Third Series Vol. VI Part 2
No. 220
Autumn 2010

THE COAT OF ARMS

ISSN 0010-003X
Price £12.00

an heraldic journal published twice yearly by The Heraldry Society

THE COAT OF ARMS

The journal of the Heraldry Society

Third series
Volume VI
2010
Part 2
Number 220 *in the original series started in 1952*

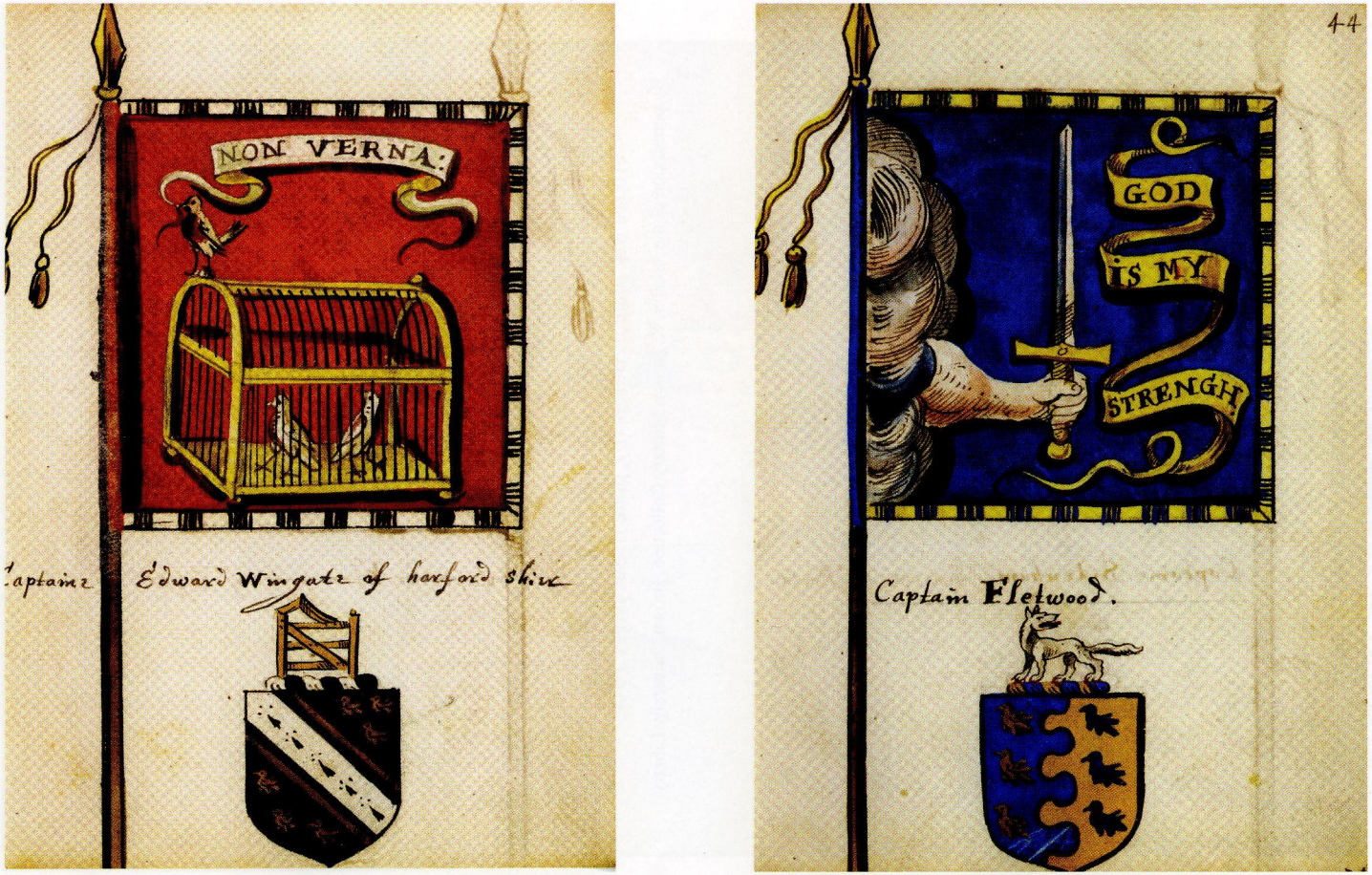
The Coat of Arms is published twice a year by The Heraldry Society, whose registered office is 53 High Street, Burnham, Slough SL1 7JX. The Society was registered in England in 1956 as registered charity no. 241456.

PLATE 3

Thomas Lant, The Funeral Procession of Sir Philip Sidney (1587-8). Above (*a*), plate 5. Below (*b*), plate 6. *See pages 76-8.*

By permission of the Anne S. K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library.

PLATE 4



Arms, crest and non-heraldic banner of (*a*) Captain Edward Wingate and (*b*) Captain Fletwood, of the Parliamentary army, *c*. 1649. BL Add. Ms. 5247 ('Regimental Banners'), fos. 17 and 44. *See page 78*.

SOME ASPECTS OF THE 'CRISIS OF HERALDRY'

Clive Cheesman

My title comes from that of an important article of 1982 by the eminent French scholar of heraldry and symbols, Michel Pastoureau, identifying a phase in the early modern period when heraldry no longer satisfied the very classes who had developed it and with whom it was popularly associated, leading to the creation of new forms of personal and corporate symbolism.[1] It is this phase and its manifestation in England that I want to look at. I make no claims to advance the study of this subject; I am not a scholar of the non- or quasi-heraldic forms of symbolism I shall be discussing and recognise that there are many who can lay claim to that status. But I hope to be able to draw out some aspects of the phase I shall attempt to describe, in the hope of encouraging further discussion of what it tells us about heraldry.

So what was the 'crisis'? What we are looking at, in short, is the great growth in the spread, in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, of symbolic imagery for personal and corporate purposes in which heraldry played no part, or only a limited one; and in which the classics, or at any rate classical notions of rhetoric and structure, provided much of the framework and the content. Emblems, devices, *imprese* – I shall give some definitions shortly – generally had only a tenuous connection with pre-existing heraldry and were often completely distinct in content, reference and style from any actual coat of arms used by the same proprietor.

Was it simply renaissance distaste for heraldry as a relic of irrational and obscurantist medieval learning? Certainly this distaste existed. The prime example is usually seen in the great Italian humanist Lorenzo Valla, and particularly his attack on the *De Insigniis et Armis* of the fourteenth-century Italian jurist Bartolo da Sassoferrato. Around 1430 Valla wrote a vehement and much quoted passage rejecting the heraldically inspired hierarchy and symbolism of colours he had read in Bartolo. He alternately addresses the jurist and holds him up for ridicule:

> Intueamur nunc rationes tuas de coloribus ... Color auerus est, inquit, nobilissimus colorum, quod per eum figuratur lux. Si quis enim vellet figurare radios solis, quod est corpus maxime luminosum, non posset commodius facere quam per radios aureos,

[1] M. Pastoureau, 'Aux origines de l'emblème: la crise de l'héraldique européenne aux XVe et XVIe siècles', in his *L'Hermine et le Sinople. Etudes d'héraldique médiévale* (Paris 1982), pp. 327-34. The present article is a minor adaptation of a lecture given to the Oxford University Heraldry Society on 18 May 2010. For the invitation to deliver that lecture I am grateful to Father Mark Elvins and Priscilla Frost.

> constat autem luce nihil esse nobilius ... Si aureum pro fulvo, rutilo, croceo, quis unquam ita caecus atque ebrius fuit, nisi similis ac par Bartolo, qui solem croceum dixerit? Sustolle paulisper oculos asine ...
>
> Now let us look at your theories of colour ... the colour gold [*aureus*] is the most noble of colours, he says, because light is represented by it. If someone wished to represent the rays of the sun, the most luminous of bodies, he could not do it more properly than by rays of gold; and it is agreed that there is nothing more noble than light ... But if by gold we mean a tawny [*fulvus*] or reddish-yellow [*rutilus*] or yellowish [*croceus*] colour, who was ever so blind or sottish as to call the sun yellowish – except for someone like Bartolo? Raise your eyes for a moment, you ass ...

And much more in this vein, before concluding 'But enough of this. It is stupid to lay down laws about the dignity of colours.'[2]

Valla was doing more than pointing out that light is really white, and that the sun is only yellow in children's pictures. He was invoking the depth and variety of colour in our experience of the world, and the extent to which schematic colour systems fail to represent this. He is not rejecting the potential symbolism of colours, but the facile association of symbolic roles (and precedence) with broad, simplistic colour bands identified by crude, imprecise and old-fashioned labels (he objects, for instance, to Bartolo's use of *azureus*, a neo-Latin word for *azure*). Heraldry, at least in the bookish form found in manuals and treatises of the middle ages, was for Valla and others of his generation a ridiculous, obscure, childish and rule-bound form of visual imagery.

Now this analysis of Valla's attack on Bartolo's treatise on heraldry is widely subscribed to, and is quite consistent with traditional views of a sharp confrontation between late medieval scholasticism in the law – 'Bartolism' as it is sometimes called – and the civic, individualistic humanism of the Renaissance, as represented by Valla.[3] However I am not sure that it really correctly represents heraldry's crisis in the renaissance, or at least the most important aspect of it.

For one thing recent scholarship has shown that the passages in Bartolo's treatise that Valla most objected to – including the symbolic hierarchy of colours – was almost certainly not by Bartolo himself, but was probably inserted by his son-in-law Niccolo Alessandri when the manuscript was edited for publication.[4] Bartolo had really written a book about the law and usage of arms, onto which his son-in-law had

[2] Lorenzo Valla, *Contra Bartoli libellum, cui titulus, de insigniis et armis, epistola clarissimo et eloquentissimo viro Candido Decembrio*. On this passage see M. Baxendall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-century Italy* (Oxford 1988), pp. 84f., whose translation I have adopted and adapted.

[3] On the confrontation between Bartolism and humanism, with much emphasis on reconciling the seeming differences, see the work of Donald R. Kelley, for instance: 'Civil science in the Renaissance: jurisprudence Italian style', *Historical Journal* 22 (1979), pp. 777-94; '*Jurisconsultus perfectus*: the lawyer as renaissance man', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 51 (1988), pp. 84-102.

[4] Osvaldo Cavallar, Susanne Degenring and Julius Kirshner (edd.), *A Grammar of Signs. Bartolo da Sassoferrato's Tract on Insignia and Coats of Arms* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1994). Among many other things the editors believe introduced by Alessandri is Bartolo's grant of arms from Charles IV.

welded rather inexpertly a section dealing with the way that arms should be painted and the symbolism of heraldry. This material was itself inexpertly derived from earlier medieval manuals on heraldry, and did not represent anything that the great jurist believed (or even cared about) in regard to coats of arms.

Secondly, and more importantly, I am sceptical about the role that medieval treatises on heraldry played in influencing heraldry in practice. I shall not argue this point in full here but suffice it to say that the detailed material in works like those of John de Bado Aureo and Nicholas Upton on the 'meaning' and significance of specific birds, beasts, monsters and other charges exerted very little if any influence over what arms were adopted and used in the medieval period and later. In an article published a couple of years ago in the *Coat of Arms* I have tried to address this question in relation to one of the most notorious 'taboos' of medieval heraldic books, that against the partridge.[5] My argument there was that everything said about the partridge and its disgusting habits was a watered-down and in parts misunderstood version of ancient lore regarding that interesting bird, handed down from Aristotle and Pliny through the bestiary tradition. It made for excitingly lurid reading but did not necessarily resonate with contemporary sentiment about the bird and when heraldry started moving beyond birds of prey in the fifteenth century partridges duly appear with an expected degree of frequency, and certainly showing no sign of being subject to a taboo.

Thirdly, the renaissance turn away from heraldry, as we shall see, did not in any way embody a turn away from ascribing a symbolic role to the imagery of personal and corporate identity. Quite the contrary.

In fact, as Pastoureau has argued, the seeds of the turn to non-heraldic imagery lay in heraldry itself. Despite this, and despite being a massively fecund area for academic study, these new forms of visual display and rhetoric have rarely been studied together with heraldry, or by scholars who are familiar with heraldry and its history.[6] Even Pastoureau himself has rarely and only briefly returned to the topic.

[5] C. E. A. Cheesman, 'Partridges: the history of a prohibition', *CoA* 3rd ser. 4 (2008), pp. 29-62. In arguing this I oppose the traditional view of, e.g., Rodney Dennys, *The Heraldic Imagination* (London 1975), chapter 4 ('Heraldry and symbolism'), that those elements in medieval treatises deriving from the bestiary tradition were influential on heraldic design and practice.

[6] For instances in English, see for example Earl Rosenthal, 'Plus ultra, Non plus ultra, and the columnar device of Emperor Charles V', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 34 (1971), pp. 204-28; D'Arcy Jonathan D. Boulton, 'Insignia of power. The use of heraldic and paraheraldic devices by Italian princes, *c*.1350-*c*.1500', in Charles M. Rosenberg (ed.), *Art and Politics in Late Medieval and Early Renaissance Italy 1250–1500* (Notre Dame Conferences in Medieval Studies 2: Notre Dame and London 1990), pp. 103-27. More recently work has been done by Pedro F. Campa: cf. his 'The space between heraldry and the emblem: the case of Spain', in Peter M. Daly, *Emblem Scholarship: directions and developments* (Imago Figurata V: Turnhout 2005), pp. 51-82, and 'Heraldry and the emblem: notes for the history of a relationship' (paper delivered at the Seventh International Conference of the Society for Emblem Studies, University of Illinois, Champaign/Urbana, 24-30 July 2005: abstract available at *http://www.conferences.uiuc.edu/conferences/conference.asp?id=329*).

Figure 1: Antonio Pollaiuolo (d. 1498), pageant shield showing the plight of Milon of Croton. Wood and gesso, gilded; figure *c*. 24 inches high. Paris, Louvre (formerly Brauer Collection, Florence).

Now I am no expert in early modern devices and emblematics, and I certainly cannot fill the gap. What I want to offer here is just the merest hint of what such a study might undertake; the analysis of how the new forms differed from heraldry, what they shared with it, how they co-existed with it, and what they imply about the ways in which heraldry was no longer satisfying its existing audiences.

Pastoureau's argument is simple. Coats of arms were hereditary, thus diminishing the extent to which a lettered and individualistic aristocracy felt it could express their personal values, virtues and ambitions. As a result, various alternative modes of personal imagery grew up. Pastoureau identifies the earliest of these within heraldry itself: the crest, the supporters and the badge. Initially, these elements were not hereditary, and each was a potential vehicle for personal statements or choices, supplementing the inherited family references on the shield.

But items in coats of arms tended to become fixed; crests, supporters and (in England) badges were soon being inherited. Pastoureau describes heraldry by the fifteenth century as tending towards sclerosis or ossification. So the desire for *individual* visual identity had to find other outlets. It found them in the personal badge-and-motto design called in Italian the *impresa*, in English the 'device' (*devise* being the French word for a motto). The word *impresa* means 'undertaking', and reflects the fact that in origin these symbols and their mottos were often associated with general or specific moral, virtuous or courageous commitments made by their bearers.

Devices were non-heraldic, often classically inspired symbols or combinations of symbols that made quite subtle allusions to the aspirations, inclinations or interests of their bearers. They often needed the assistance of their accompanying motto to make the allusion successfully, but their elliptical nature was part of their appeal. They were not regarded as hereditary, largely because they were so closely and intimately tied to the values of an individual; if anything they expressed the ideals of an age-group or generation, and as such were anchored in a particular time, rather than a being a durable identifier of a family across the ages.

Despite this non-heraldic, non-hereditary character, in the sixteenth century devices were frequently and increasingly used and displayed in circumstances where traditionally heraldry was familiar. Chief among these was the tilt or tournament. In Italy shields used in theatrical combat often bore classicizing designs and mottos from the mid-fifteenth century onwards; **Figure 1** is one from the 1460s or '70s ascribed to the Florentine sculptor Antonio Pollaiuolo – the sculptor thought to have added the figures of the infant Romulus and Remus beneath the Capitoline Wolf – and now in the Louvre; sculpted in gesso and applied to the wooden shield, the design shows the Olympic champion athlete Milon of Croton with his hands stuck in the cleft of a tree trunk; stupidly contriving to get trapped in this way, Milon was marooned in the wilderness and devoured by wolves. Around the edge is the motto SAPIENTIS EST POST VICTORIA(M) QUIESCERE. NIHIL N(AM) TAM FIRMU(M) CUI NO(N) SIT PERICULU(M) AB INVALIDO: 'It is the act of a wise man to lie low after a victory; for there is naught so solid as to be beyond danger from a weak person'.[7]

In England, the reign of Elizabeth and the early part of that of James saw many men who had undoubted right to inherited coats of arms regularly choosing to bear non-heraldic designs on their shields and banners, with accompanying writing. Other occasions where devices were shown might include any theatrical or dramatic enactment in which courtiers took part: a famous example was a piece called 'The Triumph of the Four Foster Children of Desire' put on before the Queen and the French Commissioners in 1581.[8] Among the leading participants in this event was the scholar and soldier Sir Philip Sidney, whose love for *imprese* we will look at shortly.

But they were also used – as heraldry always had been – on signets, in portraits, and increasingly on paper, in engraved form. Widely circulating works such as those by Paolo Giovio (1556, but main edition with further material by Gabriele Simeoni and Ludovico Domenichi 1574) and Girolamo Ruscelli (originating in 1556 as an

[7] Alison Wright, *The Pollaiuolo Brothers. The arts of Florence and Rome* (New Haven and London 2005), pp. 296-8. I am very grateful to Francis Ames-Lewis for this reference. The second half of the legend is from Curtius Rufus, *Historia Alexandri Magni* vii 8: *nihil tam firmum est cui non sit periculum* etiam *ab invalido*: 'nothing is so solid as to be beyond danger *even* from a weak person'. On Milon and his fate, see Pausanias vi 14.5, Diodorus Siculus iv 24.7, Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* 4.28, Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1106b, Athenaeus 412f., with M. B. Poliakoff, *Combat Sports in the Ancient World* (New Haven 1987), pp. 117-19.

[8] K. Duncan-Jones, 'Sidney's personal *imprese*', *Journal of the Courtauld and Warburg Institutes* 33 (1970), pp. 321-4 at 323.

essay on Giovio, first published separately in 1566, and circulating most widely together with a section by his brother Vincenzo in an edition of 1583) popularized them and recorded their use in varied contexts such as architecture and design.[9] They also acquired wide usage as corporate symbols, particularly in Italy among the burgeoning phenomenon of local *accademie* or clubs formed for promoting educational, cultural and erudite association.

The general character of these new forms, and their use in England, can be understood by looking at William Camden's chapter on 'impreses', as he calls them, in his *Remains concerning Britain*.[10] He depicts them growing out of heraldry, and many of his early examples are clearly heraldic badges of a traditional, dynastic sort. But others are in a radically different style:

> Queen Mary when she was Princesse, used both a red and white Rose, and a Pomegranate knit together to shew her descent from Lancaster, Yorke, and Spaine. When she came to the kingdom, by perswasion of the Clergie, shee bare winged Time drawing Truth out of a Pit, with VERITAS TEMPORIS FILIA. (*Remains* (1623), p. 217)

Combining the Tudor conjoined rose with the pomegranate of Granada was a traditional heraldic way for the daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon to refer to her ancestry. But the badge Camden ascribes her as Queen is much more personal, allegorical and entirely unheraldic. A design based around the figures of Time and Truth, and the relationship between them (spelled out by the motto), was clearly appropriate for a new monarch championing the return of the 'true religion' of Roman Catholicism.

Many other examples are given by Camden of devices or *imprese* used by well born and courtly gentlemen of the Elizabethan era:

> Master Richard Carew of Anthony, when he was in his tender yeares, devised for himself an Adamant upon an Anvile, with a Hand holding an Hammer thereover, and this Italian *Motto*, CHE VERACE DURERA, which also contained his name Anagrammatically. (ibid., p. 226)

> The Needle in the Sea Compasse still moving but to the North point only, with MOVEOR IMMOTUS, notified the respective constancie of the gentleman to one only. (ibid., p. 220)

There were even *imprese* that played ironically on the very fashion they were part of, rejecting the search for a clever image to suit every individual character trait:

[9] Paolo Giovio, with G. Simeoni and L. Domenichi, *Dialogo delle imprese militari et amorose* (Lyon 1574); G. Ruscelli, *Le imprese illustri del S.or Ieronimo Ruscelli. Aggiuntovi nuovam.te il quarto libro da Vincenzo Ruscelli da Viterbo* (Venice 1583). For online versions of both these editions see the Italian section of the excellent Glasgow University website of key early modern works on *imprese* and emblems *http://www.italianemblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/*.

[10] The principal early editions are those of 1605, 1614, 1623 and 1629, all London. The full title of the 1605 edition is *Remaines of a greater worke, concerning Britaine, the inhabitants thereof, their languages, names, surnames, empresses* [= *imprese*], *wise speeches, poësies, and epitaphes*. From 1614 other antiquarian categories included in the title were *allusions, anagrammes, armories, monies ... apparell, artillarie ... prouerbes*. A modern scholarly edition is that of R. D. Dunn (Toronto 1984).

> Excellent was that of the late Earle of Essex, who when he was cast down with sorrow, and yet to be employed in Armes, bare a black mourning shield, without any figure, but inscribed PAR NULLA FIGURA DOLORI. (ibid., p. 219)

Because they had complex and allusive meaning, devices could be set in a slightly wordier context, to tease their symbolism out more fully or to conceal it more enticingly, according to taste. From the early sixteenth century an entirely new genre of book grew up, in which devices or *imprese* were printed together not only with their mottoes, but each with a few lines of cleverly composed verse; this combination constituted a whole known as an 'emblem'.[11] Authors not only used existing devices but made up new ones, to stand for real or fictional individuals, or simply to make a moral or rhetorical point. This potential for general applicability made these books extraordinarily popular throughout western Europe; promising something of the universality of Aesop's Fables, they market a flatteringly decoded and, to an extent, accessible version of the individualistic and enigmatic *impresa*.

The first such book was by the Italian Andrea Alciato; it was first published in 1531; by 1621 it had gone through 22 editions in a range of languages.[12] Particularly influential in Britain was Claude Paradin's *Devises Heroïques* ('Heroic Mottoes' or, in another sense, 'Heroic Devices'), first published at Lyons in 1551; this book circulated widely north of the Channel both in the original French and in translation (Latin, Antwerp 1562; English, London 1591).[13] Emblems found their main popularity among the educated young, and many decried them as trivial and voguish; but others saw intellectual value in them – the Cambridge don Thomas Palmer was lecturing on Paradin as part of his course on the study of rhetoric as early as 1557.[14] What is interesting is that Paradin's book began, as its title suggests, as an album of devices or *imprese*: in the first edition each image was accompanied by just a short motto rather than a full exposition. In the second, expanded edition of 1557, however, Paradin added fuller explanatory analyses in French, thereby creating a classic emblem book. Some of his slightly obscurer devices certainly benefited from this: thus (**Figure 2** over) a fox with his brush alight signifying the peril of vengeance (in reference to the tale of Samson and the 300 foxes in *Judges* 15). Similarly a ragged and tattered banner flying from a broken spear to indicate the tendency of bad counsel to rebound on the one who gives it (**Figure 3**, over): hotheads who stir up conflict and lead others into battle are the first to suffer the consequences.

[11] Elizabeth K. Hill, 'What is an emblem?', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 29.2 (Winter 1970), pp. 261-5.

[12] The first edition (Augsburg 1531) is entitled *Viri clarissimi D. Andree Alciati iurisconsultiss. Medol. ad D. Chonradum Peutingerum uirisconsultum Emblematum liber*. References below to this edition. For full versions and publishing history see the Glasgow University website on Alciato, *http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/*.

[13] Online versions of the French editions of 1551 and 1557 at *http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/*.

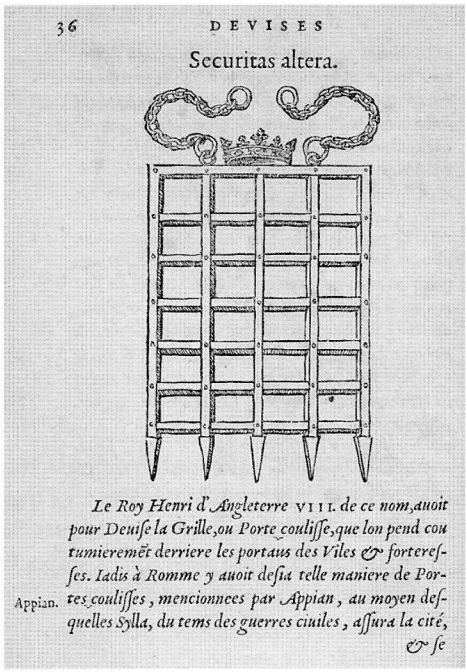
[14] On Palmer (reader in rhetoric at St John's) and his own collection of emblems, now BL Ms Sloane 3794, see J. Manning (ed.), *The Emblems of Thomas Palmer* (AMS Studies in the Emblem 2: New York 1988).

Left, *Figure 2*: C. Paradin, *Devises Heroïques* (Lyons 1551), p. 88: VINDICTAE TRAHIT EXITIUM ('To revenge he draws destruction'). In the 1557 edition (p. 142) the following analysis is added:
'Volontiers ceus qui conspirent vengeance, & qui la porte ... en sont punis les premiers. Ainsi en print il aussi es trois cens Renars, qui porterent les brandons (que Sanson leur attacha) à travers les blez des Philistins, pour les bruler.'

Right, *Figure 3*: Paradin, *Devises Heroïques* (1551), p. 122: CONSULTORI PESSIMUM ('It is worst for him who advised it'). The 1557 edition (pp. 183f.) offers the following explanation:
'Le mal, & punicion, tombe tousjours sur ceus qui conseillent le mal, ou enseignent de mal faire. Ainsi qu'il en print es Estandars, Enseignes & Guidons, qui assemblans & tirans les gens à la guerre, aussi sont ce les premiers pieces en danger: & qui ont mal-an.'

But, also interestingly, many of Paradin's devices were actually quite simple in content and straightforward in significance. Several, indeed, have a distinctly heraldic look to them. The straightforward image of a caltrap is given an eloquent exposition in the 1557 edition that adds little to the point already made in 1551 by the image and motto QUOCUNQUE FERAR ('Whithersoever I be borne', rather like the Isle of Man's *Quocunque jeceris stabit*).[15] Another good heraldic charge was the harrow, used as a badge (as Paradin noted in 1557) by Albert Duke of Bavaria and Count of Holland and Hainault (d. 1404). Its metaphor is briefly but perfectly well expounded by its motto EVERTIT ET AEQUAT ('It overturns and levels').[16] And in dealing with the portcullis, Paradin's 1557 commentary actually opens with its use as a heraldic badge by Henry VIII of England (**Figure 3**).

[15] Paradin, *Devises Heroïques* (1551), p. 97; (1557), p. 152 ('La chaussetrap ... est toujous dangereuse: & preste à nuire, en quelque lieu qu'elle tombe, pour avoir une pointe aigue & droite dessus ...').
[16] Paradin, *Devises Heroïques* (1551), p. 76; (1557), p. 125 ('Comme la Herse donques renverse & egale les motes & choses gromeleuses du champ, aussi peut le bon Prince en ses païs, par ses loix & ordonnances abatre & exterminer les mechans & les mutins ...').


36 DEVISES

Securitas altera.

Le Roy Henri d'Angleterre VIII. *de ce nom, auoit pour Deuise la Grille, ou Porte couliſſe, que lon pend coutumieremẽt derriere les portaus des Viles & forteresſes. Iadis à Romme y auoit deſia telle maniere de Portes couliſſes, mencionnees par Appian, au moyen deſquelles Sylla, du tems des guerres ciuiles, aſſura la cité, & ſe*

Appian.

Left, *Figure 3*: Paradin, *Devises Heroïques* (1557), p. 122: SECURITAS ALTERA ('a further assurance').

Above, *Figure 4*: Alciato, *Liber Emblematum* (1531), fo. A5r: NON VULGANDA CONSILIA ('plans should not be bruited abroad').

In truth there was always some overlap between older, more static, forms of visual identity and the emblematic mode – indeed the emblematic mode had long been applied, rightly or wrongly, to static or simple identificatory marks. A nice example of this is seen in Alciato's inclusion of a minotaur to stand for secrecy. Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* x 5) recorded that the minotaur was among the symbols displayed on Roman legionary standards before the reforms of Marius around 100 BC; Alciato accordingly shows it on a banner with the legend SPQR across it (**Figure 4**). The analysis of the straightforward badge as a symbol for covertness and the need to keep strategic planning secret comes straight out of Festus (Paulus ex Fest., *De Significatu Verborum*, ed. Lindsay, §135):

> Minotauri effigies inter signa militaria est, quod non minus occulta esse debent consilia ducum quam fuit domicilium eius labyrinthus.
>
> The image of the Minotaur is one of the military emblems, because generals' plans should be no less secret than was its home, the labyrinth.

Now I am somewhat sceptical that the devices on legionary standards were ever chosen for such recondite reasons, and I find the Festus passage evidence only for the proposition that the literate have always tried to endow (or over-endow) images with symbolic significance of an emblematic kind.[17]

[17] Also excessive was the late 19th-century scholarly reaction, invoking 'totemism'; for this approach to the pre-Marian military standards, including the minotaur, see Charles Renel, *Les cultes militaires de Rome. Les enseignes* (Annales de l'Université de Lyon ii 12: Lyons 1903).

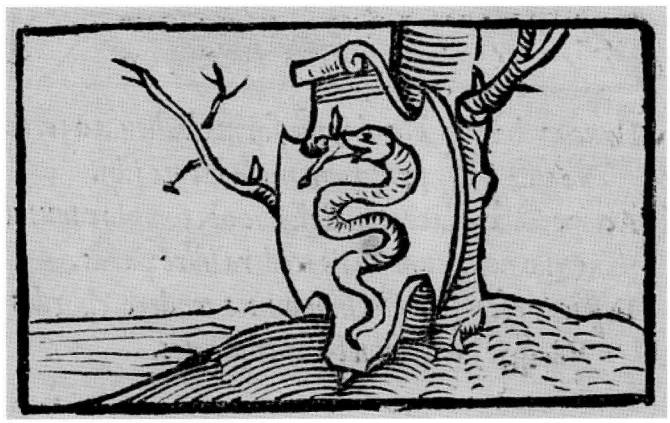


Figure 5: Alciato, *Liber Emblematum* (1531), fo. A2r: INSIGNIA DUCATUS MEDIOLAN(SIS).

Therefore it is no surprise that heraldry itself could be submitted to emblematic interpretation. Alciato, who was from Milan, dedicated his book to the Duke of that city, a member of the Sforza family; their shield served as his first emblem (**Figure 5**) and it was this old heraldic design (an infant emerging from the mouth of a serpent) that the accompanying verse tried to explain in terms of classical antecedents:

Exiliens infans sinuosi e faucibus anguis,
Est gentilitiis nobile stemma tuis.
Talia Pellaeum gesisse nomismata regem
Vidimus, hisque suum concelebrare genus,
Dum se Ammone satum, matrem anguis imagine lusam,
Divini & subolem seminis esse docet.
Ore exit tradunt sic quosdam enitier angues,
An quia sic Pallas de capite orta Iovis.

The infant emerging from the jaws of a writhing snake
Is for your house a noble diplay.
Such we see borne on the coins of the Pellaean king,
This is how he commemorated his race,
On account of his tale that he was offspring of divine seed,
Sown by Ammon, his mother deceived by the form of a snake.
He issues from the mouth, and so they say certain snakes are brought forth –
Or else because Pallas was born thus from the head of Jupiter.[18]

The 'Pellaean' king is Alexander the Great (Pella being his Macedonian birthplace) and the reference is to his claimed parentage by Zeus Ammon, the syncretized god of the Siwah oasis in Egypt.[19]

[18] Alciato, fo. A2v. I have translated *stemma* in Alciato's Latin deliberately ambiguously, since it is not clear where his usage locates it on its journey from its classical meaning ('pedigree') to its modern Italian one ('coat of arms'). The ancient and modern uses of this word and the interplay between them (here probably quite conscious) may be a fruitful topic for further research.

[19] Plutarch, *Alex.* 3, 27.

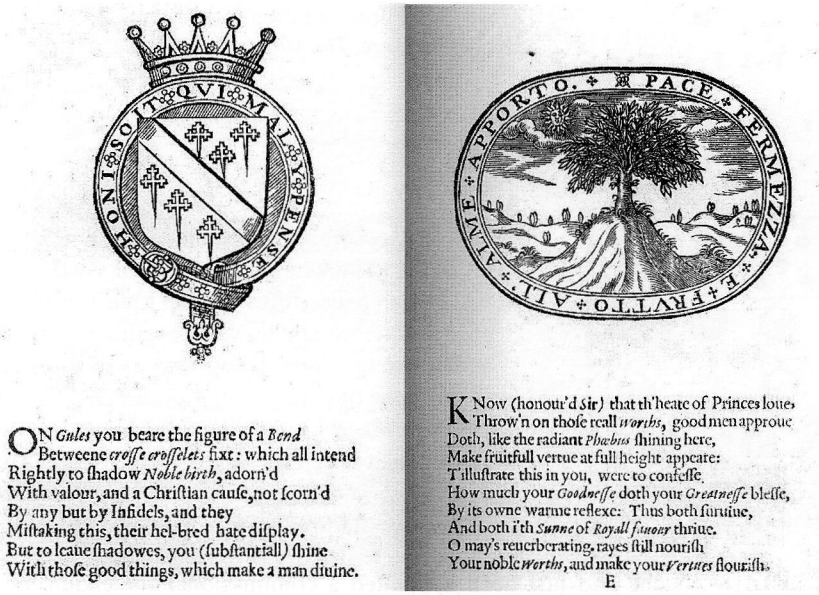


Figure 6: left, the arms, and right, the emblem of Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel. From Henry Goodyere, *The Mirrour of Majestie* (see note 20 below), pp. 24f.

A much more sustained attempt to emblematize heraldry was made by the English courtier and writer Henry Goodyere in his *Mirrour of Majestie* (1618).[20] This book sets new-look emblems side-by-side with coats of arms for each of his dedicatees, composing clever verses to go with both the new and the old forms of visual identity (**Figure 6**).

However even in Goodyere's book one has the distinct, unfortunate impression that the emblematic accounts of heraldry do not really work – indeed, that the author's heart was not fully in it. The heraldry was not of his designing, after all, and several of the coats of arms under consideration need a lot of work to turn into allegorical or metaphorical fare. The one illustrated over the page in **Figure 7**, for Edward, 11th Baron Zouche, is actually quite good material, in that the roundels on the shield came ready equipped with representational role, as 'bezants' or gold coins of Byzantium; however Goodyere strangely undermines this venerable association by treating them as uncoined pieces of gold, 'blanks' in numismatic jargon, and thereby distinct from coined money of lesser intrinsic value. His explanatory ditty runs as follows:

[20] H[enry] G[oodyere], *The Mirrour of Maiestie: or, the Badges of Honour conceitedly emblazoned; with emblemes annexed, poetically unfolded* (London 1618). Photolith reprint, edd. H. Green and J. Croston (Manchester and London 1870), available online as part of the Penn State English Emblem Book Project at *http://emblem.libraries.psu.edu/hgtoc.htm*. Goodyere is not known to have emblematized his own arms, which is a shame since they included a partridge (see above).

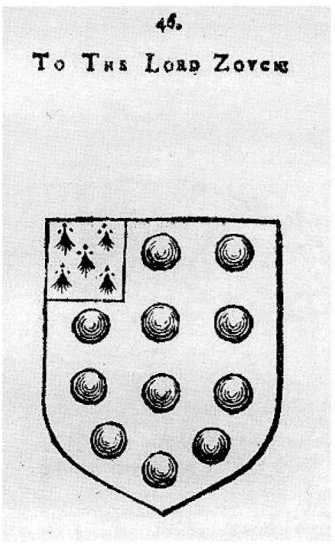


Figure 7: the arms of Edward, 11th Baron Zouche. Henry Goodyere, *The Mirrour of Majestie*, p. 46.

See, how a *worthy spirit* not imployde
May seeme to lookers on, or vaine, or voyd:
These *golden peeces* thus unshap't, uncoin'd,
Seeme as if *worth* and they were quite disjoyn'd:
When brasse or copper being stamp't or fram'd
Into the shape of plate, is oft misnam'd,
And oft mistaken for the purest gold:
But you are ever active, and unfold
Your pretious substance, that your selfe may take,
Honours true stampe; what's counterfeite forsake.[21]

Now in 1618 Zouche had just been appointed a commissioner for enquiring into abuses in the Treasury,[22] and this might have contributed to Goodyere's recourse to the language of finances and honour. But the fact remains that, compared with the detailed, perfectly fitting analysis that is possible with an emblem the bearer has created for himself to illustrate a rhetorical point close to his heart or expressive of his outlook, this is poor stuff.

Individuals could of course be enthusiastic for heraldry as well as for devices: Philip Sidney is a case in point. Four decades ago Katherine Duncan-Jones wrote on the wide range of devices and *imprese* that this famously fertile intellect devised for himself.[23] It is true that his funeral, of which a detailed record survives in the form of a wonderful, long engraving by Thomas Lant and Theodor de Brij issued in 1587-8, seems to have been pretty traditionally heraldic (**Figure 8** and **Plates 3a** and **b**).[24] It was, after all, organized by heralds. But the heraldry, though prominent, is almost disowned in Sidney's motto, *vix ea nostra voco*, 'I scarcely call these things our own' (**Figure 9**). And close examination has shown that even here, some of Sidney's favourite devices intruded: the ugly star-gazing fish (*pulchrum propter se*, 'beautiful on its own account': **Figure 10a**) and the starry sky (*per tenebras*, 'through the darkness': **Figure 10b**) were among the *imprese* he used in his lifetime. The obscure, almost hidden, way they are introduced to the engraving seems appropriate for devices whose whole point was their obscure and elliptical quality.

[21] Goodyere, *Mirrour of Majestie*, p. 46.
[22] GEC vol. xii. 2, p. 97 (with some anecdotes of his parsimony).
[23] K. Duncan-Jones, op. cit. (note 8 above).
[24] See the excellent Maryland University online project 'The Funerary Procession of Sir Philip Sidney', including a multimedia presentation of the entire roll, at *http://wiki.umd.edu/psidney/index.php?title=Main_Page*.

Figure 8: Thomas Lant, The Funeral Procession of Sir Philip Sidney (1587-8), plate 16. The coffin of the deceased, with a 'banrole' of arms at each corner and escutcheons on the velvet coverlet over the coffin.

By permission of the Anne S. K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library.

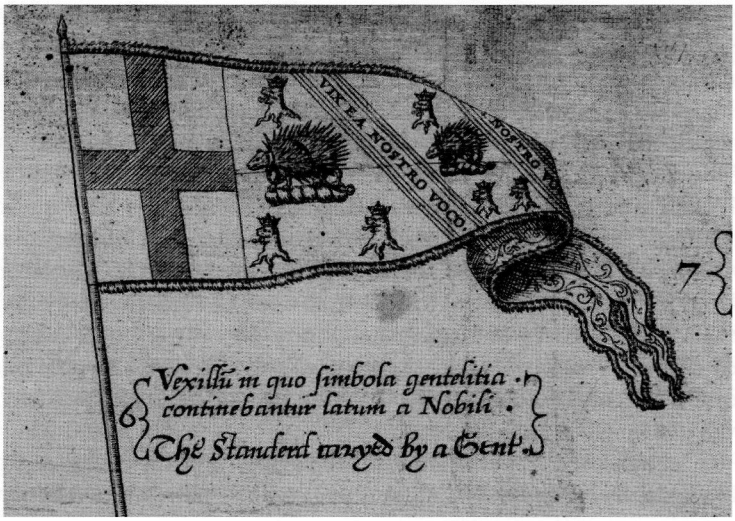


Figure 9: Thomas Lant, The Funeral Procession of Sir Philip Sidney (1587-8), plate 6 (detail: for full illustration see **Plate 3b**). The deceased's standard.

By permission of the Anne S. K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library.

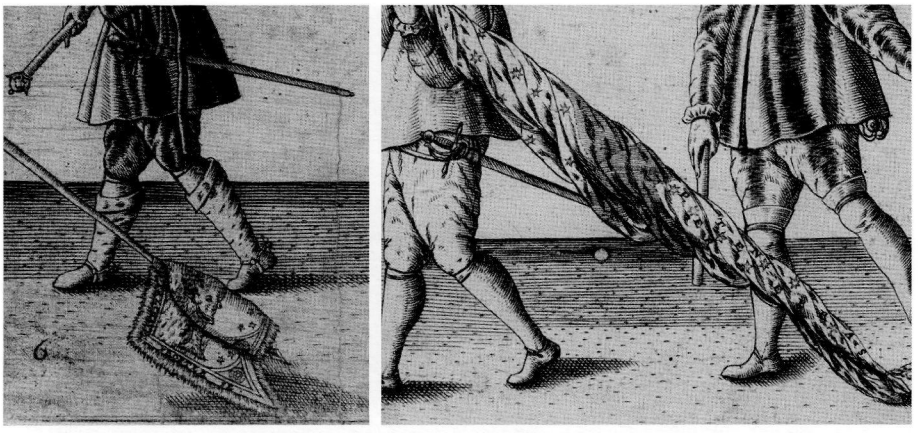


Figure 10: Thomas Lant, The Funeral Procession of Sir Philip Sidney (1587-8).
Left (*a*), detail from plate 6 (for full illustration see **Plate 3b**), showing partly furled banner with star-gazing fish and motto PULCHRUM PROPTER SE.
Right (*b*), detail from plate 5 (for full illustration see **Plate 3a**), showing furled banner with starry sky and motto PER TENEBRAS.
By permission of the Anne S. K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library.

And in some areas heraldry lost ground dramatically, as emblems and devices became a decorative resource even for officialdom. The *White Bear*, one of the most imposing warships of Elizabeth I's navy, was refitted in 1599 and beautified with a rich array of designs taken from Paradin.[25] Nearly forty years later Charles I's *Sovereign of the Seas*, in her day the most powerful naval vessel ever seen, was launched with a similarly elaborate emblematic decorative scheme.[26] Allegorical and mythical figures, historical personages, fantastic beasts, combined with mottoes and inscriptions, thus became the principal source for decoration of naval vessels. This in fact remained the norm for naval vessels into the modern age: though later warships were never decorated as richly as in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, they still had figureheads and even today they have badges; and the main source for both has always been classical allegory and myth, rather than heraldry. And on the military front, the English Civil War was to give a brief lease of life to heraldry on the battlefield, but as the illustrated images from a roll of Parliamentary officers show (**Figure 11** and **Plate 4**), it was the personally and politically resonant device that was displayed on the banner and was to dominate. To this day military unit badges and standards use a separate vocabulary from that of heraldry, though there are of course loans from one language into the other.

So the enthusiastic vogue for personal devices and for rhetorical, generally applicable emblems co-existed to some extent with heraldry, but uneasily and not

[25] Alan R. Young, 'The emblematic decoration of Queen Elizabeth I's warship the White Bear', *Emblematica* 3 (1988), pp. 45-77.
[26] Alan R. Young (ed.), *His Majesty's Royal Ship* (New York 1990).

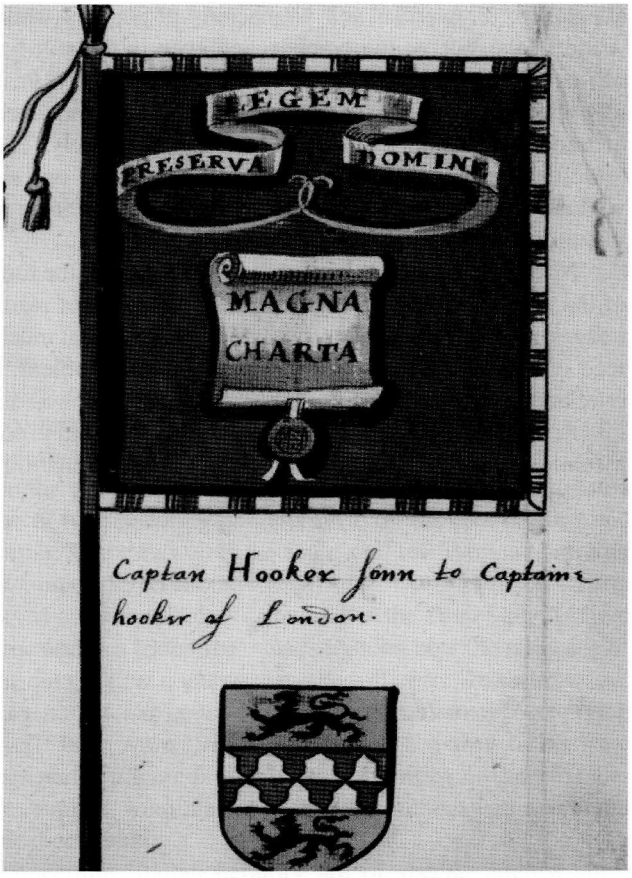


Figure 11: Arms, crest and non-heraldic banner of Captain Hooker, of the Parliamentary army, *c.* 1649. BL Add. Ms. 5247 ('Regimental Banners'), fo. 47.

always successfully. It is impossible to draw a sharp distinction between the heraldic mode and the emblematic one that underlay both emblems in the strict sense and devices. As we have seen, devices seem to have grown out of heraldic badges and are certainly difficult to distinguish between them in their early phases.[27] Later however, there is little such difficulty. Heraldry continues to deploy static, repeated and often non-figurative charges, while devices and emblems place items in interaction and create – or artfully allude to – narratives. And while the motto in heraldry has always, despite the best attempts of some of us, failed to collaborate with the design, in devices and emblems it was (in the words of contemporaries) the very soul that gave the corporeal image life.

Devices and emblems were thus used by the very classes, and in the very contexts, where heraldry would traditionally have been expected: to mark property, to indicate

[27] See now for some guidance M. P. Siddons, *Heraldic Badges in England and Wales* (three vols. in four, Woodbridge 2009), especially vol. 1 (*Introduction*) pp. 13-15 ('The origin of badges'), 23f. ('Not all motifs are badges') and 25-7 ('Non-heraldic devices').

allegiance, for warlike and pugnacious display on warships and in the theatrical world of the 'tilt' or tournament, and even in the still heraldically regulated world of the funeral – if admittedly a little surreptitiously. Pastoureau, as we have seen, identified individualism as the prime mover in the advance of devices at the expense of traditional heraldry. But it is not only that, surely. The casting off of allegiance to vertical groups such as agnatic lineages is only one side of it. Participation in a voguish move towards other sorts of imagery can be as much a statement of group identity as the old ancestral traditions it challenged.

Nor do I think there is much in the theory that the turn from heraldry was a sign of the renaissance rejection of the medieval habit of reading complex meaning into images. As I argued at the outset, I do not believe that much meaning was, in practice, read into heraldry. In fact I think that was the problem. It is not that heraldry was over-endowed with arcane significance; it is that it was disappointingly devoid of it. People like to believe that images have meanings, and to convey personal or corporate meaning by images. Heraldry's real failure was its inability to satisfy this urge.