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Poetry and Patronage in the Barberini Entourage: the *Technopaignia* of the Southern Italian Greek-Speaking Poet Francesco Arcudi, Bishop of Nusco (1590–1641)

Abstract

In 1638 the Vatican Typography printed a book in memory of Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc; the book was dedicated to Cardinal Francesco Barberini and it is a clear example of the way in which political (and ecclesiastical) power influenced the cultural dynamics of the seventeenth century. Among the scholars who composed verses for the death of de Peiresc we find Francesco Arcudi, a literate priest from the Greek-speaking area of Southern Apulia, who migrated to Rome to study in the Greek College of St. Athanasius. He showed his Greek (linguistic and liturgical) knowledge at the court of Francesco Barberini. Arcudi's poetic production is, in its greatest part, dedicated to Pope Urban VIII Barberini and his nephew, Cardinal Francesco; the poems are written for various occasions, aiming to celebrate the power and glory of the pope's and cardinal's family. Of great interest are Arcudi's τεχνοπαίγνια, figure epigrams inscribed in the shape of a bee (the arms of the Barberini family) or an eagle (symbol of Barberini's power), here edited for the first time. After an overview of Francesco Arcudi's personality and poetic production, the paper aims to advance our understanding of the cultural landscape (during the pontificate of Pope Barberini) and show the way in which Barberini's patronage influenced Arcudi's work and that of other scholars in the first half of the seventeenth century.

Keywords

Greek Renaissance poetry, Greek epigrams, figure epigrams, Barberini's entourage, Francesco Arcudi.

1. Introduction

In the first half of the seventeenth century, the three bees emblem, symbol of the Barberini family, signaled a driving force in much cultural and literary production in Rome and at the papal curia. From

here came not only a poetic stimulus and source of inspiration, but also a safe and continuous medium of patronage. Both Italian and foreign scholars and antiquarians gathered around the figures of Pope Urbanus VIII (born Maffeo Vincenzo Barberini, who held the throne of St. Peter from 1623 to 1644; see Lutz) and his nephew Francesco Barberini (cardinal from 1623; died in 1679; see Merola). Any attempt to highlight here even just the most salient features of this period of dense cultural, religious, and political would be doomed to failure.[1] Yet, one may hope that these will soon attract more attention among modern scholars. A good starting point would be to compile a prosopography of the many persons who devoted themselves to historical, artistic, and literary enterprises during the pontificate of Urbanus VIII, with accompanying bibliographical profiles. Here we will limit ourselves to mentioning some of the more illustrious members of the *Res publica litterarum Barberina* who, like bees around a honeypot, participated in the advancement of knowledge in the fields of antiquarianism, philology, ecclesiastical history and poetry.[2] We have, for example, the French humanists and antiquarians Claude-Fabri De Peiresc, Claude Saumaise, and Pierre Poussines; Henri Dormal from Flanders; the geographer, historian and bibliophile Lukas Holste from Germany; Greek-speaking scholars from the Ottoman Empire like the polygraph Leon Allacci, the theologian Petros Arcudios, and many others (*e.g.* Mattheus Caryophyllis); the Greek-native Nicholaus Alemanni and the missionary and ecclesiastical writer Neophytos Rhodinòs from Cyprus. The Barberini manuscripts, both Greek and Latin, now in the Vatican Library, are a treasure trove, though not yet sufficiently investigated, for a better understanding of these human and cultural relations. They document philological studies on many patristic and Byzantine texts, erudite discussions on important topics and, not least, requests from members of the pope's closest circle, involving all the talented scholars mentioned above and many others. It was precisely in this cultural atmosphere that the philological investigation of various theological assumptions and liturgical customs of Eastern Christians and attempts to demonstrate the unity of the universal Church and to foster dialogue with Orthodoxy in the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation flourished. Vast areas of central and northern Europe had recently broken away from the central power of Rome, professing not only a radical return to the Gospel truth and a new ecclesiastic organization, but also a different theological vision of doctrines and sacraments. Through philological, theological, and liturgical studies,

1. An extensive collection of studies on the Barberini family and cultural entourage is that of Mochi Onori et al.

2. See Allacci, *Apes Barberinae* for a prosopographical and biographical index of the major authors of the Barberini entourage around the year 1633. See also Legrande.

Allacci and Arcudios sought to demonstrate the existence of a perpetual consensus, an inseparable union on the level of faith and liturgical practice, between the Church of the East and the Church of the West (Herklotz, *Die Academia Basiliana*; "The Academia Basiliana"). Allacci, Caryophyllis and others were concerned at encountering the first signs of Lutheran and Calvinist penetration into Eastern Europe. They and others violently attacked the Patriarch of Constantinople Kyrillos Lùkaris (1572–1638) who, in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, had opened up to the reformist demands of Central Europe and had written a confession of faith strongly influenced by Calvinist thought. On this topic, see Runciman 259–88; Khokhar; Nosilla and Prandolini; Falkowsky. Treatises and polemical writings went hand in hand with this commitment. One example of this is Neophytos Rhodinòs, a missionary in southern Albania, working on behalf of the congregation *De propaganda fide*. He was in constant contact with Roman circles, in particular with Francesco Barberini and Leone Allacci,[3] and exercised his ministry in the Balkans, instructing the Hellenophones of the Himara in the Greek language and educating them in the Catholic faith (see Karalevsky; Brunello). He also preached in northern Greece and was persecuted by the Ecumenical Patriarch Lùkaris (see Tsirpanlis, "*Ο Νεόφυτος Ροδινός*").

It is difficult to detail the vast and complex landscape of cultural interplay that also had a major impact on the production of poetry. Strong cultural tension came to be expressed through editions of ancient texts, compilations of erudite works on specific themes (*e.g.* to the many works on homonymy carried out by Allacci), and through personal composition of verses and the creation of poetic anthologies. One example is the *Monumentum Romanum* from 1637, a collection of poems edited by Jan-Jacque Buchard, celebrating the death of Nicolas-Claude Fabri De Peiresc (1580–1637),[4] a scientist and man of letters with a wide reputation in early seventeenth-century Europe and closely linked to Cardinal Francesco Barberini.[5] Despite its simple structure, the *Monumentum* is a true paradigm of an era, a manifesto of a generation of men of letters who wove verses under the patronage of the powerful cardinal. Rather than shedding tears over the death of their illustrious dedicatee, bent their poetic muse to Barberini's wishes, crowded together to show off, flaunted a cultural background nourished by classical readings, and displayed erudition and a baroque vein. Such behaviour could hardly hide, or most probably did not want to hide, a very ill-concealed careerism. De Peiresc's death became an occasion for a deferential homage to the *auctor* of

3. Yet unedited letters between Rhodinòs and Allacci are still preserved in the *Fondo Allacci* of the Biblioteca Vallicelliana in Rome and I'm working on them for a forthcoming paper.

4. On Peiresc see Fumaroli.

5. The prelate was notoriously well disposed towards French politics, intellectuals and artists. See Pieyre; Colomer.

the collection, Francesco Barberini, and the opportunity to indulge his taste and follow his cultural directives. The result is a collection of verse of a high standard that concludes with the interesting section entitled Παγγλωσσία. This last section, a veritable treasure trove, contains poems in all languages known at the time, both ancient and modern, ranging from Sanskrit to epigraphic Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, Syriac, Albanian, Modern Greek, Hungarian, Japanese, Russian, and Peruvian. The anthology stems from a mournful event (de Peiresc's death) and should be testament to the esteem and affection for a man who had dedicated his life to science, but actually it reads more as a symbol of a triumphant Church, present in every age of humanity, militant in every corner of the earth, even the most remote. Displaying a Baroque poetic tendency, strongly influenced by the patronage of the Barberini family, the *Monumentum* is an obvious manifesto of a Counter-Reformation Church, dominated by the Barberini family and guided by the poet pope Urbanus VIII, who through this confirms his power, patronage and universality.

2. Francesco Arcudi: the poet

Among the many poets who contributed to the *Monumentum Romanum* was Francesco Arcudi, a scholar born in 1590 in Soleto (Terra d'Otranto), in the Greek-speaking area of southern Apulia. When he was only ten years old, in 1600, Arcudi began studying at the Pontifical Greek College of St. Athanasius in Rome. There, alongside companions such as the aforementioned Leone Allacci and under the guidance of teachers such as Nicola Alemanni and Giasone Sozomeno, he continued his studies until he completed a doctor's degree. After finishing his studies in 1613, he returned to Soleto, where he was ordained priest according to the Latin rite. At home, the socio-cultural and political situation was still inflamed, especially due to the delicate transition of the collegiate church of Soleto from the Greek to the Latin rite. It was not the right climate for those who cultivated literary and erudite interests or aspired to a career within less circumscribed horizons.[6] It was also for these reasons that he began to collect Greek manuscripts from Salento and to make a gift of them to Cardinal Francesco Barberini and Pope Urbanus VIII. They had created the Barberini Library, and any valuable donation that would help to expand the library's collection was welcome. This devotion earned Arcudi first a return to Rome and to the circle of the cardinal and then

6. On Arcudi's biography and works see Legrand 435–71; Impellizzeri; Giannachi. On Arcudi's knowledge of the Byzantine liturgy see Parenti.

the appointment as bishop of Nusco in Irpinia, which came in 1639.

All of Arcudi's donations of books (including not least the archetypal codex of the *Etymologicum Gudianum*, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana [BAV], Barb. gr. 70)[7] were accompanied by Greek epigrams of his. Arcudi was a true devotee of this type of poetry and in this he continued a long tradition that stretched from the Greek Middle Ages[8] to the Early Modern period. We are left with a corpus of about fifty epigrams of varying length (see Surace 334–35; Giannachi 898–139). He wrote Greek verses, dactylic hexameters and elegiac couplets, for various occasions during the year, such as the Pope's genethliacs, or in reply to gifts from his illustrious patrons, or for special events related to the cultural activities of the Barberini family. Examples of the latter include: a new statue erected in the Barberini library, a museum opened by Francesco Barberini at Monte Mario, a gift of forty-one gold coins from the cardinal, the discovery of a reference to statues burnt by the Latins at Constantinople in the assault of 1204, found in a codex containing Niketas Choniates' *Chronike Dieghesis*. The greatest quantity of his occasional epigrammatic poetry is preserved in ms. Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (BAV), Barb. gr. 279.[9] Poetry became a means of excelling in the eyes of powerful prelates, demonstrating one's erudition and cultivating one's career. Thus, he indulged in poetic activity from a compelling need to be under the eyes of the pope and the cardinal and to be counted among the *literati* closest to the Barberini family in order to obtain appointments, bonuses, and promotions. In this sense, we can speak of Arcudi's epigrammatic poetry as occasional poetry. Our author attempted to amplify every important action through the sounding board of his verses, and to understand not only the way Arcudi's poetry was born (the literary occasion) but also how it was enjoyed by its recipients. We must note that many of Arcudi's epigrams, like those of many other poets who gravitated around the Barberini court, have remained in handwritten manuscripts, preserved among the papal or cardinal's archival papers. They were intended as private reading for the erudite circle led by the two Barberini. As for the epigrams that Arcudi wrote in the manuscripts he donated to the pope's or the cardinal's collection, they were also only intended for those who owned and used the books. To amplify the importance of his gift, Arcudi had his seal imprinted on them, so that even future patrons would remember his affection and dedication.

Some of the epigrams can be dated to Arcudi's Roman period. What follows below is an edition[10] and translations of some poems,

7. On this manuscript see Maleci; Sciarra.

8. See Rhoby, *Ausgewählte Byzantinische Epigramme*. For a broad overview of the subject, see all references to occasional poetry in Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry I*. See also Drpić.

9. For the epigrams in BAV, Barb. gr. 279 see Giannachi. The manuscript is now digitized and available on the web.

10. The epigrams presented in this paper are all taken from Francesco Arcudi's autographs preserved in manuscript BAV, Barb. gr. 279. The author took particular care in spelling the verses he wrote, for the obvious reason of appearing as accurate as possible in the eyes of his patrons. For this reason, after careful examination of the texts, I have preserved the original spelling throughout, as well as the diacritic marks. I have only intervened to restore the capitalized initials of personal names and place names. The graphic presentation of the epigrams in elegiac couplets with every second verse indented also reflects Arcudi's choice.

which exemplify Arcudi's style. The edited epigrams were chosen because they highlight certain occasions that inspired the epigrammatic production and because they testify to the baroque style of our author, who often indulges in the same images (the bee, the honeycomb, the honey) in praising the munificence of his patrons.

11. See Giannachi 115.

BAV, Barb. gr. 279 (f. 60r)[11]

Εἰς εἰκόνα χαλκῆν Οὐρβανοῦ τοῦ Ὀγδόου
τὴν ἐν τῇ Βαρβερινῇ βιβλιοθήκῃ ἀναστηλωθεῖσαν.

Βαρβερινὸς Φραγκίσκος ἐδείματο βιβλιοθήκην,
ὡς στάδιον σοφίης· εἰκόνα θεὶς δὲ μέσην
Οὐρβανοῦ ἐν σοφίῃ ἄκρου, σταδιεῦσιν ἐνίσπει·
δεῦρ᾽ ἴτ᾽· ἀγωνοθέτης ἆθλα πάρεστι νέμων.

Οὐρβανῷ τῷ Ὀγδόῳ
εὐκτικόν

Σοὶ νεότητ᾽ ἀετοῦ Θεὸς ἄμβροτος ἀιὲν ὀπάσσοι,
καὶ πολλῶν ἐτέων οὔποτε κύκλα λίποι.

(For a bronze image of Urbanus VIII erected in the Barberini library.
Francesco Barberini built the library as an arena of wisdom, and in placing the image of Urbanus, the supreme example of wisdom, in the middle, he says to the runners: "Come on! The judge is here and oversees the races!."
To Urbanus VIII as a wish.
May the immortal God always grant you the youthful vigor of an eagle and may the cycles of many years never take an end for you).

A new statue of the pope erected by his nephew, the cardinal, in the family's private library became a cue for our author to write laudatory verses and good wishes. Expressing his devotion through formulas of good wishes with this epigram, he once again testified to his competence in the Greek language, much appreciated in the Barberini entourage. We also deduce from the text that Arcudi frequented the Barberini house assiduously and was admitted to the newly-founded library.

Another epigram was written to accompany the gift by Arcudi of

a book by Methodius on chastity. This was the Συμπόσιον περὶ ἁγνείας by Methodius of Olympus, a bishop of Middle Eastern origin who lived between the third and fourth centuries suffering a martyrdom during the time of Diocletian. Of these verses we curiously possess the original Arcudian version and a second version made in response to the pope's revisions? corrections? suggestions? The works of the scholar from Salento used to abound with references to classical mythology. This Urbanus VIII pointed out to him, so much so that Arcudi modified the poetic text. In the second version, Arcudi dwells more on the martyrdom of Methodius and is forced to openly reject the ancient myths as false tales of poets.

12. See Giannachi 117–18.

BAV, Barb. gr. 279 (f. 61r)[12]

Εἰς τὴν περὶ ἁγνείας βίβλον Μεθοδίου τοῦ μάρτυρος

Ἡ Κύπρις τὸν Ἄδωνιν ἰχνηλατέουσ᾽, ὑπ᾽ ἀκάνθης
τὸν πόδα ἐτρώθη· αἷμα δ᾽ ἔβαψε ῥόδα.
Μειθόδιος δὲ θανὼν περὶ πίστιος, αἵματι βάψεν
ἄνθεα παρθενίης, ἄφθιτα, λευκὰ πάλαι.

Idem emendatum et correctum ab auctore sui
ex censura URBANI octavi P.O.M.
doctissimi et sapientissimi Sacrae Poêsis Principis

Ψευδὲς μουσοπόλων φῦλον μυθεύσατο, ὅττι
τρωθείσης Παφίης αἷμα* ἔβαψε ῥόδα. * vel λύθρος
κάλλος ὅμως γε ῥόδοιο ἀπόλλυται. ὤλετο Κύπρις,
ὡς σκιά, ὡς ὄναρ, ὡς μῦθος ἀοιδοπόλων.
Μειθόδιος δὲ θανὼν περὶ πίστιος, αἵματι βάψεν
ἄνθεα ἁγνείης, κ᾽ ἄφθιτός ἔστιν ἔτι.
κ᾽ ἄφθιτα ἁγνείης ἔπλε κάλλεα, πορφύροντα
λύθρῳ Μειθοδίου. ταῦτ᾽ ἔχει ἥδε βίβλος.

(For the book by Methodius on chastity. Cypris, while chasing Adonis, injured her foot on a thorn and stained the rose with blood. But Methodius, having died for the faith, stained the eternal and once white flowers of virginity with blood.
The same epigram was amended and corrected by the author after the revision of Urbanus VIII, the most learned prince of sacred poetry.

> The false servants of the muses told a lie: after being wounded, Aphrodite Paphia soiled the roses with blood* (*or with a bloodstain). The beauty of the rose, however, faded and Cypris died, like a ghost, a dream, a poet's tale. Methodius, on the other hand, who died for the faith, stained the flowers of chastity with blood and is still immortal; and the beauties of chastity, purple with Methodius's blood, became immortal. Such things are contained in this book.)

On f. 104r of BAV, Barb. gr. 279 there is a longer version of the first epigram, expanded in the second part with greater insistence on the superiority of Methodius' martyrdom over the ephemeral beauty of all that is mortal (see Giannachi 116–17; Pontani 120–21).

> ἡ Κύπρις τὸν Ἄδωνιν ἰχνηλατέουσ᾽, ὑπ᾽ ἀκάνθης
> τὸν πόδα ἐβλήθη· αἷμα δ᾽ ἔβαψε ῥόδα.
> Μειθόδιος δὲ θανὼν περὶ πίστιος, αἵματι βάψεν
> ἄνθεα παρθενίης, ἄφθιτα, λευκὰ πάλαι.
> κεῖνα δ᾽ἄμ᾽ ἠβάσκοντα ἐγήρασεν, ἠδ᾽ἐμαράνθη.
> σαρκὸς γὰρ φθαρτῆς ἡ χάρις ὠκύμορος.
> ἄφθιτα ταῦτα δ᾽ἔμεινεν ἀκήρατα, κρέσσονα τόσσον
> σαρκὸς ὅσον φθαρτῆς πνεῦμα Θεοῦ προφέρει.
>
> (Cypris, while chasing Adonis, was pricked in the foot by a thorn and soiled the roses with blood. But Methodius, having died for the faith, stained the once eternal and white flowers of virginity with blood. Those former flowers, as soon as they grew, faded and withered away. For the grace of a mortal body is short-lived. The latter, on the other hand, remained incorruptible, immaculate, all the greater because the spirit of God is superior to a mortal body).

These epigrams are particularly interesting because they not only highlight one of the most common occasions that stimulated Arcudi's epigrammatic poetry (the gift of a book), but also shed light on the dynamics of reception of our author's verses. The pope, we see, received the epigrams and read them personally, even intervening if something needed improvement. We know that Urban VIII was particularly sensitive to poetry and wrote verses himself in Greek and Latin. In this case, he acted as a reviser of Arcudi's verses, improving, according to his own taste, the poetic diction and choices. It is interesting to note that Arcudi copies both versions of the epigram onto the same page of the present manuscript BAV, Barb. gr. 279; he is keen

to emphasize that the second version is the one that came about after the Pope's intervention. That is, he deliberately wants to point out that his poems have caught the attention of Urban VIII, that they were directly read by him, and that the pope proposed changes that were accepted by the author. In the second version, Arcudi adheres strictly to the Pope's literary taste and modifies the epigram by placing more emphasis on the martyrdom of the Christian saint than on mythological references. Mythology is emphatically defined as a false narrative.

The two following epigrams, the fruit of Arcudi's heartfelt devotion to Francesco Barberini, also highlight some biographical elements. Francesco insists on his Salentine (Apulian) origin, on his love for and work under the orders of the cardinal, in the end thanking him for his reception in Rome, welcomed like a castaway Ulysses at the court of the Phaeacians. The expression of sincere affection towards Barberini returns here for allowing him to leave Salento, where he felt confined and undervalued, and for having received him among his collaborators in Rome.

BAV, Barb. gr. 279 (f. 63r, again in f. 94r)

Τῷ ἐξοχωτάτῳ, καὶ αἰδεσιμωτάτῳ κυρίῳ
Φραγκίσκῳ Καρδινάλει τῷ Βαρβερινῷ

ἠνὶ Σαλεντίνων γλυκερὸς πόνος ἦλθε μελισσῶν
Ῥώμηνδ᾽, ὑμετέροις νεύμασι πειθόμενος.
σεῖο φιλοφροσύνης γλυκεροῖς ἐνικάτθεο σίμβλοις,
ὡς ἔρου ἀκραιφνοῦς σύμβολον ἀντίτυπον.
ὧδε Ὑμηττείου μέλιτος ῥόου, ὧδε Ὑβλαίου,
τοῦτο μέλι προφέρει, σῶν μετέχον χαρίτων

ἄλλο
Ὑδρουντοῖθε μέλισσα φίλον μέλι πέμψε μελίσσαις
Βαρβεριναῖς Ῥώμηνδ᾽, οἷά τ᾽ ἔροιο φόρον.

(To the most eminent and respected sir Cardinal Francesco Barberini. Behold, the sweet work of the Salentine bees has arrived in Rome, persuaded by your nods. Place it in the sweet hives of your benevolence, as a pledge corresponding to pure love. Thus, this honey surpasses that of Hymettos and of Hybla, because it partakes of your graces.

Another one.
From Otranto a bee sent honey to Rome, to the bees of Barberini, as a gift of affection.

BAV, Barb. gr. 279 (f. 80r)

Τῷ ἐξοχωτάτῳ, καὶ αἰδεσιμωτάτῳ κυρίῳ
Φραγκίσκῳ καρδινάλει τῷ Βαρβερινῷ

Ἀλκίνοος ποτ᾽ ἔδεκτο φιλοφρονέων Ὀδυσῆα
τλήμονα ναυηγὸν, δεινὰ παθόντα λίην.
νῦν δὲ φιλοφροσύνη μεγαλώνυμος, ἔξοχε, σεῖο
οἷά τε ναυηγόν μ᾽ ἄστεγον, εὐμενέως
δέξατο, καὶ μ᾽ ἐγέρῃρεν ἀνάξιον. ἦ ῥά σ᾽ ἀείσω
(ἠέρα ἄχρι πνέω) δεύτερον Ἀλκίνοον.

Ταπεινότατος δοῦλος
Φραγκίσκος ὁ Ἀρκούδιος

(To the most eminent and respected sir Cardinal Francesco Baberini. Once Alcinous, showing benevolence, welcomed Odysseus, an unfortunate castaway who had suffered much. Now, Your Eminence, your renowned benevolence welcomed me as a homeless castaway and honoured me even though I was unworthy. And I will sing to you, as long as I live, as the second Alcinous. Your most humble servant Francesco Arcudi).

Once again, we find a reference to Greek myth, but this time it is made to elevate the figure of the Cardinal even further and bring him into the panorama of heroes, through the comparison between him and Alcinous, king of the Phaeacians, who rescued the shipwrecked Odysseus.

3. The Figure Poems by Arcudi

Arcudi also dabbled in a literary genre that could certainly have impressed the Cardinal: the *carmina figurata*. In the manuscript Barb. gr. 279, on f. 86r, there is a letter in Italian (Arcudi also wrote letters in Greek and Latin) which is essentially a message of heartfelt thanks for a gift received or a request fulfilled.

> Em(inentissi)mo et R(everendissi)mo Si(gno)r mio e Prot(ettore) Col(endissi)mo
> Con un'altra mia accompagnata con un Epigramma, e da un'Ape, le cui ali erano vestite di versi a imitatione dell'amor' alato di Simmia Rodio, testificai in parte a V(ostra) E(minenza) riconoscer l'obligationi mie verso di Lei viè più crescenti, per la cortese dimostratione d'aiuto s'è degnata dare alle mie deboli forze [...].
>
> (With another of my letters accompanied by an epigram, and by a Bee whose wings were dressed in verses in imitation of the *Winged Love* by Simmias Rhodius, I testify partially to your Eminence that I recognize my obligations towards you as they grow, because of the courteous demonstration of help you have deigned to give to my weak efforts [...]).

The letter is dated 23 October 1636 and refers to an earlier missive in which Arcudi had sent Barberini a composition inspired by the *carmina figurata* of Simmias of Rhodes, and in particular the epigram known as *The Wings*. Arcudi's work can be found in the Barberini codex mentioned above, which can rightly be termed as 'the Arcudi dossier' among the Barberini manuscripts in the Vatican Library.

In the manuscript we can admire not only the imposing bee with the devout verses on its wings, but also, a few pages later, an equally monumental eagle, finely drawn on a sheet of parchment, decorated on its breast with the usual emblem of the three bees. The masterly design is embellished with Greek verses inscribed in the outstretched wings, in imitation, once again, of Simmias' *carmen figuratum*.

Before we enter into an analysis of the contents of Arcudi's two epigrams, it is worth reflecting on the choice of literary genre and the possible reasons that led Arcudi to imitate Simmias' *Wings* poetically and to try his hand at a particular iconography. Little is known about Greek figure poetry of the Hellenistic period, not least because only six epigrams have survived. On the other hand, there has at all times been a widespread tendency to blend image, or rather form, and word (See Ernst, *Carmen Figuratum*; d'Ors; Luz; Diamantopoulou, *Griechische visuelle*). To give just a few examples, we may recall Levius, a poet active between the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE in the circle of the pre-neotericists, and Publilius Optatianus Porphyrius (fourth century CE), author of the versus intexti, verses literally interwoven through pieces of papyrus agglutinated into one another.

During the Latin and Greek Middle Ages, prose texts were also sometimes inscribed with an image reminiscent of what it contained. In fact, figurative Gospels, in which a cross drawn on the page, often with obvious polychrome borders, contained the sacred text, were widespread in the East among high-quality book artefacts (see Hörandner; Diamantopoulou, Στίχοι υφαντοί). As with Simmias Rhodius, also Theocritus and Dosiadas from 3rd–2nd century BCE dabbled in literary games, adapting verses to the space of a defined form and alluding to this with the content. After this, a new image became to the Byzantines the vessel of the sacred text par excellence, reproducing the most elevated thing for a medieval Christian person: the cross (Diamantopoulou, Στίχοι υφαντοί).

Even the Renaissance took an interest in *carmina figurata*. Suffice it to say that these Hellenistic compositions, transmitted uninterruptedly in manuscripts up to the threshold of the Renaissance, were published already in the 1515 Giuntina edition of Theocritus and again in the 1516 edition edited by Zaccaria Kalliergi.[13]

3.1 The Wings of the Bee

As critics have deduced, the *carmen figuratum* known as *The Wings*, was written by Simmias of Rhodes (*Anth. Pal.* 15.24) to decorate a statue of Eros, and it must have been inscribed inside the wings of the divine image. In Arcudi's poem, instead of Eros, the powerful god and ruler of a primordial human feeling, love, we find the bee, emblem of a noble family, the Barberini – just as, if not more, powerful and capable of stimulating the muse of a young archpriest of the seventeenth century in search of a career, than Eros was in inspiring a Hellenistic poet.

BAV, Barb. gr. 279 (f. 137r)[14]

Βαρβερινῆς εἰμὶ Μελίσσης σκιά. οὐκ ἀνθέεσιν δ᾽ὠκυμόροις [⏑ – –]
αὐτὰρ ἀγήρων σοφίης λείρια αἰὲν δρέπομαι ὄνειαρ
ὡς μέλιτος στάζῃ ἀπαὶ σμήνεος. οὗ ἄπωθεν
σφῆκες, ἄμουσοί τ᾽ ἀμύητοι ἔστων
τῆς σοφίης. τὸ θεῖον
δ᾽ ἔδωκε,

πτέρυξι
τῶν ἀρετῶν θέειν γῆς

13. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Hellenistic τεχνοπαίγνια came back into vogue, above all thanks to the work of the French experimentalist poet Guillaume Apollinaire (1880–1918), and this time too with a spirit and sensitivity very similar to those of antiquity. Cubists and Futurists deconstructed the artistic space, even that of the manuscript page, and so the word became image and the verse, naturally deprived of any metrical structure, took on the form of a trace. The poetic word, therefore, not only meant but also necessarily represented the author's thought. All this cannot be defined as a literary game, or rather not only, but as a committed expressive technique, the offspring of a new vision of reality.

14. In the manuscript, at the top of f. 137r, the verses are preceded by the dedication (Οὐρβανῷ τῷ Ὀγδόῳ) and an elegiac couplet (Μοῦσα ἐμὴ ἀμυδρῶς ἐχαράξατο τῇδε μελίσσῃ/ Σεῦ ἀρετὴν, σοφίην, θέσκελα ἔργα Σέο).

πείρατα. Κράντειρα φύσει, ἄκεντρος
οὖσα δ' ἀνάσσοις· πολιτείας παναρίστου εἰκών,
κ' εὐνομίης· θελξινοών τ' ἀγγελέουσα χθονίοισι πειθώ,
εὔνασας ᾗ ἔχθος ἀνάκτων. θεομίμητε σύ, καὶ θειοφιλὴς βιώης

(I am a copy of a Barberini bee; I do not gather ephemeral flowers [⏑ – –] but always lilies of imperishable wisdom, so that my honey may grow from the honeycomb. Unlettered wasps, uninitiated into wisdom, must be kept away from this. God allowed me, through the wings of virtue, to travel to the ends of the earth. Queen by nature, you will be sovereign though you have no sting; you, the image of good government and justice; you, who by sweetening souls announce to mortals the persuasion with which you appeased the hatred of kings. You, imitator of God, may you live protected by God).

Evidently bipartite, both in form and substance, this epigram claims to imitate its archetype by its external structure and partly also by some internal elements. Simmias' verses let Eros speak directly and the first person dominates his whole composition, especially from v. 3 onwards. In Arcudi's epigram, the bee, symbol of the noble papal family, speaks directly only in the part spatially placed in the left wing (part 1). The second half of the epigram, on the other hand, is a pompous praise of the insect as a Barberini banner and indirectly, therefore, of the pope's gifts. The section thematizes some of the bee's typical qualities: the bee is a queen, addressed as sovereign of the Papal State and vicar of Saint Peter, and as an example of order and justice, it has the ability to sweeten with honey, an indirect reference to the pope's ability to settle quarrels and create peace.

Arcudi, therefore, innovates on the internal content of his ancient model but, as indicated above, deliberately does not depart from his archetype in the external formal aspects, namely the design of the wings and the metrical structure. In fact, he too uses choriambic sequences (catalectic hexameter, pentameter, tetrameter, trimeter, dimeter *in syllabam*, concluded by a catalectic choriamb or rather a bacchaeus). This formal aspect is not to be underestimated and we can speak of deliberate imitation. Arcudi always writes in dactylic hexameters or elegiac couplets (see the epigrams in BAV, Barb. gr. 279). Only in this case does he abandon the usual meters for rhythmic structures that appear extravagant when compared to his other production and that of all the versifiers (good and bad) who revolved around the Barberini circle (Leone Allacci, Pietro Arcudi, etc.).

Another element with which Arcudi embellishes his 'Wings of the Bee,' if I may be allowed to use this title, is in the refined lexicon. In addition to the Homeric coloring of many non-contracted forms (ἀνθέεσιν of v. 1; ἀγγελέουσα of v. 11) and the explicit quotations (see in vv. 8–9 γῆς πείρατα which is very evocative of the πείρατα γαίης of *Il*. XIV 200 and 301; *Od*. III 433 and IV 563), he displays lexical virtuosity by including, for example, κράντειρα in v. 9 which is found only in the *Orphic Hymns* and in an epigram of the Palatine Anthology, n. 216 of book XVI, ascribed to Antipater. In v. 4 of this ancient epigram, in fact, we read in reference to one of the Muses: ἀλλ' ἁ μὲν κράντειρα τόνου πέλει.

3.2 The Eagle

It was evidently not enough for Arcudi to demonstrate his ability to imitate Simmias Rhodius just once. BAV, Barb. gr. 279 also contains a vivid depiction of an eagle with spread wings. Here Arcudi inscribes another epigram in imitation of the Rhodian poet

Barb. gr. 279 (f. 141r)[15]

Λεῦσσέ με τὸν σύμβολα πατρῷα πέδου εὐρυανάκτων
στεφανοῦντα ὄρνιν,
αἴσιον οἰωνὸν ἅπασιν· φάος ὡς ἠελίοιο, πέτρα,
ῥοῦς τ'ἀνεκαίνισσέ με ἧβην· ἴδε, ὡς Μέλισσαι
στῆθος ἔχουσιν μέσον. Οὐρβανοῦ γὰρ
κοιρανίην, χ' ὑγείην
προφωνῶ

διαρκῆ.
Σῶστρα φέρω δ'ὑγείης,
ἥν ἀνεκαίνισσ' ἐπὶ πέτραν ἱπτὰς
πίστιος ἀῤῥήκτου· ὅπου θραῦσε νόσου ἀπειλάς
ἐς δὲ φάος θεῖον ἰδὼν, καὶ χαρίτων ῥοῦν, λεπίδας βροτείων
ἔξεσε δεινῶν: ἰδὲ γήρως λίπεν ἄχθος: νέασέν τε πρὸς ἱδρῶτας
ἦτορ.

(Look at me, bird that crowns the ancestral emblems of those who rule over vast territories; a good omen for all; look how the sunlight, the mountain, the river current have made me as new as spring; look, how the bees stand in the midst of my

15. In the manuscript, at the top of f. 137r, the verses are preceded by a title; it contains a well-wishing phrase (Ἀνακαινισθήσεται, ὡς ἀετοῦ ἡ νεότης σου. καὶ τὰ ἔτη σου οὐκ ἐλλείψουσι).

> breast. For I want to announce as lasting the sovereignty and good health of Urban. I make offerings for the health that he renewed, for he flew on the rock of an unshakable faith, when he annihilated the threats of illness and, turning his gaze to the divine light and the river of grace, smoothed away the scales of evil. He abandoned the weight of old age and made his heart ready once again for his labors).

In this second composition, Arcudi attempts to go even further in imitation of his model. He resumes *ad verbum* the incipit that in Simmias reads: Λεῦσσέ με τὸν Γᾶς τε βαθυστέρνου ἄνακτ' Ἀκμονίδαν τ' ἄλλυδις ἑδράσαντα. It seems, moreover, that in this case he has also abandoned the two-voice structure of his first epigram and returned to the ancient model. The eagle, in fact, after introducing itself and describing itself, extols the pope's regained health and announces his new labors after the complete recovery of his strength.[16]

It is worth saying a few words about the reasons that may have prompted the author to abandon the usual elegiac couplets and turn to Simmias's choriambics. Certainly, the baroque taste, which was very popular in the first thirty years of the seventeenth century, and the desire to impress readers and benefactors by showing off not only one's skill in the Greek language but also in drawing, not to mention the literary recovery of ancient models so dear to the Barberini family (in those years they had founded their own antiquarian library), must all have had an influence. I believe, however, that there may be more. The two epigrams can be dated to 1635–36 when Arcudi was the archpriest of Soleto, having returned from Rome after finishing his studies in 1613 (see Giannachi). He could therefore have encountered Simmias's poems either through manuscripts[17] or through one of the five editions printed in the sixteenth century. In 1619, however, Claude Saumaise (Salmasius) had written the first, and for several centuries the only, critical essay on Greek *carmina figurata*, published in Paris by the publisher Drovart (*Ad Dosidae Aras: Simmiae Rhodii ovvm, alas: Theocriti Fistvlam, notae*). Therefore, Arcudi may have followed the fashion of the time by composing epigrams in the manner of Simmias, precisely in the years in which they, printed in *editio princeps* just over a century ago (in the Iunta edition of 1515, followed by the Kalliergi editions in 1516 and 1545, Giovanni Trimanino's Latin translation in 1539, etc.) and reissued several times, had been studied by one of the most famous philologists on the European scene of the early seventeenth century. At that time, Salmasius'

16. On v. 1 the word εὐρυανάκτων seems to recall a Bacchylidean context (Ode V, 18–20): πτερύγεσσι ταχεί-/ αις αἰετὸς εὐρυάνακτος ἄγγελος/ Ζηνὸς in which the eagle, herald of Zeus, lord of the vast domains (εὐρυάνακτος), is mentioned (in Arcudi's poem the eagle is the most important element of the homeland of those men [*scil.* the Barberini] who have vast domains [εὐρυανάκτων]). But Arcudi could not have known these verses by Bacchylides. They are not transmitted through any, even indirect, tradition and are preserved only in a papyrus which came to light in Egypt at the end of the nineteenth century.

17. See Bernabò and Magnelli on the manuscript transmission of Simmias' *technopaignia*.

philological labors had a wide resonance among the scholars of the time and, in a letter from 1639, Cardinal Francesco Barberini himself informed Francesco Arcudi (who was then in Nusco in his diocese) of the dispute over New Testament Greek that had pitted Salmasius against Daniel Heinsius in Heidelberg (see Giannachi).

The popularity of this literary genre[18] in certain poetic collections produced in the sixteenth and seventeenth century in Jesuit colleges in France[19] may also have influenced Arcudi's choice to compose *technopaignia*. For instance, the *technopaignia* of the French Jesuite students of Dole in 1592, dedicated to the new governor of Franche-Comté, Claude II de Vergy Count of Champlitte, were highly appreciated. The *carmina figurata* of this collection are written in French, Latin, and Greek in imitation of those of the Hellenistic age (see Guillaumin et al., 24–82). Nor should it be forgotten that when our own Francesco Arcudi studied at the Pontifical Greek College of St. Athanasius in Rome, in the first decades of the seventeenth century, it was precisely the Jesuit fathers who ruled the institution.[20] Moreover, we know that among the collegians of St. Athanasius, Arcudi was not the only on to try his hand at *technopaignia*. We know of at least one other example of a *carmina figurata* from the same period, also an imitation of the *Wings* of Simmias of Rhodes, written by Gregorius Portius and transmitted again in the BAV, Barb. gr. 279 (see Pontani 118–20 for the edition and translation of the text).

In conclusion, Francesco Arcudi wanted to play his small part, surprising his illustrious protectors by imitating a recently rediscovered poet (Simmias) and by following the literary fashion of the moment, in an attempt to fly from the South of Italy (Salento, Apulia) to the Roman curia on the 'wings' of an eagle, or rather perhaps on the 'wings of a bee.'

18. On the popularity of *carmina figurata* in the seventeenth century, see Adler and Ernst; Denker; Plotke.

19. See Guillaumin et al., 8–13. On the popularity of *carmina figurata* in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, see Ernst, "Europäische Figurengedichte" 295–360.

20. On the Greek College in Rome see Tsirpanlis; Fyrigos.

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