

— Art & Religion 8 —

UTOPIA'S DOOM

THE *GRAAL* AS PARADISE OF LUST, THE SECT OF THE FREE SPIRIT
AND JHERONIMUS BOSCH'S SO-CALLED *GARDEN OF DELIGHTS*

by

Paul VANDENBROECK

edited by

Barbara BAERT



PEETERS
Leuven – Paris – Bristol, CT
2017

CONTENTS

Preface	1
Barbara BAERT & Jan VAN DER STOCK	
Foreword	3
I DREAMS OF BOUNDLESS PLEASURE: THE MEDIEVAL FOLK MYTH OF THE PARADISE OF DELIGHTS OR 'GRAIL'	7
Dreams of pleasure between earth and heaven	7
From Arthurian Grail to love paradise	21
The 'mistress of the game' and the 'ladies of the night'	28
The 'wandering masters and mistresses' visualized	37
From ecstatic experience to social subversion	48
II THE AMORAL UTOPIA HERE AND NOW: THE 'SECT OF THE FREE SPIRIT' IN THE LATE MIDDLE AGES AND THE 'WORLDLY PARADISE'	49
Orthodox/heterodox utopian dreams	49
A utopia of the medieval fringe of society	54
The Free Spirit: the dream of lawless 'Nature' and the time of Adam	62
Utopia, eschatology, and the rejection of all institutions	72
<i>Quod felicitas habetur in ista vita et non in alia</i>	73
III UTOPIA DREAMED AND CASTIGATED: JHERONIMUS BOSCH'S TRIPTYCH OF THE GRAIL OR FALSE LOVE PARADISE, COMMONLY CALLED THE <i>GARDEN OF DELIGHTS</i> (C. 1480-5)	81
1. Primitivism, instinct and seduction	82
<i>a. Moors and wild folk, mermaids and sea-knights</i>	82
<i>b. Wildness and instinct: "The sight of women drives me wild"</i>	106

<i>c. The wild riding of animals</i>	110
<i>d. Women at the centre: yet still an androcentric vision</i>	116
2. Nature as alchemical artist.	123
<i>a. Natura: the world sexualized</i>	123
<i>b. Natura: sexuality and evil</i>	130
<i>c. Naturalars: the significance of the mirabilia of the ars naturae</i>	139
<i>d. Nature, love and woman</i>	144
<i>e. The architecture of paradise</i>	147
3. Primordial era and eschatological times (“as it was in the days of Noah?”)	157
<i>a. Did Bosch depict the Sicut in diebus Noe theme?</i>	157
<i>b. From primordial era to eschatological times</i>	161
<i>c. The medieval view of the world’s earliest history</i>	163
<i>d. The visualization of the primordial era in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries</i>	170
<i>e. The re-actualization of the Deluge and the end-of-the-world theme, c. 1484–1524</i>	176
4. Marriage and pleasure	182
<i>a. Link between central panel and left wing</i>	182
<i>b. Marriage and sexual pleasure</i>	185
5. Paradise and pseudo-paradise	188
<i>a. Paradise iconography in Bosch and related images</i>	188
<i>b. Parallellism and the fusion of paradise and locus amoenus</i>	201
<i>c. The pleasures of paradise, earthly and heavenly</i>	203
<i>d. Becoming one with nature</i>	216
<i>e. The centre point of courtly love allegories and of Bosch’s panel (the scene in the sphere of the fountain)</i>	223
<i>f. Sexual multiplicity</i>	229
<i>g. A hypothetical paradise?</i>	231
6. Primordial era, golden age, paradisaical time and eschatological time	237
<i>a. Primordial era, golden age and (false) paradise</i>	237
<i>b. Primordial era, marriage/sexuality and eschatology</i>	250
<i>c. Primordial era, golden age, paradise, eschatological time. Heterodox/orthodox millenarianism.</i>	251

7. The fundamental theme of Bosch's panel explained through its parallels with folk myths and learned poetry	257
<i>a. Bosch's Garden of Delights and the folk 'Grail' (c. 1350-1600)</i>	257
<i>b. Bosch's Grail and Bebel's Triumphus Veneris.</i>	260
8. The purpose and patron of Bosch's Grail triptych	267
<i>a. A cloud of associations</i>	267
<i>b. Engelbert II of Nassau...</i>	273
<i>c. or....</i>	278
<i>d. Cimburga, the Grail, love</i>	281
 IV THE REPRESSION OF THE PHYSICAL EXPERIENCE AND THE RISE OF NEW ARTISTIC GENRES. BEAUTY AND/FROM MADNESS. AN EXISTENTIAL AND AESTHETIC CONNECTION, FIFTEENTH-SIXTEENTH CENTURY	293
The <i>folia</i>	297
<i>Fatrasie, fatras, resverie and disparate</i>	301
The aesthetics of 'drolleries' and <i>grylli</i>	304
Nature and art, the art of nature.	309
A longing for incomprehensible and impenetrable beauty	313
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	315
 INDEX NOMINUM	337
 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	345