

PIETER BRUEGEL THE ELDER'S *THE MONTHS*: A PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

In the year 1565, Antwerp merchant Nicolaes Jongelinck commissioned Pieter Bruegel the Elder to paint a series of paintings, *The Months*, for his suburban villa. Unfortunately, Jongelinck lost possession of the series of paintings and the works were passed from collection to collection. In passing from owner to owner, the collection changed in size causing the original number of paintings in the series to be a debated topic.

There are those who believe that there were originally twelve paintings in the series while others argue that there were only six. In either case, today, there are only five from the original series that remain. In examining prototypical work depicting the labors of the months, contemporaries of Bruegel, and the works of his children and other artists who followed after Bruegel, certain themes can be found consistently in the representations of the labors of the months. These themes help reveal that there were likely twelve paintings in the original series. Further examination into these other works also provides possible ideas as to what the missing paintings would have looked like.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of The College of Arts and Sciences, have examined a thesis titled “Pieter Bruegel the Elder’s *The Months: A Perspective*,” presented by Nicholas R. Erker, candidate for the Master of Arts degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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DEDICATION

For my wife, J’Nan and my daughter, Maggie.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“...So that it was said of him that while he visited the Alps, he had swallowed all the mountains and cliffs, and, upon coming home, had spit them forth upon his canvas and panels; so remarkably well was he able to follow these and other works of nature.”¹

-Carel Van Mander, 1604

While Italian Renaissance artists like Raphael and Titian were painting classically themed, heroic paintings in Italy, another artist was forging his own style in Northern Europe. Pieter Bruegel the Elder's (c. 1525 – d. 1569) dramatic style of painting was filled with the ordinary and often, the macabre. Bruegel was endowed with an unflinching ability to depict scenes of everyday life in confrontational and complicated detail. His interest in the every-day was ambitious in and of itself. In his lifetime, Bruegel amassed a fascinating body of work ranging from landscape prints with biblical themes to entire series of popular subjects. While the diversity of his subjects was interesting so, too, were his patrons. Avid collectors of Bruegel's work were doctors, philosophers, people of good social standing, and members of the Spanish royal family. With such varying backgrounds, all of these collectors had their own specific tastes.

One of Bruegel's patrons was a wealthy merchant with ties to the Antwerp Mint, Nicolaes Jongelinck (b. 1517 – d. 1570). Jongelinck collected so feverishly that at the height of his collecting he owned sixteen works by Bruegel.² The crowning achievement of Jongelinck's

¹ This excerpt from Carel Van Mander's *Schilderboeck* is one of the few contemporary documents describing Bruegel that survive. Only a scarce number of documents survive that deal with the life of Pieter Bruegel the Elder. Van Mander's accounts of Bruegel's life combined with Bruegel's life work is all that remains. Carel van Mander and Hessel Miedema, trans., *Schilder-boeck* (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1994), 190-195.

² Jongelinck was able to afford such a collection of paintings because he was a royal banker and a businessman who received tolls on goods imported from Zeeland. Jongelinck also collected works by other artists such as Frans Floris. Claudia Goldstein, "Artifacts of Domestic Life: Bruegel's Paintings in the Flemish Home" *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch*

collection was a series which he commissioned Bruegel to paint depicting the labors of the months in a continuous pictorial calendar entitled *The Months*. This series of panels is the subject of a great debate that spans two continents, many years, and numerous owners. Specifically, how many paintings did Pieter Bruegel the Elder originally include in the series of which today only five remain? Were there twelve representations of the labors of the months or did Bruegel harken back to his roots as an engraver and revisit the idea of combining months into seasons to create six paintings instead? The answer to this question is likely found by examining similar series of labors of the months by Bruegel's predecessors, contemporaries, and his two sons. This paper will focus on these comparisons and pose a possible solution to the number of paintings missing from the series and what those missing panels might have looked like based on similar sources. The life of Pieter Bruegel the Elder is the most logical place to begin an examination as it provides the genesis to his artistic development.

Very little is known about the early life of Pieter Bruegel the Elder. The exact date and place of birth is uncertain. According to some sources, he was most likely born around 1525 near the town of Breda, close to the modern day border between Holland and Belgium.³ A contemporary author, Carel Van Mander (b. 1548 – d. 1606), wrote in his biographical account that Bruegel was born in a village which gave him his namesake. The problem with this is that there are several villages which carry Bruegel's name. Van Mander's description of the location of the village leaves something to be desired, but does give the impression that Bruegel's birthplace was in the vicinity of the town of Breda.⁴ Although Van Mander's accounts of

Jaarboek, (2000): 180, Iain Buchanan, "The Collection of Nicolaes Jongelinck: II The 'Months' by Pieter Bruegel the Elder" *The Burlington Magazine* (August 1990): 541-542.

³ Rodger Marijnissen and Max Seidel, *Bruegel* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1971), 13-17.

⁴ Carel Van Mander has been translated as saying "not far from" or "in the neighborhood of" when describing the location of the birthplace of Bruegel. The verbiage is doubly important when comparing the villages with the same name: one being closer than the other. Emile Michel and Charles 2012, *The Bruegel's* (New York: Parkstone Press, 2012), 79-81

Bruegel's early life are generally helpful, they must be accepted with a certain amount of skepticism. After all, Van Mander was writing about Bruegel almost 35 years after his death, in 1604. A great deal of additional research has been done to verify Van Mander's details in his *Schilderboeck* but due to the lack of documentation, there is still a great deal of skepticism surrounding Van Mander's interpretations.⁵

What scholars can extrapolate from Van Mander and other accounts is that Bruegel must have been born sometime around 1525 because he would have been a teenager when he traveled to the city of Antwerp to apprentice under the artist Peiter Coeck van Aelst before being accepted to the Guild of St Luke in Antwerp in 1551.⁶ Antwerp was the perfect location for a young artist like Bruegel to get his footing, with its burgeoning art market and flourishing economy. The population of Antwerp in the early sixteenth century was well over 100,000 – larger than the population of Paris or London. Its position as a deep water port made it a pluralistic and cosmopolitan city. There was a great deal of trade entering into the city that brought with it a vast amount of wealth: spices coming from the east, wool from Great Britain, sugar from the Americas, and timber from the Baltic Sea - all of which fueled a growing economy.⁷ This environment made for a diverse assortment of art being produced in one place. Scores of artists' workshops were located within the city walls of Antwerp, including that of Pieter Coeck van Aelst. According to Van Mander, Bruegel worked under the direction of Coeck until December

⁵ Only a few documents exist to support Van Mander's accounts of Bruegel's life. Scholars continue to be cautious about accepting his records at face value. F. Grossmann, *Bruegel: The Complete Paintings* (London: Phaidon, 1966), 10.

⁶ Michel and Charles 2012, *The Bruegel's*, 79-80.

⁷ The population in Antwerp at around 1500 was between 44,000 and 49,000. However, by 1557 the population nearly doubled due to the bankruptcy of the Spanish state and the massive influx of goods, services, and the development of Antwerp into an international banking center. Robert L Bonn, *Painting Life: The Art of Pieter Bruegel the Elder* (New York: Richard Altschuler and Associates Inc., 2006), 49, Rengenier C. Rittersma, *Luxury in the Low Contries: Miscellaneous Reflections on Netherlandish Material Culture, 1500 to the Present* (Brussels: Pharo Publishing, 2010), 11-133, Rose-Marie Hagen and Rainer Hagen, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 1525-1569: Peasants, Fools and Demons* (New York: Taschen, America, 2000), 15.

6, 1550, when Coeck died in Brussels. This record of apprenticeship has been challenged by historians who note that Bruegel's work differs too much stylistically from that of his master to be considered a close artistic relationship.⁸ However, Bruegel's professional association with Pieter Coeck van Aelst is a matter of record, as Bruegel married Coeck's daughter, Mayken, bolstering the two artists' relationship.

In 1550, Bruegel is documented as being at work with Pieter Baltens, an artist who was much older and someone who had already been admitted to the Antwerp guild.⁹ Through his association with Baltens and Coeck, Bruegel became familiar with artists who would shape his future as well as his future commissions. Through his familiarity with Coeck and his work with large scale decorative schemes, Bruegel came into contact with Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen whose birds-eye portrayal of the landscape heavily influenced much of Bruegel's work with landscapes¹⁰ and set Bruegel apart from many of his contemporaries.

Between 1552 and 1554, Bruegel traveled to Italy, where several events happened that would shape his future as an artist.¹¹ The first was his introduction to the topography of the Alps; the Alps were an exotic landscape to those from the Low Countries and made an excellent addition to Bruegel's developing sense for artistic composition. There are no records of when Bruegel went to Italy, but based on his earliest surviving drawings it is estimated to have been

⁸ There were artists whose artistic style differed from their masters. Many clung to their sincerity and left an irrefutable testimony of the popular customs of the period. Michel and Charles 2012, *The Bruegel's*, 79-81.

⁹ Larry Silver, *Pieter Bruegel* (New York: Abbeville Press, 2011), 38.

¹⁰ Grossmann, *Bruegel: The Complete Paintings*, 12.

¹¹ The trip to Italy was full of danger due to the length and to the lawlessness of the area. Robbery was commonplace and went unpunished. The lands between Germany and France were devastated by constant war and offered no security. Even soldiers were criminals and the simplest of religious differences would be grounds for heinous crimes. This environment was not for the weary and few people made the journey. The danger from such travel made Bruegel's prints very popular. People used them as a vicarious form of safe travel. While he was in Italy, he encountered the painter Martin de Vos, the sculptor Jacques Jongelinck, and the Croatian miniaturist Giulio Clovio, all of whom would have significant influences on his later commissions. Michel and Charles 2012, *The Bruegel's*, 95, Silver, *Pieter Bruegel*, 38.

around 1552.¹² His route, though somewhat circuitous,¹³ would have taken him through Lyons and into Rome where he would have passed through the Italian Alps and seen the foreign, mountainous landscape.¹⁴

While in Italy, Bruegel seems to have spent the majority of his time in Rome, though he opted not to pursue what many artists of his time chose as their focus: classical themes such as monumental forms and sculpture as well as architecture.¹⁵ Instead, Bruegel chose to focus on nature. In addition, Bruegel became interested in the way miniature artists were modernizing the illustrated text of illuminated manuscripts. Bruegel's friend and miniature artist Giulio Clovio introduced Bruegel to the world of illustrated biblical texts.

Back in Antwerp in 1554, Bruegel produced drawings to be engraved in the workshop of Hieronymus Cock, a master printmaker who operated the *Aux Quatre Vents*, or "At the Sign of The Four Winds" print house in Antwerp. This print house was the first major publisher in Northern Europe.¹⁶ In these prints for Cock, Bruegel adapted the mountainous landscape of the Italian Alps to his native Netherlands by incorporating small Flemish villages (Fig 1). Bruegel's

¹² There are no fewer than five drawings that exist from Bruegel's trip to Italy. Bruegel signed and dated them 1552 with self confidence in their status as finished works of art. Silver, *Pieter Bruegel*, 38.

¹³ Extant drawings of Bruegel show that he visited various places in order to make preparatory drawings. *Ticino Valley South of the St. Gotthard* is one such preparatory drawing for a painting that no longer exists. Bruegel's choice of this location shows that he visited the region near Lago Maggiore which would have taken him off of the regularly traveled path which followed the Rhine to Lake Constance and from there, west. According to his drawings, Bruegel turned east from Lake Constance into the Tyrol and went as far as Innsbruck. Grossmann, *Bruegel: The Complete Paintings*, 17.

¹⁴ This route is purely speculative as no records exist stating when or how Bruegel made his trip south into Italy. Marijnissen and Seidel 1971, *Bruegel*, 16-17

¹⁵ In 1553, Bruegel created two drawing that were used by Joris Hoefnagel to produce etchings. These etchings, inscribed "*Petrus Bruegel fec: Romae A° 1553*" testify to Bruegel's visits to the neighborhoods of Rome. Additionally, among the items from the inventory of miniature artist, Giulio Clovio, was a painting done in collaboration with Bruegel titled, "*Un quadretto di miniature la metà a fato per mano sua et altra da M° Pietro Brugole.*" This painting, among others done in collaboration with Bruegel, has been lost. Grossmann, *Bruegel: The Complete Paintings*, 16.

¹⁶ At the beginning of his publishing career, Hieronymus Cock became familiar with Antoine Perrenot, Cardinal de Granvelle who was, at the time, a minister to Emperor Charles V. He would later become a major political advisor to Margaret of Parma, the regent in the Netherlands. Granvelle would become one of Bruegel's most active collectors until his exile. Cock dedicated several early prints to Granvelle in order to secure a "privilege" or protection against copying within a given region by the local ruler. Silver, *Pieter Bruegel*, 70 . Walter S. Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel and the Art of Laughter* (Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2006), 76.

earliest work known to exist at Cock's studio is a landscape devoid of human figures, generally referred to as *Landscape with Bears* (Fig 2). This well-worn drawing is a study, dated 1554, that exhibits a considerable influence by the works of Matthijs Cock, the brother of Hieronymus Cock.

Important for our topic is a series of twelve engravings known as the *Large Landscapes* (Fig 49). These engravings were designed by Bruegel based on drawings made while he was in Italy that were then engraved by the brothers Jan and Lucas van Doetecum.¹⁷ Bruegel's depictions of the mountainous landscape would have appealed to a wide audience and served as a vicarious form of travel for those who were unable to make the journey.

In the following year, Bruegel's work for Cock shifted dramatically from engravings of grand landscapes to didactic and satirical subject matter, many of them after Hieronymus Bosch.¹⁸ Bruegel's moralistic print series would include *The Big Fish Eat Little Fish* and an entire series of the *Seven Deadly Sins*. It is around this time that his work with painting first begins. *The Parable of the Sower* and *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* were the beginning of Bruegel's painting career.¹⁹ From this period until his death, Bruegel held a career as both an engraver and a painter. However, it is his paintings that have garnished the most attention, due to their popularity with the aristocracy and the upper echelon of society, both in the Netherlands and in Spain.

¹⁷ The prints combine diverse landscapes and subject matter. However, their uniform size and format suggest that they were meant to be one, single, continuous series. The compositions vary from print to print but Bruegel was able to unify them with the use of an anchor. A small piece of land in the foreground anchors each composition and serves as a foreground element that the viewer is able to look over into an expansive world. Maryan W. Ainsworth and Keith Christiansen, *From Van Eyck to Bruegel: Early Netherlandish Painting in The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999), 379-385

¹⁸ Grossmann, *Bruegel: The Complete Paintings*, 18.

¹⁹ This, of course, is not to say that Bruegel did not paint works prior to *Parable of the Sower* and *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*. It is possible that there are other works Bruegel painted that have either been lost or are not yet attributed to his hand. Grossmann, *Bruegel: The Complete Paintings*, 18.

From 1557 until 1563, Bruegel created thirteen extant paintings for various patrons in Antwerp gaining him even more celebrity in the art market. Despite this growing fame, sometime during 1563, Bruegel made the decision to move from Antwerp to Brussels. Prior to leaving, Bruegel married Mayken, the daughter of his longtime employer Pieter Coeck van Aelst, in the church of Notre Dame de la Chapelle. There is some speculation that the move from Antwerp to Brussels may have been influenced by Bruegel's new mother-in-law, Mayken Bessemers. Sources suggest that Bruegel had been having amorous relations with a servant within the household and Bessemers suggested that a move to Brussels would be advantageous to Bruegel.²⁰ This marriage further solidified his connection with van Aelst and also produced several children who would later follow in their father's footsteps as highly sought-after artists in their own right. Once in Brussels, Bruegel was able to continue his work and acquire new patrons. Brussels was the seat of the Spanish Court which employed patrons who desired artists of Bruegel's caliber. Patrons such as Cardinal Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle were quite fond of Bruegel's work: The Cardinal purchased *The Flight into Egypt* before he was forced to leave the Netherlands in 1564.²¹ Another patron, Nicolaes Jongelinck, was much more involved with Bruegel's work while he was active in Brussels. While he did not live in Brussels, Jongelinck was the most avid contemporary collector of Bruegel's work, owning approximately sixteen paintings at his collecting peak.²² Jongelinck's wealth and connections afforded him the ability to

²⁰ There was also a fear of persecution. Bruegel was a member of a heretical sect called the Family of Love and Brussels would have offered him some safety. The church of Notre Dame de la Chapelle is also the same church where Bruegel, a devout Catholic, would be buried after his death in 1569. Grossmann, *Bruegel: The Complete Paintings*, 19.

²¹ It is believed that Granvelle liked Bruegel and knew about his political views towards the Spanish Court. Granvelle may have used his position to protect Bruegel from persecution. It is very likely that Granvelle owned several more of Bruegel's works. Documents state that Spanish soldiers looted Granvelle's palace in Mechelen during the Spanish Fury at Mechelen in 1572. Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel and the Art of Laughter*, 74-75.

²² Jongelinck owned several of Bruegel's well-known works including *The Tower of Babel* and *The Way to Calvary*, among others. He owned more works by Bruegel than the most voracious collector in history, Rudolf II of Spain, who

make large purchases and commissions from Bruegel. His largest and most well-known commission is a pictorial calendar series of paintings depicting the labors of the months that has become the subject of debate among art historians.

spared no expense to acquire works by Bruegel. At his height, Jongelinck possessed no less than sixteen works by Bruegel as well as *The Seven Liberal Arts* by Frans Floris. Silver, *Pieter Bruegel*, 100.

CHAPTER 2

THE MONTHS

Nicolaes Jongelinck was a wealthy merchant with connections to the Antwerp Mint and the most avid contemporary collector of Bruegel's artwork during his lifetime.¹ Jongelinck had amassed a substantial fortune with his shipping and toll revenues coming in from the nearby province of Zeeland as well as his position as a tax collector for Phillip II and was interested in elevating himself into the status of a fine art connoisseur. Sometime around 1550, Jongelinck purchased what would become his country villa, *Ter Beke*, from the land developer, Gilbert van Schoonbeke. *Ter Beke* was located in the highly sought after Marcgravelei area in Berchem just outside the city walls and beyond the St. Joris Gate (Fig 3).² In this collection of country estates, Jongelinck and other wealthy Antwerp patrons were nestled amidst fields where the working class would toil away while the upper class lived a life of comfort, looking down from their nearby villas.³

In 1565, Jongelinck commissioned Bruegel to paint a series of paintings presumably to adorn the wall of his dining room. It would act as a frieze, showing the labors of the months as well as acting as a pictorial calendar.⁴ Many scholars believe that Jongelinck would have displayed the paintings in the dining room. Each painting appears to deal with food or the

¹ Jongelinck lived next door to Robert van Eeckeren, the brother-in-law to the Mint Master of Antwerp Jan Noirot and another avid collector of Bruegel's artwork. Claudia Goldstein, "Pieter Bruegel and the Culture of the Early Modern Dinner Party," *Pieter Bruegel and the Culture of the Early Modern Dinner Party* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), 50

² The estate of *Ter Beke* or sometimes referred to as *t' goed ter Beke* was purchased by Gilbert van Schoonbeke from Willem van de Werve, Margrave of Ryen in 1547 and was under renovation between 1542-1556. It would have been freshly completed when Jongelinck commissioned Bruegel to complete the series of paintings. Buchanan, "The Collection of Nicolaes Jongelinck: II The 'Months' by Pieter Bruegel the Elder." 547

³ Goldstein, "Pieter Bruegel and the Culture of the Early Modern Dinner Party," 136-138

⁴ Bruegel's paintings were also displayed in the dining rooms of other contemporaries who were familiar with Jongelinck such as Jan Noirot. Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel and the Art of Laughter*, 106-108, Buchanan, "The Collection of Nicolaes Jongelinck: II The 'Months' by Pieter Bruegel the Elder," 548.

consumption of food. This imagery, coupled with other pictorial elements and the function of the dining room as a gathering place in the Flemish home, leads scholars to this conclusion.⁵

Harkening back to artists who had already produced pictorial calendars representing seasonal labors, Bruegel may have taken the idea of the labors of the months from miniature artists such as Simon Benning and the Limbourg Brothers, who adopted the theme from a very long tradition of representing the calendar visually by means of the labors associated with them.⁶ Bruegel also adapted the idea of making the paintings a continuous work by connecting them end to end much like the fresco *Cycle of the Months* in Castello del Buonconsiglio (Fig 4). Bruegel completed the works for Jongelinck's villa in 1565 which Jongelinck paid the sum of 410 guilders for each painting, a considerable amount for the time.⁷ The paintings, which today are collectively referred to as *The Months*, showcased the traditional method of depicting the labors of the months on a much larger and grander scale. Each painting portrayed the medieval understanding of the labors of the months intermixed with Bruegel's predilection for nature's changing moods.⁸ Unfortunately, Jongelinck only possessed the paintings for approximately one year before he used them as a surety to procure a loan for his friend, Antwerp merchant, Daniel de Bruyne. The paintings, along with several others, were pledged to the City of Antwerp for the sum of 16,000 guilders, which de Bruyne owed on wine excise taxes. In 1565, de Bruyne defaulted on the loan and the City of Antwerp assumed ownership of the sixteen paintings by

⁵ Goldstein, "Artifacts of Domestic Life: Bruegel's Paintings in the Flemish Home." 180-185.

⁶ Buchanan, "The Collection of Nicolaes Jongelinck: II The 'Months' by Pieter Bruegel the Elder," 533-544.

⁷ Bruegel's prices may have been fairly high due to the fact that he did not churn out paintings with factory-like speed like his contemporary, Herri met de Bles, who operated a workshop Buchanan, "The Collection of Nicolaes Jongelinck: II The 'Months' by Pieter Bruegel the Elder," 541-542, Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel and the Art of Laughter*, 74-75.

⁸ Burton Dunbar, *German and Netherlandish Paintings* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 310.

Pieter Bruegel the Elder, which were described in an inventory as “*Sesthien stucken van Bruegal sulx de welke is den Thoren van Babilonyen, Eenen Cruysdrager, De Twelff maenden...*”⁹

This contemporary document is the only surviving reference to the series by any name or description during Jongelinck’s lifetime. We would want the inventory to be more specific; the entry only reads “twelve months” along with several unnamed works by Bruegel. From this description, it can be deduced that there were twelve separate panels of the months, but herein lies the dilemma of Bruegel’s ultimate design. The next document (1595) clearly lists “six paintings of the 12 months of the Year by Bruegel.” However, could the subject of the panels be correct, yet refer to only six surviving artworks in the series? In the next and last inventory to itemize the works (1659), in the inventory of Leopold Wilhelm, we find another panel has been lost with only “five large panels portraying the times of the year painted in oil as a work by Bruegel the Elder.”¹⁰

In other words, the number of panels cannot necessarily be proven by any of these inventory accounts. The first (1565) mentions only the “Twelve months” without indicating the actual number of panels. The second (1595) clearly mentions six paintings and the subject of the months of the year, but leaves open the question as to whether or not all of the paintings survived after three decades. Equally ambiguous is the last account (1659) that talks of the “times of the year” as depicted in only five panels.

There is clearly a lack of certainty among the three documents. This uncertainty has led to a great deal of speculation as to the actual number of paintings Bruegel produced for

⁹ “Sixteen pieces of Bruegel of which is The Tower of Babylon, a Crucifixion, and The Twelve months..” Jean Denuce, *The Antwerp Art Galleries: Inventories of the Art Collections in Antwerp in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Antwerp: De Sikkel, 1932), 5.

¹⁰ Hans J. van Miegroet, “The Twelve Months” Reconsidered: How a Drawing by Pieter Stevens Clarifies a Bruegel Enigma,” *Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, (1986): 29.

Jongelingck: Is it six paintings that depicted the seasons or twelve paintings depicting the labors of the months? Much can be learned from the paintings themselves which would help to understand the series as a whole and perhaps unravel the mystery surrounding it. In order to do this, it is important to start at what has universally been held among scholars as the beginning of the series: *Hunters in the Snow*.

What may be first painting in the series, *Hunters in the Snow* (Fig 5), displays a snow-covered landscape.¹¹ Bruegel used several elements from his earlier years as a printmaker and from his trip to Italy to create his landscapes. Bruegel incorporated the mountainous landscapes from his journey through the Alps and into Italy which he used in earlier prints. The influences of Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen and Joachim Patinir with their high, bird's eye view perspective is also present in Bruegel's painting and give the viewer a commanding view down the hill and into the village below. His inclusion of the Flemish village in an alpine setting gives the scene an exotic sensibility. Bruegel uses two colors to unify the scene: white and a blue-green. These two colors give the composition a feeling of icy cold winter and also serve to draw the eye across the panel. Bruegel utilized this method of unifying his compositions with similar, almost primary colors in several of his paintings including *Netherlandish Proverbs*, *Children's Games*, and *The Triumph of Death*. The main focus of the panel is a small group of men who return from their hunt, accompanied by their slightly malnourished hunting dogs, at the bottom left portion of the composition. It is quite clear that their hunt was less than successful as they return with what has been identified as either a single emaciated fox or a hare. The men descend down the hillside

¹¹ The determination as to whether or not *Hunters in the Snow* is the first painting in the series is a contested idea in its own right. Traditionally, January is the beginning of the calendar year. However, The Netherlands had not yet adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1565 when Bruegel painted the series. Pope Gregory XIII would not adopt the Gregorian calendar until 1582. Prior to that, the year began on March 1st. Buchanan, "The Collection of Nicolaes Jongelinc: II The 'Months' by Pieter Bruegel the Elder," 543.

towards the village below where much of the action seems to take place. In this panel, and each of the subsequent surviving panels, Bruegel utilizes a diagonal course of recession that moves from one portion to another, drawing the viewer into the world that Bruegel has created. In *Hunters in the Snow*, the hunting party travels diagonally from left to right down a steep hill into an expansive, fictional realm where people are both at work and at play.¹² As they travel down the hill, the hunters pass by a family busily working at singeing a pig to prepare it for slaughter, a common theme in representations of labors of the months.¹³ A man carries a table near the fire nearly stumbling over the cauldron which has been used to collect the blood of the pig.¹⁴ A woman emerges from the doorway with additional straw to add to the pile that the group is using to stoke the already blazing fire. Hanging precariously above the flame is the sign of the inn which depicts St. Eustace before the stag. This may be an iconographical reference not only to the returning hunters but to several other scenes within the painting (Fig 7), as St. Eustace was the patron saint of hunters, fireman, and those facing adversity.¹⁵ The sign may be representative of the adversity faced by the hunters who have gone hunting during the harshest of seasons only to return with a single, meager reward for their efforts. The sign hangs by a single chain as the hunters pass beneath it and down the hill to the busy scene below.

As the viewer follows the hunters down the hill into the sprawling landscape, a very active village unfolds, showing a combination of work and play. A woman carries a bundle of

¹² Bruegel developed this diagonal course of recession while in Italy which can be seen in its earliest stages of development in his drawings from that trip. Silver, *Pieter Bruegel*, 88.

¹³ Extant prints, as well as *The Census at Bethlehem* (Fig 6), display the sixteenth century method of butchering pigs, an important source of food at the time. Pigs would be slaughtered and then burned to remove the coarse hair on their skin. Hagen and Hagen, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 1525-1569: Peasants, Fools and Demons*, 47.

¹⁴ This depends on whether the group have already butchered the pig or are preparing to do so. The absence of the pig to be slaughtered would make it seem as though they are preparing to butcher it. However, the pig could already be in the fire. Since it is not a key focal point of the painting, it does not appear to be important. Evidence of this is in the painterly way Bruegel rendered the fire and in the half-finished rendering of the woman carrying the straw from the doorway. This half-finished figure almost appears to be an afterthought.

¹⁵ Jacobus de Voragine and W.G Ryan, trans., *The Golden Legend* (Temple Classics, 1993), 555-561.

firewood across a bridge while underneath, a man picks the last remaining berries from a bush and a young girl pulls another across the frozen pond on a sled. Further down the river children play games and curdle while adults skate on the ice. Bruegel includes within the composition a certain amount of levity and humor in this otherwise bleak and cold setting. Children play games and fall on the ice while others seem to also have fun and enjoy playing on the ice which is, for the moment, a respite from the reality of their lives. This reality is embodied in the figure who begrudgingly leads a horse-drawn cart through the snow-covered streets. Bruegel also includes a small sense of peril in *Hunters in the Snow*, as a chimney catches fire just beyond the skating pond. A group of villagers rush to throw water on it while others race to help with a ladder. As the viewer looks farther back into the background of the painting, a castle can be seen nestled into the base of the snow covered mountains. These mountains harken back to those that Bruegel began incorporating in his prints after his trip through the Alps to Italy, as seen in one of Bruegel's earliest, fully worked mountain scenes *Landscape with Fortified City* (Fig 8). Signed "p.bruegel" and dated 1553, the print demonstrates Bruegel's mastery of nature with the mountains silhouetted against the clouds.¹⁶ It is these mountains which visually connect this painting to its adjoining painting, *The Gloomy Day*, and create a continual visual calendar.

I believe the next painting in the series, *The Gloomy Day* (Fig 9), appears to have a direct visual connection to *Hunters in the Snow* with the snowcapped mountains which dominate the upper left portion of the composition. Similarly, a castle is nestled into the mountainous landscape Bruegel is again tying the familiarity of the Flemish countryside to the exotic Alpine horizon much like he did in *Hunters in the Snow*. The silhouetted mountains from *Landscape with Fortified City* are again echoed in this painting. A storm has beset the waters causing

¹⁶ Silver, *Pieter Bruegel*, 88.

several of the ships to crash and break apart. It appears that in one of the shipwrecks a lifeboat is moving safely away from the wreckage, giving the viewer some comfort in knowing that through the perilous waters and wrecked ships, there is survival. The power of the sea would be a familiar scenario for the sea-faring people of the Netherlands. Winter at sea was a fairly treacherous time and dangerous weather was common. The darkened sky overhead evokes a certain amount of drama and sets the stage for this dark and gloomy day.¹⁷ A small village occupies the lower left corner of the composition. People go about their routines in this village, feeding the livestock in their pens and climbing ladders to patch holes in their thatched roofs. They all appear to be hard at work, while at the same time maintaining a certain sense of levity and humor. At the bottom left corner of the village scene, a man stumbles out of the inn and urinates on a wall, while another man plays a violin. Bruegel appears to be approaching a “simple way of life” portrayal to peasantry while still giving them a certain amount of dignity. Bruegel chose to depart from the satire and depict a balance between the reality of peasant life and leisure activities .¹⁸ This is a theme that will follow through the extant panels and through many of Bruegel’s paintings.

The main focus of *The Gloomy Day* is the bottom right of the composition where Bruegel has placed a group of peasants. Pushed all the way forward, close to the picture plane is a group of individuals at work doing various tasks that represent the labors of February. Two men cut pollard willows in preparation for building and mending fences, a common practice this time of

¹⁷ Critic Aldous Huxley in a 1938 essay described *The Gloomy Day* as ...”one of those natural dramas of the sky and earth – a conflict between light and darkness.” He later went on to say “...intensely poetical, yet somber and not excessively picturesque or romantic.” Bonn, *Painting Life: The Art of Pieter Bruegel the Elder*, 24-26

¹⁸ Dr. Margaret Sullivan refers to these peasants as “good” working peasants. Bruegel rarely shows them in his work and most of them can be found in his seasonal series. Sullivan, *Bruegel's Peasants: Art and Audience in Northern Renaissance*, 43.

year (Fig 10).¹⁹ To their right, a family consisting of a man, woman, and a small child revel in the approach of Lent by eating waffles (Fig 11). This identifies the particular time of season as Shrove Tuesday, or the Tuesday prior to Ash Wednesday.²⁰ The small child wearing the paper crown, wrapped in pillows and a leather belt with a cow bell, and carrying a lantern has been identified as the Little King of Carnival. A similar figure can be seen following the revelers behind Carnival in Bruegel's *Battle Between Carnival and Lent*. (Fig 12).²¹ Just behind this grouping is a man wearing a cauldron on his head, while carrying a staff in one hand and a lit candle in the other. This figure appears to represent the feast day of St. Blaise which occurs on February 3rd.

As stated previously, the preservation of Bruegel's series as comprehensive was jeopardized in 1565 when Daniel de Bruyne defaulted on the loan owed to the City of Antwerp. Per the agreement with the city magistrates,²² Jongelinck's art collection was seized and became the possession of the City of Antwerp until July 5, 1594 when the city magistrates gave it to Archduke Ernst of Austria, Governor of the Netherlands as a gift.²³ However, when the paintings

¹⁹ Margaret Sullivan, *Bruegel's Peasants: Art and Audience in Northern Renaissance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 43.

²⁰ It is difficult to determine which calendar year Bruegel was referencing when he produced the series. In 1564, Shrove Tuesday fell on the 15th of February but in 1565 it fell on the 7th of March. This detail is a major factor in determining if the painting represents February or March, as well as if it represents one month or two. Buchanan, "The Collection of Nicolaes Jongelinck: II The 'Months' by Pieter Bruegel the Elder," 545.

²¹ Buchanan, "The Collection of Nicolaes Jongelinck: II The 'Months' by Pieter Bruegel the Elder," 545.

²² Denuce, *The Antwerp Art Galleries: Inventories of the Art Collections in Antwerp in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, 5.

²³ There is a certain amount of speculation as to whether or not the City of Antwerp retained ownership of Jongelinck's collection from 1565 until 1594. The nearly 30 year timespan is a great deal of time with no documentation and no resale. However, the fact that Jongelinck's inventory, at the time of his death, includes a Frans Floris painting which was included in the surety strongly suggests that de Bruyne paid the debt and the collection was returned. An unpublished document states that Jongelinck's paintings returned to the City of Antwerp through the art dealer Hane van Wijk. Van Wijk is documented in the Archduke's book of expenses written by his secretary, Blaise Hutter as supplying the Archduke with Bruegel's *Children's Games* on July 16th, 1594. Buchanan, "The Collection of Nicolaes Jongelinck: II The 'Months' by Pieter Bruegel the Elder," 541-542, Blaise Hutter, *L'Archduc Ernest, Sa Cour, Ses Depenses: Details, Sur Son Voyage De Prague A Bruxelles* (Brussels: Imprimeur de l'Academie Royale de Belgique, (1593-1595) 1847), 20.

became property of the Archduke, only six were given.²⁴ The paintings remained with the Archduke until his death on July 17, 1595 when the painting were listed in his inventory as “Six panels, representing the twelve months of the year by Bruegel.”²⁵ Following the death of Archduke Ernst and into the early years of the seventeenth century, documentation becomes scarce until the Archduke’s collection is transported to the imperial court of his brother, the Holy Roman Emperor, Rudolph II. The Bruegel paintings remained at the Royal Court in Prague until 1621.²⁶ The next time they are mentioned again wasn’t until 1659, in the inventory of Leopold Wilhelm, the brother of both Rudolph II and Archduke Ernst. It is in this inventory that the series was recorded as missing a panel: “Five large pieces, representing the seasons of the year in oil on panel... height 6 span 4 fingers, width 8 ½ span ... Original by the elder Bruegel.”²⁷ Through Wilhelm’s inventory it is obvious that an unidentified panel went missing while in the possession of Rudolph II and Leopold Wilhelm between 1595 and 1659. Very little is known about this missing painting. Based on other printed works by Bruegel, as well as works by his contemporaries and other sources, hypotheses can be made as to what themes Bruegel may have included in this missing painting. Those themes will be discussed later, and revolve around the theme of Spring, which would lead into the next painting representing early Summer.

Haymaking represents the labors inherent to Spring and perhaps even early Summer (Fig 13). As viewers look at the scene before them, they notice a man sitting at the bottom left corner

²⁴ On July 5th, 1594, Blaise Hutter records in his ledger: “The five gentlemen from Antwerp have presented His Highness with six panels representing the twelve months and eight pieces of tapestry.” Hutter, *L'Archduc Ernest, Sa Cour, Ses Depenses: Details, Sur Son Voyage De Prague A Bruxelles*, 19.

²⁵ In Hutter’s 1594 inventory, he fails to mention Bruegel by name. It is only in the inventory in 1595 after the Archduke’s death that Bruegel’s name is mentioned. Miegroet, ““The Twelve Months” Reconsidered: How a Drawing by Pieter Stevens Clarifies a Bruegel Enigma,” 29.

²⁶ Miegroet, ““The Twelve Months” Reconsidered: How a Drawing by Pieter Stevens Clarifies a Bruegel Enigma,” 29.

²⁷ Miegroet, ““The Twelve Months” Reconsidered: How a Drawing by Pieter Stevens Clarifies a Bruegel Enigma,” 29-30.

of the composition. This peasant sits upon the ground in summer clothes and a large hat; he is focused on repairing the scythe in his hands. His summer clothes differ greatly from Bruegel's prior two paintings due to the change in season and temperature. Bruegel depicts workers in this painting in shorter pants, lighter shirt tops and wider brimmed hats to shade them from the sun. To the right of the man repairing the scythe are three women, presumably on their way to work in the fields, walking almost in perfect cadence with each other; however, the similarities amongst the three end here. Two of the women wear hats, while the third carries hers with a jug of water. Two of the women are old while the third is young. In addition, two of the women carry their rakes over their shoulders while the other carries hers at her side. Bruegel appears to have made careful choices when rendering this small grouping of women, making them appear true to life and as diverse as possible.

Further to the right is the final grouping that completes the foreground elements. Six peasants begin their journey down the steep incline into the vast expanse. Five of these figures carry baskets on their heads loaded with produce, while one figure riding a horse wears a hat. All of them face away from the viewer with their heads obscured to the point that the objects on their heads become their heads an almost abstract figures.²⁸ Adding to the abstraction is the manner in which the figures walk in cadence down the hill in semblance of a ballet of peasant harvest. Pushed all the way up near the picture plane are several baskets containing the items of harvest at this time, such as cherries and peas.²⁹

²⁸ This is not the first time Bruegel has employed this method of abstracting the human figure. In his drawing and subsequent prints representing Summer, a figure can be seen carrying a basket on his/her head filled with fruits and vegetables. The basket hangs low over the head and face obscuring any identifying features, thus giving the impression the figure has a head made entirely of fruits and vegetables. Ainsworth, Maryan W., and Keith Christiansen, *From Van Eyck to Bruegel: Early Netherlandish Painting in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 386.

²⁹ Buchanan, "The Collection of Nicolaes Jongelincq: II The 'Months' by Pieter Bruegel the Elder," 545-546.

As the viewer follows the workers down the hill and into the lower lying area, many more peasants can be seen hard at work raking and gathering hay. These peasants in the middle ground demonstrate what Dr. Margaret Sullivan in her book, *Bruegel's Peasants*, refers to as their "industrious" side.³⁰ From the men piling hay on a horse-drawn carriage to the above-mentioned women on their way to work, the viewer's eye is drawn into the vast expanse. Further beyond the pasture are several buildings and small villages that recess even further into the background. The whole scene is balanced by two compositional elements: One is a large, rocky outcropping on the left side of the composition which sits just beyond the villages and separates the foreground from the background. The other is a large tree that is pushed all the way forward close to the picture plane on the right side of the composition. Bruegel uses these balancing elements and scatters the color red throughout the image to unify the composition. Additionally, there is a unique use of the color yellow in the hay and the buildings that dominates the foreground and contrasts with the blue of the atmospheric perspective of the background and the sky.³¹ This panel, much like the others, is about balance and the portrayal of the day-to-day idea of pastoral life. The next scene in the series shares a similar idea of balance and hard work.

What I believe to be Bruegel's next painting in the series has been described as one of the most satisfying images of a wheat field, harvest or any depiction of late summer ever created.³² Bruegel has managed to transcend beyond the panoramic scenes created by Patinir. Instead, he has managed to create an entirely secular world that integrates the peasant life harmoniously

³⁰ Sullivan discusses the two sides of peasant life that Bruegel has chosen to portray in this series: laziness and industry. Sullivan, *Bruegel's Peasants: Art and Audience in Northern Renaissance*, 43.

³¹ Bonn, *Painting Life: The Art of Pieter Bruegel the Elder*, 23.

³² Mary Sprinson de Jesús describes *The Harvesters* in great detail in her contribution to The Metropolitan Museum of Art's catalogue on *From Van Eyck to Bruegel: Early Netherlandish Painting in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*. "It is fair to say that no more satisfying image of a wheat field, the labor of harvesting, or the atmosphere of late summer has ever been painted." Ainsworth, Maryan W., and Keith Christiansen, *From Van Eyck to Bruegel: Early Netherlandish Painting in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 386.

within his landscape (Fig 14). Bruegel's use of a diagonal recession across the composition yet again draws the viewer's eye down from the hilltop into the neat rows of wheat, and, ultimately down into the green valley below. A field of wheat has been partially cut and laid neatly upon the ground in the foreground in a brilliant golden yellow. Growing out of this field is a large pear tree, with a group of peasants who take refuge underneath its branches to shade themselves from the hot summer sun. This grouping is no doubt the focal point of the painting and depicts the joy behind a meal shared during a short lull in the harvest. The peasants use one of the bundles of wheat which they have been tirelessly working to gather as their seating, while they dine on various, simple food items. Loaves of bread can be seen being cut with cheese by one of the peasant women for consumption. Three figures place small chunks of the bread in the bowls of milk kept cool inside large earthenware jugs, one of which can be seen just emerging from the edge of the wheat field. Another jug is in the hands of a peasant who drinks rather feverishly from it at the rear of the grouping. Two more jugs are carried up by a worker who walks up a path in the wheat field preparing to join the group for a quick respite. In addition to the bread and cheese, the group also eats pears and apples which were most likely found in both the tree above and those nearby.

Each of the small figures in the gathering has qualities typical of Bruegel's peasants. They are distinctly unique with his or her features and characteristics. Bruegel took great care in portraying these figures and drawing the viewer into the painting. For example, the nature in which Bruegel painted the figure with her back turned is very interesting. She sits upon the bale of grain with her back arched, poised and eating her bread with such care. The man to her side turns and looks down at the cheese that he is cutting from the large wheel while the man behind him looks out at the viewer. This figure, who appears startled mid-bite, seems to look outwards

into the viewer's space along with another figure who stops eating with his spoon almost to his mouth. Their details give viewers the impression that they have just stumbled upon this simple dining scene and surprised the peasants as they eat in the shade. Another of the more intriguing figures in the composition is the peasant who lies on the ground asleep under the tree. He rests his pitchfork against the tree, using his hat and several other garments to make a pillow. His position suggests complete abandon in that he has sprawled out with little to no regard to those around him. His body position is reminiscent of the figure in *The Land of Cockaigne* (Fig 15) in which a similar figure lies sprawled upon the ground under a tree with one arm placed behind his head. Both are sprawled out on the ground with legs splayed wide open. Dr. Sullivan states that the accusation of laziness was often applied to peasants. This figure may represent Proverbs 10:5: He that gathereth in summer is a wise son; he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame.”³³ The face of the man in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's panel closely resembles that of the *Head of a Yawning Peasant* from the Musée Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (Fig 16).

Just beyond these figures, still hard at work are more peasants bent over picking up the bundles of wheat and stacking them neatly. Nearby, two figures gather apples which have been shaken from the branches by another figure who has climbed far up the tree. The woman who picks up the wheat to bundle it removes her large hat and bends at the waist. Her face and any identifying features are completely obscured. She almost takes the shape of the bundles of wheat she is creating. This figure is again an abstraction of the human form with which Bruegel experiments. It would appear that he is making some sort of connection with the peasants and the

³³ Instead of being asleep, Dr. Margaret Sullivan suggests that the jug hidden in the wheat contains something other than the milk the other peasants are drinking. She interprets his pose as relating to that of the man in Bruegel's *Land of Cockaigne* which would be finished two years later. Sullivan, *Bruegel's Peasants: Art and Audience in Northern Renaissance*, 43-44.

chores they complete. Just behind these figures, a row of trees and brush slightly conceal a small church and several other buildings.

On the opposite side of the composition, two figures work to cut the wheat with their scythes near a path where a third peasant carries jugs up toward the group eating under the pear tree. As the viewer follows Bruegel's diagonal convention down the hill, three women can be seen. Two carry bushels of wheat on their backs while the third does not. A similar metamorphosis takes place with these two figures as with the woman gathering wheat: the figures almost take on the shapes of the items they are carrying. During their journey down the hill to deposit their wheat into the wagon waiting on the main road, the three women startle two quails who take flight. In addition, near the main road is a pond where several monks have taken refuge, and are swimming in the cool waters in order to escape the summer heat, similar to the figures swimming in the *August* scene from the *Très Riches Heures* (Fig 38). Just beyond the pond is a small village where the villagers play a game of cock throwing in the field. And, beyond the valley is yet another wheat covered hillside and what appears to be a harbor shrouded in the haze of summer. The viewer can just make out the traffic of ships coming and going.

The final painting in Bruegel's series is the *Return of the Herd* and the subject matter is fairly straightforward: workers bringing back the cattle from the pasture at the end of the year (Fig 17). In the immediate foreground is a group of men, one on horseback and several on foot, guiding a herd of cattle down a path. The short pants and shaded hats that the peasants wore during the late parts of summer in *Harvesters* are gone. Now, the figures wear long pants and jackets to keep warm from the looming storm that threatens overhead. Each of the figures carries with him a long staff used to poke the cattle.³⁴ One of the cows being herded looks out at the

³⁴ Sullivan suggests that these staves are quarterstaves, weapons used at the time and associated with rebellious peasants. Additionally, she suggests that these staves, combined with the peasants' demeanor, would mean that their

viewer, a theme Bruegel has used in other scenes to confront and draw the viewer into the space. As the cattle move across the lower portion of the composition, they turn and move further down into the space where Bruegel has created a small village in the distance. As the viewer's gaze moves further down the hill into the valley, a small vineyard can be seen with workers picking grapes for harvest along a narrow river. On the opposite side of the river are more buildings, suggesting another small village. Just outside of this village is a man who appears to be knocking down acorns from a tree. The overall appearance of the painting incorporates fall colors of yellows, ochers, browns, and greens.

Pieter Bruegel the Elder's series of *The Months* is no doubt in a league of its own in terms of its quality and impressiveness. However, as previously stated, Bruegel did not create this idea of the cycle of the seasons and months. This theme was previously pursued in the works of several of Bruegel's predecessors. These earlier works help to identify similar characteristics in the genre of seasonal paintings and labors of the months. They also help to identify what could possibly have been in Bruegel's missing painting or paintings from *The Months*.

mission is not agricultural in nature. This could be an allusion to rebellion against the Spanish State. Sullivan, *Bruegel's Peasants: Art and Audience in Northern Renaissance*, 44.

CHAPTER 3

PROTOTYPICAL ARTWORK

Many artists came before Bruegel who worked in landscapes as well as representations of the labors of the months in series. Some of these artists' works have been obscured by time while others have been well-documented. Bruegel may not have known about many of these prototypical works specifically but the influence these works would have had on successive artists may have also been an influence on Bruegel himself. Understanding the origins and evolution of depictions of the *Labors of the Months* is an essential part of understanding Bruegel's series.

We can trace representations of the *Labors of the Months* quite far back into history. The earliest extant examples are from the Hellenistic period in a frieze now embedded in the façade of the church of Hagios Eleutherios in Athens (Fig 18). These images are not identifiable as "labors." However, upon examination of the figural work and the grouping of these figures, it may be deduced that they are arranged in a continuous narrative of the year according to personifications of the months accompanied by zodiac symbols.¹ Many of the examples that are extant from late antiquity no longer exist and are known only through copies in archives.²

Roman examples begin to show up as mosaics in Carthage. These examples of the labors of the months are depicted as figures circling around two central figures holding a horn of plenty. In the four corners of the mosaic are representations of the seasons. It is here that some of the

¹ James Carson Webster, *The Labors of the Months* (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1938), 5-7.

² The Chronograph of 354 was written for Valentinus by Furius Dionysius Filocalus. This scribe was also the designer for the inscriptions of Pope Damasus. The original Chronograph no longer exists and can only be understood through two copies. One of the copies is a late fifteenth century copy in Vienna and the other is a seventeenth century copy in Rome. Both of these were copied after a ninth century copy of the original and display personifications of the months and the various items associated with them. Webster, *The Labors of the Months*, 14.

similarities between representations of the labors of the months in Bruegel's time can be seen. For example, the figure representing December in the Roman mosaic depicts a hunting scene much like many of the contemporary examples during the Northern Renaissance.³ Another similarity from antiquity can be seen in Palestine, inside of what was formerly a Christian building. The narthex of the building contains stones in the floor with representations of the months. However, several have been destroyed leaving only July through December intact. The September figure in this representation depicts the grape harvest much like many of the works from Bruegel's era, including the *Return of the Herd*. These examples from antiquity help to show what the people from the Classical Roman and Hellenistic periods related to their concepts of the months: zodiac and mythological figures mixed in with elements from daily life.

By the early Middle Ages, more familiar imagery begins to show up in northern France. Two manuscripts, one in Munich, dated 818, and one in Vienna, dated no later than 830, depict the same illustrations.⁴ July is represented by a man with a scythe ready to cut hay in the hot summer months, while a man cutting a bundle of wheat with a sickle with two other bundles of wheat growing nearby depicts August. Both *November* and *December* show scenes of the killing and butchering of hogs. The source of these scenes was most likely a mosaic from St. Romain – en-Gal (Fig 19) or depictions from a triumphal arch in Reims. In either case, these scenes will continue and evolve as the mid-millennia grows near.⁵

Surprisingly, throughout the Middle Ages, very little in the way of depictions of the labors of the months can be found in illuminated manuscripts. It would seem that artists and patrons were more concerned with non-secular imagery and biblical references. It is not until a

³ Webster, *The Labors of the Months*, 17.

⁴ Webster, *The Labors of the Months*, 37.

⁵ Webster, *The Labors of the Months*, 37.

depiction in a sacramentary from Fulda, Germany, ca. 980 (Fig 20) that this subject is first seen. In the title page of the sacramentary, figures are arranged on either side of the page in small arched frames with the names of the months outside of the frame. Familiar representations of the labors of the months are seen with the pruning of vines in *February* and *March*, a man standing with a scythe over his shoulders in July ready for the harvest, and a man wrestling with a pig preparing for the butcher in *December*.

As the twelfth century dawns in Europe, the labors of the months appeared more frequently, particularly in France and Italy.⁶ Many of the depictions come in the form of westwork architecture and archivolt carving in Romanesque cathedrals. Churches such as Ste. Croix in Bordeaux (Fig 21) and St. Leger in Cognac (Fig 22) display carvings of the labors of the months accompanied by, in some cases, the zodiac symbol, representative of that time of the year. Even the archivolt above the left portal at Chartres Cathedral, ca. 1200 (Fig 23) depicts the labors of the months. The figure representing August sheaths wheat while just above him a figure representing September is in the process of picking grapes. At the bottom of the archivolt on the opposite side is a man standing by a horse, holding a hawk. This figure represents *May*. The next is a man cutting hay with a scythe, which is now lost to the erosion of time but can presumably be representative of June (Fig 24). Understanding the history behind the development of the labor of the month's theme over the centuries may provide clarity in revealing what artists like Bruegel thought when they developed their unique compositions using this theme.

One of the earliest, and quite possibly the closest analogue of what Nicolaes Jongelinck's dining room might have looked like is found in the room which contains the *Cycle of Months* in the Buonconsiglio Castle in Trento, Italy (Fig 4). The cycle of frescos was produced by an artist

⁶ Webster, *The Labors of the Months*, 57.

known as “Wenzel,” or The Master of Bohemia. Very little is known about this Bohemian Master other than he produced the frescos in the fifteenth century and may have been a court painter to the Court of George of Liechtenstein. The fifteenth century fresco encircles the small room and depicts scenes of both peasants at work and nobility at play. However, both sides of the social spectrum portray elements of the labors of the months. January’s scene showcases a lighthearted mood with noblemen and women in the foreground having a snowball fight, an almost out of place activity amongst the noble class (Fig 25). This snow-covered landscape is possibly the earliest of its kind.⁷ February’s section depicts a jousting match while the March section is missing altogether (Fig 26). *April* depicts peasants hard at work plowing the fields and planting seeds while the aristocracy tends to their gardens (Fig 27). In the next scene a courting ritual takes place. Courtly love and garden scenes filled with flowers are common themes in depictions of the month of May (Fig 28). The adjoining panel houses a wedding scene, with a wedding party occupying the foreground while peasants milking cows, churning butter, and forming cheeses can be seen in the background. This is consistent with representations of June (Fig 29). July is again depicted with peasants in the field cutting and raking hay (Fig 30). This cycle is very much what Bruegel may have intended for the format of his series: a continuous frieze which depicted the entire calendar year. However, other traditions of representing the labors of the months in calendar cycles would come from another source that Bruegel is known to have taken an interest in, books of hours.

Très Riches Heures, produced by the Limbourg Brothers for Jean, duke of Berry, c. 1410, is a wonderful example of the labors of the month’s theme. In it, the three brothers create a twelve-image cycle which represents a pictorial calendar and includes depictions of the labors of

⁷ Millard Meiss, *The Limbourgs and their Contemporaries* (New York: George Braziller, 1974), 186.

the months. Many of the traditions of representing the labors of the months and can be seen through the *Très Riches Heures* with some regional variations.⁸ In *January*, for example, the Limbourg's depict a banquet (Fig 31) with the principal participants being altered to suit their patron. *The Queen Mary Psalter*, painted in England in the fourteenth century portrays a king and queen at a banquet which the Limbourg Brothers adapted for the *Très Riches Heures* inserting Jean, duke of Berry in the place of the central figures.⁹ *February*, which was meant to complement the January scene, shows the opposite end of the economic spectrum (Fig 32). Contrary to *January*'s, warm banqueting scene rich with color, a frozen dull grey sky covers a peasant homestead. Inside the home, three figures warm themselves by a fire by lifting their clothes and exposing their bodies. Outside, a young man chops at a tree with an axe while nearby another man leads an ass towards the town. The final figure appears to have ventured out into the cold to perform chores of some kind wrapping his body to keep warm. He blows on his hands in order to keep warm which contrasts with the *January* scene in which the noblemen raise their hands to the large fire behind the duke to keep warm. Both of these scenes focus on the harsh cold and how people dealt with the weather. The March scene depicts much more familiar imagery (Fig 33). At the forefront of the image is a peasant plowing a field with the help of two oxen, a common representation of rural life. The coldness remaining in the season can still be seen in the elderly man's attire of a heavy tunic with a blue scarf and hat. In the background of the image, more peasants toil away working to prepare the fields. The sky appears to have been damaged at some point, then repaired with a storm instead of clear sky. It is unclear whether the storm was part of the original design or not. Near the storm a man and dog run away from the

⁸ Meiss, *The Limbourgs and their Contemporaries*, 184-185.

⁹ Meiss, *The Limbourgs and their Contemporaries*, 184-185.

clouds. Other markings on the image suggest that rain or wind may be coming down from the clouds.¹⁰

The months of April and May contrast significantly with the colder, harsher weather of February and March. In these more pleasant months of the year, the nobility become the focus of the labors of the months as they emerge from their castles to engage in various activities.¹¹ The group of figures in the *April* miniature are engaged in amorous, yet courtly events (Fig 34). Some of the aristocrats give and receive rings while others pick flowers. Several scholars believe that many of the miniatures were designed in a way to depict specific events in the Duke of Berry's life as they coincide with the labors of the months.¹² For example, the nobility in the month of May are acting out the tradition of the rite of the first of the month (Fig 35). In this tradition, they stream out into the countryside to celebrate the changing season while wearing the color green. Three of the women in the group are wearing green dresses for the occasion. Documentation from the fifteenth century state that for this occasion, King Charles VI gave green mantles called *houppelandes* to his courtiers. It is suggested that one of the figures in the green *houppelande* is Jean duc du Berry's daughter Marie. She, along with her third husband Jean de Bourbon, are the focal point of the cramped composition. Marie rides atop a white horse and is the foremost lady, a sign of the highest rank.¹³ Most of the figures in the party are adorned with green branches bearing the new leaves of spring. The richly attired riding party rides in from the right side of the

¹⁰ Meiss, *The Limbourgs and their Contemporaries*, 184-185.

¹¹ Walter S. Gibson, *Pleasant Places: The Rustic Landscape from Bruegel to Ruisdael* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 121.

¹² It has been suggested that this is a specific event being depicted. It is possible that Jean duc du Berry wanted the common theme for April, courtly love, to be represented by a miniature painting of the betrothal of Charles d'Orléans, his nephew, and Bonne d' Armagnac, his granddaughter. Meiss, *The Limbourgs and their Contemporaries*, 191, Rob Dücker and Pieter Roelofs. *The Limbourg Brothers: Reflections on the Origins and the Legacy of Three Illuminators from Nijmegen* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 58, 81-82.

¹³ Meiss, *The Limbourgs and their Contemporaries*, 191.

composition and exits on the left, demonstrating the lavish lifestyle of the upper class while members of the working class toil away in the fields of the summer heat.

In June, no gentry are visible (Fig 36). Instead, three men cut fresh hay that grows on an island in the Seine River.¹⁴ Their scythes work in unison as two women rake the cut hay into mounds. This scene has a strong resemblance to Bruegel's *Haymaking* (Fig 13). Two figures work at shearing sheep in the foreground of the *July* image (Fig 37). Two other figures work in a distant field of grain. They gaze down at their work with their faces covered by wide brimmed hats as they wield their scythes, having cut down about half of the field. Little focus is given to depicting the faces of the peasant figures as their identities were not as important as the labors they were representing. Once the heat of the summer subsides, the nobility will return to the forefront of the miniatures and the peasants will again be pushed to the rear.

A small group of aristocrats parade across the foreground of the *August* miniature and appear to be either on their way to or returning from hawking (Fig 38). Three of the noblemen carry hawks in their hands while the man walking in front of the party, possibly the keeper, also carries a hawk. Just behind the party of hawkers is a group of men who have disrobed and started swimming in a small body of water in order to keep cool. Two figures swim beneath the water while the other two figures sit at the water's edge. Just beyond the swimmers are peasants working at harvesting grain in the fields. Their diminutive size in comparison to the hawking party demonstrates their ranking in the social strata. Additionally, the fact that the figures are depicted swimming nude also lends credence to the idea of marginalizing the lower classes. This

¹⁴ The island that the peasants are working on is most likely the Ile de Buci, a small island that was joined to the Ile de la Cité by filling in the branch of the Seine that ran between the two masses of land. Meiss, *The Limbourgs and their Contemporaries*, 203-204.

marginalization was also seen in the *February* painting of figures in the house raising their clothes and exposing themselves.

The act of implicitly demeaning the peasant class is seen again in the September scene (Fig 39). In it, a figure bends over exposing his/her posterior while picking grapes for the harvest. A large vineyard occupies the foreground with several other figures working at picking grapes for the harvest.¹⁵ This vineyard imagery is also seen as a minor background element in Bruegel's *Return of the Herd* (Fig 17).

The October miniature is represented by the common theme of sowing (Fig 40). A man holds seed in his apron and spreads it onto the freshly tilled soil that has been worked by the horse pulling the till. The man spreading seed wears tattered clothing and is closely followed by a group of birds who devour the seeds he places on the ground. He glances forward with a look of disdain as he spreads the seed across the soil. Just beyond the freshly tilled field is another small field with a scarecrow holding a bow and arrow and standing near the edge of the Seine. On the opposite side of the river, various people go about their daily tasks. A woman washes clothes near the steps while another man mends boats that are moored on the banks. The whole scene set before the viewer would most likely have been what Jean duc du Berry actually saw from his Parisian residence, the Hôtel de Nesle on the Left Bank.¹⁶

The *November* page of the *Très Riches Heures* is unlike the rest of the collection, as it was not painted by any of the three Limbourg Brothers, but instead was the creation of Jean Colombe.¹⁷ Despite this, it still follows the traditional conventions of what would be represented

¹⁵ The only portion of the September miniature that was completed by one of the Limbourg Brothers was the upper portion which mainly includes the sky, Chateau Saumur, and the woman carrying a basket on her head. The bottom portion was finished by Jean Colombe and is not nearly of the same quality as the style of the Limbourg Brothers. Meiss, *The Limbourgs and their Contemporaries*, 196-197.

¹⁶ Dücker, Rob, and Pieter Roelofs. *The Limbourg Brothers: Reflections on the Origins and the Legacy of Three Illuminators from Nijmegen*, 62.

¹⁷ Meiss, *The Limbourgs and their Contemporaries*, 196-197

in the labors of the months (Fig 41). A man knocks acorns down from the trees overhead with the stick he carries in his hand. He looks up into the trees which have begun to change their colors to fall. Two other figures stand among the trees apparently doing the same thing. At the man's side is a dog, intent on watching a group of pigs eating the acorns that have fallen to the ground. These acorns will be used to fatten the pigs up for their inevitable slaughtering, a labor typically depicted in the following month.

The final miniature from *Très Riches Heures* is not the typical slaughtering of the pig seen in many labors series like Bruegel's *The Months*, but it is still a depiction of the unfortunate end to a pig. The *December* miniature depicts a hunting party of three men and several dogs that have made their kill of a wild boar (Fig 42). The man who appears to be in charge of the the dogs has a look of exasperation on his face as he holds the leash of one of the dogs. Another man pulls one of the dogs away from the hoard as the third man blows a horn. The trees in the background have obviously changed to fall colors. The remainder of the scene focuses intently on the common depiction the December labor of the month, the killing of the pig.

Where Bruegel's series differs from the *Très Riches Heures* is that its focus is on its patron, Jean duc du Berry and his life experiences. This is seen starting with the banqueting scene in *January* where a portrait of the duke himself is included accepting New Year's gifts while surrounded by people in his life and court.¹⁸ The Limbourg Brothers' miniatures focus on a single event in each image while Bruegel's works showcase multiple events simultaneously. In addition, the *Très Riches Heures* seems intent on humbling the lower classes as seen in the

¹⁸ The portrait of the Duke has been identified for some time as the figure seated in front of the fire screen with the blunt nose and the luxurious attire. There are several other figures that have also been identified due to their carefully depicted facial features. Bishop Martin Gouge is the man approaching the duke wearing a clergyman's robes. Some speculate that the man wearing a grey hat near the rear of the crowd is Paul Limbourg while others dispute this in the absence of his two brothers from the scene. Dücker, Rob, and Pieter Roelofs. *The Limbourg Brothers: Reflections on the Origins and the Legacy of Three Illuminators from Nijmegen*, 54.

juxtaposition between the lavish lifestyle of the wealthy and the simple, often uncouth lifestyle of the peasants as seen in the *January* and *February* pages. In the *February* image, the peasants inside the small house lift their garments to gather more warmth.¹⁹ By doing so, they expose their genitals to the viewer. Additionally, the man cutting wood appears to be cutting firewood in his undergarments. Another distinction between the works of Bruegel and those of the Limbourg Brothers is the glorification of the homes of the Duke of Berry which are showcased in several of the pages from the *Très Riches Heures*. Despite many differences, the Limbourg Brothers series does have some similarities to Bruegel's series as seen by the inclusion of the labors of cutting hay, harvesting wheat and picking grapes for wine.

The influence of the Limbourg Brothers' *Très Riches Heures* may not have directly affected Bruegel's work. However, their work and influence most likely spread to someone Bruegel was familiar with: Simon Bening. Around 1515, Bening was invited, along with a group of other artists, to produce the *Grimani Breviary* for Cardinal Domenico Grimani.²⁰ Bening would have been familiar with the *Très Riches Heures* as it had been in the possession of Margaret of Austria in Antwerp during the time Bening was producing the *Grimani Breviary*.²¹ Bruegel is documented as possibly having access to the *Grimani Breviary* through Giulio Clovio in the summer of 1552 while in Italy.²² This exposure to the illuminated manuscript style would have undoubtedly left an impression on Bruegel. The influence from the Limbourg Brothers would have passed through Simon Bening's *Grimani Breviary* to Pieter Bruegel the Elder.

¹⁹ Meiss, *The Limbourgs and their Contemporaries*, 187-188.

²⁰ The *Grimani Breviary* is one of the most elaborate works of Flemish manuscript illumination and was purchased for the enormous sum of five hundred ducats in 1520. Several artists were brought together to complete the rather complicated work: Simon Bening, Alexander Bening, Master of James IV of Scotland (Gerard Horenbout), the Master of the David Scenes, and Gerard David. Thomas Kren and Scott McKendrick, *Illuminating the Renaissance: The Triumph of Flemish Manuscript Painting in Europe* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2003), 420.

²¹ Walter S. Gibson, *Mirror of the Earth* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), 70.

²² Michael Seymour, *Babylon: Legend, History and the Ancient City* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2014), 122.

When viewed side by side, the similarities between the *Tres Riches Heures* and the *Grimani Breviary* are striking. For instance, the *February* scene in the *Grimani Breviary* is almost a direct translation of the Limbourg Brothers' work (Fig 43). One major adaptation that Bening made to the composition is the enhancement to the quality of the spatial recession as well as a heightening of the atmospheric effects.²³ The wall that was removed in the *February* scene of the *Très Riches Heures* is now an open door where the viewer is able to look in at a family warming themselves by the fire while their small child urinates out the open door. The rest of the image retains the secondary figures outside the structure where people are warming themselves by the fire. One of these figures again carries a shawl over their head and breaths on their hands to keep warm while the other figure escorts a mule towards the village in the background. Notably absent from the *Grimani Breviary* is the figure cutting firewood. Bening appears to be making slight changes to the imagery while continuing the ideas of the labors of the months.

February's scene is not the only scene from which Bening has appropriated, as it appears that the designs from every scene in the *Très Riches Heures* calendar series have been copied almost directly. For example, the figure of Emperor Heraclius riding through the sky in a wagon as the sun god has been copied with only slight alterations. It is the manner in which Bening alters the spatial perspectives in each of the images that connects his work to Bruegel's. The higher perspective combined with the atmospheric effects of blurring people and objects as they recess into the background is a tactic that Bruegel and his contemporaries will adapt during the height of their careers.

A review of other manuscript work from Bening provides a better understanding of his labors of the months themes. By the time Bening completed work on scenes in the *Da Costa*

²³ Kren and McKendrick, *Illuminating the Renaissance: The Triumph of Flemish Manuscript Painting in Europe*, 420-424.

Hours in 1515, he had broken free from the designs of the Limbourg Brothers and was creating works that, for the most part, followed the traditional representation of the labors of the months. The scenes that are immediately recognizable from this series are July, August, and December. The *July* scene depicts a group of peasants cutting hay that is piled upon a horse drawn carriage (Fig 44). Two men work diligently at cutting it with their scythes while another group piles hay upon the carriage. Two women are in the background. One woman carries a basket and a jug, possibly food items for the workers while another woman piles hay. A small, winding road draws the viewer's attention back into the distance allowing them to recognize that there is a considerable depth to the image. Bruegel will expand on this idea fifty years later once he creates his version of this labor for Jongelinck.

In the *August* scene, peasants are again hard at work harvesting wheat which gives the illuminated page a familiar reminiscent yellow tone also appearing in Bruegel's *Harvesters* (Fig 45). The perspective is not as open in this image. The tree at the left combined with the group of trees in the background on the right and figures pressed up against the picture plane give the image a closed feel which does detach it quite a bit from Bruegel's work.

The third and final recognizable scene is that of *December* (Fig 46). This page depicts a man and woman outside an inn preparing a pig for slaughter. The man has stuck the pig and is draining the blood into a pan the woman holds. Behind them is a bale of straw. The snow covered scene, though not as vast and open as Bruegel's *Hunters in the Snow* does still have many of the same elements. The most glaring element that both images share is the location for the slaughtering of the pig outside of an inn with a clearly visible sign hanging overhead. The figures in the Bening miniature are preparing to slaughter the pig that the group in *Hunters in the Snow* have already slaughtered and are now in the singeing process. It is possible that the hay

behind the two figures is what will be used to singe the hair off of the pig once the slaughter is finished

When Bening completed the *Golf Book of Hours* (1530), which contained depictions of the *Labors of the Months*, he reused imagery and themes from prior books of hours. The December theme of slaughtering the pig is seen with a man and woman sticking a pig (Fig 47). They drain the blood into a pan with the hay waiting close by to be used later for singeing the pig. Other figures in the scene go about their chores such as stoking fires to aid in the baking of bread nearby. The peasants all at work have taken a strangely familiar, Bruegelesque appearance, with their stout bodies and simple yet colorful attire. Just below the image of the labors of the months in the *Golf Book of Hours* is a border filled with images of children at play. The games the children are playing have been suggested to be connected to the particular time of year. This may suggest why various games represented in manuscripts such as the *Golf Book of Hours* can be seen in other representations of the labors of the months. Bruegel included some of these games in his work in *The Months* series. Several of the children playing on the ice in the village in Bruegel's *Hunters in the Snow* are also represented in the borders of the *Golf Book of Hours*.²⁴ Children can be seen whipping tops, skating, sledding and curling. The game of whipping tops has been suggested to be related to the flagellation of Christ which occurred on Maundy Thursday, the Thursday which occurs before Easter.²⁵ Some scholars suggest that Bruegel may have been making a connection between several of his works and the works of Simon Bening by depicting these children at play in the borders of the *Golf Book of Hours*.²⁶ The influence of

²⁴ Amy Orrock, "Play and Learning in Pieter Bruegel's Children's Games" (PhD Diss. University of Edinburgh, 2010), 95.

²⁵ Orrock, "Play and Learning in Pieter Bruegel's Children's Games," 95.

²⁶ Bruegel produced several works in which he depicted children at play that were also intended to represent specific times of the year. *The Battle Between Carnival and Lent* and *Children's Games* are two examples in which this can be seen. In *The Battle Between Carnival and Lent* children are seen whipping tops as well as carrying rattles which

Bening's *Golf Book of Hours* is another example of an indirect influence on Bruegel. He may not have had direct contact with this particular book of hours but the influence other works had on the *Golf Book of Hours* which in turn affected other works is another link in understanding of how Bruegel would have formatted his series. ²⁷ It is also important to understand how Bruegel's early occupation as a printmaker affected his work.

In 1555, Hieronymus Cock began to publish Bruegel's work for the first time on a much larger scale than he had previously produced.²⁸ Until that point, only Matthys Cock and Maarten van Heemskerck were producing designs for Cock's landscape prints. Between 1555 and 1556, Bruegel and several other artists began publishing more landscapes for Cock as their popularity grew.²⁹ In 1559, the Master of the Small Landscapes produced a series of small landscapes (Fig 48) very similar to Bruegel's series, *The Large Landscapes* (Fig 49).³⁰ It is here that Bruegel's mastery of the compositional elements in a complex landscape can be seen. His influence by predecessors such as Simon Benning and Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen can be seen in the control over the spatial perspective all viewed from a high, bird's eye view. This commanding view of the landscape and mastery of the skill appears to have been fine-tuned by the time Bruegel produced *The Large Landscapes* in 1555. By 1563, Bruegel had moved to Brussels and left the

were played with during Lent by both children and adults. Orrock, "Play and Learning in Pieter Bruegel's Children's Games," 95.

²⁷ Kren and McKendrick, *Illuminating the Renaissance: The Triumph of Flemish Manuscript Painting in Europe*, 420-424.

²⁸ *Landscape with the Temptation of Christ and The Large Landscapes* Gibson, *Pleasant Places: The Rustic Landscape from Bruegel to Ruisdael*, 13.

²⁹ At least five landscape prints were published during this time span by artists such as Hans Bol, Matthys Cock, Lucas Gassel, and the Master of Small Landscapes. Most of the designs were produced in a collaboration of etching and engraving by two brothers Jan and Lucas Duetecum who had stated working for Cock in 1554. Timothy Riggs, *Hieronymus Cock 1510-1570: Printmaker and Publisher in Antwerp at the Sign of the Four Winds* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1972), 50-51.

³⁰ Gibson, *Pleasant Places: The Rustic Landscape from Bruegel to Ruisdael*, 13.

studio of Hieronymus Cock.³¹ He made only a few prints in that time after leaving Cock's studio and chose to focus primarily on what was making him more money and notoriety: painting.

From antiquity through the Limbourg Brothers and Simon Bening, and ultimately through the workshop of Hieronymus Cock, these artists and artworks were very important in shaping the way Peter Bruegel developed as an artist and how he approached the task of creating *The Months* for Jongelinck in 1565. It is necessary now to examine the work of artists contemporary with Bruegel to better understand the trend in producing series of paintings and images of the labors of the months.

³¹ Cock's studio itself was beginning to enter into a waning stage in its production by the end of the decade. Riggs, *Hieronymus Cock 1510-1570: Printmaker and Publisher in Antwerp at the Sign of the Four Winds*, 54.

CHAPTER 4

BRUEGEL'S CONTEMPORARIES AND FOLLOWERS

Pieter Bruegel the Elder died in 1569. Around the time of his death, many of his contemporaries were producing calendar cycles similar to *The Months* in cycles of twelve. In 1574, Gerard van Groeningen and Petrus Furnius designed *The Months*, a series of twelve engravings for the publisher, Gerard de Jode in Antwerp.¹ This series demonstrates that printed works created shortly after Bruegel produced his series on *The Months* were produced in a series of twelve. Beginning with the first scene of *January* (Fig 50), a very familiar theme arises that follows the traditions of calendar scenes. A group of men and women gather around a banquet table to feast. Two large fires flank the scene demonstrating the need for warmth at this time of year and the importance of the hearth needed to cook the food being served. The jovial feast scene bears a strong resemblance to the *January* scene from the *Très Riches Heures*. The similarities continue into the February engraving where an interior domestic scene is shown simultaneously with the exterior (Fig 51). Peasant figures inside the home warm themselves by the fire and raise their hands and feet towards the flames while a man wields an ax outside cutting more firewood. In the distance, a figure can even be seen leading a donkey into the background.

Like its predecessors, van Groeningen and Furnius' *March* scene (Fig 52) depicts several figures working at trimming trees, bundling limbs, digging in the garden, and plowing in the field. Each of these labors can be found in the *Da Costa Hours*, *Golf Book of Hours*, and *Très*

¹ The central engraved scenes by Van Groeningen were cut out of the etched borders and replaced with the twelve month scenes by Pieter van der Borcht and Petrus Furnius. The Van Doetecum brothers printed them in 1574 for Gerard de Jode. F. W. H. Hollstein, *New Hollstein Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, 1450-1700: 24 Vols.* (Amsterdam: Sound and Vision Publishers, 1993), 181-183.

Riches Heures. Unlike the prior images, the *April* scene does not subscribe to the same parallel imagery as before (Fig 53). Instead, the print depicts a hunting scene. Typically, April is reserved for lovers in gardens or herding sheep in fields.² Few other depictions use the hunting theme for April. The garden scenes usually reserved for April are instead used in the *May* scene where two distinct parties can be seen enjoying music, dining, and walking among the gardens (Fig 54). Sheep shearing is the primary theme portrayed in June and is a common theme found in various depictions of the labors of the months in series of twelve (Fig 55). It appears in several illuminated books of hours as well as in wood block prints such as *Le Calendrier des Bergers* from the fifteenth century (Fig 56).

The month of July again shows familiar figures performing their tasks (Fig 57). However, in this scene the familiarity goes a step beyond the simple reproduction of customary themes from the labors of the months, as a group of workers have ceased their laborious activities in lieu of resting under a shade tree to eat. This portrayal of resting workers engaged in eating under a shade tree is oddly reminiscent of Bruegel's grouping of peasants from *Harvesters*, painted almost ten years prior. Just beyond these figures in the middle-ground is a cart being loaded with freshly cut hay by two figures in a similar fashion as the cart in Bruegel's *Haymaking*. It is possible that these two inclusions may be sourced from Bruegel.

Van Groeningen and Furnius' *August* depicts a large number of figures hard at work harvesting grain while their *September* scene depicts figures demonstrating the various stages of harvesting grapes and producing wine (Fig 58). The month of *September* (Fig 59) showcases figures in the process of harvesting grapes and plowing fields in preparation for the planting of crops similar to the *Rothschild Hours* and the *Da Costa Hours*. Such activity is more commonly

² Buchanan, "The Collection of Nicolaes Jongelinck: II The 'Months' by Pieter Bruegel the Elder," 550.

seen in the following month of October. However, Van Groeningen has switched the two months placing the plowing and sowing in the month of October (Fig 60).

The November scene depicts two figures feeding hogs which is a theme seen in several miniature paintings and books of hours while the final *December* scene portrays the common theme of pig butchering and singeing (Figs 61 and 62).³ Figures are again at work draining the blood and butchering a pig outside an inn-like structure while nearby a fire rages with children watching as the hair is singed off the pig. While van Groeningen and Furnius' print series of twelve images from Antwerp bares many similarities to that of Bruegel's work, it is the work of another of his contemporaries that is strikingly even more similar.

Another series of twelve works depicting the labors of the months comes from another country and in a different form. A collection of enameled plates by enamellist, Martial Courteys, was created in France around 1570 and portrays scenes very similar to those of other artists working with the same subject. Starting with the *January* plate, an interesting correlation can be seen between Courteys enameled plates and the printed works of Gerard van Groeningen and Petrus Furnius. The twelve plates (Figs 63-65) follow the visual motifs of the prints with an intriguing sense of duplication as seen by the use of the same labors from month to month and the border surrounding the central images. The similarities between these two series, created around the same time but in different media and location, brings up the issue of commonality – a commonality that transcends borders and boundaries. Common motifs found in various series of twelve labors of the month point to a useable data source to strengthen the argument that Bruegel's *Months* was once a series of twelve and to assist in identifying labors of the month

³ There are still some books of hours which depict the month of November by means of feeding pigs such as the *Tres Riches Heures* and the *Grimani Breviary*. Buchanan, "The Collection of Nicolaes Jongelincq: II The 'Months' by Pieter Bruegel the Elder," 550.

series that are incomplete. Additional support to emphasize this point comes from other artists who were working at the same time as Bruegel.

Julius Golzius (d. c. 1595) was one such artist who lived and worked around the same time as Bruegel. Around the time of Bruegel's death, Golzius produced a series of engravings depicting the labors of the months with Gillis Mostaert and Hans van Luyck.⁴ His series, like many others, consists of twelve depictions of peasants and gentry engaged in various activities associated with the labors of the months. Golzius's figures and compositions at times show strong correlations between his work and that of Bruegel.

The January scene (Fig 82) depicts a spattering of figures gathered around a frozen canal, some at play while some simply standing about. Of particular importance is a small girl who appears to be sledding across the surface of the ice by means of two sticks and a make-shift sled. She bears a striking resemblance to the two girls who are doing the same thing in Pieter Bruegel's *The Census at Bethlehem*. Stylistically, Golzius's engraving also has many similarities to Bruegel's early print work in the *Small Landscapes* with the simplified perspective of the structures and the stylized birds in the sky. In addition, his figures take on a very Bruegelian stoutness which is paralleled in *Children's Games*.

In the depiction of February, figures are seen gathering wood to be used in the fire (Fig 83). Two men mind a small group of hogs who will most likely be used for butchering. The *March* image shows several workers tending to the vines that will be growing until harvest (Fig 84). With its rocky landscape, dark skies, and figures working on preparing vines, this composition resembles the works of Simon Bening. In the *April* scene, a shepherdess leads her flock down a road away from fields where workers toil away at cutting the grass. (Fig 85).

⁴ Gibson, *Pleasant Places: The Rustic Landscape from Bruegel to Ruisdael*, 23.

Golzius's *May* scene is reminiscent of other May scenes with couples engaged in amorous activities and picnics (Fig 86) while *June* returns to the more rustic views of the countryside and shows a small farm scene with several figures actively engaged in the process of shearing sheep (Fig 87).⁵

July depicts yet another scene consistent with Bruegel's work. The composition as a whole differs greatly from Bruegel's *Haymaking* but certain elements are familiar (Fig 88). A woman walks casually with her rake over her shoulder glancing outward into the viewer's space, much like the central female figure in the group of three workers who walk in cadence in *Haymaking*. The woman strolls past another figure who mirrors Bruegel's ideas. This figure sits upon the ground wearing a large brimmed hat and repairs his scythe much like the male figure at the bottom left of the composition in *Haymaking*. Golzius's depiction of *August* also parallels the composition of *Harvesters*. It shows some figures working at the harvest while most rest (Fig 89). Three figures seated on the ground near the edge of the field eat, drink, and rest. This grouping of figures is reminiscent of the group gathered under the tree in *Harvesters*. A woman turns her back to the viewer while the other two figures eat and guzzle from an earthen jug.

September is showcased as the "fruitmaand" or "fruit month" where Golzius portrays several figures in the process of harvesting apples from a tree in the foreground (Fig 90). A Flemish village depicts various people going about their business in the background. Golzius's *October* image includes the figures in the foreground stomping and pressing the grapes to produce wine that is being harvested by figures in the background (Fig 91). The stomping and pressing of grapes appears to be a fairly common theme used by many artists from the Limbourg Brothers' *Très Riches Heures* to Simon Bening's *Da Costa Hours* to the Castello del

⁵ Gibson, *Pleasant Places: The Rustic Landscape from Bruegel to Ruisdael*, 23.

Buonconsiglio frescos. The *November* scene also demonstrates familiar imagery that has similarities to books of hours (Fig 92). Two men are working in the foreground on felling a tree and sawing it in two while a farmer takes his pigs into the forest to forage for acorns. The acorns will fatten the hogs for their eventual slaughter that occurs in *December* (Fig 93). A man and a woman work on singeing the hair off of the slaughtered hog while children stand around. This singeing and slaughter of a hog outside of an inn is one of the most common themes seen throughout representations of the labors of the months. Julius Golzius is obviously referencing prototypical work and subscribing to the tradition of representing calendar cycles of the labors of the months much like several other artists contemporary to Bruegel.

Hans Bol (b. 1534 – d. 1593) was another one of those artists contemporary to Bruegel. Bol was producing biblical scenes, genre paintings, and landscapes which were engraved at *Aux Quatre Vents* around the same time Bruegel was producing work for Cock.⁶ He was a prolific draftsman of landscapes, particularly of the local countryside. As he was one of Bruegel's contemporaries and also designed work for Hieronymus Cock, it is not surprising that some of Bol's landscapes should fall into a similar vein as Bruegel's space. In 1580, Bol produced a series of prints depicting the labors of the months, nearly fifteen years after Bruegel completed *The Months* for Jongelingck. Bol depicts each scene in a pseudo roundel format with the classical representation of the zodiac symbol floating in the sky. Several of the scenes are common to what would be expected in scenes of the labors of the months. However, some of the roundels have imagery that is somewhat unusual.

⁶ Bol preferred mythological, allegorical and biblical scenes which he portrayed either on broad panoramic landscapes or in familiar country sides. Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann and Sir John Wyndham Pope-Hennessy, *Fifteenth- to Eighteenth-century European Drawings: Central Europe, The Netherlands, France, England* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999), 137.

Bol's January scene is an appropriate place to start (Fig 66). It portrays a scene of several people processing through the Grote Markt of Bergen op Zoom, in celebration. Of particular interest is the manner in which Bol has adapted the conversion of people from Bruegel's *Battle Between Carnival and Lent*. It isn't a direct translation but there is enough similarity to recognize a correlation between the two, especially when viewed in the context of the whole twelve month series. The February scene shows many people skating and enjoying other activities on a frozen river near a city gate and bridge (Fig 67). The image, though not a direct translation of Bruegel's *Ice Skating Before the Gate of St. George*, bears a striking resemblance to the composition. The *March* scene depicts a group of people planting and propping up vines, a fairly common activity in depictions of the labors of the months (Fig 68). Much like the *March* miniature from the Limbourg Brothers' *Très Riches Heures*, the change in weather has been included by a sudden downpour of rain on the right side of the composition. The similarities to Bruegel's work pick up again in the *April* panel which portrays a garden scene with gardeners hard at work planting while members of the nobility stroll by (Fig 69). In 1565, Pieter Bruegel the Elder created a print entitled *Spring* (Fig 70) in which a very similar scene unfolds in a very consistent, visual style. Workers toil away in a garden digging and planting while the aristocracy relaxes nearby. Bol's garden is laid out in a well-organized grid pattern in a similar fashion to the Bruegel image with a round section in the middle of the grid that adds variety to the pattern. Bol's *May* scene depicts a boating party with people enjoying themselves and having a picnic, one of the more common themes for the month of May. The *June* scene shows the June tradition of shearing sheep for wool (Figs 71 and 72). In the next scene of July the landscape is filled with men and women harvesting grain with scythes (Fig 73). This scene is again a familiar one which has commonly been seen in various books of hours as well as the series that Bruegel painted for Jongelinck.

Another adaptation from the work of Bruegel can be seen in Bol's *August* scene (Fig 74). Two figures, in particular, appear to come almost directly from Bruegel's design for the *Summer* print produced in 1565. The man sitting on a pile of freshly cut hay in the foreground, drinks from a jug in the same physical stature as the figure in Bruegel's *Summer* (Fig 75). The other figure that has been adapted is the man who scythes nearby. The manner in which Bol depicts this figure is almost a direct copy of the Bruegel figure.

September in Bol's series shows peasants picking apples and carrying them off to a small village in the distance while *October* brings the more common imagery of pressing grapes for the production of wine, both common themes seen before in Bruegel's works (Figs 76 and 77). In the *November* image, men can be seen chopping trees for firewood (Fig 78). While not a typical theme for November, this is not unusual as there have been several instances where months have been switched around or something entirely new has been introduced. The final and more intriguing images in the series are housed in the *December* scene, which again shows the common tradition of slaughtering and singeing a pig (Fig 79). A man and woman stand outside of an inn, under the inn sign, butchering a pig. Children are nearby playing with the pig's internal organs blowing them up like balloons, while the adults work at cutting up the rest of the pig. It is not the composition that is intriguing but instead the correlation between the images. In the previous images, Bol appears to have been appropriating some of Bruegel's work into his series of the months. To the contrary there is no work by Pieter Bruegel the Elder that resembles Bol's *December* scene. However, there is a painting by Pieter Brueghel the Younger, painted in 1616, that is almost identical to the print (Fig 64). This similarity could mean one of two things. Either Brueghel the Younger, acquired his composition from Bol when he created his painting or Pieter Bruegel the Elder at some point produced a work that strongly resembles the *December* plate of

Hans Bol which is no longer extant. It is a well-known fact that Pieter Brueghel the Younger was familiar with his father's work and would have seen work that possibly no longer exists today. It is also known that Brueghel the Younger was familiar with his father's preliminary sketches and early works. I believe it is entirely possible that the Hans Bol's *December* plate may portray a missing Bruegel work. Though that idea may be pure speculation, it is entirely plausible given the evidence.

Another of Bruegel's contemporaries working both in the vane of depictions of labors of the months and in a comparable format to that of the circular compositions of Bol is Jacob Grimmer (b. 1526 – d. 1590). Grimmer, much like Bruegel and working at the same time as Bruegel, was painting a series of representations of daily life intertwined with the changes in seasons as they relate to the individual months and labors of the months. Four of his paintings came up for auction in December of 2000 at the Christies London, King Street Salesroom (Fig 80). The lot number notes from the auction state that the four paintings auctioned may have been four of a series of twelve that have been divided into separate pairs, two of which were auctioned and those which are located at the Musée des Beaux Arts de Nancy (Fig 81).⁷ These images by Grimmer help to provide further examples of Bruegel's contemporaries who were working on the same subject matter he was. Notably, the tradition of representing labors of the months in pictorial cycles did not end in the sixteenth century; it carried on after Bruegel's death. Further investigation into the life's work of the children of Pieter Bruegel the Elder, specifically Pieter

⁷ "This panel and the three following originally formed part of a set of the Twelve Months of the Year to which, as Reine de Bertier de Sauvigny suggests four separate pairs, including those representing June and July in the Musée de Nancy, also probably belonged (loc. cit., pp. 94 and 100, nos. 4, 6, 7 and 8). As she points out, the contemporary frames for the present panels are identical to those on the pictures in Nancy and the pair formerly with Galerie de Jonckheere." Unknown, "Important Old Masters Pictures." *Christie's London, King Street Auction Catalogue* (London: Christie's, December 13, 2000), 20.

Brueghel the Younger, will provide further evidence in the manner worked with the labors of the months.

CHAPTER 5

AFTER BRUEGEL

Pieter Bruegel the Elder died on September 5, 1569 leaving behind his wife, Mayken, and three children, Pieter the Younger, Jan the Elder, and one daughter, Maria. Bruegel had not yet reached the age of fifty at the time of his death, and his two young boys had not yet grown to know their father.¹ Despite this, his sons would follow in his footsteps becoming well known artists in their own right. While they would make names for themselves in the vast Northern European art market, Bruegel's sons would still fall under the shadow of their brilliant father.

Pieter Brueghel the Younger (b. 1564 – d. 1636), is the artist with the most interesting body of work. A considerable amount of Brueghel's work was produced after works by Bruegel the Elder's prints and paintings. Brueghel painted versions of *The Tower of Babel*, *Peasant Wedding Dance*, and *The Netherlandish Proverbs*. His recreation of *The Netherlandish Proverbs* was masterfully achieved considering the complexity of the image. Some scholars believe that Brueghel the Younger may have had access to his father's sketches or very late stage versions of the final rendering due to certain differences between Bruegel the Elder's work and Brueghel the Younger's.² In several other cases it appears that Brueghel the Younger may have been working off of his father's prints from Cock's studio, *Aux Quatre Vents*.³

One print that Pieter Brueghel the Younger copied and reproduced into a painting is particularly notable. The print is a copy of a drawing produced by Bruegel the Elder in 1568.

¹ Gordon Campbell, *The Grove Encyclopedia of Northern Renaissance Art* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2009), 261.

² In the 1559 version of the *Netherlandish Proverbs* created by Bruegel the Elder, there are several figures that appear to have been added at a later stage in the composition. A man grasping fish from the water, the scissors on the wall, and several other small features have been either edited out or added in. Wolfgang Mieder *The Netherlandish Proverbs: An International Symposium on the Pieter Brueg(h)els* (Burlington: University of Vermont, 2004), 120.

³ Dunbar, *German and Netherlandish Paintings*, 310.

This work entitled *Summer* was converted into an engraving in 1570 by Pieter van der Heyden (Fig 95).⁴ The van der Heyden image shows peasants at work in a field in the summer heat. The composition of the drawing is balanced by two figures at the forefront of the picture plane. At the right is a man with a scythe who has his back turned to the viewer and is working at cutting down wheat.⁵ He stands in a classical *contrapposto* pose as he works. Nearby is another classical reference as the man seated on the ground has possibly been modeled after one of Laocoon's sons from the classical sculpture.⁶ He raises his hands over his head to hold and drink from the rather heavy jug. There are additional figures at work including a female figure carrying produce on her head. Her face has been almost completely obscured by the basket on her head thus abstracting her figure into a faceless, less human object with items identifying the season for her face. The background recesses into an expansive world in a true, Bruegelian style where peasants work diligently in the world beyond. Nearby, a church steeple pokes itself up from a cluster of trees. The close, clustered composition is more conducive for printmaking and therefore reads better as a print. However, when Pieter Brueghel the Younger used the print as a source of inspiration for his painting of *Summer* (Fig 96), he altered the composition slightly to accommodate the change to the oil painting medium. The composition was opened up slightly and figures were shifted around to alleviate the crowded nature of the original image. Brueghel the Younger later experimented with the composition and created a second version of the *Summer* (Fig 97) image by returning to the work of Bruegel the Elder. Brueghel the Younger

⁴ Upon its conversion, several alterations were made by van der Heyden. The scythe was raised slightly to accommodate more of the foreground. Everything else was copied with exacting skill down to the hazy, heat-like feeling being depicted in the background. The left-handed nature of the figures in the drawing were meant to be drawn in such a fashion that when they were engraved they would be reversed and printed in the right-handed fashion. Nadine Orenstein, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Drawings and Prints* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001), 243-245.

⁵ This male figure has been identified as possibly owing his posture to Michelangelo. Figures in his fresco *The Conversion of Paul* may have influenced Bruegel's designs in this drawing. Dunbar, *German and Netherlandish Paintings*, 309-310.

⁶ Dunbar, *German and Netherlandish Paintings*, 309.

appropriated the group of figures resting and eating under the tree from Bruegel the Elder's *Harvesters* almost identically, and replaced the grouping of figures that were meant to represent the harvesting of fruits and vegetables.⁷ The remainder of the image remains somewhat unchanged. It appears that Brueghel the Younger was simply shuffling imagery around in his paintings in an effort to experiment with composition.

Brueghel was not through with appropriating compositions from his father's drawing and print work on the seasons and labors of the months. The drawing entitled *Spring* by Bruegel the Elder (Fig 70), produced in 1565, would also be converted into an engraving in 1570 by Pieter van der Heyden (Fig 98) and then ultimately repurposed into a painting by Brueghel the Younger (Fig 99).⁸ The image's visual space is unevenly divided and shows a group of people tending to a garden. A woman near the workers gives orders while nearby, sheep are gathered for shearing. Just beyond the garden is a group of individuals in a "May Garden" playing music, boating, and making love. Each of these themes is commonly found in labors of the months for March and April. Bruegel the Elder was able to render the space appropriately and masterfully. Details and *staffage* diminish as they move farther into the background. It is no surprise with the masterful skill that Bruegel was able to render this image that Brueghel the Younger was drawn to the composition. However, unlike the *Summer* painting, Brueghel the Younger appears to have made only minimal changes to his father's *Spring*. The figures who previously represented the May portion of the labors of the months by celebrating in the "May Garden," boating and engaging in amorous behavior have been replaced with a group of reveling peasants in the midst of a kermis. They are dancing and enjoying themselves while one of the figures appears to have enjoyed

⁷ The group has been copied straight from *Harvesters* right down to their positions and the food they are eating. The delicate woman with her back to the viewer still sits upright with a piece of cheese placed carefully on her bread and another figure gazes outwards toward the viewer as though he is aware of their presence.

⁸ Orenstein, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Drawings and Prints*, 236-238.

himself to the point of urinating on the wall of the building nearby. This display of peasants urinating in public is fairly common and also found in Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *Gloomy Day*. The boating party has also been taken out and replaced with three figures who are fishing in the waters.

After he designed the *Summer* and *Spring* engravings, Pieter Bruegel the Elder was unable to complete *Autumn* and *Winter* for Pieter van der Heyden. Upon Bruegel's death in the fall of 1569, van der Heyden gave the two remaining designs over to Hans Bol to complete.⁹ Bol completed the *Winter* (Fig 100) scene which consisted of peasants and nobles enjoying themselves on the frozen lake just beneath the city gate. Bruegel the Younger produced a copy of this work of Bol's continuing his tradition of appropriating other artist's compositions (Fig 101). The *Autumn* design does not appear to have been completed by Bol and never made it to van der Heyden for engraving.

After the death of Bruegel, the tradition of portraying the labors of the months began to wane. However, many artists in the Netherlands still produced works that either depicted the labors or changes in the seasons with noticeable changes. This is seen in a series printed by Hendrick Hondius in 1642-44 which draws from the works of Paul Brill, Joos van Lier, Hans Bol, and Pieter Bruegel the Elder. In this series, four prints representing the seasons focus less on the peasants and their work and instead on four castles set against landscapes during the particular season being represented.¹⁰

In another series of the *Months*, painted by Lucas van Vlackenborch in 1584, courtiers and townspeople venture out into the countryside for small excursions while the peasants tend to

⁹ Orenstein, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Drawings and Prints*, 238.

¹⁰ Hollstein, *New Hollstein Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, 1450-1700: 24 Vols.*, 76-79.

their menial tasks.¹¹ Vlackenborch's *October* is another example of the dichotomy between nobility and peasantry where a small group of nobility enjoy a picnic in the foreground while peasants work laboriously in the valley below harvesting grapes. In some cases, generally in January and February, peasants are excluded altogether and the image is given entirely over to the jubilation of the townspeople.¹² This format almost resembles that of the *Très Riches Heures*, flipping the gentry back and forth in their importance based on the time of the year.

In the first decades of the seventeenth century, a sharp contrast emerged between the agricultural and urban depictions of the seasons and labors of the months.¹³ In several later prints, the traditional agricultural labors of the months are simply phased out in favor of more urbanized depictions. A set of prints published by Claes Jansz Visscher in 1616 depicted the traditional task of gathering fruit in September and replaces it by a group of upper class townspeople tending to a bird trapping. In addition, the labors of haymaking or pruning trees has been relegated to the background while townspeople enjoy the frivolities that have now become the labors of the months.¹⁴ Artists working in oil were also doing the same thing. Sebastiaen Vrancx produced *Grain Harvest*, around 1610, which depicts a group of peasants harvesting grain while a nobleman strolls through the field in which they are work (Fig 102).¹⁵

¹¹ Many series of the *Months* were produced around this time by additional artists. Prints designed after Paul Bril, Jan Bruegel the Elder, and Pieter Stevens all depict similar laborious activities while the gentry look on. Gibson, *Pleasant Places: The Rustic Landscape from Bruegel to Ruisdael*, 122.

¹² The upper class are often times depicted skating, celebrating and enjoying other amusements. Gibson, *Pleasant Places: The Rustic Landscape from Bruegel to Ruisdael*, 120-125.

¹³ Examples of this can be found in a set of prints published by Hendrick Hondius in 1614 after designs by Jan Wildens. Additional examples can be found in the three *Months* series etched by Jan van de Velde and published by Jannes Jansonius as well as sets by Claes Jansz Visscher. Gibson, *Pleasant Places: The Rustic Landscape from Bruegel to Ruisdael*, 125.

¹⁴ Gibson, *Pleasant Places: The Rustic Landscape from Bruegel to Ruisdael*, 120-125.

¹⁵ Natalya Gritsay and Natalia Babina, *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Flemish Painting: State Hermitage Museum Catalogue* (St. Petersburg: Hermitage Publishing House, 2008), 424.

Another harvesting scene painted by David Teniers II introduces new themes and projections in the labors of the months. When Teniers painted *Reaping* (Fig 103) around 1640, he chose to place the gentry in shadow and darkness while the working class enjoyed the warmth of the light.¹⁶ A rainbow emerges from the left side of the composition, a reference to the biblical rainbow and covenant with God, and frames the church which raises up from the center of the painting. It appears that Teniers is making moralizing statements with the grotesque collection of figures drinking and smoking in the dark and the working class near the rainbow framed church bathed in light.

These depictions of the labors of the months have evolved greatly since their beginnings in antiquity. A great deal of evidence can be derived from looking at what came before, during and after Bruegel's series to further understand not only the origins of representations of the labors of the months but also answer some of the many questions surrounding Bruegel's *Months*. An examination of his contemporaries, followers, and those who produced work after Bruegel demonstrates several things about contemporary calendar cycles. People within Bruegel's circle and those working at the same time as him were working in *Labors of the Months* imagery and those works were produced in cycles of twelve, not six. His own children were reproducing his work as copies. A great deal can be derived from those copies such as insight into what missing Bruegel works may have looked like, missing works such as the missing panels from *The Months*.

¹⁶ The reapers are representing "vita active" while the idle, upper class who drink, smoke and play bowls represent "vita voluptuosa." Gritsay and Babina, *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Flemish Painting: State Hermitage Museum Catalogue*, 365.

CHAPTER 6

PERSPECTIVES ON *THE MONTHS*

Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *The Months* had quite the circuitous journey from its conception in Bruegel's studio to Nicolaes Jongelinck's suburban villa, ultimately ending up in several separate locations. Today, *Hunters in the Snow*, *Gloomy Day*, and *Return of the Herd* all are found in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. *Haymaking* can be found in the National Gallery in Prague while *Harvesters* is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.¹ These five paintings are all that still exist from the original series Bruegel painted in 1565 for Jongelinck. Scholars remain divided in their opinion as to the exact number of panels in Bruegel's original series.

One of the earlier and more influential perspectives on Bruegel's *The Months* comes from Charles de Tolnay in his 1935 book, *Pierre Bruegel l'Ancien*. De Tolnay believed, like many, that the genesis of the series began with Bruegel's journey to Italy where he became interested in the inclusion of natural elements in his works. He anthropomorphized Bruegel's landscapes and describes them with such detail to suggest that the paintings themselves were increasingly depicting natural forms with anthropomorphic attributes. Most pointedly, De Tolnay concluded that "the Alps are for Bruegel living things."² De Tolnay stated that in 1556, Bruegel turned to using his grand landscapes as settings for aspects of human life and folly.³ He then took this kind of composition and applied it in the form of representations of everyday life.

¹ Buchanan, "The Collection of Nicolaes Jongelinck: II The 'Months' by Pieter Bruegel the Elder," 544.

² Charles de Tolnay and Piero Bianconi, *Tout l'oeuvre peint de Bruegel l'Ancien* (Paris: Flammarion, 1968), 5-9.

³ It was this point that de Tolnay describes Bruegel as following in the "archaic" style of Bosch with the same "detachment" Erasmus praised in the recklessness of human life and events. Tolnay and Bianconi, *Tout l'oeuvre peint de Bruegel l'Ancien*, 5-9.

De Tolnay defined Bruegel's next stage of development, following the 1556 flirtation with Boschian schemes, as the "1562 Stage." At this point, Bruegel was developing and assimilating his characters into the landscapes to make them more inclusive within the setting. This is evident in Bruegel's series designed after, and inspired by books of hours. According to De Tolnay, Bruegel's *The Months* consisted of six panels which allowed Bruegel to represent two successive months at one time. De Tolnay believed that by combining two months Bruegel was successful in evoking the sense of a powerful and ongoing process of organic life and human toil in nature.⁴ In combining two panels, Bruegel was able to explore the idea of changes in the elements in his world from season to season and question how the individual components of the natural world participated in that change.

Hunters in the Snow, for example, demonstrates the stiffness of the trees during the combined winter months of December and January while the renewal of nature and awakening of the natural elements becomes the underlying theme of *The Gloomy Day*. De Tolnay and many other scholars have theorized that the series begins with December rather than January (*Hunters in the Snow*) and subsequently pairs the months together.⁵ De Tolnay provides a certain amount of evidence to support his findings by describing the relationships between the figures, nature, and the changes occurring in the compositions. However, there are other viewpoints on the series by scholars who believe the cycle of paintings represent something other than what de Tolnay's findings indicate.

Absent from Charles de Tolnay's analysis of Bruegel's work is any mention to two of the five paintings still remaining in the series, *Harvesters* and *Haymaking*. One of those, *Harvesters*,

⁴ Tolnay and Bianconi, *Tout l'oeuvre peint de Bruegel l'Ancien*, 5-9.

⁵ February – March (Gloomy Day), April – May (Missing Painting), June – July (Haymaking), August – September (Harvesters), and October – November (Return of the Herd)Tolnay and Bianconi, *Tout l'oeuvre peint de Bruegel l'Ancien*, 5-9.

has been located at the Metropolitan Museum of Art since its purchase in 1919. There, scholars Maryan Ainsworth and Mary Sprinson de Jesus postulate a theory in a short article about the origins of *Harvesters*, the other paintings, as well as the possible missing paintings. They believe that the painting hanging in The Metropolitan Museum of Art was once part of a more complicated decorative scheme that was meant for Jongelinck's suburban villa. They believe that there are characteristics within the series that indicate there were only six paintings from the beginning. Ainsworth and de Jesus describe how Charles de Tolnay viewed the six panel arrangement as the possible original format and equated it to a tradition of calendar painting in which two months would be allowed to share one scene. They do raise the issue of the 1566 inventory which the paintings are first mentioned as "Twelff manden" or twelve months suggesting that there were perhaps twelve paintings. They go on to reference the 1595 gift to Archduke Ernst where the paintings are described as six paintings representing the twelve months.

Ainsworth and de Jesus next turn their attention to Dr. Walter Gibson and his views that the panels are part of a traditional calendar cycle format with a panel representing a single month. Ainsworth and de Jesus point out that *Harvesters* has many of the contemporary labors of the month calendar cycle depictions associated with the month of August but none can be associated with September. They suggest that Bruegel may have had extended seasons of the year when he created his compositions instead of dual representations of months. This perspective is contrary to the views of many other Bruegel scholars, including Dr. Walter Gibson.

The perspective held by Dr. Walter Gibson is rather interesting. In *Mirror of the Earth*, his book on sixteenth-century Flemish landscape painting, Dr. Gibson maintains a similar theory

to that of Ainsworth and de Jesus. In it, Dr. Gibson states that Bruegel was carrying on the tradition of Flemish landscape painting from great predecessors such as Lucas Gassel, Cornelis Massys, Herri met de Bles, and Joachim Patinir.⁶ Bruegel continued the traditions established by these artists, while at the same time revitalizing them by drawing from his own experiences.⁷ Gibson discusses Bruegel's origins as an artist and his journey through Italy, where he believes Bruegel came in contact with Martin de Vos, Jacob Jongelinck, and Giulio Clovio.⁸ These three played a pivotal role in shaping Bruegel's series *The Months*. Martin de Vos was crucial in introducing Bruegel to the local art scene by using his connections with Abraham Ortelius to gain Bruegel local patronage. Guilio Clovio's influence on Bruegel was also noteworthy as he was the one who familiarized Bruegel with books of hours and the format of illuminated calendar cycles while he was working on *Farnese Hours* and the *Townely Lectionary* around 1546 and 1550, respectively.⁹ The third figure, Jacob Jongelinck, was the sculptor and brother of Bruegel's future patron Nicolaes Jongelinck. Jongelinck would have helped Bruegel to secure his brother's commission. Bruegel worked for Hieronymus Cock producing drawings and engravings and at the same time worked for wealthy patrons, such as Jongelinck. For Jongelinck, Bruegel was to create his series of the *Labors of the Months*, considered revered subject matter at the time that adorned many medieval cathedrals, breviaries, and books of hours. In his book *Pleasant Places: The Rustic Landscape from Bruegel to Ruisdael*, Gibson argues that the cycle painted for Jongelinck owes much of its content, formatting, and design to older calendar scenes

⁶ Gibson, *Mirror of the Earth*, 60-75.

⁷ Bruegel drew from the traditions set by artists like Patinir while at the same time introducing his own experiences with nature that came from his travels in Italy. The interaction between Bruegel's predilection with nature and his fondness for the formulas set by Patinir can be seen in the large number of dated drawings and paintings which survive today. Gibson, *Mirror of the Earth*, 60-75.

⁸ Gibson, *Mirror of the Earth*, 61-62.

⁹ Gibson, *Mirror of the Earth*, 63.

in books of hours.¹⁰ One particular book of hours that may have been an influence, *Très Riches Heures*, may have been in the Netherlands sometime after 1500 and most likely in the possession of Margaret of Austria.¹¹ Gibson believes the five extant paintings in Bruegel's series created for Jongelinck represent less than half of the twelve that would have made up the complete calendar series. Gibson uses the example of *Harvesters* to address the issue of details within the landscapes being associated with more than one month raised by Charles de Tolnay and others. Although previously it has been suggested that *Harvesters* represents August and September as well as July and August, Gibson believes that neither combination is probable and feels that it is more than likely solely a representation of August.¹² The identification of the other panels following the two-month scheme raises similar difficulties. To the contrary, once a single-month scheme is applied to the series, a clearer image of the panels and their possible orientation becomes more evident.

Dr. Gibson also points to the size of the other series Jongelinck was commissioning at the times by other artists as further support there were twelve panels in *The Months*. Jongelinck was not afraid to spend money, therefore commissioning ten canvases from Frans Floris' depicting the *Labors of Hercules* and a large landscape by Gillis van Conixloo was not outside of his purview. One of the Frans Floris series on the Labors of Hercules was similar in number to that of *The Months*. Gibson believes that Jongelinck's tastes were driven by his strong, humanist

¹⁰ Gibson, *Pleasant Places: The Rustic Landscape from Bruegel to Ruisdael*, 121.

¹¹ From the time the Limbourg Brothers created the *Très Riches Heures* c. 1410 to the time it was in the Netherlands in 1500, it had already inspired many artists such as Alexander and Simon Bening to produce prayer books well into the sixteenth century. Gibson, *Mirror of the Earth*, 70.

¹² August is most likely the panel being represented versus the combinations of July and August or August and September, according to Gibson, for several reasons. August is the month most commonly associated with the harvest. The term *oogst* and *oogstmaand* are associated with "Harvest" and "Harvest Month" and are designations of August in the Flemish language. Additionally, the term for July is "Hay Month". The lack of haymaking would rule out the pairing of July and August. *Harvesters* does not possess the sowing scenes commonly found in depictions of September, which would also rule out the pairing of August and September. Gibson, *Mirror of the Earth*, 70.

predilections. He may have been attempting to portray his suburban villa as a contemporary analog for a classical villa. Bruegel's paintings would act as a more modernized version of frescos.

After thorough analysis into the origin and history behind the evolution of *The Months*, the question still lingers: how many panels were there in the original series? As mentioned above, there are those who believe that there were twelve, while the preeminent Bruegel scholar, Charles de Tolnay, steadfastly believed that only six panels existed.¹³ I have battled with this question for several years looking through countless sources and pouring over numerous books and articles, both modern and contemporary regarding Bruegel. Scholars remain divided on the subject. In personal correspondence, Dr. Gibson continued to express difficulty with accepting the theory that Bruegel painted two months per panel as artists working in the tradition of labors of the months had traditionally portrayed them in separate scenes. The only evidence to the contrary to surface comes from the John and Alice Steiner Collection in the form of a small watercolor scene, most likely by Joos de Momper the Younger (Fig 104).¹⁴ This small work on paper depicts a country scene very similar to that of Bruegel's *Gloomy Day*.¹⁵ This example of two months being represented in the same scene is the strongest evidence to support the six panel theory and was showcased in an article by Hans J. van Miegroet. In his article, Miegroet cited the watercolor as well as arguments about specific labors showing up in such a way that they could be interpreted as two months. However, Miegroet appeared to be less than confident in his

¹³ Buchanan, "The Collection of Nicolaes Jongelincx: II The 'Months' by Pieter Bruegel the Elder," 543.

¹⁴ Ainsworth, Maryan W., and Keith Christiansen, *From Van Eyck to Bruegel: Early Netherlandish Painting in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 390.

¹⁵ The attribution was, at one point given to Pieter Stevens, court painter to Rudolf II and a collector of Bruegel's work. However, once the watercolor scene came into the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the attribution came under some scrutiny and was ultimately changed to Joos de Momper the Younger, a contemporary of Stevens. Miegroet, "'The Twelve Months' Reconsidered: How a Drawing by Pieter Stevens Clarifies a Bruegel Enigma," 33-34.

arguments. Also working against van Miegroet is the fact that this small ink drawing, which appears to be a preparatory drawing, has no counterpart or completion. To date, there are no other works that complete a series of six paintings either by Joos de Momper the Younger or any other contemporary artist. That is the key component, “contemporary artist.” Looking at what artists in and around Antwerp were doing during the time Bruegel was active provides key evidence to support the argument that labors of the month series were most popular in the Medieval books of hours format of twelve independent scenes. This is seen in the works of Hans Bol, Petrus Furnius, Julius Goltzius, Jan van de Velde as well as many other artists, all of whom produced series depicting the labors of the months with twelve individual scenes. Through these comparisons to contemporary artists, sources of Bruegel’s inspiration, and analysis of imagery within the compositions, I have come to the final conclusion that there were, in fact, twelve original panels in the series versus the often written about six panels.

In assessing the scholarship and research on the subject of whether there are six panels or twelve, I find that Dr. Gibson’s views to be the most compelling. Dr. Gibson has made a very solid argument for Bruegel looking back to traditions of representing calendar cycles in books of hours. These are done in series of twelve, not in six pairs like many other scholars believe.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

There are many reasons why I believe that there were originally twelve paintings in *The Months* and not six. To begin, Bruegel was following a long tradition of representing the labors of the months.¹ Bruegel's series of *The Months* is closely related to the calendar cycles produced by manuscript artists, like the Limbourg Brothers and Simon Bening. The relationship to books of hours goes somewhat further when we compare Bruegel's *Gloomy Day* with the *February* page of Simon Bening's *Munich-Montserrat Hours*. Bruegel takes the depicted labor from Bening's as well as its composition, reverses it, and then elaborates on it.² This connection to the month of February in Bening's book of hours tends to make me believe that the *Gloomy Day* (Fig 9), in fact, represents February, not March nor a combination of the two. Moreover, the figures at the right in *The Gloomy Day* all seem to represent events that take place in February. The man with the caldron on his head carrying a staff with a candle represents the Feast of St. Blaise, which occurs on the third of February. The man and woman eating waffles with the young child wearing the paper crown represent Shrove Tuesday which takes place forty-six days before Easter Sunday. During 1564, the year Bruegel was most likely working on the series, Shrove Tuesday fell on the fifteenth of February. Additionally, the figures cutting pollard vines for use as building materials is a very common theme found in several books of hours pages depicting February. If that is the case, this would mean that the panel for March is missing as well as seven other panels.

¹ Silver, *Pieter Bruegel*, 321-332.

² In the *Munich-Montserrat Hours*, Simon Bening depicts farmers in the process of preparing grape vines, sowing seeds, and plowing fields all in front of a river scene. The weather appears to be turning and Bening demonstrates an ability to draw the viewer's eye with a strong diagonal. Silver, *Pieter Bruegel*, 328.

There are several historians who, like me, believe that there are seven paintings missing from Bruegel's cycle. One problem that I have discovered, however, is that of all the panels, only one pair matches up at the edges, *Hunters in the Snow* and *Gloomy Day*.³ The snowcapped mountains shrouded with the wintery storm connect the two images visually while the labors being acted out connect them temporally.⁴ It is my belief that while these two appear to match up visually there is a missing painting that would have gone between them.

Numerous scholars believe that *Hunters in the Snow* represents either January or a combination of months.⁵ Based on the imagery within the painting, the extant paintings, Bruegel's methods, and the traditions of depicting the labors of the months in pictorial calendar cycles, I believe that *Hunters in the Snow* is instead a depiction of December. The convention that carries itself through hundreds of years of traditional labors of the months depictions and calendar cycles is the butchering and singeing of pigs. A family stands outside of an inn and does just that as the group of men and dogs pass and traverse down the hill in Bruegel's snowy scene. Pieter Brueghel the Younger even produces a similar painting (Fig 94) based off of drawings and prints produced by Bruegel the Elder of a winter pig butchering.⁶ What is missing from this painting to make it a combination of two months are the labors. If it were a combination of December and January, we would expect to see people chopping wood to be used in the fire or people warming themselves by the fire. The only fire that is seen in *Hunters in the Snow* is the one being used to burn the hair off of the pig that has been butchered. This means that the

³ Silver, *Pieter Bruegel*, 327.

⁴ Silver, *Pieter Bruegel*, 327.

⁵ There are those who believe that the painting represents a January/February combination. Others feel that it is a December/January combination due to the Netherlands failure to adopt the Gregorian calendar until 1582. Until then, the New Year began at Easter. Buchanan, "The Collection of Nicolaes Jongelinc: II The 'Months' by Pieter Bruegel the Elder," 543-544.

⁶ Klaus Ertz, *Pieter Brueghel der Jungere, 1564 - 1637/38: die Gemälde mit kritischem Oeuvrekatalog* (Lingen: Luca Verlag, 2000), 570.

January scene is a missing panel in Bruegel's twelve month cycle. This is the snowy scene that would match up to what I believe to be the first painting in the series that still exists, the *Gloomy Day*.

Following *The Gloomy Day* would be the month of Spring. According to those who believe that the series contains only six paintings, the painting that would be next would have represented April and May. However, adopting the belief that there are twelve, it would appear that the next two paintings are missing. At some point, it is possible that the series contained one of these paintings because it would have needed a spring scene to complete the theme.

Unfortunately, sometime around 1659, while in the possession of Rudolf II and Archduke Leopold Wilhelm of Austria, the panel that I believe represented spring, then owned by Archduke Ernst went missing. The only documents that make mention of the missing painting are two inventories taken at different times, one in 1612 and the other in 1659.⁷ Nothing exists that tells us what this missing panel looked like or where it went. However, one can guess what Bruegel would have chosen to portray based on themes he had already chosen in existing panels, works that he had already produced and common trends in depictions of labors of the months.

Looking at common trends in the labors of the month for March, we can assume that Bruegel would have chosen something that emphasized the work of the peasant class. Peasants working in gardens and felling trees would most likely have been included in his depiction

⁷ Emperor Rudolf II, an avid collector of the work of Bruegel, acquired the paintings following the dissemination of Archduke Ernst of Austria's possessions from probate. In the probate inventory dated July 17th, 1595, the paintings are listed as "*Sechs taffell, von 12 Monathenn des Jars von Bruegel (Six paintings, of 12 months of the year by Bruegel)*." Following Rudolf II's death in 1612, the collection passed to Archduke Leopold Wilhelm of Austria who listed them in his 1659 inventory as "*Fünff grosse Stuckh einer Grossen, warin die Zeithen desz Jahrs von Öhlfarb auf Holz...Original vom alten Brögel (Five large paintings, one great. Painted on wood showing the seasons of the years... original from Bruegel the Elder)*." Ainsworth, Maryan W., and Keith Christiansen, *From Van Eyck to Bruegel: Early Netherlandish Painting in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 386.

of March.⁸ A scene just like this can be found in the *Golf Book of Hours* where a peasant works in a garden and two other figures work nearby to chop down a tree (Fig 105). It can also be found in a series of engravings by Gerard van Groeningen and Petrus Furnius from Hieronymus Cock's *Aux Quatre Vents* in 1574.⁹ It is also conceivable that Bruegel would have put figures representing Easter into the painting to relate back to the three figures in *Gloomy Day* which represented Shrove Tuesday. In his May scene, it is unlikely that Bruegel would have glorified the traditional theme of May boat riding, but instead more likely that he would have placed the boat riders, if there were any, in a place of secondary importance much like he did with the middle distance figures in *Harvesters*.¹⁰ A strong possibility for the month of May would be imagery of milking in the fields as Bruegel was attracted to depicting the working class and their labors of the months. More possibilities can be derived from Bruegel's 1565 drawing of *Spring* where the reveling, upper class figures who ride in May boats and enjoy amorous behaviors have been pushed into the background while the more industrious activities like gardening and sheep shearing take place towards the front of the image. Gardening would happen in *March* while the month of April is commonly represented in other books of hours by images of figures driving sheep into the pasture as well as the milking of livestock. Sheep shearing would be included in the *June* panel.

I believe that July and August are the extant panels of *Haymaking* and *Harvesters*. The month of July is commonly represented by making, raking, and loading hay into a wagon. All of these activities can be seen in the *Haymaking* panel. These activities are not only common in

⁸ Iain Buchanan included a chart detailing the illustrations of seven different books of hours in his article on *The Months*. Buchanan, "The Collection of Nicolaes Jongelincx: II The 'Months' by Pieter Bruegel the Elder," 550.

⁹ Hollstein, *New Hollstein Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, 1450-1700: 24 Vols.*, 181-183.

¹⁰ Many of the figures in the middle distance play games or entertain themselves while the peasants in the foreground are hard at work. Ainsworth, Maryan W., and Keith Christiansen, *From Van Eyck to Bruegel: Early Netherlandish Painting in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 386-391.

manuscript form such as *Tres Riches Heures* and the *Hennessey Hours* but can be seen in other forms of labors of the months represented in calendar cycles from other regions. A small enamel from the workshop of Jean II Pénicaut (Fig 106) depicts this same idea of workers in a field cutting and raking hay. The French enamel work dates somewhere around 1531 to 1549 and is currently part of three such examples in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection in New York. Additionally, a German calendar, printed by Johann Schultes in 1637, also depicts a man and woman cutting and raking hay in the month of July (Fig 107).¹¹ As for the *Harvesters*, the cutting of the grain is a very common theme for the month of August found in numerous other sources, including but not limited to the *Trés Riches Heures*.¹² I believe September to be another missing panel. What would be commonly displayed in a *September* scene is plowing or sowing. We know that Bruegel has portrayed figures plowing fields in previous works as well as sowing in *The Parable of the Sower* (Fig 108) in 1557 and *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* (Fig 109) in 1558.

The *October* panel is most likely the *Return of the Herd* due to two themes occurring within the image. One is the theme revolving around the herd of oxen being driven across the foreground and into the grouping of structures on the left middle-ground of the composition. These oxen are being driven in to either be sold or to be butchered, two themes that are common in the month of October. They can be found in the *Da Costa Hours*, *Ellis Hours*, and the *Rothschild Hours* (Fig 110).¹³ The second theme being represented, though in the distance, is the more common wine harvest. Johan Schulte's calendar from 1637, along with many of the other

¹¹ Many of these calendars were printed as well as almanacs. Each one depicted the same theme for July, the theme of cutting and raking hay. Dorothy Alexander and Walter L. Strauss, *The German Single-Leaf Woodcut 1600 - 1700: A Pictorial Catalogue* (New York: Abaris Books, 1977), 565.

¹² Dückers, Rob, and Pieter Roelofs. *The Limbourg Brothers: Reflections on the Origins and the Legacy of Three Illuminators from Nijmegen*, 66-68.

¹³ Buchanan, "The Collection of Nicolaes Jongelincq: II The 'Months' by Pieter Bruegel the Elder," 150.

calendars from Germany, simply show grapes being pressed or gathered but the concept of wine harvesting is quite common in October (Fig 111).¹⁴

When it comes to the missing *November* scene from Bruegel's original twelve month cycle, I believe multiple themes could have been included again much like they were in *Gloomy Day*. The threshing of flax is commonly seen in sources upon which Bruegel would have depended. The *Da Costa Hours*, *Ellis Hours* and the *Rothschild Hours* all show peasants at work spreading and thrashing flax to be used in the production of clothing (Fig 112). The theme is so popular it shows up in calendars and woodblocks across Europe (Fig 113).¹⁵ With his treatment of space, it is possible that Bruegel could have included another scene popular at the time, the feeding of pigs. This theme, though not as popular as the threshing of flax, does show up in important places such as the *November* page created by Jean Colombe in the *Trés Riches Heures*, as well as the print series by Gerard van Groeningen and Petrus Furnius (Fig 61).

With the missing panels and the extant panels that we have today, it is just a matter of re-examining the traditions of labors of the months depicted in calendar cycles to understand that Bruegel would have no reason to create six paintings representing twelve months. If he were going to create a painting of seasons, he would have produced four paintings. That is a genre that he is familiar with and has produced in the past. But where would Bruegel have gotten the idea of creating the paintings in a continuous, frieze-like format? It is possible that he acquired this idea while traveling in Italy. Two of his suggested routes into Rome would have taken him through Trento where he could have either heard of or seen in person the Cycle of Months

¹⁴ Other depictions from woodcuts in the region show the same theme of wine being pressed or grapes being harvested. Woodblocks designed after German artist Sebald Beham show men drinking while in the wine press. Hollstein, *New Hollstein Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, 1450-1700: 24 Vols.*, 250.

¹⁵ Hollstein, *New Hollstein Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, 1450-1700: 24 Vols.*, 250.

Fresco in the Buonconsiglio Castle.¹⁶ However, this theory is purely speculative considering the only evidence we have of Bruegel's journey through France and Northern Italy are drawings that he labeled and dated. I do believe, based on his drawings and the work produced after his return, that Bruegel may have seen the frescos at Buonconsiglio Castle. These would undoubtedly have influenced him in his production of the twelve month series of the *Months*.

Carel Van Mander described Pieter Bruegel the Elder as “swallowing up the mountains and cliffs, and, upon coming home,... spit them forth upon his canvas and panels...” I believe that Bruegel did more than that. From observing the trends of pictorial calendar cycles and representations of the labors of the months, he was able to produce one of the greatest collection of works to come from the Northern Renaissance. Unfortunately, that collection did not last for very long in its intended format. Bruegel's penchant for attracting patrons with financial problems led to its dispersal and ultimately to the loss of more than half of the series. The concept of missing paintings is a hard one to grasp but it is perfectly plausible. I believe that many art historians have accepted the six painting theory because it is easier to accept and condone as one missing painting is not as big of a problem as seven. But, going back and looking at the original documentation of the series in conjunction with the prototypical examples, contemporary works and works produced by Pieter Brueghel the Younger and others who came after Bruegel the Elder, a much clearer picture emerges which reveals that twelve paintings did exist which were acquired by the City of Antwerp and then split in half. One half went to Archduke Ernst of Austria (where an additional panel was lost) and the other half remains a complete mystery. However, as we have seen countless times in the history of art, missing works of art have a tendency of reemerging in the most unusual places at the most unexpected time.

¹⁶ See footnote 13 in chapter 1 for descriptions of Bruegel's possible routes through Northern Italy.

ILLUSTRATIONS



Figure 1
Landscape
Pieter Bruegel the Elder
1552-54
Engraving on paper
24 x 35 cm
The British Museum, London, England



Figure 2
Landscape with Bears
Pieter Bruegel the Elder
1554
Pen and Brown Ink on Paper
27.3 x 43 cm
Prague National Gallery, Prague, Czech Republic



Figure 3
Section of *Marchionatus Sacri Romani Imperii*
Claes Jansz. Visscher
1624
Pen and Brown Ink on Paper
52.0 x 61.5 cm
Private Art Collection of Nicholas and J'Nan Erker, Lee's Summit, Missouri



Figure 4
Cycle of the Months in Castello del Buonconsiglio
The Master of Bohemia
c. 1400
Fresco
Castello del Buonconsiglio, Trento, Italy



Figure 5
Hunters in the Snow
Pieter Bruegel the Elder
1565
Oil on Panel
117 cm × 162 cm
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria



Figure 6
The Census at Bethlehem
Pieter Bruegel the Elder
1566
Oil on Panel
116 cm × 164.5 cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels



Figure 7
Detail of *Hunters in the Snow*
Pieter Bruegel the Elder
1565
Oil on Panel
117 cm × 162 cm
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria



Figure 8
Landscape with a Fortified City
Pieter Bruegel the Elder
1553
Ink on Paper
26.3 cm × 33.3 cm
The British Museum, London, England



Figure 9
The Gloomly Day
Pieter Bruegel the Elder
1565
Oil on Panel
118 cm × 163 cm
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria



Figure 10
The Gloomy Day detail
Pieter Bruegel the Elder
1565
Oil on Panel
118 cm × 163 cm
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria



Figure 11
The Gloomy Day detail
Pieter Bruegel the Elder
1565
Oil on Panel
118 cm × 163 cm
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria



Figure 12
Battle Between Carnival and Lent
Pieter Bruegel the Elder
1559
Oil on Panel
118 cm × 164 cm
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria



Figure 13
Haymaking
Pieter Bruegel the Elder
1565
Oil on Panel
117 cm × 161 cm
Lobkowitz Palace at Prague Castle, Prague, Czech Republic



Figure 14
The Harvesters
Pieter Bruegel the Elder
1565
Oil on Panel
118 cm × 161 cm
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Figure 15
The Land of Cockaigne detail
Pieter Bruegel the Elder
1567
Oil on Panel
52 cm × 78 cm
Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Germany



Figure 16
Head of a Yawning Peasant
Pieter Bruegel the Elder
1569
Oil on Panel
9 cm × 12.5 cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels



Figure 17
Return of the Herd
Pieter Bruegel the Elder
1565
Oil on Panel
117 cm × 159 cm
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria

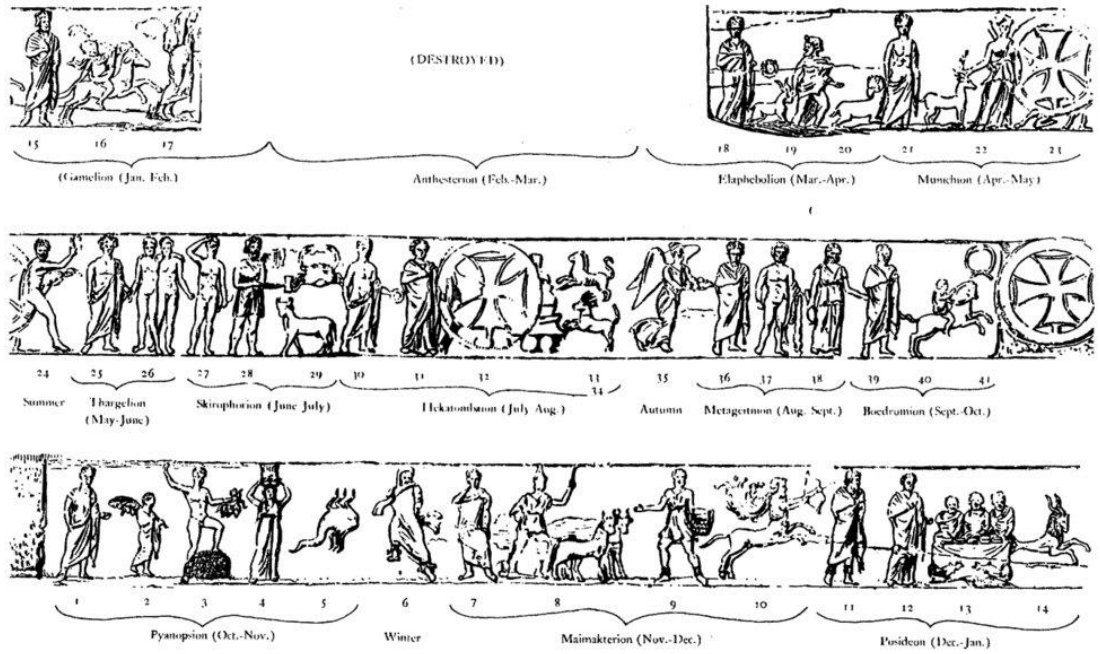


Figure 18
Labors Frieze
 Church of Hagios Eleutherios
 3rd c. B.C.



Figure 19
Roman Months Mosaic
St. Romain-en-Gal
3rd c. A.D.
Mosaic
Gallo-Roman Museum of Lyon, France



Figure 20
Fulda Sacramentary Fragment
Unknown Artist
980 C.E.
Illumination on Vellum
Staatsbibliothek Bamberg, Germany



Figure 21
Archivolt at Ste. Croix in Bordeaux
Unknown Artist
Bordeaux, France
11th – 12th c.
Archivolt
Ste. Croix Cathedral, Bordeaux



Figure 22
Archivolt at St. Leger in Cognac
Unknown Artist
Cognac, France
12th c.
Archivolt
St. Leger Cathedral, Cognac

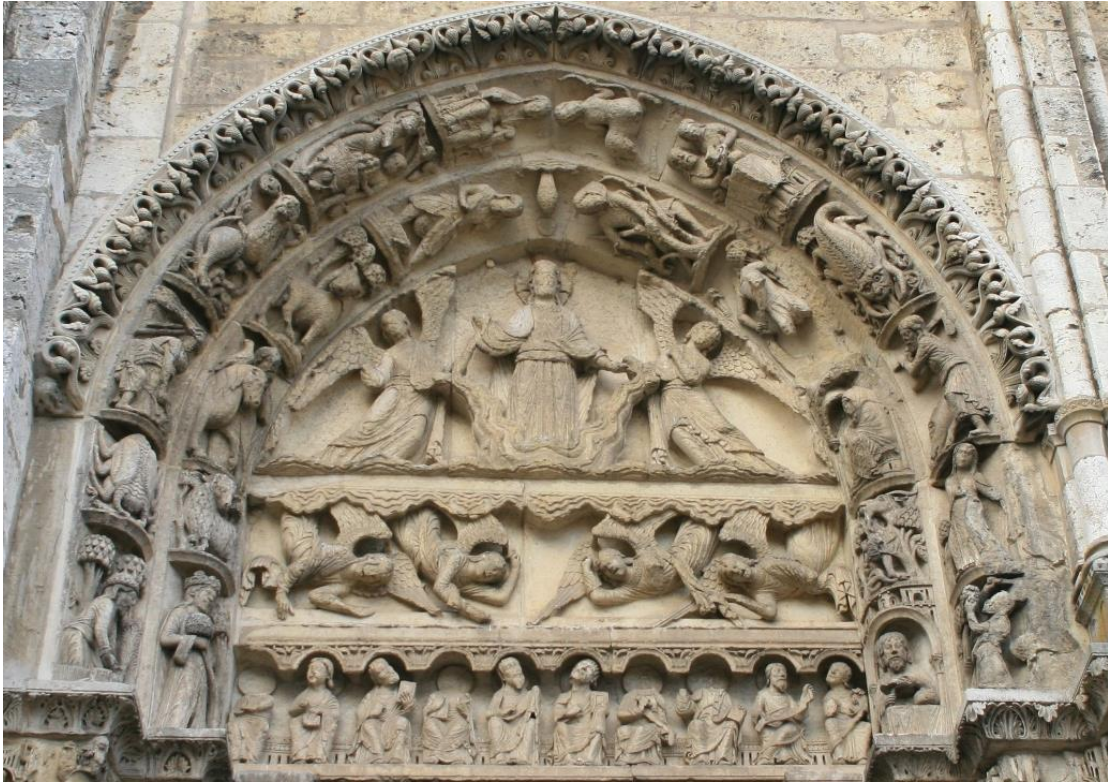


Figure 23
Portal at Chartres Cathedral
Unknown Artist
Chartres, France
c. 1200
Portal
Chartres Cathedral, Chartres



Figure 24
Portal at Chartres Cathedral
Unknown Artist
Chartres, France
c. 1200
Portal
Chartres Cathedral, Chartres



Figure 25
January, Cycle of the Months in Castello del Buonconsiglio
The Master of Bohemia
c. 1400
Fresco
Castello del Buonconsiglio, Trento, Italy



Figure 26
February, Cycle of the Months in Castello del Buonconsiglio
The Master of Bohemia
c. 1400
Fresco
Castello del Buonconsiglio, Trento, Italy



Figure 27
April, Cycle of the Months in Castello del Buonconsiglio
The Master of Bohemia
c. 1400
Fresco
Castello del Buonconsiglio, Trento, Italy



Figure 28
May, Cycle of the Months in Castello del Buonconsiglio
The Master of Bohemia
c. 1400
Fresco
Castello del Buonconsiglio, Trento, Italy



Figure 29
June, Cycle of the Months in Castello del Buonconsiglio
The Master of Bohemia
c. 1400
Fresco
Castello del Buonconsiglio, Trento, Italy



Figure 30
July, Cycle of the Months in Castello del Buonconsiglio
The Master of Bohemia
c. 1400
Fresco
Castello del Buonconsiglio, Trento, Italy



Figure 31
January, Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry
Paul and Jean de Limbourg
c. 1410
Miniature on Vellum
22.5 cm x 13.6 cm
Musée Condé, Chantilly, France



Figure 32
February, Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry
 Paul de Limbourg
 c. 1410
 Miniature on Vellum
 22.5 cm x 13.6 cm
 Musée Condé, Chantilly, France



Figure 33
March, Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry
Paul de Limbourg and Jean Colombe
c. 1410
Miniature on Vellum
22.5 cm x 13.6 cm
Musée Condé, Chantilly, France



Figure 34
April, Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry
Jean de Limbourg
c. 1410
Miniature on Vellum
22.5 cm x 13.6 cm
Musée Condé, Chantilly, France



Figure 35
May, Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry
Jean de Limbourg
c. 1410
Miniature on Vellum
22.5 cm x 13.6 cm
Musée Condé, Chantilly, France



Figure 36
June, Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry
Paul de Limbourg
c. 1410
Miniature on Vellum
22.5 cm x 13.6 cm
Musée Condé, Chantilly, France



Figure 37
July, Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry
Paul de Limbourg
c. 1410
Miniature on Vellum
22.5 cm x 13.6 cm
Musée Condé, Chantilly, France



Figure 38
August, Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry
Jean de Limbourg
c. 1410
Miniature on Vellum
22.5 cm x 13.6 cm
Musée Condé, Chantilly, France



Figure 39
September, Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry
Paul de Limbourg and Jean Colombe
c. 1410
Miniature on Vellum
22.5 cm x 13.6 cm
Musée Condé, Chantilly, France



Figure 40
October, Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry
Paul de Limbourg and Jean Colombe (?)
c. 1410
Miniature on Vellum
22.5 cm x 13.6 cm
Musée Condé, Chantilly, France

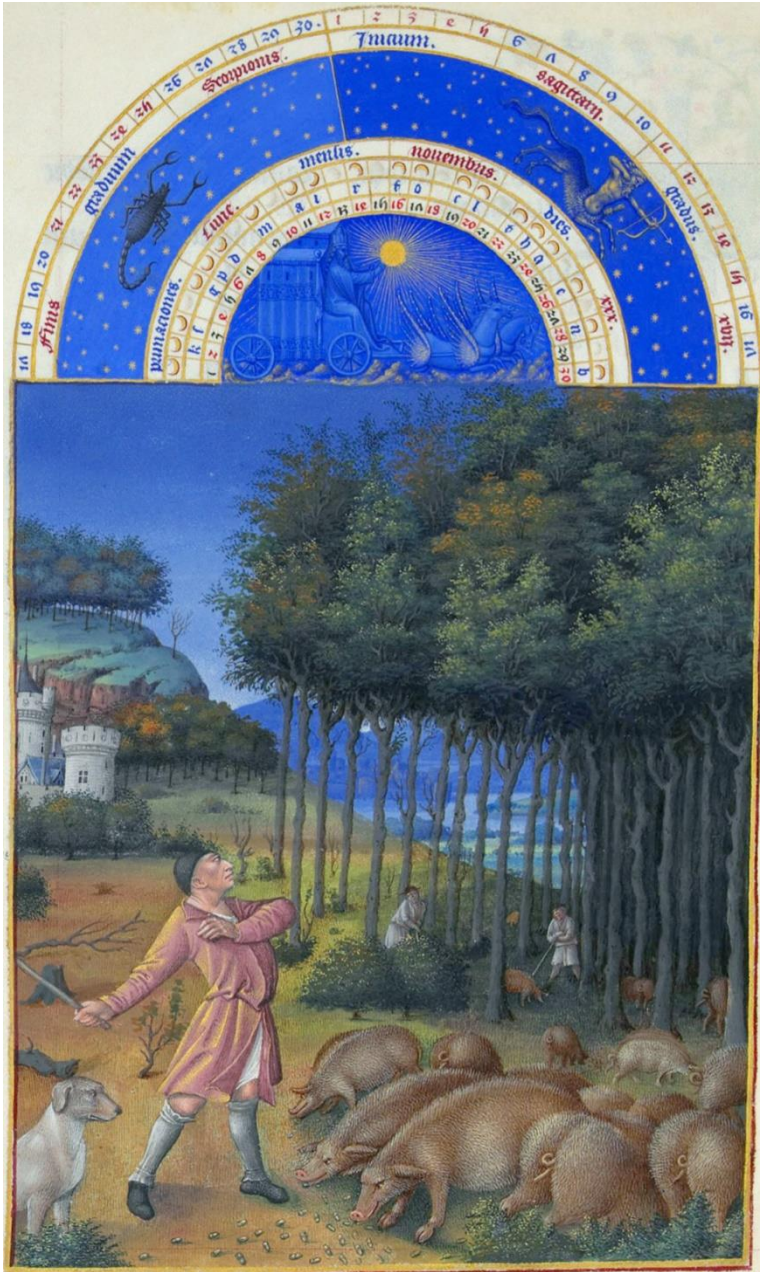


Figure 41
November, Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry
Jean Colombe
c. 1485
Miniature on Vellum
22.5 cm x 13.6 cm
Musée Condé, Chantilly, France



Figure 42
December, Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry
Paul de Limbourg
c. 1410
Miniature on Vellum
22.5 cm x 13.6 cm
Musée Condé, Chantilly, France



Figure 43
February, Grimani Breviary
Simon Bening
c. 1510
Miniature on Vellum
28 cm x 21.5 cm
Library of San Marco, Venice



Figure 44
July, Da Costa Hours
Simon Bening
c. 1515
Miniature on Vellum
17.2 cm x 12.5 cm
The Morgan Library and Museum, New York



Figure 45
August, Da Costa Hours
Simon Bening
c. 1515
Miniature on Vellum
17.2 cm x 12.5 cm
The Morgan Library and Museum, New York



Figure 46
December, Da Costa Hours
Simon Bening
c. 1515
Miniature on Vellum
17.2 cm x 12.5 cm
The Morgan Library and Museum, New York



Figure 47
December, Golf Book of Hours
Simon Bening
c. 1530
Miniature on Vellum
15.2 cm. x 20.3 cm.
The British Library, London, England



Figure 48
Small Landscapes
Master of the Small Landscapes
1559
Etching
19.3 cm x 13.4 cm
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Figure 49
Large Landscape
Pieter Bruegel the Elder
1556
Etching
19.3 cm x 13.4 cm
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Figure 50
January
Gerard van Groeningen and Petrus Furnius
c. 1574
Etching and Engraving
19.8 cm x 24.3 cm



Figure 51
February
Gerard van Groeningen and Petrus Furnius
c. 1574
Etching and Engraving
19.8 cm x 24.3 cm



Figure 52
March
Gerard van Groeningen and Petrus Furnius
c. 1574
Etching and Engraving
19.8 cm x 24.3 cm



Figure 53
April
Gerard van Groeningen and Petrus Furnius
c. 1574
Etching and Engraving
19.8 cm x 24.3 cm



Figure 54
May
Gerard van Groeningen and Petrus Furnius
c. 1574
Etching and Engraving
19.8 cm x 24.3 cm



Figure 55

June

Gerard van Groeningen and Petrus Furnius

c. 1574

Etching and Engraving

19.8 cm x 24.3 cm



Figure 56
Calendrier des Bergers, June
Unknown Artist
1497
Woodcut Print
15 cm x 22cm
Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris



Figure 57
July
Gerard van Groeningen and Petrus Furnius
c. 1574
Etching and Engraving
19.8 cm x 24.3 cm



Figure 58
August
Gerard van Groeningen and Petrus Furnius
c. 1574
Etching and Engraving
19.8 cm x 24.3 cm



Figure 59
September
Gerard van Groeningen and Petrus Furnius
c. 1574
Etching and Engraving
19.8 cm x 24.3 cm



Figure 60
October
Gerard van Groeningen and Petrus Furnius
c. 1574
Etching and Engraving
19.8 cm x 24.3 cm



Figure 61
November
Gerard van Groeningen and Petrus Furnius
c. 1574
Etching and Engraving
19.8 cm x 24.3 cm



(738/1)

Figure 62
December
Gerard van Groeningen and Petrus Furnius
c. 1574
Etching and Engraving
19.8 cm x 24.3 cm



Figure 63
Labors of the Months Enamels: January, February, March, and April
Martial Courteys
c. 1570
Enamelware
Varying Dimensions
The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles



Figure 64
Labors of the Months Enamels: May, June, July, and August
Martial Courteys
c. 1570
Enamelware
Varying Dimensions
The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles



Figure 65
Labors of the Months Enamels: September, October, November, and December.
Martial Courteys
c. 1570
Enamelware
Varying Dimensions
The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles



Figure 66
January
Hans Bol
c. 1580
Pen and Brown Ink on Paper
14 cm. in diameter
Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands



Figure 67
February
Hans Bol
c. 1580
Pen and Brown Ink on Paper
14 cm. in Diameter
Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands



Figure 68

March

Hans Bol

c. 1580

Pen and Brown Ink on Paper

14 cm. in Diameter

Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands



Figure 69

April

Hans Bol

c. 1580

Pen and Brown Ink on Paper

14 cm. in Diameter

Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands



Figure 70
Spring
Pieter Bruegel the Elder
c. 1565
Pen and Brown Ink on Paper
22.5 cm. x 28.3 cm
Albertina, Vienna, Austria



Figure 71
May
Hans Bol
c. 1580
Pen and Brown Ink on Paper
14 cm. in Diameter
Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands



Figure 72

June

Hans Bol

c. 1580

Pen and Brown Ink on Paper

14 cm. in Diameter

Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands



Figure 73

July

Hans Bol

c. 1580

Pen and Brown Ink on Paper

14 cm. in Diameter

Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands



Figure 74

August

Hans Bol

c. 1580

Pen and Brown Ink on Paper

14 cm. in Diameter

Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands

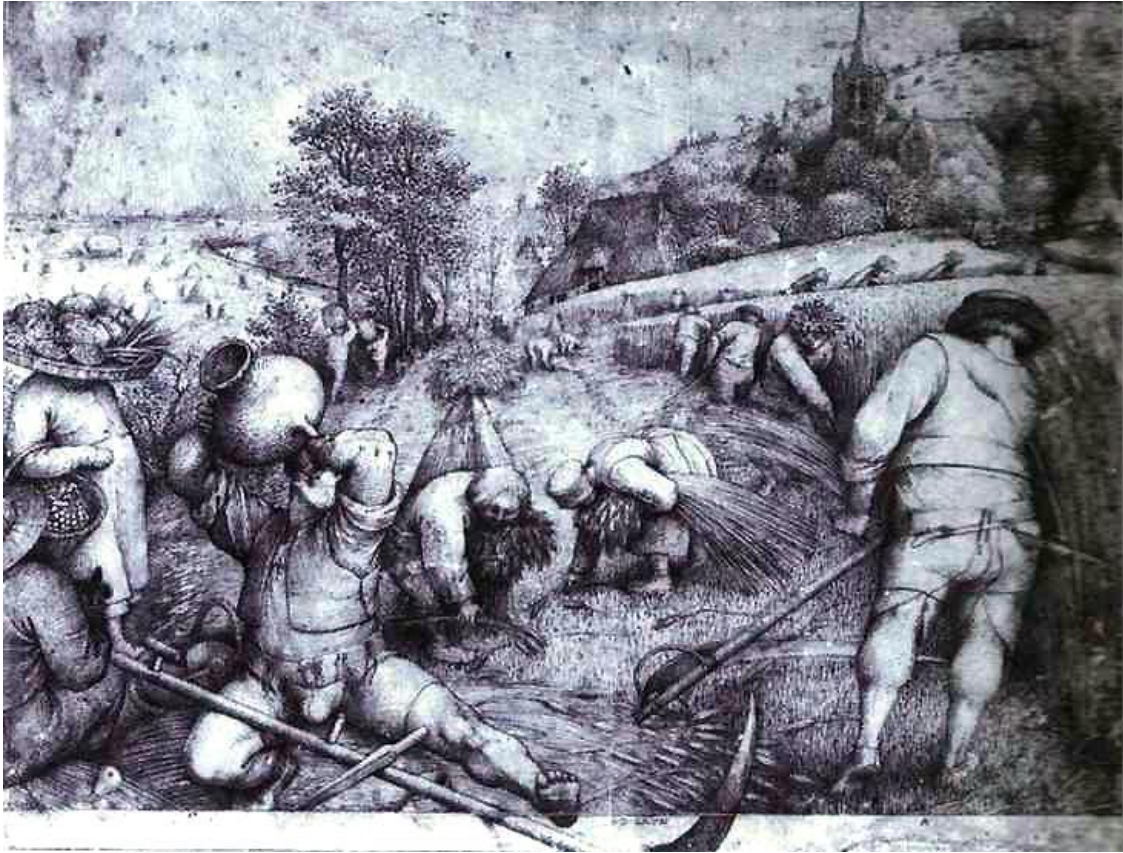


Figure 75
Summer
Pieter Bruegel the Elder
c. 1565
Pen and Brown Ink on Paper
22.5 cm. x 28.3 cm
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Figure 76
September
Hans Bol
c. 1580
Pen and Brown Ink on Paper
14 cm. in Diameter
Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands



Figure 77
October
Hans Bol
c. 1580
Pen and Brown Ink on Paper
14 cm. in Diameter
Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands



Figure 78

November

Hans Bol

c. 1580

Pen and Brown Ink on Paper

14 cm. in Diameter

Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands



Figure 79
December
Hans Bol
c. 1580
Pen and Brown Ink on Paper
14 cm. in Diameter
Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands



Figure 80
December, January, February, and October
Jacob Grimmer
c. 1580
Oil on panel, circular
18.1 cm.in diameter
Christie's London, King Street, London



Figure 81
La Fenaison. La Moisson
Jacob Grimmer
c. 1580
Oil on panel, circular
18.1 cm.in diameter
Christie's London, King Street, London



Figure 82
January
Julius Golzius, Gillis Mostaert, and Hans van Luyck
c. 1571
Engraving on Paper
169 mm × h 124 mm
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands



Figure 83
February
Julius Golzius, Gillis Mostaert, and Hans van Luyck
c. 1571
Engraving on Paper
169 mm × h 124 mm
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands



Figure 84
March
Julius Golzius, Gillis Mostaert, and Hans van Luyck
c. 1571
Engraving on Paper
169 mm × h 124 mm
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands



Figure 85

April

Julius Golzius, Gillis Mostaert, and Hans van Luyck

c. 1571

Engraving on Paper

169 mm × h 124 mm

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands



Figure 86

May

Julius Golzius, Gillis Mostaert, and Hans van Luyck

c. 1571

Engraving on Paper

169 mm × h 124 mm

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands



Figure 87

June

Julius Golzius, Gillis Mostaert, and Hans van Luyck

c. 1571

Engraving on Paper

169 mm × h 124 mm

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands



Figure 88

July

Julius Golzius, Gillis Mostaert, and Hans van Luyck

c. 1571

Engraving on Paper

169 mm × h 124 mm

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands



Figure 89
August
Julius Golzius, Gillis Mostaert, and Hans van Luyck
c. 1571
Engraving on Paper
169 mm × h 124 mm
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands



Figure 90
September
Julius Golzius, Gillis Mostaert, and Hans van Luyck
c. 1571
Engraving on Paper
169 mm × h 124 mm
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands



Figure 91
October
Julius Golzius, Gillis Mostaert, and Hans van Luyck
c. 1571
Engraving on Paper
169 mm × h 124 mm
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands



Figure 92
November
Julius Golzius, Gillis Mostaert, and Hans van Luyck
c. 1571
Engraving on Paper
169 mm × h 124 mm
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands



Figure 93
December
Julius Golzius, Gillis Mostaert, and Hans van Luyck
c. 1571
Engraving on Paper
169 mm × h 124 mm
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands



Figure 94
Autumn: An Allegory of One of the Four Seasons
Pieter Brueghel the Younger
1616
Oil on Panel
41cm. x 56.5 cm.
Christie's, New York



Figure 95
Summer
Pieter van der Heyden after Pieter Bruegel the Elder
c. 1565
Engraving; first state of two
22.5 cm. x 28.3 cm
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Figure 96
Summer
Pieter Bruegel the Younger
1590
Oil on Panel
56 cm. x 41 cm.
Private Collection



Figure 97
Summer
Pieter Brueghel the Younger
1623
Oil on Panel
73 cm. x 104.1 cm.
Christie's, New York



Figure 98
Spring
Pieter van der Heyden after Pieter Bruegel the Elder
1570
Engraving
22.5 cm. x 28.3 cm
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Figure 99
Spring
Pieter Brueghel the Younger
c. 1630
Oil on Panel
41.9 cm. × 57.2 cm.
Sotheby's New York



Figure 100
Winter
Hans Bol
c. 1570
Engraving
21.4 cm. × 29.2 cm.
Swann Auction Galleries, New York



Figure 101
Winter Landscape with Peasants
Pieter Brueghel the Younger
c. 1616
Oil on Panel
41.9 cm. × 57.2 cm.
Sotheby's, New York



Figure 102
Grain Harvest
Sebastiaan Vrancx
c. 1610
Oil on Panel
32 cm. × 44 cm.
Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, Russia



Figure 103

Reaping

David Teniers II

c. 1640

Oil on Panel

49.5 cm. x 69.5 cm.

Collection of P. P. Semyonov-Tyan-Shansky, Hermitage, Saint Petersburg, Russia



Figure 104

The Months: February and March

Joos de Momper the Younger

Late 16th c. to early 17th c.

Pen and brown ink and watercolor

15.2 cm. x 20.3 cm.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Figure 105
March, Golf Book of Hours
Simon Bening
Late 16th c. to early 17th c.
Pen and brown ink and watercolor
15.2 cm. x 20.3 cm.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Figure 106

Labors of the Months: Haymaking (July)

The workshop of Jean II Pénicaud

c. 1540

Painted enamel on copper, partly gilt

W. 8.3 cm.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

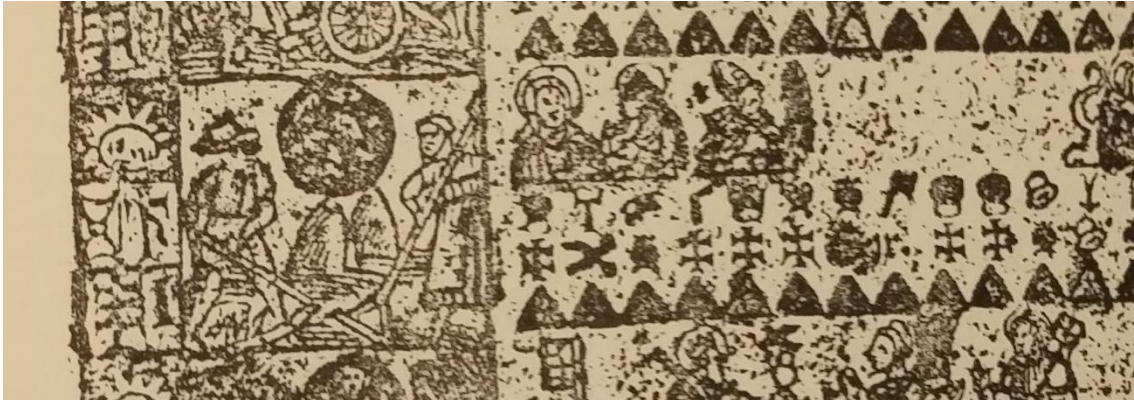


Figure 107
Calendar, July
Johann Schultes
1637
Woodcut
25.4 cm. x 38.1 cm.



Figure 108
Parable of the Sower
Pieter Bruegel the Elder
1557
Oil on Panel
73.7 cm. x 102.9 cm.
Timken Museum of Art, San Diego



Figure 109
Landscape with the Fall of Icarus
Pieter Bruegel the Elder
1558
Oil on Canvas, mounted on Wood
73.5 cm. x 112 cm.
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels



Figure 110
October, Da Costa Hours
Simon Bening
c. 1515
Miniature on Vellum
17.2 cm x 12.5 cm
The Morgan Library and Museum, New York



Figure 111
Calendar, October
Johann Schultes
1637
Woodcut
25.4 cm. x 38.1 cm.



Figure 112
November, Da Costa Hours
Simon Bening
c. 1515
Miniature on Vellum
17.2 cm x 12.5 cm
The Morgan Library and Museum, New York



Figure 113
November, Series of Twelve Months
After Sebald Beham
c. 1591
Woodblock
2.6 cm x 6.5 cm

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