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Bernini's Memorial Plaque for Carlo Barberini*

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Fig. 1. Gianlorenzo Bernini, memorial plaque of Carlo Barberini. Rome, S. Maria in Aracoeli (photo: Moscioni).

CARLO BARBERINI, brother of Pope Urban VIII and commander of the papal armies (Generale di Santa Chiesa), died during a mission in Bologna on 25 February 1630.¹ The event was commemorated in Rome by three major works in which Bernini had a hand. A monumental plaque designed by Bernini was placed on the interior façade of S. Maria in Aracoeli (Fig. 1); a magnificent temporary catafalque also designed by Bernini

was erected in the same church for the obsequies that were held there on 3 August; and a life-size statue, an ancient torso restored by Bernini (who carved the portrait head) and Algardi, was placed in the Sala dei Capitani of the Palazzo dei Conservatori.² This trio of monuments specifically echoed a tradition that had been established within living memory by the Conservators of Rome, in celebrating three previous commanders of the papal military

*This note is excerpted from an entry in a projected corpus of the terracotta sketches of Gianlorenzo Bernini, a work first envisioned by the writer in his doctoral dissertation written at Harvard in 1955 under John Coolidge's supervision.

1. On Carlo Barberini, cf. *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, Rome, 1960ff., VI, 170–171; on his death, L. von Pastor, *The History of the Popes*, 40 vols., St. Louis, Mo., 1894–1953, XXVIII, 44.

2. Cf. S. Frascetti, *Il Bernini. La sua vita, la sua opera, il suo tempo*, Milan, 1900, 93–98. On the Aracoeli plaque, R. Wittkower, *Gianlorenzo Bernini. The Sculptor of the Roman Baroque*, Oxford, 1981, 195–196; and most recently, N. Courtright in I. Lavin et al., *Drawings by Gianlorenzo Bernini from the Museum der bildenden Künste*, Leipzig, German Democratic Republic, exh. cat., Princeton, 1981, 72–77. On the catafalque, M. Fagiolo dell'Arco and S. Carandini, *L'effimero*

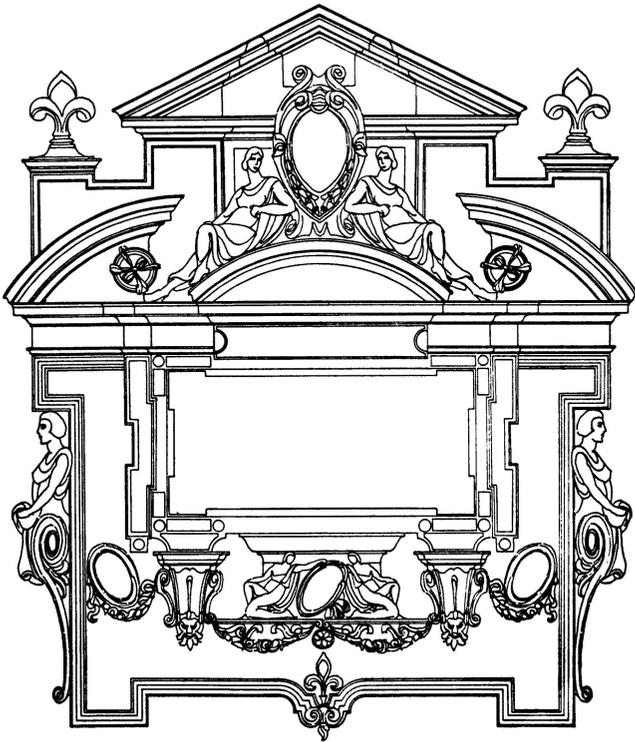


Fig. 2. Memorial plaque of Alessandro Farnese. Rome, S. Maria in Aracoeli (after Fasolo, *Rainaldi*, fig. 3).

forces. Marcantonio Colonna (died 1584), Alessandro Farnese (died 1592) and Gian Francesco Aldobrandini (died 1601), had all been honored by splendid ceremonies and monumental commemorative plaques in the Aracoeli, and by statues in the guise of ancient Roman military commanders in the Sala dei Capitani.³

Whether Bernini was familiar with the earlier temporary installations is not clear, but the permanent memorials were certainly significant, formally no less than conceptually. The Aldobrandini statue and inscription are specifically alluded to in the initial proposal made before the Conservators for commemorat-



Fig. 3. Memorial plaque of Gian Francesco Aldobrandini. Rome, S. Maria in Aracoeli (after Fasolo, *Rainaldi*, pl. 6).

ing Carlo Barberini.⁴ The Bernini-Algardi statue is closely related to the earlier examples, recreating as they had the type of the victorious general of antiquity.⁵ Similarly, throughout the development of his design for the memorial plaque Bernini made reference to its predecessors.⁶ In both the Farnese and Aldobrandini memorials (Figs. 2, 3), the flat inscribed surface is surrounded by elaborate frames and surmounted by pediments upon which female allegories carved in high relief are seated; in

barocco. Strutture della festa nella Roma del '600, 2 vols., Rome, 1977–1978, I, 79–81; a ground plan in Vienna, drawn by Borromini, was identified as for the Barberini catafalque by I. Lavin, *Bernini and the Crossing of St. Peter's*, New York, 1968, 13, n. 58. On the statue of Carlo Barberini, Wittkower, *Bernini*, 196; M. Heimbürger Ravalli, *Alessandro Algardi scultore*, Rome, 1973, 60–61.

3. For the inscriptions in the church cf. V. Forcella, *Inscrizioni delle chiese e d'altri edifici di Roma dal secolo XI fino ai giorni nostri*, Rome, 14 vols., 1869–1884, I, 197, no. 751, 206, no. 790, 213, no. 823. On the statues, cf. G. A. Borboni, *Delle statue*, Rome, 1669, 287ff.; P. Pecchiai, *Il campidoglio nel cinquecento*, Rome, 1950, 160–161; C. Petrangeli, "La sala dei capitani," *Capitolium*, xxxvii, 1962, 640–648; also A. Muñoz, "La scultura barocca e l'antico," *L'arte*, xix, 1916, 143. The ceremonies and decorations in S. Maria in Aracoeli are described in F. Casimiro, *Memorie storiche della chiesa e convento di S. Maria in Aracoeli di Roma*, Rome, 1845, 522ff., 623ff.

4. 5 March 1630: "... fiant magnifica, et solemnia funeralia digna Romani Populi, ac tanti viri . . . et simulacrum marmoreum eiusdem Ill.^{mi} et Ex.^{mi} D. Don Caroli in Palatio Capitolij una cum ornatissimis inscriptionibus, quemadmodum fuit factum fe: me: Ioanne Franc.^o Aldobrandino. . . ." Archivio Storico Capitolino, Decreti di Consigli, Magistrati e Cittadini, 1625–1640, Cred. I, vol. 33, fols. 73 verso–74 recto.

Ippolito Buzio was responsible for the Farnese statue (Pecchiai, *Campidoglio*, 161, n. 212; the payment cited makes no specific reference to the head, however); it is not clear who executed that of Colonna (ibid., 161), nor did a search of the documents by the writer yield the author of the Aldobrandini figure.

5. The statues of Alessandro Farnese and Francesco Aldobrandini were also restored ancient fragments (cf. H. Stuart Jones, *A Catalogue of the Ancient Sculptures Preserved in the Municipal Collections of Rome. The Sculptures of the Palazzo dei Conservatori*, Oxford, 1926, 41–42).

6. The Farnese inscription, dated 1596, on the north end wall of the transept, was probably designed by Giacomo della Porta, who author-

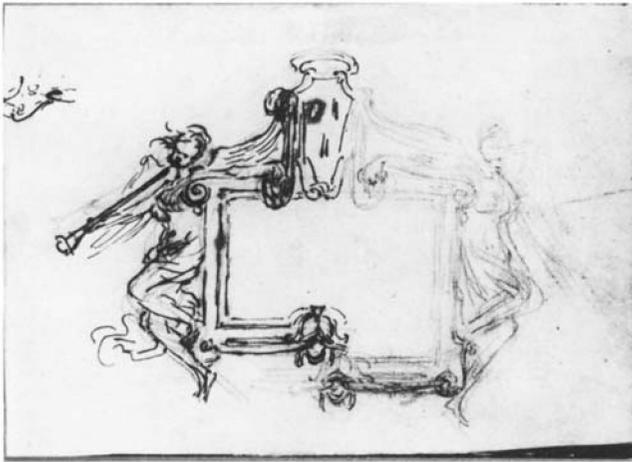


Fig. 4. Gianlorenzo Bernini, study for the Barberini plaque, drawing. Leipzig, Museum der bildenden Künste.

the Farnese monument two female terms in low relief also flank the inscription laterally. A sketch in Leipzig (Fig. 4) shows that Bernini, while greatly simplifying the design, first adopted the traditional rectilinear shape and the flanking figures of the Farnese plaque, replacing the latter by winged personifications of Fame that seem at once to rest against the framed inscription tablet, and to carry it aloft.⁷ In the final work Bernini adopted the idea of seated allegories with complementary meanings that had also appeared on the earlier plaques.

ized payments to the sculptor Ruggiero Bescapé and others between June 1595 and February 1598 (Arch. Stor. Capit., Registro di Mandati a favore degli ufficiali et artisti del Po: Ro., 1594-1603, Cred. VI, vol. 26, 128 [cf. F. Fasolo, *L'opera di Hieronimo e Carlo Rainaldi. 1570-1655 e 1611-1691*, Rome, n.d., 263], 154, 157, 159, 170, 197, 198, 215, 247, 276, 291; the contracts are quoted by A. Bertolotti, *Artisti lombardi a Roma nei secoli XV, XVI e XVII*, 2 vols., Milan, 1881, II, 310-311). On the Roman commemorations of Alessandro Farnese see D. Bodart, "Cérémonies et monuments romains à la mémoire d'Alexandre Farnèse, duc de Parme et de Plaisance," *Bulletin de l'Institut historique belge de Rome*, XXXVII, 1966, 122-136 (although not properly acknowledged, 136, n. 3, the documentation cited by Bodart from the Archivio Storico Capitolino was brought to his attention by this writer).

The inscription to Gian Francesco Aldobrandini, on the east wall of the south transept wing, together with its counterpart honoring Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini, on the corresponding wall of the north transept, both dated 1602, were the work primarily of Ippolito Buzio and Camillo Mariani, according to payments between May 1602 and February 1603, authorized by della Porta before his death on 2 September 1602 (A. Schiavo, "Notizie biografiche su Giacomo della Porta," *Palladio*, VII, 1957, 41), then by Girolamo Rainaldi (Arch. Stor. Capit., Registro di mandati . . . , 1599-1603, Cred. VI, vol. 27, 126, 127, 128, 132, 135 [payments to January 1603]; cf. Casimiro, *Memorie*, 627, and Fasolo, *Rainaldi*, 264-265).

The Colonna inscription, on the façade wall over the main entrance just to the right of Bernini's, has no allegorical figures (payment to Pietro Paolo Olivieri, authorized by della Porta, 29 September 1587; Arch. Stor. Capit., Registro di Mandati, Cred. VI, vol. 25, 95).

7. Compare an inscription flanked by winged putti, by Camillo Mariani in S. Bernardo alle Terme (G. Fiocco, "Camillo Mariani," *Le arti*,

The allegory on the left, identified as the Church in the early sources, has a shield bearing the papal arms; a huge snake, ancient symbol of heresy, is under her right foot, the tail (partly broken) curling around the front of the plaque. Between the forefinger and thumb of her right hand may be discerned a fragment of a thin rod, probably part of a staff (see below). The shield of the figure on the right contains a laurel wreath and lightning bolt, the significance of which is explained by a passage in Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*, under the heading *Virtù insuperabile*:

. . . for a crest she will carry a laurel plant, menaced but not struck by lightning. . . . Virtue, as a warrior who struggles continually with her enemy, is portrayed armed with lightning, which, as Pliny recounts, cannot with all its violence damage laurel. . . .⁸

Under her foot is a globe encircled by the band of the Zodiac, of which only the sign of Scorpio is visible. The scorpion as an astrological sign is the attribute of Mars, God of War.⁹ The figures thus symbolize the Church's victory over spiritual evil and virtue's victory over earthly strife, both achieved through Carlo Barberini's military prowess. Perhaps the best expression of their meaning is provided by the funeral oration delivered by Giulio Cenci at the obsequies in S. Maria in Aracoeli, in which Barberini is hailed as "defender of the public well-being and maker of Christian peace."¹⁰

Bernini's explicit references to the earlier works provide a foil for the fundamental thematic and formal transformations he introduced. Neither Carlo Barberini nor the three others were actually interred in Aracoeli. Hence the funereal note sounded in Bernini's final version, chiefly by the winged skull at the base of the inscription, and the melancholic pose of the figure on the right, was quite foreign to the purely commemorative import of the tradition.¹¹ Perhaps this reinterpretation was motivated by the consideration that Barberini would not in fact have a public tomb; he was buried in an obscure and inaccessible niche adjoin-

III, 1940-1941, 84 and fig. 30); trumpeting figures of Fame are seated on the pediments of the Sforza tombs in S. Maria Maggiore (cf. G. Ferrari, *La tomba nell'arte italiana*, Milan, n.d., pl. XCI).

8. ". . . per cimiero, porterà una pianta d'alloro minacciata, ma non percossa dal fulmine. . . . La virtù come guerriera, che di continuo col vitio suo inimico combatte, si dipinge armata, & col fulmine, il quale come racconta Plinio, non può con tutta la sua violenza offendere il lauro. . . ." Ed. Rome, 1603 (reprint 1970), 509.

9. Cf. G. De Tervarent, *Attributs et symbols dans l'art profane*, 3 vols., Geneva, 1958-1964, II, col. 340.

10. "propugnator publicae salutis et Christianae pacis auctor" (*In funere illustrissimi, & excellentissimi principio Caroli Barberini generallis S.R.E. ducis. Oratio habita in aede B. Virg. in Capitolio a Iulio Cincio Sacr. Consist. Aulæ, & S.P.Q.R. advocato Anno Domini MDCXXX. iij. Non Aug.*, Rome, 1630, 8).

11. M. Jaffé has pointed out that the motif at the bottom in the Leipzig drawing is not a skull but a helmet (review of I. Lavin et al., *Drawings*, in *Times Literary Supplement*, 15 October, 1982, 1127). On the pose of

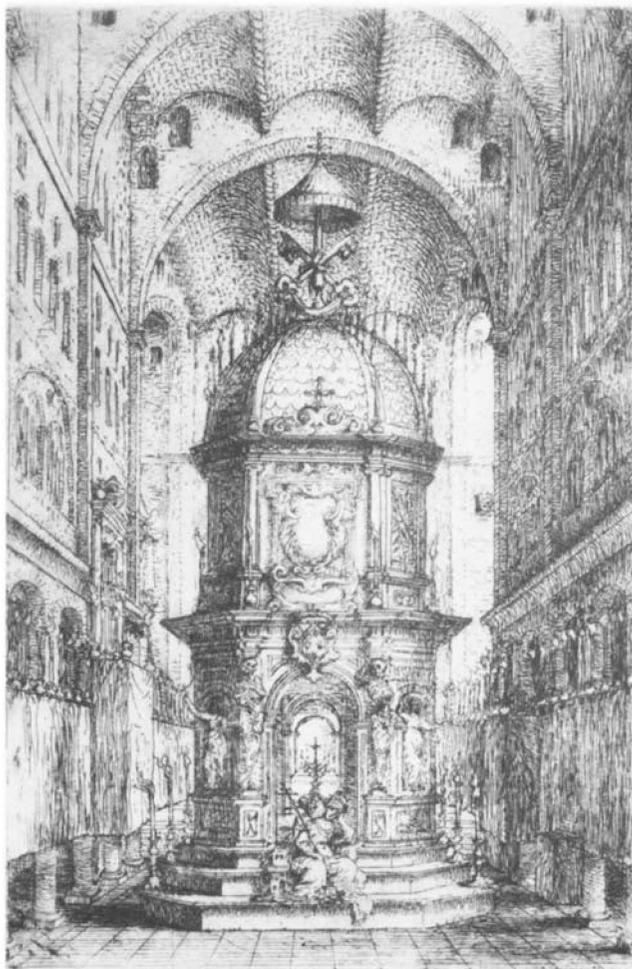


Fig. 5. Catafalque of Carlo Barberini, Ferrara, 1630, etching.

ing the family chapel in S. Andrea della Valle.¹² In any case, the new figural type was evidently derived from a great catafalque that had been erected in the Cathedral of Ferrara for obsequies held in honor of Carlo Barberini on 13 May 1630 at the behest of Cardinal Lorenzo Magalotti, Archbishop of Ferrara, who was Carlo's brother-in-law and a close friend and advisor of the Pope.¹³ The oration delivered on this occasion, by one Alfonso Pandolfi, was published along with an illustration of the cata-

Melancholy, see recently W. S. Heckscher, "Melancholia (1541). An Essay in the Rhetoric of Description by Joachim Camerarius," in H. Baron, ed., *Joachim Camerarius (1500–1574). Beiträge zur Geschichte des Humanismus im Zeitalter der Reformation*, Munich, 1978, 49–50.

12. On his burial, cf. G. Gigli, *Diario Romano*, ed. G. Ricciotti, Rome, 1958, 111; cited by Frascchetti, *Bernini*, 93, n. 1; a seated portrait of him in armor (cf. V. Martinelli, "Contributi alla scultura del seicento. I. Francesco Mochi a Roma," *Commentari*, 11, 1951, 231, fig. 284) is placed in a niche above the sarcophagus.

13. On Magalotti, cf. von Pastor, *History of the Popes*, xxviii, 39–40.



Fig. 6. Catafalque of Carlo Barberini, Ferrara, 1630, etching, detail.

falque (Figs. 5, 6).¹⁴ Seated on the steps before the structure is an allegory of the Church wearing the papal tiara and carrying a long, crossed staff. Her costume, pose and heavy monumentality

14. *Oratio in funere illustriss. & excellentiss. D. Caroli Barberini pontificiae classis imperatoris, habita iussu Eminentiss. & Reverendiss. D. Cardinalis Magalotti Ferrariae Episcopi, dum in Cathedrali Ecclesia Sororio Principi magnificentissime parentaret. Ab Alfunsio Pandulfo Ferrariensi eiusdem Ecclesiae Canonico Theologo*, Ferrara, 1630; O. Berendson, "The Italian Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Catafalques," unpub. diss., New York University, 1961, 203; the text is also cited and the print illustrated, without comment, in Fagiolo dell'Arco and Carandini, *L'effimero*, 1, 80.

Cardinal Antonio and Taddeo Barberini, both sons of Carlo, were present at the ceremony in Ferrara. Its date, 13 May, is evident from the following passages in letters written by Taddeo Barberini to Cardinal Francesco in Rome.

From Ferrara, 11 May 1630:

Qui in Ferrara me tratterò fino à Lunedì matt.^a pr.^{ma} nella quale il S. Card.^e Magalotti vol fare l'ossequie al Sig. D. Carlo nr.^o Pr.^e di bo: me: (Biblioteca Vaticana, Ms. Barb. Lat. 9268, fol. 6 recto.)

From Ancona, 19 May 1630:

Io partì da Ferr.^a insieme con l'Ill.^{mo} S.^{re} Car.^{le} Ant.^o nro. fratt.^{lo} et mio S.^{re} il Lunedì, che fummo alle 13 assai tardi, ciò è alle 18 hore sonate. (ibid., fol. 7 verso.)

The presence of Cardinal Antonio and Don Taddeo is also noted in a description of the obsequies by the contemporary chronicler C. Ubal dini, *Storia di Ferrara dall'anno 1597 a tutto l'anno 1633*, Ferrara, Biblioteca Comunale, Ms. Cl. I. 418, fol. 80 verso ff.:

Venne (Antonio) di Maggio . . . a Ferrara . . . alla cattedrale, essendovi anche D. Tadeo Barberini suo fratello, che era venuto da Roma, per ritrovarsi alle esequie di Carlo loro padre.



Fig. 7. Gianlorenzo Bernini, study for the Barberini plaque, terracotta. Cambridge, Fogg Museum.

closely anticipate Bernini's right-hand figure, and may have helped to determine his final treatment of the plaque.¹⁵

The change in the meaning of the work was accompanied by a change in its design. In the Leipzig drawing the tablet was a closed, stable form, while the flanking figures were irregular and dynamic. The entire monument would have been flat on the wall and carved in low relief. In Bernini's bozzetto in the Fogg Museum (Fig. 7), the roles of the principal elements tend to converge, the figure becoming solid and stable, while the tablet

(I am indebted to Dr. L. Capra, Director of the Biblioteca Comunale in Ferrara for having transcribed the relevant passage for me.)

15. The Ferrarese ceremony is mentioned in the oration by Cenci in Aracoeli (above, n. 10). Its effect in Rome can be shown in another way. One of the early sources says that Alfonso Pandolfi's oration at Ferrara was so impressive (naming Cardinal Antonio specifically) that it won for him the bishopric of Comacchio (A. Libanori, *Ferrara d'oro imbrunito*, 3 vols., Ferrara, 1665–1674, I, 104). In fact, in a letter of 4 May 1630, i.e., before the obsequies, from Cardinal Magalotti to Cardinal Francesco reporting the imminent death of the bishop of Comacchio, Pan-

dolfi takes on a curved, slightly concave shape.¹⁶ The figure and tablet are raised into high relief—released from the wall, as it were—and a flat slab is placed behind. In the executed version the inscription is given an almost entirely curvilinear form which approximates a pediment at the top, and to which the figures are even more tightly bound through the displacement of the frame; the latter now serves to enclose the background slab. The ultimate effect of these changes is that the figures and inscription are perceived as a single organic unit floating freely on the winged death's head at the bottom, within and before the space defined by the frame. Bernini adopted a similar illusionistic device shortly thereafter in the plaque honoring Urban VIII, which occupies the façade wall above the Carlo Barberini plaque;¹⁷ the conception also reflects the kind of thinking that resulted in the “perspectivized” double niche of the Countess Matilda monument.¹⁸

The Fogg terracotta, for the right-hand figure, is broken at the bottom but preserved intact at the top and sides; it was therefore executed separately and not as part of a study for the whole plaque. Baglione and Titi note that the figure of the Church, i.e., that on the left, was the work of Stefano Speranza,¹⁹ and her drapery in fact seems less animated than that of the allegory on the right. Hence it may be that, as the model also suggests, Bernini assumed most of the responsibility for executing the latter figure.²⁰ The bozzetto is datable to the summer of 1630, after the obsequies in Ferrara. The plaque is alluded to in Cenci's oration, and was probably completed for the funeral.²¹ Bernini received final payment on 30 September.²²

dolfi is merely listed with several other candidates among whom the Pope and Cardinal Francesco might choose (Bibl. Vat., Ms. Barb. Lat. 8731, fol. 126 recto). Subsequently, in letters of 29 May, after the obsequies, Cardinal Antonio reports Pandolfi's selection by the Pope and praises him (Bibl. Vat., Ms. Barb. Lat. 6045, fol. 14 recto, to Pandolfi; *ibid.*, Ms. Barb. Lat. 6046, fol. 8 recto, to Cardinal Francesco).

16. Inv. No. 1937.75, 10¹/₄ × 10 in.

17. Illustrated in Wittkower, *Bernini*, 206. The memorial to the Pope may be thought of as combining and developing elements from the early and final stages of the Carlo Barberini plaque into a fully dynamic design: the supporting figures are now angels in full flight and the inscription is wholly curvilinear.

18. Illustrated in Wittkower, *Bernini*, 200.

19. As pointed out by A. Muñoz, “Studi sul Bernini,” *L'arte*, XIX, 1916, 111; cf. G. Baglione, *Le vite de' pittori scultori architetti . . .*, Rome, 1642, 352; F. Titi, *Ammaestramento utile, e curioso di pittura scoltura et architettura nelle chiese di Roma*, Rome, 1686, 172f.

20. Cf. Wittkower, *Bernini*, 196.

21. Pp. 29–30 (cited above, n. 10).

22. Frascchetti, *Bernini*, 94, n. 1.