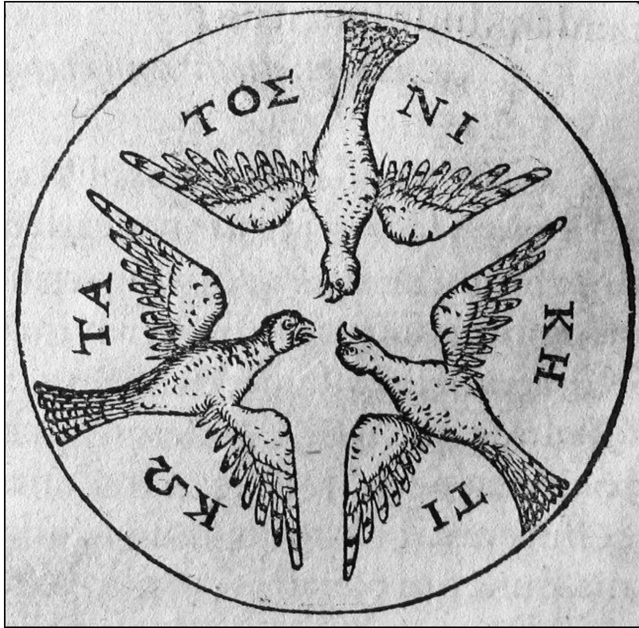

5. *Poetry and Rhetoric*

We saw in the previous Chapter how poetry was central to the transmission and therefore the perpetuation of the culture of primitive societies. This centrality was recognized by contemporary theorists and the nature of the poet's inspiration, his subject matter and the form of his expression remained of continuous interest throughout the period. From Aristotle through the time of the Roman poet Horace and up to the Renaissance with writers such as Scaliger, Sidney and Puttenham, the debate continued. Poetry was the pre-eminent art form and art was the supreme product of the human imagination. The poet's art could symbolically express the divine realities whether these were Platonic or Christian and at the same time the artistic imagination was viewed as akin to if not the same as the ritualistic frenzy or madness of the magicians, diviners and mystics as another means of experiencing these realities. This lofty view of the poetic art was contrasted with the more pedestrian artistic imperative of *mimesis* or imitation from nature. We shall see how attempts were made to reconcile the two although the difficulty of this task which

was only partially successful was exacerbated by the fact that the aims of the two disciplines, aesthetics and metaphysics, were largely incompatible

I also examine, in this present Chapter, the Art of Rhetoric or the academic discipline of writing and speaking. This takes first place in any description of the literature of the age of symbolism since the rules mandated by the Art dominated the style and to a degree the content of the literature of the period since, for the latter, one of the principal and enduring demands of Rhetoric was to copy and learn large numbers of extracts from the works of respected authors. This imperative to record *dicta* from these authorities was the origin of the commonplace books, the *Florilegia* and the anthologies of quotations which were a significant element of the literary output of the time. What was originally a pedagogical requirement became a recognized and respected literary undertaking in itself. Amongst these anthologies were the collections of fables, allegories, proverbs, epigrams, enigmas, parables, hieroglyphs, bestiaries, devices and emblems in addition to other lesser categories which we shall examine in more detail later. We shall also see how Rhetoric related to theories of poetry and to the Platonic ideals of beauty and goodness or delight and utility as these were more commonly phrased and how attempts were made to combine these theories and ideals into one coherent system.

One of the five 'canons' of Rhetoric was Memory. Again, we saw in the last Chapter how memorization was a defining activity of early oral societies; if culture could not be memorized and thus passed down from generation to generation, it would be lost forever. Memorization retained its importance as an obvious aid to speakers and writers during classical times and after, certainly up to the advent of the printing press, and to assist this difficult and time-consuming process, various techniques were developed and together these became known as the Art of Memory. I examine this Art not only for its interest as an element of Rhetoric but also because as a feature of the revival of Platonism during the Renaissance, the memory was viewed as a link in the chain of communication and understanding between the Forms and their symbolic reflections in the material world.

· Poetics ·

The word poetry itself comes from the Greek *poiein* meaning simply to make, in the sense of fabricate. The activity of any craftsman was described by *poiein*. What made poetry unique was that from the earliest

times the inspiration of the poet was thought to be from the gods; it was what Plato called divine frenzy or *furor*. The poet's imagination was filled with the spirit of his *daimon* or personal deity or with the spirit of the Muses. Said Socrates, "for not by art do they utter these things, but by divine influence …..And for this reason God takes away the mind of these men and uses them as his ministers, just as he does soothsayers and godly seers"[1] and Cicero confirmed in a famous phrase that "a poet creates in the manner of an alternative God."[2] Such was the regard that Plato had for the power of the divine frenzy of poetry that to prevent their zeal from infecting civil stability, he banished poets from his ideal state.[3] For Plato, art was a distortion or, at the least, an embellishment of the truth and poets and storytellers were imposters who had no direct experience of what they were describing. Since an understanding of truth was the goal of a philosopher, art and poetry should be excluded from consideration in philosophical systems. Plato may also have had a deeper, subliminal intent. We saw earlier how poetry in a non-literate, oral society embodied the culture of that society. Contained in poetry was their whole tradition and body of knowledge since only in poetry could this be transmitted from generation to generation. Plato may have seen the poet as the outmoded representative of that primitive oral culture which he firmly and finally rejected in favor of the new rationalism of logic and dialectics.

Our word imagination derives from the Latin *imaginatio* which in turn at least from the late Middle Ages was synonymous with the Greek *phantasia*. In its earliest meaning *phantasia* denoted appearance, the appearance of an object in the material world filtered through the senses. From this it was a natural progression that *phantasia* acquired the further meaning of the mental image of that object as well as its exterior appearance. Plotinus in his revision of Platonist dogma, restored the legitimacy of the poetic process, which in his view, through the mechanism of *phantasia*, became the means by which the Forms could be expressed in the sensible world. The *phantasia* was the channel through which the body communicated with the soul and through the soul with the eternal Forms. St. Augustine, in turn, adapted the ideas of Plotinus to conform to the Christian

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1 Plato *Ion* 534c. See the Perseus project of Tufts University on the Web. Sidney in his *Apologie for Poetrie* 1581 who also quotes this reference, points out that the Latin word for diviner, *vates*, can also mean poet.

2 Cicero *Pro Archia* VIII, 18. In his translation of Plato's word for frenzy (*De Oratore* II, 46,194) Cicero uses the Latin *furor* a word which was taken up in the Renaissance by both Ficino and Bruno in their neoPlatonic treatises.

3 Plato *Republic* 387B

message. Through the channel of his imagination and with the symbols of his art, the artist could express the ineffable ideas which he had perceived in the mind of God. The mystical system was complete and coherent. The 'enthusiasm' that was generated in the rites of the Dionysiac and Orphic mystery cults, the *sympatheia* or harmony of the universe through the channels of which magic could operate, the mechanisms of dreams and divination, the visions of the mystics, the erotic furor of Ficino and Bruno, were all elements or expressions of the same madness, frenzy or fantasy which drove the divine inspiration of the poet. This continued dependence of the artist on this divine inspiration is illustrated by the words of Barthélemy Aneau[1] in the introduction to his 1552 emblem book, *Picta poesis, ut pictura poesis erit,* Painting is poetry, just as poetry should be painting. He puts it that "whatever poet, then, sets out to compose any work should first call upon the succor of the divinity."[2] And unsurprisingly, analogies were made between the inspiration of poetry and the creation of the universe itself. We have seen how Plotinus called the world "the Poetry of God" and this metaphor appears continually in the literature right up to the end of the period. Thus Tesauro: "even almighty God rejoices in playing the Poet and fabulous Wit, and toys with mankind, veiling his highest conceits with words and figurative symbols."[3]

One variation of the theme of the divine frenzy was the poetic inspiration given by drink. This was no mere secularization of the trope but a reference to Bacchus, the god of wine, and the enthusiasm attained from the fruit of the vine in the Dionysian rites which was akin to the poetic frenzy. It was not by chance that the climax of Rabelais' epic comes when his heroes seek apotheosis at the Temple of the Bottle.[4] Some emblems show a further gloss on the idea with pictures of Bacchus with wings so that he could take flight after receiving the inspiration of the fruit of the vine. In the emblem book, *Minerva Brittana*, Henry Peacham gives an emblem in which ivy is entwined with a grapevine rather than with laurel.

Certainly the poets themselves did not hesitate to emphasize their divine status. One of the most common motifs of all in the emblem books was the translation of the divinity of poetic inspiration to the immortality

[1] To emphasize his classical credentials Aneau sometimes wrote under the penname Le Quintil Horatian.

[2] Aneau 1552 trans. Clements.

[3] Tesauro 37

[4] Rabelais *Gargantua* Book V Chapter 34 et seq.

that was earned through their work or the famous phrase *scripta manent,*[1] or writing endures. This was often illustrated by the contrast between an open book and the insubstantial artifacts of man symbolized by shattered ruins. As Horace again put it: works of poetry are more lasting than bronze and

> The Muse forbids the man worthy of praise to die
> The Muse blesses him with the reward of heaven.[2]

Poetry was thus more than just a mode of literary expression or even of philosophical expression, it was philosophy itself. This is emphasized by the pragmatist, Aristotle. He begins the *Poetics* by intimating that poetry is more serious than history since history relates individual facts but poetry deals with general principles[3] and this was a sentiment echoed throughout the age of symbolism. Boccaccio wrote that there was no fundamental difference between poetry and theology.[4] Giordano Bruno has a passage confirming the conflation of poets, painters and philosophers: all three of them use the imagination to give expression to their ideas, "whence philosophers are in some ways painters and poets; poets are painters and philosophers; painters are philosophers and poets."[5] Boethius in his treatise on music exemplifies the orthodox view of the status of artists in his treatment of both performers and composers. The musicians are not worthy of the name since they only obey orders, and the composers are only conduits of inspiration of the Muses. The critics "alone are the real musicians since their function consists in reason and philosophy"![6] Minos in his commentary on Alciato's emblem on Ganymede cites the Platonist writer Maximus Tyrius and confirms the status

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[1] The proverb has an interesting history. There are two versions: the first is *Verba volent, scripta manent*, words fly away and writing endures and the second is *Vox audita perit, littera scripta manet*, the spoken word perishes, the written word remains. Both are grammatically correct. In the first place, scripta and manent are plural, scripta being the neuter plural of the past participle of the verb to write and in the second scripta is the singular of the adjective referring to the feminine noun littera or letter. I have seen versions which mix up the two which of course are incorrect. It is generally assumed that the origin of both versions is Horace's dictum in the *Ars Poetica* 390*, nescit vox missa reverti,* a word once sent abroad can never return, although Horace was referring here to a specific event.

[2] Horace *Odes* IV, viii, 28

[3] *Poetics* 1451b.

[4] Boccaccio *Genealogie deorum gentilium* Books 14 and 15

[5] Bruno *Opera Latina* II, ii, 135 cited Yates 1999 248

[6] Cited in Burke 37

of the poet, "For when you say philosopher, you think poet; and when you say yes to the poet, you say yes to the philosopher."[1]

Ganymede was the handsome youth who was snatched from earth by an eagle and carried to Olympus to be the cupbearer of Zeus. Some said that it was his physical beauty that attracted Zeus, others that it was the purity of his mind and they point to the etymology of the name Ganymede which according to Minos means 'he who rejoices in the wisdom of God', *Gannuais medeos tes dios.* [2] Alciato interprets the myth as the allegory of the spirit rising to heaven to become one with God and it was thus for Renaissance writers a motif which more than any other symbolized neoPlatonic mysticism. It is noteworthy that Tesauro used the same story at the conclusion of his work on metaphor, *Il Cannochiale Aristotelico,* the Aristotelian Telescope*,* to exemplify each of the many symbolic literary species that he had described.

Plato did not succeed in burying poetry but the unsavory association of artistic inspiration with untruth which he had imputed to it lasted throughout the age of symbolism. It was reflected in the Latin word for the creation or composition of poetry, *fingere,* the origin of our word feign, to be contrasted with *facere,* which is the standard Latin translation of 'make'. In the Middle Ages and even late in the Renaissance, poetry was associated with lying and untruth. Conrad of Hirschau writing in the 12th century said that the poet is called a *fictor* "because he either speaks falsehood instead of the truth or mingles the truth with the false."[3]

The Italian writers on the device, struggling with the nature of metaphor as the source of inspiration, introduced the concept of *argudezza* or the false metaphor as an explanation of the phenomenon. Puttenham, the English theorist in his *Art of Poesie* of 1589 states

> As figures be the instruments of ornament in every language, so they be also in a sorte abuses or rather trespasses in speech …..drawing [the mind] from plainnesse and simplicitie to a certain doublenesse whereby our talke is the more guilefull & abusing, for what els is your Metaphor but an inversion of sence by transport; your *allegorie* [but] a duplicitie of meaning or dissimulation under covert and darke intendments.[4]

Aristotle as was his custom took a practical stance and allowed that poetry should be included in his definition of knowledge. This latter had

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[1] Alciato Emblem 36. See Clements 97 for a description of a number of emblem books which from their titles purport to be books of philosophy.

[2] Alciato *Emblemata* 1577

[3] Conrad of Hirschau *Dialogus Super Auctores* cited and trans. Eco 1986 106

[4] Puttenham 1589 154 cited in Silcox 1999

three elements: theoretical, practical and poietic and the poietic involved the arts and crafts, *techne*, and included poetry in the narrow sense. But even Aristotle praises Homer for having taught poets 'to lie properly' since although for him the function of poetry was *mimesis*, or imitation, of the activity of men there was room in this definition for the creative interpretation of what men should or ought to be doing.[1] The poet, Aristotle said, "must always represent one of three things--either things as they were or are; or things as they are said and seem to be; or things as they should be."[2]

There was apparently also scope in *mimesis* for creations of fantasy as Plato had already pointed out[3] so fortunately there was little to be excluded from the definition. Furthermore, by later times, mimesis came to include copying from the works of other artists. Indeed plagiarism was encouraged by most theorists no doubt due to the influence of the rhetorical figure of authority. When a large part of the educational process consisted of copying, categorizing and learning extracts from the classical and ecclesiastical authors it is difficult to see how it could have been otherwise. In fact, in Roman times the law of *scriptura* provided that the owner of a piece of paper or parchment was also the owner of the writing on it and as we have seen in relation to marginal notes and glosses on manuscripts, it was regarded as an honor, a compliment and mark of affection to copy the work of other writers.[4] "Our art is wholly imitation, of nature first, and then, since it cannot of itself rise so high, of things done by those whom one judges better master than oneself."[5]

Aristotle makes it clear at the beginning of his treatise that what he has to say applies to all art and indeed also to music. Song according to Aristotle was one of the six essential aspects of tragedy.[6] Although little is known about early Greek music it can be assumed that it was an integral part of the religious rites I have referred to and probably accompanied most poetry recitals. The sophistication of the meter of Greek poetry is presumably evidence of this musical accompaniment. We also can point to the fact that the Latin word *carmen* was used interchangeably throughout the period up to the Renaissance to mean both poem and song. Aristotle divided poetry into tragedy, comedy and the epic although he has

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[1] See for further discussion Curtius 398

[2] *Poetics* 1460b

[3] *Sophist* 236c "these then are the two forms of the image making art that I meant, the likeness-making and the fantastic" (Eikastike kai phantastiken).

[4] Percival Davies 1969 520

[5] Vasari 1988 31

[6] *Poetics* 1450a. The six are plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle, and song.

little to say about comedy and it is assumed that this was to come in a second book of the *Poetics* which is now lost.[1] He lays down rules for what is to be included in plot, emphasizes that the aim of poetry is the 'marvelous' and addresses at length the use of metaphor and other uses of words and modes of diction. Above all Aristotle emphasizes the seriousness of the poetic undertaking and the wheel comes full circle with his indication that the most marvelous subject of all is the inexplicable.[2]

Aristotle's *Poetics,* written in about 330 BC, was the first authority for all subsequent discussions of aesthetic and poetic theory and almost as influential was the Roman poet Horace who developed several of the major themes in contemporary poetic theory: the extent to which poetry was a product of nature or of art, whether the aim of poetry should be pleasure or utility, the relationship of poetry to painting and perhaps most important of all, the topic of decorum, how every part of a poem should be rightly related to the whole and how form should be properly related to content. His Art of Poetry*,* written on his approaching death as a letter in verse to his friends, the Pisones, was, soon after, entitled the *Ars Poetica* by Quintilian who described it as a work of genius.

Ignoring the contradiction between the concept of poetry as both the product of divine inspiration and as the creation of the poet himself, Horace discussed whether genius should be considered the joint product of nature and art or just one or the other. Put it another way; were poets born or made from practice and hard work?

> It has been made a question, whether good poetry be derived from nature or from art. For my part, I can neither conceive what study can do without a rich [natural] vein, nor what rude genius can avail of itself: so much does the one require the assistance of the other, and so amicably do they conspire [to produce the same effect].[3]

This topic also bore on the inherent tensions and contradictions in the underlying aesthetic theory of *mimesis* to which I referred above. If it was the nature of the artistic process to copy the exterior world where was the scope for inspiration or imagination? This paradox could be solved

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[1] A short treatise from the 1st century BC, the *Tractatus Coislianus*, has been assumed to contain a summary of Aristotle's views on comedy.

[2] I have used the online edition of the *Poetics* and the *Art of Poetry* of Horace available from the Perseus Project located at //:*www.perseus.tufts.edu.* (2/4/2004). In respect of the *Poetics* they state that all modern editions are based on an 11th Century Paris manuscript which of course was written a millennium and a half after the original. The Arabic translations which were recovered later were extremely debased. The first proper Latin translation was by Valla published in 1498 and the Aldine Greek *editio princeps* was in 1508.

[3] Horace *Art of Poetry* 408-411 trans. and ed. by C. Smart.

on one level by accepting that art in the sense of practice and technique when applied to the ground of nature could, in formal Aristotelian terminology,[1] assist man in bringing his potential into actuality. But the exact contribution of art to this process was always a matter for discussion. Estienne, was clear that the primacy lay in nature.

> I set a greater value upon these that are drawing from Nature, because this is as it were the Mistresse of the other....all the excellence and vertue which we find in things artificial receive their origin from Nature, whereunto the nearer Art approaches, so much the more perfect and excellent are its operations.[2]

But most commentators took the opposite view emphasizing the superiority of the imagination. In his *Apollonius of Tyana*, Philostratus wrote "that was done by the imagination which is a better artist than imitation, for imitation can only depict what it saw, but imagination what it has not seen. "[3] Sidney said the same: "literature creates a golden world where nature left a bronze." And Gracian: "the business of art is to perfect nature."[4] And so did Dürer: "for art standeth firmly fixed in Nature – and who can rend her from thence, he only possesseth her." Indeed there was a nagging sense among some thinkers that nature was basically evil; theologically, man and nature were the product of the Adamic fall and only art was capable of restoring nature to its pre-lapsarian perfection.

All this gave plenty of scope to contemporary poets and the contrasts between nature and art were frequently used as a motif by the emblem writers. The most common symbol employed was a combination of ivy and laurel, the first representing art, technique or hard work and practice and the second being the symbol of natural ability. This was again used by Aneau in his *Picta Poesis*. A variation of the motif was the legend of the mother bear licking her cubs into shape after birth which represented the contribution of work to the product of nature. Whitney explains that even those who are not naturally artistic can improve by practice and finishes his emblem with the line.

> Then have not doubt, for art maie nature helpe.

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[1] "As a general proposition, the arts either on the basis of Nature carry things further than Nature can or they imitate Nature." Aristotle *Physics* II, viii, 199a, 15-20

[2] Estienne 1645 trans. Blount 1646 64

[3] Philostratus *Apollonius of Tyana* VI, 19

[4] Gracian 1649 trans. Chambers 1962 7

Thinke howe the beare doth forme her uglye whelpe.[1]

The next question which Horace addressed and which exercised artists before and since, was whether poetry should only give pleasure or should it also be useful? The question was by no means easy and one which went all the way back to Plato's alignment of beauty and good in the *Symposium* and to Aristotle's *Ethics* in which the latter describes utility and delight as the two forms of the ultimate good. Horace's solomonesque answer to his own question was not unnaturally that poetry should do both. The topic was a continual source of debate in the Middle Ages, a debate which nowadays would be solved prosaically by saying that the function of all manmade objects falls somewhere on the line of the spectrum between pleasure and utility, the exact position depending on the cultural background of the viewer but in the late Renaissance, *Le doux l'utile*, the sweet and the useful, became the watchword of the early emblem writers from Giarda and Covarruvias to Cats and Aresi.[2] Menestrier, the emblem theorist, in his *L'Art des Emblèmes*, the Art of Emblems, of 1684 restated the position; all the subtlety of the emblem consists in combining these two essential elements. "It is this sweet mixed with the useful which Horace calls perfection in works of the mind."[3] Christopher Giarda was unusual since he particularly focussed on the pleasure that was to be derived from poetry. "For as conviction to the orator, truth to the historian, knowledge to the philosopher, delight alone – or utility only if joined to the highest delight – should be prescribed for poetry."[4]

The fact remained however that the trend for the emblem writers was towards the other end of this spectrum. In the *Allusioni, imprese et emblemi,* Allusions, devices and emblems, by Fabricii da Teramo, the author aimed at overcoming "the monstrous sphinx of ignorance unleashed in this country."[5] Menestrier made a similar point, devoting a whole chapter to a discussion of Horace's instruction that poetry should be sweet and useful; according to him, Menestrier, the emblem was principally "a kind of instruction in pictures to regulate the affairs of men." And for Estienne the purpose of the emblem was "to instruct us, by subjecting the figure to our view and the sense to our understanding." Estienne also compared poetry with the creation of the device which "excelleth poetry in that it

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[1] Whitney 1586 92. The metaphor is also used by Wechel the publisher to describe in his introduction the new cuts for the first authorized edition of Alciato's emblems in 1534.

[2] Giarda 1628; Horozco y Covarruvias 1589; Cats 1627; Aresi 1613

[3] Menestrier *L'Art des Emblèmes* 1684 207

[4] Giarda *Icones Symbolicae* trans. and cited Clements 80

[5] This and the following two quotations are cited in Clements 230

joyneth profit with pleasure; for as much as the most part of Poeticall inventions tend only to administer delight."[1]

We shall see later how, by the end of the symbolic age, many emblem authors were using for their books the simple title, *Moral Emblems,* but from the beginning some went beyond being just exponents of ethical principles and were overtly didactic in purpose. Clements gives several examples of educational emblem books[2] and cites Alciato's Emblem *Submovendum Ignorantiam*, On the Removal of Ignorance, where it is explained that the monster depicted in the emblem represents "the lightheartedness, bland desires and haughty hearts of the boorish and ignorant." Paradin in his emblem book went even further stating that it was well-known that emblems were "a stimulus to virtue and a consolation and comfort in adversity."[3] He defined virtue as the fulfillment of man's moral and intellectual potential while others said that man's virtue was characterized by his search for wisdom. In any event, the accepted symbol for virtue was no less than the sun itself. Thus Giarda: "the sun so truly fills by its rays the world with virtue, that virtue, like poetry itself, unmindful of old age and death, keeps growing daily."[4] Similarly Estienne characterized the device. "The efficacie of a Devise…serving as an example to others, … the Beholders are excited and inflamed to the search of Vertue."[5]

This was a big ambition for the emblematist but they were not hesitant to preach on the desirability of virtue, truth and morality. Again, this emphasis on virtue was derived from Aristotle's *Ethics*. According to him, the exercise of intellectual and moral virtue was the only path to happiness. We shall see how Christian militants, both Catholic and Protestant, seized upon the emblem book as an educational and devotional weapon in the religious wars of the Reformation and many of these authors were happy to admit to the sweetness of their composition in accordance with Horatian theory provided it made their moral or utilitarian message more palatable.

Thus the didacticism which characterized medieval and Renaissance literature, including the literature of symbolism, was not just a function of the Christian moral imperative, it was also inherent in the traditions of classical literary theory adumbrated by Horace and was yet another feature of classicism which was inherited by Renaissance authors. An ex-

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[1] Estienne 1645 trans. Blount 1646 14

[2] Clements 92 and see Ayers Bagley *Emblematica* 7, 2, 1993 321

[3] Paradin 1551, Preface, cited by Clements 75

[4] Giarda 93 cited by Clements 105

[5] Estienne 1645 trans. Blount 1646 15

pression of the tradition can be seen in the tendency of authors of many of the great epics of the age, from the *Anticlaudianus*, to the *Romance of the Rose* to the *Poliphili*, to include encyclopaedic descriptions of life and nature in their work which were often irrelevant to the story line. Alain de Lille in his *Anticlaudianus* wrote fulsomely in his Prologue of his didactic achievements, saying:

> since there emerges from this work the rules of grammatical syntax, the maxims of dialectical discourse, the accepted ideas of oratorical rhetoric, the wonders of mathematical lore, the melody of music, the principles of geometry, theories about writing, the excellence of the dignity of astronomy, a view of the celestial theophany, let not men without taste thrust their interpretations on this work."[1]

The original Latin of 'a view of the celestial theophany' in this passage is *theophanicae coelistis emblema* an unusual and early use of the word emblem. Perhaps mosaic in the sense used by Augustine would be a good translation. De Lille also uses the word in the same context in another of his works, the *Regulae de Sacra Theologia*, Rules of Sacred Theology.[2]

Horace also considered the relationship of poetry to painting. The two arts had long been seen to have a close relationship. According to Plutarch, the Greek poet Simonides, who, as we shall see, originated the Art of Memory, also had conceived the aphorism that painting is mute poetry and poetry a speaking picture.[3] This conceit was then perpetuated through to the Renaissance by Horace's enduring phrase, '*ut pictura poesis',* 'as is painting, so is poetry'. The persistence of this idea and of this phrase is based on one of the great misapprehensions of literary history since in this passage from his *Art of Poetry*, Horace was by no means conflating poetry and painting. He was merely using aspects of painting as a metaphor to illustrate the several ways to judge successful poetry but despite this misunderstanding, his dictum on the unity of poetry and painting was taken up by poets, commentators and the emblem authors in earnest. I have already mentioned Aneau's *Picta poesis,* and there was also Daniel Manasser's *Poesia tacens, Pictura loquens,* Silent poetry and Speaking pictures of 1630 and Daniel Stolcius' *Viridarium chymicum, poeticis picturis illustratum,* Chemical pleasure garden, illustrated with Poetical pictures, an alchemical emblem book of 1624.[4] Menestrier in his *L'Art des Emblèmes* has a chapter on *picta poesis* theory which begins: "if Painting is

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[1] Trans. Sheridan

[2] Curtius 119

[3] Plutarch *Moralia; De gloria Atheniensum* iii, 346f-347c

[4] See Bath 1994 56

mute poetry and poetry a speaking picture, then the emblem which has the beauty of both also merits these two names." Henry Estienne emphasized this commonality between the elements of the emblem. Picture and poem should be "so united together, that being considered apart they cannot explicate themselves distinctly the one without the other."[1] Daniel Cramer begins the introduction to his *Quatuor Decades Emblematum Sacrorum* Four Decades of Sacred Emblems of 1617, a Rosicrucian emblem book, with

> The Spirit that creates poetry moves within those
> Who show weighty matters represented in pictures
> For what is a picture but a silent poem.[2]

There was much discussion amongst theorists as to which of the two was the superior form. We have already seen how imagery was seen as the highest step on the ladder of the mystical ascent to God. Pierre Le Moyne in his *De l'Art des Devises* of 1666 an ascerbic yet influential treatise on the theory of devices points out that in spite of the accepted equivalence of poetry and painting how much easier it is to express the sense of an idea in a picture than in words. On the other hand, many artists and writers suggested that, of the two, poetry was the superior form. It is said that there is no example of a painter from classical times to the late Renaissance being awarded the accolade of '*ingenium*' or genius. This was reserved only for writers.[3] Thus, Sir Philip Sidney in his *Apologie for Poetrie* from 1581: "I think it may be manifest that the poet, with that same hand of delight, doth draw the mind more effectually than any other art doth." And in the treatise of Leonello D'Este: "the *ingenium* of writers is a divine thing and beyond the reach of painters."[4] Not surprisingly, it was Leonardo da Vinci who first came down definitively on the side of the painter, finding at least eight reasons why painting was the supreme art and confirming that "the poet says he can describe in beautiful verse a thing which really stands for something else by way of simile. The painter replies that he can do the same thing and in this respect he too is a poet."[5] George Richardson in his English translation of Ripa's *Iconologia* dated 1778 commented on the similarity between poet and painter; a painter is

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[1] Estienne 1645 trans. Blount 1646 cited Clements 25

[2] Trans. Tait

[3] Perhaps the earliest example of a non-literary figure is the case of the 15th century architect Filippo Brunelleschi whose epitaph describes him as a man of great genius.

[4] Quoted Baxandall 304

[5] Da Vinci *Paragone* trans. Richter 1949

always looking for a repertory "where he may find sensible images that represent with truth and precision, invisible qualities and objects."

One of the paradoxes about the concept of mimesis at least in painting if not sculpture was that it was literally impossible to achieve accurate representation of natural objects until the invention of perspective by Alberti in about 1435. Before that time it is perhaps not surprising that *ekphrasis* or descriptive writing particularly about art was thought superior to the art itself.

The Renaissance is, of course, well known for the revival of classical painting, architecture and sculpture. I have also outlined the extent of the reintroduction and the translation of classical texts. What is perhaps not so well appreciated is that at the same time there was an extraordinary revival in Latin composition in both poetry and prose and as a further sign of enthusiasm for the tradition, most Renaissance authors writing in Latin, latinized their names so that for instance Claude Mignault became Claudius Minos and Van Veen became Vaenius. Perhaps there is nothing better than this frenzy to emulate the classical writers to illustrate the insidious power of tradition and the extraordinary hold that the rediscovered classical culture had over educated people of the time and for centuries to come. This enthusiasm was derived, as Burckhard put it, from "an intense admiration and overpowering sense of another's superiority."[1] We should not be cynical about this; it is better to admire the Renaissance artists and writers for the many aspects of their genuine creativity and reevaluate at our greater perspective their passion for the intellectual achievements of classical times. Recognition of these achievements and the predominant influence that Greek and Roman culture has had over the course of our Western civilization is now in danger of being completely lost.

Latin was of course taught in the schools of the Renaissance. It was the language of the Bible and had been the universal language of educated people and the church for more than a millennium. But now intellectuals throughout Europe took it upon themselves to versify upon every subject imaginable and in every format that writers in classical times had employed. An incomplete list of subject matter would include

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[1] Cited by Wind 183. Some writers went to extreme lengths to emulate the ancients. Pierio Giovio whom we shall meet as writing an authoritative text on the rules for creating the device, published a book, *Historiarum sui temporis libri XXXXV*, or 45 books on the history of his own time, which contained large gaps after the manner of a rediscovered text. Isjewijn 5. Even Michelangelo couldn't resist the same temptation; he forged a statue of a Bacchus in the antique style which was placed in a sculpture garden of such pieces. Wind 177

poems on philosophy, agriculture, gardens, fishing, hunting, astrology, geography, medicine, alchemy, sports, art, printing, guns, balloons, ophthalmology, mushroom cooking, travel, grammar, calendars and many more.[1] Many of these poems were short but many were very long: there were epics on heroic subjects and didactic works which took a lifetime to compose. Perhaps the record for the 16th Century is the 20,000 verses of the *Victoria Deorum* by the Polish poet Clonovius composed between 1587 and 1595[2] although neoLatin poetry had never had a monopoly on length. The French morality play *L'homme pécheur,* Man the Sinner, published in 1494 had 22,000 verses.[3]

We shall see that education in Latin composition was based on the Art of Rhetoric, one of the seven liberal arts. In the traditional formulation of the seven Arts, poetry was included in Grammar or Rhetoric but by the late Middle Ages and Renaissance particularly after the introduction of the categorizations of Aristotle and the work of the scholastics, opinions differed as to what was or should be included in the curriculum of liberal arts and in some formulations poetry was included as a separate discipline. Ficino's view was that "this Golden Age, as it were, has brought back to light the Liberal Arts which were almost extinct; Grammar, Poetry, Rhetoric, Painting, Architecture, Music and Singing to the Lyre." Certainly poetry together with grammar, rhetoric, history and moral philosophy[4] was one of the five disciplines of the humanist curriculum which was revived in the Italian Renaissance. Humanism or the study of the humanities as it was originally and narrowly defined was confined to these five subjects and could be contrasted with other branches of learning such as logic, mathematics or medicine.

Aristotle and Horace were the fathers of aesthetic and poetic theory for the Renaissance and if nothing else inspired many writers on the subject. There was Sidney's treatise which I have already referred to and others included J.C. Scaliger's *Ars Poeticae*, the Art of Poetry. Most of these were stereotyped and followed the same format with three parts, the first a review of the history of poetry, then a description of the different types of poetry and finally a description of techniques of the genre. Scaliger at least was of his time in attempting to unify the various strands of theory

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[1] A full discussion of Latin poetry and prose in the Renaissance and after or NeoLatin as it is called is contained in *The Companion to NeoLatin Studies* by Ijsewijn and Sacré. They state that the 1100 pages of this Companion are hardly enough to contain even an outline of the subject.

[2] Ijsewijn 39

[3] Spiess 15

[4] Kristeller 22

into one. First he considered the primary purpose of poetry to be didactic and thus it was appropriate in poetry to employ the techniques of persuasion which were to be found in rhetoric. He also made a determined effort to reconcile the Platonic forms with Aristotle's aesthetic concept of *mimesis*. According to him, words were the material representations of the eternal Ideas which were filtered through the ideas in the mind of the poet. The concepts treated in poetry were ultimately imitations of the Platonic forms. The same synthesis is seen in Scipione Ammirato's book of devices, *Rota overo dell'imprese*, where he suggests that the device is both body and soul, the signifier of the hidden meaning and that the device is a syllogism: the words are the major propositions, the image is the minor proposition and the signified is the conclusion.[1]

Horace still had his followers in the 18th Century. Jacobus Boschius in his *Symbolographia* of 1702, a massive emblem book addressed to the continuing Erastian controversy,[2] with some two thousand emblems and devices,[3] introduced his work with a seventy page introduction and exposition of the theory of symbols in Latin verse modelled directly on Horace's masterpiece. But this work represented almost the last of the influence of the classical theorists which finally died away in the Enlightenment and with the onset of Romanticism.

· Order and Propriety ·

I have hinted at another element in the theories of painting and poetry of the time and that is the concept of propriety as the ultimate criterion of artistic achievement. An inquiry into this topic goes well beyond a discussion of what was or was not proper as the subject matter of works of imagination. It introduces us to the subtle relationship perceived by contemporaries between order and ornament, between what was appropriate and how it was to be expressed, between content and form. Both Latin and Greek had this subtle relationship which is now expressed in our words decorum and decoration, and cosmos and cosmetic. The fact that we now see these pairs of expressions as contrasting rather than complementing each other shows as well as anything the extent of the cultural and literary revolution that took place in the 17th century and the

[1] See the exposition in Caldwell 57.

[2] Erastus, a 16th century theologian, had proposed in his 75 theses published in 1589 that evil-doers should not be excluded from the sacraments.

[3] The book is unusual in that the images are printed, twelve to a page, separately from the motto and subscription (page 224).

deterioration of the old classical disciplines into the mannerism of the Baroque.

This topic is particularly relevant for our theme since there was a universal understanding by the authors of books of emblems and devices that their work was suitable as a guide to decorators, architects and artisans. This ambition and the simultaneous linkage to the moral and spiritual aims of the symbolic literature are counterintuitive to modern sensibility. To us, the decorative has a slightly pejorative tone and ornament has an implication of gratuitous excess. Nowadays, the decorative arts go hand in hand with craft and are the ugly sisters of the fine arts. We must reconcile this modern view with the stated ideals of the emblem authors and other writers of the age and explain the fact that, during the age of symbolism, the word decoration had a significantly different, more serious tone to it than it does now and only with the decline of the symbolic mode of thought, did the meaning and the practice of decoration take on its modern implications.

The Greek word for decoration was *Kosmos* but this was the secondary sense; it also had the more fundamental meaning of 'order'. Both senses went back to ancient times, at least to the earliest surviving instances of Greek literature, to Homer, where he explicitly uses the two meanings.[1] As 'order', we find the phrases *eu kata kosmon*, 'well in order', and *ou kata kosmon*, 'not in order' and this idiomatic use itself suggests that the distinction between order and ornament had been common long before he was writing. We thus get little direct etymological evidence from Homer or any other of the classical authors as to how one meaning could be derived from the other or which came first and thus might have had the greater significance. We begin to glimpse however that to order was to construct, to construct was to bring order from disparate or chaotic parts and ornament was the end result of the ordering process.

Aristotle was one of the first to use the phrase *holon kosmon* or 'complete ordering' for the universe but he also habitually used kosmos in the ornamental sense, for instance and famously, to describe one of the eight varieties of word which constitute poetic language.[2] In this context, *kosmos* is usually translated as ornament but frustratingly Aristotle does not

[1] Of the eighteen uses of the word in both the Iliad and the Odyssey, fifteen of them mean order and two of them refer to ornaments in the modern sense, for the trappings of a horse and for the dress of a woman, and the final one describes the construction or 'ordering' of the wooden horse.

[2] Aristotle *Poetics* 1457b. The eight types of word are: a common or current word, a strange or rare word, a metaphor, an ornament, a newly coined word and words that are shortened, lengthened or altered

any elaborate specifically on what he means by the word. This omission has always struck scholars as odd since he does describe at length the other seven words in his definition and to fill this literary lacuna, there has been much academic discussion. The simplest and most likely explanation according to some scholars is that a part of Aristotle's text has been lost. Others say that it was so obvious to Aristotle and to those he was writing for that it was not necessary to define it. Since metaphor is specifically one of the other definitions, metaphor cannot mean the same as kosmos which must refer to another kind of ornament. Lane Cooper makes an heroic survey of the possibilities and by process of elimination identifies the sort of word that Aristotle had in mind, the stuff of poetry, words which illuminate, beautify, ornament the text.

> the names of jewels,..words for incense and perfume… beautiful words from music,..'melody', 'harmony', 'choral', ..words from nature ..from the architecture and landscape-gardening of God and man. Wherever we find beauty, there shall we look for ornamental words; the word and its object belong together.[1]

Tesauro in his influential *Cannochiale Aristotelico* first published in 1654, referring to the same section of the *Poetics,* calls *kosmos* 'the genus and origin of all wit'.[2]

Plutarch, in his *Moralia*, also commented on the meaning of kosmos. "Pythagoras was the first philosopher that gave the name of kosmos to the world, from the order and beauty of it; for so that word signifies."[3] Here we have a good clue. Order for the Greeks was beauty. Beauty was harmony, beauty was proper proportion, beauty was the proper ordering of things. Aristotle confirms this in another part of the Poetics.

> Moreover, in everything that is beautiful, whether it be a living creature or any organism composed of parts, these parts must not only be orderly arranged but must also have a certain magnitude of their own; for beauty consists in magnitude and ordered arrangement.[4]

Much later, Balthasar Gracian in his 17th Century treatise on the Art of Wit could say the same thing. "With things seen, the proportion between the parts is beauty, among sounds it is harmony."[5] Quintilian, the Roman

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[1] Cooper 116
[2] Tesauro 1678 4
[3] Plutarch *Moralia* II, 1 Of the World trans. by W.W. Goodwin
[4] *Poetics* 7. 1450. 37. The point about the size of the object reinforces the argument about order. Aristotle goes on to say that if an object is small, its beauty cannot be observed since the parts and thus the order of its parts are too small to be seen at all.
[5] Gracian 1649 trans. Chambers 1962 95

authority on Rhetoric, also is quite specific in his appreciation of beauty. As an example, in a homely description, he says, "shall not beauty, then, be regarded in the planting of fruit trees? Who will deny it? I would arrange my trees in a certain order, and observe regular intervals between them."[1] Horace also emphasized propriety in his treatise on poetry. He said "let every species of writing fill with decorum its proper place."[2]

The Greeks were intellectually a disciplined people. We saw earlier how a belief in order was the answer of a primitive people to the apparent chaos of and changes in the natural world which dominated their existence and we saw how they invested this order with the sanction of moral authority. Order as a contrast to and a measure of control over these changes and this unpredictability was worthy of the highest human endeavor and ethical priority. We saw that Pythagoras had conceived of the cosmos as being represented by number and number has the attraction of being both discrete and ordered. Both beauty and morality lay in the fixed hierarchical ordering or construction of the world and the universe. The hierarchy of the great chain of being was proper order; it was right and it was beautiful.

Numerous authorities can be quoted to confirm this thought. Thus Hermes Trismegistus, "and rightly is the Kosmos so named for all things in it are wrought into an ordered whole…..Thus the name Kosmos may be applied to it in a secondary sense as well as literally."[3] The Christian theologians said the same. God's initial creation of order in the universe was described as ornament. In *Genesis* II, 1 after describing how 'thus the heavens and the earth were finished,' the Latin Vulgate continues '*et omnis eorum ornatus'* 'and all of them were ordered.' Inconveniently, the translators of the King James Version did not translate the word *ornatus* but blandly left the phrase as 'and all the host of them.' In his turn, St. Basil characterizes the process of creation by the very words *kosmou kosmon,* the ordering of the universe and later, describing how during the creation, God had given man a soul, Hugh of St. Victor wrote, "without he adorned you with the senses, within with wisdom…his gifts of wisdom are, as it were, precious and splendid jewels for display"[4]

In Latin, we get the same subtle distinction, this time between decorum and decoration. Aquinas writing in Latin said, "thus the supreme beauty (*decor*) would be lost to the creation if there were lacking that order

[1] Quintilian 8, 3 cited Cooper 127
[2] Horace *Ars Poetica* 92 trans. C. Smart
[3] *Hermetica* 9, 8. trans. Walter Scott
[4] Hugh of St. Victor *Soliloquy on the Ernest Money of the Soul* trans. Kevin Herbert cited by Fletcher 132

by which things are dissimilar and unequal." And Shakespeare in the opening lines of his 54th Sonnet.

> O how much more doth beauty beauteous seem
> By that sweet ornament which truth doth give![1]

Since to decorate or to ornament meant to put into order, the term decoration applied to individual elements of that order and beyond that to the items which designated rank or position in the order. Perhaps the closest modern survival of the original meaning of decoration is its use as a military or civil medal, a decoration, a demonstration of rank in the hierarchy of society. A similar meaning for cosmos, at least in the Renaissance, was a signet ring again an object (for instance, the Bishop's ring) which confirmed the hierarchical status of the wearer.[2] We see later how there was a whole genre of books including books of emblems and devices expounding the origins of engraved rings and one of the Renaissance meanings of the word symbol was a ring. Thus the link between the two meanings expressed by decorum and decoration can be seen to be and perhaps always was a symbolic one. Decoration or ornament was the symbol of that profound order, the ordering of the cosmos by the law and will of God.

For all the arts in the Renaissance, proportion, order, fitness and decorum was the principal criterion of successful achievement. In the visual arts, decorum was the depiction of nature and particularly the human body in accordance with the canon of proportion. The same went for architecture and there were a number of Renaissance architectural treatises which equated the human body with the architectural form.[3] After all, the body was the microcosm which shared the perfection of the macrocosm and both in turn were expressions of God. Alberti, the 15th Century writer and architect, reflecting the suggestion of Aristotle quoted above that beauty lay in the appropriate arrangement of the parts, had as a guiding principle for his designs the term, *concinnitas*, loosely translated as harmony or appropriateness. "This was to compose parts that are quite separate from each other by their nature according to some precise rule so that they correspond to one another in appearance."[4]

Returning to literature, we see that decorum was the proper integration of form and subject matter and how well it was expressed was deemed its clarity or as Tuve puts it, its "luminous significancy" and

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[1] Shakespeare *Sonnet 54*
[2] Fletcher 111
[3] Panofsky 92 cites works by Filarete, Manetti and Lomazzo in addition to Alberti.
[4] Cited by Nathaniel Wallace in *Emblematica* 8, 1, 1994 22

"Propriety or decorum was the basic criterion in terms of which all others were to be understood."[1] This meant suitability in terms of the person who spoke, to whom he spoke, of whom or what and the time, the place and the purpose, above all, should be appropriate to its place in the hierarchy. Estienne had the same thought in mind when he criticized the motto, *Festina Lente*, illustrated by the celebrated motif of the dolphin and the anchor as not appropriate material for a device since the two elements, dolphin and anchor, did not have a natural and thus proper relationship to each other.[2] In his enumeration of the thirty-one essential criteria for the device, Tesauro put decorum as the thirty-first and most critical.[3] Erasmus emphasized that even jokes should be 'gentlemanly and mindful of propriety.'[4] We are also fortunate to have the importance of propriety confirmed by the English writer, George Puttenham, who in his popular textbook, *The Arte of Poesie*, published in 1589 put it,

> this lovely conformitie or proportion, or convenience between the sense and the sensible.[5]

His emphasis on beauty as order is shown in the essays in the introductions to both his Book II, *Of Proportion Poeticall.*

> It is said by such as professe the Mathematicall sciences, that all things stand by proportion, and that without it nothing could stand to be good or beautiful.

and Book III, *Of Ornament Poeticall*,

> This ornament we speake of is giuen to it by figures and figuratiue speaches, which be the flowers as it were and coulours that a Poet setteth vpon his language by arte, as the embroderer doth his stone and perle, or passements of gold vpon the stuffe of a Princely garment, or as th'excellent painter bestoweth the rich Orient coulours vpon his table of pourtraite

He emphasizes throughout that this ornamentation must be done in a manner which is appropriate to its place in the work and he ends his introduction.

> wherfore the chief prayse and cunning of our Poet is in the discreet vsing of his figures, as the skilfull painters is in the good conueyance of his coulours

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1 Tuve 103
2 Estienne/Blount 1646 44
3 Tesauro Chapter XIX
4 Erasmus 1522
5 Puttenham III, xxiii, 262 cited in Tuve 219

> and shadowing traits of his pensill, with a delectable varietie, by all measure and iust proportion, and in places most aptly to be bestowed.[1]

In this emphasis on propriety, Puttenham tied together many of the themes we have just reviewed. We saw that there was an underlying contradiction in the Aristotle's theory of mimesis; that this was partly resolved by allowing art in the sense of the technique, the experience and discipline of the artist to improve on or embellish nature. According to Puttenham, this embellishment was to be effected by the addition of decorum to the work. But when he came to the critical point of defining the nature of this decorum, he had to admit that it was a concept that "it is easier to conceive than express"[2] and other than employing synonyms in a circular fashion the best he could come up with was that the cultural élite would apply the appropriate criteria to the problem thus falling back again on the natural superiority of the educated over the illiterate.[3] But there was more in this failure of attribution than lack of imagination; Puttenham illustrated here a subtle shift in the nature of aesthetic decorum which paralleled the other changes taking place at the beginning of the 17th Century that were to usher in the end of the age of symbolism. These included the shift from delight to utility in the thrust of the emblem books, a reliance on social rather than literary forms in the definition of propriety, the use of prose in theatrical tragedies and the necessity to accommodate within literary theory new forms such as non-fiction prose derived from the emblem commentary and exemplified by the analytical essay of which Montaigne and Bacon were the first practitioners.[4]

· The Art of Rhetoric ·

Education during classical times and later consisted of instruction in the seven liberal arts, liberal coming from the Latin *liber,* free; the liberal arts were the curriculum suitable for a free man. *Ars* did not mean Art in the sense it has today, but rather Discipline, a subject or branch of knowledge which was reduced to a set of rules. The nearest Greek word for what we now call Art is *techne* and thus where the word Art is used in translation during the Renaissance it could equally and perhaps more appropriately be translated as Technique. The typical categorization of

[1] Puttenham 113

[2] Puttenham 261

[3] For a full discussion of this aspect of Puttenham's work see Attridge 1986

[4] For a further discussion see Imbrie 1987

the liberal arts was Grammar, Rhetoric and Dialectic (the *Trivium* or threefold way) and Arithmetic, Music, Geometry and Astronomy (the *Quadrivium*). These categories and the make up of each category varied over the centuries but the Trivium was regarded as the more important and of the three elements, Rhetoric was preeminent.

Rhetoric, the art of composition, was the foundation of educated Renaissance writing and public speaking just as it had been since classical times. To appreciate medieval and Renaissance literature, it is essential to have a grasp of the theoretical and pedagogical basis of that literature, what were its aims and how it was to be constructed. The elements of theories of composition were quite different from what they are in our own day and to appreciate the literary experience of the time we have to put ourselves into the minds of authors who were taught with a system that had been standard educational practice and was universally accepted for nearly two thousand years. Over the centuries, there had been modifications to the system and to the elements of the system which were transferred from one discipline to another, but the basics remained in place throughout and the rigidity that resulted had advantages and disadvantages. To learn and practice the Art of Rhetoric required extraordinary discipline. By the time of the Renaissance, a student needed to learn and employ fluently hundreds of figures of speech[1] and rules of composition which as one might expect from any system enduring over such a long period had become rigid and stultifying. This rigidity of the tradition of Rhetoric added to the fractured and enigmatic nature of contemporary works of literature which depended at least as much on form as on content. At least part of the pleasure of literature was from deciphering the figures of speech and judging the success of the work in terms of the composition as much as the subject matter. However, the very rigidity of the system was part of its attraction to contemporaries. As we saw, for them order was beauty.[2] Burkhardt expresses it: "to the ancients, rhetoric, with its sister studies, was the most indispensable complement to their life of regulated beauty and freedom, their arts, their poetry."[3]

In addition to Rhetoric the Trivium included Grammar and Dialectic. The elements of these disciplines were to some extent modified over the

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[1] See *The Forest of Rhetoric* at *//www.humanities.byu.edu/rhetoric/silva.htm* (2/4/2004) which lists some 400 figures of speech forming part of formal rhetoric. These were divided into two main groups, figures of language such as anaphora, the repetition of words at the beginning of successive sentences or clauses and figures of thought such as litotes, which includes phrases such as 'not bad' for 'good'.

[2] See the discussion of the relationship between décor and decoration on page 126

[3] Burkhardt 1852 304 cited Curtius 63

centuries but the following is the basic outline. The nature of Grammar is self-evident and it was the first subject in the curriculum. Grammar was followed in the student's career by Rhetoric. Not only was the subject matter different in the different disciplines but the manner of argument had to be distinguished among them. Derived originally from rules for oratory, Rhetoric was intended to persuade, or as we have seen, form opinions or *doxa* rather than merely inform. For Rhetoric, both *ethos*, the character of the speaker which Aristotle said, "may almost be called the most effective persuasion he possesses" and the makeup of the audience were vital elements. The nature of the composition depended on at whom it was directed. Rhetoric was intended to teach the speaker to make a point and it was legitimate indeed essential to employ emotional techniques or *pathos* to put over that point. Rhetoric thus differed from other elements of the curriculum which sought the truth or the means to the truth. Rhetoric was recognized as an Art the success of which lay in persuasion almost to the exclusion of the truth of content. Aristotle puts it again that "rhetoric then may be defined as the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever."[1] But Plato held Rhetoric in disdain. He had Socrates describe oratory as 'pandering' and "a spurious counterfeit of a branch of the art of government."[2] St. Augustine however had no hesitation in pursuing Rhetoric and sought to redirect its political aims to serve the purposes of the church and the pulpit although during the Middle Ages as public speaking fell into disuse, the teaching of rhetoric became mainly concerned with written composition and particularly with the writing of letters or *dictamen* as this was called.

Dialectic was also to be distinguished not only by its subject matter but by its rules of argument. Like Logic, Dialectic is a process of reasoning whose goal is to arrive at a philosophical truth but it proceeds from premises which are generally accepted opinions rather than the self evident premises of Logic. Furthermore, the dialectic method is composed of a question and answer session during which the speakers seek to reveal a larger truth by participating in a dialogue in such a way as to draw out information from each participant. It is a process of the compilation of small pieces of truth which are to be assembled into a more collective, comprehensive and potentially universal truth.[3]

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[1] Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1355b
[2] Plato *Gorgias* 463
[3] In a colorful passage, *Phaedrus* 275 D4, Plato defends Dialectic, that is oral discussion, against the new-fangled art of writing by pointing out that once put on paper words,

Rhetoric was made up of five 'canons' which were Invention or the discovery of ideas, Disposition or Arrangement, that is the organization of the ideas, Style, Memory and Delivery. We shall be concerned here particularly with Invention and Memory the two of which were also relevant to the art of Dialectic.

Invention was the element of Rhetoric concerned with the assembly of topics or arguments to be employed in composition and the development and history of the topic will take up a large part of this Chapter. *Topos* or topic in Greek was the etymological origin of *locus* in Latin meaning place. The places or topics of Rhetoric and Dialectic were the elements of argument for the two disciplines and we shall see that the places for Memory were equally as important. The origin of the concept of the topic was Aristotle's *Topica* although he himself says that Protagoras was the first to write down common topics or ideas and quotations. Aristotle's topics were the various mechanisms of argument[1] arranged by theme and Cicero the Roman author and orator in his own book, *Topica,* generally followed and simplified the ideas of Aristotle. One development made by Cicero was to include collections of quotations as one of these heads of argument. These collections were called *auctoritates* and authorities developed the status of a natural premise for the reasoning developed in Rhetoric and Dialectic. This mode of argument from authority was enhanced during the Christian era by the adoption by the early Church of the scriptures as the divine revelation; here was Authority which could not be gainsaid. But even in Christian times, classical authors were regarded as authorities and during the Middle Ages particularly, such authors as were known, were quoted quite uncritically, without knowledge of their real importance. Boethius in his *Consolations of Philosophy* had already commented that authority was the least reliable of all sources of understanding but this did not prevent their universal use.

Memory was also an integral element of Rhetoric. Not unnaturally, in the absence of ubiquitous written resources and at a time when there was more emphasis on public speaking and later in the art of preaching, memorization took on a much larger concern for the practitioners of composition. There were two threads in the classical history of memorization: the first was bound up with the places of Invention, the topics, which were memorialized in the commonplaces and the second was the Art of

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when unfairly attacked, cannot come to their own defense and have to rely on their father's support.

[1] Aristotle's topics or elements of argument and composition included definition and etymology, conjugates, genus, species, similarities, differences, contraries, adjuncts, antecedents, consequents, contradictions, causes, effects and comparisons..

Memory which developed an alternative system of memory places. Both of these threads had a rich literary history which I shall examine in the next Section.

Rhetoric as an educational tool survived into the 18th Century. Voltaire included articles on the subject in his *Dictionnaire Philosophique* of 1784 to 1790 and it still remains an essential part of Jesuit instruction; the *Ars Dicendi* by Joseph Kleutgen first published in 1847 has had a further twenty editions in the 19th and 20th centuries.[1]

· The Art of Memory ·

Every description of the Art of Memory starts with the story of Simonides and the banquet and we shall do the same; it is a good story. Simonides (c556-468BC) was a gifted lyric poet who on this occasion had been commissioned to recite for the guests at a dinner party. At the end of the performance, his host perversely refused to pay the whole fee saying that the balance would be paid by the Gods to whom the poem had been dedicated.[2] Shortly after, Simonides was called out of the banquet to meet two men who were asking for him and at that moment the roof of the banqueting hall collapsed. The host and remaining guests were killed and their bodies were so mangled that they were unrecognizable. Simonides however was able to remember where every guest had been sitting and was thus able to identify for the relatives the location of the remains. The two men who had saved Simonides were, it was said, Castor and Pollux, the Gods to whom he had dedicated his poem.

Simonides had perfected a technique of memorization which became famous as a result of this incident and was taught in the standard academic curriculum as part of the Art of Rhetoric for the next two thousand years. It consisted quite simply of identifying a series of familiar physical locations and attaching images of the things to be remembered to each of these locations. At the appropriate moment, the memories would come to mind quite easily as you moved from location to location in the familiar order. Various rules to enhance the technique were developed over the centuries both for constructing the *loci*, the memory places, and the images: the locations should be of a certain size, the images in those location should be as emotionally charged as possible, the building

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[1] Curtius 78 n29

[2] Simonides had a reputation for complaining on this subject to the extent that a proverb is named after him: 'the box for favors is always full and that for rewards is always empty.' See Erasmus *Adages* II, ix, 12 'the songs of Simonides'.

should be real rather than imaginary, different images were appropriate for the memorization of concepts and of words.

However, the art of memory was more than just a useful tool for public speakers and authors in an age when there was an absence of written materials which today would fulfill such a function. It became, particularly in the Renaissance, a link in the philosophical chain leading from the Platonic Form down to the sensible reflection of that Form. Plato had proposed[1] that there was a third element in his Cosmos, that of Space or Place, where the sensible or material object was to be found. The memory locations employed in the Art of Memory described above were conflated in the eyes of Renaissance thinkers with the Platonic *loci*, or places, the channels through which the divine Realities could be approached. The mature Art of Memory was seen as an essential element in the systems of Ficino and della Mirandola and other Renaissance neoPlatonist thinkers and this tradition of the memory places gives us yet another insight into the format of the emblem books and the other symbolic literature of the time. Each page of the emblem book, each emblem, could be employed as a memory place and as a contemplative object giving insight into the spiritual and metaphysical world. This relationship was made explicit in some emblem books; for instance, the subtitle of *Ashrea: or the Grove of Beatitudes* of 1665 by the otherwise anonymous author EM, was 'Represented in Emblems: And by the Art of Memory.' The eight emblems in this book were specifically designed to act as memory places for the eight Beatitudes or blessings of Christ such as 'Blessed are the pure in heart'.

Perhaps the greatest practitioner and formulator of the Art of Memory in classical times was Cicero, the Roman orator[2] (106-43BC). The fundamentals of the Art were summarized in his *De Oratore*, but for memory another related work was even more influential. In *De Inventione*, he proposed a definition of Virtue which he proposed was be the life's aim of every citizen. Virtue consisted of four elements, Prudence, Justice, Forti-

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[1] *Timaeus* 52

[2] I should add here, in a book devoted to symbolism, that shorthand was supposedly invented by Cicero's slave Tiro. In order for him to keep up with his master's prolific oratory and that of other politicians, Tiro invented a shorthand script and employed a team of shorthand writers. This script was handed down over the generations and used by the Church throughout the Middle Ages. Sign language was also widespread in medieval times and perpetuated by the Church. The monastic orders which practiced silence developed extensive sign languages by means of which the monks communicated with each other. Rabelais has a hilarious passage in *Pantagruel* (Book II, 19) where Panurge and Thaumaste the English scholar, have a philosophical debate or contest entirely by means of signs. The content of the debate is not revealed.

tude and Temperance and in turn each of these was further subdivided. In the case of Prudence these subdivisions were Intelligence, Foresight and Memory. Without memory it was impossible to remember and thus learn from the consequences of your former actions. We shall discuss the Renaissance symbols of Prudence in more detail later but Cicero's definition became important in the history of the Art of Memory because it was adopted by Thomas Aquinas in his exposition of Christian ethical behavior. As a result the Art of Memory became part of orthodox ethics and achieved spiritual respectability.[1]

Many writers throughout the late Middle Ages struggled with proposals as to how best to construct the memory places and images necessitated by the Art of Memory. Not surprisingly, those of the Christian scholastic schools proposed that Heaven and Hell could be treated as effective memory places. Albertus Magnus (1206-1280) in his *De Bono*, On the Nature of Good, confirmed that the memory places should be of wonderful rather than of ordinary significance and that poetry and fables were especially moving and thus effective for this purpose.

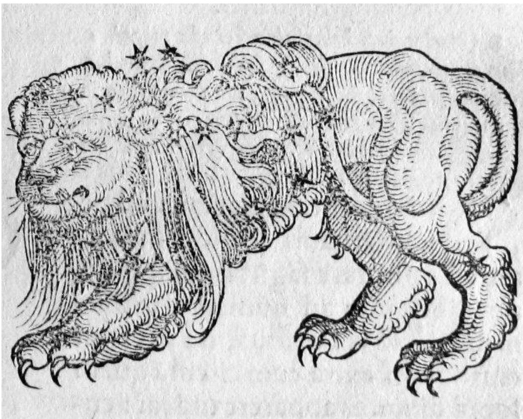

Figure 19 The Constellation Leo from the *Fables* of Hyginus in the 1549 Basle edition.

Perhaps the most well-known of the Renaissance memory treatises was *Phoenix sive artificiosa memoria,* Phoenix or artificial memory, by Peter of Ravenna first printed in Venice in 1492. Peter supposedly had a phenomenal memory either naturally or by cultivation of the Art. He had developed a battery of 100,000 memory places, he could recite the whole of Canon law, all the sayings of the philosophers and could muster twenty thousand points of civil law at will. Another famous book was the C*ongestorium artificiose memorie,* a Collection of Artificial Memories, by Johannes Romberch who suggested using the elements of the cosmos and the zodiac as well as the traditional building as memory places. He was influenced by the *Poeticon Astronomicon,* Astronomical Poems, attributed to Hyginus and possibly written in the 2nd Century AD, which was an account of the

[1] Yates 1999 36. Much of the material in this section is derived from Yates excellent book.

forty-eight constellations and the myths associated with them.[1] Needless to say the images in the Hyginus bear little relationship to the position of the stars as described by him or with the true position of the stars in the sky but they strongly influenced published star maps over the next hundred years. Romberch also had a scheme for memorizing all philosophy and the arts by means of personification and introduced a system for remembering individual letters based on pictures which thus acted as a kind of reverse hieroglyph.

The Art of Memory took physical shape in the famous Memory Theater of Giulio Camillo (1485-1544), commissioned by the King of France. This was a physical model of a theater large enough to stand inside. Each part of the model, what we could now envisage as the audience boxes, in tiers within the theater, was a memory location with symbolism derived from classical as well as Hermetic, zodiacal, Cabalist, mythical and other sources.[2] The concept of a theater as a cultural meeting place and source of intellectual fulfillment was widespread during the period. There were a number of emblem books whose titles reflected this;[3] for instance, Guillaume de la Perrière's *Le Theatre des Bon Engins* of 1539 subsequently rendered into English by Thomas Combe as *The Theater of Fine Devices* of 1593. These books also used the metaphor of a theater in another way. The author addressed the reader as a narrator expounding the underlying symbolism of the emblem. This mechanism was however not typical since it contradicted the classic function of the emblem which was to leave the underlying significance of the ensemble hidden so that the intelligent reader could devote time, effort and pleasure in decoding it.

Francis Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* (1605) also discourses on the art of memory. Bacon saw history as one of the three essential elements of learning and memory as an obvious part of the appreciation of history. Interestingly, throughout his work when referring to the images used in the art of memory he uses the word emblem and reflecting the thought of Aquinas on the use of the corporeal images, he states: "embleme re-

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[1] The text is based on the *Phaenomena* of Aratus (315-240BC) which supposedly was the most popular poem of the ancient world after the works of Homer.

[2] Camillo's book about his concept of memory*, L'idea del Theatro*, the Idea of the Theater, was published in 1550 and there has recently been a revival of interest in the Art of Memory as having analogies with the mechanisms of the computer. See for instance, Turello 1993

[3] Clements 191 gives nine other emblem books in addition to La Perrière's which include the word Theater.

duces conceits intellectual to Images sensible which strike the memory."[1] The *Mnemonics* of 1618 by John Willis[2], almost an exact contemporary of Bacon, outlined the features of the classical theory and specifically used examples from the emblem writers to illustrate the memory places.

In modern times an appreciation of the Art of Memory has been reestablished particularly as an aid for people with learning disabilities. It is now recognized that the technique of applying first order and then vivid images to the problem of memorization, involves not only both sides of the brain, the imaginative and the rational, but also reflects modern pedagogical methods whereby linking all the senses with the reasoning faculties reinforces the memory.[3]

· The Commonplace ·

We saw that in addition to the mechanisms suggested by the Art of Memory for memorizing topics, the exigencies of Rhetoric demanded that Invention, the first stage of the art, required the collection of authorities out of which ideas could be gathered for composition. Collecting extracts from ancient writers was therefore a necessary occupation for authors during the whole of the period we are considering. Later, by the 16th century, such collections actually took on the name of commonplace books but even before this date large numbers of them were written for private or public use most often under the name *Florilegia.* We shall see that both these collections and the commonplace books were a valuable resource for the authors of the symbolic literature, for the incidents which symbolized the ideas they were illustrating, for the mottos and for the commentary which often accompanied each element of the collection.

The word *Anthology* comes from the Greek for flower, *Anthos*, and this was translated into Latin as *Florilegium*, a collection of flowers.[4] The picturesque thought was of a garden of flowers, in which the reader might wander, culling his favorites for recitation or reference. One of the

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[1] Francis Bacon *The Advancement of Learning* II, 58 cited by Henebry in *Emblematica* 10, 2, 1996 236

[2] Willis also wrote *The Art of Stenographie* in 1602, the first modern book on shorthand.

[3] Buzan 1984

[4] The Greek word lego 'I collect' sounds and looks the same as the Latin word lego 'I read' although they come from different roots. This fortuitous identity is the source of this wonderful association of ideas. Personal communication from Professor Tamas Sajo.

components of the *Greek Anthology* of epigrams, which I describe in more detail below (page 154), was the collection of the Greek poet Meleager from about 100 BC which he had called the Garland. The following is the start of his Proem or introduction.[1]

> Meleager…inwove many of Anyte's lilies, and many by Moiro; few by Sappho, but they are roses; narcissi pregnant with the clear songs of Melanippides, and a fresh shoot of Simonides' vine-blossoms…

This goes on for another 60 lines or so after which Meleager had presumably exhausted the local flora. He could certainly paint a metaphor.

In the same vein, an alternative for the Garden of literary flowers was the Forest. Statius[2] in the 1st century AD was the first to call his collection of poems *Sylvae*. Sylva or silva in Latin also has the metaphorical meaning of 'material'; Statius' title thus had much the same feeling as the word Eclogue had brought to literature. It was a collection of poems or stories. Statius was imitated throughout the Renaissance and later by Poliziano, Huygens and Sanzaro on the continent of Europe and Barclay, Buchanan, Cowley, Ben Jonson, Phineas Fletcher, and Dryden in England. Apart from the latter, these were minor poets and as Samuel Johnson said, they were "men to whom the face of nature was so little known, that they have drawn it only after their own imagination." The English poets were able to take advantage of a subtle metaphor exemplified by Palmer's *Two Hundred Poosees* a manuscript in the British Library dating from 1566 which is the first English emblem book. What is a Poosee but a pun on the words Poesy and Posy,[3] the creation of a neat metamorphosis of poetry into garlands of love and flowers. The metaphor was emphasized in a *Hundred Sundrie Flowers* by Geoffrey Gascoigne a book of lyric poetry. The first edition was published in 1573 under this name but the second edition two years later was called *The Posies*

As far as the late Middle Ages was concerned, the authority for this universally employed metaphor, literature as a flower garden, was Seneca, who proposed that

> we should imitate and we should keep in separate compartments whatever we have collected from our diverse reading, for things conserved separately keep better. Then, …, we should mingle all the various nectars we have tasted and turn them into a single sweet substance, in such a way that, even

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[1] Trans. Peter Jay, Editor of the Penguin edition of the *Greek Anthology*.
[2] Statius' other claim to fame is that he is, perhaps surprisingly, proposed by Dante in the *Commedia* as the most excellent of the classical poets second only to Virgil himself.
[3] Puttenham in *The Arte of English Poesie* 48 equates *Posies* to *Apophoreta* which in classical times were short poems sent as a gift.

> if it is apparent where it originated, it appears quite different from what it was in its original state.[1]

The metaphor was used throughout the medieval period. It appears for instance in the *Hortus Deliciarum*, Garden of Delights (*c.* 1175–95) by Herrad of Landsberg (Hohenbourg), Abbess of the Convent of Ste Odile, an illustrated encyclopaedia of biblical, moral and theological material. In her introduction she refers to herself as a bee and describes how "I drew from many flowers of sacred and philosophic writing this book...and have put it together to the praise of Christ and the Church, and to your enjoyment." It is used in similar terms in Valeriano's *Hieroglyphica*. "As the bees fly, indeed, to all flowers, although the crowfoot plant and other species contain bitter and acrid fluid, nonetheless they suck out therefrom nectar from which they proceed to prepare wondrous honey."[2]

The earliest collections of extracts of authors from the classical period were by the so-called doxographers of whom the first was Theophrastus the pupil of Aristotle whose book *Phusikôn doxôn iê,* The Opinions of the Natural Philosophers, was the archetype of the doxographies.[3] The most influential during the Renaissance of many such collections after Theophrastus was the *Florilegium* by Johannes Stobaeus probably written for his son Septimius in the 5th Century AD. This gives extracts from more than 200 Greek authors including many which are not found elsewhere making the Stobaeus an important source book of Greek literature and philosophy for the Renaissance. The first Latin translation by Varinus Camers, the tutor of Pope Leo X was published in Rome in 1517. The first printed Greek edition was in 1535 and the Swiss scholar Conrad Gesner (1515-1565)[4] edited and translated a Latin and Greek edition in

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[1] Seneca *Epistolae Morales*, 84 cited in Moss 12. Seneca was actually largely paraphrasing Virgil.

[2] Valeriano *Hieroglyphica* 1626 122 cited in Clements 70

[3] See Diels 1879. Theophrastus is also known as the father of botany as a result of his *Historia Plantarum* and *De Causis Plantarum*. The only manuscripts for these works were preserved in Byzantium and were among the first to be taken to the West in 1405. See *Rome Revisited* 192

[4] Gesner was one of the most extraordinary and erudite scholars of the Renaissance. He also wrote *Historiae Animalium* published in 1587 a book of some 3,500 pages and considered by many to be the beginning of modern zoology as well as the *Bibliotheca Universalis,* a bibliography of all extant books in Latin, Greek and Hebrew which contained some 12,000 titles. He wrote a book on fossils, prompting him to be described by Stephen Jay Gould as one of the founders of modern palaeontology - *Deconstructing the Science Wars* Science 287, 256; he made another collection of *Sententiae*, this time from the works of the Byzantine monks, Antonius and Maximus first published in 1546 and wrote a book on philology, *Mithridates,* which compared 120 different languages. Not

1543 which he called *Sententiae* a word which is obviously the origin of the English 'sentence' but in the Renaissance had the specific meaning of saying or aphorism.[1] In his introduction, he again refers to the bee motif as the metaphor for collecting, arranging and profiting from the distillations of the works of the ancient authors.

The Stobaeus anthology has had a long and interesting history which is worth relating as it is typical of the vicissitudes of a classical text over the centuries and gives some indication of the fascination which the subject can hold for a literary historian. Stobaeus' anthology was originally called the *Florilegium* and it was divided into four Eclogues, a Greek word which also means collection.[2] These Eclogues were contained in two volumes and it is known that one copy of the two, perhaps the only surviving copy of the complete work, were together in a library in Constantinople in the 10th Century. Sometime later the two volumes were separated and thenceforth led separate lives. Mistakenly, the first volume with the first two books was thereafter called the *Eclogues* and the second volume containing books three and four became known as the *Florilegium*. The whole contained two hundred and eight chapters of which thirty-nine were lost from the *Florilegium* during the late Middle Ages although subsequently four of the lost chapters were found in an unrelated text.

One of the authors contained in the Stobaeus is Mercury, the Latin name for Hermes, and the extracts from his work are one of most important sources of the Hermetica. Indeed, one of these is the only source of the Hermetic discourse called the Asclepius and it is fortunate that we have it at all since it was contained on three pages which were mistakenly bound in the second volume before it was separated from the first. These pages were not returned to their correct location until the German editions of 1884 and 1894 by Wachsmith and Hense, some nine hundred years after they had been separated.

The Hermetic extracts also contain an important dialogue called the *Kore Kosmu*, variously translated as "the Virgin of the World" or "Eye-pupil of the Universe". It is the record of a supposed conversation be-

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content with all this he was one of the first mountaineers for pleasure and wrote about that!

[1] Stobaeus' work was also referred to as the *Sermones*. See for instance Whitney's *A Choice of Emblemes*.

[2] Authors from Virgil to Spenser also made use of a pun on the word Eclogue which had a second spelling Aeclogue. This may not seem much of a difference but the latter is derived from a different root, *Aikos* or Goatherd, which combined with *Logos* we can render as Conversation of a Goatherd! Conflating the two meanings we get the origin of the use of the Eclogue as a vehicle for pastoral poetry.

tween the goddess Isis and her son Horus explaining the traditional belief held by the Egyptians that their gods came from the heavens, being sent to Earth by the Father of all things to introduce civilization. Although, like the rest of the Hermetica, it probably dates from a century or so after the time of Christ, it is almost certainly based on much older oral traditions and gives us insights into the religious beliefs of pre-Christian Egypt.[1] The story is one origin of the symbol of the eye frequently found in the Renaissance. *Kore* has two meanings in classical Greek, 'eye' and 'virgin' and in particular the name of the mythical virgin daughter of Demeter. In the myth, Kore is abducted by Hades to the underworld and only rescued by Demeter on condition that she will spend six months below ground and six months above, thus symbolizing the passing of the seasons, birth and renewal and on a larger scale the birth of the universe itself. Conflation of the two meanings of this word perhaps explains why the symbol of the eye took on such significance.

Figure 20 The eye of God on the hand of God. Alciato's 16th emblem in the Tozzi edition of the *Emblemata* (1618).

But there were other early instances of the eye symbol. The device of Leon Battista Alberti the great quattrocento architect and polymath, was a winged eye which supposedly symbolized the swiftness of wing and keenness of the eye of the eagle. This combination is derived from one of the hieroglyphs of Horapollo although he attributed both characteristics to the falcon.[2] Valeriano in his *Hieroglyphica,* to be safe in his attribution, gave it to both eagle and falcon but in both cases the combination goes back to Plutarch's *De Isis and Osiris* where he ascribes the Egyptian symbol of the hawk with its power and acuity of vision as representing God himself.[3] We have already seen that the eye was a symbol of the Egyptian God Thoth later to be Hermes-Thoth the God of magic and writing and the symbol was subsequently also adopted as a representation of the Christian God. Another similar thread which became a favorite motif for medieval writers was the eye of the soul which was inspired by Plato's

[1] Scott 16
[2] Horapollo I, 6
[3] Plutarch *Moralia, De Isis & Osiris* 371, E

description of the benefits of the Art of Dialectic. Dialectic, he said, raises "the eye of the soul, buried in barbaric mud."[1]

Cusanus in his turn introduced the notion that the eye of God was able to watch us all at all times. He suggested the metaphor of the portrait painting, in which the eyes of the subject follow the viewer and are thus able to watch all people at all times.[2] This specific motif is used for one of the emblems in Henry Hawkins' *Partheneia Sacra* an emblem book of 1633 which has as its principal theme the idea of Cusanus that within every divine concept is infolded the seed of many others. The eye within a triangle became a Christian symbol for God as Trinity and the triangle was superseded by the pyramid which was adopted by the Freemasons as the symbol of the Master-builder or Creator and which is still depicted on the reverse of the U.S. one dollar bill adjoining the inscription, "In God we trust."

Returning to the anthologies, one of the most compendious of these in the Middle Ages was the *Manipulus Florum*, a Handful of Flowers,[3] a treatise comprising quotations from Christian and classical authors and explanations of biblical words and texts which was written from about 1280 to 1306 and attributed to Thomas de Hibernia. This had some 6,000 extracts arranged alphabetically in 266 topics with a large bibliography. Alphabetical indexing had been in use since the end of the 12th Century[4] but Thomas' work was the first to include cross-referencing. It was intended as a practical handbook of material for sermons but became extremely influential in the centuries that followed. It was used for instance by Quarles, the English emblem writer, to supply quotations for his *Emblemes* of 1635. Then there was the *Dits Moraulx des Philosophes,* or Moral sayings of the Philosophers, which incorporated quotations from classical philosophers and was a translation of an Arabic original, made by Guillaume de Tignonville at the turn of the 15th Century. The English translation of this version made by Earl Rivers, the brother in law of King Henry IV, was *The Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers,* supposedly the first dated book printed in England by Caxton in 1477.[5]

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[1] Plato *Republic* 533d cited in Curtius 136

[2] Wind 222. See also Hopkins 1988

[3] The Manipulus is also one of the clerical vestments so there is a pun here for Christian readers.

[4] The first book known to have been indexed was the catalogue of the collection of Cardinal Deusdedit in 1173. See Rouse and Rouse 5

[5] To give Caxton's book its full and deserved provenance, it was an English translation of a French translation of a Latin translation of a Spanish translation of an Arabic version of a Greek original of possibly spurious quotations!

There were other compendia: one of biblical quotations, the *Flores Bibliorum*, Flowers of the Bible[1] was a popular anthology of biblical excerpts and another was the *Compendium Moralium Notabilium* of Hierenias de Montagnone written between 1300 and 1310 which was a vast compilation of sayings, fables and proverbs but its originality lay in its categorizing and indexing the collection according to the different criteria of moral virtue.

The importance of these anthologies as source books for an actual literary work is illustrated by the late medieval book, the *Epistre Othea,* written by Christine de Pisan (c1364-c1430). Born in Venice and living most of her life in France, de Pisan is said to be the first European woman who made her living by writing. She wrote many works both poetry and prose based on the experiences derived from her aristocratic background, on subjects of interest to women and on chivalry. The *Epistre Othea* or Letter of the Goddess Othea to Hector written about 1400 is perhaps her best known work both now and in her own time. Some forty-three French manuscripts have survived and there were three different English translations within 100 years testifying to its popularity.[2] It is particularly interesting since the many editions of the work spanned the advent of printing and it is thus possible to compare manuscript and printed versions.[3]

The overall theme of Pisan's book was the training and character of the perfect Christian knight and to illustrate this theme there were 100 separate *histoires* or stories each taking up one page. The format consisted of a picture, a brief *quatrain* or four-line poem, a gloss containing the moral relevance with a classical reference and quotation and an *allegorie* which setout the spiritual reference including a quotation from the Bible or one of the church fathers. In many editions there were no pictures but both in its content and its format this was a direct prototype of the emblem book. The inspiration for the Othea came from an earlier Italian book the *Fiore di Virtu,* Flowers of Virtue, also called the *Chapelet des vertus*[4] and the origin of each of the individual stories from the Othea can be traced. Apart from the anthologies mentioned above, the mythological *histoires* were based on the *Ovide Moralisé* and stories from classical history

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[1] Bühler xxvii and his bibliography xxxiii. This is generally attributed to Thomas de Hibernia and in many printed editions is entitled *Flores Bibliae.*

[2] The first English translation of about 1450 was by Stephen Scrope (1386-1472) and the first printed edition of Scrope edited by Curt Bühler had to await publication until 1970.

[3] D. Russell 33

[4] Bühler xxviii

were taken from the *Histoire Ancienne jusqu'á César* or Ancient History up to the time of Caesar, a well known contemporary history text of which several manuscripts have survived.

A later anthology was the *Flores Poetarum,* Flowers of the Poets by Mirandula of 1566, a collection of passages excerpted from numerous Latin writers on a variety of subjects, and Reusner's *Symbolorum Imperatorum*, Symbols of the Emperors, from 1588, symbols in this case being used in its specific meaning of sayings, mottos or adages.[1] This was similar, although on a smaller scale, to Erasmus' *Adages*; it had for instance a long essay on the motto *Festina Lente*[2] as had Erasmus. Reusner had already published in 1581 what became one of the best known early emblem books *Emblemata .. cum symbolis ..clarorum virorum,* Emblems and Symbols of famous men, the two books having obvious similarities. Another anthology which had a direct relationship to an emblem book was Joseph Langius' *Loci cummunes seu potius florilegium* (1st Edition 1598) which quotes from Alciato and Camerarius. In the introduction to this collection by Jacobus Tirinius, Alciato's emblems are granted the status of authority which meant as we have seen that they could be used as premises for rhetorical argument.

One final collection of *Sententiae* was that by Lagnerius first printed in 1546 which originally contained extracts from Cicero; it became so popular that there were many further editions adding additional authors. It was printed in English and described as "a most pleasant posie, composed of all the most sweet smelling flowers."[3] The bee and honey metaphor of Seneca which had proved so influential in medieval literature persisted through the 17th Century. La Fontaine was to write in the introduction to his Fables.

On different flowers the bee will cling
And make its honey from everything.[4]

We can move on to another genre of anthology which was directly inspired by yet another of the elements of Rhetoric and this was the si-

[1] As we shall see the Renaissance writers had a difficulty since there was no Latin word which exactly described the device or the motto, so *symbolum* was used loosely to describe both the generic meaning of symbol as it used today and also the specific meaning of a short saying.

[2] Bath 1994 36

[3] Cited by Moss 168 from Brinsley 1612

[4] Cited by Paul J. Smith in *Emblematica* 8, 2, 1994 235

mile, the figure of speech where one thing was compared with another in order to emphasize a point. The simile has an important role in literary symbolism since it is as we shall see the starting point for the creation of metaphor. Erasmus wrote a book on similes, *Parabolae sive similia,* parabola here having its alternative meaning of a parallel rather than a parable.[1] There are obviously some literary and rhetorical parallels here with Erasmus' *Copia* and even if he did not make any attempt to draw any spiritual conclusions in his books on rhetorical subjects, other writers did not hesitate; the symbolist tradition was too strong. For instance, Robert Cawdray in the introduction to his *Treasurie or Store-house of Similies* of 1600, makes a familiar point, explaining that "most moral and religious truths cannot be directly apprehended by the senses: images, metaphors and similes are necessary to raise earthly perceptions to the understanding of divine and spiritual truths."[2]

A similar publication was John Spencer's, *Things Old and New, or store-house of similes* …. of 1658 a collection of proverbial comparisons and yet another genre was the collections of *Apophthegms* a word in Greek meaning witty saying or aphorism. Many writers published collections from times spanning the classical to the Renaissance. There was Plutarch (46-125 BC) with his *Apophthegmata Laconica*, the sayings of the Spartans, in his collection of essays called *Moralia*. The Church had their own set, the *Apophthegmata Patrum* or Sayings of the Christian fathers, a collection of monastic writings by early Christian writers also often known as the 'Sayings of the Desert Fathers' which takes the form of brief and pointed sayings, reflecting the concise and practical guidance appropriate to these holy men. Needless to say, Erasmus published a collection, the *Apophthegmata*, which in turn was edited by Lycosthenes, the rather pretentious Latinized penname of Conrad Zwinger, and this latter version was used widely in Renaissance schools.[3] We can take as an example a typical and familiar apophthegm from the collection of William Camden,[4] in his *Remaines concerning Britain* of 1614, a lighthearted manual containing expositions and lists of proverbs, devises, epigrams and other genres as they particularly concerned the British. "Henry V, after the Dolphin sent him

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[1] The classic medieval book of parables in its other sense was the *Liber Parabolarum*, the Book of Parables, by Alanus de Insulis, a compendium of versified moral sentiments from the 12th Century.

[2] Bath 1994 47

[3] Zwinger also started a commonplace book *Theatrum vitae humanae*, the Theater of human life, which was finished by his stepson Theodor Zwinger.

[4] Carter (61) describes Camden as having 'some claim to be considered as the founder of the study of modern history.'

a present of Paris Balles, answered, 'that he would shortly resend him London Balles, which should shake Paris Walles."' Shakespeare, of course, relates a much more eloquent reply by King Henry at the same event.[1]

By the 16th Century, the Florilegium had developed into the Commonplace book. Remember that the mechanism of the commonplace was originated by Aristotle who had suggested that there were *koinoi topoi,* common places, where heads of argument might be stored.[2] Later the Latin word *index* was introduced, a shortened form of *index locorum*, index of places, or *index locorum communium*, index of common places, or places in the speech or written work where similar items were to be found. This was clearly the origin of our present word commonplace where the meaning of common as ordinary has superseded its alternative and original meaning of similar although the word was used in both senses in the Middle Ages. In the *Anticlaudianus* of Alain de Lille of 1181-4, the author develops an extended series of puns using both meanings.[3]

The commonplace book now out of fashion but used for many centuries by all classes of society to jot down items of interest for future composition originated out of the standard practice in classical times and through the Renaissance, particularly in the schools of Rhetoric to make lists of quotations and arguments, authorities, linked by a common feature. One undecided question was how the topics should be arranged. Some did it alphabetically by the subject matter, some by the name of the author, some in a hierarchical arrangement based on different criteria. One of these was the use of opposites, which had the rhetorical function of emphasizing the point by means of contrast. Melancthon in his *de Rhetorica*, on Rhetoric, of 1519 proposed that the topic headings should all consist of moral concepts but then he believed that all composition should have a didactic purpose.

The influence of the discipline of the commonplace book could be seen in the arrangement adopted by the publisher of Alciato's *Emblems* from the edition of 1548 onward in which the individual emblems are ordered by topic. Previous editions had been set in an apparently random order. The discipline of the commonplace book was also recommended by Erasmus, always the practical humanist, since according to him: "the best memory is based on three most important things: study, order and

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[1] *Henry V* Act I Scene II. However, none of the earliest references to this story describe the balls as tennis balls.

[2] Aristotle *Topica* I, 14, 105b. See the discussion in Bath 1994 33.

[3] Alain de Lille *Anticlaudianus* III, 62

care."[1] And he further suggested in his *De Copia*, or Copies, of 1512, in effect a treatise on how to layout your commonplace book, that there should be always be a distinction in the classification of topics between ethical matters and other human affairs and this distinction is also followed in the later Alciato editions. In *De Copia,* Erasmus like all his predecessors invokes Seneca's bee metaphor and uses it to emphasize that element of Rhetoric that required the student to be able to say the same thing in several different ways, thus emphasizing the point he was making. These 'copies' could be stored in the commonplace book. Erasmus makes clear in this treatise that the successful application of Rhetoric involved the elegant expression of the topic rather than its relevance or importance. As Trousdale puts it, "the commonplace becomes the primary matter of the artist and the efficacious expression of forms of common knowledge the definition of his artistry."[2] Two other authors had a seminal influence on the commonplace book. The first was Rudolphus Agricola with his *De Inventione Dialectica* and *De Formendo Studio* both written in the early 1480's and the *Sylvae Morales* of 1492 by Badius,[3] the publisher of the *De Copia*, which adds an allegorical and moral theme to the arrangement of the topics.

The fragmented nature of composition induced by the rhetorical tradition contributed to the very name of the emblem genre. As we shall see, the word emblem originates from the early Greek artistic tradition of inlaid metal work, separate pieces of silver and gold which were fastened to decorative art. Erasmus in his *In Praise of Folly* makes fun of those writers who, as he says, *velut Emblemata*, in the manner of Emblems, spiced their Latin compositions with Greek quotations.[4] An example of this is in the introduction to the *Emblemata*, an emblem book by Sambucus of 1564 in which he discourses briefly on the theory of emblems. In the very first line of this introduction, he states

> *Quod emblematum, quae fere kata parergon operibus ….*
> Emblems which are inserted as accessory elements into works….[5]

Possibly this is an elegant illustration of the point he was making or maybe it was exactly the subconscious literary snobbism that Erasmus was

[1] Erasmus, D. *De Ratione studii* 1512
[2] Trousdale, 1982
[3] Badius also wrote a version of the Ship of Fools, *Stultiferae naves,* published in 1500.
[4] Erasmus in turn was quoting Quintilian *Institutes* II, 4
[5] Trans. Denis L. Drysdall *Emblematica* 5, 1, 1991 111

referring to. Although *parergon* is a Greek word and is here used as such, in the Renaissance it was commonly conjugated as a Latin noun. Alciato himself in his 1547 book used both Greek and Latin in the title - *Parergon Juris* or Accessory Elements of the Law. Some authorities assumed that the word *Parerga* was synonymous with *Emblemata* and Emanuele Tesauro whom we shall meet later as an authority on Aristotle and the theory of metaphor states that *parerga* was the Latin translation of the Greek word *emblema*.[1]

Perhaps the purest of the commonplace books was that by John Foxe of *English Martyrs* fame whose 1557 book *Locorum communium tituli* had topics arranged by the Aristotelian categories but no quotations, just blank pages to be completed by the student. He was followed by Henri Estienne with two such notebooks *Virtutum encomia* of 1573 and *Parodia morales* of 1575. In addition to the personal commonplace books kept by individuals throughout society and those that were used by students as exercise books, there were publications containing prepackaged lists of arguments or *sentences* or other materials which might be used in rhetorical composition. There was John Bodenham's *Belvedere* of 1600, Francis Meres' *Palladis Tamia* of 1598 and *Polyanthea* by Nannus Mirabellius[2] all three of which derived some of their material from earlier emblem books, illustrating how the latter had already become an accepted part of Renaissance culture and part of the process of cross-fertilization between the different elements of that culture. I shall discuss in more detail the inspiration of the Renaissance anthologies on the creation of emblems and devices below.

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[1] Tesauro 491

[2] See the discussion in Bath 1994 35