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The Perugia Fountain: an encyclopaedia of sky, culture and society

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the Fontana Maggiore, a fountain located in the centre of Perugia in Umbria in central Italy, built in 1278 and sculpted by Nicola and Giovanni Pisano. The sculptural narrative of this urban monument contains not only religious imagery but also civic and allegorical themes and symbols, including the Labours of the Months, and the zodiac. It is the purpose of this paper to demonstrate that physically through the carvings on the lower basin, the fountain depicts in stone a narrative that reflects the heavens, as well as containing celestial symbolism within its orientation. It considers the location of the fountain within the town of Perugia and the historical circumstances that led to its construction and the commissioning of the stone sculpture work as a way of understanding its functional importance. It then examines the orientation of the images of the lower basin and their reflection of the sky. Finally the paper concludes that this monument and its sculptural narrative can be considered to be an omphalos linking the individual and their community to sky, earth and seasonal rhythms, and is offered as an example of the human desire to build structures that occupy liminal spaces, which links the townspeople to the sky.

Keywords: Fontana Maggiore Perugia, Labours of the Months, Nicola and Giovanni Pisano.

Historical background

The story of the Fontana Maggiore begins with the economic revival emerging in the tenth century that encouraged the proliferation of towns. The increasing dominance of merchants and bankers begat a flourishing industrial and mercantile middle class with growing political importance.¹ As a result, the Italian communes emerged in the late eleventh and thirteenth centuries, in part the result of the struggle between the Empire and the Papacy and the ensuing political deterioration of both powers.² The communes established themselves as municipal bodies with limited sovereignty, engaged in the business of local government yet still dependent upon external seigneurial or monarchical authority for economic, military and trade relations, and crimes where the death penalty was incurred.³ Those communes that were able to turn limited into full sovereignty became known as city-states. In 1186 Henry VI, *rex romanorum* and future emperor, gave diplomatic recognition to the Perugian consular government. Pope Innocent III (Pope from 8 January 1198 until his death in 1216) followed this decision, acquiescing that Perugian civic practices carried the force of law.⁴

Perugia is a city built on a hilltop far from the mountains and with meagre freshwater springs of its own. Thus in 1275-6, when the Perugian commune determined its plans for the following decades, they included not only new and enlarged residences for the government and the *Consiglio del Popolo*, improved road access, and a new cathedral but also the construction of an aqueduct and fountain to bring water to the city centre.⁵ To provide this water, a new aqueduct needed to be built from Monte Pacciano three miles outside the town. This project also required the construction of a fountain which was to be the terminus of the fresh water for the Perugians and located between the Duomo (cathedral) and the Palazzo Comunale (town council hall), also known as the Palazzo de Priori.⁶ This was the site where five newly-built roads leading from each of the five ancient city gates converged, thus forming a centre point to the town, an omphalos (Fig.1). This fountain took a little over a year to complete and was known as the Fontana Maggiore.

¹ J.K. Hyde, *Padua in the Age of Dante* (Manchester and New York 1966), p.13.

² Helene Wieruszowski, 'Art and the Commune in the Time of Dante', *Speculum* 19, no. 1 (1944), p.14.

³ S.R. Epstein, 'The Rise and Decline of Italian City States', *Working Paper* No.51/99 (1999), p.1.

⁴ Raffaele Rossi, Attilio Bartoli Angeli, and Roberta Sottani, *Perugia*, vol. 1 (Milan: Elio Sellino Editore, 1993), pp.120-140.

⁵ Trevor Dean, *The Towns of Italy in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. Trevor Dean, Manchester Medieval Sources Series (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press 2000), pp.6-7.

⁶ William D. Wixom, 'A Glimpse at the Fountains of the Middle Ages', *Cleveland Studies in the History of Art* 8 (2003), pp.12-13.



Figure 1. Aerial view of the Fontana Maggiore from Google Earth showing the location of the fountain between the Duomo and the Palazzo de Priori.

So important was the fountain as the town's water supply that, in its *Statuti di Perugia* of 1342, the Perugian commune set down in writing prohibitions that protected the water of the Fontana Maggiore from being polluted or soiled. These included embargos against washing, laundry, drawing water to make lime, work leather, prepare parchment, or allowing animals to drink from it. The 1342 statutes also made precise reference to the sculptures when it listed 100 lire as the penalty 'for anyone who with stone, iron or wood broke ... any of the images carved there'.⁷ The alternative for the offender unable to pay the fine was the loss of his right hand. With the Fontana Maggiore being central in both its location within the city and in the city's development plans, the commune undertook the task of commissioning the decoration of the fountain with its rich and complex stone narrative.

Prior to the emergence of communal self-governorship the commissioning of buildings and the decoration of altarpieces, carved statuary, reliquaries, illuminated manuscripts, and stained glass was chiefly the dominion of the church, kings and princes. This changed as the communes gained their independence and stood alongside church, kings and princes as patron, utilising this position of strength to reinforce statements of communal pride.⁸ Thus it was that the Perugian commune commissioned Nicola Pisano (c.1220/1225 – c.1284) and his son Giovanni (c.1250 – c.1315) to carry out the sculptural work on the

⁷ Bocchi, 'Regulation of the Urban Environment by the Italian Communes from the Twelfth to the Fourteenth Century', pp.75-76.

⁸ Wieruszowski, 'Art and the Commune in the Time of Dante', p.17.

Fontana Maggiore. John White declared that these sculptors comprised two of the three men working as sculptors in late-thirteenth-century Italy whose work gave rise to a pictorial revolution (the third being Arnolfo di Cambio). By creating an innovative sculptural language that employed antique prototypes, as well as seeking new representational means through naturalistic forms, Nicola Pisano and his son, Giovanni, brought a previously unseen vividness and immediacy to sculptural expression.⁹ Anita Fiderer Moskowitz calls attention to the fact that, for such a fundamentally functional civic monument, there was no close precedent for the scale, the intricacy of design, and the lavish iconographic program. She describes it 'as original in its form and conception in the history of fountains as are Nicola Pisano's pulpits and the tomb of St. Dominic in relation to the preceding pulpit and tomb traditions.'¹⁰

The Narrative in the Images

The resulting Fontana Maggiore of Perugia was and still is a three-tiered fountain, polygonal in shape and built using an alternation of pink and white marble (Fig. 2). The lowest level is set on a ring of steps from which rises a twenty-five-sided basin. Each face of the twenty-five sides forms a diptych, two images joined by a central link, embellished with sculptured reliefs and articulated by colonettes, small thin columns used for decoration. Each diptych is separated from the next by a tripartite compound pier of twisted or patterned marble. Inside the circle of this lower basin are set twenty-four external and thirty-four internal columns that support a smaller twelve-sided basin. This second basin, formed by twelve plain-sided concave diptychs, is embellished with twelve figures placed within each diptych and twelve figures placed at the angles where each diptych meets the next one, thus reversing the scheme of the lower basin which contains images on the faces only but without figures at the angle corners. Rising from the centre of this middle basin is a single column on top of which sits a bronze basin supporting three female caryatids, three draped female figures replacing what would normally be a column.

⁹ John White, *Art and Architecture in Italy 1250-1400*, Pelican History of Art (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), p.73.

¹⁰ Anita Fiderer Moskowitz, *Italian Gothic Sculpture C.1250-C.1400* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.43.



Figure 2. The Fontana Maggiore showing the three basins with the Palazzo de Priori behind it.
Photo: D. Gunzburg.

The fountain has undergone two major reconstructions since its completion — one after an earthquake in 1349, and the second in 1948-49 after the Second World War. The complication for modern restorers was to recover the correct order of the reliefs of the middle basin. However, while White argued that the inscriptions and figures of the middle basin had been incorrectly transposed, in contrast he noted that the order of the reliefs in the lower basin could not be altered due to ‘small variations in dimension which meant that the surrounding cornices had been individually tailored to fit each particular relief.’¹¹

The contents of the sculpture work are varied. In the lower basin sit the Liberal Arts, the story of Romulus and Remus as the progenitors of Perugia, the gryphon, the symbol of Perugia, and the Guelph emblem of the lion, scenes from The Old Testament such as David and Goliath, and Samson and Delilah, along with the Labours of the Months and the zodiac. The twenty-four figures of the middle basin contain abstract personifications, such as Ecclesia Romana and Victoria Magna, figures representing cities and localities, such as

¹¹ John White, ‘The Reconstruction of Nicola Pisano's Perugia Fountain’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 33 (1970), p.71.

Rome and Chiusi, figures from The Old Testament, such as Moses, David and Solomon, Saints such as John the Baptist and Benedict, Eulistes the founder of Perugia, and men who were alive at the time of the fountain's construction and assisted with the completion of the fountain, namely the *podestà* Matteo da Correggio, and *Capitano del Popolo* Ermanno da Sassoferrato.¹² Francis Ames-Lewis describes the fountain as Perugia's 'manifesto of civic identity'.¹³ This combination of religious with civic components is also reflected in the location of the fountain in the Piazza Maggiore between the Duomo (cathedral) and the Palazzo Comunale (town council hall),¹⁴ as cited earlier.

The Fontana Maggiore was constructed and sculpted at a time when Scholasticism, a method and a system that aimed to reconcile the Christian theology of the Church Fathers with the Greek philosophy of Aristotle and his commentators, was the dominant form of theology and philosophy in the Latin West. It was also a period when, as Diana Norman clarifies, the new urban-centred religious orders, such as the Dominicans and Franciscans, encouraged a more direct relationship between ordinary mortals and God and his saints.¹⁵ Moskowitz observes that Nicola Pisano's two polygonal pulpits in Pisa and Siena that pre-date the fountain may be amongst the earliest visual expression of the spread of Scholasticism, a view also held by Ames-Lewis, John White, and John Pope-Hennessy.¹⁶ These two pulpits depict narratives of biblical history interwoven with representations of the Virtues and Vices, Liberal Arts and pagan prophetesses of Antiquity and inform the viewer about the natural world and the nature of religious experience.¹⁷ This naturalistic expression of Scholasticism is also reflected in the fountain through the images of the Labours of the Months and signs of the zodiac, clearly visible around the lower fountain, and situated along with the religious and allegorical themes, civic statuary, the liberal arts, and moral stories of the fountain as a whole.

¹² Pope-Hennessy, *Italian Gothic Sculpture*, p.232; White, 'The Reconstruction of Nicola Pisano's Perugia Fountain', p.72.

¹³ Francis Ames-Lewis, *Tuscan Marble Carving 1250-1350: Sculpture and Civic Pride* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), p.214.

¹⁴ William D. Wixom, 'A Glimpse at the Fountains of the Middle Ages', *Cleveland Studies in the History of Art* 8 (2003), pp.12-13.

¹⁵ Diana Norman, 'Change and Continuity: Art and Religion after the Black Death', in *Siena, Florence and Padua: Art, Society and Religion 1280-1400, Volume I: Interpretive Essays*, ed. Diana Norman (New Haven and London: Yale University Press in association with the Open University, 1995), p.181.

¹⁶ Ames-Lewis, *Tuscan Marble Carving 1250-1350: Sculpture and Civic Pride*, pp.89-95; White, *Art and Architecture in Italy 1250-1400*, pp.85-88; Pope-Hennessy, *Italian Gothic Sculpture*, pp.12-33.

¹⁷ Moskowitz, *Pisano Pulpits*, p.8.

Labours of the Months

James Carson Webster's study of the Labours of the Months, identified in sculptured doorways of churches and cathedrals from antiquity to the medieval period, revealed a recurring pattern involving two elements: the first stemmed from astronomy and the 'desire to make more memorable the movement of time, to introduce some sense of order, of commemorate recurrence'; the second was 'humanistic, reflecting man's life on earth'.¹⁸ According to Webster, these Labours of the Months emerged in sculptured friezes in antiquity around the fourth century initially as personifications of the month, 'human figures in constant quiet pose',¹⁹ distinguishing season and climate by their clothing and employing attributes to suggest occupation. With the appearance of the Chronograph of 354, a late Roman codex, there was the beginnings of the movement away from passive personification towards active representation of scenes of contemporary life. Webster's research revealed a transition of image representation between the fourth and ninth centuries, a metamorphosis from the assertion of nature — 'the simple idea of ripening fruits, of growing grain, of blooming flowers, of birds which appeared in the spring'²⁰ — to the human capacity to capitalize on this bounty of nature, emphasizing 'daily activity which fed him and played a part in his salvation'.²¹

David M. Robb found that the earliest sculptured zodiac in Romanesque art in Italy occurred in the decoration of the Porta dello Zodiaco of the Sacra di S. Michele in the Frazione di S. Ambrogio dated c.1114, and the earliest example of the Labours of the Months as calendar illustration in Italian sculpture occurred in the decoration of S. Zeno Cathedral, Verona, dated c.1120.²² By the twelfth century these representations of active occupation, the Labours of the Month, were well-established and found in carvings on the archivolts, door jambs, facade reliefs and floors of many Romanesque and Gothic churches, as well as in medieval stained glass windows, misericords, and in many illuminated manuscripts. These images were regionally based, with the Italian labours of June illustrated by reaping and of July by threshing, whilst in France, at a higher latitude, labours of July were illustrated by reaping and by threshing in August.

¹⁸ James Carson Webster, *The Labors of the Months*, Northwestern University Studies in the Humanities, Number Four (New York: AMS Press, 1938), pp.93-94.

¹⁹ ———, *The Labors of the Months*, p.94.

²⁰ ———, *The Labors of the Months*, p.102.

²¹ ———, *The Labors of the Months*, p.103.

²² D.M. Robb, 'Niccolò: A North Italian Sculptor of the Twelfth Century', *Art Bulletin* 12, no. 4 (1930), pp.381,410.

The sculptures of the lower basin of the Fontana Maggiore continue this tradition of the Labours or Occupations of the Months connected with their appropriate astrological zodiac sign, representing the cycle of the year and synthesising seasons and calendar. Each image of the Labours of the Months along the lower basin of the Fontana Maggiore is depicted as a single human figure engaged in an activity, a seasonal labour. The left image of each pair is inscribed with the month carved above it and contains a sculptured sign of the zodiac within it. The right image of each pair is inscribed above with either 'Uxor' (wife) or 'Socius' (companion) (see Fig.3 for an example of one month).



Figure 3. Februarius and Pisces, Fontana Maggiore, Perugia, Italy. On the left a fisherman sits on a rock with a rod in his right hand, a basket on his left next to him. The fishes of Pisces are carved in the top right hand corner. In the right hand scene ('socius') the fisherman carries the fish home.
Photo: D.Gunzburg.

According to Jonathan Alexander, it was at this time that society formed itself into three orders — those who prayed, those who fought, and those who labored. This was reflected iconographically as the Labours of the Months represented by the non-religious orders of nobility (those who fought) and peasant (those who labored).²³ Alexander notes that, by appearing to support the sacred narrative of the Bible in their placement on church facades, chosen and controlled by the third order — those who prayed — the Occupations ‘complete the Church's spiritual and physical existence.’²⁴ Whilst not commissioned by the church, nevertheless the images of the lower basin of the Fontana Maggiore also appear to be supporting a sacred narrative, flanked as they are by scenes from the Old Testament, and overlooked by the figures of St Paul, St Lawrence, St Herculaneus, St Benedict and St John the Baptist above them on the middle basin. Thus the Labours of the Month are a seasonal expression of the roles of the nobility and the peasantry in the order of the world.

Astrological Images Along the Lower Basin

On the lower basin of the Fontana Maggiore, the Labours of the Months and their zodiacal imagery follow each other consecutively in an anticlockwise direction beginning with the month of Januarius and the zodiac sign of Aquarius and completing with December and the zodiac sign of Capricorn. In the northern hemisphere the ecliptic, the apparent path of the sun through the heavens, is viewed to the south. In the scheme of the Fontana Maggiore the zodiac images have all been placed to the south of the scheme, thus facing the arc of the sun every day of the year. In this circular fountain where the images for the months of the year and their occupations could have been placed in any orientation, they have been placed to face the rising and the setting of the sun.

Furthermore the month of Januarius and the zodiac sign of Aquarius is placed at a point that is south of due west (azimuth 237^0 / declination $-23^0 32'$) and the month of December and the zodiac sign of Capricorn is placed at a point that is north of due east (azimuth 57^0 / declination $23^0 32'$). (Fig.4).

²³ Jonathan Alexander, ‘Labeur and Paresse: Ideological Representations of Medieval Peasant Labor’, *The Art Bulletin* 72, no. 3 (1990), p.437.

²⁴ ———, ‘Labeur and Paresse: Ideological Representations of Medieval Peasant Labor’, p.438.

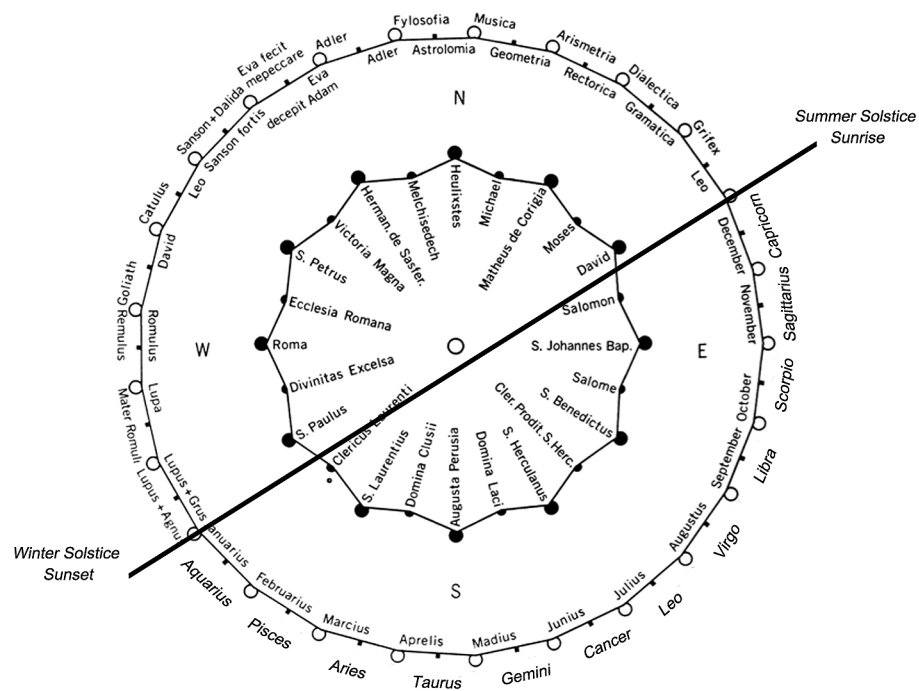


Figure 4. Plan view showing the lower (outer ring) and middle (inner ring) basins of the Fontana Maggiore, after John White's reconstruction of the figures of the middle basin, and indicating the Labours of the Months scheme with Januarius placed at the Winter Solstice sunset point and completing at the Summer Solstice sunrise point.

These two points correspond to the position on the horizon of the sun at the winter solstice sunset in the south west (Januarius / Aquarius) and to the position on the horizon of the sun at the summer solstice sunrise point in the north east. The winter solstice sunset point corresponds with traditional images connected with the Labours of the Month at that time of the year. A nobly dressed man is seated in front of a roaring fire. A whole roast chicken on a plate rests on his knee. He holds a wine cup in his left hand. The image of the water bearer of Aquarius is carved in the top right hand corner such that it appears to be pouring water into the man's wine cup. His wife sits on the other side of the roaring fire, supporting a mug on her knee in her left hand and a plate in her right hand (Fig.5). This beginning point of the monthly / astrological cycle coincides with the beginning of the liturgical year — the birth of Christ.



Figure 5. Januarius and Aquarius, Fontana Maggiore, Perugia, Italy. On the left a nobly dressed man is seated in front of a roaring fire. A whole roast chicken on a plate rests on his knee. He holds a wine cup in his left hand. The image of the water bearer of Aquarius is carved in the top right hand corner such that it appears to be pouring water into the man's wine cup. In the right hand scene ('uxor') sits his wife sits on the other side of the roaring fire, supporting a mug on her knee in her left hand and a plate in her right hand. *Photo: D.Gunzburg.*

Whilst one may never know if this was the intention of those who constructed and sculpted this scheme, it appears as if these images have been placed to reflect visually the orientation of the ecliptic to the south of the observer, and placed so that they reflect two important points of the calendar: the beginning of the year oriented to the winter solstice sunset and carrying in its Christian symbolism the birth of Christ; and the final image of the zodiac scheme oriented to the extreme north-east horizon position of the sun at the summer solstice sunrise.

Gears and Seasons

There is an additional area in which the Fontana Maggiore of Perugia reflects celestial symbolism and this concerns its architectural design. The chronicles of the time, such as those written by Florentine Giovanni Villani (c. 1276 or 1280–1348), Albertino Mussato

(1261-1329), and Rolandino of Padua (1200–1276), emphasized the causal relationship between communal triumphs and accomplishments, particularly military victories, and astrology.²⁵ Villani reflected the characteristic attitude of his day towards astrology in comprehending that both natural phenomena and human actions were influenced by the movements of the heavenly bodies, that God bestowed life and movement to humanity through a primary action which passed down through the concentric spheres of stars and planets to the motionless realm of the earth beneath the moon. It was then the province of the astrologers or natural philosophers to interpret the movements of the planets in order to understand the manifestations of God's will on earth.²⁶ Jonathan B. Riess notes that in his writing, Mussato, one of Padua's leading literary and political thinkers, perceived that

history, as made up of cycles that repeated themselves in regular and predictable patterns, implied that history could be brought to the service of the state. History could thus be 'scientifically' employed for social and political ends. The past had lessons to teach. Among these lessons was that of vigilance in the preservation of the republicanism because the alternative, tyranny, would be abhorrent. Thus, far from locking man into a deterministic or mechanical universe, the particular form of astrology that flourished at the moment made it possible for man to come to grips with the past and to influence, as did the planets, the present and the future.²⁷

The physical layout of lower and middle basins, with 25 diptychs in the lower basin and 12 in the middle basin, do not create an exact 1:2 correspondence. Seen from above, offset to each other, this deliberate displacement of basins suggest the cogs of a gear, wheels with teeth that transmit torque and aids motion. White likens this to the way many Gothic windows contain varying counterbalanced radiating parts which also suggest movement and he applies this idea of discordance to the fountain which when observed from eye level, White suggests, stimulates the viewer to move around it.²⁸ One could add that such a disjunction of precise agreements offers the stone equivalent of musical or literary syncopation, directing the viewer to keep in constant motion.

²⁵ Hyde, *Padua in the Age of Dante*, pp.304-306.

²⁶ Dale, Lewin, and Osheim, eds., *Chronicling History: Chroniclers and Historians in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, pp.122-123, 133-134. pp.122-123, 133-134.

²⁷ J.B. Riess, *Political Ideals in Medieval Italian Art: The Frescoes in the Palazzo Dei Priori, Perugia* (1297) (Ann Arbor 1981), p.73.

²⁸ White, *Art and Architecture in Italy 1250-1400*, pp.88-89.

The three-dimensional sculptural work in the middle basin further aids this motion by drawing the viewer to engage with it from a multiplicity of angles. Of sculpture work in general Charles Harrison noted that

... it is of the essence of the experience of sculpture that we tend to find ourselves in motion in its presence, seeking optimal positions and angle of view, and that different lighting conditions will tend to bring out different aspects and effects.²⁹

On the Fontana Maggiore one could argue that this gear-like design produces a regular flow of rhythm that never offers a point of rest and reflects the cycles of the seasons, forever in motion, thus reproducing the phenomenological experience of the seasons and cycles.

Additionally one can argue that this replicates the hierarchical model of an Aristotelian cosmology, all moved by gears. The top of the fountain with its three caryatids (the Trinity) suggests the unmoved mover or primary cause of all motion; below this is the middle basin with its mixture of Biblical images and saints, the sphere of the fixed stars; and finally the lower basin which contains the heavenly bodies and the Labours of the Months of the sublunar world.³⁰

Fontana Maggiore as Liminal Space

A third area where celestial symbolism is expressed in the sculptural narrative of the Fontana Maggiore is in its symbolic and metaphoric representation of a liminal space that connects the viewer to the sky as heaven. Pope-Hennessy advocated that in shape the fountain reflected or quoted the Pistoia holy-water basin of Giovanni Pisano, carved in the early 1270s, with its three caryatid figures forming the column on which the basin rested.³¹ Moskowitz proposes that the form of the whole fountain would have been one that was inherently recognized by medieval Perugians, physically by mirroring liturgical fittings and fixtures within churches such as two- and three-basined baptismal and cloister fonts, pulpits and altar ciboria; and spiritually by linking the fountain with theological concepts such as the *fons vitae* (the fountain of life), and baptism as rebirth.³² Nicola Coldstream terms this ‘micro-architecture’, the phenomenon which ‘emerged from a process of exchange between objects and media, in which the meaning and significance of one was adopted by another,

²⁹ Charles Harrison, *An Introduction to Art* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), p.187.

³⁰ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, XII:8, in Jonathan Barnes, ed. *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Bollingen Series L X X X I.2. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984. Vo.2. pp.1695-98.

³¹ Pope-Hennessy, *Italian Gothic Sculpture*, p.232.

³² Moskowitz, *Italian Gothic Sculpture C.1250-C.1400*, p.43.

only to be reflected back to the source.’³³ So just as the baptismal font and the water it contained reminded worshipers every time they entered the church of their initiation into the Christian religion via the rite of baptism and their relationship to God and the saints in heaven, so by its similar shape and the water it contained, the Fontana Maggiore contained the same attributes as a holy water or baptismal font.

One could argue that the sculptural narrative of the Fontana Maggiore, set in the open, in the public square, performs a similar function as the religious narratives on the pulpits in Pisa and Pistoia in educating the urban population about the specific role of the commune. Yet this fountain was also a place where the community came at least once if not several times a day to collect water. One can therefore see the fountain as a place where two worlds cross, that which constitutes what today Mircea Eliade would define as ‘the paradoxical place where those worlds communicate, where passage from the profane to the sacred world becomes possible’³⁴ thus defining a liminal space. In this way the routine event of collecting water would have merged with these religious recognitions and formed, for the people of Perugia, a sacred space between heaven and earth, satisfying both physical and spiritual thirst.

Conclusion

The Fontana Maggiore can be understood as a practical civic monument that represents, via its sculptural narrative, the place of the commune and its governing bodies within a cosmological scheme. In its three tiers it articulates a comprehensive understanding of the world, judicially, theologically, and astrologically. It was also constructed in a way that fused the basic necessity of water with the familiar shape of religious ritual, thus connecting the earthly need for water with spiritual thirst. Furthermore by its placement at the centre of the city, between the main civic and religious buildings and situated at the confluence of five roads, the fountain became an omphalos, one which linked the individual and their community through sculpted imagery to sky, earth, and through the Labours of the Months which are oriented towards the arc of the sun, seasonal rhythms. It is an illustration of the human desire to build structures that occupy liminal spaces, one that physically grounded them and at the same time metaphorically linked them to the sky.

³³ Nicola Coldstream, *Medieval Architecture*, Oxford History of Art (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp.162-163.

³⁴ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 1957), p.25.

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