

HEIRONYMUS BOSCH



Hieronymus Bosch (1450–1516) is one of the most notable representatives of the Early Netherlandish painting. His work, generally oil on oak wood, mainly contains fantastic illustrations of religious concepts and narratives. Within his lifetime his work was collected in the Netherlands, Austria, and Spain, and widely copied, especially his macabre and nightmarish depictions of Hell.

Little is known of Bosch's life, though there are some records. He spent most of it in the town of 's-Hertogenbosch, where he was born in his grandfather's house. His pessimistic and fantastical style cast a wide influence on northern art of the 16th century, with Pieter Bruegel the Elder being his best-known follower. Today he is seen as a hugely individualistic painter with deep insight into humanity's desires and deepest fears. Attribution has been especially difficult;

today only about 25 paintings are confidently given to his hand along with eight drawings. About another half dozen paintings are confidently attributed to his workshop. His most acclaimed works consist of a few triptych altarpieces, including the *Garden of Earthly Delights*.

Little is known of Bosch's life or training. He left behind no letters or diaries, and what has been identified has been taken from brief references to him in the municipal records of 's-Hertogenbosch, and in the account books of the local order of the Illustrious Brotherhood of Our Blessed Lady. Nothing is known of his personality or his thoughts on the meaning of his art. Bosch's date of birth has not been determined with certainty. It is estimated at 1450 on the basis of a hand drawn portrait (which may be a self-portrait) made shortly before his death in 1516. The drawing shows the artist at an advanced age, probably in his late sixties.

Christ Crowned with Thorns, sometimes known as ***Christ Mocked*** (c.1510), in the National Gallery, London, combines two events from Biblical account of Christ's Passion: the *Mocking of Jesus* and the *Crowning With Thorns*. A serene Jesus, dressed in white at the centre of the busy scene, is gazing calmly from the picture, in contrast with the violent intent of the four men around him. Two armoured soldiers stand above and behind him, with two other spectators kneeling below and in front.



The soldier to the right, with oak leaves in his hat and a spiked collar, is grasping Christ's shoulder, while the other soldier to the left, dressed in green with a broad-headed hunting crossbow bolt through his headdress, holds the crown of thorns, its position creating a halo above the head, in a mailed hand, about to thrust it onto Christ's head. In front, the jeering man on the left has a blue robe and red head covering and carries a heavy stave, while the man to the right is about to strip off Christ's cloak. Examination of the picture has shown that in the preliminary sketch, the scene was more brutal, and the cruelty has been toned down in the final version, making the men's expressions more enigmatic. The four tormentors of Christ may show different aspects of the four humours, with phlegmatic and melancholic soldiers, and sanguine and choleric spectators. The figures are crowded together in a small space in a single plane, in a manner reminiscent of Flemish devotional art of the type popularized by Hans Memling and Hugo van der Goes.

The painting, which is deceptively simple and has hidden symbolism, is both a departure from Bosch's usual style and from the way the Passion was customarily depicted at the time, with blood and violence. The oak leaves in the hat of the soldier at top right would have been understood at the time to refer to Pope Julius II, and the other refers to the alliance between the pope and the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian and Louis XII of France in furtherance of the pope's militaristic ambitions. The lower figures representing the bourgeoisie and the peasantry (to the right a Jew, identified as by his physiognomy, and the other as a Turk by the crescent moon and star on his headdress) refer to the fact that the pope was prepared to borrow money from Jews and even had dealings with the infidel Turks.



The **Adoration of the Magi** or **The Epiphany** is a triptych (c. 1485–1500) housed in the Museo del Prado, Madrid. The central panel shows the *Adoration of the Magi*, depicted in accordance with traditional Early Netherlandish iconography, but in a more rustic setting than that of van der Goes, Gossaert and others, who, following an Italian model, set the scene in the ruins of a stone building. A monumental Mary sits outside a precarious hut, with the Child held at her womb. Melchior, the eldest Magi, is kneeling with his gift before him: a sculpture of gold with the Sacrifice of Isaac, a forecast of Jesus' Passion. Below the object are several toads, symbols of heresy. Melchior's crown lies on the ground, an allusion to the powerlessness of earthly power against the celestial. Balthazar dressed in white, brings a spherical pix

containing myrrh, also used to carry the bread of the Eucharist, upon which a tiny pink dragon has alighted.

An unusual element is represented by the partially naked man and other grotesque figures at the hut's entrance. He wears a red mantle, and a crown and carries a tiara with metallic twigs in the hand, perhaps a reference to the triple crown of the pope, and has a wheel protected by a glass sleeve at the ankle of his right leg, which he thrusts forward. This has been variously interpreted as either another prefiguration of the Passion, or as a symbol of the heresy looming the followers, or as the Judaic messiah which, after having been struck by leper, has become the Antichrist. Other figures include the shepherds crawling over the hut, a traditional element in Italian contemporary Adorations of the Magi; the armies running in the far background and the quasi-anthropomorphic constructions.

The left panel depict St. Peter and one donor. In the background, a man sits on a basket under a makeshift roofing: he is possibly St. Joseph warming Jesus' nappies.

In the right panel is St. Agnes and the donor, Agnes Boss-huyse, accompanied by her coat of arms. In the back-ground, a bear and a wolf attack some people.



Bosch's most famous triptych is **The Garden of Earthly Delights** (c. 1495–1505). The outer panels, the *Garden of Eden* on the left panel and the *Last Judgment* depicted on the right, bracket 'The Garden' one of the strangest and enigmatic works in the history of Western art. It is in the Museo del Prado, Madrid

In the left hand panel God, with an innovatively youthful appearance presents Eve to Adam. The figures are set in a landscape

populated by exotic animals and unusual semi-organic hut-shaped forms. The central panel is a broad panorama teeming with nude figures engaged in innocent, self-absorbed joy, as well as fantastical compound animals, oversized fruit, and hybrid stone formations. The right panel presents a hell-scape; a world in which humankind has succumbed to the temptations of evil and is reaping eternal damnation.

As so little is known of Bosch's life or intentions, interpretations of his intent have ranged from an admonition of worldly fleshy indulgence, to a dire warning on the perils of life's temptations, to an evocation of ultimate sexual joy. The intricacy of its symbolism, particularly that of the central panel, has led to a wide range of scholarly interpretations over the centuries. Twentieth-century art historians are divided as to whether the triptych's central panel is a moral warning or a panorama of paradise lost.



The left panel (sometimes known as the *Joining of Adam and Eve*) depicts a scene from the paradise of the Garden of Eden commonly interpreted as the moment when God presents Eve to Adam. The painting shows Adam waking from a deep sleep to find a youthful God, blue-eyed and with golden curls, raising his right hand in blessing to their union, while he holds Eve's wrist with his left.

Eve avoids Adam's gaze, although it has been suggested that she is shown "seductively presenting her body to Adam". Adam's expression is one of amazement, and the art historian Ernst Fraenger (*The Millennium of Hieronymus Bosch*, 1951) has identified three elements to his seeming astonishment. Firstly, there is surprise at the presence of the God. Secondly, he is reacting to an awareness that Eve is of the same nature as himself, and has been created from his own body. Finally, from the intensity of Adam's gaze, it can be concluded that he is experiencing sexual arousal and the primal urge to reproduce for the first time.

The surrounding landscape is populated by hut-shaped forms, some of which are made from stone, while others are at least partially organic. Behind Eve rabbits, symbolising fecundity, play in the grass, and a dragon tree opposite is thought to represent eternal life. The background reveals several animals that would have been exotic to contemporaneous Europeans, including a giraffe, an elephant, and a lion that has killed and is about to devour his prey.



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In the foreground, from a large hole in the ground, emerge birds and winged animals, some of which are realistic, some fantastic. Behind a fish, a person clothed in a short-sleeved hooded jacket and with a duck's beak holds an open book as if reading. To the left of the area a cat holds a small lizard-like creature in

its jaws. While the creatures in the foreground are fantastical imaginings, many of the animals in the mid and background are drawn from contemporary travel literature, and here Bosch is appealing to "the knowledge of a humanistic and aristocratic readership". Recent research indicates the mid-15th-century humanist scholar Cyriac of Ancona's travelogues, published 1440, served as Bosch's exposure to these exotic animals, such as the elephant and the giraffe.

According to art historian Virginia Tuttle, the scene is "highly unconventional [and] cannot be identified as any



of the events from the book of Genesis traditionally depicted in Western art". Some of the images contradict the innocence expected in the Garden of Eden. Tuttle and other critics have interpreted the gaze of Adam upon his wife as lustful, and indicative of the Christian belief that humanity was doomed from the beginning. Another has suggested that Adam's facial expression betrays not just surprise but also expectation. According to a belief common in the Middle Ages, before the Fall Adam and Eve would have copulated without lust, solely to reproduce. Many believed that the first sin committed after Eve tasted the forbidden fruit was carnal lust. On the right in the top section a snake curls around a tree trunk, while to its right a mouse creeps under a rock; according to Fraenger, both animals are universal phallic symbols.



The centre panel (220 × 195cm), depicting the expansive "garden" landscape, shares a common horizon with the left wing, while the positioning of its central pool and the lake behind it echoes the lake in the earlier scene, suggesting a spatial connection between the two scenes. The garden is teeming with male and female nudes, together with a variety of animals, plants and fruit. The exotic setting is neither a paradise, as shown in the left panel, nor is it based in the terrestrial realm, but a fabrication stemming entirely from the artist's imagination. Fantastic creatures mingle with the real; otherwise ordinary fruits appear engorged to a gigantic size. The figures are indulging in diverse amorous sports and activities, both in couples and in groups, behaving "overtly and without shame", and exhibiting "a certain adolescent sexual curiosity".

Many of the numerous human figures revel in an innocent, self-absorbed sensory joy; playing unselfconsciously in the water, or cavorting in meadows with a variety of animals, seemingly at one with nature.

In the middle of the background, a large blue globe resembling a fruit pod rises in the middle of a lake. Visible through its circular window is a man holding his right hand close to his partner's genitals, and the bare buttocks of yet another figure hover in the vicinity. According to Fraenger, the eroticism of the centre panel could be considered either as an allegory of spiritual transition or a playground of corruption.



On the right-hand side of the foreground stand a group of four figures, three fair and one black-skinned. The fair-skinned figures, two males and one female, are covered from head to foot in light-brown body hair. Scholars generally agree that these hirsute figures represent wild or primeval humanity, but disagree on the symbolism of their inclusion. Art historian Patrik Reuterswärd, for example, posits that they may be seen as "the noble savage" who represents "an imagined alternative to our civilized life", imbuing the panel with "a more clear-cut primitivistic note". Writer Peter Glum, in contrast, sees the figures as intrinsically connected with whoredom and lust.

In a cave to their lower right, a male figure points towards a reclining female who is also covered in hair. The pointing man is the only clothed figure in the panel, and as Fraenger observes, "he is clothed with emphatic austerity right up to his throat". In addition, he is one of the few human figures with dark hair.

The pointing man has variously been described as either the patron of the work (Fraenger in 1947), as an advocate of Adam denouncing Eve (Dirk Bax in 1956), as Saint John the Baptist in his camel's skin (Isabel Mateo Gómez in 1963), or as a self-portrait. The woman below him lies within a semicylindrical transparent shield, while her mouth is sealed, devices implying that she bears a secret. To their left, a man crowned by leaves lies on top of what appears to be a gigantic strawberry, and is joined by a male and female who contemplate another equally huge strawberry.



There is no perspectival order in the foreground; instead it comprises a series of small motifs wherein proportion and terrestrial logic are abandoned. Bosch presents the viewer with gigantic ducks playing with tiny humans under the cover of oversized fruit; fish walking on land while birds dwell in the water; a passionate couple encased in an amniotic fluid bubble; and a man inside a red fruit staring at a mouse in a transparent cylinder.



The pools in the fore and background contain bathers of both sexes. In the central circular pool, the sexes are mostly segregated, with several females adorned by peacocks and fruit. Four women carry cherry-like fruits on their heads, perhaps a symbol of pride at the time, as has been deduced from the contemporaneous saying: "Don't eat cherries with great lords—they'll throw the pits in your face." The women are surrounded by a parade of naked men riding horses, donkeys, unicorns, camels and other exotic or fantastic creatures. Several men engage in acrobatics while riding, apparently acts designed to gain the females' attention, which highlights the attraction felt between the two sexes as groups. Around them, birds infest the water while winged fish crawl on land. Humans inhabit giant shells. All are surrounded by oversized fruit pods and eggshells, and both humans and animals feast on strawberries and cherries.



The impression of a life lived without consequence, or what art historian Hans Belting describes as "unspoilt and pre-moral existence", is underscored by the absence of children and old people. According to the second and third chapters of Genesis, Adam and Eve's children were born after they were expelled from Eden. This has led some commentators, in particular Belting, to theorise that the panel represents the world if the two had not been driven out "among the thorns and thistles of the world". In Fraenger's view, the scene illustrates "a utopia, a garden of divine delight before the Fall, or — since Bosch could not deny the existence of the dogma of original sin — a millennial condition that would arise if, after expiation of Original Sin, humanity were permitted to return to Paradise and to a state of tranquil harmony embracing all Creation."



In the high distance of the background, above the hybrid stone formations, four groups of people and creatures are seen in flight. On the immediate left a human male rides on a solar eagle-lion. The human carries a triple-branched tree of life on which perches a bird; according to Fraenger "a symbolic bird of death". Fraenger believes the man is intended to represent a genius, "he is the symbol of the extinction of the duality of the sexes, which are resolved in the ether into their original state of unity". To their right a knight with a dolphin tail sails on a winged fish. The knight's tail curls back to touch the back of his head, which references the common symbol of eternity: the snake biting its own tail. On the immediate right of the panel, a winged youth soars upwards carrying a fish in his hands and a falcon on his back. According to Belting, in these passages Bosch's "imagination triumphs ... the ambivalence of [his] visual syntax exceeds even the enigma of content, opening up that new dimension of freedom by which painting becomes art." Fraenger, in his book on the painting, titled his chapter on the high background "The Ascent to Heaven", and wrote that the airborne figures were likely intended as a link between "what is above" and "what is below", just as the left and right hand panels represent "what was" and "what will be".

The right panel illustrates Hell, the setting of a number of Bosch paintings. Bosch depicts a world in which humans have succumbed to temptations that lead to evil and reap eternal damnation. The tone of this final panel strikes a harsh contrast to those preceding it. The scene is set at night, and the natural beauty that adorned the earlier panels is noticeably absent. Compared to the warmth of the centre panel, the right wing possesses a chilling quality—rendered through cold colourisation and frozen waterways—and presents a spectacle of cruel torture and retribution. In a single, densely detailed scene, we witness cities on fire in the background; war, torture chambers, infernal taverns, and demons in the mid-ground; and mutated animals feeding on human flesh in the foreground. The human figures have lost all their eroticism, and many now attempt to cover their genitalia and breasts with their hands, ashamed by their nakedness.



Explosions in the background casts a lurid light through the city gates and spills into the water in the mid-ground; "their fiery reflections turning the water below into blood". The light illuminates a road filled with fleeing figures, while hordes of tormentors prepare to burn a neighbouring village. A short distance away, a rabbit carries an impaled and bleeding corpse, while a group of victims above

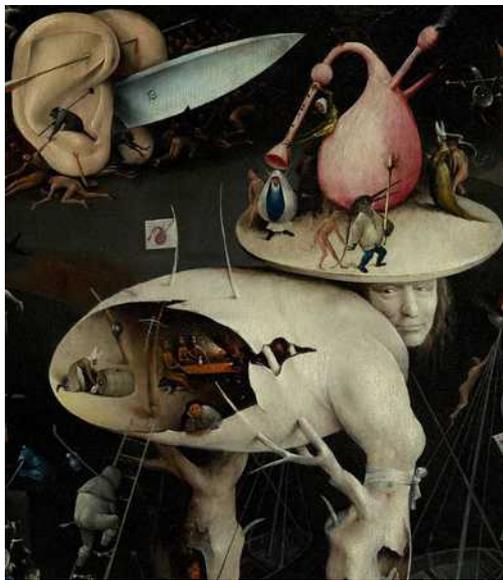
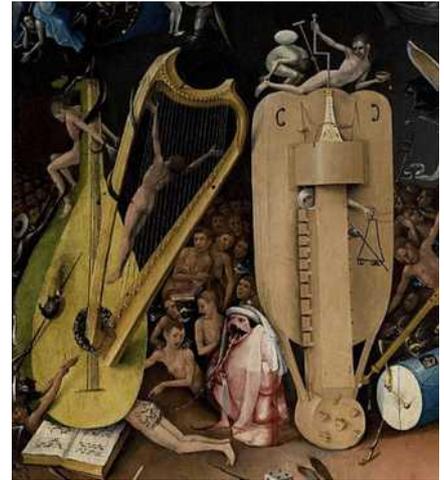


are thrown into a burning lantern. The foreground is populated by a variety of distressed or tortured figures. Some are shown vomiting or excreting, others are crucified by harp and lute, in an allegory of

music, thus sharpening the contrast between pleasure and torture. A choir sings from a score inscribed on a pair of buttocks, part of a group that has been described as the "Musicians' Hell".

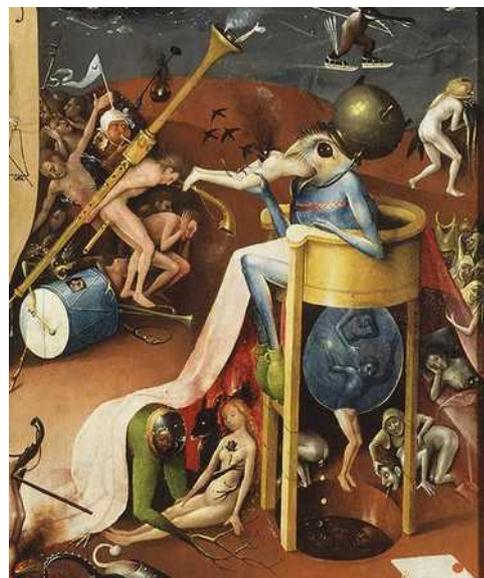
Many elements in the panel incorporate earlier iconographical conventions depicting hell. However, Bosch is innovative in that he describes hell not as a fantastical place, but as a realistic world containing many elements from day-to-day human life.

In the lower right-hand corner, a man is approached by a pig wearing the veil of a nun. The pig is shown trying to seduce the man to sign legal documents. Lust is further said to be symbolised by the gigantic musical instruments and by the choral singers in the left foreground of the panel. Musical instruments often carried erotic connotations in works of art of the period, and lust was referred to in moralising sources as the "music of the flesh". There has also been the view that Bosch's use of music here might be a rebuke against traveling minstrels, often thought of as purveyors of bawdy song and verse.



The focal point of the scene is the "Tree-Man", whose cavernous torso is supported by what could be contorted arms or rotting tree trunks. His head supports a disk populated by demons and victims parading around a huge set of bagpipes—often used as a dual sexual symbol—reminiscent of male genitals. The tree-man's torso is formed from a broken eggshell, and the supporting trunk has thorn-like branches which pierce the fragile body. A grey figure in a hood bearing an arrow jammed between his buttocks climbs a ladder into the tree-man's central cavity, where nude men sit in a tavern-like setting. The tree-man gazes outwards beyond the viewer, his conspiratorial expression a mix of wistfulness and resignation. It has been speculated that the tree-man's face is a self-portrait, citing the figure's "expression of irony and the slightly sideways gaze [which would] then constitute the signature of an artist who claimed a bizarre pictorial world for his own personal imagination".

A drawing of c. 1470s, known as the *Man Tree* depicts this extraordinary invention. This version contains no suggestion of Hell, yet its outline was adapted into one of *The Garden*'s most memorable grotesques.

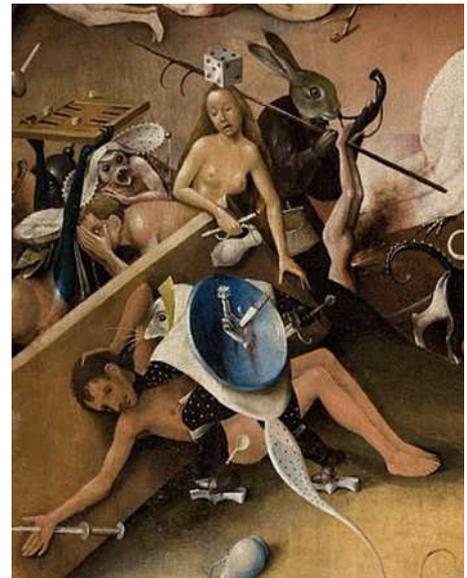


Animals are shown punishing humans, subjecting them to nightmarish torments that may symbolise the seven deadly sins, matching the torment to the sin. Sitting on an object that may be a toilet or a throne, the panel's centre-piece is a gigantic bird-headed monster feasting on human corpses, which he excretes through a cavity below him, into the transparent chamber pot on which he sits. The monster is sometimes referred to as the "Prince of Hell", a name derived from the cauldron he wears on his head, perhaps representing a debased crown. At his feet, a female has her face reflected on the buttocks of a demon.

Further to the left, next to a hare-headed demon, a group of naked persons around a toppled gambling table are being massacred with swords and knives. Other brutal violence is shown by a knight torn down and eaten up by a pack of wolves to the right of the tree-man.

During the Middle Ages, sexuality and lust were seen, by some, as evidence of humanity's fall from grace. In the eyes of some viewers, this sin is depicted in the left-hand panel through Adam's, allegedly lustful, gaze towards Eve, and it has been proposed that the centre panel was created as a warning to the viewer to avoid a life of sinful pleasure. According to this view, the penalty for such sins is shown in the right panel of the triptych.

In the 20th century, when changing artistic tastes made artists like Bosch more palatable to the European imagination, it was sometimes argued that Bosch's art was inspired by heretical points of view (e.g., the ideas of the Cathars and/or putative Adamites or Brethren of the Free Spirit as well as by obscure hermetic practices.



In recent decades, scholars have come to view Bosch's vision as less fantastic, and accepted that his art reflects the orthodox religious belief systems of his age. His depictions of sinful humanity and his conceptions of Heaven and Hell are now seen as consistent with those of late medieval didactic literature and sermons. Most writers attach a more profound significance to his paintings than had previously been supposed, and attempt to interpret them in terms of a late medieval morality. It is generally accepted that Bosch's art was created to teach specific moral and spiritual truths, and that the images rendered have precise and premeditated significance.



The ***Triptych of the Temptation of St. Anthony*** (c. 1501) tells the story of the mental and spiritual torments throughout his life, endured by Saint Anthony the Great (Anthony Abbot), one of the most prominent of the Desert Fathers of Egypt in the late 3rd and early 4th centuries. It was a popular subject in Medieval and Renaissance art. In common with many of Bosch's works, the triptych contains much fantastic imagery.



The left panel portrays the legendary flight and the fall of St. Anthony. In the sky, the saint is brought down by a host of demons. Below, is the saint's grotto (or a brothel), carved within a hill in the shape of a man on all fours, who looks up with glee at the fate of the saint above. His backside forms the entrance to the grotto, towards which an impious procession proceeds, led by a demon wearing holy vestments and accompanied by a deer. In the foreground is a tired-out Anthony, supported after the fall by a monk and a layman; the latter has been traditionally identified as Bosch himself.

Under the bridge which crosses an icy lake are three figures, one of which is a monk reading a letter. Also on the lake is a demon bird with skates: its beak holds a cartouche with the word "fat". This could be a reference to the simony scandal.

Although an offence against canon law, simony, the act of selling church offices and roles or sacred objects, became widespread in the Catholic Church in the 9th and 10th centuries. Simony is named after Simon of Magus, who is described in the Acts of the Apostles as having offered two disciples of Jesus payment in exchange for their empowering him to impart the power of the Holy Spirit to anyone on whom he would place his hands. The term extends to other forms of trafficking for money in "spiritual things".



The centre panel exemplifies Bosch's attraction to the saintly ability of refusing temptation. At the centre is the saint in contemplation, with a blessing hand pointing at his small cell inside a ruined tower where a miniature Christ appears to point at the Crucifix, indicating the true sacrifice in reply to the profane mass celebrated by demons and priestess at his left. A black-skinned priestess holds a vessel with a toad, a symbol of witchcraft as well as of luxury; the animal in turns holds an egg. A black-dressed singer has a pig face and a little owl (an allegory of heresy) above his head, while a crippled man is going to receive the communion. The saint looks out into the world of the viewer while pointing in the direction of Christ; no one in the world of the panel looks towards Christ.

The background shows, at left, a city on fire, a traditional symbol of the protection granted by Anthony against ergotism and fire. The monks of the Order of Saint Anthony specialized in the treatment and care of victims of ergotism (also known as Saint Anthony's fire), who experienced burning sensations and hallucinations.

The demon group at the left, including a woman wearing a helmet resembling a hollow tree, may symbolize the bloody violence.



The group in the water at right may be a devilish parody of either the *Flight into Egypt* or the *Adoration of the Magi*;



a third demonic group is emerging from the red fruit in the foreground. This include a devil who is playing a harp, riding a chicken, and another moving around the fish-boat at the centre. In the sky are a ship-shaped bird, flying fish and winged boats. Finally, the bearded man with a top hat could be the wizard who has set up the whole visions package.

In another interpretation, much of the images relate to ergotism and the forms of treatment at the time of Bosch. The large fruit can be interpreted as a mandrake apple and the man wielding the sword can be seen as a reference to the uprooting ceremony. Mandrake root was used often as a protection against ergotism, and the fruit was used as an anaesthetic, which helped with necessary amputations resulting from disease. The natural anaesthetic also could kill the patients if given too much, and it also caused hallucinations of its own in addition to the hallucinations of ergotism, giving meaning to the violent nature of the characters surrounding the fruit in the panel. The images of fish and thistle relate to alchemy from the time, and other 'cold' elements used to counter the 'hot' malady.

The right panel depicts the *Contemplation of St. Anthony*. The two figures riding the fish in the sky had, according to the legend, obtained the capability to fly by the Devil in order to engage in Witches' Sabbaths.

In the foreground is a naked woman, a symbol of luxury. She is peeping from a hollow trunk through a tent, which is being kept open for her by a toad. Her tempting body is being offered to the saint, who is portrayed at right, contemplating while looking at the observer at the same time. The dwarf on his right, who wears a red mantle and a whirligig, is a symbol of humanity's fecklessness.



In the foreground, finally, are the last temptations: a table with bread and a jar of wine, perhaps a reference to the eucharist, supported by naked demons. One of the human pillars has his foot caught in a jar — an allusion to the sexual act. The background includes a towered city, windmills and a lake.

Like many of Bosch's paintings, *The Temptation of St. Anthony* was the subject of a number of copies. Another version of the central panel is in Brazil, while a copy by a follower of Bosch can be found in Ottawa, and another version in the Prado Museum in Madrid. A third copy (once believed to be the original but now identified as a 16th-century copy) is owned by the Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia.

Ship of Fools (c.1490–1500) is a surviving fragment of a triptych that has been cut into several parts. Painted on one of the wings of the altarpiece it is about two thirds of its original length. The bottom third of the panel is exhibited under the title *Allegory of Gluttony*. The wing on the other side, which has more or less retained its full length, is the *Death and the Miser*, on the reverse of which is *The Wayfarer*. The two panels together would have represented the two extremes of prodigality and miserliness, condemning and caricaturing both. The central panel, if existed, is unknown.

The ship is an allegory of human life, when viewed as a risky voyage. It is also uniquely associated with the Church: the main part of the temple being "the nave" – or the ship (the French word *nef* comes from the Latin *navis* – the ship). The Church was seen as a vehicle of salvation, the only way to stay afloat in the turbulent waters of existence.

A group of ten people are gathered in a boat. The main group is comprised of a Franciscan friar and a nun playing a lute. They are seated facing each other. Their mouths are wide open as if singing, but they appear in fact to be biting, like their companions, a pancake hanging from the mast of the little boat. On the table is a cherry – a symbol of voluptuousness. This is an allusion to a folk custom, which consists of eating a hanging pancake without using one's hands. Behind them are seated the two boatmen. One of them has a giant ladle instead of an oar. The other balances a glass on his head while brandishing a broken jug on his oar. On one side, a woman readies herself to strike a young man with a jug. He is holding a flagon that he trails in the water. On the other end, sitting on a makeshift rudder, a little man in the dress of a fool drinks from a cup. Next to him, another leans over to vomit. The whole scene is dominated by a tree-like mast topped with a bouquet of flowers, in the middle of which can be seen a skull, or an owl, in Mediaeval times a symbol of bad luck. Above is a flag with the muslim crescent moon, or perhaps a symbol of "lunacy." A roasted goose is strapped to the mast. The joyful group appear adrift; a vast landscape in the background stretches toward infinity.



It has been suggested that this unusual scene is an interpretation of *The Ship of Fools*, an allegory by the humanist Sebastian Brant, published in Basel in 1494. This work was illustrated by woodcuts showing ships loaded with fools drifting toward the "fool's paradise," called Narragonia. The sequel, *The Ship of the Mad Women*, by Josse Bade, has also been proposed as a source of inspiration. Nonetheless, in the illustrations to these books, the fools are clearly recognizable from their costumes and bonnets, with the ears of asses. In Bosch's painting there is only one such figure, and he appears as if to clarify the meaning of the painting. It is probable that a work which depicts people drinking and delirious, obsessed with food and drink, is a satire on monks and an ironic criticism of the drunkenness that deprives them of their reason and their souls. The monks are here represented by the religious figures in the foreground. Anger, a consequence of a predilection for drink, would explain the woman's gesture as she strikes the young man with her jug. The dissolute clergy thus allow the boat of the Church to drift, neglectful of the soul's health and well being. All on board are without morals and rudderless. They all are lacking direction in life and oblivious to the men overboard.

The two parts of the left panel are here restored, along with the right-hand panel.

An existing fragment of the outside of the right-hand panel is known as *The Wayfarer* (which gives its name to the broken triptych) or *The Pedler*. The figure is similar to the man depicted in *The Path of Life* panel on the exterior of *The Haywain Triptych*. The character has been interpreted as choosing between the path of virtue at the gate on the right or debauchery in the house on the left, or as the prodigal son returning home from the world.



The *Haywain Triptych* (c. 1516) follows a similar narrative to the *Garden of Earthly Delights*, in which he offers us a cosmic vision of mankind and its destiny. In the left panel we are shown 'Paradise' with the creation of Adam and Eve, the origin of sin on Earth and the expulsion from the Garden of Eden by the Archangel Michael. The centre panel depicts mankind in sin

with everyone trying to avail themselves of the earthly possessions, symbolized by the hay. The right panel depicts the fires of Hell, the punishment for a life of sinfulness and greed, while the backs of both side panels show an old pilgrim trying to find his way in a dangerous world.

The left panel shows God giving form to Eve. Unlike in *The Garden* a narrative sequence flows through the panel in different scenes. At the top, the rebel angels are cast out of Heaven while God sits enthroned, the angels turning into insects as they break through the clouds.



Below this, God creates Eve from the rib of Adam.



Next, Adam and Eve find the tree bearing the fruit of knowledge, but are unsure and seem to argue about whether to accept the gift offered by the serpent.





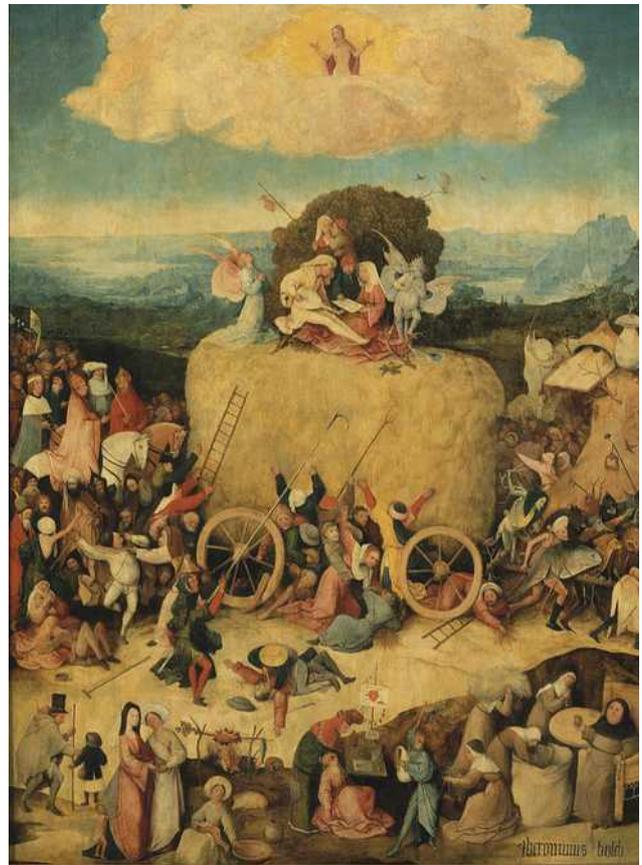
Finally, at the lowest part of the panel, the angel expels them from the Garden of Eden. The rocky exit gate is behind them and in their shame and loss of innocence they cover their genitals and look away from each other. Adam speaks with the angel seeming to apologise, saying "I am sorry but I didn't have any choice"; Eve, leaning back in a reluctant and melancholic pose, and with an embarrassed expression, looks ahead to the right; leading the viewer into the next episode of the story: the present world of sin and greed.

The angel who expels them has a resigned, sad, but serious expression.



The central panel features a large wagon of hay surrounded by a multitude of fools engaged in a variety of sins, in addition to the sins of lust which dominates the *Garden of Earthly Delights*. Hay, in Medieval symbolism signifies everything that the people strive for but is ultimately worthless - the accumulation and vanity of wealth, all to produce a great mound of hay, while neglecting the most important thing in life: leading a good life in accordance to god's law.

Bosch transforms the pilgrim travellers on the king's highway, of Saint Bernard's well-known sermon, into the journey through life in the countryside of the time, with glimpses into sometimes humorous aspects of rural life – and its many sins. Due to the way Bosch paints his figures' bodies, gestures and faces, the emotions that they convey are believable, emphatic, sincere and honest.



In the clouds overseeing the events below, Christ, the Man of Sorrows, is shown with the wounds of his passion. An angel on top of the wagon looks to the sky, praying, but none of the other figures see Christ looking down on the world. The rightward bow of the figures around the wagon provides the force for the viewer's eye to move with them on their journey and the cart is drawn by infernal beings which drag everyone to Hell, depicted on the right panel.

On top of the load of hay a man is peering from behind a large bush at a scene of idle, thoughtless play. A couple are embracing as if ready to kiss, a musician sits playing a lute for a woman who holds sheet music ready to sing. An owl, a frequent symbol in Bosch's art, is perched on a branch which protrudes from the bush. The distant landscape is of towns around broad rivers, with a high rock buttness over to the right.



The praying angel, looking up to heaven, and a blue winged daemon blowing a pipe vie for the souls of the people living a heady life of heedless folly.



To the left of the haywain, the emperor, Pope, king and a duke ride their horses, attended by nobility and a dense crowd of courtiers. Closer to the viewer is an assorted rabble, including a cripple in white, who seems to be dancing but is being threatened by a woman with a dagger. A seated woman with a young baby, into whose skirts a young man has collapsed, his head hidden underneath, may be praying. Others raise ladders against the moving wagon in an effort to scramble up.



The chaotic rabble around the haywain show all the deadly sins: greed is dominant, together with lust, wrath, envy, gluttony, pride, and sloth, and several fights have broken out over the hay. Some figures are trapped within and under the wagon's wheels; an incident with symbolic overtones which other artists have used to convey the unmerciful fate of mankind. One man is cutting the throat of another, who is pinned down on his back, his arms splayed out on the ground.



This gesture of despair - with arms flung wide - appealed to Goya, who was familiar with this painting, and which occurs with dramatic effect twice in the *Third of May*.



In the foreground is a line of less animated figures. From the left, these include two pious women, one with a child clutching at her skirts, and the other with a baby in her dress; then a woman changing her baby's napkin, behind whom a pig's head is roasting on a spit. A quack healer is inspecting the mouth of a patient, his potions and charts set out on a table. A musician playing bagpipes is distracted by a nun offering him a handful of hay, while her sisters are stuffing hay into sacks, overseen by a corpulent, seated monk taking a drink.



To the right of the haywain, strange beasts, packed together, apparently drawing the haywain itself (in front of a rocky pinnacle, which has odd structures on top) They are typical of his portmanteau creatures, some with long snouts, a large fish, a deer with antlers, and several daemons, one parading a blindfolded severed head on the end of a pole. They are precursors to the daemons which appear in the right-hand panel.

The forward kinetic motion of the participants moves the viewer from present-day sin into unadulterated torture in the realms of Hell. The procession on the left side of this panel bends back into the middle ground, but the right side figures continue in a straight line with the wagon, a more evident progress inexorably into damnation.



Finally, in the **right wing** the viewer is shown sinners entering into Hell in a succession of scenes and undergoing many physical torments, with its all destroying fires in the distance, a disturbing vision of paranoia and nightmares inspired by religious doctrine.

In the foreground, a large bloated fish with human legs and boots is swallowing a person, their legs still protruding from its mouth; a snake winds around the right leg. A daemon is disembowelling a human figure which he holds upside down. Alongside a naked human is fleeing from three strange hounds that are attacking him near a dank, dark tunnel. One of the hounds has a tree branch, upon which a bird has settled, for a tail.

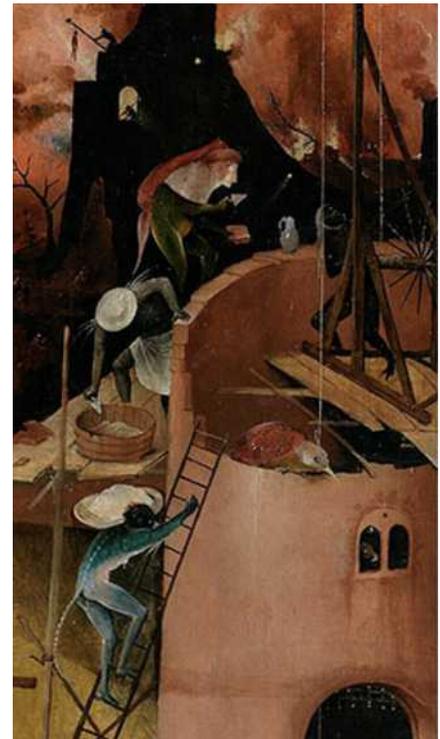




Behind them, weird portmanteau daemons are moving other naked humans around. One lies on the ground, with his hands tied behind the back; a frog sits on his genitals. Another sits astride an ox, his torso pierced through with a spear by a demon urging him on. He wears a helmet which covers his face, and carries a goblet. Another demon on all fours has a rat's face, grey human arms and the wings of a butterfly. Behind them is a round tower, whose upper parts are still being constructed.

A green, lizard-like demon ascends a stepladder up the outside of the tower with a board heaped with mortar. A crane and windlass on the top of the tower is manned by a demon, while other demons are busily laying bricks. Perched on the top lip of the tower is a huge bird with red wings.

In the distance a flat field contains scattered bodies, behind which the ruins of buildings are silhouetted against a red smoke-filled sky by fires. Up in the sky a demon riding a large creature (perhaps a fish) is chasing a bird.



The **Wayfarer**, or **Pedlar**, shown on the exterior, is very similar to that on the exterior of Bosch's broken *Wayfarer Triptych*, with *The Ship of Fools* and *Death and the Miser* panels. Some interesting differences are that here his legs are not bandaged, and his boots match. He is therefore perhaps in better condition to face the trials and tribulations of his journey through life. Unusually for Bosch it is not painted in grisaille, but in full colour.

An older, white haired man with a close-cropped full beard, is walking from left to right along a narrow path, which passes through meadows, looking back over his right shoulder as he defends himself from a collared dog which is snarling at him, with

his walking stick, with its club-like end on the ground. He wears a black chaperon-style hat, a long brown tunic, and matching brown trousers. His tunic is loosened at the neck and upper chest to reveal a black waistcoat and white underclothing. The left knee of his trousers is split to reveal most of the kneecap. He wears a pair of short black boots. A sheathed knife is on his belt. On his back is a large wickerwork pack, fastened around his arms and chest with a leather strap, and with a large wooden spoon on its side. Just in front of him, the path crosses a small stream by a stone bridge with a primitive handrail. There are birds in the water: a grey heron (or possibly a little egret), and a moorhen. In the lower left corner are long bones and a skull from a dead animal such as a horse.

Behind him, on the left, three robbers are tying another traveller to a tree, having stolen his outer clothing and his pack. They are armed with a crossbow and pikes, which put down on the ground. On the right, in the distance, a man and a woman are dancing (careless of their flock of sheep, which are wandering off) to the music provided by a bagpiper, who is seated underneath a tree. A large box is fixed to its trunk, possibly containing a miniature gallows, or a crucifixion. The background shows rolling

pasture and woods, rising to a hill on which a large gallows is being erected. A church tower rises from a town in the far distance.

The moral of the picture, we can surmise, is that of Everyman on his journey through life, avoiding the dangers and terrors of the wicked, and the distractions of frivolous pastimes, in order to escape the consequences that are revealed when the triptych is opened. The pack on his back then is the load that he carries through life, its trials and its tribulations, the decisions and actions that he must take to achieve the blessed life that he hopes for at the end of his journey. The other title by which it is known *The Pedlar*, if correct, reduces him to a traveling tradesman, with his goods for sale on his back.

Christ Carrying the Cross was painted in the early 16th century, presumably between 1500 and 1535. Once thought to be by Hieronymus Bosch the work is now generally attributed to a follower on the grounds that the colours are more reminiscent of the Mannerists of the 1530s which relates the work to the *Triptych of the Passion* in Valencia and the *Christ Before Pilate* in Princeton, works that were definitely painted after the death of Bosch.



The work depicts Jesus carrying the cross above a dark background, surrounded by numerous heads, most of which are characterized with grotesque faces. There are a total of eighteen portraits, plus one on Veronica's veil. Jesus has a woeful expression, his eyes are closed and the head is declined. In the bottom right corner is the impenitent thief, who sneers against three men who are mocking him. The penitent thief is at top right: he is portrayed with very pale skin, while being confessed by a horribly ugly monk. The bottom left corner shows Saint Veronica with the holy shroud, with her eyes half-open and the face looking back. Finally, at the top left is Simon of Cyrene, who was forced to carry the cross for Christ, his face upside upturned.



In the painting of **Christ Before Pilate** (c. 1520), accredited to a follower of Bosch, Christ is a centre of calm and beauty amidst the howling mob that has brought him to trial before Pontius Pilate. The governor is ready to wash his hands of Jesus, saying "I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it" and delivering him to be scourged and crucified (Matthew 27:24–26). The artist seems familiar with Leonardo da Vinci's studies of "ideal ugliness," counterparts to his studies of "ideal beauty," and has used bizarre visages to convey the degradation of fallen humanity. The half-length format brings the viewer up-close into the scene of the gruesome figures with distorted features and nose rings, crowded of

against the picture plane. These are typical features of a type of Flemish devotional picture then in favour. The Gothic architectural elements in the upper corners suggest the staged quality of the scene and create a theatre of piety and morality that suspends Pilate's action in time.

The Passion of Christ triptych, (between 1513 and 1535) is signed 'jheronimus Bosch', but is by a follower; Bosch died in 1516. From around 1540 it was in the Tomb Chapel of Mencia the Mendozas, the chapel "de los Reyes" in the Dominican monastery in Valencia. It is now in the Museo de Bellas Artes, Valencia.

