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Review Article
The Emblem and Literature

Emblem Theory: Recent German Contributions to the Characterization of the Emblem Genre. By Peter M. Daly. Wolfenbütteler Forschungen, Vol. 9. Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus-Thomson Organization Press, 1979. Pp. 134. Paperback, SFr. 42.00 and DM 42.00; and *Literature in the Light of the Emblem: Structural Parallels between the Emblem and Literature in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries.* By Peter M. Daly. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1979. Pp. xiv, 246. \$17.50 (Can.).

Critical understanding and appreciation of the emblem, that most characteristic of Renaissance art-forms, have for long been fraught with pitfalls for the unwary. Renaissance theorists, in their attempts to define the term "emblem," are often contradictory and confusing. Subsequent scholarship down to the mid-twentieth century provides little additional insight, a state of affairs that led Henri Stegemeier in 1946 to observe that "It is, actually, difficult to make a definition of the term complete and inclusive; *emblem* has meant such a variety of things to so many different men, that this at first is confusing." Stegemeier accompanied this with the hope "that the term *emblem* need not be again and again defined by everyone who today discusses the subject."¹ Since Stegemeier's article, interest in emblem literature has continued to grow. In the past two decades the emblem has received enthusiastic (if not always judicious) attention not only in its own right but from those who, in the footsteps of Henry Green's *Shakespeare and the Emblem Writers* (1870), have attempted to explore the relationships between emblems and drama and to recognize and explicate the emblematic qualities of Renaissance and baroque poetry. The theoretical principles involved in the art of the emblem, however, have remained matters of dispute in spite of the definitions advanced by a number of scholars. The situation has been further confused by a steady current of critical denigration that has condemned the emblem as "arbitrary" and "capricious," as perversely "enigmatic," as "a degenerate form of allegory," and as "a secondary cultural phenomenon."²

Nonetheless interest in the emblem continues to flourish. Nowhere has this been more so than in Germany where during the last fifteen years a significant reevaluation of the emblem as an art form has occurred due largely to the work of Albrecht Schöne and Dietrich Walter Jöns.³ Additional impetus has

been given to the study of emblem literature by the publication of many facsimile editions of emblem books,⁴ by the reproduction of over two hundred emblem books on microfiche by the Inter Documentation Company of Switzerland, by the microfilm publication by Research Publications, Inc., of the Harold Jantz Collection of German Baroque Literature and of the Yale collection of German Baroque Literature, by the publication of several major bibliographies that identify and locate emblem books, and by the appearance of the Henkel-Schöne *Emblemata, Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts* (1967) and its bibliographical *Supplement* (1976).⁵ Were one to now list, as Stegemeier did for the 1940's, the tasks to which scholars of emblem literature should address themselves, one would recognize inevitably the need for further theoretical exploration, the need for full-scale analyses of many important and characteristic emblem books, the need for more bibliographical information about those emblem books, the need for detailed histories of the emblem book and of virtually every single emblematic literary genre, and the need to establish a method for classifying individual emblems and their motifs to provide the foundation for other kinds of study.⁶

The contribution made by Peter Daly, a member of the German Department at McGill University, in a recent series of articles and now in two books is largely one of synthesis. Singlehandedly, he has attempted to draw the attention of English scholars to the new basis for a theory of the emblem that has been established in Germany but which, though greatly influential among German scholars, has largely been ignored by their English and American counterparts. The seminal theoretical works, in Daly's view, are Albrecht Schöne's *Emblematik and Drama in Zeitalter des Barock* (1964; 2nd ed. 1968) and Dietrich Jöns's *Das 'Sinnen-Bild.' Studien zur allegorischen Bildlichkeit bei Andreas Gryphius* (1966). In both his *Emblem Theory and Literature in the Light of the Emblem*, Daly has provided copious exegeses of the theoretical approach to the emblem set out by Schöne and Jöns. As he says in the Foreword to *Emblem Theory*, "I wanted to distil from recent German discussions of emblem theory a characterization of the emblem that could be applied in the practical interpretation of emblem books. I must also confess to a somewhat missionary purpose in desiring to acquaint English readers with the essential ideas of new German theories of the emblem" (p. 7). Daly's exegeses are accompanied by translations of many key passages, an obvious but valuable tool for his "missionary" purpose. Since the theories of the two Germans differ in certain crucial aspects, Daly's exegeses involve him in a great deal of comparative evaluation. In his attempt to elucidate how the theoretical differences might be resolved he has not only entered into a direct correspondence with the two authors and recorded their replies but ultimately has been led to enunciate tentatively a theory of the emblem that, though heavily dependent on Schöne and Jöns, is cogent and workable and may be said to take emblem theory several steps further in its development.⁷

Both Daly's books appeared in 1979. Though *Emblem Theory* was written second, it is more limited in scope, and I shall discuss it here first. Daly begins by arguing that German scholars are correct in giving the emblem genre status, and he outlines the problems associated with defining genre and the varying approaches adopted by German scholars. The centrepiece of his book then begins to emerge. It is Daly's overview of the theories of Schöne and Jöns "which proceeds from the general to the particular, from the overall description of outer form [of the emblem] to individual characterizations of the *inscriptio*, *subscriptio-pictura*, and the relation of pictured motif to meaning" (p. 21).⁸ Schöne and Jöns agree that the tripartite form of the emblem is definitive in determining the outer form of the emblem, but it is of course in the matter of defining the functional relationships between the three parts that difficulties arise. The widely-held view, shared by the two influential German scholars Heckscher and Wirth,⁹ that the function of the *subscriptio* was to resolve the enigma produced by the combination of *inscriptio* and *pictura* is rejected by Schöne who characterizes the emblem as having the dual function "of representation and interpretation, description and explanation . . . based upon the fact that that which is depicted means more than it portrays. The *res picta* of the emblem is endowed with the power to refer beyond itself, it is a *res significans*" (p. 24). As Daly attempts to show, Schöne's characterization of the emblem "embraces formal, ontological, semantic, functional and intentional elements. Whilst remaining clear in focus and conception, it is broader and more tolerant than any view to date" (p. 24), including that of Jöns, who stresses "the quality of enigma, tension and concealment in the emblem" (p. 25). In evaluating these points of view, Daly clearly favours Schöne but argues that Schöne's theory should be amended and limited in certain areas. The weakness he sees in Jöns, who in many respects is in agreement with Schöne, is the inability to accommodate early emblems which Jöns often views as "emblematic only in form" (p. 46).

Where the two Germans are most united is in their concurrence that Medieval typological and exegetical tradition provided the essential root of the emblem (p. 51). The long-standing disfavour of emblematic images as contrived or arbitrary stems from a failure, Daly argues, to perceive the emblem in terms of Medieval modes of thinking, particularly with regard to "the relationship of visual motif to concept, of thing to thought" (p. 55). Rosemary Freeman and those who have followed her, together with a whole generation of Germanists, "tended to measure the emblem against the modern symbol" (p. 58) and consequently have misjudged it and unnecessarily disparaged it. If one is convinced by the combined voices of Schöne, Jöns, and Daly (and I think one is), the implications are considerable with regard to one's understanding of the emblem as an art form and of emblematic art in general.

A further major concern that Daly discusses is mode of thought in the emblem. Jöns separates form and thought in the emblem and attaches a higher value to mode of thought than the form itself. Just what modes of thought may be defined as characteristic of the emblem occupy a whole chapter in Daly's *Emblem Theory*. Daly discusses typological thought, together with what he describes as the "hieroglyphic mode of thought" which "manifests itself in those emblems in which a strange or inorganic combination of individual motifs is assembled to represent a general notion" (p. 82), and the allegorical mode of thought in which "the emblem-writer employs an existing pictorial generalization, such as a personification, to illustrate a general truth, which is not rendered specific in any way" (p. 92). A discussion of the further complexities of "Double and Mixed Modes of Thought in the Emblem" and the theoretical means to deal with them concludes this demanding little book which must surely be required reading for any future scholar who wishes to discuss emblems or emblematic art, or even for that matter to use the term "emblematic".

I have only a few reservations concerning *Emblem Theory*. The first is indirectly a compliment to Daly. Time and time again he presents the theoretical positions of other scholars, but he then fails to go far enough in defining his own position. Thus, for example, he quotes a long passage from a letter received from Schöne elucidating the role of a typological mode of thought in Alciatus without himself providing one with his own response when in fact such a response seems necessary if Daly is to fulfill his full purpose. Another reservation concerns Daly's concentration on German criticism. Although announced by the title, and justified by the intrinsic importance of the recent work of German theorists, one would have liked some brief statement that would enable one to place German criticism in relation to the work of such writers as R.J. Clements and other scholars of Romance literatures.¹⁰ It is regrettable also that Daly's bibliography is only the briefest "Selected Bibliography." Although we now have the Henkel-Schöne *Supplement*, it is a pity that Daly could not have given us something more comprehensive, at least in the area of the theory of the emblem. Finally it is to be hoped that those wishing to obtain this book will have an easier task than this reader who was told by the American branch of Kraus-Thomson that the book was "unknown to us," and then, only after a hectic correspondence between himself and Kraus-Thomson in both Munich and Nendeln (Liechtenstein) was a copy forthcoming.

Daly's *Literature in the Light of the Emblem* is somewhat broader in scope. It attempts both to formulate a basic theory of the emblem and to explore as far as is possible within a single book criticism on the forms and functions of emblematic imagery in various literary forms and the structural affinities between the emblem and poetry, drama, and prose fiction. In his first chapter Daly gives a useful summary of the most important historic roots of the emblem (the Greek epigram, Renaissance commonplace books,

hieroglyphics, the impresa, commemorative medals, heraldry, Medieval nature symbolism, Biblical exegesis, and classical mythology) before discussing recent developments in emblem theory, this latter section being a much condensed version of his *Emblem Theory*. He then leads into what I found to be a most stimulating chapter on the "word-emblem", which he defines as "a verbal image that has qualities associated with emblems." Here he discusses the emblem book as a source of poetic imagery and as a parallel for the word-emblem, providing some brief but telling critical remarks on ventures into this field of criticism by a number of earlier scholars. This takes him to the question "What is it, then, that makes a visual image emblematic?" (p. 71). It is here that Daly demonstrates the critical insights to be gained from an intelligent application of a mind that has thought through the complex theoretical problems involved in the study of all things emblematic. Examining examples drawn from German and English authors, among whom are Gryphius, Greiffenberg, Bunyan, Bishop Hall, Vaughan, Marvell, Crashaw, and Southwell, he builds a portrait of the word-emblem by explaining its ontology, structure, function and characteristic forms. A very detailed summary would be needed to do justice to this chapter which in my view constitutes one of the most valuable contributions to date to our understanding of the relationship between emblems and literature.

What follows are Daly's chapters on emblematic poetry, drama and narrative prose, each packed with telling insights and critiques of previous scholars' work in these fields. Of necessity each chapter can be little more than a summary, and Daly's analytical comments often appear too cursory, titillating one's appetite without satisfying it in full. His purpose in the book, however, is to provide an introduction to his subject, a task he achieves with considerable virtuosity, whatever may be one's disappointments. If the book has weaknesses, they are to be found in Daly's admitted reluctance to explore beyond English and German theory and criticism, in the imbalance between the thoroughness of the first two chapters which comprise more than half the text, and the cursory quality of the chapters that follow, and in the failure to indicate, however briefly, the historical development of the emblematic literary genres he discusses, even though he is at pains to provide an initial picture of the historical emergence of the emblem itself. Finally it is unfortunate (though possibly the publisher's rather than Daly's fault) that the book does not deal with the critical literature, except for some minor exceptions, that has appeared since 1973, a matter reflected in his "Selected Bibliography," which, though broader in scope than that of his *Emblem Theory*, is just not up-to-date for a book published in 1979.¹¹

Nonetheless Daly's two books make a formidable collective contribution to our understanding of the emblem and of its relationship to other literary forms. For German scholars they must surely be the most valuable studies since Schöne and Jöns in that they not only clarify and qualify the positions of these two theorists but point the way along which future analysis of emblem

books and related literary forms must proceed. Among English scholars the debt is greater. In the immediate future no critic who wants to deal with the emblematic character of such writers as Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Herbert, Crashaw, Bunyan, or Defoe can afford to ignore the critical and theoretical position presented in these books.

NOTES

1. Henri Stegemeier, "Problems in Emblem Literature," *JEGP*, 45 (1946), 27.
2. G. Hough and A. Fowler, "Spenser and Renaissance Iconography," *Essays in Criticism*, 11 (1961), 233-38; Rosemary Freeman, *English Emblem Books* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1948), p. 30; Else Eichler, "Christian Scrivers 'Zufällige Andachten,' ein Beitrag zur Geistes- und Formgeschichte des 17. Jhs." (Diss. Halle, 1926), p. 11; Joseph Mazzeo, "A Critique of Some Modern Theories of Metaphysical Poetry," *MP*, 50 (1952), 88-96. Many further examples of such views could be cited.
3. Schöne, *Emblematik und Drama im Zeitalter des Barock* (Munich: Beck, 1964; 2nd revised ed. 1968); and Jöns, *Das 'Sinnen-Bild'. Studien zur allegorischen Bildlichkeit bei Andreas Gryphius* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1966).
4. Emblem books have been reprinted by Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt Graz, Bärenreiter Verlag, Benjamin Blom, Fink Verlag, Hofmann Verlag, Georg Olms, Guido Pressler, Reclam, Scholar Press, Scholar's Facsimiles and Reprints, University of South Carolina Press, Theatrum Orbis Terrarum Ltd., and Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
5. The *Emblemata* contains 26 emblem books and selections from a further 21. The *Supplement* contains some 2338 entries and provides the most comprehensive bibliography to date on matters related to emblem literature.
6. An analysis of Hensius is to be found in Bärbel Becker-Cantarino's *Daniel Heinsius* (Boston: Hall, 1978), and important analyses of Sambucus, Holtzwardt and Taurellus are contained in Holger Homann's *Studien zur Emblematik des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Utrecht: Haentjens Dekker and Gumbert, 1971). A major study of Alciatus is soon to be published by Virginia Woods Callahan, as is a history of emblem theory by Dieter Sulzer. Recently published was Margery Corbett and Ronald Lightbrown's *The Comely Frontispiece: The Emblematic Title-Page in England 1550-1660* (London and Boston: Routledge and K. Paul, 1979). Plans for an international project to create a computerized motif index of all published emblem books are in the formative stages under the guidance of Peter Daly, and attempts to collect all available emblem books (originals or facsimiles) are under way at Wolfenbüttel and Princeton. Among recent booklength studies that are concerned in full with emblem books and their relationship with literature are: Shahla Anand, *Of Costliest Emblems: Paradise Lost and the Emblem Tradition* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1978); Jane Aptekar, *Icons of Justice: Iconography and Thematic Imagery in Book V of 'The Faerie Queene'* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969); Marc F. Bertonasco, *Crashaw and the Baroque* (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1971); Peter M. Daly, *Dichtung und Emblematik bei Catharina Regina von Greiffenberg* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1976); John Doebler, *Shakespeare's Speaking Pictures: Studies in Iconic Imagery* (University of New Mexico Press, 1974); Martha H. Fleischer, *The Iconography of the English History Play* (Salzburg: Salzburg University, 1974); Soji Iwasaki, *The Sword and the Word: Shakespeare's Tragic Sense of Time* (Tokyo: Shinozaki Shorin, 1973); Barbara Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); Roland M. Frye, *Milton's Imagery and the Visual Arts: Iconographic Tradition in the Epic Poems* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); David H. Zucker, *Stage and Image in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (Salzburg: Salzburg University, 1972).

7. Daly's correspondence with Schöne and Jöns is recorded in *Emblem Theory*, pp. 26, 27-30, 47-51, 72-73, 119-123.
8. Schöne's terms "inscriptio" (i.e. motto or lemma), "pictura" (i.e. picture, bild, icon), and "subscriptio" (i.e. poem or epigram) are a matter of some debate though they have been adopted by most German scholars as adequate for the distinctive and well-known tripartite structure of most emblems which consists of a short motto, beneath which stands a picture below which is some form of verbal statement, usually in the form of a poem.
9. William S. Heckscher and Karl-August Wirth, "Emblem, Emblembuch," in *Reallexikon zur Deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, Vol. 5 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1959), cols. 85-228 (see especially col. 95).
10. Robert J. Clements, *Picta Poesis: Literary and Humanistic Theory in Renaissance Emblem Books* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1960).
11. Recent books by John Doeblér (on Shakespeare), Roland Frye (on Milton), David Zucker (on Marlowe), and Martha Fleischer (on the English History Play), for example, should all have been listed, together with the articles on iconography and Renaissance literature by William Heckscher, John Steadman, Kathleen Williams and Ann Haaker in the 1970-71 edition of *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*.