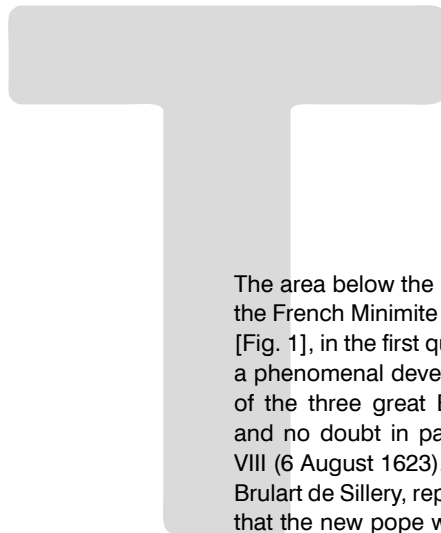


Irving Lavin (†)

Bernini's *Barcaccia* in  
the Piazza di Spagna.  
An Art-Political No Man's Land



The area below the Pincian Hill overlooked by the monastery of the French Minimite order and its church dedicated to the Trinity [Fig. 1], in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, witnessed a phenomenal development. It was an invasion, one might say, of the three great European powers, contemporaneous with, and no doubt in part inspired by, the election of Pope Urban VIII (6 August 1623). The French ambassador to Rome, Nicolas Brulart de Sillery, reported that the election was 'miraculous' and that the new pope would 'differ from the last as fire differs from water'.<sup>1</sup>

The area [Figs 2 and 3] had begun to develop when, in December 1622, a benefactor of the church acquired a building at the south end of what was then called the Piazza della Trinità, to be used for a seminary to train novices as missionaries for the propagation of the faith. The building was deeded to the church and the seminary became the home of the great institution of the Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide [Fig. 4].<sup>2</sup> Virtually at the same time the Spanish ambassador to the Holy See occupied a building directly opposite the hill, the Palazzo Monaldeschi, which later became the Palazzo di Spagna [Fig. 5], from which the area then took its name.<sup>3</sup>

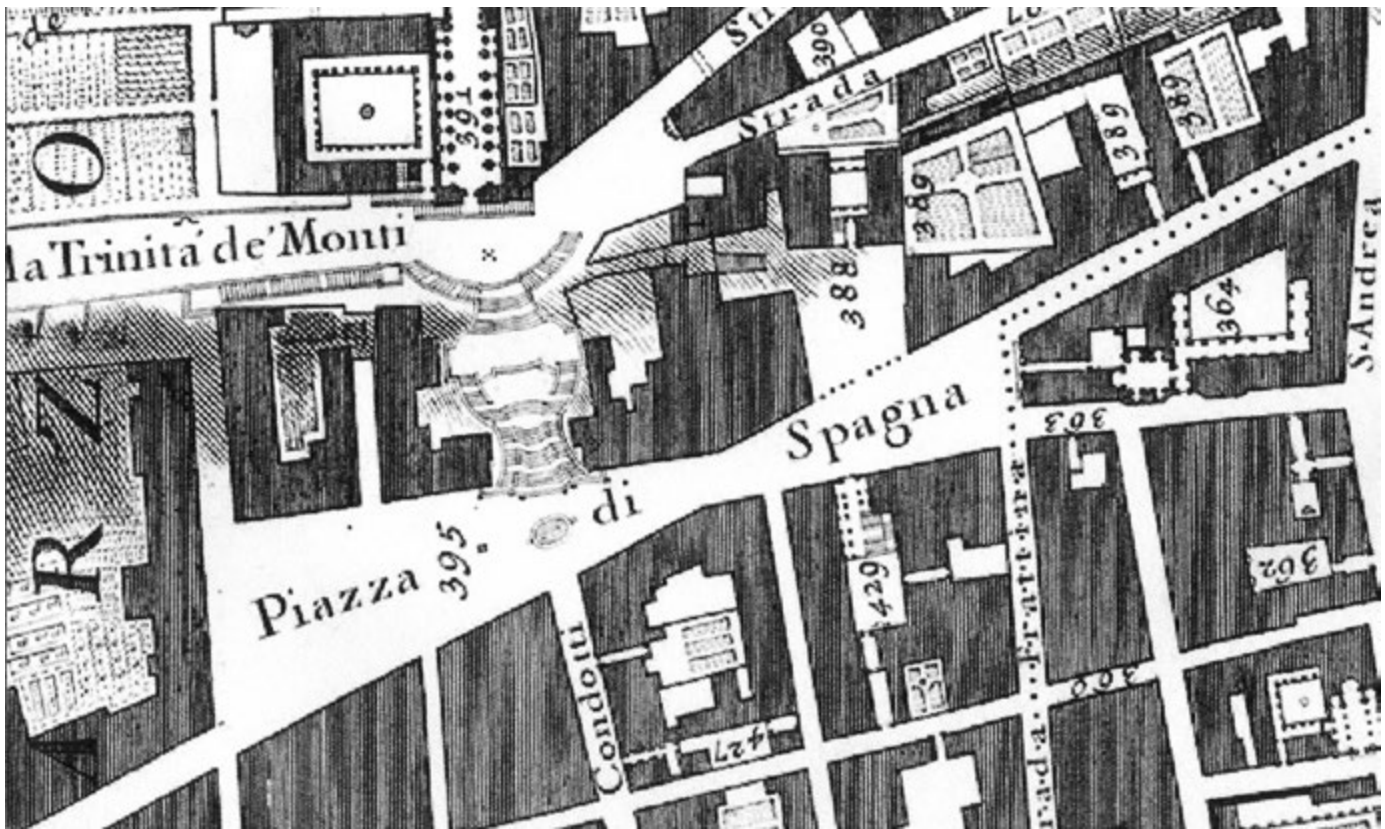
It happened, *mirabile dictu*, that exactly at this moment there arose a delicate, and dangerous territorial dispute between the three great European powers, France, Spain and the Holy See, in which the new pope was actively engaged from



1. Piazza di Spagna, night view: «Barcaccia», Spanish Steps, Santissima Trinità de' Monti. Photo: author's archive



2. Attributed to Caspar van Wittel (G. Vanvitelli), «Veduta della Platea Trinitati» (showing Horse Trough), oil on canvas, private collection. Photo: after Salerno, *Piazza di Spagna*, Fig. 13



3. Giambattista Nolli, «La nuova topografia di Roma», c. 1692–1756 (detail). Photo: author's archive





4. Giuseppe Vasi, Collegium Urbanum de Propaganda Fide, etching, 1761 (north façade on Piazza di Spagna by Gianlorenzo Bernini, the southwest façade by Francesco Borromini). Photo: Roberto Piperno



5. Palazzo Monaldeschi, afterwards Palazzo di Spagna. Photo: author's archive

the moment of his election. The issue was a dispute over the control of the 'Valtellina', the crucially important, long, verdant valley that passes from the northeast corner of Italy through the Alps toward Switzerland, Austria and Germany [Figs 6 and 7]. Because the route passed through the resolutely Calvinist Swiss Canton of Grisons on the southeast, the issue impinged on the interests of the church, and although the negotiations were intense and difficult, the pope sought to intermediate in the struggle. This paper will discuss one of the ways in which Urban VIII gave public expression to the role the church under his direction had played in resolving this strategic and religious conflict. He placed this demonstration at the foot of the Pincian Hill at the

very center of the triangular 'no man's land', between the rival states in the form of Bernini's fountain known as the *Barcaccia* [Figs 8, 9 and 10].<sup>4</sup>

On 19 February 1625 Urban took a dramatic and controversial step by appointing his favorite nephew Francesco Barberini (whom he had named Cardinal on 2 October 1623, aged twenty-six) as his *Legate a latere* seeking a peaceful reconciliation in Paris. In Francesco's large entourage was his secretary Girolamo Aleandro (1574–1629), a noted poet, historian, and member of the Barberini inner circle.<sup>5</sup> Aleandro made many friends and colleagues among the intellectual circles in Paris, but his fragile health soon required that he return to Rome. Francesco himself,



6. Landscape view of the Valtellina. Photo: author's archive

7. TCI Map, Valtellina Area (Italy, Switzerland, and Austria)



8. Giovanni Battista Falda, «Fontana nella Piazza della Trinità de' Monti», engraving No. 15 in *Le fontane di Roma*, 1691

disillusioned by the failure of the parties to reach a settlement, also returned to Rome on 17 December 1625. His disappointment was deeply shared with the pope, who reluctantly began military preparations. In the hope that better results might be achieved in further negotiations, Francesco set out for Madrid on 31 January 1626. By the time he arrived at Barcelona, however, he discovered that meetings between France and Spain, which had been kept secret, had already resulted in a peace treaty, concluded at Monzón in Aragon on 5 March 1626. Even though Cardinal Francesco had not participated, the treaty was to the great advantage of the Church and he returned triumphantly to Rome on 13 October 1626. Urban was overjoyed. Not only was war avoided, he considered the peace agreement a fulfillment of

his fondest wishes. On 6 March 1627, he sent ebullient briefs announcing the good news to all the European powers.<sup>6</sup> While the *Barcaccia* may have been designed and planned earlier, payments for construction of the fountain began in September 1628.

### Urban Humor – Public Wit

I have no doubt that the history of the papacy is full of pontiffs who enjoyed a good joke, but none to my knowledge had ever made good humor and wit a matter of public policy. One of the most astonishing of all modern urban creations, or should one say creatures, the *Barcaccia* is the first monumental, public





9. Gianlorenzo Bernini, «La Barcaccia», travertine, 1627–1629 (looking toward the corner of Via Condotti), cleaned.  
Photo: Spanishstepsapartment, 2015

fountain in Rome, in the very heart of the city, to suggest a wholly organic, quasi-natural, shape; and it is surely the first public monument that is truly, sublimely, amusing.<sup>7</sup> The political statement begins with the name, *barcaccia*, fondly applied from its resemblance to a type of humble work-boat, double-prowed for going up and down stream without turning around, used in hauling freight on the nearby Tiber [Fig. 11].<sup>8</sup> It was set low because of the feeble water pressure of the Aqua Vergine at that location. This disadvantage made the work a prime illustration of one of Bernini's basic principles of design: 'The highest praise of art consists in knowing how to make use of the little, and the bad, and the unsuitable for the purpose of making beautiful things,

so that the defect becomes useful, and if it did not exist it would have to be made'.<sup>9</sup> Domenico Bernini, the artist's son, reports on the fountain as follows:

And if Bernini in that which was not his profession showed such ability, how much must we believe him to be in that in which consisted his proper talent, refined by study, and art?

And as (Bernini himself) was wont to say, 'The good artificer was the one who knew how to invent methods to make use of the little, and the bad, to make beautiful things', he was truly marvelous in demonstrating it in fact. Under the Pincio in the Piazza called di Spagna, there had been made a lead from the Acqua



10. Gianlorenzo Bernini, «La Barcaccia», travertine, 1627–1629 (looking toward Via del Babuino). Photo: Author's Archive





11. Caspar van Wittel (called G. Vanvitelli), «Porto della Legna», c. 1700, Sotheby's, London, 5 December 2012, lot 29

Vergine to create a fountain to adorn the place. But the limited elevation above the surface did not permit a work that would give richness and majesty to that most delightful site. Urban asked him to demonstrate also on this occasion the vivacity of his imagination, and find a way with a certain artful slope, to make the water rise higher. The Cavaliere responded acutely, that in that case it would be better to think that the work and *the fountain should conform to the water, than the water to the fountain*. And so he conceived the idea of a beautiful and noble object for which it would be necessary, if need be, to restrict the height of the water. And he explained that he would remove enough earth to create a large basin which, being filled with water the fountain would represent at ground level an ocean, in the midst of which he intended to float a noble, and appropriate stone boat, which at several points as if from artillery cannons would spout water in abundance. The thought greatly pleased the pope, and without ado he gave order to carry out the project, which he deigned to ennoble himself with the following verses:

*The papal warship does not pour forth flames,  
But sweet water to extinguish the fire of war.*<sup>10</sup>

Everyone praised the ingenuity of the novelty of this fountain, and the above two verses were received by the literati with such applause that one of them, either truly convinced by the vivacity of the concept that seemed to him impossible to have

originated so appropriately for the purpose, or else disposed to think the worst, thinking it to believe it, and believing it, to publish it, responded ingeniously but boldly with the following distich:

*The fountain for the verses, not the verses for the fountain,  
Made Urban the poet; thus everyone pleases himself.*<sup>11</sup>

From antiquity on there had been naval fountains in Rome. However, never in post-classical times had they been placed in so conspicuous a site, and otherwise took the form of an imposing warship, whether an archeological relic, or a detailed replica of a modern galleon [Fig. 12].<sup>12</sup> To be sure, Bernini's workaday craft is clearly equipped fore and aft with canon; but yet, at first glance, at least, the poor, awkward tub seems obviously and emphatically to be sinking beneath the waves. The guns squirt gentle streams of water, which also gushes from apertures within to spill over the gunwales. At the same time, the morbid shape of the gunwales suggests the lips and gaping mouth of some great sea monster swallowing in one voracious gulp a diminutive version of the thing raised on a sort of mast inside, from which an ultimate gasp of water spouts heavenward. Bernini's gently militant, humble work-boat seems to founder in the overwhelming flood of its own delicious, liquid superabundance. In point of fact, however, the situation might just as well be the other way around: the monster could be vomiting it up, in effect saving it



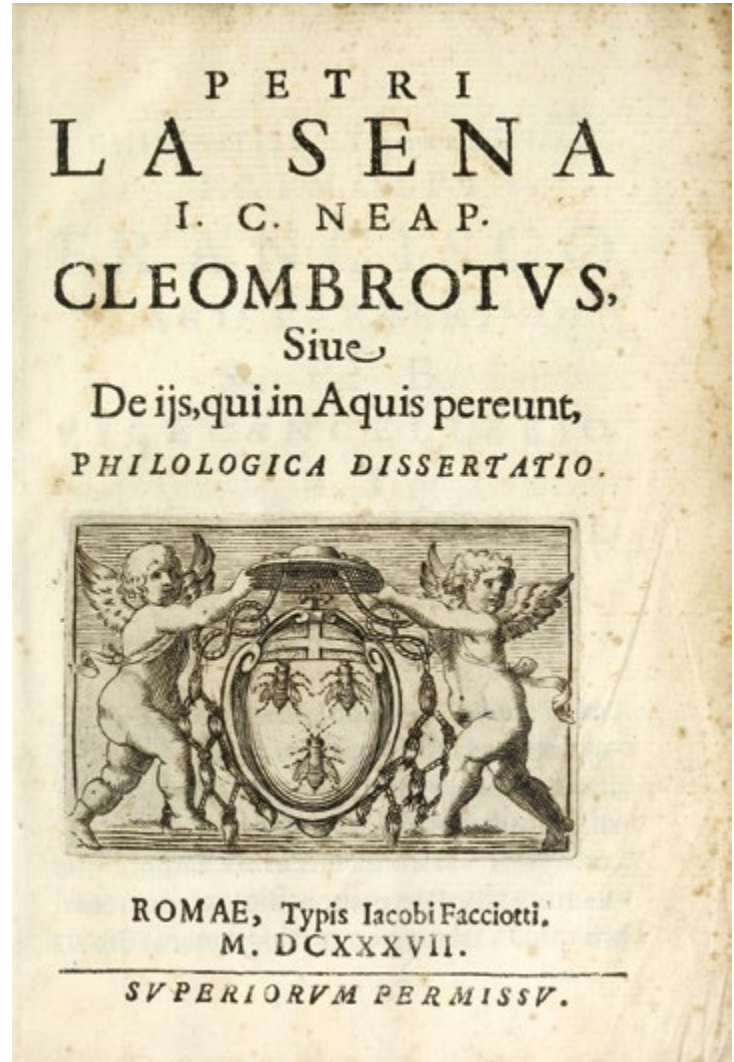
12. «Fontana della Galera», lead and stone, 1600–2005, Città del Vaticano, Giardini Vaticani. Photo: author's archive





13. «Portrait of Pietro Lasena», engraving, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, from Lorenzo Crasso, *Elogii d'hvomini letterati*, 2 vols, Venice, 1666, vol. 1, p. 253

14. Pietro Lasena, *Cleombrotus*, Rome, 1637, title page (*Petri La Sena I.C. Neap. Cleombrotus, siue, De ijs, qui in aquis pereunt, philologica dissertatio*)



from a watery death. In the end, the *Barcaccia* appears in a perpetual state of suspension, animated by the constant flow of water, here again easily accessible over rock-like steps conveniently protruding to bridge the gaps at either end, between the edge of the basin and the tub. This ironic portrayal of an unlikely object in an unlikely situation in an unlikely place – one of the major city squares – was a delight to one and all and surely contributed to its immediate baptism with its endearing, cuddly name, in the common Romanacchia parlance of the city.

Lest there be any doubt that it was perceived in this way by contemporaries, we may call to witness the account of the fountain in an extraordinary book by a now obscure but then

well-known Neapolitan polymath, Pietro Lasena (1590–1636) [Fig. 13], jurist, historian, librarian, *letterato*, who migrated to Rome where his *Cleombrotus*, or, *a Philological Dissertation on Those who have Died in the Water* [Fig. 14], dedicated to Cardinal Francesco Barberini, was published in 1637.<sup>13</sup> (Cleombrotus was an ancient Greek philosopher who committed suicide by leaping into the sea, hoping to enter into the empyrean domain envisioned in Plato's *Phaedo*.) Described in *The Transactions of the Royal Humane Society* in London for 1756 as the first work devoted to the awful theme of shipwreck and drowning, Lasena's treatise contains the first known illustration of the *Barcaccia*, by the graphic artist Matthias Greuter, along with a discussion

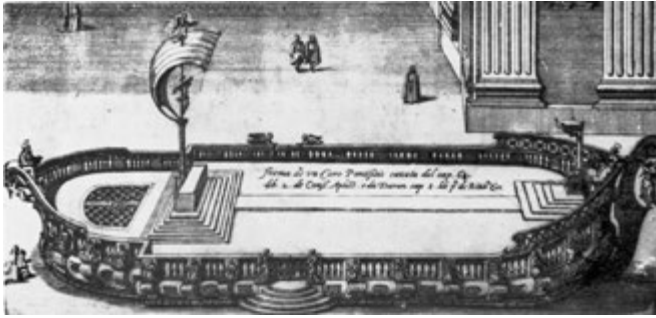


15. Matthias Greuter, «La Barcaccia», engraving, pp. 76–77 in Pietro Lasena, *Cleombrotus* (as in Fig. 14)

16. Matthias Greuter, «La Barcaccia» (detail of Fig. 15)







17. Matthias Greuter, engraving in Papirio Bartoli, *Forma de un Coro Pontificio* (proposal for High Altar of St Peter's).  
Photo: author's archive

and various epigrams, including one in Greek by Leone Allacci [Figs 15 and 16]. The point of it all, following the pope's own epigram, is to interpret the fountain with its mellifluous waters as an emblem of apian peace:

The Golden Peace of Pharia, once torn from the keel,  
Immerses the ships of war in Hyblaeen honey.

And now, O Prince, the ship brings new omens  
From which your bee sends forth honeyed liquids.<sup>14</sup>

Under the beneficent sun and the vessels of redemption all meld in a kind of self-immersion in the salvific waters of the church. The *Barcaccia* is eternally flooded but it never sinks. On the contrary, it also rises from within the gigantic, open-mouthed fish, disgorging the thirst- and fire-quenching waters of baptism as the Whale disgorged Jonah.

The irony of the conceit is most evident if one considers that the major symbol of the Catholic Church as an institution was precisely the noble ship, as the Ship of State, Christ's earthly domain guided by the pope at the helm. The theme was so central to the ideology of the church that one proposal offered at the outset of Urban's reign for furnishing the newly completed basilica of St Peter's actually enclosed the high altar and the choir for the cardinals in a ship under a sail blown by the crucifixion [Fig. 17].<sup>15</sup> There were essentially three New Testament contexts that lay behind this maritime metaphor, that is, the gospel episodes involving Christ's institution and dissemination of the Faith through his disciples: 1) the vessel from which Christ called Peter as he was fishing with Andrew on the Sea of Galilee, to succeed him as the Prince of the Apostles (Matt. 4:18–20; Mk 1:16–17); 2) the vessel in which the Apostles were caught during a storm, proving his divinity by walking on the water, and Peter's faith by urging him to do the same (Matt. 14:22–33); and 3) the



18. «Nave del Sole», woodcut in Vincenzo Cartari, *Le immagini degli dei degli antichi*, Venice, 1625, p. 45

vessel in which Christ saved the Apostles, as it was sinking from the weight of a draft of innumerable fishes he had miraculously provided (Lk. 5:3–10). Behind these episodes there lay two main Old Testament prognostications: 1) Noah and his ark, in which all the world's creatures were saved from the universal flood; and 2) Jonah who, guilty for having fled from the Lord's command, was swallowed by a sea monster, prayed to the Lord from the belly of hell, whereupon was vomited out upon the dry land (John. 1–2). Hence the naval theme of this fountain. If the note of serious humor (*serio ludere* in Renaissance terms) struck by the *Barcaccia*'s mundane marine form seems startlingly bizarre, the explanation lies in two interrelated works of learned and im-aginative antiquarianism that were its inspiration and justification. Vincenzo Cartari in his *Le immagini degli dei degli antichi*, a great compilation of ancient religious imagery, deals at length with the belief of the Egyptians, paragons of pre-Christian arcane



19.



20.

19. Claude Mellan, «Anulus piscatoris» (Christ on the water), engraving in Girolamo Aleandro, *Navis ecclesiam referentis symbolvm in veteri gemma annvlari insculptvm*, Venice, 1626, p. 13, London, The British Museum

20. Claude Mellan, «Anulus piscatoris» (Christ on a rock), 1626, engraving Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France



21. Gianlorenzo Bernini, «Triton Fountain», travertine, over life-size, 1642–1643, Rome, Piazza Barberini. Photo: Author's Archive

knowledge and wisdom, that the gods were identified with animals. On the authority of Eusebius of Caesarea in his compendious treatise *Preparation for the Gospel*, Cartari reported that the Egyptians associated the Sun with a ship and a crocodile, the large ship riding on the back of the croc immersed in sweet water [Fig. 18].<sup>16</sup> The Ship of the Sun, shown enflamed and spouting fire from its forward gun-ports in Cartari's image, represented the creative effect of the sun's motion through liquid, and the crocodile signified the water which the sun purges of its impurities.<sup>17</sup> The relevance of the 'temperate' sun as a ship conducted through the pure water by an aqueous beast whose humid generative power was second only to God's, was a congeries of associations astonishingly proleptic of the themes Urban would adopt for himself. In particular, the sun was a primary emblem of Urban VIII and the quenching waters spewing from the solar visages inside and the gun ports outside at either end of the *Barcaccia* clearly reflect Cartari's description of the water-tempering rays of the Egyptian sun-boat. The same themes, more fully developed, underlay and may have inspired a chalcedony gem, now lost, that was assumed to be an important relic of Early Christian, specifically early Petrine art [Figs 19 and 20].<sup>18</sup> Mounted as an *anulus piscatoris* (a ring formally awarded to all popes at their coronation), the carving depicted a ship at sea mounted on the back of a huge open-mouthed sea monster; from the ship's deck rose a mast that supported another, smaller vessel surmounted by a dove evocative of the salvific message a bird brought to Noah in the ark, while another bird rode to safety on the poop. To the right, as if retrieved from the jaws of the sea-monster, Christ calls Peter to walk upon the waters and follow him. (The visitor to the *Barcaccia* who approaches the gun-spouts on the narrow, bi-lingual platforms from the 'shore', does indeed seem to walk, precariously, upon the water.) Above the figures the abbreviated names of Jesus and Peter were inscribed in Greek. The gem was engraved by Claude Mellan in two versions, in one of which that was published, Christ also stands on the water; in the other, preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Christ stands on a rock in allusion to Peter as the rock



upon which the church would be built. The gem was the subject of a scholarly monograph published by Girolamo Aleandro with a dedication to Cardinal Francesco Barberini in 1626, a year after their return from Paris, the same year Urban dedicated the new church of St Peter's, and the year before the *Barcaccia* was begun.<sup>19</sup> Aleandro, secretary and a close friend of the pope and his nephew, all of whom were associated with the famous Accademia degli Umoristi, explains the gem as allusive to the Old and New Testament vessels of salvation, the ark of Noah, the fishing boat of Peter, and the ship of the church, in which both Jews and Gentiles are saved.<sup>20</sup> Aleandro does indeed relate the open-mouthed sea monster to the beast that disgorged Jonah in anticipation of the Resurrection. Aleandro made this point by referring it to Peter, recalling the annual tribute money (actually a specific coin denomination, the didrachma in the Vulgate, worth two drachmae), which Christ instructed Peter to pay, having extracted it from the mouth of a fish.<sup>21</sup> Aleandro offered this reference to explain the open mouth of the animal on the ring, and the explanation is equally valid for the gaping maw of Bernini's bi-faced ship-monster welling up from and hovering over the lower depths, inundating the fountain with the silvery redemption that both Jonah and Peter won by virtue of their devotion.<sup>22</sup> The *Barcaccia* was a monumental conflation of the salvific associations accumulated in Cartari's dramatic Ship of the Sun and the diminutive *anulus piscatoris*. The fountain morphed the sun, the vessel, and the fish into a coherent, organic image of Urban's offering on behalf of the church to the people of Rome: an abundant cascade of grace as aquatic refreshment for body and soul.

Baldinucci says unequivocally that Bernini made the fountain at the Pope's behest, and I have no doubt that in this case as in others where Bernini himself attributes to the pope ideas that he has carried out, however ingeniously, the basic conceit did indeed spring from Maffeo Barberini's imagination; after which the two men, like swarming bees, were of a single mind.<sup>23</sup> The reason I say so in this case is the location of the fountain, which was the pope's wish: it is located between the two preternatural enemies, Spain on one side of the piazza, France up the hill on the other. The papacy was often caught uncomfortably in the middle, especially in seeking to reconcile and unite the antagonists in the struggle against the Protestant heretics. In this light and in this place, the *Barcaccia* is an emblem not only of the pope's diplomacy but also of his diplomatic method.<sup>24</sup> An essential part of my argument in this paper is that Urban's effort to mitigate asperity and mediate peace under the aegis of the church was as much a part of his Urbanity as were the daring informality, charm, and wit that have indeed made the fountain an eternal symbol of what it means to be Roman.<sup>25</sup> Another of Bernini's dicta concerning the design of fountains was that 'the good architect had always to give them some real significance, or alluding to something noble, whether real or imagined'.<sup>26</sup> In the case of the *Barcaccia*, Urban's own distich provided the key to the fountain's significance in its context. But the same kind of open-mouthed sea-creature populates the Piazza Barberini itself, in the 'natural' form of gigantic, splayed out conch-shells setting forth the unimaginable treasures offered by their patron [Fig. 21].<sup>27</sup>

Text presented at the conference held to accompany the exhibition: *Las Ánimas de Bernini. Arte en Roma para la corte española*, Madrid, Museo del Prado, 2015; ed. by M. A. Lavin, 2020 (with thanks to Jack Freiberg for his always superb editorial assistance).  
N.B. Except where indicated, the translations were made by Irving Lavin.

<sup>1</sup> L. von Pastor, *The History of the Popes*, trans. by E. Graf, 40 vols, vol. XXVIII, London, 1938, p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> P. Guilday, 'The Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide (1622–1922)', *The Catholic Historical Review*, 6, no. 4, 1921, pp. 478–494.

<sup>3</sup> At first the quarters were rented from the Monaldeschi family and later, in 1654, the palace was acquired by the Spanish crown as a permanent residence for ambassadors. For the history of the Piazza, see L. Salerno, *Piazza di Spagna*, Cava dei Tirreni and Naples, 1967.

<sup>4</sup> The usual argument as to whether the fountain was the work of Pietro or Gianlorenzo Bernini was settled by documents in favor of Gianlorenzo published by H. Hibbard and I. Jaffe, 'Bernini's Barcaccia', *The Burlington Magazine*, 106, 1964, pp. 159–170.

<sup>5</sup> See below for further discussion of Aleandro.

<sup>6</sup> Pastor, *The History*, pp. 87–100.

<sup>7</sup> The most important studies of the fountain are Hibbard and Jaffe, 'Bernini's Barcaccia', pp. 159–170; C. D'Onofrio, *Roma Vista da Roma*, Rome, 1967, pp. 356–371, and C. D'Onofrio, *Le Fontane di Roma*, Rome, 1986, pp. 319–398; for a recent summary, see H.-U. Kessler, *Pietro Bernini*, Munich, 2005, pp. 405–409. The fountain was called *Barcaccia* in a guidebook of 1693; the term first appears in a poem by Berni in 1555 (Hibbard and Jaffe, 'Bernini's Barcaccia', p. 160, n. 2).

<sup>8</sup> The Tiber work boats were cited by D'Onofrio, *Roma*, pp. 354–361 and D'Onofrio, *Le Fontane*, pp. 363, 368.

<sup>9</sup> Concerning fountains: 'Anzi il sommo pregio dell'Arte consistere in sapersi servire del poco, e del cattivo, e del male atto al bisogno, per far cose belle, e far sì, che sia utile ciò, che fù difetto, e che se non fusse, bisognerebbe farlo'. Domenico Bernini, *Vita del cavalier Gio. Lorenzo Bernino / descritta da Domenico Bernino suo figlio*, Roma, 1713, Perugia, 1999, p. 32.

<sup>10</sup> I have borrowed the translation of this distich from Hibbard and Jaffe, 'Bernini's Barcaccia', p. 164.

<sup>11</sup> Domenico Bernini, *Vita*, pp. 57–59: 'Hor se il Bernino in quel, che non era professione sua, si dimostrava tanto valente, quanto dobbiam credere, che fosse in ciò, in cui consisteva il suo proprio talento raffinato dallo studio, e dall'arte? E come che soleva dire, che *Il buon' Artefice era quello, che sapeva inventar maniere, per servirsi del poco, e del cattivo, per far cose belle*, egli veramente fù maraviglioso a comprovarlo con gli effetti. Sotto il Pincio in Piazza detta di Spagna era stato condotto un capo di *Acqua Vergine* per doverne formare una Fontana in abbellimento di quel luogo: Mà la pochissima alzata, ch'ella aveva dal suolo non dava commodò di poter condurre un lavoro, che recasse ricchezza e maestà a quel deliziosissimo sito. Urbano richiese lui, acciò al suo solito facesse spiccare in quest'occasione la vivacità del suo ingegno, e trovasse modo con qualche artificiosa pendenza, che quell'acqua venisse maggiormente a sollevarsi: Rispose acutamente il Cavaliere, *che in quel caso dovevasi più tosto pensare, che l'Opera, e la Fonte si confacesse all'Acqua, che l'acqua alla Fonte*; E per ciò concepì un'Idea di Machina vaga, e nobile per cui bisognerebbe, se non fusse, restringer all'acqua l'altezza. E gli espose, che haverebbe scavato tanto di terra, quanto in essa si venisse a formare una gran Vasca, che empiendosi dell'acqua di quella Fontana rappresentasse al piano del suolo un Mare, nel cui mezzo voleva, che natasse nobile, e confacevole barca di sasso, che da più parti quasi da tanti Cannoni di Artiglieria gittasse acqua in abbondanza. Piacque il pensiero incredibilmente al Papa, e senza più diè ordine, che si desse esecuzione al disegno, quale egli medesimo non isdegnò di nobilitar con questi versi:

Bellica Pontificum non fundit Machina flammam,

Sed dulcem, belli qua perit ignis, aquam.

Fù lodata da tutti l'ingegnosa invenzione di questa Fontana, e li due sopra citati versi con tanto applauso furono ricevuti da' Letterati, che un d'essi ò persuaso veramente dalla vivacità del concetto, che gli paresse impossibile farlo nascere tanto confacevole al proposito, ò pur disposto a pensare il peggio, e pensandolo crederlo, e credendolo publicarlo, rispose ingegnosamente mà arditamente col seguente Distico.

Carminibus Fontem, non Fonti Carmina fecit

Urbanus Vates: Sic sibi quisque placet'.

See also the equivalent account in F. Baldinucci, *Vita del Cavaliere Gio. Lorenzo Bernini, scultore, architetto e pittore*, ed. by S. S. Ludovici, Milan, 1948, pp. 83f.

<sup>12</sup> The antecedents from antiquity on were studied by Hibbard and Jaffe, 'Bernini's Barcaccia'; and D'Onofrio, *Roma*, and *Le Fontane*. The current

form of the Fontana della Galera in the Giardini Vaticani, commissioned by Paul V (1605–1621), was restored in the eighteenth century, and again in the twenty-first century. See *La Fontana della Galera nei Giardini Vaticani. Storia e restauro*, ed. by M. A. De Angelis and M. Bezzini, Città del Vaticano, 2013. [Great praise and thanks to J. Freiberg for this reference. MAL].

<sup>13</sup> The following description of the work, now in my possession, was provided by the bookseller, F. Thomas Heller, of Swarthmore, PA: 'LASENA. Pietro. Cleombrotus, sive de iis, qui in aquis pereunt, philologica dissertatio. Rome, Jacobo Facciotti, 1637.

8<sup>vo</sup>. Orig. limp vellum; rebound. [8]. 192. [16] pp. With the engraved Barberini arms on the titlepage, engraved portrait of the author, 3 folding engraved plates, 2 text engravings, and 5 woodcuts. Scattered light foxing, else fine. First and only edition and very rare. A distinguished Neapolitan jurist and polymath, Lasena (1590–1636) came to Rome in 1634 (sic) to serve the Pope, Urban VIII, and his brother (sic), the cardinal Francesco Barberini, to whom the book is jointly dedicated. He was received with honor and lodged in the Vatican, but soon died of malaria and was buried in S. Andrea della Valle. *Cleombrotus* is an extended series of essays occasioned by the catastrophic shipwreck of a flotilla of Spanish galleons lost in the Gulf of Genoa in 1635, the passengers of which included Lasena's parents. The work was read before a Roman literary society but published posthumously, in tribute to its author. A discussion of the theme of shipwrecks and drowning, largely with reference to antiquity, the work is, in fact, the first book on drowning and has long been recognized as such in the literature on resuscitation – see page XVI of *The Transactions of the Royal Humane Society*, London [1796]. Hitherto unnoticed, however, is an engraving and several pages of analysis of Bernini's famous "shipwrecked" fountain, the Barcaccia, a celebrated work, Bernini's first fountain, the archetypal Roman fountain, and traditionally considered to be the first fountain in what would come to be called the Baroque style (see Wittkower, *Bernini*, for the relevant bibliography). This engraving is the first depiction of the fountain, predating by one year the illustration that has hitherto been considered to be the earliest representation of the work, a view found in the guidebook *Ritratto di Roma Moderna* published by Pompilio Totti in 1638 (see D'Onofrio, *Roma Vista*, pt. III, fig. 250). Lasena's analysis is also of considerable interest for its emphasis on Egyptian (i.e. hermetic, Neoplatonic) symbolism, and contains several epigrams relating to the fountain, including a lengthy quatrain in Greek by Leone Allacci, Graesse IV 113.'

A brief eulogy of Lasena appears in G. V. Rossi (Iani Nicii Erythraei), *Pinacotheca imaginum illustrium, doctrinae vel ingenii laude, virorum, qui, auctore superstite, diem suum obierunt*, Leipzig, 1692, pp. 106–108.

<sup>14</sup> Lasena, *Cleombrotus*, p. 77:

Aurea Pax Phariae quondam detracta carina,

Imbuit Hyblaeis bellica rostra fauis:

Et noua nunc pacis, PRINCEPS, fert omina

Puppis,

Mellitos latices qua tua promit Apis.

Isis, Egyptian goddess of peace, was called Pharia from the lighthouse – *pharo* – of Alexandria; Hybla, from Mount Hybla in Sicily, famous for its honey.

<sup>15</sup> P. G. Tornel, 'Rethinking St. Peter's: Papirio Bartoli and the Ship of the Church', *Sixteenth-Century Journal*, 48, no. 3, 2017, pp. 589–614.

<sup>16</sup> Vincenzo Cartari, *Le imagini degli dei degli antichi* (first illustrated edition published in 1571, see S. Pierguidi, 'Porta's Illustrations for Cartari', *Print Quarterly*, 22, no. 4, 2005, pp. 431–434). There were several



editions during the reign of Urban VIII; I refer to Venice, 1625, p. 45. The *Nave del Sole* is mentioned by Hibbard and Jaffe, 'Bernini's Barcaccia', p. 164, n. 19.

17 The caption of the illustration reads: 'Nave del Sole portata de un Crocodilo, che significa la prima causa che gouerna l'uniuerso dopò Iddio esser la forza del Sole congiunta nella generatione delle cose con l'umidità; & lui purgare le triste qualità di quella'. The reference to Eusebius (p. 44) is as follows: 'Et perciò, come riferisce Eusebio, i Theologi dello Egitto metteuano l'immagine del Sole in vna naue, la quale faceuano portare da vn Crocodilo, volendo per la naue mostrare il moto, che si fa nello humido alla generatione delle cose, e per lo Crocodilo l'acqua dolce, dalla quale il Sole leua ogni trista qualità, & la purga con i suoi temperati raggi'. The passage in Eusebius is as follows: 'The sun they indicate by a man embarked on a ship, the ship set on a crocodile. And the ship indicates the sun's motion in a liquid element: the crocodile potable water in which the sun travels. The figure thus signified that his revolution takes place through air that is liquid and sweet' (Eusebius of Caesarea, *Preparation for the Gospel*, trans. by E. H. Gifford, 2 vols, Eugene, OR, 2002, vol. I, p. 126).

18 The gem is discussed briefly and illustrated by Hibbard and Jaffe, 'Bernini's Barcaccia', p. 164, and Fig. 23. The circumstances of Aleandro's composition and the engraving by Mellan have been studied by D. Jaffé, 'Mellan and Peiresc', *Print Quarterly*, 7, no. 2, 1990, pp. 168–175. The most extensive modern discussion of the gem's content, and the question of its authenticity, is that by F. J. Dölger, *IXΘΥΣ. Das Fischesymbol in frühchristlicher Zeit, I: Religionsgeschichtliche und epigraphische Untersuchungen. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur ältesten Christologie und Sakramentenlehre* (Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte: Supplementheft 17), 1922, pp. 286–319.

19 Girolamo Aleandro, *Navis ecclesiam referentis symbolvm in veteri gemma annvlari insculptvm*, Rome, 1626. Thirty years after Aleandro died, in 1660–1661, the Cardinal had his sculptor, Antonio Giorgetti, carve a commemorative bust of him with inscription in San Lorenzo fuori le Mura. See J. Montagu, 'Antonio and Gioseppe Giorgetti: Sculptors to Cardinal Francesco Barberini', *The Art Bulletin*, 52, no. 3, 1970, pp. 278–298, esp. p. 280, fig. 3.

20 'Trium exstimo rerum sacrarum potissimum symbola (nam & alsia quaedam consideranda se nobis offerent) hac gemma contineri. Ac primum quidem illud signifiari tem Arcam Noë, quam Petri nauculam Ecclesiae fuisse typum. Deinde, quoniam coniunctae inuicam arca ipsa & naus cernunt, Catholicam Christi Ecclesiam iam inde aq muni primordio fuisse. Tertio loco, cum arca malo naui imposita ab ipsa naui fuleiri ac sustentari videatur, quicumque siue ex Iudaismo, siue ex Gentibus salutem vnquam sunt adepti, id per fidem in Iesum Christum, quae fides Ecclesiae firmamentum est, ijs contigisse' (Aleandro, *Navis ecclesiam*, pp. 15f.).

21 'Nec eius opinio improbanda videretur, qui extimauerit, piscem in gemma insculptum fuisse ad inuenti illius stateris memoriam refricandam exhibendumque mysterium, de quo loquuti sumus, ac profecto os huiusce nostri piscis apertum verba Domini respicere videtur, & *aperto ore eius inunies staterem*' (Aleandro, *Navis ecclesiam*, pp. 127 f.); cf. Dölger, *IXΘΥΣ. Das Fischesymbol*, loc. cit.

22 For examples of didrachmae bearing twin fishes see S. P. Noe, *The Thurian di-staters*, New York, 1935.

23 On Urban's patronage see Pastor, *The History*, vol. XXIX, pp. 408–444; also P. Hirschfeld, *Mäzene. Die Rolle des Auftraggebers in der Kunst*, Munich, 1968, pp. 156–170, and more recently by S. Schütze, *Kardinal Maffeo Barberini und die Entstehung des Römischen Hochbarock*, Munich, 2007.

24 Baldinucci, *Vita del Cavaliere*, p. 83. The political topography of the site was aptly sketched in Hibbard and Jaffe, 'Bernini's Barcaccia', pp. 165f.

25 See I. Lavin, 'Urbanitas urbana. The Pope, the Artist, and the Genius of the Place', in *I Barberini e la cultura europea del seicento*, ed. by L. Mochi Onori et al., Rome, 2007, pp. 15–30.

26 'sua opinione sempre fu che il buono architetto nel disegnar fontane dovesse sempre dar loro qualche significato vero o pure alludente a cosa nobile o vera o finta', Baldinucci, *Vita del Cavaliere*, p. 84.

27 I refer of course to the *Triton Fountain* and the *Fountain of the Bees*, the latter a modern reconstruction incorporating parts of the original; cf. D'Onofrio, *Le Fontane*, pp. 385–389.

