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Fig. 73. Mario Ceroli, "Casa di Nettuno," Palazzo Comunale, Bologna (photo: Guerra, Bologna).
CHAPTER THREE  •  GIAMBOLOGNA’S

Neptune AT THE CROSSROADS

The restoration of a public work of art, often considered a matter of common decency or communal pride, is also much more. In spending time, money, and energy on something old, we enter into a new relationship with the past, signing a new contract with our predecessors who, we recognize, implicitly or explicitly, now speak to us with greater cogency and insistence than before. Historicism repeats itself in a special way when this communication between past and present concerns a work already replete with historical resonances. Such is the case with the restoration of Giambologna’s Neptune fountain in Bologna (see Figs. 87–90; Plate III), which was recently celebrated at the inauguration of an international art history colloquium devoted to Bologna as a cultural crossroads.

In restoring the Neptune fountain, Bologna also created a new work of art, for the renovation of this public monument became a public monument in its own right. The grandiose wooden structure, full of poetic allegory and wit, built to house the operation on Giambologna’s bronze hero (Fig. 73) and the spectacle of popular pedagogy enacted in the building to demonstrate the technical procedure itself (Fig. 74) were a Postmodern reprise of the famous wooden anatomical theater erected in the Archiginnasio not long after the Neptune fountain was created.1 The art of restoration as a work of art is an astonishing and revolutionary idea, reminiscent of such Bolognese inventions as Galvani’s electrochemical action or Marconi’s telegraph. Bononia Doccet (Bologna teaches)!

This motto of the medieval city expresses the millennial role Bologna has played in the exchange of ideas, as a matter of course and as a matter of principle: as a matter of course because of Bologna’s position as a major commercial center at the intersection of the Via Flaminia and the Via Emilia, two ancient roads linking Italy to Northern Europe, and as a matter of principle through Bologna’s great university, the oldest in Europe (the name, Archiginnasio, distinguished it from all other schools except the university of Rome). Bologna was unique in adopting as its own two mottos pertaining to the university, Bononia Doccet and Bononia Mater Studiorum (Bologna, mother of studies), which were carried around the world inscribed on the new coinage issued after the city became an autonomous republic in the late fourteenth century (Figs. 75, 76). The legends were on the obverse with the emblem of the
commune, a rampant lion holding the vexillum of the cross. The reverses associated the university and the commune with the church of Rome, represented by St. Peter, shown standing, the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven in his right hand, a book in his left; and with the church of the city, represented by its patron St. Petronius, shown enthroned holding a model of Bologna in his right hand, a bishop's crozier in his left. No other city identified itself in this way, through a cultural institution, with the life of the mind and the transmission of thought. In view of this singular tradition of intellectual communication, greatly magnified by Bologna's activity in international trade, it is not surprising that from the early sixteenth century the city was rife with notions of religious reform. Alarmed by the situation, the newly appointed inquisitor sent by the Holy Office reported in 1549 that he found Bologna "a great tissue of heresies" ("una grande intrecciatura di eresie").

Less than twenty years later the city was transformed, physically, administratively, and spiritually, partly by the actions of the Inquisition itself and partly through a major program of public works and the reorganization of public services. These changes were brought about under the aegis of Pope Pius IV, who had studied law in Bologna and had served as papal vice-legate to the city the year before the inquisitor made his observation and whose greatest achievement as pope was to have brought the Council of Trent to a successful conclusion in 1563. The transformation was such that by 1565 in a projected honorific statue of the pope the claim could be made that the heresies had been crushed.

Giambologna's Neptune fountain reflects the city's tradition as a cultural crossroads at this crucial moment in its history, for reasons that go beyond the fact that the artist was an immigrant to Italy from his native Flanders. It is remarkable that a relatively unknown and inexperienced foreign sculptor who had been living in Florence was awarded a major public commission for the most important city in the Papal States after Rome. Historians have been content with the explanation in early sources: that Giambologna had participated in the competition for the great Neptune fountain in the Piazza della Signoria in Florence, awarded to Bartolommeo Ammanati even though it was generally agreed that Giambologna's was the best project. His reputation established by this succès marqué, Giambologna came
to the attention of the vice-legate to Bologna, who hired him for the task. These accounts, however plausible, tell only part of the story; the rest can be discerned in the larger context of politics and ideology to which the projects sponsored by Pius IV owed their origin.

Important inferences can be drawn from the particular circumstances in which the fountain was conceived, and its relation, only recently rediscovered, to two other works by Giambologna that were commissioned but never completed; the sculptures would have formed a monumental civic triumvirate. We owe this work of scholarly restoration, fundamental to our understanding of Bolognese art of the late Renaissance, to Richard Tuttle, who found a manuscript describing these and other projects. It was written by Pier Donato Cesi (1522–1586), bishop of Narni and vice-legate in Bologna of Pius IV’s cardinal legate, Carlo Borromeo, who resided in Rome; Cesi governed Bologna between 1560 and 1565.3 An enterprising and learned man who had studied in Bologna under Andrea Alciati, the renowned scholar of pagan mythology, Cesi commissioned many works of public utility at the pope’s behest or with his approval. The projects included rechanneling a flood-prone river near Bologna; reorganizing the grain supply to ensure against famine; renovating the residence of the apostolic legate (Palazzo Comunale); decorating the chapel of the apostolic residence; creating a poorhouse for Bologna; constructing the university building, the Palazzo dell’Archiginnasio, which included a statue of Mercury on a tall column to be placed in the courtyard; reorganizing and consolidating the city’s meat markets; constructing a new aqueduct to augment the water supply at the center of the city, where two fountains were erected—Fontana Vecchia and the Neptune fountain—one an architectural work attached to the palace of the vice-legate, the other standing free in a newly created piazza adjoining the Piazza Maggiore in front of the church of San Petronio; and, finally, creating a portrait statue of the enthroned pope to be placed before the university building in another newly created piazza on the east flank of San Petronio (Fig. 77).

Work on these various enterprises continued for years. Some projects were never finished, and they can scarcely have been conceived all at once. Yet Cesi certainly saw them as a coherent achievement, and as his stay in Bologna came to an end he com-
posed his memorial, addressed to the pope, which must be among the first such documents devoted to an extensive civic building program. A series of commemorative medals illustrated each project, an idea derived from the Roman imperial tradition, revived by the Renaissance popes, of celebrating public works by issuing medals. Cesi himself cites the classical precedent, but whereas the ancient medals were issued occasionally or seriatim, Cesi’s form a closely related group intended to complement his text, which is itself accompanied by drawings of the medallic representations. Altogether Cesi’s enterprises are a milestone in the history of what might be called self-conscious urban renewal, social as well as monumental.

Of the three sculptural projects in the program (the statue of the pope, the figure of Mercury, and the fountain of Neptune) only the Neptune fountain, the first to be begun, was carried out; the others were virtually forgotten until the discovery of Cesi’s manuscript made it possible to restore all of them to their proper collective place in history. The relationship between the papal statue and the Neptune is evident from the record of payments for expenses, which indicates that Giambologna himself brought the models to Rome for the pope’s inspection and approval. All three monuments, grouped around the city’s major public square, were conceived to complement one another; together they express not only the pope’s relationship to his second city but also the city’s relationship to the world at large. To convey these meanings, each sculpture incorporates specific traditions, from which it also departs radically in ways that reflect the common bond between them. The papal portrait states the spiritual and political theme that underlies the whole program. The statue of Mercury provides a key to much of the classical imagery, including that of the Neptune fountain, intended to reassert the ancient Christian message in modern allegorical form. The fountain is the most spectacular of the monuments. It stands literally at the ancient crossroads of the city, facing San Petronio and flanked by the palaces of the vice-legate and the commune, the seats of ecclesiastical and secular power.

Traditional honorific portraits of the enthroned pope might show him holding the (modest-size) keys of St. Peter or a book in his left hand, but the right hand was invariably raised in a gesture of
Fig. 77. Filippo Gnudi, "Ichnonografia" of Bologna, 1762, detail showing the fountain of Neptune, palaces of the vice-legate (del Publico) and the commune (del Podestà), Piazza Maggiore, S. Petronio, and the Archiginnasio. Piante di Bologna, cart. 2. n. 21/E, Biblioteca Comunale del Archiginnasio, Bologna.
blessing. Giambologna showed him holding a book in his left hand but a gigantic pair of keys in his right hand, with which he crushes underfoot the many-headed monster of heresy (Figs. 78, 79). Normally a ruler holds his scepter in his right hand, or a commander his sword or baton. Cesi explains that the two keys signify the pope's unique power both to decide what is sinful and to absolve those who are guilty. The book indicates that judgment is passed on the authority of doctrine. The senate and people of Bologna dedicated the monument to Pius for crushing heresy by the Council of Trent and for the adornments by which he conferred dignity on the city.12

We are thus confronted not with the usual beneficent and benign Holy Father but with the vengeful ruler and judge who silences the voices of heresy and rebellion. The pope's aggressive presence was magnified by a voluminous and billowing robe, and a powerful sideward twist of the body. The implications of such an awesome image at the entrance to an institution where scandalous ideas circulated actively would not have been lost on any contemporary viewer. The dangers inherent in the cosmopolitan intellectual ambience of the university must have been one of the chief motives for building the new building in the first place. Previously dispersed around the city, the various components of the university were brought together so they could be more easily surveyed and controlled. The process of consolidation, organization, and dominance was thus equally evident in the intellectual, social, and commercial spheres.

Although Cesi identifies the many-headed monster at the pope's feet as the Beast of the Apocalypse, it recalls the Hydra, and the pope wielding the massive keys to crush the enemy recalls Hercules's victory over that multifarious enemy with his heroic club. Given this association, Tuttle convincingly suggested that Giambologna's project referred explicitly to the great terracotta sculpture by Alfonso Lombardi in the Palazzo Comunale of Bologna that shows Hercules seated in triumph over the Hydra, holding the club at his side (Figs. 80, 81).14 (Originally the defeated animal was a lion, no doubt the lion rampant that symbolized Bologna as a free commune. To avoid the potentially awkward pun on Leo X's name [leo = lion in Latin], the victim was changed to the Hydra.) We know from an early source that Lombardi's figure, executed in 1513,
Fig. 79. Statue of Pius IV, drawing MS A 111 inf., fol. 54.
Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan.
Fig. 80. Alfonso Lombardi, seated Hercules, terracotta. Palazzo Comunale, Bologna (photo courtesy Norberto Gramaccini).
embodied a highly charged political allegory: the Hydra was the Bentivoglio family, whose repeated attempts to recapture Bologna were finally ended in 1513, when under the Medici pope Leo X Bologna was returned definitively to papal rule. Alfonso’s statue, which parallels the Medici adoption of Hercules as the emblem of their dominion over Florence, was always prominently visible in the Palazzo Comunale, the residence of the papal legate; it served as a civic allegory of papal dominion in a city whose tradition of learning made its significance inescapable. Pius IV’s family name was Medici, and although not related to the Medici of Florence, he was their protégé and had adopted their coat of arms at the invitation of Cosimo I; so the political implication of Giambologna’s reference to Leo X had a personal aspect as well.

Another important model for Giambologna may be discerned through his reference to Lombardi’s sculpture. Lombardi’s desire to make the analogy between Leo X and Hercules must have motivated him to show the figure seated and triumphant: the pose associated the ancient hero with the familiar tradition of papal portraits in which the pontiff is enthroned. Lombardi’s allusion to Michelangelo’s bronze statue of the enthroned Julius II, destroyed in 1511 when the Bentivoglio had last occupied the city, was surely intentional. Michelangelo’s figure was notorious because its vigorous action (atto gagliardo) served, as the artist himself proclaimed, “to threaten the people, lest they be foolish” (“Minaccia, Padre Santo, questo popolo, se non è savio”). The bronze statue of Pius IV also evokes Michelangelo’s lost image, which Giambologna seems to have reconstructed, appropriately enough, on the basis of the Moses on Julius’s tomb, especially for the turn of the body and the action of the legs. In combining Lombardi’s mythic hero with Michelangelo’s wrathful pontiff, Giambologna related both exemplars to the contemporary religious and political threats to the church (particularly at an intellectual center such as Bologna), which the Council of Trent was intended to crush. Even the reference to Hercules had an intellectual and moral meaning, based on an ancient tradition in which the Hydra was equated with the Sophists, and the victory was won not by physical force but by virtuous philosophy over false reason. Pius’s keys and book replace the power of pagan ethical thought with that of Christian doctrine.
A major revelation of Cesi's memorial is that he intended for the courtyard of the new university building a tall marble column surmounted by a figure of Mercury, messenger of the gods and teacher of the arts and science to men. Apart from resolving the question of the origin of Giambologna's renowned figure of Mercury, the information provided by Cesi solves another problem concerning the sculpture that has always puzzled scholars. As it is most commonly known, the Mercury is a lithe, zephyr-borne figure spiraling upward, his face lifted toward the culminating gesture of his upward-pointing index finger (Fig. 82). The figure defies the laws of gravity, a weightless aerial bronze. This work, commissioned as a gift from Duke Cosimo de' Medici to the emperor Maximilian II, portrayed Mercury as messenger of the gods carrying Cosimo's homage to the emperor as the Olympian Jupiter.

Mystery has surrounded the magnificent version in the Museo Civico in Bologna which, although obviously related, does not at all conform to this type of Mercury rising (Fig. 83). The body is much heavier, more athletic; the glance is lower; and the index finger points back rather than up. The Bologna bronze evidently is not a study for the later Medici commission, as has been assumed, but rather the model for the figure intended for the university, which Cesi describes as descending, rather than ascend-
Fig. 84. Logo of the publisher Giovanni Rossi, Mercury with the motto Coelo Demissus ab Allo (from Regoli, 1563).

ing to heaven. Cesi explains that Mercury was an ancient symbol of reason and truth, and the statue would remind students that wisdom flowed from heaven as a gift of God. Giambologna's muscle-bound Mercury in Bologna is thus earthbound, like an announcing angel, and he indicates not the addressee but the source of his "academic" lesson, complementing the religio-political message expressed by the papal monument itself.

Cesi's description of the figure as descending confirms another of Tuttle's proposals, that Giambologna's invention must have been related to an analogous depiction of the flying Mercury as the logo of one of the leading printers of Bologna. Giovanni Rossi (Fig. 84). The motto that accompanies the image in many of Rossi's editions, Coelo Demissus ab Allo, "sent down from high heaven," expresses the idea of a heaven-sent message that Giambologna's figure was also meant to convey. The inscription on Rossi's logo identifies the concept as a conflation of two familiar texts of Virgil, essential to the Christian interpretation of ancient history. The Virgilian scheme, in fact, underlies the grand conception of all three of Giambologna's sculptures for Bologna.

In the first book of the Aeneid, when Aeneas and his companions set sail from burning Troy to establish his race and religion at Rome, Juno, angry and
Fig. 85. Marcantonio Raimondi, Neptune calming the waters ("Quae ego — !") and other episodes from the Aenid, Book 1, engraving.
jealous, persuades Acolus to raise the winds and destroy Aeneas's fleet. Angered at the usurpation of his power over the seas, Neptune quells the storm, uttering the imperious expletive "Quos ego——!" with which he confronts his adversaries. Here Virgil, in an obvious political allusion to Caesar Augustus, likens Neptune's act to that of a ruler who calms an unruly populace. After Aeneas takes refuge on the shore of Africa, Venus, his mother, intercedes with Jupiter on behalf of her son. Jupiter renews his promise to establish Rome, and as his first step sends Mercury down (demittit ab alta) to urge the Carthaginians and Queen Dido to relinquish all thoughts of hostility and accept Aeneas with good will.

From earliest Christian times the Aenid had been understood as an allegory of the universal dominion of the Church, and the three episodes—Neptune calming the seas, Jupiter yielding to Juno's pleas, and Mercury converting the Carthaginians—were critical moments of divine intervention, ensuring the realization of God's plan to save mankind. Neptune's pacification, Jupiter's command, and Mercury's persuasion assured the establishment of the Roman empire and religion, which prepared for the dominion of Christianity. These acts of providence had been singled out before in an engraving by Marcan-tonio Raimondi after a composite design by Raphael (Fig. 85) and, merged as a coherent narrative scene, in a fresco by Raphael's pupil Pietrino del Vaga that once decorated the villa in Genoa of Andrea Doria, the great naval hero in the struggle against the Turks (Fig. 86). The latter instance is particularly significant since Mercury's pose, including the finger pointing up and back toward Jupiter, anticipates and explains that of Rossi's bookplate. This Virgilian theme must have seemed relevant to the program of public statuary at Bologna, the city of learning par excellence, where Pope Pius would readily be identified through Virgil's familiar and prophetic epithet for his hero, "pious" Aeneas.

Rossi's motto contains the word "œlok," which
does not occur in the Arneid passage; the full meaning of the image depends on the striking coincidence of phrasing in the passage recording Jupiter’s charge to Mercury in the Arneid and another, perhaps even more significant, Virgilian text. In the fourth Eclogue the poet speaks of the birth of a new age, the return of a virgin, and the descent of a new generation from on high. The passage was seen as the one text of pagan antiquity that clearly foretold the birth of Christ and the coming of Christianity. In the last verse of the prophecy the words used in the Arneid when Jupiter dispatches Mercury to Dido are preceded by a direct reference to heaven, carlo demittitur alto. The coincidence of phrasing must have seemed to confirm the divine inspiration of the Virgilian texts, which Rossi applied to the knowledge borne by the messenger of the ancient gods and incorporated in his books. Giambologna’s Mercury was intended to bear the same message of divinely inspired knowledge.

The Neptune fountain broke with tradition in almost every aspect of both form and content (Figs. 87–90; Plate III). The basic design established a
Fig. 87 (opposite). Giambologna, Fountain of Neptune, Piazza del Nettuno, Bologna (photo: Anderson 40910).

Fig. 88 (above, left). Detail of Fig. 87 (photo: Fanti, Bologna).

Fig. 89 (above, right). Detail of Fig. 87 (photo: Fanti, Bologna).

Fig. 90 (left). Detail of Fig. 87 (photo: Fanti, Bologna).
new fountain type, with the figure raised on a high, two-storied architectural base.28 The traditional architectural base for statuary employed either a tall column or a relatively low pedestal; the latter formula had generally been followed for fountains with a raised central figure (cf. Figs. 93, 97).29 In the so-called kylix fountain the predominant figure or group might be mounted on a tall support, but this support was a nonarchitectural, sculptured shaft with an elevated basin that resembled an ancient wine goblet. A striking precedent for a high, rectangular, two-storied architectural pedestal for a statue of Neptune is the fabled Pharos, or lighthouse, of Alexandria, one of the wonders of the ancient world.30 Apart from many classical and medieval textual sources, the monument was recorded on a number of Alexandrian coins, which show the corners of the upper story decorated with figure sculptures and, on top, a statue of a standing deity, often taken for Neptune (Fig. 91). The Pharos of Alexandria was one of the great engineering feats of antiquity, renowned not only for its size but also for the complex mechanisms by which it functioned. (With some ninety water jets the Neptune fountain is itself a notable feat of hydraulic engineering.) This recondite recollection of the primary symbol of the intellectual capital of the ancient world would not have been lost in the city whose university, Cesi claimed, was the foremost in Europe.31

In his pioneering manual on the images of the ancient gods, first published in 1556, Vincenzo Cartari includes a depiction of the triumph of Neptune and his consort, Amphitrite (Fig. 92).32 The pair is accompanied by two vignettes, copied from ancient gems, illustrating the dual nature of the god of the seas. Another great art theoretician of the next generation, Gian Paolo Lomazzo, describes Neptune as “now tranquil, quiet and pacific, now all turbulent.”33 In representations of the first of these ancient types the god stands calmly with his trident at his side, one leg, bent forward at the knee, resting on a support that might take the form of a dolphin; in the other he drives his wave-crashing steeds, angrily brandishing his weapon to stir up the waters. Neptune became a popular subject for fountain sculptures in the second quarter of the sixteenth century, and Giambologna’s predecessors reflected the alternative interpretations noted by Cartari:
they showed the god either in relatively stiff, firmly grounded, and frontally oriented poses (see Figs. 93, 97) or else actively wielding his trident in a dramatic tableau.³⁴ Both versions had been adapted to the Virgilian “Quo ego—!” theme, by showing the figure raising a hand in an imperious gesture of suppression (Fig. 97) or fiercely subduing the sea by spearing it with his trident.³⁵

Giambologna, in effect, combined these two seemingly incompatible types in a single figure. It is important to observe how and why this merger of opposite states of being is brought about.³⁶ Neptune bends his right leg back and out to the side rather than straight forward, and throws his left hip forward and out to the opposite side. The right arm extends down and back, the left up and forward. These complex interactions and projections impart to the standing figure a continuous spiraling movement that penetrates the surrounding space in all directions.³⁷ In this way, the stasis proper to statuary is combined with the motion proper to dramatic action and the Neptune becomes both a statua and a historia, merging the two categories that for Renaissance theoreticians of art were distinct.³⁸

Underlying these formal innovations is a fundamental reinterpretation of the theme. Neptune’s pose indicates that he is stepping down to the side, toward the city’s great central square, the Piazza Maggiore. Having ridden into the center of Bologna on his undulating steed, he descends majestically to his pedestal to receive the adulation of the populace. The motion here parallels that of the water itself, carried through the aqueduct and the fountain to the city square. The descent is divine, and as such it corresponds to the action of the Mercury intended for the courtyard of the university. In both works the idea of descent from on high alluded to papal patronage as well as to the divine origin of all true knowledge.

The gestures of Giambologna’s figure also involve a meaningful revision of predecessors. In the colossal marble Neptune carved by Ammanati, who won the commission for the fountain in Florence (Fig. 93), the giant figure rides his chariot as if in imperial triumph, and he holds in his right fist not a trident but the handle of a leather-thonged whip, in a distinctly menacing way. This theme sheds light on the significance of the small bronze preliminary model
by Giambologna in the Museo Civico of Bologna (Fig. 94). Here Neptune holds a huge commander's baton in his right hand, as if it were a weapon he is about to wield. In fact, the motif recalls a famous colossal statue of the emperor Commodus as Hercules (Fig. 95), just as Hercules imagery permeated the monument to Pope Pius. 39 A religious import is also evident here in the patent similarity of the face and flowing beard to those of Michelangelo's Moses, consonant with the reference to Moses in the seated figure of Pius IV. Neptune, of course, governed all waters, not just the sea, and, like Moses with his "rod of God," Neptune with his trident could strike water from a rock. Seen in this guise, the Neptune-Moses figure might well have been understood as bidding the waters to gush forth. In the final version the trident was substituted for the baton and, as if in compensation, the resemblance to Moses was suppressed in favor of a physiognomy like that of Hercules (cf. Figs. 81, 89, 95). Neptune holds the trident as if he were about to hurl the weapon, according to Cesi, who, echoing Virgil's political implication, compares the action to that of the ruler who would liberate his subjects from all fear of disturbances and agitation. 40 If we recall that the trident is a pun on the Tridentine Council, we can hear the religious undertone, especially through the further pun, inscribed on the medal commemorating the fountain, relating the pope's name to the waters of baptism: *Aqua Pia* (Fig. 96). 41

Giambologna owed a further debt to Giovanni Montorsoli, who in his Neptune fountain in Messina evoked the theme of Neptune stilling the waters through the gesture of the right arm and
hand (Fig. 97). The stiff salute seems appropriate to the fountain’s purpose: to commemorate the emperor Charles V’s naval victories over the Moslems. The gesture of Giambologna’s Neptune is entirely different, however: the arm is more relaxed, and the fingers uncurl in a gentle, insinuating sequence. The action evokes, above all, the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius in Rome (Fig. 98), which, more than any other ancient work, had strong positive associations from the Middle Ages, when it was identified as Constantine the Great. It retained these associations when it was reidentified in the Renaissance as the noble-minded philosopher-emperor considered to be the pagan embodiment of Christian virtue. The gesture, in particular, was much appreciated and discussed and was explained almost universally as expressive of pacification.

Indeed, there could hardly be a better definition of the effect of benign nobility, at once firm and reassuring. The outstretched arm is, in fact, a grand rhetorical gesture of persuasion, whose applicability to Neptune was inspired, or at least reinforced, by the Christian tradition of moralizing interpretations of the pagan deities. In this tradition Neptune was understood to personify intelligence and reason, precisely because he calmed the seas in the first book of the Aeneid. The interpretation is analogous to that of Hercules and the Hydra which underlay Giambologna’s treatment of the statue of Pius IV. In contrast to all his predecessors Neptune here does not achieve his end by command or violence. Emulating the passage in which Virgil likens the “Quos eg — !” episode to the ruler swaying the angry rabble with his speech, Giambologna’s sea god
Fig. 97. Giovanni Montorsoli, Fountain of Neptune, Messina (photo: Alinari 19742).

Fig. 98. Marcus Aurelius, Piazza del Campidoglio, Rome (photo: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Rome).
soothes the forces of sedition by the subtle power of persuasion.45

Cesi considered the study of eloquence and wisdom primary to human society, a point of view that brings into sharp focus other major elements of the Neptune fountain’s decoration.46 Putti embracing dolphins are a common expression of love, partly derived from the ancient stories, cited by Cesi, of affection between these animals and young boys (see Fig. 88).47 The water spouting from the animals’ mouths recalls the dolphin as an emblem of persuasion (dolphins had induced Amphitrite to leave her island refuge and become Neptune’s consort).48 Cesi observes that the siren’s, too, were embodiments of persuasion, owing to their magical song; and here, discharging water from their ample breasts, they also offer more solid fare, becoming metaphors for the fructifying Aqua Pla (see Fig. 90). The ultimate meaning of the fountain is itself rhetorical since, as Cesi says, it proclaims the benefits of the ruler’s concern for his domain.49 If in connection with these points one recalls the conformity of the overall design to that of the Pharos of Alexandria, the fountain may be seen as a veritable beacon of civic and spiritual salvation.

In his complementary gestures—the right arm held back to wield the trident, the left put forward to pacify—Giambologna’s Neptune embodied the Renaissance mythographers’ definition of the dual nature of the divinity. Like the Christian deity, alternatively angry and benign, the Neptune speaks to the people of Bologna as the Mercury spoke to the students and the statue of Pius spoke to both. All three images in concert invite peaceful and reason acceptance of the articles of faith, love, and papal rule while also implying that a just retribution awaits those who are heedless.

In view of the central role played by the Counter-Reformatory zeal of Pius IV and his vice-legate in the sculptural program and the design of the individual figures, one may wonder whether enthusiasm for Giambologna’s entry in the Florence competition was the only reason he was chosen for the Bologna Neptune, his first major work. In addition to being a promising sculptor he was a Northerner who succeeded in fusing the classical tradition he adopted in Italy with the dynamism of his own Germanic heritage. In the Neptune Giambologna transformed the balanced mechanism of antiquity into a fluid spatial movement of great pathetic power; and solid muscles have been replaced by bulging, tight-skinned forms that have a positively pneumatic quality, so the figure seems to burst with vitality, inflated by some inner spirit. This transformation, in turn, is inconceivable without the continuous weightless motion with which the classical contrapposto had already been imbued by Northern artists of the late Middle Ages—the so-called Gothic S-curve that epitomized the International Style of about 1400. Giambologna’s “restoration” of this distant late-medieval past, which enabled him to carry the contemporary Mannerist figura serpentinata to new heights of expressivity, was surely no less deliberate than his classicism, and perfectly in accord with the reaffirmation of traditional faith that was one of the driving forces of the Counter-Reformatory movement.50 One wonders whether Cesi might have intuited this profound harmony between Giambologna’s art and the efforts of Catholicism to constrain transalpine religious zeal within the ancient traditions of the Roman church.

In reviving the Northern tradition of continuous dynamics and melding it anew with the classical legacy of equilibrated mass, Giambologna created a revolution of his own, a new International Style that from Bologna would sweep the emergent absolute monarchies of Europe and dominate developments for the next two centuries.51 Neptune’s pose, the action of the arms, and the turn of the head not only appear commanding from every point of view but also impart a sweeping and turning motion that suggests the boundless reaches of the god’s domain. The figure is endowed with nobility, autonomy, universality, and grace, and the Lord of the Seas views the world with what has aptly been described as “a sovereign regard.”52 Bononia Decret, indeed!
fogle in su' d(e)cto filo saldato con l'ariento per il Gighante . . ." The document has recently been republished and discussed by Ristori, 1986, 85f; cf. also the comments by Isenmeyer, 1965, 325.

63. . . . La fama de' gh'huomini, che poi si mantiene verde, e bella per molti secoli, come la fronde del lauro, & dell'èdera si mantengono" (Ripa, 1603, 178). In a letter of 1545, published in 1550, Aretino mentions the statue's leafy cinch as an expression of "la modestia fiorentina" (cf. Ristori, 1986, 84). On the honorific symbolism of the plants, cf. Trapp, 1958.

64. On the interviews and the issues involved, see especially Levine, 1974; Parks, 1975. The chronicler Pietro Parenti records under the year 1504 that the David was brought to the Piazza "per consiglio del maestro," a passage that seems to have been overlooked or neglected by nearly everyone who has considered the matter. Raffaele Borghini later (1584) claimed that the installation did not please Michelangelo, who would have preferred to see the sculpture placed in a niche (Barocchi, ed., 1962–72, II, 207).


66. See Levine, 1974, 34 n. 13; Ristori, 1986, 93f.


68. I am indebted at this point to Bredekamp's study (1986) of Lorenzini's "Brutian" attack on the arch. and its anti-Medicean political implications.


(As he carves the image of Brutus from the marble, the sculptor is reminded of the crime, and desists. Michael Angelus Buonarrotus Facit.)

The material concerning the bust is assembled in Barocchi, ed., 1962–72, IV, 1792ff; but see Gordon, 1957; Lavin, 1975, 357f; Portheim (1889, 153) once suggested that the bust commemorates not the murder of Alessandro by Lorenzino, as is commonly assumed, but Lorenzino's own assassination in 1547 at the behest of Duke Cosimo; this view has been revived by First (1977). If this later dating is correct, Michelangelo may have conceived the sculpture in response to the busts of Cosimo I made by Bandinelli and Cellini explicitly in the imperial tradition (see Lavin, 1975, 385ff.).

70. Further to the subject of this paragraph below, p. 213ff.

3. Giambologna's Neptune at the Crossroads

First presented in the Aula Magna of the Archiginnasio at Bologna in October 1990. The lecture served to inaugurate the newly restored Fountain of Neptune and a colloquium on the subject of Bologna as a cultural crossroads, "Il luogo e il ruolo della città di Bologna tra Europa continentale e mediterranea," held under the aegis of the International Committee for the History of Art.


2. See Malaguzzi Valeri, 1901, 31f; Corpus, 1927, 10ff; Miller, 1977, 25; Bellocci, 1987, 20f.


5. The primary sources on the fountain are Vasari, 1906, VI, 191f, and Borghini, 1584, 586. For the modern literature see Avery, 1987, 206–9, 256, no. 31, with bibliography. Most important for the present essay are the contributions of Miller.
1977 (whose wide-ranging essay intuited a number of points made clear by the discovery and studies of Tuttle), and Tuttle: 1977; 1984; "Bononia," 1987; and "Il palazzo," 1987. (In a subsequent volume that came to my attention only after the present work was completed, Miller, 1989, extended her studies to the city as a whole, though without reference to Donato Cesi’s account of his projects, published by Tuttle.)

6. See Tuttle, "Bononia," 1987, with the manuscript published in extenso as an appendix. Tuttle is preparing a comprehensive monograph on the Neptune fountain.

7. In his dedicatory letter to the pope Cesi notes that he had been inspired by the medals issued, on the example of the ancients, to commemorate Pius’s achievements in Rome (see n. 41 below): "His de rebus cum sercum, quae Romae acta sunt, ea vetere exemplo aeternitatis esse numismatum monumentis ad prodendam memoriam commendata..." [Tuttle, "Bononia," 1987, 235]; "When I learned of the things accomplished in Rome which, by the example of the ancients, had been commended to memory in the eternal monuments of numismatics..." Cesi’s initiative seems to have been taken up at once in Florence, where a series of commemorative medals was issued for Cosimo I (noted by Tuttle, "Bononia," 1987, 231; see C. Johnson, 1976). Although no explanatory text accompanied the Florentine series, it was broader in scope, including notable events as well as public works. These series in turn laid the groundwork for the great medallic history of Louis XIV. On the use of such medallic series as propaganda, see Kantorowicz, 1963, 166ff.

8. The only hint of a Bologna connection for the Mercury was that the earliest of the bronze models of the figure is preserved in the Museo Civico (Fig. 83), whence scholars attributed to the period of Giambologna’s stay in Bologna the project for the figure later sent to the Hapsburg emperor in Vienna (Fig. 82; Gramberg, 1936, 76; Avery and Radcliffe, 1978, 84f.). The project for the statue of Pius IV was known from documents and other sources (Tuttle, "Bononia," 1987, 288, and "Il palazzo," 1987, 74ff.), but its connection with the fountain project was unsuspected.

Although Giambologna may have become involved in the fountain during a visit to Bologna early in 1562, the work is first mentioned in a papal brief of March 1563, a month before the sculptor moved to Bologna; after much delay the Neptune was cast in August 1566 and installed in December of that year (Gramberg, 1936, 4, 16–23). The project for the statue of Gregory is first mentioned in February 1564 and the model was taken to Rome the following April (Tuttle, "Bononia," 1987, 228; Gramberg, 1936, 71); the first and only reference to the Mercury is in Cesi’s manuscript, which Tuttle dates between December 1564 and January 1565 ("Bononia," 1987, 218). The statue of the pope and the Mercury were evidently abandoned after Giambologna and Cesi left Bologna in January 1565.


10. The strategic location of the fountain is discussed by Miller, 1977, 20ff.

11. The medal illustrating the sculpture was published by Lethe-Jasper, 1972, with an attribution to Guglielmo della Porta; the medal’s relationship to Giambologna’s project was established by Tuttle, "Il palazzo," 1987, 73ff.; "Bononia," 1987, 228f.

COLLATAQVE AD HVIVS CVTIVTIS DIGNITATEM / ORNAMENTA / S. P. O. BONONIENSIS PVS AC GRATVS” (Tuttle, “Bononiæ,” 1987, 244); “… and added trampled beneath his feet is heresy shown in a horrendous way, in the very form of the monster described by St. John in the Apocalypse. The statue holds a book in the left hand, signifying that the heretics are dealt with by doctrine; in its right hand are two keys, symbols of his dual power with which he crushes the heads of the monster. With one of the keys the theologians wish to indicate that only the pope determines what sin is; and with the other that it is for him to expiate those guilty of sin. . . . There is also added this inscription: To Pope Pius IV for having trampled heresy with the Tridentine council and having provided ornaments to the dignity of the city, the pious and grateful Bolognese senate and people of Bologna [offer this statue].”

16. The menacing aspect of Michelangelo’s colossal statue of Julius II pervades Condovi’s account of it: “E dubitando quel chieghia dovesso fare nella mano sinistra, facendo la destra sembiante di dar la benedizione, trovò il papa, che a veder la statua venuto era, se gli piacessi che gli facesse un libro. Che libro? rispose egli allora: una spada; chè non sono lettere. E morteggianando sopra la destra, che era in atto gagliardo, sottendo disse a Michelagnolo: Questa tua statua, dà ella la benedizione o malefizione? A cui Michelagnolo: Minaccia, Padre Santo, questo popolo, se non è savio” (Condovi, 1938, 75f); “And, since he was in doubt as to what to do with the left hand, having made the right hand in an attitude of benediction, he inquired of the pope, who had come to see the statue, whether he would like it if he made a book in that other hand. ‘What book,’ was the pope’s response; ‘a sword; because I for my part know nothing of letters.’ And, joking about the forceful gesture of the right hand, he said smilingly to Michelangelo, ‘This statue of yours, is it giving the benediction or a malediction?’ To which Michelangelo rejoined, ‘It is threatening this populace. Holy Father, if they are not prudent’” (Condovi, 1976, 38–39). Miller (1977, 38) and Gramaccini (1980, 30f) also perceived Giambologna’s papal monument as a reprise of Michelangelo’s.
17. As noted by Tuttle, “Il palazzo,” 1987, 76.
18. “Illud tamen addam, statuum esse in medio compluvio supra parastamiam ex vermiculato lapide columna Mercurii e coelo labentis simulachrum aereum ponit ur, cum illo significata sit antiquitus ratio et veritas, sapientiam e coelo manasse, emque veluti Dei donum esse summo studio ac veneratione suscipientem scholares facile, posito ibi signo in memoriam revocament” (Tuttle, “Il palazzo,” 1987, 84; 71ff. for discussion); “I will add that it has been decided to place in the middle of the courtyard on a prepared column of vermiculated stone a bronze image of Mercury descending from heaven; since in antiquity he symbolized reason and truth, the image being placed there as a reminder, the students may readily recall that wisdom descends from heaven and that it is a gift of God to be received with study and veneration.”
19. The most recent discussion of the Mercury is in Avery, 1987, 125–30, 261 nos. 68, 72, 73, with previous bibliography.
20. Tuttle, “Il palazzo,” 1987, 73. The variants of Rossi’s logo show the same distinction between upward- and backward-pointing gestures of Mercury, so that he may also have inspired the version Giambologna sent to Vienna; see the examples illustrated in Sorbello, 1923, 39–44; Zappella, 1986, 247, fgs. 829–38.
22. Rossi’s logo also helps to identify an individual who may have had an important share in formulating the Virgilian program of the sculptures. The device appears in a commentary on the first
book of the Arneid published in 1563 by Sebastiano Regoli (1514–1570), who was professor of humane letters at the university (Fig. 8.4).

Regoli's subtle and learned commentary includes many of the interpretations discussed here and in Gesi's memorial. Regoli also delivered one of the inaugural addresses when the new university was dedicated in the same year, and Rossi's publication of the text of the oration also contains the logo. (Regoli, In primum, 1563, and Onatio, 1563; on Regoli, see Fasoli, 1962, 97, and 1987, 274f; Fantuzzi, 1781–94, VII, 180–82.)


24. ac veluti magno in populo sum coorta est seditio, saevitique animis ignobile volgus, iamque faces et saxa volant (furor arma ministrat), tum pietate gravem ac meritis si forte virum quem conspexerit, silent arrectisque auribus adstant; ille regit dictis animos et pectora mulct.

"And as, when oft-times in a great nation tumult has risen, the base rabble rage angrily, and now brands and stones fly; madness lends arms; then, if haply they set eyes on a man honoured for noble character and service, they are silent and stand by with attentive ears; he with speech sways their passion and soothes their breasts" (I, 148–53; Fairclough, 1950, I, 250–53).

25. Haece et Maia genitum demitit ab alto, ut terrae usque novae panteat Carthaginis aeres hospitio Teucris, ne fati nescia Dido finibus arcet, volat ille per aera magnum remigio alarum ac Libyae citas adstitit oris. et iam iussa facti, ponunteque ferocia Poeni corda volente deo; in primis regina quietum accipit in Teucros animum mentemque benignam.

"So speaking, he sends the son of Maia down from heaven, that the land and towers of new-built Carthage may open to greet the Teutrians, and Dido, ignorant of fate, might not bar them from her lands. Through the wide air he flies on the oarage of wings, and speedily alights on the Lybian coasts. At once he does his bidding, and, God willing it, the Phoenicians lay aside their savage thoughts; above all, the queen receives a gentle mind and gracious purpose towards the Teutrians" (I, 297–304; Fairclough, 1950, I, 262f).

26. The Marcantonio engraving has been discussed most recently by Lord, 1984. On the drawing in Edinburgh, which is presumed to reflect Pierino's composition, see Boccardo, 1989, 66f.

27. Ultima Cumaei venit iam carminis aetas; magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo. iam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna; iam nova progenies caelo demittitur alto.

"Now is come the last age of the song of Cumae; the great line of the centuries begins anew. Now the Virgin returns, the reign of Saturn returns; now a new generation descends from heaven on high" (IV, 4–7; Fairclough, 1950, I, 28f).

The same motto was used with reference to Louis XIV; see Kantorowicz, 1963, 169.

28. There are a number of drawings for the fountain by Tommaso Laureti, who had overall responsibility for the project; some were discussed by Turtle in a paper presented at the colloquium in Bologna; others have been published by H. Widaner in Italienische, 1991. Only one of the drawings, in Darmstadt, anticipates the structure as well as aspects of the sculptural decoration of the executed work; I believe the sketch must have been made after Giambologna became involved in the project and reflects his intervention (this also seems to be the view of Widaner, ibid., 32).

29. On the statuary pedestal in the Renaissance see Weil-Garris, 1983; on the fountain types, Wiles, 1933, chapters V and VI.

30. The standard work on the Pharos is Thielsch, 1909; for a more recent summary see Fraser, 1972, i, 18–20. II, 42–54. ffolliott, 1984, 224 n. 36; compared Montorsoli's design for a light-
house at Messina and the decorative sculptures on his Neptune fountain there to the Pharos of Alexandria.


32. "Although in these times academies have been established in many places throughout Europe, that of Bologna is the most flourishing whether owing to the goodwill of heaven, the excellence of the teachers, the beauty of the city, or the citizens' warmth and charity toward strangers."

33. "Nettuno, Dio del mare, fu formato in diversi modi, ora tranquillo, quieto et pacifico, et ora tutto turbato, come si legge presso Omero e Vergilio" (Ciardi, ed. II, 1974, 508; cited by Wiles, 1933, 60 n. 2).

34. Neptune fountains are studied by Wiles, 1933: a useful survey of Neptune monuments in the sixteenth century is in Hamilton, 1976.

35. Precedent examples of this latter type are Montorsoli's lost fountain for the garden of the Villa of Andrea Doria at Genoa (see Gorse, 1985, 28) and an unexecuted fountain in the Villa d'Este at Tivoli (Coffin, 1960, 17). Also relevant, perhaps, is a medal cast some years later that may, however, reflect an early project for the Neptune fountain in Florence (Campbell, 1985, 116f.).

36. See the remarkable analysis of Neptune's pose and movement by Gramberg, 1936, 28ff. esp. 32.

37. The spatial quality of the figure is displayed to maximum effect in the side view of the fountain shown on the commemorative medal (Fig. 96), which Tuttle attributes to Giambologna himself ("Bononia," 1987, 226, fig. 18, 230).

38. On these concepts see Smith, 1968, and Greenstein, 1990 (see also Greenstein's forthcoming book, Alberti, Mantegna, and Painting as "Historia").

39. On this work see Haskell and Penny, 1981, 188–89. Miller, 1977, 36, also saw in the baton a reference to Hercules.

40. "qui tridentem teneat dextra, quasi ictum inflicturus... ut subjectas ditionis suae gentes omni procellarum arce agitationis metu liberet" (Tuttle, "Bononia," 1987, 243). On Neptune as the supreme magistrate who suppresses sedition, see Regoli, In primum, 1563, 181ff., 185.

41. Miller, 1977, 36, noted the trident-Tridentine relationship. The pope was fond of punning on his name, especially with projects such as the "Porta Pia," the "Aqua Pia," the "Via Pia," and the "Civitas Pia" in Rome (see Fagiolo and Madonna, 1972).

42. On Montorsoli's fountain see ffolliott, 1984, 139ff.

43. For an excellent study of the role of the Marcus Aurelius in the sixteenth century, including the gesture, see Mezzatesta, 1834, esp. 621f., 628f., 631. Miller, 1977, 26 n. 17, points out that contemporaneously with the Piazza Nettuno in Bologna, Pius IV was also preoccupied with the Campidoglio and the setting for the equestrian monument. On the meaning of the gesture in antiquity, see Bergmann, 1990, 6ff.


45. See the last line in the passage quoted in n. 24 above. Concerning this verse Sebastiano Regoli speaks of the true ruler, who quells sedition by the power of eloquence: "Et principem eum, esse verum regem, qui in Deos pietate, meritisq. in patriam sit clarus, ac eloquentia pluviam valeat. Item hinc discimus, quanta sit vis eloquentiae, & quas ad res sit adhibenda, ad seditiones siclicet tollendas, ac motum populi sedandum; ad iniurias prohibendas, & quod vi, ac armis summi Imperatores saepe non possunt; verbis id asservantur viri boni oratores" (In primum, 1563, 188).

46. Cesi introduces his account of the building of the university with an eloquent praise of human-
istic studies: "Cum dispersa primum ac passim vagans hominum multitudo eloquentiae ac sapientiae viribus intra urbes ad civilem cultum coacta ferinos illos mores exuerit, ac deinde paulatim mansuetudinis doctrina animis ad florentissimum vitae statum sit perducta, facile intellectum est literarum studium nihil ad tunc dam aut ornamand mortuum societatem antiquius, nihil aptius, nihil denique praestabilius inventri posse, beatasque respublicas illas esse, in quibus literarum cultus non postremus habeatur" (Tuttle, "Bononia," 1987, 238); "When first the dispersed multitude of wandering men gathered into cities by the powers of eloquence and wisdom had cast off those savage ways and then, their spirits tamed by education, gradually been led to a flourishing state of life, it was readily understood that to safeguard and adorn human society nothing could be found more ancient, more apt or preferable than the study of letters, and that those nations are blessed in which letters are not held in least regard."

47. "Delphinos autem esse ingenios hominum natura propensiores, ut verosimile sit cum illis pueros iocandi, fidem faciunt ubique historiae, dum eorum beneficio Arionem, Pahemonem, Phalantum, Tarantem, Telemachum et pleroque alios servos commemorant" (Tuttle, "Bononia," 1987, 243); "Many stories attest that dolphins have an innate propensity toward human beings, whence it is natural that young boys play with them, and record that Arion, Pahemon, Phalantus, Tarantis, Telemachus and many others were saved by the benevolence of dolphins."

48. On the dolphin see Tervarent, 1959, II. 143f.

49. "Sirenes quamquam apud aliquos illecebaram loco habentur, non inepte tamen ab alius ad significandum orationis dulcedinem flectuntur, unde illud Martialis Cato grammaticus latina Siren, ut praeterea aures sirenem illecebras in Apolloniis templi apud Philostratum suspensas legi" (Tuttle, "Bononia," 1987, 243); "Although according to some Sirens are considered beguiling, they are aptly construed by others to signify the sweetness of speech, whence Martial calls Cato the Grammarian the Latin Siren, and I also read in Philostratus that the golden lures of the Sirens were hung up in the temple of Apollo. Moreover, since our Sirens express their breasts they seem to indicate that they excel not only by the delight of the voice, but also offer something more solid from within themselves. Therefore the artful construction and ornament of the leaping water speaks thus: the highest leisure and pursuit of peace thrive most if the ruler himself assumes the task of administering the realm."

50. Emphasis on Giambologna's absorption of the classical tradition has tended to obscure this fundamental debt to his Northern background. Holderbaum found evidence of a medieval revival in Giambologna's late religious works, which he also sees as Counter-Reformatory in spirit (1983, 207, 213f., 274ff., 290).

There is some evidence that Giambologna himself may have had Protestant leanings during the 1630's (Holderbaum, 1983, 196–98); if so, he must later have returned to the Catholic fold, as his funerary chapel in SS. Annunziata in Florence testifies.

51. The relationship between Giambologna's art and contemporary political development was another enduring contribution of Holderbaum, 1983, 149ff.


4. Caravaggio's Calling of Saint Matthew:

The Identity of the Protagonist

First presented in a session on Irony and Paradox in Northern Art at a meeting of the College Art Association in February 1990.

1. For the early history of Paul's metaphor, see Hugédé, 1957. For the exaltation of the lowly, see the pioneering and still fundamental studies of the paradoxical encomium by Colie (1966) and of the sermo humilis by Auerbach (1965). This essay is a sequel to an earlier study in which I discussed the Socratic irony embodied in Caravaggio's first altarpiece for the Contarelli chapel (Lavin, "Divine Inspiration," 1974).


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