

## THE FIGURE OF HERCULES AND THE PATH OF VIRTUS. SPIRITUAL AND ICONOGRAPHIC MOTIFS

The translation of the *Heroides* by Octavien de Saint-Gelais, dedicated to Charles VIII, is contained in various richly decorated manuscripts. In particular, a codex in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris includes twenty-one illuminated pages that show, for the most part, an image of the heroine in the act of writing a letter to her lover<sup>1</sup>. The printed editions, too, tend predominantly to emphasize the genre of the poetic epistle rather than the letter's narrative content. This iconographical *topos* echoes the *scribentis imago* evoked by Ovid in two epistles; in the first, no. VII, Dido is about to write a letter to Aeneas, with her sword in her lap ready for her imminent suicide: *adspicias utinam, quae sit scribentis imago; scribimus, et gremio Troicus ensis adest*<sup>2</sup>. The simultaneity of the writing and the preparation of the weapon that will bring about her death is noted by illustrators of Ovid's work. In the manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Dido is shown seated at her table, her sword in her lap, writing the epistle to Aeneas, whose portrait hangs on the wooden panelling of her elegant little study<sup>3</sup>. In the second case cited, the *scribentis imago* is of Canace, who was bound to her brother Macareus by incestuous love<sup>4</sup>.

In contrast with the others, the miniature of Deianira does not show the heroine writing her letter, but a grieving woman whose gestures reveal her profound desperation (Figures 1-2). The epistle presents other unusual characteristics compared to the others, such as the arrival from outside of the news that Hercules was dying (l. 143), a new fact which changes what the heroine is writing: «The half-man Nessus sank down in lotus-bearing Evenus, tinging its waters with his equine blood. But why am I reciting things like these? Even as I write comes rumour to me saying my lord is dying of the poison from my cloak»<sup>5</sup>. In the background of the French miniature can be seen Hercules, dying in the fire, with an appearance similar to Christ's: with long hair and beard, dressed in a white tunic like the one worn by Jesus as reported in the Gospel of Luke (23:12). Brought before Herod, Christ is interrogated at length, but does not answer. Herod then dresses him in an *alba* tunic before sending him back to Pilate: *Sprevit autem illum Herodes cum exercitu suo et illisit indutum veste alba et remisit ad Pilatum*.

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\* I wish to thank Susan Scott for translating my essay into English.

<sup>1</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Richelieu Manuscrits Français 873. Some pages, however, illustrate a group of episodes from the same epistle, which frame the main picture, such as Oenone writing to Paris. Cf. CACIORGNA 2008, pp. 37-39.

<sup>2</sup> *Ov. Her.* 7. 185-186.

<sup>3</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Richelieu Manuscrits Français 873, fol. 42v.

<sup>4</sup> *Ov. Her.* 11. 7.

<sup>5</sup> *Ov. Her.* 9. 141-144. English translation by Grant SHOWERMAN 1914, p. 119.

## HOLY-WATER FONTS BY ANTONIO FEDERIGHI AND SALVATION FROM ORIGINAL SIN

Visitors entering the cathedral of Siena, near the beginning of the long central nave, find themselves at a sort of «fork in the road», represented by two holy-water fonts placed next to the right and left piers. These are celebrated works by Antonio Federighi, a favourite artist of the Piccolomini family (Figures 3-4)<sup>6</sup>. At the entrance to the church, an inscription in the pavement, dictated together with the iconographical program that connects Hermes Trismegistes to the Sibyls, invites visitors to adopt an attitude suitable for the sacredness of the spot: CASTISSIMUM VIRGINIS TEMPLUM CASTE MEMENTO INGREDI. In the Christian tradition the term *temple* alludes to Mary's womb and evokes the altar holding the Body of Christ<sup>7</sup>.

Carved of Carrara marble, each font stands on a round marble slab, set into the pavement, whose raised edge gives it a slightly concave form. Their shape brings to mind a candlestick whose shaft is supported by a pyramidal base. The stoup on the right rests on animal paws, and the one on the left on the heads of cherubs. The right-hand font presents three «prisoners», while the other, in that same position, shows winged putti riding dolphins. The basin at the top of the font on the right, which is fluted and adorned with festoons alternating with cherubs' heads and dolphins facing each other, is supported by mighty dragons, prehistoric animals intently devouring hard-shelled turtles. The basin atop the font on the left, whose lower part is decorated with broad grooves – a circle of beads separates this section from a band of cherubs' heads, shells, dolphins, palmette motifs, and medallions – is supported by three eagles that seem about to take flight, grasping a snake in their claws. The interior of the two basins is enlivened with animals and fresh-water fish.

No document has yet been found concerning the commission for the two fonts; nonetheless, we can deduce their date by comparing two inventories of the cathedral made after the middle of the fifteenth century. The inventory of 1458, «compiled and newly revised... at the time of the esteemed and magnificent knight Mister Cristofano di Filigi», contains a rubric («here below will be written numerous non-ordinary [«transordinarie»] things for the church») which lists «two large basins for holy water at the entrance to the church»<sup>8</sup>. As can be gathered from the subsequent inventory, these were two holy water fonts which were there before the ones by Federighi, since the 1467 inventory, drawn up «at the time of the magnificent and generous knight Mister Savino di Matteo d'Antonio di Ghuido», reports that «two *newly made* fonts, very beautiful and carved and illustrated» were located at the foot of the first two piers: «stanno a piei le due prime more della intrata della chiesa»<sup>9</sup>. Mentioned at the same time is «a basin at the pillar near the Door of Pardon»<sup>10</sup>. It is thus clear that Federighi's two fonts replaced

<sup>6</sup> In the nineteenth century, the literature attributes them to Jacopo della Quercia, even if the pedestal of the stoup on the right is thought to be an antique candlestick, reused for this purpose, as happened also with other works by the same artist. Gaetano Milanese attributes to Federighi «the basins of the two holy water fonts at the foot of the central nave of the Duomo, assigned without foundation to Giacomo della Quercia» (MILANESI 1854, t. II, p. 436, n. 310).

<sup>7</sup> R. Guerrini in CACIORGNA - GUERRINI 2004, p. 49, n. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Archivio dell'Opera della Metropolitana di Siena, 867, fol. 27v. Cf. also LUSINI 1939, p. 89, n. 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 15v. Cf. also LUSINI 1939, p. 89, n. 1.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 15v. Cf. also LUSINI 1939, p. 89, n. 1.

the earlier «basins», one of which was probably moved to a position by the chapel of Votive Offerings, close to the so-called «door of Pardon»<sup>11</sup>.

The year 1467 thus is the *terminus ante quem* for execution of the two works, the commission for which has been linked in any case with Cristoforo Felici, *Operaio del Duomo* from 24 July 1457<sup>12</sup>. Felici's term as rector is distinguished by his close relationship with Donatello and in general with the cultural and artistic milieu of his time<sup>13</sup>. His ties with the leading figures of the Piccolomini family, Pope Pius II first and foremost, and the pope's nephew Francesco Tedeschini, archbishop of Siena and a cardinal from 1460<sup>14</sup>, are of major importance.

Before making the two fountains in Siena, Federighi carved, before 1456, a holy water font for the cathedral of Orvieto, a building project where he served as *capomaestro*<sup>15</sup>. The decoration of this font already contains some of the iconographical motifs (eagles supporting the basin and putti riding dolphins) which he would take up again and develop in the fountains for Siena<sup>16</sup>.

Recent iconographical studies of the two works in Siena have highlighted the decorative elements as expressions of Neoplatonist thought in the second half of the fifteenth century. The font on the right would thus manifest the drama of the soul's fall from the heights of heaven to the violence of the physical world, while the one on the left would show the serenity of its climb back up. However, these two itineraries make up one sole discourse on human fragility, which the Grace of God redeems through the purification of cleansing with water<sup>17</sup>.

To my mind, a reading aimed at deciphering every detail of the rich ornamentation of the fountains would be complex and take us off course. We might be looking for a meaning by analyzing a mere detail inspired by the classical tradition that had been absorbed into the erudite repertory of the sculptor. With that said, and trying to grasp synthetically the meaning of the two decorative complexes, it seems clear that the most prominent subjects of the font on the left are the angels balancing on the dolphins' heads and a triad of eagles grasping snakes, with their wings spread to support the basin.

To interpret the symbol, frequent in art, of an eagle fighting a snake, reference is obligatory to the well-known essay by Rudolf Wittkower, who traces this theme starting with non-classical civilizations on through the ancient world up to the Christian era, when it takes on a greater number of meanings<sup>18</sup>. Among these is the idea that the eagle never grows old and begins a new life, as asserted in one of the Psalms: «he... renews your youth like an eagle's»<sup>19</sup>. On the symbolical plane, this refers to the resurrection of Christ but also of all Christians, obtained

<sup>11</sup> DEL BRAVO 1970, p. 79, n. 237.

<sup>12</sup> ANGELINI 2005, p. 136.

<sup>13</sup> On Cristoforo Felici, see ANGELINI 1994, pp. 268-272; MOSCADELLI 1996.

<sup>14</sup> ANGELINI 1994, pp. 263-264.

<sup>15</sup> On a holy water font whose authenticity is in doubt, found in a collection in London and attributed by Richter to Federighi at a date sometime between 1458 and 1462, see RICHTER 2008.

<sup>16</sup> RICHTER 2002, p. 200; ANGELINI 2005, p. 112 (Angelini notes that the eagle motif on the holy water font in Orvieto is derived from an invention by Giovanni Pisano, while the putti riding dolphins come from the well-known sarcophagus front in the Museo dell'Opera in Siena).

<sup>17</sup> GARGANESE 2006-2008.

<sup>18</sup> WITTKOWER 1938-1939, pp. 13-83; cf. especially pp. 41 ff.

<sup>19</sup> *Salmi* 102. 5.

through the grace conferred by the sacraments, baptism in particular<sup>20</sup>. The *Physiologus* recounts that as the eagle grows old, his flight becomes clumsy and his sight dims. He thus begins searching for a spring of pure water and then flies up towards the sun to burn away his old wings and the cloudiness from his eyes. He dips himself into the spring three times and is renewed, young once again. In the same way, when man's eyes grow cloudy, he should look towards Jesus Christ, the fount of purification and rejuvenation<sup>21</sup>. Another fundamental aspect of the symbolism of the eagle is the fight with the snake, which represents Christ's eschatological triumph over the devil, as affirmed in the *Sermones* by Pseudo-Ambrose: «just as the eagle devours serpents... so also does Christ our Lord, having dealt a deathblow to the serpent, that is to say torn the devil to shreds, in taking on human nature extinguished that sin which held mankind enslaved like a mortal illness»<sup>22</sup>. Just as the regal nature of the eagle enables the symbol to represent Jesus, so too the dolphin, which since antiquity has been an attribute of love, becomes in the Christian tradition an emblem of «Christ the friend», the Redeemer, who became incarnate for our salvation<sup>23</sup>.

The holy water contained in the basin of the font is thus the fount of renewal. The eagle represents Christ who, by being made flesh, liberated mankind from sin (the snake). Aspersion of the faithful with water upon entering the church is a gesture which commemorates their own baptism; guilt is destroyed and their life is renewed. The old Adam dies and a new creature is generated, destined to the kingdom which has no end<sup>24</sup>.

Moving now to examine the stoup on the right, we find dragons, in the Christian bestiary the personification of evil, of Satan and by extension of all his followers, i.e., sinners<sup>25</sup>. The «prisoners», too, as Michelangelo established, symbolize the human soul that has not been regenerated from sin, imprisoned in its body, its basest natural desires<sup>26</sup>. Two male figures are bound, while two female figures, although not tied by ropes, assume the same pose as the men<sup>27</sup>. The only sculpted figure whose identity is certain is that of Hercules wearing the head of the Nemean lion like a helmet (Figure 5). Christian exegetical tradition equates the figure of Hercules with that of Christ, and his legendary labours become moral victories over vice, to the point that the hero becomes the *Vitiorum Domitor*<sup>28</sup>. Contrary to this interpretation, the state of enslavement, being restrained by ropes, which characterizes the stoup's shaft, seems derived from Lattantius 1. 9, who describes Hercules as the slave of his own vices<sup>29</sup>, a hero gifted only with physical prowess but devoid of inner strength. At the same time, however, we can glimpse

<sup>20</sup> CICCARESE 2002, p. 111.

<sup>21</sup> ZAMBON 2002<sup>5</sup>, pp. 44-45.

<sup>22</sup> *Patrologia Latina* XVII, col. 695. Cf. WITTKOWER 1987, pp. 43, 76, n. 182. A visual reference to the fight between the eagle and the snake is inserted into one of the marble inlays in the pavement of Siena Cathedral, the *Expulsion of Herod* by Benvenuto di Giovanni. Cf. R. Guerrini, in CACIORGNA - GUERRINI 2004, p. 94; the scrolled crook of a crosier now in the Museo dell'Opera, made in the first half of the fourteenth century, terminates in the shape of a snake enclosing an eagle and the *Agnus Dei*: see [B. Tavolari], in GERARDI ET AL. 2006, pp. 306-307.

<sup>23</sup> CHARBONNEAU-LASSAY 2006, pp. 717-718.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. San Paolino da Nola, *Carmina varia* XXX, *Appendix I*.

<sup>25</sup> See Hesychius of Jerusalem, *Fragments on the Psalms* LXXIII (PG 93, 1241D-1244A).

<sup>26</sup> PANOFKY 1939, p. 266.

<sup>27</sup> GARGANESE 2006-2008, p. 154.

<sup>28</sup> WITTKOWER 1987, p. 200.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. GARGANESE 2006-2008, p. 156.

the hope of the struggle of good over evil, a moral reading of Hercules's defeat of the Nemean lion. What is more, the hero, when «at the crossroad» he wondered which path to take in his passage from childhood to youth, had chosen Virtue, which set him on a harsh and long road, rather than Vice, whose path was indicated as easy and short. This acted as an exhortation to visitors entering through the central door of the church to pursue a virtuous path of faith, which was granted to us by Christ's sacrifice. As the Gospel of John (19:28) tells us, Jesus, on the cross, «knew that everything had now been completed and, so that the scripture should be completely fulfilled, he said "I am thirsty"». A sponge soaked in vinegar was held up to his mouth, and after receiving the refreshment given to the tortured, before dying he uttered his last words, addressed to his father: *consummatum est*, it is finished<sup>30</sup>. This salvific theme at the entrance to the cathedral finds a meaningful echo in the inner portal of the Piccolomini Library with its illustration of *Adam and Eve Driven out of Paradise*, borrowed from Jacopo della Quercia, and the insertion of Saint Bernardine's monogram of Christ indicating redemption from sin and death through Jesus Christ<sup>31</sup>.

#### THE HOLY SATURDAY BASIN IN THE SAINT JOHN CHAPEL

On the left side of the cathedral chancel is the chapel of Saint John, built by Alberto Aringhieri to house the relic of the arm of Saint John the Baptist. The cultivated *Operaio del Duomo* belonged, as evidenced by his portrait frescoed near the chapel entrance, to the order of the Knights of Malta, whose patron saint is John the Baptist. When work on the chapel was finished, Aringhieri had this epigraph placed in front of it: QUIDAM D. ALBERTUS D. FRANC ARINGHERII EQUES RHODI NITIDE / TEMPLI HUIUS DECORATIONI INSTAURATIONIQ SOLERTI CURA / AC INDUSTRIA OPERARII OFFICIO FUNCTUS IIII ET XX ANNIS INSU / DANS SACELLUMQ HOC DIVO BAPT JOANNI EXTRUENS HOC SIBI UT / ERGASTULUM VIVENS LIBER. TRADATUR SPONTE CURAVIT A D MDIII<sup>32</sup>.

In the centre of the chapel stands the Holy Saturday basin, carved by Federighi between 1465 and 1468<sup>33</sup>. Eight panels are separated by twin fluted engaged pillars; six panels show scenes from *Genesis*<sup>34</sup>, while the other two are stories of Hercules. In the panel illustrating the first of his famous labours, the hero vigorously grasps the lion's jaws, an explication of the reference to this subject on the shaft of the font on the right, *Hercules and the Nemean Lion* (Figure 6)<sup>35</sup>. In the other panel the hero, with his club made from an uprooted olive tree, an attribute of his like the lion skin, is striking a hybrid creature, the centaur Nessus (Figure 7); thus the iconographical programs of the two sculpture projects (the Holy Saturday basin and the holy water fonts)

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Sen. *Her. O.* 1472. On Federighi's predilection for this mythological figure, see the essay by A. Angelini, *Antonio Federighi e il mito di Ercole* (ANGELINI 2005).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. GUERRINI 2009, pp. 162-165.

<sup>32</sup> Currently, due to a restorer's error, drawing also on the publication of a new edition of Alfonso Landi's «*Racconto del Duomo di Siena* [post 1655] 1992, p. 87, NITIDE has been transcribed as STETI DE. For the correct transcription of the epigraph, see *Guida storico-artistica* 1908, p. 217. The inscription presents some points that have not been clarified, like *vivens ergastulum*.

<sup>33</sup> LOSERIES 2009, p. 152.

<sup>34</sup> *The Creation of Adam, Creation of Eve, God Admonishing Adam and Eve, The Temptation of Eve, The Temptation of Adam, The Expulsion from Paradise*.

<sup>35</sup> On Federighi's predilection for this hero, see the analysis by ANGELINI 2005, pp. 105-149.

appear closely related. A symbolic tie, too, is suggested by their similar functions: on Easter Eve, when the resurrection of Christ is commemorated, the basin held the water blessed for use in the rite of baptism.

*Ovide moralisé*, a poem written in the early fourteenth century which interprets Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in an allegorical Christian key, is an important source for understanding the relation between the stories from Genesis and the scenes of Hercules shown on the basin. Book IX of *Ovide* makes numerous comparisons between Alcmena, mother of Hercules, and the Virgin Mary; the twelve labours and God's fights with the devil; and the betrayal of Deianira, deceived by the centaur Nessus, and the expulsion from Paradise, in which Deianira represents fallen man and Nessus the tempter devil<sup>36</sup>.

#### HERCULES ON THE PLINTH OF THE COLUMN AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE SAINT JOHN CHAPEL

Besides on the holy water fountains and the Holy Saturday basin, the figure of Hercules is found in Siena Cathedral also on the plinth of the column at the entrance to the Saint John Chapel, carved by Federighi probably within 1467<sup>37</sup>. The motifs taken from the classical repertory are imitated so skilfully by the sculptor that the piece could be mistaken for an archaeological object, an ancient sacrificial altar. Even though the base, together with its pendant by Giovanni di Stefano, was not designed for the chapel, nonetheless it must have been conceived to rest against something else since the sculpted decoration covers only three sides. On one side Hercules is seen returning from the first of his labours, with the Nemean lion across his shoulders, bent under the weight of the invulnerable monster (Figure 8). On the inner side, next to the chapel entrance, Hercules is seen from behind, with his long hair and strong muscles, his club outstretched and cloak lifted by the wind to show the pelt of the defeated lion, as he rides a horse holding the reins so forcefully as to cause it to rear (Figure 9). This may refer to the eighth labour, when with a blow of his club he struck the king of the Bistones, Diomedes of Thrace, who kept man-eating wild mares to whom he fed unknowing guests. After having knocked out the king, who is shown dying, the hero fed him to his own mares.

#### HERCULES IN THE LOGGIA DELLA MERCANZIA

Between 1463 and 1465, Federighi had worked on the right-hand bench at the Loggia della Mercanzia, which presents on its backrest an interesting cycle of Famous Men, the valorous heroes of Republican Rome and the supreme example for the governors of the city: Cicero, Brutus Minor, Brutus Major, Furius Camillus, and Cato the Younger<sup>38</sup>. Two nudes, a male and female, serve as armrests (Figure 10). The male figure placed on the left represents Hercules (Figure 11), as shown by the lion's head glimpsed behind his back. The female figure has now been identified as Deianira, thanks to an analysis of the relief carved on the short side of the bench, set beneath her. Here can be seen a nude woman riding a centaur, which refers to her

<sup>36</sup> PETROCCHI 1997, p. 91. Cf. GAETA 1954.

<sup>37</sup> ANGELINI 2005, p. 141.

<sup>38</sup> R. Guerrini, in CACIORGNA - GUERRINI 2003, pp. 61-72; 77-83; 86-94; 103-109.

kidnapping by the centaur Nessus (Figure 12)<sup>39</sup>. On the other side, corresponding to the position of Deianira, is a female figure holding in her hand the palm of victory, with a shield and sword in front of her (Figure 13). This is a representation of Hercules's victory in choosing *Virtus* over *Voluptas* and overcoming all his trials. At the same time, she is a figure of Wisdom-Virtue who rewards the hero for choosing her. This iconography is found also in the inlay by Pinturicchio in the pavement of Siena Cathedral, showing sages, having turned their back on Fortune, climbing the hill towards Wisdom (*Sapientia*) who hands a palm as a symbolic prize to Socrates, the supreme example of ancient philosophy and the summit of the virtuous itinerary that leads to *quies*<sup>40</sup>.

#### HERCULES AT THE CROSSROAD FROM XENOPHON TO THE LITERARY AND FIGURATIVE CULTURE OF SIENESE HUMANISM

Evidence of the esteem Enea Silvio Piccolomini felt for Antonio Beccadelli, known as Il Panormita, and Alfonso of Aragon is the commentary Piccolomini wrote on Il Panormita's work *De Dictis et Factis Alphonsi Regis*. In the dedicatory epistle he stated that Beccadelli exceeded Xenophon in eloquence just as Alfonso stands above Socrates in wisdom: *Nam et tu Xenophontem hunc eloquentia superas et Alphonsus sapientia Socratem antecedit*<sup>41</sup>. Alfonso is thus equated with Socrates, the supreme paradigm of wisdom, «the most luminous summit of the Greeks», as Valerius Maximus claims, *Socrates autem Graecae doctrinae clarissimum columen*<sup>42</sup>.

Il Panormita, meanwhile, is compared to Xenophon, author of the *Memorabilia*, a collection of «remembrances of Socrates». This text enjoyed great success in the ancient world and was transmitted to the West in the fifteenth century through the work of the humanists Guarino Veronese, Isidore of Kiev, Cardinal Bessarion, and Giano Lascaris<sup>43</sup>. In the second volume of his best-known work on Socrates, Xenophon, reflecting the writing on Hercules by the Sophist Prodicus of Ceos, recounts that the hero at the moment of his passage from childhood to youth – when young men, by now their own masters, demonstrate whether in life they will follow the path of virtue or of vice – went to a solitary spot and, seated there, pondered which road to take. Two women appeared and approached him. They were both tall, but one had a beautiful aspect and noble nature; purity embellished her face and modesty her gaze, her posture and movements were graceful, and she wore a white dress. The other, whose face was made up with cosmetics to appear whiter or redder than it was, and whose posture made her seem more unnaturally erect, had a bold gaze, and her dress gave generous glimpses of her voluptuous body.

In Sieneese circles, the theme of Hercules at the crossroad was widely popular. It is shown, for example, on the birth salver attributed to Benvenuto di Giovanni and Girolamo di Benvenuto (Galleria Giorgio Franchetti della Ca' d'Oro in Venice). In the background behind *Virtus* is a path

<sup>39</sup> GARGANESE 2011, p. 54.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. CACIORGNA 2004, pp. 191-231; M. Caciorgna, in CACIORGNA – GUERRINI 2004, pp. 64-82.

<sup>41</sup> PICCOLOMINI 1551, p. 472E.

<sup>42</sup> V. Max. 6. 4 ext. 2.

<sup>43</sup> On the spread of this text during the Age of Humanism, Cf. BANDINI 1988; ID. 1994.

going up to a rocky hill, guarded by two lions, while behind *Voluptus*, by contrast, is shown a pleasant landscape with a scene of bathers in a lascivious pose<sup>44</sup>.

Domenico Beccafumi also treated the same subject on a *spalliera* in the Museo Bardini in Florence, where the allegorical figures have an almost unreal aspect, and in Palazzo Venturi in Siena (Figure 14), where the subject is part of the mythological series in roundels and is flanked, like the others, by two reclining heroines.

#### SCIPIO AS A NEW HERCULES. SILIUS ITALICUS AND RAPHAEL

In Raphael's famous painting of the *Vision of a Knight* now in the National Gallery in London (Figure 15), next to *Virtus* is a hill traversed by a rocky path, in contrast with the pleasant, inviting landscape behind *Voluptas*. The young warrior lying beneath a «verdant» laurel tree that shades the scene is the young Scipio Africanus, who is at a difficult point in his life. After the disastrous battle of Cannae and the loss of several relatives, including his father, he withdrew into a secluded part of his house, where *Virtus* and *Voluptas* appeared to him in a dream, promising him various gifts. Book XV of the *Punica* by Silius Italicus provides the original literary source for the iconography of Raphael's famous work<sup>45</sup>. On one side *Voluptas* offers a cardamom flower, the symbol of effeminacy, while on the other *Virtus* appears as Minerva, wearing military clothes and carrying a sword. Erwin Panofsky hypothesizes that the painting was made for a member of the Borghese family named Scipione<sup>46</sup>. In the Archivio di Stato in Siena, I found documentary evidence that a member of the Borghese family, born on 20 June 1494, was given the meaningful name of Scipione Africano<sup>47</sup>. The painting of the *Three Graces* currently in the Musée Condé in Chantilly (Figures 16), which formed a diptych with the *Vision of a Knight*, reflects a Siennese model as its inspiration, the marble sculpture group in the centre of the Piccolomini Library. To understand the symbolism of the apples held by the Graces, we should look at the *Scipio Frieze* in the Palazzo dei Conservatori in Rome (Figures 17-18)<sup>48</sup>. In the band uniting the first panel showing the *Mythical Birth* of the hero derived from Silius Italicus and the second panel of *Scipio Talking with Jupiter in the Capitoline Temple* is *Hercules Holding the Apples of the Hesperides*. A similar iconography can be seen in the image accompanying *Heroic Virtue* in Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* (Figure 19). The text reports that the Campidoglio housed a gilt statue of Hercules wearing the lion pelt and holding the apples of the

<sup>44</sup> The salver shows on its reverse side the arms of the Vieri and Tancredi families, referring to the marriage between Girolamo de' Vieri and Caterina Tancredi celebrated in 1500. Cf. DE CARLI 1997, pp. 192-93; BANDERA 1999, p. 244.

<sup>45</sup> On the literary presences that influenced the painting's iconography, see GUERRINI 1985, pp. 74 ss.

<sup>46</sup> PANOFSKY 1930, p. 143.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Archivio di Stato di Siena, Ms. A 48; Biccherna 1133, fol. 647r: «Scipione Affricano Vittorio figlio di Alisandro di Ambrogio Borghesi si battezzò adì 20 di giugno, compare ser Antonio Prete chappellano di santo Cristofano»; Archivio di Stato di Siena, S. Giovanni, Battezzati, 12: «Scipione Africano Vettorio figliolo d'Alisandro d'Ambruogio Borghesi si batteggò adì 20 di giugno. Fu compare ser Niccolò chappellano di sancto Christofano in Chamullia». For a more detailed report on the Borghesi patronage of the painting, see CACIORGNA 2004, p. 214, n. 83. On the theme of the Dream of Scipio, see also CACIORGNA 2014, p. 126.

<sup>48</sup> GUERRINI 1991, pp. 277-278.



Hesperides which symbolize the three heroic virtues attributed to him: moderation of Wrath, temperance of Greed, and the generous scorn of delights and pleasures<sup>49</sup>.

This same symbolic meaning can be discerned in the decoration of one of the cabinet doors made by Lorenzo Sciorina for the Studiolo of Francesco I in Palazzo Vecchio in Florence (Figure 20). The painting shows the garden where a tree grew that bore golden fruit, guarded by the Hesperides and by the dragon Ladon. Sent by Eurystheus, Hercules went to the legendary garden, given by Gaia to Hera as a wedding gift, and stole three apples. This is one of the hero's labours described, with variants, by ancient sources<sup>50</sup>. In the centre of the garden stands a fountain adorned with a statue of Minerva, a subject in keeping with the theme. This presence on one hand can be explained by a version of the myth according to which Athena returned the fruits that had been stolen from the nymphs; on another, according to ancient and «modern» exegeses of the myth, the golden apples were also a symbol of virtue and wisdom. Convincingly, the door by Sciorina, traditionally connected with the *Invention of Gunpowder*, has been linked to the statue of *Venus Anadyomene* in the Studiolo; this relation sends us back to the dichotomy between *Virtus* and *Voluptas* with which Hercules was faced when he had to choose at the crossroad<sup>51</sup>. What is more, in Francesco's Studiolo, the apples of the Hesperides have a celebratory intent because they are visually linked to the balls on the Medici coat of arms. In a composition by Pietro Angelo of Barga dedicated to Cosimo I, Hercules fights the dragon and steals the fruit from the garden of the Hesperides to take them to Florence, where they will be placed on the Medici arms<sup>52</sup>. This episode is evoked by the large travertine Medici coat of arms flanked by figures of Hercules mounted on the Fortress, known as the Fortezza di Santa Barbara, in Siena (Figure 21). The arms were carved in 1561 by Francesco Camilliani, who also made the fountain in Piazza Pretoria in Palermo: «in Tuscany, the sculptor left no trace of his presence other than the Medici arms on the fortress of Saint Barbara in Siena, flanked by two garlanded youths, who place their protective hands on the scrolls of the Grand-Ducal emblem, and are worked with the skill admired in the deities on the Pretoria Fountain»<sup>53</sup>.

WISDOM FIGHTING AGAINST FORTUNE IN THE LITERARY AND FIGURATIVE TRADITION. FROM SENECA TO MEDALLIONS, FROM ROSSO FIORENTINO TO VASARI

An elegant medallion struck around 1580-85 by Giovan Battista Bonini, which bears on its *recto* the profile of Camillus Agrippus, an engineer, mathematician, and writer of treatises on fencing, shows Minerva holding a lance in her left hand, while her right grabs the hair of Fortune, who,

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<sup>49</sup> «Si trova in Roma, cioè in Campidoglio, una statua di metallo indorata d'Ercole, vestita della spoglia del Leone, con la clava, e con la sinistra mano tiene tre pomi d'oro portati da gli orti Esperidi, i quali significano le tre virtù eroiche a Ercole attribuite. La prima è la moderazione dell'Ira. La seconda la temperanza dell'Avarizia. L'altra, è il generoso sprezzamento delle delizie e de piaceri. E però dicesi che la virtù eroica nell'uomo, è quando la ragione ha talmente sottoposti gli affetti sensitivi, che sia giunta al punto indivisibile de i mezzi virtuosi, e fattosi pura et illustre, che trapassi l'eccellenza umana, et a gli Angeli si accosti», MAFFEI 2012, p. 597.

<sup>50</sup> For a detailed analysis of the sources, see CONTICELLI 2007, pp. 260 ff.

<sup>51</sup> CONTICELLI 2007, pp. 264-267. The *Invention of Gunpowder* should be linked with another door on which is shown *Lavinia at the Altar*: CACIORGNA 1999, pp. 552-553.

<sup>52</sup> The composition is in KLIEMANN 1976, pp. 84, 259-265, appendix 55.

<sup>53</sup> VENTURI 1936, pp. 541-42; C. Sisi, in GENTILINI - SISI 1989, p. 166.

in keeping with her usual attributes, is holding a sail (Figure 22)<sup>54</sup>. Aby Warburg included the medallion in Table 48 of his «Atlas of Memory», *Mnemosyne*, dedicated to the goddess of chance (Figure 23)<sup>55</sup>. On the medallion is a Latin inscription, *VELIS NOLISVE*, which, according to the scholar Alfred Doren, was taken from a text by Pius II<sup>56</sup>. In the summer of 1444 Enea Silvio Piccolomini wrote from Vienna to his friend Procopius of Rabenstein a letter in which he imagines he is entering the temple of Fortune, on whose door is placed the following warning: *Paucos admitto, servo pauciores* (few receive my favour, even fewer keep it for long)<sup>57</sup>. The epistle is a refined poetic fiction which was printed between 1475 and 1476 with the title *Somnium de Fortuna*<sup>58</sup>. Procopius's failure to be named to a position offered Enea Silvio the occasion for an invective against the iniquities of Fate.

Piccolomini is led into the monumental palace by Maffeo Vegio<sup>59</sup>, the humanist from Lodi who becomes, in this brief journey, an *alter Vergilius*. During the conversation with his mentor, who in the meantime had been named a canon of St. Peter's Basilica, Piccolomini lists a series of Famous Men, among them Socrates, who received no benefit from Fortune despite their acknowledged sagacity<sup>60</sup>. Vegio contradicts Enea Silvio, listing deserving persons who were aided by Fortune. Nonetheless, men should not desire worldly goods, but follow the example of the philosopher Crates of Thebes, who was able to detach himself from these in order to progress further in philosophical knowledge<sup>61</sup>. The passage in the epistle from which the motto *velis nolisve* was taken is dedicated to Alfonso, king of Sicily, Sardinia, Majorca, Valencia and Aragon (1396-1458):

Dum sic famur, video parva statura virum, nigro vultu, laetis oculis, qui manus in capillos Fortunae coniecerat, arreptaque coma: «Sta tandem domina meque respice – dicebat – quo me fugis iam annis duodecim? Capta es, *sive velis, sive nolis*, ut me respicias oportet, satis mihi adversa fuisti. Nunc alium vultum prebebis reor, aut mihi blanda eris, aut omnes tibi crines evellam. Cur me fugis pusillanimesque sectaris?». Fortunae quoque in eum vox erat «vicisti fateor, nec me amplius experieris adversam». Tum ego: «Quis hic est – inquam –, Vegi, qui Fortunae vim facit?». «Alfontius – refert ille – Rex Arragonum, qui cum fratribus apud Stantiam captus, Philippoque duci Mediolanensis datus, dimissus denique novis se proelis immiscuit. Adversamque dominam insecutus, tantum instando perseverandoque fecit, ut victam pudore Fortunam iam in suum favorem revocaverit»<sup>62</sup>.

<sup>54</sup> In 1923 the scholar Alfred Doren published the medallion, without indicating its author or location (1922-1923, pp. 143-44, plate VI, fig. 16). The author is identified in TODERI - VANNEL 2003, no. 1288, pp. 139-140. On the iconography, see CACIORGNA 2009.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. SPINELLI - VENUTI 1998.

<sup>56</sup> DOREN 1922-23, p. 144.

<sup>57</sup> COLONNA 1989, p. 129.

<sup>58</sup> On the edition of the epistle, see COLONNA 1989, p. 129, n. 16, and Indice Generale degli Incunaboli, nos. 7832-7833.

<sup>59</sup> Maffeo Vegio is the author of Book XIII of the *Aeneid*. This supplement was published for the first time in 1471 with Virgil's *Opera omnia* (Venice, Adamo da Ambergau) and continually republished throughout the late fifteenth century (Indice Generale degli Incunaboli, no. 10181 ff.). Vegio also wrote a biography of Saint Bernardino of Siena.

<sup>60</sup> PICCOLOMINI 1551, p. 612B.

<sup>61</sup> PICCOLOMINI 1551, p. 613B.

<sup>62</sup> PICCOLOMINI 1551, p. 615AB. «While we are speaking in this way, I see a man, short in stature, dark of face, with laughing eyes, who had placed his hands on Fortune's hair and, grabbing her hair, said: Lady, look at me for once, why have you been fleeing me for twelve years now? You have been caught, whether you like it or not, and you have

Besides in the *Somnium de Fortuna* by Pius II, the theme of the contrast between virtue and Wisdom recurs also in ancient sources. In many passages in *De brevitate*, but also in the other *Dialogues*, Seneca proposes to pursue *sapientia* in order to defeat the terrible *regnum fortunae*. The ethical model he took as inspiration is *sapiens*; raised to the level of virtue, he is free, untouchable by vice and the blows of fortune, sufficient unto himself, to the point that he has nothing to lose, becoming imperturbable<sup>63</sup>. Naturally, the journey to reach the goal is laborious; for Seneca, life can be compared to a sea in which man, surprised by constant storms, sails at the mercy of the waves. The metaphor appears frequently in his *Dialogues*, among them *De providentia* 5. 9-10:

Natures that are listless, that are prone to sleep, or to a kind of wakefulness that closely resembles sleep, are composed of sluggish elements. It takes sterner stuff to make a man who deserves to be mentioned with consideration. His course will not be the level way; uphill and downhill must he go, be tossed about, and guide his bark through stormy waters; he must keep his course in spite of fortune. Much that is hard, much that is rough will befall him, but he himself will soften the one, and make the other smooth. Fire tests gold, misfortune brave men. See to what a height virtue must climb! You will find that it has no safe road to tread<sup>64</sup>.

Besides, in a world governed by reason, i.e., by providence, nothing is left to chance and luck becomes an absurdity. Seneca, following and probably accentuating a Stoic orientation, justifies fortune's blows, even the most terrible, as trial to which fortune (like fate) subjects him. To instil this conviction, the agonistic concept of virtue is important: since there is no virtue without a struggle, in the struggle against adversities man becomes more virtuous<sup>65</sup>. In this perspective, we could refer to *De providentia* 4. 12, which dwells on this combat, *certamen*, evident in the medallion dedicated to Camillus Agrippus. In this passage Seneca says that if fortune flagellates and lacerates us, we must bear it because this is not cruelty but a fight, and the more often we face it the more courageous we will become. The strongest part of the body is the part that is exercised the most. We must offer ourselves to fortune in order for it to make us more resilient in the fight against her<sup>66</sup>. Thus, in this context but also in numerous others in the works of Seneca, the military metaphor emerges forcefully as a distinctive trait of the philosopher's Stoic morality. So it may be the case that Camillus Agrippus, portrayed on the obverse side of the medallion, the author of the *Trattato di scientia d'arme, con un dialogo di filosofia* dedicated to

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to look at me, you have been against me long enough. I believe that now you must show another face; either you will be mild with me or I will tear out all your hair. Why do you flee from me and follow the cowardly? Then the voice of Fortune addressed him: «I acknowledge that you have won, no longer will you have me as an adversary». So then I: «Who is this – I say – o Vegio, who is being violent with Fortune» – Alfonso – he says – King of the Aragonese, who was captured... and, handed over to Filippo duke of Milan, and finally released, took part in new battles. Pursuing the hostile tyrant, he so greatly insisted and persevered that he succeeded in turning Fortune back to his side, overcome by shame.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. LA PENNA 2004, p. 22.

<sup>64</sup> Trans. BASORE 1928-1935, pp. 39, 41.

<sup>65</sup> LA PENNA 2004, p. 25.

<sup>66</sup> *Verberat nos et lacerat fortuna? Patiamur: non est saevitia; certamen est, quod quo saepius adierimus, fortiores erimus. Solidissima corporis pars est quam frequens usus agitavit. Praebendi fortunae sumus, ut contra illam ab ipsa duremur.*

Cosimo de' Medici, in which he describes a new art of duelling<sup>67</sup>, may have wanted to indicate by the struggle against fortune pictured on the reverse the most difficult *certamen* a man must face in his life. Fortune, after all, is the adversary necessary for the «militancy» of the wise. In *De brevitate vitae* 8. 5, Seneca states that time, in a person's life, slips by silently, never arresting its frantic course. Man is always busy despite the fact that life rushes on. But when death comes, *velis nolis*, whether he wishes it or not, he has to find time for it:

Nemo restituet annos, nemo iterum te tibi reddet. Ibit qua coepit aetas nec cursum suum aut revocabit aut supprimet; nihil tumultuabitur, nihil admonebit velocitatis suae: tacita labetur. Non illa se regis imperio, non favore populi longius proferet: sicut missa est a primo die curret, nusquam devertetur, nusquam remorabitur. Quid fiet? Tu occupatus es, vita festinat: mors interim aderit, cui *velis nolis* vacandum est<sup>68</sup>.

Rosso Fiorentino deals with same theme in an evocative sanguine drawing now in the Hessisches Landesmuseum in Darmstadt, datable around 1521-22, which presents Wisdom in the shape of Minerva as she violently grabs Fortune by the hair (Figure 24). This disconcerting invention by Rosso represents the endpoint of a constant dissension, a perennial conflict that characterized over the centuries the instable relation between the events of human destiny and the moods of fortune<sup>69</sup>. The episode is divided into two separate moments in time. On the right, in the background, a figure identified as Virtue grabs by the hair another woman whom we can identify as Fortune. In the foreground on the left is Virtue after the terrible fight, exhibiting her trophy, which some scholars say could be a strip of flesh. According to this interpretation, not only did Virtue hold Fortune back by her hair, but in the struggle she also tore apart one of her breasts<sup>70</sup>. Actually, the figure in the foreground should be interpreted as Fortune-Kairos showing off the scalp of her rival<sup>71</sup>.

Drawing on the ancient and modern sources and following the path that from Hercules leads *ad Sapientiam* after overcoming the trial with Fortune, we can understand the iconography of the ceiling of the Sala del Camino in Vasari's House, which shows Virtue with Envy beneath her feet and, having grabbed Fortune by the hair, beating each of them with a stick (Figure 25)<sup>72</sup>. Virtue's stick reminds us of the club of Hercules, who at the crossroad chose the path towards *Virtus*<sup>73</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> Cf. AGRIPPA 1553.

<sup>68</sup> Trans. BASORE 1928-1935, p. 313: «Yet no one will bring back the years, no one will bestow you once more on yourself. Life will follow the path it started upon, and will neither reverse nor check its course; it will make no noise, it will not remind you of its swiftness. Silent it will glide on; it will not prolong itself at the command of a king, or at the applause of the populace. Just as it was started on its first day, so it will run; nowhere will it delay. And what will be the result? You have been engrossed, life hastens by; meanwhile death will be at hand, for which, willy nilly, you must find leisure».

<sup>69</sup> MUGNAINI 1994, p. 112.

<sup>70</sup> CARROL 1987; Cf. also MUGNAINI 1994, p. 112.

<sup>71</sup> MUNDY 1988, pp. 79-80.

<sup>72</sup> MILANESI 1878-1885, vol. VII, p. 686.

<sup>73</sup> We could speak of 'Herculean virtue': the expression is Rudolf Wittkower's (1938-1939, p. 201).

## SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ALLEGORICAL PAINTINGS: DIVINE WISDOM AND PRUDENCE

Hanging in the historic palace that houses the headquarters of Monte dei Paschi bank in Siena is a canvas painted by Francesco Rustici around 1621-23, showing two allegorical figures and titled *Wisdom and Prudence* (Figure 26)<sup>74</sup>. On the right a young woman seated on the ground, barefoot, reflects her face in the mirror held in her right hand, while her left points to a pole terminating in a pommel shaped like an eye, around which a snake is coiled. Behind her can be seen a plant on which hangs an object that sheds light, dispelling the darkness. Cesare Ripa's description of *Prudence* helps us decipher some details and interpret their meaning<sup>75</sup>. The leaves glimpsed near the top of the painting could allude to a mulberry tree, while the metallic object could be the helmet that Prudence has hung on the tree. The mulberry tree is a symbol of prudence because it never germinates until the cold weather is past, just as the prudent man does not act before the right time has come. The golden helmet signifies the wits of the prudent, careful man, armed with wise counsel.

On the left is another young woman being inspired by the dove of the Holy Spirit, seated on a stone block with her right hand resting on a book and her left pointing to the sky. In the corner, a skull is a *memento mori*. This is a specific presentation of Wisdom, «divine» wisdom, so that a more precise title for the painting should be *Divine Wisdom and Prudence*<sup>76</sup>. Regarding this image, Ripa refers to chapter 1 of the Biblical book of *Ecclesiasticus*: «Wisdom was created before everything, prudent understanding subsists from remotest ages». This citation is especially helpful in interpreting Rustici's painting, in particular concerning the combination of Wisdom with Prudence<sup>77</sup>.

<sup>74</sup> On the painting, see A. Bagnoli, in GURRIERI ET AL. 1988, p. 418; P. Agnorelli, in BELLOSI 2002, p. 384.

<sup>75</sup> MAFFEI 2012, pp. 492-493: «Nella destra mano terrà una frezza, intorno alla quale vi sarà rivolto un pesce detto Ecneide, ovvero Remora, che così è chiamato da' Latini, il quale scrive Plinio, che attaccandosi alla Nave, ha forza di fermarla, e perciò è posto per la tardanza; nella sinistra terrà lo specchio, nel quale mirando, contempla se stessa... L'elmo dorato, che tiene in capo, significa l'ingegno dell'uomo prudente et accorto, armato di saggi consigli... La ghirlanda delle foglie del moro, che circonda l'elmo dinota, che l'huomo savio e prudente non deve fare le cose innanzi tempo, ma ordinarle con giudizio, & però l'Alciato disse: "Non germina giamai il tardo moro, / Fin che 'l freddo non è mancato, e spento; / Né 'l savio fa le cose innanzi tempo, / Ma l'ordina con modo, e con decoro". Il pesce avvolto alla frezza è indicio di questo medesimo... Lo specchio significa la cognizione del prudente non poter regolar le sue azioni, se i propri suoi difetti non conosce, e corregge. E questo intendeva Socrate quando essortava i suoi Scolari a riguardar se medesimi ogni mattina nello specchio».

<sup>76</sup> GABRIELE - GALASSI 2010, pp. 66-68: «Perché in altro luogo si è ragionato della Sapienza profana, sotto la figura di Pallade, mi par quasi necessario, che si formi una figura, che rappresenti la Sapienza Divina, la quale sarà in cotal guisa. Una donna di bellissimo, e santissimo aspetto, sopra un quadrato... nella man destra terrà uno scudo rotondo collo Spirito Santo in mezzo. Nella man sinistra il libro della Sapienza... Si pone sopra il quadrato, per significare, che è fondata stabilmente sopra ferma Sede, dove non può vacillare, né titubare da niuno lato... Si pone lo Spirito Santo in mezzo allo scudo rotondo, in figura di Orbe, sì perché la somma Sapienza Divina governa perfettamente tutto il Mondo col suo medesimo Spirito, sì anche perché egli può infondere il perfetto lume, e perfetta sapienza ai i Principi per governare il Mondo conforme alla Sapienza; poichè... *Spiritus Dei Sapientiam docet*».

<sup>77</sup> Cf. *Ecclesiasticus* 1:4. See also the first of the Great O Antiphons of Advent: «O Wisdom, /coming forth from the mouth of the Most High,/ reaching from one end to the other,/ mightily and sweetly ordering all things:/ Come and teach us the way of prudence».

## SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ALLEGORICAL PAINTINGS: KAIROS BETWEEN NECESSITY AND VIRTUE

Wisdom, in some cases, is conflated with the representation of Virtue, as can be seen in the iconography of another painting in the Monte dei Paschi collection. This is a canvas painted by Bernardino Mei around 1653, which traditionally bears the title *Fortune between Virtue and Necessity* (Figure 27)<sup>78</sup>. In reality, the central figure is the allegory of Kairos, or Occasion, whom Ripa, following Phidias, describes with characteristics very similar to the image painted by Mei. Her hair is loose on her forehead in order to be grabbed more easily, and the wheel indicates the fleeting nature of occasion<sup>79</sup>.

On the left, near the bottom, Necessity is inserted as a male figure instead of the female described by Ripa holding a hammer in her right hand and a handful of nails in her left<sup>80</sup>. The Sieneese iconographical tradition already included examples of exchanges of this type in the definition of allegorical figures, as can be seen in the ceiling of the Sala del Concistoro in Palazzo Pubblico, painted by Domenico Beccafumi, where *Love of the Fatherland* is presented as a female figure and *Mutual Benevolence* as male.

## MEDIO TUTISSIMA

The third allegorical figure in Mei's painting is also represented in perfect accord with some of Ripa's descriptions of *Virtue* (Figure 28)<sup>81</sup>. The *Virtue* painted by Bernardino Mei is a young woman crowned with laurel, wearing a tunic with a sun on the bodice. The allegorical figure is seated on a carved stone, solidly planted on a rock where Kairos unsteadily tries to place her foot. The attributes like the book and the rock on which *Virtue* is sitting derive from the iconography of Wisdom. On the book she holds open with her left hand is inscribed the motto:

<sup>78</sup> On the painting, see F. Bisogni, in GURRIERI ET AL. 1988, p. 430; P. Agnorelli, in BELLOSI 2002, p. 394.

<sup>79</sup> BUSCAROLI 1992, p. 322: «Fidia, antico e nobilissimo scultore, disegnò l'occasione donna ignuda, con un velo a traverso che le copriva le parti vergognose, e con li capelli sparsi per la fronte, in modo che la nuca restava tutta scoperta e calva, con piedi alati, posandosi sopra una ruota e con la mano destra un rasoio. I capelli rivolti tutti verso la fronte ci fanno conoscere che l'occasione si deve prevenire aspettandola al passo, e non seguirla per pigliarla quando ha volto le spalle, perché passa velocemente; con piedi alati posasi sopra la ruota che perpetuamente si gira». It seems clear that the figure in the centre of Mei's painting should be interpreted as Kairos; certainly, it cannot be denied that she has the traits characteristic of Fortune, like the cornucopia: «Donna co'l globo celeste in capo, e in mano il cornucopia. Il globo celeste dimostra, siccome egli è in continuo moto, così la fortuna sempre si move, e muta faccia a ciascuno, hor'inalzando, & hor'abbassando, e perché pare che ella sia la dispensatrice delle ricchezze & delli beni di questo mondo; però se le fa anco il cornucopia, per dimostrare che non altrimenti quelli girano di mano in mano» (MAFFEI 2012, p. 435).

<sup>80</sup> MAFFEI 2012, p. 425.

<sup>81</sup> MAFFEI 2012, pp. 599-601: «Giovanetta alata, e modestamente vestita, sarà coronata di lauro, et in mano terrà un ramo di quercia, con un motto nel lembo della veste che dica: MEDIO TUTISSIMA. Disse Silio Italico nel 13 lib. della *Guerra Cartaginese*, che la virtù istessa è conveniente mercede a sé medesima, e si conformò con questo detto all'opinione de i Stoici, che dicevano fuor di lei non esser cosa alcuna che la possa premiare a bastanza... Il sole dimostra che come dal cielo illumina esso la terra, così dal cuore la virtù difende le sue potenze regolate a dar il moto et il vigore a tutto il corpo nostro, che è mondo piccolo, come dissero i Greci, e poi per la virtù s'illumina, scalda, et avvigora in maniera che buona parte de' Filosofi antichi la stimorno bastante a supplire alle soddisfazioni et a' gusti che nella vita umana possono desiderarsi... La ghirlanda dell'alloro ne significa che sì come il lauro è sempre verde, e non è mai tocco da fulmine, così la virtù mostra sempre vigore, e non è mai abbattuta da qualsivoglia avversario, come anco né per incendio né per naufragio si perde, né per adversa fortuna o sorte contraria...».

MEDIO TUTISSIMA<sup>82</sup>. Besides the source cited by Ripa (Silius Italicus), the phrase refers to a passage from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (2. 137) about the myth of Phaeton, son of Helios, the god of the Sun. Helios consented to his son's wish to drive the chariot of the sun for a whole day so long as he followed an established course in the «middle part»: *Altius egressus caelestia tecta cremabis, / inferius terras: medio tutissimus ibis*<sup>83</sup>. The reference to Ovid explains the decoration on the tunic of Ripa's figure, consisting of a sun with rays radiating from it, and of the figure of Virtue painted by Mei, derived from this iconographical repertory with the addition of the yellow ochre colour. Besides, the motif of the sun is emphasized in the study of emblems as early as Andrea Alciato, who dedicates to the myth the icon distinguishing the motto *In temerarios* (Figure 29)<sup>84</sup>. Here too the fiery sphere is personified by inserting eyes, a nose, and mouth<sup>85</sup>. In this context a reference to Seneca, *De providentia* 5. 10-11 is especially meaningful, where he sees the young man and his risky endeavour as a figure of the heroic man who, contrary to the inept and cowardly, wants to ascend to the summit of knowledge and virtue, defying the inevitable risks, even mortal ones.

Like Phaeton, in youth one must brave bold enterprises in order to achieve knowledge. The young Hercules and the young Scipio, a new Hercules, at the crossroad made a heroic choice under the banner of Wisdom, who sits squarely and securely on a block of stone, untouchable by Fortune, against whom it is necessary to struggle forcefully.

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<sup>82</sup> In Ripa, this appears on the hem of her tunic.

<sup>83</sup> On the sources: Mino Gabriele, in ARIANI – GABRIELE 1998, p. 617. Besides, Ripa himself, concerning the «parte mediana», cites Horace (*S.* 1. 106-7), commenting «che queste azioni solo sono dipendenti dalla virtù, le quali hanno la loro estremità, che sono come fosse ove l'uomo cade e s'immerge, cadendo dal suo dritto sentiero» (MAFFEI 2012, p. 600).

<sup>84</sup> On this emblem, see the commentary by Mino Gabriele, in GABRIELE 2009, pp. 344-345.

<sup>85</sup> MARONGIU 2008, p. 126.

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Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

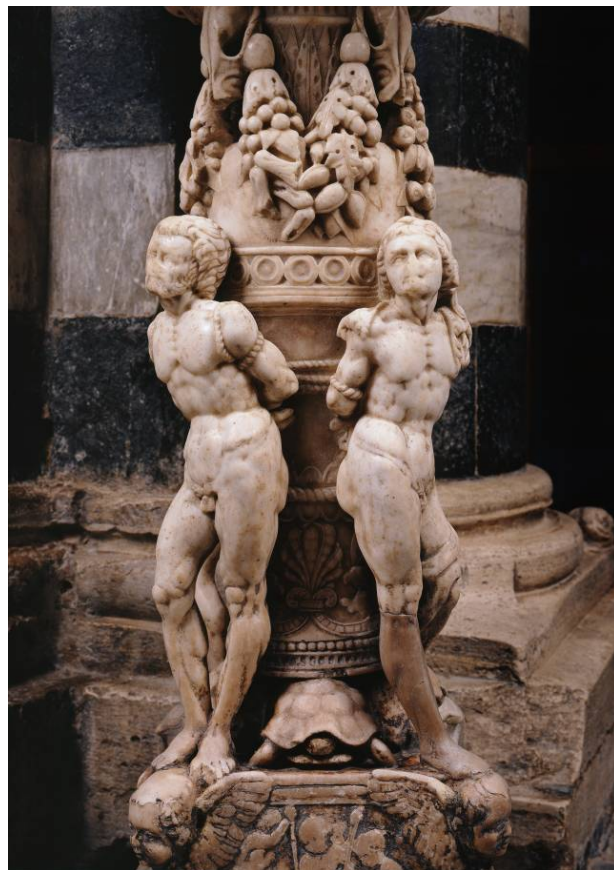


Figure 5

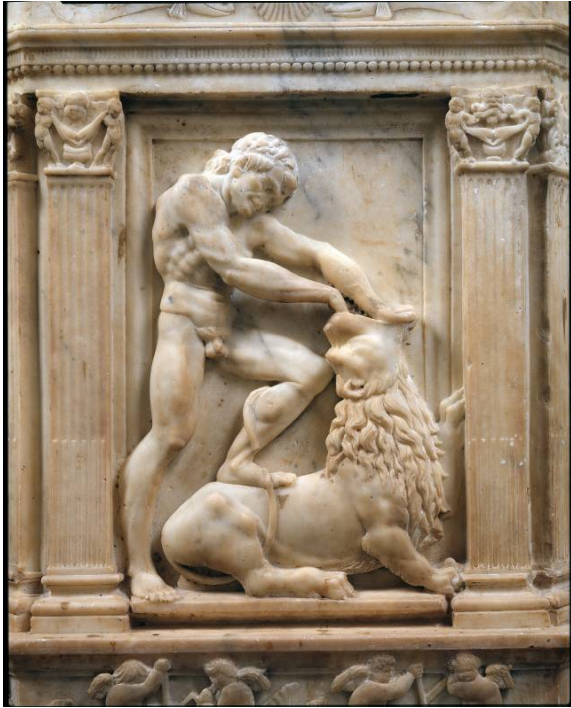


Figure 6

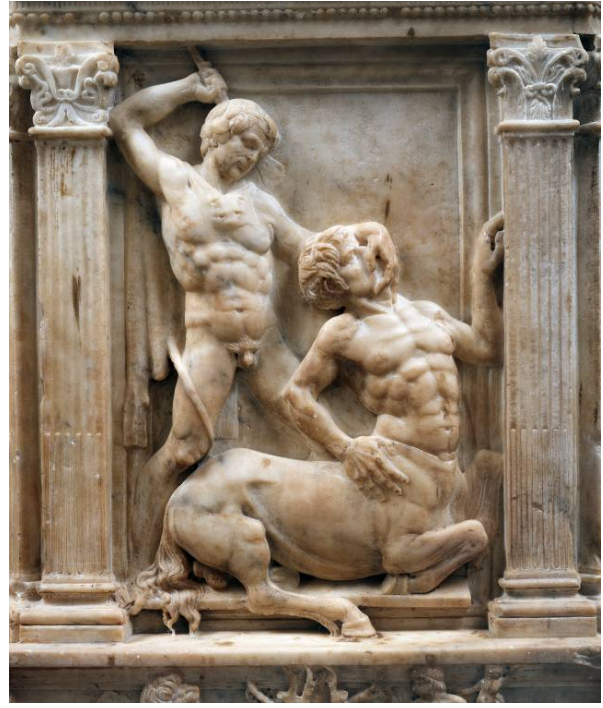


Figure 7



Figure 8

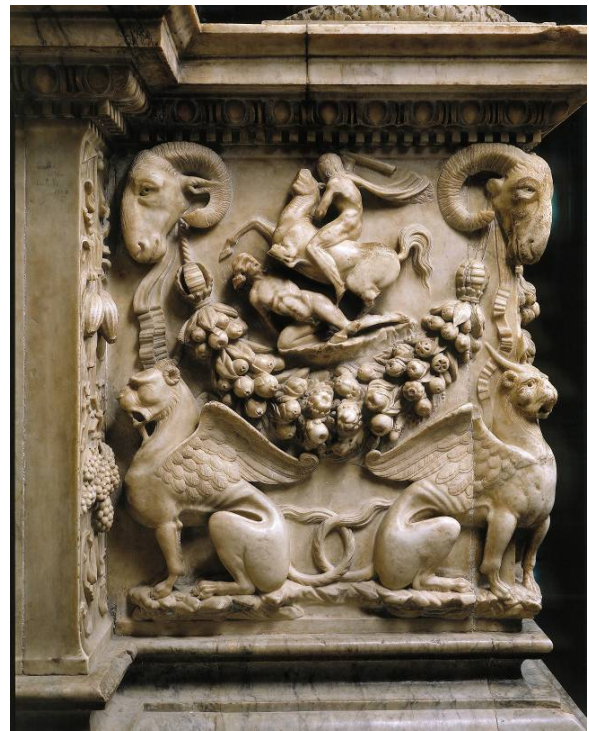


Figure 9



Figure 10

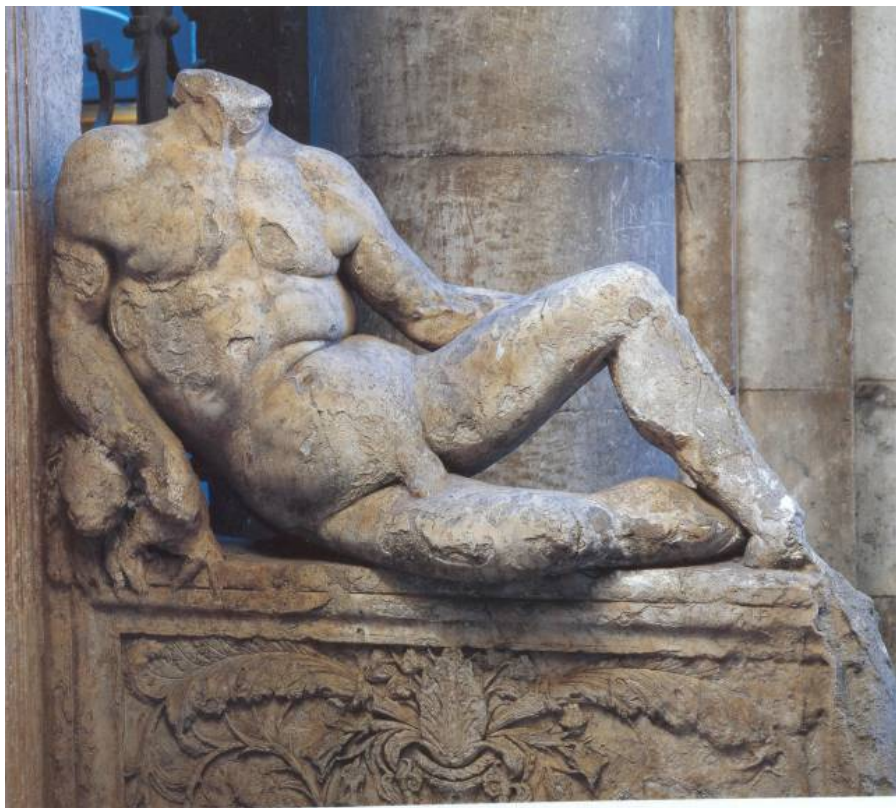


Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13





Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17

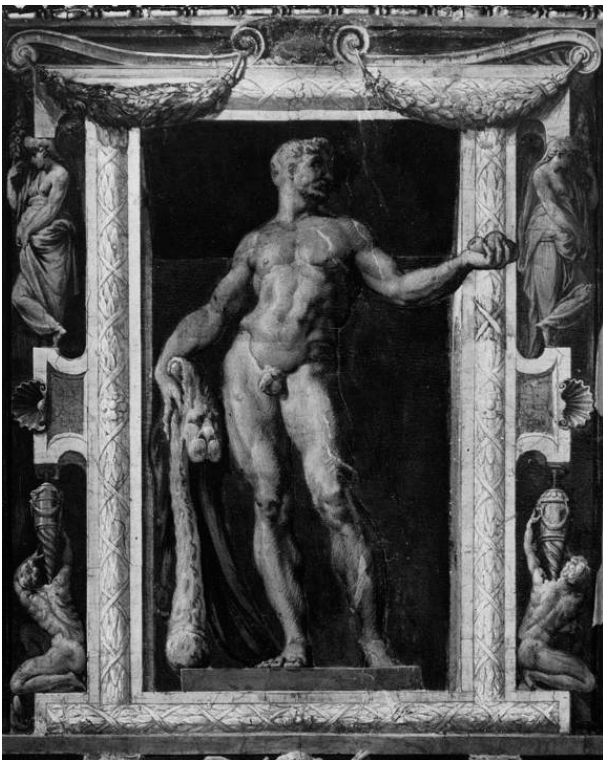


Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20



Figure 21



Figure 22



Figure 23

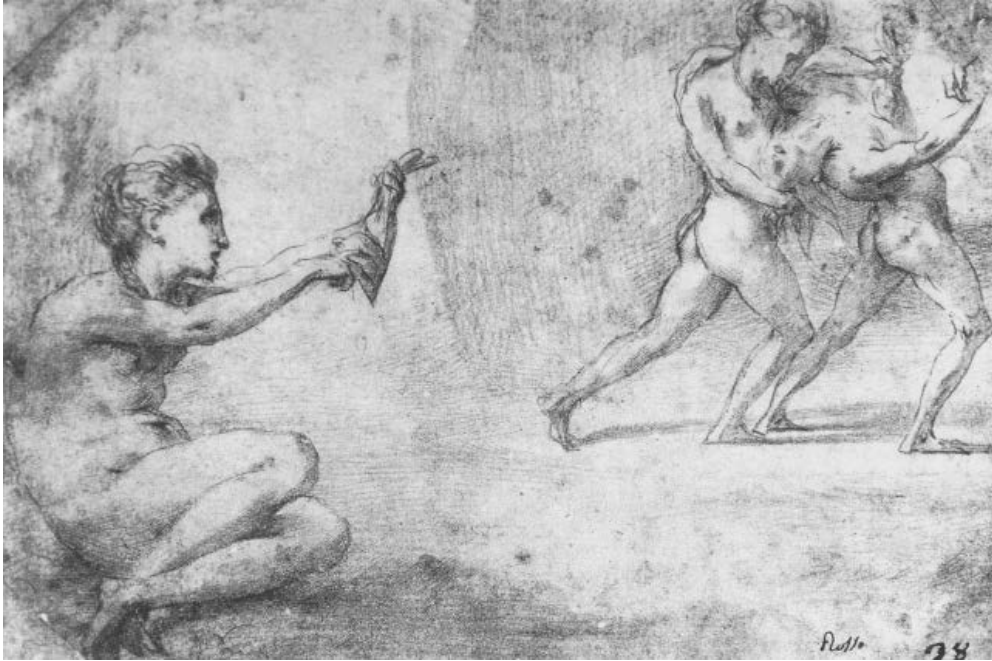


Figure 24



Figure 25



Figure 26



Figure 27



Figure 28



Figure 29