

ons see the following: Wilhelm Neuss, "Bibelillustra-
n, 1948, column 478ff; and, Christian-Adolf Isermeyer,
n" in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (3rd ed.),
1183. Older research in Christian sermons has been
an article by Chistlieb (revised by M. Schian) in *Realen-
testantische Theologie und Kirche* (3rd ed.), 15, pp. 623ff.
Niebergall on sermons in *Die Religion in Geschichte und
d.*), V, column 516ff draws together the most important
terature. On homiletic issues—the teaching underlying
the articles by Caspari in *Realencyklopädie für protes-
e und Kirche* (3rd ed.), vol. 8, 1900, pp. 295ff; and M.
Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart (3rd ed.), 1959, III,
contains further important literature.

dt, 1962, p. 39.

l, 1971, pp. 24ff.

959, p. 6 already noted that subjects which traditionally
reted as strictly Catholic were actually done by Pro-
fessionalism of nineteenth-century society apparently
in the minds of many researchers. As soon as Mary
ical (!) scene, they automatically assumed it had been
atholic patron or, perhaps, for one of the Catholic
urch schools). In the nineteenth and twentieth century,
gained further credence when just such works of sev-
y art were acquired to decorate Catholic churches. It
erted here that by the sixteenth and seventeenth cen-
hardly any difference between the denominations in the
of biblical themes. Efforts to assign individual biblical
ic denominations are doomed to repeated failure if they
factor into account. The work of Rembrandt in particular
stand a whole series of just such unsatisfactory attribu-
ors have repeatedly sought to deduce either Rembrandt's
belief or that of a certain patron solely on the basis of
n motif was present in a painting or not. Careful study
taken to ascertain whether the addition or elimination
notif might be the result of contemporary tastes or due
hic preferences of an individual artist. Only in very few
dogmatic and denominational contrasts exemplified;
it was not always clear which religious belief an artist
sider, for instance, renditions of the Last Supper). Only
us ordering of particular themes into a strict chronology
of the two sacraments rather than the seven sacraments),
ddition of historically relevant data (i.e., the portrayal
part of the Last Supper), do specific scenes acquire a
character.

sculptors, cabinetmakers, and porcelain painters, gold
, did not really bother about the religious background
ose work they copied. As a result, in many Protestant
ons of altarpieces by Rubens can be found; and in Cath-
the way to Spain and Italy, the underlying use of themes
ng from Protestant biblical illustrations or graphic works
oked. There existed between the religious camps a much
xchange than has previously been assumed. This equally
ng art student's choice of teacher; here, too, religious
have played no significant role whatsoever.
ication, emblem books, and books on moral teachings
een written by persons with definite religious convic-
generally valid hypotheses were used by people of all
and, later printers, as well as pirated editions, did not
e original author's religious inclinations.

ard Lairesse moved to Amsterdam, he joined the artist
olentibus arduum." Founded in 1669, this group prop-
cal theories of the French Academy. After going blind,
ublic lectures on art theory for his friends in the artist

community "Ingenio et labore," which were copied down by his son
Abraham and published as two volumes: *Grundlegginge der Teekenkunst*,
Amsterdam 1701 and *Het groot Schilderboek*, Amsterdam 1707. Trans-
lated into several languages, these books exercised considerable influence
down to the nineteenth century. Compare G. Kauffmann, 1955-57, p.
185ff; J. J. M. Timmers, 1942; and Snoep, 1970.

26. As early as 1854 Kolloff (p. 496) very perceptively remarked: "In
the world of art a knowledge of the Orient was as good as nonexistent.
In the depiction of biblical events, the Orient was alluded to through
the inclusion of an imaginative bunch of date palms. This old, well-
established procedure can be seen, for example, in the etching *Rest on
the Flight into Egypt* by Martin Schöngauer. The engraver, however, in
opposition to the old painter (who seldom worried about individual
details) took great care in rendering the exotic trees included in the
composition. They allow us to recognize the scene as an oriental one
and reveal that the engraver had thought about even the minutest detail.
In the entire sixteenth century this kind of care and attention in the
re-creation of the Orient is seldom encountered. . . ." Even the artists
of the seventeenth century did little to change this state of affairs. Only
rarely did they depict a palm in their paintings as Rembrandt did in his
The Ascension of Christ in Munich (Bredius, 557), and in his etching
The Proclamation to the Shepherds (Bartsch 44).

27. Willem de Poorter's painting *Paulus and Barnabas in Lystra* is con-
sistently and falsely interpreted as Salomon's idolatry. Even Jan Lievens'
painting in the J. Paul Getty Museum (Malibu, California; cat. no. 32)
was, until recently, incorrectly labeled *Eli Teaching Samuel*. Like the
painting attributed to the youthful Dou in a private collection, it also
depicts, in my estimation, the teaching of Alexander by Aristotle. In
the case of the picture by Lievens, it is unquestionably a *portrait historié*.
To verify this hypothesis, however, the graphic prototype still needs to
be unearthed.

28. See the example in the C. W. Mönnich/Michel van der Plas, *Het
Word in Beeld*, Baarn, 1977, pp. 50ff.

29. Thus, for instance, the drawing by R. de Hooghe entitled *The
Circumcision*, 1665, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (illustration in Fuchs,
1968, p. 72), reveals the elegant rooms of an obviously rich Jew. Hanging
on the wall are two large Old Testament paintings: *Moses Kneeling Before
the Burning Bush* and *Elias Being Fed by Ravens*. The etching of *Abraham
and Isaac on the Way to the Place of Sacrifice* was created by Rembrandt
for a Spanish Jew (this information was verbally communicated to me
by Mr. Dudok van Heel).

Depiction of Mythological Themes

Eric J. Sluiter



THE DEPICTION OF MYTHOLOGICAL THEMES, compared with
that of religious subjects, played a lesser role in Dutch
history painting of the seventeenth century. Nevertheless,
as we shall see, the number of paintings with representations
of classical myths is far from insignificant.¹

In sixteenth-century Italy mythological themes flourished
in the pictorial arts. At the same time in the North, the
representations of these themes, especially in painting, re-
mained relatively incidental. As contact with Italy in-
creased over the course of the sixteenth century, the interest
in themes from antiquity also grew; initially it appeared in
prints and drawings and gradually also in paintings. Only
after 1590 was there a sustained production of paintings
with representations of antique myths, specifically, the pe-
riods of greatest interest were between 1590 and 1620 and
between 1650 and 1690.

The appearance after 1590 of translations of the works
of Ovid, Virgil, and Homer is a clear sign of the spread of
interest in mythology in broader circles. Especially signifi-
cant was the great popularity of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. No
other classical book was translated so often and no other
appeared in so many illustrated editions.² Ovid's tales also
seem to have been far and away the most popular sources
of inspiration for artists; the majority of mythological themes
encountered in paintings derive from the *Metamorphoses*.
The Haarlem painter, poet, and art theorist, Carel van
Mander considered the *Metamorphoses* of such great im-
portance that he devoted an extensive part of his *Het
Schilder-Boeck* (published 1604) to it. As he himself said,
he wanted the "Interpretation of the *Metamorphoses*"
(Wtlegginghe op den *Metamorphosis*), as this section was
called, to be of use to artists and art lovers.³ At the time
that he wrote his piece, it seems that the *Metamorphoses*
had already earned the sobriquet "painters' Bible."⁴ Van
Mander did not recount the stories but rather sought to
explain them to his readers. In his view, buried within the

seemingly superficial narratives was a wealth of general
wisdom and instruction which could inspire moral improve-
ment and the pursuit of a virtuous life.⁵

Van Mander distinguished three types of "interpreta-
tions": an historical explanation (giving the historical events
which were thought to provide the basis for specific myth-
ological stories); a natural history interpretation (revealing
wisdom concerning the elements, the movement of the
stars, etc. which was hidden in the tales); and the "Leer-
lijcke en stichtelijcke uytlegginghen," which is to say, an
account of the morals which were concealed in the stories.
He placed by far the greatest emphasis on the last men-
tioned.

Van Mander's explanation of mythology was based on
an old and at that time still vital tradition established in
the first centuries after Christ. Classical literature, of which
the mythical fables are an essential part, had always been
a basic feature of Western culture. If these often outwardly
frivolous tales were to retain this important status they had
to be brought into agreement with Christian philosophy.
Thus, a long tradition was established of interpreting the
fables allegorically. It reached a high point in the Middle
Ages and, with some modifications, in the Renaissance.
In sixteenth-century Italy, mythological handbooks offered
compilations of numerous explanations of the actions and
appearances of Greek and Roman gods and heroes.⁶ Van
Mander was not alone in his reliance on these traditions
(especially that of the Italian handbooks). Whenever the
classical myths were employed in Dutch seventeenth-cen-
tury prose, poetry, drama, or emblematic literature, they
were used in an allegorical fashion, whereby the moralizing
meaning was stressed first and foremost.⁷ At the close of
the seventeenth century the classical artist and art theo-
retician, Gerard Lairesse, could still assert that mythological
stories contained moral lessons "om de deugd te doen aanne-
men en het kwaad te schuwen" (to promote virtue and shun

evil).⁸ One rightly may ask whether a pronouncement at the end of the century so reminiscent of those of Van Mander should be given as much weight as if it had been delivered at the beginning of the seventeenth century. A more modern approach to mythology gradually developed toward the end of the century.⁹

Judging from Van Mander's writings, other seventeenth-century literature (including emblematic literature), and the many prints of mythological subjects with explanatory texts, we may assume that mythological scenes in paintings generally alluded to more than a mere illustration of the story. It is important to keep in mind that even seemingly frivolous subjects could be given strongly moralistic interpretations. Just as one can see from Dutch genre painting, it was not unusual to represent, by way of contrast, scenes of impropriety as an allusion to the path of virtuousness.¹⁰ At the same time, however, one may presume that attaching morals to mythological representations occasionally provided a pretext for the depiction of piquant subjects. Unfortunately, one seldom finds indications as to which way the subject was intended to be interpreted in paintings. How seventeenth-century viewers assessed paintings of mythological themes and to what degree they perceived deeper meanings in these works are questions requiring far more research. Only occasionally can we be certain of these matters when we know, for example, how or where a painting hung.¹¹

In the following pages we will examine which themes were painted in seventeenth-century Holland and how they were executed. We will restrict ourselves to paintings of specific episodes from the mythological stories. The pictures in which mythological personages are freely combined within allegories are thus excluded from consideration.

When we attempt to survey the mythological paintings still known to us we are initially struck by the rather limited number of themes which were represented. Of the numerous themes which appeared in illustrated publications of Ovid's works or in loose print series, a great many were seldom or never painted. Moreover, subjects which were represented frequently in paintings were not always the same themes which enjoyed popularity in the literature of the time. Painting clearly had its own requirements.

Different explanations can be offered for these rather restricted selections. The most important is the influence of the pictorial tradition itself: familiarity with representations of specific themes and the existence of well-known models often provided inspiration for painters and patrons. Some themes also readily lent themselves to depiction with traditional pictorial motifs, such as a banquet, courtship, meeting, departure, etc. Furthermore, while a certain mythological representation might find favor with specific groups of people because of its moral message, the attrac-

tiveness of its pictorial form should not be underestimated as a determinant of a subject's popularity. Finally, some themes evidently were well suited to political allegories or the glorification of individuals, while others lent themselves to artistic specializations. If, for example, a painter specialized in arcadian landscapes or the painting of animals, he usually exhibited clear preferences in the selection of mythological themes.

By far the most frequently encountered themes are: Actaeon Spying Upon Diana and her Nymphs as they Bathe, Diana Discovering Callisto's Pregnancy, The Courtship of Venus and Adonis, and Vertumnus Disguised as an Old Woman in an Attempt to Seduce Pomona. Other often-repeated themes are: The Judgment of Paris, Mercury Lulling Argus to Sleep with his Flute, The Judgment of Midas during the Musical Competition between Apollo and Pan, The Courtship of Mars and Venus, and The Marriage of Peleus and Thetis.¹² It is striking to note that the explanations given to the most popular themes bear a certain similarity to one another. Most contain a warning against the choice of earthly enjoyments, lust, etc., which invariably result in severe punishment. The punishment itself is not represented, but rather the events which precipitated it.

Representations of the Judgment of Paris (fig. 1), in which the Trojan king's son must decide which of the three goddesses—Minerva, Juno, and Venus—is the fairest, always included a strict moralizing message. The theme's popularity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries might in part reflect the fact that no other classical fable reads so much like a parable. Paris can be seen as an exemplar of the man who makes the wrong choice and, as a result, meets his downfall. The three goddesses represent all aspects of human life: Juno, the active life, power, wealth; Minerva, the contemplative life, wisdom, learning; and Venus, the sensual life, love, and passion. Van Mander states in his "Wtlegginghe" that Paris caused the destruction of his country and the death of himself and his friends by the choice of sensuality over wisdom and wealth. In the first part of his *Schilder-Boeck*, the so-called "Leerdicht" (didactic poem), he cites the fatal examples of Paris and Actaeon as a warning to youth not to be corrupted by the temptations of the senses but rather to study diligently.¹³

Although Ovid had not included the story of Paris and the earlier marriage of Peleus and Thetis (fig. 2 and cat. no. 5) in his *Metamorphoses*, Van Mander used the occasion of Ovid's reference to the love of Peleus and Thetis to give a full account of these stories in Book 11 of his "Wtlegginghe." These episodes were occasionally represented together in a single painting, for example (fig. 2) one by Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem, which depicted this marriage and included the Judgment of Paris in the distance

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fig. 1 Joachim Uytewael, *The Judgment of Paris*, signed and dated 1615, panel, 60 x 79 cm, London, National Gallery, inv. no. 6334.



fig. 2 Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem, *The Marriage of Peleus and Thetis*, canvas, 246 x 419 cm, Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum, cat. 1924, no. 59 (photo: Dingjan, The Hague).



fig. 3 Cornelis van Poelenburgh, *Diana and Callisto*, 39,5 x 48,5 cm, Leningrad, Hermitage, inv. no. 1062.

53,5 x 81,5

(1593, Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum).¹⁴ The banquet held by the gods to honor the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, during which the goddess of discord (Eris or Discordia) threw down the apple "for the most beautiful" among the celebrants, was, as Van Mander stated, ultimately the cause of the Trojan War.¹⁵ Van Mander interpreted the fable of Peleus and Thetis as a warning against the discord which is the cause of all ruin. Following his explanation, he included an excursus on governmental leaders, who, he maintained, must be wise, rich, and reasonable. These gentlemen do well to bear the lessons of the Judgment of Paris in mind so that they may avoid making the wrong choices.¹⁶ The painting by Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem of 1593 was commissioned by the city of Haarlem for the Prinsenhof and was probably intended to remind the rulers of just such warnings; its admonitory purport was strengthened by the depiction of the Judgment of Paris in the background.

At times it appears that for special occasions quite arbitrary and even contradictory uses were made of mythological themes. For example, the marriage of Peleus and Thetis was employed a few times as an allegory of marriage. At the time of the joyous entry of Henriette Maria of England, the marriage of Willem II and Mary Stuart was represented allegorically as Peleus and Thetis.¹⁷ The associations here were entirely superficial: the fact was stressed that the princess was English (coming from overseas, she suggested com-

parison with Thetis, the sea nymph) and that one could hope for the birth of a hero like Achilles (the son of Peleus and Thetis). Understandably, any reference to discord and its consequences is excluded here. The known paintings of this subject, however, always depict Eris, the goddess of discord (or Jupiter holding the apple), and scarcely ever devote much attention to Peleus and Thetis. Indeed, one usually has difficulty making them out among the assembly of gods. In such pictures, there clearly can be no question of the works functioning as marriage allegories.

The moral of the story of Actaeon and Callisto (figs. 3 and 4) is almost the same. They were examples of youths who succumbed to the temptations of the senses and consequently were ruined. Actaeon was killed by his own hounds (the dogs symbolize his evil lusts) because he allowed his eyes (senses) to see Diana naked; Callisto fell into disgrace because she foolishly allowed Jupiter to deceive her.¹⁸ Diana functions in these stories as the unrelenting guardian of virginal chastity.

It is conspicuous that paintings of the courtship of Venus and Adonis rarely represent a tranquil, devoted couple (cat. no. 8). Venus embraces Adonis while appearing to engage him in conversation; Adonis usually seems aloof and often appears on the point of rising. In the background a death of Adonis is occasionally represented, and often we are shown Cupid playing with Adonis' dogs. Since Ovid's text



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fig. 4 Rembrandt van Rijn, *Diana and Acteon and the Discovery of Callisto's Pregnancy*, signed and dated 1634, canvas, 72 x 95 cm, Anholt, Coll. Fürst zu Salm-Salm.

does not specify disinterest on Adonis' part, it is rather remarkable that he is represented so often in paintings as indifferent or resistant to Venus' advances. Perhaps the artist intended here to stress the moral which was most often attached to the story at this time in Holland. Adonis was compared with the reckless youth who ignores divine counsel and goes to his ruin (Venus warns Adonis against hunting dangerous large game; by failing to heed the advice, he is slain). Venus, in this case, symbolizes celestial love, while Adonis, the inexperienced youth, prefers terrestrial matters (the hunt). Cupid playing with hounds is perhaps intended to emphasize Adonis' true interests.¹⁹

Van Mander interpreted the story of the virtuous Pomona (cat. no. 18), who after suffering the persistent advances of Vertumnus in his many disguises finally succumbs, as follows: Pomona represents virtue, and Vertumnus' exertions reveal the difficulty one encounters when trying to attain virtue.²⁰ The principal attraction of this theme may have rested in the juxtaposition of the pretty, youthful, and chaste Pomona passively listening to the active persuasion of the ugly old woman. Motifs contrasting pretty young women and ugly old ones were much favored in the seventeenth century (e.g. Bathsheba and Danae with their servants).

Notwithstanding the fact that these interpretations included constant and diverse incentives to virtue, representations of mythological subjects were thought by many to be immoral. According to Coornhert (1586), the perusal of paintings of the "naked Venus" only results in "fiery sensuality, burning desires and hot passion" (vierighe onkuyshheid, brandende begheerte ende heete minne). In his *Houwelick* (1625), Cats warns against unchaste subjects in art, like Lot and his Daughters, David and Bathsheba, the Rape of Europa, and Leda and the Swan, which only arouse evil lusts in the young. Writers of treatises on art, like Van Hoogstraten, Lairesse, and Houbraken, also warn against the painting of immoral scenes. Lairesse, for example, considered the paintings *Mars and Venus Discovered Together by Vulcan*, *Diana in her Bath* ("even though it was painted by Van Dijck"), and the biblical *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife* unsuited to public display in a gallery of paintings.²¹ The effect of similar pronouncements may have served to increase the emphasis on decorous ways to interpret mythological fables rather than to diminish the popularity of these often rather frivolous scenes. As we shall see, this interest was unmistakably evident in the Netherlands.

Some of the subjects we have mentioned appeared regularly throughout the seventeenth century, while others

were limited in their popularity to a specific period or group of artists. Thus, we shall take as our starting point a roughly chronological review of the different groups of artists.

Among the works of the Dutch mannerists the most frequently repeated subjects were the Judgment of Paris, the Marriage of Peleus and Thetis, Venus and Adonis, and other scenes of Venus, like Venus and Mars and Venus and Cupid. Themes which can be grouped generally under the heading "Diana and the Nymphs," such as Diana and Actaeon and Diana and Callisto, also were treated a number of times by the mannerists. The Judgment of Paris (fig. 1) is frequently encountered later in the century but never in such concentration as with the mannerists. (The theme is totally absent from the works of the Pre-Rembrandtists and the Rembrandt School). The subject also enjoyed great popularity in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy and, from an international point of view, is perhaps the most frequently represented mythological story. Generally, the pictorial form is very traditional; the famous print by Marc Antonio Raimondi after Raphael appears to have had a demonstrable influence.

In contrast to the Judgment of Paris, the Marriage of Peleus and Thetis (fig. 2 and cat. no. 5) is a typical mannerist predilection and appears almost exclusively in the Netherlands. The subject belongs to the more general theme of the feast of the gods. Its most famous prototype was Raphael's composition, executed by students, depicting the banquet of the gods honoring the marriage of Cupid and Psyche in the Villa Farnesina (Loggia di Psiche, c. 1517). Of great importance for Dutch art at the same time was a composition by Bartholomeus Spranger which was inspired by Raphael's work, and which likewise represents the marriage of Cupid and Psyche and was engraved by Hendrick Goltzius in 1587.²² The many banquets of the gods by mannerists in the Netherlands almost always represented the marriage of Peleus and Thetis. The theme was a special favorite of Cornelis Cornelisz., Abraham Bloemaert, and Uytewael. Feasts of the gods were later treated by Cornelis van Poelenburgh (who painted the subject several times) and Nikolaus Knüpfer; in these works, however, the subject disappears entirely and all that remains is the assembly of gods, usually situated in the clouds.

From the story of the love of Venus and Adonis, three episodes were frequently chosen: the Courtship of Venus and Adonis, Venus Lamenting the Death of Adonis (the least often represented), and the Departure of Adonis. With the exception of a single painting by Goltzius depicting the death of Adonis, the mannerists always represented the couple's courtship (cat. no. 8).

The departure of Adonis (fig. 5), in which Venus vainly attempts to stop Adonis from going hunting, did not appear at all in Ovid. The tradition for representing the theme

originated with Titian (Madrid, Prado) and subsequently was influentially perpetuated by Rubens (Düsseldorf, Kunstmuseum). In Dutch art the subject first appeared in 1622 in a painting by Paulus Moreelse, and was later depicted by, among others, Bloemaert (1632) and Honthorst (1641). All of these pictures clearly reflect knowledge of Rubens' composition. After 1650 the theme became the most widely represented scene from the Venus and Adonis story (cat. no. 52).

The Pre-Rembrandtists, active between c. 1610 and 1630, were of a younger generation than the mannerists. The central figure in this group was Pieter Lastman who worked mainly in Amsterdam. The works of these painters reflect entirely different tastes. They painted very few mythological scenes and no scenes of Venus, love scenes, or groups of nude figures. If they represented a story from the *Metamorphoses* their choice of subject was often quite exceptional, for example, Juno Surprising Jupiter and Io (who has just been transformed into a cow) (Lastman, 1618), and Apollo and the Dead Coronis (Lastman, in imitation of the German painter Elsheimer, who was so important for this group). Equally exceptional is the choice of subjects taken from sources other than Ovid, like the Quarrel between Orestes and Pylades at the Sacrifice (Lastman and Moeyaert) and the various scenes from Homer's *Odyssey*. Depictions of Odysseus and Nausica, Odysseus and Athena, and Odysseus and Circe are encountered primarily in the works of the Pre-Rembrandtists. The favorite *Odyssey* scene was the meeting of Odysseus and Nausica (fig. 6), which besides being represented by Lastman, was also depicted by Moeyaert, Jan Pynas, Thomas de Keyser, and Joachim van Sandrart. All these later pictures testify to the powerful influence of Lastman's paintings of 1609 and 1619.²³ Lastman seems to have preferred gripping narratives involving dialogue and sudden encounters or recognitions. In these scenes such markedly different reactions as terror and astonishment could be expressed.²⁴ A theme like *Odysseus and Nausica* is clearly a case in point.

The Caravaggisti, who were active at nearly the same time as the Pre-Rembrandtists, also displayed very little interest in mythological themes; at least such was the case during the period (c. 1615-1630) when they worked in the style which may rightly be called Caravaggistic. Furthermore, there are no mythological themes which can be called typical for this group, that is to say, subjects which were represented more often by the Caravaggisti than by any other group. Somewhat exceptional are two paintings by Van Baburen, the *Chaining of Prometheus*, 1623 (cat. no. 14), and the *Flaying of Marsyas*, two rather gruesome themes, both of which are quite rare in the Netherlands.²⁵ Even Honthorst painted few mythological themes in this period. The number of paintings of mythological subjects increased

p. 78 fig. 1

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in their popularity to a specific period or group of artists, we shall take as our starting point a roughly chronological review of the different groups of artists.

The works of the Dutch mannerists the most repeated subjects were the Judgment of Paris, the Rape of Peleus and Thetis, Venus and Adonis, and the Hunt of Venus, like Venus and Mars and Venus and Actaeon which can be grouped generally under the name "Diana and the Nymphs," such as Diana and Actaeon and Callisto, also were treated a number of times by the mannerists. The Judgment of Paris (fig. 1) was encountered later in the century but never in the same way as with the mannerists. (The theme is also found in the works of the Pre-Rembrandtists and the Rembrandt School). The subject also enjoyed great popularity in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy and, from a national point of view, is perhaps the most widely represented mythological story. Generally, the subject is very traditional; the famous print by Marcantonio after Raphael appears to have had a strong influence.

In addition to the Judgment of Paris, the Marriage of Peleus and Thetis (fig. 2 and cat. no. 5) is a typical mannerist subject and appears almost exclusively in the works of the mannerists. The subject belongs to the more general theme of the marriages of the gods. Its most famous prototype was the Marriage of Peleus and Thetis, executed by students, depicting the gods honoring the marriage of Cupid and Psyche at the Villa Farnesina (Loggia di Psiche, c. 1517). The Marriage of Peleus and Thetis was a special favorite for Dutch art at the same time as was the Marriage of Peleus and Thetis by Bartholomeus Spranger which was inspired by the Marriage of Peleus and Thetis and which likewise represents the marriage of Peleus and Thetis and was engraved by Hendrick Goltzius in 1687.²² The many banquets of the gods by mannerist painters in the Netherlands almost always represented the Marriage of Peleus and Thetis. The theme was a special favorite of Cornelis Cornelisz., Abraham Bloemaert, and Pieter van der Vochten of the gods were later treated by Cornelis Goltzius (who painted the subject several times) and Pieter Knüpfer; in these works, however, the subject is treated entirely and all that remains is the assembly of the gods situated in the clouds.

The story of the love of Venus and Adonis, three of the most frequently chosen: the Courtship of Venus and Adonis, Venus Lamenting the Death of Adonis (the subject of the present), and the Departure of Adonis. With the exception of a single painting by Goltzius depicting the Death of Adonis, the mannerists always represented the subject in a group (cat. no. 8).

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fig. 5 Paulus Moreelse, *Venus and Adonis*, signed and dated 1622, panel, 37.5 x 50.5 cm, Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie, cat. 1962, p. 134, inv. no. 1093.

only in his later works (from c. 1628 on) when he worked primarily for the court circles and his style gradually shifted to a cool classicism.²⁶

A group of landscape painters who are important for us is the so-called Poelenburgh School. Cornelis van Poelenburgh and his followers,²⁷ who were active primarily in The Hague, painted numerous small paintings with mythological depictions. These scenes were situated in arcadian landscapes with ruins and softly rolling hills. Often the subjects were the same as those preferred by the mannerists, such as the Judgment of Paris and the Banquet of the Gods. Exceptionally popular among this group were representations of Actaeon Surprising Diana as She Bathes and Diana (again while bathing) Discovering Callisto's Pregnancy. These two subjects, which can be grouped together under the title *Diana and the Bathing Nymphs*, undoubtedly were the most frequently depicted mythological subjects in the northern Netherlands, already appearing fairly regularly in the works of the mannerists (especially Uytewael). Both subjects offered the opportunity to portray various naked figures with different poses and responses. Famous Italian models existed for both: the best-known being the pendants

which Titian painted for Philip II in 1556-1559 (now in Edinburgh, National Gallery of Scotland). A print by Cornelis Cort (c. 1565) after a composition by Titian was of crucial importance for the depiction of scenes of Diana and Callisto. We continually encounter the pose of Titian's Diana and/or his group of nymphs around Callisto.²⁸ As with Diana and Actaeon, the subject was usually treated in large figure compositions by the mannerists, while later painters from the Poelenburgh circle assigned far greater prominence to the landscape (fig. 3). In contrast to his *Diana and Callisto*, Titian's *Diana and Actaeon* had scarcely any influence in the North. It was rather Tempesta's prints of this subject which seem to have had the most influence on Dutch representations of Diana and Actaeon.²⁹ The pose of Actaeon, in particular, with his sprouting antlers and such elements as the hounds looking up at their master in surprise reappear in many seventeenth-century works. In most mannerist compositions, Actaeon occupies a rather important place (e.g. Uytewael, Boston, 1612). In many later depictions of this theme by the Poelenburgh School, however, one has difficulty in even locating Actaeon. For those painters the subject became a secondary consideration

and often vanished entirely. What remains are numerous landscapes with an idyllic and sensuous mood where Diana and her nymphs are seen enjoying themselves in the nude. These two themes (Actaeon and Callisto) which were so closely related in form and meaning and which had already been conceived of as pendants by Titian, were once joined in a single painting by no less an artist than Rembrandt (1634, Anholt, fig. 4). In Rembrandt's works we again find as many elements from the Tempesta prints as from Titian's composition.³⁰

After 1650, these two themes lost much of their popularity. Except for Jacob van Loo and several late seventeenth-century artists, few painters addressed the subject. On the other hand, there were a number of monumentally scaled, large figure paintings of Diana with her Nymphs Resting after the Hunt (cat. no. 51 and cat. no. 54). Paintings of this type were greatly admired by the Court of Orange in The Hague. In the hunting castle Honsef-laarsdijk, for example, there was a Diana-Zaal (Hall of Diana), with paintings by Pieter de Grebber, Paulus Bor, Christian van Couwenbergh, and Rubens. In the inventories of the collections of the House of Orange, there was a remarkable number of paintings, among them two large works by Honthorst which depicted Diana themes.³¹ The ambitious academics, like De Grebber, Jacob van Loo (cat. no. 51), and Jacob Backer are known to have executed several paintings of these subjects; the early painting by Vermeer (cat. no. 54) is very much part of this group. Later in the century, the subject appeared several different times in the works of such artists as Jan van Noordt, Gerard Lairesse, and Adriaen van der Werff.

For convenience sake, we have referred to some artists as academics. Among the works of these painters, we encounter, besides Diana scenes, numerous monumental compositions with lovers, for example Venus and Adonis, especially Adonis' departure (cat. no. 52), and a theme which was new to the northern Netherlands, Jupiter Disguised as Diana to Seduce Callisto (cat. no. 57). Not only these themes but others which became popular after 1650 also often seem to owe their popularity to famous compositions by Rubens.³²

Especially after 1640, the subject of Vertumnus Disguised as an Old Woman to Seduce Pomona came very much into vogue (cat. no. 18), only the scenes of Diana and Actaeon or Callisto were more frequently depicted. In contrast to the Diana themes, however, Vertumnus was only rarely executed outside Holland. Although this subject had already been treated a few times by the mannerists in the first decades of the century (and even one time each by a Pre-Rembrandtist and a Caravaggist), it began to appear frequently only after 1640. We witness a veritable explosion of interest in this subject in the Rembrandt School, and

the theme enjoyed special favor among artists we know primarily as genre painters. That these artists had a preference for this subject perhaps reflects the fact that it is one of the few mythological themes in which the main characters are usually entirely clothed.³³ Only occasionally was Pomona depicted naked, as for example in the two paintings of this theme executed by the mannerist Goltzius.

A theme which also enjoyed great favor after 1640, especially with the Rembrandt School, was Mercury Lulling Argus to Sleep in Order to Kill Him. This subject, once again, seems to have been treated most frequently by Dutch artists.

Among the works of late seventeenth-century artists (those active after c. 1670), we encounter a relatively large number of representations of mythological themes, as well as numerous scenes from classical (primarily Roman) history. The subjects which had been popular with the academics remained so with these later artists, while several new preferences also appeared: representations of Achilles, especially Achilles Discovered by Odysseus among the Daughters of Lycomedes (earlier depicted repeatedly by the Rubens School); scenes from Virgil's *Aeneas*, particularly from the account of the love of Aeneas and Dido; and finally, such subjects as Diana and the Sleeping Endymion (cat. no. 68) which were often depicted in seventeenth-century Italy. An increase in the number of rarely or uniquely represented themes is also noteworthy. In his *Het Groot Schilder-Boeck*, Lairesse lamented that artists continually repeated the same themes, while Ovid, Homer, and Virgil offered enough stories which were suited to representation to triple artists' thematic repertoires.³⁴ Although Lairesse painted many traditional subjects, he and Gerard Hoet often addressed quite exceptional themes.

Having reviewed various subjects which enjoyed favor in seventeenth-century Holland, it becomes clear that certain themes reflect typical Dutch preferences. By the same token, other themes which were popular elsewhere found representation only occasionally in Holland. As examples of subjects which were rarely depicted by Dutch artists, we would cite scenes of Hercules, Leda and the Swan, Danae, Jupiter and Antiope, the Abduction of Ganymede, Amor and Psyche, and Apollo Flaying Marsyas, while the Rape of Persephone, the Rape of Europa, Apollo and Daphne, Narcissus, and Bacchus and Ariadne were not so popular in Holland as elsewhere. It is noteworthy that four of the mythological themes mentioned here are among the few mythological themes painted by Rembrandt: the *Rape of Persephone* (c. 1629); the *Rape of Europa* (1632); the *Abduction of Ganymede* (1635); and *Danae* (1636, completed c. 1645-50). Themes which enjoyed some popularity, like *Diana and Callisto/Actaeon* (1634) and *Andromeda* (c. 1627/1628), were painted by Rembrandt in rather unusual ways.

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His only later painting with a theme from Ovid depicts *Jupiter and Mercury as Guests of Philomen and Baucis* (1658). Famous paintings of this theme existed by Elsheimer and Rubens. Although Flemish artists often represented the subject, it was rather rarely broached in Holland.³⁵ From an international point of view, therefore, Rembrandt's choice was less unusual as when it is considered within the Dutch tradition. The paintings listed above almost all originated in his early years and, apart from a single Rape of Europa and a Rape of Persephone, evidently had little influence upon his students' works. By and large, they chose less violent and more decorous subjects.

We already noted that mythological personages could be freely employed in all sorts of allegories. Minerva, Mercury, Neptune, and Hercules were sometimes used in allegories glorifying cities and countries or in allegories celebrating justice, prosperity, or commerce. Mythological allusions could also be employed for the glorification of individuals; the honored recipient's qualities would be likened to those of gods and heroes. In some cases the allusion merely involved the representation of the appropriate subject, while at other times the people themselves were portrayed in these scenes. The Oranjezaal in the Huis ten Bosch employs both types and doubtless is the most important example of this genre in Holland. Frederick Hendrik is compared, in turn, with Hercules, Aeneas, and Achilles, while Maurits and Frederick Hendrik are portrayed as Castor and Pollux. This use of mythology will be discussed in the essay on history painting in public buildings and the residences of the stadtholders by Beatrijs Brenninkmeyer.³⁶

Notes

1. See for example, Pigler, 1974, II, pp. 9-348 (a very incomplete but nevertheless valuable handbook enumerating paintings, drawings and prints depicting numerous mythological subjects). Reproductions of many Netherlandish paintings of mythological subjects can be found under system number 9 (Classical Mythology and Ancient History) in the Decimal Index of the Art of the Low Countries (DIAL), a photographic index arranged according to H. van de Waal's Iconoclass (see Bibliography) and available for consultation at various art historical institutions and museums in Europe and the United States. The present author is in possession of a card system recording paintings known both from personal inspection and photographs and reproductions consulted chiefly at the Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie in The Hague and the Witt Library and Warburg Institute in London.

2. See Geerebaert, 1924, p. 138ff (Ovid), p. 177ff (Virgil), p. 43ff (Homer). Concerning illustrated publications of Ovid, see Henkel, 1921, and Henkel, 1930.

3. Van Mander, 1604, *Voor-reden op de Wtleghing*, fol. IV. He considered this of importance since no publication had yet appeared in Dutch which revealed the essence of these stories.

4. Van Mander, *Voor-reden op de Wtleghing*, fol. IV vso. In Harman Jansz. Muller's publication of Ioannes Florianus' Dutch translation of Ovid (Amsterdam, 1588) it was first recommended to artists (see Henkel, 1930, p. 59). The prose translation by Florianus was the earliest in the Netherlands and was first published in Antwerp in 1552 (reprinted in 1556, 1588, 1595, 1599, 1607, 1609 and several additional times until 1650).

5. Van Mander, *Voor-reden op de Wtleghing*, fol. III and IV vso.

6. The most important and widely used were those of Lilio Giraldi, 1548, and especially, Natale Conti, 1551, and Vincenzo Cartari, 1556. Concerning these, see Seznec 1940 (1972), II, chap. I, and Allen, 1970, chap. VIII.

Prof. dr. J. Bruyn allowed me to consult his thesis, in which a clear picture of Van Mander's relationship to this tradition is sketched.

7. Vondel also gave a passionate defense of the use and moral importance of antique fables: Sterck et al. et., 1934, vol. 7, pp. 386-398: *Voorrede bij Publius Ovidius Nazonos Herscheppinge. Vertaelt door J.V. Vondel*.

Van Mander emphatically excluded the Christian-allegorical interpretation (in which biblical parallels are sought in the mythological stories). This type of interpretation, however, is often encountered elsewhere in the literature produced by other seventeenth-century writers (for example, Vondel, among others).

8. Lairese, 1707, I, p. 117. See also how Lairese offers "didactic" (leerlijke) interpretations of mythological stories in his Vol. II, chap. 9, 10 and 13.

9. See Allen, 1970, chap. X.

10. See the writings of E. de Jongh, for instance his introduction to *Tot leering en vermaak*, exh. cat. Amsterdam, 1976, 27, 28.

11. See notes 23 and 25.

12. The allegorical subjects Venus and Mars (usually an allegory of Peace) and Sine Cerere et Baccho friget Venus (an allegory inspired by Terentius' saying), so loved by the mannerists, must be excluded from consideration here.

13. Van Mander, 1604, *Wtlegghingh*, fol. 94 and Van Mander, 1604, *Grondt*, I, fol. 6. See also Miedema, 1973, II, pp. 40 and 485. See, for example, also the motto on the title page of J.H. Krul's play, 't *Vonnis van Paris en d'ontschackinghe van Helena*, Amsterdam, 1637.
14. See, for example, also Uytewael's *Judgment of Paris* (London, National Gallery), fig. 1, and his *Marriage of Peleus and Thetis* (Brunswick, Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum).
15. Van Mander, 1604, *Wtlegghingh*, fol. 90v, 91.
16. Van Mander, 1604, *Wtlegghingh*, fol. 94v.
The mistake of people who prefer earthly things is also seen in the *Judgment of Midas*: Van Mander, *ibid.*, fol. 89vso, 90, and Van Mander offers the opinion that one should not trouble oneself about the judgment of "Midas' heralds" (herauten) or "ignorance's bad judgment" (*Quaet oordeel der overstandighe*); Van Mander refers here specifically to the judgment of the uniformed connoisseur (kunstkenner). Concerning the last mentioned, see Miedema, pp. 376, 377, 394, and Pigler 1954, De Jongh, 1971, pp. 161-65.
17. Snoep, 1975, pp. 36, 72, and fig. 35 (see also the entry of Elizabeth van de Pfalz into Amsterdam, 1613).
18. Van Mander, 1604, *Wtlegghingh*, fol. 23. Van Mander, *Grondt*, I, fol. 6.
19. This is the interpretation offered by Van Mander, *Wtlegghingh*, fol. 88 and 88v, and also, for example, by P.C. Hooft, "Op 't verziensel van Venus en Adonis," in *Alle de gedrukte Werken*, Amsterdam, 1972 (W. Hellinga and P. Tuynman ed.), pp. 329, 330. Various other sources offer just the opposite interpretations: Venus symbolizes lust and Adonis virtue. For both interpretations, however, it is essential that Adonis goes hunting despite Venus' warning. J. van Tatenhove (Leyden) is preparing a publication on the various interpretations of this story.
A related interpretation is also seen in the case of the story of Mercury and Argus (Argus stands for human rationality, which is tempted by pleasures of the senses and consequently destroyed); Van Mander, *Wtlegghingh*, fol. 9.
20. Van Mander, 1604, *Wtlegghingh*, fol. 115v.
21. D.V. Coornheert, *Zedekunst dat is wellevenskunst* (1568), ed. Becker, Leiden, 1942, p. 31; Jacob Cats, "Houwelick . . .," in *Alle de Wercken*, Amsterdam, 1665, p. 162; Vondel: J.F.M. Sterck et al., ed., 1939, vol. 4, p. 598; Hoogstraten 1678, p. 85; Lairese, 1707, p. 12; Houbraken, 1718-21, II, pp. 119-121.
Concerning this, see De Jongh, 1968/9, pp. 65-67.
22. For representations of this theme, see Bardon, 1960.
23. De Keyser's painting was painted for the "Desolate Boedelkamer" of the town hall in Amsterdam. The meaning there is quite clear. Just as Odysseus, who was bereft of all possession, was received by Nausica, the bankrupt citizen can rely on the city fathers. The picture by Sandrart hung as a chimneypiece in the house of Huydecoper (now in Amsterdam, the Rijksmuseum). The theme probably served generally as a model of hospitality.
24. Concerning this, see Tümpel, 1974, p. 143.
25. The Prometheus painting was designed as a pendant to a representation of Adam and Eve. The Marsyas also probably formed an ensemble with these two. All three present examples (two mythological and one biblical) are of people who have transgressed a divine commandment and as a result are severely punished. See: Slatkes, 1969, pp. 80-81, and 124-25.

Slatkes suggests that

26. For example, the scenes of Diana painted for the Court, the goddess of the hunt (see note 30), and a courtly theme which is connected with the hunt like Meleager and Atalanta (it was already painted several times by Rubens and Jordaens before Honthorst and afterwards was treated very regularly in the northern Netherlands; seldom treated outside the Netherlands).

27. Several of Poelenburgh's followers are Dirk van der Lisse, Daniel Vertangen, Abraham van Cuylenburgh, Johan van Haensbergen. Before the Poelenburgh School, landscape painters who still worked more or less in the sixteenth-century Flemish tradition (Gillis van Coninxloo, David Vinckboons, Roelant Savery, Alexander Keirincx) often populated their landscapes with tiny mythological scenes depicting subjects like Cephalus and Procris, Latona and the Lycian Peasants (2), Venus and Adonis, and, in the case of Savery, a great number of representations of Orpheus and the animals.

28. These themes were initially popularized in the North by the early seventeenth-century Flemish artists Hendrik van Balen and Hendrik de Clerck.

29. The well-known illustrations of the *Metamorphoses* by the Italian Antonio Tempesta (a series of 150, Bartsch XVII, 638-787 [probably published for the first time in 1606 by Pieter de Jode in Amsterdam], a series of 10, Bartsch XVII, 812-821, and several loose prints) seem at times to have had some influence on the forms of certain themes. The prints in question here are: Bartsch XVII, 662, 815, 822, 823.

30. See, among others, Vliegthart, 1972.

31. Concerning Honselersdijk, see Snoep, 1969, pp. 287-289. Amalia van Solms also had herself portrayed at various times as Diana. This taste at the Court for Diana is probably connected with the cult of Diana which existed in the French Court in the sixteenth century. Concerning these, see among others, Bardon, 1963.

32. In the last mentioned case, see, for example, Rubens' *Departure of Adonis*, now in Düsseldorf (of which several versions exist) and his *Jupiter and Callisto* now in Kassel.

33. Vertumnus and Pomona were already depicted entirely clothed in the print by Antonio Tempesta (see note 28, Bartsch XVII, 779), the composition of which was often taken up by later artists.

34. Lairese, 1707, L. p. 45.

35. See, among others: Russell, 1977 (Ganymede); Kahr, 1978 (Danae); Stechow, 1940/41 (Philemon and Baucis).

36. A good example of a mythological theme which when represented by Dutch artists often carried political implications is the fable of Perseus Freeing Andromeda. See, among others, Sabbe, 1972, and Snoep, 1975, pp. 65-67.