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REGURGITATING NATURE: ON A CELEBRATED ANECDOTE BY KAREL VAN MANDER ABOUT PIETER BRUEGEL THE ELDER

Denis Ribouillault

The curious anecdote in Karel van Mander's biography of Bruegel, where the artist is said to have swallowed all the mountains and rocks during his crossing of the Alps and spat them out again onto canvas and panels upon returning home, has been quoted by almost every Bruegel scholar. Yet it has never been given a full explanation. In this study, it is proposed that the passage, echoing on one level Bruegel's frequent depiction of overindulging peasants, disguises a highly cultivated reference to the theory of imitation as a digestive process, or innutrition theory, which was widely used by humanist writers of the time to champion vernacular expression. DOI: [10.5092/jhna.2016.8.1.4](https://doi.org/10.5092/jhna.2016.8.1.4)

For Michel Weemans

*Under so mean a form we should
never have picked out the nobility and
splendour of his admirable ideas*

(Michel de Montaigne, *Essays*, Book 3, p. 12).¹

*Some books are to be tasted,
others to be swallowed and some few to be
chewed and digested*

(Francis Bacon, *Of Studies*)²

- In *Les couilles de Cézanne* (Cézanne's balls) Jean-Claude Lebensztejn recounts a quite striking but equally forgotten anecdote about the great artist: "Gauguin relates how in 1879 or 1880, while [Cézanne] was painting out of doors in Médan, a passing walker claiming to be a former pupil of Corot offered to rectify his landscape. Cézanne scraped away the gentleman's additions with an acid remark and then, after a moment's silence, let out a great fart accompanied by the words: 'Ah! That's better.'"³ Far from the image of Cézanne the theoretician, so beloved of art historians, the anecdote clearly shows the artist brazenly farting in the face of academism and established tradition. In this story Cézanne is the seeker after "truth in painting," the man who would explain later, to Émile Bernard: "It is my view that art can be attained only if we take nature as our starting point. The great error of art as taught in Museums is that it upholds methods which distance us

absolutely from the observation of nature, which should be our guide.”⁴ Unabashedly scatological, this anecdote is perhaps more theoretical than it first appears. And while Cézanne stops short of directly associating his irreverent fart with his quest for the true, authentic, imitation of nature, he has an important predecessor in Pieter Bruegel the Elder, in whose work these two paradoxical, apparently conflicting, characteristics are profoundly linked.

- 2 The following argument takes, as its starting point, the curious anecdote in Karel van Mander’s biography of Bruegel, where the artist is said to have swallowed all the mountains and rocks during his crossing of the Alps and spat them out again onto canvas and panels upon returning home; a famous quote that has never been given a full explanation by Bruegel scholars. The anecdote is, like Cézanne’s story, more theoretical than it seems and will allow us to explore the little-discussed tension in Bruegel’s work between vulgarity and obscenity on the one hand, and the imitation of nature on the other. More specifically, I want to suggest that Bruegelian obscenity not only opposes and satirizes the dominant artistic theory of its day, namely the classicizing Italian model,⁵ but that it also, perhaps more subtly, masks—in a kind of paradoxical eulogy—a highly developed and sophisticated theoretical reflection on the imitation of nature. In the last part of the paper, I address more broadly the question of digestion, vomiting, and defecation in relation to Bruegel’s oeuvre, questioning the theoretical function played by the figure of the *kakker* in his paintings and locating it within the larger cultural framework of medical knowledge and contemporary literature.
- 3 This essay draws on a number of studies over the past twenty years, which have sought a better understanding of the grotesque, parody, and satire in humanist thought and artistic and literary production during the Renaissance.⁶ The concepts of paradoxical eulogy and satire, inherent in the language of inversion and diversion, are present in antique literature and especially in the rhetorician Lucian of Samosata. In painting, they are expressed in the work of artists categorized by Pliny the Elder as rhyparographers—painters of everyday, repugnant, or base subjects—as opposed to the “high” painters of noble subjects, known as megalographers.⁷ In the Renaissance, paradoxical eulogy and satire are taken up by Erasmus and Rabelais, each in his own way appropriating and elaborating on Menippean satire by adapting it to the expectations of Christian humanism.⁸ The hermeneutic implications of these literary genres had their pendant in painting, too. Reindert Falkenburg has shown how Pieter Aertsen’s grotesque peasant figures—and their revival of the antique rhyparographers’ art—would have been understood in relation to this comic, parodic genre, at the margins of a cultural hegemony characterized by its reverence for the art of antiquity and the great Italian masters.⁹
- 4 This notion of paradox (*para-doxa*) lies at the heart of Pieter Bruegel’s work, too, as argued by Jürgen Müller in his study *Das Paradox als Bildform: Studien zur Ikonologie Pieter Bruegels d.Ä.*, in which the author draws abundantly on contemporary literature, in particular the writings of Erasmus and Sebastian Franck.¹⁰ Recently, Michel Weemans’s magisterial monograph on Herri Met de Bles has further enriched this approach, showing how the latter’s landscapes function as a kind of visual exegesis: the paintings are not content to illustrate a text or to imitate a specific place. Rather, through the inclusion of often grotesque, improbable details, they visualize an interpretation of that text, engaging the viewer in a hermeneutic process that demands a conversion of the act of looking, from physical seeing to intellectual insight. Emblematic of paradox and the disruption of

the senses, the figure of Silenus is central to this interpretative principle, both in paintings by Bles and in the contemporaneous writings of Erasmus and Rabelais (who includes him in the prologue to *Gargantua*). Both authors see Silenus as an ugly, buffoonish figure—not only a sylvan mythological creature, the adoptive father of Bacchus, but also and more specifically a reference to the Sileni of Alcibiades in Plato’s *Symposium*: small grotesque statuettes carved in such a way that they revealed a divine figure, a treasure concealed in their chest, to whoever managed to open them. In this game of *serio ludere*, so characteristic of Renaissance humanism, the Silenic figures invite the viewer/reader to look beyond what they see at first, to grasp the wisdom and profundity beneath the comic, grotesque, obscene surface.¹¹

Peasant Bruegel and the Italian Model



Fig. 1 Johannes and Lucas van Doetecum, after Pieter Bruegel, published by Hieronymus Cock, *Large Landscape with Travelers*, ca. 1555–56, engraving, 32.1 x 42.8 cm. British Museum, London, inv. no. 1870.0625.656 (artwork in the public domain; photo: Trustees of the British Museum)



Fig. 2 Pieter van der Heyden, after Pieter Bruegel, published by Hieronymus Cock, signed Hieronymus Bosch, *The Big Fish Eat Little Fish*, 1557, engraving, 22.8 x 29.4 cm. British Museum, London, inv. no. 1875.0710.2651 (artwork in the public domain; photo: Trustees of the British Museum)

- 5 Let us start with the interpretation of the celebrated, often-quoted passage in Karel van Mander’s biography of Bruegel, written for his *Schilder-Boeck* (Book of Painters), published in Haarlem in 1604. The passage reads: “On his travels he drew many views from life so that it is said that when he was in the Alps he swallowed all those mountains and rocks which, upon returning home, he spat out again [regurgitated] onto canvas and panels, so faithfully was he able, in this respect and others, to follow Nature.”¹² In mentioning the journey through the Alps, van Mander refers to the celebrated series of *Great Landscapes*, presented by Bruegel to the publisher Hieronymus Cock on his return from Italy in 1555 (fig. 1).¹³ Soon after, Bruegel created burlesque and grotesque compositions, which quickly earned him the nickname “the new Hieronymus Bosch” (fig. 2).¹⁴ The *Great Landscapes* reinterpreted the *Weltlandschaft* tradition (inaugurated by Patinir) in the light of Italian landscapes by Titian and Campagnola, while at the same time distancing themselves quite deliberately from the Italian model favored by Flemish painters such as Hans Vredeman de Vries or Frans Floris. Bruegel preferred instead to embody and extend a resolutely Dutch vernacular artistic vocabulary characterized by the importance of landscape but also by the figure of the peasant or countryman, the “primitive Batavian,” coarse and bawdy but decent and amiable nonetheless, the object of renewed interest among Flemish and Dutch historians of the time, and categorized by most art historians as belonging to what Hans Joachim Raupp called



Fig. 3 Pieter Bruegel, *The Peasant Dance*, 1568, oil on panel, 114 x 164 cm. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, inv. no. GG_1059 (artwork in the public domain; photo: wikimedia commons)



Fig. 4a Copy after Pieter Bruegel, *The Beekeepers*, 1540–69, pen and brown ink on paper, 19.1 x 29.5 cm. British Museum, London, inv. no. SL.5236.59 (artwork in the public domain; photo: Trustees of the British Museum)



Fig. 4b Michelangelo, *Sacrifice of Noah* (detail), 1509, fresco. Sistine Chapel, Vatican City (artwork in the public domain; photo: wikimedia commons)



Fig. 5 Pieter Bruegel, *The Tower of Babel*, 1563, oil on panel, 114 x 155 cm. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, inv. no. GG_1026 (artwork in the public domain; photo: wikimedia commons)

the *genus satiricum* (satirical genre) (fig. 3).¹⁵

- 6 Bruegel does not deny the Italian models: rather than quoting from them, he absorbs and ingests them. In his famous Berlin drawing, one of the beekeepers is directly inspired by a figure painted by Michelangelo for *Noah's Sacrifice* on the Sistine Chapel ceiling (figs. 4a and 4b). However, transposed to the Brabant, faceless and surrounded by hives, Bruegel's figure echoes his model in pose alone.¹⁶ Similarly, the celebrated Vienna *Tower of Babel* takes the Roman Coliseum as the ideal embodiment of classical architecture, parodied here—in a sense—by its lopsided structure. Bruegel hints that the building is irremediably destined for ruin and destruction, perhaps an echo of humanistic commentary on the fall of Rome and neo-Stoic lament on the destruction of

the “machina mundi” (fig. 5).¹⁷ In place of the ideal classical figure, Bruegel presents the stocky peasant, a faceless, headless body that subverts the nobility enshrined in contemporary canons as the ultimate goal of painting. Bruegel degrades his figures still further elsewhere: mutilated bodies in *The Beggars* (Louvre, 1568), blind bodies in *The Parable of the Blind* (Capodimonte, 1568), crouching figures defecating in the foreground in *The Magpie on the Gallows* (Darmstadt, 1568) (fig. 6). Other figures—notably in the celebrated series of the Seven Deadly Sins—have arseholes for mouths. In his disfigured bodies and mouths—gaping, monstrous, vomiting—Bruegel orchestrates a great symphony of viscera, digestion, and low bodily functions (figs. 2, 7, 8a, 8b).¹⁸

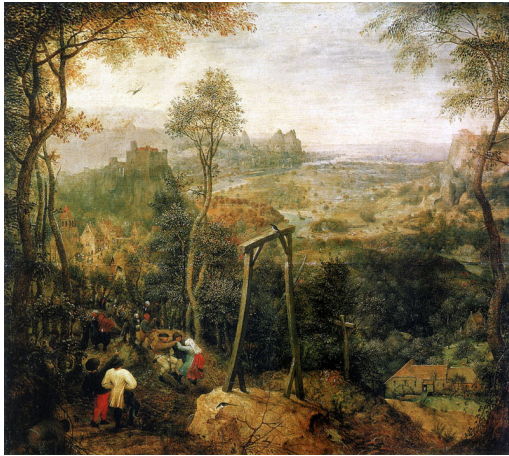


Fig. 6 Pieter Bruegel, *The Magpie on the Gallows*, 1568, oil on panel, 46 x 51 cm. Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt (artwork in the public domain; photo: wikimedia commons)



Fig. 7 Pieter van der Heyden, after Pieter Bruegel, published by Hieronymus Cock, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, 1556, engraving, 24.4 x 32.6 cm. British Museum, London, inv. no. 1866.0407.10 (artwork in the public domain; photo: Trustees of the British Museum)



Fig. 8a Pieter van der Heyden, after Pieter Bruegel, published by Hieronymus Cock, *Luxuria*, 1558, engraving, 22.6 x 29.4 cm. British Museum, London, inv. no. 1880.0710.636 (artwork in the public domain; photo: Trustees of the British Museum)



Fig. 8b Pieter van der Heyden, after Pieter Bruegel, published by Hieronymus Cock, *Gula*, 1558, engraving, 22.3 x 29.4 cm. British Museum, London, inv. no. 1880.0710.638 (artwork in the public domain; photo: Trustees of the British Museum)

7 And so we begin to see van Mander’s passage in a clearer light. The Bruegel who devours and regurgitates mountains is clearly a reflection of the imaginary world in his perennially fascinating, comical, and shocking paintings. In van Mander’s biography, Bruegel thus becomes a character in his own fictive world. Like his drunken peasants at country fêtes (see fig. 3), Bruegel has over-in-

dulged in drawing (“he drew many views from life”),¹⁹ and his excesses ultimately lead him to regurgitate or spew out what he has ingested. This image of “Peasant Bruegel” is especially clear at the beginning of van Mander’s biography: “Nature found and struck lucky wonderfully well with her man—only to be struck by him in turn in a grand way—when she went to pick him out in Brabant in an obscure village amidst peasants, and stimulate him toward the art of painting so as to copy peasants with the brush: our lasting fame of the Netherlands, the very lively and whimsical Pieter Brueghel.”²⁰ Van Mander had read Vasari’s *Lives* and based his biographies of northern painters on this Italian model, from which he borrowed the trope of *natura sola magistra* or “Nature as guide.” This topos attributes rustic, pastoral origins to painters whose works rival Nature herself and give prominence to studies taken from life (*naer het leven*); artists who are themselves children of Nature, then, still largely caked in the rustic dirt of their beginnings.

- 8 As Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz have clearly shown, Vasari constructed several of his artists’ *Lives* on this mythologizing model, beginning with Giotto, whose talent for imitating nature was revealed as he watched over his flocks in the countryside, as a young shepherd-boy; Domenico Beccafumi and Andrea del Castagno get the same treatment. Later commentators describe Zurbarán’s or Goya’s childhoods in the same way; as does Passeri when speaking of Guercino. Van Mander uses the same formula to describe the early talents of Joachim Patinir, Herri Met de Bles, and Joris Hoefnagel. Joachim von Sandrart’s biography of Claude Lorrain is similar in intent, as I have shown in a recent article.²¹ Later in his *Life of Bruegel*, van Mander pursues his theory of the artist being reflected in his own work, when he reminds us that Bruegel would dress as a peasant in order to pass unnoticed when drawing (and often imitating) his oafish, drunken compatriots at village fêtes.²²

Satirical Critique or Paradoxical Eulogy?

- 9 And yet, beyond its easily deciphered function as a commonplace trope, van Mander’s anecdote remains a curious, even incongruous inclusion in his select (and selective) narrative. We can picture Peasant Bruegel among the peasants at the kermis, but it is more difficult to imagine the same character trudging a path through the Alps—not quite the right scenery for revelry and binge drinking (see fig. 1).²³ Most importantly: what does the image of ingestion and ejection have to do with the imitation of Nature? What is the causal link between the two parts of van Mander’s sentence (“so that it is said that when he was in the Alps . . . so faithful was he able, in this respect and others, to follow Nature”), between regurgitation and mimesis? Surveying the rich and extensive Bruegel literature, we find more than one commentator perplexed by the passage. It is quoted by the great majority of authors but with no attempt at explanation. The few who have tried insist on the connection between allusion to a dirtying action (spitting out or regurgitation) and the essence of Bruegelian “imitation,” which is diametrically opposed to Italian *mimesis*. Hence, for Bertram Kaschek: “The often-quoted remark that has Bruegel swallowing the rocks and mountains of the Alps and spitting them out on his return home, such was his fidelity to Nature, should be clearly understood as pejorative: Bruegel’s so-called realism is being criticized as raw and undigested.”²⁴
- 10 Likewise, in a pioneering article on Bruegel’s rhyparographic figures, Michel Weemans’s interpretation insists on the tension between the Bruegelian landscape model and the tradition of Italian “fine painting”: for him, the metaphor is not a direct criticism of Bruegel but points to a negative

reception of his approach to landscape.

Van Mander's powerful metaphor expresses complete astonishment at a mimetic practice alien to the logocratic system of representation which has, like Floris's work, perfectly digested the Italian precepts according to which "the hand obeys promptly when guided by reason." In one sense, we might say that Van Mander's remark echoes Michelangelo's famous condemnation of Flemish landscapes, as recorded by Francesco de Hollanda, in which he scorns painting "done without art or reason, symmetry or proportion, without choice or discernment, without design, in a word without substance or sinew."²⁵

- 11 Kaschek's and Weemans's interpretations should not be misunderstood. Van Mander does not validate such criticism of Bruegelian landscape painting. Indeed, Walter Melion's work on Karel van Mander (*Shaping the Netherlandish Canon*, 1991) demonstrates admirably how the *Schilder-Boek*—containing the first chapter on landscape painting ever included in a theoretical treatise on art—not only affirms the specific character of Dutch landscape but seeks to elevate it from the status of mere background painting to a paradigm for all visual representation, conferring upon it the same dignity as history painting. In short, van Mander is no Michelangelo. Quite the opposite. He enshrines Bruegel as the champion of Dutch landscape painters, comparing him with his Italian counterparts in the genre—Tintoretto, Titian and Muziano—and praising him for his ability to draw the eye into the depths of the picture and capture the immense *varietas* of the natural scene.²⁶



Fig. 9 Karel van Mander, *Peasant Kermis*, 1592, pen and brush on paper, 28.4 x 40.6 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. no. RP-T-2008-101(R) (artwork in the public domain)

- 12 Furthermore, we cannot be certain that van Mander's superficially vulgar metaphor is intended "in the pejorative sense," as Kaschek suggests, given that the author himself tried his hand at pictures of peasant festivities, in the Bruegelian tradition.²⁷ A 1592 drawing of a country fête, engraved by Nicolas Clock in 1593, is one example (fig. 9).²⁸ In addition to which, as Svetlana Alpers has pointed out, the accompanying legend—in van Mander's own hand—suggests the opposite of a moralizing interpretation of the scene (which is directly inspired by Bruegel's *Deadly Sins*; see fig. 8a): far from being criticized, the spectacle is accepted as commonplace, even defended. Another engraved version of the same drawing associates it with an indulgent Dutch proverb to the effect that "not every day is a holiday."²⁹ The image of debauched peasantry is not necessarily negative, then, in van Mander's eyes, though the village festivities are essentially comic in their

effect. Recent historical research into the association of the peasant figure with scatology and obscenity during the Renaissance also suggests that this was essentially comical and satirical in its aim and intent.³⁰ Similarly, in the context of Dutch history, as we have seen, the peasant figure embodies the region's Batavian past and is not so much denigrated for his primitivism as celebrated for his straightforward honesty and simplicity. This inversion is especially apparent in one of Erasmus's *Adagia*, "the Batavian ear": an epigram by Martial describing the ignorant condition of the ancient northern peoples is reversed in a celebration of the simple, good-hearted, straightforward character of Erasmus's Dutch contemporaries.³¹

Ars and Ingenium: Bruegel and the Imitation of Nature

- 13 A negative interpretation of van Mander's metaphor for the Bruegelian imitation of nature flies in the face of the positive re-evaluation of the artist's work around 1600, not only in van Mander's writings but among other contemporaries, too. One particularly interesting image serves to illustrate this point: an engraving by Simon Novellanus published by Joris Hoefnagel after a drawing by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (now lost), a copy of which exists in the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Besançon (fig. 10). Dated circa 1590–95, when Hoefnagel was working at the court of Rudolf II in Prague, this splendid composition shows two draftsmen applying themselves to the depiction of an immense valley. The image thematizes the subject of drawing *from nature*, which is also the subject of the passage in van Mander's biography.³² The engraving bears witness to the renewed enthusiasm—especially at the Prague court—for Pieter Bruegel's work, the landscape genre, and, more generally, the representation of nature around 1600.³³



Fig. 10 Simon Novellanus, after Pieter Bruegel, published by Joris Hoefnagel, *Landscape with Two Draftsmen*, ca. 1590–95, etching, 26 x 33.7 cm. British Museum, London, inv. no. F.1.26 (artwork in the public domain; photo: Trustees of the British Museum)

- 14 The engraving's Latin verse is inspired by Propertius, "Arti et ingenio stat sine morte decus,"³⁴ and the figures of Mercury and Psyche spiraling in the air, clearly added by Hoefnagel, serve to underscore the perception of landscape painting (*ars*) as an appeal to the painter's imagination or genius (*ingenium*) and a possible path to immortal glory. The details dignify the landscape genre, considered inferior in the art theory of the day, which continued to celebrate history painting as supreme.³⁵ The engraving presents the draftsman in the landscape, no longer as a scrupulous but mechanical imitator of nature (*naer het leven*) but—on a par with history painters—as an artist producing a work of the genius and intellect (*uit den gheest*), gifted with spiritual powers which enable him to bring nature itself to life. The humanist Abraham Ortelius goes further still in his *album amicorum*—which circulated from 1574 to 1596—when he confides that Bruegel was

not only the best painter of his generation, but also “Nature itself in paint” (*natura pictorum*). In this, he says, Bruegel is “worthy of being imitated by all.” Ortelius’s equation hints that the artist is not content merely to imitate the outward appearance of the natural scene (*natura naturata*); rather, he recreates the creative processes and power of Nature herself (*natura naturans*), and it is for this reason that his works must be imitated by others.³⁶

- 15 It is in this context—the eulogy of the imitation of nature—that we should interpret van Mander’s “visceral” anecdote. The metaphor does not, in fact, allude to the raw, “undigested,” character of Bruegel’s art but rather to the act of *digestion* in the phenomenological sense of the term: the digestion of things seen, which will subsequently engender things represented. It is precisely this act of *digestion* that justifies the elevation of landscape painting to the status of history painting in the hierarchy of genres. The mountains and rocks are the raw materials that will be digested and transformed by the artist, even if this “creative,” profoundly positive transformation appears superficially disgusting and repellent (following the example of paradoxical eulogy inspired by Menippean, Erasmian, and Rabelasian literature). To my knowledge, Konrad Oberhuber is one of few art historians to have perceived this essential dimension, in his text on Bruegel’s early drawings:

We must rather see him as a master capable, in the first instance, of making fresh new observations from life and subsequently of assimilating these discoveries into the art forms and world view of his time. Van Mander’s famous phrase—that Bruegel “swallowed up” the mountains and “spat them out” onto the canvas—suggests at least some form of digestion taking place while the raw material remained within the artist’s body and soul. And indeed, in the impressive etchings of 1555 we find the fresh if raw material of the early drawings totally transformed by the artist’s personality, as similarly expressed in the rest of his oeuvre. Other great landscapists like Claude Lorrain digested what they found in nature in precisely the same way.³⁷

- 16 Hessel Miedema, one of the foremost experts on Karel van Mander, agrees: “The oft-quoted passage about swallowing down and spitting out has to do with the talent of Bruegel, who stored up everything he had seen in his memory, assimilated it, and could subsequently use it *ad libitum*; this in contrast to the working from life of Jan de Hollander, which attracts low esteem and ridicule.”³⁸ According to Miedema, van Mander distinguishes between Pieter Bruegel’s landscapes, and those of landscape artists like Jan de Hollander (or Jan de Amstel) of whom he gives an essentially negative account (despite referring to him as “highly distinguished”) in a passage tinged with irony.³⁹ In his series of portraits of Flemish painters, published in Antwerp in 1572, Dominicus Lampsonius celebrates the landscapes (*rura*) of Jan de Amstel as “the glory of the Flemings,”⁴⁰ while the Italians excel at the depiction of figures, hence the proverb asserting that “the Italians have their brains in their head, the Flemish in their skilled hands.” Coming from Lampsonius, this affirmation suggests parity between the genres rather than an acceptance of the inferiority of landscape.⁴¹ Van Mander takes the positive re-evaluation of landscape even further in his treatise, though he makes a distinction between two approaches to drawing from life (*naer het leven*): on the one hand, a nondiscriminatory record of reality, as adopted by Jan de Hollander, a painter disinclined to intensive study and tempted by the “easy option,” and on the other, a de-

liberate concern for the selection of natural elements, to be stored in the memory and sublimated by the painter's intelligence or genius, a quality embodied by Pieter Bruegel better than any other.

Digestion as a Theory of Imitation

17 The “digestive” process of the “creative imitation” of nature and landscape—characteristic of Bruegel’s Alpine views—finds its exact parallel in the so-called theory of innutrition, in other words the assimilation—as opposed to the mechanical imitation—of literary sources, which focused contemporary attention on the status (in literature and poetry) of the vernacular, rather than Latin. Important heralds of this theory were Clément Marot, Montaigne, and Ronsard and the Pléiade writers in France, but also, in the Netherlands, Jan van der Noot and Lucas de Heere, to which Karel van Mander, himself a pupil of de Heere and a poet and classicist, was extremely close.⁴² Recently, Todd Richardson has written illuminatingly about the very close links that existed between the theories being developed in literary circles of the time, and Bruegel’s painting, which also insisted (as we have seen) on the development of a properly Dutch pictorial vocabulary. However, Richardson makes no connection between the theory of innutrition and the Bruegelian concept of the imitation of nature.⁴³

18 The theory of innutrition is clearly articulated by the rhetorician Seneca in his letter no. 84 to Lucilius:

the food we have eaten, as long as it retains its original quality and floats in our stomachs as an undiluted mass, is a burden; but it passes into tissue and blood only when it has been changed from its original form. So it is with the food which nourishes our higher nature,—we should see to it that whatever we have absorbed should not be allowed to remain unchanged, or it will be no part of us. We must digest it; otherwise it will merely enter the memory and not the reasoning power. Let us loyally welcome such foods and make them our own, so that something that is one may be formed out of many elements, just as one number is formed of several elements whenever, by our reckoning, lesser sums, each different from the others, are brought together. This is what our mind should do: it should hide away all the materials by which it has been aided, and bring to light only what it has made of them.⁴⁴

19 This theory, which dates back to Plato (the *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*), also appears in Quintilian⁴⁵ and was taken up in the Renaissance by numerous authors such as Petrarch,⁴⁶ Pietro Bembo,⁴⁷ Montaigne,⁴⁸ Rabelais,⁴⁹ and Erasmus, who wrote:

That must be digested which you devour in varied daily reading, and must be made your own by meditation, rather than memorised or put into a book, so that your mind [*ingenium*] crammed with every kind of food, may give birth to a style which smells not of any flower, shrub or grass, but of your own native talent and feeling [*indolem affectusque pectoris tui*], so that he who reads may not recognise fragments culled from Cicero, but the reflection of a well-stored mind.⁵⁰

20 Lastly, and above all, the doctrine was taken up by the poets of the Pléiade. It is articulated by Joa-

chim du Bellay, for example, in the very specific context of *La Deffence et Illustration de la Langue Francoyse* (1549), in which the poet asserts the equal nobility of French, Latin, and Greek:

Immitant les meilleurs aucteurs Grecz, se transformant en eux, les devorant, & apres les avoir bien digerez, les convertissant en sang, & nourriture, se proposant, chacun selon son naturel & l'argument qu'il vouloit elire, le meilleur aucteur . . . Cela faisant (dy-je) les Romains ont baty tous ces beaux ecriz que nous louons et admirons fort.⁵¹

- 21 The metaphor of the digestion of sources draws in particular on the example of the bee sampling pollen from flowers, before transforming and digesting it into the delicious honey of poetry. Pindar, Plato, Seneca, Lucretius, Horace, and innumerable Renaissance authors used this comparison. In this way, as Teresa Chevrolet reminds us, “the imitation of nature shakes off its subjugation to the laws of realist reproduction, and in so doing confers upon the artist the dizzying power of a true demiurge.”⁵² Ronsard offers a particularly eloquent version, for our purposes, in his poem “L’Hylas,” substituting the landscape painter for the poet:

Mon Passerat, je ressemble à l’Abeille
Qui va cueillant tantost la fleur vermeille,
Tantost la jaune : errant de pré en pré
Volle en la part qui plus luy vient à gré,
Contre l’Hyver amassant force vives:
Ainsy courant et fueilletant mes livres,
J’amasse, trie et choisis le plus beau,
Qu’en cent couleurs je peints en un tableau,
Tantost en l’autre: et maistre en ma peinture,
Sans me forcer j’imite la Nature.⁵³

- 22 The same metaphor is found in other art treatises, notably Joachim von Sandrart’s *Teutsche Academie*, published in 1675, in which landscape holds a crucially important place—as it does in van Mander’s *Schilder-boek*. Sandrart’s eighth chapter, inspired by Horace,⁵⁴ deals with the propriety to be demonstrated when representing figures, and cites the aforementioned example of the draftsman in a landscape:

In such depictions we must also take account of the figures’ profession and trade. A valiant swordsman or a spirited soldier will show different gestures and postures from a melancholy philosopher or a painter collecting the fruits of the tree of nature *and swallowing them down so that he might spit them out, in a manner of*

speaking, on a sheet of paper or a piece of canvas [emphasis added].⁵⁵

- 23 In his own biography—describing the drawings of antiquities he made in the Giustiniani gallery in Rome—Sandrart, too, compares himself to “a bee, thirsting after art . . . as if these were flowering bushes laden with nectar.”⁵⁶ Samuel van Hoogstraten, in his *Introduction to the Elevated School of Painting* (1678), takes up the image of the draftsman in the landscape, when he talks of “gathering provisions,” which must subsequently be “extracted” from his mind, without mentioning digestion explicitly however:

Go then, O young painters! Into the forest, or up along the hills, to depict far vistas or richly wooded views; or to gather the abundance of nature in your sketchbook with pen and chalk. Go to, and try with steady observation to get used to never raising your gaze in vain; but as far as time and your tools permit, record everything as if you described in writing, and to imprint on your mind the character of things, so that you can draw on [this mental store] when you have no example from nature before you, with all this in your memory for you to use.⁵⁷

- 24 The role of bodily ingestion in the process of imitation is not confined, in van Mander’s writing, to the Bruegel anecdote. It appears in at least two further passages in the *Schilder-Boek*. Van Mander explains that the painters Bartholomeus Spranger and Michiel Coxcie copied Roman antiquities in order to gather them into their “breast” (*boesem*). The image expresses the same idea of the artist appropriating or making “his own,” works of art which have served as his models:⁵⁸
- 25 In *Den Grondt*, Van Mander maintains that artists should absorb a model (*inslorpen*) if they want to imitate creatively (*uit den gheest*) rather than copy slavishly, using again the metaphor of digestion to discuss his theory of creative imitation. In his study on the relationship between Bruegel and Bosch, Matthijs IJssink has directed attention to this passage, arguing that prints like the famous *Big Fish Eat Little Fish* (fig. 2), invented by Bruegel, but ascribed to Bosch, might be entirely concerned by this theme of *aemulatio* or assimilation of the style of a master by another painter.⁶⁰
- 26 In Chapter 8 of *Den Grondt* (*Van het Landschap*) van Mander expounds his optical approach to landscape painting, and uses another metaphor connected with food and ingestion. Van Mander is concerned above all with how to combine figures going about their daily occupations, with a vast landscape extending to a distant horizon, in the manner of the antique painter Ludius, or Studius, as described by Pliny the Elder.⁶¹ The painter must, he says, create “a small world” (*cleyne Weerelt*) in which the eye is free to roam and graze at will, satisfying its optical appetite. In this way, the picture’s viewers, “led by pleasure and desire, and hungry for more, . . . will peer over and under, like guests tasting many dishes.”⁶² In another chapter, van Mander praises the “licked” (polished) precision of Bruegel’s painting (*Netticheydt*), indicating that it provides “sweet nourishment for the eye.”⁶³ In van Mander’s life of Jan and Hubert van Eyck, the art lover’s optical appetite for the beauty of a painted landscape is compared to that of “bees and flies in summer swarming and hanging around baskets of figs and raisins.”⁶⁴
- 27 In this assimilation of eye and mouth, the theorist likens the painter’s panel to a table on which

dishes are spread. The comparison links the Dutch words *tafelreel* (painter's panel) and *tafel* (table); or the artist's studio to a kitchen or dining room. This rich confusion of the senses finds its fullest expression in Dutch still-life painting, a generation later.⁶⁵ The ancient Greeks made the same connection in their definition of the word *parerga*, originally used to describe landscape, but which some (like Philostratus) defined as *condimenta picturae*.⁶⁶ *Parerga* is translatable as something akin to the French *hors d'œuvre*, taking further still the semantic interweaving central to any discussion of a "taste" for painting.

The Production and Expulsion of Images

- 28 Let us return to the apiarian origins of van Mander's metaphor. Scientists have observed the bee's regurgitation of honey since ancient Greek times. Pliny the Elder clearly writes in his *Natural History* that honey is "vomited by bees, out of their mouths."⁶⁷ Aristotle says the same in his *History of Animals*, explaining more precisely that bees ingurgitate the honey in order to spit or spew it out once they reach their destination.⁶⁸ The bee's digestive system transforms the nectar as it is swallowed and regurgitated several times over, before being stored in cells, inside the hive. For the ancients, honey—the product of successive ingurgitations and regurgitations—was quite literally bee-sick! This fact was well known in the Renaissance.⁶⁹ Indeed, van Mander's *Schilder-Boek* quotes the artist P. D. Cluyt, a skilled draftsman and trained physician, and his father Dirck Outgaertsz Cluyt (Theodore Clusius) (1546–1598), the celebrated director of the botanical garden in Leiden and author of the *Natural History of Bees*, published in 1597, which repeats the substance of the ancient authors' writings.⁷⁰
- 29 In his study of the bee in antique mythology, Jean-Pierre Albert notes that numerous sources and practices connect honey, and the production of honey, with the intestines. Hence the use of the word *alvi* (bellies) for hives, according to Varro, "for the food, the honey [they contain]." And he explains further: "it seems that the reason why they are so narrow in the middle is so that they may imitate the forms of bees [or: the form of an abdomen]." While Columella—after summarizing the technique of *bugonia* (the belief that bees were engendered by spontaneous generation from putrefying matter)—writes: "Magon even asserts that the same result may be obtained with the entrails [*ventribus*] of animals." Pondering the frequency of these intestinal references, Albert reminds the reader that honey was widely held to be the excrement of bees: a paradoxical excrement, indeed, being edible, fragrant, and as pure as the creatures that produce it. Faced with these conflicting accounts, Columella advises his readers not to concern themselves with "whether bees vomit honey from the mouth or render it from out of some other part."⁷¹
- 30 It is not our place to comment on these ancient beliefs here: suffice it to say that they may help interpret some odd details in Bruegel's inventions (connecting beehives with arseholes and headless bodies; fig. 11) but also justify van Mander's superficially repellent metaphor (and this to a hitherto unsuspected extent). From a more general, anthropological standpoint, they also reaffirm the role of the body and digestion in the process of the imitation of nature. As Jérémie Koering has written, of innutrition:

The body is the locus in which the immaterial, the subtle, the mutable and impalpable is transformed into matter. . . . The metaphor of ingestion and digestion . . . illustrates this continuity of the natural and imaginary world in which imitation,

by engaging the body and its “organs” at the most fundamental level, maintains the materiality and living quality of the model in the object produced.⁷²



Fig. 11 Pieter van der Heyden, after Pieter Bruegel, published by Hieronymus Cock, *The Ass at School*, 1557, engraving, 26.1 x 33.5 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 28.4(21) (artwork in the public domain)

- 31 In bees, honey (which Pliny believed originates in the heavens) is vomited or defecated. In Bruegel, the process of selecting the elements of nature and arranging them on canvas involves the artist’s own body. In van Mander’s image, swallowing is assimilated with seeing and drawing motifs from life, while regurgitation or defecation refers to the elaboration of new compositions in the artist’s studio—van Mander specifically indicates “upon returning home”—based on studies made *ad vivum*. Again, this reading is especially clear when compared with attitudes in contemporary literature. In Montaigne’s *Essays*, the humanist calls himself “a gentleman who only communicated his life by the workings of his belly” and he directly associates his oeuvre with excrement: “Here, but not so nauseous, are the excrements of an old mind, sometimes thick, sometimes thin, and always indigested.”⁷³

The Figure of the *Kakker* in Bruegel’s Work

- 32 The rapprochement between digestion and ejection on the one hand, and imitation on the other, sheds new light on the recurring figure of the *kakker* (shitter) in the work of Bruegel and his Flemish contemporaries, and—it seems to me—on the figure’s hitherto overlooked theoretical dimension. As I have suggested elsewhere, the *kakker* may be understood as a satirical inversion of the figure of the draftsman in the landscape.⁷⁴ To take one concrete example: in Bruegel’s Darmstadt painting, *The Magpie on the Gallows*, the *kakker* is situated in the bottom left-hand corner, in other words in the same prominent position as the figure of the draftsman in innumerable works from the fifteenth century onward (see fig. 6). Seen from behind, crouching down, he is the viewer’s point of entry into the composition.⁷⁵ His hunched back defines a virtual line, extended farther into the picture by the raised arm of the man in red trousers, pointing to the splendid panorama that opens out on the horizon. This important diagonal—further reinforced by the crossbar at the top of the gallows—both opposes and connects the basest, most “material” and most spiritual aspects of the picture. In the exact middle of the canvas, and the diagonal line, the figure of the magpie is unmissable. The bird materializes the tension (so important in Bruegel’s work) between foreground and background, and the optical oscillation central to van Mander’s theory of landscape.⁷⁶
- 33 The *kakker* plays an important role in Flemish painting. As van Mander also points out, Joachim

Patinir habitually includes a small figure of a *kakker* as a kind of signature in his paintings, establishing a strong connection between the art of landscape and the grotesque: “He had the custom of painting a little man doing his business in all his landscapes and he was therefore known as “The Shitter.” Sometimes you had to search for this little shitter, as with the little owl of Hendrick met de Bles.”⁷⁷ Michel Weemans notes, quite rightly, that this surprising association has its source in Pliny, and more specifically in the latter’s distinction between megalography (the painting of noble and elevated subjects) and rhyparography (the painting of commonplace, base subjects). For Patinir and Bruegel alike, it is clear that the antique landscape painter Studius (or Ludius), cited by van Mander as the model for the Flemish landscapists, is associated with the Plinian rhyparographers, thereby justifying Patinir’s initially rather strange-seeming signature.⁷⁸

- 34 The role of the Bruegelian, rhyparographic *kakker* as a disruptive figure in an artistic system devoted to the preaching of ideal beauty (megalography) is explicit in another of van Mander’s anecdotes. In his life of the painter Hans Vredeman de Vries, the biographer reports that Bruegel had wickedly added a small detail to one of his colleague’s “perspective” paintings: “a peasant in a befouled shirt occupied with a peasant woman.” The painting’s owner laughed so hard on discovering the audacious detail that he refused to have it removed. Clearly, in Bruegel’s graffiti, the grotesque and obscene serve to subvert the Romanizing architecture of Vredeman de Vries, who was known at the time as the “Flemish Vitruvius,” though the amused owner’s attitude to the “very spiritual” Bruegel was anything but severe.⁷⁹

Digestio—Dispositio—Ordinanty

- 35 Interpreted from an artistic standpoint, van Mander’s anecdote describes a practice favored by the majority of Renaissance landscape painters—a practice that finds its highest expression in the work of Claude Lorrain, as Konrad Oberhuber rightly points out in the passage quoted above: the artist draws out of doors before returning to his studio to paint imaginary landscapes, the fruits of his *ingenium*, based on his sketches.⁸⁰ This is an important remark for the history of landscape painting, since the Flemish tradition of landscape painting defined as “realistic” has been exaggeratedly contrasted with the “ideal” landscape of the Italians in the historiography of the field, starting with Michelangelo’s famous critique of Flemish art referred to by Francisco de Hollanda.
- 36 In this context, it is symptomatic that the term *digestio*, as used by Cicero or Quintilian, for example, also refers to a rhetorical device enacting the distinction between a general idea and specific points or chapters—in short, the process of ordering (*ordo, ordinatio*).⁸¹ In this, it is similar to another rhetorical device, namely *dispositio*.⁸² Transposed to painting, the term is applicable to the forging of a harmonious composition from heterogeneous fragments (*ordinanty* in van Mander’s terminology).⁸³ As such, the word eloquently describes one of the central preoccupations of landscape painters from Bruegel onward. Van Mander also uses the term *stellingh*, originally applied to the disposition of figures in history painting, to describe Bruegel’s arrangement of the elements of his Alpine landscapes. He writes:

Besides I could proclaim proudly the fine coloring and artful disposition of the works and prints of the counterfeiter Bruegel, in which, as if we were in the horn-capped Alps, he shows us how without great toil we may fashion views deep into vertiginous dales, [then up toward] steep cliffs and cloud-kissing pines, [then out

toward] far distances, and along rushing streams.⁸⁴

Epilogue: Doctor Rabelais and the Mind-Body Dialectic

37 From a more general cultural standpoint, the central importance of the digestive metaphor in Bruegel's and van Mander's day (and Seneca's, long before)⁸⁵ is directly linked to medical knowledge and, more specifically, to the theory of the humors, according to which the body and spirit or disposition are governed by the same qualities (hot, cold, dry, wet) and elements (earth, air, fire, water). For example, melancholy—diagnosed as an excess of black bile—could be caused by “poorly digested” images.⁸⁶ An engraving by Matthaus Greuter, republished several times, is described as showing “a doctor [purging] a melancholic by causing him to defecate his images” (fig. 12).⁸⁷ The idea seems to have been current before the Renaissance: the *Expositio prosae de Angelis*, by the twelfth-century writer Alain de Lille explains that “images are defecated by the mind.”⁸⁸



Fig. 12 Matthias Greuter, *Le médecin guarissant Phantasié purgeant aussi par drogues la folie*, ca. 1600, engraving. Wellcome collection, London (artwork in the public domain; photo: wikimedia commons)



Fig. 13 Martin Droeshout, *To This Grave Doctor Millions Do Resort*, ca. 1620–30, etching, 34.8 x 40.8 cm. British Museum, London, inv. no. 1854.1113.154 (artwork in the public domain; photo: Trustees of the British Museum)

38 These scatological metaphors refer to actual therapeutic practices of the time, based on the use and abuse of intestinal purges and forced vomiting, in order to free the mind or spirit. Galen of Pergamon and Hippocrates were the sources for the practice, cited in numerous medical texts. The virtues of vomiting are celebrated in Aldobrandino of Siena's *Régime du corps* (Regimen of the body, 1256), which also notes the best times of year for bleeding and intestinal purges. An entire chapter is devoted to purges, followed by another on vomiting: “Par coi il fait bon user le vomir”—advice doubtless followed by Rabelais for the healing of his invalid Pantagruel.⁸⁹ A later English version of Greuter's image in the British Museum depicts this medical world (fig. 13). The toilet chair is reserved for a peasant figure (a *rude Rusticall*), while a young courtier and clerics receive other treatments for the expurgation of corrupting images from their minds. Here, the association of the peasant figure with scatology echoes the Bruegelian strategy highlighted by van Mander in his biography: the peasant regurgitates or defecates his images. Dated circa 1600, the engraving's first edition is derived from an emblem in Theodor de Bry's *Emblemata Saecularia* of 1597, a work that borrows several figures of drunken peasants from compositions by Karel van Mander.⁹⁰ Interestingly, in Martin Droeshout's version of the print (circa 1620–30), the doctor is

renamed Panurgus, indicating a close kinship with the world of Rabelais.⁹¹

- 39 The conjunction of medical science, food or nourishment, obscenity, imitation, and satire is indeed (especially) dense in Rabelais,⁹² himself a doctor, whose writings were often justly compared to Bruegel's paintings. The rapprochement has a long history. In 1565, a collection of engravings entitled *Les songes drolatiques de Pantagruel* includes six plates directly inspired by characters and motifs from the series of Vices published by Hieronymus Cock in 1558.⁹³ In Rabelais, as in Bruegel, the representation of *imitatio* as *digestio* is more than a straightforward scholarly reference disguised in burlesque tones. It affirms the central importance of the body in the construction and perception of the text or image. Michel Jeanneret's comments on Rabelais's assimilation of imitation and digestion are worth noting if we are to understand the paradoxical hermeneutics in Bruegel, as articulated by van Mander:

It would be wrong—he writes—to take this bibliophagy lightly and to neutralize its power by shelving it as cliché and rhetoric. The comic surface belies a profound reflection on the status of literature in the experience of everyday life. We understand it better in its cultural context. The oral tradition, or what remains of it when our mentalities and mores are dominated by print; the written document is rarely dissociated from its enunciation in the spoken word. In such circumstances, the word is perceived as an audible presence, an articulation, an accentuation, the sender's physical engagement in his message. The text is addressed not only to the intellect; it is a global event that demands the participation of body and mind alike. Communication is perceived as a series of concrete impulses and abstract significations alike, an aspect of organic life impacting the whole person. And the same is true of knowledge, which remains associated with an act of sensory apprehension. To acquire learning is to transport a tangible object from the outer to the inner world.⁹⁴

- 40 Like Bruegel's oeuvre, Rabelais's writing perfectly encapsulates this dialectic of the internal and external, inner and outer, essence and appearance. As such, it constitutes—with the writings of other humanists like Erasmus—a crucial source for our understanding of the driving forces behind Bruegel's art. As Bakhtine has clearly shown, defecation is a powerful metaphor for birth and rebirth, creation and intellectual creativity, especially in *Gargantua*—remember, for example, the episode of Gargamelle giving birth, or the infant Gargantua hunting for the best arse-wipe.⁹⁵ Similarly, in Bruegel's *Magpie on the Gallows*, the opposition between the *kakker* in the foreground—like so many figures of draftsmen in landscape paintings—and the splendid natural panorama establishes a pictorial tension that invites us to read beyond our initial apprehension of the grotesque, ludicrous detail (see fig. 6). Just as van Mander establishes a paradoxical link between Bruegel's regurgitation and the "intelligent" imitation of nature, so Bruegel himself juxtaposes an ideal landscape and a figure attending to the basest of human needs, inviting us to read the composition on a number of levels. Voltaire shows a clear understanding of this "Silenic" aesthetic when he writes, in Rabelais's own voice: "I took my compatriots at their weakest point; I spoke of drinking, I talked filth, and with that secret, I was afforded every liberty. High-minded people heard finesse, and were grateful to me; coarse folk saw only filth, and relished it: far from suffering persecution, I was loved by all."⁹⁶

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¹ Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1958).

² Francis Bacon, *The Works of Francis Bacon* (London, 1778), 1:51.

³ Jean-Claude Lebensztejn, *Les couilles de Cézanne* (Paris: Séguier, 1995), 23.

⁴ Émile Bernard, “Conversations avec Cézanne,” *Mercure de France*, June 1, 1921, 372–97, quoted in Émile Bernard, *Souvenirs sur Paul Cézanne et lettres inédites* (Paris: R. G. Michel, 1924). On Cézanne’s attitude toward landscape painting, see especially Svetlana Alpers, *The Vexations of Art: Velazquez and Others* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 39–40 (“Rocks and Hills in Provence”).

⁵ This is not to say, of course, that Italian art was devoid of a spirit of satire and wit. We are referring here to the “classicizing Italian model” as understood by the defenders of a deliberately noble art of painting, free of coarseness and jocularly.

⁶ For more on this, with regard to literature, see Patricia Eichel-Lojkine, *Excentricité et humanisme: Parodie et détournement des codes à la Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 2002), with an extensive bibliography.

⁷ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, book 35.

⁸ The *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines Menippean satire as follows: “Menippean satire, seriocomic genre, chiefly in ancient [Greek literature](#). and [Latin literature](#), in which contemporary institutions, conventions, and ideas were criticized in a mocking satiric style that mingled prose and verse” (<http://www.britannica.com/art/Menippean-satire>). Annette H. Tomarken, *The Smile of Truth: The French Satirical Eulogy and Its Antecedents* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Romain Menini, *Rabelais altérateur “Græciser en François”* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2014); Bernd Renner, *Difficile est saturam non scribere: L’Herméneutique de la satire rabelaisienne* (Geneva: Droz, 2007). On Erasmus and satire, see especially Léon-E. Halkin, “La satire dans l’Éloge de la folie,” in *La satire humaniste*, ed. Rudolf de Smet (Leuven: Peeters Press, 1994), 141–49. Voltaire’s gathering of all three authors in a single textual tribute, “Lucien, Érasme et Rabelais dans les Champs-Élysées” (1765), is symptomatic in this regard.

⁹ Reindert Falkenburg, “Pieter Aertsen, Rhyparographe,” in *Rhetoric—rhétoriqueurs—rederijkers*, ed. Jelles Koopmans and Mark Meadow (Amsterdam: Royal Netherlandish Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1995), 197–215.

¹⁰ Jürgen Müller, *Das Paradox als Bildform: Studien zur Ikonologie Pieter Bruegels d.Ä.* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1999).

¹¹ Michel Weemans, *Herri Met de Bles: Les ruses du paysage au temps de Bruegel et d’Érasme* (Paris: Hazan, 2013), esp. 205–25, on the Sileni of Alcibiades. On landscape as visual exegesis, see also Denis Ribouillault and Michel Weemans, eds., *Sacred Landscape: Landscape as Exegesis in Early Modern Europe* (Florence: Olschki, 2011).

¹² “In zijn reysen heeft hy veel ghesichten nae t’leven gheconterfeyt, soo datter gheseyt wort, dat hy in d’Alpes wesende, al die berghen en rotsen had in gheswolghen, en t’huys ghecomen op doecken en Penneelen uytghespogen hadde, soo eyghentlijck con hy te desen en ander deelen de Natuere nae volghen”: Karel van Mander, *Het Schilder-Boeck . . .* (Haarlem, 1604), f. 233 r. See Karel van Mander, *The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters, from the First Edition of the Schilder-boek, 1603–1604, with an Introduction and Translation*, ed. Hessel Miedema (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1994–99), 1:190. The verb *uytghespogen* (or *uitspugen*) can be rendered as “regurgitate” or “spit out.”

¹³ On this famous series, see Catherine Levesque, *Journey Through Landscape in Seventeenth-Century Holland* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania University Press, 1994), 17–33; and Nadine M. Orenstein, ed., *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Drawings and Prints* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art/New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 120–36. For an updated account of Bruegel’s travel to Italy, including the journey through the Alps, see Katrien Lichtert, “New Perspectives on Pieter Bruegel the Elder’s Journey to Italy (c. 1552–1554/1555),” *Oud Holland* 128, no. 1 (2015): 39–54, esp. 47–51.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/18750176-90000205>

¹⁴ Dominicus Lampsonius, *Pictorum aliquot celebrium Germaniae inferioris effigies* (Antwerp, 1572). On this comparison and this nickname, first mentioned in 1567 by Lodovico Guicciardini

in his *Descrittione di tutti i Paesi Bassi*, see further Matthijs IJssink, *Bosch en Bruegel als Bosch: Kunst over kunst bij Pieter Bruegel (c. 1528–1569) en Jheronimus Bosch (c. 1450–1516)* (Nijmegen: Stichting Nijmeegse Kunsthistorische Studies, 2009).

¹⁵ H. J. Raupp, *Bauernsatiren: Entstehung und Entwicklung des bäuerlichen Genres in der deutschen und niederländischen Kunst ca. 1470–1570* (Niederzier: Lukassen, 1986). On the figure of the peasant in Bruegel's work, and the vernacular question, see Stephanie Porras, "Rural Memory, Pagan Idolatry: Pieter Bruegel's Peasant Shrines," *Art History* 34, no. 3 (2011): 486–509; Porras, "Producing the Vernacular: Antwerp, Cultural Archaeology and the Bruegelian Peasant," *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 3, no. 1 (2011) [available online]; and Mark Meadow, "Bruegel's *Procession to Calvary*, Aemulatio and the Space of Vernacular Style," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 46 (1996): 181–205. On the satirical interpretation of the Bruegelian landscape, see also Ethan Matt Kavaler's historical synthesis, *Pieter Bruegel: Parables of Order and Enterprise* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 24–28.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5092/jhna.2011.3.1.3>

¹⁶ See remarks on this drawing by David A. Levine, "Parody, Proverb, and Paradox in Two Late Works by Pieter Bruegel the Elder," in *Parody and Festivity in Early Modern Art: Essays on Comedy as Social Vision*, ed. David R. Smith (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 85–98.

¹⁷ Porras, *Rural Memory*, 502.

¹⁸ For more on this aspect of Bruegel's work, see recent remarks by Yemi Onafuwa, "Exuberant Gluttony: Bruegel's Overeaters," in *Parody and Festivity in Early Modern Art: Essays on Comedy as Social Vision*, ed. David R. Smith (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 99–114.

¹⁹ "veel ghesichten nae t'leven gheconterfeyt": Karel van Mander, *Het Schilder-Boeck . . .*, f. 233 r.

²⁰ Van Mander, *The Lives*, 1:190.

²¹ See Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), 4–37. For Claude Lorraine's biography, see Denis Ribouillault, "De la pratique au mythe: La figure du dessinateur dans les paysages de Claude Lorraine," in *Regardeurs, flâneurs et voyageurs dans la peinture* (conference proceedings, Paris, I.N.H.A., 2009), ed. Anne-Laure Imbert (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2015), 147–68. The question of biographical anecdotes is discussed in a number of studies. On van Mander, see J. Muylle, "Piet den Drol—Karel van Mander en Pieter Bruegel: Bijdrage tot de literaire receptie van Pieter Bruegels werk ca. 1600," in *Wort und Bild in der niederländischen Kunst und Literatur des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts*, ed. H. Vekeman and J. Müller Hofstede (Erfstadt: Lukassen, 1983), 137–44; Jürgen Müller, *Concordia Pragensis: Karel van Manders Kunsttheorie im Schilder-Boeck; Ein Beitrag zur Rhetorisierung von Kunst und Leben am Beispiel der rudolfinischen Hofkünstler* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1993); and Todd Richardson, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Art Discourse in the Sixteenth-Century Netherlands* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 205–14. We should note that none of these authors analyzes the passage that concerns us here. For a recent overview of anecdotes in the history of art and in art theory, see Emmanuelle Hénin, François Lecercle, and Lise Wajeman, eds., *La théorie subreptice: Les anecdotes dans la théorie de l'art (XVIe–XVIIIe siècles)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012).

²² "Brueghel often went out of town among the peasants with this Franckert [a dealer and friend of the painter], to fun-fairs and weddings, dressed in peasants' costume, and they gave presents just like the others, pretending to be family or acquaintances of the bride or the bridegroom. Here Brueghel entertained himself observing the nature of the peasants—in eating, drinking, dancing, leaping, lovemaking and other amusements—which he then most animatedly and subtly imitated

with paint.” Van Mander, *The Lives*, 1:190.

²³ It is worth noting that peasants at Bruegelian gatherings defecate and vomit with some discretion, unlike those in German prints of the preceding generation—by Sebald Beham, for example. This simple observation suggests greater caution if we are to connect Bruegel spewing out rocks after his Alpine journey and the revelling peasants in his paintings. For more on this, see Alison Stewart, “Expelling from Top and Bottom: The Changing Role of Scatology in Images of Peasants Festivals from Albrecht Dürer to Pieter Bruegel,” in *Fecal Matters in Early Modern Literature and Art: Studies in Scatology*, ed. Jeff Persels and Russell Ganim (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 128–29, 132–36.

²⁴ Bertram Kaschek, “Bruegel in Prag: Anmerkungen zur Rezeption Pieter Bruegels d. ä. um 1600,” *Studia Rudolphina* 7 (2007): 53.

²⁵ Michel Weemans, “Les rhyparographes,” *Rires et autres éclats*, Parade: Revue d’art et de littérature, no. 8 (Tourcoing: École régionale supérieure d’expression plastique, 2008), 78. Francisco de Hollanda’s original phrase is discussed in Sylvie Deswartes-Rosa, “Si dipinge col cervello e non con le mani,” in *Fiamminghi a Roma 1508–1608* (conference proceedings, Brussels, 1995), ed. Nicole Dacos, *Bollettino d’arte*, supplement to no. 100 (1997): 277–94.

²⁶ Walter Melion, “Introduction: The Affinity of History and Landscape” and chapt. 12, “Ortelius and Van Mander on Viewing the Art of Pieter Bruegel,” in *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon: Karel van Mander’s Schilder-Boeck* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 1–12 and 173–82.

²⁷ For Bruegel’s influence on Karel van Mander as an artist, see Marjolein Leesberg, “Karel van Mander as a Painter,” *Simiolus* 22, nos. 1/2 (1993–94): 28–31. Besides several drawings and a number of pictorial elements borrowed from Bruegel in his paintings, van Mander wrote poems and farces centered on the figure of the peasant (for example “der leye sotte-klyuten van eenighe boerten vande boeren bedreven”; cf. Leesberg, “Karel van Mander,” 29n133).

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²⁸ See van Mander, *The Lives*, 2:131 and 165 for the engraving.

²⁹ Svetlana Alpers, “Realism As a Comic Mode: Low-Life Painting Seen through Bredero’s Eyes,” *Simiolus* 8, no. 3 (1975–76): 124. We should note that Alpers’s interpretation was strongly criticized by Hessel Miedema, provoking a series of polemical articles on the question of the peasant figure and its contemporary reception. See Svetlana Alpers, “Taking Pictures Seriously: A Reply to Hessel Miedema,” *Simiolus* 10, no. 1 (1978–79): 46–50. Recently, Walter Gibson has argued that comedy and laughter are central to numerous works by Pieter Bruegel. See Walter S. Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel and the Art of Laughter* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3780447>

<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3780562>

³⁰ See especially Johannes Merkel, *Form und Funktion der Komik im Nürnberger Fastnachtspiel* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Schwarz, 1971), 192–201; Sydney Schragar, *Scatology in Modern Drama* (New York: Irvington Publishers, 1982), 75–95; Stewart, “Expelling from Top and Bottom,” 125.

³¹ Erasmus, “Auris Batava” (*Adagia*, IV vi 35); Erasmus, “Auris Batava / A Dutch Ear,” in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 36, ed. and trans. J. N. Grant and B. I. Knott (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 235–37; see Porras, “Producing the Vernacular,” with bibliography. Another interesting example is Hugo Grotius’s idealization of the rustic beginnings of the Dutch Republic in his 1610’s *Book on the Antiquity of the Batavian*.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5092/jhna.2011.3.1.3>

³² On the *ad vivum* tradition, see Claudia Swan, “*Ad vivum, naer het leven*, from the life: Defining a Mode of Representation,” *Word & Image* 11, no. 4 (1995): 353–72.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02666286.1995.10435926>

³³ We should note, in this context, that van Mander played an important role in the diffusion and theorization of art at the court of Rudolf II in Prague, as Jürgen Müller shows. See Müller, *Concordia Pragensis*, esp. 77–80.

³⁴ Propertius, *Elegies* III, vol. 2.

³⁵ Kaschek, “Bruegel in Prag,” 51–55. The engraving was the model for the fine anonymous painting *Man Drawing in a Landscape*, in the National Gallery, London dated circa 1600. For more on this work, see the present author’s notice in *Fables du paysage flamand*, exh. cat., ed. Alain Tapié and Michel Weemans (Lille: Palais des Beaux-Arts, 2012–13 / Paris: Somogy, 2012), 174–75.

³⁶ Richardson, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder*, 38–41. See also on this topic, Nina Eugenia Serebrennikov, “Imitating Nature: Imitating Bruegel,” *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 47 (1996): 222–46; and J. B. Bedaux and A. van Gool, “Brueghel’s Birthyear, Motive of an Ars/Natura Transmutation,” *Simiolus* 7, no. 3 (1974): 133–56. In literature, this would be the Democritean side of *imitatio*, on which see Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3780298>

³⁷ Konrad Oberhuber, “Bruegel’s Early Landscape Drawings,” *Master Drawings* 19, no. 2 (Summer 1981): 151.

³⁸ Van Mander, *The Lives*, 3:258–59. Concerning van Mander’s anecdote, another important expert agrees with such views, albeit in very brief terms: Walter S. Gibson, “Le paysage alpestre dans l’art de Pieter Bruegel l’Ancien,” in *La Montagne et ses images du peintre d’Akrésilas à Thomas Cole* (conference proceedings, Chambéry-Annecy, 1991) (Paris: C.T.H.S., 1991), 183: “Si l’on inclut les dessins de Bruegel, cette description haute en couleur n’est pas trop éloignée du but, bien que la transformation du paysage en œuvre d’art ait été moins spontanée que l’ait suggéré Mander. Bruegel digère complètement ses montagnes avant de les restituer et la complexité de ce processus peut être perçue dans une de ses premières productions de son voyage dans les Alpes, les *Grands paysages*.”

³⁹ Van Mander, *The Lives*, 1:118 and 3:32–36. In his commentary Miedema notes that “one senses from Van Mander’s text a marked scorn for this landscape painter that is unparalleled anywhere else in the *Lives*” (3:33). In relation to the assertion that the painter made everything after life, Miedema writes: “With this ironic addition Van Mander gives an extra twist to the negative image he is giving. In themselves, clouds and skies are subjects that call for a great deal of spirit, and that demand much study from life. Yet working from life is still an activity that ought not be undertaken without the necessary ability to discriminate, and we see here that in the ignorant it is no more than a pretext for sheer laziness (3:34).”

⁴⁰ “*propria Belgarum laus est bene pingere rura*,” Dominicus Lampsonius, *Pictorum Aliquot Celebrium Germaniae Inferioris Effigies* (1572); see Hollstein 1994 no. 92.

⁴¹ Lampsonius, *Pictorum Aliquot Celebrium Germaniae Inferioris Effigies*. The following inscription accompanies the portrait:

DE JOANNE HOLLANDO, ANVERPIANO PICT:

Propria Belgarum laus est bene pingere rura:

Ausoniorum, homines pingere, sine deos.

*Nec mirum in capite Ausonius, sed Belga cerebrum
Non temere in guava fertur habere manu.
Maluit ergo manus Jani bene pingere rura
Quam caput, aut homines, aut male scire deos.*

On this proverb and its diffusion in the art theory of the day, see Deswartes-Rosa, “Si dipinge col cervello.”

⁴² On Karel van Mander as a poet, translator of the classics, and man of letters, see Reindert Jacobsen, *Carel van Mander (1548–1606), dichter en prozaschrijver* (Rotterdam, 1906); G. S. Overdiep, “Carel van Mander,” in *Geschiedenis van de Letterkunde der Nederlanden* (The Hague, 1944), 3:335–50; and Pierre Brachin, “Carel van Mander, Trait d’Union entre Nord et Sud,” in *Faits et valeurs: Douze chapitres sur la littérature néerlandaise et ses alentours* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), 20–33. This aspect of van Mander’s biography, i.e., his familiarity with ancient and contemporary literary theory, is an important argument in favor of the thesis developed in this article.

⁴³ Richardson, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder*, 41–51. Richardson notes (44–45): “The Pléiade program was well known in the Netherlands. . . . Lucas De Heere and Jan Van der Noot, though not members of the group, were prominent advocates of the cause. In Dutch literary history, Van der Noot is generally considered to be the first major Dutch Renaissance poet, producing the first collection of lyrical poems of the Renaissance in the Dutch language, *Het Bosken*, in Antwerp in 1567. He lived in Antwerp and was a faithful follower of Ronsard. His second collection, *Het Theatre oft Toonneel* (dedicated to Petrarch and du Bellay), was published in 1568 (the same year as Bruegel’s peasant paintings) and shows especially the influence of Ronsard in the sonnet and song forms.” On the question of the vernacular in the Netherlands in Bruegel’s day, see Porras, “Producing the Vernacular.” For an important discussion of the vernacular in Dutch art and literature, see also Bart Ramakers, “As Many Lands, As Many Customs: Vernacular Self-Awareness among the Netherlandish Rhetoricians,” in *The Transformation of Vernacular Expression in Early Modern Arts*, ed. Joost Keizer and Todd Richardson (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 123–78.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5092/jhna.2011.3.1.3>

⁴⁴ Seneca, *Moral Letters to Lucilius*, 84 (On gathering ideas), trans. Richard Mott Gummere (Cambridge, Mass., and London: W. Heinemann, 1917–25), accessed March 15, 2015, http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Moral_letters_to_Lucilius. On the theory of innutrition, see George W. Pigman, “Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (Spring 1980): 4–15. On Renaissance humanist theory of *imitatio*, a classic source is Thomas Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982).

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⁴⁵ Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 10.1.

⁴⁶ Petrarch, *Epistolae familiares* 22.2.12–13 and 1.8.2.

⁴⁷ Pietro Bembo, “Letter to Longueil,” in *Epistolarum Familiarium* 5.17.

⁴⁸ Michel de Montaigne, “Sur l’institution des enfants,” in *Essays*, bk. 1, chapt. 26.

⁴⁹ On imitation as digestion in Rabelais, see below and the references cited in note 92.

⁵⁰ Erasmus, *Ciceronianus, or A Dialogue on the Best Style of Speaking*, trans. Izora Scott, ed. Paul Monroe (New York: Columbia University Teachers College, 1908), 81–82. On the very close links between Erasmian culture and painting in Bruegel’s time, see Weemans, *Herri Met de Bles*.

⁵¹ “Imitating the finest Greek authors, transforming themselves to become the latter, devouring them and having thoroughly digested them, converting them to blood, and nourishment, and

each proposing, according to his nature and the argument he wished to elect, the finest author . . . in so doing (I say) the Romans constructed all these fine writings which we praise and so greatly admire” (translated by Louise Lalaurie-Rogers): Joachim du Bellay, *La Défense et Illustration de la langue française* (1549), ed. H. Chamard (Paris: Didier, 1948), 42–43 (chapt. 1, p. 7).

⁵² Teresa Chevrolet, *L'idée de fable: Théorie de la fiction poétique à la Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 2007), 685.

⁵³ Pierre de Ronsard, “Hylas (first published 1569),” lines 417–26, in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 15, ed. Paul Laumonier (Paris: Hachette, 1974–75), 252: “My dear Passerat, I resemble the Bee, collecting from flowers, sometimes yellow, sometimes red, roaming from field to field, flying to whichever part pleases him most, amassing vital energies against the Winter; thus do I wander and leaf through my books, collecting, sorting and choosing the best, painting them in a hundred colors, in one picture, and the next, Master of my painted world, the unforced imitator of Nature” (translated by Louise Lalaurie-Rogers). Note that Ronsard alludes here to the process of gathering material from disparate sources (*florilegium*) and not to their digestion as such. For more on the two types of imitation covered by the bee metaphor, see Pigman, “Versions of Imitation.”

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⁵⁴ Horace, *Ad Pisones*, 156–60.

⁵⁵ “Man hat auch in solchen Ausbildungen auf der Personen Profession und Beruf abzusehen. Ein vermessener Fechter oder wilder Soldat will eine andere action und Stellung haben als ein tiefsinniger Philosophus oder Mahler der vom Baum der Natur die Früchte abbricht und einschlucket daß sie auf Papier oder in Stuck Leinwat gleichsam wieder ausspeye” (translated by Louise Lalaurie-Rogers). Joachim von Sandrart, *Teutsche Academie* (Nuremberg, 1675), bk. 3, p. 76. Sandrart takes van Mander’s anecdote in his life of Bruegel word for word. See *Teusche AcademieII*, bk. 3, p. 259.

⁵⁶ Von Sandrart, *Teusche Academie II*, “Lebenslauf,” bk. 3, p. 5.

⁵⁷ “Tre dan, ô Schilderjeucht! ten boschwaert in, of langs de heuvelen op, om verre verschieten, of boomrijke gezichten af te maelen; of met pen en krijt de rijke natuer in uw tekenboek op te gaeren. Val aen, en betracht met stadich opletten u te wennen nooit vergeefs op te zien; maer, zooveel de tijdt, of uw gereetschap, toelaet, alles als op te schrijven, en in uwe gedachten den aert der dingen te prenten, om daer na uit de geest, wanneer u ‘t natuerlijk voorbeeld ontbreekt, u met u voorraet, in uwe geheugnis opgedaen, te behelpen.” Samuel van Hoogstraten, *Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderconst, anders de Zichtbaere Wereld* [Introduction to the Elevated School of Painting, or the Visible World]. Rotterdam, 1678, bk. 4, chapt. 5, p. 139. I quote the English translation given in *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings V, Small-Scale History Paintings*, ed. Ernst van de Wetering, Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), 84.

⁵⁸ Jan Blanc, *Peindre et penser la peinture au XVII^e siècle: La théorie de Samuel van Hoogstraten* (Bern: Lang, 2008), 44n34.

⁵⁹ Van Mander, *The Lives*, 1:294 and 4:191.

⁶⁰ See Ilsink, *Bosch en Bruegel als Bosch*, 253: “Het bereft hier een studiemethode die een uitvloeisel is van een imitatietheorie. Dit is echter niet de manier waarop volleerde kunstenaars zouden moeten werken. Van een volwassen kunstenaar zou Van Mander eerder verwachten dat die het model waarnaar hij werkte zou ‘inslorpen’ om vervolgens de eigen artistieke schleppling ‘uyt zijn selven,’ uit de geest, te maken.” The passage in question is from Karel van Mander, *Den Grondt der edel vry schilder-const* (1604), with a translation and commentary by Hessel Miedema (Utrecht,

1973), 2:437–39 (II.15h); discussed also in 2:388–89 (I 46 f-g). Ilsink develops this idea in chapter 4 of his book (“Bruegel re-creert Bosch”), 215–302, without specifically referring to the theory of innutrition however. Recently, Jérémie Koering has addressed the vexed relationship between Giorgione’s and Titian’s styles in a similar vein. Yet, unlike Ilsink, he has developed his argument specifically through the framework of the theory of innutrition. See Jérémie Koering, “Titien l’iconophage,” *Venezia Cinquecento* 21, no. 41 (2011 [2012]): 5–37. Jérémie Koering is currently preparing a monograph on the subject: *Les iconophages: Poétique de l’imitation et citation visuelle dans l’art de la Renaissance*, forthcoming.

⁶¹ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 35.116–17.

⁶² Karel van Mander, *Den Grondt (Van het Lantschap)*, fol. 37v, stanza 41, quoted in Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon*, 12.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 199; Van Mander, *The Lives*, 1:62.

⁶⁵ On the link between the artist’s panel and the table in seventeenth-century Dutch still-life painting, see Joanna Woodall, “Laying the Table: The Procedures of Still Life,” *Art History* 35, no. 5 (November 2012): 976–1003.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8365.2012.00933.x>

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, quoting Franciscus Junius, *De pictura veterum* (London, 1638), bk. 3, chapt. 8, para. 12, line 220.

⁶⁷ Pliny the Elder writes of honey: “This substance is engendered from the air, mostly at the rising of the constellations, and more especially when Sirius is shining; never, however, before the rising of the Vergiliae, and then just before day-break. Hence it is, that at early dawn the leaves of the trees are found covered with a kind of honey-like dew, and those who go into the open air at an early hour in the morning, find their clothes covered, and their hair matted, with a sort of unctuous liquid. Whether it is that this liquid is the sweat of the heavens, or whether a saliva emanating from the stars, or a juice exuding from the air while purifying itself, would that it had been, when it comes to us, pure, limpid, and genuine, as it was, when first it took its downward descent. But as it is, falling from so vast a height, attracting corruption in its passage, and tainted by the exhalations of the earth as it meets them, sucked, too, as it is from off the trees and the herbage of the fields, and accumulated in the stomachs of the bees—for they cast it up again through the mouth—deteriorated besides by the juices of flowers, and then steeped within the hives and subjected to such repeated changes, still, in spite of all this it affords us by its flavour a most exquisite pleasure, the result no doubt of its aethereal nature and origin.” Pliny, *Natural History XI*, trans. John Bostock and H. T. Riley (London: George Bell & Sons, 1890), 30–31. See Jean-Pierre Albert, “Vierges nées d’un taureau mort [Technique apicole et mythologie de l’abeille dans l’Antiquité],” *Mètis: Anthropologie des mondes grecs anciens* 7 (1992): 95–96.

http://www.persee.fr/doc/metis_1105-2201_1992_num_7_1_978

⁶⁸ Aristotle, *History of Animals*, 9.40.626a25; 5.22.554a17.

⁶⁹ See, in particular, André Matthiolo, *Les Commentaires de M.P. André Matthiolo, . . . sur les six livres de Pedacius Dioscoride*, trans. Antoine du Pinet (Lyon, 1627), chapt. 65, 181–84. The first Italian edition dates from 1544.

⁷⁰ Dirck Outgaertszn Cluyt (Theodorus Clutius), *Van de Byen, haer wonderliche oorsprong, natur, eygenschap . . .* (Leiden, 1598). On Cluyt, van Mander, and the question of imagery taken from nature, see Claudia Swan, *Art, Science, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Holland: Jacques De Gheyn II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 49ff. Cluyt’s treatise quickly became a pivotal

work and was reprinted nine times over a period of 110 years.

⁷¹ Marcus Tarentius Varro, *De re rustica* 16.15; and Lucius Junius Moderatus Columella, *On Agriculture* 14.6 and 2.4; quoted in Albert, “Vierges nées d’un taureau mort,” 101–2.

http://www.persee.fr/doc/metis_1105-2201_1992_num_7_1_978

⁷² Koering, “Titien l’iconophage,” 10.

⁷³ “un Gentilhomme qui ne communiquoit sa vie que par les operations de son ventre [...]

Ce sont icy, un peu plus civilement, des excremens d’un vieil esprit, dur tantost, tantost lache: et toujours indigeste.” Michel de Montaigne, *Essais*, bk. 3, chapt. 9, line 946; quoted by Éric Méchoulan,

Le livre avalé: De la littérature entre mémoire et culture XVIe–XVIIIe siècle (Montréal: Les Presses de l’Université de Montréal, 2004), 47. This passage is analyzed in detail in Gisèle

Mathieu-Castellani, “Des excréments d’un vieil esprit: Montaigne coprographe,” *Littérature* 62 (1986): 14–24. The English translation is taken from *The Essays of Montaigne*, translated by

Charles Cotton, ed. William Carew Hazlitt (London: Reeves and Turner, 1877; Project Gutenberg EBook, 2006, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3597/3597.txt>).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.3406/litt.1986.2268>

⁷⁴ Denis Ribouillault, “Inversion comique ou critique satirique? La vue du Capitole de Hieronymus Cock (1562),” *RACAR* 38, no. 1 (2013): 90. On the subject of bodily fluids, including excrements, in early modern art, see further Frédéric Cousinié, *Esthétique des fluides: Sang, sperme, merde, dans la peinture française du XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Le Félin, 2011).

<https://papyrus.bib.umontreal.ca/xmlui/handle/1866/12147>

⁷⁵ Like the draftsman in the landscape, the *kakker* fully belongs to the category of marginal figures or figures seen from behind (*rückenfiguren*) defined by Louis Marin as *figures-relais*. See Louis Marin, *De la Représentation*, (Paris : Gallimard–Le Seuil, 1994), 214–18.

⁷⁶ Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon*, 12.

⁷⁷ Van Mander, *The Lives*, 1:134.

⁷⁸ For more on the *kakker* in Flemish art of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Weemans, “Les rhyparographes” and Weemans, *Herri Met de Bles*, 50.

⁷⁹ Van Mander, *The Lives*, 1:325. On this anecdote, see further Richardson, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder*, 205–14.

⁸⁰ On this point, see for example Lawrence Gowing, “Nature and the Ideal in the Art of Claude,” *Art Quarterly* 37 (1974): 91–97.

⁸¹ On this point regarding Montaigne, see Méchoulan, *Le livre avalé*, 46–50.

⁸² Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 9.2; 10.4.1; 11.2.37; Cicero, *De oratore* 1.186 and 190; 3.205. See Michel Jeanneret, *Des mets et des mots: Banquets et propos de table à la Renaissance* (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1987), 127.

⁸³ On composition (*ordinant*) in van Mander’s writings, see Miedema in van Mander, *The Lives*, 2:288–89: “*Ordineren* (composing) relates to the way what is being depicted is grouped, either in the imaginary space of the world that is being depicted, or in the picture plane. An ‘ordinantie’ is indeed also called a ‘by-eeen-voeginghe’ (lit. joining-in-one) by Van Mander, a literal translation of Vasari’s *composizione*.” See also Thomas Puttfarken, *The Discovery of Pictorial Composition: Theories of Visual Order in Painting* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 193–95.

⁸⁴ Karel van Mander, *Den Grondt (Van het Lantschap)*, fol. 36r, stanza 25; quoted and translated in Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon*, 11.

⁸⁵ Danielle Gourevitch, “Le menu de l’homme libre: Recherches sur l’alimentation et la digestion dans les œuvres en prose de Sénèque le philosophe,” in *Mélanges de philosophie, de littérature et*

d'histoire ancienne offerts à Pierre Boyancé, Publications de l'École française de Rome 22 (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1974), 311–44.

http://www.persee.fr/doc/efr_0000-0000_1974_ant_22_1_1683

⁸⁶ Koering, “Titien l’iconophage,” 10. Another recent study by Jérémie Koering examines the relationship between artistic creation, innutrition, and melancholy, in connection with medical theories of the time. Jérémie Koering, “Un artiste affamé: Privation, mélancolie et innutrition dans la *Vie de Taddeo Zuccaro*,” in *Art et violence: Vies d’artistes en Europe à l’époque moderne*, ed. René Démoris, Florence Ferran, and Corinne Lucas-Fiorato (Paris: Editions Desjonquères, 2012), 146–59.

⁸⁷ Guillaume Cassegrain, “‘Une histoire débonnaire’: Quelques remarques sur l’aria,” in *La notion d’école*, ed. Christine Peltre and Philippe Lorentz (Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, 2007), 210. On Greuter’s engraving and other prints with the same theme, see Eugen Holländer, *Die Karikatur und Satire in der Medizin* (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke, 1921), 200–211.

⁸⁸ Cassegrain, “Une histoire débonnaire,” 210.

⁸⁹ See Louis Landouzy and Rogier Pépin, eds., *Le Régime du corps de maître Aldebrandin de Sienne* (1911; repr. Geneva: Slatkine, 1978); quoted in David LaGuardia, “Doctor Rabelais and the Medicine of Scatology,” in *Fecal Matters in Early Modern Literature and Art: Studies in Scatology*, ed. Jeff Persels and Russel Ganim (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 24–37. As Stefano Gulizia kindly reminded me, the same is true for Folengo and his imitators in Italy. See, for instance, William Schupbach, “Doctor Parma’s Medicinal Macaronic: Poem by Bartolotti, Pictures by Giorgione and Titian,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 41 (1978): 147–91.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/750866>

⁹⁰ Such as, Karel van Mander, *Drunken Soldier Supported by a Woman*, 1588, drawing, 248 x 189 mm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. no. RP-T-1913-3. Engraved in J. T. de Bry and J. I. de Bry, *Emblemata Saecularia. Mira et iucunda varietate seculi huius mores ita experimentia . . .* (Frankfurt am Main, 1596), no. 35, 105 x 83 mm (et gvla plvs noxae confert qvam marti. ensis). An engraving (no. 65) showing patients being purged of their images, entitled *Stultorum Medicus*, is accompanied by the following legend: arte mea cerebrvm nisi sit sapientia totvm.

⁹¹ On the reception of Rabelais’s Panurge in England, see A. L. Prescott, *Imagining Rabelais in Renaissance England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 86–102.

⁹² On this aspect of Rabelais, see (in addition to Jeanneret, *Des mots et des mets*) Eichel-Lojkine, *Excentricité et humanisme*; and Renner, *Difficile est saturam non scribere*. On digestive and culinary metaphors in Rabelais, see Mikhaïl Bakhtine’s foundational work *L’œuvre de François Rabelais et la culture populaire au Moyen Age et sous la Renaissance*, trans. Andrée Robel (1970; Paris: Gallimard, 2006). See also Mikhaïl Bakhtine, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helen Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

⁹³ Nina Eugenia Serebrennikov, “On the Surface of Dulle Griet: Pieter Bruegel in the Context of Rabelais,” in *Rabelais in Context*, ed. Barbara C. Bowen (proceedings of the 1991 Vanderbilt Conference, Birmingham, Ala.) (Summa Publications, 1993), 165. See especially Michel Jeanneret, introduction, *Les songes drolatiques de Pantagruel*, ed. M. Jeanneret (Geneva: Droz, 2004).

⁹⁴ Jeanneret, *Des mots et des mets*, 122.

⁹⁵ Bakhtine, *L’œuvre*, 206; Eichel-Lojkine, *Excentricité et humanisme*, 206–10; LaGuardia, “Doctor Rabelais.”

⁹⁶ “Je pris mes compatriotes par leur faible ; je parlai de boire, je dis des ordures, et avec ce secret tout me fut permis. Les gens d’esprit y entendirent finesse, et mèn surent gré; les gens grossiers ne

virent que les ordures, et les savourèrent: tout le monde m'aima, loin de me persécuter" (translated by Louise Lalaurie-Rogers). Voltaire, "Lucien, Érasme et Rabelais dans les Champs-Élysées," in *Dialogues philosophiques*, Collection Scripta Manent 43 (Paris: À l'enseigne du pot cassé, 1929), 204.

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