A STUDY OF
THE ORIGINS AND MEANINGS OF
THE 17TH CENTURY DUTCH AND FLEMISH GAME PIECE
AS A VANITAS ALLEGORY

A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree Master of Arts

by
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1974

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to express my appreciation to friends and colleagues in the Division of the History of Art at The Ohio State University for their helpful information and suggestions, particularly Mr. Jack Kunin, and Ms. Karen Rechnitzer. Ms. Jacqueline Sisson, Fine Arts Librarian, cheerfully aided me in securing library materials. I would like to express my appreciation to Dr. Sadja Herzog, my adviser, who provided me with an incentive to work in the area of 17th century studies. Special thanks must go to Dr. Herzog for his guidance, encouragement and sense of humor during the completion of this thesis, and also to Professor Mary R. Kealy, my second reader, for her helpful suggestions, especially concerning the organizational aspects of this paper.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgment</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Illustrations</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of Literature</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method and Objectives</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Development of the Game Piece</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still Life Painting in Antiquity</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still Life Painting in the Middle Ages</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel Painting Tradition</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still Life Painting and St. Jerome</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Memento-mori Tradition</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pieter Aertsen</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Live Animal Representation</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emblematic Derivations</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allegory</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fables and Proverbs</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horsedoeeter and the Concert</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Live and Dead Animal Representation</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live Animal Protagonist: the Dog</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live Animals as Thieves</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live Birds as Thieves</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protagonist versus Antagonist</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game in the Vanitas Still Life</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Game Piece as a Vanitas Allegory</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanitas Game Piece with Hunting Implements</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Problem of the Hunter</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Conclusions</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected Bibliography</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrations</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Unless indicated parenthetically, all illustrations are from photographs supplied by the proprietors of the objects. For full titles of photo sources, see bibliography.


3. Limbourg Brothers, January Page, MS 1284, Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry. Chantilly, Musée Condé. (Hattinger, Très Riches Heures, Pl. 1).

4. Limbourg Brothers, February Page, MS 1284, Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry. Chantilly, Musée Condé. (Hattinger, Très Riches Heures, Pl. 2).


7. The Master of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves, Visitation, folio


9. The Master of Mary of Burgundy, Christ Nailed to the Cross, folio 43v, Hours of the Master of Mary of Burgundy. Vienna, Austrian National Library. (Fächter, Mary of Burgundy, ill. 13).


12. The Master of Mary of Burgundy, Presentation of a bird to a lady, Ms Douce 219, The Hours of Engelbert of Nassau. Oxford, Bodleian Library. (Fächter, Mary of Burgundy, ill. 31).


vi


34. Ambrosius Bosschaert the Younger, Dead Frog. Paris, F. Lugt Collection. (Bol, Holländische Maler, ill. 30).


37. Dirk Valkenburg, Dead Hare. Hanover, Landesmuseum. (Bernt, Netherlandish Painters, III, 1225).


INTRODUCTION

The large corpus of 17th century Netherlandish still life painting makes it difficult, if not impossible, to write a comprehensive survey of this multifaceted category of painting. Contributing to the difficulty are the many subdivisions of still life, including the breakfast piece, the flower piece, the Vanitas, the fish and game piece. Among the areas already partly investigated in the literature is the Vanitas still life, and the somewhat related flower and breakfast piece. This paper will address itself to the problem of the game piece; that is, to paintings composed chiefly of products of the hunt. Most writings on the game piece focus on it in the context of the development of still life painting in general, or consist simply of photographic collections. The task still remains of establishing the historical evolution and iconographic significance of the 17th century Netherlandish game piece. A brief review of the literature will outline the state of scholarship pertaining to Netherlandish still life, and fix the position of the game piece within these writings.

Review of Literature

A. E. Bye's monograph of 1921, written as a series of essay studies was the first to place the game piece within the context of still life as a whole. Bye's approach is oriented toward discussing the emancipation of the game piece from still life subjects. He indicates that kitchen and pantry scenes first interested Netherlandish still life painters because they were able to display the gleaming
surfaces of kitchen utensils and the rich assemblage of comestibles.
Bye also notes that sign board painting, particularly for inns, accustomed patrons to viewing animals as an integral part of the still life, but he does not stress this as a major point of departure for the development of the independent game piece. Two years later, in 1923, Ludwig Baldass² devoted an article to the beginnings of still life painting in which he studies the process whereby individual still life objects grew increasingly independent from their context; he focused his attention specifically on Pieter Aertsen and his followers. The book most directly relevant to this paper was published in 1947 by R. van Luttervelt.³ The author tentatively suggests some symbolic readings of the game piece in his chapter on hunters and bird catchers, and notes that dead game may function within the Vanitas tradition. Bengtsson and Omberg in 1951 discussed the structural and compositional changes in still life, including the game piece.⁴ Their extended essay summarizes the state of scholarship up to 1951, and suggests new directions for study. They indicate that basic still life categories such as the breakfast piece, the fish piece, etc., in the early part of the century later merge to form hybrids in which these separate components appear together. They also discuss a growing tendency toward more decorative still life paintings in the second half of the 17th century, as in the game pieces by Weenix. The following year, there appeared Bergström's classic monograph⁵ on still life painting. Bergström's book does not directly address the symbolism of the game piece except as a category of still life as a whole. He clarifies the position of the game piece within the Netherlandish still life tradition, discusses its develop-
ment, and key artists. Bergström's well documented treatment of still life *per se* is particularly useful for material concerning the evolution of still life painting into an independent genre, and he organizes still life painting into various categories such as the flower piece, fruit piece, breakfast piece, banquet piece, Vanitas, etc. Bergström also touches on the sociological and religious circumstances which provided the proper climate for this development. The most recent monographic study appeared in 1969. The author, Laurens J. Bol, treats both 17th century Dutch landscape and still life painting, including a section on the fish piece and the game piece in the first half of the 17th century; and still life with hunting equipment and live animal representation in the second half of the century. Bol's study, rich in illustrative material, focuses on the general trends in the various branches of the Netherlandish still life, but does not specifically address itself to problems of disguised symbolism, moralization or other meanings inherent in much still life painting. The study most directly related to the game piece is E. de Jongh's "Erotica in Vogelperspectief." This generally well documented article draws on previously unconnected emblematic, biographic and literary sources to demonstrate that still life components, particularly the bird, convey sexual content in genre paintings. In addition to the bird, the author cites specific still life motifs which may serve to amplify sexual symbolism, such as discarded shoes, Eros figures, dogs and bird cages. A number of the motifs which he studies reappear in still life compositions with dead game. On the whole, de Jongh's article is the most penetrating study of symbolism in Dutch genre painting. However, de Jongh does
not deal directly with the game piece.

This summary of literature most germane to the study of the 17th century game piece shows that writers focus their attention on the placement of the game piece within the tradition of still life painting as a whole, or treat painters generally, and not particularly for their still life production. Thus, the development of the game piece as a subunit of still life painting has yet to be written, and with the exception of de Jongh's work, very little attention has been given to the meaning of still life, including dead game. This paper will concentrate on the symbolic and moralistic dimensions of the game piece.

Method and Objectives

This paper will begin with a consideration of the still life in antiquity, and its re-emergence in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and the relationships of this tradition to the art of the 17th century. The vastness of this material and the great span of time imposes limitations on this study, making it difficult to generalize, particularly about the Middle Ages, or indicate an absolutely consistent development. Consequently, it will be necessary to emphasize material which will reflect major trends of those periods important to the study of the game piece.

The survey which follows aims at providing a framework against which to judge the significance and uniqueness of the 17th century game
piece within the still life tradition, particularly by defining the nature of its antecedents and by considering the function which game -- live or dead -- played in the European tradition. This investigation will introduce the reader to the sources of animal lore in classical, medieval and Renaissance literature. The particular goal of this paper will be to discuss the origins and significance of the Dutch and Flemish game piece as a manifestation of basic Netherlandish moral thought.
CHAPTER I

ORIGINS OF THE GAME PIECE

Still Life Painting in Antiquity

Surprisingly the independent game piece, which flourished in the Netherlands from the 1640's onwards, has absolutely no precedent in either the Renaissance or the medieval traditions. In fact, prior to the 17th century, the game piece existed as an independent genre only as a minor aspect of wall decoration in classical antiquity. These representations, generally in fresco and mosaic, are primarily simple in composition and reflect an accurate observation of nature. Our knowledge of classical examples derives mainly from a few fragments preserved in the Pompeii-Herculaneum-Stabia area which was buried in the 79 A.D. eruption of Vesuvius. In addition to still life per se, paintings of dead animals and birds also appear as components in hunting scenes, a subject favored in Roman decoration. Market and genre scenes also formed part of the repertory of the subject matter, as in an example from the House of Julia Felix, Pompeii.

More germane to the study of 17th century still life painting than the extant frescoes and mosaics at Pompeii -- which were not excavated until the 18th century and, hence, could have had no direct impact on earlier representations -- are the writings of Pliny and Philostratus, who were known and read throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Their descriptions of still lifes may be relevant to the rise of the game piece in the 17th century.
Pliny\textsuperscript{13} (Roman naturalist, 23-79 A.D.), discusses artists active prior to the end of the first century A.D. in the Mediterranean area, including Sosos (3rd-2nd century B.C., Pergamon), a still life mosaicist whose Doves Pliny notes were acclaimed for their realism:

"A remarkable detail in the picture is a dove, which is drinking and casts the shadow of its head on the water, while others are sunning and preening themselves on the brim of the large drinking vessel."\textsuperscript{14}

Pliny also writes about the very popular rhopographe\textsuperscript{15} (i.e., "odds and ends") produced by another mosaicist, Perikos, who:

"...followed a humble line, winning however the highest glory that it had to bring. He painted barbers' shops, cobblers' stalls, asses, estables and similar subjects..."\textsuperscript{16}

Although these still lifes were recorded as a minor art only, their existence firmly establishes a long tradition for still life painting, and literary evidence indicates that the artists producing them were well paid.\textsuperscript{17} Moreover, Pliny appears to be particularly interested in describing the illusionistic abilities of still life painters.

For example, Zeuxis, in competition with Parrhasios, exhibited a painting on stage of some grapes which was "so true to nature that the birds flew up to the wall of the stage."\textsuperscript{18} However, he was forced to concede victory to his rival when Zeuxis, himself, was fooled by Parrhasios' illusionistic rendering of a linen curtain.

Philostratus (Greek Sophist, c. 217 A.D.) includes descriptions of still life painting in his Images written in the third century.

An entry for the fictional painter Xenia, whose name means gifts
(especially food) given to dinner guests, is noteworthy. Philostratus may have intended his description to be as evocative as the illusionistic painting he describes:

"It is a good thing to gather figs and also not to pass over in silence the figs in this picture. Purple figs dripping with juice and heaped on vine-leaves; and they are depicted with breaks in the skin, some just cracking open to disgorge their honey, some split apart, they are so ripe. Near them lies a branch, not bare, by Zeus, or empty of fruit, but under the shade of its leaves are figs, some still green and "untimely", some with wrinkled skin and overripe...while on the tip of the branch a sparrow buries its bill in what seems the very sweetest of the figs."19

The space which Philostratus allot to his lively, detailed description of Xenia's work not only attests to the writer's descriptive skills, but also to the relative popularity of this minor genre in classical antiquity.

Both Pliny and Philostratus stress the highly illusionistic qualities of antique still life painting. The surviving works at Pompeii also suggest that the ascription of naturalism to such works was their most noteworthy feature. Philostratus' vivid account of Xenia particularly reinforces this point. Thus, the illusionistic qualities which are so remarkable in the 17th century are actually prefigured in ancient art. But it is particularly by their reputation as recorded in literature that knowledge of ancient still life painting passed to the 17th century and may have contributed a degree of respectability to this genre, and a desire in the 17th century still life painters to surpass their antique predecessors in naturalistic portrayal.
Still Life Painting in the Middle Ages

The Bestiary

In the early Middle Ages independent still life painting did not exist. The components of the still life, however, such as depictions of everyday objects, plants, animals and birds were present in manuscript illumination, especially in marginal illustration and in the portrayal of religious figures where objects served as identifying attributes. Two types of manuscript sources are of prime importance to this study: medieval bestiaries based on ancient natural history; and fables, also of classical origin. The actual illustrations in bestiaries as well as the symbolic meaning of the animals, contributed a rich storehouse of animal lore to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Bestiary and fable imagery found its way into several types of manuscripts, including books of hours.

The bestiary originated in Alexandria in the second century A.D., became extremely popular, and reached its peak production in the 13th and 14th centuries. The bestiary consisted of a collection of essentially scientific animal descriptions, with entries on all manner of animals, usually organized with an illustration to accompany each discussion, and often with a moralization included. The entries were permeated with Christian allegory relating a particular animal to a moral or ethical concept. For example, White's translation of a medieval bestiary includes an entry on the owl, a night bird, which because of its associations with darkness, and therefore ignorance and unenlightenment, became the avian counterpart of the Jews. The
entry on the partridge is particularly interesting in terms of exposing medieval Christian sentiment toward excessive sexual habits. The partridge was not only credited with the ability to conceive via its olfactory organs, but also believed to have homosexual tendencies.\textsuperscript{22} Nor did the goat fare well in the bestiary; it was noted for its excessive lasciviousness.\textsuperscript{23}

The bestiary, essentially a form of Christian propaganda, helped establish the association of abstract concepts or qualities with animals and birds through the use of religious allegory. Marginal illustrations of manuscripts show similar associations of animals with moralized content. For example, the ape frequently appears in marginal illustration, as in the monkey school theme, or ape intellectuals or scholars.\textsuperscript{24} In these contexts, the simians satirically comment on humans who consider themselves members of an intellectual elite, and reflect the ape's pseudo-human mentality as recorded in the bestiary. The ape is of particular interest to this study because of its frequent appearance in marginalia and the remarkably consistent way in which it is treated in the Middle Ages, Renaissance and Baroque periods, where at all times simians appear as a representation of vice.

**Marginalia and Exempla**

Manuscript marginalia generally include illustrations of fables, proverbs, exempla, or pure fanciful creations. Although frequently related to the main text or primary illumination by theme, marginal illustrations were stylistically less formal than the principal
illumination. Randall indicates that to a certain extent growth of marginalia depended on the rise of preaching orders and the subsequent use of exempla in sermons. The exemplum is a short narrative used to confirm or illustrate a general statement, and it was most prevalent in England, Northern France, Flanders and Brabant -- that is, precisely those areas richest in marginal illustration. The basic use of exempla was not only to illustrate an abstract idea in a simple manner, as in an analogy, but also to indicate the result of disobeying a moral law. Simultaneously, exempla added interest to the sermon as marginal illustration added interest to a book of hours. For example, Alexander Neckam's 13th century De Naturis Rerum, based on several classical sources, uses exempla to illustrate qualities of animals and natural occurrences. One exemplum involves birds gathered together to choose a king. These birds decided that the bird able to fly the highest would be king. The wren, which could not have won by itself, hid under the eagle's wing to soar up with the stronger bird and by hopping upon the eagle's head in the final moment of the contest usurp the title of king. The exemplum's thrust is directed to those who profit from the hard work of others.

The most significant aspect of exempla and marginal illustrations is that both convey a moral. Exempla, delivered after the sermon, usually were pithy moralizations which underscored the major theme of the sermon, much as marginal illustrations amplified the major text or illumination of a manuscript. The range of moralizing themes in marginalia grew by including exempla which are drawn from bestiaries, fables,
proverbs, theology and local history. All these sources provided for
the incorporation of secular themes with moral teachings sponsored by
the Church. Among other literary genres, the fable was a rich source
for exempla, and a fountainhead of animal lore in the Middle Ages. For
example, the Aesop tale of the "Fox and the Crow," tells of how the
false flattery of the fox tricked the crow out of its cheese. It appears
as a marginal decoration in the 9th century Morienval Gospels. This
fable illustrates man's susceptibility to flattery and cites a moral
characterized by the Old Testament proverb, "Meddle not with him that
flattereth with his lip" (Proverbs xx:19).

Many marginalia in dealing with animal subjects thus have a
source in popular literature, particularly in the bestiary and fable
books, but also in proverbs or contemporary histories. These marginalia
add to the didactic content of religious illustration by underscoring
a moral or religious teaching.

Marginal Decoration and Jean Pucelle

Marginal decoration underwent a gradual change of style in the
course of the Middle Ages. This change occurred simultaneously with
the general increase of naturalism in manuscript illumination and more
naturalistic subject matter in marginalia. One of the earliest
creative manipulators of marginal decoration, Jean Pucelle who was
active in Paris in the first half of the 14th century, substantially
influenced the form of marginal illustration during his lifetime and
even after his death through the widespread use of his shopbook of

12
designs.\textsuperscript{29} Pucelle infused energy and freedom into his marginal illustrations, sparking them with life and increasing their naturalistic qualities. More significant to the consideration of still life, however, is the relationship of Pucelle’s marginalia to the principal illumination. The secondary illustration was no longer overpowered by the main illumination, or unconnected to it; rather, it bore a more direct relationship to the main illumination, frequently taking the form of a frame for a panel painting. In short, Pucelle’s ornamentation began to assert itself more positively as an integral part of the manuscript page. The integration of marginal decoration with the main illumination extended not only to form, but also to content, appending a coda to the theme of the major illumination.

Pucelle perfected his integrated page format in the Hours of Jeanne d’Évreux.\textsuperscript{30} In the three folios which are discussed below, the marginalia located in the \textit{bas-de-page} and the historiated initials amplify or comment upon the major illustration, infusing secular motifs with religious or moral implications. On the Visitation page (fol. 35), (Fig. 1) of this manuscript, a soldier in the initial below the Visitation miniature chases a rabbit which has escaped to the other side of the page. This scene has been identified as a parody of valour,\textsuperscript{31} but the rabbit in the margin may also refer to fertility in connection with the Visitation, the subject of the miniature.\textsuperscript{32} On folio 33 of the same manuscript, Pucelle illustrates the Flight into Egypt (Fig. 2) in the miniature and to it relates an ape in the initial which appears directly above toppling pagan idols which form
the bas-de-page illumination. Both ape and toppling idols amplify the meaning of the miniature. The ape may reinforce the evil connotations of the idols, it may refer simply to Egypt, or it may allude to the sinful nature of man.

Pucelle's marginalia, not always moralizing in character, sometimes simply displays the miniaturist's exuberant love of nature and his desire to embellish the manuscript. When it was appropriate, the painter inserted scenes from secular life, as on folio 5v, the May page of the Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux, where the occupation for the month of May is illustrated by hawking. This genre scene in the bas-de-page reinforces the outdoor associations of the month of May through secular activities carried on in that month. It should also be noted that Pucelle's marginal illustration is relatively more naturalistic than the main illumination. This tendency toward naturalism continued to grow, as illustrated by the Limbourg manuscripts (early 15th century), but most significantly, provided the fruitful environment for genre representation. It is possible that increased naturalism of marginal illustration encouraged a choice of secular subjects, including genre elements and still life details.

The Limbourgs

The Limbourg Brothers, painting in France in the first and second decades of the 15th century, were responsible for new degrees of naturalism within the principal manuscript illumination. Their
manuscript figures, although charmingly elongated and delicate, are also accentuated by remarkable life-like details. The calendar pages of Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry, which the illuminators probably worked on from 1414 until the duke's death in 1416, are full of secular activities marking each month. There is also a profusion of still life objects in these illuminations which increases their naturalistic appearance. For example, the January illustration (Fig. 3) contains a wealth of details of food and utensils conveying to perfection the idea of a sumptuous banquet. There are even incidental inclusions, such as two dogs on the table also enjoying the meal. In addition to still life motifs, the range of secular subjects in the calendar pages is wide, including two hunting scenes: a falcon hunt for the month of August, and a boar hunt with dogs attacking their fallen victim for the month of December.

Throughout the calendar pages of Les Très Riches Heures the Limbourg's contrast types -- rich against poor, alternating monthly illustrations between portrayals of nobility and peasantry, thereby reinforcing class distinctions. For example, the warm colors of January's banquet where the nobility feast contrasts to the cold blues and greys which pervade the February landscape (Fig. 4). For the peasants, in the latter illumination, good living implies keeping warm. The tattered hose of October's peasant sowing winter wheat also contrasts with the costumes of the nobility found in the illuminations for August, May, April and January. Thus, the Limbourgs not only introduce naturalistic still life elements, and genre elements, but
they also go beyond anecdotal illustration to a statement on the varying conditions of life, directly or indirectly engendering a social comment.

Hours of Catherine of Cleves

Secular marginal illustration and main religious illumination, both of which reflect a large degree of naturalism, harmonize to form well integrated full page decoration in the Hours of Catherine of Cleves, executed by an unidentified Utrecht illuminator in the 1430's. More ornate than most Dutch manuscripts, this book of hours helped create a larger range of marginalia. The artist also individualized human types by choosing models with irregular physiognomies for the main miniatures, and even peasant-types for the marginalia, while simultaneously noting naturalistic hand gestures and facial responses. The Master of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves was also able to integrate a taste for luxury with homey occupations and used many naturalistic and genre details. For example, the Birth of the Virgin (Fig. 5), (fol. G-f. 20), illustrates a domestic interior with St. Anne in bed, receiving the infant Mary from a midwife. The homey qualities are reiterated by the cat, at the left, which washes its paws before the fire. The marginalia of this illustration, richly touched with gold leaf, include two bee hives amid floral decoration. Because bees were believed to be capable of reproduction without copulation, their presence in the border would allude to Mary's own virgin birth, and therefore relate to the main illumination.
A second miniature depicting the Trinity (Fig. 6), (fol. G.-f. 85) resorts to a genre motif in the bas-de-page to enhance a particular aspect of the Trinity scene. Christ appears as a nude infant carrying a cross over one shoulder and descending to earth along rays of light, rather than as an adult. This unusual portrayal draws attention to Christ’s Incarnation and Sacrifice; the initial and final events of Christ’s mission on earth. The bas-de-page, depicting a fisherman gathering his catch at a lakeside, comments on another aspect of Christ’s mission. The fisherman is a visual metaphor of Christ as a fisher of men (Luke vii-11), by which He meant that His mission on earth was to achieve the salvation of mankind.

A related message is illustrated in the Visitation (Fig. 7), (fol. G.-f. 32) and its bas-de-page. The main illumination illustrates the Visitation, the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth during their pregnancies. It was on this occasion, according to some accounts, that St. John in utero knelt down in recognition of Christ, thereby marking the first instance of man’s acknowledgement of the Incarnation and of Christ’s earthly mission. The bas-de-page illustrates the nude child Christ sitting in the center of a bird trap made of nets held in readiness for action by the similarly nude infant St. John, who sits in a wicker blind.

It appears that Christ assumes the role of enticer, or decoy — but evidently not of birds, because a tethered bird appears near the mouth of the net. The scene is a symbolic one in which Christ assumes
the role of bait for the devil, a variation on the mousetrap-motif as illustrated in the Merode Altarpiece. And just as St. John was an active agent in fullfilling Christ's mission on earth, he functions in this symbolic scene as an agent in the entrapment of the devil. The importance of this scene, and the image of the fisherman in the Trinity miniature, to this discussion is that genre motifs serve as symbolic devices.

Vronensteyn Hours

In another Dutch manuscript, the Hours of Mary van Vronensteyn, dated 1460, the marginal illuminations not only amplify the theme of the main miniature by adding additional episodes of the narrative, but also provide moralistic commentary. On folio 17v the miniature of the Betrayal of Christ (Fig. 8) is surrounded by no fewer than five marginal depictions relating to the primary illumination. The betrayal scene, placed slightly to the right of the page, shows a crowd pushing forward behind the figures of Christ and Judas. Peter, to the left of Christ, holds his sword in the air above Malchus, who appears to be falling over backwards. The figures are framed by a rocky landscape in the background. The three scenes in the corners of the border amplify the historical sequence of events relating to the arrest of Christ: Christ before Caiphas, lower right corner; Christ before Pilate, lower left corner; and Christ restoring Malchus' ear, upper left corner. The first two scenes point to the rejection of Christ by religious and secular authorities, while the third scene bespeaks
Christ's forgiveness and magnanimity. These scenes contrast accuser and accused and demonstrate the moral superiority of Christ who returns good for evil. The other two marginal illuminations, Peter's Denial of Christ, represented by a cock and the heads of Peter and the maid servant, at the left, and the suicide of Judas at the right are purposely opposed on the page and may be understood as moral contrasts. Peter and Judas, who both betrayed Christ, teach the moral and doctrinal lesson that those who choose good rather than evil and ask forgiveness when they sin, as did Peter, will return to Christ and achieve salvation. Thus, this full page of decoration not only illustrates a series of marginalia definitely planned to augment the central theme, but also provides a moral comment by illustrating good and evil and contrasting man's choice of good and evil and the consequences of that choice.

The Master of Mary of Burgundy

The Master of Mary of Burgundy expanded the role of marginal decoration at the end of the 15th century by devoting sections of his illustrations to pure still life representations; he turned the entire margin into a still life frame for the miniature. For example, in Christ Nailed to the Cross (Fig. 9), (fol. 43v) in the Hours of the Master of Mary of Burgundy (c. 1480) in Vienna, the Master of Mary of Burgundy created a diaphragm arch with still life objects in front of it, including a rosary, pillow and book of hours. The objects are shown with such palpability and exist in such a clearly defined space.
that there is a clear separation of time and space between foreground still life and the image of the Crucifixion. It appears that the Master of Mary of Burgundy made a conscious effort to create an illusionistic frame for his principal illumination, giving a greater sense of depth to the miniature and creating an illusion which allows the viewer to forget about the manuscript page itself. We, like Mary of Burgundy in prayer, witness a vision of the Crucifixion.

Especially interesting innovations appear in the Adoration of the Magi (fol. 145v) from the Hours of Engelbert of Nassau, illuminated slightly later (c. 1485) than the Vienna Book of Hours, where the Master of Mary of Burgundy created shelves for the still life objects, freeing them to be objects existing in their own right. The objects on the shelves, including two vases (one with a peacock feather), bowls, a plate and a container full of flowers. The shadows cast by the objects add to the illusionistic qualities of the decoration. The Master of Mary of Burgundy also freely spread flowers over the page of St. Anthony in the Desert (fol. 36v-37) in the same book of hours, again emphasizing the independent existence of still life objects. The still life elements -- flowers, butterflies, insects -- are all highly naturalistically rendered, but placed on a flat background in the border which frames the main illumination of St. Anthony in the Desert. This placement dissolves the plane of the page and creates the illusion that the still life motifs of the border are real, tangible objects. Compared to the main miniature, the border is more naturalistic and appears to project from the surface of the page and
to pertain to the space of the viewer.

The Burial of the Dead (Fig. 10), (fol. 21\textsuperscript{h}) on the first page of the Mass of the Dead, in the Hours of Engelbert of Nassau, is worth particular attention. Skulls placed on shelves frame the major miniature on two sides, again giving the main image the illusion of recession into space. Here, in the Burial of the Dead, the Master of Mary of Burgundy has emphasized the importance of the border, treating it as independent still life while simultaneously reinforcing the associations of death illustrated in the central miniature showing the interment of the dead. The memento-mori theme is strengthened by the inclusion of Engelbert of Nassau's motto, \textit{Ce Sera Moe} (This will be me), which in conjunction with the miniature is a terrifying image reminding Engelbert and the viewer of his own death. The skull, used here as a still life symbol of death, foreshadows the frequent appearance of this same motif in later Vanitas paintings.

Also of interest in the Hours of Engelbert of Nassau is a story portrayed in two sequences of a continuous narrative separated by several pages of full page illumination and text. The figures, with no background to orient them on the page, create their own space by converting the manuscript page into a backdrop for their forms. The resulting creation, delicate and light, dances over the manuscript page. The first sequence, occupying 18 pages among the Hours of the Cross, illustrates various episodes in hawking (Fig. 11). It begins with a nobleman bowing to a lady while he points to hooded falcons above the
text. In the following pages where text and marginalia mingle, the hunt proceeds with a huntsman blowing a horn and a dog running towards him. The next sequence of pages open to show a hunter whistling to a greyhound which bounds ahead to take the lead in the following scene. The next five pages intersperse birds and dogs darting around the script. The last scene of these pages shows the trained hunting birds downing their prey, an enormous and fabulous bird, combining the form of a pheasant with the plumage of a peacock. After the falcons have taken their quarry, the nobleman-hunter is seen putting out a lure to coax his hunting birds to return. Then the nobleman-hunter runs toward the fallen bird which is surrounded by his dogs. In the next scene, he carries the dead bird by the neck and presents it to his lady (Fig. 12). Following the presentation, the bird appears between two women who pluck its feathers to make into a crest for the helmet of a knight. Although the second narrative series, comprising a mock tournament, is discontinuous with the hawking sequence, which occurs some 40 pages earlier, the two series are linked by style and content. The crest of feathers made in the initial sequence is presented by the lady from the first sequence to the mock hero in the second sequence. The mock tournament stretching over nine pages, begins in the Hours of the Cross and continues in the Hours of the Virgin. It begins with the lady presenting the feather crest to a lion. In the second scene a monkey holds the reins to the lion's steed, a unicorn, while the lady appears to be sewing the letter "E" on the unicorn's caparison. The third scene of the tournament illustrates a bull charging towards a goat. The next three pages depict additional characters which appear in the later
pages of the tournament, including a fox wearing a cape, a monkey mounted on a stag, a monkey carrying a lance, and a third monkey riding a boar. The lion astride the unicorn also appears. The tournament itself illustrates these animals engaged in combat with wildmen. In the midst of the fray, the chief protagonist, the lion on his unicorn, confronts a wildman on horseback. In the final decoration of the sequence the triumphant lion rides away on his unicorn with two simians as companions. One rides behind the lion; another walks ahead carrying a lance.

Pacht state that these is no relationship between the text and the illustration of these sequences, and that this is just the representation of a courtly pasttime enjoyed by the owner of the prayer book. The secular nature of the hunting scenes and the playful portrayal of the tournament do seem to be unrelated to the text of the Hours of the Cross or the Hours of the Virgin. However, they relate specifically to the life of the book’s owner, Engelbert of Nassau, who probably commissioned the series. The appearance of the lion in the tournament is a clue to the main reading of the sequence. Engelbert’s coat of arms contains a lion on a field of blue powdered with gold. The letter "E", Engelbert’s initial, appears on the lion’s steed, the unicorn. The arms of Engelbert of Nassau also include peacock feathers, the plumage of the mythical bird featured in the first series. The association of virgins with unicorns and the abduction of women by wildmen, the lion’s opponents, suggests a direct relationship between Engelbert and the woman who embroiders the unicorn.
with the letter "E". As a knight and champion of the lady, Engelbert was obliged to fight and defeat her enemies, especially wildmen who did not observe the chivalric code and were well known as abductors of women. Also, it was customery for knights to mark their livery with their arms and initials, and these heraldic markings were normally made for the knight by his lady. Putting all these motifs together, and viewing the sequence as an allegory, we can conclude that the hawking and mock tournament refer to Engelbert, and perhaps to a specific event in his life. The bird which he gives his lady, in the sense that it is a heraldic bird, may represent Engelbert of Nassau himself. Thus, it may relate to the capture of Engelbert's love by the lady whom he will champion in the second sequence. The interpretation of the bird as Engelbert fits into the chivalric tradition of the nobleman being a willing slave to his lady. The overtures of love are particularly obvious in the scene showing the knight offering the lady the bird. In addition to being a serious reference to Engelbert's life, the combined sequence might also be construed as a playful, but not necessarily mocking, allusion to hunting and chivalry, especially since the nobleman presents the lady with a bird which is unusually large in comparison to the hunter's own size. In any case, these two sequences provide one of the most telling examples of the allegorical function of animals in genre scenes.

In recapitulation, manuscript illumination in the Middle Ages shows the growth of naturalism, the increased appearance of still life motifs as objects existing in their own right, and the growth of
secular motifs or genre elements. In addition, still life objects and genre details function to communicate a moral lesson. Finally, of particular relevance to the game piece, animal subjects, such as fable representation, in manuscript decoration, appear to be more oriented toward secular moralization than theological exegesis, and this tradition in manuscript illumination paves the way for the continuation of this treatment of animals in the 17th century game piece.

Panel Painting Tradition

The Madonna and Child theme in panel paintings of the 15th and 16th centuries where still life objects are included, provides for a convenient context in which to study the symbolic associations of still life accessories with a well known and clearly defined religious subject. Bergström makes a particularly well documented case for the inclusion of certain still life objects conveying symbolic meaning in Madonna and Child representations. Examining a chronologically ranged sampling of this theme may show changes in the compositional and symbolic relationship of still life details to religious setting. For example, in Jan Van Eyck's Lucca Madonna (Frankfurt, Städelisches Kunstinstitut), painted about 1433-1434, subsidiary still life objects occur on both sides of the Virgin, who sits nursing the Christ Child. The still life includes two pieces of unidentifiable fruit on the window sill at the left, and a carafe, candlestick and basin in the niche to the right of the Virgin. The sealed carafe and brass water basin, which both contain water, relates to the purity of the Virgin. The fruit refers to both Original Sin and the joys of paradise. They
allude to the redemptive purpose of Christ's life on earth. These still
life components, despite their significance to the meaning of the paint-
ing, are scattered in the background, isolated and relegated to minor
importance in the composition.

Toward the end of the century, symbolic still life objects were
moved forward, displayed more prominently, and grouped together in more
coherent units. Hugo van der Goes' Portinari Altarpiece (Florence,
Uffizi), datable to the mid 1470's, is a good example. The sheaf of
wheat in the foreground of the Nativity scene, parallels the position
of the Christ Child and foreshadows His sacrifice. Violets are scatter-
ed on the ground and other flowers stand upright in a glass and a
Spanish medicine jar next to the sheaf of wheat. These flowers include
a scarlet lily and irises in the medicine jar and columbine and carna-
tions in the glass. The violets on the ground refer to the Virgin's
humility since the violet was regarded as a humble flower because it
grows close to the ground. The carnations in the glass allude to the
passion of Christ; they were called "nail flowers" in Van der Goes' life
time. The columbine in the same glass symbolizes the Virgin's sorrow.
Iris and scarlet lilies function analogously, their color indicating
the blood of Christ's passion and, again, the sorrow of His mother.
The flowers may also indicate Christ's role as Redeemer, or more liter-
ally, as the medicine of mankind.

In the early part of the 16th century, still life objects were
brought to the forward edge of the painting and grouped

26
together functioning as a visual, or perhaps symbolic, unit. For example, Joos van Cleve's *Holy Family* (Fig. 13), *(New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art)*, depicts the Madonna nursing the Christ Child. In front of them on a balustrade rests a glass of wine, knife, walnut and a plate containing grapes, cherries, a pear, an apple, and a pomegranate. These still life objects function symbolically to express the cycle from Original Sin to Redemption. This emphasizes the meaning of Christ's earthly mission. Joos has moved the still life objects from a subservient position to one veiling in importance with that of the Madonna and Child, and it plays a vastly more significant role in conveying religious content. Thus, in the 16th century the role of still life was strengthened by its greater physical prominence and its more consolidated arrangement in groups, allowing for a greater emphasis on unified symbolic content. The foreground placement and organization of still life in panel painting is analogous to, and continues the growth of importance and relative size of still life details noted in the development of manuscript marginalia. The foreground placement of still life details, their organized groupings, and proliferation continue to develop later in the century in mannerist paintings.

**Still Life Painting and St. Jerome**

A second avenue by which still life motifs acquired independent meaning is as an identifying agent for a saint, or other holy personage. In the course of time specific attributes became intimately associated with the personality traits or theological significance of the
figure identified with the object. St. Jerome, for instance, is frequently portrayed as a scholar, as a penitent in the wilderness, or in his study pointing to a skull. St. Jerome in his study portrays the scholar surrounded by books, writing implements, and scientific instruments used in measuring (e.g., hour glass, astrolabe). The characterization of the saint as a scholar derives from classical and medieval portrayals of authors, and the implements surrounding him are those which specify his scholarship and erudition. St. Jerome in his study became quite popular during the Renaissance period, probably because the humanists found St. Jerome a model to which they should aspire; the saint was reputed for both his learning and humility. The pictorial tradition of the saint in his study evolves from a relatively simple portrayal of St. Jerome with a book or two and writing implements to the saint surrounded by a plethora of accessories referring to scholarly pursuits, or specific doctrines associated with his name. The more fully evolved tradition is exemplified in the Eyckian St. Jerome in his Study in the Institute of Arts, Detroit, where we see the saint seated at a desk in his study, the fingers of one hand laced between the pages of a book, and his head propped up by his other hand in the traditional meditative pose. The study is filled with books, an hour glass, carafe, astrolabe, apothecary jar, and other still life objects associated with Jerome and his scholarly activities; the books refer to the saint's erudition; the hour glass to temporality; and the carafe to the purity of the Virgin Mary, the subject of a Hieronymic treatise, which reflects the saint's particular interest in Marian theology.
The second pictorial tradition, the penitent saint, refers to St. Jerome's efforts to sever himself from dependence on material goods and to moderate his passion for profane learning. The saint exiled himself to the wilderness where he lived as an ascetic, meditating on the Crucifixion while mortifying his flesh in order to strengthen his spiritual fibre. In this context we see the saint usually kneeling before a crucifix and beating his bare breast with a stone. The forbidding landscape setting of the wilderness scene enhances Jerome's rejection of material concerns which is specified by his long beard, wrinkled skin, bare feet and generally unkempt appearance. This pictorial tradition became popular in the later 15th century, particularly in Italy where it attracted Dürer, who made an engraving of St. Jerome in the wilderness (Fig. 14) which was widely circulated and seems to have encouraged the spread of the theme north of the Alps. Dürer's treatment of the saint showed him as a penitent -- haggard and clearly rejecting his adherence to a life as an indiscriminate scholar of human learning.

The evolution of Dürer's thoughts regarding the saint as a scholar are symptomatic of those changes which provided the right climate for the success of the Reformation. His earliest treatment of the saint shows Jerome in his study absorbed in scholarly pursuits. The print is rich in Hieronymic iconography, compressing as it were, references to the whole span of Jerome's life and thought. Thus, we see the lion (symbol of compassion), implements of scholarship, and reference to the saint's thoughts on temporality and the life here-
after (skull and gourd). The saint himself is writing at his desk, engrossed in scholarly activity. About 1520, Dürrer made a drawing which narrows in on one aspect of the saint's thought -- on death and temporality of all earthly existence. This representation of St. Jerome is a conflation of the humanistic version of Jerome in his study and the penitent Jerome, which Dürrer derived from Italian sources. We see the saint, his body ravaged by his experiences in the wilderness, once again seated in his study. Now, however, he holds a skull in front of him, and the skull and death evidently preoccupy his thoughts. This idea is elaborated by Dürrer in his final rendering of the saint's life in a painting now in Lisbon in which the saint in his study points forcefully at a skull, addresses the viewer with troubled eyes while scratching his deeply furrowed brow in an adaptation of the traditional meditative gesture known so well in Melancholia I. The emphatic gesture spotlights the skull and the *memento-mori* thrust of the painting. The forceful image of the saint pointing to the skull, the focus on death and the concomitant exhortation to look first at spiritual, rather than temporal welfare and values contributed to the popularity of Dürrer's image of St. Jerome in the 16th century.

All three categories (Jerome the scholar, penitent Jerome, and the "*memento-mori*" Jerome) associate the saint with still life objects reflecting transience of physical life, and the false pride of pursuing earthly rather than spiritual knowledge. Moreover, the culminating development of the portrayal of St. Jerome pointing to a skull is not
derived from either a biographic event or from the saint's writings. Rather, it is an invention the underlying purpose of which is devotional. This new iconography is morbid -- a reflection of the morbidity of the later Middle Ages, when the preoccupation with death was a fact of life, due in part to the Black Death and the belief that the millenium would bring the end of the world.

**The Memento-mori Tradition**

The 16th century treatment of the St. Jerome theme contributed to the development of the *memento-mori* theme through the investment of specific objects with symbolic content which reminded man of his own mortality. Earlier instances of the theme occur on the reverse of some of the portraits of the 15th century Flemish painter Rogier van der Weyden, and in particular, in his *Braque Triptych* (c.1451) in the Louvre. The inner faces of the triptych depict John the Baptist, on the left wing, gesturing toward a deesis group in the central panel comprising the intercessory Virgin, Christ as Savior of the World and the youthful St. John the Evangelist, while the sorrowful Magdalen, in the right wing, solemnly regards the central group. Blum has shown that the triptych was commissioned by the young wife of Jean Braque as a memorial after his death. She suggests further that the weeping Magdalen may be a disguised reference to the sorrowing young widow and that the youthful Evangelist, the patron saint of Jean Braque, placed in close association to Christ and the Virgin, may reflect the hope of the widow that the soul of her dead husband might dwell in paradise. The outer wings of this altarpiece reveal a skull and the Braque coat
of arms on the left wing, and on the right wing, a cross with the inscription, "Oh death how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that liveth at rest in his possessions, unto the man that hath nothing to vex him and hath prosperity in all things, Yea unto him that is yet able to receive meat" (Ecclesiasticus xlvi:1). If Blum's interpretation is accurate, the outer wings take on a particularly touching human quality, recalling both the transience and sweetness of physical life and man's need to nourish his soul and prepare for a spiritual life after death. The sorrow of the widow may be read both on the features of the Magdalen on the interior and also in this inscription which speaks so eloquently of the bitterness attached to the remembrance of death to the living. The skull, a symbol of death, strengthens the memento-mori theme; yet, the cross affirms the promise of salvation.

A wider range of objects become subject to memento-mori iconography in the context of the Dance of Death, where images of the skeleton and skull abound. In Dance of Death cycles, Death, personified as a skeleton, appears as the indiscriminate reaper, taking his harvest from the rich and poor, the mighty and the meek. For example, in Hans Holbein's "The Emperor," from the Dance of Death, published as a book in 1538, we see Death claiming the life of the sovereign. Death places his hand on the emperor's crown, symbol of supreme temporal authority, here shown subordinate to an even higher authority. The crown, thus, enters the repertory of objects symbolic of transience -- carrying with it the special impact that even the mighty succumb to Death's scythe. In addition, Death carries away a bishop,
physician, astrologer, miser, knight, each of whom is specified by an attribute which sometimes later appear in Vanitas still lifes where they connote the transience of worldly possessions and human achievements. The Dance of Death, incorporating skulls and skeletons, not only augments the range of symbolic secular still life objects, but also expands the memento-mori-Vanitas themes.

These three subjects -- St. Jerome, donor portraits, and the Dance of Death -- tended to converge with Vanitas representations where individual objects retained moralistic associations of their own even when taken out of their particular religious context. The skull, for example, even when isolated, conveyed associations of death. In fact, Luttervelt notes that the early Vanitas paintings were called a death's head, or dootshoof. Significantly, the objects composing the Vanitas painting retained associations derived from their original contexts, as in the St. Jerome theme. That is, worn books, reminiscent of those in Jerome's study, still convey the connotations of use, age, the passage of time and the vanity of man's pursuit of earthly rather than heavenly knowledge. Thus, specific objects by the 16th century had become so permeated with meaning in association with various subject matter that even when isolated in Vanitas paintings these objects retained and conveyed symbolic and moralistic content.

The concept of such Vanitas paintings derives from the verse in Ecclesiastes (1:2) "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Luttervelt calls the Vanitas an emblematic
art, in that specific combinations of objects become associated with the theme of the Vanitas. Generally Vanitas paintings serve to remind man of the shortness of life, the frailty of the thread keeping him alive, and the transience of even his greatest achievements. "Neither treasure nor wealth can free you from a speedy death" (Schat noch rijkdom kan u niet van een snelle Dood bevrijden...), as Vondel wrote in 1644.65 The obvious implication of that statement is to look beyond this earthly life and plan for the after life.

Pieter Aertsen

The growing emancipation of still life from a religious context was accelerated at the end of the 16th century by the tendency of artists in the Netherlands to push Biblical subject matter to the background of their paintings, while filling the foregrounds of their works with large still life assemblages. This compositional device is usually called the "Mannerist inversion." Most writers view the 'Mannerist inversion' as a caprice, and cite works exhibiting this feature as one of several manifestations of increased secularization of the arts accompanied by a decline in the symbolic tradition which supposedly characterized the Renaissance period. In the comments which follow, we shall see that the 'Mannerist inversion' indeed may be a sign of secularizing art, but that its profane associations are not equivalent to an art without content.

Pieter Aertsen, one of the principal exponents of the 'Mannerist inversion' is often named in the majority of literature as an innovator
of the device, although he may be simply an early practitioner. His Meat Stall in the University Museum, Uppsala, signed and dated 1551 is a fine example of the artist's exploitation of the "Mannerist inversion." This large panel appears to illustrate a butcher's or meat vendor's shop. A large variety of viands in various stages of slaughter and processing fills the foreground.

The inescapably prominent still life in the foreground, and the diagonal recession of these objects and the buildings draw our eye back to a sign, an advertisement for the sale of land, attached to a building support. The first two words of the sign, "hier achter" (behind here) draws our attention to the background where we see a tavern scene consisting of two women at a table, a man leaning through a window and a second man warming himself before a fire. These individuals may have participated in a banquet, as suggested by the litter of mussel shells lying on the ground outside the tavern. Near these mussel shells and closer to the foreground, a third man draws water from a well. A bundle of kindling for the fire leans against the sign post behind this man. This combination of details suggests some symbolic associations. The tavern scene is reminiscent of portrayals of the Prodigal Son among the harlots, and the mussel shells and kindling, faggots, located just outside the tavern and closer to the foreground, may allude to sexuality; the mussels were a common aphrodesiac, and the faggots may be a visual metaphor of passion. Incongruous in the tavern setting, however, is the presence of a complete carcass of an ox. The motif makes little sense as a naturalistic detail; but its
presence in the tavern may be for symbolic impact. The slaughtered beast may allude to death, and may characterize the setting as one which leads man to perdition. Outside the tavern we see the man drawing water from a well. Immediately behind him is the bundle of firewood. The proximity of the two images suggests that the artist wanted the viewer to see them in combination. The firewood may refer back to the tavern scene where one man warms himself in front of a fire. The faggots, therefore, may be "fuel" for the fires of passion. Nearby the man draws the most common substance used to quell fires -- water. Fire and water were often mentioned together as opposites, one referring to the fires of damnation and the other to the waters of salvation. The man with the water, outside the tavern, and therefore not part of the perdition and death imagery, concerns himself with the welfare of his spirit, and with salvation. The remaining scenes set in a landscape and occupying the center and left portions of the background, deal directly with the theme of salvation by showing people marching along a path towards a church visible in the extreme left. This 'pilgrimage' is a visual metaphor of an idea of some concern to Catholics during the Reformation period: the path of salvation lies in the Church.

Among the figures in the landscape we recognize the Holy Family in what seems to be a scene of the Flight into Egypt. The Virgin, astride an ass, holds the Christ Child on her lap while she also appears to be giving an object to one of two mendicants seated at the side of the road. Among
the victuals in the foreground of this scene, we see a platter containing two fish. Our eye is drawn to this detail for two reasons: the majority of the comestibles are meats, making the fish more prominent; and the fish are crossed at right angles, an unnaturalistic and certainly not accidental, detail. We are reminded that since early Christian times Christ was symbolized by the fish, and when we note that one of the heads of the fish points directly towards the Holy Family in the background, we cannot doubt that the fish are meant to draw our attention to the religious theme. This detail alone suggests that there is a meaningful relationship between the still life components in the foreground and the diminutive scenes in the background.

The middle scene also visually carries the viewer from right to left. The figures progress away from the right with its mussel shells and kindling wood, toward the left where the church tower appears. The sign at the far right may now reveal Aertsen's intended reading of this progression and clarify the relationship between foreground and background: "Behind here is a piece of property for sale now by the rod at the convenience of the buyer or all 1 1/4 rods together." Thus, it may be inferred that man buys transient or sensual pleasures at the cost of his eternal salvation which is represented by the church tower in the left section of the painting. The man at the well, also
serves as a transitional figure between the scene of debauchery and death and the pilgrimage and salvation imagery at the left. The meat products in the foreground reinforce implications of transience, and of course, impending death. In short, a juxtaposition occurs between the transient foodstuffs, possibly representing materialism, and the concept of spiritualism. In this context the 'Mannerist inversion' may be a literal suggestion to the viewer to look beyond the riches of the earth to the immutable treasures of heaven.

The still life components of Aertsen's painting, in short, comment upon or amplify, symbolically and moralistically, the meaning of the religious scene depicted in the background. The function of the still life relative to the Biblical narrative is very comparable to the relationship between the marginalia and full page illustration in illuminated manuscripts of the previous century. The artists in both media even observed the same spatial relationships.

It is but a short step from the cameo religious depiction framed by large and projecting still life components to the independent still life which emerges in the early 17th century in the Netherlands. Among the early practitioners of the pure still life is Frans Snyders, whose large and lusciously painted tableaux set the pattern for the new century. The question remains: is our estimation of the content of Snyders' paintings, and the independent still life as a whole, as erroneous as is the traditional assessment of the significance of the foodstuffs crowding the foreground of Aertsen's paintings?
NOTES


8. De Jongh, "Erotica in Vogelperspectief," 36-38, disappoints the reader by discussing a few thinly documented ideas involving some paintings by Metsu. For instance, he fails to substantiate fully the eroticism of sewing, or what he considers to be an obscene gesture.

10. The 1640's date applies more to the Dutch game piece than the Flemish game piece. Snyders was producing game pieces in the earlier decades of the century. For a list of signed, and some dated works by Snyders, see E. Greindl, Les peintres flamands de nature morte au XVIIe siècle, Brussels, 1956, 179-182. Bergström
Dutch Still Life, 147, discusses the game piece in Holland as a late development of still life painting.

11. For example, a painting of three dead birds identified as thrushes suspended from a nail were found at Pompeii. Ill. J. N. Croisille, Les natures mortes campaniennes; répertoire descriptif des peintures de nature morte du Musée national de Naples, de Pompeii, Herculanum, et Stabiae, Brussels, 1965, Pl. XLVII, 91; No. 67. There are numerous other illustrations of birds, live or dead, including Pl. XLV and Pl. XLIX, from Pompeii and Herculanum, respectively. Another representation of birds hanging, identified as partridges, also in Pompeii, is incorporated in a still life with a pitcher, dish of eggs and mortar and pestle. This still life, ill. A. Massa, The World of Pompeii, Geneva, 1972, opp. 60, was part of a dining room wall decoration.


13. Pliny is a significant source on life in classical antiquity.

However, many of his accounts are the retelling of traditional stories, not reflections of his own experiences or observations.


15. Rhopoeputes, painting of odds and ends, should not be confused with rhyparographos, the painting of refuse or litter. Sosos is credited by Pliny to have been the most famous exponent of the 'unswept floor' motif, wherein refuse or litter from the table was illusionistically depicted as though the foodstuffs themselves
were scattered on the floor following or during a banquet. See
Sterling, La nature morte, 11.

16. The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art, trans. K. Jex-
Blake with comm. and intro. E. Sellers and added notes by H. L.

17. Maluri, Roman Painting, 133.

18. Pliny's Chapters on Art, 111.

19. Philostratus, Imagines and Callistratus, Descriptions, eds. T. E.
Page, E. Capps, J. Rouse, trans. A. Fairbanks, London and New York,
1931, Bk. 1, 31; Bk. 2, 26.


with bibliography, 271-281.


23. White, Bestiary, 74.

24. H. W. Janson, Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renais-
sance (Studies of the Warburg Institute, 20), London, 1952, 167-
168, where Janson also cites an early example of ape intellectuals
playing chess in a Walters Art Gallery Manuscript, Ms. 88, fol. 186r.
The same theme appears later in the wroks of Teniers. See also,
the ape as doctor and musician: E. Evans, Animal Symbolism in

25. L. Randall, Images in the Margins of Gothic Manuscripts, Berkeley
and Los Angeles, 1966, 8-10.

Literature of England, New York, 1911, 8; E. Curtius, European
Literature of the Latin Middle Ages, trans. W. Trask, Princeton, 1967, 59, defines this as a term from antique rhetoric, "an interpolated anecdote serving as an example."


30. Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux, Queen of France, at the Cloisters, Metropolitan Museum of Art, intro. J. Borinier, Greenwich (Conn.), 1965. This manuscript was completed by Pucelle before 1328, the year of the death of Charles IV who commissioned the book as a gift for his wife, Jeanne d'Evreux.

31. Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux, 20. Although this interpretation is not documented in Borinier's commentary, it probably derives from the defenseless nature of the rabbit. Since the rabbit is such a defenseless creature, like an infant, and screams like a human child when it is wounded, its use here as the quarry of the soldier is probably a reference to the Massacre of the Innocents.

32. C. Ripa, Iconologia, trans. D. Pers, Amsterdam, 1644, 579, depicts "Fecundity" as a woman with chickens and rabbits at her feet.

33. Cf. also Melchior Broederlam's panel painting, Flight into Egypt, Dijon, Musée des Beaux-Arts, datable to 1394-1399.

34. Janson, Aes and Aes Lore, 18, 109; E. Panofsky, The Life and Art
of Albrecht Dürer, Princeton (paperback edition), 1971, 67, also
notes that the ape may symbolize the Synagogue or Eve, which
would characterize Mary as the New Eve and reinforce the connotations
of Redemption associated with the life of Christ.

35. Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry, Chantilly, Musée Condé,
MS 1284. The Limbourgs are discussed by E. Panofsky, Early

36. Hours of Catherine of Cleves, intro. and comm. J. Plummer,
facsimile from the illuminated manuscript in the Guennol Collection,
the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, n.d.

37. L. Delaisté, A Century of Dutch Manuscript Illumination, Berkeley
and Los Angeles, 1968, 54-61, esp. 58, finds this characteristic
of medieval Dutch manuscripts.

38. Hours of Catherine of Cleves, Plummer’s commentary, #5, unpaged.
This is partially explained by E. Topsell’s The History of Four-
Footed Beasts and Serpents and Insects, taken primarily from the
Historiae Animalium of Conrad Gesner, 3 vols., London, 1658
(repr. New York, 1967); 3: Theater of Insects, 890-897, which notes
that bees, both profitable and wise creatures, generated from cor-
rruption of other bodies.

39. The motif is more common in Annunciation scenes, e.g., the Hérôde
Altarpiece, by the Master of Flemalle, c. 1426, New York, Metropo-

copolitan Museum of Art, and the Grabow Altarpiece, by Master
Bertram, 1379, Hamburg, Kunsthalle.

40. See M. Shapiro, "Musculipula Diaboli, The Symbolism of the Hérôde
41. Hours of Mary van Vronensteyn, Brussels, Bibliothèque royale, (MS II 7619).

42. Delaissé, Dutch Manuscripts, 46-47.

43. This contrast of good and bad judgment is similar to the earlier depictions of the wise and foolish virgins which appear in the margins of miniatures representing the Last Judgment. The virgins, often similarly placed to the left and right of Christ (just as Peter and Judas) or even entering the gates of heaven or hell, respectively, graphically emphasize the consequences of the choice between good and evil.

44. A Book of Hours originally belonging to Charles the Bold, Vienna, Austrian National Library, Cod. 1857.


47. Pächt, Mary of Burgundy, 33. The Hours of Engelbert of Nassau, completed for Philip the Fair about 1485, represents a late development in which the artist integrates individual parts of the miniature to the whole and treats them as self sufficient subjects.

48. The Oxford Prayer Book was originally made for Engelbert of Nassau, but later came into the possession of Philip the Fair. Signs of the first owner, such as the "E's" on the unicorn, Engelbert's motto, Ce Sera Sera, on the folio with the Mass of the Dead, and the extensive use of peacock feathers which appear on Engelbert of
Nassau's arms; signs of the second owner include: the arms of Philip the Fair, son of Mary of Burgundy and Maximilian. It is possible that the book was a gift from Engelbert (lieutenant of the realm) to Philip. In any event, Philip's coat of arms were painted over Engelbert's. Fächt, Mary of Burgundy, note 27, observes that there is a third monogram, but he is unable to identify it or its significance.

49. This sequence functions as an allegory of the soul's quest for good and its relationship with God (or the Virgin). The good Christian hopes to enter the service of the Virgin and offer himself body and soul. This interpretation relates the miniature to the text, namely the Hours of the Cross and the Hours of the Virgin. Fächt's opinion, therefore, requires revision.


51. Ill. Panofsky, Netherlandish Painting, 2, Pl. 123.

52. Ill. Panofsky, Netherlandish Painting, 2, Pl. 304.


54. C. Cuttler, Northern Painting from Pucelle to Bruegel, New York, 1968, 155.

55. The conjunction of these objects allude to the circumstances of Christ's earthly mission: His sacrifice, referred to by the wine and grapes, which was necessitated by Original Sin, here indicated by the apple which symbolizes Adam's sin.
56. For example, St. Peter was frequently represented with the keys of the Church; consequently, keys came to be associated with authority.


58. Ill. Panofsky, Netherlandish Painting, 2, Pl. 129.

59. See Panofsky, Dürer, 212-213.


63. K. v. Hoynerswaal’s userers, etc., also partake of the Vanitas repertory.

64. Luttervelt, Schilders, 37.


67. G. Frank and D. Mine, "He carries fire in one hand and water in the other," Proverbes en Hines, Baltimore, 1937, Pl. CXXXII.

68. See H. Zerner, The School of Fontainebleau, Etchings and Engravings, trans. S. Baron, New York, 1969, Pl. LD 91, the central etching of "Lust" is accompanied by four smaller etchings which also depict this vice, one of which illustrates a man pouring water into a well (as opposed to drawing water). A woman appears in a window.
behind him.

69. I am indebted for this interpretation to Kenneth Craig's "The Meaning of Rembrandt's Slaughtered Ox," an unpublished seminar report presented at The Ohio State University, Spring 1971.
CHAPTER II

LIVE ANIMAL REPRESENTATION

It is clear from the literature reviewed in the preceding chapter that the game piece has been treated only in the context of its appearance within a particular artist's oeuvre, or as part of the development of still life painting. The game piece is, however, a distinct category of still life painting, and, as we shall see, it is a type of Vanitas painting. The game piece consists of one or many dead animals or birds, and frequently, one or more live animals may also be present.

An initial investigation of live animals -- significant to this paper as a means of studying exactly how the animal functioned as a symbol in the 17th century, and as an aid in understanding the potential symbolism of dead animals -- is particularly useful because the symbolic associations of these animals in medieval manuscripts and 15th century panel paintings are reasonably well documented and understood. Consequently, this study will profit from an initial survey of live animal portrayal in the 17th century which will show that painters of the new century continued to view animals as purveyors of moralistic (and possibly religious) content, and that the earlier meanings continued to apply in the 17th century. Of prime interest to this investigation of live animal representation is the adaptation of emblems, fables, and proverbs to paintings. From the texts which these works illustrate we have firm documentation of the way in which these animals were used to adumbrate a moral. A brief review of this material will provide a
framework within which we can assess the role played by animals in the new context of the game piece.

Emblematic Derivations

Emblems provide the greatest evidence of the codification and continuity into the 17th century of traditional animal symbolism. Emblems, an extremely popular genre in the Low Countries, consist of an illustration, motto and epigram which function together to convey a moral. Many emblems derive from proverbs, fables and bestiary material. The emblem literature reveals that many live animals were used as vehicles for moralization, indicating the aptness of animals not only to convey morals, but also to act as surrogates for man. Moreover, it is certain that emblems were used as source material by some 17th century painters.

Frans Snyders' Bird Catching (Fig. 15) in Aachen, Suermondt Museum, for instance, features a fettered owl harassed by day birds, which is derived directly from an emblematic image used by Sambucus in 1564 and 1566 and by Rollenhagen in 1611 and 1613. In both cases an owl fettered to a pole is assaulted by several day birds, and a bird catcher appears in the background. Sambuccus' emblem (Fig. 17), entitled, "Ignari artes oderunt," is explained by the accompanying epigram: because of the day birds' hatred for the owl they attack the fettered bird, precipitating their own capture, which, in this case, is the punishment for their own wickedness. Rollenhagen's emblem (Fig. 18), on the other hand, is entitled, "Nequeo·compecere multos," or "Unable to stop the many." The clarifying epigram indicates that those who cannot defeat superior
should submit to their fate with stoicism. The illustration depicts a fettered owl, which, hopelessly outnumbered by attacking day birds, sits stoically on its perch enduring the assault. The combination of motto and epigram communicate the theme of the emblem: the necessity to face adversity with stoic resolve. Since the thrust of both emblems is different, how do we determine Snyders' meaning in the adaptation of the owl harassed by day birds? An examination of the tradition upon which it is based will guide us in answering this question.

The owl, whose reputation was firmly established in bestiaries, was viewed as the embodiment of evil and ignorance. The motif of the owl attacked by day birds appears most frequently in the drolleries of medieval manuscripts. For instance, in the Hours of Engelbert of Nassau the motif appears in the marginal decoration for the prayers following the litany, and again in another manuscript in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, All Souls College (MS, 6, fol. 13) (Fig. 16). A comparison of these two drolleries with a similar depiction from the Dialogues of Creatures Moralized, first appearing in 1480, reveals the intention of the medieval illuminators:

"...(the owl) it is a paseynge cruell byrde,... hurtyth and cachith myce, and sh she lurkyth in chirches and drinketh the oyle of the lanpe, and defilith it with her tonge. And whan she is impugnyd of other byrdes that love day lyghte shec fitteth and defendith herself with her cleys...This Owle is a nyghte byrde, most fowle and hatefull among all other byrdes...."9

The Dialogues also tells us that anyone who thinks of doing evil (like the owl) shall be "callyd a folle." The text augments the illustration of the owl attacked by day birds and clearly defines the owl as an
avian personification of ignobility. It is because the owl was characterized in this way that during the Middle Ages the owl became the symbol of the ignorant heretic. Associations of ignorance and folly continued to plague the owl's reputation throughout the Renaissance and Baroque periods. At the same time, additional dimensions were incorporated into this image. Let us consider the rendering of Owls in a Tree, a drawing by Hieronymus Bosch in Rotterdam, Boymans-van Beuningen Museum, to discover what these other associations were.

Bosch's drawing depicts an owl with wings outspread just landing on a tree trunk; below a second owl pokes its head out of a nest and a third owl appears behind the upper portion of the tree. A crowd of people, moving toward the scene of an execution, is visible in the distant landscape. Does Bosch draw upon the traditional image of the owl in his drawing? This question is difficult to assess due to the trimmed state of the drawing. However, Rosenberg has shown that during the Reformation, even though the owl was primarily considered the embodiment of sin, it also came to be viewed as a victim of attack by self-righteous day birds. Rosenberg makes the above observations on the basis of Lutheran material which stresses that another person's "...corruption does not excuse one's own sinfulness." In this way, Luther attempted to limit the overzealous behavior of his followers in their efforts to stamp out heresy -- excesses which were a sin in themselves. Rosenberg further documents these ideas by citing a woodcut ascribed to Dürer. The print bears the inscription, "Der Eulen seynet alle Vogel neydig und gräm," ("All birds are envious and hateful of the owl") and includes a poem
which begins, "O Neyd and Hass aller Welt." According to Rosenberg, this print specifies that the burden of sin is laid more on the sanctimonious (i.e., day birds) than on the sinful (i.e., owl). Therefore, Bosch's drawing may be read on at least two levels: the drawing may comment on the wickedness and evil of the owl, or on the sinfulness of the overzealous day birds. Thus, by the Reformation period the owl assumes the dual image of evil and ignorance, and the victim of harassment. Both of these ideas appear in the emblem of Sambucus. The later dimension of the owl as stoic represented by Rollenhagen, in fact, derives from the owl's victimization by day birds; in order to survive the assault of the day birds the owl was forced to assume a stoic role.

Now that we have seen the various ways in which the owl can be interpreted, let us return to our examination of Snyders' painting in Aachen. It is possible that all of the meanings we investigated may apply in varying degrees to Snyders' fettered owl. Although the owl predominantly retained associations of evil and folly (viz., Hal's Malle Babbe), Snyders also seems to indicate the folly of the day birds because they linger near their enemy, the fettered owl, which has already deposited one dead bird on the ground below its perch and clutches the freshly killed body of a second bird. Although Snyders, a Flemish Catholic, indicates the day birds' folly, he probably did not intend to convey the exact ideas inherent in similar Protestant Reformation depictions of the owl and day birds, as discussed by Rosenberg.

53
The evil and folly of the owl (medieval interpretation) and the wickedness and folly of the day birds (Reformation interpretation) appear combined in Sambucus' emblem (Fig. 17) which provides the best explanation for the meaning of Snyders' *Bird Catching*. But the owl and birds in Snyders' painting seem to be derived from the icon in Rollenhagen's emblem (Fig. 18), indicating that Snyders probably drew his image from the latter and his meaning from the former.

Snyders' painting is interesting to this paper not only because of the way Snyders seems to draw together several symbolic associations, but also because it points out the continued tradition of investing live birds and animals with symbolic meaning from the period of the Middle Ages to the 17th century. It indicates a basic continuity of symbolic imagery associated with particular birds or animals, and also suggests the possibility that additional dimensions accrued to it. Evidently the image was understood in several ways, any one or all of which may be valid and applicable to the Aachen painting.

**Allegory**

In the above discussion, we can see evidence pointing toward the use of birds or animals as vehicles for symbolic communication which was basically directed toward moralization. However, birds or animals may also be pressed into the service of allegory. There is a painting in Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, the *Threatened Swan*, by J. Asselyn\(^\text{15}\) (1616-1652) which not only exemplifies animals used in
allegory, but also shows how closely allegorical images may be linked to the emblematic tradition and how easily a simple genre painting may be turned into an allegory.

Asselyn's painting is dominated by a large white swan with its wings spread, reacting violently to the intrusion of its nest by an approaching dog. Three inscriptions appear in the painting: "Da Raad Pensionaris," below the swan; "Holland," on an egg in the nest; and "De Viand van de staat," above the dog. These inscriptions allude to the vigilant protection of Netherlandish markets by Johan de Witt, the Grand Pensionary of Holland.

Curiously, the inscriptions were added ex post facto. The implications of this fact are particularly interesting. The events to which the inscriptions allude began in late 1651 when the English passed navigation acts aimed specifically against Dutch commerce in Europe, but the problems were not resolved until the signing of a treaty in 1654. It seems likely, therefore, that the inscriptions in Asselyn's painting were added after the conclusion of the treaty, the terms of which were favorable to the Dutch. The hero of the negotiations was Johan de Witt, and the inscriptions on Asselyn's painting cast him in a favorable light as protector and procurer of commercial benefits for Holland. It is reasonable to assume that the inscriptions were added while the events to which they allude were still fresh in the public's mind, or possibly as an epitaph on the occasion of de Witt's death in 1672. In either case, the inscrip-
tions were almost certainly added after Asselyn's death in 1652! Thus, Asselyn's *Threatened Swan* appears to be an interesting case of a genre painting which was converted into an allegory by the simple addition of inscriptions. Evidently, it was a small matter to invest a genre theme with symbolic content; and equally evident, the 17th century Dutch readily turned to animal or bird portrayals for the purpose of allegorization.  

**Fables and Proverbs**

Fables and proverbs are a major 17th century source of motifs culled by painters for situations involving animals. Paintings of both fables and proverbs, already identified in the previous chapter among medieval marginalia, are literal transcriptions drawn from their respective textual sources. Initially appearing as woodcut illustrations complete with verse, later fable and proverb themes were divorced from the text and translated into painting form. The general thrust of both fable and proverb is to moralize by extolling prudent behavior. For the purpose of this study, we will limit our examination of fable and proverb material to an example drawn from each.  

With a comparatively wide range of available fable material, it is interesting that several fable paintings deal with the theme of false pride. An example, *The Raven Who Lost His Stolen Feathers* (The Hague, Mauritshuis) by Melchior d'Hondecoeter, is a literal translation of a fable illustration into painting form. This fable
exploits the raven as a vehicle for demonstrating the results of foolish behavior. According to the fable, the raven dons pilfered plumage to enhance its appearance. Hondecoeter depicts the moment when the raven loses its assumed coat of feathers and is discovered to be a fraud. This particular painting is significant because it illustrates a fable in which live birds or animals are employed for moralization; moreover, it was painted by Hondecoeter, a well known animal and bird painter, and indicates his interest in moralizing in his paintings. Equally important, the theme of the fable depicting the vice of false pride manifested in overconcern for outward appearances, reoccurs in several of his other paintings, as in the motif of strutting peacocks. 24

The primary concern of the fable, to amuse and moralize (by extolling prudent behavior or indicating the consequences of imprudent behavior), is paralleled in the proverb literature. For instance, the proverb, "Two dogs fight for a bone, and a third runs away with it," warns against shortsightedness and greed. This proverb is literally depicted by Frans Snyders' Dogs in the Kitchen (Fig. 21) which is in the Louvre, Paris. The interesting aspect of this painting is that the same proverb was also rendered emblematically by Jacob Cats, "Two Dogs and the Bone" where two dogs "strive for a bone, and the third taketh it away." 26 Again, we see the interrelationship of the various manifestations of the tradition of symbolic imagery and the continued tenancy to invest images with symbolic meaning, some of which may be augmented by inscription, while others remain more cryptic.
Of greater significance than the above evidence that animals and birds were used as vehicles for symbolic communication is the underlying fact that these animals actually engage in activities which reflect human virtues or vices. All of the paintings we have examined employed animals as substitutes for human behavior and we shall see that even when paintings are not derived directly from emblem, fable or proverb literature, animals will function as foils for human behavior, even to the extent that they burlesque man's actions or satirize them. Paintings of this type are frequent in the oeuvre of Hondecoeter.

**Hondecoeter and the Concert**

Hondecoeter relied heavily for the subjects of his paintings on animals and birds which display particularly human characteristics. We have already seen in Hondecoeter's fable painting that he illustrates human virtues and vices in animal guise. The "mock concert" is another way that 17th century painters exposed human foibles. Hondecoeter's rendition of this theme is a good example.

**Melchior d'Hondecoeter's Bird Concert** (Vienna, Gemäldegalerie der Akademie der Bildenden Künste), depicts an owl perched on a stump while it leads other birds in song. A pair of eye glasses and a music book lie at the base of the stump. From the previous discussion of emblems, we are already aware of the symbolism of the owl. Yet, the owl appears here with an important attribute, a pair of glasses, which serves as a key to Hondecoeter's exact purpose in casting the owl as
conductor or the birds. An early 17th century painting by Hieronymus Franken, Rustic Breakfast, 30 (Antwerp, Musée royaux des Beaux-Arts), clarifies the significance of the image of the owl with eye glasses. In Rustic Breakfast a print or drawing pinned to the wall appears in the background above a table full of still life elements. The illustration which depicts an owl with a candle and glasses, bears the inscription, "Al heeft hij kaers en bril...uyl niet zien wil" ("What use are the spectacles if the owl refuses to see?"). The same inscription appears in Jan Steen's After the Drinking Bout 31 (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum). A similar image appears in emblematic form in Rolleston, incorporating the motto, "Coecus nil luce iuvatur." 32 The emblem depicts the owl as an avian representation of folly, or as one who refuses to see, which, of course, arises from the medieval tradition of the owl as bird of the night, refusing the light of the Church. 33 Hondecoeter has made this implication more explicit because the owl in his painting does not even wear the glasses, but it has left them on the ground on the open pages of the book. Clearly, Hondecoeter's owl is a symbol of folly and ignorance. What, then, may be said concerning the birds which follow the owl in song? These birds actually show the ease with which one is lead by folly. This may also relate to the owl's role as decoy for other birds as noted above in Sambucus' emblem of the owl, a hated night bird, where the owl snares other birds, which in this case would imply leading them into behavior which results in their death.

A comparison of Frans Snyders' Bird Concert 34 in Leningrad, the Hermitage, to Hondecoeter's painting, reveals a similar point of view.
In the Leningrad painting, an owl with music book and baton leads various birds of exotic plumage in song. The birds which have joined the concert include, among others, a peacock, swan, parrot, stork and eagle. Snyders not only indicates the folly these birds display by readily subjecting their voices to the leadership of the owl, but he also comments on false pride. The exotic plumage of these birds, preened for public performance, indicates their interest in the facade they present, or pride in their appearance. Their performance itself illustrates the proverb, "Every bird loves to hear himself sing," another commentary on false pride and ignorance.

The third painting, Cats and the Mock Concert, by David Teniers (Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen) also features an owl as conductor. This time, however, the owl stands on an open book surrounded by singing cats. Two monkies are also among the musicians. The cat's vocal abilities are well expressed in the term "caterwaul," referring to the characteristic harsh cry of a rutting cat. Teniers has combined the owl with the screeching and mewing cats attempting to make music which epitomizes folly. This theme is similar to ape intellectuals in marginal illustration, noted by Janson, where apes aspire toward culture through activities connected with refinement and education. Thus, Teniers not only exposes the concert players as fools, but also their affectations of high culture. The painting comments on aspects of bourgeois behavior, once again reminding us of the 17th century proclivity to moralize for human benefit by a variety of means -- in this case paintings in which
animals imitate humans, and where they function as embodiments of virtues or vices.
NOTES


6. In the Middle Ages the owl was said to be a night bird, shunning the daylight; it was, consequently, compared to the Jew who refused the enlightenment of the Church, and thereby came to symbolize the enemies of the Church and the ignorance of those enemies. It should not be forgotten, however, that in antiquity the owl was associated with Athena and symbolized wisdom. The owl, according to Biblical references given by Holmgren, Bird Walk, 130, also alludes to sorrow because of its mournful call. Obviously the owl had multiple images even before the Middle Ages.

7. Day birds attacking an owl also appear on misericords under the choir stools of a cathedral in Beverley, England. See Evans.
Animal Symbolism, 222.

8. Hours of Engelbert of Nassau, intro. J. Alexander, prayers following the litany, opposite #100.


12. Rosenberg, "Bosch," 123, notes several possible levels of meaning in Bosch's drawing, apart from the meanings cited in the text. There is also the proverbial illustration of "This is a real owl's nest," and the representation of particular vices, especially greed of the birds which wait for insects.

13. The motif of the owl attacked by day birds appears as a heraldic device in the background of Lucas Cranach's Portrait of Johannes Cuspinian (Fig. 19), a pendant to the portrait of his wife, Anna Cuspinian (Fig. 20), both in Winterthur, Oskar Reinhart Collection. Painted in 1502 to commemorate the couple's marriage, it is evident from the appearance of corresponding motifs in each panel and the direction of each sitter's gaze, that the two portraits were meant to hang together. The meaning of Johanne's device may be bivalent, depending on whether the owl or the day birds allude to Cuspinian. If the owl signifies ignorance, Johannes as professor at the
university may have compared himself to the day birds. On the other hand, if the owl represents stoic resolve by equating the reading of this device with Anna's, a crane (i.e., good) attacked by a falcon (i.e., evil), indicating the struggle of good against evil, the owl and not the day birds would be Johanne's device. See: O. Benesch, The Art of the Renaissance in Northern Europe, London, 1965, 64; I. Bergström, Den symboliska nejlikan, Malmo, 1958, 125-128.


18. Initially, it is most probable that the painting only conveyed the idea of protection, notably maternal, which is quite similar to emblematic depictions of the mother hen with her brood. E.g., J. Camerarius, Symbolorum et Emblematum ex Volatilibus, 4, Frankfurt am Main, 1596, Emblem LII, "Dulce et Decorum est," which depicts a mother hen protecting her chicks from an intruding predator.

19. Bol, Holländische Maler, 255, cites a similar work by Abraham Hondius, Attack of Three Dogs on a Swan, Glasgow, Art Galleries, which he says is an allegorical rendering of the proverb, "when your fear cometh as desolation and your destruction cometh
as a whirlwind" (Proverbs 1:27) which implies that one must live a Christian life in order to call upon the Lord in an unexpected or sudden hour of need. Bol says that the broken architecture behind the swan is Hondius' way of illustrating "destruction cometh as a whirlwind." Asselyn's original meaning prior to the addition of the inscriptions on the Threatened Swan may have been identical to Hondius' implications to be prepared (in spiritual terms) for sudden disaster alluded to in his painting Attack of Three Dogs on a Swan.

20. Between 1472 and 1700, 187 different editions of fable books, most drawn from Aesopian sources, appeared in the Netherlands. See, J. Landwehr, Fable Books Printed in the Low Countries; a Concise Bibliography until 1800, The Hague, 1963, i-8. Many of these editions contained handsome illustrations which inspired paintings by a number of still life or animal painters. The total number of editions of fable books was derived from a graph, based on Landwehr, of publications per decade, "Number of Fable-Books Printed in the Low Countries from 1470-1715," prepared as part of a seminar at The Ohio State University, 1973, by Ms. Karen Rechnitzer.

21. Other paintings of fables and proverbs depicting birds and animals include: F. Snyders, The Cock and the Gem, Aachen, Suermondt Museum, which deals with the fool who cannot recognize true value; the fable of the fox and the stork appears as one of the paintings hanging on the back wall of the Art Cabinet by Jan Van Kessel (Antwerp, Private Collection), ill. Bernt, Netherlandish Painters.
II, 615. The popularity of the fable in general is illustrated by the large number of paintings depicting the satyr and the peasant, including versions by Jacob Jordaens, Munich, Alte Pinakotek; J. Toorenvliet, Osnabrück, Stadisches Museum; 3, Fabritius, Bergamo, Accademia Carrara; H. M. Sorgh, sale F. von Hochberg, Amsterdam (Frederik Muller), Nov. 25, 1924, no. 62; Jan Steen, London, Art-dealer, 1948. All of these in addition to several other versions of the same subject, may be located in the Decimal Index to Art of the Low Countries, Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie, The Hague, 1961, 92 F 4. All citations from the Decimal Index will be subsequently noted as D.I.A.L.

There are fewer extant proverbial animal representations than fable representations, but there are some to be noted: "Do not buy a Pig in a Poke," J. Jordaens, Leiden, Print Room of the Rijksuniverstiteit; "The Master's Eye Makes the Horse Fat," also by Jordaens, Kassel, Gemäldegalerie, both of which are catalogued under D.I.A.L. 86, plus the appropriate proverb. There are also many proverbial representation which do not deal directly with birds or animals, but reflect the popularity of the proverb: D. Teniers, "Lightly Come, Lightly Go," Private Collection, concerning the aspects of Fortune; J. Jordaens, "The Old Ones Sing and the Young Ones Chirp," Paris, The Louvre, which indicates that youth follows the pattern set by the older generation. For these, see once again, D.I.A.L. under the section on proverbs.

22. Other paintings which deal with false pride include: The Hare and Tortoise, F. Snyders, Madrid, The Prado, ill. R. H. Milenski,


24. For example, The Pair of Peacocks and Parkland with Animals, ill. Melchior de Hondecoeter, (1636-1695) Gemäldegalerie der Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Wien, Katalog der XVI. Sonderausstellung, Vienna, 1968, #7 and #8, respectively.


27. Such as, peacock, pride, monkies, gluttony, e.g., Parkland with Animals, Vienna, Gemäldegalerie der Akademie der Bildenden Künste; hens and chicks, maternal protection, e.g., The Threatened Hen (Fig. 23), Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

28. The concert was a frequent subject of 17th century paintings, in which the participants were usually engaged in raucous behavior. See, The Merry Company ('The Old Ones Sing and the Young Ones Chirp'), by Jan Steen, ill. Rosenberg, Slive, ter Kuile, Dutch Art, ill. 187.

29. Ill. Melchior de Hondecoeter, Katalog, # 7.

30. Ill. Zarnowska, La nature-mort, #40. For a similar depiction attributed to a follower of Aertsen, see Bergström, Dutch Still Life, 23.


33. See note 6 of this chapter.


35. Ill. C. de Lys and F. Rhudy, Centuries of Cats in Art and the Written Word, Norwalk, 1971, 70.

36. Implications of lust are reinforced by other aspects of this painting, particularly the bagpipes. Monkeys are also noted for their excessive sexual appetites (Janson, Apes and Apelore, 115, 261). See also, Evans, Animal Symbolism, 219, for a citation of the ape with a musical instrument connoting sexuality.

37. See Chapter I, 10 and note 24.
CHAPTER III

LIVE AND DEAD ANIMAL REPRESENTATION

The preceding survey of live animals cast in symbolic roles leads to the first stage of our investigation: live animals juxtaposed to dead game. Here, too, we will find that these paintings are clearly not just decorative pieces, but that they frequently convey a didactic message derived largely from the contrast between life and death. It also becomes clear from examining a number of game pieces in which live and dead animals appear together that there is a limited repertory of fauna -- both live and dead.¹ A survey of live animals represented in the game piece reveals that they in fact appear consistently as predator, thief or guardian: the intruding animal predators are the cat and weasel; a bird, usually a magpie; and the watchful hunting dog which chases away the would-be thieves. The monkey also appears in some game pieces when fruit or nuts are present. Although the monkey always disregards the game, it is an omnivore like man, and it is usually portrayed as a thief.² Each type of creature plays a specific role in the game piece, setting up a drama of encounter between guardian and thief, as we shall see, which functions as an allegory of good and evil, or virtue and vice.

Live Animal Protagonist: the Dog

The dog, usually a hunting dog, consistently plays the role of protector of its master's goods. It sometimes barks at the intruder or simply assumes a guardian's pose. In still other instances the
dog snarls and leaps after the interlopers. These actions cast
the dog in a positive light. The canine's reputation as protector is
firmly established by a long tradition stretching back to antiquity.
Plutarch recounts the story of the faithful guardianship of a dog
after its master's death. The dog not only watched over the dead
body of its master, but also brought about the apprehension of his
killers by drawing attention to them by its loud, furious barking.
All examples of the dog in the game piece are consistent with this
tradition so that it would seem that the dog exemplifies loyalty or
vigilance. The canine warden, often shown pitted against thieving
intruders which would appear to signify vice, is the obvious animal
representative of virtue in the game piece, as we shall demonstrate
below.

An example representing this type of depiction of the dog is
Jan Baptist Weenix's Dead Roebuck (Fig. 24), (Amsterdam, Rijks-
museum), in which an eviscerated deer with its head on a plinth, is
suspended between a snarling dog and spitting cat. This painting
clearly shows the dog as warden of the game and establishes a conflict
between it and the cat.

Live Animals as Thieves

Perhaps the most common intruding live animal is the cat. In
some paintings, such as Frans Snyders' Culinary Still Life (Munich,
Alte Pinakotek) and Snyders' Still Life with Dead Game (Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum), a cat creeps in surreptitiously from one side of the composition, apparently with the intention of pilfering some of the dead game spread out on the table top. The clandestine movements of these cats are consistent with the time-honored image of the feline as a villainous creature, possessed of a stealthy, thieving and cruel nature. These features of the cat's character are clearly illustrated in another example, J. B. Weenix's *The Thievish Cat*¹⁰ (New York, The New York Historical Society), in which a woman vendor chases a feline intruder away from her produce stall.

Among all the possible ways to portray the cat, it is always its negative aspects that still life painters chose to illustrate. These are consistent with the actual behavior of the cat, and also consistent with the symbolic role the cat has long played. However, the stealthy cat is only one among several live animal intruders in the game piece, which include, notably, the weasel,¹¹ and the monkey.

The monkey is perhaps the most striking example of an esurient intruder. Although not interested in pilfering dead game, the monkey appears frequently in the game piece when fruit or nuts, favorite targets of the monkey's appetite, are also present.

Janson's study indicates that the monkey is well known for its greed and gluttony, evidenced by various depictions of monks surrounded by nut shells, symbolic reminders of the monks' sensual appetite.¹² For instance, Bruegel's *Fettered Monks*¹³ (Berlin, 71
Deutsches Museum), dated 1562, depicts two chained monkies with bits of nut shells lying near them. The simians, chained to a ring, have lost their freedom due to their gluttonous nature, shown by the shells surrounding the trapped monkies. The monkey appears precisely in this light in still life paintings. In a painting by Frans Snyders, *Woman Selling Fruit and Vegetables* (Fig. 25), (Leningrad, The Hermitage), a monkey attempts to pilfer fruit from a heavily laden table, but instead it overturns the basket and falls from the table. This painting portrays a definite example of the monkey's lack of foresight or judgment, which frequently causes it to become the victim of unhappy circumstances. Because the monkey appears to be willing to go to any lengths to satisfy its appetite, it becomes an especially appropriate symbol of greed and gluttony.

Of greater consequence to this study than the gluttonous character of the monkey, is its humanoid appearance and actions, which make the simian an especially apt surrogate for man. Although the point was made in the previous chapter that live animals act as foils for man, it should be noted the monkey is a particularly graphic example of an animal which may be used as a substitute for man to symbolize human vices.

**Live Birds as Thieves**

Live birds generally appear in the same piece as thieves, if we are to judge from the way the over-present dog barks and attempts
beyond the watchdog's range. Among the most clearly identifiable birds is the magpie. It appears in *Dead Hare and Dog* (Fig. 26) by Jan Weenix in the Wallace Collection, London. A spaniel, lunging in from the left, barks furiously at a scavenging magpie perched on a stone sculpture of two resting putti. Dead game, including two partridges, a hare, a turkey and other less easily identifiable game birds, is placed against a worn stone plinth in the foreground. Withering roses at the right of the game appear directly under the magpie. In the background of the composition, a statue of Hercules slaying Cerberus is visible in the center of a lake surrounded by an extensive pleasure garden.

The selection of the thieving magpie in this painting is probably due to its reputation in the Bible as a clever thief, hoarder and feeder on carrion. More importantly the magpie is one of the few birds reputed to be capable of imitating human voice sounds. The magpie was said to be capable of deceiving humans into believing that a man was calling, which bears comparison to the deceptive practices of the devil, and somewhat obliquely, to the fact that man is easily fooled by his senses and led into misconceptions, i.e., ignorance, or foolish behavior. It appears as though the 17th century artists may have alluded to this characteristic of the magpie by portraying the bird with its beak open as in *Dead Hare and Dog.*

Because of these habits the magpie embodies evil and the vice of avarice. It is evidently opposed to the dog, and in this instance
where the confrontation of dog and magpie erupts into an aggressive encounter, these creatures, as representatives of good and evil, may allude to the Psychomachia, or combat between virtue and vice. Set against images of dead game, the dog-magpie confrontation presents the viewer with the fundamental contrast between life and death, and virtue and vice. This life-death juxtaposition is a simple, yet fundamental aspect of all game pieces which include live animals.

In addition to the dead game, other accessories in the painting Dead Hare and Dog underscore the Vanitas aspect of the contrast between life and death. For instance, withering roses and leaves already eaten by snails or caterpillers, and the cracked stone clearly allude to decay of particular material substances and hence, to passage of time. Significantly, the landscape in the background completes this Vanitas theme.

The landscape behind the game piece and the other foreground accessories consists of a large and well manicured pleasure garden. Groups of idlers loll about the borders of an artificial lake which features a large sculpture of Hercules slaying Cerberus in its center. The impression created by this setting is one of peace, calm and idyllic beauty, which contrasts sharply to the comparatively large and detailed treatment of dead game and decaying vegetation assembled in the foreground. Since the foreground is nothing more than a close-up view of a portion of the pleasure garden, and since death is very obviously a feature of the setting, Weenix implies that death also

74
lurks elsewhere in the garden, and that its beauties and pleasures are of the most ephemeral variety. Weenix appears in fact to specify this idea by an interesting and complex set of meanings tied up in the sculpture of Hercules slaying Cerberus. The choice of depicting this Labor which brought Hercules to the mouth of Hades, and therefore to the threshold of death, introduces the first of several sinister notes into the idyllic garden. The action itself focuses on death and slaughter, rather than on a glorious aspect of the hero which might shift the emphasis to Hercules' proverbial characterization as Fortitude. It reminds the viewer, also, that Hercules was a famous hunter -- slayer of the Aryanthian boar, the Nemean lion, the Lernean Hydra, and three-headed Cerberus. Most importantly, Hercules himself died as the result of the murder of the centaur Nessus who attempted to make love to Deianeira, Hercules' second wife. In his dying breath, Nessus persuaded Deianeira to bestow on Hercules a tunic stained with the poisoned blood of the Lernean Hydra. Deianeira unwittingly sent the garment to Hercules which caused his own death. In short, not only does the sculpture suggest that the parkland setting is a hell-garden, but that even its heroes meet their untimely end when the hunter of hunters, Death himself, wields his inescapable scythe. Therefore, the background in combination with the death and time eroding imagery in the foreground -- and with the magpie as a symbol of the vices of the flesh -- clearly establishes Weenix's Dead Hare and Dog as a Vanitas allegory.17
Protagonist versus Antagonist

Confrontation between representatives of good and evil embodied in the dog and monkey occurs in Still Life: Dead Game, Spaniel and Monkey in Garden (Fig. 28) by J. Weenix (Philadelphia, Museum of Art). This time the intruder is a monkey perched on top of an urn. A canine protector attempts to chase away the monkey. The simian, withdrawing at the approach of the spaniel, clutches a small object, probably a fruit. Dead birds, including a swan, pheasant, and rooster appear at the base of the urn.

The confrontation between dog and monkey actually reflects the opposition of two different value sets embodied by each of the animals, i.e., good and evil, which is brought sharply into focus by various reminders of life's brevity. For instance, the dead birds supply a contrast to the live animals, evoking a reminder to man of the inevitability of death. Other reminders of death or transience include the urn, which may allude to a funerary function, and the withering vegetation which suggests transience because of its growth cycle. Among the plants we find some roses which symbolize the ephemerality of life even more specifically than the other vegetation, because the full splendor of the rose lasts only a short time. Thus, in addition to dead game, there are various reminders of death present in this painting.

By focusing on death -- or temporality in general -- Weenix forces
the viewer to consider his present life. In this light, the monkey which so aptly stands as a surrogate for man and a symbol of his hedonistic appetites, reminds us that sensual pleasures are temporary. The simian's lack of capacity to judge is particularly relevant here. The fugitive aspects of life's pleasures are lucidly put before the viewer because the pleasure garden, stretching out into the distance, is juxtaposed to the large foreground images of death. The contrast of dead game with an idyllic garden setting enhances the tangibility of the foreground and draws our attention to its implications of evanescence.

Game in the Vanitas Still Life

A Vanitas composition may be easily identified by a variety of still life objects which make reference to worldliness, to transience, and to resurrection or eternal life. Normally these aspects of the theme are portrayed by material riches, time measuring devices, or a skull. But other still life elements may convey the same ideas. A brilliant array of flowers, particularly when they are exotic or expensive, can allude to worldliness; flowers or fruit in various stages of decay suggest the passage of time, or may double as a reference to death. Because the imagery is so varied, references to the allegory may go unnoticed in many paintings. A brief survey of various game pieces will show how in many instances the components of the game piece were evidently chosen to specify one or more aspects of a Vanitas allegory.
Among the still life objects most frequently associated with the Vanitas theme and most thoroughly documented are fruit and flowers which appear in varying degrees of decomposition. The fruit and flower Vanitas may appear as the subject of an entire painting or as a minor motif within a larger composition. Typical of the latter type of depiction is the painting by Jan Weenix, Dead Hare and Still Life (Fig. 30), (London, Wallace Collection), which contains a Vanitas still life in the foreground. The clearly definable constituents of this Vanitas assemblage are to be found among the foreground fruit and flowers. We shall examine the particular items which serve as keys for interpreting the still life grouping in a Vanitas context. Following the examination of still life objects, we shall also consider the relationship of dead game and still life objects present in the composition.

The primary key for a Vanitas interpretation of Weenix's painting is the fruit arrangement which appears in a large wicker basket next to a dead hare. The fruit, consisting mainly of grapes, some plums, and a peach (?), is presented in various stages of decay, particularly notable in the almost completely rotted fruit (no longer identifiable) which rests on the edge of the basket. The entire fruit arrangement is reminiscent of an emblem by Roemer Visscher depicting a bowl of fruit with the caption, "Vroech rijp, vroech rot" (Soon ripe, soon rotten). This emblem clearly shows that fruit was employed to remind man of the brevity of his temporal existence which was exactly Weenix's implication by including the decaying fruit in this still
life painting. In addition to fruit, the roses present in the same painting add significantly to transience. Flowers generally communicate ideas of ephemerality due to their rapid maturation and decay. Moreover, the roses in Weenix's painting are at the height of bloom, and their leaves have already been partially consumed by insects. The next step in their evolution is decay, reminding us once again of the proverb, "Soon ripe, soon rotten." The roses, also, appear to have attached themselves to a dead tree branch, which also supports two dead birds. The broken branch reiterates ideas of lifelessness, barrenness and death. Thus, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the large foreground elements were devised by the artist to convey a Vanitas allegory. In this context, where the viewer is reminded of brevity by fruits and flowers, the dead game actually becomes an element of the Vanitas. To complete the Vanitas image, Weenix includes a park-like garden in the background, representing worldly pleasures. Juxtaposed to this distant pleasure garden are the foreground details which remind the viewer of death and brevity, and of the relative inconsequence of worldliness when confronted by death.

Dead game, however, frequently appears without the accompanying fruit and flowers which Weenix incorporated in Fig. 30. In such cases, as we shall see, dead game itself assumes the implications inherent in more easily understood fruit and flower Vanitas compositions. Before we examine dead game as the sole element of a still life, let us consider some examples of dead game appearing with other still life objects clearly related to the Vanitas-memento-mori tradition.
A pertinent example, P. Boel and Jacob Jordaen's *Vanitas* (Brussels, Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts) contains a number of reminders of brevity or corporeal decay, including an hour glass, figure of father time, flowers, a death's head, and a child blowing soap bubbles which alludes to ephemerality. This last motif goes under the name of *homo bulla*.25 Directly adjacent to the skull is a dead duck. In addition to the Vanitas symbols, Boel and Jordaen's composition includes gilt plates, musical instruments, etc. -- objects which are non-essential to corporeal life and endanger the spirit by distracting man with temporary pleasures. Boel and Jordaen's painting easily qualifies as a Vanitas, which generally serves at least one of the following functions: to remind man of the fugitive quality of time; the transience of the world, and the inevitability of death. Bearing this in mind, what role does the dead duck play in Boel and Jordaen's painting? The dead duck, as already noted concerning other dead game, serves as an additional reminder of death, specifically augmenting the implications supplied by the human skull and the *homo bulla* in this painting. It is possible to pin point the symbolic meaning of dead game even further than the mere reminder of mortality. We have indicated that live animals and birds sometimes served as surrogates for man. As we shall discover, dead game may be used by the artist to substitute for man, while directing a message to man that all things must die.

We will begin with an investigation of Abraham van Beyeren's
Breakfast Piece (Munich, M. J. Boehler Collection) in order to show how game may be used by the artist to direct a particular message to man. Van Beyeren's painting depicts an assemblage of still life objects arranged across a table top, which include a plucked duck and a mortar and pestle. Above the still life, another dead bird hangs from a chipped plaster wall. Terverant notes that the plucked duck may refer to man. If this is applicable here, then the dead fowl may be a comment on man's temporality. In addition, the mortar and pestle, not uncommon to van Beyeren's work, parallels the implications concerning man's mortality implied by the presence of the plucked duck. For, the mortar and pestle, which is associated with medicine, may actually allude to the fact that pharmacology cannot prevent death, as reflected by the quotation, "Physician, heal thyself" (Luke iv:23). In conjunction with these reminders of temporality, suggestions of worldliness, consisting of pieces of fruit, oysters, and extravagant crystal ware, clearly indicate that this still life is a Vanitas composition. Moreover, van Beyeren draws attention to mortality by alluding to man through the image of a dead fowl.

The message of mortality, directed to man through the dead game, is stated even more pointedly in Vanitas Still Life (Fig. 31) by Petrus Schotanus (Amsterdam, William M. J. Russel Collection). The most obvious features of Schotanus' Vanitas are an hour glass, celestial globe, two books and three dead birds -- two woodcocks and a snipe. In addition to these components, we find two pertinent inscriptions which clearly state the intention of the painting. The
open pages of one book reads, "Gelyck den vis het net en den vogel den
strick, also overvalt den mensch den doot op een ongelege tyt," which
is derived from Ecclesiastes ix:12 (As the fishes that are taken in
an evil net, and as the birds are caught in the snare, so are the sons
of man snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them).
Another inscription located on the bottom of the same page reads,
"En alle dinck verslijt met den tyt," which indicates that all things
succumb to time. The quotations and the dead fowls in Schotanus'
painting are unmistakable reminders that man and beast alike reach
the same undeterable fate: death. The dead birds bring the ephemeral
nature of bodily existence sharply into focus. Time's fugitive
nature is made specific by the inclusion of the hour glass. It is
also significant that Schotanus chose two types of winter birds,
snipes and woodcocks, whose migratory habits brought them to Northern
Europe in winter, the season of the year symbolically associated with
death.

With the two paintings discussed above, we have demonstrated that
dead game can function not only as a reminder of transience, but also
more poignantly, as a reminder of man's own corporeal demise. In
certain cases the game actually assumes surrogate status for man,
or reminds him of the impending death of all living creatures. The
birds explicitly direct this message to man, reminding him to,
"...but ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls
of the air, and they shall tell thee..." (Job xii:7).

82
The Game Piece as a Vanitas Allegory

Now that we have arrived at a primary understanding of what dead game itself implies, we may move to the next phase of our investigation: the game piece as a subdivision of Vanitas painting in general. Since game appears as an element in several Vanitas paintings, and since dead game itself has been shown to function as a specific reminder of man's own death within Vanitas compositions, we shall now investigate dead game as the primary element of the Vanitas composition with subsidiary motifs reinforcing the basic accent on death and transience.

Jan Weenix's Still Life (Fig. 33), (Philadelphia, Museum of Art) illustrates how the 17th century artist expanded the role of dead game from a simple subsidiary motif to an entire Vanitas composition with all of the implications found in the more common types of Vanitas still lifes. Weenix's painting features a dead hare posed in the foreground against hunting gear. A fly crawls over the hare's hind leg. A partridge and two other dead birds lie at the hare's side. Other birds, including a duck, hang limply from a moss-covered, gnarled and lifeless tree which closes off the right side of the composition. A replica of Giovanni da Bologna's Rape of the Sabines, broken to simulate an antique statue, stands in front of some classical architecture in the distant background.

A number of clues leave no doubt that the artist intended to allude to a Vanitas allegory in this work. The most obvious element
pointing to the fleeting nature of earthly life, apart from the dead game itself, is the relatively rare inclusion of a prematurely aged rendition of Giovanni da Bologna's *Rape of the Sabine Women*.\textsuperscript{34} This statue comments ironically on time's ruinous effects on man's achievement's, specified here by an example of Renaissance (i.e., "modern") sculpture which is in a ravaged condition. Moreover, the subject of the broken sculpture refers to lust and specifies the character of the garden as a pleasure garden. In addition, the broken branch of the dead tree, as well as the barrenness of the foreground vegetation, conveys an impression of death. Together, the symbols incorporated in Weenix's game piece specify transience and remind the viewer of the fleeting nature of time, an invariable feature of the Vanitas.

**Vanitas Game Piece with Hunting Implements**

*Weenix's Still Life* (Fig. 33) in Philadelphia, fits very closely into a formula which was used repeatedly by the artist; a Vanitas composition made up of game and various items which allude to ephemerality, such as the fly, rotting fruit, etc.; and hunting equipment. The formula was not only used and reused by Weenix, but also by other painters whose works, however, do not approach the decorative monumentality of Weenix's paintings. Among the more noteworthy practitioners of the "formula" are Willem van Aelst, Marguerite de Heer, and Jan Vonck. Since their paintings are so similar (to those of Weenix) we shall examine only a few. To provide some frame-
work for this investigation, we shall classify each painting according to the motif which introduces the Vanitas theme.

The Fly as a Symbol of Death or Decay

Ambrosius Bosschaert's Dead Frog (Fig. 34), (Paris, F. Lugt Collection), is a particularly striking illustration of the way the fly could be used to underscore the idea of death. The painting consists of a close-up view of a dead frog lying belly-up surrounded by flies. The position of the frog indicates that it is dead; the flies drive the point home. The combination of images not only makes sense from the point of view of everyday experiences, but also because the fly was thought to breed in filth and putrefaction, it came to be used frequently to specify or draw attention to death. Also, because the stench of rotting flesh attracts the fly, it also conveys the idea of decay and the passage of time -- hence, the fly can serve as a Vanitas motif to symbolize transience as well as death.

The fly appears similarly in Willem van Aelst's Still Life with Hunting Gear and Dead Bird (Fig. 35), (Karlsruhe, Staatliche Kunsthalle), which features a dead partridge. The partridge is suspended by one leg amidst a table top full of carefully arranged hunting equipment, including a velvet game bag, hunting horn, net and falcon blinders. A single fly crawls on the dead bird's wing. The main interest of this painting by van Aelst lies in the fact that the artist is chiefly noted for his floral Vanitas compositions 36
in which the idea of ephemerality is specified by a mechanical time piece. In his game piece, however, a fly -- a much more appropriate indication of decay for a bird or animal carcass -- functions exactly as the watch in van Aelst's flower pieces. It is a symbolic reminder of fleeting time and mortality.37

A third example featuring the fly is Marguerite de Heer's After the Hunt (Fig. 36), (Bordeaux, Musée des Beaux-Arts), in which dead birds and hunting gear are spread across an ornate marble tabletop. The fly appears on the wing of the central, and largest, dead bird. There is little reason to doubt that Marguerite de Heer alluded to the Vanitas theme through the inclusion of the fly in her game piece; for, she added yet another motif of particular appropriateness to convey the idea of the passage of time and the instability of life -- a floating feather below the large dead bird.

The Floating Feather as a Symbol of Flight of Time

The floating feather, momentarily lingering in the air, suggests transience as effectively as a soap bubble or burning candle. But more importantly, it is a most appropriate way of alluding to the instability of life and the motif is a brilliant way to deal with the idea of the passage of time in the game piece. This device, certainly appealing for its display of artistic bravura, attracted a number of artists and was plainly used as a symbol of tempus fugit. For instance, Jan Vonck employed a floating feather in Dead Birds (Fig. 40),
(The Hague, S. Hijstad, Dealer), which depicts several dead fowls on a chipped stone table top. A single bird is suspended from a string above a dog which sniffs with curiosity at the pile of carcasses. Two feathers waft downwards from the hanging fowl. Vonck's compositions, evidently Vanitas oriented, are always stark, usually employing only a few birds on a stone table top against a dark, impenetrable background. His only keys to transience are the floating feather, and occasionally, the chipped or cracking stone of the table itself.

Chipped or Cracked Masonry
as a Symbol of the Wearing Effect of Time

Vonck was not the only painter to employ worn stone structures to indicate the ruinous effects of time. A far more emphatic use of this device is found in a painting, Dead Birds (Fig. 41) by Jan Weenix, (London, Wallace Collection), which not only displays dead birds and hunting equipment on a cracked stone block, but also includes the completely toppled portion of a pillar. Several paintings by other artists transmit qualities of ephemerality through cracked casements, broken pillars, etc., which suggest gradual, but inevitable destruction wrought by the passage of time.

In the above paintings, we are confronted with a number of Vanitas game pieces, each with its own unique combination of symbols of decay or brevity. As noted, the symbols here are not the only means of conveying transience or temporality; however, they are the
most common ones used by painters of the game piece. By viewing a
large selection of dead game, clearly indicated as Vanitas allegories
by the accompanying symbolic motifs, we encounter additional evidence
that game functions as the principal and obvious reminder of death.
Consequently, in paintings which solely feature dead game, such as
Nelchior d'Hondecoeter's Still Life-Game Birds (Fig. 42), (Philadelphia,
Museum of Art), we may be reasonably sure of Vanitas allusions. The
dead game itself not only implies death, but it is specifically
a symbol of the inevitability of death for all living things.

The Problem of the Hunter

Hunting gear, an accessory in many game pieces, has been thus far
neglected. The hunting equipment generally includes a rifle, powder
horn, game bag, falcon blinders and various implements of entrapment.
How do these accessories relate to the Vanitas intentions of our
artists? There are two possible answers to this question. First,
the still life objects pertaining to hunting may function like
any other material item of value incorporated in a Vanitas composition,
such as the armor or gilt plate in Boel and Jordaen's Vanitas
in Bordeaux.39 That is, these objects indicate worldly preoccupation,
alluding to the vanity of owning expensive or extravagant hunting
equipment and of indulging in an activity associated with courtly
leisure. Based on the knowledge that wealthy patrons purchased these
paintings, and on the numerous Vanitas symbols included in the game
piece, it is much more probable that the hunting implements cryptically
allude to a conceit: although man may hunt game, the ultimate hunter is death. Such characterization of death is not unusual, as illustrated by Hendrick Hondious' *Death and the Huntsman* (Fig. 43), (London, Wallace Collection), a drawing which depicts a hunter confronted by the figure of death. Hondious' drawing implies that death stalks all life and that the prowess of the human hunter is insignificant in the face of the great reaper, Death. These two ideas return us to the thrust of the game piece: that all living creatures, man as well as animals, must die.
NOTES

1. The most frequently depicted dead creatures are the hare and roe-buck, and less frequently, the boar; among the fowl, the most numerous are the partridge, swan, duck, peacock and woodcock or snipe (listed in order of frequency). Part of the reason for this narrow spectrum is certainly due to the animals and birds which are available for hunting in the Low Countries. However, does this account for the full range of hunted wild life? Animals hunted for trophy or exotic values, such as lions and tigers depicted by Rubens, are totally absent. The reasons for this selectivity are unknown to the author.

2. In rare instances, human beings play a complementary role. E.g., Frans Snyders' Culinary Still Life (see page 70), depicts a boy glancing over his shoulder, who filches grapes from the table. His actions parallel those of the cat.

3. It should be noted, however, as discussed in the previous section on proverbs, that the dog was also used to symbolize greed as when it is shown fighting over bones with other dogs. See above, page 57. The canine is also a fornicator and defecator. However, these traits of the dog do not appear in the same piece.


5. The dog and cat evidently, signify good and evil or virtue and vice. The two were traditionally treated as enemies, as reflected

90
in the proverb, "To agree like cat and dog," G. Frank and D. Hiner, Proverbes en Rimes, Proverb LIX. See also, Apperson, Proverbs, 88. The dog and cat are still cited as enemies in the 17th century, as in Ripa's Iconologia, 494, where "quarrelling" is represented by a man holding a sword. A dog and cat confront each other at the man's feet. The strong tradition to cast dog and cat as enemies as well as opposites, just as in the comparison of dog and bird and dog and monkey, reduces to a basic comparison of good and evil, symbolized by the respective animals.


8. Other paintings which include the cat as predator may be found in Greindl, Peintres flamands: Paul de Vos' Game with Cat and Parrot, Madrid, Prado, ill. 43; Jan Fyt's Still Life with Dog and Cat, Madrid, Prado, ill. 59; and A. Claessens' Dead Birds and Fruit, Paris, J. O. Leegenoek Collection, ill 44.

9. The cat's cruelty is clearly established by Aesop's fable of the "Cat and the Hen," which recounts the narrative of a cat that allowed a hen to plead for its life, but had no intention of sparing its potential victim. This fable may be the source for the painting, A Hen Frightened by a Cat (Fig. 22), by Govert Dirksz. Camphuysen (1623/24-1672), in the J. G. Johnson Collection, Philadelphia. See Caxton's Aesop, 167. E. Panofsky, Problems in Titian: Mostly Iconographic (wrightman Lectures, II), New York, 1969, 28, also notes the cruel, as well as choleric, temperament
of the cat. The cat is also known for its laziness. Chaucer's
411, tells of the Friar who finds the softest spot in the house
by locating and displacing the sleeping cat, which had previously
chosen the spot for itself. Consequently, we can understand why
the cat is frequently shown stealing game rather than hunting its
own food; stealing is easier than catching game. Steele, Medieval
Lore, 165, notes the cat's lustful nature. The cat was also noted
as a predator because of its "mousing" abilities. See White,
Bestiary, 90.


11. The weasel is another beast of poor reputation. Like the cat, it
encroaches on dead game, e.g., Jan Fyt's Dead Game with Weasels
(Fig. 29), Detroit, The Detroit Institute of Arts; Matthias
Wittoos' Jassel and Two Birds (Dunkirk, Musée municipal), (ill. Le
Siècle de Rembrandt, tableaux hollandaises des collections
15, 1971, 243), depicts weasels as intruders or predators,
respectively. The weasel, like the cat, is well known for its
stealth and cruelty, and appears cast in this negative light in
the game piece. See Topsell/Gesner, The History of Four-footed
Beasts, 1, 564-565.

13. Ill., Janson, Apes and Ape Lore, Pl. XXII. The same motif occurs in *The Rich Man and Lazarus* (Luke xvi:19-31) in the manner of Frans Francken II (D.I.A.L. 73 C 95,2), where a fettered monkey appears in the left corner of the composition near a lavishly prepared table. The monkey may also have pieces of nut shells. The ball and chain attached to the simian, as noted by Janson, 148, signify "outward subserviance to sensual pleasure." Interestingly enough, the monkey may compare to the squirrel, which appears in a similar way. For instance, Frans Snyders' *Fruit and Vegetables with Monkey, Squirrel and Parrot* (Stuttgart, Stattgalerie) depicts a squirrel breaking a nut apart and beginning to eat the meat. Moreover, the squirrel appears chained in a niche, nut shells near by, in the background of a still life by A. Claessens, *Dead Birds and Fruit*, Paris, J. O. Leegenhoek Collection. Both ill., Greindl, *Peintres flamands*, ill. 37 and 44, respectively.

14. Other birds in addition to the magpie, appear as scavengers in the game piece. These birds, however, are on the whole unidentifiable.

15. Holmgren, *Bird Walk*, 107. Also noted in Proverbs xxx:17, "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out..." which, according to Holmgren, relates to the magpie. The quotation itself refers to habits of feeding on carrion by this particular bird. For a reference to the magpie as a hoarder, see E. Phipson, *The Animal Lore of Shakespeare's Time*, London, 1883, 183. See also, Rosenberg, "A Bosch Drawing," 119, 123, who indicates that magpies
(or magpie-like birds) watching for insects allude to the sin of
greed. C. Swainson, *Provincial Names and Folklore of British
Birds*, London, 1885, 75-81, recounts the sources in folklore
which name the magpie as a bird of "evil omen," even identifying
it with the devil. Swainson also cites a verse which relates to
the appearance of the magpie: "One is for sorrow, two is mirth;
three is a wedding, four is a birth, five is heaven, six hell,
seven the devil's ain sell." The magpie, as most scavenging
birds in the game piece, usually appears singly, which according
to the verse cited above, relates to sorrow. See also, Apperson,
*Proverbs*, 390.

16. See also Melchior d'Hondecoeter's *Contemplative Magpie* (Fig. 27)
(Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) which features a magpie perched
on a tree stump above dead game birds piled on the ground. The
magpie's beak is open, as though the bird were speaking to the
viewer. Swainson, *Folklore*, 77, relates that the magpie was the
only bird not to enter the ark, preferring to perch outside chatter-
ting about the flood and drowning world, implying not only
that the bird was bad luck, but also that it possibly acted to
reflect on man's errors and consequent death, which might apply
to Hondecoeter's painting. Basically, however, the bird perched
above dead game functions to contrast life and death, just as in
Weenix's *Dead Hare and Dog*, see page 74.

17. The theme of a false paradise is the subject of a number of
epics by writers such as Petrarch, Ariosto and Spencer, where a
hero is deceived by an apparently beautiful woman who usually inhabits an enchanted isle or garden. Her true character, however, is eventually discovered by the male hero. The garden, moreover, frequently was associated particularly with love, as in The Romance of the Rose. Further study in this area may be fruitful. See A. Gianatti, The Earthly Paradise and the Renaissance Epic, Princeton, 1966.


22. Visscher, Sinnepoppen, 27.

23. See note 18 of this chapter.

24. Ill. Greindl, Peintres flamands, ill. 78.

25. For references to the Homo Bulla theme, see W. Stechow, "Homo


28. Holbein, *Dance of Death*, 131. The mortar and pestle also appears in Don's paintings, usually dealing with a physician incapable of curing his patient's disease, i.e., love sickness.

29. Van Beyeren's Vanitas imagery is easier to understand in works like *Still Life* and *Flower Piece* (both Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) than in his game pieces. Both contain precious still life or floral objects with a clock to specify the passage of time.

30. There is another painting by Schotanus which may be equally important to the understanding of his Vanitas intentions; *Vanitas Still Life* (Fig. 32), (Berlin, Lepke Sale, May 10, 1932, 391). This painting, similar in format to the one discussed in the text, also includes an inscription, which is impossible to decipher.

96
from photographic reproductions. This painting should be included in any further studies of the symbolism of dead game.

31. This point is illustrated in the proverb: "There is winter enough for the snipe and the woodcock too," See Apperson, *Proverbs*, 583.

32. Dead birds also appear in other traditional Vanitas contexts which more specifically draw the thrust of their symbolism from Christian content, either through religious or moralistic tradition.

For example, a painting by Anthonie Velde II, *Fruit and Game Birds*, (Fig. 39) depicts dead birds, with a bowl of fruit containing grapes, plus a solitary apple and gourd. Except for the coincidental appearance of three agricultural products, one might be tempted to view this work as a pure still life. However, the fruits may allude to meanings of a sacred nature: grapes traditionally refer to the Sacrifice of Christ; the apple to Original Sin; and the gourd to Resurrection or eternal life. The conjunction of these products would seem to allude to Christ's earthly mission: His sacrifice necessitated by Original Sin which resulted in Redemption. In this context, the dead birds, already noted as features of Vanitas still lifes, comment on the condition of temporality or earthly life in contrast to the eternal salvation promised by Christ. This interpretation bears similarities with 15th and 16th century panel paintings, see page 27 of Chapter I.

33. For symbolism of the fly see page 85 and note 35.

34. The *Rape of the Sabine Women* was used on other occasions by both
J. B. Yeendix and his son, Jan, to express transience. For additional examples, see, Gods and Heroes, Baroque Images of Antiquity, Oct. 30, 1968 - Jan. 4, 1969, (Loan Exhibition from North American Collections), The Wildenstein Gallery, New York, 1968, entry 57. See also, Le Siècle de Rembrandt, 239, #231, for a painting by Jan Yeendix which depicts the Rape of the Sabine Women on an urn in a game piece, The Products of the Hunt, Paris, The Louvre.


36. For example, van Aelst's Flowers (Rotterdam, Boymans Museum) which portrays a vase of flowers with a watch. Ill. Martin, Dutch Painting, Pl. 316.

37. Other examples of the fly as a symbol of decay appear in: Dirk Valkenburg's Dead Hare (Fig. 37), (Hanover, Landesmuseum), and Hendrick de Fromantiou's Still Life with Partridge, Pheasant and Hunting Gear (Fig. 38), in Maastricht, Limbœurs Provinciaal Museum.

38. See particularly the list of still life objects in Bergström, Dutch Still Life, 154.

39. See page 80 and note 24 of this chapter.

40. Cf. Bergström, Dutch Still Life, 156, for comments on the uselessness of hunting, but moreover, 307, note 15, for Death represented as a hunter.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, virtually no independent still lifes were created between the period of antiquity and the late Renaissance. Still life elements, rather, were employed in the interim only as subsidiary motifs of a larger composition to specify setting, or characterize, identify or augment the major theme, as in the exploitation of marginalia to clarify or expand the subject of the main illumination. Through their continued depiction as secondary details, still life elements came to be associated with the major themes themselves, which were frequently moralistic or Vanitas—memento-mori oriented. Among the latter, the theme of St. Jerome is noteworthy. Thus, when still life emerged in the 17th century, it drew upon a long tradition where animals, birds and everyday objects were invested with rather pointed moralistic allusions. More specific to the game piece, the tendency to use live animal representation to communicate abstract ideas was not only developed and exploited during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, but continued well into the 17th century, as illustrated by numerous renderings of animals in fables, proverbs, emblems and allegories. In the 17th century the animals and birds continued to project their traditional symbolic associations.

Thus, the game piece, as a unique category of still life, is actually a culmination of the trends manifest in marginalia, panel
painting and Vanitas-memento-mori themes which developed directly out of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The appearance of the game piece itself reflects the fact that animals were long considered appropriate vehicles for the instruction of man. The thrust of the game piece, of course, is to comment specifically on human mortality, leading the viewer to think of the dead animals as surrogates for man similar to the way live animals traditionally served as surrogates for man in fables, proverbs and emblems. Furthermore, by juxtaposing dead game to material possessions, the artists suggest an evaluation of the importance of material existence in contrast to the inevitability of death. In the instances in which live and dead animals appear together the artist sharpens his focus on death by accenting the contrast between life and death itself, i.e., live and dead animals. Consequently, we may be sure that dead game served to remind the viewer of death or temporality in general and functioned primarily as a Vanitas element within a larger still life painting or as a whole Vanitas composition. The viewer is reminded through the game piece that most of man's mundane activities and desires are vanities, and that like the pictured game, man "...is like the beasts that perish" (Psalms xlix:12).
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IGNARI ARTES ODERUNT. NOCTUA.

Ad Obertum Gifantum.

Me nihil ingerentem ut pebfumam
Odere stultae en alites.
Nocere quantum sit illicit,
Possit libenter et veliur:
Sed poena deinde congrua
Has punit, in laqueum et iacit.
Auceps enim per nos facit
Tot aduolare, rubibus
Quas implicat mensae paras,
Sic odius fructus nocent,
Fosor cadit tuncam in suam.

17. J. Sambucus, "Ignari artes oderunt,"
Emblemata, et aliquot nummi antiqui,
Antwerp, 1566, 223. (Emblemata, eds.
Henkel and Schöne, 394).
NEQVEO COMPESCERE MVLVTOS.

Perfuro, quid faciam: NEQVEO COMPESCERE MVLVTOS, 
Si vis cedendo vincere, Disc pati.

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