

The Emblem in Scandinavia and the Baltic. Ed. Simon McKeown and Mara R. Wade. Glasgow: Glasgow Emblem Studies 11, 2006. xxvi + 340 pp. + illus. £ 21.99.

Simon McKeown, *Emblematic Paintings from Sweden's Age of Greatness. Nils Bielke and the Neo-Stoic Gallery at Skokloster.* Imago Figurata Studies Vol. 6. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2006. vii + 280 pp. + illus. \$96.00. Review by LARS BURMAN, UPPSALA UNIVERSITY.

In 1531 Andrea Alciato's *Emblematum Liber* was published, and it started the much studied vogue for the emblem. The emblem form is basically tri-partite: it consists of an enigmatic picture with a motto and an explanatory epigrammatic text. Research has, however, shown how the emblem form influenced thinking and artistic expression in various ways. The tri-partite structure is by no means universal, especially not when it comes to applied emblematics, emblems used as meaningful decorative elements of, for example, buildings or furniture. The idea of "nude emblems" without actual pictures, was also productive (and easy to manage). The first printed sonnet in Swedish was written by the great initiator of Swedish literature, Georg Stiernhielm. Originally inspired by emblems by Camerarius and Cats, he represented himself in 1644 imaginatively as a silkworm in the fourteen-line "Emblema auctoris." Through hard work the author (like the silkworm) creates a treasure out of leaves; the worm (like the author) dies as a result of its constant toil, but is reborn with wings by revitalizing forces. It is not a coincidence that the first sonnet in Swedish borrows its artistic power from the emblem genre. Stiernhielm aimed to introduce his time's modern and fashionable vehicles of intellectual creativity.

The art of the emblem was present all over Europe for a long time, and it has received a lot of scholarly interest. The two books reviewed here focus on Scandinavia and the Baltic. This part of Europe was culturally peripheral in the seventeenth- and early eighteenth centuries, but the Danish and Swedish realms were geographically vast, and the rise of Sweden as a European great power extraordinary. The cultural influx in Scandinavia was strong and quick, and it is interesting to reflect on how the rise of political influence, economic wealth and cultural import were related.

In the instructive introduction to the collection *The Emblem in Scandinavia and the Baltic* the editors point out that notwithstanding the wars and rivalries, “the Baltic region was in one sense curiously unified and co-sympathetic” (xiii). They point out the common cultural background, the Germanic character of the area, and also the common Lutheran heritage. When it comes to the Swedish “imperium” they stress the administrative coherence which opened for transmigration; Swedish rule in the Baltic territories was comparatively benign.

While much research in Scandinavia has been focused on the national situations, this collection gives a healthy eagle’s perspective. It is evident from the book that studies in the art of the emblem is a constructive approach when comparing various traditions and pioneering attempts. Thus the scholarly value of the collection as a whole is even greater than the sum of its parts.

It is valuable that two groundbreaking, older studies have been translated from Swedish and made accessible to an international audience. The volume’s article on political emblematics by Allan Ellenius was published in 1954-55, and his learned unravelling of the meaning of the frontispiece to Johannes Schefferus’s *De militia navali veterum libri quatuor* was in its time an eye-opener. Lena Rangström’s study of the Governor-General Carl Gustaf Wrangel’s series of emblematically embellished partisans (1975) sheds light on the problems of the applied emblems. A third study, Hans-Olof Boström’s article on the love emblems at the baroque castles of Ekholmen and Venngarn, was first presented in 1980 but has now been enlarged. His study of the *emblemata amatoria* shows how sensitive the wealthy Chancellor of the Realm, Magnus Gabriel de la Gardie, was to the hierarchical demands of style and genres—the emblems were placed in his wife’s rooms at Venngarn and in the summer pavilions at Ekholmen.

Emblematic programmes were obviously important in the highest Swedish aristocracy, and Julian Vasquez studies the relations between the emblems in Schering Rosenhane’s manuscript *Hortus Regius* and the corresponding frescos in his Stockholm palace. The plausible hypothesis is that the abdication of Queen Christina accounts for a number of the subtle differences between manuscript and painted frescos. I am not altogether convinced in every instance—the evidence is circumstantial—but the arguments for the hypothesis are strong.

Carsten Bach-Nielsen writes a comprehensive overview of emblematics in Denmark, and it is interesting to note the difference between the Danish examples of continental type which Bach-Nielsen presents, and the sparse emblems from Norway (then a part of Denmark) studied by Henrik von Achen. These emblems are not very sophisticated and mostly linked to the church. They reflect, however, the uses of devotional emblematics.

For a comprehensive overview of Latvian emblematics we can turn to Elita Grosmane's article. Even though Latvia cannot boast of a strong and original tradition we once again find many examples of an interested reception of the fashion. Grosmane also notes how the borders of the emblem genre can be blurred, and discusses examples of "para-emblematic phenomena" (71).

Religion and emblems south and east of the Baltic Sea is the subject of three articles: Mara R. Wade's "Sebald Meinhard's Liturgical Emblems in Danzig," Ojars Sparitis's "Dominican Pedagogy in the Emblematic Ceiling Paintings of the Parsiene Church, Latvia" and a study by Marcin Wislocki on the devotional background to the emblems and quasi-emblems in protestant churches on the southern coast of the Baltic. The uses of Daniel Cramer's *Emblemata Sacra* are the subject in Sabine Mödersheim's contribution to the volume. His heart emblems were widely influential and had a remarkable wide geographical spread.

The twelfth of the articles is by Simon McKeown, and deals with Johann Joachim Zeuner's emblematic manuscript for Carl Gustaf Wrangel, the Swedish aristocrat who already has been mentioned as the owner of emblematically embellished partisans. We are now once again on the south coast of the Baltic Sea, because Wrangel was the General-Governor of Pommerania, and Zeuner's book was a splendid but abortive attempt to further the interests of himself and of his native Stettin. Wrangel died in 1676 and Stettin fell into decline in the wars with Brandenburg. But McKeown is able to tell an interesting story of emblematic creativity as a means for social preferment. The story is given an extra twist, since the manuscript contains pictures of the castle of Stettin, which became extremely important at the rebuilding of the castle after the allied bombings in 1944.

We now turn to the other volume under consideration, written by the good story-teller Simon McKeown. His study of the emblematic paintings at Skokloster Castle in Sweden turns out to be something of a detective story. At the castle between Uppsala and Stockholm, once built by one of the most powerful of Swedish noblemen from the 17th century—the recurring Carl Gustaf Wrangel—eighteen emblematic paintings are preserved. McKeown stresses that they are unusual since they take their motifs and meaning from a printed book—Otto Vænius’s *Q. Horati Flacci Emblemata*, also known as *Emblemata Horatiana* (1607). Almost no paintings from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century took their materials in full from printed sources, and McKeown states that “no comparable group of emblematic canvases from any European tradition has been recorded or documented” (8). McKeown’s thorough investigation of the paintings is therefore most welcome.

McKeown shows that the paintings must have been brought to the castle after Wrangel’s time, and with a inspired set of evidence—drilled holes in the frames, later documents, remnants of original gilding, a paint-smudged copy at Skokloster of Gomberville’s French edition of Vænius’s book etc.—he is able not only to determine the history of the paintings, but also to describe the intellectual, neo-stoic set-up of a once extremely powerful Swedish nobleman during the last turbulent years of the Swedish “Age of Greatness.”

It turns out that the paintings must have been commissioned by the field marshal and Governor-General Nils Bielke (1644-1716). Bielke was the hero of the bloody Scanian war, but the trusted confidant of King Charles XI fell from grace when the king died. He was charged with high treason and after a seven year long process he was sentenced to death in 1705. In the end the young king Charles XII commuted the sentence, and ruled that Bielke should reside at his country seat as a stranger both to the court and to Stockholm. His fall was indeed great. Bielke had been one of the most powerful politicians and generals in Europe and became a lonely land-owner north of Uppsala.

The last years had, however, some redeeming features for Bielke. He still could use his fortunes for both material and intellectual construction projects at his castle Salsta north of Uppsala. At the focus

of McKeown's investigation lies Bielke's combined stable/library/armoury—720 square meters of splendid pastimes for an elderly count, reflecting on the pranks of Fickle Fortune.

McKeown is able to prove that Bielke arranged an imposing gallery in his library, adorned by the commissioned emblematic paintings. Thus he made a suitable pictorial representation of the interests and mindframe of a well-educated nobleman in the highest social position. But Bielke chose just a number of emblems from the abundance in *Emblemata Horatiana*, and McKeown makes it plausible that at least some of these choices are explained by the biography of Bielke; there is “a more personal narrative behind the abstractions” (71). McKeown sees shadows of “aggrieved innocence of the paintings' owner” (71). Even some of the small changes in the way the printed emblems were transferred are convincingly explained as results of Bielke's personal situation. For a person who considered himself wrongly accused of treason, it was, obviously, important if centrally placed figures in the deeply meaningful emblems carry symbolic objects in the good right hand or in the unclean and ill-fated left one.

Bielke died at the eve of the reign of Charles XII. The library was moved by the heirs to Skokloster; the paintings were forcibly dismantled from the walls and sent with the books to the same castle. McKeown's study is not only well-researched; it is also a good example of intellectual archaeology. A puzzle of observations, material findings and scholarly learning is made into a convincing whole.

All the paintings are represented in the volume together with their counterparts in Vænius, including the texts. The plates are also accompanied with Gomberville's explanations in the translation of Thomas Mannington Gibbs (1721), and with commentaries by McKeown.

Katherine Ibbett. *The Style of the State in French Theater, 1630-1660. Neoclassicism and Government*. Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009. vii + 176 pp. + 4 illus. \$99.95. Review by MICHAEL MEERE, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY.

The Style of the State invites us to look differently. With this book, we get a glimpse of what is behind the imposing and, at times, dusty