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ADVERTISING GONE WRONG - SIXTUS V IN THE IMAGE OF MOSES: THE *Fontana Dell'acqua Felice* AS A FAILED COMMUNICATION CHANNEL

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Today's highways and busy streets are strewn with large billboards. Advertisers are well aware of the advantage: unlike commercials or magazine ads, people are guaranteed to see them whether they like it or not. The public fountains in Rome, built under the patronage of the Popes, were intended to function in much the same way as today's billboards do. Erected during the Protestant Reformation and after the Council of Trent (1543-1665), they played a part in the Church's efforts to strengthen papal authority and 'advertise' the Catholic position as superior to that of the Protestant. They advertised and promoted the Papacy and Christian dogma to passersby: to pilgrims and townsfolk, clergy and laymen, rich and poor, literati and illiterate, all of whom too would view them whether they liked it or not.

Placed within the cityscape and on the roads, these fountains had first and foremost the functional purpose of providing water and are thus associated with the baptismal sacrament and the 'living water' of Jesus. Their specific locations and function dictates a dynamic relation between the fountain and the people.

The location of a fountain on a busy thoroughfare necessitates attracting the attention of passersby on the move, whereas its placement in the center of a plaza may allow the observer a more relaxed position and more detailed contemplation. Either way, the images and various elements of the fountain gradually become visible to the observer as he approaches — thus offering a methodological framework for their reading. Such a reading, we contend, does not necessarily lean upon a narrative order but, rather, upon a spatial order (near, far), a linear order (first, last), and an observational state (static,

dynamic), which work in concert, depending on the observer's position and perception.

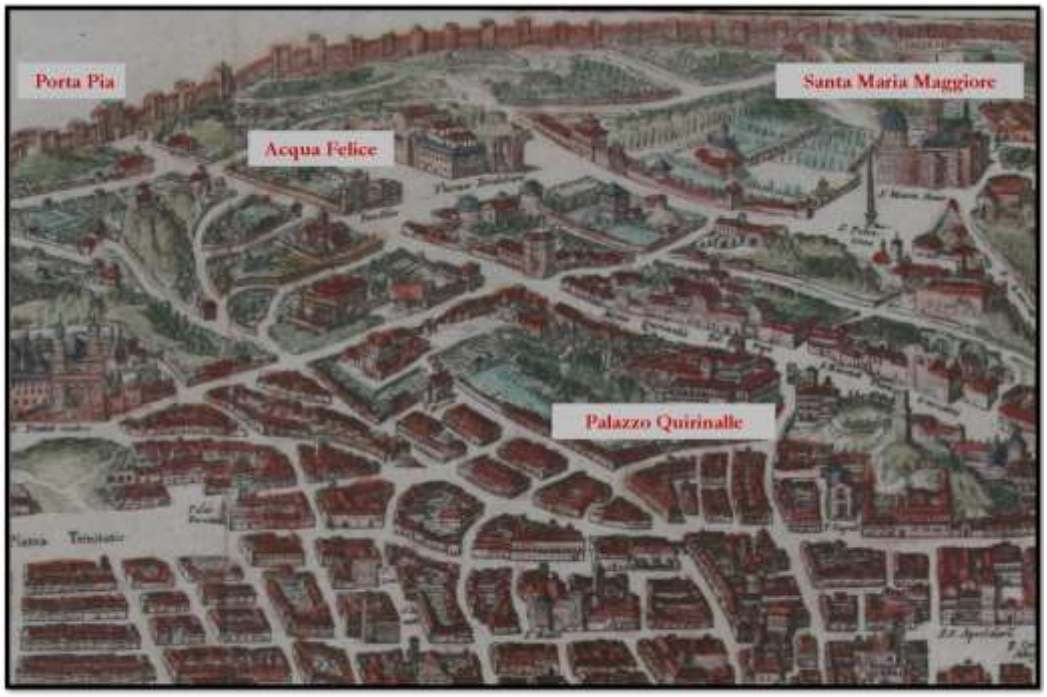

Fig. 1. The *Fontana dell'Acqua Felice*: location and district. Marked by the authors on a map by Matthäus Merian, *Map of Rome* (1640), in: *Topographia Italiae, Das ist: Warhaffte und Curioese Beschreibung von ganz Italien … Einen Anhang von Koenigreich Morea*, (Frankfurt, c.1688), 94r. (detail)
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:View_of_Rome_Roma_1688.jpg#metadata
(Accessed July 27, 2014) In the public domain

The *Fontana dell'Acqua Felice*, built under the patronage of Pope Sixtus V in 1587 near one of the seven pilgrim churches, *Santa Maria Maggiore*, on the access road to the city through the *Porta Pia*, was then and still is a Roman landmark (Fig. 1). Its location is significant because it is on the route to the palace of Pope Sixtus V (*Palazzo Quirinalle*); and, even more significantly, it lies at the end of the first aqueduct through which, for the first time in one thousand years, water once again flowed into Rome.[1] Not since Vitiges, the

[1] Dorothy Metzger Habel, *The Urban Development of Rome in the Age of Alexander VII*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2002), 15, 16, 22

Gothic king, besieged Rome in 537 CE and destroyed its aqueducts, had water flowed into the city.[2]

The *Fontana dell'Acqua Felice*, or the *Moses Fountain*, is a three blind-arched structure designed by Domenico Fontana after an ancient Roman triumphal arch. In the center is a colossal statue of Moses and two reliefs identified by researchers as the story of Aaron and the Children of Israel collecting manna (on the left); and the Battle of Joshua and the Amalekites (on the right) (Fig. 2).[3]

Fig. 2. Domenico and Giovanni Fontana, *Acqua Felice Fountain*, 1587, travertine marble, Piazza San Bernardo, Rome. Photograph: ©Dafna Maharshak

[2] Cesare D'Onofrio, *Le fontane di Roma*, (Roma: Romana società editrice, 1986), 13.

[3] See further discussion on the identification of the left-hand relief on and on the right-hand relief on (pages below)

The *Fontana dell'Acqua Felice* showcases the multifaceted and multilayered reading of these fountains erected for the purpose of promoting the papacy and the position of the Catholic Church. We contend that our application of a modern communication model has enabled a more comprehensive understanding of the fountain as a means of communication. This communication model allowed us to take into account not only the 'fixed' images and their iconographic meaning, but also the changing communications environment and the changing awareness and knowledge of the crowd it addresses. Our implementation of modern marketing communication theory in order to analyze the 16th-century fountain has also revealed the presence of a distraction element (namely, *noise*). [4] In the *Acqua Felice* fountain, this factor, as will be argued, had critical implications and, indeed, turned the entire message upside-down. Intended by the Pope to glorify his and the Church's power, the fountain instead became a source of mockery and scorn.

The modern marketing communication theory applied here is based on a model by Harold Lasswell (1902-1978), who recognizes certain elements as present in all communication stages.[5] According to Lasswell, the *source* (person, organization, company, brand) uses a certain medium (ad, billboard, television) in order to send a *message* (story, picture, advertisement) to a certain audience - that is, to the *receiver* (person, consumer).[6] Applying the model to our subject matter, the source is the Pope and the Church, which use the fountain as a medium to communicate their message to the people of Rome. This message comprises encoded symbols and evokes a (positive or negative) response from the target audience, which intuitively decodes it.

[4] Wilbour Schramm, "Nature of Communication between Humans," in *The Process and Effects of Mass Communications*, eds. W. Schramm and D.F. Roberts (Urbana, Chicago, London: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1977), 26.

[5] Harold D. Lasswell (1948), "The Structure and Function of Communication Society," in The Process and Effects of Mass Communications, eds. W. Schramm and D.F. Roberts, (Urbana, Chicago, London: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1971), 84.

[6] Philip Kotler, *Marketing Management, Analysis, Planning, Implementation, and Control* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1994) 597.

Consequently, every advertisement has three important components: *picture*, *headline*, and *text* (or *copy*) which should also be referred to in this order.[7] Each component, according to the communication model, fulfills a specific and distinct role, enabling analysis of the fountain and the manner in which it conveys its messages to the different audiences.

Taking this approach to analyzing an art-work may seem self-contradictory. Ostensibly it is all '*picture*' – all visual. We nevertheless refer to the viewing order as a key element. As mentioned, a fountain on a busy thoroughfare necessitates attracting the attention of passersby who are on the move. This implies, first, the need to draw the viewers' attention; and second, to make them perceptive to the fountain's meaning by causing them to examine its details more closely. This fact, which applies also to the modern communications media, has led researchers to analyze the different elements and components of an advertisement in relation to their function in drawing the viewers' attention, and in forming their perceptions. Thus, according to Kotler, the *picture* is the first to be noticed and should be 'strong' enough to draw attention, and the *headline*, which is the second to be observed, should be intriguing enough to stimulate the receiver into reading the *text*.[8]

Accordingly, we refer to the Triumphal Arch structure and form, with its inscribed panel, as the *picture* that can be seen and recognized from afar as a familiar symbol of triumph and glory (Fig. 2). The second element, the *headline*, can be identified in the colossal statue of Moses (Fig. 3), which dominates the closer space and would, likewise, had been familiar to the contemporaneous Romans and visitors in its association with Michelangelo's famous statue of Moses. Finally, assimilating the function of the *text*, are the

[7] Kotler, *Marketing Management*, 637: The term 'copy' is explained by Kotler as follows: "The reader first notices the picture, and it must be strong enough to draw attention. Then the headline must be effective in propelling the person to read the copy. The copy itself must be well composed." We have therefore used the term *text*, which is in accordance with this meaning but suits better the historical context of a 16th-century artistic monument. We thank Prof. Jacob Hornik for his useful advice and assistance in this matter.

[8] Kotler, *Marketing Management*, 637.

two reliefs, which can be contemplated only once the passerby is standing close to the fountain (Figs. 4,6).

Frames of reference: **the Triumphal Arch**

The triumphal arches that have survived from Antiquity were inseparable parts of the Roman urban landscape. In Antiquity, as also in the 16th century, they were a tangible expression of daring and success - a symbol of victory and glory. They remained part of Rome's proud urban landscape in the new era. Since the rule of Charles V, this same 'vocabulary' had been used throughout the Holy Roman Empire, in the revival of the Roman Triumphal Entry after the example of the Roman *Triumphus*. The entrance of a sovereign into one of the cities of his realm had included, since that time, the building of magnificent ephemeral triumphal arches, made entirely of ephemeral materials – wood, stucco, and canvas – imitating more enduring and nobler materials, such as marble or bronze.[9] In Charles V's Entry into Rome (April 1536), for example, the Emperor's procession followed the same Roman triumphal route used in Antiquity, using the same Classical iconography and imagery of the Roman–Imperial *Triumphus* – including the triumphal arches.[10]

It is therefore clear that the layman observer of the *Acqua Felice Fountain* would have had no difficulty in grasping the message of victory encoded in the fountain's architectural structure and in understanding it in light of the ancient tradition. The *picture* of the triumphal arch works, thus, within the *frames of reference*.[11] In other words, to paraphrase Wilbur Schramm, the triumphal arch is a sign bearing a *similarity of meaning*, for it belongs to an

[9] Roy Strong, *Art and Power, Renaissance Festivals 1450–1650* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1984), 86; Margaret M. McGowan, "The Renaissance Triumph and its Classical Heritage," in *Court Festivals of the European Renaissance, Art, Politics and Performance*, eds. J.R. Mulryne and E. Goldring (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 26-47.

[10] André Chastel, *The Sack of Rome, 1527,* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1983), 210.

[11] Wilbur Schramm, "Nature of Communication Between Humans," in *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication* ed. Wilbour Schramm and Donald F. Roberts (Urbana, Chicago, London: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1977), 31.

experience sufficiently similar so that the same sign can be shared efficiently by different receivers.[12]

At the center of this approach lies the view that an effective communication process depends to a certain extent on the sharing of ideas between the two bodies involved in this process: the source—the sender, and the objective, i.e., the target audience—the receiver. The artist who designed the fountain, using the well-known form of the triumphal arch, took this same approach. The basis for the success of the advertising campaign lies, therefore, in the degree of overlap between the fields of experience of the two bodies involved in the communication process.[13] This approach unites and even creates a reciprocity between the encoder and the decoder—between the source and the target audience.

By extension, relying on these *frames of reference*, the *receiver* would understand that the water erupting through the sealed arches is part of the realization of an everlasting triumph: it is the 'living water' of baptism and salvation, and an engineering triumph in bringing water back to the parched city.

The dimensions of the Latin inscription topped by the Pope's coat of arms on the *Fontana dell'Acqua Felice* are likewise noticeable from a great distance, even before the individual words and symbols become distinctly readable.[14] It constitutes, first and foremost, part of the triumphal arch image (or *picture*) even from afar and even to the illiterate. Additionally, both the literati and the illiterate would have associated the monument with Sixtus V, whose coat of arms is placed between two angels on the semicircular gable and beneath the Cross (Fig. 2). The literati would also have enjoyed an additional content, intended to enhance the *picture* of the triumphal arch, reflecting praise for

[12] See: Schramm, "Nature of Communication," 30-31: "The similarity of meaning which Mr. A and Mr. B will perceive in a message depends on finding an area where the experience of the two people is sufficiently similar that they can share the same signs efficiently."
[13] Kotler, *Marketing Management*, 597.
[14] Tyler Lansford, *The Latin Inscriptions of Rome: A Walking Guide* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2009), 278-279.

Sixtus V for surmounting the complex engineering challenges, triumphing over the laws of nature, and successfully bringing water to this place.[15] They could also have read that the Pope had changed the aqueduct's name from *Acqua Alesandrina*, for the pagan Caesar Alessandro Severus (222-235), to *Acqua Felice*, Sixtus's given name—Felice Peretti.[16]

In advertisements however, much of the potential meaning lies outside the actual words.[17]Accordingly, the inscription on the triumphal arch is not conditional upon nor even essential for the perception of the fountain's *picture* as a clear and unequivocal sign of the Pope's and the Church's triumph. Literati and laymen alike would have had no difficulty in reading the message – with or without the actual words - and understanding that the common symbol of victory was being harnessed to glorify Sixtus V as a modern *triumphator*.

The Figure of Moses as *Headline* and *Noise*

The image or *picture* of the triumphal arch encloses in its central arch the colossal statue of Moses, which gives its name to the monumental fountain (Fig. 3). The imposing statue was created by Prospero Antichi (also known as Prospero Bresciano) and Leonardo Sormani.[18]

After the triumphal arch with its inscription, the image of Moses is undoubtedly the most central and dominant element of the fountain. The

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[15] Lansford, *The Latin Inscriptions of Rome*, 278-279: "*Sixtus the fifth, Supreme Pontiff, native of Ascoli Piceno, /By the gathering of many rivulets /Brought water by a winding channel from the Colonna territory /To the left of the Via Praenestina, /Twenty miles from the reservoir, twenty-two from it source, /And called it Felice from his name before his office /He began it in the first year of his office and completed it in the third, 1587*"

[16] Katherine W. Rinne, *The Water of Rome: Aqueducts Fountains and the Birth of the Baroque City* (New Haven, London: Yale Univ. Press, 2010), 3.

[17] Schramm, "Nature of Communication," 31.

[18] Sormani was born in Savona and worked in Rome for thirty years from 1550 to 1590. He was among the most active sculptors working for Sixtus V. Prospero Antichi (Breciano) too spent nearly his entire career in Rome and was engaged in several projects for Sixtus V. For further reading on the two artists see: Romano Giovanni Baglione, *Le vite de pittori scvltori et architetti, dal pontificato di Gregorio XIII del 1572, in fino a'tempi di papa Vrbano ottauo 1642*, (Roma: Andrea Fei, MDCXLII), 42-44, 90-91; Steven F. Ostrow, "The Discourse of Failure in Seventeenth Century Rome: Prosper Bresciano's Moses," *Art Bulletin*, 88, 2, (2006): 268-270.

colossal statue naturally draws our attention because of its size and its central position, but even more so because it strikes us as familiar. We can relate to the contemporaneous local lore according to which the sculptor tried to measure up to Michelangelo, who had created a statue of Moses in the nearby Church of San Pietro in Vincoli (1515). Word of mouth had it that the sculptor made the mistake of not creating a model and instead carved the statue directly out of a block of marble that was lying on the ground rather than standing upright. As a result, its proportions were not correct. When the statue was revealed to the public it was ridiculed, and Prospero Antichi is said to have fallen into a state of melancholy.[19]

The story is probably exaggerated. It is however certain that the statue was ridiculed, to the extent that the locals even called it 'Il Mosè ridicolo' - the ridiculous Moses.[20] An interesting and revealing piece of evidence of this can be found in a *pasquinata*, affixed by a visitor to the *Acqua Felice Fountain*:[21]

> The fresh water is good and the fountain is beautiful;
> With that monster above, however, it is no longer so.
> O you, Sixtus, who keeps fast your word,
> Hang the new Michelangelo by his throat.[22]

The fountain itself is praised; the criticism is reserved for the statue of Moses in its center, which brings to mind Michelangelo's statue.

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[19] Baglione, *Le vite*, 44; Ostrow, "Discourse of Failure," 283.

[20] This expression, probably deriving from contemporaneous criticism in the 16th-century, appears even in current-day guide-books to Rome and internet sites. See for example: http://roma.andreapollett.com/S3/romaft36i.htm. Accessed July 27, 2014

[21] The *pasquinate* is a custom developed in Rome by which the public expressed its displeasure through anonymous notes called *pasquinate*, which were affixed to an ancient statute near the San Pantaleo (1216) church. See: Peter Partner, *Renaissance Rome 1500-1559, A Portrait of Society* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: Univ. of California Press, 1976), 202-204. The phenomenon of *pasquinate* was discussed by Partner who surveyed the public's response to the Pope's corruption in the 16th century.

[22] Translation by Ostrow, "Discourse of Failure," 272. Another *pasquinata* states similarly that: 'He looks with grim eye/ At the water that rushes to his feet./Horrified/ At the damage that has been done to him,/ By a sculptor who has lost his mind' (Guarda con occhio torvo/ L'acqua che scorge ai pié/ Pensando inorriditi / Al dannoche a lui fe/ Uno scultore stordito). As in: Luigi Callari, *Le fontane di Roma* (Roma: Bardi Editore 1970), 104-105.

In modern advertising, the function of the dominant element (the *headline*) is to highlight the central concepts. [23] From the *sender's* point of view, there can be no doubt that the association of Moses with water was meant to link it to the story of Moses striking the rock (Exodus 17:6; Numbers 20:11), as the personification of a benevolent leader acting in God's name to care for his people (physically and spiritually). Moreover, the colossal statue of Moses—in the formal context of the triumphal arch – is perceived as the victorious image of the *triumphator*. The steadfast pose with his legs spread apart, his right hand commanding, and the Tablets of the Law in his left hand, mark him as a particular *triumphator*—his victory is the Victory of the Law.

Fig. 3. Prospero Bresciano and Leonardo Sormani, *Moses* (detail), 1587-1588, marble, 4.25 m., the Acqua Felice Fountain, Rome. Photograph: ©Dafna Maharshak

[23] Kotler, *Marketing Management*, 635.

In Rome after the Protestant Reformation, the issue of the Pope's authority was of the highest concern. The colossal image of Moses within the arch functions as the *headline* in an advertisement: it emphasizes the main idea that the Pope sought to transmit to the target audience. The Pope's coat-of-arms and his name inscribed above the arches, makes it clear that he is, in fact, advertising himself as the champion of legal authority on earth – as the new Moses, an *alter Moses*. The audience, however, as apparent from the above-mentioned *pasquinata*, seems to have formed a different perception.

The message was contaminated. The Pope's depiction as a modern *triumphator*, as the 'spring of living water,' and as the 'champion of the law,' no longer held true. The colossal statue of Moses had clearly become a distracting element. This is the concept usually called *noise* in modern communication theory.[24] However, before we can consider the effect of the 'Il Mosè ridicolo' on this analysis of the fountain, we must first turn to examine the two reliefs, on the right and left arches.

[24] Schramm, "Nature of Communication," 26.

Mediating the *text*: the fountain goddess and the wine-skin carrier

The two reliefs, one on either side of Moses, are meant for a closer view (Figs. 4, 6). Incised into the flat surface in various degrees - from low to high relief - they are rich in details and therefore not as prominent as Moses. Only when standing directly in front of the fountain can the observer distinguish the relief details that - according to Tod Marder - on the left side present the story of Aaron and the Children of Israel collecting manna (Exodus, 16); and on the right, the Battle of Joshua and the Amalekites (Exodus, 17: 9-13) - according to both Marder and Philip Fehl (Figs 4,6).[25] The first element of the reliefs that would draw the viewers' attention as they approach is that of the female figure at the bottom of the left relief (Fig. 5).

Looking over her right shoulder towards the direction of the city gate (Porta Pia), the female figure projects outward from the background, extending past the niche's frame. Her right hand projects into the viewer's space, offering a seashell. She is distinctive and set apart also by her appearance, bare-breasted styled *all'antica*, and by her separation from the historical narrative.

Tod Marder, recognizing the singularity of this figure, notes that the relief of her head offers a clear imitation of ancient sculpture and is, therefore, a 'fake *spolia*.'[26] The identification of the female figure as *spolia*, nevertheless, is not taken into consideration as a distinguishing factor, and Marder interprets her identity as an Israelite woman collecting manna; and, accordingly, he identifies the entire scene as Aaron and the Israelites collecting manna. [27]

Considering the *spolia* appearance of the female figure as a distinguishing factor, it becomes clear that this appearance associates her with the river gods

[25] Tod. A. Marder, "Sisto V e la Fontana del Mosè," in *Sisto V Roma e il Lazio*, eds. Marcello Fagiolo and Maria L. Madonna (Roma: instituto poligrafoco e zecca dello stato, 1992), 532; Philip P. Fehl, "Hermeticism and Art: Emblem and Allegory in the Work of Bernini,"*Artibus et Historiae* 7, no. 14 (1986): 157.

[26] Marder, "Sisto V e la Fontana del Mosè," 536: "La testa è una Chiara imitazione dall'antico, mentre la mano sinistra è cosi grande e sproprzionata che credo vinisse scolpita per sembrare un restauro di una mano utilizzata da un altro corpo, mentre in effete è tratta dallo stesso blocco di pietra."

[27] Marder, "Sisto V e la Fontana del Mosè," 528, 532.

from Ancient Rome. These statues and this association would have been common to the Romans citizen and visitors, who could have encountered them daily, for example, at the foot of the Campidoglio, where they could see the statues of Tiber and Nile.

Fig. 4. Giovanni Battista della Porta, *Aaron leading the Israelites to the water*, 1589-1590(?), marble, the relief on the left side of the Acqua Felice Fountain, Rome. Photograph: ©Dafna Maharshak

The use of 'fake *spolia*' is therefore meaningful. Like the use of the triumphal arch discussed above, the use of the Ancient Roman style in designing this female statue employs a *similarity of meaning*. In other words, the fact that she

resembles the Roman river gods makes her – quite simply – the 'fountain goddess.' She is, thus, the fountain goddess erupting from the rock after Moses has struck it. Accordingly, the entire scene can be interpreted – not as the story of Aaron and the Israelites collecting manna – but, rather as the story of Aaron leading the Israelites to the water that erupted from the rock (*Exodus*, 17:6; *Numbers*, 20:11) (Fig. 4).[28]

Figure 5: Giovanni Battista della Porta, *The Fountain Goddess,* (detail from Fig. 4), 1589-1590(?),Photograph: ©Dafna Maharshak

[28] It is interesting to note at this point that Sixtus V referred to this story and meaning in a *bolla* he wrote in his last year as pope (1590): "*Sacerdos Aaron ... expressus, populum Iudai cum sitientem ad Acquas ducit*." As in: Fehl, "Hermeticism," 187, n. 27.

This identification of the scene brings us closer to answering the question posed above. As the fountain goddess she is separated by stylistic and spatial means according to the traditional manner of depicting these figures. In order to comprehend her full meaning, however, we should also consider the viewer's actual position when encountering her.

As argued above, the fountain goddess – due to her actual and stylistic prominence, would be the first to be noticed by the viewer upon approaching the fountain, but only after seeing the *picture* of the triumphal arch and the *headline* of the colossal Moses, which can be already be seen from afar. This position defines her actual role as mediator between the first gaze, which is distanced and therefore intuitive, and the second, which is more direct and intimate and therefore of a more contemplative nature. The first stage might be accidental, a glimpse of the arch and of Moses while walking or riding down the road. The detailed and packed compositions in the two reliefs, on the other hand, require the deliberate attention and disposition of the viewer, which can be given only in the second stage of viewing. Only in this second disposition will the viewer also be able to understand (decode) their messages. The fountain goddess is therefore designed to arouse interest, to draw the viewers' attention and make her memorable after they leave.

She is there to attract and draw passersby away from the city bustle, inviting them to stop, to study the reliefs - to effect a change in their observational state from a dynamic to a static one - in order to prepare the viewers' state of mind to decode fully the messages conveyed by the reliefs and the fountain. The invitation she extends, which is directed to all, also contains a special gesture that is intended for the more specific 'potential audience' of pilgrims. The seashell she holds and extends in her hand became at the beginning of the 12th century the symbol of pilgrims on their way to Santiago de Compostela, and later the symbol of all pilgrims.[29] Thus, she welcomes the pilgrims arriving at the Eternal City with the water of the Pope's fountain. The

[29] See for example the *Supper at Emmaus* (1601) by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571-1610).

fountain goddess is not part of the narrative; only by reading her within the viewing sequence does it become clear that she is a mediator, appealing to the viewers in their own language: resembling a Roman *spolia*, extending the symbol of pilgrims and, above all, connecting the familiar urban environment with the biblical story.

Fig. 6. Flaminio Vacca & Pier Paolo Olivieri, *Joshua and the Gibeonites*, 1589-1590 (?), marble relief, the relief on the right side of the Acqua Felice Fountain, Rome. Photograph: ©Dafna Maharshak

Similar to the figure of the fountain goddess on the left, the incised figure of a wine-skin carrier at the bottom of the right relief draws the viewers' attention (Fig. 6). Next to him are a cow and a sheep, their heads lowered, emphasizing

that the figure is kneeling down in front of the actual water of the fountain. Like the fountain goddess on the other side who holds the pilgrim's seashell, the wine-skin carrier too alludes to the actual use of the water by both the historical figures behind him, and the people of the city who are using the fountain in front of him. He too functions as a mediator. In contrast to the goddess, however, the wine-skin carrier forms part of the relief's biblical narrative.

This male figure, wearing torn garments, carries a wine-skin on one shoulder, while struggling with the weight of a water container in his other hand. The heavy water container, the wine-skin he carries, and the worn garments, associate him first and foremost with the poor, with the weary of the road, the simple people who approach the Pope's fountain in need of both the actual and the spiritual water.

To the learned, however, this same image might convey a much more complex message. The wine-skin and the worn garments identify him as one of the Gibeonites who tried to trick the Israelites:

> However, when the people of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, they resorted to a ruse: They went as a delegation whose donkeys were loaded with worn-out sacks ... They put worn and patched sandals on their feet and wore old clothes. …Then they went to Joshua… and said to him and the Israelites, 'We have come from a distant country; make a treaty with us.' (Joshua, 9:3-7)

Accordingly, the central figure, whose helmet is engraved with an image of the sun, is recognized as Joshua. Joshua's gesture, pointing back to the stone tablet, indicates his attempt to prevent his men from slaughtering the Gibeonites after their trickery had been discovered, because of the pledge undertaken in the signed treaty between them. Their punishment was to become servants to Israel, and Joshua made them water-carriers and woodcutters:

> But Joshua made them that day cutters of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of the Lord, to this day, in the place that he should choose. (Joshua, 9:27)

The curse, however, was eventually turned into a blessing. Their duties placed them in the sanctuary of the Lord, with the opportunity of learning God's law and understanding the true religion, worship, and knowledge of God. The Gibeonites became an emblem and promise of the reception of the Gentiles into God's church:

> Now the first inhabitants that dwelt in their possessions in their cities were the Israelites, the priests, Levites, and the Nethinims [temple servants]. (1 Chronicles, 9:2)

The scene depicted on the right relief is therefore the story of Joshua and the Gibeonites. In the context of 16th-century historical and religious events, this story seems to convey a relevant metaphor for one of the most critical concerns of the Catholic Church: namely, loss of the faithful to the Protestant Reformation.

The story of the Gibeonites, whose transgression was forgiven and who were given the right to serve God, as written in the Book of Joshua, is a story and promise of reconciliation.

Accordingly, the Protestants are likewise invited to return to the true faith, and are promised that they will be accepted by the Church and by its leader the Pope. The true faith is a 'living water' which is promised even to those who have betrayed the alliance with God and become – as a consequence – slaves to their misdeeds.

The image of the Pope, or at least the image he wishes to advertise through this story, is that of a benevolent leader who provides the poor and weary with 'living water' and desires to lead and unite all the children of God and lead them to the true fountain.

Response and Action: The Ox and the Ass

The purpose of any communication is to create an understanding leading to appropriate responses or actions by the receiver. The message must seize the audience's attention and interest, evoke desire and, finally, spur them into action.[30] Thus, while in the advertising and marketing world the desired action is the actual purchase of a product, in the religious world of the Church the desired objective would be the 'purchase' so to speak, of ideas, which should then be responded to by a motivation "to reflect its image [i.e. the Triumph of Christ's ascension into heaven] in their lives and actions."[31] The desired action is, therefore, prayer, meditation, and the demonstration in one's life of the Church's direction and laws. In the *Acqua Felice* fountain the figures of the ox and ass which feature in the relief of Joshua manifest this principle. They facilitate the passersby - especially the pilgrims as the 'target audience' of this encoded symbol – to direct their minds to the spiritual journey even while walking the mundane streets of the city.

The instructions to the pilgrims to the seven churches and other holy places in Rome included that of perpetual prayer and meditation:

> In order for believers, when they visit the seven churches, not to waste their time, they should recite psalms, prayers, lamentations, supplications and the like […]. There are those who are able to walk and read at the same time that they are practicing meditation […] Others must through similar *exercises*, more adapted to their souls, reach unity with God.[32] (emphasis by the authors)

Meditation activities had been performed from Early Christianity on, but the term *exercises* may apply specifically to Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*

[30] Kotler, *Marketing Management*, 603, 604.

[31] Pius V, Pope, *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, trans. Rev. J. Donovan (Baltimore: Lucas Brothers, 1829), Art. 6, 57.

[32] Giovanni Severano, *Memorie sacre delle sette chiese di Roma e di altri luoghi, che si trovano per le strade di esse, parte seconda in cvi si tratta del modo di visitare dette chiese*, vol. 2, (Roma: Giacomo Mascardi, 1630), 184: "Perche i divoti qundo fanno questa visita delle sette Chiese, per occupar bene tutto'l tempo, solgiano per strada andar dicendo Salmi, Ossitii, Letanie, Corone. Rozrii, & alter simli Orationi vocali…le quali (ò alcune di esse) si potranno andar leggendo, meditando, e prticando per la via…secondo che parerà à chi vorrà servirsene: dovendo ciascuno, in simili eserciti, regolarsi da quello che è più propotionato, e consorme al suo spirit; e che più facilmente lo conduce ad unire con Dio."

(1522–1524).[33] Influenced by the *Meditations on the Life of Christ* (*Meditactiones vite Christi)*, a pseudo-Bonaventura text from the beginning of the 14th century, Loyola's *Exercises* encouraged believers to use whatever means that suited and helped them to become one with God.[34] These means and devices could include the visual images and sights that they encountered on their way.

The direction stated above, to meditate and contemplate God, was therefore also incumbent upon pilgrims when outside of the church, as they walked along in the city from one church to the next. In order to do so, they were advised to contemplate spiritual texts or other sources 'more adapted to their souls.'[35] In that sense, the fountains would have constituted way-stations for meditation, no less then they constituted way-stations for physical repose and refreshment.

On the *Acqua Felice* fountain, as on other fountains that were built under the patronage of popes, it is possible to discern liturgical motifs that would facilitate such contemplation. Some of them seem straightforward and obvious and others encoded.[36] At the center of the Joshua relief are the heads of an ox and an ass (Fig. 7). They are depicted as part of the narrative, forming part of the Gibeonites' livestock, as are the cow and the sheep lowering their heads to the water in the first plane. The ox and the ass are, however, also

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[33] Lawrence F. Hundersmarck, "The Use of Imagination, Emotion, and the Will in a Medieval Classic: The Medicationes Vite Christi," *Logos*, 6, 2 (2003): 46-49.
"The consummate example of this type of contemplation began with St. Francis, who received the stigmata and thereby became the "image and reflection of the life of Christ."

[34] Josef F. Conwell, *Impelling Spirit, Revisiting a Founding Experience: 1539 Ignatius of Loyola and his Companions, an Exploration into the Spirit and Aims of the Society of Jesus as Revealed in the Founders' Proposed Papal Letter Approving the Society* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1997), 158.

[35] See note 32 above.

[36] For example: liturgical motifs such as the cross at the fountain of *Acqua Paola* or the images of Mary and Jesus at the fountain in *Piazza di S. Maria Maggiore*, are examples of simple, straightforward symbols. Encoded messages can be discerned in the images of the bees in the *Fountain of the Bees*. They can be understood as the Pope's (Urban VIII) coat-of-arms, but also as a Marian symbol. see: Richard Dimler, "The Bee in the Jesuit Book: Themes and Contrast," in *The Emblem in Renaissance and Baroque Europe Tradition and Variety, Selected Papers of the Glasgow International Emblem Conference 13-17 August, 1990*, ed. Alison Adams et al. (Leiden, New York, Koln: e.J. Brill, 1992), 235. Another example is the boat shape of the fountain *Barcaccia* at the foot of the Spanish Stairs. The boat has several meanings, one of them being the 'ship of the church'.

immediately associated with the Nativity scene in which, following a long visual and textual tradition, they are most commonly integrated.[37]

Fig. 7. Flaminio Vacca and Pier Paolo Olivier, *The Wine-Skin Carrier with the Ox and the Ass* (detail from Fig. 6) Photograph: ©Dafna Maharshak

[37] This image of the ass and the ox is not mentioned in the Gospels. The first surviving source referring to them in connection with the birth of Christ is the thirteenth homily on the Gospel of St. Luke by Origen (c. 239 to 242 A.D), who states that the manger in which Christ was laid "was that very one, which the prophet foretold, saying, 'The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's manger.' " (Isaiah, 1:3) The ox and the ass are mentioned thereafter in the *Golden Legend* (*Legenda aurea*, 1265), according to which Joseph arranged the manger for his ox and ass that had come with them from Nazareth (the ass carried Mary on their way to Bethlehem and the ox was meant to be sold). The ox and the ass were witnesses to the birth; miraculously, they recognize God, bend their knee and pay homage. See: Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend, Readings on the Saints*, vol. 1, trans. William Granger Ryan, (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1993), 38, 41.

The traditional explanation and meaning of the two animals within the Nativity scene was from the prophecy of Isaiah: 'The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib' (Isaiah, 1:3). A complementary description of the Nativity, which includes further explanation and meaning of the two animals' presence, is offered by the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, which introduces a narrative expansion of the Scriptures. Aimed to guide the readers in their meditation, and in order to awaken their feelings and identification with Jesus, the book offers a clear picture in which the ox and the ass take part in the caring for the infant. The text describes how the ox and the ass knelt near the infant and through their breath, which flowed in perfect harmony, warmed the newborn child.[38] Following these traditions, the image of an ox and ass became part of most visual representations of the Nativity from Early Christian art to Renaissance and Baroque art.

The role and function of the ox and the ass on the fountain's relief is therefore one of *similarity of meaning*. Despite their being presented 'out of context' and not in relation to the birth of Christ, they nevertheless make an immediate, intuitive, and unmistakable reference to it, motivating the passersby to connect them to the familiar and well-established mental image to which they belong. The question, nevertheless, is whether there is a particular reason or explanation for the inclusion of this specific motif? Or, in other words, why did the sender – i.e. the Pope – want to evoke the association and meditation on the Nativity scene here; and, what if any is its connotation to the fountain?

In order to answer these questions, it is important to consider the fountain's location on the pilgrim route from the Porta Pia road to Santa Maria Maggiore, where the relic of the manger is located (Fig. 1).[39] The detail of the

[38] Iohanis de Caulibus, *Meditactiones vite Christi olim S. Bonaventurae* (M. Stallings-Taney, ed., Corpus Christianorum, CLIII, Tenholti, Brepols, 1997), VII, lines 34-37; Allan F. Westphall, "The Passion in English: Meditations on the Life of Christ in Michigan State University Library MS 1," *Neophilologus,* 97 (2013): 200. Accessed August 28, 2014. DOI 10.1007/s11061-012-9304-6.

[39] Giralomo Franzini, *Le cose maravigliose dell'alma citta di Roma, anfiteatro del mondo. con le chiese et antichita,* (Roma: Andrea Fei and Antonio Faccheti, MDC), 19: *"Il Presepio nel quale giacque Christo in Bethleem.*"

ox and ass connects the fountain with the manger relic and, thus, specifically targets the pilgrim audience.

There can be no doubt that both the patron (the sender) and the artists (the encoders) were conscious of this connection, and that the inclusion of the ox and ass was thus most probably deliberately intended for the pilgrim audience. Pope Sixtus V renovated the basilica's *Chapel of the Nativity* (*Capella del Presepio)* and promoted its importance and appeal for pilgrimage by promising an indulgence. A contemporary Guide to Rome declares that everyone who visits the *Chapel of the Nativity* will be rewarded by saving one soul from purgatory.[40] The artists Flaminio Vacca (1538-1605) and Pier Paolo Olivieri (1551-1599), who produced the fountain's reliefs, were also those who sculpted the holy figures in the *Chapel of the Nativity*.[41]

The pilgrims, walking down the Porta Pia road, thus receive an 'invitation' or a reminder to visit the chapel and to prepare themselves for the visit by meditating upon the scene of the Nativity. In much the same way that modern 'location-based advertising' or 'direct marketing' does, the fountain thus addresses a specific target audience by inserting something that is of interest to them: a 'meditation device' that is relevant and useful in this precise location, while at the same time preparing (or advertising if you will) them for their next station.

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[40] Franzini, *Le cose maravigliose*… 19.
"*..e chi celebrarà ò farà celebrare nella capella del Presepio con tanta maesta e splendore edificata novamente da sisto vliberarà un anima dale pene del Purgatorio.*"

[41] Arnolfo di Cambio, *Crèche* (Presepio, Representation of Nativity), 1290-1292, Marble, Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome. Paolo Olivieri recreated the nativity scene from that created by Arnolfo di Cambio (1240-1310) in the latter part of the 13th century in the crypt of the basilica. Steven F. Ostrow, *Art and Spirituality in Counter-Reformation Rome, the Sistine and Pauline Chapels in S. Maria Maggiore* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), 23, 57; Maurizi Galletti, ed., *The Basilica of St. Mary Major, Faith and Sacred Space*, (Rome: Sangiorgioeditrice, 2010), 167.

Conclusions

Modern advertising research suggests that for a billboard to be effective,

> It must communicate a relevant message in a clear, interesting, and readable manner to the appropriate audience. It must also be at an appropriate location in order to be seen by the target audience.[42]

The *Acqua Felice* fountain, if measured by these criteria, could have won modern appreciation, at least as far as its design and intentions went. It had everything needed for success: a perfect location on one of Rome's main roads, which was a pilgrimage road leading from the city gate to one of the 'must visit' seven pilgrimage churches of Rome. Moreover, by its very nature of being a water fountain, it had its 'captive audience': the abundant water streaming out of the fountain attracted the weary pilgrims in particular, but also the townsfolk.

Both visitors and locals were thereby exposed to the communication channel offered by the fountain, and both visitors and locals could comprehend the clear message of the Church's strength, of victory and of truth. This was done by using a clear and simple visual means taken from the cultural and visual world of the target audience. Visual images such as the triumphal arch as a sign of victory, for example, belong to that 'area where the experience of the two people is sufficiently similar that they can share the same signs efficiently.'[43]

Following the viewing order and position, from the *picture* of the triumphal arch which can be seen from afar, to the *headline* of the colossal statue of Moses, and finally the *text* of the two reliefs which can be contemplated only upon a closer look, has permitted us to observe in greater depth the interactive relationship between the fountain's location, its images, and the audience. Thus, for example, the allegorical figure of the fountain goddess is understandable only as part of this relationship when identified as a mediator

[42] Charles R. Taylor, George R. Franke and Hae-Kyong Bang, "Use and Effectiveness of Billboards: Perspectives from Selective-Perception Theory and Retail-Gravity Models," *Journal of Advertising* (2006, 35:4),- 24 [21-34].

[43] Schramm, "The Nature of Communication," 31.

and designed as a 'fake *spolia*' in order to attract the viewer's attention while drawing water, resting, or standing for a moment before reengaging with the city's hubbub.

Consideration of the fountain's spatial position and the principle of the similarity of meanings of the figures of the ox and the ass, further enabled us to detect a specific message directed, much as modern 'direct marketing' does, to a specific target audience in a specific place. The insertion of the ox and the ass was thus aimed to motivate pilgrims to respond with meditation and by visiting the newly renovated Chapel of the Nativity further down the road in Santa Maria Maggiore.

The message which the sender, Pope Sixtus V, and the artists encoded in this monument is indeed 'clear, interesting, and readable […] to the appropriate audience':[44] it advertises the victorious Catholic Church and the Pope in the image of Moses (as the *Alter Moses*) as a modern *triumphator.*

The very image of the *triumphator*, however, is the fountain's downfall. The colossal statue of Moses was already ridiculed in its own time and the entire fountain is – according to the contemporaneous *pasquinata* 'no longer so' beautiful because of it.[45] In modern communication theory this kind of distraction is called *noise* and it is usually defined as 'anything in the communication channel which the sender did not intentionally put there.'[46]

The colossal statue of Moses became more than a minor unfortunate distraction. It caused the loss of the entire message. Instead of celebrating the idea of triumph, of dignity, and of the sacred mission of the true Church and the Pope, all that people could see was 'that monster above'.[47] The carefully encoded message was miscarried; and the Moses fountain became the fountain of 'Il Mosè ridicolo' - the ridiculous Moses.

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[44] See note 42
[45] See note 22
[46] Schramm, "The Nature of Communication," 26.
[47] See note 22