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The Politics of a Poet: The Archipoeta As Revealed by His Imagery

MOST OF THE POETS of the High Middle Ages are anonymous in the sense that of their lives we know nothing. But of the Archipoeta we know less than nothing, for even his name is a mocking travesty of a title, probably a play on that of his patron, the Archicancellarius, Reinald von Dassel, Archbishop of Cologne. Only ten poems can be ascribed with any certainty to a poet whose sense of form and whose verbal agility equal or exceed those of any medieval poet. These ten short poems appear to be intensely personal and to reflect the idiosyncrasies of their author and his reactions to the events and personages of his time. There is no independent evidence about this remarkable man, no documents exist to which he was a witness; there are no records of his relations with other poets or with his patrons. He is thus to an even greater degree than most contemporary writers in Latin or the vernacular a *persona*, a poet who appears only in his works. Since many of these works present the poet in the first person, it is a natural assumption that the statements made there are those of the poet himself, that he is telling of his own feelings and views and using the vehicle of his verse to make known to the world his personal reactions to patrons, to emperors, to courtiers, and to bishops.

Such a view might be described as a pathetic fallacy, although not in the way in which the expression is usually used. The ideas he expresses are, of course, his own but they are conditioned by the genre in which he writes and the effects which he wishes to produce. When a poet un-

dertakes to write an epic, he knows that he must take an elevated subject and treat it in a noble style, that he must assume the *persona* of an objective narrator who nevertheless is aware of the deep significance of the events he records and who therefore tells them with the gravity and dignity they deserve. He sets himself to deal with the subject in a form which his readers will recognize as suitable for the subject. If he does not do this, he runs a grave risk of being misunderstood. His epic may be regarded as a mock epic, as a parody, as a satire, even as a piece of light verse. In other words, the poet must subordinate his personality to the demands of the genre in which he writes and he may assume only the *persona* which is appropriate to that genre.

The Archipoeta wrote only short poems. At first sight they may appear to suffer from a certain monotony of subject, for all contain an element of complaint. Usually it is a lament on the poet's poverty which leads to a plea for more aid and more frequent aid from his patron, Reinald von Dassel. There is no need to imagine that the poet did not need the support he asked for. He says himself that he was of a knightly family and that he was not prepared to perform any of the more menial jobs that might support him. But no poet was likely to secure the support of a prince of the church merely by writing versified complaint, and we must look for other explanations of the poet's apparent ability to move in the highest circles of the empire and address with freedom, almost with impertinence, the most important subject in the land.

The *persona* of the poverty-stricken artist is only one of several which the poet assumes. Its frequency is due to the fact that the great majority of his poems are written from the point of view of the humble commentator—or, more accurately, from the pose of the humble commentator. Since they are short poems of social comment, the author cannot assume the stance of the epic narrator nor the personal involvement of the elegist. He has chosen the "I" form to comment on contemporary events and must therefore assume one of two stances. He can present himself as superior to the events he describes and on which he comments, or he can speak as a seer, as one whose judgment of events was to be valued because of superior knowledge or even divine inspiration. There was plenty of precedent for such a stance—the political odes of Horace and the satires of Juvenal come to mind—but such an attitude would have committed the Archipoeta to a position which would have deprived him of all possibility of the use of irony, and it would have been inconsistent with

his constant reiteration of his utter dependence on his patron. He prefers rather to portray himself as *poeta humilis*. Such an attitude offered several advantages. The poet could ask in the most brazen fashion for material assistance, since he was “*poeta humilis et pauper*.” But, perhaps more important, it deprived his often waspish comments of any sting. Since he proclaimed himself as a poor poet who was singing for his supper, there was no need for his betters to take seriously the almost insolent comments which he made about them, particularly since such comments were often veiled by the stylistic methods which he employed.

In adopting his pose of “*poeta humilis*,” the Archipoeta was careful to use the appropriate imagery. He describes himself in terms such as:

sic et ego dignus morte
prave vivens et distorte¹
(II.39f.)

or

asperitas brume necat horriferaque gelu me
continuum tussim pacior, tamquam tiscus sim.
(III.17)

or

Iam febre vexatus nimioque dolore gravatus
(VI.8)

or

Nudus et incultus cunctis appareo stultus;
pro vili panno sum vilis parque trutanno.
nec me nudavit ludus neque fur spoliavit:
pro solo victu sic sum spoliatus amictu,
pro victu vestes consumpsi, dii mihi testes.
(VI.18ff.)

The poet is sick, poor, hungry, and ill-clothed. He is the very prototype of the neglected artist, but still he struggles on to write poetry. The stance of sickness, weakness, and humility gives him the opportunity to poke

fun at the great ones of the earth by comparing his own sad state to that of wealth and power. The apostrophe of his audience is often made through images and descriptive epithets which contrast forcibly with the poet's description of himself:

Lingua balbus, hebes ingenio
viris doctis sermonem facio.

(I.1f.)

or

stultus ego qui penes te
nummis equis victu veste
dies omnes duxi feste
nunc insanus plus Oreste,
male vivens et moleste . . .

compared with

Pacis auctor, ultor litis
esto vati tuo mitis . . .

(II.78ff.)

The Archipoeta spends a whole poem in extravagant praise of Reinald von Dassel, showering upon him every figure from the rhetorical textbooks—"Ulixē facundior Tullianē loqueris/columba simplicior . . . serpente callidior . . . Alexandro forcior . . . David mansuetior . . . Martinoque largior"—only to conclude with a sharp contrast with his own position:

Dum sanctorum omnium colitur celebritas
singuli colentium gerunt vestes inclitas,
archicancellarium vatis pulsat nuditas.
Poeta composuit racionem rithmicam
satyrus imposuit melodiam musicam
unde bene meruit mantellum et tunicam.

(II.x,xi)

The great/small topos was never better illustrated—the Archbishop and his companions in glittering robes, the poet in rags. But it is this tattered

poet who is telling us of these great ones, and without him their fame would be nothing. It is he who provides them with the appropriate descriptive epithets and with their one claim to fame among posterity. The question of who is in fact *humilis* and who is *magnus* is thus left to the audience.

The poet helps the audience by the assumption of other stances. For, as a poet, he is also a seer. The appropriate imagery for the poet as prophet and seer is well enough illustrated by Horace:

Quem virum aut heroa lyra vel acri
tibia sumis celebrare, Clio?

or in the great political odes such as III.2, III.3, IV.4, and IV.5. Even more appropriate for the Archipoeta is the calm statement of superiority made by Horace in Odes III.1 "Odi profanum vulgus et arceo," which sets him above the common herd and makes his pronouncements infinitely more significant to those of a mere mortal. When the Archipoeta adopts the stance of a poet-seer, he does not use this kind of imagery. He refuses to set himself apart from the herd but rather claims that his powers, such as they are, are mere accidentals of his personality, traits which will be intensified by the liberal provision of good wine. The result is an ironical opposition of the statements of the Archipoeta on matters of grave concern—public policy, charity, the prowess of the emperor, and even the ultimate destiny of a man's soul—which are delivered in all seriousness and often with an air of authority, and the *persona* of the poet who is allegedly making these pronouncements: a man beset by poverty, ragged, sick, hungry, and apparently unable to write unless reinforced by wine and the generosity of his patron. The only justification for the Archipoeta's existence is his ability to exercise the poet's craft in the service of Reinald von Dassel, and over and over again he emphasizes that without him the world would little note nor long remember what the Archbishop of Cologne did or even who he was. Here lies his ultimate strength, the reason why he is able to talk to his patron as he does, to beg without shame, and even to be insolent if the spirit moves him, for without his poetic gift and the fame he spreads, Reinald would be a cypher.

The opposition between the various *personae* assumed by the Archipoeta and the ironic interplay between them is best seen in the two poems most intimately connected with political matters, numbers IV and IX in

Krefeld's edition.² Both are concerned with the successes enjoyed by Friedrich Barbarossa in his campaigns in Italy and each, from a different point of view, examines the problems of a man who, whether he likes it or not, finds himself in the position of a poet-laureate. There can be no doubt that in each of these two poems an actual historical situation is being described—Reinald von Dessel did ask his court poet to celebrate the deeds of Friedrich Barbarossa in epic fashion, and the Archipoeta was talking about actual achievements of the Emperor in his later poem. The poem which disclaims any ability to write an epic on the imperial achievement has thirty-three strophes (if the gap at strophe xxi is only two lines long), the poem on the *gesta Friderici* has thirty-four. The similarity—perhaps even identity—of length is surely not accidental. For what he had refused to do when requested by the Archbishop, he performs spontaneously—in his own fashion. Thus both poems are a testimony to his personal attitudes. One demonstrates his independence, his determination to write only when he wants and what he wants; the second demonstrates that if he wishes to do so he can celebrate the Emperor's achievements at least as well as an epic poet-laureate, even if not in a formal epic poem.

The two poems are a personal declaration of independence but they are not necessarily conveyed in a true first person. In reading them we must distinguish between various types of utterance. The poet may actually speak as himself. This kind of declaration is much rarer than might appear at first sight. He may adopt various *personae*, all of them variations on *poeta*, through whom he expresses views which may coincide with his own, which purport to be his own, but which may be and frequently are poses to make a point with which, as a person, he does not agree. To all this should be added another and far more subtle method of indicating the views of the poet, not of the *persona*. The imagery and rhetorical techniques employed by the poet may be in obvious opposition to those demanded by the theme he is pursuing and thus may show more clearly than a personal statement could reveal what the poet really thought. A detailed examination of the poems will demonstrate the interaction of the two methods.

What we may call the "epic disclaimer" presents an opposition between the Archbishop, apostrophized in each of the first seven strophes of poem IV, and a poetical statement by a person who claims to be his

humble, indeed abject slave, who yet happens to write poetry. Reinald is carefully described as a man of a clear judgment (“discrete mentis”) but also as a person who would never go beyond the bounds of a wise man. Such a description means that he is capable of being convinced by logical argument (“probare potero multis argumentis”). In fact, however, no such logical arguments are produced. The Archipoeta prefers to pervert the whole situation and make it farcical. He quickly adopts the stance of the “poeta servus,” ready for anything and prepared to go through fire and water (“ibo, si preceperis, eciam trans freta”) for his master—but not prepared to do what he is asked. His excuse is that he is expected to do in a week what Virgil or Homer could not have done in five years. The implications are that the deeds of Friedrich would take these poets five years or more to write—if they undertook them. Is Friedrich then the equivalent of Aeneas and Achilles? The Archbishop must think that he is, if he wants his tame poet to write an epic about his achievements.

The Archipoeta does not linger on this thought, for he has something else in mind. If a wretched poet is to write on such a magnificent subject, he must surely be inspired—and how is he to come by the inspiration which will make him the equivalent of Vergil and Lucan? Even the little poetic fire and power of prophecy he possesses deserts him on occasion:

prophetic spiritus fugit ab Helya,
 Helyseum deserit saepe propheticia,
 nec me semper sequitur mea poetria.
 (IV.vii)

The words are a sharp rebuke to the Archbishop—poetical inspiration cannot be turned on to order—made by the poet in his own person, a defense, one may say, of the poet against the Philistine, but made in the *persona* of the poet-slave which he has adopted. This assertion of independence is not allowed to become offensive. The Archipoeta quickly reverts to his favorite protective covering, that of the poet who cannot work in solitude or in a state of abstinence from food and wine. By adopting this stance he can evade the request to write a Barbarossa epic by demonstrating his unsuitability rather than his inability. Epic poetry belongs to the elevated style. It is a lofty genre, not to be attempted by flighty poets but by those who take their craft seriously. Such are the poets who

are described in strophes x and xi. But the Archipoeta does not belong to this group. He does not abstain. His poetry is directly dependent on the quality and quantity of the wine he consumes:

Tales versus facio quale vinum bibo
(IV.xiv)

and on the provision of food:

nihil possum facere nisi sumpto cibo . . .
(IV.xiv)

The situation is summed up in these lines:

scribere non valeo pauper et mendicus
que gessit in Latio Cesar Friedericus. . .
(IV.xvi)

This is not a mere request for financial support. It is a statement that great themes cannot be attempted by poor poets, a contrast made perfectly clear:

unde sepe lugeo quando vos ridetis
(IV.xvii)

The poet then explains at considerable length why action should be taken to bring the poet of Barbarossa up to the standard required for an epic poet. He is too noble to beg—or to dig—and it would not be consistent with the dignity of Reinald to do other than support him, still less would it be right for a German as opposed to an Italian prelate. Suddenly the poem ceases to be a matter of whether the Archipoeta should write about the deeds of Barbarossa. The question to be discussed is the relation between poet and patron. After demonstrating that the poet whom Reinald von Dassel has been supporting, or failing to support, is incapable of handling an epic theme, because such a theme demands a man not dependent on occasional gifts of food and wine, the Archipoeta assumes the mantle of the seer (which he had previously discarded) and talks of the need for true patronage. Not only is generosity characteristic of any true Christian, it is also politically wise:

In regni negociis potens et peritus
 a regni negotio nomen est sortitus;
 precepti dominici memor, non oblitus
 tribuit hilariter, non velud invitus.

(IV.xxvii)

A clear connection is made between Reinald's position as chief minister and the necessity to give generously. The Archbishop owes his high position to political skill, but it is only the poet who can advertise his worthiness for that position.

To view this poem as a somewhat crude effort by the Archipoeta to obtain material benefits by saying that he cannot write an epic poem about the deeds of Barbarossa unless he is well paid for it is an oversimplification. The poet rarely speaks in his own person. He is stating that a "poeta humilis" cannot be expected to write the "sermo sublimior." If Reinald wishes his poet to speak of grave matters of state, then he must behave like a generous lord. His style must be appropriate to the epic style. The poet, while adopting for most of the poem the *persona* of the "poeta servus," speaks in the tone of the "poeta vates" and at times comes very close to lecturing his patron on his duties. Thus there is throughout the ironical contrast between the *persona* of the poverty-stricken, dependent, almost servile poet-laureate and the independent, superior, and quite unrepentant poet who is well aware of his value to his patron.

It is the second *persona* who is in evidence in the poem on the deeds of Friedrich Barbarossa, number IX in Krefeld's edition. Although he does not fail to mention his patron, the Archbishop, the poem is not written from the stance of the "poeta humilis." Here the poet assumes the stance of *vates* and goes even further. He purports to be able to determine what is good for the world and to see the course of history. From the very beginning there is assumed identification between the panegyrist of Barbarossa and the poet-prophet who surveys the world and lays down the principles of imperial rule.

The poem is dominated by one image derived from a statement of Jesus himself: Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's. Cities and magnates who do so are praised, those who fail to do so are damned. But to this statement there is a corollary: Render to God the things which are God's. There is no explicit opposition between these two commandments, but the tension between them is implicit throughout the poem,

as it was in contemporary politics, and it is indicated by a different and perhaps more subtle variation of the poetical stance.

The poem opens with what is apparently the standard apostrophe of the ruler. The poet does not appear as an individual *persona* but (in the second strophe) as a spokesman for Barbarossa's loyal subjects. It is not until strophe vii that a verb appears in the first person singular, unless we count "me pudet" in strophe iv. The poet has deliberately avoided the impression of offering a personal opinion. He is creating the illusion of being the spokesman of many and of setting down in verse what everyone in the empire believes. If he had actually done this, the poem would hardly be worth a comment. The imagery appropriate to imperial panegyric had developed, so far as the Christian West was concerned, at the court of Charlemagne, and subsequent poets had improved on it. There is ample evidence that Barbarossa himself was well aware of the importance of such poetic propaganda.³ It would therefore seem reasonable that a poem in praise of the Emperor's deeds in Italy, whether written in response to a direct request or not, would employ the imagery appropriate to such an occasion, which would be familiar to the Emperor and to his chief advisor, Reinald von Dassel. But in fact the appropriate imagery is not used. Quite the contrary. In the first three strophes the poet uses only those images which would be appropriate to God, not to his secular regent. For convenience we may set side by side the attributes of Barbarossa, as the poem gives them, and the biblical passages with which they are connected.

mundi domine	Verbo Domini caeli firmati sunt; et spiritu oris eius omnis virtus eorum	(Ps. 36.6)
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Cesar noster	Pater noster qui est in celis, sanctificetur nomen tuum	(Matt. 6.9)
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ave	Ave, Rabbi, et osculatus est eum. [The reference is to Judas]	(Matt. 26.49)
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Ave Maria, gratia plena; Dominus tecum benedicta tu in mulieribus	(Luke 1.28)
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cuius iugum est
suave

Tollite iugum meum super vos, et discite a me quia mitis sum et humilis corde; et invenientis quietum animabus vestris.
Iugum enim meum suave est et onus meum leve.

(Matt. 11.29, 30)

Quisquis contra
calcitrat

Saule, Saule quid me persequeris? Qui dixit: Quis es, Domine? Et ille: Ego sum Jesus quem tu persequeris; durum est tibi contra stimulum calcitrare.

(Acts 9.4, 5)

obstinati cordis
est et cervicis
prave

Caelum mihi sedes est, terra autem scabellum pedum meorum; quam domum aedificabitis mihi? dicit Dominus; aut quis locus requietionis meae est?

Nonne manus mea fecit haec omnia?

Dura cervice et incircumcisis cordibus et auribus vos semper Spiritui Sancto resistitis; sicut patres vestri, ita et vos.

(Acts 7.49–51)

Princeps terrae
principum

Et post regnum eorum, cum creverint iniquitates, consurget rex impudens facie, intelligens propositiones. Et roborabitur fortitudo eius; et non in viribus suis; et supra quam credi potest, universa vastabit, et prosperabitur, et faciet. Et interficiet robustos et populum sanctorum. Secundum voluntatem suam et dirigetur dolus in manu eius; et cor suum magnificabit et in copia rerum omnium occidet plurimos; et contra principem principum consurget, et sine manu conteretur.

(Dan. 8.23–25)

Haec dicit Dominus Deus: Ecco ego suscitabo omnes amatores tuos contra te, de quibus satiata est anima tua, et congregabo eos adversum te in circuitu: Filios Babylonis et universos Chaldaeos, nobiles, tyrannosque et principes, omnes filios Assyriorum, iuvenes

forma egregia duces et magistratus universos,
principes principum . . .

(Ezech. 23.22, 23)

cuius tuba titu-
bant arces inimice
tibi

Et septem angeli qui habebant septem tubas,
praeparaverunt se ut tuba canerent

(Rev. 8.6)

colla subdimus

Porro gens quae subiecerit cervicem suam sub
iugo regis Babylonis et servierit ei, dimittam
eam in terra sua, dicit Dominus, et colet eam
et habitabit in ea. Et ad Sedeciam, regem Juda,
locutus sum secundum omnia verba haec, di-
cens: Subiicite colla vestra sub iugo regis Ba-
bylonis, et servite ei, et populo eius et vivetis.

(Jer. 27.11, 12)

tibi colla subdi-
mus tygres et
formice et cum
cedris Libani
vepres et mirice

Domine, Dominus noster, quam admirabile est
nomen tuum in universa terra!

Omnia subiecisti sub pedibus eius oves et
boves universas insuper et pecora campi, Volu-
cres caeli et pisces maris qui perambulant semi-
tas maris.

(Ps. 8.2, 8, 9)

Nemo prudens
ambigit te per dei
nutum super
reges alios regem
constitutum

Quare fremuerunt gentes, et populi meditati
sunt inania? Astiterunt reges terrae, et prin-
cipes convenerunt in unum adversus Dom-
inum, et adversus Christum eius.

Dirumpamus vincula eorum et proiciamus a
nobis iugum ipsorum. Qui habitat in caelis ir-
ridebit eos et Dominus subsannabit eos. Tunc
loquetur ad eos in ira sua, et in furore suo
conturbabit eos. Ego autem constitutus sum
rex ab eo super Sion, montem sanctum eius
praedicans praeceptum eius. Dominus dixit ad
me: Filius meus es tu; ego hodie genui te.

(Ps. 2.1-7)

Ego constitui te hodie super gentes et super
regna ut evellas et destruas et disperdas et dis-
sipes et aedifices et plantes.

(Jer. 1.10)

Subiecti igitur estote omni humanae creaturae
propter Deum, sive regi quasi praecellenti, sive
ducibus, tamquam ab eo missis ad vindictam
malefactorum, laudem vero bonorum; quia sic
est voluntas Dei ut beneficientes obmutescere
faciatis imprudentium hominum ignoran-
tiam . . .

(1 Pet. 2.13-15)

The first general point to be noted about all the images used of Barbarossa in the first three strophes is that they are directly connected with God in their biblical context. The biblical passages show God as the ruler of the universe, and in a few cases there is clear reference to what happens to those who try to usurp his power, as may be seen in the quoted passages from Daniel and Ezechiel. Here, as frequently in the "Confession,"⁴ the context surrounding a biblical reference often gives more of the poet's true opinion than the actual words which appear in the poem. The use of images and attributes which are used in Holy Writ of God himself must inevitably have caused the audience to think that the Archipoeta was concerned to show his Emperor as the only power on earth, a union of spiritual and temporal function. There is good evidence that Barbarossa himself was much of that opinion. He created two antipopes, Victor IV and Pascal III, and caused the latter to canonize his predecessor, Charlemagne, the earliest of those who had sought the union of spiritual and temporal powers. There can be little doubt that Barbarossa would be gratified to be described in divine imagery. But on closer examination the use of such imagery is not quite so flattering as might appear.

We have already noted that in the passages in which several of the images appear, there are references to upstart kings whose aspirations were crushed. Other modifications are less obvious. The Archipoeta says: "cuius bonis omnibus iugum est suave." The passage from Matthew already quoted occurs in the following context: "Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis et ego reficiam vos." The whole point of the biblical passages is the relief given by Jesus to all those who come to Him, particularly the weak and oppressed, whereas Barbarossa's yoke is light "for all good men." Presumably the Emperor is the judge of who is good and who is not and the greater part of the poem seems to indicate that the

imperial yoke was by no means light on those who did not conform to his plans. Nor is the allusion to Acts 9.5 more encouraging. Anyone who thinks that the yoke is too hard is warned that it is difficult to kick against the pricks. The text shows that Paul is resisting the commands of God and that he cannot be allowed to do so for very long. Does Barbarossa think that resistance to him is tantamount to resistance to God? Apparently so, for in the very next strophe we are reminded of the fate of those who resist, and the biblical passages are concerned with the ruthless suppression of disobedience to the supreme ruler. The selection of images in these strophes presents Barbarossa as the supreme arbiter of all matters both temporal and spiritual, as something very close to God himself. It is clearly the duty of each member of the audience to decide for himself whether the images presented here are to be taken seriously. There can be little doubt that Barbarossa himself was prepared to accept them at face value because he believed he merited such attributes. We must examine the rest of the poem to find out whether he was right.

The third strophe gives a hint about the method of interpretation we should follow. (The poet is still speaking in the *persona* of the all-wise seer.)

Nemo prudens ambigit te per dei nutum
 super reges alios regem constitutum
 et in dei populo digne consecutum
 tam vindicte gladium quam tutele scutum.
 (IX.iii)

The important word here is "prudens." Does it mean "wise" in the sense of "sensible," "aware of the arguments," wise in the sense of the man who builds his foundation on a rock⁵—such an interpretation would be complimentary to Barbarossa—or does it perhaps mean "anyone who knows what is good for him." Certainly the latter interpretation would be true for the Archipoeta, for he is in many respects a court poet, but it would also be true of the generality of the empire, if they wish to avoid the fate of Milan. Both power and protection are in the hands of the Emperor. Indeed it would appear that the spiritual arm, the papacy, is totally without influence.

Another hint is given in the next strophe:

Unde diu cogitans quod non esset tutum
 Cesari non reddere censum vel tributum.
 (IX.iv)

The reference is clear: "Licet censum dare Caesari an non? Cognita autem Jesus enquitia eorum ait: Quid me tentatis, hypocritae? Ostendite mihi numisma census. At obtulerunt ei denarium. Et ait illis Jesus: Cuius est imago haec et superscriptio? Dicunt ei: Caesaris. Tunc ait illis: Reddite ergo quae sunt Caesaris Caesari et quae sunt Dei, Deo." But the poem seems to call for more than the biblical reference. The distinction between what is due to God and what is due to Caesar has been deliberately blurred by the imagery. And furthermore, a person who does not recognize the elevation of the Emperor's status is not only not "prudent"—he is not safe. What contribution is the Archipoeta to make? Since it is apparently dangerous not to pay "censum et tributum" to Caesar, he, poorer than the widow in the biblical story, will give his mite. And what is this mite? It is the use of his talent to praise Barbarossa. The poem written in praise of Barbarossa thus proves to be something which is performed because it is not safe to do anything else. Yet if we read the passage in the Bible, his contribution is greater than that of anyone else: "Et sedens Jesus contra gazophylacium, aspiciebat quomodo turba iactaret aes in gazophylacium et multi divites iactabant multa. Cum venisset autem vidua una, misit duo minuta, quod est quadrans. Et convocans discipulos suos ait illis: Amen dico vobis quoniam vidua haec pauper plus omnibus misit, qui miserunt in gazophylacium."⁶ Thus in the first three strophes we have imagery which implies that the Emperor is laying claim to the divine as well as the secular role, and a statement by his panegyrist that he is functioning as an official poet because he must pay his tribute to Caesar.

What follows is an *amplificatio* of the theme of the poet rendering service to his master—the picture of *potestas larga*, of the Emperor using his power for the benefit of his people. It is the function of a professional poet and of a formal panegyrist to call attention to these virtues—especially if he needs the money ("nos poetae pauperes"). The poet affirms strongly that he is writing from the Christian, not the classical point of view, as a son of the church, not a follower of Cicero or the Muses. It is from the Christian point of view that he will write of a man who has

restored the image of Rome by undertaking its secular burdens. But the poet's statement actually goes further, for it plays on several possible meanings:

Christi sensus imbuat mentem Christianam
 ut de christo domini digna laude canam,
 qui potenter sustinens sarcinam mundanam
 relevat in pristinum gradum rem Romanam.
 (IX.viii)

The poet's task is to sing the praises of the Lord's anointed—anything from Saul to Barbarossa—but the presence of the word "christo" inevitably recalls "Christ," particularly since it is associated with "Christi" in the first line. The implication that Christ has inspired the poet to sing of things worthy of HIM is inescapable, as is the confusion between Christ and the Lord's anointed. The confusion between the secular and the spiritual is continued in the next strophe, where the decline of Rome and the consequent impudence of the barbaric tribes are described in language reminiscent of the spiritual life—"ortas in imperio spinas impiorum."

Yet the following strophes are clearly secular in intent. The Lombards are compared with the rebels against Jupiter, not those who rebelled against God. It is the tribute due to Caesar that they have refused to give; and the city of Ambrose, one of the greatest of the Christian fathers, is compared to Troy, which had resisted the will of the pagan gods. Yet the biblical imagery is always present:

omnes erant caesares, nemo census dabat

 ut quod erat Caesaris daret ei gratis
 (IX.xiii)

The citizens of Milan should obey Barbarossa because of the biblical injunction to render to Caesar the things which are Caesar's. The reputation of the emperor needs no further clarification—according to the poet, who has been building it for fifteen strophes—but it is a combination of the religious and the secular. The first half of the poem concludes with his reference:

qui rebelles lancea fodiens ultrici
 representat Karolum dextera victrici.
 (IX.xvi)

Barbarossa is the heir of Charlemagne, whom he had canonized, at once the Emperor and the saint. It is clear that the imperial mandate to the Archipoeta, conveyed through Reinald von Dassel, had been to the effect that Barbarossa was to be celebrated as the combination of the secular and the spiritual powers of the empire. Yet the imagery which the poet, the independent seer, uses makes only too clear the incongruity between the Emperor's desires and what was really due to him as the tribute due to Caesar. In asking for more than this tribute from the poet, he has to suffer the consequences in veiled but nevertheless sharp sarcasm.

The second half of the poem moves to epic recital, but epic recital with a difference. It is clearly impossible in a short poem like this to use the full epic style, but there are ways of imitating it. The poet himself gives a hint of what he is going to do:

Primo suo domino paruit Papia
 urbs bona, flos urbium, clara, potens, pia;
 digna foret laudibus et topographia,
 nisi quod nunc utimur brevitatis via.
 (IX.xviii)

In other words, rhetoric would call for a full treatment of Barbarossa's first triumph, Pavia—if this were not a short poem. Nevertheless, the roll-call of victories continues, complete with figures—hyperbole: “donec desunt Alpibus frigora vel nives”; apostrophe: “letare, Novaria, numquam vetus fies”; and many others. There are the appropriate references to Constantine and the denigration of the Byzantine empire, the almost inevitable comparison with the deeds of the Greeks, the assertion that an account of his exploits would be another *Aeneid*. All this is narrative, flattering, factual, inflated. Neither Barbarossa nor Reinald can object, even if they perceive the irony and even if they perceive that the high-sounding conflicts promised in strophe xxvii in words reminiscent of “arma virumque cano” prove to be punitive expeditions against highwaymen. To have removed these malefactors is one of the great “gesta Friderici,” and there is no doubt that he has brought peace to Italy, but it is peace at

the price of great cruelty and destruction. This certainly is not the peace which is brought to mind by the words "Iterum describitur orbis ab Augusto."⁷ This is not the coming of the Prince of Peace. The whole strophe is a nicely ambiguous play on Christian and classical figures.

Iterum describitur orbis ab Augusto
 redditur respublica statui vetusto
 pax terras ingreditur habitu venusto
 et iam non opprimitur iustus ab iniusto.
 (IX.xxx)

There is no harm in describing Barbarossa as Augustus—indeed that was one of his titles—but the first Augustus was parceling out the world for taxation purposes, as an absolute ruler with no regard for the babe who was born in Bethlehem of Judaea. Order is being restored but what is the "statui vetusto" to which it is returning? Is it that of Italy before the revolt or that of Augustus Caesar, Emperor of pagan Rome? The use of "respublica" and "vetusto" seems to imply the latter. The return of peace to the earth is a theme pursued by Ovid and particularly by Vergil in the Messianic eclogue (even though the actual word "pax" does not appear there), and it should not be forgotten that *pax Romana* implied the absolute control of the Emperor. It is naturally desirable that the just should not be persecuted by the unjust, provided we know which are which. Watenpuhl is no doubt correct in saying that the "hominibus bonae voluntatis" of Luke 2.14 are the same as the "iusti," but this does not solve the problem. They may very well correspond also to the "prudens" of strophe iii. In the end it is the friends of the new Augustus who will triumph.

It is the same conception of Barbarossa as the heir to the secular principate which motivates the anti-Byzantine feeling of the next strophe. The "volat fama" is reminiscent of Vergil, while the scorn for the Greek emperor is more in accord with Roman scorn for the Greeks than with the official attitude towards the successors of Constantine, although it must be remembered that there was a long tradition of anti-Byzantine feeling in the West. The obvious intention of the poet is to show Barbarossa as a Western, legitimate successor of Augustus. The Christian element is deliberately played down. These are matters of general principle but, as the next strophe shows, there were actual historical events of great impor-

tance which colored the attitude of the poet. Barbarossa was at this time supporting an antipope against Alexander who, after a struggle with William I of Sicily, had endorsed his rule. This same Alexander had even cooperated with the Byzantines in his opposition to Barbarossa. It is thus incumbent upon the Archipoeta to describe William of Sicily as "tyrannus" or "rex iniustus" and to condemn the Byzantines who had dared to oppose Friedrich. The Emperor, in this poem, has restored peace in Italy but, as everyone knew, it was a peace of devastation, imposed in defiance of a duly elected pope by an emperor who abrogated to himself both secular and divine powers. Thus the poet's statement in strophe vii becomes the grimmest of irony:

Filius ecclesie fidem sequor sanam
contempno gentilium falsitatem vanam.
(IX.vii)

In fact he is celebrating Barbarossa for the rest of the poem not as a Christian Emperor but rather as the restorer of the old Roman principate of Augustus, the pre-Christian, pagan rule in which the church could have no part. The images and the allusions make this clear. It is the *pax Romana*, not the *pax Christiana*, which is being restored.

The last two strophes thus become of great importance, strophes xxxiii and xxxiv, the years of the life of Christ and a final prayer. Reinald von Dassel, the Archbishop who alone supported the uncanonical election of the new antipope, Paschal III, the Archbishop who was chancellor first and bishop very much second, is described in language drawn from the Gospels. He is John the Baptist making straight the way of the Lord,⁸ but the verbs used of his activities convey not peace but a sword—*preparavit, extirpavit, subiugavit*. Only the last verb is one of peace, *liberavit*, but this applies only to the poet himself. The poem he has just written has freed him from the constant pressure of the Archbishop to write about the deeds of Barbarossa and had perhaps brought in a little money as an incidental. The poet has celebrated the new *princeps principum* and his John the Baptist and has thus earned his pay. Nor does he spare the Emperor a highly ambiguous final strophe. Barbarossa is described as "nobilis," surely a reference more to his deeds than to his birth, and there is therefore an assumption that the ruthless deeds just described are noble. "Age sicut agis," "Go on acting in the way you are," continues the same idea.⁹ Pos-

sibly such a statement constitutes poetic approval but it could equally well mean "This is the way to continue your policy of secular imperialism." Certainly the next line implies that this is the way to gain fame: "sicut exaltatus es, exaltare magis." Again the words are biblical and are almost always used in connection with God, not a secular ruler. The impression of Godlike power is continued in the last two lines, which have a deliberately Old Testament quality,¹⁰ the Lord of Hosts striking down His enemies:

fove tuos subditos hostes cede plagis
super eos irruens ultione stragis!

Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, but Barbarossa is taking his own revenge, as if he were God himself.

The poem closes as it opened, with images reserved for God used of a secular ruler. The poet has fulfilled the command of his patron, Reinald von Dassel, and has glorified the Italian policies of his Emperor in words which could without difficulty be interpreted as a sincere endorsement of those policies. But this endorsement is made by the *persona* of the poet, the one who has been commanded to perform, the "prudens" of strophe iii, the "vidua pauperior" of strophe iv, the "filius ecclesie" of strophe vii. All these are masks and furthermore they are poses which carry ironical possibilities. The real views of the poet are to be sought not in the statements made by the various *personae* but in the imagery used by the poet himself. In applying to a secular ruler images which were, in the mind of the audience, associated exclusively with God, the poet strongly criticizes Barbarossa's usurpation of spiritual functions; by using the classical, imperial image and the epic form, albeit in mocking fashion, he associates Barbarossa not with the Holy Roman Empire but with secular Roman rule. His patron Reinald von Dassel becomes a secularized John the Baptist proclaiming the legitimacy of the new imperialism. The distinction so clearly proclaimed by the *persona* between the things which are Caesar's and the things which are God's is utterly denied by the poet's use or abuse of the imagery conventions of the two genres, the panegyric and the epic.

It is hard to escape the feeling that the two poems of the Archipoeta concerned with the deeds of Barbarossa are closely connected. His refusal

to write an epic because he was not the man for such a task is nullified by his poem praising the very deeds which would have been the stuff of the epic and ostensibly showing his Emperor as the personification of imperial justice. Yet the imagery shows that he regards these deeds as the subject for a mock-epic, not an epic, and his biblical imagery makes it clear that the tribute due to Caesar has been vastly exceeded by the powers which Barbarossa has abrogated to himself. The *Archipoeta* demonstrates that it is not the *persona* of the poet who tells the truth but the poet who juggles the imagery and conventions of a genre to produce effects which are often totally different from the apparent intention of the poem.

NOTES

1. All quotations are taken from Heinrich Krefeld, *Die Gedichte des Archipoeta*, Heinrich Watenphul, ed. (Heidelberg, 1958). I have followed the numbering of the poems in this edition.

2. The exact dates of the two poems are difficult to determine. Milan was captured on March 1, 1162, so that IX must have been written after that date. It seems probable, as Krefeld suggests, that the poem would be particularly suited for presentation in Novara, and that the most likely date would therefore be September/October 1163. A date very close to this seems indicated for IV, although the evidence is much less clear. See Krefeld, pp. 104 ff. and 131.

3. The subject is treated in the following works: Paul Lehmann, *Das literarische Bild Karls des Grossen* (Munich, 1934, repr. 1959); N. Rubinstein, "Political Rhetoric in the Imperial Chancery During the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," *Medium Aevum* (1945), 14:22 ff.; Anette Georgi, *Das lateinische und deutsche Preisgedicht des Mittelalters*, Philologische Studien und Quellen, no. 48 (Berlin, 1969).

4. No. X in Krefeld's edition. The frequent biblical allusions, when read in context, provide a brilliant satirical commentary on the relations between the poet and Reinald von Dassel.

5. "Omnis ergo qui audit verba mea haec et facit ea assimilabitur viro sapienti qui aedificavit domum supra petram" (Matt. 7.24).

6. Mark 12.41 ff.

7. "Factum est autem in diebus illis exiit edictum Caesaris Augusti, ut describeretur universus orbis" (Luke 2.1).

8. "Vox clamantis in deserto parate viam Domini; rectas facite semitas eius" (Luke 2.4).

9. "Interrogabant autem eum et milites dicentes 'Quid faciemus et nos?' Et ait illis: neminem conculcatis neque calumniam faciatis et contenti estote stipendiis vestris" (Luke 3.14).

10. "Iudica illos, Deus, decidant a cognitionibus suis; secundum multitudinem impietatum eorum expelle eos, quoniam irritaverunt te, Domine" (Ps. 5.11); "Exsurgat Deus et dissipentur inimici eius et fugiant qui oderunt eum a facie eius. Sicut deficit fumus, deficiant. Sicut fluit cera a facie ignis, sic pereant peccatores a facie Dei et iusti epulentur et exultent" (Ps. 67.1).