***The Garden of Earthly Delight*s triptych by Jheronimus Bosch: a discourse on love and reason**.

By Jeanne van Waadenoijen

Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, panel 220x389 cm, Madrid Museo Nacional del Prado.

'Love is an inborn suffering which results from the sight of, and uncontrolled thinking about, the beauty of the other sex.'[1] With these words opens the first chapter of Andreas Capellanus' *De Amore* (On love).[2] I leave it open to question whether Bosch could have been acquainted with this treatise. The *De Amore* was well known during the Middle Ages, whether in Latin or in translations,

[1] Cited after *Andreas Capellanus on Love*, edited with an English translation by P. G. Walsh, Duckworth Classical, Medieval and Renaissance editions, London: Duckworth 1982, p. 33.
[2] See for the authorship and dating of the treatise Peter Dronke, 'Andreas Capellanus', *The Journal of Medieval Latin*, Vol. 4 (1994), pp. 51-63.

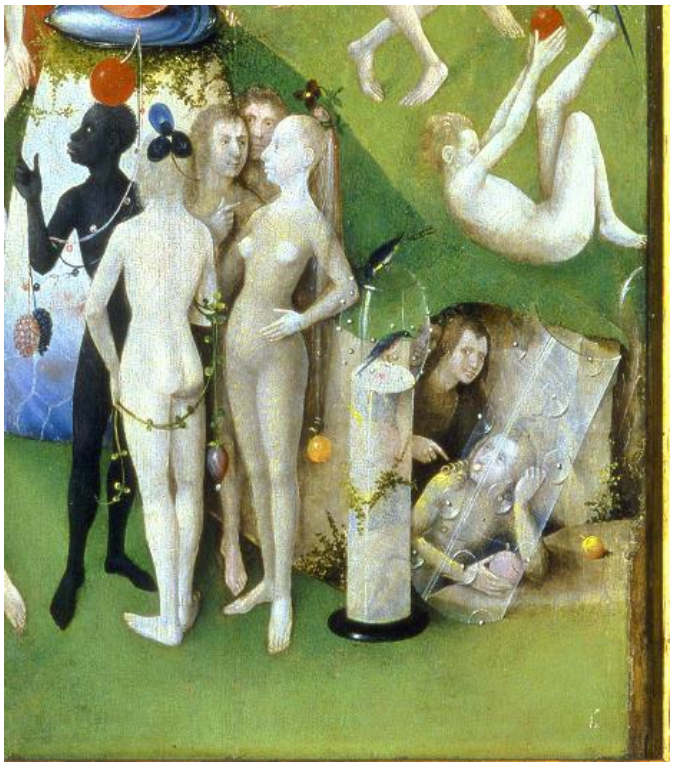

Fig. 1. *Wild people*, detail from *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, central panel.

and printed editions were published by the end of the fifteenth century.[3] However, the idea that love begins with seeing was a commonplace in the days of Bosch, doubtlessly favoured by the inclusion of Capellanus' definition in the famous *Romance of the Rose* by Guillaume de Lorris († 1238) and Jean de Meun (1240-1305). In contrast to the modern viewer, Bosch's public would not have had much trouble interpreting the scene in the right bottom corner of the central panel of Bosch's famous triptych of the so-called *Garden of Earthly Delights* in the Prado Museum where young men and women are engaged in amorous dalliance (fig. 1).[4] From a dark hole emerges a hairy young man who, while looking at a bird in a transparent glass, points at an equally hairy young man leaning in front of him with a round object (most likely an apple) in one hand, supporting the head by the other in the classical posture of meditating.[5] From the preliminary drawing, visible with infrared reflectography, results that the bird was originally planned on the head of the pensive young man undoubtedly with the aim of suggesting the kind of thoughts passing through his mind.[6] He is looking at an attractive young woman, and according to the current view of the time, the sight of an attractive woman arouses a desire in the heart by the thought of the enjoyment.[7] The bird suggests the nature of the enjoyment, for the Dutch verb 'vogelen' meant and means to have

[3] Barbara Nelson Sargent, 'A medieval commentary on Andreas Capellanus,' *Romania*, Vol. 94, No. 376 (4) (1973), pp. 528-541.
[4] For this article, I used the French edition of Daniel Poirion, Paris: Garnier-Flammarion 1972 and the English translation by A.S. Kline, *The Romance of the Rose* (*le Roman de la Rose*), Poetry in Translation 2019 (www.poetryintranslation.com). Since one cannot expect the translation always being literal, I refer to the original French text for those interested in the exact wording of the original.
[5] The reclining figure, usually identified as a woman, is, as Erwin Pokorny pointed out, a young man. See Jeanne van Waadenoijen, '"Salmen genoechte hebben met wiven?" The Garden of Earthly Delights, interpretations and prejudices,' in *Jheronimus Bosch his life and work*, 4th International Jheronimus Bosch Conference, April 14-16, 2016, Jheronimus Bosch Art Center, 's-Hertogenbosch, pp. 388-404. Cf. for the apple Jan van Boendale, *Lekenspiegel* (eds. Ludo Jongen en Miriam Piters). Athenaeum-Polak & Van Gennep, Amsterdam, 2003, p. 45: if God punished Adam for eating just an apple with hell, what punishment would He not inflict us for the capital sins we repeatedly commit.
[6] Cf. Carmen Garrido, Roger Van Schoute, *Bosch at the Museo del Prado*, Madrid 2001, p. 169, fig. 12, p. 166.
[7] *Het Boek van Sidrac* (edited by J.F.J. van Tol). Amsterdam, 1936, p. 138.

Fig. 2. *The creation of Adam and Eve*, detail from *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, left panel.

intercourse. The woman of the desire is also completely covered by body hair. The hirsute figures represent wild people 'who were known for their impetuous animal lust.[8] Their presence sheds a dubious light on the lovemaking youngsters and makes it very unlikely that Bosch intended to represent them as innocently diverting themselves in what calls to mind the terrestrial Paradise with its central fountain and four streams.

Since the triptych came to the attention of art historians at the end of the nineteenth century, a constant stream of publications aimed at explaining its enigmatic images saw the light and with them even so many, often far-fetched, interpretations ranging from innocent amusement to grave sin.[9] Since the central panel finds itself between shutters that represent the Creation of Adam and Eve, in the left-hand wing, and Hell, in the right-hand wing, nowadays most scholars tend towards a negative interpretation. The central panel would represent the sin of *Luxuria*, lust, as opposed to the lawful sex of marriage exemplified by the marriage of Adam and Eve (fig. 2).[10] Although this interpretation reflects ideas about sex and marriage current during the Middle Ages, it does not account for

[8] Larry Silver, *Hieronymus Bosch*, Munich: Hirmer, 2006, p. 58 who concisely summed up the findings of Paul Vandenbroeck, 'Jheronimus Bosch' zogenaamde Tuin der Lusten.II', in *Jaarboek van het Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpe*n, 1990, pp. 11-18, esp. p. 23.

[9] See for a survey of the several interpretations and an extensive bibliography Rogier H. Marijnissen & P. Ruyffelaere, *Hieronymus Bosch, the complete works*, Antwerp, Mercatorfonds, 2007. Stefan Fischer, *Hieronymus Bosch. Das volständige Werk*, Köln, Taschen, 2014.

[10] Dirk Bax, *Beschrijving en poging tot verklaring van het Tuin der Onkuisheiddrieluik van Jeroen Bosch, gevolgd door kritiek op Fraenger* (Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Nederlanse akademie van Wetenschappen, afd. Letterkunde, nieuwe reeks, LXII I, 2), Amsterdam: N.V. Noord-Hollandsche Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1956, p. 20; Paul Vandenbroeck, 'Jheronimus Bosch' zogenaamde Tuin der Lusten.I', in *Jaarboek van het Museum voor Schonen Kunsten Antwerpen*, 1989, p. 24-38; Eric De Bruyn, 'The cat and the mouse (or rat) on the left panel of Bosch's Garden of Delight Triptych: an iconological approach', *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor Schonen Kunsten Antwerpen* 2002, pp. 6-55. Silver, op. cit. (note 8), p. 69.

Fig 3. *Creation of Eve and Marriage, Bible Moralisée*, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 2554, f.1.

a number of anomalies, to begin with the from an iconographical point of view unusual representation of Adam and Eve. It does not represent the moment of the creation of Eve from the side of sleeping Adam nor their marriage according to tradition (fig. 3).[11]It does neither explain the carefree atmosphere of the centre panel nor the nudity of the human beings who are greatly and, in the eyes of modern beholders, innocently amusing themselves. And what significance should be attributed to the outsize birds and fruits, to the strange shaped structures? Why are there no children or old people, why are there no signs of labour or products of human civilisation?

Furthermore, it was observed that the Garden of Eden where God just created the first couple seems already infested by Original Sin before the Fall, as the hideous animals in the foreground and strange shaped 'rocks' in the background seem to suggest.[12] The same strange forms with spiky thorns form part of the bizarre structures in the background of the landscape in the central panel. They are also present in the water that surrounds the earth enclosed in a huge crystal globe pictured in the outer wings. To some the bizarre forms refer to sex and procreation.[13] To others they represent evil, which came into the world with the Fall of the Rebel Angels, an event that would have taken place, according to Augustine, at the beginning of the Creation when God separated light from darkness.[14] The bizarre forms, therefore, would indicate that the world had been corrupt

[11] Lynn Jacobs, 'The Triptych unhinged: Bosch's Garden of Earthly Delights' in Jos Koldeweij, Bernard Vermet with Barbara van Kooij (eds), *Hieronymus Bosch: new insights into his life and work*, Rotterdam 2001, p. 73. Reindert Falkenburg, *The Land of Unlikeness. Hieronymus Bosch, 'The Garden of Earthly Delights'*, s.d. [2011], p. 119. See also Margaret Sullivan, 'The timely art of Hieronymus Bosch: the left panel of the Garden of Earthly Delights', *Oud Holland*, 127(2014), pp.165-195, esp. p. 17.

[12] Charles De Tolnay, *Hieronymus Bosch*, Basel: Les éditions Holbein, 1937, p. 33. Hans Belting, *Hieronymus Bosch. The Garden of Earthly Delights*, München: Prestel Verlag, 2002, p. 26. Falkenburg, op. cit. (note 11), p. 123.

[13] Bax, op.cit. (note 10), pp. 27-33; Vandenbroeck, op. cit. (note 10), p. 59.

[14] Augustine, *The City of God*, translated by Marcus Dods, New York, Random House, c.1950, p. 361.

Fig.4. *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, exterior.

from its very inception. Some scholars even contend that Bosch intended to express that God, visible in the upper left corner in a much-reduced scale as to the huge crystal globe, had lost control of the world he was creating.[15] While it is true that, according to Augustine evil came into the world with the Fall of the Rebel Angels, it is equally true, always according to Augustine, that God foresaw what would happen. Therefore, he had prepared his plan of salvation. It started with the patriarchs, culminated in Christ, and continued with the Church and her sacraments. Augustine, moreover, leaves no doubt that all that God created is good. The 'flaw of wickedness is not nature, but contrary to nature, and has its origin, not in the Creator, but in the will.'[16] 'He caused the devil (good by God's creation, wicked by his own will) to be cast down from his high position.'[17] In the light of Augustine's enormous influence throughout the ages, it is highly unlikely that Bosch wanted to express that God's Creation, contrary to his intention, was corrupt from its very beginning.

To understand what Bosch's triptych is about, we need to start where in his time viewers would have started, with the exterior (fig.4). When closed, the outer wings represent in the left upper corner God, one hand raised, in the other a book (the Word by which he created all), in the act of creating the world. This is underscored by the Latin inscriptions '*Ipse dixit et facta su[n]t' – 'Ipse*

[15] Belting, op. cit. (note 12), p. 22; Yona Pinson, '"Let there be…" – The World Corrupted from its Inception', in *Jheronimus Bosch, his life and work (4th International Jheronimus Bosch Conference, April 14-16*, 2016), Jheronimus Bosch Art Center,'s-Hertogenbosch, Den Bosch 2016, pp. 236-259.
[16] Augustine, op. cit. (note 14), p. 361.
[17] Ibid., p. 361.

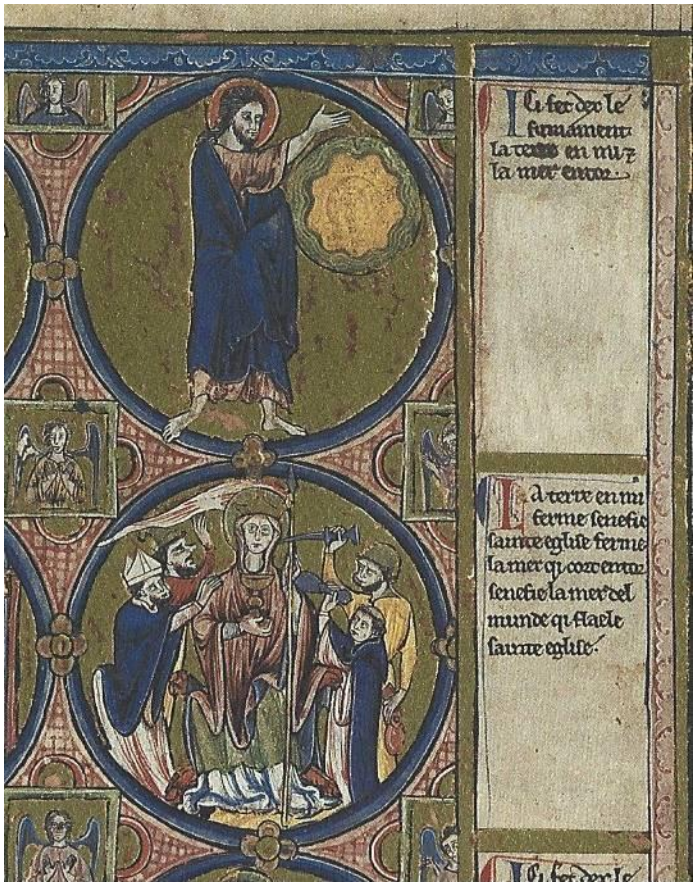

Fig. 5. *Third day of creation*, *Bible Moralisée*, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbiliothek, Cod. 2554, fol.1.

ma[n]davit et et creata su[n]t' ('For he spoke and they were made: he commanded and they were created') in top of the panels. These words are found in the psalms 32 and 148, psalms that are exhortations to praise God, the Creator of all.[18] Under a dark, partly lighted cloudy sky is in a huge crystal globe the earth visible surrounded by water and strange, unnatural half-vegetable, half-mineral forms with fruitlike round objects and spiky thorns. Most scholars agree that the image represents the third day of Creation when God separated the dry land from the water, if not the first three days, the dark, partly lighted clouds symbolizing the separation of light and darkness and the Fall of the Rebel Angels.[19] That Bosch depicts God a tiny figure as compared to the huge globe does not necessarily indicate that God is less important; that the world he was creating 'was already slipping beyond his control'.[20] It will simply signify that Bosch calls above all attention to the just created world and the moment of the separation of the dry land from the water. The answer to the question why is given in the Bible and its exegesis current during the Middle Ages. According to both the *Bible moralisée* and the Bible with glosses and postilla by Nicolas of Lyra (1270-1349), published in print at the end of the of the fifteenth century, the dry land symbolizes the Church, the community of the faithful, the souls thirsting for God, harassed by her enemies, the sinners, unbelievers (fig. 5).[21] The exegesis derives from Augustine who in his *Confessiones* gives an allegorical interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis, the story of the Creation

[18] Ps 32 (33): 9 and Ps 148 (49): 5.
[19] Jacobs, op. cit. (note 11), p. 73 draws attention to 'specific connections between the imary on each side of each wing panel. The dark side of the orb on the right panel of the exterior correlates with the dark scene of the hell on the panel's reverse, just as the lighter side of the orb at the left does with the paradise scene on its interior.' They are the good and wicked souls, described as 'light and darkness', according to Augustine, op. cit. (note 22), p. 336.
[20] Belting, op. cit. (note 12), p. 22.
[21] *Bible moralisée Codex Vindobonenis 2554 der Östereichischen Nationalbibliotheek,* Kommentar von Reiner Hausherr, übersetzung der französischen Bibeltexte von Hans –Walter Stork, Graz: Akademische Druch-u. Verlag-anstalt, 1992, p. 49. *Bibliorum Sacrorum cum glossa ordinaria [...] et postilla Nicolai Lyrani,* Venice 1603., t. I,

seen as an account of redemption, as a story of spiritual renovation and completion of man in the bosom of the Church right up to the rest in God in the Sabbath of eternal life.[22] 'I have also considered what spiritual truths you intended to be expressed by the order in which the world was created and the order in which creation is described. I have seen that while each single one of your works is good, collectively they are very good, and that heaven and earth, which represent the Head and the body of the Church, were predestined in your Word, that is in your only begotten Son, before time began, when there was no morning and no evening.'[23] After he explained the first days of creation, he arrives in chapter seventeenth at the third day and the explanation of the verse 'God also said: Let the waters that are under the heaven, be gathered together into one place: and let the dry land appear.'(Genesis 1, 9-11) 'Who gathered the bitter sea of humanity into one society? All men are united by one purpose, temporal happiness on earth, and all that they do is aimed at this goal [….] But there are souls that thirst for you, souls which in your eyes are set apart from the great main of the sea for a different purpose'.[24] The sea are the faithless gathered into one body, 'so that the earnest devotion of the faithful [the dry land] might be clearly seen and they might bear you fruit in works of mercy [the trees of the dry land also created on the third day]'[25]

After separating the dry land from the water, after creating the Church amidst the 'bitter sea of humanity' 'united by one purpose, temporal happiness on earth', on the fourth day God creates from the waters - the world of the sinners and unbelievers - the sacraments of the Church and her messengers.[26] 'Let the sea too conceive and give birth to your works. *Let the waters produce that have life in them*. For *by separating worth from dross* you become *true spokesmen* of God, who bade the waters produce, not the living soul which the earth was to bear, *but moving things that have life in them and winged things that fly above the earth*. By the work of your saints, O God, your sacraments have moved amidst the flood of the world's temptations to bathe its peoples in the waters of your baptism and imprint your name upon them. […] The words of your messengers have soared like winged things above the earth beneath the firmament of your Book, for this was the authority given to them and beneath it they were to take wing wherever their journey lay. There is *no word, no accent of theirs that does not make itself heard, till their utterance fills every land, till their message reaches the end of the world*. And this is because you, O God, have blessed their work and

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cols.15-16. Jeanne van Waadenoijen, *A possible source for Bosch's choice of the Third Day of the Creation for the outer wings of the triptych of The Garden of Earthly Delights*, https://jeroenboschplaza.com/artikel/2022-van-waadenoijen-03-article-garden-prado/?lang=en

[22] Augustine, *Confessions*, translated and with an introduction by R.S. Pine-Coffin, Penguin books, Harmondsworth 1961, 4th ed, pp. 311-347.

[23] Ibid., p. 344-45.

[24] Ibid., p. 324.

[25] Ibid., p. 324.

[26] Ibid., p. 324.

multiplied it.'[27] The dry land, the Church, produces the living soul, 'But the living soul takes its first beginnings from the earth [the Church], for only those who already have faith can profit by detaching themselves from earthly loves so that the soul which lived in death when it lived in luxury may live in you instead. For those pleasures kill, but you, O Lord, are the joy that gives life to the pure heart.'[28] The living soul 'eats from the Fish that was raised from the deep, for the Fish was raised up to be the food of the dry earth'.[29] Fish and food symbolize Christ and the Eucharist. The living soul must keep itself 'intact from the savage monster pride, from the sloth and the sensual pleasures of lust, and from quibbling knowledge that is knowledge only in name, so that the beast may be tamed, the herds be broken in, and the serpents be made to lose their sting. For these creatures are the symbols of the impulses of the soul. But the arrogance of pride, the pleasures of lust, and the poison of vain curiosity are the impulses of the soul that is dead, nor so dead that it lacks all impulse, but one that is dead because it has forsaken the fountain of life and is swept along by the fleeting things of this world, lending itself to their ways. But your Word, O God, is the fountain of eternal life.'[30]
Augustine ends his allegorical exegesis thanking God for all that we see, heaven and earth, light separated from darkness, the waters and the dry land, plants and trees, fishes, birds and animals. 'And finally we see man, made in your image and likeness, ruling over all the irrational animals for the very reason that he was made in your image and resembles you, that is, because he has the power of reason and understanding. And just as in man's soul there are two forces, one which is dominant because it deliberates and one which obeys because it is subject to such guidance, in the same way, in the physical sense, woman has been made for man. In her mind and her rational intelligence she has a nature equal of man's, but in sex she is physically subject to him in the same way as our natural impulses need to be subjected to the reasoning power of the mind, in order that the actions to lead may be inspired by the principles of good conduct.'[31]
This allegorical interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis underlies, in my opinion, the representations of the triptych. In the light of Augustine's exegesis, the landscape with its strange 'rocks' in the background of the representation in the left interior wing of the triptych does not simply represent the Garden of Eden, it also alludes to the 'bitter sea of humanity, united by one purpose,

[27] Ibid., p. 328.
[28] Ibid., p. 330.
[29] Ibid., p. 330.
[30] Ibid., p. 331.
[31] Ibid., p. 344.

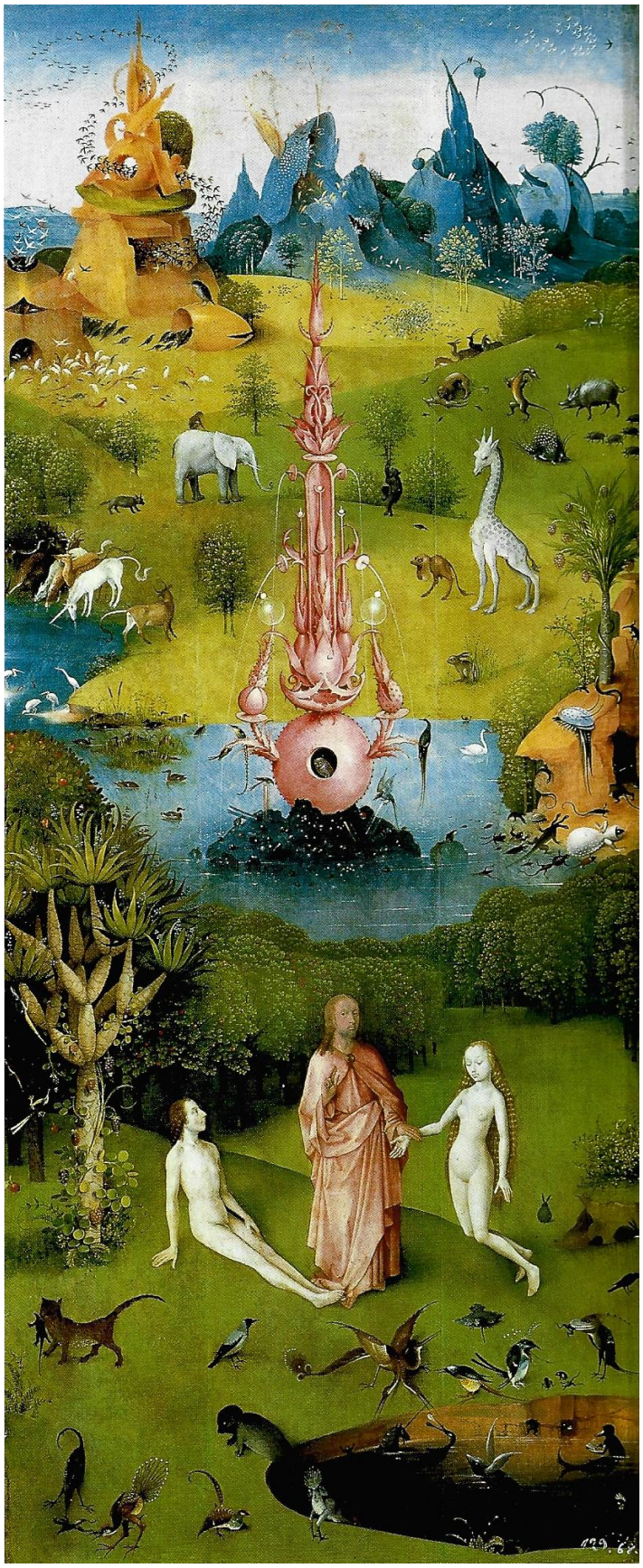

Fig. 6. *The garden of Earthly Delights*, left panel.

temporal happiness on earth.'[32] The enormous flight of birds that unfolds in the sky in the left upper corner to disappear in the far distance will symbolize the messengers who announce the Word until the end of the earth (fig. 6). They depart from the sunny part of the strange shaped 'rocks' in the background of the landscape, that is, the 'waters', in which the Church has sent out its messengers. In the dark, blue part of the 'rocks' perches an owl surrounded by birds. Since bird-catchers employed the owl as decoy for capturing unsuspecting birds, the owl surrounded by birds became to symbolize the devil catching unwary souls.[33] The dark 'rocks' are the opposite of the sunny 'rocks' from which depart the winged messengers. They symbolize the sinners, the unbelievers unaware of the luring devil whereas the sunny 'rocks' allude to the faithful the 'waters' also brought forth. Beneath these 'rocks' emerges a fountain from the deep, the Fountain of Life, the Fish, Christ (fig. 6).[34] Attention was drawn to the crab-like features of the fountain, which were associated with Cancer, the sign of the Zodiac, and an astro-al-

[32] Ibid., p. 324.
[33] Vandenbroeck, op. cit. (note 10), p. 190.
[34] Vandenbroeck, op. cit. (note 10), p. 56, and p. 35, fig. 5. See also Fischer, op. cit. (note 9), p. 102.

chimical interpretation of the triptych proposed.[35] If Bosch deliberately chose to give the fountain crab-like forms, we might rather think of the following passage from *The Spiritual Espousals* by Jan van Ruusbroec (1293-1381) where the famous mystic compares the growing love of God with the course of the sun along the signs of the Zodiac. 'When the sun has risen in the heavens as high as it can, it stands in the sign of Cancer (which means Crab, because it cannot go further, but begins to go back). Then come the fiercest heats of the whole year. And the sun draws up all the moisture, and the earth becomes dry, and the fruits ripen quickly.[....] So likewise, when Christ, the Divine Sun, has risen to the zenith of our hearts [....]. He will draw all things, that is, all our powers, to Himself.'[36] It is the moment of the most intensive feeling of love of God. The fountain rests on what seems a heap of precious stones. Recently Margareth Carroll drew attention to the precious stones that were supposed to grow from the earth, and that, according to Albertus Magnus, 'the shores of rivers and streams are propitious sites where stones and gems are "born."'[37] For a possible interpretation of the precious stones in this context, I like to draw attention to one of the well-known meditations of Anselm (1033-1109) in which he expresses his longing for God and his love of Christ, 'Thou hast set gold among minerals in rare preeminence for worth and beauty; yet what is all of it compared to my priceless Lord, and His fathomless glory, that the angels long to gaze into? Every precious stone and desirable to look upon is the work of Thy hands,—sardius, topaz, jasper, chrysolite, onyx, beryl, amethyst, sapphire, carbuncle, emerald; and yet what are all of them but toys compared with Thee, all-loveable and all-beauteous King?'[38] Right below the fountain, Bosch represents Christ, the Word, who just created Adam and Eve. He created man in his likeness, as Adam's posture makes clear. He sits stiffly erect looking at his Creator, his feet touching those of Christ, who holds the newly created, demurely kneeling Eve by the wrist, a gesture that does not so much denote that he gives her in marriage but that he presents her to Adam, 'woman has been made for man'.[39] Looking at the beholder, Christ makes a blessing gesture. The animals in the *Garden of*

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[35] Anna Bosczkowska, 'The Crab, the Sun, the Moon and Venus. Studies in the Iconology of Hieronymus Bosch's Triptych '*The Garden of Earthly Delights', Oud Holland*, 91 (1977), pp. 197-231.

[36] John Ruusbroec, *The spiritual espousals and other works*. Introduction and translation by James A. Wiseman, O.S. B, New York: Paulist Press, 1985, p. 84.

[37] Margaret D. Carroll, *Hieronymus Bosch: time and transformation in the* Garden of Earthly Delights, Yale university Press, Newhaven/ London, 2021, p. 57

[38] St. Anselm's *Book of Meditations and prayers*, tr. from the Latin by ML, London 1872, pp. 163-165. See also Jean-François Cottier, *«Anima mea»: Prières privées et textes de dévotion du Moyen Age latin. Autour des «Prières ou Méditations» attribuées à Saint Anselme de Cantorbéry (XIème-XIIème s.),* Turnhout, 2001.

[39] See for the gesture Amira Karl von Amira, Die Handegebärden in den Bilderhandschriften des Sachsenspiegels, (= Abhandlungen der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-Philologische und Historische Klasse; Bd. 23, 2). München: Franz [u.a.] 1905. https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.117, p. 252. Adam is looking at his Creator Christ. Nothing suggests that he has a 'divinely-induced visionary dream of mankind's future reunion with God', as suggested by Falkenburg, op. cit. (note 11), p. 126. Painters disposed of a number of devices to suggest dreams or visions: sleeping with eyes closed surrounded by or against the background of their dream, with open eyes staring straight ahead in the air, or the well-known 'clouds'. Where in the triptych do we see an allusion to mankind's future? More to

Eden panel that are behaving according to their nature stress that man, in contrast to the brute creation, is gifted with reasoning power.

Many an art historian wondered why Bosch depicts God the Creator in the shape of Christ. Quite apart that for ages God could but be represented in the human shape of the second person of the Trinity, the Word, the Son, Christ is here not only the Word by which he created all, he also is the Redeemer, and Adam and Eve also are the in baptism of Christ renewed humans.[40] Christ, here in his dual role of Creator and Redeemer, looks at the spectator to remind him that 'the words "Seek God, and your soul shall have life", are not mere sounds that strike man's ears,' but that 'they are a call to action, so that the earth [Church] may produce a living soul. Do not fall in with the manners of this world, but keep yourself intact from it. The soul lives when it avoids the things which it is death to seek.'[41] In an aperture in the centre of the lower part of the fountain lurks a little owl in the dark, the eyes fixed on Adam. The bird finds itself in the very centre of the panel on the crossing lines of the diagonals. According to medieval belief, both cry and appearance of the little owl was an ill omen, of evil and death. The owl, moreover, prefers darkness to light and becomes thus a symbol of him who contemplates evil.[42] In this context, the little owl will allude, like the monstrous reptiles creeping from the water to hide in a dark hole and other monstrous beings, to the devil lying in wait, to Temptation and Fall.

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the point is Silver, op. cit. (note 8), p. 40, who, while adhering to the idea of the marriage, puts the question why Eve demurely casts down the eyes, whereas shame was introduced only after the Fall. As for his suggestion that she casts down the eyes since love begins with seeing, it can be observed that, always according to Augustine, Adam and Eve would have generated offspring without lust had they remained in Paradise. Nils Büttner, 'No flesh in the Garden of Earthly Delights. On the Paintings of Hieronymus Bosch,' in Felix Ensslin, Charlotte Klink (eds), *Aesthetics of the Flesh*, Berlin 2014, pp. 272-299, p. 291: The 'The first human couple will not escape their fate, as in the opinion of Augustine and many medieval theologians the Fall of Man happened just at the moment depicted by Bosch. It is the moment when Adam turns away from God and toward his consort in flesh, the woman. It is this orientation toward the carnal which shapes the further course of salvation history.' But Adam looks at God, not at Eve.

[40] To make this clear Bosch deliberately deviated from the established iconographic tradition.

[41] Augustine, op. cit. (note 22), p.330.

[42] The reputation and symbolic significance of the owl, nocturnal bird of prey, was based upon its living and operating in the dark, and upon its incapacity to see in daylight. Both its sound and appearance were considered ill omens. Bird catchers employed the owl as decoy for capturing unsuspecting birds, what gave rise to its symbolic meaning of the devil catching unwary souls. Because of its blindness during the day, the owl became a symbol of ignorance, silliness, of him who is not capable of seeing his own silly conduct reflected in that of the other, of knowing himself. The owl could also symbolize wisdom because of his capacity to see in the dark. In the Garden, Bosch represents five times an owl, clearly recognizable as of different species, what does suppose that they will have different meanings. Two of them are decoys, the perched owl in the far background of the left panel, and the tawny owl (strix aluco) in the group of birds that invades the central panel from the left. The owl on the right is an eagle owl (bubo bubo), prophet of misery and deep sorrowing. Both tawny owl and eagle owl look at the spectator. The owl that hides in the dark hole in the very middle of the left wing is a little owl, apart from being an ill omen also known for its uncleanness. The owl looking at the viewer while carried along in the circle of the riders is a barn owl, metaphor of Asmodeus, the devil of unchastity, who at night flies around like a barn owl, Eric De Bruyn, 'Op verkenning in de Tuin der Lusten 6', *Bossche Kringen* 9, 3 (2022), pp. 42-45, esp. p. 43.

Fig. 7. *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, central panel.

After this 'introduction' which makes it clear that man is created in God's likeness, that is, that he, in contrast to other living creatures, has a soul gifted with a free will and reasoning power which enables him to make right choices and resist temptations, follows the main argument. In the central panel, Bosch depicts, in a landscape that continues that in the left panel, the souls (that is why they are all naked) of the earthly minded, the 'bitter sea of humanity', the souls 'united by one purpose, temporal happiness on earth' (fig. 7).[43] Notwithstanding the crowded, seemingly chaotic

[43] Falkenburg, op. cit. (note 11), p. 205, explaining that the human likeness with God is in the soul, assumes that the nude figures are souls, but does not explain their nudity. The association of nudity with souls probably derives from the pictorial tradition to render the souls in representations of last judgments and hell naked.
Since Augustine speaks of souls, it seems appropriate to see in the frivolous youngsters the souls of the earthly minded.

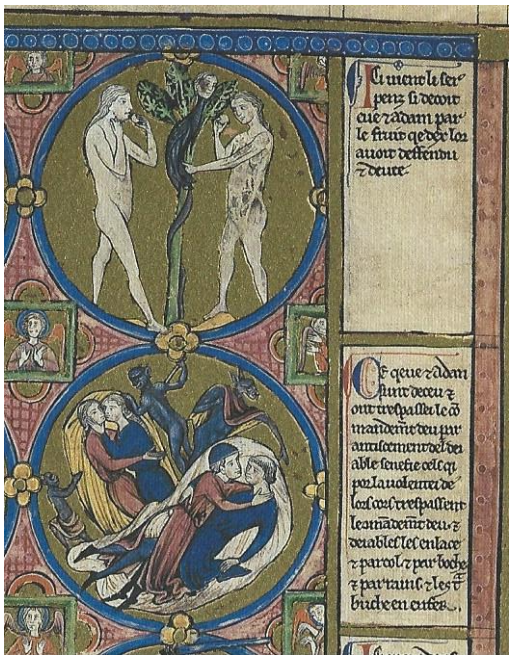

Fig. 8. *The Temptation, Bible Moralisée*, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 2554, f.2.

composition, which, as we will see, has the function of conveying the idea of the frenzy of love, Bosch guides the eye of the viewer orderly across the picture plane in a way that the moral lesson cannot be missed. The gesturing young man in the group of persons in the foreground to the left, right below the gigantic birds that invade the landscape, directs the eye of the viewer toward the Fountain of Life with its lurking owl alluding to both redemption and temptation and fall. The illustration of the allegorical interpretation of the Fall in the *Bible moralisée* shows two love couples beset by devils, one heterosex ual, the other homosexual (fig.8). The accompanying text goes, 'That Eve and Adam are deceived and infringed God's command on instigation of the devil, signifies those who by their carnal lust infringed God's command and the devil embraces them at neck, mouth and arm and carries them into Hell'.[44] The group with the gesturing young man finds itself near the group of outsize birds, while not far from there a young man dives into the water with legs wide apart, forming thus an epsilon, well-known symbol of the free will and the capacity to choose between virtue and vice.[45] Whatever the symbolic meaning of the individual birds, headed by the goldfinch – as the tawny owl and duck a well-known decoy -, together they will allude to temptation. Their very dimension indicates that the souls have themselves ruled by their temptations. The same is true for the giant, hollow fruits, symbols of ephemeral carnal pleasures.[46] The water with its temptations directs the eye towards the cavalcade of exited young men riding all manner of unbridled animals.[47] These animals represent the impulses of the soul, whatever their individual symbolic meanings (each of them can signify lust and lasciviousness).[48] Carrying all types of objects, birds, fishes, fruits, an egg (also charged with symbolic meanings of the same kind) the men are racing around a pond with attractive bathing young ladies. It cannot be accidental that the egg they carry along finds itself in the very middle of the composition, on the axis that leads the eye towards the pool with bathing damsels

[44] *Bible Moralisée*, op. cit. (note 18), fol.2.
[45] First observed by Wilhelm Fraenger, *Hieronymus Bosch*, Dorset Press, New York, 1989, pp. 115-6.
[46].Waadenoijen, op. cit. (note 5), p. 402.
[47] See for the association of water with Venus Dirk Bax, *Ontcijfering van Jeroen Bosch*, PhD diss, University Nijmegen, The Hague: Staatsdrukkerij-en uitgeversbedrijf, 1948, p. 102.
[48] Vandenbroeck, op.cit. (note 10), p. 136.

right beneath a fountain in the lower part of which, in a dark opening, a man lays his hand on the genitals of his female companion. The egg is an aphrodisiac, it refers like the fishes, birds and fruits to lust, sexual desire, and it contributes to the understanding of what is going on.[49] The whole scene expresses how love makes man lose his reason, how it makes him incapable of restraining his impulses, of controlling the reigns.[50] He can think of nothing but love, a luxury, by the way, that only they who do not need to toil for their daily bread can afford**.**[51]

From the water on which floats the fountain of carnal love depart four streams marked by four 'watergates'. These fantastic, irregular shaped constructions, partly made of materials that suggest crystal and precious stones of the kind known from descriptions of the from costly materials built but instable fairy-tale palaces, notably that of Fortune, leaves no doubt that we have to do with a perverted version of the terrestrial Paradise.[52] In, on and around the watergates people are frolicking and cutting capers. Their careless, foolish behaviour suggests that they are unaware of the danger to which they are exposing themselves, symbolized by the at the viewer staring eagle owl, 'prophet of misadventure, hideous messenger of dolour', seated on a big hollow fruit-like object that covers the heads of a therefore literally not seeing wildly dancing couple waving cherries.[53] More cherries surround them and a branch of the hawthorn evocating May Day, a feast that often involved licentious conduct.[54] The souls are absorbed in the pleasures of love, which deprives them of their reason and makes them the equals of the brute creation. They highly amuse themselves in what turns out to be a false, for transitory, paradise where the souls that live in luxury live in death.[55] 'For those pleasures kill', as is shown in the right wing where below the burning world of the Apocalypse souls are tortured in Hell.[56]

On the design of Augustine's allegorical exegesis Bosch embroidered his magnificent evocation of the pleasures of love and their fatal aftermath, inspired by the already mentioned *Romance of the Rose*, a long allegorical poem on the art of love. Since, in a publication of 1947, Howard Daniel defined the middle panel as 'the great Rosegarden of sin', Bosch studies repeatedly mention the

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[49] Bax, op. cit. (note 47), p. 145.
[50] Walsh, op. cit. (note 1), p. 35.
[o]https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/pott002derm03_01/pott002derm03_01_0001.php
[52] *The Romance of the Rose (Roman de la Rose)*, Poetry in Translation (www.poetryintranslation.com) 2019., p. 85; Poirion, op. cit. (note 4), lines 6100- 6115. The wobbly structures will have alerted the public for disorder was a sign of evil. See Waadenoijen, op. cit. (note 5), p. 389.
[53] Poirion, op. cit. (note 4), lines 5975-77 note to 5975: li chahuans are eagle owls (strix alluco)
[54] Ibid.
[55] Cf. Augustine, op. cit. (note 22) 19, p. 330.
[56] Ibid.

Fig. 9. *The Golden Age, Romance of the Rose*, London, British Library, Ms. Harley 4425, fol. 76v.

Romance.[57] However, none of the authors of these studies took the trouble to show how the *Romance* relates to the *Garden*, in what way it inspired Bosch. It was even doubted whether there was a relation at all.[58] Illustrations of the poem nowhere show naked humans not even there, where they depict the Golden Age (fig. 9). They show, on the contrary, well-dressed men and women who behave themselves with courtly elegance and dignity among the equally well-dressed personifications of abstract notions like love, reason, youth, wealth, pleasure, etc. (fig. 10). The references are usually limited to the motives of fountain, garden, and lovemaking; I myself pointed out the correspondence between the morality of Reason's sermon and the morality that seems to underlie the *Garde*n.[59] At a closer look, it turns out that the relation between painting and poem goes beyond a shared morality: the poem seems to be the source of Bosch's *Garden*.

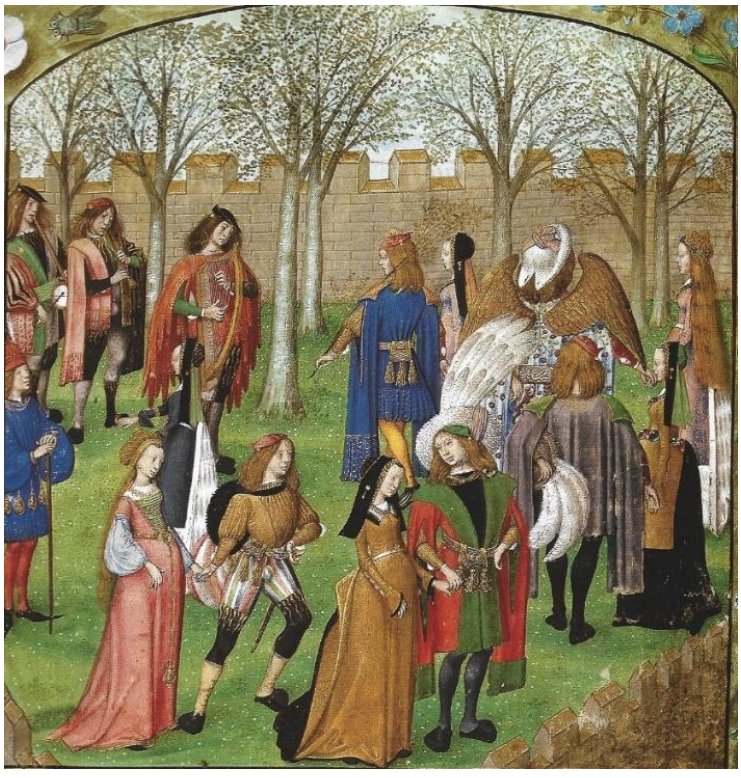

Fig. 10. *The Garden of Love, Romance of the Rose*, London, British Library, Ms. Harley 4425, fol. 12v.

[57] Howard Daniel, *Hieronymus Bosch*, New York: Hyperion Press, 1947, p. 14. Bax, op. cit. (note 8), pp.73-75; Gibson, 'The Garden of Earthly Delight by Hieronymus Bosch: the Iconography of the Central Panel,' *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, vol. XXIV, 1973, pp. 1-26, esp. pp. 9-10; Vanderbroeck, op.cit. (note 8) pp. 118-119; Jeanne van Waadenoijen*, De 'geheimtaal' van Jheronimus Bosch. Een interpretatie van zijn werk*, Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2007, p. 242; Reindert Falkenburg (note 9), p. 171 and pp. 268-269; Fischer, op. cit. (note 9), p. 109.
[58] Marijnissen, op. cit. (note 9), p. 95.
[59] Waadenoijen, op. cit. (note 57), p. 242.

Written in the 13th century, at the end of the Middle Ages the *Romance of the Rose* was still in vogue in court circles, which celebrated in popular romances of chivalry an idealized code of civilized behaviour, characterized by ideals such as honour, loyalty, courage, and courtly love.[60] 'Of noble knights and ladies, arms, and love, / Of chivalry, and noble deeds I sing,' so begins the Italian poet Ludovico Ariosto (1474-1533) his famous poem *Orlando Furioso*, which he set out to compose in 1504 for the Este court in Ferrara.[61] The *Romance of the Rose* saw several printed editions at the end of the fifteenth century. At the same time manuscript versions continued to be produced.[62] Count Engelbrecht II of Nassau (1451-1504), presumed commissioner of the *Garden*, possessed a lavishly illustrated manuscript copy made at the end of the fifteenth century, the text copied from a printed edition.[63] Another member of the same Burgundian court, Philip of Cleves, lord of Ravenstein (1459 -1528), had a moralized prose translation of the *Romance of the Rose* made by Jean Molinet (1435 -1507), poet and chronicler of the Burgundian court.[64] The opening lines of the prologue inform that the prince, who has distinguished himself in the art of warfare, now wants to invest in the art of love. An enterprise not without danger, warns Molinet, who discerns three forms of love: divine love, natural love and foolish love (*amour fatuelle*), the latter, among others, foolish delight, an incredible deception, a devilish illusion. It degrades honour, it destroys reason, corrupts good manners, it generates vices, it empties the purse, it diminishes the forces, it ruins the body, and damns the soul.[65] This is the love the personification of Reason warns Lover for in a long sermon in

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[60] Larry D. Benson, 'Courtly Love and Chivalry in the Later Middle Ages', in Robert F. Yeager (ed), *Fifteenth-century studies: recent essays*, Hamden (Conn.), Archon Books, 1984, pp. 239-257.

[61] 'Le donne, i cavalieri, l'arme, gli amori/ le cortesie, l'audaci imprese io canto,' Tr. Kline https://www.poetryintranslation.com/klineasariosto.php

[62] A lavishly illustrated manuscript copy made for François I dates from ca 1525. Lhttps://www.facsimile-finder.com/facsimiles/rose-novel-for-king-francois-i-facsimile#&gid=1&pid=19

[63] Now in the British Museum. British Library, London. Ms. Harley 4425. See for Engelbrecht and the *Garden* J.K. Steppe, 'Jheronimus Bosch. Bijdrage tot de historische en de ikonografische studie van zijn werk,' in Jheronimus *Bosch, Bijdragen bij de gelegenheid van de herdenkingstentoonstelling te 's-Hertogenbosch 1967*, Eindhoven, pp. 7-12.

[64] See for Jean Molinet Jean Devaux (ed.), 'Roman de la Rose moralisé de Jean Molinet,' *La Vie en Prose* https://sites.unimi.it/lavieenproses/index.php/titres/98-roman-de-la-rose?showall=1 The incipit of the manuscript in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek of The Hague goes: 'Au tresnoble co(m)mandement // et pour accomplir le bon // plaisir de Jllustre prince // et mon tresredoubte // seigneur./ Monseigneur Philippe // de cleves./ Seigneur de Ravestain // fut ce Romant de la Rose mora= // liset et translate de rime en // prose. ou sont comprins le prolo= // gue./ Cent et vij. chapitres re= // duis par sens moral de fole a= // mour vicieuse a divine amour // vertueuse'. (On the very noble commission of and to please the illustrious prince and my very awe-inspiring lord Philip of Cleves, lord of Ravestein was this Romant de la Rose moralised and translated in prose with a prologue and 107 chapters turned by moral sense from vicious foolish love into virtuous divine love.) French original cited after Anne S. Korteweg, *Guide to the French language medieval manuscripts in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek* [National Library of the Netherlands], Moran Micropublications, Amsterdam, 2006 (https://brill.com/fileasset/downloads_prod ts/46172_Guide_French-Medieval-Manuscripts.pdf)

[65] Jean Molinet, *Romant de la Rose*, moralise cler et net, translate de rime en prose par vostre humble Molinet nouvellement imprime a Paris en la grant rue de Sainct Jaques a lensigne de la Rose Blanche couronnee (1521), pp. 1-2 https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k71417g/f247.item#.

the *Romance of the Rose*. After a description of love with its many contradictions, she gives, on request of Lover, a definition of love,

Listen; if its essence I've caught,
Then Love is a frailty of thought,
Shared by two, they of any gender,
When they are close to one another,
Rising in them as a longing, born
Of a disordered vision one morn,
To embrace and kiss each other,
Find bodily solace in one another.
And lovers do think of nothing else,
But burn with joy within themselves;
They care but little for fruitfulness,
Delighting themselves in fond excess.[66]

Yet, according to Reason, the pleasure of love 'is the root of all malaise'. Sex serves procreation. To make this a pleasant task Nature provided it with pleasure, of which people abuse by pursuing the pleasure for its own sake,

No man doth the right road travel,
Nor right intention doth possess,
Who only pleasure doth address.
For, know you what they engender
Who do such? They but surrender
Themselves, like slaves, in a trice,
To the Prince of all earthly vice.
For such is the root of all malaise,
As Cicero in his writing says,
Where he speaks about Old Age,
Which he, more than Youth, doth praise.
Youth drives the young folk, sadly,

[66] Kline, op. cit. (note 4), II, p. 22; lines 4378-4388 in Poirion, op. cit. (note 4)

To risk both their soul and body;
Tis too perilous to pass through
Without breaking a limb or two,
Meeting death, or bringing shame
And dishonour on the family name.[67]

Reason continues explaining that Youth drives men to folly and a dissolute life,

Youth drives young men to folly,
To ribaldry, debauchery,
To lechery, and wild excess,
Exposing the heart's fickleness;
Given such disorder, never
Can order be regained ever.
Youth doth lead those into danger,
Who fix all their heart on Pleasure;
Thus Pleasure doth snare and command
The body and the mind of man,
By means of Youth his hand-maiden
Whose custom tis to do ill to men,
And draw them to delight; and true,
Tis the only task she seeks to do.[68]

Reason warns Lover against Love, and advises him to get rid of him,

When you received Amor, that same
Fractious guest, and gave him lodging,
All ill was in your welcoming;
Drive him forth now from your courts,
Lest he should rob you of those thoughts
That yet may work to your own good;
Expel him swiftly, as you should.

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[67] Kline, op. cit. (note 4), II, p. 25; lines 4428-4438 in Poirion, op. cit. (note 4)
[68] Kline, op. cit. (note 4), II, p. 26; lines 4463-4475 in Poirion, op. cit. (note 4)

Great mischief in hearts doth move,
Whene'er they are drunk with Love.
In the end, you'll know the cost,
When the time has all been lost,
And your youth has been wasted,
In those pleasures briefly tasted.
And should you live long enough
To see yourself win free of Love,
For the time so lost you'll grieve,
Time that you can ne'er retrieve;
Win, I mean, all that you sought,
For in that Love where you are caught
Men lose sense, time, rank and station,
Body and soul, and reputation.[69]

The central panel shows how Love, with the complicity of Pleasure and Youth, makes the soul lose its reason. In contrast to the illuminators of the manuscripts who illustrate the poem by means of personifications of abstract ideas such as love, reason, youth, wealth, pleasure, old age, idleness, folly, etc., Bosch does not illustrate the episode of Reason admonishing Lover depicting the personification of Reason in front of Lover, he chose to express what Reason's sermon is about. The love-making lovers represent Love. Youth is expressed by the presence of young men and women only, Idleness by the absence of any form of labour, Folly by the frolicking youngsters in the background, Pleasure by the carefree, playful mood that pervades the central panel expressing that the dangerous power of Love lies in the attractiveness of its ephemeral pleasures.[70] In his well-known passage dedicated to the works of Bosch, Fray José de Sigüenza (1544 - 1606) had interpreted the strawberry in the central panel, the madroño with its brief taste as a symbol of transient pleasures.[71] In a study dedicated to the strawberry in Hieronymus Bosch Walter Gibson drew attention to the employment of Virgil's metaphor of the fair strawberries hiding the serpent in the *Romance of the Rose*. In warning against the dangers of confiding secrets to women, Jean de Meun has Genius say:

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[69] Kline, op. cit. (note 4), II, p. 31; lines 4626-4629 in Poirion, op. cit. (note 4)
[70] Already pointed out by Bax, op. cit. (note 10), p. 79: 'That he [Bosch] wanted to underscore the deceitful appearances of unchastity: it presents itself in the middle panel as something enchanting the eye; as something innocent that gratifies the senses.' (Ttranslation mine)
[71] Fray José de Siguënza, *Tercera parte de la Historia de la Orden di San Geronimo*, Madrid, en la imprenta real, 1605, Vol. 3, p. 637.

Take note of these lines of Virgil, and make your hearts so familiar with them that they cannot be erased: O children who gather flowers and fresh, clean strawberries, the cold serpent lies in the grass. ... O children who search for flowers and young strawberries on the ground, the cold, evil serpent is hiding there, the malignant snake who hides and conceals his poison, secreting it beneath the tender grass until such time as he can pour it out to deceive and injure you; children, be careful to shun him. Do not let yourselves be caught if you want to escape death, for he is such a venomous beast in his body, tail, and head that you will be poisoned if you come near him; he treacherously stings and bites whomsoever he touches, without hope of a cure, and no remedy can heal the burning of that poison. No herb or root is of any use against it; the only medicine is flight.[72]

'We do not know, of course,' Gibson concludes, 'if Bosch's lushly decorative strawberries were inspired specifically by Virgil's image of snake and strawberry, or if he drew on the unsavory symbolism of this fruit in general. Nevertheless, the dominating presence of strawberries in his central panel should alert us, as it must have contemporary viewers, that this garden, however fair seeming, is no earthly or celestial paradise but a deceitful garden, an illusion whose alluring forms conceal death and damnation.'[73]

'Since, then, every wickedness is the outcome of love, and no good is known to result from it but instead boundless pains for mankind, why foolish boy,' Capellanus exclaims, 'do you seek to love and to deprive yourself of the grace of God and your everlasting heritage?' 'How wretched, mad, and assuredly infra-bestial is the man who for momentary pleasure of the flesh surrenders the joys of eternity, and seeks to enslave himself to the flames of everlasting Hell!'[74]
The right hand panel shows the bitter outcome of the hunt for love, it shows what lies in wait for those who could not but think of temporary earthly pleasures which are doomed to decay and wither away, and lead to eternal death (fig.11). The world on fire in top of the panel evokes the Last Judgement. Underneath, devils torture souls in Hell. In the middle of Hell's icy-cold, half-frozen water - Hell was believed both very hot and very cold - stands the so-called Tree-Man. This enigmatic figure consists of the head of an elderly man with a broken egg for body and two withered, dead tree trunks - evocating the unfruitful tree that shall be cast into the fire - in unstable boats for

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[72] Quoted after Walter S. Gibson, 'The Strawberries of Hieronymus Bosch,' *Cleveland Studies in the History of Art*, Vol. 8 (2003), pp. 24-33, esp. p. 30.
[73] Gibson, op. cit. (note 72), p. 30. Vandenbroeck, op. cit. (note 6), p. 161.
[74] Walsh, op. cit. (note 1), p. 287.

Fig. 11. *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, left panel.

legs.[75] The spiky, dead branches of the tree-legs pierce the broken egg-body, which shows inside a tavern, not to say a brothel as the sign with the bagpipe suggests. A bagpipe forms also part of the 'hat' on the head of the elderly man, his grey hair coloured by the glow of hell-fire, who turns his head and glances at his hollow egg-body. The 'hat' consists in a round disk with in its centre a smoking bag-pipe, symbol of gluttony and lechery, devilish instrument of temptation. Devils in the guise of a prostitute, a procuress and a brothel-keeper force souls to walk around it. The scene calls to mind Augustine's exegesis of the psalm verse ' "The ungodly walk in a circle round about" (Ps 11:8), that is, in the desire of things temporal, which revolves as a wheel in a repeated circle of seven days; and therefore they do not arrive at the eighth, that is, at eternity, for which this Psalm is entitled.'[76] The Tree-Man alludes to both decay and old age. Lust has passed away, and his looking back at the brothel in his broken egg-body evokes Old Age who is looking back on a dissolute life in Reason's sermon,

And late it comes into her mind,

[75] Mt. 3:10.

[76] Translated by an anonymous scholar. (From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 8. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. http://wwwcrank.newadvent.org/fathers/1801012.htm ; Vandenbroeck, op. cit. (note 10), pp. 33-34. See also De Bruyn, op. cit. (note 42), p. 28.

As she recalls the years behind,
Seeing herself worn, white-haired,
That Youth deceived her, ever snared
Her, and did fill her life always
With vanity, in former days;

Chasing the pleasures of love makes man lose his reason, not to say that 'love and sexual intercourse weaken man's bodies and enfeeble them for war.'[77] It brings him to commit crimes for which he will be punished in Hell. In his picture, Bosch does not so much represent the punishments for the traditional capital sins, he makes above all clear what the pleasures of love really are and to what crimes they might lead. The walls of Amor's love-garden are those of the tavern, where the young people use to amuse themselves with all possible manner of debauchery. In the lower left corner, devils violently interrupt the drinking, gambling, and whoring in a tavern, alluded to by the cards, jugs, dice, a backgammon board, an overturned table, and a girl with jug, candle, and a huge dice on her head. The cut off hand with dice hints to the crimes of perjury and false witness lovers do not shrink from to reach their goal, for the punishment for swearing a false oath was the cutting off the hand.[78] Decapitation was the punishment for murder, which develops from love quite frequently, according to Capellanus, quite apart that brawls caused by drunkenness and gambling in taverns could easily finish in violence and murder.[79] The devil piercing a heart at his sword leaves no doubt that love is the cause of the frightening violence, expressed by the youth covering his face while looking at the spectator. Behind the bed curtains on the utmost right, behind the souls devouring falcon-devil sitting in a cuckstool over a cesspool, a whole army of prostitutes is ready to entertain the drunken guests. In the centre of the panel, the effect of prodigality to which the lover is prone, since spending is an easy but dangerous way to conquer a woman's heart, according to Friend in the *Romance of the Rose*, as Richness makes clear,

I let my friends travel there freely,
To dance and to sing most sweetly,
There they live a while, pleasantly,
Yet them the wise do never envy,
Though every pleasure is on hand,

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[77] Walsh, op. cit. (note 1), p.305.
[78] Walsh, op. cit. (note 1), p. 295. See for hand Herman Steensma, *Straffen door de eeuwen heen. De beul, het tuchthuis en de gevangenis*, The Hague: Omniboek, 1982, p. 34.
[79] Waadenoijen, op. cit. (note 56), pp. 217-18.

The farandole, and sarabande,
And tabors, and viols, and flutes,
To company their fresh pursuits,
And games of dice, backgammon,
chess
And other such pastimes, to excess,
With every pleasant luxury;
All filled with amorous gaiety.
There go men and maids in hordes,
All paired together by old bawds,
Through every meadow, garden, grove,
Gayer than parrots, they do rove,
And then return, by gentle paths,
To steam together in hot baths,
Flowery crowns upon their brows,
All ready for them thus to souse,
In the house of Foolish-Largesse.
She impoverishes them, distress
She brings, and dire wounds hard to cure,
She knows how to charge, what's more,
Squeezing them for their fair lodging,
Taking from them cruel reckoning,
They're forced to sell their land,
To place full payment in her hand.
I lead them there, no joy they lack,
Yet Poverty doth bring them back,
Cold and trembling and quite bare;
Hers the exit, mine the road there.[80]

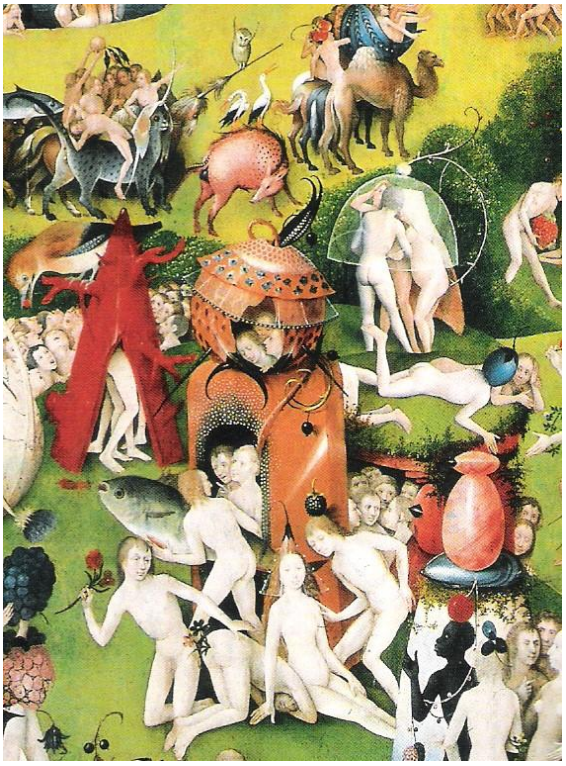

Fig. 12. *Bathhouse*, detail central panel.

The spending took place in taverns and bathhouses, the latter pictured among the pleasures in the central panel: not far from the group of wild people, an orange coloured structure suggesting a bath-house is visible, and not far from there a couple significantly together with a procuress under a glass

[80] Kline, op. cit. (note 4), II, p. 246; lines 10085-10115 in Poirion, op. cit. (note 4)

dome (fig. 12). The outcome of the lavishly spending is poverty, which leads to beggary symbolized by the as beggars characterized souls on top of the hurdy-gurdy, by the time Bosch painted his triptych the instrument of blind beggars (fig. 13).[81] One of them balances an egg on his curved back while manoeuvring his crutch in the backside of his companion, who, provided with a beggar's bowl, operates the hurdy-gurdy making it clear that lustful love is the cause of their condition. 'Cold and trembling and quite bare' are the skaters nearby. To the right of the Tree-Man, devils attack and punish helmed soldiers and an armoured knight with a chalice in and around a lantern without light (of faith, wisdom) for the crimes of unjust war and plunder.[82] The musical instruments right over the tavern scene in the corner are also associated with transient worldly pleasures. Jean de Meun lists a whole series of instruments Pygmalion employs in the conquest of his beloved,

In lieu of the Mass, fair chansonettes,
Concerning love's delicious secrets,
And made his instruments sound out,
So none might hear God's thunder shout.
For he'd a host, of diverse fashion,
And hands more skilled, in addition,
Than Amphion of Thebes possessed,
Harps, gigues and rebecs, and the rest,
Guitars and lutes, in full measure,
All such chosen to bring pleasure;
Then in the cymbals he'd rejoice,
Or seize a fretel and flute away,
On a chalumeau pipe, or play
On some drum or tambourine,
Full loud as any could, I wean;
Bagpipes, trumpet, and citole,
And the psaltery, and viol,[83]

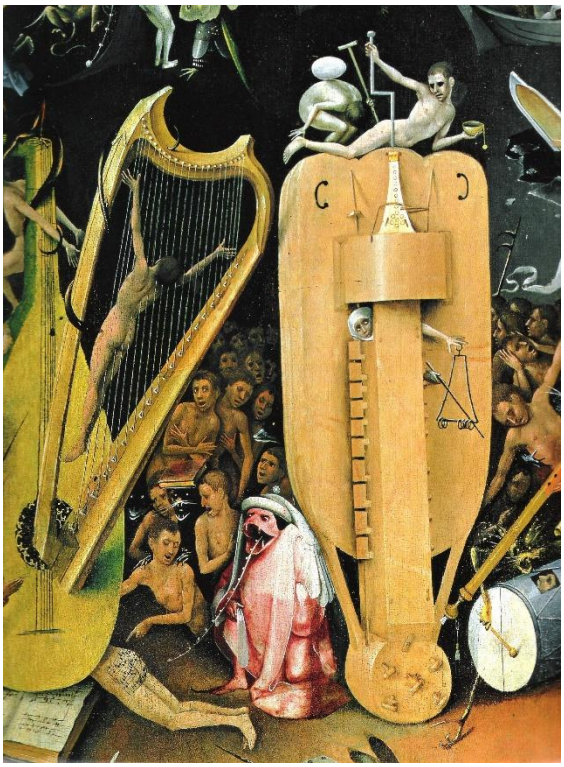

Fig. 13. *Musical instruments*, detail right panel.

The score visible under lute and harp begins with a dissonant triad, so undesirable that it was called *diabolus in musica*: the here assembled souls are condemned to sing devilish music in the choir of

[81] Bax, op. cit. (note 10), p.100.
[82] See Walsh, op. cit. (note 1), p. 301.
[83] Kline, op. cit. (note 4), II, pp. 665-66; lines 21021-21050 in Poirion, op. cit. (note 4)

the devil.[84] The 'nun', whose veil characterizes her as an abbess, will refer to whoredom, for a prostitute who had become a bawd, of whom it was said that they were dirtier than pigs, was called an abbess (fig. 14).[85] That the man seems to refuse to sign the parchment in the pig's lap with the pen held out to him might refer both to a Dutch expression 'schrijven in mijn francijn' (write in my parchment) in which 'francijn' indicates the female sex organ, and to homosexuality. For in the sermon in which Genius condemns homosexuality as sin against Natura, Jean de Meun has him say,

Those who write not with the pen
By which the species doth live again,
In those precious books, that Nature
Prepared not for the idle creature
To despise, but granted to all,
That which might be used by all,
Such that each might be a writer
And Man and Woman live forever.[86]

A little further on in Genius's sermon we can read:

Those who spurn such a mistress [Nature],
Read her book [letres in the original French text] backwards no less,
And from the wrong page, whence,
They fail to grasp its proper sense; [87]

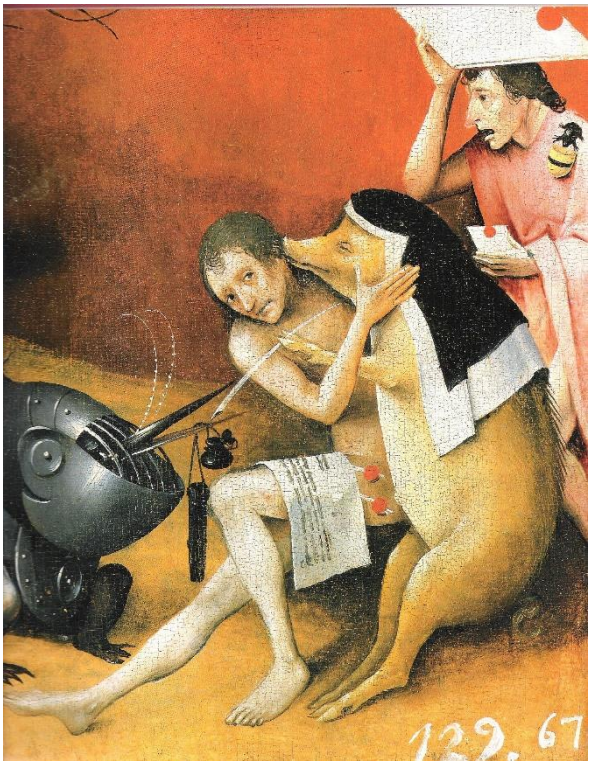

Fig. 14. *The 'Nun'*, detail right panel.

A passage that might have inspired the by the badge as a messenger characterized soul with the sealed letters behind the pig.
The subject of the central panel is not so much lust but love to which the soul, particularly in his youth, is prone. Since in the minds of medieval man sex and sin were closely connected, as the illustration in the *Bible moralisée* shows, it will come to no surprise to find that the prickly objects

[84] Waadenoijen, op. cit. (note 57), p. 220, note 498.
[85] Ibid., p. 218.
[86] Kline, op. cit. (note 4), II, p. 613; lines 19629-19636 in Poirion, op. cit. (note 4)
[87] Kline, op. cit. (note 4), II, p. 614; lines 19657-19670 in Poirion, op. cit. (note 4)

and the spiky thorns already encountered in the outer shutters can allude to sin as well to sex.[88] Those familiar with Reason's defence of her use of the word 'co(u)illes' (testicles) will have had no trouble in discovering the spiky thorns throughout the triptych allusions to the male sexual organ,

Every woman sets out to name
Them by I know not what name,
Purse, tackle, thing, part, prickle,
As if they were thorny and tickle.'[89]

If 'earthly' is understood as worldly, idle, the modern title of the triptych, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, is to the point, apart from the fact that it does not show a garden, for gardens were enclosed, as the dream-garden of Love in the *Romance of the Rose*. With its central fountain and four streams, it far more evokes the terrestrial Paradise, yet the outsize birds and fruits, the strange, unstable structures that seem to explode, the human figures flying in the air, mythological beings such as unicorns, griffins, sirens and sea knights, all charged with erotic connotations, makes it clear that this landscape does not represent Paradise. The souls imagine themselves in Paradise, but theirs is a false paradise that conceals death beneath the pleasures.
The *Romance of the Rose*, in particular the second part by Jean de Meun, had long after it was finished (ca 1285) given rise to the Quarrel of the Rose (1401-1403), a debate between those who considered the poem immoral and offensive to women and those who defended it. Evidently, the poem continued to raise discussions, since both Molinet and Bosch felt the need to point out the danger of love, as Reason had done in the *Romance*. Molinet states that it is his intention to convert vicious love into virtuous love, the hunt for the rose becomes an example of Lover's quest for the love of God and the rose an image of the crucified Christ. Since the subject of the central panel of the triptych is love, a topic addressed in the popular *Romance of the Rose*, it is plausible that Bosch, like Molinet, received the commission to treat this subject, possibly in connection with the discussions

[88] Vandenbroeck, op. cit. (note 10), pp. 53-54. Bax' interpretation of many forms as erotic symbols inspired by popular Dutch songs, sayings and slang expressions of Bosch's time, however, is to be taken with some circumspection, not in the least since it is a question how much Dutch the intended public mastered. See Gilbert Degroote, 'Taaltoestanden in de Bourgondische Nederlanden,' De Nieuwe Taalgids, 49 (1956), pp. 303-309. Apart from that, it can be observed that the symbolism inspired by sayings and popular expressions in the different languages often have a common, Latin, source. Bax' intuition that many forms hint to sex remains valid. See Vandenbroeck, op. cit. (note 10), pp. 34-35 for the idea that the Fall was above all connected with sexuality.
[89] Kline, op. cit. (note 4), II, p. 128; lines 7142-44 in Poirion, op. cit. (note 4), 'Chascune qui les va nommant /Les apelle ne sai comment, /Borces, hernois, riens, piches, pines,/Aussi cum ce fussent espines;'.

raised by the poem. Bosch opens his discourse with a reference to Augustine's well-known allegorical exegesis of the Third day of Creation as a clue to the deciphering of the representations in the interior of the triptych that pivot on love and reason. He continues the allegory with the creation of man in God's likeness, that is, endowed with reason and a free will he should use if he does not want to end up in hell. Is in Molinet the Lover a metaphor for the soul longing to conquer the rose/Christ, Bosch relates Reason's sermon, in which she depicts love as an uncontrolled passion that makes man lose his reason, to Augustine's allegory. The beholder of the triptych, if he does not want to lose forever the hope of eternal life offered by Christ and his Church, should remember that God created him in his own image, that is, with a soul with a free will and reasoning power in order to resist temptation and restrain his natural impulses.

The Tree-Man looking back at his sinful past leads the eye of the viewer diagonally along the groups of merry youngsters towards the group with the gesturing young man in the lower left corner of the middle panel, and from there towards the Fountain of Life in the left panel. If my interpretation of the fountain as referring to the love of God is right, then Bosch, like Molinet (and Augustine), opposes worldly love to Divine love. When the triptych is closed, the psalm verses remind the spectator that he should praise the Lord and trust in the merciful Creator of all.

'Behold the eyes of the Lord are on them that fear him: and on them that hope in his mercy
To deliver their souls from death; ….' (Ps. 32:18-19)

There is a tendency to interpret the representations in Bosch's triptychs as progressive in time, a time that starts with the Creation and ends with Hell, testifying to Bosch pessimistic world-view.[90] Yet the fact that the triptychs are read from left to right does not imply that Bosch had in mind to depict the history of humankind with Hell as final destination. For a Christian, his final destination is the heavenly Jerusalem. The end of the world is the beginning of a new, eternal life in God's Kingdom in heaven for the elected, or in Hell for the unrepentant sinners. Effectively, in the triptych of the *Garden of Earthly Delights*, Bosch directs the eye of the spectator by the backward looking Tree-Man back to the left panel with the Fountain of Life and the blessing Christ to remind him that Christ had 'not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.'(Luke 5:32) There is still hope. Moreover, a reading of the triptych as progressive in time posed the problem that the central panel 'does not fit into this time sequence'.[91] That the landscape of the *Garden of Eden* is continued in the

[90] Jacobs, op. cit. (note 11), p. 68 'history of sin'; Silver, op. cit. (note 86), p. 75, 'with Hell as last final destination.' Falkenburg, op. cit. (note 11), p. 103, p. 275 'from Creation to Perdition'; Büttner, op. cit. (note 38), p. 292; Carroll, op. cit. (note 36), p. 3, views 'the triptych as a field for speculation about the origin of the cosmos, the life history of the earth, and the transformation of humankind from the first age of world history to the last.'

[91] Belting, op. cit. (note 12), p. 21.

middle panel suggests that the events in left and middle panel are taking place in the same world, but which world? The Garden of Eden? In that case, who then are the people who populate this Garden? According to the biblical story, Adam and Eve had no offspring in the terrestrial Paradise.[92] Why than did Bosch depict both Adam and Eve and their merrymaking offspring in the same landscape?

If we accept the hypothesis that Bosch based his triptych on the allegorical reading of the first chapter of Genesis as proposed by Augustine in his *Confessiones*, this explains why Bosch did not paint a traditional creation of the first human pair, why he left out the Fall but did suggest the presence of evil. For redemption, alluded to by the Creator in the shape of Christ, by the Fountain of Life and the palm tree with serpent over a dark cave where devilish reptiles are hiding - a reference to Christ overcoming the devil, death on the cross -, had become necessary precisely because of the Fall.[93] By deviating from tradition, Bosch invites the spectator to consider the allegorical significance of the creation of Adam and Eve as humankind endowed with a free will and reasoning power created and redeemed by Christ, whereas the middle panel shows how God's gifts are used. The triptych is not an account of the evolvement of the history of humankind in time but is about the relation of the humans with God. It does not present a lesson in history, it is a mirror held up to the viewer 'in order that foolish men may observe as in a mirror the foolishness of others and may then correct their own folly, and that they may learn to censure themselves those things which they find reprehensible in others.'[94]

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[92] An ingenuous solution was presented by Wirth, who proposed to see in the middle panel Paradise as it could have been had the Fall not taken place. Yet if the Fall had not taken place people would have reproduced themselves without lust, according to Augustine.

[93] Waadenoijen, op. cit. (note 57), p. 213, note 479; Fischer, op. cit. (note 9), p. 105.

[94] Nigel of Canterbury, *Speculum stultorum* (ca 1180), cited from Waadenoijen, op. cit. (note 52), p. 241.