Ascents and Descents: Personal Pilgrimage in Hieronymus Bosch's The Haywain

Alison Daines
Brigham Young University - Provo

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd

Part of the Art Practice Commons

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
ASCENTS AND DESCENTS: PERSONAL PILGRIMAGE IN
HIERONYMUS BOSCH’S *THE HAYWAIN*

Alison Newbold Daines

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Martha M. Peacock, Chair
Mark J. Johnson
Heather Belnap Jensen

Department of Visual Arts
Brigham Young University
December 2009

Copyright © 2009 Alison Newbold Daines

All Rights Reserved
ABSTRACT

ASCENTS AND DESCENTS: PERSONAL PILGRIMAGE IN

HIERONYMUS BOSCH’S *THE HAYWAIN*

Alison Newbold Daines

Department of Visual Arts

Master of Arts

At the end of the fifteenth century, Hieronymus Bosch provided the foremost expression of the strict religious piety embodied by the *Devotio Moderna* and the impending embrace of secular humanism. As a result, Bosch’s seemingly complex images provided viewers with positive messages concerning the journey of life through the use of binary symbolism. He utilized the pilgrimage motif as a guide throughout his paintings and in relation to the liminal spaces surrounding his works. This article will examine his important triptych, *The Haywain*, (c.1495-1516) as an example of spiritual paths taken simultaneously by both religious and contemporary figures, along with the viewers themselves.

The underlying theme of Christ’s Ascension in *The Haywain* plays out in an interwoven assortment of journeys, identified by characteristic northern and medieval Christian iconography. Christ’s final journey acts as the ultimate goal and the paradigm for both the pilgrim within the triptych and the viewer. Evidence of processional celebrations mimicking pilgrimages reveals that the motifs in Bosch’s works were located throughout his visual culture. Finally, an investigation of Bosch’s 1505 triptych *The Temptation of St. Anthony* reveals that Bosch remains consistent in his use of the pilgrimage theme. Bosch worked within the context of the visual and textual culture of the Netherlandish city of ‘s-Hertogenbosch, and despite his creative style, was understood among his contemporaries as a messenger of positive piety.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express a deep gratitude to those who have helped me in this endeavor. First and foremost I would like to thank my advisor Dr. Martha M. Peacock. Her influence and enthusiasm have made an enormous contribution to my educational experience and will always remain so. I appreciate the time, effort, and high expectations that she put into this paper. I would like to thank my committee members Dr. Heather Jensen and Dr. Mark Johnson for all their invaluable advice, both with this project and several other classes. I would also like to thank Dr. Mark Magleby and the rest of the Art History faculty for their contributions to my appreciation of art.

I am grateful to Brigham Young University’s Graduate Studies for providing me with a Graduate Research Fellowship. With this grant I was able to perform research in the Koninglijk Bibliotheek and the Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie in The Hague, Netherlands. The information I gathered there contributed significantly to this paper. I would also like to thank my fellow graduate students for their support, ideas and suggestions to this paper and other projects. I am grateful to my parents, my father who taught me the value of hard work, and my mother for her support and role of traveling companion. Finally, I would like to thank my husband for his unfailing support and love, without which I could not have done this; and to my sweet daughter, whose arrival made this all the more interesting.
This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

Date

Martha M. Peacock, Chair

Date

Mark J. Johnson

Date

Heather Belnap Jensen
As chair of the candidate’s graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Alison Newbold Daines in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

__________________________  ______________________________________
Date      Martha M. Peacock
Chair, Graduate Committee

Accepted for the Department

__________________________  ______________________________________
Date      Heather Belnap Jensen
Graduate Coordinator

Accepted for the College

__________________________  ______________________________________
Date      Rory Scanlon
Assistant Dean, College of Fine Arts and Communications
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents........................................................................................................vi

List of Figures..............................................................................................................vii

Introduction................................................................................................................1

Pilgrimage Within The Haywain....................................................................................7

Fall and Redemption: Binaries within *The Haywain*..................................................16

Christ’s Ascension.....................................................................................................20

The Pilgrimage of Christ and Man: The Saint Anthony Triptych.................................39

Conclusions: Cultural Manifestations of Pilgrimages..................................................48

Figures.......................................................................................................................53

Bibliography...............................................................................................................89
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1- Hieronymus Bosch, *The Haywain*, c. 1510-1516, Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Figure 2- Hieronymus Bosch, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, 1505, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon.

Figure 3- Hieronymus Bosch, *The Wayfarer*, 1510, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

Figure 4- Hieronymus Bosch, Exterior, from *The Haywain*. c. 1510-1516, Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Figure 5- Artist(s) Unknown, Title page from *Imitatio Christi* with Christ as Salvator Mundi, from Antwerp, 1505, Utrecht, Museum Catharijneconvent.

Figure 6- Hieronymus Bosch, Left panel, from *The Haywain*, c. 1510-1516, Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Figure 7- Hieronymus Bosch, Left panel, from *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, 1503-1504, Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Figure 8- Hugo van der Goes, *The Fall of Adam*, c. 1480, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Figure 9- Hieronymus Bosch, Central panel, from *The Haywain*, c. 1510-1516, Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Figure 10- Artist(s) Unknown, *The Ascension*, Salzburg, ca. 1150, Morgan Library, New York.

Figure 11- Ambrogio di Stefano da Fossano Bergognone, *The Assumption of the Virgin*, ca. 1500, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Figure 12- Artist(s) Unknown, *The Ascension*, Germany, c. 1150, Morgan Library, New York.

Figure 13- Master of Troyes, *The Ascension*, France, c. 1250, Morgan Library, New York.

Figure 14- Artist(s) Unknown, *The Ascension*, from the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*, Germany, c. 1400-1500, Koninglijk Bibliothek, The Hague.

Figure 15- Hieronymus Bosch, Exterior, *The Epiphany Triptych*, 1495, Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Figure 16- Hieronymus Bosch, Detail from *The Haywain*, c. 1510-1516, Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Figure 17- Hieronymus Bosch, *The Field Has Eyes, the Wood Has Ear*, c. 1500-1516, Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin.

Figure 18- Hans Memling, *Panorama of the Joys of the Virgin*, 1480, Alte Pinakothek, Munich.
Figure 19- Hans Memling, *The Resurrection, with the Martyrdom of St. Sebastian and the Ascension*, 1490, Louvre, Paris.

Figure 20- Adrian van Wesel, *Lijdensaltaar*, in the St. Antonius chapel, Cathedral of St. John, 1500, ‘s-Hertogenbosch.

Figure 21, Artist(s) Unknown, *Ascension*, from the *Lijdensaltaar*, in the St. Antonius chapel, Cathedral of St. John, 1500, ‘s-Hertogenbosch.

Figure 22- Matthias Grünewald, *Resurrection*, from the *Isenheim Altarpiece*, 1512-1516, Musée d'Unterlinden, Colmar.

Figure 23- Hieronymus Bosch, Detail from *The Haywain*, c. 1510-1516, Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Figure 24- Hieronymus Bosch, Detail from *The Haywain*, c. 1510-1516, Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Figure 25- Artist(s) Unknown, *Visitation*, from Book of Hours, Northern France, c. 1425-75, Koninklijk Bibliotheek, The Hague.

Figure 26- Workshop of Hieronymus Bosch, *Entombment*, c. 1477-1516, British Museum, London.

Figure 27- Artist(s) Unknown, *Visitation*, from Book of Hours, Central France, c. 1450-1500, Koninklijk Bibliotheek, The Hague.

Figure 28- Hieronymus Bosch, Right panel, from *The Haywain*, c. 1510-1516, Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Figure 29- Hieronymus Bosch, *Arrest of Christ* panel, from *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, 1505, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon.

Figure 30- Hieronymus Bosch, *The Way to Calvary* panel, from *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, 1505, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon.

Figure 31- Artist(s) Unknown, *Arrest*, from the *Lijdensaltaar*, in the St. Antonius chapel, Cathedral of St. John, 1500, ‘s-Hertogenbosch.

Figure 32- Hieronymus Bosch, Left panel, from *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, 1505, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon.

Figure 33- Hieronymus Bosch, Detail, from left panel, from *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, 1505, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon.
Figure 34- Hieronymus Bosch, Detail, from central panel, from *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, 1505, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon.

Figure 35- Hieronymus Bosch, *The Epiphany Triptych*, 1495, Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Figure 36- Hieronymus Bosch, right panel, from *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, 1505, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon.

Figure 37- Frans Hogenberg, *The Haywain Surrounded by Allegorical Scenes*, 1559, Bibliothèque Royale Albert Ier., Brussels.

Figure 38- Remigus Hogenberg, *The Turnip Wagon*, 1559, Bibliothèque Royale Albert Ier., Brussels.
Introduction

Although Hieronymus Bosch (1453-1516) was raised in a climate of intense religiosity, he also lived in a world that was moving toward secular humanism. Looking forward to the early modern genre scenes, Bosch’s work broke new ground by marrying dogmatic religious themes to contemporary genre imagery. Bosch engaged his audience in a detailed discussion of the human condition that had been primarily associated with popular “low” art. Via this component of familiarity, Bosch was able to guide his viewers through their own spiritual pilgrimage. Though pilgrimage metaphors have previously been assigned to Bosch’s works (albeit in a cursory fashion), careful analysis of Bosch’s art reveals that the pilgrimage motif is a much more significant thematic device than has been formerly recognized. In ‘s-Hertogenbosch, Bosch’s neighbors mimicked the act of religious pilgrimage through celebrations that included processional parades and floats. The importance of this vital motif is evidenced in the important triptychs: The Haywain, (c.1495-1516).¹ This triptych illuminates Bosch’s positive program of advice and encouragement to mortals on their spiritual pilgrimage through life, and reenact pilgrimages in terms that would have been recognizable to Bosch’s intended audience of ordinary Christians.

The cultural environment of ‘s-Hertogenbosch reveals aspects of both the sacred and the secular. The Devotio Moderna contributed to an astounding increase in the number of religious

¹ There are two versions of The Haywain, one in the Prado, one in the Escorial. While it is unclear as to which is the original, the Prado version is the triptych used for discussion by most scholars. It will be the version examined here. Originally it was dated between 1485 and 1490. Although it is one of the eight works by Bosch with an actual signature, some recent dendrochronological work suggests it may have been created after Bosch’s death in 1516; others have suggested a date between c. 1510-16. This article operates on the assumption that The Haywain is either by Bosch, or is a copy of the lost original. For a complete list of recent dendrochronological results of Bosch’s works, see Jos Koldeweij, Paul Vandenbroeck, Bernard Vermet, Hieronymus Bosch: The Complete Paintings and Drawings, (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2001), 87-88.
foundations and orders within the city, and religion permeated aspects of everyday life.² However, ‘s-Hertogenbosch also had several powerful secular influences, including a famous Latin school and five rederijker kamers, or rhetoric chambers. These literary associations presented poetic and dramatic performances at various public events.³ Works by Erasmus, both Catholic theologian and Dutch humanist, were being circulated.⁴ The optimism that Bosch directs toward mankind was a precursor to the more enlightened view that would soon develop in European thought. Despite Bosch’s forward-thinking connotations, The Haywain still contains elements of traditional, religious subject-matter.

The Haywain’s left panel narrates the story of the origin of sin, beginning with the expulsion of the rebel angels (Fig. 1). Lucifer’s minions are depicted as a swarm of insect-like creatures, spilling out of a cloud containing God the Father. In continuous narrative below, God creates Eve from Adam’s rib, the first parents are tempted by the serpent, and finally are cast out of the garden by the archangel in the foreground of the panel. The central panel portrays the mortal world. Here, individuals of every age, occupation, and class, cluster around a large hay wagon, battling for the chance to grasp the coveted straw. Atop the mound of hay, individuals participate in lustful activities, save the one angel who appears to be pleading to Christ above. Christ, embraced by clouds, looks down on the scene as the procession makes its way from the bucolic green hills into the atmospheric red skies of hell. Hell in the right panel features demonic vignettes containing animalistic creatures punishing the damned as the portrayal of a “world turned upside down.”

² Ten years after Bosch’s death in 1526, one person out of every nineteen belonged to a religious order. This number is a much higher proportion than other Netherlandish cities at that time. Walter Gibson, Hieronymus Bosch, (London: Thames and Hudson LTD, 1973), 13-14.
³ Ibid.
While this article will focus primarily on *The Haywain*, Bosch’s *Temptation of St. Anthony* triptych (c. 1505) will provide further evidence that Bosch intended *The Haywain* to be read as a pilgrimage journey (Fig. 2). While the *Temptation of St. Anthony* contains a straightforward portrayal of the saint’s life journey, thematic links between the two triptychs will reveal that *The Haywain*’s more elusive subject matter could also have been understood as an allusion to spiritual ascents, descents, and pilgrimages.

Through analysis *The Haywain*, this article will demonstrate the fundamental importance of the pilgrimage metaphor to Bosch’s work and to the intended effect on his audience. The first section will briefly treat the principal developments in Bosch scholarship that have created the commonplace perception of Bosch as a negative medieval Christian or even heretic. I suggest that to a large extent, scholars have neglected semiotic associations within Bosch’s works, which will instead illuminate a much more optimistic character in Bosch’s work. The second section will provide evidence for identifying Bosch’s figures as pilgrims or wanderers in *The Haywain*. The next section will discuss Bosch’s use of Christ’s Ascension as the underlying theme of the triptych. The symbolism of Christ’s last journey at the completion of his mission coincides with the viewer’s perceived desire to join him there. The paths laid out for Bosch’s wanderer, and therefore the viewer, are ascent into heaven by following Christ, or descent into hell through earthly misbehavior. The final section will reinforce Bosch’s reliance on the pilgrimage motif as a teaching tool by referencing the interplay between Christ’s and man’s journey through life as portrayed in *The Temptation of St. Anthony*.

Before undertaking these tasks, however, it is important to review the state of current Bosch scholarship in order to lay out the points of departure in this study. Bosch has always presented a challenge for scholars, because Bosch’s work does not follow the seemingly
straightforward rules of traditional iconographic interpretation. In addition, Bosch scholars have largely ignored semiotic theory in their interpretations, and this neglect has inhibited scholars’ ability to situate Bosch in his own popular, historical context. A more complete reading of Bosch can be achieved by viewing his works through this lens and by more carefully searching out the further possible interpretive references in his work.

Bosch’s mention in serious art scholarship began with Erwin Panofsky, who believed that Bosch’s pictorial language was all but indecipherable. He refused to consider Bosch in the same realm as his contemporaries; Bosch was simply too unique and confusing to be analyzed and considered in the tradition of Jan van Eyck and Robert Campin. Panofsky concluded his 1953 book *Early Netherlandish Painting* by barely mentioning Bosch, and providing instead of an analysis, a Renaissance rhyme: “This, too high for my wit/ I prefer to omit.” Panofsky had essentially conceded defeat with respect to Bosch.5

Panofsky’s failure was read as a challenge by other scholars, who began to consider Bosch’s works in greater detail. Several interpretations developed out of the responses to Panofsky’s invitation. These interpretations can generally be separated into two broad categories: Bosch either had a late medieval Christian outlook, or he was a heretic or member of a mystical sect. Whichever branch of thought they subscribed to, scholars most often derived meaning through reference to precise iconographical explanations, consistent with the tradition of Panofsky.6 Early Bosch scholarship used iconographic methods to interpret Bosch’s meaning in broad strokes. However, those methods proved an incomplete approach at best; scholars were

---


6 By “iconography” I intend its common definition: the derivation of meaning in an artistic work with reference to readily recognizable symbols intentionally included by the artist to communicate specific meaning to the viewer.
able to recognize that Bosch addressed sin, but failed beyond that to assign any specific meaning to many of his figures and scenes. Perhaps they simply found the task too daunting.

In 1927, in reference to Bosch’s work, Max J. Friedlander expressed this frustration by stating: “We are never quite free of the irritating sense that there must be something behind it, that the master is clandestinely alluding to something more than he shows.”7 From the 1930s to the 1970s, most scholars agreed that Bosch’s paintings were strange, but that they simply expressed the medieval, Christian ideas of a past time. In the 1980s, Walter Gibson contributed substantial scholarship to the subject and considered Bosch’s main theme to be the universal condition of man, or mankind’s constant battle with sin and folly. This approach brought scholars closer to a better understanding of Bosch’s grand design.8

In order to find expanded meaning in Bosch’s works, Dirk Bax based his analysis of Bosch on Netherlandish proverbs.9 Bax’s book was very thorough in interpreting Bosch’s oeuvre—it moved through each painting object by object. Unfortunately, Bax did not read the works as a whole. While his iconographical research has contributed to the understanding of Bosch’s culture, it is in no way a comprehensive or final statement on Bosch’s purpose.

In 1984 Jeffery Hamburger pointed out that the character of Bosch’s work requires the historian to temper his imagination, and to instead base interpretations on contemporary thought and practice.10 One common source of contemporary thought that he employs is the historical proverb. By combining proverbial interpretation with contextual factors, there is potential for an even deeper and more comprehensive reading.

---

8 Gibson, 9-12.
It became clear that Panofsky’s technique had significantly shaped the way northern art generally, and Bosch specifically, was interpreted among scholars. In 1984, however, Michael Ann Holly set out to determine how that development occurred. Through a postmodern approach, Holly concludes that Panofsky’s original iconological and iconographical methodology partly influenced the later use of semiology in relation to linguistics in art history. It is important to acknowledge that historians cannot fully interpret artwork outside of the period that they were created and to trace academic influences contributing to ones interpretation. Using this model, semiotics can be applied to produce broader readings of artwork.

Despite this understanding, more theoretical readings of Bosch have only recently appeared among researchers of northern art. In 1991, Walter Melion’s *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon* discussed the need for a new, more theoretical approach to Netherlandish art. Most recently, in 2001 the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam held the exhibition *Hieronymus Bosch: The Complete Paintings and Drawings*. The theory-driven scholarship produced for this exhibition focused on Bosch as a brilliant product of his contemporary popular culture through a more thorough analysis of his hometown and those who were thought to have been his viewers, namely the upper-class members of society.

---

12 This book is useful in understanding what influenced the “new art history” that was forming contemporarily with the writing of this book. It traces the path from formalism is Panofskian iconography, which has become so influential, particularly in northern art history.
13 Through a discussion of economics and class structure, Larry Silver recently brought forth Marxist ideas in his 2006 monograph: *Hieronymus Bosch*, (New York: Abbeville Press, 2006), and Walter Gibson has discussed Bosch works in terms of class in his 1973 monograph of the artist.
I suggest that because Bosch’s works deviate considerably from traditional iconography in their compositions, one must attempt a postmodern theoretical approach, and then continue by applying the available iconographical evidence. Rather than simply analyzing the complex details of his work piece-by-piece, which causes the interpretation to adjust every time the focus changes, Bosch’s works must be viewed intertextually. Multiple themes are interwoven throughout Bosch’s works. When these themes are identified, the reading becomes richer and the varying themes even help to define one another. This essay will help to create an intertextuality that flows with the gaze of Bosch’s possible viewers. This enhanced understanding will connect common themes amongst Bosch’s triptychs, supplying a greater understanding of Bosch’s intended artistic purpose. This semiological approach will be applied through the careful analysis of Bosch’s significant work, *The Haywain*, with supportive evidence provided by the *Temptation of St. Anthony*.

**Pilgrimage Within The Haywain**

*The Haywain* tells the tale of a wanderer, a pilgrim, who by observing major moments in Christian history obtains his own knowledge of the difference between good and evil. The triptych is a teaching tool intended to assist Bosch’s audience as they struggled in their everyday lives to make correct spiritual choices. Bosch’s viewers, who were quite familiar with the common medieval act of holy pilgrimage, could relate to the plight of the wanderer, and draw

---

16 Julia Kristeva, *Desire and Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 69. See also Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson, "Semiotics and Art History," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 73, No. 2, (June 1991), 205 (in which Bal discusses the process that occurs when the viewer of a work fixates his gaze upon a single object within the work, and the change that occurs to the viewer’s understanding of the work’s overall meaning).
strength from the lessons he imparted. In order to make his lessons both relatable and memorable, Bosch utilized a binary form of instruction – elements of each scene present both the good and the bad results of a particular choice one after the other. In this way, the path to heaven and the path to hell are presented side by side; the viewer may choose whether to ascend with Christ into eternal salvation, or descend with the wicked into eternal damnation. Bosch approached many of his work using binaries to exemplify his thoughts, and his duality has often been overlooked by scholars focused on his seeming negativity.

Many scholars have noted that Bosch had an affinity for wanderers; the outer panels of the *The Haywain* triptych do indeed reveal a wandering pilgrim. Bosch also included this figure, often referred to as the “wayfarer” or “everyman,” in other works. The pilgrim’s presence on the outer panels is a preview of the more elaborated journeys on the inside of the triptych.

Contemporaries would have understood pilgrimages, the Christian experience whereby an adherent would make an arduous journey through sometimes difficult conditions in order to witness a holy site or procure holy relics, as a fundamental aspect of spirituality, even if they did not have the ready opportunity to travel to the more prominent sites of Rome, Jerusalem, and Santiago de Compostela. For Bosch’s audience, pilgrimage was recognizable as an experiential expression of faith pursued by a substantial and visible portion of the general population. In one example, the city of Aachen recorded 142,000 pilgrims visiting on a single day in 1496.

---


19 Bosch was originally named Jeroen Anthoniszoon van Aken, meaning “from Aachen,” the city of his relatives and ancestors. It is assumed that Bosch changed his name in order to be associated with his residence of ‘s-Hertogenbosch. Aachen is located 144 kilometers from ‘s-Hertogenbosch. It is thought that Bosch’s family moved to ‘s-Hertogenbosch at the beginning of the fifteenth century. Jos Koldeweij “Hieronymus Bosch and his City,” in Jos Koldeweij, Paul Vandenbroeck, Bernard Vermet, *Hieronymus Bosch: The Complete Paintings and Drawings*, (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2001), 22-23. J. Stopford and James Graham-Campbell’s article, “Some Approaches to the Study of Christian Pilgrimages” discusses these numbers as being fairly accurate as they may have been
Bosch’s works also relate the spiritual aspect of the popular pilgrimage tradition to the increasing secularism of northern society. His imagery combines religious events and themes with the indifference that man can have for such subjects. Thus, his art reveals a contemporary angst over the diminishing influence of the church toward the end of the century, despite the continuing number of pilgrims, and once again exposes Bosch’s unique position between humanism and strict religiosity.20 By combining these themes, Bosch is able to address both literal and spiritual pilgrimages in his painting.

The “pilgrimage of life” as taught by St. Augustine, denotes the true spiritual path that Christians are to travel. He refers to Hebrews 11:13-15, describing Christians as “strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”21 It is through this theme that Bosch singles out pious travelers in all their forms, not only the actual travelling pilgrims. The relationship that Bosch fosters between his painted figures and his audience mirrors the individual’s relationship with God promoted through the reformist Devotio Moderna movement of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.

Devotio Moderna sought to return to an era of greater piety and to transform the whole of human existence into a rewarding pilgrimage.22 The movement also recommended a more individual attitude toward worship, particularly in the Low Countries. In turn, Bosch provided his viewers with works that interacted with their own divine experience.

---

20 By the fifteenth century, the spiritual aspects of pilgrimages had been in decline for some time. The utilization of penitential pilgrimages for economical purposes by the Church and state had diminished their holy aura. See Josie P. Campbell, Popular Cultures in the Middle Ages, (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1986), 105.
22 By turning spirituality into a personal quest, Thomas a Kempis somewhat removed the responsibility of the intercessors (Mary, saints) by placing it back on humankind. Christians were called upon to emulate Christ through personal experience and understanding.
While many of the faithful in Bosch’s time may not have had the resources to undertake a major pilgrimage, every Christian could attend the local cathedral. Bosch utilized the act of church attendance by immersing his triptych into the experience. By journeying through the cathedral and physically approaching the altar, one could accomplish the unique cognitive experience of a pilgrimage. Michel Foucault’s explication of liminal spaces within transient states may explain why an individual’s physical act of proceeding through the cathedral and approaching the altar provides such a unique cognitive experience. Liminal spaces (“heterotopias”) always relate to another space, and cannot be considered separately from each other. The liminality of a space therefore lies in the paradoxical simultaneous interconnection with, and stark difference from, another everyday space. 23

In the example most useful to our discussion, a faithful person enters a liminal space when she approaches an altar—the altar is, at the same time, connected to the everyday world by strict geography, but also disconnected from the world by the weight of its sacred nature. Bosch’s audience, familiar as it was with the spiritual importance of pilgrimages, was able to conduct a pseudo-pilgrimage upon each visit to the cathedral. Furthermore, Bosch himself intended to place his audience within the liminal space created by his paintings. By gazing upon the exploits of the wanderer in Bosch’s triptychs, viewers could accomplish a meaningful mental spiritual pilgrimage without ever leaving the confines of the church.

Specifically, Bosch intended his viewers to interpret both The Haywain and the St. Anthony triptychs according to the Christian themes of ascent into heaven, descent into hell, and the wanderer’s path that led in each direction. These themes represent the multi-faceted understanding that the viewer experiences while interacting with the triptych, including its

location and the manner in which the work is approached by the body. The Cistercian monk Guillaume de Déguilleville’s Pilgrimage of the Soul (c. 1355) was an influential exposition on the mystical alternatives for actual pilgrimages. These “pilgrimages” include the path a soul takes as it overcomes negative attributes, thus becoming closer to purification, its destination. This contemporary work parallels Bosch’s content with its themes of pilgrimage, penance and journeys. Furthermore, Bosch does not just present his audience with commentary on contemporary treatise like Déguilleville’s, but he also provides the actual experience.

Around 1250, a chapel was established in ‘s-Hertogenbosch by Franciscans and Dominicans who had settled there a short time earlier. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, over thirty churches had been established, with over 930 monks and nuns living within the city boundaries. This was an exceptionally high number, providing one member of a religious order for every eighteen or nineteen town inhabitants. Thus, Bosch was provided with ample opportunity to unite with this religious fervor via his art. Despite this spiritual zeal, spurred on by trepidation toward the end of the century, Bosch was still addressing what he considered to be mankind’s continual downward spiral, contributing to the conflicting times in which he was living. Growing concepts that featured a more individualistic approach to religion echoed Bosch’s intertextuality. Furthermore, each of the religious houses became patrons for the artists and craftsmen. Lastly, in conjunction with the piety of Bosch’s contemporaries, his triptych formats imply the presence of an altar that would have contributed to the process of their

---

24 In the fifteenth century, a Middle Dutch edition was translated entitled Boeck van den pelgherym, appeared in Harlem in 1486. See Koldeweij, 63.
25 Ibid., 29-30.
27 Koldeweij, 29-30.
worship. Bosch likely intended that as the viewer approached the altar, it created for them a form of pilgrimage, which replicated ideas like Déguilleville’s.

Bosch’s wayfarers lope across the landscape on thin, lanky legs, clothed in graying, torn garments. This wanderer occurs on the exterior of two Bosch triptychs and one tondo: The Haywain, The Last Judgment, and the Rotterdam panel. In the Rotterdam panel from 1510 (Fig. 3), and on the exterior of The Haywain, the wanderers are almost identical (Fig. 4). This figure has been identified in several ways as a tramp, a thief, a prodigal son, a drunkard, and even the Wandering Jew, among others. All of the attributed identities could conceivably be correct, as he might also personify “Everyman.” The figure becomes whatever is most relatable to the specific viewer as she identifies with him in her own journey. The figure is transitional physically and spiritually; he is neither an example of righteousness, nor evil, just like Bosch’s viewer.


The identification of the 1510 panel as an exterior to a triptych come from the muted colors, which was Bosch’s version of the traditional grisaille exterior of contemporary triptychs. The circular composition corresponds with other Bosch exteriors like The Garden of Earthly Delights. Silver, Bosch, 252-3. It has also been discovered that the same wood was used for Bosch’s Ship of Fools and Death and the Usurer. See Peter Klein, “Dendochronological Analyses of Panels from the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries,” Van Eyck to Breugel 1400-1550: Dutch and Flemish Painting in the Collection of the Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, (Rotterdam, 1994), 90-95.

Most scholars consider the outer panels of The Haywain to be technically inferior to the interior, and were completed by Bosch’s workshop. Gibson, 69.

James Snyder’s 1973 monograph summarizes the varying identities given to the wayfarer. “A good example of the problems encountered in interpreting Bosch’s works is the bewildering scholarship of the so-called Landloper (tramp). The striding figure…has been identified as the Biblical prodigal son (Gluck, De Tolnay), a peddler (Seligman), a vagabond thief (Conway), an errant drunkard (Bax), a wayward shepherd (Calas), a personification of Sloth (Zupnick), a child of Saturn (Pigler), a personification of the melancholic humor of Saturn (Philip), and finally an image of Elck (Everyman) of Netherlandish proverbs.” James Snyder, Bosch in Perspective, (New Jersey: Englewood Cliffs, 1973), 3. Philip Leider has identified him as Cartaphilus, the Wandering Jew who mocked Christ on the way to Calvary by telling him to move more quickly. Christ told him that he shall wait until his return. Cartaphilus converts, and stays upon the earth waiting for Christ’s return by turning thirty every one hundred years. See Philip Leider, “The Identity of Hieronymus Bosch’s Wayfarer,” Assaph- Studies in Art History 2001: http://www.tau.ac.il/arts/projects/PUB/assaph-art/assaph6/articles_assaph6/leider.pdf . Virginia Tuttle’s suggestion that the figure is living in voluntary poverty as a Christian alternative to, and protection against, avarice, has received wide consideration. See Virginia Tuttle, “Bosch’s Image of Poverty” The Art Bulletin, Vol. 63, No. 1 (March 1981), 88-95.
The wayfaring man looks back, but he is presented in the foreground facing the viewer. In *The Haywain*, he approaches a bridge, but does not see it. Consistent with Bosch’s use of binary symbolism, the bridge is both dangerous, and a continuation of the correct path. The figure holds a walking stick akin to that carried by St. Anthony in the triptych to be discussed, implying the spiritual assistance that he requires in finding his way. Both the walking stick and bridge bring to mind Christ’s “narrow path” (Matthew 1:13-14) and his parable of the blind leading the blind (Matthew 15:14).32 Kahren Jones Hellerstedt has researched the meaning behind the often present walking staff in Netherlandish painting and literature. She sees these as associated with blind figures and identifies such figures as symbols of aimless wanderers or misguided humans, who are lost without an inner vision to guide them.33 These figures remind the viewer to be aware of the path he is on, as looks can be deceiving. Bosch’s use of the traveler motif allows the viewer to be fully aware of potential ascents and descents on life’s path.

The wanderer’s path is definitely not an easy one. Signs of danger, both physical and spiritual, are present throughout both scenes. The dogs represent bodily harm. A passage from the Middle Dutch version of the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* (c.1309-1324) discusses the dangers of dogs to a pilgrim. The passage states that a pilgrim must often take back roads and defend himself with a stick against hazardous dogs. The stick represents the faith required to defend oneself against threats like hellish dogs.34

Other dangers are present; behind the wanderer a gallows sits atop a hill. This is a clear reference to Golgotha and Christ’s redemption, which is later echoed inside the triptych. In the

---

32 Silver, 260.
34 Koldewij, 63.
Rotterdam panel, the ominous sign of the owl shadows the wandering man. Bosch is using a hill to represent spiritual danger, or salvation. The wanderer’s walking stick creates a diagonal line directly to the gallows of death. The stick may symbolize mankind’s only path to redemption, and furthermore, it protects him from the dog, or iniquity. The panel from the Rotterdam Wayfarer may also provide an island of righteousness amidst the evil. Directly below the hill, an ox looks directly at the viewer while gesturing toward the wanderer with its head. In traditional Adoration scenes, the ox appears to acknowledge the event by looking directly at the scene, thus he represents the gentiles who accept Christ. Bosch’s ox may be encouraging persistence, communicating to the viewer that while it may be difficult spiritually, the path he is travelling—presumably to the altar—is the correct one.

Viewer identification with the wayfarer can also be understood in terms of the practice of Devotio Moderna. In his book Imitatio Christi (c.1418), Thomas a Kempis urges readers to accept a measure of accountability for their own salvation. Bosch’s contemporaries and viewers, therefore, understood that individuals were responsible for their own choices between good and evil. Consequently, a recognition and understanding of human failings was necessary to navigate the path of life. Bosch’s wayfarer embodies these concepts. The Pilgrimage of the Soul states that all humans are on their way to heavenly Jerusalem. Jos Koldeweij remarks that Bosch intentionally avoids presenting his wanderer as a stereotypical pilgrim, travelling on a specific expedition, in order to avoid any negative associations with nomadic pilgrims without a purpose. However, if an actual pilgrim were to view the image, he would have an affinity with the figure in his general life pilgrimage. The viewer thereby recognizes himself regardless of his state.

36 Koldeweij, 62-63.
The packs on the pilgrim’s backs have led some scholars to suggest that they are peddlers and hence swindlers. Virgin Tuttle contends that while peddlers did indeed have such baskets, they were not only carried by peddlers; any traveler might require a type of container for his belongings. It seems likely that Bosch was allowing the viewer to see the pack as he pleased, with the primary idea of it being a burden that the traveler must bear, thus implementing the concepts of *Imitatio Christi*. A Dutch edition of that book published in Antwerp in 1505 contains a woodcut of Christ giving his blessing as Salvator Mundi (Fig. 5). The words accompanying the page read “No follower of mine shall walk in darkness, says the Lord” (John 8:12) as the opening statement of the book and epitomizing the *Devotio Moderna* movement. In the woodcut, Christ is looking toward a figure within the decorative frame. The figure’s dress and pack are identical to Bosch’s, but the pack in the woodcut contains grapes, a Eucharistic symbol. The man appears to be struggling amid the greenery and monsters throughout the rest of the frame, while Christ looks on with a steady gaze.

This contemporary woodcut presents the wanderer in a similar fashion to Bosch’s pilgrimage. He is struggling through the trials of life and temptation, signified by the monsters and the vegetation. However, the grapes on his back, representative of the restorative and spiritual power of the Eucharist, imply that he is on the right path despite his obstacles. Having a similar premise within a popular text that was produced alongside Bosch’s works further supports the idea that viewers were reading and recognizing the themes, specifically pilgrimages, in Bosch’s works.

---

38 Tuttle, 88. She also points out that Michel Mollat describes the typical poor traveler as carrying a pack on his back and a walking stick. See Michel Mollat, “La notion de pauvreté au moyen Âge: position de problèmes,” *Revue d’histoire de l’église de France*, No. 53, (1966), 17.
39 Koldeweij, 60, 64.
40 Ibid., 64.
Fall and Redemption: Binaries within The Haywain

The wayfarer disintegrates both physically and spiritually when the triptych is opened and he is split in two. The solution to his predicament lies in the focus on the predominant figure of Christ in the central panel. The interior of The Haywain reveals a continuous narrative, progressing from left, Eden, to right, Hell. The central panel features the secular world, making the subject the present state of man. The Haywain was one of the first triptychs in northern European art to make this world, not the next, the subject of the work. The viewer senses his own presence within the painting, and is thus brought into the liminal space between the mortal world and the altar. There, the viewer learns what is perhaps Bosch’s most important lesson, namely, that there are two options available to the everyman pilgrim: heaven or hell. The triptych, however, is not only meant to be read horizontally, the composition also encourages vertical reading and understanding. This parallels the vertical emphasis of the church itself, which also directs the viewer’s gaze toward heaven.

The binary construction provided by The Haywain makes the choice between good and evil accessible to Bosch’s audience. The journeys and destinations located throughout the triptych reflect basic theological principles found in well-known literature of the time, like Thomas Aquinas’ Summa Theologica (1265-1274). The pattern of Aquinas’ book, which was emerging as common theological theory, utilizes a cyclical device similar to the “life journey” motif of The Haywain. Aquinas discussed the main elements of Christianity as being the existence of God, the creation of Man, Man’s purpose, Christ’s mission, the Sacraments, and the return to God’s presence. These basic concepts are seen layered within the triptych through different signs and symbols. Reflections of these ideas from the Imitatio Christi and Speculum

---

42 As will be discussed later in this study.
*Humanae Salvationis* indicate that the ideas discussed in this paper, and put forth in *The Haywain*, are one part of the overall paradigm that popular Christian culture was adhering to in late fifteenth-century Netherlands.

As an instructor of righteousness in this popular culture, Bosch utilized a common technique of his day—the triptych. However, his application of the continuous narrative, his lack of *grisaille* on the exterior panels, and his use of contemporary/popular figures in combination with Christian allegory were a unique contribution to the genre. Bosch shifted ever so subtly away from the established, symbolic character and traditional reading of the triptych, in order to offer his viewers a deeper meaning, and more accessible instruction. Bosch’s altarpiece created a liminal space that harmonized the abstract spiritual journey his audience was travelling, with their actual personal Eucharistic journey to the altar. Once a viewer had approached the altarpiece, he read the triptych from left to right.

The left panel describes the mortal journeys that necessitate Christ’s redemption (Fig. 6). The top of the left panel begins with the rebel angels being cast out of heaven, their last journey from heaven, with the intent to spiritually blind and deceive the inhabitants of earth.\(^{43}\) Revelation 12:12 states: “Woe the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.”\(^{44}\) The rebel angels spill out of the cloud into Eden, taking on the form of insects and other strange beings.

The rebel angels in *The Haywain* intend to block any spiritual ascents made by mankind. The journey that these creatures are making out of heaven would be a warning reminder to the spectator due to their sheer number; Bosch’s spectators were no doubt terrified with the knowledge that the earth is full of demons bent on destruction. This is the first journey offered


\(^{44}\) This event is apocryphal, providing a history for the battle in Revelation 12:7-12, the battle between St. Michael and his angels with the seven-headed dragon and his angels.
by the triptych: that of the single-minded, lost souls in open rebellion against God. Though it would have been typical of Bosch, he did not take advantage of the subject matter—the creatures are not as grotesquely deformed as others within the triptych.45 Perhaps this was meant to underline the fact that the angels are united in their purpose. Instead, Bosch focuses on the event itself by placing the powerful figure of God, surrounded by righteous angels, above the cascade of falling, lost souls.

The rest of the panel, from top to bottom, continues the narration of Eden set within a fanciful, Boschian landscape. The first scene below the rebel angels is the Creation of Eve. God the Father is present as an older, white-bearded figure, rather than the younger Christ-like figure presiding at the betrothal of Adam and Even in the Garden of Earthly Delights (Fig. 7).46 Below this vignette is the Temptation of Adam and Eve. The serpent possesses the head of a woman, similar to Hugo van der Goes’ painting of The Fall of Adam of c. 1480 (Fig. 8). Satan’s association with Eve and women anticipates her symbolic relationship with the viewer represented in the next scene.

These two events in Eden lead to the second journey taken on the interior of the triptych, the Expulsion, which is placed in the foreground before the viewer. Adam and Eve are being driven out by an archangel, who is clothed in a cope and alb, the liturgical vestments worn by the priest at Mass.47 Adam is positioned toward the spectator, although the angel is coming at him with a flaming sword. It is as if Adam’s need to communicate is urgent enough to risk the

---

45 Silver, 260-261. Silver also points out that the rebel angels are loosely painted, and that underdrawings have been discovered with infrared technology revealing similar angels not painted on. He states that this confirms the impression that this (Prado) is the stronger version of the two triptychs, and that it at least has original sections painted by Bosch.
46 Ibid., 21-24, 264.
angel’s wrath, as he is clearly gesturing toward the angel. He is indicating that disobedience to
God produces the anger, represented by the angel’s threat of violence.

Adam’s message provides multifaceted instruction to the viewer. He is first and foremost
calling attention to the consequences of sin, which removes one from the presence of God. The
message continues, however, in the angel’s clothing, which may be associated with the
Eucharist. Adam is reminding the viewer that it is only through Eucharistic cleansing that one
can be restored in good favor with God. Eve’s role in the message is clear: she turns away from
the viewer, and consequently from the important advice that Adam offers as she enters the mortal
world. Eve clearly sorrows, both for her transgression, and the pain she will experience out of
Eden. This gives viewers a look into their own potential sadness if they descend into
transgression and disobedience.

With Adam’s warning of the consequences of sin firmly presented, the central panel
offers the hay cart itself (Fig. 9). The lyrics of a Netherlandish song (c. 1470) pronounce that
God has piled all the good things of the earth into a heap like a stack of hay for man’s taking.
However, each man wants the whole pile for himself. What man does not see when he is blinded
by greed, is that hay is worthless, or that worldly gain is of no value.48 The general consensus
among scholars is that this panel portrays the sin of avarice. This is evident in the masses of
people clamoring for the hay while blinded to the fact that the cart is slowly entering into the hell
of the right panel, and taking them along. Above the hay wagon, Christ looks down as he begins
his ascent into heaven, leaving humans responsible for their own choices and actions.
However, the principal concept taught by Bosch is that a proper spiritual journey is the one
exemplified by Christ and that his followers must reject a life of avarice and folly.

48 Gibson, 71. Paul De Keyser has researched the meaning of the hay more thoroughly in “Rhetorica
Christ’s Ascension

The figure of Christ above the hay represents the actual Ascension that took place at the end of Christ’s earthly mission. This event coincides with Bosch’s theme of the pilgrim as it parallels the wanderer’s attempt to follow Christ into heaven on his final journey. Furthermore, Christ’s central, topmost position in the triptych suggests his role as the ultimate example for the viewer. By following Christ’s example, the viewer will ascend with him. Therefore, Bosch’s viewer is presented with a choice: choose to ascend into heaven or descend into hell. As a moral instructor, Bosch obviously recommended that his viewers choose and follow the path to salvation by ignoring the pitfalls of sin and ascending into heaven.

In order to achieve this intended effect, Bosch referenced the theme of Christ’s Ascension. In fact, although heretofore unrecognized as such, Bosch actually intended that The Haywain itself be read as Christ’s Ascension. Evidence for this interpretation is readily apparent in iconographical evidence throughout the triptych. Examination of the illuminated manuscripts that directly influenced Bosch’s work confirms this interpretation. Both Mary’s and Peter’s locations in the scene, and their traditional roles in the Ascension further bolster this argument. Finally, Bosch was visibly influenced by other versions of the Ascension produced by his contemporaries. While the necessary pieces of the Ascension are present within the triptych, each aspect is layered with additional meaning. As Bosch’s viewer visually follows the scene to the figure of Christ, she is able to recognize her own imperfections, and is reminded of the personal spiritual journey that the Ascension symbolizes.

Canonically, the Ascension is an event that is mentioned only briefly in scripture. Although it is described on three different occasions in the New Testament, the most thorough accounts are in the Gospel of Nicodemus: “And while Jesus was speaking to his disciples we

---

49 Gibson, 9-12.
saw him taken up into heaven…. While he was yet sitting on the Mount Mamilch and teaching his disciples we saw a cloud overshadow both him and his disciples and the cloud took him up into heaven, and his disciples lay upon their faces upon the earth.”

The version in Mark is the most concise, describing only the ascent and the presence of his disciples. In Luke, more interaction with the Apostles is described. In Acts, there is a description of the cloud that received him and two men in white apparel. Finally, in the gospel of Nicodemus, the new element of the Apostles praying with their faces on the ground is added.

In the sixth century, Pope Gregory the Great contrasted the Ascension of Christ with that of Enoch and Elijah. Enoch had required the assistance of angels to rise into heaven, and Elijah the aid of a chariot. Christ significantly ascended into heaven by his own power and this began to be recognized as a manifestation of his divinity. Bede perpetuated these ideas in the eighth century, influencing Carolingian homilists in the ninth and Anglo-Saxon vernacular writers in the tenth-century. An anonymous, tenth century homily discusses this feature of the Ascension:

The cloud did not make its appearance there because the Lord had need of the cloud’s aid at the Ascension, nor did the cloud raise him up; but he took the cloud before him, since he hath all creatures in his hand, and by his divine power and by his eternal wisdom, according to his purpose (will), he orders and disposes all things. And he, in the cloud, disappeared from their sight and ascended into Heaven, as a sign that from thence in like manner he will on Dooms day come upon this earth in a cloud, with hosts of angels…..

---

50 Gospel of Nicodemus, First Greek Form 14 and 16. Komroff, Manuel, *Apocrypha* ed. by Manuel Komroff, (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1936), 189. Often referred to as the Acts of Pilate, this work does not assume to have written by Pilate, but to have been derived from the official acts preserved in the praetorian at Jerusalem. The alleged Hebrew original is attributed to Nicodemos. The title "Gospel of Nicodemus" is of medieval origin. The Apocrypha gained wide credit in the Middle Ages, and has considerably affected the legends of our Savior's Passion. Its popularity is attested by the number of languages in which it exists, each of these being represented by two or more recensions. There is a text in Greek, the original language; a Coptic, an Armenian and a Latin, besides modern translations. The Latin versions were naturally its most current form and were printed several times in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. See “Acta Pilati” The Catholic Encyclopedia website: http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01111b.htm

This theological development manifests itself in the images proliferated after the fifth century as Christ begins to ascend without the assistance of God’s hand coming down from heaven. Indeed, God’s assisting hand almost disappears at this point in time, and while Christ is seen ascending in various ways, such as on thrones, in mandorlas, or simply within the clouds themselves, it is by his own power that he rises. However, there are examples where supportive angels accompany him into heaven, but Christ does not use the support of their hands (Fig. 10). These angels accentuate his heavenly ascent and provide the viewer with additional incentive to follow him. Bosch may have included one of these “supporting angels” as a tool to help direct the path of the wanderer.

In Northern Europe, medieval images of the Ascension depicted an ascending Christ, viewed by the twelve apostles, but no Mary figure. It was not until the influence of eastern manuscripts reached the west, that Mary was included in the scene. This influence quickly evolved in western scenes, available to Bosch, and Mary became a common figure in the Ascension.

It has also been suggested that Mary was included in the scenes to illustrate John 3:13: “No man hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven.” Mary’s presence recalled the fundamental idea that the divine Christ had elevated the human nature he had received from his mother to heaven, enthroned next to his father, and that he had descended to earth. An event such as the Ascension is ideal for illustrating this idea.

52 Dewald, 293.
53 The earliest versions of the scene were developed out of the final stages of classical, Roman art and therefore depict a realistic rendering of the event. They portray a beardless Christ on a mountain, stepping up into heaven aided by the hand of God, which is coming down from the top of the image, helping him up. Below Christ, the Apostles are usually present and have been represented in various states such as praying, looking up, or studying. Their faces usually contain a mixture of fear and contemplation. Dewald, 277-82.
54 Ibid., 286.
55 Deshman, 519.
56 Ibid.
because as Christ ascends from earth to his rightful place in heaven, he is taking with him the humanity he inherited from his mother. Moreover, the Ascension symbolizes finality. The inherited humanity that rose up with him is representative of mankind’s ability to join him on the right side. Mary also experienced her own ascension at the end of her life. After her death, her soul ascended as an exemplum for human kind. In images of this event, Mary parallels Christ (Fig. 11).

Twelfth-century mystics had also discussed Mary’s role in the Ascension. Her presence in the scenes influenced by eastern versions may have prompted them to consider her in their writings about the event. St. Elizabeth of Schoenau was known to have experienced frequent mystical graces until her death in 1164. One of her graces referenced the Ascension, and was recorded by her brother Egbert, a Benedictine abbot. St. Elizabeth described the event: Mary was not only present, she was in fact the last with whom Christ spoke after Peter. Mary then offered comfort and inspiration to the saddened disciples.57 Mystical visions involving Mary at the Ascension became a trend which continued with later medieval mystics such as St. Bridget of Sweden. While she remained a prominent figure in the Ascension scenes, Mary was frequently shown alongside Peter. In St. Elizabeth’s vision, she related that Mary, Peter and John were the only participants who remained serene after Christ departed.58

Peter was eventually depicted alongside Mary as a person of seemingly equal importance in the Ascension scenes. Peter is commonly identified with graying, lighter hair, occasionally tonsured, and a beard to indicate age, as in a twelfth-century German painting where he is distinguished from the other apostles (Fig. 12). It is quite clear why Peter would be a figure with recognizable features after having received the keys of authority from Christ. When Mary was

58 Ibid., 252.
absent from the scenes, Peter would quite often share the central focus with John or Paul (Fig 13). However, it is quite rare to find an Ascension scene without Mary in a place of prominence. In southern Europe, the images produced in the thirteenth century and thereafter were in the Byzantine manner and maintained primarily a frontal, full-bodied Christ with Mary as the central figure below the scene, and a disappearing Christ with Mary and Peter sharing the dominant position below him in the northern European examples. Ascension images in manuscripts contemporary with Bosch typically included these key components (Fig. 14). As Christ becomes an example to follow by rising above the mortal world, figures like Peter and Mary will represent the pilgrim choosing righteousness and ascending with Christ. Most interpretations of the triptych focus on mankind’s failure to choose the correct path through his foolishness. The clouds played a symbolic role in the Ascension, emphasizing mankind’s character as imperfect beings. Bede’s homily on the subject of the Ascension that was mentioned earlier applies the incarnational principle to the cloud from which Christ ascended. He spoke of how the cloud overshadowed Christ’s brilliant divinity as he reached earth, and filtered it to a level tolerable for humanity.\textsuperscript{59} Bosch utilized these concepts in \textit{The Haywain}, where clouds mark Christ’s, and hopefully the viewer’s, ultimate destination. As will be discussed, Bosch’s Mary is located on the bottom left side of the central panel, she remains below to encourage the pilgrim on his path to personal ascension and fulfill her role as intercessor.

Bosch’s ascending Christ is wearing the red robes of the passion. In \textit{The Golden Legend}, Voragine holds a discussion with an angel asking Christ questions about his ascent into heaven. He asks him why his clothing is red. Christ answers that it is representational of his blood and that the devil was a winepress that entangled the human race and pressed out their spirituality. Christ broke that winepress with his earthly sacrifice and when he ascended into heaven upon its

\textsuperscript{59} Deshman, 520.
completion, he opened the doors of heaven and poured down the wine of the spirit; his blood. The bright spots of red throughout the entire triptych could symbolize the wine, or his blood, pouring down.

The hay cart presents several interactive connotations, including the hill of Christ’s Ascension. The worthless hay clearly represents greed as the figures surrounding it appear to desire it above all else. However, hay is also a fairly clear reference to the Nativity, the manger, Golgotha, and the “bread” of Christ’s mortal body. Therefore the hay could also reference Christ’s mortal experience, echoing his role as the new Adam, and thus uniting the scene with the left panel. This also gives allusion to the mortal experience of the viewer. These significant aspects of Christ’s mission tie in with the Ascension by symbolizing the important steps necessary for a pilgrim to take on his path to salvation.

At Christ’s birth, his death was inevitable. The event of his birth is fundamentally associated with the manger, and therefore, hay. The manger and the altar are interchangeable symbolically. The image of Christ rising gloriously above the mound of hay resonates with connotations of the altar upon which the triptych sits. This is achieved not only through the symbolism of Christ’s position and the hay itself, but also through the actual shape of the mound. The top is leveled out, providing an altar for the body of Christ, or the Eucharist. The viewer has the choice to metaphorically partake from Bosch’s altar by deciding to ascend along with Christ.

---


61 Through the sin he committed, Adam brought sin and death into the world. Christ paid for mankind’s impactions, brought on by the Fall, through his sacrifice. Christ is referred to as the “last Adam” in 1 Corinthians 15:45, referring to his triumph over the sin that the “first Adam” brought upon his descendants. Christian theologians consider Christ as the new Adam, and Mary as the new Eve. In 1 Corinthians 15:45, it is understood that as the original Adam was the head of all mankind, the father of all according to the flesh, so also Jesus Christ was constituted chief and head of the spiritual family of the elect, and potentially of all mankind, since all are invited to partake of His salvation. Thus the first Adam is a type of the second, but while the former transmits to his progeny a legacy of death, the latter, on the contrary, becomes the vivifying principle of restored righteousness. See “Adam in the New Testament” The Catholic Encyclopedia website: http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01129a.htm
The angel on top of the hay is kneeling in adoration, as if taking part in the Mass.⁶² Continuing in this vein, the tomb of Christ, and his majestic ascent from it, marks the completion of the cause for which he was born. The hay mound/altar can then become the tomb, representing the body of Christ.⁶³ As the hay transforms into the tomb, the viewer witnesses Christ overcoming death and rising above the hay. The tomb also references Christ’s one descent, his earthly mission. The tomb in Bosch’s panel warns viewers of the “spiritual death” they may suffer if they choose to follow the hay cart. Again, the mound of hay acts as the hill in Jerusalem from which Christ ascended into heaven, completing his earthly mission.

Bosch has produced a more evident reference to the correlation linking the tomb and the altar. On the exterior of his Epiphany Triptych (c. 1495) he portrays the Mass of St. Gregory (Fig. 15).⁶⁴ As told in The Golden Legend, St. Gregory sees the body of Christ as the Man of Sorrows while performing Mass.⁶⁵ In Bosch’s version an altar is laid out before Gregory and the donors of the triptych. Rising from the altar is the figure of Christ. Bosch has portrayed a Man of Sorrows similar to Christ in The Haywain. Surrounding him is an arch-shaped progression of small scenes narrating the Passion and directly above Christ’s head is the hill of Golgotha.⁶⁶ This example displays Bosch’s knowledge of these connections and use of them in The Haywain.

On the hay mound, the owl perched on the branch above the blue devil is a clear sign of ominous evil (Fig. 16).⁶⁷ However, he plays another role in conjunction with the birds flying

---

⁶² Gibson, 72-73.
⁶³ The connection between the altar and the tomb goes back to the early church. The altar became understood as the symbol of Christ's tomb; this conflation is partially based on the fact that the Eucharistic elements were placed on the altar during the liturgy, and specially preserved portions reposed on the altar for use during emergencies. See "Pyxis Depicting Women at the Tomb of Christ," In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/litu/ho_17.190.57.htm
⁶⁴ Silver, 166-67.
⁶⁵ Voragine, 138.
⁶⁶ Silver, 166-67.
⁶⁷ Blue is considered the traditional color of deceit, solidifying the symbolic power that the hay (or the adversary) can have over the will of mankind, and the negative association with the owl. Gibson, 73.
away behind him. The birds flying away symbolize Christ’s Ascension, and his “flight” into heaven. The details of the birds are inscrutable as they have already reached a significant distance from the rest of the scene. However, they appear to be more slender than the bulky form of the owl, suggesting a different species. St. Jerome considered birds, specifically eagles, a symbol of the Ascension. 68 Furthermore, the bird’s flight creates a sense of freedom from the anchor of the hay. Birds in flight conjure the notion of “going home,” resembling both Christ’s final journey and the journey of the pilgrim. 69 As the birds flee the scene, the owl stays attached to the branch, representative of the controlling power of greed. The owl that does not ascend into the sky represents choices a wanderer may make leading to descent.

Owls are a fairly common Boschian device. A completed Bosch drawing called The Field Has Eyes, the Wood Has Ears features an owl hidden in a tree, only visible to the viewer (Fig. 17). Above in the branches day birds cavort. 70 Owls are predators of day birds, yet they also attract their prey. 71 The birds in this drawing are unaware of the danger that is near, resembling the figures in Bosch’s panel who are attracted to the hay. They are ignorant of the dangerous path on which their desire is leading them on. The birds taking flight in The Haywain have received their spiritual sight, grown aware of the danger presented by owls, and have continued on their journey toward salvation. The viewer is encouraged to do likewise.

In another instance of duality, the representation of an owl is a warning symbol in the Netherlands; he sits atop the procession wagon as an ominous sign for the followers of the cart. 72 The birds flying away may symbolize the broken chains in which mankind is no longer ensnared.

---
69 Birds in flight have been used as a symbol of the Ascension on it’s feast day. See F. L. Cross, The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, (London: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2000.
71 Silver, 279.
72 Gibson, 146, 161.
Christ’s sacrifice has freed them, or mankind, from an eternal sentence in Hell brought on by the
Fall. The Ascension was the final strike against Satan’s power. 73 The yellow clouds that open up
to reveal Christ in the sky above parallel, in opposite fashion, the open clouds from which the
rebel angels spill down in the left panel. The viewer’s eye is first led down in the left panel, and
then up in the central panel in symbolic fashion. Bosch’s use of the Ascension was not unique to
him. There are also contemporary examples of Ascension scenes that confirm Bosch’s intent and
use of the event.

During the last half of the fifteenth-century, Bruges became the principal center for art in
the region. 74 The leading artist in the city was Hans Memling (act.1465-1494), who painted for
several patrons producing art influenced by his predecessors Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der
Weyden. 75 Memling produced a painting that featured small vignettes across a unified
landscape, which provided an example for Bosch and others of numerous small figures displayed
across a large panorama. 76 This type of continuous narrative is similar to Bosch’s triptychs.
Indeed, Memling’s Panorama of the Joys of the Virgin of 1480 bears striking resemblance to
Bosch’s Haywain (Fig. 18). Memling portrays the seven joys of Mary, and like Bosch, the
principal events of Christ’s life, including the Ascension. It also utilizes one comprehensive
landscape amid the varying scenes. Memling’s style of composition would have informed
Bosch’s later triptychs. 77 In this particular work by Memling, he has portrayed the Ascension in

73 As Christ left the earth, he also remained spiritually to help the pilgrims on their path. Matthew 28:20:
“Because he who was taken up into heaven is both God and a human being, he remains on earth with the saints in
the humanity which he took from the earth, but in the divinity with which he fills the earth and heaven equally he
remains all days, even to the consummation of the world.”
74 Silver, 81. Next to Ghent, Bruges had the second largest population in Holland and Flanders, and with a
large canal linked to the North Sea, the entire continent could conduct trade there. Also see Jean Wilson Painting in
Bruges at the Close of the Middle Ages: Studies in Society and Visual Culture, (University Park: University of
Pennsylvania Press, 1998)
75 Ibid., 82.
77 Silver, 88-89.
the distance on the right side. It is placed to the left of the Assumption of Mary in the upper right corner. Christ’s placement, robes, and gesture echo those used by Bosch in *The Haywain*. Furthermore, halfway between Memling’s Ascension scene and the foreground, are two women who appear to be Mary and another holy woman. These women are not only placed next to each other in a similar fashion to Bosch’s, but the Ascension is also taking place behind them and to the right. Works like Memling’s may have influenced Bosch to incorporate similar themes into a single symbol, comparable to the role of the hay in *The Haywain*.78

In 1490, Hans Memling created *The Resurrection, with the Martyrdom of St. Sebastian and the Ascension* triptych (Fig. 19). The right panel portrays the Ascension in a manner similar to the illuminated manuscripts. Christ is disappearing into the clouds, rather than being lifted up with the clouds, in the common medieval technique.79 It is clear that Bosch was not the only artist who borrowed Ascension influences from illuminated manuscripts.

Also during Bosch’s time, sculpted narratives with small-scale figures in dense religious narratives were widely admired, especially when made into large shrines.80 One such shrine is the *Lijdensaltaar* in the St. Antonius chapel, commissioned by the Brotherhood of Our Lady in c. 1500 for the Cathedral of St. John in ‘s-Hertogenbosch (Fig. 20). This altarpiece contains themes related to Bosch’s depiction of ascents and descents, and its location and patrons provide a further connection. Bosch was a member in good standing of the Brotherhood, and along with

---

78 Bosch’s use of similar holy women discussed on pages 31-36.
79 Meyer Schapiro, “The Image of the Disappearing Christ: The Ascension in English Art around the Year 1000,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, ser. 6, No. 23, (1943), 133. This style is referred to as the “disappearing Christ.” A term that Meyer Schapiro coined in the 1940’s. Christ is portrayed at the very moment he disappears into heaven; his upper body hidden in stylized clouds, or a mandorla, that reveal only his feet and legs, occasionally the entire lower half of his body. This was initially developed in England and then traveled quite quickly to the continent at the end of the eleventh and into the twelfth centuries. This new style became the standard in northern Europe and England, while Italy held onto the established Byzantine manner. Also see Deshman, 519.
his father, was consulted in connection with this commission. The principal artist was a well-known sculptor from Utrecht, Adrian van Wesel. Bosch and his brother Goswin were also called upon to paint wings for the sculpted altarpiece. While the originals are believed to have been destroyed, the replacement panels appear to be done by a follower of Bosch.

The outer, right shutter of the Lijdensaltaar depicts Christ’s Ascension. The bushes here are reminiscent of the vegetation atop the hay cart in The Haywain, providing further evidence that at least the top of the hay cart represents the hill from which Christ ascended. The angels accompanying Christ are also similar to the lone angel in The Haywain. In addition, the hill also holds a rectangular tomb, a unique component in an Ascension scene, which is symbolic of Christ’s triumph over death, the Eucharist, and the altar before which the pilgrim is stands. Finally, the tomb in ‘s-Hertogenbosch’s Lijdensaltaar is comparable to Memling’s foreground in Panorama of the Joys of the Virgin. It presents the Resurrection scene with a tomb similar to the example of the Ascension in the Lijdensaltaar. This Ascension scene is also analogous to scenes like Grunewald’s Resurrection of the Isenheim Altarpiece (c. 1512-1516) (Fig. 22). The flat, rectangular tombs are comparable, suggesting that the Lijdensaltaar panel may be a reference to both the Ascension and the Resurrection. Bosch’s close association with the Lijdensaltaar further bolsters the argument that the hay cart is an interchangeable object.

It has been established that it is common for an Ascension scene to be portrayed with Mary and Peter without the apostles or with the two figures in a dominant position ahead of the rest of the apostles. In The Haywain, the same essential compositional factors exist. Mary is

---

81 Silver, Bosch, 122, 131.
82 Scholars have suggested that Bosch’s panels St. John the Baptist, and St. John the Evangelist on Patmos were shutters on the altarpiece in commemoration of the dedication of the church to St. John. Koldeweij, 70-78.
83 Ibid.
represented in the foreground of the left side, and Peter is represented on the horse within the procession.  These two figures further solidify the argument that the panel depicts the Ascension, and they also provide the pilgrim with spiritual support on her journey.

Peter and Mary were almost exclusively featured in all versions of the Ascension in illuminated manuscripts by the end of the thirteenth century. Moving up the central panel on the left side, a procession of men on horses appears behind the hay wagon (Fig. 23). Most scholars have identified the two men in the front as the emperor and the Pope, specifically Alexander VI. The men behind them have been identified as Burgundian dukes, and the remaining horsemen are specified through their banners. One is the double-headed eagle of the Holy Roman Empire, the other the fleur-de-lys of France. Once again, Bosch teaches in binaries—the first of these two figures, at the head of the procession on horseback, is the embodiment of St. Peter. In this role, the figure acts as both the then current and the first ever pope. Furthermore, in the left panel, where God is creating Eve, God is wearing the same hat as the man on the horse. This is further evidence that this man replaces God on earth, which is the role of the pope.

The Peter/Pope figure is clearly not only following, but gesturing toward the hay. Next to, and behind him are the heads of the spiritual and political realms of Christianity. This is clearly a message about the danger and far-reaching effects of greed on all levels of status and class. I suggest that by using the pope to also represent St. Peter, it is a commentary on the inevitability that humans will fall, thus their need for redemption. Peter is placed parallel with the Temptation of Adam and Eve in the left panel. At this moment in the Fall, they are still

---

85 Schapiro, 135.
86 Brown, 252
87 Gibson, 69.
88 Silver, 270.
89 Ibid.
unaware of their transgression. The Peter/Pope figure is still unaware that he is following a hay wagon directly into hell. St. Peter himself experienced ignorance about his own transgression until he heard the cock crow a third time. “And Peter remembered the words of Jesus, which said unto him, before the cock crow, though shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly (Matthew 26:75).” This event in Peter’s life demonstrates his own instance of spiritual blindness, represented in his literal blindness of the hay cart’s descent into Hell.

In the foreground of the hay cart scene, the standing woman in white is often identified as a fortune-teller, reading the palm of the woman next to her (Fig. 24). However, it is plausible that the woman in white and her companion allude to Mary and Elizabeth at the Visitation. In images of the Visitation, Mary and Elizabeth face each other in the same manner Bosch has portrayed them. Elizabeth is often gesturing toward Mary, indicating to the viewer her role as a holy vessel (Fig. 25). Furthermore, the fortune-teller suggestion may stand as a reference to Elizabeth’s knowledge of Mary’s pregnancy before she was told.

In The Haywain, these two women are posed toward each other in an intimate posture. Placed at eye level with the viewer, the personal connection appears not only sacred, but significant in relation to the rest of the panel. However, the women have been placed as figures among the foolish characters throughout the panel.91

The woman beside Mary has been singled out as a fortune seeker because of her finery.92 Bosch has portrayed this woman in other works. One finished drawing by Bosch, or his workshop, portrays The Entombment (Fig. 26). To the left of the composition is a woman with a bowed head, holding up a crown of thorns. Her manner of dress is quite similar to Elizabeth’s in The Haywain. While the woman’s identity in The Entombment is unclear, she does appear to be

---

90 Silver, Bosch, 266.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid.
a pious, if not holy figure. This is further evidence that Bosch intends the two women in the central panel to be read as holy figures, rather than fortune-tellers.

Perhaps Bosch chose to portray Mary with Elizabeth because of the duality that Elizabeth provides for Mary. Mary learns of Elizabeth’s pregnancy at the Annunciation, and hurries to visit her (Luke 1:39). Mary’s eagerness to reach her older relative may have been a desire to seek a confidante, one in a similar position. Mary’s desire to share her joy with the other woman eventually reveals her as both a holy vessel, and a mortal being. Mary, divine though she is, walks among humanity, which emphasizes her role as an intercessor. In the journeys of the soul that Bosch offers his viewers, there is an attitude of equality, and even sympathy, with those whom Bosch condemns. In the case of The Haywain, he uses both genders and every class to encourage all to adhere to his warnings. Using this idea, Bosch is calling for a type of instruction to the masses, revealing a much more compassionate opinion of mankind than his demons and menacing figures would suggest. Bosch seems to firmly believe that escape from sin and misery, represented by his more grotesque creations, is possible for the pilgrim: with the help and intervention of both Mary and Peter.

Bosch’s technique of teaching by comparing and contrasting related binary concepts reaches an apex in the figure of Mary and her association with Eve in the left panel. As Eve turns from the viewer in sorrow, she enters into the central panel, and reemerges into the secular world as the “new” Eve. She is pointing unswervingly at Mary with her elbow in a direct line that is a short distance with no obstacle between the two figures.

The woman placed below Mary and Elizabeth may at first appear to pose a problem with the Marian identification, as she is wearing the same clothing as Mary. However, she can also be understood as another dualistic lesson within the scene. Firstly, her clothing is dull in its
whiteness, accentuating the brightness of Mary’s. She is not wearing the outer robe shared by Mary. Lastly, Bosch has portrayed her as a reference to the events behind her. The exposed bottom of the baby symbolizes the objectionable behavior of the people surrounding the hay; their greed for a worthless object portrays the dirtier side of human nature.93 Mary is pure, separate, and extremely distinct from all that the hay represents. Next to the dull woman, a pig’s head roasting on a spit further symbolizes gluttony and greed.94

As the two women in the foreground have been identified as the Visitation scene, the issue of Mary actually holding an infant is solved through the little boy next to Elizabeth, both children representing Christ and John the Baptist. The small boy next to Elizabeth is only slightly older than the infant Mary holds, illustrating their six-month difference. Thus, this element alludes to the future-- just as the Ascension alludes to the future.

In illuminated manuscripts, there are numerous early and contemporary examples produced in the Netherlands and Flanders that use this same pose. In the 1425-75 example from Tournai discussed earlier, the two women’s hands meet together as an acknowledgement of the treasures they hold.95 Furthermore, Elizabeth’s clothing also has the same color motif that Bosch uses. Behind them is a hill, mostly likely representing Golgotha. Hills like this one continue to be portrayed in Visitation scenes in illuminated manuscripts. Another example from c.1450-1500 renders the same hill, gesture, and clothing, as Bosch’s women (Fig. 27). A hill representing Golgotha and the future fate of Christ also connotes the Ascension hill, the tomb, and the altar; all contained within The Haywain.

Mary and Elizabeth are placed in the foreground, looking out at the viewer as if to acknowledge the scene behind them. A slight diagonal line draws them to the angel on the

93 Dixon, 112.
94 Silver, Bosch, 230.
95 See Figure 25.
mound of hay, and hence toward Christ in the clouds above. Furthermore, the positioning of the greedy gatherers, as well as their pitchforks and ladder, helps draw the viewer’s eye to Christ and the angel. Thus the viewer is enlightened with the knowledge that one’s path may become clear upon recognizing the misdeeds of others—the hay gatherers are a cautionary tale intended to warn and exhort. Furthermore, the ladder is representative of both ascents and descents; Bosch included it exclusively for the viewer, as it is not necessary for the retrieval of loose hay. To the left of the hay, Peter stands as a symbol of the true church of Christ upon the earth, a means to ascend, contrasting with the false deceit of the hay, leading the masses down.

Continuing with the narrative created in the left panel upon Eve’s exit out of Eden, a man with a walking stick makes his way toward the hay. The blind man in the central panel appears to require the support of the small child with him. He also carries a burden on his back, this time a baby. He has often been recognized as a false beggar, a character in *The Pilgrimage of the Soul*, identified by his tall hat. His blindness is preventing him from spiritually noticing the “island” of righteousness that Mary and Elizabeth create. However, the viewer may also read his staff as a symbol of hope pointing upward toward Christ. This is the type of hope available to the pilgrim at the altar. He may see it as an opportunity to banish his own blindness.

Past Mary and Elizabeth, next to the seated woman in white, the artist has depicted a quack doctor, clothed in the garments of a surgeon-barber, examining the open mouth of a female patient in a red dress. He has hung up a banner displaying a heart with worms coming out of it and a rat below. Beneath that banner is another document, bearing an official seal in order to give his patients confidence. Legitimate medical practitioners of the era were often difficult to distinguish from quack doctors; this common problem was often satirized as

---

96 Hellerstedt, 163-66.
97 Gibson, 58-59.
98 Silver, *Bosch*, 266.
blindness and foolishness in literature and art. Furthermore, Bosch may have intended this vignette to be understood as another binary regarding the true healing of Christ, and the false healing of the world. Next to the quack doctor is a bagpipe player in blue. He is perhaps serenading the group of nuns that are frantically hoarding hay, while a fat friar looks on at their labor. The lustful song of the bagpipe player contrasts with the supposed virginity of the nuns. This completes the foreground; all figures are symbols of greed and deceit, with the exception of Mary and Elizabeth. Their interactions with the children represent the Christ child, contrasting with the woman exposing her child, a symbolic false Christ. These figures are all involved in a symbolic descent, spurred on by the Fall in the left panel.

While Bosch has drawn a visible line of ascent from Mary to Christ, he has also drawn lines of descent. These instances of decline are set off by the rebel angels spilling out of the clouds of heaven. Travelling directly downward, they blend into the descent of Adam and Eve set in a sliding zigzag narrating their fall. As they travel into the central panel, the line moves up from Mary to Christ. A slightly diagonal line connects Christ in the clouds, down to the figure crushed by the wheel of the hay cart. This figure has not only fallen beneath the literal cause of deception, the hay, but has fallen upon a ladder that is pointing downward. Paralleling those who fall from God’s presence, this fallen ladder contrasts with the ladder pointing up to the angel and eventually to Christ. The crushed figure’s position completes a pyramid, with Christ and Mary. The man beneath the wheel and Mary provide the base of the pyramid; Christ is the head. This is an example of smaller paths within larger paths in the triptych to ensure the viewer follows the upward path and shuns the other. One is leading up, the other is leading down.

99 Vandenbroeck, 67-69.
100 In Ship of Fools Sebastian Brant says “If bagpipes you enjoy and prize, And harps and lutes you would despise, You ride a fool’s sled, are unwise.” Sebastian Brant, Ship of Fools, trans. Edwin Zeydel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), 186.
The foolish figures that desire the hay also represent the dangers of descent through their flailing, contorted bodies. They are bending toward the ground, hell, or the hay, physically set against the direction of Christ above, descending against him. The figures of Mary, Peter, and the angel praying are placed in an upright position, representing their ascent. The viewer’s vision can either be drawn up or down, descending or ascending according to their own actions. Bosch’s chaotic scene presents the viewer with the correct path, but admits that human nature creates roadblocks to obscure the pilgrim’s vision. The viewer has the ultimate decision; he knows that the path recommended by Mary and Christ leads to salvation, while the path chosen by sinners leads to damnation.

The sheer size of the hay cart blinds its followers as it descends into Hell, which becomes the right panel (Fig. 28). It is in this last panel where Bosch portrays his familiar demonic creatures leading the procession to damnation. While Christ is clearly visible to the spectator, he is ignored by the figures below. The steady pace of the hay wagon toward hell, informs the viewer that Christ will be left alone. The viewer chooses the correct path, and rises with Christ above the altar. The only other saving grace is the “island” of Mary, the viewer’s intercessor. Her role in the triptych can prevent the result of transgression in the right panel. Souls are being punished according to their particular sins, as is also the situation in Bosch’s Garden of Earthly Delights. The occupants of Hell appear to be building and expanding their domain, in anticipation of those shortly arriving from the central panel.

In the foreground of the hell panel, a man astride a cow is being tormented by demons as he crosses a bridge, which may be a reference to the Visions of Tondalys. In Tondalys’s journey into Hell, he was punished for stealing cattle from a neighbor by leading one across a narrow

---

102 Ibid., 271-272.
bridge. Tondalys’s unfortunate experience with that bridge resulted in torment, curable only if he had made the decision not to cross and instead return the cow. This bridge in Hell reminds the viewer of the narrow bridge on the exterior that the wayfarer was approaching.

The background appears to flame behind ruins that are only silhouetted against the night sky. Damned souls struggle throughout, but their efforts are fruitless. The darkness of this locale symbolizes the darkness a wanderer may stumble into upon becoming spiritually blind. St. Gregory had a vision of heaven in which houses were being constructed of golden bricks, each brick representing a good deed performed on earth. Walter Gibson suggests that the stones used for building in Bosch’s hell panel parallel St. Gregory’s vision, as the demons build out of stones supplied by misdeeds. Furthermore, the idea of establishing a building suggests a final destination. As Bosch is speaking to all pilgrims, wanderers, and everyman, he may be reminding them of how one’s choices lead to certain finality. By concluding in Hell, *The Haywain* encourages the viewer to consider the destination of her journey – a pilgrimage performed poorly, may very well descend into the most undesirable of locales.

*The Haywain* has presented the pilgrim with an opportunity to choose righteousness. He has made it clear through the use of ascents and descents, based upon the ultimate ascent of Christ upon the completion of his earthly mission. The pilgrim or everyman would have also recognized similar motifs in other works by Bosch that contain references to paths of salvation or damnation.

---

103 Gibson, 77.
104 Ibid., 61.
The Pilgrimage of Christ and Man: The St. Anthony Triptych

*The Temptation of St. Anthony* (c. 1505) depicts the saint’s life in truncated form. The left panel depicts his friends assisting the unconscious saint back to his abode after a struggle with the devil. In the sky above, the saint is being tormented by demons that refuse to let him ascend into heaven. Throughout the panel Bosch has scattered his monstrous creatures and anthropomorphic demons. The central panel continues to portray Satan’s torments and the moment when Anthony asks, “Why didst thou not come to me then, to succor me and heal my wounds?” Set among false prophets and demons, Anthony kneels before an altar in a ruin, while looking out at the viewer. Christ responds to Anthony’s complaint: “Anthony, I was here, but I waited to see thee fight and now that thou hast fought the good fight, I shall spread my glory throughout the whole world!” Reinforced by Christ’s words, Anthony is finally shown in the right panel battling demons of gluttony and lust.105

In this work, St. Anthony’s own pilgrimage through life to spiritual redemption is suggestive of the metaphorical pilgrimage in *The Haywain* offered to Bosch’s viewer as a model of righteousness. Like the *Haywain*, the *Saint Anthony* triptych instructs Bosch’s audience as to how they must live if they wish to ascend to heaven. The triptych depicts the key spiritual events in the life of St. Anthony.

The *Saint Anthony* triptych is a small but complex tale of a single subject. Most likely using Voragine’s *The Golden Legend* as his source, Bosch followed the “known” details of the saint quite closely in his triptych. St. Anthony’s biography reveals several temptations in the wilderness, among them the most challenging was lust. Nevertheless, the hermit St. Anthony exemplifies a worthy figure proceeding on a divine path. His journey is made all the more difficult by his skin condition and relentless tormentors.

105 Ibid., 138-152.
St. Anthony’s sufferings mirror a number of Christ’s, making him an ideal example of emulating Christ for the personal spiritual journey highlighted in the *Imitatio Christi*. In his triptych of the saint, Bosch brings the viewer’s attention specifically to the sins of humanity against Christ. The exterior panels depict two scenes, the *Arrest of Christ*, and *The Way to Calvary* (Fig. 29, 30). Immediately the viewer is faced with a reminder of his sins in conjunction with a narrative from the Passion. This imagery portraying a journey is dual: Christ is on his way to fulfill his mission, but he is also physically on his way to Golgotha. Both spiritual and physical passage is necessary to complete a successful pilgrimage. The figure of St. Anthony on the interior provides the audience with an example of such a dual journey. Furthermore, the destination of the pilgrimage can be both physical and spiritual, allowing any pious beholders the prospect of a voyaging experience up to and before the altar.

The *Arrest of Christ* portrays suffering essential to the journey of a pilgrim emulating Christ. In this scene, Christ is being tormented by a group of soldiers and a jeering crowd. In a slightly diagonal vertical line, Bosch has created his “islands of righteousness” within the hectic scene. In the foreground, Peter battles Malchus in defense of his master. Slightly above and across from Peter, Judas slinks away. Judas not only moves in the direction opposite the viewer but has his back turned, as if ashamed of the eyes of the spectator in much the same way Eve turned from the viewer in the *Haywain*. Just as Mary and Elizabeth do in *The Haywain*, the positioning of Peter and Judas in the foreground reveals to the spectator the fundamental selection of spiritual paths available. Peter faces toward the viewer; he is the foundation of the vertical line of righteousness. This positioning echoes that of *The Haywain*’s pilgrim and Adam.

---

107 Judas is identified by the bag of silver hanging around his neck backwards. Larry Silver suggests that it may be hung in such a fashion in order to anticipate the suicide by hanging, which Bosch depicts on the Prado exterior. Ibid.
both of which communicate with the viewer in a similar manner. Furthermore, the inner, left shutter of the Lijdensaltaar portrays the Arrest of Christ as well (Fig. 31). Like the Arrest in the St. Anthony Triptych here, Peter is in the foreground with his knife drawn. Peter’s presence in both panels presents a strong image, symbolic of the strength that lies in the correct path.

Christ continues the line of rectitude and then becomes the central figure of the entire panel. Above him sits the “cup of bitterness” upon a hill. It is the highest point within the panel and is symbolic of the moment of solitude Christ experienced in the garden just before his arrest. The prominent hill foreshadows both Golgotha and the Ascension hill, thus once again emphasizing descent and ascent.

The Way to Calvary portrays Christ once again in the center of the panel. He is closely surrounded by St. Veronica, wiping his brow with her veil, and Simon of Cyrene, assisting Christ with the great weight of the cross. These three figures create another island amidst the disturbing antagonists in the crowd, ranging from the soldiers to playful children enjoying the spectator. Parallel to the Arrest, Bosch has placed two figures in the foreground that represent two paths. Facing the viewer and below Christ is one of the two thieves awaiting his fate. He is in deep conversation with a monk, his face contrite and focused as the monk delivers spiritual counsel. The other thief stands opposite this remorseful figure; he appears insolent as the monk attempts a similar conversation. Like Judas, this figure does not connect with the viewer, as he is blindfolded. Once again, the journeys are both literal and sacred, as the destination of the hill looms in the background. The binaries throughout the outer panels combine to reflect the interior. St. Anthony’s experiences on the interior of the triptych echo Christ’s sufferings on the exterior, Christ’s temptation in the wilderness, and his ultimate triumph over them all.108

108 St. Anthony generated popularity from his skin condition (St. Anthony’s fire), which influenced the medieval hospital order, the Antonites, to treat the condition. It has been suggested that St. Anthony’s fire was a
St. Anthony suffered his tribulations while wandering in the desert. He was born in upper Egypt to wealthy parents but left it all to become a hermit. The left wing depicts the saint unconscious, being brought across a bridge by friends (Fig. 32). This bridge mirrors the one contemplated by the pilgrim in the Haywain: both bridges symbolic of paths chosen on life’s journey. These figures are central in the panel and the man to the right of St. Anthony appears to appeal to the viewer, as if asking him to contemplate the sufferings of the saint. St. Anthony and his aids create Bosch’s island of righteousness. This island is even more greatly emphasized by the complicated group of demonic figures, which linger both around the men and in the background.

In the sky above St. Anthony’s tormentors, a miniature St. Anthony pleads upward for help. This small scene is another instance of the portrayal of conflicting paths and ascents and descents. The demons intend to force him to descend with them against his will. These demons bring to mind those that pulled the hay cart into Hell as the hoarders blindly followed. The difference here is that St. Anthony’s eyes are spiritually open. This scene is also conflating another event in his life when angels attempt to carry him away due to his righteousness. Demons opposed this so ferociously, that he was unable to ascend. The winged creatures halting St. Anthony’s ascent in the upper left panel bear resemblance to the rebel angels of the Haywain. Both groups of demon angels have the same goal, which is to lead all astray.

gangrenous skin ailment like ergotism, a condition caused by the fungus found in rye bread. Ergotism may cause hallucinations, which some scholars have suggested caused Bosch to create such fantastical creatures. Another cause could be erysipelas, a bacterium. Ibid., 220-222.

109 Most of the biographical detail of St. Anthony’s life comes from the 360 AD work The Life of Anthony, by Athanasius of Alexandria. It was later translated into Latin Evagrius of Antioch. The Latin version gained popularity that held through the Middle Ages. It was then put into Voragine’s Golden Legend around 1260.

110 The image of St. Anthony among the demons became a popular subject among Bosch’s contemporaries. See Jean Michel Massing, “Schongauer’s Tribulations of St. Anthony: Its Iconography and Influences on German Art,” Print Quarterly I (1984), 220-36.

111 According to Voragine’s biography, St. Anthony was eventually rescued from his tormentors by a wonderful light that drove the demons away and cured his diseased skin. He asked Christ why he was not rescued sooner and was told that he had to first fight worthily, in order to prove his strength. Silver, Bosch, 222.
Below the bridge is a skating creature often referred to as a messenger-bird. The bird is going in the opposite direction of St. Anthony and his companions, serving the same purpose as Judas and the defiant thief on the outer panels. The creature wears a letter “A” on the insignia of his cloak (Fig. 33). It is similar to pilgrims’ souvenirs from Aachen, which often featured a capital “A” occasionally crowned with a small cross. 112 This may be a type of self-portrait: the “A” is perhaps a reference to Bosch’s original surname.113 Bosch may have used the small symbol to identify himself as a wanderer with a message, although the form he takes indicates his own imprudent human nature. Through this self-portrait, Bosch is connecting himself with the viewer and “everyman.” Bosch may have been combining his two toponyms in the triptych, and using a pilgrimage reference as a link to his past. The bird appears to be engaged in his journey and is notably passing St. Anthony. If Bosch is indeed connecting himself to the bird, then it coincides with his pessimistic view of mankind. By connecting himself to such a figure in a prominent location within the work, he is emphasizing to the viewer that his commentary on the paths of life includes himself; it reaches “everyman.” Lastly, the bird’s role as a messenger corresponds with Bosch’s role as artist in bringing the message of his work to his viewers.

The central panel features St. Anthony in the center surrounded by his tormentors and demons (Fig. 34). In this depiction, he is kneeling with his hands in a gesture of blessing, while pausing to turn and communicate directly with the viewer.114 He appears to plead with the

---

112 Jos Koldeweij, 23.
113 Opinions vary as to what the inscription is on the letter being carried. It is often interpreted as saying “bosco,” which is Spanish for “woods” and implies that it was painted for a Spanish or Portuguese patron. In Dutch, “Bosch” also means “woods,” further evidence that Bosch is connecting himself with this figure. Ibid.
114 Most scholars consider the blessing gesture to be a reaction against the Black Mass taking place next to him, and the surrounding evil in general. Others link it to John the Baptist blessing a cup of poison (shown in the container being offered next to him), which then transforms into snakes. Laurinda Dixon is interested in alchemy in relation to Bosch and links the vessel of water to the healing process performed in a hospital of the Antonite Order. See Laurinda Dixon, “Bosch’s St. Anthony Triptych- An Apothecary Apotheosis,” Art Journal 44 (1984), 119-31.
viewer to ignore worldly demons and to continue on a pious path. Fra Jose de Siguenza, a sixteenth-century monk and historian describes Bosch’s depiction of this concept:

He is surrounded by the endless fantasies and monsters that the fiend creates in order to confuse, worry, and disturbs that pious soul and has steadfast love. For this purpose he conjures up animals, wild chimeras, monsters, conflagrations, images of death, screams, threats, vipers, lions, dragons, and horrible birds of so many kinds that one must admire him for his ability to give shape to so many ideas. And all this he did in order to prove that a soul that is supported by the grace of God and elevated by his hand to a like way of life cannot at all be dislodged or diverted from its goal even though, in the imagination and to the outer and inner eye, the devil depicts that which can excite laughter or vain delight or anger or other inordinate passions.115

Siguenza is noticing that Bosch often used the path of the pilgrim in his work. He mentions the fact that the final goal is often hard to see and he observed that Bosch used his talent with fantastical imagery to accentuate the path toward righteousness, clearly connected with the righteousness of St. Anthony. Through using these themes, Bosch poses the question of whether the viewer will be tempted by the surrounding disorder. Bosch does not allow the journey to be made without distractions. The man with no torso stops the viewer’s path, offering a golden cup upon his knee. If this cup is refused, another vessel of liquid is presented to the viewer, being offered as an alternative to the Eucharist. Once these obstacles are avoided, a last creature attempts to dissuade. The hooded monster blows from his piped beak what appears to be smoke, conceivably as a distraction. Despite these temptations and distractions, there is a light coming out of the dark of the ruin. It points directly toward the altar as a figurative “light at the end of the tunnel” before the final destination. It is not Bosch’s intent to dissuade his audience from the true path, but it is a rather sympathetic acknowledgment of mankind’s weakness for distraction.

The Black Mass next to St. Anthony is surrounded by representations of several follies that would lead one to such a distracting destination.\textsuperscript{116} The two figures before the table act as priests, attracting the foolish figures around the table. The pigheaded figure has been identified as the personification of Luna the conjurer, conducting a sort of satanic ceremony.\textsuperscript{117} The pighead may also represent gluttony, as did the pig head in the \textit{Haywain}. The figure in white that partakes of the ceremony is wearing a headdress similar to a crown of thorns, an association with Christ to confound the traveler.\textsuperscript{118} Paul Vanderbroeck has compared this figure’s headdress to the one worn by the robed, bearded man often referred to as an anti-Christ in the central panel of Bosch’s 1495 \textit{Epiphany Triptych} (Fig. 35).\textsuperscript{119} While the role of the man in \textit{The Epiphany} is disputed, his menacing presence against the Christ-child creates a similar duality to that found in the two altars of the triptych.

Once again, Bosch has laid out two complete paths for the viewer. In this panel, the good path leads to the altar in order to partake of the Eucharist. In fact, the right side of the ruin in this central panel portrays a ruined column containing scenes of righteousness within registers on the decaying wall. The third from the top portrays the Hebrew spies returning from Canaan (Numbers 13:24) with a giant cluster of grapes. This scene is used as a typological example of

\textsuperscript{117} Charles Cuttler, “The Lisbon Temptation of St. Anthony,” \textit{Art Bulletin} 39 (1957), 118. Cuttler is looking at engravings of the Children of the Planets in order to demonstrate that conjurers use similar round tables and function under the manipulations of the moon. He is also comparing the figures to Bosch’s \textit{Conjurer}.
\textsuperscript{118} The woman in white has also been compared to the woman in white from \textit{The Haywain}. However, St. Anthony’s figure in white is more plausibly similar to the man in the \textit{Epiphany Triptych}. (See Charles Cuttler, “Exotics in Fifteenth Century Art: Comments on Oriental and Gypsy Costume,” Frans van Wijngaerden et. Al., eds., \textit{Liber amicorum Herman Liebaers} (Brussels: n.p., 1984), 419-34.) Also, there is a figure within the \textit{St. Anthony Triptych} that is similar to the woman in white in \textit{The Haywain}. It is St. Veronica on the outer, left panel. (Fig. 30) She is undoubtedly St. Veronica, given that she is offering Christ her veil. Therefore, her headdress could not suggest a gypsy, or fortune-teller. Furthermore, she is situated within one of Bosch’s islands of righteousness, as is the woman in white with her companion in \textit{The Haywain}. Along with the identical headdresses, the women in both triptychs are wearing similar loose-fitting dresses with wide sleeves, with a type of robe, or apron on top.
Christ Carrying the Cross in the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*.\(^{120}\) It is a reflection of the outer panel, but also the man carrying his heavy burden is quite similar to Bosch’s wayfaring man in the *Haywain* with his walking stick, clothing and stance. He is looking at the viewer and gesturing toward the oversized grapes hanging from a stick next to him, as if revealing to the viewer the destination of his journey-- the Eucharist, or in a larger sense, redemption. Next to this column, St. Anthony also points toward the altar, inviting the spectator to journey toward it and partake.

Next to the altar is the actual figure of Christ, wearing the same dark robes and offering the same gesture of benediction as St. Anthony.\(^ {121}\) He is ascending up to the altar, as do the viewers. This parallel between the two figures allows the viewer to feel as if she can be one with Christ like St. Anthony. The way to achieve this is through the Eucharist being offered not only within the painting but as the painting itself, which would have been placed upon an altar. Like *The Haywain*, Bosch is providing the viewer with a multifaceted pilgrimage, where the path leading up to the correct destination is often unclear and often blocked.

The right wing portrays St. Anthony being tempted by a woman bathing in a stream before him. She is interpreted as the devil in disguise (Fig. 36).\(^ {122}\) He is attempting to read, but the temptation has taken his attention away from his studies. He is not looking directly at her, but is instead turning toward the viewer. He is not making eye contact with the audience, rather Bosch is allowing the spectator to see the distraction and turmoil on his face. Nevertheless, St. Anthony resists, casting a sharp contrast to the first parents who succumbed to the feminine serpent in *The Haywain*. The walking stick that Anthony has may imply his struggle as well. Its

\(^{120}\) Silver, *Bosch*, 230.  
\(^{121}\) Silver, “God in the Details,” 632-33.  
\(^{122}\) Cuttler, 116.
presence could symbolize blindness and Anthony’s attempt to find his way in such difficult
circumstances; this is comparable to the blind man in the central panel of The Haywain.

Finally, the right panel portrays a tree with a hay stack atop it. This is reminiscent of the
Haywain. The tree is on fire, yet an owl remains perched on a branch. The owl’s negative
presence, and its inability to fly away from danger, symbolizes how precarious the road to
spirituality is. A wanderer may be so spiritually blind that even the most damaging temptations
have no effect and descent is imminent. This owl, like the owl in The Haywain, is contrasted
with the birds taking flight, which have chosen the path to ascension.

The environment in this panel is just as cold, watery, disordered, and mystical as the first
two. The differences in this scene are the sexual overtones, which are emphasized by the nude
figures throughout.123 St. Anthony grapples with lust, but Bosch provides points of light
throughout the triptych to guide him on his journey. These clear symbols of the journey of life
reinforce the correct path to salvation for St. Anthony, for the viewer, and for himself. Pilgrims
viewing this altarpiece are reminded of both the frailty of remaining on the correct path and the
hope that remains through committing to Christ. Despite his trials, St. Anthony persevered,
acting as a model of one who has ascended. In Bosch’s time, popular religious practices literally
reenacted this pilgrimage and celebrated feast days commemorating religious holidays. The
floats created for the processions represented themes similar to those discussed in Bosch’s
works. Bosch’s contemporaries would have recognized such premises in his paintings as part of
his contemporary visual culture.

123 Silver, Bosch, 232.
Conclusions: Cultural Manifestations of Pilgrimages

The pilgrimage motif used by Bosch in his paintings was used in the daily life of his contemporaries. In spite of the fanatic religious ideas circulating in the city, ‘s-Hertogenbosch was still on the cusp of secularization. Feast days, processional floats, and parades imitating pilgrimages often resulted in a celebratory atmosphere or “world turned upside-down.” Evidence of processional images inspired by The Haywain solidifies the themes that Bosch’s pilgrimage motif was visible in the commonplace proceedings of his contemporaries and not only in the art being produced.

Bosch was a documented member of The Brotherhood of Our Lady, one of the many groups dedicated to the veneration of Mary. It is assumed that Bosch was rather well to do based on financial records of his wife’s means and the status that comes with being in this particular Brotherhood.¹²⁴ The organization itself was large and wealthy and most likely contributed money and time to the organization of religious music, masses, and feasts. One aspect of these celebrations often included a float as part of the processionals. The religious experience of a procession is remarkably similar to the pilgrimage explored by Bosch. Indeed, a procession can mimic a pilgrimage as it makes its way to the destination of the cathedral. A literal and metaphysical pilgrimage of the soul takes place as the pilgrim participates in the procession, and eventually approaches the altar. Indeed, it is possible that The Haywain is depicting exaggerated, negative feast day and processional behavior, as it influenced later prints commemorating feast days.

¹²⁴ Gibson, Hieronymus Bosch, 16.
In 1559, Frans Hogenberg issued an engraving of a hay cart being pulled among a crowd of foolish individuals (Fig. 37).\(^{125}\) A devil sits atop the hay, similar to Bosch’s blue demon. According to a contemporary description, in August of 1563 a hay cart was actually pulled through the streets of Antwerp in the annual procession held on the Feast of Mary’s Assumption. It was one of several floats meant to reprimand the shortcomings of Everyman. According to contemporary description, the hay cart was ridden by a devil called “Bedrieghelijck aenlocken,” meaning, “alluring deceit.” It was followed by all manner of people trying to pull the hay from the cart for themselves.

Another example of the use of Bosch’s cart is the *Feast of the Assumption* by Hogenberg’s brother Remigus in 1559 (Fig. 38). This scene replaces the hay that Bosch used with turnips. The wagon is followed by a procession similar to that of *The Haywain*. The most visible figures in Remigus’ print are direct excerpts from *The Haywain*: the greedy Franciscan monk, poor Claire nuns hoarding turnips. Upper class individuals sit atop the turnip pile, identified by their clothing in the same manner as *The Haywain*.\(^{126}\)

The Boschian-influenced message is that the guilt of greed extends across all classes. The inscription below the image reads: “Each is out to steal by night, by day, churchmen, laymen, be it woman or man; they pull, they pluck all from the wagon; he is soon called the best who can steal the most.” An explanation for the use of turnips instead of hay may rely on a play on words. Turnips are like hay because they are abundant and of small value, and it has been suggested that Remigus’ turnips illustrate a pun on two Netherlandish words. The noun *rapen*, plural of *raap*, means turnip and the verb *rapen* means to steal or plunder.\(^{127}\)

---


\(^{126}\) Ibid., 188.

\(^{127}\) Ibid.
At the time these prints were produced, depressed economic conditions had beset the Netherlands, which would explain the popularity of Bosch’s *Haywain* because of its warning against greed.\(^{128}\) Therefore, Bosch’s imagery was reworked for a new era. This explains the lack of a Christ figure in the later scenes; Bosch’s feast scene was more of a religious warning, whereas the two later prints were a manifestation of concern for the present economic decline. Furthermore, duality and equality throughout the triptych mirror the psychological atmosphere of ‘s-Hertogenbosch in Bosch’s time. Everyone in the scene appears to be in limbo, save the sanctuaries of righteousness where Mary, Elizabeth and Peter are placed. This suggests the different journeys that those throughout the scene, and the viewer, are allowed to choose. The dual nature of the decision lies above the scene between the angel and demon on top of the hay or the turnips. This print’s association with a procession and its direct influence from *The Haywain* suggest that Bosch’s ideas about pilgrims, ascents and descents were current and understood.

The viewers would also recognize that it is a feast day because of the procession that follows the float. Triumphal processions were held to commemorate the entry of Christ into heaven. They included banners, like the one in the far, back corner of this scene. As stated before, these processions served as a symbolic community pilgrimage. The celebration of processions allowed onlookers to remember the critical choice that must be made to choose the correct path.

The central symbol of the float in *The Haywain* was a blatant reminder of the brotherhood who contributed to the construction of feast day floats. This would be especially clear if The Brotherhood of Our Lady commissioned the triptych as it has been suggested. The

\(^{128}\) Ibid., 194. A decline in commerce and industry, demands for increased taxes by Philip II, and several famines caused the thriving economy of the Netherlands to falter.
float would have been a symbol of the Brotherhood to viewers. Thus he includes himself in this condemnation of mankind. This is further evidence of Bosch’s sympathy to mankind’s plight, and a contradiction to the scathing pessimism that many scholars would propose. He himself desires to be on the correct path, but he recognizes how easily one is swayed from the journey. The central, ascending figure of Christ in The Haywain remains as a constant beacon, and the perseverance of St. Anthony provide an example of one who ascended with Christ despite the temptations.

Bosch drew inspiration and subject matter from his involvement in and personal understanding of these community religious practices. Processions, feast days, and masses offered both subject matter and recognizable metaphor for his chosen teaching method. By referencing communal religious experiences with which his audience was familiar, Bosch was able to clearly and effectively teach his viewers to choose the righteous path toward ascension.

Recent Bosch scholarship has slowly moved away from a strict iconographical approach and interpretations have ranged from divine to demonic. This study has certainly made use of the iconographical method. However, it has also attempted to use different tools of interpretation in order to build upon the work that has been done. Hopefully through this broader reading, the meanings behind The Haywain has become more profound, and a more physical and spiritual rereading of Bosch has been accomplished. The linking of The Haywain with Ascension iconography was meant to be an added layer upon which to expand associations of sin and redemption. Bosch certainly intended the viewer to recall the Ascension and intertextualize it with ideas of journeying, ascending and descending. In a culture where life was centered on religion, spiritual ascents and descents in reference to pilgrimages and processions must have pervaded even the most unenthusiastic worshipper. Due to human nature, it is unfortunately the
descent that is experienced the most, which is why Bosch’s works deal with more examples of
sin than piety. However, I would suggest that his intention was not to condemn, but to assist. His
“islands of righteousness” fluctuate in size depending on how the viewer is experiencing the
message. The church can be such an island within in a town. And more specifically the nave, the
altar, and the triptych become further isolated areas of righteous influence within a wicked
world. As pilgrims make their way to this altar, they undertake Bosch’s intended journey of
ascent and salvation through Christ. This examination has focused on themes situated throughout
*The Haywain* as a whole. Hopefully this approach acts as a call for a rereading of Bosch’s entire
oeuvre. Through this scholars will be able to further locate connecting intertextualities and gain a
greater understanding of his visual culture.
Fig. 1- Hieronymus Bosch, *The Haywain*, c. 1510-1516, Museo del Prado, Madrid.
Fig. 2- Hieronymus Bosch, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, 1505, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon.
Fig. 3- Hieronymus Bosch, *The Wayfarer*, 1510, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam.
Fig. 4- Hieronymus Bosch, Exterior, from *The Haywain*. c. 1510-1516, Museo del Prado, Madrid.
Fig. 5- Artist(s) Unknown, Title page from *Imitatio Christi* with Christ as Salvator Mundi, from Antwerp, 1505, Utrecht, Museum Catharijneconvent.
Fig. 6- Hieronymus Bosch, Left panel, from *The Haywain*, c. 1510-1516, Museo del Prado, Madrid.
Fig. 7- Hieronymus Bosch, Left panel, from *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, 1503-1504, Museo del Prado, Madrid.
Fig. 8- Hugo van der Goes, *The Fall of Adam*, c. 1480, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.
Fig. 9- Hieronymus Bosch, Central panel, from *The Haywain*, c. 1510-1516, Museo del Prado, Madrid.
Fig. 10- Artist(s) Unknown, *The Ascension*, Salzburg, ca. 1150, Morgan Library, New York.
Fig. 11- Ambrogio di Stefano da Fossano Bergognone, *The Assumption of the Virgin*, ca. 1500, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
Fig. 12- Artist(s) Unknown, *The Ascension*, Germany, c. 1150, Morgan Library, New York.

Fig. 13- Master of Troyes, *The Ascension*, France, c. 1250, Morgan Library, New York.
Fig. 14- Artist Unknown, *The Ascension*, from the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*, Germany, c. 1400-1500, Koninglijk Bibliothek, The Hague.
Fig. 15- Hieronymus Bosch, *The Epiphany Triptych*, Exterior, 1495, Museo del Prado, Madrid.
Fig. 16- Hieronymus Bosch, Detail from *The Haywain*, c. 1510-1516, Museo del Prado, Madrid.
Fig. 17- Hieronymus Bosch, *The Field Has Eyes, the Wood Has Ear*, c. 1500-1516, Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin.
Fig. 18- Hans Memling, *Panorama of the Joys of the Virgin*, 1480, Alte Pinakothek, Munich.
Fig. 19- Hans Memling, *The Resurrection, with the Martyrdom of St. Sebastian and the Ascension*, 1490, Louvre, Paris.
Fig. 20- Adrian van Wesel, *Lijdensaltaar*, in the St. Antonius chapel, Cathedral of St. John, 1500, ‘s-Hertogenbosch.
Fig. 21- Artist(s) Unknown, Ascension, from the Lijdensaltaar, in the St. Antonius chapel, Cathedral of St. John, 1500, 's-Hertogenbosch.
Fig. 22- Matthias Grünewald, *Resurrection*, from the *Isenheim Altarpiece*, 1512-1516, Musée d'Unterlinden, Colmar.
Fig. 23- Hieronymus Bosch, Detail from *The Haywain*, c. 1510-1516, Museo del Prado, Madrid.
Fig. 24- Hieronymus Bosch, Detail from *The Haywain*, c. 1510-1516, Museo del Prado, Madrid.
Fig. 25- Artist(s) Unknown, *Visitation*, from Book of Hours, Northern France, c. 1425-75, Koninglijk Bibliotheek, The Hague.
Fig. 26- Workshop of Hieronymus Bosch, *Entombment*, c. 1477-1516, British Museum, London.
Fig. 27- Artist(s) Unknown, *Visitation*, from Book of Hours, Central France, c. 1450-1500, Koninglijk Bibliotheek, The Hague.
Fig. 28- Hieronymus Bosch, Right panel, from *The Haywain*, c. 1510-1516, Museo del Prado, Madrid.
Fig. 29- Hieronymus Bosch, *Arrest of Christ* panel, from *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, 1505, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon.

Fig. 30- Hieronymus Bosch, *The Way to Calvary* panel, from *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*. 1505, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon.
Fig. 31- Artist Unknown, *Arrest*, from the *Lijdensaltaar*, in the St. Antonius chapel, Cathedral of St. John, 1500, ‘s-Hertogenbosch.
Fig. 32- Hieronymus Bosch, Left panel, from *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, 1505, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon.
Fig. 33- Hieronymus Bosch, Detail, from left panel, from *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, 1505, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon.
Fig. 34- Hieronymus Bosch, Detail, from central panel, from *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, 1505, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon.
Fig. 35- Hieronymus Bosch, *The Epiphany Triptych*, 1495, Museo del Prado, Madrid.
Fig. 36- Hieronymus Bosch, Right panel, from *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, 1505, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon.
Fig. 37- Frans Hogenberg, The Haywain Surrounded by Allegorical Scenes, 1559, Bibliothèque Royale Albert Ier., Brussels.
Fig. 38- Remigus Hogenberg, *The Turnip Wagon*, 1559, Bibliothèque Royale Albert Ier., Brussels.


Campbell, Josie P., Popular Cultures in the Middle Ages, (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1986).


