Emblem as Meditative Icon in La Ceppède's *Théorèmes*

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by

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While full comprehension of the divine image in La Ceppède's *Théorèmes* is at times quite remote, understanding of the human image is often more accessible. I will argue that many of La Ceppède's sonnets can be read as emblems which, both didactically and aesthetically, reveal the human in the divine through the iconographic portrayal of images, either written or graphic. By icon, I refer to the sacred representation and interpretation of images for the purpose of collective worship. Icons become the artistic means by which a devout subject, either poet or meditant, may identify and envision a religious object. In this vein, I raise the question of emblem in La Ceppède's sonnets in order to grasp more firmly the role of visual and pictorial image to the poet's conception of devotional exercise. The presence of engravings in the original 1613 and 1622 editions of the *Théorèmes* compounds the question of what contribution illustrations, both literal and figurative, play in understanding the work as a whole. While critics have studied the relationship between the *Théorèmes* and pictorial art, the link to emblem, a genre corresponding to both the artistic and devotional traditions of La Ceppède's epoch, merits further attention.[1]

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[1] Major works on La Ceppède such as Paul Chilton's *The Poetry of La Ceppède* (Oxford, 1977), Terence Cave's *Devotional Poetry in France* (Cambridge, 1969) and Lance K. Donaldson-Evans' *Poésie et méditation chez Jean de La Ceppède* (Geneva: Droz, 1969), in part concentrate on descriptive and sensorial realism of "peinture parlante". Leonard Marsh has done seminal work on emblem and La Ceppède. Especially interesting is his exploration of the link between sensorial sign and the "mysterious context" of the work. Articles include "Emblematic Representations of Heat and Cold in La Ceppède's *Théorèmes,*" *The Sixteenth-Century Journal* vol. 18, no. 1 (Spring 1987), pp. 53–61; "Poetry as Emblem: A Habit of Mind in La Ceppède's *Théorèmes* "*Cahiers du Dix-septième* vol. 2, no. 2 (Fall 1988), pp. 89–99; "Water and Blood: Two Baroque Emblems in La Ceppède's *Théorèmes* ", *Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature* vol. 15, no. 29 (1988), pp. 567–575. See also Marshes dissertation: "The Emblematic Character of La Ceppède's *Théorèmes,*" Boston College, 1982. *Diss. Abstr.* no. 43, Aug. 1982, p. 463 A. For previous work on illustrations in the *Théorèmes,* consult Jacqueline Plantié and Josette Yeremian, "Un théorème de plus: le frontispice des *Théorèmes* de Jean de La Ceppède", *XVIIe siècle* no. 143 (1984), pp. 89–105.

Emblem's structure contributes to the systematization of spiritual exercise, giving the meditant a more coherent didactic framework in which to analyze devotional mystery. My aim in discussing emblem is to show why adaptation of this genre is crucial to La Ceppède's project of deploying literature to redeem souls. I also contend that while not always central to the text's comprehension, some of the original engravings carry a generic, as well as religious significance. In order to elucidate these ideas, a brief discussion of emblem's history, purpose and structure will be useful.

Daniel Russell, discussing the classical origins of the term, consults Hessel Miedema's etymological research to define the initial conception of emblem as, "any mounted or inserted part, ranging from an insole in a shoe to a cultivated branch grafted onto a wild tree".[2] In Classical Latin, the term has a technical connotation, referring to inlay in small art objects as well as to gold and silver decorations soldered onto tableware (337). Both definitions view emblem as a work having, in Alison Saunders' words, both a "decorative and useful"[3] function. They also stress the materiality of emblem, associating it with a craft whose results are visible if not tangible. A similar philosophy undergirds the origins of emblem in late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century France. Describing the work of Andrea Alciati, considered the founder of emblem not only in France but all of Europe, Russell argues that emblem developed at a time when, "French artists began to organize personifications of the virtues in new ways that were more heavily dependent on concrete visual attributes".[4] Often the "complexity and novelty" (536) of these images were so extensive that artists added poetic interpretations to amplify the meaning of these images. As an example of this trend, Russell cites the work of poets such as Henri Baude who helped design tapestries and stained-glass windows based on "proverbial themes" (542). The general presentation of such works was that of "a semi-ideogrammatic picture, which in turn was explained in a short verse text" (542). One should remember, however, that the relationship is reciprocal, with the image often illustrating and explicating the text. In an immediate context, then, it was within this artistic and intellectual climate of pictorial *proverbes en rime* that Alciati's emblems emerged.

Before passing to a discussion of Alciati's emblems and their influence on French emblem of the mid-sixteenth century, brief mention should be made of the broader historical context within which Alciati's emblem originated, the hieroglyph. If one conceives of a hieroglyph as an image, pictorially symbolic in nature, which has a narrative or other revelatory significance, then it is easy to see the impact hieroglyph would have had on the design of tapestries, stained-glass windows, and eventually on emblem. Since the hieroglyph often has a hermetic character, it exerted a great influence on emblems designed to be esoteric or enigmatic. Daniel Russell describes the association between hieroglyph and emblem in the following terms:

> The emblem form was attractive to Renaissance humanists because it seemed to combine discursive with ideogrammatic communication. For Renaissance Neo-Platonists, ideogrammatic hieroglyphs permitted the visual intuition of truths not otherwise accessible in their absolute form. Their confidence in Egyptian hieroglyphs (wrongly considered to be ideogrammatic) as a Utopian, almost magic language, was reinforced by the attitude of total reverence which surrounded all very ancient languages during the Renaissance.[5]

I stress the notion of hieroglyph because La Ceppède employs the term throughout the *Théorèmes*. Interestingly, the term appears most often toward the end of the text, indicating that the symbolic importance of many of the work's key images may now be revealed. In Sonnet (I,3,36)[6] for example, the symbolism of Christ's robe, which the poet calls a "hieroglyphique" (l.5), is finally explained as Roman soldiers tear it into four pieces. The four pieces represent the four corners of the globe to which Christ's church will spread. Similarly, in Sonnet (I,3,87), the poet's description of the dove returning with an olive branch after the flood as a "hieroglyphique" (l.13) marks a kind of progressive revelation in which the promise of Christ's peace in the New Testament is prefigured by the symbolism of the Old. The relevance of such examples lies in the iconographic quality Renaissance poets and artists give to interpretive images of this kind. Indeed, Russell states that Alciati's emblems were based mostly on "humanistic concerns and iconographical motifs", which served as the thematic rudiments of the genre.[7]

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[2] The definition appears in Russell's article "The Term 'Emblème' in Sixteenth-Century France," *Neophilologus* 59 (1975), p. 336. The reference to Miedema is taken from "The Term 'Emblema' in Alciati" *JWCI* XXXI (1968).

[3] I refer to the title of Saunders' work, *The Sixteenth Century French Emblem Book: A Decorative and Useful Genre*. Geneva: Droz, 1969.

[4] "Alciati's Emblems in Renaissance France," *Renaissance Quarterly* 34 (1981), p. 536. See also Russell's book. *The Emblem and Device in France* (Lexington: French Forum, 1985) for further explanation of the term. One observes that while this work provides useful background information on emblem, its primary emphasis is on device.

[5] "The Term 'Emblème'...", p. 346.

[6] All textual citations are taken from Yvette Quenot's edition of the *Théorèmes sur le sacre mystere de nostre redemption*. Paris: Société des textes français modernes, 1988–89.

[7] "Alciad's Emblems...", p. 543.

What then, was the genre's structure and what were its goals? External structure varied according to editions, but Russell describes two general types of presentations for Alciati's emblems. The first, appearing in Christian Wechel's 1534 edition, "combines picture and text within the confines of a single codex unit" (543). This layout, one which "welds picture and text together into a paginal unit" (543), set the standard for many emblem books to follow. Often, authors and publishers reinforced the discreet nature of the emblem unit by asking craftsmen to add decorative inlay which served to delineate borders between emblems and embellish the illustrations. In some cases, the aesthetic value of such emblems was so striking that they were removed from the books and used as decorations in homes. In contrast to the self-contained format of the Wechel editions, the later Steyner editions present Alciati's emblems "in a continuous running text, with interspersed illustrations, in a way not very different from certain editions of Marot's *Adolescence Clementine"* (544).

Despite differences in external layout, the internal construction of Alciati's emblems was more or less uniform. Using Henkel and Schöne's terminology, Russell speaks of a tripartite emblem structure composed of a "titular structure, an illustration and an epigrammatic subscriptio" (545).[8] These three elements make up the conventional traits of emblem, with the link between the three holding the key to the genre's interpretation. Russell provides useful insight into the tie between emblem's constitutive elements when he states:

> The title and illustration taken together inspire the reader/viewer to pose one or more questions that will be answered in the explanatory text in such a way as to recall a more or less unexpected moral commonplace. The element of surprise has the effect of making the message more memorable, while the illustration provided a convenient memory place to which the message might be attached (545).

Thus, at least in Alciati, text-image interaction is characterized by a "progressive discovery" (542) where title and picture begin and develop inquiry, while the text further amplifies and often concludes the exercise, frequently giving an allegorical interpretation of the emblem's content. Russell's mention of a "moral commonplace" playing a role in the emblem's theme and conclusion points to the didactic function of the genre, while the presence of intellectual surprise recalls the mannerist context in which much sixteenth-century French poetry developed.

As previously mentioned, text-image interaction is often reciprocal, with emblem generating a constant flux and re-flux of meaning as the reader shifts from text to image and back again. Echoing many of Russell's arguments, Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani emphasizes the bivalence of text and image, as well as reader participation when she states:

> L'emblématiste se borne à postuler une convertabilité à double sens, d'une verbalisation initiale en figurants iconiques — c'est le trajet qu'accomplit le destinataire — de ces figurants iconiques en 'paroles' — c'est le trajet que doit accomplir le destinataire, guidé par la glose qui contrôle le décodage.[9]

Shortly, I will argue that La Ceppède deploys an emblematic format to help his reader decode and convert meaning between text, image and implied title. Consequently, emblem shapes the meditative process, as the poet exploits emblem's constitutive elements to problematize and explicate divine mystery. Here, problematization refers to establishing the intellectual and affective frames of reference which allow the meditant to explore the significance of Christ's redemptive act.

Though the design, purpose and interpretation of Alciati's framework had a profound impact on most French emblematists of the mid-to-late sixteenth century, many of these poets took liberties with the original format, especially with regard to the explicit representation of emblem according to the tripartite construction. Between 1536 and 1555, the period generally recognized as the height of French emblems, there appeared five works directly spawned from Alciati's model: Guillaume de La Perrière's *Théâtre de bons engins* (1536), Gilles Corrozet's *Hecatomgraphie* (1541), Guillaume Guéroult's *Premier livre des emblemes* (1550), Barthélemy Aneau's *Picta poesis* (1552), and Pierre Coustau's Latin *Pegma,* translated into French as *Pegme* (1555). Critics claim that while many of the emblems published in the above collections did have a direct, didactic function, others were more enigmatic or esoteric in character. In his preface to *Picta poesis,* Aneau himself contends that the decorative role of emblem should equal the didactic, and that the genre should also stress ingenuity and wit.[10]

Many interesting variations occur in the adaptations of Alciati's model. For example, one finds no title to the emblems in La Perrière's *Theatre,* nor his *Morsophie.* The appearance of titles was not the rule in many collections, and in some cases titles were added in later editions, usually taken from the concluding line of the verse. "Partial emblems" also existed on the level of figure. Coustau's *Pegme* includes 23 emblems without illustra-

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[8] Russell cites Arthur Henkel and Albrecht Schöne's *Emblemata: Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1967).

[9] "Le défi de l'emblème". *Revue de littérature comparée* 4 (1990), p. 600.
[10] Saunders, op. cit., p. 17 and 25.

tion, and many critics doubt as to whether or not Alciati even intended his emblema to be illustrated at all.[11] Russell suggests that for a work to be emblematic in character, it need not necessarily have the explicit presence of the three basic elements.[12] His analysis of the twenty-sixth poem of Sponde's *Sonnets d'amour* illustrates this point by describing how the verbal "picture" at the beginning of the text leads to a comparison which is allegorically explained throughout the verse (550–1). Thus, in some cases where text creates enough of a picture, and the text's sententiousness provides phrases that could serve as a moralizing title, the physical absence of one or more of emblem's traditional elements does not prevent a work from being interpreted in emblematic fashion.

Even on the physical levels of layout and decoration, much variety exists in French emblem books published between 1536 and 1555. In many editions such as La Perrière's *Théâtre* and Corrozet's *Hecatomgraphie,* one observes a strict symmetry where figure faces verse on opposite pages. Other collections, however, do not present this type of symmetry. Likewise, ornate decoration figures prominently in some editions, with intricate borderwork encasing title, illustration and text, while others carry no decoration at all. Thus, many permutations of the genre were allowed within a given set of traits, making it easier for lyric poetry of the period to have an emblematic quality without directly adhering to the label emblem.

Such is the case with La Ceppède. Structurally, the *Théorèmes* do not constitute an emblem book in the strictest sense of the term. The original 1613 and 1622 editions contain no crafted borders between sonnets, and except for the small engravings which embellish the first letter of each poem, the *Théorèmes* have little decoration. More importantly, one does not find a manifestation of title and figure in what became the Alciatian sense, primarily because the sonnets have no title other than a numerical designation. In addition, the smallness of the figures, coupled with their occasional irrelevance to the text, at times diminishes or eliminates the explicit role of two-thirds of emblem's constitutive elements. Hence, as in Russell's emblematic interpretation of Sponde, the emblematic character of the *Théorèmes* derives mainly from the text itself. However as will be seen in the sonnets analyzed, in some cases the illustrative element does indeed act as a graphic, pictorial support, enhancing the overall message of the text. I argue that what appears in La Ceppède is a quasi-emblem or near-emblem which implicitly appropriates the format of the emblem genre in a manner similar to much of the lyric poetry of this era.

Before beginning textual analysis I will mention one additional aspect concerning emblem's history, an aspect which will help answer the question of why La Ceppède chose to incorporate emblem within his lyric format. After the rise of French emblem in the 1530s and 1550s, the genre experienced a lull of about twenty years, at the end of which two noted emblem books emerged: Georgette de Montenay's *Emblemes ou devises chrestiennes* (1571), and Théodore de Bèze's collection of emblems published with his *Icones* (1580 and 1581). As the titles of these works suggest, emblem had now taken on a devotional theme. Despite the fact that both Montenay and Bèze were Protestant, it is quite likely La Ceppède read, or at least knew of, these works. The *Théorèmes ,* then, written during the Counter Reformation, in part comprise a reaffirmation of Catholic doctrine during the Wars of Religion. Nonetheless, the need to assert Catholic values at a time of political upheaval would not have prevented La Ceppède from limiting himself to only one set of intellectual and artistic currents of his era. I would argue that one reason why La Ceppède adopts an emblematic format is in part to respond to Protestant adaptations of the genre. The chronological link between the appearance of emblem and the *Théorèmes* is reinforced by the probability that La Ceppède composed the work from 1590–94 during his exile in Avignon.[13] Theme in Alciati and many of his successors was mostly secular in nature, as the "humanistic concerns"[14] of these earlier emblems dealt with work, the court, love, friendship, i.e., the concerns of everyday life. Critics contend that examples in this type of emblem came from the animal world, bestiary or fable, ancient myth and popular tale. The change to Christian thematics, both Catholic and Protestant, no doubt coincided with the wars of religion and brought about a slight change in the theory and purpose of emblem. Emblem was still thought of in decorative and morally didactic terms. Yet what one sees in the work of theorists such as the Jesuit Claude-François Menestrier is the conceptualization of emblem in terms of divine mystery, especially as mystery related to the progressive revelation between the Old Testament and the New.

Menestrier's 1684 interpretation of emblem's purpose best elucidates these ideas:

> Cela n'empèche pas que nos Mysteres n'ayent leurs figures, leurs images et leurs peintures dans l'ancien Testament. C'est ce qui fit que la religion des Juifs fut â proprement parler une religion d'Emblèmes... Ces figures qui furent pour eux des Mysteres ou des Enigmes où ils n'entendoient rien, sont des Emblèmes pour nous... C'est pour

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[11] Russell, "The Term 'Emblème' ...", p. 338.
[12] "Alciati's Emblems...", p. 550.

[13] I refer to p. 28 of the introduction to Quenot's edition.
[14] Russell, "Alciati's Emblems...", p. 513.

cela que le Fils de Dieu parloit des plus grands Mysteres de nostre Religion sous les voiles des Paraboles, pour en faire autant d'Emblèmes.[15]

Thus, emblem as a genre allies itself with religious consciousness, biblical exegesis and spiritual exercise, thereby making it a readily suitable generic format for La Ceppède's devotional lyric.

One finds a direct relation of emblem to mystery in the sonnet sequence (I,1,86–88). Here the poet interprets the story of the adolescent in Mark (14:51–52) who, in the attempt to follow Christ to His trial in Jerusalem, is stripped of his garments. The adolescent becomes an emblematic figure whose loyalty, nudity and selflessness carry allegorical significance for all meditants. In Sonnet 88 especially, illustration vividly supports allegory. The sequence as a whole, however, also has a distinctly pictorial character in its representation of images especially in lines 5–14 of Sonnet 86, where the adolescent's actions are first described:

. . . Un jeune adolescent s'eveille matinier
S'affeuble d'un linceul, hors du chalit se jette
Ouvre un peu la fenestre, espie, ecoute, guette
Sort, s'approche, & craintif tallone le dernier.

Voyant mener le Christ, il suit le pitoyable:
Tandis quelque mastin de la troupe effroyable
Voit cet homme incognu, qui la cohorte suit.

Il l'attaque, il l'empoigne, il le tient, il le meine [:]
Le jeune homme fait force, & laisse & qui l'entreine
Son linceul, pour son corps, & s'echappe & s'enfuit.

The adolescent's image is emblematic in nature because, it comprises a verbal illustration which represents both "humanistic concerns" and "iconographical motifs".[16] Here, humanistic concerns and iconographical motifs merge as the reader's challenge to follow Christ is visually and meditatively embodied in the adolescent who becomes a supreme figure of fidelity. As stated, critics have discussed pictorial language in La Ceppède. Nonetheless, such analysis becomes especially pertinent because image not only becomes the point of departure for devotional contemplation, but does so within the implicit structure

of a generic format which in turn guides, if not systematizes, the *dévot's* meditation. "System" comes into play as emblem's tripartite structure channels the reader's thought into a unified conception of what the image means. Emblem's ideogrammatic and discursive elements become manifest as La Ceppède transforms the adolescent's image into one whose mention and subsequent visualization evoke a series of devotional problems aimed at enhancing the meditant's intellectual and spiritual growth. On an emotive level as well, this growth is achieved by bridging the gap between text and public through techniques of identification. La Ceppède vividly depicts the fear and hesitation a *dévot* may experience when reading such a passage. In so doing, the poet underscores the fragility of faith as well as the need to reinforce it by interpreting the experience as part of divine mystery. Emblem's format articulates and reveals the mystery with illustration providing a visual referent, text an intellectual analysis, and "title" a moral conclusion.

From a hieroglyphic standpoint, the presentation of the adolescent's image resembles that of a polyptych since the entire image is composed of a visual sequence where scenes unfold and build upon one another to represent a coherent action. Briefly, the act represented is that of the adolescent who, upon awakening, dons a cloak, and timidly ventures outside to follow the shackled Christ. Whereupon a Roman soldier spies the adolescent and attacks him, tearing off the young man's cloak and forcing him to flee nude. As in Russell's analysis of Sponde, the picture is "constructed around verbs in the present tense".[17] These verbs give a detailed pictorial representation of the adolescent's and soldier's movements as they bring to life a scene the devotional public might otherwise have difficulty visualizing. Use of verbs such as "voir" (ll.9 and 11), and "espier" (l.7), as well as the adolescent's action in line 7 of opening the window to view the proceedings, reinforces the notion that poet, character and reader are somehow observing a key moment in the Passion. In the same vein. Lance K. Donaldson-Evans interprets this sonnet as a small "drama", if not "spectacle", unfolding before the reader's eyes.[18]

Important to the emblematic quality of this image is the allegory the image represents. Attempting to discover this meaning, the poet dedicates the following sonnet (I,1,87) to finding out who the adolescent is and what his action represents. After proposing several ideas as to whom the adolescent might be, the poet draws a typological conclusion, seeing the adolescent's flight as the successor to Joseph's escape from his master's wife in Genesis (39:12):

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[15] Saunders, op. cit., p. 5. Saunders quotes directly from *L'art des emblemes ou s'enseigne la morale par les figures de la fable, de l'histoire, et de la nature. Ouvrage rempli de pres de cinq cent figures. Par P.C.F. Menestrier, de la compagnie de Jesus,* Paris: R.J.B. de la Caille, 1684. 8. p. 208. BN Z 17490.

[16] Russell, "Alciad's Emblems...", p. 543.

[17] Ibid., p. 550.

[18] *Poésie et méditation...*, pp. 32–33.

Ainsi le bon Joseph craignant de voir seduite
Son ame, & pour ne point estre induit à pecher,
Abandonnant sa robe eut recours à la fuite.

Interpreting the image as part of the Bible's progressive revelation elevates
the adolescent to an iconographic status, thus tightening the link between fig-
ure and mystery. Icon here represents a model, through which the human imi-
tates the divine. I argue therefore that in these two initial sonnets, one can be-
gin to see the emblematic dimension of the image and the poetry surrounding
it. However, it is in the final poem of this brief sequence where the interac-
tion of explicit image and text, as well as implied title, illustrates most vivid-
ly the emblematic structure of La Ceppède's work, showing how this structure
guides the meditant's contemplation.

In Sonnet 88, the poet takes the allegory one step further, directly applying
the image of the adolescent to the meditant himself. In effect, poet and *dév-
ot* become one as the "je" becomes a highly personalized, highly internalized
speaker seeking to identify narrator with public. The moralistic, didactic pur-
pose of the image becomes apparent as the poet/*devot* begins to deeply con-
template the ramifications of the adolescent's act. As the text indicates, the
poet/meditant realizes that the image translates into an allegory for his own
life, in effect representing the poet/ meditant's attempt to shed the material
world for that of the spirit:

Maintefois j'ay tenté de vous suivre, ô ma vie,
Par les sentiers cognus que vous m'avez ouverts:
Mais tousjours, mais tousjours, vos ennemis divers
M'empoignant au linceul, m'ont la force ravie.

Ores que sainctement vostre esprit me convie
De retracer vos pas, par les pas de ces vers,
Ce monde, ce charmeur, cet ennemy pervers,
Me prenant au manteau veut frustrer mon envie.

De mile vains objets il rend mon cœur épris
Dont l'amour me tient tant, & si longuement pris
Qu'à peine auray-je temps de vous suivre au Calvaire.

Faites donc (s'il vous plait), ô Seigneur desormais
Que de l'adolescent imitant l'exemplaire
Je quitte ces habits au monde pour jamais.

From a general standpoint, the predominant motifs of the sequence are those of
nuditas temporalis and *nuditas virtualis,* both of which were often represent-
ed in religious painting of the Renaissance. The former represents nudity as a

rejection of the material world, while the latter sees it as symbolic of divine
innocence and purity.[19] In emblematic fashion, the engraving which accompa-
nies this sonnet seemingly depicts a *nuditas* of this sort:[20]

Rising from the lush flora which fills the bottom half of the engraving, what
appears to be a young man sprouts wings rather than arms as the foliage
evolves into a more distinctly angelic shape. In addition, the figure's human
traits become increasingly defined. The young man's, or "adolescent's" tor-
so remains uncovered, as if to reject the corrupt materiality of this world for
the exalted spirituality of the next. Accordingly, the figure takes on the im-
age of a renascent Adam, whose *nuditas temporalis* and *nuditas virtualis*
return the figure to the paradisiacal state from which his predecessor fell.
The emergence of the figure's head above all else in the engraving lends a
triumphant, transcendent quality to the image, as if to convey the poem's
"motto"/conclusion: "Je quitte ces habits au monde pour jamais". Epigraph
thus allies with epigram, with coherence between image and text solidly
reinforced.

Like many of La Ceppède's other poems, this sonnet presents a devotional
problem for the meditant's contemplation. Here, the problem concerns the dif-
ficulty of the *poet/dévot* in abandoning self-love for the love of Christ. Sym-
bolizing self-love is the "linceul", also characterized as "le manteau" (l.8),
which La Ceppède describes in his first annotation[21] to the poem as:

[19] For a detailed discussion of these concepts, consult George Ferguson's *Signs and
Symbols in Christian Art,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961, pp. 49–50.
[20] The image is taken from a facsimile of an original (1613, 1622) edition of the
Théorèmes in Marseille.
[21] La Ceppède's note appears after the word "linceul" in the text.

l'amour de nous mesmes, & nos affections, dont naturelement nous sommes envelopez. De mesme il faut entendre le mot de Manteau, au 8. (sic) vers suivant, pour le chatouillement des vanitez... (256).

In emphasizing the importance of self-love, La Ceppède further develops the sequential portrait of the poet/*dévot*/lover by setting forth the temptations the latter must overcome to follow Christ. Framing this sequential transformation of the poet/*dévot* is the sonnet's structure, that of a prayer/confession on the part of the narrator, expressed within a dialectic between divine and earthly (self) love. In effect, the poet/meditant litanizes the difficulties and failures of his attempt to adhere to Christ's teachings. Proposing a solution to the problem, the poet refers to the allegory of the adolescent in line 13. Allegory, especially when represented in pictorial form, lends a visually symbolic, moral, and therefore emblematic quality to the sequence. It also develops the poet's technique of identifying the adolescent with the poet/reader. Ultimately, the adolescent's example so inspires the poet/meditant as to lead to a change in devotional consciousness and practice; a change expressed in the motto at the poem's conclusion that the poet/meditant will forever abandon the trappings of this world, thus marking the end of the dialectic struggle between material and divine love. Such a declaration completes an exegetic sequence as the poet moves from a state of doubt to one of inspiration and faith.

Consequently, within the poem and the sonnet sequence in which it is situated, the emblematic image plays a large role in establishing and revealing the adolescent's, and therefore the *dévot's,* love of Christ. The poet/meditant finds himself with a purified version of how to express his love for the divine. As a result of this analogy, the poet/meditant theoretically undergoes the same denuding as Joseph and the adolescent, stripping himself of his profane desires and subsequently directing his passion and love upward. Though ostensibly erotic in allusion and tone, nudity in this context transforms its principal connotation from the profane to the sacred, while illustrating the poet's conception of ideal love and, indirectly, of ideal beauty. As in profane love, man's "essence", as expressed in the process of denuding, must be exposed in order for any union to take place. Nudity emerges as a metaphor for the spiritual exegesis necessary to attain understanding of Christ. Given that man's nudity now represents virtue as opposed to sin, he is now prepared to receive Christ as a loving follower. It is important to point out that man's *nuditas temporalis* and *virtualis* also applies to Christ himself. Man's virtuous nudity in this sonnet prefigures Christ's redemptive nudity in Sonnet 11 of Book Three, where La Ceppède depicts Christ's nakedness on the Cross as an ironic covering of Adam and Eve's fallen nude state:

> Tout nud done, il exerce à ce coup sa Prestrise
> Et couvre la rougeur dont Eve fut surprise
> Dont son mary rougit lors qu'ils se virent nuds.

Christ and Man's *nuditas virtualis* thus prepares and symbolizes a reciprocal love experience which expresses the former's sacrifice and the latter's devotion. The purity of this love is undoubtedly seductive, emphasizing salvation as the predominant quality of Christ as Lover.

Within this notion of man's transcendent and virtuous nudity lies the implication that perhaps poetry in general undergoes the same purifying, exegetic experience. The sonnet's second quatrain suggests an intimate link between the sanctity of man and verse:

> Ores que sainctement vostre Esprit me convie,
> De retracer vos pas, par les pas de ces vers,
> Ce monde, ce charmeur, cet ennemy pervers
> Me prenant au manteau veut frustrer mon envie.

The rhyme "vers/pervers" distinctly refers to the corrupt, secular lyric which, in his *avant-propos*. La Ceppède claims he will strip and purify:

> ...qu'on la [la poésie] despouïlle de ses vestemens prophanes, & qu'on luy rase le poil; ... Or pour luy descoudre ses mondains habits (ou plustost habitudes) pour luy raire ses cheveux idolatres, menteurs & lascifs; j'advisay qu'on ne pouvait mettre en œuvre un outil plus utile que le rasoir à double tranchant de la profonde meditation de la Passion & mort de nostre Sauveur JE-SUS-CHRIST: en quoy certes je ne me trompay nullement; car des lors qu'elle se sentit seulement toucher de cest heureux cautere elle mesme deschira ses vieux habillemens, & s'arracha sa Medusine perruque (54–5).

The mention and explanation of the word "habits" as signifying both "habillement" and "habitude" is striking as it directly alludes to the dual meaning of the word "habits" in the present sonnet's emblematic "motto": "Je quitte ces habits [2] au monde pour jamais". In annotation 2, La Ceppède interprets the word "habits" in the following manner:

> Ce mot respondant au sens de la lettre, en tant qu'il signifie les habillemens, represente cependant fort bien l'allegorie, pource que les habits, ou habitudes au mal nous font souvent prisonniers de Satan, & nous devons tascher de les laisser (256).

The tie between the meaning of "habits", both in the present sonnet and the *avant-propos* established, it becomes clear that La Ceppède is trying to strip not only his poetry, but all poetry of its corrupt material trappings in the dia-

lectical struggle between the human and the divine. Thus, just as Christ's nudity ironically covers and redeems Adam's shame, the return of poetry to a denuded, pure state not only veils verse, but more importantly absolves it of its tainted past.

The genre of emblem itself is also sanctified within this devotional transformation. One can argue that emblem's main contribution to the devotional process is the construction of icons in which image and text construct and reveal mystery. In this sonnet, the figure of the adolescent evolves into a meditative icon whose meaning is to be contemplated and whose experience imitated by all true lovers and followers of Christ. With the sacred appropriated through the profane, the adolescent's nudity, like Christ's, ironically represents a spiritual, rather than carnal seduction, and gradually establishes and resolves the mystery of man's love for Christ as well as Christ's love for man. Emblem's emphasis on unity of image and text produces a didactic cohesiveness representative of devotional manual, while raising this didacticism to a literary plane. Thus, La Ceppède's devotional process becomes artistically more complex than many of its forbears. Perhaps the most emblematic aspect not only of this sonnet, but of the work in general, is that La Ceppède borrows and varies numerous biblical, rhetorical and generic motifs to weave his icons. In the spirit of emblem's original definition, the poet mounts and grafts literary motifs onto devotional structures. Thus, emblem amounts to a literary inlay or mosaic on a devotional pattern. As a result of its iconographic status, emblem in La Ceppède far surpasses the status of mere "ornament",[22] fusing devotional and literary memory into a meditative experience reflecting all religious thought through the prism of art.

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[22] Francis Lawrence explores the importance of signs and the senses to La Ceppède's contemplative sequences in "La Ceppède's *Théorèmes* and Ignatian Meditation", *Comparative Literature,* vol. 17, no. 2 (1965). Christine McCall Probes cites Lawrence's argument in her article "The Magdalene: Two Seventeenth Century Portraits and the Biblical Document" (in *Création and Recréation, Mélanges offerts à Marie-Odile Sweetser,* Tübingen: Narr, 1993, pp. 223–234).