

Figuration and Semiotic Potential



Anthropomorphosis and Its Critics

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Prodigies of Nature, Wonders of the Hand: Political Portents and Divine Artifice in Haarlem ca. 1600

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My essay examines a pair of prints recording the two whales famously stranded on the Dutch littoral in 1598 and 1601 [Figs. 11.1 & 11.2]. Designed or engraved by Hendrick Goltzius and his associates, the premier printmakers in Holland, these monumental broadsheets function exegetically, reading the whales not as political prognostics, but as expressions of divine artifice writ large on the Book of Nature.¹ In truth, it would be more accurate to claim that they substitute one kind of exegetical reading, closely associated with Lutheranism, with another based in the Psalms and the Gospels, but not confessionally bound, and therefore, not overtly political. In order to explain how and why these prints deflect political commentary, I first distinguish them from earlier prints that construe beached whales as political omens portending God's intentions for the new Dutch state. Then, situating the prints within Goltzius's larger project of staging artifice itself as the figure of Christian piety, I further contextualize them by reference to the rhetorical *spelen van sinne* (allegorical verse dramas) regularly performed throughout the Low Countries by civic chambers of rhetoric, with whose discourse of *const* (art, artifice, artisanship) Goltzius was intimately familiar. In passing, I also locate the Goltzius workshop's beached-whale prints within the distinctive socio-political circumstances of Haarlem, where they were produced: this prosperous city had three clear demographics—Mennonites, Catholics, and the Reformed—whose peaceable interaction the city fathers fostered through policies of civic détente, that aimed tactfully and pragmatically to suppress the rhetoric of political difference and religious dissension. As will be obvious, my essay thus inversely complements the topic

1 On the 'Book of Nature' as an expression of the belief that all of creation, having been written by the finger of God, accords with Holy Writ and likewise certifies the existence of an all-powerful *Deus Artifex*, see Jorink E., *Het Boeck der Natuere: Nederlandse geleerden en de wonderen van Gods Schepping, 1575–1715* (Leiden: 2007), esp. 13–185; and idem, *Reading the Book of Nature in the Dutch Golden Age, 1575–1715*, trans. A. J. Vanderjagt, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 191 (Leiden – Boston: 2010), esp. 1–179. On divine artifice as expressed in the wonders of creation, and the allied conception of nature as artist, see Daston L. – Park K., *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150–1750* (New York: 1998) 255–301.



FIGURE 11.1 *Jacob Matham after Hendrick Goltzius, Beached Whale in the Vicinity of Katwijk (1598). Engraving, 31.7 × 42.8 cm. London, British Museum. By permission of the British Museum.*



FIGURE 11.2 *Jacob Matham, Beached Whale at Wijk aan Zee (1601). Engraving, 31 × 43 cm. London, British Museum. By permission of the British Museum.*

of this volume—anthropomorphosis—by examining two examples of partial resistance to this impulse: the prints’ designers and commentators, instead of apprehending nature solely in human terms, choose also to appreciate its wonders per se without personifying them. They treat them as indices of divine artifice, which is most clearly discerned in the prodigious, as opposed to portentous, works of nature. In conclusion, I offer as a counter-example one of Goltzius’s signature *poëterijen* (poetic fictions), the *Venus, Bacchus, and Ceres* of 1593, a *penwerck* (pen-work) replete with natural prodigies that are viewed through an anthropomorphic lens [Fig. 11.11].

The earlier of the two prints, *Beached Whale in the Vicinity of Katwijk*, engraved by Jacob Matham after a large drawing executed *nae t’ leven* (after the life) by his stepfather, the celebrated draughtsman Hendrick Goltzius, depicts the whale beached at Berkheij between Scheveningen and Katwijk on 3 February 1598 [Fig. 11.1].² The second print, *Beached Whale at Wijk aan Zee*, engraved by Matham after one of his own drawings made *nae t’ leven*, records the whale beached at Wijk aan Zee on 19 December 1601 [Fig. 11.2].³ The two whales, one lying toward the east, the other toward the west, have attracted a mixed viewership: in 1598, there are city folk (the well-dressed couple watching as a man measures the animal’s membrum), country folk (the couple at far left accompanied by a pointing boy), and aristocrats (the three horsemen being addressed by a quartet of fishermen); in addition to onlookers, there are figures who climb, measure, or harvest the creature, cutting its blubber and gathering its *tranen* (oily droplets). A similar cast of characters has assembled in 1601, amongst whom one peers into the beast’s mouth, while another clambers up its head to examine the eye. Both in 1598 and 1601, the beholders respond attentively to the curious sight that has drawn them to this place (some from

2 On the *Beached Whale in the Vicinity of Katwijk*, see Melion W., “Introduction, Memory, Cognition, and Image Production”, in Küchler S. – Melion W. (eds.), *Images of Memory: On Remembering and Representation* (Washington, D.C. – London: 1991) 19–22; Widerkehr L. (comp.), *The New Hollstein Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings, and Woodcuts, 1450–1700: Jacob Matham*, ed. H. Leeftang, 3 parts (Ouderkerk aan den IJssel: 2008) II 135–137, no. 202; and Leesberg M. (comp.), *The New Hollstein Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings, and Woodcuts, 145–1700: Hendrick Goltzius*, ed. H. Leeftang, 4 parts (Ouderkerk aan den IJssel – Amsterdam: 2012) IV 16–21, no. 632. This print was copied at least three times between 1598 and 1605, on which see *ibidem* 16–17, nos. 632b, 632f, and 632g. On the drawing by Goltzius that served as Matham’s modello, see Reznicek E. K. J., *Die Zeichnungen von Hendrick Goltzius*, 2 vols. (Utrecht: 1961) I 442–443, no. 419.

3 On the *Beached Whale at Wijk aan Zee*, see Melion, “Introduction: Memory, Cognition, and Image Production”, in Küchler – Melion (eds.), *Images of Memory* 22–23; and Widerkehr (comp.), *The New Hollstein: Jacob Matham*, ed. Leeftang, II 138–139, no. 203.

far away, as the carts and carriages attest). The paired subscriptions, as we shall soon see, project onto these engaged but otherwise impartial beholders two distinct sorts of response: the one text either mocks or fears the colossus and the events it presages; the other admires and appreciates it not as a *dramatis persona* but as something divinely manufactured. The latter response (in Dutch), unlike the former (in Latin), refrains from anthropomorphizing the whale; the Dutch verses, composed of quatrains rather than distychs, take up far more space than the Latin and make their case more descriptively, as well as less discursively. Moreover, the letters are larger and written more boldly, so that the Dutch texts *qua text* predominate visually. In what follows, I concentrate on this Dutch reading of the *visschen* stranded at Katwijk and Wijk aan Zee: what are we asked to see and know about the whale; how are we prompted to read it as a page from the Book of Nature?

Published respectively by Goltzius and Matham, these spectacular plates were amongst the grandest issued by the Goltzius workshop. The long Dutch inscriptions were furnished by Karel van Mander, the Flemish emigré, poet, painter, print designer, and fellow citizen of Haarlem, who was then at work on his monumental *Schilder-Boeck* (*Book on Picturing*), the art theoretical and historical treatise that would establish Goltzius's canonical status as an inimitable master of *teyckenconst* (art of delineation).⁴ Commissioned by Goltzius and/or Matham, these inscriptions, counterpointed by shorter Latin texts composed by the humanist poet Theodorus Screvelius, assistant director of the Latin School of Haarlem, are essential to the prints' semantic fabric. As major productions of the most renowned engraver's workshop in the Northern Netherlands, these prints implicitly proclaim the excellence of Goltzius's burin-hand, wielded in emulation of earlier masters such as Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert and Cornelis Cort, and bequeathed to Matham by his master Goltzius. In subject and handling, then, these prints appeal to a taste for the *curieus* (curious), exemplifying contemporary usage of the term to mark what appears strange, in the sense of rare, alien, or abnormal—that is, the whale, an unusual sea creature, displayed on shore under exceptional circumstances—but also to characterize what is exquisite, in the sense of expertly and conscientiously worked—that is, Matham's plate, which from

4 On *teyckenconst* in Van Mander's "T'leven van Henricus Goltzius", see Melion W. S., *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon: Karel van Mander's 'Schilder-Boeck'* (Chicago – London: 1991) 43–51. The "Life of Goltzius" exemplifies the theory and practice of *tecykenconst* peculiar to the Low Countries, in Book IV of the *Schilder-Boeck*, "Het leven der doorluchtighe Nederlandsche en Hoogh-duytsche schilders", on which see *ibidem* 60–91; and Miedema H. (ed.), *Karel van Mander: The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters*, trans. D. Cook-Radmore, 6 vols. (Doornspijk: 1998) V 175–225.

close up resolves into concentric hatches, swelling and tapering along their ambit, that are the basic unit of Goltzius's signature burin-hand.⁵ Accordingly, Matham's beached-whale prints can be seen to function as epitomes of both natural and artisanal curiosity. They also operate, as will soon become evident, as devotional images, reconciling the claims of divine and human artifice upon our powers of attention and our perceptual and spiritual faculties.

Although scholars have sometimes identified the landscape format of Matham's two engravings as unprecedented, they derive in both subject and composition from earlier topical prints and broadsheets, such as Jan Wierix's plate of ca. 1577, documenting the three whales stranded near the village of Ter Heide between 12 and 23 November of that year [Fig. 11.3].⁶ Part of a pod of 'thirteen sea monsters', as the collateral Dutch and French texts tell us, these whales, one of which has just beached, prompt several armed onlookers to flee. Their patent fear and alarm amplify the threatening message of the inscriptions, perhaps composed by Willem van Haecht, that interpret the whales as divine warnings against 'the peril and distress that encroached and continue to encroach [upon the Netherlands] from hidden enemies, [in the form of] great monsters'.⁷ The swelling waves that seem to hurl the whales onto the littoral, like the terrified witnesses running for their lives, allude to the famous portents of the final days enumerated by Christ himself in *Luke* 21:25–26: 'and upon the earth distress of nations, by reason of the confusion of the roaring sea and waves; men withering away for fear, and expectation of what shall come

5 On this double sense of the term 'curieus', which can mean 'merkwaardig', 'eigenaardig', 'raar', or 'vreemdsoortig', as in 'curieuse konsten', but also 'zorgvuldig' or 'nauwkeurig', see Knuttel J. A. N. (ed.), *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche taal. Derde deel, tweede stuk* (The Hague – Leiden: 1916; reprint ed., Leiden: 1993), cols. 2171–2172.

6 On Wierix's *Whales Stranding at Ter Heyde*, see Ruyven-Zeman Z. van – Leesberg M. (comps.), *The New Hollstein Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings, and Woodcuts, 1450–1700: The Wierix Family*, eds. J. van der Stock – M. Leesberg, 10 parts (Rotterdam: 2004) IX 62–63, no. 1932.

7 In Dutch: 'Van dees derthien seemonsters, de drie versanden / Waer deur ons Godt waerschouden tperijckel en noot / Dat ons was naeckende, ende noch is voorhanden / Deur gheveijdsde vijanden: als monsteren groot'. In French: 'De treise monstres tels de mer, les trois surprent, / Le sable est court arrest, de Dieu certain presage, / De nostre mal passe et encore apparent, / Si tout faint ennemij comme monstre on nencage'. Signatures identify 'Johan Wierics' as engraver and 'W. van Haecht' as publisher. On business relations between Wierix and Van Haecht, see Roey J. van, "Het Antwerpse geslacht Van Haecht (Verhaecht): tafereelmakers, schilders, kunsthendelaars", in *Miscellanea Jozef Duverger*, 2 vols. (Ghent: 1967–1968) I 216–228, esp. 223; and Mauquoy-Hendrickx M., *Les estampes des Wierix conservées au Cabinet des Estampes de la Bibliothèque Royale Albert Ier*, 3 vols. (Brussels: 1978–1983) III.2 516–517, 520.

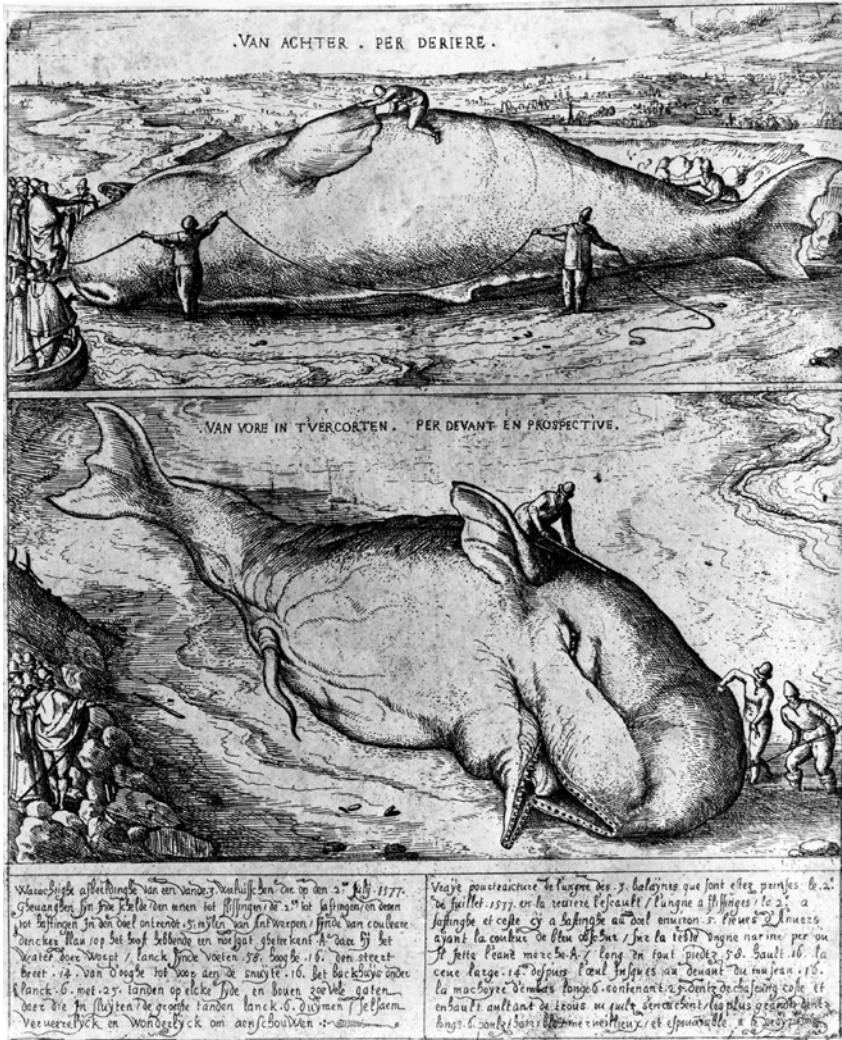


FIGURE 11.4 Anonymous, True Portrayal of One of the Three Whales Caught in the River Schelde on 2 July 1577 (24 July 1577). Etching, 19.4 × 23.5 cm. Rotterdam, *Atlas van Stolk*.

tionary reading [Fig. 11.4].¹¹ Having provided information about the whale's color, size, number of teeth, and place of capture, the inscriptions, again in

11 On this topical print, see Rijn G. van (ed.), *Atlas van Stolk. Katalogus der historie-, spot- en zinneprenten betreffende de geschiedenis van Nederland*, 11 vols. (Amsterdam: 1895–1931) I 271, no. 627; and Deinsse, A. B. van, “Over de potvisschen in Nederland gestrand tusschen de jaren 1531–1788”, *Zoologische mededeelingen* 4 (1918) 22–50, esp. 35–36.

Dutch and French, conclude by characterizing the animal as a 'strange', 'wondrous', but also 'fearful' sight, which is to say, portentous and foreboding.¹² The print of the small pilot whale stranded near Zandvoort in 1594, engraved and published by Goltzius in that year, contains two inscriptions: composed by Cornelis Schonaeus, rector of the Latin School of Haarlem, the Latin text plays on the antithesis of the adjectives *scita* and *deforme*, extolling the 'judicious art' Goltzius demonstrates in presenting a 'misshapen monster' to our view, whereas the two Dutch rondelets, added in letterpress, state that 'many folk think it may portend something extraordinary', and closes with the injunction that 'we must always hope for the best from God' [Fig. 11.5].¹³ The Dutch verses identify the fish as a tunny, not a whale, but nevertheless interpret it as a cetacean portent. They also note that two creatures beached on this very spot, the first on 2 March 1566, the second 21 November 1594: the latter, a male, was already dead when it washed on shore; the former, a female, thrashed clamorously upon landing. The implication is that the new stranding heralds events as epochal as those of 1566, when the Compromise of Nobles and the first Iconoclasm took place.¹⁴

Like the Wierix print, the print published by Goltzius dubs the whale 'monster', construing it as an omen of God's will and assaying its appearance as a vaticinal phenomenon. By contrast, Matham's prints for the most part eschew any reference to portents, instead insisting that the beached whales are nothing more nor less than *wonder wercken* (wondrous works) of God, symptoms of his boundless powers as *artifex* (artificer) [Figs. 11.1 & 11.2]. With regard to the engraving of 1598, Van Mander classifies the whale as fish ('visch') rather than monster, describes the violent storm that drove it ashore, records its measure-

12 In Dutch: 'selsaem verveereyck en wonderlyck om aenschouwen'. In French: 'horrible, merueilleux et espouvantable a le veoyez'.

13 'Ceruleus profert immania corpora pontus; / Quorum unum hic cernis depictum candide lector, / Inventum Batavo deforme in littore monstrum: / Quod tibi spectandum scita dat Goltzius arte'. On the *Female Pilot Whale Stranded at Zandvoort*, see Leesberg (comp.), *The New Hollstein: Hendrick Goltzius*, ed. Leeftang, IV 14–15, no. 631.

14 'Als men duysent, vijf hondert, heeft gheschreven, / Ende vier en tneghentich, in de maent / November, eenentWintich, aenghedreven / Quam t'Sandtvoort, in Hollandt, dus van ghedaent, / Eenen dooden Visch, die men eenen Walvisch Waent: / Maer Tanijn ghenaeemt Wordt van den Zee-luyden, / Menich meent oft yet Wonders Wil beduyden. // Tweedden Martij ses en tsestich, oock strande / Daer eenen sulcken, die met groot misbaer / En gheruysch, noch levende quam te lande, / Dien was manlijck, desen vroulijck, end maer / Twintich voeten, en den anderen daer / Te vooren, was lanck twee en veertich voeten: / T'best altijdt van Godt wy verhopen moeten'.

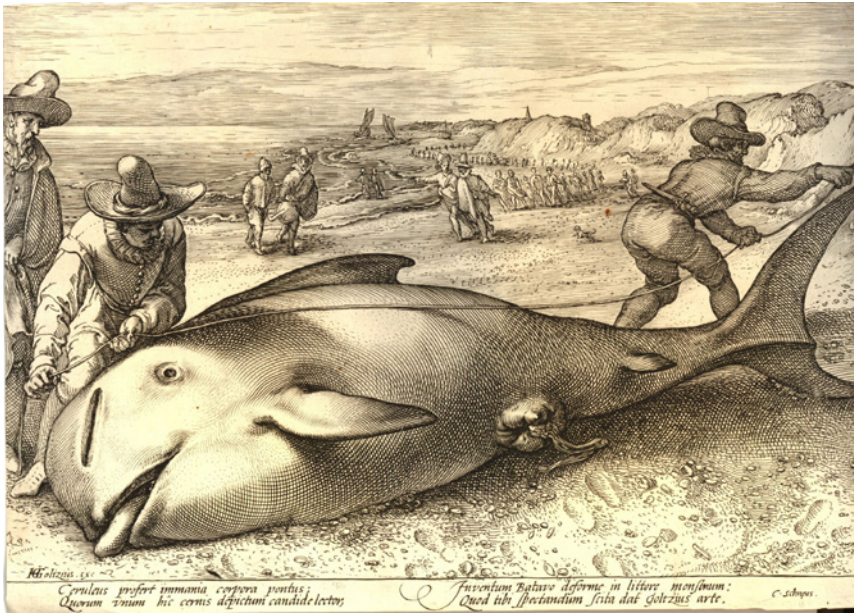


FIGURE 11.5 Hendrick Goltzius, Female Pilot Whale Beached near Zandvoort (1594). Engraving, 18.5 × 26 cm. Rotterdam, *Atlas van Stolk*.

ments along with the date and place of stranding, and encourages us to see it as evidence of God's supreme authority and to exalt in the realization of his omnipotence:

The salty waves, profoundly unsettled by the stormy air, stiffly pitched by the winds, have thus washed a fish onto the shore by Catwijck, causing us to know from out of the sea's depths the wondrous work of God.

Measuring fifty-six feet long, each foot eleven inches, and thirty-three wide, on the third day of February, sixteen hundred less two, as recorded, the species of whale being known from these measurements.

With an astonished heart, many a person beheld it, and many a tongue and voice were impelled to exalt the Lord: for he whose highest value transcends all praise, may never sufficiently be lauded.¹⁵

15 'De soute golven wreed afgrondich omghewoelt / door onwedersche locht, met winden stijf ghesmeten, / hebben dusch eenen visch bij Catwijck aenghespoelt / ons t' wonder werck van Godt wt diepte der zee doen weten. // Elf duijmsche voeten ses en vijftich langh ghemeten, / den drij en dertich dick, in sporckel derden dach / sestien hondert min twee

The Latin subscription, comprising three diptychs, functions as a counterpoint to Van Mander's far longer text: whereas the latter is decriptive and urges the beholder to take note of the whale's awesome dimensions and circumstances, and to construe these as evidence of the divine artificer's limitless powers of creation, Screvelius's three distychs are suffused with other kinds of emotion—fear and anxiety, for example—having to do with the minatory intentions divinely forecast by this prodigy. Unlike Van Mander, who reads the whale exegetically in light of *Psalms* 18 [19]:1 ('The heavens shew forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of his hand'), *Jeremiah* 10:2 ('[...] and be not afraid of the signs of heaven, which the heathens fear'), and *Romans* 1:20 ('For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; his eternal power also, and divinity'), Screvelius reads the whale in the manner of Cicero, Pliny the Elder, Seneca, and the Stoics, who construe natural wonders as 'harbingers of dire disaster'.¹⁶ Indeed, Screvelius even purports to address the pagan gods: 'Hurled ashore by the bluegreen sea, a huge whale (gods forbend [your] threats) laid eyes upon the strands of Catwijk; driven to the headland by wind and its own motion, this terror of the deep Atlantic, a baleen whale, subsides onto dry land, captured by the sand; which [whale] we [now] give to paper and to fame, a matter fit for the populace to report'.¹⁷ The conjunction of this text and Van Mander's heightens the Christian character of his account, which celebrates and venerates what God has wrought, rather than taking fright at its import.

The print of 1601 is even more explicit in its refusal to interpret the whale as portent:

men schreef, maer hoe gheheten / onder walvisch gheslacht men sulcke tellen plach. //
Met een verwondert hert hem menich oogh aensach, / des menich tongh en mont den
heere moste loven: / want nemmermeer ghenoech men hem gheprijsen mach / wiens
hooghste weerd alleen, gaet alle lof te boven'. These verses are signed with Karel van
Mander's motto, 'Een is nodich'.

- 16 Cicero M. T., *De natura deorum*, ed.–trans. H. Rackham (London – Cambridge, Mass.: 1933) II, v, as quoted in Jorink, *Reading the Book of Nature* 115. On Cicero's *De natura deorum*, Pliny's *Naturalis historia*, and Seneca's *Naturales quaestiones* as sources of a fearful response to the divine *vestigia* written upon the so-called Book of Nature, see *ibidem* 39–40, 115–116. On the importance of the biblical passages cited above to Lutheran and Reformed readings of the Book of Nature, see *ibidem* 36–37, 66–67, 135–137.
- 17 'Ingens caeruleo iactatus gurgite cetus / (Dij prohibete minas) Catthorum littora vidit, //
Qualis Atlantiaci terror, Ballaena profundis, / Quum vento motu suo telluris ad oras //
Pellitur, et sicca subsidit, captus arena: / Quem chartis famaeque damus, populoque loquendum'.

Near Wijk aan See, toward the West, on the nineteenth of December in the year sixteen hundred and one, a great sperm whale ('potwalvisch') stranded on the beach, just as may be seen in this print. Sixty-three feet in length, each foot eleven inches long, thirty-eight in width. Ocean briny in your foaming, what malevolent offspring have you delivered to us citizens? Is it a threat, a warning, the sort of thing that customarily frightens idle folk? God warns us sufficiently in his holy word, to which we willingly and obediently submit. Let the lofty name of him whose wondrous works attest his omnipotence be praised far and wide.¹⁸

Viewing the whale as a thing of nature, born of the sea, Van Mander sees through it to its maker, whose agency the creature signifies. Whereas Holy Writ is the admonitory medium that broadcasts the will of God, the image of the whale, as Van Mander avers, divulges the Lord's powers of artifice. The Latin inscription situates the whale within a mythological rather than Christian frame of reference. Screevelius emphasizes the monster's terrible singularity, in particular calling attention (somewhat ludicrously) to its sizeable priapic *membrum*; moreover, just as in 1598 he urged the viewer to see the shore through the eyes of the whale ('cetus [...] Catthorum littora vidit'), so here he converts the whale into a protagonist of sorts that struggles against the sandy strand until its guts fatally rupture ('littoris oras rasis [...] at impresso mox rumpitur ilia ventre'). He expertly utilizes progymnasmata to characterize the whale and its environs, narrativize the creature's moira, and conjure up its struggle against the elements and ineluctable demise: ironic synecdoche ('membrosius ipso [...] genitali pube Priapo') evokes the whale's immensity; prosopopoeia puts us in the place of the hamlet that senses the leviathan's presence ('vicus Lemi Neptunius [...] prospectat'); ethopoeia and pathopoeia make us feel the creature's plight as it fights for its life, resists fate, and finally succumbs ('littoris oras rasis, et attonito fatalibus haesit arenis corpore'). These effects are enhanced by the conjunction of terms ridiculous and sublime ('membrosius' and 'ingens') that indicates how low this once awe-inspiring *monstrum*

18 'Bij wijck op see, na t'west, Desember neghentien / laer sestien hondert een, op t'strand de see quam ruijmen / Potwalvisch groot, ghelijck in druck men hier mach sien, / lanck drij en t'sestich voet, en elck voet van elf duijmen. // Dick achtendertich voet: maer Ocean int schuijmen, / heel pekelick wat brought u borgher ons aenboot? / ist dreijghingh, of waerschouw, of ijdel volx costuijmen / hem hier verschricken in, welck niet gheschieden hoort? // Godt waerschouwt al ghenook ons in sijn heylich woort, / Daer elck goetwillich most ghehoorsaem onder buijghen / Den lof sijns hooghen naems verbreydt sy voort in voort, / wiens wonder wercken groot sijn heerlijckheijt betuijghen'.

horrendum has fallen. (In the picture, this same effect is produced by the juxtaposition of the onlookers' Lilliputian footprints to the massive but ultimately ephemeral 'footprint' impressed into the littoral by the whale's thrashing). In other respects, however, the Latin verses this time complement the Dutch, for they refrain from perusing the creature as a portent, by turns partially legible and insistently opaque: 'A monster horrific, misshapen, immense, in its genitals more greatly endowed than the Hellespontine Priapus himself. Where: the Neptunian hamlet lying to the west of Beverwijck, which looks from the sun's rising in the east toward the town of Haarlem. The vast maritime despoiler grazed the shore's edge, its body confounded by the fatal sands, whereupon its entrails soon burst from the crushed belly'.¹⁹

Van Mander, in his refusal to personalize the whale, describes it in the manner of a Christian exegete and meditator, but also of a natural historian recording a specimen. His texts closely correspond to the acts of viewing upon which both prints dwell: the *Beached Whale at Wijk aan Zee*, for instance, includes numerous beholders intently gazing at the dead whale, or watching others prod, climb, and measure it [Fig. 11.2]. Distilled in his references to 'wonder werck' (1598) and 'wonder wercken' (1601), Van Mander's emphasis on wonder and workmanship, like his collateral references to the Book of Scripture and the Book of Nature, surely derives from article two of the *Belydenisse des gheloofs* (*Confession of Faith*, commonly known as the *Belgian Confession*), the 37 articles of faith composed by the theologian Guido de Brès as a doctrinal summa of the Dutch Reformed Church. First promulgated in 1561–1562, the *Belydenisse* circulated very widely, and as Erik Jorink has amply demonstrated, it strongly influenced Dutch thinking about the Book of Nature. Article two would have been well known to Goltzius and Matham (the former probably Catholic, the latter definitely so), as well as to Van Mander (a Mennonite), and of course to the beached whale prints' likely viewers, literate in Latin and/or Dutch:

We know him [God] by two means. First, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe, since that universe is before our eyes like a beautiful book in which all creatures, great and small, are as letters 'to make us ponder the invisible things of God: his eternal power and divinity', as the apostle Paul says in *Romans* 1:20. All these things are enough to

19 'Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens, membrosius ipso / Hellespontiaco genitali pube Priapo. // Qua Bavarum vicus Lemi Neptunius urbem / Pronus ad occasum, rutilo prospectat ab ortu, // Immanis pelagi populator, littoris oras / Rasit, et attonito fatalibus haesit arenis // Corpore; at impresso mox rumpitur ilia ventre'.

convict men and to leave them without excuse. Second, he makes himself known to us more openly by his holy and divine word, as much as we need in this life, for his glory and for the salvation of his own.²⁰

The term 'wonder', as Jorink shows, was often preferred to 'mirakel' or 'miraculum', which smacked of the Catholic cult of saints and miracles, but in practice the word designates the full spectrum of praeternatural or extra-natural phenomena, encompassing what Augustine in *De civitate Dei* (XXI 8) had dubbed *miracula Dei*, that is, everything extraordinary in nature.²¹ For most of Van Mander's contemporaries, as Jorink further indicates, the 'letters' constitutive of the *liber naturae* could be decoded only by recourse to the scriptural *liber gratiae*, which is to say that the Book of Nature was to be viewed or, better, read exegetically.²² *Romans* 1:20 provided the basis for this conception of natural exegesis that crosses confessional boundaries, uniting Philipp Melanchthon, John Calvin, Philippe de Mornay, Seigneur du Plessis-Marly, Guillaume de Salluste, Seigneur du Bartas, and Hugo Grotius. Melanchthon succinctly summarizes this point of view as follows: '[Only] when the spirit is strengthened by the true and right conviction of God, and of the Creation through the Word of God itself, is it both useful and pleasant to seek the signs of God in nature too and to collect arguments that confirm that God exists'.²³

But Van Mander diverges from this consensus in his conviction, clearly voiced in the *Beached Whale at Wijk aan Zee* of 1601, that the kind of wonder here engendered (like that inspired by the stranding of 1598) neither warns nor reprimands, threatens nor prophesies, but rather, fills every good Christian with feelings of astonishment and the desire to praise the Creator. For the majority of his elite contemporaries, on the contrary, the whale, like other natural prodigies, would have been appreciated as a symptom of divine intention—a *signum*, *ostentum*, *praesagium*, or *portentum*—categories of showing complementary to *monstrum* (from *monstrare*, 'to show, reveal, make known').²⁴ This

20 Jorink, *Reading the Book of Nature*, trans. Vanderjagt 20; this passage translates article two from the 1619 edition, as transcribed in Bakhuizen van den Brink J. N. (ed.), *De Nederlandse belijdenisgeschriften* (Amsterdam: 1976) 73.

21 On Augustine's *City of God* as a key source of the notion that pious wonder is an appropriate response to the various kinds and degrees of natural *miracula*, see Jorink, *Reading the Book of Nature*, trans. Vanderjagt 8–10.

22 On the crucial relation between the *liber naturae* and *liber gratiae*, see *ibidem* 33–107, esp. 33–75.

23 *Ibidem* 44, as translated from *Corpus reformatorum* XXI 369.

24 On this family of terms, all of which are related to *miraculum* and *prodigium*, see *ibidem* 113–114; and, with specific reference to 'ostentum', 'portentum', 'monstrum', and 'prodigium',

is not to say that divination, judicial astrology, or other predictive instruments, all of which assume that divine providence can be parsed, were simply countenanced, for these activities would have seemed presumptive and even idolatrous, in contravention of *Deuteronomy* 18:10–12 ('Neither let there be found among you any one that [...] consulteth soothsayers or observeth dreams and omens') and *Jeremiah* 10:2 ('Learn not according to the ways of the Gentiles: and be not afraid of the signs of heaven').²⁵ And yet, there was widespread agreement that such signs, even if they could only be understood in general terms, were indeed signs, and as such, providential. Jacob Cats later summarized this point of view in a booklet, the *Aenmerckinghe op de tegenwoordighe steert-sterre* (*Commentary on the Latter-Day Tail-Star*) of 1619, on a related type of divine prodigy, the imposing comet of 1618, which he took for a sign that God would do 'something exceptional', setting forth an 'example' of divine omnipotence, as a call to probity and moral reform.²⁶ Another standard position was taken by the Reformed theologian Gisbertus Voetius, who states in *De signis, de naturae miraculis, ostentis et prodigiis* (*On Signs, Miracles of Nature, Portents, and Prodigies*) of ca. 1648–1669, that any such signs, so long as they resemble biblical portents, must be accepted as God-given messages.²⁷ Cats, Voetius, and many others construed these messages more often than not as admonitory or minatory.²⁸

By denying the whale's value as presage, even as he elevates its value as work, Van Mander forecloses the claims made in polemical tracts such as the pamphlet entitled "Whale of Berkheij: That is, a description of the great fish stranded at Berkheij in the year 1598 on the third of February, with an explanation of the things that followed upon it [...]".²⁹ Interpreting the whale as an

see Céard J., *La nature et les prodiges. L'insolite au XVI^e siècle, en France*, Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance 158 (Geneva: 1977) 39–40, 439.

25 On these biblical injunctions against prognostication, see Jorink, *Reading the Book of Nature*, trans. Vanderjagt 117–124.

26 As cited in *ibidem* 133, on the basis of Cats J., *Aenmerckinghe op de tegenwoordighe Steersterre*, ed. G. J. Johannes (Utrecht: 1986) 79. On this booklet, see *ibidem* 9–35; and Jorink, *Reading the Book of Nature*, trans. Vanderjagt 131–134.

27 Voetius Gisbertus, *Selectarum disputationum theologicarum partes I–V* (Utrecht – Amsterdam, Johannes van Waesberge: 1648–1669) III 923. On Voetius, see Jorink, *Reading the Book of Nature*, trans. Vanderjagt, 64–68, 136–138.

28 On the inclination to read *signa* as divine *admonita*, see *ibidem* 109–142.

29 Anonymous and undated, a single copy of this pamphlet is preserved in the Bibliotheek van 's Rijks Museum van Natuurlijke Historie te Leiden (No. 2700—Mamm.): *Walvisch van Berckhey: Dat is, Eene beschrijvinghe des grooten Vischs, die tot Berckhey ghestrandet is Anno 1598. den 3. Februarij, met eene verclaringhe der dinghen die daer naer ghevolgt*

auspice of the bloody Spanish invasion of the Duchy of Cleves, the pamphleteer recounts how he had hoped initially that it might signal God's intentions toward Spain, rather than the Netherlands:

And so in the year ninety-eight the sea brought landward a great whale, terrifying in aspect, frightful to behold in the eyes of every man and woman: I too was astonished to see this behemoth ('ghedrocht') that the sea had stranded upon the shore of Berckey. It was well understood by all that something strange and wonderful would follow thereafter, and that God was incensed; but noone enlarged upon what that calamity might be—until from out of Brabant there came a gloss, an answer fully unfurled, drawn from the poet as if he had spoken with the Lord God himself.

I fall stone still; I halt my pen, hold my tongue, and hope that the Lord in his good time may reveal that he caused this great monster to be stranded not as an ill omen of his intention to subject these lands before a huge, cruel, and bloodthirsty beast seeking nothing less than with fire and sword to lay waste to our noble Netherlands, and to despoil it, in the manner of a whale, which having seized something in its jaws, then rends and gulps it down, digests and utterly destroys it.³⁰

zijn: Met noch een cort verhael der geschiedenissen, die van den lesten Augusti 1598, tot nu toe verlopen zijn int Vorstendom Cleve ende omliggende vrije Landen, door de aencomste van den Spaenschen Leger, hare ongehoorde wreetheyt tegen de Cleefsche ende hare Steden, die sy als vyanden innemen voor den Coninck van Spagnen. T'samen eenen Brief van des Keyzers Ghesant, met d'Admirants antwoordt. On this booklet, see Van Deinse, "Over de potvisschen in Nederland gestrand" 36–39. On the whale stranded by the fishing village of Berkhey, see Kraaijenga A. E., "Een beeld van waarheid. Rond de stranding van een potvis", *Teylers Museum Magazijn* 2, 2 (1984) 1–4; and Schama, *Embarrassment of Riches* 130–132.

- 30 As cited in Van Deinse, "Over de potvisschen in Nederland gestrand" 37–38: 'Derhalven als int Jaer van t'neghentich en acht, / De Zee een Walvisch groot op het landt hadd' ghebracht, Die grouwelijck t'aensien, en schrick'lijck was t'aenschouwen, / In d'ooghen van elck een, beyd' Mannen en der Vrouwen: / Soo was ick med' verbaest, aensiende dit ghe-drocht, / Dwelck te Berckhey de Zee hadd' op het landt ghebrocht. / Elck een heeft wel verstaen dat hier op woude volghen / Wat vreemts en wonderbaers, en dat Godt was verbolghen. / Maer wat het wesen soud' heeft niemant uytghebolt, / Tot datter uyt Brabant een glossa quam gherolt, / Daer in t' volle bescheyt niet anders wordt ontloken, / Dan of de dichter hadd' met Godt den Heer ghesproken. // Ick sweegh vast still'; ick hielt mijn penn' end' oock mijn mondt, / Hopende dat de Heer' soud' toonen t'sijner stondt, / Dat hy dit monster groot hadd' in Hollandt doen stranden, / Niet als een voorspoeck, dat hij woude dese Landen / Brenghen onder het groot, wreet, en bloet-dorstich dier, / Dwelck niet anders en soeckt, dan door het zweert en vyer, / Ons edele Nederlandt, woest ende

Although he concedes that the monster may indeed be a sign that God would subject the Netherlands to a 'great, cruel, and bloodthirsty beast [...] like unto a whale that rends, consumes, digests, and totally destroys whatever it seizes in its jaws', he then admits, 'so did I yet hope that God would make the Spanish villain languish with pain and grief, just as did the whale after two days and three nights [on shore]'.³¹ Whereas, unsure of the whale's precise significance, the pamphleteer remains certain of its portentousness, Van Mander refuses to anthropomorphize the whale, stripping it of its status as omen, and instead seeing it as God's *wonder werck*, the product of his inimitable artisanship. Moreover, as he avows, this divine deed compels the beholder to engage in laudatory prayer, for filled with wonder at such a sight, our 'tongue and mouth must praise the Lord'.

Van Mander's disavowal of augury may also be construed as a refusal to confessionalize the strandings, that is, to interpret them in a Lutheran way as harbingers of the days of divine vengeance, of Godsent distress in city and country, and of the Lord's wrath upon the people.³² As Robin Barnes has argued, amongst the great reformers, Luther was unique in the virtually doctrinal sanction he gave to the perusal of heavensent portents, as also in his endorsement of what Barnes calls a 'powerful sense of eschatological expectancy'.³³ With regard to the divine source of natural omens, there were several proof texts for the Lutheran position that such phenomena are heralds of God's intention and judgment: in the prophets, *Joel* 2:28–32, the Lord's assurance that he 'will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth'; in the Gospels, *Luke* 21:29–30, the parabolic similitude of the fig tree that shoots forth fruit, just as the Lord broadcasts dire warnings.³⁴ If anything, this proved more true of Luther's later adherents: the philosopher Job Finkel, for example, a close follower of Philipp Melancthon, published three substantial treatises on marvels and wondrous *indicia* between 1556 and 1567. Here he cites *Joel* 2, along with *Matthew* 24

leech te maken, / Als een Walvisch, die t'gheen dat hy krijght in zijn kaken, / Verscheurt, inswelght, verteert, en gantschelijck vernielt'.

- 31 Ibidem 38: 'Ick hebb' altijd ghehoopt, dat Godt den Spaenschen fielt / Soude met pijn en smert van hongher doen versmachten'. The pamphleteer then proposes that the whale's death throes, which lasted two days and three nights, be read as a sign of the wrathful punishment God intends to impose upon Spain: 'Ghelijck dien Walvisch nae twee daghen en drie nachten'.
- 32 On Lutheran preoccupation with the eschaton and its portents—natural, political, and ecclesiastical—see Barnes R. B., *Prophecy and Gnosis: Apocalypticism in the Wake of the Lutheran Reformation* (Stanford: 1988) 36–126.
- 33 Ibidem 3.
- 34 On *Joel* 2:28–32 as an eschatological proof text, see ibidem 89; on *Luke* 21:29–30, see 45–46.

and *Luke* 21, to justify his conviction that history is nothing more than 'a series of miraculous tokens, whose accumulation points to the end of the world'.³⁵ These natural signs, of which there were various species—*prodigium*, *monstrum*, *portentum*, *ostentum*, *miraculum*, et al.—are held to presage calamities that likewise announce the second coming of Christ.³⁶ Barnes cites the Lutheran theologian Andreas Musculus, co-author of the *Formula of Concord*, who believed that more presages had appeared in the last forty years than had previously been known during the entire history of humankind. Musculus urges his readers ever to be watchful, for 'the greater and the more terrifying the prodigies, the greater the disasters to follow'.³⁷ Van Mander, in curbing the prophetic impulse, also checks the reflex of Lutheran eschatology. The call to revere the whale as evidence of the Creator and his workmanship is exegetical in the most general way: confessionally indeterminate, it tacitly functions as a tonic against the sort of religious division that a more doctrinal reading of the beached whale as portent would have implied. If Van Mander, diverging from the tract of 1598, refrains from viewing the whale as a prognostic of political discord, he also forbears from glossing it as a marker of civic strife and confessional discord.

The religious situation of Haarlem, in which three main religious groups—Reformed, Catholics, and Mennonites—operated in tandem, occupying collateral religious spheres even while interacting socially across confessional lines, provides the local circumstances for Matham's prints of 1598 and 1601. Haarlem was distinctive, as Joke Spaans has argued in her classic study of the city's plural religious identities: 'The ecclesiastical communities, the Reformed included, formed closed circles centered on their characteristic doctrine and devotion. For most persons, Church membership, or alternatively, the refusal to join a Church, stood apart from social life as it was lived daily. Whereas society was Christian, its contours were not determined by the public Church. This situation was exceptional in Europe'.³⁸ Van Mander's insistence that the whales not be read as dire political portents, but more generally as wonders of

35 As cited in *ibidem* 90, which in turn quotes Schilling H., "Job Fintel und die Zeichen der Endzeit", in Brückner W. (ed.), *Volkserzählung und Reformation: Ein Handbuch zur Tradierung und Funktion von Erzählstoffen und Erzählliteratur im Protestantismus* (Berlin: 1974) 326–392, esp. 361.

36 Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis* 91.

37 As cited in *ibidem* 92, which in turn quotes Spieker C. W., *Lebensgeschichte des Andreas Musculus* (Frankfurt a. O.: 1858; reprint ed., Nieuwkoop: 1964) 224–225.

38 Spaans J., *Haarlem na de Reformatie: Stedelijke cultuur en kerkelijk leven, 1577–1620*, *Hollands Historische Reeks* 11 (The Hague: 1989) 197.

nature, of *natura artifex*, and of the divine *artifex naturae*, implicitly characterizes them as phenomena resistant to a Lutheran interpretation, but more than this, intimates that they altogether transcend the kind of confessional readings that pit Catholic Spain against the Reformed Netherlands, respectively metaphorized by the 'enmity' between whales and shore.

The creature is instead seen to evoke, by dint of the divinely mandated stranding that makes it visible, the *mirabilia Domini* celebrated in *Psalms* 103 and 104, and the power of God to overcome any difficulty and of faith to transcend all persecution, affirmed in *Psalms* 73. The phrase 'wonder wercken' is directly translated from the psalms' praises of God's 'wonderful works' ('*mirabilia eius*'), which the psalmist interprets not as portentous indicators of wrathful judgment, but on the contrary, as expressions of the Lord's many and glorious mercies to the 'children of men'.³⁹ *Psalms* 106:21–25 are typical in their commendation of the providential wisdom and inventiveness discernible everywhere in creation, not least the 'wonders in the deep':

Let the mercies of the Lord give glory to him: and his wonderful works to the children of men.

And let them sacrifice the sacrifice of praise: and declare his works with joy.

They that go down to the sea in ships, doing business in the great waters:

These have seen the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep.

He said the word, and there arose a storm of wind: and the waves thereof were lifted up.

Verse 25 glorifies the power of God to control wind and waves, and accordingly, it recalls Van Mander's description of the storms that washed the whales onto the shore at Berkheij near Katwijk ('de soute golven wreed afgrondich omghewoelt') and Wijk aan Zee ('op t'strant de see quam ruijmen'). *Psalms* 103:24–27 are especially apposite, for they single out the creatures of the sea, largest amongst which is leviathan, as manifestations of divine potency and dominion: 'How great are thy works, O Lord? Thou hast made all things in wisdom: the earth is filled with thy riches. So is this great sea, which stretcheth wide its arms: there are creeping things without number, creatures little and great, [...] that leviathan, whom thou hast formed to play therein. All expect of

39 According to *Genesis* 1:21, the 'great whales' were the first of the 'living and moving creature[s]', that God fashioned to populate the firmament of waters on the fifth day of creation.

thee that thou give them food in season'. And *Psalm* 73:14, more than any other, in its imagery of the leviathan subdued and battered by the power of God, licenses the connection Van Mander draws between the beached whale and its maker's limitless ability to work wonders: 'Thou by thy strength didst make the sea firm; thou didst crush the heads of leviathan in the waters'.

The clear distinction between reading the whale as sign of God's intention and appreciating it as example of God's work, along with the conviction that such appreciation will impel the viewer prayerfully to sound the praises of the Lord, recalls the similar distinction made by Montaigne in his essay "Of a Monstrous Child" between reading the child as 'prognostic to the king', an option Montaigne rejects, and apprehending it as one of 'the infinity of forms that [God] has comprised [in the immensity of his work]'.⁴⁰ The notion that monsters, far from being abnormal signs sent by God, proceed from his infinite wisdom and are for this reason 'good and ordinary and regular', howsoever we perceive them, derives in turn from Saint Augustine, as Jean Céard has shown in his study of the science of prodigies and monsters.⁴¹ On this account, Montaigne testifies to a shift in the idea of nature, which ceases to function as the joint site of presages, sent by God to mark underlying disorders, and of prodigies, produced by nature in her orderly efforts to match microcosm to macrocosm. For Montaigne, as for Van Mander, monsters give evidence of nature's order, an order we glimpse rather than understand, whose ultimate source is God, the maker of nature's 'assortment and relationship'. Indeed, Van Mander's reluctance to join Screvelius in using the term 'monster' can be attributed to his belief that whales are God's good works, not divine omens, and as such, that Matham's prints are sources of intelligence that allow the viewer to contemplate these *wercken*.

It is surely worth noting that by 1582, Gabriele Paleotti, Cardinal and Archbishop of Bologna, had codified the division between natural and presageful monsters in his *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane* (*Discourse on Sacred and Profane Images*), the most important post-Tridentine treatise on Catholic image-making. This text, possibly known to Goltzius, Matham, and

40 As cited in Céard J., "The Crisis of the Science of Monsters", in Desan P. (ed.), *Humanism in Crisis: The Decline of the French Renaissance*, Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Civilization (Ann Arbor: 1991) 181–205, esp. 188–189, which quotes *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. D. M. Frame (Stanford: 1958) 539.

41 Céard, "The Crisis of the Science of Monsters" 189; for a fuller discussion of Augustine's views on natural prodigies and their significance, see Céard, *La nature et les prodiges* 21–30. On Montaigne's notion of 'variété' as it relates to his construals of 'miracles' and 'monstres', see *ibidem* 397–434.

Van Mander, is relevant because it circulated so widely, educing normative and prescriptive attitudes toward religious and secular imagery. Paleotti distinguishes the category of *mostri dalla natura* (natural monsters) from the category of *cose prodigiose* (prodigious things), by which he means monstrous portents.⁴² Citing 2 *Maccabees* 5:2–3, on the airborne signs that darkly pre-saged the momentous events soon to occur in Jerusalem, Paleotti professes that omens are most difficult to discern, requiring to be certified judiciously before they are accepted as true, and consequently, he counsels the painter to refrain from depicting such things. He proscribes any portentous image either based on hearsay or invented by the painter *a capriccio* (capriciously):

The pictorial representation [of prodigies] should be considered circumspectly, since they ought not to be fashioned capriciously, after one's own invention, nor even less, to be construed as verified, even though others have reported or written about them; for this subject matter, being unusual and extraordinary, requires judgment all the more to be expressed opportunely, and veracity, in order that noone be deceived.

With regard to this matter, what has been written in the *Books of Maccabees* is most notable: 'And it came to pass that through the whole city of Jerusalem for the space of forty days there were seen horsemen running in the air, in gilded raiment, and armed with spears, like bands of soldiers. And horses set in order by ranks, running one against another, with shakings of shields, and a multitude of men in helmets, with drawn swords, and casting of darts, and glittering of golden armour, and of harnesses of all sorts'.⁴³

42 Paleotti G., *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane*, in Barocchi P. (ed.), *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento fra manierismo e controriforma*, 3 vols. (Bari: 1961) II 419–424, esp. 419, 423.

43 Ibidem 423: 'Le quali doveranno ricevere la sua ragionevole considerazione nel rappresentarle in pittura, perchè né anco queste si debbono fare a capriccio, di propria invenzione, né meno si doverà assicurare alcuno subito di farle, se bene altri l'avesse o riferite o scritte; però che, per essere materie molto straordinarie et insolite, tanto più ricercano e giudicio per isprimerle opportunamente, e verità, acciò nessuno resti ingannato.

"Tra queste molto notabile è quella scritta nei libri de' Macabei con queste parole:

"Contigit autem per universam Hierosolymorum civitatem videri diebus quadraginta per aera equites discurrentes auratas stolas habentes et hastas, quasi cohortes armatas, et cursus equorum per ordines digestos, et congressiones fieri cominus, et scutorum motus, et galeatorum multitudinem gladiis districtis, et telorum iactus, et aureorum armorum splendorem omnisque generis loricarum". 2 *Maccabees* 5:4 adds that the people, unable to decode these wonders, nonetheless observed them hopefully: 'Wherefore all men prayed that these prodigies might turn to good'.

Although Paleotti allows that God-given portents have undeniably occurred, his aversion to depictions of them resonates with Montaigne's extreme skepticism toward the diviners' art. Suggesting that most auspices are merely natural monsters that have been misconstrued, Paleotti's text devalues precisely the sort of imagery that Matham's prints, conjoined with Van Mander's inscriptions, explicitly contravene.

The voyage narratives of the Dutch explorer Jan Huygen van Linschoten provide the most pertinent local context for Van Mander's antipathy to divination applied to the things of nature.⁴⁴ Stripped of any augural significance, whales appear frequently in publications such as the *Twee journalen van twee verscheide voyagien [...] van by noorden om, langhs Noorwegen [...] na Vay-gats* (*Two Journals of Two Different Voyages [...] Northward along the Norwegian Coast [...] to Waygats*) of ca. 1595, in which Linschoten recounts his participation in a whaling expedition, as well as his discovery of whale-bones beached on the coast of the island Vaigatch [Fig. 11.6].⁴⁵ Having received

44 On Van Linschoten's various expeditions and the texts, images, and maps issued to document them, see Moer A. van den, *Een zestiende-eeuwse Hollander in het Verre Oosten en het Hoge Noorden. Leven, werken, reizen en avonturen van Jan Huygen van Linschoten (1563–1611)* (Amsterdam: 1979); and Koeman C., "Jan Huygen van Linschoten," *Revista da Universidade de Coimbra* 32 (1985) 24–47.

45 See, for example, the description of the whale captured in the harbor of the island Toxar, in Linschoten Jan Huygen van, *Twee journalen van twee verscheiden voyagien, gedaen door Jan Huygen van Linschoten, van by Noorden om, langhs Noorwegen, d' Noordt-Caep, Laplandt, Finlandt, Ruslandt, de witte Zee, de Kusten van Candenoës, Sweetenoës, Pitzora, etc. door de Strate ofte Enghte van Nassouw, tot voor by de Riviere Oby, na Vay-Gats, gedaen in de Jaren 1594 en 1595* (Franeker, Gerardus Ketel: 1595; reprint ed., Amsterdam, Gillis Joosten Saeghman: ca. 1665) 8–9: "This island Toxar, like the solid land around it, is for the most part flat and empty, so far as one can see from seaside, and consists mainly of a sandy strand that extends landward for over two miles. Behind it is a mountain range, beyond which, we were told, lies the river of Colcocova [...]. On the 14th, as on the previous day, we saw several whales in the harbor, swimming toward us: we followed, but by fault of the harpooners, failed to overpower them; finally, having captured one, we brought it onto dry land and cut it into pieces, which we then placed in barrels, to boil down into tapers. Though still young, it measured 33 or 34 feet in length, and the tail was about 8 feet wide; on each side of the jawbone, 268 plates of baleen projected upward. We obtained [from it] 20 tons of blubber, in addition to the flesh, entrails, and skin." ["Dit Eylant Toxar, en 't vaste landt daer ontrent, is meest al te mael aen de zee-kant, so veer men sien kan, een leeg vlack Landt, en meest zandt-strandt, de welcke tot over de twee mijlen landewaert in streckt. Heeft daer na een Geberghte, en achter dit leght de Riviere van Colcocova [...]. Den 14. als oock des daeghs te vooren, sagen wy sommige Walvisschen in de Haven, by ons op de Reede komen: wy vervolgdense wel, maer by faute van harpoensers, konden

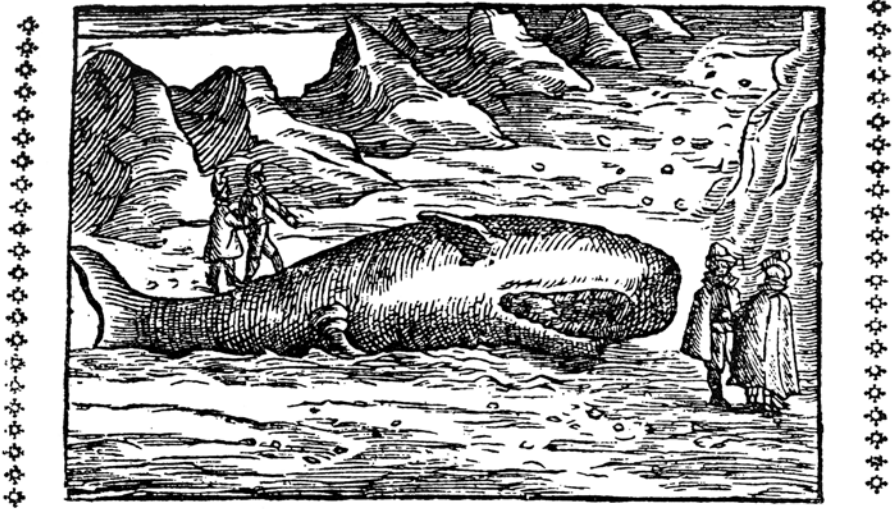


FIGURE 11.6 *Anonymous, Whale Caught in Harbor of the Island Toxar, illustrated in Jan Hugen van Linschoten, Twee journalen van twee verscheyde voyagien [...] van by noorden om, langhs Noorwegen [...] na Vay-gats (Franeker, Gerardus Ketel: 1595; reprint ed., Amsterdam, Gillis Joosten Saeghman: ca. 1665) 9. Woodcut. London, British Library. By permission of the British Library.*

a city commission to paint a *gedachtenisse* (commemorative plaque) recording Van Linschoten's donation to the town of Haarlem of part of the whale's jawbone found at Vaigatch, Van Mander would have known how the explorer justified collecting these bones: they are worthy natural specimens, remarkable for their great size and rarity; they provide information about the fauna of Vaigatch and suggest opportunities for hunting and trading, that it was Van Linschoten's mission to confirm; and they irrefutably testify to his presence at the Strait of Vaigatch, certifying that he fulfilled his obligations as explorer and voyager.⁴⁶ Whereas for the anonymous pamphleteer of 1598, the whale's jaws

geen gewelt daer op doen, doch kregghen in 't eynde een, brachten hem aen strant op het droogh, daer wy hem aen stucken haptten, en in tonnen leyden, om Craen af te koken. Was noch jongh, en had echter 33. of 34. voeten in de lenghte, en de staert by de acht voeten breed, had aen elcke zyde van de onderste Kaeck-beenen, op-waerts aen steeckende 268. beerden; kregghen daer 20. ton Speck van, behalven 't Vlees, ingewant en vel!]

46 The partial jawbone given to Haarlem, Van Linschoten's home town, in memory of his first voyage to Nova Zembla (1594), was found on the eastern shore of Vaigatch. In fact, the jawbone was discovered during his second expedition to Nova Zembla (1595), as he attests in *Twee journalen* 37: 'On this day our guests found a dead whale lying on the eastern shore of Vaigatch, between the Cape of Unrest and the Cape of the Cross, its jawbone

are an evocative figure of Spanish rapacity, for Van Linschoten the jawbone is nothing more than a specimen, document, and evidentiary marker.

I have been locating Matham's prints and Van Mander's inscriptions within a polyglot community of essays, treatises, and chronicles that question the legitimacy of combing nature for political portents, and instead propound alternative modes of viewing. They construe the whales as works of God (Montaigne), as natural monsters (Paleotti), or as exotic specimens (Linschoten), rather than valuing them as signifying portents that require to be decoded. Unlike Montaigne, Paleotti, and Linschoten, however, all of whom reduce extraordinary sights to natural effects, albeit effects that have their source in God, Van Mander emphatically describes Matham's images as records of divine artifice. The resources of Matham's skilled burin-hand, employed to document these wondrous examples of divine handiwork, engage in an act of religious service, for the appropriate response to these works of God is 'praise of the Lord', as Van Mander puts it. The viewing of these prints leads to exaltation, born of a full sense of divine omnipotence, and this experience leads in turn to pious praise of the Lord, that is, to laudatory prayer.

As I have outlined it, this exercise, in which the engraver's skill serves to attest God's inimitable works, conforms to the larger project of exemplary Christian service pursued by the Goltzius workshop in the 1590s. Briefly put, in demonstration plates such as the *Life of the Virgin* of 1593–94, engraved in the manner of a various Northern and Italian masters, the *Passion* of 1596–98, engraved in the manner of Lucas van Leyden, and the *Pietà* of 1598, engraved in the manner of Dürer, Goltzius labors to exemplify the *handelighen* (pictorial manners) of masters he reveres, incorporating his hand into theirs; he places every pictorial resource at his command in service to Christian themes rendered as if by the hands of other masters, renowned for their religious

measuring 16 feet in length and of commensurate width: two pieces of the jawbone were brought back to Holland, and one hangs at the civic militia hall in Enkhuizen, the other in the city hall of Haarlem'. ['Op desen dagh vonden onse gasten aen de Oostzyde van Vaygats, tusschen de Twisthoeck en Kruys-hoek, een dooden Walvisch leggen, hebbende kakebeenen van 16. voeten langh, en dick na advenant: 2. van de kakebeenen sijn mede in Hollant gebracht, een hanght te Enckhuysen op de Doelen, en een ander tot Haerlem op 't Stad-huys'.] On Van Mander's plaque recording the gift, see Valentiner E., *Karel van Mander als Maler*, Zur Kunstgeschichte des Auslandes 132 (Strasbourg: 1930) 84–85; Miedema H. (ed.), *De archiefbescheiden van het St. Lukasgilde te Haarlem, 1497–1798*, 2 vols. (Alphen aan den Rijn: 1980) I 67–68; and Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon* 200, 231.

imagery [Figs. 11.7–11.9].⁴⁷ For instance, the *Rest on the Return from the Flight into Egypt*, the closing plate from the *Life of the Virgin* series, functions as an epitome of Federico Barocci's art, a new image not only executed as if by Barocci's hand, but seemingly invented by him, as if newly minted by his unique genius [Fig. 11.10].⁴⁸ It is also an epitome of religious devotion: by illustrating a scene from the infancy of Christ, implicitly expressive of the mystery of the Incarnation, Goltzius affirms his piety, as well as that of Barocci, and further by implication, that of the print's dedicatee, the intensely devout Wilhelm V, Duke of Bavaria.

In exemplifying both consummate artistry and incontrovertible devotion, calling attention to the former even while using it to vivify the latter, Goltzius was of course responding to one of the most contentious issues that faced makers of Roman Catholic art in the decades following the reform Council of Trent. These issues can be summarized by reference to one of the most important treatises on sacred art written in response to the conciliar decree endorsing imagemaking, Giovanni Gilio's *Dialogo degli errori de' pittori* (*Dialogue on the Errors of Painters*) of 1564. Published one year after the close of the final session, Gilio's polemical text offers a powerful critique of Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, arguing that the painter has placed his art above doctrine: the painter, says Gilio, has privileged his conceits, in particular his preoccupation

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- 47 On Goltzius's *Life of the Virgin* series, see Leesberg (comp.), *The New Hollstein: Hendrick Goltzius*, ed. Leeftang, I 15–32, nos. 8–13. On these prints, the imitative method they epitomize, and the jointly religious and artisanal virtue they exemplify, see Melion W. S., "Self-Imaging and the Engraver's Virtù: Hendrick Goltzius's *Pietà* of 1598", *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 46 (1995) 105–143; idem, "Cordis circumcisio in spiritu: Imitation and the Wounded Christ in Hendrick Goltzius's *Circumcision* of 1594", *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 52 (2001) 31–77; idem, "The Meditative Function of Hendrick Goltzius's *Life of the Virgin* of 1593–94", in Falkenburg R. – Melion W. S. – Richardson T. (eds.), *Image and Imagination of the Religious Self in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Proteus: Studies in Early Modern Identity Formation 1 (Turnhout: 2007) 379–425; and idem, "Eros and Imitation in Hendrick Goltzius's *Annunciation* from the *Life of the Virgin*", in idem, *The Meditative Art: Studies in the Northern Devotional Print, 1550–1625*, Early Modern Catholicism and the Visual Arts 1 (Philadelphia: 2009) 369–394. On the *Passion*, in the *Manner of Lucas van Leyden*, see Leesberg (comp.), *The New Hollstein: Hendrick Goltzius*, ed. Leeftang, I 45–69, nos. 17–28. On the *Pietà*, see ibidem I 74–77, no. 31.
- 48 On Goltzius's *Rest on the Return from the Flight*, see Leesberg (comp.), *The New Hollstein: Hendrick Goltzius*, ed. Leeftang, I 21, no. 13; and Melion W. S., "Theory and Practice: Reproductive Engravings in the Sixteenth-Century Netherlands", in Riggs T. – Silver L. (eds.), *Graven Images: The Rise of Professional Printmakers in Antwerp and Haarlem, 1540–1640* [exh. cat., Mary and Leigh Block Gallery, Northwestern University, Evanston] (Evanston: 1993) 47–69, esp. 62.



FIGURE 11.7 Hendrik Goltzius, *Circumcision*, in the Manner of Albrecht Dürer (1594), from *Life of the Virgin* (1593–1594). Engraving, 48.4 × 35.7 cm. London, British Museum. By permission of the British Museum.



FIGURE 11.8 *Hendrick Goltzius, Ecce Homo (1597), from Passion, in the Manner of Lucas van Leyden (1597–1598). Engraving, 20 × 13 cm. London, British Museum. By permission of the British Museum.*



FIGURE 11.9 *Hendrick Goltzius, Pietà, in the Manner of Albrecht Dürer (1596). Engraving, 18 × 13 cm. London. British Museum. By permission of the British Museum.*



FIGURE 11.10 *Hendrick Goltzius, Rest on the Return from the Flight into Egypt, in the Manner of Federico Barroci (1593), from Life of the Virgin (1593–1594). Engraving, 47 × 35.3 cm. London, British Museum. By permission of the British Museum.*

with the nude and with poetic fictions, such as the Dantesque presence of Charon, ferryman of the underworld, very much to the detriment of the prophetic religious subject he should ostensibly be portraying; as a consequence, he has committed the sin of willful error.⁴⁹ Having limited himself to a very selective production of master engravings dedicated to Catholic patrons, Goltzius sought in the 1590s to promulgate epitomes of the engraver's art, that might yet circumvent the sort of charges levelled against Michelangelo by critics such as Gilio. In the *Return from the Flight*, he deflects this critique of self-assertion by applying a thematic of religious service—further distilled and embodied by the figure of St. John the Baptist—vaunting not his own art but rather, that of Barocci, and then using that master's pictorial manner to strengthen the image's devotional form, function, and meaning.

In the beached whale prints, Matham, accommodating the argument of Van Mander's inscriptions, executes a simple version of Goltzius's complex maneuver: as Goltzius had made pictorial manner his theme, so Matham's theme is divine artifice, and as Goltzius had placed pictorial manner in service to religious truth, so Matham's art serves to evince God's prodigious works of nature. In both cases, the engravers and their collaborators produce novel devotional images that may be construed as signally pious and altogether orthodox.

I want to turn in closing to the principal context for the notion that divine artifice is the engraver's legitimate concern, indeed the subject that certifies his very art. This context was local: I refer to *rederijker* (rhetorical) drama, specifically to the *spelen van sinne* (allegorical verse dramas), such as the plays performed at the celebrated Antwerp *landjuweel* (regional prize competition) of 1561, the last and grandest of the Brabantine series of competitions inaugurated in 1515. Perhaps edited by Willem van Haecht, *factor* of the *Violieren* (Gillyflowers), one of three rhetorical chambers resident in mid-sixteenth-century Antwerp and the company that hosted the 1561 *landjuweel*, these *spelen* form part of the festival performances published by Willem Silvius in 1562.⁵⁰

49 On Gilio's critique of Michelangelo, see Dempsey C., "Mythic Inventions in Counter-Reformation Painting", in Ramsey P. A. (ed.), *Rome in the Renaissance: The City and the Myth*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies (Binghamton: 1982) 55–75, esp. 65–66.

50 Organized by De Violieren in collaboration with the Antwerp Guild of St. Luke, the *landjuweel* of 1561 was accompanied by a second prize competition, known as the *Haagspel*, and in addition, incorporated a festive entry and poetical pageant, both of which featured competitive tableaux vivants. The political context for this theatrical extravaganza, as Joeroen Vandommele has shown, was the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis, negotiated in 1559. On the organization and program of the 1561 *landjuweel*, see Vandommele J., *Als in een spiegel. Vrede, kennis en gemeenschap op het Antwerpse Landjuweel van 1561*, Middeleeuwse Studies en Bronnen 132 (Hilversum: 2011) 11–64; and on the *spelen van sinne* performed

Goltzius, Matham, and Van Mander were of course familiar with this genre of literary-rhetorical composition: Van Mander himself wrote several *spelen*;⁵¹ Goltzius had studied with Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert, a supreme master of allegorical drama in verse, and he was a member of the *Pelicaenen* (Pelicans), the Haarlem chamber for which he and Matham devised several emblematic blazons on the company motto 'Trou moet blijcken' ('Faith must shine forth').⁵²

during the *landjuweel*, 137–360. On the two publications that stemmed respectively from the *landjuweel* and the *Haagspel*, both of which incorporate prose prefaces by Willem van Haecht, see *ibidem* 45–47. On the *landjuweel* and its literary significance, also see Coigneau D., "Inleiding", in Cockx-Indestege E. – Waterschoot W. (eds.), *Uyt Ionsten ver-saemt. Het landjuweel van 1561 in Antwerpen* (Brussels: 1994) 9–44; *idem*, "Maer die steden apaert'. Over het rederijerslandjuweel en het haagspel van 1561", in Vanhemelryck F. (ed.), *Volkscultuur in het hertogdom Brabant* (Brussels: 1994) 115–141; Vandommele J. J. M., "Come all ye artless, take pleasure in learning!' The Role of Education in Allegorical Plays Performed at the Antwerp *Landjuweel* of 1561", in Kemperink M. G. (ed.), *Vision in Text and Image* (Leuven: 2008) 85–100; *idem*, "Herewith the poet doth reveal'. The Poetical Pageant of the Antwerp *Landjuweel* of 1561 as an Innovative Transmitter of the Concept of Harmony", in Vries A. de (ed.), *Cultural Mediators: Artists and Writers on the Crossroads of Tradition, Innovation, and Reception in the Low Countries and Italy, 1450–1650* (Leuven: 2008) 161–180; and *idem*, "Mirroring God, Reflecting Man: Shaping Identity through Knowledge in the Antwerp Plays of 1561", in Ramakers B. (ed.), *Understanding Art in Antwerp (1540–1580): Classicizing the Popular, Popularizing the Classics* (Leuven: 2011) 173–195.

51 On Van Mander's *spelen van sinne*, all of which are lost, see Jacobsen R., *Carel van Mander (1548–1606). Dichter en prozaschrijver* (Ph.D. dissertation, Rijks-Universiteit Leiden: 1906; reprint ed., Utrecht: 1972) 28–32. The biography of Van Mander added to the 1618 edition of the *Schilder-Boeck* mentions several plays staged in his home town of Meulebeke, the most elaborate of which told the story of Noah and the ark; other plays produced throughout Flanders focused on Nebuchadnezzar, on David and Solomon, on Solomon (his judgment, idolatry, and dealings with the architect Hiram and the Queen of Sheba), and two plays composed just before his journey to Rome in 1574, one dealing with Bel and the Dragon, the other with Wisdom and Folly. On these *spelen*, see "t Geslacht, de geboort, plaets, tydt, leven, ende wercken van Karel van Mander, Schilder en Poet, mitsgaders zyn overlyden, ende begraefenis", in Mander Karel van, *Het Schilder-Boeck* (Amsterdam, Jacob Pieterszoon Wachter: 1618), fol. Rijj recto-verso; for a critical edition of this *Levensbericht*, which is sometimes attributed to the poet Gerbrand Adriaenszoon Bredero, see Miedema (ed.), *Karel van Mander: The Lives*, trans. Cook-Radmore, I 7–33, esp. 14–17. On Van Mander's *Noah*, see Johannessen K. L., *Zwischen Himmel und Erde: Eine Studie über Joost van den Vondels biblische Tragödie in Gattungs-geschichtlicher Perspektive* (Oslo – Zwolle: 1963) 261–261. As Miedema notes in *Karel van Mander: The Lives* II 47, the poet may have received invitations ('kaerten') to produce his plays at festivals of rhetoric elsewhere in Flanders, since there was no chamber of rhetoric in Meulebeke.

52 On Goltzius's design for the chamber *Trou moet blijcken*, engraved by Matham, see Widerkehr L., "Jacob Matham Goltzij privignus: Jacob Matham graveur et ses rapports avec

I will focus on two plays from the 1561 *landjuweel*, that would have circulated widely, as a result of their inclusion in Silvius and Van Haecht's commemorative volume, unparalleled in its sheer size, editorial precision, and generic scope. The fourteen participating chambers were asked to compose allegorical plays that addressed the question, 'What spurs men most to *consten* ('arts')?' The term *consten*, as used by the chambers, refers to the arts as instruments of knowledge-formation: it embraces the traditional liberal arts, as well as poetry, painting, and, exceptionally, sculpture. To the competition question, the chamber from 's Hertogenbosch, *Den Vierighen Doorn* ('The Fiery Bramble'), answered, 'The spirit of God's wisdom that works through love'; the chamber from Lier, *Den Groeyende Boom* ('The Growing/Greening Tree'), answered, 'Hope for immortal glory in heaven and on earth'.⁵³

The key protagonist of the 's Hertogenbosch play is *Simpel van Verstande* ('Simple of Mind'), who is guided by various personifications to a vision of God's wisdom, first by *Tgoethertich Vermueghen* ('Noble-minded Ability') and *In Consten Verhueghen* ('Exaltation in the Arts'), and later by *Rechte Kennisse* ('True Knowledge') and *Des Waerheys Bewijs* ('Evidence of Truth'), messengers sent by God. In a crucial homily True Knowledge asserts that God is himself the *opperste Constenae*r ('Highest Artificer'), who has established all *goede consten* ('good arts') to fortify the cause of virtue: 'Further, as you will see, it has pleased the Lord who, as the highest artificer, knows and can do everything, willing and accomplishing what no man on earth can do, howsoever gifted or magnified

Hendrick Goltzius", *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 42–43 (1991–1992) 219–260, esp. 230, 257, no. M.1 On this and other blazons engraved by Matham after Goltzius, including a *New Year's Print of the Old Haarlem Chamber of Rhetoric 'De Pellicanisten'*, see Leesberg (comp.), *The New Hollstein: Hendrick Goltzius*, ed. Leeftang, IV 207–210, nos. 756–758.

53 Haecht Willem van (ed.?), *Spelen van sinne vol scoone moralisacien wtleggingen ende bediedenissen op alle loeflijcke consten waerinne men claerlijck ghelijck in eenen spiegel, Figuerlijck, Poetelijck ende Retorijckelijck mach aenschouwen hoe nootsakelijck ende dienstelijck die selve consten allen menschen zijn* (Antwerp, Willem Silvius: 1562) 141, 159 (for the 's Hertogenbosch chamber's response); 465, 468, 482 (for the Lier chamber's response). The *spel van sinne* of 's Hertogenbosch argues that the *raison d'être* and point of origin of all human 'consten' is the 'constich hantwerck' ('artful handiwork') of God, whose 'gheest der wijsheyt' ('spirit of wisdom') best expressed itself in the mystery of the Incarnation, the supreme epitome of divine artifice (ibidem 151, 159). The *spel van sinne* of Lier ultimately turns on a double reading of 'hope van onsterflijckheyt' ('hope for immortality'), which is taken to mean both 'hope for immortal fame' and 'hope for eternal life', and in a further construal of the latter sense, 'hope for salvation' (ibidem 477–481). For a summary of the competing chambers' 'beantwoordinghen oft solutien' ('answers or solutions') to the question, 'Dwelck den mensch aldermeest tot consten verweect', see ibidem 16.

by art, to order all good arts for the foritification of virtue'.⁵⁴ The term *const* embraces both the literary and pictorial arts, as I have indicated above, and True Knowledge uses it to refer to God's inimitable artisanship, his 'constich hantwerck soet boven sucaden' ('artful handiwork sweet above all sweets').⁵⁵ Her point, bodied forth in the faculty she personifies, is that genuine knowledge, source of the greatest pleasure, derives from attention paid to those things artfully fashioned by the Lord, which are to be appreciated as tokens of his supreme and universal wisdom. Cognizant of God's 'paternal, affectionate good deeds', exemplified by his artful handiwork, we will strive to praise, honor, and thank him liberally, having been led to God through our awareness of *const*.⁵⁶ By contrast, whoever forgets that God is the fountain from which all arts flow, resembles those pagans who credited nature alone as the source of such gifts; they falsely ascribe the arts to human nature, and consequently, as True Knowledge implies, these misguided artisans are culpable of engaging in a form of idolatry.⁵⁷

Simple of Mind enthusiastically responds to this second homily, which teaches him that 'kennise der consten weerdich' ('knowledge of the worthy arts'), leavened by the realization that all such *const* originates in God, is the means whereby we approach him, discerning his greatness.⁵⁸ Armed with such knowledge, Simple of Mind is now ready to receive the play's closing revelation: namely, the insight that to espouse *const* rightly is to acknowledge God as its source, and that the practice of *const* is grounded in God the Artificer's

54 Ibidem 150: 'Voorts heeft de Heere na sijn wel behaghen / Alle goede consten soo ghy sult mercken // wel / Gheordineert tot sduechs verstercken // snel / Als opperste Constenaer, diet al weet en can / Wil, en vermach, dwelck ter werelt gheen man / En doet, hoe constich begaeft oft vermaert'.

55 Ibidem 151.

56 Ibidem 151: 'Sijn Vaderlijcke liefhebbende goey-daden / sijn Constich hantwerck soet boven sucaden / Sijn wel ghemaecte schepselen goet van cueren / Als hemel, aerde, en alle creatueren / Diemen mach noemen oft den mensch bekend sijn / Met loff, prijs, en danckbaerheyt liberalijck'.

57 Ibidem: 'Dwelck vele (eylaes) doen al te qualijck / Als die daer meynen dat sulcx al sijnen ganck / Heeft, wt der natueren, na dopinien cranck / Van sommige Heydens in sinnen ghespeten / Die Godt hier in te danckene vergheten / Als fonteyne daer alle consten wt vloeyen'.

58 Ibidem: 'Soo hoor ick wel na des waerheys bedijcken / Dat alsulcke kennisse der consten weerdich / Wel tprincipaelste stuck (daer in men volheerdich / Hoort te blijevne) is naer u meeninghe'.

various endeavors, the greatest of which is his creation of God made flesh in Christ.⁵⁹

Arguing that God is himself the supreme artificer, the 's Hertogenbosch play folds the pursuit of *const* into the search for religious truth. It offers a rhetorical-artisanal discourse of art onto which we can map Matham's prints of God's wondrous works, works that, in Van Mander's words, compel us piously to acknowledge God's omnipotence. Like the 's Hertogenbosch players, Van Mander affirms the nexus of art and piety, viewing Matham's prints as devotional images that by describing examples of divine *const* invite artful praise of the Lord.⁶⁰

Although the Lier chamber responds differently to the competition question, answering 'hope for eternal glory in heaven and on earth', their method of argumentation complements that of 's Hertogenbosch. Their key protagonist is *Mensche* ('Man'), whom *Treck der Natueren* ('Natural Inclination'), accompanied by *Pays* ('Peace'), attempts to awaken from his lethargy and ignite to the practice of art.⁶¹ Lacking the stamina for such effortful study, Man requires the encouragement of two further personifications, *Neerstich Useren* ('Diligent

59 Ibidem 159 (italics mine): 'En daer desen dan is soo met liefde om vaen / Als ghever, en wilder dat men dwerck volbringt / Wercken, oft consten na des heeren vermaen / Sonder eyghen eere daer in ghemingt / Wordt sulcke niet alleen, daer therte toe dringt / Een constenaer, oft meester, rustich en vroet / Maer crijcht daer den prijs door, daer na elck verlingt / By de Croone der Eeren gheleken soet / *Daer de Vader sijnen son inde Menscheyt goet / Mede vercierde, door sijn conste rechtveerdich* / Als hy hem salfde midts der liefden gloet / Met olie der blijenschappen eer-weerdich / Boven sijn mede ghesellen, dwelck soetgheerdich / *Den reynen constenaers is een exemplaar* / Dus wel hem die dit met verstande vol-heerdich / *Door de rechte Gods conste* is volghene naer'.

60 'Artful' here also refers to the play, itself expressive of the God-given *const* it acclaims.

61 Ibidem: 'Ick gae tot den mensche en machs laten niet / Het is mijns moeders bevel hoort naer mijn tale / Liefde ghenaeemt, en woont in de hoochste sale / Met haer kint onsterflijcke glorie schoone / Op dat de mensch sou ontfanghen de croone / Door hope der onsterflijcker glorien net / Die subijtelijck sal worden in hem gheset / Soeckene reyn conste niet van deser eerden'. *Treck de Natueren* then states (ibidem 465) that 'hope naer glorie' ('hope for glory') is the defining condition of the true 'constenaer constich' ('artful artificer'): 'laet, want noyt en wasser constenaer constich / Hope naer glorie was in hem gheprent / Dat sy onsterflijck souwen blijven bekent'. At stake is the practice of 'reyn conste' ('pure art', exercised for honor rather than monetary profit), as the character *Fame van Eeren* ('Honorable Fame') later makes clear (ibidem 469): 'Dinct ghiericheyt, is een leelijck cieraet / Tbringt verdoemenisse, met hem ghedraghen / Verwect dat conste, het aensien oft tbehaghen / in ghelt, cieraet, cleeren, oft gulden ringhen / Sou hooverdije, dan conste by brenghen / Neen, tis teghen natuere ghelooft dat vast / Niet weert datmense by reyn conste tast / Haer wesen is verganckelijck te male / Maer soect reyn conste die

Usage') and *Wel Behagen* ('Good Content'), who reassure and inspire him to follow the example of the Muses.⁶² Only through works of art, they tell him, will he achieve the life after death that eternal fame vouchsafes.⁶³

Conste herself eventually appears, rewarding Man's fervent desire to see her. After engaging in dialogue with her, Man proves himself ready to receive the solution to the competition question, which appears in a *thoon* ('allegorical presentation', that is, a tableau vivant, often enacted on the second register of the stage set) glossed by *Conste*. The name of God, inscribed in Hebrew letters, becomes visible in a cloudbank, encircled by cherubs.⁶⁴ Paraphrasing Christ, *Conste* announces that what Man desires shall be his reward (*Matthew* 6:21): 'Attend, Man, to that which is revealed to you, and ask no longer for immortality. See instead that which lasts everlastingly till the end of all days, that which ceaselessly the ancients ever hoped to know with cunning skills, that which they did not understand yet sought through me, subtly counterfeiting the good and the bad as clever *artisten* (artists), in order to convey to glory the simpleminded who easily falter'.⁶⁵

Man, acceding to these insights delivered by *Conste*, states: 'This spurs me freely to you, so that with you and through you I might chance to attend the

princepale / Achter sal laten eenen onsterflijcken naem / Laet sulck glorie u verwecken bequaem / Om hemels tsijne en onvergancklijck'.

- 62 Midway through the *spel*, *Mensche* takes center stage with *Neerstich Useren* and *Wel Behaghen*, and announces how, led first by *Treck der Natueren* and then by them, he has now attached himself to the Muses, whose various gifts he gratefully acknowledges (*ibidem* 477): 'Ick bender toe ontwect, dies mijn vreucht vermeert / In sulcken loflijcken consten loyale / Weerdich sijn sy, tot den hemel gheeert / Want sy comen wt de hoochste sale'.
- 63 *Neerstich Useren* and *Wel Behaghen* adduce Orpheus, the power of whose art has made him immortal (*ibidem* 472–473): 'Hoort Orpheus de stil staen boomen, rivieren / Door sijns spels vercierden // alderley dieren / Stervende soo hebben de Goddinnen / Hem self begraven, en ten hemel binnen / Sijn constich spel verheven, dus dan ghy / Om sulcken glorie, niet te gane voorby / Vinde ick u verwect tot consten ongheslaemt'.
- 64 The *thoon* is described in a marginal gloss (*ibidem* 481): 'Toon. Den name Gods in Hebreusche inde wolcken ommering met Cherubinnen'.
- 65 *ibidem* 481: 'Siet mensche op dat ick u verthoone / Donsterflijckheyt wilt my niet meer vraghen / Aensiet dat nu dat eewich blijft tot allen daghen / Daer de Antiquiteyt met nauwer listen / Altijt op ghehoopt hebben sonder vertragen / Om te kennen daer sy niet af en wisten / Sochtent door my en als cloecke artisten / Conterfeyten tgoet, en quaet subtielijck / Om voor die simpele die lichtelijck misten / Tot glorien te bringhene blijlijck'. *Const* is arguing that whereas the ancients believed 'onsterflijckheyt' to be obtainable in and through the practice of 'const', Christian 'constenaeren' realize that 'const' is but the means to an end, that end being eternal salvation, which issues from Christ and entails the use of all one's native abilities.

constenaers (artificer's) works, hoping for immortal glory, in which my spirit should rest forever, confirmed in glory'.⁶⁶ *Conste* concurs, praising God as the highest artificer, whose honorable *hantwerck* (handiwork) *Conste* serves to imitate: 'I am the mirror [of God's handiwork], through which is known heaven's course and the whole firmament; indeed men know death and life through me [...]. Thus, oh Man, be assured of this, and in hope of pure glory and of becoming an immortal creature, desire to use me diligently early and late [...]. I go, be diligent alone in my virtue, for through me heavenly fruit is tasted'.⁶⁷ Through the arts, then, we come to know their source, a truth literally enacted in this play when *Conste* explicates the *thoon* that stages an epiphany of God's name. What Man has learned from *Conste*, he announces in a final speech, is that God is the 'wercker der const hemels boven al' ('the heavenly maker of art above all'), whose promise of surpassing glory is known as *Elisius dal* ('the Elisian fields'), where 'immortal souls reign forever'.⁶⁸

In this articulation, God is acknowledged as the supreme *constenaer*, and the chief virtue of art is seen to consist in the imitation of God's works, the symptoms of his peerless *const*. Viewed in these terms, Maham's prints may be construed as mirrors of the divine handwork of the *hoochsten constenaer* ('highest artificer'). This is precisely the claim made by Van Mander's inscriptions that ask us to regard the whales not as political portents, monstrous presages, or encoded prolepses, but as divine creations, valuable in and of themselves, the true and pious subjects of Matham's prints. Appreciated in this way, the whales become doubly curious, strange things rarely fashioned, epitomes of the unfamiliar and of artifice, justly served by Matham's burin-hand.

66 Ibidem: 'Dat is my oock meest verweckende vrijlijck / Tot u, op dat ick des constenaers wercken / Met u en door u sou connen aenmercken / Midts hopende op de glorie onsterflijck / Dat mijnen gheest daer sou rusten erflijck / Om sijn in glorien gheconfirmeert'.

67 Ibidem 482: 'Waer af ick den spiegel ben daerment al [des hoochsten constenaers [...] hantwerck] in kent / Den loop des hemels en theel firmament / Ia doot en leven kentmen oock door my / [...] Dus o mensche ghy // hier op vastelijck staet / Wilt Neerstich useren om my vroech en laet / Door hope om in glorien puere / Te worden een onsterflijcke creatuere / [...] / Ick gae sijt neerstich alleen om mijn duecht / Want van my ghesmaect wort een hemelsche vruecht'.

68 Ibidem: 'Door hope volcomelijck mijn herte verhuecht / Midts die reyn conste die my heeft verthoont / De glorie daer donsterflijcheyt in woont / Den wercker der consts hemels boven al / De glorie die smenschen arbeyt verschoont / Welck meest tot consten verwect groot en smal / Vanden Poeten ghenaemt Elisius dal / Daer de sielen onsterflijck eewich regneren'. In this passage, 'hope volcomelijck' is fully identified with the hope for glory, which has become indistinguishable from the hope for eternal life in Christ.

Excursus: Prodigies of Nature in a *Poeterij* by Hendrick Goltzius

There were other ways, of course, to treat the thematic of artifice, and so, in closing, I want briefly to consider a *penwerck* (pen-work) by Van Mander's close friend Hendrick Goltzius that incorporates a very different kind of natural prodigy.⁶⁹ The *penwerck* in question, the *Venus, Bacchus, and Ceres* of 1593, is itself something prodigious, an epitome of artifice, and, as such, comments meta-pictorially on the subject of artifice that it also mythologizes: drawn in pen and various shades of brown ink on parchment, it consists entirely of concentric hatches and cross-hatches, delineated in Goltzius's signature burin-hand; relying neither on contour lines nor tonal washes, he yet manages to describe a wide spectrum of textures and to capture fugitive effects of reflected light and penumbral shadow [Fig. 11.11].⁷⁰ In places, such as the female nude's midriff or the male nude's upper arm, he depicts even subtler effects of re-reflected light that scintillates from surface to surface. Although the *penwerck* is ostensibly monochrome, it evokes a full palette of colors, not least the changeable coloring of flesh, flame, foliage, and bark. This epitome of Goltzius's *teyckenconst* (art of delineation) is a *poëterij*—a poetical subject, that is, a mythological fiction.⁷¹ The central figure is Venus, the flanking

- 69 On the term *penwerck*, utilized by Van Mander in the "Life of Goltzius", *Het Schilder-Boeck* (Haarlem, Paschier van Wesbusch: 1604), fol. 285 verso, to designate the epitomes of *teyckenconst* rendered by him in pen and ink on parchment or canvas, see Melion W. S., "Love and Artisanhip in Hendrick Goltzius's *Venus, Bacchus, and Ceres* of 1606", *Art History* 16 (1993) 60–94, esp. 62–63; and Miedema, *Karel van Mander: The Lives*, trans. Cook-Radmore, V 207–208.
- 70 On the *Venus, Baccus, and Ceres*, lauded by Van Mander as a paragon of both *teyckenconst* and *reflexy-const* (art of reflection), see "Den grondt der edel vry Schilder-const", *Schilder-Boeck*, fol. 33 recto; and "T'leven van Henricus Goltzius, uytmemende Schilder, Plaetsnijder, en Glaes-Schrijver, van Mulbracht", in ibidem, fol. 285 recto. On this *pen-werck*, see Reznicek, *Zeichnungen von Hendrick Goltzius* I 102–103, 286–87, no. 129; Miedema H. (ed.–trans.), *Karel van Mander, Den grondt der edel vry schilder-const*, 2 vols. (Utrecht: 1973) II 529–30; Nichols L. W., *The 'Pen-Works' of Hendrick Goltzius* [exh. cat., Philadelphia Museum of Art], *Bulletin Philadelphia Museum of Art* 88 (1991) 12–14; and Leeftang H., "Sine Cerere et Libero friget Venus, 1593", in Leeftang H – Luijten G. – et al., *Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617): Drawings, Prints, and Paintings* [exh. cat., Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Toledo Museum of Art] (Amsterdam – New York – Toledo – Zwolle: 2003) 248–50, no. 87.
- 71 On the term *poëterij*, introduced by Van Mander in "T'leven van Ioan de Mabuse, Schilder", *Schilder-Boeck*, fol. 225 verso, see Silver L., "Figure nude, historie, e poesie: Jan Gossaert and the Renaissance Nude in the Netherlands", *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 37 (1986) 1–40; and Miedema (ed.), *Karel van Mander: The Lives*, trans. Cook-Radmore, III 146–47.



FIGURE 11.11 *Hendrick Goltzius, Venus, Bacchus, and Ceres (Sine Cerere et Baccho friget Venus) (1593). Pen and brown ink on parchment, 61.3 × 49.5 cm. London, British Museum. By permission of the British Museum.*

figures Bacchus and Ceres, both of whom offer their gifts to the goddess: the wine god's presentation of grapes and the goddess of agriculture's presentation of a produce-laden cornucopia, enliven the goddess of love, warming her, supplying the food and drink that brings eros to life. In response, she starts to smile, becoming, before our very eyes, Philomeides Aphrodite—Venus the joyful goddess who rejoices in laughter. The three divinities enact an apothegm popularized by the Roman playwright Terence in the *Eunuchus*, and disseminated widely by Erasmus in the *Adagia*: 'Sine Cerere et Baccho friget Venus' ('Without Ceres and Bacchus, Venus grows cold').⁷² Erasmus considered this adage 'very neat' because its every part 'enshrines a metaphor': just as food and drink convert desire into passion, so the conversion of Ceres and Bacchus into images of love's instruments, and of Venus into an image of burning desire, wittily and vividly illustrates the truism that food and drink are the things that stimulate lasciviousness.⁷³ At Venus's feet, Cupid stokes a small fire fueled by ears of wheat and vine tendrils, and this flame, which signifies burgeoning love, casts a brilliant glow on Venus and the attendant deities. Very brightly lit are the draped fabric shielding her pudendum and the heart-shaped pendant decorating her *cestus*, the girdle that signifies seductive love's irresistible charms.⁷⁴

Emerging from the vaporous smoke of Cupid's fire is one of the many prodigies of natural artifice that populate the picture: a half-formed, snub-nosed face with slanted eyes emanates from the smoky exhalation. Upon closer inspection, other faces become evident: the silhouette of the ledge upon which Ceres sets her left foot, for example, resembles a bearded face with deep-set eye and protruberant cheek, seen from the side. Other faces materialize from the knotty bark of the myrtle tree, sacred to Venus, against which she leans—most conspicuously, a satyr-like face with upturned eyes in shadowy sockets, a blunt nose, a leering mouth, and a goatee. Above the doves, likewise sacred to Venus, another face appears to be forming, its eye-sockets already discernible, the nose just beginning to project, the cheeks and brow not yet

72 On the adage 'Sine Cere et Baccho friget Venus', see Mynors R. A. B. (ed.-trans.), *Collected Works of Erasmus: Adages II i 1 to II vi 100* (Toronto – Buffalo – London: 1991) 187–88. Van Mander cites this adage in "Van Venus", in "Wtlegghingh op den Metamorphosis Pub. Ovidij Nasonis", Book V of *Het Schilder-Boeck*, fol. 29 verso. On the *Eunuch* as a source of *boelscappen*—erotic imagery closely related to the *poëterij*—see Sluijter E. J., "Emulating Sensual Beauty: Representations of Danaë from Gossaert to Rembrandt", *Simiolus* (1999) 4–45, esp. 12, 14–16.

73 Mynors (ed.-trans.), *Adages II i 1 to II vi 100*, 886.

74 On the *cestus*, see Van Mander, "Van Venus", in "Wtlegghingh", fol. 29 recto.

distinguishable. These embryonic countenances allude to the transformative power of emergent love, as embodied by Venus in the company of her son Cupid and servitors Ceres and Bacchus. This is surely why the mask-like faces embedded in the tree trunk are juxtaposed to two further references to love-driven transformation: the Provençal roses growing next to the satyr's head allude to Adonis, beloved by Venus, from whose blood they issued;⁷⁵ the paired doves below the less fully-formed face allude to the nymph Peristera, who, driven by affection for the goddess, helped her to gather a bouquet so floriferous that it bested the one Cupid had plucked.⁷⁶ For her pains, the petulant Cupid then turned her into a snow-white dove, a creature that ever after remained dear to the goddess.

Whereas the beached whales, discussed above, prove resistant to construal as portents, here the facial images are tendered as presages of love's newfound strength, its growing power to overturn the normal course of events. Goltzius invites the viewer to read them as metonymic analogues of prospering Venus. Karel van Mander's iconographical treatise, the "Wtleghghingh op den Metamorphosis Pub. Ovidij Nasonis" ("Commentary on the Metamorphoses of Publius Ovidius Naso"), written soon after Goltzius drew his *penwerck*, provides ready access to the dense web of allusions he has spun. The proximity of the satyr's face to Venus's, its features as dark and bestial as hers are bright and beautiful, intimates that she is two-faced: on the one hand, Venus is the 'daughter of heaven', celestial in her pulchritude; on the other, to quote Van Mander, she is 'dubbed vulgar, carnal, and voluptuous, the youngest daughter of Jupiter and Dione, who prefers to haunt solitary and dark places, where her works may remain hidden'.⁷⁷ This other Venus is nicknamed Melaena, the 'dark one'.

75 On Adonis, from whose blood issued the red rose and the Provençal rose, see *ibidem*, fol. 30 recto; and Van Mander, "Van Adonis", in *ibidem*, fol. 88 recto.

76 On Peristera, see Van Mander, "Van Venus", in "Wtleghghingh", fol. 30 recto.

77 Van Mander, "Van Venus", in "Wtleghghingh", fol. 30 recto: 'Maer Plato in't Bancket seght, datter zijn twee Venus, en twee Cupidons: want Venus is niet sonder Cupido. D'een Venus, seght hy, is ouder als d'ander, en is sonder Moeder, dochter des Hemels, die wy noemen Hemelsche, reyne en kuyssche, niet anders soeckende als een lichtende blinckentheyt in der Godtheyt: oft door een seer vyerige liefde die sy in ons baert, onse Sielen te vereenigen met t'Godlijcke wesen, als die t'beeldt en teecken des selven is. D'ander is de jongste dochter van Iuppiter en Dione, dese wort ghenoeemt volcksche, vleeschlijcke, wellustige, gemeenlijck haer onthoudende in eensaem holen, en doncker plaatsen, om dat haer wercken verborgen willen wesen: dese noemt Pausanias te deser oorsaeck Melaena, dat is, de swarte'. As will be evident from this passage, there are also two aspects to Cupid. Indeed, it might be argued that all four deities are depicted in two aspects, the one celestial, the other terrestrial: the smoky face, turned left like Cupid's, portrays his baser nature;

The *penwerck* shows the goddess inhabiting precisely the sort of shaded, isolated spot described by Van Mander; her pose, standing from the waist down, reclining from the waist up, not only indicates that she has not yet reached her full stature—namely, strength—but also implies that she, like the sweethearts she inspires, shares a predilection for the lover's couch or bed. However, as Goltzius intimates, when Venus finally stands upright, and her power blazes at maximum strength, she will tower over Ceres and Bacchus. That the implanted faces belong to satyrs has to do with their function as attributes of Venus's power to stimulate sexual desire: as Van Mander puts it, they represent the 'pricking of Venus', her capacity to beget carnal love ('beteyckenende de prickeling van Venus').⁷⁸ That the faces appear nascent rather than fully formed, speaks to their status as indicators of love's ability to transmogrify all things. Van Mander makes this point by paraphrasing Petrarch's "Triumph of Love" from the *Trionfi*: 'Petrarch the Italian poet gives Cupid rainbow-colored wings in his "Triumph of Love", in order to make known that unchaste love, once it is unbound, is insatiable, always tending toward transformation and renewal'.⁷⁹ Furthermore, the partially glimpsed likenesses, their features still inchoate, directly derive from Petrarch's description of the captives marching behind Love's triumphal chariot, as its living spoils:

With keen survey I mark'd the ghostly show,
To find a shade among the sons of Woe
To memory known: but every trace was lost
In the dim features of the moving host:
Oblivion's hand had drawn a dark disguise
O'er their wan lineaments and beamless eyes.⁸⁰

the face projecting from the ledge, silhouetted like Ceres's, betrays her earthy side; and the young satyr whose face and figure repeat that of Bacchus, and who, like him, gazes adoringly at Venus, functions as his vulgar doppelgänger. On the potential fierceness of Cupid, inherited from the wild beasts that suckled him, see Van Mander, "Van Cupido", in *ibidem*, fol. 7 verso.

- 78 Van Mander, "Van den Satyren", in *ibidem*, fol. 11 verso: 'Sy zijn (meenen eenighe) ghenomemt Satyren, nae een Griecx woordt Sathe, beteyckenende de prickeling van Venus'.
- 79 Van Mander, "Van Cupido", in *ibidem*, fol. 8 recto-verso: 'Petrarcha Italisch Poeet, in zijn Triumph der Liefde, geeft hem vleughels van duysenderley verwen, willende te kennen geven, dat d'oncuysche Liefde, ongebonden wesende, onversadigh is, altyts gheneghen tot veranderinghe, oft vernieuwinghe'.
- 80 Boyd H. A. M. (ed.-trans.), *The Triumphs of Petrarch* (London: 1807) 6.

The presence of faces in fire, earth, and wood, suggests that love, in its impulse to transform, knows no elemental boundaries. As Van Mander states with reference to Empedocles, love is like 'fiery heat, or again, like a Godly force that causes all created things to germinate'.⁸¹ Caught in mid-formation, the dynamic countenances also call to mind Van Mander's assertion that love is a fundamentally mimetic impulse, for it compels all living things to fashion likenesses of themselves: 'Love, a Godly power, consists in a sure desire, found in all things, to bring forth one's image and likeness through union and coalescence'.⁸² He reiterates this observation to underscore its importance: 'Venus [like Cupid] is construed truly as the desire of created things to bring forth their image and likeness'.⁸³ The likenesses of faces that coalesce from the drawing's dense networks of line, stand for this mimetic impulse that Venus, as the personification of love, sets in motion. Her presence gives rise to these feats of natural artifice because, as Van Mander further suggests, 'she presides over summer and the month of April, as goddess over orchards and gardens, wherein she is placed to foster propagation and growth'.⁸⁴

Goltzius's astonishing penmanship, the index of his love of art, proxies for and is proxied by these instances of anthropomorphosis. Indeed, in the magnificent *Venus, Bacchus, and Ceres* of 1606, the largest of his *penwercken*, he interpolates a self-portrait of himself offering burins at the altar of Venus: he thus implies that it is he, or rather, his penhand, that bodies forth the mimetic passion engendered by Venus.⁸⁵ Van Mander formulates this conceit complementarily in the chapter on the woodland deity Pan. Referring to the iconography of Pan wrestling with Cupid, he argues that the latter's victory demonstrates love's power over nature, for it is love, and love alone, that awakens nature's generative capacities: 'Love conquers Nature: and it is Love that stirs Nature,

81 Ibidem, fol. 8 recto: '[...] oft een vyerige hitte, oft eyndlijck een Godtlijcke cracht, die aller schepselen wasdom gheeft, nae dat Empedocles seght'.

82 Ibidem: 'en dat Liefde een Godtlijcke cracht wesende, is een seker begheerte in alle dinghen, om hem te vereenighen en versamen, om zijn ghelijck wesen oft ghedaente te tellen'.

83 Ibidem: 'welcke Venus oock wordt ghehouden eyghentlijck te wesen de begheerte, die de schepselen hebben, voort te brenghen hun ghelijcke beeldt oft schepsel, welcke begheerte ontstaet uyt een wisse overeencominghe der lichaemen en ghematicheyt der Locht'.

84 Van Mander, "Van Venus", in ibidem, fol. 29 recto: 'Sy was ooc geheeten Somer oft April-Goddinne, en Godinne der Hoven oft Tuynen, daer sy in was gestelt om het teelen en wasdom'.

85 On Goltzius's self-portrait in the *Venus, Bacchus, and Ceres* of 1606, see Melion, "Love and Artisanship" 60–62; and Nichols L. W., "Sine Cerere et Libero friget Venus, 1606 (?)", in Leeftang – Luijten – et al., *Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617)* 277–79, no. 100.

generating her every form'.⁸⁶ In bringing the elements to life, anthropomorphizing them, Goltzius's Venus allegorizes the artist's ability to activate the power of representation that lies dormant in nature until it is pricked by love. At issue is his own artifice, his wondrous skill of hand, that the prodigies of nature on view in the *Venus, Bacchus, and Ceres* may be seen boldly to portend.

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86 Van Mander, "Van Pan", in "Wtlegghingh", fol. 11 verso: 'Liefde verwint Natuere: Oock is Liefde, die de teelinghe aller gedaenten der Natueren verweckt'.

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Walvisch van Berckhey: Dat is, Eene beschrijvinghe des grooten Vischs, die tot Berckhey ghestrandet is Anno 1598. den 3. Februarij, met eene verclaringhe der dinghen die daer naer ghevolght zijn: Met noch een cort verhael der geschiedenissen, die van den lesten Augusti 1598, tot nu toe verlopen zijn int Vorstendom Cleve ende omliggende vrije Landen, door de aencomste van den Spaenschen Leger, hare ongehoorde wreetheyt tegen de Cleefsche ende hare Steden, die sy als vyanden innemen voor den Coninck van Spagnen. T'samen eenen Brief van des Keyzers Ghesant, met d'Admirants antwoordt. (Pamphlet, n.p.—n.d.: Bibliotheek van 's Rijks Museum van Natuurlijke Historie te Leiden [No. 2700—Mamm.]).

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