8. The Renaissance

The two defining achievements of the Renaissance, the revival of classicism and the invention of the printing press assured the simultaneous triumph and demise of the age of symbolism. On the one hand, scholars were faced with the recovery of a complete literary and artistic culture which in spite of its historical and aesthetic attractions knew nothing of Christian orthodoxy. Undaunted, these scholars reacted by attempting to reconcile the two traditions, classical and Christian, and to integrate them into one coherent system, one effect of which was to reinforce and perpetuate the culture of symbolism. At the same time, printing enabled the widespread dissemination of the literature of symbolism including the new genres of emblem and device. By the end of the 17th century tens of thousands of these books had been sold and hundreds of thousands of emblems, devices and enigmas as well as other genres had been composed, read and deciphered and their symbolism contemplated and absorbed. But the same benefits of printing applied to the nascent scientific revolution. The rapid spread of knowledge, the sharing of information, the loosening of the censorship of the Church slowly but inexorably brought about the triumph of empiricism.

· Recovery of the Ancient Texts ·

The politics of Europe at the end of the Middle Ages had been dominated by the centuries long struggle between the Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire for control of the Church, finally ending with victory for the Popes. It was natural that after relative political stability had been achieved by the formation of self-contained city-states, the Renaissance should begin in Italy. Latin was an easy language for the Italians and the evidence of their heritage lay around them in enigmatic grandeur. The rise of a merchant class and the formation of universities provided financial and intellectual stimulus for the earliest humanists.[1] Dante (1265-1321), Petrarch (1304-1374) and Boccaccio (1313-1375), led the way to a revival of classical learning

Although the culture of symbolism initiated by Plato was the orthodox norm, none of the text of Plotinus nor of any of Plato's work other than part of the Timaeus was known to the Middle Ages. Knowledge of these writers was second-hand, principally from the early church father's, particularly St. Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius, and, as far as Plato was concerned, from other Latin authors such as Cicero and Seneca. Chalcidius in 321 had translated a part of the *Timaeus* (which contains Plato's cosmological theories) but this translation with his commentary was only half complete at Chalcidius' death. Even in the early Renaissance many of the original classical texts were available only through extracts and anthologies like those of Plutarch, Clement of Alexandria, Stobaeus (page 143) and other doxographers.

Interest in the classics had received a stimulus in the 12th Century, when contact was made between European and the Arab scholars in Spain. Translations of a number of the principal Greek texts, which had been preserved in Arabic, were made which, for instance, inspired the work of Thomas Aquinas. The mainstream of philosophical and theological thought turned towards Aristotelianism.

During the early Middle Ages the work of Aristotle had effectively been lost to the West but in the 9th Century, many Greek texts had been translated into Arabic by Nestorian Christians of Syria and thus became available to the Muslim Caliphate whose capital was at first Damascus and then Baghdad.[2] Some philosophical confusion was caused by the fact that the translation of parts of the Enneads of Plotinus was published as

[1] A university was founded in Bologna in 1119 and thereafter in Siena (1203) and Vicenza (1204)

[2] Armstrong 170

the theology of Aristotle but in general the Arab philosophers tried to adapt Greek metaphysics to Islam through the medium of the doctrine of *Falsafah,* an attempt to describe God in rationalistic terms. Some of the Moslem philosophers were strongly influenced by Plato and Aristotle as, for example, al Farabi (d 980)[1]and Avicenna (980-1037), one of the greatest of the Muslim thinkers. The latter combined both rationalism and mysticism in his beliefs, employing the Ptolemaic system of the spheres to describe the realm between God and Man and ultimately advocating mysticism, symbolism and imagery as the means to attain knowledge of God. Later, at the other end of the Muslim Empire in Cordova, Spain, ibn Rushd (1126-1198), known as Averroes, returned to the more rationalist spirit of the *Falsafah.* He had less influence in his own culture than in the West where his commentaries on Aristotle were translated into Hebrew and Latin and widely circulated in Europe.

Contacts between Byzantine and Italian scholars in the early 15th Century and then the exodus of Greek scholars to the West, at the time of the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453, provided a further boost to the revival of classical learning and the availability of classical texts. One of the best known of these scholars was Gemisto Plethon who came from Constantinople to attend the Council of Florence (1438 - 1439) which had been called to discuss the possible amalgamation of the Eastern and Western churches in the light of the threats from Turkish infidels. A talk by Plethon on Plato inspired Cosimo de Medici, who was attending the Council, to his project of reviving Platonism, a task which he eventually delegated to Marsiglio Ficino. Plethon is also reputed to have identified the principal scriptures of Zoroaster, namely the Chaldaic Oracles.[2]

In spite of the these contributions by Byzantine scholars, it is a remarkable fact, commented on in scathing terms by Gibbon that the one thousand years of the Eastern Roman Empire, produced not one original work of literature or art. "In the revolution of ten centuries, not a single discovery was made to exalt the dignity or enhance the happiness of mankind."[3] The great contribution of the Byzantines was the preservation of and to some extent commentary on the ancient texts and when these finally became available in the West, they confirmed the antiquity

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[1] Armstrong 174-194

[2] For an translation and commentary on the texts of Zoroaster see http:/www.avesta.org (3/10/2004)

[3] Gibbon VII, 117. The same can be said to an extent of the Middle Ages in Western Europe where also "the quest of truth is thought of as the recovery of what was embedded in tradition ... rather than the discovery of what is new." Eisenstein 86

and authority of the philosophers and vastly extended the vocabulary of symbols from classical authors. There was a frenzy of translation, publication and commentary on the new-found classics. For instance, according to Augustijn, at least 400 Latin classics were translated into German in the century from 1450.[1]

We have to thank a few determined book collectors of the 15th Century for the recovery and survival of many of the classical texts particularly Greek texts. Among these collectors was the humanist Pope Nicholas V (pontiff from 1447-1455), who spent huge sums of money acquiring and copying books and manuscripts. He offered 10,000 gold florins for a translation of Homer into Latin.[2] His agents scoured monastic libraries in Western Europe and in the Eastern Mediterranean. The most famous of these emissaries was Poggio Bracciolini, the papal secretary, who discovered many texts including hitherto unknown works of Cicero and the complete works of Quintilian.[3] The nine thousand volumes that Nicholas V left after his death became the foundation of the Vatican Library. The Medicis, Federigo of Montefeltro the Duke of Urbino[4] and Cardinal Bessarion likewise collected or employed copyists. Bessarion's collection was the foundation of the Biblioteca Marciana in the City of Venice. Montefeltro supposedly had 30 to 40 scribes working for him for 20 years[5] and it is related that Cosimo de Medici took on 45 copyists who completed 200 volumes in 22 months from Nicholas' collection.[6]

The Church establishment at first welcomed the Renaissance. The Vatican participated in and indeed took the lead in the revival of classicism. This was not just because the Church shared in the general humanist enthusiasm but because there was "a consistent determination to place knowledge at the service of governance."[7] The Papacy, lacking temporal power and authority, was determined to bolster its moral supremacy in Europe by demonstrating its cultural leadership. Furthermore, the new ability to read Greek gave confidence to the continuing efforts by the

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[1] Augustijn 1995

[2] Burkhardt 1960 113 says that this project was never undertaken due to Nicholas' death but Ijswejin states that the Pope's secretary, Horatius Romanus, did attempt such a translation.

[3] Bracciolini was nevertheless best known in his own time for his book the *Facetiae* a collection of short bawdy stories which was immensely popular (page 160).

[4] The Studiolo of the Duke from his palace in Gubbio, a small private study with extraordinary inlaid panels depicting aspects of his cultural life, has been reinstalled in the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

[5] According to the memoirs of his book dealer, Vespasiano de Bisticci.

[6] Burckhardt 1960 117

[7] James Billington in *Rome Revisited* ix

Vatican to claim precedence over the Eastern Orthodox churches and churchmen also appreciated the opportunity of reading the works of the early fathers in translation, some of them available for the first time. At times, however, the humanists undercut their credibility, even with the broadminded Popes of the Quattrocento, by describing the Christian God as Jupiter and Christian churches as temples!

In spite of this enthusiasm, the Renaissance obviously contained seeds of immense danger to the church, loosening the bonds of doctrinal authority and offering opportunities for individual emotional and aesthetic fulfillment outside the ecclesiastical environment. Gombrich expresses these dangers thus; the Renaissance represented "the opening up of emotional spheres which had hitherto been the preserve of religious worship. This step had been possible through the transformation of the classical symbols through the solvent of neoPlatonic thought."[1] Also, the very trend of returning to ancient works in the original text led inevitably to a reexamination of the origins of the scriptures and to textual criticism of passages hitherto considered spiritually inviolate. In spite of the emphasis on the symbolic aspect of the scriptures which had always been part of Christian teaching, questioning the word of God as revealed in the Bible challenged the foundations of doctrinal orthodoxy.

The Counter Reformation signaled a reversal in the attitude of the church authorities although this was due not to a reaction against classicism but to the immediate doctrinal threats from the Protestants. Many conservative measures were promulgated at the Council of Trent (1545-1563) including a return to the orthodoxy of the Latin Vulgate Bible to counter both the new textual criticism and the dangers from vernacular translations. The Office of the Index of forbidden books was founded in 1571 and the terrifying power of the Inquisition was employed to enforce doctrinal rectitude. Authors and publishers of books deemed heretical were automatically excommunicated and this threat dampened the ardor of many authors including those well outside what we would think of as the mainstream of religious publishing. For example, Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) was so alarmed after hearing that Copernicus' work had been placed on the Index that he considered giving up the profession of astronomer[2] and likewise, after hearing that Galileo had been indicted by the Inquisition, René Descartes refused to allow the publication of his *Treatise on the Universe* which proposed a heliocentric universe.

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[1] Gombridge 64

[2] Eisenstein 226

This reactionary policy of the Catholic establishment had profound and unintended consequences. It shifted the center of the nascent printing industry from Catholic to Protestant cities; for instance the printers in Lyons, an important early center of the printing/publishing business, largely emigrated to Geneva. It ensured that Protestant cities became the foremost centers of learning and technology when the latter developed in the 17th century. Protestant printers took delight in immediately printing those books which were placed on the Index thus taking advantage of a notoriety which, of course, aided the printers' marketing and sales departments.[1] We can contrast the success of the Royal Society in England founded in 1662 and its journal, *The Transactions,* which rapidly gained a world-wide subscription list and continues to this day, with its counterpart in Italy, the Accademia del Cimento, which survived only 10 years and whose only publication dated 1666-7 was forced to be completely anonymous.[2]

However the popularity of the symbolic literature were hardly affected by the draconian reaction initiated at the Council of Trent. On the contrary, the emblem book for instance was enthusiastically adopted by the Church and, in particular, by Jesuit authors. A large subset of the emblem literature was written by Jesuits and was devoted to propagating the Catholic message.

· The Printing Revolution ·

Text

The invention of printing with moveable type has been frequently characterized as the most important event in world history in the second millenium. It ushered in an explosion of communication that was not equaled until the invention of the telephone and radio and in our own day with communication between computers.

It began at Mainz in Germany with the Bible of John Gutenberg (1398-1468) and his invention spread rapidly throughout Europe. The first press was introduced into Italy in 1464 and the presses were all over Germany by 1470. One of the first books printed in Italy was Cardinal

[1] Catholic printers sometimes resorted to the stratagem of putting false names and addresses on their publications to avoid the censor. For instance, the second edition of Galileo's *Dialogo* published in 1710 which had been on the Index since 1633 was stated to be published in Florence but was actually published in Naples.

[2] Eisenstein 245

Bessarion's *In calumniatorem Platonis*, a defence of Platonism.[1] Caxton, who learnt his trade in Germany and printed his first book in Cologne, started his business in England in 1476. Wynkin de Worde who had been his foreman, took over Caxton's press on the latter's death and continued printing until 1534.[2] By the end of the 15th century there were 100 printers in Venice alone of which the most well-known was the Aldine Press of Aldus Manutius. Printing became big business employing large numbers of people and requiring large amounts of capital and each printing house employed people of many different types including artisans and academics. Anton Koberger of Nurenberg was said to employ one hundred craftsmen with twenty-four presses as early as 1470.[3] Aldus also had thirty people resident in his workshop/home in Venice and was one of the most celebrated names of the Renaissance, the archetypal printer whose name even now is commemorated in the Aldus software company. His mark, the dolphin entwined round an anchor, is the most widely recognized symbol in the history of printing.

Aldus was an academic as well as a businessman; he commissioned and supervised the first translations of many of the newly retrieved classics. Since he had in his shop the true texts of many of these classics, his establishment and those of other printers like him became centers of learning. Scholars would visit the printing houses to get a chance to read the texts. Erasmus himself describes such a visit.

Aldus was also the first to publish in the quarto format, the size which we are accustomed to see in a hard cover book. Before this innovation, books had been printed in folio, the large format reproducing the typical size of the codex. The imposing size of the codex reflected its value. If your book had taken months or even years to create or was possibly the only remaining copy of a great work, this made it very precious.[4] Its size made it more difficult to carry and thus was a small contribution to security and in medieval monastic libraries, security was enhanced by chaining the books to the benches on which they were read. The value of the codex is reflected in Christian symbolism from the Middle Ages. Pictures and sculptures of the prophets from the old Testament are shown using scrolls or *volumina* in Latin which were deemed to reflect only im-

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[1] Kristeller 159

[2] Despite all the efforts of Caxton who printed about eighty books, and de Worde, printing was not widespread in England and many English books were printed on the Continent.

[3] Hind 370

[4] According to White 241, King Edward III of England bought a book in 1331 at a cost of £66 13s 4d, the equivalent price of 90 oxen.

perfect or partial knowledge. The apostles and other New Testament characters are shown with books or codices since to them the truth had been fully revealed.[1]

But this all changed with the advent of printing and reducing the size of his printed books from folio to quarto was intended by Aldus to have the opposite effect: to make his books more manageable, more accessible, more portable and thus more saleable. Apparently he succeeded. Grafton quotes a customer of Aldus writing to him in 1501 with sentiments we can all empathize with. "For since my various activities leave me no spare time…your books…which are so handy that I can use them walking, and even, so to speak, while playing the courtier..have become a special delight to me."[2]

Advertising was another innovation which naturally accompanied the new commercial status of the printer; books eventually acquired a title page which in addition to the name of book and author included the name of the printer/publisher and where he might be reached. This however was not an immediate development. Caxton, for example, did not print a single book with a title page. Manuscripts and early books used the colophon to summarize the contents of the book which was always the last page of the book.[3] A further innovation was the use of paper. The codex was usually written on vellum and this was expensive and in short supply. One major work could use hundreds of calfskins. The critics of printing quickly pointed out the fragility of the new medium but it was the only practical solution for the vastly increased output.

Printing was nevertheless a commercial venture requiring large amounts of capital. The greatest work of Plantin, who was perhaps the most famous printer in Europe after Aldus, was the Polyglot Bible. This magnificent work of eight volumes printed in four different languages was funded by Philip II of Spain but caused a constitutional crisis when the King was required to return to the Spanish Treasury the money laid out for the venture. Books printed had to be sold and they were sold; the output of the great publishing enterprises is a testament to the demand for the new medium. "Greek and Latin classics, law books, herbals, bible

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[1] Didron I, 274

[2] *The humanist as reader* in Cavallo and Chartier 86

[3] To the modern mind, the practice of having the title at the back of the book seems odd but it has an extraordinarily ancient origin. Cuneiform clay tablets from their size could not contain much information and if there were two or more could easily get separated. It was the practice therefore to make a summary of the contents at the bottom of the tablet and also indicate whether or not this was the end of the document. Many such tablets have been found on which the last words are 'Not the end'. Casson 6

translations, anatomy texts, arithmetic books, beautifully illustrated volumes of verse - all these issued from a single shop."[1] This output and the commercial success of the printers point to a phenomenal, almost neurotic demand, which has not been equaled until the present day obsession with computers and the Internet. Emblem books may have been the only new genre of the era and they represented a staggering volume but they comprised only a fraction of the number of publications. The large number of printers in business throughout Europe was obviously sustained by a vast demand, representing the sudden release of an unsatisfied hunger for knowledge by the new reading public.[2]

In such circumstances, it is not surprising that there were cases where commercialization overcame any responsibility for textual purity. Erasmus has an amusing episode condemning the spread of rubbishy books. In a discussion of the problems of the world, and referring to printers, Erasmus continues,

> the fact is that no small part of these troubles comes from these fellows unbridled license. They fill the world with books, not just trifling things (such as I write, perhaps) but stupid, ignorant, slanderous, scandalous, raving, irreligious and seditious books, and the number of them is such that even the valuable publications lose their value.

And then again a little later,

> Nowadays, the innumerable crowd of printers create confusion everywhere, particularly in Germany...To what corner of the Earth do they not fly, these swarms of new books.[3]

This debasement of the writers' art apparently continued into the 17th Century. Both Alciato and Corrozet complained. The latter said that there were too many volumes, as many presses as there were pens, more books than readers and more readers than good writers.[4] On the other hand, some authors were to known to complain bitterly that the typesetting for their books was broken up immediately after use thus denying

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[1] Eisenstein 139. By one reckoning, by 1501, there were 1,000 presses in Europe, which had already produced 35,000 titles and 20 million copies. According to Carter *Printing and the Mind of Man* xxiii by 1600 every major city in Europe had a printing press. See also *//communication.ucsd.edu/bjones/books/printech.html* (2/4/2004)

[2] It could very well be asked where these readers came from. Although there is little documentary evidence it must be assumed that reading was more widespread than might be magined. For instance, Lady Anne Clifford in her diary in the early 17th century relates how several of her servants read to her. Clifford 1990

[3] Erasmus (1508 edition) II. I. i

[4] Corrozet, *Hecatomgraphie* A2v cited in Clements 163

them the opportunity for another edition. No doubt also there was amongst the intellectuals a natural reaction that the printed book was a newfangled contraption which was not worthy of the true connoisseur. The Duke of Urbino whom we have seen as the owner of one the great libraries of the time is credited with the well-known remark that he would 'be ashamed to own a printed book'.[1] Nevertheless, books were printed in vast quantities and there were immediate calls[2] by the purists for measures to control the content of books, that is censorship, and these calls were viewed favorably by the authorities for their own reasons. The first censorship of printed books was initiated by the town of Cologne in 1478 with the immediate approval of the Pope. According to Landwehr, the first author to receive a '*privilegio*' from the authorities was Albrecht Dürer himself with his *Apocalypsis* of 1511.[3] Many authors fell foul of the new restrictions including for instance Henri Estienne, a member of the great French publishing dynasty, who landed in jail after failing to get permission from the authorities in Geneva for a small book of translations of the Greek Anthology. Generally, however, the sanction was a heavy fine. The seriousness with which the authorities took their duties in this matter is shown by the debate that took place in the Dutch Estates General or Parliament in 1617 over the publication of the anonymous *Thronus Cupidinis*. Permission was eventually refused since the book was deemed to be largely plagiaristic which indeed it was, the first part having been copied from the work of Daniel Heinsius and the second and third parts from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* adapted by Simeoni in 1577.

Just as the present day communications revolution, in the midst of which I write, sparked by the development of computers and the Internet, has made it almost impossible for national governments to prevent the free flow of information around the world, similarly the revolution let loose by the printing press weakened control by governments and the Church over the contents of the book. The publication of a book might still require the approval of the censor and during the Counter Reformation a book might be placed on the Index, but it became impossible for

[1] Burkhardt 117. The actual words were written by the Duke's bookseller Bisticci who said, "In this library all the books are superlatively good, and written with the pen, and had there been one printed volume, it would have been ashamed in such company."
[2] Possibly the first suggestion that censorship would overcome the problem of shoddy publications was made in a letter of 1471 by Niccolo Perotti to the Pope. Perotti wrote a commentary on the Epigrams of Martial under the title *Cornucopiae* which was published in 1499 and he is considered a candidate as the author of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (page 224).
[3] Landwehr 1975 XIII

the authorities to chart the whereabouts of every copy.[1] In fact, after the division of Europe into Protestant and Catholic nations in the 16th Century, quite the opposite happened; the Protestant camp developed its propaganda by immediately printing any important book placed on the Catholic Index.

Figure 43 The title page of the *Pegma* by Pierre Coustau showing the privilège.

Copyright itself derived from censorship. The authorities soon realized that the easiest way to control the output of books was to control them at the source: the presses. England was the first to formalize this control and the authority was given to the Company of Stationers which was chartered in 1557. To print a book, you had first to place the name of the book on the Register kept by the Stationers and this gave you and you alone the right to print it. Thus you had acquired the right to the copy of that book. This did not mean that writers suddenly became wealthy. On the contrary the rewards for authorship, as always, were meager: Milton was supposedly paid £5.00 for Paradise Lost with another £5.00 to come if there was a second printing.[2]

There was naturally opposition to the new technology of printing from established booksellers who could see that the value of their existing stock would be ruined by the printed competition. There is the well-known story of how John Fust, the financial backer of Gutenberg, took a stock of the newly printed Bibles to Paris to try to sell them to the stu-

[1] The censor's approval was indicated by a notation on the title page of the book of *Cum privilegio* or *Avec privilège du Roi*. As one more example of the power of tradition, all Bibles printed by the Oxford University Press contained this statement on the title page until well into the 20th Century.

[2] Carter xxiii

dents at the university. But he met determined opposition from the local guild of the book trade, the *Confrerie des Libraries*, who proclaimed that such a number of valuable books could only come from the Devil himself. Fust had to flee for his life.

The obvious advantage of the printed book was increased circulation. In so many cases, in the age of the scribes, copies of books just were not available. One famous story of the lack of copies of a text goes all the way back to St. Augustine. He was ordained bishop in 391 while his predecessor, Valerius, was still alive contrary to the provisions of canon law enacted some 70 years earlier. His excuse was that he had never seen a copy of the law! Apparently, in this case, ignorance of the law excused the mighty theologian.[1] Another later example of how handicapped the medieval world was by lack of standard copies and how valuable a solitary manuscript might be, was the principal copy of the Digest of Civil Law, the Florentine Codex. According to the report of Budaeus (Guillaume Budé), the French jurist, this was kept literally behind bars and thus was impossible to consult. It was not printed until 1553 which permitted at least a start in the correction of the errors which had crept in over the centuries.

We have seen how the first university, Bologna, was founded as early as 1119 and in the 13th Century, those in Paris, Siena, Vicenza, Bologna, Padua, Ghent, Oxford and Cambridge had been established. These were the first non-ecclesiastical centers of higher education and they naturally required books. Acquiring them was a painfully slow business; the students had to go to the booksellers and copy them for themselves or pay for them to be copied.

Thus, where in the early 15th Century, there may have been only one copy of a book which could have taken up to a year to transcribe, suddenly, after 1456, there were between 200 and 1,000 copies in one print run. What a revolution! However difficult it is to document, it is not difficult to imagine the effect that this had on the level of literacy and intellectual curiosity among the literate members of society and with curiosity comes inquiry, research and experiment. For example, after the publication of *Behende und hubsche Rechnung* ..., or Useful and elegant Arithmetic.. by Johannes Widnung in 1489 arithmetic calculation by Arabic numerals rather than the more cumbersome Latin numerals became widespread.[2]

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[1] The confusion is also understandable in the fact that there were so many bishops. At the time of Augustine, there were about 700 in Africa alone with one new one being created each week! Wills xi

[2] Wolfegg 84. The decimal form of numbers was introduced into Europe in the 12th Century by Abrahim ibn Ezra.

Carter expresses it thus. "The pace of intellectual life quickened. There are no medieval Utopias. From More onwards, the world has never been without one."[1]

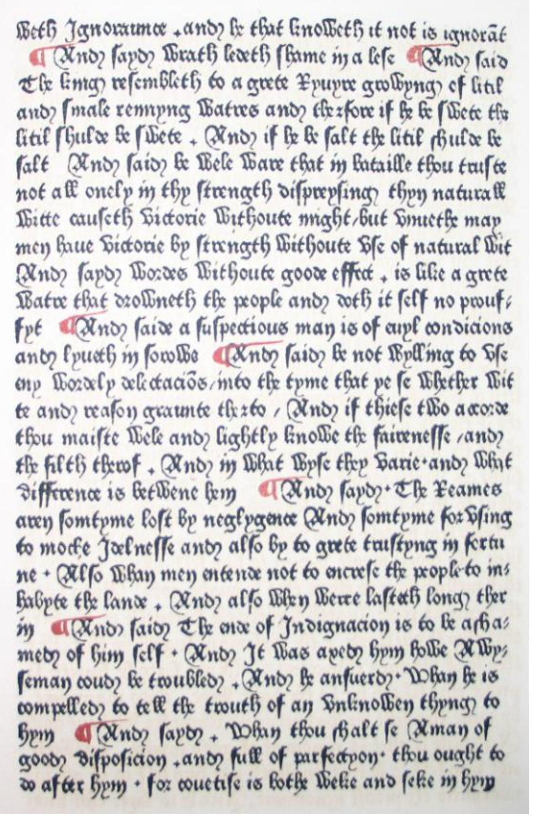
weth Ignoraunce . and he that knoweth it not is ignorāt
And sayd wrath ledeth shame in a lese And said
The kyng resembleth to a grete Ryuyre growyng of litil
and smale rennyng watres and therfore if he be swete the
litil shulde be swete . And if he be salt the litil shulde be
salt And said be wele ware that in bataille thou truste
not all onely in thy strength dispreysing thyn naturall
witte causeth victorie withoute might / but vnnethe may
men haue victorie by strength withoute vse of natural wit
And sayd wordes withoute goode effect . is like a grete
watre that drowneth the people and doth it self no prouf-
fyt And saide a suspectious man is of euyl condicions
and lyueth in sorowe And said be not wyllyng to vse
eny wordely delectacios / into the tyme that ye se whether wit
te and reason graunte therto / And if thiese two accorde
thou maiste wele and lightly knowe the faireness / and
the filth therof . And in what wyse they varie . and what
difference is betwene hem And sayd . The Reames
aren somtyme lost by neglygence And somtyme for vsing
to moche Idelnesse and also by to grete trustyng in fortu
ne . Also whan men entende not to encrese the people to in-
habyte the lande . And also when werre lasteth longe ther
in And said The ende of Indignacion is to be ascha-
med of him self . And It was axed hym howe A wy-
seman coude be troubled . And he ansuerd . whan he is
compelled to tell the trouth of an vnknowen thyng to
hym And sayd . whan thou shalt se A man of
good disposicion . and full of parfectyon . thou ought to
do after hym . for couetise is bothe weke and seke in hym

Figure 44 A page from Caxton's *The Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers* printed in 1477 'the first dated book printed in England'. The earliest typefaces were designed to emulate manuscript**.**

Manuscript writing did not die out immediately. Indeed many of the late 15th Century manuscripts were copied from printed versions since these were often the ones that were immediately available to be copied. The scripted and the printed copy were at first very similar except that the printed copy was mostly on paper, although often a few presentation copies of an edition were still printed on vellum. But the profession of scribe was obviously finished and this in itself had a profound effect on monastic life and on the secularism of knowledge. Vellum continued to be used for book binding for another century as did the use of clasps to

[1] Carter xxix

secure the covers of the printed book. Almost every image of a book in medieval and Renaissance art shows the clasp as a prominent feature.

Paper itself had first been introduced into Spain about 950 and the first paper factory in Europe started about 1150 near Valencia and paper making then slowly spread throughout the Continent. Paper was given watermarks as from the end of the 13th Century and over 16,000 different watermarks from 1282 to the end of the 16th century have been identified.[1] Many of these marks were the symbols with which we have become familiar and are drawn from classical and Christian sources. Paper makers were generally very small operations and there were large numbers of them which partially accounts for this large number of marks. The Albigensians particularly had a reputation for being excellent paper makers and Bayley[2] at the beginning of the 20th Century proposed that the marks were a secret code used for communication between exiled groups of these unfortunates who had been dispersed after the Crusade from 1209 to 1226.[3] The combination of this number of watermarks and a substantial paper trade means that the paper itself is of no help in identifying the origins of what was written or subsequently printed on the paper.[4]

Another result of the printing revolution was standardization and permanence of the text.[5] Of course, this could work both ways; if there was an error, it would also be perpetuated. A celebrated example was the Wicked Bible where it was proposed that "thou shalt commit adultery"! Nevertheless this sort of thing was the exception. It had always been known that ancient texts gradually became debased after countless copying and many are the references to the necessity to go back to the original sources.[6] This was truly the inspiration of the Renaissance; the joy of

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[1] Bricquet 1923

[2] Bayley 1909

[3] It was during this local crusade that the Abbot of Citeaux, when asked by his soldiers how they should distinguish between Catholics and heretics, made the infamous remark 'Kill them all. God will know his own.'

[4] The study of watermarks has been used to investigate the origin of some works: for instance in the dating of Newton's manuscripts. Dobbs Appendix 2.

[5] It is interesting that this benefit of the printing revolution has up to now been lacking in the current communications revolution, the Internet. It is only too easy to change the text of Web pages and only too common to find that links to Web pages have been broken or that the Web address no longer exists. This impermanence is recognized by the fathers of the Internet to be a serious drawback.

[6] A technique to accelerate production of codices in the Middle Ages was for several scribes to work at the same time from dictation. This technique was the source of countless errors when words were misheard. See for an example *A Metrical Bestiary* edited by A. W. Rendell, in 1928, where three original Latin versions of the same book from the 12th Century are compared.

being able to return to the unsullied ancient scripts. As Petrarch said, referring to the original texts, he hoped his descendants would be able to return to the "pure radiance" of the past. Not one of all the classical texts that have survived to the present day is in the hand of original author. The earliest copies of most of them were dated from hundreds of years or more after the original. The earliest edition we have of the surviving plays of Sophocles was written 1,400 years after the date the original was composed.

Apart from the age of the original texts and the innumerable times they had been copied, there was an additional burden on the scholar in his desire to tease out the pure and original meaning of the text. It was universal practice, indeed it was recognized as the duty of any reader, to make notes on the text, indicating his commitment to and participation in the reverential act of reading. Respect for the content of the book was added to respect for the time consuming and arduous task of preparing the materials, of writing, copying and binding it. Curtius quotes the heart-felt words of one scribe in the colophon of his book: "just as the sick desire health, so the scribe yearns for the end of the book."[1]

Notes, glosses, scholia and marginalia were often transcribed into subsequent copies making it even more difficult to decipher the original text. This had been the practice ever since classical times when many contemporary authors wrote commentaries on the works of their peers and it continued through to the Renaissance. Thus Pomponio Leto who was the first modern editor of Virgil with his version written from 1487 to 1490, had the misfortune to be unaware that he was working from a text which had been extensively glossed by Servius. This was a serious impediment since hundreds of lines of commentary had been added to every ten lines of original text.[2] The practice of adding explanatory notes became so ingrained that authors felt no hesitation in writing comments on their own work as they went along. Today, we might call these comments footnotes but in the works of the Middle Ages the commentaries were sometimes much longer than the rest of the piece. For instance, Jean de Meung, the author of the second part of the *Roman de la Rose,* interspersed the verse epic with long prose commentaries on the poem and on many other unrelated subjects. The *Cornucopiae* of Perotti published in 1489 consisted of 500 pages of commentary on one book of

[1] Curtius 328

[2] Grafton 1991 49 and Allen 141

Martial's Epigrams[1] and we shall see how the emblem literature was no exception to this tradition. The later editions of some of the better-known emblem books were often accompanied by hundreds of pages of commentary. The ideal for the Renaissance humanist was, however, the accuracy and thus beauty of the work as it had first existed in classical times. *Antiquitas saeculi, juventus mundi*; the old days were the youth of the world.

It is often remarked that perhaps the most significant immediate result of the printing revolution was the Reformation itself. Between 1517 and 1520 Luther's thirty publications sold probably three hundred thousand copies.[2] It is not difficult to see that these publications would hardly have had the effect they did if there had just been only a couple of copies of each. On the other hand, the Catholics also embraced printing as a medium of spreading the word of God and many of the earliest printer/publishers were actually clerics.

There has been much discussion on the significance of the invention of printing for the rise of science and the accompanying decline in the doctrines of Platonism which we have seen had dominated philosophy for the previous 2,000 years. Was printing the main cause of this climactic event, was it a catalyst which speeded up an inevitable but gradual change or was it just one among many influences impinging on the cultural revolution of the 17th Century? In all probability, it was all three and I discuss this in greater detail in Chapter 11 below.

Image

The image was one of the three prerequisite elements of the books of emblems, devices and other symbolic species and in the 16th and 17th Century these images or *pictura* were mostly woodcuts. Some later books had illustrations made from engraved metal or copper plates. This process was much more difficult[3] than the woodcut; the engraving was physically more demanding and the process required two steps in the

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[1] Perotti's son Pyrrhus produced a second edition which was even longer. He said in the introduction to his edition "with commentaries of this sort, the longer they are the better"!

[2] Eisenstein 148

[3] An example of the cost and difficulty of producing and printing engraved plates, if not the low regard paid to illustrations, is the 1481 edition of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. It was originally intended to have one engraved illustration for each of the 100 Cantos but the maximum number of illustrations ever printed was 19, most copies only have 2 and the prime example printed on vellum and presented to the Signoria of Florence had no plates at all. Hind 528

press. The woodcut could be printed at the same time as type but the metal plate required a separate printing although usually it provided higher quality results. *Symbolicae questiones* of 1555 by Achille Bocchi was the first emblem book published with copperplate engravings. Another technique was drypoint where the picture was scratched onto a relatively soft metal plate. This gave more artistic flexibility but only allowed a limited number of prints before the plate became blurred. One of the masters of this medium was the so-called 'Master of the Amsterdam Cabinet' named after the place where most of his prints are kept.[1]

The advent of the woodcut print or the cut as it is called for short was a revolution in itself. Although the woodcut could get corrupted by cracking or blurring, this was nothing to what might happen to a codex illustration which had to be copied time and time again. In fact it was not uncommon, in order to save time, for a scribe to omit some details from the illustration of a book or indeed to omit the illustration completely so that over the centuries many manuscripts became completely debased, losing their illustrations altogether. Of course that is not to say that the block makers were perfect. They too got lazy. The first edition of Alciato's *Book of Emblems* contains seven emblems picturing Cupid with a blindfold which is of course appropriate and correct since Cupid is renowned for shooting his arrows blindly and indiscriminately. In none of the subsequent editions did all seven images have their blindfolds.[2]

The earliest carved wood blocks were used for decorating textiles, for playing cards and for religious images which were made in the monasteries and sold to pilgrims. Almost all the earliest cuts outside the book trade were of religious subjects. Later in the 15th Century woodcut printing was used for all kinds of decorative purposes including for wallpaper. The first written reference to block cutters dates from about 1400 and the earliest date on a single woodcut is of 1418.

Many of the cutters, particularly in Italy, were independent shops who were commissioned by printers to make the cuts from designs which were produced by artists either in the employ of the printer or who themselves were independent. A handful of early artists, notably Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), who eventually had his own press, Marc Antonio (d 1527) in Italy and Lucas van Leyden (d 1533) in Holland, made their cuts into masterpieces but as always the masters were very few.

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[1] See Wolfegg 1998

[2] Panofsky 1937 122 cited by Mason Tung *Emblematica* 8, 1, 1994 40

There were, however, a number of illustrators whose work was prized above others and these included Virgil Solis, Bernard Salomon, Theodore de Bry, Jost Amman, de Passe, Boetius a Bolswert and Cornelis Gallé who was a student of Rubens. The cuts were commissioned by and then belonged to the printer and might be used again and again, particularly Initial letters which emulating the miniaturists of the codex were often very elaborate. One of the most notorious examples of this was the Great Folio Bible of Elizabeth of England where many of the woodcut initial letters depicted scenes from classical pagan myths and stories.[1] Other images might also be used many times; for instance, a portrait face might depict different people in the same book or the same generic picture of a town might be used to depict entirely different places. In the *Hecatomgraphie,* an emblem book by Corrozet, one of the illustrations was used in eleven different works[2] and in Whitney's *A Choice of Emblems* which was one of the first English emblem books although printed by Plantin in Holland, 202 out of the 248 images had been used in earlier books he had published.

Figure 45 Woodcut by Virgil Solis illustrating the story of Narcissus from a 1563 edition of Ovid's Metamorphoses. See the illustration of the same scene on page 104 from a 1584 edition where the cut supposedly by Bernard Salomon is actually a reversed copy of the above.

There are also instances where the same cut was used by different printers thus proving that it had been supplied by one independent shop. Indeed, one of the reasons for the large margins seen in woodcuts was to leave room for inscriptions which different printers might require. Often separate borders or frames for the pictures, called '*passe-partout*', were cut and these could be mixed and matched with images. Sometimes the pictures were just reversed and in other cases the foreground elements were put in the background and vice versa all in the hope that readers would not detect the changes. It has been suggested that the simplicity of the woodcut illustrations found in early emblem books was not due to the inherent difficulty of the medium or to the simple and direct nature of

[1] Green 1866 234
[2] D. Russell 178

successful symbolic representation but to the banal fact that printers had a stock of images in hand which were deliberately of a general nature so that they could be applied to a variety of subjects.

Figure 46 The tradition of illluminated initials was continued by the block cutters. Letter L from the *Livre de Matheolus* of 1492.

In one of the most celebrated early French emblem books, the *Picta Poesis,* simultaneously published in Latin and French in 1552, the author, Barthelémy Aneau, acknowledged that he had composed most of the epigrams to match blocks which were already owned by the printer. Quarles who wrote the most successful English emblem book *Emblemes* first published in 1635 borrowed all his pictures from two earlier books the *Pia Desideria* of Hermann Hugo and the Jesuit treatise *Typus Mundi.*

Many block makers were forced to join guilds, the medieval equivalent of labor unions, and more often than not this was the carpenter's guild. The number of block makers was thus restricted and this partly accounts for the difficulties and expense that printers had in illustrating their books.[1] The religious orders however were not subject to these restrictions which is one reason for the large number and variety of religious prints.

The French excelled in cutting initials and Geoffrey Tory who wrote the great classic, *Champ Fleury,* on the origin of the French language and the symbolic meaning of letters, started his career as a block cutter. Jean Dupré printed the first illustrated book in Paris in 1481 and Verard, also in Paris, was the most important publisher of illustrated books in France in the 15th century. The *Compost et Kalendrier des Bergiers* by Marchant first published in 1491 and having many editions and variants, was noteworthy as being one of the first printed and illustrated books describing the life of and addressed at the ordinary country people of the time although it is not clear how many of the intended readership were actually able to read. It had scenes from seasonal life, healthy living, virtues and vices,

[1] Hind 88

astrology and physiognomy.[1] One passage illustrates how the extraordinary medieval reliance on number symbolism was shared even by the common people for whom the book was intended.

> We shepherds say that the age of man is seventy-two year, and that we like but to one whole year. For evermore, we take six year for every month as January and February and so forth: for as the year changeth by the twelve months into twelve sundry manners so doth a man change himself twelve times in his life, by twelve ages and every age lasteth six year. If so be that he live to seventy-two, for three times six maketh eighteen and six times six maketh thirty-six and then is man at his best and also at the highest and twelve times six maketh seventy-two and that is the age of man.[2]

The word 'compost' has nothing to do with gardening or the outdoor life of a shepherd; it comes from the Latin *compotus* or *computus*. A computus in the Middle Ages was a book about dates and time including such matters as calendars, the calculation of the date of Easter,[3] phases of the moon, eclipses and divination. The *computus* was part of the educational curriculum right back to classical times on a par with *grammaticus* the study of grammar. The Venerable Bede made a particular contribution to the genre, with his *De temporum ratione,* on the Calculation of Time, from 727, which became a classic text book for church schools. Another early *Computus*, written by Helpericus of Auxerre, dates from the 9th Century AD and the first English edition of this was printed in 1503.[4]

An important genre of woodcut printing was the blockbook in which the whole page including text was printed from one block. There is some controversy over whether blockbooks were being printed in the early 15th century thereby preceding printing by movable type or whether they were contemporaneous. There is a legend that printing by movable type was actually invented by a Dutchman with the name of Koster who had started printing blockbooks including the *Speculum Humanæ Salvationis*, the Mirror of Human Salvation, supposedly the first book printed in Hol-

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[1] A similar book *Opus Ruralium Commodorum* by Petrus de Crescentiis was published in 1493. See Hind 347

[2] *The Kalendar and Compost of Shepherds* 1518 trans. and ed. by G.C. Heseltine 1931 4

[3] The calculation and promulgation of the date of Easter day was regarded as one of the most important pastoral tasks of the Church and the lengths to which they were prepared to go to ascertain this date with accuracy including using some medieval cathedrals as observatories of the sun are described in Heilbron 1999

[4] Translations of Byzantine, Jewish and Ethiopian computuses are given in Book 7 of Scaliger 1580

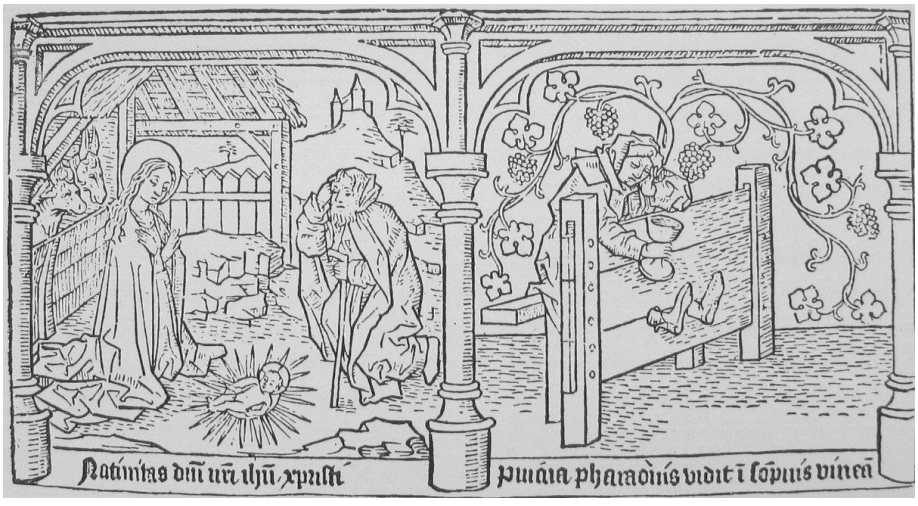

Figure 47 A page from the blockbook *Speculum Humanae Salvationis.*

land[1] and that his set of type was stolen by one of his apprentices, named Faust or Fust and taken to Mainz where they were used by Gutenberg. Probably most blockbooks were printed from about 1450 to 1470 and the earliest and the best were from the Netherlands with a few from Germany. The first colored printing of blocks was of the 1482 edition of the *Poeticon Astronomicon* of Hyginus by the publisher, Ratdolf, in Venice. It is also noticeable that block books often had the form of the emblem with a picture incorporating a motto and beneath the picture an explanatory poem.

It may seem odd that blockbook printing should flourish at the same time as printing by movable type but the former had its advantages. It avoided the cost of buying or making the type and indeed the cost of the press itself since blockbooks could be printed by hand. Small editions could therefore be produced profitably.

Finally, another genre of the wood-cut was the Printers device,[2] the trademark of the publisher/printer which would appear on the title page of the book. These marks combine neatly our interest in woodcuts, printing and the emblem and device. Indeed, Alciato himself proposes the printer's device or trademark as a genre which would benefit from his *Emblemata*. A collection of printers' devices is being made from books in the Royal Dutch Library and in this collection there are to date at least

[1] However in the *Cologne Chronicle* of 1499, it is stated that "the art of printing, as has been said, was discovered at Mainz, in the manner as it is now generally used, yet the first prefiguration was found in Holland, in the Donatuses which were printed there before that time." Cited in Goudy 1940

[2] See page 224 for a more detailed discussion of the Device and its differences from the Emblem.

2,750 devices attributable to individual printers. The examples from this collection show the extent to which Alciato succeeded in his limited ambition; there is extensive cross-fertilization between these devices and the emblem literature. For instance, in 1536 Johannes Steelsius, a Dutch printer, started using one of Alciato's own emblems as his mark. It was intended as a pun on his own name since the picture from the emblem showed a tombstone or *stele* as it is called in Greek. However, Steelsius 'improved' on the emblem for his own purpose since he replaced the cloud in Alciato's picture with an armillary sphere, the ultimate symbol of universal structure and harmony. Presumably his purpose was to indicate that his publications had the authority and reliability of the divinely ordained macrocosm.

The most celebrated printer's mark of the age was the anchor and dolphin of the Aldine press a motif which permeated Renaissance literature and art. According to Erasmus, Aldus had in his possession a Roman coin of Titus Vespasian from AD 80 which showed the symbol and the proverb. This had originally been issued to mark the eruption of Vesuvius of that year, the eruption in which Pliny had died. According to Suetonius the favorite phrase of the Emperor Augustus was 'more haste less speed' although in this case Augustus also used the symbol of a crab and a butterfly to illustrate the adage. Again, according to Erasmus "there is no other in the whole range of proverbs so worthy of use."[1] The origin of it all, as so often, was probably the advice of Aristotle to "deliberate slowly and act fast."[2]

Figure 48 The printers mark of the Aldine Press on an edition of the Greek Anthology.

[1] Erasmus (1508 edition) II. I. i

[2] Aristotle *Nichomachean Ethics* VI, 1142B. Tesauro Chapter XIX attributes the saying to Demosthenes, an Athenian politician who was a contemporary of Aristotle.

The combination was also a potent Christian symbol. The anchor had had been used in primitive times to denote the burial places of sailors and the early Christians adopted it as suggestive of the cross without betraying their actual identity. When flanked by fishes or dolphins this gave it added meaning since the fish was also a Christian symbol.[1] There were many similar devices throughout the literature: a tortoise carrying a sail, a dolphin tied to a tortoise, a sail attached to column, a butterfly on a crab, a falcon holding the weights of a clock in its beak, a remora twisted round an arrow, an eagle and a lamb and a blindfolded lynx.[2] Emanuele Tesauro in his exposition of symbolic tropes in *Il Cannochiale Aristotelico* gives examples of the symbol used as an Emblem, a Medal, a Device, a Hieroglyph and a Cipher.[3]

Figure 49 The device of Augustus according to Whitney's emblem (page 121) From his *Choice of Emblemes*.

The mulberry tree, the device of Ludovico Sforza, called il Moro (1452-1508), the ruler of Milan, was of the same genre, illustrating the same dictum of Aristotle, since it grows slowly and then suddenly flowers and the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, the Renaissance erotic fantasy and source for the emblem book which I discuss in detail later, had at least 80 variants of the trope. Achille Bocchi who wrote the emblem book *Symbolicae Questiones* published in 1574 used a similar symbol for his academy, the *Hermathena*, a figure combining Hermes, the swift god of eloquence and Athena, the goddess of wisdom.

As we shall see the emblem genre was characterized by the three elements of the composition. Without the revolution of the printing press and thus without the woodcut, it goes without saying that there would have been no emblem literature as we know it. But there was also a more subtle reason why the cut made an essential if unintended contribution to the genre. Woodblock cutting was a difficult and imprecise art and the early cuts were by their nature simpler in design than the equiva-

[1] See Biedermann 10

[2] The origins of these devices are given in Wind 98

[3] Tesauro Chapter XIX

lent manuscript illuminations would have been. Not only did this simplicity give the illustration a more symbolic tone but also it added to the uncertainty of the meaning of the illustration and the uncertainty of the relationship between the illustration and the text. We have to recognize that this feature of early emblems may have been largely fortuitous since the illustrations that were used were in many cases from the preexisting stock of images in the hands of the publishers. They were available, they were thus cheap to use and the ambiguities contributed to the enigmatic quality of the total composition and to its attraction for contemporary readers. The aim of the emblem writers in their mature work was not to illustrate the text by means of picture and motto but to compose a tripartite ensemble, the elements of which played off against each other so that the reader had to work at discovering the interpretative solution in its many possible symbolic levels.

· Universal Truth ·

As the Renaissance matured, more classical texts were discovered, translated and made available to scholars who thus had access to a hitherto largely unknown treasure house of material. It was not unnatural that contemporary thinkers should search for common threads in this wealth of literature and philosophy. The word humanist itself now inspires a vision of cultivated scholars, expert in every branch of contemporary knowledge, laboring to bring order out of a mass of new material and ideas. Their approach was to attempt to integrate into a complete whole many if not all of the concepts we have already discussed including hermetism, Kabbala, magic, Christian ethics and the Art of Memory. We in turn can begin to glimpse the extent of the extraordinary treasures that became available to the Renaissance scholar: the panoply of the Greek myths, one thousand years of Greek, Roman and early Christian literature and the mysterious and magical philosophies of Egypt and the Near East.

Two of the most influential early scholars in this process of integration were Marsiglio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola. Ficino rediscovered and translated Plotinus, translated the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the works of Pseudo-Dionysius, Porphyry and Proclus as well as Plato's Dialogues. He was appointed the head of the new Platonic Academy in Florence and he coined the phrase 'Platonic Love' which was widely used by writers of his own and later centuries. His most important original philosophical contribution was the *Theologia Platonica*, emulating the work of Proclus[1] of the

[1] Proclus was a pupil of Plotinus and head of the Athenian Academy for 50 years.

same name written 1,000 years earlier. In this work, Ficino emphasized the immortality of the soul both as the principal theme of Platonism and as the common feature of a reconciliation between Platonism and Christianity. He made a determined effort to combine the theories of Platonism and Christian theology on equal terms and was prepared to draw on his knowledge of Hermetic, magical, astrological, oriental and even Aristotelian texts in this task. He combined the Platonic belief in the desire of the soul to be reunited with God with his own mystical experiences and those of others. He argued that the soul is immortal using the Hermetic dogma that man has a divine element remaining within him which puts him to some degree on a level with God. His most widely read book was the *De vita Coelitus Comparanda*, On capturing the life of the Stars, which is largely based on the *Asclepius*, part of the Corpus Hermeticum. He excused his reliance on these diverse sources with the argument we have seen used by Aquinas that they were different aspects of the truth and that Christian theology and pagan philosophy were concurrent branches of man's constant search for God. He thus perhaps unconsciously followed the words of St. Clement that I quoted earlier: the Jewish and the Greek traditions had merged to form the river of truth that was Christianity.

A younger contemporary of Ficino was Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494), one of the few humanists who were not overwhelmed by the worship of classicism. Like Ficino he also attempted to form a system of universal truth, a reconciliation of Christian doctrine, with Jewish beliefs and neoPlatonism and to a greater extent than Ficino, he emphasized the contribution of the Kabbala to this eclectic whole. But he was sufficiently realistic to appreciate that "there has been nobody in the past and there will be nobody after us, to whom truth has given itself to be understood in its entirety. Its immensity is too great for human capacity to be equal to it."[1]

Pico's most famous work was his *Oration* of 1486, intended to be the introduction to what he called his *Nine Hundred Theses* which in turn were extracts from writers from the different traditions we have covered and which together served to illustrate his theme of the universality of secular knowledge and religious truth. He proposed to use these theses in a public debate in which he would defend his ideas but this debate was never held since the Pope declared some of the theses heretical. The most controversial of all was Pico's surprising conclusion: "there is no science, that more certainly confirms the divinity of Christ, than Magic and Caba-

[1] Kristeller 207

la". Typically, the Oration opened with a quotation from one of the Hermetic Treatises, the Asclepius. "O what a miracle is man". It continues at the start of Chapter 16 "and indeed not only the Mosaic and Christian mysteries but also the theology of the ancients shows us the value of the liberal arts" and over the next twenty Chapters he reviews the sayings and works of Apollo, the Chaldeans and Zoroaster, the 'ancient theology of Hermes Trismegistus', the number theory of Pythagoras, theorems dealing with magic and the Cabala and finally "the things that I have elicited from the ancient mysteries of the Hebrews and have cited for confirmation of the inviolable Catholic faith."

There are many other examples of writers of the time combining these themes in a single thesis. One of these is Giulio Camillo's description of the memory places in his famous Theater described above (page 140)

> We have three souls of which the one nearest to God is called by Mercurius Trismegistus and Plato *mens*, by Moses the spirit of life, by St. Augustine the higher part, by David light, when he says 'In thy light shall we see light', and Pythagoras agrees with David in that celebrated precept, 'No man may speak of God without light'. Which light is called by Aristotle the *intellectus agens*, [the active intelligence] and it is that one eye by which all the three Gorgon sisters see, according to the symbolic theologians.[1]

The memory places were drawn into mainstream Renaissance philosophy as manifestations of the Platonic space where the microcosm could channel into the Realities of the macrocosm. Alternatively the memory places could be thought of as talismans, objects imprinted with images containing magical powers, a conception which reminds us of Plato's apt metaphor, later used by both Cicero and Plutarch, of wax and the signet ring.[2] Plato compared memory to a piece of wax on which a signet ring has been impressed to form an image. In the manner of memory, the wax eventually softens and the impressed image slowly disappears. The talismanic memory places

> would be supposed not only to draw power from the cosmos into the memory but to unify memory. All the details of the world of sense, reflected in memory, would be unified organically within the memory, because subsumed and unified under the higher celestial images, the images of their 'causes' … The mind and memory of man is now divine having powers of grasping the highest reality through a magically activated imagination.[3]

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[1] Camillo 1552 42-43 quoted in Yates 1999 153

[2] Plato *Theaetatus*

[3] Yates 1999 159, 161. By causes, Yates refers to the Platonic forms.

The magical element of the relationship between divine Reality and material expression of that Reality mediated through the memory was expressed even more forcibly in the works of Giordano Bruno (1552-1600) writing in the late 16th Century. He represented an extreme example of the Renaissance attempt to revive Christian neoPlatonism and combine it with elements of myth, hermetism, magic and other themes that we have discussed. Bruno's own fate illustrates the dangers of flaunting a belief in magic even though as we have seen magic permeated all parts of medieval and Renaissance thought. Not only did he emphasize the magical elements of the memory systems in his quest to achieve access to those divine Realities but he was brazen in his beliefs, traveling throughout Europe to expound them and recklessly returning to Italy where the Inquisition and ultimately the stake awaited him.

Bruno was influenced by the *Mythologia* of Natalis Comes of 1616 a book described by Gombrich[1] as a "bewildering farrago of pedantic erudition and uncritical compilation" and by the work of the Catalan philosopher and mystic Ramon Llull (1232 - 1316) who had made an early attempt to develop a "universal philosophy" which might demonstrate that Christianity, Judaism and Islam could be viewed as identical. His purpose in showing this was of course to persuade Jews and Muslims that there was obviously no obstacle to their immediate conversion to Christianity! In this he was in the good company of Aquinas whose second great work, the *Summa Contra Gentiles,* Christianity for Nonbelievers, of about 1264, was directed at the same audience.

Llull is one of the most extraordinary and colorful characters in the late Middle Ages. Inspired by visions to take up his pen to the glory of God and to convert the heretic, he performed his God-given task with unflagging zeal. He made several visits to North Africa attempting to preach to the infidel and wrote nearly 300 books including possibly the first autobiography and the first novels of the modern era. His great work, however, to which all the others were subservient was the invention and exposition of what he called his Art.[2] This was an extraordinarily complex philosophical theory involving the application of algebraic and symbolic logic whereby all philosophical and other practical questions could be answered. The basis of his philosophy was Augustine's description of the Trinity reflected in the microcosm, the three parts of the soul of man: the intellect for the art of knowing, the will for learning to love the truth and the Art of Memory for remembering truth.

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[1] Gombrich 120

[2] Remember that the Greek word for art, craft and technique was the same: *techne.*

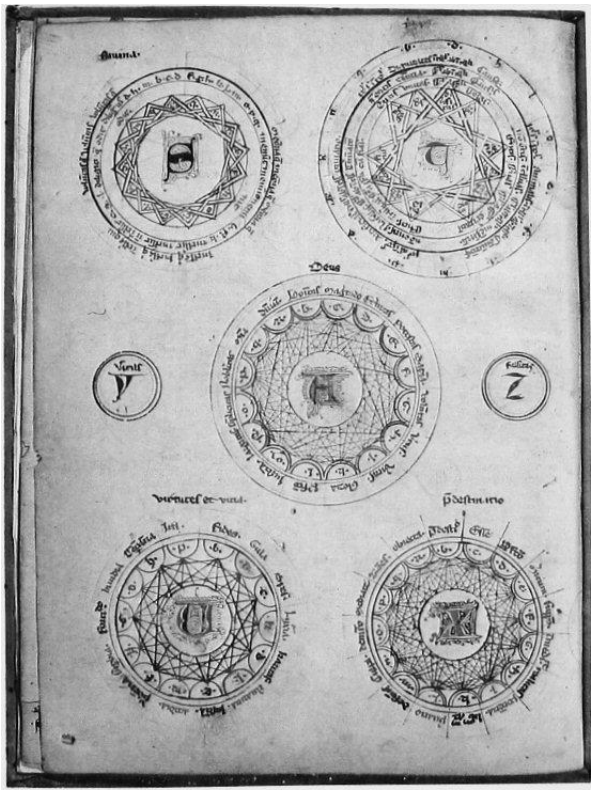

Figure 50 Figures from a manuscript of the *Ars Demonstriva* by Ramon LLull.

Llull's Art begins with what he calls the Dignities of God. These in turn were derived from the Names of God originating with Augustine and developed by Pseudo-Dionysius in his book, *De Divinis Nominibus*, Of the Divine Names. The Names were in the ancient tradition that believed that the essence of a being was encapsulated in the name of that being; we have seen that this was also thought to be true of the Egyptian hieroglyphs. To meditate on the Divine names was the first step in the progress to the mystical experience of God. The sanctity of the names of God was also a Jewish tradition and one which was reflected in the importance given in the Cabala to the sacred letters. As for Llull, he took the first letters of each of the Divine Names, the Dignities, and this was always the starting point for his logic. He did not do anything by halves. One of his books has 1,080 examples of how to work out the answers to theological and philosophical questions. Here are a few taken at random: Why is the glory of the next world not visible in this world? Are the simple elements divisible into essential or integral parts? Does free will remain in the soul after death?[1]

[1] Bonner 516 et seq

In spite of the extraordinary effort put in by Llull to construct and publicize his Art over a long lifetime, his influence and the success of the Art was not very great. There was opposition in the Church from some quarters because his work was too rational and from others that it was too mystical. But many of the writers we have already met read and presumably understood him including Nicholas of Cusa, Cornelius Agrippa and Giordano Bruno and later Newton,[1] Athanasius Kircher and Leibniz. The irony of it was that whereas Llull was eventually canonized, Bruno whose work was in many ways an extension of Llull's was burned at the stake. Such was the change of atmosphere born of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation.

The book which perhaps represents Bruno's style and beliefs best is the *Degli' Heroici Furori,* The Heroic Frenzies*,* published in 1585 which he describes as illustrating a religion of natural contemplation. This is categorized as an emblem book but it is unique in many ways; it consists of a long and disjointed allegory in the form of a pastoral dialogue not dissimilar to Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calendar* published a few years earlier in 1579. There are no images and Bruno's theme is illustrated by a series of short poems with commentaries describing how an heroic search for truth and mystical zeal to unite the soul with God are man's highest calling compared to which erotic earthly desires are bestial and vulgar. Fifteen of the sonnets are descriptions of devices carried by the warriors of love. The *furori* were the four degrees of Platonic desire which Ficino describes in his commentary on the *Symposium* through which the soul progresses on the way to its unification with God. In Bruno's case they were heroic because of the effort required to overcome earthly appetites and turn the soul to contemplation of the divine. Certainly as much as any emblem book, *The Heroic Frenzies* reflects the philosophical and mystical purpose of the genre and Bruno in his customary exuberant style describes his purpose as to

> seek the truth of nature in all her specific natural forms in which they contemplate the eternal essence, the specific substantial perpetuator of the eternal generation and vicissitudes of things …. And above them all presides the form of forms, the fountain of light, the truth of truth, the God of gods, for all is full of divinity, truth, being and goodness.[2]

John Dee (1527-1608) was an English contemporary of Bruno, who attempted almost single handedly to bring about a neoPlatonist revival in England and a renewal of interest in Llull. He was much influenced by

[1] Newton owned 8 books by Lull.
[2] Trans. Yates 1991 278

the books on *Natural Magic* by Cornelius Agrippa and is reputed to be the model for the character of Prospero in Shakespeare's *Tempest*. His own masterwork was the *Monas Hieroglyphica* which name he also gave to a composite symbol of the signs of the seven planets he had invented and by which he became best known. He was a serious mathematician and experimental astronomer and illustrates again how philosophy, magic and science as we know it were intimately bound together. He was probably a source of inspiration for the Rosicrucians and an illustration of the *Monas Hieroglyphica* appears in the Rosicrucian Manifesto. Because of his beliefs and especially in the harsher political climate after the death of Queen Elizabeth, Dee suffered a similar fate to Bruno: he was accused of witchcraft, sent to prison and his house was burned to the ground.

In the Pythagorean tradition of Nicholas of Cusa and Llull, Dee believed that mathematics was the most powerful force in the universe, that using the starting point of his monad, all planetary motions could be derived through a series of theorems and that as in the Cabala the symbols of the universe could be manipulated by mathematics. He too saw symbols as manifestations of the essence of the thing they represented and that language had a mystical meaning which if manipulated correctly could reveal the divine secrets. He saw clearly the advantages of hieroglyphs or mathematical symbols as universal writing since, as he said, "its properties can be eloquently explained in every language and nation."[1] Towards the end of his career, Dee appeared to become less and less inclined towards the experimentation and empirical observations of his earlier life and reverted to the deductive and mystical ideas of his predecessors.

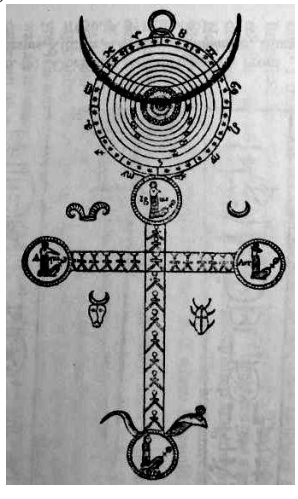

Figure 51 John Dee's *Monas Hieroglyphica* as depicted by Athanasius Kircher in the *Obeliscus Pamphilius* of 1650.

[1] Cited Dieckmann 315

All through the sixteenth century, writers embraced the new eclecticism. An example was the popular emblem book *Zodiacus Christianus* by the Jesuit, Jeremiah Drexel, in which he uses signs culled from biblical references and which in his eyes, for the Christian, should replace the traditional zodiac. Another was Girolamo Ruscelli's *Le imprese illustri,* Famous Devices, first published in the 1566. This work was an exposition of the origins of the devices of many of the nobility of Europe. In the case of the Girasole, the flower which always turns to the sun, the device of the nobleman Aurelio Porcelaga, he summarizes, within the scope of seven pages, all the ground that I have covered in this book. In his essay on the sun as the "source of life and knowledge", he demonstrates the contributions of the Jewish Cabalists, Hermes Trismegistus, hieroglyphs, Horapollo, Pythagoras, Plato, Ovids *Metamorphoses* which describes the origin of the heliotrope as the metamorphosis of Clitia who had fallen in love with the sun, Plotinus, Venus, Ptolemy, Dionysius and Ficino. In the climax of his essay he reviews Holy Scripture, describes Christ our Lord as the sun of Justice to whom we should always turn and deems the device of the Heliotrope as worthy of "showing the faith, obedience, diligence, love and devotion owed to the father, our Lord."[1]

Figure 52 The sunflower on the nimbus of St. John symbolizing the soul turning towards God. From a glass painting of the 12th century.

From Hellenistic times, the sun had been associated with the Greek god Apollo, although the reason for this is obscure. Macrobius in his *Saturnalia* gives a number of explanations of which one will be familiar: the etymology of Apollo is said to be *a Polloi* or not many or the one. Macrobius explains that all the myriad Roman gods had become subsumed within the one Sun god.[2] Indeed the sun was the central deity of Mithraism and subsequently in 274 the Emperor Aurelian proclaimed *Sol Invictus,* the Unconquerable Sun, as the supreme deity of the Roman Empire. Christianity in its turn took over aspects of sun worship (e.g. Sunday) though in keeping with its moralistic spirituality the sun is usually depicted in Christian literature as *Sol Justitiae*,

[1] Ruscelli 1584 369
[2] *Saturnalia* 1, 17, 7

or as it was said in the Old Testament, the Sun of Righteousness.[1] Albertus Magnus writing in the 13th Century said: "in the sun, because it encircles the 'machine' of the world, is signified the power of the Father, the wisdom of the Son and the love of the Holy Spirit."[2] The Sun and the sunflower were widely used as a symbol in Renaissance times and in the emblem literature, for instance in the emblem books of Scève, Paradin, Wither and Vaenius[3] and is even cited in Llull as a symbol of love and devotion. "The friend was asked how man's heart turned to love his beloved. He answered, and said 'Just as the sunflower turns to the sun.'"[4]

Yet another example of the new Renaissance eclecticism was one of the greatest books of the age, the *Essais* of Montaigne, much influenced by Plutarch's *Moralia* and now believed to be organized in a framework in accordance with the Art of Memory.[5] The Essays, written in several versions from about 1580 to 1592 when Montaigne died, consist of 3 books with a total of 107 Essays ordered in groups each of which refers to one of the 13 major mythical divinities. The purpose of this arrangement, it is supposed, was first to enable Montaigne, in a book which initially did not even have separate paragraphs, to remember where he was during his long task of continually improving and updating all the Essays and secondly to bring a structure and balance to the whole composition which has traditionally been regarded as rather a random collection. Montaigne himself gives no overt clue as to any orderly arrangement of his work and indeed specifically denies it, referring to the Essays as "grotesque and monstrous bodies, pierced together of divers members, without definite shape, having no order, sequence or proportion other than accidental."[6] In the interpretation by Daniel Martin, the essays can be said to be examples of the personification of the different characteristics of the Gods they represent and thus firmly in the rhetorical and allegorical tradition. Certainly Montaigne's taste for illusions and allusions, puzzles and multiple meaning together with the numerous references to classical authors and biblical sources reflects the spirit of the age which in his case displays an unsurpassed sophistication. He clearly knew about emblems and refers to them in the original meaning of inlaid ornaments when discussing the changes and additions to his work that he was continually making.

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[1] *Malachi* 4, 2
[2] Albertus Magnus *De laudibus B. Mariae Virg.* XII, 5 quoted in Hopper 94
[3] See Praz 109 and Judith Dundas *Emblematica* 7, 1, 1993 63
[4] Llull *Llibre d'Amic e Amar*, 342 cited in Praz 110
[5] See Martin 1993 and http://www-unix.oit.umass.edu~essays/Montaigne/index2.shtml
[6] Essay I, 28 in Donald Frame's translation.

> My book is always one. Except that at each new edition so that the buyer may not come off completely empty handed, I allow myself to add, since it is only an ill-fitted patch work, some extra ornaments (quelque embleme supernumeraire).[1]

Then there was Edmund Spenser in his masterwork *The Faerie Queen*. This was based on the work of Apuleius, with his fable of Cupid and Psyche from the *Golden Ass* and used motifs from the Middle East, Egypt and from the Song of Solomon in the Old Testament to tell a political and spiritual Christian allegory of which the center piece was the garden of a Greek god, Adonis.

I shall later refer to some of the giants of the new age of empiricism in particular Kepler, Newton and Leibniz and we shall see that they too were wholly immersed in the traditions of their age. They read Hermes, Raymond Llull, Philo, St. Augustine and Aquinas, practiced alchemy and tried to perfect an universal language which would finally reveal the ultimate secrets of God. There was no question with any of these writers of attempting to supplant Christianity although the church authorities had their doubts in the case of some of the more extreme of these thinkers such as Bruno and Galileo. Rather they wished in some way to reconcile the new knowledge with Christian doctrine or provide a platform for their own empirical theories. For example, la Peyrère a 17th Century French scholar stated the position. According to him, the Bible "is wonderfully reconciled with all prophane Records whether ancient or new, to wit those of the Caldeans, Egyptians, Scythians and Chinensians."[2]

The syncretism of the philosophers was not confined to the acknowledged writers and thinkers of the day; it filtered down into the standard curriculum of the schools and thus became the accepted cultural orthodoxy. We can see this from the school textbooks of the time. There was Charles Hoole's *A New Discovery of the Old Art of Teaching School* of 1660 who recommended that pupils should use their common place books to collect sayings from the ancient authors including anecdotes from classical history from Plutarch and Livy, fables from Aesop, Ovid and Comes, adages from Erasmus, hieroglyphs from Valeriano and Caussin and emblems from Alciato and Reusner together with other genres of contemporary symbolic literature. The same proposal made by Obadiah

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[1] Trans. Donald Frame. The original clearly refers to the emblem in its original meaning of a decorative piece of marquetry. See page 224 below for a discussion of the origins of the meaning of the word emblem.

[2] La Peyrère *Prae-Adamitae* 1655 7, 29. The quotation is from the English translation *Men before Adam* 1656 cited in Grafton 1991 206

Walker in his *Of Education, especially of young Gentlemen* of 1673, where he suggests that students should

> take notice of remarkable Histories, Fables, Apologues (such as are not in Esop), Adagies if not in Erasmus, or Manutius, Hieroglyphicks, Emblems and Symbols; which are but simile's drest after divers fashions.[1]

I conclude this section with a description of two remarkable books, the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili,* and the *Narrenshiff,* both of which heavily influenced the writers of emblems and devices and in their form and content sum up the eclectic ambitions of the Renaissance scholars and thinkers. Published in 1499,[2] by the Aldine Press in Venice, the Greek title of the *Poliphili* means "Poliphilo's Struggles of Love in a Dream" and Poliphilo, the hero, is the personification of a lover of many things (Greek 'poli'), possibly also a lover of antique things ('polia') and certainly, lover of Polia, the name of the heroine. The origin of the title was the *Batrachomyomachia,* the Battle of the Mice and Frogs, a poem traditionally believed to have been written by Homer.[3] Following the lead of Prudentius from the early years of the Christian era with his *Psychomachia*, there were numerous imitations of this burlesque epic in the Renaissance[4] and even Alciato wrote a popular legal treatise on dueling subtitled *Monomachia*.[5]

Why is the Poliphili extraordinary? From the technical point of view there are several reasons. It was the first book ever printed in modern Roman (modified Bembo type), which, after 500 years, is still in widespread use today. It was the only book printed by Aldus which contained illustrations and indeed one of the first printed books where the pictures were made specially for the book and where some of the pictures occupy

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[1] Bath 1994 38-39. Apologue was a synonym for Fable.

[2] At least part of the book must have been written after 1489 since it incorporates material from Perotti's *Cornucopia* published in that year.

[3] Suidas, the 10th Century encyclopaedist, however, says that the real author was Pigres of Caria in about 480BC.

[4] A short list of these would include the *Aeluromyomachia* by Dassi published in 1549, *Lerofilomachia* by Oddi a prose comedy in 5 acts published in 1578, another *Batrachomyomachia* by Jacob Balde in 1628, the *Melissomachia* of Verbiest in 1652, the *Georgarchontomachia* of Beronicius written in 1672 and a *Galeomyomachia,* the Battle of the Cats and Mice, c1494 by Prodromus.

[5] *De singulari certamine liber* or *Monomachia*, Singlehanded combat, was written before 1528 on the occasion of a proposal by Francis 1 of France to settle his country's differences with the Hapsburgs by a personal duel with the Emperor Charles V. Such proposals to settle differences between countries by means of a personal duel between the monarchs were quite frequent at this time but not one of them ever took place! For examples see Huizinga 109

two pages. It was the first book ever printed where the text flows round the illustrations creating a harmonious combination of text and image. Today, in another communications revolution, we would call it multimedia. The book contains 172 wonderful woodcut illustrations which are unsigned. Mantegna, the Bellinis, Bordone and even Botticelli have been considered as candidates as draftsmen. This latter is not a completely fanciful possibility since Botticelli had already illustrated two editions of Dante's *Commedia*.[1] The artist of the Poliphili has now also been identified as the illustrator of an edition of the *Metamorphoses* published in Venice in 1497 by Bonsignore. Helen Barolini calls the Poliphili "a marvel of graphic beauty" and "the most glorious book of the Renaissance".[2]

Likewise, the author of the Poliphili is anonymous but in 1515 it was discovered that the first letter of each Chapter formed an acrostic translated as, "Brother Francesco Colonna loved Polia immensely" (note the past tense).[3] Other references have since been found to Colonna in the text although the controversy over the identity of the author still continues.[4] The text itself has aroused strong opinions. It is written principally in Italian but has passages in Latin, Greek, Chaldean, Arabic and Hebrew. It is horribly abstruse and much of the vocabulary is invented by the author.[5] Also, as befits the dream state, the grammar, loosely based on Latin syntax but without case endings, is impossibly dense, making the book almost unreadable. That sourpuss Benedetto Croce called it "long, boring and a caricature of humanism". There was an English edi-

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[1] The first is the Florence edition of 1481 with commentary by Cristoforo Landino and the second is the unfinished series of drawings prepared by Botticelli in the 1490's for his patron Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de Medici whch are now in the Staatliche Museen in Berlin.

[2] Barolini 91

[3] This conceit was also a traditional one. For instance see the epic poem the *Alexandreis* of about 1175 by Walter of Chatillon where the first initials of each of the ten books spelled out his name.

[4] See for instance Lefaivre 1995

[5] Lefaivre identifies over 3,000 original words based on Greek roots and according to Casella and Pozzi's definitive work on Colonna, the Latin vocabulary is "an obstinate chase after the most precious words taken from the most remote regions of Latin literature." The practise of using invented words was an old one and derived from the gradual breakdown of classical Latin into local and regional dialects. The isolation of centers of learning was such that discipline and uniformity in grammar and spelling was largely lost and writers had no compunction in inventing new words. For many centuries there was a specific writing style called hermeneutic in which the writer deliberately used archaic words mostly derived from classical Greek and of course, words to describe new concepts developed subsequently in both Christian and secular environments did not exist in classical times.

tion in 1594 but this only covers one third of the book and much of the translation is incorrect including the first sentence! A full English translation[1] had to wait half a millenium before publication in 1999 but the translator in this latter version makes no attempt to match the archaic obscurity of much of the vocabulary so that the reader does not get any of the enigmatic and gothic sense of the original. Even for contemporaries 'Poliphilian' language became a caricature of obscurity. It was castigated by Castiglione[2] and seized on by the Venetian Senate during the equivalent of a filibuster.

Apart from its technical and bibliographic interest, the book absolutely typifies the literary and philosophic atmosphere of the time, the moment in history when the emblem books were conceived. Many if not all the themes of Renaissance literature and culture are encapsulated in it; from Platonism to personification,[3] a passionate not to say erotic love of classical languages, architecture and monuments, an obsession with secrecy and riddles all illustrated by hieroglyphs and devices and the whole subsumed within Poliphilo's dream within a dream. The text is replete with analogies and direct reference if not plagiarism from Apuleius, Boccaccio, Dante, Petrarch, Ovid, the Roman de la Rose in addition to architectural references from Alberti and Filarete.

Every modern commentator has had a different view of the author's overall theme. To some it is a textbook of alchemy[4] and to others an allegory of the conflict of the Church and humanism. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to determine whether it had a serious objective or was a pastiche or parody of the pastoral romances of Boccaccio, a rhapsody of the author's encompassing classical knowledge or a passionate offering to Eros for the real Polia who, if she has been correctly identified, had died of the plague before the book was completed.

The outline of the story is Poliphilo's love for and pursuit of Polia and the eventual consummation of this journey[5], all as an allegory of the progress of the soul to its final destiny, the union of love and death, a hypererotic manifestation of Ficino's furor, one of the elements of the ascension of the Platonic soul. Behind this simple tale, lie layers of com-

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[1] Godwin 1999

[2] Castiglione *The Book of the Courtier* 1528 trans. George Bull and cited in Griggs 1998 17

[3] Godwin identifies some 70 personified characters in the story.

[4] Béroalde de Verville in 1600 gave a revised edition of the first French translation with an alchemical commentary.

[5] The climax of the story where Poliphilo and Polia are ceremoniously united in the Temple of Venus is plagiarized or satirized by Rabelais in the conclusion of the story of Pantagruel where Panurge is initiated in the Temple of the Bottle.

plexity matching the density of the language. The Poliphili had been described as a compendium of all knowledge available to the Renaissance humanist. Over two hundred pages of the book, together with more than half the illustrations describe the fantastic architecture that Poliphilo encounters in his quest. Another large section is devoted to a description of gardens and according to one authority[1] the Poliphili became the most influential treatise on architecture and landscape gardening over the three centuries after its publication. The book is an encyclopaedia on botany; there is said to be a description of every plant then known in Europe and there are dozens of other topics on which the narrator expounds at length including music, topiary, mosaics, fabrics, painting and food.

The Poliphili is subtitled "where all human things are nothing but a dream." Does this foretell a Nietzschean denial of reality or is it a reference to the Reality of the Platonic forms or possibly on the contrary the whole book is no more than a desolate cry for the 'real' human Polia and a rejection of stifling Platonic metaphysics? The book was extraordinarily influential in many fields and especially amongst the emblem writers.[2] Achille Bocchi takes an image of an ox head from the Poliphili as the first emblem of his *Questiones Symbolicarum* of 1556, one of the earliest of the Italian emblem books. Alciato in his emblem *Paupertatem summis ingeniis obesse, ne povebantur*, Poverty prevents the greatest development of your abilities, uses an image derived directly from the Poliphili.

The Ship of Fools, *Das Narren Shyff* in the original German, by Sebastian Brant (1467/8-1521) was another of the most famous books of the Renaissance. Published in 1494, it consisted of 112 poems[3] with accompanying images, mottos and a short three line summary. This sounds like an emblem book and there is an obvious analogy. The emphasis in the book, however, is on the poems which are much longer than we have come to expect from, for example, the emblem writers, being from one to three pages each and each telling the story of one of the fools on board. The whole is a satire on the weaknesses and follies of Brant's time told with a delightful good humor combined with an earnest moral tone that both reflected Brant's profound religious beliefs and perfectly suited

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[1] Blunt 1937-1938. Blunt was, of course, the British aesthete and art critic who turned out to have been a Soviet master spy during the whole of his career.

[2] The Poliphili uses the word *emblematura* in the traditional meaning of mosaic work on eight occasions. See the references in Manning 349 Note 47. The first edition of the Poliphili to which he refers did not have page numbers so his numbers have to be divided by 16 to find the correct 'signature' or binding of 16 pages.

[3] Like most Renaissance books which went through many editions, there were changes, additions and deletions over the years.

the satirical nature of the work. There are references to biblical and classical authorities throughout indicating that Brant like all scholars of the age was equally comfortable with both sources. The woodcuts which accompany each poem are of very high quality probably produced in the workshop of the publisher by several different artists although some experts have suggested that Dürer may have been a contributor.

Ships and Fools were recurring symbols in medieval and Renaissance literature; together they were irresistible. The ship resonated with the classical and then Christian theme of a journey and particularly for the Christian the journey of the pilgrim through life. The medieval literary history of the fool went back at least to the satirical poem, *Speculum Stultorum* or Mirror of Fools by Nigel Whitacre (1130 – c1207) in which the hero Burnellus, an ass, founds a monastic order. Brant's work was merely the best-known of a long tradition. The word fool had very strong implications of sinner; the imperative of moral didacticism was universal. Even the notion of a shipload of sinners had antecedents and there were frequent associations with the myth of St. Ursula. This British heroine and saint had resisted the advances of a pagan suitor but her ship and crew of likeminded virgins was swept away in a storm and after many adventures all of them were massacred by the Huns. Some of these earlier stories told of an utopia of fools called the land of Cockayne where presumably all sinners could relax and enjoy themselves without the pressure of the confessional to prick their consciences.

Brant's Ship of Fools went through about 80 Editions including translations[1] and it proved to be a continuing influence on Renaissance literature. Thomas Murner a younger contemporary of Brant plagiarized him wholesale; one third of *Das Narren Schyff* was copied into his *Narrenbeschworung*. Murner was a Catholic theologian who was tireless in his task of satirizing Luther and his second satirical work *Schelmenzunft* of 1512 was the basis of a popular emblem book a century later[2] the *Nebulo Nebulonum* of Johann Flitner from 1620.

The subject of fools was the theme of La Perrière's second emblem book *La Morosophie*, Foolish Wisdom, of 1553 (Latin *morus* = foolish) and *Emblemas Morales*, Moral Emblems, of Horozco y Covarruvias of 1589 and in England, the Latin translation of the Ship of Fools was published in 1569 almost contemporaneously with the first English emblem book,

[1] Surprisingly, the first full English translation by E. H. Zeydel was only published in 1944. Earlier 16th Century English editions were either adaptations or parodies.

[2] For a further discussion of the use of *facetiae* in emblems see Manning Chapter 7, 220

A Theatre for Voluptuous Worldlings[1] by Van der Noot. There were also a number of specifically satirical emblem books which took up many of the themes uses by Brant. One of these was the *Mundi Lapis Lydius* of Antonius a Burgundis of 1650. The Narrenshiff was also used as a source book for emblems. For instance, Whitney's Emblem 176 is based on Brant's Poem 77 which describes the foolishness of gambling and Whitney's Emblem 223 *Noone can serve two masters*, (i.e. God and mammon) is derived from Brant's Poem 18.

Figure 53 The folly of gambling. Illustrations from Brant's *The Ship of Fools* (77) and Whitney's *A Choice of Emblemes* (176).

Perhaps even more famous than *The Ship of Fools* was Erasmus' essay *In Praise of Folly*[2] which was published in 1509 with illustrations in later editions by Holbein. Brant and Erasmus were acquaintances and there seems little doubt that Erasmus drew extensively on Brant's work. *In Praise of Folly* was a subtle parody on the absurdity of the state of contemporary learning in both philosophy and the sciences, but it could also have been interpreted as an attack on the excesses of the Church, the desirability of reform and a return to the simplicity of the Scriptures. The book was part of another literary thread which went back to classical times and back to one more element of Rhetoric, namely the paradox, a figure of speech defined as the proof of a thesis which is at odds with generally accepted opinion. Many classical authors had written paradoxes which were often given the title *In Praise of…* and the genre reached its

[1] According to Brunet, the 1569 English edition was a translation by Henry Bynneman of the French edition of the previous year.
[2] The book was written when Erasmus was staying with Thomas More in England and the Latin/Greek title *Moriae Encomium* was a subtle play on his friend's name.

height with Cicero[1] who believed that it was the ultimate in Socratic dialogue. Here is a Ciceronian example: "only the wise man is truly free and the foolish person is a slave."

For the Christian, the fundamental paradox came from the words of St. Paul.

> Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe…. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.[2]

This passage was the text for Erasmus' work[3] and that of many other Christian writers before and after him. Folly could be interpreted as unrighteousness or even just simplicity in a context where it could be contrasted with the excesses of the wealthy, the irreverent or the powerful. Cornelius Agrippa's book *De Vanitate Scientiarum* of 1530, whatever the motives for its composition, was also influenced by Erasmus and significantly it was subtitled: 'Teaching with good and firm evidence how to reason against the common opinion in many matters.'[4] Certainly its conclusion was the same as that of Erasmus, namely that knowledge was vain unless inspired by the word of God revealed through the Bible.

The paradox then was one more influence on the literature of age emphasizing the puzzling, the enigmatic and the secretive. Knowledge should be hidden to be worth knowing and true knowledge could only be gained by contemplation of the meaning hidden in the mysteries of symbolism or the word of God.

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[1] Cicero *Paradoxa Stoicorum*

[2] *Corinthians* 1 18-25

[3] Even Erasmus' works could not escape the reach of the emblem genre. In 1676 there was a version of the *In Praise of Folly* which was divided into sections to each of which there was added a picture. This version is usually categorized as an emblem book.

[4] Trans. Spiess 66