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The hydraulics of imagination: fantastical fountains in the drawing books of Jacopo Bellini

The Venetian artist Jacopo Bellini (c. 1400 – c. 1470/71) filled the pages of his drawing books with innumerable architectural musings, but none proved more prescient than his depictions of monumental fountains.[1] Each of the two drawing books – preserved today in the Louvre and the British Museum respectively – include examples of these structures, but the three fountains in the Paris album are the focus of this article.[2] The latter are particularly remarkable in their scale and sculptural complexity, far surpassing any of the monuments Jacopo would have seen in Italy during his own lifetime, let alone during the 1430s and 1440s when the relevant compositions are dated (Figs. 1-3).[3] Monuments that

1 In the writing of this article, I am greatly indebted to Frank Fehrenbach, whose innumerable suggestions and critiques, as well as his own inspiring work on fountains, have been a constant guide. I am also extremely grateful to Paul Barolsky and Ulrich Pfisterer for their penetrating comments on prior drafts of this article, and to all the speakers and organizers of the Berlin conference who offered their very helpful suggestions.

2 For complete facsimiles of the two books, with extended commentary and prior literature, see Degenhart, Bernhard / Schmitt, Annegrit: *Corpus der Italienischen Zeichnungen, 1300-1450*. 3 Vols., Vol. 2 (5-8). Berlin 1990. See also Eisler, Colin: *The genius of Jacopo Bellini: the complete paintings and drawings*. New York 1989. Elen, Albert J.: *Italian late-medieval and Renaissance drawing-books from Giovannino de' Grassi to Palma Giovane*. Leiden 1995, pp. 214-215, 219-220; and on Jacopo's inventive architecture, Brown, Patricia Fortini: „The antiquarianism of Jacopo Bellini". In: *Artibus et Historiae* 26, 1992, pp. 65-84.
The drawing books include three drawings of fountains each; in the Paris album they appear within compositions on fols. 10, 15v-16, and 24v-25, and in the London album, on fols. 66v-67, 74v-75, and 96v-97.

3 Morét, Stefan: *Der italienische Figurenbrunnen des Cinquecento*. Oberhausen 2003, pp. 24-31, situates Jacopo's drawings within a very useful account of the development of Italian fountains from the early fifteenth century into the sixteenth century. See also Wiles, Bertha Harris: *The fountains of Florentine sculptors and their followers from Donatello to Bernini*. Cambridge 1933, pp. 11-16. Brunckhorst, Friedl: *Architektur im Bild: die Darstellung der Stadt Venedig im 15. Jahrhundert*. Hildesheim 1997, pp. 20-23, points out that Venice lacked the water conduits necessary for building fountains like those Jacopo envisioned and that the drawings are, as such, truly fantastical creations. Jacopo's near contemporary Marin Sanudo also noted this aspect his native city with the ironic quip, „Venexia è in aqua e non ha aqua". Sanudo, Marin: *De origine, situ et magistratibus urbis Venetae ovvero la Città di Venetia (1493-1530)*. Angela Caracciolo Aricò (Ed.), Milan 1980, p. 38. In the dating of Jacopo's drawing books, I have followed Degenhart / Schmitt 1990, Vol. 2 (5), pp. 103-191, who argue for placing the Paris volume earlier than its London counterpart. However, Luciano Bellosi and Antonio Mazzotta have recently voiced skepticism on this point, preferring – with reference to prior literature – to situate the London volume first in the artist's chronology; see Agosti, Giovanni / Thiébaut, Dominique (Eds.): *Mantegna, 1431-1506*. Paris 2008, p. 112. In the context of this article, the debate has little

realize the ambition of these drawings are documented only after the artist's death, in the last decades of the fifteenth century.[4] Even the fictional fountains described in contemporary literature rarely measure up.[5] As I will argue here, Jacopo's fountains – paradigms of his precocious skills as an inventor – instantiate the source behind the drawings themselves: the artist's fertile imagination. Within the context of the present volume, they attest not only to an early fifteenth-century interest in the representation of imagination as a visual subject, but also to the essential role of drawing as a generative vehicle for Renaissance artistic innovation.

The fountain in Jacopo's Paris drawing of the *Judgment of Solomon* dominates the foreground plane of an expansive courtyard (Fig. 1).[6] Stairwells zigzag overhead; terraces jut outwards and windows recede into the background depths. An arcade frames the surprisingly diminutive narrative unfolding in Solomon's inner court. Every nook, window, and doorway of the drawing is populated by anonymous figures – a soldier, an old man with a cane, and inquisitive spectators peering up, down, and out. Yet no figures are more lively than those that adorn the foreground fountain. The colossal monument is composed of two curving basins that blossom around a stocky Corinthian column. Freestanding youths holding garlands dance gleefully around the lower basin's lip, twisting their bodies with the curve of the pendulous boughs. Another cluster of boys expectorate into the basin above, only to be trumped by the fountain's crowning statuette, who relieves his bladder with bravura and sends an impressive stream arching over their heads.

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bearing; even if Jacopo's fountains in the Paris drawing book are of a slightly later date, their precocity is still remarkable all the same.

4 For examples of late fifteenth-century fountains (no longer extant) at Rome, Naples, the Villa Medici at Careggi, and the royal court of Hungary, see Infessura, Stefano: *Diario della città di Roma*. Oreste Tommasini (Ed.), Rome 1890, p. 254; Salazar, Lorenzo: „Racconti di storia Napoletana". In: *Archivio Storico per le Province Napoletane* 33, 1908, pp. 474-544, pp. 503-504; Gombrich, Ernst H.: „Alberto Avogradro's descriptions of the Badia of Fiesole and of the Villa of Careggi". In: *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 5, 1962, pp. 217-229; Balogh, Jolán: *Die Anfänge der Renaissance in Ungarn: Matthias Corvinus und die Kunst*. Graz 1975, pp. 168, 174-178. Notables examples from the sixteenth century include the dramatic fountains designed by Niccolò Tribolo for the Medici villa of Castello: *Fountain of Hercules and Antaeus* (c. 1543, crowned by Bartolomeo Ammannati's later bronze statue) and *Fountain of the Labyrinth* (c. 1545); see Lazzaro, Claudia: *The Italian Renaissance garden*. New Haven 1990, pp. 172-177.

5 Boccaccio's *Amorosa Visione* does, however, include an extended description of an imagined fountain that is comparable to Jacopo's drawings; see Boccaccio, Giovanni: *Amorosa visione*. Trans. Robert Hollander / Timothy Hampton / Margherita Frankel, Hanover 1986, Canto XXXVIII, lines 27-88, and also Miller, Naomi: „Paradise regained: medieval garden fountains". In: *Medieval gardens*. Ed. Elisabeth Macdougall. Dumbarton Oaks 1986, pp. 149-150. The fictional monument („uno eximio fonte") elaborately described by Colonna, with accompanying illustration, in his *Hypnertomachia Poliphili* (1499) continues in this tradition; see Colonna, Francesco: *Hypnertomachia Poliphili*. Eds. Marco Ariani and Mino Gabriele. 2 Vols. Milan 1998, Vol. 1, pp. 88-92.

6 Degenhart / Schmitt 1990, Vol. 2 (6), p. 340, Pls. 28-29 (fols. 24v-25).

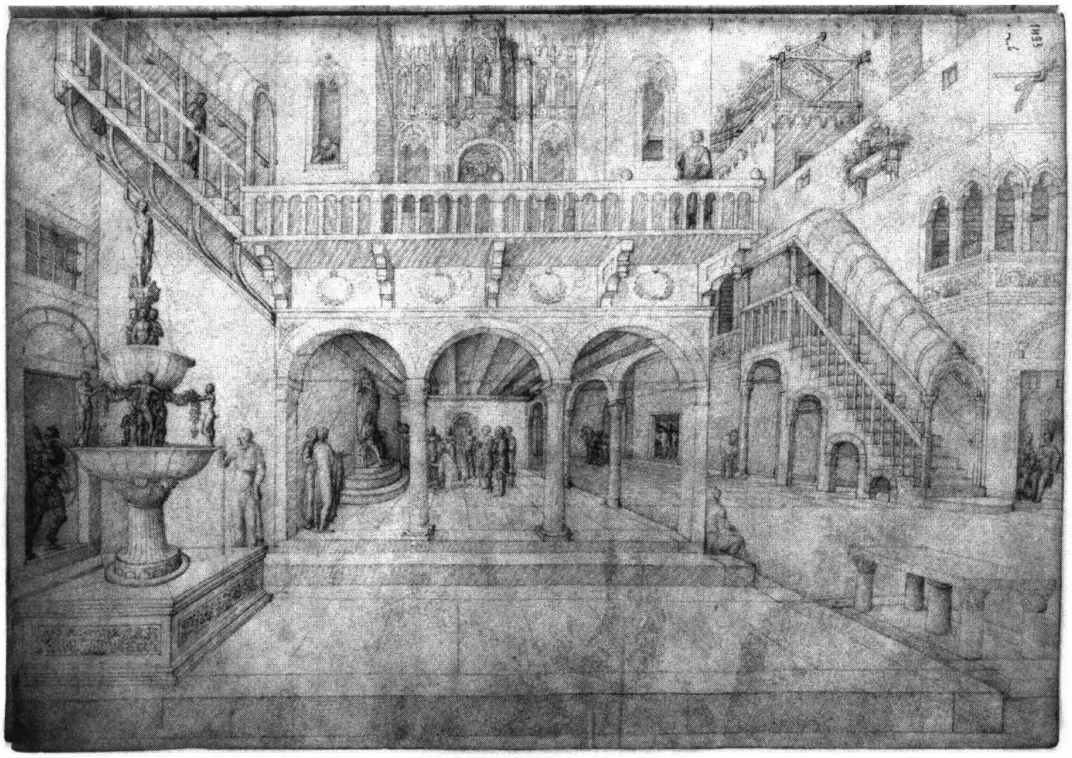

Abb. 1: Jacopo Bellini: Judgment of Solomon, c. 1435-1440, Pen on vellum, Paris, Musée du Louvre

The dancing figures on the monument defiantly resist their sculptural identity and behave as living, moving beings. Their vivacity recalls medieval and Renaissance images of the „Fons Vitae", the paradisiacal Fountain of Life, whose potent waters not only purified bathers but also endowed them with renewed energy and youthful vigor.[7] Like those rejuvenated bathers, the statuettes on Jacopo's fountain seem vested with life by the watery structure they inhabit.

The fountain in Jacopo's *Presentation at the Temple*, another drawing from the Paris album, is enlivened by the same inner vitality (Fig. 2).[8] The monument is distracting, despite its secondary position within the landscape; it entices the eye away from the Presentation scene in the foreground temple and contributes – along with the wandering animals and other mysterious details – to an inherent tension between center and periphery. An ambiguously-gendered figure at the fountain's summit squirts a long, arching jet of water from its right

7 See Rapp-Buri, Anna: *Der Jungbrunnen in Literatur und bildender Kunst des Mittelalters*. Zürich 1976 for several examples. Also highly relevant are two Ferrarese prints, dated between 1470 and 1480, in which putti and women are shown bathing and cavorting in the basins of elaborate candelabra fountains; Hind, Arthur M.: *Early Italian engraving*. 7 Vols. New York 1938, Vol. 1 (1), p. 258, nos. 19-20.

8 Degenhart / Schmitt 1990, Vol. 2 (6), pp. 316-318, Pl. 7 (fol. 10).

Abb. 2: Jacopo Bellini: Presentation at the Temple, c. 1440, Pen on vellum, Paris, Musée du Louvre

breast. A group of male figures below follows suit; right hands steadying their aim, they micturate into the scalloped basin at their feet. Another row of spouts underneath the basin continues this directional flow. Even innocent bystanders respond to the fountain's infectious energy. A boy sitting on the monument's front ledge holds his right hand before his groin, as if ready to imitate the boastful virility of the urinating statues above him.

The squirting breast of the fountain's crowning figure was a common symbol of fertility both in antiquity and in medieval literature, a connotation that the urinating male figures shared.[9] Both urine and breast milk were understood by classical writers and their later readers as bodily fluids endowed with the spirit and inner force of life. Pliny the Elder asserts that urine, particularly that of prepubescent boys, has great salutary potential, „not only natural but supernatural" and that breast milk, an antidote for fevers, pains, and nausea, is most efficacious if the woman has previously given birth to a boy.[10]

9 Deonna, W.: „La femme aux seins jaillissants et l'enfant ‚mingens'". In: *Genava* 6, 1958, pp. 239-296.

10 Pliny the Elder, *Historia Naturalis*, XXVIII.xviii.65 and XXVIII.xxi.72.

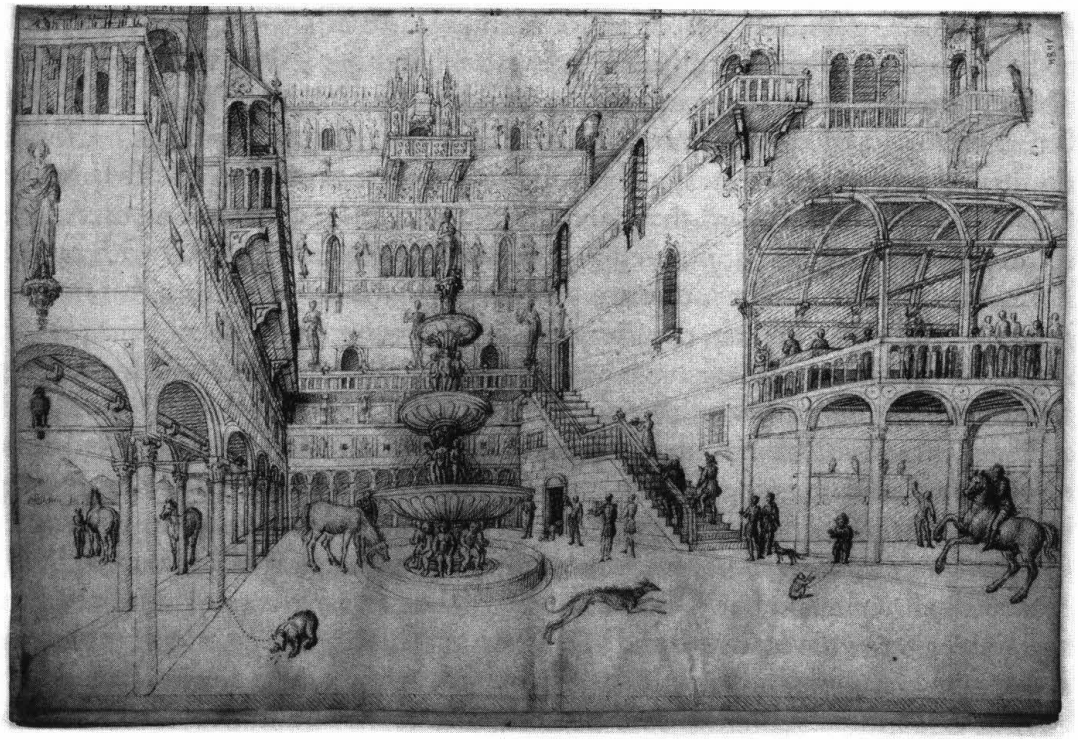

Abb. 3: Jacopo Bellini: Beheading of John the Baptist, c. 1440-1445, Pen on vellum, Paris, Musée du Louvre

Urinating boys also appear as fertility symbols on fifteenth-century birth trays – a common gift for new mothers.[11] In such images and perhaps also in Jacopo's fountain, micturation may have been a euphemism for male ejaculation itself. This association is supported, particularly in the latter case, by the influential Aristotelian definition of sperm as a combination of water and the „pneuma", the body's animating force.[12] Indeed, the playful children of Renaissance sculpture were consistently described in contemporary documents as „spiritelli", animated spirits who served to embody the inner vitals or the powers of the natural elements (earth, air, wind, and water).[13] It is no surprise that lactating and urinating figures, enlivened – like those in Jacopo's drawing – by the fluids coursing through them, appear so frequently in Renaissance fountain decoration from the latter half of the fifteenth century on.[14]

11 Carli, Cecilia de: *I deschi da parto e la pittura del primo Rinascimento Toscano*. Turin 1997, pp. 98-101, no. 15 and pp. 144-145, no. 35. Musacchio, Jacqueline Marie: *The art and ritual of childbirth in Renaissance Italy*. New Haven 1999, pp. 126-134, 194-195.

12 Solmsen, Friedrich: „The vital heat, the inborn pneuma and the aether". In: *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 77, 1957, pp. 119-223.

13 Pfisterer, Ulrich. *Donatello und die Entdeckung der Stile 1430-1445*. Munich 2002, pp. 133-146.

14 Another early example of the squirting breast as a fountain motif is documented at the 1453 banquet in Lille, held by the Duke of Burgundy Philip the Good; Deonna 1958, pp. 245-246.

The last and grandest of Jacopo's fountains in the Paris volume abounds with a similar cast of spirited sculptural figures and arching jets of water (Fig. 3).[15] This colossal candelabra emerges from a wide collecting pool, its three tiers of fluted basins crawling with animated putti who spit, urinate, and crouch around the structure's central stem. The three basins appear ever so slightly off-balance, like a stack of spinning tops that could fly out of control at any moment. At the fountain's summit, a nude statuette squeezes water from her breast with casual nonchalance, seemingly unaware of her precarious position. As in the *Presentation at the Temple*, the fountain's energy is contagious; even the jaunty statues on the palace facade have begun to shake their hips and to dance along with the lively monument.

The ostensible subject of the drawing in which Jacopo has situated this impressive fountain is the *Beheading of John the Baptist*. The body of the saint is slumped across a darkened threshold behind the monument and to its right. On the stairway above, Salome is carrying John's decapitated head up to King Herod's banquet chamber. Once discovered, the narrative is easy to follow, but the viewer must navigate around the lively and highly distracting fountain in order to find it. Like the bucking horse in the drawing's right corner, startled by a crouching monkey and the dog sprinting towards him, the viewer encounters the fantastical monument as an unexpected divergence, one to which Jacopo's composition has ceded the privileged center.

By contrast, the fountains in Jacopo's London drawing book lack the lively figural sculpture and visible water-jets of their Paris counterparts. This discrepancy seems related to the greater focus on perspectival accuracy evident throughout the London album, which results in fountains that appear solid and monumental but also stiff and almost lifeless.[16] One of the London drawings does reprise the narrative subject and several elements of the Paris *Beheading of John the Baptist*, including the setting of John's martyrdom under a grand staircase and in the shadows behind a courtyard fountain.[17] Yet this monument's squat design has far more in common with medieval baptismal fonts than with the sixteenth century Renaissance-creations that Jacopo's Paris fountains so uncannily foreshadow.[18] The large octagonal basin of the London fountain even

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For examples of fifteenth-century „putti pissatori" statuettes, see Wiles 1933, p. 7; Moureyre-Garoty, Françoise de la: *Sculpture italienne*. Exhibition Musée Jacquemart-André. Paris 1975, no. 43; Lusanna, Enrica Neri / Faedo, Lucia (Eds.): *Il Museo Bardini a Firenze*. 2 Vols. Milan 1986, Vol. 2, p. 258, no. 193.

15 Degenhart / Schmitt 1990, Vol. 2 (6), pp. 323-325, Pls. 13-14 (fols. 15v-16).

16 The final fountain in the London drawing book is the most rigid in terms of its perspectival accuracy and includes only one sculptural figure. Jacopo has even left behind the ruling lines he used to compose the monument, as if to visibly emphasize this point. See Degenhart / Schmitt 1990, Vol. 2 (6), pp. 544-545, Pls. 310-311 (fols. 96v-97). On the difference in architectural approach between the Paris and London volumes, see Degenhart / Schmitt 1990, Vol. 2 (5), pp. 34-94; Brunckhorst 1997, pp. 16-17, 28.

17 Degenhart / Schmitt 1990, Vol. 2 (6), p. 512, Pls. 266-267 (fols. 74v-75).

18 Comparable fonts include the late twelfth-century example in Lucca's Church of San Frediano and the famous font in Siena's baptistery, completed 1434. Heydasch-Lehmann, Susanne: *Der*

alludes to John the Baptist himself, as baptismal fonts and baptisteries were often constructed with eight sides to refer to Christ's Resurrection on the eighth day of Easter Week.[19] While the fountain in the London *Beheading* blends into the surrounding narrative, the fountain in the Paris *Beheading* actively and rudely vies for prominence, its pissing putti an affront to saintly martyrdom. Like Salome's seductive dance, the latter fountain's delightful exuberance flouts the gravity of the moment. Why do these monuments in the Paris album demand so much attention?

As Patricia Fortini Brown has shown, Jacopo's penchant for highlighting ancillary details on the margins of the observable world signals what would later become a defining trait of Venetian narrative painting.[20] The compositional experiments in Jacopo's drawing books served as a crucial foundation for the paintings of Gentile Bellini and other artists of the next generation, who absorbed Jacopo's lessons and adapted them on a monumental scale. Along similar lines, Creighton Gilbert – in a penetrating critique of the „subject-complex" inherent in the iconological method – argued that Renaissance drawings like Jacopo's were experimental negotiations between narrative rendering and the exigencies of the artist's individual style, in which „personal fancy" encroaches on the primacy of the conventional „subject".[21] Jacopo's fountains in the Paris album can be understood along these lines as productive exercises in compositional innovation. Through the unexpected prominence and appeal of their colossal structures, playful water-jets, and vivacious figures, they bring new life to the telling of old biblical narratives and thus epitomize the creative ambitions of their maker.

Renaissance terminology would have placed these delightful monuments among the „parerga", those adjacent elements of a composition that Derrida aptly called „ill-detachable detachments",[22] and which – in fifteenth-century texts like Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* – were defined as the exquisite details („waters, fonts, mountains, hills, woods, and animals") bordering the center of an image.[23] These enticing side-realms were sometimes

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„Taufbrunnen" in San Frediano in Lucca und die Entwicklung der toskanischen Plastik in der 2. Hälfte des 12. Jahrhunderts. Frankfurt a. M. 1991; Poeschke, Joachim: *Donatello and his world: sculpture of the Italian Renaissance*. Trans. Russell Stockman. New York 1990, pp. 358-359, nos. 14-15.

19 Nordström, Folke: *Mediaeval baptismal fonts: an iconographical study*. Stockholm 1984, p. 14.

20 Brown, Patricia Fortini: *Venetian narrative painting in the age of Carpaccio*. New Haven 1988, pp. 99-100; see also Elen 1995, pp. 219-220.

21 Gilbert, Creighton: „On subject and not-subject in Italian Renaissance pictures". In: *Art Bulletin* 34, 1952, pp. 208-209.

22 Derrida, Jacques: *La vérité en peinture*. Tours 1978, p. 67.

23 „Cum gli exquisiti parergi. Aque. fonti. monti. colli. boscheti. animali". Colonna 1998, Vol. 1, p. 61. Paolo Giovio, in his sixteenth-century commentary on the paintings of Dosso Dossi, likewise pinpoints these marginal details, praising them as the greatest testament to the artist's skills of invention: „ Doxi autem Ferrariensis urbanum probatur ingenium cum in iustis operibus, tum maxime in illis, quae parerga vocantur". Quoted from Barocchi, Paola (Ed.): *Scritti d'Arte del Cinquecento*. 3 Vols. Milan 1971, Vol. 1, p. 18; see also Fiorenza, Giancarlo: *Dosso Dossi:*

seen to vie for prominence with the primary subject by generating meaning of their own. Pliny the Elder, one of the first to use the term in an art-historical context, describes how the ancient artist Protogenes chose the „parerga" as the locus of his visual signature. When Protogenes was painting his murals at the Temple of Athena, so Pliny recounts, he inserted a few little ships „in what painters call the parerga" to refer to himself and his prior career as a lowly painter of warships.[24] These vessels, by evoking Protogenes's humble beginnings, further glorified the ultimate heights that his work had achieved and commented, from within the image itself, on the very nature of artistic development.[25]

While Jacopo's fountains are not biographical indexes in such a literal sense, they do embody the imaginative process behind the artist's drawing books and can be understood as a comparable form of artistic signature. Indeed, the very structure of these monuments mirrors the models of imagination that were current in the artist's lifetime. In the fifteenth century, „phantasia" (or „imaginatio") was understood as a kind of movement, as a process that channeled sensory experiences of the world through the mind and transformed them into images. Once generated these images could be further analyzed or stored within the memory.[26] The brain itself was described as a moist organ, in which the movement of fluids propelled the creation of thoughts and the recollection of memories.[27] According to this model, water was the primary element propelling the generation of mental activity; its role within the brain parallels the role of

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paintings of myth, magic and the antique. University Park 2008, 5-9, 116-119. For additional discussion of „parerga" see Junius, Franciscus: *De pictura veterum libri tres*. 3 Vols. Rotterdam 1694, Vol. 3, vii.12; Gombrich, Ernst H.: *Norm and form: studies in the art of the Renaissance Vol. 1*. London 1966, pp. 113-115; Wood, Christopher S.: *Albrecht Altdorfer and the origins of landscape*. London 1993, pp. 55-61; Ibid.: „‚Curious pictures' and the art of description". In: *Word & Image* 11, 1995, pp. 343-349; Stoichita, Victor I.: *The self-aware image: an insight into early modern meta-painting*. Trans. Anne-Marie Glasheen. Cambridge 1997, pp. 23-25.

24 „Simul, ut dictum est, et Protogenes floruit [...] quidam et naves pinxisse usque ad quinquagensimum annum; argumentum esse, quod cum Athenis celeberrimo loco Minervae delubri propylon pingeret, ubi fecit nobilem Paralum et Hammoniada, quam quidam Nausicaan vocant, adiecerit parvolas naves longas in iis, quae pictores parergia appellant, ut appareret, a quibus initiis ad arcem ostentationis opera sua pervenissent". Pliny the Elder, *Historia Naturalis*, XXXV.xxxvi.101.

25 In another image by Protogenes described in Strabo's *Geographica*, XIV.ii.5, the „parergon" – an astonishingly lifelike partridge depicted alongside the main subject – proved so distracting to viewers that the artist was compelled to paint it out. In this instance, Protogenes's marginal demonstration of artistic skill was dangerously close to taking center stage.

26 Aristotle, *De Anima*, 427b-428b; Kanz, Roland: *Die Kunst des Capriccio: kreativer Eigensinn in Renaissance und Barock*. Munich 2002, pp. 62-69; Kemp, Martin: „From ‚mimesis' to ‚fantasia': the quattrocento vocabulary of creation, inspiration and genius in the visual arts". In: *Viator* 8, 1977, pp. 347-398; Harvey, Ruth E.: *The inward wits: psychological theory in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*. London 1975, pp. 31-53; see also Summers, David: *The judgment of sense*. Cambridge 1987.

27 Aristotle, *De Memoria et Reminiscentia*, 449b 30, 450a 32, 453a 14; Sorabji, Richard, *Aristotle on memory*. Chicago 2004, pp. 49, 50, 59; see also Carruthers, Mary J.: *The book of memory: a study of memory in medieval culture*. Cambridge 1990, pp. 47-60.

the waters flowing through Jacopo's fountains, which power the lively physical activities of the monuments' sculptural figures, and mirror – by extension – the creative enterprise behind the artist's drawing books as a whole.

The notion of visualizing imagination as a wellspring also underlies the myth of the Castalian font, said to originate at the home of the ever-inspiring Muses.[28] Inherent in its rousing waters was the understanding of imagination as a generative source and the double meaning of the word „source" itself. In fifteenth-century prints depicting the Muses by the Masters of the Tarocchi (active c. 1465-70), Calliope and Poesia are even situated beside flowing fonts, the emblem of their inspirational powers, and monumental fountains like those at the court of King Matthias Corvinus in Hungary deliberately evoked the Castalian source in their decorative programs.[29]

Fountains, „phantasia", and creative identity also intermingle in the work of Jacopo's contemporary Giovanni Fontana, a Venetian inventor who belonged to the artist's close intellectual milieu. Fontana dedicated a lost treatise on painting and perspective to Jacopo, and may well have known him personally.[30] His early fifteenth-century manuscript of war machines and curious automata features a variety of hydraulic creations, and several fountains among them.[31] Beside a fountain on which a male statuette ejaculates water from his erect member, Fontana confidently asserts (as if to mirror his creation's virility),[32] „I, Giovanni Fontana, have invented new fountains, built in part from the foundations of the ancients, in part from my own innate talent (ingenium)".[33] Fontana extends this idea further with the inscription accompanying another dramatic fountain depicted in the volume. Beside this second structure – an

28 Lazzaro 1990, pp. 132-134; Schröter, Elisabeth: *Ikonographie des Themas Parnass vor Raffael: die Schrift- und Bildtraditionen von der Spätantike bis zum 15. Jahrhundert*. Hildesheim 1977, pp. 5-22.

29 For the prints, see Levenson, Jay A. / Oberhuber, Konrad / Sheehan, Jacquelyn L. (Eds.): *Early Italian engravings from the National Gallery of Art*. Washington, D. C. 1973, p. 101, no. 23, p. 120, no. 40, and p.121, no. 41. On the fountain with sculpted images of the Muses, documented at Matthias Corvinus's late fifteenth-century Visegrád palace, see Balogh, Jolán: *A művészet Mátyás király udvarában*. Budapest 1966, pp. 247-248.

30 Battisti, Eugenio / Battisti, Giuseppa Saccaro (Eds.): *Le macchine cifrate di Giovanni Fontana*. Milan 1984, pp. 18-24; see also Wiewelhove, Hildegard: *Tischbrunnen: Forschungen zur europäischen Tafelkultur*. Berlin 2002, pp. 20, 57-58; Prager, Frank D.: „Fontana on fountains: Venetian hydraulics of 1418". In: *Physis* 13, 1971, pp. 341-360; and Eisler 1989, pp. 62, 446-447, who has put forth the rather far-fetched suggestion that Jacopo himself might have worked as a hydraulic engineer. For a compelling discussion of Fontana's automata and their inherent argument for the powers of human „ingenium", see Grafton, Anthony: „The devil as automation: Giovanni Fontana and the meanings of a fifteenth-century machine". In: *Genesis redux; essays in the history and philosophy of artificial life*. Ed. Jessica Riskin. Chicago 2007, pp. 46-62.

31 *Bellicorum Instrumentorum Liber*, Cod. Icon. 242, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, first half of the fifteenth century. Complete text and illustrations in Battisti / Battisti 1984.

32 It is worth recalling here that the Latin word for an artist's pen or brush (peniculus) could also refer to the male genitalia, an association that likewise may have been at play behind the fertile, urinating putti on the fountains the Jacopo penned in the Paris album.

33 „Ego, Iohanes Fontana, novos adinveni fontes, partim ex antiquorum fondamentis collectos, partim ex proprio ingenio." (fols. 22v-23r);. Battisti / Battisti 1984, p. 69.

Abb. 4: Jacopo de' Barbari: Virgin and Child with John the Baptist and Saint Anthony at the Fountain, c. 1503-1506, Oil on canvas, Paris, Musée du Louvre

assemblage of tubing, water spouts, and collection chambers derived from Arabic models – Fontana writes: „Among fountains perhaps none has ever been invented that is more artful and lasting than this one. It is also the product of my own imagination (fantaxie), because I, Giovanni Fontana, have always delighted in studying these matters".[34]

This emphatic emphasis on the first-person speaker serves to pinpoint the origins of „Fontana", the author's nickname and an evident source of pride.[35] More significantly, it invites a conflation between Fontana's inventions and Fontana the individual. The inventor implies that the fountain represents his

34 „De fontibus forsitan non est inventus artifitialior durabiliorque. Est quoque proprie fantaxie, quia ego, Iohannes Fontana, semper in hiis studere placuit", (fols. 62v-63r); Battisti / Battisti 1984, p. 96.

35 On „Fontana" as a nickname, see Prager 1971, p. 343. See also Battisti / Battisti 1984, pp. 60-61, 86, for the only other two instances in Fontana's manuscript in which he refers to himself by this same first-person formula.

inner faculties and the imaginative workings of his mind. He describes the monument, in essence, as his signature creation.

The association between fountain and signature is not unique to Fontana's manuscript. The flowing font in an early sixteenth-century painting of *Virgin and Child with John the Baptist and Saint Anthony* by Jacopo de' Barbari (c. 1460/70 – c. 1516) – a Venetian artist who was doubtless well-acquainted with the Bellini tradition – is more than a mere symbolic reference to the Virgin as a „fons puritatis" (Fig. 4).[36] Directly below the trickling water spout in the painting's lower right corner, the artist has positioned his signature tablet, which is inscribed not only with his initials and personal hieroglyph, the caduceus, but also with a verse from Ovid's *Amores*. Barbari has excerpted this particular verse (indicated below) from the last lines of a poem in which Ovid sings of the enduring afterlife his works will enjoy:

> „Let the mob admire worthless things; but to me may golden-haired Apollo serve cups filled from the Castalian spring, and may I wear on my hair the myrtle that fears the frost and be much read by anxious lovers. Envy feeds on the living; after death it is silent, when each man's fame protects him as he deserves. So, even when the final flame has consumed me, I shall live and a considerable part of me will survive".[37]

Given that this text bear scant relation to the actual subject of Barbari's painting, it seems most likely that he intended it – as did Ovid himself – to make a statement about his own artistry. Whether Barbari made this painting for a specific patron or purpose is not known.[38] However, he must have expected discerning viewers to find their way back to Ovid's poem and to note the resonance between the streaming source above his signature plaque and the Castalian waters evoked in the poet's preceding lines. Like the mythical font of the Muses, Barbari's fountain represents the creative currents of his own imagination, which brought this painting – and all his other works – to life.[39]

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36 Levenson, Jay A.: *Jacopo de' Barbari and northern art of the early sixteenth century*. Ph.D. dissertation, New York University. New York 1978, pp. 176-180, no. 2; Ferrari, Simone: *Jacopo de' Barbari: un protagonista del Rinascimento tra Venezia e Dürer*. Milan 2006, pp. 91-93, Pl. VII, with prior literature.

37 „Vilia miretur vulgus; mihi flavus Apollo / pocula Castalia plena ministret aqua, / sustineamque coma metuentem frigora myrtum, / atque ita sollicito multus amante legar! / pascitur in vivis Livor; post fata quiescit, / cum suus ex merito quemque tuetur honos. / ergo etiam cum me supremus adederit ignis, / vivam, parsque mei multa superstes erit". (my emphasis MAB); Ovid, *Amores*, I.15 (35-42); translation from Ovid: *Amores I*. Ed. and trans. John Barsby. London 1991, p. 162.

38 Barbari's self-assertion here recalls the famous letter on the art of painting that he wrote to the Elector of Saxony Frederick the Wise, in whose service he was employed beginning in the spring of 1503; for the text of this letter, see Ferrari 2006, pp. 175-176. Levenson 1978, pp. 18-19, 90, argues that the painting itself may well date to Barbari's period of employ at Frederick's court.

39 Another comparable example is Albrecht Altdorfer's *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* (1510), which features a colossal candelabra fountain teeming with lively putti and likely inspired by late fifteenth-century Italian prints circulating in the artist's native Germany. Altdorfer has situated

The fantastical fountains in Jacopo Bellini's Paris album are not accompanied by explanatory inscriptions or poetic verses, but their fertile imagery alone provides a gloss on the drawings they inhabit. These animated monuments visualize the ambitions and achievements of an artist who broke with compositional convention and thereby stimulated the next generation of Venetian painters. It is not unreasonable to suppose that Jacopo conceived of his two albums precisely as this kind of inspirational source, given that drawing was the chosen medium in the fifteenth century for the passing down of artistic tradition. The Paris and London volumes in themselves mark a crucial transition away from the patterns and figure-types of medieval modelbooks towards the production and use of increasingly complex, experimental drawings within the artist's workshop. They offer not so much models to be copied as models for the creative process itself. Unlike the signature fountain in Jacopo de' Barbari's painting, which points solely to its maker, Jacopo Bellini's fountains are embedded in an album of drawings intended not only to glorify the artist himself but also to rouse future artistic minds.[40] Jacopo's son Gentile Bellini, who eventually inherited the Paris and London drawing books, seems to have recognized the particularly inspiring qualities of the former album. He chose the Paris drawing book in 1479 as his introductory gift to Sultan Mehmed in Constantinople – where the Venetian government had sent him as an envoy – doubtless as a means of displaying the signature qualities of his paternal inheritance, the foundations of his own artistry.[41] Jacopo's fountains and their infectious energy, like the streaming waters of the Castalian font, promise the generation of still more images to come and presage an enduring legacy for the Bellini name.

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his signature plaque and dedicatory inscription – in which he offers the painting as a gift to the Virgin – directly at the fountain's base, as if it were an integral part of the monument. The fountain thus emblematizes the enlivening powers of Altdorfer's artistry and the creative process that brought his pious offering into being. See Winzinger, Franz: *Albrecht Altdorfer: Die Gemälde*. Munich 1975, pp. 75-77, no. 7, with prior literature; Wood 1993, pp. 100, 245; and especially Bushart, Magdalena: *Sehen und Erkennen: Albrecht Altdorfers religiöse Bilder*. Munich 2004, pp. 71-73.

40 In this regard, Jacopo's Paris fountains can be compared to the flowing font depicted on the reverse of Matteo de' Pasti's medal (before 1453) honoring the Italian humanist and educator Guarino de Verona. The waters streaming down from the fountain's summit and nourishing the flowering meadow at its base represent the font of Guarino's learning, from which knowledge of the ancient world flows to future generations. Pfisterer, Ulrich: „‚Soweit die Flügel meines Auges tragen': Leon Battista Albertis Imprese und Selbstbildnis". In: *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 42 (1998), p. 206; Pollard, J. Graham: *Renaissance Medals*. 2 Vols.: Italy. Washington D. C. 2007, Vol. 1, pp. 56-57, no. 39, with prior literature.

41 Degenhart / Schmitt, 1990, Vol. 2 (5), pp. 14-15. It should also be pointed out that the Paris album is executed on parchment, while the London album is on paper, making the former an even more luxurious gift; Elen 1995, p. 6. Nonetheless, there is no reason to conclude that Jacopo originally intended either of the two drawing books as presentation objects, despite the arguments of Joost-Gaugier, Christiane L.: „The ‚sketchbooks' of Jacopo Bellini reconsidered". In: *Paragone* 297, 1974, pp. 30-33.

Horst Bredekamp, Christiane Kruse, Pablo Schneider (Hrsg.)

IMAGINATION UND REPRÄSENTATION

Zwei Bildsphären der Frühen Neuzeit

Wilhelm Fink