**The Good, the Bad and the Ugly.**

An Investigation into the Operation of the Ugly Body as a Tool for Moralistic Rhetoric within Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *'The Fall of the Rebel Angels'* (1562), *'Mad Meg'* (c.1562) and *'The Triumph of Death'* (C.1562)


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## ***Preface***

I grew up with a body focused repetitive disorder called Trichotillomania, which consistently made me feel physically unattractive. It is perhaps because of this, that I have always been fascinated with ugliness and its agency in shaping how we conceive of the world around us.

Art historical scholarship on the Early Modern period tends to focus on beautiful, polished and contained bodies, with studies on ugliness few and far between. Beauty's dark and neglected sister was in many ways a crucial fixture in this period, often braided into theological, socio-political discourses and providing a means for understanding and controlling the chaos of the world surrounding. When you unpick Bruegel's ugly rendering of the body within the paintings discussed, what you find is fear. Fear of moral decay, fear of eternal death, fear of the destructive consequences of war. It is through ugliness that we can gain a greater understanding of the shape that life in the Early Modern period took and the fears which characterised this. It is for this reason that I decided to focus my research on demonstrating the historical power which ugliness possessed.

The process of writing this thesis was somewhat hindered by monolingualism. My lack of proficiency in Dutch prevented the incorporation of Middle Dutch sources which would have carried the 16th century voice further through my research. Anna Pawlak's '*Trilogie de Gottessuche*' (2008) is also written in German, with no English translation available. I would not have been able to overcome this obstacle had it not been for the time and attention of my brilliant German-speaking friends, Tim and Hannah.

***Abstract***

Within Pieter Bruegel the Elder's artistic output exists three paintings in which ugliness is a common theme; '*The Fall of the Rebel Angels'* (1562)*, 'Mad Meg'* (c.1562) and '*The Triumph of Death'* (c.1562). Other than their identical dimensions and creation during a similar time period, we know very little about the nature of conception of these works.

Occasional suggestions have been that they should be understood as a thematic collection due to such similar formal correspondences. Anna Pawlak's 2008 study '*Triologie Der Gottessuche'* has been the first to explore this argument at an iconographic level. Pawlak proposes that the paintings should be understood as a collective unit not only due to their formal similarities, but for their identical exploration of the theme of vice and moral guiding of the viewer towards a more virtuous existence. This thesis will bolster Pawlak's hypothesis by attesting to the unified operation of the ugly body among the three paintings which enables the moralising rhetoric for which she argues. Such research is necessary considering the lack of historiographical and archival documents which could evidence this hypothesis further.

The subject of ugliness is extensive and complex. For this reason, this thesis investigates a specific facet of its theory – the abject body – to enable a more focused inspection of Bruegel's use of ugliness as a tool for moralistic rhetoric. The existence of two distinct features of the abject; the transgression of the body's boundaries and categorical confusion of the body, will be examined within each of the three works. It will be revealed that the application of these features amongst a contemporary symbolism towards the subject of sin, creates an overriding message that to sin is to find oneself abjectly ugly. Such a message dissuades the viewer from the moral decay which incites this physical decay into ugliness. Although the painting's specific narratives vary, this operation of ugliness as a tool for moralistic rhetoric ultimately hinges them together, thus providing an additional evidencing layer to Pawlak's argument that they should be understood as a unified whole.

***Introduction***

Pieter Bruegel the Elder, (1525-1569) is largely distinguished for his scenes of peasant life, depiction of proverbs and sweeping landscapes.[1] His paintings are described as "canonical images of 16th century painting in northern Europe."[2] Amongst his prolific body of work on subjects exploring the life of rural and urban society of his time, Bruegel painted three distinctly apocalyptic images in the 1560s which share in their collective creation of an atmosphere of ugliness.

*The Fall of the Rebel Angels* (Fig.1) depicts Lucifer and his rebel following's expulsion from Heaven in a battle between the holy and the morally corrupt.[3] It is currently displayed in the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium.[4] Illuminated by heaven itself, the rebel contingent are beaten down by a band of pearly angels led by the archangel Michael. In this vertical descent to hell, the rebel angels are shown in a state of transformation from beauty into ugliness, as they burst from their holy states into monstrous hybrids. *Mad Meg* (Fig.2) is currently on display in the Museum Mayer van den Bergh in Antwerp.[5] A crumbling city-scape venues a battle between its monstrous inhabitants and a crowd of enraged housewives led by the plundering giant of Mad Meg, a popular character within Early Modern European culture. As the housewives gather their loot and Meg storms towards the mouth of hell, demonic figures perform horrid tasks, creating an atmosphere of ghastly ugliness. *The Triumph of Death* (Fig.3) is presently located in the Museo Nacional del Prado in Madrid.[6] The painting illustrates a frightening vision of a world overwhelmed by death's violent assault. The viewer encounters hideous sights of corpses and torturous activity at the hand of anthropomorphic skeletons. Each of the three paintings confront the viewer with hideous scenes of unnatural bodies, thus uniting the three in the shared climate of ugliness which they elicit.

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[1] Bill Hughes, *A Historical Sociology of Disability: Human Validity and Invalidity from Antiquity to Early Modernity* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2019), Taylor & Francis Ebook, 281.
[2] Ethan Matt Kavaler, *Pieter Bruegel: Parables of Order and Enterprise* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1.
[3] Polyxeni Potter, "Awake, Arise or Be for Ever Fall'n," *Emerging Infectious Diseases,* vol. 15, no. 7 (2009), 1156.
[4] Joseph Leo Koerner, *Bosch & Bruegel: From Enemy Painting to Everyday Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 84.
[5] "Mad Meg," A horror film in painted form, Museum Mayer van den Bergh, accessed 26/06/20, https://www.museummayervandenbergh.be/en/page/mad-meg.
[6] Koerner, *Bosch & Bruegel: From Enemy Painting to Everyday Life,* 84.

The question of the identity of the patron(s) for these paintings, as well as the possibility that they were painted under the same commission, represents one of the various debates within the art historical study of Bruegel, whose limited biography has presented numerous challenges to retracing the steps of his personal life and career. We have no knowledge of the origins of these three paintings or the nature of their conceptions, meaning that any suggestion to who may have commissioned and funded these pieces, remains speculation. Most discussion surrounding the indication that they may have been painted as part of a collective commission, draws reference to their practical similarities in both dimension and date. *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* bears both the painter's signature and date of 1562, *Mad Meg* displays the painter's signature and a somewhat illegible date of either 1561 or 1562, and *The Triumph of Death* bears neither, but research confidently attributes its genesis to around 1562.[7] Art Historian Charles de Tolnay initially noted the shared dimensions of 117 x 162 cm of the paintings and thus experienced the first academic inclination to refer to them as a collective in 1935.[8] This was swiftly followed by Walther Vanbeselaere's 1944 description of "*een somberen trilogie*" (a gloomy trilogy), without much further analysis.[9] Beyond this initial hypothesis, Bruegel researchers such as Walter Gibson and Alexander Wied have continued to speculate towards an understanding of the paintings as a unit, without entering into a deeper level of analysis which reaches beyond the evidence of their formal correlations and occasional acknowledgement towards the similar iconographic depiction of sins and their respective punishments in each of the three works. [10]

Despite the substantial lack of in-depth analysis towards this issue, the three works are continuously placed consecutive to one another in academic studies on Bruegel.[11] The possibility of a connection had occupied marginal discussion in Bruegel's art historical study until Anna Pawlak's *'Trilogie der Gottessuche'* of 2008, which represents the first long-form academic study arguing for their collective conception, with formal correspondences such as dimensions and dates placed as secondary to the evidence indicated through iconographic analysis. Pawlak posits that the three works "are to be understood as a trilogy dealing with the subject of vice, the ways

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[7] Anna Pawlak, *Trilogie der Gottessuche: Pieter Bruegels d. Ä. Sturz der gefallenen Engel, Triumph des Todes und Dulle Griet* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2008), 19-20.
[8] Charles de Tolnay, *Pierre Bruegel l'Ancien* (Paris: Nouvelle société, 1935), 31.
[9] Walther Vanbeselaere, *Pieter Bruegel en het Nederlandsche manierisme* (Tielt: J. Lannoo, 1944), 52.
[10] Walter S. Gibson, *Bruegel* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 1977), 99;
Alexander Wied, *Bruegel* (Mailand: Studio Vista, 1979), 116.
[11] Toby Ferris, *Short Life in a Strange World: Birth to Death in 42 Panels* (London: 4th Estate, 2020), 68;
Thomas Kren and Scot McKendrick, *Illuminating the Renaissance: The Triumph of Flemish Manuscript Painting in Europe* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2003), 492.

of redemption and the complex of the absence or invisible presence of God."[12] She directs attention to the theological rooting of the iconography of the works, which encourages the viewer to dedicate themselves to a life of virtuous moral behaviour and spiritual devotion.

The present investigation will provide scholarly support to the lone-island of Pawlak's iconographic analysis, in presenting the unified operation of 'ugliness' across the three works as integral to the enaction of rhetoric argued for by Pawlak. This will boost Pawlak's addressal of an iconographic level of connection in recognising the cognitive experience of the ugly body that scaffolds such iconographic analysis, thus further evidencing that the hypothesis of a collective conception runs deeper than mere formal correspondences. Exploring the various levels at which these three paintings could be connected is crucial given that we may never obtain the archival documents which could hold this hypothesis to be historically robust.

Prior to investigating Bruegel's engagement with the ugly body as a means for providing moralistic rhetoric, it is first necessary to consider the nature of the Early Modern conception of ugliness and the relationship which it was understood to share with sinfulness. The term 'ugly' holds its origins in the Old Norse *ugglig,* connoting "to be feared or dreaded."[13] Naomi Baker explains in her 2010 study 'Plain Ugly: The Unattractive Body in Early Modern Culture', that "prior to the development of formal aesthetics in the eighteenth century, beauty and its inversions operated within wider moral and transcendent frameworks"[14] therefore consistently interlocking the Early Modern discourse on ugliness with ideas of a problematic morality. The "monstrous error of atheism", for example, is described by influential French writer Pierre de La Primaudaye in his examination of the era's philosophy, to be "most ugly."[15] The present study will refer to historical literature both preceding and during the Early Modern period which demonstrated this close relationship between morality and ugliness, yet it should be acknowledged that lack of proficiency in the Dutch language is a limiting factor for the author. This has prevented the incorporation of a substantial corpus of 16th century Middle Dutch sources which would provide a fuller framework of contemporary conceptions towards ugliness.

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[12] Pawlak, *Trilogie der Gottessuche*, "*dass die drei Tafeln al seine Trilogie zu fassen sind, die sich mit dem Thema der Laster, den Wegen der Erlösung un dem Komplex der unischtbaren Präsenz und der Abwesenheit Gottes auseinandersetzt",* trans. Talitha Myners, 28 February 2020, 10.
[13] Kirk Hazen, *An Introduction to Language* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 238.
[14] Naomi Baker, *Plain Ugly: The Unattractive Body in Early Modern Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 11.
[15] Pierre de La Primaudaye, *The French Academie,* trans. Thomas Bowes (London: Impensis George. Bishop, 1594), 4.

The consistent braiding of the action of sin and vice into visions of ugliness in this time period was aided by a withstanding societal fascination with Physiognomics. The discipline refers to the "ancient science of determining someone's innate character on the basis of their outward and hence, observable bodily features", and was treated with sincerity in Bruegel's era.[16] The Early Modern tradition of physiognomy was rooted in literature of the Middle Ages and Antiquity, with its development as a theoretical subject taking place at the latter end of the 5th century BCE, in pseudo-Aristotle's *physiogonomica;* a text which emphasised that "the soul and body appropriate to the same kind always go together."[17] Physiognomy had been a popular subject before Bruegel's time, with frequent mention in Middle English writing, such as in the 'Tale of Beryn', a 15th century pastiche of Chaucer's 'Cantebury Tales', which speaks of a "fisnamy."[18] In her study on physiognomic theory, Elisabeth Drago explains that interest in the subject in the late Medieval period leading up to Bruegel's era was propelled by the "widespread rediscovery of 'lost' classical texts" and the "growth of scholarly libraries and the foundation of universities across Europe."[19] Multiple texts related to the subject crystallize this interest, such as leading Humanist Desiderius Erasmus's 'In praise of folly' of 1511. The text is narrated by the assumed voice of folly, who claims;

*"…(a)s if any man, mistaking me for wisedome (sic), could not at first sight convince himself by my face, the true indec of my mind? I am no counterfeit, nor do I carry one thing in my looks and another in my breast."*[20]

In this statement, Erasmus's Folly reflects the principle concerns which characterise physiognomic theory; the conception that one's internal character can be interpreted through their physical appearance. The prevalence of such a line of thought in Humanist texts such as this, and indeed, in literature since the Medieval period including Michel Scot's early 13th century '*Liber physiognomiae'*, are testament to an extended societal interest in the relationship of visible appearance to internal essence. Elizabeth Honig refers to the potential influence of physiognomy on Bruegel's artistic output, positing that he was "painting for an audience trained in thinking carefully about the significance of physical traits" and the moral standing which they may be seen

[16] Mariska Leunissen, "Physiognomy," *Oxford Handbook of Science and Medicine in the Classical World,* vol.10, no.1093 (2018), 1.
[17] Elisabeth Drago, "The Art and Science of Reading Faces: Physiognomic Theory and Hans Holbein the Younger," (Masters Thesis., Temple University, 2010), 4.
[18] Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Merchant's Second Tale," in *Volume 1 of The Works of the British Poets: with Prefaces, Biographical and Critical,* ed. Robert Anderson (London: Arch, 1795), 264.
[19] Ibidem, 3.
[20] Desiderius Erasmus, *In Praise of Folly,* trans. John Wilson 1668 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 11-12.

to reflect.[21] It is set against this contextual understanding that to be visually ugly is to be sinful and morally astray, that Bruegel mobilizes the ugly body in a digestible way for his Early Modern audience.

Although no researcher on Bruegel has directly engaged with the theoretical subject of ugliness, a substantial corpus of literature explores themes which carry forward this contemporary fascination with human behaviour and its potentially ugly consequences. Literature such as Elizabeth Honig's 'Pieter Bruegel and the Idea of Human Nature' (2019) and Ethan Matt Kavaler's 'Pieter Bruegel: Parables of Order and Enterprise*'* (1999) will prove beneficial to this study in their documentation of the moralising core at the centre of Bruegel's output, promoting a certain "self-questioning" within the viewer.[22] Margaret Sullivan's 'Madness and Folly: Peter Bruegel's Dulle Griet' (1977) and Yona Pinson's 'Folly and Vanity in Bruegel's 'Dulle Griet': Proverbial Metaphors and Their Relationship to Imagery' (1999) are more specific towards this perspective in attributing particular vices as integral to the painting's meaning. Such studies aid the present analysis in guiding how the ugly body could slot into the moralising framework of Bruegel's works.

The experience of war is a noteworthy historical context regarding the necessity for ugliness to be used as a tool for moralistic rhetoric in this way. As Bruegel was painting these three works, The Netherlands was existing under the Habsburg Empire ruled by Philip II of Spain (1527-1598).[23] The Low Countries had experienced centuries of war under the Hapsburg rule of Charles V (1500-1558), Philip's predecessor, characterised by persistent conflicts with France, the Ottoman Empire and the Sack of Rome of 1527.[24] The ugliness of war had coloured life for Bruegel's contemporaries for several centuries, with Honig explaining that "being caught up within the chaos of war, not by choice as a combatant but by chance as a civilian, was a very real prospect for people all over 16th century Europe."[25] In the mid 16th century civil war was again on the horizon, with tensions regarding increasing taxation and attempts to quell Protestantism reaching their boiling point.[26] In the years leading up to his death in 1569, Bruegel would experience the destructive impact of the Dutch war of independence against the

[21] Elizabeth Alice Honig, *Pieter Bruegel and the Idea of Human Nature* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2019), 143.
[22] Honig, *Pieter Bruegel and the Idea of Human Nature,* 13.
[23] Henry Kamen, *Philip of Spain* (London: Yale University Press, 1997), 178.
[24] James D. Tracy, *Emperor Charles V, Impresario of War: Campaign Strategy, International Finance, and Domestic Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
[25] Honig, *Pieter Bruegel and the Idea of Human Nature*, 128.
[26] "Dutch Revolts," Oxford Reference, accessed 10th July 2020, https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095736876.

governing powers of the Habsburg Empire.[27] Various scholars on Bruegel have suggested that he occasionally grapples with this subject of the catastrophic impact of war, with Pierre Francastel insisting that Bruegel's was "une oeuvre d'opposition"[28] to the Spanish regime and both Tine Luk Meganck's reading of *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* and Margaret Sullivan's of *The Triumph of Death*, seeing each as a reflection of contemporary political and religious tensions in the Netherlands at the time.[29] Whilst there is little knowledge surrounding the precise political and religious beliefs of Bruegel, Nadine M. Orenstein points out that "it is difficult to imagine" he was "unmoved by the climate of terror that surrounded him", in her study of his elusive biography.[30] It may be said that the iconographies of the three paintings evoke the ugly consequences and destructive potential of war, with their structuring around the principle of a "divided unit"[31], barren landscapes and artillery-like infiltrations as embodied in the marauding housewives, armoured angels and marching military units of death.

Given that the study of ugliness is a conceptually complex pursuit, with Nina M. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer describing it as "at once too broad and too diffuse", this investigation will focus on 'the abject body' as one specific facet of the extensive theory of ugliness to enable a focused exploration of Bruegel's use of ugliness in a moralistic framework.[32] Chapter one will introduce the concept of the abject. The following three chapters will focus on *The Fall of the Rebel Angels, Mad Meg* and *The Triumph of Death* respectively. Each chapter will consist of two subchapters examining the presence of the same two defining features of the abject body within each panel; subchapter one will attend to the transgression of the body's boundaries and subchapter two will inspect the categorical confusion of the body. In connecting the three paintings through the lens of Bruegel's application and engagement with the visual ugliness of the abject body, this study will not only reveal the mutual rhetorical framework each shares but will argue that this framework evidences their conception as a thematic collection that should be understood as a unified whole. Ugliness will be demonstrated as key to Bruegel's moralistic rhetoric, offering a means of communicating the "self-conscious and highly intellectual notions

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[27] Nadine M. Orenstein, "The Elusive Life of Pieter Bruegel the Elder," in *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Drawings and Print,* ed. Nadine M. Orenstein (New York: The Metropolitan Muesum of Art, 2001), 9.
[28] Pierre Francastel, *Bruegel* (Paris: Éditions Hazan, 1995), 27-28.
[29] Tine Luk Meganck, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Fall of the Rebel Angels: Art, Knowledge and Politics on the Eve of the Dutch Revolt* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2014);
Margaret Sullivan, *Bruegel and the Creative Process,1559-1563* (Farnham: Burlington, 2010), 4.
[30] Nadine M. Orenstein, *The Elusive Life of Pieter Bruegel the Elder,* 9.
[31]Pawlak, *Trilogie der Gottessuche,* "*Ebenso offenbaren die dargestellten Figuren eine relevante Übereinstimmung: Auf allen drei Bildern wurden diese nach dem Prinzip einer 'geteilten Einheit' dargestellt*", 187.
[32] Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, "Ugliness" in *Critical Terms for Art History,* eds. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 281.

and values"[33] which Sullivan describes to be characteristic of his artistic output and resultant legacy, and revealing of the instructive potential which ugliness was capable of possessing in Early Modern art.

[33] Quoted in Ethan Kavaler, *Pieter Bruegel: Parables of Order and Enterprise,* 27.

## ***Chapter One: The Abject***

The Abject exists as a concept distinct in its own right, yet overlaps to a great extent in the theoretical infrastructure of ugliness in terms of the reactions of repulsion it elicits for the viewer. Studies on the subject of ugliness have frequently engaged with abject theory as a means of better understanding its operation.[34] Naomi Baker reiterates this stating that "the abject", specifically Julia Kristeva's theorisation, "sheds light on the function of representation of ugly characters in the maintenance of Early Modern subjectivity."[35]

'Abjection' originates in the Latin *abicere,* meaning "to throw away" or "to cast off, away or out."[36] With the physical body existing as its "primary site", the abject disturbs the psychological scaffolding of our sense of self in transgressing the boundaries of the body and disrupting our ability to conceive of its boundaries overall.[37] Such disturbances confuse our ability to understand the body as an autonomous entity, disintegrating the subject-object dialectic and eliciting a reaction of repulsion for the viewer. The theory of abjection has been developed and investigated in a large body of scholarship covering a range of disciplines including psychology, politics and the arts. Julia Kristeva's defining of the abject as "what I must get rid of in order to be an I at all"[38] has spearheaded the study of the abject's relationship to the visual arts. Kristeva is a Bulgarian-French philosopher and psychoanalyst whose work explores literary criticism and personal history.[39] Her 1982 text 'Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection' is undoubtedly the primary point of departure for any discourse towards abjection, irrespective of discipline.

In her ground-breaking exploration, Kristeva defines three categories of the abject; "bodily incorporation," "bodily waste" and "signs of sexual difference."[40] Transitional matter such as food, excrement and menstrual blood are defining features which fall into each category of the abject respectively. Within these categories, the corpse is seen as the most abject figure of

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[34] Sara Rodrigues and Ela Przybylo, *On the Politics of Ugliness* (New York: Springer, 2018);
Baker, *Plain Ugly: The Unattractive Body in Early Modern Culture*, 97-131.
[35] Baker, *Plain Ugly: The Unattractive Body in Early Modern Culture*, 97.
[36] Rina Arya, *Abjection and Representation: An Exploration of Abjection in the Visual Arts, Film and Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), ProQuest Ebook Central, 3.
[37] Ibidem, 57
[38] Hal Foster, "Obscene, Abject, Traumatic," *October,* vol. 78 (1996), 114.
[39] P. Corcoran, *Awaiting Apocalypse* (New York: Springer, 1999), 39.
[40]Elizabeth A. Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1994), 193.

all, as it is an "'I' that has lost its 'I-hood."[41] What makes these categories abject is not the substances and fluids involved themselves, but the disruption of the autonomy of the body which they represent and the discomfort which arises from witnessing this. The abject body "hovers at the border of what is assimilable, thinkable but is itself unassimilable" being neither a subject nor an object yet displaying features of both and thus, existing in the ambiguous space between the two states.[42] It creates a destabilising viewing experience which upsets the equanimity of the onlooker, arousing feelings of anxiety, disgust and repulsion.

In Rina Arya's 2014 book 'Abjection and Representation', she unpacks the terms 'abject' and 'abjection', clarifying that they are to be "used in different but related senses to refer to an operation (to make abject) and a condition (abjection)" of "being in this state," after "one has experienced the abject or has been rendered abject."[43] Whilst the 'abject' may be taken to be adjectival – a visual property which repulses us - , the condition of abjection refers to the viewer's realisation that the abject cannot be expelled into an objective status because it is a part of the subject and thus the self. Philosopher Judith Butler touches on the abject in many of her academic studies, including her gender theory text 'Bodies that Matter', in which she muses that "the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside, which is after all 'inside' the subject as its own founding repudiation."[44] The establishing of what is other, what is 'outside' to our inside, 'object' to our subject is a process based on exclusion which is necessary and integral to subjecthood and selfhood overall. In this sense, the repulsion that the viewer experiences when faced with the abject is a repulsion of the self. Kristeva exclaims; " I expel myself, I spit myself out, I abject myself with the same motion through which 'I' claim to establish myself."[45] Thus, the abject's troubling of subjecthood is followed by the condition of abjection in which the viewer's governing understanding of the world is entirely subverted and all meaning collapses.

The disruption of autonomy resulting from the transgression of the boundaries of the body and categorical confusion are each defining features of the abject which this study will take as entry points to monographing Bruegel's operation of ugliness as a mechanism for moralistic

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[41] Ela Przybylo, "The Politics of Ugliness," *eSharp: Politics & Aesthetics*, vol. 1, no. 16 (2018), 15.
[42] Arya, *Abjection and Representation: An Exploration of Abjection in the Visual Arts, Film and Literature*, 4.
[43] Ibidem, 3.

[44] Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 3.

[45] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 3.

rhetoric within the three panels. Whilst Bruegel's artistic production has occasionally been linked to the abject, as with disability scholar Bill Hugh's remark that Bruegel "followed Bosch in his attraction to the grotesque and the abject"[46] and medieval academic Beverly Bruen's assertion that Bruegel "invented physiologies borrowed from the language of the abject"[47] in her 2011 dissertation 'The Making of Monsters: Has the Medieval Monster been Reassembled as the Unbounded Body of Medical Science and Environmental Horror', the true extent of the use of the abject body within his imagery has been left largely unexplored.

[46] Hughes, *A Historical Sociology of Disability: Human Validity and Invalidity from Antiquity to Early Modernity*, 281.
[47] Beverly Anne Bruen, "The Making of Monsters: Has the Medieval Monster been Reassembled as the Unbounded Body of Medical Science and Environmental Horror?," (Diss., The Australian National University, 2011), 127.

## ***Chapter Two – The Fall of the Rebel Angels***

*The Fall of the Rebel Angels* exhibits a panoramic scene brimming with activity. The setting gradients downwards from celestial blues and pale whites into earthier tones towards its lower half. A pulsing congregation of demonic pests surges from the brightly glowing semi-circle of the sun disc at the top, filling the composition with tempestuous haste. The mass of creatures expands in all directions in its fall, reaching dangerously close to the edge of the composition and the viewer's space. As Pawlak points out;

"*hardly any other collection of bizarre figures challenged art historians to invent names for the ugly: while Gerhard Menzel described them as "horrible and demonic births of hell" and Gustav Gluck as "countless hellish beating", Theodor Janicke wrote about them: "each is hideousness in itself.""*[48]

In this vision of ugliness, what we are witnessing is the apocryphal story of the first battle between the holy and the corrupt at the beginning of time. Prior to the original sin which led to Adam and Eve's banishment from the Garden of Eden, the angel Lucifer and his accomplices were expelled from heaven for their excess in pride. Having been one of God's most celebrated angels, both grand and beautiful, Lucifer exclaimed with his increasingly proud heart; "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God… I will be like the most high" (Isaiah 14:13-14).[49] Lucifer's prideful ambitions to ascend to the height of God's rank was marked by the bible as "the beginning of all sin" (Ecclesiastes 10:13), and for this moral failing, he and his followers were expelled to the regions of hell.[50] Bruegel extends this narrative to the beginning and the end of time. The fall of the rebel angels was often theologically amalgamated to the story of Lucifer's final annihilation, an event taking place at time's end (Revelation 12:7-9).[51] In this second defeat of Lucifer, Michael and his angelic cohorts drive away a seven-headed dragon, which, though heavily obscured within the mass, can be traced at the centre of the composition, with Michael's right foot perched upon the dragon's beige belly.[52] Bruegel thereby presents the eternal battle against evil which has taken place throughout earthly time.

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[48] Pawlak, *Trilogie der Gottessuche,*"*Kaum eine andere Ansammlung von bizarren Gestalten forderte die Kunsthistoriker mehr auf, für das Hässliche Bezeichnungen zu erfinden: Während Gerhard Menzel sie als > Scheusale und dämonische Ausgeburten der Hölle< und Gustav Glück als >zahlloses höllisches Geschmeiß < bezeichnete, schrieb Theodor Jänick über sie: Jedes ist eine Scheußlichkeit für sich,*"trans. Talitha Myners, 11 February 2020, 48.
[49] Honig, *Pieter Bruegel and the Idea of Human Nature,* 85.
[50] Ibidem, 84.
[51] Honig, *Pieter Bruegel and the Idea of Human Nature,* 88.
[52] Ibidem.

The falling rebel angels are depicted in various states of hybridity, among which there are "insectoids with fish parts, humanoids with bird parts, mechanoids with crustacean parts."[53] This seemingly ceaseless whirlpool of creatures appear to us in their precise moment of transformation from their previous angelic states. Bruegel not only assembles these forms into hybrids but combines artificial and natural components into their physical composition as well, including elements of "fauna, flora, various instruments and ethnographic objects."[54]

Although many of the rebel angel's physical forms may be uncategorisable within the natural order, amongst the mass are several creatures recognisable to an Early Modern viewer's physiognomic understanding of the signifiers of sins. Most obvious to the Early Modern conscious, is the numerological connection of the seven heads of the dragon to the seven deadly sins. This was a popular subject within visual arts of the time, explored by artists such as Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Coecke van Aelst.[55] It was also an area of interest for Bruegel himself, who explored the subject in his 1558 series of engravings.[56] Honig points out that Bruegel augments this language of sin even further in incorporating "the bear of anger, the dog of envy, the ape of lust and – denuded of its finery – the peacock of pride"[57] into the narrative's imagery. In Bruegel's time, as Honig continues to explain, Lucifer existed as the "prime example of disruptive, rebellious pride" and "many chambers of rhetoric competing in Brussels in 1562, the very year of Bruegel's painting, wrote of how God had to expel this arrogant angel in order to maintain peace in heaven."[58] Bruegel emphasises the overriding theme of sin closely associated with Lucifer, through incorporating this additional animal symbolism.

This chapter will explore how the abject body within this painting supports a moralistic rhetoric which directly connects ugliness to moral corruption. The following two subchapters will interrogate Bruegel's transgression of the boundaries of the body and use of hybridity to instigate a categorical confusion for the viewer. Each strategy disrupts the ability to understand the body as an autonomous entity, thus conjuring the condition of abjection for the viewer.

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53 Ferris, *Short Life in a Strange World: Birth to Death in 42 Panels,* 68.
54 Tine Luk Meganck, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Fall of the Rebel Angels: Art, Knowledge and Politics on the Eve of the Dutch Revolt*, 69.
55 Stijn Alsteens, "The Drawings of Pieter Coecke van Aelst," *Master Drawings*, vol. 52, no. 3 (2014), 287-289; Walter S. Gibson, "Hieronymus Bosch and the Mirror of Man: The Authorship and Iconography of the "Tabletop of the Seven Deadly Sins"," *Oud Holland*, vol. 87, no. 4 (1973).
56 H. Arthur Klein, *Graphic Worlds of Peter Bruegel the Elder* (Massachusetts: Courier Corporation, 2014), 100-114.
57 Honig, *Pieter Bruegel and the Idea of Human Nature,* 91.
58 Ibidem, 85.

***Subchapter One: Transgression of the body***

This subchapter will consider the abject transgression of the boundaries of the body throughout the imagery of Bruegel's '*The Fall of the Rebel Angels*.' Bruegel's attention to representing various moments of bodily incorporation and bodily waste, as well as his focus upon the display of the orifices of the body throughout the painting, suggest a repulsive unbounding of the body of the sinful, a message arguably perpetuated to dissuade the viewer from the temptation of sin. In this way, the transgression of the body in this panel exhibits Bruegel's mobilization of ugliness as a tool for moralistic rhetoric.

Close inspection of the highly complex, figure-filled composition of *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* uncovers the presence of various figures placed in a state of egestion or ingestion in which the boundaries of the body are traversed. Among the dozens of falling angels, a chained dog fatally wounded by the swipe of a nearby virtuous angel's weapon battles with a winged lizard in the upper right of the composition. The dog ferociously takes the lizard's tail in his mouth whilst the lizard grips the dog's tail, incorporating their body images into one another as if fused in one endless chain. Directly beneath the pair, a lobster-clawed angel is angled to expose his excretion to the viewer, with the rest of his body obscured from sight. It is not the waste material itself which renders this figure an abject archetype, but the precise moment of defecation which Bruegel has selected to present to us. The rebel angel is suspended in a moment of mid-defecation, with the viewer suspended here with him. We are held to the vision of this material, half within the realm of his body and half exiting, thus failing to fully separate from the contained unit of the body. Rather, the boundary of his body is represented in transgression; it fissures and does not seal. Another defecating angel, located at the lower left of the composition, is caught in a horrifying moment of two-fold transgression in which the manifestation of the abject body is maximised to the highest degree for the viewer. Tine Luk Meganck, who is responsible for the text 'Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Fall of the Rebel Angels', the sole longform and in depth study of the painting to exist, directs attention to this "devil with a human body and a lizard's head" who can be seen "biting into his own arm while upside down, his anus towards the viewer, shitting."[59] His boundaries are totally transgressed as his body folds in on itself in a horrifying circle of incorporation and waste.

[59] Meganck, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Fall of the Rebel Angels: Art, Knowledge and Politics on the Eve of the Dutch Revolt*, 41.

The panel exhibits a tension surrounding the borders of the body and what trespasses these borders in representing various figures in states of physical transgression which characterise the abject. Bruen notes how Bruegel's "nasty little creatures" tend to "slither and cavort and transgress boundaries."[60] These abject figures are held in a space between subjective and objective identity, attesting to the oscillating, penetrable corporeality of the body and eliciting a repulsed reaction in the viewer who must affront the rebel angels' inability for autonomy and self-contained physical identity. Beset with urges to eat one another and open their bodies into defecation, Bruegel's angels are unbounded, rejecting conformation to the laws which regulate the clean and ordered subject and thus corresponding to Kristeva's definition of the abject as that which "does not respect borders, positions, rules."[61] The abject nature of the damned angel's bodies is exaggerated to the viewer through the contrast offered by the solid, self-containment of the bodies of Michael and his virtuous cohorts. Pawlak also notes the juxtaposition of the "calmly floating angels" with "the deformities screaming in horror in chaotic movement."[62] Garmented in creamy white and pink robes, their bodies are shrouded in on themselves and cocooned into the safety of subjectivity contrasted against the amorphous bodies which fall below them. This opportunity for comparison enforces the overriding rhetorical message which these abject bodies indicate; to sin is to find one's body uncontainable, to become repulsively abject.

Such repulsive transgression places the falling rebel angels in direct opposition to emerging models of the Early Modern subject as contained and completely self-policed. In Peter Stallybrass's study of the body as a historical site for gender conflict, he observes the increasing bounding of the body during this period; the "cleansing of orifices" that progressively distinguished "the social elite from the 'vulgar'", placed greater stress upon the importance of physical boundary to individuality, constructing an ideal subject based upon characteristics of self-containment and autonomy.[63] Norbert Elias describes this privatization of particular behaviours in 'The Civilising Process*'* (1939) explaining how the general public were directed by authorities to adopt specific social manners, which subsequently created a new "frontier of

[60] Bruen, *The Making of Monsters,* 45.
[61] Ibidem, 7.
[62] Pawlak, *Trilogie der Gottessuche*, "*In dieser auffallend kontrastierten Gruppe wird dem ruhig schwebenden Engel ein vor Entsetzen schreiendes Missgebilde in chaotischer Bewegung gegenübergestellt*", trans. Talitha Myners, 30 February 2020, 49.
[63] Peter Stallybrass, 'Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed,' in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe,* eds. Margaret W. Ferguson et al. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 125.

shame."[64] Contemporary examples of this increasing refinement include the Brunswick Court regulations of 1589 which warns; "let no one" under any circumstance "foul the staircase, corridors or closets with urine or other filth, but go to suitable, prescribed places for such relief", and the preaching of Giovanni della Casa's *'Il Galateo'* of 1609; "it does not befit a modest, honourable man to prepare to relieve nature in the presence of other people."[65]

Early Modern conceptions of ugliness reflected this emerging societal stress on privacy and containment through frequently adopting the polar opposite properties of fluidity and leakiness. In John Donne's eighth elegy, 'The Comparison', the difference between a beautiful and ugly maiden is registered in this contrast in corporeality. The beautiful woman harbours "sweat drops" the size of "pearl carcanets" whilst her loathsome counterpart reveals a "rank sweaty froth" like "spermatic issue of ripe menstruous boils."[66] In their consistent bodily transgressions, Bruegel's damned angels fulfil the Early Modern definition of ugliness as the corporeal, inchoate opposition to emerging models of the contained and ordered ideal subject.

Not only does Bruegel indicate abject transgression to be a direct consequence of sinful behaviour, but he keeps the threat of further abjection immanent throughout the composition through the drawing of attention to the orifices of the body. Bodily orifices represent the areas at which the body may be entered or exited and thus symbolise, as Arya remarks, the "points of greatest vulnerability" to the abject.[67] *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* continuously exposes the body's entry and exit points. Almost all of the damned scream out in what can only be imagined as a cacophonous clamour. Bruegel academic Robert Bonn notes the "fishes with open mouths ready to devour anything that comes their way"[68] and Pawlak directs attention to the bloated bird-fish hybrid which tears at its pregnant stomach, "screaming open its body."[69] Various creatures reveal their anuses, including the seven-headed dragon who falls in a torsion which exposes the small dark oval of his anus to the left of Michael's bent knee. To the left of the dragon, a sundial hangs from a helmet-headed demon creating a perverse resemblance to the orifice of his anus. Through

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[64] Norbert Elias, *The Civilising Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations,* trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 118.
[65] Quoted by Elias, *The Civilising Process,* 111-112.
[66] John Donne, *John Donne: The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 62.
[67] Arya, *Abjection and Representation: An Exploration of Abjection in the Visual Arts, Film and Literature*, 60.

[68] Robert Bonn, *Painting Life: The Art of Pieter Bruegel, the Elder* (Orange County: Robert Bonn, 2006), 67.

[69] Pawlak, *Trilogie der Gottessuche,* "*Ebenfalls kann ein daneben befindlicher Vogel, der schreiend seinen Leib aufreißt, al sein Verweis auf die größte Verzweif-lung gedeutet warden, die im Bezug auf den Ort der ewigen Strafe entsteht,"* trans. Talitha Myners, 28 February 2020, 52-53.

this emphasis on the sites of abjection, these orifices from which repulsive substances might emanate or be taken up infuse the panel with the threat of the body's transgression.

Once again, the good angels personify the Early Modern ideal which counters the punctured bodies of the damned. Such holy figures embody the essence of social mores circulating within an increasingly refined Early Modern society, marked most clearly in the publishing of handbooks on manners and decorum such as Erasmus's '*De Civilatate morum puerilium'* of 1530. His guidance encompasses contemporary attitudes towards public decency and concealment, musing that "to expose" the "parts of the body which nature has invested with modesty ought to be far removed from the conduct of a gentleman."[70] Michael and his angels achieve Erasmus's model for decorum with their tight-lipped, conservatively clothed representation, further demonstrating Bruegel's positioning of the abject body as a metaphor for the punishment of sin. Not only do the good angels expose no orifices with their clean and smooth contours, but each can additionally be seen to hold a trumpet-like instrument or a sword. These protuberances create an even greater tension towards the potential transgression of the body's boundaries, considering the level of orifices exposed by the damned and the ease at which these sharp protuberances could traverse these entry and exit points. Bruen also registers Breugel's use of the "language of the abject" in "stressing bodily orifices and protuberances" in this way.[71] As our eyes travel vertically down the composition, we experience a safe, contained ideal of the Early Modern subject increasingly shaped into an unbounded territory of apertures, reminding the viewer of the ease at which the bodies of those who act out of pride, or any other sin indeed, may become abject. Just as the threat of the temptation of sin is forever immanent, so too is the threat of its abject punishment.

In its consistent positioning of creatures in moments of ingestion and excretion, as well as the emphasis upon the orifices of the body and nearby protuberances, it may be said that *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* exhibits an imagery imbued with the tension of the transgression of the boundaries of the body. This presentation of a defining feature of the abject body is placed alongside a narrative of sin; a relationship significant to the moralistic rhetoric this operation of ugliness enables. This thematic link to sinful behaviour and its consequences is enabled through the depiction of a recognisable apocryphal narrative regarding the subject, as well as the use of imagery of specific animals and their associated sins which would have been recognisable to the

[70] Desiderius Erasmus, *De civilitate morum puerilium*, trans. Brian McGregor (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 277.
[71] Bruen, *The Making of Monsters,* 12.

physiognomic eye. It is therefore likely that the historical viewer would have understood that what they are witnessing are the abject consequences of sinful behaviour. Forging a connection between the angels imbued with vice and the transgression of the boundaries of their body, and the good angels with their tightly contained fulfilments of emerging models of the ideal body, strongly rhetorises to the viewer that to be sinful is to be ugly. Indeed, as Erasmus states "whatsoever is filthy in the body, that same is to be understood in the soul."[72] The operation of the abject body is thus integral to the moralistic rhetoric of *The Fall of the Rebel angels*, offering opportunity for Bruegel to illustrate the consequences of sinfulness and appropriate models of moral conduct through the inversely self-contained, un-repulsive subjectivity of the good angels.

[72] Desiderius Erasmus, *The Manual of a Christian Knight* (London: Methuen & Co., 1905), 142.

***Subchapter Two – Categorical Confusion***

This subchapter will examine categorical confusion within the imagery of Bruegel's *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* as a tool for moralistic rhetoric. Through his depiction of the rebel angels in a state of hybridity, Bruegel disrupts our ability to categorically understand the rebel angels as autonomous entities. Confronted with this indeterminate vision, the viewer is steered away from the moral decay which prompted this consequence.

Expelled from heaven under God's instruction, *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* depicts the prideful mass as "mutant creatures"[73], a hybrid state of being which marks a blurring of the visual boundaries of the body as well as a blurring of our ability to categorically understand such bodies. Almost every rebel angel is depicted through this physical and ideological hybridity, with Paul Rockett's monograph on Bruegel describing his creatures as "nightmarish mixtures of animals, humans and even vegetables."[74] Cases of hybridity include the emerald aquatic beast at the lower right corner; its torso combining the lower body of a fish with the upper body of a crustacean and the pincers of a crab, finished with two opened mussel shells as wings. Beneath him, human headed dragonflies grit their teeth in the terror of their descent. To the left of the composition, a falling figure's head has transformed into a pale cabbage from out of which his artichoke torso grows, equipped with moth wings, thus combining animal and vegetable elements. Even the physical form of the seven headed dragon reveals a level of hybridity, with some of the crowned heads showing dog-like features whilst others harbour a more goat-like resemblance, with "long necks, pointed snouts and ears."[75] Such categorical blending is not only by nature of their physical appearance, but also involves an ideological scrambling with Bruegel incorporation of sea-borne creatures such as fish, crustaceans and molluscs into the mass of angels. These features, which are traditionally associated with the element of water, render a world ideologically upside-down in which birds fall and fish can fly. Faced with the "sea of monstrous absurdity"[76] of Bruegel's hybrid, mutant creatures, the viewer is accosted with an abruptly unfamiliar universe which does not conform with typical classification or the standards of nomenclature. What can be categorized is here rendered uncategorizable in this problematization of our ontological understanding of the world. For instance, the cabbage-headed hybrid cannot be objectively understood as a cabbage, artichoke, or moth independently,

[73] Honig, *Pieter Bruegel and the Idea of Human Nature*, 84.
[74] Paul Rockett, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder* (New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc, 2015), 23.

[75] Ibidem, 88.
[76] Honig, *Pieter Bruegel and the Idea of Human Nature,* 84.

given the fusion of each element into a singular form. Our existing biological expectations are incapable of placing this figure, and almost every other figure in the mass, within a realm of objective understanding.

Categorical confusion is maximised through the incorporation of elements of the human body and its adornments, threading an animated humanity into the rebel angel's forms. As Honig points out, various falling figures "still have human arms, remnants of their former state."[77] In her brief article for the epidemiological journal 'Emerging Infectious Diseases', Polyxeni Potter describes Bruegel's creatures as "earthy beasts with facial expressions, peering eyes and human limbs."[78] Before succumbing to pride, this mass of vermin had once existed as figures physically resembling the pearly angels hovering above them. The introduction of this sense of remaining humanity continues through the incorporation of human-like adornments, including the wearing of armour and holding of weapons recognisable in the lower left-hand corner where the cabbage-headed hybrid extends a golden armoured arm, whilst the devil on his right wears a double-breastplate and a silver helmet upon his head. Bruegel thus threads certain aesthetic elements through the imagery that produce a sense of a reality which the viewer knows to be true. The incorporation of armour and weaponry indicates the spirit of war that shapes this reality, and indeed, was a very real concern for Bruegel's contemporary audience. Bruegel subverts this in fusing such elements into hybrid forms outside of categorical expectation. A feeling of estrangement is produced in the synthesis of domains which we understand to be separated, rooted in the fact that we are close to being capable and yet, ultimately incapable of relating them to our humanity.

Just as the visible moments of ingestion and egestion confront the viewer with an occupation of the interstice between inside and outside of the boundaries of the body, Bruegel's hybrid forms are horrifyingly interstitial in their confusing of biological and ontological categories by which we interpret the body. Such hybridity blurs the boundaries of the body to become the "impossible object"[79], fulfilling Kristeva's musings of the abject as; "ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. It lies there quite close, but it cannot be assimilated."[80] A feeling of discomfort occurs as we contemplate these fallen angels who do not

[77] Ibidem, 84-85.
[78] Potter, *Awake, Arise or Be for Ever Fall'n,* 1156.

[79] Arya, *Abjection and Representation: An Exploration of Abjection in the Visual Arts, Film and Literature*, 29.
[80] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection,* 1.

respect the "borders, positions and rules" of categorical objectivity.[81] They are "not me. Not that" but "not nothing, either", they are a "something that I do not recognize as a thing."[82]

From the analysis of this chapter, it is clear that ugliness in its abject form, is imperative to the moralising rhetoric of '*The Fall of the Rebel Angels.'* Such rhetoric is enabled through the transgression of the boundaries of the body marked by the positioning of various demons in moments of ingestion or egestion as well as the attentiveness to the inclusion of orifices and protuberances to sustain the tension of further transgression. In disrupting the boundaries of the body in this way, Bruegel makes clear to the viewer that to sin is to find one's body a breach-able territory, devoid of the safety of the autonomous, objective forms of the good angels above. This moralising rhetoric is further enabled through the categorical problematization which arises from the depiction of the angels in hybrid states, unnaturally combining recognisable elements of human, animal and vegetable forms. This hybridity disrupts the ability for the rebel angel's bodies to possess autonomy. The viewer is therefore not only witness to the angel's descent into hell as a consequence of their vices, but crucially, their transformation from a contained, recognisable beauty into the horror of the abject body. In this world tangled in warfare and fuelled by sin, the body is uncontrollable and unrecognisable. With political and religious tensions simmering in the Netherlands, Bruegel guides the viewer to question their own moral standing against the ugly fate which before them, a fate which Bruegel proposes the Netherlands could be facing very soon if the war of Dutch independence is to break out.

[81] Ibidem, 4.
[82] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection,* 2.

## ***Chapter Three: Mad Meg***

*Mad Meg* presents a hellish landscape of ugliness. Charging towards an anthropomorphic mouth of hell to the left of the composition, the gigantic figure of Meg sweeps through the encompassing chaos with her hoard of shimmering jewels and kitchen utensils. Meg and her followers, indicated by the group of small housewives to the right of the composition, have marauded their immediate surroundings; seemingly the city-like home to a demonic population. Some are shown in combat with surrounding creatures whilst others collect coins that a giant, frequently referred to as the figure of Folly by academics including Margaret Sullivan and Yona Pinson, ladles from his buttocks.[83] Groups of armoured troops pool into the composition, though it is unclear whether their purpose is in support of the housewives or demons.

The grim atmosphere of the scene is enforced by the bizarre activities of the surrounding demonic figures. These hybrid creatures can be seen eating one another, leaking out bodily fluids and brandishing themselves to the viewer. On closer inspection, it becomes difficult to determine where the demonic group ends and where the housewives or armoured troops begin, with each group exhibiting subtle properties of the other, quietly blurring into physical resemblance. Indeed, this hellish inferno is alight with an abject ugliness from corner to corner of the composition.

Karel van Mander '*Schilderboek'* was the first to describe Bruegel's interpretation of *Mad Meg* in the early 17th century, soon after it was made. Van Mander speaks of a "*Dulle Griet die een roof voor de Helle doet*"[84] translated by Gibson to "Dulle Griet who loots in front of Hell."[85] Belgian folklorist Jan Grauls later mediated in his study *'Volkstaal en volksleven in het werk van Pieter Bruegel'*, that the title 'Griet' was in the artists era, a common label for reference to an aggressive and bossy woman, referencing the popular saying "Where two Griets are in one house, no barking dog is needed" located in Goedthal's proverb collection of 1568.[86] Gibson's 'Pieter Bruegel and the art of Laughter*'* (2006) provides further proverbial evidence to the 16th century association of her character with vice, referring to the proverb "She could plunder in front of Hell and return

[83] Yona Pinson, "Folly and Vanity in Bruegel's 'Dulle Griet': Proverbial Metaphors and Their Relationship to Bosch's Imagery," *Studies in Iconography*, vol. 20 (1999), 190;
Margaret A. Sullivan, "Madness and Folly: Peter Bruegel the Elder's Dulle Griet," *The Art Bulletin,* vol. 59, no. 1 (1977), 55.
[84] Karel Van Mander, *Schilderboek,* trans. Hessel Miedema (Gelderland: Doornspijk, 1994), 99.
[85] Walter S. Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel and the Art of Laughter* (London: University of California Press, Ltd., 2006), 126.
[86] Jan Grauls, *Volkstaal en volksleven in het werk van Pieter Bruegel* (Antwerp: N.V. Standaard Boekhandel, 1957), 28.

unscathed" which can be located within three collections "published in the Netherlands between 1549 and 1568" and also "in a political song of the period."[87] Another proverb circulating at this time declares "the best Griet that one found, was the one who bound the devil to a cushion",[88] located in Roemer Visscher's '*Brabbeling'* (1614) and the '*Klucht van Oene'* (1646)*,* a farce by Jan Vos.[89]

Mad Meg also crops up as a character in various 16th century Dutch dramas. Gibson relays these frequent theatrical appearances, noting the character of "Griet Suermuyl" in a "*factie* (a comic dramatic performance) given by the Lier chamber of *rederijkers* at the Antwerp *Haechspel* of 1561" and "Schele Griet (Cross-Eyed Griet)" appearing "in a Haarlem play of about 1600".[90] Beyond her presence on stage, Gibson acknowledges that "Griet was also a popular name for large cannons" with "Dulle Griet" being "precisely the name given to the giant canon placed in the Friday market at Ghent in 1578."[91] To Bruegel's Early Modern audience therefore, Mad Meg was a character with established proverbial and cultural associations to a belligerent disposition. It could be argued that such associations also place Meg within the broader context of war, given their frequent references to plundering and destruction.

Bruegel's interpretation of *Mad Meg* maintains this link to sinful behaviour. The painting is rife with symbolism and proverbial references which the Early Modern viewer would be able to recognise. For instance, the central figure widely understood to represent folly carries a 'ship of fools' upon his shoulder, an image appearing "frequently in Carnival processions, satiric engravings and in paintings such as Bosch's *Ship of Fools.*"[92] He also perches upon a burning roof, perhaps referring to German Humanist Sebastian Brant's narration of the "fool of presumption" in his 1494 satirical text 'Ship of Fools', who "kindles fires on roofs of straw, to whom world fame is highest law."[93] Scooping money from out of his behind, he exposes himself indecently to the viewer, an attribute typical of the Early Modern image of the fool.[94] Beyond Meg's proverbial and cultural associations to belligerence, and destruction, she also closely resembles the allegorical figure of *Ira* (Anger) in Bruegel's print of 1558 for his series of the Seven Deadly Sins,

[87] Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel and the Art of Laughter,* 127.
[88] Ibidem, 143.
[89] Quoted in Jan Grauls, *Volkstaal en volkstaal en volksleven in het werk van Pieter Bruegel*, 24-25.
[90] Ibidem, 218.
[91] Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel and the Art of Laughter,* 127.
[92] Sullivan, "Madness and Folly: Peter Bruegel the Elder's Dulle Griet," 62.
[93] Sebastian Brant, *The Ship of Fools* (Newburyport: Dover Publications, 2012), ACLS Humanities E-Book, 297.
[94] Sullivan, "Madness and Folly: Peter Bruegel the Elder's Dulle Griet," 61.

with their plundering movement through the composition and armoured clothing, indicating that she may also embody anger.

Though the relationships of Meg and Folly to sinful behaviour are the most dominant, the surrounding landscape is notably populated with what Pinson describes to be "esoteric depictions of sin that remain hermetic"[95] and Louise Milne describes as " a sewer of human bestiality and sin"[96], in her study of the influence of dreams within the work. To name a few cases of this symbolic language of sin in the figures surrounding Meg and Folly, "lust is suggested by the naked people in the glass globe hanging from the top of the castle at the upper left,"[97] a man scarping a kettle with a knife represents the proverb "to scrape the pot"[98], indicating that mismanaged desires can lead to folly, and the repeated image of cracked egg shells refers acts as a familiar contemporary symbol of vanity.[99] Responding to the frequency of references to sin within the painting, Sullivan remarks that for Bruegel's viewers, Mag Meg "could be understood simply as a moral lesson, a warning about the sins of anger, avarice, gluttony, envy and lust, sins that threaten the sanity of any human being."[100]

This chapter will argue that the operation of the abject body is integral to the enabling of this "moral lesson" against the activity of sin.[101] Comparable to *The Fall of the Rebel Angels,* the first subchapter will investigate the transgression of the boundaries of the body through the prevalence of processes of bodily incorporation and bodily waste and attention to the exposure of the orifices of the body. The second subchapter will explore the employment of categorical confusion exhibited through the blurring of physical properties and attires of demonic and human forms. The abject body will be demonstrated to operate within a similarly moralising framework as that which can be identified within *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* ; thereby highlighting the thematic connection of the two works in their use of ugliness as a visual tool for rhetoric and further evidencing the possibility that the three paintings should be viewed as a collective unit, exploring the same subject of the unattractive consequences of sin.

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[95] Pinson, "Folly and Vanity in Bruegel's 'Dulle Griet': Proverbial Metaphors and Their Relationship to Bosch's Imagery,"187.
[96] Louise S. Milne, "Dreams and Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *Dulle Griet,"* in *Contemporary Explorations in the Culture of the Low Countries*, ed. William Z. Shetter et al. (Maryland: University Press of America, 1996, 208.
[97] Sullivan, "Madness and Folly: Peter Bruegel the Elder's Dulle Griet," 60.
[98] Ibidem, 62.
[99] Pinson, "Folly and Vanity in Bruegel's 'Dulle Griet': Proverbial Metaphors and Their Relationship to Bosch's Imagery," 200.
[100] Margaret A. Sullivan, *Bruegel and the Creative Process, 1559-1563* ( Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), Google Ebook, 196.
[101] Ibidem.

***Subchapter One: Transgression of the Body***

This subchapter will consider the abject transgression of the boundaries of the body throughout the imagery of Bruegel's *Mad Meg*. As with *The Fall of the Rebel Angels,* Bruegel's attention to the representation of bodily incorporation and bodily waste throughout the composition, as well as the display of the orifices of the body, create a viewing experience characterised by repulsion, dissuading the viewer from succumbing to the temptation of sin.

In alignment with the falling mass of rebel angels discussed previously, a significant number of figures within the gruesome landscape of *Mad Meg* are caught in transgressive processes of ingestion and egestion. The most obvious case of this may perhaps be the gigantic figure largely regarded as representing folly, who scoops money out of his rear into the crowd of Meg's minions below. Bruegel has orientated this figure with his front barely visible, so that the viewer may capture the precise moment of defecation, thus maximising the experience of abjection. As with the excreting figures of *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*, the material is displayed both inside and outside the body's boundary, moving between the two realms and denying the body self-containment. Bruegel took to exploring this concept of a "topsy-turvy world ruled by human folly" in several other works, including his *Flemish Proverbs* (1559) and *Feast of Fools* (1559), yet here such sinful folly is directly linked to the transgression of the body.[102] As Pinson states, "defecating" is interpreted by Bruegel as a "visual metaphor to illustrate folly, vanity and other moral defects."[103]

Such an analogy aligns with the lasting tradition from medievaldom into Early Modern culture which registered the bowels as a "site of corruption"[104] and public voiding as an indication of particular sinful dispositions including folly. In the middle ages, this diabolist theme shows up in Caesarius of Heisterbach's description of the bowels as the "dwelling place of demons"[105] and Dante Alighieri's hell in his '*Divina Commedia',* in which those who have sinned

[102] Pinson, "Folly and Vanity in Bruegel's 'Dulle Griet,'" 187.
[103] Ibidem, 197.
[104] Fiona Whelan, *The Making of Manners and Morals in Twelfth-Century England: The Book of the Civilised Man* (Oxfordshire: Taylor & Francis, 2017) 139.
[105] Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Caesarii Heisterbacensis monachi ordinis citerciensis Dialogus miraculorum*, ed. J. Strange (Ridgewood: NJ, 1966), 311-12.

must sit in excrement and wear it on their heads.[106] In her book 'Sin and Filth in Medieval Culture', Martha Bayless explains how;

"*the material corruption of the body was regarded as a tangible, unavoidable presence, an inescapable part of the human condition, like original sin – and indeed not just like original sin, but as the actual material embodiment of original sin."*[107]

The centuries leading up to Bruegel's era had, in this way, built a solid ideological tie between scatology and moral corruption. The abject defecation of this figure seen to represent folly, finds itself within this context.

Although Folly is the most dominant abject body in scale, the rest of this hellish landscape is host to an abundance of figures suspended in similar such moments of transgression. To the lower right of the bridge across which Meg heaves her loot, René Graziani points out the beady-eyed "murderous fish"[108] which peeks its head to the surface as he swallows the golden-armoured leg of a human. Upon the bridge itself, a small black toad escapes from the mouth of a demon being tied by a housewife. In the river to the left of the bridge, a beaked demon bites into the torso of a drowning nude human. Directly beneath this figure, a crippled monster excretes dangerously close to the compositional frame, with a spiked bird pecking at his falling innards, as they threaten to drop into the viewer's space. As with the defecation of Folly, Bruegel holds these bodies in their precise moments of transgression; we may not examine the ingested or egested product as an objective whole in itself. Instead, we are only exposed to the upper half of the frog's peeking body, the single remaining leg of the golden soldier and the headless torso of the nude human. The viewer, impelled into a state of repulsion at the sight of these innumerable abject bodies, is confronted with the overriding message that to be led astray by sin as those in *Mad Meg* have been, will not only see the world set alight into a hellish inferno, but will see the body punctured and breached into a state of un-objectifiable ugliness.

Corresponding with the emphasis placed upon the orifices of the falling angels, Bruegel employs the same strategy here, to maintain the threat of further abjection throughout the composition. Creatures such as the nude-coloured animal perching on the castle walls just above

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[106] Dante Alighieri, *Inferno* (Indiana: Hackett Publishing, 2009), 172.
[107] Martha Bayless, *Sin and Filth in Medieval Culture: The Devil in the Latrine (*Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 7.
[108] René Graziani, "Pieter Bruegel's 'Dulle Griet' and Dante," *The Burlington Magazine,* vol. 115, no. 841 (1973), 215.

Meg's head and the gluttonous "composite-anus mouth"[109], as described by Sullivan, unashamedly brandish and expose the openings to their bodies. Climbing a ladder to the right of Meg's minions, half of a bloated animal's body seems to reveal no other features than two legs and an anus-like orifice. Beaten down demons expose themselves and scream in response to the violence of Meg's minions, who equally scream out in their attack. Meg herself holds an ecstatic expression with her toothless mouth wide. Bruegel's sinful bodies exist in a state of vulnerability to transgression. Indeed, Milne describes the "dream-like images" of the panel as expressing fears of "attack through the body's orifices."[110]

Through the analysis of this subchapter, it may be said that the moralistic rhetoric of both *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* and *Mad Meg* is fuelled by the tension surrounding the transgression of the boundaries of the body within their imagery. Creatures are consistently suspended in the junctures of ingestion and excretion, or alternatively, brandish and expose the orifices of their body as if threatening further enaction of these processes. In this didactic apocalypse, a moralising lesson arises, expressed clearly to the contemporary viewer fluent in the proverbial and cultural symbolism of the image, that the path to avoiding the abject fate of the creatures before the viewer is to avoid leading a life dictated by sin. This similar emphasis on the transgression of the boundaries of the body firmly aligns *Mad Meg* with *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* through their mutual operation of ugliness, bolstering Pawlak's hypothesis that they should be understood as a thematic collection.

[109] Sullivan, "Madness and Folly: Peter Bruegel the Elder's Dulle Griet," 60.
[110] Louise S. Milne, "Dreams and Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *Dulle Griet,"* 210.

***Subchapter Two: Categorical Confusion***

This subchapter examines Bruegel's employment of categorical confusion within *Mad Meg* as an integral mechanism for the moralistic rhetoric enacted by the painting. Bruegel achieves this confusion through blurring the bodies of the demons, little women and armoured men involved in conflict with a more overt use of hybridity in which heterogenous body parts are conglomerated, but also through a more tentative blurring by having the separate groups adopt similar attires. The combination of Bruegel's strategies causes forms to appear to metamorphosise into one another, inducing a sense of uncertainty for the viewer as to which character belongs to which specific category. The abject horror of categorical confusion is closely tied to the sinful behaviour exhibited by the characters involved, thus emphasising ugliness as a necessary component to the moralistic rhetoric of the painting.

*Mad Meg* blurs physical boundaries with the same overtness as *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* in its positioning of the body in hybrid forms. This has been noted by Bonn in the "crustaceans with human faces on the lower left"[111] including a barrel-shaped creature with a black top hat and the anus mouth, revealing what playwright Amani Alied describes as "faces on things that don't have faces on."[112] Bruegel further engages with hybridity in the lower right where the most violent portion of battle is taking place. An artillery of housewives, characterised through their aprons and headwear, can be seen hauling goods from a nearby house, collecting the falling coins of folly above them and violently attacking several devilish creatures. Aside from their smaller sizing, they appear as visual echoes of Meg, suggesting that they too embody the anger and destruction associated with her figure. Bruegel hybridizes the conflict through conglomerating body parts between groups. A few of the battling demons are shown to have human heads and faces. Among these is a figure suspended mid-fall into the city's encompassing moat whose small webbed red feet point to the sky in his descent, as well as the black, spiked head and webbed hands of a fallen maiden at the centre of the crowd. This use of hybridity takes on the same overt categorical confusion as identified in the demonic forms of *The Fall of the Rebel Angels,* working to once again disrupt the viewer's ability to assimilate the figures before them as

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[111] Bonn, *Painting Life: The Art of Pieter Bruegel, the Elder*, 55.

[112] Amani Alied, "A Desacralisation of Violence in Modern British Playwriting," (Thesis., University of Manchester, 2014), 227.

understandable objects. However, *Mad Meg's* blurring of categories also takes a more subtle form in painting the demonic contingent in human clothing.

Many of the demonic contingent have adopted the attire of their enemies. As Pawlak points out, many of the demons have strategized to disguise themselves "in a manner that is comparable to the over-dimensional, costumed man", presumably "with the intention of hereby outwitting the female attackers."[113] This can be identified in the crouched figure desperately trying to escape a nearby housewife at the right, who pulls at his red skirt to reveal a black tail peeping out from underneath. To the immediate left of the scuffle, Pawlak identifies a grey demon with a "black frayed headscarf"[114] who has fallen to the ground, gripping his lance tightly. Despite having carefully disguised himself in the head-scarfed attire of his enemy, his frog-like hands betray his true form, identifying him as a member of the demonic contingent of the battle. Such strategic adoption of the enemy groups attire confuses the two groups for the viewer, as if the housewives are shape-shifting into demons. Further examples can be identified at the lower right corner of the composition, where a company of armoured men wade into battle. The figures closest to us appear to be demons in disguise who have immersed themselves into the group of men unnoticed. These figures include a grimacing fish with silver armoured arms, gripping onto a knife as he decapitates a smaller fish. Squatting upon the fish's back is a heavily clad demon, swamped in a disguise of black metallic armour from which his frog legs peep out. Behind them, a plump demon wears a cone-shaped helmet and stands silently so as to not draw suspicion from the surrounding men. Two additional helmet-headed demons climb out of the moat to join the conflict further into the scene. In art historian Irving Zupnick's study of the potential influence of the Dutch revolt upon the painting's iconography, he describes the group as a "strange mix of knights and beasts,"[115] whilst Rose-Marie and Rainer Hagen's read the foreground group as "devils, demons, half-animals and soldiers whose identity is completely concealed beneath their armour."[116]

In blurring the dress of the demons with their human enemies, Bruegel unsettles the definitions of human and demon for the viewer, disabling the aesthetic safety of distinguishable

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[113] Pawlak, *Trilogie der Gottessuche,* "*Einige haben sich sogar analog zu dem überdimensionierten, kostümierten Mann als Frauen verkleidet, wohl um dadurch die Angreiferinnen überlisten zu können*", trans. Talitha Myners, 20 February 2020, 158.
[114] Pawlak, *Trilogie der Gottessuche,* "*Das Ungeheuer im grauen Kleid mit dem schwarzen ausgefransten Kopftuch liegt bereits am Boden und halt sich mit ganzer Kraft an seiner Lanze fest, während das andere in die Ecke gedrängt wurde*", trans. Talitha Myners, 20 February 2020, 158-159.
[115] Irving L. Zupnick, "Bruegel and the Revolt of the Netherlands," *Art Journal*, vol. 23, no. 4 (1964), 287.
[116] Rose-Marie Hagen and Rainer Hagen, *What Great Paintings Say, Volume 2* (Cologne: Taschen, 2003), 179.

categories. Such a strategy plays on the existing anxiety surrounding the literal and figurative distinctions between human and animal. The question of what it was that distinguished humans from animals was a point of fascination during the Early Modern period, hosting complex and inconsistent explanations. René Girard described this as a "crisis of distinctions."[117] Descartes 'Cartesian subject' ruled that such a distinction was marked by the existence of a soul in the human body and the lack thereof in the animal body, with his infamous declaration;

*" (A)fter the error of those who deny God, there is none that leads weak minds further from the straight path of virtue than that of imagining that the souls of beasts are of the same nature as our own."*[118]

Yet ideas surrounding the ability for the body to remain exclusively human remained problematic. In Erica Fudge, Ruth Gilbert and Susan Wiseman's essay 'the Dislocation of the Human', they root this crisis of distinction in several key factors, including theological teaching that the "human form was no guarantee of humanity when angels or devils might take that shape", as well as the belief that "children, the mad, the colonised other", though appearing to be human, could all border on "association with the animal."[119] In addition, the "wearing of clothes – which seems to differentiate the human from the non-human" could occasionally be interpreted as constructive or destructive to human identity.[120] To the Early Modern viewer, "clothing could, perhaps, alter the body within."[121]

Building upon this contemporary anxiety surrounding the distinction between human and animal, Bruegel's protean bodies elicit a sense of mistrust for the viewer. The body is subverted into something deceitful, which can all too easily betray us by melting into other physical forms. Indeed, Ferris acknowledges experiencing a "psychological wobble"[122] standing in front of the painting which is for Honig, "without norms, without figures we can relate to or even comprehend, where the irrational is everywhere and signification is most absent."[123] Such a reaction is testament to the confusion characteristic of the condition of abjection, which is enacted for the viewer through this confrontation with a body threatening to transmute.

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117 René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 49.
118 René Descartes, "Discourse on Method," in *Descartes: Selected Philosophical Writings,* ed. Robert Stoothoff et al. trans. John Cottingham et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1637), 46.
119 Erica Fudge, Ruth Gilbert and Susan Wiseman, "Introduction: the Dislocation of the Human," in *At the Borders of the Human, Beasts, Bodies and Natural Philosophy in the Early Modern Period,* ed. Erica Fudge et al. (Hampshire: MacMillan Press LTD, 1999), 3.
120 Ibidem.
121 Fudge et. Al, *Introduction: the Dislocation of the Human,* 3.
122 Ferris, *Short Life in a Strange World: Birth to Death in 42 Panels,* 61.
123 Honig, *Pieter Bruegel and the Idea of Human Nature*, 127.

Just as *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* is rife with a physiognomic language connecting specific animals to specific sins, *Mad Meg's* conjuring of a multitude of proverbs recognisable to the Early Modern eye, makes the connection between the ugly bodies before us to sinful behaviour undeniable. The shrewish housewives which follow Meg represent a "cluster of proverbial phrases linked to Griet folklore"[124], the generally negative connotations of which, serve to indicate that the housewives battling demons should not necessarily be interpreted as a positive event. The image of pillaging women in battle would not have been surprising to the Early Modern viewer, for as John Lynn points out in his study on women in warfare of the period, most of the 16th century saw "legions of women" accompany armies in the field acting as "significant factors and actors in this plunder-driven campaign economy."[125] *Mad Meg* is not the only work of Bruegel's in which women are represented in battle, as illustrated by his 1559 image of 'Fortitude'. Honig describes how in this image, "half of the foreground combat is carried out by female figures" perhaps suggesting that "women's struggle against internal vices was important in this society."[126] However, contemporary associations of the character of Meg with destruction and belligerence, as well as the continuous application of familiar proverbs and symbolisms signalling the presence of sinful humanity, indicates that Meg and her followers are "not defeating their inner weaknesses" and are, on the contrary, "giving reign to them."[127] In their destructive plunder these women cannot recognise the chaos which their vices have brought on; to both their surrounding environment and to their bodies. The use of ugliness is thus here represented through the standard of categorical irrationality of the body of the sinner.[128]

The analysis of this chapter demonstrates Bruegel's incorporation of the abject body as an instrument for the discouragement of sin. This strategy for moralising rhetoric is achieved through a transgression of the boundaries of the body, matched to that which is prevalent in *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*. Each is fielded with processes of ingestion and egestion which exaggerate the capacity of the body to be fluid and undefined. This is once again boosted by the incessant presence of orifices within the composition, maintaining the threat of further transgression. *Mad*

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[124] Milne, "Dreams and Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *Dulle Griet,"* 208.
[125] John A. Lynn II, *Women, Armies and Warfare in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 8.
[126] Honig, *Pieter Bruegel and the Idea of Human Nature,* 127.
[127] Ibidem.
[128] Baker, *Plain Ugly: The Unattractive Body in Early Modern Culture*, 17.

*Meg* also operates a similar use of hybrid forms, although it departs from *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* more overt inciting of categorical confusion by taking a more subtle approach with the blurring of attires of each battling contingent. Through this visual technique, Bruegel dexterously instils a mistrust of the body for the viewer, which is transformed into ugliness, through its menacingly unstable form. Such ugliness is crystallised into the pattern of a language of sin, indicated by the use of familiar proverbs throughout the painting. In this gruesome depiction, Bruegel warns the viewer of the hellishly abject body of the person who succumbs to sin.

Such a rhetorical message is coloured by the turbulent political and religious climate in the Netherlands at the time at which Bruegel was painting. The spirit of warfare is carried through *Mad Meg* not only through her immediate cultural and proverbial associations with destruction, but also through the wearing of armour of various characters including Meg herself, the tactical movements of artilleries around the composition and the crumbling architecture of a city-scape under attack. With the frequent appearance of armour and divided composition also echoed in *The Fall of the Rebel Angels,* Bruegel is providing a commentary towards war characterised by ugliness, in these paintings. In both paintings, the abject body acts as a warning signal towards the destruction and moral decay which Bruegel suggests arises from warfare. This elaborates that although they may not be visually identical, the two paintings explore the same theme of moral corruption and ultimately, operate the same rhetorical message through their operation of ugliness.

## ***Chapter Four: The Triumph of Death***

In *The Triumph of Death,* Bruegel presents us with the downfall of a sinful humankind at the hand of a seemingly endless artillery of anthropomorphic skeletons, devoid of any presence of god or redemptive signal. In his 2014 study on the painting's use of anthropomorphism, art historian Larry Silver describes the lower right quarter of the composition as a;

*'dense military conflict, where death's infantry forces advance from left to right and overwhelm the mass of humanity, overcoming even armed resistance to herd a huge crowd into a box-trap, whose cross reveals it as a collective coffin."*[129]

The surrounding landscape is completely barren, charred and dotted with further scenes of death, including hangings, drownings, decapitations and death by the wheel, an ancient torture device for gradual execution.[130] Honig muses on the "cruel parody" of "angelic trumpets that herald the day of judgement" alluding to the "Christian end of time", for "there is no judgement here" nor any "joyous salvation for some group of the righteous" and indeed, no presence of God.[131] The only occasion the trumpets mark in the *The Triumph of Death* is the arrival of death and a signalling that more is on its way.

The catastrophic scene is haunted by the presence of the corpse, a figure who also preoccupied the Early Modern imagination. Bruegel shows the human body in a process of decomposition, with even the living who flee exhibiting symptoms of transformation into corpses. Beyond the unsettling presence of the corpse, the grim atmosphere is enhanced through Bruegel's anthropomorphising of death, placing it in direct tension with life. Various members of the dead imitate the rituals of the living, adopting their clothing and confusing the categories of the living and dead for the viewer.

Pawlak argues that we are witnessing the "eponymous triumph of death, unquantifiable in its totality", but rejecting of an "explicit iconographical attribution"; rather, "the panel programmatically subsumes elements from diverse representation traditions under a single

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[129] Silver, "Morbid Fascination: Death by Bruegel', 436-437.

[130] George Ryley Scott, *The History of Torture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 180.
[131] Honig, *Pieter Bruegel and the Idea of Human Nature,* 108.

pictorial formula."[132] The paintings thematic architecture involves the consolidation of several designs rooted in the *danse macabre*, including "the triumph of death, the apocalypse" and "the encounter between the three living and the three dead."[133] The composition is also fielded with references to contemporary proverbs and specific works on the subject of death by various other artists, such as the "confrontation between a decomposing corpse and a court lady" in the lower right quadrant which draws reference to the "death and the maiden theme" favoured in "early 16th c prints" and the depiction of the proverb "*die groote vissen eten de cleyne*" [134] ( big fish eat little fish) near to the ossuary's moat.[135] Notable reference is also made to the woodcuts of Hans Holbein, whose personifications of death frequently mimic their victims or adopt parts of their clothing.[136] As Pawlak summarises, *The Triumph of Death* not only displays "diverse types of death as a kind of imaginative encyclopaedia of the macabre" but also "functions as a visual compendium, a summation of historical and contemporary images dealing with death as an abstract concept."[137]

As with *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* and *Mad Meg,* the chaos we are witness to is shown to be the consequence of humanity succumbing to sin. This moralising key is most clearly evidenced in the foreground, where a "catalogue of human weaknesses and follies", as described by Silver, are displayed.[138] These figures obsessively indulge in their material belongings and the "pleasures of life."[139] The image of death stalking a sinful humanity distracted by their vices was common to the Early Modern visual arts with Albrecht Dürer's 'The Promenade' (1498), in which a young, sumptuously dressed couple are pursued by a deceitful skeleton, offering example.[140] Undisturbed by death's hasty approach, the attention of Bruegel's foreground figures is locked on their vices, as indicated by the fallen emperor who reaches a hand towards his wealth and the blissfully unaware couple to the right who continue to enjoy their music despite the chaos unfolding. The humanity primarily depicted here is "characterised as lacking virtue", a

[132] Anna Pawlak, "The Imaginarium of Death," in *Pieter Bruegel the Elder and Religion*, ed. Bertram Kaschek et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 138.
[133] Ibidem, 141.
[134] Jan Waszink, "Oldenbarnevelt and Fishes. Satirical Prints from the 12-years Truce," *History of European Ideas,* vol. 10, no. 1080 (2020), 1.
[135] Pawlak, "The Imaginarium of Death," 141-142.
[136] William M. Ivins, Jr., "Hans Holbein's Dance of Death," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, vol. 14, no. 11 (1919) 231-235.
[137] Ibidem, 144.
[138] Silver, "Morbid Fascination: Death by Bruegel,' 436.
[139] Pawlak, "The Imaginarium of Death," 152.
[140] Una E. Johnson, "Prints by Albrecht Dürer," *Brooklyn Museum Bulletin*, vol. 16, no. 3 (1955), 3-5.

"sinful element" which Pawlak takes to be "decisive for a proper understanding of the painting."[141]

As with *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* and *Mad Meg,* the imagery of *The Triumph of Death* is reminiscent of an iconography of war. Silver notes that the "military discipline and organization" of death's infantry recalls "emerging modern standing armies of the 16th century, which developed new techniques of drill and coordinated conflict that defined Early Modern war tactics."

This chapter will explore how ugliness operates within the generally moralising character of *The Triumph of Death*'s message. The first subchapter will consider the centrality of the corpse to the painting's imagery, which exists as the ultimate symbol of the abject in representing a body transgressed to its limit. The second subchapter will interrogate the categorical confusion of life and death as embodied by the anthropomorphic skeletal figures. It will be argued that the consequences of sin presented in *The Triumph of Death* are shaped by the ugliness of the abject body, the presence of which also haunts the previous two paintings discussed, demonstrating their thematic and rhetorical connectivity.

[141] Pawlak, "The Imaginarium of Death," 153.

***Subchapter One: Transgression of the Body***

This subchapter will consider Bruegel's transgression of the boundaries of the body within *The Triumph of Death* through examining his centralization of the corpse and visual application of corpse-like characteristics throughout the composition. This treatment of the corpse demonstrates the instructive use of the abject body within the moralising framework of *The Triumph of Death*. In his *'Enchiridation',* Erasmsus states "The reward (saith he) of sin is death."[142] The apocalyptic punishment of sin here echoes this statement. Whilst the abject qualities of the bodies of *Mad Meg* and *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* are localised in their transgression between bodily interiors and exteriors, the corpse of *The Triumph of Death* "epitomizes the horror that abjection gives rise to" in its transgression of the physical body in its entirety.[143] The corpse is described by Kristeva as 'the most sickening of wastes' in its existence as a 'border that has encroached upon everything.'[144]

The significance of the figure of the corpse is indicated by the compositional centrality Bruegel imparts upon it. Collapsing into our central area of view is a pile of human corpses, largely depicted moments from or after death. Various figures exhibit signs of life as they tumble atop of one another, with a level of muscular engagement indicated behind the jaw-droppings screams and desperate arms swung into the air in the final moments of defence. Yet traces of death's process coexist with the signs of life of these bodies. Though many eyes remain open, their gazes are unfixed and bleary, seemingly focused on nothing at all. Some continue to look out with only the whites of their eyes visible, their pupils rolled into the back of their heads indicating a loss of facial control in death. Such an appearance indicates the coexistence of life and death within the same body. The corpse's presence continues to haunt the painting beyond its foreground. As additional corps of death advance to the middle ground of the scene, they battle with pockets of the hopeless living, studding the landscape with scenes of bloodshed and murder. Dawn is fast approaching but the balmy sky only draws more attention to the silhouetted dangling corpses, which hang among lifeless vegetation and torture wheels. As Ferris expresses, "raise your head to the horizon" and "you see gallows" marked by "hanging corpses."[145]There is no visual escape from the harrowing presence of the corpse in *The Triumph of Death.*

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[142] Desiderius Erasmus, *The Manual of a Christian Knight*, 47.
[143] Arya, *Abjection and Representation: An Exploration of Abjection in the Visual Arts, Film and Literature*, 61.
[144]Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection,* 3.
[145] Ferris, *Short Life in a Strange World: Birth to Death in 42 Panels,* 206.

Bruen articulates the corpse as the "darkest form' of abject ambiguity; "of being and ceasing to be, of absence and presence, of disgust and longing."[146] The body in death is in a continuous state of alteration; Bruen describes this as a "transitional swarming."[147] Eternally incompatible with the subjectivity of the living, the undead corpse which Bruegel shows us is the perfectly alarming sight of the most harrowing loss of self of all. As Bruen points out, the existence of the corpse as the "utmost of abjection"[148] explains why "preparation of the dead for burial or cremation is clothed in a plethora of taboos and cleansing rituals."[149] Proper funerary rituals allow us to escape the treacherous ambiguity of the corpse. In *The Triumph of Death* Bruegel gives no safety of the completed ritual of burial and indeed, subverts the process entirely in the middle ground. A skeletal corpse can be seen stepping out of his grave. To his right, a dead body lies face-down in close proximity to an open empty grave and in the foreground a female corpse rests in a casket which remains open, emphasising Bruegel's intent to not grant us the safety of burial.

The abject horror of Bruegel's corpses is worsened when dominant historical beliefs towards acts of death and dying are taken into consideration. Theological discourse emphasised the lack of importance of the body following the soul's departure.[150] In her study of conceptions on death in Early Modern Venice, Alexandra Bamji posits that the "perceived dualism of body and soul" and the conception that the body was "a vehicle for the soul and worthless without it" meant that, at the death of the body, "attention shifted immediately to the fate of the soul", which could live on in heaven if a virtuous and spiritually devout life had been led.[151] Erasmus's image of the "soldier of Christ" encompasses this ideology, for the body of the soldier of Christ acts as a tent within which he temporarily exists during his life-long pilgrimage, with death offering him a "gateway" to heaven."[152] Such an experience was however, dependent on the "preparation for death" which "must be practiced through our whole life."[153] A successful death requires devotion to God and a life of virtue. Such ideas were a continuation of those expressed in the '*Ars Moriendi'* manual of the Middle Ages, which instructed on precisely how to ensure a

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146 Bruen, *The Making of Monsters,* 79.
147 Ibidem, 93.
148 Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection,* 4.
149 Bruen, *The Making of Monsters,* 79.
150 Sarah Tarlow, *Ritual, Belief and the Dead in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 17.
151 Alexandra Bamji, "The Materiality of Death in Early Modern Venice," in *Religious Materiality in the Early Modern World* ed. Suzannea Ivanič et al. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 123.
152 Desiderus Erasmus, "Preparing for Death," in *Spiritualia and Pastoralia,* vol. 70 of *The Collected Works of Erasmus,* trans. John N. Grant, ed. John W. O'Malley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 15.
153 Ibidem, 398-407.

good death.[154] Bruegel's corpses are all the more terrifying because they are not the remaining signifiers of a 'good death.' The lack of faith indicated by the scattering of broken crosses throughout the composition and sinful behaviour of the foreground figures signal the onset of "eternal death"; the death of the soul as well as the body.[155] To this subject; Erasmus exclaims "no body deprived of the soul is as dead as the soul abandoned by God."[156] The historical viewer is thus faced with the ugliness of the abjectly transgressed body and burdened with the knowledge that no souls have, or will, survive this Godless apocalypse.

Bruegel draws the harrowing presence of the corpse further into the scene by representing those who have seemingly not been fatally struck with premature corpse-like characteristics; emulsifying life and death. The terrified living seem to all too swiftly melt into the anthropomorphised skeletons to the left of the box trap coffin. As they attempt, in vain, to enter the safety offered by the trap, the figures in closest proximity to the terrorizing skeletons progressively lose the lifeful rosiness to their hollowing faces, as their skin begins to fade into sickly grey. The idea of the rotting and decaying flesh of those who have sinned was one greatly circulated within the Early Modern period. John Donne's sermons conjure the image of the unattractively rotting body for his congregation, as indication of the fall of man;

"*thou pursuest they works of the flesh, and hast none, for thy flesh is dust held together by plaisters: Dissolution and putrefaction is gone over thee alive; thou hast over liv'd thine own death, and art become thine own ghost, and thine own hell."*[157]

Through this image, Donne draws a parallel between physical decay and a deterioration in moral standing. Erasmus furthers this idea in his '*Enchiridion'* stating that "the bodies of holy people be the temples of the holy ghost" and "lewd men's bodies be the sepulchre of dead corpses."[158]Bruegel's faces which already begin to transform into bony skulls, appear "neither human nor non-human", exhibiting characteristics of a decaying body whilst remaining alive.[159]

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154 William Caxton, *Ars Moriendi* (London: W. Blades, 1868).
155 Richard Wunderli and Gerald Broce, "The Final Moment before Death in Early Modern England," in *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 20, no. 2 (1989), 263.
156 Desiderius Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus: Spiritualia, Volume 66* (Toronto: University of Toronto press, 1989), 29.
157 John Donne, *The Sermons of John Donne, Volume 1*, ed. George Rueben Potter et al. (California: University of California Press, 1984), 83.
158 Erasmus, *The Manual of a Christian Knight*, 52.
159 Arya, *Abjection and Representation: An Exploration of Abjection in the Visual Arts, Film and Literature*, 61.

This coetaneousness of life with the symptoms of death provides visual manifestation to Kristeva's horror at the corpse as "death infecting life."[160]

Bruegel thus connects this world of warfare in which humans are led astray by vices and the temptations of sin, to the ultimate transgression of the body embodied by the corpse. The significance of the corpse is indicated through the compositional centrality imparted upon its figure and its continued presence across the horizon offering no visual relief, not even through the depiction of completed acts of burial or cremation. Significance is also suggested in the corpse-like characteristics of the still-living contingent. As Bruen states, "bodily death" though "fearful in itself" is here "compounded by the mental picture of potential apocalypse and eternal punishment for mortal sin."[161] To be intoxicated by material goods such as the "emperor's gold or the pilgrim's relics and charms" in this way, and to be swept away from faith in the chaos of war is to putrefy, decompose and dissolve into eternal death.[162] This subchapter thus presents Bruegel's engagement with the abject body as a moralising warning against the prioritising of material goods over faith, uniting the operation of the three paintings and bolstering Pawlak's hypothesis that they should be understood as a collective exploration of the same theme.

[160] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection,* 4.
[161] Bruen, *The Making of Monsters,* 33.
[162] Peter Thon, "Bruegel's The Triumph of Death Reconsidered," *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 3 (1968), 291.

***Subchapter Two: Categorical Confusion***

This subchapter will investigate how the anthropomorphising of death within the imagery of *The Triumph of Death* mobilizes an abject blurring of categories, in order to instil a sense of fear within the viewer towards the consequences of a life ruled by sin. Through visualising death as human and planting moments of behavioural mimicry and adoption of the clothing of the living, Bruegel confuses categories for the viewer, who must address this embodiment of what is both me and not me. This takes place within the moral framework of the presentation of the consequences of sin, dissuading the viewer from corruption and godlessness.

In *The Triumph of Death* Bruegel represents death in what Silver describes to be an "active, hostile anthropomorphosis."[163] Art of the late medieval period consistently turned to anthropomorphism when it came to the task of visually representing death, so that the pictorial metaphor had solidified into an iconographic phenomenon by the late thirteenth century.[164] The physical bodies of the dead increasingly became the visual embodiment of the concept overall. In his 1538 introduction to Hans Holbein's woodcuts exploring the theme of the Dance of Death, Jean de Vauzèles mediates on the "curious questioning" of "how can the figure of death be represented by the living?"[165] To this issue, he decides that one "cannot find a thing more closely approaching a simulation of death than a dead person."[166] Works such as Albrecht Dürer's 'Death and the Lansquenet' of 1510, Hans Baldung Grien's 'Death and the Maiden' of 1517 and Holbein's 'The Advocate' of 1581 from his Dance of Death series, are typical in their imaging of death coming for "individuals one at a time, interrupting them in the midst of life with a light tap on the shoulder, the wave of a skull or an hourglass."[167] Such confrontations see what Pawlak describes as the "alter ego or alter idem" face to face with the living "in the form of a macabre future vision of their own being and a proclamation of the nullity of all earthly things."[168] Bruegel expands this personification to be death in its innumerable mass, not just a single figure.

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[163] Michel Weemans and Bertrand Prévost, "Introduction," in *The Anthropomorphic Lens: Anthropomorphism, Microcosmism and Analogy in Early Modern Thought and Visual Arts,* ed. Walter Melion et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 16.
[164] Pawlak, *Trilogie der Gottessuche,* 90.
[165] Hans Holbein and Jean de Vauzelles, *The Dance of Death. A complete Facsimile of the Original 1538 Edition of Les simulachres & historiees faces de la mort,* ed. Werner L. Gunderscheimer (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 4-5.
[166] Ibidem.
[167] Honig, *Pieter Bruegel and the Idea of Human Nature,* 113.
[168] Pawlak, *Trilogie der Gottessuche*, "*Das Alter Ego bzw. Alter idem trat den Lebendigen in der Form einer makabren gegenwärtigen Zukunftsvision des eigenen Wesens gegenüber und verkündete die Nichtigkeit alles Irdsichen*", trans. Talitha Myners, 18 February 2020, 91.

His portrayal of death is characterised with an adoption of the behavioural characteristics of the living. Despite existing precisely as cadavers and skeletal corpses, the antagonising skeletons appear to behave with more fervour and life than the living. They carry an enthusiastic energy as they gallop across the burning landscape with wide strides, and a physical stability all the more lacking in the defence, who consistently flop, collapse and fall into one another as if drained of the energy we would expect from our human contingent. The bestowal of such life-fulness onto what we know to be dead results in a confusion of subjectivity in which we cannot rationalise the ambiguous status of the dead, who appear 'other' to us in their skeletal forms, yet behave in a way to which we can associate and relate. Bruegel's personification of death thus works to conjure a condition of abjection for the viewer, in which a sense of self is temporarily lost.

Bruegel enables this condition of abjection further by providing the dead with a more specific mimicry of the living. This takes place with what Pawlak describes to be an almost "protean capacity" by "wearing their clothes and interacting in such a way that we can assume they will take the place of the living."[169] To the right of the dying emperor, a skeleton wearing a cardinal's hat supports the body of his victim and carefully mirrors his slumped over pose. Directly above the lovers in the lower right corner, a skeletal figure holding a violin leans over to join the band of the living. Behind him, a blue caped skeleton, clothed as though a human, places a plated skull on the white tablecloth in a movement to join the feast. The anthropomorphic dead are seen here to not only adopt their victim's clothing but perform and mimic their immediate behaviours to inconspicuously assume their disguises. The sheer intention of this mimicry can be noted in the skeleton who creeps into the festivities of the right foreground adorning a mask of the face of a living man.

In this straddling of life and death, the antagonising cadavers overstep the delineations of subjectivity and conceivable categorisation for the viewer. Like the corpses which pile into and punctuate the composition, these ambiguous bodies hint at "the intolerable insecurity of subjective identity", placing us in a state of psychological disarray for we both can and cannot recognise ourselves.[170] Bruegel thus connects this landscape of battle in which humans are led away from faith and towards the temptations of sins, to not solely eternal death, but the erasure of the realms between life and death. This creates an uncomfortable viewing experience similar

[169] Pawlak, "The Imaginarium of Death," 135.

[170] Bruen, *The Making of Monsters,* 128.

to that induced in *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* and *Mad Meg,* each of which incorporates a confusion of categories within their respective visual narratives.

From the analysis of this chapter, it is clear that the abject body is engaged with as an ultimate warning against moral deviation. The state of humanity represented here; caught within the destructive pandemonium of war and obsessed still by material pleasures and goods, leads a sinful existence which Bruegel suggests will result in transformation into (as indicated by the corpse), and attack by (as indicated by the ambiguously lifelike skeletons) the horrifying abject body. Bruegel installs this message firstly through giving emphasis to the presence of the corpse and allowing the population of the living to display corpse-like characteristics. This dictatorship of vice is also shown to instigate a confusion of categories of death and life overall, propelling the viewer into a condition of abjection in which a sense of self is temporarily lost. Bruegel implores his audience to consider their own moral standing and take caution in how they choose to lead their lives, especially with political tensions on the cusp of spilling into the Dutch Revolt. The abject body is once again employed as a visual strategy for rhetoric within the painting, demarking that whilst each of the three apocalyptic scenes may differ in their precise narratives, their tactical use of ugliness ultimately unites them.

## ***Conclusion***

*The Fall of the Rebel Angels, Mad Meg* and *The Triumph of Death* are rich with abject ugliness. Though their precise narratives may differ, each chapter uncovers the connective operation of the abject body within a moralising framework which hinges the three paintings together.

Analysis of the transgression of the boundaries of the body and the eliciting of a sense of categorical confusion for the viewer, each defining features of the abject, reveal how this unified rhetorical use of ugliness is mediated. The imageries of *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* and *Mad Meg* are infused with physically transgressive moments of bodily incorporation and bodily waste, as the rebellious angels and monstrous inhabitants of their compositions consistently eat one another, defecate and burst open their bodies. Beyond this immediate transgression, both paintings harbour a tension towards further potential transgression, with creatures indecently exposing the entry and exit points of their orifices. This emphasis is made all the more severe in *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* where the protuberances of the angels' instruments and weapons threaten breach of the body through countless surrounding entry points. Such visual features elicit a reaction of repulsion from the viewer, who must grapple with the indeterminate status of the body in a state of transgression. *The Triumph of Death* takes this to its most extreme, in exhibiting the figure of the corpse; Kristeva's king of the abject. The painting's composition is haunted by this figure of an "'I' that has lost its I hood"[171], surrendered to complete objectivity.

Further to this, each painting is united in its use of categorical confusion, a tool which throws the viewer into the condition of abjection. *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* and *Mad Meg* align in their use of hybridity, combining singular forms with human, animal and vegetable elements, rendering them incompatible with our categorical understanding. *Mad Meg* enacts this mechanism less explicitly, by subtly blurring physical features and attires of human and demonic groups to obscure which realm to which each figure belongs. Similarly, *The Triumph of Death* confuses opposing groups, by having its anthropomorphic death adopt the clothing and mimic the behaviours of the living. Thus, the transgression of the boundaries of the body and the eliciting of categorical confusion both work as strategies which disrupt the ability for the viewer to experience the body as autonomous. Rather, Bruegel's bodies exist in a shadowy space of indeterminacy, spilling out of the physical boundaries of the human in their consistent leakiness and spilling over the category of 'human' itself. This study incessantly repeats the countless areas

[171] Ela Przybylo, "The Politics of Ugliness," 15.

in which the abject shows up in these three paintings, yet such repetition is necessary in order to emphasise Bruegel's heavy and continuous reliance on the abject within his imagery.

The atmosphere of ugliness which these features of the abject create falls within a continued narrative framework of sin and its consequences. Bruegel ensures that this framework be known by the contemporary viewer, in fielding each work with physiognomic, proverbial and symbolic references tied to this overriding theme. Among various references to other sins, it is the excess pride of the rebel angels, the belligerence of Meg and the absence of faith of the surviving humanity in *The Triumph of Death* in which the cause of this ugliness is rooted. It is moral decay which presages decay into ugliness. Through presenting the abject as a direct consequence of sin, Bruegel urges the viewer to consider their own morality against that which they see before them, and ultimately, choose to resist the temptations of sin which brought about such consequences.

This presentation of abject ugliness as a result of sin is set within the context of war. Each painting is centralized around the struggle between two to three divided groups, who charge into their compositions from different angles. These movements take place across seemingly war-torn landscapes in *Mad Meg* and *The Triumph of Death* with the crumbling architecture of the former and the scorched, barren surfaces of the latter. Painted with the outbreak of civil war on the horizon for the Netherlands and centuries of war under the Hapsburg rule already behind them, it could perhaps be said that Bruegel is appealing to his historical viewer through these three paintings and their visual encounters with ugliness. In this warlike environment, Bruegel's figures have lost sight of their morals and as consequence, have descended into an abject ugliness. With a nation on the cusp of war, he presents us with the bloodshed that could, and indeed was, spilled during the Dutch war of independence, and the climate of ugliness which this would characterise.

Though the origins of these three paintings may forever be lost in a state of academic speculation with no concrete evidence relaying the precise histories of their conception, it is clear that in their operation of the ugly body within this moralising framework, Bruegel's *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*, *Mad Meg* and *The Triumph of Death* are thematically and cognitively connected.

***Illustrations***

*Figure 1,* Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Fall of the Rebel Angels,* 1562, oil on panel, 117 x 162 cm, (Belgium, Royal Museum of Fine Arts of Belgium, Inventory number: 584).

*Figure 2,* Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Mad Meg,* c.1562, oil on panel, 117 x 162 cm, (Antwerp, Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Inventory number: 54556).

*Figure 3,* Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Triumph of Death,* c. 1562, oil on panel, 117 x 162 cm, (Madrid, Museo del Prado, Inventory number: P01393).

***Illustration Credits***

Fig. 1.
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Fig. 3.
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