

Edited by Christine Göttler and Mia M. Mochizuki

# Landscape and Earth in Early Modernity

## Picturing Unruly Nature



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# Landscape and Earth in Early Modernity

# Visual and Material Culture, 1300-1700

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# Acknowledgments

*Landscape and Earth in Early Modernity: Picturing Unruly Nature*, like many books, stemmed from multiple beginnings. This volume emerged from the editors' shared interest in the early modern landscape and its potential to spur the imagination of alternative worlds. While shaped by our own explorations of the earth's changeable nature, the project was also driven by the topical question of how to engage with the early modern landscape in art history today, at a moment when human activity has irreversibly transformed our planet. Over the course of many conversations, we came to choose the category of the "unruly" to open up and distill new ways to approach a protean subject that has tended to resist uniform interpretation.

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# Landscape, Mutability, and the Unruly Earth: An Introduction

Christine Göttler<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

Taking unruliness as a central category, this introduction explores a fresh approach to early modern art centering on landscape, which is here defined in terms of modes of engagement with ever-changing nature and the mutable body of the earth. During the early modern period, unruliness was viewed as the defining condition of the natural elemental world. Proceeding from three interrelated case studies focusing on processes of extraction and material transformation, the reshaping of land through labor, religion, and art, and the overthrow of nature through God's intervention, the early modern landscape will be presented as a mediating concept between shifting notions of nature and earth.

**Keywords:** earth; landscape; nature; unruliness; overthrow; reform

“Art Show as Unruly Organism”: this was the tagline used by *New York Times* art critic Roberta Smith for her review of the Kassel documenta (13), 2012. It was accompanied by a picture of the *Doing Nothing Garden* created by Beijing artist Song Dong, set up in front of the baroque Orangery along the central axis of Karlsruhe Park, but separated from its well-kept lawn by a ring of orange rubber tubing.<sup>2</sup> Artists participating in the 2012 documenta were asked to engage with the sites on which their works would

<sup>1</sup> The ideas presented in this introduction form part of the author's ongoing work on the early modern imaginaries of landscape and nature. Special thanks go to my co-editor Mia Mochizuki for her help in bringing together the chapters of this book and to Armin Kunz for sharing ideas on the early modern landscape. A generous fellowship at the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel made it possible to finalize this essay in the best possible surroundings. It is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Rosa.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, “Art Show as Unruly Organism.” Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, the documenta's artistic director in 2012, stressed in her dedicatory statement the inclusive vision of the show and its attention to “the shapes and practices of knowing of all the animate and inanimate makers of the world”: Christov-Bakargiev, “Preface.” The title's inverted capitalization as “dOCUMENTA (13)” was meant to underscore the show's aim of reversing traditional hierarchies in the making of art.



Fig. 0.1: Song Dong, *Doing Nothing Garden*, 2010–2012. Daily-life rubbish and building rubbish with plants and neon signs, 7 × 32.5 × 23.5 m, Kassel, dOCUMENTA (13) (shown shortly before the opening of the exhibition). Image: © Song Dong, courtesy of Pace Gallery.

be displayed. The Orangery, built for Landgrave Karl of Hesse-Kassel (1654–1730) as a summer residence and a house for overwintering plants, was originally designed as the focal point of the newly laid-out French formal garden. Celebrated at the time for its technological innovations, it was later transformed into a landscape garden, in other words, a type of garden that attempted to conceal human labor and intervention.<sup>3</sup>

Song Dong's *Doing Nothing Garden* functioned as a heterotopic space, a garden within another garden, but one that was left to grow unruly and of its own accord (Fig. 0.1).<sup>4</sup> The artist began the project in 2010 by sowing seeds of roughly eighty

3 Becker, "Die Geschichte der Karlsaue," esp. 23–33; Von Buttlar, "Vom Karlsberg zur Wilhelmshöhe."

4 dOCUMENTA (13), vol. 2, *The Logbook*, 194; vol. 3, *The Guidebook*, 306–7, no. 165. Badagliaccia, "Doing and Nothing"; Frohne, "Doing Nothing," 55–57; Jansen, "The Art of Doing Nothing in Contemporary China"; Pickartz, "Der Tanz war sehr frenetisch...," 195, 285–86; Wang, *Song Dong*, 228–29. Both Badagliaccia and Jansen emphasize the indebtedness of Song Dong's art to philosophical Daoism or Chan Buddhism. See also: Guest, "The Getting of Wisdom." On the impact of Daoism on contemporary art in China: Liu Weijian, "The Dao in Modern Chinese Art." On Song Dong's *Doing Nothing Garden* as an example of art works using plant growth: Corder, "Plant Growth as Transient or Durational Material," 215–16; Wagner, "In solchen Zeiten wie diesen," 120.

different local plant species on piles of municipal waste, shaped into an undulating row of mounds. By the time the documenta opened, the garden had grown to a height of roughly 6 meters. Neon signs of Chinese characters, placed along the curve of the mound, made it into an emblematic structure with a maxim playing on the seemingly opposite notions of “doing” (*zuo* 做) and “not doing” (*bu zuo* 不做):

不做白不做 (*bu zuo bai bu zuo*), 做了当没做 (*zuo le dang mei zuo*), 白做也得做 (*bai zuo ye dei zuo*)

Visitors unable to read Chinese had to consult the catalog to choose from a range of English translations produced by machine translation services and Song Dong's friends. For example, Philip Tinari, the then newly appointed director of Beijing's UCCA Center for Contemporary Art, translated the aphorism as follows:

That which goes undone goes undone in vain, that which is done is done still in vain, that done in vain must still be done.<sup>5</sup>

Daoist paradoxical thought was expressed here in a medium that stood for urban modernity, and interpretative openness was given material form as continuous growth. In the catalog, Song Dong noted that “this ‘do’ could change to any verb,” thus emphasizing the verb's ability to continually generate new meanings; at the end of the documenta the artist celebrated his garden's convertibility by recycling various parts for other art works.<sup>6</sup>

Song Dong's *Doing Nothing Garden* was one of three works created with plants in the immediate vicinity of the Orangery building.<sup>7</sup> Positioned next to it were Massimo Bartolini's *Untitled (Wave)*, a pool of water with a wave-making machine behind a frame of barley plants,<sup>8</sup> and Maria Loboda's *The Work Is Dedicated to an Emperor*, consisting of twenty cypress trees in pots placed across Karlsau Park in various strategic formations as if preparing for military action.<sup>9</sup> Also nearby, but in the hidden compost area of the park, was Pierre Huyghe's *Untitled*, an environment of decay and transformation, ironically subverting God's command when he sent

5 Song Dong, “Doing Nothing.” It is a pleasure to thank Lihong Liu for her help in translating the Chinese characters and for discussing the use of Daoist traditions in contemporary Chinese art.

6 Scazzosi, “Gardens and Landscapes as ‘Open-Ended Works.’”

7 Corder, “Plant Growth as Transient or Durational Material,” 214–15.

8 Massimo Bartolini, *Untitled (Wave)*, 1997–2012. Pool, water, electrical motor, barley, 500 × 950 × 130 cm. Kassel, DOCUMENTA (13). Pickartz, “Der Tanz war sehr frenetisch...,” 195, 285.

9 Maria Loboda, *The Work Is Dedicated to an Emperor*, 2012. Twenty cypress trees in pots, lined up according to various battlefield strategies. Kassel, DOCUMENTA (13). Pickartz, “Der Tanz war sehr frenetisch...,” 84, 195, 285–86.

Adam “out of the paradise of pleasure to till the earth from which he was taken” (Gen. 3:23).<sup>10</sup> The artificial ecosystems presented in Karlsruhe Park at documenta (13), with their visions of utopian and dystopian futures, serve here as a reference point to introduce a collection of essays that engage with the ways in which the unruly nature of the premodern world was imagined, interpreted, pictured, and performed.

## Unruly Organisms

As Kenneth Olwig and others have observed, “land” in its premodern sense primarily refers to a place as a social entity, a community, country, and territory, and the suffix “-scape” with its variants in Germanic languages (English, German, Dutch, Frisian, and Danish) is related to processes of shaping and creating.<sup>11</sup> In Dutch usage, “landschap” made its entry into the vocabulary of art around 1600; it is used by Karel van Mander who, in his *Schilder-Boeck* of 1604, frequently mentions “landtschappen” as a possible specialization for (Netherlandish) artists.<sup>12</sup> Like “paesaggio” in Italian, and “paysage” in French, the Germanic variants “landscape,” “Landschaft,” and “landschap” could refer to land shaped by human activity or a representation of that shaped land.<sup>13</sup> This dual meaning also informs the chapters assembled in this book; landscape is explored as a site of artistic engagement with the earth and its ecologies at specific moments in history. Rather than a stable entity, landscape is considered as an intermediary or mediating space in the interplay between the natural and the artificial, the real and the imaginary, inside and outside.

From the late nineteenth century onward, the suffix “-scape” has been used to form an ever-increasing number of new words, including, within the broad realm of “landscape,” “cityscape,” “cloudscape,” “dreamscape,” “dunescape,” “hellscape,”

10 Pierre Huyghe, *Untilled*, 2011–2012. Alive entities and inanimate things, made and not made. Kassel, DOCUMENTA (13). Cheetham, *Landscape into Eco Art*, 46–47; Fehrenbach and Krüger, “Einleitung”; Von Hantelmann, “Thinking the Arrival”; Pickartz, “Der Tanz war sehr frenetisch...,” 84, 195, 285–86. See also Peter Schneemann’s contribution in this volume. Throughout the text I follow the Douay-Rheims translation of the Bible, based on the Latin Vulgate: *The Vulgate Bible*, 16–17: “Et emisit eum Dominus Deus de paradiso voluptatis ut operaretur terra de qua sumptus est.”

11 Olwig, “The ‘Actual Landscape,’ or Actual Landscapes?”; Olwig, *Landscape, Nature and the Body Politic*, 16–20; Olwig, “Performing on the Landscape”; Olwig, “Recovering the Substantive Nature of Landscape,” 630–53; Cosgrove, “Landscape and Landschaft.” See also: Liu Lihong, “Path, Place, and Pace,” 208–10.

12 Van Mander, *Schilder-Boeck*. The first documented use of “landschaft” in an artistic context is, however, by Dürer who, in the diary of his journey to the Netherlands (1520/21), referred to Joachim Patinir (ca. 1480–1524) as “den gut Landschaftsmaler” (“the good landscape painter”): Wood, *Albrecht Altdorfer and the Origins of Landscape*, 45.

13 Roger, *Court traité du paysage*, 22–26.



“lunarscape,” “mountainscape,” all of them listed in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as relating to a specific area or scene, or a pictorial representation of it. Art historian Jonathan Hay developed the concepts of “surfacescapes,” “imagescapes,” and “bodyscapes” to emphasize that aspects of materiality, figuration, and plasticity in art works are capable of mediating across different visual cultures.<sup>14</sup> Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai identifies “scapes” or landscapes as the chaotic flows (of people and processes, but also of images, imaginaries, and ideas) that characterize the modern world.<sup>15</sup> Tim Ingold, for his part, foregrounds the work of the imagination in human engagement with a changing environment and its strata of past and present, real and imagined history.<sup>16</sup> Ingold’s emphasis on the material aspects of imagining comes close to premodern views of the image-making capacity of the mind as intimately linked to memory and sensual perception.<sup>17</sup>

Over the last twenty or thirty years there has been a growing literature on the emergence of the “landscape” in sixteenth-century northern European art and the multiple links of this new visual imagery to “new” forms of knowledge such as geography, geology, cosmography, surveying, and mapping.<sup>18</sup> In the first and second editions of his *Landscape and Power* (1994 and 2002), W. J. T. Mitchell opened up new ways for rethinking representations of landscapes as relational and reflective artistic practices, rather than as pictorial genres.<sup>19</sup> *Landscape and Earth in Early Modernity: Picturing Unruly Nature* builds upon and further develops these approaches. But what sets this volume apart from the wealth of existing publications on the early modern landscape is its focus on “unruliness.”<sup>20</sup> In early modern thought, change and contingency were the defining conditions of the elemental world that underwent a perpetual cycle of growth and decay.<sup>21</sup> The “unruly” is used here as a central category

14 Hay, “The Mediating Work of Art,” 449–50; Hay, “The Worldly Eye,” 121–32.

15 Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy.” Appadurai uses the terms “ethnoscapes,” “technoscapes,” “financescapes,” and “mediascapes.” See also: Salazar, “Scapes.”

16 Ingold, “Introduction.”

17 The classic study is: Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*.

18 Relevant publications with a focus on the early modern period include: Busch, *Landschaftsmalerei*; Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*; DeLue and Elkins, *Landscape Theory*; Enenkel and Melion, *Landscape and the Visual Hermeneutics of Place*; Fehrenbach, “*Sfondare*: Landschaft als Krafraum”; Fleckner, Hua, and Tzeng, *Memorial Landscapes*; Heuer and Zorach, *Ecologies, Agents, Terrains*; Kasper et al., *Entdeckungen der Landschaft*; Kirchhoff and Trepl, *Vieldeutige Natur*; Mitchell, *Landscape and Power*; Schama, *Landscape and Memory*; Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*; Warnke, *Politische Landschaft*.

19 Mitchell, *Landscape and Power*.

20 For “unruliness” with regard to the materiality of scientific objects: Dacome, et al., “Unruly Objects: Material Entanglements in the Arts and Sciences.” For unruliness and the world of things: Appadurai, “The Thing Itself.”

21 The key reference from the thirteenth through the sixteenth centuries remained Aristotle’s *Meteorology*: Martin, *Renaissance Meteorology*, esp. 5–9 and 23–26; Dal Prete, “Climate and Meteorology”; Dal Prete, “The Ruins of the Earth.”

to historicize and reframe the early modern landscape in terms of its engagement with the earth's cavernous body, reinterpreted and restaged across different visual media, including paintings, prints, and performances. This introduction aims to open up a window into the dynamic semantics of the "unruly" and how this category shaped evolving views on landscape, earth, and nature up to current times. "Early modernity" is not primarily meant to designate a narrowly defined period in the history of western European art. Rather, it is offered as a heuristic phrase to express a sense of living in a transitional age, at the brink of something not quite graspable, a shared awareness associated with multiple moments in time.<sup>22</sup> The long history and current topicality of artists' engagement with nature is evidenced by Peter Schneemann's contribution to this volume.

In its early modern usages, the word "unruly" lent itself to multiple meanings, including severe weather conditions, the uncontrollable forces of water and fire, the wild growth of vegetation, the turbulence of war and revolution, the restlessness of animals, demons, and spirits, the uncontrolled imagination (viewed as both dangerous and ingenious), and the spirit of animated draftsmanship.<sup>23</sup> In this volume, Victoria Sancho Lobis connects the fleeting elements of nature (such as leaves, roots, patterns of clouds, and light) with the early modern artist's impulse to draw, while Steffen Zierholz explores randomly generated stone structures as a vehicle for the artist's imagination. Unruliness was, moreover, frequently associated with the materials used by artists and craftsmen, including the resistance and sturdiness of certain woods, the unpredictable chemical reactions of pigments and other compounds, and the risks involved in all metallurgical operations. Premodern biographies of artists are full of accounts of how they engaged with the unpredictability of the material world.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the irregular weather patterns caused by the Little Ice Age led to fears that the heavens themselves were out of joint.<sup>24</sup> The perils of the elemental world were not, however, exclusively manifest in weather extremes such as floods, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions, but also in slower and more subtle changes of the earth's composition, such as the shifting borders between water and land, indiscernible within the short span of a human life.<sup>25</sup> As shown by Mia Mochizuki, the sense of foreboding conveyed by some of

22 See, however, for an equally broad use of the term "Renaissance": Baker, "A Twenty-First-Century Renaissance"; Howard, "Approaching Renaissance Religions," 17–18; Starn, "A Postmodern Renaissance."

23 *OED Online*, s.v. "Unruly, adj. and n.," accessed October 8, 2021, <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/217421?redirectedFrom=unruly>.

24 Degroot, *The Frigid Golden Age*, 253–99; Goedde, "Bethlehem in the Snow and Holland on the Ice"; Pfister, "Weeping in the Snow."

25 See the contributions by Tina Asmussen (on metals), Mia Mochizuki (on the dynamics between land, water, and air), and Steffen Zierholz (on stones) in this volume. On disasters: Passannante, *Catastrophizing*.

the Dutch landscape paintings arose from this shared awareness of the mutability of all worldly things, the flows and commotions of the elements never at rest.

When Horst Bredekamp published his pioneering article “Die Erde als Lebewesen” (The Earth as Living Organism) in *Kritische Berichte* of 1981, scholarly interest in the early modern imaginary of the earth as an animated, living body was just beginning.<sup>26</sup> The turn in the humanities towards the global and the material increased scholarly sensitivity to questions of cultural difference in the ways humans have interacted with their local natural environments across time and space. Recent publications on early modern attempts to harmonize the Genesis account of creation with observations of the natural world have revealed the degree to which theories about the history of the earth were shaped by religious debates. Finally, the surge in interest in the history of alchemy has led to more nuanced views regarding the early modern understanding of natural and artificial environments, as well as the arts associated with the perfecting of nature, such as agriculture and mining, that frequently feature in paintings and prints.<sup>27</sup> Foregrounding the contingencies of natural and artificial processes, the following sections look at three case studies to probe an alternative framework for landscape, where reality and its potential for imaginings and representation intersect.

## Materials of the Earth

In the Judaeo-Christian framework, decay, death, and mutability entered the world with the original sin and the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Edmund Spenser (1522–1599), in his “Two Cantos of Mutabilitie” added posthumously to the 1609 edition of *The Faerie Queene*, introduces Mutability as the rebellious daughter of Mother Earth and one of the Titans.<sup>28</sup> Although in Spenser’s poem Mutability fails in her ambition to claim sovereignty over the heavens, her rule on earth, inherited from her mother, remains unchallenged. In contrast to the equally mutable goddess of Fortune, Mutability was rarely personified in medieval and early modern culture. Rather, mutability was understood as the invisible force affecting all matter and living beings below the moon, as evident in the cycle of

26 Bredekamp, “Die Erde als Lebewesen.”

27 On the interrelationship between religion and natural philosophy: Blair and von Greyerz, *Physico-theology*; Roling, *Physica sacra*. On the boundaries between the natural and the artificial: Bensaude-Vincent and Newman, “Introduction: The Artificial and the Natural.” On alchemy and the quest for the perfectibility of nature: Newman, *Promethean Ambitions*. See also: Keller, “Mining Tacitus.”

28 On Spenser’s “Mutabilitie”: Anderson, *Light and Death*, 32–51; Machosky, “The Personification of the Human Subject”; Miller, “Nature in the *Faerie Queene*.” On mutability in literature and the visual arts: Hallett, “Change, Fortune, and Time”; Lehtonen, *Fortuna, Money, and the Sublunar World*.



seasons, the alternation of day and night, the ebb and flow of the waters, and the generation and corruption of metals and stones.

The high demand for printed and painted series of the months and seasons speaks to an increasing interest in landscapes affected by weather and climate and shaped by agriculture over long periods of time.<sup>29</sup> Series of the seven planetary gods occasionally also include landscapes fashioned from within by the mineral treasures that Nature had hidden away from covetous human eyes. At the turn of the seventeenth century, mountainous landscapes with stone quarries and mines became a favorite subject in the visual arts, allowing painters and printmakers to display their own compositional skills in emulation of the creative powers of the earth.<sup>30</sup> A particularly noteworthy example is a series of the *Seven Planets*, drawn by Maarten de Vos (1532–1603) and engraved by Crispijn de Passe the Elder (1564–1637), which shows the planetary gods steering their airborne chariots over the regions under their influence, distinguished from each other by their resources and industries (Figs. 0.2–6).<sup>31</sup> The frontispiece, composed by the printer and publisher Theodorus Graminaeus (1530?–1594?), who also contributed the Latin inscriptions to the prints, contextualizes the series within the well-known concept of the “golden chain,” emphasizing the mutual interdependence of all parts of the world (Fig. 0.2).<sup>32</sup> The series’ title, “Plato’s golden chain, through which the first genera of things are bound together in mutual concord and harmonize with each other and the Archetype,” appears in the central oval space, bounded by the chain.<sup>33</sup> As further explained at the bottom of the page, the prints revolve around “the seven planets,” introduced as part of “Plato’s golden chain,” and the impact of “their actions upon (human) bodies, animals, plants, and metals.”<sup>34</sup> Alternately

29 Recent literature includes: Kaschek, *Weltzeit und Endzeit*; Melion, “Introduction: Landscape and the Visual Hermeneutics of Place.”

30 For landscapes with mining scenes: Asmussen, *The Cultural and Material Worlds of Mining*; Baumgartner, “Molte belle et varie fantasie”; Prosperetti, *Landscape and Philosophy*, 68–74; Silver, *Peasant Scenes and Landscapes*, 38–39; Tapié and Weemans, *Fables du paysage flamand*, 304–7, cat. nos. 90–92 (Michel Weemans). See also Tina Asmussen’s contribution in this volume.

31 Schuckman, *Maarten de Vos*, 14:273–75, cat. nos. 1373a–1379; Brakensiek, “Als Platons goldene Kette riss,” 93–96; Kaulbach and Schleier, *Der Welt Lauf*, 83–88, cat. no. 17.1–8 (Stephan Brakensiek); Veldman, “De macht van de planeten,” 21–32, 48–50.

32 Like De Passe, Graminaeus was at the time living in Cologne. For Graminaeus, see Fuchs, “Das Wüten des bösen Feindes.”

33 “Cathena aurea Platonis qua prima rerum genera in amplitudinem diffusa multuis [= mutuis] concentibus constringuntur et conveniunt adminicem [= ad invicem] et cum Arthetypo [= Archetypo].” Corrected spelling cited from Veldman, “De macht van de planeten.” Veldman offers the most detailed interpretation of Graminaeus’s title page; Crispijn de Passe was obviously not familiar with Latin and misspelled several words.

34 “Septem planetae inventi ex aurea catena Platonis, eorundemque actiones in corpora, animalia, herbas et metalla, excusi a Crispino Passaeno Zelando.” The title concludes with the widely cited saying that “the wise man will dominate the stars” (“Sapiens dominabitur astris”).

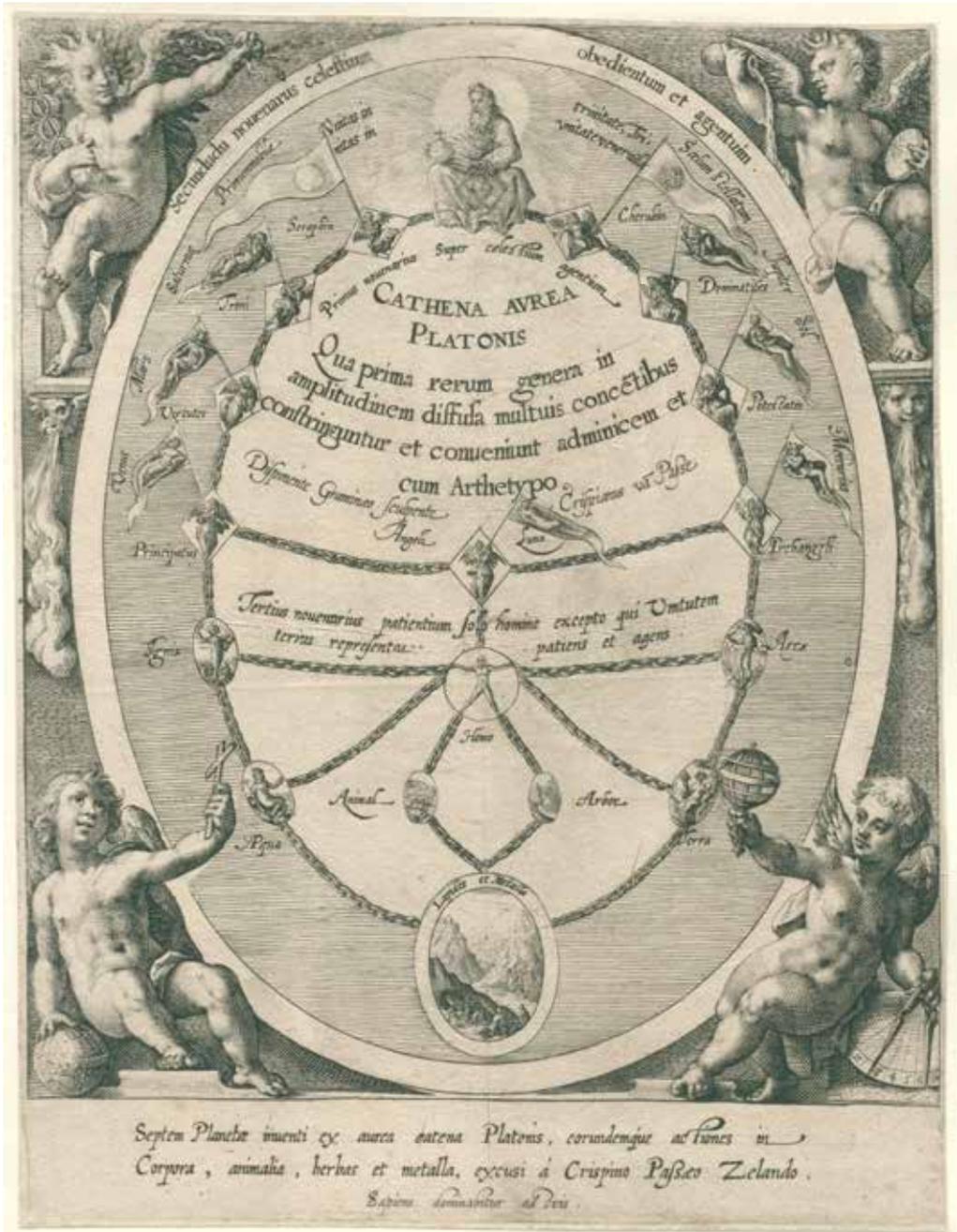


Fig. 0.2: Crispijn de Passe the Elder after Theodor Graminaeus, *Cathena aurea Platonis*, before 1593 (title page of the series *The Seven Planets*). Engraving, 24.3 × 18.6 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet, inv. no. RP-P-1981-186. Image: © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

ascribed to Homer or Plato, the “golden chain” was a recurring motif in philosophy, literature, and the visual arts throughout the medieval and early modern periods.<sup>35</sup> Cesare Ripa (ca. 1555–1622), in the first, unillustrated edition of his *Iconologia* of 1593, referred to it as “the junction and bond between human and divine things and the tie of humankind to its creator.”<sup>36</sup> The writer mainly responsible for passing on the motif, and Graminaeus’s possible source, was Macrobius (ca. 385/390–after 430) who, in his commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis*, describes the “golden chain” as a “connection of parts,” reaching “from the supreme God down to the last dregs of things.”<sup>37</sup>

In De Passe’s print, two connecting chains linked to medallions inscribed “Luna” and “Homo,” respectively, mark the boundaries between the superlunary and sublunary spheres, and the higher and lower elementary worlds, corresponding to the old Aristotelian tradition.<sup>38</sup> The large oval pendant linked to the “Homo” medallion and bearing the image of a mountainous landscape with people working in quarries and mines relates to the subject of the prints: like the worlds of animals and plants, the realm of “stones and metals” (“lapides et metalla”) is shaped by, but also shapes, human actions. With their planetary associations and correspondences, metals, located at the very bottom of the “golden chain” of creation, affect cultures, climates, arts, industries, bodies, and minds. The title page situates De Vos’s landscapes within the broader interest in the natural and religious history of the earth and the exploitation of its mineral resources.

In the series, Venus, the goddess of love, steers her chariot over a landscape that features the mining, smelting, and further processing of copper, the metal linked with her (Fig. 0.3). The festive scene in the foreground stresses the malleable metal’s peaceful uses such as for the manufacturing of trumpets and—not shown in the print but certainly recognized by De Passe—engraving.<sup>39</sup> Mars, the god of war associated with hard iron, is shown traveling over rocky land, where an army camp has been erected (Fig. 0.4). In the smithy in the foreground, weapons are being produced.

35 The allusion to Homer comes from *Iliad* 8.18–27, where Zeus boasts that while the other gods would not be able to pull him down from heaven to earth by means of a golden rope, he could easily drag all of them up to heaven. Plato refers to the passage in *Theaetetus* (153 C). See Auffarth, “Justice, the King, and the Gods,” 436–37. For later usages: Carroll, “Rembrandt’s *Aristotle*,” 48–50; Gampp, “*Magia Naturalis*.”

36 Ripa, *Iconologia*, 76: “la congiunzione, & il legamento delle cose humane con le divine, & un vincolo dell’humana generatione co’l sommo Fattore suo.” Carroll, “Rembrandt’s *Aristotle*,” 50.

37 Macrobius, *In somnium Scipionis* 1.14: “invenietur pressius intuenti a summo deo usque ad ultimam rerum faecem una mutuis se vinculis religans et nusquam interrupta connexio.” Cited from Carroll, “Rembrandt’s *Aristotle*,” 49. See also: Lyons, “Some Notes on the *Roman de la rose*”; Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 59.

38 At the time the Aristotelian division of the cosmos into a changeable sublunary and an unchanging supralunary or celestial realm had already come under attack. See Randles, *The Unmaking of the Medieval Christian Cosmos*.

39 According to the inscription “what is made of copper confers joy” (“quod ab aere factu gaudia confert”).



Fig. 0.3: Crispijn de Passe the Elder after Maarten de Vos, Landscape with the Chariot of Venus, ca. 1600 (from the series *The Seven Planets and the Catena aurea*). Engraving, 24.5 × 18.7 cm (sheet), London, The British Museum, inv. no. 1862,0712.331. Image: © The Trustees of the British Museum.



Fig. 0.4: Crispijn de Passe the Elder after Maarten de Vos, Landscape with the Chariot of Mars, before 1593 (from the series *The Seven Planets and the Catena aurea*). Engraving, 24.6 × 18.3 cm (sheet), Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet, inv. no. RP-P-1981-188. Image: © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Fig. 0.5: Crispijn de Passe the Elder after Maarten de Vos, *Landscape with the Chariot of Jupiter*, before 1593 (from the series *The Seven Planets and the Catena aurea*). Engraving, 23.7 × 18.1 cm (sheet), Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet, inv. no. RP-P-1981-190. Image: © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Fig. 0.6: Crispijn de Passe the Elder after Maarten de Vos, Landscape with the Chariot of Saturn, before 1593 (from the series *The Seven Planets and the Catena aurea*). Engraving, 23.5 x 18 cm (sheet), Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet, inv. no. RP-P-1981-187. Image: © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Mighty Jupiter, connected with “shiny” (“speciosa”) tin, flies over a coastal region with some spectacular ancient architecture (Fig. 0.5). In the foreground, several learned men are preoccupied with atlases, globes, and measuring instruments; in the background, a smoking furnace highlights tin’s utility for the production of everyday things. Unfriendly Saturn, finally, associated with toxic lead, moves over an inhospitable landscape permeated by fumes and swept by fire and floods (Fig. 0.6).<sup>40</sup> Some castaways from a shipwreck are trying to reach land. A scene of witchcraft is shown next to an idolatrous ceremony surrounding a feather-crowned king. In the foreground the mining of lead ore is paralleled with a cannibalistic meal, indicating that the location depicted must be identified with the New World. De Vos’s landscapes should be understood as portraits recording the changing faces of the earth in their different shapes, expressions, and moods. Hewn from mining rather than agriculture, they affect the lives of the communities residing within the confines of their influence.<sup>41</sup> Finally, the prints may also be viewed as ruminations about the ambiguity of metals and the metallurgical arts, associated with the Ovidian Iron Age.

An early seventeenth-century album from the library of an otherwise unknown collector by the name of Jean de Poligny sheds light on the extraordinary fascination exercised by these kinds of landscapes on their period viewers (Fig. 0.7). The album includes a world chronicle written in French, starting with the Creation and going up to 1521, and several hand-colored prints by the Netherlandish engravers Johannes Sadeler I (1550–1600), Raphael Sadeler I (1560–1632), Adriaen Collaert (ca. 1560–1618), and Philips Galle (1537–1612), that showcase the whole history of mankind, from Adam’s creation to mankind’s final hours and the destruction of the earth at the Last Judgment.<sup>42</sup> Many of these prints depict landscapes. In addition to several

40 Already Pliny the Elder, while writing on the medical uses of lead, commented on the toxicity of the metal’s fumes: *Natural History*, 9:246–49 (34.49.167).

41 For the concept: Reckwitz, “Affective Spaces.”

42 Bound in parchment, the album from the library of Jean de Poligny, now in the Rijksprentenkabinet, Amsterdam, includes a *Cronica cronicarum* from the creation of the world up until 1521, a map by Abraham Ortelius, and about fifty hand-colored prints from various series by Johannes Sadeler I, Raphael Sadeler I, Adriaen Collaert, and Philips Galle, such as *The Story of the First Men*, 1583 (Johannes Sadeler I after Maarten de Vos, Schuckman, *Maarten de Vos*, 14:14–15, cat. nos. 25–36); *Mankind before the Flood* and *Mankind Awaiting the Last Judgment*, 1581–1585 (Johannes Sadeler I after Dirck Barendsz., De Hoop Scheffer, *Aegidius Sadeler to Raphael Sadeler II*, 21:124, cat. nos. 264–65); *The Apostles’ Creed*, 1578–1579 (Johannes Sadeler I after Maarten de Vos, Schuckman, *Maarten de Vos*, 14:189–90, cat. nos. 871–82); *The Four Elements*, ca. 1582 (Adriaen Collaert after Maarten de Vos, Schuckman, *Maarten de Vos*, 14:270–71, cat. nos. 1349–52), *The Eight Planets*, 1585 (Johannes Sadeler I after Maarten de Vos, Schuckman, *Maarten de Vos*, 14:275–76, nos. 1380–87); *The Four Temperaments*, 1583 (Raphael Sadeler I after Maarten de Vos, Schuckman, *Maarten de Vos*, 14:293–94, cat. nos. 1482–85); *The Eight Wonders of the World*, 1572 (Philips Galle after Maarten van Heemskerck, Veldman, *Maarten van Heemskerck*, part 2, 192–197, cat. nos. 513–20). For a detailed description of the album, see Rijksstudio (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.433820>.



Fig. 0.7: Johannes Sadeler I after Maarten de Vos, *The Sun and the Moon and Their Influences on the Provinces, Regions, and Cities*, 1585 (from the series *Planetarum effectus et eorum in signis zodiaci*). Engravings, each ca. 23.5 × 24 cm, both cut within borders; hand-colored and glued onto a sheet of parchment (53.9 × 3.5 cm), Album Jean de Poligny, Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet, inv. no. RP-P-2005-214. Image: © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

series of the four elements and the four temperaments, there is also a series of the seven planets.<sup>43</sup> This, however, focuses not so much on the seven planets' influence on the metals, but rather on the ways in which they shaped "provinces, regions, and communities," a topic that, with the broad dissemination of Hippocrates's *Airs, Waters, Places*, was receiving growing attention.<sup>44</sup> In the series, Holland and Zeeland are listed among the water-dominated places under the influence of the moon.

The album originally contained at least a dozen more maps and also a hand-colored copy of the large-scale broadsheet *Ordo universi et humanarum scientiarum prima monumenta*, conceived by the physician and natural philosopher Andrea Bacci (1524–1600), who held the chair of botany at the university of Rome.<sup>45</sup> Bacci was the author of a seminal work on the thermal baths and curative waters in Rome and several other treatises on health including on the medicinal value of unicorn horn, the panacea theriac, and the natural history of Italian vines.<sup>46</sup> He must have used the *Ordo universi* as a pedagogical tool to explain to his courtly audience the various correspondences between the macrocosm, visualized as a set of concentric spheres with the earth at its center, and the microcosm, presented as a head resembling the spherical shape of the cosmos. While the original print by Natale Bonifacio (1537–1592) is extant in only one copy on vellum at the British Library, a number of later versions of this highly successful work still survive. The copy included in the Poligny album was engraved by Adriaen Huybrechts (died after 1614) and published by Gerard de Jode (1509–1591) in Antwerp in 1585 (Fig. 0.8).<sup>47</sup> If the engraving was indeed pasted on the first sheet of the album, as is most likely, it would have provided its owner with a guide to situate the natural world within a larger cosmological and religious framework and to help him understand the dynamics of his own life and its relationship to the history of God's creation of the entire universe. Diagrams such as Bacci's allowed early modern men and women to contemplate mutability

43 Johannes Sadeler I after Maarten de Vos, *The Seven Planets*, 1585. Schuckman, *Maarten de Vos*, 14:275–76, nos. 1380–87; Veldman, "De macht van de planeten," 32–37.

44 On the growing interest in the Hippocratic *Airs, Waters, Places* from the late sixteenth-century onwards: Siraisi, "Historiae, Natural History, Roman Antiquity," 330 (with further literature).

45 Natale Bonifacio after Andrea Bacci, *Ordo universi et humanarum scientiarum prima monumenta*, 1581, engraving on vellum, London, British Library, inv. no. BL, 1856.g.16.(4.). Saffrey, "L'homme-microcosme"; Berger, *The Art of Philosophy*, 20–21; Siegel, "Kosmos und Kopf," 117–22; Siegel, *Tabula*, 23–27.

46 Siraisi, "Historiae, Natural History, Roman Antiquity." Bacci's publications include: *De thermis* [...] *in quo agitur de universa aquarum natura* [...] *libri VII* (1571 and subsequent editions); *Discorso dell'alicorno* (1582); *Tabula de theriaca* (1582); and *De naturali vinorum historia libri VII* (1596 and subsequent editions). See also: Crespi, "Bacci, Andrea."

47 Leesberg, *The De Jode Dynasty*, part 3, 38–39, cat. no. 680; Saffrey, "L'homme-microcosme," 96–97. According to Leesberg, the engraving that once belonged to the Poligny album was auctioned at Libert, Paris, in 2004 (28 V 2004). Its present whereabouts are unknown. It is a pleasure to thank Huigen Leefflang, Curator of Prints, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, as well as Marjolein Leesberg, for providing further information on this fascinating album.





Fig. 0.8: Adriaen Huybrechts after Andrea Bacci, *Ordo universi et humanarum scientiarum prima monumenta*, 1585. Engraving, 60.3 × 42.7 cm, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, RES QB–201 (170, 1)–FT 4. Image: © BnF.

in nature as part of an all-encompassing cosmological machine linking micro- and macro-worlds with their different temporal and spatial dimensions.

## “Reforming” the Landscape

But where was the place of nature in these Netherlandish landscapes transformed through mining and agriculture? And how was nature imagined and portrayed at a time when the landscape, with its economic, but also spiritual potential, became a frequent theme in the visual arts? In the widely disseminated allegorical poem of the *Roman de la rose*, “Dame Nature” is introduced as a blacksmith hammering new creatures in her forge to replace those who had died.<sup>48</sup> The poem was begun by Guillaume de Lorris in the 1230s, but completed in a much expanded form by Jean de Meung in the 1270s, and it was in this version that the *Roman de la rose* became so widely known. Illustrations of the poem, circulated in both manuscript and print form, frequently picture the goddess as she lifts her hammer to forge new life, as exemplified by this humble woodcut in a printed edition published by Jean Croquet in Geneva around 1481 (Fig. 0.9). Interestingly, this copy of the Geneva edition, held at the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, was owned by the Parisian surgeon and book collecting enthusiast François Rasse des Neux (ca. 1525–1587) who left several handwritten comments in the margins of the text.<sup>49</sup> Rasse was known not only for his extensive collections of manuscripts and books, but also for his natural history cabinet, particularly his collection of petrifications, visited by the ceramicist and writer Bernard Palissy (1510–1589).<sup>50</sup> On the page with the picture of Nature as a craftswoman in her workshop, Rasse comments on her solicitousness to secure the conservation of life.<sup>51</sup> He also marked the verses praising alchemy as the only “true art” able to approximate the workings of nature, expressing, however, his doubts about the success of alchemical transmutation.<sup>52</sup>

48 De Lorris and de Meung, *Cy comme[n]ce le roma[n]t de la rose* (HAB, M: Lm 4° 3d), fol. 133r: “Comment nature la subtile | Forge tousiours ou filz ou fille | Affin que lumaine lygnye | Par son deffault ne faille mie.” McWebb, “Lady Nature in Word and Image,” 67–69; Modersohn, *Natura als Göttin im Mittelalter*, 73–160; Morton, *The “Roman de la rose” in Its Philosophical Context*, 51–61; Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, 90–137; Newman, *Promethean Ambitions*, 77–82.

49 De Lorris and de Meung, *Cy comme[n]ce le roma[n]t de la rose*: “De la libraire de Francois Rasse des Neux Chirurgien à Paris et Ordinaire du Roy. 1546.” On François Rasse des Neux: Davis, “Beyond the Market,” 83; Greengrass, “Desserrant les nœds”; Veyrin-Forrer, “Un collectionneur engagé.”

50 Greengrass, “Desserrant les nœds,” 65.

51 De Lorris and de Meung, *Cy comme[n]ce le roma[n]t de la rose*, fol. 133r, handwritten note by François Rasse: “Ici il commence à entrer en matiere discours comme la nature est soigneuse de la conservation de ce tout.”

52 De Lorris and de Meung, *Cy comme[n]ce le roma[n]t de la rose*, fol. 134v. The best translation and analysis of the verses related to alchemy is by Newman, *Promethean Ambitions*, 79–81. Rasse comments



Fig. 0.9: Nature in Her Workshop, in *Cy comme[n]ce le roma[n]t de la rose. Ou tout lart damours est enclose* (Geneva: Jean Croquet, ca. 1481), fol. 133r. Colored woodcut, 6.7 × 5.9 cm, with commentary by François Rasse des Neux, Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, call no. M: Lm 4° 3d. Image: © Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel.

Rasse's comments in his copy of the *Roman de la rose* reveal a familiarity with alchemical thought and an interest in the workings of the natural world, shared with many contemporaries, including his acquaintance Palissy.<sup>53</sup> At the turn of the seventeenth century, the relationship of art to nature became a central topic in both alchemical writing and the literature on art. Michael Maier (1568–1622), in the commentary on emblem two “Nutrix eius terra est” (“His Nurse Is the Earth”) of his *Atalanta fugiens*, insists that artificial creation in the glass vessel of the alchemist is no different from natural creation in the womb of a woman or the womb of the earth.<sup>54</sup> Art cooperates with nature, rather than overthrowing it: “Art and Nature take each other by the hand, so that each may stand in for the other; nonetheless Nature remains the mistress, and Art the maidservant.”<sup>55</sup> The “pictura” of emblem two shows Earth with her body in the form of a globe, suckling the philosopher's child “with the wonderful juice” contained within her; the motifs of the she-goat nursing Jupiter and the she-wolf nursing Romulus and Remus highlight the powerful effects of this juice provided by Earth herself (Fig. 0.10).<sup>56</sup>

Hendrick Goltzius's (1558–1617) figure of generative Nature in his chiaroscuro woodcut *Demogorgon in the Cave of Eternity* reverberates with alchemical imagery reminiscent of the *Roman de la rose* (Fig. 0.11).<sup>57</sup> Nature is shown enclosed in a transparent bubble and holding a giant syringe by which she propels plants and animals into the world. Like the hammer, the syringe stands for sexual potency; the multiple breasts associate her with the Ephesian Diana, stressing Nature's fertility and procreative power.<sup>58</sup> Nature's unruly productivity is contrasted to the measured activity of the bearded man in the foreground who, with his gaze turned to the starry sky, notes down the harmonious movements of the superlunary bodies on a stone

on the margin of the page: “Il tient l'operation de l'alchimie pour veritable.”

53 Shell, “Casting Life, Recasting Experience.” See also: Dupré, “Artists and the Philosophers' Stone”; Newman, *Promethean Ambitions*, 145–63.

54 Maier, *Atalanta fugiens*, 19: “Vas quidem artificiale est sed in hoc differentia non committitur, sive nidus ab ipsa gallina fiat, sive a rustica incerto quodam loco (ut solet) ordinetur, eadem erit ovorum generatio et ex illis pullorum exclusio. Calor est res naturalis, sive ab igne temperato veniat furnorum et simi putredinis, vel sole et aere, vel matris visceribus, aut aliunde.” Jong, *Michael Maier's Atalanta fugiens*, 65: “The retort is artificial, it is true, but it makes no difference whether a nest is made by the hen or by the farmer, for the coming into being of the egg will be the same. Warmth is a natural force, regardless of whether it emanates from the moderate fire of furnaces, from putrid manure, from sunlight, from the mother's body or from another source.”

55 Maier, *Atalanta fugiens*, 19: “Ars itaque et natura mutuas sibi manus conferunt, ita ut haec illius vicaria fiat et illa huius: Nihilominus natura manet domina et ars ancilla.” Jong, *Michael Maier's Atalanta fugiens*, 64–65.

56 Maier, *Atalanta fugiens*, 19: “[...] in hoc admirando succo terrestri contingit.” Jong, *Michael Maier's Atalanta fugiens*, 65; Bredekamp, “Die Erde als Lebewesen,” 12–13; Laube, “Die Alchemie,” 180–81.

57 Pollack and Vitali, *Crossing Parallels*, 165–67, cat. no. 58 (Christine Göttler).

58 Goesch, *Diana Ephesia*. See also: Wenderholm, “Personifikationen der Natur.”



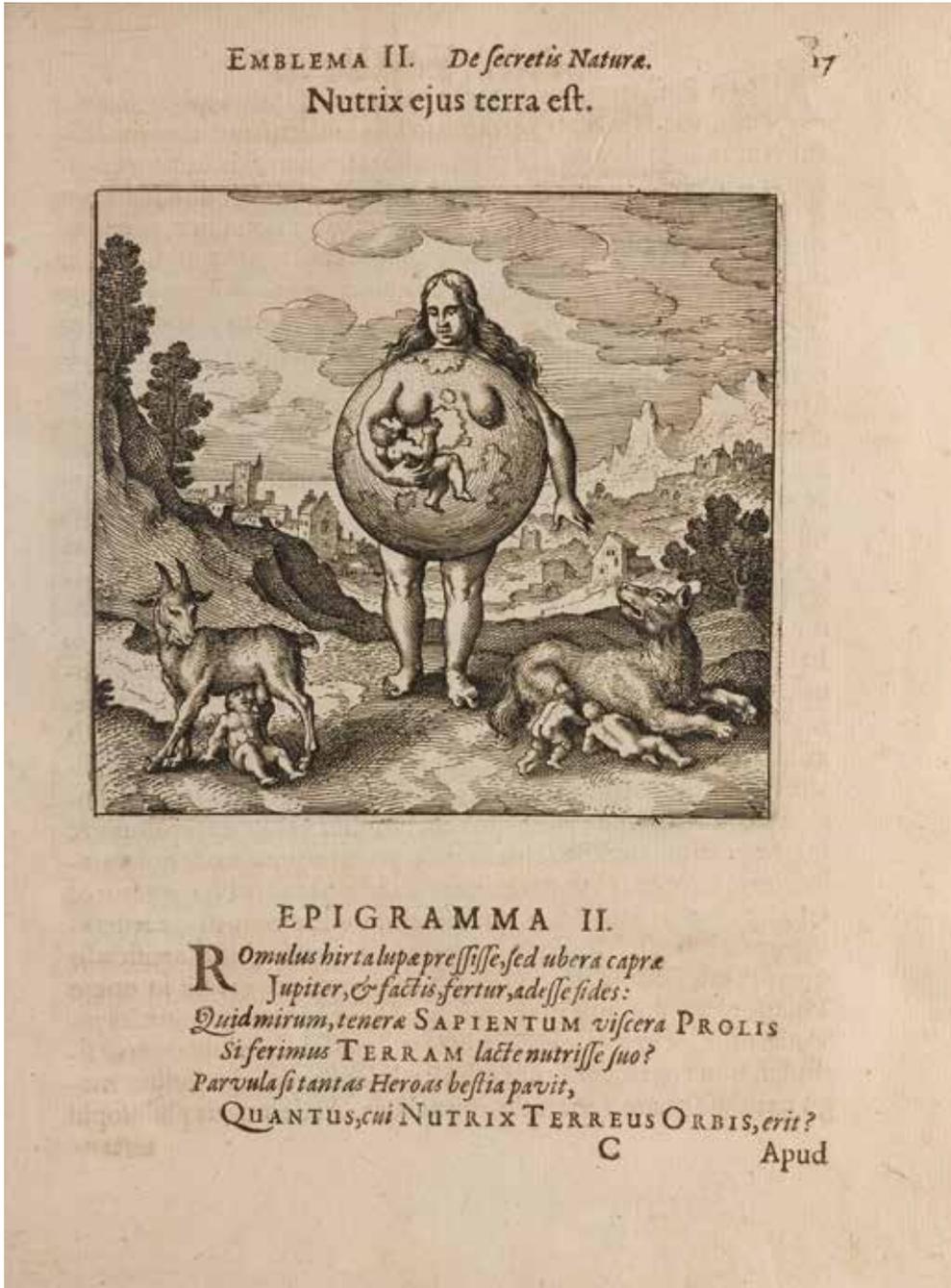


Fig. 0.10: Matthäus Merian the Elder, "His Nurse Is the Earth," in Michael Maier, *Atalanta fugiens* (Oppenheim: Hieronymus Galler and Johann Theodor de Bry, 1618), 17. Engraving, 9.3 × 10.1 cm, Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, call no. A:196 Quod. (1). Image: © Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel.



Fig. 0.11: Hendrick Goltzius, *Demogorgon in the Cave of Eternity* (first print of the series of *Demogorgon and the Deities*), ca. 1586–1590. Chiaroscuro woodcut from one line block and two tone blocks in tan and dark grey, 35 × 26.3 cm, Coburg, Kunstsammlungen der Veste Coburg, Kupferstichkabinett, inv. no. VII.31.183. Image: © Kunstsammlungen der Veste Coburg.

slab.<sup>59</sup> But Goltzius's woodcut also indicates a shift in the imagery of Nature. From the sixteenth century onwards, Nature was no longer represented as an artisan or craftswoman, but rather as a wet-nurse feeding the whole of the material world. The Florentine alchemist and glassmaker Antonio Neri's 1599 manuscript *Il tesoro del mondo* includes a particularly striking image of the regenerative dynamics of Nature, showing her as a heavenly goddess surrounded by clouds, pouring streams of milk from her swollen breasts over metals, thus nourishing their subterranean growth (Fig. 0.12).<sup>60</sup>

A 1572 series engraved by Philips Galle (1537–1612) after Maarten van Heemskerck (1498–1574) further complicates the dynamics between art, labor, and nature, and between creative and procreative work (Fig. 0.13). Of particular interest in the context of this book is the first print, which depicts a curious encounter between the large figure of multi-breasted Nature and a giant celestial sphere with tools, instruments, and objects attached to its surface, as if held by magnetic force, symbolic of the universe of labor.<sup>61</sup> A landscape of cattle grazing by a large body of water, with a town visible in the distance, serves as the stage for the scene. The role of Nature, identified as the Ovidian “renewer of all things” and shown nursing a human child, is further detailed in the Latin hexameters below the picture. Expanding on Job 5:7, “Man is born to toil, and the bird to fly,” the caption states that “like the bird that with its song drives its fledged brood out of the nest [...] so Nature [...] gently leads mankind from the soft cradle of the mother's womb to labor and hard toil.”<sup>62</sup> The relationship between nature and art is therefore recast by emphasizing mankind's power to shape the earth and make it more useful for human needs.<sup>63</sup> Labor, the punishment God placed on mankind as a result of Adam's sin, is here framed as a means of redemption and the expiation of sins.

59 The figure of the bearded man combines the features of Boccaccio's Demogorgon with those of Claudian's “venerable old man” in his fiction of the “Cave of Eternity” in *De consulatu Stilichonis*: Pollack and Vitali, *Crossing Parallels*, 165–67, cat. no. 58 (Christine Göttler).

60 Engle, “Depicting Alchemy.” On Antonio Neri: Boer and Engle, “Antonio Neri”; Dupré, “Making Materials.” For a related imagery of the growth of metals and minerals, see also Tina Asmussen's contribution in this volume.

61 The sphere is spanned by the band of the zodiac with the earth at its center. Veldman, *Maarten van Heemskerck*, part 2, 181–85, nos. 501–6; Sellink and Leesberg, *Philips Galle*, part 2, 257–65, nos. 303–8; Bartsch, “Bildbesprechung: Maarten van Heemskerck”; Kaulbach and Schleier, “*Der Welt Lauf*” 59–62, cat. no. 11.1–5 (Hans-Martin Kaulbach); Veldman, “Images of Labor and Diligence”; Veldman, “Representations of Labor and Diligence.” Still foundational: Kemp, “Natura,” 148–49.

62 “Ales ut a primis productum in aera nidis| Iam iam plumantes certo modulamine foetus,| Hortaturque sequi, brevibusque insurgere pennis;| Sic genus humanum rerum Natura novatrix| Mollibus e cunis, gravidaq[ue] parentis ab aluo,| Ducit ad aerumnas, et duros cauta labores.” Ovid calls “natura” “rerum novatrix” in *Metamorphoses* 15.252.

63 See also: Bredekamp, “Observations on the Natural History of the Web.”



Fig. 0.12: Nature Nurturing the Growth of Metals, in Antonio Neri, *Il tesoro del mondo* (*The Treasure of the World*), fol. 2r. Pen and watercolor, 17 × 11 cm, Glasgow, University of Glasgow Archives and Special Collections, MS Ferguson 67. Image: © University of Glasgow.



Fig. 0.13: Philips Galle after Maarten van Heemskerck, *Man Born to Toil*, 1572. Part of an album with prints by Maarten van Heemskerck and other artists, fol. 202r. Engraving, 20.9 × 24.8 cm (plate); 26.3 × 34.3 cm (sheet). Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet, inv. no. RP-P-1988-297-202. Image: © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

The early modern landscape was an area where the natural and the artificial converged, and man-made structures mingled with natural surroundings. Landscapes were understood as multifaceted articulations of God's creation; corrupted through Adam's sin, they could be restored to their original condition through human labor and art. The destruction caused by wars and natural calamities called for a reshaping or "reformation of the landscape," to use Alexandra Walsham's happy expression in her book on the history of the British Isles.<sup>64</sup> But restoring the countryside was also a principal concern of Catholic reform.<sup>65</sup> Ivo Raband has shown that the 1594 Antwerp spectacle in honor of Archduke Ernest of Austria,

64 Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*.

65 Johnson, "Gardening for God"; Walsham, "Holywell."

the new Spanish governor-general, deployed a Virgilian Golden Age imagery of natural abundance to link the renewal of (Catholic) religion to the renewal of the landscape. The inclusion of a tableau vivant with Agriculture seated in the middle and flanked by Nature (with bare arms and breasts) and Annus (representing the seasonal cycle), was meant to remind the new governor-general of the city's hope that he would return peace to the country so that the soil could be cultivated again. The fact that the city council also presented the archduke with Pieter Bruegel's *Seasons* underscores the urgency of rural renewal. But the gift of landscape paintings by an artist who was himself identified with Nature also points to the relationship between the art of agriculture and that of painting, a connection described by Don Felipe de Guevara (ca. 1500–ca. 1563) in the dedication of his 1563 *Comentario de la pintura y pintores antiguos* (*Commentary on Painting and Painters*) to the archduke's uncle, King Philip II of Spain (1527–1598).<sup>66</sup> According to De Guevara, the arts of both agriculture and painting restore the body and the mind; both relate to the variety of nature, while at the same time bringing order into it.

There has as yet been little research conducted into the interrelationship between painterly and agricultural practices as processes meant to restore order into either the pictorial or the natural worlds.<sup>67</sup> A case in point is the retirement seat built by Duke Wilhelm V of Bavaria (1548–1626) at Schleissheim (near Munich) after his forced abdication in 1597.<sup>68</sup> The project transformed what had been a traditional hunting ground into a “sacred landscape” with a manor house, a large agricultural estate, several chapels and hermitages, a glasshouse, and an alchemical laboratory, where experiments in the transmutation of metals were apparently conducted. At the center of the complex was the chapel dedicated to the duke's patron saint, St. William of Malavalle (died 1157), who after his conversion had settled in a wasteland (“mala valle”) near Grosseto to establish a hermit community. The chapel's altarpiece, created by the duke's favorite painter Peter Candid (ca. 1548–1628) around 1600, is an atmospheric depiction of the stony, barren landscape that St. William set out to reform and make fruitful, with a sunlit sky in the background and a great cloud in the foreground, where the Virgin is seated with her Son descending from the heavenly realm in dazzling light (Fig. 0.14). The reshaping of landscape gestured toward the concurrent societal trends of conversion, renewal, and reform.

66 De Guevara, *Comentarios de la pintura*, 5–6; Giménez-Berger, “Ethics and Economies of Art in Renaissance Spain,” 10. For Abraham Ortelius's praise of Pieter Bruegel as “nature among painters” (“naturam pictorum”): Meganck, *Erudite Eyes*, 223.

67 A notable exception is: Leonhard, *The Fertile Ground of Painting*, esp. 13–22.

68 Göttler, “Sacred Woods”: Performing Solitude at the Court of Duke Wilhelm V of Bavaria.”





Fig. 0.14: Peter Candid, *Vision of St. William of Malavalle*, ca. 1600 (from the Chapel of St. William at Schleissheim). Oil on canvas, 306.5 × 174.5 cm, Munich, Bayerische Verwaltung der staatlichen Schlösser, Gärten und Seen, Nymphenburg, Marstalldepot, inv. no. SAS-G-0001. Image: © Bayerische Schlösserverwaltung.



Fig. 0.15: Johannes Sadeler I after Dirck Barendsz., *Mankind Awaiting the Last Judgement* (“Ita erit et adventus filii hominis”), 1581–1583. Engraving, 35 × 44.2 cm (cut within border), hand-colored in blue, green, red, and brown, glued onto a sheet of parchment (53.9 × 38 cm) in an album from the library of Jean de Poligny, Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet, inv. no. RP-P-2005-214-3. Image: © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

## Overthrowing Nature

But what about the floods, fires, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions that disrupted the cycle of the seasons, provoking fears that a cosmic catastrophe would soon bring the world to an end? Debates about the age of the earth prompted speculations about its transformation during the Flood and its future fiery destruction.<sup>69</sup> The universal deluge at the time of Noah and the final conflagration at the end of times were often discussed in relation to each other, and depictions of these two supernatural events were frequently paired.<sup>70</sup> The very first prints pasted by Jean de Poligny into his album, after the maps and the *Ordo universi*, were two engravings by Johannes Sadeler I after Dirck Barendsz.: each of these compositions include

69 Barnett, *After the Flood*, 20–23; Dal Prete, “Being the World Eternal.”

70 Barnett, *After the Flood*, 129–59, esp. 152–59; Barnett rightly observes that in the eighteenth century the Flood was discussed independently from the Apocalypse.

a banquet scene, while in the background, unnoticed by the people enjoying the festivities, the disaster of the Great Flood and the apocalyptic event of the Last Judgment are already unfurling (Fig. 0.15).<sup>71</sup>

As was the case with the 1618 landslide that buried the flourishing mining town of Plurs (near Chiavenna, Italy) and all its inhabitants under thick layers of rubble, natural disasters were often interpreted as divine punishments for mankind's sins.<sup>72</sup> The wasteland left after this catastrophic event was compared to the ashen wilderness into which the once fertile valley of Sodom had turned after the city had been consumed by fire (Gen. 19:24–25). Sodom's annihilation through a rain of "brimstone and fire" was undoubtedly the most frequently depicted catastrophe in early modern Netherlandish art (Figs. 0.16 and 0.17).<sup>73</sup> Only Lot and his family were spared. Lot's wife, however, because she disobeyed God's instructions not to look behind her, was "turned into a statue of salt" (Gen. 19:26).<sup>74</sup> The Latin Vulgate uses the verb "subvertere" to describe the divine act of destruction, rendered in vernacular versions of the Bible as either "destroy" (Douay-Rheims Bible), or as "overthrow" (King James Bible).<sup>75</sup> "Overthrow," in particular, captures the meaning of the event as a miraculous inversion of the natural order; commentators describe how the

71 Johannes Sadeler I after Dirck Barendsz., *Mankind before the Flood* and *Mankind Awaiting the Last Judgment*, 1581–1585. De Hoop Scheffer, *Aegidius Sadeler to Raphael Sadeler II*, 21:124, cat. nos. 264–65. See note 42, above.

72 See Suzanne Karr Schmidt's contribution in this volume.

73 To punish the sins of the inhabitants, God, in the dead of the night, when everybody was asleep, "rained [...] brimstone and fire" in order to destroy "these cities and all the country about, all the inhabitants of the cities, and all things that spring from the earth." *The Vulgate Bible*, 86–87 (Gen. 19:24–25): "Igitur Dominus pluit super Sodomam et Gomorram sulphur et ignem a Domino de caelo. Et subvertit civitates has, et omnem circa regionem, universos habitatores urbium, et cuncta terrae virentia."

74 *The Vulgate Bible*, 86–87 (Gen. 19:26): "Respicensque uxor eius post se versa est in statuam salis."

75 *The Vulgate Bible*, 86–87 (Gen. 19:25): "Et subvertit civitates has." "And he destroyed these cities." *The Vulgate Bible*, 88–89 (Gen. 19:29): "Cum enim subverteret Deus civitates regionis illius, recordatus Abrahae et liberavit Loth de subversione urbium in quibus habitaverat." "Now when God destroyed the cities of that country, remembering Abraham he delivered Lot out of the destruction of the cities wherein he had dwelt." *The King James Study Bible*, 41 (Gen. 19:25): "And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground." *The King James Study Bible*, 41 (Gen. 19:29): "And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt." Luther, *Biblia Deusch* ("Das Erste Buch Mose," 19) translates "subvertere" as "umkehren": "Da lies der Herr schwebel und fewr regenen von dem Herrn von himel erab/ auff Sodom und Gomorra/ und keret die stede umb/ die gantzte gegend/ und alle einwoner der stedte/ und was auff dem land gewachsen war/ Und sein weib sahe hindersich/ und ward zur saltz seule." The Septuagint uses the ancient Greek word καταστροφή (katastrophē), made up of the preposition κατά (kata), "down, downward," and the verb στρέφειν (strephein), a "turning," thus meaning an "overthrow," "ruin," or "downward turn," which was, however, not taken up in the Latin Vulgate, the King James version, or Luther's German translation of the Bible. See Briese and Günther, "Katastrophe," 167–68; Meier, "Zur Terminologie der (Natur-)Katastrophe."



Fig. 0.16: Herri met de Bles (circle of), *Landscape with Lot and His Daughters in Front of the Burning Sodom*, sixteenth century. Oil on panel, 33.2 × 45.2 cm, Warsaw, Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, inv. no. M.Ob.600 MNW. Image: © Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie / Piotr Ligier.

miraculous rain resulted in an overturning of the earth's crust that transformed "the paradise of the Lord" (Gen. 13:10) into a smoldering wasteland.

In the visual arts, the material alterations accompanying the disaster—the liquification of fire, the turning of Lot's wife's body into salt, and the distortion of the earth's surface—tell their own stories. Netherlandish landscape painters represented the burning cities as a hell on earth and dystopian counter-image to the Garden of Eden. With their intense, luminous colors the frequently small paintings were intended to spark the desires of potential buyers in the exceedingly competitive art market. Dante, in the *Divine Comedy*, identified the color of the fire of hell and of Satan as vermilion, a pigment that was prepared from mercury and sulfur, in other words the same components found in the biblical descriptions of the fire of hell and the rain that fell on Sodom.<sup>76</sup> The Netherlandish painter-chemist, by using vermilion, realgar, and orpiment—mercuric and

76 Klettke, "Feuer und Flamme," 9–10.



Fig. 0.17: Herri met de Bles (or workshop of), *Landscape with Lot and His Daughters*, second third of the sixteenth century. Oil on panel, 26 × 40 cm, Namur, TreM.a, Musée des arts anciens, inv. no. 245C. Image: © Coll. Province de Namur / G. Focant.

arsenic sulfides—to produce the effects of light and shade in the fiery material that rained down on the sinful cities, was in a certain way repeating the work of God as the “master alchemist” of the universe who poured punishment down on the once fertile land.

A small painting created in the circle of Herri met de Bles (active ca. 1533–ca. 1566) showing Lot’s daughters seducing their father is an example of such alchemy of painting (Fig. 0.16).<sup>77</sup> It situates the scene in a kind of pleasure garden with rare animals, among them a unicorn; in the background a vivid red rain of fire, most probably created with vermilion, is falling on the cities. The story inspired Herri met de Bles to produce a range of new pictorial inventions. One of his paintings, now in Namur, centers on the “dead sea” into which the area was gradually transformed after the fire had died (Fig. 0.17).<sup>78</sup> In the background, the fire is still burning and has spread to one of the ships at anchor there. The dark cave at the front left serves

<sup>77</sup> On the painting’s possible attribution to Herri met de Bles: Friedländer, *Pieter Bruegel und Nachtrag zu früheren Bänden*, 131.

<sup>78</sup> Tapié and Weemans, *Fables du paysage flamand*, 198–99, cat. no. 37 (Jacques Toussaint); Weemans, *Herri met de Bles*, 288–91.

as a dwelling place for Lot and his two daughters. A similar cave can be seen on the island on the right, right next to a church, and appears to be crowned by an idol on a high pedestal. Michel Weemans has drawn attention to the skull-like shapes of the caves, which emphasize the barrenness of the area. At the same time, stone, water, and air appear curiously full of life, as if these elements are competing with the fourth one, fire, which Van Mander associated with the artist's mind. Also in the picture is the little owl with which Herri used to sign his works.<sup>79</sup> The owl is sitting on the smaller cliff rising out of the water just below the burning ship. Looking out of the picture toward the viewer, it functions as a counter figure to the immovable pillar of Lot's wife shown in the middle of the road not far from the city gate.

The devastation, or “overthrow,” of the biblical “cities of the plain” haunted the minds and imaginations of early modern men and women and challenged theologians, natural philosophers, and artists to think more deeply about the destructive forces of art and nature. For Netherlandish painters experimenting in the still new genre of landscape, the fiery disaster provided an opportunity to stage their skills in the alchemy of paints, to reconsider their own identities in relation to other experts in material processes, and to create a successful and attractive work for the still new space of the gallery, or *constkamer*, a space that, incidentally, was itself starting to feature as the subject of paintings.<sup>80</sup> This brings us back to some of the central objectives of the volume: to explore the ways in which early modern artists imagined landscape in its shifting relationship to nature, the material world, and the dynamics of their craftsmanship and art. Landscape as a new kind of specialization for artists emerged at a time of growing interest in subtle natural phenomena such as light, clouds, rain, and reflections, and at a moment when the seemingly “lowest” elements in the chain of being—metal and stone—were receiving increased attention, not least for the knowledge they conveyed about geological time and the antediluvian history of the earth.

This volume does not aim to give a comprehensive account of the history of a new genre, which in western European art has been traditionally associated with the Netherlands. Rather, its individual chapters shed light on the broad range of early modern artists' approaches to landscape, when knowledge about the earth was itself in a process of transformation and there was not one, but a multiplicity of landscapes, natures, and cosmologies. It is my hope that this book might initiate further thoughts about the early modern landscape, including its implications for

79 Weemans, *Herri met de Bles*, 288–91. On the motif of the owl persecuted by other birds: Vandenbroeck, “*Bubo significans*.”

80 Foundational contributions to the rich literature on depicted collection spaces (*constkamers*) include: Honig, *Painting and the Market in Early Modern Antwerp*, 177–89; Marr, “The Flemish ‘Pictures of Collections’ Genre”; Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image*, 123–27.

a global art history and its reverberations in contemporary art. The utopian and dystopian ecospheres laid over Karlsruhe Park at documenta (13) suggest an art form that is realized by laying layer over layer, privileging composition over invention. Song Dong's *Doing Nothing Garden*, begun by the artist, but then grown by nature (aided by fertilizer from local waste), finds its early modern precedents in notions of art as operating in tandem with nature and in the range of *constkamer* objects wrought by both nature and art.<sup>81</sup>

## Picturing the Unruly Landscape

The authors of this book explore “unruliness” in landscape from various perspectives, through various media, and within different time frames and cultural contexts. Its four parts are reflected in the sections of this introduction, which are intended as further deliberations on the theme. Part One, “Latent Landscapes,” addresses how the experience of “unruliness” in ecologies and landscapes served as a foundation for renegotiating representation. Risk in the interplay of aesthetic practice and visual judgment is at the core of Mia Mochizuki's chapter that ascribes the “teraqueous” quality of the Dutch landscape, with its conspicuously low horizon, to a new awareness of the interactions between water and land. She shows how the use of maps, astrolabes, globes, and other navigational aids challenged established visual and representational conventions and brought together the “scapes” of land, sea, and clouds to create a visual ecosystem that combined earth, water, and air. Victoria Sancho Lobis demonstrates that many of the landscape drawings of Pieter Bruegel the Elder and contemporaneous artists were crafted from prints rather than drawn from nature. Their unruly elements revealed the artists' ambition to capture the inner workings of nature through a virtuoso performance in pen and ink. Karin Leonhard elaborates on the beginnings of an English theory of landscape based on the Aristotelian distinction between “particulars,” objects perceivable by the senses, and “universals,” objects accessible only through the intellect. Early theorists recognized the ability of the imagination to complete the landscape by bringing distant objects into focus; in a tradition reaching back to Lomazzo and Leonardo, draperies molded to the body of their wearers by the wind were believed to evoke the folds of a landscape, thereby reinforcing the notion of an animated, unruly earth.

Part Two, “Elemental Resources,” tracks how engagement with the earth's materials obscured distinctions between the natural and the artificial. Romita Ray, in her chapter on indigo plantations in colonial South Asia, points to the seminal impact

81 See most recently: Göttler, “Tales of Transformation”; Göttler, “Vulcan's Forge.”



exerted by globalization on local landscapes. She asks how natural environments were recreated as controlled plantation spaces, which were then advertised in engravings, photographs, and dioramas. While the laborious extraction of natural indigo was later replaced by synthetic production, the most beautiful and costly indigo continued to be sourced from wild plants. Metamorphosis as petrification is examined by Steffen Zierholz, who uses the example of a painting on stone depicting the transformation of Atlas into a mountain to trace how mythological representations conveyed knowledge about the world of stones to which they themselves belonged. The early modern artist was construed as a natural philosopher endowed with insight into the secrets of nature, itself mediated in the space where these works were displayed. Tina Asmussen investigates sites of extraction as emotionally and ecologically charged “resource landscapes,” carrying both the promise of prosperity and the threat of failure and loss. Drawing on a selection of textual and visual sources, she reveals how cosmological and religious beliefs framed metals as alternative fruits of the earth that could potentially satisfy both material desires and spiritual needs.

Part Three, “Staged Topographies,” looks at the mutual interdependence between nature and cultivation to explore how the interest in a generative natural world shaped artists’ experimentation with media and materials. Ivo Raband, in his analysis of the Stage of Agriculture for the triumphal entry of Archduke Ernest of Austria in 1594, shows how in response to the ongoing war, a Virgilian Golden Age imagery was deployed to remind the new Spanish governor of the urgency of agricultural renewal. The fact that Agricultura was flanked on the stage by Natura and Annus further emphasized the city’s desire to return to a timeless golden era with nature restored. That landscape paintings often produce their effects in larger configurations, rather than as individual pieces, is amply documented by Michèle Seehafer in her chapter on Christian IV’s Rosenborg Castle in Copenhagen. The ninety-five landscapes inserted into the oak paneled walls of the Winter Room of the Danish king’s beloved residence recall the experience of nature through their sensuous and material associations as sovereign territory, a resource for sustenance, and a pleasurable heterotopic site. For Michel Weemans, the graphic works of Pieter Bruegel the Elder exemplify the fluid boundaries between natural images and images generated in an artist’s fruitful mind. The widespread fascination with images in the process of becoming, such as those created by the erosive effects of wind and water on rock, underscored the drama of nature in its cycle of change.

Part Four, “Fragile Ecologies,” explores how easily the delicate balancing act between art and nature, or technology and the environment, could be upended. Suzanne Karr Schmidt presents broadsheets with liftable flaps that spread the news of the 1618 landslide at the mining town of Plurs. She argues that the medium created



a new disaster imaginary that allowed readers to reenact and experience emotionally the catastrophe staged in the language of divine vengeance in the accompanying texts. Nor was the destruction of nature limited to the early modern world. In a timely epilogue, Peter Schneemann reveals the degree to which contemporary artists use the landscape as a surface on which to project their own ecocritical modes of engagement with nature and the earth, one where earlier art forms were imagined, enacted, and performed. Like its precedent in the early modern period, the contemporary landscape has emerged as a testing ground and as a site where paradisiacal, antediluvian, and apocalyptic scenarios continue to play out. Landscape's unruly predicament, pioneered during the turbulent times of early modernity, may provide a lens for understanding its frail nature today.

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