BAROCKE INSZENIERUNG

Herausgegeben von Joseph Imorde, Fritz Neumeyer und Tristan Weidiger

Zurich, 1999
This paper is partly in the nature of an extended, and I hope expansive, footnote to an extraordinarily important and strangely neglected essay on Bernini's tomb of Urban VIII published in 1971 by Catherine Wilkinson (fig. 1). Her brief article focused specifically on the iconography of the figures of Charity and Justice, but Wilkinson's interpretation has important implications for our understanding of Bernini's art generally. She demonstrated, in effect, that the two figures do not represent, as had always been taken for granted, the traditional moral allegories of Charity and Justice, but illustrating the relatively simple, not to say superficial, and often soporific character of Bernini's art as it was commonly conceived. Taking up the doctrinal formulations of the Council of Trent and as well as other supporting texts, Wilkinson made it clear that Bernini's figures are intellectually sophisticated, indeed profound evocations, not of the moral virtues, but of the divine virtues of Charity and Justice. The virtues are therefore not qualities of Urban VIII personally, but attributes of his office as the Vicar of Christ on earth. Interestingly, Wilkinson overlooked what is perhaps the most striking testimony to her interpretation: a painting by Baglione in which Divine Wisdom, crowned by the dove of the Holy Spirit, reaches down from heaven with golden chains to link herself to each other her earthly representatives, Charity and Justice (fig. 2). Bernini's allegories therefore cannot be understood as mourners for the departed pope. Among the least valuable implications of Wilkinson's work, for example, is that it obviated the embarrassing need to continue Charity's maternal benevolence as an expression of grief (fig. 3). The initial key to the significance of the allegories is that Bernini did not accompany the pope by the cardinal moral virtues normally ...
associated with the earthly ruler, whose loss they properly mourn. Instead, he combined one of the cardinal virtues, Justice, with the chief theological virtue, Charity. This combination was common enough, but in the context of papal portraiture it specifically denoted the role of the papacy in the execution of God’s wish that man be justified, that is, made just, and so redeemed from original sin. God achieves this result through the sacrifice of his only son, and the exercise of the chief attributes of his perfection, the divine virtues of Charity and Justice. The two virtues are equal and interdependent, the one operating through the other in the interest of mankind. The allegories, therefore, far from lamenting the pope’s demise, illustrate the roles of God’s virtues in achieving the beneficent result implicit in the pope’s salvific gesture.

In the case of Charity Bernini makes his point by creating a binary complementary moral and psychological contrast—«contrapposto,» Bernini would have called it—between the extremes of the soul’s route to salvation. One child (fig. 3), having absorbed the milk of God’s forgiving goodwill, sleeps blissfully until the end of time. The other soul (fig. 4) bawls at the top of his lungs: he is the repentant sinner reaching desperately for redemption, so utterly consumed by recrimination as to be unaware of Charity’s compassionate response to his excruciating Jeremiad. Wilkinson cites a remarkably close precedent for Bernini’s concept in a painting by Lanfranco illustrating the action of the Virgin interceding with her son to save a repentant soul (fig. 6). To a degree, the composition, and perhaps also the concept, seems to echo the figure of Charity Bernini’s father, Pietro, had carved years before in Naples (fig. 7). The point of the subject, however, is explicitly represented in a painting by Guercino, famous in his day, as evidenced by an engraving in which the accompanying inscription treats the subject of Charity as a memento mori reminding the viewer that his own redemption is in direct proportion to his participation in God’s love (fig. 8). Charity is a vigorously dynamic and earthly figure who conceives the papal tomb primarily by resting her sleeping charge against the sarcophagus—an image that insistently recalls the themes of the Pieta and entombment of Christ, whose sacrifice was the prototype of all acts of charity. In sharp contrast, the pensive figure of Justice stands, or more accurately leans against the tomb, in a pose that redolent of languor and passivity (fig. 9). Whereas Charity has fewer accouterments than usual (two babies rather than three), Justice has more: the book, and fasces in
addition to the canonical sword and balance. The attributes obviously relate to the quintessential forms of justice: legal, commutative and distributive, derived ultimately from Aristotle, developed by the scholastics, and formulated definitively at the Council of Trent. Three points concern us here. The crofjog pose of the figure and the inclusion of the fasces have a common theme with respect to the sword and balance, which evoke the impartial and retributive nature of justice. Crof|ed legs were a frequent attribute of figures representative of unburdened meditation and contemplation, and in this case the motif express one of the fundamental attributes of God’s justice, that it is slow and deliberate. Vincenzo Cartari explains the fact that Saturn was often represented with his feet tied together as indicating that Divine Goodness does not run quickly or noisily to castigate error, but belatedly and slowly, so that the sinner is unaware before he feels the pain. Under the heading precisely of Divine Justice Cesare Ripa describes the faces with the ax, carried by the lictors before the consuls and the Tribune of the People, as signifying that in the execution of justice overzealous castigation is unwarranted, and that justice should never be precipitous but have time to mature judgment while unbinding the rods that cover the ax. The crofjog pose and the faces occur together in a painting of Justice attributed to Battista Dossi (fig. 10).

The second observation I want to make about Justice concerns the weapon she holds. The particular sitting of Urban’s justice, which we will discuss presently, is felt in the magnificent colony of bees that decorates the pomum (fig. 11). Valeriano in his Hieroglyphics explains the double-edged sword as alluding to the two aspects of punishment, corporeal and spiritual. In this case the point is made with a particular embellishment in the form of damascening that decorates the two faces of the blade in mirror images (fig. 12). The design is evidently indecipherable as words, but I suspect it may allude to Islam and the conversion of the infidel.

This ideal of Christian justice, which included publication of the bible in Arabic, was a guiding principle of the Propaganda Fide, the great missionary institution that was one of the major preoccupations of Urban’s reign.

My third point concerns the most commonly misunderstood feature of the allegory, that is, what might be called her mood, her head resting on her hand, her head and eyes turned upward, her lips parted as if in response to some message received from on high. In truth, there is nothing tearful or morbid about her expression.

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11 Cesare Ripa, Iconologia, 1644, 5th ed., 1660, 1:71; 2:403, 495. Such an expression of tearful or morbid about her expression.

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The two groups together thus offer a veritable concert of psychological and moral states, the allegories themselves acting in a counterpoint perhaps deliberately analogous to the saintly figures in the crouching pairs beneath the dome, Veronica, Andrew, Longinus and Helen (fig. 15), carried out under Bernini’s supervision during the same period as Urban’s tomb; they represent the principal passion relics possessed by the basilica. The two female saints—one active, one passive—are earthbound and outward directed, while the two men (one active, one passive) appear upward directed and inspired from heaven.22

This theme, that is, the divine origin and earthward dispensation of God’s grace in the form of Charity and Justice, carries deep into the motivation and ultimate significance of the monument, which is in fact the first papal tomb incorporating these two virtues together and in isolation. Rarely, they appeared together independently, as in the painting by Baglione. They were commonly included in cycles of the virtues, and in Domenichino’s series at San Carlo, the attributes of justice include both the sword and the fasces (fig. 17).23 Most importantly, there was a certain tradition for pairing the allegories in relation to papal portraits, since from the Middle Ages on these virtues played fundamental roles in the theoretical dis-
cusions of the extent and limitations of papal rule—the so-called «plenitudo potestatis.» 24 This last context was clearly a factor in Bernini’s conception. One direct source was the image of Pope Urban I flanked by Justice and Charity in the series of grandiose papal portraits by Giulio Romano in the Sala di Costantino, which document the awesome continuity of the church of Rome since its establishment by the first Christian emperor (fig. 18). 25 This onomatic reference may reflect three contemporary sources report for Urban’s choice of his name: because of his affection for the city; because he wished to emulate the great achievements of his namesakes; and because, realizing that he tended to be rather rigid («aliquanto ... rigidetto») by nature, the name would be a continuous reminder to be temperate. 26 On the «urbanity» of the pope’s rule we shall have more to say presently. Underlying the first two motivations may be a particular understanding of the role played by the image of Urban I in the Sala di Costantino cycle: as the first pope to identify himself literally with the capital of the empire, he would have been the embodiment par excellence of the virtues associated with the church’s dominion. 27 The allusion is no doubt also to Urban II, promoter of the first crusade, who is mentioned specifically in another source and may have been a model for Urban VIII’s zealous support for foreign missions and the Propaganda Fide. 28 Interestingly, the same allegories reappear in the frame of a portrait of Urban VII, by Cherubino Alberti (fig. 19). 29 The point is that this combination of virtues, while perhaps appropriate to a specific individual, was also emblematic of the vicarious role of all the successors of Peter as magistrates of the church.

The sense of continuity is expressed in the basic conception of the tomb, which is a kind of epitome of the two papal monuments previously erected in new St. Peter’s, those of Paul III (fig. 20) and Gregory XIII (fig. 21). 30 The parallel and continuity between them is established by the use of corresponding materials, and by the echoing pyramidal composition of the bronze figure of the pope seated on a pedestal, before and beside which are placed white marble pairs of allegories. The levitating gesture of St. Peter, in the middle, which requires that of St. Peter himself in the Sala di Costantino (fig. 22), seems deliberately to intermediate between the palm—down pacification of Paul III and the triumphal exclamation of Gregory XIII. 31 Bernini’s allegories leaning against the sarcophagus seem also to link the reclinig and isolated standing figures on the two earlier monuments, while relating the tomb to its psychological and spatial development in a new way. These papal monuments have a close parallel in an engraved political allegory that is rooted in the Petrarchan tradition of allegorical triumphs, and that in turn anticipates many of the features of Bernini’s conception. The composition was designed by Joseph Heintz, court painter to the emperor Rudolph II, and engraved by Lucas Kilian in Venice in 1609, to celebrate the appointment of Heintz’s brother Daniel as architect of the city of Bern (fig. 23). 32 Seated atop a two-stepped structure the triumphant figure of Justice brandishes her sword and holds her scales aloft, looking heavenward. She is flanked below by standing figures of Truth...
Bernini, Tomb of Urban VIII, detail. Rome, St. Peter's (photo: ARFSP)
Bernini's Bumbling Barberini Bees

Front view, St. Veronica; (b) Front view, St. Ludmila; (c) Front view, St. Andrew; (d) Front view, St. Helen. Rome, St. Peter's (photos: Anderson 20590, 20598, 20591, 20593, 20591)
and Charity, who rest their arms on the pedestal. Truth looks up to the sun (one of Urban VIII’s emblems) and Charity holds one child while looking down toward the other who reaches up toward her, between them at their feet on the lower level cringes the chained figure of Avarice. Apart from the theme of the allegory, its relevance for Bernini lay in the unity and coherence of the composition, and the psychological counterpoint enacted by the figures.

The earlier papal monuments had included four allegories each, alluding to the terrestrial and celestial virtues of the popes: Paul III—Justice, Prudence, Peace and Abundance; Gregory XIII—Charity, Peace, Faith, Hope. (The monument to Paul III was first erected freestanding in a side aisle with the allegories placed at the front and back; when it was moved and reinstalled in a niche in one of the crossing piers, Justice and Prudence were placed at the base while the other two were set on the pediment above). Bernini may be said to have abstracted and combined the two chief virtues of the earlier tombs, Justice and Charity. The significance of this choice must be understood in the light of a project to integrate the choir and crossing of St. Peter’s in one grandiose and comprehensive program. At the center the tomb of St. Peter was crowned with a new baldachin that expressed Christ’s triumph in its very design; and the papal altar was surrounded in the crossing piers with relics and images of saints evoking Christ’s passion, the whole embodying the process of sacrifice and salvation.

It must have seemed positively providential that the Farnese tomb, having been transferred to one of the crossing piers, was, so to speak, «in the way» of this vast program.33 The idea of moving it to the apse (1628-9) to form a pair with the tomb of Urban gave the opportunity to demonstrate the significance of papal succession through the location of the two monuments, as well as their design. Placed in the lateral niches the pair flank the tomb of St. Peter himself at the center of the crossing. This arrangement formed a coherent group of memorials that served to illustrate the millenial papal succession and hegemony initiated under St. Peter and established under Constantine.34

Moreover, the choice of Justice and Charity created in relation to Paul III’s Justice and Prudence an inseparable contraposto in meaning, as well as form: the cardinal virtues traditionally associated with earthly dominion, the wise ruler, 21a-o-116 the divine virtues proper to the pope as a spiritual leader, the just judge.35 A final correlation and contrast is evident in the treatment of what is, literally and figuratively, the central theme of both tombs, that is, death itself. In both cases the caducity of earthly existence is expressed by wing-borne inscriptions with the names of the deceased (fig. 24).

33 It has been suggested that Urban chose to pair his tomb with that of Paul III because the Farnese pope served as a model for his own papal ambitions (Clark 1951, 73). My own view is that the choice was due to the desire to replace the isolated monument of a papal terrestrial and spiritual diadem.

34 In the theme of papal succession in the arrangement of the tombs on Borgialli’s 1737-9, 1743-5, followed by Sabella 1756-7, 1757-5, who notes that the figures would have been made-up by a depiction of Christ (being the key to St. Peter expressing the subject of the monumental decoration in the apse of the old basilica) that was placed for the altar in the center of the apse, between the two tombs.36}

35 Though 1613-4, 1614, noted the foundation in relation to the Paul III tomb of the theological virtues: Charity, for the moral virtue Prudence, but it is safe to say that the change implies a corresponding shift in meaning for Justice.

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36 "Benevento, Prudent with Spin., Bene, S. Camillo Gambari (Photo Albani 19584)"
Bernini's Bumbling Barberini Bees

P. Prospero Ant后悔, Tomb of Gregory XIII, Rome, St. Peter's (after Dossi 1577, IV, 372)
except that Bernini assimilated this motif, and the figure of Historia represented on the front of Paul III's cope (fig. 52), to the traditional winged personification of Death, which now becomes also the fateful recorder of life. 39

However, the choice of Justice and Charity alone for the tomb of Urban—unprecedented, I repeat, in papal funerary iconography—suggests that this combination of virtues, in their divine nature, had special meaning in the case of Urban VIII. (I want to emphasize here parenthetically, that the tomb of Urban was an astonishing, even revolutionary departure from the grandiose, self-expository monuments covered with great visual biographies, erected by his recent predecessors, Sixtus V and Paul V at Santa Maria Maggiore. 40) The complementary and necessary attributes of Charity and Justice were a constant feature in the ideology of the good magistrate from antiquity on, discussed and eulogized in innumerable ways in innumerable texts. One of the leitmotifs of this theme made it particularly relevant to Urban VIII because it was based on the equally ancient tradition that the social organization of the bee, three of which animals constituted the cost of arms of Urban VIII, represented the ideal state: a hierarchical monarchy where every individual had its assigned place which it never transgressed, and where every individual made its contribution to the commonweal, wholeheartedly, and in utter harmony with its fellows. 41 Two specific characteristics of the bee were especially relevant to the ideology of the good ruler, the fact that the bee could inflict pain its stinger, and was thus feared by its enemies, but also produced sweet honey and was thus loved by its friends. 42 The other important characteristic was that the ruling bee itself—often thought to be a king rather than a queen—larger, more important and constantly surrounded and guided by its subjects—had no stinger. Overall, both these counts, the ideal state of the bee was based on and derived from the ideal admixture of charity and justice inherent in its nature. In general terms, the bee became one of the important emblems of the ideal ruler, as when Alciati depicted Princely Clemency as a hive to which bees are attracted because the ruler treats his subjects with justice and clemency, or as an enthusiastic seated ruler to whom the bees fly in good will (figs. 26, 27). 43Punget amat est the motto of another emblem of the Principate Perfecto, illustrated by a swarm of bees following its leader (fig. 28). 44 In another case, the swarm following the king illustrates the jargon of the stinglef king bee from Seneca's discourse on Clemency to indicate that, in Pliny's words, majesty alone

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Clearly taken as apposite for Urban, whose very
temple was, as we have seen, incorporated the ideal of
rigor tempered by charity. All these metaphors,
the stingless king bee, the poetic victory over
the ferocious lion, the rule by majesty alone,
the domination of urbanity, were applied to the pope
in the literary celebrations of his election. Indeed,
I suspect that the tradition of the bee as the
embodiment of the Godlike coincidence of op-
posites, clemency and justice, may have been the
most important factor in the choice of those al-
legories for the tomb. In any case, these asso-
ciations of the bee must have made the election of
Maffeo Barberini to the papacy seem like a heav-
sent materialization of those same divine
virtues that were the quintessential attributes
of the vicar of Christ on earth.

This point may be thought of, and certainly
was thought of by contemporaries, as literally
true. One more bee-fact is necessary to un-
derstand why. Because of the attributes we have
discussed, and for many other reasons, as well—for
example, the perfect geometry of its hive and
the perfect efficiency of its anatomy—the bee
was regarded as endowed with a supernatural
intelligence. Whence it became a symbol of Divine
Wisdom, whose primary aim was to make us
perfect in his own image. The idea is both clas-
lical and biblical: • Led by such tokens and such
insances, many have taught that bees have re-
ceived a share of the divine intelligence, and a
heavenly ETHUS for God, they say,

(matetatl testament), not cruelly, suffices for the
ideal ruler (fig. 29).*

Although it has not been properly under-
stood heretofore, the same fundamental
thought underlies the poems of 1652 by
Bernini and Rubens for editions of Urban's
poetry (figs. 30, 31). Both portray the ideal of
overwhelming strength united with the gen-
tleness of poetry. Bernini showed David as de-
fender of his flock strangling the lion (I Samuel
17:45–52) but with his harp nearby. Rubens
showed Samson killing the lion, from whose
body bees jested forth (•... and out of the
strong came forth sweetness). Judges 14:5–6,
5, 14); this biblical episode is mentioned in a
poem addressed to Urban's brother Antonio, a
Capuchin monk, which alludes to the spirit's
rise to heaven from the corrupt body. Rubens
here also identifies Urban's poetry with the
meekliness of bees. The bees injusting
specifically from the lion's mouth, including
a formation of three, draw an obvious parallel
between Urban, celebrated as a poet in the
Greek style, and Pindar, whose poetry
was said to have been instilled by honey that bees had
dropped upon him as a child. • But the basic
image and the conceit derive from a broader
concept, that is, self-control, Dominius dignius,
the noblest form of Force, represented by
Ripa as a man straddling and bridling a lion (fig.28).
Ripa's image had been taken up as a
counterpart to Strength by Domenichino (fig. 29).•• This idea of self-restraint was clai-
ped in origin, ascribed above all, with
Alexander the Great, whose greatness was aug-
cmented by his self-control, which proved his
greatness as much as any victory: •... great-
minded as he was and still greater owing to his
control of himself, and of a greatness proved by
this action as much as by any other victory be-
cause he conquered himself... •• The idea was

42 In the word, evidently, that
Bernini also understood and here-
foreforth used the whole
Catholic concept as discussed
by Aristotle (De anima, 429a.23).

43 Guglielmo della Porta,
Tavoletta di 111 (Stilii), Rome, St.
Peter's (Photo Ill 1896.)
Bernini’s Bumbling Barberini Bees

pervades all things...yes, unto him all beings thereafter return, and, when unmade, are restored; no place is there for death, but, still quick, they fly up to the ranks of the stars, and mount to the heavens aloft» (Virgil, Georgics, IV, 219–27). \(^{55}\) For my spirit is sweet above honey: and my inheritance above honey and honeycomb» (Ecclesiasticus 24:27). \(^{56}\)

To be sure, all popes are elected by the act of Divine Providence, operating through the ballots of the College of Cardinals. But at the election of Maffeo Barberini, the act of Divine Providence—the descent of the Holy Spirit, one might well assert—was made physically manifest by the sudden appearance through an open window of the Conclave of nothing less than a swarm of bees! The event is alluded to in a tapestry illustrating Urban’s election, where a conspicuously open window is shown conspicuously in the background (fig. 34). The wonder is repeated in Pietro da Cortona’s frescoed vault in the great salon of the Palazzo Barberini (fig. 35), where the invading squadron is framed by a wreath of laurel (the arms of the new pope). \(^{57}\)

A contemporaneous account of the decoration actually describes the scene as Divine Providence commanding Immortality to crown with its iridescent diadem the arms of the new pope, whose election had made him «King of the Bees». \(^{58}\)

The story of the election, and Cortona’s reference to it had yet a deeper significance, however, since Urban’s victory was confirmed only after a recount was taken, at his insistence, when it was discovered that a ballot was misfiring from the scrutiny that had elected him. \(^{59}\) This is the primary scene represented in the election tapestry, where allegorical figures of Modesty and Magnanimity fly into the concave to celebrate the virtues Urban displayed in his own election. \(^{60}\)

His coronation and abjuration of immortality, pressed by the miracle of the bees, were thus occasioned by his exemplary demonstration of virtue in its most heroic form, self-restraint. The pope’s biographer commented: «It was a truly memorable deed that will render his name forever most glorious because, seeing himself at one point pope and then not pope, with great courage and with such a magnificent heart he decided to let the welfare of the universal Church prevail over his own desire for the supreme pontificate. Wherefore smote him his other signal faculties and spiritual qualities are the constancy, magnanimity, and generosity he demonstrated in his heroic act, it will be sufficient to render his name immortal and celebrate to the world the manner in which he assumed the papacy.» \(^{61}\)

It might thus well be said that the age of the Baroque was ushered in by a supreme act of ephemeralism—the sudden descent upon Rome, the church, and mankind, of an unmistakably heaven-sent swarm of buzzing Barberini bees, converging to the chosen one the divine virtues of Clemency and Justice proper to his newly acquired office.

With that swarm began the veritable invasion (plague, as some would have it by the time Urban’s reign ended) of bees, the number of which populating Rome and the papal states one was later estimated at more than ten thousand. \(^{62}\)

In my estimation, however, what distinguished the Barberini bees was not their number—many popes had been great builders and art patrons, and many puns and other games had been played with their coats of arms. But none had acquired the active, literally volatile presence of the Barberini bees. Perhaps one should rather say transience, for to my mind and in our context, at least, the Barberini bees embody the notion of ephemeralism in their period more profoundly and more pungently than any other sign. They fly against the blue sky in the church of theVirgin at the altar of heaven (fig. 36); and in the early medieval apse mosaic in the basilica of St. Cosmas and Damian in the heart of the Roman forum, where a Barberini restoration gave new life to the image of Urban’s predecessor, the sainted Pope Felix IV (Felicitas, Happiness), they fructify the garden of paradise (fig. 37).

This same quality informs the famous bees that have alighted on Urban’s tomb, having now

57 The subject of Urban’s election has been extensively explored in their connection by Scott 1992, 1993, 1995. Of course, for Cortona’s attention to the memory of the bee and its relevance to the Cortonan frescos, see Scott 1995, 1996, and also the city 1893, 1897, the exploration of the working figures by Mattia Falcone (1643–1707) ... Meditations of Inexplicable Providence, contemporaneous to the making of the Barberini tapestries, to Francisco de Miranda 1616, to the significance of the honey in a Barberian emblem, see below.
58 The Urban as King of the Bees, see Scott 1995, 1996.
59 For the story of the rescue of the queen, see Scott 1993, 1995.
63 Bernini’s Bumbling Barberini Bees
64 For my spirit is sweet above honey: and my inheritance above honey and honeycomb» (Ecclesiasticus 24:27).
65 The subject of Urban’s election has been extensively explored in their connection by Scott 1992, 1993, 1995. Of course, for Cortona’s attention to the memory of the bee and its relevance to the Cortonan frescos, see Scott 1995, 1996, and also the city 1893, 1897, the exploration of the working figures by Mattia Falcone (1643–1707) ... Meditations of Inexplicable Providence, contemporaneous to the making of the Barberini tapestries, to Francisco de Miranda 1616, to the significance of the honey in a Barberian emblem, see below.
66 The Urban as King of the Bees, see Scott 1995, 1996.
67 For the story of the rescue of the queen, see Scott 1993, 1995.
presumably pased through a window of the basilica, to participate in the commemoration of St. Peter's departed successor and their beloved ruler—just as they had done twenty years before at Urban's election. In 64, the three large bees that allude to the cost of arms are really the leaders—king-size bees, one might say (figs. 38, 39)—of a swarm that popu-
lates the monument; the others are much small-
er, worker bees—indeed, they are true to scale (figs. 40, 41, 42). Transforming the papal coat of arms into a swarm of insects buzzing over the papal tomb was, surely, an act of unpara-
alled imagination and wit, which also served to transform the mood of melancholy and despair usually associated with funeral iconography into a moment of surprise and even of joy. The essential idea was not new, however. Stinging swarms had been associated with, and attached to tombs in two closely related and complementary instances, both of which I think were semi-
nal inspirations for Bernini's conceit. The Greek Anthology includes a description of the tomb of Archilochus, *who first made the Muse bite* (fig. 39) *dipping her in vipers' gall, staining mild Helicon with blood.* ... *Pasqually, as if in despair.* This line is repeated in the Examen di tutti i monumenti pontifici of Vincenzo Carducci (1607-1673), and the蜜蜂 are associated with bees and wasps on the tomb of Archilochus, the founder of Greek lyric poetry, famous for having composed the song of victory used by the victors at Olympia, and for inventing the epope and other verse forms; but he was also famous for his bitter satires, which wound-
ed his enemies even unto death. It is thus a kind of poetic justice that at his own death his barbs should return as a reminder of his mali-
tious verses, in the form of a swarm of wasps carved on his tomb. The idea was visualized in Alciati's famous emblem book (fig. 42), and given Urban's fame as a poet himself—he wrote a great deal in exactly the kind of epodic verse associated with Archilochus—there can be no doubt of his, and Bernini's, familiarity with the tradition. The Swallowing bee wasps attack on his tomb of swarms of wasps and bees (fig. 44).

Once Nerone's name, the world did quake to hear, And Rome did tremble, at Domitian's sight: But now the Tyrant, cause of all this fear, Is laid full low, upon whose toombe do light, To take revenge, the Bee, and summer Flie, Who escap'st sometime his cruellte.

It is remarkable indeed, and must have seemed providential to the pope and to Bernini, that these two associations between stinging insects and death should both apply equally to Urban, the first as poet, the second as pope; providential also in that simply by reversing the sense of the malevolent tradition, the image of the bee-
infested tomb could be transformed. Instead of swarming to avenge ancient, pagan evil, the apici-
ian chorus (one can practically hear the buzzing of the busy bees) is attracted to its ruler, as in Al-
ciati's emblems of Prince lobby (figs. 26 and 27). The bees celebrate the triumph of Christian virtue realized poetically in Urban's verses, devoted not to destructive diatribe but to pious inspiration; and institutionally in Urban's reign, devoted not to tyranny and martyrdom but to the charity and justice of the of rule of Christ vested in the pope. Considered in this light the seemingly casual, bumbling placement of the three big Barberini bees be-
comes charged with meaning. They all face up-
ward and seem to rise in an ascending march past the skeletal figure of death, as if in response to the resurrecting command of the pope—ap-
propriated, as Kauffmann first noticed, from the gesture of St. Peter himself in the Sala di Costantino series (fig. 22)—enhanced on his seat of wisdom, itself ornamented with bees. It is astonishing but true that the lowestmost bee, on the rim of the sarcophagus basin, has no stinger—it is not broken off, it never had one (fig. 38), O death, where is thy victory?! (Rom. 15:55) The other two (fig. 39), as if resurrected, are whole again and proceed in their rise to the very border of death, commemoration, and life.

The hyperbolic flattery usually attributed to Bernini is belied not only by the theological na-
ture of the allegories, but also by the inordinate importance attributed to death itself, by virtue of the inclusion of the Michelangelesque sar-
cophagus, and especially the central role played by the figure of the Reaper in the drama of the tomb. Like the bees, Death seems to rise from the sarcophagus, a conceit derived. I think, from the tomb of a great Flemish cardinal of the sixteenth century, well known through con-
temporary engravings of monuments of famous persons (fig. 45). In the tomb of Cardinal Erard de la March, however, Death performs his
La lettera alla terra, appunto essa, rende un fanciullo a cominciare in canti, le braccia del tempo, commenziati dall’infinito poi debutta, se fanciullo, aiutato anco nella sua fatica, di materiali, a scoprere il suo, ancora di buona via della vendita, assottigliandola alla base, quell’infinito fanciullo, tanto esso amato nel pensiero del mondo, ma la spinta è del bravo colui, che vede nel mondo, che soldi per non l’assoggettare sempre cammini, non seguendone la giustizia il fattore alla vera, perché sempre la viva nel sincero, la vita, e non per il suo bene, in inutili, in troppo.

DO

13 Domenico, Bees with Dominion over the Saff, rear (photo: Alinari 28565)

14 Bernini, Bee, Rome, S. Maria in Trastevere, (photo: SIP Roma 1993/94, front cover)
Bernini's Bumbling Barberini Bees

role as momento mori in a traditional way, branding the death of his father, Archduke Leopold I, writes, or rather finishes writing the name and title of Urban VIII in the black book of death (fig. 48). The bookish Death seems to recall that along with his literary interests the pope was an avid historian and bibliophile. However, a more specific reference is suggested by a rarely noted, and to my mind never properly understood peculiarity of the motif, the name of Urban's predecessor partially visible on a preceding page. Often assumed to refer to Urban's immediate predecessor Gregory XV, the letters are clearly legible as CL above and A.1 below, that is, Clement VIII Aldobrandini. And, as if to avoid any possibility of misunderstanding, exactly the right number of pages, corresponding to the number of intervening popes, namely three, are shown between that with Urban's name and that with Clement's. (Clement VIII, Leo XI, Paul V, Gregory XV, Urban VIII) It is not hard to understand why the reference to Gregory was avoided: that pope's nephew, Cardinal Ludovisi, had been a bitter enemy since the time of the concile. On the other hand, Urban had been a great favorite of Clement VIII, who had furthered his early career in many ways. However, I think there was another, more specific reason, which may even have been the inspiration for the motif of the record book itself. One of the important acts of Clement was to have established in Castel Sant'Angelo (originally the tomb of the Emperor Hadrian), the guardian forresses of the papa-cy, an archive for the historical records of the church, the so-called Biblioteca Clementina. In praise of the project, Barberini wrote a poem, dedicated to Clement, which was included in all the editions of his collected verse. The poem, which is dedicated to Clement and titled De tabulario pontificii in arce Hadriana, involves an elaborate conceit specifically linking the records kept through the Pope's generosity to the permanence of his fame. Urban himself, apart from his famous literary and bibliophilic interests, was also a great archivist, establishing along with several ecclesiastical repositories, a central archive of the notarial records of the city. Hans Kauffmann, recalling the figure on Paul III's cope, aptly described the figure of death writing in a book as a kind of allegory of History (fig. 46). Here, however, Death has the specific task of record keeper—archivist, one might well say—displaying at once the ephemeralinity of earthly things, bees as well as things, notably the church as embodied in the person of its temporal and spiritual head. Therein lies the ultimate, and supremely paradoxical, significance of Bernini's tomb of Urban VIII—and, I would say, of ephemeralinity in Baroque art generally. The very figure representing the triumph of transience, winged Death, is at the same time also the guarantor of permanence, indeed of immortality, through the achievements and fame of Urban, and through the divinities vested in God in the institution of the church and the papacy.

Bernini left two unmistakable clues to the supernaturally inspired truth of this message. Four of the small, <real> bees appear on the legs of the sarcophagus, while a fifth has landed on a leaf of the laurel wreath that decorates the sarcophagus lid, near the tip of Death's wing (fig. 42). Laurel was, of course, the preeminent symbol of poetry and the victorious immortality it confers. and one of the best known and most consistent of the ideas attached to bees—based on Virgil's notion, quoted earlier, that the bee did not die but flew to heaven to join the stars—that they symbolized immortality. The two Barberini emblems coincided in the principle Barberini family impress, which depicted a flight of bees landing on the branches of a laurel tree, with the legend His domus (fig. 40). The meaning and history of this device are critical to an understanding of the message of the tomb. The conceit is based on a climactic passage in the Aeneid when the hero, having at last reached Latium after his peregrinations from Troy, realized that he had reached his final destination, there to establish the religion of his fathers and the hegemony of Rome, from the wondrous descent of a large swarm of bees upon a laurel tree sacred to Apollo. Heeding the signs, he declared «His domus, haec patria eft» (here is our home, here our country). Maffeo invented the impress to celebrate the transferal of the Barberini family from Florence to Rome, and his own call to a higher destiny, before he became pope.

The bee-infested laurel was thus a truly un-canny forecast of the api-an intervention of Divine Providence in Urban's election. On the pope's tomb the little bee, the very emblem of trembling transience, almost invisible perched on its botanical equivalent, by its humble immortality clips the wings of death itself and tri-
Maledicentia.

ETMENA II.

C O M M I N T A R I I.

Di Cefare Ripa.

H I S T O R I A.

The figure above is a diagram of a tomb, likely a part of a larger architectural or artistic work. It appears to be a decorative piece, possibly related to the theme of maledicentia (malice, wickedness) as suggested by the text. The text includes a commentary in Latin, which might be discussing the iconography or historical significance of the tomb depicted.

The diagram is a visual representation of the tomb, showing its various components and possibly its location or significance. The text refers to the work of Andrea Alciati, who wrote "Maledicentia," and the emblem "Alien" from "Tabulae emblematicae," which could be related to the imagery and themes of the tomb.

The reference to "Di Cefare Ripa" suggests a historical or artistic context, possibly providing further details or commentary on the tomb or related works. The text also includes a historical reference to "Stevens," which might be a location or a specific reference within the historical context of the tomb's design.

Overall, the image and text together provide a detailed view of the tomb and its significance, likely within the context of historical or artistic studies.
Bernini’s Bumbling Barberini Bees

unphs over the very emblem of earthly caducity. At the same time, the lyrical delicacy of the motif reinforces a hint of nostalgia implicit in another emblematic association of the laurel and bee, the Virgilian Golden Age evoked rhapsodically by contemporaries in relation to the Barberini papacy. «That tree of knowledge, of triumph, of poetry, of empire, of immortality, of chastity; and similarly the bee of eloquence, poetry, continence, clemency, diligence, artifice, long and prosperous life, eternal felicity, peace, and union.»

The primary withe to the meaning of the tomb is to be found where it should be, in the coat of arms of the Barberini pope, attached to the face of the arch at the apex of the niche (fig. 49). Here an extraordinary—indeed, as far as I know unique—operation is performed by two heaven-sent messengers. The Barberini escutcheon, instead of arriving, as in the ceiling of the Palazzo Barberini (fig. 35), is detached from the papal tiara and keys and carried aloft. The image is a living demonstration of the fleeting earthly presence and spiritual sublimation of an individual mortal who briefly occupied the center of an eternally abiding creation of the will of God.

In the end, however, perhaps the sharpest insight into the significance of Bernini’s bumbling Barberini bees and the spirit in which they were conceived was provided by Bernini himself. His words are quoted by his biographers in recounting an incident that took place at the unveiling of the tomb of Urban, in the presence of the pope’s ferociously insomniac successor, Innocent X, who had driven the Barberini family into exile: «One cannot refrain at this point from recalling a cutting reply the Cavaliere gave in demonstration of his firm allegiance to Urban, to a person of high station who was not sympathetic to the Barberini family. He had represented here and there on the sarcophagus of the tomb a number of bees, for no other purpose than to allude wittily to Urban’s arms. The person noticed, and in the presence of others said to the Cavaliere with a smile, Sir, you have wished by placing the bees here and there to portray the dispersion of the Barberini family (the members had then withdrawn to France), to which without a moment’s hesitation Bernini replied, But you, Sir, may well know that dispersed bees at the sound of a bell return to congrue, referring to the great bell on the Capitoline that sounds at the death of every pope. Bernini’s reply brought him great applause from those who reflected on the risk he took at that time to remain conitant to the memory of his benefactor.»
Illustrations

Alinari
AFFFP: Archivio della Reverenda Fabbrica di S. Pietro
Biblioteca Universitaria dell'Università di Pisa
ICCG: Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione, Roma
SAGN: Soprintendenza alle gallerie, Napoli

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