

Blood, Rocks, and Clouds: Matter and Artistry in Rubens's Antwerp Mythological Paintings

A dissertation presented

by

Marisa Mandabach

to

The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the subject of

History of Art and Architecture

Harvard University

Cambridge Massachusetts

December 14, 2016

© Marisa Mandabach, 2016

All rights reserved.

Blood, Rocks, and Clouds: Matter and Artistry in Rubens's Antwerp Mythological Paintings

Abstract

Artistic identity is often sought in self-portraits or in artists' theoretical writings. This dissertation explores how Peter Paul Rubens shaped a creative persona through mythological and allegorical works. Central to this were a set of paintings that invoked spontaneous generation, the natural scientific theory that certain species or life forms emerged directly from raw matter. Painted in Antwerp, all depicted processes related to image-making such as formation, figuration, or procreation. They include Rubens's *Head of Medusa* (ca. 1613-18), the *Finding of Erichthonius* (ca. 1613-18), *Deucalion and Pyrrha* (ca. 1635), and *Neptune Calming the Tempest* (ca. 1634). All of these works center on the fluctuations of raw, elemental matter. They therefore theorize, in different ways, the relationship between matter and artistic agency, offering a means to explore Rubens's art theory and ideas about his own creativity.

In Rubens's time there was widespread fascination with nature's "artistry." Churning out formations that resembled and preserved metamorphic processes, nature was analogized with the artist in the visual practices of the *Kunst- und Wunderkammer*. The *Head of Medusa* responds to this interest as well. It depicts the gorgon's blood spawning a virtual cabinet of insects, snakes, and other reptiles, including a monstrous two-headed snake, painted by the still life specialist Frans Snyders. Erupting from the gorgon's petrifying mask, her blood is posited as a symbolic "prime matter" of both nature and painting. I discuss this

stunning conceit in relation to Rubens's artistic identity as it was shaped through his other works. I also argue that *Head of Medusa* thematized its own collaborative authorship. Both in it and in *Prometheus Bound* (1611-12), the reserves where the painter's hands exchanged are depicted as wounds with regenerative connotations, implying images as living bodies in whose creation matter is an active agent. My second chapter centers on two further myths of spontaneous generation: the Finding of Erichthonius and Deucalion and Pyrrha. In both of these images, Rubens lends Mother Earth a symbolic body of rocks, stone, or mud; and he emulates sculptural practice in order to conceptualize painting's enlivening qualities. Zeroing in on the animating fluctuations of monochrome relief, he shows ancient matter erupting into new forms as it is enlivened by water and air. The third chapter centers on *Neptune Calming the Tempest*, in which water and air are whipped up into a storm whose embodiment is the North wind Boreas. Rubens created the scene for the festive entry of a Habsburg ruler into Antwerp on April 17, 1635. I argue that Rubens embedded his artistic authority in the cycle, in the two water deities in the Stage of Welcome who activate the procession through images. Rubens's oil sketch of *Neptune Calming the Tempest* depicts Boreas as a transparent cloud-figure whose "flesh" mingles brushwork with the preparatory layer of the *imprimatura*. In this, I argue, Rubens invokes the topos of the "image made by chance," showing that his oil sketches could model art-theoretical ideas. The works discussed in this study thus offer a surprising conception of matter—not as something that the painter must heroically shape or overcome, but rather as a collaborator or even a stand-in for the artist.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	vi
List of Illustrations.....	ix
Introduction: the Mollusk’s Blood.....	1
Matter and the monograph.....	18
Chapter 1: The Generative Medusa and Rubens’s Red-Blooded Art.....	32
Leonardo’s <i>animalaccio</i> and still lives of the forest floor.....	43
The Medusa, Prometheus Bound, and collaboration as violence.....	58
Rubens, rubentis.....	66
The head of Medusa and the Kunst- und Wunderkammer.....	80
Chapter 2: Spontaneous Generation and the <i>Copia</i> of Painting in Counter-Reformation Antwerp.....	90
Diana Ephesus as an emblem of nature and art.....	95
The Finding of Erichthonius and the regeneration of sculpture.....	104
Staging the Antwerp garland: Diana Ephesus and the aesthetics of hyper-production.....	109
Deucalion and Pyrrha: spontaneous generation and body-making.....	126
Chapter 3: Rubens’s <i>Quos ego</i> and the Painter as Neptune.....	132
Cinquecento Neptunes and the limits of ‘Herrscherallégorie’.....	140
The blockade of the Scheldt and images of water in Antwerp 1600-1630.....	145
Bodies of Water in the <i>Pompa introitus Ferdinandi</i>	154
The Meeting of Two Ferdinands at Nördlingen.....	159
The painter’s urn.....	166
The specificity of the oil sketch.....	170
Spontaneity in landscape painting and the “image made by chance”.....	177
Rubens’s storms and the painting as cosmos.....	181
Leonardo’s Neptune drawing (ca. 1504) and the grotesque poetics of water.....	184
Painting and wetness.....	188
The <i>Quos ego</i> as a creation scene.....	189
Conclusion: Rubens’s Fertility.....	198
Works cited (primary sources).....	208
Works cited (secondary sources).....	210
Illustrations.....	228

Acknowledgments

Writing this dissertation with the resources I have had at Harvard University and the University of Hamburg has been a privilege for which I am deeply grateful. That gratitude is due first of all to the members of my committee. Joseph Koerner, thank you for your brilliant publications, which shaped my approach to art history even before we met. Each of our discussions about this project gave it new life. After our last meeting before I submitted, I left your office feeling so inspired. Walking down Mt. Auburn St. toward the river, I suddenly heard something squawking in the treetops: a member of Harvard's elusive and legendary flock of wild turkeys, silhouetted against the evening sky. It was fitting: though your advice was always down-to-earth, working with you also had an element of magic. Frank Fehrenbach, thank you for supporting my work in every way imaginable—for letting me teach Leonardo for you, and for giving me a fellowship at Naturbilder. It is such an honor to be in your intellectual orbit. Claudia Swan, from our first three-hour Kaffeeklatsch in Berlin, to museum visits, to conferences, you have been a lifeline. Thank you for being a model for me, and for always treating me like both a student and a colleague.

I am deeply grateful to Joanna Woodall, whose MA course at the Courtauld Institute provided what is still my essential framework as a historian of Netherlandish art. I will never forget seeing the *Head of Medusa* with you for the first time in the Mauritshuis, where the image's discord radiated into the space of the gallery and we were cursed at by fellow museumgoers for talking too much in front of it. That conversation, which planted the seeds of both my Master's thesis and my dissertation, was of course entirely worth it. I have not thanked you enough since for your teaching. Several other senior academic colleagues encouraged this project and gave me crucial feedback along the way, especially Christine

Göttler, Marisa Bass, Antien Knaap, and Luc Duerloo. I am profoundly grateful to Gerlinde Gruber for receiving me so generously at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in 2010. Our conversations in the Niederländische Saale and in the conservation lab helped to bring my ideas about Rubens into clearer focus. I am also grateful to the members of the research group Naturbilder and the students at Universität Hamburg for allowing me to present my work in progress on multiple occasions. Other colleagues nourished my growth as a scholar before I embarked on the dissertation in earnest. Susan Dackerman, thank you for letting me work at the Harvard Art Museums, where I learned so much about letting objects speak and was able to study and write about Rubens's oil sketches. I also wish to thank Gulru Necipoglu for her thoughtful feedback on my coursework.

I could never have researched or written this dissertation without the staff at the Warburg Institute, the Rubenianum, and the libraries at Harvard University: Houghton, Widener, and the Fine Arts Library. I am especially grateful to librarian Denise O'Malley, whose competence and kindness were a saving grace. To Deanna Dalrymple, who carries the department of the History of Art & Architecture on her shoulders, thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for everything you did to get me through the program. You make a difference in the lives of so many young scholars. I am also grateful to earlier teachers, especially Jim Connolly at Milton Academy and Neil Arditi at Sarah Lawrence College, who may not know how much of an impact they had on my decision to pursue graduate studies.

Jennifer Nelson, beyond the countless instances of mentoring and the specific advice you have given me about this project, I will acknowledge here what you must already know: that I have followed in your footsteps for twenty years. Thank you for being so brave and for showing me what kind of future was possible for me. Hannah Janeway, thank you for teaching me the meaning of sisterhood. Our Caribbean escapades replenished my joy, and

were therefore crucial elements in this dissertation as well. Erika Billick, another sister, thank you for your continuing sweetness and love. Zeynep Oguz, thank you for our beautiful conversations, your moral support, and those summer afternoons we spent working and not working over iced tea. Misti Jeffreys, thank you for those salty, vinegary, cidery afternoons in the pub, and for sharing your family with me when I was lonely in London. Finally, Shawon Kinew, *gemella*, thank you for being a source of solidarity and laughter as we navigated graduate school together.

To Harvey, who cannot read this but is a very good boy, thank you for being such a joyful and loving companion, and for teaching me how to be healthy while writing. You deserve a million juicy steaks.

There are no words that can express the love and gratitude I feel toward my family right now. Thank you for putting up with me. Mom and dad, thank you for raising me to believe in my abilities and for giving me the freedom to find my own path in life. I am so lucky to have parents as loving and supportive as you. Jonny, my brother, thank you for all those soul sessions that always brought me back down to earth, or to the sea. Aleksandar, my new family, we survived our dissertations together. Thank you for loving me and for inspiring me as a historian and a human being.

Finally, to Joseph C. Forte, *il mio mentore*: thank you for making me fall in love with art history, and for making me believe that I could do this. I owe you a debt that I can never repay, except by fulfilling my promise to you to become a teacher. I will try.

List of Illustrations

1. Peter Paul Rubens, *Hercules Discovering the Tyrian Purple*, 1637-38. Oil on panel, 28 x 32.6 cm. Bayonne, Musée Bonnat, inv. no. 1068
2. Peter Paul Rubens, *Group Portrait of Peter Paul Rubens, Philip Rubens, Justus Lipsius and Johannes Woverius (The Four Philosophers)*, 1611-1612. Oil on panel, 167 x 143 cm. Florence, Palazzo Pitti, inv. no. 85
3. Peter Paul Rubens and Frans Snyders, *Head of Medusa*, ca. 1613-1618. Oil on canvas, 68.5 x 118 cm. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Inv. Nr. GG_3834
4. Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Head of Medusa*, 1597. Oil on canvas mounted on wood, 55cm diameter. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi inv. no. 1351
5. Pieter Perret after Otto van Veen (or Peter Paul Rubens), *Allegory of the Temptations of Youth*, ca. 1575-1625. Engraving, 31.9 cm 21.8 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-1904-2854
6. Godfried Maes, *Head of Medusa*, ca. 1680. Pen drawing. Location unknown (sold by Sotheby's London, July 11, 2001)
7. Studio of Peter Paul Rubens, *Perseus Freeing Andromeda*, ca. 1622. Oil on canvas transferred from panel, 99.5 x 139 cm. St. Petersburg, Hermitage Museum, ГЭ-461
8. Unknown painter or painters, probably Flemish, sixteenth or seventeenth century. Oil on panel, 49 x 74 cm. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi P1472.
9. Otto Marseus van Schrieck, *Sottobosco with Snakes, Toad, and Tulip*, signed and dated 1662. Oil on canvas, 50.7 x 68.5 cm. Braunschweig, Herzog-Anton-Ulrich Museum, inv. no. 431.
10. Otto Marseus van Schrieck, *Sottobosco with Toad and Blue Morning Glory*, signed and dated 1600. Oil on canvas, 53.7 x 68 cm. Schwerin, Staatliches Museum inv. no. 154
11. Peter Paul Rubens and Frans Snyders, *Prometheus Bound*, begun ca. 1611-12 and completed by 1618. Oil on canvas, 242.6 x 209.6 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art, no. W1950-3-1, Purchased with the W.P. Wilstach Fund, 1950
12. Frans Snyders, *An eagle with wings spread*, ca. 1610. Pen and brown ink with brown wash on paper, 28 x 20.2 cm. London, British Museum 1946,0713.176
13. Peter Paul Rubens and Frans Snyders, *Head of Medusa*. Detail: "snake hair"
14. Peter Paul Rubens and Frans Snyders, *Head of Medusa*. Detail: "snake nest"
15. Jan Harmensz. Muller after Hendrick Goltzius, *Creation of the World*, ca. 1592. Engraving, second state of two, 26.4 cm diameter. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 53.601.338(6)
16. a. Johann Theodoor de Bry, *Primordial Chaos*, ca. 1617. Etching. In Robert Fludd, *Utriusque cosmi maioris scilicet et minoris metaphysica, physica atque technica historia in duo volumina secundum cosmi differentiam divisa* (Oppenheim, 1617), vol. 1, p. 37. Image courtesy of Stiftung der Werke von C.G. Jung, Zürich, VD17 12:637305Q. Digitized at <http://www.e-rara.ch/doi/10.3931/e-rara-5500>.
b. Johann Theodoor de Bry, *The Four Elements*, ca. 1617. Etching, [dimensions]. In Robert Fludd, *Utriusque cosmi maioris scilicet et minoris metaphysica, physica atque technica historia in duo volumina secundum cosmi differentiam divisa* (Oppenheim, 1617), vol. 1, p. 37.

- Image courtesy of Stiftung der Werke von C.G. Jung, Zürich, VD17 12:637305Q.
Digitized at <http://www.e-rara.ch/doi/10.3931/e-rara-5500>.
17. Peter Paul Rubens and Frans Snyders, *Prometheus Bound* (detail: “Prometheus’s liver”)
 18. Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Beheading of St. John the Baptist*, 1608. Oil on canvas, 361 x 620 cm. Valetta, Saint John’s Museum. Detail: signature (“f. michel Ang”)
 19. Peter Paul Rubens, *Narcissus Falling in Love with his Own Reflection*. Oil on panel, 14 x 14.5 cm. Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, acc. no. 2518, acquired with the collection of D.G. van Beuningen, 1958
 20. Peter Paul Rubens, *Death of Decius Mus*, 1616/1617. Oil on canvas, 289 x 518 cm. Vienna, Liechtenstein Museum, inv. no. GE51. Detail: “dying soldier”
 21. Peter Paul Rubens, *Descent from the Cross*, 1612-1614. Oil on panel, 420.5 x 320 cm. Antwerp, Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekathedraal
 22. Giulio Romano, *Perseus Disarming and the Birth of Coral*, ca. 1536-38. Pen and brown ink on blue paper, 192 x 316 mm. London, British Museum, acc. no. 1895,0915.645
 23. Peter Paul Rubens after unknown artist (studio of Giulio Romano), *Perseus Disarming and the Birth of Coral*, ca. 1592-1640. London, British Museum, 1851,0208.322
 24. a. Frans Snyders, *Butcher’s Shop*, ca. 1630-40. Oil on canvas. Moscow, Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, inv. no. Ж-349. Detail: “goat’s head”
b. Frans Snyders and Anthony van Dyck, *Fish Market*, ca. 1621. Oil on canvas, 253 x 375 cm. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. no. GG_383
 25. Frans Snyders, *Butcher’s Shop*, ca. 1630-40. Oil on canvas. Moscow, Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, inv. no. Ж-349
 26. Frans Francken the Younger, *Cabinet of a Collector*, signed and dated 1617. Oil on panel, 76.5 x 119.1 cm. London, Royal Collection, RCIN 405781
 27. Giacinto Calandrucci, *Head of Medusa*, ca. 1700. Oil on tortoise shell, 49 x 48 cm. Stockholm, Nationalmuseum, NM7163
 28. Romeyn de Hooghe, *The Ephesian Herm as Nature Giving Birth*, 1685. Engraving, title page of Antonie van Leeuwenhoek, *Ontledingen and ontdekkingen van levende dierkens in de deel-deelen van verscheyde dieren, vogelen en visschen* (Leiden: Boutesteyn, 1686)
 29. Jean Mignon, *Diana Ephesus*, ca. 1523-1603. Etching. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art acc. no. 1964.8.862
 30. Peter Paul Rubens, *The Finding of Erichthonius*, ca. 1616. Oil on canvas, 218 x 317 cm. Vienna, Liechtenstein Museum inv. no. GE111
 31. Peter Paul Rubens, *The Finding of Erichthonius*, ca. 1615. Oil on panel, 50 x 41 cm. London, Courtauld Gallery, The Samuel Courtauld Trust P.1978.PG.364
 32. Peter Paul Rubens, *Nymphs and Satyrs*, 1638-40. Oil on canvas, 139.7 x 167 cm. Madrid, Museo del Prado.
 33. Frans Snyders, *Still Life of Fruits and Vegetables*. Pen and ink and wash on paper, 242 x 344 mm. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum
 34. Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens, *Nature Adorned*, ca. 1615. Oil on panel, 106.7 x 72.4 cm. Glasgow, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, acc. no. 609
 35. Peter Paul Rubens and Osias Beert, *Pausias and Glycera*, ca. 1612. Oil on canvas, approx. 17.3 x 16.2 cm. Sarasota, Ringling Museum of Art, inv. no. SN219
 36. Jan Brueghel the Elder, *Part of a Garland of Fruit and Flowers*. Pen in brown ink, brown wash, 29.6 x 11.7 cm. Antwerp, Museum Plantin-Moretus, inv. no. D.IX.23

37. Peter Paul Rubens and Frans Snyders, *Statue of Ceres*, ca. 1615. Oil on panel, 90.5 x 65.5 cm. St. Petersburg, Hermitage Museum, inv. no. 504
38. Jan Brueghel the Elder and Henrick van Balen, *Garland of Fruit Around a Depiction of Ceres Receiving Gifts from the Four Seasons*, ca. 1617. Oil on panel, 104 x 68.9 cm. Antwerp, Dexia Bank inv. no. 1291
39. Cornelis Galle I after Peter Paul Rubens, Frontispiece for Leonardus Lessius, *De Iustitia et Iure*, 4th ed. (Antwerp, 1617). Engraving on laid paper, 31.7 x 19.3 cm. Williamstown, The Clark Museum, 1982.74
40. Peter Paul Rubens (workshop) and Frans Snyders, *Ceres and Pan*, ca. 1620. Oil on canvas, 178.5 x 280.5 cm. Madrid, Museo del Prado
41. Peter Paul Rubens, *Deucalion and Pyrrha*, 1636, oil on panel, 26x40.7, Madrid, Museo del Prado, inv. no. 2041
42. Peter Paul Rubens (workshop), *Cadmus Sowing the Dragon's Teeth*, ca. 1640. Oil on panel, 27.7 cm x 43.3 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum SK-A-4051.
43. Peter Paul Rubens, *Deucalion and Pyrrha* (detail: "stages of creation")
44. Peter Paul Rubens, *The Voyage of the Cardinal Infante Ferdinand of Spain from Barcelona to Genoa in April 1633, with Neptune Calming the Tempest (Quos ego)*, 1635. Oil on panel, 48.9 x 64.1 cm. Cambridge, Harvard Art Museums, 1942.174
45. Peter Paul Rubens, *Neptune Calming the Tempest (Quos ego)*, 1635. Oil on canvas, 326 x 384 cm. Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden.
46. Peter Paul Rubens, *Hercules Strangling the Nemean Lion*, ca. 1639. Oil on panel, with traces of red chalk, 23 x 39.2 cm. Cambridge, Harvard Art Museums 2000.199
47. Peter Paul Rubens, *The Voyage of the Cardinal Infante Ferdinand of Spain from Barcelona to Genoa in April 1633, with Neptune Calming the Tempest (Quos ego)*. Detail: "Boreas"
48. Agnolo Bronzino, *Portrait of Andrea Doria as Neptune*, 1531-33. Oil on canvas, 149 x 199.5 cm. Milan, Pinacoteca Brera, Reg. Cron 1206
49. Romeyn de Hooghe [after Juan de Ledesma], *Farnese Bridge Over the Scheldt*, 1670. Etching, 34.4 x 37.3 cm. Image courtesy of Brown University, Brown Digital Repository.
50. Romeyn de Hoogh [after Juan de Ledesma], *Explosion of the Farnese Bridge*, 1680. Etching, 26.8 x 35.9 cm. Houston, Museum of Fine Arts, acc. no. BF.2000.23.3
51. Frans Francken the Younger, *Allegory on the Abdication of Emperor Charles V in Brussels, 25 October 1555*, ca. 1630-40. Oil on panel, 134 x 172 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, SK-A-112
52. Theodoor van Thulden after Peter Paul Rubens, *Stage of Mercury (Mercury Fleeing Antwerp)*. Engraving, 57 x 40.5 cm. In Jean Gaspard Gevaerts, *Pompa introitus Ferdinandi Austriaci* (Antwerp, 1641). Brussels, Bibliothèque Albert I, II 36.816 E LP [Harvard Fine Arts Library, Visual Collections, d2008.09949]
53. Theodoor van Thulden after Peter Paul Rubens, *Arch of the Mint* (front), ca. 1641. Etching with plate tone, 47.4 x 30.3 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art 1985.52-16729. Made for Jean Gaspard Gevaerts, *Pompa introitus Ferdinandi Austriaci* (Antwerp, 1641)
54. Peter Paul Rubens, *Arch of the Mint*, ca. 1645. Oil sketch on panel, 71 x 104 cm. Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, inv no. 316-317. Details: "Peruvius," "Rio de la Plata"
55. Peter Paul Rubens, *The Meeting of the Two Ferdinands at Nördlingen*, ca. 1634-5. Oil on canvas. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum
56. Peter Paul Rubens, *Education of the Princess*, ca. 1622. Oil on canvas, 394 x 295 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre

57. Peter Paul Rubens, *The Meeting of the Two Ferdinands at Nördlingen*, ca. 1634-5. Oil on panel, 49.1 x 69.8 cm. Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, inv. no. 87.PB.15
58. Peter Paul Rubens and Frans Snyders, *Union of Earth and Water (Antverpia and Scaldis)*, ca. 1618. Oil on canvas, 222.5 x 180.5 cm. St. Petersburg, Hermitage Museum, inv. no. ГЭ-464
59. Peter Paul Rubens or Abraham Janssen, *Two Studies of a River God*, 1620-25. Black chalk on cream antique laid paper, 41.6 x 24.2 cm. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, acc. no. 20.813
60. Peter Paul Rubens, *The Birth of Venus*, ca. 1632-3. Black chalk and oil on oak panel, 61 x 78 cm. London, National Gallery, inv. no. NG1195
61. *River Nile*. In Vincenzo Cartari, *Imagini de i dei* (Venice, 1647), 144/ Duke University Libraries MARCXML
62. *The Winds*. In Vincenzo Cartari, *Le imagini dei degli antichi* (1608), vol. 1, 244. Image courtesy of Duke University Libraries (D-6 C322IMA)
63. Peter Paul Rubens, *Hero and Leander*, ca. 1604. Oil on canvas 95.9 x 128 cm. New Haven, Yale University Art Gallery, 1962.25
64. Peter Paul Rubens, *Hero and Leander*, ca. 1600-03. Pen and brown ink with wash on paper, 20.40 x 30.60 cm. Glasgow, National Gallery of Scotland, acc. no. D 4936.
65. Peter Paul Rubens, *Two Nereids*, ca. 1602. Black chalk on paper, 22.2 x 30.6 cm. Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin
66. Leonardo da Vinci, *Neptune (Quos ego)*, ca. 1504-5. Black chalk on paper, 25.1 x 39.2 cm. Buckingham Palace, Royal Collection Trust, RCIN 912570
67. Theodoor van Thulden after Peter Paul Rubens, *Quos ego*. Engraving, dimensions unknown. In Jean Gaspard Gevaerts, *Pompa introitus Ferdinandi Austriaci* (Antwerp, 1641), 7. Harvard University, Houghton Library p Typ 630.41.422.
68. Marcantonio Raimondi after Raffaello Sanzio, *Quos ego*, ca. 1615-16. Engraving, dimensions unknown. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 19.52.10. Detail of central panel.
69. Marcantonio Raimondi, *The Dream of Raphael (Two Women Sleeping by the Banks of the River Styx)*, ca. 1507-08. Engraving, dimensions unknown. Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, P.5380-R.
70. a. Virgil Solis, *Elementorum distributio*, in Ovid/Johannes Spreng, *Metamorphoses Ovidii* (Frankfurt, 1563), 3.
b. Bernard Salomon, *La creation du monde*, woodcut, in *Métamorphose Figurée* (Lyon, 1557), 7.
c. Pieter van der Borcht, *Elementorum distributio*, engraving, in Ovid, *Ovidii Nasonis Metamorphoses Expisitatae* (Antwerp, 1591), 7.
71. Louis Béroud, *L'inondation (Peintre copiant un tableau au musée du Louvre)*, 1910. Oil on canvas, 254 x 197.8 cm. Private collection.

Introduction: the Mollusk's Blood

In a late oil sketch that belonged to the cycle of sixty mythological paintings he designed in 1637-1638 for the Torre de la Parada, a Spanish royal hunting lodge near Madrid, Peter Paul Rubens takes Hercules to the beach [fig. 1].¹ His source for the scene was a legend first recounted in a second-century Greek thesaurus, the *Onomasticon* of Julius Pollux.² One day, Hercules was walking with a dog along the shores of Tyre (present-day Lebanon) on his way to see a nymph he loved. Suddenly, the dog discovered a murex shell in the sand and, as dogs are inclined to do, promptly ate the mollusk inside of it, staining its mouth with the animal's inky "blood." When Hercules and the dog arrived, the nymph saw the reddish purple stain and begged Hercules to get her a gown in that color. A local industry was born for Tyrian purple or *purpura*, "the most precious color of antiquity," reserved by sumptuary laws for imperial dress.³

The sketch has attracted relatively little attention in the vast Rubens scholarship,⁴ with

¹ Rubens's oil sketch for "Hercules Discovering the Tyrian Purple" is in the Musée Bonnat in Bayonne, inv. no. Vincent Ducourau, ed., *Musée Bonnat, Bayonne* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2004), 60-61; and Michael Jaffé, "Esquisses inédites de Rubens pour La Torre della Parada," *La Revue du Louvre et des Musée de France* 14/6 (Jan., 1964), 313-322: 316. On this image in the Torre de la Parada cycle see Svetlana Alpers, *The Decoration of the Torre de la Parada*, Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard 9 (London and New York: Phaidon, 1971), 221-22, no. 31a; Arnauld Brejon de Lavergnée, ed., *Rubens* (Gent: Snoeck; Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées, 2004), exh. cat. Palais des Beux-Arts de Lille, cat. no. 91; and Aneta Georgievska-Shine and Larry Silver: *Rubens, Velazquez, and the King of Spain* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), 33-36.

² Julius Pollux, *Onomasticon* I, 47. As Held (*Oil Sketches*, 279) points out, a French translation of Pollux had been included in a 1614 French edition of Philostratus' *Imagines* that Rubens knew. Philostratus trans. by Blaise de Vigenere, *Les images ou tableaux de platte peinture des deux Philostrates sophistes grecs et les statues de Callistrate [...]* (Paris, 1614), 242. The subject was first identified by Max Rooses, *L'oeuvre de P.P. Rubens: histoire et description de ses tableaux et dessins, phototypies* (Antwerp: J. Maes, 1886) III, 20, no. 527.

³ On the value of purple and specifically Tyrian purple in Roman antiquity, see John Gage, *Color and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 25-26.

⁴ Although Alpers's *catalogue raisonné* on it was among the first volumes published in the *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard*, the Torre de la Parada remains under-studied, in part due to the heavy involvement of Rubens's workshop in executing the large canvases and their perceived low quality.

Svetlana Alpers, in her book on the decorations of the Torre de la Parada, even admitting some puzzlement as to why Rubens included the strange scene in the cycle.⁵ Only one earlier depiction of it is known.⁶ That Rubens, faced with the task of designing sixty separate scenes for a hunting lodge, would have dug into some of the more arcane corners of mythology for a story featuring a ravenous dog was hardly out of character for the famously erudite artist.⁷ The scene was also in keeping with what Alpers has described as the “anti-heroic” character of the Torre de la Parada cycle, which unites it with Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*: “the basis of the comic treatment of the gods in both [...] is the conflict between heroism and love.”⁸ Scenes of Hercules on his off-time were a kind of comedic sub-genre in early modern painting exemplified by the themes of “drunken Hercules” and “Hercules and Omphale,” both of which Rubens had painted earlier in his career.⁹ Yet here, rather than milking the anti-heroic tropes of emasculation or drunkenness (the loss of bodily boundaries and autonomy) for laughs and thereby offering an obvious foil to Hercules’s masculine virtue, Rubens depicts Hercules simply kneeling, patting a dog on the head and gazing out at the lapping waves as if in the midst of some thought or deduction.

Rubens knew and painted numerous Ovidian etiologies, or origin myths, explaining how plants got their forms. And in such myths, *blood* is spilt again and again as one of nature’s favorite mediums, permanently staining the berries of the mulberry tree,¹⁰ the petals

⁵ Alpers, 222: “The reason for the inclusion of this very unusual scene in the Torre series is not clear.”

⁶ By Santi di Tito in the background of his *Hercules and Io* in the Studiolo of Francis I in the Palazzo Vecchio; Held, 280.

⁷ Another such scene Rubens included in the Torre de la Parada cycle is *Glaucus and Scylla*.

⁸ Alpers, *The Decoration of the Torre de la Parada*, 155.

⁹ On Rubens’s *Drunken Hercules* see Lisa Rosenthal, “Manhood and Statehood: Rubens’s Construction of Heroic Virtue,” *Oxford Art Journal* 16/1 (1993), 92-11, esp. 92-95. For Rubens’s copies after the Farnese Hercules, see Marjorie van Meulen et al, *Corpus Rubenianum Ludvig Burchard XXIII*, Copies after the Antique (London: Harvey Miller, 1993), cat. nos. 31, 37, 43, 44.

¹⁰ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* IV: 93-127 (death of Thisbe).

of the hyacinth¹¹ and of the anemone,¹² the sap of the myrrh tree,¹³ and so on. Here, Rubens gives us almost the reverse: an etiology of a *color* from the blood of a lowly animal. The scene gives a mythological overlay to an otherwise technical history of how and where Tyrian purple, derived from the secretions of predatory sea snails, was actually produced in antiquity.¹⁴ Hercules becomes a comic hero of visual technology.

In his classic monograph on Rubens's oil sketches, Julius Held suggested that Rubens might have included the scene as a topical allusion to the discovery by the Dutch alchemist, inventor, and engraver Cornelis Drebbel, in 1630, of how to dye wool a deep red using a solution of cochineal and tin.¹⁵ Like Hercules's discovery of Tyrian purple and so many legendary scientific discoveries, this happened by accident, when Drebbel dropped a flask of aqua regia onto a tin windowsill.¹⁶ As Held notes, the parallel is strengthened by the fact that *purpura* was understood in antiquity as an especially deep and precious red.¹⁷ Rubens seems to have conceived of it in this way too: in his sketch, the substance that drips from the dog's muzzle is represented with vermillion, the color Rubens, like many early modern painters,

¹¹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* III: 474-510 (death of Ajax): "While the truthful mouth of Apollo uttered these words, look, the blood that had spilt on the ground staining the grass was no longer blood, and a flower sprang up, brighter than Tyrian dye, and took the shape of a lily, though it was purple in colour, where the other is silvery white."

¹² Ovid, *Metamorphoses* X: 708-739 (death of Adonis): "So saying, she [Cyntherea] sprinkled the blood with odorous nectar: and, at the touch, it swelled up, as bubbles emerge in yellow mud. In less than an hour, a flower, of the colour of blood, was created such as pomegranates carry, that hide their seeds under a tough rind [...]." Rubens's painting of this scene in ca. 1614 is now in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, inv. no. ; oil sketch in the Dulwich Picture Gallery in London, acc. no. 451.

¹³ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* X: 356-430 (death of Myrrha's nurse): "While she was still speaking, the soil covered her shins; roots, breaking from her toes, spread sideways, supporting a tall trunk; her bones strengthened, and in the midst of the remaining marrow, the blood became sap [...]." All above translations of Ovid from Anthony S. Kline, ed., *The Ovid Project*. Online edition URL: <http://etext.virginia.edu/latin/ovid/trans/Ovhome.htm>

¹⁴ The extraction of Tyrian purple from mollusks is discussed in Pliny the Elder, *Historia naturalis* IX, chapters 60-65.

¹⁵ Held, 280.

¹⁶ Held, 280.

¹⁷ Indeed, as Held points out, Blaise de Vigenère, in his commentary on the 1614 French translation of Philostratus that may have been Rubens's source, uses purple and red interchangeably ("les Pourpes ou Escarlattes anciennes"); Philostratus, *Imagines* (Paris, 1614), 242.

typically used to depict fresh blood.¹⁸ Whether or not the allusion to Drebbel was intended, Tyrian purple is invoked by Rubens, I would argue, both as *a* color and as symbolic color *par excellence*. Precious and significant, it perfectly stands for color's ability to transcend its base materiality as if moves from nature to culture, from mollusk blood to *the* signifier of imperial splendor. Rubens was of course deeply familiar with such signs. He trafficked in them. Yet here he divests from them, reifying color and taking us back to nature, to the mollusk and its secretion.

That Rubens identifies *purpura* with vermillion becomes more significant in light of the Latin meaning of his own name: "reddening" or "blushing." Specifically, *rubens* is the present active participle of *rubeo*, which in classical literature often specifically meant to redden or blush with blood. This etymology has received mostly passing discussion,¹⁹ which is perhaps for the best. It is difficult to connect it to specific works, or rather it is too easy; as a thesis about Rubens's art, it easily devolves into a reductive reading of each patch or stroke of red as a kind of crypto-signature. Such an argument would be as much of a dead end as the one, actually made and debated at a recent Rubens conference in Antwerp, that red in Rubens primarily or even always signifies his patrons the Habsburgs, who were identified with

¹⁸ On Rubens's use of vermillion in this sketch, see Held, 280.

¹⁹ Rubens's family name is traceable to as early as 1396, and was originally spelled "Rubbens" or "Ruebens"; the latter spelling was still used by Rubens's father. According to Max Rooses, it was the painter and his siblings that first Latinized their name to Rubens; Max Rooses, *Rubens*, trans. Harold Child (London: Duckworth, 1904), vol. 1, 2-3. Tine Meganck recently discussed the alchemical significance of Rubens's name in a catalogue entry, "The 'Reddener': Peter Paul Rubens and Alchemy," in *Art and Alchemy: the Mystery of Transformation*, ed. Sven Dupré, Dedo von Kerssenbrock-Krosigk, and Beat Wismer, trans. Susanna Michael (Munich: Hirner, 2014), 146-155. Eileen Reeves has suggested that the swirling reddish sky seen in the background of Rubens's group and self-portrait known as the "Four Philosophers" is an *aurora borealis*, which "in Flanders was most often described as *rubens* or reddish"; *Painting the Heavens: Art and Science in the Age of Galileo* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 64. Desmond Shawe-Taylor and Jennifer Scott have likewise suggested that Rubens's name is alluded to in the reddening sky in his self-portrait now in Windsor Castle; *Bruegel to Rubens: Masters of Flemish Painting* (London: Royal Collection Publications, 2007), 142-143, no. 30. Christine Göttler mentioned the significance of Rubens's name in forthcoming work presented at the University of Hamburg in May 2015; she also brought Meganck's contribution to my attention. Finally, I discussed this topic at some length in my MA thesis, "Opening the Doors of the Temple of Janus: the Generative *Medusa* and Rubens's Red-Blooded Art" (Courtauld Institute, London, 2006).

burgundy—not wrong, just not very interesting or productive.

Yet what is striking about *Hercules Discovering the Tyrian Purple* is its emphasis not on Rubens’s “signature color,” but on its materiality. Knelt over by Hercules, the dash of vermillion in the shell is detained at the crux of the narrative as a meaningful substance. The detail offers a point of departure for this dissertation, which is about intersections of making and matter in Rubens’s mythological paintings. By matter, I mean not just the actual physical stratum of the paintings, nor just the various textures or substances they depict: flesh or indeed often blood, fabric, hair, metals, gems or stones, the fur, feathers or scales of animals, atmospheric or elemental substances such as earth, clouds, water, fire, or smoke. Rather, my focus here is on images where Rubens depicts raw matter at the crux of a mythological scene—where matter, like the mollusk’s blood, *acts*. More broadly, I will explore how Rubens and his Antwerp collaborators shaped creative personae and ideas about image-making through their works.

The classicist Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux has defined the Greek term *ikonopoesis* or image-making specifically as “the making of images of living things.”²⁰ In natural philosophy, the most crucial paradigm besides sexual reproduction for the making of *actual* living things was spontaneous generation: the Aristotelian doctrine, current until about the mid-seventeenth century when it began to be debunked by microscopy, that certain ‘low’ species such as flies arose directly from a life force latent in decaying or raw matter. As Karin Leonhard has argued in brilliant studies, spontaneous generation was invoked in seventeenth-century painting in ways that linked it metaphorically to painting itself.²¹ This

²⁰ Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux, “Les limites de l’anthropomorphisme: Hermès et Dionysos,” in C. Malamoud and J.-P. Vernant, eds., *Corps des Dieux*, 259-87 (Paris, 1986). Cited in Caroline van Eck, *Art, Agency and Living Presence: From the Animated Image to the Excessive Object* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2014), 47, note 86.

²¹ Karin Leonhard, *Bildfelder: Stilleben und Naturstücke des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2013); and “Pictura’s Fertile Field: Otto Marseus van Schrieck and the Genre of Sottobosco Painting,” *Simiolus* 31/2

was something I intuited and argued as well, in my Master's thesis of 2006.²² Leonhard has focused on still lives of the forest floor, a genre that flourished in the second half of the seventeenth century and whose main practitioners seem to have been Dutch. 'Zooming in' on murky, mossy creatural worlds, the *sottoboschi* construe matter not as something heroically shaped or enlivened by the painter, but as a force in the image that also plays an active role in its making. As Leonhard argues, however, what this emphasized was not simply the painted image's liveliness, but the tensions between its apparent liveliness and its inert materiality. Identifying their works with *natura naturans*—"nature naturing," a realm of flux in which images or species are perpetually forming and deforming—baroque still life painters also exposed their art as *natura naturata* or "nature natured," a realm of static creations that are dead on arrival, bound to the muck of materials.²³

In the *Head of Medusa* (ca. 1613-1618), Rubens embroils matter in an act of creation, detaining it halfway to form. Created in Antwerp in collaboration with the still life specialist Frans Snyders, this work departed radically from visual tradition by showing the gorgon's blood metamorphosing into snakes, and, by implication, into an entire virtual display shelf of insects and reptiles—a reference to spontaneous generation. I argue that Rubens and Snyders posit the gorgon's blood as a symbolic "prime matter" of both nature and painting, conflating the two. I then connect the work to Rubens's and Snyders's collaboration; Rubens's "red-bloodedness" as constructed in his works and by his early biographers; and the ambitions of the early modern *Kunst- und Wunderkammer*. The remaining two chapters focus on further intersections of artistic agency, materiality, and nature in Rubens.

(2010), 95-118.

²² See note 20, as above.

²³ On the opposition of *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* in the early modern period see Thomas Leinkauf, "Implikationen des Begriffs *natura naturans* in der frühen Neuzeit," in Natascha Adamowsky, Hartmut Böhme, and Robert Felfe, eds., *Ludi Naturae: Spiele der Natur in Kunst und Wissenschaft* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2011), 103-118.

The notion of matter as a generative force in painting was not limited to an undercurrent of baroque still life; rather, I argue, it lay at the core of much of baroque figural painting as developed by its most Herculean proponent. An example is Rubens's late oil sketch of *Deucalion and Pyrrha* (ca. 1638), another work from the Torre de la Parada cycle. The image's Ovidian subject is the regeneration of the human race from the "bones," i.e. rocks, of Mother Earth.²⁴ Here, too, Rubens construes metamorphosis not as shape-shifting, but as the shift from matter to any body at all.

In early seventeenth-century Antwerp, the counter-Reformation revival of the concept of living images rested on a belief in the immanence of spirit in organic matter. At the same time, this intersected with widespread curiosity about the agency of matter in nature, whose metamorphic processes, constantly churning out formations that resembled or preserved those processes (mandrake roots, fossils, etc.), were analogized with art-making. Connected to this was the "grotesque," understood in the early modern period not simply as a characteristic of how something looks (monstrous, aberrant) but also as visual poetics, a mode of image-making.²⁵ Arising from the grotto and other low, chthonic spaces of nature, the grotesque was a site of oscillation between formation and deformation, human and non-human, image and non-image. In Rubens, I show, it is also sometimes construed as an illuminated species of the painterly, a mode of painting that emphasizes its own genesis.

Elsewhere, Rubens does give Mother Earth a body, allegorizing her as nature in the guise of Artemis Ephesus, an ancient herm statue with multiple breasts that symbolized nature's fertility. Rubens's depictions of the Ephesian herm are the focus of the second chapter, which explores how Rubens and his Antwerp collaborators in the 1610s fashioned

²⁴ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1: 313-415.

²⁵ See Dorothea Scholl, *Von den 'Grottesken' zum Grotesken: Die Konstituierung einer Poetik des Grotesken in der italienischen Renaissance* (Münster: Lit, 2004).

painting as a universal technology. In sixteenth-century art and art theory, Artemis Ephesus, like the Medusa, embodied comparisons between nature and art: art's idealized beauty as opposed to nature's multiplicity, the limitless (and grotesque or grotto-esque) fertility of the artistic imagination, or art's shared access with poetry to nature's divine mysteries. Rubens and his colleagues drew from such traditions, I argue, but now situated art's cornucopia firmly in the realm of painting, a super-productive realm that, like nature herself, was economically and culturally *primary*.

The focus of my third and last chapter is Rubens's late oil sketch of *Neptune Calming the Tempest* (1634), also known as *Quos Ego* after the passage from Virgil's *Aeneid* on which it is based. The sketch belonged to Rubens's designs for the triumphal entry of Ferdinand II into Antwerp on April 17, 1635. Now in the Harvard Art Museums, it one of Rubens's most virtuosic oil sketches, depicting waves churning and breaking, clouds forming and dissipating, with startling fluency. Its crux is the relationship between Neptune and the fleeing north wind Boreas, depicted as a half-embodied cloud. Connecting it to its pendant in the cycle, which prominently depicts the personified river Danube, I bring a range of evidence to argue that Rubens created these figures as allegories of the painter, who does not simply represent but physically shapes, materializes, and *makes* imperial history. I also question the dichotomy between private and public, or utilitarian and aesthetic, that has governed approaches to Rubens's oil sketches, arguing that their character was not only practical but also theoretical and performative.²⁶

Particularly in the oil sketch, Neptune and his liquid realm are implied as collaborators

²⁶ On Rubens's oil sketches, beyond Held's still authoritative catalogue, see Peter C. Sutton and Marjorie E. Wieseman with Nico van Hout, *Drawn by the Brush: Oil Sketches by Peter Paul Rubens* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004); Philippa Hurd, ed., *Peter Paul Rubens: A Touch of Brilliance: Oil Sketches and Related Works from the Stage Hermitage Museum and the Courtauld Institute Gallery* (Munich and London: Prestel, 2003); Leo van Puyvelde, trans. Eveline Winkworth, *The Sketches of Rubens* (London: Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1947).

in image-making. To some extent, my interpretation of this work recuperates a controversial thesis put forth in another book by Svetlana Alpers, the *Making of Rubens* (1996).²⁷ Alpers examined the early French critical responses to Rubens's painting that famously pitted defenders of his sensuous colorism such as Roger de Piles (1635-1709) against advocates of the more linear and rational classicism of Poussin. Her last chapter argued that such responses to Rubens were prefigured in his images themselves, which shaped an artistic identity through forms of allegory. Specifically, she argued that his figures of the drunken Silenus and of dancing Flemish peasants modeled a creative mode of bacchic "abandonment."²⁸ Lisa Rosenthal, using approaches drawn partly from psychology, has explored how Rubens shaped a creative persona and navigated political and gendered power dynamics through allegory.²⁹ Self-portraiture is the realm in which artistic identity is most often sought. Like Alpers and Rosenthal, however, I am after something different and more elusive: how it is thematized in works that are ostensibly about something else. The *Head of Medusa* and *Deucalion and Pyrrha*, Rubens's early and late myths of spontaneous generation, are rich sources for this. However, the premise of this study is that even images that do not explicitly depict acts of creation can invoke image-making conceptually, as well as related processes like formation, figuration, and procreation.³⁰ My third chapters argues that Rubens would have identified not with figures of total abandonment such as Silenus, but with ones that elegantly channel or marshal nature's generative forces, namely bodies of water.

Throughout, I also consider Rubens's artistic authority as something shaped conjunctively

²⁷ Svetlana Alpers, *The Making of Rubens* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). For a review of this book see Lisa Rosenthal, "Rubens Reconsidered: Alpers and the Making of Artistic Authority," *Oxford Art Journal* 19/2 (1996), 102-105; and for a more critical review, Joanna Woodall, "Conversation Piece," *Art History* 19/1 (March, 1996), 134.

²⁸ Alpers, *The Making of Rubens*, ch. 3 ("Creativity in the Flesh: the Drunken Silenus"), 101-157.

²⁹ Lisa Rosenthal, *Gender, Politics, and Allegory in the Art of Rubens* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

³⁰ On the notion of the figure in western art and literature see the classic essay by Erich Auerbach, "Figura," in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984): 11-78.

with other artists.³¹

I focus primarily on two phases in Rubens's career, the only extended periods during which he was based in Antwerp. The first half of the thesis focuses on works from the 1610s, when Rubens, freshly returned to Antwerp after eight years in the Italian peninsula working as court painter to the Gonzaga in Mantua, collaborated with other Antwerp painters and with them forging new conceptions of painting. Collaboration is a recurrent theme in these discussions. The second half, encompassing *Deucalion and Pyrrha* (1636) and *Neptune Calming the Tempest* (1634), pivots to works Rubens made in Antwerp in the last decade of his life, which served as models for his workshop.³²

In 1927, a ninety-page bibliography on Rubens alone was published in Antwerp.³³ To calculate its length today is daunting. Few other artists were such a fulcrum for the development of the discipline of art history itself. Moreover, Rubens constitutes a bridge between forms of art history *avant la lettre*—early modern art biographies, such as those written on him by André Félibien (1666), Pietro Bellori (1672), and Joachim von Sandrart (1675),³⁴ and the French critical debates of the eighteenth century—and the professional and popular art history publications that proliferated in the nineteenth century.

The first academic Rubens monograph in modern art history was arguably that of

³¹ As Lisa Rosenthal notes, one of the “limitations” of Alpers’s study was that Rubens “appears here as a solitary maker, removed from the collaborative enterprise of his studio practice and from the complexities of negotiating with powerful patrons”; “Rubens Reconsidered,” 104.

³² On Rubens’s workshop see Arnout Balis, “Rubens en zijn atelier: een probleemstelling,” in *Rubens: Een genie aan het werk* (Antwerp, 2007), 30-63; “Working it Out: Design Tools and Practices in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Flemish Art,” in Vlieghe et al, eds., 2000, 129-51; and “Fatto da un mio discepolo”: Rubens’s Studio Practices Revealed,” in T. Nakamura, *Rubens and his Workshop: the Flight of Lot and his Family from Sodom* (Tokyo, 1994), 97-127. Balis’s studies have shown that Rubens’s workshop was extremely hierarchical and efficient, with all productivity geared toward the work of the ‘master’. As Anne-Marie Logan notes, this is in contrast to Rembrandt who “allowed freedom of individual expression among his pupils”; Rubens “did not have to register students with the guild and had the court’s permission to operate outside of its rules,” so he could run his workshop as he pleased.

³³ Hoofdbibliotheek der stad Antwerpen, *Literatuur over Rubens* (Antwerp: Hoofdbibliotheek, 1927).

³⁴ André Félibien, *Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellens peintres anciens et modernes* (Paris, 1666-1668).

Gustav Friedrich Waagen, published in Berlin in 1833 and in an English translation in 1840.³⁵ From then until about the mid-twentieth century, the standard Rubens monograph was a hybrid biography and catalogue: “his life and work.” This was nothing new. Since Vasari, artist biographies had been vehicles for art criticism and theory. What was distinctive about the Rubens historiography was rather the opposite: the continued prominence of his biography even after the emergence of academic art history. The fame that Rubens achieved during his lifetime meant that stories about him were quickly codified, and that a wealth of documentary evidence about him, including his extensive professional correspondence, was preserved. This, combined with Antwerp’s strong traditions of record-keeping and local history, allowed an unusually vivid picture to be sketched of Rubens’s life.³⁶ In 1887, a nearly 500-page book was published on Rubens and his family, appendix with timelines and genealogical charts.³⁷ In 1861, an entire book-length essay was published in Cologne just on the question of where Rubens was born.³⁸ The answer: he was born in 1577 in Siegen, where his father Jan Rubens, a lawyer and former alderman of Antwerp, had been forced into temporary exile following a scandalous adulterous affair in Cologne with the Princess of Orange, for which he was even briefly imprisoned. A Protestant, Rubens’s father had fled Antwerp to Cologne in 1567 at the beginning of the violent anti-Reformation campaign in the city led by the Duke of Alva.³⁹ In 1587, he died, and Rubens’s mother, Maria Pypelinckx, moved the family back to Antwerp.⁴⁰

³⁵ Gustav Friedrich Waagen, *Über den Maler Petrus Paulus Rubens* (Berlin, 1833).

³⁶ Joseph François Boussard, *Les leçons de P. P. Rubens: Ou, fragments épistolaires sur la religion, la peinture et la politique: Extraits d'une correspondance inédite* (Brussels: T. Lejeune, 1838); Emile Cachet, *Lettres inédites de Pierre-Paul Rubens, publiées d'après ses autographes* (Brussels: M. Hayez, 1840).

³⁷ Pierre Génard, *P.P. Rubens: Aanteekeningen over den grooten meester en zijne bloedverwanten* (Antwerp: P. Kockx, 1877).

³⁸ Leonard Ennen, *Ueber den Geburtsort von Peter Paul Rubens* (Cologne: M. DuMont-Schauberg, 1861).

³⁹ Jan Rubens’s name appears in a list of Antwerp Calvinists drawn up in 1566; he was registered in Siegen as a Lutheran. Rooses, *Rubens* (1904), 3 and 12.

⁴⁰ Rubens states in a letter to George Geldorp dated July 25, 1627 that he lived in Cologne for the first ten

“Rubens the diplomat,” the cosmopolitan painter who traveled through Europe in the service of the Habsburgs and their allies—on a mission of peace in a time of total war—is a character that has captivated authors, particularly in the years leading up to and during the Second World War.⁴¹ Even the titles of recent popular biographies read like those of spy thrillers.⁴² Though sending painters between European courts as envoys or tokens of favor was not uncommon in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Rubens’s political career was indeed exceptional. For two decades he appears to have tried, sincerely and exhaustively, to broker an end to the disastrous web of conflicts, known as the Thirty Years War and the Eighty Years War, that spun out from the Habsburg’s attempts to quell the Protestant rebellions in their territories. The failure of those efforts has been seen as a backdrop for Rubens’s late *Horrors of War* (1638-39), a hysterical, smoky, chaotic scene of terror now in the Palazzo Pitti. Recently, Ulrich Heinen and others have challenged the myth of the “peace-loving” Rubens, noting his complicitness in Habsburg imperialism and the inherent contradictions of his allegories that try to enforce peace *through* violence.⁴³

Rubens’s studio-home on what is today the Vaartstraat (Wapper Straat) in Antwerp was destroyed in an eighteenth-century renovation, but reconstructed based on historical documents and reopened to the public on 28 July, 1946.⁴⁴ In the late 1940s and the 1950s

years of his life; Rooses, *Rubens* (1904), 9.

⁴¹ See Charles Ruelens and Max Rooses, *Codex Diplomaticus Rubenianus*, 6 vols. (Antwerp, 1887-1909); M. Gachard, *Histoire politique et diplomatique de Pierre-Paul Rubens* (Brussels: Office de publicité, 1877); H. M. Digby, *Policy and Paint, or Some Incidents in the Lives of Dudley Carleton and Peter Paul Rubens* (London, New York, Bombay, and Calcutta: Longmans, Green & Co., 1913); Emile Cammaerts, *Rubens, Painter and Diplomat* (London: Faber and Faber, 1931); Jozef Muls, *Rubens als Diplomaat in den Tachtigjarigen Oorlog* (Naarden: In den Toren, 1942).

⁴² See Anne-Marie Lescourret, *Rubens: a Double Life* (Chicago: I.R. Dee, 1993); and Mark Lamster, *Master of Shadows: the Secret Diplomatic Career of the Painter Peter Paul Rubens* (New York: Doubleday, 2009).

⁴³ Ulrich Heinen, “Rubens’ Pictorial Diplomacy at War (1637/1638),” *Nederlands kunsthistorisch jaarboek* 55.2004 (2006), 196-225.

⁴⁴ See Floris Prims, *Medeelingen door F. Prims en D. Roggen over P.P. Rubens op de openbare vergadering van 28 juli 1946 te Antwerpen bij de opening van het Rubenshuis* (Antwerp: Standaard-Boekhandel, 1946); and Frederik Clijmans, *The Reconstruction of the House and Studio of Rubens* (Antwerp, 1948).

there was a flurry of exhibitions and publications on Rubens's two wives.⁴⁵ This interest in Rubens's domestic and family life was firmly in keeping with the postwar moment, but also with a longstanding characterization of Rubens as an exemplary social actor, whose work ethic, financial success, and loving family modeled bourgeois ideals.⁴⁶

It was Max Rooses, the curator of the Plantin-Moretus museum in Antwerp from its founding in 1877, who firmly established "Rubens studies" as an art-historical field in its own right, with Antwerp as a respected center. 1877 was also the tercentenary celebration of Rubens's birth, which sparked a flood of shows and publications. Rooses was a major contributor to the *Rubens-bulletijn*, published in Antwerp from 1882 to 1910.⁴⁷ His seminal five-volume monograph on Rubens was published in Antwerp between 1887 and 1892.⁴⁸ In 1890, he published another monograph in German, *Rubens Leben und Werke*, which was translated into Dutch and French by 1903 and into English by 1904.⁴⁹ His *Geschiedenis der Antwerpsche schilderschool* (1879) had characterized Rubens as the apotheosis of Antwerp painting.⁵⁰ In 1887, Rooses and Charles Ruelens (1820-1890), the Brussels-based archaeologist and curator of manuscripts at the Royal Library of Belgium, began publishing Rubens's *Correspondance*.⁵¹ Though Rubens's extensive travels, friendships, and patronage abroad in places that would become centers of art history (Italy, France, Germany, England) meant that the seeds of Rubens studies were scattered widely, their center today arguably

⁴⁵ See Maurice Gilliams, *Rubens en zijn beide vrouwen* (Antwerp: Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1947); Jacqueline Bouchot-Saupique, *Elena Fourment Rubens*, Il Museo dei Capolavori, (Paris: Éditions d'Art, 1947).

⁴⁶ The interest in Rubens's domestic life was most recently met by an exhibition of Rubens's portraits of his family; see Ben van Beneden, ed., *Rubens in Private: the Master Portrays his Family*, catalogue of an exhibition held at the Rubenshuis, Antwerp, March 28-June 28, 2015 (London: Thames & Hudson, 2015).

⁴⁷ *Rubens-bulletijn: jaarboeken der ambtelijke commissie ingesteld door den Gemeenteraad der stad Antwerpen voor het uitgeven der bescheiden betrekkend het leven en de werken van Rubens* (Antwerp: Wed de Backer, 1882-1910).

⁴⁸ Max Rooses, *L'oeuvre de P. P. Rubens* (Antwerp: Jos. Maes, 1887-1892).

⁴⁹ Max Rooses, *Rubens' Leben und Werke* (Stuttgart: Union Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1890).

⁵⁰ Max Rooses, *Geschiedenis der Antwerpsche schilderschool* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1879).

⁵¹ Max Rooses and Charles Ruelens, *Correspondance de Rubens et documents épistolaires concernant sa vie et ses oeuvres* (Antwerp: Veuve de Backer, 1887-1909).

remains in Antwerp and at the Rubenianum, an institute and library located next to the Rubenshuis, which in 1962 began publishing the *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard*.⁵² The definitive postwar Rubens monograph, his *Corpus*, has been broken down into this series of *catalogues raisonnées* by the most distinguished Rubenists on various aspects of his work.

One theme that has not yet received an independent volume in the *Corpus* are Rubens's self-portraits.⁵³ In this regard, Rubens stands in striking contrast to Rembrandt, whose dozens of painted and etched self-portraits have been at the forefront of exhibitions and research.⁵⁴ The auratic quality of Rembrandt's self-portraits, his often melancholic or scruffy appearance, and the fact that he so often stages himself in the studio, as a *painter*, have met and indeed helped to shape expectations of self-portraiture as an ongoing project or experiment of wrestling with the artistic self.⁵⁵ By contrast, Rubens's self-portraits have been

⁵² *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard* (London and New York: Phaedon, 1968-).

⁵³ On Rubens's self-portraits see Nils Büttner, "Se ipsum expressit': Rubens's Self-portraits as public statements," in *Rubens in Private: The Master Portrays his Family*, ed. Ben van Beneden (London: Thames & Hudson, 2015), 39-53; and Justus Müller-Hofstede, "Peter Paul Rubens 1577-1640: Selbstbildnis und Selbstverständnis," in *Von Bruegel bis Rubens: Das goldene Jahrhundert der flämischen Malerei*, ed. Ekkehard Mai and Hans Vlieghe (Vienna and Cologne: Locher, 1992-3), 103-120.

⁵⁴ The number of attributed self-portraits by Rembrandt ranges from 19 to 40. See Ernst van de Wetering with contributions by Josua Bruyn, Karin M. Groen, and Lideke Peese Binkhorst, *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 4, *The Self Portraits* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 2005). See also Walter A. Liedtke, "Rembrandt at Work: Some Late Self-Portraits," *De Kroniek van het Rembrandthuis* (2011), 20-27; Iris Schaefer, "Reclaiming the Inner Rembrandt: Passion and the Early Self-Portraits," in *Nederlands kunsthistorisch jaarboek* 60.2010, 233-262; Hans Belting, "Persona: die Masken des Selbst und das Gesicht," in *Wir Sind Maske*, ed. Sylvia Ferino-Pagden, exhib. cat. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (Milan: Silvano, 2009), 29-37; Michael Cole and Mary Pardo, *Inventions of the Studio* (University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 35-40; Christopher White and Quentin Buvelot, eds., *Rembrandt by Himself*, exhib. cat. National Gallery, London (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Harry Berger, *Fictions of the Pose: Rembrandt Against the Italian Renaissance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), esp. ch. 3; Simon Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes* (London: Lane, 1999); H. Perry Chapman, *Rembrandt's Self-Portraits: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990); and Claus Grimm, *Rembrandt Selbst: eine Neubewertung seiner Porträtkunst* (Stuttgart: Belser, 1991).

⁵⁵ This view is summarized for instance by Wilhelm von Bode: "[N]o other [artist] has left behind him anything like as many pictures of himself. The reason was assuredly not self-conceit. [...] It has been said, not without reason, that Rembrandt preached in them 'know thyself'. He does this, indeed, in his own way, but attempting to work out in his own features his psychological and artistic problems, and thus to find their solution. In these pictures of himself, of which nearly a hundred have come down to us in paintings, etchings, and drawings, we can follow the artist, almost year by year, from the beginning of his artistic career till the end of his life." Wilhelm von Bode, trans. Margaret L. Clarke, *Great Masters of Dutch and Flemish Painting* (London: Duckworth, 1909), 13-14. More recently, see for instance Pia Müller-Tamm, *Ich bin hier!: Von Rembrandt zum Selfie*, exhib. cat. Staatliche Kusthalle, Karlsruhe (Cologne and Karlsruhe: Snoeck, 2015).

regarded more as sporadic, isolated acts.⁵⁶ No major monographic museum show has ever been dedicated to them. In fact, aside from a handful of disputed fragments and copies, only two paintings by Rubens can be considered independent self-portraits, in the sense of the artist appearing as a single sitter: the self-portrait dated to 1623 and now held in Windsor Castle, and the one now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum and dated to the last year of Rubens's life (ca. 1638/40).⁵⁷ In contrast to Rembrandt's oblique or theatrical stagings, Rubens looks out at us with an expression that is direct, confident, and equal parts serious and sanguine. His cheeks are rosy. In the late self-portrait, in which he is aristocratically dressed, his watery eyes betray old age and perhaps a hint of wistfulness; yet a raised eyebrow renders him more arch than melancholic. His handful of other self-portraits depict Rubens in company, surrounded by family or esteemed humanist friends. He never appears in the studio or holds the tools of a painter. His earliest self-portrait depicts him with his first wife Isabella Brandt, sitting under a honeysuckle bower bathed in clear spring light. One of his last, from 1638, depicts him with his second wife Helena Fourment and their son in the garden of their splendid Antwerp home. Two early group portraits, the so-called *Self-Portrait in a Circle of Friends in Mantua* (1602-1604) and the *Four Philosophers* (1611-12), seem to confirm that forms of status and social belonging were what Rubens wanted to convey in his self-portraits, not complex notions about painting or the artistic self. Despite this, certain art-theoretical layers have been discerned in the *Four Philosophers* [fig. 2]. Hans Evers first noted that the two living and two dead tulips in the glass vase linked painting with transience, and symbolized portraiture's ability to unite the living and the dead; Nico van

⁵⁶ This contrast is also pointed out by Müller-Hofstede, 103. On the different critical responses to Rubens and Rembrandt and the latter's "interrogations and manipulations of individuality and authenticity," see Svetlana Alpers, *Rembrandt's Enterprise: the Studio and the Market* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 65-6 and 101-2. The above description is from Rosenthal's review of Alpers, "Rubens Reconsidered," 102.

⁵⁷ Müller-Hofstede, 103. The two works mentioned here are RCIN 400156; KHM Inv. Nr. GG_527.

Hout's discovery, through infrared examination, that the detail of the flowers was a later addition by Rubens has added strength to this theory.⁵⁸ Eileen Reeves has pointed to the *aurora borealis* streaking over the classical landscape in the background, a phenomenon that "in Flanders was most often described as *rubens* or reddish."⁵⁹ Similarly, it has been noted that the background of the Windsor self-portrait depicts a rock wall and a reddening sky, which in Latin would read "*Petrus et caelum rubens*."⁶⁰

The study of Rubens's artistic identity closely borders the study of his art theory. Some scholars have argued that Rubens's paintings modeled theoretical notions such as the *paragone* with sculpture.⁶¹ Justus Müller Hofstede has explored Rubens's engagement with cinquecento art theory, connecting his art to the humanistic theory of *ut pictura poesis*.⁶² The discussion around Rubens's art theory has centered heavily on his "theoretical notebook," interest in which has recently spiked with an exhibition at the Rubenshuis.⁶³ Ulrich Heinen has explored Rubens's garden and diet, as well as his *Malphysiologie*, the way he conceived of his paintings as living bodies.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Hans Evers, *Rubens und sein Werk* (Brussels, 1943), 327; Nico van Hout, "A Second Self-Portrait in Rubens's 'Four Philosophers,'" *The Burlington Magazine* vol. 142, no. 1172 (Nov. 2000), 694-697.

⁵⁹ Reeves, *Painting the Heavens*, 64.

⁶⁰ Shawe-Taylor and Scott in *Rubens to Bruegel*, 143.

⁶¹ Jeffrey Muller, "Rubens's Theory and Practice of the Imitation of Art," *The Art Bulletin* 64 (1982), 229-247; John Beldon Scott, "The Meaning of Perseus and Andromeda in the Farnese Gallery and on the Rubens House," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 51 (1988), 250-260; and Steven J. Cody, "Rubens and the 'Smell of Stone': The Translation of the Antique and the Emulation of Michelangelo," *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* vol. 20, no. 3 (Winter 2013): 39-55.

⁶² Justus Müller Hofstede, "Rubens und die Kunstlehre des Cinquecento. Zur Deutung eines theoretischen Skizzenblattes im Berliner Kabinett," in *Peter Paul Rubens 1577-1640: Katalog I* (Cologne, 1977).

⁶³ Preserved in at least four closely contemporary transcripts or copies, this was a compilation of experimental drawings with notes on a range of art-theoretical topics. In 2015, all four extant copies were exhibited together for the first time at the Rubenshuis, in conjunction with a project at the Rubenianum led by Arnout Balis that will apparently culminate in a publication ("Rubens Maverick Artist: The Master's Theoretical Notebook," Rubenshuis Antwerp, 19 October 2013-19 January 2014). On Rubens's theoretical notebook, see Arnout Balis, "Rubens und Inventio: Der Beitrag seines *theoretischen Studienbuches*, in *Rubens Passioni*, 11-40. There is also a printed edition of Rubens's sketchbook *Théorie de la figure humaine*, first published in Paris in 1773, which compiles it. See Michael Jaffé, *Van Dyck's Antwerp Sketchbook*, 2 vols. (London, 1966).

⁶⁴ Ulrich Heinen, "Rubens's Garten und die Gesundheit des Künstlers," *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 65 (2004), 71-182; "Haut und Knochen - Fleisch und Blut. Rubens' Affektmalerei," in Ulrich Heinen and Andreas Thielemann, eds., *Rubens passioni: Kultur der Leidenschaften im Barock* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht,

A contemporary who visited Rubens in his studio in 1621 claimed that he found him simultaneously painting, dictating a letter, supervising assistants, and listening to a reading of Tacitus.⁶⁵ That absorbing an ancient author would have been part of Rubens's working process is not surprising. Rubens's knowledge of classical antiquity was legendary, extending far beyond texts to what would now be called material and visual culture. He collected ancient arcana such as coins or gems that revealed obscure or lost iconographies, corresponding about these artifacts with learned friends such as the French antiquarian Nicolas Claude-Fabri de Peiresc, with whom he apparently planned to author a book on the subject.⁶⁶ In a passage from his theoretical notebook that I discuss in my second chapter in connection with Rubens's *Deucalion and Pyrrha* (ca. 1636), Rubens laments that painters resurrect merely the stone of ancient art, not the spirit or the flesh—which he sees as intriguingly synonymous. Rather than as inert fragments, Rubens understands ancient sculptures, including the ones he copied and collected,⁶⁷ as living essences whose revival (or reincarnation) was painting's highest aim.

Rubens will thus always reward art historians with a deep commitment to the classical tradition. Elizabeth McGrath, at the Warburg Institute in London,⁶⁸ has laid some of the most important groundwork for the study of Rubens's engagement with classical antiquity; I rely on her work extensively in my second chapter on his classically informed images of

2001), 70-109.

⁶⁵ On this story, see Anne-Marie Logan, "Rubens as a Teacher: 'He may teach his art to his students and others to his liking,'" in Amy Golahny, Mila M. Mochizuki, and Lisa Vergara, eds., *In His Milieu: Essays on Netherlandish Art in Memory of John Michael Montias* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 247-263: 250-252.

⁶⁶ Peter Miller, "Peiresc, Rubens, and Visual Culture circa 1620," in Anna C. Knaap and Michael C. J. Putnam, eds., *Art, Music, and Spectacle in the Age of Rubens: the Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi* (London: Harvey Miller, 2013), 49-64.

⁶⁷ See *Corpus Rubenianum* Ludwig Burchard 23 (Rubens' Copies After the Antique); and Jeffrey Muller, *Rubens: the Artist as Collector* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

⁶⁸ The extent to which Rubens's understanding of ancient artworks as containing a vital essence or trace of the past mirrors Warburg's own concept of the *Engramma*, formulated in the *Mnemosene Atlas*, is striking.

nature's fertility.⁶⁹ Though it is both an understatement and a cliché to say that Rubens transformed any source he used into something entirely new, his art simply cannot be understood outside of intellectual history. The range of his interests, evidenced by the inventory of his library and records of his purchases from Antwerp's Plantijn press, can make the referential web loom so large that can be difficult to find a way out of it, or to find an author that *was not* somehow connected to him. Aneta Georgievska-Shine's book on Rubens's mythological paintings names, in the introduction alone, Aguilonius, Virgil, Lucretius, Montaigne, the Philostrati, Justus Lipsius, Francesco Patrizi, Lope de Vega, Marino, Ariosto, Donne, Tasso, Samuel van Hoogstraten, Claude-Barthélémy Monsot, Vasari, Van Mander, Zuccaro, Horace, Alberti, Melanchthon, Macrobius, Seneca, Quintilian, Cicero, Callimachus, and Theocritus.⁷⁰ Lisa Rosenthal has pointed out the problem of identifying "Rubens's large, sensuously-painted figures" with "tiny, schematic and labelled ones in [...] prints,"⁷¹ which could be extended to a criticism of any approach to Rubens that focuses too heavily on textual sources. In truth, however, this is a perfectly valid and illuminating approach to Rubens. I take a different one because my interests lie more in conceptual and material histories of painting as a craft, and in what might be called the "technical consciousness" of Flemish baroque painting. Though I discuss mythographic sources throughout, gleaned from the work of earlier scholars, my focus is on how Rubens and his collaborators used mythology to negotiate and model their own enterprises.

Matter and the monograph

⁶⁹ Elizabeth McGrath, "Garlanding the Great Mother: Rubens, Jan Brueghel and the Celebration of Nature's Fertility," in *Munuscula amicorum: Contributions on Rubens and his Colleagues in Honour of Hans Vlieghe*, ed. Katlijne van der Stighelen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 103-122.

⁷⁰ Aneta Georgievska-Shine, *Rubens and the Archaeology of Myth, 1610-1620: Visual and Poetic Memory* (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009).

⁷¹ Rosenthal, "Manhood and Statehood," 96.

Because it focuses primarily on a single artist, and because the word no longer implies a claim to completeness (at least, certainly not in the case of Rubens), this dissertation could be described as monographic. But it is also that in another sense, in that it takes on the issue of Rubens's artistic identity and of *what kind of maker* emerged from his works. Rubens's earliest monographers often assumed that his works were manifestations of "his life and genius,"⁷² in other words that something essential of Rubens himself was inscribed into them (*monographed*, as it were).⁷³ Such a notion has long since been debunked as a Romantic fallacy, as have ones about artworks as reflecting some essential spirit of an age or nation. Two breakthrough studies in this regard were those of Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz (1934), and later of Rudolf and Margot Wittkower (1963), which explored how notions or "legends" about artistic temperament and creativity were shaped in early modern literature and art.⁷⁴ A discussion about concepts of the artist flourished as part of a broader challenge to fixed assumptions about authorship in the 1960s and 1970s.⁷⁵ For Rubens and my study in particular, a few themes stand out as particularly relevant, which for brevity's sake will be listed here rather sweepingly: the liminal social position of painters, whose proximity to power and cultural agency could far exceed the traditionally low status of craft; painters as political operatives, courtiers, or diplomats; artistic rivalries and communities; cultures and representations of the studio;⁷⁶ painting and sculpting as forms of spectacle or live

⁷² I quote the title of the English translation of the first academic Rubens monograph: Gustav Friedrich Waagen, *Peter Paul Rubens: His Life and Genius*, ed. Anna Jameson, trans. Robert E. Noel (London: Saunderson & Otley, 1840).

⁷³ I thank Joseph Koerner for pointing out to me this etymological sense of the "monograph."

⁷⁴ For an English translation see Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981). See also Rudolf and Margot Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn: the Character and Conduct of Artists, a Documented History from Antiquity to the French Revolution* (New York: Norton, 1963).

⁷⁵ See the seminal articles Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image – Music – Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142-148; and Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?," in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley et al (New York: The New Press, 1998), 205-222.

⁷⁶ See Michael Cole and Mary Pardo, eds., *Inventions of the Studio: Renaissance to Romanticism* (Chapel Hill:

performance;⁷⁷ art-making a form of embodied knowledge;⁷⁸ the analogies between painting and occult practices like magic or alchemy; concepts of perception and the imagination;⁷⁹ images as representations of their makers; and gendered notions of artistic creativity. Philip Sohm significantly advanced Kris and Kurz's "historical experiment" by showing how creative personae were shaped in the relationship *between* texts and images, which often strangely prefigure criticism of themselves and their makers.⁸⁰ There has also been an interest in how the relationship between artists and their works was conceived by early modern artists and art-theorists. One of the most oft-cited examples is Leonardo's remark that "every painter paints himself" (*ogni pittore dipinge se*), which he meant as a criticism of the unconscious tendency of paintings to project their own physical features onto their figures.⁸¹ Joseph Koerner traced some of the roots of modern notions of authorship and artistic agency, and of images as direct or indexical expressions of their makers, to the innovations of Albrecht Dürer in graphic art and self-portraiture.⁸² Louis Marin's *To Destroy Painting* (1995) used Caravaggio's *Head of Medusa* to explore the ontological rupture between artists and their works.⁸³ All of these studies have informed the approach to Rubens reflected here.

In recent years, however, the "material turn" has also meant that the figure of the artist

University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

⁷⁷ Evelyn Welch, "Painting as Performance in the Italian Renaissance Court," *Fenway Court* 31 (2004), 19-32, 202-203; Nicola Suthor, *Bravura: Virtuosität und Mutwilligkeit in der Malerei der Frühen Neuzeit* (Munich: Fink, 2010); Giles Knox, *The Late Paintings of Velázquez: Theorizing Painterly Performance* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

⁷⁸ Pamela H. Smith, *The Body of the Artisan: Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

⁷⁹ Martin Kemp, "From 'Mimesis' to 'Fantasia': the Quattrocento Vocabulary of Creation, Inspiration and Genius in the Visual Arts," in *Viator* 8 (1997), 347-398; David Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 103-143; Keith Moxey, "Hieronymus Bosch and the 'World Upside-Down': the Case of the Garden of Earthly Delights," *Visual Culture: Images and Interpretations* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1994); 104-140.

⁸⁰ See Philip Sohm, "Caravaggio's Deaths," *The Art Bulletin* 84/3 (Sept., 2002): 449-468.

⁸¹ Frank Zollner, "Ogni Pittore Dipinge Sé," in *Der Künstler übersieh in seinem Werk*, ed. Matthias Winner (Weinheim: VCH, 1992), 137-60. For an argument that Rubens's student Anthony van Dyck depicted his likeness and thereby self-identified with his early figures of St. Sebastian, see Adam Eaker, "Van Dyck between Master and Model," *The Art Bulletin* 97.2 (June, 2015), 173-191.

⁸² Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

⁸³ Louis Marin, trans. Mette Hjort, *To Destroy Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

has sometimes stood in tension with *the object*, which has moved increasingly to the center of fascination.⁸⁴ Despite having arisen in the 1980s partly as a reaction to the *dematerialization* of media and communication,⁸⁵ the material turn in art history (as well as related fields such as the history of science, media studies, etc.) has powerfully shifted focus in the opposite direction, if not always to actual objects and their materials, at least to their agency in human culture.⁸⁶ This has given rise to the field of material culture studies, and has altered the connections between disciplines, for instance by making archaeology more central to anthropology. Even that window into intellectual history, the book, is now routinely studied as a physical object that evidences material histories such as those of ink, vellum, and paper as much as ideas.⁸⁷ Bruno Latour’s troubling of the distinction between subject and object;⁸⁸ Alfred Gell’s anthropological theory of “art and agency”;⁸⁹ “thing theory”;⁹⁰ the concept of “vibrant matter” recently put forth by the political theorist Jane Bennett⁹¹—such ideas are shaping art history in fundamental ways, even if the most galvanizing contributions have tended to come from outside the discipline. Though one effect has been a greater emphasis on the body and embodiment, art history is also responding to an increased emphasis on non-human agency: the way things, materials, and environments shape society and history.

⁸⁴ The scholarship on “the object” is immense. See e.g. Fiona Candlin and Raiford Guins, *The Object Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009); and Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). For a witty criticism of the craze for “the object” in art history that imagines replacing it with a study of “the abject,” see Joseph Koerner, “The Abject of Art History,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 31 (Spring, 1997), 5-8.

⁸⁵ The material turn is associated with an exhibition held at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris entitled *Les immatériaux*.

⁸⁶ For a summary of the material turn, see Petra Langa-Berndt’s introduction to the volume edited by her, *Materiality* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015); and Daniel Miller, “Materiality: An Introduction,” in *Materiality*, ed. Daniel Miller (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005): 1-50.

⁸⁷ Roland Barthes, “The Pleasure of the Text,” in *A Barthes Reader*, ed. Susan Sontag (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 404-14.

⁸⁸ Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

⁸⁹ Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, 1998).

⁹⁰ “Thing theory” derives from Heidegger’s differentiation of objects and things; see Martin Heidegger, “The Thing,” trans. Albert Hofstadter, in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 165-86.

⁹¹ Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

Like a skipped stone, “the object” continues to send its ripples through art history, remaining just elusive enough to keep the discussion going.

One place where its impact can be felt is in the scholarship on art and agency, for which Gell’s work has been influential.⁹² A recent contribution was Horst Bredekamp’s *Theorie des Bildakts* (Theory of the Image-Act) (2014).⁹³ However, investigations into how images *act* had already been undertaken by David Freedberg in his *The Power of Images* (1989).⁹⁴ Far from being inert, images echo forth in our bodies and affect our behavior—fooling our eyes, raising our heartbeat, affecting our dreams, arousing us sexually or provoking violent backlash. For the past decade or so Freedberg has been a proponent of linking art history with neurobiology by researching how the brain responds to images. (By necessity and somewhat paradoxically, such studies have relied overwhelmingly on digital reproductions of works of art, foregoing the question of how response is mediated by artworks’ materiality or physical presence.) James Elkins has taken a less scientific and more semiotic approach, but has likewise argued that artworks have agency or as he puts it that “the object stares back.”⁹⁵

This line of thinking has specifically been connected with the head of Medusa. As an object that literally stares back, immobilizing its viewers and turning *them* into static works of art (which Freud famously interpreted as a metaphor for male sexual arousal),⁹⁶ it was one of the most powerful metaphors in antiquity and the early modern period for the agency of art

⁹² See *inter alia* Robin Osborne and Jeremy Tanner, eds., *Art’s Agency and Art History* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007); Caroline van Eck, “Living Statues: Alfred Gell’s Art and Agency, Living Presence Response and the Sublime,” *Art History* 33/4 (2010), 642-659; and Liana Chua and Mark Elliot, eds., *Distributed Objects: Meaning and Mattering after Alfred Gell* (New York: Berghahn, 2013).

⁹³ Horst Bredekamp, *Theorie des Bildakts* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2010).

⁹⁴ David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

⁹⁵ James Elkins, *The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

⁹⁶ Sigmund Freud, “Medusa’s Head” (1922), in *The Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1955), 69.

objects.⁹⁷ Accordingly, Ulrich Heinen has interpreted Rubens's and Snyders's *Head of Medusa* as an overt reflection on the ability of images to trigger responses in their viewers. First mirroring and empathizing with the depicted subject, Heinen argues, Rubens's ideal viewer then overcomes his response and his terror through neo-Stoic philosophy.⁹⁸ In this sense, Rubens even anticipated what would later be proven by neuroscientists. In my first chapter, I argue that an art history of the viewer, defined as the horizon of meaning or as a kind of co-creator, has particular limits when applied to *this* image of the Medusa, which was first and foremost concerned with issues of creativity. Rubens's radical emphasis on grotesque feminine body matter cannot be explained simply as an attempt to ramp up the 'horror factor' for male viewers. Rather, it should also be explored discursively on its own terms.

His nod to neuroscience aside, Heinen primarily situates the *Head of Medusa* in the philosophical discourse of Rubens's time. Indeed, art historians such as Caroline van Eck and Frank Fehrenbach have shown that the agency of artworks, beyond the limited set of phenomena that can be shown scientifically, was also the subject of legends and myths that had accumulated since antiquity—and that were in turn related to art's potential for life, and the power of *artists* to transform organic matter into living bodies.⁹⁹ Despite myths such as that of Pygmalion, which continually shone a torch on the possibility of real enlivenment, the life of images was understood at best as just that, *possible* but not actual, and at worst as a

⁹⁷ See Van Eck, "Gemankeerde Pygmalions en succesvolle Medusa's," in *Levende Beelden: Kunst werken en kijken* (Leiden and Brussels: Leiden University Press, 2011), 8-27 and 108-109.

⁹⁸ Ulrich Heinen, "Huygens, Rubens and Medusa: Reflecting the passions in paintings, with some considerations of neuroscience in art history," *Nederlands kunsthistorisch jaarboek*, 60.2010, 151-178. Heinen discusses similar issues in "Zur bildrhetorischen Wirkungsästhetik im Barock: ein Systematisierungsversuch nach neurobiologischen Modellen," in *Bildrhetorik*, ed. Joachim Knape (Baden-Baden: Koerner, 2007), 113-158; and "Emotionales Bild-Erleben in der frühen Neuzeit," in *Anthropologie der Literatur: Poetogene Strukturen und ästhetisch-soziale Handlungsfelder*, ed. Rüdiger Zymner and Manfred Engel (Paderborn, 2004), 356-383.

⁹⁹ See Frank Fehrenbach, "Coming Alive: Some Remarks on the Rise of 'Monochrome' Sculpture in the Renaissance," *Notes on the History of Art* 30/3 (April, 2011), 47-55; Caroline van Eck, *Levende beelden*.

dangerous illusion, casting the artist as a magician or trickster.¹⁰⁰ If life is defined as an effect, an experience in the body of the viewer, then images can indeed be considered alive; yet in the era long before contemporary bio-art, paintings and sculptures still undeniably lacked the main criteria for life, i.e. independent movement and growth.¹⁰¹ Art's agency thus also boiled down to what life status could be attributed to matter itself. All of the works I focus on show Rubens and his collaborators pushing back on multiple fronts against this limitation, breaking down the boundaries between art and life either by depicting matter as generative or in flux, or by creating the illusion of an endlessly proliferating surplus.

What is matter? In the first definition given in the *Philosophisches Wörterbuch*, it is the “raw material” for human craft, as opposed to the form the material acquires by being worked.¹⁰² This theory, known as hylemorphism, was the basis of the understanding of matter in western philosophy and was especially connected with the philosophy of Aristotle. The Greek word for matter, *hyle*, originally meant wood or timber—one of the most crucial materials humans have used to make their worlds. Yet early modern artists, writers, naturalists, and collectors often seem to have understood the tension between matter and form as a productive rather than an absolute one, or even as a kind of generative principle; and they were fascinated by sites and objects where the opposition broke down. This has been identified with the artistic practices that emerged around the *Kunst- und Wunderkammer*, as explored by Horst Bredekamp, Jurgis Baltrušaitis, and others.¹⁰³ However, it can also be

¹⁰⁰ Michael Cole, “The Demonic Arts and the Origin of the Medium,” *The Art Bulletin* 84/4 (Dec., 2002): 621-640. On the Pygmalion myth and enlivenment in art see Victor Stoichita, *The Pygmalion Effect: from Ovid to Hitchcock* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

¹⁰¹ My awareness of the ways attempts by early modern artist to collapse the boundary between art and nature prefigure currents in contemporary art (including so-called bio-art) has been deeply informed by Frank Fehrenbach.

¹⁰² Walter Brugger, ed., *Philosophisches Wörterbuch*, 5th edition (Freiburg: Herder, 1953), 188-89 (“Materie”).

¹⁰³ Horst Bredekamp, trans. *The Lure of Antiquity and the Cult of the Machine: the Kunstkammer and the Evolution of Nature, Art, and Technology*, trans. Allison Brown (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1995); Jurgis Baltrušaitis, *Aberrations: An Essay on the Legend of Forms* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989).

discerned in the history of oil painting, for example in the theoretical discourse on the “image made by chance”—the notion that forms or images could be perceived in rough matter (clouds, rocks, stains), and that painters could visually or even physically incorporate such accidents into their images. Similarly, Alberti in his *de Statua* had claimed that the first sculptures originated from people discerning the lineaments of bodies in a tree stump, a clod of earth, or other lifeless conglomerations of raw matter.¹⁰⁴ In seventeenth-century Dutch art theory, this discourse would become linked to notions about wetness and spontaneity in landscape painting. I argue that Rubens invokes such ideas in his image of Neptune marshaling images in the clouds. Generally, my interest is in paintings by him in which matter is symbolically endowed with agency.¹⁰⁵

As Susan Koslow has noted in connection with Rubens’s and Snyder’s *Head of Medusa*, matter was strongly identified with the feminine.¹⁰⁶ In the Aristotelian breakdown of the four causes of organic life, only one, the material cause (*causae materialis*), was gendered female; the formal, efficient, and telic causes were all attributed to the male.¹⁰⁷ The analogies in Aristotle’s philosophy between creation and procreation meant that the artist was conceived of as essentially male, endowing feminine matter with form and life.¹⁰⁸ Yet matter was also understood to have a certain inherent life force, a *calor innatus* or vital heat. This was the

¹⁰⁴ Roland Kanz, *Die Kunst des Capriccio: kreativer Eigensinn in Renaissance und Barock* (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2002), 77.

¹⁰⁵ This is somewhat reminiscent for example of Heidegger’s notion that *hyle* is “co-responsible” (along with the idea or *eidōs*) for the work of art; his example is a silver chalice. Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” in Martin Heidegger trans. William Lovitt, *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977).

¹⁰⁶ Susan Koslow, “How looked the Gorgon then...?: the Science and Poetics of the *Head of Medusa* by Rubens and Snyder,” in Cynthia P. Schneider, William W. Robinson, and Alice I. Davies, eds., *Shop Talk: Studies in Honor of Seymour Slive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Art Museums, 1995). See also Susan Koslow “The Head of Medusa by Peter Paul Rubens and Frans Snyder: a Postscript” (May 2, 2006), <http://profkoslow.com/publications/medusapostscript.html>. On gender in Rubens see *inter alia* Sarah Cohen, “Rubens’s France: Gender and Personification in the Marie de Medici Cycle,” *The Art Bulletin* 85/3 (Sept. 2003), 490-522; and Rosenthal, “Manhood and Statehood.”

¹⁰⁷ See Frederika H. Jacobs, “Women’s Capacity to Create: The Unusual Case of Sofonisba Anguissola,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 47/1 (Spring, 1994), 74-101.

¹⁰⁸ Jacobs, “Women’s Capacity to Create,” 75-6.

explanation for asexual or “spontaneous” generation—for why the decaying raw matter of the earth could bring forth life forms, even without the procreative life force of a male seed.

Around 1600 there was intense curiosity about the underlying fabric of matter. Experiments with microscopy began in the northern Netherlands in the 1590s; even raw matter was revealing itself as made up of even smaller components. In Rubens’s time, however, the natural philosophical understanding of matter still drew heavily from ancient beliefs. One of the most important was the belief that all matter was comprised of four elements—fire, earth, water, air—whose separation out of the primordial chaos was the first step in the creation of the universe, the scene with which Ovid opens his *Metamorphoses*.¹⁰⁹ In my third chapter, I discuss the meaningful resemblance between this creation scene, as it was depicted in contemporary illustrated Ovids, and Rubens’s image of Neptune calming the tempest.

The material turn has affected some of the most theoretical spaces of art history, which has wrestled with the tensions works of art stage between visibility and materiality, facture and fiction, texture and sign. The last of these dichotomies is the focus of Hubert Damisch’s *Theory of /Cloud/*, some of whose arguments can be seen underlying my third chapter. James Elkins’s *What Painting Is*, which opens by declaring that “painting is alchemy,” is based around extended descriptions of the craggy, geological surfaces of Rembrandt’s paintings.¹¹⁰ Elsewhere, Elkins has remarked: “[m]arks, together with the figures and images they build, are always compromised by age, by accident, and—most importantly—by each other, and they are always partly illegible.”¹¹¹ Georges Didi-Huberman has noted that even

¹⁰⁹ On this scene, see Gernot and Hartmut Böhme, *Feuer, Wasser, Erde, Luft: Eine Kulturgeschichte der Elemente* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1996), 32-44.

¹¹⁰ James Elkins, *What Painting Is: How to Think about Oil Painting, Using the Language of Alchemy* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

¹¹¹ James Elkins, “Marks, Traces, ‘Traits’, ‘Orli’, and ‘Splendores’: Nonsemiotic Elements in Pictures,” *Critical*

the most ideal representations are sometimes ruptured by what he calls a “patch,” a visual moment in which the image asserts its own presence, “proclaiming itself as pure matter.”¹¹²

In his book on Fra Angelico, Didi-Huberman describes the “patch” as follows:

It is a way of naming ‘the cursed part’ of painting, the indexical, nondescriptive and dissemblant part. In fact paintings often reserve – and this is once more their gift of disconcerting – a part of themselves for negating and clouding what they affirm in the mimetic order. Something in their aspect collapses at that point of dissemblance, a sort of disturbance, comes to reign there as the omnipotence of strangeness. There is nothing metaphysical about this strangeness in itself: it is only the power, the very symptom of painting – the materiality of painting, that is, *color* – color that no longer “colors” objects but rather irrupts and ravages the decorum of the aspect.¹¹³

In both the *Head of Medusa* and *Prometheus Bound*, another Rubens-Snyders collaboration of the 1610s, precisely such a “symptom of painting,” narratively explained as a wound or body matter (the gorgon’s blood and Prometheus’s liver), erupts from the center of an otherwise seamless mimetic image, drawing attention to the raw matter of painting itself. However, my interest in such self-reflexive aspects of Rubens’s paintings lies not in their tautological pointing-back at their actual materiality. Rather, I am interested in how Rubens’s shaped a creative persona, vis-à-vis materiality, using a repertoire of established myths. In both of these cases, mythology invests painting’s wounds with special (re)-generative power, suggesting matter as an active force in the making of images and bodies. This runs contrary to the more common understanding of matter and artistic agency as being in tension with one another. In Christian metaphysics, matter is low and is meant to be transcended; the notion that painters heroically *overcame* their base materials was crucial to their ennoblement. In the Flemish baroque, I argue, a radically different understanding, or claim, can be seen: that painters’ materials are analogous to the *prima materia* of nature, and have an inherent life force.

Inquiry 21/4 (1995), 822-860: 832.

¹¹² Georges Didi-Huberman, “The Art of Not Describing: Vermeer – the Detail and the Patch,” *History of the Human Sciences* 2 (1989), 135.

¹¹³ Georges Didi-Huberman, trans. Jane Marie Todd, *Fra Angelico: Dissemblance and Figuration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 9. Much of the critical discourse surrounding dis-figuration derives from the French critical term “macula”; see the journal of that name published in Paris 1976-78.

More than the theoretical discourse on materiality, this project has been shaped by scholarly approaches closer to my field. An obvious influence, to which my title pays homage, is Rebecca Zorach's *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold* (2005). Zorach explored the visual culture that emerged in the sixteenth century around the French royal court at Fontainebleau, particularly its rampant analogies between the female body, nature, economic surplus, and the making and mechanical reproduction of images.¹¹⁴ I am most in dialogue with Zorach in my second chapter, which focuses on Rubens's images of Diana Ephesus. However, I engage with her work throughout in my own emphasis on themes of fertility, liquidity, excess, and economies of image-making. I am also clearly indebted to Elizabeth Honig's economic analyses of Antwerp painting.¹¹⁵ Christine Göttler's article on the "subtle bodies" or spooks depicted in the hellscapes of Rubens's collaborator Jan Brueghel the Elder resonates with my own interest in the cloud-figure of Boreas.¹¹⁶ Mechthild Fend and Daniela Bohde's edition on *Inkarnation* or the representation of flesh in painting has also informed my work on Rubens—as has Fend's idea that skin, in Rubens, acts as a kind of stage that mingles virtually with the surface of painting itself.¹¹⁷

Another resource, especially for the second half of the dissertation, have been histories of "painterliness" such as Philip Sohm's *Pittoresco* (1991), Nicola Suthor's *Bravura* (2010), and Jodi Cranston's *the Muddled Mirror* (2010), on Titian's blurry late work.¹¹⁸ Rubens's style

¹¹⁴ Rebecca Zorach, *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold: Abundance and Excess in the French Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

¹¹⁵ Elizabeth Honig, *Painting and the Market in Early Modern Antwerp* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

¹¹⁶ Christine Göttler, *Spirits Unseen: the Representation of Subtle Bodies in Early Modern European Culture* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008).

¹¹⁷ Mechthild Fend, "Inkarnation oder Haut? Die Körperoberfläche als Schauplatz der Malerei bei Rubens und Ingres," in *Pymalions Werkstatt: die Erschaffung des Menschen im Atelier von der Renaissance bis zum Surrealismus*, ed. B. Eschenburg (Cologne: Wienand, 2001), 71-79; and Daniela Bohde and Mechthild Fend, eds., *Weder Haut noch Fleisch: das Inkarnat in der Kunstgeschichte*, Neue Frankfurter Forschungen zur Kunst, vol. 3 (Berlin: Mann, 2007).

¹¹⁸ Jodi Cranston, *The Muddled Mirror: Materiality and Figuration in Titian's Later Paintings* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010); Philip Sohm, *Pittoresco: Marco Boschini, his Critics, and their Critiques of Painterly Brushwork in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Italy* (Cambridge and NY: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and Suthor, *Bravura* (as above, note 78).

famously shifted following his stay in 1628 in Madrid, where he undertook a deeper study of late sixteenth-century Venetian paintings in the Spanish royal collection. Such works, with their showy brushwork and greater emphasis on landscape, had a deep impact on Rubens's late manner. Oil sketches played a key role in this shift, acting as a template or testing ground for multiple techniques that could be described as "painterly": gestural marks that index the motions of the brush; impasto, which asserts the painting as three-dimensional object; painting in a single, wet application (i.e. *alla prima*) as opposed to in successively drying layers; and mixing colors directly on the surface or even "optically," in other words leaving them unmixed, so that the image coalesces only from a certain distance.

Today, rather than being seen as powerful illusions or stand-ins, Rubens's paintings are often studied in a way that would seem to de-emphasize such power, replacing it, perhaps, with a different kind of fetishism. This is part of a general trend in which technical and conservation studies have moved from behind the scenes to the forefront of museums. Breaking down images into patchworks, into their elements, has become a way of marketing them. A recent catalogue of the National Gallery in London was devoted entirely to *details* of works from its collection. It is not uncommon now to see blown-up details from IRR or x-radiograph scans displayed beside original works. If the age of connoisseurship—the seeds of which were planted among the "amateur" art-lovers (*liefhebbers*) of Rubens's time and their collections¹¹⁹—has passed, the technical study of art history offers an approach supposedly further removed from the vagaries of taste and the market. Renzo Piano's redesign of the former Fogg Museum at Harvard, unveiled in 2015, places the conservation lab behind glazed walls, on the top floor, illuminated by the glass ceiling; the horizon of art history becomes the living image of its technicians at work, punctuated by the tiny colored dots of

¹¹⁹ Elizabeth Honig, "The Beholder as a Work of Art: A Study in the Location of Value in Seventeenth-Century Flemish Painting," *Nederlands kunsthistorisch jaarboek* 46 (1995), 252-297.

the university's historic pigment collection. The interest in materiality is also shaping how art history is taught. Art-making, explored through studio visits, hands-on studies of historical materials or tools, and technical workshops, is increasingly part of graduate art history curricula. Some day, we might imagine, the soporific dim of the slideshow will be replaced with the clear light of the studio, and the laboratory.

In 2007, the Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten in Antwerp, with the funding of the Getty Foundation, began an extensive research project on its Rubens holdings, which were published in 2010 in a volume edited by the two most prominent Rubens scholars in Belgium, Nico van Hout and Arnout Balis. Entitled *Rubens doorgelicht* or “Rubens unveiled,”¹²⁰ it is illustrated on its cover with a cropped detail from Rubens's *Venus Frigida* (ca. 1614): the goddess's corpulent lower body, seen from behind, squatting over red and white drapery. Never before has Venus looked so unideal, so flesh-and-blood. Similar details appear throughout, paired with infrared and x-ray images and clear explanations of the techniques by which Rubens manipulated his materials into apparent life. An example are the streaks sometimes visible to the naked eye in his images—records of the broad, coarse brush he used to lay in the priming layer or *imprimatura*, known in Dutch, evocatively, as the *doodverf* or ‘dead coloring’.¹²¹ In this, Rubens was using a painterly technique derived not from Venice but from a local Antwerp tradition that went back to the sixteenth century, of painting so thinly that the *doodverf* shows through and impinges on the representation. In Rubens's oil sketch for *Neptune Calming the Tempest*, as we will see, this layer becomes part of

¹²⁰ Nico van Hout with contributions by Arnout Balis, *Rubens doorgelicht: meekijken over de schouder van een virtuoos* (Antwerp: Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 2010); published in English in 2012 as *Rubens Unveiled: Notes on the Master's Painting Techniques*. On the technical aspects of Rubens's art, see also Joos vander Auwera, ed., *Rubens: A Genius at Work: the Works of Peter Paul Rubens in the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium Reconsidered* (Tielt: Lanoo, 2007); and Hubert von Sonnenburg, *Rubens: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Technik* (Munich: Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, 1980).

¹²¹ On Rubens's use of the *doodverf* see also Nico van Hout, “Functies van doodverf met bijzondere aandacht voor de onderschildering en andere onderliggende Stadia in het Werk van P.P. Rubens” (PhD dissertation, Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven, 2005).

the ‘flesh’ of the personified winds, giving them form as clouds while also tethering them to the composite materiality of the painting.

Rubens’s mantle of intellectual and cultural history today grows increasingly heavy and inaccessible to most viewers. Technical approaches offer a refreshing means of engagement; taste for his works aside, Rubens was a master technician of oil painting. Such studies also provide a crucial foundation for my work, which is concerned with how Rubens and his Antwerp colleagues conceived of and fashioned their enterprise of image-making. However, though this dissertation responds to the current interest in materiality, it also pushes back somewhat by showing how the value attributed to matter and making has a history—that it too has been formed through legends and myths.

Chapter 1: The Generative Medusa and Rubens's Red-Blooded Art

“No matter where and when you take the pulse of Netherlandish painting, you will feel its blood running fresh and full of life.”

—Max Rooses, *Geschiedenis der Antwerpsche schilderschool* (Antwerp, 1879)

“The colouring of his flesh in particular has such a vivid transparency of tone—such a glow of life—that it is easy to understand how Guido Reni should have been struck with wonder upon beholding a picture of Rubens for the first time, and exclaim, ‘Does this painter mix blood with his colours?’”¹²²

—Gustav Friedrich Waagen, *Über den Maler Petrus Paulus Rubens* (Berlin, 1833)

This chapter is about the life of an image: a painting of the *Head of Medusa* created in Antwerp in ca. 1613-18¹²³ by Peter Paul Rubens and Frans Snyders (1579-1667) that is now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna [fig. 3].¹²⁴ The painting's first recorded owner

¹²² Waagen, *Peter Paul Rubens*, 52.

¹²³ I follow the dating given by Anne T. Woollett in *Rubens and Bruegel: A Working Friendship*, ed. Anne T. Woollett and Ariane van Suchtelen (Los Angeles and The Hague, 2006), 180, cat. no. 24. However, the painting has previously been dated to between 1610 and 1625; see Sutton, 287. Koslow, “How Looked the Gorgon Then...,” note 1, argues that the *terminus ante quem* is 1613 because that is when Rubens acquired Gesner's book on serpents. Wolfgang Prohaska, “The *Head of Medusa*,” in Arnout Balis, Christa Nitzte-Ertz, Ute Kleinman, and Stephan Brakensiek, eds., *Das Flämische Stilleben*, exh. cat. Vienna and Ruhr-Essen, 2002, cat. no. 12, 81, suggested a date close to 1617-18 because of the resemblance of the gorgon's head to the possessed people in Rubens's *Miracle of St. Ignatius Loyola*.

¹²⁴ The identity of Rubens's collaborator for the *Head of Medusa* has been debated. An attribution of the still life elements to Frans Snyders is generally accepted. The work is almost certainly the same as a *Head of Medusa* recorded in the 1635 inventory of George Villiers, which attributes it to “Rubens and Subter,” the latter perhaps a misspelling of Snyders's name. The attribution to Snyders is upheld by Woollett in *A Working Friendship*; Ulrich Heinen in Nils Büttner and Ulrich Heinen, *Barocke Leidenschaften* (Munich: Hirner, 2004), 222-27, cat. no. 44; Susan Koslow, “How looked the Gorgon then...”: The Science and Poetics of the *Head of Medusa* by Rubens and Snyders,” in Cynthia P. Schneider et al, eds., *Shop Talk: Studies in Honor of Seymour Slive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Art Museums, 1995), 147-149. Peter C. Sutton notes that Constantijn Huygens, writing in his memoirs between 1629 and 1631, names the painters of a copy of the work (which he took for the original) as ‘Rubbens ende Snijders’; see Peter C. Sutton, *The Age of Rubens* (Boston and Toledo, 1993-4) cat. no. 12, 247. However, Wolfgang Prohaska, noting that the snakes differ from other ones painted

was George Villiers (1592-1628), the Duke of Buckingham, who likely purchased it from Rubens in the 1620s. After Villiers's assassination in 1628, the painting was auctioned, in 1635, in Antwerp along with the rest of his collection.

By the “life” of the image I do not just mean its afterlife, in the sense of its reception by collectors or later artists. Nor am I interested only in the prior or contemporary historical contexts that might explain its content and appearance. Rather, I am also interested in how such histories and explanations intersect with how concepts of enlivenment are constructed in the painting itself, which is on an important level *about* natural and artificial life, and the interstices between them.

We see the head of Medusa lying on a rocky precipice, bathed in clear lunar light. In the distance, a seascape recedes in streaks of dark blue and grey. A patch of ivy springs up from the lower left margin; other, fern-like foliage crawls up the hillside on the right. This is a wild place, where the forces of nature flourish. However, in the foreground, the precipice is bare and smooth, as if specifically crafted for the purposes of display. And what is displayed is a horrifying event: snakes being spontaneously generated from Medusa's blood. In a puddle of gore beneath her neck—a scramble of black and red that resembles an

by Snyders, has suggested that Rubens painted the entire image himself. See his entry on the painting in *Das Flämische Stilleben* (as above, note 124), cat. no. 12. Prohaska makes the same argument in his catalogue entry on the *Head of Medusa* in Johann Kräftner, Wilfried Seipel and Renate Trnek eds, *Rubens in Vienna: the Masterpieces: the pictures in the collections of the Prince of Liechtenstein, the Kunsthistorisches Museum and the Gemäldegalerie der Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Vienna* (Vienna: Christian Brandstätter, 2004), 222-226, no. 50. Prohaska's argument would seem to ignore aspects of scale, genre, and date that could easily explain why Snyders paints snakes differently in different paintings. The 1991 catalogue of the Kunsthistorisches Museum gives an unexplained attribution of the snakes in the *Head of Medusa* to both Frans Snyders and Paul de Vos; see Sylvia Ferino-Pagden, Wolfgang Prohaska, and Karl Schütz, eds., *Die Gemäldegalerie des Kunsthistorisches Museums in Wien: Verzeichnis der Gemälde* (Vienna: Christian Brandstätter, 1991), cat. no. 404. For a convincing argument against this double attribution see Hella Robels, *Frans Snyders, Stilleben- und Tiermaler, 1579-1657* (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1989) 370-1, cat. no. 276. For an older attribution to Jan Brueghel the Elder, see Max Rooses, *L'Oeuvre de P.P. Rubens: Histoire et Description de ses Tableaux et Dessins* (Antwerp, J. Maes, 1886-92) vol. 3, 636. Rooses however did also mention Snyders as a candidate. I follow the attribution to Snyders, both for the documentary reasons explained above and, as I discuss later in this chapter, because the work resonates so strongly with another, confirmed Rubens-Snyders collaboration, *Prometheus Bound* (ca. 1611-1618, Philadelphia Museum of Art).

abstract expressionist painting—squiggly, inchoate forms seem to appear and pulse forth on the precipice, translucent bodies still coated in the substance that has sparked their lives.

The creation of snakes from Medusa's blood is discussed by Ovid and especially by Lucan. In the *Pharsalia* (ca. 61 AD), Lucan relates how, as Perseus flew over Africa with the gorgon's freshly decapitated head, drops of her blood spilled onto the earth and mixed with the soil, generating all of the terrible snakes of Libya.¹²⁵ Rubens and Snyders are the only artists known to have made this scene the subject of a painting.¹²⁶ In doing so, they link the Medusa myth to spontaneous generation, the natural scientific belief that certain 'low' life forms arose not from sexual reproduction but rather directly from decaying raw matter. Spontaneous generation held widespread currency until well into the eighteenth century, though some were beginning to question it openly by the 1650s.¹²⁷

A white shroud is wrapped over the gorgon's hairline, trailing off to the right where it intermingles with strands of her brown hair and soaks up more of her abundant blood. Oozing from her neck, blood also secretes from her nostril, eyes, mouth. The dozen or so snakes that form her dreadful coiffure are captured by Snyders with stunning mimetic precision, their skins shimmering in metallic blue-green, coppery orange, and yellow hues. Two rope-like bulges at the gorgon's right temple seem to confirm that all of these snakes have sprung from directly from her head—one bites its host in the forehead as if to extricate itself—but the snakes are twisted into an indecipherable knot, blocking any attempt to pull them into discrete, closed sites. The tenebristic lighting dramatizes their repetitive coiled

¹²⁵ Ovid *Metamorphoses* IV.846-50; Lucan, *Pharsalia* IX.720. In his *Theriaca*, 8-20, Nikander of Colophon (ca. 197-130 BC) specifies that 'poisonous spiders, along with dangerous reptiles and vipers and the countless other dangers the earth has imposed on us, are descended from from the blood of Typhon,' the primordial serpent; Leonhard, *Bildfelder*, 189.

¹²⁶ Koslow, "'How looked the Gorgon then...?'" 147-149, argues that the painting alludes more to Lucan than to Ovid.

¹²⁷ The history and seventeenth-century debates on spontaneous generation are summarized in Leonhard, *Bildfelder*, 61-69.

forms; light flashes and disappears at intervals, visually animating them. The effect seems to presage Aby Warburg's description of snakes as "a threatening symbol of the ambivalent in nature: death and life, visible and invisible, without prior warning and deadly on sight."¹²⁸

In the lower right the foreground breaks off abruptly, like a stage. A greenish snake faces us, its body coiled in horizontal s-curves—threatening to spring forward off the cliff and out of the painting. This snake is mirrored on the left side, where the precipice steps down slightly and another, fully individuated snake writhes in vertical s-curves. It cranes its neck tauntingly towards yet another snake that lies belly-up, still half-entangled in the coiffure. Two more snakes are depicted in the center, their tails entwined as if just now breaking loose.

At the upper right of the painting, two snakes of different colors emerge from the Medusa's white shroud, twisting around each other. One, which is bronze-colored and thinner, bites the other, greenish one in the head. Beneath them another snake lies tangled up in the shroud, as a snakelet bursts from its belly. As Susan Koslow argued in her seminal article on the painting, this part of the picture illustrates learned beliefs about the reproductive habits of vipers. According to Pliny (in Philemon Holland's English translation of 1601),

[A]s [vipers] engender together, they clip and embrace, and so entangled they be [...] that a man who saw them, would thinke they were one serpent with two heads. In the very act of generation, the male viper thrusteth his head into the mouth of the female; which she (for the pleasure and delectation that she taketh) gnaweth and biteth off.¹²⁹

Pliny also claims that unlike those of other snakes, viper babies do not hatch from eggs but erupt straight from the belly of their mother—killing her to avenge the death of their

¹²⁸ Aby Warburg, trans. Michael P. Steinberg, *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997) [note to Warburg's first draft], 55.

¹²⁹ Pliny the Elder, trans. and ed. Philemon Holland, *The history of the world: Commonly called, the naturall historie of C. Plinius Secundus* (London, 1601), ch. LXII ("Of Vipers: their manner of generation and bringing forth young [...].")

father.¹³⁰ In the second half of the sixteenth century, vipers thus appeared in moralizing and misogynistic emblems of ‘Venus improba’ or the ‘bad wife’.¹³¹ Koslow connects this to Aristotelian theories about the defective or quasi-monstrous nature of women, and specifically to early modern anxieties about menstrual blood.

In addition to the hair-snakes, the ones that have apparently broken loose, and the ones just now emerging from the blood, the gorgon’s head also appears to have spawned an entire menagerie of creepy-crawlers now assembled on the left side of the precipice: two spiders, a scorpion, a brownish snake that lies in a closed spiral, a yellow and black salamander that cocks its head to glance at us, and an orange snake with two heads, each with a set of dragon-like wings or whiskers. This two-headed snake, known as an *amphisbaena*, is of course not a real species. Nevertheless, it had been described and classified by Pliny and referenced by early modern natural philosophers such as Conrad Gessner, who treated it as a “natural monster.”¹³² It was something of a hot topic in European natural history around 1600; one had reportedly been found in Mexico in 1606, and images of it were disseminated in the Accademia dei Lincei in Rome.¹³³ In contrast to the rampaging hair-snakes, the *amphisbaena* and the other creatures on the precipice appear more static, like specimens neatly arranged for our viewing. Only the salamander looks at us as if to confirm that it is alive. Meanwhile, the right eye of the Medusa is wide open. Her upper eyelid is peeled back—threatening to unleash her deadly gaze—but her iris is rotated down

¹³⁰ Pliny, *Natural History* X: 82: “The female bears the eggs inside her until they hatch; she then gives birth to one of them a day. Since she may bear up to twenty young, the ones not yet born become impatient and burst out of her sides, killing her.”

¹³¹ “Venus improba,” Hadrianus Junius *Emblemata* (Antwerp, 1565) no. 38. Albert Henkel and Albrecht Schöne, *Emblemata: Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche, 1967), 660-1. Also cited in Koslow, “How Looked the Gorgon Then,” 147.

¹³² Pliny, *Natural History* XXXVIII, VIII, 85. See Arnout Balis, “Facetten van de Vlaamse dierenschilderkunst van de 15de tot de 17de eeuw,” in *Het Aards Paradijs. Dierenvoorstellingen in de Nederlanden van de 16de en 17de eeuw*, exh. cat. Antwerp, 1982, 37-55: 45.

¹³³ David Freedberg, *The Eye of the Lynx: Galileo, His Friends, and the Beginnings of Modern Natural History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), .

and to the left, so that it turns towards the picture plane even as it gruesomely dislocates from its natural position in the head, staring at everything and nothing at once. The white of the eye arcs over the sunken iris, its surface reverberating with a glint of white impasto.

Fusing human and animal, mythology and natural history while depicting tangled transitions between life and death, the *Head of Medusa* is a hybrid creation that refuses to fall to one side or another. Indeed, the anxious etymology of the *amphisbaena* given by Edward Topsell in 1658 could easily apply to it:

The Grecians call this Serpent *Amphisbaina*, and the Latines from thence *Amphisbaena*, because it goeth both ways [...], as those Monsters which are said to have eyes in their backs, or rather like to Janus, which is said to have two faces, one forward, and another backward, and therefore I have called it Double-head [.] compounded of two words together, [...] which the *French* do expresse by a like compounded word, *Double-marcheur*, that is, going two ways.¹³⁴

Note that the vertical axis that passes through the Medusa's dislocated right eye also slices the *amphisbaena* in half. Hybridity or *amphisbaenism*, not snake-hair or a petrifying gaze, is her main attribute.

This deeply ambiguous character was sensed by Constantijn Huygens (1596-1687), secretary to the Prince of Orange, who diarized about a copy of Rubens's *Head of Medusa* he saw and mistook for the original in the Amsterdam home of a friend.¹³⁵ Calling it both "pleasing" and "terrible," he notes that it was usually kept behind a curtain; and while he marvels at the *ineffabili industria* of its artists, he also admits that he would rather see it in friends' homes than in his own (*domi amicorum [...] quam meae*).¹³⁶

A recent interpretation of the painting put forth by Ulrich Heinen has focused on

¹³⁴ Edward Topsell, *History of Four-Footed Beasts and Serpents and Insects* (London, 1658), vol. II, 700.

¹³⁵ Sohiers' version was probably the one auctioned in 1719 in The Hague from the collection of Warmenhuysen van Bennebroek. There are two known copies of the painting: a copy signed by Rubens's student Victor Wolfvoet, which is a smaller replica made to scale—everything, down to the intricate highlights and textures of the snakescales, is copied exactly—and another now in the Moravian Museum in Brno. Prohaska, 1977, 82.

See S.A. Worp, "Constantijn Huygens over de schilders van zijn tijd," *Oud Holland* 9 (1891), 106-36.

such ambivalences of viewing.¹³⁷ As Heinen points out, Huygens's claim about the curtain suggests that the painting was unveiled to select visitors, in which case the gorgon's white shroud would have fictively doubled the real cloth and the drama of the unveiling.

According to Heinen, the image was likely meant to prompt an exercise in *apatheia*, the state of mind in neo-Stoic philosophy in which one is undisturbed by the "passions."¹³⁸ Adducing a philosophical discussion that went back to Aristotle and was revived among early modern neo-Stoics in writings on the "contagiousness" of yawns, laughter, and weeping, Heinen notes that Rubens "kept a representation of a yawning peasant in his collection."¹³⁹ He argues further that the artist anticipated, in the expressive horror of his *Medusa*, something since established by neuroscience: that the sight of human expressions or gestures, both in real life and in art, activates "mirror neurons" that cause viewers to re-enact the same expression or gestures in their brains. This line of thinking was summarized by Stephanie Dickey in an introduction to the volume in which Heinen's article appeared, on the "passions" (early modern theories of emotion) in Netherlandish painting:

Already in Renaissance art theory and philosophy, the intuitive notion that we cannot grasp another person's emotions without undergoing corresponding feelings ourselves was extended from lived experience to the encounter with a work of art. Much later, in the second half of the nineteenth century, similar views were defended by such art theorists as Robert Vischer, Theodor Lipps and Heinrich Wölfflin, when (in opposition to the 'disinterested' beholder proposed by Immanuel Kant) they reflected on the viewer's 'Einfühlung' (or empathy) with art. As noted by David Freedberg, these ideas on art and empathy have now been validated by neuroscience [...].¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Ulrich Heinen, "Huygens, Rubens and Medusa: Reflecting the passions in paintings, with some considerations of neuroscience in art history," *Nederlands kunsthistorisch jaarboek*, 60 (2010), 151-178. Heinen discusses similar issues in "Zur bildrhetorischen Wirkungsästhetik im Barock: ein Systematisierungsversuch nach neurobiologischen Modellen," *Bildrhetorik*, 113-158; and "Emotionales Bild-Erleben in der frühen Neuzeit," *Anthropologie der Literatur*, 356-383.

¹³⁸ On Rubens and the passions see Ulrich Heinen and Andreas Thielemann, eds., *Rubens Passioni: die Kultur der Leidenschaften im Barock* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001).

¹³⁹ Heinen, "Huygens, Rubens and Medusa," 155.

¹⁴⁰ Stephanie Dickey, "Introduction: Motions of the Mind," in: Stephanie S. Dickey and Herman Roodenburg, eds., *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek 60 (The Passions in the Arts of the Early Modern Netherlands)* (2010), 23-40: . Regarding "mirror neurons" Dickey and Roodenburg specifically mention the neuroscientific research of Vittorio Gallese and Giacomo Rizzolatti, "ultimately inspired by the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty."

Images trigger embodied responses through the convincing representation not only of human gestures or expressions, but also of terrifying creatures that seem to move and activate the body's 'fight or flight' response.¹⁴¹ The *Head of Medusa* ticks both boxes. Moreover, as both a death scene and a birth scene, it grotesquely conflates two fundamental horrors, dilating both. However, according to Heinen, for Rubens's audience, the purpose of viewing such a horrific image would have been to overcome this initial response and to reach a state of detachment: "In this way Rubens's theater of horror is a kind of stoical 'consolatio' and 'remedium'."¹⁴² What the *Head of Medusa* would then ultimately confirm is the power *not* of images, but of a viewer, fortified by his philosophy.¹⁴³

The path from horror to apathy is perhaps less straightforward than Heinen suggests, as is the relationship between terror, apathy, pleasure, and knowledge—all of which could be understood as opposites of one another. Nonetheless, the notion that images had the power to convert terrifying things into neutral, edifying, or even pleasant experiences (or some combination of the three) was well established in Rubens's age, and was in fact specifically associated with the depiction of reptiles. Aristotle in his *Poetics* had noted that ugly things, if depicted skillfully, could bring as much pleasure as beautiful ones.¹⁴⁴ Plutarch used the lizard to exemplify disgusting motifs in painting and poetry, a trope taken up later by seventeenth-century writers on art such as Samuel van Hoogstraten and Franciscus Junius. The latter

¹⁴¹ Another example are the early modern "Schüttelkasten," boxes filled with miniature fictive animals (bugs, reptiles) that seemed to move and come to life when shaken. A late sixteenth-century example is at Schloss Ambras. See Leonhard, *Bildfelder*, 117-118.

¹⁴² Heinen, 165.

¹⁴³ Rubens's brother Philip Rubens was a student of the renowned Flemish neo-Stoic humanist Justus Lipsius (1547-1606). On Rubens's neo-Stoic intellectual milieu see Mark Morford, *Stoics and Neostoics: Rubens and the Circle of Lipsius* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991).

¹⁴⁴ Aristotle, *Poetics*, IV: "The truth of this second point is shown by experience: though the objects themselves may be painful to see, we delight to view the most realistic representations of them in art, the forms for example of the lowest animals and of dead bodies." On "the *topos* of art's power to neutralize ugliness" see Christopher Wood, "Otto Pächt und die nicht mehr schönen Künste," in *Am Anfang war das Auge*, ed. Artur Rosenaur (Vienna, 2006), 67-76.

remarked that, because people enjoy seeing “art provoking nature to a strife,” they not only enjoy images of beautiful things but also “love to see a painted lizard, sayth Plutarch.”¹⁴⁵ In the seventeenth century, the painted lizard became a symbol of mimesis itself and its ability not just to mirror reality but to transform the experience of it entirely.

Heinen’s reading also corresponds to Rubens’s own evident interest, pursued throughout his career, in how images can be made to move the spectator. As Bernard Aikema has argued, this interest can be discerned in numerous aspects of Rubens’s art: robust and dynamic figures, a vibrant and varied palette, tenebrism, and bizarre and grotesque elements. (To this I would add Rubens’s explosive, centrifugal compositions, which often appear as if they are “bursting at the seams.”) Rubens’s art thus reflects a heightened awareness of the role of the spectator, who in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries became a constitutive if “implied” feature of the work of art.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, as Aikema argues with an acknowledged debt to John Shearman, during this period,¹⁴⁷

the ‘implied spectator’ was addressed by means of ever new and often highly spectacular pictorial devices [...]. It might be proposed that what we call the ‘baroque’ in the visual arts is the ultimate consequence of this development, as is Marino’s *meraviglia* in poetry. The very emblem of this aesthetic mode is Medusa. Her sensual beauty mingled with horror was exalted both by Marino and by Caravaggio and Rubens.¹⁴⁸

Aikema refers here to Giambattista Marino’s famous ekphrasis on the Head of Medusa by Caravaggio—the closest predecessor of Rubens’s and Snyders’s work, which Rubens may well have seen during his stay in Florence in 1600 [fig. 4].¹⁴⁹ Marino emphasizes the image’s

¹⁴⁵ Franciscus Junius (1591-1677), *De schilder-konst der oude* (Middelburg, 1641), 65: “Wy aenschouwen de Schilderije van een Haegdisse, van een Simme, van Thersites met lust ende verwonderingh, seght Plutarchus, meer om de ghelijckenisse die wy daer in sien dan om de schoonheyd.” Junius cites Plutarch’s *Moralia*, which Samuel van Hoogstraten cites as well in his *Inleyding*. Cited in Leonhard, *Bildfelder*, 101.

¹⁴⁶ Bernard Aikema, “Rubens’s ‘*meraviglia*’”, in *Munuscula amicorum*, vol. 1 (Turnhout, 2006), 213-232.

¹⁴⁷ John K.G. Shearman, *Only Connect: Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

¹⁴⁸ Aikema, 214.

¹⁴⁹ Another, earlier version of this work by Caravaggio was recently brought to light. Dated to 1596, it is privately owned. The earlier known version now in the Uffizi was created the following year, in 1597. On the

ability to render enemies awestruck and powerless. Addressing its first owner, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, he concludes *ché la vera Medusa è il valor vostro*, “that the true Medusa is your valor.”¹⁵⁰ The reversal draws on the Medusa’s traditional role in martial imagery as an apotropaion, a protective image meant to ward off terror *through* terror. Thus, Lodovico Dolce in his *Dialogo* (1557) had allegorized the head of Medusa as reason or intellect, whose possessor would “stand armed against the lustfulness of the world” (*dovesse stare armato contro le lascivie del mondo*); Cesare Ripa, in his *Iconologia* (1593), as the triumph of reason over sensuality.¹⁵¹

Something like this is discerned in an engraving known as *Allegory of the Temptations of Youth*, engraved in Antwerp in ca. 1594-5 by Pieter Perret after Otto van Veen, who was Rubens’s teacher—or possibly, as has also been argued, after the young Rubens himself [fig. 5].¹⁵² Venus expresses a stream of milk, bending towards her target—a youth who has fallen backwards, ready to succumb to all of her pleasures—while Minerva tries to pull him away, blocking the stream with her shield. However, while the head of Medusa may be posited as the first line of defense, it not only fails at this but actually aids the enemy: the milk hits the shield and splashes right onto the youth’s ecstatic face, its path repeated by the juicy stream flowing from a bacchante’s grape-filled cup. *Amor vincit omnia*. And the Medusa is a conduit of all the irrational yet nutritive pleasures flowing in her milk.

former, see Mina Gregori and Ermanno Zoffili, eds, *The First Medusa – Caravaggio* (Milan: 5 Continents, 2011). On the Uffizi version see Caterina Caneva, *La Medusa del Caravaggio Restaurata* (Rome: Retablo, 2002); Avigdor Posèq, “Caravaggio’s Medusa Shield,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 113 (1989), 170-174. On Rubens’s reception of Caravaggio see Irene Schaudies, “Trimming Rubens’ Shadow: New Light on the Mediation of Caravaggio in the Southern Netherlands,” *Netherlands kunsthistorisch jaarboek* 55.2004 (2006), 334-367.

¹⁵⁰ Giambattista Marino, *La galeria* (Trento: La finestra, 2005).

¹⁵¹ Woollett and van Suchtelen, 182. On the Perseus myth as a state allegory in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Evers, *Rubens und sein Werk*, 201-4.

¹⁵² Lisa Rosenthal (*Gender, Politics, and Allegory*, 54) explains that the source for the engraving has been “tentatively reascribed to Rubens,” perhaps a workshop replica Rubens made while Van Veen’s pupil from 1594-8. See also Justus Müller Hofstede, “Zur Antwerpener Frühzeit von Peter Paul Rubens,” *Münchener Jahrbuch der Bildenden Kunst* (1962), 206-11.

An approach focused on the embodied response of an ideal prime viewer is in keeping with Rubens's intellectual context and the Medusa's traditional role in the aesthetics of effect. Yet its weakness is that it is something of a catch-all; it could potentially apply to any baroque head of Medusa. Indeed, it might be said to resonate more with Caravaggio's work—or, for example, with this pen drawing of the *Head of Medusa* of ca. 1680 by the Antwerp painter Godfried Maes (1649-1700) [fig. 6], which depicts the gorgon's mouth agape as if mid-scream.¹⁵³ Maes's drawing is discussed by Klaus Herding, who categorizes it as an *Ausdruckskopf*, a head or bust meant to convey a specific powerful expression.¹⁵⁴ By contrast, Rubens's and Snyders's *Head of Medusa*, which lies prone and obliquely to the viewer so that the face is nearly in profile, is, though expressive, distinctly less confrontational. Rather than just a frozen image of someone gasping or screaming at the instant of her death, her face seems to pull back or freeze into place before our eyes, as if acknowledging that it is just now *becoming* a permanent mask. Its objective or artifactual quality, enhanced by the foreshortened placement on a ground plane and by the clear signs of death in the face (bluish pallor, grey lips, bloody excretions, and glassy, frozen eyes), does not entirely cancel out the impression of life. It thus appears as something impossible yet marvelous, a *living artifact*. While almost certainly intended to provoke horror, empathy, or some combination of the two, the head of Medusa is also clearly posited as an object to be studied, inviting a *post mortem* (or rather *in mortem*) inspection to continue long after the initial horror or *consolatio* has passed. Moreover, I would argue that Rubens and Snyders, in

¹⁵³ The drawing was put up for sale in March, 2002 in the *Salon du dessin* of the art dealer Didier Aaron in Paris; cf. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Nr. 70,23.2002, 55; Klaus Herding, "Zum künstlerischen Ausdruck von Grauen und Sanftmut," in Klaus Herding and Bernhard Stumpfhaus, eds., *Pathos, Affekt, Gefühl: die Emotionen in der Künsten* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2004), 300-356.

¹⁵⁴ Herding, 331-333. The drawing appears to belong to a tradition that can be traced as early as an engraving of the *Head of Medusa* by Cornelis Cort (1533-1578), which depicts the screaming head frontally, as a stony bust, accompanied by an inscription from the *Metamorphoses*. See John Varriano, *Caravaggio: the Art of Realism* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 206-207.

comparison to Caravaggio and Maes, significantly dilate the internal, constitutive elements of Medusan terror—bodily rupture, grotesque femininity, human-animal hybridity—not simply to increase terror, but also to explore those elements specifically.

Why, then, did Rubens and Snyders, two painters who could achieve almost any representational effect imaginable in oil paints, dedicate their *ineffabili industria* to the image of a decapitated head metamorphosing into a snake nest? Clearly, one reason was that their audience had an intellectual framework in which to appreciate it. Yet the work's content and departures from Caravaggio's precedent still require further explanation. Four departures seem especially salient, and will be explored in this chapter. The first is the landscape format and the introduction of a ground plane, which imparts a narrative dimension to the image of the Medusa even while excluding Perseus.¹⁵⁵ The second is the inclusion of other animals besides snakes, a genre-drift into still life. The third is the emphasis on the neck wound, emphasizing the Medusa's metamorphic instability between image and non-image. The fourth is the focus on the generative capacity of Medusa's blood. These departures were radical, and cannot be explained simply as attempts to make the image more terrifying. Rather, they situate the image in a contemporary discourse about the intersections between life and death, in nature and in painting.

Leonardo's *animalaccio* and still lives of the forest floor

The granddaughter of Gaia or Mother Earth, Medusa carried deep associations with nature and procreation.¹⁵⁶ Her father was the sea god Phorcys, who embodied the dangers of the deep sea. According to most versions of her myth, she was the most beautiful of the three

¹⁵⁵ The frontality of the head of Medusa was traditionally a crucial aspect of its horror. See Jean-Pierre Vernant, "In the Mirror of the Medusa" (1985), in *The Medusa Reader*, 200-231; and Frontisi-Ducroix, "The Gorgon, Paradigm of Image Creation," *The Medusa Reader*, 263 ("Frontality").

¹⁵⁶ The most influential versions of the Medusa myth in antiquity were found in Hesiod, *Theogony* 270-94; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4.614-20, 770-803; and Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 2.4.2-3.

gorgon sisters, renowned for their long hair. She was also the only one of the sisters who was mortal. When Neptune raped her in Minerva's temple, the goddess, furious at this sacrilege, turned her hair into snakes and made her mortally ugly to behold. However, one of her most popular guises in antiquity was the 'beautiful Medusa', a serene, symmetrical, often winged face that proliferated on jewelry and amulets.

While classical Medusas abound, independent images of the head of Medusa in the Middle Ages seem to have been exceedingly rare. Only one is extant today, a fourteenth-century stone sculpture of the Hungarian school.¹⁵⁷ More surprisingly, only one painting of the head of Medusa is known to have been created in the fifteenth century, when classical subject matter otherwise flourished.¹⁵⁸ This is the *Head of Medusa* by Leonardo da Vinci, now lost but described by Vasari in his biography of the artist:¹⁵⁹

The fancy came to [Leonardo] to paint a picture in oils showing the head of a Medusa, with the head attired with a coil of serpents, the most strange and extravagant invention imaginable; but since it was a work that took time, it remained unfinished, as happened with almost all his things. It is among the rare works of art in the Palace of Duke Cosimo [de Medici] [...].¹⁶⁰

From its origins in the Renaissance, the head of Medusa was therefore linked to aristocratic collecting, and to artistic invention and license. As John Varriano argues, Vasari's description of Leonardo's image as the "strangest and most extravagant invention imaginable" suggests it departed significantly from classical convention, perhaps in its dramatization of the

¹⁵⁷ Now in the Varmuzeum, Budapest. See Jane Davidson Reid, *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts, 1300s-1900s*, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 650.

¹⁵⁸ The only image that could be considered an exception is a Tuscan majolica dish of ca. 1500 bearing the Pitti arms and now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, inv. no. 1204-1864. John Varriano, "Leonardo's Lost *Medusa* and other Medici Medusas from the *Tazza Farnese* to Caravaggio," in *Gazette des beaux-arts*, 130 (1997) 73-80: 74.

¹⁵⁹ Varriano, "Leonardo's Lost *Medusa*," 73-80.

¹⁶⁰ Giorgio Vasari, *Vite*, 1568 ed. Vasari suggests the work was made during Leonardo's early, Florentine period, between about 1470 and 1481; Varriano, 74.

Medusa's facial expression.¹⁶¹ Despite Vasari's insistence on its originality, Leonardo's work must also have responded to a Florentine interest in the Medusa inspired by ancient objects entering the Medici and other aristocratic collections.¹⁶² An example is the "Tazza Farnese," a Hellenistic shallow bowl of the third to first century B.C. acquired by Lorenzo de' Medici in 1471 and now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples. In an inventory of 1492, it was appraised as the most valuable gem in the Medici collections.¹⁶³ Its front side depicts the serene, moon-like face of the Medusa surrounded by her long flowing hair, while the reverse depicts a "complex allegory on the fertility of the Nile."¹⁶⁴

Though Leonardo's lost work may be echoed in some sixteenth-century images including the aforementioned majolica plate, no independent *paintings* of the head of Medusa are known prior to those of Caravaggio. Again, this is surprising given the intensive revival of classical themes during this period—even if this particular theme, a face that is *not meant to be looked at*, perhaps inherently lends itself to rarity. The absence of *cinquecento* heads of Medusa also makes sense given the primacy of narrative in mythological paintings. Though it sometimes appeared in scenes of Perseus slaying the sea monster, on its own the head of Medusa or *gorgoneion*—in Greek literally the "image of the gorgon"—is more akin to an icon; its only justification as an independent image was as a kind of reconstruction of Minerva's aegis or Perseus's shield. In both antiquity and the Renaissance, the *gorgoneion* was invoked most commonly in the realm of ornament, where its apotropaic aspect could be exercised: on amulets or other jewels that offered protection against the evil eye; lintels or other

¹⁶¹ As Varriano argues, sixteenth-century images that may have been derived from Leonardo's *Head of Medusa* emphasize the gorgon's terrible expression, suggesting Leonardo may have innovated the subject by using the gorgon's face as an expression of the *affetti* or "passions of the soul." Varriano, 75.

¹⁶² On the Medusa and Medici collecting see Valentina Conticelli, ed., *Medusa: il mito, l'antico e i Medici* (Florence and Rome: Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali, 2008).

¹⁶³ Varriano, 73. On the *Tazza Farnese* see also Alessandro Nova, *Il Libro del Vento: Rappresentare l'invisibile* (Milan: Ulteya, 2007), 26-27.

¹⁶⁴ Nova, *The Book of the Wind*, 26.

transitional spaces in architecture; and, of course, cuirasses or shields. The most spectacular examples of the latter are the embossed gold and silver shields created for Emperor Charles V by the Milanese sculptors Filippo and Francesco Negroli.

It is noteworthy that the next painter to take on the subject was one who, like Leonardo, was known for transgressing established norms in painting. Now a star attraction in the Uffizi, Caravaggio's *Head of Medusa* was given in 1608 as a wedding present to the future Grand Duke of Tuscany. From at least 1631, it was displayed in the Medici armory in the hand of a 'tournament knight' doll on a wooden horse.¹⁶⁵ Its allure today is enhanced by the fact that it has been identified as one of a handful of images for which Caravaggio studied his own features in a mirror—eliding the artist with the gorgon, his mirror with that of Perseus, and both mirrors with the surface of the painting. Partly for this reason, the work has sparked rich theoretical inquiries into Caravaggio's art and artistic agency; Louis Marin made it the subject of an entire book.¹⁶⁶ However, scholars have not acknowledged that Rubens's and Snyder's work might likewise have reflected upon concepts of artistic creativity.

This is surprising. Rubens and Snyder engage, no less than Caravaggio, with a tradition of understanding the Medusa as a paradigmatic artist, an emblem of the form-giving transitions between life and death in nature.¹⁶⁷ There was also a deeply rooted understanding of the head of Medusa itself as a paradigmatic artwork. For Flemish speakers, this would have been a short leap thanks to a linguistic homology; "shield" and "painting"

¹⁶⁵ See Walter Friedlaender, *Caravaggio Studies* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1955), 87-89.

¹⁶⁶ Louis Marin, *To Destroy Painting*. See also Paul Barolsky, "The Ambiguity of Caravaggio's Medusa," *Source* 32/3 (2013), 28-29.

¹⁶⁷ Van Eck, "Gemankeerde Pygmalions en succesvolle Medusa's," in *Levende Beelden*, 8-27; and Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux, "The Gorgon, Paradigm of Image Creation," trans. Seth Graebner, *The Medusa Reader* no. 70, 262-266.

are designated by the same word, *Schild*.¹⁶⁸ The importance of the Medusa shield to Rubens in particular is shown by the fact that it appeared in his most blatantly self-referential statement: the frescoes he designed for the loggia of his Antwerp studio-home (ca. 1618-21). These included a *trompe l'oeil* sculptural frieze of famous lost paintings of antiquity, overlapped by a giant full-color 'canvas' painting of Perseus freeing Andromeda that appeared to be hanging out to dry over the courtyard—announcing the triumph of the Belgian Apelles over ancient painting [fig. 7].¹⁶⁹ Held up by a crouching genius at the center of the composition, the Medusa shield in the Rubenshuis has been interpreted as a play on the *paragone* between painting and sculpture.¹⁷⁰

As Caroline van Eck argues, “the story of Medusa in antiquity offers among the most versatile and ambivalent paradigms of the emergence of figuration or *ikonopoesis*—literally the making of images of living things—both in sculpture and in painting.”¹⁷¹ Medusa was both a victim of metamorphosis and an *agent* of it, able to petrify living bodies by means of her gaze or to create new species with her blood. According to most versions of the myth, she was still pregnant with Neptune’s child when she was beheaded by Perseus, who used a mirror given to him by Minerva to avoid looking directly at her.¹⁷² Her pregnancy is poignant, for

¹⁶⁸ Joanna Woodall notes that “for Dutch-speaking viewers [Perseus’s] mirror-like shield is likely to have evoked the term *schilder*, the word for painter deriving from the decoration of knight’s *shields* by medieval craftsmen.” Joanna Woodall, “Wtwael’s *Perseus and Andromeda*: looking for love in early seventeenth-century Dutch painting,” in Caroline Arscott and Katie Scott, eds., *Manifestations of Venus: Art and Sexuality* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 47. For the etymology of the term *schilder*, see Anne Lowenthal, *Joachim Wtewael and Dutch Mannerism* (Doornspijk, 1986) 130-1; cited in Woodall (2000), 187, note 53.

¹⁶⁹ All of these decorations were destroyed during an eighteenth-century renovation of the Rubenshuis. However, they are represented in detail in an engraving of 1692 by Jacob Harrweijn. A painting of *Freeing Andromeda* now in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg is thought to be derived from Rubenshuis fresco. See Elizabeth McGrath, “The Painted Decoration of Rubens’s House,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 41 (1978), 245-277; Jeffrey Muller, “The Perseus and Andromeda on Rubens’s House,” *Simiolus* 12 (1981/1982), 131-146.

¹⁷⁰ See especially Beldon Scott, “The Meaning of Perseus and Andromeda in the Farnese Gallery and on the Rubens House” (as above, note 60).

¹⁷¹ Van Eck, *Levende beelden*, 10. Translation from the Dutch mine.

¹⁷² Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 2.4.2-3; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4.614-20, 770-803; Hesiod, *Theogony* 280ff.; Ovid

metamorphosis changes her both formally and substantially. She is like someone electrocuted whose touch continues transmitting shocks—hair ‘standing on end’, deadly rays perpetually flowing from her eyes. Her decapitated head retains these powers, as Perseus discovers in the *Metamorphoses* when, after a fight breaks out at his wedding, he turns it to his enemies and instantly creates “over two hundred statues—a handsome sculpture gallery.”¹⁷³ If both Perseus and the Medusa can be read here as allegories of the artist, the Medusa more closely associates the artist with those transformations that occur on the *material* level, and specifically with the conversion of living bodies into objects whose life is only apparent. Indeed, as van Eck notes, “as the only mortal of the three gorgon sisters, Medusa is from the beginning associated with death; she has a mortal strand written into her DNA.”¹⁷⁴ This “killing creativity” is discerned in the earliest extant autobiography of a sculptor, that of Benvenuto Cellini (written 1558 to 1563), whose account of the making of his bronze statue of *Perseus and Medusa* suggests a sympathetic relationship between the heating of the bronze furnace and his own nearly deadly fever.¹⁷⁵ Rubens and Snyders break down the Medusa’s artistry into its material nuances.

In addition to the snakes of Libya, the head of Medusa also gave birth to the winged horse Pegasus, who created the Hippocrene spring in which the muses bath and was thus a symbol of the liberal arts. Though Ovid had suggested that Pegasus sprang directly from Medusa’s severed neck, Lope de Vega, writing around 1600, claimed that the Medusa’s blood specifically created the “thousand colors” of Pegasus’s wings, refracting into a kind of

Metamorphoses 4.784ff., vi.119ff.; *Hyginus, Fabulae* 151.

¹⁷³ Beldon Scott, “The Meaning of Perseus and Andromeda,” 253. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, V.209.

¹⁷⁴ Van Eck, *Levende Beelden*, 11.

¹⁷⁵ Benvenuto Cellini, trans. John A. Symonds, *The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1983), . Cited in van Eck, *Levende Beelden*, . See also Michael Cole, “Cellini’s Blood,” *The Art Bulletin* 81 (1999), 215-235.

universal palette.¹⁷⁶

My interpretation of Rubens's and Snyders's *Head of Medusa* assumes that its emphasis on the gorgon's creativity is in keeping both with the subject matter, and with the work's specific time and place. Despite Maurizio Nannucci's axiom that "all art has been contemporary," certain images seem to announce their moment more than others.¹⁷⁷ Entering into a rare genre—heads of Medusa made by superstar Italian painters for aristocratic patrons—Rubens's and Snyders's work can be seen as a local statement on the ambitions and character of the Antwerp school of painting as it emerged in the 1610s.

Why did Rubens and Snyders choose to depict the head of Medusa *not* as an apotropaion emblazoned on a shield, but in a landscape where it is surrounded by various creepy-crawly creatures? Crucially, there is in the Uffizi another painting, an unattributed Flemish work of the sixteenth or seventeenth century, that depicts the head of Medusa in a similar way [fig. 8].¹⁷⁸ There are also some salient differences. There is no distant seascape; the setting is dark and cramped, like a hole in the ground, or a tomb. The head is seen from the back, turned almost entirely *into* the pictorial space; the light source appears to come from the front, brightly illuminating the snakes that replace the Medusa's hair and are positioned at "center

¹⁷⁶ Henry M. Martin, "The Perseus Myth in Lope de Vega and Calderon with Some Reference to Their Sources," *PMLA* 46/2 (June, 1931), 457-8.

¹⁷⁷ On Flemish early modern paintings as 'contemporary art', see Charlotte Houghton, "This Was Tomorrow: Pieter Artsen's *Meat Stall* as Contemporary Art," *The Art Bulletin* 86.2004, 277-300. Walter Benjamin analogized the Medusa's gaze with "the face of modernity": "The linchpin of [Baudelaire's] entire theory of art is 'modern beauty,' and for him the proof of modernity seems to be this: it is marked with the fatality of one day being antiquity, and it reveals this to whoever witnesses its birth. Here we meet the quintessence of the unforeseen, which for Baudelaire is an inalienable quality of the beautiful. The face of modernity itself blasts us with its immemorial gaze. Such was the gaze of Medusa for the Greeks." In "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century," translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin; reproduced in *The Medusa Reader*.

¹⁷⁸ Galleria degli Uffizi, *Gli Uffizi: Catalogo Generale* (Florence: Centro Di, 1979), 485. Though there has been a consensus that the work dates to the seventeenth century, the Uffizi website very recently began dating it to the sixteenth century (though maintaining it as Flemish), for reasons I do not yet know. On this painting see Richard Turner, "Words and Pictures: The Birth and Death of Leonardo's Medusa," in *Arte Lombarda* 66 (1983), 103-111; Roland Kanz, *Die Kunst des Capriccio*, esp. 54-80; and Leonhard, *Bildfelder*, 182-183.

stage” for our inspection. This approach goes even further than Rubens’s and Snyders’s work in emphasizing the Medusa’s human-animal hybridity. The head is also surrounded by different though equally chthonic animals, including rats, bats, and frogs. The animals furthest to the sides face inward, visually sealing off the cramped space. The gorgon exhales some kind of steam from her open mouth, making the air look sticky and damp. Her severed neck is mostly hidden, indicated only by a sliver of red along its contour. In contrast to the gleaming precipice in Rubens’s and Snyders’s painting, here the earth looks uneven and dirty. Yet it too is stained with a few drops of blood, which mingle with the dirt.

Recently put back on display in the *Nuove sale* of the Uffizi after languishing for decades in storage, this work is best known for the fact that it was for two centuries mistaken for Leonardo’s lost *Head of Medusa*. It was bequeathed at some point in the mid-seventeenth century to grand duke Ferdinand II (1610-1670) by Hippolyte de Vicq, a Flemish noble who was a member of the grandducal court in Florence—and whose parents had been portrayed by Rubens, a detail that has not been remarked upon in scholarship on the painting.¹⁷⁹ It entered the Medici collection in the Palazzo Pitti shortly before 1666, at which time de Vicq must have been quite young; it is possible that he brought the work with him as a gift when he arrived at court. The palace inventory initially records the work as Flemish, “*dicono di mano di un pittore fiammingo*”¹⁸⁰—*dicono*, “they say,” already indicating some uncertainty. But when it moved to the Uffizi shortly before 1700, it began to be confused with Leonardo’s work, which was by then presumably lost.¹⁸¹ Indeed, this was the belief of

¹⁷⁹ J. Gailliard, *Bruges et le Franc ou Leur magistrature et leur noblesse, avec des données historiques et généalogiques sur chaque famille*, vol. 2 (1858), 273. Rubens’s portrait of Henri de Vicq (1573-1651) is in the Louvre, Inv. 1793. His portrait of Hippolyte van Male is in the Tel Aviv Museum of Art.

¹⁸⁰ Luciano Berti, ed., *Gli Uffizi: Catalogo Generale* (Florence: Centro Di), 1979, Inv. P1472, 485.

¹⁸¹ The Uffizi catalogues since 1769 still label it as Flemish, but the inventories since 1783 record it as Leonardo’s masterpiece. See Didier Bodart, *Rubens e la pittura fiamminga*, 306-307, cat. no. 137; and Angela Ottino Della Chiesa, trans. Madeleine Jay, *The Complete Paintings of Leonardo da Vinci* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969), no. 4.

Percy Bysshe Shelley, who made it the subject of his ekphrasis “On the Medusa of Leonardo da Vinci in the Florentine Gallery,” in which the head of Medusa—“gazing in death on heaven from those wet rocks” while it “makes a thrilling vapour of the air” – becomes a jewel of Romantic beauty. (Echoing Constantijn Huygens, Shelley marvels at “the tempestuous loveliness of terror.”)¹⁸² By the early twentieth century it was once again catalogued as a Flemish work of the sixteenth or seventeenth century. Its maker and its precise relationship to Rubens’s and Snyders’s work remain unknown. A composite of the various speculations might go like this: it is a Flemish¹⁸³ “Caravaggesque”¹⁸⁴ work somehow related to Rubens’s *Head of Medusa* (probably inspired by it)¹⁸⁵ but based however on a late fifteenth-century composition (Leonardo’s *Head of Medusa?*)¹⁸⁶ and embellished with a fantastical still life according to local tastes.¹⁸⁷

The painting closely resembles *sottoboschi* paintings, still lifes of the forest floor that emerged in the mid-seventeenth century.¹⁸⁸ A fascinating niche of baroque still life painting, the *sottobosco* allowed painters and viewers to ‘zoom in’ on a realm that is secret, ephemeral, and often violent [fig. 9].¹⁸⁹ Its invention is widely credited to Otto Marseus van Schrieck (ca.

¹⁸² Percy Bysshe Shelley, “On the Medusa of Leonardo da Vinci in the Florentine Gallery.” See Carol Jacobs, “On Looking at Shelley’s Medusa,” *Yale French Studies* no. 69, *The Lesson of Paul de Man* (1985), .

¹⁸³ The work’s Flemish authorship is now generally accepted. Heinen briefly mentions the work and calls it an “early *sottobosco* painting,” whose few known practitioners were Dutch; “Huygens, Rubens and Medusa,” 173, note 32.

¹⁸⁴ Sutton, *The Age of Rubens*, 303.

¹⁸⁵ Sutton, *The Age of Rubens*, 303; Bodart, *Rubens e la pittura fiamminga*, 306. Koslow (“Postscript”) has even suggested that Snyders may have executed the animals in both paintings, for which I do not see much evidence.

¹⁸⁶ Until recently the Uffizi maintained a date of ca. 1600, i.e. before Rubens’s and Snyders’s, suggesting it reflects an earlier, possibly Leonardesque tradition. Leonhard discusses the work in connection with the *sottoboschi* but maintains the dating of ca. 1600, suggesting it as a precursor rather than an offshoot of the genre itself; *Bildfelder*, 182-184.

¹⁸⁷ Karl Voll, who compared the two works in a short paper, believed the Uffizi painting to have derived its basic composition from Leonardo’s *Head of Medusa*. His was a Wölflinian formalist comparison meant to highlight the Flemish-baroque flamboyance of Rubens’s paintings as opposed to the classical Italian Renaissance spirit vouchsafed in the Uffizi painting (despite unclassical details like the disconcertingly prominent frog); *Vergleichende Gemäldestudien*, 2nd ed. (Munich: G. Müller, 1908), 38-42, fig. 8.

¹⁸⁸ Again, Heinen simply calls the work “an early *sottobosco* painting,” but does not suggest an attribution.

¹⁸⁹ See the writings of Karin Leonard: *Bildfelder*; “Painted Poison: Venomous Beasts, Herbs, Gems, and Baroque Color Theory,” *Nederlands kunsthistorisch jaarboek* 61 (2011), 116-147; and “Pictura’s Fertile Field: Otto Marseus

1613-1678), whose name, etymologically related to the Dutch word *schrik* (horror), is either a coincidence or a clever case of self-fashioning.¹⁹⁰ Born in Nijmegen, near the German border with the Low Countries, van Schrieck was active in Florence and Rome in the 1650s and established a niche market for *sottoboschi* paintings there. According to a contemporary biographer, van Schrieck later joined up with the *Bentveugels*, a group of Dutch painters in Rome who cultivated a reputation as eccentric expats and who nicknamed him the *snuffelaar* or “sniffer” for his habit of sniffing “all kinds of strangely colored or speckled snakes, lizards, caterpillars, spiders, wasps, and strange plants and herbs.”¹⁹¹ Another biographer claims that van Schrieck had, by the 1650s, set up his own *vivarium* in Rome where he would observe (and presumably sniff) reptiles and amphibians from life, and that he continued collecting such animals when he returned to Amsterdam.¹⁹²

His biographers thus imply that van Schrieck had a transgressively intimate knowledge of his subject matter—a conflation of art and life that is also performed in his works themselves. In *sottoboschi* still lifes, low species such as toads or mushrooms seem to emerge directly from the mossy earth, as if spontaneously generated from the physical ground of the painting itself. Material-mimetic touches like gluing real moth wings to simulate fictive ones, or using actual paint-soaked moss to stamp the texture of the forest floor, blur the boundaries of nature and artifice, enacting a Medusan creative killing. For instance, in van Schrieck’s “Morning glories, toad, and insects” (1660), the texture of the moss-stamped moss is visually echoed in the speckled skin of a toad; pressed butterfly wings

van Schrieck and the Genre of Sottobosco Painting,” *Simiolus* 31/2 (2010), 95-118.

¹⁹⁰ Leonhard, *Bildfelder*. On this artist see also Susanna Steensma, *Otto Marseus van Schrieck: Leben und Werk*, Studien zur Kunstgeschichte 131 (Hildesheim/Zürich/New York, 1999).

¹⁹¹ “[...] *allerwegen naar vremd gekleurde of gespikkelde slangen, bagedissen, rupsen, spinnen, flintertjes, en vremde gewassen en kruiden omsnuffelde.*” Arnold Houbraken, *Schouburgh* I, 357-358. (Houbraken cites van Hoogstraten, who visited van Schrieck in Rome.) Leonhard, *Bildfelder*, 18.

¹⁹² Samuel van Hoogstraten, *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst* (Rotterdam, 1678), 169. Leonhard, *Bildfelder*, 22.

‘fly’ around the papery petals of brilliant blue morning glories [fig. 10]. In this world, the difference between animals and plants is shown to be merely one of degree; all formations are shown to be reformations of existing matter.

The *sottoboschi* have been explored in masterful studies by Karin Leonhard, who argues that they drew parallels between spontaneous generation and painting. Leonhard connects the genre to the mythological battle between Apollo and the chthonic serpent Python, in which the latter was vanquished, as well as to the historical “return of the repressed” postulated by Aby Warburg and Walter Benjamin—the seeping-back of a matriarchal and heterogeneous prehistory centered around earth cults and female fertility, both repressed in Apollonian society.¹⁹³ Van Schrieck, she argues, fashioned himself as the cultivator of “fertile fields,” but not in the Apollonian-Christian sense of a gardener, whose task is to cultivate perfect images and *species*, and to organize the chaos of the natural world. Rather, in the “negative mimesis” of the *sottoboschi* still life, “the forms of nature are detained to repeat themselves in the image, and tempted to disturbances, dissolutions or aberrations, non-forms or monstrosities.”¹⁹⁴

It is surely not a coincidence that Ferdinand II acquired his “Flemish” *Head of Medusa* in the 1660s, when this genre was also at a peak of popularity in Florence. The resemblance is so striking that it does not seem a stretch to attribute the work to van Schrieck himself, who might have seen Huygens’s copy of Rubens’s and Snyders’s work in Amsterdam and created a kind of ‘spinoff’, or to one of his followers. Indeed, the Uffizi painting has a very direct link to Rubens’s and Snyders’s *Head of Medusa*, which has gone unnoticed: a monstrous snake birth—the snakelet erupting from the mother’s belly—is depicted in the exact same

¹⁹³ Leonhard, *Bildfelder*, 93-96. See Walter Benjamin, “Franz Kafka” (1934); and Johann Jakob Bachofen, *Das Mutterrecht* (Frankfurt, 1975).

¹⁹⁴ Leonhard, *Bildfelder*, 189.

place, the lower right corner.

Rubens's and Snyder's *Head of Medusa* thus anticipates and perhaps directly inspired a still life genre that emerged thirty years later. However, there remains another possibility that cannot quite be discounted: that the Uffizi painting preserves a now-lost type whose inventor was Leonardo. Indeed, it resonates strongly with another of Leonardo's reported works. Vasari tells us of a round wooden shield painted by the young Leonardo and later sold by his father to the Duke of Milan—an *animalaccio* or “big bad animal” composed of numerous creatures and exhaling deadly vapors, like a basilisk. The biographer says Leonardo hoped that this work would “produce the same effect as once did his head of Medusa.” In fact, Vasari devotes much more space to the *animalaccio* than he does to Leonardo's *Head of Medusa* itself, offering an intriguing account of the image's genesis. The story begins when a peasant overseeing the estate of Leonardo's father cuts down a fig tree and from its wood fashions a crude shield, which he asks “Ser Piero” to bring to Florence so that it could be painted—presumably, by Leonardo. Leonardo's father obliged, and,

without telling Leonardo whose it was, [...] asked him to paint something upon it. Leonardo having one day taken this buckler in his hands, and seeing it twisted, ill-made, and clumsy, straightened it by the fire, and [...] from the rough and clumsy thing that it was, caused it to be made smooth and equal; and afterwards, having covered it with gesso, and having prepared it after his own method, he began to think of what he might paint on it, that should be able to terrify all who should come upon it, producing the same effect as once did the head of Medusa. Leonardo therefore, to this end, carried to a room into which no one entered but himself alone, slow-worms, lizards, field-cricketts, snakes, moths, grasshoppers, bats, and other kinds of such-like animals, out of the number of which, variously put together, he evolved a most horrible and terrifying creature, which poisoned the air with its breath, and turned it into flame; and he represented it coming from out a dark and jagged rock, belching poison from its open throat, and fire from its eyes, and smoke from its nostril, in so strange a manner, that it seemed altogether a monstrous and horrible thing; and such pains did he take in executing it, that although the smell of the dead animals in the room was very noisome, it was not perceived by Leonardo, so great was the passion that he bore towards his art.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ Giorgio Vasari, “The Life of Leonardo da Vinci,” from the 2nd edition of the *Lives* (1568), trans. Herbert P. Horne (London: At the Sign of the Unicorn, 1903), 15-16. On the *animalaccio* story and particularly the theme of horror see Frank Fehrenbach, “Compositio corporum: Renaissance der Bio Art,” *Vorträge aus dem Warburg-Haus*, Wolfgang Kemp et al, eds. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2006), 131-176, esp. 149.

Offering a glimpse into the earthy back rooms of process, Vasari emphasizes the painter's miraculous transformation of his materials. Taking the "twisted, ill-made and clumsy" (albeit well-intentioned) work of a peasant-craftsman, Leonardo first straightens out the shield by the mercurial blaze of a fire, so that this support—after the final layer of gesso and mysterious preparations "after his own method"—becomes a kind of white matter, the medium of Leonardo's *inventio*.

Yet all of this emphasis on the transcendence of materials leaves its refuse. In his creative frenzy, Leonardo is said not to notice the smell of rotting animals that fills his studio. But we notice it. It permeates the scene, surrounding the painter and leaving a permanent stain on our impression of his studio. Indeed, in a scene with the protracted temporality and tenebristic lighting of a horror film, Vasari ends the story by conflating the pleasing and terrifying revelation of the finished picture with that of entering the painter's private space. Ser Piero enters Leonardo's studio and is told to wait while Leonardo "adjust[s] the buckler to the light on the easel, and put[s] it to the window, in order to lower the light" before he is finally invited into the room.¹⁹⁶ The staging—the easel set against the window (in other words, backlit)—resonates with the relatively dark atmosphere of the Uffizi *Head of Medusa*.

In an article on Joachim Wtwael's *Perseus and Andromeda* (1611), Joanna Woodall notes the "Medusan character" of a "strangely unarticulated part of the sea-shore," pointing out that this can be seen as analogous to "the messy, material debris of the painter's studio."¹⁹⁷ Significantly, dead animals were sometimes used to make paints, as two red pigments came from crushing or boiling insects: cochineal (carmine red), derived from the

¹⁹⁶ Vasari/Horne, 16.

¹⁹⁷ Woodall, "Wtwael's *Perseus and Andromeda*," 47.

coccus cacti beetle, and lac lake (red lake), from a sticky red resin formed when *coccus lacca* beetles, living in trees, become stuck in the sap.¹⁹⁸ Vasari opens the door to this space, descriptively releasing the odors (one thinks of the acidity of paint thinner) given off by the creatures as they begin a retrograde trajectory into the underworld—while their new life as simulacra begins. And at this crossroads of nature and art, his creation blooming in the midst of decay, is the painter at work.

Vasari says Leonardo intended this work to produce the same effect as his head of Medusa; he does not say it *is* the head of Medusa. Rather than a head surrounded by animals, let alone spontaneously generating them, he describes the *animalaccio* as “evolved from” the animals themselves, which are “variously put together,” evoking the slightly later composite heads of Arcimboldo and his followers. Still, the resemblance to both Flemish heads of Medusa is striking. The most basic resemblance lies in Leonardo’s introduction of a ground plane: *e quello fece uscire d’una pietra scura e spezzata*, “and he represented it coming from out a dark and jagged rock.” In contrast to the expressive face of Caravaggio’s *Head of Medusa* (and most likely Leonardo’s as well), which is committed to the surface of the shield (or perhaps lurking tensely just ‘behind’ it¹⁹⁹), these “nature Medusas” inhabit virtual surroundings that they also ‘bleed into’ and with which they are thus to some extent consubstantial, as if the entire shield has melted into the infinite stuff of fiction.

Yet if Rubens’s and Snyders’s *Head of Medusa* is related to Leonardo’s *animalaccio*, the unattributed work in the Uffizi is a closer relative. Depicting the gorgon “poisoning the air with its breath,” which Medusa herself is not traditionally known to do, it sets the head in a subterranean, grotto-like space whose ambiance of death and decay is central to the *animalaccio* story as well. Moreover, while all of the animals in Snyders’s still life are brightly

¹⁹⁸ A.P. Laurie, *The Pigments and Techniques of the Old Masters* (London: Macmillan, 1914), 12 and 44-5.

¹⁹⁹ Marin, *To Destroy Painting*, 121.

illuminated, some of the creatures in the Uffizi painting—especially the most sepulchral ones, the rats and bats—lurk in the shadows, avoiding being seen at first glance and jumping out at you the longer you look.²⁰⁰ The animals in this work also have the intimate, casual feeling of nature studies. (The exception are the snakes themselves, whose intricate, glittering textures, probably based on metal life casts, struck me, when I saw the work, as having been painted by another hand or perhaps at a different time.²⁰¹)

In the works we have been examining, *ikonopoiesis* is construed not as an intellectual process, an idea arising in the mind,²⁰² but as a purely material or accidental one. This is a conceit. Their actual making involved immense technical skill and planning. However, by invoking the Medusa characterize nature as blindly procreative, they posit the danger of an equally materialistic conception of painting. One way to understand this is in terms of the tension between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*.²⁰³ Unless the painter can create something that rivals living, processual nature, his works inevitably belong to the latter category and are like the creations of the Medusa: cold-blooded, or even specimens dead on arrival. The “Flemish” Medusas pose this threat, even while vigorously denying it and using a variety of ingenious techniques to blur the boundaries between art and life. In this regard, Rubens’s and Snyders’s *Head of Medusa* also is quite different. Rather than conveying metamorphosis and consubstantiality through a chain of formal analogies, like the *sottoboschi*, or by means of a unifying steamy atmosphere that permeates a cramped space, Rubens and Snyders shine a spotlight on one such “negative mimesis”—the generation of snakes from Medusa’s

²⁰⁰ This echoes Leonardo’s father’s experience of viewing the animalaccio, in which the creature ‘jumps out’ at him suddenly in the right light.

²⁰¹ I am unaware of any technical studies done on the painting that could confirm this. Karl Voll’s suggestion that the work conveys a fifteenth-century prototype later “embellished with a fantastical still life according to local tastes” has not to my knowledge been taken up. It is also possible that a copy of such a prototype was reworked or “embellished” by van Shrieck or one of his followers.

²⁰² For this conception, see Erwin Panofsky, *Idea: A Concept in Art Theory* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1968).

²⁰³ See Leinkauf, “Implikationen des Begriffs *natura naturans*” (as above, note 23).

blood—in a gory but completely legible scene that becomes a perverse triumph of their own *high* mimesis. If the *sottoboschi* are cross-sections of nature that still capture its fluctuating or unstable character—the toad sticks its tongue out, capturing a moth that will soon become mud again—Rubens and Snyders explode nature (who is the Medusa herself) in order to stage its most mysterious transformation, the generation of life forms from matter, in synthetic or processual time.

Indeed, while horror or compassion can overwhelm the viewer in an instant, the sense of time the image constructs narratively or ‘internally’ is more complex.²⁰⁴ The relentlessly overlapping hair-snakes, whose fragments we glimpse in perfect clarity, disrupt or scramble viewing time and send it into a perpetual loop. A more linear progression seems offered by the creatures that are shown in successive stages of completion, culminating in the fully fledged creatures in the foreground. Yet these creatures, which are free in theory to move independently and should therefore appear the most alive, are instead the most static and specimen-like.²⁰⁵ As Koslow has argued, Snyders may well have studied bronze casts of reptiles in preparation for the *Head of Medusa*.²⁰⁶ In the final act, then, Snyders’s creations take their places back where they started, as specimens on a shelf.

The Medusa, Prometheus Bound, and collaboration as violence

Rubens and Snyders show the gorgon to be partly consubstantial with both the snakes that spring from her head, and the ones generated by her blood. Yet they depict these transitions between the Medusa and her creatures not as fluid or natural, but as violent. In this sense, they also dramatize the pressures and tensions of their own collaboration, which was again

²⁰⁴ For a study of the potential for temporal complexity in painting see Leo Steinberg, *Leonardo's Incessant Last Supper* (New York: Zone, 2001).

²⁰⁵ I thank Maurice Sass (University of Hamburg) for bringing this aspect of the image to my attention.

²⁰⁶ Koslow, “‘How Looked the Gorgon Then...’”147. Otto Marseus van Schrieck may have used life casts to model his creatures as well, including the moth-eating frog in the Schwerin painting; Leonhard, *Bildfelder*, 30.

one of the most novel aspects of their work. The painting therefore offers an interesting comparison with another Rubens-Snyders creation of the 1610s, the *Prometheus Bound* now in Philadelphia [fig. 11].²⁰⁷ Both works were made during a decade when collaboration between master specialists was emerging in Antwerp as a normal mode of production. They can be seen as trials of the same experiment: creative competition. Divided with a striking evenness between human and animal components, they thematize not just the dynamics of their own dual authorship but also the rivalries of both painters with the creative energies of nature. The resulting spectacles of artifice would have appealed to savvy collectors.

I am not suggesting that the works were created as pendants. There are differences of format and scale: at 24 x 21 centimeters, the *Head of Medusa* is almost exactly one-third of the size of *Prometheus Bound*, whose larger scale and vertical format fit its subject matter: a clash between a titan and a bird of prey that is also Zeus. However, both collaborations depict a human-animal struggle set in a perilous mountain landscape. Both also differ from previous versions of their subjects in their extraordinary emphasis on animal still life, just then on the precipice of becoming an independent genre. This subtle genre drift is also an epistemological one, between mythology and natural history. But rather than covering up this hybridity, Rubens and Snyders dramatize it as an irreconcilable clash. Crucially, in both works, authorial interstices erupt in wounds, whose amorphous or undercooked appearances contrast with the immaculate mimesis of the whole.

More prosaically, this comparison can help clarify an issue of attribution. The snakes and other animals in the *Head of Medusa* have widely been attributed to Snyders both on stylistic grounds, and because the inventory of the Villiers auction names the artists as

²⁰⁷ There is another version of this “Prometheus Bound” now in Oldenburg, Germany. On the Philadelphia version Anne T. Woollett in *Rubens & Bruegel: A Working Friendship*, 166-173, cat. no. 221; Fiske Kimball, “Rubens’ Prometheus,” *Burlington Magazine* 94 (1952), 67-68; and especially Julius Held, “Prometheus Bound,” *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin* vol. 59 no. 279 (August, 1963), 16-32.

Rubens and “Subter,” likely a misspelling of Snyders’s name.²⁰⁸ However, Jan Brueghel the Elder and Paul de Vos have also been mentioned as candidates; and it has also been suggested, without much basis, that Rubens painted the entire image himself.²⁰⁹ By contrast, *Prometheus Bound*, begun as early as 1611 and finished by 1618, has justly been described as one of the “best documented collaborative paintings of the early seventeenth century.”²¹⁰ Its attribution to Snyders is certain—strengthening the case, I would argue, that Snyders painted the animals in the *Head of Medusa*, as well. In a letter of 1618 to Sir Dudley Carleton in which he discusses various works he has for sale, Rubens himself names “a Prometheus Bound on Mount Caucasus with an eagle which pecks its liver, original by my hand and the eagle done by Snyders.”²¹¹ As Julius Held has pointed out, the letter shows that the prevalence of collaborative painting in Antwerp did not mean that the status of individual authorship was undervalued, or that collectors simply did not know the difference.²¹² On the contrary: Rubens’s and Snyders’s public was made up of informed collectors for whom an “original” by two master specialists might have been doubly appealing. Elizabeth Honig has documented the changes in collecting practices between 1610 and 1620, including an increase of about thirty percent in the number of attributed paintings and a refinement of the language used in attributions. She argues that during this decade, collaboration emerged in Antwerp not just as an efficient mode of production, but as a way of addressing and constructing a new type of connoisseurial viewer, the *liefhebber*.²¹³

²⁰⁸ See note 124, as above.

²⁰⁹ Prohaska, “The *Head of Medusa*,” in *Das Flämische Stilleben*, cat. no. 12.

²¹⁰ Held, “Prometheus Bound,” 19.

²¹¹ Rubens’s letter is cited in Held, “Prometheus Bound,” 19–20.

²¹² Held (“Prometheus Bound,” 20): “It is sometimes said that the question of personal execution of a work was taken more lightly in the 17th century than today and especially in the so-called Rubens factory (a most unfortunate and misleading term). This letter, which so clearly tells us what is by Rubens and what is by Snyders or other students, gives the lie to such notions. The serious collectors of the 17th century clearly wanted to know what they were getting [...]”

²¹³ Honig, “The Beholder as a Work of Art” (as above, note 119). On collaboration in Antwerp painting see

These new collecting and viewing practices arose during an innovative and experimental period in Antwerp painting, when Rubens and his colleagues were forging new working methods and conceptions of their art. It is therefore not surprising that both the *Head of Medusa* and *Prometheus Bound* center on mythological figures that carried deep associations with the visual arts.²¹⁴ Following the version of the myth attributed to Aeschylus, Prometheus was not only a titan punished for defying the higher gods; he was also a tragic hero, whose theft of fire—which Rubens would also depict later, in a 1636 oil sketch for the Torre de la Parada cycle—gifted mankind with technology and the arts.²¹⁵ In his *De Sculptura* of 1504, Pomponius Gauricus had simply identified Prometheus as a sculptor, the archetype of a human creator in transgressive competition with the gods.²¹⁶ Likewise, Natale Conti tells us in his *Mythologiae* that “Prometheus is supposed to have been the first one to shape men out of mud.”²¹⁷ In a *Prometheus Bound* by Jacob Jordaens—whose eagle appears to have been copied directly from that of Snyders, either by Jordaens or by Snyders himself—a small marble sculpture lies on the mountainside, a clear allusion to Prometheus’s occupation.²¹⁸

The paintings thus spark a chain of “productive *paragones*”:²¹⁹ between human and animal, painting and sculpture, and creative powers divine, natural, and human. Yet it would

also Susan Merriam, *Seventeenth-Century Flemish Garland Paintings: Still Life, Vision, and the Devotional Image* (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2011).

²¹⁴ See Olga Raggio, “The Myth of Prometheus: Its Survival and Metamorphoses up to the Eighteenth Century,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* vol. 21, no. 1/2 (1958), 44-62.

²¹⁵ Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*. As Christine Göttler explores in forthcoming work, fire was invoked by Flemish baroque painters to symbolize their own transformative power over the natural world.

²¹⁶ Pomponio Gaurico, *De Sculptura*, ed. and trans. into German by Heinrich Brockhaus (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1886), 164. Cited Held, “Prometheus Bound,” 31.

²¹⁷ Natale Conti, *Mythologiae* (1583) IV, ch. 6. As Olga Raggio notes, p. 59, Conti also “draws a quite unexpected parallel between the evils caused to mankind by Prometheus’ disobedience and the evils—war, destruction and massacre—caused by Protestant heresy, the modern example of sinful arrogance of spirit,” a reading that to my knowledge has not yet been applied to Rubens’s and Snyders’s painting.

²¹⁸ Held, “Prometheus Bound,” 31.

²¹⁹ I thank Joris van Gastel, Giannis Hadjinicolau, and Markus Rath for inspiring these thoughts with their session “Productive Paragones” at the Renaissance Society of America Annual Conference (Berlin, 2015), where I presented a portion of this work.

be wrong to read these works simply as celebrations of artifice. Their rhetoric is more complex or even devious. Inasmuch as Medusa or Prometheus can be seen as artist figures, their creative acts either result in or are the result of mortal transgressions between the divine and human realms. The works' overt messages of punishment should not be overlooked. At the same time, in each case this also becomes a perverse triumph of the figure painter; the subject of torture allows Rubens to depict passions or extreme states of being that move and overwhelm the viewer, a common topos of praise for his work, including specifically *Prometheus Bound*. A Latin poem by Dominicus Baudius dated April 11, 1612, sent by the poet personally sent in a letter to Rubens and the earliest literary reference to the painting, emphasizes that, were he not chained to the mountain, Rubens's Prometheus would literally throw himself onto the viewer.²²⁰ Baudius also says that Snyder's eagle (which he misidentifies as a vulture) actually seems to "beat the air with its wings" and to "shoot savage flames" from its eyes—as if Snyder himself has picked up the torch depicted in the lower left, enlivening his creature with the very creative energies Prometheus has stolen.

Yet it is Snyder's eagle that ostensibly triumphs, just as his snakes *bite back* and overwhelm the head of Medusa. The eagle's victory is performed in its majestically outstretched wings, a pose that allows Snyder to fully articulate his object. A preparatory drawing now in the British Museum suggests that the full wingspan was critical to Snyder's conception of the eagle [fig. 12].²²¹ Glaring at the viewer, its feathers diagonally spanning the entire sheet, the eagle achieves maximum corporeal and psychic freedom. His presence is enhanced by the shadow he casts on the rock behind him, cross-hatched and darkened in

²²⁰ "[...] a ferocious vulture, with his hooked beak searches the chest of Prometheus and gives no respite to his victim; the cruel bird devours again and again his ever regrowing liver. He is not content with the frightful repast and with his claws tears open his face and body. He would pounce on the spectator, at the expense of the latter's life, if he were not prevented from doing so by his attachment to his prey." Baudius, a professor at the University of Leiden, was an acquaintance of Rubens and especially his brother. His poem was sent to Rubens in a letter of April 11, 1612. Translation from Kimball, "Rubens' Prometheus," 67.

²²¹ See Arthur E. Popham, "A Drawing by Snyder," *Burlington Magazine* XCIV (1952), 237.

brown wash. In the painting, both Prometheus and the eagle are pushed to the foreground, their bodies stretched along the same diagonal, lit from the front and rendered in stark detail. The result is a highly ostentatious contrast: the naked body of Prometheus, flexed and stretched to articulate every imaginable muscle, and the eagle with its thousands of feathers darkly spreading over the surface. In the *Head of Medusa*, the rhetoric of creative competition is more complex, as the boundaries between human and animal are demarcated not just through violence but also through metamorphosis.

Scholars have tended to assume that both of these works were classically inspired conceits of Rubens, for which Snyders skillfully filled in the blanks. Yet it is also possible that the choice of imagery was structured by and meant to draw attention to the collaboration itself. Indeed, in light of what Honig and others have shown about the ostentatious character of Antwerp collaborative painting, it is even appropriate to ask whether the amphisbaena in the *Head of Medusa*, far from being a mere curiosity, might allude to the hybrid character of the entire image—a wink at its dual authorship.

Rubens and Snyders contrast the vitality of the Medusa's blood with the stony pallor her head, which is implied as a sculpture-in-progress. The image implies an eruption from sculpture into painting—a *paragone* in action. Moreover, as a spectacle of creatural individuations that are frozen *in media res* (and thus doomed to eternal incompleteness), it draws attention to the interstices of collaboration. The snakes struggle to pull away from the Medusa's coiffure—a possibility shown by the two 'escapees' and the perfectly coiled snake on the precipice—but each twists over the next, tightening the knot rather than unraveling it. In the foreground, two snakelets wriggle in opposite directions from drops of blood; but the monstrosity to their left, the amphisbaena, warns that they might not make it.

The tensest pathways occur where the hands of the painters exchange, and the

gorgon's head gives way to snakes [figs. 13 and 14]. Look again at the snaky 'dreadlocks' that grow from the forehead: on the lower one, steep brown diagonal hatches denote hair, while on the upper one these are cross-hatched and given silvery blue highlights, becoming scales. In the interstices between figure-painting and still life, between human and animal, liquid and solid (i.e., painting and sculpture), mimesis breaks down to expose its scaffolding. There is an implicit violence in this, as the snake most alike in color and texture to the 'knots' turns around and bites Medusa in the temple. Meanwhile, in her severed neck the entire construction project has collapsed, leaving behind a scramble of red and black from which a single cord dangles like a live wire: it is n/either ligament n/or snake, an undercooked specimen *we're not meant to see*. Indeed, it has only been exposed by violent rupture. And the image says that it is here, in the knots and wounds of bodily breakdown, that creation occurs.

Hyperbolically contrasted to the glassy perfection of the still life, and to the Medusa's own stony pallor, the neck wound is a radical cut or caesura that gives way to a kind of primordial chaos or *prima materia*. It is reminiscent of Lucretius's description of the chaos that preceded creation, in which "not a thing could be seen, that was similar to our things."²²² Or as Gernot and Hartmut Böhme put it in their cultural history of the elements, "chaos is a world *sin imagine*."²²³ Yet for viewers and readers, it is also full of the *potential* for images. Hendrick Goltzius visualized this potential in his *Creation of the World* series (1589) as a sphere in which dark and light appear trapped in perpetual conflict [fig. 15].²²⁴ Two etchings made by Johann Theodoor de Bry (1561-1623) for *Utriusque cosmi* (1617), by the

²²² For Lucretius's description of chaos, *De rerum natura* V, 432-435.

²²³ Böhme, *Feuer, Wasser, Erde, Luft*, 34. This phrase is used by Ovid in *Fasti* I: 111 and in *Metamorphoses* I: 87.

²²⁴ New Hollstein (Muller Dynasty) part 2, 124, 35 II/II. A preparatory sketch is in the Universiteitsbibliotheek, Leiden, inv.no.PK-1958-T-3. On Goltzius's creation scene, see Hélène Mazur Contamine, "Goltzius' sketches for Muller's 'Seven Days of Creation' and Matham's 'Four Elements'," *Oud-Holland*, 102.1998, 174-180.

Paracelsian natural philosopher, cosmologist and occultist Robert Fludd and published in the same decade in which Rubens and Snyders painted the *Head of Medusa*, likewise attempt to render chaos *as* an image [figs. 16a and b]. One, illustrating the first page of Chapter IX, depicts the primordial chaos as an amorphous cloud that is dark in the middle.²²⁵ Three pages later, the four elements appear in the middle of the cloud, jumbled up yet now clearly distinguishable from each other.²²⁶ As I will argue in my third chapter, Rubens's late oil sketch of *Neptune Calming the Tempest* would likewise imply material or elemental chaos as the origin of images.

Locating the first sparks of organic life in a substance that is somehow both prior and subsequent to the triumphs of figuration that surround it, the *Head of Medusa* depicts this *prima materia* as a color, red, enlivened by the first rudiments of relief (white highlight, black shadow) and the spiraling motions of the snakes.²²⁷ From there, we are told, any sort of image is possible. Yet as we have seen, Rubens and Snyders also question and endanger the viability of the Medusa's creatures, which kill each other in the midst of their own generative acts, or end up as monsters or static specimens. Both their *Medusa* and their *Prometheus Bound* also feature mythological characters whose quasi-artistic acts are either punished, or are the result of punishment. They therefore thematize both painting's claims to enlivenment, and the built-in failure or impossibility of those claims.

Both images depict figures in states of abjection and ontological suspension. Medusa has been cut into a fragment, unable to control the transformations of her own bodily

²²⁵ *Quod universa coelorum tam spiritualis, quam corporalium substantia sit aut elementum aut ex elementi compositum*. Robert Fludd, *Utriusque cosmii, Maioris scilicet et Minoris, metaphysica, physica, atque technica Historia* [The metaphysical, physical, and technical history of the two worlds, namely the greater and lesser] (Oppenheim, 1617), vol. 1, 37. Digitized at <http://www.e-rara.ch/cgj/content/pageview/1683929> and <http://www.e-rara.ch/cgj/content/pageview/1683933>. On Rubens and Fludd see Meganck, 148, note 11.

²²⁶ Fludd, *Utriusque cosmii*, 41.

²²⁷ On serpentine movement in Rubens, see Paul Vandebroek, "The Solomonic Column: A Rubenesque Motif in the Light of Tradition," *Rubensbulletin* (Antwerp: Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 2014), 24-91, esp. 27-29. I thank Claudia Swan for bringing this article to my attention.

material. Prometheus, his body inverted and chained, will endure the same punishment forever because his liver regenerates [fig. 17]. Indeed, the most striking similarity between the two works is that the most charged sites of collaborative exchange depict not only wounds, but wounds with regenerative power. The liver was considered the seat of life in all humans, as Badius notes in his ekphrasis.²²⁸ Badius also emphasizes the bloodiness of the wound, even though it pales in comparison to the Medusa's: "Blood oozes from the chest of Prometheus and colours every spot where he treads his claws."²²⁹

By implying painterly collaboration as a clash of forces, Rubens and Snyders not only call attention to their own respective skills; they also juxtapose these skills with the creative energies of nature, suggesting that the highest painterly skill would be to create artificial analogues of those energies. Prometheus's liver and Medusa's blood inhabit a space between hands, a messy generative wellspring that appears physically internal to the image. Collaboration opens up a gash that naturalizes life within the image itself.

Rubens, rubentis

The *Head of Medusa* also broke precedent in its sheer bloodiness. As I have been arguing, the image posits the gorgon's blood as the symbolic "prime matter" of both nature and painting. This is connected, I will now suggest, to notions about blood and the color red that were of interest to Rubens's biographers and likely also to Rubens and his collaborators themselves.

In his Rubens monograph, first published in German in 1833, Gustav Friedrich Waagen (1797-1866) makes an extraordinary comment. After praising the painter for the "colouring of his flesh," its "vivid transparency of tone" and "glow of life," he suddenly states: "it is easy to understand how Guido Reni should have been struck with wonder upon

²²⁸ Cited in Fiske-Kimball, "Rubens' Prometheus," 67.

²²⁹ Cited in Fiske-Kimball, "Rubens' Prometheus," 67.

beholding a picture of Rubens for the first time, and exclaim, ‘Does this painter mix blood with his colours?’”²³⁰

Waagen does not specify his source, and the origins of this story remain a mystery. As Anna Jameson, who edited the 1840 English edition of Waagen’s monograph, pointed out in a note, praising painters for the inner redness of their figures was not without precedent: Guido’s alleged remark is reminiscent of ones made about the Greek painter Parrhasius, renowned for his mastery of color, whose women were said to have “looked as though they had fed on roses.”²³¹ Seneca had reported in his *Controversies* that Parrhasius had bought a slave and tortured him to death, in order to model the figure of Prometheus for a painting.²³² Seneca treats this as a scandal, summarizing the various ethical arguments for or against it—including that of Fulvius Sparsus, who also claims that Parrhasius, “wherever he needs blood, [...] uses human blood.”²³³ As Norman Land has pointed out recently, this association was also latent in the red pigment most commonly used to depict blood, vermilion or *cinnabaris*, which Pliny etymologized as “dragon’s blood.”²³⁴ Parrhasius’s use of human blood—apparently, the blood of his model—and not “dragon’s blood” was thus a transgressive literalism; just as Prometheus stole fire from Zeus, Parrhasius stole life from his model to give it to his painting. The topos of the painter as murderer has been discerned in Caravaggio’s *Beheading of Saint John the Baptist* (1608), the only picture the artist signed [fig.

²³⁰ Gustav Friedrich Waagen, *Peter Paul Rubens: His Life and Genius*, ed. Anna Jameson, trans. Robert E. Noel (London: Saunder and Otley, 1840), 52.

²³¹ Note by Anna Jameson, 52: “In the same manner it was said of Parrhasius, the great master of colouring among the painters of antiquity, that his women ‘looked as though they had fed on roses’; and Annibal Caracci said of Caravaggio, that he did not *paint* but *grind* flesh [...]”

²³² Seneca, *Controversiae*, trans. Michael Winterbottom, vol. II (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 448-449. Cited in Norman E. Land, “Blood as Paint: Rubens, Guido Reni, and Parrhasius,” *Notes on the History of Art* 31/2 (2012), 22-23: 22. See also Helen Morales, “The Torturor’s Apprentice: Parrhasius and the Limits of Art,” in Jaś Elsner, ed., *Art and Text in Roman Culture* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 182-209.

²³³ Land, “Blood as Paint,” 22.

²³⁴ Pliny, *Historia naturalis* 33.116 and 35.50. Cited Land, 22. On the deep symbolic connection between red and blood in classical mythology and folklore, see Eva Wunderlich, *Die Bedeutung der roten Farbe im Kultus der Griechen und Römer, erläutert mit Berücksichtigung entsprechender Bräuche bei anderen Völkern*, Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten XX, vol. 1 (Breslau and Tübingen, 1925), 4-18 (“Rot als Blutsymbol”).

18].²³⁵ And what a signature! On the ground next to the saint's freshly decapitated head, the letters "f. michel Ang." appear, trailing from a puddle of his blood as if Caravaggio has dipped his finger in this medium to write them—identifying himself with the executioner.²³⁶

The notion of painting as both life-giving and destructive was also crucial to the *seicento* reception of Titian's late works, with their gestural slashes and patches of color. As Jodi Cranston has noted, the Venetian artist and critic Marco Boschini, grappling with Titian's radical painterliness, drew a connection in it "between brushstrokes and bodily fluids, such as blood and milk, and between [Titian's] working method and medical procedures."²³⁷ In one passage, Boschini recounts a description of Titian at work by Palma Giovane, who compares the painter to a surgeon:

And he gradually covered with living flesh those bare bones, going over them repeatedly until all they lacked was breath itself [...]. For the final touches he would blend the transitions from highlights to halftones with his fingers, blending one tint with another, or with a smear of his finger he would apply a dark accent in some corner to strengthen it, *or with a dab or red, like a drop of blood, he would enliven some surface*—in this way bringing his animated figures to completion.²³⁸

Waagen, by contrast, recuperates red-bloodedness as a positive and constructive quality of Rubens's art. What astonished Guido was that Rubens's bodies seemed to be enlivened from the inside out, luminous vessels that glow as if heated by real circulating blood.

In his discussion of Rubens's collaboration with François d'Aguilon (1567 – 1617), the Flemish Jesuit color theorist whose *De coloribus* (1613) Rubens illustrated, Julius Held has

²³⁵ On the "painter as executioner" see Suthor, *Bravura*, 13-25; in Caravaggio's *Saint John the Baptist*, 17-21. See also Karin Gludovatz, "Caravaggio's Blutsbrüderschaft. Der Subtext der Signatur in der Enthauptung des Johannes von 1608," *Kunsthistoriker: Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Kunsthistorikerverbandes* 15/16 (1999), 141-147; and Walter K. Lang, *Grausame Bilder. Sadismus in der neopolitanischen Malerei von Caravaggio bis Giordano* (Berlin, 2001), 121.

²³⁶ It was formerly thought that the signature read "I. Michelang.o," as a more explicit confession; as scholars have argued, however, the first letter is more likely "f," a reference to his brotherhood in the Knights of Malta. See Suthor, *Bravura*, .

²³⁷ Cranston, *The Muddled Mirror*, 5.

²³⁸ Cranston, *The Muddled Mirror*, 4. Emphasis mine.

argued that Rubens styled himself in his letters as a person of sanguine temperament.²³⁹ Held connects this to Aguilonius’s notion that painters’ temperaments are manifested in their works, and especially to Rubens’s well known claim that he was “by nature suited to large projects rather than small curiosities.”²⁴⁰ Held’s suggestion is supported by a conspicuous fact: Rubens’s name is a Latin present participle that means “reddening” or “blushing.”

In his group portrait known as the *Four Philosophers* (1611-12), now in the Palazzo Pitti, Rubens portrayed himself standing in the corner beside a brilliant red curtain. Moreover, as Nico van Hout has shown with reference to infrared examination conducted at the University of Antwerp, the entire left section of this image was repainted at some point by Rubens.²⁴¹ Originally, his self-portrait was a more marginal, even lurking presence—clad in a wide-brimmed hat and peeking out from *behind* the curtain. Rubens then painted himself out by *enlarging the red curtain*, painting his new portrait in front of it. A red curtain physically mediated between two versions of Rubens’s self-image.

Rubens would not have lacked for myths about the meaning of his name and its associations with life-giving and life-taking.²⁴² *Rubens* appears in medical literature, in

²³⁹ See Julius Held, “Rubens and Aguilonius: New Points of Contact,” *The Art Bulletin* 61/2 (June 1979), 257-264: 263.

²⁴⁰ Letter to William Turnbull, September 13, 1621. Rooses/Ruelens, *Correspondence*, II 315.

²⁴¹ Nico van Hout, “A Second Self-Portrait in Rubens’s ‘Four Philosophers,’” *The Burlington Magazine* vol. 142 no. 1172 (Nov., 2000), 694-697. On this painting see Hans Vlieghe, *Portraits – I. Antwerp, Identified Sitters*, Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard XIX (London, 1987), 128-32, no. 117; Wolfram Prinz, “The *Four Philosophers* by Rubens and the Pseudo-Seneca in Seventeenth-Century Painting,” *Art Bulletin* LV, 1 (1973), 410-28; Müller-Hofstede, “Selbstbildnis und Selbstverständnis,” 103-2.

²⁴² See e.g. Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia* 6:34 (*insula quae solis appellatur et eadem nympharum cubile, rubens, in qua nullum non animal absumitur certis causis*); Seneca, *Hercules Furens*, 135 (*iam Cadmeis incluta Bacchis aspersa die dumeta rubent Phoebique fugit reditura soror*); Seneca, *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*, letter 122 (*ubi primus equis Oriens adflavit anbelis, illis sera rubens accendit lumina vesper*); Virgil, *Eclogues* 3 (*sua semper apud me munera sunt, lauri et suave rubens hyacinthus*); Virgil, *Georgicon*, book 1: 231 (*tenent caelum zonae; quarum una corusco semper sole rubens et torrida semper ab igni*); Horace, *Satyrarum libri* book I, poem 8 (*Tisiphonen: serpentes atque videres infernas errare canes lunamque rubentem*); Celsus, *De medicina* book 2, chapter 4 (*post sudorem inborrescere; aut post vomitum singultum esse vel rubere oculos*); Livy, [History of Rome] book 24, chapter 48 (...*ignorare. Omnia, velut forte congregata turba, vasta vasta rubens*); Seneca, *De Ira* book 2, chapter 11 (*sic itaque ira metuitur, quomodo umbra ab infantibus, a feris rubens pinna*.); Flaccus, *Argonauta* 3: 113 (...*immenso prospexit ab aethere Typhon igne simul ventisque rubens, ...*); etc. A search for *rubeo* and its related words on the Perseus digital Latin library turned up 327 citations at the time of this dissertation’s completion:

cosmological descriptions of the earth being warmed and lit by the sun, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as a factor in the transformation of bodies. For example, in the myth of Narcissus—whom Alberti had called the “first painter,”²⁴³ and whose death Rubens depicts in an oil sketch now in Rotterdam [fig. 19]²⁴⁴—the youth, before metamorphosing into the flower that would bear his name, beats his chest with “hands of marble” until it “flushes red,” like the different colors of ripening fruits: “as apples are often pale in part, part red, or as grapes in their different bunches are stained with purple when they are not yet ripe” (*pectora traxerunt roseum percussa ruborem, non aliter quam poma solent, quae candida parte, parte rubent, aut ut variis solet uva racemis ducere purpureum nondum matura colorem*).²⁴⁵ His body finally melts like wax, becoming “white mingled with red” (*mixto candore rubori*), like the flower. As Held notes, in Rubens's sketch, the vermillion of Narcissus's cape is reflected in the water, where it transforms into a deeper shade of red—an optical phenomenon upon which Rubens had remarked, in a note on colored reflections in water in a landscape drawing in London.²⁴⁶ As he becomes an image, Narcissus blushes.

Pietro Bellori clearly grasped the significance of Rubens's name. In his *Vita* of Rubens (1672), he cites an inscription on the painter's funeral monument: “But you, Rubens, give life and intellect to your figures; through you, light, shadow, and color live. Why did death with its black funeral want you? You live: the life you painted blushes with your colors” (*Das tu Rubenius vitam, mentemque figuris, / Et per te vivit lumen, et umbra, color. / Quid te Rubeni nigro mors funere voluit: / Vivis, vita tuo picta colore rubet*).²⁴⁷ Bellori characterizes red as the horizon of

http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/searchresults?target=la&all_words=rubeo&all_words_expand=on&phrase=&any_words=&exclude_words=&documents=

²⁴³ See Cristelle Louise Baskins, “Echoing Narcissus in Alberti's ‘Della Pittura,’” *The Oxford Art Journal* 16/1 (1993), 25-33; and Sohm, “Caravaggio's Deaths,” esp. 459-463.

²⁴⁴ Held, *Oil Sketches*, I, 146, no. 135.

²⁴⁵ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* III: 474-510.

²⁴⁶ Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, inv. no. 2518. Held, *Oil Sketches*, 77, cat. no. 204.

²⁴⁷ Bellori, translation mine. See also the published English edition translated by Alice Sedwick Wohl, *The Lives*

Rubens's colors, which collectively make images "blush" or "redden"—a reversal, we might note, of the gorgon's blood refracting into the thousand colors of Perseus's wings.

Moreover, Bellori suggests that this blushing is where Rubens "lives" in his works.

Scholars have made surprisingly little of the implications of Rubens's name for his creative persona. An exception is Tine Meganck's recent catalogue entry on Rubens's portrait of Paracelsus (1493-1531).²⁴⁸ Rubens's portrait of the philosopher, occultist, and alchemist was a copy of an earlier one by Quentin Metsys (ca. 1465-1530) that may have been modeled from life.²⁴⁹ Metsys's original is lost but there are at least three seventeenth-century copies, all of which have been attributed either to Rubens or to one of his students or followers.²⁵⁰ Noting scattered references to alchemy in Rubens's "theoretical notebook," Meganck argues that Rubens created the portrait of Paracelsus as an act of quasi-alchemical re-enlivenment.²⁵¹ As she points out, Paracelsus is shown holding a book opened to the word *Quintisense*, "a reference to the alchemical *quinta essentia*, and also a pun on Metsys's first name."²⁵² Paracelsus appears before a landscape, wearing a fur-trimmed red hat, grasping a parapet, and holding a book. In many ways, the image must have struck Rubens as quaintly archaic: the landscape, which in all three extant copies closely resembles the panoramic Flemish landscapes of the sixteenth century popularized by Joachim Patinir (though, interestingly, the landscape is different in each version); the philosopher's awkwardly

of the Modern Painters, Sculptors and Architects, 205.

²⁴⁸ Tine Meganck, "The 'Reddener': Peter Paul Rubens and Alchemy," in *Art and Alchemy: the Mystery of Transformation*, ed. Sven Dupré, Dedo von Kerssenbrock-Krosigk and Beat Wismer, trans. Susanna Michael (2014), 146-155, cat. no. 63.

²⁴⁹ Meganck, 149.

²⁵⁰ The versions in the Uppsala University Art Collections and in the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Brussels are generally attributed either to Rubens or to an unknown student of his. Another nearly identical version, in the Louvre, is attributed to an anonymous Flemish copyist. See Kristin Lohse Belkin, *Rubens: Copies and Adaptations from Renaissance and later Artists: German and Netherlandish Artists*, Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard, Part XXVI (London, 2009), vol. I, 234-238; and Meganck, 147 and 150-1.

²⁵¹ Meganck, 149.

²⁵² Meganck, 149.

foreshortened arms and stubby fingers; the flat-looking, didactically labeled parapet.

Rubens's copy can indeed be seen not only as a re-enlivenment of Paracelsus himself, but as a re-enactment or re-embodiment of Antwerp's art historical past: a revival of the "quintessence" of Metsys as well.

Later in the seventeenth century, as Rubens himself made the transition to history and his first biographers began to codify his legend, his art quickly became identified with alchemy. According to Sandrart (1675), when a famed master of alchemy invited Rubens to invest in his experiments and thereby "grow rich with him," Rubens shot back, "Master Brendlin, you arrive twenty years too late, because in the meantime I have found the true philosopher's stone in my brushes and paints."²⁵³

The artist-chemist was as a topos in early modern artist-biographies, and most often a negative one—associating the artist with secrecy, profligacy, obsessive tinkering, and failure.²⁵⁴ By contrast, Sandrart uses it to make a witty comment on Rubens's financial success, and to analogize his art with alchemy's highest goals. Alchemists tried to get rich by cheating nature and turning base matter into gold; Rubens actually succeeded in creating works that far exceeded the sum of their materials. Indeed, the passage immediately follows Sandrart's discussion of Rubens's Antwerp house including its "Kunst-cammer" and the sale of his collection of antiquities to the Duke of Buckingham²⁵⁵—again, the first owner of the *Head of Medusa*.

²⁵³ Joachim Sandrart, *Teutsche Academie der Edlen Bau-Bild- und Mablerey-Künste* (Nürnberg, 1675 (II, Book 3), 292: "Demnach/ als einsmals der weitberühmte Alchimist Meister Brendel von Londen/ den jedermann hochgehrt/ zu ihm kommen und contestirt/ wie nahe er zu der rechten Tinctura gelangt/ daß in kurzer Zeit das gewiße Goldmachen gefunden werden könnte/ mit Erbietten/ wann Rubens ihm wolte ein Haus einrichten/ und die nohtwendige Unkosten indessen herschiessen/ wolle er mit ihme in Gesellschaft verbleiben/ antwortete ihm Rubens: M. Brendlin/ ihr komt allein um 20. Jahr zu spat/ dann um selbige Zeit schon hab ich durch den Pensel und die Farben den rechten wahrhaften Lapidem Philosophicum gefunden." Cited in Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn*, 84. The anecdote was repeated in Roger de Piles, *Abrege de la vie des peintres* (Paris 1699), 40.

²⁵⁴ See Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth and Magic* (as above, note 74).

²⁵⁵ Sandrart, 292. I sincerely thank Christine Göttler for pointing this out to me.

Vermillion, the color of the gorgon's blood, was obtained from mercury sulfide using a chemical process. As Pamela Smith has noted, it was "associated with generation and life"²⁵⁶ and was valued more highly in alchemy than all other colors except for gold.²⁵⁷ In the canonical fourteenth-century alchemical treatise of Simeon of Cologne, red is called the "crowned king" of colors (*rex diademate rubeo*).²⁵⁸ In fact, as Karin Leonhard has pointed out, the philosopher's stone, "the substance that could instantly turn the mass from putrefying black to gold," was characterized as a red powder.²⁵⁹ Discussing the floral still lives of the Dutch painter and alchemist Jan Goedart (1617-1668), Leonhard notes that alchemical treatises often illustrate the process of transmutation by the changing of flowers from white to red, colors that were associated with the two most basic alchemical elements, mercury and sulfur.²⁶⁰ *Rubedo*, as she notes, was an alternate term for red specifically used by alchemists.²⁶¹ This suggests that Sandrart's characterization of Rubens's painting *as* alchemy, and Bellori's description of Rubens's life "blushing with [his] colors," were both connected to his name.

Of course, such ideas were in keeping with the theological implications of red, and with a specific analogy between red and the enlivening power of blood that was essential to theories of the image: with a bloodstain, Christ had offered his living image to Veronica's veil. His "self-portrait" was created by an amalgam of blood and sweat—just as pigment was mixed with a medium such as egg yolk or oil (the blood thus forming the 'pigment' part of the analogy).²⁶² In counter-Reformation Antwerp, beliefs about blood would have formed a

²⁵⁶ Pamela Smith, "Vermilion, Mercury, Blood, and Lizards: Matter and Meaning in Metalworking," in *Materials and Expertise in Early Modern Europe: Between Market and Laboratory*, ed. Ursula Klein and E.C. Spary (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 29-49: 41.

²⁵⁷ Smith, "Vermilion, Mercury, Blood, and Lizards," 41.

²⁵⁸ Leonhard, *Bildfelder*, 140.

²⁵⁹ Smith, "Vermilion, Mercury, Blood, and Lizards," 40.

²⁶⁰ Leonhard, *Bildfelder*, 269.

²⁶¹ Leonhard, *Bildfelder*, 288.

²⁶² On blood in art see *inter alia* Beate Fricke, "A Liquid History: Blood and Animation in Late Medieval Art," *RES: Journal of Anthropology and Aesthetics* 63/64, "Wet/Dry," ed. Francesco Pellizi and Christopher S. Wood

powerful suggestion about the liquids used by painters; for if transubstantiation is a holy truth, then paintings might be more than simulacra, more than copies of copies: they might contain and transmit a live spirit in their material essence. Rubens's paintings, of course, for all their bright and dizzying vitality, for all their *red-bloodedness*, can be seen as driven by this aporia, this 'if'.

In the *Head of Medusa*, Rubens invests drops of blood with a generative impulse. Conversely, bleeding out, i.e. being drained of red, is a Rubensian trope for dying.²⁶³ Ulrich Heinen has pointed this out in regards to what he calls Rubens's "*Malphysiologie*"—both Rubens's anatomical construction of figures and his conception of paintings themselves as physical bodies. Heinen focuses particularly on Rubens's *Death of Seneca* (1615) and his crucifixion scenes. Elizabeth McGrath, describing the pale, bluish-grey flesh of the freshly decapitated saint in Rubens's *Beheading of Saint John the Baptist* (1610), likewise points that this coloration was "a convention of Rubens for limbs emptied of blood."²⁶⁴ McGrath also suggests that this may have been connected to the experiments being conducted in early seventeenth-century Padua by Fabricius of Aquapendente, whose student, William Harvey, would publish his groundbreaking *De motu cordis* (On the Circulation of the Blood) in 1628.²⁶⁵ Heinen more extensively connects Rubens's art to Harvey's emergent theories. As Thomas Fuchs has argued in his study of Harvey's work, his vitalist theories of the blood entailed a revival of Aristotle in rejection of Galenic physiology: "For Aristotle, it was the heart that was uniquely the seat of life; for Harvey, it is the blood itself."²⁶⁶ Harvey codified these not only in *De motu cordis* but also in embryological studies. For example, in chapter 54 of his

(2013), 52-69; Zorach, *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold*, ch. 1; 33-81 and 248-257.

²⁶³ Heinen, "Haut und Knochen - Fleisch und Blut" (as above, note 64).

²⁶⁴ Elizabeth McGrath in *Rubens: A Master in the Making*, ed. David Jaffé, Elizabeth McGrath et al (London: National Gallery Co., 2005), 171, cat. no. 80.

²⁶⁵ McGrath, 171.

²⁶⁶ Thomas Fuchs, *The Mechanization of the Heart: Harvey and Descartes* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2001), 20.

embryological treatise *De generatione animalium* (1651), “Of the blood in so far as it is the principal part,” Harvey writes: “It is therefore certain and plainly to be seen with one’s own eyes that the blood is both the author and preserver of the body and the principal part in which the soul resides. [...] And for as long as life remains, the blood alone is always animate and hot.”²⁶⁷ Elsewhere he writes: “The blood like a tutelary deity is the very soul itself in the body,” and that “Blood is not only the author of life [...]. Indeed, for want of blood not only do all the parts immediately languish, but the animal itself dies on a sudden.”²⁶⁸

Such ideas clearly resonate with the *Head of Medusa*, and with how blood behaves in Rubens’s other depictions of dead and dying bodies during this period. An example comes from Rubens’s cycle of scenes from the life of the Roman consul Decius Mus (1616/17).²⁶⁹ In the *Death of Decius Mus*, blood trickles from the eyes, nostrils, and mouths of soldiers who have fallen beneath the melee of battle [fig. 20]. One figure, whose pose is based on the famous statue of the “dying Gaul,” is stretched along the bottom frame—arms thrown behind him, back arched, mouth parted in ecstatic agony. His limbs are shown in successive stages of bluish grey. Like the head of Medusa, he is a volcano of blood: a broken spear has been plunged into his chest, from which thick red rivulets emerge, pooling and gathering (acquiring highlights and shadows) on their paths down his body. Some have reached the ground, where they splatter into pure red paint. A bloodstain has also inched up the spear and reddened the hair of an adjacent soldier.

Rubens’s identification with red went far beyond the curtain in his self-portrait. Rather, throughout his oeuvre, Rubens uses red with an exuberance that borders on the

²⁶⁷ Willaim Harvey, *Disputations Touching the Generation of Animals*, trans. Gweneth Whitteridge (Oxford and Boston: Blackwell Mosby, 1981), 257.

²⁶⁸ Harvey, *Disputations*, 257.

²⁶⁹ On the Decius Mus cycle, Günter Brucher, *Der Decius Must-Gemäldezyklus von Peter Paul Rubens* (Graz: Akademische Druck-u. Verlagsanstalt, 1984).

indulgent. It is difficult to find a Rubensian hero that does *not* swoop in wearing a red cape. Sometimes, a swath of red percusses on silvery armor or on gleaming skin, a zone of pure color that materializes brightly and randomly: even when Rubens tries to blame it on a curtain or a cape, it seems to exceed any interior source, pointing to some overwhelming redness beyond the image.²⁷⁰ If blood is the “author of life” in Rubens’s figures, red suggests the creative impulse within the pictorial body itself, sweeping through and invigorating the image in all its lush materiality.²⁷¹ Yet the blood of the dead is exposed only after the fatal rupture of their bodies, carrying all hidden energies onto the surface; its drainage is a consolidation of life into pure matter; and what it leaves behind is a corpse. Just as the blood of Medusa creates by *killing*, the final destination of paint is hardness, inertia, and mimicry.

In Rubens’s *Descent from the Cross*, the central panel of a triptych Rubens painted in 1612-14 for the Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekathedraal in Antwerp, where it is displayed today,²⁷² Christ’s corpse is stretched diagonally across the center [fig. 21]. Its bluish black undertones increase at the extremities, a stony pallor enhanced by the white burial cloth in which it is lowered—again, reminiscent of the white shroud over the face of the Medusa. Yet Christ’s wounds, too, stream with crimson blood, a *signa vitae* that also drips onto the cloth.²⁷³ A basin of his blood lies in the lower right corner.²⁷⁴ Rather than the flip of an ontological switch, Rubens consistently explored ways to visualize death as a coloristic *process*. Through his

²⁷⁰ See for instance Rubens’s *Saint George* (1605-7), in which the red of the Saint’s cape reverberates on his helmet and body armor, and flashes from his horse’s eye.

²⁷¹ On blood in Rubens’s paintings see Heinen, “Haut und Knochen – Fleisch und Blut” (as above, note 64).

²⁷² Rubens created two other versions of this theme between 1616 and 1618, one now in the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Lille, the other in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg.

²⁷³ My understanding of *signae vitarum* in images and my use of this term have been influenced by the work of Frank Fehrenbach.

²⁷⁴ A similar detail is seen in Rubens’s *Decius Mus Consulting the Haruspices*, in which a sacrificed calf lies on the ground, blood seeping from a gash in its neck as well as from its open eyes, nostrils, and gums. Its stunned facial expression is much like that of Medusa. Its blood has been collected in a golden charger that, filled to the brink, has begun to tip forward and spill its contents onto the ground. Another example is Rubens’s *Head of Cyrus Brought to Queen Tomyris*, ca. 1622-23 (MFA Boston 41.40), which likewise depicts an enormous gilt charger full of the saint’s blood in the central foreground.

charged depictions of blood and red in the 1610s, he associated himself not simply with the generative in painting, but with painting's ability to capture oscillations between death and life.

In fact, this is seen in Rubens's earliest known image of the Medusa. It depicts the scene in the *Metamorphoses* just after Perseus has vanquished the sea monster:

He washes his hands, after the victory, in seawater drawn for him, and, so that Medusa's head, covered with its snakes, is not bruised by the harsh sand, he makes the ground soft with leaves, and spreads out plants from below the waves, and places the head of that daughter of Phorcys on them. The fresh plants, still living inside, and absorbent, respond to the influence of the Gorgon's head and harden at its touch, acquiring a new rigidity in branches and fronds. And the ocean nymphs try out this wonder on more plants, and are delighted that the same thing happens at its touch, and repeat it by scattering the seeds from the plants through the waves. Even now corals have the same nature, hardening at a touch of air, and what was alive, under the water, above water is turned to stone.²⁷⁵

The scene characterizes the head of Medusa is a nest that blindly converts nature into art. Here the head sparks a metamorphosis by *contact*, proving that the gorgon's deadly force derives from an internal source, is contained in her very blood: an "influence" that the plants soak up, petrifying them and by implication staining them red.

As Michael Jaffé has shown, Rubens's drawing, known as *Perseus Disarming and the Birth of Coral*, was not entirely his work. Rather, it was a studio copy of a drawing by Giulio Romano (1499-1546). One of those "undispersed effects of the studio" that are so often lost to art history, the drawing was likely acquired by Rubens during his stay in Mantua in 1600-1605 and later intensely reworked with the "enlivening touch of his brush." Rubens shaded reserve spaces with lush washes, "redefining [...] outlines to increase the intensity of expression" and heightening them "to the degree of bas-relief."²⁷⁶ Romano's original

²⁷⁵ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* IV.1017-1022. Translation in Anthony S. Kline, ed., *The Ovid Project*. Online edition URL: <http://etext.virginia.edu/latin/ovid/trans/Ovhome.htm>. On coral in natural history and in the material agency of images in the early modern period see Maurice Saß, "Gemalte Korallenamulette: Zur Vorstellung eigenwirksamer Bilder bei Piero della Francesca, Andrea Mantegna und Camillo Leonardi," in *Kunsttexte.de* 2012, 1: Bild, Wissen, Technik. <http://edoc.hu-berlin.de/kunsttexte/2012-1/sass-maurice-2/PDF/sass.pdf>

²⁷⁶ On this drawing, see Michael Jaffé, "Rubens and Giulio Romano at Mantua," *The Art Bulletin* 40/4 (1958),

drawing has been preserved, so we can surmise the extent of Rubens's changes [figs. 22 and 23]. In particular, note how Rubens densifies the twig-like lines held by the nymph into a single piece of coral. In a rhythm that begins at the tip of Medusa's tongue and radiates in waves along the nymph's thigh, hitting its peak in the fresh specimen she lifts, a full creative progression is sensed. Rubens also draws out the sea monster's multiple breasts and lopped-off tail, emphasizing the theme of feminine creativity. (The *monstrum multimammium* evokes Artemis Ephesus, a symbol of nature's fertility that will be a focus of the next chapter.) Instead of merely recording or even embellishing upon what he sees on a separate sheet—instead of making a “copy of a copy,” Plato's condemnatory phrase for painting since its forms are themselves shadows of lost ideals—Rubens becomes like a force of nature, coursing through and exploding every vein of the original. Even though the Medusa creates by killing, the difference between a pile of sticks and a delightful new species of collectible objects is still the mystical touch of her blood.

The voluminous drop of blood, pulsing with life, was a recurring detail in Snyder's work as well, in his paintings of market stalls [figs. 24a-b].²⁷⁷ In such images, blood signifies the freshness of the kill: not that the animal for sale is dead, but rather that it was *recently alive* and perhaps still is, in some sense. An example is Snyder's *Butcher's Stall* of ca. 1630-1640, now in the Pushkin Museum in Moscow [fig. 25]. It shows numerous dead animal parts displayed in the shallow stall. Their abstracted forms confirm that they are no longer living bodies but

325; and Jeremy Wood, ed., *Rubens Drawing on Italy*, catalogue of an exhibition held at the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh, 14 June-1 Sept. 2002 (Edinburgh: National Gallery of Scotland, 2002), 60-61, cat. nos. 37 and 38.

²⁷⁷ Snyder helped revive the Antwerp genre of market scenes first developed in the mid-sixteenth century by Pieter Aertsen and Joachim Bueckelaer. On Snyder's market scenes see Elizabeth Honig, *Painting and the Market in Early Modern Antwerp*, ch. 5 (“Orders and Things”), 115-169; and Susan Koslow, *Frans Snyders: The Noble Estate: Seventeenth-Century Still-Life and Animal Painting in the Southern Netherlands* (Antwerp: Fonds Mercator, 1995). Another example would be Snyder's *Fish Market* in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, where a glowing drop of blood drips before the glassy eyes of a seal.

just so many things, on their way to being broken down further— chopped, flayed, hung upside-down. Dead birds are strung side-by-side in a silent ‘chorus line’; in a bloodstained basket in the foreground, we see a jumble of snouts, heads, feet. The most arresting of these fragments is the large cow’s head, whose right eye almost seems to look at us,²⁷⁸ its upper lip curled back as if just about to smile or speak. The cow’s ontological status is reminiscent of a humorous line from the *Princess Bride* (1987), in which Billy Crystal’s medicine man, after examining the tortured body of the hero Westley, assures his worried friends that he is only “*mostly* dead, not all dead.” Another bodiless head, of a goat, sits in a basket in the foreground that appears about to tip forward; a drop of blood falls from its slightly parted lips, like a grotesque speech bubble. On the right, blood drips from the mouth of *another* goat whose whole body hangs upside-down from hooks; the butcher, a knife in his mouth, pulls back a layer of the white hide, while a dog attempts to lap up the fresh blood.

Once blood is exposed in the image, the very thing it signifies, life, is threatened, expiring, or expired. Yet that life is also externalized, held in suspension before our eyes in deconstructed, purely visual form. The most gruesome case in Rubens’s art is indeed perhaps the *Beheading of Saint John the Baptist* (1608-9). Painted shortly after Rubens’s return from Italy, it shows the saint’s headless body on the ground, arms chained at the wrist. Multiple streams of blood issue from the saint’s severed neck, dripping over his forearm and fingertips. Like those of the soldier in the *Death of Decius Mus*, these extremities are bluish grey. In the center, Salome’s prize is displayed on a silver charger, a white shroud draped over its hairline (again, strikingly similar to the one in the *Head of Medusa*). Its detachment from the body, the dark space that separates it along a vertical axis, imparts a sense of vertigo. But what really turns the stomach is that it has become a kind of curiosity, with which a grisly game of show-and-

²⁷⁸ The cow’s staring eye in profile is a visual citation of works by the Antwerp painter Pieter Aertsen, such as his *Butcher’s Stall* of 1551.

tell is played: a crone manually pulls out the Saint's grey tongue, eliciting responses ranging from mild fascination to horror. Depleted of its former life source (which below the chasm continues depleting), its pallor enhanced by the silver and white display, the head is forced to mimic and mock its former animation; it has become a nightmarish work of art.

That a fascination with the enlivening properties of blood can be discerned in the works of both Rubens and Snyders lends some complexity to the *Head of Medusa*, in which, as I have argued, the gorgon's wound is also posited as an authorial interstice. This brings up an interesting question. Who in fact painted the blood, Rubens or Snyders? What is known about the techniques of such Antwerp collaborative painting suggests that the blood functioned as a kind of reserve space. Such areas were typically painted in by the figure painter, who worked first, to separate his figures from the area to be painted by the still life specialist.²⁷⁹ However, in the *Head of Medusa*, the reserve space is activated narratively, becoming "inhabited" by Snyders's creatures as well. Rubens's overflow, the substance that erupts from his own "still life" of the petrifying head of Medusa, becomes the raw material for Snyders's animated still life. Like the Medusa and her snakes, the painters' works are *con-sanguinus*.²⁸⁰

The head of Medusa and the Kunst- und Wunderkammer

What are the implications of the Medusa's genre-drift into still life? The possibility is perhaps latent in the subject matter, not only because it must include animals, but also because of the associations of the Medusa with making life still; she is a paradigmatic creator of *nature morte*.

²⁷⁹ See the technical discussions in *A Working Friendship* (as above, note 123).

²⁸⁰ I thank Joseph Koerner for bringing this element of complexity to my attention.

Yet the stunning precision with which Snyders renders the snakes,²⁸¹ the allusions to their emblematology, and the other animals were all unrequired by the subject matter; and together they have the effect of radically reframing it.

On the one hand, each such aspect of the work's content can be explained as a reference to something else. Susan Koslow, for instance, has argued that the amphisbaena is primarily a reference to Lucan's *Pharsalia*, where it is indeed listed among the snakes born from Medusa's blood.²⁸² Similarly, the inclusion of other reptiles and insects makes sense because such animals were connected in natural history, with Pliny and others describing them on the same page.²⁸³ On the other hand, the scene Rubens and Snyders depict is mysterious and unprecedented: the head of Medusa bleeding out the ground, almost as if Perseus has dropped it or placed it there to see what happens next. It is possible that the inclusion of a ground plane and other animals derived from the Leonardesque prototype that may be reflected in the work now in the Uffizi and that may also have been related to the lost work described by Vasari. Yet both that work and Vasari's description emphasize dark, cramped, grotto-like settings; Snyders's precipice is clearly and brightly lit, allowing for maximum clarity and identification.

Taxonomy thus pulls the snakes in two directions (is that why they writhe so?): if defined by their troubled mythological origins, they would fall into the container labeled

²⁸¹ Despite the emblematic allusions to vipers, the snakes in the *Head of Medusa* have been identified by Dr. José Rosado (Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University) as the common European grass snake or *Natrix natrix*. Sutton, *The Age of Rubens*, 247.

²⁸² Lucan *Pharsalia* IX.720. Cited by Koslow, "How Looked the Gorgon Then," 148. In a postscript ("The Head of Medusa" by Peter Paul Rubens and Frans Snyders: A Postscript," author's website <http://profkoslow.com/publications/medusapostscript.html>), Koslow restates that the amphisbaena "arises from Rubens's close reading of Lucan's text."

²⁸³ See for instance Pliny, trans. Philemon Holland (1601), *The Tenth Booke of the Historie of Nature.*, Ch. LXXII, "What creatures live of poyson, and what of earth": "*Scorpions* feed upon earth. And *Serpents* againe, if they may come handsomely to wine, will make meanes to drinke their fill of it, howsoever otherwise they have but little need of anie drinke. They eat no meat at all, or very little, when they be kept close within any thing: like as the *Spiders* also, which otherwise naturally live by sucking."

“creatures sprung from Medusa’s head,” but they are also deliberately associated with the specimens in front of the head. Indeed, some have managed to crawl off and join their natural-historical cousins. At every step of the way, the painting seems to refuse categorization. More than any specific source, it thus invokes the *Kunst- und Wunderkammer* or cabinet of curiosities, in which artworks and specimens mingled on same shelf and the boundaries between art and nature were in perpetual flux and negotiation.²⁸⁴ Though the early modern “pursuit of knowledge” has been associated with print media and their mobility and claims to descriptive immediacy,²⁸⁵ painting also shaped ideas about nature. Even before still life emerged as an independent genre, by the late sixteenth century Flemish painters were specializing in the depiction of *naturalia*. The most spectacular case was Joris Hoefnagel (1542-1601). Born and trained in Antwerp, but compelled to leave after 1575 when the city was sacked by Spanish troops and most of his family fortune was plundered, Hoefnagel was a court painter for the Duke of Bavaria and later for Emperor Rudolf II, both of whom had significant natural scientific collections.²⁸⁶ He became known for his detailed watercolors of animals and plants, often set into elaborate ornamental or calligraphic frameworks: the antennae of a butterfly eliding with the flourishes of an unraveling letter, over the geometrical markings of a caterpillar; a dead mouse casting its shadow in the white margin of an image of a putto with a skull. Direct precursors of still life painting,

²⁸⁴ The scholarship on *Kunst-und-Wunderkammer* is as copious and diverse as the subject. For just some recent contributions, see James Delbourgo, “Die Wunderkammer als Ort von Neugier, Horror und Freiheit” in *Assoziationsraum Wunderkammer: Zeitgenössische Künste zur Kunst- und Naturalienkammer der Franckeschen Stiftungen zu Halle*, ed. Nike Bätzner (Halle, 2015) [83]-96; Katharina Pilaski Kaliardos, *The Munich Kunstkammer: Art, Nature, and the Representation of Knowledge in Courty Contexts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013); Pamela Smith, “Collecting Nature and Art: Artisans and Knowledge in the ‘Kunstkammer,’” in *Engaging with Nature: Essays on the Natural World in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Barbara A. Hanawalt and Lisa J. Kiser (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 115-135; Claudia Valter, “Abbildung, Katalogisierung, Beschreibung: Ordnungsversuche in Kunst- und Wunderkammern,” in *Scientiae et artes* 1 (2004), 593-617.

²⁸⁵ I refer to the exhibition and catalogue curated and edited by Susan Dackerman, *Prints and the Pursuit of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe*, Harvard Art Museums (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

²⁸⁶ See Marjorie Lee Hendrix, “Joris Hoefnaegel and the ‘Four Elements’: A Study in Sixteenth-Century Nature Painting” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1984).

Hoefnagel's images not only capture the variety and strangeness of nature's works; they also connect these qualities to the freedom of art, and art's ability to negotiate between ontological and formal states in a way analogous to nature itself.

By the mid-seventeenth century, still lifes depicting cabinets and their collections were an established Flemish genre. In one such painting now in the British Royal Collection, dated 1617 and signed by Frans Francken the Younger, an amphisbaena *identical* to the one in Rubens's and Snyder's painting appears among nature studies pinned to the wall beside other paintings and drawings, and *real* specimens, including a seahorse and a fish [fig. 26].²⁸⁷ On the right, donkey-headed iconoclasts smash a pile of emblems of the arts.

When specimens could not be obtained by collectors, images often substituted for them.²⁸⁸ However, in cabinets themselves, mimetic naturalism was hardly the only or most common way of relating art to nature. As Horst Bredekamp has shown, the juxtaposition was often more structural or tectonic.²⁸⁹ Ancient artworks were especially prized, and were stored and displayed alongside 'artistic' products of the ancient earth such as fossils. Also valued were objects that playfully or grotesquely defied categorization altogether. Morphological strangeness and deformation were prized as exemplifying nature's fantastical imagination, and evocative specimens were sometimes reworked or added to, generating hybrids: a shell transformed, with the addition of silver-gilt 'antennae', into a snail; a slab of swirling marble painted over with a stormy seascape; a giant mineral specimen re-imagined as Mount Golgotha with a bustling mine underneath; a coral branch as the Tree of Knowledge

²⁸⁷ I have not seen this remarked upon in any of the scholarship on the *Head of Medusa*. On this painting, see Shawe-Taylor and Scott, *Bruegel to Rubens*, 126-129, no. 25.

²⁸⁸ See for instance Angela Fischel, *Natur im Bild: Zeichnung und Naturerkenntnis bei Conrad Gessner und Ulisse Aldrovandi* (Berlin: Mann, 2009), on the paintings made for Ulisse Aldrovandi.

²⁸⁹ Bredekamp, *The Lure of Antiquity and the Cult of the Machine* (as above, note 103).

in paradise; a gnarled tuber root fashioned into a crucifix; and so on.²⁹⁰ In other words, art and nature were seen not just as analogous or competitive in their creative abilities, but as potential collaborators. One such hybrid work, a tortoise shell repurposed as the surface support for a painting by Giacinto Calandrucci (1647-1707), depicts none other than the head of Medusa [fig. 27].²⁹¹

Such objects may strike us as chimerical or capricious—a niche interest. However, they reflected broader experimental tendencies in oil painting as well. The *sottoboschi*'s physical incorporation of real specimens such as moth wings, and their use of moss as a printing matrix for the mossy ground, are prime examples. Rubens and Snyders, too, invoke the idea of nature as a collaborator in their *Head of Medusa*. Cabinets often featured metal casts of reptiles or snakes, for which the animal was cast alive.²⁹² Such life casting, which killed the animal in order to give it a new and more permanent life as an art object, represented an extreme form of 'killing creativity' analogous to the Medusa's own metamorphoses. Offering a direct path from nature to art, it also removed, somewhat transgressively, the factor of representational skill or technique. Snyders's still life, which, again, likely relied in preparatory stages on the study of such bronze casts, can thus be seen as a restoration or re-enlivenment of the original animals in full color, surpassing a prototype whose artist was to a large extent nature herself. As Tine Meganck has recently noted, Rubens himself demonstrated an interest in life casting: one of the four extant copies of his

²⁹⁰ My list is a pastiche of works now held in the Kunst- und Wunderkammer in Schloss Ambras. For the catalogue see Wilfried Seipel, ed., *Meisterwerke der Sammlungen Schloss Ambras* (Vienna: Kunsthistorisches Museum, 2008).

²⁹¹ The work, whose surface is badly damaged, is now in the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm, NM 7163. It is also known through a drawing now in the Louvre. Julia Kristeva, *The Severed Head: Capital Visions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 37.

²⁹² For example, the life casts made by the goldsmith and sculptor Wenzel Jamnitzer (1507/8-1585). On life casting see especially Pamela Smith, *The Body of the Artisan* (as above, note 79); and "Vermillion, Mercury, Blood, and Lizards," in *Materials and Expertise in Early Modern Europe: Between Market and Laboratory*, ed. Ursula Klein and E. C. Spary (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2010): 29-49. For examples of life casts of lizards by Wenzel Jamnitzer and from the workshop of Bernard Palissy, see Leonhard, *Bildfelder*, 100.

theoretical notebook, the transcription prepared by his student Anthony van Dyck, “contains several medical and artistic recipes, including [...] a recipe to cast live animals and flowers in metal, a technique with alchemical overtones that aimed to create art as some sort of super-nature.”²⁹³ Such ambitions were characteristic of the project of Antwerp painting in the 1610s.

Reptiles and insects have a natural otherness. Their intricate forms, lack of perceptible empathy, and relatively small size encourage a view of them as fantastical designs of nature. Yet to the early European viewers of the *Head of Medusa*, the otherness of Snyder’s still life would not have been merely instinctive; rather, his creatures would likely have struck them also as exotic. Both the salamander and the scorpion were known to hail from Mediterranean or tropical climates. More salient still would have been the allusion to Africa, the continent where the Medusa’s blood spilt and mingled with earth to produce snakes. (Again, Lucan had specifically mentioned Libya.) The rocky precipice could also allude to Mount Atlas, which the head of Medusa allegedly turned to stone—i.e., created—and which was identified geographically with Morocco.²⁹⁴

Such references seem to have been grasped by Jan van Kessel (1626-1679), who cites the *Head of Medusa* multiple times in his *Four Parts of the World* series, in the “Continent of Africa.”²⁹⁵ The grandson of Rubens’s frequent collaborator Jan Brueghel the Elder, Van Kessel likely saw the work when it was auctioned in Antwerp in 1635. Created in the 1660s,

²⁹³ Meganck, 147.

²⁹⁴ The mountain range known as the Atlas Mountains today extends across Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia.

²⁹⁵ Van Kessel produced two identical versions of the series, one that is in tact and is now in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich, and one that is only partially in tact and is now in the Prado. On the Munich version, see Mirjam Neumeister, *Alte Pinakothek: Flämische Malerei*, 218-229. See Nadia Baadj, “A world of materials in a cabinet without drawers: Reframing Jan van Kessel’s *The four parts of the world*,” *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 62/1 (2012), 202-237; and on Van Kessel’s use of visual quotations including of the *Head of Medusa*, see Nadia Baadj, *Jan van Kessel I (1626-79): Crafting a Natural History of Art in Early Modern Antwerp* (London/Turnhout: Harvey Miller 2016), 125-7. Didier Bodart (*Rubens e la pittura fiamminga*, 306), likewise points out Van Kessel’s quotation of Snyder’s still life, connecting this to Van Kessel’s signature, which he composed of various insects. In fact, the “Angola” panel appears directly beneath this signature.

his series comprised four central panels each surrounded by sixteen miniature oil paintings on copper set into ebony frames. The whole ensemble was mounted on a stand, a fictitious piece of ‘furniture’ that as Nadja Baadj has argued mimicked the luxurious *kunstkasten* then being manufactured in Antwerp.²⁹⁶ It therefore would have raised viewers’ expectations of an encounter with precious or exotic objects *inside* the cabinet, for which paintings were usually a decoration, only to replace them with a delightful and entirely painted display of exotic animals, plants, and people.²⁹⁷ Snyders’s mating vipers and amphisbaena are reproduced in the small panel labeled “Angola”; the perfectly coiled snake in the foreground reappears in “Mecca.” Again, an amphisbaena had also allegedly been found in Mexico in 1606—a case of a report from the New World substantiating a species whose existence was by then perhaps being called into question. Snyders’s still life for the *Head of Medusa* was quickly understood not just as a source of visual information about snakes, but as an image that could make exotic animals terrifyingly present.

Early modern natural historical collections have been seen as expressions of collectors’ own world-knowledge and power,²⁹⁸ a reading that easily expands to include images that functioned on some level as virtual collections. An example are the encyclopedic landscapes that were a specialty of Flemish painters. In Flemish “paradise” landscapes, a biblical microcosm such as the Garden of Eden or Noah’s ark becomes the pretense for a

²⁹⁶ Baadj, “A World of Materials,” 213.

²⁹⁷ Baadj (“A World of Materials,” 215) argues that part of the novelty of Kessel’s *Four Parts of the World* series was that it also transformed a genre—natural scientific illustrations—that since its emergence in the 1570s was traditionally “restricted to graphic media.” On “images as containers of knowledge” and “the painting as museum,” see also Elizabeth Honig, “Making Sense of Things: On the Motives of Dutch Still Life,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* no. 34 (Autumn, 1998), 166-183, esp. 177-178.

²⁹⁸ Julius von Schlosser, *Die Kunst- und Wunderkammern der Spätrenaissance: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Sammelwesens* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1909); Thomas daCosta Kaufmann, “Remarks on the Collections of Rudolf II: The Kunstkammer as a Form of Representation,” *Art Journal* Vol. 38, No. 1 (Autumn, 1978), 22-28, who interprets Kunst- und Wunderkammern as “imperial self-representation”; and Anne Veltrup, “Kunstkammerschränke als Spiegel der fürstlichen Ordnung,” in *Die kurfürstlich-sächsische Kunstkammer in Dresden*, ed. Dirk Syndram (Dresden, 2012), vol. 5 (*Geschichte einer Sammlung*): 223-235.

spectacular, miniaturist display of everything under the sun, described and arranged for the viewer's delight. Similar universal themes often took serial form:²⁹⁹ series of the four elements, the five senses, or the four parts of the world. The settings fuse landscape with open-ended or ruined interiors; assemblages of manmade objects are combined with living things, as well as atmospheric evocations of the metamorphic processes that underlie the material world: weapons and other metalwork heaped, in glittering piles, before the ruinous cave of Vulcan's forge; a volcano smoking in the distance while a single brass chandelier dangles inexplicably from the sky; a contemporary floral still life perched upon by a parrot, stacked with other paintings against cabinets displaying various other categories of things (scientific instruments, antique busts); freshly hunted animals jumbled before a banquet table while living creatures wander innocently across the landscape; a dusty sunlit hallway covered floor-to-ceiling with paintings, bending with the receding barrel vault and merging into an almost hallucinatory tunnel of images. Nature and artifice, in such paintings, are not simply analogized, but so exhaustively interwoven that a stable difference between them becomes impossible to locate.

This is also true, to some extent, of the cornucopias, garlands, swags, and bouquets that act as fictive frames or "burst through the seams" of so many collaborative Antwerp paintings of this period. Symbolizing the Golden Age, a mythological ancient time of abundance and peace, such imagery began to proliferate in Antwerp during the period of relative optimism and stability that followed the signing, in 1608, of the Twelve Years Truce between Spain and its rebellious Northern provinces. It thus clearly served the political agenda of the Habsburgs and their regents in Brussels, the archdukes Albert and Isabella. Rubens and Jan Brueghel the Elder were, in particular, closely associated with the archducal

²⁹⁹ On seriality, natural knowledge, and collecting in this period, see Honig, *Painting and the Market*, 148-150.

court, holding the status of its official painters—though Rubens, who eventually gained the status of an aristocrat himself, refused to reside at the court and maintained a significant independence from it. Rubens’s and Brueghel’s *Five Senses* series, painted in Antwerp between 1617 and 1619, stages each allegory in an imaginary courtly setting: an imperial armory, a music chamber, a banquet hall, a *Kunstkammer*. As Elizabeth McFadden has explained, the series therefore functioned as “a declaration of the self-sufficiency of the archducal court whose accumulation of naturalia and man’s fruits emphasized the peaceful and artistically fertile period of the archdukes’ reign,” with “the accumulation of raw goods represent[ing] the bounteous and wide-ranging yields of the archducal estates.”³⁰⁰ The cornucopias radiated out.

Yet if Flemish baroque world-allegories reflected courtly dreams, they also fashioned a notion of *painters* as indispensable manufacturers of those dreams. Indeed, as McFadden argues, Rubens’s and Brueghel’s series also called attention to the role of *painting* in the making of taste—its endless “cooking” of raw materials into delectable images.³⁰¹ Such an idea is in keeping with the *Head of Medusa*, whose hideous copiousness and depiction of blood transforming into species are difficult to read as forms of imperial splendor. Indeed, as Horst Bredekamp has argued, at the heart of the *Kunst- und Wunderkammer* lay a fascination not with variety or abundance, but with the “metamorphic potentials” of matter itself.³⁰² This is the aspect of the *Kunst- und Wunderkammer* the *Head of Medusa* most

³⁰⁰ Elizabeth McFadden, “Food, Alchemy, and Transformation in Jan Brueghel’s *The Allegory of Taste*,” *Rutgers Art Review*, vol. 30 (2014), 35-55: 38 and 39.

³⁰¹ McFadden, 39-42: “While the paintings deploy tropes of human ingenuity and the manipulation of nature, I believe that these tropes can also be read in terms of artistic self-reflexivity. The *Five Senses* is the ultimate statement of the artist’s manipulation of nature into crafted artifice and beauty. Furthermore, the medium of painting is extolled as the art form most capable of rendering this transformation from the raw and uncultivated into the refined and tasteful. [...] Like the cook, the painter also manipulates raw materials, *i.e.* pigment, into a cultivated object for the delectation of its viewers and, ultimately, surpasses nature through such artifice.”

³⁰² Bredekamp, *The Lure of Antiquity and the Cult of the Machine*, 47.

perceptively reflects. Rubens and Snyder's posits the Medusa's blood as a symbolic matter, terrifyingly alive as it fluctuates between form and non-form, image and non-image. Setting up the display of mimetic specimens, their image juxtaposes these specimens with that which can never be collected or displayed, and is transgressively zoomed in upon: *natura naturans*, the gnarled liquid throes of raw matter, rudiments, roots.

Chapter 2: Spontaneous Generation and the *Copia* of Painting in Counter-Reformation Antwerp

Rubens's identification of his *Medusa* with mother nature and emphasis on her blood as the "author of life" were firmly in keeping with the broader project of painting in the Southern Netherlands around 1600. Not only was there widespread curiosity in European learned circles about the agency of matter in nature—whose metamorphic processes were analogized with image-making in artistic practices associated with the Kunst- und Wunderkammer. Rather, natural-philosophical questions about the life-status of organic matter were also closely linked to theological ones about the presence of spirit in *images* and the permeability and enlivenment of matter in general. Antwerp, which in thirty years had gone from being a post-iconoclastic Calvinist republic to a center of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, was a center of such concerns.

The monstrous *amphisbaena* that appears near the compositional center of the *Head of Medusa* in particular seems to navigate notions about materiality. As Angela Fischel has noted, monsters, in the second half of the sixteenth century, had been seen as products and symbols of the purely material side of nature.³⁰³ They were linked with the feminine body of the earth and its mindless fluctuations—rebellious, multiplicitous, and blindly procreative. By identifying artistic creation with these aspects of nature, it also risks characterizing painting's productivity in a highly material sense, associating image-making with multiplicity and

³⁰³ Fischel, *Natur im Bild*, 112-116. This was in keeping with gendered Aristotelian notions of matter and procreation that prevailed into the seventeenth century: "[Aristotle's] argument runs thus: nature would always wish to create the most perfect thing, which is the most completely formed, the best endowed with the powers of procreation, and the hottest. Such a creature is the male, who implants his semen in the female to the end of procreating males. If, however, there is some lack of generative heat, or if climatic conditions are adverse, then creation is not perfected and a female results. [...] *Females are the result of a generative event not carried through to its final conclusion.*" Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Women: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 8.

hybridity. Indeed, as I have argued, it dramatizes its dual authorship, to which the *amphisbaena* might even be seen as a witty allusion.

In this chapter, I examine other images by Rubens and his collaborators that link painting to nature's fertility, delving more deeply into the culture of production among Antwerp painters in the 1610s. For this, I will first turn to another mythological genetrix³⁰⁴ that, like Medusa, was used to model connections between nature and art theory: the herm statue of Artemis Ephesus, an emblem of mother nature or mother earth. Rubens depicted this statue in at least three works during this decade, always in enlivened guises: first, in his painting of the *Finding of Erichthonius*, another myth of spontaneous generation; second, in a painting known as *Nature Adorned*, a collaboration with Jan Brueghel the Elder; third, in an engraved frontispiece he designed for a treatise by the Jesuit economist Leonardus Lessius. At the end of the chapter, I will jump to a much later work, in which mother earth takes the form of an allegorical landscape whose "bones," or rocks, are invested with generative agency, in a way similar to the drops of Medusa's blood.

Thinking about the self-consciousness of Rubens and his Antwerp collaborators requires some consideration of the position these artists occupied in the history of oil painting as a set of techniques, or a technology.³⁰⁵ To comment, today, on the extraordinary *skill* of Flemish baroque painters is to sound like something other than an art historian. Quality is taboo in academic art history,³⁰⁶ partly because it bears the stain of the art market and partly because judgments about it are subjective and therefore unserious and

³⁰⁴ Koslow ("How Looked the Gorgon Then...," 148) similarly described the *Head of Medusa* as a "genetrix, whose spawn is deadly." She connects this to "misogynist fantas[ies] of the power of women" rather than to concepts of natural and artistic creation.

³⁰⁵ My understanding of oil painting as a "visual technology" has been informed by lectures on Van Eyck given by Joseph Koerner at Harvard University in 2008.

³⁰⁶ I thank Joseph Koerner for pointing out the problem of quality in art history during a seminar in fall of 2008. See also Jakob Rosenberg, *On Quality in Art: Criteria of Excellence, Past and Present* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967).

unscientific. Ideas about quality are also susceptible to cultural prejudice and racism; attributing a high level of quality or “mastery” to European old master paintings is especially problematic. Superlatives and teleologies should indeed be banished from our vocabularies.

Yet technique *is* increasingly of interest to art historians, as a form of embodied knowledge.³⁰⁷ To take the technical skill of early seventeenth-century Antwerp painting as a given is to overlook one of its most salient aspects. Here I am interested not simply in Rubens’s and his colleagues’ techniques, but rather in what we might call their “technical consciousness.” How did these artists conceive of what they were doing? What was their image of an image-maker? It is important to remember, first, that Antwerp’s workshop traditions had long encouraged early forms of mass-production, shaping a situation in the city that eventually became the standard throughout Europe, in which the fluctuations of art and the market were closely related. Centers of craft knowledge, Antwerp’s large workshops enabled artistic production to be highly mechanized and efficient.³⁰⁸ The technical awareness of Rubens and other Antwerp painters who worked abroad (such as Jan Brueghel the Elder, who like Rubens was active for several years in Italy) obviously far exceeded local tradition—which was itself porous, thanks to the mobility of artists. By Rubens’s time, moreover, another mode of learning must also have been increasingly important: *viewing*. As the aristocratic collections that were predecessors of museums expanded, so did the bourgeois art market, allowing painters themselves to be collectors and even art dealers.³⁰⁹ For Rubens and other commercially successful Antwerp painters, craft knowledge was not only something one acquired in the workshop but also something one could see reflected as

³⁰⁷ This current in art history is represented especially by Pamela Smith’s *The Body of the Artisan* (as above, note 79).

³⁰⁸ Honig, *Painting and the Market*, 15-18.

³⁰⁹ Painters were among the earliest art dealers in Antwerp, renting stalls at the beurs (market) and hoarding and selling not only their own works but also those of others; Honig, *Painting and the Market*, 16-17.

a set of possibilities in other works. Such painters could also metabolize an Italian and emerging vernacular canon of theories about the meaning and value of their knowledge. In a period in Antwerp otherwise marked by deep economic uncertainty, painting took on an outsized economic and cultural importance.³¹⁰ This meant that legendary valorizations of painters and their craft carried real weight. Finally, Antwerp painters of the early seventeenth century saw their individual technical possibilities multiplied by the practice of collaboration between master specialists. The aims of Netherlandish painting had long been linked to the simulation of nature. Collectively, specialists could meet an astonishing plethora of those aims.

The boundaries of periods are drawn retrospectively. Rather than relying on a term such as “Flemish baroque,” it is important to define the period I am interested in more closely. I would define this as the period that coincided, roughly, with the reconstruction of Antwerp’s churches and their replenishment with altarpieces and other images in the early seventeenth century; the window between the rise, during these same decades, of new local genres—of particular interest here will be the “garland paintings” invented by Jan Brueghel the Elder—and their afterlife as market types whose products were at several removes from the cultural and economic forces that first informed them; the reign of Albrecht and Isabella as governors of the Habsburg Netherlands, including the Twelve Years Truce and its collapse; and the period of activity of Rubens.

In August of 1566, Protestant rioters had stormed the Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekathedraal, smashing, burning and otherwise abusing its altarpieces and other

³¹⁰ As Honig notes, though large numbers of artists also emigrated to the Northern provinces, the numbers of artists in Antwerp seems to have rebounded was still proportionally very high by the seventeenth century: at least 216 painters were recorded as active in Antwerp in 1616, “twice as many as there had been in 1584.” During this same period, the number of merchants dwindled and did not rebound. Honig, *Painting and the Market* 110. Honig cites Alfons Thijs, “Antwerp’s Luxury Industries: the Pursuit of Profit and Artistic Sentivity,” in *Antwerp, Story of a Metropolis, 16th-17th century*, ed. Jan van der Stock (Gent: Snoeck-Ducaju, 1993), 111-112.

decorations. The causes and ramifications of this episode, which destroyed a sizable portion of the city's artistic heritage yet also sparked artistic innovations, have been thoroughly examined.³¹¹ As David Freedberg has argued, one result was that painting's materiality and "fleshliness" were increasingly emphasized in images aimed at the market (and depicting markets), while another was a rise in artistic self-consciousness, including the emergence of written Netherlandish art theory.³¹² Antwerp's iconoclasm was the first major outbreak of a rebellion against Habsburg Spanish rule that would lead to the city being ruled, from 1577, by a Calvinist Republic.³¹³ In 1584, Alessandro Farnese, the Duke of Parma and the grandson of Charles V, laid siege to Antwerp and violently forced it back under Habsburg rule. Connecting the city to the sea and the lifeline of its mercantile economy, the Scheldt river was blockaded, severing Antwerp from the Protestant northern territories, to which many of the city's inhabitants, given the choice to convert or leave, fled. Between 1560 and 1580, Antwerp lost over half of its former population, including large numbers of merchants and craftspeople.³¹⁴ During the late sixteenth century, the entire class system of the southern Netherlands was restructured; from a proto-bourgeois society driven by craft and trade emerged one in which markets were increasingly speculative, and wealth was concentrated in the hands of a few patrician landowners that fashioned themselves as feudal lords or aristocrats.³¹⁵ Its population halved, Antwerp must have felt somewhat ghostly. In an oft-cited letter of 1627, Rubens himself would write, "This city languishes like a consumptive

³¹¹ See inter alia J. Scheerder, *De Beeldenstorm* (Bussum, 1974), esp. 18-96; and David Freedberg, *Iconoclasm and Painting in the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1566-1609* (New York: Garland, 1988).

³¹² Freedberg, *Iconoclasm and Painting* (as above, note 314). On iconoclasm and the rise of market scenes, see also Honig, *Painting and the Market*, 24-29.

³¹³ On art in Antwerp after the iconoclasm and before the recapture of the city, see Koenraad Jonckheere, *Antwerp Art After Iconoclasm: Experiments in Decorum, 1566-1585* (Brussels and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

³¹⁴ The population of Antwerp appears to have declined from approximately 90,000 to approximately 45,000 between the 1560s and 1580s. See J. van Roey, "De bevolking," in *Antwerpen in de zestiende eeuw*, 95-108.

³¹⁵ See Honig, *Painting and the Market*, 100-114.

body, declining little by little; every day we notice a decrease in the number of its inhabitants, for this unhappy population has no means of supporting itself, either through the products of its labor and industry, or by trade.”³¹⁶ To specialists, all of this is of course well known. Yet it is worth bearing in mind that behind the “golden age” Rubens and his peers were imagining in the 1610s lay a still recent past of violent social and economic upheaval.

Like the *Head of Medusa*, the works explored in this chapter are on some level about spontaneous generation: creation from raw matter. They are also more generally about restoring to painting the mystery and wonder of creation. Jan Brueghel the Elder’s floral garlands, lush and sensuous microcreations proliferating around devotional meta-images, are stunning acts of this restoration. They are steeped in signs of revival—of antiquity, and of the spirit-filled art of the Netherlands. Like all revivals, however, they were also thoroughly contemporary.

Diana Ephesus as an emblem of nature and art

As we will recall, Constantijn Huygens described the copy of Rubens’s and Snyders’s *Head of Medusa* he saw in Amsterdam as both “terrible” and “pleasing.” Early modern artists and antiquarians would have found both of these aspects of nature modeled by an ancient herm statue of the Artemis.³¹⁷ Dating to around 300 BC and worshipped at the temple of Artemis in Ephesus, it envisioned the goddess with multiple breasts, dripping with various fruits and animals—in other words, as a kind of monster. The original is lost, but it was known in the Middle Ages through Roman copies and coins.³¹⁸ St. Jerome had anxiously described it as

³¹⁶ The population of Antwerp appears to have declined from approximately 90,000 to 45,000 between the 1560s and 1580s. J. van Roey, “De bevolking,” in *Antwerpen in de zestiende eeuw*, 95-108. Cited by Honig in *Painting and the Market*, 107.

³¹⁷ On this statue and its reception in early modern art, see Andrea Goesch, *Diana Ephesia: ikonographische Studien zur Allegorie der Natur in der Kunst vom 16.-19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt and New York: Lang, 1996); and McGrath, “Garlanding the Great Mother.”

³¹⁸ The Temple was destroyed in 401 AD. At least five Roman copies of the statue are known: one in marble

“multimammia.”³¹⁹ One theory about the multiple breasts is that they arose as misinterpretations of other fertility symbols, such as fruits or even bull testicles, that originally adorned the statue.³²⁰

Images of the Ephesian herm were disseminated widely in the sixteenth century. Artemis Ephesus appeared in Italian gardens in the guise of sculptures or fountain statues,³²¹ and in emblematic literature as a personification of Nature herself.³²² The interest in this figure was stimulated by a fascination with the more recondite devotional practices and images of antiquity. In Vincenzo Cartari’s *Imagini dei Dei degli Antichi* (1556), a copy of which Rubens owned, the Ephesian herm appears twice: first as an independent, fully embodied figure³²³ standing opposite Apollo outside the cave of time—where she is labeled simply as “Natura”—and later in the more archaeologically correct form of a herm, where she is described as “the *image* of the goddess of nature, full of breasts, to show that the universe obtains nutriment from her occult virtue” (*Immagine della Dea Natura tutta piena di poppe, per mostrare, che l’universo piglia nutrimento dalla virtu occulta della medesima*).³²⁴

It is not surprising to see this emblem of nature’s secrets reappear over a century later in an etching used to advertise discoveries in microscopy [fig. 28]. Created in 1685 by the Dutch printmaker Romeyn de Hooghe, it served as a frontispiece for more than one

and bronze, now in the Musei Capitolini in Rome; one in alabaster, 2nd century AD but with 19th-century bronze head, hands, and feet, now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples (inv. No. 6286); the one from the Amphitheater of Lepcis Magna and now in the Archaeological Museum of Tripoli, Libya; two versions both dating to the 1st century AD and now in the Archaeological Museum in Selcuk, Turkey.

³¹⁹ Jerome, *Commentarii in epistolas Pauli ad Ephesos*, prologus. Cited McGrath, 118, note 9.

³²⁰ Gerard Seiterle, “Artemis: die Grosse Göttin von Ephesos,” *Antike Welt* (1979): 3-19.

³²¹ For example, the fountain of Diana Ephesus as Natura created by Pirro Ligorio (ca. 1500-1589) for the Villa d’Este in Tivoli, Lazio, and the sculpture of Diana Ephesus Ligorio likewise created for the Villa Pia in the Vatican Gardens (1561), where it was placed on the far interior wall and juxtaposed with a statue of Cybele on the façade. See Zorach, *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold*, 99.

³²² Caesare Ripa, *Iconologia ovvero Descrizione Dell’imagini Universali cavate dall’Antichità’ et da altri luoghi*, 2nd ed. (Rome, 1603), 348.

³²³ Giulio Romano appears to have been the first artist to depict Diana Ephesus as a freestanding figure. See Goesch, *Diana Ephesia*, 54-57, fig. 53-4; cited McGrath, 106-107.

³²⁴ Cartari, *Imagini dei Dei degli Antichi* (1556), 13 and 61. Emphasis mine.

publication by the Dutch pioneer of microscopy Antonie van Leeuwenhoek (1632-1723), including two of his treatises on the subject.³²⁵ It interprets the emergence of species from Mother Nature as a vaginal birth.³²⁶ The statue gazes dreamily to the side, one hand lifting a curtain to unveil herself while her other hand empties a cornucopia onto the plinth.³²⁷ The unveiling is dramatized by another “curtain” beneath the lower torso, where the statue opens up and unravels in ambiguous ruffles. Larger curiosities are seen in the foreground, including a turkey, an exotic bird from the Americas. But it is the tiny creatures on the plinth—a “stage” reminiscent of both the precipice of the *Head of Medusa* and the forest floors of Otto Marseus van Schrieck—that fascinate the figures that surround it. These include an artist who holds up a magnifying glass while she sketches, and two men lurking behind the curtain. The image playfully exploits moral ambivalence around curiosity or peeking beneath nature’s surface. It also explicitly connects nature’s bounty with the market: in the foreground we see a fisherman with his catch, and a young flower seller with her basket. Moreover, nature’s cornucopia is not entirely natural; its contents are heavily informed by still life painting, by then an established, lucrative genre. The butterfly specifically evokes the *sottoboschi*, whose main practitioners were Dutch. As discussed in the previous chapter, the *Head of Medusa* by Rubens and Snyder was connected with the *sottoboschi* genre; it is an early use of still life painting to ‘zoom in’ on nature’s most secretive processes, which like de Hooghe’s print it codes as a vaginal birth. Of course, it was the rise of microscopy that would put theories of

³²⁵ *Levende Dierkens* (1686); *Anatomia seu Interiora Rerum* (1687); *Arcana Naturae Ope & beneficio exquisitissimorum Microscopiorum Detecta* (1696); *Arcana Naturae Ope & beneficio exquisitissimorum Microscopiorum Detecta*, 1708. See the online project on Leeuwenhoek: <http://lensonleeuwenhoek.net/content/frontispieces>. On Leeuwenhoek see also Edward G. Ruestow, *The Microscope in the Dutch Republic: The Shaping of Discovery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

³²⁶ McGrath, 119, note 17: “Giulio [Romano] represented the figure as a stiff cult statue in the Sala delle Aquile of the Palazzo del Te, but in the cycle of human life in the Loggia of the Giardino Segreto he put her to work, delivering a newborn child to rival good and bad geniuses. The theme would be taken further by Netherlandish artists who showed a naked *Natura* herself giving birth.”

³²⁷ As McGrath notes, “All versions of the statue include a veil, usually seen by commentators as symbolic of Nature’s secrets”; McGrath, “Garlanding the Great Mother,” 115.

spontaneous generation to rest by the eighteenth century, a triumph of science over art.

Elizabeth McGrath has observed that the Ephesian herm and other personifications of Mother Nature crop up with conspicuous frequency in Rubens's art. She argues that this reflected a specific antiquarian interest of Rubens that peaked during the 1610s, the years immediately following his return to Antwerp: "At this period in his life, Rubens seems to have been particularly intrigued by nature deities and the ancient syncretism connected with them," which she explores in depth.³²⁸ In these pages, I will explore the ways in which Rubens's and his collaborators' invocations of Natura also thematized their own creativity and productivity. To begin, I will outline three earlier, sixteenth-century paradigms by which the Ephesian herm was linked to concepts of the artist.

The grotesque and the grotto-esque: Diana Ephesus at Fontainebleau

As Rebecca Zorach has shown in her seminal book, French and Italian artists associated with the French royal court in Fontainebleau were fascinated with the Ephesian herm.³²⁹ A well-known marble variation by Niccolo Tribolò (1500-1550) was displayed in the Chateau of Fontainebleau.³³⁰ Tribolò, who also designed the famous Boboli gardens of the Villa di Castello, which features a grotto on its central axis,³³¹ likely brought the work with him when he arrived at the French court in 1529. His sculpture met and stimulated an intense interest in nature among French writers and artists. As Caroline van Eck summarizes: "the poetics of Fontainebleau revolved around the idea that poetry (and by extension the visual arts) is a

³²⁸ McGrath, "Garlanding the Great Mother," 107.

³²⁹ Zorach, *Blood Milk Ink Gold*, 83-134, ch. 2 ("Milk"), 83-134 and 256-267.

³³⁰ Zorach, 83.

³³¹ Michel de Montaigne praises Tribolò's garden for the Villa di Castello in his travel journal in 1581; Caroline Van Eck, "Animation and Petrification in Rubens's *Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi*," in *Art, Music and Spectacle in the Age of Rubens: the Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi*, ed. Anna C. Knaap and Michael C. J. Putnam (London and Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 156.

revelation of the divine forces that animate all nature.”³³² The primary locus of this concept was the grotto, a womb-like space of maternal and material excess that was linked to ornament. Pierre Ronsard would marvel at the grotto designed by Primaticcio for Prince Charles of Lorraine in 1555, claiming that “nature [herself] had portrayed the walls of such beautiful grotesque and such hard rocks” (*la nature avoit portrait les murs / de crotisque si belle en des rochers si durs*).³³³

The Ephesian herm was also invoked in ornamental prints, a springboard for fantastical designs *alla grottesca*.³³⁴ In an etching of ca. 1543-1546 by the Fontainebleau printmaker Jean Mignon [fig. 29],³³⁵ the Ephesian herm is the source of formal surprises and twists mirrored on either side: a half-bird, half-butterfly; a ribbon that disrupts the otherwise non-objective path of a single line, from which dangles a lobster; a smiling satyr whose shoulder solidifies as a sculptural ionic volute; an upside-down, purely linear ‘volute’ with a lotus flower at its center (a play on the ‘Persian’ column). The herm is not simply surrounded by *capricci* but is identified as their maternal nest, filled below the waist with more cluttered, Janus-like designs: an owl with outstretched wings; a satyr spitting out his own forked tongue; and two snakes tied in a symmetrical knot, their tails attenuating into ropes then pure lines, from which dangles an upside-down fish.³³⁶ As Zorach notes, the aesthetics of copiousness had special implications for printmaking; “copia” meant both abundance and *copy*.³³⁷

³³² Van Eck, “Animation and Petrification,” 156.

³³³ Van Eck, “Animation and Petrification,” 155-156, note 27.

³³⁴ See for example Cornelis Floris, *Veelderlij Veranderinghe van grotissen ende Compartimenten* [...] (Antwerp 1556).

³³⁵ National Gallery Washington, Rosenwald Collection 1964.8.862. On this print See Zorach, *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold*, 131.

³³⁶ On frontality and the monstrous, see Vernant in *The Medusa Reader*, 200-231; and Frontisi-Ducroix in *The Medusa Reader*, 263.

³³⁷ Zorach (*Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold*, 19), citing Erasmus’s *De Copia* (“On Abundance”) which “recommends a highly ornamented prose style consisting of cascades of rethorical figures and tropes,” connects copiousness to printing.

The ‘tail’ of Mignon’s design is strongly reminiscent of the famous opening lines of Horace’s *Ars Poetica*, which deal with the problem of artistic license and the relationship of art to both poetry and nature. According to Horace, while both painters and poets are free to “dare whatever they have fancied,” painters should take care not to violate the laws of nature. As an example, Horace describes hybrid grotesques that evoke a centaur and a siren—a beautiful woman with the *tail of a fish*. Such “vain images” (*vanae specie*), he claims, inevitably provoke laughter.³³⁸ However, beginning around 1400, authors cited the passage without its negative caveat, recuperating the comparison between painting and poetry to ennoble the former and to celebrate artistic freedom.³³⁹ Artists participated in this discourse as well, depicting grotesques in their works in part as symbols of their own imaginative powers, in keeping with the double meaning of *fantasia*: ‘fantasy’ in the sense of the imaginative faculty, and ‘a fantasy’ in the sense of one of its creations.³⁴⁰

Mignon’s etching links the freedom performed and symbolized by grotesque ornament to chthonic nature; both are troped by the female body and its capricious, baffling processes. Such a link had already been suggested by the origins of the Renaissance grotesque: the late fifteenth-century discovery of the Domus Aurea, a subterranean ruin of a pleasure villa built by Nero on Rome’s Palatine Hill whose walls were decorated with painted grotesques like the ones Horace describes. An anonymous Italian poem of ca. 1500 tells how curious painters would contort themselves to climb down into the cave-like interiors, which were full of creepy-crawly animals; in their contortions, the painters became as bizarre as the

³³⁸ Horace *Ars Poetica* 1-13. The passage was cited in the *Emblemata Horatiana* of Otto Vaenius (Rubens’s earliest teacher in Antwerp), who adopts a chimera in a “metaphoric self-portrait.” See Alison Adams and Marleen van der Weij, eds., *Emblems of the Low Countries: A Book Historical Perspective* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2003): 42-44 (“making a chimera”).

³³⁹ Cennino Cennini’s *Libro della Pittura* (1400) famously began by affirming the freedom painters share with poets to “compose and bind together [...] according to [their] imagination,” using the example of a “half-man, half-horse” (centaur).

³⁴⁰ On this concept see especially Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art*, 133-155; and Moxey, “Hieronymus Bosch and the ‘World Upside Down.’”

spectacles they had come to find.³⁴¹

Liquidity and ornament: Diana Ephesus and the head of Medusa in Cellini

Like the head of Medusa, the Ephesian herm could also thematize the generation of images from grotesque effluvia—most obviously when invoked as a fountain statue, but also in etchings, where both she and her creations were made by ‘irrigating’ the furrows of the copper plate, first with acid and then with ink.³⁴² A slippage between the Ephesian herm and the liquidity of the Medusa also has a famous precedent in sculpture: Benvenuto Cellini’s bronze statue of *Perseus with the Head of Medusa* (1545), whose elaborate marble pedestal, created specifically to accompany it, was decorated at all four corners with caryatids of Diana Ephesus.³⁴³ Each caryatid is crowned with a pineapple and other fruits that spill from a basket, coalescing into two fruit swags that burst diagonally up, connecting to the acanthus-scroll offshoots of the ionic volutes of the mock capitals over the niches. The niches themselves contain bronze statuettes of Olympian deities associated with the Medici and their protection. Directly above each, the ornament takes a horrific turn in the form of four hollow-eyed masks, whose open mouths shoot twirling flames that formally echo the Medusa’s blood dripping in the statue above. The pedestal thus links the gorgon’s blood, which erupts at the limits of figuration and is depicted in the both liquid and solid material

³⁴¹ The grotesque ceiling ornament created by Giovanni Udine to accompany Raphael’s frescoes in the Vatican Logge also featured an image of Diana Ephesus.

³⁴² On generativity and printmaking, see Zorach, *Blood Milk Ink Gold*, ch. 2, “Ink.”

³⁴³ Kathleen Weil-Garris Brandt, “On Pedestals: Michelangelo’s David, Bandinelli’s Hercules and Cacus and the Sculpture of the Piazza Della Signoria,” *Roemisches Jahrbuch Fuer Kunstgeschichte* 20 (1983): 377-415: 409-411; Christine Corretti, “Cellini’s *Perseus and Medusa*: Configurations of the Body of Sate,” PhD dissertation, Case Western Reserve University, 2011, 57-58, 206-7; John Shearman, “Art Or Politics in the Piazza?” in *Benvenuto Cellini: Kunst und Kunsttheorie im 16. Jahrhundert*, ed. Alessandro Nova (Cologne: Böhlau, 2003): 19-36. Though the sculpture was revealed before the pedestal was complete, the pedestal was clearly created together with it and formed part of its original conception.

of bronze,³⁴⁴ with the promiscuity and excess of ornament, whose forms are both mindlessly repetitive and nonsensically various. By contrast, the bronze statuettes are bodies of iconographic *difference*; their slight transgressions beyond the niches—an elbow, a knee, a hand—only confirm their status as content, as that which is contained. Meanwhile, beneath the Ephesian caryatids, four pairs of disembodied feet appear, communicating the absurdity of *their* bodily boundaries almost as a punchline. Erupting around the statuettes, the caryatids and the Medusan masks are identified less as bodies than as open sites.

‘Natural selection’: Diana Ephesus and disegno

In the 1560s, Cellini depicted the Ephesian herm again, as a personification of Nature in the emblem he designed for the Florentine Accademia del Disegno.³⁴⁵ What meanings this figure might have carried for theories of *disegno* can be discerned by the statue’s appearance in the frescoes Vasari designed for his own homes.³⁴⁶ A room Vasari designed in 1548 for his house in Arezzo contains wall frescoes that depict scenes from the lives of the ancient painters Apelles, Zeuxis, Parrhasius, and Protogenes. These theoretically loaded origin myths of painting are accompanied by illusionistic friezes and other ornament. At the top of the north wall, the Ephesian herm appears as a personification of Nature.³⁴⁷ Directly beneath her on the wall is a *historia* of Zeuxis creating his legendary portrait of Helen of Troy.³⁴⁸

According to a famous story told by Cicero and Pliny, for the task of painting the most beautiful woman in the world, the painter summoned the most beautiful maidens of Croton to his studio, selecting the most perfect features of each and fusing them into a composite

³⁴⁴ Michael Cole, “Cellini’s Blood,” *The Art Bulletin* 81/2 (June, 1999), 215-235.

³⁴⁵ British Museum, inv. no. 1860,0616.18; and Musée du Louvre, Paris, Cabinet des Dessins, inv. no. 2752.

³⁴⁶ Liana Cheney, *The Homes of Giorgio Vasari* (New York: P. Lang, 2006).

³⁴⁷ Vasari may have seen the copy of the statue now in the Museo Archeologico in Naples which was formerly in the Farnese collection. Cheney, 81.

³⁴⁸ On Artemis of Ephesus in the Casa Vasari in Arezzo, see Cheney, 36, 81, and 224 (figure 24).

ideal.³⁴⁹ The Ephesian statue in the Casa Vasari in Arezzo can thus be seen to represent nature in its multiplicity, which the artist surpasses to create perfect bodies.

Vasari would return to this theme for his house in Florence—replacing Zeuxis, however, with Apelles. Following a story likewise told by Pliny, the painter is shown at his studio in Ephesus, depicting a standing figure who is not Helen but the goddess Artemis herself.³⁵⁰ He stands before his half-finished work, painting by candlelight. In a back room, assistants are huddled over drawings. The living goddess-model stands beside the panel, providing a contrast to the fragment it displays: though Diana's upper body is complete, her lower body is still just an underdrawing. In the foreground, two additional models are shown in various states of undress, one of them pulling a white cloth up over her head. Like Zeuxis, then, Apelles is composing his goddess by selecting the most beautiful parts from multiple models; still further ones are shown gathering expectantly in the adjacent room.³⁵¹ It is in this antechamber of female bodies that the Ephesian herm reappears, in an arch window that frames a landscape. Merely imitating nature would render an image as un-ideal or grotesque as the herm itself. Standing before his half-finished goddess, Apelles glances down at the drawing in his left hand, which overlaps Diana's pudendum—implying that *disegno* both intervenes in and stimulates the erotics of the creative process.

There were thus at least three earlier ways in which the Ephesian herm had modeled theories of art: as a link between the imagination and the sacred and bizarre fertility of the earth, symbolized by the grotto; as an embodiment of the grotesque open-endedness of ornament, i.e. the non-figural or non-image; and as a *foil* for art, an endless sourcebook for

³⁴⁹ Cicero, *De Inventione*, II, I, I; Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 35.

³⁵⁰ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 35-93. The image is also known from two drawings in the Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, a finished drawing (inv. n. 1180E) and a *bozzetto* (inv. N. 19166F). On the *Sala Vasari* in Florence, see Cheney, *The Homes of Giorgio Vasari*, 44-5.

³⁵¹ Liana Cheney, *Giorgio Vasari's Teachers: Sacred & Profane Art* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 28-32.

the painter to select from and surpass. Echoes of each of these paradigms can be found in the work I will discuss here. However, it will become clear that Rubens uses the Ephesian herm differently. First, in contrast to Fontainebleau, he locates art's cornucopia firmly in the realm of *painting*. Second, he implies that his art surpasses nature primarily neither by judicious selection nor by fertile invention, but rather through a kind of sheer technical productivity—as a second nature capable of generating real material abundance, and of bringing dead matter to life.

The Finding of Erichthonius and the regeneration of sculpture

Artemis Ephesus appears in what is perhaps Rubens's strangest mythological painting: the *Finding of Erichthonius*. Dated to ca. 1616, this work is preserved in two oil studies, an engraving after Rubens's designs, and a canvas painting now in the Liechtenstein Museum in Vienna [figs. 30 and 31].³⁵² Its immediate reception in Antwerp painting is also shown by the two versions made by Rubens's student Jacob Jordaens.³⁵³

According to Ovid, when Vulcan tried and failed to rape Minerva, his seed spilled onto the earth, accidentally mating with Gaia instead. The result was the monster Erichthonius, a human baby with the lower limbs of a snake. After Erichthonius's birth, his mother gave

³⁵² Liechtenstein Collection, inv. no. 111. On this painting see Wolfgang Stechow, "The *Finding of Erichthonius*: An Ancient Theme in Baroque Art," in *Studies in Western Art: Acts of the Twentieth International Congress of the History of Art*, vol. 3 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963); Svetlana Alpers, "Manner and Meaning in Some Rubens Mythologies," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 30 (1967), 272-295; Aneta Georgievskashine, "From Ovid's Cecrops to Rubens's City of God in *The Finding of Erichthonius*," *The Art Bulletin* 86/1 (March 2004), 58-74, and *Rubens and the Archaeology of Myth*, 153-185; and Johann Kräftner, *Peter Paul Rubens – The Masterpieces from the Viennese Collections* (Vienna, 2004), 131, no. 29. There are two oil studies by Rubens of this work, one held in the Courtauld Institute in London and the other in the Gallerie Jean Francois Heim in Basel. See Held, vol. II, 318-319, no. 231; and Michael Jaffé, *Rubens, Catalogo Completo* (Milan, 1989), 208, no. 319. A severely cut fragment now in the Allen Art Museum at Oberlin College is thought to be from a later version Rubens created in the 1630s. See Ludwig Burchard, "Rubens's *Daughters of Cecrops*," *Allen Memorial Art Museum Bulletin* 1 (1953), 4-26.

³⁵³ Jacob Jordaens's first version dates to 1617 and is now in the KMSK in Antwerp; his second and much later version dates to ca. 1640 and is now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum. Neither includes the Ephesian statue. The 1617 version instead fills the right-hand side of the composition with two living curiosities: a parrot and a turkey.

him to Minerva, who shut him in a box she then entrusted for protection to the daughters of the Attic king Cecrops—Herse, Aglaurus, and Pandora—warning the girls never to look inside. Aglaurus disobeyed, with tragic consequences. The story is recounted twice in Ovid, first in its denouement: a tattletale crow reports Aglaurus’s disobedience to Minerva, who punishes her by driving her mad until she falls off a cliff to her death.³⁵⁴ Later, a different, earlier segment is narrated. Mercury falls in love with Herse, but when Aglaurus, whom Invidia, at Minerva’s behest, has filled with resentment against her sister, refuses to let him past the threshold, he turns her to stone.³⁵⁵

Rubens takes us back to the moment when Aglaurus, unable to control her curiosity, has just defied Minerva’s orders, revealing the monster. While earlier, mannerist images had shown Erichthonius leaping from his basket or gazing devilishly at the viewer,³⁵⁶ in Rubens’s painting he there lies innocently, like a real baby that does not know he is a monster. Moreover, as Svetlana Alpers has noted, given the possibilities the story might have offered to depict dramatic action, Rubens selects a rather untheatrical moment: a group of women gathered around a basket in a garden.³⁵⁷ Alpers thus concluded that rather than a narrative *historia*, Rubens uses Erichthonius “as a model for birth or creation in nature.”³⁵⁸ This more allegorical or emblematic approach would have been encouraged by sources such as Natalis Comes’s *Mythologiae* (1562), which had pointed out that “the name Erichthonius combines

³⁵⁴ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* II: 531-565. The myth was also told in Hyginus (2.13), who describes Erichthonius as a serpent. Pausanias (*Description* 1.24.7) interprets the snake coiled at the feet of the statue of Athena on the Acropolis as Erichthonius. Georgievskaja-Shine, “From Ovid’s Cecrops to Rubens’s City of God,” 69, note 6. On the myth see Murray Fowler, “The Myth of Erichthonius,” *Classical Philology* 28 (1943): 28ff.

³⁵⁵ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* II: 708-832.

³⁵⁶ See for example the engraving after Hendrick Goltzius by his workshop, “Daughters of Cecrops Open the Casket Entrusted to them by Minerva” (1589), from an illustrated *Ovidi Metamorphoses* engraved after Hendrick Goltzius (first 1570); National Gallery, D.C. 2011.139.147; New Holstein no. 563.

³⁵⁷ Alpers, “Manner and Meaning,” uses the image to explore the “the problem of the relationship between allegorical meaning and dramatic action” (292).

³⁵⁸ Held disagrees with this purely allegorical interpretation, interpreting the work instead as a conflation of both Ovidian versions of the myth.

the words for strive and earth” [*eri-ctithonius*].³⁵⁹ As scholars have noted, the Erichthonius myth was rarely depicted prior to the seventeenth century outside of illustrated Ovids.³⁶⁰ That Rubens chose to paint both it and the birth of snakes from Medusa’s blood shows his interest in excavating rarely depicted myths or arcane aspects of well-known ones that could double as allegories of spontaneous generation.

Rubens sets the scene in a garden presided over by a stone fountain statue of Diana Ephesus. Green foliage sprouts from the basin. Erichthonius’s grayish snake-legs echo the fountain’s color, as if to confirm that she is his mother. In the finished canvas, the format is expanded laterally to include a distant garden landscape with planting beds. Two more figures are added, a small boy and an old woman who grins satirically at the viewer. More decorative objects appear in the garden: on the left, a grinning stone herm of Pan, and on the ground in front of Erichthonius, a richly ornamented gilt vase with a winged *gorgoneion* at its center. The Ephesian fountain is also encrusted with various shells and a branch of coral.

In the two oil studies, the fountain’s niche takes up nearly the entire right half of the composition, suggesting it was essential to Rubens’s conception or even motivated him to take on the subject. Indeed, in all of Rubens’s extant versions of the image, it is as carefully modeled, detailed, and animated as the ‘living’ figures. At the same time, the lapse into grisaille in such a large area of the image cordon it off as a symbolic body, an approach reinforced in the large canvas by the addition of the other ornaments: in this garden, nature is made present through manmade images. Water streams from the eye-catching ripples of the statue’s breasts, and from the open mouths of the dolphins at her sides. The wide basin cuts her off below the waist, replacing her with a silvery cascade. Her eyes are rolled up into

³⁵⁹ Natalis Comes, *Mythologiae* (1562): “Vulcanus impurus est, in material ignis, sive calor potius, qui generationem adiuvat, & in terram decidens multiplicia gignit animalia: quare eius & terrae filius Erichthonius tam diversae formae dicitur fuisse.” Cited in Alpers, “Manner and Meaning,” 283.

³⁶⁰ Georgievskaja-Shine, 58; Alpers, 373.

her head, implying a kind of grotesque ecstasy but also perhaps her ontological ambivalence as a statue. Rubens was certainly aware of the more archaeologically correct form of the herm, so his choice of a fountain is striking, aligning his work more with recent and contemporary sculptural practice. As with the Medusa, whose stony pallor likewise implies her as a sculpture (in progress), the eruption of a sculptural fragment into liquid is identified as the maternal source of the ‘real’, colored world.

In this, Rubens clearly invokes the *paragone* between painting and sculpture.³⁶¹ More specifically, the *Finding of Erichthonius* contains inklings of an idea that Rubens would later formulate in writing: the importance of enlivening ancient sculpture by wresting it from stone.³⁶² Rubens’s discussion of this topic was contained in his *De imitatione statuarum*, a text from his theoretical notebook that Rogier de Piles, who apparently had the notebook in the late seventeenth century, reproduced in his *Cours de peinture* (1708).³⁶³ Rubens writes: “Nature herself furnished the human body in those early ages, when it was nearer its origin and perfection, with everything that could make a perfect model.”³⁶⁴ Indeed, his belief in the perfection of bodies in antiquity was the reason Rubens was said to have disliked sketching

³⁶¹ An implicit comment on the *paragone* between painting and sculpture has been discerned in the decorations of the Rubenshuis, which included a *trompe l’oeil* sculptural frieze of ancient paintings. See McGrath, “The Painted Decoration of Rubens’s House” (as above, note 169); and Beldon Scott, “The Meaning of Perseus and Andromeda in the Farnese Gallery and on the Rubens House” (as above, note 60).

³⁶² Rubens’s views on the enlivenment of ancient sculpture in the *De imitatione statuarum* have been connected by Ulrich Heinen and Andreas Thielemann with his *Death of Seneca* (1615) now in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich. See Heinen, “Haut und Knochen – Fleisch und Blut” (as above, note 64); and Andreas Thielemann, “Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), *De imitatione statuarum*,” in Manfred Luchterhandt et al, eds., *Abgekupfert: Roms Antiken in den Reproduktionsmedien der Frühen Neuzeit: Katalog zur Ausstellung Kunstsammlung der Gipsabgüsse*, catalogue of an exhibition held at Universität Göttingen, 27 October 2013 – 16 February 2014 (Petersberg: Michael Imhof, 2014), 319-321. See also Andreas Thielemann, “Rubens’ Traktat *De imitatione statuarum*,” in Ursula Rombach and Peter Seiler, eds., *Imitatio als Transformation: Theorie und Praxis der Antikennachahmung in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Petersberg: Michael Imhof, 2012), 95-150; and Steven J. Cody, “Rubens and the ‘Smell of Stone’: The Translation of the Antique and the Emulation of Michaelangelo,” *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* vol. 20, no. 3 (Winter 2013): 39-55.

³⁶³ Rogier de Piles, *Cours de Peinture pars principes* (first. ed. Paris, 1708), 139-141.

³⁶⁴ De Piles, *Cours de Peinture*, 139.

from live models, calling it of “little or no purpose.”³⁶⁵ Yet painters who merely imitate ancient statues, he suggests, miss the point. In order to create figures that are “far from stone” (*omnino citra saxum*), painters must judiciously absorb or literally be “imbibed” with ancient statues (*imo imbibitionem*),³⁶⁶ wresting the living figures from the hard materials in which they are calcified. Otherwise, they “disgrace nature, because with so many colors they represent not flesh but marble” (*in opproprium Naturae, dum pro carne marmor coloribus tantum representant*).³⁶⁷ Rubens further writes that while sculptures may “fascinate the eyes” with their “greater relief,” their “stony splendor and harsh light” makes them “most alien to humankind”; they are unable to capture the intricacies of human beings such as the “transparency of flesh, skin, and cartilage [...] skin marks or bruises [*maccaturas*] and all the various motions and the skins that are by disposition either stretched or taut.”³⁶⁸ Painting is better than sculpture at representing living flesh, and thus more suited to revive the glories of ancient art.

Lorenzo Lotto had portrayed the famous antiquarian Andrea Odoni (1527) with a statuette of Diana Ephesus in his hand, implying her as an emblem of not only nature’s mysteries, but also those of antiquity.³⁶⁹ In the *Finding of Erichthonius*, Rubens connects the two: its stone cleansed and filled with water, the Ephesian herm becomes once more a living

³⁶⁵ Logan, “Rubens as a Teacher,” 249.

³⁶⁶ De Piles, *Cours de Peinture*, 139.

³⁶⁷ De Piles, *Cours de Peinture*, 139-140: “Nam plures imperiti & etiam periti non distinguunt materiam à forma, saxum à figura, nec necessitatem marmoris ab artificio. Una autem maxima est Statuarum optimas utilissimas ut viles inutiles esse, vel etiam damnosas: Nam Tyrones ex iis nescio quid crudi, terminati, & difficilis molestaque. Anatomiae dum trahunt videntur proficere, sed in opproprium Naturae, dum pro carne marmor coloribus tantum representant.”

³⁶⁸ De Piles, *Cours de Peinture*, 140-141: “Multa sunt enim notanda imo & vitanda etiam in optimis accidentia citra culpam Artificis praecipuè differentia umbrarum, cum caro pellis, cartilago sua diaphanitate multa leniant precipitia in Statuis nigredinis & umbrae quae sua densitate saxum duplicat inexorabiliter obvium. Adde quasdam maccaturas ad omnes motus variabiles & facilitate pellis aut dimissas aut contractas a Statuariis vulgo evitatas, optimis tamen aliquando admissas, Picturae certa sed cum moderatione necessarias. Lumine etiam ab omni humanitate alienissimae differunt lapideo splendore & aspera luce superficies magis elevante ac par est, aut saltem oculos fascinante.” I thank Jennifer Nelson for providing a more direct translation of this passage.

³⁶⁹ Buckingham Palace, RCIN 405776.

source. The moss on the basin and the vines that crawl around the shells confirm the latent life-force that lies hidden in old works of stone. As in the *Head of Medusa*, spontaneous generation is invoked to navigate painting's crossings between death and life, and between antiquity and the present.

In the chapter that follows this one, I will argue that Rubens used water deities to model the fluidity of the imagination and the medium. The tipped-over urn held parallel to the picture plane is a recurrent object in his work which, like the Ephesian fountain or indeed the decapitated head of Medusa, conceives of painting as 'tapping' a vital, liquid wellspring. I will not explore this argument in depth here. However, it is worth previewing in connection with the *Finding of Erichthonius*, in which Mother Earth, personified in ruinous ancient stone, is reactivated by liquid that sets her generative processes once more into motion. One such Rubensian urn is found in the late *Nymphs and Satyrs* (ca. 1638-40, Museo del Prado) [fig. 32]. Though the painting's loose brushwork clearly shows the influence of Titian, it was based on an earlier, now lost work by Rubens of the 1610s.³⁷⁰ It depicts satyrs and nymphs romping around a sylvan landscape. Two nymphs lean against a giant urn and gaze out at us while a satyr fondles them from behind. The bursting stream that floods the foreground implies a logical conclusion to the grouping.

Such associations between procreation, agricultural surplus, and painting were a defining feature of Antwerp painting in the 1610s. To explore this in more depth, let us now turn to another of Rubens's depictions of the Ephesian herm from this decade.

Staging the Antwerp garland: Diana Ephesus and the aesthetics of hyper-production

³⁷⁰ On this painting see especially Karolien Clippe, "Rubens Nymphs and Satyrs in the Prado: Observations on its Genesis and Meaning," *The Burlington Magazine* 149 (2007), 76; and Alejandro Vergara, "Peter Paul Rubens: Nymphs and Satyrs," in *Splendor, Myth and Vision: Nudes from the Prado*, exhib. cat. Clark Art Institute and Museo Nacional del Prado, 2016, 120-123 no. 13.

A drawing attributed to Frans Snyders and now in the Ashmolean Museum shows apples, gourds, grapes, pears, and countless other unidentifiable spheres scattered and overlapping on a ground plane [fig. 33].³⁷¹ The fruits seem to have been brought from the market and casually dumped out onto the floor. Twigs or branches face in random directions, severed from any natural source. A single bird perches on the foremost branch, eyeing us in profile. Created in pen and ink with wash, the drawing is ostensibly a preparation for a still life painting. Yet it seems as much as anything an imaginative exercise in filling up a blank sheet as quickly as possible with a certain kind of agricultural surplus. In the process, the sheet is transformed into a strangely replicative space. The clipped stems and the basket explicitly deny this abundance as the result of direct organic growth, but the arrangement also insists on its own naturalness and haphazardness, denying that it has any design or external logic. It is as if *natura naturata* and *natura naturans* have switched places, and nature's objects have learned to reproduce of their own accord.

Though better known as an animal specialist, Snyders also contributed prolifically to the genre of "garland paintings," which arose in Antwerp in the first two decades of the seventeenth century and typically involved a collaboration between a still life specialist and a figure painter.³⁷² David Freedberg has identified the genre's origins in a handful of works created by Jan Brueghel the Elder under the patronage of the archbishop and cardinal Federico Borromeo, an avid collector and writer on art for whom Brueghel had worked during his stay in Milan in the mid-1590s.³⁷³ Correspondences between painter and patron

³⁷¹ K.T. Parker, *Ashmolean Museum: Catalogue of the Collection of Drawings*, vol. 1, Netherlandish, German, French, and Spanish Schools (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938).

³⁷² On this genre see Susan Merriam, *Seventeenth-Century Flemish Garland Paintings* (as above, note 212).

³⁷³ David Freedberg, "The origins and rise of the Flemish Madonnas in Flower Garlands," *Münchener Jabrbuch der bildenden Kunst*, 3.F. 32 (1981), 115-150; Beatrijs Brenninkmeyer-de Rooij, "Zeldzame bloemen, 'Fatta tutti del naturel' door Jan Brueghel I.," *Oud-Holland* 104 (1990), 218-248; Lucy C. Cutler, "Virtue and Diligence: Jan Brueghel I and Federico Borromeo," *Nederlands kunsthistorisch jaarboek* 54 (2004), 202-227; and "Representing an alternative empire at the court of cardinal Federico Borromeo in Habsburg Milan," *The Possessions of a Cardinal*:

contain references to floral garland still lifes surrounding devotional images, an arrangement Borromeo apparently requested.³⁷⁴ The earliest such letter, dated February 1, 1608, describes a painting most likely now in the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana in Milan, a floral garland by Brueghel inset with a *Madonna and Child* by Hendrick van Balen—two physical paintings merged into one artwork.³⁷⁵ This physical hybridity was quickly adapted into a purely illusionistic one, which in turn drew Antwerp painters into closer collaboration with one another. In addition to Catholic subjects, garlands or swags quickly began cropping up around pagan images as well, and comprising not only flowers but also fruits, vegetables, and even animals. Later, as the genre proliferated on the market, a more distinct separation would set in again between meta-image and garland, with the latter sometimes posited as a *trompe l'oeil*.³⁷⁶ However, an earlier approach, which seems to have peaked by the 1620s, was to show figures such as putti manipulating, staging, or worshipping the garland in a landscape or architectural space. An example is a painting by Rubens and Brueghel now in the Glasgow Art Museum [fig. 34]. It depicts the Ephesian herm being worshipped in a forest over which an enormous garland of fruits, vegetables, and flowers has been superimposed.³⁷⁷ Like the *Head of Medusa*, this painting was first owned by the Duke of Buckingham, cornucopia and anti-cornucopia originally mingling in the same collection.³⁷⁸

Politics, Piety, and Art 1450-1700, essays from a conference held at Open University, London, Dec. 2-3 2004 (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 249-264.

³⁷⁴ Brueghel remarks in a letter that he has created the garland entirely according to Borromeo's suggestions. Freedberg, "The Origins and Rise of the Flemish Madonnas in Flower Garlands," 117.

³⁷⁵ Freedberg, "The Origins and Rise of the Flemish Madonnas in Flower Garlands," 117, note 13.

³⁷⁶ See especially the paintings of Daniel Seghers.

³⁷⁷ Glasgow Art Museum, Kelvingrove, inv. 609. On this painting see McGrath, "Garlanding the Great Mother"; Joost van der Auwera, *Rubens, l'atelier du génie: autor des oeuvres du maître aux Musées royaux* (2007), 115-116, no. 24; and Anne T. Woollett in *Rubens and Brueghel: A Working Friendship*, 160, cat. no. 21.

³⁷⁸ Rubens sold his entire cabinet of antiques, gems, and paintings to Villiers in 1625 for 100,000 florins. On Villiers' collection, which was inventoried following his assassination and sold in 1648, see Randall Davies, "An Inventory of the Duke of Buckingham's Pictures, etc., at York House in 1635," *Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 10 (1906), 376; and Brian Fairfax, "Catalogue of the curious Collection of Pictures of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, in which is included the valuable collection of Sir Peter Paul Rubens" (London, 1758).

Brueghel's garland acts as a frame or oculus through which we view the center: the Ephesian herm, elevated on a classical pedestal. Three nude nymphs, who most likely represent the three graces, fondle and press themselves against it.³⁷⁹ Surrounding them, the garland is so large that it eclipses the trees. Its individual components are impossible to count, their collective weight unimaginable. The garland's pendulous form obviously echoes the most striking feature of the statue's body. As in the Ashmolean sheet, the proliferation of irregularly shaped and sized spheres creates a sense of deviant repetition, or mutation. The garland also appears to be ripening: fruits change color halfway through, and grapes of multiple colors cling to the same vine. In the foreground, nymphs and another satyr grab armfuls of bounty, either to replenish the garland or deplete it—it is not clear which. Other satyrs climb the trees to install a bright red cloth of honor behind the statue. Two butterfly-winged genii flutter above, each lowering a floral micro-garland onto the statue's head.

The space is brightly lit, making the garland visible down to its tiniest components. Yet the garland is also surrounded by a dark reserve that is too thick to be explained as a cast shadow, and that pushes it optically forward. A blazing sunbeam shoots down from the sky but is almost entirely blocked by the red cloth and the treetops, making the lighting somewhat incoherent. It is as if the two painters could not quite agree on the weather, or the time of day.

One of the three graces reaches up to grasp the statue's veil, stepping on the back of a satyr who has prostrated himself on the plinth for this purpose. (The satyr's legs disappear

³⁷⁹ These figures in the painting have traditionally been identified as the three graces, a reading McGrath ("Garlanding the Great Mother," 114-15) questions. Though she notes that "in classical poetry, notably the *Fasti*, the Graces weave garlands from spring flowers collected by their companions, the Horae," she believes this association is "attenuated" by the fact that Rubens does not depict the figures in *Nature Adorned* weaving garlands, but rather "undressing and unveiling"; and ultimately she is "not persuaded that the artist would have allowed one of the decorous Graces to use a satyr as a footstool." I retain the identification of these figures as the three graces, which I do not think is entirely incompatible with scene's satirical character.

into the garland's dark reserve.³⁸⁰) A second grace pulls the veil down and forward, into the light. The transition is striking: in the shadows, the veil is the same dark grey as the stone, while in the light it appears like soft white cloth, a 'lighting trick' that seems to fascinate the graces as they perform it.³⁸¹ The veil is reminiscent of the cloth wrapped around the head of Rubens's and Snyders's *Medusa*, strengthening an interpretation of the latter, too, as a quasi-statue. Indeed, both figures oscillate between personification and object; when writing about them, it is often difficult to know which pronoun to use, "she" or "it."

A third grace reaches up to grasp the double-stranded beaded necklace that adorns the statue. The necklace is stone-gray, and its classical bead-and-reel design reappears on the pedestal, strengthening the impression that it is part of the sculpture. Ornament forms a liminal layer with which the graces fetishistically engage—always and never touching the statue itself. The grace in the center, who pulls the veil towards the light, gazes at the white cloth in her hand. What is she thinking, musing at the veil of nature? Her face is turned past profile, her expression impossible to read.

The dark space between the statue and the garland is teeming. Satyrs lurk and twist out of it. One sticks out his tongue: this is Pan, whose blue-green hair, tanned skin, goat horns, vacant or ecstatic eyes, and animal physiognomy render him a taxonomic and ontological question mark. Next to him is Silenus, who holds up a torch and grins lewdly at us, leaning back against the pedestal. A satyr with black African features grabs his torso from behind, smiling; their lower bodies disappear beneath the garland. It is as if the grotesque poetics with which the Ephesian herm had long been associated (for instance, in the Mignon

³⁸⁰ This figure is derived from one in Michelangelo's cartoon for his *Battle of Cascina*; Vander Auwera, *Rubens, l'atelier du génie*, 116.

³⁸¹ McGrath ("Garlanding the Great Mother," 115) likewise notes that "the nymphs [...] almost seem to transform a marble veil to cloth as they gently pull it into the light [...]. She adds: "Contrary to the usual interpretation of the action as 'adorning', the sale catalogue of Mrs Mary Edwards, London (Cock) 28-29 May 1746, no. 140 talks of 'The Graces unveiling nature'"; McGrath, "Garlanding the Great Mother," 122, note 51.

etching)—vegetable, animal, human, and ornamental forms lapsing into one another—are here ‘naturalized’ in a bizarre but ostensibly legible figural scene. Rubens and Snyders place special emphasis on the unraveling of male bodies, whose lower parts are either occluded or revealed as animalistic. The painting thus belongs to a loose group of works in which Rubens depicted forms of emasculation and abandonment, a theme that has interested scholars.³⁸² These include Rubens’s bacchic paintings, to which *Nature Adorned* is, obviously, closely related: gazing out at us, Silenus seems to confirm that this is *his* realm, no matter whom or what is being worshipped on the pedestal.³⁸³

Rubens often cast ‘Ethiopians’ as satyrs in such works. The pairing of Silenus with a black satyr occurs in one of his best known bacchic paintings, the *Drunken Silenus* of 1616-17 now in Munich. In *Nature Adorned*, however, the satyr that reaches around Silenus to grasp the chubby, rounded forms of his torso also clearly parodies the sapphic worshippers above.³⁸⁴ The corpulent women that crouch or sprawl in the foreground gathering produce likewise have a relative in the Munich painting: a satyress who lies on the ground nursing two infants with veined, swollen breasts, while above her a satyr tempts us with a branch of gleaming grapes—the fruits or nipples of mother earth.³⁸⁵ (A similar ‘earth mother’ is the nursing tigress that can be found sprawled on the ground of bacchic paintings by Rubens

³⁸² On emasculation in Rubens see Lisa Rosenthal, *Gender, Politics, and Allegory*; Svetlana Alpers, *The Making of Rubens*, esp. ch. 3; and Maria Lydia Brendel, “Allegorical Truth-telling via the Feminine Baroque: Rubens’s Material Reality: *Reframing Het Pelskin*,” PhD dissertation, McGill University, Montreal, 1999.

³⁸³ On Rubens’s bacchic paintings see especially Lucy Davis, “A Gift From Nature: Rubens’s ‘Bacchus’ and Artistic Creativity,” *Nederlands kunsthistorisch jaarboek* 55.2004 (2006): 226-243; Karoline de Clippel, “‘Bacchanaal’ of ‘vastenavond’: what’s in a name? Receptie en classificatie van Rubens’ bacchinse voorstellingen in de zeventiende eeuw,” in *Munuscula amicorum: Contributions on Rubens and his Colleagues in Honour of Hans Vlieghe*, ed. Katlijne van der Stighelen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 123-146; and Karoline de Clippel, “Rough Bacchus, neat Andromeda: Rubens’s mythologies and the meaning of manner,” in *Classical mythology in the Netherlands in the age of Renaissance and Baroque*, proceedings of a conference held in Antwerp, 19-21 May 2005, ed. Carl van de Velde (Leuven and Walpole: Peeters, 2009), 95-102.

³⁸⁴ The neatness of the parody was either a case of Rubens ingeniously adapting an earlier work, or else suggests, contrary to present dating, that *Nature Adorned* was created earlier.

³⁸⁵ On nature as a nursing mother see Peter Dronke, “Bernard Silvestris, Natura, and Personification,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XLIII, 1980, 16-31.

and his followers.) Yet while such scenes are typically concerned with the lower bodily rites of consumption and excretion—lactating, drinking, urinating, ejaculating—in *Nature Adorned*, it is less clear what type of bacchanalia we have arrived at. Revelry and leisure are suggested, but so too is labor. The possibility of consumption is everywhere, but no one is shown actually consuming. And the three graces, who are not bacchantes, appear lost in earnest worship. Clearly, something else is going on here that is specific not to bacchic paintings, but to another genre.

As Freedberg points out, garland paintings were on an important level an affirmation of the visionary and miraculous power of sacred images, in keeping with broader programs of the Counter-Reformation.³⁸⁶ The specific form of Brueghel's earliest, floral garlands may have responded to a resurgence around 1600 of theological and cultic interest in the rosary.³⁸⁷ The imperative to honor images was internalized in images themselves; and the best way to honor images, it seemed, was with more images. In such works, the question of divine presence in matter is reframed in spectacles of fertility that identify a new source of life for images in the mysteries of nature—her inevitable, cyclical incarnation of matter with form and value.

Garland paintings also offered a new and spectacular showcase for painterly skill.³⁸⁸ The innovation was not simply to include conspicuous still life passages in a larger image, which had been done since the time of van Eyck. Rather, it was to embed still life in the image as a kind of framework or seam, producing a new image-space structured around the novel practice of collaboration between master specialists. Though studio assistants—trained in the master's style or in specific skills—still often anonymously contributed to workshop

³⁸⁶ Freedberg, "The Origins and Rise of the Flemish Madonnas in Flower Garlands," 120-22.

³⁸⁷ Freedberg, "The Origins and Rise of the Flemish Madonnas in Flower Garlands," 122.

³⁸⁸ Freedberg, "The Origins and Rise of the Flemish Madonnas in Flower Garlands," 120; Susan Merriam, "Icons After Iconoclasm," 4-5.

output, around 1600, painters in Antwerp also began to collaborate ostentatiously, or “horizontally.” Why they began doing this is still an open question. However, as Susan Merriam and others have argued, one reason clearly seems to have been the rise of market specialization and of a class of collectors who could delight in discerning two hands in a single image.³⁸⁹

As Merriam describes, because of their “collaborative execution,” garland paintings, “like no other images produced at the time, [...] foreground the fact that they are made objects.”³⁹⁰ Painter’s self-awareness about this genre as it emerged in Antwerp is shown in an early collaborative painting of ca. 1612 by Rubens and Osias Beert (ca. 1580-1623/4) [fig. 35].³⁹¹ Its subject was a legendary lost painting of antiquity. Glycera, a flower seller who was the first person to weave floral garlands, meets with the painter Pausias, her lover—only to find that he has surpassed her by becoming the first to *paint* garlands.³⁹² On the right, a table conveniently appears in the landscape to display a vase bursting with flowers, a paraphrase of the kinds of independent still lifes then already being produced in Antwerp. Pausias proudly holds up his work—obliquely, so that its surface is illegibly dark and attention shifts back to the real’ flowers of Glycera. As David Freedberg has argued, Pausias was most likely a self-portrait of Beert himself.³⁹³ The painting shows Rubens and Beert actively shaping a reception for still life, and for garland painting, around established notions of competition between nature, painting, and other crafts.

Netherlandish painting had long been associated with illusions that showcased the special properties or advantages of the oil medium: light-refracting objects like tears or

³⁸⁹ On the connection between the garland painting and collecting practices see Susan Merriam, “Icons after Iconoclasm: The Flemish Garland Picture, 1608-1700,” Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University (2002); and Honig, “The Beholder as a Work of Art.”

³⁹⁰ Susan Merriam, “Icons after Iconoclasm,” 4.

³⁹¹ Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota, Florida.

³⁹² Pliny, *Natural History* XXV: 125.

³⁹³ Freedberg, “The Origins and Rise of the Flemish Madonnas in Flower Garlands,” 121.

jewels (created by thinly layering a dark color over a lighter one); veils, which articulated the thinness of the material stratum in which images could now appear. Brueghel's garlands brim with such 'special effects': cascades of paper-thin, softly layered petals, drops of dew, changeant colors whose range suggests an explosion of painting's arsenal.³⁹⁴ As Merriam notes, what Brueghel strove to capture above all in such works were the "differentiation of textures" and the "properties of materials."³⁹⁵

Such collaborations between Rubens and Brueghel typically began with the outline of the garland being scratched onto the panel's surface. Rubens would then paint his figures, leaving that part blank; then Brueghel would paint his garland.³⁹⁶ However, as Joost vander Auwera has observed, for *Nature Adorned*, the order was different.³⁹⁷ Rubens first "laid out the overall lines of the composition," applying priming to both the garland and the figures. He then handed the panel over to Brueghel, who painted his garland; Rubens then returned to paint the figures; finally, Brueghel returned again to retouch the garland's edges so that they convincingly overlapped.³⁹⁸ The image's interwoven, dialectical growth, with the garland ripening in stages and the painters going back and forth, partly inhabiting each other's work, strangely resonates with its content.

Discussing the African satyrs in *Nature Adorned*, Elizabeth McGrath has noted that Natura's mysteries, her "cyclical processes of death and (re)generation," were sometimes allegorized with physical blackness.³⁹⁹ This idea was specifically connected to the Ephesian

³⁹⁴ I thank Frank Fehrenbach for bringing this aspect of Flemish floral still life paintings to my attention during his talk at RSA Berlin, 2015.

³⁹⁵ Merriam, "Icons After Iconoclasm," 4-5.

³⁹⁶ Joost vander Auwera in *Rubens: A Genius at Work*, 115-116.

³⁹⁷ Vander Auwera, 116.

³⁹⁸ Vander Auwera, 116.

³⁹⁹ In Giovanni Maria Falconetto's fresco of 1520 in the Palazzo d'Arco in Mantua (which Rubens would have seen when he was court painter there), Diana Ephesus is portrayed with dark skin and African features. McGrath, 116. On Nature's blackness see also Zorach, 102-103.

herm, which was believed to have Middle Eastern or African origins.⁴⁰⁰ Given this, the dark reserve that surrounds the garland—which is also an undifferentiated space between hands—becomes more interesting. Such reserves are typical of Flemish collaborative paintings, records of the entire area originally blocked out for Brueghel’s still life, Yet the one in *Nature Adorned* is unusually thick, merging with the silhouettes of trees and spreading like an ink stain—a ‘ground’ that has somehow gone vertical, as if the garland came with its own dark clod of earth. A crouching faun plays a flute in the lower right corner, where space seems to fall back like a cave. As if to say, all of this—all of these infinitely variable colors, shapes, textures, tastes—from *that*. The overall construction is reminiscent of Lucretius’s description of the earth as both a womb and a tomb.⁴⁰¹ Indeed, the absurdity of lavishing excess upon a figure that supposedly embodies a mystery—*natura naturans*, that which can never truly be depicted—is perhaps not lost on Diana Ephesus herself.⁴⁰² Surrounded by a multicolored chain of which she is supposedly the source, she is grey, impassive, still. She looks up and away, literally rolling her eyes. She will keep her mystery—or rather, perhaps she does not truly embody it anyway.

In his correspondences with Borromeo and others, Brueghel stresses the time and diligence his garlands took to create.⁴⁰³ Yet evidence suggests that his practice was also extremely efficient, based on careful preparatory drawings that served as the basis for full-color templates, which could then be copied into finished works as many times as necessary.⁴⁰⁴ Specialization has the advantage of narrowing the task at hand; it encourages

⁴⁰⁰ Zorach, *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold*, 103.

⁴⁰¹ *De rerum natura* 5, 259: “omniparens eadem rerum commune sepulchrum”). This reference, though not the anatomical analogy, is given in McGrath, “Garlanding the Great Mother,” 119, note 22.

⁴⁰² As Gernot and Hartmut Böhme (*Feuer, Wasser, Erde, Luft*, 47) explain, Gaia was understood “not as the earth that is visible to our eyes; rather, she is the potential that finds expression in it.”

⁴⁰³ See Lucy Cutler, “Virtue and Diligence: Jan Brueghel I and Federico Borromeo” (as above, note 376).

⁴⁰⁴ On Brueghel’s technique for his garlands, see Ariane van Suchtelen in *A Working Friendship*, 152-165, cat. nos. 19, 20, 21.

both mastery and mechanization. One such preparatory drawing by Brueghel, which would reappear in full color in a painting he made with Pieter van Avont, is preserved today in Antwerp's Museum Plantin-Moretus [fig. 36].⁴⁰⁵ Drawn in pen and brown ink with brown wash, it depicts a section of a garland of fruit and flowers pinned to a wall, casting a thick shadow and trailing heavily onto the floor. The drawing gives you the sense that Brueghel understood his garlands as virtual objects, made up of modular segments that, once constructed, could be reused—a combination, we might say, of the roles of Glycera, the garland-weaver, and Pausias, the garland-painter.

In a collaboration of ca. 1616 between Rubens and Snyders, the garland is hoisted up as two separate swags, in other words, still broken down into its modules [fig. 37]. Preserved today in two versions including one in the Hermitage,⁴⁰⁶ this work centers around a statue of Ceres, goddess of the grain and of the earth's fruitfulness. One again, Rubens 'makes like the Medusa' and turns the goddess to stone. Her statue stands in haughty contrapposto, pulling at its toga and tugging at its veil. It is fussing with itself, rather like the graces in *Nature Adorned* fuss over the statue's ornaments. A swag of fruits and vegetables is pinned to the center of the pediment, pulled to the side like a baldachin, while on the other side a row of putti struggle to lift an identical swag to complete the ornament. The anxious sense of *non finito* is heightened by the niche's perfect classical symmetry. One of the putti stands directly beneath the statue, heaving a giant melon over his shoulder. He glances back at us. His nudity is partially covered by a billowing crimson sash, which technical examination shows

⁴⁰⁵ inv. D.IX.23. See van Suchtelen in *A Working Friendship*, 164, fig. 87.

⁴⁰⁶ The Hermitage version is thought to be the earlier of the two versions. See Natal'ia Ivanovna Gritsaï and Natalya Babina, *Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Flemish Painting* (St. Petersburg: Hermitage Publishing House, 2008), 231-233, cat. no. 300; and Rolando Bellini, Natal'ia Ivanovna Gritsaï, and Ermitazh Gosudarstvennyi, eds., *Rubens's Ceres: Two Original Versions* (Cinisello Balsamo, Milan: Silvana, 2007). The architectural design of the niche echoes that of the entrance to the garden in the Rubenshuis; first noted by M. Varshavskaya, *Rubens' Paintings in the Hermitage Museum*, 92.

was added as a final touch—suggestively invoking Rubens’s signature color.⁴⁰⁷

As in *Nature Adorned*, the garlanding of a statue just on the verge of coming to life sparks a chain of comparisons between painting, sculpture, and nature. In his typical dialectical fashion, Rubens uses the Ephesian herm to allegorize both *natura naturans* and its opposite, the epitome of which is sculpture. Both works also have a distinctly playful and satirical tone that sets them apart from most other garland paintings. Neither an all-out bacchanalia nor a carefully orchestrated ritual, the contortions of the satyrs and putti around the center suggest a shambolic behind-the-scenes dress rehearsal. These figures seem distinctly disinterested in or even unaware of the statues themselves, like day laborers just brought in to do a job. None of them even looks at the statue directly. It is the liminal layer of ornament with which they concern themselves.

Ceres is garlanded once again in a painting of ca. 1621-22 by Jan Brueghel and Hendrick van Balen.⁴⁰⁸ This painting exists today in two nearly identical versions, one in the Mauritshuis in the Hague and the other owned by the Dexia Bank in Antwerp [fig. 38].⁴⁰⁹ Van Balen was Brueghel’s most frequent collaborator; since 1604, the two had lived down the street from each other on the Lange Nieuwestraat,⁴¹⁰ a convenience that as Ariane van Suchtelen notes must have “simplified their collaboration, since their panels and copper plates could now be carried back and forth with ease.”⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁷ Natal’ia Gritsaï in the press release for CODART: <https://www.codart.nl/guide/exhibitions/rubens-two-versions-of-a-single-painting-the-statue-of-ceres-from-the-collections-of-the-state-hermitage-and-of-mr-hermann-beyeler-switzerland/>.

⁴⁰⁸ See Ariane van Suchtelen in *A Working Friendship*, 156-165, cat. nos. 21 and 21: 157. On their collaboration see B. Werche, “Die Zusammenarbeit von Jan Brueghel d.Ä. und Hendrick van Balen,” in *Brueghel-Brueghel: Pieter Brueghel der Jüngere 1565-1637/8–Jan Brueghel der Ältere 1568-1625, Flämische Malerei um 1600. Tradition und Fortschritt*, ed. Klaus Ertz (Essen-Vienna, 1997-98), 67-74.

⁴⁰⁹ Van Suchtelen in *A Working Friendship*, 56-165, cat. nos. 20, 21. Van Suchtelen believes the Antwerp version to be the earlier of the two. Strangely, while Van Suchtelen’s entry dates the work to ca. 1621-22, in the entry in the same catalogue on Rubens’s and Brueghel’s *Allegory of Taste*, in which the painting appears in a fictive gallery, it is dated to ca. 1618.

⁴¹⁰ Van Suchtelen, 157.

⁴¹¹ Van Suchtelen, 160.

The two identical garlands Brueghel depicted in the two versions of this painting are also both nearly identical to the garland in *Nature Adorned*.⁴¹² The same cabbage here, the same white turnip there, the split-open melon, the vase bursting with wheat—Brueghel has reproduced the fruits of his earlier labors *exactly*. Once again, his garland is surrounded by the dark reserve that merges with silhouetted trees. But now, the winged genii fluttering around the garland have nowhere to attach it: the treetops have disappeared, and the garland simply trails off into the sun, its vanishing echoed in reverse by an approaching flock of birds and by clouds that darken as they grow closer.

The central medallion's fictive gold rim confirms it as a discreet, portable object. The image inside shows Ceres sitting in a landscape where putti fly overhead and industriously gather flowers scattered on the ground. On the other side of the rim, putti gather fruits on the ground and fly overhead to attach the garland. The proliferation and repetition of objects inside and outside the medallion encourages viewers to weave constantly back and forth between the two, unraveling the very object that has been asserted. Once more, technical studies show how this process of viewing was structured by the process of the collaboration. In the medallion, van Balen followed the standard procedure for collaborative paintings by executing his figures first. However, as van Suchtelen explains, in the rest of the image, “remarkably, [...] the order appears to have been reversed [...] with Brueghel painting his garland first and van Balen his figures afterward.”⁴¹³

An ornamental framework that becomes painting's a triumph or exponent, the Flemish garland undermines the idea of painting as the production of content, characterizing it instead as a set of vivid, open-ended processes. It is always just now there, being woven or

⁴¹² As well as to the garland in *Holy Family in a Garland* in the Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, Virginia; vander Auwera in *A Genius at Work*, 116.

⁴¹³ Van Suchtelen, 160. A stereomicroscopic examination was undertaken of the Mauritshuis version; a similar examination of the Antwerp version was not possible.

installed, its fruits ripening and dropping. In this sense, rather than understanding the Flemish garland as a means of restoring life to the old cult image, we might see it as a re-staging of painting as contemporary art. It might even be worth asking whether such early images of the garland “in progress” were not also a way of highlighting the genre’s novelty.

Brueghel’s garlands would proliferate on the market, in the works of his son, his grandson, his other pupils, and a network of other Antwerp painters connected through family and friendship. As van Suchtelen notes, copying was so widespread and so much the norm in seventeenth-century Antwerp that “the fact that the painter Sebastian Vrancx (1573-1647) was opposed to copying as a matter of principle was considered very odd by his contemporaries.”⁴¹⁴ The copiousness of the garland was thus not limited to its content. Rather, the garland functioned as a productive synapse of Antwerp painting in this period: sparking a lucrative genre, bringing painters into one another’s workshops, and opening up new pathways of working and viewing. In a painting of ca. 1615-17 now in Munich’s Alte Pinakothek, Snyder depicts the garland ‘on the move’, being carried through a craggy mountain landscape by putti as if halfway to its next pictorial event.⁴¹⁵ One thinks of van Balen and Brueghel on the way to each other’s studios. The garlands “in progress” of the 1610s and 1620s indeed imply that each work of art is an arbitrary fragment of an endless production, like a cornucopia. Such a conception is clearly related to the situation of Antwerp painting, and its relationship to the European art market.

Rubens’s third depiction of the Ephesian herm in the 1610s occurs in the title page he designed for the 1617 Antwerp edition of *De iustitia et iure* (Leuven, 1605), a treatise by the

⁴¹⁴ Van Suchtelen, 163. On copying in Antwerp see also Honig, “The Beholder as Work of Art,” 269.

⁴¹⁵ Susan Merriam discusses such garland paintings, which she calls “fragments,” in which the garland does not adorn a meta-image: “When used in this way [...] instead of framing a single image, fragments are used to adorn an entire collection.” Merriam, *Seventeenth-Century Flemish Garland Paintings*, 91.

Jesuit economist Leonardus Lessius [fig. 39].⁴¹⁶ A scholar at the Jesuit college in Louvain, Lessius had studied banking in Antwerp. His treatise, widely reprinted and read in the seventeenth century, was the first to deal systematically and at length with the moral implications of the emerging capitalist system.⁴¹⁷ Lessius was also the first economist to formulate the notion of “competition” in trade.⁴¹⁸ The Ephesian herm depicted in Rubens’s title page holds a cornucopia, defining nature as the source of economic surplus. Indeed, in the new economy that had arisen in the late sixteenth century from the rubble of Antwerp’s collapsed mercantile one, agriculture was a crucial economic motor, as well as a means of self-fashioning for elites—including Rubens himself, who in the 1630s spent much of his time at his country estate.

In a painting he created around the same time as his title page for Lessius’s treatise, Rubens depicts *Ceres and Pan* (1615) flirting in a wood beside a mound of fruits and vegetables painted by Snyder [fig. 40]. The painting emphasizes the forest, and its blackness, as the source of this colorful bounty: apples still dangle from the trees, while on the ground below, already-cut produce—artichokes, a watermelon, and a split-open pumpkin that clearly evokes the female anatomy—seem to tumble onto the ground. Ceres aims her cornucopia toward the center: channeling and condensing the fertility of the forest, it releases a flood of smaller produce across her lap. In middle distance, a woman whose head balances a market basket turns back to gaze at us. She has apparently just come from the mythologized “market stall” we now behold. In another Rubens-Snyders collaboration

⁴¹⁶ See *P.P. Rubens als boekillustrator*, exh. cat. Museum Plantin-Moretus March 7-July 4, 1977 (Antwerp, 1977), 38-39. A drawing or oil sketch by Rubens for the Lessius title page is presumably lost. *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard*, pt. 21, Book Illustrations and Title-Pages (London and Philadelphia: Harvey Miller, 1978), 184-188, nos. 38 and 38a.

⁴¹⁷ On Lessius see Honig, *Painting and the Market*, 30 and 106; and Raymond de Roover, *Leonardus Lessius als economist: De economische leerstellingen van de latere scholastiek in de zuidelijk Nederlanden* (Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1969), on which Honig’s discussion is heavily based.

⁴¹⁸ Honig, *Painting and the Market*, 106.

from this period, *Ceres with two nymphs* (1615-17), Ceres's cornucopia is held up by two voluptuous nudes while a third woman, who is fully clothed, reaches in to take a piece of fruit. In other words, Ceres herself is envisioned as a contemporary female consumer.⁴¹⁹ The economic importance of agriculture in the southern Netherlands is, clearly, one context for Rubens's and his colleagues' celebration of agricultural produce in their paintings. Yet as we have seen, such works also model the *copia* of painting itself in specific ways. First, they identify painting's fertility with both copying and collaboration, conceiving of it not primarily in terms of the powers of invention of individual artists, but as a technical capacity that is collective: an endless chain of production whose universality is comparable with that of nature herself. *Nature Adorned* and other images of the garland "in progress" indeed evoke a world in which multiple laborers, worshippers of nature, create artificial analogues of nature's fertility. These analogues replicate nature down to its most subtle textures, and surpass nature by triumphing over its forces of decay and death. Rubens's images of the Ephesian herm, in both *Nature Adorned* and the *Finding of Erichthonius*, embodies *Pittura* as she was conceived in early seventeenth-century Antwerp. Or rather, like the *Head of Medusa*, she embodies precisely what painting is *not*—hard and sterile, i.e. sculptural—only to erupt at her periphery, first in her veil and then in her garland, into a demonstration of what painting *is*: permeable, liminal, procreative. At the same time, all three works also closely navigate painting's own relationship with *natura naturata*, its status as both "womb and tomb."

Toon van Houdt has examined humanist and scholastic writings, including those of Lipsius, that show the "economics of art" in early modern Antwerp.⁴²⁰ He argues that in Antwerp around 1600, there occurred a certain "blurring of the categories of craftsmen and

⁴¹⁹ This work is likewise in the Prado. A painting I will discuss in Chapter 3 depicts a figure identified as an allegory of Antwerp or Earth, which can be seen as a variant of Ceres.

⁴²⁰ Toon Van Houdt, "The Economics of Art in Early Modern Times: Some Humanist and Scholastic Approaches," *History of Political Economy* 31 (1999), 303-331.

businessmen.”⁴²¹ The transformation of material value has long been identified as a hallmark of the Renaissance idea of painting, exemplified by Alberti’s famous observation that the best painters did not use real gold leaf but *simulated* gold with cheaper color.⁴²² In Counter-Reformation Antwerp, a situation had arisen in which painting’s alchemy was performed for an increasingly speculative market. The result, according to van Houdt, was that artists, “like merchants [...] were forced to hone their diligence (*diligentia*) and industry (*industria*) so as to perceive and anticipate the conditions on the ‘art market’ as adequately as possible. [...] [P]ainters, sculptors and engravers ceased to be viewed as mere craftsmen and were, instead, regarded as entrepreneurs.”⁴²³ As Elizabeth Honig has observed, there was considerable anxiety in seventeenth-century Antwerp about this conception, and that of artworks as commodities. In the city’s new economy, both artists and collectors strove to fashion themselves as aristocrats, in other words as *beyond the market*. They therefore wanted to participate in the art market while also “defining a distance between themselves and the leveling mechanisms of market capitalism.”⁴²⁴ Honig traces this ambivalence in the Antwerp market-stall painting as it was revived in the seventeenth century by Snyders and others.⁴²⁵ However, the works we have just examined that identify painting with spontaneous generation may have their own strategy for situating painting both within and beyond the market. This is suggested by their allusions to the *prima materia*: the water that erupts from the Ephesian fountain, the blood of the Medusa, and even, perhaps, the black reserve

⁴²¹ Van Houdt, 310.

⁴²² “But, there are those who utilize gold in a disproportionate way because they think that gold lends a certain majesty to the *historia*. In fact, as the admiration and greater praise of an artist is based on colors, thus also one can observe that, after you have placed gold on a flat table, the major parts of [those] surfaces that one needed to represent as bright and brilliant appear dark to the observers; and others [surfaces], which should be darker, result more luminous. Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. Rocco Sinisgalli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 72-73.

⁴²³ Van Houdt, 310-311.

⁴²⁴ Honig, *Art and the Market*, 121.

⁴²⁵ Honig, *Art and the Market*, 121.

around Brueghel's garland. In all three cases, raw or elemental matter is invoked to emphasize painting's *primariness*; even if the end result are material objects or specimens, the true locus of painting, Rubens insists, is not here but in the living matter that precedes all creation.

The remainder of this dissertation will continue to trace such ideas in mythological painted Rubens made much later in his career. In the 1630s, the last decade of his life, Rubens famously shifted to a more "painterly" style, which had been inspired partly by the *cinquecento* Venetian works he had encountered in the Spanish royal collection in Madrid. Central to this was a shift in Rubens's use of the oil sketch, a technique his oeuvre ultimately helped make standard in European workshop practices. Though Rubens had created oil sketches as early as the 1610s, in this late period, his oil sketches not only modeled images but also came to be templates for the fluid, virtuosic, gestural style of his finished works. I will conclude this chapter with an interlude on a late Rubens oil sketch whose subject, like the *Head of Medusa* and the *Finding of Erichthonius*, is the generation of life forms from raw matter. Here, however, Rubens also connects this subject specifically to the potential of the oil sketch.

Deucalion and Pyrrha: spontaneous generation and body-making

In his late oil sketch of *Deucalion and Pyrrha* (ca 1636), Rubens imagines the world after the flood [fig. 41].⁴²⁶ Not the allegorical but the real body of Gaia—the earth itself washed clean of humans—lies latent with her earth tones. Above, the sky is tinged with yellow, pink, and blue.

⁴²⁶ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1: 313-415. On Rubens's *Deucalion and Pyrrha* see Georgievska-Shine and Silver, *Rubens, Velazquez, and the King of Spain*, 33-35; Held, *Rubens's Oil Sketches* vol. 1, cat. no. 184, 270-271; Alpers, *The Decorations for the Torre de la Parada*, 22.

In the *Head of Medusa*, we saw the first flickers of spontaneous generation identified in the eruption of a liquid from a quasi-sculptural fragment; as the Medusa recedes into petrification and horror, her blood takes on the many strange forms on the precipice. The image represents the most primary type of metamorphosis, the shift from raw matter into *any potential body*. The *Finding of Erichthonius*, though it does not explicitly depict a generative event in progress, is presided over by a stony personification of nature who is always liquefying; her disembodiment or dissolution is identified as the precursor to the generation of the snaky Erichthonius. Now, a new race of humans is shown emerging from the rocks or “bones” of Mother Earth.

Deucalion was the son of Prometheus. Using a chest built by his artisan father, he and his wife Pyrrha were the sole survivors of the cataclysmic flood unleashed by Zeus. The elderly couple could not bear children, however, threatening humanity’s survival. As the rains fell, the oracle at Themis, a titaness, advised Deucalion to “cover your head and throw the bones of your mother behind your shoulder,” which he correctly interpreted to mean the “bones” of Gaia—*rocks*, which once thrown indeed metamorphosed into humans.

What a subject for the figural painter in his old age: a brand-new human race emerging from the rocks of mother earth. As opposed to the *Finding of Erichthonius*, Gaia is not personified, but is rather the natural entity that precedes personification in general. And in this post-diluvian world (we glimpse a sea in the distance, perhaps the flood receding), it is *human figures*—one of whom is the son of the titan Prometheus, who gifted humanity with the arts—that are shown facilitating the re-generative process.

This sketch was one of sixty mythological paintings Rubens designed in ca. 1636-37 for the Spanish royal hunting lodge known as the Torre de la Parada—a creative task as arduous and copious as that of Deucalion, even if the finished canvasses (about forty

survive, nearly all in the Prado) were largely executed by Rubens's studio assistants. *Deucalion and Pyrrha* is believed to have been paired in the cycle with an image of *Cadmus Sowing the Dragon's Teeth* [fig. 42]. This was another metamorphosis of spontaneous generation: when Cadmus, lacking an army, plants the teeth of the dragon in the earth, armed warriors sprout up from it and immediately begin to battle each other.⁴²⁷ As in the *Head of Medusa*, the material chaos of the earth, represented by the dragon and its scattered teeth, has a violent impulse. Rubens thus returns, in his last great cycle of paintings, to the generation of life forms—this time, human beings—from raw matter. In both the *Head of Medusa* and *Deucalion and Pyrrha*, this occurs only after a cataclysm: the gorgon's decapitation, which has violently exposed her internal substance (identified with the *prima materia* of nature), and now, the flood, which has left her wet and raw, primed for regeneration.

In their ragged clothes, the two elderly survivors conduct their work in the muddy-looking foreground of the temple. Deucalion throws two rocks over his shoulder at once, while Pyrrha bends down to pick up another.⁴²⁸ Their hunched poses mirror each other, and their impossibly long arms extend and bend, conveying a sense of perpetual, wheel-like motion.⁴²⁹ Their muscular forearms and giant scale suggest the kinds of bodies—those of titans—that belong to a different, lost age of the earth.

This epochal juncture the image depicts, the transition between two ages in the history of human bodies, can be seen as a stylistic or art-historical break as well. The bodies of Deucalion and Pyrrha clearly evoke those of Michelangelo, the most famous painter who

⁴²⁷ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* III: 94-115. The large canvas was executed by Jacob Jordaens; Prado no. 1713. See Vlieghe, 1968, 262-65, fig. 44. On the oil sketch, which is in a private collection in Norfolk, Held, 264, cat. no. 176. There is another oil sketch by the workshop or follower of Rubens, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam SK-A-4051.

⁴²⁸ The figure of Deucalion distinctly resembles the figure of Hercules from Rubens's image of *Hercules Discovering the Tyrian Purple*, likewise from the Torre de la Parada and discussed in my introduction.

⁴²⁹ See Gilles Deleuze on Baroque images as "living machines"; Gilles Deleuze, trans. Tom Conley, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 123-4.

also worked in stone.⁴³⁰ Even their heavily draped costumes are reminiscent of his prophets and sibyls in the Sistine ceiling. By contrast, the pinkish nudes that emerge on the right are more Titianesque—not surprisingly, since Rubens’s understanding of the subject of Adam and Eve had been heavily filtered through Titian, whose painting of the subject he had copied in Madrid.⁴³¹ Conceptually embodying the practice of a sculptor—namely, modeling—Rubens affirms his art by working at its negative limits and transcending them.

Deucalion and Pyrrha eject their rocks against the multicolored sky. Fluttered along by two tiny birds, the sky’s horizontal streaks connect the left side with the right, where a young naked couple stands, legs wobbly-looking and bent. These are Deucalion and Pyrrha’s first creation, who clearly resembles Adam and Eve, a subject Rubens had painted on more than one occasion.⁴³² The woman’s extremely long blonde hair, in particular, is reminiscent of Rubens’s earlier depictions of Eve, as well as of Venus. Fresh new beings, their flesh is similar to the earth below them but brighter and warmer, flushed with pink. They embrace. As Julius Held has pointed out, their first instinct upon waking up in this new world is apparently to begin procreating.⁴³³ Notably, their hunched, dynamic, unstable poses are reminiscent equally of Paradise scenes and of *expulsions*. Not that they look ashamed: the woman’s covering hand, based on the pose of the *Venus pudica* statue, disappears behind her upper thigh, suggesting it has another purpose than modesty.

Behind them, another pinkish male nude is sprawled on the ground, gazing up at the

⁴³⁰ I am grateful to Antien Knaap for pointing this out when I presented these thoughts at the Renaissance Society of America annual conference (Boston, MA), 2016.

⁴³¹ See Rubens’s copy of 1628-9 after Titian’s *Fall* (ca. 1550), both of which are now in the Prado. On Rubens and Titian, see Hilliard T. Goldfarb, David Freedberg, Manuela B. Mena Marqués, *Titian and Rubens: Power, Politics and Style* (Boston: Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 1998), especially Freedberg’s essay “Rubens and Titian: Art and Politics”: 30-60; and Aneta Georgievska-Shine, “Rubens’s Europa and Titian’s Auctoris Index,” *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 59/1 (2009), 274-291.

⁴³² Jeremy Wood, *Rubens: Copies and Adaptations from Renaissance and Later Artists: Italian Artists. 2, Titian and North Italian Art* (London: Harvey Miller, 2010).

⁴³³ Held, *Oil Sketches*, 271.

flying rocks as if awaiting his own mate [fig. 43]. Lower on the ground, nearly trampled beneath the feet of “Adam and Eve,” are two writhing, just-thrown creations. Like the snakelets that crawled out of Medusa’s blood, these are grotesques, not in the sense of chimerae but in the sense of being only half-finished, captured halfway between matter and form. Hairless, faceless and still without apparent gender, they are made of a few smears of blue-grey over the beige ground, and a tiny bit of eggshell yellow. The foremost one lies on its stomach, its elbow bent as if it is trying to push itself up. The triangular shadows that form in the places where its body separates from the ground are echoed in the rocks on the ground to the left, and the one Pyrrha holds up against the sky, whose three visible facets, in three different shades of grey, suggest the rock as a kind of kernel or code of all three-dimensional bodies. Again, a passage of enlivened raw matter is identified etymologically with Rubens’s name: in this case, his first name, *Petrus* or “rock.”

The thickness of the material world, in heavy and constant flux, is articulated in streaks of impasto and unmixed, vibrating colors. Such painterliness is typical of Rubens’s late oil sketches, in which the poetics of spontaneity come not just from rapid execution, but from an astonishing fluency, a near elision of thought and action.⁴³⁴ As we will see further in the next chapter, the emergence of forms is also often rooted in the fluctuations of the pictorial ground: the *doodverf* or “dead coloring,” which in *Deucalion and Pyrrha* provides most of the basis for the illusory ground, the earth. In other words, what was a common technique for Rubens is here given metaphorical weight: the earth, largely substituted by the earthy ‘dead coloring’, is endowed with real generative agency. Even Deucalion and Pyrrha’s finished creations show this parentage: the Ovidian ‘Eve’, in particular, incorporates it in her torso,

⁴³⁴ “Never in the history of art does there seem to be so infinitesimal a gap between idea and execution. Whether large or small, the oil sketches take us into the heart and mind of the painter, and reveal a fluency with the brush [...]”; David Freedberg, “The Hand of Rubens,” in *Peter Paul Rubens: Paintings and Oil Sketches*, exhib. cat. Gagosian Gallery, ed. David Freedberg (New York, 1995), 7-25: 8.

neck, and hair.

The focusing of this agency into the rocks that model rudimentary relief shows that, despite the widespread association of his art with *colore* as opposed to *disegno*, Rubens was also clearly fascinated with the potency of light and dark, and the ‘seeds’ of images as volumetric forms. This was in keeping with the early modern understanding of *colore* that is perhaps lost in the English cognate; while *grisaille* or *brunaille* might strike us as belonging more to the realm of *disegno*, for Roger de Piles, tonal modeling was part and parcel of Rubens’s colorism.⁴³⁵ Yet the sketch also implies that without all three of the colors that streak across the sky—red, yellow, and blue, which the Flemish scholar François d’Aguilon (1567-1617) had first begun to theorize as the “primary colors”⁴³⁶—nature’s figures would remain bound to the cold materiality of the earth. Deucalion and Pyrrha offer an image of painters as postdiluvian heroes: industrious, perpetually laboring titans who turn clumps of matter into living bodies by collaborating with Nature herself.

⁴³⁵ Alpers, *The Making of Rubens*, 75.

⁴³⁶ Rubens illustrated Aguilonius’s work. See Julius Held, “Rubens and Aguilonius: New Points of Contact,” *The Art Bulletin* 61/2 (1979), 257-64; Charles Parkhurst, “Aguilonius’ Optics and Rubens’ Color,” *Nederlands kunsthistorisch jaarboek* 12.1961, 35-48; and Michael Jaffé: Rubens and Optics: Some Fresh Evidence,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 34 (1971), 362-366.

Chapter 3: Rubens's *Quos ego* and the Painter as Neptune

On April 10, 1633, Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand (1606-1641), the son of Philip III of Spain and Margaret of Austria, set sail with his fleet from the harbor of Barcelona. He had been sent to Brussels by his older brother, King Philip IV of Spain, to take on the position of regent of the Netherlands. But his voyage began inauspiciously: a massive storm struck, and his fleet was forced to take refuge in the harbor of Cadaques for thirteen days.

A late oil sketch by Rubens now in the Harvard Art Museums [fig. 44] allegorizes the clearing of the storm, after which Ferdinand was finally able to resume his journey to the southern Netherlands. Rubens ties the event to a scene from Book I of Virgil's *Aeneid*.⁴³⁷

After the keeper of the winds Aeolus unleashes a storm that threatens Aeneas's fleet, Neptune uses his powers to clear it, angrily calling out to the winds:

Has such great confidence in your origin taken hold of you?
Now, winds, do you dare, without my divine will,
to stir up heaven and earth, and to lift up such great masses?
(You) whom I!—but it is better to calm the moved waves.⁴³⁸

The threatening phrase *Quos ego*—"You whom I!"—is a well known example of aposiopesis, a device in which a sentence is left broken off and the rest of its meaning only implied (that unspoken remainder acquiring only more weight, however, by its absence).

Quos ego is also a traditional if somewhat antiquated title for Rubens's image. More favored today is either *Neptune Calming the Tempest*, or the wordier title under which the oil sketch is

⁴³⁷ On Rubens and Virgil, see Elizabeth McGrath, "Artists, their Books and Subjects from Classical Mythology," in *Classical Mythology in the Netherlands in the Age of Renaissance and Baroque* (proceedings of conference held in Antwerp, 19-21 May 2005), ed. Carl van de Velde (Leuven and Walpole MA: Peeters, 2009), 301-332. In 1636 Rubens received two books on Virgil that he had ordered from the Plantijn Press; Putnam, "Virgil and the *Pompa*," 170.

⁴³⁸ *Tantane vos generis tenuit fiducia vestri? / Iam coelum terramque meo sine numine, venti, / Miscere et tantas audetis tollere moles? / Quos ego—! sed motos praestat componere fluctus.* Translation from http://www.stjohns-chs.org/language/imurphy_courses/ap-latin/week22translation.pdf.

currently catalogued and displayed: *The Voyage of the Cardinal Infante Ferdinand of Spain from Barcelona to Genoa in April 1633, with Neptune Calming the Tempest*. I will refer to the image here as *Quos ego* both for brevity's sake and because I think it resonates with the poetic, rather than journalistic, character of Rubens's art. By this I do not mean to imply a simple or deterministic relationship to Virgil's text, but rather an imaginative emulation of it.⁴³⁹

Rubens's sketch belonged to his designs for the Triumphal Entry of Cardinal Infante Ferdinand into Antwerp, which finally took place on April 17, 1635. An elaborate urban spectacle, the *Pompa introitus Ferdinandi* consisted of a series of twelve painted wooden archways or 'stages', inset with giant canvas paintings and interspersed with live performances, which the Cardinal-Infanti encountered at set points along his route through the city. Such triumphal entries welcoming Habsburg rulers and their local governors into cities had a long tradition in the Southern Netherlands,⁴⁴⁰ though as we will see, the *Pompa introitus Ferdinandi* departed from previous events in significant ways. Rubens, recently returned to Antwerp after a decade of diplomatic service abroad for the Habsburgs and their allies, was chosen by the Antwerp city council to oversee the festival's designs. His large workshop was put into action to execute them. The majority of Rubens's oil sketches for the series, and the large canvases made after them, have been preserved. The canvas painting for the *Quos ego* is now in the Gemäldegalerie in Dresden [fig. 45].⁴⁴¹ Additionally, a commemorative book on the festival was published in 1641, with detailed etchings after Rubens's designs by his pupil Theodoor van Thulden (1606-1669) and Latin commentary by the Antwerp humanist Jean-Gaspard Gevaerts (1593-1666), a close friend of Rubens who

⁴³⁹ On Rubens and *ut pictura poesis*, Müller-Hofstede, "Rubens und die Kunstlehre des Cinquecento" (as above, note 62).

⁴⁴⁰ Elizabeth McGrath, *Rubens's Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi and the Traditions of Civic Pageantry*, doctoral thesis, University of London, 1971.

⁴⁴¹ Angelo Walther, ed., *Gemäldegalerie Dresden: alte Meister: Katalog der ausgestellten Werke* (Dresden and Leipzig: E.A. Seemann, 1992), 334-335, cat. no. 64b.

likely gave significant input into his designs.⁴⁴²

John Rupert Martin's 1972 monograph on the *Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi* remains authoritative.⁴⁴³ In 2014, the series was the subject of a symposium held at Harvard, for which the university's oil sketch of the *Quos ego* was the point of departure. The symposium opened with a live performance of Baroque music, and its proceedings were published in a richly illustrated volume.⁴⁴⁴ While some of the authors who discuss the *Quos ego* focus on iconography and rely more on van Thulden's engraving,⁴⁴⁵ other authors are more specifically concerned with the oil sketch, including how it was made⁴⁴⁶ and the possibilities of curating its exhibition in a museum.⁴⁴⁷

Symposia and multiauthor volumes are valuable in their ability to bring together multiple perspectives, methods, and frameworks. However, the conceptual gaps between the various contributions, including interesting or potentially productive problems, are often left unexplored. One such problem in the case of the *Quos ego* is the precise nature of the relationship between Rubens's oil sketch, van Thulden's etching, and the finished canvas. All three could be regarded as different guises of the same image, whose meaning, while perhaps more legible in the two later versions than in the original prototype, remains basically constant. Another approach would be to regard the sketch, the print, and the canvas painting as three separate artworks whose meanings are indelibly shaped by their different mediums, as well as different contexts of production and viewing. The former risks overemphasizing

⁴⁴² Jean Gaspard Gevaerts, *Pompa introitus Ferdinandi Austriaci Hispaniarum Infantis...* (Antwerp, 1641).

⁴⁴³ John Rupert Martin, *The Decorations for the Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi* (London and New York: Phaidon, 1972).

⁴⁴⁴ Anna C. Knaap and Michael C. J. Putnam, eds., *Art, Music, and Spectacle in the Age of Rubens: the Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi* (London: Harvey Miller, 2013).

⁴⁴⁵ Peter Miller, "Peiresc, Rubens, and Visual Culture circa 1620," in *Art, Music, and Spectacle*, 49-64; Michael C. J. Putnam, "Virgil and the Pompa," in *Art Music, and Spectacle*, 169-188; Carmen Arnold-Biucchi, "Coins and Classical Imagery in the Time of Rubens: The *Stage of Welcome* in Caspar Gevartius's *Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi*," in *Art, Music, and Spectacle*, 189-215.

⁴⁴⁶ See Anne T. Woollett, "The Burden of Invention: Rubens and the *Stage of Welcome*," in *Art, Music, and Spectacle*, 219-240.

⁴⁴⁷ See Ivan Gaskell, "Being True to Rubens," in *Art, Music, and Spectacle*, 241-260.

iconographic meaning. The latter risks underemphasizing it while advancing a deterministic notion of medium specificity. How can we avoid falling into either one of these traps?

One way would be to heuristically include the image's metamorphosis through different techniques as part of what we consider its meaning..This does not mean that Rubens would have anticipated a context in which all three versions of the *Quos ego* could be viewed and compared simultaneously—though I think there is a case to be made that an artist who flourished in the era of the *Kunstkammer* might indeed have imagined this, if not as a real possibility, as a kind of ideal viewing scenario.⁴⁴⁸ At the very least, Rubens laid down his *prima idea* for the *Quos ego* with the understanding that it would take on new forms, even while itself being preserved as an object worthy of appreciation, study, and reception.

Such an understanding would help to explain a salient difference between the oil sketch and the other two versions. In the former, Boreas is depicted as an amorphous cloud-figure, while in latter he has acquired serpentine legs and winged headgear, clearly delineated classical attributes. This entails a shift that we already saw in the *Head of Medusa*, between two different types of grotesque: the amorphous or partially formed body, and the hybrid of species or double-body. I will argue that this shift was not merely accidental but meaningful, revealing Rubens's conception of the oil sketch as a distinct category of painting suited to the display of specific types of imagery and painterly skill. The 'cloudy' Boreas in the *Quos ego* oil sketch reflects consciously and ostentatiously on the metaphysics of sketching in oil. In this and other ways, the sketch constructs a myth of the painter as Neptune, a 'mover and shaker' of materials and forces.

Through his use of *alla prima* or wet-in-wet painting and his systematic adoption of the oil sketch into his workshop process, Rubens promoted a conception of painting as a

⁴⁴⁸ On the Antwerp *Kunstkammer*, see Ariane van Suchtelen and Ben van Beneden, eds., *Kamers vol kunst in zeventiende-eeuws Antwerpen* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2009).

liquid art.⁴⁴⁹ His depictions of water deities such as Neptune and river gods therefore offer an intriguing yet unexplored source for his self-fashioning as an artist. I will first closely examine his oil sketch for the *Quos ego*.

Neptune rises from the grey, wind-lashed sea. His body is twisted and his knees are deeply bent; he resembles a surfer, who similarly must strike a dynamic equilibrium in the moving sea, find order in watery chaos. A red cloth billows around his body, giving visual form to the wind that also moves the waves. Holding his trident in his right hand, he stretches his left arm towards the sky, a gesture that to his classically informed viewers would have invoked the ancient type of the “speaking ruler.”⁴⁵⁰ From his outstretched hand, a storm gust, a streak that appears to have been made by quickly removing paint with a thinner-soaked cloth, shoots up towards the sky. It is like the narrow start of a speech bubble—but rather than text, figures appear in the clouds. As Gevartius explains in his commentary in the 1641 volume, Neptune has summoned Auster and Zephyr, the warmer southeast and southwest winds, to drive away Boreas, the cold, rebellious North wind who has generated the storm.⁴⁵¹ This is a departure from Virgil, who characterizes the south winds negatively.⁴⁵² Gevartius emphasizes the favorable character of the south winds in the

⁴⁴⁹ On liquidity in art see the recent volume edited by Cassandra Nakas, *Verflüssigungen* (Paderborn, 2015). Recent thoughts on the topic of liquidity in art were presented at a conference at McGill University, “Liquid Intelligence and the Aesthetics of Fluidity” (2013), whose proceedings have not been published. See also Zorach, *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold*; and Francesco Pellizi and Christopher S. Wood, eds., “Wet/Dry,” *RES: Journal of Anthropology and Aesthetics* 63/64 (2013).

⁴⁵⁰ Luba Freedman notes that Neptune’s gesture is “borrowed from classical images of earthy rulers”; “Neptune in Classical and Renaissance Visual Art,” *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 2/2 (fall 1995), 219-237: 231. Freedman follows and cites Irving Lavin, “Giambologna’s *Neptune* at the Crossroads,” in his *Past-Present: Essays on Historicism in Art from Donatello to Picasso*, Berkeley, 1993, 75-81.

⁴⁵¹ Rubens had depicted Boreas before, in his *Boreas and Orithya* (ca. 1612, now Vienna, Akademie der Bildenden Künste); N. Lowitzch in Johann Kräfner, Wilfried Seipel and Renate Trnek eds, *Rubens in Vienna: the Masterpieces: the pictures in the collections of the Prince of Liechtenstein, the Kunsthistorisches Museum and the Gemäldegalerie der Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Vienna* (Vienna: Christian Brandstätter, 2004), 106-09, no. 22. On the classical iconography of Boreas’s abduction of Orithya, see Nova, *The Book of the Wind*, 21-25.

⁴⁵² As Putnam notes, 13, while Gevartius in his commentary clearly states that both Auster and Zephyr are “propitious and favorable to those voyaging from Spain to Italy,” and thus in the image “Zephyr [...] is correctly joined to Auster,” Zephyr is in fact described in the *Aeneid* as *unfavorable* and tempestuous.

Latin poem he supplied beneath van Thulden's etching, which glosses the image as follows:

Once Neptune calms the waters, the North Wind, driven off by
Favorable South winds [*felicibus Austris*], leaves the sea, and the vessel carries Heaven's noble
cargo across the Etruscan waves. O what great
fears for the West along with Belgium did it harbor in its
slender frame on behalf of such a trust!⁴⁵³

In the foreground, waves churn and break. The sea foam, white peaks formed by the end of a brushstroke, seems almost to materialize before our eyes—breaking the surface of the sea and of the image. Meanwhile, the ground plane, the foundation or 'stage floor' on which figures in a Renaissance *historia* typically enact a scene in space, has been liquefied, and the figures struggle to stay afloat. Only Neptune stands on something solid: his *quadriga* or chariot-shell, pulled by four monstrous sea horses with serpentine tails. Their bulging eyes and flared nostrils register the terror of the storm. One hippocampus thrashes its silvery tail over the surface of the water; its tail is identical to the water in color, differentiated only by a tiny impasto highlight and a few faint contours. On the right, a triton blows on a conch shell, from which water streams forth instead of sound. On the left are three sea nymphs, twisting on top of one other, their blonde hair falling in thick wet clumps. One of the nymphs stretches her arm across the foreground, grasping the reigns of Neptune's chariot; her wrist brushes over the white peak of a wave, as if she is trying to grasp or to stabilize the sea itself. Floating in the calmer middle distance are half a dozen ships, two of which have elaborate gabled roofs and windows. Other, tinier ships float along the horizon, where dashes of yellow and pink indicate a time and place in which the storm has already passed.

Despite the imagery of watery chaos and excess, Rubens has crafted the scene with a

⁴⁵³ *Neptuno sternente fretum, ac felicibus Austris / Pulsus abit pelago Boreas: et nobile caeli / Depositum Tyrrhena vehit trans aequora puppis; / O quantos, gracili ligno, pro pignore tanto, / Hesperiae simul et Belgi complexa timores.* Putnam, 13, points out that the novel characterization of the south winds as favorable—*felicibus austris*—is a pun on Ferdinand of Austria.

stunning economy of means.⁴⁵⁴ While some objects and substances are rendered with a fully saturated or ‘loaded’ brush or even with impasto—for instance, Neptune’s red drapery, or the white seafoam—in other areas, Rubens has painted so thinly that the light beige of the underpainting shows through. Known in Italian as the *imprimatura* and in Dutch as the *doodverf* or literally “dead coloring,” this layer is especially noticeable in the sky, where it forms part of the luminous flesh of the winds. There was a tradition in Antwerp of exposing such earlier stages of painting.⁴⁵⁵ Indeed, as a recent volume on Antwerp painting explains:

The imprimatura was a semitranslucent pigmented preparation applied in a thin layer on top of the ground. It served a variety of roles: as an isolating layer, it could protect the highly absorbent chalk-based ground from soaking up too much oil medium from the paint layers; as a preliminary layer, it toned down the bright white of the ground; and as a paint layer of sorts, it had an aesthetic impact due to the fact that it often remained visible in local areas on the finished surface of the painting.⁴⁵⁶

Rubens used the dead coloring for a range of effects, including as a base for flesh tones or for the sky.⁴⁵⁷ He also engaged its expressive streaks as a kind of atmospheric ‘special effect’, a stimulus or a template of motion. This approach is seen especially in his late oil sketches. For example, his oil sketch of *Hercules and the Nemean Lion* [fig. 46], now in the Harvard Art Museums and painted in 1639 in the last year of his, uses the rapid streaks of the dead

⁴⁵⁴ Jakob Rosenberg likewise sensitively described Rubens’s use of the ground layer in the *Quos ego* as a balance between spontaneity and control: “The fluid and brilliant brushwork seems by its spontaneous and impetuous character to defy any sober analysis. Yet one can say that Rubens proceeded with the utmost economy, leaving open the warm light ground wherever its original tone was of help in the tonal design. In passages he covered it thinly with transparent layers. [...] The mature Rubens’ touch thus shows power, immediacy, and fluidity combined with subtlety and control. His technique takes advantage of the achievements of the great Venetian [Titian] yet it develops the treatment to a more open and *alla prima* manner which comes closer to the character of modern painting.” Jakob Rosenberg, “Rubens’s Sketch for *The Wrath of Neptune*,” *Bulletin of the Fogg Museum of Art* vol. X, I (Nov. 1942), 5-14: 10-11.

⁴⁵⁵ See Hessel Miedema, “Over kwaliteitsvoorschriften in het St. Lucasgilde, over ‘doodverf,’” *Oud-Holland* 101 (1987): 141-147; and Nico van Hout, “Functies van doodverf.” Joseph Leo Koerner remarks on Pieter Bruegel the Elder’s often visible grounds in “Unmasking the World: Bruegel’s Ethnography,” *Common Knowledge* 10/2 (2004): 220-254. On the visibility of the priming in Rembrandt, see Nicola Suthor, “Transparenz der Mittel: Zur Sichtbarkeit der Imprimatur in einigen Werken Rembrandts”: 223-250. For recent theoretical approaches to the ground in painting, see Gottfried Boehm, ed., *Der Grund: das Feld des Sichtbaren* (Munich: Fink, 2012).

⁴⁵⁶ Tiarna Doherty, Mark Leonard, and Jørgen Wadum, “Brueghel and Rubens at Work: Technique and the Practice of Collaboration,” in *Rubens and Brueghel: A Working Friendship*, 215-251, esp. 221.

⁴⁵⁷ On Rubens’s use of the *imprimatura* see also Nico van Hout and Arnout Balis, *Rubens Doorgelicht: meekijken over de schouder van een virtuoos* (Antwerp: Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 2010), ; and Nico van Hout, “Functies van doodverf” (as above, note 122).

coloring to dynamize the horizontal clash of man and beast. Though a few background details are noted (for instance, another lion lounging under a distant tree), it is above all this layer that communicates the unified texture of the space.

In the *Quos ego*, Rubens uses this layer to visualize an atmospheric element that is itself invisible, wind. But he also enfoldes the allegorical bodies of the winds halfway into this stratum, leaving them to oscillate between figure and landscape, thing and non-thing, just as they are literally on the verge of fleeing the scene. The dead coloring both expresses the winds' nature as air in motion—a dynamic layer prior to the world and its images—and models them as fictive bodies, the lightness of absence becoming a form of presence. Like the half-drowned bodies in the water below, they are fragments; but they are both obscured by the clouds and *made* of them. Moreover, because they are consubstantial with both the background and the pictorial ground, they break down any strict division between *both* of these and the figures.

Each of the three winds embodies this hybridity in a different way. The south wind on the left, gazing intently along the upper margin towards Boreas, is the most fully formed; its entire upper body is modeled in dark and light grey paint. The south wind in the center is scarcely even there, a dark cloud with just faintest contour of a head and wing. It is Boreas that is most polarized between figure and ground [fig. 47]. His grey wing stretches over a cloud and his grey beard indicates his face as it glances back toward the viewer; but all of his flesh itself is left blank, replaced with the beige of the dead coloring. It is this region of the image that is Neptune's focus. The viewer's attention is strongly directed toward the sky as well, not only by Neptune's index finger but also by the storm gust that physically shoots off from it. Neptune is shown marshaling the winds not through speech, but as material presences, like a conjurer.

In its fascination with the material subtleties of water and its embrace of the amorphous, Rubens's sketch seems to construe painting as a liquid art, in which images are formed through flux. In this chapter, I will present a range of evidence to argue that Rubens's oil sketch for the *Quos ego* modeled ideas about the fluidity of painting and of the imagination. However, Rubens also invokes Neptune here in a political context, the welcoming of a Habsburg ruler to Antwerp, where the sea god carried deep political meanings. Interpreting the *Quos ego* in as a statement on artistic agency does not mean ignoring its political iconography or its role in the *Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi*. On the contrary: forms of agency are linked in societies, and Rubens was an artist for whom the connections between political and artistic agency were especially close. I will try therefore not simply to argue that Rubens self-identifies with Neptune, but also to show what was at stake in that identification.

Cinquecento Neptunes and the limits of 'Herrscherallégorie'

Images of Neptune had proliferated in Italy in the sixteenth century. The political value of claiming dominion over water is obvious, and indeed, such images often functioned as allegories of the powerful individuals who commissioned them.⁴⁵⁸ A well known example is Agnolo Bronzino's portrait of Andrea Doria (1530s, now in the Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan), which depicts the Genoese admiral in the guise of Neptune, standing before a wooden column wound with ropes that invokes the deck of a ship [fig. 48].⁴⁵⁹ Doria is naked, with a

⁴⁵⁸ See Maria Fukada, "Neptune in Villa Madama as an Allegory of Good Ruler," *Tōkyō-Geijutsu-Daigaku-Seiyō-Bijutsushi-Kenkyūshitsu-kiyō* 10 (2012/13), 19-26; Freedman, "Neptune in Classical and Renaissance Visual Art," 219-237; Michaela J. Marek, *Ekphrasis und Herrscherallégorie; Antike Bildbeschreibungen im Werke Titians und Leonardos* (Worms, 1985), 90-92 and 96-99.

⁴⁵⁹ The trident has been painted over another object: a squared oar, the outline of which is still visible. On this painting see Maurice Brock, "Entre ressemblance et allégorie: Andrea Doria par Sebastiano del Piombo et Bronzino," and "Le Portrait d'Andrea Doria en Neptune par Bronzino," both in *Les portraits du pouvoir*: 21-23 and 49-62; Friedrich B. Polleroß, "Rector Marium or Pater Patriae?: the Portraits of Andrea Doria as Neptune," in *Wege zum Mythos* (2001), 107-121; and John Pope-Hennessy, *The Portrait in the Renaissance* (New York, 1966),

flowing grey beard. He pulls a grey sailcloth around his powerful upper thighs that just exposes the top of his penile shaft. Gazing off to the right, he holds his trident straight up, his hand tensed as if ready to lift it.⁴⁶⁰ Bronzino's composite figure signifies both Dorea's mastery of the sea, and his ability to remain steadfast while navigating a stormy political domain.⁴⁶¹ There were ample classical precedents for such an image of Neptune. For example, a coin described by Vincenzo Cartari in his *Le imagini dei dei degli antichi* (Venice, 1571) had depicted Marcus Aurelius on the front and Neptune on the back.⁴⁶² Similarly, Neptune's driving away of the North wind in Rubens's *Quos ego* has been interpreted as "a clear reference to the victory over Swedish forces in Germany and the hoped-for victory over the heretic Northern Netherlands,"⁴⁶³ which suggests an elision of Neptune and the Cardinal-Infante himself.

Marble *fontane di Nettuno* formed a genre of public statuary in the 1550s and 1560s.⁴⁶⁴ In such works, princely self-fashioning plays out in an urban arena where it mingles with constructions of civic identity. Formally, such fountains are distinguished by a set of contrasts between stability and flow, solidity and liquidity, rest and propulsory force—often achieved by juxtaposing not only marble with water, but also Neptune with auxiliary figures and ornament. Giovanni Angelo Montorsori's Neptune fountain in Messina, completed by 1557, contrasts the god's stiff *contrapposto* stance—arm raised imperiously, trident held

244-245.

⁴⁶⁰ Camille Paglia analyzed the erotics of this image and its insinuations of an erection; *Glittering Images: A Journey Through Art from Egypt to Star Wars* (New York: Pantheon, 2012): 53-57.

⁴⁶¹ See P. Boccardo, *Andrea Doria e le arti*, Rome 1989, 105-118; B. Davidson, "The *Navigazione d'Enea* tapestries designed by Perino del Vaga for Andrea Doria," *Art Bulletin* 72 (1990), 35-50; C.B. Strehlke et al., *Pontormo, Bronzino, and the Medici: the Transformation of the Renaissance Portrait in Florence* (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2004) 139-41, no. 41.

⁴⁶² Freedman, "Neptune in Classical and Renaissance Visual Art," 231.

⁴⁶³ Anna C. Knaap, "Introduction," *Art, Music and Spectacle*, 11-12.

⁴⁶⁴ See Johannes Myssok, "Große Gesten und souveräne Blicke: der Stadtbrunnen und die Neudefinition des urbanen Raums im italienischen Cinquecento," 207-222; and especially Brigit Laschke-Hubert, "*Quos ego* oder wie der Meeresgott Neptun die Plätze eroberte," 97-124; in *Skulptur und Platz*, ed. Alessandra Nova and Stephanie Hanke (Berlin, 2014).

straight up—with the writhing, chained figures of Scylla and Charybdis, personifications of the rocks surrounding the harbor of Messina that were responsible for shipwrecks.

Bartolomeo Ammannati's Neptune fountain, now in the Piazza della Signoria in Florence, was commissioned by Cosimo I to celebrate the 1565 marriage between Johanna of Austria (the daughter of Charles I) and Francesco I de' Medici. As Malcolm Campbell and Gino Corti have argued, it symbolized "the pro-Hapsburg policies which had been pursued by both Cosimo I and Francesco I, and [...] their pretensions to naval power."⁴⁶⁵ Like Montosorli's Neptune, Ammannati's marble sea god stands in solid *contrapposto*. His hair and beard look flowing and wet, and his head twists to the left as if something has caught his attention—his hand grips the trident, ready for action—but his attitude is still basically static and watchful, especially in contrast to the twisting maritime bronze figures that surround him. He holds a lash with three cords that closely resembles the object Cartari describes Neptune holding on the verso of the Marcus Aurelius coin.⁴⁶⁶

Such images of Neptune would have offered crucial prototypes for Rubens.⁴⁶⁷ They also support the interpretive model known in German as *Herrscher Allegorie* (allegory of the ruler), according to which an image of a powerful god is understood to stand in for the ruler that commissioned or first received the image. This approach has played an important role in scholarship on the function of Greco-Roman deities in early modern literature and art.

⁴⁶⁵ See Malcolm Campbell and Gino Corti, "Ammannati's Neptune fountain in Florence and the Spanish Armada," in *Essays Presented to Myron P. Gilmore*, ed. Sergio Bertelli and Gloria Ramakus, vol. 2, 1978, ; Loretta Cammarella Falsitta, *Cellini, Bandinelli, Ammannati: La Fontana del Nettuno in Piazza della Signoria a Firenze* (Milan: Skira, 2009).

⁴⁶⁶ Freedman, "Neptune in Classical and Renaissance Visual Art," 231.

⁴⁶⁷ Another crucial example is the Neptune fountain in Bologna created by Giambologna and finished by 1567. See Richard J. Tuttle, *The Neptune Fountain in Bologna: Bronze, Marble, and Water in the Making of a Papal City* (Turnhout: Harvey Miller, 2015); and Michael Wayne Cole, *Ambitious Form: Giambologna, Ammannati, and Danti in Florence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011). No sketches by Rubens after such fountains exist. However there is little doubt that he was aware of them. A Roman street scene by Michael Sweerts depicts a Flemish artist sketching Gianlorenzo Bernini's famous "Neptune and Triton"; see Lara Yeager, "A Flemish Artist Amongst His Own?: A Closer Look at Michael Sweert's Roman Street Scene with a Young Artist Drawing Bernini's 'Neptune and Triton,'" in *Culture figurative a confronto tra Fiandre e Italia dal XV al XVII secolo* (Milan: Silvana, 2008), 167-75.

Gordon Teskey has argued for example that the Renaissance revival of classical mythology was chiefly a means of lending an “aura of mysterious power” to the “body of the prince.”⁴⁶⁸ Such an interpretation has been applied to Jan Gossaert’s painting known as *Neptune and Amphitrite*. As Marisa Bass notes, arguing for an alternative reading, scholars have repeatedly argued that Gossaert invoked Neptune’s heroic male body as a personification of his patron, Philip of Burgundy.⁴⁶⁹

The identification of Neptune with Habsburg power was indeed in keeping with the dynasty’s motto, *Nec plus ultra* (“nothing farther beyond”). Symbolized by the twin pillars Hercules was said to have erected near the Gibraltar Straits as a warning to sailors to go no further, the motto had been adapted by Charles V to broadcast that, conversely, *his* domain extended to the ends of the known world and beyond. A bronze luxury shield of ca. 1535-45 accordingly depicts Charles as *maris dominus*, standing atop a warship backed by Neptune along with Hercules and his pillars.⁴⁷⁰ A map of the New World made in 1562 shows Charles’s son and successor Philip II sitting at the front of Neptune’s coach as it sails over the waves towards America.⁴⁷¹ Rubens evokes such imperial representations in his Neptune’s gesture, which corresponds, again, with the classical type of the emperor’s “speaking hand.” This type was exemplified by the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius and was also known from Roman reliefs depicting ceremonial address or *adlocutio*.⁴⁷² Yet if Rubens’s imperious

⁴⁶⁸ Gordon Teskey, *Allegory and Violence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 78-82: 79.

⁴⁶⁹ Bass argues convincingly that Gossaert’s painting actually represents not Neptune and Amphitrite but Neptune with Zeeland; “Gossaert’s ‘Neptune and Amphitrite’ reconsidered,” *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, vol. 35, no. 1/2 (2011), 61-83. On arguments for Neptune as an allegory of Philip of Burgundy, see Stephanie Schrader, “Gossaert’s ‘Neptune and Amphitrite’ and the Body of the Patron,” *Nederlands kunsthistorisch jaarboek* 58.2007/[8], 40-57. For an argument against giving the patron “primary heuristic value” see Stephen Campbell, *The Cabinet of Eros: Renaissance Mythological Painting and the Studiolo of Isabella d’Este* (New Haven, 2004), 3; cited Bass, 70.

⁴⁷⁰ See Arnout Balis, “De stroom en de zee: De iconografie van Scaldis en Neptunus in de Antwerpse kunst,” *Tijdschrift voor geschiedenis* vol. 123/4 (2010), 505-519: 508. I thank Claudia Swan for bringing this article to my attention.

⁴⁷¹ Balis, “De Stroom en de zee,” 508.

⁴⁷² Freedman, “Neptune in Classical and Renaissance Visual Art,” 232.

Neptune is indeed an allegory of Ferdinand or of Habsburg power in general, it is anything but a straightforward one. In the first place, it is also a mythologized recasting of a real event, the clearing of the storm that struck the coast of northern Spain in April, 1633. Moreover, far from conflating Neptune and the prince, the scene explicitly separates the two, and even imagines one dramatically intervening to save the other. If gods offered easy fodder for princely allegory, in classical mythology itself the relationship between gods and rulers tended to be more complex. In the *Quos ego*, Ferdinand is displaced to the middle ground, one of dozens of tiny historical bodies tossed in the ships subject to the vicissitudes of nature and the whims of the gods.

If cinquecento *fontane di Nettuno* juxtaposed the god's solid and erect body with dynamic auxiliary figures and the flow of real water, Rubens's Neptune seems to embody a more fluid boundary between chaos and control. Rather than rising calmly over the storm, he appears fully at home in his tempestuous domain even as he forcefully acts upon it. Pulled back in a tense zigzag, his body has absorbed the storm's fury and now unleashes it back in reverse. Such dynamism is in keeping with what Frank Fehrenbach has described as an operative tension of all early modern festive entries: "the complex chiasmus between the ruler, moving on a vehicle or on horseback, and the unmoving ephemeral *apparati* (stages, tableaux vivants, sculptures, architecture) that come to life at the very instant when the procession stop and the ruler turns, along with his entourage, 'into stone' [...]." ⁴⁷³ In the *Pompa introitus Ferdinandi*, Neptune is a moving allegory that intervenes for a temporarily stalled prince. Moreover, while Rubens could easily have followed Virgil more closely by showing Neptune in the act of speech, he instead depicts his communication with the winds as a *physical* intervention in the messy, cloudy, moving sky. It is literally his hand that speaks.

⁴⁷³ Frank Fehrenbach, "The Unmoved Mover," in *Art, Music, and Spectacle in the Age of Rubens*, 117-142.

I will therefore consider the possibility that Rubens's sketch identifies Neptune not directly with Ferdinand, but rather with the painter himself. Such an identification would be in keeping with Steven Mullaney's characterization of early modern festive entries not as "mere shows or rituals of celebration" but rather as "rituals of negotiation between potentially rival powers, between strong, partially autonomous civic authorities and the royal or noble state authorities who wished to enter their domain."⁴⁷⁴ If we understand *Pompa introitus Ferdinandi* in this way, as a "ritual of negotiation," it is certainly plausible that Rubens, one of the most prominent "civic authorities" in Antwerp, would have embedded his authority into the cycle. However, establishing this thesis requires investigating the range of meanings Neptune carried in early seventeenth-century Antwerp. Of the many gods Rubens might have invoked—and he seems truly to have invoked them all⁴⁷⁵—Neptune and related water deities such as river gods were the ones that would have spoken most urgently to the real contingencies of power, which in Antwerp had long been formed or dismantled over water.

The blockade of the Scheldt and images of water in Antwerp 1600-1630

The importance of controlling water would resonated strongly for citizens of Antwerp in the 1630s. A century earlier, the city had been vibrant trading center, awash in goods and capital.

Yet as Jonathan Israel describes, Antwerp's importance

was not just commercial and financial. Because it was the unique place in Europe where all commodities, new and old—including New World cochineal, indigo, tobacco, African ivory, Indian diamonds, and Far Eastern spices—were gathered together and stockpiled, and where the colonial pretensions of the then leading maritime powers were on display, it was also the center of mapmaking and cosmography [...] *the place where the new reality most powerfully projected itself on the*

⁴⁷⁴ Steven Mullaney, "Imaginary Conquests: European Material Technologies and the Colonial Mirror Stage," in Peter Erickson and Clark Hulse, eds., *Early Modern Visual Culture: Representation, Race, and Empire In Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2002): 15-44, esp. 33-43 (48).

⁴⁷⁵ My understanding of Rubens as "calling up all the gods" in response to the crisis of the southern Netherlands has been informed by Joanna Woodall's teaching.

*understanding and on the artistic imagination.*⁴⁷⁶

Antwerp's golden age was an idea that was actively constructed by artists. One of the most eloquent and critical visualizations of the city's economic and cultural "boom,"⁴⁷⁷ which also hints at some of the fault lines beneath it, is Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *Tower of Babel* (1563). Commissioned by the Antwerp financier Nicolaes Jonghelinck, it depicts, beside the doomed construction project of the tower and the dense metropolis it dwarfs, a river—identifying Babel with Antwerp.⁴⁷⁸ Merchant ships gather in the harbor, where workers, made ant-tiny with distance, unload rudimentary building blocks. Other workers carry grey masonry stones up a hill towards the foreground, where the stones are shown being chiseled into shape. Behind the stonemasons, King Nimrod stands in full regalia while the Tower's architect and his assistants prostrate themselves before him. Interspersed with crumbling rock formations, Bruegel's *Tower* is both a construction project and a ruin-in-progress. Indeed, as Peter Parshall describes, "Bruegel grew up on the margin of a thriving, proto-capitalist mercantile economy and in a polyglot culture. By the time of his maturity that culture was being torn apart by sectarian disputes under the hand of the Spanish Hapsburgs, an external dictatorial power."⁴⁷⁹ The river is shown as an essential lifeline to this world. Bruegel painted at least two versions of the scene, sparking a local genre; the majority of "Towers of Babel" created

⁴⁷⁶ Israel, 38. Emphasis mine.

⁴⁷⁷ Herman Van der Wee, *The Growth of the Antwerp Market and the European Economy* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff 1963), vol. 2, 327, has described this period in Antwerp as "a feverish capitalistic boom"; cited Honig, *Painting and the Market*, 6.

⁴⁷⁸ This identification is broadly accepted in art-historical scholarship, though its contours and implications are debated. Lodovico Guicciardini, in his 1567 *Description of All the Low Countries* of 1567, wrote glowingly of the "variety of languages, differing so much from one another [...]. Without leaving one town you can see, and even imitate exactly, the manner of living and habits of many distant nations."

⁴⁷⁹ Peter Parshall, "Pieter Bruegel the Elder's 'Tower of Babel': An Aesthetics of Displacement," in *Disaster as Image: Iconographies and Media Strategies Across Europe and Asia* (Regensburg: Schnell + Steiner, 2014), 71-79: 77. A good summary of this work's topicality is given in Joanne Mora, "Utopia Lost: Allegory, Ruins and Pieter Bruegel's Tower of Babel," *Art History* 30/2 (2007), 198-216. For instance, Mansbach, "Pieter Bruegel's Towers of Babel," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 45/1 (1982), 43-56, argued that Nimrod, in the Vienna painting, represents Philip II, and that the dated signature emphasizes that the picture is meant to allegorize the present. See also Edward Snow, "The Language of Contradiction in Bruegel's *Tower of Babel*," *Res* 5 (Spring 1983), 40-8, on the resemblance to the coliseum as a commentary on the "Romanist' oppression of the Flemish Lowlands," 43.

in Antwerp workshops in the second half of the sixteenth century likewise depict a river, sometimes setting Babel in an elaborate river landscape in the style that had been popularized by Joachim Patinir.⁴⁸⁰ River landscapes indeed remained of the most recognizable and commercially successful ‘Antwerp’ genres until well into the seventeenth century.

However, from 1585 to 1586, Alessandro Farnese laid siege to Antwerp, ending the Calvinist republic and forcing Antwerp back under Spanish rule. The siege completely disrupted trade along the Scheldt, which had already slowed significantly since the start of the Protestant rebellion in the 1560s.⁴⁸¹ When it was over, the mouth of the river remained under the control of Protestant rebels, from which Antwerp was now disconnected, “locked into a captive, subordinate situation without direct access to the sea.”⁴⁸² Just what a rupture the siege was for Antwerp, and for the Low Countries in general, is suggested by a set of etchings by Romeyn de Hooghe [fig. 49]. Most likely created for a late seventeenth-century edition of Famiano Strada’s (1572-1649) *Histoire de la guerre de Flandre* (1645),⁴⁸³ the first etching depicts the “Pont du Farnese,” the pontoon bridge the Duke of Parma ordered built across the Scheldt in 1585, in a pioneering feat of siege engineering. It characterizes the river as a space cluttered with rigid technological order, incapable of flow. A second etching from the same series shows the bridge attacked by one of the Dutch ‘fire ships’ (that however failed to end the siege): mid-explosion, bodies, boats, oars, beams flying out as towers of smoke and flames rise from the water [fig. 50].⁴⁸⁴ With the civil war, Antwerp’s

⁴⁸⁰ See especially the multiple versions by Abel Grimmer.

⁴⁸¹ Honig, *Painting and the Market*, 75-76.

⁴⁸² Israel, “Rubens, Antwerp, and the Fight for Domination of the World Trade System,” 38.

⁴⁸³ Reproduced in Eric van Hooydonk, *Strijd om de Stroom: Een politieke geschiedenis van de Schelde* (Leuven, 2013) 121.

⁴⁸⁴ Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, BF.2000.23.3.

representative body of water became no longer a nourishing lifeline but a space of conflict.⁴⁸⁵ Its blockade was nothing less than a protracted trauma for the city.

On April 9, 1609, delegates of the United Provinces and the Spanish Netherlands signed a treaty in the Antwerp Stadhuis. The treaty ushered in the period known as the Twelve Years Truce, during which there was some hope that trading on the Scheldt might be revived.⁴⁸⁶ But in 1622, a year after the truce collapsed, the regents in Brussels succumbed to Spanish pressure and agreed to enforce a “full-scale river blockade” against the Dutch, shutting down “all river navigation between the Southern and Northern Netherlands.”⁴⁸⁷ Within five years, the desperation of Spain’s Netherlandish subjects to reopen their trade connections resulted in an ill-fated scheme to alter the course of the Rhine river. Known as the Fossa Mariana and later as the Fossa Eugenia, this entailed a plan to divert river traffic away from the northern Netherlands and to the south by constructing a massive canal between the Rhine and the Maas rivers, as well as a smaller canal between Maastricht and Mechelen.⁴⁸⁸ Huge amounts of capital and labor were invested in the scheme, which was designed by the engineer Giovanni de’Medici and supervised by the Flemish official Johannes Woverius (1576-1636), a close friend of Rubens who is one of the men depicted in his group portrait known as the *Four Philosophers*.⁴⁸⁹ As Jonathan Israel has recently noted, Rubens followed the progress of the Fossa Mariana with keen interest, defending it against the apparent doubts of his friends abroad.⁴⁹⁰ In a letter to Pierre Dupuy dated July 24, 1626,

⁴⁸⁵ Maurits Ebben and Simon Groenveld, eds., *De scheldedelta als verbinding en scheiding tussen noord en zuid, 1500-1800* (Maastricht: Shaker, 2007), 11-20.

⁴⁸⁶ Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic and the Hispanic World, 1606-1661* (Oxford and New York: Clarendon, 1982), 15.

⁴⁸⁷ Israel, “Rubens, Antwerp, and the Fight for Domination of the World Trade System,” 42.

⁴⁸⁸ Israel, “Rubens, Antwerp, and the Fight for Domination of the World Trade System,” 40.

⁴⁸⁹ In November 1626, shortly after work on the Rhine-Maas canal began, 8000 laborers and soldiers are documented as allocated for it. Israel, “Rubens, Antwerp, and the Fight for Domination of the World Trade System,” 45.

⁴⁹⁰ Israel, “Rubens, Antwerp, and the Fight for Domination of the World Trade System,” 43-47, gives a detailed

he excitedly describes the plan “to divert the Rhine from its ordinary course” as well as the related designs for the canal to be built between Maastricht and Mechelen, for which he claimed to have personally seen “due impresse gloriosissime.”⁴⁹¹ In later correspondence dated between January and April 1627, Rubens again assures his Parisian friend that “questa opera e molto avanzata.”⁴⁹² In fact, however, funding for the Fossa Mariana was increasingly attenuated as the Habsburgs tried to suppress multiple rebellious fronts at once. All hopes for the project finally collapsed in 1629, when the Dutch army captured the Maas valley.⁴⁹³

In other words, just a few years before he depicted Neptune changing nature’s course, Rubens had witnessed the planning and failure of “the most ambitious engineering project and strategic plan ever undertaken by the Spanish Habsburg regime in the Low Countries”⁴⁹⁴—a plan that would have altered the course of two major European rivers, physically moving water on a massive, superhuman scale. Such wishful thinking can be discerned in Antwerp painting. As Arnout Balis has pointed out, maritime and mercantile imagery flourished in Antwerp even as the city was increasingly cut off from the spoils of global trade and its former image as a trade center faded into memory.⁴⁹⁵ The “bodies of water” that populate Antwerp paintings of this period—Neptune, tritons, nereids, dolphins, river gods—thus served a mnemonic and nostalgic function, expressing a collective desire for the kingdom of water’s return.

For such images, artists could draw upon a rich local iconography of water, which had long dominated the city’s mythos. As Marisa Bass notes, a “localized image of maritime power” had already been conveyed in a 1527 poem written by the city secretary Cornelius

summary of the Fossa Mariana project and Rubens’s knowledge of it.

⁴⁹¹ Israel, “Rubens, Antwerp, and the Fight for Domination of the World Trade System,” 44. See Rooses and Ruelens vol. 3, 448.

⁴⁹² Israel, “Rubens, Antwerp, and the Fight for Domination of the World Trade System,” 45.

⁴⁹³ Israel, “Rubens, Antwerp, and the Fight for Domination of the World Trade System,” 2013, 46.

⁴⁹⁴ Israel, “Rubens, Antwerp, and the Fight for Domination of the World Trade System,” 42.

⁴⁹⁵ Balis, “De stroom en de zee” (as above, note 466).

Grapheus. Entitled “Antwerp speaks,” the poem describes “Neptune and his oceanic entourage bringing fortune to the city and its merchants.”⁴⁹⁶ Maritime figures adorn the façade of the Antwerp Stadhuis, designed by Cornelis Floris de Vriendt (the brother of Frans Floris) and built in 1561-65.⁴⁹⁷ They also played a vital role in earlier triumphal entries of Habsburg rulers.⁴⁹⁸ However, in the early seventeenth century, such figures took on increasingly robust personified guises in Antwerp painting. This inverse relationship of water’s figural presence to its economic reality in Antwerp brings to mind Walter Benjamin’s words on allegory: “Allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things.”⁴⁹⁹

When addressed directly to Habsburg authorities, such imagery may have had a hortatory function. For example, the 1599 Triumphal Entry of Albrecht and Isabella into Antwerp, a direct predecessor of the *Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi*, featured a sculpted *currus Neptuni*: a carriage flanked by nereids and tritons and drawn by hippocampi to a shore where Neptune, standing beside Amphitrite, held out his trident as if offering it to the new sovereigns.⁵⁰⁰ As Balis argues, this “gift” seems to have implied a plea to Albrecht and Isabella to return actual autonomy over water to their subjects.⁵⁰¹

In 1609, two paintings were commissioned to decorate the State Hall of the Antwerp Stadhuis, where the Twelve Years Truce was negotiated and signed that same year. Displayed as pendants on opposite ends of the room, the paintings were an *Adoration of the Magi* by Rubens and *Antwerp and Scaldis* by Abraham Janssens (ca. 1567-1632). In the latter, the

⁴⁹⁶ C. Grapheus, “Antverpia loquitur,” in idem, *De nomine florentissimae civitatis Antverpiensis* (Antwerp, 1527), fol. A3. Cited Bass, 72.

⁴⁹⁷ See H. Bevers, “Die Meerwesen vom Antwerpener Rathaus,” *Jaarboek Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen* (1982), 97-116.

⁴⁹⁸ Balis, “De stroom en de zee,” 507.

⁴⁹⁹ Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London and New York, 1990) (1963), 178.

⁵⁰⁰ Balis, “De stroom en de zee,” 509.

⁵⁰¹ Balis, “De stroom en de zee,” 509.

Scheldt appears as a blue-bearded, muscular nude. Garlanded with leaves, he reclines on a pink cloth before a row of cattail reeds, extending a cornucopia toward the personification of Antwerp, who is richly dressed and wears a crenellated crown.⁵⁰² Water itself is almost absent. Except for a thin stream that trickles from Scaldis's amphora, its form is allegorical and embodied. Rubens's pendant links the image of the Scheldt to a celebration of the world's riches and wonders.⁵⁰³ As Balis points out, Adoration scenes, which occasioned the display of luxurious and exotic costumes and goods, had long been a space in which Netherlandish artists navigated ideas about material culture in a newly global age.⁵⁰⁴ Rubens's 1609 *Adoration* is the earliest of four versions he is known to have painted of the subject.⁵⁰⁵ It depicts a colorful and brightly lit throng of worshippers entering from the right. The kings are sumptuously dressed; Balthazar's turban is pinned with a bird-of-paradise feather.⁵⁰⁶ Servants flex their muscles as they strain to bring forth the heavy gifts. The infant Christ bends his head, gazing down into a large gold chalice that gleams as brightly as his halo. The pairing of Rubens's and Janssens's paintings thus connected the fertility of water to the material splendor of the world at large, offered to Christ and displayed in the municipal heart

⁵⁰² As Balis notes ("De stroom en de zee," 507, note 6), Janssens's figure of Scaldis may have been inspired by a 1586 engraving by Phillips Galle, which shows the Scheldt naked with the roads of Antwerp in the background. See Jan van der Stock, *Antwerpen. Verhaal van een metropool*, exh. cat. 1993, 50-51; P.P. Bober and R. Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists & Antique Sculpture. A Handbook of Sources* (London 1986) 99-104, „river gods“; and Van Hooydonk, *Strijd om de Stroom*, 121.

⁵⁰³ On this painting see also José Ramón Marcaida, "Rubens and the bird of paradise: painting natural knowledge in the early seventeenth century," *Renaissance Studies* vol. 28, no. 1 (2014), 112-147; Hans Ost, *Malerei und Friedensdiplomatie. Peter Paul Rubens' 'Anbetung der Könige' im Museo del Prado zu Madrid* (Cologne: Hanstein Verlag, 2003); Joos van der Auwera, "Rubens' Adoration of the Magi in Light of its Original Antwerp Destination," in A. Vergara et al, *Rubens, The Adoration of the Magi*, Madrid 2004, 27-53; and Joos van der Auwera in *Antwerpen: Verhaal van een Metropool: 16de-17de eeuw*, ed Jan van der Stock (Gent: Snoeck-Ducaju & Zoon, 1993), 146-7, cat. no. 1.

⁵⁰⁴ Balis, "De stroom en de zee," 506.

⁵⁰⁵ In 1609, twice around 1617, and in 1624. Rubens heavily reworked and updated his 1609 Adoration in 1628-9 while at the Spanish court.

⁵⁰⁶ See Claudia Swan, "Exotica on the Move: Birds of Paradise in Early Modern Holland," *Art History* 38/4 (2015), 620-635.

of Antwerp.⁵⁰⁷ Rubens would make a similar connection in his *Neptune and Amphitrite*.

Formerly held in Berlin and missing since World War II, it depicted the couple standing before the sail of a merchant ship, surrounded by animals that alluded to Asia and Africa.⁵⁰⁸

A painting by Frans Francken the Younger (1581-1642) dated to the 1630s and now in the Rijksmuseum makes the nostalgic quality of such imagery more explicit [fig. 51]. Like the *Quos ego*, the painting is a mythological recasting of imperial history. However, it refers to an event much farther in the past and also more epochal: Charles V's abdication in 1555 of the sovereignty of the Spanish Netherlands to his son Philip II, one year before Philip became king. Pointing out the profusion of marine imagery in the foreground, Balis has argued that the work alluded to Spain's exclusion of its Netherlandish subjects from global sea trade.⁵⁰⁹ In 1526, Charles V had extended the right to trade on Spanish colonies to all of Spain's subjects—an act his son would quickly revoke upon assuming the throne. The prohibition on Netherlandish subjects trading in the colonies would remain in place until well into the seventeenth century. Even the act that in 1601 officially made Albrecht and Isabella governors of the Spanish Netherlands contained a clause stipulating that their subjects could not trade in the "east and west indies," i.e. Asia and America.⁵¹⁰ In 1624, some Flemish nobles—perhaps reacting to the establishment of the Dutch West India Company

⁵⁰⁷ Balis's argument might be augmented by pointing out that these pendant paintings characterize water's fertility in a double way—on the one hand, as exotic and global, but also on the other hand as *natural and local*, a limitless source of agricultural products and *fruits de mer*. The paintings might therefore be connected not only with nostalgia for lost trade, but also with the rise of agriculture as an economic motor for Flemish elites. On the latter as a historical development, see Honig, *Painting and the Market*, 100-114.

⁵⁰⁸ See Michael Jaffe, *Rubens: Catalogo Completo* (Milan 1989), 205, cat 301; Julius Held, *Rubens Oil Sketches* (Princeton, 1980), 342-44, cat. 254. Cited Balis, "De stroom en de zee," 510.

⁵⁰⁹ Balis cites and gets most of his information regarding the exclusion of the Southern Netherlands from international trade from E. Stols, *De Spaanse Brabander of de handelsbetrekkingen der Zuidelijke Nederlanden met de iberische wereld 1598-1648* (Brussels 1971), 96-127. See also F.H. Mertens and K.L. Torfs, *Geschiedenis van Antwerpen sedert de stichting der stad tot onze tyden* (8 vols, Antwerp 1845-1846; reprint Antwerp 1975-6, IV, 335-337, 728; V, 463-5; VI, 38-3.

⁵¹⁰ Balis, "De stroom en de zee," 512.

three years earlier—rather hopefully formed an “Admiralty of Flemish-Spanish trade.”⁵¹¹ But it was not until 1640 that Philip IV finally granted Netherlandish subjects the right to conduct trade in “Indie”—a gesture that anyway remained largely symbolic, since the Scheldt was still blockaded.⁵¹²

Francken painted at least twenty variations upon the theme of “Neptune and Amphitrite” during his career.⁵¹³ Balis argues that these paintings collectively functioned as an implicit plea to Habsburg authorities to lift the prohibition. Indeed, this context sheds some light on why Francken chose to stage the *Abdication of Charles V* on a beach, where the sovereigns are upstaged by marine allegories. Neptune floats on the left, backed by the pillars of Hercules. He gazes back at Charles, resting his left hand upon a giant globe; the reigns of his hippocampi pass directly over the eastern coast of Africa. A nereid to his left cradles a blowfish, likewise gazing dreamily back toward Charles. Other figures engage the spectator: a triton blows a conch shell toward us, while a smiling nereid offers us a lobster. In the foreground, a patch of reeds along the water’s edge gives way to a sandy mound littered with shells: a naturalized ‘cabinet’ not unlike the rocky precipice in the *Head of Medusa*, so close we could touch it. In the lower right, allegories of the Four Continents kneel towards Charles, arms brimming with precious and exotic gifts. The sand bank on which they kneel extends all the way to the plinth beneath the throne, where Francken depicts yet another scattering of shells directly beneath the crown and scepter—as if to suggest that even these instruments of power have been furnished by Neptune himself. Thus, as in Rubens’s *Quos ego*, an image that ostensibly celebrates Habsburg history depicts Neptune coming to the aid of a Habsburg ruler.

⁵¹¹ Balis, “De stroom en de zee,” 513.

⁵¹² Balis, “De stroom en de zee,” 513.

⁵¹³ Härting, *Frans Francken der Jüngere (1581-1642)*, 97-113, 310-16, nos. 276-98.

Bodies of Water in the Pompa introitus Ferdinandi

Again, the *Quos ego* was shown early in the *Pompa introitus Ferdinandi*, as part of the “Stage of Welcome.” This stage was directly followed by the “Stage of Mercury,” which depicted Antwerp’s patron deity—the god of commerce—as an enlivened statue on the verge of abandoning his pedestal and fleeing the city [fig. 52]. Scaldis lies on the ground beneath him in chains, his urn empty. Nonetheless, the top of the stage is adorned with marine imagery, presided over by Neptune with his trident and Antwerpia with her cornucopia. Two fluttering genii empty urns of water into shells that form the ‘capitals’ of the framing pilasters. As scholars have noted, such a direct allusion to the real state of affairs was not without precedent in Antwerp festive entries. Archduke Ernest of Austria (1553-1595) had been welcomed to the city in 1594 by an “Arch of the St. Jansbridge” beneath which Scaldis appeared in shackles; at the Archduke’s approach, nereids rushed up to free the river, whose empty urn immediately began spouting water again.⁵¹⁴ However, in the “Stage of Mercury,” no nereids free the Scheldt. Rubens leaves open the possibility that the river’s urn might stay dry.

Meanwhile, in the next stage, liquidity appears to have been displaced elsewhere [fig. 53]. Known as the “Arch of the Mint,” this stage was partially sponsored by the Antwerp Mint, making it the only privately funded stage in the *Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi* that was designed by Rubens and Gevaerts.⁵¹⁵ Taking the form of a gargantuan mountain representing

⁵¹⁴ Balis, “De stroom en de zee,” 517. See J. Bochiuss, *Descriptio publicae gratulationis... in adventu... Ernesti...*, Antwerp 1595; reprint NY 1970, 118 vv., pl. 26. The performance was commemorated in a 1595 engraving by Pieter van der Borcht after Cornelis Floris and Joost de Momper. Reproduced and discussed in Frank Fehrenbach, “The Unmoved Mover,” in *Art, Music and Spectacle*, 139.

⁵¹⁵ On this stage, see Elizabeth McGrath, “Rubens’s Arch of the Mint,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 37 (1974), 191-217; Steven Mullaney, “Imaginary Conquests: European Material Technologies and the Colonial Mirror Stage,” in *Early Modern Visual Culture: Representation, Race, and Empire in Renaissance England*, ed.

Mount Potosi in the viceroyalty of Peru (present-day Bolivia), it offered an elaborate allegory on the financial exploitation of the New World. As Antien Knaap explains, since the discovery of silver on Potosi in 1545, the mountain

had been a source of great wealth for the Spanish monarchy, producing millions of kilos of silver a year in the 1590s. The profits had been used to fund wars against the Dutch, the English, and the Turks. Yet by 1635, the wealth-producing Mt Potosi had been exhausted, and the large influx of silver had caused inflation within Spain's vast empire. Be that as it may, the famed mine stood as a symbol of Spain's wealth, and by erecting it in the streets of Antwerp the organizers of the pageant made the case that they wanted to share in Spain's resources in order to solve their own economic troubles.⁵¹⁶

Rubens depicts Potosi rather hopefully as a potential "solution for Antwerp's economic plight," despite the reality that its silver was by then largely tapped out.⁵¹⁷ Yet the elaborate and violent imagery of the stage, addressed equally to Ferdinand and to Rubens's own corporate sponsors,⁵¹⁸ seems to invite a more complex reading. I will briefly examine the "Arch of the Mint," focusing on metaphors of liquidity and on the role of the four river gods.

Potosi appears as a half-natural, half-architectural formation, both lavishly ornamented and still 'under construction' (a bit like Bruegel's *Tower of Babel*), in which crags and niches symmetrically display figures, scenes, decorations, and inscriptions. The stage's front and back sides are almost identical in structure. However, their imagery is different. As Steven Mullaney argues, the difference between the front and the back would have been dramatized by how Ferdinand experienced the two sides, passing through the portal and "never having both in view at once."⁵¹⁹ It is also possible, if not likely, that Ferdinand never even turned

Clark Hulse and Peter Erickson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 15-43, esp. 33-43; and Knaap, "Introduction," *Art, Music and Spectacle*, 20-21.

⁵¹⁶ Knaap, "Introduction," 20-21.

⁵¹⁷ As Mullaney notes, "the technology did not yet exist to extract deeper deposits"; "Imaginary Conquests," 38.

⁵¹⁸ As Elizabeth McGrath notes, "With his mint pageant Rubens succeeded in producing, in an emphatic expression of the particular concern of a particular group, an image resonant with much wider social and political implications"; McGrath, "Rubens's Arch of the Mint," 192.

⁵¹⁹ Mullaney, 38.

around to view the second side, whose audience would then have been entirely local.⁵²⁰

The rustic front portal drips with grassy matter. In an architectural niche above it stands Moneta, the personification of money, who brandishes a cornucopia, a caduceus, and scales. On either side of the niche are two natural caves; each has a lion lurking in its interior and is adorned with a drooping string of coins. Two larger lions climb up the sides of the mountain, wrapping their paws around twin columns that represent the pillars of Hercules. A medallion above the central niche displays the profile of Philip IV. A single tree rises from the center of the mountain's peak. On one side of it, Felicitas—happiness or good fortune—stands holding a billowing sail and a model ship. On the other side, the Argonaut Jason, in Roman armor, reaches out and pulls the golden fleece from the tree. As Gevaerts's text makes clear, this last figure represents the *conquistadores*, “the new Jason and the Argonauts.”⁵²¹

Because the overall structure remains the same, the shift in imagery on the reverse, is both subtle and jarring, like a distorted mirror image.⁵²² In place of Moneta, in the central niche now stands a male figure hammering away at a thunderbolt: this is Vulcan, whose forge is depicted as a neat, miniature workshop. The inscription beneath him reads: *aurum potentius ictu fulmineo* (“gold is stronger than a bolt of thunder”). A string of coins arcs above him, tied by a ribbon to a medallion that depicts the three graces (here symbolizing the mineral triad bronze, silver, and gold) and is trimmed with vegetable swags, which dangled alongside insignias of Philip IV and Ferdinand.⁵²³ On the peak, Hercules raises his club to smash a dragon that guards the base of a tree, a reference to his eleventh labor in the garden

⁵²⁰ Mullaney, 36-7.

⁵²¹ Moreover, as McGrath (“Rubens’s Arch of the Mint,” 197) points out, the golden fleece of Jason was an “apt and well-chosen image for the imperial wealth of Spain. Jason had been the oldest, and, with Hercules, the most popular hero of the medieval Burgundian court, and, like Hercules, had been taken over from the dukes of Burgundy by the acquisitive Hapsburg family along with the actual Flemish provinces.”

⁵²² I was unfortunately unable to obtain an image of the reverse.

⁵²³ McGrath, “Rubens’s Arch of the Mint,” 197.

of the Hesperides. However, in a departure from all known versions of the myth, here it is Hispania that plucks the golden apples, before Hercules has even finished his labor—conveying, as Mullaney points out, “a sense of haste and stealth.”⁵²⁴ Crawling on the mountainside beneath the peak are a salamander, an animal with strong demonic connotations, and two tiny monkeys, animals associated with trickery. If the front depicts a kind of Habsburg mountain utopia, the animals on the reverse seem to authenticate that this side is actually set in the New World. Two cave-niches contain depictions of mining. On the left, workers hack away at the mountain with pickaxes, their poses echoing Hercules with his club and Vulcan with his hammer. (The visual resonance between Hercules’s labor and those of the miners is striking, and may have inspired Rubens to change his original design: in an extant oil sketch for the stage, the scene of Hercules clubbing the dragon appears on the *front* side.⁵²⁵) On the right, two more figures emerge from their caves. One stoops beneath a heavy load of wax tapers (miners’ only source of light); the other, who has African features, appears chained to the mountain, a clear reference to slavery. Beneath this cave is an inscription from Virgil’s *Georgics*: *Labor omnia vincit improbus* (“Hard labor overcame all things”).⁵²⁶ As Elizabeth McGrath points out, Rubens had read at least two sources that detailed the brutal means by which America’s resources were plundered: José de Acosta’s *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* (1590), and Theodoor de Bry’s *Les Grands Voyages*.⁵²⁷ Rather than a simple plea to the Habsburgs to share their wealth, the “Arch of the Mint” thus offers, as Mullaney describes, “two incompatible views of Spanish wealth and its New

⁵²⁴ Mullaney, 36.

⁵²⁵ McGrath (“Rubens’s Arch of the Mint, 197) suggests the scene might have been moved to the back because “it was thought illogical to show Hercules gathering his golden apples beyond the Pillars the hero himself set up at the world’s limits, even if Gevaerts’s rationalist account would suggest that the Hesperides were islands in the Atlantic.”

⁵²⁶ *Georgics* i, 134-6: *Labor omnia vincit / Improbus et duris urgens in rebus egestas.*

⁵²⁷ In fact, as McGrath notes (“Rubens’s Arch of the Mint,” 196), Rubens’s inspiration for this stage may have been a rocky mountain depicted on the frontispiece for the sixth volume of De Bry’s treatise, on America.

World origins [...].⁵²⁸

The only figures seen on both sides are the four river gods that appear at the mountain's base. Two are embedded in the architecture, taking the form of rustic herms that hold up the portal. The other two are full personifications that sit or recline on niches, spilling out gold and silver from their urns. On the front, these figures are identified as Peruvius and Rio de la Plata. They spill the contents of their urns actively onto the 'floor' where the liquid appears to harden, a process seen especially clearly in the engraving.⁵²⁹ On the reverse, Maragnon and Condorillus instead recline *over* their niches, which are vacant except for heaps of mining and minting tools. Rather than actively pouring forth their streams, they rest casually upon their urns, which are positioned to the sides so that their streams elide with the rusticated stones of the niches—as if nourishing or 'minting' the entire apparatus [fig. 54].⁵³⁰

According to a legend recounted by de Acosta, silver was discovered on Potosi in 1545 when an Indian pulled up a quinoa bush with silvery roots.⁵³¹ Like the very notion of golden apples, the tale already suggests a transcendence of nature into art, evocative of an object in a *Kunst-und-Wunderkammer*. Yet the "Arch of the Mint" not only rearranges the boundaries of nature and art; it also does so while inserting labor as an intervening factor, emphasizing the natural and unnatural roots of the Habsburgs' wealth. Incorporated into a system of ornament, the Spanish coins shown to have passed through the mountain's entire production line, including extraction and hammering into shape.

⁵²⁸ Mullaney, 38.

⁵²⁹ On imagery of hardening in the *Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi* see Caroline van Eck, "Animation and Petrification" (as above, note 331).

⁵³⁰ A similar device is used in the "Stage of Mercury," where winged genii pour water into shells.

⁵³¹ McGrath, "Rubens's Arch of the Mint," 192. Ioseph de Acosta, *Historia Natural y Moral de las Indias, en que se tratan las cosas notables del cielo, y elementos, metales, plantas, y animales...* (Seville, 1590), 207-10. See also Garcilaso de la Vega, *El Inca, Royal Commentaries of the Incas and General History of Peru*, trans. Harold V Livermore, vol. I (Austin and London, 1966), 535-6.

It is the river gods that first activate the entire apparatus. On the front, their more active pours bring forth the raw materials, which coalesce on the floor; on the reverse, they recline languidly as these materials instantly *become* the stage. It is only natural, then, that the first architectural forms to arise beside them, the herms, resemble them physically. Their relaxed, effortless productivity is juxtaposed both with the miners' unnatural hacking and with Hispania's 'harvest', which requires an equally violent act of labor and is therefore likewise characterized as unnatural. The river gods offer an alternative paradigm of production. They are conduits of nature's materials and forces, which they channel directly and easily into the stage. Despite their exotic names, their position at the base, the most 'down to earth' part of the stage, suggests them as distinctly more local figures. Maragon, whose thick white hair and beard render him virtually indistinguishable from Neptune in the *Quos ego*, glances over his shoulder at the spectator.

The Meeting of Two Ferdinands at Nördlingen

The "Arch of the Mint" is thus an allegory not only of money but also of labor. In it, Rubens connects the fertility of the river gods both to the generation and accumulation of capital and, implicitly, to the making of images. However, Peruvius, Rio de la Plata, Maragnon and Condorillus were not the first river gods the Cardinal Infante would have encountered that day. Another river god would have greeted him in the "Stage of Welcome," in the canvas displayed directly opposite the *Quos ego*. Known as the *Meeting of the Two Ferdinands at Nördlingen*, this was another mythological recasting of an episode from Ferdinand's journey to the Netherlands [fig. 55]. On his way through Bavaria, the Cardinal Infante had taken part in the Battle of Nördlingen, where the Catholic League had defeated the Protestant Swedish army—a glimmer of hope in a war that was otherwise going badly for the Spanish, draining

the very coins shown in the “Arch of the Mint.” In Rubens’s image, Ferdinand greets his cousin, Ferdinand of Hungary, on the battlefield. Kneeling, the cousins shake hands and gaze into each other’s eyes, enacting the harmonious concord that follows victory.

The personified Danube river reclines in the foreground. Crowned with reeds and flowers, he leans his bare torso against a giant clay urn. His long grey beard flows down to his chest where it seems to dissolve into mist. A brilliant ultramarine cloth wraps over his left shoulder and twists over his thighs, which stretch along the foreground. With his left arm, he gestures back towards the princes; his open palm aligns with the horizon. His right arm is slung over the urn, whose open mouth spills forth a stream tinged with red—a reference to the blood spilt on the battlefield. Vegetation sprouts up beneath the urn. Like Neptune, Danube is also accompanied by female consorts. One, identified as Germania, wears a sable-trimmed brocade dress and rests on a gold insignia, gazing at us.

Danube appears recumbent yet active. His feet are crossed at the ankles, beginning a corkscrew motion that continues in the twist of his torso, flows through his arms that are bent in different directions, and finally leaps the bounds of his body, on one side, with his gesture towards the princes, and on the other with the spilling of his urn. A channel through which viewers enter and engage with the *historia*, his body is also a primary object of viewing. The alignment of his palm with the horizon on which the princes stand confirms that he inhabits a different space from them, offering visual access to Habsburg history while acting on its margins.⁵³² Like Neptune, he gestures back *into* the pictorial space and into a scene whose smaller scale evokes a ‘picture within a picture’—setting into motion the procession through images.⁵³³

⁵³² A similar intermediary figure is the page seen from the back in an orange coat who guides a horse towards the scene in the middle ground.

⁵³³ See Victor Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge

Yet Danube's engagement with the *historia* does not end at the limits of his body. The vermillion that spills from his urn resurfaces on the clothing and accouterments of the princes and their entourages, most vividly on Ferdinand's red cape. The same red is echoed in the striped standard flags carried by the soldiers. Painted so sketchily that they seem to bleed into the clouds and smoke of the battlefield, the flags visually echo the Danube's blood-streaked stream, with which they are vertically aligned.

Danube in the "Stage of Welcome" might be interpreted simply as a lively reference to the battle's location, or, as one scholar has suggested, as an allusion to river gods depicted on ancient Roman coins.⁵³⁴ We might also frame the visual resonance between the Danube's red-tinted stream and the princes' clothing and standard flags primarily in political terms, as a means of rooting Habsburg power in the blood-soaked terrain. Yet this figure's liminal and choric position and his firm grasp on nature's colors—which pour from a vessel held close to his body and infuse the image's political spectrum—also strongly suggest Danube as a paint-spiller, a figure of the artist-propagandist presenting his work. This is strengthened by Rubens's emphasis on the river's fertility, the flowers that instantly sprout up around its stream. *These are your images*, Danube seems to say, gesturing back to the figure who would have seen himself mirrored there. *I have created you in them*.

Indeed, a similar resonance between red and white drapery and the painter's colors occurs in an earlier painting by Rubens, the *Education of the Princess* (ca. 1622) from the Marie de Medici cycle [fig. 56]. The image shows Mercury, the god with whom Rubens most consistently self-identified,⁵³⁵ swooping down before a waterfall, his red and white drapery

University Press, 1996).

⁵³⁴ Martin, 60. On the Roman coins that may have inspired Rubens's image of the Danube see Carmen Arnold-Biucchi, "Coins and Classical Imagery in the Time of Rubens: The Stage of Welcome in Caspar Gevartius's *Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi*," in *Art, Music, and Spectacle*, 189-215: 208-9.

⁵³⁵ Rubens set up an image of the Musathena, a composite of Hermes (Mercury) and Athena (Minerva) as if "to

billowing around him. He extends his caduceus toward the book in Minerva's lap in which the princess is writing. Various emblems of art appear in the foreground, including a palette with two colors: red and white. (The most 'loaded' brush is dipped in red.) The rainbow that appears in the waterfall behind Mercury strengthens his identification as a stand-in for the painter, whose palette refracts into all of the colors of nature.⁵³⁶

With their muscular bodies and grey beards, the two water deities in the "Stage of Welcome" almost look like the same figure in two different costumes—or even in the same costume: in the large canvas, Neptune's lower body is draped, like Danube's, with an ultramarine cloth. Such allegorical doubling makes sense in a processual cycle, in which each image constitutes part of a larger experience.

Scholars have tended to grant these figures an auxiliary relationship to the historical scenes they introduce. This approach is reflected in the Harvard Art Museums' current title for the *Quos ego*—which reverses the spatial arrangement to displace Neptune to the background—and in the conventional title of the *Meeting of the Two Ferdinands at Nördlingen*, which erases the Danube and his consorts completely. Yet Neptune and the Danube are much larger and more physically present to the viewer than the Habsburg figures in whose worlds they intervene—in both cases, through a liquid medium. Neptune's intervention is more forceful. However, even Danube physically influences the scene behind him with his stream. In the oil sketch, the blood that tinges the stream is depicted a single stroke of vermilion, while in the finished canvas the blood and water appear more mixed [fig. 57]. Both versions evoke oil paint, in which pigment is mixed with a wet medium. As I have

survey the courtyard" of his Antwerp home. See Elizabeth McGrath, "Rubens's *Musathena*," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 50 (1987): 233-45.

⁵³⁶ On Rubens's interest in rainbows, which he depicted in multiple works, see Georgievska-Shine, *Rubens and the Archaeology of Myth*, 136-40. Rubens's interest in the rainbow may have been connected to his interest in optics and collaboration with the optical theorist Aguilonius; John Gage, *Color and Culture*, 95.

shown, Rubens fashioned red, associated with the Habsburgs but also with alchemical enlivenment, as his signature color, in keeping with the Latin meaning of his name. The *Stage of Welcome* is another and particularly vivid example. Pouring from Danube's apparently bottomless vessel, red pools at the lower margin, nourishing the ground, which immediately responds by bringing forth plant life.

Rubens's art theory has primarily been connected with his extensive professional correspondence and his theoretical notebook.⁵³⁷ The question of how Rubens shaped his creative persona and later critical reception through his works themselves remains relatively open. A major exception was Alpers's *The Making of Rubens*, which connected Rubens's paintings and their reception with the concept of bacchic creativity.⁵³⁸ Noting that Rogier de Piles, "the great admirer of and propagandist for Rubens in France," had drawn a distinction, via his notion of *liberté*, "between the painter withdrawing *from* himself to finish a painting and giving way *to* himself, abandoning himself," Alpers argued: "and there is something of Rubens's pleasure in abandoning himself to the working of his paint, his *liberté*, that is like the pleasure of the peasants at their revelry."⁵³⁹ Her most provocative claim was that Rubens allegorized himself in his figures of drunken Silenus, whose drunken songs could be seen as a form of artistic expression. Alpers herself somewhat second-guessed this argument, which indeed seems to contradict how Rubens otherwise presented himself.⁵⁴⁰ The subject of bacchic frenzy would certainly have allowed Rubens fashion himself as a painter who worked with vivacity, spontaneity, and speed—established categories in early modern

⁵³⁷ See notes 61-63, as above.

⁵³⁸ Alpers, *The Making of Rubens*, ch. 3 ("Creativity in the Flesh: The *Drunken Silenus*"), 101-157.

⁵³⁹ Alpers, *The Making of Rubens*, 63.

⁵⁴⁰ Alpers, *The Making of Rubens*, 157, the last line of the book: "But I must admit, Silenus was a marginal figure."

art theory, which were connected specifically with Rubens. Bellori had remarked, of Rubens's figures: "they seem executed in one dash of the brush and infused with one breath" and had also praised Rubens for the *furiam del penello*, the "speed of [his] brush."⁵⁴¹ However, that is not the same thing as Rubens allegorizing himself as a bacchic figure, let alone as a fat, drunken fool. If we do not elide them, meaningful differences might emerge between the personification of forms of abandonment—ecstasy, fury, chaos—and the personification of the act of creating those forms.

Alpers's basic premise—that Rubens used forms of allegory to fashion a creative persona in his works—is plausible, and perhaps deserves more reception than it has gotten. Rather than Silenus, an impotent consumer whose songs are elicited from him by a jeering entourage, I have suggested that Rubens identified his creativity with water deities: virile producers who spill or channel liquids that transform the visual field. Rather than sheer degenerate *liberté*, river gods embody a more elegant balance between chaos and control, a letting go that is also a form of mastery.⁵⁴² Rubens often depicts them in the company of women who are their implied conjugal mates,⁵⁴³ and sometimes also with children. The emphasis on nutritive, healthy procreativity resonates with how Rubens portrayed himself.⁵⁴⁴

River gods also resonate with Rubens's clear interest in imbuing his paintings with life. In the *Head of Medusa*, we saw how he and Snyder zeroed in on the gorgon's blood, a liquid *prima materia* of both nature and painting. Likewise, in the *Finding of Erichthonius*,

⁵⁴¹ Bellori, *Lives of the Modern Painters*, 205.

⁵⁴² Such a characterization is reminiscent of the description of Rubens's art by Burckhardt in reference to Fromentin (*Les maitres d'autrefois*, 133): "über seine Arbeit: er malte ruhig und zugleich begeistert, en combinant bien, en se décidant vite." Jacob Burckhardt, *Erinnerung aus Rubens* (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner, 1938), 17.

⁵⁴³ This aspect of Rubens's depictions of river gods was pointed out by Jacob Burckhardt, *Rubens* (Vienna, 1937), 94.

⁵⁴⁴ See Alpers's discussion (pp. 156-7) of two late Rubens self-portrait chalk drawings—one whose verso contains a sketch of an embracing male and female couple, and one, depicting Rubens with Helen Fourment and their son, drawn on the verso of an earlier sketch of his first wife Isabella Brandt—on the role of "desire [...] for the merging with a woman that was essential to him in the making of art."

Rubens allegorized Erichthonius's mother—Gaia or mother earth—as the fountain statue of Artemis Ephesus, with water streaming from its multiple breasts. Liquids are characterized in these images as inexhaustible life forces that course through or even *within* images.

In early modern natural philosophy, the origins of life were often sought in liquid. William Harvey, whose discovery of the circulation of blood Ulrich Heinen has, again, linked to Rubens's "*Malphysiology*," emphasized embryological liquids as a precursor to life forms. In his *De generatione animalium* (1650), in which he painstakingly records his observations of the emergence of an embryo in a fertilized chicken egg, Harvey describes "a most bright, refulgent liquor, more clear than any crystalline humor":⁵⁴⁵

And here for a long time I hesitated, being divided in my mind as to what I should decide concerning this white colliquament, whether I ought to call it the innate heat, or the *radical moisture*, or the material prepared for the future foetus, or the perfectly concocted nutriment such as 'dew' is accounted among secondary humors.⁵⁴⁶

Harvey ultimately agrees with Aristotle that this mysterious liquid is not simply the chick's nourishment, but the "material constituting the chick" itself.⁵⁴⁷

Because their fluctuations were believed to mirror and act in sympathy with cosmological forces, liquids were believed to be key to the origins of human life as well. In the introduction to Book IV of his *Mythologiae* (1567), entitled "Why the Ancients Thought that the Moon Controlled Childbirth," Natale Conti writes:

The natural scientists consider the Moon a friend of the childbearing woman because she activates the unique power of moisture that supports the fetus and helps it grow from the uterus. [...] It seems to me that even a person of average intelligence can see how the Moon helps to build up moisture; in fact her power manifests itself in many ways, but particularly with the different shellfish species, which increase and decrease as the Moon's light waxes and wanes. And when childbirth comes, the fetus itself is surrounded by a great deal of moisture (it's very much like serum) in the uterine membrane.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁵ William Harvey, *Disputations concerning the generation of animals*, trans. Gweneth Whitterededge (Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1981), 92.

⁵⁴⁶ Harvey, 94.

⁵⁴⁷ Harvey, 92.

⁵⁴⁸ Natale Conti, *Mythologiae* (Venice, 1567), 237-8; and Padua edition (1613), 150-151.

In a natural philosophical treatise on fish, the *Compleat Angler*, Isaak Walton (1593-1683) reminds his readers: “The *water* is the eldest daughter of the Creator, the element upon which the Spirit of God did first move, the element which God commanded to bring forth creatures abundantly. [It] is the chief ingredient in the creation [...]”⁵⁴⁹

The large canvas painting of the *Quos ego* now in Dresden depicts drops of water on the arm of the nymph, which stretches across the foreground. Large and gleaming, the drops appear to lie simultaneously on the surface of her skin, and of the image itself. Rubens emphasizes water’s ability to leap or dissolve boundaries, in a performative manner addressed to the viewer.⁵⁵⁰ At the image’s other extremity, along the light-flooded horizon, tiny boats vanish one by one. Water is thus used by Rubens to deny the limits of the image while also punctuating them.

The painter’s urn

In a painting of 1618, by Rubens and Snyders depict a river god crowned with leaves and white flowers. Now in the Hermitage, the painting is known as the *Union of Earth and Water*, or sometimes as *Antwerp and the Scheldt* [fig. 58].⁵⁵¹ The river god in it is nearly identical to the figure in Janssens’s painting of *Antwerp and Scaldis*. But he also holds a trident and is accompanied by a Triton, identifying him with Neptune, or more broadly as a

⁵⁴⁹ Isaak Walton, *The Compleat Angler, or the Contemplative Man’s Recreation* (London, 1653): 31-2. See C. Webster, “Water as the Ultimate Principle of Nature: the Background to Boyle’s Sceptical Chymist,” *Ambix* 13/2 (1966), 96-107.

⁵⁵⁰ On skin as a theatrical “stage” of Rubens’s painting, see Mechthild Fend, “Inkarnat oder Haut? Die Körperoberfläche als Schauplatz der Malerei bei Rubens und Ingres,” in H. Friedel and B. Eschenbach, eds., *Pygmalions Werkstatt: die Erschaffung des Menschen im Atelier von der Renaissance bis zum Surrealismus*, Köln: Wienand, 2001, 71-79.

⁵⁵¹ Hermitage ГЭ-464. There is an oil sketch in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, inv. no. 267; see Held, *Oil Sketches*, vol. 1, 325-26, no. 238. On the painting see M. Varshavskaya, *Rubens’ Paintings in the Hermitage Museum* (Leningrad: Aurora Art Publishers, 1975), 116-118; Natalya Gritsay and Natalya Babina, *Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Flemish Painting* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 240-244, cat. no. 305; Jaffé 1989, 206, note 304; Gritsay 1993a, 49-56; and It was James Schmidt, in correspondence with Varshavskaya, who first proposed the allegorical interpretation of the two figures as Antwerp and the Scheldt.

personification of Water. The iconographical slippage shows how closely such figures were linked, and how easily the Scheldt could synecdochally represent the entire kingdom of water for Antwerp. Posing from behind, the water god displays his muscular back, twisting his head to gaze at the figure beside him: Antwerp, Earth, or Cybele. The downward flow of his stream is mirrored in reverse by the upward proliferation of fruits from her cornucopia. Vines crawl along the rock wall on the right, reminiscent of the wild rocky setting of the *Head of Medusa*. The figures clasp hands over a giant clay urn. Made of fired earth and brimming with water, the urn is a material symbol of the union enacted by them. The classical bead motif that frames the urn's large open mouth recedes slightly on the left. The urn's position, which is radically frontal yet avoids the flattening effect of full foreshortening, implies that this source may be limitless. At the center both of the allegorical union and of the composition, Rubens thus frames an opening or a source. A luminous stream erupts from it, falling before a naturalized stone plinth. The silvery colors of the plinth are identical to those of the water, inviting a comparison between different stages of matter and showing water's chameleon-like ability to take on the colors of its surroundings. Splashing upward where it lands, the water grows darker towards the foreground as if indicating sudden increasing depth.

A chalk drawing related to the above painting, dated to ca. 1620-25, was recently reattributed from Rubens to Janssens [fig. 59].⁵⁵² Held in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the sheet consists of two studies of a river god. One strikes a pose that is nearly identical to that of the water god in the *Union of Earth and Water*. However, his left arm is

⁵⁵² MFA Boston, 20.813. In a recent study of notes on Rubens's drawings, Joost Vander Auwera argues that notes that appear on the left edge and verso of this sheet are in the handwriting not of Rubens but of Janssens; Veronika Kopecky, *Die Beischriften des Peter Paul Rubens. Überlegungen zu handschriftlichen Vermerken auf Zeichnungen*, PhD dissertation, University of Hamburg, 2012 vol.1, 22, fig. 14. For the transcriptions of these notes see the MFA website, which takes them from Julius Held, *Rubens: Selected Drawings* (Mt. Kisco, NY: Moyer Bell Ltd., 1986), 108: <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/studies-of-a-river-god-231569>. The uppermost face and architecture, which are sketchier and not modeled, may well be by a different hand.

now slung completely over the urn, pulling it closer so that it overlaps his body. The urn's stream dissolves in the foreground in abstract squiggly lines; a few longer lines on the left denote vegetation. The river is characterized as a generative source of life-forms. At the top of the sheet, the face of a second river god, or the same one from a different view and now wearing a turban, appears beside some sketchily rendered classical architecture. This god looks out directly at the viewer. The river god is thus identified as fertile and potent in two ways: as a conduit of the image's graphic 'raw materials', and as an intermediary that breaks the boundary between image and viewer.

In a later drawing now in the National Gallery in London whose subject is the *Birth of Venus*, Rubens depicts another urn-spiller resembling both Neptune and a river god [fig. 60].⁵⁵³ Created in black chalk and oil, this drawing is dated to ca. 1632-33, making it extremely close to the *Pompa introitus Ferdinandi*. It likely served as the modello for a silver basin. It shows the goddess, surrounded by nymphs, stepping out of her shell and onto the shore.⁵⁵⁴ This central scene is surrounded by a border of shells and by a frieze of marine figures (nymphs, tritons, dolphins, hippocampi, water fowl) that appear to float along the periphery, as if suspended within and connected by flowing water. At the top, Neptune and Amphitrite recline against a large urn whose stream flows down into a shell basin that links or clasps the shell-border. Unlike the sea represented in the central scene, this water, bestowed directly by the embodiment and source of all water, appears to activate or hydraulically power the entire, pulsating visual field, and all of the forms that appear to move within it. As he did with the river gods in the "Arch of the Mint," Rubens characterizes the urn-spiller as a conduit for the material basis of the metallic object. Moreover, the liminality

⁵⁵³ National Gallery, London, NG1195.

⁵⁵⁴ Described by Hesiod as well as Pliny, the birth of Venus from the sea was the subject of a legendary painting by Apelles.

of these figures creates a narrative ‘ripple’ that inserts the bodies of water as prior to the images and histories they implicitly create.

The sexual potency of rivers was widely allegorized. For instance, an illustration from the 1647 edition of Cartari’s *Imagini* depicts the river Nile surrounded by sixteen children that represent its degrees of growth in cubits [fig. 61]. Rubens represents agency as the mastery of liquidity, which is clearly also a form of male procreative power. In the previous chapter, I examined how Rubens and his Antwerp collaborators set themselves in competitive relationships with the female allegorical body of nature. Emptying their urns towards the viewer, Antwerp’s river gods are posited as the most primary source of nature’s abundance.

In their mysterious relationship to reality, which they interpret, mirror, code, recollect, reenact, influence, and even predict, paintings are akin to dreams. The water gods that populate early seventeenth-century Antwerp painting indeed suggest a dreamlike wish-fulfillment through memory—which in turn has implications for concepts of the artist. Such imagery did not only constitute a plea for the return of the kingdom of water to Antwerp, as Balis has argued. Rather, they also implied that *paintings* could be a successful replacement for that lost kingdom. By personifying nature’s fertility, Antwerp painters analogized their materials with the *prima materia* of nature, putting forth their their images as a vital alternative to reality. Indeed, the images we have examined appear ‘switched on’ like faucets, as if their vitality flowed from an internal source.

As Anne Woollett has noted, one important departure of the *Pompa introitus Ferdinandi* from previous such triumphal entries was that “the glorification of its subject was expressed not through static architecture or outmoded tableaux vivants, but through the innovative and versatile medium of painting.”⁵⁵⁵ Masters of liquidity that are subtly prior to

⁵⁵⁵ Woollet, “The Burden of Invention,” 238.

the histories they introduce and seem also to physically shape or inform, Neptune and the Danube would have made it clear to Rubens's audience on April 10, 1633 that painters, who could make images of harmony in an age of rebellion, were not just powerful but indispensable.

The specificity of the oil sketch

Neptune's kingdom in the *Quos ego* is characterized as a space of material chaos and excess. To bring it to order, Neptune starts with an act of communication: he calls the winds. In Rubens's interpretation of the scene, he also does this through gesture, as Gevartius notes in his commentary: *manuque versus Boream elata, ipsum maturare fuga iubet* ("and with his hand raised toward Boreas, he orders him to hasten his flight").⁵⁵⁶

In all three versions of the image, Neptune indeed points directly at Boreas. However, in the Dresden canvas and in van Thulden's etching, the storm gust that in the oil sketch issues from Neptune's outstretched hand toward the two south winds has disappeared. Repeating parallel lines instead appear *behind* Neptune's arm, suggesting rain. The difference is crucial: in the two finished versions, it appears that Neptune has already summoned the south winds and now "orders [Boreas] to hasten his flight," whereas the oil sketch appears to depict both stages simultaneously. Moreover, as noted previously, in the canvas and the etching all three of the winds have acquired winged headgear, and Boreas now has serpentine legs. He has transformed from an amorphous cloud-figure to a kind of chimera: part man, part cloud, part bird, and part fish.

The snake-legged Boreas was an ancient variation that had been described by Pausanias. It was also illustrated in Vincenzo Cartari's *Imagini* (1571), which was widely

⁵⁵⁶ Michael Putnam ("Virgil and the *Pompa*," 171) notes: "the only occasion in classical Latin where a form of the verb *maturare* is conjoined with a form of the noun *fuga* is at *Aeneid* 1.137, two lines after the striking aposiopesis of *Quos ego*, where Neptune gives his command to the winds to 'hasten their flight' (*maturate fugam*)."

reprinted including in Antwerp [fig. 62]. Rubens was almost certainly aware of this iconography before he painted the sketch. Moreover, as Peter Miller points out, the winged headgear had probably been suggested to the artist as early as 1627 by his friend Nicolas Fabri de Pereisc.⁵⁵⁷ In a letter written to Rubens in June of that year, the French antiquarian speculates about the meaning of a guise of Jupiter as the “Rain-Bringer” (*Jupiter Pluvius*) found on the Antonine Column in Rome. He then describes an ancient tablet depicting four planets and a nude figure that rises from the waves and “exerts himself to exhale the wind, and we see sculpted two little wings, attached to the forehead, in the middle of which wings there is a certain square thing unknown to me, on which are engraved three little balls [...]”⁵⁵⁸ The letter was labeled in Pereisc’s outgoing correspondence as “De Ventis.” Rubens responded in 1630, noting that “the fragment with those Egyptian gods and the wind is also curious.”⁵⁵⁹

Why then did Rubens not convey these details in the oil sketch? And what is the significance of this difference between the oil sketch and the other two versions? Miller suggests in his discussion of Rubens and Pereisc that the headgear “was added by Rubens at a late stage as an afterthought or, more appealingly, as an homage to [this] unusual friendship.”⁵⁶⁰ Woollett attributes the difference simply to the preliminary nature of the sketch: “As was often the case, certain figural elements briefly described in the sketch, such as the figure of nefarious Boreas, the north wind, identified by his serpentine legs, were painted in greater detail in the painting.”⁵⁶¹ In this, Woollett implicitly sets the image in a teleology in which the sketch culminates in the finished version, as if the iconography were

⁵⁵⁷ Paris B.N., MS. N.a.f. 5169, fol. 25v. Cited Miller, “Pereisc, Rubens, and Visual Culture,” 62, note 20.

⁵⁵⁸ Miller, “Pereisc, Rubens, and Visual Culture,” 62.

⁵⁵⁹ Miller, “Pereisc, Rubens, and Visual Culture,” 62.

⁵⁶⁰ Miller, “Pereisc, Rubens, and Visual Culture,” 55.

⁵⁶¹ Woollett, “The Burden of Invention.”

already futurally present in the sketch but not yet fully realized.⁵⁶² Her explanation also overlooks how eloquent and deliberate the sketch is in other regards. Despite this, Boreas's serpentine legs are not merely difficult to discern in the sketch; they are simply not there.

The difference may have had more to do with Rubens's conception of the oil sketch as a type of image suited to the display of specific forms of painterly skill. Indeed, by this phase in his career, it is plausible that he saw the oil sketch not just as a means to an end, but as a product with its own critical framework and audience. I have suggested that the bodies of water in the "Stage of Welcome" functioned as allegories of the painter.⁵⁶³ How might this identification have functioned in the oil sketches, whose first audience would have been Rubens's assistants or his close friends, in other words, viewers attuned to a deeper range of art-theoretical issues?

This question is pertinent given the importance of Rubens's art and his workshop in the history of the oil sketch. Though this history is complex and intersects with those of other forms of drafting,⁵⁶⁴ Rubens's use of the technique was pivotal in establishing its

⁵⁶² As Joris van Gastel has noted (with an acknowledged debt to Malcolm Baker) a similar bias is common in approaches to sculptural *bozzetti*: "Where sketch models in wax or clay are part of monographic studies and catalogues [...] they often function as illustrations to a narrative that is structured primarily by the 'archival thread'; the discussion of the role of these sketches thus remains subordinate to the main chronological argument. When, on the other hand, the discussion focuses on sculptural practice in particular, such as in Rudolf Wittkower's *Sculpture: Processes and Principles*, the view of the sculptural process is, in Baker's words, 'essentially proleptic' in that the 'concern above all is with the finished work and the procedures involved in producing this.'" Joris van Gastel, "Michaelangelo's Lesson: the Baroque Bozzetto Between Creation and Destruction," in *Das baptische Bild: Körperhafte Bilderfabrung in der Neuzeit*, ed. Markus Rath, Jörg Tremper, and Iris Wenderholm (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2013), 209-225; and Malcolm Baker, "Limewood, Chiromancy and Narratives of Making: Writing about the Materials and Processes of Sculpture," *Art History* 21/4 (1998), 509-510.

⁵⁶³ As Lisa Rosenthal has pointed out, one of the biggest problems with Alpers's *The Making of Rubens* was that it limits Rubens's artistic identity within the individualistic construct of a single creator. Rosenthal, "Rubens Reconsidered," 104.

⁵⁶⁴ On the early history of the oil sketch, see Linda and George Bauer, "Artist Inventories and the Language of the Oil Sketch," *The Burlington Magazine* 141/1158 (Sept. 1999), 520-30; Linda Freeman Bauer, "On the Origins of the Oil Sketch: Form and Function in Cinquecento Preparatory Techniques," PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1976; Rüdiger Klessmann and Reinhold Wex, eds., *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Ölskizze*, proceedings of a symposium held at the Herzog Anton-Urlich-Museum in Braunschweig, 28.-30.3.1984, in conjunction with the exhibition "Malerei aus erster Hand – Ölskizzen von Tintoretto bis Goya" (Hannover: Schäfer, 1984), especially Linda Freeman Bauer, "Some Early Views and Uses of the Painted Sketch," 14-24; Paul Wescher, *La*

products as collectible artworks.⁵⁶⁵ A still unexplored question is how Rubens's oil sketches might have fashioned or anticipated a critical response to this relatively novel type of image. To ask this risks anachronistically projecting a modern view of oil sketches as aesthetic and valuable objects. However, some roots of this view undoubtedly go back to Rubens's time and indeed to his work. Untangling them would require a more comprehensive history of the oil sketch than has been written, as well as an investigation into the history of artists as collectors and initiators of new kinds of collecting practices. However, a few pertinent facts can be summarized here.

Watercolor studies had been made since the late fifteenth century, especially in Germany and the Low Countries. Their delicacy and translucence resulted in extraordinarily lifelike nature studies. Moreover, as Linda Freeman Bauer has pointed out, the incorporation of wash already starts to blur the boundaries between a drawing and a painting.⁵⁶⁶ In his *Tempio* (1590), Gian Paolo Lomazzo instructs painters to make *disegni* in a variety of media, including tempera and wash.⁵⁶⁷ By Rubens's time, in other words, the category of drawing already firmly encompassed wet media and brushes.

However, the history of making studies in oil—the dominant medium for non-architectural paintings since the early sixteenth century—does appear to have certain contours, whose traces first appear in Venice.⁵⁶⁸ In the *Libro della Pittura*, Vasari mentions a study of a head by Giorgione “colorita a olio,” the earliest reference to such a work.⁵⁶⁹ Vasari also describes a competition between four Venetian painters for the commission to paint the

Prima Idea: Die Entwicklung der Ölskizze von Tintoretto bis Picasso (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1960); and Rudolf Wittkower, Introduction to *Masters of the Loaded Brush: Oil Sketches from Rubens to Tiepolo* (New York, 1967), xv-xxv.

⁵⁶⁵ See especially Peter Sutton's introduction to *Masters of the Loaded Brush*, 16-41.

⁵⁶⁶ Freeman Bauer, “Some Early Views and Uses of the Painted Sketch,” 15.

⁵⁶⁷ Freeman Bauer, “Some Early Views and Uses of the Painted Sketch,” 14.

⁵⁶⁸ Freeman Bauer, “Some Early Views and Uses of the Painted Sketch,” 13-14.

⁵⁶⁹ Vasari mentions the work again in his *Vite* of Giorgione; Freeman Bauer, “Some Early Views and Uses of the Painted Sketch,” 14.

ceiling of the Scuola Grande di San Rocco: Joseffo Salviati, Federigo Zuccherò, Paolo Veronese, and Tintoretto. While the other three worked diligently on their cartoons, Tintoretto “sketched a great canvas and painted it with his usual rapidity,” installing it *in situ* as if it were the finished work. The judges were furious, saying they had only asked for designs. Tintoretto explained that “this was his method of making designs, that he did not know how to proceed in any other manner.”⁵⁷⁰ He then told the judges that if they “would not pay him for the work and for his labor, he would make them a present of it.” Tintoretto leapt ahead of his competitors, in other words, by rhetorically collapsing the distance between *modello* and finished work. He won the commission.

Oil sketches by Tintoretto, Veronese, and Titian are recorded in Rubens’s collection and likely inspired and facilitated his use of the technique.⁵⁷¹ In adopting this Venetian practice, Rubens would have taken on some of the critical discourse surrounding Venetian painterliness and sketchiness. As Philip Sohm has shown, much of this criticism was ambivalent. When used in finished works, painterly brushwork was generally viewed well into the seventeenth century as a defect—a result of old age, a lack of skill, or poverty (i.e., the need to finish paintings quickly).⁵⁷² Remarks made by Cardinal Lorenzo de’ Medici, one of the earliest documented collectors of oil sketches, confirm that sketchiness was not a particularly valued quality. On three *bozzette* by Bernardo Strozzi in his collection, which he acquired in the third quarter of the seventeenth century, de’Medici wrote: *per esser a olio, ne’ essendo disegni, ne’ pitture in un certo modo et assai schizzi, non son[o] stimate troppo* (“being not drawings because they are done in oil, neither are they paintings in a certain sense, and very

⁵⁷⁰ Vasari, trans. Gaston du C. de Vere, *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (orig. Florence, 1567) (“Life of Battista Franco”).

⁵⁷¹ Jeffrey M. Muller has argued that six works listed as “desseins” by Titian, Veronese, and Tintoretto in the inventory of Rubens’s collection made after his death were in fact not “drawings on paper” but oil sketches; “Oil Sketches in Rubens’ Collection,” *Burlington Magazine* 117 (1975), 371-77.

⁵⁷² Sohm, *Pittoresco*, 25-27.

sketchy, they are not esteemed too much.”⁵⁷³ His remarks reflect an ambiguity—*ne’ essendo disegni, ne’ pitture*—that can also be discerned in Vasari’s rather underhanded concluding remark on the commission for San Rocco: “And after these words, although he had many contradictions, [Tintoretto] so contrived that the work is still in the same place.” Despite their ambiguous status, early modern oil sketches were categorized not as paintings but as drawings. Giulio Mancini, a physician and art collector whose *Considerazioni sulla pittura* were written between 1617 and 1621, included oil sketches in his recommendations for how to organize an imaginary collection of drawings.⁵⁷⁴ In a memorandum of 1614, Rubens recorded among his works a “dissegno colorito.” This was most likely the highly finished and detailed oil *modello* he created in 1611-12 for the high altarpiece of the Church of St. Bavo in Ghent, which is now in the National Gallery in London.⁵⁷⁵ As Freeman Bauer points out, Rubens’s use of the term “dissegno” shows that he viewed even the most highly finished and colored oil studies as drawings.⁵⁷⁶

Nico van Hout and Arnout Balis have recently argued that all of Rubens’s “preliminary studies [...] were primarily for his use, and contrary to the modern practice he did not consider them to be works of art in their own right. He could never have imagined that his oil sketches would be hung one day alongside finished paintings, or that there would be exhibitions devoted to his chalk or pen studies alone.”⁵⁷⁷ As evidence, van Hout and Balis point to Rubens’s will, in which the artist stipulated that his drawings—a category that for

⁵⁷³ Cited in Freeman Bauer, “Some Early Views and Uses of the Painted Sketch,” 14.

⁵⁷⁴ Giulio Mancini, *Considerazioni sulla pittura*, ed. Adriana Marucchi and Luigi Salerno (Rome, 1956), 143: “che dei disegni a mano ne farà libri destinti secondo le materie, tempi, grandezza di foglio, nationi e modo di disegno, s’ a penna, lapis e carbone, acquarella, chiaro scuro, tenta a olio.” Cited Freeman Bauer, “Some Early Views and Uses of the Painted Sketch,” 15.

⁵⁷⁵ See Gregory Martin, “Rubens’s ‘Dissegno Colorito’ for Bishop Maes Reconsidered,” *Burlington Magazine* 110 (1968), 434-37. See also Held, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul I*, 11.

⁵⁷⁶ Freeman Bauer, “Some Early Views and Uses of the Painted Sketch,” 15.

⁵⁷⁷ Nico van Hout and Arnout Balis, *Rubens Unveiled: Notes on the Master’s Painting Technique: A Catalogue of Rubens Paintings in the Antwerp Museum* (Antwerp: Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 2012), 17.

him, again, would have included his oil sketches—were only to be sold if none of his sons or sons-in-law became painters. This, they argue, shows that Rubens saw his preliminary works as valuable only to *artists*, and even then only as utilitarian objects, not aesthetic ones.

Even if Rubens did not consider his oil sketches independent art objects in the modern sense, and would certainly not have imagined them behind glass, it is worth asking whether he saw them as works of art in *any sense*, and if so, what that sense was. An avid art collector himself, Rubens likely saw artists not as the opposite of collectors, but rather as a special category of collectors.⁵⁷⁸ Certainly, Rubens valued the drawings in his collection by other painters, including oil sketches, as fodder for his own images. But he also likely viewed them in many of the same ways as the *liebbebers* of his age did: a means of delighting the eye while training it in the recognition of various hands, building a vocabulary of style, sparking conversations with friends. His belief that painters were the most appropriate owners of preliminary works certainly had much to do with the value of such works as study material. Clearly, he wished to keep his trade secrets in the family. However, he may also have believed that artists, not socially elite amateurs like Cardinal de'Medici, were the type of collectors best capable of understanding and appreciating such works. Or to put it another way: for Rubens, using and understanding probably went hand-in-hand. On a more obvious level, the very fact that Rubens stipulated that his drawings were only to be sold under particular circumstances acknowledges the possibility that they *could* be sold, i.e., that they were collectible. The large number of his oil sketches that survive supports this.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁸ See Muller, *Rubens: the Artist as Collector* (as above, note 67).

⁵⁷⁹ Rubens's oil sketches were also copied, apparently secretly, by his student William Panneels. More than 500 such copies are now held in the Kobberstiksamling in Copenhagen and have helped art historians identify now-lost works. Held, *Oil Sketches*, vol. 1, 5.

Spontaneity in landscape painting and the “image made by chance”

Sixteenth-century oil studies are rare. Of the few that are preserved today, most are monochromatic or painted in grisaille.⁵⁸⁰ Otto van Veen, Rubens’s teacher in Antwerp, is known to have created grisaille oil studies for some of his paintings.⁵⁸¹ Francisco Pacheco mentions monochrome studies, explaining that oil is used for them because it is the easiest medium to “unite and arrange the forms.”⁵⁸² Indeed, as Linda Freeman Bauer notes, the function of most early oil studies appears to have been to “coordinate and control the distribution of the tonal values by means of which painted forms acquire their plasticity.”⁵⁸³ Art historians have typically divided baroque preparatory studies into two categories: the rougher and more monochromatic *bozzetto*, and the more detailed and colored *modello*.⁵⁸⁴ Rubens’s *Quos ego* oil sketch is striking for the ways in which it eludes this distinction. Because the silvery, amorphous forms of water and clouds dominate its representational content, it resembles a *bozzetto*, even if the high degree of tonal modulation and visual detail are more in keeping with a *modello*. The winds, whose forms seem to result from a conflict between dark and light—the moment the storm is breaking—seem almost to belong to an earlier stage of the image. Their mixture of brushwork and dead coloring emphasizes the image’s material basis, from which they arise in the interstices of representation and non-representation.

In this, Rubens invokes the deeply rooted concept in art theory known as the “image

⁵⁸⁰ For instance, monochromatic oil studies by Domenico Beccafumi and Jacopo and Domenico Tintoretto, which were painted on paper or board. Freeman Bauer, .

⁵⁸¹ Freeman Bauer, “Some Early Views and Uses of the Painted Sketch,” 15.

⁵⁸² Freeman Bauer, “Some Early Views and Uses of the Painted Sketch,” note 16.

⁵⁸³ Freeman Bauer, “Some Early Views and Uses of the Painted Sketch,” 14 and 16.

⁵⁸⁴ The literature on the *bozzetto* is summarized in Van Gestel, “Michaelangelo’s Lesson.” See also Linda and George Bauer, “Artists’ Inventories and the Language of the Oil Sketch,” *The Burlington Magazine* vol. 141, no. 1158 (Sept., 1999), 520-530. Rudolf Wittkower in his introduction to the *Masters of the Loaded Brush* catalogue (xxi) distinguishes between “at least” five types of oil sketches: the “spontaneous oil sketch” (the *prima idea*); the “oil sketch as clarifying statement”; the *modello*; the oil sketch “*post festum*,” i.e. as copy; and finally the “autonomous oil sketch: a picture in its own right, divorced from the preparatory process and without sequel.”

made by chance.” Grappling with the mysterious forces by which humans perceive and make images, writers on art from Philostratus to Leonardo had pointed out that images could be seen in amorphous formations such as clouds, smoke, marble, or stains—or, as Alberti put it, that “nature herself seems to take delight in painting.”⁵⁸⁵ An allusion to the topos has been discerned in the riders that appear in the clouds in Andrea Mantegna’s early *Saint Sebastian* (1457/59).⁵⁸⁶ Another variant of the topos that arose in the late fifteenth century was that artists could *use* such accidental images to stimulate their imaginations. Leonardo instructed painters that if they studied “walls splashed with a number of stains or stones of various mixed colors,” “the ashes of a fire, or clouds, or mud,” or even “the sound of bells, in whose pealing you can find every name and word you can imagine,” they could find “find really marvelous ideas” they could then “reduce to good, integrated form.”⁵⁸⁷ As both a perceptual exercise and an image-making technique, the image made by chance characterizes the painter as someone who derives order from chaos, images from raw or ephemeral materials. A more extreme twist on the idea was that artists could physically incorporate stains into their paintings. For example, Leonardo also tells us that Botticelli claimed to be able to create landscapes simply by throwing a paint-soaked sponge at the panel.⁵⁸⁸

In seventeenth-century Dutch art theory, such notions became connected with ones about single-application or wet-on-wet painting. This was linked to a discourse about

⁵⁸⁵ See H.W. Janson, “The ‘Image Made by Chance’ in Renaissance Thought,” in *De artibus opuscula XL: Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky*, ed. Millard Meiss (New York: New York University Press, 1961), 54-66. Primary sources discussed by Janson include Lucretius, Philostratus, Albertus Magnus, Leonardo, and Vasari.

⁵⁸⁶ Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, GG 301.

⁵⁸⁷ Translation from Philip McMahon, *Treatise on Painting [Codex Urbinus Latinus 1270] by Leonardo da Vinci* (Princeton, 1956), I, 50f; cited in Janson, 260.

⁵⁸⁸ Leonardo finds this technique ridiculous, arguing that stains can “give you inventions [but] not teach you to finish any detail,” and that Botticelli “makes very dull landscapes.” Janson, 262.

sketchiness and speed in painting in general.⁵⁸⁹ The mimetic style of early Netherlandish painting had favored polished or “licked” surfaces built up in thin layers, each of which was allowed to dry before the next was applied. But by the mid-sixteenth century some painters had abandoned this technique, painting in one setting and mixing their colors directly on the surface. A document from s’Hertogenbosch shows that concerns about the practice had already arisen there by the mid-sixteenth century; in 1546, the local painters’ guild attempted to enforce quality control by requiring painters to use at least two layers.⁵⁹⁰ Nonetheless, the practice continued and was promoted especially in Venice by Tintoretto.⁵⁹¹ By the mid-seventeenth century it was widespread, an essential vehicle of the spontaneous, gestural painting styles marketed to collectors.⁵⁹²

The conjunction of wet-in-wet painting with the image made by chance is exemplified by a story told by Arnold Houbraken (1660-1719) after Samuel van Hoogstraten (1627-1678). The story involves a competition between three Dutch painters to paint a landscape in a single day.⁵⁹³ The winner, Jan Porcellis, was the painter who worked the most slowly, following his preconceived mental idea. Third place went to Francois van Knibbergen, whose intriguing method Houbraken describes as follows:

Because he had the brush fully at his will, he began, according to his usual manner, to paint in such a way that everything that he touched was immediately finished, for air, vistas, trees, mountains, waterfalls flowed from his paintbrush like the letters from the pen of an

⁵⁸⁹ See Jan Nicolaisen, “Chaos unentwirrbarer Formen: künstlerische Handschrift als Ausdruck von Subjektivität in der niederländischen Malerei und Kunsttheorie des 17. Jahrhunderts,” in exhib. cat. Kiel (2004), *Augenkitzel: Barocke Meisterwerke und die Kunst des Informel* (Kiel, 2004) 34-40; Leonhard, *Bildfelder* 86-88; and Miriam Volmert, “Vom ‘Chaos der Farben’ zum *blot*. Konzepte von Bilderfindung und Gedächtnis bei Alexander Cozens und Samuel van Hoogstraten,” *Flusser Studies* 14.

⁵⁹⁰ See Jilleen Nadolny, “European Documentary Sources before c. 1550 Relating to Painting Grounds Applied to Wooden Supports: Translation and Terminology,” in *Preparation for Painting: The Artist’s Choice and its Consequences*, ed. Joyce H. Townsend, Tiarna Doherty, Gunnar Heydenreich and Jacqueline Ridge (London, 2008), 1-13.

⁵⁹¹ Una Roman d’Elia, “Tintoretto, Aretino, and the Speed of Creation,” *Word & Image* 20.2004, 206-218.

⁵⁹² On wet-in-wet painting see Suthor, *Bravura*, .

⁵⁹³ Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam, 1718-1721); reprint, 1976.

experienced scribe.⁵⁹⁴

The description evokes an art of utter immediacy. The things of nature literally ‘flow’ from van Knibbergen’s brush—rather like the flowers that in Rubens’s *Meeting of the Two Ferdinands* sprout up beneath the Danube’s urn. There is no intervention by the painter’s judgment. According to Houbraken, the second-place contestant, Jan van Goyen, worked in “quite another way,” which seems to fall somewhere between:

[F]or after he painted over the entire canvas, here lighter, there darker, more or less like a multicolored agate stone, he sought to form with the brush the various blurs of color into a background with farmhouses. [...] In short, his eye, practiced to discover the forms lying hidden in the chaos of inextricable colors, had so stimulated his hand and his intellect, that one believed to see a finished image, before one could even make out what he actually planned to paint.⁵⁹⁵

Houbraken emphasizes the public and performative nature of the competition: images arise before the spectators’ eyes. The scene is indeed in keeping with the title of Houbraken’s work, “the great theater of Dutch painters.” Furthermore, the reference to “forms lying hidden in the chaos of inextricable colors” and particularly to a multicolored stone also clearly invokes the topos of the image made by chance. Elsewhere, Samuel van Hoogstraten—again, Houbraken’s source for the story—had specifically encouraged painters to study clouds: “one must also invest his diligence in the correct perception of the spirited impetus of the clouds, and how their driving-forth and their form arises.”⁵⁹⁶ Rubens’s *Quos ego* oil sketch, whose very subject is the organization of a churning, chaotic visual field and the “driving-forth” of clouds, thus appears to allude to this important topos in the history of the imagination. His sketch already implies a connection that later theorists would glean

⁵⁹⁴ Cited and translated from Nicolaisen, “Chaos unentwirrbarer Formen,” 36.

⁵⁹⁵ See Eric Sluijter, “Jan van Goyen als marktleider, virtuoos en vernieuwer,” in *Jan van Goyen*, ed. Christian Vogelaaar (Leiden: Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal, 1996), 38-59.

⁵⁹⁶ “Men moet ook zijn vlijt aenleggen in den geestigen zwier der wolken wel waer te nemen, en hoe haere drift en gedaente in een zekere evenredenhayt bestaet.” Samuel van Hoogstraten, *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst* (Rotterdam, 1678), 140: On clouds in Dutch art and theory see John Walsh, “Skies and Reality in Dutch Landscape,” in David Freedberg and Jan de Vries, eds., *Art in History/History in Art: Studies in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 95-118.

from the seventeenth-century Dutch landscape tradition.

Rubens's storms and the painting as cosmos

Vasari wrote that sketches “are made in the form of a stain [*in forma di una macchia*] and are rendered very quickly, because of the artist’s furor [...] to test the spirit of that which occurs to him.”⁵⁹⁷ As we have seen, the idea of artistic *furor* also crops up in Bellori’s biography of Rubens, which praised the “great fury and speed of his brush” (*la gran prontezza e furia del penello*).⁵⁹⁸ How might Rubens’s paintings have anticipated or fashioned such a response?⁵⁹⁹ For this question, his depictions of sea storms offer key insight. They are also the most explicit cases of the painter acting as Neptune. Two such paintings date to early in Rubens’s career: the *Miracle of Saint Walburga*, finished by 1611, and *Hero and Leander*, painted in 1604 while Rubens was still in Italy and now in the Yale University Art Gallery [fig. 63].⁶⁰⁰ Like Rubens’s later hunting scenes and images of Flemish peasant festivals, his paintings of storms employ the poetics of organized chaos—an explosive centrifugal tension that threatens to break apart, yet is held within the boundaries of the image. Here, however, these poetics are not performed by humans or animals but written into the material flux of nature itself, in the form of an awesomely destructive wave.

According to a Greek legend reported by the Latin authors Ovid and Musaeus, Leander swam across the Dardanelles every night to conduct secret trysts with Hero, a

⁵⁹⁷ “fatti in forma di una macchia, ed accennati da noi in una sola bozza del tutto.” On the *macchia* in painting see Sohm, *Pittresco*, 36-48. Also cited in Held, *Rubens Oil Sketches*, vol. 1, 7.

⁵⁹⁸ Bellori, *Lives of the Modern Painters*, 205.

⁵⁹⁹ For an exemplary article that explores how an artist might proleptically construct or anticipate criticism of their works, see Sohm, “Caravaggio’s Lives.”

⁶⁰⁰ Yale University Art Gallery 1962.25. Rubens’s *Hero and Leander* was the subject of an ekphrasis in Marino’s *Galleria*, which was translated Joost van den Vondel (“Op den dode Leander, in d’armen der zeegodinnen, Door Rubens Geschilderd, op Marino” (1650). On this painting see Amy Golahny, “Rubens’s *Hero and Leander* and its Poetic Progeny,” *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin*, 1990: 20-37.

priestess in the temple of Aphrodite, who would hold out a lamp to guide her lover's way.⁶⁰¹ One stormy night, her lamp blew out, and Leander drowned; the distraught Hero threw herself into the same sea and drowned as well. Rubens interprets *Hero and Leander* as a night scene, using the wave's parabolic forms to play scales at the limits of chiaroscuro. The entire scene emerges *ex negativo* against a dark ground. Lightning zigzags over Leander's pale corpse and the nude bodies of the nereids that swim around it. The wave seems to be swallowing the sky from beneath—as if the ground plane has been pulled up from the corners like a rug, leaving the figures tumbling towards the center. Dark clouds hang above, creating a vortex through which only a tiny fragment of the horizon is visible. The jagged forms of the lightning are echoed in the s-curves of the wave, which in the lower right seems to break before our eyes: in a technique that prefigures film animation, what begins as a series of disconnected white dashes of foam becomes denser and brighter, morphing into a series of s-curves before finally exploding into a billow of foam whose impasto also breaks the surface of the image.

Rubens's activation of the fluid 'dark matter' of the background challenges some art-historical arguments about the history of pictorial composition. In a paper "On Grounds and Backgrounds," Jeroen Stumpel argued that the notion of planimetric composition is a modern one; in the Italian Renaissance, composition was understood in terms of the coherence of the narrative or *historia*.⁶⁰² The image itself was a "piecemeal affair," made up of three components: the figures, the ground plane or *piano*, and the background or *campo*.⁶⁰³ Stumpel focused especially on the semantic history of the latter term, which then as now

⁶⁰¹ Ovid *Heroides* (1st century B.C., Epistles 18 and 19); Musaeus *Hero and Leander* (5th c. A.D.)

⁶⁰² Jeroen Stumpel, "On Grounds and Backgrounds: Some Remarks about Composition in Renaissance Painting," *Simiolus* 18 (1988): 210-243. Stumpel's argument was picked up by Thomas Puttfarcken, *The Discovery of Pictorial Composition: Theories of Visual Order in Painting 1400-1800* (New York and London, 2000). See also Matteo Burioni, "Ground und *campo*. Die Metaphorik des Bildgrundes in der frühen Neuzeit," in Gottfried Böhm and Matteo Burioni, eds, *Der Grund. Das Feld des Sichtbaren* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2012): 95-149.

⁶⁰³ Stumpel, 237.

most commonly meant “field.” Cennino Cennini had used *campo* around 1400 to mean any surface area to which paint is applied. Accordingly, *campire* or *campeggiare* could simply mean “to paint,” analogous to the German term *schildern*.⁶⁰⁴ By the sixteenth century, however, *campo* more commonly meant something more like the image’s “background.” For instance, a contract for a work by Pinturicchio recorded that “in the empty part of the pictures, or really, the background of the figures, he promised to paint landscapes and skies” (*Anche promette nel vacuo delli quadri o vero campi de le figure pegnere paese et aiere*).⁶⁰⁵ Baldinucci defines *campo* in his *Vocabolario Toscano dell’arte del disegno* (1681) as “that space that circumscribes the outer edges of a painted object” (*quello spazio, che circoscrive tutti l’estremità della cosa dipinta*).⁶⁰⁶ In other words, what had once designated the background came to mean the non-objective in the image *tout court*—any area not part of some fictive thing. Thomas Puttfarcken, citing Stumpel, has similarly argued that the “bounded image”—a foundation of modern aesthetics exemplified by the easel picture—is a modern invention.⁶⁰⁷ Such a conception of the picture as a “total configuration of forces” or an “independent [...] organism”⁶⁰⁸ did not exist, Puttfarcken argues, prior to the rise of the French academic painting in the late seventeenth century. Prior to this, the image had “no ontological status apart from that of its figures and objects.”⁶⁰⁹ Puttfarcken tends to omit the theoretical discussion of Renaissance images themselves, which responded to and were constructed around their planar boundaries in various imaginative ways. He also gives short shrift to ideas in Renaissance art theory that

⁶⁰⁴ This is the sense in which it is used by Cennino Cennini; cited in Stumpel, 221.

⁶⁰⁵ Cited Stumpel, 221.

⁶⁰⁶ Cited Stumpel, 222.

⁶⁰⁷ Puttfarcken, 3.

⁶⁰⁸ Puttfarcken, 3.

⁶⁰⁹ Puttfarcken, 18.

offered alternative ways of conceiving of the image's unity—for instance, Lodovico Dolce's conception of the painting as a union of colors (*unione di colore*).⁶¹⁰

In both *Hero and Leander* and *Quos ego*, the space surrounding the figures is hardly negative, nor is it simply filled in with a landscape. It pulses with liquid matter that threatens to envelop the figures. This approach was worked out by Rubens in his earliest conceptions of *Hero and Leander*, a pen-and-ink drawing and a chalk drawing (both ca. 1600-03) [figs. 64 and 65]. The wave's vibrating curved lines, darkening and tensing like muscular sinews, are not background but *the* physical body of the image, in which the figures are more or less material accidents. What Rubens conceives is not simply a *unione di colore*, a coloristic union that dissolves the linear boundaries between objects. Rather, he turns space into a visible texture or tissue, implying the image not as a fictive interior but as a fluctuating, living world.

In Rubens's painting of *Hero and Leander*, the figures are carved into stark relief, even as they slip back into the undifferentiated chaos of the wave—the *campo* collapsed together with the *piano*. Though the wave's darkness might seem to render it more like negative space, it in fact does the opposite, asserting its presence in dazzling flashes. As in the *Head of Medusa*, the fluctuations of liquid call attention to both figuration and vision as contingent processes. Again, this type of painterliness is troped by the animal grotesque: in the lower left corner, the open jaws of a dolphin threaten to snap shut, just as the wave-sky vortex threatens to “devour” all of the figures. The figures still hold their own, though; miniscule white ripples spread around them, both reflecting their pale skin and manifesting the motions of the water, showing that this destructive substance is also malleable.

Leonardo's Neptune drawing (ca. 1504) and the grotesque poetics of water

⁶¹⁰ Lodovico Dolce, *Dialogo della Pittura* (Venice, 1557). See Mark Roskill, *Dolce's Aretino and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento* (New York: New York University Press, 1968).

As Alessandro Nova has discussed, storms visualize forces in nature that are otherwise invisible. For this reason, they were a subject of interest for painters.⁶¹¹ Rubens's oil sketch for the *Quos ego* does not only represent a sea storm, but also connects it to the metamorphic character of the sketch. Rubens would not have been the first painter to make such a connection. Rather, it goes back to the drawing practice of Leonardo. Around 1504, Leonardo began experimenting with a radically new technique of sketching, especially in the softer mediums of charcoal or chalk. Rather than using contours or stable illusions of relief to divide the emergent figures from the space and from each other, he would draw figures in flurries of repetitive, overlapping, recalibrating, correcting, continuous marks.⁶¹² He referred to such drawings as *componimenti inculti* or "rough compositions." Their rounded clusters of marks indeed often resemble a dark storm cloud, in which forms appear to split organically but never completely from one another.⁶¹³ This drawing style would find its most dramatic expression in Leonardo's late "Deluge" series, drawings of cataclysmic storms he made in 1515.⁶¹⁴ However, an earlier example is a sketch of ca. 1504-5, which depicts Neptune [fig. 66].⁶¹⁵ Vasari confirms that Leonardo created a drawing of Neptune:

For his good friend Antonio Segni,⁶¹⁶ Leonardo drew, on a sheet of paper, a Neptune executed with such careful craftsmanship that it seemed absolutely alive. In it one saw the ocean troubled, and Neptune's car drawn by sea-horses, with fantastic creatures, marine monsters and winds, and some very beautiful heads of sea-gods. This drawing was presented

⁶¹¹ Alessandro Nova, *The Book of the Wind: The Representation of the Invisible* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2011). Surprisingly, Nova does not mention Rubens's *Quos ego*. On the wind in Renaissance art, see also David Summers, "Aria II: The Union of Image and Artist as an Aesthetic Ideal in Renaissance Art," *Artibus et Historiae* 10/20 (1989), 15-31.

⁶¹² See Ernst Gombrich, "Leonardo's Method for Working out Compositions," in *Leonardo: Selected Scholarship*, ed. Claire Farago (New York and London: Garland, 1999), vol. 2, 114-121. My understanding of Leonardo's art, including the *componimento inculto*, have been deeply informed by the courses taught by Frank Fehrenbach at Harvard University and the University of Hamburg.

⁶¹³ For example, Leonardo's *Madonna and Child with Saint Anne* (1504), Musée du Louvre inv. 776.

⁶¹⁴ On Leonardo's depictions of water and concepts of animation, including his hydrological research and his "deluge" drawings, see Frank Fehrenbach, *Licht und Wasser*, esp. 256-258 and ch. 5 ("Die 'Sintflutzeichnungen'"), 291-331.

⁶¹⁵ Royal Collection Trust, RCIN 912570. See Cecil Gould, "Leonardo's 'Neptune' Drawing," *The Burlington Magazine* 94/595 (Oct. 1952), 289-295.

⁶¹⁶ Incidentally, Segni was the Master of the Papal Mint, an earlier association of fluidity and minting.

by Fabio, the son of Antonio, to Messer Giovanni Gaddi, with this epigram: “Virgil and Homer both depicted Neptune driving his sea-horses through the rushing waves. The poets saw him in their imaginations, but Vinci with his own eyes, and so he rightly vanquished them.” (*Pinxit Virgilius Neptunum, pinxit Homerus; / Dum maris undisoni per vada flectit equos. / Mente quidem vates illum conspexit uterque, / Vincius ast oculis; jureque vincit eos*).⁶¹⁷

The reference to Virgil at the start of the epigram, and to the sea as *turbato* (“troubled”), suggests that the subject of Leonardo’s drawing was the *Quos ego* scene. More broadly, the statement that Virgil and Homer “depicted” Neptune—*pinxit*, a word repeated twice in the same line—invokes the *paragone* between painting and poetry, on which Leonardo wrote extensively.⁶¹⁸ Central to this debate were the equal claims of painters and poets to artistic freedom, which since Horace’s *Ars poetica* had been associated with the depiction of composite grotesques.⁶¹⁹ It is therefore noteworthy that Vasari’s citation of the epigram is immediately followed by a description of Leonardo’s *Head of Medusa*: “The fancy came to him to paint a picture in oils of the head of Medusa, with the head attired with a coil of snakes, the most strange and extravagant invention that could ever be imagined [...].”⁶²⁰ The transition from Neptune to the Medusa is appropriate since both were associated with fantasy and the grotesque; indeed, according to Vasari Leonardo’s drawing of Neptune featured “fantastic creatures, marine monsters and winds.”⁶²¹

A drawing of Neptune is contained in Leonardo’s notebook now held at Windsor

⁶¹⁷ Vasari, *Vite* (Florence, 1568): *Ad Antonio Segni, suo amicissimo, fece un foglio un Nettuno, condotto così di disegno con tanta diligenzie, che e parevo del tutto vivo. Vedevasi il mare turbato ed il carro suo tirato da cavalli marini con le fantasime, l’orche ed i noti, ed alcune teste di Dei marini bellissime; il quale disegno fu donato da Fabio suo figliuolo a messer Giovanni Gaddi, con questo epigramma [...].*

⁶¹⁸ Claire J. Farago, *Leonardo da Vinci’s Paragone: A Critical Interpretation with a New Edition of the Text in the Codex Urbinas*, Brill Studies in Intellectual History 25 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 13-25.

⁶¹⁹ Horace *Ars Poetica* 1-13. This passage was cited in the *Emblemata Horatiana* of Otto Vaenius—Rubens’s earliest teacher in Antwerp—who seems to shrug off the pejorative tone Horace takes on the grotesque, depicting a chimaera and proudly citing Homer in a “metaphoric self-portrait”; see Alison Adams and Marleen van der Weij, eds., *Emblems of the Low Countries: A Book Historical Perspective* (Glasgow, 2003): 42-44 (“making a chimaera”).

⁶²⁰ Vasari, trans. Gaston de Vere, “Life of Leonardo da Vinci,” from the *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (orig. Florence, 1567). Available online at <http://members.efn.org/~acd/vite/VasariLeo2.html>

⁶²¹ A connection between the *gorgoneion* and the realm of water may already have been suggested by the “Tazza Farnese,” which paired an image of it with an allegory on the Nile river. On this gem, see Nova, *Book of the Wind*, 26-27.

Castle. Drawn in black chalk, it depicts the god as an embodiment of turbulent animation. Like Bronzino's portrait of Andrea Dorea, Leonardo's Neptune is cropped at the upper thighs. But rather than appearing as a clean statuesque fragment, his body visually merges with an animal melee: four hippocampi rear away from him, their necks snapping back as if he has just pulled their reigns. His precise physical connection to the horses is unclear; their bodies unravel in tails that in turn overlap his lower body, visually unravelling it as well. Like the snakes in Rubens's *Head of Medusa*, the horse's serpentine tails resist being seen as distinct entities. Twirling both up and down, they seem to multiply before our eyes. With his right hand, Neptune raises the trident over his head and gazes down, as if in the next instant he will drive it down to split apart the grotesque configuration,⁶²² even as he stands at its literal crux: a diagrammatic cross passes through his raised right hand and down the center of his chest.⁶²³

Leonardo thus linked the chaos of the sea both to the poetics of the serpentine grotesque and to the processual character of the sketch. In contrast to Rubens's Neptune, his is so deeply embedded in the chaos of his realm that his own body morphs into a grotesque. Rubens draws a distinction between marshaling chaos and giving way to it. Yet both painters depict Neptune's realm just on the brink of control, conveying its instability with innovative sketching techniques. Both therefore identify Neptune with the draughtsman: ruler of a space of fantasy, hybridity, and material flux.⁶²⁴

⁶²² Gould likewise notes that Neptune "hurls his trident to pacify the turbulent waves." Gould emphasizes the novelty of Leonardo's depiction: "More than 3000 antique gems are reproduced in Furtwängler's *Die Antiken Gemmen* and of these only two (pl. xlvi, No. 10, Berlin, and pl. L., No. 19, Tyszkiewicz collection) show Neptune driving four sea horses and even then in both cases they are arranged differently (being in profile) from those in Leonardo's drawing, and the god is not brandishing his trident."

⁶²³ It might be noted that the basic dynamics of Leonardo's Neptune are echoed in Rubens's and Snyders' *Head of Medusa*: serpentine creatures pulling away from and drawn back toward a mythological 'host'.

⁶²⁴ Paul Vandebroek ("The Solomonic Column") discusses Rubens's *Quos ego* briefly in connection with the motif of the solomonic column in Rubens, drawing attention to the emphasis on spiralling motion. As Vandebroek notes, Gevartius's text "quotes a passage from Pausias that muses at length on the notions of

Painting and wetness

Vasari wrote disparagingly of the overly linear “dry manner” (*maniera secca*) of quattrocento painters.⁶²⁵ Conversely, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, painterly brushwork was often called *macchiato*—“stained,” a word that connotes both accidentalness and wetness.⁶²⁶ *Alla prima* or wet-on-wet painting further strengthened the association between wetness, spontaneity, and the freshness of creation.⁶²⁷ Rubens’s awareness of such an association is evidenced by the aforementioned fresco decorations of his Antwerp house, the crux of which crux a *trompe l’oeil* “canvas” of *Perseus and Andromeda* that appeared to be drying over the courtyard. In the public space of his studio, Rubens set up the illusion of a perpetually drying, and therefore perpetually still wet and fresh work of art.⁶²⁸

The representation of liquids was understood to be a special domain of painting that set it apart from sculpture. Leonardo had emphasized this in his writings on the *paragone*, pointing out that only painters can capture a variety of wet phenomena: “mists,” “rains,” and “rivers of greater or lesser transparency, in which can be seen the fish playing between the surface of the water and the bed; also the polished pebbles of various hues, deposited on the washed sand of the river’s bed and surrounded by verdant plants under the surface of the water.”⁶²⁹ Fluidity was crucial to Leonardo’s claim that painting could capture not simply

‘round’ and ‘turning round’” (*Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi*, 16), connecting this to the serpentine body of Boreas, which “terminates in a spiral”: “the power of the sea, personified by Neptune, is visualized as a whirlpool or maelstrom, and hence as *spirally twisting*.”

⁶²⁵ Vasari uses the term *secca* numerous times to describe the dry, hard, overly studied manners of painters prior to the sixteenth century. For instance, on Paolo Uccello: *maniera secca e tagliante* (“dry and hard manner”).

⁶²⁶ On the *macchia* in Italian art criticism, see Sohm, *Pittoresco*, esp. 35-43.

⁶²⁷ On Rubens’s use of *alla prima* painting see Van Hout and Balis, *Rubens Unveiled*, 10-11 and 91.

⁶²⁸ A copy from Rubens’s circle, which echoes the picture as it appears in an engraving of the Rubenshuis by Harrewijn, is held in the Hermitage Museum; see Gritsay and Babina, *Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Paintings*, 253-255, no. 310. The *Perseus Freeing Andromeda* in the Rubenshuis has been seen as a statement on the *paragone* with sculpture; see note 171 above. However, to my knowledge, this aspect of the work’s meaning and specifically the petrifying power of the Medusa shield at the center have not been connected to the implied drying and hardening of the painting on the canvas.

⁶²⁹ Leonardo da Vinci, *Leonardo on Painting: An Anthology of Writings*, ed. Martin Kemp (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 40-42. Translation from Kemp.

nature's forms or bodies, but its processes as they are perceived by the eye. A layer of wetness mediates perception in many possible ways, making objects appear muddled or clear, dark or dazzlingly reflective, static or chaotic, unified or fragmented. Despite Alberti's topos of the painting as a window, his *Della Pittura* also offered a different paradigm, that of the pool of water glimpsed, grasped, and disturbed by Narcissus—not simply a mirror, but a living substance.⁶³⁰

Pliny's account of the restoration of Apelles's *Venus Anadyomene* also offered a precedent for the association between painting and liquidity. Depicting the birth of the goddess from the sea, "wringin her hair, and the falling drops of water form[ing] a transparent silver veil around her form," *Venus Anadyomene* was "the most admired" of all of Apelles's works. Pliny claims that by Roman times, "the lower part" of the painting was badly damaged, and "it was impossible to find anyone who could repair it."⁶³¹ This part of the painting would almost certainly have depicted water. In the end, "as it continued to decay," another painter, Dorotheus, had to be brought in to copy it. The story implies not only that water is difficult to paint, but also that each representation of it is unique.⁶³²

The Quos ego as a creation scene

Given this, we might understand why the winds in the *Quos ego*—which are creatures of both water and air—were not reproduced exactly from Rubens's sketch. A second, now lost *modello* may have been created for the later two versions. Rubens may also have sketched out his new design for the winds directly onto the large canvas. The transformation of Boreas is

⁶³⁰ On Alberti's metaphor of Narcissus as a painter, see Baskins, "Echoing Narcissus" (as above, note 245).

⁶³¹ Pliny, 35-36. The painting is lost, but a fresco in the House of the Venus Marina in Pompeii, for example, on the south wall of the peristyle, is thought to derive from it and shows the foreground flooded with water. Titian's *Venus Anadyomene* (c. 1520), now held in the Scottish National Gallery in Edinburgh, was modeled after Pliny's description of Apelles's lost work.

⁶³² I thank Frank Fehrenbach for pointing out this possible reading to me.

particularly suggestive. We should recall that the shift from liquid chaos to serpentine grotesque was not without precedent in Rubens's art; it is precisely what occurs in the *Head of Medusa*. In both images, Rubens emphasizes liquid's hylemorphic impulse, its "will to form." In Van Thulden's etching of the *Quos ego* and in the finished canvas, a puff of smoke rises from Boreas's now clearly delineated shoulder—as if he has not yet fully shaken off the embryonic smoke from which he emerged [fig. 67].

This suggests a different angle of interpretation. What if, rather than just driving away the winds, Neptune is also conjuring them—driving away the storm and *causing* it? The latter is precisely what several friends and colleagues with whom I have viewed Rubens's oil sketch initially assumed. This intuition is a misreading in that it has no basis in the textual sources whose relationship to the *Quos ego* is established (Virgil, Gevartius). However, such an ambiguity resonates with ideas in art theory about the relationship between creation and destruction in the making of images. Formulated most recently by Horst Bredekamp with the term "*produktive Zerstörung*," this notion is found in *seicento* art criticism as well. In his *Vocabolario toscano dell'arte del disegno* (1681), Baldinucci defines the term *modello* as follows: "the first, and most important effort of the whole work, for in breaking apart, and rebuilding again [*guastando, e raccomodando*], the artist achieves the greatest beauty and perfection."⁶³³ To create a sketch is to break apart and to rebuild. Another *seicento* critic who grasped the dialectical relationship between creation and destruction in image-making was Marco Boschini. In an aforementioned passage, Boschini had described Titian's late working method as an oscillation between relief-building and surgical violence.⁶³⁴ Moreover, in the visual tradition we have been examining, Neptune stood in an inherently ambivalent

⁶³³ Baldinucci, *Vocabolario toscano dell'arte del disegno* (1681), . See Van Gastel, "Michelangelo's lesson," 214.

⁶³⁴ Boschini, *Breve istruzione*, 730-32; translated in David Rosand, "Titian and the Critical Tradition," in David Rosand, ed, *Titian: His World and his Legacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), . See also Jodi Cranston, *The Muddled Mirror*, 8.

relationship to the sea: he was at turns its ruler, its inhabitant, and its embodiment. The *Quos ego* was a scene in which the murkiness and dynamics of this relationship could be narrated as a struggle. It required the depiction of chaos and order in equal part.

Such difficulty may have been why the scene was quite rarely depicted. An early, influential exception was an engraving of ca. 1515-16 by Marcantonio Raimondi after Raphael, which illustrated the frontispiece of a planned but never finished edition of the *Aeneid* [fig. 68].⁶³⁵ Like Leonardo's and Rubens's sketches, Raimondi's engraving depicts a single heroic figure facing off against a site of visual or material chaos. From its beginnings in the Renaissance, the *Quos ego* therefore seems to have been connected to ideas about the artistic imagination.⁶³⁶ This is supported by the ways Raimondi's engraving of the scene resonances with another of his works, the mysterious engraving known as the *Dream of Raphael* or as *Two Women Sleeping on the Bank of the River Styx* [fig. 69].⁶³⁷ Thought to date to ca. 1506-8, the years when Raimondi was working in Venice, the latter is the first known engraved night scene in Italian art. It may have been based on a now-lost work by Giorgione

⁶³⁵ On the frontispiece, the *Quos ego* is surrounded by smaller scenes from the *Aeneid*. Ivan Gaskell discusses its role in an exhibition held at the Fogg Museum between December 21, 2010 and March 17, 2002, which centered around Rubens's *Quos ego* oil sketch; see Ivan Gaskell, "Being True to Rubens," in *Art, Music, and Spectacle*: 244-5. Raphael/Raimondi's *Quos ego* was the source of inspiration for a drawing of the *Quos ego* of [ca. 1600], part of a series of over fifty pen and ink drawings illustrating scenes from the *Aeneid* by the Flemish painter Sebastiaen Vranx (1574-1647). See Louisa Wood Ruby, "Sebastiaen Vranx as Illustrator of Virgil's 'Aeneid,'" *Old Master Drawings* 28/1 (Spring, 1990), 54-73, esp. 68.

⁶³⁶ On the Raphael/Raimondi *Quos ego* see Christian K. Kleinbug, "Raphael's Quos Ego: forgotten document of the Renaissance Paragone," *Word and Image* vol. 28, issue 3 (2012), 287-301. Kleinbug interprets the work as a statement on the *paragone* between painting and sculpture. See also Konrad Oberhuber, ed., *The works of Marcantonio Raimondi and of his School*, Illustrated Bartsch 27, New York 1978, 352-I: 264.

⁶³⁷ The latter is the title used by the Metropolitan Museum for their version [31.31.2]. On this engraving, see especially Anne Bloemacher, "Raimondis Wettstreit mit der Malerei: Der Kupferstich im Zeitalter des erneuerten Topos der Verlebendigung" in *Raffael und Raimondi. Produktion und Intention der frühen Druckgraphik nach Raffael* (2017) 204-308. At the time of this dissertation's completion Bloemacher's book had not yet been published. I thank her for providing me with a word document of this chapter, whose page numbers it does not make sense to cite here. See also Landau in *The Genius of Venice*, 318, cat. no. 15; Maria Ruvoldt, *The Italian Renaissance Imagery of Inspiration: Metaphors of Sex, Sleep, and Dreams* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Innis Shoemaker, ed., with contributions by Elizabeth Broun, *The Engravings of Marcantonio Raimondi* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1981). The title the *Dream of Raphael* was given to the engraving by the eighteenth-century historian Carl Heinrich von Heineken, who assumed that it was made after Raphael. However, scholars have established more recently that it dates to Raimondi's time in Venice, before he began working with Raphael. Bloemacher, "Raimondis Wettstreit mit der Malerei."

that may or may not be reflected in a 1544 painting by Battista Dossi.⁶³⁸ It has also been argued that Raimondi designed the image himself as a pastiche of literary and stylistic references.⁶³⁹ The engraving depicts two women sleeping in the foreground of a stormy seascape. Their unconscious dream-states seem to be associated with the four chimerical monsters that crawl onto the brightly lit shore. As scholars have argued, such *capricci* were understood by artists and viewers as symbols of artistic fantasy, strengthening ennobling analogies between painting and poetry; Raimondi's engraving belonged to a flurry of images around 1500 that used fantastical or monstrous imagery to construct a visual discourse on the artistic imagination.⁶⁴⁰

The so-called *Dream of Raphael* is a precursor to the nocturnal seascape Raimondi depicts in his *Quos ego*. Both employ stark tonal contrasts that not only build relief but also convey unnatural illumination and rupture—the cloudy sky ripped into by lightning. Elemental chaos, dramatized by sharp discordant angles and jarring reflections, is associated in both with creatures of fantasy: the four chimerae, but also the four headwinds, disembodied fragments nestled in the stormcloud that rises from the sea. However, while in the feminized dream-space of the river Styx, death and destruction unfold unchecked, Neptune's realm is on the brink of being controlled.

The flood is the ultimate scene of erasure, sweeping bodies into the undifferentiated materiality of the world. Visualizing such an event involves a certain imaginative, mastering a tension between image and non-image. In the *Quos ego*, the latter is rendered not as negative space but as a palpable, threatening presence. Rubens's innovation was to connect this

⁶³⁸ Bloemacher, "Raimondis Wettstreit mit der Malerei."

⁶³⁹ Shoemaker/Broun, Maria Ruvoldt, *The Italian Renaissance Imagery of Inspiration* believes the design though it may have been inspired by Giorgione (*La Tempesta*) was Raimondi's own; Bloemacher, "Raimondis Wettstreit mit der Malerei."

⁶⁴⁰ See note 80, as above.

presence—the realm of Neptune—to his own wet drafting technique. Yet like Raimondi and Leonardo, he too directs attention to a region of jumbled half-images, where tonal fluctuations suggest but never quite cohere into bodies.⁶⁴¹ When illustrated, the *Quos ego* is a drama in which the survival of life-forms is paradoxically ensured by driving out specific personifications.

It may therefore not surprise us to learn that the Latin mythographer Fulgentius had etymologized Neptune as a visionary or an image-maker. In his *Mythologiae*, Fulgentius writes: “The third element, of water, they explained as Neptune, whom in Greek they also call Poseidon, for *pion idonan*, which in Latin means making shapes, for the reason that only this element makes for itself shapes of what things are in store [...]”⁶⁴² An analogy between the *Quos ego* scene in particular and the making of images can already be discerned in Virgil’s text. As Neptune’s spoken threat to the winds trails off, the god suddenly seems to address himself: “But first it is fit to restrain the moved waves” (*sed motos praestat componere fluctus*). The verb *componere* also meant to “compose” in a creative sense.⁶⁴³

The Neptune of the *Quos ego* also echoes one of the most powerful creative archetypes of antiquity, the demiurge who created the world by first wresting it from the primordial chaos and separating out the four elements. Narrated in the opening lines of the *Metamorphoses*, the scene was depicted in the many illustrated Ovids published in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, from which Rubens frequently drew inspiration.⁶⁴⁴

⁶⁴¹ On clouds and smoke as sites of graphic virtuosity in prints, Michael Gaudio, “Making Sense of Smoke: Engraving and Ornament in de Bry’s America,” in *Engraving the Savage: The New World and Techniques of Civilization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), ch. 2.

⁶⁴² Fabius Planciades Fulgentius, trans. Leslie George Whitbread, *Mythologies* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1971), 51.

⁶⁴³ On composition in art, see Frank Fehrenbach, “Komposition,” in *Metzler Lexikon Kunstwissenschaft*, ed. Ulrich Pfisterer (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2003), 178-181.

⁶⁴⁴ Rubens frequently drew inspiration from illustrated Ovids, especially the 1609 Dutch illustrated Ovid and the one published by the Plantijn Press in Antwerp in 1591. See Held, *Oil Sketches*, 281. As Elizabeth McGrath notes, “These works often specifically advertized themselves as aimed at artists [...]” Elizabeth McGrath,

Illustrations of the creation scene appear in such books' opening pages, just as Rubens's *Quos ego* formed part of the "Stage of Welcome" [figs. 70 a, b, c]. They show the maker of the world standing in a churning seascape, extending his arms toward the sky and clouds. Given this resemblance, it is worth examining the *Metamorphoses*' famous opening lines:

I want to speak about bodies changed into new forms. You, gods, since you are the ones who alter these, and all other things, inspire my attempt, and spin out a continuous thread of words, from the world's first origins to my own time. Before there was earth or sea or the sky that covers everything, Nature appeared the same throughout the whole world: what we call chaos: a raw confused mass, nothing but inert matter, badly combined discordant atoms of things, confused in the one place. [...] Though there was land and sea and air, it was unstable land, unswimmable water, air needing light. Nothing retained its shape, one thing obstructed another, because in the one body, cold fought with heat, moist with dry, soft with hard, and weight with weightless things.⁶⁴⁵

That Ovid makes chaos the starting point of the *Metamorphoses* is significant in itself. As scholars have argued, for Ovid and other authors, the primordial chaos meant both a pre-*iconic* and a pre-*linguistic* state.⁶⁴⁶ This made the demiurge analogous to the poet,⁶⁴⁷ who likewise creates not *ex nihilo* but with the pre-existing, unuttered and unwritten "raw materials" of thoughts and images that form in the mind. Moreover, as a world prior to images and words, the Ovidian chaos is also *irreproducible*.⁶⁴⁸

Rather than depictions of the primordial chaos itself, the *Quos ego* most resembles the scene that comes just after, when "the conflict was ended by a god and a greater order of nature" who split chaos into the four elements.⁶⁴⁹ As Richard Tarrant has pointed out, Ovid's description of chaos relies heavily on visual metaphors, emphasizing darkness and

"Rubens and Ovid," in *The Afterlife of Ovid*, ed. Peter Mack and John North (London: Institute of Classical Studies 2015), 159-179, note 159.

⁶⁴⁵ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I: 1-10. Translation from A.S. Kline, available online at <http://ovid.lib.virginia.edu/trans/Metamorph.htm#488381088>. On this passage, see Böhme, *Feuer, Wasser, Erde, Luft*, 33-38.

⁶⁴⁶ Böhme, *Feuer, Wasser, Erde, Luft*, 36.

⁶⁴⁷ See Richard Tarrant, "Chaos in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and its Neronian Influence," *Arethusa* 35/3 (Fall 2002), 349-360.

⁶⁴⁸ Böhme, *Feuer, Wasser, Erde, Luft*, 38.

⁶⁴⁹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, I: 32-51.

shapelessness.⁶⁵⁰ The shift from chaos to order is thus analogous to the earliest stages of pictorial relief. From there, the creator's intervention becomes more active and physical as he creates the four continents:

When whichever god it was had ordered and divided the mass, and collected it into separate parts, he first gathered the earth into a great ball so that it was uniform on all sides. Then he ordered the seas to spread and rise in waves in the flowing winds and pour around the coasts of the encircled land. He added springs and standing pools and lakes, and contained in shelving banks the widely separated rivers, some of which are swallowed by the earth itself, others of which reach the sea and entering the expanse of open waters beat against coastlines instead of riverbanks.⁶⁵¹

Ovid then describes the creation of the four winds:

There he ordered the clouds and vapours to exist, and thunder to shake the minds of human beings, and winds that create lightning-bolts and flashes [*illic et nebulas, illic consistere nubes iussit et humanas motura tonitrua mentes et cum fulminibus facientes fulgura ventos*]. The world's maker did not allow these, either, to possess the air indiscriminately; as it is they are scarcely prevented from tearing the world apart, each with its blasts steering a separate course: like the discord between brothers.⁶⁵²

As Tarrant points out, chaos is never truly eradicated from Creation: "as Ovid's poem continues, the clear-cut divisions established at the outset are undone or threatened at several levels. In the poem's early books, the boundaries between the elements themselves are breached in ways that reverse the original act of creation: Jupiter's flood obliterates the distinction between earth and water [...],⁶⁵³ and Phaethon's disastrous ride in the Sun-god's chariot comes near to returning the world to chaos [...]."⁶⁵⁴ The potential for reversals or relapses into chaos is first written into the bodies of the "clouds and vapors," which mingle water and air, and the *winds*, which spark storms that temporarily return the world to its original chaotic state.

Rubens had enacted such a reversal in his earlier paintings of sea storms. In the *Quos*

⁶⁵⁰ Tarrant, 351.

⁶⁵¹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, I: 32-51.

⁶⁵² Ovid, *Metamorphoses*. I: 52-68.

⁶⁵³ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1.291: *iamque mare et tellus ullum discrimen habebant*, "and now the sea and land had no distinction."

⁶⁵⁴ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 2.298-99: *si freta, si terrae pereunt, si regia caeli, / in chaos antiquum confundimur*, "if the seas and lands and the palace of heaven perish, / we are sunk into primeval Chaos."

ego, his Neptune mimics the demiurge stepping in to restore the original order. This was true of earlier depictions of the scene as well. Yet while Raimondi's Neptune, pulling at the reigns as he gazes up at the clouds, confronts the amorphous *visually*, Rubens's Neptune drops the reigns and powerfully extends his hand into the sky. The storm gust that in the oil sketch issues from his hand implies a more direct, physical connection between his body and the images that appear and disappear in the clouds. This is in keeping with the shift we have seen in the seventeenth century toward understanding the amorphous materials of painting as constitutive elements in artistic fantasy.

Rubens's *Quos ego* oil sketch can therefore be understood not only as a political allegory, but also as an essay on the interconnected fluidity of the imagination and the medium. In this, it is also a statement of the power of the painter to shape political realities. Both here and in the image's pendant, the *Meeting of the Two Ferdinands at Nördlingen*, Rubens depicts water deities that activate the cycle of images through which the Cardinal Infante would pass. Just as the Danube's urn spills out a stream whose colors clothe the princes in the background, Neptune both summons and drives away the winds—specters that themselves have the power to move and shape reality. For Rubens, it is not the prince but the painter, as Neptune, who knows the hidden forces that drive appearances and events, and uses this knowledge to physically intervene in and re-create the world.

Rubens's Neptune is not merely a "shape-maker." Rather, he is suggested as a *collaborator* with the forces, both material and immaterial, that move through nature and perpetually cause both creation and destruction. Indeed, the reason the winds are not fully at his command—the reason he has to shake his fist at them—is that his dominion over them is contested: they belong equally to Aeolus, as creatures not of water but of air. They can be seen as belonging to the category of personified spirits in art that also included putti or

spiritelli.⁶⁵⁵ In brewing the storm, Boreas has transgressively delved into Neptune's element as well, mixing water and air and reversing the original separation. One of the most peculiar aspects of the *Quos ego* sketch is indeed the way Boreas *mirrors* Neptune, glancing back with his intimation of a grey beard and bare chest.

“*You whom I...!*” Rubens lets his speaker reverberate in the spirited matter of the sky.

⁶⁵⁵ See Summers, “*Aria II*” (as above, note 609).

Conclusion: Rubens's Fertility

Splash! In a painting of 1910, Louis Bérourd (1852-1930)—perhaps most famous as the person who discovered the theft of the *Mona Lisa* when he showed up to sketch it and found its wall empty—depicts a mustachioed painter sitting in the Louvre, making a study of Rubens's *Disembarkation of Marie de Medici at Marseilles* (1622-24) [fig. 71]. But something has gone awry: the serpentine bodies of the Naiads, twisting in the watery lower section, have physically spilled forward out of the painting, splashing water into the space of the gallery. Tipping back in his chair, the painter awaits getting wet with a mix of horror and rapture.⁶⁵⁶

Rubens's art was also characterized as both excessive and liquid by the Dutch poet and painter Jan Veth, in a book of criticism he published in 1911, just one year after Bérourd's painting was made. Veth begins his chapter on Rubens by conceding that the painter's art is just *too* much for many viewers of his age. In this, he displays the approach common in early Rubens monographs of defensively listing the painter's many "excesses" and "faults" before proceeding to his art:⁶⁵⁷

We can perhaps understand Papa Ingres when he claims that whenever he had to pass through the Marie de Medici gallery, he spread out his umbrella to shield his eyes from so much offensiveness, more easily than we can grasp the rapturous admiration that Delacroix carried around with him [for Rubens] his whole life.⁶⁵⁸

The anecdote links Rubens's stylistic excess with the fleshiness of his female figures. Distaste

⁶⁵⁶ Louis Bérourd's *Les joies de l'Inondation (dans la Galerie Médicis)* was sold at Sotheby's New York on 19th Century European Art, 04 November 2011.

⁶⁵⁷ See e.g. Emile Michel, *Rubens: His Life, His Work, and His Time* (1899), vol. 2, 305: "It is not surprising that with his fertility of invention, and his superabundant production, Rubens should have his defects, that he should sometimes lack taste and proportion. His monsters are often more absurd than terrible; his allegories, more subtle than beautiful, have neither the sobriety nor the style to which the great Italians have accustomed us. Some of his figures are of excessive triviality, and might be suppressed with advantage; other present themselves in strange accoutrements, overladen with attributes, or shamelessly display their exuberant rotundities. The muscularities of his Hercules verge on caricature, and he represents *Charity* and *Nature* in the ugliest guise, with two rows of breasts, placed one above the other."

⁶⁵⁸ Jan Veth, *Im Schatten alter Kunst* (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1911), 102. Translation mine.

for Rubens had indeed long been connected with gendered notions of style. This went back to some of the earliest criticism of Rubens's art, including the eighteenth-century debates in France about Rubens's "colorism," which had implicitly cast Rubens's style as feminine. Today, having a distaste for Rubens can also imply taking a moral stance against the type of materialism or splendor that his art epitomizes, namely the idea of paintings as glorifications of European imperial power and wealth.

The scene of poor "Papa Ingres" defending himself from the Marie de Medici cycle with an umbrella resonates, first, with Rubens's ubiquity—how difficult it is, for painters working in any European figural tradition, to ever fully avoid his influence. But it also speaks to the forms of excess particular to Rubens's style. Indeed, if Rembrandt's paintings exceed in terms of their actual physicality—their heavily impastoed, almost sculptural surfaces—Rubens's excess is imaginary. Both Veth and Bérout craft a "punchline" about Rubens in the form of precipitation, literalizing a superfluity that is in fact entirely virtual. Veth makes the same joke elsewhere, where he claims that the Rubens gallery in Antwerp had been nicknamed the "meat market" (*Fleischballe*).⁶⁵⁹ In the paintings we have explored in this study, wherever Rubens does break the material surface of the images, it is a pictorial "moment" often loaded with meaning. For example, in the *Head of Medusa*, the impasto occurs in the white of the gorgon's glaring eye—as if to articulate the moment in which it has finally become a sculpture. In *Deucalion and Pyrrha*, impastoed yellow streaks across the sky just below the rock thrown by Pyrrha, as if it will deliver and implant the warmth of sun into the earth. However, as we have seen, an even more characteristic technique of Rubens, which was in keeping with Antwerp tradition, was to paint so *thinly* as to reveal the priming or

⁶⁵⁹ Veth, 102. This characterization was echoed more recently in the title of a review of a Rubens exhibition at the National Gallery in London; see David Howarth: "Rubens: the Master Butcher," review of "Rubens: A Master in the Making," exhibition held at National Gallery in London, *Apollo* 162 (Dec., 2005).

doodverf. If both Rubens and Rembrandt sometimes imply an elision between the physical surfaces of paint and human flesh, Rubens more typically does so by nuancing *thin* surfaces into astonishing luminosity and depth, creating illusions of pulsing, glowing, reddening matter *beneath* the surface. His tendency to fill space with whirling drapery, atmospheric phenomena (clouds, smoke), or flowing water likewise makes his images resemble living organisms. An elision between the painting and a living human body is one implied target of Bérout's parody, in which the twisting bodies of the nereids seem to activate the internal fluids of Rubens's image. (However, though the metaphor of the painting as a body might suggest an ontological unity, Rubens's paintings of the 1610s and 1620s also teem with still lifes executed by his collaborators, defining the image's value as accumulative rather than integrative.) Rubens's penchant for high tonal contrast, a saturated and varied palette, and robust figures create an overwhelming sense of *presence* that his illusions of motion 'activate': a centrifugal force makes his figures appear on the brink of falling out of the image. The projecting of figures or objects into the viewer's space is a much remarked upon characteristic of baroque "theatricality," identified particularly with the art of Caravaggio. By contrast, Rubens tends to dramatize the tensions between his painting's presence, and its fictiveness or interiority. This is exemplified by his large canvas painting of the *Quos ego*, where drops of water shimmer on the nereid's arm in the foreground—suggesting they lay on the surface of the canvas—while tiny ships recede into the glowing, distant horizon. Rubens constructs *virtual* worlds coursed through with light and heat, bodies coursed through with blood. This impression of ontological distinctness makes his images appear both more and *less* real—asserting their viability as *stand-ins* for reality. As we have seen, moreover, Rubens consistently demonstrated his powers at enlivenment by depicting petrification and death, which he visualized as the quasi-biological process of being drained

of red. In the *Head of Medusa*, this life force was identified with the blood of the gorgon, a symbolic matter that invokes both paint and Rubens's name ("reddening"). If this implies Rubens as a life force that lends spirit to flesh, it also suggests that painting's raw materials themselves possess an inherent generative impulse analogous to those of nature. By the 1630s, Rubens's conception of the relationship between the artist and his materials would become more heroic; he would depict, in *Deucalion and Pyrrha* and the *Quos ego*, elderly yet powerful bodies physically throwing or manipulating matter into bodies. Yet even in these later images, the fundamental conceit of the *Head of Medusa* prevails. Rather than someone who works after nature, Rubens often characterized the artist as embedded *within* nature's flux, in touch with its most primary forces.

Rubens astonishes not only with his imagery of copiousness (swags bursting with fruit, statues lactating, urns spilling out water), but also with the copiousness of his imagery—the sheer abundance and variety of his output. Anna Jameson articulates how these two aspects of Rubens's art intertwine, in her introduction to the English edition of Waagen's monograph. Praising Rubens's artistic fertility, she echoes his own depictions of river gods pouring out their images:

Look but at the thirteen hundred pictures, all the product of his own vehement and abounding fancy; in great part the work of his own right hand. In these multifarious creations, embracing almost every aspect of life and nature, what amazing versatility of power as displayed in the conception of his subjects,—what fertility of invention in their various treatment! What ardent, breathing, blooming life,—what pomp and potency of colour and light, have been poured forth on his canvass!⁶⁶⁰

If Netherlandish painters, from Van Eyck to Bosch to Bruegel, were renowned for their skilled assimilations of the material world, in the fullest imaginable range of its optical phenomena, Rubens also seems to have tried to rival nature in his sheer productivity.

⁶⁶⁰ Anna Jameson, introduction, in Waagen, *Peter Paul Rubens: His Life and Genius*, 4. We might note, again, the language of inundation.

Rubens's own productivity was facilitated by his legendary work ethic—he was said to have awoken every morning at 4 a.m. and painted until evening—but also by the structure of his workshop, whose management we might consider another kind of creative skill. Though large painting workshops had a long tradition in Antwerp—the workshops of Frans Floris, Pieter Cocke van Aelst, and Pieter Brueghel the Younger, for instance, come to mind—the “Rubens factory” far surpassed any of these. The aforementioned Swedish physician Otto Sterling, who visited Rubens's studio in Antwerp in 1621, describes an astonishing sight:

We also saw a large chamber without windows, but lit from a large hole in the ceiling that cast the light into the middle of the room. In this chamber sat many young painters, everyone working on different pieces that had been drawn with chalk for them in advance by Mr. Rubens, and different coloured patches of paint placed here and there on the surface. The young painters had to work up these paintings with colours, and finally Mr. Rubens would perfect and complete the paintings with his own brushstrokes and colours. I was told all these paintings would be considered Rubens' work, and thus he has become exceedingly rich, and kings and princes have given him great gifts and jewels.⁶⁶¹

Two aspects of Sterling's account are noteworthy. First, Sterling emphasizes the absence of windows; the natural world is shut out, channeled into the studio in a single beam of light. The workshop space's artificiality is the precondition for creating entirely new works. Second, Sterling claims that it is Rubens who provides the final “brushstrokes and colors” and the rudimentary chalk drawings—the skin and the bones, as it were—while his assistants fill in the rest. Rubens transcends the technical limits of his own body, physically incorporating his students' work into his own.⁶⁶² Yet as we have seen, Rubens also collaborated side-by-side with master specialists, whose work he acknowledged and even helped market to collectors.⁶⁶³ We might note how well such a conception of image-making,

⁶⁶¹ On this story, see Logan, “Rubens as a Teacher” (as above, note 65), 250-252.

⁶⁶² Sterling's account resonates with remarks Rubens made in a letter of April 28, 1618 to Sir Dudley Carleton offering him works for sale, in which he lists a painting “done by the best of my pupils, and the whole retouched by my hand.”

⁶⁶³ In the same letter to Carleton, Rubens lists his *Prometheus Bound* and clearly states that the “eagle” was done by Snyder. As Julius Held has pointed out, this shows that Antwerp collectors “wanted to know what they were getting.”

the studio as a relentlessly productive space, resonates with *Deucalion and Pyrrha*, in which the two rhythmically working body-makers allow their works-in-progress to leave their hands—though in this case, their collaborator, who adds the finishing touches, is raw matter or nature herself. Contrary to how Svetlana Alpers characterized Rubens’s authority in *The Making of Rubens*, Rubens consistently fashioned himself in relation to other artists, an openness that has tended over time to augment his persona rather than diminish it.

Rubens also fashioned his creative persona through his works, not just in collaboration with other painters but also in relation to other, rival creative paradigms. The most important of these was nature, whose creative processes Rubens visualized in allegories of spontaneous generation: the *Head of Medusa*, the *Finding of Erichthonius*, *Deucalion and Pyrrha*, and the *Quos ego*. All of these works thematize nature’s oscillations between form, matter, and spirit. Another alternative creator for Rubens was the sculptor, whose “killing creativity” he criticized in the *Head of Medusa* but whose quasi-organic technique of modeling he also emulated in *Deucalion and Pyrrha*. Yet another were Antwerp’s emergent still-life specialists, against whom Rubens defined his own enterprise of figure painting in spectacles of violent human-animal struggle.

In my first and second chapters, I connected the *Head of Medusa* to the “technical consciousness” of Antwerp painters in the 1610s, a decade when Rubens and his Antwerp collaborators were busily fashioning the *copia* of painting. I compared the *Head of Medusa* to another Rubens-Snyders collaboration, *Prometheus Bound*, which likewise characterizes collaboration as violence. In each case, a re-generative “wound” opens up in the interstices between hands, locating artistic agency not primarily in the body of the artist, but in the raw materials of painting, which are analogized with the *prima materia* of nature. Such a concept was broadly in keeping with the Counter-Reformation imperative to restore life to matter,

and to images. As I argued, it also resonated with Rubens's identifications with the color red, whose presence or absence appears to infuse or drain away life in his works.

Matter's formative impulses fascinated collectors around 1600. Specimens with evocative deformations or "accidental" images were prized as evidence of nature's artistry. But this analogy also worked the other way: artists attempted to collapse the difference between their products and those of nature. This can be seen not only in artistic practices typically associated with the Kunst- und Wunderkammer, such as metal life-casting or painting on marble, but also in more traditional spaces of Antwerp oil painting. The *Head of Medusa*, a sculpture-in-progress erupting into a painting-in-progress whose creator is *nature herself*, is a stunning example.

The second chapter focused on Rubens's depictions of Artemis Ephesus. Rebecca Zorach has shown that in the French Renaissance, this ancient statue, an emblem of nature's copiousness, was connected to technological and biological metaphors of copying and reproduction. Antwerp painters likewise shaped an aesthetics of copiousness and copying that was specific to their art. Crafting images of astonishing hybridity and multiplicity, they attempted to characterize painting as a universal technology. I argued that this was predicated on an analogy between painting and the *prima materia*, a link powerfully forged in the *Head of Medusa* and the *Finding of Erichthonius*. Each depicts a sculptural fragment—symbolic of nature as the mysterious source of all things—"giving birth" through a painterly liquid (blood, water).

Rubens would later make a similar association in his oil sketch of *Deucalion and Pyrrha* (1636), a work that hinged the first half of the dissertation to the second. The latter was centered on Rubens's late Antwerp period and specifically on the *Quos ego* and the *Meeting of the Two Ferdinands at Nördlingen*. All three of these mythological images likewise thematize

ikonopoesis: the “making of images of living things” from raw matter.⁶⁶⁴ But they do so in different ways than the *Head of Medusa*. One difference is that in these later works, *natura naturans* is given helping hands: gods or titans who physically intervene in the earth’s history, and who I argue more directly allegorize the painter. In the Habsburg imperial context in which Rubens often worked, the ability of such figures to shape the world in a material or primary sense also lent them political agency. Still, the conception of artistic creativity such figures embody is not just that of a single figure heroically overcoming or shaping matter. Rather, in these works, matter often appears as a double or stand-in of the artist. The embodiment of this idea is Boreas, the rebellious North wind in Rubens’s *Quos ego* oil sketch. Composed of water and air, underpainting and brushwork, he glances back at Neptune—whom he physically resembles—as if mirroring him.

Throughout this study I have subjected Rubens’s images to close readings. Such an approach is open to criticisms of imposing meaning upon images subjectively or anachronistically. However, many art historians use their intuitions—what strikes them as meaningful, strange, or even beautiful about images in the process of viewing them—to guide their directions of research, rather than the other way around. As long as those intuitions are historically informed, it is possible to take risks and leaps in one’s thinking about images, and even to arrive at meanings that were not necessarily intended by the artist, while still working with the *stuff* of history.

Most of the paintings discussed in the second half of the dissertation were made for large cycles that were displayed in spaces of Habsburg imperial power. Future work on Rubens’s oil sketch for *Deucalion and Pyrrha* could better integrate my interpretation of this work within the rest of the Torre de la Parada cycle. In the case of the *Quos ego* and the

⁶⁶⁴ Again, I quote Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux; as above, note 20.

Meeting of the Two Ferdinands at Nördlingen, I discussed how these pendants activated the *Pompa introitus Ferdinandi* and the ruler's procession through images. As historians have argued, such triumphal entries in the Spanish Netherlands were spectacles of negotiation between Habsburg rulers and local civic authorities. This supports my thesis that Rubens—one of the most powerful civic authorities of Antwerp, and moreover the *author* of the entire spectacle—would have allegorized that authority somehow in the cycle. Bodies of water were a particularly resonant choice. Drawing from Alpers's thesis that Rubens identified his creativity with his figures of the drunken Silenus, I posited Neptune, Oceanus, and river gods as figures more in keeping with Rubens's creative persona: elegant and virile (always shown in the company of women), personifying not bacchic frenzy but a balance between abandonment and mastery, chaos and control.

My third chapter also argued that Rubens's oil sketch for the *Quos ego* modeled art-theoretical ideas about the fluidity of the imagination and the medium. Rubens's oil *modelli* were meant to be scrutinized closely. They may have been shown to Rubens's erudite friends who were interested in his working process. Yet their primary audience was other painters, who may have valued them as both utilitarian and aesthetic objects. Scholars have emphasized the extreme efficiency of Rubens's workshop, a hierarchical production line in which preparatory works simply served as fodder for finished ones. The "cloudy" figure of Boreas, which strongly evokes the theoretical topos of the "image made by chance" and which is emphasized only in the oil sketch, suggests that Rubens's oil sketches may also have been sites in which art theory was performed and exchanged. In seventeenth-century Dutch art theory, this topos would become more closely linked to the idea of spontaneity in landscape painting as well as to wet-in-wet painting. A precocious collector of oil sketches himself, Rubens may have considered his own oil sketches as future collectibles that could

enter elite contexts of viewing. In other words, a sketch like the *Quos ego* may have been created with its own critical reception in mind. The sketch's subject matter would have allowed it to demonstrate the qualities of spontaneity and fluidity in painting. Rubens may thus have intended it to serve the purposes of technical instruction and conceptual education in the workshop.

Works cited (primary sources)

- De Acosta, Joseph. *Historia Natural y Moral de las Indias*. Seville, 1590.
- Aeschylus. *Prometheus Bound*. Translated by Janet Case. London: J. M. Dent and Co., 1905.
- Apollodorus. *Bibliotheca*. Translated by Michael Simpson. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1976.
- Aristotle. *Poetics*. Translated by Seth Benardete and Michael David. South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2002.
- Bellori, Giovan Pietro. *Le vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti moderni*. Rome: Mascardi, 1672.
- Cellini, Benvenuto. *The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini*. Translated by John A. Symonds. Oxford: Phaidon, 1983.
- Conti, Natale. *Mythologiae*. Venice, 1567. Reprint: New York: Garland Pub., 1976.
- Dolce, Lodovino. *Dialogo della pittura*. Vence, 1557.
- Félibien, André. *Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellens peintres anciens et modernes*. Paris, 1666-1668.
- Fludd, Robert. *Utriusque cosmi, Maioris scilicet et Minoris, metaphysica, physica, atque technica Historia*. Oppenheim, 1617.
- Fulgentius. *Mythologies (Mitologiarum libri tres)*. In *Fulgentius the Mythographer*, translated by Leslie George Whitbread. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1971.
- Gaurico, Pomponio. *De Sculptura*. Translated by Heinrich Brockhaus. Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1886.
- Gevaerts, Jean Gaspard. *Pompa introitus Ferdinandi Austriaci Hispaniarum Infantis [...]*. Antwerp, 1641.
- Harvey, William. *Disputations Touching the Generation of Animals*. Translated by Gweneth Whitteredge. Oxford and Boston: Blackwell Mosby, 1981.
- Hesiod. *Theogony*. Translated by Glenn W. Most. Loeb Classical Library. 2014.
- Hoogstraten, Samuel van. *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst*. Rotterdam, 1678.
- Horace. *Ars Poetica*. Translated by H. Rushton Fairclough. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961.
- Houbraken, Arnold. *De groote schonburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en Schilderessen*. 3 vols. Amsterdam, 1718-1721. Reprint: Amsterdam, 1976.
- Hyginus. *Fabularum liber*. Basel, 1535. Reprint: New York: Garland Pub., 1976.

- Junius, Franciscus. *De schilder-konst der oude*. Middelburg, 1641.
- Leeuwenhoek, Antonie van. *Ontledingen and ontdekkingen van levende dierkens in de deel-deelen van verscheide dieren, vogelen en visschen*. Leiden: Boutesteyn, 1686.
- Lucan. *The Civil War*. Translated by J. D. Duff. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1928.
- Lucretius. *De rerum Natura*. Translated by William Ellert Leonard. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1916.
- Pollux, Justus. *Onomasticon. The Greek Classics*, vol. XIX. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016.
- Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Trans. A. S. Kline. 2000. Online edition:
<http://ovid.lib.virginia.edu/trans/Ovhome.htm>
- De Piles, Roger. *Abrege de la vie des peintres*. Paris, 1699.
- _____. *Cours de Peinture pars principes*. Paris, 1708.
- Plutarch. *Moralia*. Translated by Frank C. Babbitt. London: Heinemann, 1960.
- Philostratus, trans. Blaise de Vigenere. *Les images ou tableaux de platte peinture des deux Philostrates sophistes grecs et les statues de Callistrate*. Paris, 1614.
- Pliny the Elder. *Historia naturalis IX*.
- Pliny the Elder, trans. Philemon Holland. *The history of the world: Commonly called, the naturall historie of C. Plinius Secundus*. London, 1601.
- Ripa, Cesare. *Iconologia overo Descrittione Dell'imagini Universali cavate dall'Antichita' et da altri luoghi*, 2nd ed. Rome, 1603.
- Sandrart, Joachim. *Teutsche Academie der Edlen Bau-Bild- und Mablerey-Künste*. Nuremberg, 1675.
- Seneca. *Declamations (Controversiae)*. Translated by Michael Winterbottom. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974.
- Topsell, Edward. *History of Four-Footed Beasts and Serpents and Insects*. London, 1658.
- Vasari, Giorgio. *Le vite de' piu' eccelenti architetti, pittori, et scultori Italiani*. Translated by Gaston du C. De Vere. London: Macmillan, 1912.
- Vasari, Giorgio. *Le vite de' piu' eccelenti architetti, pittori, et scultori Italiani*. Translated by Herbert P. Horne. London: At the Sign of the Unicorn, 1903.
- Walton, Isaak. *The Compleat Angler, or the Contemplative Man's Recreation*. London, 1653.

Works cited (secondary sources)

- Adams, Alison, and Marleen van der Weij, eds. *Emblems of the Low Countries: A Book Historical Perspective*. Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2003.
- Aikema, Bernard. "Rubens's 'meraviglia'." In *Munuscula amicorum: Contributions on Rubens and his Colleagues in Honour of Hans Vlieghe*, edited by Katlijne van der Stighelen, vol. 1., 213-232. Turnhout: Brepols, 2006.
- Alpers, Svetlana. *The Decoration of the Torre de la Parada*. Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard, pt. 9. London and New York: Phaidon, 1971.
- _____. *The Making of Rubens*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.
- _____. "Manner and Meaning in Some Rubens Mythologies." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 30 (1967): 272-295.
- _____. *Rembrandt's Enterprise: the Studio and the Market*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- Arnold-Biucchi, Carmen. "Coins and Classical Imagery in the Time of Rubens: The Stage of Welcome in Caspar Gevartius's *Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi*." In *Art, Music, and Spectacle in the Age of Rubens: the Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi*, edited by Anna C. Knaap and Michael C. J. Putnam, 143-165. London and Turnhout: Brepols, 2013.
- Vander Auwera, Joost. "Rubens' Adoration of the Magi in Light of its Original Antwerp Destination." In *The Adoration of the Magi*, edited by A. Vergara, 27-53. Madrid: Museo del Prado, 2004.
- _____, ed. *Rubens: A Genius at Work: the Works of Peter Paul Rubens in the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium Reconsidered*. Tiel: Lannoo, 2007.
- Baadj, Nadia. *Jan van Kessel I (1626-1679): Crafting a Natural History of Art in Early Modern Antwerp*. London: Harvey Miller, 2016.
- _____. "A World of Materials in a Cabinet without Drawers: Reframing Jan van Kessel's *The four parts of the world*." *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 62/1, 2012: 202-237.
- Babina, Natalya, ed. *Rubens, Van Dyck & Jordaens: Flemish Painters from the Hermitage*. Amsterdam: Hermitage Amsterdam, 2011.
- Balis, Arnout. "Facetten van de Vlaamse dierenschilderkunst van de 15de tot de 17de eeuw." In *Het Aards Paradijs. Dierenvoorstellingen in de Nederlanden van de 16de en 17de eeuw*, edited by Carl van de Velde, 37-55. Antwerp: Koninklijke Maatschappij voor Dierkunde van Antwerpen, 1982.
- _____. "Rubens en zijn atelier: een probleemstelling." In *Rubens: Een genie aan het werk: rondom de Rubenswerken in de Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België*, edited by Joost Vander Auwera, Arnout Balis, Marc Vingerhoedt, Nathalie Verbruggen, and Catherine Robberechts, 30-51. Tiel: Lannoo, 2007.

- _____. "Rubens und Inventio: Der Beitrag seines *theoretischen Studienbuches*." In *Rubens passioni: Kultur der Leidenschaften im Barock*, edited by Ulrich Heinen and Andreas Thielemann, 11-40. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001.
- _____. "De stroom en de zee: De iconografie van Scaldis en Neptunus in de Antwerpse kunst." *Tijdschrift voor geschiedenis* 123/4 (2010): 505-519.
- Baltrušaitis, Jurgis. *Aberrations: An Essay on the Legend of Forms*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989.
- Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." In *Image – Music – Text*, translated by Stephen Heath, 142-148. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977.
- Baskins, Cristelle Louise. "Echoing Narcissus in Alberti's 'Della Pittura'." *The Oxford Art Journal* 16/1 (1993): 25-33.
- Bass, Marisa. "Gosaert's 'Neptune and Amphitrite' reconsidered." *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 35/2 (2011): 61-83.
- Bauer, Linda and George. "Artist Inventories and the Language of the Oil Sketch." *The Burlington Magazine* 141/1158 (Sept. 1999): 520-30
- Beldon Scott, John. "The Meaning of Perseus and Andromeda in the Farnese Gallery and on the Rubens House." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 51 (1988): 250-260.
- Belkin, Kristin Lohse. *Rubens: Copies and Adaptations from Renaissance and Later Artists: German and Netherlandish Artists*. Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard, Part XXVI, vol. 1. London, 2009.
- Van Beneden, Ben, ed. *Rubens in Private: the Master Portrays his Family*. Catalogue of an exhibition at the Rubenshuis, Antwerp, March 28–June 28, 2015. London: Thames & Hudson, 2015.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*. Translated by John Osborne. London and New York: Verso, 1998.
- Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.
- Berti, Luciano, ed. *Gli Uffizi: Catalogo Generale*. Florence: Centro Di, 1979.
- Bevers, Holm. "Die Meerwesen vom Antwerpener Rathaus." *Jaarboek Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen* (1982): 97-117.
- Bodart, Didier. *Rubens e la pittura fiamminga del Seicento / Rubens et la peinture flamande du XVIIème siècle dans les collections publiques florentines*. Florence: Centro Di, 1977.
- Bohde, Daniela, and Mechthild Fend, eds. *Weder Haut noch Fleisch: das Inkarnat in der Kunstgeschichte*. Neue Frankfurter Forschungen zur Kunst, vol. 3. Berlin: Mann, 2007.
- Von Bode, William. *Great Masters of Dutch and Flemish Painting*. Translated by Margaret L. Clarke. London: Duckworth, 1909.
- Böhme, Gernot and Hartmut. *Feuer, Wasser, Erde, Luft: Eine Kulturgeschichte der Elemente*. Munich: C. H. Beck, 1996.

- Boussard, Joseph François. *Les leçons de P. P. Rubens: Ou, fragments épistolaires sur la religion, la peinture et la politique: Extraits d'une correspondance inédite*. Brussels: T. Lejeune, 1838.
- Bredekamp, Horst. *The Lure of Antiquity and the Cult of the Machine: the Kunstammer and the Evolution of Nature, Art, and Technology*. Translated by Allison Brown. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1995.
- _____. *Theorie des Bildakts*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2010.
- Brenninkmeyer- de Rooij, Beatrijs. "Zeldzame bloemen, 'Fatta tutti del naturel' door Jan Brueghel I." *Oud-Holland* 104 (1990): 218-248.
- Burckhardt, Jacob. *Rubens*. Vienna and Leipzig: Bernina, 1937.
- Burioni, Matteo. "Ground und *campo*. Die Metaphorik des Bildgrundes in der frühen Neuzeit." In *Der Grund. Das Feld des Sichtbaren*, edited by Gottfried Böehm and Matteo Burioni, 95-149. Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2012.
- Burke, Seán. *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida*. 2nd ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998.
- Büttner, Nils, and Heinen, Ulrich. *Barocke Leidenschaften*. Catalogue of an exhibition held at Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig, Aug. 8-Oct. 31, 2004. Munich: Hirmer, 2004.
- Cammarella Falsitta, Loretta. *Cellini, Bandinelli, Ammannati: La Fontana del Nettuno in Piazza della Signoria a Firenze*. Milan: Skira, 2009.
- Campbell, Malcolm, and Gino Corti. "Ammannati's Neptune fountain in Florence and the Spanish Armada." In *Essays Presented to Myron P. Gilmore*, edited by Sergio Bertelli and Gloria Ramakus, vol. 2. Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1978.
- Caneva, Caterina. *La Medusa del Caravaggio Restaurata*. Rome: Retablo, 2002.
- Cheney, Liana. *The Homes of Giorgio Vasari*. New York: P. Lang, 2006.
- Clijmans, Frederik. *The Reconstruction of the House and Studio of Rubens*. Antwerp, 1948.
- Cutler, Lucy C. "Virtue and Diligence: Jan Brueghel I and Federico Borromeo." *Nederlands kunsthistorisch jaarboek* 54 (2004): 202-227.
- De Clippel, Karolien. "'Bacchanaal' of 'vastenavond': what's in a name? Receptie en classificatie van Rubens' bacchinese voorstellingen in de zeventiende eeuw." In *Munuscula amicorum: Contributions on Rubens and his Colleagues in Honour of Hans Vlieghe*, edited by Katlijne van der Stighelen, 123-146. Turnhout: Brepols, 2006.
- _____. "Rough Bacchus, neat Andromeda. Rubens's mythologies and the meaning of manner." In *Classical mythology in the Netherlands in the age of Renaissance and Baroque*, edited by Carl van de Velde, 95-102. Proceedings of a conference held in Antwerp, 19-21 May 2005. Leuven and Walpole: Peeters, 2009.

- Cody, Steven J. "Rubens and the 'Smell of Stone': The Translation of the Antique and the Emulation of Michaelangelo." *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 20/3 (Winter, 2013): 39-55.
- Cohen, Sarah. "Rubens's France: Gender and Personification in the Marie de Medici Cycle." *The Art Bulletin* 85/3 (Sept. 2003): 490-522.
- Cole, Michael. "Cellini's Blood." *The Art Bulletin* 81 (1999): 215-235.
- _____. "The Demonic Arts and the Origin of the Medium." *The Art Bulletin* 84/4 (Dec., 2002): 621-640.
- Cole, Michael, and Mary Pardo. *Inventions of the Studio: Renaissance to Romanticism* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.
- Conticelli, Valentina, ed. *Medusa: il mito, l'antico e i Medici*. Florence and Rome: Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali, 2008.
- Corretti, Christine. "Cellini's *Perseus and Medusa*: Configurations of the Body of Sate." Ph.D. dissertation, Case Western Reserve University, 2011.
- Cranston, Jodi. *The Muddled Mirror: Materiality and Figuration in Titian's Later Paintings*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010.
- Davidson Reid, Jane. *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts, 1300s-1900s*, vol. 2. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- DaCosta Kaufmann, Thomas. "Remarks on the Collections of Rudolf II: The Kunstkammer as a Form of Representation." *Art Journal* 38/1 (Autumn, 1978): 22-28.
- Davies, Randall. "An Inventory of the Duke of Buckingham's Pictures, etc., at York House in 1635." *Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 10 (1906): 376.
- Davis, Lucy. "A Gift From Nature: Rubens's 'Bacchus' and Artistic Creativity." *Nederlands kunsthistorisch jaarboek* 55.2004 (2006): 226-243.
- D'Elia, Una Roman. "Tintoretto, Aretino, and the Speed of Creation." *Word & Image* 20.2004: 206-218.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*. Translated by Tom Conley. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
- Dickey, Stephanie S., and Herman Roodenburg, eds. *The Passions in the Arts of the Early Modern Netherlands*. *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 60 (2010).
- Didi-Huberman, Georges. "The Art of Not Describing: Vermeer – the Detail and the Patch." *History of the Human Sciences* vol. 2, no. (June, 1989): 135-169.
- _____. *Fra Angelico: Dissemblance and Figuration*. Translated by Jane Marie Todd. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Eaker, Adam. "Van Dyck between Master and Model." *The Art Bulletin* 97.2 (June, 2015): 173-191.

- Ebben, Maurits, and Simon Groenveld, eds. *De scheldedelta als verbinding en scheiding tussen noord en zuid, 1500-1800*. Maastricht: Shaker, 2007.
- Van Eck, Caroline. "Animation and Petrification in Rubens's *Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi*." In *Art, Music, and Spectacle in the Age of Rubens: the Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi*, edited by Anna C. Knaap and Michael C. J. Putnam, 143-165. London and Turnhout: Brepols, 2013.
- _____. *Art, Agency and Living Presence: From the Animated Image to the Excessive Object*. Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2014.
- _____. *Levende beelden: Kunst werken en kijken*. Leiden and Brussels: Leiden University Press, 2011.
- Elkins, James. *The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.
- _____. "Marks, Traces, 'Traits', 'Orli', and 'Splendores': Nonsemiotic Elements in Pictures." *Critical Inquiry* 21/4 (1995): 822-860 .
- _____. *What Painting Is: How to Think about Oil Painting, Using the Language of Alchemy*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Ennen, Leonard. *Ueber den Geburtsort von Peter Paul Rubens*. Cologne: M. DuMont-Schauberg, 1861.
- Farago, Claire J. *Leonardo da Vinci's Paragone: A Critical Interpretation with a New Edition of the Text in the Codex Urbinas*. Brill Studies in Intellectual History 25. Leiden: Brill, 1992.
- Fehrenbach, Frank. "Compositio corporum: Renaissance der Bio Art." In *Vorträge aus dem Warburg-Haus*, edited by Wolfgang Kemp et al, 131-176. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2006.
- _____. *Leonardos Vermächtnis?: Kenneth Clark und die Deutungsgeschichte der 'Sintflutzeichnungen'*. Marburg: Verlag des Kunstgeschichtlichen Instituts der Phillips-Universität Marburg, 2001.
- _____. "The Unmoved Mover." In *Art, Music, and Spectacle in the Age of Rubens: the Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi*, edited by Anna C. Knaap and Michael C. J. Putnam, 117-142. London and Turnhout: Brepols, 2013.
- Fend, Mechthild. "Inkarnat oder Haut? Die Körperoberfläche als Schauplatz der Malerei bei Rubens und Ingres." In *Pymalions Werkstatt: die Erschaffung des Menschen im Atelier von der Renaissance bis zum Surrealismus*, edited by B. Eschenburg, 71-79. Cologne: Wienand, 2001.
- Ferino-Pagden, Sylvia, Wolfgang Prohaska, and Karl Schütz, eds. *Die Gemäldegalerie des Kunsthistorisches Museums in Wien: Verzeichnis der Gemälde*. Vienna: Christian Brandstätter, 1991.
- Fischel, Angela. *Natur im Bild: Zeichnung und Naturerkenntnis bei Conrad Gessner und Ulisse Aldrovandi*. Berlin: Mann, 2009.
- Fischer, Marcel. *Rubens und Rembrandt: Zwei Grosse Selbstbildnisse*. St. Gallen: Tschudy, 1951.
- Foucault, Michael. "What is an Author?." In *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, edited by James D. Faubion, 205-222. New York: The New Press, 1998.
- Freedberg, David. *The Eye of the Lynx: Galileo, His Friends, and the Beginnings of Modern Natural History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

- _____. *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.
- _____. "Art and Iconoclasm, 1525-1580: The Case of the Northern Netherlands." In *Kunst voor de Beeldenstorm. Noordnederlandse Kunst 1525-1580*, ed. J.P. Fildt Kok et al., 69-84. Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 1986.
- _____. "The Hand of Rubens." In *Peter Paul Rubens: Paintings and Oil Sketches*, edited by David Freedberg. New York: Gagosian Gallery, 1995.
- _____. *Iconoclasm and Painting in the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1566-1609*. New York: Garland, 1988.
- _____. "The origins and rise of the Flemish Madonnas in Flower Garlands." *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst*, 3.F. 32 (1981): 115-150.
- Freedman, Luba. "Neptune in Classical and Renaissance Visual Art." *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 2/2 (Fall, 1995): 219-237.
- Freeman Bauer, Linda. "Some Early Views and Uses of the Painted Sketch." In *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Ölskizze*, edited by Rüdiger Klessmann and Reinhold Wex, 14-24. Proceedings of a symposium held at the Herzog Anton-Urlich-Museum in Braunschweig, 28.-30.3.1984, in conjunction with the exhibition "Malerei aus erster Hand – Ölskizzen von Tintoretto bis Goya." Hannover: Schäfer, 1984.
- Fricke, Beate. "A Liquid History: Blood and Animation in Late Medieval Art." *RES: Journal of Anthropology and Aesthetics* 63/64, "Wet/Dry," edited by Francesco Pellizi and Christopher S. Wood (2013): 52-69.
- Fried, Michael. *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Friedlaender, Walter. *Caravaggio Studies*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1955.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Medusa's Head." In *The Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, edited by James Strachey. London: Hogarth, 1955.
- Frontisi-Ducroux, Françoise. "Les limites de l'anthropomorphisme: Hermès et Dionysos." In *Corps des Dieux*, edited by C. Malamoud and J.-P. Vernant, 259-87. Paris, 1986.
- Fuchs, Thomas. *The Mechanization of the Heart: Harvey and Descartes*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2001.
- Gage, John. *Color and Meaning: Art, Science, and Symbolism*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989.
- Galinsky, G. Karl. *The Herakles Theme: the Adaptations of the Hero in Literature from Homer to the Twentieth Century*. Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1972.
- Garber, Marjorie, and Nancy J. Vickers, eds. *The Medusa Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Van Gastel, Joris. "Michaelangelo's Lesson: the Baroque Bozzetto Between Creation and

- Destruction.” In *Das baptische Bild: Körperhafte Bilderfabrikation in der Neuzeit*, edited by Markus Rath, Jörg Tremper, and Iris Wenderholm, 209-225. Berlin: Akademie, 2013.
- Gaudio, Michael. “Making Sense of Smoke: Engraving and Ornament in de Bry’s America.” In *Engraving the Savage: The New World and Techniques of Civilization*, ch. 2. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- Gell, Alfred. *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, 1998.
- Génard, Pierre. *P.P. Rubens: Aanteekeningen over den grooten meester en zijne bloedverwanten*. Antwerp: P. Kockx, 1877.
- Georgievska-Shine, Aneta. “From Ovid’s Cecrops to Rubens’s City of God in *The Finding of Erichthonius*.” *The Art Bulletin* 86/1 (March 2004): 58-74.
- _____. *Rubens and the Archaeology of Myth, 1610-1620: Visual and Poetic Memory*. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009.
- Georgievska-Shine, Aneta, and Larry Silver. *Rubens, Velazquez and the King of Spain*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014.
- Gludovatz, Karin. “Caravaggio’s Blutsbrüderschaft. Der Subtext der Signatur in der Enthauptung des Johannes von 1608.” *Kunsthistoriker: Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Kunsthistorikerverbandes* 15/16 (1999): 141-147.
- Goesch, Andrea. *Diana Ephesia: ikonographische Studien zur Allegorie der Natur in der Kunst vom 16.-19. Jahrhundert*. Frankfurt and New York: Lang, 1996.
- Golahny, Amy. “Rubens’s *Hero and Leander* and its Poetic Progeny.” *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin*, 1990: 20-37.
- Goldfarb, Hilliard T., David Freedberg, and Manuela B. Mena Marqués, eds. *Rubens: Power, Politics and Style*. Boston: Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 1998.
- Gombrich, Ernst. “Leonardo’s Method for Working out Compositions.” In *Leonardo: Selected Scholarship*, edited by Claire Farago, vol. 2, 114-121. New York and London: Garland, 1999.
- Göttler, Christine. *Spirits Unseen: the Representation of Subtle Bodies in Early Modern European Culture*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008.
- Gould, Cecil. “Leonardo’s ‘Neptune’ Drawing.” *The Burlington Magazine* 94/95 (Oct. 1952): 289-295.
- Gregori, Mina, and Ermanno Zoffili, eds. *The First Medusa – Caravaggio*. Milan: 5 Continents, 2011.
- Heidegger, Martin. “The Thing.” In Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, translated by Albert Hofstadter, 165-186. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.
- _____. “The Question Concerning Technology.” In Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*, translated by William Lovitt. New York: Harper & Row, 1977.
- Heinen, Ulrich. “Emotionales Bild-Erleben in der frühen Neuzeit.” In *Anthropologie der Literatur:*

- Poetogene Strukturen und ästhetisch-soziale Handlungsfelder*, edited by Rüdiger Zymner and Manfred Engel, 356-383. Paderborn, 2004.
- _____. "Haut und Knochen - Fleisch und Blut. Rubens' Affektmalerei." In *Rubens passioni: Kultur der Leidenschaften im Barock*, edited by Ulrich Heinen and Andreas Thielemann, 70-109. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001.
- _____. "Huygens, Rubens and Medusa: Reflecting the passions in paintings, with some considerations of neuroscience in art history." *Nederlands kunsthistorisch jaarboek* 60 (2010): 151-178.
- _____. "Rubens's Garten und die Gesundheit des Künstlers." *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 65 (2004): 71-182.
- _____. "Rubens' Pictorial Diplomacy at War (1637/1638)." *Nederlands kunsthistorisch jaarboek* 55.2004 (2006): 196-225.
- _____. "Zur bildrhetorischen Wirkungsästhetik im Barock: ein Systematisierungsversuch nach neurobiologischen Modellen." In *Bildrhetorik*, edited by Joachim Knape, 113-158. Baden-Baden: Koerner, 2007.
- Held, Julius. *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens: A Critical Catalogue*. 2 volumes. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980.
- _____. "Rubens and Aguilonius: New Points of Contact." *The Art Bulletin* 61/2 (1979): 257-64.
- _____. "Rubens's *Prometheus Bound*." *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin* 59 (1963): 16-32.
- Henkel, Albert, and Albrecht Schöne. *Emblemata: Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts*. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche, 1967.
- Herding, Klaus. "Zum künstlerischen Ausdruck von Grauen und Sanftmut." In *Pathos, Affekt, Gefühl: die Emotionen in der Künsten*, edited by Klaus Herding and Bernhard Stumpfhaus, 300-356. Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2004.
- Honig, Elizabeth. *Painting and the Market in Early Modern Antwerp*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.
- _____. "The Beholder as a Work of Art: A Study in the Location of Value in Seventeenth-Century Flemish Painting." *Nederlands kunsthistorisch jaarboek* 46 (1995): 252-297.
- _____. "Making Sense of Things: On the Motives of Dutch Still Life." *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* no. 34 (Autumn, 1998): 166-183.
- Houghton, Charlotte. "This Was Tomorrow: Pieter Artsen's *Meat Stall* as Contemporary Art." *The Art Bulletin* 86 (2004): 277-300.
- Van Hout, Nico, and Arnout Balis. *Rubens Unveiled: Notes on the Master's Painting Technique: A Catalogue of Rubens Paintings in the Antwerp Museum*. Antwerp: Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 2012.
- _____. *Rubens doorgelicht: meekijken over de schouder van een virtuoos*. Antwerp: Koninklijk Museum voor

- Schone Kunsten, 2010.
- Van Hout, Nico. "Functies van doodverf met bijzondere aandacht voor de onderschildering en andere onderliggende Stadia in het Werk van P.P. Rubens." PhD dissertation, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2005.
- _____. "A Second Self-Portrait in Rubens's 'Four Philosophers'." *The Burlington Magazine* vol. 142, no. 1172 (Nov. 2000): 694-697.
- Van Houdt, Toon. "The Economics of Art in Early Modern Times: Some Humanist and Scholastic Approaches." *History of Political Economy* 31 (1999): 303-331.
- Howarth, David. "Rubens: the Master Butcher." Review of "Rubens: A Master in the Making," exhibition held at National Gallery in London, 26 Oct. 2005–15 Jan. 2006. *Apollo* 162 (Dec., 2005).
- Hurd, Philippa, ed. *Peter Paul Rubens: a Touch of Brilliance: Oil Sketches and Related Works from the Stage Hermitage Museum and the Courtauld Institute Gallery*. Munich and London: Prestel, 2003.
- Israel, Jonathan. "Rubens, Antwerp, and the Fight for Domination of the World Trade System (1572-1650)." In *Art, Music, and Spectacle in the Age of Rubens: the Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi*, edited by Anna C. Knaap and Michael C. J. Putnam, 37-47. London and Turnhout: Brepols, 2013.
- Jacobs, Carol. "On Looking at Shelley's Medusa." *Yale French Studies* 69, The Lesson of Paul de Man (1985): 163-179.
- Jacobs, Frederika H. "Women's Capacity to Create: The Unusual Case of Sofonisba Anguissola." *Renaissance Quarterly* 47/1 (Spring, 1994): 74-101.
- Jaffé, David, McGrath, Elizabeth, et al. *Rubens: A Master in the Making*. London: National Gallery Co., 2005.
- Jaffé, Michael. *Rubens, Catalogo Completo*. Milan: Rizzoli, 1989.
- _____. "Rubens and Optics: Some Fresh Evidence." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 34 (1971): 362-366.
- _____. "Rubens and Giulio Romano at Mantua." *The Art Bulletin* 40/4 (1958): 325-328.
- _____. "Rubens as a Collector of Drawings." Part One. *Master Drawings* 2/4 (Winter, 1964): 383-397, 434-454.
- _____. "...Sono disegni coloriti di Rubens." *The Burlington Magazine* 128/1004 (November, 1986): 780-785.
- _____. *Van Dyck's Antwerp Sketchbook*. 2 vols. London: Macdonald, 1966.
- Jameson, Anna. Introduction to Waagen, Gustav Friedrich, *Peter Paul Rubens: His Life and Genius*, edited by Anna Jameson. London: Saunder and Otley, 1840.
- Janson, H.W. "The 'Image Made by Chance' in Renaissance Thought." In *De artibus opuscula XL*:

- Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky*, edited by Millard Meiss, 54-66. New York: New York University Press, 1961.
- Kanz, Roland. *Die Kunst des Capriccio: kreativer Eigensinn in Renaissance und Barock*. Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2002.
- Kemp, Martin. "From 'Mimesis' to 'Fantasia': the Quattrocento Vocabulary of Creation, Inspiration and Genius in the Visual Arts." *Viator* 8 (1997): 347-398.
- Kimball, Fiske. "Rubens' Prometheus." *Burlington Magazine* 94 (1952): 67-68.
- Knaap, Anna C., and Michael C.J. Putnam, eds. *Art, Music, and Spectacle in the Age of Rubens: the Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi*. London: Harvey Miller, 2013.
- Koerner, Joseph Leo. *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.
- _____. "The Abject of Art History." *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 31 (Spring, 1997): 5-8.
- Koslow, Susan. "How looked the Gorgon then...': the Science and Poetics of the *Head of Medusa* by Rubens and Snyders." In *Shop Talk: Studies in Honor of Seymour Slive: Presented on his Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, edited by Cynthia P. Schneider, William W. Robinson, and Alice I. Davies, 147-149. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Art Museums, 1995.
- _____. "The Head of Medusa by Peter Paul Rubens and Frans Snyders: a Postscript." May 2, 2006. <http://profkoslow.com/publications/medusapostscript.html>.
- Knox, Giles. *The Late Paintings of Velázquez: Theorizing Painterly Performance*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2009.
- Kräftner, Johann, Wilfried Seipel, and Renate Trnek, eds. *Rubens in Vienna: the Masterpieces: the Pictures in the Collections of the Prince of Liechtenstein, the Kunsthistorisches Museum and the Gemäldegalerie der Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Vienna*. Vienna: Christian Brandstätter, 2004.
- Kris, Ernst, and Kurz, Otto. *Legend, Myth and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.
- Kristeva, Julia. *The Severed Head: Captial Visions*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.
- Land, Norman E. "Blood as Paint: Rubens, Guido Reni, and Parrhasius." *Notes on the History of Art* 31/2 (2012): 22-23.
- Lang, Walter K. *Grausame Bilder. Sadismus in der neapolitanischen Malerei von Caravaggio bis Giordano*. Berlin: Reimer, 2001.
- Langa-Berndt, Petra, ed. *Materiality*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015.
- Laschka-Hubert, Brigit. "*Quos ego* oder wie der Meeresherr Neptune die Plätze eroberte." In *Skulptur und Platz: Raumbesetzung, Raumüberwindung, Interaktion*, edited by Alessandro Nova and Stephanie Hanke. Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2014.
- Latour, Bruno. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.

- Laurie, A.P. *The Pigments and Techniques of the Old Masters*. London: Macmillan, 1914.
- Lavergnée, Arnauld Brejon de, ed. *Rubens*. Catalogue of an exhibition held at the Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille, 6 March-14 June, 2004. Gent and Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées, 2004.
- Lavin, Irving. "Giambologna's *Neptune* at the Crossroads." In Irving Lavin, *Past-Present: Essays on Historicism in Art from Donatello to Picasso*, 75-81. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.
- Lee, Rensselaer Wright. *Ut pictura poesis: the Humanistic Theory of Painting*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1967.
- Leinkauf, Thomas. "Implikationen des Begriffs *natura naturans* in der frühen Neuzeit." In *Ludi Naturae: Spiele der Natur in Kunst und Wissenschaft*, edited by Natascha Adamowsky, Hartmut Böhme, and Robert Felfe, 103-118. Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2011.
- Leonhard, Karin. *Bildfelder: Stilleben und Naturstücke des 17. Jahrhunderts*. Berlin: Akademie, 2013.
- _____. "Painted Poison: Venomous Beasts, Herbs, Gems, and Baroque Color Theory." *Nederlands kunsthistorisch jaarboek* 61 (2011): 116-147.
- _____. "Pictura's Fertile Field: Otto Marseus van Schrieck and the Genre of Sottobosco Painting." *Simiolus* 31/2 (2010): 95-118.
- Logan, Anne-Marie. "Rubens as a Teacher: 'He may teach his art to his students and others to his liking.'" In *In His Milieu: Essays on Netherlandish Art in Memory of John Michael Montias*, edited by Amy Golahny, Mila M. Mochizuki, and Lisa Vergara, 247-263. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006.
- Lowenthal, Anne. *Joachim Wtewael and Dutch Mannerism*. Doornspijk: Davaco, 1986.
- Maclean, Ian. *The Renaissance Notion of Women: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- Marin, Louis. *To Destroy Painting*. Translated by Mette Hjort. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Martin, Henry M. "The Perseus Myth in Lope de Vega and Calderon with Some Reference to Their Sources." *PMLA* 46/2 (June, 1931): 450-460.
- Martin, John Rupert. *The Decorations for the Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi*. Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard XVI. London and New York: Phaidon, 1972.
- McFadden, Elizabeth. "Food, Alchemy, and Transformation in Jan Brueghel's *The Allegory of Taste*." *Rutgers Art Review* 30 (2014): 35-55.
- McGrath, Elizabeth. "Artists, their Books and Subjects from Classical Mythology." In *Classical Mythology in the Netherlands in the Age of Renaissance and Baroque*, edited by Carl van de Velde, 301-332. Leuven and Walpole: Peeters, 2009.

- _____. "Garlanding the Great Mother: Rubens, Jan Brueghel and the Celebration of Nature's Fertility." In *Munuscula amicorum: Contributions on Rubens and his Colleagues in Honour of Hans Vlieghe*, edited by Katlijne van der Stighelen, 103-122. Turnhout: Brepols, 2006.
- _____. "The Painted Decoration of Rubens's House." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 41 (1978): 245-277.
- _____. "Rubens's *Musathena*." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 50 (1987): 233-45.
- _____. "Rubens and Ovid." In *The Afterlife of Ovid*, edited by Peter Mack and John North, 159-179. London: Institute of Classical Studies, 2015.
- _____. "Rubens's Arch of the Mint." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 37 (1974): 191-217.
- _____. *Rubens's Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi and the Traditions of Civic Pageantry*. Doctoral thesis. University of London, 1971.
- Miedema, Hessel. "Over kwaliteitsvoorschriften in het St. Lucasgilde, over 'doodverf'." *Oud-Holland* 101 (1987): 141-147.
- Meganck, Tine. "The 'Reddener': Peter Paul Rubens and Alchemy." In *Art and Alchemy: the Mystery of Transformation*, edited by Sven Dupré and Dedo von Kerssenbrock-Krosigk, 146-155. Catalogue of an exhibition held at Museum Kunstpalast, April 5 – August 10, 2014. Munich: Hirner, 2014.
- Merriam, Susan. "Icons after Iconoclasm: The Flemish Garland Picture, 1608-1700." Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2002.
- _____. *Seventeenth-Century Flemish Garland Paintings: Still Life, Vision, and the Devotional Image*. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2011.
- Van der Meulen, Marjon. *Rubens' Copies after the Antique*. Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard 23. 3 vols. London: Harvey Miller, 1993.
- Miller, Daniel. "Materiality: An Introduction." In *Materiality*, edited by Daniel Miller, 1-50. Durham: Duke University Press: 2005.
- Miller, Peter. "Peiresc, Rubens, and Visual Culture circa 1620." In *Art, Music, and Spectacle in the Age of Rubens: the Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi*, edited by Anna C. Knaap and Michael C. J. Putnam, 49-64. London and Turnhout: Brepols, 2013.
- Mora, Joanne. "Utopia Lost: Allegory, Ruins and Pieter Bruegel's Tower of Babel." *Art History* 30/2 (2007): 198-216.
- Morales, Helen. "The Torturer's Apprentice: Parrhasius and the Limits of Art." In *Art and Text in Roman Culture*, edited by Jaś Elsner, 182-209. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Morford, Mark. *Stoics and Neostoics: Rubens and the Circle of Lipsius*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991.
- Moxey, Keith. "Hieronymus Bosch and the 'World Upside-Down': the Case of the Garden of Earthly Delights." In *Visual Culture: Images and Interpretations*, edited by Norman Bryson, 104-

140. Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1994.
- Mullaney, Seven. "Imaginary Conquests: European Material Technologies and the Colonial Mirror Stage." In *Early Modern Visual Culture: Representation, Race, and Empire in Renaissance England*, edited by Clark Hulse and Peter Erickson, 15-43. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.
- Muller, Jeffrey M. "Oil Sketches in Rubens' Collection." *Burlington Magazine* 117 (1975): 371-77.
- _____. *Rubens: the Artist as Collector*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.
- _____. "Rubens's Theory and Practice of the Imitation of Art." *The Art Bulletin* 64 (1982): 229-247.
- Müller Hofstede, Justus. "The Perseus and Andromeda on Rubens's House." *Simiolus* 12 (1981/1982), 131-146.
- _____. "Private Collections in the Spanish Netherlands: Ownership and Display of Paintings in Domestic Interiors." In *The Age of Rubens*, edited by Peter Sutton and Marjorie Wieseman, 194-206. Catalogue of an exhib. held at the MFA, Boston, 22 Sept. 1993-2. Jan. 1994. New York: Abrams, 1993: 194-206.
- _____. "Peter Paul Rubens 1577-1640: Selbstbildnis und Selbstverständnis." In *Von Bruegel bis Rubens: Das goldene Jahrhundert der flämischen Malerei*, edited by Ekkehard Mai and Hans Vlieghe, 103-120. Vienna and Cologne: Locher, 1993.
- _____. "Rubens und die Kunstlehre des Cinquecento. Zur Deutung eines theoretischen Skizzenblattes im Berliner Kabinett." In *Peter Paul Rubens 1577-1640*, edited by Gerhard Bott et al. Catalogue of an exhib. held at the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne, 15 October – 15 December, 1977. Cologne: Museen der Stadt Köln, 1977.
- _____. "Zur Antwerpener Frühzeit von Peter Paul Rubens." *Münchener Jahrbuch der Bildenden Kunst* (1962): 206-11.
- Nadolny, Jilleen. "European Documentary Sources before c. 1550 Relating to Painting Grounds Applied to Wooden Supports: Translation and Terminology." In *Preparation for Painting: The Artist's Choice and its Consequences*, edited by Joyce H. Townsend, Tiarna Doherty, Gunnar Heydenreich, and Jacqueline Ridge, 1-13. London: Archetype, 2008.
- Neumeister, Mirjam, ed. *Alte Pinakothek: Flämische Malerei*. Munich: Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, 2009.
- Nicolaisen, Jan. "Chaos unentwirrbarer Formen: künstlerische Handschrift als Ausdruck von Subjektivität in der niederländischen Malerei und Kunsttheorie des 17. Jahrhunderts." In *Augenkitzel: Barocke Meisterwerke und die Kunst des Informel*, edited by Dirk Luckow and Sylvia Martin, 34-40. Catalogue of an exhib. held at the Kunsthalle zu Kiel, 24. Jan. – 12. April, 2004. Kiel: Kunsthalle, 2004.
- Nova, Alessandro. *Il Libro del Vento: Rappresentare l'invisibile*. Milan: Ultrera, 2007.
- Panofsky, Erwin. *Idea: A Concept in Art Theory*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1968.
- Parkhurst, Charles. "Aguilonius' Optics and Rubens' Color." *Nederlands kunsthistorisch jaarboek* 12,

1961: 35-48.

- Parshall, Peter. "Pieter Bruegel the Elder's 'Tower of Babel': An Aesthetics of Displacement." In *Disaster as Image: Iconographies and Media Strategies Across Europe and Asia*, edited by Monica Juneja, 71-79. Regensburg: Schnell + Steiner, 2014.
- Pellizi, Francesco, and Wood, Christopher S., eds. *Wet/Dry. RES: Journal of Anthropology and Aesthetics* 63/64 (2003).
- Popham, Arthur E. "A Drawing by Snyders." *Burlington Magazine* XCIV (1952): 237.
- Posèq, Avigdor. "Caravaggio's Medusa Sheild." *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 113 (1989).
- Prohaska, Wolfgang. "The Head of Medusa." In *Das Flämische Stilleben*, edited by Arnout Balis, Christa Nitze-Ertz, Uta Kleinman, and Stepha Brakensiek, cat. no. 12. Exhib. cat. Vienna and Ruhr-Essen. Lingen: Luca, 2002.
- Van Puyvelde, Leo. *The Sketches of Rubens*. Translated by Eveline Winkworth. London: Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1947.
- Pyhrr, Stuart W., and José-A. Godoy, eds. *Heroic Armor of the Italian Renaissance: Filippo Negroli and his Contemporaries*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998.
- Raggio, Olga. "The Myth of Prometheus: Its Survival and Metamorphoses up to the Eighteenth Century." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* vol. 21, no. 1/2 (1958): 44-62.
- Reeves, Eileen. *Painting the Heavens: Art and Science in the Age of Galileo*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- Robels, Hella. *Frans Snyders, Stilleben- und Tiermaler, 1579-1657*. Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1989.
- Rosenthal, Lisa. *Gender, Politics, and Allegory in the Art of Rubens*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- _____. "Manhood and Statehood: Rubens's Construction of Heroic Virtue." *Oxford Art Journal* 16/1 (1993): 92-111.
- _____. "Rubens Reconsidered: Alpers and the Making of Artistic Authority." *Oxford Art Journal* 19/2 (1996): 102-105.
- Rooses, Max. *Correspondance de Rubens et documents épistolaires concernant sa vie et ses oeuvres*. Antwerp: Veuve de Backer, 1887-1909.
- _____. *Geschiedenis der Antwerpsche schilderschool*. The Hague: Nijhoff, 1879.
- _____. *L'oeuvre de P. P. Rubens*. Antwerp: Jos. Maes, 1887-1892.
- _____. *Rubens*. Translated by Harold Childe. London: Duckworth & Co., 1904.
- Rosenberg, Jakob. *On Quality in Art: Criteria of Excellence, Past and Present*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967.

- _____. "Rubens's Sketch for *The Wrath of Neptune*." *Bulletin of the Fogg Museum of Art* vol. X, I (Nov. 1942): 5-14.
- Saß, Maurice. "Gemalte Korallenamulette: Zur Vorstellung eigenwirksamer Bilder bei Piero della Francesca, Andrea Mantegna und Camillo Leonardi." In *Kunsttexte.de* 2012, 1: Bild, Wissen, Technik [electronic resource].
- Schaudies, Irene. "Trimming Rubens' Shadow: New Light on the Mediation of Caravaggio in the Southern Netherlands." *Netherlands kunsthistorisch jaarboek* 55.2004 (2006): 334-367.
- Scholl, Dorothea. *Von den 'Grottesken' zum Grotesken: Die Konstituierung einer Poetik des Grotesken in der italienischen Renaissance*. Münster: Lit, 2004.
- Shawe-Taylor, Desmond, and Jennifer Scott, eds. *Bruegel to Rubens: Masters of Flemish Painting*. London: Royal Collection Publications, 2007.
- Shearman, John. *Only Connect: Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Smith, Pamela H. *The Body of the Artisan: Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- _____. "Collecting Nature and Art: Artisans and Knowledge in the 'Kunstkammer.'" In *Engaging with Nature: Essays on the Natural World in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, edited by Barbara A. Hanawalt and Lisa J. Kiser, 115-135. Notre Dame, ID: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008.
- _____. "Vermilion, Mercury, Blood, and Lizards: Matter and Meaning in Metalworking." In *Materials and Expertise in Early Modern Europe: Between Market and Laboratory*, edited Ursula Klein and E.C. Spary, 29-49. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- Sohm, Philip. "Caravaggio's Deaths." *The Art Bulletin* 84/3 (Sept., 2002): 449-468.
- _____. "Gendered Style in Italian Art Criticism from Michelangelo to Malvasia." *Renaissance Quarterly* 48/4 (December, 1985): 759-808.
- _____. *Pittoresco: Marco Boschini, his Critics, and their Critiques of Painterly Brushwork in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Italy*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Von Sonnenburg, Hubert. *Rubens: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Technik*. Munich: Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, 1980.
- Steensma, Susanna. *Otto Marseus van Schrieck: Leben und Werk*. Studien zur Kunstgeschichte 131. Hildesheim/Zürich/New York: Olms, 1999.
- Van der Stock, Jan, ed. *Antwerpen: Verhaal van een Metropool: 16de-17de eeuw*. Gent: Snoeck-Ducaju & Zoon, 1993.
- Stoichita, Victor. *The Pygmalion Effect: from Ovid to Hitchcock*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

- _____. *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Stumpel, Jeroen. "On Grounds and Backgrounds: Some Remarks about Composition in Renaissance Painting." *Simiolus* 18 (1988): 210-243.
- Van Suchtelen, Ariane, and Ben van Beneden, eds. *Kamers vol kunst in zeventiende-eeuws Antwerpen*. Zwolle: Waanders, 2009.
- Summers, David. *Michelangelo and the Language of Art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.
- Suthor, Nicola. "Transparenz der Mittel: Zur Sichtbarkeit der Imprimatur in einigen Werken Rembrandts." In *Der Grund: das Feld des Sichtbaren*, edited by Gottfried Böhm, 223-250. Munich: Fink, 2012.
- _____. *Bravura: Virtuosität und Mutwilligkeit in der Malerei der Frühen Neuzeit*. Munich: Fink, 2010.
- Sutton, Peter T. "The Head of Medusa." In *The Age of Rubens*, edited by Peter T. Sutton. Boston and Toledo, 1993-4.
- Tarrant, Richard. "Chaos in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and its Neronian Influence." *Aethusa* 35/3 (Fall 2002): 349-360.
- Teskey, Gordon. *Allegory and Violence*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996.
- Thielemann, Andreas. "Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), *De imitatione statuarum*." In *Abgekupfert: Roms Antiken in den Reproduktionsmedien der Frühen Neuzeit: Katalog zur Ausstellung Kunstsammlung der Gipsabgüsse*, edited by Manfred Luchterhandt et al, 319-321. Catalogue of an exhibition held at Universität Göttingen, 27 October 2013 – 16 February 2014. Petersberg: Michael Imhof, 2014.
- _____. "Rubens' Traktat *De imitatione statuarum*." In *Imitatio als Transformation: Theorie und Praxis der Antikennachahmung in der Frühen Neuzeit*, edited by Ursula Rombach and Peter Seiler, 95-150. Petersberg: Michael Imhof, 2012.
- Turner, Richard. "Words and Pictures: The Birth and Death of Leonardo's Medusa." *Arte Lombarda* 66 (1983): 103-111.
- Vandenbroeck, Paul. "The Solomonic Column: A Rubenesque Motif in Light of Tradition." *Rubensbulletin* (2014): 24-91.
- Van de Velde, Carl. "Rembrandt, Rubens and classical mythology: the case of Andromeda." In *Classical Mythology in the Netherlands in the Age of Renaissance and Baroque*, edited by Carl van de Velde. Proceedings of a conference in Antwerp, 19-21 May 2005. Leuven and Walpole: Peeters, 2009.
- Varriano, John. "Leonardo's Lost *Medusa* and other Medici Medusas from the *Tazza Farnese* to Caravaggio." *Gazette des beaux-arts* 130 (1997): 73-80.
- Veth, Jan. *Im Schatten alter Kunst*. Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1911.

- Vlieghe, Hans. *Portraits – I. Antwerp, Identified Sitters*. Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard XIX. London, 1987.
- Voll, Karl. *Vergleichende Gemäldestudien*. 2nd ed. Munich: G. Müller, 1908.
- Waagen, Gustav Friedrich. *Über den Maler Petrus Paulus Rubens*. Berlin, 1833.
- _____. *Peter Paul Rubens: His Life and Genius*. Translated by Robert E. Noel. London: Saunder & Otley, 1840.
- Walsh, John. "Skies and Reality in Dutch Landscape." In *Art in History/History in Art: Studies in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Culture*, edited by David Freedberg and Jan de Vries, 95-118. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- Warburg, Aby. *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America*. Translated by Michael P. Steinberg. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.
- Webster, C. "Water as the Ultimate Principle of Nature: the Background to Boyle's Sceptical Chymist." *Ambix* 13/2 (1966): 96-107.
- Weil-Garris Brandt, Kathleen. "On Pedestals: Michelangelo's David, Bandinelli's Hercules and Cacus and the Sculpture of the Piazza Della Signoria." *Roemisches Jahrbuch Für Kunstgeschichte* 20 (1983): 377-415.
- Welch, Evelyn. "Painting as Performance in the Italian Renaissance Court." *Fenway Court* 31 (2004): 19-32, 202-203.
- Werche, B. "Die Zusammenarbeit von Jan Brueghel d.Ä. und Hendrick van Balen." In *Breughel-Breughel: Pieter Brueghel der Jüngere 1565-1637/8-Jan Brueghel der Ältere 1568-1625, Flämische Malerei um 1600. Tradition und Fortschritt*, edited by Klaus Ertz, 67-74. Exhib. cat. Essen-Vienna. Lingen: Luca, 1997.
- Wescher, Paul. *La Prima Idea: Die Entwicklung der Ölskizze von Tintoretto bis Picasso*. Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1960.
- Wittkower, Rudolf and Margot. *Born Under Saturn: the Character and Conduct of Artists, a Documented History from Antiquity to the French Revolution*. New York: Norton, 1963.
- Wittkower, Rudolf. Introduction. *Masters of the Loaded Brush: Oil Sketches from Rubens to Tiepolo*. New York: M. Knoedler & Co., 1967.
- Wood, Christopher. „Otto Pächt und die nicht mehr schönen Künste.“ In *Am Anfang war das Auge*, edited by Artur Rosenaur, 67-76. Vienna, 2006.
- Woodall, Joanna. "Conversation Piece." *Art History* 19/1 (March, 1996): 134-140.
- _____. "Wtwael's *Persus and Andromeda*: Looking for Love in Early Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting." In *Manifestations of Venus: Art and Sexuality*, edited by Caroline Arscott and Katie Scott, 39-68. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000.
- Woollett, Anne T. "The Burden of Invention: Rubens and the *Stage of Welcome*." In *Art, Music, and*

- Spectacle in the Age of Rubens: the Pompa Introitus Ferdinandi*, edited by Anna C. Knaap and Michael C. J. Putnam, 219-240. London and Turnhout: Brepols, 2013.
- Woollet, Anne T., and Ariane van Suchtelen, eds. *Rubens and Brueghel: A Working Friendship*. Exhib. cat. Los Angeles and the Hague. Zwolle: Waanders, 2006.
- Worp, S.A. "Constantijn Huygens over de schilders van zijn tijd." *Oud Holland* 9 (1891): 106-36.
- Wunderlich, Eva. *Die Bedeutung der roten Farbe im Kultus der Griechen und Römer, erläutert mit Berücksichtigung entsprechender Bräuche bei anderen Völkern*. Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten XX, vol. 1. Breslau and Tübingen, 1925.
- Zollner, Frank. "Ogni Pittore Dipinge Sé." In *Der Künstler über sich in seinem Werk*, edited by Matthias Winner, 137-160. Weinheim: VCH, 1992.
- Zorach, Rebecca. *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold: Abundance and Excess in the French Renaissance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Illustrations

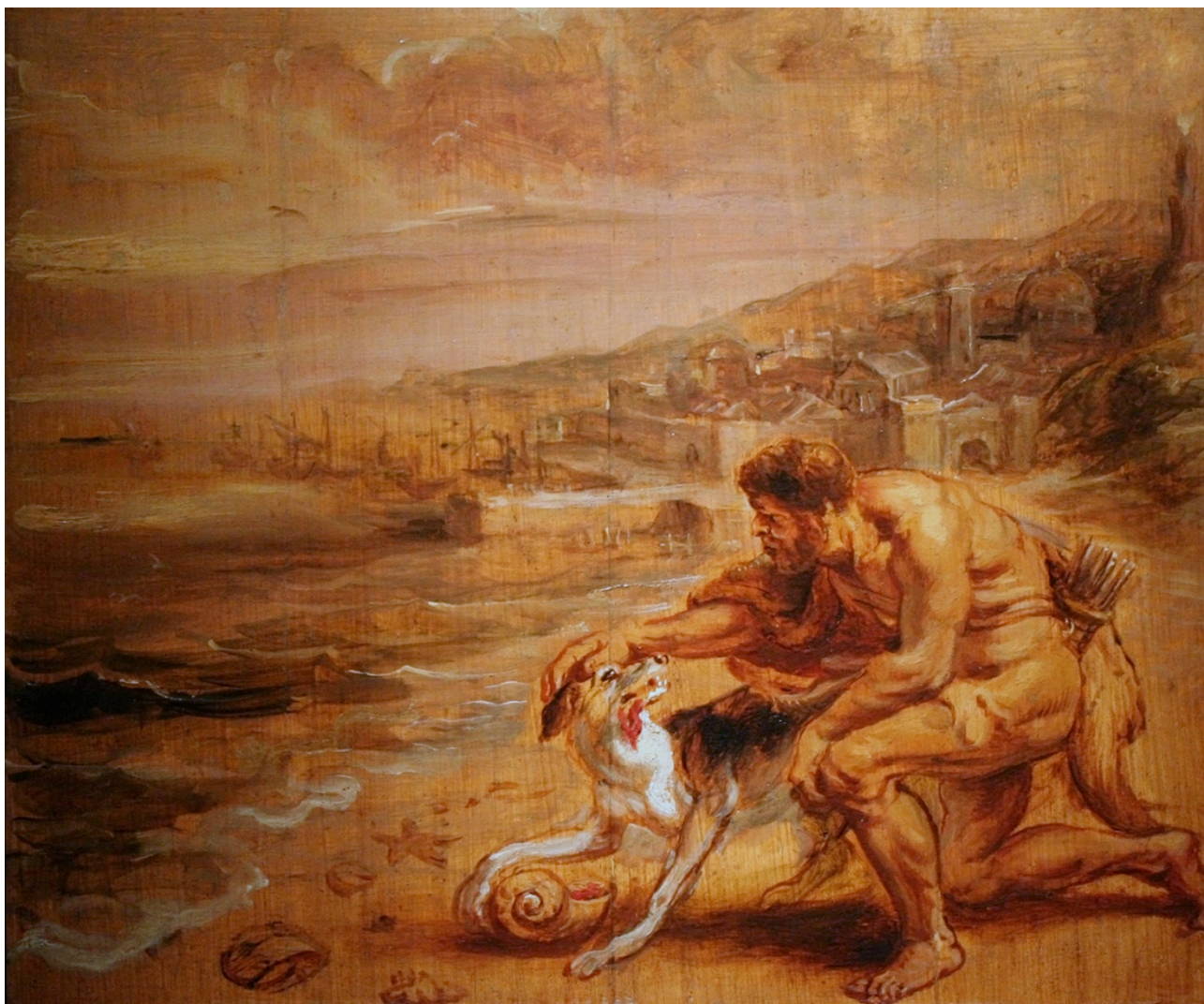


Figure 1: Peter Paul Rubens, *Hercules Discovering the Tyrian Purple*, 1637-38. Oil on panel, 28 x 32.6 cm. Bayonne, Musée Bonnat, inv. no. 1068



Fig. 2: Peter Paul Rubens, *Group Portrait of Peter Paul Rubens, Philip Rubens, Justus Lipsius and Johannes Woverius (The Four Philosophers)*, 1611-1612. Oil on panel, 167 x 143 cm. Florence, Palazzo Pitti inv. no. 85



Fig. 3: Peter Paul Rubens and Frans Snyder, *Head of Medusa*, ca. 1613-1618. Oil on canvas, 68.5 x 118 cm. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Inv. No. GG_3834



Fig. 4: Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Head of Medusa*, 1597. Oil on canvas mounted on wood, 55 cm diameter. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi inv. no. 1351



Fig. 6: Godfried Maes, *Head of Medusa*, ca. 1680. Pen drawing. Location unknown (sold by Sotheby's London, July 11, 2001)



Fig. 7: Studio of Peter Paul Rubens, *Perseus Freeing Andromeda*, ca. 1622. Oil on canvas transferred from panel, 99.5 x 139 cm. St. Petersburg, Hermitage Museum, ГЭ-461



Fig. 8: Unknown painter or painters, probably Flemish, sixteenth or seventeenth century. Oil on panel, 49 x 74 cm. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi P1472



Fig. 9: Otto Marseus van Schrieck, *Sottobosco with Snakes, Toad, and Tulip*, signed and dated 1662. Oil on canvas, 50.7 x 68.5 cm. Braunschweig, Herzog-Anton-Ulrich Museum, inv. no. 431



Fig. 10: Otto Marseus van Schrieck, *Sottobosco with Toad and Blue Morning Glory*, signed and dated 1600. Oil on canvas, 53.7 x 68 cm. Schwerin, Staatliches Museum inv. no. 154



Fig. 11: Peter Paul Rubens and Frans Snyders, *Prometheus Bound*, begun ca. 1611-12 and completed by 1618. Oil on canvas, 242.6 x 209.6 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art, no. W1950-3-1, Purchased with the W.P. Wiltach Fund, 1950



Fig. 12: Frans Snyder, *An eagle with wings spread*, ca. 1610. Pen and brown ink with brown wash on paper, 28 x 20.2 cm. London, British Museum 1946,0713.176

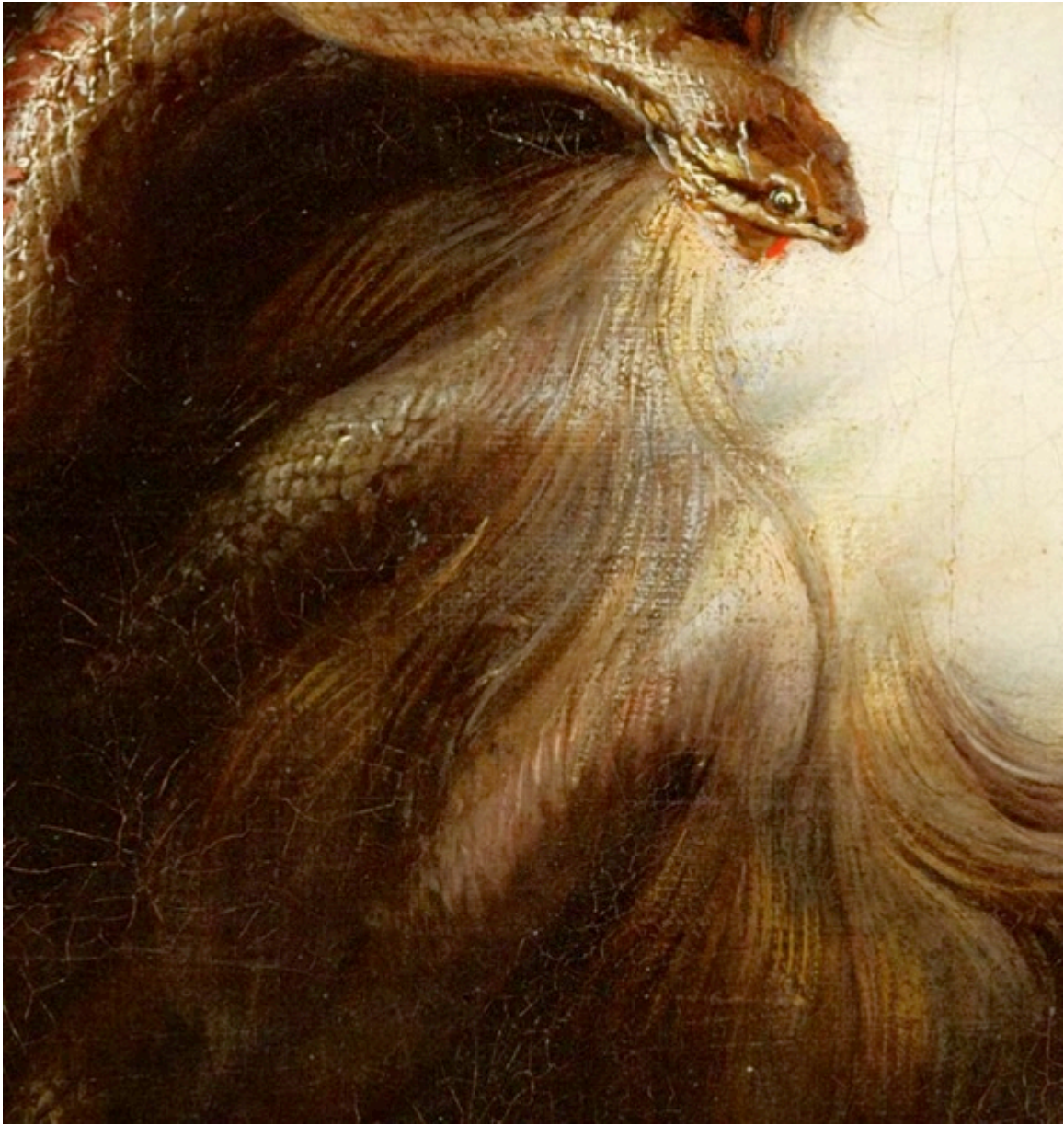


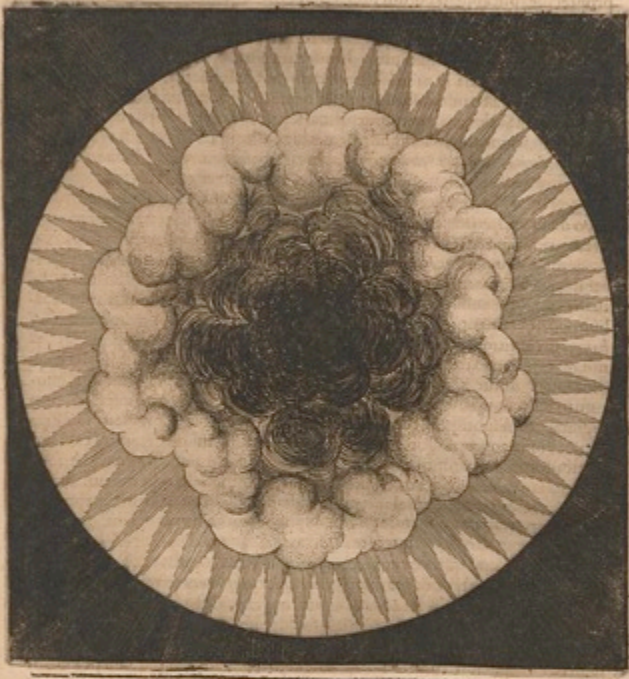
Fig. 13: Rubens and Snyders, *Head of Medusa*. Detail: “snake hair”



Fig. 14: Peter Paul Rubens and Frans Snyders, *Head of Medusa*. Detail: “snake nest”



Fig. 15: Jan Harmensz. Muller after Hendrick Goltzius, *Creation of the World*, ca. 1592. Engraving, second state of two, 26.4 cm diameter. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 53.601.338(6)



CAPUT IX.

Quod universa cœlorum tam spiritalis, quam corporalis substantia sit aut elementum aut ex elementis compositum.

ROST hujusigitur divini opificii complementum omnis cujuslibet ejus regionis substantiæ portio aut elementum aut elementatum esse comperta est; quarum, quæ elementum vocatur est prima, minima, & simplicissima pars, ex qua cujuslibet cœli elementatum immediatè constituitur. Et quia cujuslibet cœli substantia propter majorem vel minorem lucis præsentiam crassior, impurius, & imperfectior habetur, igitur elementi simplicitas vel absolutè intelligitur, tantummodò elementorum cœli spiritalis, vel respectivè consideratur: Nam si ad ea cœli inferioris comparentur,

E 3

simplicia

Fig. 16 a: Johann Theodoor de Bry, *Primordial Chaos*, ca. 1617. Etching. In Robert Fludd, *Utriusque cosmi maioris scilicet et minoris metaphysica, physica atque technica historia in duo volumina secundum cosmi differentiam divisa* (Oppenheim, 1617), vol. 1, p. 37. Image courtesy of Stiftung der Werke von C.G. Jung, Zürich, VD17 12:637305Q. Digitized at <http://www.e-rara.ch/doi/10.3931/e-rara-5500>.



Fig. 16 b: Johann Theodoor de Bry, *The Four Elements*, ca. 1617. Etching. In Robert Fludd, *Utriusque cosmi maioris scilicet et minoris metaphysica, physica atque technica historia in duo volumina secundum cosmi differentiam divisa* (Oppenheim, 1617), vol. 1, 37. Image courtesy of Stiftung der Werke von C.G. Jung, Zürich, VD17 12:637305Q. Digitized at <http://www.e-rara.ch/doi/10.3931/e-rara-5500>



Fig. 17: Peter Paul Rubens and Frans Snyders, *Prometheus Bound*
Detail: "Prometheus's liver"



Fig. 18: Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Beheading of St. John the Baptist*, 1608. Oil on canvas, 361 x 620 cm. Valetta, Saint John's Museum.
Detail: signature ("f. michel Ang")



Fig. 19: Peter Paul Rubens, *Narcissus Falling in Love with his Own Reflection*. Oil on panel, 14 x 14.5 cm. Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, acc. no. 2518. Acquired with the collection of D.G. van Beuningen, 1958



Fig. 20: Peter Paul Rubens, *Death of Decius Mus*, 1616/1617. Oil on canvas, 289 x 518 cm. Vienna, Liechtenstein Museum, inv. no. GE51.
Detail: “dying soldier”



Fig. 21 Peter Paul Rubens, *Descent from the Cross*, 1612-1614. Oil on panel, 420.5 x 320 cm. Antwerp, Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekathedraal



Fig. 22: Giulio Romano, *Perseus Disarming and the Birth of Coral*, ca. 1536-38. Pen and brown ink on blue paper, 192 x 316 mm. London, British Museum, acc. no. 1895,0915.645



Fig. 23: Peter Paul Rubens after unknown artist (studio of Giulio Romano), *Perseus Disarming and the Birth of Coral*, ca. 1592-1640. London, British Museum, 1851,0208.322

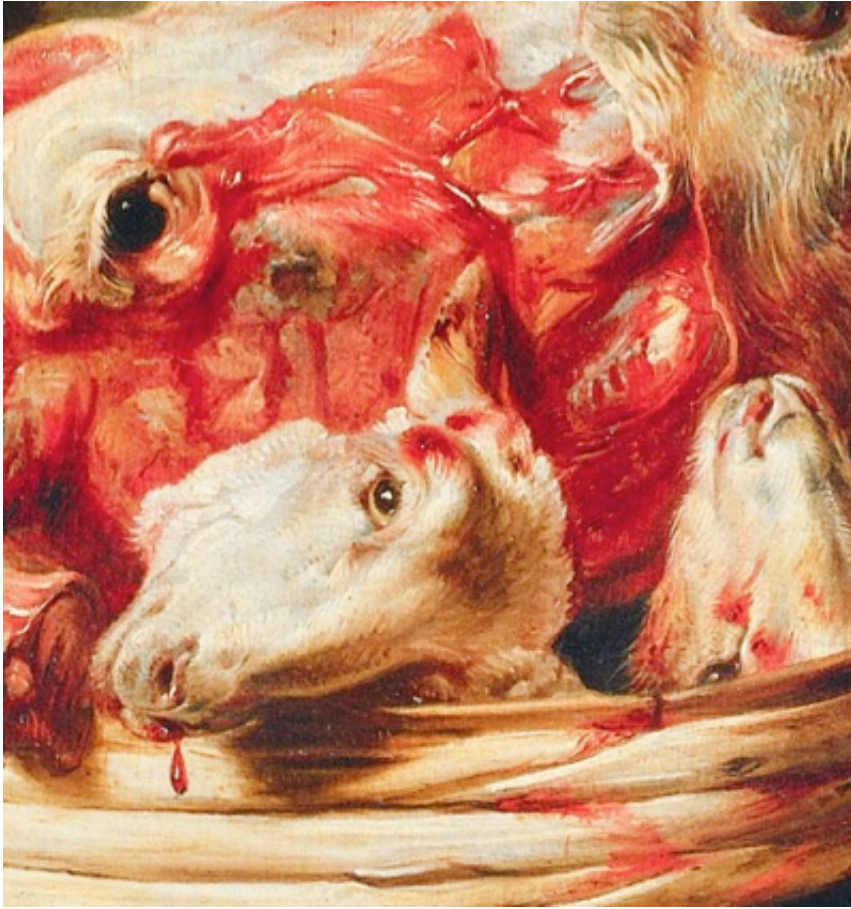


Fig. 24 a: Frans Snyder, *Butcher's Shop*, ca. 1630-40. Oil on canvas. Moscow, Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, inv. no. Ж-349
Detail: "goat's head"



Fig. 24 b: Frans Snyder and Anthony van Dyck, *Fish Market*, ca. 1621. Oil on canvas, 253 x 375 cm. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. no. GG_383
Detail: “seal with dripping blood”



Fig. 25: Frans Snyder, *Butcher's Shop*, ca. 1630-40. Oil on canvas. Moscow, Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, inv. no. Ж-349



Fig. 26: Frans Francken the Younger, *Cabinet of a Collector*, signed and dated 1617. Oil on panel, 76.5 x 119.1 cm. London, Royal Collection, RCIN 405781



Fig. 27: Giacinto Calandrucci, *Head of Medusa*, ca. 1700. Oil on tortoise shell, 49x48 cm. Stockholm, Nationalmuseum, NM7163



Fig. 28: Romeyn de Hooghe, *The Ephesian Herm as Nature Giving Birth*, 1685. Engraving, title page of Antonie van Leeuwenhoek, *Ontleding en ontdekkingen van levende dierkens in de teel-deelen van verscheyde dieren, vogelen en visschen* (Leiden: Boutesteyn, 1686)



Fig. 29: Jean Mignon, *Diana Ephesus*, ca. 1523-1603. Etching. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art acc. no. 1964.8.862



Fig. 30: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Finding of Erichthonius*, ca. 1616. Oil on canvas, 218 x 317 cm. Vienna, Liechtenstein Museum inv. no. GE111



Fig. 31: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Finding of Erichtonius*, ca. 1615. oil on panel, 50 x 41 cm. London, Courtauld Gallery, The Samuel Courtauld Trust P.1978.PG.364



Fig. 32: Peter Paul Rubens, *Nymphs and Satyrs*, 1638-40. Oil on canvas, 139.7 x 167 cm. Madrid, Museo del Prado.



Fig. 33: Frans Snyders (attributed), *Still Life of Fruits and Vegetables*. Pen and ink and wash on paper, 242 x 344 mm. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum



Fig. 34: Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens, *Nature Adorned*, ca. 1615. Oil on panel, 106.7 x 72.4 cm. Glasgow, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, acc. no. 609



Fig. 35: Peter Paul Rubens and Osias Beert, *Pausias and Glycera*, ca. 1612. Oil on canvas, approx. 17.3 x 16.2 cm. Sarasota, Ringling Museum of Art, inv. no. SN219



Fig. 36: Jan Brueghel the Elder, *Part of a Garland of Fruit and Flowers*. Pen in brown ink, brown wash, 29.6 x 11.7 cm. Antwerp, Museum Plantin-Moretus, inv. no. D.IX.23



Fig. 37: Peter Paul Rubens and Frans Snyders, *Statue of Ceres*, ca. 1615. Oil on panel, 90.5 x 65.5 cm. St. Petersburg, Hermitage Museum, inv. no. 504



Fig. 38: Jan Brueghel the Elder and Henrick van Balen, *Garland of Fruit Around a Depiction of Ceres Receiving Gifts from the Four Seasons*, ca. 1617. Oil on panel, 104 x 68.9 cm. Antwerp, Dexia Bank inv. no. 1291

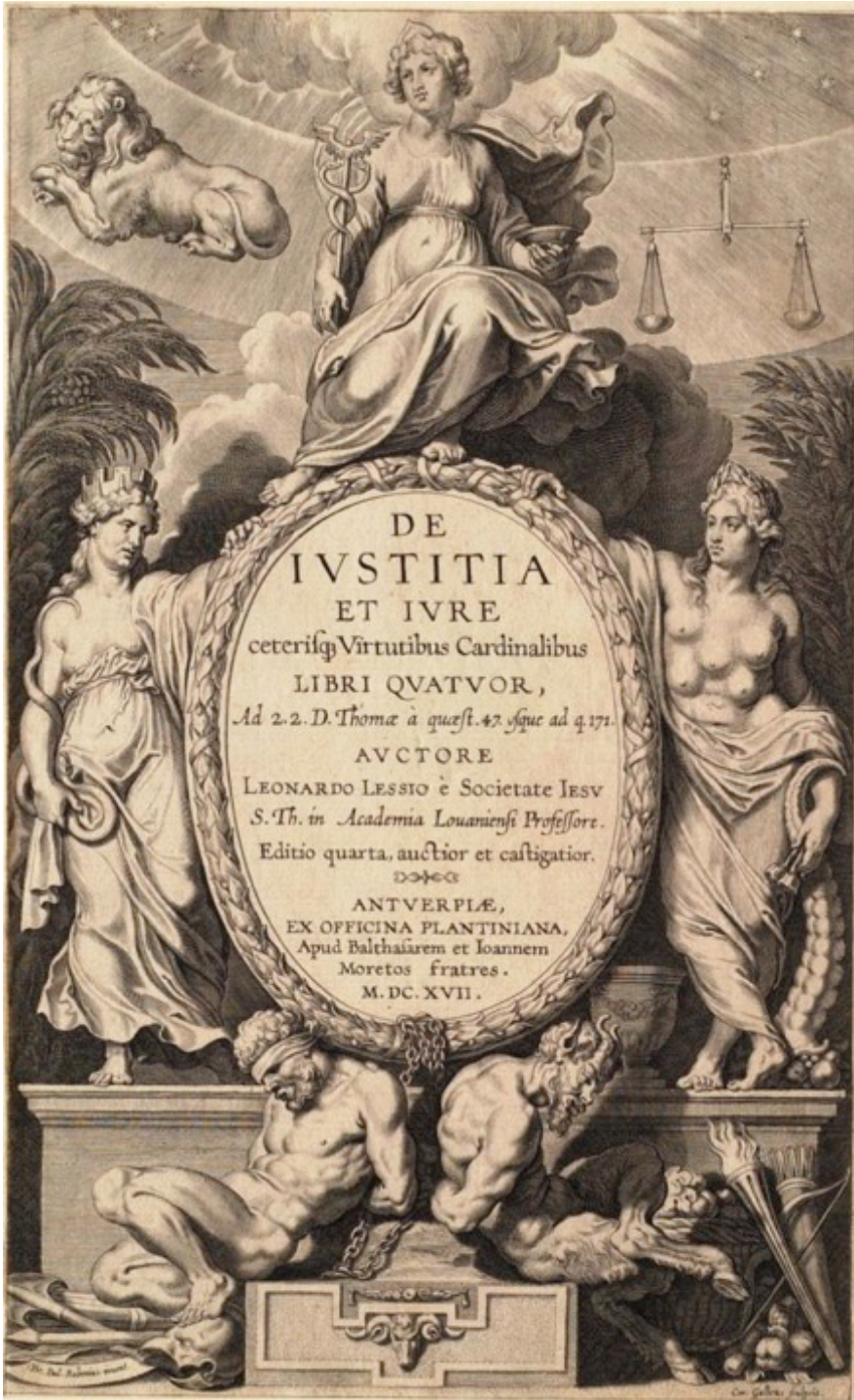


Fig. 39: Cornelis Galle I after Peter Paul Rubens, Frontispiece for Leonardus Lessius, *De Iustitia et Iure*, 4th ed. (Antwerp, 1617). Engraving on laid paper, 31.7 x 19.3 cm. Williamstown, The Clark Museum, 1982.74



Fig. 40: Peter Paul Rubens (workshop) and Frans Snyders, *Ceres and Pan*, ca. 1620. Oil on canvas, 178.5 x 280.5 cm. Madrid, Museo del Prado



Fig. 41: Peter Paul Rubens, *Deucalion and Pyrrha*, 1636, oil on panel, 26x40.7, Madrid, Museo del Prado, inv. no. 2041



Fig. 42: Peter Paul Rubens (workshop), *Cadmus Sowing the Dragon's Teeth*, ca. 1640. Oil on panel, 27.7 cm x 43.3 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum SK-A-4051.



Fig. 43: Rubens, *Deucalion and Pyrrha* (detail: “stages of figuration”)



Fig. 44: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Voyage of the Cardinal Infante Ferdinand of Spain from Barceloa to Genoa in April 1633, with Neptune Calming the Tempest (Quos ego)*, 1635. Oil on panel, 48.9 x 64.1 cm. Cambridge, Harvard Art Museums, 1942.174



Fig. 45: Peter Paul Rubens, *Neptune Calming the Tempest (Quos ego)*, 1635. Oil on canvas, 326 x 384 cm. Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden



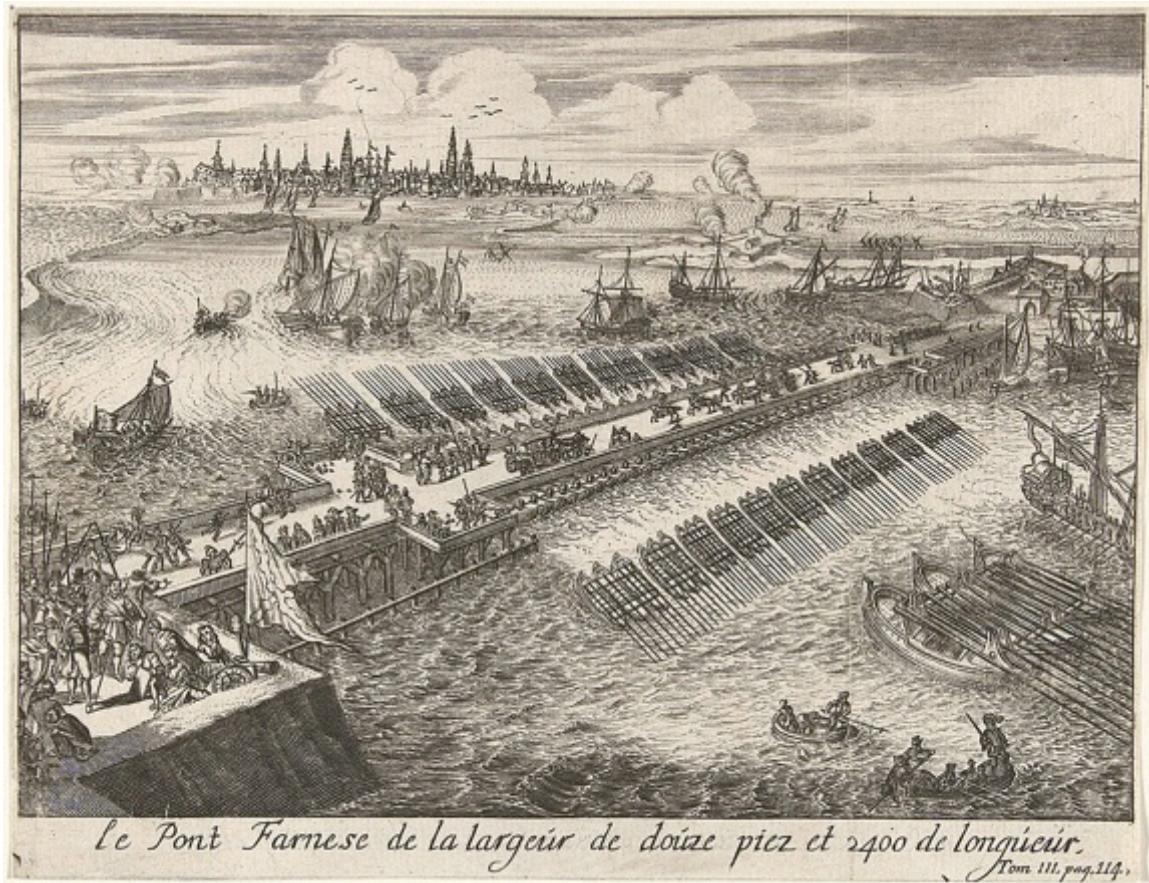
Fig. 46: Peter Paul Rubens, *Hercules Strangling the Nemean Lion*, ca. 1639. Oil on panel, with traces of red chalk, 23 x 39.2 cm. Cambridge, Harvard Art Museums 2000.199



Fig. 47: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Voyage of the Cardinal Infante Ferdinand of Spain from Barceloa to Genoa in April 1633, with Neptune Calming the Tempest (Quos ego)*, detail: "Boreas"



Fig. 48: Agnolo Bronzino, *Portrait of Andrea Doria as Neptune*, 1531-33. Oil on canvas, 149 x 199.5 cm. Milan, Pinacoteca Brera, Reg. Cron 1206



Le Pont Farnese de la largeur de douze piez et 2400 de longueur.
Tom III, pag. 114.

Fig. 49: Romeyn de Hooghe [after Juan de Ledesma], *Farnese Bridge Over the Scheldt*, 1670. Etching, 34.4 x 37.3 cm. Image courtesy of Brown University, Brown Digital Repository



Fig. 50: Romeyn de Hoogh [after Juan de Ledesma], *Explosion of the Farnese Bridge*, 1680. Etching, 26.8 x 35.9 cm. Houston, Museum of Fine Arts, acc. no. BF.2000.23.3



Fig. 51: Frans Francken the Younger, *Allegory on the Abdication of Emperor Charles V in Brussels, 25 October 1555*, ca. 1630-40. Oil on panel, 134 x 172 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, SK-A-112

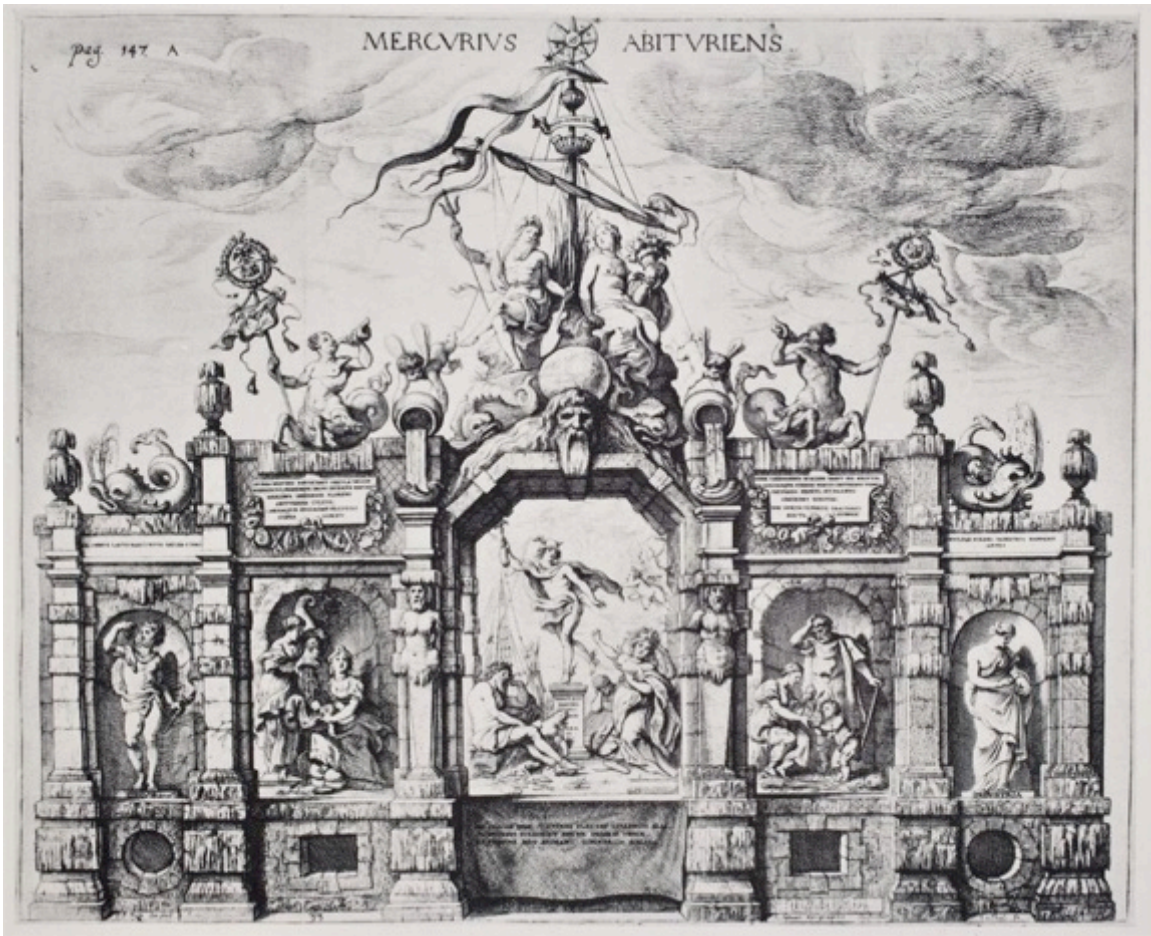


Fig. 52: Theodoor van Thulden after Peter Paul Rubens, *Stage of Mercury (Mercury Fleeing Antwerp)*. Engraving, 57 x 40.5 cm. In Jean Gaspard Gevaerts, *Pompa introitus Ferdinandi Austriaci* (Antwerp, 1641). Brussels, Bibliothèque Albert I, II 36.816 E LP [Harvard Fine Arts Library, Visual Collections, d2008.09949]



Fig. 53: Theodoor van Thulden after Peter Paul Rubens, *Arch of the Mint* (front), ca. 1641. Etching with plate tone, 47.4 x 30.3 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art 1985.52-16729. Made for Jean Gaspard Gevaerts, *Pompa introitus Ferdinandi Austriaci* (Antwerp, 1641)



Fig. 54: Peter Paul Rubens, *Arch of the Mint*, ca. 1645. Oil sketch on panel, 71 x 104 cm. Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, inv no. 316-317. (Details: “Peruvius,” “Rio de la Plata”)



Fig. 55: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Meeting of the Two Ferdinands at Nördlingen*, ca. 1634-5. Oil on canvas. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum



Fig. 56: Peter Paul Rubens, *Education of the Princess*, ca. 1622. Oil on canvas, 394 x 295 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre



Fig. 57: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Meeting of the Two Ferdinands at Nördlingen*, ca. 1634-5. Oil on panel, 49.1 x 69.8 cm. Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, inv. no. 87.PB.15



Fig. 58: Peter Paul Rubens and Frans Snyders, *Union of Earth and Water (Antverpia and Scaldis)*, ca. 1618. Oil on canvas, 222.5 x 180.5 cm. St. Petersburg, Hermitage Museum, inv. no. ГЭ-464



Fig. 59: Peter Paul Rubens or Abraham Janssen, *Two Studies of a River God*, 1620-25. Black chalk on cream antique laid paper, 41.6 x 24.2 cm. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, acc. no. 20.813



Fig. 60: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Birth of Venus*, ca. 1632-3. Black chalk and oil on oak panel, 61 x 78 cm. London, National Gallery, inv. no. NG1195

144

Imagini dei Dei

Imagini del fiume Nilo sedente sopra la Sfinge, con molti fanciulli intorno che dinotano li gradi del crescimento del detto fiume, che sono se dieci cubiti per ordinario.



Fig. 61: *River Nile*. In Vincenzo Cartari, *Imagini de i dei* (Venice, 1647), 144/ Duke University Libraries MARCXML

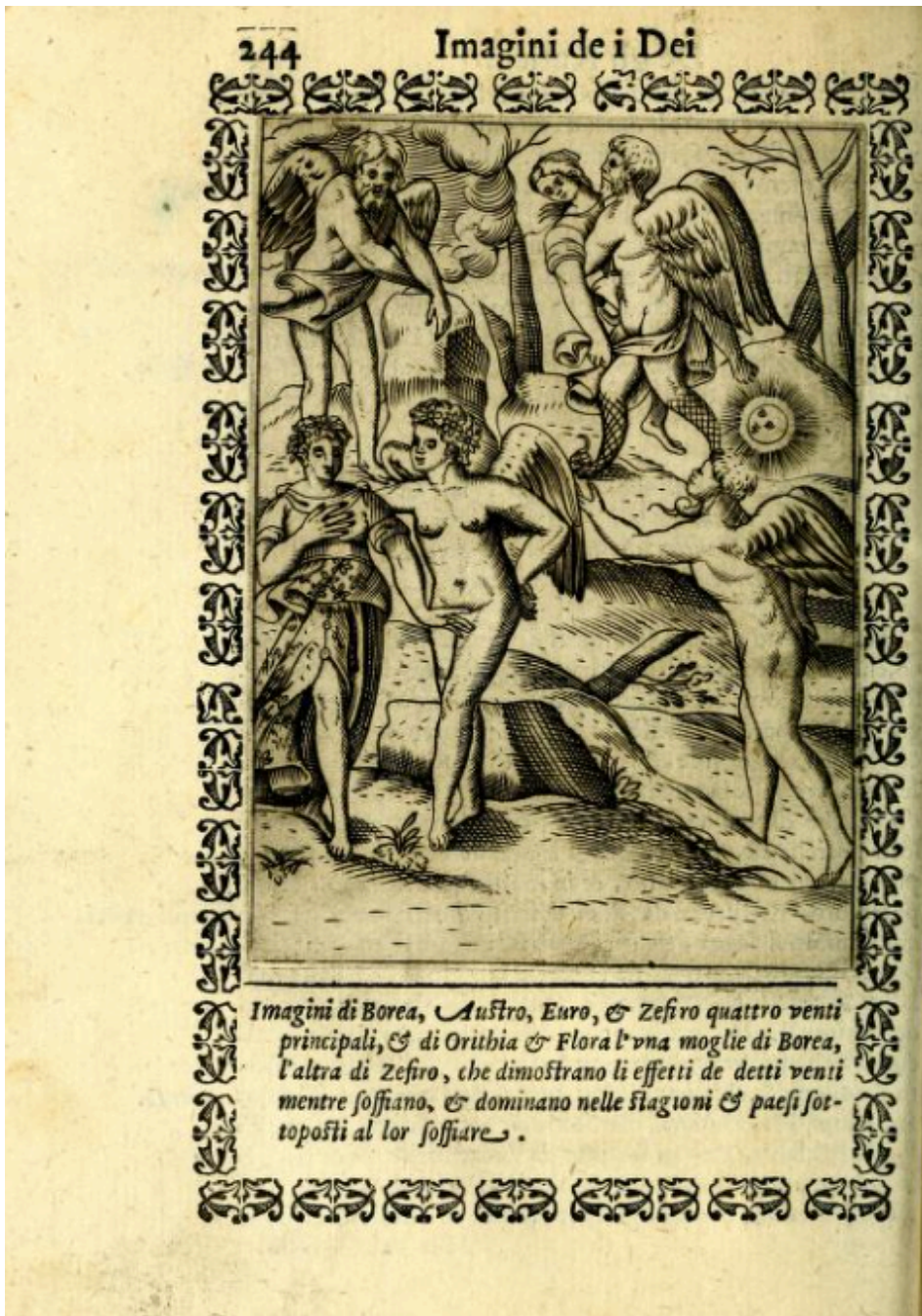


Fig. 62: *The Winds*. In Vincenzo Cartari, *Le imagini dei degli antichi* (1608), vol. 1, 244. Image courtesy of Duke University Libraries (D-6 C322IMA)



Fig. 63: Peter Paul Rubens, *Hero and Leander*, ca. 1604. Oil on canvas 95.9 x 128 cm. New Haven, Yale University Art Gallery, 1962.25

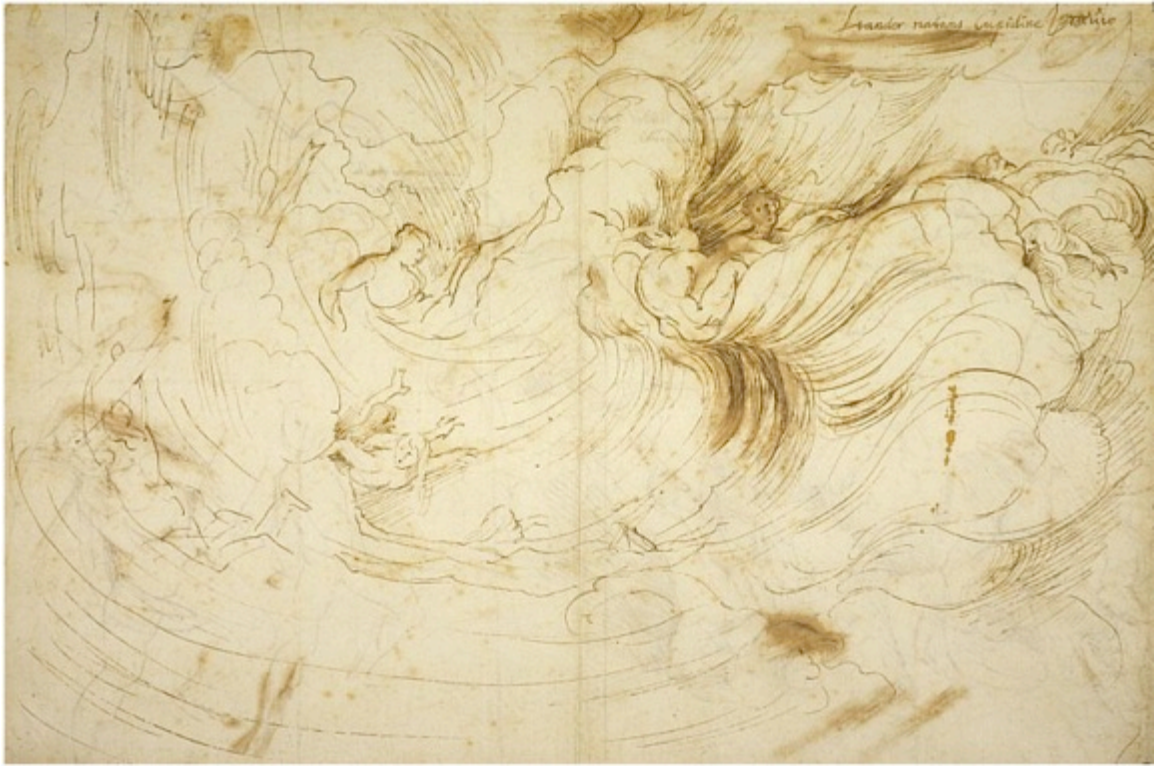


Fig. 64: Peter Paul Rubens, *Hero and Leander*, ca. 1600-03. Pen and brown ink with wash on paper, 20.40 x 30.60 cm. Glasgow, National Gallery of Scotland, acc. no. D 4936.



Fig. 65: Peter Paul Rubens, *Two Nereids*, ca. 1602. Black chalk on paper, 22.2 x 30.6 cm. Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin



Fig. 66: Leonardo da Vinci, *Neptune (Quos ego)*, ca. 1504-5. Black chalk on paper, 25.1 x 39.2 cm. Buckingham Palace, Royal Collection Trust, RCIN 912570



Fig. 67: Theodoor van Thulden after Peter Paul Rubens, *Quos ego*. Engraving, dimensions unknown. In Jean Gaspard Gevaerts, *Pompa introitus Ferdinandi Austriaci* (Antwerp, 1641), 7. Harvard University, Houghton Library p Typ 630.41.422



Fig. 68: Marcantonio Raimondi after Raffaello Sanzio, *Quos ego*, ca. 1615-16. Engraving, dimensions unknown. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 19.52.10. Detail of central panel



Fig. 69: Marcantonio Raimondi, *The Dream of Raphael (Two Women Sleeping by the Banks of the River Styx)*, ca. 1507-08. Engraving, dimensions unknown. Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, P.5380-R

Figs. 70 a-c

a) Virgil Solis, *Elementorum distributio*. In Ovid/Johannes Spreng, *Metamorphoses Ovidii* (Frankfurt, 1563), 3.

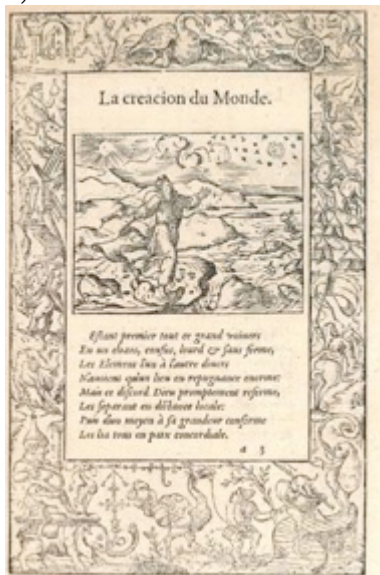
b) Bernard Salomon, *La creation du monde*. Woodcut. In Ovid, *Métamorphose Figurée* (Lyon, 1557), 7.

c) Pieter van der Borch, *Elementorum distributio*. engraving, in Ovid, *Ovidii Nasonis Metamorphoses Expisitae* (Antwerp, 1591), 7.

a)



b)



c)

ELEMENTORVM DISTRIBUTIO. I.

7



A 4



Fig. 71: Louis Béroud, *L'inondation* (*Peintre copiant un tableau au musée du Louvre*), 1910. Oil on canvas, 254 x 197.8 cm. Private collection