In October 1606, the chamber of rhetoric Trou Moet Blycken (Loyalty Needs Proof) organized a festive contest for the chambers of rhetoric of Holland. Trou Moet Blycken was the senior chamber of Haarlem, Holland’s second largest city with 30,000 inhabitants in 1600. On the Sunday morning of 22 October 1606, a delegation of Trou Moet Blycken went outside the city to welcome the twelve guest chambers, the two younger Haarlem chambers, and Cornelius Schonaeus, rector of the Latin School with his pupils. The delegations then made their allegorical entries into the city through the Houtpoort, with their colours flying and drum rolls, and costumed delegation members. A standard-bearer and a drummer, in costly dress headed these allegorical pageants, followed by Mercury (symbolizing the art of rhetoric) and 10 other members, dressed in long crimson robes with white cords, green stockings, and white shoes with red silk ribbons, grey hats with red and white strings.

A couple of young women carried the silver prizes to be won in the competition, following Mercury and his fellowship to the Nieuwe Doelen,
the hall of the civic militia. Here an elegant stage had been erected, on which the Virgin of Haarlem, performed by the painter Jan Blommendael, was awaiting the delegations. The Virgin was beautifully dressed and had the subdued figure of Tyranny’s Violence under her feet. At her side were Pallas and Reason, embellished with the city’s coats of arms. Delegation after delegation presented their painted blazons, welcomed by the Virgin of Haarlem speaking in ballads. Between each ballad and the passing of another chamber, the town pipers performed music. The next day Mercury and his company again presented themselves with colours flying and rolling drums. They invited delegation upon delegation onto a beautifully decorated stage on the Market place topped with a Pelican (the chamber’s symbol) and surrounded by signboards with aphorisms. Rhetoric, performed by Blommendael, invited each delegation to present the blazon painted for this occasion and the accompanying allegorical entry in a short poem. Rhetoric, speaking lines written by the rhetorician, Joachim Targier then answered each ‘explanation.’

After the opening ceremony, Rhetoric and her company exhibited the blazons, to the sounds of the pipers, in a public procession with rolling drums and colours flying, leading them to the chamber’s hall.

During the next five days, Rhetoric and her company invited each delegation in turn to perform a play answering the question “What reward awaits those who comfort the poor with love and what severe retribution awaits those who mercilessly scorn the poor.” Each day, two or three chambers performed their answers in spelen van zinne (alle-

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4 ATMB, Register, fols. 74v–87. For Blommendael and Targier, see A. van Dixhoorn, “Lustige geesten. Rederijkers en hun kamers in het publieke leven van de Noordelijke Nederlanden in de vijftiende, zestiende en zeventiende eeuw” (Ph.D. diss., Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2004), cd-rom, prosopography of Haarlem rhetoricians, nos. H64 and H468. Blommendael composed one of the obituary poems commemorating the death in 1617 of the famous Amsterdam painter, rhetorician, playwright, and poet Gebrand Adriaensz Bredero. Targier was the author of an introductory poem in the Schilderboeck (Book of Painters and Painting) by the famous painter-poet Karel van Mander published in 1604.

5 The blazons still are in the chamber’s possession. Engraved blazons were also published in the printed edition of the submissions in Const-thoonende Iuweel. For these blazons, see De Bruin, De schatten, 86–144. Also, Y. Bleyerveld, “De negen geschilderde blazonen van de Vlaardingse rederijkerswedstrijd van 1616,” in Op de Hollandse Parnas. De Vlaardingse rederijkerswedstrijd van 1616, ed. B. Ramakers (Zwolle: Waanders, 2006), 31–64.