

# EMBLEMATA





The Device of Maximilian of Austria, "Emperor of the World,"  
from *Le Imprese Illustri* of Girolamo Ruscelli

# EMBLEMATA

*Symbolic Literature of the Renaissance*



*From the Collection of*  
ROBIN RAYBOULD




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## INTRODUCTION



This exhibition shows a selection of the “symbolic literature” which was published in Europe mostly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The exhibition is arranged by the categories, or species as I call them, defined by contemporary writers and commentators. For example, Henri Estienne, in his treatise *L’Art de faire les Devises, or The Making Devices*, of 1645, (no. 55 in this catalog) thought it essential to distinguish between devices, hieroglyphics, enigmas, symbols, fables, parables, emblems, sentences, reverses of medals, arms, blazons, cimiers, cyphres and rebuses. Other contemporary writers enumerated further categories. One of these species, the emblem book, is still a living force in literature (though admittedly now a rather feeble one) and examples have been published, and are shown here, right through to the twenty-first century.

The books are either collections of “symbols” or treatises on “symbols.” All in all, it is possible to distinguish sixty to eighty different species of this symbolic literature as defined by contemporaries, and I set out a list of these in the accompanying table. The count is not precise because there are sub-species and cross-overs which in some cases make the distinctions somewhat artificial. The numbers next to the individual species and the author’s name in the table give the page number of the book in the present catalog in which that category is collected or referred to.

Many of these works can be grouped into categories which indicate their common origin or relationship. These include the species derived from heraldry, such as arms, devices, insignia, mottos; those related to jokes, including satires, testaments, paradoxes and others; divinations, including dreams, prophesies, lotteries and visions; and the performing arts, including masques, festivals, burlesques and other dramatic writings. It is evident that some of these are not literary material, but nevertheless they are included because they were seen by contemporaries as symbolic species, and were either collected into book form with commentaries on their allegorical nature, or were included as illustrations in the many contemporary treatises on the nature of the symbol.

The invention of printing by movable type during the mid-fifteenth century was the greatest cultural event in Europe of the second millen-

nium. Printing presses were rapidly set up in every major city in Europe and millions of books were printed (some twenty million before the end of the fifteenth century). Of this vast output, a sizeable part consisted of books of symbols and books on theories of symbolism in which contemporaries analyzed the nature of the symbol and gave innumerable examples of the genre. Some of these are the subject of this exhibit.

In the essay which follows, I briefly outline the origins of this obsession with symbol and allegory which dominated early European culture and which, as a result of the advent of the printing press, could finally be expressed and appreciated by the reading public on a wide scale.

Interest in semiotics, the art and science of signs, has persisted to the present day and continues to provoke strong opinions. Jacques Maritain in the twentieth century has said: "No problems are more complex or more fundamental to the concerns of men and civilization than those concerning signs." Earlier, Friedrich Nietzsche had abandoned the field as hopeless: "Human beings can only come to terms with the enormous uncertainty about truth only as long as they are unable to remember that all our laws about nature were imposed on it in the form of metaphor, analogy and heuristic fiction."

But I prefer the words of Martin Luther himself: "Allegory is a beautiful harlot who fondles men in such a way that it is impossible for her not to be loved."

*Enjoy!*



## ORIGINS OF WESTERN SYMBOLISM



The several millennia of European history from the earliest times to the end of the seventeenth century in our era can usefully be regarded and investigated as a single cultural period. During this long period, Western Europe was, in the words of Roland Barthes, "a super-civilization" (*The Semiotic Challenge*, Berkeley, 1994), a characterization which indicates that, despite the obvious and dramatic, societal and political changes and developments during the period, there were unifying cultural characteristics which gave it identity and which distinguished it from our own era of empiricism and the natural sciences.

Foremost amongst these was the universal interest at every level of society in the use of symbolism and allegory to explore and express the reality of things, an interest which was manifested in every aspect of religious, civic and daily life, in art, in architecture, literature, medicine and recreation. Over the centuries, this obsession persisted and expanded until every facet of the natural world, both in the heavens and on earth, was deemed to have its symbolic significance: stars, animals, plants, stones, colors, numbers, names and many others, all of which contributed to a culture dominated by an imperative to express the inexpressible, that is, by the attempt to reach an understanding of the nature of God and the meaning of life.

The origins of this obsession are ancient and complex and we can follow several separate threads. The first is the tradition of interpretation by the early Greeks of their myths and their heroic literature, the works of Homer. From the earliest days, it was realized that these myths represented something more than just campfire stories: either the gods were kings and heroes who had been apotheosized as a result of their great deeds or they were symbols of the forces of nature, the power and unpredictability of which dominated the lives of primitive peoples, or they were forces of the human mind, emotions, abstract ideas, for which, at the time, language was otherwise inadequate.

This tradition of textual interpretation by the Greeks fed through to the tradition of interpretation of the Christian Scriptures. The earliest church fathers, such as Justin of Caesarea and Clement of Alexandria,

recognized that if Christian theology was to achieve respectability, let alone dominance in the intellectual world, it was essential to imbue it with the same authority and prestige as Greek philosophy, and they did this by adopting much of the technique and dogma of the Greeks. Thus, the literal sense of the Scriptures, which, in many places, was obscure or contradictory, was found by these authorities and later ones to have a hidden moral or spiritual significance.

This takeover of Greek philosophy, or, as Clement put it, its “merging into the river of truth,” included also the wholesale adoption of the metaphysics of Plato, a philosophical system which proceeded to dominate Christian thought during the first millennium. Plato addressed the problem which exercised thinkers before and after him. How do you grasp the meaning and the reality of an ever-changing material world, the world of movement, growth, disease, death, changes exemplified by another river metaphor, Heraclitus’ dictum, that “you never step into the same river twice?” His solution was the theory of absolute Forms or Ideas. He proposed that the evanescent elements of the material world which we see around us are mere reflections or symbols of eternal and unchanging Ideas of those elements which are the only true Reality. For the Christian, the Ideas or Forms of Plato translated into the *Logoi*, or Words. As expressed in the opening verse of St. John’s Gospel, “the Word was God and the Word was with God.”

Later, Christian mystics realized the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of achieving a direct knowledge of the nature of God, which left them the alternative that He could only be approached by identification and absorption with the symbols of His being which were revealed in Nature and in the Scriptures. This process reached its climax in the writings of St. Bonaventure in the thirteenth century, who expressed the pantheistic and nearly heretical view that: “Like through a mirror, we can contemplate God with the sensible things, not only since they are signs but by themselves as his essence, presence and power.”

The culture of symbolism was perpetuated and enhanced, throughout the whole period, by an enduring belief in the secrecy of knowledge. Difficult as it may be for us with our modern liberal sensibilities to accept, it is nevertheless a remarkable fact that there is hardly a single writer during the period who does not emphasize his persistent belief that knowledge of any kind must be concealed from the *idiotae*, the ignorant masses, that, as Pythagoras first put it, it must be hidden behind

the veil, and expressed only in symbols which could be understood by the educated or the initiated. I could quote extracts which express this thought from Plato, Pythagoras, Aristotle, St. Paul, Origen, St. Clement, St. Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, John of Salisbury, Roger Bacon, Petrarch, Boccaccio, della Mirandola, Francis Bacon and others. A secret language, a symbolic expression, was deemed essential for the communication of mystical, religious and even secular learning.

Yet a further thread was the so-called Art of Memory. From the times of the earliest Greek thinkers and writers, a technique had been developed to assist the process of memorization, an essential capability at a time when there was no printing, writing materials were expensive and few could even write. This technique, the Art of Memory, which remained surprisingly stable and consistent during the whole period, consisted essentially of having in one’s mind “memory places,” for instance, a building with which one was familiar, through the rooms of which one could move in a predetermined progression and on the walls of which were symbols to which were attached or associated the memories one wished to recall. Even as late as the seventeenth century there was a mass of publications describing and enlarging on this technique and emphasizing the part that was to be played in the symbolic associations of the Art.

Finally, and underlying and reinforcing all these trends, was the attempt initiated by Aristotle, and continued in the work of many of his successors, including the Roman poet Horace and both St. Augustine and St. Aquinas, to perfect a theory of language itself. To them, a word was certainly the symbol of a thought, of a material object, or of an abstraction; but the difficulty was that the meaning of a word is ultimately circular – it has to be defined by other words – so how does language arise? For the mystics, the Word, the *Logos*, had a divine origin. For the theorists, language evolved through the use of metaphor, the surprising juxtaposition of ideas, one thing apparently meaning another. Theories of metaphor underpinned all contemporary treatises on the symbolic literature and it is no surprise that that the greatest of these, Tesauro’s *Cannochiale Aristotelico*, is formally a discussion of Aristotle’s theory of metaphor.

If one constant theme unites all these separate threads, it is of the difficulty, perhaps the impossibility, of reconciling the paradox that the purpose of the symbol, of allegory, was, in the phrase that was constantly quoted throughout the period, both “to conceal and reveal” the mysteries of life and of God.

## THE SYMBOLIC SPECIES



The following table shows the main symbolic literary genres as they were enumerated by contemporary authors in the late Renaissance. In the column of authors is given the name of at least one writer who compiled a collection of or wrote a treatise on this genre. The numbers refer to the item no. in the present catalog, where an example of this genre is shown (unnumbered items are not represented in the exhibition).

<i>Species</i>	<i>Subspecies</i>	<i>Other name</i>	<i>Author</i>
Allegories	Laconisms	Hyponoia	Tesauro no. 52
Apophthegms		Dictes	Stobaeus no. 66
		Gnomes	
		Aphorisms	
		Moral sentences	
		Maxims	
Apparatus	Blasons		Tesauro no. 52
Arms			Tesauro no. 52
	Livrées		
Ballets	Volucrarities	Physiologus	Tesauro no. 52
Bestiaries			Caussin no. 65
Burlesques			Addison
	Equivoques		
	Travesties		
Centos			Estienne no. 67
Centuries of			
Nostradamus			Menestrier no. 49
Cognizances	Badges		Puttenham
Coins/Medals	Reverses		Tesauro no. 52
Cyphers	Acrostics	Sifra	Estienne no. 55
Dances of Death	Totendanz		Drexel no. 86
		Danses macabres	
Devices		Imprese	Giovio no. 56
Divinations	Oracles	Prophesies	Menestrier no. 49
		Prognostications	
Dreams	Visions		Menestrier no. 49
Dramatic	Comedies		Addison
Writings	Tragedies		
	Morality plays		
Emblems		Parerga	Alciato no. 2
Enigmas			Menestrier no. 49
Epigrams	Elegies		Tesauro no. 52
Epic Poems		Epopées	Gracian

<i>Species</i>	<i>Subspecies</i>	<i>Other name</i>	<i>Author</i>
Equestrian Games			Tesauro no. 52
Fables			Estienne no. 55
Festivals	Masques	Spectacles	Menestrier no. 49
	Triumphs		
Fictions of Poets			Gracian
Figure Poems		Technopaegnia	Quarles no. 22
Foggie			Contile
Herbals			Matthioli
Heroic arguments			Tesauro no. 52
Hieroglyphs			Estienne no. 55
Iconologies			Ripa no. 81/82
Inscriptions	Epitaphs		Tesauro no. 52
Insignia			Tesauro no. 52
Jokes	Trophies	Facetiae	Tabourot no. 87
			Nugae
			Ridicula
			Nebulae
Lapidaries			Licetus
Lotteries	Fates		Menestrier no. 49
Metamorphoses			Ovid no. 73
Mottos	Cimiers	Tituli	Ruscelli no. 60
	War cries		
Mythologies			Hyginus no. 71
Novels			Gracian
Painting/			
Sculpture			Tesauro no. 52
Parables	Exempla		Estienne no. 55
Paradoxes			Lando
Proverbs		Adages	Erasmus no. 76
			Paroemia
Rebuses			Tabourot no. 87
Satires	Laments		Estienne no. 55
		Parodies	
		Complaints	
		Testaments	
	Fools		
Somma			Tesauro no. 52
Signs			Tesauro no. 52
Similes			Caussin no. 65
Symbols	Tessera		Estienne no. 55
Talismans	Amulets		Menestrier no. 49
Wands	Baguettes		Menestrier no. 49



# THE BOOK OF NATURE

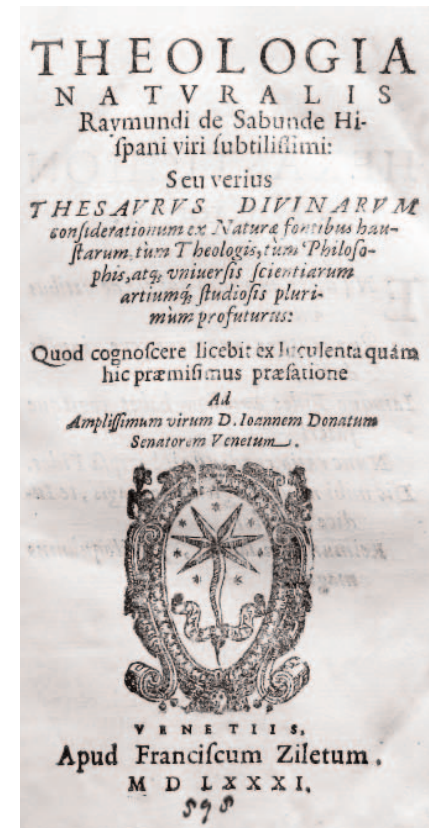
## I

RAYMUNDI DE SABUNDE

*Theologia Naturalis seu verius thesaurus divinarum  
considerationum ex Naturae fontibus haustarum tum  
Theologis, tum Philosophis, atque universis scientiarum  
artiumque, studiosis plurimum profuturus.*

VENICE: APUD FRANCISCUM ZILETUM, 1581

Title Page





This is the second Latin edition of Sabunde's famous book, which became the centerpiece of Montaigne's *Essais* in the 200-page essay, "An Apology for Raymund Sabunde." Earlier editions were eventually placed on the Index of Forbidden Books (and are thus rather rare) as a result of an over-confident prologue which appeared to set up the *Theologia Naturalis* in competition with the Bible itself. Once the prologue was omitted, as it is in this edition, the book was reprinted and further editions appeared, including several translated into French by Montaigne himself for the benefit of his father, who did not know Latin.

My interest in this book lies in the fact that more than any other it epitomizes the content of this exhibition. It preaches that Nature, the *Theologia Naturalis*, symbolizes the nature of God and that man, with God's grace and properly enlightened, has the capability of reading that Book correctly. Since the world was a creation of God, every element in it revealed His truth and did so by means of the associations which can be learnt from the herbals, the lapidaries, the bestiaries and the other symbolic species. And so from the later Middle Ages, the Book of Nature and its interpretations came to assume as much theological importance as the other Christian book, the Bible, itself. As Sabunde said in the Prologue (watered down by Montaigne and translated by M. A. Screech): "God has given us two books: the Book of the Universal Order of Things (or, of Nature) and the Book of the Bible. The former was given to us first, from the origin of the world: for each creature is like a letter traced by the hand of God."

Literature: Graesse, 6, 203



## EMBLEM BOOKS



The emblem book is the most popular and the most extensive species of symbolic literature. There are some seven thousand documented titles and editions in the genre published from the sixteenth to the twenty-first century. Each emblem book comprises a number of individual emblems, usually one to a page and usually about one hundred in number, but sometimes as few as eight and at least one by Boschius containing two thousand.

*Boschius no. 32*

What is an emblem? It is a multipart symbol, in most cases in three parts – a motto, a picture and short poem – which, when read in combination, reveal a philosophical, moral or spiritual insight. In some cases, there were more than three parts to the emblem – up to eight or nine, all of which contributed to the interpretation of the symbolic meaning of the whole.

Why was the emblem so popular? Because this format especially, full of concealed meanings which first had to be teased out and then meditated upon at length, admirably suited contemporary society's obsession with allegory and symbolism. The three elements of the emblem were intended to illustrate a unity of intellectual, aesthetic, perhaps mystical experience, and provide spiritual or philosophical fulfillment.

The exhibit illustrates the longevity of the genre with examples from the sixteenth century to the present day with a special section on devotional emblem books issued mostly by the Jesuits to promote Catholic orthodoxy.

# EMBLEMS SIXTEENTH-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

## 2

ANDREAE ALCIATI V. C.

*Omnia Emblemata: cum commentariis, quibus  
Emblematum omnium aperta origine, mens auctoris  
explicatur, & obscura omnia dubiaque illustrantur:  
per Claudium Minoem divionensem*

ANTWERP: EX OFFICINA CHRISTOPHORII PLANTINI, 1577

Emblem 118:  
Virtuti fortuna  
comes (Fortune ac-  
companies virtue).  
This image is Al-  
ciato's own de-  
vice with the ca-  
duceus of Her-  
mes and the cor-  
nu copia symbol-  
izing the union  
of courage and  
good fortune.



The first emblem book of all, containing about one hundred emblems, was written by Andreas Alciato, a celebrated international jurist, in or about 1522, and first published in 1531, probably without his knowledge or authorization. Such was the popularity of the work, which was originally conceived as a mere trifle which he composed during idle hours on a public holiday, that he kept adding emblems in further editions until, by the time of his death in 1550, his book contained 220 emblems. Altogether, the extraordinary total of 180 editions of Alciato's *Emblemata*, in many European languages and countries, were published before the end of the seventeenth century.

As time went on, other writers took advantage of the popularity of Alciato's book and, in the later editions, contributed lengthy commentaries on the origin and meaning of each emblem. This edition from 1577 is one of the earliest of these, with a commentary by Claudius Minos resulting in a work of 750 pages although this was by no means the largest or longest edition. The edition of Tozzi in 1622 contained 850 double column large quarto pages. These commentaries formed an important thread in the development of the literary essay pioneered in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by Montaigne and Bacon.

Literature: Adams, 607; Landwehr 1570, 13

## 3

PETRI COSTALII

*Pegma: cum narrationibus philosophicis*

LYONS: APUD MATTHIAM BONHOMME, 1555

Just as the horse resists the rider, so the appetite resists reason, an edifying dictum from Plato's *Phaedrus* (page 157).



First edition of one of the earliest emblem books, with ninety-five emblems. Like Alciato, Coustau was a lawyer, and the book has a number of legal references. He also admits that he wrote some of the emblems during the leisure time that accompanied his profession. It may not be a coincidence that a number of the early emblematicists were lawyers, since the Code of Civil Law, the *Corpus Juris Civilis*, was, after 1,500 years of use, acknowledged to be a chaotic jumble, a mosaic, into which interpretations, that is emblems, had been continuously inserted.

*Pegma* is a rather obscure Latin word which was used in antiquity and the Renaissance to mean a structure, scaffold or mechanism upon which precious objects could be displayed. Perhaps the best translation is "staging," a term which resonates with titles of other emblem books of "theater" (e.g. La Perrière's *Le Theatre des Bons Engins*, or the Theater of Fine Devices, of 1539), and reflects the elaborate stage mechanisms of contemporary pageants and festivals.

As an accepted motif which has symbolic function, stage machinery was validated by Emmanuel Tesauro, in his great *Cannochiale Aristotelico* as an object which provides an illusion of reality. The idea of stage machinery as symbol possibly originates from Plato's use in the *Republic* (Stephanus 1578, 518c) of the word *periaktoi* in his description of the soul turning from the darkness of the Sensible world to the light of the absolute and eternal Forms or Ideas. In Greek theater, the *periaktoi* were small canvases with scenery painted on them. They were attached to spindles which could be turned to change the scene.

Tesauro no. 52

Literature: Praz, 309; Adams, 2732; Brunet, 18563; Landwehr 1978, 75; Brun, 161



DIDACO SAAVEDRA FAXARDO

*Idea Principis Christiano-Politicus*

AMSTERDAM: APUD JOH. JANSONIUM JUNIOREM, 1657

Emblem 38: *Con Halago I Con Rigor*  
[i.e., Rigor] (With  
flattery and severity)  
or as  
Teddy Roosevelt  
said "Speak softly  
and carry a big  
stick."



The most renowned Spanish emblem book and one which had an international readership was Saavedra's *Idea de un Príncipe político Cristiano*, (The Nature of a Christian Prince), first published in 1640. The theme of the book is the political education of Christian princes through emblematics. According to Saavedra, appearance was everything for the political leader, and this princely characteristic was nicely reflected in the dual nature of the emblematic symbol: the signifier and the signified.

This was one in a series of books from the period giving advice to kings and princes as to the nature of kingship, of which the most famous was Machiavelli's *The Prince*, and Erasmus' *The Education of a Christian Prince*. Saavedra restates the neo-Platonic doctrine that the temporal leader derives his authority from God alone. Saavedra had studied this doctrine closely and it had been affirmed as Catholic orthodoxy by the Council of Trent, which, in the middle of the sixteenth century, had initiated the program of the Counter-Reformation to reinstate Catholic authority over the Church. The book and its emblems reflect this truth: that the prince is a mirror of his state, that his authority is from God alone and that the Scriptures are paramount. As Saavedra says: "God was (nature's) creator. The metal serpent, the burning bush, Gideon's fleece, Samson's lion, the High Priest's vestments, the blandishments of the Spouse, what are they other than devices?" (trans. Pedro F. Campa).

The images were cut by Ralph Sadeler, one of the best-known woodcut artists of the time (see also Drexel's *Zodiacus Christianus*). Saavedra's work is an example of the difficulty of categorizing some of the books in this exhibition. Each emblem here could be described as a Device since it only has two elements, the image and the motto, and the latter is printed within the image. There is no poem, only the commentary, and the title makes reference to the *symbola*, a word commonly used for device, for which there was no classical Latin equivalent. But since emblems always speak to general moral and spiritual themes rather than individual achievements or ambitions, it is correctly categorized as an emblem book.

Literature: Landwehr 1978, 171

Drexel no. 16

## 5

HA [HENRY HAWKINS]

*Partheneia Sacra or the Mysterious Garden of the Sacred Parthenes ...*

[PARIS]: PRINTED BY JOHN COUSTURIER, 1633

Symbolum V: An emblem of the heliotrope, a very common motif for the emblematisers, illustrating how the soul can turn to God just as the heliotrope turns to the sun.

Later in this emblem, HA also refers to the omniscience of God, symbolized by the eye of the portrait which follows the viewer to wherever he is standing, a striking metaphor first employed by the brilliant fifteenth century philosopher Nicholas of Cusa.



First edition of an English Catholic emblem book. Printed in Paris and published under the pseudonym HA, presumably for security reasons in view of anti-Catholic sentiment in England at the time, the author is generally assumed to be Henry Hawkins, an English Jesuit. The book has been described by Wolfgang Lotte as "the most important Catholic emblem book in English literature" (*Review of English Studies*, Vol. 26, 1975, 144). Rosemary Freeman, in her pioneering study *English Emblem Books* (Octagon, 1978), devotes a long extract to it.

The book is unusual, because each emblem comprises much more than the usual tri-partite structure; it has two pictures, called, respectively the Devise and the Embleme, each with a different motto; and there are seven other elements, including the Character, the Morals, the Essay, the Discourse, the Poesie, the Theories, and the Apostrophe. Each emblem represents a symbol of the Virgin Mary and illustrates the four modes of interpretation of this symbol which had been standard Christian practice since the earliest times: the literal interpretation, the allegorical (or historical), the tropological (or moral) and the anagogical (or spiritual).

Literature: Praz, 364

## 6

PHILIP AYRES

*Emblemata Amatoria, Emblems of Love, Embleme d'Amore, Emblemes d'Amour in four languages dedicated to the ladys.*

LONDON: SOLD BY R. BENTLY IN COVENT GARDEN, 1683



Emblem 7: In Vain, an amusing and unusual scene showing two Cupids with a number of broken arrows, apparently wasted on the hard-hearted lady at whom they have been aimed.

First edition of a popular English emblem book by this author who was a poet and friend of Dryden. Emblems of love were very common throughout Europe, particularly in Holland in the seventeenth century and many of the images in the book were taken from originals by the Dutch authors Vaenius and Heinsius. The poems in this version, conveniently for multilingual lovers, are rendered in four different languages.

Heinsius no. 13

At least one Cupid is shown in each emblem, illustrating among other things one of the dilemmas that contemporary story-tellers had with Cupid. Should he be shown with or without a blindfold? The classical story has him with a blindfold because his arrows were always shot at random. But this in many cases restricted the author's scope, and for this reason, or because of the illustrator's ignorance or laziness, the blindfold was often left off pictures of Cupid.

Literature: Landwehr 1978, 47; Wing, A4307

## 7

LAURENS VAN HAECHT GOIDTSENHOVEN

*Mikrokosmos Parvus Mundi*

ANTWERP: APUD GERARDUM DE IODECIUS, 1579

Emblem 1: Man  
the microcosm  
within the  
universe, or  
macrocosm.



First edition of an emblem book containing seventy-two emblems with beautiful images by de Jode, one of the master illustrators of the sixteenth century. The title reflects the neo-Platonist doctrine that every element of man was reflected in the universe at large and vice-versa, echoing the concept of the “Great Chain of Being,” in which the spirit of God, one and eternal, flows through the multiple layers of the macrocosm into man, the fragmented and mutable microcosm.

The emblems all describe Greek and Roman myths, including Apuleius’ Golden Ass, the Harpies, Arion and the dolphin, Tantalus, Penelope and Odysseus, Circe, Prometheus and the Eagle, Alexander the Great visiting Diogenes, and Aeneas and Ascanius fleeing Troy. Interestingly, each emblem includes a Biblical quotation, giving a moral or spiritual interpretation of the whole, and this is an example of the interpretative tradition in which classical myths as well as Old Testament stories were acceptable to the Christian theologians as “types” or prefigurations of the events of the New Testament.

Literature: Praz, 263

## 8

JOHANN FLITNER

*Nebulo nebularum: hoc est, Iocoseria modernae nequitiae censura.*

FRANKFURT: APUD JACOBUM DE ZETTER, 1620

Ode XX:  
He fell between two  
stools.



This book can be categorized as an emblem book, a joke book, or a book of satires, and the title gives the flavor of the work – “the rascal of rascals.” It contains thirty-three “Odes,” each of which has six parts: a motto, a “nucleus” which is in effect an explanation of the motto, a long poem, another motto, a picture, and a “nota,” or long prose essay. The book is subtitled “uncensored modern jokes which describe the wickedness, fraud and sadness of mankind.” It is based on a much earlier satirical work, Thomas Murner’s *Schelmenzunft*, or Band of Rogues, of 1512. Murner was a Catholic theologian who was tireless in his satirizing of Martin Luther, and would use any material for this task. In an earlier work by Murner, *Narrenbeschwörung*, he had plagiarized Sebastian Brant’s famous *Narren Schyff*, or Ship of Fools. In the present work, the table has been turned on Murner.

Literature: Praz, 333; Brunet, 18397; Graesse, 2:597; Landwehr 1972, 71



Figure 28: The God Harpocrates, with his finger to his lip, signifying silence.



## 9

LE ROY SIEUR DE GOMBERVILLE

### *La Doctrine des Mœurs qui represente en cent tableaux la différence des passions*

PARIS: JACQUES LE GRAS, 1688

A French edition of one of the most popular emblem books of the seventeenth century. It was first published by Otto Van Veen in 1607 as the *Emblemata Horatiana*, a collection of sayings from the Roman poet. In this present edition, however, De Gomberville acknowledges neither Van Veen nor Horace, but does state in his introduction that the book is intended to illustrate the philosophy of the Stoics. It contains a series of moral emblems on Virtue, Wisdom, Desire, and Death, and De Gomberville intended that the reader should be reminded of the images which were painted in or on the Stoa or open gallery in which Zeno, the first Stoic philosopher, taught his students.

This image of Harpocrates, a very popular symbol throughout the period, was actually derived from a much earlier Egyptian symbol for the son of Isis. (Then, as now, all little boys put their fingers in their mouths!) De Gomberville's explication of the image is actually rather weak, stating merely that the lover should talk *to* his beloved but not *about* him/her to other people. He does, however, confirm the link to ancient Greek mystery religions, which enjoined silence and secrecy on their adherents. From this developed the whole tradition of the secrecy of knowledge throughout the classical and modern periods. It was also, in Christian terms, a symbol of the mystery of God in the apophatic theological tradition originating with St Augustine, who proposed that "God is better known by not knowing," thus suggesting that He is as easily represented by darkness as by light and by silence as by speech. Thus silence also can signify the love of God.

Literature: Praz, 355; Caillet, 4638



ARNOLD HOUBRAKEN

*Stichtelyke Zinnebeelden*

AMSTERDAM: BY WILLEM BARENTS, 1723

Emblem 6:  
*Spiegel* (Mirror), showing  
a philosopher following  
Socrates' suggestion  
that one should exam-  
ine oneself each day in  
the mirror to reflect on  
life (see also no. 78 for  
the iconology of pru-  
dence and the mirror).



The title of this work can be translated as Edifying Emblems, or Moral Emblems. Houbraken, who with another author, Gezine Brit, wrote the fifty-seven emblems for this book, also drew the pictures, which were then engraved on copper-plates. Much of the material is taken from Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*.

Ripa no. 81

Phaedrus no. 70

The commentary on the emblem shown above includes a Dutch translation of Phaedrus' Aesopian fable the Brother and Sister, in which a handsome brother and an ugly sister see themselves in a mirror, from which resentment brews. The mirror had strong symbolic associations in the medieval and Renaissance eras, signifying that which can "show the world as it is and point out what it should be." There were dozens if not hundreds (one commentator says the number is limitless) of works which were called *Speculum* or mirror in Latin, and the tradition goes back in religious literature through St. Augustine to the Bible, and in secular works back to Plotinus, Cicero and Plato. Just one example is the greatest of all medieval encyclopedias, the *Speculum Majus*, or Great Mirror, of Vincent of Beauvais.

Literature: Praz, 375; Landwehr 1970, 231

FLORENTIUS SCHOONHOVIUS

*Emblemata partim Moralia et partim etiam Civilia*

GOUDA: APUD ANDREAM BURIER, 1618



Emblem 5:  
*Nihil Ignavis Votis*  
(Laziness gets you  
nowhere, i.e., seize the  
opportunity when  
you may).

First edition of one of the most influential emblem books of the era. It has seventy-four emblems, each with very beautifully engraved pictures by Crispin de Passe, and learned commentary.

The emblem shows the goddess Fortuna on both a wheel and a sphere (usually she is content with just one or the other) emphasizing how she can roll away at a moment's notice. Fortuna, a personification which more than any other endured throughout the whole classical and medieval period, illustrated how, from the beginning man has felt himself to be at the mercy of the elements, of fate, of chance. In the Christian era, this translated into a belief in the dependence of man on God's will, and provoked the debate on man's ability to make his own decisions, i.e., the debate on the existence of free will. One of the characteristics of the Renaissance was the gradual emergence of the belief in the power of the individual, who by the exercise of virtue may rise above the vagaries of fortune to become, in the words of Giordano Bruno, *domitrice della Fortuna*, the tamer of Fate. Fortune in the sense of riches or plenty, as shown in the emblem of Alciato, was a late development of the meaning of the word.

Alciato no. 2

Literature: Praz, 493; Graesse, 6, 314; Landwehr 1970, 604

Pages 26-30 are not part of this Preview

## DEVOTIONAL EMBLEM BOOKS



There was a strong Catholic tradition of devotional and meditative literature in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. The most revered and influential of them all was the *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis (ca. 1379-1471) completed in 1441, and with more than 3,000 editions one of the most popular books in the Western canon. St. Bonaventure (1221-1274) in his *De Triplici Via* proposed three types of meditation, the *Via Purgativa* (the purgative way), the *Via Illuminativa* (the way of illumination), and the *Via Unitiva* (the way of unity). St. Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556), who founded the Society of Jesus in 1540, also wrote a book, *Exercitia Spiritualis*, or *Spiritual Exercises*, on how to meditate. In this, his masterpiece, he relied on the teaching of St. Augustine who had separated the soul into three parts, memory, understanding and will, each of which should be nourished and directed into contemplation of the mystical journey to salvation.

The emblem book became a central part of the armory of the Jesuits and emblem composition was a standard element of Jesuit teaching. It formed an essential part of the Curriculum of Studies for the Jesuits, the *Ratio Studiorum* of 1599, in which students were specifically encouraged to compose inscriptions and emblems, and make and solve enigmas. In 1640, the Jesuits chose to celebrate the centenary of their foundation by publishing an emblem book, *Imago primi saeculi Societatis Jesu*, an Image of the first century of the Society of Jesus. Altogether, some 1,700 Jesuit emblem books have been identified. There were books illustrating the lives of the Saints, books of monastic rules, hymnals, prayer books, and aids to sermons. Their output was endless and many Jesuit emblem books are found in small formats, 16mo or 24mo, obviously designed to be slipped into the pocket where they could be available for meditative and devotional purposes in the reader's idle moments.

*Society of Jesus*  
no. 30

HA no. 5

English Catholics were able to enjoy *Parthenia Sacra*, while Protestants had Quarles' *Emblemes* of 1635, the most popular English emblem book. One frequently employed motif among religious emblems was that of the lighted candle, which variously symbolized light and dark, good and evil, or the light imparted from the grace of God, the varieties amply illustrated by Quarles' other work *Hieroglyphics of the Light of Man*, and the *Lychnocausia* of 1638, by the Scotsman Robert Farlie.

Quarles no. 22

Quarles no. 22  
Farlie no. 37

## 16

[JEREMIAS DREXEL S.J.]

*Zodiacus Christianus seu signa 12 divinae  
Praedestinationis*

MUNICH: RAPHAELO SADELERO, 1618

Symbolum VI:  
The Fig-tree, with  
the advice that  
one should listen  
to the word of  
God.



Jeremy Drexel was a vastly prolific and popular Jesuit writer of the early seventeenth century. He wrote about twenty works of various kinds, mostly devotional, including several emblem books.

The *Zodiacus Christianus*, with just thirteen emblems (each here termed a *symbolum*) was one of his most popular works. Mario Praz, in his classic emblem bibliography, *Studies in Seventeenth Century Imagery*, says that the first edition is unknown, yet here it is. The confusion is understandable since nowhere is the name of the real author mentioned, only the engraver and publisher, Ralph Sadeler. One possible explanation for this is the outbreak of the Thirty Years War in 1618, a bloody religious conflict in Germany which may have persuaded Drexel to keep his name out of the limelight. There were many later editions in which the commentary on each emblem was much more extensive.

Literature: Landwehr 1972, 63; Caillet, 3250

## 17

JEREMIAS DREXEL S. J.

*Orbis Phaeton hoc est de Universis Vitiis Linguae*

COLOGNE: APUD CORNEL AP EGMOND, 1635



Emblem B:  
The Eastern Emperor,  
Julian, on his horse  
wielding the sword of  
Blasphemy.

Another of Drexel's devotional emblem books. The title refers to Phaeton the god of the sun; the subtitle is *De universis vitiis lingua* (On bad language). There are twenty-three emblems lettered according to the alphabet, each of which discusses a particular misuse of language, together with the symbolic associations relating that topic to a Christian sin. There are more than 800 pages of discussion about the innumerable sins that Christians are unfortunately prone to commit.

It is said that by 1642 170,000 copies of Drexel's books had been printed in Munich alone. It must have been difficult for him to stick to his vow of poverty!

Literature: Praz, 318



HERMANN HUGO S.J.

*Pia Desideria*

ANTWERP: APUD HENRICUM AERTSUMS, 1636

Emblem II illustrates Psalm 69:5 (here incorrectly given as Psalm 68): "Oh God, thou knowest my simplicity, and my faults are not hid from thee."



First published in 1624, this devotional miniature was the most popular emblem book of the seventeenth century, with 124 editions and translations, and probably the most influential of all Jesuit emblem books. There are three parts, each with fifteen emblems, the emblems consisting of a motto, a picture, a biblical quotation, and a long poem interpreting the whole. The three books represent the three stages in the mystical ascent to the understanding of God.

The explanatory poem to the emblem opposite is an essay on foolishness, symbolized by the jester in the picture. There was a long tradition of satirical works on fools (e.g., Sebastian Brant, Erasmus) going back to the twelfth century, and the word fool always had, at the time, an underlying meaning of sinner, unbeliever, backslider. The Christian obsession with foolishness derives from the New Testament (I Corinthians 1:18-25) where it is stated: "Has not God made foolishness the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. . . . For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength."

Quarles no. 22 The *Pia Desideria* was the source of much of Quarles' emblem book.

Literature: Brunet, 1636; Graesse, 3:386, Landwehr 1972, 89

PERE CHESNEAU

*Emblemes Sacrez sur le Tres-saint et Tres-adorable Sacrement de L'Eucharistie*

PARIS: CHEZ FLORENTIN LAMBERT, 1667



Emblem 1 shows Orpheus playing for the animals (see a similar emblem illustrated in no. 31).

One hundred emblems with Christian references by yet another Jesuit writer. It is, as the author says in the introduction, a translation into French of the book which he had published ten years earlier in Latin as *Orpheus Eucharisticus*.

This is certainly an example of how Christian theologians used classical stories as parables or pre-figurations of the Christian message, but the example of Orpheus is more than this. Orpheus was taken by contemporaries as a symbol of Christ himself, and beyond that of the inevitable rise and fall of civilizations. Orpheus had brought a civilizing influence to society with the harmony of his music but this peaceful era was followed, after his untimely death, by a period of decay and decline. Orpheus thus also symbolized the cycle of death and rebirth, an interpretation which is specifically given by Sandys in his commentary on the story of Orpheus in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

Sandys no. 73

Literature: Praz, 304; Landwehr 1978, 71

JOHANN BAPTIST PLENGG

*Piae Considerationes ad Declinandum a malo et faciendum bonum, cum iconibus*

VIENNA: [N.P.], 1672

Emblem 9:  
The Vanity of the Impious, a soul being weighed against the devil.



First edition of an emblem book by the Austrian Jesuit, Plengg, with thirty-two full-page engraved emblems based on those of Boetius a Bolswert, which first appeared in an earlier emblem book by Antoine Suquet in 1620. There are essays accompanying each emblem on the various aspects of Christian virtue, and this copy also includes long manuscript essays in Latin in a contemporary hand dated 1723 on the inside cover and on the reverse of many of the emblems, all entitled "To the greater glory of God."

PERE CAPUCIN

*Les Emblèmes d'Amour Divin et Humain Ensemble*

PARIS: CHEZ JEAN MESSENGER, 1631



*Musique d'amour:*  
the lovers perform a duet on a contemporary organ with an angel helpfully working the bellows (page 66).

This rather beautiful little emblem book by an anonymous Capuchin father contains 119 emblems on human and divine love, promoting the thesis that human love is an essential foretaste of the love of God. Each emblem has a Latin motto with a French translation and a short interpretative poem in French. There were at least three later editions.



DEUTERONOMY 33. 25.

*As thy days, so shall thy strength be.*

The post  
Of swift-foot time  
Hath now at length begun  
The kalends of our middle stage :  
The number'd steps that we have gone, do show  
The number of those steps we are to go :  
The buds and blossoms of our age  
Are blown, decay'd and gone,  
And all our prime  
Is lost :  
And what we boast too much, we have least cause to boast

Ah me !  
There is no rest :  
Our time is always fleeing.  
What rein can curb our head-strong hours ?  
They pass away : they pass we know not how :  
Our now is gone, before we can say now :  
Time past and future's none of ours :  
That hath as yet no being ;  
And this hath ceased  
To be :  
What is, is only ours : how short a time have we !

Hieroglyph. XII: One of the emblems of the *Hieroglyphicks of the Life of Man*, the verses from which are figure poems, another of the symbolic species.



The book is dedicated to Edward Benlowes, a particular friend of Quarles and a well-known author of figure poems. A figure poem by Benlowes is included in the Introduction to this work.

22

FRANCIS QUARLES  
*Emblems Divine and Moral  
Hieroglyphicks of the Life of Man*

LONDON: PRINTED FOR A. BETTESWORTH ET AL., 1723

This is a late edition of the most popular English emblem book. The first of the two titles was initially published in 1635 followed by the second in 1638, but thereafter they were always published together, eventually going through about sixty editions of which about twenty date from the nineteenth century. They were based on two Catholic publications, the *Pia Desideria* of Hermann Hugo, and the anonymous *Typus Mundi*, and Quarles' combined adaptation was unusual in that the text and to a large extent the pictures remained unchanged throughout its publishing history. Its popularity is shown also by the large print runs; the first combined edition of his two books from 1639/1640 had a run of 5,000 copies, an exceptionally large number for those days.

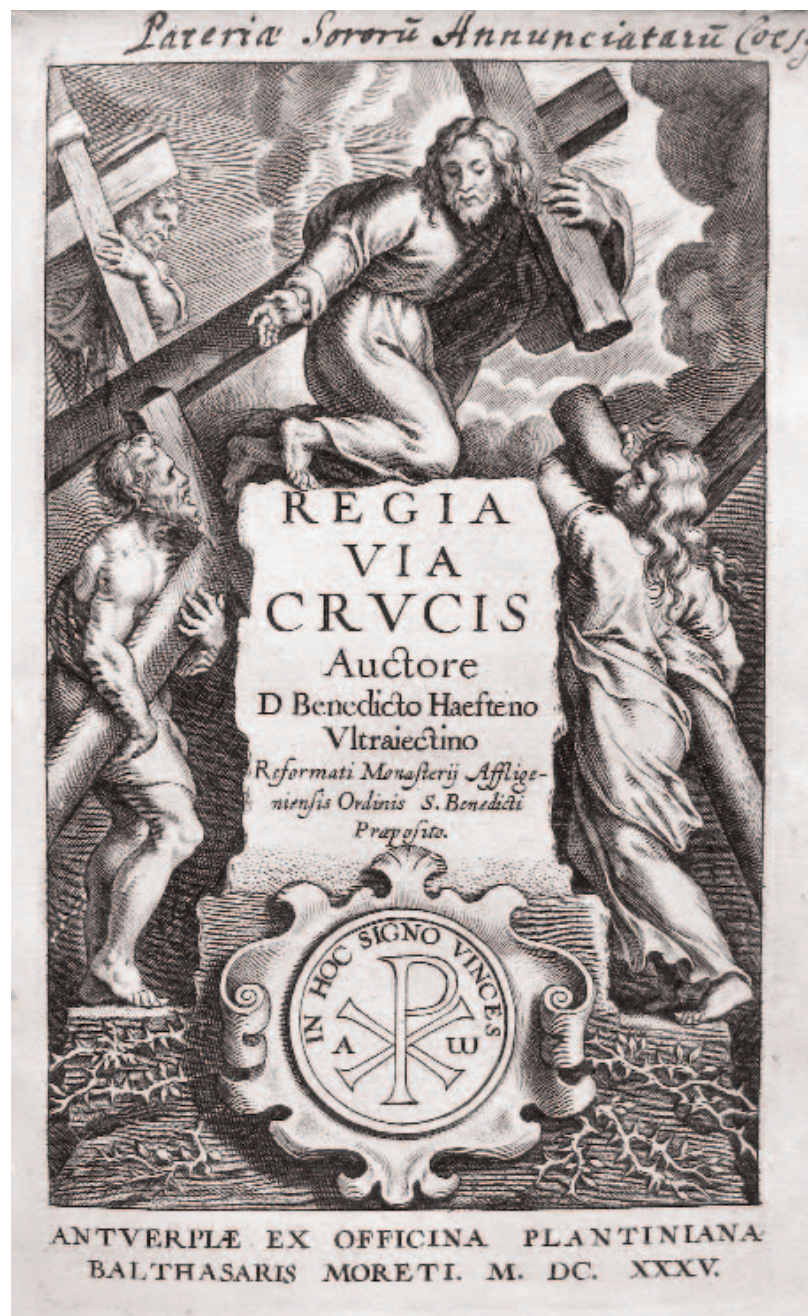
*Hugo no. 18*

*Typus Mundi no. 26*

Each emblem has six parts; the picture, the motto in Latin or English, a biblical quotation, an explanatory verse, a quotation from the church fathers, and a short epigram. The mottos are taken from the twelfth-century anthology of Thomas de Hibernia, *Manipulus Florum*, which incidentally was the first book to have a cross-referenced index. Quarles was a better poet than his predecessors and his emblems were mostly original, which certainly could not be said of many of the earlier writers. In spite of its morbid theme — a meditation on mortality symbolized by the passing and the renewal of the seasons — Quarles' book became extremely popular.

Literature: Graesse, 5:519; Freeman, 114

Title page  
designed by  
Rubens.



D BENEDICTO HAEFTENO

*Regia Via Crucis*

ANTWERP: EX OFFICINA PLANTINIANA BALTHARIS MORETI,  
1635

First edition of this very popular devotional emblem book which was subsequently translated into German, French and Spanish. There are thirty-six engravings of the first state by Cornelis Gallé, the well-known engraver of the Flemish School, including the title page illustration designed by Rubens for the book. In fact, Rubens designed more than forty title pages for Plantin, and he acknowledges that he did this as relaxation on holidays or weekends, taking copies of the book in payment. See also no. 61 for another title page designed by Rubens. Van Haefteo also wrote another equally popular emblem book of the same date, the *Schola Cordis*.

*Pietrasancta*  
no. 61

Literature: Praz, 361; Brunet, 1664; Graesse, 3:195; Landwehr 1970, 186



## 24

AMABLE BONNEFONS

*Hortulus Christianorum ex quo singulis diebus  
aliquem sanctitatis Florem licet excerpere*

PARIS: APUD JACOBUM LANGLOIS, 1648

10th March:  
St. Codratus  
who, in 258 CE,  
was beheaded for  
his faith by the  
Emperor Valer-  
ian. He had first  
been thrown to  
the lions, but  
they would not  
harm him.



Another devotional emblem book which despite its small size manages to pack in 365 emblems, one for each saint's day of the year, each with a picture of the saint, an appropriate virtue (temperance, patience, charity, etc.), and an essay on the virtue and how it applies to each saint. The title means "Little garden of Christians" and each emblem is described as a flower. The origin of this figure (e.g., anthology, florilegium) universally employed throughout the period was the Roman essayist Seneca, who advised that "we should treat our libraries like bees in a flower garden, mingle all the various nectars we have tasted and turn them into a single sweet substance."

When I bought the book, it was described as "quite rare." That's what they always say, of course, but in this case it appears to be true. There is no reference to it in OCLC, nor any of the emblem bibliographies.

## 25

ADRIAN POIRTERS S.J.

*Den Alderheyflichsten Naem voor een Nieu-Jaer-Gift*

[N.P.], 1647



The depressed widow  
must in all her hard-  
ships seek consolati-  
on from God the  
father of widows: an  
emblem compar-  
ing the travails of  
widowhood to  
the hardness yet  
beauty of a pearl  
(page 171).

Poirters was another prolific Jesuit author, and many of his many books had multiple editions. This little devotional emblem book is stated to be a New Year's Gift, and this follows a very ancient tradition, one which today has been superseded by Christmas gifts. It was customary that if the donor could not afford a physical gift, poems were an acceptable alternative. The *Epigrams* of Martial contain similar literary gifts. The text *Martial* no. 69 consists of a long essay devoted to the hardship of widows.

Literature: Praz, 459; Landwehr 1970, 538

*Typus Mundi in quo eius Calamitates et Pericula  
nec non Divini, humanique Amoris Antipathia  
Emblematicè proponuntur.*

ANTWERP: APUD IOAN. CNOBBAERT, 1627

This is the first edition of what looks like a typical devotional emblem book, but it was actually written as a class project by students at the Jesuit college in Antwerp. There are thirty-two emblems, and the names of the students responsible for each one are given at the back of the book. Apart from the picture and the Latin poem there is one epigram in French and one in Dutch for each emblem, all contributing to an understanding of the whole.

The theme of the book, given in the subtitle, is the calamity and danger of a world in which the love of God and the love of man are opposed. Despite its simple origin, the book became quite popular and went through four editions. Some commentators profess to find an underlying alchemical progression through the book. Together with the *Pia Desideria*, it formed the basis of *Emblems Divine and Moral*, the highly successful English emblem book by Francis Quarles.

Hugo no. 18

Quarles no. 22

Literature: Praz, 519; Landwehr 1970, 673; de Vries, 126



Emblem 1:  
The world is contained in the apple tree, showing Adam in the Garden of Eden.

Pages 46-52 are not part of this Preview.

32

R.P. JACOBO BOSCHIO S.J.

*Symbolographia sive De Arte  
Symbolica Sermones Septem*

AUGSBURG: APUD JOANNEM CASPARUM BENCARD, 1702

Jacobus Boschius, a Jesuit, addresses in this book the rather esoteric theological controversy first raised by Erastus in 1589: should evil-doers be excluded from the sacraments? He uses the medium of the emblem to make his points and employs some 2,000 in doing so, making it one of the largest emblem books known. The picture of the emblems are printed twelve to a page, and the other elements of each emblem have to be located through the indexes. This cumbersome procedure makes it clear that the author is losing sight of the original purpose of the emblem, which was to use all three parts of the symbol to strip away the veil of its meaning and, in the process, provide intellectual interest and insight.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the whole book is the introduction, a poem of some seventy pages, which is modeled directly on the *Ars Poetica*, (The Art of Poetry), the masterpiece of Horace, the Roman poet. This introduction is an exposition of symbolic theory in seven parts, comprising an Introduction, the Definition of a Perfect Symbol (device), the Laws of Jove, the Body of the Symbol, the Legitimacy of the Motto, Embellishing the Symbol, and Defective Symbols. It is also interesting that, despite the author's status as a Jesuit priest, there is hardly a single Christian reference in the whole of this introduction – there are nevertheless hundreds if not thousands of classical references and citations throughout the book.

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Literature: Praz, 283; Brunet, 18562; Landwehr 1972, 41



FRANCISCO REINZER S.J.

*Meteorologia philosophica-politica in duodecim  
dissertationes*

AUGSBURG: IMPENSIS JEREMIAE WOLFII, 1709

The Conclusio of the emblem "On the movement of the sea and of floods." The heading says: *The soul should not be dejected by a just war, the motto is: It rises with the rising waters, and the picture shows what is apparently the Ark rising in the Flood* (page 185).



Another encyclopedic emblem book, with some eighty-four emblems. It is typical of the genre in the eighteenth century in its erudition, in the complexity of its format, and in the obscurity of the emblems. The general theme of the book is meteorology and mineralogy. Each emblem is divided into two main parts: the first part is a description of a particular topic such as the size and color of comets, or magnetism. This descriptive part, called the *Quaestio*, is in the format of the medieval *Summa* exemplified by the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas, in which a statement or premise is provided, which is then questioned, and the doubts raised in the questions are then given an individual answer. The second part of each emblem, called the *Conclusio Politica*, sets out the moral or significance which is to be drawn from the first part, and it incorporates a heading, an image which includes a motto, and a commentary. This last element attempts to explain the first three, which are in some cases very difficult to decipher.

Literature: Praz, 468; Landwehr 1972, 121

JOSEPH ZOLLER

*Conceptus Chronographicus  
de concepta sacra deipara...*

AUGSBURG: TYPIS JOHANNIS MICHAËLIS LABHART, 1712



Conceptus XX: This shows a rather warlike and inappropriate picture illustrating *Purity triumphs*. It is also anachronistic since, although it pretends to be the symbol of Rome, it includes cannons amongst the weaponry.

An emblem book by Joseph Zoller, a Benedictine monk, on the characteristics and virtues of the Virgin Mary. There are one hundred emblems, each with seven parts, a comment from the scriptures, what he calls the authority or quotation from the Bible illustrating the emblem, the Ratio or theme, the secular History of the theme, the Symbol containing a picture or emblem, a comment on the classical origins of the theme, and a paragraph he calls the Anagram with several further quotations. In fact, the title to each part of every emblem contains an anagram.

Literature: Praz, 543; Landwehr 1972, 159

# 35

JOHANN ULRICH KRAUS

## Heilige Augen- und Gemuths- Lust vorstellend, alle Sonn-Fest-und Fehrtagliche. . . .

VERFERTIGET UND HERAUSGEGEBEN VON JOHANN ULRICH  
KRAUSEN KUPFER-STECHERN IN AUGSBURG: 1706

Christ preaching  
to the disciples in  
the Garden of  
Gethsemane  
with the words  
of John 16:5-15  
(page 36).



This is perhaps the best-known and the culmination of a series of emblem books, from the seventeenth century and after, which illustrate and interpret the Bible. It contains 120 extraordinary engravings of scenes from the New Testament with two emblems per page printed on one side only. The top image illustrates a scene from the Gospels and the bottom image a scene from the Epistles. In addition to pastoral scenes such as is shown above, it is clear that the draughtsman of the images loved architectural drawing; the book is full of monumental architecture, contemporary townscapes and classical ruins.

Literature: Praz, 389; Landwehr 1972, 96

# NINETEENTH-CENTURY EMBLEM BOOKS

# 36

JOHN BUNYAN

## Divine Emblems: or, Temporal Things Spiritualized

COVENTRY: N. MERRIDEW, 1806



The Sinner and the  
Spider (page 34).

A late edition of the emblem book by John Bunyan of *Pilgrim's Progress* fame. First published in 1686 under the title *A Book for Boys and Girls, or, Country Rhymes for Children*, it went through a number of editions and eventually the title was changed to the current form. The emblems give quite simplistic, moral admonitions suitable for children, which one can quite imagine being written by Bunyan; the book includes an additional and typical short poem entitled "A caution to watch against sin." Quite so.

The image above is from the longest emblem of all: "The Sinner and the Spider." This discusses in some detail a moral problem which exercised thinkers throughout the period: the extent to which animals have moral responsibility. On the one hand, animals do not have free will and are thus not subject to the moral dilemma of Adam which brought about the Fall; on the other hand, authorities such as St. Augustine took the more practical view that humans were obviously the superior in ethical matters. But as the spider says in Bunyan's emblem:

Poor Man! I keep the rules of my creation,  
Thy sin has cast thee headlong from thy station

Literature: Praz, 291

Pages 25 – 30 are not part of this preview.

The emblem  
*Amor, Ut pila,*  
*vices exigit* (Love,  
 like a ball, de-  
 mands reciproca-  
 tion), showing a  
 rather effete  
 Dutch couple  
 playing with a  
 shuttlecock  
 (page 73).



## 37

### JACOB CATS AND ROBERT FARLIE *Moral Emblems with Aphorisms, Adages and Proverbs, of all Ages and Nations*

NEW YORK: D. APPLETON & CO., 1860

This is the most beautiful emblem book of the nineteenth century, with extraordinary engravings mostly by the well-known British artist, John Leighton. The emblems are derived from the seventeenth century Dutch poet, Jacob Cats, and the *Lychinocausia* of John Farlie, one of the few emblematisers from Scotland. The book is dedicated to William Stirling-Maxwell, whose collection of emblem books was given to Glasgow University and still represents the largest such collection in the world.

Literature: McLean; Goldman

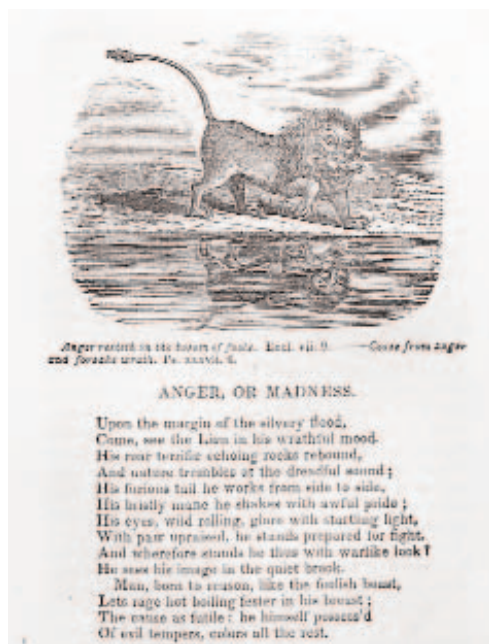


WILLIAM HOLMES AND JOHN BARBER

*Religious Emblems: Being a Series of Emblematic  
Engravings with Written Explanations, Miscellaneous  
Observations and Religious Reflections...*

CINCINNATI: HENRY HOWE, PUBLISHER, 1857

*Anger, or  
Madness*  
(page 115).

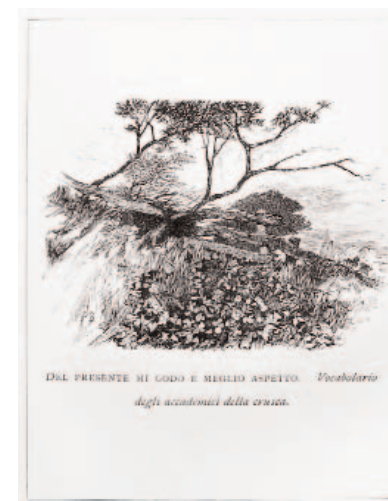


This work, one of the few American emblem books predating the twentieth century, was first published in 1845 and contains fifty emblems of a Christian devotional nature. This copy is bound with a similar work with continuous pagination called *Religious Allegories*, which has another twenty-six emblems, and there are also two additional long essays on "Peace and Comfort" and "Directions for a Religious Life." On the title page is an interesting quotation from Hosea 10:12, "I have used similitudes," a phrase which could be used to justify the whole field of symbolic literature.

MRS. ALFRED GATTY

*A Book of Emblems*

LONDON: BELL AND DALDY, 1872



An emblem from the  
Accademici dell Crusca:  
*I rejoice in the present and  
have better things in store*  
(page 85).

Margaret Gatty was a prolific English author of the mid-nineteenth century. She published the *Proverbs Illustrated* in 1857 and the *Book of Sundials* in 1872, the latter consisting of sketches of sundials she had made from all over Europe, each accompanied by a moral and symbolic poem. She also wrote the standard text on British seaweeds, and founded a children's magazine called *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, every issue of which, from 1866 to 1873, included an emblem of her devising. The emblems in this book were reprinted from her magazine. The images for each emblem are copied (with acknowledgement) from at least ten different sixteenth- and seventeenth-century emblem books, as well as a book of devices from the Italian Renaissance academies, showing that these books must have been widely available in her time. In any event, Margaret Gatty *Accademia no.* knew her material; she correctly describes emblems as "allegorical pictures, which typify moral truths." 58/9

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

*Moral Emblems and other Poems*

NEW YORK: CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS, 1921

Emblem V.



V

Industrious pirate! see him sweep  
 The lonely bosom of the deep,  
 And daily the horizon scan  
 From Hatteras or Matapan.  
 Be sure, before that pirate's old,  
 He will have made a pot of gold,  
 And will retire from all his labours  
 And be respected by his neighbours.  
*You also scan your life's horizon  
 For all that you can clap your eyes on.*

This is the first American edition of the last original emblem book of the nineteenth century. It was originally published by a child, Lloyd Osborne, the stepson of Robert Louis Stevenson, the novelist. Young Osborne, concerned about the desperate state of the family's finances when they were living in Switzerland in 1882, used a toy printing press to publish leaflets and menus, as well as this book, *Moral Emblems*. Stevenson wrote the poems for the book and also carved the accompanying woodcuts. The emblems reflect Stevenson's lifelong and bitter cynicism toward middle class material values.

## TWENTIETH-CENTURY EMBLEM BOOKS

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There has been quite a revival of emblem books in the twentieth century, particularly in England but also in America. These are often much shorter than the classic examples but nevertheless usually consist of the three required elements of motto, illustration, and poem or commentary. Many are beautifully printed.



IAN HAMILTON FINLAY AND RON COSTLEY

*Heroic Emblems*

CALAIS: Z PRESS, 1977

Hinc Clarior  
(page 19).

Gombrich takes the original form of this *impresa*, and the 'five closely printed pages' of commentary on it by Ruscelli, as illustrating the fertility of 'free-floating metaphor'. The motto, 'Hence brighter', accompanied by the device of a sun behind clouds, supplies a 'formula' on which we are able to meditate. 'Somehow such an image reveals an aspect of the world which would seem to elude the ordered progress of dialectic argument.' Of course the success of such an *impresa* in provoking meditation and commentary is not simply a function of the compressed and suggestive form of the original. It is crucial that the reference evoked should be to the presence and absence of light. The commentary can therefore draw upon the manifold implications of light as a metaphysical substance, ranging back to such sources as St. Augustine who held that all knowledge was acquired through 'divine illumination of the intellect'. It can draw upon a philosophical tradition which, from Neo-Platonism onwards, has been particularly congenial to the poet.

A set of twenty-four emblems or devices with images of modern weapons by the well-known British artist Ian Hamilton Finlay and an introduction and commentary on each emblem by Stephen Bann. These commentaries are in the classic style with references going back to the Renaissance and classical times, as for instance, the reference to Ruscelli given above.

Ruscelli no. 60

PETER GAULD

*A Book of Emblems*

IPSWICH: THE BASEMENT PRESS, 1998

Emblem H:  
*The Heart.**The Heart*

In darkness or at dawn,  
How's love born?

There's a vacancy in the heart  
Where all things start.

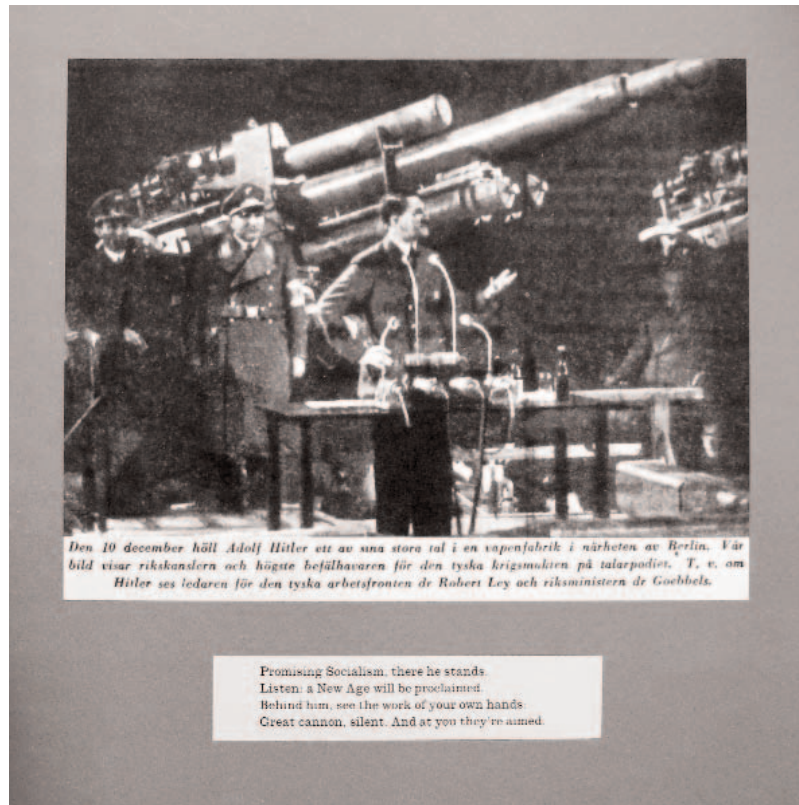
Twenty-seven emblems, one for each letter of the alphabet plus a final A, each followed by a short fable. The poems are said to be ancient.

# 43

BERTHOLD BRECHT

## *War Primer*

LONDON: LIBRIS, 1998

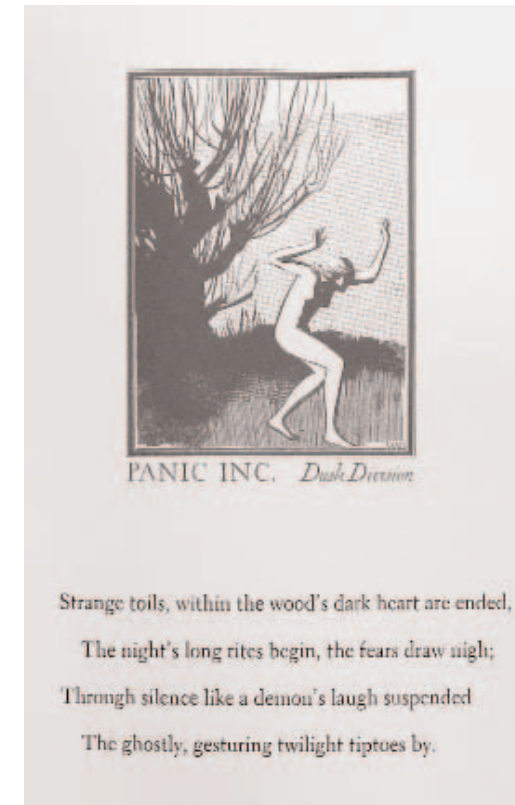


# 44

W. R. BENET AND W. A. DWIGGINS

## *A Baker's Dozen of Emblems*

NEW YORK: MERGENTHALER LINOTYPE COMPANY, 1935



*Panic.*

Drawings by Dwiggin and thirteen emblems in verse by Benet, collected from various numbers of the *Saturday Review* from 1927/8. It includes a short essay by Dwiggin as an advertisement for his new font, Electra. Panic is an interesting motif being one of the first instances of the trope of personification in Western literature. It was used by Homer in the *Iliad* (Book 9, 1).



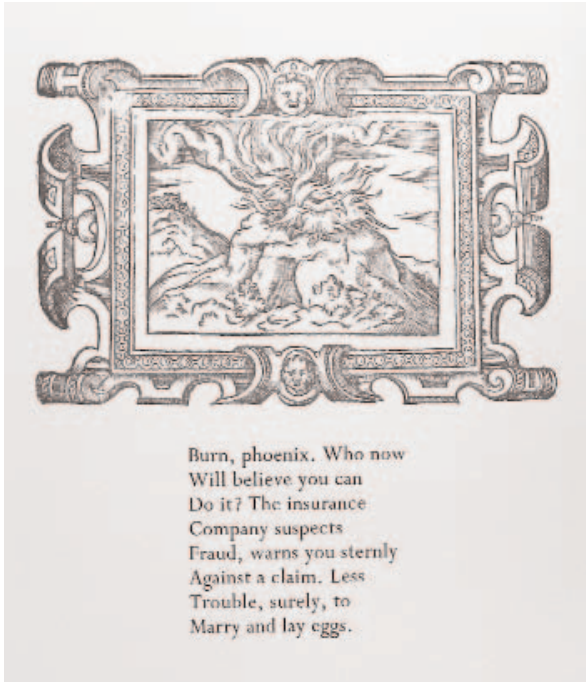
# 45

EDWARD LUCIE-SMITH

## *Borrowed Emblems*

LONDON: TURRET BOOKS, 1967

Emblem 1:  
*The Phoenix.*



Burn, phoenix. Who now  
Will believe you can  
Do it? The insurance  
Company suspects  
Fraud, warns you sternly  
Against a claim. Less  
Trouble, surely, to  
Marry and lay eggs.

Ten emblems "borrowed" from the Christian emblems in Theodore de B  ze's *Les Vrais Pourtraits des Hommes Illustres* of 1581, with new contemporary poems by Lucie-Smith, an English art critic.

# 46

ALAN HALSEY

## *An Alphabet of Emblems*

SHROPSHIRE: TERN PRESS, 1987



T

A tract of country stretches  
Out before them  
Like a treatise beyond human  
understanding exhumed.

One emblem for each letter of the alphabet, each with a short four-line cryptic poem, and a rather beautiful lino-cut as an illustration.

# 47

MEGAN JENKINSON

## *Under the Aegis, the Virtues*

AUCKLAND: FORTUNA PRESS, 1997

Emblem 24:  
Justice.



An emblem book from New Zealand, with double-page emblems based on the classical virtues, and a few additional virtues imagined by the author. The images are photographic collages, accompanied by poems in English and Latin. The book has been applauded by emblem academics as being particularly true to the original form, and there are several interesting introductory essays.

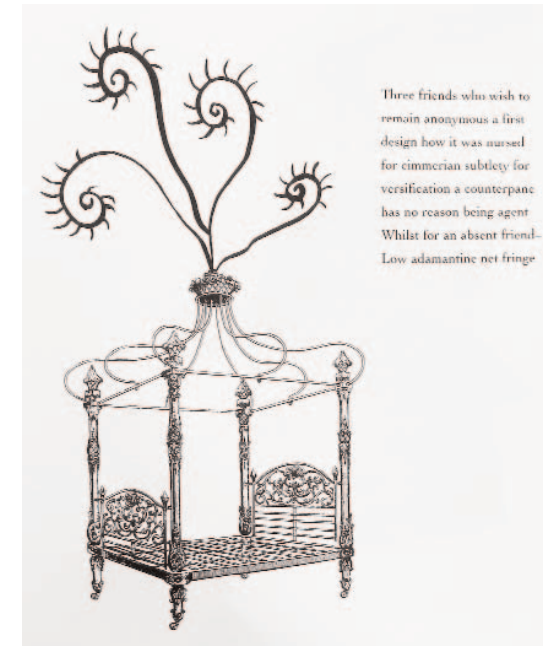
Literature: *Emblematika* 11:443

# 48

SUSAN HOWE

## *Bed Hangings*

NEW YORK: GRANARY PRESS, 2001



This work, a series of illustrated poems, has been categorized as an emblem book. The poems, which are in the tradition of figure or concrete poetry, have an early New England cast to them, but the title has an interesting historical and emblematic connection going back to the sixteenth century. When Mary, Queen of Scots was imprisoned by Queen Elizabeth for plotting against the English throne, she spent some of her time in captivity embroidering her bed-hangings with emblems and devices. Much academic ink has subsequently been spilled on the description and meaning of these images which were eventually used against her in her trial as evidence of her treasonable intentions. She was found guilty and executed.

## TREATISES



Not only were there innumerable collections of the various species of literary symbol shown in this exhibition, but in the seventeenth century particularly there appeared a large number of academic treatises discussing the theories underlying the different genres of the symbolic literature, as well as their origin and history. The Italians were particularly prolific: there are some seventy treatises in Italian from the period just on the nature of the device.

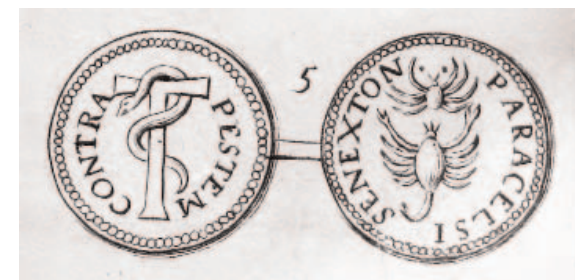


## 49

CLAUDE-FRANÇOIS MENESTRIER

*La philosophie des Images Enigmatiques*

LYONS: CHEZ HILAIRE BARITEL, 1694



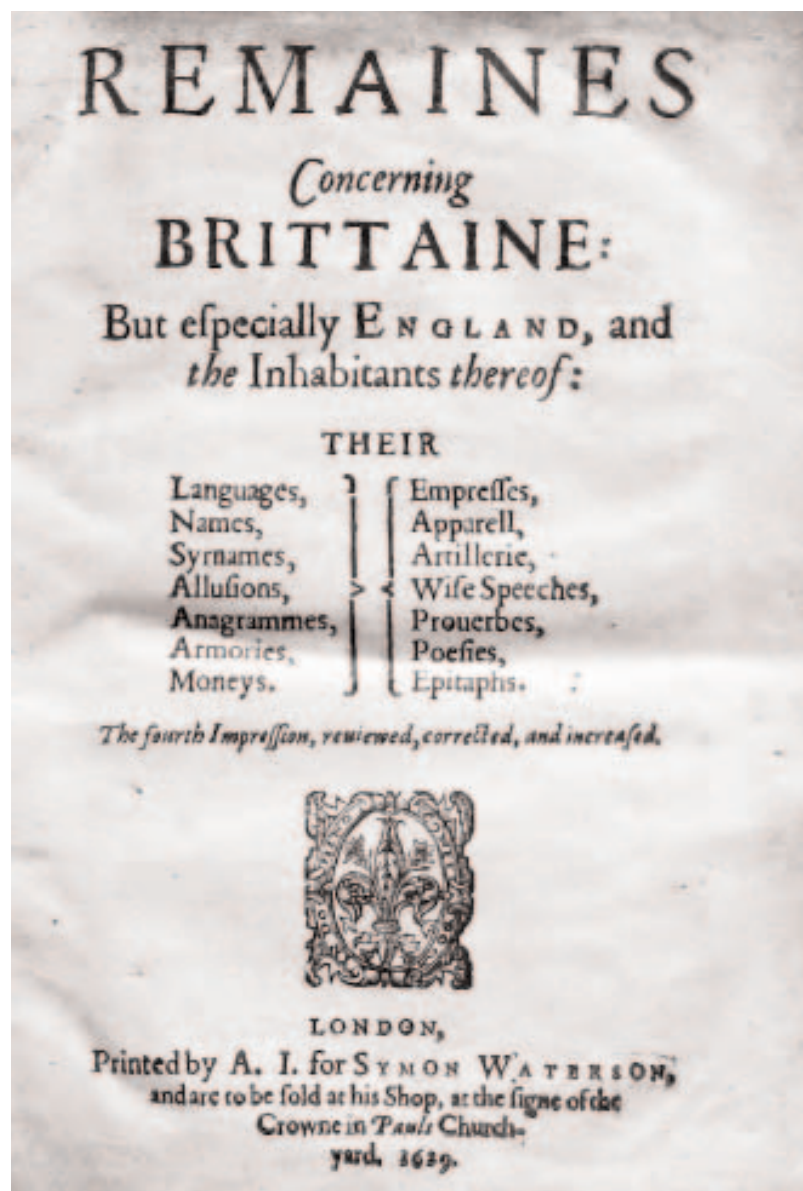
Talismans:  
the pest-thaler, a  
medal which was  
worn to ward off  
the plague  
(page 264).

Menestrier, a Frenchman, who was described by his contemporaries as a “prodigy of nature,” wrote some 152 works on symbolic subjects. He was the acknowledged expert in seventeenth-century France on the design and organization of festivals. If you had a wedding, a funeral, a royal pageant or procession or a civic event, and if you could afford him, the cry was “Appelons Menestrier!”

The present work is an exposition of eleven of the symbolic literary species: enigmas, hieroglyphs, oracles, prophecies, fates (a type of divination), divinations, lotteries, talismans, dreams, the prophecies of Nostradamus (of which Menestrier has a very poor opinion), and baguettes (this latter standing for magic wands and not loaves of bread). Over half the book is devoted to the enigma, an ancient species which probably originated with the enigmatic pronouncements of the Greek oracles. The enigma in classical Rhetoric was one of five types of allegory, and it later became synonymous with riddle. It could also be used for serious spiritual exposition, as St. Augustine showed in his commentary on Corinthians I:13 (St. Paul’s injunction “to look through a glass darkly” or in Latin “in enigmatē”). Menestrier defines the enigma as “an ingenious mystery which affects to veil another sense than that which is presented in words and figures.”

Literature: Graesse, 4:488; Landwehr 1978, 137; Caillet, 7376





50

WILLIAM CAMDEN

*Remaines concerning Brittain: But especially  
England, and the Inhabitants thereof*

LONDON: PRINTED FOR SYMON WATERSON, 1629

The full title of the first edition (1605) of this book was "Remaines of a Greater Work concerning Brittain," the greater work being his *Britannia* of 1584, a scholarly and hugely successful guide book to Britain which affected "how generations of subsequent British writers examined their country" (Herendeen). The present book was a sort of appendix to his greater work, containing miscellaneous information, including references to the symbolic material and literature used by the British. As it says in the title, its subject matter is Languages, Names, Surnames, Allusions, Anagrammes, Armories, Moneys, Impresses (devices), Apparell, Artillerie, Wise Speeches (apophthegms), Proverbes, Poesies, and Epitaphs.

The whole contains much interesting and useful historical information about English culture and customs of the time told in a light-hearted manner. His genial view of his motherland comes out in the description in his introduction: Britain is, he says, "well known to be the most flourishing and excellent, most renowned and famous Isle of the whole world, so rich in commodities, so beautiful in situation, so resplendent in all glory," a view with which I heartily concur; but see the opposing view in Le Moyne's *De l'Art des Devises*.

*Le Moyne no.*

Another famous remark which Camden relates is that by King Henry V when the Dauphin of France sent him from Paris some tennis balls as a gift. The King replied: "He would shortly resend London balls which would shake Paris walls." Shakespeare gives a much more eloquent version of the same story.

Literature: Graesse, 2:25

Pages 76 -82 are not part of this Preview.

## 55

HENRY ESTIENNE, SIEUR DES FOSSEZ

### *L'art de faire les Devises*

PARIS: CHEZ JEAN PÂLÉ, 1645

This Henri Estienne was a descendant of the famous sixteenth-century French publisher of the same name, and this classic treatise discussing the whole field of symbolic literature is dedicated to Cardinal Mazarin, who at the time was the prime minister of France. In addition to devices, Estienne describes Hieroglyphs, Symbols, Enigmas, Emblems, Parables, Proverbs, Cyphers, Arms, and Reverses of Medals. The word “symbols” was used by contemporaries in several senses: as a general description of the whole field, for the specific word device since there was no Latin word for this and for the series of maxims called the Symbola of Pythagoras, which were the group of moral sayings supposedly derived from Pythagoras himself. *Estienne no. 67* *Berni no. 85*

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Literature: Praz, 330; Brunet, 18598; Landwehr 1978, 84; Caillet, 3695

GIOVIO, BISHOP OF NOCERA

*Dialogo dell'Imprese Militari et Amoroze*

LYONS: APPRESSO GUGLIELMO ROVIGLIO, 1559

The device of the King of France, the porcupine with the motto *Cominus et Eminus*, (Near and Far), created by Giovio himself (page 20).



This is the first illustrated edition of the first treatise on devices (*imprese* in Italian). Giovio was the acknowledged contemporary expert on the device and the rules contained in his treatise, although expanded by later theorists, were generally accepted as orthodox. Giovio lays down five parameters for a good device: that there should be proper proportion between motto and device, that the idea should not be too obscure, that the picture should be memorable, that no human figure should be represented and that the form of the motto should be drawn according to additional carefully circumscribed rules: they should be in a different language and ideally not consist of more than four words.

The Italians certainly seemed to specialize in devices. After Giovio, there were dozens of Italian authors who wrote such treatises and most were in the same format as Giovio's, i.e., first a discussion on the origin and nature of and rules for a device, followed by examples of these devices from the great men and women of the time, together with explanations of their meaning. In general, Giovio's rules remained standard, although Tesauro, in his treatise published a century later, examines the matter in more detail and proposes thirty-two essential elements for a successful device.

*Tesauro* no. 52

Literature: Praz, 384; Brunet, 18602; Graesse, 3:491; Landwehr 1978, 76; Mortimer, 249

PIERRE LE MOYNE S.J.

*De L'art des Devises*PARIS: CHEZ SEBASTIEN CRAMOISY, & SEBASTIEN MABRE  
CRAMOISY 1666

The device of Madame de Montmorency, which also shows (beneath the device) her family's coat of arms (page 267).

This book has been described as the most important treatise in the seventeenth century on the nature of the device. Le Moyne was a French Jesuit who wrote several books on the subject. In this treatise, he refuses to allow that the Italians had had anything at all to do with the origin of the Art, and as for the English, he declares in the famous phrase: "The muse has been unknown in their isle since the time of King Arthur." It is of course a truism that a man's character will come out in his writing, and in the case of Le Moyne, on almost every page he is revealed as an irascible and rather bitter old man.

Apart from the extensive introduction describing the origin and nature of the device, the book contains four collections of devices, the Cabinet de Devises, Le Jardin de Devises, Devises Royales and Devises Adoptées. The first and last are devices of contemporary Frenchmen; the second, which has no images but just motto, poem and description, appears to be a series of ideas for potential clients; and the third, also with no pictures, is a series of panegyrics to the sun, with texts describing the duties of the king, presumably intended to ingratiate Le Moyne with Louis XIV, the Sun King.

Literature: Praz, 400; Landwehr 1978, 127



Two lyres and  
a bow with the  
motto: *They  
will resonate with  
other vibrations.*  
A device  
created by  
Alcibiades  
Lucarini when  
he was elected  
President of  
the Academy  
(page 35).



DVE LIRE COLL' ARCO IN VNA D'ESSE  
ET IL MOTTO

ALIIS PULSIS, RESONABUNT.

Spiegata dal Sig. ALCIBIADE Lucarini Dottore, e Cavalier  
Cesareo, sotto nome d'ACCORDATO, nell'Accad. Par-  
tenia, quando fù eletto primo Principe di quella.

Da M. Tull. nel 2. De Divin. Cell. nel 9. delle Nott. Attic. c. 7. Erac. nel lib.  
De Compat. e conte. nat. c. 1. e dal Guar. nel livic.

**L**A LIRA è la mia vita,  
Son l'Opre il suono, I Nerui il mio Pensiero,  
Virtù la voce, E io senz' Arco Arciero:  
Con quanto il Ciel mi diè sauer e' ngegno  
Arrivar pur sonando lo spero al segno:  
E se la Voce mia  
Cruda, o stanca non fia;  
Al Suon Diuin Risonerà, non erro,  
Da quel Sol Mossa, non da forza, o ferro.

E 2

58/59

*Imprese dell'Offitioso Accademico Intronato*

SIENA: NELLA STAMPARIA D'ERCOLE GORI, 1629

*Recreationi Amoroze di gli Academici  
Gelati di Bologna*

BOLOGNA: PER GIOVANNI ROSSI, 1590

The Italian academies, of which there were at least one thousand one hundred in the late Renaissance, all had devices. Many also published books of devices, and these two books are from two of the most famous *accademie*, the Intronati of Siena and the Gelati of Bologna. The first contains two parts, a section on devices of famous people and nobles of Italy, both men and women, plus the devices of other academies, followed by a section on religious devices. Each device, in addition to the obligatory image and motto, also has an explanatory note and a short poem, so it is difficult to distinguish them from emblems. Altogether there are about four hundred and fifty devices. The whole is preceded by a section containing twenty sonnets introducing the book, and these were presumably written by members of the academy. The library of the Intronati still exists in Siena.

The second book contains several devices from the Academy of the Gelati, to each of which is added a long poem. In addition there is the text of a famous 250-page treatise on love, entitled *Psafone*, by one of the academicians, Melchiorre Zoppio.

Literature: Praz, 405, 244; Landwehr 1978, 23



GIROLAMO RUSCELLI

*Le Imprese Illustri Aggiuntovi nuovamente il quarto  
libro da Vincenzo Ruscelli*

VENICE: APPRESSO FRANCESCO DE FRANCESCHI, 1584

The device of the  
Duke of Mantua  
(Bk. IV, page 8).



First published in 1572, this is the most complete edition of perhaps the most extensive treatise on the device, illustrated with two hundred examples of some of the greatest aristocrats and leaders of Europe including the Emperors of Austria, the Kings of France and Poland, the King and Queen of Spain, and most of the rulers of the Italian city-states of the time. There is an introduction which expands on Giovio's rules for the construction of a good device, and a fourth book by the author's nephew Vincenzo Ruscelli. It has useful biographies of all the subjects and high-quality engravings.

Literature: Praz, 482; Adams, 955; Brunet, 18604; Graesse 6:194; Landwehr 1978, 170

SILVESTRA PIETRASANCTA ROMANO

*De Symbolis Heroicis Libri IX*

ANTWERP: EX OFFICIO PLANTINIANA BALTHASARIS MORETI,  
1634



The title page is by Rubens and is signed by him in the bottom left corner (see no. 23 for a discussion of Rubens' work for the publisher Plantin). It has recently been shown that this picture is similar to a relief on the front of Rubens' house in Antwerp, the three figures representing Prudence with the caduceus (see the Iconology no. 81), Inspiration (the winged figure), and Genius (with the laurel crown).

First edition of a book on the theory of devices, illustrated by some two hundred and seventy images of the devices of famous Europeans of the age. It also has interesting essays on the symbolic meanings of coins, medals, and rings, and on emblems, ciphers, and mottos. There is a chapter on the genealogy of the distinguished Carafa family of Naples, of whom Pietrasanta was the confessor. One member of the family was Pope Paul IV (1555–1559), who created the Index of Forbidden Books. This book was one of the first to introduce theories of the device outside Italy, and it also began a trend of introducing general philosophical themes for the motifs of the device rather than mere personal accomplishments.

Literature: Praz, 455; Brunet, 18576; Graesse, 5:237; Landwehr 1970, 498

Hieroglyph I:15:  
Moonrise, depicted by a ba-  
boon standing with its hands  
raised to heaven,  
for as Horapollo says, the ba-  
boon is represented praying  
to the goddess since both  
share in light.



## HIEROGLYPHS

### 62

HORUS APOLLO (HORAPOLLO)

*Hieroglyphica: De Sacris notis et sculpturis libri duo,  
ubi ad fidem vestusti codicis manu scripti restituta  
sunt loca permulta, corrupta ante ac deplorata.*

PARIS: APUD JACOBUM KERVER, 1551

The *editio princeps* of the *Horapollon* was printed by Aldus in 1505, and this edition by Kerver, the great French printer, with *pictura* by Jean Cousin, the premier French illustrator of the age, is the first to be printed in both Latin and Greek, as well as the first to be laid out like an emblem book.

The manuscript of the *Horapollon*, which was discovered in 1419 in Greece and brought to Italy, was probably written in the fifth century CE in Alexandria and translated into Greek by one Philippus. The identity of the author is uncertain, and the two parts may very well have been written by different people. The book, which gives an interpretation of some 189 Egyptian hieroglyphs, was one of the most influential texts in the Renaissance, and caused a sensation amongst Italian humanists. It fuelled the fascination with the concept of an original universal language, and seemed to justify the obsession of the age, a belief that matter and idea, form and content, were one and the same and that symbol and allegory were the key to an understanding of the ultimate realities. To take just one contemporary comment, that of Marsiglio Ficino: "God possesses knowledge not by means of complex reflection but by the simple and definite form of things," that is, by the hieroglyphs. Although some of the interpretations of the *Horapollon*, particularly in the first book, seem to be based on some kind of understanding of their real meaning, most of them are now generally regarded as fictitious and derived from earlier Greek texts.

Literature: Adams, 850; Landwehr 1978, 108; Mortimer, 315

GIOVANNI PIERIO VALERIANO  
*Hieroglyphica sive de Sacris Aegyptiorum,  
 aliarumque gentium literis Commentarii*

BASLE: PER THOMAM GUARINUM, 1567

Moonrise: the same motif as is shown in the *Horapollo* – a baboon praying to the moon (page 46).



First published in 1556 in Florence as a fragment of eight books, and then issued in full by Isengrin in fifty-eight books, this edition of 1567 contains a further two books written by Curio, and a total of 83 woodcuts. It was composed much earlier than the date of publication, probably before 1527, the year in which Rome was sacked by the mutinous army of the Holy Roman Emperor, and the original inspiration for his work may have been the so-called Bembine table. The *Hieroglyphica* was formally intended as a commentary on and enlargement of Horapollo's work of the same name, but Valeriano extended his commentary to cover other ancient symbols. His thesis, that Christian revelation was merely one more in the line in divine wisdom revealed by Platonism and the hieroglyphs, was very much in the tradition of the Renaissance Platonists, who put as much faith in the pagan prophets such as the Sibyls as

Pignori no. 64

Horapollo no.

62

the Old Testament prophets in their role of prefiguring the words and actions of Christ.

So insistent was Valeriano in his neo-Platonist interpretation that sometimes his imagination, like that of Horapollo, gets the better of him, but the breadth of his knowledge and reference is remarkable. He cites a total of 435 authorities. His book was very popular; there were at least thirty-three later editions, often with further commentary by others, and it was extremely influential on the European literary and decorative culture of the next two centuries. Baruch Romaelius, for instance, lifted sixteen sections from the *Hieroglyphica*, added pictures and epigrams in both Latin and German, and published the result as an emblem book. Thomas Palmer with his *Two Hundred Poesies* of 1566, the first English emblem book, did the same; amongst his emblems were extracts from Valeriano which he translated and turned into verse. But Valeriano, like many of his contemporaries, did not take a very disciplined approach to the symbolic literature. He wrote that "hieroglyphics include emblems, symbols, insignia, which although they differ in name are seen to be similar in many ways."

Literature: Praz, 521; Adams, 521



LAURENTIUS PIGNORIUS

*Characteres Aegyptiī, hoc est Sacrorum, quibus  
Aegyptiī utuntur, simulachrorum accurata delineatio  
et explicatio.*

FRANKFURT: TYPIS MATTHIAE BECKERI, 1608



The Bembin Table from Pignorius

This book is a description and exposition of the Bembin Table or Table of Isis, a large brass altar piece or table from the second century CE, which, in the early sixteenth century, was in the possession of Cardinal Bembo, a patron of Valeriano; and it is said that sight of this piece originally inspired Pierio Valeriano to write his *Hieroglyphica*. The table is inlaid with silver and enamel, and carved with numerous hieroglyphs. The piece was stolen during the sack of Rome in 1527 by the imperial armies but eventually recovered and is still extant in a museum in Turin, Italy.

This book was first published in 1605, but this present edition is the first with images. It is a serious philological attempt to investigate the origin of the Table as an archeological object, and the author avoids interpreting the meaning of the images. He does give an overview of the origin of hieroglyphs as a whole, but expresses doubt as to whether those on the Table were meaningful at all. It is now recognized that he was correct and that the script and image carvings are completely fanciful. The book has a number of nicely printed images and fold-out sheets.

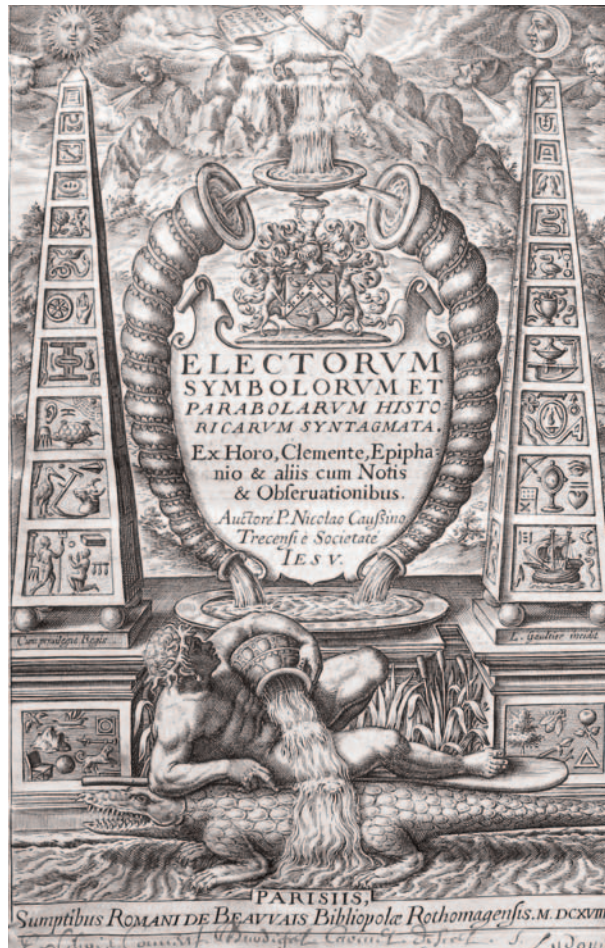
Literature: Brunet, 25413; Graesse, 5:290; Hilmy, 2:119



P. NICOLAS CAUSSIN S.J.  
*De Symbolica Egyptiorum Sapientia,  
 Polyhistor Symbolicus*

PARIS: SUMPTIBUS ROMANI DE BEAUVAIS, 1618

The first of two title pages to the first edition of *De Symbolica*, showing a different title from the one given above. This first title was dropped in subsequent editions.



Caussin, a Jesuit, was confessor to the young king Louis XIII of France, and his two books on symbolism are bound together in this volume, the first edition of each. In the first book, the *Horapollō* and the *Physiologus* of St. Epiphanius are both reprinted in Latin and Greek, together with an introduction describing the difference between enigmas, symbols, hieroglyphs, emblems and parables. Caussin was one of the first to cast doubt on the Egyptian origin of the *Horapollō*, pointing out that some of the words used had Latin roots, which would, of course, have been impossible if it had been translated directly from the Egyptian. *Horapollō* no. 62

The *Physiologus*, which is usually translated as “the Naturalist,” was one of the most widely-circulated books of the Middle Ages. Originating as a Greek text in Alexandria about the second century CE, the anonymous author drew on the descriptions of animals by Aristotle and Pliny, and deduced a moral from each description. It was translated into almost every European language including Icelandic, and Ethiopian. As time went on, the text expanded and became the forerunner of the Bestiary. The version included here, said to be written by St. Epiphanius in the fourth century CE, was one of several which survived to the Renaissance.

Caussin’s second volume, the *Polyhistor*, contains more than 1,000 parables or parallels compiled by Caussin. As one would expect from similes or statements in parallel, these are cast in double format, the first part being a short story taken from classical history, and the second part the apodosis, rhetorically the necessary conclusion, or, as we would say, the moral of the story.

Literature: Praz, 301; Landwehr 1978, 68; Hilmy, 1:121

# APOPHTHEGMS

66

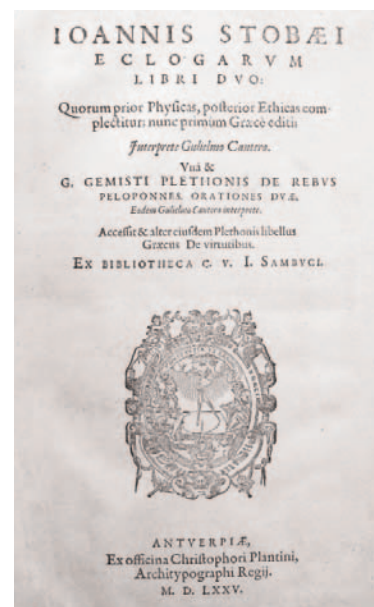
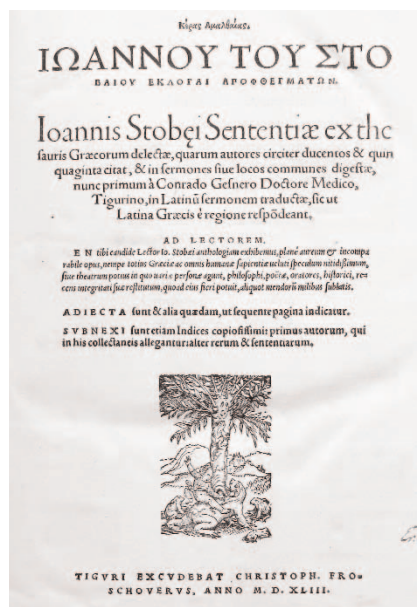
JOHANNES STOBÆUS

## *Sententiae ex Thesaurus Graecorum Eclogarum Libri Duo*

ZURICH: CHRISTOPH, 1543

ANTWERP: EX OFFICINA FROSCHOUERUS CHRISTOPHORI  
PLATINI, 1575

Title Pages.



In the Renaissance, these two volumes were thought to be two different books but it is now known that they are two parts of a single book. The *Eclogues* is the first printed edition of the first two “books” and the *Sententiae* is the first edition in both Greek and Latin (separate Greek and Latin editions were published earlier) of the third and fourth “books” of this doxography, written in about the fourth century CE. The word *doxography* comes from the Greek *doxa*, opinions, and *graphein*, to write, and the

Stobaeus contains extracts from about 500 Greek authors, many of which are otherwise unknown. The book has been described by Larousse as an “exceptionally precious collection.” Part of the *Eclogues* is lost, but we know what it should contain from the ninth-century *Bibliotheka*, or Library, of Photius, the Patriarch of the Eastern Orthodox Church, a work which contains a listing of some 280 books including the Stobaeus, of which he gives detailed contents and chapter headings. One of the entries in the Stobaeus is the only source of the *Asclepius*, one of the principal Hermetic texts, and another is one of the only two sources of Stoic ethics. Stoicism was the only complete philosophical system produced in classical times, and its ethical element had a significant influence on Christian thinking.

For the symbolic literature, the Stobaeus typifies the genre of collections of sayings or apophthegms (also called sentences, dictes, maxims, aphorisms, gnomes) by ancient “authorities,” which were collected by students and authors in their anthologies, florilegia and common-place books over the whole period. These collections formed an essential element of Rhetoric as the discipline of both written and oral composition was called. Not only were “sentences” used as the theme of the composition, they could be also called upon to illustrate or prove the arguments in it. This is why writers of the time seemed to have such an extensive knowledge of all the works of the Church fathers and classical authors. They had their common-place books at hand which provided the “authority” for every topic. Furthermore, these “sentences” were by definition short extracts, usually one-liners, which were intended both to conceal and reveal a moral, spiritual, philosophical or theological injunction and thus, in literary terms, meshed neatly with the other symbolic species, such as proverb, fable or emblem.

Literature: Adams 1872, 1879; Graesse, 6:500

*Homerici Centones, Virgiliani Centones, Nonni  
Paraphrasis Evangelii Ioannis*

EXCU. HENR. STEPH(ANUS). 1578

Title Page.



Centos can be classed as a subgroup of the apophthegms. A cento is a poem which is constructed out of extracts, often just one line at a time, from other poems, usually from Homer or Virgil. The word comes from the Greek *kentrones*, originally meaning spur or point, and thus needle and, finally, patchwork. It was a genre which was quite popular in classical and Renaissance times and develops out of the imperative in classical rhetoric to learn extracts from the ancient authorities as a basis for com-

position. But the cento also represented a step beyond this apparently rather juvenile exercise. There was always, for writers during this period, a tension between the respect for the ancient authors (as Petrarch put it, a return to the “pure radiance” of the past) and the artistic desire to produce original work. The cento, which goes back at least to the second century CE, since it is referred to by the Christian writer Tertullian, was a serious attempt, if something of a caricature, to find the right compromise in this age-old literary dilemma.

This book has three of the most celebrated centos. The first is a Homeric cento in Greek and Latin, written by the Empress Eudocia, wife of the Emperor Theodosius II in the early fifth century, and based on a slightly earlier incomplete version by a Christian bishop, Patricius. The poem is a narrative of the Christian story made up entirely of lines from Homer. The second is a Virgilian cento in Latin by the Roman authoress Proba, from the late fourth century, again with a Christian purpose, but this time more muted than Eudocia’s cento, possibly out of fear of reprisals during the time of the pagan Emperor Julian. The third is a Homeric cento, by the fifth-century Egyptian poet Nonnus, being a paraphrase of the Gospel of St. John.

The first printed edition of the centos was issued by Aldus in 1505, and is apparently “infinitely rare.” But the present copy of Estienne’s edition has a fourth, eighty-page section of proverbs extracted from Homer which appears to make this copy also rare, if not unique.

Literature: Schreiber, 205



## DREAMS

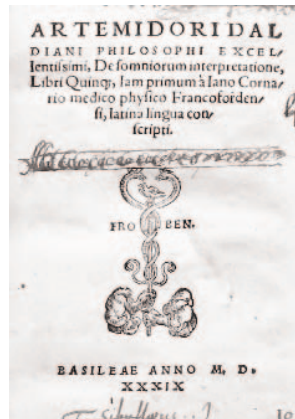
68

ARTEMIDORUS

*De somniorum interpretatione, libri quinque*

BASLE: FROBEN, 1539

Title Page.



First edition of the first Latin translation after Aldus' Greek *editio princeps* of 1518. Written in the first or second century BCE, this became the classic reference book for the interpretation of the symbolism of dreams during classical, medieval and later times and it is no coincidence that Freud used the same title for his own masterwork, *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Freud was happy to acknowledge his debt to Artemidorus, in particular to his theory of interpretation by association.

Dreams and their meanings had much greater significance to ancient peoples than they do today; there were dozens of "dream books" throughout the period, and almost every natural philosopher had something to say about them, particularly the extent to which dreams were a channel to the divine, and a means of foretelling the future. Artemidorus sums it up by saying (*Art. I, 2.* trans. R.J. White) that "allegorical dreams . . . are those which signify one thing by means of another."

Literature: Adams, 2036; Caillet, 472; Durling, 321; Thorndike, II:290

## EPIGRAMS

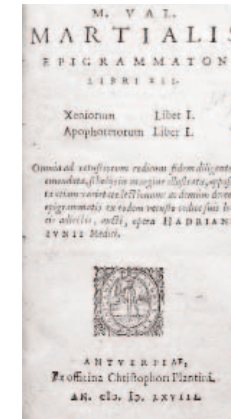
69

M. VAL. MARTIALIS

*Epigrammaton Libri XII*

ANTWERP: EX OFFICIO CHRISTOPHORI PLANTINI, 1568

Title Page.



Martial, a Spaniard writing in the first century CE, is perhaps the greatest epigrammatist of all time. He wrote some 1,400 Latin epigrams, many of which have been characterized as salacious, but this does not detract from their subtlety, variety and wit. The first publication of the *Epigrammaton* of Martial in the West was in the 1470s, translated and edited by Niccolo Perotti and Pomponio Leto, and the former also wrote a commentary on Martial entitled *Cornucopia*, published in 1489. Perotti's son, Pyrrhus, published an expanded edition of the *Cornucopia* which included the delightful remark that "with commentaries of this sort, the longer they are the better."

The final two books of Martial's work (13 and 14) were entitled *Xenia* and *Apophoreta*. These were the names for gifts that were given to guests after dinner parties in Roman times, and gifts that were given on New Year's Day. An alternative to a physical gift was the gift of a poem expressing your appreciation and, in his book, Martial provided these prepackaged gift-poems.

Literature: Brunet, 12549; Graesse, 4:424



## FABLES

70

AESOP

### *Phaedri Fabularum Aesopiarum Libri Quinque editi a Johanne Laurentio*

AMSTERDAM: APUD JOH. JANSSONIUM & VIDUAM ELIZAEI  
WEYERSTRAET, 1667

This shows the picture of a statue of Aesop looking very ugly, a feature of Aesopian tradition derived from the entirely fictitious *Life of Aesop* written by Maximus Planudes in the fourteenth century. To this page an anonymous scribe has wittily added in manuscript *Invidia virtutum comes* (Envy is the companion of virtue) since the correct motto should be *Fortuna virtutum comes* (for which see Alciato's device in his emblem book no. 2). The picture on this page is sloppily printed at an angle.



The history of the fable in the West originates, of course, with Aesop, who is believed to have been a historical figure, born a slave in about 620 BCE. He was apparently freed, and rose to become a prominent political as well as literary figure in the court of King Croesus. He is said to have developed his fables during the course of his diplomatic duties.

One of the two threads by which Aesop's fables passed into the medieval tradition was the Latin version by Phaedrus, a Roman slave from the first century CE (the title page of the present book notes that he was freed by the Emperor Augustus himself). Rather than just translate or versify the tales he had picked up, Phaedrus added his own interpretations, and in many cases changed the tenor of the stories. The true Aesopian fable follows a consistent format: it mercilessly describes the fate of those who are weak or stupid; and it almost never makes moral judgments on the actions of the participants. By contrast, Phaedrus, the product of a more stable and secure society than that of Aesop 700 years earlier, changed the emphasis of the stories in many cases to illustrate ethical themes, and he included stories which had nothing to do with the tradition of the fable, introducing anecdotes about famous people, witty aphorisms and jokes.

The current edition has some 220 fables and is noteworthy on several levels. There are the original Aesopian fables, written and interpreted by Phaedrus in Latin verse; there are extensive notes on each fable by Laurentius in Latin and Greek; and fine engravings illustrating the fables in the context of seventeenth-century Holland. The whole is laid out in the manner of an emblem book, and, as an added bonus, in this copy an early reader has added to every fable, in manuscript, a second Latin motto, and in some cases a third motto in Dutch. The whole is embellished by at least one hundred pages of several different indexes.

Literature: Brunet, 12523; Landwehr 1963, 248

LIB. Ego. 111.

A in utrisque humeris singulas magnas, in sinistro cubito unam grandem, in manu prioris unam, in utrisque māmīs singulas obscuras, in lumbis interiore unam, in utrisque genibus singulas, in dextero crure unam, in utrisque pedibus singulas. omnino est stellarum quatuordecim. Effusio aquæ cum Aquario ipso est stellarum triginta. Sed in his omnibus prima & nouissima clara.

Pisces.

Omnes stellæ piscium sunt quatuor aut quinquæ cuiuslibet magnitudinis, præter duas tertie magnitudinis, quæ in ipsorum piscium rostris mutantur.

**H**orum alter Notius, Boræus alter appellatur: ideo quod unus eorum qui Boræus dicitur, inter æquinoctialem & æstiuum circulum sub Andromedæ brachio collocatus, & arcticum polum spectans constituitur. alter autē in zodiaco circulo extremo sub scapulis equi, non longè ab æquinoctiali circulo collocatus spectans ad occidentem. Hi pisces quibusdam stellis, ut lineola ab arietis pede primo coniunguntur, quorum inferior ante occidere et exortiri uidetur. Habet decem & septem, et Boræus omnino duodecim. Coniunctio eorum habet ad Aquilonem spectans stellas tres, ad alteram partem tres, ad exortum res. In commissa tres, omnino duodecim: horum coniunctionem quæ à pede arietis primo notatur, Aratus græcè *πρόωρον* & *πρόωρον*. Cicero nodum cœlestem dicit: qui utrunque uoluit significare, eum nodum non solum piscium, sed etiā totius spheræ esse. quo enim loco circulus ab arietis pede Mesembrinus dicitur, qui meridiem significat: & quo loco is circulus Mesembrinus coniungitur, & transit æquinoctialem circulum, in ipsa coniunctione circularum nodus piscium significatur: quare eum non modò nodum pisciū, sed etiam cœlestium nodum appellauerunt.

Pisfix.

Cetus habet tres stellas secundæ magnitudinis uide licet sciam in uentre, quæ uenter ceti nominatur: & duas in cauda. habet et nullas tertie magnitudinis, quoniam insigniores sunt. Menckertus etiam in medio ori reliqua sunt quatuor et quinta magnitudinis.

**P**isfix à media cauda diuiditur ab hyemali circulo, spectans ad exortum, rostro propè posteriorem arietis pedem iungens. huius priorē partē corporis qui spectat ad exortus, propè alluere flumen Eridani uidetur. hæc cadit exorto cancro & leone, exortitur autē cū Centauro et geminis. sed habet in extrema cauda

Sic enim noster colices habent, tametsi aliquando gerat nullus in portu, uersus hanc sunt, et in aliis de arce solis natus et polygri, in suis, et in aliis de arce solis ap. natus.

Y

BASLE: PER IOANNEM HERVAGIUM, 1549

As well as the *Fables*, this book contains Hyginus' *Poeticon Astronomicum*, and both of these contained stories from the Greek myths and descriptions of the mythical origins of the constellations, including the signs of the zodiac. Written just about the date of the birth of Christ, the *Fables* was translated/adapted from an earlier Greek writer. This adaptation is so idiosyncratic that it is suggested that Hyginus may even have been a schoolboy who was given the translation to do as a classroom exercise. Interestingly, the *Fables* contains more than eighty examples of metamorphoses. The first printed edition of the *Fables* was in 1535, and derives from a single manuscript which is now lost; the first edition of the *Poeticon* was by Ratdolt in 1482. A later edition by Ratdolt contains the first example of multi-color printed illustrations.

In addition to these works, the book contains six further classical works on myths: the *Fables* of Palaephatus (date uncertain, but possibly Alexandrine, fourth-third century BCE), the *Mythologia* of Fulgentius (fifth-sixth century CE), the *Speculatio de deorum natura* of Phornutus (properly Cornutus, from first century CE), the *De deorum imaginibus* of Albricus (possibly twelfth century CE), the *Phaenomenon* of Aratus (ca. 275 BCE, rewritten by Germanicus Caesar in Latin in the first century CE) in both Greek and Latin with an extensive Latin commentary, and the *Sphaera* of Proclus (fifth century CE) in both Greek and Latin in the translation by Thomas Linacre, an Englishman. Each of these books deserves a full description but there is no room here. Several of them were first printed by Aldus in 1505.

Literature: Adams, 1252

Pages 108-114 are not part of this Preview.

The first edition of this book, published in 1500, had 818 adages. In each succeeding edition, Erasmus added more and more until, finally, there were thousands (chiliades in Greek) of adages. This edition contains 1,071 pages and 4,251 proverbs, all of them with some commentary and most with long essays on their origin, history and relevance to his own times; and as it became more popular (there were twenty-seven editions in his life-time alone), Erasmus used it as a vehicle for his own views on contemporary society. Paul Kristeller said that with the *Adages*, Erasmus “earned the gratitude of posterity by supplying his successors with a systematic collection of anecdotes and sentences ready for use, the real quotation book of the early modern period that everybody used but few cared to mention.”

Many countries in the world have a tradition of proverbs and they go back far into the origins of literary history, back at least to the civilizations of Sumeria and Babylonia in the second millennium BCE. In the West, the status of the genre is confirmed by the incorporation of the *Book of Proverbs* in the canon of the Old Testament. Erasmus wrote in his Introduction that the proverb always contains an enigma or mystery and points to some allegorical or figurative meaning. He quotes Diomedes, the Greek grammarian: “a proverb is the taking over of a popular saying, fitted to things and times, when words say one thing and mean another.”

It was this book, together with his new translation of the New Testament and his *In Praise of Folly*, which was primarily responsible for the extraordinary reputation that Erasmus gained as the leading humanist scholar of the age.

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Literature: Adams, 457



CONRAD LYCOSTHENES

*Apophthegmata ex probatis Graecae Latinaeque  
linguae scriptoribus*

GENEVA: EXCUDEBAT JACOBUS STOER, 1594

Title Page.



First published in 1555, this book is an amplification and rearrangement of Erasmus' *Adages*. Erasmus had ordered his book by author and had more than 4,000 entries and Lycosthenes ordered it by topic or the common places resulting in more than 6,000 entries. Commonplace books (common in this case meaning alike rather than ordinary) were the foundation of the academic discipline of Rhetoric or composition, which every student and writer employed to collect "authorities" upon which to base his work. Originating with Aristotle's *koînôî topoi*, the importance of the common places is shown by the multitude of doxographies, florilegia and anthologies of the period, for instance the Stobaeus. As a result of its ease of use, the Lycosthenes was adopted as a school text book, at least in England, supplanting Erasmus in popularity. Erasmus' *Adages* had eighty-three editions between 1530 and 1573 but thereafter in the course of the next sixty years there appeared only five. It has been shown that Shakespeare used Lycosthenes and one fortunate book collector has found, in a flea market in France, Montaigne's own copy of the work with more than 6,500 manuscript notes.

Bound in with this copy is a short work of the same date, also by Lycosthenes, entitled "Parables or similitudes," parables in this case having the meaning of parallels rather than spiritual stories. Similitudes were another of the symbolic species of the era.

Literature: Graesse, 4:310



## SATIRES

78

NICOLAS BOILEAU-DESPREAUX

*Oeuvres diverses du Sieur D\*\*\*\*\* avec le Traité du  
Sublime*

AMSTERDAM: CHEZ ABRAHAM WOLFGANG, 1677

The frontispiece with, at the bottom left corner, the words *Utile dulci*, (useful and sweet), Horace's famous answer to the age-old question as to the purpose of art.



Nicolas Boileau was best known for his satires, eleven poems averaging about 250 lines each, on the works and the talent, or lack of it, of his fellow French poets. This was the first time in modern times that satire had been used for a serious purpose and not just for invective or envy.

The etymology of the word, satire, is from the Latin *satura*, meaning “mixture” and *satyr*, the lascivious Greek mythological being. This accidental combination gives the genre its hard-edged, aggressive tone. As with the joke, satire is validated for symbolic literature by the insight of Aristotle that satire is a form of wit, wit is a form of metaphor and metaphor is the driving mechanism of language where the meaning of a word is described or signified in some novel manner so as to produce “wonder” in the reader. Satire was a universal genre and there were many subgenres such as testaments, laments and complaints.

Despite his chosen format, Nicolas Boileau was a serious literary critic; another of his works was “*L’art poétique en vers*,” modeled on the *Art of Poetry* by the Roman poet Horace (as is the work by Boschius) which was the first attempt to systematize French verse. Yet another represents the first translation into a vernacular language of Longinus’ *On the Sublime*, (ca. first century CE) described as “one of the greatest of all critical achievements and unique in its unerring insight into the essentials of art” (*Oxford Classical Dictionary*). Longinus strongly influenced the Romantic writers of the following century. Both the latter works are also contained in this volume.

Literature: Brunet, 14047

Boschius no. 32

*Les Songes Drolatiques de Pantagruel*

Slide show of the illustrations from Book 9 of  
the *Oeuvres de Rabelais*, Paris: Dalibon, 1823

Image 8.  
See no. 74/5 for  
a frame possibly  
by the same  
illustrator.



Rabelais' masterpiece *Gargantua and Pantagruel* was published in four books and in many editions from 1532 to 1552. A fifth book was published posthumously in 1564 under the title *L'isle sonnante*, the Ringing Isle. The authorship of this last book has been disputed although it certainly exhibits the brilliantly ascerbic and scatological style of the earlier books. The whole work is one of the great satires of all Western literature castigating, without shame or pity, the institutions, culture and society of the time. It became immediately popular but, not unnaturally, also provoked intense opposition, particularly from the Church authorities, and it was later placed on the Index of Forbidden Books.

*Les Songes Drolatiques de Pantagruel*, from which the present images are taken, was first published in 1565 by Richard Breton in Paris. It consisted of an introduction and the 120 cartoons which are displayed in the electronic slide-show. The cartoons in the original edition had neither titles nor descriptions but presumably were intended to be illustrations of characters from Rabelais' work. This original edition gives us little further help or information as to the author or artist, indicating only in the brief introduction that the publisher knew Rabelais well and therefore decided to bring "this last of his works to light."

The present images are taken from the third printing of the *Songes Drolatiques* which appeared in 1823 as the last volume of an edition of the complete works of Rabelais. For this edition, the images were recut with astonishing accuracy but lack something of the delicacy of those in the first edition. The editors of this third edition added references to Rabelais' work for each of the images but these references are now regarded as almost uniformly fanciful and worthless.

Literature: Brunet, 17126; Graesse, 6:7

## INSCRIPTIONS

80

FRANCISCO SWEERTII

*Selectae Christiani Orbis Deliciae ex Urbibus,  
Templis, Bibliothecis et aliunde*

COLOGNE: BERNARDI GAULTERI, 1608

Title Page.



Inscriptions and epitaphs were reckoned to be symbolic species since in their best examples they provide a witty or succinct summary of the life and achievements of their subject. Epitaphs are one of the most ancient of the symbolic species. It is no coincidence that the etymology of the word semiotics is from the Greek *sema* which meant both sign and tomb.

This *Delicious Selection from the Christian World* has some 700 pages of epitaphs which the author claims to have found throughout Europe. His credibility is somewhat undermined however when he includes epitaphs from Cimbrica or modern Denmark from the graves of biblical figures such as David, Joshua and Judas Maccabeus as well as Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, King Arthur, the Holy Roman Emperors, Charles V and Maximilian and other worthies from ancient and modern times!

## ICONOLOGIES



The Iconologies were handbooks for those artists and writers who needed to know the conventional code for depicting the personifications of abstract ideas in the art and decoration of the time. Thus if you wished to know how to depict Poetry or Laziness or Beauty or Patience or the Soul or Deception you referred to an Iconology. The importance of these books to contemporary society and its art and decoration is emphasized by almost every writer on symbolic subjects of the period. I can quote just one, Erasmus, who in his *De Ratione Studii*, On the Purpose of Education, suggested that authors should “write some brief and pithy saying such as aphorisms, proverbs and maxims at the beginning and end of your books; others you will inscribe on rings or drinking cups; others you will paint on doors and walls or even in the glass of a window so that what may aid learning is constantly before the eye.”

We are reminded by this that there was, during the whole era, no distinction between the aims of the fine and the decorative arts and indeed all the works displayed in this exhibition had one overriding didactic purpose and this was ethical and/or spiritual, for the imperatives of church or state or for the expansion of knowledge.

The remarkable thing about the two major Iconologies displayed here is that they both come from the last years of the 18th century, indicating that, even at this late date, the culture of symbol and allegory was alive and flourishing.





81/82

CESARE RIPA

*Iconology; or a Collection of Emblematical Figures*  
translated by George Richardson

LONDON: BY G. SCOTT, 1779

*Iconologia*

AMSTERDAM: HORN, 1699

The first work is a late English edition of Cesare Ripa's classic book which first appeared in 1593 and was perhaps the most influential late Renaissance book on the nature of allegory. There were more than forty editions of the book in eight languages and, in each new edition, further entries were made to the original number both by Ripa himself and future editors so that by the 1764 Italian edition there were more than 1,000 allegories described. The book is an exegesis of the personification of human emotions in allegorical terms.

Ripa, who lived from about 1560 to 1623, was one of the more colorful literary characters of the time. He started life as a cook but rose through the domestic ranks and as majordomo to the household of Cardinal Salviati, he found time to write his great book. Upon its publication, he was immediately knighted by the Duke of Savoy.

This present edition was also to some extent expanded by the translator George Richardson who emphasizes, even at this late date, the importance of the didactic function of literature and art. The book consists of a series of essays on the personified allegories and the pictures of them printed four to a page.

The second volume is an earlier Dutch edition written principally for children.

Literature: Brunet, 9177; Graesse, 6:113



Prudence in English and Dutch (and see no. 78 where the same virtue is depicted).



H. F. GRAVELOT AND C. N. COCHIN

*Iconologie par Figures ou Traité complet des Allégories, Emblèmes &c.*

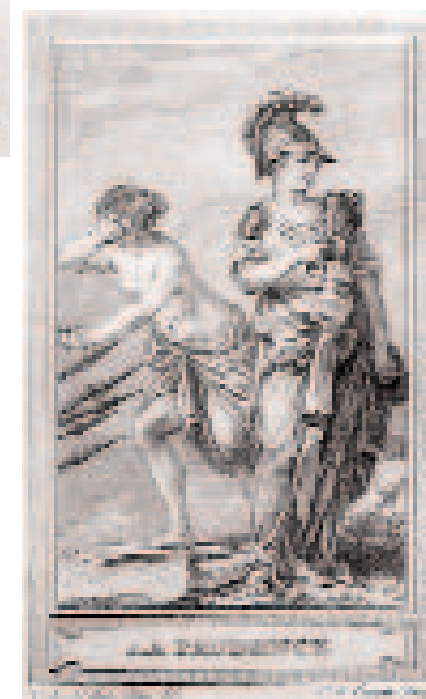
PARIS: LATTRÉ GRAVEUR, 1791

*Ripa nos.*  
81/82 This is the great French iconology in 4 volumes which depicts and describes more than 500 allegories. It is noticeable that here, and in the *Ripa* and in personifications going back to the earliest times, that the majority of the symbolic figures are female. There is an interesting academic discussion as to why this is. On the one hand, as Anthony Grafton has pointed out, the words for most Greek abstract ideas are feminine, and this is followed in Latin and then French. On the other, the origin of the trope of personification lies in the fact that, in early Greek and in all languages as they develop, words did not exist for abstract terms, and personifications were developed to remedy this; for instance, it was easy to depict or recite the concepts of love and war as Venus and Mars, since their very gender pointed to their meaning. So it is unclear which came first: the word or the personification.

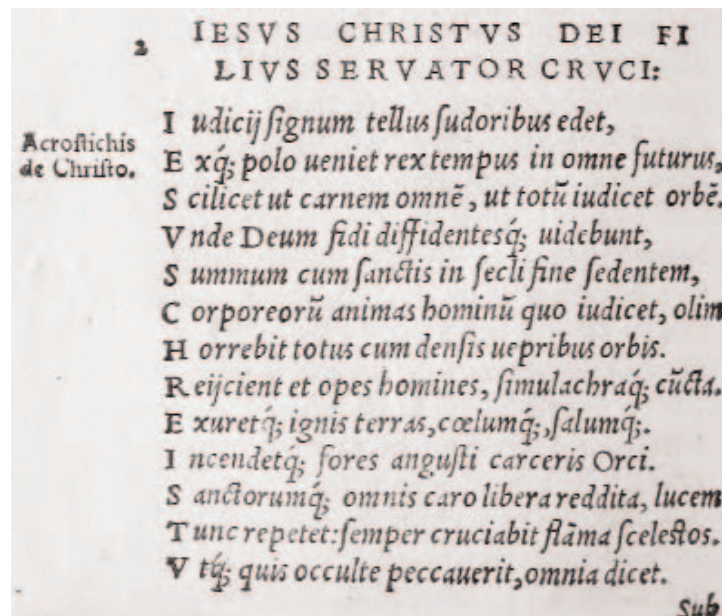
Literature: Brunet, 9174; Graesse, 3:140; Landwehr 1978, 349; Cohen-De Ricci, 456



Two images of Prudence, one of the four cardinal virtues, where the mirror indicates that everyone should examine himself before deciding on action (this goes back to the suggestion of Socrates who advised a daily look in the mirror for this purpose), the snake which guards itself carefully when attacked and the helmet which helps one resist lies and perfidy. This allegory is however completely different from the symbol of Prudence in classical times, which used a two-headed man (sometimes three-headed) to represent a careful consideration of both past and future. In the background of the second picture is the image of Temerity, who covers her eyes before plunging off a cliff.



The coming of Christ  
is foretold from an  
anagrammatic analy-  
sis of his name.



## PROPHESIES

### 84

#### *Sibyllina Oracula de Graeco in Latinum conversa, et in eadem annotationes Sebastiano Castalione interprete*

BASLE: OPERINI, 1547

This first Latin translation of the Sibylline Oracles, written in Latin verse, may have been made from the *editio princeps* in Greek published in the previous year by Betuleius Xystus. Only fragments in Greek had been previously published in 1489 as part of Politian's *Miscellany*. Prophecies, oracles and divinations of all types were recognized as part of the symbolic literature: the prophet says one thing in an enigmatic form and means something else.

The prophets of ancient Greece were called the sibyls; originally there was thought to have been just one but in later times the number was expanded to more than ten. For the Christian exegetes, the sibyls were given almost as much credibility as the Old Testament prophets in prefiguring the events of the New Testament and it is for this reason that Michelangelo depicted a sibyl alongside the prophets on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Apart from the oracles, perhaps the most famous of the classical prefigurations accepted by the Church, was Virgil's *Fourth Eclogue* which describes the return to the golden age after the birth of a son to Mark Anthony and his wife Octavia. This Eclogue is reprinted at the end of this edition of the Oracles. Surprisingly perhaps, Proclus, the fifth century CE Neoplatonist philosopher, calls the *Sibylline Oracles*, with Plato's *Timaeus*, the most influential books of his time.

The Sibylline oracles published here are an eclectic collection of eight books from Christian, Jewish and Gnostic sources which appear to date from the second to the sixth centuries CE. They do not have any coherent order or subject matter and over the centuries following the publication of this edition, more of them were discovered; the final version has fourteen books.



The  
frontispiece of  
*Moralitas  
Arcana*



## SYMBOLS

### 85

FRANCESCO BERNI

#### *Moralitatas Arcana ex Pythagorae Symbolis*

FERRARA: TYPIS IULII BULZONI GILII, 1669

Pythagoras, the Greek philosopher from the fifth century BCE, was responsible for the discovery of primitive harmonics and number theory out of which arose the prevailing concepts of classical and Renaissance cosmology and the so-called music of the spheres. Incidentally, the one thing that he certainly did not originate was what he is now most famous for: the geometrical theorem of the length of the hypotenuse of a triangle.

Pythagoras and his students were what we would now disparagingly call a sect. They were all expected to live moral and upright lives and, to this end, he issued a series of brief moral injunctions which were collected by his students and handed down to posterity. During the Renaissance, these sayings became known as the *Symbola* of Pythagoras and their origin, history, meaning and authenticity proved to be of endless fascination to contemporary scholars. Humanists such as Alberti, Beroaldo, Ficino, della Mirandola and many others wrote treatises on the subject.

This 500-page commentary on forty-one of the Pythagorean maxims is by the Italian poet Francesco Berni (not the earlier Francesco Berni who wrote the burlesque poetry known as the *Capitoli*) and includes the famous "Do not eat beans" and others such as "Come to the sacrifice barefoot" and "Abstain from fish."

*Moribundis*: advice for  
those about to die.



## DANCES OF DEATH

86

JEREMIAS DREXEL S. J.

*Aeternitas Prodrömus Mortis Nuntius*

COLOGNE: SUMPT. CORNEL AB EGMOND ET SOCIORUM,  
1633

I described Jeremy Drexel before as one of the most prolific authors of Emblem books of his time. In fact, he was so well-known that when he died there was a move to make him a saint. This little book, no doubt intended to be carried around on one's person as a constant reminder of its theme and the desirability of humility in the face of death, is both an Emblem book and a Dance of Death. The latter was a popular genre which had possibly originated at the time of the Black Death, the pandemic of plague of 1347-1350, which killed about one third of the population of Europe. A similar and earlier tradition was the story of the Danse Macabre, macabre possibly deriving from the Arabic word for grave-digger.

The Dance of Death was generally laid out in the same format as the emblem book, i.e., with a motto, an image, a poem and often with an accompanying essay. But they all had the same theme – death leading away Everyman whatever his class of life. Like the Emblem book, the Dance of Death continued to be popular in later centuries – for instance, in the eighteenth century Rowlandson's drawings for his *English Dance of Death* were amongst his greatest works.

Literature: Praz, 318

## JOKES

87

ETIENNE TABOUROT

### *Les bigarrures et touches du Seigneur des Accords*

PARIS: CHEZ ESTIENNE MAUCROY, 1662

A rebus: the interior figures have to be translated to achieve the exterior motto. A clue: the V is green.



Bigarrures means miscellany and may derive from the Greek word poikilia also meaning “motley” or “variegated.” The first French translation of Alciato’s emblems (Christian Wechel 1536) was described in the introduction as a “livret des bigarreures.”

Tabourot’s marvelous book contains 600 pages of jokes, short and in many cases obscene stories, as well as chapters on literary and symbolic oddities such as rebuses, equivokes, acrostics and other word games such as anagrams, leonine verses and echoes. He devotes a hundred pages to what he calls “touches,” which are witty remarks derived from the technical word in fencing when you score a hit on your opponent. Anyone who was the subject of a verbal *touche* was supposed to respond with an equally witty *retouche*.

Another 80 pages is devoted to “Les Escraignes dijonnaises.” Tabourot describes how the *escraignes* were small mud huts which were built each winter in Burgundy in which members of the peasant community, both men and women, would spend the evening warmed by a small fire and tell stories to pass the time. Tabourot disguised himself to attend some of these soirées and now retells these stories, some of which are extraordinarily vulgar.

Literature: Brunet, 17824; Graesse, 7:5

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For further information and bibliography, see also Robin Raybould's web site [www.camrax.com](http://www.camrax.com)



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