

The Renaissance Society of America - Annual Meeting

19 - 21 March 2009

UCLA & The Getty Museum, Malibu, Los Angeles, USA

First panel

Emblematics and Science (sponsor GEMCA, UCL; co-sponsor the Emblem Discipline of RSA)

Organiser: Andrea Catellani, GEMCA, UCL.

Chair: Sarah F. Matthews-Grieco, Syracuse University in Florence.

Definition of the figura in Vaenius's emblematic works

Agnès Guiderdoni-Bruslé, FNRS, UCL.

In his address to the reader and beholder, Vaenius roots his *Conclusiones* in a Platonic and mathematical tradition, in which *figurae* are used to formalise knowledge. Later in the text, he links his project to the alchemical world. In this paper, I will study how Vaenius used an array of rhetorical notions (like allegory and symbol) and historical traditions – philosophy and theology, but also alchemy, physics and chemistry – in order to explain his project. *Figurae* appear as a sort of universal language, able to connect and articulate all the different forms of knowledge and science in a deep way. I will try to understand what a figure is for him, and establish a tentative definition of the notion of figure in relation to his other emblem books.

Visual Demonstration between Science and Emblematics in Vaenius' *Conclusiones*

Ralph Dekoninck, FNRS, UCL.

The visual layout of the *Conclusiones* by Vaenius, with its diagrammatic figures combined with more iconic elements, seems really unusual. Nevertheless, further analysis shows that it shares some spatial and visual solutions with other illustrated publications of the same time, and that we can try to reconstruct this inter-textual web. This paper will try to address in particular the issue of early-modern visual modalities of demonstration, at the intersection of emblematics and science. It will show that, in Vaenius' text, science and emblematics borrow

from each other visual solutions in order to convey an abstract message. Image becomes the place in which truth is not only expressed and effectively communicated, but also demonstrated: this last aspect, and its inter-textual links, deserves a closer examination.

Emblematic and Graphic Processes in Vaenius' *Physicae et Theologicae Conclusiones* (1621): Semiotic Observations.

Andrea Catellani, GEMCA, UCL.

This paper attempts a semiotic analysis of some aspects of Otto Van Veen's *Physicae et Theologicae Conclusiones*. In his preface, the author says that he "shows and demonstrates by figures" (figuraliter ostendo & probo) his thesis on predestination and free will. But how exactly is this combined act of showing and demonstrating carried out? What kind of visual signs ("figures") are involved, and how do they interact with "verbal" texts? There emerge from this analysis a number of visual "cognitive operators" - iconic, graphic/diagrammatic and abstract figures - which shed light on the graphic processing of ideas. From this point of view, the strategy by which Vaenius intended to "show and demonstrate" his theories becomes clear: this short text is an interesting example of how emblematics and the so-called "emblematic process" were transformed and adapted to theological and scientific discourse.

Second panel

Emblematic Visual Culture and the Sciences I (sponsor the Emblem Discipline of RSA; co-sponsor GEMCA, UCL)

Organizer: Andrea Catellani, GEMCA, UCL

Co-Organizer: Tamara Goeglein (Department of English/Office of the Provost – Franklin & Marshall College, Lancaster, PA)

Chair: Tamara Goeglein

Emblems and the Natural World

Sara F. Matthews-Grieco (Syracuse University in Florence)

Cold and moist lettuce as an antidote to Venus and peppery rocket as an attribute of Pan are canny associations of current botanical and dietary lore with some of the better known figures of classical mythology. The authors, translators and illustrators of emblem books

presumed of their target audience(s) a common cultural background with respect to the natural world. Widely-known characteristics of plants, animals and minerals are thus used as signifying elements to construct an elaborated semiotic message (sometimes more explicit in the image, sometimes more explicit in the text) wherein various levels of the emblem public would find both familiar and novel notions. References to the natural world abound in emblem books until the 1620s circa, when it seems that such "common" references were no longer considered quite fashionable or worthy.

"Between mythology and science: a study of interdisciplinarity in the "Atalanta Fugiens" (1617)".

Emilie Granjon (Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, Canada; Université Jean Moulin, France).

In 1617, the German alchemist Michael Maier wrote a fundamental treatise, the "Atalanta Fugiens", which contained fifty unusual emblems comprising pictures, texts, and musical scores (fugues). Alchemists used a number of semantic strategies to obstruct access to their science: in the case of this book, three media were combined to form a hermetic work that was intended to be understood by the initiated, but impenetrable to the layman. To decipher its meaning, the disciple would have to draw upon various "areas of reference" such as scenes taken from daily life, or disciplines such as astrology, alchemy, mythology and geometry. Each "area of reference" contains a semantic code that contributes to the understanding of the alchemical discourse. What will be examined here is the link between "science" (geometry) and mythology, and how this link permits us to decipher the alchemical symbolism of the emblems.

Emblematic Bees

Julie Keenan

The Accademia dei Lincei, a group of Italian scholars founded in 1603 by Federico Cesi, was devoted to the direct study of nature and the classification of plants, animals, and fossils. With the invention of the microscope, their illustrations become a progressively more precise sequence of images, accompanied by formulaic descriptions, in which the external view of a plant or animal is demonstrated to obscure those internal characteristics that ultimately define it. In their *Melissographia* (1625), three greatly magnified views of the bee are combined with verse as a panegyric to the newly-elected Pope Urban VIII, whose family emblem was the bee. Juxtaposing Andrea Alciato's emblems with the *Melissographia*, I will explore the relationship between the emblematic and the scientific, that is, between the symbolic picture and the precise illustration, as well as the claims each makes to reveal the divinely authored Book of Nature.

Third panel

Emblematic Visual Culture and the Sciences II (sponsor the Emblem Discipline of RSA; co-sponsor GEMCA, UCL)

Organizer: Andrea Catellani, GEMCA, UCL

Co-Organizer: Tamara Goeglein (Dept. of English/Office of the Provost – Franklin & Marshall College, Lancaster, PA)

Chair: Monica Calabritto (Dept. of Romance Languages and Literatures, Hunter College, CUNY)

Respondent: Agnès Guiderdoni, FNRS, UCL

Emblematic Intersections: Emblems and Early Modern Visual Culture in France

David Graham (Concordia University, Montreal)

In a 2004 e-Colloquia essay, György E. Szőnyi wrote that “When speaking about emblematic expressions and structures, we have to consider the whole spectrum of early modern cultural representations”. I expand on Szőnyi’s observation by examining the role of the emblem in the economy of early modern visual culture in France, and in particular by elucidating the ways in which the structural and functional characteristics of the emblem work together to create a unique mode of reading. Many emblematisers worked not only in emblems *stricto sensu* but in related quasi-scientific modes: fable books, books of natural history and the like. By examining the intersections between the emblematic and non-emblematic works by a variety of authors and engravers (Corrozet, La Perrière, Guérout, Woeriot and Flamen), I will delineate the essential ways in which the emblem differentiates itself: iterative bimodal reading, typographic layout, and simultaneous personalization and generalization of the moral lesson.

Mens emblematica and Legal Humanism: the Senneton edition of the *Corpus Juris Civilis*

Valérie Hayaert (EUI)

Andrea Alciato and Pierre Coustau were both lawyers who wrote emblem books as an *otium litteratum* in the margins of the time they devoted to legal theory and practice. Their playful and profitable anthologies are nonetheless packed with legalisms while contemporary legal treatises and commentaries use emblematic representations (visual and textual) for a variety of purposes. The most striking example of the insertion of emblems into a legal text is an

edition of the *Corpus Juris Civilis* printed by the Senneton brothers (Lyons, 1548-1550). The Justinian Codex is adorned by emblemata that give a figurative form to Roman interdicts, or serve as a mnemonic tool for a particularly complex body of laws.

Must We Compare Emblematic Texts and Images?

Tamara Goeglein (Dept. of English/Office of the Provost – Franklin & Marshall College, Lancaster, PA)

Emblems are irreducibly composite art forms—they are visible and readable, and they thus require a double literacy that must confront the relation between the emblematic text and image. Hybrid media can relate the image and text in a variety of ways, although most emblem studies fall into what W.J.T. Mitchell calls the “trap of comparison.” Comparative methods predictably “rediscover” the period’s aesthetic concept – such as the Renaissance *ut pictura poesis* tradition – on their way to unifying “the verbal” and “the visual” on a higher-level abstract plane. What alternative ways of reading/seeing text and image can the emerging field of visual studies offer emblem studies? I will suggest a few.