

Doemen 1567 streef, wāst schāde dat den Leeu so lang slapende bleef. Sile Hon guerrier neust dormy si profou, Jan 70. moins 3. libre seroit son fond.



De Nederlantsche macht.

- 1. Den Leeu die slaecht
- 2. Den Wouff die ghaecht
- 3. Den Voch die strect
- 4. Den Hond die bart
- 5. Den Esel die last
- 6. Het Slaapen quese.

Le lion sommeille,  
Le Loup beant veille,  
Le sauc Renard s'appe,  
Le chien hurle et jappe,  
L'âne a charge plévine,  
L'agneau est en hévine.

Der Leeu slaecht ertz, om wāchen  
Der Wouff sperret auff sijne rāchen  
Der Vochs raubi al wat ē wil  
Der Hond bloeft om' is nicht stil  
Der Esel last ertz last uder al  
Das Schāffleijn is in großer quel.

Pl. 1570 en achtē, Ontwaecht den Leeu, en hij kenden si Wolfs gheslachte. + Le, belgique Lyon en sursaut se suctia, Jan, 00 et 18 quand le loup le veilla.



De Kattē.  
Hōla wouff, schātij sulcken brocken slur v crughe.  
Doo ert hōoch tijt dat gij nu eens ruijnt v maghe.  
Den vōsch.  
Gij wōnt te vrel vōm sēdōs spijz vōrāvōden  
Dōtrom moettijt, met schāmden nu dōer dōt spōuden.  
Den Wouff  
Sdōncht d schālcēken vōsch en gij gheuejst kate,  
Hād ick niet gesoēckē, gij en hād dit oēch dātē.

Le Chat.  
Hōla loup affōm, qui engraisst ta gorge  
De noz, mēlōur sōpōt, tōmpt est de vōlōte gorge.  
Le Renard.  
Tu vōulōis dōvōr par tōp la chāt hōmme,  
Parquōz en dōtōmōmōr ta quēulle lā rēdōmme.  
Le Wouff  
Tāz tōy d sōm Renard, et tōy Chāt mōlōur,  
Sōis il mēn d'spōir vōs pōrōtē, fōy et cōur.

De Kattē.  
Ghōdēre wouff dōnch au solōte brocken vōvōlōtē zōdōr  
Dō ert zōcht dōt tēz, dōm maghe cōmōmōr rēgnōtē gij.  
Der fūsch.  
Du wōlōst zō rōm dōs lōvōdē spōijz vōrōvōden.  
Dōrāvōden mōstus es mē schāmden dōtōmōr dōtōmōr.  
Der Wouff.  
Sdōncht gij d lōvōr fūsch vōm dōtōmōr dōtōmōr dōtōmōr  
Hēt id mēn gāstōndēn v hēt dōtōmōr dōtōmōr dōtōmōr.



# The World Upside Down as a Political Motif

• WIM VROOM •

The years between 1566 and 1585 were some of the most eventful in the history of the city of Antwerp. The Iconoclasm in 1566, the *Wonderjaar*, can be regarded as the beginning of the Revolt against Spanish rule; the conquest of the city by Alessandro Farnese in 1585 delivered Antwerp into Spanish hands once and for all and signalled the end of its participation in the Revolt. In the intervening years, the Revolt was fought with intense physical violence of all kinds, but equally by means of propaganda – mainly on the rebels' side. This propaganda war was waged with words – hundreds of pamphlets were published – but imagery, too, was employed in the struggle.<sup>1</sup> The principal medium was the print, and the most important centre of print production was Antwerp.<sup>2</sup> Most of these prints are politically-slanted allegories: almost always comprising an image and explanatory text. Allegories are usually generalizing in nature and so can be linked to an overall political situation, but by no means always to a specific event. Even the political standpoint, for or against Spain, which modern historians essentially take for granted, is not as clear-cut as it seems. This article concentrates on one example of this problem of interpretation. In 1578 and 1579 the Wierix family,

Fig. 1

JAN WIERIX  
AFTER WILLEM  
VAN HAECHT,  
*The Sleeping Lion*,  
1577.  
Engraving,  
202 x 314 mm.  
Rijksmuseum,  
Amsterdam (inv. no.  
RP-P-08-79.019).

Fig. 2

JAN WIERIX  
AFTER WILLEM  
VAN HAECHT,  
*The Greedy Wolf*,  
1578.  
Engraving,  
202 x 314 mm.  
Atlas van Stolk,  
Rotterdam.

renowned printmakers, printed four prints, numbered 1 to 4 in a later edition.<sup>3</sup> The designer was the painter Marten van Cleve and the inventor and publisher was Willem de Haecht, who thus had overall responsibility for the publication. Two of them are animal allegories – *The Sleeping Lion* (*De slapende leeu*) (fig. 1) and *The Greedy Wolf* (*Den ghierighen wolf*) (fig. 2). Although these prints are numbered 2 and 3, they were probably published first, since they are dated 1578. In the year 1567, as the print shows, the Lion (the Netherlands) is asleep; in 1578 the greedy Wolf (the Spanish oppressor), which gorged itself on the Lion, has to vomit; the Lion has awoken.<sup>4</sup>

The two other prints, numbered 1 and 4, are in the form of a rebus.<sup>5</sup> *The World Upside Down* (*De verkeerde Weerelt*) (no. 1) deserves close analysis as it occupies a central place in this argument (fig. 3). The text, in Dutch, French and German, explains the rebus almost entirely: 'Hypocrisy and Tyranny hold the world upside down/ Fidelity and Love sleep, so Time teaches us'.<sup>6</sup> The print depicts the text, as is usual in a rebus, in a combination of traditional personifications with homonyms in the form of pictograms that represent letters or words. On the extreme left is the personification of Hypocrisy or Dissimulation, portrayed





as a semi-naked old woman with drooping breasts, snakes for hair and a sword at her waist, holding a scourge entwined with snakes in one hand and a rosary in the other. Beside her is the upside down globe with the year '1579', (the reversed '6' is an obvious mistake by the printmaker), which the helmeted Tyranny holds bound with ropes; he wears a helmet and holds a sword that is piercing a heart. The two clasped hands are a symbol of Fidelity. The duck (eend) simply means 'and' (ende). Love sleeps with her three children. The turf (graszode) is 'so' (soo). The semicircular ship's housing on which Time sits – a 'den' – is a homonym for the definite article 'den'. And Time, with the usual attributes of a scythe, an hourglass and wings, points to a book with 'us' (Ous) and a ladder (leer) with a 't', giving 'teaches us' (ons leert). The plinth contains the names of Marten van Cleve, the draughtsman, and W. Haecht, the deviser and publisher, and a dial which begins at 1566 and ends at 1583, with the hand – a dagger

with a skull – pointing to the year 1579, the date of the print. The background shows a country at war, with cities bombarding one another.<sup>7</sup> The print numbered 4, *Blind Shepherds (Blinde Herders)*, likewise dated 1579, is also a rebus. The text reads, 'Behold blind shepherds, who lack God's commandments / As through their folly wolves shear the sheep' (fig. 4).<sup>8</sup>

The four prints, two dating from 1578 and two from 1579, were later numbered and sold as a single set in Antwerp.<sup>9</sup> The general meaning is clear: the country is being exploited; it is in crisis, plagued by violence, and can only regain peace and mutual love by observing God's commandments. The set has an unmistakable – if moderate – anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic connotation.

The environment in which these prints were made is clear: it was that of the Antwerp chambers of rhetoric. The chamber known as *De Violieren* was the most prominent; it had united with the Guild of St Luke as far back as 1480

Fig. 3

ANTOINE WIERIX  
AFTER WILLEM  
VAN HAECHT,  
*The World Upside  
Down*, 1579.  
Engraving,  
207 x 322 mm.  
Rijksmuseum,  
Amsterdam (inv. no.  
RP-P-OB-76.885).









entirely different political meaning, had been incorporated five years previously in a painted landscape – unsigned, but without doubt by Jacob Grimmer (1525/26-after 1592) (fig. 5).<sup>15</sup> The same rebus is painted in the foreground in a different form from that in the print, but possibly still by Marten van Cleve, who we know provided the figures for Grimmer on occasion (fig. 6).<sup>16</sup> The content of the rebus is much like that of the print, but there are a number of important differences. The dial, for example, begins in 1565 (not in 1566) and runs through to 1575 (not 1585), while the dagger points to 1574 (not 1579). The painting therefore has to be dated to 1574. Furthermore the rosary in the hand of Hypocrisy – an anti-Catholic symbol – is replaced by an apple of discord, which changes the personification to that of Envy or *Invidia*.<sup>17</sup> Of less importance is the fact that ‘Ons leert’ is

not depicted with the ‘ladder – leer’ play on words, but by the alphabet.

Jacob Grimmer is known as an innovator of landscape art, something demonstrated in this painting by the choice of a slightly elevated vantage point, while large trees, painted in great detail, act as a repoussoir. Curving paths in lighter or darker brown, green and yellowy pink shades lend depth to the hilly landscape, which runs into a river on the left. The rebus forms part of the landscape and is included in it. Hypocrisy enters the scene from behind a hill, but the symbolism is unrelated to what is taking place in the landscape. There we see the horrors of war: this puts the painting into a specific historical context. On the far right a woman and a child beg for mercy for the man who is being hanged on a tree by a helmeted soldier; two likewise helmeted soldiers on horseback and a third look on. Another

Fig. 5  
JACOB GRIMMER,  
*The World Upside  
Down, An Allegory  
on the Raids of  
Sea Beggars on the  
Flemish Coasts*, 1574.  
Oil on panel,  
94.5 x 123.8 mm.  
Private collection,  
photo: Thijs Quispel.



victim is already hanging from a tree on the left of the scene. Confusion and violence reign in the background. Farmhouses are being plundered on the right. In the centre people loot a village church and haul the bell from the tower, probably with the intention of melting it down for guns.<sup>18</sup> Further to the left the priest in ceremonial garb is captured by soldiers and taken, with the parish banners, to a waiting boat; others carry the gold reliquary. Sacks of looted goods lie ready for transport. On the river there is a sailing boat, probably a fishing craft, carrying refugees who are being fired upon by soldiers from another boat. A village is also being besieged on the other bank of the river. In the distance lies a walled town.

The scene of soldiers plundering and murdering – a far from unfamiliar subject in the late sixteenth century – was certainly not painted from life, but without doubt it refers to military operations that took place to the north and east of Antwerp with great frequency.<sup>19</sup> There were dozens of attacks ashore by marauding bands of Sea Beggars from Vlissingen – in rebel hands since 1572 – on villages and small towns on the coasts of Zeeland and Northwest Flanders in the period between 1572 and 1576; two comprehensive studies chart these raids in detail.<sup>20</sup> The Sea Beggars, sometimes numbering as

many as three hundred men, terrorized the populations of the coastal villages. They set fire to churches, took the priests hostage and stole anything that took their fancy: money, goods and livestock. On occasion the priest was murdered. There has been much speculation about the aim of these forays. It is possible that the Sea Beggars' organized looting in the sea polder areas was an attempt to conquer Zeeland and perhaps Flanders, too, once and for all. When their efforts failed they called a halt to their activities at the end of 1576: William of Orange started negotiations that led to the Pacification of Ghent in October 1576.

The reports and rumours about these aggressive raids also reached Antwerp and were certainly known about in the circle of the Violiers. The famous chronicle about the troubles in the city between 1565 and 1574 written by Godevaert van Haecht (1546-89), Willem van Haecht's nephew and, like him, a Lutheran,<sup>21</sup> mentions them several times. One example is the raid on Eeklo in East Flanders at the end of June. 'Around three hundred soldiers from Zeeland, known as Beggars, arrived in the village of Eeklo in Flanders, where they looted the church of its silverware and took the priest, the mayor and the bailiff in captivity to their ships, as a result of which as many as three hundred people were

Fig. 6  
Detail from fig. 5.





driven from the village, because they did not want to submit to the papacy'.<sup>22</sup>

The painter Jacob Grimmer moved in the same circles in Antwerp as Willem van Haecht, the deviser of the rebus.<sup>23</sup> He became a member of De Violieren in 1546, and a year later a member of the Guild of St Luke. Van Mander praised him as a landscape painter, but he was also 'devoted to rhetoric and a very good character in the drama'.<sup>24</sup> Grimmer was a Lutheran too. Evidently he was familiar with Van Haecht's invention of the *World Upside Down* rebus, which may have already been put into a drawing by Martin van Cleve in 1574, but would only see the light as a print five years later, with some small but significant changes. The painting of 1574, with its realistic depiction of raids by Calvinist Sea Beggars in combination with the allegorical warning against the horrific violence, was directed not so much against Calvinism, but against the merciless activities of the Sea Beggars. Five years later in a very different political environment, it was possible to use the same rebus, with only minor changes, in the propaganda war against the Spanish tyranny. The rebus had a generally pacific intent, which could be used in various political situations.<sup>25</sup> This was in line with the Lutheran philosophy of life. Further research may show whether other allegorical prints, now automatically regarded as anti-Spanish, might be interpreted differently.

## NOTES

- \* For Wouter, who conceived the exhibition *Art before the Iconoclasm*, this contribution on the art that followed it.
- 1 See cat. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, *Willem van Oranje, om vrijheid van geweten*, Amsterdam 1984, on the use of imagery in broad terms for William of Orange and the question of the Revolt.
  - 2 Daniel R. Horst, *De opstand in zwart-wit; propagandaprenten uit de Nederlandse Opstand (1566-1584)*, Zutphen 2003.
  - 3 Marie Mauquoy-Hendrickx, *Les estampes des Wierix, conservées au Cabinet des estampes de la Bibliothèque Royale Albert Ier, catalogue raisonné, deuxième partie*, Brussels 1979, pp. 301-02; Hollstein's *Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts 1450-1700*, vol. 67, *The Wierix Family*, part ix, Rotterdam 2004, pp. 47-51.
  - 4 For anti-Spanish animal symbolism see Horst op. cit. (note 2), figs 88-91, p. 224, and note 11.
  - 5 On rhetoricians and rebuses see C.P. Burgers 'De rebus van onze oude rederijkers' in *Het Boek*. 14, 1925, pp. 145-90.
  - 6 'Gheveijstheijt, met Tijran(n)ij, hout de weerelt verkeert, / Trouw, ende Liefde slaept, soo den Tijt, ons leert.'
  - 7 The print is mentioned in passing and interpreted as a complaint against Spanish tyranny in C.W.M. Hazelzet-van der Linden, *Verkeerde werelden, exempla contraria in de Nederlandse beeldende kunst*, Amsterdam (Vrije Universiteit thesis) 2004, pp. 43 and 298.
  - 8 'Schout blinde herders, die Godts wet ontbeiren / Want deur haer sotheijt wolven de schaepen scheren.'
  - 9 Horst op. cit. (note 2) pp. 272-80, 358-59 and the literature cited there.
  - 10 For the Antwerp chambers of rhetoric in the sixteenth century see Anne-Laure van Bruaene, *Om beters wille. Rederijkerskamers en de stedelijke cultuur in de Zuidelijke*



- Nederlanden (1400-1650), Amsterdam 2008, pp. 92, 109 and 130-42; Hubert Meeus, 'Antwerpse rederijkers op zoek naar een nieuwe rol', and Guido Marnef, 'Inleiding', both in: Bart Ramakers, *Confirmisten en rebellen; rederijkerscultuur in de Nederlanden (1400-1650)*, Amsterdam 2003, pp. 126-38 and pp. 174-88 respectively. On Antwerp in this period: Guido Marnef, *Antwerpen in de tijd van de reformatie; ondergronds protestantisme in een handelsmetropool 1550-1577*, Antwerp & Amsterdam 1996, primarily pp. 56-60.
- 11 For Willem van Haecht and his family see J. van Roey, 'Het Antwerpse geslacht Van Haecht (Verhaecht); tafereelmakers, schilders, kunsthandelaars' in: *Miscellanea Jozef Duverger, Bijdragen tot de kunstgeschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 1, Ghent 1968, pp. 216-30, and *Nationaal biografisch woordenboek*, 1, Brussels 1964, cols. 589-91.
  - 12 'Thantwerpen aen s Janspoort.' Horst, op. cit. (note 2), p. 284. The thirteenth-century St Janspoort stood on the south side of the city.
  - 13 On Willem van Haecht as an author of image programmes, see Holm Bevers, 'Willem van Haecht composuit; zu einem Aspekt der Antwerpener Stichproduktion un 1570' in: *Die Malerei Antwerpens; Gattungen, Meister, Wirkungen. Studien zur flämischen Kunst des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts. Internationales Kolloquium Wien 1993*, Vienna 1993, pp. 178-85 and fig. 6. Also Yvonne Bleyerveld, 'Van de tiran verlost; het boekje *Tyrannorum praemia. Den loon der tyrannen* van Willem van Haecht (1578)' in: *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 52 (2001), Zwolle 2001, pp. 126-53; this booklet is unmistakably anti-Spanish propaganda; Van Haecht can be regarded as having been personally involved with the Dutch struggle for freedom; he also wrote a book about the relief of Leiden.
  - 14 In 1585 the population of Antwerp was approximately 55-60% Catholic, approximately 25-30% Calvinist, approximately 15% Lutheran and approximately 2% Anabaptist, see J. Andriessen, 'De katholieken te Antwerpen 1577-85' in: *Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis*, 70 (1987), p. 61.
  - 15 Oil on panel, 94.5 x 123.8 cm; private collection, Amsterdam; sale Christie's Amsterdam, 6 May 1996, lot no. 100, as 'An allegory and illustration of the effects of Spanish policy in the Netherlands, 1565-1575'. See also Reine de Bertier de Sauvigny, *Jacob et Abel Grimmer, catalogue raisonné*, Brussels 1991, pp. 61 and 63, no. xv and pl. 6. Mentioned in David Kunzle, *From Criminal to Courtier; the Soldier in Netherlandish Art 1550-1672*, Leiden 2002, p. 183.
  - 16 On Martin van Cleve: *Saur allgemeines Künstlerlexikon*, 19, Munich & Leipzig 1998, p. 552, no. 8 (on the collaboration with Jacob Grimmer).
  - 17 Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia of Uytbeeldinghe des verstands*, Soest 1971 (repr. ed. 1644), pp. 164-65 (Geveinsthey in de slincker hand een Pater noster) and pp. 350-51 (Invidia Nijdigheyt). It is not certain whether the round fruit is an apple. If it is a pomegranate this woman may represent Hypocrisy; however, the anti-Catholic connotation has been dropped, Horst op. cit. (note 2), pp. 202 and 207.
  - 18 Rob van Roosbroeck (ed.), *De kroniek van Godevaert van Haecht, over de troebelen van 1565 tot 1574 te Antwerpen en elders*, Antwerp 1929, II, p. 201 (25 July 1572): 'verlieten sy (de Geuzen) seer subtylelyck Aerdenborch nemende allen den roof met haer oock de clocken uyt den toren om gescut af te gieten'.
  - 19 Kunzle op. cit. (note 13), pp. 167-86: 'massacre and plunder in late sixteenth-century landscape'.
  - 20 A.M.J. de Kraker, 'De woelingen der watergeuzen in het Vlaamse kustgebied; een onderzoek naar hun acties in de Vier Ambachten en de gevolgen daarvan tussen 1572 en 1576', in: *Jaarboek Oudheidkundige Kring 'De Vier Ambachten te Hulst'*, 1980-81, pp. 65-186 and A.R. Bauwens 'De tweede opstand; geuzenlandingen en soldatenfoulen in het kustgebied van Noord-west Vlaanderen 1572-76' in: *Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van West-Zeeuws-Vlaanderen*, 18 (1989), pp. 5-107.
  - 21 Van Roey op. cit. (note 9), pp. 220-23; he worked with his uncle Willem and the Wierixes.
  - 22 'Syn omtrent 300 soldaten uyt Zeeland, die men Guesen noempde gecomen in 't dorpe van Eekeloo in Vlaenderen, daer sy de kercke beroofden van 't silverwerck en nemen den paepe, den meyer en den baeliu gevangen me na haer scepen, doer welke wel 300 menschen uyt dien dorpe verdreven waeren, omdat se 't pausdom niet en wilden obedieren.' See Roosbroeck op. cit. (note 16), p. 196, and Van Roey op. cit. (note 9), p. 218 about his relationship with Willem van Haecht.
  - 23 For Grimmer, see *The Dictionary of Art*, 13, New York 1996, p. 664; *Saur allgemeines Künstlerlexikon*, 62, Munich-Leipzig 2009, pp. 292-4.
  - 24 '...de Rhetorica toegedaen en een seer goede personagie in 't spelem.' Hessel Miedema (ed.), *Karel van Mander; the Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters, from the First Edition of the Schilder-boeck (1603-1604)*, 1, Doornspijk, 1994, p. 284.
  - 25 Horst op. cit. (note 2), pp. 305-06.