

1 | Introduction

Peter Paul Rubens was the foremost painter in the seventeenth-century Southern Low Countries. The output and quality of his workshop was immense, the reception of his works even greater. While Rubens is well-known for the many paintings that left his workshop in quick succession, the fact that he designed illustrations and title pages for numerous books, and worked with Balthasar I Moretus, one of the most important publishers of their time, is less well-known. His work in book illustration has often been seen as an oddity best explained by his friendship with Moretus. Even today the myth of the master painter Rubens who “demanded to be paid well for his illustrations [and] may have been somewhat disdainful of the work, since he would do illustrations only on Sundays”, is the major narrative told about this aspect of Rubens’s work.¹ However, there was no contemporary or earlier artist of his standing who contributed so many illustrations to books of any kind or size like Rubens, and the elaborate allegorical title pages he designed for many influential authors and patrons together with the truly large print runs and many editions for some titles, paint an entirely different picture. For Rubens, books were the basis of his learning and his work; the extensive library he acquired throughout his life was part of his image as a gentleman, and the books he illustrated were among the most influential books of the seventeenth century.

Additionally, the importance of books in the context of the religious war, the generally wide distribution and great print runs of these books which Rubens illustrated, the value that was attributed to these objects, and the material value with which they were produced, suggest that for Rubens the books were not less important than his paintings, they were a different medium to be used for different messages. Nowadays, in a world flooded with books and images, where information is easily accessed via the internet, the importance of books in the dissemination of ideas is easily forgotten, and the impact of a title page or an illustration in an age in which images were not taken for granted could have been much larger than we are prone to believe.

In the past, Rubens’s title pages were interpreted mainly with stylistic questions in mind because the drawings for these could be dated and thus seemed to offer answers for Rubens’s stylis-

¹ Kurlansky 2016, p. 174.

tic development. Of course, the organisation of Rubens's oeuvre, the selection and attribution of works to it, was a most pressing work for early art historians and it is little wonder that the archival sources were thus interpreted with these aspects in mind. My interests lie elsewhere. While the earlier projects mainly collected Rubens's work and the archival sources pertaining to title pages, I have evaluated individual title pages and the archival sources in their historical and sociological context to see what impact these designs could have had on book production, on the readers, or on the books. The argument that with his designs Rubens was simply helping an old friend out seems too weak with regard to the importance these books had in seventeenth-century society.

The questions underlying this study consider the social and historical context of the title pages: what was it that motivated Rubens to participate in the book projects and who else was involved? What kind of books were these? For what purpose were they produced? And in what way were they relevant for Rubens and his contemporaries? Instead of accepting the deprecative stance regarding Rubens's work on books, this doctoral thesis aims to find out what motivated Rubens to design title pages, and what social, economic and political advantages he could have received from this practice. In order to answer these questions, I have reexamined the material collected by earlier publications on the title pages and centred it around the title pages and the history of their production, instead of Rubens's style. When Rubens produced the designs for these illustrated title pages, this particular form of paratext, the title page, already had a history and tradition of several decades, which raised certain expectations. On the other hand, illustrated and engraved title pages started to disappear from books in the eighteenth century and, consequently, the expectations and the knowledge of reading these intricate allegories disappeared. To understand what these allegorical inventions would have meant to Rubens's contemporaries was thus a main objective of this research. To come close to that knowledge, the social and historical context of the title pages and their production, especially the people involved in their production, is the necessary basis for an interpretation.²

1.1 | Questions of Periodisation

Rubens's books have so far been considered as "Baroque" book illustration, whereby the periodisation of "Baroque" creates problems, rather than advantages.³ Baroque is a constructed period of artistic style, the usefulness of which ends with a first chronological attribution of works to a specific artist. For further inquiries, this kind of periodisation is more likely to hinder than to help.

² As this is as good a place as any, I wish to emphasise that I use the male pronoun to refer to the agents involved not only because it enables fluent reading, but also because the female pronoun would simply be wrong in most cases of this study: most of the agents in this study, be they authors, printers, designers, producers, were male.

³ Gullström 2014; Febvre et al. 1998; Van de Velde 1997; Frese 1989; Hofer 1970.

From a historical perspective the term simply does not exist: no contemporary of Rubens would have called his age or their art “Baroque”. Rubens and his contemporaries perceived themselves to be part of the Renaissance with their constant references to Roman antiquity. From a modern perspective, the art-historical periodisation which separates works of art according to their style hinders an interdisciplinary exchange and an international perspective, as it does not encompass the countries in which the reformation had taken hold. Book illustration should, however, be considered from an international perspective as the distribution of books not necessarily followed national borders. Additionally, the early modern period offers advantages for an interdisciplinary approach. For historians, for instance, the Baroque as a period does not exist, the caesurae of the early modern period are placed much earlier and much later, and encompasses a multitude of art historical periods, differentiated on stylistic grounds. What is more, the theological issues concerning images did not change throughout the early modern period, whichever practice or style was applied to them: the substantial core of Catholic theology concerning images was that the reverence of a holy image was always directed at the holy prototype and not the image itself.⁴ Thus even from an art-historical standpoint, using “Baroque” as a period is questionable.

Even for non-religious images, the way in which an image was read and the dependence on the famous Horatian dictum of “ut pictura poesis” did not change until the eighteenth century. Painters and art theoreticians deliberately misread the Horatian maxime that poetry should be like a painting⁵ for their own ends and stipulated that a painting could be like a poem. This opened the door to the reasoning of art theoreticians that whatever applied to the art of rhetoric should also apply to other arts. Art theoreticians used the well-known vocabulary of rhetorical treatises to describe the visual arts, thereby elevating what was considered a mechanical art to the *artes liberales*. The inventive force and artistic imagination, previously only accorded to poets, was now also accorded to painters. Their work could from then on be expressed in the rhetorical terms of *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*: the invention, the arrangement and the style of a work of art.

The earliest theoretical writing on art was that of Leon Battista Alberti, but Rubens also knew Karel Van Mander’s *Schilder-Boeck*,⁶ the works of Giorgio Vasari,⁷ and Francisus Junius’s treatise *De pictura veterum*.⁸ Junius, whose work Rubens praised, stated in his first chapter that poetry and painting should be seen as sister arts as the same rules of rhetoric applied to both. Moreover, the main stimulus for both was *imitatio* and, to use Junius’s term, *phantasia*.⁹ Both these concepts were

⁴ This had already been established before the council of Trent and did not change much in the following century. Hecht 2016.

⁵ Hor. ars. 361.

⁶ One copy is known on the title page of which can be read: “ex libris Pet. Pa. Rubens”. Cf. Arents et al. 2001, no. A1.

⁷ A present from his friend Gaspar Gevaerts, *Ibid.*, no. B3.

⁸ Büttner 2015c.

⁹ Fehl 1981, p. 30.

needed in the reception of art: in order to see and judge an artistic work properly the viewer needed imagination.¹⁰ Emotional vividness of the poetic or visual language was the main tool in the service of persuasion: Cicero had already stipulated in his *Orator* that the orator had to teach, delight, and move his audience.¹¹ This art theoretical construct was succinctly developed but did not change throughout the early modern period in its core emphasis on the persuasion of the viewer.¹²

1.2 | Rubens and Book Illustration in Recent Scholarship

Two important books on Rubens's title pages were published in the wake of the Rubens year of 1977: *Book Illustration and Title-pages*, the Catalogue Raisonné by Richard Judson and Carl van de Velde, and *Rubens and the Book*, a catalogue for an exhibition at the Chapin Library of Williams College in Williamstown by Julius S. Held and his students.¹³ In these two publications many archival sources were uncovered, collected, interpreted and published, and without these fundamental works, the following research would have been impossible. The basis for all Rubens publications is of course the work of Max Rooses who collected letters and archival sources on Rubens and Balthasar Moretus.¹⁴ Even before that in 1873, Voorhelm Schneevoogt had collected all prints made after Rubens's work, cataloguing the title pages for the first time.¹⁵ These works constitute the basis of my research, which relies in many parts on the archival sources mentioned and transcribed in these volumes.¹⁶ In the following I give an overview of what has happened in the last forty years.

Apart from these encompassing studies, Rubens's book illustration is also mentioned in countless overviews on book illustration and in catalogues of exhibitions. In these works, Rubens's title pages are embedded in a wider context, which usually only allows for a catalogue entry on a specific title page fitting into this context. Out of necessity and because of their focus on a wider context, these works concentrate on the visual aspect of the title pages, ignoring to a large part the books to which these title pages were attached and thus treating title pages like prints. Title pages, however, are intended to be bound to a book. This alone necessitates an analysis that includes the context of the book: its subject matter, its author, publisher, and the way in which it was published. The tendency to look at title pages as one would look at single prints might reflect a wish to enno-

¹⁰ Büttner 2015c, p. 77. On Junius see Büttner 2011; Dundas 2007; Junius 2004; Dundas 1996; Warncke 2005; Fehl 1996; Warncke 1987; Fehl 1981.

¹¹ The three tasks of the orator, "docere, delectare, et movere", cf. *Orator* 69.

¹² Büttner 2015c; R. W. Lee 1967; Warncke 1987.

¹³ Judson and Van de Velde 1977a; Held 1977.

¹⁴ Ruelens and Rooses 1972a; Rooses 1904; Rooses 1903; Rooses 1886; Rooses 1883; Rooses 1882; Rooses 1881.

¹⁵ Even though many of his attributions have been corrected in the meantime, it is nonetheless the first such catalogue and deserves mention here: Voorhelm Schneevoogt 1873.

¹⁶ My work, of course, relies heavily on the literature gathered by these authors; Rubens scholarship has been extensive and for earlier literature I ask the reader to refer to these publications.

ble title pages: an artist like Rubens could not be seen within the confines of applied arts. All the same, it could also reflect the way in which title pages were collected from early on. Samuel Pepys (1633–1703), for instance, had collected about 900 title pages with the help of his friend John Evelyn.¹⁷ The collecting of these images often meant that somewhere a book had been robbed of its title page; this destruction can still be seen in libraries. As title pages were intended to introduce books, they were not produced as single, independent prints. To view them out of their context might mean to miss their significance beyond their aesthetic appearance.

Rubens's title pages are mentioned in many volumes of the *Corpus Rubenianum* Ludwig Burchard (CRLB), the *Catalogue Raisonné* of Rubens's work. Its authors often use the title page designs to give a wider context to the paintings, drawings, objects or tapestries they focus on. Most notably, both Elizabeth McGrath in her volume on *Subjects from History* and Nils Büttner in his contribution to the CRLB on *Allegories* commented on Rubens's use of books in his designs.¹⁸ McGrath has published widely on the works by Rubens that rely heavily on classical literature, paying tribute to his wide learning. As his own books, the source of his learning, play a large role in McGrath's detailed examination of Rubens's paintings, it is little wonder that she studied the nature of his library and its relationship to his work more closely.¹⁹ Nils Büttner's biographies of Rubens have been indispensable, as have been the many articles he has published on the socio-historical circumstances in which Rubens and his contemporaries found themselves.²⁰ The forthcoming CRLB volume on *Allegories* proved increasingly important for the interpretation of the allegorical title pages and many of the overarching topics in this volume proved to be congruent for the study of title pages.²¹ Those title pages for which preparatory drawings are still extant were also incorporated in a large exhibition on Rubens's drawings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art curated by Anne-Marie Logan and Michiel C. Plomp in 2005.²²

In the study of Rubens's title pages, Balthasar Moretus plays an important role. Moretus was not only Rubens's friend but also ran the most renowned publishing house north of the Alps, following in the footsteps of his grandfather Christopher Plantin. Thus the *Officina Plantiniana*, or the Plantin-Moretus publishing and printing house, features widely in this research on Rubens and his books, especially as this company was transformed into a museum and archives in the nineteenth century. The Museum Plantin-Moretus (MPM) houses important archives for the history of

¹⁷ R Emmert 2005. Latham, Robert (Ed.): *Catalogue of the Pepys Library at Magdalene College Cambridge*, vol. III, pt. 1, compiled by A.W. Aspital. 87–175: "My collection of frontispieces".

¹⁸ McGrath 1997; Büttner 2018.

¹⁹ McGrath 2016, Introduction; McGrath 2009a; McGrath 2009b; McGrath 2006; McGrath 1997; McGrath 1987.

²⁰ For the biographies, cf. esp. Büttner 2015c; Büttner 2006b; Büttner 2004. Cf. also Büttner 2017a; Büttner 2015b; Büttner 2015a; Büttner 2014a; Büttner 2014b; Büttner 2012; Büttner 2011; Büttner 2010; Büttner 2008c; Büttner 2006a.

²¹ Büttner 2018.

²² Logan and Plomp 2005.

books and publishing, and has contributed several important exhibitions and catalogues, not to forget the research of countless scholars under its roofs. In the Rubens year 1977 the MPM dedicated an exhibition to Rubens as a book illustrator, *P. P. Rubens als boekillustrator*, curated by Judson and Van de Velde, who brought their years of research to the exhibition.²³ Twenty years later in the same institution, *The Illustration of Books Published by the Moretuses* was the central topic of an exhibition in which Rubens's books featured widely.²⁴

In 2004 an exhibition was devoted to Rubens's library.²⁵ It showcased books Rubens bought, possibly possessed, and illustrated, and was based on the work of Prosper Arents and Dirk Imhof. Arents continued the work begun by Max Rooses in the 1880s and reconstructed Rubens's library.²⁶ For this reconstruction, Arents used the MPM's extensive archives, the letters written by Rubens and his friends and family, and the printed auction catalogue of Albert Rubens's library discovered by Arents in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris in 1948. Arents also listed every book that Rubens mentioned or that was mentioned in the context of Rubens—an invaluable work.²⁷ Frans Baudouin edited and finished the work begun by Rooses and Arents and wrote several papers on Rubens and his books.²⁸

The many publications on Christophe Plantin and the dynasty of printers he founded also belong to the main literature used in this study. Among these publications, Leon Voet's work on the history of the *Officina Plantiniana* is still the seminal work to turn to.²⁹ In the past decades Karen Lee Bowen and Dirk Imhof have added substantially to this history with their studies of the Plantinian archives and research on individual family members or publications.³⁰ Apart from exhibitions in the MPM and the *Catalogue Raisonné* of the CRLB, several chapters in books, articles and studies were devoted to the topic of Rubens and the book, most of these written after the *Catalogue Raisonné* and not incorporated in it. Julius S. Held, for instance, studied Rubens's involvement in the production of the *Vita Ignatii*, an account of the Life of the founder of the Society of Jesus Ignatius Loyola.³¹ Sometimes individual title pages were discussed repeatedly, as, for instance, the title page for Franciscus Aguilonius's *Opticorum libri sex*. This title page gave also room for speculation concerning Rubens's lost colour theory.³² However, in most of the twentieth century, the attribution of drawings to Rubens's œuvre was of greater importance for scholarship on Rubens's ti-

²³ Cf. Judson and Hoozee 1977 for earlier literature.

²⁴ Nave 1997.

²⁵ Schepper 2004.

²⁶ Rooses 1883; Rooses 1882.

²⁷ Arents et al. 2001; Arents 1961.

²⁸ Baudouin 2002b; Baudouin 2001.

²⁹ Voet 1969.

³⁰ Imhof 2014; Bowen and Imhof 2010; Bowen and Imhof 2008; Bowen and Imhof 2005; Bowen 2003; Bowen and Imhof 2003; Bowen and Imhof 2001; Bowen 1997.

³¹ Held 1982, pp. 168ff.; Held 1979; Held 1972.

³² Parkhurst 1961; see section 5.2 and for a detailed bibliography: Bertram 2016.

tle pages, so that the archival sources and the drawings for the title pages were mostly interpreted with that question in mind and its focus on the artist.

In 1977, Annegret Glang-Süberkrüb already complained about the scholarly neglect of seventeenth-century book illustration in general.³³ Writing from a perspective that prioritised books rather than artists, she especially expressed her discomfort at the subjective interpretations of art historians who prioritised the drawings of the master over the finished prints, or neglected the collaboration between publisher and painter.³⁴ The focus shifted, however, with the rise of a new interest in the studies of print and book culture not only by art historians, but also by historians in all their specialities (book historians, literary historians and historians of knowledge). Increasingly, Rubens was featured in specialised publications about religious book illustration or scientific book illustrations, the publications of which alone show that studies on books has increased since the 1990s and the subjects became more diverse.

The study of printing with all its social implications began with Elizabeth Eisenstein's *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, historian Roger Chartier's *The Order of Books*, and literary historian Gérard Genette's *Paratexts*.³⁵ Genette's suggested taxonomy influenced book studies in the following decades and also prompted studies into early modern paratexts in order to tackle the blind spot in Genette's work; Genette had ignored historical differences and change in his taxonomy.³⁶ Accordingly, the focus has increasingly shifted towards readers and publishers in book studies. Moreover, the appearance of books in their entirety began to play a larger role, much in contrast to the previous, fairly isolated focus on text or illustration only.³⁷ Rubens's title pages are likewise often mentioned in studies and exhibitions of other publishers or readers in early modern Antwerp, such as in Stijn van Rossem's invaluable study on the publishing strategies of the Verdussens or in the catalogue to an exhibition on the burgomaster Nicolaas Rockox's library.³⁸ Studies as these were very useful to my work as they provided a broader perspective and helped contextualise the work by Moretus and Rubens. Van Rossem's elaborate study of publishing in Antwerp and of the rivalries between the publishers was particularly helpful in this endeavour.

While the diachronic studies of book illustration in the first half of the twentieth century tend to be illustrative rather than informative, those in the latter half concentrate on word-image relationships. Increasingly, individual studies try to understand the nature of (early modern) book

³³ This neglect has up to date not been remedied in the form of a book. A database for all illustrated British books, however, has been enabled by the Bibliographical Society: Hunter 2009.

³⁴ Glang-Süberkrüb 1977, col. 556; Glang-Süberkrüb emphasised the importance of Rooses 1886 for her work.

³⁵ Eisenstein 1979; Chartier 1994; Genette 1997.

³⁶ K. A. E. Enenkel 2015; H. Smith 2011.

³⁷ Sherman 2007; Genette 1997; Chartier 1994; Eisenstein 1983; Eisenstein 1979.

³⁸ Van Rossem 2014a; Fabri et al. 2004.

production and use in various details: the workings of the guilds, of censorship, of pricing and the economy, and of the development of a whole trade in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.³⁹

Over the last decade Ralph Dekoninck provided a thorough survey of seventeenth-century Jesuit print culture, looking both at the genre of the prints discussed in his work as well as their historical context, and underlaying them with a theological, anthropological and image-theoretical basis.⁴⁰ A similarly encompassing approach was used by Susanne Lang in her work on the illustration of the reports of the Jesuit missionaries.⁴¹ It is this material turn, a turn to the production, use and function of books and book illustration mainly, that influenced my study of Rubens's title pages.

A meaningful study of title pages has to look at the book, or even books, invariably connected to a title page. Focussing on books, as well as the title pages, includes the production process, as the book did not simply come into being, as bibliographer David F. McKenzie stresses: "it is invariably the product of human agency in complex and highly volatile contexts which a responsible scholarship must seek to recover if we are to understand better the creation and communication of meaning as the defining characteristic of human societies".⁴² Meaning is not inherent in an object, it is given to it by an audience that was trained to specific expectations, and thus the creation or production of meaning in relation to these expectations becomes relevant. The medium's own historicity has to be taken into account, if meanings are to be recovered, and the book seen as a product of many people. Thus it is one objective of this book to recover the contexts of book production, to see the book as "the product of one complex set of social and technological processes" for which a "large number of people, machines, and materials must converge and act together for it to come into existence at all."⁴³ This work is an attempt to deal with title pages in a way that acknowledges the several agents involved in the production of books and in the production of the title pages of these books in particular.

It is also an attempt to acknowledge the historicity of the medium involved, as the medium's historicity influenced the production of title pages just as it influenced a contemporary attribution to meaning. Adrian Johns sees the book as "the material embodiment of, if not a consensus, then at least a collective consent."⁴⁴ The same is essentially true for title pages, and it was this collective consent that ensured the meaning of the title pages. This was made clear especially in those cases when difficulties arose, as for instance, when someone complained to Moretus. Thus, this study

³⁹ For a diachronic study cf. Hofer 1970. For the trade cf. Mathijsen 2011; Cruz 2009; Johns 2008; Materné 1991; Vervliet 1991; Wittmann 1991; Briels 1974.

⁴⁰ Cf. Dekoninck 2005a. Cf. also the further work Dekoninck 2016; Dekoninck 2012; Dekoninck 2011; Dekoninck 2010; Dekoninck 2008; Dekoninck 2005b; Dekoninck 2002.

⁴¹ Lang 2012.

⁴² McKenzie 1999, p. 4.

⁴³ Johns 2008, p. 3.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

is an art historical attempts to discover possible historical meanings of the title pages Rubens designed because these were instances of collective consent: this means that the material images, their production and their use, are in the centre of this investigation.

The images, however, were produced and influenced by people all with their own wishes and their own agendas. Rather than focussing on merely the designer, I decided to investigate all “authors” involved, i.e. the printers, the engravers, and the readers if possible. Instead of taking Rubens’s part for granted in this process, I have tried to uncover his role in the social networks and structures of book publishing. How much of the finished title page can be attributed to Rubens the artist, how much to the publisher, or the author, and how much influence do the dedicatees have on the title page? Not all of the agents could be investigated with the same thoroughness, and although as much as possible was done, others will have to add to this. The basic hypothesis of this present work is that the meaning and the relevance of a title page cannot be properly assessed without an idea of the relevance of the book and the meaning it was accorded by Rubens and his contemporaries.

1.3 | Methodology

In the 1960s, critical theory, and mostly social constructivism took hold in academia, postulating that human reality and with it history was socially constructed.⁴⁵ This instigated a paradigm shift in the humanities which have tried in several ways to deal with this postulated construction of reality since then. Michel Foucault, in *The Order of Things*, has voiced the problem that man can only think in terms of the already begun, of the already existing: whenever he attempts to understand himself as living, labouring being, man finds himself in a human time and space that is already institutionalized and subjugated by society. Thus it is “always against a background of the already begun that man is able to reflect on what may serve for him as origin”.⁴⁶ We have no other possibility than to think in terms and categories created before our time, and only as time passes will these become visible. At the moment the assumptions held a century past are visible in the scholarship from that time, telling us sometimes more about the scholars of the nineteenth century than about Rubens. A focus on the style of Rubens in the sketches for title pages, for instance, rather than on the finished product that was produced in a collaborative effort says more about the

⁴⁵ Berger et al. 1966.

⁴⁶ Foucault 2002, pp. 359–360. “C’est qu’en effet l’homme ne se découvre que lié à une historicité déjà faite: il n’est jamais contemporain de cette origine qui à travers le temps des choses s’esquisse en se dérochant; quand il essaie de se définir comme être vivant, il ne découvre son propre commencement que sur fond d’une vie qui elle-même a débuté bien avant lui; quand il essaie de se ressaisir comme être au travail, il n’en met au jour les formes les plus rudimentaires qu’à l’intérieur d’un temps et d’un espace humains déjà institutionnalisés, déjà maîtrisés par la société; [...] C’est toujours sur un fond de déjà commencé que l’homme peut penser ce qui vaut pour lui comme origine.” Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses*, Gallimard 1966, p. 341.

person asking questions than about Rubens's preferences. Generally, historical discourse analysis, Grounded Theory Method, or even the media-historical analysis of art are all poststructuralist answers to the fundamental problem that our view on history and our research interests are always already influenced and to a certain extent created by our circumstances. Historical interpretations are thus always influenced by subjectivism and *zeitgeist*.

The methodological approaches developed lately have in common with each other that they are trying to relativise as far as possible the preconceived assumptions on which everyone works. Rather than suggesting prescriptive methods, they describe a specific attitude towards history and historical research that acknowledges this basis of set values and assumptions instead of ignoring it. This kind of research is principally open-minded in that it tries to find and question preconceived notions and assumptions. Its focus lies on the process of historical research, always involving the reflection of the author's own personal stance and the assumptions revealed during the research process itself.⁴⁷ All of these poststructuralist philosophies see (historical) research as an act of interpretation, an act of giving meaning to utterances, be they in words or images. Common to all is the principle assumption that the individual creates meaning, that meaning is not seen as inherent in the picture or text, and is thus by necessity subjective. As the meaning is attributed by the individual, the interpretations created can also be conflicting. To solve the conflict, the interpretations and the way the individual arrived at them, have to be reflected on and discussed.

Although none of the theories above were strictly used to arrive at the conclusions presented in this thesis, the fundamentals of the Grounded Theory Method have been very influential in the process of the research, especially in giving a vocabulary to processes otherwise not mentioned in art history. Grounded Theory has provided me with a systematic way to gather, structure and analyse the knowledge gained on early modern book production and consumption, and especially to structure the rather large corpus of Rubens's title pages. The theory is a qualitative method of enquiry with the aim of building a theory on the basis of empirical data, using a constant back-and-forth between data, the coding of the data, and existing theories.⁴⁸ It was first described and used by sociologists Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss in order to show fundamental social processes that induce change, and in the following years the theory was evolved by Strauss and Juliet Corbin.⁴⁹ These scholars are still connected with the method, even though many independent variants have been developed over the years. The methods are united by the focus on qualitative research, "findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification",⁵⁰ an open and explorative character with the goal to arrive at a theory, at abstract concepts between

⁴⁷ Especially Grounded Theory Method as developed by Glaser and Strauss. Glaser et al. 1965 and Glaser et al. 1967. Cf. also Strübing 2004.

⁴⁸ Bohnsack et al. 2006.

⁴⁹ Glaser et al. 1965 and Glaser et al. 1967.

⁵⁰ Strauss et al. 1998, p. 10.

which relations can then be specified. Qualitative methods allow for conclusions to be drawn even though the data is not, and cannot be, all-encompassing and exhaustive.

The conclusions are drawn through a thorough interpretation of a few well-placed case studies, which makes the research questions and the selection of case studies so important. The ensuing constant back-and-forth between the material and theorising generated from the material at hand is meant to provide checks and balances on the interpretation of meagre data. This grounding, i.e. drawing the theory from the data, acknowledges that the description of data or material is tied to a general context and a more global view. The researcher's task is to tie both together, the description with the concept, without leaping to "immaculate conceptions" or preconceived generalisations. The sociological method of Grounded Theory was developed in order to deal with interviews in a qualitative, not quantitative way, creating tools for the process of interpretation. It can, however, also be applied to any other data, and is a helpful way to deal with a large corpus of images in which not every image can be scrutinised in the necessary detail. Grounded Theory is especially helpful for sampling, coding, and clustering sets of data.

Sampling and the Tools of Grounded Theory

Through Grounded Theory Method a few well-chosen case studies or samples are interpreted in such a way as to arrive at an overarching concept or theory, or at least a deep understanding of the research matter. The samples developed in this process are not premeditated but reveal themselves in the course of the interaction between the researcher and the material. The goal of this study was to provide a framework in which Rubens's title pages, or any other title pages, could be structured and studied. From the beginning it was perceived that the social history of title pages would be the basis of the inquiry: the questions of who was involved in the creation of the title pages and the books and who the intended readers were. These questions could only be answered through individual case studies in a qualitative way. From the outset it was inconceivable to rewrite the comprehensive catalogue provided by Judson and Van de Velde in 1977; only a few case studies were planned that were intended to be a representative cross section of Rubens's title pages. This, however, proved to be a major difficulty as the title pages presented themselves as anything but easily structured. Previous studies had examined the title pages on stylistic grounds, structuring them chronologically or, if at all, according to Rubens's perceived stylistic development as a painter and draughtsman. This structure was not helpful for the research questions considered here, which are much more centred on the title pages themselves.

The process described in Grounded Theory helped in developing a structure through sampling and coding. Sampling in this research style "is based on evolving theoretical concepts".⁵¹ After

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 46.

an initial open sampling based on a study of the corpus and the literature, and following a first working hypothesis, a first sample is studied. Alongside this study and the ongoing analysis of compiled data, in this case during the interpretation of the first title page, the hypothesis is tested and the next sample is sought. This “theoretical sampling” is thus based on emerging concepts with the goal to explore these concepts in more depth. Thus the first step was to identify the corpus of title pages to be dealt with. This already posed a major problem, as not every title page that carries the name Rubens was necessarily drawn by Rubens. This distinction is, however, a modern one and has to do with the image of the artist as a lone genius, created by specific nineteenth-century views on artists. Rubens’s workshop practice with his many assistants stands in contrast to this view of the artist as a lone genius. In the past forty years Rubens’s workshop has been studied extensively.⁵²

Many hands were involved in the production of his work, be it a painting, a tapestry or a title page. But if Rubens sold it as his work and under his name, especially if the same was printed on the print, then it should be considered a Rubens notwithstanding our reservation about originals.⁵³ The signatures on a print could, for instance, also explicate that Rubens invented the image while Erasmus Quellinus drew it and Galle printed it. Each part of the process is thus acknowledged, but the concept was considered to be the more important part by Rubens and his contemporaries. On some title pages his name is not mentioned, but the archival sources show explicitly that Rubens was involved in the invention. When neither documents nor a signature showed Rubens to be involved in the production of a title page, it was not considered in this study. One example of this is the title page for the *Life of Ignatius Loyola*.⁵⁴ There are no documents that would substantiate the claim by Julius Held that the title page to the *Life of Loyola* was by Rubens: his name does not appear on the title page, and the title page does not display his usual treatment of title pages. Therefore, I have not included this particular title page in the corpus.⁵⁵ Thus the corpus under scrutiny here is limited to 48 titles with title pages by Rubens, of which the first was designed in 1611 and the last five published after his death.⁵⁶

⁵² Schmiedlechner forthcoming; Bulckens et al. 2017; Nakamura 2013; Schmiedlechner 2012; Van Hout et al. 2012; Büttner 2008a; Vlieghe 2000; Vlieghe 1992; Vlieghe 1977.

⁵³ Büttner 2008b.

⁵⁴ Ribadeneyra 1609; cf. Büttner in Bertram 2018b, no. 2, pp. 36–39.

⁵⁵ Held 1972. This is not to say that this title page could not be a first attempt by a young artist, thus maybe not displaying the later boldness in design, but I would prefer to err on the side of caution. It is better to first study those title pages of which there are documents recording Rubens’s involvement.

⁵⁶ Aedo y Gallart 1635; Aguilonius 1613; Areopagita 1634; Augustín et al. 1617; Barberini 1634; Baronio and Sponde 1623; Bauhuis et al. 1634; *Biblia Sacra* 1617; Bidermann 1634; Blois 1632; Boonaerts 1634; Bosio 1617; Boyvin 1638; *Breviarium Romanum* 1614; Chifflet 1640; Cordier 1628; Cordier 1630; De Bie 1615; De Bie and Hemelaer 1627; *Gelresche Rechten des Vremvndtschen Quartiers* 1620; Gevaerts 1642; Goltzius 1618, 1645a, 1644; Haefen 1635; Haraeus 1623; Hugo 1626; Jesu 1620; L. Lessius 1617; Lipsius 1637; Liutprandus 1640; Longo a Coriolano 1623; Marselaer 1666; Mascardi 1622; Morgues 1637; Mudzaert 1622; Nonnius 1620; Pietrasanta 1634; Ribadeneyra and Rosweyde 1619; Rios

In a first open sampling, several title pages were scrutinised using a standard set of questions in order to find out what material would be available to study the title pages and what would be needed. In the course of this overview, the set of questions changed considerably, mainly to incorporate the genre of a book and the various editions of the same title printed before and after the first edition with a Rubens title page. From this first open sampling a first case study was chosen: the title page by Franciscus Aguilonius, the first published title page by Rubens.⁵⁷ In the first sample I tested the way in which title pages could be dealt with and gathered research questions. The title page for Aguilonius presented itself because it has received the scholarly attention so far, and offered a testing ground with the possibility for a comparison of methods and interpretive view points. It was found, for instance, that a good tool to analyse the images was the art historical comparison of images. The comparison, however, had to be valid, i.e. there had to be a reasonable relationship between the images. A reasonable relationship was found in title pages for the same genre, similar formats or various title pages for the same title. For the iconographical analysis early modern contemporary literature was used, preferably literature for which there was proof that Rubens would have had access to it. During this detailed analysis of one title page several ways of future inquiry presented themselves.⁵⁸

Through the microanalysis of the sample and the tool of coding, preliminary concepts were then established with which further case studies could be defined. After the first case study, I decided to focus on the context of books which resulted in the first chapter. One aspect of the larger historical context was the social context of the book production, including the author's identity and religious affiliation. The aim of theoretical sampling is the exploration of the emerging concept, and this meant that other agents that could have a possible influence on the title pages were explored, for instance dedicatees of the books.

Categorisation of the material at hand was a process that accompanied the research from its beginning. In previous studies the material was categorised chronologically, trying to cluster the title pages according to Rubens's stylistic development. Increasingly throughout my study, this approach seemed inadequate for title pages, as much of their appearance depended on context rather than Rubens's artistic development. Instead, the genre, the format, the patron and the contents of the book seemed to have more influence on the appearance of a single title page.

The categories developed throughout the study were based on constant coding, i.e. the constant development of theoretical concepts.⁵⁹ To systematically examine the material, the material

y Alarcón 1641; Rosweyde 1617, 1628; Sarbiewski 1632, 1634; Scribani 1624; Steen 1616; Tornielli 1620; Tristan 1634. Cf. also Table 1 in Chapter 3.

⁵⁷ Cf. section 5.2.

⁵⁸ Cf. Bertram 2016.

⁵⁹ Coding is a tool in the gradual development of theoretical concepts based on the systematic examination of the material. For a description of the analytic tools of open, axial and selective coding, cf. Strauss et al. 1998, pt. 2.

is constantly compared, while memos and mind-maps are indispensable tools.⁶⁰ Memos aid analytic thinking and force the researcher to critically assess concepts and enforce analytical abstraction. Additionally, they help uncover discrepancies or conceptual biases which can then be solved by a renewed look at the data. Mind-maps help to structure the findings and to link the various concepts with each other. They are a great tool in organising the data in a different way from the usual database that enforces linear thinking and makes it difficult to show more than one relationship. The three categories into which the title pages fall, outlined in the following, have been developed from the mind-maps drawn up from the first case studies. It is based on the historical book classes that were found to be an early modern organising principle. These book classes have been used to provide a basis for comparison between book of the Rubens corpus.⁶¹ In the end seven case studies were made until a point of saturation was reached.⁶²

Saturation is the point in the research when a case study is not perceived to add to the concepts.⁶³ After the sixth case study it seemed that the findings, or the concepts underlying the findings, were already repeating themselves, and that adding new variables would not change the findings significantly.

Problems of Interpretation

One characteristic of qualitative methods is the constant reflection of the role of the researcher within the process of research. The researcher's own subjective viewpoint is recognised and incorporated in the process, and potential problems are identified and addressed. In the course of this research, title pages are interpreted in detail, which opens its own pitfalls and problems. In the title pages two art-historical problems become visible: that of interpretation and that of the medium. Both are intertwined and it is important to clarify these epistemological problems beforehand.

Just as the openness of the researcher's mind is a prerequisite in the present study, so is the postulated openness of the title page. In a way, I assume that for title pages the same is true that Umberto Eco, in his *Opera aperta*, reserved for modern art: a deliberate and systematic ambiguity.⁶⁴ While Eco distinguishes between traditional or "classical" art and modern art to elaborate his concept of the open work, the distinction instead lies in the assumptions that one makes

⁶⁰ For a good overview on the procedures of the analytic process, cf. Strauss et al. 1998, p. 12.

⁶¹ Cf. Chapter 3.

⁶² These were the case studies on Goltzius's *Opera omnia*, cf. Chapter 4; Aguilonius's *Opticorum*, cf. 5.2, published as Bertram 2016; Lessius's *De iustitia et iure*, cf. 5.3; the genre of poetry with Maffeo Barberini's *Poemata*, Bauhsius's *Epigrammata*, and Sarbiewski's *Lycorum*; and the genre of Church history with Baronius's *Annales* and all its derivatives, cf. Chapter 6.

⁶³ Sometimes this point is also reached when the time frame set for the study is adhered to.

⁶⁴ Eco 1989, esp. David Robey's introduction. Cf. also Zymner 2002 who attributes the same openness to emblems.

concerning any art. Any text or image presents the reader or viewer with a “field” of interpretive possibilities, its interpretive field, from which the reader or viewer has to decide which approach is valid. With “traditional” or “classical” art, this field is usually narrowed down from the very start of the interpretation based on assumptions and previous knowledge and experiences of this type of art.⁶⁵ The Crocean aesthetics against which Eco wrote in 1962 incorporates the assumption that “art is a purely mental phenomenon that could be communicated directly from the mind of the artist to that of the reader, viewer, or listener”, as David Robey put it in his introduction to Eco’s work.⁶⁶ With this view the material medium of the work, its historical circumstances and its context are irrelevant and a stable essence of an artwork is assumed. Just as Eco’s work, this research is opposed to any such notion. It is rather the reader, viewer, or listener who creates the meaning in an art work, and several interpretations are thus conceivable and possible.⁶⁷ This suggests that the interpretive field should be first explored before a viewpoint can be narrowed down. If the interpretive field is only narrowed down by a discriminating viewer after considering all possibilities, an early modern work might be seen to be much more open and ambiguous than previously thought and might offer a variety of possible interpretations depending on its viewers.

Although a multitude of perspectives suggests an unlimited number of interpretations there are limits as to what can be said about any historical artefact, person or occurrence. Each work directs the viewers’ response by the way in which its elements are composed and by the way it plays with the expectations and traditions raised by a particular medium. The reading of one and the same image changes with the context, thus with the viewer, the medium and the placement of the image.⁶⁸ There is no single meaning of an image; the meaning has to be negotiated with these factors in mind. In order to narrow down possible interpretations, it is necessary to know the prevalent expectations that viewers would have had for a specific medium at any given time. As the focus of this work lies on early modern title page production, the possible interpretations are limited to early modern viewers.⁶⁹ Apart from finding media-specific conventions and traditions, the limits of interpretation are also set by sources. Nils Büttner has suggested that only the largest possible number of (archival) sources can help in limiting what can be said about images. He follows Reinhart Koselleck’s “veto of the sources”, which states that historical records only reveal what cannot be claimed, instead of revealing what can be said, so that only a large enough number of sources can reliably limit the possibilities of interpretation.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Of course the openness attested by Eco to modern art is of a much more radical kind, but only different not inherently opposed.

⁶⁶ Eco 1989, p. ix.

⁶⁷ Büttner 2014a, p. 9.

⁶⁸ Cf. the media-historical analysis as suggested by Warncke 1987.

⁶⁹ As the early modern period is very large this poses a problem, but sources were preferred that were as close as possible to the title page under consideration, and the concept of what an image was did not change fundamentally.

⁷⁰ Büttner 2018, Introduction.

Apart from media-specific conventions and archival sources, a third check on the interpretive possibilities is available through the discourses within which the objects are located. These various discourses dictate how an object could and would have been used and viewed. The interpretational frame that is expressed for specific title pages in this part of the thesis, is derived from an analysis of the book's context and the discourses within which it is located, of its author, its publisher, their communication if extant, the book's contents and appearance (or paratextual matter) and the proclaimed intentions.

The interpretational frame defines the possibilities of interpretation; it does not deliver one definite interpretation, and it assumes that the main goal of title pages is communication. The possibilities of interpretation, or the "number of different perspectives from which it can be viewed and understood", that give a work "a wealth of different resonances and echoes without impairing its original essence", are a necessary part of what Eco called the open work.⁷¹ Rubens's title pages are, above all, open works, in that a multitude of interpretations can be applied to them and that each reading, each interpretation, can add another aspect to the work. This possibility of multiple interpretations gives Rubens's work depth and erudition; more generally, these multiple interpretations interweave and overlap, which is what makes the title pages so fascinating.

An art-historical interpretation of title pages should always consider that on a very basic level the image presented on the title page is transmitted through a specific medium which in itself already has conventions or traditions and raises specific expectations. While it might be helpful to also look at some of Rubens's paintings, especially concerning the composition or single iconographical aspects, it is very difficult to simply transfer meanings and interpretations from painting to print. Each of the various media have their own characteristics, a print uses different means in order to convey space and colour through black and white, the paper and its colour play an important role, its material and its size (usually) dictate the use. In contrast to a painting by Rubens, which could and would be viewed by more than one person at a time, a book would most probably be used by one person and from a close distance only. However, the interpretation of a title page is possibly made easier than that of a painting whose context might change significantly, because the intended context is usually delivered with the book—at least its closer context of dedication, text and *approbatio*. By using the same title pages for different books and copying them from other printers' editions, the openness of the title page was exploited by all publishers in Rubens's time.⁷² With different contexts and the changing references, these images were opened to a great variety of interpretations.

⁷¹ Eco 1989, p. 3.

⁷² Cf. Bertram 2018a.

In order to ascertain how far Rubens was or could have been involved, the collected correspondences of Balthasar Moretus and Peter Paul Rubens have been invaluable, especially the parts already compiled by Held, and by Judson and Van de Velde in the 1970s. A methodological problem with an analysis of these compilations is that most of the letters were published in edited form. In the publications mentioned above, they were also truncated and only the parts directly concerned with the title pages published.⁷³ Letter writing, however, was considered an art form at this time, and followed social and rhetorical conventions.⁷⁴ From the published snippets it is very hard to see the larger context of the letter. It is not explained how a letter was preserved, whether it was a handwritten draft, a copy, or the actual letter; whether there was a larger issue within which the publication of the relevant book was just a part; nor is it explained how the relevant content was included in the larger letter, whether it had a prominent place, was part of an elaborate argument or just an aside.⁷⁵ Most of these questions could not be answered conclusively due to the restrictions a doctoral thesis poses in terms of time, money and space. An attempt to contextualise the snippets of letters was abandoned, as this was not the main issue, but was to serve as a basis in order to better understand the title pages. What could be done, however, was a contextualisation of the title pages into the general production process in Rubens's workshop, for which the work of Patricia Schmiedlechner has been invaluable.⁷⁶ Recent publications in book history, such as Stijn van Rossem's analysis of the publishing strategies of the family Verdussen, were also very useful for contextualising the letters.⁷⁷

The structure of the following does not follow the inductive process of the research, but tries to present the results by moving from the general to the specific, in order to provide the reader with the background knowledge to place the case studies in their historical context. The second chapter

⁷³ The copious number of letters by Peter Paul Rubens and his correspondents have been edited by various scholars in the past centuries and also translated by various scholars, first by Max Rooses, cf. Ruelens and Rooses 1972a and the following volumes. Van de Velde 2006; Magurn 1971; P. P. Rubens 1955; Zoff 1918. In order to make clear whose translation I have followed, the letters are always quoted with the work of the relevant editor, even if the same letter might be found in other works, too. Very rarely have I found a different, in my eyes more accurate, translations. On such occasions I will indicate this. If I find it necessary for the reader to engage with the original, I have included the Latin version. All other languages have also been translated or rephrased in order to increase readability.

⁷⁴ A minor consolation is that the letters between Moretus and his authors were not written to be published; all of the letters mentioned meant business and were not intellectual mini treatises written to be published in a carefully selected edition of an author's work. Nevertheless, the letters also only provided the opinion of a single person and it cannot be taken as proof that something was a common occurrence from one utterance in one single letter. Thus, all the letters can do is to point into a direction and show options until more archival material is unearthed that either corroborates or qualifies the suggestions made here.

⁷⁵ De Landtsheer 2011.

⁷⁶ For studies on early modern workshops cf. Nakamura 2013; Schmiedlechner 2012; Van Hout et al. 2012; Büttner 2008a; Vlieghe 2000; for the Rubens workshop in particular cf. Schmiedlechner 2012, as well as Patricia Schmiedlechner's forthcoming doctoral thesis on Rubens's workshop practices.

⁷⁷ Van Rossem 2014a.

first describes the general context of the title pages, beginning with an introduction to the development of the early modern illustrated title page, the production processes of title pages as exemplified by the collaboration of Balthasar Moretus and Peter Paul Rubens, before placing Rubens's interest in books in its social context. In the third chapter explains the corpus of the title pages designed by Rubens, and how the various title pages were sorted into the book classes established by the inventory drawn on Albert Rubens's death. In the fourth chapter those case studies are presented that fall into the category of Rubens's interest as an antiquarian. In the fifth chapter those case studies are dealt with that show Rubens emerge as a humanist scholar in his designs for Jesuit scholars. The sixth chapter covers projects in which Rubens had a political rather than scholarly interest and emerges as a Catholic patriot.