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The Iconography of the Honey Bee in Western Art

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The Iconography of the Honey Bee in Western Art

By

Maura Wilson

This thesis, written under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor and approved by the program chair, has been presented to and accepted by the Department of Humanities in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Humanities

Dominican University of California

San Rafael, CA

May 2019

Abstract

This master's thesis studies the ways in which the honey bee is used as a symbol in Western art, specifically between the 1st century AD and the 17th century. Artists have had a close relationship with honey bees since they first drew scenes of life on cave walls; since then, honey bees have been a recurring image featured in artworks spanning centuries, cultures, and religions. During the Renaissance in Europe, the honey bee was adapted from a symbol associated with fertility and polytheistic cult rituals to become a symbol of eloquence in Christianity. The community-based, diligent nature of the honey bee resulting in the surplus of sweet honey helps to explain the continued representation of the honey bee in art. Considering the complex nature of the honey bee's role in human life, it is plain to see why artists have gravitated towards the honey bee for use as a symbol for centuries. By studying the symbolism of the bee in several works of art from the Renaissance and before – *Artemis of Ephesus* from the 2nd century CE, *Venus With Cupid Stealing Honey* by Lucas Cranach the Elder from 1472, *The Miracle of the Bees* by Juan de Valdes Leal painted in 1673, and finally the tomb of Pope Urban VIII sculpted by Gianlorenzo Bernini between 1627 and 1647 — I intend to explore the meanings behind the relationship between the honey bee and the culture that produced these works of art and the way that it continues to steadily evolve and adapt to suit the time and the artist's portrayal.

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Introduction

Honey bees have always been an essential element in human existence. Early humans held the honey bee in the highest respect. Some of the earliest cave art to as yet be discovered depicts the art of honey hunting. The rock art found in Spain and Africa shows where hunters should go to collect honey, how to identify different types of bees based off of their hives so that each hunting expedition yields the most product, and even the safest way to collect the honey (Crane 11). Creating cave art required time and energy to make and gather resources to create pigments to place on the walls, and in a species that was still struggling to survive, this time and energy were precious. The fact that such resources were spent depicting information about bees and honey is indicative of just how important these resources were to early humans.

Even as society developed and language became more complex, the honey bee remained a part of human culture. In ancient Egypt the lord of books, learning, holy words, and scribe of the gods, Thoth, would be celebrated during festivals with offerings of honey (Buchmann 129). The image of the honey bee became so tightly interwoven with the culture of the ancient Egyptians that the Egyptian hieroglyph meaning “scribe” was the image of a honey bee (“Egypt’s Lost Queens”), thus the relationship between the ancient Egyptians and honey bees ran so deeply that it came to be reflected in their written language. The Egyptians weren’t the only culture to represent their deep connection to the honey bee through their language and religion: Jewish cultures also attribute great significance so rooted in the culture that it is part of their language. The root for the Hebrew word for bee, *dbure*, pronounced Deborah, is made from the root word *dbr*, which translates to “word” (Buchmann 129). The two women in the Old Testament named Deborah were both women praised as being wise, so not only were these

women named for honey bees but they also embodied all that the honey bee represented: wisdom and eloquence through their words (Birchall 68). Bees are featured again in the Old Testament in the Book of Judges 14, in which the story of Samson tells of the protagonist using his intense strength to kill a lion. When he returns later, he sees that the carcass is now inhabited by a hive of bees and filled with honey. This inspires him with a riddle: “Out of the eater, something to eat; out of the strong, something sweet” (Judges 14: 14). This riddle and the honey bee’s involvement comes to be a symbol of the power of the God, His guiding wisdom, and the eloquence which He can inspire. Such a deeply intertwined connection between the natural world, religions and cultures the world over is something unique to the icon of the honey bee. This makes the plight which the honey bee faces today even more worrisome and perplexing.

There is much talk about the honey bee is dying off, but in fact this is only partially true. The honey bee is actually on its way towards extinction. According to the United States Department of Agriculture and the United States Environmental Protection Agency, in the winter of 2006, beekeepers began reporting losses of 30 to 90 percent of their hives (Epstein et al. 6). While some loss of bees is to be expected during winter, these numbers were unusually high and half of the reported cases did not show patterns consistent with natural bee deaths, including large numbers of worker bees disappearing, leaving the queen, larvae, and an abundance of honey but few bee bodies near the hive (Epstein et al.1). The cause of this sudden plummet in honey bee numbers, now called Colony Collapse Disorder, or CCD, is still under investigation by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, but the cause remains elusive (Epstein et al. 1). Much of the research attempting to explain the sudden CCD epidemic is done in laboratories, which is essential to understanding on a scientific level what is happening to the bee. However, the issue doesn’t exist solely in the laboratory.

Honey bees live among humans every day. There needs to be more work done to involve the communities that the bees live in in playing an active role in their preservation now, because the honey bee continues to die now and the daily choices made in the communities where honey bees live can help alter the road to extinction that the honey bee currently travels. As Val Plumwood points out in her book, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, humanity's effort to dominate one another causes all other life forms to seem somehow lesser than the fight we wage with each other. This attitude towards nature is especially damning to all life when the honey bee, which is so essential to the food chain through its work pollinating, is put at risk as a result.

Humanity's attitude towards nature was not always so hostile and domination-driven. By observing the way the honey bee is portrayed in works of art from Western cultures during the Renaissance era, ranging 1525 to 1647, I hope to uncover how and why humanity's attitude toward the honey bee changed in Western culture. In the first chapter of this work, I will analyze the statue of Artemis of Ephesus from the 2nd century CE to lay the groundwork for the rest of my arguments. When we understand how early modern Western cultures incorporated the honey bee into every aspect of their lives and culture it becomes more perplexing to then see where humanity's relationship to nature has arrived today. Next, I will discuss two paintings from 1525, *Venus with Cupid Stealing Honey* and 1530, *Cupid Complaining to Venus* both painted by Lucas Cranach the Elder in the Netherlands during the Protestant reformation. Following this piece will be a Spanish work by Juan de Valdes Leal from 1673 titled *The Miracle of the Bees*. Finally I shall consider the tomb of Pope VIII by Gianlorenzo Bernini, carved between 1627 and 1647. By studying the way in which the presence of honey bees in these works reflects the personal connection between humans and the honey bee at the time of each work's creation, I will point to how and why the meaning of the honey bee changed so drastically in Western civilization. By

understanding the changing iconography of the honey bee, the humans who today might gain more understanding for the creatures and make choices life that will help to preserve the honey bee for future generations.

Today the honey bee does not possess the same social or cultural significance that it once did. Rather than interpreting the honey bee as a supernatural being, it is a creature that is largely seen as a nuisance. It is difficult to predict where this will leave the honey bee for the future generations. However, there is hope that by rediscovering the cultural iconography that honey bees once represented in past Western cultures, contemporary cultures will be reminded of the real importance that the honey bee has in humanity's daily lives.

The Bees of Artemis Ephesus

Now what delight can greater be

Than secrets for to knowe

Of sacred bees, the Muses' birds,

All which this booke doth showe,

- Charles Butler, *The Feminine Monarchie* (1609)

The honey bee was a pivotal aspect in the everyday life of the ancient Greeks for a multitude of reasons. Grecian and Roman philosophers, including Plato (428 BC – 348BC) and Cicero (106 BC – 43BC), attributed a myriad of mystical abilities to the honey bee. Varro (116 BC – 27 BC) described the honey bee as being the “birds of the Muses” (Haarhoff 155) because of their ability to create an abundance of sweet honey from simple pollen dust. In ancient Greece it was even believed that feeding honey to infant children would impart wisdom on the child and ensure eloquence in their future (Haarhoff 155). Besides their mystical significance, honey bees and honey were also essential to the economy of Greece. Honey bees and honey were so economically important that the price of Egyptian strained honey in the year 3000 BC was among the first set, recorded, and monitored prices for trade (Haarhoff 156). The ancient Ephesians, then part of Greece but today part of Turkey, held the honey bee in such reverence that they printed images of bees on the currency that they used for foreign trade (Cook 3).

The honey bee was not only an essential part of the economics of the ancient world, but it played a fundamental role in the religions of the ancient world. One of the most vivid ways that historians of today can see the importance of the honey bee to the ancient Greeks and, more specifically, the Ephesians is in how tightly woven the icon of the honey bee was in the Greek pantheon. The role that honey bees have played in many Greek myths elevates them to a status

far beyond that of a simple insect that produces a delicious sweetener. It turns the bee into a deity in its own right and offers the honey bee a permanent place in the religion of the ancient Greeks.

One of the most pivotal roles that honey bees play in Greek mythology is that of nursemaid to the infant Zeus. As the story goes, Rhea, one of the titan daughters of the earth and sky, hid in a cave on the island of Crete to give birth to her son, Zeus, away from the watchful eye of her father (Cook 2). Rhea needed to remain hidden in the cave until the child Zeus had grown enough to defend himself against his father, Cronus. To keep the young Zeus alive, Rhea's mother Cybele clanged cymbals to attract bees to the cave (Haarhoff 157), so birds and bees flew in and out of the cave to bring food to Rhea and Zeus (Cook 6). One other person, a princess named Melissa, was allowed into the cave (Cook 3). Melissa helped to feed the infant Zeus and was later rewarded by lending her name to the Greek word for bees and later sharing the name with the priestesses who served as the goddess Athena's attendants. They were called *melissae* (Cook 3). When Zeus had grown and taken his place as "King of Heaven", he rewarded the bees for their services to himself and his mother (Haarhoff 157). Besides their necessary role in keeping Zeus alive during his infancy, they are also said to have defended this sacred cave from intruders. The cave remained "sacred to bees... and it is unlawful for any – be he god or man – to enter therein" (Cook 2). However, it is said that four men, attracted by the honey, covered themselves in bronze for protection from the bee stings and went into the cave (Cook 2). Once inside the cave they saw the clothes used to swaddle Zeus and their bronze armor immediately split off of their bodies and Zeus appeared before them, furious that they had disobeyed his commands that no man enter the cave (Cook 2). Zeus was prepared to kill the men but instead he called upon a swarm of bees to chase the men from the cave, where they were then

transformed into birds. (Cook 2) Through these myths the honey bee becomes solidified as an integral part of Greek mythology.

Almost as a reward for its pivotal place in mythology, the priestesses of the cult of Artemis are called *melissae*, the Greek word for honey bees. Long after the Greek pantheon had crumbled and the Roman pantheon had taken its place, Artemis and her *melissae* remained a central aspect of daily life in Ephesus (Haarhoff 160). As it turns out, the comparison between the priestesses of Ephesus and the honey bees is a very apt one to make: the hard working diligence of the bee, their industrious yet communal way of life (Grant 381), and the way in which the honey bee divides labor but maintained harmony and independence all at the same time (Haarhoff 160) were all elements of the honey bee's life that the Ephesians sought to emulate. Besides maintaining a highly functional community the honey bee also has the ability to make honey, which was believed to impart wisdom and eloquence with its consumption, especially if an individual began consuming it at an early age (Cook 3). All of these elements come together to create the ideal image of a society. The simile is captured beautifully in the verse from *Georgics: Book IV* by Virgil:

*Noting these tokens and examples some have said
that a share of divine intelligence is in bees,
and a draught of aether: since there is a god in everything,
earth and the expanse of sea and the sky's depths:
from this source the flocks and herds, men, and every species
of creature, each derive their little life, at birth:
to it surely all then return, and dissolved, are remade,
and there is no room for death, but still living
they fly to the ranks of the stars, and climb the high heavens.*

Even after Zeus had grown and left his cave, honey bees continued to be closely associated with his birthplace and the birth that occurred there. As one myth goes, when intruders entered the cave where Zeus was born, bees defended the sacred birthing space and the men were turned into birds and the bees, forever linking Zeus's birthplace to the age-old saying associated with love and lust. Even in later myths, Zeus was said to have called upon bees to feed one of his own children who was left abandoned in the woods (Cook 4). These associations between honey bees, children, childbirth, love, and lust all mean that bees are no longer solely linked to gods and mythology, but have become connected to human life on a deeper level: bees have become associated with children and the event of childbirth. Childbirth, because it was an important and dangerous event for the mother and the start of another life, required that protection and comfort be sought from the gods. It was often sought under the watchful gaze of the goddess Artemis, protector of women and girls (Sokolowski 428) and her faithful *melissae*, her honey bees.



Figure 1 Artemis of Ephesus, 2nd century CE

This important role that Artemis played in protecting lives brought into the world was held in great reverence by the Ephesians. They showed this reverence through their representation of Artemis of Ephesus (Figure 1) and in the way that the Ephesians incorporated Artemis and *melissae* into their daily lives.

This figure of Artemis of Ephesus is a 2nd century roman copy of the 300 BCE original. In this, the most iconic depiction of Artemis of Ephesus, the goddess is seen wearing a thin dress covered by a heavy and elaborate apron. Upon the apron are depictions of the offerings which



Figure 2 Detail of Artemis of Ephesus, 2nd century CE

Ephesus citizens frequently dedicated to this goddess including what are believed to be either bull scrotums or breasts, lions, bulls, the garments themselves, and honey bees (Brøns, Figure 2). The fact that she wears these offerings and physically must carry their great weight, which is such a tight and heavy garment that it becomes extremely restrictive on this goddess that values freedom above all else, means that these offerings and the people who dedicated them to the goddess must be very important to the goddess. This depiction of the goddess sends a clear message to her followers: that the objects that adorn her are ones that are of great importance to Artemis, so important that she would sacrifice her freedom of movement for them. These offerings please her and to maintain her favor they should be given to her to earn her favor.

As beloved as this image was by Ephesians, it was not as adored by those who didn't worship her or appreciate her for what she was. Her outstretched arms, association with the natural world, and radiance evoke images of the Great Mother, or Mother Earth (Hooker 44). To her followers, this maternal image of Artemis cultivates feelings safety and protection (Hooker 44). Artemis's *melissae* and her title as the goddess of the hunt earned her the label of "Mistress of the Beasts" (Hooker 43). To her enemies, this larger than life depiction, laden with the

enormity of her followers' offerings, suggesting that the numbers in her cult are great, struck fear in those who did not support the goddess (Hooker 44). In repayment for the protection that Artemis gave the Ephesians in all aspects of their life, the Ephesians protected their goddess. Knowing that there were those who wanted to see the demise of the cult of Artemis, the Ephesians made sure that her image was a visual display of the great support that the goddess had behind her. Across the tops of her feet and along her sides Artemis is physically supported by honey bees, a visual representation of the *melissae* who oversee "the great temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the world" (Hooker 42). While the bees do not take as central a position on the figure of Artemis as the lions or bulls which surround her, their iconographic role in this piece is pivotal just as the role of the *melissae* is not necessarily to be the center of attention but rather to support the goddess in the community. Their role is to facilitate the worship of Artemis and to oversee her great temple. They are the goddess's earthbound support system.

Even as Christianity began to spread throughout the known world, the Ephesians held tight to the image of Artemis. A large part of their motivation in defending the cult of Artemis is the fact that the Ephesians had intertwined the goddess with their everyday lives, their society, and even their economy (Hooker 43). In Acts 19:28 – 41, Luke describes Saint Paul's experience trying to preach Christianity in Ephesus as akin to "fighting with wild animals" (Hooker 37), so great was their devotion to Artemis, "Mistress of Beasts" (Hooker 43).

The freedom offered in the cult of Artemis was not always appreciated by other faiths either. Followers of the cult of Artemis of Ephesus were encouraged to partake in self-indulgences and excess while maintaining diligence in the workplace (Hooker 38). Again, this is partially why the *melissae* are such an apt title for the priestesses of Artemis, for in many ways

this believe in a balance of diligent work and self-indulgence is not unlike the life lead by the honey bees in their hive. For while bees fly about all day, indulging in the sweetness of pollen, their gathering does turn into hard work when they then turn it into honey. The hard work of the honey bees then pays off when they create an abundance of sweet honey for humans to indulge in. Honey bees are also then blessed with a natural knowledge of math and science, knowledge that humans need to work to obtain (Grant 381), they also are thought to sing divine songs to the muses while they work (Cook 8). This is more evidence of the way in which the ancient Ephesians saw the honey bee as maintaining the balance between diligence and abundance that humans sought to achieve: when the honey bee utilized it's knowledge of math and science they were rewarded with honey and their work was aided by the enjoyment of song. In this way, the bees and Artemis were the ideal symbols to represent the people of Ephesus: they are allowed to enjoy abundance without shirking their responsibilities.

Indeed, despite partaking in self-indulgences, the people of Ephesus were by no means a lazy people. Their civilization thrived in trade, tourism, and artisans. In trade, the Ephesians imported great quantities of fine Greek textiles to be used as offerings to the goddess (Sokolowski 428). Coin minters also profited from trade, because as part of the many processions in Ephesus to honor Artemis involved the use of coins minted with the image of the goddess and bees (Hooker 43). This would have been the ancient equivalent of the penny presses that today can be found at almost any tourist attraction, although this ancient version could still be used to purchase goods. These processions were also celebrated with miniatures of the figure of Artemis of Ephesus, made and sold by local artisans (Hooker 44). With the goddess's presence so tightly linked to the economy and lifestyle of the Ephesians, a Christian Apostle living in the city preaching monotheism and attempting to turn tourists and citizens away from

the cult of Artemis was extremely bad for business. By threatening their religion, Paul effectively threatened the livelihood of the citizens of Ephesus (Hooker 45). Just as much as Artemis and the *melissae* guarded the cult members, so too did the Ephesians see themselves as the protectors of the image and welfare of their goddess (Hooker 43). To defend their livelihoods and their goddess, the Ephesians drove Paul from their land and kept Artemis and the *melissae* sacred and relevant for years to come.

Rather than their connection to a higher power being something understood only by implication, the honey bees of Grecian mythology are indisputably linked to the pantheon. In Ephesus, the honey bee aligned itself to the fierce and powerful Artemis, goddess of nature, women, and childbirth. Due to Artemis's significance to the daily lives and societal functions of Ephesus, the honey bee assured itself protection and longevity even in face of dawning Christianity. Part of the reason for the preserving the honey bee's meaning in Greek myths most likely has to do with their significance in Zeus's birth myth and his continued use of them for punishment and prosperity. Without the honey bee, Zeus's mother never would have found a safe place to bear her child and the Greek pantheon would never have come to fruition. This early association with childbirth and raising children later served in linking the honey bees to Artemis, the goddess who protected women in childbirth. The Greek faith owes much to the honey bee. It may sound strange, as today these stories are simply myths. However, to the ancient Greeks these stories were as much a reality of life as eating. In this way, bees were truly were sacred creatures. Though the honey bee maintained its significance in Ephesus for years after Paul the Apostle left the peninsula, there was something about the connection between the honey bee, the almighty, and children that must have stayed with him as he continued to travel and spread the word of Christianity. As Christianity grew and later began to prosper, the image of bees

imparting eloquence and pointing out those whom God decided were his chosen ones would become significant to their religion. Christianity would even adopt the idea of bees representing a religious figure. Thus the honey bee has managed to remain significant across religion, culture, and time.

Venus with Cupid Stealing Honey

The Italian Renaissance is one of the most significant eras in the history of Western art. It is a period in which many advances in technology were made; artists began to understand how to use perspective to make two-dimensional surfaces appear to be three-dimensional worlds, math and science combined with art to create incredibly anatomically accurate statues, and architectural marvels grew up in city skylines. However, while the Italian Renaissance was pushing forward in the south of Europe, Northern European countries were putting their own uniquely Northern spin on the same advances in technology and art. Where the Italian Renaissance was bold and gaudy, the Northern Renaissance was somewhat more subdued and somber. While the artists in Italy made art that depicted classical bible scenes packed with action and passions, art in the North reflected the artwork of Medieval Europe, incorporating somewhat more simplistic past style into new messages. What the Northern and Italian Renaissances did share in equally was their participation in the trend of rediscovering the stories of Greek mythology, a trend that swept throughout Europe and the Holy Roman Empire. Poetry written by ancient Greek philosophers was especially popular and it was translated, then later sent throughout the empire. These stories and characters became frequent and easily recognizable subjects in artworks throughout the Western world. It sign of a well-rounded education to make and own art featuring Greek myths and was socially acceptable for these works to feature nudes. One particularly popular artist who painted these Greek myths and repeatedly revisited these scenes to use one composition to convey varying messages in his works was Lucas Cranach the Elder.

While his name does not often appear alongside his somewhat better known contemporaries, Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472 – 1553) is one of the unsung heroes of the

German Renaissance. His name may not be well known, many of his works are staples of the Northern Renaissance style, conveying much of what was quintessential about the era's artwork. A large part of the reason his works so clearly reflect the era's style is because he lived and worked in the epicenter of some of the major events of the Renaissance, namely the Protestant Reformation (1517 – 1648). Cranach was a court painter to the Electors of Saxony, a state of the Holy Roman Empire. Besides fulfilling his duties as court painter, Cranach ran an extremely efficient and profitable workshop which churned out an incredible number of paintings and prints which sustained both the Elder and the Younger throughout their careers. Cranach was also a close friend of Martin Luther, the man who led the Protestant Reformation. Cranach was an entrepreneur so, in order to remain popular with the changing values of his clients, the artistic style of his workshop would need to change stylistically. While Cranach was successful as a Catholic artist, much of his notability was earned as a result of the Protestant Reformation and his popularity with his Protestant patrons (Talbot 67). Cranach's career placed him in the unique position of being both a successful Catholic painter and printmaker and later an equally successful artist as a supporter of the Protestant Reformation and Martin Luther.

There were many reasons for the princes and nobles of the Holy Roman Empire to decide to alienate themselves from the Catholic church and push in favor of the Protestant faith. One of the strongest motivations behind the change was the fact that Protestantism advocated for the separation of church and state. Under Catholicism, the Emperor enforced a rule throughout the Holy Roman Empire that no ruler was to make any political decision without first consulting a priest. As Protestants, rulers would be able to act as their own "emergency bishops" (Cantoni 505) and bypass the church. In essence, the Protestant upper class could rely on themselves and their own ethics to make political choices rather than involve a second party, which in this case

would have been the church. In this way they not only had the opportunity to further their own political agendas, but they managed to separate church and state; consequently, German and Austria sovereigns were free to change their religion as they saw fit but they were not permitted to enforce this change on their subjects (Cantoni 519). This also meant that German sovereigns were no longer financially obligated to give donations to any church or church-related charity. By cutting the Church out, the sovereign rulers of Northern Europe were able to keep their wealth and give as they saw fit. Likewise, their peasant subjects were able to keep money set aside for taxes and other necessities.

Again, Cranach was an entrepreneur. This meant that when his patrons converted from Catholicism to Protestantism, Cranach needed to quickly move away from the Catholic style that he was used to and adopt a style that appealed to Protestant sensibilities. Several key elements of his work needed to change in order to reflect the new social styles. Most notably, Cranach needed to change his original impulsive and emotional style into the more subdued one. This more restrained style is the one which he became known for. He drew much of his new inspiration by looking to the past. More specifically, Cranach drew much of his inspiration from medieval art, despite the fact that many of his contemporaries, like Jan van Eyck and Albrecht Durer, were adopting much more dimensional techniques like those used in the Italian Renaissance.

To maintain his popularity, another key element of Cranach's original style needed to change. Namely, he needed to adjust the way in which he used and depicted natural imagery in his works. In many of his early works, Cranach explores the relationship between nature and humans via their juxtaposition (Talbot 76). Landscape often plays a key role in setting a tone and conveying the emotions which an artist seeks to communicate. In his earlier Catholic-style



Figure 3 "John the Baptist Preaching in the Wilderness" by Lucas Cranach the Elder, 1516 CE

works, his zeal for nature and emotion is far more pronounced. The subjects of many of Cranach's early biblical prints are often found framed by thickly forested nature scenes. For example, in "John the Baptist Preaching in the Wilderness" (Figure 3)

Cranach balances the action and melodrama of the crowd with the quiet stillness of the wilderness that surrounds the scene. In these early works, this stylistic use of nature offered something of a stable break from

the fervor of Cranach's subjects. However, as his style changed so too did his treatment of the natural world.

His work did lose some of the passion that once infused his pieces, but as the artist pared back his intense use of nature he became more refined (Talbot 68). This more focused approach to his work helped to make Cranach a popular artist at the time of the Protestant Reformation, but it also had an extremely interesting effect on some of the subjects that he visited repeatedly throughout his career.

Artists had begun to look to the Greek Pantheon as a well of creativity from which they drew a wealth of inspiration. Cranach particularly resonated with one particular poem by Theocritus (300BC to 260BC). The myth was that of "Venus With Cupid Stealing Honey" (Figure 4) and the subject would be repeated throughout Cranach the Elder's career, before, during and after the Protestant Reformation. This poem told the story of Cupid, the god of love, attempting to steal honey from a beehive and then complaining to his mother, Venus, when the bees stung him. The poem reads:

*Love the thief was once stung by a wicked
bee, as he filched a honeycomb from the
hive, and all his finger-tips were pricked. It
hurt, and he blew on his hand, stamped the
earth, and skipped about; and he showed his
hurt to Aphrodite, complaining that the bee
is but a tiny creature, but it causes such
wounds. And his mother laughed: 'What!
Are you not like the bees, you who are also
little but cause such great wounds?'* (qtd. in
Hutton 1039)

Writers and artists alike have revisited this myth numerous have since Theocritus first put down these words. Something about this poem and composition resonated with Cranach and his workshop because he repeatedly returned to it throughout his career, giving the original poem a versatility that Theocritus could not have foreseen. Through his work, Cranach reflected not only the significance of Theocritus's poem almost one hundred years after the poem was initially translated and later published but he also offers his viewer social commentary through his treatment of the subject.

Cranach directly connects the poem to his piece so that there can be no confusion about what his subject is meant to be. In the upper left corner of the work, Cranach included a small inscription featuring a German translation of Theocritus's:

As Cupid was stealing honey from the hive,



Figure 4 "Venus with Cupid Stealing Honey" by Lucas Cranach the Elder, 1530 CE

A bee stung the thief on the finger;

And so do we seek transitory and dangerous pleasures

That are mixed with sadness and bring us pain. (qtd. in Hutton 1037)

At first glance, all Cranach has accomplished in this work is to give a visual aid to a popular story. However, looking at this painting alongside the aphorism we begin to see another, more critical side to the meaning of this work. In this 1472 version of “Venus With Cupid Stealing Honey” Venus could serve two purposes. As the nude Venus stands languid and alluring, fixating the viewer with direct eye contact and a coquettish smile she could either be a distraction from the scene behind her or she could be a visual challenge to the viewer’s moral compass.

From the moment viewers come into contact with this piece, their ethics are called into question. The central figure of Venus draws the viewer in, not only because her creamy white skin contrasts with the dark earthly tones of the background, but also because she reaches out and grabs the viewer with her stare. She makes direct and firm eye contact with the viewer. Her gaze is challenging, yet she is calm. Her lax shoulders and draped body language create a relaxing aura, but her half smile and smooth brow create the illusion that she has some sort of knowledge. It is intimate knowledge that she might choose to share, though at her own discretion. Her composure and self-awareness suggest that there isn’t a soul on this earth who could force that knowledge from her. The idea that she has information to share is bolstered by her eyebrows, which are conspicuously missing from her face. As the artists of the Northern Renaissance looked back to medieval times for inspiration in their works, they also picked up on medieval fashion trends, like that of women shaving their eyebrows and hair lines. They did so to create the illusion of a large forehead and, therefore, a large brain. It insinuated that these women

were very intelligent and had brains to offer besides beauty. Here, Venus has also adopted this fad to show that she is so much more than just her pretty face and curvy figure. Again, she has knowledge to share, but will she? Though her look challenges the viewer to hold eye contact with her, her look is more inviting than aggressive. Her challenge is more one challenging the viewer to refuse her invitation. She looks innocent enough, so what could be the harm in being drawn in to admire this woman and ask that she might share what worldly knowledge she has?

Moving from her eyes, it is also clear that although this Venus is unclothed she is not a depiction of the lusty, sexual side of love. Her cheeks and lips are blushed just enough to create the illusion of life, but they are not flushed from activity. She is, as yet, not preoccupied by sexual desires. The question is then left up to the viewer: is she about to be overtaken by such desires or is she refusing to lose such control over herself?

Besides her body, this Venus is also very tactfully dressed to complete the illusion. As ironic as it is to discuss the dress of a nude woman, there is actually quite a lot on this nude Venus to distinguish this woman from the typical reclining nude, awaiting ravaging. Rather, this woman wears a golden hair net and a golden corded necklace. Neither of these pieces of jewelry could ever be worn by a woman anything less than upper class, and upper class women were not to be trifled with. They were to be respected and treated with dignity, just as this Venus must be. The golden hair net even creates an almost halo-like glow around Venus's head, giving an ethereal shine to her appearance. This goddess, though she is exposed to the elements and friendless with the exception of the whining child beside her, is a formidable force of nature. She is in control over her own mind, her own body, and her own resources. Venus is to be respected, she will not permit abuse.

Even the sheer cloth which Venus uses to cover herself is a show of Venus's control over herself. Yes, the cloth is virtually see through, but Venus has chosen what shows through. She covers her privates just enough to preserve her modesty and keep herself hidden. Though a breeze could easily come along and blow away her coverings, she stands like a person who is confident that this will not happen. Venus remains in control of who gets to see which parts of her anatomy. That being said, she does show some of her figure. Though the wispy cloth is covering Venus's lower half, her breasts remain exposed to the viewer. She keeps an arm close to her chest so she can cover herself, revoking the viewer's privileges of seeing her at the slightest provocation, but she shows just enough to tell the viewer that she might be interested in a physical relationship and that she is a fertile woman. Through this carefully manipulated imagery, Cranach is able to depict Venus as not just the embodiment of the ideal relationship but the ideal Northern European female: she is smart, she is lustful, but she remains modest, intelligent, and in control. Cranach found a way here to use a secular subject to convey the dream Northern Renaissance noblewoman: a woman with high morals but a knowledge of what it is a partner wants.

There is something very important to understanding this work that must be distinguished before going farther in this analysis: although there are numerous kinds of love that exist in the world, there are two kinds of love depicted in this work to serve Cranach's message. It is often easy to forget that there are two kinds of love represented in this work, but this is why there are effectively two gods of love. In Cranach's depiction of "Venus with Cupid Stealing Honey" Venus is the physical embodiment of deep, lasting, emotional love. There is more to Venus than just her physical beauty, which in a mortal woman would eventually fade away. She stands firmly planted in her place despite the fact that the ground she is standing on appears sharp and

her cold while her feet are bare. This Venus, and therefore love that transcends physical appearances, is steadfast and will not fade any time soon.

Cupid, on the other hand, represents a different kind of love. He is the more passionate, physical love. With his arrows, he penetrates, he acts quickly, and he stings. The sting, the arrow wound, and the passion of Cupid's love will eventually heal and fade. After Cupid's love fades, it take wing and flies on to the next victim of the next arrow. Cupid's love lacks the longevity and persistence that Venus's love has because while her assets lie in the heart and mind, Cupid's love is an impulsive, animalistic, lustful love. A love based solely in lust cannot last, though to act on such love carries more risk than to act on Venus's love.

Here is where the significance of the honey bee's presence changes the meaning of this piece. This could have been a simple depiction of the two kinds of love. However, as stated before, the purpose of this piece was to challenge the viewer's morals, not to simply convey two loves. While the poem at the top of the piece warns of the sting that can come with love, there is more meaning to these bees than just their similarity to the pangs of love.

First, the reactions between the bees and Cupid are interesting. There are seven bees buzzing around Cupid, but they are not panicked. Angry, stinging bees would involve some sense of urgency to their actions, these bees don't even really appear to be flying. They look as though they're calmly crawling across Cupid's body. Actually, the only figure with any kind of urgency in this piece is Cupid, who swats away at the bees and looks to be afraid of them. He even holds the honey comb that ignited this reaction away from himself in an attempt to keep the bees away from him, though it does not work.

By this time honey was already associated with children. The rediscovery of Greek and Roman myth reminded artist of the important role that honey bees played in the Greek pantheon.

As Artemis of Ephesus reminds us, the honey bee was extremely significant in matters of fertility. Therefore, the honey bees in this work represent the same things as they have in previous eras: childbirth and children. In addition to their original meaning, though, they have also come to represent all potential stings to a woman's reputation and honor in the early Northern Renaissance. Cupid follows in his mother's footsteps as a god of love, though he is much more mischievous and impulsive in the way that he carries out his duties as love god. Rather than endow love, as Venus does, Cupid forces love upon his victims by shooting them. His love is forceful, impulsive, passionate, and lustful. Lovers caught in the throws of Cupid's lust run the risk of conceiving children through their actions. A child born out of pure lust, without the stability of the kind of relationship represented by Venus in this piece, would have been a major risk to the mother and her image in society. When this piece was painted, the society of Northern Europe was ruled by a culture of honor and shame (Heijden 46). Under Protestantism, women caught committing sexual crimes, including prostitution, adultery, indecency, and fornication, could be tried and convicted (Heijden 26). In a culture where a woman's "eerbaarheid", her honor and virginity, meant the reputation of her family, and where neighbors were all too eager to see those accused convicted in order to maintain a respectable community, the morals and ethics of community members were constantly held to higher standards (Heijden 46). To have a child out of wedlock at this time would have been devastating to the social status of the parents, namely the mother, and could doom the child to a life inside an orphanage. Giving in to a lustful and quickly-combusting relationship represented by Cupid ruins the lives of all those caught up in this unstable relationship.

Herein is where Cranach challenges the viewer's morals. Will the viewer give in to Cupid's lust, despite risking their "geode naam en faam" or "good name and reputation"

(Heijden 46)? Or will the viewer engage in a meaningful relationship, represented by Venus, founded off of a desire to learn more about the individual? Even Cupid seeks refuge in Venus's stability. As he swats away the threat of stinging bees and tries to keep his honey comb as far away from himself as possible, he looks to Venus for help, although she ignores his turmoil. It is almost as if Cupid is telling the viewer that the sweet rewards of giving in to lustful pleasures is not worth the risk of the stings that might follow. Venus, in contrast to Cupid, is not perturbed by the bees flying so near her in all of her nakedness; she maintains her stability and holds the viewer's gaze as if to say that she knows that she is sweetness enough, she will not go hunting honey elsewhere. She knows that Cupid is suffering the repercussions of his impulsive actions. She is forcing him to learn from his mistakes. Even if the bees, or in this case the children, do come along, under her care all will be well cared for and love can prosper. The lasting love of this Venus will not fly away like that of Cupid.

This 1530 work by Cranach does challenge the viewer to accept the Venus of emotional, lasting love, but it also does quite a bit of hand holding to get the viewer to where Cranach wants them to be. Namely, the presence of the poem and the stability of Venus's figure lay a clear path to lead the viewer to the conclusion that Cranach would like them to reach. He wants the viewer to renounce carnal desires. In other words, he would like to lead his viewer to the conclusion that they must not give in to fleeting lust and must rather do what is just. However, as has been previously stated, there was something about this poem and composition that continued to draw Cranach back to it. The reason could be as simple as the fact that this subject was popular in the Northern Renaissance, what with the reclaimed popularity of these classical mythological tales. However, that is a very simplistic explanation. It is more likely that Cranach was continuing to

work with this subject and his composition of this subject because he was working to redefine and retell his moral-challenging narrative.

Take, for instance, this earlier version of the same subject by Cranach. In this version of “Cupid Complaining to Venus” (Figure 5) it is immediately clear that we are not looking at the same composure and control that was told in the first version. The story told in this piece, though also challenging to the viewer’s morals, does not offer such a clearly guided path to the resolution that Cranach would like for his viewers to reach. Part of what is so challenging in this



Figure 5 "Cupid Complaining to Venus" by Lucas Cranach the Elder, 1525 CE

piece is that the cautionary poem is not as obvious in this piece as it is in the work that follows it. Rather than make the poem stand out against a white background, like Cranach did in his 1530 painting, he painted the poem in the blue sky, where it fades into the background and is nearly lost. Without the poem the viewer’s attention is drawn more straight to the central subjects of the piece and the morality embedded in the piece is diminished. Without the poem, the viewer is left to their own moral devices. It is

as if Cranach is asking, “When there is no one around to see your actions, what will you do?”

Besides obscuring the moralizing poem’s position in this work, there have been other obvious changes made to the subject between these pieces. Cranach changed the tree which Venus leans on, changing it from a tree bearing fruit that look suspiciously like apples to an olive

tree, the symbol of peace in Christianity; he took away the stag and doe that hide in the woods behind Cupid; Cranach even simplified the landscape behind Venus compared to the later one. What remains most consistent between the two compositions is the figure of Venus and Cupid, so it is interesting to observe how the two changed between works.

Venus's face has noticeably changed in this piece. The 1525 Venus's expression is similar to that of the 1530 version; however, there are several changes which make her more sexually alluring than in the previous piece. While this Venus maintains the challengingly direct eye contact with the viewer that the previous work had, this Venus's eyes are much darker than her counterpart's. There is something more beguiling about them that leads the viewer to believe that she has some sort of plan in mind for them. Her cheeks and lips, as well, are flushed. This would imply that, unlike the case with the other Venus, something *has* happened to arouse this Venus. This immediately makes her more closely related to the physical love which was previously only associated with Cupid. She even has more pronounced eyebrows, and her fancy hat covers part of her forehead, distancing this Venus from the medieval fashion trend that valued intelligence over physical beauty. Here Cranach heavily favors Venus' physical beauty over her mental aptitude. Even her adornments are less graceful and subdued than in Cranach's 1530 Venus. Here, the halo-like hair net is covered with a deep red hat adorned with what appear to be ostrich feathers and her daintily decorated golden necklace is instead a thick, heavy chain draped around her neck. Rather than appearing as an ethereal goddess, this Venus looks like some common woman with a chain around her neck. She is physically weighed down by this massive collar at the mercy of whomever controls the chain. Almost like a collar, the chain shows that this Venus has an owner. She lacks the self-agency and self respect that Cranach's other Venus has. This Venus is not in charge of her own body, she is a slave to it and its animal-

like desires. Here Venus even lacks the dignity of the flimsy covering that the other version was allowed. She stands completely exposed, displaying her full hips, rounded stomach, and full chest. The other Venus allowed her viewers to see her parts of her nakedness while this Venus insists that the viewer admire her body. Utilizing the drape of her body and keeping her arms away from herself, this Venus sends the clear message that she is a lustful creature; she lacks the same composure which the other Venus holds on to. Here, rather than draw attention to her mental prowess, this Venus flaunts her fertility and takes on the role of pure temptress. Even this Venus's feet suggest that she is less grounded than the 1530 Venus. She stands on one foot, one that is placed on soft grass rather than the rocky soil which might hurt her bare feet. It is almost as if, with one swift breeze, this Venus could topple over. She's made even more unstable by the root snaking its way between her legs. This suspiciously serpent-like root might harken from this secular image back to a biblical one of Eve being tempted by the snake to disobey God and give in to her desire for sweet fruit. This is indicative of the test which the viewer's morals are being put to. Will the viewers morals and values favor emotional love or give in to animalistic lust?

The lustful Venus makes the symbolism of the honey bees in this work very interesting. While in the 1530 version the honey bees are more threatening as they represent reckless sexual behavior, here they are not as menacing of a presence. To begin with, there are far fewer bees present in this 1525 version of this composition than there are in the 1530 version. They have even less of the swarming, angry, threatening feeling than in the other version. In fact, Cupid doesn't even seem to be very perturbed by these bees. He even holds the honey comb up to Venus. Bees still represent children and childbirth in this piece, and it is not necessarily less of a threat, but Venus and Cupid are less bothered by it. Both deities here, Venus and Cupid, are representations of lustful love. Giving in to lust still runs the risk of defying social, religious, and

legal norms, just as plucking a honey comb runs the risk of being stung by bees. However, in this work, it is as if Venus and Cupid have weighed the dangers of partaking in their lust against the repercussions and decided that the risk was worth the reward. The subjects in this work have had their morals tested and have been found wanting. Cranach seeks to test the viewers now and see if they, too, will give in to the risks of lust or if they will endure the sting of unrequited love and move on.

In the case of Cranach's depiction of Venus with Cupid stealing honey, his use of honey bees sways the meaning of each work. Though the meaning of the bee does not change, in every rendition of this subject the honey bee continues to represent childbirth and children, now with the additional meaning of damage done to a woman's image. Without this detail the cautionary tale that Cranach depicts would have carry with it no obvious repercussions. Cranach's honey bee represents the threat of answering for one's actions. Without this threat, the viewer is simply looking at a nude and with a cupid looking up at her. She becomes so much more inviting and almost encouraging of the viewer to interpret her as a sexual being and not much more. With the addition of these bees, the narrative of the work instead becomes: Do what you will with this image, but remember that there will be consequences. Outside of the stable relationship represented in Cranach's 1530 version of "Venus With Cupid Stealing Honey" a child born of pure lust will not be cared for and could doom the mother to a life of scandal. Though the viewer is left to trust their own resolve in their morals, there is still the subtle but looming voice of some higher power, cautioning the viewer that their actions will have consequences. The meaning of the honey bee remains the same as it did in the days of Artemis of Ephesus, however in the hands of the Protestant Reformation the meaning challenges the viewers morals rather than offer comfort and protection. Here is the turning point in the meaning of the bee: while the bee

represents the same things that it did for ancient Greeks the bee is now transitioning from an essential component of religion to a tool through which to convey Christian morals. As it evolves into a non-secular icon, so too will its meaning change again to become further entangled with the new religions that utilize it for their own purposes.

The Miracle of the Bees

When the honey bee icon moved from Ephesus to Europe, the meaning of the imagery immediately began to be manipulated to suit the artist's message. Gone were the days of the Cult of Artemis when honey bees had the firm role to play in society and religious service through the *melissae*. Within the context of the Protestant Reformation, the honey bee also had a role to play as a reminder of the consequences that followed immoral actions, but outside of the Protestant Reformation and the Greek myths popular during that time there was no set cultural meaning behind the honey bee. Without a solid role to play, the meaning of the honey bee was available for interpretation by Catholic artists.

Whereas in years past a single bee or a drop of honey on an infant's lips prophesized eloquence in adulthood, Catholicism believed craved more impressive miracles. Thus Catholics declared that a swarm of honey bees was indisputable evidence of Gods will. One story of a swarm of bees indicating God's will is the story of Saint Ambrose (334 – 397AD) (Kinhead 475), Bishop of Milan, who was said to have been swarmed by bees in early childhood. It is said that as bees covered the infant Ambrose his father uttered that if his son survived this he was truly destined for greatness. This prophecy did come to fruition as Saint Ambrose eventually grew to become an eloquent writer and revered teacher of God's message, remembered for his multitude of writings and hymns which he left behind. His dedication to the poor, to study, and to the state made him a popular figure for many Catholics, though he had exceedingly strict viewers on maintaining moral piety and devotion to the Catholic Church. Nevertheless, stories of his experiences and wisdom permeated beyond his lifetime and kept him a very popular saint for many years. His relationship to and use of bees in his teachings would also remain significant to his image far beyond his lifetime.

The way in which Saint Ambrose's relationship to the honey bee was manipulated and exploited is very interesting, though. Saint Ambrose was a popular saint in the 17th century, not just due to his title of "Patron Saint of Beekeepers" but also because of the hymns that he wrote and for his legendary eloquence as a speaker (Birchall 166). The man had essentially become myth, in no small part because of the bees to which he owed his notoriety. In a time when the



Figure 6 "The Miracle of the Bees" by Juan de Valdes Leal, 1673 CE

world science was burgeoning on discoveries that would call into question the miracles of yesteryear, there was a push on the part of the Catholic church to reassert the relevance of saints and miracles. The altarpiece by Juan de Valdes Leal titled *The Life of Saint Ambrose* was one such product of this time. Valdes Leal made the work as commissioned piece, ordered by Archbishop Ambrosio Spinola of Seville in the year 1673, when Valdes Leal was at the peak of his career

(Kinkead 475). The panel of the altarpiece to be discussed here is titled *The Miracle of the Bees* (Figure 6). Archbishop Spinola commissioned these works to adorn an altar in his private home (Kinkead 480) to commemorate the saint whom he was named for upon moving to Spain. As a commissioned piece for a high ranking member of Spinola society, Valdes Leal's job was as much to convey his subject matter in such a way that it would glorify the Spinola family and the city of Seville (Kinkead 480). Throughout the series Valdes Leal pays particular attention to the

architecture of the settings of the works (Kinkead 480). He also depicts matters which Archbishop Ambrosio thought were important during his time as archbishop, including matters of national, civic, and personal concerns (Kinkead 472).

“The Miracle of the Bees” panel in particular depicts a scene from Saint Ambrose’s childhood. It is said that when he was child sleeping in his cradle, a swarm of bees flew into the child’s room and surrounded his head. Some versions of the story claim that the bees formed a column around the infant so that he could not be reached or brought to safety. Ambrose’s caregivers had to look on in awe, watching as bees flew in and out of Ambrose’s mouth. Soon, the bees flew away and left the child completely unscathed, still sleeping peacefully. Ambrose’s father interpreted this event to mean that his child would go on to do great things, and history tells that Ambrose did indeed go on to have many great accomplishments (Birchall 166).

In the middle ages, there was a certain amount of reverence for the honey bee’s perceived chastity (Birchall 55). During Saint Ambrose’s life the chastity of the female honey bee was attributed to the functionality of the hive. Saint Ambrose once explained the honey bee’s productivity by saying:

... as it were a honeycombe, for virginity is fit to be compared to bees, so laborious is it, so modest, so continent. The bee feeds on dew, it knows no marriage couch, it makes honey. The virgin’s dew is the divine word, for the words of God descend like the dew. The virgin’s modesty is unstained nature. The virgin’s produce is the fruit of the lips, without bitterness, abounding in sweetness. They work in common and their fruit is common. (qtd in Birchall 55)

Ambrose directly attributes the functionality of a beehive to the virginity of the bee. He then attributes the virginity of the bee to the will of God, saying that the bees would not be able to

produce honey if they were not blessed with purity. Valdes Leal displays these same beliefs in his depiction of Saint Ambrose's childhood.

All servants depicted in the scene, and therefore witness to this miracle of God's will, are female. They are the worker bees that keep this prominent household, and therefore society, functioning. Their private lives are impossible to infer from the painting, but because they are all modestly dressed and clearly work in a wealthy household, the viewer can infer that their behavior outside of this moment in time reflects the respectability of the household. Despite the privilege of being witness to this miracle, though, these women cower. They do not understand this event and they are fearful. This is where the male figure in the scene becomes important to the meaning of the work.

Historically speaking, this scene should have been witnessed only by the female servants and nursemaids who attended to the child while the parents handled business. The story does say that the father was called in, though this man appears to have already been present as he is not rushing into the room but rather quietly stepping towards the cradle. He does, however, understand that the scene before him is one that demands reverence, not panic. He gestures to the women to tell them to be still. They obey and do nothing besides watch the miracle unfold before them. A viewer in 1673 would have understood the rest of the story, knowing that when the bees flew away from the child, Ambrose's father understood this incident to mean that his son was meant for greatness. Upon closer inspection, though, this male figure might not be Ambrose's father at all. In actuality, when compared with an image of Archbishop Ambrosio Spinola himself the two look quite similar. This is rather an audacious move for Spinola and Valdes Leal to have made, as they are not simply placing Spinola in the scene but are rather giving him a rather commanding role in the transpiring events. He is not only a witness to this miracle but an

active player in it. When he commissioned this altarpiece to be made, Spinola had already solidified himself in the history of Seville. As an Italian with little knowledge of the Spanish language (Antonio 8), Spinola had to work to become the public figure that he eventually did. He would eventually go on to fight in the name of Spain in Flanders, Germany, serve for a time as the first captain in the Spanish military, and even earned the title “el mortal expugnador de Ostende y de Breda” (Antonio 8). Though he had ensured that his name be written throughout the history books in connection to his military conquests, literary writings, and deeds as archbishop, Spinola had yet to conquer the realm of the religious. This piece was his chance to do so. In portraying himself alongside his name-saint receiving a miracle from God, Spinola sets himself aside from most other men of his status and makes himself not just special in terms of his accomplishments but also in the eyes of God. By placing himself in this scene and using the surrounding architecture to place this scene in Seville, Valdes Leal implies that God has not only chosen Saint Ambrose, but also Archbishop Ambrosio Spinola and the city of Seville itself. As the bees in this scene fly off into the distance, they are flying in to the city of Seville. In this way, Archbishop Spinola’s devotion to the city of Seville is unquestionable. He has placed both himself and his adopted city in Catholic history as witness to the miracle that God performed for the infant Saint Ambrose.

By drawing implying the role of women that Archbishop Spinola and Saint Ambrose agreed on, Valdes Leal as called up another parallel between the archbishop and his name-saint. In the afore mentioned quote from Saint Ambrose’s, he says that “The virgin’s dew is the divine word, for the words of God descend like the dew” (qtd. in Birchall 55). This statement could mean that when women preserve their chastity they are carrying out God’s word, however in the context of this work this statement applies to so much more than virginity alone. Through this

work, Archbishop Spinola is establishing parallels between himself and his name-saint. By including imagery which would evoke Saint Ambrose's religious teachings, Valdes Leal is not only saying that he supports these teachings but also that he observes them. During his life, Archbishop Spinola was well known for his writing and poetry dedicated to Spain and Catholicism (Rodriguez). While it is difficult to speak to Spinola's personal life, it was said that he was also a very pious man. By calling to mind Ambrose's statement which reminds the listener that when they remain faithful to God's will they will produce goodness, Valdes Leal also implies that because Archbishop Spinola has produced noteworthy works of writing he lives his life in such a way that God rewards him with his writing abilities.

The setting of the scene is another aspect of this work that shows both Saint Ambrose and by Archbishop Spinola. While other pieces in this series fill the space with figures to pay attention to, this particular panel of the life of Saint Ambrose series allows the architecture of the scene to take center stage. While the actual scene of infant Saint Ambrose being swarmed by bees occupies a relatively small part of the canvas, the rest of the work is not lacking in significance. Above the scene soars the combination of Spanish arches and Moorish details so characteristic of the architecture of Seville (Figure 7). Although this altarpiece would only ever be on display in Archbishop Spinola's home, conveying the architecture of Seville conveyed the wealth and work that the archbishop had donated to building the city of Seville. Valdes Leon made a point to paint



Figure 7 Detail of the architecture in "The Miracle of the Bees" by de Valdes Leal, 1673 CE

each scene with architecture that resembled that of Seville in order to anchor the series and solidify the connection between Saint Ambrose and Archbishop Ambrosio Spinola.

Though so heavily featuring architecture in this singular panel of the larger altarpiece series is somewhat conspicuous, it is fitting considering the time in which Archbishop Spinola was alive and Valdes Leal was painting. As Ragsdale explains in his book titled *Structures as Argument*, during the Middle Ages and before, the perfection that was obtainable through the use of geometry was thought to be the pinnacle of beauty and God's creation. This belief was later reflected in the geometry that is so characteristic of the gothic era, especially in Seville where the influences of Islamic architecture combined with Spanish characteristics. Geometric styles were designed with the intent to stimulate the brain with delicately balanced and precisely calculated geometry (Ragsdale). By stimulating the brain through geometry, viewers and architects could get as close to knowing God's mind as they could hope (Ragsdale). This is why the incorporation of architecture in this depiction of Saint Ambrose's life was key. Elizabeth Birchall states in her book, *In Praise of Bees: A Cabinet of Curiosities*, that Saint Ambrose was known to have admired the geometrically perfect construction of the honeycomb as a "God-given artifice" (124). A honey comb, as saint Ambrose pointed out, is a small scale and non-human version of this precision. This would make bees the only animal besides humans to be able to create using geometry and therefore visualize the medieval interpretation of the mind of God. Here, Valdes Leon portrays both bees and impressive architecture in the same scene depicting the two beings on earth with the ability to visualize God's brain.

The artistic representations of Saint Ambrose's life and teachings make him a prime example of the way in which a swarm of bees is a sign of a higher purpose. The admiration which Saint Ambrose had for the honey bee's "God-given" (Birchall 124) architectural prowess

became reflected in the architecture that Catholics produced, later to be referenced in 1673 in “The Miracle of the Bees” by Juan de Valdes Leon. The attention to detail that Valdes Leon pays to the architectural design in this piece could simply be attributed to the artist attempting to please the Spinola family and patron; however, it can be no small coincidence that the saint portrayed in the painting, was a product of a time in which geometry was exalted as being that which made up God’s mind, and was also known to be an admirer of the architectural abilities possessed by bees.

This particular swarm of bees also represents Saint Ambrose’s eloquence and the way in which he voiced his opinions on civic order. During his life, Saint Ambrose was known to have used honey bees as an example for how a society must live to function best. During Saint Ambrose’s life and that of Valdes Leon, it was believed that the functionality of society rested on the shoulders of obedient, hardworking women who would raise children to also be obedient and hardworking.

Without the bees, this scene could be one of any Seville interiors, which would still serve the artist’s and patron’s purposes in some ways. As an Italian immigrant living in Spain and carving a place for himself in society, Archbishop Spinola was eager to show his deep love for his adopted home of Seville. Valdes Leal’s attention to detail ensures that the combination of Moorish and European architecture styles that make up Seville’s ornate face was not lost in this work. However, with the added presence of honey bees in this work it is clear that this is a retelling of the story of Saint Ambrose and the miracle of the bees. This gives the viewer the clues that they need to understand the message that both Juan de Valdes Leal and Archbishop Ambrosio Spinola sought to convey through this piece. By placing the likeness of himself in this depiction of the story of Saint Ambrose, Spinola makes himself special. He implies that God has

chosen him, not only because he shares a name with Saint Ambrose but also because he was allowed to witness this miracle take place. In making sure that the setting is recognizably Seville, Spinola and Valdes Leal have made Seville a special place as well. Especially when considering that Saint Ambrose himself thought of honey bees as the only other living being on earth who could comprehend geometry and therefore know God's mind, Valdes Leal as the artist has truly given Seville a high place of honor alongside bees in this piece. The presence of the bees and the reactions of the individuals around the swarm also reflect the ideas of both Spinola and his namesaint regarding the place that virtue should have in society. Without the swarm of bees in this work, the piece would mean none of this. While these bees are rather central in their importance to the piece, not all artists were so blatant with their connections to bees. Especially in subsequent years, artists became rather more subtle in their inclusion of bees but the effect that these insects had on the meaning of a piece remained just as significant as ever.

The Tomb of Pope Urban VIII

The flourishing of the art which arose during the Renaissance would not have been made possible without the help of wealthy patrons who recognized artistic resurgence and wanted to take full advantage of the talent and imagination prospering at this time. One of the most active places for talented artists, of course, Italy. The Church was extremely wealthy at this

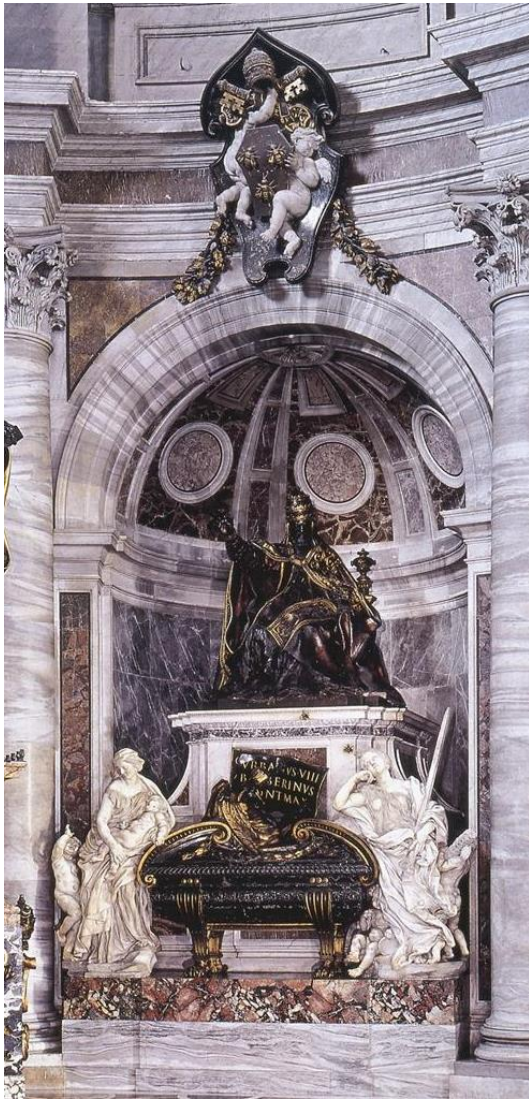


Figure 8 The tomb of Pope Urban VIII by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, 1627 - 1647 CE

time and not only played an active role in society but also in politics. Having a connection in the clergy could be a great advantage to an artist's career, so the relationship between these types of patrons and their artists was often a very close one that could result in friendship. One such relationship was that between the artist Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598 – 1680) and Pope Urban VIII (1568 – 1644). While Bernini was an incredibly clever and successful artist during his time, Pope Urban VIII was a successful politician from his position in the Church. He worked his way up through the ranks of the church, making few enemies as he went, and eventually became Pope, where he continued his political strategy of “many friends, few enemies” (Britannica).

Unfortunately, Pope Urban VIII would outlive his artist friend, Bernini, and Bernini was commissioned to make the tomb dedicated to Urban inside Saint Peter's Basilica. Being the clever artist that he was, though, Bernini would not simply make another monument dedicated to a deceased pope. Rather, Bernini utilized his talents and education, embracing entomology, religion, myth, and art, to create an enormous and touching monument to his friend and patron.

This sculpture, known as the Tomb of Pope Urban VIII (Figure 8), is not only imposing but also multilayered. There are literally three layers of bees to go with each level of this piece, adding to the stable, triangular structure of the entire work. The first of the bees are large honey bees located at the top of the piece, crowning the entire work; Next, in the middle of the piece are three medium-sized bees, crawling across the pedestal that supports the statue of Pope Urban VIII who seated as though he is continuing to lecture from beyond the grave; lastly are small bees located across the bottom of the piece. Each layer and each honey bee on this work is riddled with meaning.

The first layer of bees to discuss is that at the top of the piece: the large bees on the crest above the tomb (Figure 9). The base of the crest is inspired by Pope Urban VIII's family crest. Pope Urban's family crest is said to have originally been a horsefly, but as the family ascended the ladder of Italian society, they changed



Figure 9 Detail of Barberini bees on papal coat of arms atop the tomb of Pope Urban VIII, 1627 - 1647 CE

their insignia to a honey bee, later called Barberini bees after Pope Urban's family name (Davis).

Considering that Urban's family was in pursuit of a position in the church, this was an extremely strategic move on their part. Though these bees are not directly associated with Saint Ambrose and his swarm of bees, Catholicism still associated a visitation from a swarm of bees with having been chosen by God to speak His word. By changing their familial insignia to a bee, Urban and his family were implying that God had chosen them to advance through society and earn a place in the church. The crest scene on the tomb is a compilation of Pope Urban VIII's family crest and the papal seal. Rather than a single large bee, this crest features three large bees situated in a trinity underneath St. Peter's keys and the papal crown. In using three bees for this papal seal, the artist evokes the imagery of the Holy Trinity, showing the family's devotion to the religious way of life and teachings. Three is also a very visually stable number. It creates a solid base and it makes for visual and actual balance. This evokes the feeling that the family and the man that the seal refers to is also stable. It implies that even though Pope Urban VIII is deceased and in the tomb, the memory of his time as Pope is not going anywhere. Another key element of what makes these bees so stable is their stillness. The other bees on the sculpture are positioned and carved in such a way that they imply movement. Honey bees in life tend to amble around and flutter their wings, buzzing and making noise as they move along. The bees on this seal, however, do none of this. Their wings sit folded on their backs, they are evenly spaced from each other, and they all face in the same direction, towards Heaven. They are in no hurry to rush off to find pollen or make honey; they know that their duty lies with God, just as Pope Urban VIII's was obedience to God. In this way, the many layers of the papal crest come together to not only honor Pope Urban VIII but also confirm that his family is just as pious and devout as the Pope was. All of the many meanings behind the symbols in this piece make it so that, even after the

Pope's passing, Pope Urban's family will forever be immortalized as devoutly Catholic, and chosen individuals.

The next portion of the tomb, that of the base of the sculpture and the top of the sarcophagus, contains yet another use of the bee icon. This time, the bees are more naturalistic than the rigid, orderly honey bees in the crest. (Figure 10) These bees are still larger than life and somewhat more orderly than real bees would be, and they do mirror the three bees on the coat of arms above them because they are the same number of bees and clearly a group, but they are more naturalistic in the sense that as two of these bees amble towards the figure of Pope Urban VIII, one bee strays from the line to investigate the sarcophagus at the base of the statue. Unlike the other two bees, this bee appears to be attempting to get under sarcophagus lid. Howard Davis, in a journal article titled "Bees on the Tomb of Urban VIII" hypothesizes that the

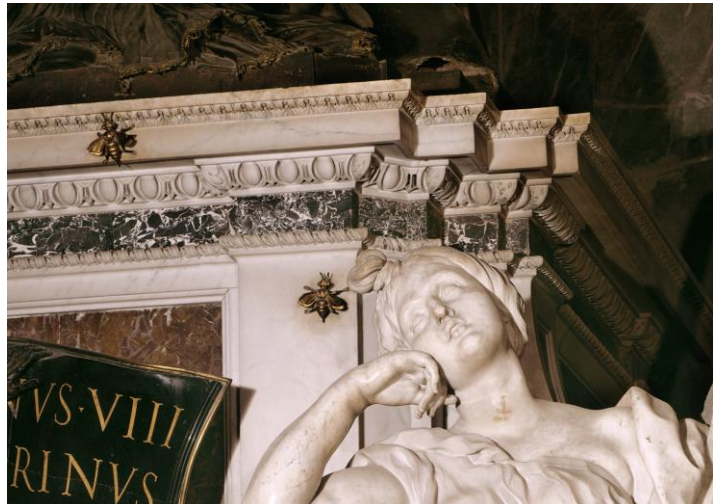


Figure 10 Detail of two medium-sized bees on statue base of Pope Urban VIII, 1627 - 1647 CE

placement of these honeybees was Bernini's way of emphasizing Pope Urban VIII's good nature and personality (Davis 42). Additionally, by placing this bee near the coffin lid, Bernini suggests that there is something sweet emanating from the sarcophagus, as bees are typically drawn to sweet smells. Since it is implied that Pope

Urban VIII is inside the sarcophagus, as it is his tomb, which implies that the bee is drawn to the sweet "odor of sanctity" which emanates from Pope Urban VIII himself (Davis 42). Davis arrives at this conclusion by reasoning that Bernini "seems to be using the response of the bees to

a fragrance issuing from the sarcophagus as a subtle and sophisticated compliment to the pope, implying saintliness in Urban—a kind of personal nomination on the part of his friend... that the pope should be considered for that highest honor” (Davis 45). These bees, as a group, are also something of a small swarm that is beginning to cover tomb. Again, this emphasizes the idea that Urban was chosen for the role that he filled during his lifetime, even as he continues to gesture as though continuing to orate God’s message in death. The way in which the honey bees are positioned across the work makes the connection for the viewer that the body in the sarcophagus is the same as that in the sculpture, so that even if there were no name plate and no information on this piece there would still be a clear connection between the body and the memory of the man. The bees help to show that the memory of this pope, represented in the idealized and frozen in action statue of the man entombed, is as sweet as the man whose body lies in the tomb.

It is interesting, though, that two of the bees stand out where they sit while the one bee looking for the source of the sweet smell is a little more difficult to see. The lonely bee on the sarcophagus is almost like a secret between the artist and the viewer, as though Bernini left it to see who would be paying attention enough to see his little homage to his friend. It is even more interesting to see that the two bees crawling towards the figure of Urban hold their own and demand attention from the viewer. They are made of gilt gold and placed against white marble, creating quite a lot of contrast so that they cannot be overlooked. They almost stand out more than the large figures standing to the sides of the sarcophagus. It is as though Bernini is telling his viewer that the bees and what they represent for Urban is more important than the rest of the composition. Almost as if Bernini is reminding his viewer that they are there to remember the man buried within, not to gawk at the artwork before them.

The smallest bees on this work are located on the legs of the sarcophagus and are one inch in length. Bernini carved life-sized bees onto each leg of the actual vessel intended to house the body of his deceased

friend, although Pope

Urban's body never actually

spent any time in the

sarcophagus (Davis, Figure

11). These figures are carved

directly onto the marble

sarcophagus, unlike the other



Figure 11 Detail of two of the one-inch bees on sarcophagus legs on tomb of Pope Urban VIII, 1627 - 1647 CE

bees, which were all placed on the work after the entire work was finished. As secret as the medium-sized bee crawling along the sarcophagus lid is, these bees are even more of a secret between artist and viewer as you have to be very close to the work to be able to see them. They have no definition or color variation from the surface that they were carved into, making them even harder to spot. These miniscule carvings are a very personal touch that Bernini seems to have left just for his friend and the rare viewer who cares enough to look for them. Two of these one inch bees would never even be seen by viewers as they are located on the back of the sarcophagus against the base of Pope Urban's statue, yet there they are. Every detail was taken into consideration.

As unassuming and difficult to see as these figures may be, they are absolutely essential to the piece because they are the only figures that are actually offering support to the real, physical, human Urban who is presumably lying dead inside the sarcophagus. Besides the fact that their stature is so drastically different from the other two groups of bees on this piece, these

life-sized figures also differ because there are four of these figures as opposed to each other group, which are both made up of three bees. By positioning these tiny bees so that they are facing where the lid of the sarcophagus meets the base, Bernini has implied that these small bees are drawn to the odor of sanctity emanating from the pope's tomb, just as the mid-sized bees were. Besides pointing out the sweet odor which must be emanating from Urban's corpse, these tiny bees serve another purpose in this piece. During the early Renaissance the number four was often used to represent the four elements that comprise earth: water, air, earth, and fire (Davis 40). The association with the earth and the four, sturdy legs of the sarcophagus root Pope Urban VIII to the ground. These bees, the most realistically earth-bound of all three groups of bees in this piece, tether Pope Urban's physical form, supposedly resting in the sarcophagus, to the earth. These tiny bees will not allow him to completely become a spirit and a memory. Instead they ensure that Urban must stay on earth in some way, almost as though Bernini is telling his deceased friend that he left unfinished business behind, so he must be kept bound to the realm of the living.



Figure 12 Detail of Justice on the tomb of Pope Urban VIII, 1627 - 1647 CE

The statues on each side of this tomb are quite striking, though not for the same reasons that the statues on other tombs in Saint Peter's are striking. Most other tombs in the Basilica make a point of including a statue personification of time to emphasize how short the pope's life was. These figures, though large and impressive and sumptuously carved, actually appear quite unmotivated. They are not the proud or imposing

figures that modern viewers typically associate with Renaissance sculpture; they instead drape themselves over the sarcophagus as though they're waiting for someone to come by and demand that they straighten up. Compared to the thoughtfully placed bees, these figures are quite disorderly. Justice (Figure 12) slouches and looks quite bored as she waits for her child attendants to finish situating her props. She has even thoughtlessly let her robes fall over the child sitting at her feet, and the child struggles to free itself from the folds of fabric. On the opposite side of the tomb, the figure of Love (Figure 13) doesn't look very loving as she wrestles with one fussing baby and gets tugged at by another. Even death, sitting comfortably on top of the sarcophagus, is still working on carving the Latin phrase on the tomb's plaque. The only figures in this piece who truly look ready to be seen are the bees. The figures of Love and Justice are present because they have to be, as a formality to fit in with the other tombs in Saint Peter's Basilica. The real messages that Bernini left behind for both the viewer and for Urban are sent through the bees. Just as God used bees as his messengers, to show whom he had chosen to speak for him, Bernini also used the honey bee for his messenger.

The unprepared, disheveled look of the sculptures in this work leave the viewer with a sense of anticipation. It is as if at any moment Love scoops up the screaming child at her ankle and will straighten up long enough to pose for the sculpture, Death will finish carving his sign and affix it to the tomb, and Justice will heave her head off of her hand and stand at attention. The bees, too, bring with them a sense



Figure 13 Detail of Love on the tomb of Pope Urban VIII, 1627 - 1647

that something is about to happen with them, especially the life-sized bees. It is as if they will take flight at any moment and either bump around the sarcophagus, looking for an entry point, or will fly off to a flower or their hive. This serves two purposes in the context of this piece. First, it shows that Bernini felt that his friend died too young. Many shared this sentiment, although Pope Urban did live to be 76 years old and accomplished much during his time in the papacy. Yet his supporters must have hoped to see more great things from him and were worried that they wouldn't after his death. Second, although it allows the viewer's imagination to fill in the actions and the sounds left out by the limitations of marble. While Love and Justice seem to be sighing, the active, crawling bees look as though they are ready to take flight. When bees get ready to fly, what do they do? They take wing and make a buzzing noise. Though the stone is, clearly, not actually making a buzzing noise, the implication of the sound calls forth a role that bees once played for the ancient Greeks and Romans: the buzzing of honey bees made songs that the muses taught the bees to inspire artisans. It has already been established that a swarm of bees was the way in which the Catholic God communicated with those he had blessed with the eloquence to spread his word, but there is no swarm in this work. Rather these bees and their buzzing is a reference to the role of the honey bee from classical antiquity, when the honey bee delivered messages of inspiration from the muses to artisans. Here the honey bees don't deliver inspirations from muses but rather serve as a direct line of communication between Urban and God. This shows not only how eloquent and inspired the words that Urban shared must have been, but it also shows his education. Including the honey bees in the first place implies that Urban would have understood the significance of the honey bees as messengers in this work; therefore he was most likely well read and aware of the role that honey bees played in ancient Greece and Rome. This shows how highly Bernini thought of Urban: he saw him as an

accomplished, prolific force who was taken from this earthly plane with still more great deeds to accomplish.

Bernini made an incredibly thoughtful tribute to his friend. The way that he went about manipulating the image of the honey bee in this instance was nothing short of masterful. He took an image that was at one point a completely secular image, then served only to convey Catholic morals and miracles, and he turned it into yet another completely new and unique icon. Bernini used small honey bees to actually steal attention and meaning away from large, beautiful statues that previous artists had always used as the focal points of their works. Bernini throws the idea of the humans as focal points out and instead packs layer upon layer of meaning on top of these tiny beings. Part of Bernini's meaning didn't even need to be visually communicated to the viewer. The sound of the buzzing bees whispering inspiration to Urban is an element of this piece that is left up to the viewer to imagine, but it is effective and Bernini conveys this beautifully. Even down to the most miniscule detail of sculpted bees just one inch in length, Bernini packs meaning into this. The largest bee in this work symbolizes just as much as the smallest bee. It is truly an outstanding work of art, and demonstrates so clearly the way in which the honey bee remains relevant to humanity throughout history and in different ways. By the time Bernini began interpreting the honey bee icon, it had gone through several changes and a multitude of cultures. Bernini recognized the image's durability, longevity, and significance and also recognized that he could use this to his advantage. He then artfully combined the traditional meaning of the honey bee with new meanings all his own, even going so far as to leave quiet personal messages to his deceased friend and respected patron on the monument that he made for his friend.

Conclusion

The relationship between human life and honey bees has regressed quickly over time. By the time the Renaissance was drawing to a close, the honey bee had devolved into an icon with little to no cultural significance, leaving its meaning malleable and its importance to current culture precarious. The way in which the significance that the honey bee held deteriorated is very indicative of how Western culture's relationship to the natural world and the soul also changed. Between the time that Artemis of Ephesus was carved and the early Renaissance the honey bee changed from symbol of protection for women and children in childbirth, an earthly and natural event and reasonable time of fear in which humans should crave emotional comfort and physical protection from a deity, into a symbol which cautioned against the dangers posed to the soul through lust and sin. Towards the end of the Renaissance the honey bee would no longer serve as a symbol that could offer comfort and protection independently of the deity it served, but rather became an indicator of divine presence and divine will.

In the Tomb of Pope Urban VIII, Bernini has disregarded almost all previous meaning that the honey bee held for man. Rather than serve God, as honey bees had in the age of Juan de Valdes Leal when he used the honey bee to represent God's chosen man and city in "The Miracle of the Bees," Bernini's bees serve him and Pope Urban VIII. While Bernini's use of bees does offer a more intimate view of his personal relationship with his friend, his use of bees also serves to show how far society had strayed from their initial closeness to the honey bee. It is because society has lost almost all reverence that it once held for the independent icon of the honey bee that Bernini is able to manipulate the image of the honey bee so that it serves as homage to his friend whom Bernini saw as a good and worthy person. If society in 1627 had still

seen the honey bee as did the Ephesians in the 2nd century, the meaning of Pope Urban's Tomb would have completely changed. Rather than Bernini's feelings regarding his friend's worthiness as a pope and religious figure, the tomb would have been a symbol of fertility and protection during childbirth.

Bernini carved this tomb close enough to Juan de Valdes Leal's time that he was able to share some of this icon's meanings with his predecessor, like the way in which honey bees indicated God's choice. Though Bernini used his honey bees to indicate the sacred smell which then indicated holiness and the almighty's choice, Valdes Leal was not altogether innocent of utilizing the honey bee for his own intentions either. Juan de Valdes Leal painted "The Miracle of the Bees" on commission for an important member of Seville society. He needed to utilize the meaning of the honey bee to praise three individuals: God, Saint Ambrose, and Archbishop Spinola. Rather than manipulate the honey bee image, though, he used the 1623 understanding of what honey bees represent to reflect his intentions. In 1623, Valdes Leal knew that placing the honey bee alongside Saint Ambrose, the patron saint of beekeeping, would tell his viewer all they needed to know to understand his work since Valdes Leal's viewer would know that swarms of honey bees indicate that God chose Saint Ambrose to be his orator. Using this message to his advantage, Valdes Leal fills the rest of the painting with recognizable elements of Seville and makes Saint Ambrose's father in the likeness of Archbishop Spinola. This way his Catholic viewers know that Valdes Leal is saying that Archbishop Spinola, like his name-saint, has been chosen by God to do great things.

The location of the artist and their work also greatly affects the meaning of the honey bees in the work. For instance, had Lucas Cranach the Elder tried to emulate Valdes Leal's or Bernini's bees, his Protestant audience would not have understood or appreciated his work in the

same way that the other two artists discussed. Cranach painted “Venus with Cupid Stealing Honey” and “Cupid Complaining to Venus” in 1525 and 1530, using the re-popularized story of Cupid being stung by bees and his mother cautioning him for his actions, to appeal to the Protestants of Northern Europe and their newly formed aesthetic and moral sensibilities. With the new religious upheaval in Saxony, Cranach was able to use the already established symbolic connection between honey bees and childbirth to play both sides of the schism made by the Protestant Reformation. By changing the imagery in the painting around the honey bees Cranach was able to caution against immoral actions in two different paintings while damning one kind of love and praising another. These two images with two messages are only possible because of the imagery of the honey bees. Neither of these images fully embrace the secular significance or praise of the honey bee the way in which ancient civilizations once did. The honey bee was still an icon that a viewer would have understood through their knowledge of mythology, its use here cautioned against what Protestants and Catholics deemed to be immoral, but it was a tool, it was not part of the culture of Northern Europe.

The only culture in Western Civilization to really appreciate the honey bee in every aspect of their lives was that of the Ephesians. The close connection between the honey bee and Artemis, who oversaw many of the Ephesians major life events, made Artemis’s *melissae* an essential aspect of everyday life. The honey bee was appreciated for its abilities as an architect, a honey producer, but also for the gentle song they sing while they work. The Ephesians saw the way that the honey bee could balance indulgence and work and they strove to achieve this balance in their own lives. They appreciated them so much that the honey bee became an essential part of the Ephesian economy. The honey bee was essential to the Ephesian identity.

One aspect of the honey bee's symbolism did carry over throughout each period of renewed interest in the honey bee icon. The connection between the honey bee and inspired speech is one that human culture cannot seem to stray far from. For the ancient Greeks and Romans, the honey bee was the messenger of the muses, singing songs to artists to bestow the muse's inspiration. Lucas Cranach the Elder places his honey bees alongside a poem from antiquity. While Cranach's works are portrayals of two interpretations of a poem from classical antiquity, the inclusion of the written poem in the painted works implies that Cranach saw something in the poem that was in and of itself appealing and inspired. For Juan de Valdes Leal and Gian Lorenzo Bernini, the bees indicate gifted orators whose spoken and written words were so eloquent that they must be divinely inspired. Although the honey bee's relationship to the divine word has remained a constant element of the symbol's interpretation, the honeybee has nevertheless continued to lose its footing within a cultural context as it is rarely appreciated as a songstress for the muses in contemporary contexts.

While it is true that there have been pockets of renewed interest in the honey bee throughout history, the icon of the honey bee never again reached the level of cultural integration that it had enjoyed in Ephesus or as a part of Greek mythology. The most notable example of resurgence in the use of honey bees for iconography before contemporary times has to be that of Napoleon Bonaparte. In order to cover all that remained of the French monarchy, Napoleon had all fleur-de-lys adorning the former monarchy's clothes and furniture turned upside down and into bees as a reminder to the citizens of France that the monarchy was gone but they needed to become worker-bees for their country and begin the process of rebuilding (Buchmann 137). However important the honey bee was to Napoleon's vision of France, it was not a vision shared by the citizens of France. The honey bee never became an icon tightly interwoven with the

identity of what it meant to be French, as it had with Ephesians. Where Ephesus minted coins with honey bees on them, Napoleon was the only Frenchman adorned in bees. Where Ephesians drove Saint Paul out of Ephesus for condemning their worship of Artemis and *melissae*, the French drove Napoleon out of the country and rid themselves of the association with the honey bee. Napoleon may have drawn the comparison between himself, France, and the honey bee, but the honey bee never grew into a cultural definition of what it meant to be French the way it had defined what it meant to be an Ephesian.

How did humanity stray so far from the connection we once had with the natural world? According to Val Plumwood this separation started due to the feuding that humanity started with itself. “Venus and Cupid Stealing Honey” and “Cupid Complaining to Venus” is a good example of Plumwood’s claim. While the Catholics and Protestants were fighting over whose religion was more authentic, the meaning of the honey bee image steadily became less established so that by the time Bernini decided to include bees in his tomb sculpture the meaning of the honey bee icon was completely malleable.

Since 1647, when the tomb of Pope Urban VIII was completed, the relationship between humans and the natural world has continued to deteriorate until it arrived at where we are today: afraid of the honey bee that was once held in such reverence and responsible for their extinction.

It is difficult to propose a solution that could, with complete certainty, solve the issues facing the honey bee today. However, a good place to start helping the honey bee to regain numbers is to involve the common person; by appreciating the honey bee, not necessarily to the same extent that the Ephesians did but perhaps to an degree that encourages people to plant more native flowers outside to help feed bees. The fact remains that the honey bee relies on environments that humanity creates, so it is up to us to do our part, no matter the size of the

action, to give the honey bee the help that it needs to survive so that generations of the future can have the chance to appreciate the honey bee in a deeper way than today's generations seem to.

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