



Nano Morgante: the most famous buffoon of Cosimo I de' Medici

H. Valdes-Socin¹

Received: 25 June 2023 / Accepted: 15 July 2023

© The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Italian Society of Endocrinology (SIE) 2023

The Dwarf Morgante, (born Braccio di Bartolo) was the most famous of the five buffoons who lived at the court of Cosimo I de' Medici [1]. His portrait can be admired at Pitti Palace, in Florence. The painter Agnolo di Cosimo (detto Bronzino), made for Cosimo I a full-length portrait of Morgante. He is represented nude, from two perspectives, front and back (Fig. 1). A butterfly discovered during the last restoration covers decorously his genitals.

In addition to Bronzino's manierist dual-sided portrait, Morgante has been immortalized in the marble sculpture in 1560 by Valerio Cioli at the Bacchino Fountain, in the Boboli Gardens, which portrays him straddling a turtle (Fig. 2). Finally, we can also find Morgante, represented as a soldier, in the magnificent *fresco* of Vasari of the *Salone*

dei Cinquecento of *Palazzo Vecchio*, commemorating the capture of the fort of Siena by the Florentine army [1].

The dwarf Morgante (ironically nicknamed as the giant of the eponymous poem by Luigi Pulci) suffered evidently from achondroplasia (OMIM 100800). He died in 1580, in Florence, affected by a malignant fever ("mal castrone"). A *post mortem* poem by Antonio Francesco Grazzini remembers him as: "*Il più saggio ed accorto, il più raro sovrano buffòn che mai vedesse o Sole o stella*" [2]. As a final point, we would like to highlight the interest of representational art in portraying real life achondroplastic dwarfs, as illustrated by recent articles published in this Journal [3, 4].

✉ H. Valdes-Socin
hg.valdessocin@chuliege.be

¹ Service d'Endocrinologie, Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Liège, Liège, Belgium

Fig. 1 **a** (front) and **b** (back) Portrait of Nano Morgante, oil 149×89 cm, (circa 1553) by Agnolo di Cosimo detto Bronzino (1503–1572). Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Pitti. Florence, Italy



Fig. 2 Bacchino Fountain or *fontanella del Nano Morgante* (circa 1560) by Valerio Cioli, in the Boboli Gardens, Florence (photo by the author)

Declarations

Conflicts of interest The author states that there is no conflict of interest.

Research involving human participants and/or animals Not applicable.

Informed consent Not applicable.

References

1. Obryan R (2012) Grotesque bodies, princely delight: dwarfs in Italian renaissance court imagery. *Preternature* 1:252–288. <https://doi.org/10.1353/prn.2012.0011>
2. Battin J (2009) Art and the history of medicine. The dwarf pointed by Mantegna of Montua and the Morgante of Florence. *Vesalius*. 15(1):5–8
3. Bianucci R, Sineo L, Nerlich AG et al (2022) “Cola u’ Nanu”: an early nineteenth century case of disproportionate small stature. *J Endocrinol Invest* 45:2405–2406. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40618-022-01804-8>
4. Valdes-Socin H, Daly AF, Petrossians P (2023) Djeho, the Egyptian God’s dancer with dwarfism from the thirtieth dynasty. *J Endocrinol Invest*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40618-023-02074-8>

Publisher’s Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.