

MULIGIN, IGNATIO FRANCESCO, *Il Trionfo d'applausi, e di glorie figurato di purissime lettere di sua altezza reale Maria Anna Christina Vittoria di Baviera Delfina di Francia, nel quale si contengono li seguenti versi, da leggersi nella figura con il microscopion*  
In Italian, manuscript on paper, accompanied by a microscopic drawing (by Pierre Mignard?)  
France, c. 1683-84

221 leaves (ff. 0-220) of paper (Auvergne, before 1685: quires i-vii with a watermark of a crowned cage and the mark of Benoît Colombier; quires viii-ix with a watermark of a grape and the mark GG; quire x with a watermark of the arms of the Medici (see Gaudriault, 1995, p. 190, and Delaunay, 1997), composed of 10 quires (i32 (0-31) ii26 iii-vi24 vii16 viii26 ix24 x9 (de 10: 212-220)), complete, written in a cursive script entirely in the hand of the author, in one column of 18-21 lines (justification 155 x 245 mm.), ruled in pencil (ff. 3-144: 30, 155, 40 x 45, 245, 45 mm.), catchwords, signatures trimmed (except f. 162, "c.8"), in excellent condition (except one spot on f. 173), drawing preserved separately (630 x 500 mm.). Contemporary binding of red morocco with a tooled double floral frieze gilt, spine decorated and gilt between the bands, edges gilt, attributed to Bernard Bernache (see Métivier, 1998), binder to the king from 1684 to 1721. Dimensions 335 x 225 mm.

This book-length manuscript is accompanied by a microscopic drawing. The text is written by a previously unidentified figure in the papal circle for the Dauphine of France as a diplomatic act intended to influence the King. The exceedingly rare microscopic drawing – which conceals the entire text in its infinitesimal strokes – is perhaps by Pierre Mignard. The manuscript and its drawing witness the early scientific impact of the microscope on visual and textual transmissions. Made within decades of the publication of Robert Hooke's *Micrographia* (1665) and the invention of the simple microscope by Anton van Leeuwenhoek (1674), the work helps clarify the intersection between art and optics at the end of the seventeenth century.

## PROVENANCE

1. Written at the court of France by an employee of the Papal Legate and for Marie Anne Christine of Bavaria (born 17 November 1660; died 20 April 1690), wife of Louis de France (married 17 March 1680), who was the only son of King Louis XIV of France and Queen Marie-Therese of Spain. He was born in 1661 and died in 1711. Internal evidence suggests that the manuscript was written in the years 1683-84, not long after the couple's marriage and probably before 1685, when the daughter-in-law of the King began to fall out of royal favor. The manuscript was doubtless written in or near Paris at the royal court, where its author Ignacio Muligin served the Papal Legate.

## TEXT

The text is described according to the divisions of the microscopic drawing, as follows:

ff. 1r-2r, Table of Contents, *Indice di tutti i versi che sono compresi nella figura di sua Altezza reale*;

f. 3r, Title;

ff. 4r-v, Dedicatory letter, incipit, *Altezza Reale. All'immortal grandezza dell'Altezza Vostra Reale gioiscono sempre piu le penne degl'Omeri...* ;

ff. 5-78, the Dauphine and the Chariot, [Title] *Sopra la real testa di Sua Altezza Reale Maria Anna Christina Vittoria Delfina di Francia, seguitan li presenti versi, e la sopradetta dedicatoria e incominciata nella testa del piccolo angelo, che porta la croce significando la religione, il scettro, il regno &c. // [Poem] Serenatevi, o Cieli, / Rida dirai festivi / Incoronato il sol, piu de l'usato... ;*

ff. 78v-83, the angel who guides the horses, incipit, *Nell'angelo che seconda i cavalli incomincian li seguenti versi // D'opere gloriose / Diversita concorde a la gran mole... ;*

ff. 83v-91, the angel who brings incense to the Dauphine, incipit, *Nell'angelo che incensa sua Altezza Reale incomincian li seguenti versi // Pria che de moi natali / Il fortunato di giunga alla sera... ;*

ff. 91v-147, the horses, incipit, *Nelli cavalli, che e tiratto il carro trionfale, incomincian li seguenti versi // Sferza i destrieri e per lo ciel stellato / Affretta il corso o desiata notte... ;*

ff. 147-173, the angel who wears the crown (head), incipit, *Sopra la testa dell'angelo, che porta la corona reale e la tromba della fama, seguitan li seguenti versi // Con mantice indefesso / Chimico affumicato / Trabe d'assiduo carbon faville ardenti... ;*

ff. 173v-182v, the angel who wears the crown (body), incipit, *Nell'angelo, che porta la croce, bilancia, scettro, e spada e scritta la sopradette dedicatoria, seguitando pure li seguenti versi : « Nato appena era il mondo e non amora / a' gl'obliqui sentier ben'uso il sole / ... ;*

ff. 182v-201v, Hercules, incipit. *Nella figura d'Ercole incomincian li seguenti versi // L'armi cotanto e l'erre che gia sottrasse / Di purpureo licor Italia e Roma / ... ;*

ff. 201v-208, shield with arms, incipit, *Nell'armi di sua Altezza Reale Monseigneur il Delfino, e di sua Altezza Reale Madama la Delfina seguitan li presenti versi // Na ne deserti campi / Aspettarono indarno / ... ;*

f.f 208-220v, the lion, incipit, *Nella testa del leone incomincian li seguenti versi // Dabila prescisse / L'ultima meta a le relate antenne / ...-... / Che il mar, la terra, il ciel forme si belle / Uguagliar si rotrian tuite le stelle / Viva, viva, viva / Fine.*

The text is a long poem in Italian, composed of approximately 6,800 verses, on the glory of the Dauphine, Marie Anne Christine of Bavaria, written in a mannered style characteristic of the virtuosity of Baroque poetry and full of allegories and classical allusions. One ode is addressed to the Elector of Bavaria, the brother of the Dauphine and the spouse of the Infanta of Austria (see ff. 44v-45v: *Compositione fatta dal presente autore al serenissimo Elettore Massimiliano Emanuele di Baviera, fratello di Vostra Altezza Reale, al tempo de' gloriosi imenei con la serenissima Arciduchessa d'Austria. // Oda // Zeffiri pellegrini / Che rendete a sakei florido il suolo...* ). Only the wars where Louis XIV emerged victorious are evoked on f. 115 (Bizerte, Alger, Holland).

The author, who at the same time wrote the poem and calligraphically executed the poem-drawing, is Swedish, Ignatio Francesco Muligin, who was in the service of the apostolic Legate at the court of the king of France, the Cardinal Angelo Maria Ranuzzi (1683-89). Without his signature at the end of the dedication and the testimony of Gilles Ménage (1613-1692), he would remain unknown. The correspondence of the Legate is silent on his identity (see Ranuzzi,

1973 and 1988). The archives of Ranuzzi in more than 600 volumes, which went with his library to his nephew, Count Vincenzo Antonio Ranuzzi (1658-1726) and today are preserved in the Henry Ransom Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas at Austin, seem to offer no further information.

## ILLUSTRATION

Whereas it is certain that Muligin wrote the poem and composed the text of the poem-drawing, it is not likely that he designed the accompanying drawing; more likely, he collaborated with a draughtsman at court. The style and composition of the drawing recall work by Pierre Mignard (1610-1695). Official court painter, Mignard was shut out from the Academy and was quite active as a portrait painter. His specialization and his close ties with the court would have made him a likely collaborator with Muligin on the present project.

The drawing represents the Dauphine in a chariot drawn by horses with several figures: angels, a lion with the arms of the Dauphine, Hercules. The figures of the drawing, which are very finely executed, are composed of microscopic letters of the poem, which is transcribed in normal scale in the manuscript that accompanies the drawing. The shaded space and the blank space are the results of the varied placement of the letters. Although the letters are placed in diverse ways, they can only be read horizontally when observed with a magnifying glass.

If it were possible to "read" the drawing, it would be necessary to proceed, according to the content, in this order: to begin by the head of the Dauphine in her chariot, then to continue at her feet, then at the wheels of the chariot, then the victory that guides the horses, then the figure that bears the incense of the Dauphine, then the horses, then the figure who carries the royal crown and the trumpet of renown (*Renommée*), then the angel that carries the cross, the scales, the scepter and the sword, then Hercules who marvels at seeing the grandeur of Her Royal Highness, then the crown and the shield held by the lion, and to finish with the head of the lion then his body. But, no matter what is indicated in the table after the figure with the royal crown and of *Renommée*, it is actually by the angel that carries the cross, the scales, the scepter, and the sword that one must begin to read the text, because the microscopic letters of the dedicatory epistle create the figure of the angel.

Here is the testimony of the celebrated erudite literary man, Gilles Ménage, who saw the actual drawing of the Dauphine:

"It seems even that the moderns surpassed the ancients, because not only do they form capital letters that are imperceptible to the eyes without the aid of a microscope; but they even compose all the traits of the faces and of other figures with the same characters, as was done in the Crucifix which is at Sainte Genevieve du Mont where all the features are composed in strong small characters. The latter form all the Passion of Our Lord according to Saint John. Other examples are an image of the Virgin that is in the same place, another that belongs to M. de Camp named to the bishopric of Pamiers. I have seen still other figures, and portraits drawn from nature and made in the same manner as that of the deceased Madame la Dauphine pulled by a chariot, crowned by a flying Victory. There were also other hieroglyphic figures, which are related to her and to Monseigneur. All this formed a square painting about one and one half feet square; and what seems to have made the traits and the ordinary lines were nothing but small capitals of a delicacy so surprising. No engraving could make the figure and even the very

naturalistic face of Madame la Dauphine more lovely. Finally, all the letters make up an Italian poem of thousands of verses in praise of this princess. It was an officer of the Legate, Cardinal Ranucci, who was the author. This man was Swedish. He had traveled almost everywhere and knew a very large number of languages." (Ménage, pp. 40-42).

[Il semble même que nos modernes aient enchéri sur les anciens: puisque non-seulement ils forment des caractères majuscules qui sont imperceptibles aux yeux sans secours de microscope; mais encore, qu'ils composent tous les traits des visages et d'autres figures avec ces mêmes caractères; tels, que ce Crucifix qui est à Sainte Geneviève du Mont, dont tous les traits comprennent en fort petits caractères toute la Passion de N. S. selon S. Jean, cette image de la Vierge qui est aussi au même lieu, et cette autre qui est entre les mains de M. de Camp nommé à l'évêché de Pamiers. J'ay vu encore des figures, et des portraits au naturel, faits de cette manière, comme celui de feuë Madame la Dauphine tirée dans un char, couronnée par une Victoire en l'air. Il y avoit aussi d'autres figures hieroglyphiques qui avoient du raport à elle, et à Monseigneur. Tout cela formoit un tableau en quarré d'un pied et demy; et ce qui paroissoit estre fait de traits et de linéamens ordinaires, ne l'étoit que de petites majuscules d'une délicatesse si surprenante qu'il n'y avoit point de taille-douce qui fût plus belle, et dans les figures, et dans le visage même de Madame la Dauphine, qui étoit très-ressemblant. Enfin, toutes ces lettres composoient un poëme italien de plusieurs milliers de vers à la louange de cette princesse. C'étoit un officier du nonce le cardinal Ranucci, qui en étoit l'auteur. Cet homme étoit Suédois. Il avoit voyagé presque par tout, & savoit un très-grand nombre de langues.]

The testimony of Gilles Ménage shows that the practice of microscopic calligraphy was in vogue at the end of the seventeenth century. The preceptor of the Dauphin, Pierre-Daniel Huet (1630-1721) informs us that he demonstrated to the Dauphin and other members of the court that a piece of parchment with the dimensions 27 x 21.5 cm. could hold on its recto and verso around 15,000 verses and could be inserted in the shell of a walnut (see Lalanne, pp. 1-8; and Feuillet de Conches, vol. 1). Nevertheless, surviving examples are very rare. For another example formerly in the art market, see Paris, Hotel Drouot, 11 June 2001, lot 42, *The Last Supper*.

The execution of a portrait of the Dauphine by an officer of the Legate was not, however, a simple amusement for the court; rather it was a diplomatic act to get her attention so that she would influence the king on affairs of state. The disputes between the French royalty and the papacy were serious and numerous (they involved the Gallican Declaration of 1682, the affair of the Quartiers Francs around the embassies, the nomination of bishoprics, the preparation of the succession of the bishopric of Cologne, and so forth). At the end of the preceding legate's tenure, they did not wish to name a new legate, but the birth of the Duke of Burgundy, the eldest son of the Dauphin, gave the Pope the occasion to be represented again at court. To plead with the Sun King in order to obtain favors was an important political act. The Dauphine, sister of Duke Maximilian-Emmanuel of Bavaria, could and did play a role in the affairs concerning Germany. In a letter to Ranuzzi the Pope expressed his hope that the Dauphine could intervene with the king (see Ranuzzi, 1973, vol. II, p. 315). This was not an unreasonable expectation, because various sources indicated that King Louis XIV was fond of his Bavarian daughter-in-law. For example, at the beginning of the Legate's tenure in office, the Pope counted heavily on the influence of the Dauphine in order to obtain the conversion of the Duke Christian-August of Saxony (Ranuzzi, 1973, vol. I, p. 301, no. 395, December 1683). Then the legate, who had several meetings with the people of the court (Ranuzzi, 1973, vol. I, p. 61)

visited the Dauphine at the time of the voyage of the court to Valenciennes in 1684 (Ranuzzi, 1973, vol. I, p. 382, no. 732). The attempts made to approach the Dauphine and to have her intervene in the affairs of her husband and her father-in-law failed. The legate even noted that the Dauphin and the King were at the time displeased with the Dauphine who was therefore powerless (Ranuzzi, 1973, vol. II, p. 319). This context permits us to date the gift made to the Dauphine by Muligin during the years 1683-1684 and to see it as a present made in order to court favors with the Dauphine from traditionally Catholic Bavaria for the apostolic legate.

There is a second work by Muligin that confirms the diplomatic importance of the present text and drawing. In spite of explicit indications in the title and the table of content, this second work has never been identified as an example of microscopic calligraphy, because its drawing has become separated from the text and appears to be lost. This volume is preserved in Paris in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (MS ital. 496, published by Mazzatinti, vol. 1). It is a poem on the glory (*la gloire*) of the king, with a translation of the life of Alexander the Great by Plutarch. The title, on f. 5, leaves no doubt that the manuscript was composed to accompany a microscopic drawing: *Real figura della Maestà del Gran Rè Ludovico XIII di Francia & Navarra, delineata di purissime lettere, nella quale s'acompara, et distintamente descritta la Vita et Grandezze di Alessandro Magno fatta da Plutarco, con applausi festivi di sonetti fatti alle glorie della Maestà Sua, finita con gran fatiche l'anno 1686 la sopradetta real figura da me sottoscritto. Ignatio Francesco Muligin Inventore*. Its binding in red morocco with the arms of the king and the so-called border of the Louvre in the center is closely related to the binding of the present manuscript (Mazzatinti, p. cxxxiii). BnF MS ital. 496 was offered to the king in 1686 and kept in the royal library of Versailles, until it was transferred to the newly constructed royal library in Paris in 1738.

The early timeline of microscope technology spans the period from c. 1590 to c. 1674. In 1590, two Dutch spectacle makers, Hans Janssen and his son Zacharias are claimed, perhaps erroneously, to be the inventors of the compound microscope. Then, in 1609, Galileo develops a compound microscope with a convex and concave lens, and a decade later, in 1619, Contantine Drebbel presents a compound microscope with two convex lenses. In 1665 in London, Robert Hooke publishes *Micrographia*, a collection of biological micrographs, and finally in 1674, Anton van Leeuwenhoek invents the simple microscope. Throughout the seventeenth century, illustrators exploited the microscope to develop new techniques of visualization. Microscopic drawings of insects and even cells accompany Hooke's *Micrographia*; and David Freedberg (see below, 2003) brings to light a large number of drawings associated with the Academy of the Lynxes (founded by Prince Federico Cesi in 1603) who documented and classified nature in pictorial form based on microscopic observation. Although little is known about microscopic drawings composed entirely of letters, in part because so few appear to survive, the virtuoso technique employed here as a secret diplomatic act is an extension of experiments with visualization of the sort sponsored by the Lynceans.

## LITERATURE

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