

Jan Gossaert's *Neptune and Amphitrite* reconsidered*

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In 1821, a painting of two nude sea gods entered the collection of the Staatliche Museen in Berlin and was soon heralded as the first monumental depiction of mythological nudes in the history of Netherlandish art (fig. 1).¹ The Latin signature “Ioannes Malbodius pingebat” (“Jan Gossaert painted this”) and the date “1516” inscribed in Roman capitals below the feet of the deities affirmed beyond doubt the artist responsible for its creation. Long recognized as the major work of Gossaert’s career, second only perhaps to the celebrated lost altarpiece he created for Middelburg Abbey, the painting now in Berlin is the starting point for any understanding of the artist’s engagement with antiquity.²

Despite the painting’s undisputed importance to Gossaert’s oeuvre and the history of classical revival in the Low Countries, the very question of what the work represents has never been properly investigated. Upon its rediscovery in Berlin, it was declared a depiction of *Neptune and Amphitrite*, and that identification has been

maintained throughout all subsequent scholarship.³ This assumption must have been based on the work’s apparent correlation with other depictions of the mythological couple, given that absolutely no documentation of the painting survives prior to the nineteenth century. Yet when reexamined in the light of the larger visual tradition, the accepted identification of the subject proves to be far from satisfying.

The silence of the historical record, the utter lack of documents regarding the commission, reception or contemporary viewing of the work during the sixteenth century, is reason in itself to look at the painting again and ask whether some of the long-standing conclusions concerning its original meaning and function may have been preemptive. In particular, the notion that this picture—although created a full seven years after Gossaert’s documented trip to Italy—nonetheless reflects a conception of antiquity grounded first and foremost in Rome fails to account for the contingencies of the local

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¹ Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, inv. nr. 648. For a summary of prior literature see M. Ainsworth *et al.*, exhib. cat. *Man, myth, and sensual pleasures: Jan Gossart’s renaissance, the complete works*, New York (Metropolitan Museum of Art) 2010, pp. 217–20, nr. 30. The painting had belonged to the English merchant Edward Solly but is not documented prior to 1821. For the history of Solly’s collection see W.H. Köhler, “Die Sammlung Solly: Merkmale und Kennzeichen Ihrer Bilder,” in M. Boskovits (ed.), *Frühe Italienische Malerei: Gemäldegalerie*

Berlin, Katalog der Gemälde, Berlin 1988, pp. 185–86, and F. Herrmann, “Peel and Solly: two nineteenth-century art collectors and their sources of supply,” *Journal of the History of Collections* 3, nr. 1 (1991), pp. 89–96, esp. pp. 92–94.

² On the Middelburg altarpiece see L.C. van Dyck, “Jan Gossaerts retabel voor het hoogaltaar van de Abdijkerk te Middelburg,” in idem, *De Abdij van Tongerlo: gebundelde historische studies*, Averbode 1999, pp. 649–54. For Albrecht Dürer’s famous remarks on the altarpiece in December 1520 see A. Dürer, *Schrifflicher Nachlass*, ed. H. Rupprich, 3 vols., Berlin 1956–69, vol. 1, p. 162.

³ The title appears in G.F. Waagen’s original guide to the Berlin collection, *Verzeichnis der Gemälde-Sammlung des Königlichen Museums zu Berlin*, Berlin 1832, p. 162, nr. 130, and in the first *catalogue raisonné* of the artist by M. Gossart, *Un des peintres peu connus de l’école flamande de transition, Jean Gossart de Maubeuge: sa vie et son oeuvre*, Lille 1902, p. 67, nr. 648. It has remained unchallenged ever since.



1 Jan Gossaert, *Neptune and Amphitrite (?)*, 1516, oil on panel. Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie

context of its creation on Netherlandish soil. By perpetuating the portrait of Gossaert as a pioneer in the so-called Romanist school, as the forefather of figures like Maarten van Heemskerck and Frans Floris who so explicitly based their artistic identity on a knowledge of Italian models, scholars have obscured the specificity of the Berlin painting and the artistic project that it represents.⁴ A new analysis of the work's iconography and the intellectual milieu in which it was created suggests instead that Gossaert's painting embodies the fertile union of land and sea and the history of the region from which it sprang: not Italy, but the Netherlands.

FROM ROME TO ZEELAND Gossaert had two interlocutors in the making of his 1516 painting, and it is crucial to recognize their roles from the outset. The first was his patron, Philip of Burgundy, admiral of the Netherlands and bastard son of the Duke of Burgundy.⁵ The admiral's name and personal motto, "A plus sera" ("There will be more") are inscribed in the top right corner of the picture, attesting to his agency as the one who commissioned the work.⁶ Gossaert's second associate was the humanist Gerard Geldenhouwer, then newly employed as Philip's secretary, whose antiquarian pursuits and classical acumen must have guided the conception of the image.⁷

Gossaert's relationship with Philip began early in his career. Between late fall 1508 and the spring of 1509 Philip led an ambassadorial mission to the papal court of Pope Julius II and asked the artist to accompany him.⁸ The embassy traveled through northern Italy and arrived in Rome in January 1509, where Gossaert was to

⁴ For the first definitive characterization of Gossaert as a Romanist see G.J. Hoogewerff, *Nederlandsche schilders in Italië in de XVIIe eeuw: de geschiedenis van het Romanisme*, Utrecht 1912, pp. 41–56, esp. p. 51.

⁵ The essential biography, with previous literature, is J. Sterk, *Philips van Bourgondië (1465–1524), bisschop van Utrecht als protagonist van de Renaissance: zijn leven en maecenaat*, Zutphen 1980. See also P.G. Bietenholz, *Contemporaries of Erasmus: a biographical register of the Renaissance and Reformation*, 3 vols., Toronto 1995, vol. 1, pp. 230–31. Philip was appointed admiral in 1498 and held the office until 1517, when he became Bishop of Utrecht.

⁶ "A / plus sera / ph[ilipp]e bourg[og]ne."

⁷ For the most accurate biography of the humanist, with prior literature, see G. Geldenhouwer, *Gerard Geldenhouwer van Nijmegen (1482–1542), historische werken: Lucubratiuncula de Batacorum Insula, Historia Batavica, Germaniae Inferioris historiae, Germanicorum historiarum illustratio*, trans. and ed. I. Bejczy



2 Jan Gossaert, *View of the Colosseum*, c. 1509, pen and ink. Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett

produce his remarkable drawings after ancient monuments, including his famous study of the Colosseum (fig. 2).⁹ According to Geldenhouwer's posthumous biography of Philip, Gossaert's drawings were created at the admiral's behest: "Nothing in Rome delighted [Philip] more than those sacred monuments of antiquity, which he commissioned the most famous painter Jan Gossaert of Mabuse to depict for him."¹⁰

Scholars have often cited this passage as evidence that Rome provided the main impetus for Philip's subsequent commissioning of works like the Berlin painting, but to do so is to take Geldenhouwer's statement out of context. By the time he wrote and published the biography in 1529, Geldenhouwer's open conversion to

et al., Hilversum 1998, pp. 10–12, and Bietenholz, *op. cit.* (note 5), vol. 2, pp. 82–84. See also J. Prinsen, *Gerardus Geldenhouwer Noviomagus: bijdrage tot de kennis van zijn leven en werken*, The Hague 1898, which is still an important study.

⁸ A.J. Wauters, "Une ambassade flamande chez le Pape Jules II en 1508," *La Revue de Belgique* 1904, pp. 290–307.

⁹ Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, inv. nr. KdZ 12918; Ainsworth *et al.*, *op. cit.* (note 1), pp. 386–87, nr. 102, with prior literature, and *ibid.*, pp. 378–85, nrs. 99–101 for Gossaert's other surviving drawings after Roman sculpture and monuments.

¹⁰ G. Geldenhouwer, *Collectanea van Gerardus Geldenhouwer Noviomagus*, ed. J. Prinsen, Amsterdam 1901, pp. 232–33 (*Vita clarissimi principis, Philippi a Burgundia*, Strasbourg 1529): "Nihil magis eum Romae delectabat, quam sacra illa vetustatis monumenta, quae per clarissimum pictorem Joannem Gossardum Malbodium dipingenda sibi curavit."

Lutheranism meant that his account of the Roman sojourn was informed as much by his religious convictions as by the memory of his deceased patron.¹¹ Immediately after his mention of Gossaert's drawings, Geldenhouwer proceeds to pit Philip's admiration for "the sacred monuments of antiquity" and the citizens of venerable Roman descent against the disgust he felt for the immoral ecclesiastics of the Vatican. He writes that Philip saw cardinals stick out their tongues and make obscene gestures at the members of his embassy so as to insinuate that all northerners were simple folk.¹² Whether or not this corresponds to what Philip actually experienced, the rhetoric and intentionality of the passage as a whole—the contrast Geldenhouwer establishes between the wickedness of contemporary Rome and the purity of its classical past—should alert us not to treat the biography as a straightforward historical document.¹³ When Geldenhouwer concludes his account of the embassy by reiterating the language of his earlier reference to Gossaert's drawings: "In short, nothing in Rome pleased [Philip] except the sky and sun, stones and timbers, and those Roman citizens," it becomes clear that the humanist was concerned above all to emphasize that Philip admired only those aspects of Rome that were true to its ancient origins and were untarnished by Catholic corruption. His passing reference to Philip's commission is merely one example in this vein.¹⁴

We are better served by turning to the surviving drawings themselves and considering their appeal as

personal records of the visit shared by artist and patron. In the drawing of the Colosseum, the seeming eagerness of Gossaert's pen, the desire to render every detail of the monument before him, extends not only to the building's tiered columns but also to its crumbling stones, sprouting weeds, and the surrounding terrain that seems in danger of engulfing its very foundations. The artist captures the experience of viewing the past across the gulf of temporal distance. Both the high level of finish and the inscription in the upper right corner, which identifies the artist in the third person and in a contemporary hand that is not Gossaert's own, suggest that drawings like this came to serve their patron more as mementos of the Roman experience—collector's items that Philip could show and discuss at his court—than as the active vehicles for Gossaert's creation of a new kind of painting.¹⁵ It is significant that upon returning home from Italy he did not make immediate use of these drawings as visual models but instead began a productive dialogue with the painterly tradition of his early Netherlandish predecessors.¹⁶ In *The Malvagna triptych*, which dates to this period, a stunning canopy of Gothic ornament provides occasion for an Eyckian play on the boundary between the intimate world of the Virgin Mary and the realm of the viewer (fig. 3). Here Gossaert reveals his mastery of a pictorial mode that is the very opposite of classical monumentality.

Even when he finally produced the painting known as *Neptune and Amphitrite*—seven years after his visit

11 For the most extensive discussion see Prinsen, *op. cit.* (note 7), pp. 64–97. For the letter of 13 November 1526 in which Geldenhouwer professed his conversion to Lutheranism see H. de Vocht, *Litterae virorum eruditorum ad Franciscum Craneveldium 1522–1528: a collection of original letters edited from the manuscripts and illustrated with notes and commentaries*, Louvain 1928, pp. 545–48, nr. 209.

12 Geldenhouwer, *Collectanea* cit. (note 10), p. 233: "Addebat, se vidente, cardinales quosdam primi nominis, dum sacrae reliquiae populo et praecipue Germanis nostris venerande ostenderentur, exertis linguis ac digitis in turpem modum compositis, nostrorum simplicitati insultasse."

13 The Lutheran agenda underlying this passage is evident even in Geldenhouwer's choice of words, particularly in the derogatory use of "curtisanos" to refer to the members of the Roman Curia, a usage also found in Martin Luther's own writing. See J. Ramminger, *Neulateinische Wortliste*, s.v. "curtisanus": www.neulatein.de/words/3/007199.htm.

14 Geldenhouwer, *Collectanea* cit. (note 10), p. 234: "Nihil ei (ut paucis dicam) Romae placuit, praeter coelum et solum, lapides et ligna, et cives illos Romanos."

15 The inscription on the drawing reads: "Jennin Mabusen eghenen / handt, Contrafetet in Roma / in [?] Coloseus". It may be possible to identify the author of this text from the handwriting. Gossaert himself has been ruled out; see Ainsworth *et al.*, *op. cit.* (note 1), p. 386, note 8. A close comparison with Geldenhouwer's autograph manuscript preserved in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in Brussels, MS 11 53, eliminates him as well. I am very grateful to James Hankins and especially to Michel Verweij, curator of manuscripts in Brussels, for consulting with me on this point. I have not yet been able to compare the inscription to Philip's handwriting, but that certainly warrants investigation.

16 See M. Ainsworth, "The painter Gossart in his artistic milieu," in Ainsworth *et al.*, *op. cit.* (note 1), pp. 13–15, and pp. 131–39, nr. 6, pp. 145–49, nr. 8, for *The Malvagna triptych* (Palermo, Galleria Regionale della Sicilia, inv. nr. 75) and *The adoration of the kings* (London, National Gallery, inv. nr. NG 2790) respectively. See also the relevant comments in M. Bass, "Man, myth and sensual pleasures: Jan Gossart's renaissance," *Historians of Netherlandish Art Newsletter and Review of Books* 28 (2011), pp. 26–27.



3 Jan Gossaert, *The Malvagna triptych*, c. 1513–15, oil on panel. Palermo, Galleria Regionale della Sicilia

to Rome—his use of Italian models is hardly emphatic. Any recollection of specific monuments is folded subtly into the fabric of his own composition. Gossaert does not explicitly quote a single Roman building, nor does he adhere strictly to ancient precepts. Examples include the wholly unclassical capitals of the surrounding columns and the arrangement of the triglyphs in the entablature, which are situated above the bucrania rather than adjacent to them as properly illustrated in the 1511 edition of Vitruvius's treatise *De architectura*.¹⁷ While boasting his knowledge of and inventive approach to ancient architectural form, Gossaert simultaneously avoids any overt reference or site specificity to the antiquity of the eternal city.¹⁸

¹⁷ See E.M. Kavalier, "Gossart as architect," in Ainsworth *et al.*, op. cit. (note 1), pp. 34–35, and S. Heringuez, "L'architecture antique dans le *Neptune et Amphitrite* de Jean Gossart," *Journal de la Renaissance* 6 (2008), pp. 107–18.

¹⁸ Gossaert's approach to Roman antiquity stands in notable contrast to that of Maarten van Heemskerck. In Heemskerck's 1553 self-portrait (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum), Heemskerck even depicted himself in front of the Colosseum, a memorial to his career-defining encounter with ancient Rome. See J.P. Filedt Kok *et al.*, *Kunst voor de Beeldenstorm*, Amsterdam (Rijksmuseum) 1986, pp. 267–68, nr. 148, and pp. 264–66, nr. 146, for Heemskerck's *St Luke painting the Virgin* (Rennes, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rennes), with a sculpture courtyard based on Rome's Casa Sassi in the background. See also I.M. Veldman,

Following Gossaert's own lead, then, it seems logical to turn from Rome to the Netherlands, and specifically to the province of Zeeland where both artist and patron settled after their southern journey, in order to approach an understanding of the original context for the Berlin painting. As Jacob van Deventer's map of the province reveals, Zeeland was little more than a loose assemblage of islands during the sixteenth century, dangerously prone to flooding but also an important center of trade because of its coastal position (fig. 4).¹⁹ More than any other Netherlandish province, Zeeland embodied both the great prosperity and the potential destruction that resulted from the land's proximity to the ocean, which in turn defined the Low Countries as a whole.²⁰ For this

"Maarten van Heemskerck en Italië," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 44 (1993), pp. 125–42.

¹⁹ On the history of van Deventer's map of Zeeland (ed. princ. c. 1549) in the context of his larger cartographic projects in the Netherlands see J. van Deventer, *De kaarten van de Nederlandsche provinciën in de zestiende eeuw*, The Hague 1941, p. 8, nr. 5; R.W. Karrow, *Mapmakers of the sixteenth century and their maps: bio-bibliographies of the cartographers of Abraham Ortelius, 1570*, Chicago 1993, pp. 142–58, esp. p. 150; D. and J. Blonk-van der Wijst, *Zelandia comitatus: geschiedenis en cartobibliografie van de provincie Zeeland tot 1860*, Houten 2010, pp. 46–53, 123–34, nrs. 1–2. For a biographical overview see B. van 't Hoff, *Jacob van Deventer: keizerlijk-koninklijk geograaf*, The Hague 1953.



4 Jacob van Deventer, *Map of Zeeland*, 1570, engraving. Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Library

reason, Zeeland was especially important to Philip's duties as admiral. Geldenhouwer reports in his biography that Philip "presided over the matters pertaining to the profit of all Zeeland and its mariners with no less care than he gave to his own home."²¹

Indeed, Philip had settled in the province eager to renovate his newly inherited palace located at West-Souburg on the isle of Walcheren, the most outlying of all Zeeland's islands.²² Geldenhouwer writes that Philip, in overseeing these renovations, "moved so familiarly among craftsmen, architects, sculptors and painters that

²⁰ See Lodovico Guicciardini's apt comment on Zeeland's exposure to the elements in his *Descrittione di tutti i Paesi Bassi*, Antwerp 1567, p. 17. On maritime trade in Zeeland see W.S. Unger, "Middelburg als handelsstad (xiii^e tot xvii^e eeuw)," *Archief: Vroegere en Latere Mededeelingen Voornamelijk in Betrekking tot Zeeland* 1935, pp. 1–177; J. Sigmond, *Nederlandse zeehavens tussen 1500–1800*, Amsterdam 1989, pp. 19–31, 236–37; J. Parmentier, "Een maritiem-economische schets van de deltahavens, 1400–1800," in M. Ebben and S. Groenveld (eds.), *De scheldedelta als verbinding en scheiding tussen noord en zuid, 1500–1800*, Maastricht 2007, pp. 11–26.

²¹ Geldenhouwer, *Collectanea* cit. (note 10), p. 230: "...praefectus enim ab eo rebus maritimis, et regiarum classium dux consitus est, in qua praefectura, ea quae ad totius Zelandiae nautarumque commodum spectabant, non minus quam suam ipsius domum, curabat."

²² On the history of the palace of Souburg see J. van den Broeck, *Middeleeuwse kastelen van Zeeland: bijzonderheden over verdwenen burchten en riddershofsteden*, Delft 1978, pp. 28–35; J.A. Trimpe Burger, "Het kasteel van West-Souburg," *Zeeuws Tijdschrift* 2 (1972), pp. 251–52; M.F. Lantsheer and F. Nagtglas, *Zelandia illustrata: verzameling van kaarten, portretten, platen*

he was thought to be one of them," and that Gossaert was among the painters and architects of the first quality whom Philip summoned to the task of realizing his ambitions of courtly splendor and sophistication.²³ Gossaert had already been admitted into the local Brotherhood of Our Lady in Middelburg in 1509, which suggests that immediately after the trip to Rome he settled conveniently close to the admiral's court and remained so even while accepting commissions from other patrons.²⁴ Thus although neither the castle on Walcheren nor its archival records are preserved, Philip's palace at Souburg was almost certainly the original location of the artist's 1516 painting.

Zeeland was also the setting for Geldenhouwer's entry into Philip's service, several years after Gossaert but under circumstances no less exceptional than the southern travels shared by artist and patron. The event that precipitated his appointment is recorded in the humanist's first published work, the subject of which should immediately catch our attention. Geldenhouwer's short *De Zelandiae situ* ("On the region of Zeeland") of 1514 was the first treatise wholly devoted to the history and geography of the Netherlandish province.²⁵ In the text, Geldenhouwer effusively celebrates Zeeland's thriving commerce and wealth of humanist learning, citing its bustling ports and the many esteemed scholars born there.²⁶ He praises the farmland, the palaces and temples, the quick-witted inhabitants, and the

enz., betreffende de oudheid en geschiedenis van Zeeland, 2 vols., Middelburg 1879, vol. 1, pp. 694–701.

²³ Geldenhouwer, *Collectanea* cit. (note 10), p. 235: "In patriam reversus, totus exornandae arcis suae Suytburgo intentus, inter fabros, architectos, sculptores et pictores versabatur adeo familiariter, ut unus illorum putaretur.... Accersierat sibi magnis expensis pictores et architectos primi nominis, Jacobum Barbarum Venetum et Joannem Malbodium, nostrae aetatis Zeuxim et Apellem." Philip's later biographer Willem Heda even recounts that the admiral himself would paint and draw in his free time: "picturae ac liniamentum per ocium operam dans, utrumque callebat, et de sculpturis optime judicabat;" see W. Heda, *Historia episcoporum Trajectensium*, Franeker 1612, p. 424.

²⁴ See Ainsworth, op. cit. (note 16), p. 11, and Gossart, op. cit. (note 3), p. 31, note 2.

²⁵ Gerard Geldenhouwer, *De Zelandiae situ*, in Dorp et al., *Martini Dorpii sacre theologiae licenciatii dialogus, in quo Venus et Cupido omnes adhibent versutias*, Louvain 1514, fols. G3–G4; reprinted in Petrus Scriverius, *Batavia illustrata seu de Batavorum insula, Hollandia, Zelandia, Frisia, territorio Traiectensi et Gelria*, Leiden 1609, pp. 138–41.

²⁶ Geldenhouwer, *De Zelandiae situ*, cit. (note 25), fol. G3r–v.

ample harvests of pure wheat and the whitest salt. Not the least, he touts the newly documented antiquity of Walcheren, the island which the admiral then called home. “The lord Philip of Burgundy, commander of the Ocean, has persuaded me that the name Wallachria derives from ‘Gallia,’ with the G transformed into a W. This very year Philip found at Westkapelle a marble stone inscribed with the name of Hercules in most ancient letters, which either means that Hercules once landed there or that Zeeland was held to be sacred to Hercules. And in my judgment that is not far off the mark.”²⁷

The stone altar, which still survives today, is inscribed with a dedication to the god Hercules Magusanus, and as Geldenhower eagerly observed, provides unassailable evidence of ancient cult worship in the region.²⁸ Even more crucially, the inscription was the first of its kind ever found in Zeeland, and one of the earliest to be discovered in the Netherlands as a whole (fig. 5). Probably through Philip’s instigation, it was enshrined soon after its discovery in a wall of the church at Westkapelle, the westernmost point on Walcheren. Philip’s own palace at West-Souburg lay less than 20 kilometers away, just down Walcheren’s southern coastline (fig. 6).²⁹ Within the church, the stone offered a retrospective of local



5 Altar dedicated to Hercules Magusanus. Middelburg, Zeeuws Museum

history, as the medieval St Willibrord was said to have smashed a pagan idol worshipped on the site and thereby to have converted the inhabitants to Christianity.³⁰

For Philip, a patron whose interest in antiquity had already been fueled by his trip to Italy, the finding of this inscription must have been exhilarating. While

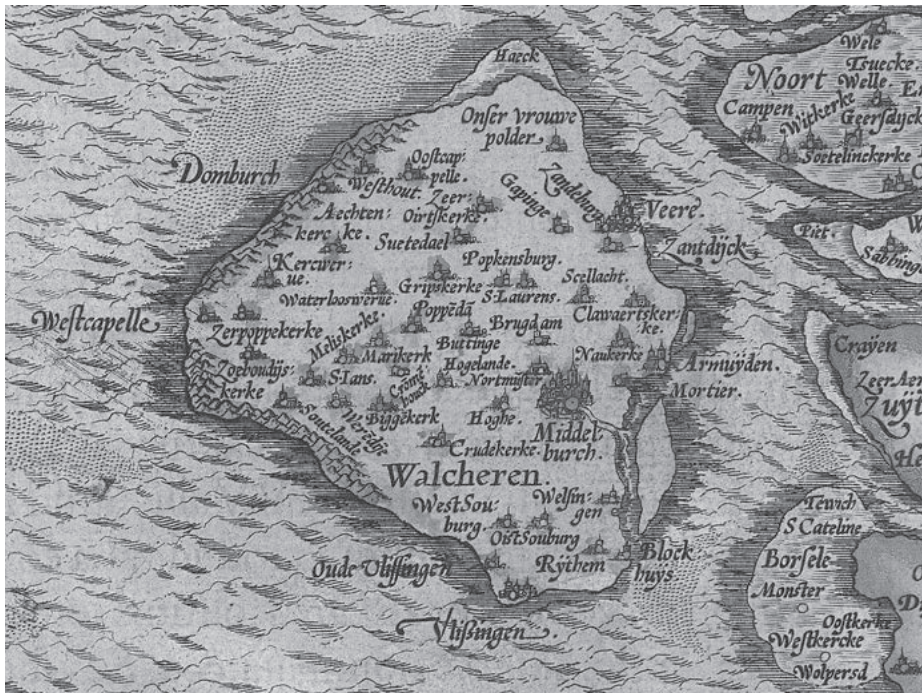
²⁷ *Ibid.*, fol. G3v: “Wallchriam a Gallia denominari mutata g in duplex v persuasit mihi vir princeps Philippus Burgundus, oceani praefectus, qui et hoc anno in Westcappella marmor reperit Herculis nomine vetustissimis inscriptum literis, quare et Herculeum aut ibi aliquando appulisse, aut Zelandiam Herculi sacram fuisse asserere nititur. Quod a vero (meo iudicio) non longe abest.”

²⁸ The inscription reads: “HERCVLI / MAGVSANO / M[arcus] PRIMINIS / TERTIVS / V.S.L.M.” Hercules Magusanus, a conflation of the Roman hero with an indigenous deity, was the most important god worshipped by the ancient inhabitants of the Low Countries. On Hercules Magusanus and the presence of the god’s cult in Zeeland see J.A. Trimpe Burger, *De Romeinen in Zeeland: onder de hoede van Nehalemnia*, Middelburg 1997, esp. pp. 43–45, and N. Roymans and T. Derks, “Het heiligdom te Empel: algemene beschouwingen.” in *idem, De tempel van Empel: een Hercules-heiligdom in het woongebied van de Bataven*, Den Bosch 1994, pp. 10–38, esp. pp. 32–35.

²⁹ The church at Westcapelle burned down in May 1831 and the Hercules stone was then given to the provincial collection of antiquities, now part of the Zeeuws Museum in Middelburg; see Lantsheer and Nagtglas, *op. cit.* (note 22), vol. 1, pp. 635–36. It cannot be ascertained from the sources exactly where the stone was erected in the church or how soon it went on display after its discovery. See J.G. Becanus, *Origines Antwerpianae*, Antwerp 1569, p. 154: “Est hactenus in eo lapide, qui

in baptisterio muro infixus cernitur apud Westcapelanos.” See also M. Smallegange, *Nieuwe cronyk van Zeeland*, Middelburg 1696, pp. 78–82, 628–29; M. Gargon, *Walchersche arkadia, waar in oorspronk, heerlijkheden, ambachten, etc., van Walcheren nagespoord en opgehelderd zijn*, Leiden 1746, pp. 185–90; Isaak Tirion, *Tegenwoordige staat der Vereenigde Nederlanden: behelzende eene beschryving van Zeeland*, Amsterdam 1761, pp. 215–17. Philip himself saw to its preservation, according to Marcus Boxhorn in J. Reygersbergh and M.Z. van Boxhorn, *Chronik van Zeelandt, eertijds beschreven door d’heer Johan Reygersbergen, nu verbeterd, ende vermeerderd*, Middelburg 1644, p. 287: “Dese Steen in den jare 1514, tot Westcapelle is ghevonden, ende door last van Philips van Burgundien, doe Admiraal van der Zee, ende een groote achter van dierghelijcke oude overblijfselen, aldaer in de Kercke is bewaert gheworden.”

³⁰ See the late fifteenth-century Netherlandish chronicle of J. a Leydis, *Rerum Belgicarum chronici et historici de bellis, uribus, situ, et moribus gentis antiqui recentioresque scriptores*, ed. F. Sweertius, Frankfurt 1620, pp. 30–31. See also K. Baart, *Westkapelle: hare bevolking, westkapelsche dijk*, Middelburg 1889, pp. 13–18. A historical map showing Zeeland during Willibrord’s day rediscovered at Egmond Abbey in 1536 and described as “a sketch of that old island of Zeeland, done from life” (“vivam adumbrationem veteris illius insulae Zelandiae”), attests to the sixteenth-century interest in the province’s early Christian history. See Lantsheer and Nagtglas, *op. cit.* (note 22), vol. 1, pp. 12–13.



6 Detail of Walcheren from fig. 4

Gossaert's drawings of Roman monuments had already provided Philip with a record of Italy's past, this altar dedicated to Hercules—sprung from Netherlandish soil—offered something that the drawings could not: a testament to the ancient history of his native land. That the altar was dedicated to Hercules made the historical resonance even greater, as the hero had long figured in literature on the mythical origins of the Burgundian house.³¹ Just a few years earlier, during the 1511 winter festival in Brussels, Philip had already showed an interest in cultivating his heroic lineage by sculpting a monumental Hercules snowman.³² Yet whereas a sculpture of snow was only an ephemeral monument, Philip, by means of long-enduring stone, could now assert his own

ancient lineage not only through literary tradition but also through archeological evidence. All this meant that he suddenly had much to discuss with a budding scholar like Geldenhouwer.

Not long after the humanist gained admission to the admiral's intimate milieu, he began to work alongside Gossaert in realizing the antiquarian ambitions of their patron. In his 1516 pamphlet on the funeral of Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria, Geldenhouwer recounts how Philip aided and encouraged Gossaert in his design of a chariot for the solemn procession, which the humanist describes using language evocative of an ancient Roman triumph.³³ Geldenhouwer refers to Gossaert as "the Apelles of our age," and honors Philip as "his one

³¹ A particularly famous example was the 1468 marriage celebration of Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, to Margaret of York, which included a presentation of the 12 labors of Hercules. See O. de la Marche, *Mémoires d'Olivier de la Marche: maître d'hôtel et capitaine des gardes de Charles le Téméraire*, ed. H. Beaune and J. d'Arbaumont, 4 vols., Paris 1883-88, vol. 3, pp. 143-47. See also the Herculean narrative in R. Lefèvre, *Le recueil des histoires de Troyes*, ed. Marc Aeschbach, Bern 1987, composed c. 1464 at the court of Charles the Bold's father, Philip the Good, and for an additional discussion, M.-R. Jung, *Hercule*

dans la littérature française du XVII^e siècle: de l'Hercule courtois à l'Hercule baroque, Geneva 1966, pp. 13-40.

³² See H. Pleij, *De sneeuwpoppen van 1511: literatuur en stads cultuur tussen middeleeuwen en moderne tijd*, Amsterdam 1988, pp. 25-26, and 361.

³³ See R.W. Scheller, "Jan Gossaerts triomfwagen," in A.-M. Logan (ed.), *Essays in northern European art presented to Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann on his sixtieth birthday*, Doornspijk 1983, pp. 228-36. At the conclusion of the treatise, Geldenhouwer, *Collectanea* cit. (note 10), p. 214 (*Pompa exequiarum Ca-*

and only patron, who in this project (as in all things) is superhuman in his inventiveness."³⁴ Even more telling is Geldenhouwer's poem on the art of painting, written just one year earlier and dedicated to "the magnificent hero Philip of Burgundy, commander of the sea."³⁵ The poem lists among the myriad subjects that the painter might portray with his brush the various loves of the gods, great deeds of men, and elements of the natural world, including the element over which Philip, as admiral, had sway: "the waves of the ocean and the furious winds, the realms of trident-bearing Neptune, and the court of Tethys."³⁶ By alluding to the famous episode in the first book of Virgil's *Aeneid*,³⁷ when the sea god calmed the waves and drove off the winds, Geldenhouwer insinuates Philip into the realm of epic, with its epochal struggle between war and peace. And as the poem's final lines attest, the admiral's command also extended beyond the turbulent ocean to more calm and cultured domains: "Because you, illustrious Philip, bestow worthy gifts on the painters of our time, we have written you a few little verses in praise of art."³⁸

Gossaert's 1516 painting may well have been the first mythological work produced under Philip's auspices; at the very least, it is the earliest of them to survive today. The image would seem to represent a culminating mo-

ment in the collaboration between Gossaert, Geldenhouwer, and their mutual patron. From those initial travels through Italy to the finding of Zeeland's first ancient inscription, the ambition to revive the ancient past on Netherlandish shores had quickly come to define the intellectual and artistic pursuits at Philip's court. Gossaert's monumental painting attests to this ambition more clearly than any other extant image or documentary source in that it realizes not only a union of classical form and subject but also, as I will endeavor to show, a claim for the historical antiquity of the place where it was made.

THE ELUSIVE AMPHITRITE Past interpretations of Gossaert's painting, beyond the question of its visual precedents and presumed debt to Italian models, have hinged almost exclusively on the figure of the marine god Neptune and his presumed relation to Philip himself. Neptune has been understood to allude to Philip's admiralty and to his title "commander of the sea," a parallel which Geldenhouwer's poem honoring the admiral already suggested.³⁹ The sensual portrayal of Neptune's nude body has also been aligned with the bachelor's amorous proclivities and infamous relations with the opposite sex. In 1516, the year of the painting,

tholici Hispaniarum regis Ferdonandi, Louvain 1516), signals the challenges of describing the funeral in proper Latin, given all the vernacular terms and titles employed at the Burgundian court, and asks for his readers' understanding.

34 Geldenhouwer, *Collectanea* cit. (note 10), pp. 209–10: "In currus lateribus effigiati genii nudi, inventione et arte mirifica Joannis Malbodii, pictoris clarissimi: ac nostri saeculi Apellis. Is quicquid in vexillis, curru, armis, insignibus, militaribus signis erat artis pulchritudinis invenerat, adhortante et subinde iuvante eum unico patrono meo Philippo Burgundo, maris praefecto, qui hac in re (ut in omni) ingenio supra humanum est."

35 Geldenhouwer, *Collectanea* cit. (note 10), p. 175 (*Satyrae octo ad verae religionis cultores*, Louvain 1515): "Magnifico heroi Philippo Burgundo, oceani praefecto, Gerardus Noviomagus."

36 Geldenhouwer, *Collectanea* cit. (note 10), p. 176: "Exprimit oceani fluctus ventosque furentes / regna tridentiferi Neptuni et Tethyos aulam."

37 Virgil, *Aeneid*, I.124–56. On the recurrence of the "Quos ego" motif in literature and art see R.A. Brower, "Visual and verbal translation of myth: Neptune in Virgil, Rubens, Dryden," *Daedalus* 101 (1972), pp. 155–82.

38 Geldenhouwer, *Collectanea* cit. (note 10), p. 176: "Olim Parrhasius, Zeusis, praclarus Apelles, / pictores, verae meruer insignia laudis, / grati principibus, laudati carmine vatum, / temporis at nostri pictores, clare Philippe, / dignis muneribus quia donas, artis honorem, / paucis versiculis tibi scripsimus."

39 For the association of Philip with Neptune see S. Bergmans *et al.*, exhib. cat. *Le siècle de Bruegel: la peinture en Belgique au XVII^e siècle*, Brussels (Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts) 1963, pp. 101–02, nr. 107; Sterk, *op. cit.* (note 5), pp. 117–18; L. Sicking, "La découverte de Neptune: représentations maritimes des souverains et amiraux des Pays-Bas (XV^e–XVII^e siècles)," in J.-M. Cauchies (ed.), *Publication du centre européen d'études bourguignonnes*, Neuchâtel 1997, pp. 132–34; L. Sicking, *Neptune and the Netherlands: state, economy, and war at sea in the Renaissance*, Leiden 2004, pp. 100–01; S. Schrader, "Gossaert's *Neptune and Amphitrite* and the body of the patron," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 58 (2008), pp. 40–57; idem, "Gossart's mythological nudes and the shaping of Philip of Burgundy's erotic identity," in Ainsworth *et al.*, *op. cit.* (note 1), pp. 57–67. Despite the arguments of these scholars, the association between Philip and Neptune in Gossaert's painting is ultimately less explicit than other instances in which admirals were associated with the sea god, such as the Italian admiral Andrea Doria, who developed a far more systematic and political iconography around himself as an embodiment of Virgil's Neptune; see P. Boccardo, *Andrea Doria e le arti*, Rome 1989, pp. 105–18; B. Davidson, "The *Navigazione d'Enea* tapestries designed by Perino del Vaga for Andrea Doria," *Art Bulletin* 72 (1990), pp. 35–50; C.B. Strehle *et al.*, exhib. cat. *Pontormo, Bronzino, and the Medici: the transformation of the Renaissance portrait in Florence*, Philadelphia (Philadelphia Museum of Art) 2004, pp. 139–41, nr. 41.



7 *Neptune and Amphitrite*, mosaic from ancient Circa, 315–25 AD. Paris, Musée du Louvre

Philip was scolded openly at the meeting of the Order of the Golden Fleece for being “much too fond of chasing women.”⁴⁰

⁴⁰ For the full text of Philip’s chastisement see Vienna, Staatsarchiv, *Der Orden vom Goldenen Vlies, Register der Kapitelsitzungen*, II, 8 (1491–1531), 22r: “...monseigneur philippe bastart de bourgoingne feust largement dammeret et en jeu enclin a desrober” (“Monsieur Philip, bastard of Burgundy, has been much too fond of chasing woman and inclined to cheat at games”). Sterk, op. cit. (note 5), p. 33, cites what is only a paraphrase of the original document from Le B. de Reiffenberg, *Histoire de l’Ordre de la Toison d’Or*, Brussels 1830, p. 302.

⁴¹ On the danger of granting “primary heuristic value” to the patron when interpreting artworks made in the courtly realm see the insightful remarks of S. Campbell, *The cabinet of*

Yet while the association between Philip and the sea god in Gossaert’s painting surely constituted one aspect of its reception at the admiral’s court, the intentionality of the work cannot be explained solely along the lines of its patron, any more than it can be construed as the inevitable product of his sojourn in Rome.⁴¹ If the figure of Neptune stands for Philip himself, then the goddess at his side must have a corresponding identity as well, beyond serving as a mere affirmation of the admiral’s virility. Although she is generally treated in the scholarship as little more than a token female nude, Gossaert depicts the two deities hand in hand, side by side on the same pedestal. He clearly grants them equal prominence in the composition. In order to understand the larger function and significance of Gossaert’s painting within the intellectual circle of Philip’s court in Zeeland we must take a closer look at this loving couple and in particular, at Neptune’s neglected consort.

According to the myth, Amphitrite was a Nereid who shunned Neptune’s advances and fled to the ends of the world.⁴² Neptune sent a dolphin in her pursuit, who brought her back to the sea god, and she eventually acquiesced to his desires. The couple then celebrated their marriage surrounded by the full glory of their watery kingdom. Neptune and Amphitrite are thus most often portrayed together on a chariot drawn by hippocampi, accompanied by the trusty dolphin as well as a host of Tritons, Nereids, and other sea creatures. Such iconography was already employed in ancient Greek temples devoted to the couple and it recurs from antiquity onward, eventually reaching canonical status in the 1571 illustrated edition of Vincenzo Cartari’s *Le imagini de i dei de gli antichi*, (“Images of the gods of the ancients;” figs. 7, 8).⁴³

As Duncan Bull has recently pointed out, the most crucial example for Gossaert and Philip, one they could

Eros: Renaissance mythological painting and the studiolo of Isabella d’Este, New Haven 2004, p. 3.

⁴² In particular see Hyginus, *Astronomica*, II.17, based on Eratosthenes, *Catasterismi* 31, and Eustathios, *Commentarii ad Homeri Odysseam*, III.91; For additional sources see S. Kaempf-Dimitraïdou, “Amphitrite,” in *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae (LIMC)*, 8 vols., Zürich 1981–2009, vol. 1.1, pp. 724–25, and W.H. Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexikon der Griechischen und Römischen Mythologie*, 6 vols., Leipzig 1884–1937, vol. 1, pp. 318–21.

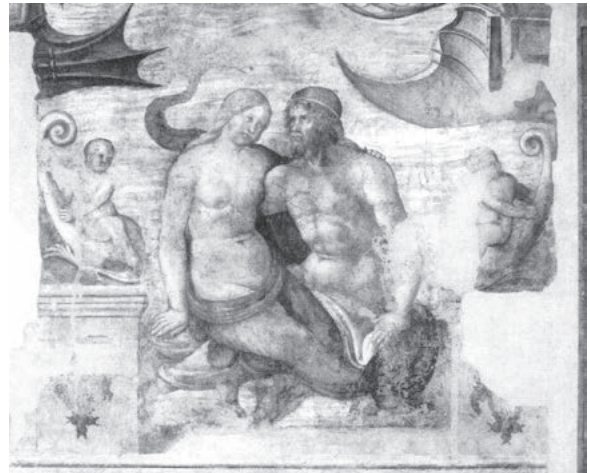
⁴³ Pausanias in the *Description of Greece* (II.1.7–8), relates that the ancient Greek temple at Corinth included statues of



8 *Neptune and Amphitrite*, from Vincenzo Cartari, *Le imagini de i dei de gli antichi*, Venice 1571. Cambridge (Mass.), Houghton Library

have readily seen during their travels through Italy, was Jacopo Ripanda's fresco of c. 1507–08 in Rome's Palazzo dei Conservatori, which includes a portrayal of Neptune and Amphitrite riding on a dolphin in the foreground of a Roman naval victory (fig. 9).⁴⁴ Ripanda's deities are

Amphitrite and Neptune standing on a chariot accompanied by Palaemon on a dolphin, Tritons, Nereids, and the goddess Venus as an infant. The ancient temple at Ténos also featured monumental statues of the couple surrounded by sea creatures; see R. Étienne and J.-P. Braun, *Ténos I: Le sanctuaire de Poseidon et d'Amphitrite*, Paris 1986, pp. 271–86. Even on coins from Ténos, the diminutive depiction of the sea gods standing in their temple includes two abutting dolphins, as illustrated in R. Étienne, *Ténos II: Tenos et les Cyclades*, Paris 1990, pp. 249–50, nr. 402, pl. XXIV. For a general overview of the iconography of Amphitrite in antiquity see Kaempf-Dimitraidou, op. cit. (note 42), vol. 1.1, pp. 725–35, and vol. 1.2, pp. 576–92 (ill.). As pointed out by Kaempf-Dimitraidou, pp. 734–35, Amphitrite was almost always depicted in consort with her host of oceanic creatures, beginning in the later Hellenistic period and continuing in Roman art. The representative Roman example illustrated here is a mosaic from ancient Cirta, 315–25 AD, now in Paris, Musée du Louvre,



9 Detail of *Neptune and Amphitrite*, from Jacopo Ripanda, *Naval battle of the Aegadian Islands*, c. 1507–08. Rome, Palazzo dei Conservatori, Sala di Annibale

nude from the waist up and embrace each other fondly, as do the figures in Gossaert's later work.

Yet it is also important to recognize the ways in which Gossaert's 1516 painting deviates from Ripanda and from the iconography of Neptune and Amphitrite in general. Rather than riding the open seas, the Netherlandish artist depicts the two deities standing alone and enshrined in a shallow architectural space. The dolphin that securely identifies Ripanda's couple is absent, as are the chariot, sea horses and the host of marine nymphs that are otherwise usually included in depictions of the pair. Excepting the laurel crowns worn by the gods, which might seem to be the vestiges of a recent triumph, Gossaert has ban-

inv. nr. MA 1880. The illustration from Vincenzo Cartari's *Le imagini de i dei de gli antichi*, Venice 1571, p. 250 is based directly on Pausanias's description of the temple at Corinth mentioned above, as becomes clear from Cartari's description on p. 249: "Vedeuasi anco buona parte della compagnia di Nettuno in un suo tempio nel paese di Corinto, come recita Pausania, percioche egli con Anfritrite sua moglie stava su un carro, ove era anco Palemone fanciullo appoggiato ad un Delfino: Quattro cavalli tiravano il carro, et erano loro à lato duo Tritoni." The earlier, 1556 edition of Cartari's work includes neither this passage nor an illustration of the couple.

⁴⁴ D. Bull, "Jan Gossaert and Jacopo Ripanda on the Capitoline," *Simiolus* 34 (2009/2010), pp. 89–94. Ripanda's Neptune and Amphitrite appear in the Palazzo dei Conservatori in Rome in a historical fresco depicting the naval Battle of the Aegadian Islands fought during the First Punic War.



10 Frans Francken the Younger, *Neptune and Amphitrite*, 1630s, oil on copper on wood. Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art

ished all narrative detail from the painting.⁴⁵

It was not until the late sixteenth century that Neptune and Amphitrite became a popular subject in the art of the Netherlands, particularly in the dominant seaport of Antwerp. The city secretary Cornelius Grapheus already conveyed a localized image of maritime power in

45 L. Silver, “Figure nude, historie e poesie: Jan Gossaert and the Renaissance nude in the Netherlands,” *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 37 (1986), pp. 1–40, esp. p. 11, suggests this reference to triumph, as does Sterk, op. cit. (note 5), pp. 117–18, but the laurel crowns might also have been understood to associate god and goddess with the arts through the model of Apollo.

46 C. Grapheus, “Antverpia loquitur,” in idem, *De nomine florentissimae civitatis Antverpiensis*, Antwerp 1527, fol. A3.

47 U. Härting, *Frans Francken der Jüngere*, Freren 1989, pp. 97–113, 310–16, nrs. 276–98. The example illustrated is from the Cleveland Museum of Art, inv. nr. 1982.245. For notable examples by other Netherlandish artists working in Antwerp and beyond see the engraving by Jan Saenredam after Hendrik Goltzius, *Neptune and Amphitrite*, c. 1594, illustrated in F.W.H. Hollstein, *Dutch and Flemish etchings, engravings, and woodcuts, ca. 1450–1700*, 72 vols., Amsterdam, Roosendaal & Rotterdam 1949–2010, vol. 23, nr. 58; an engraving by Jacob Matham after Bartholomeus Spranger, *The triumph of Neptune*, c. 1611–14, in L. Widerkehr, *The new Hollstein, Dutch and Flemish etchings, engravings and woodcuts, 1450–1700*, Jacob Matham, ed. H. Leeftang, Ouderkerk aan den IJssel & Amsterdam 2007, vol. 2, nr. 180; a painting by Abraham Bloemaert, *Triumph of Neptune and Amphitrite*, c. 1630–35 (Hartford, Wadsworth Athenaeum), illustrated in M.G. Roethlisberger, *Abraham Bloemaert and his sons: paintings and prints*, 2 vols., Doornspijk 1993, vol. 1, p. 299, nr. 457 (fig. 634), as well as the examples on p. 277, nr. 423 (fig. 593) and p. 328, nr. 514 (fig. 699); and a painting by Jacob

his 1527 poem “Antwerp speaks,” in which he describes Neptune and his oceanic entourage bringing fortune to the city and its merchants.⁴⁶ The Antwerp artist Frans Francken the Younger would later paint no fewer than 20 versions of this very theme, each with a boisterous cast of sea beings (fig. 10).⁴⁷ During triumphal entries into the city, Neptune and other aqueous deities surfaced frequently, but even less so than in Francken’s crowded paintings, the sea god and his bride were seldom isolated or privileged amidst the hubbub of these processions. Often they shared the stage with the likes of Oceanus, Nereus, Triton or a retinue of watery nymphs.⁴⁸

Local deities usurped the traditional marine gods on several occasions as well, introducing a new degree of visual ambiguity. In the 1549 entry of Prince Philip II into Antwerp, the same Cornelius Grapheus described the triumphant pairing of the personified city and her spouse the river Scheldt.⁴⁹ During this procession, the *Triumphal arch of the English nation* was also crowned by another such couple: a bearded god with a trident and a goddess in a white gown riding together in a shell-shaped chariot drawn by hippocampi (figs. 11, 12). The published account of the festivities describes this group as “four large statues or carved sculptures, each 12 feet

Jordaens, *Neptune and Amphitrite*, 1644 (Antwerp, Rubenshuis), illustrated in R.-A. d’Hulst, *Jacob Jordaens*, Ithaca 1982, p. 220, fig. 178. For additional examples see also A. de Bosque, *Mythologie et maniérisme, Italie, Bavière, Fontainebleau, Prague, Pays-Bas: peinture et dessins*, Paris 1985, pp. 274–80, and J.D. Reid, *The Oxford guide to classical mythology in the arts, 1300–1990s*, 2 vols., New York & Oxford 1993, vol. 1, pp. 95–99.

48 For an early sixteenth-century example see C. Grapheus, *Divi Caroli imperatoris Caesaris optimi maximi desyderatissimus ex Hispania in Germaniam reditus*, Antwerp 1520, which commences with a plea for Aeolus to calm the winds, as in the opening lines of bk. I of the *Aeneid*, followed by a summons to the many gods of the sea to smooth the waves and make way for Charles V to safely reach the port of Antwerp.

49 Cornelius Grapheus, *De seer wonderlijcke schoone triumphelijcke incompst van den hooghmogenden Prince Philips*, Antwerp 1549, fol. G4v. The anonymous author of *De blijde ende heerlijcke incomste van mijn-heer Fransois van Vranckrijck*, Antwerp 1582, pp. 44–47, also places a female personification of Antwerp alongside Neptune. A tableau shown during Antwerp’s 1561 Landjuweel, *Spelen van sinne*, Antwerp 1562), fol. H4, pairs Antwerp and the river Schelde, who is seated atop a dog (“hond”) personifying the Honte, i.e. the Westerschelde. For this reference I am indebted to J.J.M. Vandommele, *Als in een spiegel: concepten van vrede, kennis en gemeenschap op het Antwerpse Landjuweel van 1561*, diss., Groningen, forthcoming.



11 *Triumphal arch of the English nation*, from Cornelius Gropheus, *De seer wonderlijcke, schoone, triumphelijke incompst van Philips, Prince van Spaignen*, Antwerp 1549. Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Library

high, which can be identified as an image of Oceanus Britannicus (the English sea), an image of Britannia (England), and the images of two Tritons, or sea hors-

⁵⁰ Gropheus, *Triumphelijke incompst* cit. (note 49), fols. Kiv: "In dierste facie boven de Elevatie sachmen hooge in de locht vier groote statuen oft gesneden beelden, elcke van xij voeten. Te wetene, het beelt van Oceanus Britannicus dat is der Engelscher zee: het beelt van Britannia dat is Engelant ende de beelden van twee Tritones diemen heet Zeeridderen." Again, it should be pointed out that although the text goes on to identify the female figure as Britannia on the basis of her white garment, this attribute is only legible in the specific context of the accompanying description and the dedication of the arch as a whole to England.

⁵¹ See R. Barthes, "Myth today," in idem, *Mythologies*, trans. A. Lavers, New York 1972, pp. 109–59 for a discussion of myth in relation to semiology and the ways in which mythical concepts by nature lend themselves to appropriation in the contemporary political and historical moment. In a similar manner,



12 Detail of *Oceanus Britannicus and Britannia* from fig. 11.

es.⁵⁰ Yet were these figures to be encountered in isolation, without the explanatory text, they might seem to be not Oceanus Britannicus and Britannia but Neptune and Amphitrite. In other words, on the basis of iconography alone, a regional depiction might easily be mistaken as yet another iteration of a well-known myth.

It is not difficult to surmise why the local deities so closely resemble the universal gods of the seas. Presumably the designer of the English arch called the iconography of Neptune and Amphitrite to mind when conceiving how he might depict the union of Britain and its surrounding waters. After all, no real visual tradition existed for the latter subject. By drawing on the essential form of an existing mythological couple (Neptune and Amphitrite) and the triumphal connotations that they carried with them, the designer was able to create an image of a new mythological pair which specifically embodied Britain's identity as a formidable maritime power. A myth of the sea was thus transformed into the myth of a nation.⁵¹

M. Loh, *Titian remade: repetition and the transformation of early modern Italian art*, Los Angeles 2007, pp. 85–128, has recently employed the concept of "allegory" to discuss the ways in which Padovanino's *Triumph* of c. 1614–20 (Bergamo, Accademia Carrara) is a painting that builds on the myth of Peleus and Thetis to make a larger statement about art and artistic emulation in the Venetian seicento. The notion of employing the essential form of the myth of Neptune and Amphitrite as a means to create an allegory about the interrelation of land and sea was suggested by Julius Meyer long ago in his discussion of Rubens's *Neptune and Amphitrite* (formerly Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie), "Neptun und Amphitrite" von Rubens," *Jahrbuch der Königlich Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 2 (1881), pp. 113–30, esp. pp. 119–23. For further evidence of the inherent ambiguity of marine subjects see the case of Bloemaert's triumphal paintings, Roethlisberger, op. cit. (note 47), and the debate surround-



13 Benvenuto Cellini, *Saltcellar*, 1540–43. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

In the case of Gossaert's painting, a similar kind of elision is possible; the very sparseness of the composition allows for interpretative flexibility. The pair's oceanic accessories are pared down to the trident in the god's hand, the molluscan specimen that covers (while also amusingly accentuating) his genitals, and the scalloped shell that the goddess wears in her hair like a bonnet and which serves as her sole defining attribute. This single accessory, and the mere fact that she is coupled with Neptune, is hardly enough to confirm her identity as Amphitrite.

More so than many of her fellow aqueous divinities, Amphitrite was a slippery character whose figural proximity to Neptune was readily appropriated. She paled in

ing the subject of Nicolas Poussin's painting of c. 1635–36 in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, as discussed in M. Levey, "Poussin's 'Neptune and Amphitrite' at Philadelphia: a re-identification rejected," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 26 (1963), pp. 359–60, and T. Thomas, "Poussin's Philadelphia marine painting: new evidence for the *Neptune and Amphitrite* theory," *Aurora* 10 (2009), pp. 40–76, with a summary of the previous literature.

52 Giovanni Boccaccio, *Genealogie deorum gentilium*, ed. Vittorio Zaccaria, Milan 1998, bk. 10, p. 970: "Huic preterea dicit Albericus uxorem fuisse nomine Amphitritem, et amplissimam, sed ex pluribus mulieribus, prolem."

53 See Étienne and Braun, op. cit. (note 43), pp. 181–84, with the cult at Ténos as the sole instance of Amphitrite being honored in any notable fashion, and even then only in the later centuries of the cult's history.

54 P. Zanker and B.C. Ewald, *Mit Mythen Leben: die Bilderwelt der Römischen Sarkophage*, Munich 2004, pp. 117–28, 341–43.

significance to her husband, whose countless infidelities undermined not only her spousal status but also her authority as joint ruler of the seas. Boccaccio explains in his *Genealogy of the pagan gods* that Neptune "had a wife by the name of Amphitrite and a bounteous number of children, though they were borne by many different women."⁵² In the ancient Greek sanctuaries of Neptune and Amphitrite, the male god was the focus of cultic devotion while his wife played only an ancillary role.⁵³ On Roman sarcophagi depicting marine triumphs, Amphitrite was displaced by the other Nereids or by the ocean-born Venus.⁵⁴ In classical and Renaissance literature, she was often taken as a stock personification of the sea, as in the opening lines of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*,⁵⁵ or in the sixteenth-century *Mythologies* of Natale Conti, who writes that, "she's supposed to be Neptune's wife because she represents water, but what Amphitrite really represents is the body and internal composition of all the moisture that either encircles the earth or is contained inside it."⁵⁶

Without the recognizable trappings of Neptune's entourage, Amphitrite remained amorphous and, in the eyes of at least one Renaissance artist, profoundly uninspiring. The great Italian sculptor Benvenuto Cellini, when describing the genesis of his famous saltcellar, recounts that his patron Cardinal Ippolito d'Este had consulted two learned men on possible iconographies for the salt (fig. 13).⁵⁷ Having heard the proposals of these "virtuosos," as the artist mockingly calls them, Cellini went on to dismiss both options on the grounds that no matter how erudite a humanist's prescription it hardly

55 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1.13–14. The same is true of all the references to Amphitrite in Homer, *Odyssey*, III.91, V.422, XII.60, and XII.97.

56 N. Conti, *Natali Conti's Mythologiae*, ed. and trans. J. Mulryan and S. Brown, 2 vols., Tempe 2006, vol. 1, p. 147, and N. Conti, *Mythologiae*, Venice 1567, p. 53: "Haec cum aqua sit, dicitur uxor Neptuni... est enim Amphitrite corpus et materia humoris omnis, qui vel circa terram est, vel intra terram ipsam includitur." A similar characterization of Amphitrite is found as early as Fulgentius, *Fulgentius the mythographer*, trans. L.G. Whitbread, Columbus 1971, bk. 1.4, p. 51, and in Lilio Gregorio Giraldi, *De deis gentium*, Basel 1548, New York 1976, p. 227.

57 M.W. Cole, *Cellini and the principles of sculpture*, Cambridge 2002, pp. 15–42; R. Zorach, *Blood, milk, ink, gold: abundance and excess in the French Renaissance*, Chicago 2005, pp. 95–96; A. Prater, *Cellinis Salzfass für Franz I.*, Stuttgart 1988, pp. 35–36.

guaranteed a beautiful visual product.⁵⁸ The artist explains the superiority of his own invention as follows. "Messer Gabbriello suggested that I should model an Amphitrite, the wife of Neptune, together with those Tritons of the sea, and many other things that are beautiful to say but not to make. I have made an oval form, and on this form, in keeping with how the Sea shows itself to embrace the Land, I made two figures well over a palm big, in a sitting posture, entering into each other with their legs, just as one sees certain long branches of the sea entering the land."⁵⁹

Cellini chose a subject tailored to the functional specificity of the object itself. He represented the geographical intersection of land and sea by means of which salt, the very substance contained by a saltcellar, is actually produced. The gilt basin in which the salt would have been placed is situated at the point where the couple's legs and sensuous nude bodies intertwine, their fecundity underscored by land's unmistakable gesture of squirting milk from her breast. The resonance and appeal of the couple's entwining bodies would have made the saltcellar all the more engaging as a conversation piece in the elite courtly milieu for which it was made.⁶⁰

Gossaert's painting was likewise commissioned by a noble patron and destined for display in a courtly setting, so it is little surprise that the work shares a close affinity with Cellini's saltcellar. Gossaert's deities do not announce their identities through a copious display of attendants and oceanic accoutrements. Instead, they command attention, as do Cellini's counterparts, through the sensuality and refinement of their bodies. Just as the meeting of legs atop Cellini's salt evokes the intersection of earth and sea, the embrace between Gossaert's deities also harbors meaning, particularly as regards the goddess at Neptune's side. Like Cellini's fertile nymph or the triumphant figure of Britannia, Gossaert's goddess may well represent not a body of water but a body



14 Detail of fig. 1

of land.

AN ANCIENT ISLE REDISCOVERED Gossaert's deities stand poised on a stone pedestal. The goddess inclines her blue eyes towards her lover, parting her lips ever so slightly to reveal her two front teeth (fig. 14). Neptune wraps his arm around her protectively, taking hold of her hand with a gesture of decorum and resting his mighty thumb on her white fingers. The goddess reciprocates, reaching her arm behind the god's back and closing the circle around her own body. As if to affirm the perfect symmetry of their embrace, Gossaert thrice echoes its shape in the surrounding architecture: in the ocular opening above the gods' heads, the circle of pebbled green marble on the pedestal below their feet, and finally, in the painting's most subtle yet spectacular detail: the glasslike pool of water that encircles the pedestal itself and ripples gently against the surrounding columns (fig. 15). The water extends behind the pedestal and below the tassels of the curtain in the background, where it resolves into a slender band of brilliant blue, indicating that just beyond the temple's threshold lies the open ocean.

The pool of water in Gossaert's painting is not dif-

⁵⁸ B. Cellini, *Opere di Benvenuto Cellini*, ed. G.G. Ferrero, Turin 1971, p. 373.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 374: "Messer Gabbriello aveva disegnato che io facessi una Amfitrite moglie di Nettunno, insieme con di quei Tritoni di Nettunno e molte altre cose assai belle da dire, ma non da fare. Io feci una forma ovata... e sopra detta forma, secondo che mostra il Mare abbracciarsi con la Terra, feci due figure grande più d'un palmo assai bene, le quale stavano a sedere entrando colle gambe l'una nell'altra, si come si vede certi rami di mare lunghi che entran nella terra." The English translation is based on Cole, *op. cit.* (note 57), p. 22.

⁶⁰ It is interesting to note that Cellini's object was later classified under other names. A 1560 inventory of the French royal collection, for instance, deems it a depiction of Triton and Thetis. See P. Lacroix, "Inventaire des bijoux de la couronne de France," *Revue Universelle des Arts* 3 (1856), p. 342, nr. 107. While this kind of shift in identification is not uncommon in inventory records, it indicates that the object's design allows for an interpretative flexibility that even Cellini himself went on to exploit in his later writings. On this last point see Cole, *op. cit.* (note 57), pp. 40-42.



15 Detail of fig. 1

difficult to explain, given that ancient sanctuaries dedicated to the marine gods were invariably located near the sea, on an isthmus or an island.⁶¹ Gossaert's deities are standing in a temple situated as if on the edge of the land with water implicitly stretching out behind them. The isolation of the figures is emphasized by the building's close confines and by the pedestal on which they are standing, which suggests the very form of an island itself.

One isle in particular stands in direct relation to Gossaert's painting. If an island is meant, Philip commissioned the work while living at his palace on Walcheren in Zeeland, and he did so just two years after discovering the ancient Hercules inscription washed up on the shores of that island's westernmost point, where the land stops and the open sea begins (fig. 6). Given that the province was the admiral's residence and his governing domain, as well as the place where Gossaert's monumental work was most probably displayed, it is difficult to imagine that the intended location could have been elsewhere. In effect, the painting situates an an-

cient temple on the shores of Zeeland itself.

This localization of the image also has implications for the gods who inhabit it. As already noted, Gossaert establishes an affinity between the bodies of the deities and their physical surroundings. The parallel between the shape of Neptune's tender embrace and the shape of the waters encircling the pedestal below implies that the goddess whom he shields is herself like a body of land enveloped by and bound to the sea god's natural element. Far more than a general embodiment of sea, the blushing goddess gazing up at Neptune adoringly with her bright blue eyes would seem to embody the region under Philip's charge, the site of his palace and his newly discovered ancient lineage. She would seem to be not Amphitrite but Zeeland herself: the sensual personification of the place where land and sea meet.

Of course, no prior visual tradition of depicting *Neptune and Zelandia* existed in Netherlandish art, but comparison with the most important model for Gossaert's deities—the famous 1504 engraving of *Adam and Eve* by

61 See note 43 above, especially Étienne and Braun, *op. cit.* (note 43), pp. 182–84, for a summary discussion of the cults of Neptune located in the Greek islands of the Cyclades, including the temple on the island of Delos referred to in Virgil, *Aeneid*, III.73–74. Among the textual sources, Pausanias's *Description of Greece* is particularly important. Although Pausanias was only printed for the first time in 1516 by Aldus Manutius in Venice, his work did circulate in manuscript form. See O. Kristeller *et al.*, *Catalogus translationum et commentariorum: mediaeval and Renaissance Latin translations and commentaries*, in progress, Washington DC 1960–, vol. 2, pp. 215–20. Erasmus reports consulting manuscripts of Pausanias and several other Greek writers during the preparation of his *Adages* in 1507–08 in Venice; see D. Erasmus, *Opera omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami*, in pro-

gress, Amsterdam 1969–, vol. 2.3, pp. 22–24, nr. II.i.i. However, although it is certainly possible that a humanist like Goldenhouwer would have been familiar with these ancient texts, there is no evidence in the painting of a specific reference to a particular ancient temple, as argued unconvincingly by Heringuez, *op. cit.* (note 17), p. 118, note 4, and Bergmans *et al.*, *op. cit.* (note 39), p. 102, who propose a link to the Erechtheion in Athens, and S. Herzog, “Tradition and innovation in Gossaert's Neptune and Amphitrite and Danae,” *Bulletin Museum Boymans van Beuningen* 19 (1968), pp. 25–41, esp. pp. 34–35, who suggests that the model was the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, based on a reading of Pausanias. Strangely enough, Herzog omits any mention of the Temple of Neptune at Corinth.



16 Albrecht Dürer, *Adam and Eve*, 1504, engraving. London, British Museum

⁶² That this print was an extremely important model for Gossaert is already evident in his first painting of *Adam and Eve* (c. 1510, Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza), inv. nr. 1930.26, which follows the pose of Dürer's figures almost exactly; see Ainsworth *et al.*, op. cit. (note 1), pp. 114–17, nr. 1. The Madrid painting is striking as one of the few cases where Gossaert follows a visual model in such a direct manner and without significant alteration. Along with Dürer's *Adam and Eve*, the engraving of *Mars and Venus* (c. 1510) by Jacopo de' Barbari has long been associated with Gossaert's painting because of a single reference to the artist in Geldenhouwer's biography of Philip (see note 23). For this tradition see J. Duverger, "Jacopo de' Barbari en Jan Gossart bij Filips van Burgondie te Souburg (1515)," in P. Bergmans (ed.), *Mélanges Hulin de Loo*, Brussels & Paris 1931, pp. 142–53; J.A. Levenson, "Jacopo de' Barbari and northern art of the early sixteenth century," diss., New York 1978, pp. 31–34; S. Ferrari, *Jacopo de' Barbari: un protagonista del Rinascimento tra Venezia e Dürer*, Milan 2006, pp. 142–43, nr. 26. Yet Jacopo de' Barbari's importance to Gossaert seems much overstated in light of the visual evidence, as is his perceived influence on early sixteenth-century art in Germany and the Netherlands at large.

⁶³ See the important discussion of Dürer's print in J. Koerner, *The moment of self-portraiture in German Renaissance art*,

his fellow northern artist Albrecht Dürer—is nonetheless illuminating (fig. 16).⁶² Gossaert's only significant deviation from this example of ideal classical form occurs precisely in his depiction of the couple's meaningful embrace.⁶³ By disrupting the prelapsarian purity of Dürer's composition, its two figures inclined towards one another but not touching, Gossaert renders his deities not only more sensual but also more evocative of the union between land and sea.⁶⁴ Like Cellini's saltcellar, Gossaert's painting encourages visual association through the resonance between the physical relationship of the couple and the topography of their place of origin.

While one might expect the personified goddess Zeelandia to have a more specific iconography beyond the mere representation of a body surrounded by water, it is precisely this image which defines the visual manifestations of the province. Beginning in the late fifteenth century, Zeeland was represented by a coat of arms showing a heraldic lion emerging from the waves.⁶⁵ In a witty detail from Jacob van Deventer's map of the province, a nude Neptune—wielding his trident and wearing a laurel crown as he does in Gossaert's painting—strides the surf on the back of a monstrous sea lion whose form echoes that of the lion on the shield in the god's right hand (fig. 17).⁶⁶

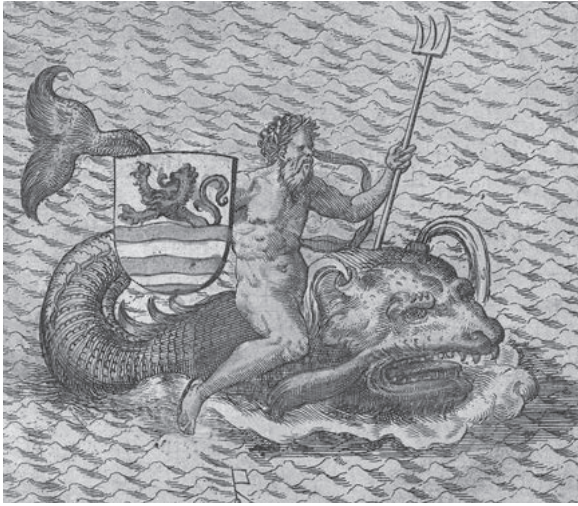
Still more relevant to Gossaert's painting, repre-

Chicago 1993, pp. 187–202.

⁶⁴ The embrace of Neptune and Amphitrite in the aforementioned Roman fresco by Jacopo Ripanda is quite different from that of the figures in Gossaert's painting. As Bull, op. cit. (note 44), p. 94, himself points out, Gossaert seems to have recalled Ripanda's figures more strongly in his painting *Hercules and Deianira* (1517, Birmingham, Barber Institute of Fine Arts, inv. nr. 46.10, illustrated in Ainsworth *et al.*, op. cit. (note 1), pp. 221–24, nr. 31), suggesting that the northern artist divorced form and subject in his reception of the Italian model.

⁶⁵ For the history of the coat of arms see the seminal article by P. Scherft, "Luctor et emergo, 1586–1634: wapen en wapenspreuk van Zeeland," *Archief van het Koninklijk Zeeuwsch Genootschap der Wetenschappen* (1979), pp. 158–85. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, this triumphant figure rising from the surf acquired heightened meaning in the context of the Dutch Revolt, when the Latin motto "I struggle and emerge" ("Luctor et emergo") came to be associated with Zeeland's arms and the corresponding fight to win independence from Spain, as in the famous series of Zeeland tapestries completed in 1604 to commemorate the victories won off local shores. See K. Heyning, *The Zeeland tapestries*, Middelburg 2007, pp. 71–73, 110–11.

⁶⁶ For this edition of van Deventer's map see Blonk-van der Wijst, op. cit. (note 19), pp. 126–34, nr. 2.



17 Detail of Neptune from fig. 4

sentations of Zeeland also sometimes elided with the classical myth of Venus's birth. The polymath Romeyn de Hooghe, in his self-illustrated *Spiegel van staat des Vereenigde Nederlands* (1706), opens his chapter on Zeeland by alluding to the consonance between the newborn deity rising from the sea and the watery ascent of the lion on the province's shield. "The goddess Venus herself," he declares, "could not have risen more splendidly from the waves than this sea woman."⁶⁷ In de Hooghe's accompanying allegorical representation of the province, "stouthearted Zeeland" surrounded by her six most important cities wears a scallop shell (an attribute of

67 R. de Hooghe, *Spiegel van staat des Vereenigde Nederlands*, Amsterdam 1706, p. 305: "De Godinne Venus, kan uyt de golven niet heerlyker opgehaald zyn als deze Zee Vrouw." See also H. van Nierop et al., *Romeyn de Hooghe: de verbeelding van de late Gouden Eeuw*, Zwolle 2008.

68 De Hooghe, op. cit. (note 67), p. 304. The cities, from left to right, are Vlissingen, Tholen, Middelburg, Zierikzee, Goes, and Veere. For a discussion and the identification of these figures see *ibid.*, pp. 306–08.

69 P. Stratenus and C. Boey, *Venus Zeelanda et alia eius poemata*, The Hague 1641.

70 The harbor town in the background of the title page may loosely resemble Goes, Stratenus's hometown, but it may also be nothing more than a generalized townscape. For a comparison see the view of Goes in the *Speculum Zeelandiae* (1660), illustrated in F. Gittenberger and H. Weiss, *Zeeland in oude kaarten*, Tiel 1983, p. 95.

71 C. Boey, "Venus orta mari," in J. Cats et al., *Faces augustae*, Leiden 1656, p. 291: "Dat flammis lethale gelu, medioque calescens / Frigore Mattiaci Venus incunabula ponti / Et Patrias

Venus) on her breastplate and displays her coat of arms, while the ever-present Neptune strides the ocean in the distance (fig. 18).⁶⁸

Decades earlier, the local humanists Petrus Stratenus and Cornelis Boey published an entire collection of verse entitled *Venus Zeelanda* (1641), which takes the province as the setting for their imaginary love affairs with two beautiful women.⁶⁹ On the title page of the volume, designed by an anonymous artist, the sensual Venus of Zeeland herself is depicted just off the province's coastline, seated in the scallop shell from which she was born (fig. 19).⁷⁰ Cornelis Boey, leaving no doubt that the goddess of love emerged from the waves along his native shores, wrote an entire poem on that very subject hailing "the newborn Venus, burning in the frigid midst of Zeeland's sea" as she "raises her joyous head from the icy waters and recognizes her birthplace."⁷¹

It may not be a coincidence that the earliest precedents for Boey's humanist praise of his homeland are to be found in Gossaert's learned circle. In addition to the example of Geldenhouwer and his 1514 treatise on Zeeland, Hadrianus Barlandus, a scholarly contemporary and close colleague of the latter, extolled his native province in vivid prose, evoking a pleasure garden where it was "the greatest delight to study, promenade or to exchange intimacies with a mistress," in short, a place worthy of Venus herself.⁷² Even the title page of Stratenus and Boey's 1641 volume was derived directly from a small 1524 engraving of *Venus sailing in a shell* by Gossaert's contemporary Dirck Vellert (fig. 20).⁷³ But

agnoscit aquas, gelidoque fluento / Protrudit geniale caput." Writers such as Hadrianus Junius and Abraham Ortelius had already identified the ancient tribe of the "Mattiaci" with Zeeland back in the sixteenth century. Interestingly, Boey also published a treatise praising the towns of Zeeland, *Urbiūm Zelandiae comitatum constituentium et reliquarum encomia*, The Hague 1637, which continued in the literary tradition that Geldenhouwer had begun a century earlier.

72 H. Barlandus, *Opusculo de insignibus oppidis Germaniae Inferioris*, Louvain 1524, fols. 55v–56: "Hic vel studere, vel obambulare, vel cum amicula confabulari, vel cibum capere, vel cum sodalibus lusitare summa est voluptas." Reprinted in Scriverius, op. cit. (note 25), pp. 141–42. See also A. Wesseling, "In praise of Brabant, Holland, and the Habsburg expansion: Barlandus' survey of the Low Countries (1524)," in D. Sacré and G. Tournoy (eds.), *Myrica: essays on Neo-Latin literature in memory of Jozef IJsewijn*, Louvain 2000, pp. 229–47.

73 See Hollstein, op. cit. (note 47), vol. 33, nr. 11. The Netherlandish artist Cornelius Massys also made an engraving (c. 1539–43) after Vellert's design, for which see J. van der Stock,



18 Romeyn de Hooghe, *Allegory of Zeeland*, etching from *Spiegel van staat des Vereenigde Nederlands*, Amsterdam 1706. Cambridge (Mass.), Houghton Library

most significantly, the goddess in Gossaert's own Berlin painting already wears as her only attribute a scallop-shell bonnet. It is not entirely implausible that the notion of personifying Zeeland with an allusion to Venus had its origins at Philip's court.

Yet the primary importance of recognizing the connection between Zeeland and Gossaert's painting lies in the corresponding revelation of the work's meaning and function within the artist's intimate intellectual milieu. By ensconcing Neptune and his paramour within a classical temple seemingly situated in the province itself the image asserts the region's ancient past, building

upon the evidence of Philip's archeological find and on Geldenhouwer's analysis of Walcheren's ancient history in his treatise on Zeeland.

Fundamental to Philip and Geldenhouwer's shared interest in the antiquity of the province was the recent discovery that Roman writers such as Julius Caesar, Pliny the Elder and Tacitus had long ago described the Netherlands as a body of land surrounded on all sides by water.⁷⁴ The so-called "island of Batavia," which was generally understood to be located between the branches of the Rhine and to border the ocean on its western front, had already captured the contemporary imagi-

exhib. cat. *Cornelis Matsys, 1510/11-1556/57: oeuvre graphique*, Brussels (Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I) 1985, p. 30, nr. 31.

⁷⁴ The most important ancient sources were Caesar, *De bello Gallico*, IV.10, Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia*, IV.101, and

Tacitus, *Germania* 29. For a discussion see H. Teitler, "Romeinen en Bataven: de literaire bronnen," in L. Swinkels (ed.), exhib. cat. *De Bataven: verhalen van een verdwenen volk*, Amsterdam & Nijmegen (Museum Het Valkhof) 2004, pp. 20-36.



19 Title page from Petrus Stratenus and Cornelis Boey, *Venus Zeelanda*, The Hague 1641. Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Library

nation by the time Gossaert created his monumental painting of 1516. Venus herself was evoked explicitly as the mother of the Batavian isle,⁷⁵ while another writer envisioned Mercury and Apollo looking down from the clouds on its shores, prophesying that the land would one day abound in fruit, gold and milk and would teem with the most industrious citizens.⁷⁶ The very notion

⁷⁵ See H. de Vocht (ed.), *Jerome de Busleyden, founder of the Louvain Collegium Trilingue: his life and writings*, Turnhout 1950, pp. 381, nr. 48, for a letter of 1508 from Luigi Marliano to Jerome Busleyden: “Mirum est, quicquid beata haec insula parit tam pulchrum est, ut matre Venere editum putetur.”

⁷⁶ Lucas Nerdenus, *Luce Nerdeni inter Apollinem et Mercurium dialogus fabulosus de prima ciuitatis Delphorum apud Hollandos*, Delft 1517, fol. B4: “Vides ne illic apud Belgas Bathavorum nationem oceano germanico finitimam... Umbriferum quod cernis nemus terram fertilitate frugum felicem. Nec non multo auro



20 Dirck Vellert, *Venus sailing in a shell*, engraving, 1524. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet

of a waterbound nation as an ideal locus of culture and virtue was explored that same year in Thomas More's immensely popular *Utopia*, a work which he composed while traveling through the Netherlands.⁷⁷ Geldenhouwer himself even helped see the volume's woodcut of the Utopian isle to press (fig. 21).⁷⁸

Yet beyond imaginative descriptions, the geogra-

lacteque exuberantem efficit.”

⁷⁷ Thomas More, *Libellus vere aureus nec minus salutaris quam festiuis de optimo reipublicae statu, deque nova insula Utopia*, Louvain 1516. More's description of the island loosely evokes the geography of Britain, although Utopia is nonetheless understood to be located in the New World. See B.R. Goodey, “Mapping ‘Utopia’: a comment on the geography of Sir Thomas More,” *Geographical Review* 60 (1970), pp. 15–30.

⁷⁸ Geldenhouwer was directly involved in seeing More's work published, and even wrote a laudatory poem for the first



21 Ambrosius Holbein, *Utopia*, woodcut from Thomas More, *Libellus vere aureus nec minus salutaris quam festivus de optimo reipublicae statu, deque nova insula Utopia*, Louvain 1516. Cambridge (Mass.), Houghton Library

phy of the Batavian isle as described in ancient sources proved difficult to align directly with the contemporary Netherlandish provinces. Geldenhouwer was one of several scholars already engaged in active dispute over this very question, and attempts to describe and chart the precise limits of the Batavian territory would continue for decades thereafter.⁷⁹ The details aside, it is important to recognize why Zeeland figured so prominently in the early stages of debate. No matter how many historical maps of Batavia might be drawn, and notably Geldenhouwer himself commissioned the first one, the difficulty of aligning past and present boundaries still remained.⁸⁰ Sixteenth-century Zeeland, however, was itself a collection of islands and already closely mirrored the presumed topography of Batavia and its northern surrounds.⁸¹ A look back at Jacob van Deventer's map confirms this striking affinity (fig. 4). Geldenhouwer's humanist colleague Cornelius Aurelius even refers explicitly to Walcheren as marking the outer periphery

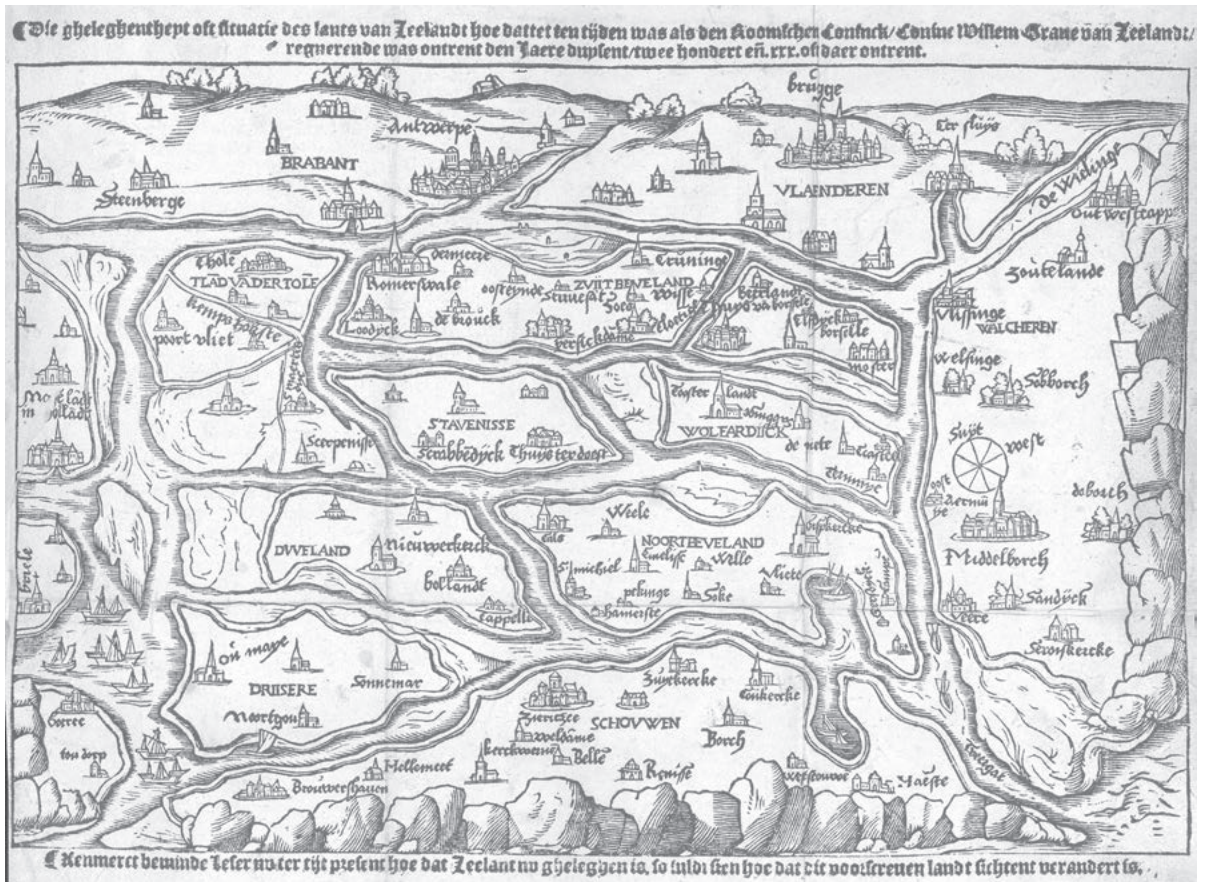
edition, but he took particular trouble over the illustration of the island—a woodcut by Ambrosius Holbein which he had sent to Erasmus for approval prior to the final printing. See exhib. cat. *Dirk Martens 1473–1973*, Aalst 1973, pp. 192–93, nrs. A 273a–c, 278, M 136, and D. Erasmus, *Opus epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*, ed. P.S. Allen, 12 vols., Oxford 1906–58, vol. 2, pp. 379–81, nr. 487 (12 November 1516).

79 On Geldenhouwer's particular understanding of Batavia see I. Bejczy, "Drie humanisten en een mythe: de betekenis van Erasmus, Aurelius en Geldenhouwer voor de Bataafse kwestie," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 109 (1996), pp. 467–84, with critical reference to K. Tilmans, *Historiography and humanism in Holland in the age of Erasmus: Aurelius and the Divisiechroniek of 1517*, Nieuwkoop 1992, esp. pp. 211–62. See also A. Noordzij, *Gelre: dynastie, land en identiteit in de late middeleeuwen*, Hilversum 2009, pp. 297–301, 303. On the larger history of the Batavian myth see E.O.G. Haitsma Mulier, "De Bataafse mythe opnieuw bekeken," *Bijdragen en Mededelingen voor de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 111 (1996), pp. 344–67, and I. Schöffer, "The Batavian myth during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries," in J.S. Bromley and E.H. Kossmann (eds.), *Britain and the Netherlands. Volume V, Some political mythologies: papers delivered to the fifth Anglo-Dutch historical conference*, The Hague 1975, pp. 78–101.

80 On the map of Batavia commissioned by Geldenhouwer, which has not survived, see A.H. Huussen, Jr., "Willem Hen-

dricxz. Croock: Amsterdams stadsfabriekmeester, schilder en kartograaf in de eerste helft van de zestiende eeuw," *Jaarboek van het Genootschap Amstelodamum* 64 (1972), pp. 29–53, esp. p. 35, and H. van der Heijden, "De Bataven in de cartographie van de zestiende tot negentiende eeuw," in Swinkels, op. cit. (note 74), pp. 115–16. Geldenhouwer described the map in a letter of 28 November 1522 to fellow humanist Frans Cranevelt: "Batavorum insulam Guilielmus Crocus, egregius pictor et cosmographus, mihi depinxit, ab arce Lobeta in Oceanum mare... hanc brevi videbis et gaudebis;" see de Vocht, op. cit. (note 11), pp. 71–72, nr. 27.

81 In his first published treatise directly to address the question of Batavia, Geldenhouwer attempted a concordance of the comments of Pliny the Elder and Caesar, noting that both describe the ancient Netherlands as a collection of islands. See Geldenhouwer, op. cit. (note 7), p. 40, and G. Geldenhouwer, *Lucubratiuncula Gerardi Noviomagi de Batavorum insula*, Antwerp 1520, fol. A3. Geldenhouwer's early foray into the subject of the region's ancient history reverberates in the 1551 chronicle of Jan Reygersbergh, who builds on Geldenhouwer's initial remarks to assert outright that Holland and Zeeland both constitute part of what was once ancient Batavia. See J. Reygersbergh, *Dye cronijcke van Zeelandt*, Antwerp 1551, B4v, and Reygersbergh and Boxhorn, op. cit. (note 29), p. 12.



22 Map of Zeeland c. 1230, from Jan Reygersbergh, *Dye cronijcke van Zeelandt*, Antwerp 1551. Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Library

of the Batavian territory and as the point where the branches of the Rhine reach the ocean.⁸²

The reception of Gossaert's painting was thus almost certainly informed by the notion that the geography of Zeeland offered a crucial point of reference for the ancient history of the Netherlands as a whole. The island-like pedestal on which Gossaert's deities are standing may even have evoked this topographical association between the contemporary province and the ancient Batavian isle and thereby roused further discussion among the visitors to Philip's palace. Not only by virtue of its

classical subject but also in its very design, Gossaert's painting could not but have echoed the newfound fascination with local antiquity.

ZELANDIA REDIVIVA In the prologue to his 1551 *Cronijcke van Zeelandt*, Jan Reygersbergh declared that his writing was necessitated by the volatility of the region, which had endured "so many strange events and wonders of inundation and high floods" and which had suffered such great losses as a result.⁸³ To emphasize the point, he included a historical map showing Zeeland

⁸² C. Aurelius, *Batavia sive de antiquo veroque eius insulae quam Rhenus in Hollandia facit situ, descriptione et laudibus* ed. Bonaventura Vulcanius, Antwerp 1586, p. 48.

⁸³ Reygersbergh, op. cit. (note 81), A3, and Reygersbergh and Boxhorn, op. cit. (note 29), p. 5: "...veel vreemdighets

ende wonders van inundation ende hooghe vloedem." This urge to document the history of the region in the face of destruction is evident even earlier in the local literature of Zeeland, for instance in *Een nieu ghedichte vander schade die daer nu is gheschiet van die vloet des waters*, a pamphlet of 1530 describing the ruin

as it was three centuries earlier, around 1230, with an accompanying inscription urging the viewer to marvel at how radically the province had been transformed by time (fig. 22).⁸⁴

The challenge of creating an ideal and unassailable monument to Zeeland's history lies, so I contend, at the very foundation of Gossaert's monumental painting. Within a province that had little in the way of a visible historical record, Gossaert's painting embodied a regional past that was otherwise scarcely in evidence. The ancient inscription that Philip had discovered on the island of Walcheren, although of great historical significance, hardly made much of a visual impact. For Philip as a patron, having experienced Rome's wealth of antiquity at first hand, it must have been difficult to escape the awareness of what was lacking in his own native Netherlands, and he clearly grasped the potential of Gossaert's art to fill this gap. Unlike the artist's depiction of the Roman Colosseum as a building ravaged by time, Gossaert's 1516 painting portrays an antiquity that is resplendent and perfectly intact, the local past brought to life in the present through the deities at its center with their blushing cheeks and sensual bodies.

Uncertainty still surrounds the trajectory of Gossaert's painting between 1516 and 1821, when it resurfaced in Berlin, but it can be surmised that any passing viewer would have taken the work to be a simple depiction of Neptune and Amphitrite, just as it has been understood in all past art-historical scholarship. Yet in the original context of Philip's court, the painting also would have resonated as specific to the site of its making, as a representation of *Neptune and Zelandia*, as an embodiment of the union between land and sea. In Philip's palace on the island of Walcheren, Gossaert's painting gave visual form to the revival of the past on local shores and heralded a new era of greater peace, prosperity and cultural achievement in the Low Countries. To recognize that the province of Zeeland, and the meeting of land and sea, lie at the very foundation of Gossaert's earliest extant mythological image is to realize that the ambition of the artist who painted it, and of Philip and Geldenhower as his interlocutors, was not

to follow in the footsteps of Italy but to claim an ancient lineage of their own.

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inflicted by flooding that year. Catalogued in W.C. Zijlstra, *Den Zeusen bessem: catalogus van de Nederlandse pamfletten*, Middelburg 1994, nr. 8. For documentation of the recurrent floods in the region see M.K.E. Gottschalk, *Stormvloed en rivieroverstromingen in Nederland*, 2 vols., Assen 1971-77.

⁸⁴ Reygersbergh, op. cit. (note 81), woodcut inserted between fols. M4v and N1. See also Blonk-van der Wijst, op. cit. (note 19), pp. 419-20, nr. 4.