

MODERNO'S PRIMARY SOURCES

RUNNING NOTES ON A PATERA IN THE FORM OF A GILT-BRONZE BATTLE-SCENE TAZZA, ASCRIBED TO GALEAZZO MONDELLA FROM VERONA (1467–1528), CALLED MODERNO AND DERIVED FROM SCENES OF THE TRAJAN COLUMN

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Summary

The aim of this note is to outline potential materials and research areas relevant to the present gilt-bronze goblet attributed to the Renaissance gold-smith, seal engraver and medalist, known by the nickname *Moderno*.¹ It is uniquely decorated in *tondo* with figures of 'ancient' warriors. A detailed and careful analysis of this scene leads to the conclusion that *Moderno* took inspiration for the figures from the frieze of Trajan's Column in Rome. Moreover, the general conception of the scene on the *patera* derives from ancient literary descriptions of shields possessed by mythical heroes. In particular, the description of the shield of Aeneas by Vergil may have suggested to *Moderno* the distribution of the warriors in the *patera*. Vergil was very popular in Italy during the Renaissance times. Finally, the shallowness of the *patera* may be due to the wish to imitate the Farnese Cup, which at the time was possessed by the Medici family, in a period when the same Pope was a Medici. The conclusion of this research is that *Moderno* is much more interested in assimilating and mastering of ancient models than it has been previously admitted. He may have developed this interest especially during the second part of his life, when he travelled to Rome and shared the antiquarian interests which prevailed in Rome at the time within the *litterati* circles of elite courts. The goblet is currently conserved in SB Sammlung at Berlin.²

Description

The goblet is composed of a circular foot supporting a slender stem (fig. 1). Above this stem, there is a cup in the form of a *patera* or *phiale*. The upper face of the *patera* is concave and of course was destined to hold liquids, probably wine. As it will be argued here, it may have never been used for drinking but only for libations. The stem is endowed in the middle with a flat ring-shaped knob. This type of goblet with a circular foot and a slender stem, interrupted in the middle by a knob, is ancient.³ The shape of the *patera* is also known in antiquity, especially in advanced Roman imperial times.⁴ Thus the general shape of this goblet appears inspired by ancient plates.

1 Attempts have been made to identify *Moderno*, Molinier identifies him as Vettor di Antonio Gambelio, called "Camelio", a Venetian, 1455/60-1537. Other scholars have advanced names like Caradosso, Coreto Cagnoli, Giovanni Guerino, Galeazzo Mondella and several others, as possibly being concealed beneath *Moderno*'s pseudonym. The current scholarship (after 1980s) identifies him as Galeazzo Mondella (Italian, Verona 1467–1528). About this artist, see BOSELLI, *Nuovi documenti sull'arte veneta del secolo XVI*, pp. 124-236; ROGNINI, *Galeazzo e Girolamo Mondella, artisti del Rinascimento veronese*, pp. 95-119; LEWIS, *The Plaquettes of "Moderno" and his followers*, pp. 105-141; ALHAIQUE PETTINELLI, *Tra antico e moderno: Roma nel primo Rinascimento*; BROWN, 'The Archival Scholarship of Antonino Bertoletti', pp. 65-71 and BARBIERI, *Il 'reliquiario della Santissima Croce' del Tesoro del Duomo Vecchio di Brescia*, pp. 25-56.

2 The goblet has been published in the pamphlet "Gilt-bronze battle scene tazza, Berlin" (sine data). It had been acquired in 1996 from a private collection in France for SB Sammlung.

3 See, e. g., STRONG, *Greek and Roman Gold and Silver Plate*, pls. 26 a and 54 b.

4 See STRONG, *ibidem*, pls. 58-60 and 62-65.



Figure 1-2. gilt-bronze goblet at Berlin, SB Sammlung, attributed to Galeazzo Mondella from Verona.

The representations

The decorated parts of the goblet are the upper surface of the foot and the upper surface of the *patera*. These decorations are in relief. The foot bears racemes with leaves and berries of a water plant. These vegetal patterns also appear on similar ancient examples.⁵ The upper face of the *patera* is endowed with an external ribbon which surrounds a circular field (fig. 2). The centre of this field is marked by three concentric circles, which are decorated with dots in relief. Between the external ribbon and the central circles, there is a representation of 11 warriors engaged in a battle. The following description begins from the standing figure of a barbarian. Figure no. 1 is a striding warrior who holds an oblong shield in his left hand and a sword in his right hand. He has long hair and is naked except for a short drapery, covering the low part of his belly. A helmet lies on the ground between his legs. His form seems derived from ancient figures of barbarians. Between the first and the second figure, a bush appears on the ground. Figure no. 2 is a knight on a rearing up horse with forelegs raised. He also holds shield in his left and a sword in his right. He wears a helmet. Below the horse, a dying warrior (figure no. 3) lies on the ground, his shield abandoned. Figure no. 4 is a warrior seen from behind. As usual, he holds a shield in his left hand and raises his right hand, with a sword. His hair looks curly. He is clearly a Roman. A helmet lies on the ground between the legs of warrior no. 4. Figure no. 5 is a warrior bent forward. He wears a helmet; he holds his shield in his left hand, while with his right thrusting the sword inside the chest of a lying warrior (figure no. 6). The latter still holds his shield in his left hand, his hair is long and brought behind. Figure no. 7 is a striding warrior, helmet on head, shield in his right and sword in his left. A helmet lies on the ground between the legs of the warrior. Figures nos. 8 and 9 are two warriors who are dueling. Warrior no. 8 holds a shield in his left and a dagger in his right, his head is without helmet, warrior no. 9 holds shield and sword, he has a helmet, both wear cuirasses. Below figures 8 and 9 bushes appear on the ground. Figure no. 10 is a knight without helmet, holding shield and sword, on a rearing horse and is charging warrior no. 11, who is lying on the ground, his sword and shield lie abandoned on the ground. The ground is expressed through short lines.

Stylistic features and attribution

The most impressive stylistic feature of this relief is the fact that the figures are fleshed out especially through the rendering of their muscles. Whether the hair or parts of the body or the

⁵ See e. g. the Hadra vases (GUERRINI, *Vasi di Hadra*), the Gnathia vases (FORTI, *La ceramica di Gnathia*) and the West Slope Pottery (ROTROFF, *Attic West Slope Ware*, pp. 657-662).

drapery or weapons or vegetal elements are represented, these patterns are obtained through convex traits. Moreover the contour lines of the figures are less important than in most works of the Renaissance and sometimes are completely missing. For example, the hair of warrior no. 1 is defined only by convex oblong flakes, which meant to represent the single locks of the hair. These features are typical of the oeuvre of Mondella.⁶ The cup studied in these pages probably had been conceived and executed in Mondella's workshop under an important commission for a prominent patron. To the author knowledge there is only one comparable specimen,⁷ a circular plaquette, flat rather than convex as the present *patera*.

As it will be argued below, it is possible to date the chronology of execution of the cup in the later years of activity of Mondella's career, when he lived in Rome. It is in these years (late 1510s and early 1520s) that the artist developed an interest to flesh out classical themes (e. g. Hercules labours), and incorporates into the body of his work, elements from ancient monuments.⁸ This suggestion derives further support from the analysis of the likely iconographic sources of the warriors represented in the *patera*.

Iconographic sources

Figure no. 1 may be inspired by figures from Dacians in Trajan's Column, especially as far as their physical appearances are concerned, but also in the pose of the warrior and in the oblong shape of the shield and in the sword (fig. 3).⁹ Figure no. 2 appears indebted to representations of Roman knights on horses in the same column (fig. 4).¹⁰ In particular, two patterns strongly suggest a derivation of this figure from the imagery of Trajan's Column: the lowered muzzle of the horse and the rendering of the mane of the horse through a series of sinuous locks which compose a wavy outline. Figure no. 3 is also inspired by representations of fallen warriors imaged on Trajan's Column (fig. 5).¹¹ Even Figure no. 4 finds comparison in warriors of the Trajan's Column seen from their back (fig. 6).¹² Figure no. 5 appears to have been derived from similar figures of the Trajan Column (fig. 7).¹³ The fallen figure no. 6 is also a variation of fallen soldiers on the above-mentioned column.¹⁴

The warriors represented in profile views nos. 7, 8 and 9 are variations of similar *schemata* adopted for warriors engaged in duels on the same column.¹⁵ The fallen warrior no. 11 and the knight no. 10 are variations of the *schemata* which have been already considered for the figures

6 About this artist, see bibliography cited in note 1.

7 It is in the Salton Collection of Renaissance & Baroque Medals & Plaquettes in the Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine. See SALTON, *The Salton Collection, Renaissance & Baroque Medals & Plaquettes*, no. 161. It is a circular plaquette, measuring 110 mm in diameter against the 121 mm diameter of the cup of the present *patera*, it is described by Salton as possibly "a decorative bottom of a bowl". It is a unique survival of Moderno's trial cast with the casting sprues still in place. The particularly identical locations of the sprues (circular in cross-section on the Salton specimen, still protruding and unfinished, and on the *patera*, filed and chiseled), and the less advanced detailed modeling of the draperies, swords, costumes and postures of warriors on the Salton specimen clearly suggest an earlier attempt to establish the modeling of the complex design in the wax prior to casting. Technical examination clearly demonstrates that casting the *patera* with a cup with an exceedingly delicate, thin rim and the slender foot in one pour was challenging. So it comes as no surprise to assume that Moderno ran several cast trials before successfully completing the final casting of the delicate form of the present *patera*.

8 See ROGNINI, *Galeazzo e Girolamo Mondella, artisti del rinascimento veronese* and ALHAIQUE PETTINELLI, *Tra antico e moderno: Roma nel primo Rinascimento*.

9 See COARELLI, *La Colonna Traiana*, figs. 28; 31; especially 38-39 and 45; moreover 68; 79; 83; 105; 114; 135-136; 138; 148-149; 166 and 171.

10 See COARELLI, *La Colonna Traiana*, figs. 6-7; 23; 38; 40; especially 51; 58-59; 67-68; 104-105; 122 and 168-169.

11 See COARELLI, *La Colonna Traiana*, figs. 23; 28; 31; 38; 43; 45; 67-68; 79-80; 83; 113-115; 138; 160-161 and particularly 170.

12 See COARELLI, *La Colonna Traiana*, figs. 20; especially 23-24; 31; especially 40; 44-45; 68; 73-74; 82-83; 115; especially 142-143; 161 and 176.

13 See COARELLI, *La Colonna Traiana*, figs. 24; 57; 69-70; 84; especially 108 and 116

14 For comparison, see note 12.

15 For comparison, see COARELLI, *La Colonna Traiana*, figs. 68-69; 74-75; especially 81-84 and 113-115; also 136; especially 142 and 176.



Figure 3. Rome, Trajan column, *in situ*: scenes 37-38



Figure 4. Rome, Trajan column, *in situ*: scenes 57-58

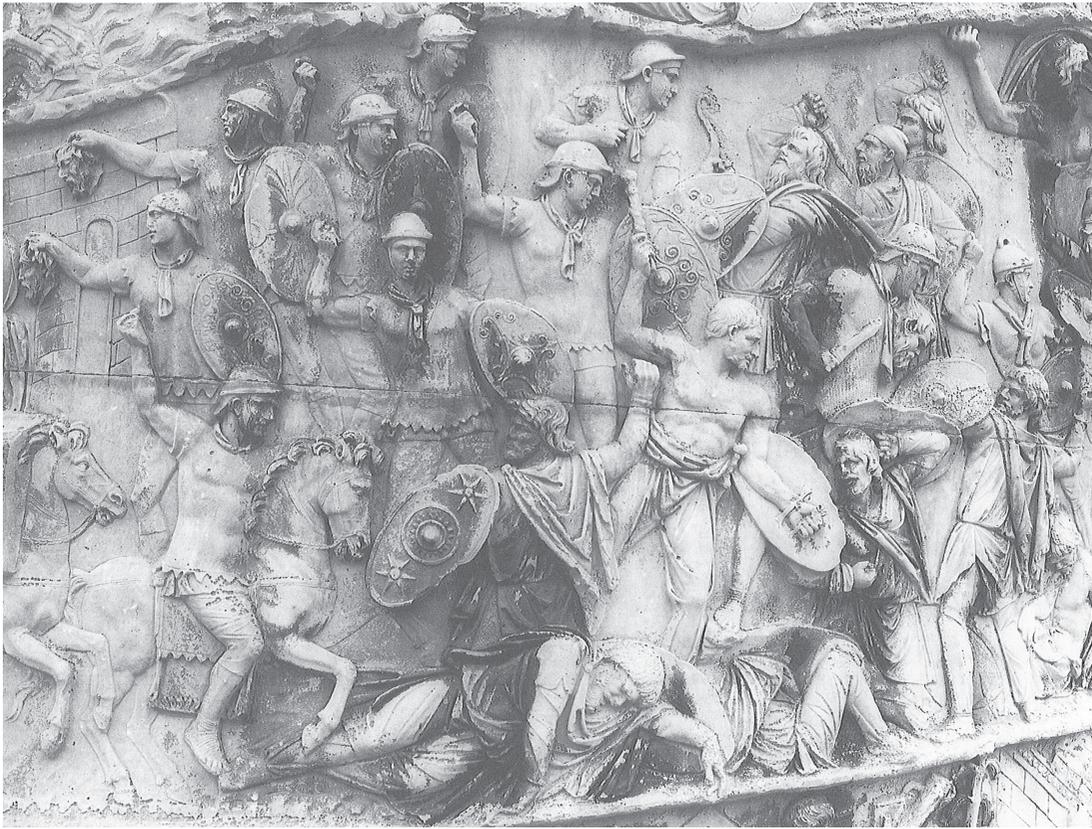


Figure 5. Rome, Trajan column, *in situ*: scene 24



Figure 6. Rome, Trajan column, *in situ*: scenes 16-117

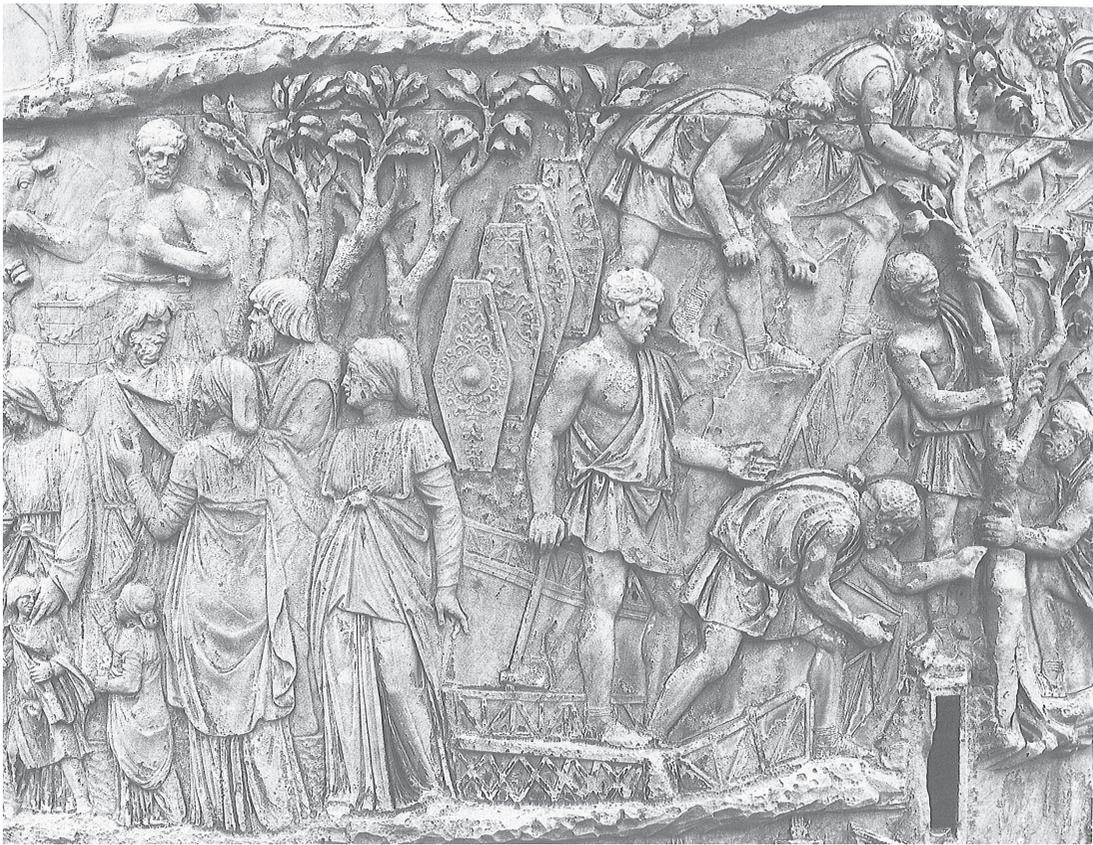


Figure 7. Rome, Trajan column, *in situ*: scenes 91-92



Figure 8. Rome, Trajan column, *in situ*: scene 72

nos. 3 and 2. The oblong shields and the types of swords and of dagger adopted in the relief on the *patera* had also been often represented in the Column of Trajan (fig. 8).¹⁶ The representation of the ground using wavy horizontal lines and of grass through bent slightly curved lines is also figured on Trajan's Column. The helmet adopted by Moderno is the same worn by Roman soldiers in Trajan's monument. The leaves of bushes in the *patera* also occur in the same shape in the ancient column.¹⁷ Finally the sword is put in the chest of figure no. 3 exactly in the same area of the body in which the Dacian king Decebalus puts his sword in the episode of his suicide in the column.¹⁸ All these observations suggest that the source of inspiration of our relief was the Trajan column. Throughout the late 15th and the early 16th century, Trajan's Column was analytically observed by artists based in Rome and thus became a very authoritative paradigm for new works of art.¹⁹

The antecedents of the relief on the upper side of the *patera*

The upper side of the *patera* is divided in three parts: a. the external, circular border; b. the central *oculus* of the tondo; and c. the area between a and b which is filled with the relief representation of a battle. This subdivision of the area of a tondo derives from ancient descriptions of famous shields. The first important example of this tradition is the description of the shield of Achilles in Homer, *Iliad* 18. 479-608.²⁰ In this case, the external circumference of the shield was interpreted as the Ocean (vv. 606-607), while the scenes represented in the shield also included battling warriors (vv. 509-540).

In the poem entitled *Shield of Herakles* attributed to Hesiod, there was a long description of the shield of Herakles (vv. 139-320): it also represented episodes of war (vv. 144-167; 178-200 and 216-270) and was endowed with an external circumference interpreted as the Ocean (314-320). Finally, Vergil, *Aeneid* 8. 625-731 described the shield of Aeneas which was endowed with representations of battles in Roman history. The well known high esteem of Vergil in Italy throughout the 15th and 16th centuries²¹ suggests that this famous description may have been a source of inspiration for the battle on our cup. The above-mentioned descriptions of the shields of Achilles and Herakles make it clear that the represented scenes were disposed around the centres of the shields. The same must be said about the shield of Aeneas. Since Vergil's description of the latter was more popular during the Renaissance than the corresponding details of shields attributed to Homer and Hesiod, it is important to quote the entire passage by Vergil:

clipei non enarrabile textum. 625
 illic res Italas Romanorumque triumphos
 haud vaturn ignarus venturique inscius aevi
 fecerat ignipotens, illic genus omne futurae
 stirpis ab Ascanio pugnataque in ordine bella.
 fecerat et viridi fetam Mavortis in antro 630
 procubuisse lupam, geminos huic ubera circum
 ludere pendentis pueros et lambere matrem
 impavidos, illam tereti cervice reflexa

16 See COARELLI, *La Colonna Traiana*, figs. 23; 25; 27; 29-32; 35-37; 39-40; 42-47; 56; 60; 65-70; 73-74; 76-85; 88; 91-92; 113-116; 126-127; 132-133; 135-139; 141-143; 145; 154-163; 165-166 and 171.

17 See COARELLI, *La Colonna Traiana*, pls. 76; 108-110 and particularly 133.

18 See COARELLI, *La Colonna Traiana*, fig. 171.

19 About the issue of the influence of the Trajan column upon artists throughout the late 15th and the early 16th century, see PASQUALITTI, *La Colonna Traiana e i disegni rinascimentali*; FALLANI, *La Colonna Traiana e i disegni rinascimentali*; CAVALLARO, *La Colonna traiana nel Quattrocento*, pp. 9-37 and BODON, *Per la fortuna della Colonna Traiana nella cultura antiquaria veneta del Rinascimento*, pp. 227-242.

20 About these mythical shields and their ancient descriptions, see DEJONG, *Pluperfects and the Artist in Ekphrases: from the Shield of Achilles to the Shield of Aeneas*, with previous bibliography.

21 About this issue, see ZABUGHIN, *Vergilio nel Rinascimento italiano* and P. PROCACCIOLI, *Rinascimento*, pp. 475-498.

mulcere alternos et corpora fingere lingua.
nec procul hinc Romam et raptas sine more Sabinas 635
consessu caveae, magnis Circensibus actis,
addiderat, subitoque novum consurgere bellum
Romulidis Tatíoque seni Curibusque severis.
post idem inter se posito certamine reges
armati Iovis ante aram paterasque tenentes 640
stabant et caesa iungebant foedera porca.
haud procul inde citae Mettum in diversa quadrigae
distulerant (at tu dictis, Albane, maneres!),
raptabatque viri mendacis viscera Tullus
per silvam, et sparsi rorabant sanguine vepres. 645
nec non Tarquinius eiectum Porsenna iubebat
accipere ingentique urbem obsidione premebat;
Aeneadae in ferrum pro libertate ruebant.
illum indignanti similem similemque minanti
aspiceres, pontem auderet quia vellere Cocles 650
et fluvium vinclis innaret Cloelia ruptis.
in summo custos Tarpeiae Manlius arcis
stabat pro templo et Capitolia celsa tenebat,
Romuleoque recens horrebat regia culmo.
atque hic auratis volitans argenteus anser 655
porticibus Gallos in limine adesse canebat;
Galli per dumos aderant arcemque tenebant
defensi tenebris et dono noctis opacae.
aurea caesaries ollis atque aurea vestis,
virgatis lucent sagulis, tum lactea colla 660
auro innectuntur, duo quisque Alpina coruscant
gaesa manu, scutis protecti corpora longis.
hic exsultantis Salios nudosque Lupercos
lanigerosque apices et lapsa ancilia caelo
extuderat, castae ducebant sacra per urbem 665
pilentis matres in mollibus. hinc procul addit
Tartareas etiam sedes, alta ostia Ditis,
et scelerum poenas, et te, Catilina, minaci
pendentem scopulo Furiarumque ora trementem,
secretosque pios, his dantem iura Catonem. 670
haec inter tumidi late maris ibat imago
aurea, sed fluctu spumabant caerulea cano,
et circum argento clari delphines in orbem
aequora verrebant caudis aestumque secabant.
in medio classis aeratas, Actia bella, 675
cernere erat, totumque instructo Marte videres
fervere Leucaten auroque effulgere fluctus.
hinc Augustus agens Italos in proelia Caesar
cum patribus populoque, penatibus et magnis dis,
stans celsa in puppi, geminas cui tempora flammis 680
laeta vomunt patriumque aperitur vertice sidus.
parte alia ventis et dis Agrippa secundis

arduus agmen agens, cui, belli insigne superbum,
 tempora navali fulgent rostrata corona.
 hinc ope barbarica variisque Antonius armis, 685
 victor ab Aurorae populis et litore rubro,
 Aegyptum virisque Orientis et ultima secum
 Bactra vehit, sequiturque (nefas) Aegyptia coniunx.
 una omnes ruere ac totum spumare reductis
 convulsum remis rostrisque tridentibus aequor. 690
 alta petunt; pelago credas innare revulsas
 Cycladas aut montis concurrere montibus altos,
 tanta mole viri turritis puppibus instant.
 stuppea flamma manu telisque volatile ferrum
 spargitur, arva nova Neptunia caede rubescunt. 695
 regina in mediis patrio vocat agmina sistro,
 necdum etiam geminos a tergo respicit anguis.
 omnigenumque deum monstra et latrator Anubis
 contra Neptunum et Venerem contraque Minervam
 tela tenent. saevit medio in certamine Mavors 700
 caelatus ferro, tristesque ex aethere Dirae,
 et scissa gaudens vadit Discordia palla,
 quam cum sanguineo sequitur Bellona flagello.
 Actius haec cernens arcum intendebat Apollo
 desuper; omnis eo terrore Aegyptus et Indi, 705
 omnis Arabs, omnes vertebant terga Sabaei.
 ipsa videbatur ventis regina vocatis
 vela dare et laxos iam iamque immittere funis.
 illam inter caedes pallentem morte futura
 fecerat ignipotens undis et Iapyge ferri, 710
 contra autem magno maerentem corpore Nilum
 pandentemque sinus et tota veste vocantem
 caeruleum in gremium latebrosaue flumina victos.
 at Caesar, triplici invectus Romana triumpho
 moenia, dis Italis votum immortale sacrabat, 715
 maxima ter centum totam delubra per urbem.
 laetitia ludisque viae plausuque fremebant;
 omnibus in templis matrum chorus, omnibus arae;
 ante aras terram caesi stravere iuveni.
 ipse sedens niveo candentis limine Phoebi 720
 dona recognoscit populorum aptatque superbis
 postibus; incedunt victae longo ordine gentes,
 quam variae linguis, habitu tam vestis et armis.
 hic Nomadum genus et discinctos Mulciber Afros,
 hic Lelegas Carasque sagittiferosque Gelonos 725
 finxerat; Euphrates ibat iam mollior undis,
 extremique hominum Morini, Rhenusque bicornis,
 indomitique Dahae, et pontem indignatus Araxes.
 Talia per clipeum Volcani, dona parentis,
 miratur rerumque ignarus imagine gaudet 730
 attollens umero famamque et fata nepotum.

'the shield's indescribable detail.
There the lord with the power of fire, not unversed
in prophecy, and knowledge of the centuries to come,
had fashioned the history of Italy, and Rome's triumphs:
there was every future generation of Ascanius's stock,
and the sequence of battles they were to fight.
He had also shown the she-wolf, having just littered,
lying on the ground, in the green cave of Mars,
the twin brothers, Romulus and Remus, playing, hanging
on her teats, and fearlessly sucking at their foster-mother.
Bending her neck back smoothly she caressed them
in turn, and licked their limbs with her tongue.
Not far from that he had placed Rome, the Sabine women,
lawlessly snatched from the seated crowd, when the great games
were held in the Circus: and the sudden surge of fresh warfare
between Romulus's men, and the aged Tatius and his austere Cures.
Next, the same two kings stood armed in front of Jove's altar,
holding the wine-cups and joined in league, sacrificing a sow,
the new-built palace bristling with Romulus's thatch.
Then, not far from that, four-horse chariots driven
in different directions tore Mettus apart (Alban, you should
have kept your word, though!), and Tullus dragged the liar's
entrails through the woods, the briars wet with sprinkled blood.
There was Porsenna too, ordering Rome to admit the banished
Tarquin, and gripping the city in a mighty siege:
the scions of Aeneas running on the sword for freedom's sake.
You could see Porsenna in angry, and in threatening, posture,
because Cocles dared to tear down the bridge,
because Cloelia broke her restraints and swam the river.
At the top Manlius, guardian of the Tarpeian Citadel,
stood before the temple, defending the high Capitol.
And there the silvery goose, flying through the gilded
colonnades, cackled that the Gauls were at the gate.
The Gauls were there in the gorse, taking the Citadel,
protected by the dark, the gift of shadowy night.
Their hair was gold, and their clothes were gold,
they shone in striped cloaks, their white necks
torqued with gold, each waving two Alpine javelins
in his hand, long shields defending their bodies.
Here he had beaten out the leaping Salii and naked Luperci,
the woolly priest's caps, and the oval shields that fell
from heaven, chaste mothers in cushioned carriages
leading sacred images through the city. Far from these
he had added the regions of Tartarus, the high gates of Dis,
the punishment for wickedness, and you Catiline, hanging
from a threatening cliff, trembling at the sight of the Furies:
and the good, at a distance, Cato handing out justice.
The likeness of the swollen sea flowed everywhere among these,

in gold, though the flood foamed with white billows,
 and dolphins in bright silver swept the waters
 round about with arching tails, and cut through the surge.
 In the centre bronze ships could be seen, the Battle of Actium,
 and you could make out all Leucate in feverish
 preparation for war, the waves gleaming with gold.
 On one side Augustus Caesar stands on the high stern,
 leading the Italians to the conflict, with him the Senate,
 the People, the household gods, the great gods, his happy brow
 shoots out twin flames, and his father's star is shown on his head.
 Elsewhere Agrippa, favoured by the winds and the gods
 leads his towering column of ships, his brow shines
 with the beaks of the naval crown, his proud battle distinction.
 On the other side Antony, with barbarous wealth and strange weapons,
 conqueror of eastern peoples and the Indian shores, bringing Egypt,
 and the might of the Orient, with him, and furthest Bactria:
 and his Egyptian consort follows him (the shame).
 All press forward together, and the whole sea foams,
 churned by the sweeping oars and the trident rams.
 They seek deep water: you'd think the Cycladic islands were uprooted
 and afloat on the flood, or high mountains clashed with mountains,
 so huge the mass with which the men attack the towering sterns.
 Blazing tow and missiles of winged steel shower from their hands,
 Neptune's fields grow red with fresh slaughter.
 The queen in the centre signals to her columns with the native
sistrum, not yet turning to look at the twin snakes at her back.
 Barking Anubis, and monstrous gods of every kind
 brandish weapons against Neptune, Venus,
 and Minerva. Mars rages in the centre of the contest,
 engraved in steel, and the grim Furies in the sky,
 and Discord in a torn robe strides joyously, while
 Bellona follows with her blood-drenched whip.
 Apollo of Actium sees from above and bends his bow: at this
 all Egypt, and India, all the Arabs and Sabaeans turn and flee.
 The queen herself is seen to call upon the winds,
 set sail, and now, even now, spread the slackened canvas.
 The lord with the power of fire has fashioned her pallid
 with the coming of death, amidst the slaughter,
 carried onwards by the waves and wind of Iapyx,
 while before her is Nile, mourning with his vast extent,
 opening wide his bays, and, with his whole tapestry, calling
 the vanquished to his dark green breast, and sheltering streams.
 Next Augustus, entering the walls of Rome in triple triumph,
 is dedicating his immortal offering to Italy's gods,
 three hundred great shrines throughout the city.
 The streets are ringing with joy, playfulness, applause:
 a band of women in every temple, altars in every one:
 before the altars sacrificial steers cover the ground.
 He himself sits at the snow-white threshold of shining Apollo,

examines the gifts of nations, and hangs them on the proud gates.
 The conquered peoples walk past in a long line, as diverse
 in language as in weapons, or the fashion of their clothes.
 Here Vulcan has shown the Nomad race and loose-robed Africans,
 there the Leleges and Carians and Gelonians with their quivers:
 Euphrates runs with quieter waves, and the Morini,
 remotest of mankind, the double-horned Rhine,
 the untamed Dahae, and Araxes, resenting its restored bridge.
 Aeneas marvels at such things on Vulcan's shield, his mother's gift,
 and delights in the images, not recognising the future events,
 lifting to his shoulder the glory and the destiny of his heirs.' (transl. Loeb)

Vergil begins his description from the scene below the centre and then moves up along the circular shape of the shield, until he arrives at the top of the shield (v. 652: *in summo*, 'at the top'), even here the sea is disposed along the external circumference (v. 673: *circum*, 'round about'), while the scene of the battle of Actium occupied the centre or *oculus* of the shield (v. 675: *in medio*, 'in the centre'). Thus the poet from Mantua offered an authoritative example of description of battles disposed in circle. Moreover even the shield of Aeneas was golden or gilt (v. 672: *aurea*, 'in gold'). Finally, Vergil represents on this shield Romulus and Titus Tatius while they toasted to their alliance outstretching their *paterae* (v. 640: *pateras... tenentes* 'holding the wine-cups'). Thus this passage of Vergil is crucial in order to understand why exactly a *patera* was made by Moderno and decorated with episodes of war. The decision to adopt this shape may have also been influenced by this scene described for the shield of Aeneas. In that case, our cup may have celebrated an alliance between two lords who saw themselves as the new Romulus and Titus Tatius. Moreover, the scene on this cup should be included in the artistic genre of representations of battles which was in high honor in this period, from the 'Battle of San Romano' by Paolo Uccello²² to the 'Battle of Anghiari' by Leonardo²³ to the 'Battle at the Milvian Bridge' by Giulio Romano, based on a drawing by Raffaello.²⁴ With antecedents as these, the commission of a goblet representing a battle is hardly surprising at Rome in the late 15th or early 16th century. The Roman subject of the battle is also understandable in the tradition of visual representations inspired by Vergil.

A few additional observations

The circular disposition of the episodes represented on the upper side of the *patera* depends on the influence of ancient descriptions of famous shields – those of Achilles by Homer, of Herakles by Hesiod and especially of Aeneas by Vergil – which were endowed with this feature. In the relief frieze on the upper side of the *patera*, the transition from one episode to another is not marked but is suggested only by narrow empty spaces left among these scenes. This device also derives from the frieze from the Column of Trajan and strengthens the notion that this ancient monument was the crucial source of inspiration for our chalice's decorative field. The decision to gild the *patera* can be understood in the context of the influence of the shield of Aeneas described by Vergil which – as the poet from Mantua stressed – was also gilt. The use of gold suggests that the goblet was made for a clearly wealthy and socially prominent patron or buyer. Finally, the *patera* looks rather shallow. This fact probably is due to a conscious imitation of ancient *paterae* which were equally shallow.²⁵ In this period, the most famous surviving ancient *patera* was the so-called Farnese cup²⁶

22 See BORSI, *Paolo Uccello*.

23 See MAGNANO, *Leonardo*.

24 See ROWLAND, *The Vatican Stanze*, pp. 95-119.

25 See note 4.

26 About this well known piece, see LA ROCCA, *L'eta' d'oro di Cleopatra* and for its fortune in the art of the early Renaissance,

which is also shallow and may have been a source of inspiration for Moderno. In fact, in the early 16th century, the Farnese cup was part of the Medici collection. During this period two members of the Medici family became Popes, Leo 10th and Clement 7th. Thus an artist who travelled to Rome and wanted to take advantage of papal patronage may have decided to imitate this famous cup. As the Farnese cup, our cup may have never been used for drinking during banquets but only for libations.

The red wine in the gilt *patera* suggests the idea of blood on the shield of Aeneas and thus may have conveyed the illusion of living in Roman times. This feeling would have been very much beloved in the context of the classicistic culture of Rome during the Renaissance.

Conclusive observations

The subject represented on the patera suggests that the object had been made for, or destined to, a highly distinguished patron with a deep appreciation of the literary works by Vergil, Homer and Hesiod. Since the iconographic source for this relief, Trajan's Column was a well-known Roman monument and since the present object's author – Moderno – is known to have been in Rome during the second part of his life, it is probable that the cup was made in Rome for a Roman lord. Unfortunately, during the years which are considered here, the Pontifical state was busy with endless wars and feudal lords inside the Papal state fought one against the other.²⁷ Thus any specific details regarding the historical context which surrounds our patera may never be known to us. In view of its direct iconographic relationship with the great literary works of Vergil, Homer, Hesiod and images from Trajan's Column the present patera is unique in terms of typology among Renaissance bronzes and objects of virtue, and stands virtually above all the other works attributable to Moderno.

YUEN, *The Tazza Farnese as a Source for Botticelli 'Birth of Venus*, pp. 175-178.

27 See *Enciclopedia dei Papi*, Rome (2014), s. vv. Giulio II, Leone X, Adriano VI and Clemente VII.

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