Habsburg Mythology and the Waldstein Palace in Prague

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In the 1620s Albrecht of Waldstein wholly identified himself with the Holy Roman Empire.[1] Nevertheless, allusions to his personage have allegedly been found and are still predominantly being sought in the decoration of his palace in Prague (1621–30), Czech Republic.[2] The most famous example is the Mars of Baccio Bianco in the Great Hall, which is traditionally interpreted as a crypto-portrait of Albrecht von Waldstein in spite of the fact that archival documents do not corroborate this identification. In his autobiographical letter of 1654, Baccio Bianco wrote: 'The Great Hall was already finished […].His Excellence ordered me to paint something on the ceiling. The hall was already decorated with arms and trophies in stucco. Pieroni proposed that I paint the chariot of Mars. I have made a drawing and its form was well received.'[3] The formulation of Baccio Bianco's report implies that a martial theme was allocated to the Great Hall from the beginning and that the iconography of the ceiling painting was proposed by architect Giovanni Battista Pieroni. Waldstein is not mentioned anywhere.

In all the scholarly books and guides the ceiling painting in the Great Hall of Waldstein's Palace in Prague is interpreted as a crypto-portrait of Waldstein (fig. 1). Why? Baccio Bianco's Mars has a full beard, while Waldstein was always portrayed with a carefully trimmed goatee. Mars' face has the same physiognomic features as all the other men Baccio Bianco painted on the walls of Waldstein Palace and there is nothing in this representation which enables us to connect it with Albrecht von Waldstein. The attributes of Mars, the star above his head and the sign of the planet on the shield, point exclusively to the planetary divinity. Moreover, he is represented exactly like the Mars in the Sala Terrena of Waldstein Palace, who could not possibly be Waldstein. So, why Waldstein?

Fig. 1 Mars in the Great Hall

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The answer must be sought in Albrecht von Waldstein's status in Central European historical consciousness. After the duke had been assassinated on 25 February 1634, as early as March of that year a very influential book appeared in Prague which summed up the main arguments of imperial propaganda, which still influence our perception of this man. The Latin title of this unsigned pamphlet, written by a certain Albert von Kurtz, may be translated as follows: 'Havoc of Disloyalty of Albrecht of Friedland or the Hell of an Ungrateful Soul.'[4] According to this pamphlet, the Duke of Friedland wanted to become king of Bohemia and organized an uprising with the aim of seizing the Czech lands, which were the hereditary property of the Habsburgs. In the subsequent centuries, a positive evaluation of Waldstein prevailed because of his 'anti-imperial attitude'. Especially in Germany and Bohemia, this was taken for granted and he was sometimes even portrayed as a pioneer of the resistance to Rome and the Habsburgs.

Although the Czech language and nationhood were revived in the nineteenth century, the Czechs could not separate themselves politically from the Habsburg empire. At least, however, they could systematically cut the Habsburgs out of the cultural history of their land. Special care was taken to weaken the Habsburg presence in Prague's historical monuments. While nobody at that time was interested in the imperial themes in the decoration of the Waldstein Palace, any link with its creator would, on the contrary, be most welcome. An 1848 edition of a guide to Prague contains the following passage about Waldstein's palace:

> After great and famous victories by which he conquered for the Emperor the whole of northern Germany he fell into imperial disgrace and built it as his residence. Here he set up a court so magnificent that it equalled even that of the Emperor […]. [In the Great Hall] he had himself portrayed on a ceiling as a victor on a two-wheel chariot drawn by four horses, with a star above his head, which is decorated with a laurel.[5]

Needless to say, there is no laurel painted on Mars' head.

In the twentieth century, when art historians started to analyse the depiction of Mars on the ceiling of the Great Hall, its identification with Waldstein was so firmly established that it occurred to no one to search for its roots. The most striking feature of Waldstein's Prague palace is not what it reveals, but what it hides. What we miss on the façade and in the palace interior is any direct reference to its builder. Neither on the palace façade nor in its interior is there anything which could be connected directly with Albrecht Wenzel Eusebius of Waldstein, Duke of Friedland and Mecklenburg, Generalissimo of the Imperial Army, Admiral of the North and Baltic Seas, and Supreme Commander of Prague. The Waldstein Palace in Prague is one of the biggest aristocratic residences, but its builder is absent from its decoration. Whom and what does it then celebrate?

Ferdinand II

In the seventeenth century the first room that visitors reached was the Great Hall, where they waited before they were received. The hall was colossal, not so much to accommodate waiting visitors, but above all to show off Waldstein's large bodyguard lined up along the walls. We begin the inspection

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of the Great Hall at the original entrance, which is opposite the present one. On the northern side of the hall there are two doors, but the one near the windows facing the street is a sham (fig. 2).

Fig. 2 The northern wall of the Great Hall, with the original entrance on the right

Waldstein's guests entered through the eastern door. They were welcomed in the Great Hall not only by the duke's guard lining the walls and Mars on the ceiling but also by stucco genii with outstretched wings looking down on them from under the ceiling, executed by Santino Galli in 1623. These snow-white guards were the opposite in every respect to the duke's guardsmen in full armour. The genii are naked and hold the gilded symbols of a peaceful reign in their hands—palm branches, laurel wreaths and crowns (fig. 3).

Fig. 3 Genii with a wreath, a palm leaf, a crown, and a crown with inserted palm leaves

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To the left of the original entrance a genius stands to introduce this heavenly guard to Waldstein's visitors (fig. 3, far right). Over the heads of all who enter the Great Hall he raises a symbol consisting of a crown in which two palm leaves are inserted. In Waldstein's time everybody knew this symbol because it was the personal emblem of the Holy Roman Emperor, Ferdinand II, who used this emblem together with the motto LEGITIME CERTANTIBUS ('To those who who fight with honour'), which reveals the meaning of the combination of crown and palm leaves, symbols of victory (fig. 4).[6] Amongst the items on which Ferdinand II represented himself with this emblem is a medal minted to commemorate the Battle of the White Mountain of 20 November 1620, in which the army of the Czech Estates was defeated.

Fig. 4 Emblem of Ferdinand II in Jacob Typotius, *Symbola divina et humana* (Prague, 1601), fig. 106

In the Great Hall the heavenly guard has its leader is represented in the important place in the middle of the south wall. In his right hand he holds the laurel wreath and with his left hand he ceremoniously raises the marshal's baton to stress that peace is victorious. On either side he has adjutants with palm branches: the genius on his left points to his heart, while the genius on his right points upwards to the ceiling fresco of Baccio Bianco, which is the culmination of the hall's rich decoration (fig. 5). In a reading that is both unsubstantiated and improbable, the Czech patriotic myth sees Waldstein in the figure of Mars on this ceiling fresco. A far more serious candidate is the genius holding a marshal's baton, who might really be Albrecht von Waldstein's *alter ego*. This genius leads the heavenly mission, which is explicitly defined as the mission of Emperor Ferdinand II. The horror of war, which the ceiling with Mars has evoked, is thus averted and the walls of the Great Hall of Waldstein's palace acquire a symbolic dimension. It has become an impenetrable barrier to war, a guarantee of eternal peace.

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Fig. 5 Genii on the south wall, the middle one holding aloft the marshal's baton

War Defeated

The ceiling fresco of the Great Hall represents Mars in armour on a war chariot, heading into battle together with his companions (fig. 1). This subject was inspired by the function of this hall, in which Waldstein paraded his guard. In Germany this type of hall was known as a '*Trabantensaal*' ('hall of companions'). The most famous analogy for Waldstein's Great Hall is the Hall of Mars in the Palace of Versailles, named after the ceiling painting of 1672 by Claude II Audran. The Hall of Mars was originally reserved for the guard, which was announced by the ceiling painting representing Mars riding in the sky in a chariot drawn by wolves.

In the Waldstein Palace, Mars is clearly identified by the star over his head and the sign of the planet on his shield. Raised in his hand is a lethal weapon, the spiked mace. It is Mars, but he is not represented here as the Olympian deity. While in ancient mythology Mars always fights alone or with other Olympians, Baccio Bianco represented Mars at the head of an army dressed and armed like soldiers of Waldstein's time. This Mars is clearly a personification of War. The true nature of Mars' army on the ceiling of the Great Hall of the Waldstein Palace is revealed in a similar representation painted by Antonio Bellucci for the Liechtenstein Palace in Vienna between 1697 and 1704.[7] In this ceiling painting we also see Mars in his chariot as he rides through the clouds into battle. The god is as dignified as his Prague counterpart, perhaps even more so, because he is represented *all'antica*. But Mars' companions in Vienna are ugly, naked savages who aggressively urge their lord to demonstrate his full destructive powers. This painting also features the spiked mace but we do not see it in Mars' hand: instead, a naked Turk-like barbarian raises it in his right hand, while pushing Mars forward with his left hand.

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Fig. 6 Antonio Bellucci, Mars, 1697–1704, Liechtenstein Palace in Vienna

Mars in the Great Hall of Waldstein's palace personifies War, which dominates the ceiling decoration. The central panel with the chariot of the god of War is flanked by panels with painted trophies, which reappear in the stucco reliefs on the perimeter of the ceiling. The Great Hall is not, however, a temple of Mars: its walls are not in the Doric order, as it would befit the god of War, but are Ionic in style. Genii with symbols of peace and just rule are standing on fragments of Ionic entablature supported by Ionic pilasters. If we completed the entablature in our imagination, we could be standing inside an Ionic temple, a temple of peace and prosperity, in which the demon of war is forever imprisoned.

The Imperial Dynasty

According to the inventory of the palace furnishings drawn up straight after Waldstein's death (1634) there were no portraits of him or of members of his family.[8] Instead, the palace was full of portraits of members of the Habsburg imperial dynasty. The most important portraits were in the south wing, which contained an enfilade of three rooms. Through the Great Hall the visitors entered the Knights' Hall, where Waldstein received collective audiences. This was separated by the Antechamber from the Audience Hall, where the duke received only the most important visitors.[9] In the Knights' Hall there were portraits of Emperor Ferdinand II and his wife, and in the Antechamber portraits of Ferdinand III and his wife. These were full-length, life-size representations, which was the most official type of portraiture. The Habsburg portraits were complemented by a series of twelve portraits of ancient Roman emperors.[10] The gallery of portraits which originally decorated the Knights' Hall and Antechamber was meant to emphasize the continuity between the ancient Roman Empire and its successor, the Holy Roman Empire, which was at that time firmly in Habsburg hands.

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Consequently this double portrait gallery clearly highlighted the dynastic idea. Just as in ancient Rome rule passed from one Emperor to the next, in the Habsburg family it passed from father to son.

The decorative schemes of the individual rooms in Waldstein's palace were interlinked. While in the Great Hall Waldstein's visitors were confronted with the personification of War, in the following two rooms they were assured that the imperial dynasty would not allow the fury of war to reign forever. The opposite number of the Triumph of War on the ceiling of the Great Hall is the Golden Age, a key element in the Habsburg imperial propaganda, which was explicitly celebrated in the Audience Hall.

The Golden Age

The Audience Hall was richly decorated with a wall painting which Baccio Bianco created between 1623 and 1624. Depicted on the ceiling is the visit of Venus to the workshop of her husband Vulcan, who is preparing new armour for her son Aeneas (fig. 7). The Audience Hall was the heart of Waldstein's palace and its ceiling fresco was the key representation and emblem of the whole residence. Thanks to Vulcan's armour, Aeneas became lord of Italy and founded the Iulian dynasty, from which not only the ancient Roman emperors but also their Habsburg successors derived their origins. Vergil's *Aeneid* contains two prophecies on which Habsburg imperial mythology was founded. When Venus confides in Jupiter about her fears for Aeneas, the supreme god calms her by predicting not only her son's victory but the glorious future of his kin as well: 'Then shall Caesar be born, the Trojan from the noble family, whose empire shall reach to the sea and reputation to the stars.'[11] In the prophecy predicting the coming of the Golden Age under imperial rule, Anchises speaks as follows to his son visiting him in the underworld: 'There he is, there the promised man, as you often heard, Augustus Caesar himself, the Divine son who shall usher in the Golden Age for us in Latium once again.'[12]

Fig. 7 Vulcan in his workshop with Venus and Amor

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In the Audience Hall the coming of the Golden Age is celebrated by two sets of four paintings. Depicted on the vault is the succession of the ages, culminating in the Golden Age, while the paintings on the wall celebrated the ruler's virtues that are its precondition. The 'historical' series decorates the vault, counter-clockwise. Beginning on the right of the entrance door, we see the Gigantomachy (the battle of the Olympian gods with the Giants), the Iron Age, the Silver Age, and the Golden Age (fig. 7). This reversal of the ages was prophesied in Vergil's famous Fourth Eclogue: 'The great line of the centuries begins anew […] a new generation descends from heaven on high […] The iron brood shall at last cease and a golden race spring up throughout the world!'[13] The succession of the ages was known above all from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The illustrations of 1610 for this work by Antonio Tempesta provided the models for the paintings.[14] The starting point of the Audience Hall decoration is the Gigantomachy, which is depicted to the left of the entrance door on the north wall. It is placed directly above the fireplace, the flames of which thus completed the depiction of the Giants attacking Olympus.

Fig. 8 Gigantomachy, Iron Age, Silver Age, and Golden Age

In the painting the Giants are characterized by their huge size, nakedness and long hair. While in the foreground they are lifting rocks, in the background they are attacking heaven with branches. The Olympian gods are defending themselves from behind the clouds; Jupiter, in the middle, has a bolt of lightning, as Ovid describes him in *Metamorphoses*: 'Rendering the heights of heaven no safer than the earth, they say the giants attempted to take the Celestial kingdom, piling mountains up to the distant stars. Then the all-powerful father of the gods hurled his bolt of lightning.'[15] The basic difference between Gigantomachy and Titanomachy was that in the latter case Jupiter opened up his route to power by overcoming the Titans, while in the former case it was the Giants who rose up against Jupiter. Consequently, the defeat of the Giants could be presented as a preview of later victories over other insurgents.

In Habsburg iconography the Gigantomachy was a standard allusion to the dynasty's opponents. The greatest internal enemies of Ferdinand II were the rebellious Bohemian Estates. After the Austrian and Hungarian Estates had joined their revolt, the Czech uprising practically brought the Habsburg empire to the point of dissolution. The defeat of the Czech Estates was therefore the greatest victory of Ferdinand II, and was appropriately immortalized in art. In 1622 Ferdinand II celebrated the victory over the Bohemian Estates and their Winter King Frederick with a

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medal containing his portrait and the Gigantomachy on the reverse.[16] On top there is Justice and Jupiter, the *alter ego* of Ferdinand II, who is casting down the Giants with his bolt of lightning. In the prominent position of bottom centre we see a crushed Giant with Frederick's attributes. He is lying on his back, with his hands helplessly outstretched. Holding a sceptre in his left hand, with his right hand he tries in vain to prevent the crown from falling off his head. The depiction is accompanied by Ferdinand's motto: 'LEGITIME CERTANTIBUS'.

Since the Bohemian rebellion took place only a few years before the Waldstein Palace was erected, it would be surprising not to find an echo of the rebellion's suppression in its decoration. When we enter the Audience Hall we have the representation of the Gigantomachy on our left and our right that of the Iron Age, about which Ovid writes in the *Metamorphoses:* 'And now harmful iron appeared, and gold more harmful than iron. War came, whose struggles employ both, waving clashing arms with bloodstained hands. They lived on plunder.'[17] In the foreground of the painting an armoured rider attacks a soldier who is lying down and trying in vain to defend himself with a shield. In the background, soldiers capture a walled city to plunder it.

The prophecy of the coming of the Golden Age was the theme of the two paintings on the opposite side of the vault. When we proceed in a counter-clockwise direction, universal peace does not come until the Silver Age. While it is the age of universal peace, alluded to by a woman who sits with a child on her lap, it is also the age of hard work, symbolized by men with shovels and bags over their shoulders, a man ploughing the field with a pair of oxen, and men digging a patch of ground. Finally, the Silver Age will be followed by the coveted Golden Age, when human beings will have no enemies, as is suggested by a wild animal peacefully walking past the men. It will be a blessed age in which everybody will have everything without working; all they will have to do is to pick the fruit from the trees. This terrestrial paradise is illustrated by naked people relaxing and happy children immersed in play. The painting is located right next to the garden window. In the same way as the flames of the fireplace enhanced the horror of the Gigantomachy, the rustle of leaves, the gurgling of fountains and bird song enliven the representation of the eternal peace and universal bliss of the Golden Age.

In the lunettes of the Audience Hall we find four personifications. In the west, placed in an important position above the entrance doors, is Glory (fig. 9, left), represented by a bare-breasted woman with a cornucopia, the symbol of fertility and plenty, in her left hand. She looks upwards and has a burst of rays around her head; in her raised right hand she holds a golden figure, a symbol of victory. On the north wall, next to the Golden Age, Victory is bringing peace (fig. 9, right). This is a young woman flying through the air; in her right hand she holds a laurel wreath and in her left hand a palm leaf. With her right foot she treads on a heap of arms and armour. Below her there is another symbol of war, a burned-out city. The painter represented Victory in a yellow blouse and white dress, a symbol of victory untainted by any guilt.

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Fig. 9 Glory and Victory

To the right of the entrance doors on the south-west wall, Fame, with huge coloured wings, is holding a trumpet in her raised right hand. She is dressed in a light robe hitched up to mid-calf so that she is able to run quickly (fig. 10, left). When we proceed in a counter-clockwise direction, we find Eternity, a woman sitting on a dark cloud, with her left hand resting on a crescent moon and her right hand pointing to the sun (fig. 10, right).

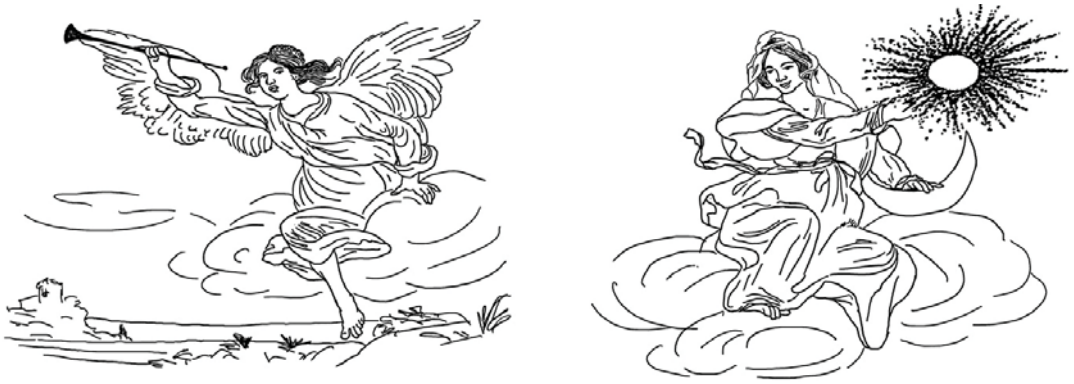

Fig. 10 Fame and Eternity

Two panels with putti connect the wall paintings with the ceiling fresco representing Vulcan making armour for Aeneas at Venus' request. Between the allegory of Eternity and Fame, there is a putto with a bolt of lightning and Amor's bow, symbols of Jupiter's and Venus' patronage of Aeneas (fig. 11, left). The putto on the opposite wall, with a quiver on his back and holding the helmet of Aeneas, has a similar meaning (fig. 11, right). These personifications did not have a general meaning: they specifically celebrated the fame of victory and the eternal glory of the Holy Roman Emperors as the descendants of Aeneas.

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Fig. 11 Putto with bolt of lightning and bow and putto with Aeneas' helmet

Ancestors of the Habsburg Dynasty

The Audience Hall is connected with Waldstein's private apartment by means of a gallery featuring a ceiling decorated with a cycle of sixteen wall paintings illustrating Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Baccio Bianco painted them between 1623 and 1624, using as models Antonio Tempesta's illustrations of the *Metamorphoses* published in 1610.[18] As his models for some scenes he also used older illustrations of *Virgil Solis* of 1563.[19] The succession of scenes closely follows the literary work. The beginning of the world, with which Ovid started his poem, is represented at the door to the Audience Hall. Through scenes arranged in analogous or contrasting pairs, the wall paintings in the Lower Gallery sum up the history of the universe. In the seventh field there are two tragic descents, Pluto carrying Proserpina to Hades and, on the opposite side, Icarus falling from heaven. This pair makes a dramatic contrast with the pair in the last field, which flank the doors to Waldstein's study. In the last field, we find the apotheoses of Aeneas and Romulus (fig. 12).

Fig. 12 The deifications of Aeneas and Romulus

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Although the Lower Gallery is known in the modern literature as the Mythological Gallery, the main function of the strange tales from the mythical past which decorate its ceiling was to prepare the ground for the key scenes flanking the doors of the Duke's study. The apotheosis of Aeneas, who is assisted by his mother Venus (fig. 12, left), and the apotheosis of Romulus, whom his father Mars drives to heaven (fig. 12, right), represented not only a mythical past but above all the promise of a splendid future. Aeneas and Romulus were not only mythical heroes, but also ancestors of the ruling dynasty, which was what was being celebrated.

The decoration of the Upper Gallery corroborates our reading of the Lower Gallery. The east wing of the palace of Albrecht von Waldstein contains two galleries, the one above the other. The Upper Gallery connected the bedrooms of Waldstein's wife and the room which was probably destined at the outset to be the children's bedroom. The ceiling paintings by Baccio Bianco from 1623–24 that decorate the gallery do not have the intimate character we might expect. On the contrary, they are dominated by the celebration of the imperial house, as if it was a public space.

The Habsburg world rule is alluded to with a series of representations of the four continents on the east wall, variations on models in the *Iconology* of Cesare Ripa, the illustrated edition of which was first published in 1603.[20] The painting on the ceiling glorifies the cosmic dimension of the Holy Roman Empire with personifications of the seven planets, which are accompanied on both sides by the relevant signs of the Zodiac. On the northern side, the series begins with the Moon, followed by Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. The planets are arranged in the traditional manner, in the order in which they supposedly orbited the earth.

The modern name for the Upper Gallery, 'Astrological Gallery', is misleading. There is no depiction of a specific constellation of planets in it, nor is there even the slightest hint at astrology, only the traditional Christian reading of the stars, that is, as a link between Earth and the upper Heaven, the abode of God. After Saturn, the eighth and highest sphere, follows the wall behind which the bedroom of Waldstein's daughter was situated. The wall is decorated with two superimposed personifications flanked by symbols, exactly as on the northern side. But whereas on the northern side plenty and public well-being are celebrated in general terms, the southern wall bears an allusion to the ruling dynasty (fig. 13).

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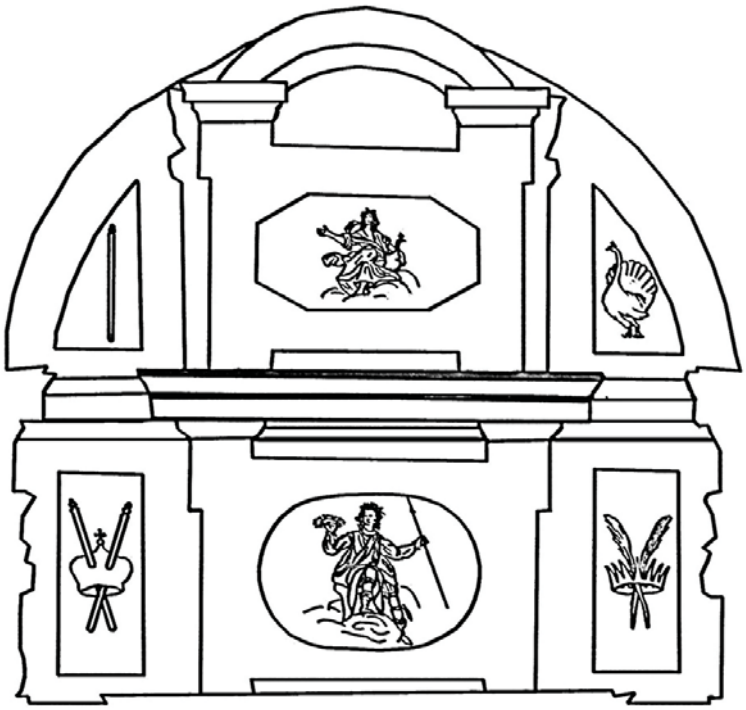

Fig. 13 Allegory of the wise rule of Ferdinand II on the southern wall of Upper Gallery

On the southern wall we find a crowned woman with a peacock, the attribute of the goddess Juno, while on the left there is a sceptre and on the right a peacock. The Junoesque figure is a personification of Virtue: as a peacock shines with its own feathers, so Virtue shines with its own light. Below the woman with a peacock there is a young man with a wreath and spear in his hand, symbols of victory and of rule. On the left are two sceptres inserted into an imperial crown, on the right two palm leaves inserted into a crown with spikes. This was the personal emblem of Emperor Ferdinand II, which we have already encountered in the Great Hall. The young man with a wreath thus celebrates victorious rule, which is explicitly specified as the rule of Ferdinand II.

Aeneas' Victory

The construction of the Waldstein Palace is a chronicle of its builder's career in the Holy Roman Empire. The Duke started to create it in 1621 when he was appointed as the Supreme Commander of Prague, and the main building of the palace was constructed and decorated before 1625, when he was appointed Generalissimo of the Imperial Army. After having become a Prince of the Holy Roman Empire in 1624, Waldstein was made Duke of Friedland in 1627 and a year later Duke of Mecklenburg, which were all very prestigious titles indeed. This triumphant entry into the elite of European aristocracy brought with it considerably higher requirements, which Waldstein rose to meet with his Prague residence. This upgrade is evident above all in the conception of the garden, in the truly imperial Sala Terrena, and in the monumental fountain decorated with bronze sculptures. With these features Waldstein surpassed everything he had so far created in his Prague residence.

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The most ambitious part of the architecture of the Waldstein Palace is no doubt the impressive Sala Terrena, which is the rightly famous masterpiece of Giovanni Battista Pieroni. It is no ordinary garden building but, rather, an architectonic and conceptual dominant of the whole palace complex, as is emphasized by its gigantic size, sumptuous decoration, and the way it detaches itself from the garden. The imperial nature of the Sala Terrena is reflected in its rich decoration. Although the niches in the walls are now empty, the painted decoration has survived. The Sala is decorated with twenty four paintings and ten small panels from 1628–29 in which a painter from the workshop of Baccio Bianco celebrated the Trojan hero Aeneas. The sequence of paintings begins with the Sacrifice of Polyxena on the northern wall, behind which was situated the Audience Hall.[21] As a model, the painter used the Antonio Tempesta illustration for Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[22]

On the southern side of the Sala Terrena there is a scene with Neptune raising his trident to calm a sea storm. This composition is known as '*Quos ego'*, after the verse from the *Aeneid* in which Neptune rebukes the disobedient elements.[23] This oft-imitated type of Neptune was created by Raphael and owes its enormous popularity to Marcantonio Raimondi's engraving of 1515–16.[24] In the Sala Terrena the painting celebrated the end of Aeneas' wanderings, while the painting on the opposite side evoked its beginning. With the death of Polyxena the Trojan War was definitively ended and Aeneas began the distressful wanderings that only ended thanks to Neptune's intervention, making possible the successful landing of Aeneas' army in Italy.

In the interpretation of the paintings in the Sala Terrena, visitors are guided by the plaster genii incorporated into the architectural decoration of the walls. While the genii at the sides of Polyxena are turning away from the tragic scene, on the opposite wall the genii are rejoicing in Neptune's timely intervention. The genius on the right is triumphantly pointing to the stormy heavens which the god of the oceans has tamed. The genius sitting beneath the image of *pius Aeneas* on the western wall is the only one in the Sala Terrena who is also looking at a painting as well as pointing to it. By doing this he is advising visitors to start their inspection of the paintings at that very point. In three lunettes on the western wall of the Sala Terrena there are paintings featuring Aeneas as the main hero. On the left, in the southern lunette, we find the well-known pictorial type of *pius Aeneas*, in which the hero, accompanied by Iulus, is seen carrying his father Anchises from burning Troy.[25] The painter followed Antonio Tempesta's illustration for Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[26]

Fig. 14 *Pius Aeneas*

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Fig. 15 Genius sitting beneath the painting of *pius Aeneas*

The series continues on the opposite, northern side of the western wall with the Trojan attack on Laurentum, the capital city of the Latins defended by Camilla, whom we see on horseback in the left corner, the rider in front of her being Aeneas (fig. 16). When the capital of the Latins was besieged, Aeneas set off on a dangerous journey through a mountain pass in order to attack Laurentum from its undefended side. Turnus discovered his plan and lay in ambush there to kill him. However, when Turnus learned that Camilla had fallen, he had to return to the defence of Laurentum and Aeneas was able to reach the Laurentum battlefield safely and win the war. The painter's inspiration was an illustration of Aeneas' epic published for the first time in 1559, in which the main events of the eleventh book were summed up. In the accompanying text we read: 'Aeneas arrives at the enemy city. Everybody starts to fight, the Trojans start to prevail, and Camilla was also killed.'[27]

Fig. 16 Camilla (left) and Aeneas (centre)

The illustration of the *Aeneid* culminates in the middle lunette depicting the closing scene of the whole epic, Aeneas' hesitation before his deadly blow (fig. 17). When Turnus was defeated, he

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begged Aeneas to spare his life, and the hero hesitated. Fierce in his arms, Aeneas stood with rolling eyes, and stayed his hand; and now more and more, as he paused, these words began to sway him.[28] The duel of Aeneas and Turnus, together with the depiction of *pius Aeneas*, was the most oft-illustrated scene of the whole *Aeneid*.[29]

Fig. 17 The duel of Aeneas and Turnus

On the vault of the Sala Terrena, between the lunettes and arches of the arcades, are eight figures from ancient myths accompanied by inscriptions. The choice and placement of these heroes and heroines is coherent. They are divided into three groups: the Greeks besieging Troy, the Trojans defending their city, and the Trojans and their enemies in Italy. The duel between Aeneas and Turnus in the central lunette is flanked by the related figures of Aeneas and Pallas, an obvious choice because Pallas was killed by Turnus and his death was avenged by Aeneas. Depicted on the opposite side of the Sala Terrena are Turnus and Camilla, the main opponents of the Trojans in Italy. As is to be expected, Turnus is facing his adversary Aeneas. The quartet of protagonists from Vergil's *Aeneid* represented in the middle of the Sala Terrena is flanked by the heroes of the Trojan War represented in all four corners. On the northern side are depicted two defenders of Troy, Hector and Penthesilea, Hector thus being placed next to his sister Polyxena, whose sacrifice is represented on the northern wall. On the southern side are two protagonists of the Greek invasion army, Achilles and Odysseus with the statuette of Minerva that he stole from Troy.

The Sala Terrena decoration culminates in its ceiling, where there are three panels with Olympian gods the arrangement of which is closely linked to the depictions on the vault and in the lunettes. The middle panel shows Jupiter, who is flanked by Juno, Aeneas' main divine opponent , and Venus, his main protector (fig. 18). On the southern ceiling panel, above two Greek protagonists of the Trojan War, Odysseus and Achilles, we see an assembly of gods who sided with the Greeks: Minerva, Juno, Neptune, Vulcan and Mercury. On the left there is a small panel with the emblem of the main supporters of the Greeks, Juno's peacock; on the right is Jupiter's eagle. On the northern side of the ceiling, above the main defenders of Troy, Hector and Penthesilea, who are shown in the northern corners, we see an assembly of gods who sided with the Trojans: Venus, Apollo, Mars, Diana, and the river god Xanthos/Skamandros. At its sides there are two small panels with the birds associated with Venus, the swan and the dove.

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Fig. 18 Venus and Amor, Jupiter, and Juno

The painter who decorated the Sala Terrena also painted a cycle of paintings with Argonauts on the ceiling of the Banquet Room, which is behind the doors on the Sala's southern wall. The depiction of the quest for the Golden Fleece was a response to a very important event in Waldstein's life that considerably heightened his identification with the Holy Roman Empire. In 1628 he received the highest Habsburg honour, the Order of the Golden Fleece, which was an updating of the myths of Jason and the Argonauts. Ancient myth was interpreted along Christian lines and the Golden Fleece was identified with the mystical Divine Lamb, which thus found its greatest protector in the Grand Master of the Order, the ruling Habsburg Emperor.[30] Although the decoration of the Dining Hall and Sala Terrena was inspired by ancient myths, its message was the celebration of the Habsburg dynasty and the Holy Roman Empire together with its historical mission. Jason's eastern expedition in search of the Golden Fleece was a prefiguration of Alexander the Great's conquests and his empire in the East. However, much more important for the future of mankind was the duel between Aeneas and Turnus, which was represented in the most important place in the Sala Terrena, in the central lunette of its back wall. This victory enabled the descendants of the great Trojan to become lords not only of Italy but also of the whole world.

Rebels' Debacle

The story told by the wall paintings in the Sala Terrena is continued seamlessly in the garden. The counterpart of Aeneas' victory in the Sala Terrena is the celebration of the Czech rebels' debacle in the garden statuary. Although the present-day placement of the garden statues unfortunately does not correspond to their original arrangement, this can be corrected in our imagination. While today the fountain with a bronze statue of Venus with Amor is situated in front of the Sala Terrena,[31] in Waldstein's time this site was occupied by an elaborate fountain with bronze sculptures which summed up the whole message of the duke's Prague residence. The fountain was crowned by Neptune and supplementarily decorated with four dogs, four horse heads, two lion heads and two gryphon heads. It was complemented by four bronze sculptural groups on marble bases standing between the fountain and the Sala Terrena: Laocoon and his son, the Wrestlers, Venus with Adonis,

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and Bacchus with the little Satyr.[32] These statues were created between 1623 and 1627 in the Prague studio of the celebrated Adrien de Vries, former court sculptor to Emperor Rudolf II.[33]

In 1625, Adrien de Vries created a statue of Laocoon (fig. 19), which was intended to crown the fountain in front of the Sala Terrena but, at Waldstein's request, was replaced by Neptune. This change was evidently very important for Waldstein, because this order of his seriously endangered the completion of the garden sculptures. Adrien de Vries was in his seventies at the time and died soon afterwards. The Neptune statue, the last work of the master, was completed in his studio after his death, in 1627. Before we ask why Waldstein preferred Neptune, we must ask ourselves what made Adrien de Vries choose the Laocoon myth.

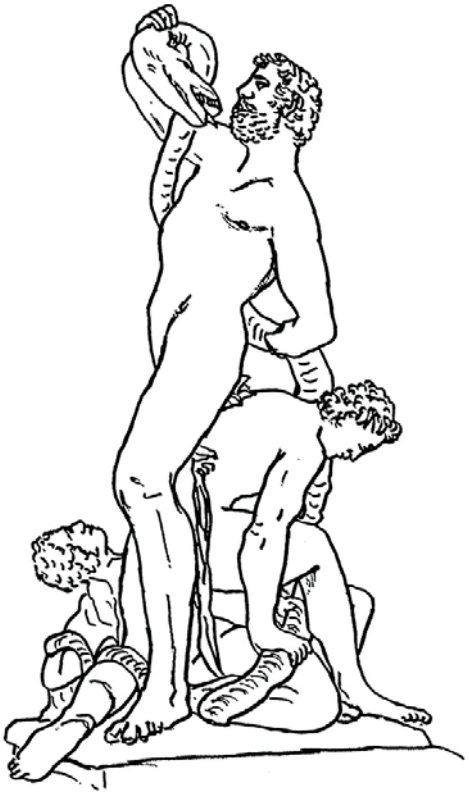

Fig. 19 Laocoon

All the sculptures which de Vries created for Waldstein represented classical themes and could have had the same function as those created by this sculptor for the imperial residence of Rudolf II at Prague Castle, namely, to turn Prague into a second Rome. This seems logical because an ancient Roman group statue depicting the death of Laocoon and his sons was a famous icon of Rome, as it was a highlight of the Papal collection at the Vatican. But the Prague Laocoon is not a copy of an ancient original: in fact, it is the very first variation on this ancient theme in European monumental sculpture. Although the Vatican statue was often copied, in spite of (or precisely because of) its enormous popularity no sculptor before de Vries had depicted the story of Laocoon in a way which differed from the Vatican original. Nor was the second variation on the Laocoon theme created until a full two centuries later, which makes Adrien de Vries's Laocoon absolutely exceptional. For de Vries the subject itself was evidently more important than a reference to the ancient marble statue in Rome, with which his Laocoon has only the underlying mythical story in common.

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What could make Laocoon topical in Central Europe at the beginning of the seventeenth century? Laocoon was the Trojan priest who revolted against the gods' decision that his city must be captured by the Greeks, for which he was immediately cruelly punished. When he was preparing to sacrifice to Neptune, two snakes emerged from the sea and strangled him together with both his sons. Laocoon had to die because Troy had to be burned to allow Aeneas to arrive in Italy in a sequence of events that would lead to the birth of Rome and its world empire. As a token of God's plan, Laocoon thus legitimized imperial rule on earth. Adrien de Vries's Laocoon can also be taken as alluding to the defeat of the Bohemian Estates in the Battle of White Mountain in 1620. When the theme of Laocoon appeared in art of that time, it was always in a negative context, as an example of justly punished transgression. In the Waldstein garden an impious Laocoon would become a negative counterpart to *pius Aeneas*, who was the ancestor and *alter ego* of the Emperor.

Given that Waldstein decided that Neptune would fit better into the programme of the decoration of his palace, we must ask what his motivation could have been. Adrien de Vries's Neptune calming the sea alludes to the relevant passage in the *Aeneid*, which is also illustrated in the Sala Terrena.[34] Raphael's '*Quos ego*' type represents the angry god, who holds reins in his left hand and in his right a clearly menacing trident. But Adrien de Vries's Neptune does not raise his weapon to strike: he holds it as an attribute in his left hand, and is even hiding it behind his back. Furthermore, he is holding the terrible trident upside down, with the spikes pointing downwards—in a detail that must have been de Vries's invention because we do not find it on any other Neptune statue of this type. The contrast to Raphael's aggressive Neptune could not be greater. The Neptune of Adrien de Vries has his right hand raised in a way which compares the ancient god to a mortal orator calming a disorderly crowd. It was clearly an allusion to the subsequent verses in the *Aeneid* in which Vergil compares Neptune calming the sea to a man who resolutely stands up in the middle of a civil riot and calms the mutineers with his wise words.[35] Vergil's verses were a transparent allusion to the role of Emperor Augustus' in the civil war. It was thanks to this that the iconographic type entered the propagandistic art of Waldstein's time.

Fig. 20 Neptune calming the sea

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While the Prague Neptune corresponds to the way the god was represented in the art of that time, Adrien de Vries intensified the image of the peacemaker with a number of small details. Nevertheless, his Neptune is as powerful and authoritative as that of Raphael. In Prague Neptune's enemies are represented by a dog, another addition of Adrien de Vries that is absolutely unique in the iconography of this god. Neptune was often represented with horses or dolphins, but never with a dog. The dog would suit Pluto, but there is no doubt that the statue represents Neptune, which de Vries stressed by adding small dolphins to the trident. The dog represents the rebels to which Vergil's description of Neptune calming the sea alludes. It could also allude to the defeated Bohemian Estates. It is a conspicuously small dog when compared with Neptune. This dog is no monster, merely a dog that has got into a fury and has been quickly pacified by his master. He stands with head threateningly lowered, trying to be frightening, but only at a distance, because Neptune's authority does not allow him to leave the place between his feet.

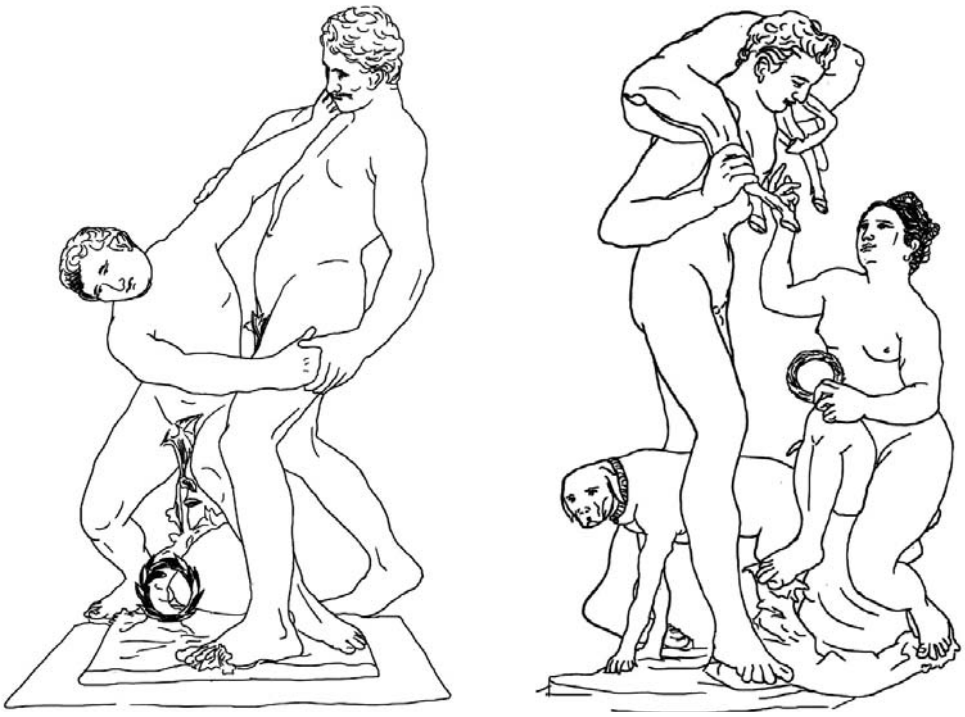

Fig. 21 Wrestlers and Venus with Adonis

Neptune's fountain in the Waldstein garden was originally complemented by four statues, which are all mentioned in the correspondence between Waldstein and Adrien de Vries. The Wrestlers, which according to the inscription on its base was created in 1625, might be a distant echo of an ancient Roman statue, but was most probably also an allusion to the defeat of the Bohemian rebels (fig. 21, left). Adrien de Vries characterized his statue as a 'group of those who wrestle with each other', but their actions do not correspond to this description, because the outcome of the fight has already been decided. The left-hand wrestler is represented in a deep forward bend, evidently trying to pull the right wrestler down to the ground with both his hands. With his left hand he has grasped his opponent's shoulder and with the other hand his thigh. He is the aggressor: he started the fight, while the right wrestler is only resolutely reacting to his action and successfully defending himself. The victor is represented standing firmly upright with legs apart, but he is not attacking: he holds the aggressor's hands with both his hands so that he can force them away from his body. The

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right-hand wrestler is evidently the winner, because in the following moment the aggressor will be lying on the ground. The allegorical content of the wrestlers is made clear by the laurel wreath which is depicted on the ground, a prize awaiting the victor, who fought with honour.

The wreath also appears in the 1624 group with Venus and Adonis, although it is never included in depictions of this mythical couple! During the hundred years spanning 1600 Venus and Adonis was a very fashionable theme in painting and we often find it in the art of the Prague court of Rudolf II. The two scenes most often depicted were Venus trying to stop Adonis from departing on the fateful boar hunt and Venus lamenting his death. The representation of Adonis' departure was noticeably stereotyped: we repeatedly see a seated Venus trying to embrace Adonis, who is walking away. The Prague statue seemingly conforms to this type, because Venus is also represented on the ground and she is raising her hands towards the walking Adonis (fig. 21, right). But the hunter is not departing: he is returning from a successful hunt with the game over his shoulder! Adonis' triumphant return is highlighted by the wreath in Venus' raised hand, which occupies a central position in the group.

In Waldstein's time the standard allegorical reading of the Adonis myth was centred on the hero's refusal of divine counsel, his departure from Venus, and its tragic consequence. This would make Adonis a perfect counterpart to Laocoon, who likewise disobeyed and had to pay for it. But Prague's Adonis is safely returning from a hunt with a deer on his shoulders and Venus is greeting him with a wreath because he has done exactly what she had advised him: 'Be bold when they run, but bravery is unsafe when faced with the brave. Do not be foolish, beware of endangering me, and do not provoke the creatures nature has armed, lest your glory be to my great cost. Neither youth nor beauty, nor the charms that affect Venus, affect lions or bristling boars or the eyes and minds of other wild creatures.'[36] In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries we do not find any other examples of Venus with a wreath or the motif of Adonis' return from the hunt with a small animal on his shoulders. Adrien de Vries reversed the traditional iconographical type, but retained its political message. The tamed Adonis obeys his divine master and is justly rewarded; or, when we translate the motif into contemporary political terminology, Adonis may be seen as an obstinate rebel who is transformed into a dutiful subject.

Next to the fountain in the Waldstein garden it is possible to imagine the statues of Laocoon and the Wrestlers standing side by side, the former symbolizing punished impiety and the latter defeated revolt. Next to the group with Laocoon, in which resistance was condemned, the group with Venus and Adonis could have stood, celebrating the advantages of foresightful submission. The group with Bacchus and the little Satyr (fig. 22), which celebrated the blessings of peace, could have stood on the other end of the row, next to the Wrestlers. In this arrangement, the peace-bringing Venus would be a counterpart to the peaceful Bacchus, who would be the opposite of the Wrestlers. While in the fight between the Wrestlers life is at stake, Bacchus with a wine beaker behind his back is only teasing the little Satyr.

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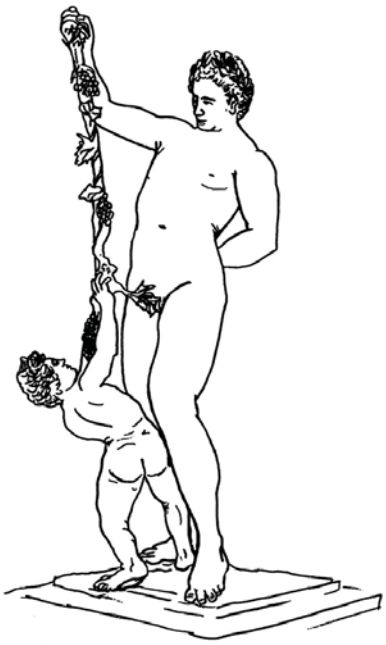

Fig. 22 Bacchus and Satyr

All the mythological statues Adrien de Vries created for Waldstein were site-specific comments on political developments in Prague and the kingdom of Bohemia. The snarling dog tamed by a god stressed that the fountain of Neptune was not only an illustration of an ancient myth. This impressive detail, which has no substantiation in ancient mythology, indicates that this Neptune actually is Ferdinand II, and that Waldstein most probably wished his garden to be dominated by this very god. The Emperor was being celebrated because he had calmed the political storm which had threatened the very existence of the Holy Roman Empire.

Waldstein´s Absence

Although Waldstein spent considerable time on the battlefields and had a thousand predilections, he never displayed his personal experiences, feelings or attitudes unless he could turn them to his personal advantage. In the last years of his life, his physical condition quickly deteriorated, which may have influenced his psychological state and his political attitudes. But in the 1620s, at the peak of his career, Albrecht von Waldstein wholly identified himself with the Holy Roman Empire. This was also expressed in the decoration of his palace in Prague, which he constructed at that time. In this sense, we may say that in the palace of the most energetic man of his time, impersonality reigned. Nor do we anywhere in the palace find the crowned eagle, the princely and later ducal emblem that he started to use in 1622 (fig. 23).

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Fig. 23 The 1622 coat of arms of Waldstein as a count

In the Waldstein Palace we find depictions of lions, which are interpreted as an allusion to Waldstein's ancestral family.[37] But why do we not find the main motif of the Waldstein family emblem—a standing lion with a double tail depicted from the side? Why do we find here exclusively the lion's head depicted *en face*, which is not part of the Waldstein emblem? These lions' heads evidently do not allude to Waldstein but to the vanquished enemies of the Holy Roman Empire. The lion's head often has a ring in its mouth, symbolizing a dangerous beast which has been overpowered and tamed.

Fig. 24 Lion´s heads on porch of the main façade of Waldstein palace

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In 1626, when Waldstein started to mint coins, he hesitated between two mottos: 'God is my protector' and 'In defiance of envy'. As the former evidently seemed to him too general and the latter too personal, he finally adopted the motto: 'SACRI ROMANI IMPERII PRINCEPS' (fig. 25).

Fig. 25 Waldstein's coin of 1626 with the eagle and inscription 'Prince of the Holy Roman Empire'

Although we know Albrecht of Waldstein was interested in astrology, nowhere in his palace have we found constellations of stars at the moment of Waldstein's birth or anything else which would allude to him. In the paintings, stucco decorations and sculptures which decorated the palace, there were no portraits of its builder, not even his coat of arms or personal emblem. When we look for celebrations of Waldstein's person or his family, we find nothing. But as soon as we forget his personage and start to look for allusions to his office, the Prince of the Holy Roman Empire is suddenly vividly present. The hero of the Waldstein palace in Prague was not its builder, but the Holy Roman Empire and its Emperor.

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Illustrations

All drawings (except Fig. 4) are by Nina Bažantová
Fig. 4: archive of the author

[1] This work was supported by grant nr. IAA800090902 (Antická inspirace v českém barokním umění / Classical inspiration in Czech Baroque art) of the Grant Agency of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic.
[2] *Umělecké památky Prahy, Malá Strana* 1999, pp. 147–159; Muchka and Křížová 1996; *The Wallenstein Palace in Prague* 2002; Konečný 2005; *Albrecht von Wallenstein. Inter arma silent musae* 2007; Bažant and Bažantová 2011; Bažant 2011; Uličný 2011; Klipcová, Uličný 2013.
[3] '*Era già finita la sala principale … Mi commessa sua Eccellenza, che dovessi a pesare a qual cosa. Già il salone era adorno di arme e trofei di guerra finti di stucco. Il Pieroni propose, che si facesse dentro il carro di Marte. Ne feci il disegno, e piacque in buona forma*', in Baldinucci 1812, vol. XII, p. 402.
[4] *Alberti Fridlandi Perduellionis Chaos Sive Ingrati Animi Abyssus* 1634. On the title page we read, '*Cum Licentia Superiorum*', but no author, publisher or place of publication is given.
[5] Zap 1848, p. 209. The first identifications of Mars in Waldstein Palace as Albrecht von Waldstein: Lange 1841, p. 74.
[6] Typotius 1601, fig. 106.
[7] Reuss 1998, pp. 276–278.
[8] Inventory of Waldstein palace of 1634: Praha, State regional archive (Státní oblastní archiv), Family archive (Rodinný archiv), 'Valdštejnové' (Waldsteins), cart. 6, sign. A29; Schebek 1881, pp. 587–608.
[9] Today the Knights' Hall is dominated by a monumental painting of Waldstein on horseback which dates from 1631, but the painting was brought to the palace long after the Duke's death (presumably from Valdice monastery). The painting was hung in 1877 in its present place above the fireplace, the idea coming from Countess Maria of Waldstein, who at that time supervised extensive reconstruction works in the palace of her husband, Count Ernst von Waldstein. Albrecht von Waldstein's portrait met the anticipations of Czech patriots, who expected to find allusions to the great Czech in the palace. However, the portrait's dominant position in the Knights' Hall contradicts everything we know about the palace's original decoration.
[10] From the sixteenth century onwards, such a portrait series was standard decoration in the public rooms of important residences. Its predecessor in Prague was in the palace of Emperor Rudolf II. The idea is rooted in ancient Rome, where Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus wrote his famous *De vita caesarum*, the biographies of the twelve founders of the ancient Roman Empire, from Caesar to Domitianus.
[11] Vergil, *Aeneis*, I, 286-287 (translation by H. R. Fairclough).
[12] Vergil, *Aeneis*, VI, 791-795 (translation by H. R. Fairclough).
[13] Vergil, *Eclogues*, IV, 5-9. (translation by H. R. Fairclough).
[14] Tempesta 1610, figs. 3, 4, 5 and 6.
[15] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, I, 151-155 (translation by A. S. Kline).
[16] National Museum, Prague, inv. Nr. H5-58.539; *Albrecht von Wallenstein. Inter arma silent musae* 2007, nr. 14, 48. Kleisner 2008, fig. 4.
[17] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, I, 141-144 (translation by A. S. Kline).
[18] Tempesta 1610, figs. 1, 8, 10, 12, 22, 24, 25, 28, 32, 41, 47, 75, 141 and 172.
[19] Spreng 1563, figs. 27, 40 and 172.
[20] Ripa 1603.
[21] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XIII, 475–480.

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[22] Tempesta 1610, fig. 122.
[23] Vergil, *Aeneis*, I, 148-156.
[24] Bartsch, vol. XIV, 204, 352.
[25] Vergil, *Aeneis*, II, 707-720.
[26] Tempesta 1610, fig. 126.
[27] *Vergilii Maronis dreyzehen Bücher von dem tewren Helden Enea*... (Frankfurt am Main, 1559), book 11.
[28] Vergil, *Aeneis*, XII, 939-941.
[29] E.g. *Dell'Eneide di Virgilio del commendatore Annibal Caro* (Roma, 1622), book 12.
[30] Tanner 1993, 146-161.
[31] It is the work in 1599 of Benedikt Wurzelbauer and the Rudolphine sculptor, Nikolaus Pfaff (the original is in the Gallery of Prague Castle). Waldstein bought the statue from the Lobkovic family in 1630, but he did not place it in front of the Sala Terrena.
[32] In 1648 the statues were stolen by the Swedish army and moved to Drottningholm, where they became the pride of the residence of the Swedish kings. In 1910, copies of all the sculptures which had decorated the Neptune fountain were made. Today they are installed in the Waldstein garden, but not in their original site. They are arranged along the axis of the Sala Terrena, together with the statue of Apollo. This statue is not dated and probably it was never exhibited in the garden because, after Waldstein's death, a white box was found in his palace which contained 'a metal statue of Apollo.'
[33] Larsson 1998; Scholten 1999; Larsson 2000; S. Michalski, 2004.
[34] See notes 21 and 22.
[35] Vergil, *Aeneis*, I, 148–156.
[36] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, X, 543-552 (translated by B. More).
[37] In the Waldstein Palace we find the coat of arms of Waldstein family with lions in the garden. It decorates the stone socle which is today part of the fountain with Venus and the copies of bronze vases.

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