The Sides of the North

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An Anthology in Honor of Professor Yona Pinson

Edited by

Tamar Cholcman and Assaf Pinkus

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PROFESSOR YONA PINSON

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EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

THE MANY SIDES OF THE NORTH: OVERVIEW AND PERSPECTIVES

TAMAR CHOLCMAN AND ASSAF PINKUS

> "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north."
> *Isaiah* 14:13

Little voice, great mind. Whoever attended Professor Yona Pinson's lectures knows well that at some point she would surely smile apologetically for having a little voice. Indeed, you must pay attention and listen carefully. Speaking softly and gently, yet wisely, assertive, and eloquently, Yona's little voice expresses inspiring thoughts, stimulating ideas, moving students beyond words, beyond the visual. For the past forty years Yona has taught in the Art History Department at Tel Aviv University, from tutor to professor to chair. The diversity of topics and methodological approaches covered by her research, from meticulous iconographical studies to post-modern reflections on such issues as marginality and folly, reveal her eminent scholastic lasting impression on both students and scholars in the field of Northern Renaissance Art. Her publications and courses provided us, her students and colleagues, with a wide scope of in-depth interdisciplinary studies that have broadly enriched our intellectual and cultural horizons, evoking our curiosity and imagination. Discussing a painting by Van Eyck, Memling, or some other artist, Yona would often recall a concert she had heard or an event she had witnessed in that very same church where it hangs, thus constantly reminding us that a work of art is always a living member in the much larger body of human culture. Through these often personal anecdotes, she would then point out to us some previously unnoticed aspects that emerged from the paintings' encounters and interactions with other media, times, and audiences. Whoever worked with Yona can attest too to her

warm personality and moral integrity: as much as she is devoted to her scholarly work, so too has she been dedicated to fighting for human rights, a better future for Israeli society; and she has never hesitated to raise her "little voice" against wrongs when it was needed, whether in the public political life or in the academic arena. At the same time, she would always find the way and time to encourage, instruct, and listen to each and every student. "I have learned much from my teachers, more from my colleagues, and most of all from my disciples." It is with this quotation from the Babylonian Talmud (*Ta'anit*) that Yona used to begin her courses. It is time now for her colleagues and students to pay tribute to all that we have learned from her.

Raising his throne above the stars of God, seeking to equal himself with the utmost height in the Sides of the North, the story of Hillel ben Shahar, Lucifer, embodies the human faults that occupied the very heart of Pinson's academic interest: hubris and obtuse human nature, hope and vanity, spiritual ascension and physical decline and, mainly, a moralistic lesson that is interwoven throughout Northern Renaissance Art. This volume offers homage to her long journey along the Sides of the North.

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Yona Pinson completed her PhD studies in the early 1980s at the Sorbonne IV under the supervision of Professor Jacques Thuillier. Her dissertation was on the sixteenth-century wooden doors of the "treasury" of Saint-Bertin, which holds the relics and goldsmiths' objects of the abbey's church. Since then, her research has extended to focus on Late Medieval and Northern Renaissance Art, mainly iconographical topics; comparative iconography; the works of Bosch and Bruegel the Elder; issues of gender and morality as visualized in the theme of the *femme fatale*; emblems books; and the intricate relations between word and image. Many of her articles – in such prestigious publications as *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, *Corpus of Illuminated Manuscripts*, *Artibus et Historiae*, *Studies in Iconography*, *Source Notes in the History of Art*, *Emblematica – An International Journal for Emblem Studies*, and *Word & Image* – have long become milestones in the field. A complete survey covering each of her contributions would demand a volume of its own. Here, however, we shall indicate just a few examples of her influential writings.

In her study on Bosch's new form of the moralized semi-secular triptych, Pinson demonstrates how the artist's inventiveness is expressed through his audacious shift from the formal arrangement of the devotional triptych, in which he replaced the religious content of the central panel

with an apparently secular theme. Intended for both courtly and cultivated elite audiences, this new design would have stimulated private contemplation. Bosch introduced into these moralized triptychs motifs that had formerly been found exclusively in the domain of marginal imagery. The sacred narratives or iconic images are replaced with seemingly profane or secular imagery not belonging to the devotional realm. With the traditional pattern of the triptych now disturbed, the new motifs relocated in the center become vehicles of didactic instruction, and this novel ensemble carries a new sermonic tone. As a departure point for her reconsideration of Bosch's oeuvre, Pinson carefully challenges the traditional assumptions of both much-discussed works, such as the semi-secular *Haywain* triptych, *c.* 1510, and less familiar ones, such as the recently reconstructed triptych, *c.* 1494, whose fragments are kept in Rotterdam, Paris, New Haven, and Washington. Moreover, her new reading explores the ethical and moralistic dimension of sermonic triptychs. Following this path, she further suggests how such unusual didactic lessons seem to employ an apparently secular vocabulary in order to administer a sober sermon. In the moralistic lesson *homo viato*r, the theme of right and wrong choices adds an ethical dimension to Bosch's sermon painting, guiding the viewers through their own succumbing to vices, or being ensnared through the follies and earthly temptations, of lust, gluttony, and avarice that would eventually lead to damnation.

Another exploration by Pinson of the works of Bosch is dedicated to images of war and violence as ethical lessons in his *Last Judgment* triptych. Here, she underlines the relations between violent imagery and actual historical events. Her discussion ranges from images of battles, skirmishes, and raids within the geographic vicinity of Bosch's environs, to the artist's didactic and ethical visual statements about the vagaries and horrors of war. Reading Bosch's visualizations of hellish war machines, soldiers, assaults, and sieges as moralistic statements, she relates these to the writings of the contemporary moralists who condemned the violence of warfare, such as Erasmus of Rotterdam and his position in regard to the actual conflicts between the Habsburgs and Guelders. Pinson further explored this topic in her recent publication on the war and anti-war discourse in Alciato's *Book of Emblems*. Here too she examines specific anti-war motifs, paying particular attention to the influence of, again, Erasmus's particular approach, this time in regard to Alciato. Alciato's personal experience of the ravages of the French and Habsburgian military assaults on Milan during the early sixteenth century are seen as the driving force behind his pacifist discourse, which gained even greater significance when the emblems were grouped within the context of thematic

classifications and Virtues and Vices, as introduced by Rouille in the 1549 French and 1550 Latin editions of the *Emblemata*.

Pinson's examination of Bruegel's 1564 *Adoration of the Kings* introduced us to another seminal observation. The Old King's strange and deformed face and his wild white hair served her as the first clue to questioning what might otherwise seem to be a traditional reverential depiction. By carefully examining the Old King's rich costume, she revealed meanings of wickedness and symbols of sin interwoven into the rich brocade design and embroidered on the border of his royal robe. Bruegel's depiction of the Epiphany is, therefore, not only completely secular, but is also a pessimistic world view. In Breugel's *Adoration*, she contends, the Kings form part of the forces of evil and bow falsely before the Lord. She furthers this astute observation by examining more of the Northern Renaissance Adorations, concentrating on the figure of the Black King in a seminal study that is also addressed in this volume by Larry Silver. Focusing mainly on Bosch's and Breugel's Epiphanies, Pinson offers a new reading of the Black Magus based on the emblematic signs concealed in the ornamentation of the kings' cloaks, their offerings, and also their gestures and attributes. Through the examination of patristic exegetical literature and the contemporary images of black figures in the popular literature, she convincingly demonstrates the penetration of the negative image of the black man into a highly devotional moment of the Adoration of the Christ Child.

Her interest in visualized moralistic lessons led Pinson to cross to the other side of the North, where she addressed the architectural elements and scenography in the art of Nicolas Poussin. Pinson demonstrates how, by inserting contemporary architectural elements taken from the *scena comica* into the ideal city setting, for example in his *Massacre of the Innocents*, Poussin actualizes the remote time and signs of transience and ephemeral life, which now become carved into the decor. Thus, architectural principles become speaking elements and visual metaphors in Poussin's mute language, translating and reflecting his moralistic approach to art. "Led by Eve: The Large Ship of Female Fools and the Five Senses" is the title of another of Yona's academic journeys, engaging with the subject of representation of women in Northern art. Helping to define these issues, Pinson notes how the image of Eve was depicted as incarnating danger as a powerful temptress, able to entrap Adam through her sensuality. Eve becomes here a personification of Sight, elegantly dressed as a courtesan, with her alter-ego thus having metamorphosed into a contemporary bourgeois seductress. In early modern Europe, Pinson

contends, the powerful, disobedient woman represented a real threat to the well-established patriarchal bourgeois social order.

Pinson's seminal study, *The Fools' Journey. A Myth of Obsession in Northern Renaissance Art*, epitomizes her interdisciplinary and broad-scope approach to Northern Renaissance Art and is undoubtedly among her most laudable works. Tracing the evolution of the newly-emerging iconographical patterns of fools and folly, it sheds light on the original and innovative invention that was an exclusive creation of Northern Renaissance art and culture. The novel theme of the fools' journey, as expressed mainly through prints in Germany and later in the Netherlands in the sixteenth century, is revealed as an ironical paraphrase, parodying the well-established Christian *topos*, the Pilgrimage of Life or the Pilgrimage of the Human Soul, which offered the believer the opportunity to journey on the road towards redemption. The new mythical image of the fools' journey, however, confronts the contemporary reader/viewer with an image of the fool on his journey that will lead him, instead, to his doomed fate, thereby reflecting a pessimistic world-view. In a reception-based analysis Pinson takes into consideration the strategies of communicating meanings and values to various audiences, from the wider, necessarily literate urban public, notably women, to the highly cultivated elite circles of urban society that displayed a greater intellectual involvement. In her view, the work challenged the sophisticated viewer to re-create a meaningful ensemble out of the various scenes and motifs presented within complex compositions; while for the illiterate, the same medium served as a didactic tool.

On the occasion of her retirement, and having more than fulfilled her academic duties, Pinson finally found the time to return to her original passion that had led her to choose art history as her vocation. Her forthcoming book, *Mirror of Moral: Moralization, Allegorized Lessons, and Irony in Hieronymus Bosch's Oeuvre*, is not only the realization of her own expectations but also of ours, her students, colleagues, and readers.

The present anthology, *The Sides of the North*, expresses Pinson's fields of interest, and thus, following her path, this volume is arranged according to some of the major topics she has worked on and explored.

Opening this volume is the thematic comprehensive overview first chapter by **Larry Silver**, who discusses an originally lost central panel from a dismembered *Adoration of the Magi*, which has now been found in a European private collection. Known previously only from a weak copy and a somewhat better adaptation (Anderlecht), the architecture of a preserved portion of its left wing contains a fragment with a depiction of two shepherds (Philadelphia) and aligns exactly with the corresponding

side of the central panel. Silver addresses the imagery and content of the newly-reconstructed *Adoration* in terms of its relationship to other Adorations, especially the better-known triptych in the Prado, through which he is able to locate the work among Bosch's early oeuvre. Evidence of alteration to the painting (*pentimenti*) further indicates its belonging to Bosch's own workshop. Silver leads the reader from the conception of the Three Magi as representatives of the three oldest continents (the older Magus represents Europe, the younger one represents Asia, and the youngest, the Black Magus, represents Africa), through an analysis of the Black Magus, and through other triptychs that Silver compares and analyses; through an imagery of evil and grotesque figures, animals, and other monsters; to an acute analysis of the Magi's characters, presentation, and gifts. Agreeing with Pinson's analysis of Bosch's and Bruegel's representation of the imagery of gifts by the Three Magi as suspicious, even evil, components, Silver continues to substantiate the newly-recovered Bosch center panel as definitively complementing surviving panels, more specifically the two wings preserved in a pair of fragments (at the Philadelphia Museum of Art): *Two Shepherds* and *Retinue of the Magi*. Silver finally determines that the newly-found triptych, with its original center, had indeed originated in the Bosch workshop and is indeed an authentic "Bosch" creation, whose content accords with other works by the same painter that he analyses in the chapter on this crucial theme of the Adoration of the Magi. Silver effectively demonstrates that the serious iconographic content and ultimate vision of this small devotional work stem from the unique imagination and from the lifetime workshop of Bosch himself. Silver's assessment and recognition of the reconstructed triptych with its original center as an authentic "Bosch" creation is thus an important contribution to the still unresolved question of to what extent workshop execution made up the overall output of Bosch's oeuvre.

The following three chapters are concerned with *self-fashioning*. **Mara Wade**'s chapter deals with Melchior Lorck, the first Danish artist of international renown. Through the analysis of Lorck's three self-portraits Wade takes the reader on a fascinating journey, following the artist through Renaissance Europe, from Denmark to Ottoman Constantinople. By means of these very different self-portrayals, she also takes the reader on a second journey, establishing Lorck's self-perception and his self-positioning as a cosmopolitan artist and scholar. The three self-portraits depict Lorck as a cosmopolitan by situating him, first, in the court festival of Maximillian II; second, in the Ottoman Empire in the Prospect of Constantinople; and third, in the pictorial language of humanism as expressed through an emblematic self-portrait. In the first portrait Lorck is,

as Wade observes, one of the participants of the festival and thereby a subject of Maximilian and the European tradition; while in the second he is seen in the process of creating a panorama of Constantinople, revealing it to Europe. In so doing, Wade argues that Lorck established himself as open to the new culture and thus a true cosmopolitan. As the culmination of his artistic development, the third portrait, the emblematic self-portrait, as Wade skilfully establishes, positions Melchior Lorck as a sophisticated man of the world whose cultivation and refinement are expressed in the sixteenth-century genre of learned elites: the emblem. Through this fascinating journey of the three self-portraits, Wade leads the reader in this chapter to the pinnacle of her premise – that the cosmopolitanism of Melchior Lock finds its truest expression in his emblematic self-portrait – in the Emblem.

The emblematic mentality of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is discussed by **Michael J. Giordano** in the third chapter, through several emblematic books, and especially through a comparative study of the works by Andrea Alciato and Maurice Scève, both of which have important claims on Renaissance history. Andrea Alciato's *Emblematum liber*, printed in Augsburg in 1531 by Heinrich Styner, is considered to be among the earliest printed emblem books and was widely circulated in Europe. Having no fewer than a hundred editions by 1620, it inspired the writing of local emblem books in France, Germany, Spain, the Low Countries, and Poland. The important work of Maurice Scève, *Délie, object de plus haulte vertu*, followed Alciato's success and was published in Lyon in 1543 by Antoine Constantin. Scève is probably the first French writer of the device, a motto and picture that reciprocally interpret one another (a device, or *imprese* as the Italians called them), and the first French writer to compose a *canzoniere* in the manner of Petrarch. Giordano compares and contrasts Alciato and Scève in regard to the philosophy of the icon, word-image relations, their very different ways of addressing their publics, the functions of the emblem and device, and their attitudes towards the oft-sought virtue of Prudence. Inquiring into the relations between motto (*inscriptio*), image (*pictura*), and the verse texts (*subscriptio*), the study pays close attention to inter-semiotic translation, demonstrating that although both authors share the tenets of emblematic thought, their moralistic aims and strategies differ: while Alciatio teaches his readers through moralized allegories, Scève poses questions, avoiding glossary in favor of periphrastic indirection and enigma.

The fourth chapter, by **Kathryn M. Rudy**, presents an intriguing manuscript, written and used in the late fifteenth century by a community of religious sisters in the eastern part of the Northern Netherlands

(possibly the third order Franciscan nuns in Kampen). This non-illustrated manuscript, as Rudy contends, is in fact a theatrically interpreted text of the Legend of Saint Barbara. Read in its entirety and in solitary meditation in the eight days before the saint's feast, it engaged the reader in a prayer that involved a three-fold disposition: an activity to perform, a (mental) image to ponder, and lines to utter. The spiritual exercise is thus interactive, demanding that the reader involve her own body in telling and meditating upon the martyrdom story, and in performing, as Rudy denotes it, a small-scale theatre whose spectators are the sister herself, Saint Barbara, and Christ. The sister thereby undergoes such spiritual calisthenics in order to imitate Saint Barbara during her attenuated martyrdom, who is in turn imitating Christ during his Passion. The text may have been used in conjunction with an image depicting the various stages of Barbara's suffering, and thus constructed a somatic exercise which took place in the presence of the multi-episodic *Passion* of Barbara. By reading the text in this way, Rudy concludes, the nun could use the actions of her body, the sound of her voice, and possibly the image in front of her eyes, in order to construct an elaborate and imaginative mimesis of the sacred.

Another principle topic in Pinson's academic oeuvre is the issue of *marginality*. This is addressed in the two following chapters. **Nurith Kenaan-Kedar**'s contribution in the fifth chapter delves into one of the most enigmatic pictorial phenomena of the High and Late Medieval culture – marginal sculpture. Through a close examination of the corbel sculptures installed on the flying buttresses of Laon Cathedral, she reflects upon problems of pictorial language, expressive forms, type and topics of marginality, viewing practices, meaning, and morality. Tracing the historiography of medieval marginal sculpture, from the romantic writings of such scholars as Champfleury, Victor Hugo, and Prosper Mérimée, and iconographical studies such as those by Émile Mâle on the one hand, and of structuralists, modern, and post-modern theory, from Mikhail Bakhtin and Meyer Schapiro to Michael Camille, on the other hand, Kenaan-Kedar engages with issues of style and meaning, formal versus marginal art, model and antimodel, reserved versus extreme emotional gesticulation, etc., considering marginality as the threshold between patrons and artists, official and peripheral. Following this, Kenaan-Kedar offers a close analysis of the forty-eight almost free-standing sculptures of the male corbels at Laon. Until the present study, these had been identified merely as Caryatides, ignoring their idiosyncratic form and function. Categorizing the various figures into four groups that perform specific gestures – looking into the distance, listening carefully, looking skywards, and

resting – she interprets this visual reality as a variation on the theme of hearing and seeing, listening and watching, the two senses that are manifested here through bodily movement. In a comparative study with other medieval marginal sculpture and through examining the literary and historical writings, Kenaan-Kedar finally identifies the figures as representing the city watchmen.

In the sixth chapter, **Liad Rinot** addresses the subject of the background painting of cityscapes found in many iconic paintings of the fifteenth century. These cityscapes often include detailed views of daily urban life, of buildings, and of the townspeople engaged in quotidian activities. Background images have received much attention in the research of sixteenth-century landscape painting and have been interpreted as bearing religious meaning, inviting a "mental journey." Symbolic use of everyday images in the background was a device also employed by Hieronymus Bosch to create an allegorical landscape, which the viewer was then required to interpret in order to reveal the work's moral religious meaning. Many such images, however, Rinot contends, can already be found in the backgrounds of works by Campin and his followers and this device was in fact "borrowed" from the "marginal imagery" of medieval manuscripts. Similarly, the fifteenth-century background painting too represents a "model-anti-model" relationship with the main figures, offering another layer of meaning in interpretation of the painting's main theme. Rinot identifies a number of motifs from urban daily life, such as the tavern, the barbershop, and the representation of women outside their homes, integrated into devotional paintings. All these, he contends, bore negative moral meanings for the contemporary viewer. He suggests an understanding of this dichotomy between the images that embody notions of sin in the background, and the religious scene, not only as evidence of the artist's endeavor to create a more realistic view of the city, but also and primarily as a representation of the daily life that the believer sought to leave behind when dedicating himself to private religious contemplation, following the *Devotio Moderna* principles. The background cityscape was thus, Rinot concludes, aimed to aid the viewer to ascend from the mundane to the heavenly realm of the saints, from the back-grounded marginal everyday activities to the foregrounded contemplation and imitation of the saints.

The topic of *artistic identity and intentionalism* is viewed from different angles. In the seventh chapter, **Ingrid Alexander-Skipnes** sheds new light on the work of Master H. L., known to us only by his initials. Examining a small boxwood sculpture of Adam and Eve, dated *c.* 1520, she reveals its complex iconography, the artist's use of materials, and his

technique, as well as his treatment of this traditional theme, in relation to sculpture, prints, and paintings by his contemporaries, and thus reveals how the artist employed his technical virtuosity to create a dynamic and innovative narrative. The richness of its design and the innovative use of space distinguish this small sculpture from other *Kleinplastik*, according to Alexander-Skipnes. The artist, who signed his works only with his initials, has left a scant, yet tantalizing clue to his identity. Although little is known of the origins of his training, it has been established that he was active between 1511 and 1526 in the Upper Rhine region, and likely also to have worked in Lower Bavaria, Austria and, possibly, to have visited Italy. Alexander-Skipnes demonstrates the artist's familiarity with the work of German artists' treatment of the subject, especially Dürer and Cranach, and through the exploration of the stylistic commonalities with Netherlandish artists she discusses how Master H.L.'s materials and technique were used to accomplish striking visual effects. These were achieved by carving patterned ridges in a variety of directions for the ground that extends to the back wooded area, creating a "hatchings" texture, resembling the printmaker's technique. The composition reflects a theme that flourished in early sixteenth-century Germany, but reveals innovation and invention which, according to Alexander-Skipnes, reveals the artist's adaptation and "translation" of artistic and iconographic elements of his contemporaries, particularly Dürer, Baldung, Cranach, and the Netherlandish artist, Gossart, into his own inspired vision. As the subject was largely commissioned at the time by private collectors, Master H.L's unconventional narrative and originality would have resonated within the cultural circles of the early sixteenth century.

Ruth Strauss, in the eighth chapter, focuses on the relations between the repeated presence of Jan Steen in various disguises in his own paintings and his identity as artist, attesting that the artworks reveal the true temperament of the artist. The inclusion of the artist's self-representation (unlike self-portrait) in various roles and modes, as a comic actor or stock character, exploring human passions, "wearing the mask" of the fool, as a "wise fool" or commentator, or as a sinner, and using the connotations of his name and monogram in the paintings, express his identification with his own craft and represent a reflection of his Self. The absence of a self-portrait of the artist in traditional outfit and with the tools of his craft is significant for understanding his view of the creative process and of himself in the role of painter. The examples discussed by Strauss demonstrate how the various modes of self-representation are dictated by their contexts in various compositions, and at the same time dictate the nature of their depiction as influenced by theoretical ideas. Comparing the

allegorical self-representations to Steen's official self-portrait helps to clarify the way in which he constructed his identity, according to his own objectives but, concomitantly, intended to match the expectations and viewing practices of his contemporaries. In this chapter, Strauss proposes a new interpretation of Jan Steen's self-representation that indicates repetition as a significant device that allows the viewers to understand his multi-layered intellectual approach and creative working processes in his self-fashioning and, ultimately, his identity. Conceiving the painting as a mirror of the many facets of the moralistic and symbolic meanings of the term "identity" in Northern Renaissance art and culture, the paintings offer a visual discourse on identity as invented, imagined, and embodied by the artist in his work.

In chapter nine, *Aaron as High Priest* stands at the center of **Juliette Roding**'s iconographical study, both as a topic and as a work attributed to Karel van Mander III (1609–1670). The painting has a rather vague history, in terms of its commission, attribution, and location and, mostly, of its identification: namely, whether it indeed represents the biblical figure of Aaron, a tronie of a man in a fantasy costume, or an historical portrait (crypto-portrait). In order to decipher this riddle, Roding first introduces the relatively less known career and tentative training of Karel van Mander III according to the scant evidence that has survived. She then scrutinizes the stylistic characteristics of the painting and its attribution, followed by a thorough iconographical analysis of each attribute and visual quality of the figure. She begins with a study of the various sources in which either Aaron or his garments are mentioned. The painting's irregularities and iconographical anomalies are further enhanced by a comparative study of paintings of Aaron by other contemporary artists. The jewel depicted in van Mander's painting, for example, featuring a central eight-sided golden medallion depicting a man wearing a helmet, presents a sharp deviation from the conventional breastplate with twelve stones so frequent in Aaron's iconography. The three books also deviate in not belonging to the conventional Aaron imagery. Contextualizing these peculiarities and others within the political and religious conflicts during the reign of Christian IV and the Lutheran doctrine and ideology promoted by him, Roding shows that through the deliberate alteration of the traditional Aaron iconography, Van Mander makes an important statement, indicating Christian IV, attesting to his identity as the commissioner of the painting, and confirming the role of the Danish Lutheran king as Protector of the Bible.

Finally, before turning the page, we would like to acknowledge all of those involved in the production of this book. First and foremost we thank each and every one of the contributors to this anthology: colleagues and long-life friends, scholars, and former students, trained and inspired by Yona Pinson. Special thanks are due to Naomi Paz and Tzach Ben Josef, for their professional editing, and for providing a pleasant working atmosphere under a tight schedule. At Cambridge Scholars Publishing, it has been a pleasure working with editor-in-chief Samuel Baker, typesetting manager Amanda Millar, and with Adam Terry, print administrator. Finally, and above all, to Yona Pinson, for guiding us in our ascent to the Sides of the North.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS BY PROFESSOR YONA PINSON

Books

Mirror of Moral: Moralization, Allegorized Lessons, and Irony in Hieronymus Bosch's Oeuvre (in preparation).

Pinson, Yona, dir. and Diane de Selliers, ed. *Érasme: Éloge de la folie. Illustré par les peintres de la Renaissance du Nord*. Brussels: UltraLetters, 2013. (Scientific director, iconography, and commentaries with an introductory essay)

The Fools' Journey: A Myth of Obsession in Northern Renaissance Art. Turnhout: Brepols, 2009.

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"Conduite par Eve: *La nef de folles et les cinq sens*, Jehan Drouyn, Paris, *c*. 1500. " In *Les 5 sens: Entre Moyen Âge et renaissance. Enjeux épistémologiques et esthétiques. Dijon, 17–18 Novembre, 2011*, edited by Jean-Marie Fritz and Olga A. Duhl. Dijon: Editions Universitaires de Dijon, 2014. (invited paper)

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CHAPTER ONE

A NEW BOSCH *EPIPHANY*? *ADORATION OF THE MAGI* REASSEMBLED

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For Yona Pinson,
colleague and friend

Today Hieronymus Bosch is most readily associated with images of Hell and its torments or with the temptation of isolated hermit saints by legions of demons. Among his Gospel subjects, however, Bosch's most popular (and most copied) imagery features the scene of the Epiphany. That event, associated with the twelfth night of Christmas, occurred when the wise men or "Magi" from "the East" (traditionally three in number in visual art) came to Jerusalem, led by the Star in the East, to view the King of the Jews, the new-born infant Jesus (*Matthew* 2:1–11). In tribute they brought luxury gifts, fit for a king: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Although pagans, these foreign kings were the first Gentiles to acknowledge the divinity and royal supremacy of the Christ Child. Their holy relics were later to enjoy special veneration in a magnificent golden shrine from the early thirteenth century created by Nicholas of Verdun, in Cologne Cathedral, the archdiocese of the Netherlands.[1]

During the period of Bosch's early career, Netherlandish visual conventions of the late fifteenth century pictured the Three Magi as representatives of the three ages of mankind (youth, maturity, and old age) as well as the three Old World continents (Africa, Asia, and Europe).[2]

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1 Franz Günter Zehnder, *Die Heiligen Drei Könige: Darstellung und Verehrung* (Cologne: Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, 1982).

2 The Three Magi enjoyed particular popularity in early sixteenth-century Antwerp, in part because of the conflation of Jerusalem as a central destination with the port city of Brabant as the new central meeting point. See: Dan

Europe, the most senior by virtue of being the first to adopt Christianity, is usually shown as the oldest, white-haired Magus, given the most favorable position, kneeling closest to the Christ Child. Asia usually appears second, although with fewer distinguishing features of skin pigmentation or costume, since figures from that continent were least familiar to Netherlandish painters. Black Africa, however, the youngest and most distinctive member of the trio of Magi as representatives of continents, first appeared only in the last third of the fifteenth century. Bosch himself would readily include a black Magus in his own *Adorations*, though usually as a figure isolated at the margins of the scene.[3]

In the Netherlands, specific representation of one of the three Magi as a black man began around 1470, either with Hans Memling's *Adoration* (Madrid) or else with Hugo van der Goes's *Monforte Altarpiece* (Berlin), which more strongly emphasized the Asian Magus alongside the African black Magus in the overall scene. By the 1480s younger followers of Hugo and Memling—Geertgen tot sint Jans and Gerard David—had already incorporated a black Magus into their own compositions of the Adoration of the Magi.

Contemporary maps, known as T-O maps, showed Jerusalem as the center of the known world, with the three continents converging upon it. In a similar fashion, so too did the three personified kings of "the East" come to signify the central location of Jesus as the wellspring of the new, true religion, for which these altarpieces were all produced. Both the world dominion of Christianity as well as its adoption by the world's Gentiles are claims imbedded in the developed imagery of the Adoration of the Magi.

Ewing, "Magi and Merchants: The Force behind the Antwerp Mannerists' Adoration Pictures," *Jaarboek Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen* (2004/05): 287–291; for Rubens, 296–299.

[3] Joseph Leo Koerner, "The Epiphany of the Black Magus *circa* 1500," in *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, vol. 3, *From the "Age of Discovery" to the Age of Abolition*, eds. David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 7–92, esp. 62–81; Paul H.D. Kaplan, *The Rise of the Black Magus in Western Art* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985); Joaneath Spicer, ed., *Revealing the African Presence in Renaissance Europe* (Baltimore: Walters Art Gallery, 2012, published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name, shown at Walters Art Gallery).

Fig. 1. Bosch, *Adoration of the Magi*, *c.* 1495–1497, triptych, Prado, Madrid

The most accomplished and familiar Bosch *Adoration of the Magi* triptych (Madrid, Prado) can now be dated. Its donors, discovered by Paul Vandenbroeck, were an Antwerp couple, Peeter Scheyve and Agnes de Gramme.[4] Before 1495 Peeter was still married to Barbara van Woelputte, and Agnes died before 15 January, 1500. Thus the Madrid *Epiphany* by Bosch must have been painted between 1495 and 1499. Moreover, the Prado wings closely resemble a derivative, lesser, Bosch workshop *Ecce Homo* triptych (Boston Museum of Fine Arts), whose shutter panels present a similar structure, showing patron saints standing above two kneeling donor figures before a deep landscape.[5] We also know the names

4 Paul Vandenbroeck, *Jheronimus Bosch: de verlossing van de Wereld* (Ghent: Ludion, 2003), 176.

5 For the Boston *Ecce Homo*, see: Karel Gerhard Boon, ed., *Jheronimus Bosch* ('s-Hertogenbosch: Hieronymus Bosch Exhibition Foundation, 1967, published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name, shown at Noordbrabants

of the Boston donors, Peter van Os (left outer wing), who married the daughter of Franco van Langel (left inner wing) in 1496, only to lose her to death in 1497, thus dating the picture quite precisely to 1496/97.[6] Bosch's Madrid *Epiphany*, its model, therefore likely dates to before that time, i.e. from around 1497 or even earlier; and because of the link with the Boston triptych, the Prado *Epiphany* can be dated even more precisely to a period between 1495 and 1497.

Yona Pinson has provided the most insightful analysis of the gifts provided by the Magi in Bosch's Prado painting, particularly by the young black Magus. She reveals these offerings to be steeped in evil, even as they are presented to the Christ Child—both in this *Epiphany* as well as in its later adaptation (1564; London, National Gallery) by Pieter Bruegel.[7]

Museum), 104–105, no. 27; Colin Eisler, *New England Museums*, vol. 4 of Corpus de la Peinture des Anciens Pays-Bas Les Primitifs Flamands (Brussels: Centre national de recherches primitifs flamands, 1961), 33–43.

6 Godfried C.M. van Dijck, "Peter van Os ontmaskerd: het drieluik van Boston," *De Brabantse Leeuw* 47 (1998): 116–124. I am indebted to Bernard Vermet for this reference.

7 Yona Pinson, "Bruegel's 1564 *Adoration*: Hidden Meanings of Evil in the Figure of the Old King," *Artibus et historiae* 30 (1994): 109–128. For Bosch's Prado picture, see: Larry Silver, *Hieronymus Bosch* (New York: Abbeville, 2006), 168–175; Debra Higgs Strickland, "Picturing Antichrist and Others in the Prado *Epiphany* by Hieronymus Bosch," in *Others and Outcasts in Early Modern Europe: Picturing the Social Margins*, ed. Tom Nichols (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 11–35; Lotte Brand Philip, "The Prado *Epiphany* by Jerome Bosch," *Art Bulletin* 35 (1953): 267–293. On the ornamented crown of the aged Magus, placed in the foreground directly before the Madonna (and closest to the viewer), Bosch shows a pair of naked figures holding up a circular mount, which looks like a convex mirror but might depict a dark gemstone. Atop that crown a pair of gluttonous birds holds large red fruits in their mouths (redolent of Bosch's sensuous world of sin in the central panel of his *Garden of Earthly Delights*, Prado, Madrid). Even the golden gift behind the helmet, a sculpted scene of the Sacrifice of Isaac—traditional medieval typology for the Crucifixion—rests upon the backs of nefarious black toads, an unambiguous symbol of evil and pestilence (See: Renilde Vervoort, "The Pestilent Toad: The Significance of the Toad in the Works of Bosch," in *Hieronymus Bosch: New Insights into his Life and Work*, eds. Jos Koldeweij and Bernard Vermet (Rotterdam: Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum, 2001), 145–151). The crown of the middle Magus, held by an ominous figure in the doorway of the stable (identified by Brand Philip as the Antichrist), also features a row of demonic figures, including apes and birds. Another item in the hand of Bosch's black Magus echoes this same imagery: atop an orb in his hand a golden bird with a red fruit perches above an unidentified scene, presumably also typological, of

Even the omniscient Christ Child seems unaware of these hidden threats of present evil, so the viewer must be unusually vigilant in order to notice them.

Moreover, the Prado *Epiphany* remained Bosch's most popular image for copies, some preserved without the wings, while others use the original triptych form.[8] Ultimately, this subject forces an attentive, pious viewer to reflect on the very act of seeing and believing, just as the three Magi had to perceive divinity even when hidden within the form of the humble flesh of the infant Christ Child.

Many features of this Bosch Madrid painting are indeed conventional, starting with its triptych format.[9] Visual attention focuses on the foreground Madonna and Child, who sit at the right side of the central panel, separated visually by a bare branch that scarcely supports the roof of this humble, ramshackle stable. This isolated holy pair of figures forms the object of devotion for the Magi, who advance from the left edge, leading the viewer's eye readily to the Madonna and Child. On her lap, against a dark blue mantle, suggestive of her future state of mourning, the Magi's true object of devotion, the Christ Child, sits upon a bright white sheet, not only a swaddling cloth but also an anticipation of the eventual funeral shroud of the Deposition, the very relic that would come to be known as the Shroud of Turin.[10]

Bosch deliberately makes the holy figures of his Prado *Epiphany* less pretty and more distinctly ordinary as humans. In contrast to the courtly markers of heaven in many fifteenth-century Flemish images of Madonna and Child, they are not surrounded by angels, haloes, glowing lights, or even jeweled garments, which all conventionally signify the supernatural.

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offerings by a trio of soldiers before a king. The robe hem of the black Magus reveals ornament trim with hybrid monsters, birds with human heads, and even more large fruit. These monstrous hybrids were understood to live at the farthest margins of the known world, emblems of the uncivilized and strange, as Strickland elucidates.

8 Gerd Unverfehrt, *Hieronymus Bosch: Die Rezeption seiner Kunst im frühen 16. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Mann, 1980), 82–85, figs. 13–20; Roger Van Schoute, Hélène Verougstraete, and Carmen Garrido, "Bosch and his Sphere: Technique," in *Hieronymus Bosch: New Insights into his Life and Work*, 111–112.

9 Lynn Jacobs, *Opening Doors: The Early Netherlandish Triptych Reinterpreted* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 206–209.

10 John Belden Scott, *Architecture for the Shroud: Relic and Ritual in Turin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), esp. 9–16; the Shroud was featured in works by painters such as Caravaggio and Rubens in their images of Christ being lowered from the cross or laid in the tomb.

Moreover, Bosch presents the Madonna and Child in the foreground, directly before the gaze of the viewer, who assumes a role akin to the Magi. Rather than kneeling, like the European Magus, Bosch's black Magus stands erect in a white cloak along the left edge of the central panel, farthest away from the Virgin and Child, while the other two Magi appear in the very center foreground.

Fig. 2. After Hieronymus Bosch, *Adoration of the Magi*, triptych, 's-Hertogenbosch, Het Noordbrabants Museum (formely Moonen Collection)

The Prado *Epiphany* was a mature formulation by Bosch, who must have become a master in 's-Hertogenbosch around 1475.[11] Most of these elements, however, had already appeared in a simpler, smaller work, presumably an earlier Bosch composition, which has been known to scholars until now only from several copies and variants, such as the

[11] Pater Gerlach, "De bronnen voor het leven en het werk van Jeroen Bosch: Bronnen voor zijn werk," *Hieronymus Bosch: Opstellen over leven en werk*, ed. P. M. le Blanc (The Hague: SDU uitgeverij, 1988), 55–62; Jos Koldeweij, "Hieronymus Bosch and his City," in *Hieronymus Bosch: The Complete Paintings and Drawings*, eds. A. M. Koldeweij, Paul Vandenbroeck, and Bernard Vermet (Rotterdam: Harry N. Abrams, 2001), 20–83, esp. 53–56.