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Aesthetic Form and Social Plurality in Rubens' *Death of Decius Mus**

(Fig. 1) Peter Paul Rubens, *The Death of Decius Mus*, 1616–1617, oil on canvas, 289 x 518 cm. Inv.: GE 51, LIECHTENSTEIN, The Princely Collections, Vaduz-Vienna/SCALA, Florence (2023 © Photo Scala, Florence)

From 1616 to 1618 Peter Paul Rubens worked on designs for a tapestry series depicting the story of the Roman consul Decius Mus for purchasers in Genoa, finally rendered by the Brussels tapestry weaver Jan Raes (1574–1651) (Fig. 1)[1]. In the Roman consul's death scene – the image series' narrative culmination – I want to examine a certain detail that gains significance through its spatial disposition, close to the viewers, at the battlefield's ground: in the oil painting of the Liechtenstein Collection, the gored male body turns out as a place, where antiquity as a guideline for how to depict a human body is far-reachingly reflected.

It is historically and stylistically reliable that Rubens' workshop, specifically Anthony van Dyck, was responsible for the execution of the painting in question[2]. Because of the meaning of Rubens' theoretical reflections on the imitation of statues for the depiction of the dead combatant's body in the painting from Vienna and his remarkable acquaintance with the socio-political conditions in Genoa – passed down through the painter's letters and so far insufficiently noticed –, we can assume at least an intellectual participation of Rubens in the working process. So, why did he put such strong emphasis on the body's formal configuration?

There are some important contributions from the research to the artist's depiction of human bodies, which I will refer to. Lisa Rosenthal took interest in the significance of the virile body for the neostoic concept of virtue. Jeffrey Muller showed that Rubens' references to the art of the past for the shaping of pictorial objects like human bodies follow rules laid down by Quintilian in his rhetorical treatise *Institutio Oratoria*. Suzanne J. Walker drew attention to disproportions of human bodies in Rubens' work.[3]

In view of the artist's treatise on the imitation of statues I want to examine, why he established a spatial, formal and perceptual relationship between the procumbent figure as an obtrusive visual benchmark and the head figure's sacrificial death. I argue for a polyvalent perception and herewith refer to Ulrich

Heinen, who showed that Rubens earlier in his lifetime anticipated different circles of viewers in the working process[4]. With the dead body's complex physical form, Rubens, in a historical view, puts Genoa's political and social constitution into focus and critically deliberates his amenities as an artist. The image will be scrutinized in the context of Rubens' exchange of letters and related to the meaning the Roman consul for the city had. In consideration of Genoa's socio-political history, I will show that Rubens with his painting argues for the republic of Genoa as a heterogeneous communal body. Herewith, the painting discloses the function of decentralized pictorial structures for antiauthoritarian narratives and semantics, which is significant, because the Decius Mus series was the first of Rubens' design projects for large tapestry series.

1. Antiquity as an aesthetic guideline

During his stay in Italy, Rubens fabricated drawings of some of the most prominent ancient sculptures. With his studies of the *Laocoon* in the courtyard of the Vatican he took special interest in the torso. Apart from the white paper, the thorax finds its specific shape in separation of and elevation from the image plane, which is mainly betokened by the preciseness of the contour lines. With black tones, the painter graphically articulates flesh and muscles in order to convey a distinct idea of the body in its corporeal autonomy, whereupon the bodily surface keeps its planarity (Fig. 2).

In his treatise *De imitatione statuarum*, which is a fragment published from the theoretical notebook, Rubens writes that for the highest accomplishment in painting the knowledge of and familiarity with the antique statues is indispensable. In order to transform the solid material into painting and to achieve natural impressions, the painter has to desist from the diversity of shadows, which actually testifies the hardness of the statue's materiality respectively its light-reflecting superficiality: "Lumine etiam ab omni humanitate alienissimae differunt lapideo splendore et aspera luce superficies magis elevante, ac par est, aut saltem oculos fascinante.[5]"

(Fig. 2) Peter Paul Rubens, *Torso des Laokoon*, around 1601/1602, drawing (black chalk), 45.6 x 29.6 cm, Kupferstich-Kabinett, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Foto: Herbert Boswank (www.skd.museum)

Laocoon's front view conveys the hermetic corporality of the antique sculpture in its lit, lithic materiality (since the body's contour and sporadic shadows are emphasized). Simultaneously, it visualizes Rubens' special interest in the pictorial transformation of antiquities by providing it with natural impressions (subdued brightness of the body's surface through smooth dark tones). The diaphanousness of flesh, skin and gristles would soften the aforesaid hardness of the transitions in stone, as Rubens states[6].

Although Rubens is actually enlivening his model, his interest keeps to be strong in realizing the concept of a clearly defined, heroic masculine physicality. In his treatise he also expressed the belief

"that the bodies of ancient Romans and Greeks have been closer to perfection of creation, from which humankind had since declined"[7].

(Fig. 3) Detail: Peter Paul Rubens, *Das Große Jüngste Gericht*, about 1617, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen - Alte Pinakothek München (oil on canvas, 608.5 x 463.5 cm)

(Fig. 4) Detail: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Miracles of St. Francis Xavier*, about 1617/1618, oil on canvas, 535 x 395 cm
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The actual human body is brought in relation to the ideal of the ancient sculptures. At this juncture, Rubens' reflections on the construction of the human figure, which were published in Paris in 1773 under the title *Théorie de la figure humaine*, prove the ancient statues' exemplary function. The writing is a compiling version after one of the copies of extracts from the lost theoretical notebook.

All human bodies consist of three geometrical solids: cube, circle and equilateral triangle. Different types or parts of firm bodies ("les corps forts & vigoreux") correspond especially to the "cube ou quarré"[8].

By this standard, as Jeffrey Muller states, Rubens studied and measured the ancient models, which already and always had incorporated those formal principles into their own shapes. As "archetypes"[9] they "offered Rubens a repository of hidden truth that could be revealed by applying the right numerical and geometric measures"[10].

In the half lying man in the lower left corner of *The Great Last Judgement* and *The Miracles of St. Francis Xavier*, the Flemish painter received these archetypes (Fig. 3/Fig. 4). In the figures' linearly enclosed chest, the painter resumed the front side of the *Torso Belvedere*, which he in a drawing fabricated according to the antique example (Fig. 5). We specifically find the clear impression of the *Belvedere Torso's* front view in the formal perspicuity of the figure in the preliminary study for the two paintings (Fig. 6). Here, the body's cut-out distinctiveness reflects its own unpinning.

Although charily enlivened through blue tones, the figures in both paintings principally keep attention to the brightness of the physical surface. The men, on the one hand the figure describes a man arising from the grave, on the other hand a sick one, follow the impression of ancient statues. They invariably hold the potency of antique archetypes, according to which "mankind was closer to the original and unspoiled perfection of nature"[11]. Keeping this potential active, Rubens interprets death and sickness in terms of an everlasting ruling transcendency.

In his drawings of antique statues, Rubens focused on the composition of human bodies, which he also theoretically reflected. In order to transform the ancient statues into painting and to achieve natural impressions, Rubens intends that the painter has to desist from shadow casts and overcome the hardness of the stone. Although, as will become clear, the ancient sculpture's materiality was also reflected in the dead soldier's body. As his drawing of the *Laocoon* shows, the formal completeness, which he realized as the unmistakable characteristic of the ancient human body, was based on its linear seclusiveness. Also, certain realms of a body – a figure's chest or its spine – Rubens considers as formally self-contained.

2. Physical deformation

Like the figure in *The Great Last Judgement* and *The Miracles of St. Francis Xavier*, the painter shows the procumbent soldier in the death scene of Decius Mus

at the image's lower border. He is posed to some extent as a visual threshold. This is crucial, because Rubens' *modello* in the Prado instead discloses a visual distance between the beholders and the death scene, conveyed by the figure positioned straight on the ground. The fallen soldier is placed in some distance to the image's lower boundary, but the physical structure of the body in the painting from Vienna is already present here (Fig. 7).

(Fig. 5) Peter Paul Rubens, *Torso Belvedere*, RH.S.109, Collection City of Antwerp, Rubens House (1602–1608, drawing (pencil, black chalk), 37.5 x 27 cm)

The story, which Titus Livius in *Ab Urbe Condita* (8, 9) tells, is about two consuls, Decius and Manlius, who each had a nightly vision about the battle against the Latins. One of them, together with the enemy, would have to be sacrificed to the "Dii Manes" and "Mother Earth". The divine fate decreed: The people and army, whose leader would sacrifice his life to defeat the enemies, carry the victory. During the battle, Decius led the left wing, which could not defend itself any longer.

(Fig. 6) Peter Paul Rubens, *Study of the man raised from the dead and two studies of legs in a kneeling position, for figures in "Miracles of St Francis Xavier" (…)*, c. 1617–1618, drawing (black chalk), 35 x 54.2 cm © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

The consul therefore asked for divine help and was ready to sacrifice himself. A rain of missiles took his life. The next day, his corpse was found under a huge mound of deceased enemies. There is no reference in Livius' text to the anonymous figure, which is why Rubens particularly could use his imagination for its pictorial representation (Fig. 8).

With special focus on the vaulty thorax, the finely structured and shaded corporeal surface is linked to the chest study of *Laocoon*. As Günter Brucher has suggested, the figure as a whole is congruent with the antique statue of a dying *Niobid*. Günter Brucher underlines Rubens' unbroken interest in antique sculpture and attests the painter "eine Hinwendung […] zu neuartigen, nämlich barock-'geklärten' und teilweise am klassischen Kanon der Antike orientierten Formkategorien"[12]. Unlike the *Dying Niobid*, the dead combatant's legs are splayed. The lower left leg is immersed in the mortal conglomerate. The soldier's right leg is depicted just parallel to the image's lower boundary. The figure's arms seem to be insistently depressed.

Although Günter Brucher due to the splayed legs induces a second ancient model, the *Dying Gaul*[13], his suggestions historically remain questionable. Not only because a differentiation in the disposition of the arms can be identified, but because we have no clear pictorial evidence that Rubens was aware of the ancient supine figures[14]. Not least Günter Brucher's proposal leads to periodical problematics considering the question, which

(Fig. 7) Peter Paul Rubens, *The Death of the Consul Publius Decius*, 1616–1617, oil on panel, 100 x 140.5 cm, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado (© Photographic Archive Museo Nacional del Prado)

antiquity the painter could have in mind. Have the depictions of the *Niobid* or the *Dying Gaul* been dated back to Roman times, the *Laocoon* (as Rubens probably saw it with the supplemented outstretched right arm) allegedly traces back to a Greek original in bronze. Nevertheless, the ideal of the antique body can be comprehended as an aesthetic guideline for the procumbent soldier. Slightly modified, the figure recurs in paintings, which the artist accomplished within a quite short time. In view of *The Defeat of Sanherib* (around 1617), *The Death of Adonis* (ca. 1614) as well as *Juno and Argus* (around 1610) a comprehensive scanning makes clear that the bodies come into focus in respect of their homogeneous, lithic-like shapes.

An important characteristic of *The Death of Decius Mus* is the alignment of the fallen soldier's right arm and right leg with the lower horizontal image border. Further specifications unfold concerning the figure's physicality. The shadow running parallel to the ground plane interlaces with green tones. It counterbalances the clearly outlined and shaded thorax in its superficial, light reflecting brightness, which is referring to antique sculptures' superficiality and material durability. At the same time, and corresponding with Rubens' treatise, the thorax is smoothly vitalized by blue tones, which adumbrate the transparency of the skin. Thus, the painter's interest is at least twofold: retrieving the preceding example of *Laocoon*'s thorax and converting the procumbent body in places into an enlivened form. Nevertheless, scrutinizing the line placed between the right hand and right leg, the dark tones seem to alienate the combatant's extremities – especially his right leg.

In this instance, everything, what the artist's remarks on human bodies respectively ancient statues and their transformation into painting implicate, seems to be abolished: outlines are blurred, the complete absence of superficial brightness and no vibrancy by means of the skin's transparency or flesh structures. And even the impression of sculptures' lithic durability is undermined, which shadow casts usually convey. Following the incidence of light, the right leg's obscuration is not caused by a toss of shadows. In this position, the body gradually appears to be absorbed by the dead and crouching soldiers[15] as well as animals, which is underlined by the wriggling of the dark-green textile channelled into the invisible. This is similarly ac-

complished with the left leg, whose contours Rubens strongly dissolves through dark tones.

According to Suzanne J. Walker, assaulted male bodies – "victims" – in Rubens' oeuvre express a "denial of masculine authority" through physical distortions. Their anatomical features, which Suzanne J. Walker elicits in *Cain Slaying Abel* (1608–1609), *Prometheus Bound* (1618), and the *Lamentation* (1614), articulate a carnosity of the torso. The torso in its asymmetrical disposition and with its inoperable limbs, delineates a suspension of the heroic "symmetrically balanced [upper] body"[16]. That loss of "bodily" sovereignty becomes evident in the figures' inability to control their own bodies[17]. In descrying these disproportions, Suzanne J. Walker sensitizes us to the pictorial presentation of human suffering and violence specifically in physical terms (which also includes the outstretched arm of those figures)[18].

The dead combatant in the death scene of Decius Mus is not detached from symmetry or other components that in Suzanne J. Walker's view mostly build up the heroic body. What I deem important, is the reception of a specific sculpture-like aesthetic, based on the artist's view of ancient statues and bodies, and its complex pictorial reflection. The corpus has a multi-layered shaping and the particular disfiguration and physical deformation become also evident at a further place in the artist's oeuvre: the *Battle against Maxentius* (1622).

3. Artistic memory

The fractional deformation of physical integrity pertains to the meaning of memory in artistic practice and its relation to the body of antique statues.

Leonardo da Vinci advised the artist "to repeat with the imagination the superficial outlines of forms previously studied or other notable things comprehended by subtle speculation, and this is really a praiseworthy and useful activity for confirming things in one's memory"[19]. Also, Giorgio Vasari stressed the importance of the artistic memory:

"Il qual disegno non può avere buon'origine, se non s'ha dato continuamente opera a ritrarre cose naturali, e studiato pitture d'eccellenti maestri, e di statue antiche di rilievo, come s'è tante volte detto. Ma sopra tutto il meglio è gl'ignudi degli uomini vivi, e femmine, e da quelli avere preso in memoria, per lo continuo uso, i muscoli del torso, delle schiene, delle gambe, braccia, delle ginocchia, e l'ossa di sotto, e poi avere sicurta, per lo molto studio, che senza avere i naturali innanzi, si possa formare di fantasia da se attitudini per ogni verso"[20].

Artistic memory, shaped by the observation of (sculptural) bodies, was significant to Rubens, as a remark in his letters show. Writing to Franciscus Junius on 1 August 1637, he stated: "Those things which are perceived by the senses produce a sharper and more durable impression […] than those which present themselves to us only in the imagination, like dreams"[21].

Rubens' drawings after ancient statues, testified by the *Laocoon* or the *Belvedere Torso*, and their inclusion into painting, can be understood as the "record of his memory of works of art"[22]. At once, they display his erudition. Rubens' production of drawings of the ancient models and the

"predominance of the male nude – and especially the strong male nude – […] during and after his critical time in Rome, […] invigorate his art by clothing strong, classically inspired ideas in fitting formal garb – that is, in fashioning his own rhetorically inspired body of eloquence at the foundation of his art"[23].

The two aspects contained in Rubens' view of artistic adaptation, focusing the ancient world as a primordial period concentrated in its sculptures and their reflective transformation into painting, trace back to the historical theory of art in the seventeenth century[24]. His understanding of memory is grounded in the ancient discourses of Plato and Aristotle, who conceived memory as a storage, from which images can be retracted. In addition, Plato deems memory a mental place of knowledge, which testifies memory's impression by God[25].

Beyond that, the eighteenth century has crystallized as the period of fundamental shifts in the conception of the human body. The "homo clausus" defined the notion of an unmitigated body and its sharp outline outstripped the aesthetic of a permeable or grotesque hu-

(Fig. 8) Detail: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Death of Decius Mus,* 1616–1617, oil on canvas, 289 x 518 cm. Inv.: GE 51, LIECHTENSTEIN, The Princely Collections, Vaduz-Vienna/SCALA, Florence (2023 © Photo Scala, Florence)

man corporality. This implies not only formal outward isolation but also the concentration of the homogeneous physical structure[26]. With commemorative sculpture and architecture of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, formal features of antiquities have been received. These works attend the past as an ideal period and established a historical continuity: "The classical paradigm envisioned the past, but also promised utopia with wholeness and beauty [of the human form] as antidotes to human suffering." In presenting a "collective vision of the citizen body" through an everlasting beautiful corporality, class differences could have been overcome and replaced by a common humanity. Hence, the antique male body, enlivening the "Greek spirit", could stand for "celebrating the beauty of muscularity as the exemplar of unity and wholeness"[27].

By avoiding exclusively emulating a statue or converting it into painting by conforming to his theoretical rules, Rubens, with the procumbent soldier's leg, sacrifices the formal homogeneity assigned to the antique male body. This becomes evident in the physical disfigurations, which the dead combatant's extremities command. Here, imaginative artistic memory is grounded by actual pictorial rendering.

4. Historical outline

One of the essential questions to consider in this context is, which topicality for the republic of Genoa Decius Mus, consul of the ancient Roman republic, had. Thinking about heroic virtue and figural authority takes us directly into the discussions about social superiority. This concerns conflicts, which vehemently coined Genoa's socio-cultural field. They trace back to the economic alliance between Genoa and Spain, which privileged the state's old gentry ("nobili vecchi" or "eminenti") from the mid sixteenth century on. The conflicts also pertained to the function of the doge as the actual authority in the political field. As Matteo Salonia explains, "in the Genoese system, unity resulted from private networks, but also from the diversification of investments and the integration of markets, which were freely pursued by countless merchants."

Private wealth and capital accumulation were bound to political forms of self-government. The Genoese intended to prevent a "signoria", the tyrannical concentration of power in the republic's highest office, the doge. The debilitation of an overarching political power of the state's head office, political self-determination and the development of a public financial budget went hand in hand and should restrict uncontrolled governmental monopolized expenditure.[28] In the 16th century, the "nobili vecchi" wielded power, which was chiefly based on their economical influence.

The different attitudes between old nobility and new nobility ("nobili nuovi") clarified in the Corsican war. Whereas the "vecchi"

"came to be identified with pro-Spanish positions, with entrusting the republic's defense to the fleet under An-

drea Doria's command, and with a tendency to place private ambition above the public good", the nuovi meanwhile "came to identify themselves with a policy of armed neutrality and claimed to be the champions of the common good as opposed to the *vecchi*'s alleged pursuit of private interests, even at the expense of the community at large"[29].

Thus, the difference between generating wealth mainly for common matters or private ones early characterized the relationship between "nuovi" and "vecchi", who availed themselves of the connections with the Spanish court. This led to statutory arrangements.

Within the "tradition of communal self-government", the "Regulae Communis Ianuae" from 1363 put the limitation of the doge's authority through an "act of moderation" into focus[30]. Whereas the first passage – "De civitate Ianuae per ducem de populo perpetuo gubernanda" – emphasizes the doge as the head of the state, the third one – "In quibus consistit baylia domini ducis et consilii" – articulates an essential rule in view of communal politics. The head office should consist of twelve councilors, who took care of control. "Si vero fuerint in absentia domini ducis, tunc debeant esse presentes ad minus novem ex ipsis consiliariis, et tunc debeant ex ipsis novem vocibus esse concordes octo ad minus"[31]. Further, the "nuovi" have been supplied with political offices. This led to a "division of offices", which involved the impossibility for the doge exclusively to place his men in pivotal political functions. This resulted in the offices' independence from the central office ("De prohibita intromissione iusticie domino duci et consilio")[32].

To summarize: The republic's highest office historically is not only to be seen in terms of financial circumstances, but specifically in view of the aspirations of the state's two main factions. Andrea Spinola, himself in the office of the doge, defined the state's head office as follows:

"Questa parola di Doge, o duce, che dir vogliamo, e nome civile, significando, non chi signoreggi, ma chi come scorta vada inanzi, e che guidi. Di qui e che i capi di alcune republiche libere si chiamano Dogi. A capi tali sogliono le leggi dar apparenza e prospettiva, ma *modestissima autorità*"[33].

In a way, in the figure of Andrea Doria, the problems connected with the position of an alleged singular ruler and the struggles between "vecchi" and "nuovi" become evident. With the attempted murder of Andrea Doria in 1547, Giovanni Luigi Fieschi seeked to end his arbitrary power. Although not in charge of the doge's office, Andrea Doria's commitment to the Habsburg empire, e.g. in function of an admiral of the Spanish-Mediterranean fleet, resulted in his de facto position as the "head of the old nobility". Andrea Doria weaved "the most delicate bonds between the republic's citizens and the Spanish monarchy [which] contributed greatly to the persistence of division along factional lines"[34]. One-sided financial profits from Spanish finances stressed the social distinctions. To a large extent, this raised the monetary resources of the "nobili vecchi". Selling galleys to the Spanish crown, maintained their financial privilege resulting in a "guarantee of loyalty to the king of Spain", Philipp II, who was obliged as a debtor to Genoa's old nobility[35]. The recognition of Genoa as a free republic after Andrea Doria's detachment from the French kingdom and from his position as a governor of the French Mediterranean fleet in 1528, in fact led to political dependence on Spain[36].

When tension between the factions grew, the silk manufacturers' guild became a place where "nobili nuovi" and the ordinary citizens ("commoners"), especially workers from the silk industry, banded together. On 15 March 1575, they compelled the suspension of the "garibetto" legislation – a reform from 1547 passed by Andrea Doria to hold the "nobili vecchi" at the court of Charles V (Genoese financiers at the Spanish court have exclusively been *vecchi*.) The resolution had enhanced the republic's loyalty to the Spanish crown[37].

The "commoners" articulated two demands: "Entry into the nobility for the wealthiest and most influential, and a reduction of fiscal pressure for the artisans and the poor." Consequently, they repealed the "gabella della pinta", a tax on the sale of wine by pint, which was a burden for the lower social classes, on 27 May 1575[38]. In 1576, the constitution "Leges novae reipublicae genuensis" ensured that the old and new nobility were presented equally in political offices. The decision included options for further downward adjustments. More precisely, striving for a

conciliation of Genoa's ruling forces, the essential result has been that the "Minor Consiglio" should be composed of the same average of "vecchi" and "nuovi". Now, to restrict pressure from the lower ranks, an annual acceptance of up to ten aspirants into the nobility additionally occurred. All at once ninety-seven "commoners" had been accepted per "ascrizione" in 1576. However, rivalries did not stop to persist. The "vecchi"-faction in itself was imbued by clashes of individual aspirations, which led to an additional privilege of clientele structures bound to powerful families. Within the lower factions, tensions enhanced between merchants and artisans or manufacturers[39].

These historical events demonstrate that the contested aspirations of the different "fazioni" shaped the republic's social and political constitution. The republic's lowermost civic sections were seen as a tool of bunching forces against the "eminenti". In turn, the noble factions recognized them as a latent force that had to be suppressed. In the figure of Andrea Doria the political power of a single ruler and the danger of a "signoria" became evident.

5. Intellectual discourse

Ansaldo Ceba and Uberto Foglietta are decisive intellectual voices in the academic discussions about Genoa's dependence on Spain, the republic's economic autonomy, and the debates about nobility and its statutorily involvement into the corpus of politics. In his text *Il Cittadino nobile di Repubblica* from 1617, Ansaldo Ceba referred to the early Roman history and republic, as conveyed by Livius. The republican system represented the principle of civic liberty and was based on Christian ethic, which embodied itself in antique exempla[40] (which have been recorded by pictorial programs placed on the walls in the houses of leading Genoese families). They invoked the topos of "amor patriae" and the cult of historic heroic individuals[41]. In this conception, virtue meant the willingness of an individual to commit oneself to public common good. The "Cittadino nobile" is the ideal figure complying with these requests. Ansaldo Ceba considers the death for the "patria" as the highest virtue and links it to the self-sacrifice of Decius Mus[42].

The author is specifically interested in the "Cittadino's" physical constitution, the "buona dispositione del corpo"[43], respectively the "beni del corpo". These are "necessarij al Cittadino, perch'egli possa aiutarne l'essercitio delle virtù, onde s'acquista la civile felicità alla Republica"[44]. Ansaldo Ceba further writes:

"Ma, perché l'operationi d'alcune virtù principali son molte volte impedite dal mancamento de'beni del corpo, e della fortuna, di questi ancora s'hanno a recar le diffinitioni in questo trattato; accioche'l buon Cittadino, quanto è in lui, possa procurare o d'acquistarli, o di mantenerli, o d'accrescerli. Per beni del corpo noi intendiamo la sanità, la bellezza, la robustezza, l'agilità, e l'attitudine alle fatiche, insieme con qualunque altra dote possa rendere la persona più habile al servigio publico"[45].

With the strength, beauty and health of the "Cittadino's" body, Ansaldo Ceba implicitly joins the understanding of the ideal human body, which Rubens refers to in his treatise on antique statues. It is linked to the perfection of human creation and the ideal of ancient corporality. The "Cittadino's" virtue Ansaldo Ceba bases on corporeal preferences, the body's integrity and potency.

In his *Dialogo sopra il legittimo governo popolare della Repubblica di Genova*, Uberto Foglietta, who published his text when the "nobili nuovi" had widely been ousted from political competences, mentions noble plebeian families of the ancient times, like the "Decj", but highlights an "uomo plebeo nuovo" without honors of the ancestors[46]. What he basically focused on, is advocating the republic's communal well-being, which could only be reached by restricting the inordinate power of individual, selected citizens. In context of the Corsican war, Uberto Foglietta in another text, *Della Repubblica di Genova*, very directly refers to the split between the social factions. Neither divine fortune, nor heavenly statutes, but what is directly producing the grievances within the own proximate surrounding has to be foregrounded in regard to the republic's recovery.

"Percioche anchora che quella della Corsica sia una gran perdita, nondimeno ce ne soprasta una altra maggiore; ne in cio possiamo accusare la ingiuria della Fortuna; o darne colpa alle stelle; ma bene alle nostre passioni, le quali se non lasciamo, […] temo che appresso la Corsica non perdiamo noi stessi anchora"[47]

In view of the indicated need for self-reflection by the involved, Uberto Foglietta considers the actual situation, in which the old nobility "claimed precedence over the 'nuovi' by appealing to a supposed greater antiquity of their families and to greater fame as heroes of the fatherland"[48].

According to the author, just the old nobility's claim of superiority caused a division between Genoa's residents. The principal houses were responsible for "years of cruel tyranny" ("Tirannide di tanti anni")[49]. Uberto Foglietta attacked the "nobili vecchi" in terms of their ancestral superiority – "supposed greater antiquity"[50] – and uniform self-involvement, which chiefly caused the divisions between Genoa's residents. Pointing to the artlessness of fortune or celestial preconditions, and underlining the relevance of approaching the proximate conflicts, he decidedly negates the concentration of power in a politically isolated figure or civic group.

A non-noble like Simone Boccanegra, who took office of the doge in 1359, would have stopped the power of the Doria and Spinola families, as the author intends[51]. A thorn in Uberto Foglietta's side was the aforesaid "garibetto", because it intended to prohibit a majority of the "nobili nuovi", actually non-nobles by origin, in the government. Furthermore, the resolution aimed to prohibit their intention to build a public fleet (and taking pressure on the private galley owners)[52]. Concerning this matter, Uberto Foglietta immediately addresses Andrea Doria and the wealthy owners of galleys:

"Dare le gallee alla Patria, che questa sola è la prova, che egli preferisce alla grandezza della casa il bene pubblico […]. Altrimente come si potrebbe egli domandare liberatore, se egli lasciasse nella sua casa una potenza, che può opprimere la libertà"[53]?

These broader matters of contested social and political rights and claims reached the intellectual circle of Justus Lipsius in Antwerp, which Rubens was well familiar with. In his *Opera omnia*, which was part of Rubens' library[54], Justus Lipsius on the one hand differentiated between "Patricij" and "Plebeij", on the other hand between "Nobiles" and "Novi". For instance, in contrast to the "Novi", whose social influence was restricted to the vita privata, the "Nobiles" were allowed to possess ancestral portraits acquired by holders of a political office. The "Decij" are mentioned in context of the discussions about the plebeijs' (or "commoners'") access to political offices and political and social honors[55].

To sum up: Uberto Foglietta specifically refers to the conflicts between the social classes in Genoa, which he calls the "nobili vecchi" to account for. In his view, the "nobili nuovi" are endowed with plebeian, civic values, and comply with the conception of a virtuous gentry. Considering the members of the "gens Deciana" as an example of virtue traces back to Livius, who in his *History of Rome* (10, 24) took special regard to the "Decii" advocating the Roman "plebs". Ansaldo Ceba conceives the "Cittadino nobile" the citizen's ideal image. In this context, he underlines the "Cittadino's" corporeal amenities and lists a range of other abilities and features, which the virtue of the ideal citizen is based on[56].

6. Visual discourse

In respect of Rubens' theoretical notes, there are three physical levels of the dead combatant's body: the embossment of ancient sculpture (planar brightness, partially shaded surface, sharp outlines), liveliness of a fleshy body (thick shadow counterbalancing the light-reflecting skin, its adumbrated transparency) and the deformation of extremities (covering green-dark tonality, blurring of contours). Depicted close to the viewers, the body is crucially forming the perception of Decius Mus' death, which is therefore beheld under certain conditions. First, seen in consideration of an antique statue in terms of *Laocoon*'s physical selectness, Rubens' and Ansaldo Ceba's preferences of the ideal (antique) body are projected to Decius Mus. Beheld under the aesthetic proposition of a lithic, clearly out-

lined body, he can be understood as a discrete, isolated heroic example of virtue. At once, the Roman consul seems idealized, his death divinely given, and congruent with the procedures described in Livius' *Ab urbe Condita*. Secondly, perceived in consideration of a human, fleshy, plastic body, the mortally wounding and goring lance becomes a marker. Decius Mus' throat is accentuated as the place of decisive slaying. He seems successively grounded on the blackguardly battlefield. Finally, looking at the combatant's deformed right leg, physicality seems overemphasized. From the thorax on, the corpus is gradually going to be encompassed by the darkness that also absorbs the fighting soldiers and animals. At once, the dying consul in the beholders' perception transforms into the procumbent dead figure.

We can relate to this intensified permeability of the soldier's physicality a term Michail Bachtin uses. In line with Irmela Marei Krüger-Fürhoff, the permeability of the "grotesque body" Michail Bachtin recognizes as divergent to classical features, which are chiefly expressed in the completeness of clearly defined corporeal surfaces. Grotesque bodies have pervious boundaries, articulate physical depths and can be moulded by their own outgrowths: "Die künstlerische Logik der grotesken Gestalt ignoriert […] die verschlossene, ebenmäßige und taube Fläche des Leibes"[57].

The image's decisive narrative moment is membered in sense of a perceptual tripartition configured by the formal trichotomy of the prone body. The predetermined corporeal integrity of the ancient statue Rubens projects to Decius Mus, who is defined as an exemplum virtutis. The statue reflects the ideal citizen's physical preferences described in Ansaldo Ceba's text. But the viewers recognize how Decius Mus successively falls to the battlefield's ground: from a heroic ideal to a mortally wounded Roman soldier to a distorted body. Does the body-percolating picket refer to the vertical direction, which the consul's heroism is aligned to, it is also connected with Decius Mus' death caused by the goring lance. Thus, Rubens foretells a temporal shift, in which the Roman consul finally seems to disfigure into the horizontally prone corpus, which also has been lethally injured. This figural correspondence is strengthened by the fact that Livius speaks of missiles instead of a lance that caused the consul's death. The relation between the figures is not only a spatial or a temporal one. Also, the soldier's disfigured leg is mirrored in Decius Mus' prominent posed one above the horse's back.

To underline the meaning of the relationship between the two figures in the climax of the *Decius Mus Series*, I would like to refer to some other larger political narratives in Rubens' oeuvre. The "focal point" of his unfinished *Henri IV Series* for the northern end of the second gallery in the Palais Luxembourg in Paris is the king's triumph. The chariot is steered by a female figure, which is identified as the personification of "virtus". The outline of the setting can be described as classical, since the probable presence of Olympian gods and "conventional participants in Roman triumphs" marks the triumph as ancient-Roman[58]. In terms of Henri's historicizing entries, pamphlets celebrated the peaceable king and allegorize him with several gods[59]. "In Henri IV, Rubens was confronted with an almost paradigmatic figure of heroism, a profane, modern avatar of a warrior saint"[60]. In the *Constantine Series* Rubens restored the ancient Roman setting. With the emperor's triumphal entry into Rome[61] he furthermore antedates the narrative structure of the *Henri IV Series*. This is accentuated by the fact that the mentioned *Battle against Maxentius* reflects *Henri IV Victorious*[62].

In *The Death of Decius Mus*, in which the battle and the triumphal aspect of the narrative are united and in addition characterized by the close relation of the hero with the dead soldier, Rubens with his studio recognizes an opportunity to refine in painting the classical themes of virtue, fortune and fate. Reinhold Baumstark recently pointed to the preparatory drawing for the Latin soldier with the lance located at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and its function to enforce the central dramatic moment. The drawing was also used for the *Tiger, Lion and Leopard Hunt* (1616–1617*).*[63] *The hunting image from Rennes* is reproduced in the middle area of the *Allegory of Sight* (ca. 1617) by Jan Brueghel I and Rubens[64].

Thus, heightening the dramatic moment in *The Death of Decius Mus* through the soldier with the lance, implicated considerations about the visual perception of the event. The compositional line built by the lance in the death scene of Decius Mus shifts the

beholder's focus to the dead soldier's right leg. The Latin soldier's mortal deed is thwarted by the Roman soldier armed with a sword. This is reflected in the act of a Latin soldier in the left background opposing the attacking Roman army. Both actions thwart the transcendental structure of the narrative, which ends in the consul's death. The Roman soldier's sword is emphasizing the dead combatant's leg and makes evident that Rubens reflected with it a perceptual differentiation of the dramatic and heroic moment, which can also be seen in context of the broader narration.

In view of another version of the subject (Fig. 9), it becomes clear that Simon de Vos instead put emphasis on the link between the heroic death of the Roman consul and the divine and provident course of the narration.

This is conveyed by Decius Mus' figural separation, the wide space defined by the sky, and the protagonist's distance to the fallen figures at the bottom of the battlefield. The dramatic moment is stressed by the armies entering the center from both sides. In Decius Mus' heroic accentuation, de Vos is referring to the concept of the "Miles Christianus", which artists staged in seventeenth-century prints and military writings and traces back to ancient Roman times[65]. The depictions by Jan Luyken and David Vinckboon, who worked in Rubens' surrounding in Antwerp, shed light on the main compositional features (Fig. 10/Fig. 11).

Therein, notions of Christian ethic converge with the exposed figure of a geared military leader, who as a Christian soldier is fighting against or triumphing over the forces of evil. Conveying a visual distance to the beholders, the dead bodies on the ground in de Vos' image seem like arranged attributes of the battle between the Romans and Latins. The homogeneous plain constitution of the brightly lit body on the battlefield's ground brings to mind the antique statue of the *Dying Niobid*. Further, no particular pictorial differentiation of the procumbent figure's torso can be identified.

Rubens' *Triumph of the Victor*[66] (Fig. 12) was commissioned by the Antwerp shooting guild "Oude Voetboog". Following Lisa Rosenthal, the heroic figure is a reference to the guild's patron St George, and, exemplifying pious knighthood, a representation of masculine virtue. The prone corpse shown parallel to the image's lower boundary is identified as a figuration of cowardice, over which – together with the vices of envy and discord – the virtuous hero triumphs.[67] In neostoic sense, virtue is understood as the ability to rule passions through reason, which has to be an asset of statesmen and ensures a "strong and peaceful state"[68]. This idea was illustrated by two sculptural representations of Andrea Doria. Appearing as the Roman sea god Neptune in Baccio Bandinelli's unfinished sculpture and as a victorious commander in the new version of Giovan Angelo da Montorsoli, Genoa's most powerful figure and supposed liberator of the state represents the ideal sovereign or supratemporal heroic virtue[69]. This allegorical meaning of Neptune emanates from the imperial Habsburg image programme[70].

In Rubens' *Death of Decius Mus*, the hero's virtue is closely connected with Genoese political theories. The dead combatant is anticipated by the corpse in the painting from Kassel. Referring to the *Dying Niobid*[71], there is no major pictorial differentiation and deformation of the body's physicality. Opposed to the soldier's right leg, the darkening of the figure's arm in the *Triumph of the Victor* is caused by a shadow. The homogeneous physicality of the dead soldier in respect of the image's allegorical theme – virtue as the primary reason of the state's well-being – underlines that Rubens linked the idea of the heroic Christian fighter to the concept of an ideal corporality. We can also perceive this with the body of Andrea Doria in guise of Neptune in Agnolo Bronzino's portrait of the political leader. For Maurice Brock, the corporality is founded in Michelangelo's *David* and its shape is accentuated by a pictorial "monochromie" and "éclairage"[72]. Friedrich Polleroß considers the sea god's ideal body in Bandinellis work a depiction of the ideal government[73].

Susanne Tauss stresses the virtuous aspect of Decius Mus' divine salvation in Rubens' painting, and contextualizes it with large Italian Trecento wall paintings and the iconographic topos of the "uomini famosi"[74]. From this point of view, the hero's decline – his divinely determined self-sacrifice accompanied by light – and the dead soldier's body could be seen as expressions of a social and political formation in good order.

(Fig. 9) Vos, Simon de. 1603–1676. *The Death of Decius Mus*. Flanders, 1641, oil on copperplate, 66.5 x 87.5 cm. Inv.no. ГЭ-7132, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg (Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum/photo by Vladimir Terebenin)

Compared to the perceptual and formal specificities in Rubens' *Death of Decius Mus*, de Vos provides one single view of the main figure. The statue-like lighted body shown on the ground underlines its heroic or divine position.

Which conclusions result from the suspension of Decius Mus' figural separation in the painting of the Liechtenstein Collection? What results from the central event's different semantic layers disclosed in the formal structure of the slayed combatant's body?

By artistically receding from the ancient model and its imitation through the depiction of the right leg, the painter in terms of perception detaches the beholders from the pictorial object. Showing the transformation of Decius Mus' heroic isolation into a distorted human figure, Rubens opposes Ansaldo Ceba's demand for expelled strength and physical beauty, which the "Cittadino nobile" as an example of virtue has to perform. Herewith, his characterization as a "Miles Christianus" is misaligned. In comparison to the statue-like figures in the mentioned paintings between 1611 and 1618, straightening up at the pictorial ground, the procumbent body in Decius Mus' death scene shows no physical coherence. The soldier's deformed corpus, originally a reference to *Laocoon'*s chest, particularly negates the perfection of human shape and the conception of an aesthetic ideal. The actual depiction of the body in the immediate foreground further pushes the limb to the pictorial space's broadest periphery. Seeing more and more through the surface of a faultless body based on the ancient model, the viewers are confronted with a pictorial reality that has its benchmark in physical and perceptual plurality. This can mainly be understood as an argument against the authoritarian position of a singular ruler in Genoa's sociopolitical field and its exclusive concept of virtue.

Antiquity as a formal example constituted for the most part Rubens' reputation. His drawings of the ancient models testify his artistic memory and erudition. In partially abandoning *Laocoon'*s ideal physicality respectively its transformation into painting, Rubens is working against his own theoretical claims and sacrificing the primacy of the sculpture-like aesthetic. The green coloured leg percolates the fleshy body and the physical superficiality that in the ancient sculpture catches our eye, as the painter explained. By the overemphasis of physicality, Rubens' claim to visualize the antique examples in painting by select imitation and

pictorial transformation[75] in order to obtain natural impressions, is displaced. With the soldier's extremity, the physical form becomes independent. This shows that Rubens does not strictly depend on mnemonic conceptions in order to convey his understanding of the unity of Genoa's social body but on actual pictorial rendering, which touches Walter Melion's and Susanne Küchler's comprehension of the "socially and culturally specific" interplay between memory and image production, "recollection and handiwork"[76].

(Fig. 10) Jan Luyken, *De Christelijke Ridder/Den Geestelycken Krygsman*, 1689, etching, 28.2 x 37.5 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (source: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)

Comparing Rubens' composition with other versions of the subject and related themes, it becomes clear that the homogeneous sculptural human body conveys a beholding situation, in which the narrative's transcendental aspect and the neostoic understanding of virtue are focused. Because of the complex relation between the dying consul and the prone corpus with its formal specifications, the ethical and moral semantics of the story are refined and transferred to the republic of Genoa in consideration of the actual social and political occurrences.

7. The social body I: Rubens and Genoa

During his eight-year stay in Italy and Spain, the artist travelled to Genoa in 1607[77]. Result of his growing familiarity with and interest in the culture of the Mediterranean merchant city is his work *Palazzi di Genova* (1622). Therein, twelve palaces and villas, mostly built by Galeazzo Alessi in the mid sixteenth century for the highest local nobility, are reproduced in different engravings and architectural outlines. This respect, which the painter for the city had, is expressed in his collection of the local buildings. In the preface, *Al benigno lettori*, Rubens writes:

"Mi è parso donque di fare una opera meritoria verso il ben publico di tutmia peregrinatione Italica, d'alcuni Palazzi della superba città di Genova. Perché si come quella Republica è propria de Gentillomini, cosi le loro fabriche sono bellissime e commodissime, à proportione più tosto de famigle benché numerose di Gentilhuomini particolari, che di una Corte d'un Principe assoluto. Come si vede per essempio nel Palazzo de Pitti in Florenza, & il Farnesiano in Roma, la Cancellaria, Caprorola, & infiniti altri per tutta l'Italia, si come ancora la famosissima fabrica della Regina Madre nel borgo di S. Germano à Parigi. Li quali tutti eccedono di grandezza, di sito e spesa, le facultà di Gentilhuomini privati. Mà io vorrei servire al uso commune, e più tosto giovare à molti ch'a pochi"[78].

In these sentences, introducing an architectural collection of local edifices, Rubens mentions, strange to say, the republic's political constitution. He differentiates between the city's political administration, directed by the nobility, and a princely regency that more or less comes up with a single potentate. If we consider his request to serve with his work "molti ch'a pochi", the artist seems to hint at the precarious state of Genoa's political arrangement. This pertains mainly to the critical allocation of power to noble families. What shines through these last sentences, is that the Flemish painter was aware of the controversial hierarchies between different social factions and the threat to Genoa's common good caused by their ongoing struggles. The city's socio-political order is not recognized as a comprehensive one.

By means of the purpose of his own published work, Rubens argues for a noble family incorporating self-determined social factions, which are in charge of governmental power. The painter's remarks converge with Uberto Foglietta's idea: arguing against the exclusive authority of a few, respectively a single one, but for unity in regard to the dignity of society's particular members.

In no other context than the image series, precisely the moment of Decius Mus' death, the Flemish painter frankly wrote about the problematic relationship between social plurality and authoritarian singularization. In a letter to Sir Dudley Carleton dated 26 May 1618 (whose collection of antiquities the painter acquired the same year) Rubens stresses just the circumstance that the Roman consul had sacrificed himself for the good of the Roman people: "I will send Your Excellency all the measurements of my cartoons of the history of Decius Mus, the Roman Consul who sacrificed himself for the victory of the Roman people"[79].

This exemplifies that the relationship between Decius Mus as an excelled figure and its embedding in social structures, given with the Roman "plebs", was of specific interest for the artist working on the commission. Therewith Rubens, in line with Uberto Foglietta, takes a stand against political theories that advocate the ruling figure or group of an authoritarian political structure. In his *Six Bookes of a Commonweale* (1576) Jean Bodin has argued that the sovereign's deeds are legitimated by God, which is the only power he is accountable to. The civil laws of the state are subordinated to the divine and natural law[80]. Although "any act of resistance by a subject against his ruler must be altogether outlawed in the name of trying to preserve the fragile structure of the commonwealth", Bodin concedes the people to slain a ruler, who has become a tyrant respectively an usurper[81].

Rubens' *Death of Decius Mus* and Uberto Foglietta's understanding of the republic of Genoa can be seen in the tradition of political theory in Italy since the end of the Trecento. The question, how a state is able to combine political liberty with the prevention of oppression and faction has been taken up by Donato Giannotti in his *Dialogue on the Republic of the Venetians* (1540). He argues that "the combination of liberty and security attained by the Venetians can be attributed to two main causes. One is the balance between the rule of the one, the few and the many which they are able to maintain by combining the rule of the Doge with the Senate and the *Consiglio Grande*"[82]. Specific relations between the ancient Roman republic and Italian city states in terms of political liberty can be found in treatises of Niccolò Machiavelli (*The Discourses*, 1531) and Paolo Paruta (*Political Discourses*, 1599)[83].

Reading Rubens' preface, the question remains, why he chose a compilation of private houses of Genoa's mighty class gently arguing for a noble family that would consist of different members. Would such a book rather not be the place for a granting comment on the nobility's predominance or a single ruler? This question is not raised rhetorically: Giacomo Montanari has recently emphasized the aristocracy's familiarity with the Flemish painter. Giovanni Vincenzo Imperiale commissioned (or purchased) two paintings, which concern the stoic virtue of tempering the passions. This is embodied by mythological figures and by their readiness to make sacrifices[84]. Likewise, the design of Rubens' *Decius Mus Series* was adopted in several tapestries owned by noble families[85].

(Fig. 11) Pieter Serwouters after David Vinckboon, *Christelijke Ridder*, 1614, engraving, 29.7 x 35.8 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (source: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)

All the more important is the question, why Rubens induced a spatial, formal and perceptual relation between the dying Decius Mus and the procumbent figure and why its body looks as it does. The human body is not only used to substantiate the ideal citizen's preferences, but also returns in Ansaldo Ceba's text as a sign for the idea of the republic:

"Non intendiamo però con tutto, quel, c'habbiam detto, che debba il nostro Cittadino andar mendicando l'oc-

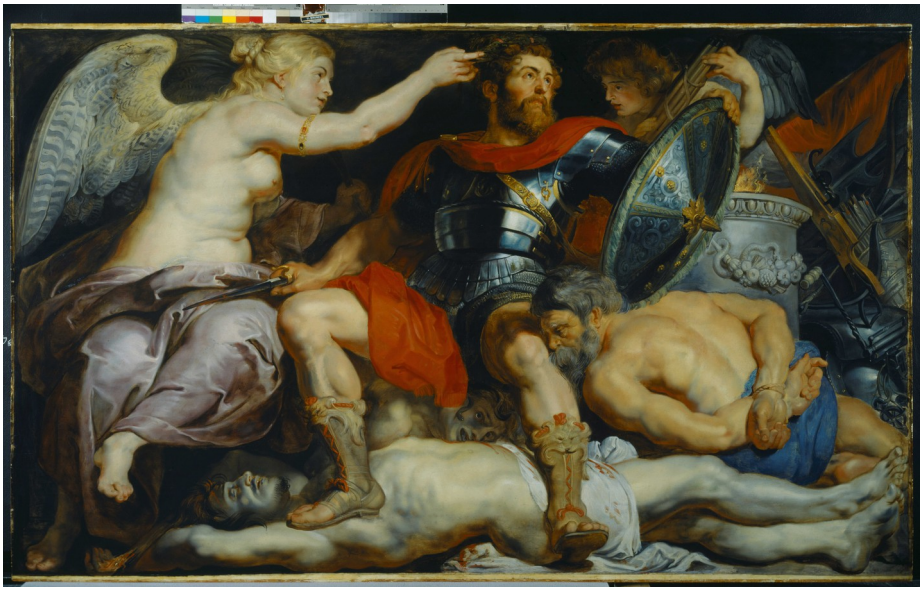
casioni di predicar al popolo; perche ciò non può essere senza sospetto, o di vanita, o d'ambitione: ma ben giudichiamo, che, se gli saran presentate senza cercarle, non debba ricusare di far comuni i suoi spiriti con chi può avvisarsi doverlo aiutare a vivificarne maggiormente tutto il corpo della Republica"[86].

Following Ansaldo Ceba, the exemplary citizen forms the republic's body through his amenities, hence, carries its ideal constitution, beauty, and health as a whole in himself. Comprehending a state or a society as a "corpo della Republica" traces back to ancient times and could indicate the polity's unity. Albrecht Koschorke et al. disclosed the genesis of the political metaphor of the body from the Roman antiquity through Christian texts and rituals to canonical law and juridical corporation doctrine. The relationship between the human body as a member of the state and the state itself as a political body are brought into focus[87]. From the leaders of the republic Marcus Tullius Cicero in *De officiis* (I, 85) demanded, "ut totum corpus rei publicae curent, ne, dum partem aliquam tuentur, reliquas deserant." Basically, the autonomous body of the society could comprise each part of the citizenship, whereupon the different layers are associated with individual vital parts and limbs, which depend on each other[88].

While Publius Cornelius Tacitus and Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus were thinking more or less about a self-reliant "res publica" without a princeps[89], Lucius Annaeus Seneca referred to a different relationship between ruler and "res publica". As a "spiritus vitalis", which embodies the citizenship as a whole, he holds the republic together. Jan Bernhard Meister notes that the "corpus rei publicae" in this view is converted into a "corpus principis", who as a divine sovereign had to guarantee and provide the republic's well-being and continuity[90]. The idea of the princeps as "pater patria" directly shifts the attention back to Genoa's environment and the neostoic concept of virtue. Called supposed "liberatore", Andrea Doria broached the issue of the communal structure's embodiment in the figure of a single ruler[91]. Fieschi's attempted murder of Andrea Doria corresponded to killing the actual incorporation of the nobili vecchi and their supposed social superiority as the primordial reason for the conflicts according to Uberto Foglietta.

It became clear that the dead combatant in Rubens' image represents the undermined dominance of a single ruler. Furthermore, the "res publica" is reflected in the fallen soldier's body. However, according to Ansaldo Ceba's *Cittadino nobile* and its ideal physical constitution, the *res publica* can be understood as an arrangement of noblemen. This is congruent with his aspiration to suggest with the "Cittadino" an exemplary future noble gentry. Although each citizen potentially is able to comply with this idea, the "Cittadino" represents a specific guidance. In other words: With Ansaldo Ceba's concept in mind, we take one single view of Rubens' image. With the soldier's body defined as an antique statue, beholders perceived the dying consul as a predestined example of virtue and the republic catered to a single ruler. Against the background of the republic's actual social and political grievances, Andrea Doria's virtues and his civic self-image seem to have been mythological[92].

The hermetic or one-sided perception, which is connected with the representation of *Laocoon*'s ideal body, contradicts Rubens' understanding of a wholesome republic. For him, the republic's socio-political corpus has to consist of different layers, which in the polity's organism exist independently of a single dominant authority. Rubens' aesthetic and pictorial description refers to Uberto Foglietta's application of the body as a political sign: "un corpo", whose formal structure consists of several units. According to Uberto Foglietta, the body's composition is divided into "tre ordini, Senatorio, Equestre, e Pedestre". "In ognuno di questi tre Ordini erano molti Patrizj, ed infiniti plebei". With the "uomo plebeo nuovo senza alcuna memoria delli suoi antichi […] che egli non pure sarebbe potuto pervenire a'Magistrati, ma nemmeno entrare nell'ordine Equestre", Uberto Foglietta introduced a plebeian limb, which specifically mirrors his reluctance against the "nobili vecchi"[93]. Incidentally, in view of the Genoese palaces and Antwerp's and Brussels' architectural settings, which are structured by private edifices, Rubens in his preface to *Palazzi di Genova* used the body emblematically and speaks about "il corpo di tutta la città"[94].



(Fig. 12) Peter Paul Rubens, *Der Triumph des Siegers,* GK 91, around 1614, oil on panel (oak), 161 x 263 cm, © Hessen Kassel Heritage 2023, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister

Showing Decius Mus subsiding and transforming into a disfigured corpus, the artist connects the history painting with Genoa's everlasting exigency to prevent the authority of a single ruler. Dividing the transcendental single view of Decius Mus as a heroic example of virtue, Rubens refines the historical relationship between Genoa's republic and the ancient Roman republic. In the context of Ansaldo Ceba's and Uberto Foglietta's treatises, he shapes a realistic comprehension of the republican body, which is based on actual circumstances and focuses an all-encompassing well-being in consideration of its several elements.

8. The social body II: Rubens and Genoa

In context of the siege of the city of La Rochelle in 1628 by French troops under the duke of Angoulême, Rubens' letter to Pierre Dupuy from 19 May 1628 contains striking information about his acquaintance with the social conflicts between Genoa's citizenship and nobility. The artist is alluding to the conspiracy, which duke Charles Emmanuel of Savoy initiated, and was brought to termination by the wealthy non-noble citizen Giulio Cesare Vacchero. Vacchero attempted to overthrow the government and to promote himself in the doge's office. Rubens, who "remain[s] on very intimate terms with several eminent personages in that republic" writes:

"The Genoa conspiracy was terrible. It is thought to have been instigated by the Duke of Savoy, who never tires of interfering in such causes, without, however, espousing any of them. The discontent of those people is certainly justified, as many Genoese gentlemen of the most moderate opinions have confessed to me, and it will never come to an end except by the transformation or the ruin of that republic. The nobility has, in fact, assumed a tyrannical domination, contrary to the oaths and pacts which were solemnly sworn in the late agreements between the nobles and the people, and concluded after long and cruel struggles. The conditions were that each year a certain number of the most qualified citizens should be admitted to the nobility; by this means the people would participate in the administration and all the public offices. But they have been cheated out of this benefit by a wicked plot on the part of the nobles, who never gave the necessary number of votes or ballots to these candidates. The result is

that for many years not a single one of them has been elected, while the people remain completely excluded from all honors and participation in the government, deprived of the fruits of such a dearly won peace. It is to be noted that the new nobles, who had been chosen from the people by virtue of the agreement with the old nobility, are the most obstinate in excluding from this dignity men of their former caste. They hope that in time their nobility will mature, enabling them to pass as nobles of long standing (who consider themselves of higher rank and do not like to associate with the others); thus, they do not want their number to increase, lest their new authority be weakened by the participation of many of their equals. I have discussed this subject at some length because I have been several times in Genoa"[95].

Rubens draws a clear terminological distinction between the nobility and the ordinary citizens. He distinguishes the domineering authority of the "vecchi". Stating that the "nobili nuovi" – as soon as politically elevated – would behave in the same way the "vecchi" behave, excluding their former civic associates from political matters, Rubens indeed raises the "nuovi" socially and ethically to the older "nobili". In this focus, in which the "fazioni" of the "nobili" converge, Genoa's ordinary citizens particularly subside. They emerge in the artist's view, in which "vecchi" and "nuovi" appear together in terms of their common unexemplary and negative comportment. The potential imitation of the vecchi by the nuovi is pictorially expressed in the mimetic, lifelike physical shape of the combatant, which points to the sculptural ideal of the body.

Historically, Rubens observation is authenticated. As expounded in context of the suspension of the "garibetto"-legislation, the "nuovi" banded together with non-nobles, mostly labourers from the silk industry. The "commoners'" demand, to access the nobility, is the crucial point for the *nuovi*, which Rubens refers to. Thomas Allison Kirk states:

"The *nuovi* who had taken control of the city continued to drag their feet, however, on the question of allowing new members into the nobility, a move that would have diluted their own power. […] In spite of the moves to satisfy the poor and the willingness to finance naval armament from their own fortunes, it was precisely the new nobles' reluctance to open the ranks of the oligarchy that made reconciliation with the *nobili vecchi* inevitable"[96].

Rubens puts his statement at the height of the political crisis, which bled in the execution of Giulio Cesare Vacchero. Besides the attempted murder of Andrea Doria in 1547, this can be understood as a direct relation to the dead soldier. But putting the neglected parts of the corpus as a sign for the republic's constitution into focus, Rubens gives means for Genoa's potential social recovery.

Rubens pictorially discloses the classical form of the antique statue and the mimetic human body in places as a sign of artistic and social superiority. Putting the soldier's right leg into focus, he modifies the emblematical status of the figure, which indicated Genoa's social-political constitution. Forming a new view of the republican body through neglected pictorial elements, Rubens does not primarily emphasize a certain historical concept of a political community, but concerns himself with its actual and real constitution. In respect of the visual concept of the "Miles Christianus", Rubens with the image wanted to enforce, what Uberto Foglietta and Ansaldo Ceba to some extent were not eager to describe in all consequences: fortune of the collective republican body apprehended not as a divinely given property or depending on a primary figure, but consisting of different members respectively physical entities.

With the soldier's extremities, the supposed Genoese noble purchasers of the image series would have encountered perceptual resistance. Divine providence, which clinged to the head figure's isolation and sacrifice and to its anchoring in the idea of the "Miles Christianus", has been revalued, from the bottom up, down to the place where virtue truly might originate. Straight from the battlefield's ground, the proper meaning of sacrificing to common matters gains an enduring significance.

Jan Raes significantly did not repeal the limb's obscured deformation, which can be noticed on the left side at the tapestry's lower border. Similar to the argument of the history painting, the tapestry, taken its place in the community of the image series, may have been recognized no less than semantically threefold.

Endnotes

* I cordially thank Ulrich Heinen for fruitful conversations and advice. Susanne Gramatzki I owe helpful comments on the text.

1. For the afterlife of the paintings: Reinhold Baumstark and Guy Delmarcel, *Rubens. Subjects from History: The Decius Mus Series*, 2 Vols., Vol. 1, London 2019, pp. 218–234. The commission to Rubens and contract of 9 November 1616, signed by the Antwerp tapestry dealer Francois Sweerts, the Genoese businessman Franco Cattaneo and Jan Raes, is published in Susanne Tauss, *Dulce et decorum? Der Decius-Mus-Zyklus von Peter Paul Rubens*, Osnabrück 2000, pp. 270–271. Concerning the established tapestry industry in Genoa in the second half of the sixteenth century: Tauss 2000, *Dulce et decorum?*, pp. 312–314. The *Decius Mus Series* Susanne Tauss relates to the broader environment of Genoa's highest social circles. For some evidence that anchors the order in the Brignole family: Tauss 2000, *Dulce et decorum?*, pp. 256–263; Guy Delmarcel considers it likely that the "Genoese gentlemen" – mentioned by Rubens (letter to Sir Dudley Carleton from 12 May 1618, in: *The Letters of Peter Paul Rubens*, ed./trans. by Ruth Saunders Magurn, Cambridge Mass. 1955, pp. 61–63, 63) – are business associates of Franco Cattaneo. Genoese merchants had offices in Antwerp since the sixteenth century (Baumstark and Delmarcel 2019, *Decius Mus Series*, Vol. 1, p. 242); Franco Cattaneo's role within a network of tradesmen and old families in Genoa was recently highlighted by Anna Orlando: Anna Orlando, *Le famiglie genovesi e Rubens. Effigiati, destinatari e committenti*, in: Genoa, Palazzo Ducale, *Rubens a Genova*, a cura di Nils Büttner e Anna Orlando, Milano 2022, pp. 180–191, 187. Orlando also considers that Pietro Maria Gentile presumably was involved in commissioning Rubens (Orlando 2022, *Le Famiglie*, p. 188); Koenraad Brosens recently argued for Francois Sweerts as the client of the "modelli" respectively the paintings and links the work order with the Heidelberg Court under Frederick V (Koenraad Brosens, *Nuova luce sulla funzione dei modelli nel ciclo di arazzi con "Le storie di Decio Mure" di Rubens*, in: Genoa, Palazzo Ducale, *Rubens a Genova*, a cura di Nils Büttner e Anna Orlando, Milano 2022, pp. 200–209, 206f.). The connection between Sweerts and the Heidelberg Court was already pointed out by Jozef Duverger: Jozef Duverger, *Aantekeningen betreffende de patronen van P. P. Rubens en de tapijten met de Geschiedenis van Decius Mus*, in: *Gentse bijdragen tot de kunstgeschiedenis*, Nr. 24, 1976–1978, pp. 15–42; Hanns Hubach, *Tapisserien für den Heidelberger Hof – in den Briefen des Antwerpener Humanisten Frans Sweerts (1618)*, in: *Churfürstlicher Hochzeitlicher HeimführungsTriumph. Inszenierung und Wirkung der Hochzeit Kurfürst Friedrichs V. mit Elisabeth Stuart (1613)*, ed. by Nichola M.V. Hayton et al., Ubstadt-Weiher 2020, pp. 191–231, 203f.
2. Baumstark is arguing that the image series' narrative culmination was painted by Jacob Jordaens and his studio – mainly due to Rubens' workload in 1617. The oil sketch from Madrid is seen as a product of Rubens' workshop (Baumstark and Delmarcel 2019, *Decius Mus Series*, Vol. 2, pp. 122, 133–140; Baumstark and Delmarcel 2019, *Decius Mus Series*, Vol. 1, pp. 186–188). Baumstark's recent ideas about the authorship of the painting and the modello have been rejected by Christopher Brown – Brown attributes the Prado study to Rubens and the painting to his studio respectively to Anthonis van Dyck (Christopher Brown, *A Reconsideration of Rubens's "Decius Mus" Series Offers Controversial Ideas on Its Authorship and Role in the Tapestry-Making Process*, in: *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 163, September 2021, pp. 862–864) – and critically reviewed by Charles Scribner (Charles Scribner, *Review of "Rubens. Subjects from History: The Decius Mus Series (Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard, XIII, 2)*", in: *Historians of Netherlandish Art Reviews*, hnanews.org, 29.11.2022).
3. Lisa Rosenthal, *Gender, Politics, and Allegory in the Art of Rubens*, Cambridge University Press 2005, pp. 79–85; Jeffrey Muller, *Rubens's Theory and Practice of the Imitation of Art*, in: *The Art Bulletin*, LXIV, Nr. 2, 1982, pp. 229–247; Suzanne J. Walker, *Rubens' Victims. Images of the Assaulted Male Body*, in: *Rubens and the Human Body*, ed. by Cordula van Wyhe, Turnhout 2018, pp. 157–174.
4. Ulrich Heinen, *Rubens zwischen Predigt und Kunst. Der Hochaltar für die Walburgenkirche in Antwerpen*, Weimar 1996, pp. 13, 31, 156.
5. Peter Paul Rubens, *De imitatione statuarum*, in: *Imitatio als Transformation: Theorie und Praxis der Antikennachahmung in der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. by Ursula Rombach and Peter Seiler, Petersberg 2012, pp. 135–136, 135. "Multa sunt enim notanda, immo et vitanda etiam in optimis accidentia citra culpam artificis, praecipue differentia umbrarum, cum caro, pellis, cartilago sua diaphanitate multa leniant praecipitia in statuis nigredinis et umbrae, quae sua densitate saxum duplicat inexorabiliter obvium" (Rubens 2012, *De imitatione statuarum*, p. 135).
6. Rubens 2012, *De imitatione statuarum*, p. 135.
7. Jeffrey Muller, *Rubens's Collection in History*, in: *A House of Art. Rubens as Collector*, ed. by Kristin Lohse Belkin and Fiona Healy, Antwerp 2004, pp. 10–85, 18. "obiectum naturali antiquitus origini perfectionique propius offerebat ultro compactum, quod nunc saeculorum senescentium defectu ab accidentibus corruptum nihil sui retinuit delabente in plura perfectione succedentibus vitiis" (Rubens 2012, *De imitatione statuarum*, p. 135).
8. Peter Paul Rubens, *Théorie de la figure humaine. Considérée dans ses principes, soit en repos ou en mouve*, ed. by Charles-Antoine Jombert, Paris 1773, pp. 1–3.
9. Muller 1982, *Rubens's Theory*, pp. 229–247, 236.
10. Muller 2004, *Rubens's Collection*, p. 20.
11. Muller 1982, *Rubens's Theory*, p. 231.
12. Günter Brucher, *Der Decius Mus-Gemäldezyklus von Peter Paul Rubens*, Graz 1984, p. 58.
13. *Dying Niobid*, ancient Roman, Florence, Gallerie degli Uffizi; *Dying Gaul*, ancient Roman, Venice, Museo Archeologico.
14. Brucher 1984, *Decius Mus*, pp. 55–58. On another version of the marble sculpture, exhibited in the Munich Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek: Phyllis Pray Bober and Ruth Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists & Antique Sculpture. A Handbook of Sources*, London 1986, p. 140.
15. Renzo Baldasso explains that the realism of the fights located on the ground, especially the strangulation-scene, counterbalances the theatricality of Decius Mus' death (Renzo Baldasso, *Killing and Dying at "The Death of Decius Mus"*, in: *Death, Torture and the Broken Body in European Art, 1300–1650*, ed. by John R. Decker and Mitzki Kirkland-Ives, Farnham 2015, pp. 137–163, 157).
16. Walker 2018, *Rubens' Victims*, p. 158.
17. Walker 2018, *Rubens' Victims*, p. 168.
18. Walker 2018, *Rubens' Victims*, p. 170.
19. *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci*, ed. by Jean Paul Richter, London 1939, p. 307, quoted from Muller 1982, Rubens's Theory, p. 246.
20. Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architetti*, Roma 1759/1760, p. 43, quoted from Bernice F. Davidson, *Mostra di Disegni di Perino del Vaga e la sua cerchia*, Firenze 1966, p. 7.
21. Letter to Francis Junius from 1 August 1637, in: Saunders Magurn: *The Letters*, pp. 406–408, 407.
22. Muller 1982, *Rubens's Theory*, p. 247.
23. Catherine H. Lusheck, *Rubens and the Eloquence of Drawing*, London/New York 2017, pp. 3–6, 163, 166. See also: Nils Büttner, *Rubens*, Munich 2007, pp. 16–36; Lusheck 2017, *Eloquence*, p. 220. In a recent article, Lusheck turns her attention to figures in Rubens' work, which show physical labour, strength and effort and are depicted in a rough way. Resulting from the painter's "esteemed models", Lusheck interprets them as metaphors for the painter's work, which she states as an intellectual work of the mind. Rubens has "mediated between the privileged, intellectual work befitting ['Stoic-inspired'] status as ['self-fashioning'] humanist gentleman-painter and the substantial physical labors of painting itself." Rubens' occupation with labour is based on the ideas of labour formulated in classical texts (Catherine H. Lusheck, *Laboring Bodies, Laboring Artist.Rubens and the Virtues of Intellectual and Painterly Work*, in: *Rubens e la cultura italiana, 1600–1608*, a cura di Raffaella Morselli e Cecilia Paolini, Rome 2020, pp. 247–271, 247, 258–259, 254).
24. On the one hand, nature's fertility was seen as exceeding its mere concentration in antique sculptures, which is why progress has to depend on the avoidance of their slavish imitation. On the other hand, one distinguished model (or group of models) functions as the ideal embodiment for everything that follows (Muller 1982, *Rubens's Theory*, pp. 233–234).
25. Walter Melion and Susanne Küchler, *Introduction. Memory, Cognition, and Image Production*, in: *Images of Memory. On Remembering and Representation*, ed. by Susanne Küchler and Walter Melion, Washington 1991, pp. 1–46, 3.
26. Irmela Marei Krüger-Fürhoff, *Der versehrte Körper. Revisionen des klassizistischen Schönheitsideals*, Göttingen 2001, pp. 7–15.
27. Ana Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body. Classicism, Modernism, and the First World War*, Oxford 2009, pp. 111–112.
28. Matteo Salonia, *Genoa's Freedom. Entrepreneurship, Republicanism, and the Spanish Atlantic*, New York et al. 2017, pp. 40, 43–55.

29. Thomas Allison Kirk, *Genoa and the Sea. Policy and Power in an Early Modern Maritime Republic, 1559–1684*, Baltimore 2005, pp. 54–55.
30. "Regulae communis Ianuae anno MCCCLXIII, tempore ducatus domini Gabrielis Adurni conditae", p. 243, in: *Historiae Patriae Monumenta*, *XVIII*, trans. by Salonia 2017, *Genoa's Freedom*, Torino 1901 (original work published 1363), pp. 243–388, quoted from Salonia 2017, *Genoa's Freedom*, p. 49.
31. "Regulae communis Ianuae", p. 262, quoted from Salonia 2017, *Genoa's Freedom*, p. 50.
32. "Regulae communis Ianuae", quoted from Salonia 2017, *Genoa's Freedom*, p. 50.
33. Biblioteca Universitaria di Genova, *Ricordi*, ms. B.VIII.26,75, quoted from Salonia 2017, *Genoa's Freedom*, p. 55.
34. Kirk 2005, *Genoa and the Sea*, pp. 53, 31.
35. Kirk 2005, *Genoa and the Sea*, pp. 45, 41.
36. Andrea Zanini, *Genova. Economia e Società tra XVII e XVIII Secolo*, in: Rome, Scuderie del Quirinale, *Superbarocco. Arte a Genova da Rubens a Magnasco*, a cura di Jonathan Bober et al., Milano 2022, pp. 7–21, 10.
37. Kirk 2005, *Genoa and the Sea*, pp. 56–58, 67; Matthias Schnettger, *Principe sovrano oder Civitas imperialis? Die Republik Genua und das Alte Reich in der frühen Neuzeit (1556–1797)*, Mainz 2006, pp. 265–266.
38. Kirk 2005, *Genoa and the Sea*, p. 67.
39. Kirk 2005, *Genoa and the Sea*, pp. 68–69.
40. Ceba deems Christian ethic a central attribute of the Cittadino: "Ma si disponga insieme, e di render alla patria il dritto, che le conviene, e di prestar alla Chiesa l'ubidienza […]; imperoche, cosi facendo, sarà, secondo il nostro giudicio, in un tempo medesimo, e buon Cittadino, e buon Christiano" (Ansaldo Ceba, *Il Cittadino nobile di Repubblica*, Venetia 1620 (reprint of the edn Venetia 1617), p. 26).
41. Tauss 2000, Dulce et decorum?, pp. 246–249. Tauss shows that the image programs in Andrea Doria's palace in Fassolo near Genoa contained an iconography that linked the city to the early Roman history and represented it as a new Roman republic (Tauss 2000, *Dulce et decorum?*, pp. 246–249).
42. "Formidabil cosa ultimamente è la morte" (Ceba 1617/1620, *Cittadino*, p. 54). "E generosissimi i Decij, che, per saluar le legioni Romane, prefer partito di sacrificar se medesimi. […] Significando con tutto ciò, che, fuori di spenderla per salute della patria, egli haurebbe la sua vita risparmiata" (Ceba 1617/1620, *Cittadino*, pp. 56–57).
43. Ceba 1617/1620, *Cittadino*, pp. 124–125.
44. Ceba 1617/1620, *Cittadino*, p. 157.
45. Ceba 1617/1620, *Cittadino*, p. 18.
46. "Conoscano per l'esempio delli medesimi Romani più chiaro il loro errore, voglio aggiungere, che molti plebei in Roma, non dico degli antichi, e grandi come sarebbero Licinj, Crassi, Sempronj, Decj, Fulvj, Marcelli, Lelj, Pisoni, Metelli, ed altri simili, innumerabili di famiglie plebee nobilissime cosi chiamate da Livio nel Nono della quarta Dec. Sed omnes Patritios, et plebeios nobilissimarum familiarum M. Portius longe anteibat. Il quale Porzio Catone poco dopo il medesimo Livio chiama uomo nuovo: non solum quia indignabantur hominem novum Censorem videre. Lasciando dunque queste famiglie Popolari chiarissime, ed antichissime, e piene di Consolati, e di trionfi, le quali nel sopra allegato luogo di Cesare, e di Catone, Sallustio fa pari di genere alle patrizie, io dico, che eziandio un uomo plebeo nuovo senza alcuna memoria delli suoi antichi, ed essendo esso di facoltà, e valore tanto debole, che egli non pure sarebbe potuto pervenire a' Magistrati, ma nemmeno entrare nell'ordine Equestre, era preferito nella amministrazione della Repubblica a molti Patrizj, ed il suo voto solo valeva più di quello di molti Patrizj, non ostante, che in casa di quelli Patrizj fossero stati Consolati, e trionfi, e fossero tutti li Patrizj antichissimi, discendendo da quelli padri Senatori già stati fino a tempo dei re." (Uberto Foglietta, *Dialogo sopra il legittimo governo popolare della Repubblica di Genova di Oberto Foglietta cancelliere di detta repubblica, Libri II*, Genova 1798 (reprint of the ed. Genova 1560), pp. 141–142).
47. Uberto Foglietta, *Della Repubblica di Genova, Libri II*, Roma 1559, p. 7, quoted from Kirk 2005, *Genoa and the Sea*, p. 55.
48. Kirk 2005, *Genoa and the Sea*, pp. 55–56.
49. Uberto 1559, *Della Repubblica*, p. 68, quoted from Kirk 2005, *Genoa and the Sea*, p. 56.
50. Kirk 2005, *Genoa and the Sea*, p. 56.
51. "Fu spenta alla fine questa loro tirannide dalla virtù, grandezza d'animo, prudenza di Simone Boccanegra, il quale con quella destrezza, che si vede da chi diligentemente considera la cosa, si fece fare Duce, e tiró a se l'autorità per poter fare quel buono effetto, che egli disegnava, di liberare la sua Patria dalla tirannide de' d'Oria, e Spinola, i quali al lora scacciata la parte contraria regnavano, come egli fece instituendo lo Stato comune a tutti li Cittadini, e buono com'era stato a quelli primi felici tempi dei Consoli, al quale stato tutti li Cittadini senza distinzione erano ammessi, solamente vi cambió il nome, chiamandolo Popolare, cioè comune a tutto il Popolo." (Uberto 1560/1798, pp. 89–90).
52. Kirk 2005, *Genoa and the Sea*, pp. 56–59.
53. Uberto 1560/1798, p. 161.
54. Prosper Arents, *De Bibliotheek van Pieter Pauwel Rubens. Een reconstructie*, Antwerp 2001, p. 130.
55. Justus Lipsius, *Opera Omnia. Quae Ad Criticam Proprie Spectant*, Lugduni Batavorum 1596, pp. 635–636.
56. Ceba 1617/1620, *Cittadino*, pp. 56f., 21–115.
57. Michail Bachtin, *Die groteske Gestalt des Leibes*, in: *Literatur und Karneval. Zur Romantheorie und Lachkultur*, Frankfurt a.M. 1996 (original work published 1969), pp. 15–23, 17.
58. Alexis Merle Du Bourg, *Rubens. The Henri IV Series*, London/Turnhout 2017, pp. 250–251; Peter Paul Rubens, *The Triumph of Henri IV*, ca. 1630, oil on canvas, 378 x 690 cm, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi.
59. Merle Du Bourg 2017, *Henri IV*, pp. 251, 254.
60. Merle Du Bourg 2017, *Henri IV*, p. 173.
61. Peter Paul Rubens, *The Entry into Rome*, 1622, oil on oak support, 48,6 x 64,5 cm, Indianapolis, Indianapolis Museum of Art/The Clowes Collection.
62. Peter Paul Rubens, *The Battle against Maxentius*, 1622, oil on oak support, 36,8 x 57,8 cm, Kansas City, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art; Peter Paul Rubens, *Henri IV Victorious*, ca. 1630, oil on canvas, 367 x 693 cm, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi.
63. Baumstark and Delmarcel 2019, *Decius Mus Series*, Vol. 2, pp. 140–141; Peter Paul Rubens, *Tiger, Lion and Leopard Hunt*, 1616–1617, oil on canvas, 256 x 324 cm, Rennes, Musée des Beaux-Arts; Peter Paul Rubens, *The Death of Decius Mus: Studies of a Head, Arms and Hands*, 1617, drawing, 40,5 x 31 cm, London, The Victoria and Albert Museum.
64. Jan Brueghel I and Peter Paul Rubens, *Allegory of Sight*, 1617, oil on panel, 65 x 109,5 cm, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado; Justus Müller Hofstede has distinguished between three levels of perception negotiated in the gallery: the unreflective-sensual, the empirical-cognitive and a transcendental search for truth (Justus Müller Hofstede, *"Non Saturatur Oculus Visu". Zur Allegorie des Gesichts von Peter Paul Rubens und Jan Brueghel d.Ä.*, in: *Wort und Bild in der niederländischen Kunst und Literatur des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by Justus Müller Hofstede and Herman Vekeman, Erftstadt 1984, pp. 243–289).
65. Antonio Possevino, *Il Soldato Christiano Con Nuove Aggiunte*, Venedig 1604, pp. 35–37. For the emergence of the *Militia Christiana*, its theological anchoring in biblical passages and its continued existence through the Middle Ages: Andreas Wang, *Der "miles christianus" im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert und seine mittelalterliche Tradition. Ein Beitrag zum Verhältnis von sprachlicher und graphischer Bildlichkeit*, Bern/Frankfurt a. M. 1975, pp. 21–37. As a theological term known since early Christianity, the *Militia Christiana* qualifies the Christian as a warrior against the forces of evil and characterizes the church as a military formation. This idea, which is basically grounded in Paul's *Ephesian Letters* (6, 10–17), attributes an ethical and Christian dimension to the profane military service (Ulla Krempel, *Die Krönung des Tugendhelden*, in: Peter Paul Rubens. *Werk und Nachruhm*, ed. by Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte/Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, München 1981, pp. 89–104, 90, 92).
66. The thematically related *Hero Crowned by Victory* was listed in Rubens' inventory of inheritance as "Een Christene Ridder" (Krempel 1981, Krönung, p. 90). Peter Paul Rubens, *Hero Crowned by Victory*, around 1613/1614, oil on panel, 221,5 x 200,2 cm, Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen/Alte Pinakothek.
67. Rosenthal 2005, *Gender, Politics, and Allegory*, pp. 79–80.
68. Rosenthal 2005, *Gender, Politics, and Allegory*, p. 85. With regard to the painting's location (the assembly hall of the Gilde van de Oude Voetboog) and its allegorical meaning, "Rubens showed victory triumphing over discord, warmongering and ferocity, all evils that endangered the well-being of the community." (Nils Büttner, *Rubens. Allegories and Subjects from Literature*, 2 Vols., Vol. 1, Turnhout 2018, p. 158).
69. Baccio Bandinelli, *Andrea Doria as Neptune*, 1536–1538, Marmor, Carrara, Piazza del Duomo; Giovan Angelo da Montorsoli, *Andrea Doria Victorious over Turks and with Weaponry*, 1539–1540, Marmor, Genoa, Palazzo Ducale; Katharina Helm, *In honore et exaltation di Soa Excelentia. Das Standbild des Andrea Doria in der Gestalt Neptuns von Baccio Bandinelli*, in: *Imitatio heroi-*

ca. Heldenangleichung im Bildnis, ed. by Ralf von den Hoff et al., Würzburg 2015, pp. 137–154, 149, 151; Friedrich Polleroß, *Rector Marium or Pater Patriae? The Portraits of Andrea Doria as Neptune*, in: *Wege zum Mythos*, ed. by Luba Freedman and Gerlinde Huber-Rebenich, Berlin 2001, pp. 107–121, 118f.; Bandinelli's assignment went through different changes: Polleroß 2001, *Rector Marium or Pater Patriae?*, pp. 111f.; I cordially thank Ulrich Heinen for drawing my attention to Andrea Doria's figuration as Neptune.

70. Helm 2015, *In honore*, p. 150.
71. Brucher 1984, *Decius Mus*, p. 56.
72. Maurice Brock, *Le portrait d'Andrea Doria en Neptune par Bronzino*, in: *Les portraits du pouvoir*, ed. by Anne-Lise Desmas, Paris/Rome 2003, pp. 49–55, 50f., 53; Friedrich Polleroß states that Bronzino showed Andrea Doria as the admiral of the ancient Roman navy (Polleroß 2001, *Rector Marium or Pater Patriae?*, p. 109).
73. Polleroß 2001, *Rector Marium or Pater Patriae?*, p. 118.
74. Tauss 2000, *Dulce et decorum?*, pp. 52–57, 121.
75. Muller 1982, *Rubens's Theory*, p. 235; Craig Hugh Smyth, *Mannerism and Maniera*, New York 1962, pp. 25–26, 79.
76. Melion and Küchler 1991, *Memory*, pp. 4, 7.
77. For Rubens' acquaintance with Ambrogio Spinola, the Genoese financier and commander of the Spanish troops in the southern Netherlands and their connection through the artist's diplomatic activities see: Laura Tagliaferro, *Di Rubens e di alcuni Genovesi*, in: Genoa, Palazzo Ducale, *Rubens e Genova*, a cura di Giuliana Biavati et al., Genova 1977, pp. 31–57, 43.
78. Peter Paul Rubens, *Palazzi di Genova*, Genova 2001.
79. Letter to Sir Dudley Carleton from 26 May 1618, in: Saunders Magurn, *The Letters*, pp. 64–66, 66.
80. Jean Bodin, *The Six Books of a Commonweale*, trans. by Richard Knolles, ed. by Kenneth D. McRae, Cambridge, Mass. 1962 (Book 1, Chapter 8, p. 86); Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 Vols., Vol. 2, Cambridge University Press 1978, pp. 287, 295.
81. Skinner 1978, Vol. 2, *Foundations*, pp. 287; Bodin 1962, *Six Books*, p. 219.
82. Skinner 1978, Vol. 1, *Foundations*, p. 141; Donato Giannotti, *The Republic of the Venetians*, in: *Opere*, Vol. 1, pp. 1–243, pp. 50–52.
83. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, trans. by Leslie J. Walker, ed. by Bernard Crick, Harmondsworth 1970; Paolo Paruta, *Political Discourses*, in: *Opere Politiche*, ed. by C. Monzani, 2 Vols., Vol. 2, Florence 1852, pp. 1–371; Skinner 1978, Vol. 1, *Foundations*, pp. 142, 157–158.
84. Peter Paul Rubens, *The Love-Sick Hercules Being Hen-Pecked by Omphale*, ca. 1602, oil on canvas, 278 x 215 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre; Copy after Peter Paul Rubens, *The Death of Adonis*, Private Collection; Giacomo Montanari, *A Matter of Books. Rubens and the Cultural Exchange with the Genoese Aristocracy: The Case of Giovanni Vincenzo Imperiale*, in: *Rubens e la cultura italiana, 1600–1608*, ed. by Raffaella Morselli and Cecilia Paolini, Roma 2020, pp. 217–227, 223. In Bernardo Castello's fresco *The Triumph of Marcellus at Syracuse* in the Villa Imperiale "La Bellezza" is part of a "cultural programme", which the Imperiale family sought to establish through images (Montanari 2020, *A Matter of Books*, p. 220).
85. Baldasso 2015, *Killing and Dying*, p. 141, note 7; Orlando 2022, *Le famiglie genovesi e Rubens.* As a court painter in Mantua, Rubens produced portraits showing members of Genoa's high nobility ("nobili vecchi"). Some of them had been identified as members of the Spinola, Doria, Imperiale and Grimaldi families. For further literature see: Tauss, *Dulce et decorum?*, p. 307; Anna Orlando, *Rubens e il ritratto. La rivoluzione "genovese"*, in: Genoa, Palazzo Ducale, *Rubens a Genova*, a cura di Nils Büttner e Anna Orlando, Milano 2022, pp. 232–239. Orlando links Nicolò di Giovanni Battista Spinola to the ownership of the tapestries: Orlando 2022, *Le Famiglie*, p. 187.
86. Ceba 1617/1620, *Cittadino*, p. 218.
87. Albrecht Koschorke et al., *Der fiktive Staat. Konstruktionen des politischen Körpers in der Geschichte Europas*, Frankfurt a.M 2007, pp. 64–77.
88. Jan Bernhard Meister, *Der Körper des Princeps. Zur Problematik eines monarchischen Körpers ohne Monarchie*, Basel 2010, p. 159.
89. Meister 2010, *Der Körper*, pp. 165, 167. Publius Cornelius Tacitus, *Annales*, III, 6, 3; I, 3, 7; *Historiae*, I, 16, 1; I, 50, 3; Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus, *Panegyric*, 67, 6. In this point of view, the princeps can be defined as the "body natural", the *res publica* as the everlasting "body politic". In the Middle Ages, the "body politic" instead evolved from the king's body (Meister 2010, *Der Körper*, p. 165). See: Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Medieval Political Theology*, Princeton 1970.
90. Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *De Clementia*, I, 4, 1; Meister 2010, *Der Körper*, p. 164.
91. Uberto 1560/1798, p. 161.
92. About Andrea Doria's modesty Pietro Aretino wrote: "quella modestia che, se ben sete primo ne la patria, non ha mai permesso si fatto titolo a la degnità de i vostri chiari meriti; anzi più tosto si è sodisfatta in mostrarsi eguale nel collegio de i suoi cittadini, che seder duce di tutta la moltitudine ne gli ordini civili." (Pietro Aretino, Lettere, a cura di P. Procaccioli, II/2, Rome 1998, p. 299; Polleroß 2001, *Rector Marium or Pater Patriae?*, p. 120). In Andrea Doria's biography of 1550, Capelloni remarked that he "vive come Cittadino, tal che nissun vantaggio in lei da gli altri si discerne, se non che come benemerito di essa (con giusto titulo) è chiamato Padre della Patria: & datole l'honore d'institutor e conservator d'ogni prosperità." (L. Capelloni, *Al vittorioso Principe d'Oria*, quoted by Polleroß 2001, *Rector Marium or Pater Patriae?*, p. 120, n. 65).
93. Uberto 1560/1798, *Dialogo*, pp. 141–142.
94. Rubens 2001, *Palazzi*.
95. Letter to Pierre Dupuy from 19 May 1628, in: Saunders Magurn, *The Letters*, pp. 264–266, 265.
96. Kirk 2005, *Genoa and the Sea*, p. 67.

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Figures

(Fig. 1) Peter Paul Rubens, *The Death of Decius Mus*, 1616–1617, oil on canvas, 289 x 518 cm. Inv.: GE 51, LIECHTENSTEIN, The Princely Collections, Vaduz-Vienna/SCALA, Florence (2023©Photo Scala, Florence)

(Fig. 2) Peter Paul Rubens, *Torso des Laokoon*, around 1601/1602, drawing (black chalk), 45.6 x 29.6 cm, Kupferstich-Kabinett, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Foto:

Herbert Boswank (www.skd.museum)

(Fig. 3) Detail: Peter Paul Rubens, *Das Große Jüngste Gericht*, about 1617, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen – Alte Pinakothek München (oil on canvas, 608.5 x 463.5 cm)

(Fig. 4) Detail: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Miracles of St. Francis Xavier*, about 1617/1618, oil on canvas, 535 x 395 cm, © KHM-Museumsverband

(Fig. 5) Peter Paul Rubens, *Torso Belvedere*, RH.S.109, Collection City of Antwerp, Rubens House (1602–1608, drawing (pencil, black chalk), 37.5 x 27 cm)

(Fig. 6) Peter Paul Rubens, *Study of the man raised from the dead and two studies of legs in a kneeling position, for figures in "Miracles of St Francis Xavier" (…)*, c. 1617–1618, drawing (black chalk), 35 x 54.2 cm © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

(Fig. 7) Peter Paul Rubens, *The Death of the Consul Publius Decius*, 1616–1617, oil on panel, 100 x 140.5 cm, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado (© Photographic Archive Museo Nacional del Prado)

(Fig. 8) Detail: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Death of Decius Mus*, 1616–1617, oil on canvas, 289 x 518 cm. Inv.: GE 51, LIECHTENSTEIN, The Princely Collections, Vaduz-Vienna/SCALA, Florence (2023 © Photo Scala, Florence)

(Fig. 9) Vos, Simon de. 1603–1676. *The Death of Decius Mus*. Flanders, 1641, oil on copperplate, 66.5 x 87.5 cm. Inv.no. ГЭ-7132, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg (Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum/photo by Vladimir Terebenin)

(Fig. 10) Jan Luyken, *De Christelijke Ridder/Den Geestelycken Krygsman*, 1689, etching, 28.2 x 37.5 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (source: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)

(Fig. 11) Pieter Serwouters after David Vinckboon, *Christelijke Ridder*, 1614, engraving, 29.7 x 35.8 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (source: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)

(Fig. 12) Peter Paul Rubens, *Der Triumph des Siegers*, GK 91, around 1614, oil on panel (oak), 161 x 263 cm, © Hessen Kassel Heritage 2023, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister

Abstract

Analysing the structure of the dead combatant's physicality in "The Death of Decius Mus" from Rubens' image series on the Roman consul, the corpus turns out to be a place where antiquity as a guideline for how to depict a human body is reflected. Broaching the issue of Genoa's political constitution, the corpus is related to Rubens' theory of the imitation of statues, the intellectual discourses about the city's socio-political formations and their history. Scrutinizing the relationship between Decius Mus' tenuous figural position in the painting and the soldier's body as a rudiment of the pictorial space, this paper reveals the relevance of pictorial elements in Rubens' history painting, which point to several structures of perception and narrative decentralization. Herewith, the artist formed a comprehension of Genoa's republican constitution, which undermined its authoritarian historical outline and focused on welfare in consideration of its elements. The decisive form of the image structure activated perceptual resistance and made it possible to see real circumstances.

This article is an introduction to results of my PhD thesis, "Rubens und die Immanenz des Bildes. Sehen und Erzählen im Norden", in which I follow on from my master thesis. With specific regard to Rubens' "Battle of the Amazons" (1617), perceptual respectively mental structures of the beholder and their reflection in and activation through layers of the pictorial space and levels of representation in early modern history painting are disclosed, and their relevance for depicted narrations and actions is shown. This leads to a theory of the early modern image, in which the image-concepts of Leon Battista Alberti and the Catholic Reform are modified.

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Title

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