



Fontana delle Tartarughe

The iconography of a Roman fountain

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La Fontana delle Tartarughe

My first reaction to La Fontana delle Tartarughe is one of joy: the rippling water and the playful forms radiate happy feelings. The small fountain and its environment create a quiet sanctuary in the otherwise busy streets of Rome, and when you turn a corner and suddenly see the fountain, you feel as if you have discovered a hidden treasure.

If you look more carefully at the fountain and the four statues' faces, however, you will discover that not all of them are smiling. One of the boys even looks sad, almost melancholic. Still, the face you meet when you leave Palazzo Mattei di Giove is the most joyful of them all: the boy who has been interpreted as spring by Thomas Eser.

What is the reason for the feeling of joy that fills most viewers when they cross Piazza Mattei for the first time? A likely answer is the youthful manner in which the boys are depicted; there is a certain amount of energy in the way they vigorously climb the back of the dolphins and effortlessly raise their empty hand into mid-air.

In fact, it is as if the whole fountain, even the movement and sounds of the water, radiates a positive energy. The water drips, trickles, and gushes in four small streams from the masks on the upper basin, into the basin below. From the dolphins mouths the water spouts into the conches below, which slowly overflow. The water then pours into the quadrefoil shaped basin at ground level. Before the days of the modern cars and the Italian Vespa, the effect produced by these sounds must have been even more astounding.



Figur 1: Fontana delle Tartarughe in Piazza Mattei.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank my tutor at the University of Oslo, Leif Holm Monssen, and my prior tutor Vidar Poulsson for helping me with the bibliography. I also thank Professor Carolyn Smyth at John Cabot University in Rome, and Professor Roy Tommy Eriksen from the University of Agder, for interesting comments and suggestions regarding my thesis during my stay in Rome. The administration of the Norwegian Institute in Rome has arranged accomodation and letters of recomodation to get access to the Vatican Library, Biblioteca Hertziana, the American Academy in Rome and several other librerries and institutions in Rome. A special thank goes to the librarian at the Norwegian Institute in Rome, Germana Graziosi. Finally I want to thank translator Tonje Nilsen and my mother and father who have helped me with copyediting the thesis.

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Introduction

This thesis addresses the iconography of the Roman fountain La Fontana delle Tartarughe (fig. 1). My hypothesis is that the bronze sculptures in the fountain are representations of a character from Roman mythology, i.e. the young shepherd Ganymede, who Jupiter fell in love with.

La Fontana delle Tartarughe in Piazza Mattei is located to the very centre of Rome, lying in the middle of a triangle made up of Capitoline Hill with its famous museums, Isola Tiberina in the River Tiber and Largo Torre Argentina with its many buses, ruins and stray cats. Nevertheless, the piazza and the fountain are not easy to find, since they are located in the Roman Ghetto, the area where the Jewish population was once segregated from the rest of society (fig. 8). With its narrow streets and scruffy old buildings, the Ghetto is seen as a less interesting area, even today. Radiating positive energy and joy, the Fountain of the Turtles presents a stark contrast to these surroundings, and it has become a prime symbol of Roman Mannerism.

The original idea of my thesis, that the iconography in La Fontana delle Tartarughe represents the ancient Roman myth of Jupiter and Ganymede, was the result of several factors. When I decided to apply the Hovedfag (graduate level) at the University of Oslo, I had just finished the Grunnfag (foundation course) in Greek and Roman Archaeology. In one of the Grunnfag lessons, the professor presented the myth depicted in an antique Roman fountain found in the former classical collection of the National Gallery, Oslo.

When I later encountered La Fontana delle Tartarughe, the iconography of the sculptures, the lack of attributes and the strange contraposto pose reminded me of the Ganymede depictions I had seen at Grunnfag.

Later investigations revealed that the iconography of the Turtle Fountain was unknown, that the patron of the fountain was the Duke of a fief called Giove (Italian for Jupiter) and that the four turtles on the rim had been added more than seventy years after the original designs. These facts made it seem even more plausible that the myth of Jupiter and Ganymede was the iconographic theme for La Fontana delle Tartarughe.

My stay in Rome was fascinating, but extensive; a few sources on this theme were written in English, German and Latin, but the majority of the bibliography was written in Italian. For my study I needed access to the library at The Norwegian Institute in Rome

(DNIR), but the American Academy in Rome, Biblioteca Hertziana and the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana were also important sources for the bibliography.

I needed financial support to be able to study in Italy, and scholarships from the Norwegian Research Council (NFR), the Astrup-Fearnley Foundation and the International Research Programme “From Renovatio to Reform” enabled me to spend a year and a half at DNIR.

As I discovered several other possible iconographic representations of the Ganymede myth in the decoration of the Mattei’s buildings, excursions to the family’s castles in Lazio and Umbria soon became necessary. In a worn-out bus belonging to DNIR, I travelled with a group of other students to the small medieval villages on the hills of rural Belmonte, Giove and Rocca Sinibalda.

In my thesis I have mostly used the historical iconographic method; the comparison of iconographic factors in Antique and Mannerist Ganymede depictions has been crucial to the outcome of this study. As for understanding the period in which the fountain was built, contemporary books, maps and prints have been a greater help to me than any modern book.

Finally, I do not wish to suggest that the conclusions reached by the art historians Eser, Fehl, Benocci or D’Onofrio are incorrect; it is not rare for Late Renaissance and Mannerist monuments to have more than one iconographic theme.

CHAPTER 1: THE FLORENTINE AND ROMAN FOUNTAINS

a. The Florentine fountains under the Medici

In Florence, a new era began when duke Cosimo I de' Medici came to power in 1537, with numerous commissions for Florentine artists under the patronage of the Medici family¹. Artists such as Verrocchio, Rossellino and Donatello had made beautiful fountains for the Medici's Early Renaissance palaces and villas, but there was now a surge of High Renaissance and Mannerist fountains.

One of the artists frequently employed by Cosimo I was Niccolò Tribolo (1500-1558), who is perhaps best known for The Fountain of the Labyrinth in Villa della Petraia and The Fountain of Hercules in Villa Reale di Castello, made in 1560 and 1559 respectively. Both fountains were finished by Tribolo's followers after his death in 1558: The Fountain of the Labyrinth was finished by Giovanni Bologna (1529-1608) and The Fountain of Hercules by Bartolomeo Ammanati (1511-1592).

Tribolo's works are examples of a style which was to dominate the Florentine artists fountains in the years to come: the *candelabrum typos* (fig.2)². The base of the fountain consists of a tall balustrade, which causes a vertical accentuation and is crowned by a figure sculptured in marble or bronze. The balustrade is divided vertically by at least two basins in the shape of small bowls, which are often decorated with marine animals or putti in low relief. The balustrade and the bowl shaped basin are elements which are also found in the fountains made in Rome in the late sixteenth century.

Other fountains made in the candelabrum style by Florentine artists include Giovanni Angelo Montorsoli's "Fountain of Orion" and Giovanni Bologna's "Fountain of Oceanus" (fig. 2). They were finished in 1553 and 1567, respectively, and can be found in the city of Messina and in the Boboli Gardens.

Clearly visible in the bronze figure at the top of the Oceanus Fountain is the *serpentinata*-movement, a composition which was characteristic of Giambologna³ and can be found in most of his sculptures, from the smallest statuettes to the great sculpture in the Boboli Gardens.

¹ Pope-Hennessy, John: Italian High renaissance and Baroque Sculpture, Hong Kong 2000, p.217.

² Avery, Charles: Florentine Renaissance Sculpture, London 1993, p.246.

³ Avery, p.213.

Born in Flanders, Giovanni Bologna was discovered by the rich art collector Bernardo Vecchietti when he was studying Antique and Renaissance art in Rome and Florence in the late 1550s. Vecchietti became Giambologna's patron, and it was he who later introduced the artist to the Medici.



Figure 2: Fountain of Oceanus, Boboli gardens, Florence 1567, by Giovanni Bologna. Photo: www.szabranski.com.

When Cosimo I Medici wanted to build a grand fountain in Piazza della Signoria in Florence (Figure 3), the family's court-artist Bandinelli, though initially commissioned, was too old to participate in the project. Meeting the demands from the artists Benvenuto Cellini and Bartolomeo Ammanati, the Grand Duke arranged an open competition to decide who should receive the commission, after which Bandinelli, realising that he was losing his near monopoly, flew into a rage and partly destroyed the large marble block which was the material for the Neptune sculpture.

The artists participating in the prestigious competition were Ammanati, Cellini, Bandinelli and Giambologna. In the end, Ammanati received the commission and made a fountain consisting of two main elements: a grand statue of Neptune made of white marble and a large polygonal basin decorated with bronze sculptures of marine nymphs and efebi at

the corners⁴. Because of the damage inflicted on the marble block, however, the Neptune figure in the centre is less monumental than what Ammanati's initial designs suggest.



Figure 3: Fountain of Neptune, Piazza della Signoria, Florence by Ammanati. Photo: <http://keptar.demasz.hu>

Like the fountains made by Montorsoli in Messina and Giambologna in Bologna, the one in Piazza della Signoria belonged to the second typos which dominated the Florentine art scene: the Neptune fountain. These fountains featured large statues as their centrepiece, often

⁴ The efebs in this fountain has been interpreted by Cesare D'Onofrio as predecessors of the young boys in the Fontana delle Tartarughe. See chapter 1.a.ii.

placed on a high base in the middle of a wide basin. Both the basin and the base were decorated with comparatively small marine animals and figures.

With the Neptune fountain in Bologna, Giambologna proved his excellence as a monumental artist. The composition of this fountain is much more coherent than the one in Piazza della Signoria, and this Neptune is heavier and more monumental than Ammanati's; it radiates an almost brute energy. When Bologna finished his fountain in 1566, it was regarded the most sophisticated Italian fountain ever made.

Giovanni Bologna had many pupils and apprentices to assist him with his major commissions. Two of his pupils, Pietro Tacca and Antonio Susini, later specialised in small bronze statuettes in the style of their master, and another, Taddeo Landini, was to become one of the artists responsible for the design of the Roman Fontana delle Tartarughe.

1. b. Giacomo della Porta's Roman Bowl-Fountains

In Rome, the fountains were usually designed by architects, not sculptors as in Florence⁵. One of these architects was Giacomo della Porta (1533-1602) who designed 18 fountains, by commission of Pope Gregory XIII Boncampagni (1572-1585)⁶. The reason for this extensive increase in the number of Roman fountains was the reactivation of the Acqua Virgo aqueduct.

One of the old Roman water sources is located in the small village Salone in the Alban Hills, nine miles to the north of the city: an aqueduct leading from Salone to Rome was built in the early first century AD, and eventually restored and reopened by Pope Gregory XIII in the sixteenth century.

As illustrated by the broken lines on the right in Figure 4, water pipes ran from the aqueducts to many of the piazzas in Campo Marzio, thus the water reached the entire area, from Piazza San Sebastinello by the Spanish Steps in the east, to Piazza del Popolo in the north, Campo di Fiori in the west, and Piazza Mattei in the south. The renovation of the aqueduct was done to improve the water supply of the Eternal City, and hence the fountains were made with a practical function in mind, i.e. to serve as water sources for the Roman population.

⁵ "In Rome fountain design was the preserve of architects, not sculptors, and fountains were thought of mainly in architectural terms" in John Pope-Hennessy: *Italian High renaissance and Baroque Sculpture*, Hong Kong 2000, p.386.

⁶ H.V. Morton: *The Waters of Rome*, London 1970, pp.73-74.

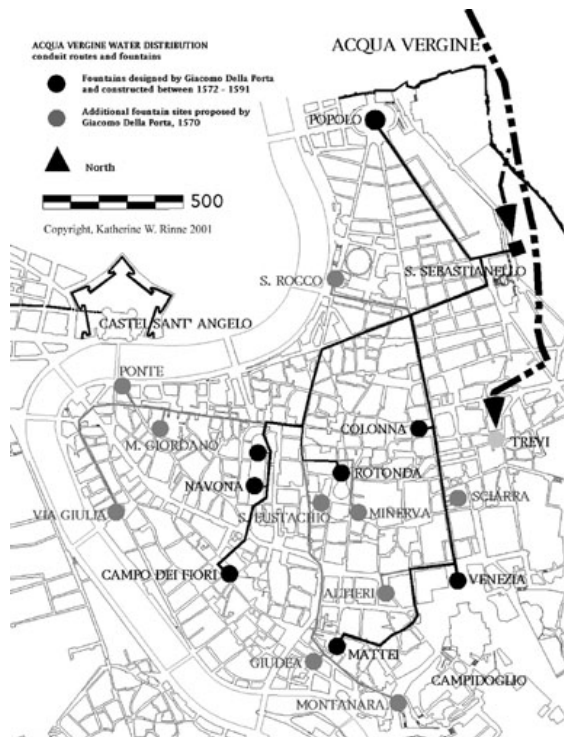


Figure 4: Map of the pipelines of Acqua Virgo. Photo:
http://www.iath.virginia.edu/waters/acqua_vergine.html

The first fountain designed was the one formerly found in Piazza del Popolo, but now located in Piazza Nicosia (Figure 5)⁷. It is the predecessor of della Porta’s other bowl-fountains and features four steps forming a hexagonal base and leading up to the fountain’s main basin. The base is decorated with an elegant rim and in the centre of the basin there is a balustrade decorated with four stylistically made dolphins. On top of the



Figure 5: The fountain in Piazza Nicosia, photo: romasegreta.it

⁷ H.V. Honour: *The Waters of Rome* , London 1970, p.90, and Willy Pochino: *Le fontane di Roma*, Rome 1996, p.248.

balustrade we find the characteristic bowl shaped basin, the trademark of della Porta's eighteen Roman fountains. The upper basin is decorated with four heads of putti spouting water, and just below its rim four dragons appear, taken from the Boncampagni family's coat of arms. The balustrade is continued in the upper basin, and on top of the fountain there is yet another basin: a small one from which the water gushes up into the air. The water then falls down into the upper basin, filling the bowl, before finally dripping into the basin at ground level.

Generally, the bowl-fountains by della Porta consisted of little decoration and few elements, and the fountain in Piazza Nicosia featured most of them: a huge polygonal basin at ground level, a balustrade on which the upper bowl shaped basin is located, and the stylistically made dolphins. These elements can also be found in e.g. Fontana di Piazza delle Cinque Scuole in the Ghetto, Fontana d' Aracoeli by Campidoglio, the original Fontana della Terrina, Fontana della Piazza Madonna dei Monti, Fontana di Piazza Colonna, as well as the turtle fountain, Fontana delle Tartarughe in Piazza Mattei in the Roman Ghetto.

The building of the fountain in Piazza Mattei took place from 1580 to 1585. Unlike the other bowl-fountains, it was built under the patronage of the Mattei family, and not Pope Gregory XIII.

Giacomo della Porta was responsible for the initial design of Fontana delle Tartarughe, but there was also another artist who contributed to the artistic execution of the monument: the young Florentine Taddeo Landini (1550-1596), a former pupil of Giovanni Bologna. Fontana delle Tartarughe was Landini's first Roman commission, and the young artist gained considerable fame after this work.

Due to Landini's sculptures, this fountain is more decorative and elegant than the other bowl-fountains made by della Porta. The elements typical for the bowl-fountains can all be found: the big polygonal basin, the balustrade on which the upper bowl shaped basin is located and the dolphins; however, the four boys moulded in bronze by Landini give the fountain an expression completely different from the other Roman bowl-fountains.

The Fontana delle Tartarughe quickly became so popular that a legend was told about its building: a certain Duke of Mattei lost his fortune in gambling one night. In an attempt to win back the trust of his rich fiancée's father, he ordered the fountain to be built overnight. The next day, he opened the window facing the piazza, and showed the fiancée's father the new fountain. The father was impressed, and the duke could marry his daughter after all. To

remind himself of this event, the duke blocked out the window. This window is still visible in palazzo Giacomo Mattei today, facing the piazza.

”..uno dei duchi (del quale la tradizione ha dimenticato il nome), essendo un giocatore accanito, una notte perse una grande somma al gioco; per questo motivo il futuro suocero gli negò la mano della figlia, ma il duca volle fargli capire che molto poteva un nobile anche se privo di denari. Lo convinse ugualmente a venire a cena a casa sua con la figlia e, durante la cena, fece realizzare la fontana delle Tartarughe nella piazza antistante; quindi invitò i due ad affacciarsi alla finestra, facendoli restare sbalorditi, e disse ai due: “Ecco cosà è capace di farre in poche ore uno squattrinato Mattei!”. Il padre della ragazza si convinse della grandiosità del Mattei e gli concesse di sposare la figlia; ma il duca fece poi murare quella finestra, come oggi si può vedere⁸.”

⁸ Giorgio Carpaneto; *Le famiglie nobili romane*, Rome 2000, p.254.

CHAPTER 2: THE TURTLE FOUNTAIN

This chapter is an introduction of the fountain, the area surrounding the monument, and the commission. I will also attempt to present prior historical research and some possible sources of inspiration for the Fontana delle Tartarughe.

2.a.i Contemporary Reception

Fontana delle Tartarughe was famous and admired in its own time; indeed, the descriptions by the artists' contemporaries appear to have been entirely positive. In 1588 Girolamo Ferrucci compared the fountain in Piazza Mattei to the other fountains in Rome, and declared that the four figures' elegance and excellence made it the most beautiful and perfect one:

*“Questo fra gli altri fonti, che sono in Roma a nostri tempi, e tenuto per il più bello & perfetto, che vi sia, per la vaghezza & eccellenza dell’opera”.*⁹

Taddeo Landini was also mentioned in this text: he was described as a highly competent Florentine sculptor, and Ferrucci considered his fountain to be the most graceful of their time¹⁰.

A few decades later, in 1638, Pompilio Totti referred to Taddeo Landini as an excellent maestro and described the fountain as very elegant in his “Ritratto di Roma moderna”¹¹. Another characterisation was made in 1642, this time by the renowned art historian and artist Giovanni Baglione: he considered the Roman sculpture a beautiful fountain and saw it as a testimony of the patron's virtue:

*„Fontana Mattei...l'altra bellissima de' Signori Matthei a piazza de' Funari sono degni testimonii della sua virtù „*¹²

He also commented on the first clay sketch: even at such an early stage young Landini impressed the famous historian. The fountain was already celebrated for its beauty, and Landini received a great many positive responses. Alessandro Specchi included the fountain in his Roman prints and drawings from 1699. In a print depicting “Palazzo della duca Mattei” the author described it as “The fountain in

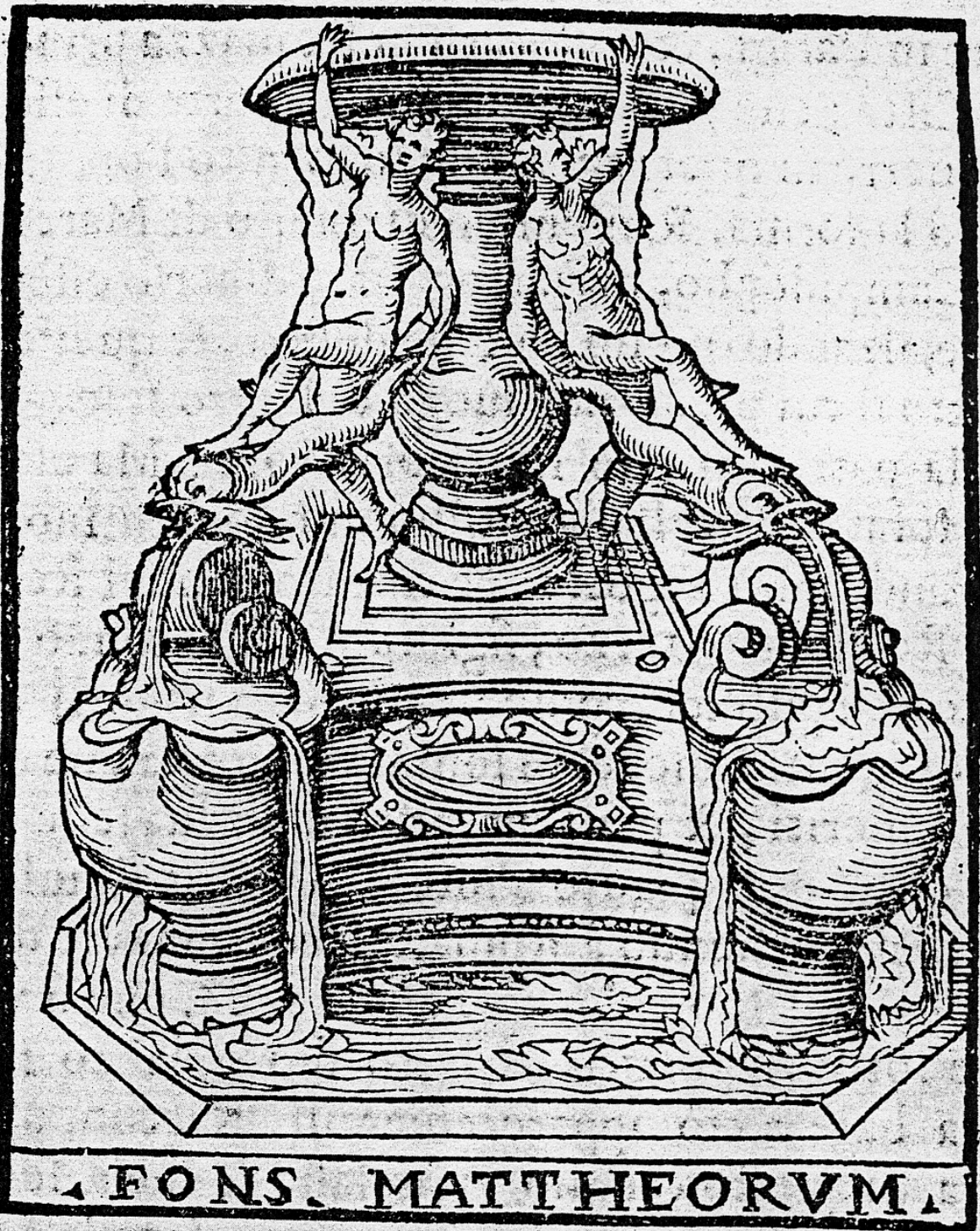
⁹ Girolamo Ferrucci, *L'Antichità di Roma di Andrea Fulvio*, Venice 1588, p.322.

¹⁰ “L'autore di questa bell'opera fu Taddeo Landini Fiorentino buono, & vago artefice di questo tempo, che lavorò l'anno 1585”, p.322 op.cit.

¹¹ “Ritratto di Roma moderna” Roma 1638, p.174.

¹² Giovanni Baglione: *Le vite de pittori, scultore et architetti Giovanni Baglione*, Rome 1642, p.82.

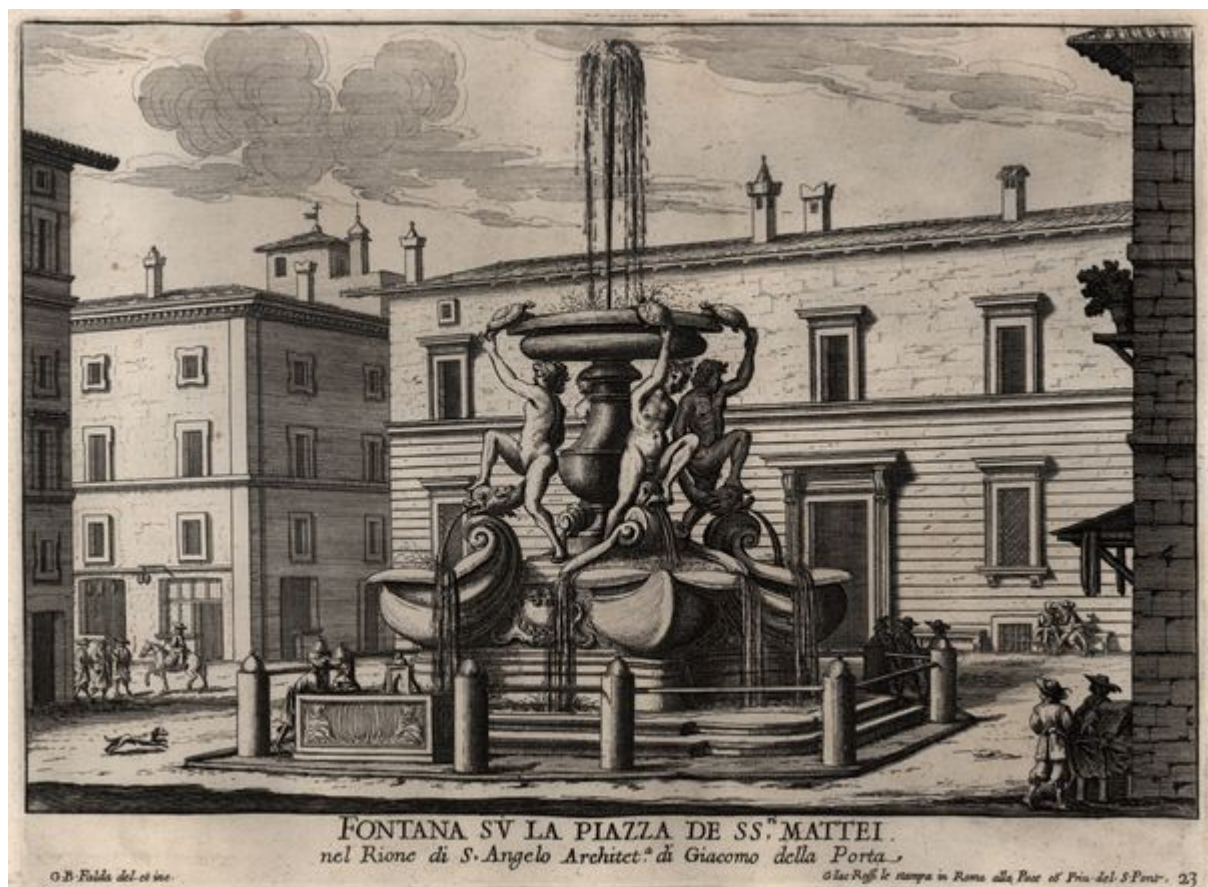
ANTICHITA' DI ROMA



Fonte nella piazza de' Matthei.

Figur 6: Fonte nella piazza de' Matthei, Alessandro Specchi 1699 from Thomas Eser: *Der Schildkrötenbrunnen des taddeo Landini*, Tübingen 1991/1992, p.207.

Piazza Mattei by Michelangelo Buonarroti”¹³. The modern art historian Philip Fehl mentions that the fountain was also misattributed to Raphael in its contemporaneity¹⁴. These fallacious attributes might be interpreted as a compliment to the artists responsible for the design: Giacomo della Porta and Taddeo Landini. It can be taken as an indication of the fountain’s fame in its own time.



Figur 7:“Fontana su la Piazza de SS. Mattei”, Giovanni Battista Falda, from Philipp Fehl: *Schönheit, Schicklichkeit und Ikonographie: Bemerkungen zur Fontana delle Tartarughe in Rom*, Munich 1984, p.131.

The fountain can also be found in Giovanni Battista Falda’s series of prints from 1678 (figure 7), and the inclusion in this selection is yet another confirmation of its popularity

¹³ “...Fontana nella Piazza Mattei di Michelangelo Buonarroti...” in G.B. Falda - A. Specchi; *Palazzi di Roma nel’600*, Ristampa Renata Piccinini, Roma 1998, p.43.

¹⁴ „Obwohl man wusste, dass die Skulpturen das Werk des leider viel zu früh verstorbenen Künstlers Taddeo Landini waren, deutete man doch des öfteren auf Raphael als den eigentlichen Schöpfer des Brunnens; Landini habe nur begabt ausgeführt, was Raphael vor ihm entworfen hatte“. Philipp Fehl, in *Schönheit, Schicklichkeit und Ikonographie: Bemerkungen zur Fontana delle Tartarughe in Rom*, Munich 1984, p.126.

in the seventeenth century¹⁵. Landini's reputation as an artist appears to have grown considerably due to the figures found at Piazza Mattei.

2.a.ii. Research History

The range of modern monographies is limited to two dissertations and a few art history articles. The most important contemporary contributors on the subject are Cesare D'Onofrio, Pio Pecchiai, Gerda Panofsky-Söergel, Henry Morton, Carla Benocci, Filipp Fehl and Thomas Eser.

Pio Pecchiai, Henry Morton and Cesare D'Onofrio have all written books about the fountains of Rome¹⁶. Pecchiai was, in his "Le fontane di Roma", the first to gather the information on the topic, and many later writers have used his book as their source. He was also the first art historian to state the hypothesis that the young boys were efebi – i.e. sons of Neptune. In "The waters of Rome" Morton presents amongst others the Turtle fountain. Morton is one of the few art historians writing in English who are concerned with the Roman fountains. D'Onofrio's book "Fontane di Roma" is more up-to-date, however, and also more interesting because of the author's knowledge about the local history of the Roman Ghetto.

Gerda Panofsky-Söergel's article "Zur Geschichte des Palazzo Mattei" – based on her Ph.D. – is primarily an account of the patron's family palace Mattei di Giove¹⁷. However, her thorough presentation covers more than just the palace: she also says much about the other Mattheian holdings, their family history and Post-Reformation Rome in general. In addition, she examines contemporary maps and drawings made of the fountain and the Ghetto area.

Carla Benocci's article "Taddeo Landini e la fontana delle tartarughe in Piazza Mattei a Roma" from 1984 is based upon her dissertation on Taddeo Landini and the Turtle Fountain¹⁸. She surveys most of the information regarding the monument, and, in addition, calls attention to the similarities between the young boys in the fountain and various works of art by contemporaries of della Porta and Landini, e.g. "San Giovanni

¹⁵ Giovanni Battista Falda: "Le Fontane di Roma da Gio Battista Falda", Rome 1678.

¹⁶ Pio Pecchiai; "Le fontane di Roma" Roma 1944, Cesare d'Onofrio; "Fontane di Roma" Roma 1957, H.V. Morton; "The waters of Rome" London, 1970.

¹⁷Gerda Panofsky-Söergel: „Zur Geschichte des Palazzo Mattei" in „Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte" No. 11: Wien 1968, pp. 111-188.

¹⁸Carla Benocci: "Taddeo Landini e la fontana delle tartarughe in Piazza Mattei a Roma" in "Storia dell'Arte" September-December issue, Florence 1984, pp.187-203.

Battista” by Donatello, “Mercurio Volante” by Cellini and Giambologna’s “The Triumph of Neptune” in the Boboli Gardens.

In “Schönheit, Schicklichkeit und Ikonographie; Bemerkungen zur Fontana delle Tartarughe in Rom” Philipp Fehl makes a short, but thorough, presentation of the existing material on the subject¹⁹. However, some of his information is based on the work of older art historians such as Walter Friedländer and Alois Riegl, and his theories are somewhat outdated. According to Fehl, the iconography, i.e. the juxtaposition of the slow turtles and the swift dolphins, is connected to the neoplatonic saying “Festina Lente” (“make haste slowly”). He also suggests that the boys represent the four winds: east, west, north and south, but this theory does not seem to agree with how they are positioned. The boys do not face the cardinal directions: they are placed in the directions north-east, south-west etc.

Another art historian who sees the “Festina Lente” as the main iconographic theme is Thomas Eser, who has found many early prints and drawings picturing the fountain, and presents a wide range of possible sources of inspiration for both the main design by Giacomo della Porta and the bronze figures made by Taddeo Landini²⁰. He has also written a short biography of Landini, which documents his earlier and later works and places him within an art historical context.

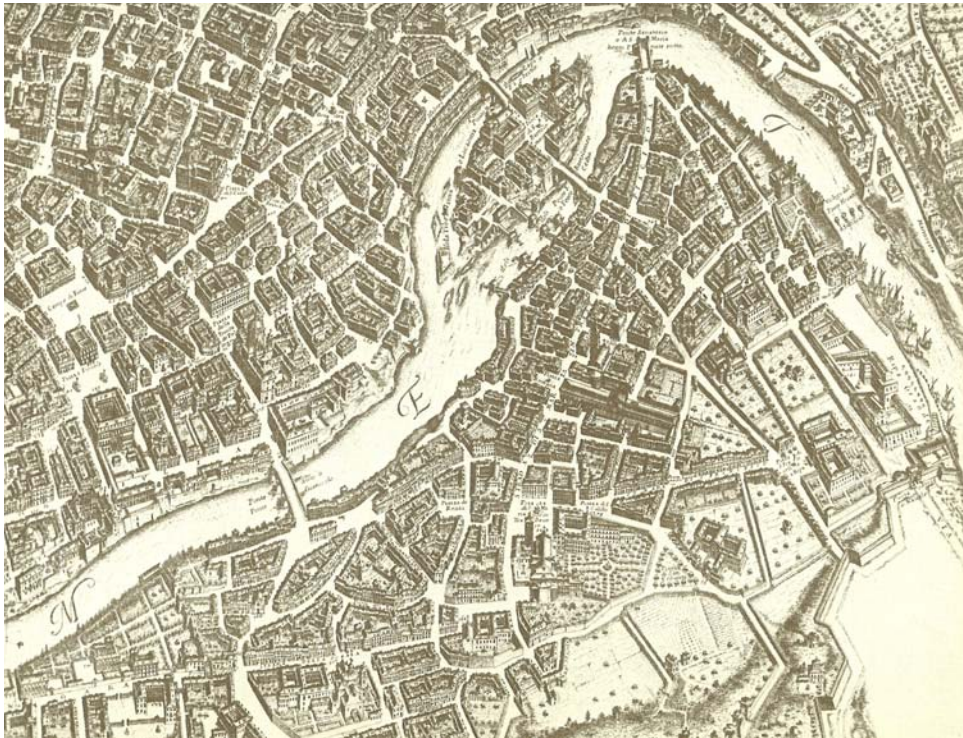
In this section I have presented a selection of the bibliography written on the Turtle Fountain. The early literature consisted mainly of descriptions of the fountain and acclamations of the two artists, whereas modern writers seem to agree that except for rather general themes, such as “Festina Lente”, the efebi and the four winds, the fountain does not have an obvious iconographic theme or programme.

2.a.iii Description

The Jewish quarter in Rome has an atmosphere which distinguishes the area from the rest of the city (figure 8). It is slightly run-down, but still charming. Where the narrow streets of Via dei Funari and Via Paganica meet we find Piazza Mattei, surrounded by relatively

¹⁹ From “Martin Gosebruch zu Ehren; Festschrift anlässlich seines 65. Geburtstages am 20. Juni 1984“ p.126-137. By F. N. Steigerwald, Hirmer Verlag München, 1984.

²⁰ Thomas Eser: “Der “Schilkrötenbrunnen” des Taddeo Landini” Tübingen, 1989.



Figur 8: The Roman Ghetto, Tiber-Island and Trastevere. Map by Giovanni Battista Falda 1730, from G. Arragozzini: *Le piante di Roma dal Cinquecento all Ottocento*, p.121.

tall buildings in warm Roman ochre colours which underline the confined feeling. It is in contrast to this shabby area that the “fountain of joy”, La Fontana delle Tartarughe, appears before our eyes.

The fountain is surrounded by eight small marble pillars (figure 9), each about two feet tall and connected by a iron fence. It separate the monument from the rest of the piazza and form a fence against the traffic. Behind the pillars and the fence we find the basin, framed by a marble rim in a peculiar shape: four semicircles linked by four rounded angles. Together they form the classical decorative theme known as the polygonal quadrifoglie.



Figur 9: Fontana delle Tartarughe,

Photo: http://www.uga.edu/rome/images/Fontana_delle_Tartarughe.JPG

The fountain consists of two main elements: the architectural form, which is carved out of marble, and the figures sculpted in bronze. The architectural form rises in the centre of the basin, as if growing out of the earth itself, and is the fountain's base and anchor. It is made of dark marble – marmo africano, and when the stone is wet the colour changes from dark grey to almost black. The architectural form is composed of an octagonal semi-square base on which four major conches rest. Over the base, we see a balustrade with voluptuous forms and on top of that another basin made in a chalice-like shape, from which water gushes into the air. On the octagonal base, four cartouches alternate with the four conches, bearing the inscription:

“ALEXANDER VII – RESTAURAVIT – ORNATIQUE – ANNO PONTIF IV”²¹.

The upper part of each conch end in a small volute-like shape, and a small dolphin is placed on each of these. The four dolphins are moulded in bronze and made in a stylistic manner, and each animal rests its lower jaw on the top of the volute, squirting water through its beak-like mouth into the conch below. Its tail bustle about in the air, but is held by an adolescent boy. There are four such slender youths depicted in the fountain: one

²¹ The Latin inscription means: Alexander VII, in his fourth year of his pontificate, restored and improved (this monument).

behind each of the stylistically formed dolphins. They all rest a foot on the dolphin's head, as if to keep it still, while their other foot is placed on the base, as if to secure their foothold. The boys stand in a contraposto pose – all their limbs are bent, and they appear to be playing and almost on the verge of leaping towards the viewer. They stretch one arm towards the sky, as if reaching for something in the air above, while the other is lowered, grabbing the tail of the dolphin. Furthermore, they are naked, and have no attributes. The four adolescents are thin and elegant, not muscular and strong, even so, they radiate potential strength and a strong positive energy.

From a distance, their heads look identical, but on closer inspection they reveal individual expressions and hairstyles. The first smiles brightly, the second is melancholic, the third looks down, and the fourth seems cheerful, though not as happy as the first boy. They all have the same pose, but alternate in the way the contraposto is turned: one raises his right hand and left knee, while the next raises his left hand and right knee etc. In this way, the four boys form a zigzag composition around the fountain: a composition which creates dynamics and leads the viewer's eye around the monument (Figure 10).



Figur 10 La Fontana delle Tartarughe, detail.

Photo:<http://www.activitaly.it/monument/imago/48p.jpg>



Figur 11: Fontana delle Tartarughe, detail.

photo:romasegreta.it

Between the boys - on the upper basin's outer wall - four heads of putti appear. All the putti have puffed cheeks and appear to be blowing air, and each one wears a headband. The putti facing north and west both wear a kind of head cloth, and the two facing south and east have wreaths of flowers on their heads²².

Above the boys' hands, four turtles are trying to crawl over the rim of the upper basin (Figure 5 and 6). Like the youths and the dolphins, the turtles are moulded in bronze, but unlike the stylistically fashioned dolphins these reptiles are made in a quite realistic manner. Playfully, but cautiously, the four boys try to push the turtles into the upper basin. The turtles scramble, and their hind legs wave in the air as if to regain foothold so they can get back over the rim.

2.a.iv Style

The monument's interesting dynamics is created by the juxtaposition of the architectural forms by Giacomo della Porta and the sculptures by Taddeo Landini. The heaviness of the architectural elements carved in marble contrast with the light bronze sculptures, while the latter ease the grandeur of della Porta's classical and ponderous entablature. Giacomo della Porta's conches are rounded, massive and situated close to the ground, and create a sense of heaviness. With the chalice at the top and the balustrade in the centre, and the conches on the bottom, the elements form a heavy entablature, which appear to rise out of the ground. This heaviness may be a result of the material they are made of: the dark marble, or *marmo africano*, which gives the monument a heavy yet soft tactile sensation.

Another feature typical of La Fontana delle Tartarughe is the sense of rhythm and movement: the juxtaposed elements create a dynamic expression. This is visible in the open silhouette of the young boys' pose, for instance, whereas the underlying architectural creates a stabile and massive centre to the monument. Landini added vitality and energy, possibly to make the fountain's appearance less monumental. The thin, slender figures are smaller than what would be expected in the context of this kind of architectural form. Compared to the heavy stone the bronze sculptures seem light and appear to defy the force of gravity, but they are anchored to the ground by the marble elements. The figures are the

²² Thomas Eser has interpreted these headbands as symbols of the warm and cold winds, the former the heads with flowers and the latter with headcloths. In Thoams Eser: *Der Schildkrötenbrunnen des Taddeo Landini*, Tübingen 1992, p.251.

first thing to catch the viewers' attention when they discover the fountain in the Ghetto, yet Landini's elements do not subdue della Porta's contribution. In fact, they accentuate each other's stylistic expressions.

The difference in style is immediately noticeable, not only in the contrast between the two artists, but also thematically in "speed versus slowness" or "Festina Lente", embodied by the boys and the turtles, respectively. The boys are filled with energy and radiate vitality and youth, especially in contrast to the turtles, a widespread symbol of slowness.

Another example of contrast is the slenderness of the boys versus the volume of the architectural elements. The materials used can be interpreted as an example of a Mannerist juxtaposition: the combination of the matt and heavy marble versus the shiny and light bronze. Such juxtapositions were frequently used in the Mannerism period.

The artists use two distinct artistic styles. Della Porta's monumental and architectural marble forms are rooted in the classical Roman heritage, while Landini's decorative style might be influenced by the rich Florentine tradition of sculptors, goldsmiths and bronze moulders. These two regional traditions merge into a unity of architectural and sculptural forms.

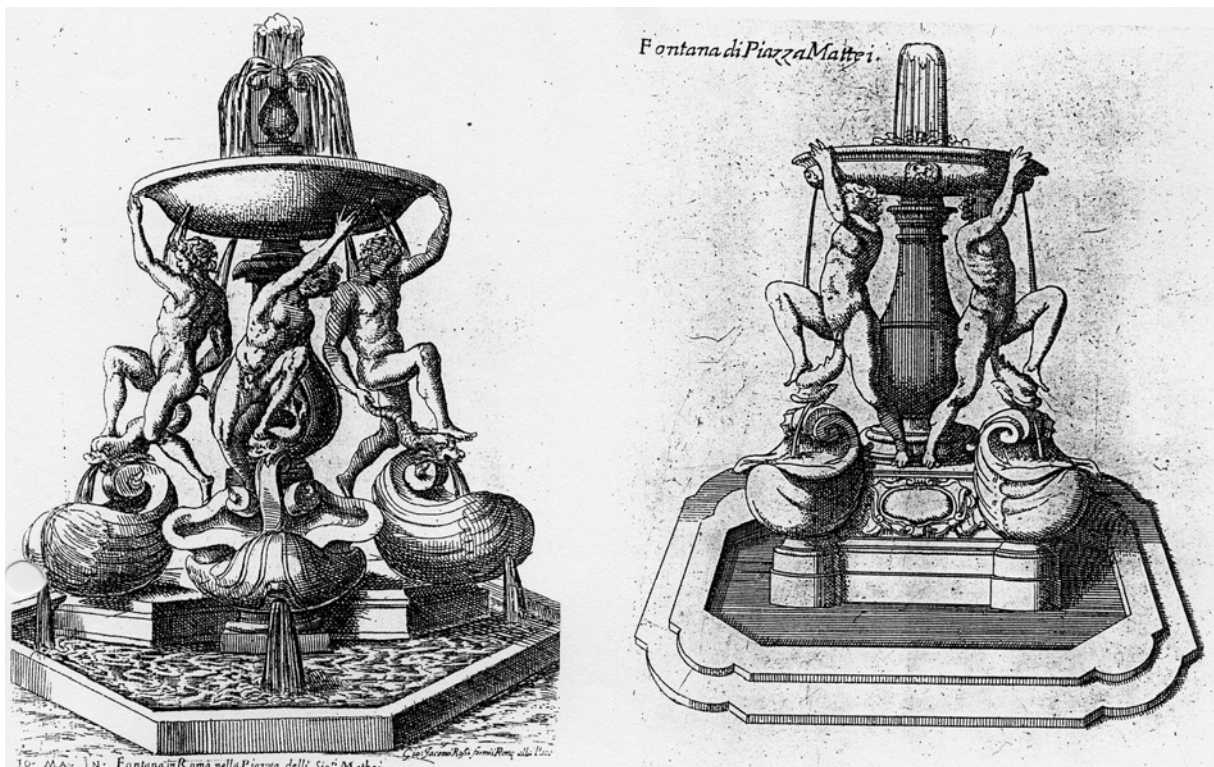
In this section, I have attempted to place La Fontana delle Tartarughe in a stylistic period. Two different styles were used in the monument: the High Renaissance tradition represented by della Porta's architectural forms, and the Manneristic approach expressed by Landini. Still, taken as a whole, the monument belongs to the art historical period of Mannerism, which is easily recognisable by the extensive use of juxtapositions.

2.a.v Later Elements

The fountain that can be seen today is not identical to the one finished in 1575: La Fontana delle Tartarughe has been subject to numerous restorations and modifications: in the 17th and 19th century, in 1903, in 1932, in 1976-79 and finally in 2001²³. A significant alteration took place in 1853-54, when the efebi were dressed up with fig leaves; however, changes which took place after this major alteration were of a more of a preserving kind.

²³ In the restorations from the 20th century and in 2001 were conserving restorations: H.V. Morton : the Waters of Rome, London 1970, p.105, Willy Pochino: Le Fontane di Roma, Rome 1996, p.209.

In comparison, the first, and most significant, restoration was a transformation of the fountain: in the 1660s the crawling turtles were placed on the rim of upper basin, and they were to become so popular that the Romans named both the fountain and the piazza after them. The exact date of the restoration is unknown, but depictions and documents indicate



Figur 12: The fountain in Piazza Mattei by Maggi: “Fontane diverse”, 1618 and The Fontana delle Tartarughe by D. Parasacchi: “Raccolta delle principale Fontane dell’inclita citta di Roma” from 1637/1647 in Thoma Eser : *Der Schildkrötenbrunnen des Taddeo Landini*, Tübingen 1992, p.209.

a year sometime between 1647 and 1662. The last depiction of the fountain without the turtles was made in 1647; it is a print found in “Raccolta”, a collection by Parasacchi (Figure 12)²⁴. The creatures were described for the first time in 1662 in a design by

²⁴ Parasacchi: *Raccolta* Rome 1647, in Thomas Eser: *Der Schildkrötenbrunnen des Taddeo Landini*, Tübingen 1992, p.209.

Giovanni Battista Falda²⁵, and most historians assume 1660 to be the year of the alteration (Figure 7).

The restoration was not limited to the addition of the turtles: the four heads of the putti appeared at the same time. They were placed on the outer surface of the top chalice, where they spout water into the basin below. The cartouches were decorated in the same operation, when a Latin inscription was carved into the dark marble:

“ALEXANDER VII – RESTAURAVIT – ORNATIQUE – ANNO PONTIF IV”.

The fact that the fountain’s initial design does not include the four turtles makes the issue of iconography even more important. Originally, i.e. before the turtles and the putti were added, the four boys were depicted without attributes, which is remarkably rare in Renaissance art.

2.a.vi. Possible Sources of Inspiration

As regards likely sources of inspiration for the fountain’s design (the different elements, especially the boys, and their composition), modern art historians have suggested several different artists²⁶.

Morton underlines the resemblance between La Fontana delle Tartarughe and the Fountain of Neptune in Piazza della Signoria (Figure 3, chapter 1.a), i.e. a complex Florentine fountain contemporary to the Turtle Fountain²⁷. The construction of the latter was initiated eleven years before that of La Fontana delle Tartarughe, and finished by Ammanati in 1575.

There are many parallel features in the two fountains. The bronze figures in particular are of a similar character, as is their combination with the marble architectural form. Other elements recognisable from Piazza Mattei include the quadrofolio shaped basin and the bronze efebi, or sons of Neptune, located to the “corners” of the basin. The eight efebi in Piazza Signoria are placed back to back, in a manner similar to the pairing of the four male figures in Piazza Mattei, and the bronze Landini figures bear a great resemblance to the bronze efebi placed at the corners of the lower basin in the Florentine piazza. The pose is strikingly similar, but the efebi have attributes which the Mattei boys lack. Nude young

²⁵ G.B. Falda : *Fontane di Roma* 1675, see Thomas Eser p.205.

²⁶ Only a selection of the most frequently mentioned artists will be mentioned in this presentation. For further reading see Morton, Fehl, D’Onofrio, Benocci and Eser.

²⁷ Morton p.100 and 105.

men with goat legs and tail, like the Signorian efebi, are easily identified as efebi. However, the young boys in Piazza Mattei do not have these, or any other, attributes, whether or not they are efebi.

According to Morton and D’Onofrio, another important source of inspiration was Michelangelo Buonarroti’s “Ignudi” in the Vatican, i.e. the male figures depicted sitting and reclining on the “frames” of his biblical scenes in ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Michelangelo was the most acclaimed artist in Late Renaissance, and it seems highly plausible that Landini was influenced by him. On the other hand, the Piazza Mattei figures are much more elegant and graceful than the Ignudi. The latter are powerful, robust and muscular, while the former are slim, young and joyful. Nevertheless, Landini’s style is most certainly inspired by that of Michelangelo, which the Ignudi are a prime example of.

In addition to Morton and D’Onofrio there is a small number of other art historians who discuss the different sources of inspiration for La Fontana delle Tartarughe, namely Thomas Eser, Carla Benocci, Charles Avery, Willy Pochino and Philipp Fehl e.a.

When young, Landini was a pupil of Giovanni Bologna, and the suggestion that he was influenced by his teacher seems a plausible hypothesis. Eser and D’Onofrio list two fountains by Giambologna, namely The Neptune Fountain in Bologna (1560) and The Fountain of the Ocean (1575) in the Boboli Gardens in Florence (Figure 2 in Chapter 1.a) as possible sources of inspiration. Both the composition and the use of materials, marble and bronze, are similar in the two fountains.

Another, less known, bronze fountain attributed to Giambologna is the Genio Mediceo (figure 13)²⁸, which depicts an adolescent boy sitting on top of a volute. It is assumed to have been one of the small fountains surrounding The Appenine in Francesco de Medici’s Villa Pratolino in Florence, but today this bronze is a part of the permanent exhibition in Palazzo Pitti’s Galleria Palatina²⁹. When seen in profile, the youth is strikingly similar to

²⁸P.325 in “Palazzo Vecchio: committenza e collezionismo medicei”, Firenze 1980, and p.173 in “Rinascimento” Roma 2001.

²⁹ Si sale lo Scalone che porta al primo piano; al terzo ripiano, Genio mediceo, bronzo per fontana del Gianbologna. Qui ha sede la Galleria Palatina. in “Palazzo Vecchio: committenza e collezionismo medicei”, Firenze 1980 p.325, and in “Rinascimento” Roma 2001 p.173.

the Mattei boys. The pose, the raised arm, the way he leans backwards, the elegance of the limbs and the joyful facial expression are all features shared by the two figures: the genio and the efeb. Furthermore, there are similarities in the composition of the different elements surrounding the boys: the genio sits astride an architectural form in the shape of volute, and much like the Mattheian bronzes he rests one foot on the back of a mythological animal. Both are depicted as young, beautiful boys, and both lack attributes, except for the one animal beneath their feet. The Genio Mediceo was a tribute to the patron, Duke Cosimo I de' Medici³⁰, and it is accompanied by a Capricorn, which was the star sign for his day of birth.

All things considered, there are many points of resemblance between the two figures, not to mention the fact that both figures are elements of a fountain and that they are made in the same material, i.e. bronze. The figures are also executed in a more or less similar style, having the same slenderness and grace as well as the mythological animal beneath their feet. All these factors can be interpreted as indications of the strong influence Giambologna had on his pupil. The conspicuous difference between the clear iconography in the Genio Mediceo and the lack of such imagery in the Mattei fountain makes one wonder if there are things yet to be discovered in Piazza Mattei.

³⁰ P.325 in "Palazzo Vecchio: committenza e collezionismo mediceo", Firenze 1980.



Figure 13: “Genio Mediceo”, Galleria Palatina, Florence ca. 1575 by Giovanni Bologna.

Photo: Di Lallo: *Rinascimento – capolavori dei musei Italiani*; Tokyo-Roma 2001, Rome 2001, p.173.

2.b. The Commission

The “Congregazione sopra le strade e le fontane” was a committee lead by the papal architect Giacomo della Porta, who had founded this body on the commission of the pope so as to reach a decision about the direction of Rome’s pipeline project (Figure 14). Their assignment was to increase the water capacity in the city, and Della Porta was responsible for the majority of the resultant 18 fountains, and during the project he reinvented the so-called bowl-fountain³¹.

Some of the more famous of the fountains constructed during the project are the two small Triton Fountains in Piazza Navona and the Terrina Fountain in Piazza della Chiesa Nuova. The project of building the Roman bowl-fountains was initiated a few years prior to the initiation of La Fontana delle Tartarughe.

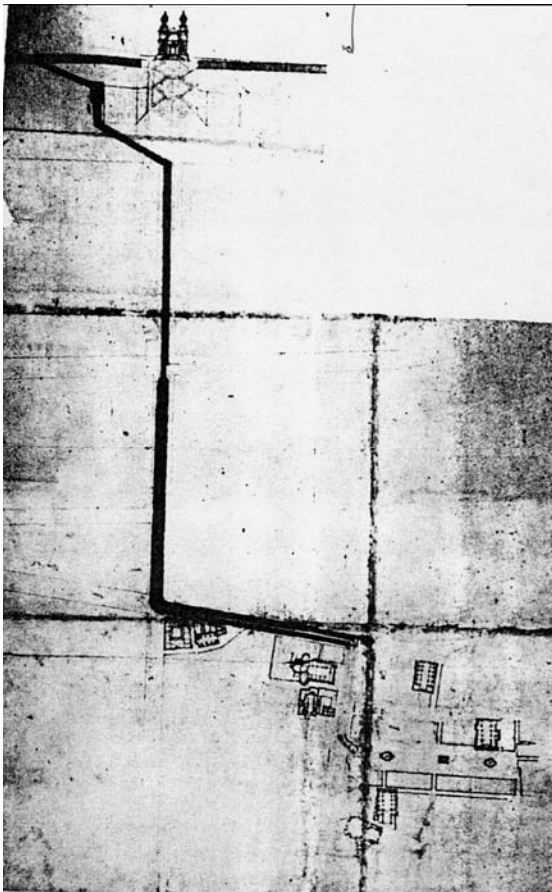


Figure 7 Plan for pipeline Acqua Vergine: original design by Giacomo della Porta. Eser p.224.

³¹ The bowl-fountain has a shape with its origin in the classical fountain. H.W. Morton declares that della Porta was the inventor of the Roman bowl-fountain. But, according to a Seicento map of ancient Rome by Etienne Du Pèrac from 1575 (pp.38-49 in "Le piante di Roma – dal cinquecento all'ottocento" a cura di Giovanna Aragozzini e Marco Nocca, Dino Audino Editore, Roma, 1999), the city had many such bowl-shaped fountains before 1570. In addition to this contemporary source, we have other examples of this kind of fountain shape; in Pompeii and in several depictions in antique Roman frescoes (e.g. in *The golden house of Nero*).

The committee consisted of architects, congressmen and cardinals, and one of the members was Congressman Muzio Mattei, the owner of Palazzo Mattei. At first the pipeline was meant to cover the area from Piazza di Spagna to Piazza della Rotonda, but after pressure from committee member Muzio Mattei it was decided that the Ghetto was to have a new fountain as well³².

Giacomo della Porta was responsible for the fountain's design, but the Mattei, the commissioner, wanted a more decorative expression in addition to this artist's architectural elements. Therefore, the congressman hired the young, and virtually unknown, artist Taddeo Landini to make four figures for the fountain, after which the building began. Five years later, in 1585, the fountain was complete.

The Landini figures were originally meant to be carved in marble, like the architectural elements made by della Porta. However, the contract was altered and Muzio Mattei commissioned four young boys moulded in bronze instead, a material far more expensive than marble³³.

Originally, the fountain's was supposed to provide the Ghetto population with water, but in the end the fountain in Piazza Mattei went from being a public water source to being a semi-public fountain with a purely decorative function³⁴.

Until 1659 the fountain was named after the owners of the nearby Isola, hence it was called La Fontana delli Mattei or La Fons Mattheiorum, i.e. "the fountain belonging to the Mattei" and the "Mattheian fountain" respectively³⁵; as mentioned above, the characteristic turtles were not added until that time. According to "The congregation for streets and fountains of Rome", the family was under an obligation to keep the piazza and the fountain in order at their own expense:

*"...a fare mattonare detta Piazza a sue spese et tener netta la fonte."*³⁶

In the nineteenth century a sarcophagus was added to the piazza, in order to give the Ghetto population a source of water. Such ancient "sarcophagus fountain" are found in many places in Rome, and the one in Piazza Mattei is documented in a print by Amici

³² Eser, Fehl.

³³ Thomas Eser, p.224-225

³⁴ Cesare D'Onofrio "Le fontane di Roma" 1977 p.191.

³⁵ Archivio Storico Capitolino: cr.IV, volume 103.pp.12-13/ Eser p.273, and Cesare D'Onofrio p.131.

³⁶ From Archivio Storico Capitolino, cr.IV, volume 103, p.10/ Eser p.271.

from 1837. This addition accentuates the Ghetto population's need for a water source, a need which the banker family disregarded when they commissioned a fountain with a purely decorative function. La Fontana delle Tartarughe became a symbol of power to the Mattei family.

2.b.i A Location Based on Local History?

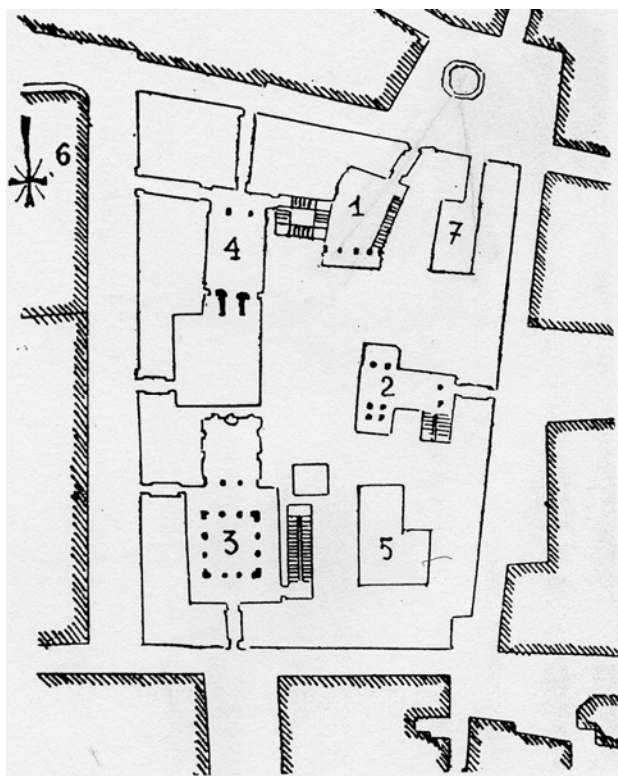
At the time of the initiation of La Fontana delle Tartarughe, the Ghetto had recently undergone drastic changes. Pope Paul IV enclosed the Jewish area in 1555, and built a tall wooden wall around it to suppress the Roman Jewish population³⁷. With a pen stroke the pope changed the quarter from being an ancient sacred area into becoming a place guarded by soldiers and almost constantly locked. The Mattei, however, seem to have profited on this transformation, since they were a well reputed and renowned Roman family, and since their block, Isola Mattei, was located on the border of the Ghetto, they were entrusted with the keys to the newly segregated area's main gate (Figure 15)³⁸. Because of this, they were responsible for the Ghetto's water supply as early as in 1555, and this might be one of the reasons why they were allowed to have a private fountain built as part of the work of a public commission.

Isola Mattei, the block belonging to the Mattei, consisted of six palaces seen in Figure 15: Palazzo Giacomo Mattei (1 and 7), Palazzo Mattei Paganica (2 and 5), Palazzo Mattei di Giove (4) and Palazzo Alessandro Mattei (5). All these palaces were built on historical ground, an important location in ancient Rome. According to Pirro Ligorio, the Circus Flaminius was located in this area, and he describes how Ludovico Mattei had parts of it demolished to make space for the new Palazzo Mattei di Giove:

“Only a few years ago (about 1550) I was able to design the curved end, and measure its plan: but in laying the foundations of his house messer Ludovico has uprooted its remains, made of great blocks of travertine; I have seen the floor of the arena, made of concrete (opus signinum) very hard and thick, covered here and there

³⁷ Martin Gosebruch zu Ehren p.137

³⁸ See Söergel Panofsky pp.111-115.



Figur 14: Isola Mattei, from Carlo Pietrangeli, Guide Rionali di Roma: Rione Sant Angelo, Rome 1984, p.71. No. 1 and 7: Palazzo Giacomo Mattei, no.2 and 5: Palazzo Mattei-Paganica, no.4: Palazzo Mattei di Giove, no.3: Palazzo Alessandro Mattei.

with patches of mosaic: and also the channel which separates the seats from the arena.”³⁹.

Even today ruins of this circus are visible inside the Mattei Paganica.

The exact location of the Turtle Fountain is undoubtedly caused by many different factors, such as the location of the mattheian palaces, the pipeline and the wish of the committee, and it may also be partially due to local history. The area was documented by many historians and archaeologists contemporary to Asdrubale Mattei, for instance the

³⁹ Taken from “ Le antichità di Roma” Di m. Bartholomeo Marliani Cavalier di San Pietro. Libro quinto, 1536, cited in Rodolfo Lanciani: “Storia degli scavi di Roma - e notizie intorno le collezioni Romane di Antichità”. Volume secondo. (A.1531-1549) Arnaldo Forni Editore 1975., p.65.

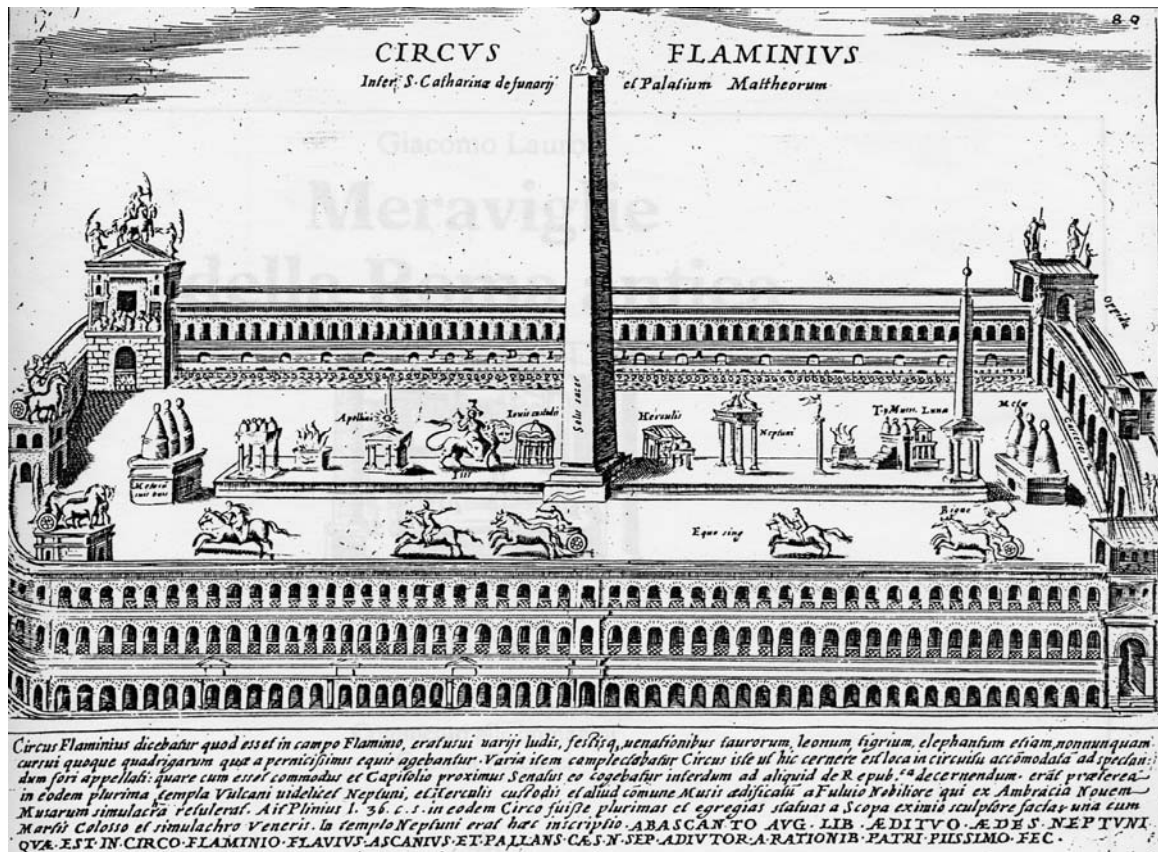


Figure 15: Giovanni Bartolomeo Marliani: Circo Flaminio in “Urbis Romae Topographia”, 1560.

famous Giovanni Bartholomeo Marliani. In “Urbis Romae Topographia” from 1560 he describes a monument by Scopas made by the Circus Flaminius, i.e. a shrine dedicated to Neptune which was uncovered during recent excavations of the Crypta Balbi-area (Figure 16)⁴⁰. This Neptune temple was decorated with four nymphs, each placed on a different kind of sea animals, e.g. a dolphin, and hence rather similar to another monument with four slender figures placed on top of a dolphin: La Fontana delle Tartarughe:

“...con le Statue delle Ninfe Marine, quale posta sopra un Delfino, qual’ altra sopra una Balena, ed alter sopra alter effigie di pesci, scolpite tutte di mano del celebre Scopas...”⁴¹

⁴⁰ “The temple has been identified as the Temple of the Nymphs, known to have been located in the Campus martius. This identification is based on the location of the Villa Publica, which must have been nearby, and on the identification as the porticus Minuncia frumentaria of the quadriporticus in which the temple was set.” Museo Nazionale Romano: Crypta Balbi” p.17:

⁴¹ Taken from Vasi’s quotation in “Delle magnificenze de Roma Antica e Moderna. Libro Quarto.” in Rodolfo Lanciani: “Storia degli scavi di Roma - e notizie intorno le collezioni Romane di Antichità”. Volume secondo. (A.1531-1549) Arnaldo Forni Editore 1975.

Giacomo della Porta, leader of the Congregazione, was at the time not only the papal architect, but also an important figure in the archaeological milieu of Rome. It is most likely that he was familiar with this famous description, which had been published only ten years prior to the initiation of the Turtle Fountain.

Based on marble slabs from the third century, the Roman archaeologist and historian Rodolfo Lanciani made his famous map “Forma urbis Romae” in 1901. All the antique monuments and buildings described by the Severan historians were recorded in inscriptions on the slabs and later mapped by Lanciani.

He mentions the Circo Flaminio and its location in relation to the Isola Mattei, and locates an ancient water source to the site: a spring located to the very corner of the Isola Mattei, in the crossing between Via dei Funari and Via Paganica. This spring’s location was close to where La Fontana delle Tartarughe is found today, as seen marked “Fons” on the down left corner of the circus in figure 17.

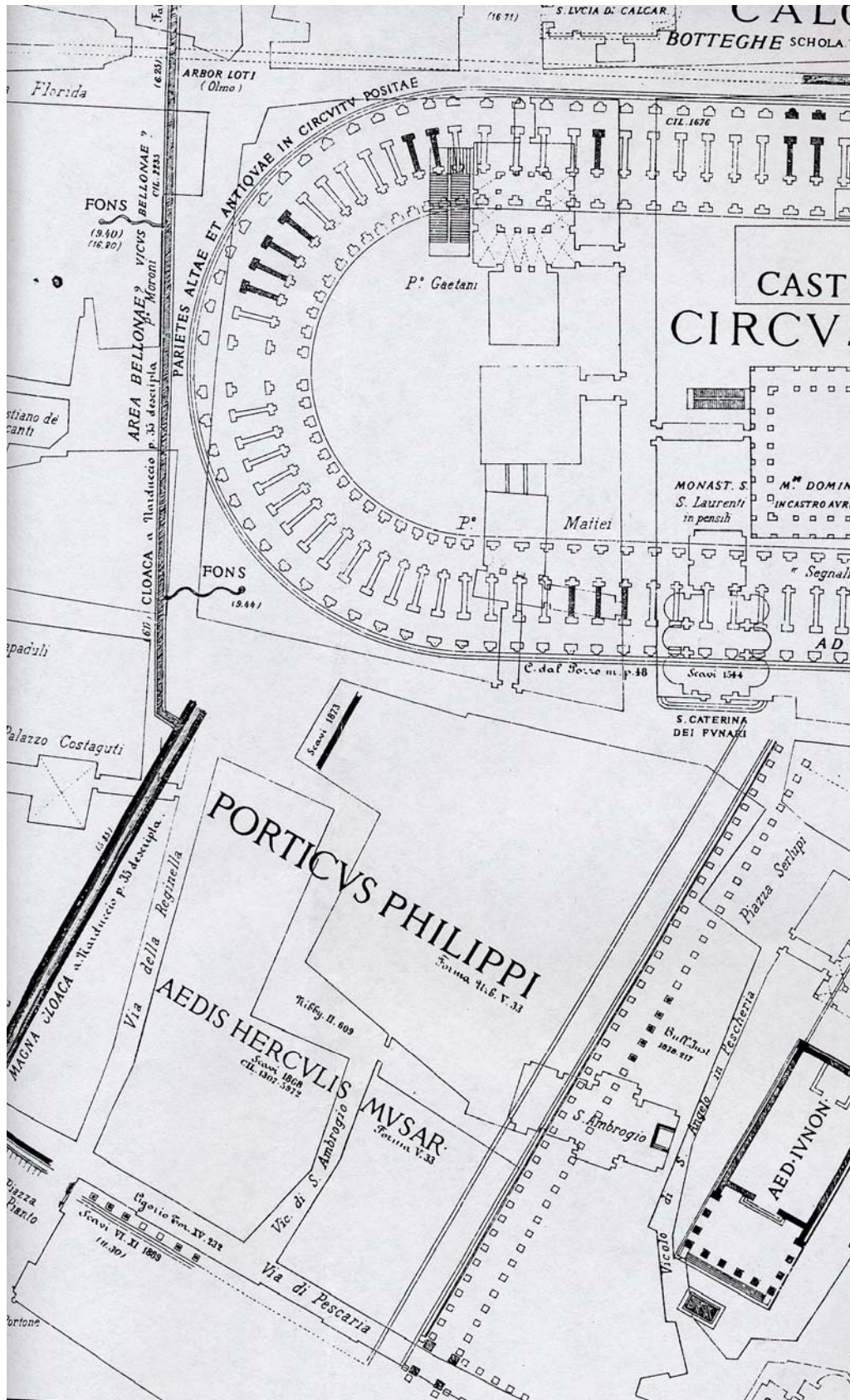


Figure 16: Circo Flaminio from "Forma Urbis Romae": Rodolpho Lanciani: 1901.

Ancient Romans used to worship their springs, personified as nymphs, river gods and efebi⁴², and this ancient spring might be the most probable location for Scopa's four "ninfe marine" in Circo Massimo, since water nymphs generally are associated with the sea, a waterfall or a spring. The location of the aforementioned Neptune shrine might therefore have its origin in the same spring documented in "Severan Forma Urbis Romae".

Recent excavation in the area has also revealed a piscine, i.e. a small basin used to fetch water, from the Middle Ages in Piazza Mattei⁴³.

A fountain located to the same area, possibly with an iconography similar to the Scopan monument, could have been a tribute to Scopas and Roman history. Thus, the new fountain would be a part of a long tradition of water sources in Piazza Mattei, and the Mattei would create a link between past and present.

In this section I have tried to demonstrate the range of factors which might have been important when choosing a suitable location for the commissioned fountain. There appears to have been water sources in Piazza Mattei for a very long time: first the natural source documented in Severan Forma Urbis Romae, then the Neptune temple and the Scopan sculptures of the four nymphs and fish, and finally the medieval source indicated by the find of the piscine.

2.c. *The Mattei Family*

The origin of the Mattei's is uncertain, since little is known about the early history of the family, except for the fact that in the 1350s they moved from the former immigrant and Jewish area in Trastevere to the other side of the banks of the Tiber, to Rione Sant Angelo, known as the Roman Ghetto (Figure 8)⁴⁴. They are descended from the old and renowned Roman family Papareschi, and Pope Innocent II, whose pontificate lasted from 1130-1143, was one of their famous ancestors.

There does not seem to be any genealogic reasons for the choice this particular area: the Mattei's were Catholics, not Jews. However, most historians suggest that the banker family moved to the Jewish Ghetto because of their profession.

⁴² James Hall: "*Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*", London 1992, pp.227 and 265.

⁴³ Daniele Manacorda: "*Museo Nazionale Romano Cripta Balbi*", Milan 2000, pp.14-17 and p.28. Forfatter.

⁴⁴ Panofsky-Söergel p.111.

ALBERO GENEALOGICO DEI MATTEI (dal secolo XV)

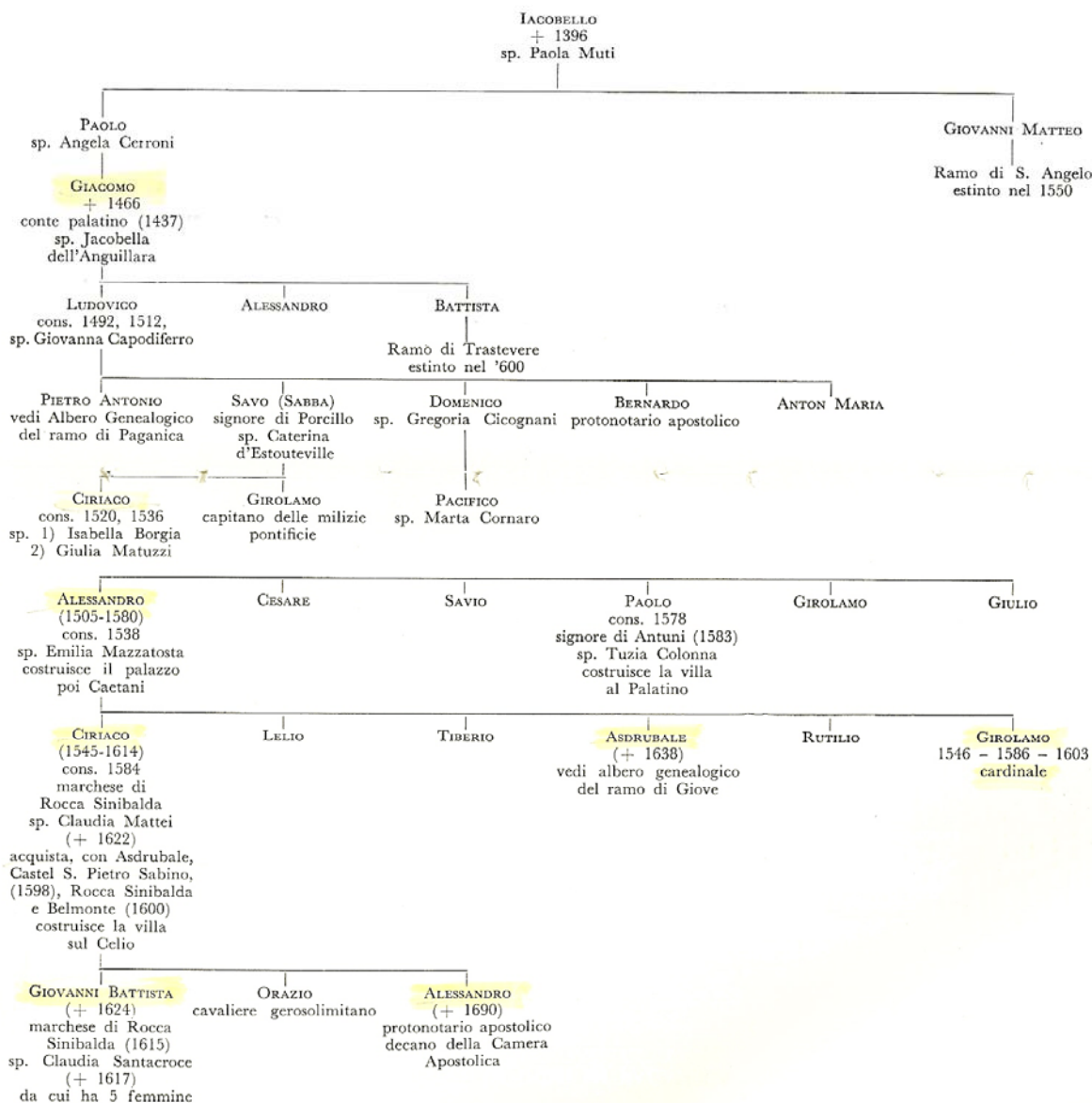


Figure 17: Mattei family tree, from Carlo Pietrangelo: *Guide Rionali di Roma; Rione Sant Angelo*, p. 165-166.

The patron of La Fontana delle Tartarughe was Muzio Mattei, a member of the committee which planned the building of the Roman bowl-fountains. Muzio's three nephews: Girolamo (1546-1603), Ciriaco (1545-1614) and Asdrubale Mattei (1556-1638) became the most powerful members of the Roman family (figure 18). In 1586 Girolamo Mattei, the older brother of Asdrubale, was appointed cardinal under Pope Sixtus V.

Ciriaco Mattei inherited Villa Celimontana from his father, and turned the shabby vineyard on Monte Celio into a renowned park with a grand palace. The park was adorned with many fountains and had one of the biggest selections of antique sculptures.

Asdrubale Mattei was appointed Marchese of Giove when he bought the palace of Giove in Umbria, on the 14th of June in 1597. And the family added the crowned eagle of Jupiter ("Giove" in Italian) to their escutcheon. The Jupiter-eagle was depicted on a variety of details in their palaces: e.g. on doorknobs, on the stuccoed ceiling and in intarsia on the furniture.



Figur 18 The Mattei coat-of-arms, The Mattei family-chapel in Santa Maria in Aracoeli, Rome. Photo: AKT.

The eagle was not just a symbol of the fief of Giove, but also of the Primogenitur agreement which the Mattei family were a part of, according to which a man's property passed to his oldest brother if he died without any sons. It was because of this principle that "the man last standing", Asdrubale Mattei, came to own five different fiefs: Giove in

1597, Rocca Sinibalda in 1600, Antuni, Castello San Pietro and Belmonte, as well as Palazzo Mattei di Giove.

The men mentioned above are the Mattei family members I will mention most frequently in this thesis, and most important of them are Muzio Mattei, the commissioner of the fountain, and Asdrubale Mattei, who inherited the fountain after his uncle and added a number of palaces and feudi to the Mattheian properties through purchase and inheritance.

In this second chapter I have tried to present the facts regarding La Fontana delle Tartarughe. According to the research history that I have used, there are two questions left unanswered: when were the turtles added, and is there a complex iconography concealed in the fountain, an iconography which has not yet been discovered?

CHAPTER 3: THE MYTH OF JUPITER AND GANYMEDE

3. a. *The Myth of Jupiter and Ganymede*

The myth of Jupiter and Ganymede is the Roman version of one of the Loves of Zeus from Greek mythology. Like the myths of Danae, Leda, Io, Antiope and Europa, it is a description of the amorous adventures of Jupiter.

Ganymede was a prince famous for his beauty, the son of King Tros, and lived in the royal palace of Troy. He was also a shepherd, and was watching his herd of sheep on Mount Ida with his dog when Jupiter caught sight of him. The god fell instantly in love with the young boy, and transformed himself into an eagle so he could fly down and meet this beautiful youth. The Jupiter-eagle swooped down, grabbed Ganymede in his claws and brought him up to Mount Olympus to be his lover. There Ganymede served the gods as their cupbearer, a position formerly held by Juno, Jupiter's daughter. Because of this, he became an immortal, and was regarded a demigod. In other words, the myth describes a homosexual relation, and because of its content it was less frequently depicted by Christian artists than the other Loves of Jupiter.

The most frequently cited version is written by Ovid:

*“The of Gods once felt the burning Joy,
And sigh'd for lovely Ganymede of Troy:
Long was he puzzled to assume a Shape
Most fit, and expeditious for the rape:
A bird's was proper, yet he scorns to wear
Any but That which might his Thunder bear.*

*Down with his masquesrading Wings he flies,
And bears the Trojan to the Skies;
Where now, in Robes of heav'nly Purple drest,
He serves the Nectar at th'Almighty's Feast,
To slighted Juno an unwelcomed Guest.”⁴⁵*

⁴⁵ Ovidius Naso, Publius: *Metamorphoseon : libri XV / cum annot. posthumis Iohan. Min-Ellii. Quas magna ex parte suppl. atque emend. P. Rabus, Hafniae 1766, pp.334-335.*

Several of the most popular antique writers, such as Homer, Platon, Ovid and Vergil, made their own versions of the myth of Jupiter and Ganymede, and their descriptions became the source material for scholars in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

3.a.i. LIMC: the antique tradition of poses and attributes for Ganymede

The story of Ganymede and Jupiter was a popular theme in the classical antiquity, and it gave the Greeks a divine sanction and legitimation for homosexual love⁴⁶. In “Lexicon Iconigraphae Mythologiae Classicae” (LIMC) there are 267 illustrations of the myth, made between 600 BC and 400 AD, more than 35 of which have a strikingly similar pose: Ganymede is depicted en face with one arm stretched over his head, as if about to put it around the eagle’s neck, and his opposite leg is placed behind him, perhaps so not to lose his balance when the eagle lifts him up into the sky (Figure 20 and 21).



Figure 19: Antique Ganymede-representations; Hans Christoph Ackermann: *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, Zürich 199LIMC: Ganymede depictions

⁴⁶ James Hall: *Hall’s dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art.*, London 1992, p.135.



Ganymedes 242 c



Ganymedes 246



Ganymedes 247



Ganymedes 243



Ganymedes 249



Ganymedes 250

Figur 20: Antique Ganymede-representations; Hans Christoph Ackermann: *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, Zürich 1997.

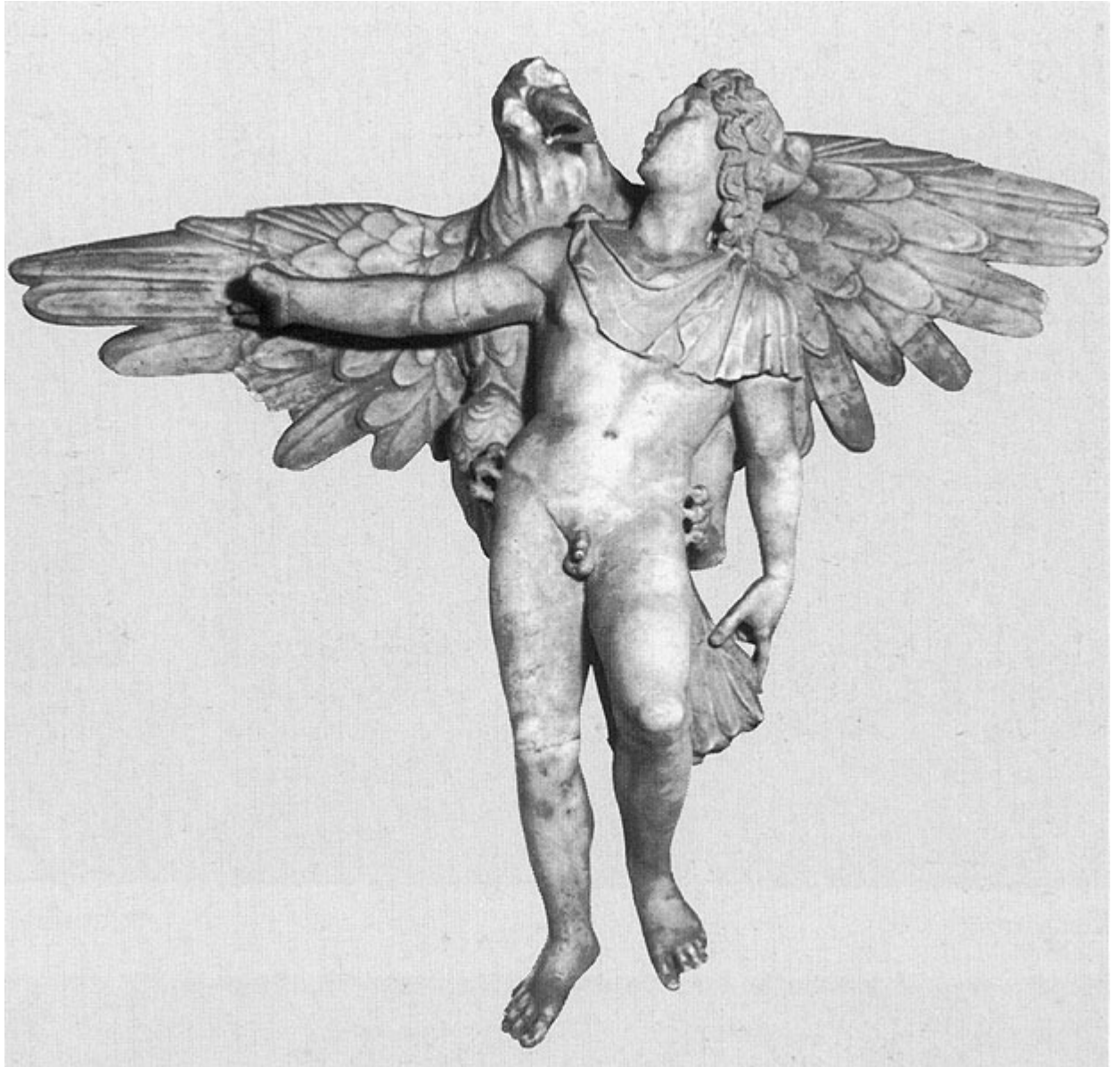


Figure 21: Ganymede by Leochares from Hans Christoph Ackermann: *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, Zürich 199

This traditional pose originated from a famous Ganymede sculpture made by Leochares in the fourth century BC⁴⁷ (figure 22). In the sculpture group which gave rise to a new iconographic tradition Ganymede is depicted in a pose with his right arm stretched along the eagle's right wing, but this pose is the result of an inaccurate restoration: originally his right arm stretched around the eagle's neck⁴⁸. The unrestored pose caused a strange contraposto where the left leg is placed a little further back than the

⁴⁷ The Leochares Ganymede was a part of Emperor Nero's decoration in the Domus Aurea in Rome.

⁴⁸ "...il braccio destro del giovinetto fu malamente restaurato: esso doveva in origine cingere il collo dell'aquila". *Encyclopedia Italiana*, Rome 1932 p.370.

right, thus the right arm and left leg are active and form a continuous line, while the left arm and the right leg are still.

Until the fourth century BC depictions of the myth featured both Jupiter and Ganymede, but after Leochares famous sculpture it became increasingly frequent to have Ganymede accompanied by Jupiter as an eagle.

Ganymede was described as a natural, playful, innocent, young boy fond of animals⁴⁹. His most typical attribute is Jupiter in the shape of the eagle, but sometimes he also wears a Frygian outfit with pyjama-like trousers, the characteristic Frygian hat and cloak and a pair of shepherd's sandals. In some versions he is accompanied by a dog, and holds a shepherd's crook, or he is depicted with a wine cup or pitcher (amphora or oinoche) in his lowered hand. Either way, his pose is same as the contraposto made by Leochares: en face, with one arm and one leg stretched, and the opposite leg and arm bent. Sometimes the knee of the bent leg is even pointing up, and the stretched arm is sometimes reaches towards the eagle or the sky, as if to point towards the eagle or Mount Olympus.

In some classical depictions Ganymede is represented without attributes, except the characteristic pose and the eagle in the background, but usually the Frygian shepherd is also wearing a Chlamys (a short cloak)⁵⁰. These are the attributes and the pose which through the history of art has come to be characteristic of the myth of Jupiter and Ganymede.

3.a.ii. Medieval Interpretations

The theoretical interpretation of the Ganymede myth was a field of interest to many medieval authors. One of the interpreters was Saint Cyrill of Alexandria (375-444), who claimed that it was as an example of the vileness of the gods: the tale of Jupiter and Ganymede was supposed to be a deterrent to Christian congregations⁵¹.

⁴⁹ Auf diese Weise durfte auch Ganymedes sich als das geben, was er war: ein natürlicher, spielericher, tierfreundlicher, unschuldiger, dabei eigenständig handelnder Knabe...“ LIMC IV 1, Artemis Verlag München, 1988.p.169.

⁵⁰ „...Ganymedes kann den Arm um den Hals des Adlers legen, von vorn oder im Profil erscheinen, nackt, mit der Chlamys versehen oder voll bekleidet sein“. LIMC IV 1, Artemis Verlag München,1988. p.168.

⁵¹ Reallexicon f'r Antike und Christentum, Band VIII: Stuttgart 1972, p.1047.

In his “Redectorium morale” Petrus Bechorius states that the Rape of Ganymede symbolizes man’s loss of innocence: it describes “the literal ravishment of the spirit of God, leaving sin behind in the mortal world”⁵².

He interpreted the Ganymede as a symbol of how man could be saved by God, despite his sinful nature.

The myth also appears in other sacral contexts: one of the bronze doors in San Peters Basilica, decorated by Filarete in 1445, depicts a small version of the Ganymede story. The youth is portrayed naked, with no attributes but the eagle, and like in the earlier versions he grabs it around the neck. The shepherd is placed in a contraposto pose, which is also recognisable from the antique tradition of Ganymede depictions, and the fact that Ganymede is represented in the nude is yet another feature which is derived from the classic iconography.

Medieval theoreticians, e.g. Saint Augustine, Chrysostomos, Seneca and Dante Alighieri, based their knowledge on the antique writers, and Dante’s description of Ganymede in “Purgatorio” was to become influential during the Renaissance:

“...in dream I seemed to see an eagle poised with golden pinions, in the sky: its wings were open ; it was ready to swoop down. And I seemed to be there where Ganymede deserted his own family when he was snatched up for the high concictory. Within myself I thought: “This eagle may be used to hunting only here; its claws refuse to carry upward any prey found elsewhere.” Then it seemed to me that, wheeling slightly and terrible as lightning, it swooped, snatching me up to the fire’s orbit. And there it seemed that he and I were burning; and this imagined conflagration scorched me so – I was compelled to break my sleep.”⁵³”

3.a.iii. Renaissance Interpretations

In the Renaissance the myth of Jupiter and Ganymede was interpreted as a metaphysical symbol of immortality, and in the sixteenth century it was depicted more

⁵² Penelope Cromwell Mayo: “Amor spiritualis et carnalis: Aspects of the myth of Ganymede in Art”, New York University, Ph.D. 1967. p. 97.

⁵³ *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, Purgatory, Canto IX, 19-33. Translated by Allen Mandelbaum, London 1982, p.74.

frequently than in any period since the classical antiquity⁵⁴. The story of the Trojan prince became an allegory of the human soul's advance towards God and Heaven.

One of the theoreticians who based his theories on Dante's medieval interpretation was Christoforo Landino⁵⁵. In 1529 he wrote a comment on Dante's description of Ganymede, in which he interpreted the myth as an allegory of the mind's liberation. Landino disapproved of Dante's hypothesis that Ganymede symbolised the resurrected soul, and his neoplatonic interpretation had no room for the eroticism of the antiquity or the moralisation of the Middle Ages⁵⁶.

Twenty six years later, in 1555, Francesco Bocchi states that Ganymede's progress towards heaven was not physical, but spiritual ("mens humana"), in that sense Ganymede rises in the form of pure mentality⁵⁷.

Ganymede was also a frequent topic in art historians' denomination of the male body. The figures of Samson and Ganymede, respectively, became two poles in description of the nude man in art. In "Dialogo della Pittura" (1557) Ludovico Dolce states that these figures are the two most common ways to depict the male body: the robust and muscular Samson versus the slender and elegant Ganymede⁵⁸.

3.a.iv. Depictions of the Myth in Renaissance and Mannerism

On 1.january 1533 Michelangelo Buonarotti sent a drawing of the "Ganymede" to his patron Tommaso de'Cavalieri (figure 23). Enclosed with the drawing was a letter where Michelangelo states:

*"It is customary for a man to name for the recipient the things he sends, but in this case, out of proper respect, it is not done"*⁵⁹.

⁵⁴ Mayo,1967, p.101.

⁵⁵ "Commedia di Dante Alghieri...con'esposizione di Christoforo Landino, Venice 1529 in Mayo p.106. I have not been able to detected if Federico Landino and Taddeo Landini were related, but they both came from Florence.

⁵⁶ Mayo refers to the "Emblemata" by Andrea Alciati, printed in Augsburg 1531. Mayo, in p.107.

⁵⁷ "Symbolicarum questionum" Francesco Bocchi, in Mayo p.112.

⁵⁸ "Trattati d'Arte del Cinquecento fra Mannerismo a Controriforma" Vol.1, a cura di Paola Barocchi, Bari 1960, p.177.

⁵⁹ *Sarebbe lecito dare il nome delle cose che l'uomo dona, a chi le riceve: ma per buon respecto non si fa in questa* from "Antiquity and its interpreters" ed. Alina Payne, Cambridge University press 2000, note 34 p.124.



Figur 22: Ganymede, drawing by Michelangelo Buonarroti,
<http://www.uchsc.edu/news/bridge/2003/April2003/Ganymede3.jpg>

This statement illustrates how the myth was regarded in the Renaissance. Because of its homoerotic content it was frowned upon as a story with an improper and unmentionable theme, regardless of the recent Christian interpretations.

Michelangelo's drawing has a great influence on later depictions, but the main source of inspiration was still the classical antique sculpture group by Leochares.

There was an increasing interest in classical sculpture, exemplified by the antique marble sculpture of Ganymede, which Benvenuto Cellini was set to restore by the commission of Duke Cosimo De' Medici of Florence (figure 24). The sculpture was finished in 1546, and the completion seems to have enhanced the interest in the theme of Jupiter and Ganymede. Cellini's marble version is naked, points to the sky with his right arm, stands on his right leg, bends his left knee, and scratches the eagle behind him on the head with his right arm. Thus he forms a contrapposto similar to the Leochares' version.



Figure 23 Ganymede, marble, by Cellini, (1545). **Figur 24:** Ganymede Riding on the Eagle, Cellini, 1547.
Photo:scultura-itaiana.com photo:scultura-itaiana.com

In 1547, the year after the marble restoration, Cellini finished his bronze sculpture Ganymede (figure 25), another work by the commission of Cosimo De' Medici. The naked Ganymede sits astride the Jupiter-eagle, raises his left arm towards the sky and bends his right knee. He keeps his balance by resting on his left leg on the eagle's back, and his right arm is bent backwards, as if he's leaning against the eagle right wing. The contrapposto is similar to that in earlier depictions of the myth, though there is some variation, since Ganymede does not stand, but sits on the back of the Jupiter-eagle.

Common features of the two sculptures are the slenderness of the body, Jupiter in the shape of an eagle, and the contraposto in the iconographic tradition which can be traced from the antique Greek sculpture. This contraposto is found in the majority of the Renaissance and Mannerist depictions, to a greater or lesser degree.

3.b. The Mattei's Knowledge of the Myth

It is well documented that the Mattei family was familiar with of these and other depictions prior to the building of the La Fontana delle Tartarughe. Baldassarre Peruzzi, the architect behind the Mattei's Palace of Rocca Sinibalda and Loggia Mattei, made a famous depiction of the Ganymede myth in Villa Farnesina in 1514 (figure 26).



Figure 25: Ganymede by Baldassarre Peruzzi, Villa Farnesina, 1541.

Photo: windows.ucar.edu/mythology

Ganymede was also depicted by other artists with close ties the Mattei family, e.g. by Lelio Orsi in the 1540s, when he decorated the ceiling of a room belonging to Asdrubale Mattei's future wife Constanza Gonzaga, and by Federico Zuccaro (whos brother had finished a façade fresco for the Mattei in 1548) in his renowned decoration of the Academia di San Luca in the 1590s⁶⁰. These are only a few examples of the myth's popularity in Rome at the time of the Turtle fountain.

⁶⁰ The Lelio Orsi painting is documented in *Storia dell'arte italiana*, IX, A.Venturi, Roma 1933, p.630.

3.c. Avoiding attributes – an iconographic tradition?

There seems to have been a tradition of depicting the myth of Jupiter and Ganymede with a bare minimum of attributes. Peruzzi places Ganymede in the characteristic contraposto with bent arms and legs, raptured by the Jupiter-eagle and wearing only a small loincloth. Federico Zuccaro's Ganymede also wears a loincloth and is accompanied by the eagle, and is placed in the same contraposto as the two Cellini and the Peruzzi. Michelangelo's version also features this contraposto and the Jupiter-eagle, but he chose to portray Ganymede without a loincloth: the youth is naked except for the chlamys blowing in the wind behind him.

Short Summary:

To summarize, I have attempted to give a short presentation of the theoretical and iconographic tradition of the myth of Jupiter and Ganymede. The interpretations of the myth appear to have changed drastically between the antiquity to the Renaissance. In Classical Greece it was a symbol of homosexuality and an allegory of a homosexual relationship between an old and a young man. Then, in the pious Middle Ages, the myth was regarded as an example of the sinful pagan deities, and in the Renaissance it was seen absent any eroticism and regarded a symbol of the human mind's progress towards God.

Leochares' sculpture group seems to have started a tradition: during the antiquity, Middle Ages and Renaissance this sculpture seems to have set the tone for the later iconographical representations of the myth of Jupiter and Ganymede.

In some of these depictions the contraposto is not easily perceptible and the pose may seem casual and arbitrary, but in light of Leochares' contraposto "prototype" the position of the limbs in all the Ganymede versions seems to be a part of the same iconographic tradition: one arm lifted upwards or towards the sky, while the opposite knee is bent and sometimes points up.

In addition, a remarkably large number of these Ganymede depictions feature a naked youth, and no attributes but the eagle. Taken together, these three observations can be interpreted as features of an iconographic tradition, a tradition which might later be discovered in other works of art.

CHAPTER 4: MATTEI PROPERTIES WITH REPRESENTATIONS OF JUPITER AND GANYMEDE

In this chapter I shall present a selection of works of art which might be interpreted as depictions of the myth of Jupiter and Ganymede, and which were acquired by the Mattei family over a span of a hundred years: i.e. during the lives of Ludvico Mattei, Giacomo Mattei (+1466), his grandson, Ciriaco, and nephews, Girolamo (1546-1603), Ciriaco (1545-1614) and Asdrubale (1556-1638), and finally Asdrubale's grandson, Alessandro Mattei (+1690) (See family tree figure18) .

During these three generations the Mattei family obtained several large properties, most of which have been described in great detail by art historians⁶¹. However, the decorations of the palaces and castles have not been seen in the context of the myth of Jupiter and Ganymede or an iconographic programme based on this story, and a closer examination of the myth's importance to the family might provide a new perspective on their renowned art collection.

The most famous buildings belonging to the Mattei were the Roman palaces in Isola Mattei (near the Ghetto, (figure 15)), Villa Celimontana on Roman Mount Celio, Castello Giove in Lazio and Castello Rocca Sinibalda in Umbria; the last two were castles in their possession. In 1600, when it was at the height of its power, the family held five fiefs; the two mentioned above in Lazio and Umbria, in addition to Belmonte, Antuni and Castel S. Pietro, all in Lazio.

The most famous works of art in the family's possession were La Fontana delle Tartarughe and Caravaggio's Capitoline San Giovanni Battista. In addition, they owned works by such artists as Federico and Taddeo Zuccaro, Baldassarre Peruzzi, Carlo Maderno and Gianlorenzo Bernini, as well as a collection of antiques which today is found in the Vatican Museum⁶².

4.a. Palazzo Giacomo Mattei

In Piazza Mattei No.17 and 19 we find Palazzo Giacomo Mattei (Figure 27) in Isola Mattei, built after the design of Bernardo Rosselini or Giuliano da Maiano and finished in 1466⁶³. The palace in No.17 was the residence of Cardinal Girolamo Mattei, brother of

⁶¹ Panofsky-Söergel pp. 111-113, Pochino pp. 209-2011 and pp. 232-237, *Guide Rionale di Roma* pp. 56-82, *Le famiglie nobili romane* by Giorgio Carpaneto, Rendina editori, Rome 2000, pp. 245-254.

⁶² Giorgio Carpaneto, *Le famiglie nobili romane*, Rome 2000. p.254.

⁶³ C. Pietrangeli, *Guide Rionali di Roma*, Fratelli Palombi Editori, Rome 1984, p.62.

Asdrubale Mattei, and after the latter became Duke of Giove, in 1597, a new family stemma adorned the building's doorway (figure 27). The coat of arms has been lost, but there is a 19th century photograph in which the stemma of Mattei di Giove is still visible over the doorway, depicting the eagle of Jupiter



Figure 26: Piazza Mattei with the Fontana delle Tartarughe. Palazzo Giacomo Mattei, with the coat of arms depicting the eagle, in the background. Photo: Thorvaldsen Museum, Copenhagen 1868.

Inside the courtyard of No.17 there is a small fountain, La Fontana del Cortile, likely made by Taddeo Landini originally (figure 28)⁶⁴. Today this fountain depicts Neptune, the Roman god of the sea, standing with his fork in his hand and wearing a loin cloth. According to Willy Pochino, this fountain was poorly restored in the 19th century:

Il palazzo presenta una fontana all'angolo piatto che si trova a destra del cortile del civ.17. Sul muro è dipinta una edicola con al centro la figura statuara di Giove⁶⁵.

⁶⁴ Landini being responsible for the design of La Fontana dell' Cortile is not documented by either Varagnoli nor Pochino, but a guide in Palazzo Mattei-Paganica held this information in 2001.

⁶⁵ "Fontana del Cortile: Il palazzo presenta una fontana all'angolo piatto che si trova a destra del cortile del civ.17. Sul muro è dipinta una edicola con al centro la figura statuara di Giove. Oltre alla nicchia ed alla statua sono dipinte una conchiglia nell'abside, due lesene laterali ed una riquadratura rettilinea in alto. Sotto la figura è una vasca pensile a conchiglia, ricchissima de vegetazione che nasconde il fregio in marmo sul muro. La fontana è stata con probabilità malamente rimaneggiata perchè la vasca pensile ha dimensioni maggiori della vasca

Not only were the proportions of the elements in the fountain changed to the point where they do not seem to connect anymore, but its very iconography was altered. The theme of the fountain was changed from the original depiction of Jupiter to the present-day Neptune depiction. Pocino has misinterpreted this fountain as to depict Jupiter, but that was the former motive, before the eighteenth century restoration (ref. prior note).



Figure 27: La Fontana del Cortile. Photo: AKT.

raccolta. Ai suoi lati scende a terra una formazione rocciosa mentre al centro, sotto di essa, sonodue delfini, con le code ritte e intrecciate, presso I quale è collocata la cannella che vera l'acqua in una vaschetta a terra di forma circolare, molto piccola. Completa l'insieme una malridotta ringhiera ottocentesca." *Le fontane di Roma*, Willy Pochino, Rome 1996, p. 211.



Figur 28: The two fountains by Landini: seen from the doorway of Palazzo Giacomo Mattei. Photo AKT.

Both Landini fountains, the Fontana dell’Cortile and the Fontana delle Tartarughe, are visible from the doorway of No. 17 (Figure 29). If the latter represents Ganymede, the two fountains seen together can refer to the myth of Jupiter and Ganymede; since both figures are presented, seen from the entrance to Cardinal Girolamo Mattei’s residence. The protagonist, Jupiter, was depicted in the courtyard fountain, while Ganymede was visible in the piazza outside the door of the palace, unfolded in Piazza Mattei. Jupiter would also have been watching Ganymede from the coat of arms above the doorway, depicting the Jupiter eagle. And Ganymede in the Turtle fountain would stretch his arm up into the air, towards the Jupiter eagle in the coat of arms above.

Since the Mattei family were the commissioners for both the boys in La Fontana delle Tartarughe and the original Jupiter fountain in the backyard of Piazza Mattei No.17, and Landini most probably was the artist responsible for the two fountains, it seems plausible to assume that there was an iconographic link between the two fountains.

In 1601-02 Ciriaco Mattei commissioned Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio to paint a canvas which has later been assumed to be a dedication to his son Giovanni Battista Mattei (see family tree in chapter 2.c, Figure 18) This painting is today known as “San Giovanni

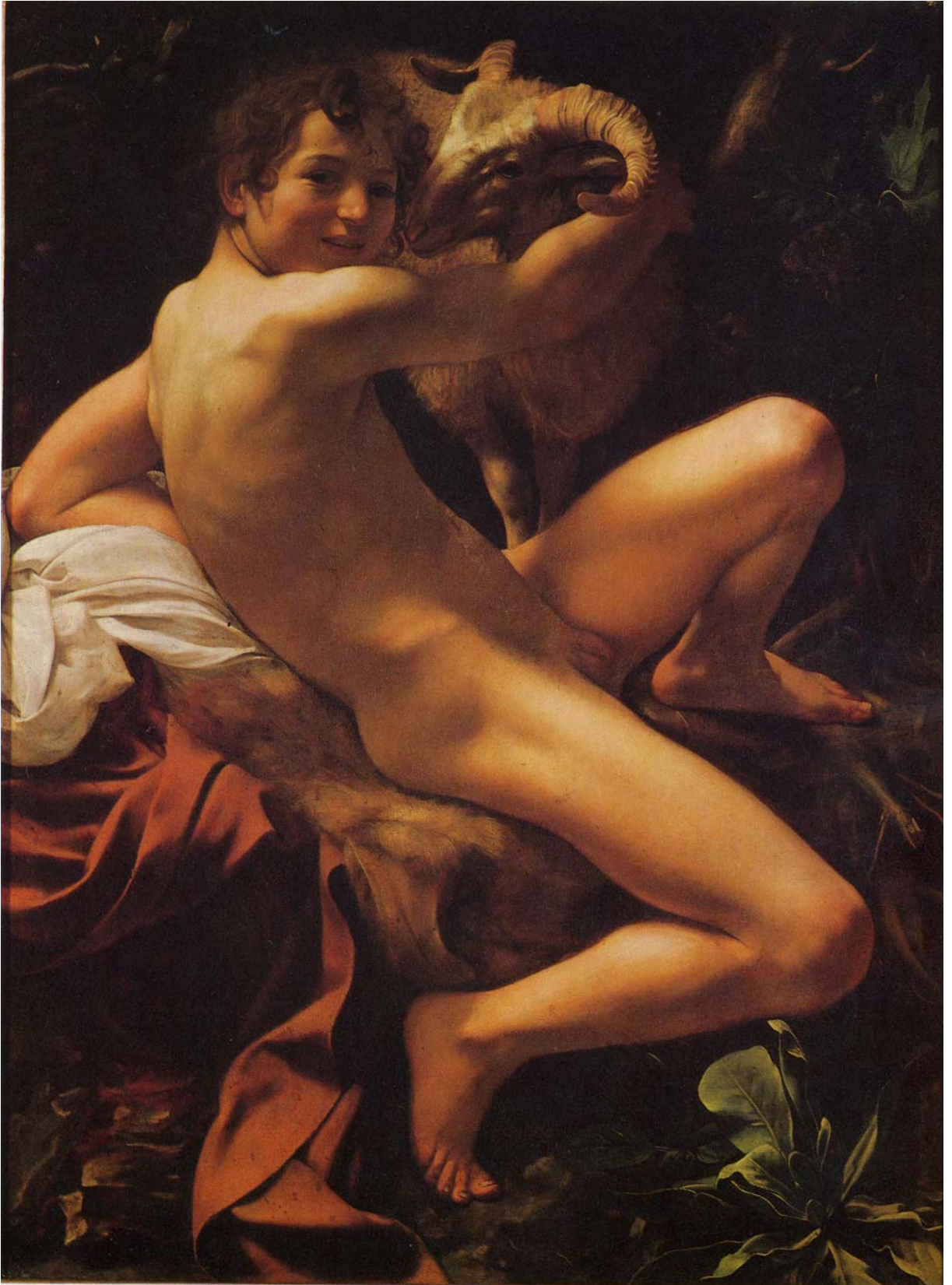
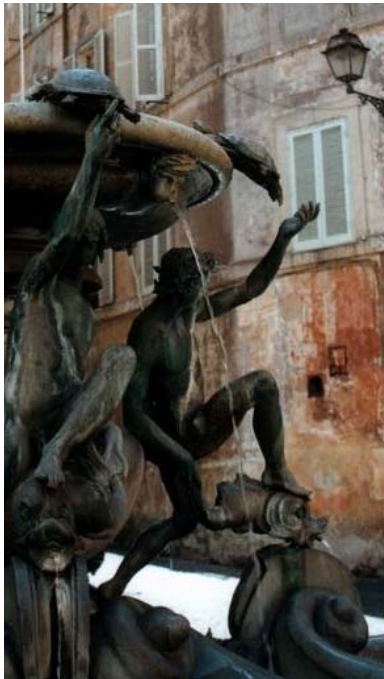


Figure 29: San Giovanni Battista by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio 1601-02, Museo Campidoglio, from Howard Hibbard: *Caravaggio*, London 1983, p.153.

Battista” (Campidoglio), and portrays a young shepherd. It is displayed in the Roman National Gallery on the Capitoline Hill (Figure 30).

There has been some controversy as to whether the modern title of the painting is correct, since Gaspare Celio’s account of del Monte’s collection in 1638 does not mention any picture with such a title⁶⁶. However, he does describe a painting called “Pastor friso”, “a shepherd frieze”, which seems to match the Campidoglio-version⁶⁷. There is also another title which has been associated with the painting, i.e. “Corydon”, which was used by del Monte’s for a similar picture in his estate in 1628. One modern interpretation of this canvas connects it to the sacrifice of Isaac; another is Howard Hibbard’s suggestion that the shepherd is Phrixus, who was saved from death by a flying golden ram. Hibbard remarks upon a strangely shaped branch in the upper left corner of the picture⁶⁸.

This branch may, in dimmed light, be interpreted as a continuation of the shepherd’s right arm, parts of which are almost invisible due to the *chiaroscuro* effect, slung around the ram’s neck. If his right arm stretches towards the sky, rather than being bent at the elbow, then his right arm and left leg would form a *contrapposto* pose similar to the *Ganymede*-types represented by Leochares: his stretched right arm, his raised left knee, his left arm behind him, and his right leg still on the ground as if to keep his balance (Figure 22, chapter 3).



Figur 30: Fontana delle Tartarughe, in profile, detail. Photo: romecity.it/picture09.jpg

⁶⁶ Howard Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, Thames & Hudson, London 1983, p.152

⁶⁷ Howard Hibbard, *Caravaggio*, Thames & Hudson, London 1983, p.152.

⁶⁸ “What he took to be a bird at the upper left seems to be a weird branch formation” in *Caravaggio*, Howard Hibbard, Thames & Hudson, London 1983, (Notes to illustration 96) p. 306.

The main difference between the poses of the Leochares and the Caravaggio is that the latter is not seen en face, but in profile, and that while his right arm is bent, it might be reaching out towards the sky, rather than being placed around the ram's neck.

To sum up, the shepherds in the Caravaggio painting and the Leochares sculpture share the following features: the position of their legs and their left arm, their youthful countenance, their nudity and their slenderness. The similarity of these elements makes it plausible to interpret the "Pastor friso" as a depiction of Ganymede, the Phrygian shepherd ("il pastore")⁶⁹. In addition, the canvas was placed on the representational floor, or primo piano, in Palazzo Giacomo Mattei, where someone looking out the window would have seen the pose repeated in the four boys in La Fontana delle Tartarughe (Figure 31).

4.b. Palazzo Mattei-Paganica

On the commission of Ludovico Mattei, Claudio Vignola built Palazzo Mattei-Paganica. The palace, which lies in Isola Mattei (Figure 15, chapter 2.b.i), facing the Piazza Enciclopedia Italiana, was finished in 1541. It features many decorations depicting Jupiter as an eagle: e.g. a frieze on the façade where the heraldic eagle alternate with masks, and a window decoration inside the cortile depicting another Jupiter-eagle. There is also a grand depiction of the family's coat of arms, found on the loggia's ceiling and made by Federico Zuccaro, where representation of the eagle of Jupiter, symbol of Giove, is found together with the impresa chess pattern symbolising the Mattei family.

In 1546-47, Ludovico Mattei commissioned Domenico Rietti, also known as Zaga, to paint a series of frescoes in Palazzo Mattei-Paganica. Found on the ground floor walls in the cortile, they are made in "gusto archeologico", a style inspired by Perino del Vaga. The frescoes have mythological themes, for instance Romulus and Remus, the vices of Hercules, and the loves of the gods. One of Zaga's lunettes depicts the rape of Ganymede; this is the first documented depiction of the myth in the family's possession:

⁶⁹ Since the Middle Ages San Giovanni Battista was often interpreted as the zodiacal sign Aquarius (Chapter 2.a.ii), which was also the classical mythological pseudonym of Ganymede. Due to this information the Caravaggio San Giovanni Battista be interpreted as a depiction of not only the Saint John the Baptist, but at the same time even a representation of both Aquarius and Ganymede.

”In quella (lunetta red.)centrale si riconosce il Ratto di Ganimede mentre piu difficile risulta l’identificazione di quelle che si vedono di lati: a sinistra una zattera, a destra un’ altra, che cammina con un bambino accanto”⁷⁰.

The fresco belongs to the same iconographic tradition as the Michelangelo version (Figure 23, Chapter 3) of the story: a young shepherd is lifted into the air the sky by Jupiter in the shape of an eagle. Ganymede is naked and positioned in the contraposto described in Chapter 3.

This particular fresco, located to the fond wall of the room, was given the most important place of all the lunettes: Zaga’s Rape of Ganymede would be the first theme one would see when entering the cortile.

4.c. Palazzo Mattei di Giove

In 1556 Asdrubale Mattei initiated the building of a new palace in Isola Mattei (Figure 15, chapter 2.b.i), on the corner of Via Caetani and Via dei Funari (figure 31). The architect responsible for the design was Carlo Maderno, and it would take 33 years before the building was completed. By that time Asdrubale Mattei had become Duke of the fief Giove (he was appointed in 1597), and consequently the palace was called Palazzo Mattei di Giove. Because of the Giove name, which is Italian for Jupiter, the new palace was adorned with eagles, symbolising the king of the gods.



Figur 31:Palazzo dell'Ecc.mo. Sig. Duca Mattei, by Alessandro Specchi 1690, from Giorgio Carpaneto: *Le famiglie nobili romane*, Rome 2000, p.249.

⁷⁰ Varagnoli, Claudio:”I palazzi di Mattei: il rapporto con la città” in *Palazzo Mattei Paganica e encyclopedia italiana*, Istituto della Encyclopedia Italiana Fondata da Giovanni Treccani, Marchesi Grafiche Editoriale Sp.A., Roma 1996, p.259.

Versions of the eagle and the deity are found in almost every room of the palace. For instance, the floor, ceiling and mantelpiece on the primo piano were decorated with the family's coat of arms (the chess pattern symbolising the family), the Maltese cross symbolising Constanza Gonzaga, and the eagle of Giove.

In the 16th century there was a garden in the upper part of the cortile, which was decorated with a number of Jupiter eagles, e.g. a bronze version on a column made of the "imperial stone" porphyry, and one in a aedicule framed with ionic pilasters⁷¹.



Figure 32: Antique tondo: Jupiter and Ganymede, in the cortile loggia, Palazzo Mattei di Giove, from Lucia Guerrini: *Palazzo Mattei di Giove : le antichità*, in "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, Rome 1982.

The cortile is divided by a small loggia, which is decorated by antique fragments which were acquired by Asdrubale Mattei in the early 17th century⁷². One of these antique

⁷¹ Panofsky-Söergel p.126.

⁷² ed. Lucia Guerrini: , "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, Roma, 1982 p.113

fragments is a tondo masoned into the wall, (figure 33). This tondo, chiselled out in marble, depicts the myth of Jupiter and Ganymede, and it is the second documented version of the myth in the Mattei family's possession⁷³.

The young Ganymede has his arm around the neck of the eagle, which lifts him up into the air. He is dressed in a short chlamys which blows in the wind behind him, and positioned in the traditional Leochares-contraposto described in 2.a.

The location of this tondo may seem strange, since it is placed among many other antique fragments in the wall, but placed thus it would have been visible from the doorway to the hall connecting Palazzo Mattei di Giove to Palazzo Caetani (già Palazzo Alessandro Mattei).



Figure 33: Jupiter statue by D. Mazzo, Palazzo Mattei di Giove, photo: AKT.

⁷³ *Palazzo Mattei di Giove : le antichità*, ed. Lucia Guerrini, "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, Roma, 1982 p.113.

A large Jupiter statue, made in stucco, stands in the stairway leading to the first floor (figure 34). Wearing a toga and holding a thunderbolt in his left hand, the bearded god is depicted en face. The statue is made in stucco, and it is assumed that Donato Mazzo, i.e. the artist who made the stucco works in the Palazzo Mattei di Giove, was responsible for the execution of this statue as well⁷⁴. The figure of Jupiter is larger than a man, and the prominent location in the entrance area enhances its monumental impression and makes it appear even more dominant. Placed on the top of the first staircase, the Jupiter is the first statue to be seen when entering the primo piano.

4.d. The Castle of Giove

As mentioned earlier, Asdrubale Mattei became duke of the Umbrian fief Giove in 1597. Since then, the eagle of Jupiter (or Giove in Italian) was incorporated in the family's coat of arms. The fief Giove is a small province with the village of Giove, named after an ancient temple devoted to Jupiter, as its centre. The name remains, though the sanctity is gone.

The village of Giove is located on the top of the hill Rocca di Giove, with a view of the valley below, i.e. Valle Teverina. The small village is dominated by medieval architecture, including the palace belonging to Asdrubale Mattei from 1597,(Figure 35). The palace, Palazzo Ducale or Castello di Giove, is a fortification with a history dating from the Middle Ages, and, to befit its new function as a ducal residence, it was rebuilt by Claudio Vignola in the sixteenth century⁷⁵.

With its “mastodont” façade Palazzo Ducale dominates the centre of Giove. It lies opposite the parish church, devoted to San Giovanni Battista, but even the tall church towers seem small compared to the fortress-like palace.

One corner of the seven storey high facade points towards Piazza XXIV, and beneath a balcony facing the piazza there is a huge eagle (Figure 36). The eagle is made in stucco and has a wingspan of approximately six feet, spreading its wings above the piazza. The way it hovers above piazza is similar to the way the Jupiter eagle hovered above Mount Ida in the myth of Jupiter and Ganymede.

It is very likely that the stucco eagle represents the name of the fief (Giove), the fief's ancient history (i.e. its origin as a Jupiter sanctity), and the Duke of Giove, i.e. Asdrubale

⁷⁴ Guida Rionali di Roma; Rione San Angelo, p.78.

⁷⁵ Giove – *comune dell'Umbria*, Umberto Romito e Mauro Bonucci, Giove 2001, p.52.



Figure 34: Castello di Giove, Giove in Terni, the facade. Photo:comune.terni.it



Figure 35: Stucco eagle, Castello di Giove, Giove in Terni. Photo: AKT

Mattei, who commissioned the reconstruction of the palace from a medieval fortress to a Renaissance residence.

Inside the palace there are numerous paintings and sculptures made in the fifteenth and sixteenth century; for instance, there is a mantelpiece on the piano nobile (first floor), which is decorated with caryatids and the family's coat of arms. In the adjacent room there is a frescoed ceiling painted in the style of the school of Domenicho Zampieri, a Bolognese painter and architect who lived from 1581-1641⁷⁶. Because of the connection to this Renaissance artist, we have to assume that this fresco was commissioned by the Mattei family. It depicts scenes of the triumphant Jupiter, a theme which might have symbolised the name of the palace and the Mattei family⁷⁷. The theme's importance to the family is underlined by the fresco's position in one of the grand halls.

4.e. The Castle of Rocca Sinibalda

Asdrubale Mattei gained ownership of the fief Rocca Sinibalda in 1600. This village, located to Valle del Turano twenty kilometres from Rieti, has its centre on the top of a small mountain by the same name. The name is derived from an old Italian family, the Senebaldis, who built a fortress on the mountain in the early Middle Ages. The present-day palace of Rocca Sinibalda was built on the remains of the old castle belonging to this family⁷⁸.

The interior of the palace is richly decorated with the symbol of the Mattei family: the eagle of Jupiter. There are eagles on picture frames, furniture, door handles and carpets, and even the rafters are adorned with small, carved friezes depicting the eagle. Many of the great halls of the palace are decorated with frescoes or canvases; one of them features a frieze by Federico and Taddeo Zuccaro, which depicts Neptune and his nymphs, and in another room there is a series of canvases by Paul Bril, which depicts the five fiefs of the Mattei family: Giove, Rocca Sinibalda, Belmonte, Castel San Pietro and Antuni.

In the Sala dei Rei (Hall of the Kings) we find a frescoed frieze which is attributed to Guido Reni and Polidoro da Caravaggio (Figure 37)⁷⁹. On the frieze young, naked boys (putti) are juxtaposed with eagles. Some of the putti present the Mattheian coat of arms, while

⁷⁶ Umberto Romito e Mauro Bonucci *Giove – commune dell'Umbria*, , Giove 2001, p.52.

⁷⁷ Umberto Romito e Mauro Bonucci, 2001, p.52. I was not allowed entrance in the castle, so this information is based on op.cit.

⁷⁸ *Rocca Sinibalda ed il suo Castello*, Mario Bolognesi, Piersaldo Editore, Roma 1985, pp.11-12.

⁷⁹ Mario Bolognesi: *Rocca Sinibalda ed il suo Castello*.Roma, 1985, p.29.

others play with clusters of grapes. In addition, there is also a putto serving an eagle wine from a cantharos (antique winecup) in one of the corners.



Figure 36: Eagle-fresco, Sala dei Rei, Palace of Rocca Sinibalda. Photo: AKT.

This scene may allude to the myth of Ganymede, since the Phrygian prince (also naked, though not as young as the putti) was a cupbearer on Mount Olympus and served Jupiter (often symbolised by an eagle) wine from a cantharos (a common attribute for Ganymede).

What is most interesting about Palace of Rocca Sinibalda is its architecture: it is shaped like an eagle (Figure 38). According to Panofsky-Söergel and several other art historians, the original architectural plan, made by Sienese architect Baldassarre Peruzzi, depict an eagle (figure 39)⁸⁰.

However, the shape of the eagle is easier to detect in pictures of the palace than in the rather confusing original designs by Peruzzi. The southern terrace corresponds to the beak, pointing to the village below. The wings of the eagle are represented by two

⁸⁰ Panfsky-Söergel p.112, *The life and works by Baldassarre Peruzzi* by William Winthorp Kent. Arch.Book Publishing, New York,1925, p.80, and Bolognesi 1985, p.29.

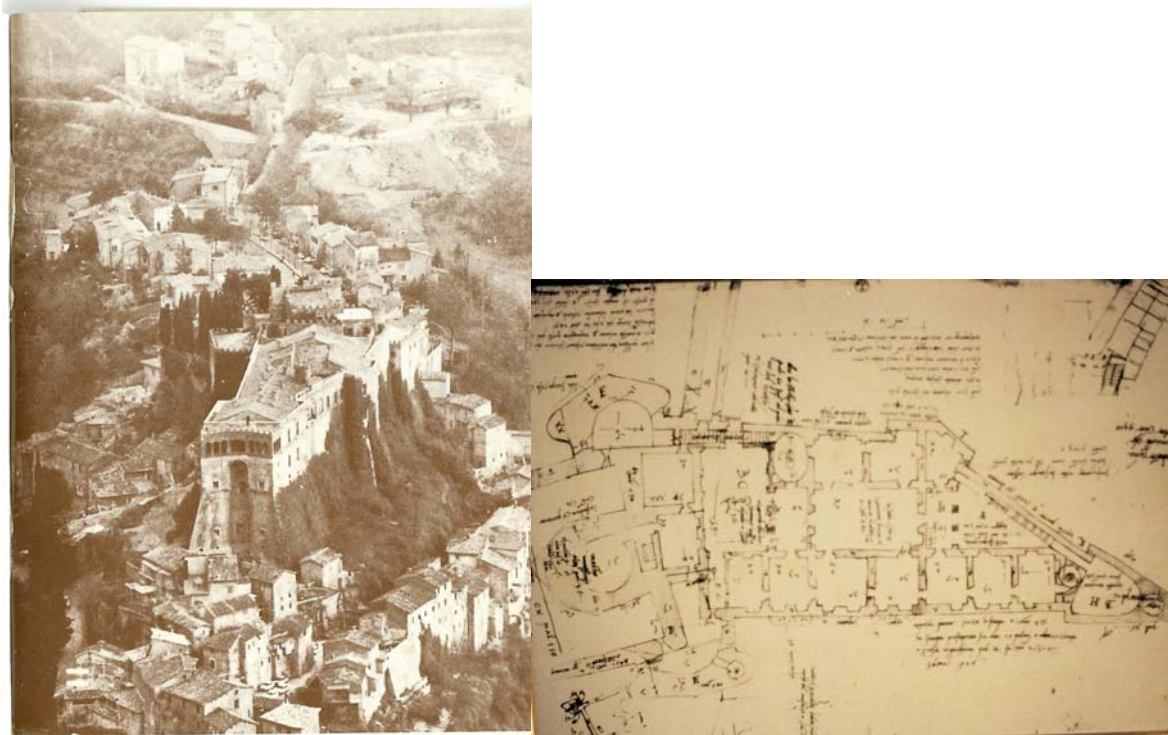


Figure 37: Palace of Rocca Sinibalda. Photo: Manlio Marini.

Original designs of Rocca Sinibalda by B. Peruzzi. Photo AKT.

towers, one on each side of the palace. The palace's main walls constitute the flanks of the eagle, while the tail is the northern wing, which narrows towards the end and splits in two, much like the feathered tail of an eagle.

Since the transformation from a medieval fortress to a palace was finished in the mid-16th century, the Mattei could not have been the ones who decided the theme of the architectural plan⁸¹. Regardless of this fact, the symbolic value held by the eagle-shaped palace, might have been one of the decisive factors for the family when they purchased the building in 1600.

4.f. Villa Celimontana

Villa Celimontana on the Roman hill Monte Celio became one of the Mattei properties in 1553, when Giacomo Mattei bought the scruffy vineyard from the Paluzelli family. His nephew Ciriaco Mattei, elder brother of Asdrubale Mattei, inherited the property and, with the help of his architect Giacomo del Duca, rebuilt the small building into the large villa which

⁸¹ "L'opera grandiosa, la cui costruzione fu iniziata nell'anno 1532, cioè 5 anni dopo il sacco di Roma, in seguito alla morte di Baldassarre, avvenuta nel 1536, venne portata a termine dal figlio Sallustio e da Bartolomeo De Rocchi." In Mario Bolognesi, 1985 p.29.

can be seen today (figure 40). The area around the villa was also changed: there were many ruins on the property which supplied the new grand park with antiques and fountains. Today, the villa is a public park



Figure 38: Villa Celimontana, facade. Photo: inf.uniroma3.it

Carla Benocci has made a thorough presentation of the history of this building and its environment in her book “Villa Celimontana”⁸². She documents the antiques which today are a part of the Vatican Museum’s collection, and presents many maps and prints contemporary to the Matteis, in order to document the villa’s history.

After Ciriaco Mattei died, his son Alessandro inherited Villa Celimontana. He made some further changes, especially in the iconography of the park. In Ciriaco’s lifetime, it had been dominated by smaller sculptures depicting scenes from Roman mythology: for instance the adventures of Hercules, including the Lernean Hydra and Atlas. Alessandro new park, on the other hand, was decorated with larger and more monumental fountains: for instance La Fontana dell’Tritone (the fountain of the Triton) and La Fontana dell’Aquila (the fountain of the eagle). Both fountains were made in the mid-seventeenth century by the young Gianlorenzo Bernini. According to Charles Avery, the building of the Triton fountain in 1642 was Bernini’s first private commission⁸³.

⁸² *Villa Celimontana* by Carla Benocci, Torino 1991 .

⁸³ *Genius of the Baroque* by Charles Avery, Thames & Hudson , London 1997, p.184.

Two incisions by Giacomo Rossi from document the Fountain of the Eagle (Figure 41), and in the text below the print he states that the fountain was made by Gianlorenzo Bernini for the Duke of Giove on Villa Mattei⁸⁴. Both fountains are gone today, but the Mattei's Triton fountain was the predecessor for the one found in Piazza Barberini, commissioned by Pope Urban VIII Barberini in 1643, i.e. the year after the Villa Mattei version was finished. The fountain of the eagle is completely lost today, however, and the only documentation of the monument, apart from the Rossi print, are two nineteenth century descriptions by Filippo Baldinucci and D. Bernini⁸⁵.

La Fontana dell'Aquila was located to the right side of the palace, in the part of the park closest to the Dominican church Santa Maria in Vallicella, as seen in Rodolpho Lanciani's map *Forma Urbis Romanum*. One of the main roads in the park led to the fountain, a fact which might prove important in the later iconographic interpretation of the monument.

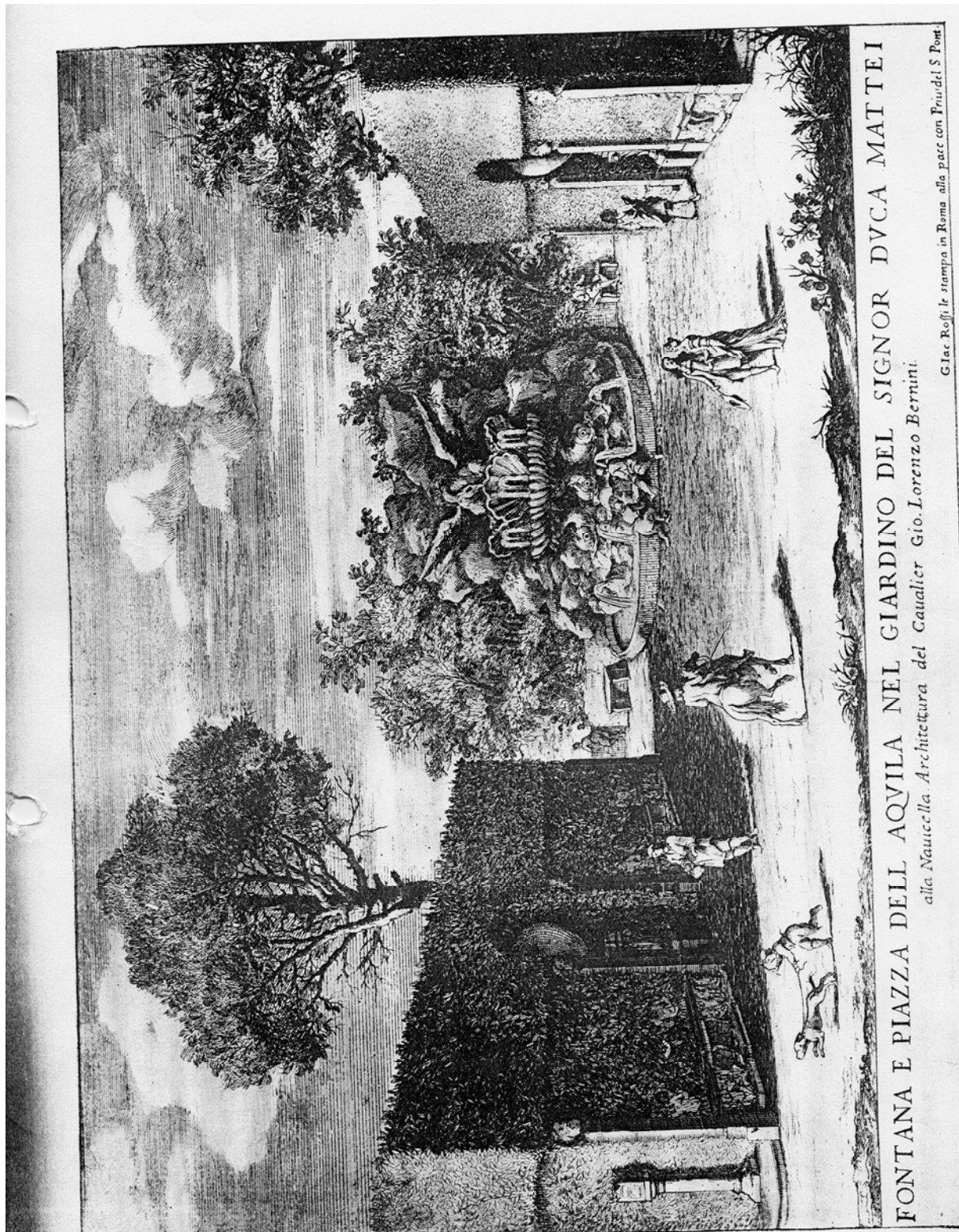
The fountain consisted of three main elements: a lunette-shaped lower basin framed by a masoned rim, three dolphins, and a second, huge basin. The dolphins were placed in the middle of the lower basin, resting on their beaks and squirting water. The largest basin, above the dolphins, was made out of three open shells, each spurting a little water into the air. The eagle which gave the fountain its name was placed behind the shells. Sitting on top of a mountain, looking down and spreading its wings, it must have appeared to be about to fly towards the ground. According to the Rossi print, the wingspan of this bird was about twelve feet, so it must have been a monumental sight.

Some of the other sculptures described by Benocci have also been lost, for instance a pastoral scene chiselled out in stone by Giacomo del Duca, Alessandro Mattei's architect during the renovation of the villa and the park in the years after 1614⁸⁶.

⁸⁴ Giacomo de Rossi: *Le fontane di Roma nelle piazze e luoghi publià della città* in Giacomo de Rossi dalle sue stampe, Rome 1675-91.

⁸⁵ *Vita di G.L. Bernini* by Filippo Baldinucci, Milano 1821 and *La vita del cavalier Gianlorenzo Bernini* by D. Bernini, Roma, 1713.

⁸⁶ "Il disegno del Lauro rivela infatti un boschetto, ai margini del giardino geometrico, un episodio bucolico. Un pastore è in piedi, accanto sono ue cervi, più in là è un cane accovacciato, mentre altri animali sono tra le piante". *Villa Celimontana* by Carla Benocci, Rome, p.9



FONTANA E PIAZZA DELL AQUILA NEL GIARDINO DEL SIGNOR DVCA MATTEI
alla Nauicella. Architettura del Cavalier Gio. Lorenzo Bernini.

Giac. Rossi. In stampa in Roma alla pace con Priordel S. Pont.

Figure 39: "La Fontana dell'Aquila" from "Giacomo de Rossi dalle sue stampe.." Rome 1675-91.

The sculptural scene was composed of a small forest, or “boschetto”, where a shepherd walked with his dog, surrounded by other animals. The shepherd has often been interpreted to represent one of the shepherds watching their sheep on Monte Citori when the young Hercules encountered Amphitruon in one of his adventures, but according to Benocci the iconography of this scene is uncertain.

In a description of the area from 1631, the scene is mentioned in relation to a “secret garden” containing a labyrinth in which there is a dragon sitting on top of a mountain:

“...un “giardino segreto con fontana” da “sallite e scente de scalini fatte a laberinto”, da un “laberinto con alberi intorno e in mezzo un drago”, di forma ovale, a ridosso della loggia di S. Sisto, e da un “boschetto con molti animali di pietra con un pastore”⁸⁷

However, since there is no other description or depiction of any mountain or dragon, this may refer to the eagle in “Fontana dell’Aquila”, the only animal on top of a mountain which has been described in connection to Villa Celimontana.

The pastoral scene was found in the right side of the park, not far from Santa Maria in Navicella. According to maps made by Rodolpho Lanciani and Giacomo Lauro’s, the sculptures were placed at the end of the main road on which La Fontana dell’Aquila was to be found⁸⁸.

With the sculpture groups, i.e. the fountain and the pastoral scene, placed opposite each other in this way, the road could have represented a link between the two, and a new interpretation of the iconography in these elements might connect them to the myth of Jupiter and Ganymede.⁸⁹ Thus, the Eagle Fountain would depict Jupiter as an eagle, right before he leaves Mount Olympus to fly down to the earthlings in La Fontana dell’Aquila. Leaving Mount Olympus, he sees the beautiful shepherd who is watching his herd with his dog by his side in the pastoral scene.

⁸⁷ in Benocci, p.39.

⁸⁸ In the map by Lanciani, the Giardino Segreto was located close to the excavation by Crociferi 10/VI 1602, and in a direct line from the Giardino Segreto we can see La Fontana dell’Aquila by G. Bernini. Villa Mattei in *Forma Urbis Romae*, Rodolpho Lanciani, Roma 1900 and *Villa Celimontana* by Giacomo Lauro, Roma 1614.

⁸⁹ Laura Benocci describes this Secret Garden-complex in her book *Villa Celimontana* (note22), but she does not put it in relation to the Eagle-fountain, or the iconography of the Ganymede myth.

At the turn of the eighteenth century, two writers described the Eagle Fountain of Villa Celimontana, and both suggested that this fountain was a part of an iconographic programme celebrating the Mattei family; Filippo Baldinucci and D. Bernini.

In 1682, the renowned historian and artist Filippo Baldinucci (1625-1697) wrote his biography of Gianlorenzo Bernini⁹⁰. He lists a series of fountains made by the sculptor, among them the Eagle Fountain in Girolamo Mattei's Villa Celimontana. It is described as a huge eagle situated on a mountain which is identified as Mount Olympus:

*"...in altra fonte fatta per lo duca Girolamo Mattei per la sua famosa villa di Roma alla Navicella averebbe egli voluto far cosa grande e masteosa, ma l'acqua poteva alzarsi poco. Finse egli dunque monte Olimpo, sopra il quale figuro un' aquila volante, che e l'arme di quella casa, la quale benissimo alludeva anche al monte, a mezzo del quale effece vedere le nuvole, che non potendo alzarsi fino alla sommità dell'Olimpo, da quel posto tramandano le piogge."*⁹¹.

The eagle, on the other hand, is not named, and Baldinucci simply describes it as "an eagle corresponding to the family's coat of arms", i.e. the eagle of Giove or Jupiter. He also declares that the sculpture "alludes perfectly to Mount Olympus". The last statement might be interpreted to mean that fountain depicts a scene from the myth of Jupiter and Ganymede, i.e. when the god is about to leave the Olympic mountain in the shape of an eagle.

The second eighteenth century writer is D. Bernini, who wrote a monograph about Gianlorenzo Bernini in 1713. Like Baldinucci, he suggests that the Eagle Fountain in Villa Celimontana depicts Jupiter on top of the tall Mount Olympus:

*"Haveva poca altezzal'acqua di quella Fontana ancora. Fins' egli dunque il Monte Olimpo, et a piedi di esso alcune nuvole, che non potendosi sollevare alla somnita di quell' altissimo monte, daquell posto tramandano abbondante copia d'acqua, e sopra il monte figuro un Aquila di volo sublime che allude non solo all'arme di quella casa, ma benissimo ancora al monte accenato"*⁹².

⁹⁰ Filippo Baldinucci; *Vita di G. L. Bernini*, Rome 1682, Reprinted Milan 1821.

⁹¹ Filippo Baldinucci; *Vita di G.L. Bernini*, Milano 1821, p.141.

⁹² D. Bernini: *La vita del cavalier Gianlorenzo Bernini*, Rome 1713.

Hence, the flying eagle alludes not only to the coat of arms and the family name, but might also be interpreted as a representation of the Jupiter-eagle in the second before he leaves the Olympic Mountain, to fly down to Mount Ida where Ganymede watches his herd.

4.g. Conclusion

The Mattei had several properties in addition to the buildings mentioned above, for instance Loggia Mattei on the Palatine Hill, the castles in Belmonte, Antuni, and Castel San Pietro in Lazio, the family chapels in Santa Maria in Aracoeli and Santa Caterina in Funari.

The majority of the Matteis' monuments and buildings appear to have represented the same iconographic theme, since there are certain elements - the eagle and the young, naked boy – that are repeated in much of the architecture and many of the works of art belonging to the family. These two elements seen together can be interpreted as a representation of the myth of Jupiter and Ganymede.

CHAPTER 5: THE TURTLES

5.a. Introduction

The iconography of the fountain in Piazza Mattei was altered in the 1660s when the four turtles were added to the monument, after which its name was also changed, from Fontana delli Mattei to Fontana delle Tartarughe. The fact that the iconography was changed nearly eighty years after the fountain's original completion makes one wonder if the turtles were added to distract the viewer from the original theme. If this was the case then perhaps the turtles are somehow linked to the young boys in the older iconography. However, prior research has not agreed on any iconographic theme regarding the turtles, and they have been judged to be nothing more than exotic ornamentation. It has been suggested that the artist responsible for the design of the turtles was the baroque artist Gianlorenzo Bernini, and that the alteration took place in 1658⁹³.



Figur 40: Fontana delle Tartarughe: detail; the raised hand and the turtle. photo:thais.it/scultura

⁹³ Fehl: p.129, Pocino: p.209, and D'Onofrio: p.130, states 1658 as the year of the addition of the turtles. Benocci states 1658-59 as the year of the addition of the turtles, Benocci: p.190. Thomas Eser suggests 1660 as the year of this alteration of the iconography: Eser p.265.

Firstly, the turtles are so realistic that they might have been made out of moulds made of real animals, a method Bernini often used for details in his sculptures (Figure 42)⁹⁴.

Secondly, the four cartouches on the fountains lower basin were adorned with the inscription:

“ALEXANDER VII – RESTAVRAVIT - ORNAVTIQVE – ANNO PONTIF. IV”

The fountain was not only restored (restavravit), but also decorated (ornavtiqve), and it is likely that this alludes to the turtles, even though the oldest known documentation of the turtles is a print made by G. B. Falda in 1675, i.e. fifteen years later⁹⁵.

Pope Alexander VII was elected pope in 1655, so the fourth year of Pope Alexander VII's pontificate would be 1659. As mentioned before, (in chapter 2.a.v “The later elements”) prior research history has stated 1658 and 1660 to be the year of the addition of the turtles. But according to the inscription, my hypothesis would be that the turtles were added in 1659.

In the following chapter I shall examine the possibility that the turtles are more than just exotic elements; they may in fact be representations of the fountain's original iconographic theme.

5.b. The Turtle as an Iconographic Element

The turtle is not a frequent motif in Western art. A contemporary of Giacomo della Porta's, the historian Valeriano Bolzani, devoted four whole pages to the animal in his “Hieroglyphica”, but he does not stress any particular interpretation of the turtle, except the term “Festina Lente” (“make haste slowly”)⁹⁶. Compared to other marine animals, e.g. the ever popular dolphin, the turtle has never been a fashionable iconographic element.

In his dictionary of symbols and signs the art historian James Hall uses the same term as Varagnoli, and states that the turtle was the symbol of “Festina Lente”⁹⁷. This is the symbolism behind the use of turtles in Cosimo de' Medici coat of arms in the early fifteenth century.

In Pauly-Wissova's iconographic encyclopaedia, “Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertums-wissenschaft”, the turtle is said to represent merely five figures in the ancient world: Asclepius (the god of healing), Aischylos (the dramatist), Apollo (the god of

⁹⁴ Fehl, p.136.

⁹⁵ *Pianta di Roma* by Giovanni Battista Falda, Roma 1676.

⁹⁶ *Hieroglyphica* by G.P. Valeriano Bolzani, Lyon 1602 (first ed. 1556), in Garland Publishing, Inc. New York and London 1976.

⁹⁷ *Halls dictionary of subjects and symbols in art*, by James Hall, Clays Ltd, London 1974, p.135.

the sun), a character in one of Aesop's fables, and one of the attributes of Jupiter Sabazius⁹⁸. The last figure is a deity based on late Roman syncretism, and the only one of the five with any known relation to the myth of Jupiter and Ganymede.

5.b.i. Syncretisms

A syncretism is a blend of different deities, wherein the characteristics and attributes of the new god are based on the features of the earlier ones⁹⁹. In addition to fusions involving Greek and Roman deities, Western syncretisms could also incorporate Asian and African deities:

“A sort of religious experimentalism was going on, which tended to unite different deities into one figure, to bestow on one deity titles and characteristics of others, and to bring together cults which originally had no connection with each other”¹⁰⁰

These processes flourished as an indirect result of the decline of the Roman Empire: as the Romans began to lose control over the colonies, the traditional religions and cults merged with the Roman deities, thus creating syncretisms. Before long, they were present in the entire Roman Empire, and the people who worshipped them often wore amulets or small figurines symbolising the deity. These objects of worship included all the attributes of the deities involved in the syncretism.

5.b.ii. Jupiter Sabazius

One of these late Roman syncretisms was Jupiter Sabazius (Figure 43). Sabazius was a Phrygian god whose mystery cult spread to the Greek world, and later to the Roman Empire where it became quite popular¹⁰¹. According to early Greek sources, Jupiter Sabazius was the Phrygian identity of the Roman god Bacchus, but in Lydia and Phrygia the deity was equated with Jupiter¹⁰².

⁹⁸ *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* by Georg Wissowa, „Band 7: Fornax-Helikeia“, Stuttgart 1912, side

⁹⁹ *Peter and Paul - History, Cult and Memory in the Early Centuries*, by Fabrizio Bisconti e.a., Electa, Milano 2000, pp.11-13 .

¹⁰⁰ *Peter and Paul - History, Cult and Memory in the Early Centuries*, by Fabrizio Bisconti e.a., Electa, Milano 2000, p.11.

¹⁰¹ “*Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*” by August Friedrich von Pauly and Georg Wissowa, Metzlersher Verlag, Stuttgart 1894, Band I A2: Saale-Samathon: Sabazios.

¹⁰² *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, by Hans Cristoph Ackermann, Artemis Verlag, Zürich 1997, volume 8, p.1069.

Modern historians believe him to be a syncretism of Jupiter (the king of the gods), Apollo (the sun god), Mithras (the Phrygian god of fertility and the world's creation), and Bacchus (the god of wine and symposium)¹⁰³. Jupiter Sabazio was also closely connected to the Jewish Jahve, which is interesting since the fountain is located to the Roman Ghetto for the Jewish population¹⁰⁴.



Figure 41: Bust of Jupiter Sabazius, cast in bronze, second-third century A.D., Vatican Museums, photo: Fabrizio Bisconti: *Peter and Paul – History, Cult and Memory in the Early Centuries*, Milan 2000, p.12 .

The believers of Jupiter Sabazius wore figurines or amulets portraying Jupiter Sabazius to protect themselves against the *matiasma* (the “evil eye”) or bad luck. One of these figurines (figure 44) consists of a bust of the deity with some of his most common attributes: the bearded face of Jupiter, an eagle on his right shoulder, the pine cone of Bacchus, the serpent entwined around a staff which symbolizes Asclepius, and finally, on the chest, the scene of Mithras slaying a bull.

A more popular representation of the god was the so-called hands of Sabazius (figure X). These were small bronze sculptures in the shape of a life-size hand, decorated with all attributes belonging to the Jupiter Sabazius. Most of them are recognisable, but the meaning

¹⁰³ Encyclopedia Italiana, p.1068-1070.

¹⁰⁴ Op.cit. p.1068-1070.

of several of the symbols has been lost. One such representation is found on a print by Cassiano



Figure 42: Sabazius-hand, print by Cassiano dal Pozzo, 1649, from Ingo Herklotz: *Cassiano dal Pozzo und die Archäologie des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Munich 1999, Fig.21 p.157.

dal Pozzo (1588-1657), which show the caduceus of Mercury (another staff entwined by a serpent), the serpent of Asclepius, a frog, a salamander, a scale, the pine cone of Bacchus, etc¹⁰⁵. These symbols were intended to protect the owner against illness, infertility and bad luck.

Another drawing by dal Pozzo (figure 45) shows the hand of Sabazius flattened, with all the symbols of the deity clearly visible. In addition to the decorations mentioned above, we

¹⁰⁵ In the seventeenth century Cassiano dal Pozzo also lead an excavation in the area of Palazzo Mattei di Giove, to excavate the remains of Circo Flaminio (See Ingo Herklotz: *Cassiano dal Pozzo und die Archäologie des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Munich 1999 and *Forma Urbis Romae* by Rodolpho Lanciani, Roma 1899, Plate “Circus Flaminus” Figure 16 in chapter 2.).

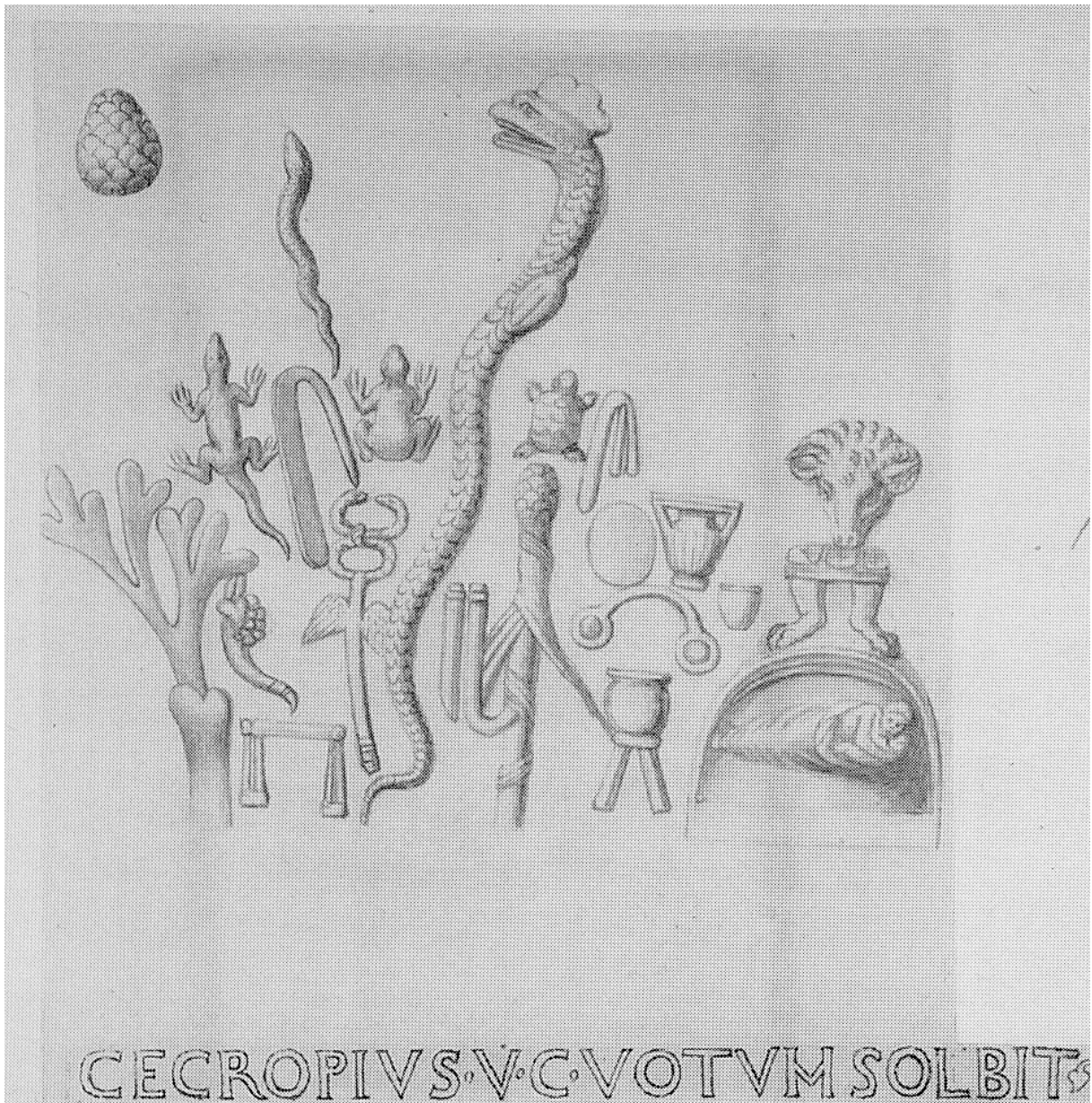


Figure 43: Sabazius-hand flattened, print by Cassiano dal Pozzo, 1649, from Ingo Herklotz: *Cassiano dal Pozzo und die Archäologie des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Munich 1999.

find a dragon-like serpent, five unidentified tools, two pots, an amphora, a mother with her child, the head of a capricorn and the turtle. The symbolism of the turtle and the other elements is not known, but it is clear that they all played an important role in the cult of Jupiter Sabazius, since each of them is found on other Sabazius-hands as well. Where the different elements are in relation to each other seems to have been important, since they are always found on the same part of the Sabazius-hands: for instance, the dragon-like serpent and the pine cone are located to the ring finger and the thumb, respectively.

5.b.iii. Mithras

One of the deities in the Sabazian syncretism was Mithras, a sun god of Phrygian origin. The cult of Mithras was exclusively male, and the temples were located to small caves beneath the ground: “mithreum”. In the city of Rome there were as many as 39 mithreums; one of these was located to the area of Isola Mattei and another lay close to the Mattei’s Villa Celimontana on Monte Celio¹⁰⁶.

In the mid-sixteenth century, Maertens van Heemskerck (1498-1574) made a drawing of a marble fragment found in an excavation on Monte Celio (figure 46). According to Pirro Ligorio this relievo was found in the area close to Santa Maria Domnica, inside the park of Villa Celimontana¹⁰⁷. The scene depicted shows Mithras slaying the bull (the Tauromachy),

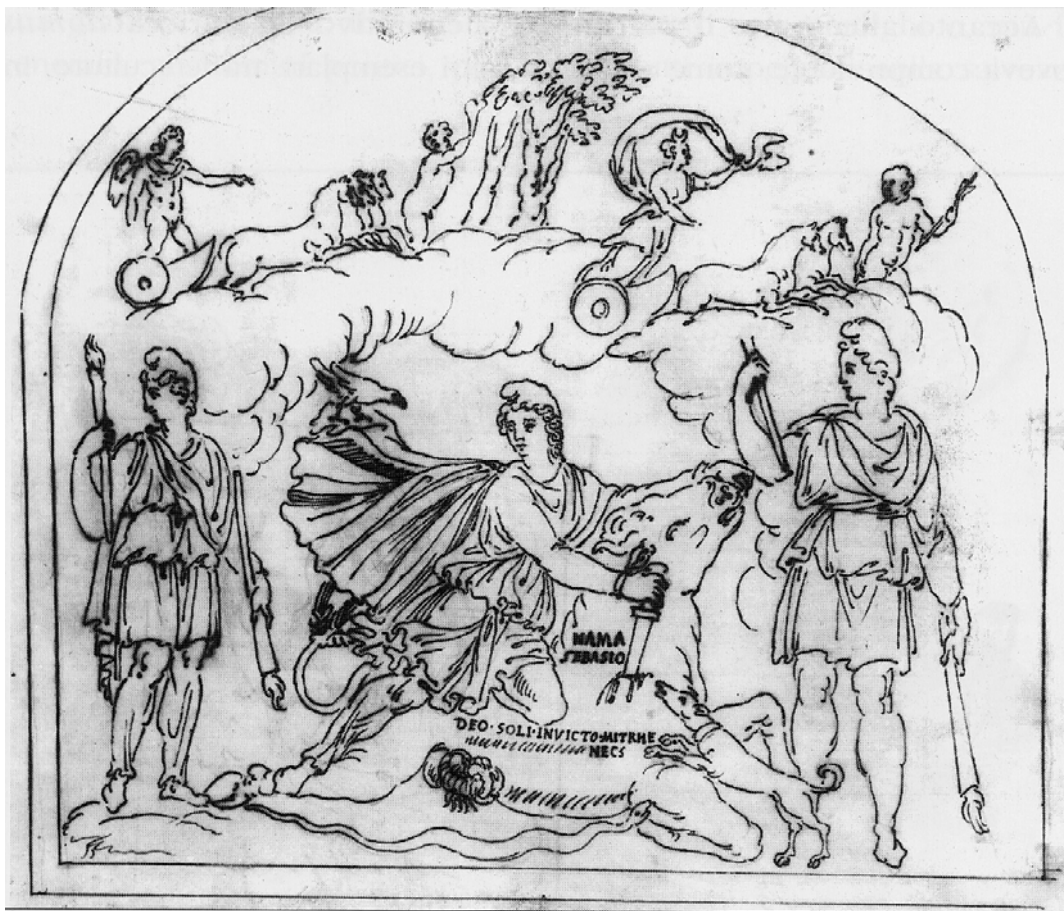


Figure 44: Mithras slaying the bull, M.v.Heemskerck, mid sixteenth century, from Filippi, Elena: *Maaerten van Heemskerck Invention urbis*. Milan 1990.

¹⁰⁶ *Roma Mithraica* by Carlo Pavia, Carlo Lorenzini Editore, Roma 1986, p.17. *Crypta Balbi – Fori imperiali* by ed. Serena Baiani, Edizioni Kappa, Roma 2000, p.31, plate 1 and plate 40. Also inside the cortile of Palazzo Mattei di Giove it is a relievo depicting Mithras slaying the bull, this relievo was made as a part of the stucco decorations made by Donato Mazzo of the palace in the late sixteenth century. See chapter 4.e.

¹⁰⁷ Mandowsky, Erna and Charles Mitchell: *Pirro Ligorio’s Roman Antiquities*, London 1963, p.62.

but it also features the rest of the objects, animals and persons traditionally associated with Jupiter Sabazius.

Heemskerck documented the following Latin inscription on the Celio marble fragment¹⁰⁸:

NAMA SEBASIO ----- DEO-SOLI-INVICTO-MITHRAE

which translates as “I am Sabazius, the god of the rising sun Mithras”. In other words, Heemskerck had documented, not only the antique Mithras fragment, but also a connection between this deity and Jupiter Sabazius.

Most Mithras sculptures picture a scene from the life of Mithras, i.e. when he saved the world from darkness and death by slaying the bull representing the dark forces. As can be seen in the drawing of the relievo from Persepolis (figure 47) the god is dressed in the typical Phrygian outfit: the Phrygian hat, pyjama-like pants, a shirt and a short cloak, and in his raised hand he holds the dagger with which he kills the bull¹⁰⁹. On the ground there is a dog drinking the bull’s blood, and a scorpion and a snake attacking the dying animal. The three animals symbolise the circle of life,



Figure 45: Mithras slaying of the bull, fragment from the ruins of Persepolis, Guiseppe Maria Sesti: *Le dimore del cielo – Archeologia e Mito delle Costellazioni* by, Novecento Editori, Rome 1987, p.458.

¹⁰⁸ This marble relievo is today a part of the Vatican Collection. Since the relievo is polychrome, the inscription on the chest of the bull might have been painted on the bull, not chiselled out in the marble. See *Roma Mithraica* by Carlo Pavia, Carlo Lorenzini Editore, Rome 1986, p.46.

¹⁰⁹ The Macedonian city of Persepolis was rediscovered in 1620.

since plants grow where the dying bull's blood soaks the ground . The helpers of Mithras; Cautes and Cautopates, are found to the sides of the scene; these characters are often interpreted as symbols of the sunrise and sunset, respectively, or spring and autumn. Sometimes the god is also followed by an eagle, a raven and, finally, a turtle(to the bottom left in figure 47). As is the case with the Sabazius-hands, the symbolism of the turtle is unknown.

The turtle is one of the attributes of Jupiter Sabazius, the syncretism made of, among other gods of earlier origin, Mithras. Since the turtle is depicted as an attribute of Mithras, it must have come to the Sabazius-hand as a companion of the Phrygian deity.

In Roman mythology the Phrygian sun god became associated with Aquarius, as did another Phrygian deity: the demigod Ganymede¹¹⁰. The young boy was turned into the constellation by Jupiter as a bestowal upon his father, King Tros¹¹¹. Mithras became a part of the zodiac because the taumachia-scene features its twelve signs: the bull is Orion, the dog is Sirius (the brightest star in Canis Major), the raven is Hydra, the scorpion is Scorpio, Cautes and Cautopates are the rising and setting Venus, and Mithras is represented by Aquarius¹¹².

Both Mithras and Ganymede were Phrygian shepherds. Ganymede was watching his sheep on Mount Ida when he was enraptured by Jupiter, whereas Mithras was named the Good Shepherd by his worshippers – since he lead the way to the good (“ho fuggito il male, ho trovato il meglio”). Both are often depicted wearing a short cloak, a Phrygian hat and a pyjama-like pants, though Mithras wears these Phrygian clothes more often than Ganymede. Examples of this iconographic tradition can be found in the illustrations in LIMC, figure 20-22, chapter 3.a.i.

¹¹⁰ Guiseppe Maria Sesti: *Le dimore del cielo – Archeologia e Mito delle Costellazioni* by, Novecento Editori, Roma 1987, pp.62-63.

¹¹¹ Guiseppe Maria Sesti, *Le dimore del cielo- Archeologia e Mito delle Costellazioni* by Novecento Editori, Roma 1987, p. 223, Boroli, Paolo: *Atlante di Astronomia*, Novara 1999, p.36, Kruszynski, Anette: *Der Ganymed-Mythos in Emblematik und mythographischer Literatur des 16.Jahrhunderts*, Worms 1985, pp.87-89. Klauser, Theodor: *Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum*, Stuttgart 1972, pp.1036-1037.

¹¹² Guiseppe Maria Sesti: *Le dimore del cielo – Archeologia e Mito delle Costellazioni* by, Novecento Editori, Roma 1987, pp.62-63.

To summarise this section 5.b.; Ganymede and Mithras had the same origin (Phrygian), they wore more or less the same clothing, i.e. the traditional Phrygian outfit, both were shepherds, and both were represented by the zodiacal constellation Aquarius. Ganymede's relation to Jupiter is known from the Roman mythology, while the links between Mithras and Jupiter are documented in the syncretism of Jupiter Sabazius. Thus we find that the turtle and Ganymede are linked in two ways: through Mithras and through Jupiter Sabazius, the former because of the common zodiacal sign and the Phrygian origin of the two shepherds, and the latter because of the myth of Ganymede and Jupiter.

5.c. The intellectual milieu in Baroque Rome

If the papal architect Gianlorenzo Bernini was the artist responsible for the designs of the turtles, then it is important to establish whether he knew of the link between the myth of Ganymede and the turtle. To do that, we have to examine the intellectual milieu which Bernini was a part of: the circle around Pope Alexander VII in Baroque Rome.

Gianlorenzo Bernini remained a close friend of the pope through his whole pontificate, which lasted from 1655 till his death in 1667. Judging from Alexander VII's diary, partly published by Richard Krautheimer, there seems to have been almost daily contact between the two men¹¹³. Bernini also had close contact with his friend and former patron Maffeo Barberini, who was elected Pope Urban VIII in 1623.

Like Bernini, the historian Cassiano dal Pozzo served under Urban VIII, and in the early seventeenth century he was a part of the learned and artistic circle around Cardinal Francesco Barberini, the pope's uncle. As seen in chapter 5.b.ii, Cassiano dal Pozzo documented the Roman syncretism of Sabazius. The future Pope Alexander VII Fabio Chigi was also closely connected to this circle, and it was from him, through Cardinal Barberini, that Cassiano dal Pozzo received many animals and plants which he used in his documentation for his famous Museo Cartaceo or Paper Museum which were to come¹¹⁴.

¹¹³ *The diary of Alexander VII- Notes on Art, artists and Architecture* by Richard Krautheimer and Roger B.S. Jones, *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, Band Fünfzehn, Verlag Ernst Wasmuth, Tübingen 1975, p.199-233.

¹¹⁴ Ingo Herklotz: *Cassiano dal Pozzo und die Archäologie des 17.Jahrhunderts*, Munich 1999.

Thus, both dal Pozzo and Bernini were a part of the same intellectual milieu, and the former's documentation and discoveries may have informed the sculptor about turtles being attributes of Jupiter. Furthermore, they both worked for the same papal patron: first Urban VII and then Alexander VII, and it was the latter who in 1659 commissioned the turtles for the Fontana delle Tartarughe.

5.d. Summary

The four turtles were added to the fountain in 1659, nearly eighty years after the completion of the original Fontana delle Tartarughe. They have been interpreted as exotic elements with no other iconographic theme than the general adage “Festina Lente”. The turtle has had several iconographic meanings through history, however, for instance as a attribute of Jupiter Sabazius, a syncretism with connections to Mithras, a Phrygian god with many similarities and links to Ganymede. Hence, all things considered, there exists an iconographic link between the turtle and the myth of Jupiter and Ganymede. This link was well known among the scholars of Baroque Rome, i.e. the intellectual milieu associated with Pope Alexander VII, where the assumed artist behind the turtles, Gianlorenzo Bernini, was among the most prominent figures. In other words, if Bernini was the artist responsible for the new elements in the fountain in Piazza Mattei, he might have chosen this particular animal because of his knowledge about the link to Ganymede.

CHAPTER 6: RECAPITULATION AND TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE ICONOGRAPHY

Introduction

In this section I intend to sum up the thesis and draw a tentative conclusion.

In the first chapter I presented the Florentine fountains made under the Medici, and the Roman bowl fountains that were reinvented by Giacomo della Porta.

In chapter two, I presented earlier interpretations of the iconography in the Turtle Fountain. Earlier research has not agreed on an iconographic theme, or even if such a theme exists, and this leaves room for new interpretations. My suggestion is that the theme is based on the myth of Jupiter and Ganymede, and draws from a rich tradition of Ganymede representations.

The third chapter dealt with the iconographic tradition of the Ganymede myth. The depictions presented have influenced the theory that there is a connection between the myth of Jupiter and Ganymede and the fountain¹¹⁵.

In the third chapter I examined various Mattei decorations and monuments which might be interpreted as representations of the Ganymede myth. It seems as though the majority of the Mattei's possessions depicted this Roman myth.

Finally, in chapter five I presented likely interpretations of the turtles, which represent the second iconographic theme in La Fontana delle Tartarughe. Since they were not a part of the original iconography, they have to be examined apart from the rest of the fountain's elements, and this examination lead us back to Roman mythology.

6.a. An iconographic programme for the Mattei?

Many historians are open to the possibility that the Mattei had an iconographic programme, it has been suggested by both contemporaries of the family and by modern researchers, but these scholars do not state any theory about what the theme of such a programme might be. However, all agree that the programme is closely connected to the family's coat of arms: the escutcheon picturing the eagle of Giove - the symbol of Jupiter.

¹¹⁵ The Mattei did not gain the name di Giove until twelve years after the completion of La Fontana delle Tartarughe, hence the eagle of Jupiter was not a part of their coat of arms until 1597. However, Jupiter was represented in a Mattei-monument before that; Taddeo Landini's (1550-1596) fountain in the cortile of Palazzo Girolamo Mattei, Piazza Mattei no.17, was an impressive depiction of this deity.

6.a.i. Baldinucci

In 1682 the renowned historian and artist Filippo Baldinucci (1625-1697) wrote a biography of Gianlorenzo Bernini, and in the second chapter he lists the fountains made by Bernini, one of which belonged to Muzio Mattei, son of Ciriaco Mattei and cousin of Asdrubale Mattei Duca di Giove (figure X)¹¹⁶. This fountain, as mentioned in previous chapter 4.f. was known as “Fontana dell’Aquila” (The Eagle Fountain), and it was located to the garden complex which today is known as Villa Celimontana,. The fountain featured a huge eagle hovering over a mountain peak which Baldinucci identified as Mount Olympus.:

*“Finse egli dunque il monte olimpo, sopra il quale figuro un’ aquila volante, che e l’arme di quella casa, la quale benissimo alludeva anche al monte, a mezzo del quale effece vedere le nuvole, che non potendo alzarsi fino alla sommità dell’Olimpo, da quel posto tramandano le pioggie.”*¹¹⁷

The eagle is not identified, however, but Baldinucci thinks it corresponds to eagle in the Mattei’s coat of arms, and to the Mount Olympus. In Roman mythology the only described scene when Jupiter is in the shape of an eagle and is about to leave the Olympic mountain, is in the context of the myth of Jupiter and Ganymede. The quotation above shows that the Mattei family did have an iconographical theme for the Fountain of the Eagle; it was not merely a depiction of an eagle, it was a representation of the Jupiter eagle – the symbol in their coat of arms.

6.a.ii. Modern Art Historians

As mentioned above, several modern art historians have suggested that the Mattei family had their own iconographic programme, but the three I have chosen to focus on do not seem to agree on what sort of iconographic programme the family had. Indeed, a Renaissance family seldom had but one iconographic programme, but used different myths and themes in different contexts and locations. For instance, the Barberini family usually had the bee as their insignia, but a wide range of other iconographic themes can found on their properties. The Matteis does not appear to be an exception to this rule.

¹¹⁶ ...in altra fonte per lo duca Girolamo Mattei per la sua famosa villa di Roma alla Navicella avrebbe egli voluto far cosa grande e masteosa, ma l’acqua poteva alzarsi poco...in F. Baldinucci “Vita di G.L. Bernini” Milano 1821, p.141. (in Carla Benocci “Villa Celimontana “ p.130): .

¹¹⁷ Baldinucci p.141 in Benocci p.130.

In “Zur geschichte des Palazzo Mattei di Giove” G. Panofsky-Söergel documents the family’s collection of Antique emperors. She suggests that this collection was used to prove their genealogic link to the ancient rulers.

Another programme is presented by E. Blair MacDougall in “Fountains, Statues and Flowers. Studies in Gardens of the 6th Centuries”¹¹⁸. According to Blair MacDougall, the programme of Ciriaco Mattei, owner of Villa Celimontana, was based on four factors: local history, myths linked to the site of the villa – strongly connected to the owner, his genealogy and his date of birth.

A third, thorough account of the Mattei family’s buildings and antiques was written by Claudio Varagnoli and published under the title “Palazzo Mattei di Paganica e l’Encyclopedia Italiana”. The author does not mention the Ganymede-myth, but he does propose the theory that the symbol of the Jupiter eagle is the basis of an iconographic programme. According to Varagnoli, the Jupiter eagle was an allusion to Asdrubale Mattei’s coat of arms:

*”Nel salone di Palazzo Mattei si alternano nei cassettoni laterali... con in mezzo il busto di un’ aquila, che potrebbe essere interpretata come una allusione all’elemento araldico nella stemma del padrone di casa”*¹¹⁹

In other words, the eagle was an allusion to Asdrubale’s dukeship of Giove.

In 1561 Onofrio Panvinio (+1562) wrote “De Gente Nobili Matthaëia Liber”, a genealogic opus recording the history of the Mattei family, dedicated to Muzio Mattei¹²⁰. Unfortunately, “Le gente Matthaëia Liber” was not accessible in the Vatican Library during my stay in Rome, so I have not been able to study it myself. Therefore, I have used “Palazzo Mattei di Paganica e l’Encyclopedia Italiana” by author Claudio Varagnoli as a secondary source, even though he does not cover the subject of an iconographic programme in much depth. He does mention, however, that La Fontana delle Tartarughe was used as a symbol of the family’s importance in the Ghetto:

“La fontana puo essere quindi considerata un segno di appropriazione, seppure simbolica, di un spazio esterno – come se l’espansione di Mattei non forse piu ristretta ai soli limiti dell’isolato secondo un programma di celebrazione della

¹¹⁸ Elisabeth Blair MacDougall: Fountains, Statues and Flowers. Studies in gardens of the 16th centuries. Washington 1994.

¹¹⁹ Claudio Varagnoli, Bruschi, Amaldo e.a.: “I Palazzi dei mattei: Il rapporto con la città” in *Palazzo Mattei di paganica e l’Encyclopedia Italiana*, Rome 1996, p.³²¹

¹²⁰ Onofrio Panvinio: De gente Nobili Matthaëia Liber, Rome 1561.

*famiglia che trova il suo parallelo nell'opera genealogica di Onofrio Panvinio sulla Gens Mattheia, dedicate propria a Muzio.”*¹²¹

Varagnoli claims that the Mattei family had a celebrational programme which included the Turtle Fountain, even though the fountain was located to the public piazza. He says the fountain was considered a symbol of the Mattei family's numerous properties, as well as their power in counter-reformation Rome.

This celebrational programme was described in the “Gens Mattheia” written by Onofrio Panvinio, and commissioned by Muzio Mattei – the patron of the same fountain.

6.b The Myth of Jupiter and Ganymede: An Iconographic Programme for the Mattei Family?

The eagle of Jupiter is a frequently used symbol in the properties of the Mattei family, and combined with a young, naked boy it represents the myth of Jupiter and Ganymede. It is possible to find several such depictions in the family's possession, so many, in fact, that it is a reasonable to assume that the myth represented a iconographic programme for the Mattei family.

The first documented depiction of the Ganymede myth in the Mattei's possession is the frescoed lunette in Palazzo Mattei Paganica, painted by Dello Zaga in 1546-47. It was followed by the two fountains made by Taddeo Landini from the 1580s, i.e. the Jupiter Fountain in Palazzo Girolamo Mattei and the Turtle Fountain with the nude boys, found in Palazzo Girolama Mattei and Piazza Mattei, respectively. When taken together these two fountains could be interpreted as an representation of the myth of Jupiter and Ganymede, featuring both the god and the young prince.

After Asdrubale Mattei was appointed Duca di Giove in 1597, the coat of arms depicting the Jupiter eagle would hang just above the front door of Palazzo Girolamo Mattei: establishing an even more obvious link between the four bronzes and the symbol of the eagle. The eagle in the coat of arms would appear to be flying towards the piazza, while the young Ganymede extended his arm towards him.

Sixty years after the completion of La fontana delle Tartarughe, Michelangelo Merisi Caravaggio made a famous canvas for Giacomo Mattei, who lived in Piazza Mattei no.17.

¹²¹ From “Palazzo Mattei di Paganica e l'Enciclopedia Italiana ” by Claudio Varagnoli in *I Palazzi dei Mattei: il rapporto con la città. P.321.*

Depicting a young naked boy sitting in a rather strange contraposto, it repeats the iconographic features of the boys in the Turtle Fountain outside the palace. According to contemporary art historians this painting depicted a shepherd, and since the only naked shepherd known from Roman mythology is Ganymede it is fair to assume that the boy on the canvas represents the Phrygian shepherd.

The residence of Asdrubale Mattei was adorned with details depicting Jupiter in the shape of an eagle, but he could also be seen as himself, e.g. in a big statue standing in the stairway leading up to primo piano. Placed on the top of a base, it would have appeared even more impressive because of its important location.

Finally, I would like to mention an antique fragment found in the cortile of Palazzo Mattei di Giove, which depicts the myth of Ganymede; a small tondo with the eagle of Jupiter standing behind the young and naked Ganymede.

Castello di Giove, its surrounding fief, and the title Duca di Giove passed to Asdrubale Mattei in 1597, and after that “di Giove” was added to the family’s name. On the façade of the palace there is a hovering stucco eagle overlooking the piazza, which can be interpreted as yet another symbol of the myth. It represents the eagle the moment before he swoops down to Mount Ida to carry Ganymede away. In addition, there is a fresco made by Domenichino inside the palace which may depict the enthroned Jupiter followed by Ganymede, but this possibility has not yet been properly investigated.

The next Jupiter representation to come into the Mattei’s possession was Castello Rocca Sinibalda, which passed to the family in 1600. The palace itself is built in the shape of an eagle, but there are also numerous eagle-details decorating its interior, and in one of the salone there is a frieze which was made after the Mattei bought the castle. This frescoed frieze depicts putti serving grapes and wine to a crowned eagle, it can be interpreted as a Mannerist version of Ganymede, who was the young cupbearer of crowned Jupiter, the king of the gods.

Finally, there is the most spectacular representation of the myth, which is found in Villa Celimontana. When the property was renovated in the 1620s Giacomo dell’ Duca made a small pastoral scene featuring a shepherd and his animals, all chiselled out in stucco, which was placed in a secret garden in the eastern part of the grandiose park. About twenty years later, Gianlorenzo Bernini made his famous fountain of the eagle, which was situated to the same area as the pastoral scene. According to the artist’s contemporaries, the fountain is a representation of the Jupiter eagle, and seen in the context of each other the eagle and the shepherd might be interpreted as a representation of the myth of Jupiter and Ganymede: the Jupiter eagle is about to leave Mount Olympus, while the unsuspecting Ganymede watches

his herd on Mount Ida. In other words, the Bernini fountain represents Jupiter in the moment before the Rape of Ganymede.

Taken together, these monuments form an iconographic programme which seems to have been used by the Mattei family.

6. d. The Boys in Fontana delle Tartarughe – Representations of Ganymede?

For a long time, the young boys in the Turtle Fountain have been interpreted as efebi, or sons of Neptune. An efeb is not a specific mythological personification, but a general figure depicted as young boy or man, surrounded by marine attributes, and in close proximity to water, e.g. a fountain. The efebi have no iconographic content other than being the sons and helpers of Neptune and his nymphs.

If one takes into consideration the other Mattei properties and the name di Giove, this interpretation is rather unsatisfactory. It would be strange if most of the decorations in buildings, monuments and works of art belonging to the Mattei family represented the myth of Ganymede and Jupiter, while the most popular monument in their possession deviated from this iconographic programme.

The pose of the four bronze boys in the Turtle Fountain is another characteristic of antique depictions of Ganymede. The efebi's raised arms reach towards the sky in a pose which does not seem to have any practical explanation unless they represent reaching towards the neck of the Jupiter eagle, as seen in the Leochares version (figure 22). All the efebi bend and lift a knee, like a mannered version of the bent knee in the antique Ganymede versions (figure 20-21). The efebi's other arms stretch backwards in a pose which also mirrors the antique Ganymede representations, where the shepherd has his arm behind him as if to protect himself from the eagle coming flying down. Finally, they rest their other legs on the base of the fountain, as if trying to keep their balance, similar to Ganymede's pose when he is lifted by Jupiter. All things considered, the strange contraposto of the boys in the Turtle Fountain seem to match the classical pose of most Ganymede representations.

Taking into consideration the efebi's lack of attributes, these young bronze boys seem to fit into the classical iconographic tradition of Ganymede representations, where the Phrygian shepherd was depicted with the Jupiter eagle and his characteristic pose as his only attributes.

Conclusion:

Looking through the Mattei properties with the myth of Jupiter and Ganymede in mind, a new iconographic theme appears before our eyes. From dello Zaga's first depiction in Palazzo Mattei Paganica in 1541 till the last representation of the myth in Gianlorenzo Bernini's Villa Celimontana "Fountain of the Eagle" in 1642, the shepherd and the eagle made up the family's iconographic programme. Used for over a hundred years, it is the most consistent theme in the Mattei family properties, and could once be found in at least twelve parks, castles and works of art.

The Turtle Fountain is no exception from this iconographic programme; in fact, there are few mattheian works of art in which the myth more noticeable than La Fontana delle Tartarughe. Questions raised in earlier research, for instance relating to the lack of attributes, the strange contraposto or the lack of an iconographic theme in the fountain, may all be answered if the iconography is taken from the myth of Jupiter and Ganymede: the Antique iconographic tradition of Ganymede explains the strange contraposto, the nudity and the lack of attributes in the bronze boys in Piazza Mattei.

In addition, the exotic turtles that gave the fountain its new name in 1659 are also linked to this iconography, since the turtle was an attribute of the Late Roman syncretism Jupiter Sabazio and that of Mithras. I have discovered that there are many connections between the turtle and the myth of Jupiter and Ganymede; that there are similarities, not only between Jupiter and Jupiter Sabazio, but also between the Phrygian sun god Mithras, who is believed to have been a part of the syncretism, and Ganymede.

Hence, the myth of Ganymede is not only represented in the iconography of the original design of La Fontana delle Tartarughe from 1585, but even in that of the four turtles made in 1659.

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