a single period. The problems encountered in his work on the Renaissance led him logically to thinkers of subsequent ages, such as Leibniz and even his own teacher, Gaston Bachelard. Moreover, his intellectual curiosity rendered Margolin particularly qualified to study Renaissance scholars that were active in a variety of fields, such as Charles de Bovelles and Girolamo Cardano. He also wrote on travel in the Renaissance and the history of eyeglasses, to mention only a very few topics. First and last, however, Margolin has always been, and will continue to be, an Erasmus scholar. His profound understanding and appreciation of Erasmus may well be based on a certain natural affinity. It has found expression in monographs, topical essays as well as editions and translations of Erasmus' writings. His recent volume *Érasme, précepteur de l'Europe* is ample proof that his devotion to Erasmus and Erasmianism has not diminished and that we may expect many more insights in the years to come.

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Michael Bath. *Speaking Pictures: English Emblem Books and Renaissance Culture*. London & New York: Longman, 1994.

Elizabeth See Watson. *Achille Bocchi and the Emblem Book as Symbolic Form*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

These two vastly different books contribute greatly to sharpen our awareness of European emblem literature and its Renaissance and modern theories. They add nothing factually new to the canon of the emblem and of Renaissance culture, but they go far in developing our sensitivity to the implications of emblem history. Bath's *Speaking Pictures* attempts to awaken us to a semiotic and hence a contemporary appreciation of the English emblem by placing it in the cultural context of Renaissance signs. Consequently, his book throws a wide net out over a considerable number of authors, artistic traditions and publications in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These include the emblem, the impresa and the devise (which of these was which, and how, was a burning issue) and also, among others, the terminology of *topoi*, *energeia* and *loci communes* of traditional and Ramist logic, the enseignas of tournaments and of personal and royal state heraldry, Counter-Reformation Catholic and Reformed Protestant techniques of meditation, certain concepts of current philosophico-mystical systems like the Book of Creatures and Egyptian hieroglyphics, and translations of Italian books of emblem theory like Giovio's *Dialogo* of 1555. Watson's *Achille Bocchi* has the much narrower and more controlled function of introducing the man, his emblematic work and his theory of symbols to modern readers who have ignored his place in the stream of European and, by implication, of English literature. Watson's

work unveils for us a prominent sixteenth-century Italian literary figure who deserves his rightful place.

Speaking Pictures is haunted by its method. Semiotics is the art of finding interrelationships between symbols and the things they signify. When the things signified are as diverse as emblems, devises and impresas, and when the definitions of these as genres are as contradictory from European country to country and decade to decade, and among authors in any one place at a single moment as they are in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the art of finding their semiotic referentiality becomes obtuse. The use of semiotics and of its vocabulary of referents and inter-referentiality in *Speaking Pictures* is caught up in the very argument about the nature of the emblem that it is meant to settle. Because of this, Bath's study confuses as it clarifies, much as does Rosemund Tuve's *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery* of 1947. This is not to say that *Speaking Pictures* is an irrelevant book, but that it is in fact the opposite to this because of the extraordinary mass of material that Bath draws upon. Also, like Tuve's study, *Speaking Pictures* will be in circulation authoritatively for a long time.

The modern sensibility that adheres to semiotics holds necessarily, if not avowedly, that its theory of signs, referents and signifieds is a system of metaphysics. The signs tell us as signs why and how the things that they signify, are. When applied to Renaissance literature as in *Speaking Pictures*, semiotics comes to replace the Judaeo-Christian/Graeco-Roman amalgam of philosophical ideas that then constituted current views of existence. *Speaking Pictures* may even attribute certain characteristics of metaphysics (the study of being and essence) to epistemology (the study of how do I know that I know). One suspects that Bath's book fuses the former into the latter a number of times, particularly on page 241. Several references to Augustine's so-called semiotics, which ignore the relationship between his dense philosophical and theological ideas and his understanding of signs, do not make the existence of a system of Renaissance semiotics more credible. Nevertheless, the separate chapters of *Speaking Pictures* and their clearly delineated parts, lead us magisterially forward through the history of the emblem in England. First, there are the emblematisers Thomas Palmer (unpublished) and Geoffrey Whitney (published) in the sixteenth century. Soon, we arrive at the book's pivotal Chapter 6 on "The philosophy of Symbols" covering Samuel Daniel's, Abraham Fraunce's and Thomas Blount's criticism.

The strength of *Speaking Pictures* is its central argument "that emblems are agglomerations of topoi, a *bricolage* of received ideas" (p. 108), not put together haphazardly but with referential design. Bath writes, "the English emblem was an untidy body of signifying practices," and he concludes that "To write its history . . . what we ought to do is to try to identify some of the competing norms of signification which seem to have gone into its make up" (p. 75). From this, there follows his "definition of the normative model . . . that the emblem presents us with an epigram which resolves the enigmatic relationship between motto and picture by appealing to

received meanings which its images have in established iconographic systems of Western culture” (p. 74). The reader may feel that ultimately this definition does not rest necessarily on a semiotic understanding of the emblem or of its background. The definition might also be based on the methods of ancient and new historical criticism that Bath uses to support his arguments.

As a work of new historical literary criticism, *Speaking Pictures* can be extremely enlightening. Its description of Henry Peacham’s *Minerva Britannia* as a picture of the court of the crown prince Henry, “as the moral and cultural powerhouse of a flourishing Commonwealth” (p. 90), transforms our understanding of this emblem book of 1612. Elsewhere, Bath’s analysis of the Jesuit Henry Hawkins’ *Partheneia Sacra* of 1633 is written from the heart and it is a truly fine explication of several of the most touching passages of this slighted English work. Bath is right to argue that there are poetic reaches in *Partheneia Sacra* that attain the heights of the best religious verse of Metaphysical poets like Donne, Crashaw and Southwell. By contrast to the new historical criticism of passages on Peacham and Hawkins, the concluding chapter of *Speaking Pictures* argues on semiotic grounds that emblem literature continued to be produced in England after its traditionally held closing date of 1700, up to and including the nineteenth century. As the Renaissance culture that gave birth to emblem literature and that is at the basis of the argument of *Speaking Pictures* had ceased to exist by 1700, one has to believe in semiotics to accept that the practice of emblems persisted beyond that date.

As for Elizabeth See Watson’s book, with its concentration on the life, times and writings of one man, we are dealing with a work of an old-fashioned order. *Achille Bocchi and the Emblem Book as Symbolic Form* goes to show that solidity is still an active element in scholarship even if, as it stands, the book will not spark a revolution. Watson’s elegant clarity reminds us that style remains a prerequisite of human literary culture in spite of the invading pressure of the audio-visual, the mass-media and the computer. It is refreshing to be made to remember that human discipline has something constant. Watson’s first two brief biographical chapters on Bocchi and on the origins of his personal culture are brilliantly readable. She ferrets out the ordinary facts concerning a distinguished minor Bolognese patrician and displays them in the daylight of Renaissance humanism. Her chapters recreate our sparse knowledge of an obscure life in its immediate historical context and manage to give this life back its original vitality. Bocchi, who was born and spent practically all his life and died in Bologna, lived from 1488 to 1562. These were momentous years in the development of Italian and Western civilizations, during which for a time Bocchi’s city lay under the double-edged influence of the political power and cultural patronage of Julius II and later of Julius III. Bocchi was the son, grandson, cousin, brother and father of humanists, his first job may have been that of an *improvvisatore* or song-poet, a kind of troubadour of the upper mind and the Renaissance upper class, and a little later he became for almost half a century a teacher in the Faculty of Rhetoric at the “Studi” or University of Bologna, a centre of world thought. His *Symbolicae Quaestiones* on,

about and with emblems, came out in 1555 at almost the end of his full, distinguished, if still somewhat obscure career, as a kind of retrospective volume on everything cultural from poetry to architecture that he had endeavoured to achieve.

As the author of the *Symbolicae Quaestiones*, Bocchi belongs to the group of Italian theorists like Poliziano, Scaliger, Bembo and Donatus whom Bernard Weinberg collected in his *History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance* of 1961. It is no accident that Watson has recourse to Weinberg in her first chapter (p. 7). That is to say, nothing that Bocchi said or thought was the final word on the subject of emblems, philosophy, theology, verse, architecture or education. And yet, if he had not spoken, the period's cultural background would lack one of its sustaining pillars that helped others to make the definitive statement that eluded him. Bocchi is important because it is not only history's universal geniuses that make their times memorable.

Bocchi's *Symbolicae Quaestiones* came off the printing press of his own Bolognese literary academy. Watson stresses Bocchi's greater freedom than Alciato's in employing verse in his emblems (p. 69) and his reliance on poetic theory in his use of hidden truth in images and mottoes (pp. 84-85). She develops a concept of *impresa* based on the equivalence of painting and poetry (p. 86) far alien to Bath's view in *Speaking Pictures*, and she concludes that there existed literary origins for both the emblem and the symbol and hence for their relationship in emblem literature (p. 88). But ultimately, in Bocchi, Watson conceives of the goal of the emblem as "the specification of the relationships between poetry and painting" (p. 95). Her later chapters explore the history of the emblem and the symbol among Italian authors. This survey of a multitude of writers, the density of its references and its examination of a large number of individual emblems, will remind the reader of the investigation of genre, epigrams and rhetorical terms in Bath's study of the English emblem, and the reader may wish once more, in spite of himself, to escape into Rosemary Freeman's *English Emblem Books* for a rest.

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