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REPRESENTING THE *ATRA BILIS*: THE ‘SAID’ AND ‘UNSAID’ OF THE MELANCHOLIC IN CESARE RIPA’S *ICONOLOGIA**

Abstract. This article is the third in a series of works which aims to contribute to documenting the influence of the medical theory of individual temperaments, derived from the theory of the four humors, through the major work *Iconologia* by the Italian humanist Cesare Ripa (1555–1622). Here, we studied the allegory of the melancholic. Beyond the work aimed at situating it within the medical tradition, we were particularly interested in the relationship between text and image and the interplay between expression (*explicite*) and silence (*implicite*) that is so frequent in the work. We thus undertook to analyse all the symbolic attributes of Ripa’s composition according to whether they appear in the engraving, in the text, in both, and whether they are commented on or not. The importance given at the end of the text to the teachings of the School of Salerno also allowed us to better understand the synthetic thought of the Italian humanist and, consequently, the overall economy of the *Iconologia*. Thus, in the course of our reflection on the modes of expression of the ‘said’ and ‘unsaid’ in the definition of the melancholic temperament in Ripa, we attempted to account for the internal mechanics of his work and the nature of the rhetorical strategies (both textual and visual) of his discursive architecture.

Keywords: Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, quaternary theory, complexions, melancholic, iconographic attributes, symbolic syntax, textual and visual rhetorical strategies

In her introduction to *Miroirs de la mélancolie*, Hélène Cazes revisits the key ideas that have accompanied this illness throughout history and rightfully declares that *at the wedding of Philology and Medicine, melancholy holds the place*

* We would like to point out that this publication is the result of a scientific project titled “Fantas-tiquer les chimères en l’air’: *l’atra bilis* et les *passiones animi* aux XVI^e et XVII^e siècles en France. Médecine, Littérature, Iconologie”. It was also funded by the scientific development fund of the Faculty of Philology at the University of Lodz (2023–2024).

of honor from its invention to our most recent and post-modern continuations¹. Indeed, one can no longer count the works where Its Majesty *Atra Bilis* appears in its most impenetrable attire, and the number of works dedicated to it bears witness to the *perpetual inspiration of a tradition beyond disciplines and languages*². Placing our contribution within this long tradition of works dedicated to melancholy, we continue here our studies on the influence of the medical theory of individual temperaments, derived from the theory of the four humors, through the major work that is Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* (1555–1622)³. Therefore, following the *Collerico per il fuoco* and *Flemmatico per l'acqua* which we have previously explored, we will now focus on the allegory of the melancholic. We will analyse the engraving illustrating the *Malencolico per la terra*⁴ and the accompanying commentary by Ripa to reflect on the textual and visual strategies employed. The overall philological approach will remain consistent with our previous work, but in the case of this melancholic, we will specifically study the modes of expression of “said” and “unsaid” that make the relationship between image and text significantly different from a mere illustration or reference.

1. *Ante oculos ponere*

“Iconology”, this new term coined by Ripa raises the question of the status of the image and representation in a much more direct manner than André Alciat's *Emblems* could. Regarding these two related works, it has been argued that they ultimately pursue opposite approaches: *chez Alciat, une série de signes chargés de significations, chez Ripa, une série de réalités en quête de représentations*⁵. It is at least certain that Ripa, as he states in his preamble, devotes his entire project to *Images faites pour signifier une chose différente de celle qui se voit avec l'œil*⁶. Further on, he specifies:

¹ H. CAZES, *Introduction*, [in:] *Miroirs de la mélancolie. Mirrors of Melancholy*, ed. IDEM, A.-F. MORAND, coll. P. DUHAMEL, A.-M. HANSEN, Paris 2015, p. 9.

² *Ibidem*.

³ We have chosen the edition by Pietro Paolo Tozzi from 1625 (C. RIPA, *Della novissima iconologia*, Padova: per Pietro Paolo Tozzi, 1625); later in the text, we will use the abbreviation C. RIPA (It.) whenever we cite this edition. Our choice was initially guided by the presence of beautiful and detailed woodcuts accompanying the author's commentary, and subsequently by the fidelity of the French translation by Jean Baudoin, which we will also cite in this work (C. RIPA, *Iconologie ou Explication nouvelle de plusieurs images, emblèmes, et autres figures hyeroglyphiques*, seconde partie, Paris: chez Mathieu Guillemot, 1664). Further in the text, we will use the abbreviation C. RIPA (Fr.) whenever we cite this edition.

⁴ C. RIPA (It.), p. 112.

⁵ P. LAURENS, F. VUILLEUMIER-LAURENS, *Cesare Ripa lecteur d'Alciat: Emblématique et Iconologie*, JS 1, 2016, p. 69 [with Alciat, a series of signs laden with meanings; with Ripa, a series of realities in search of representations].

⁶ P. CHONÉ, *Iconologie du Chevalier Cesare Ripa de Pérouse*, EMod 2, 2011, p. 110 [images made to signify something different from what is seen with the eye].

Laissant de côté l'Image dont se sert l'Orateur, et dont traite Aristote au livre troisième de sa *Rhétorique*, je parlerai seulement de celle qui appartient aux Peintres ou à ceux qui par le moyen des couleurs ou d'une autre chose visible peuvent représenter une chose différente [...].⁷

As numerous and significant as the engravings that enrich it may be, the *Iconologia* is primarily a textual discourse⁸. Ripa does not describe the engraved personifications. Moreover, strictly speaking, he does not describe his allegorical figures either but defines them in the Aristotelian sense of Topics. Description only appears in the voice of the poet who would bring to life a completed composition "before the eyes" of his audience, so Ripa establishes with his work, which precedes creation, a genealogy that connects the expression of the essence of things to ekphrasis, through the intermediary of mechanical arts.

La définition écrite, bien qu'elle soit faite de peu de mots, et que son imitation en peinture doive pareillement être laconique, cependant il n'est pas mauvais de faire l'observation de beaucoup de propositions [cose proposte]; de la sorte, ou bien l'on pourra dans le nombre en choisir quelques-unes qui soient le plus à propos, ou bien toutes ensemble elles formeront une composition, plus semblable à la description qu'élaborent les Orateurs et les Poètes, qu'à la définition propre aux Dialecticiens⁹.

1.1. The engraving, mute poetry

From this perspective, the engraving appears to function as an illustration aimed at imprinting essential elements in memory. However, it is crucial to understand what Ripa considers essential and ensure that it is indeed conveyed in the engraving. Instead of moving from text to engraving, let us imagine ourselves as readers of an illustrated edition and describe what they would see first and foremost.

The engraving is entirely dominated by a middle-aged man with a beard flowing down to his chest. His mouth is bandaged, his head tilted forward, and his gaze immersed in a large folio book held open in his left hand. A bird perches atop his head as if nesting there, calmly surveying the surroundings. With his right hand,

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 110. *Setting aside the Image used by the Orator, which Aristotle discusses in the third book of his Rhetoric, I will speak only of that which belongs to Painters or to those who, through colors or some other visible means, can represent something different [...].*

⁸ Let us recall that, regardless of Ripa's initial intention, the first edition of the *Iconologia* (1593) does not include any engravings, and only a portion of the allegories in subsequent editions benefited from iconographic enrichment.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 113. *[Although the written definition is made up of few words, and its imitation in painting must likewise be laconic, it is nevertheless not a bad idea to make the observation of many propositions [cose proposte]; in this way, either we will be able to choose from the number some which are the most appropriate, or all together they will form a composition, more similar to the description drawn up by the Orators and Poets, than to the definition proper to the Dialecticians].*

the man brandishes a large, heavy purse made of leather or canvas. He is dressed in a long robe with short sleeves and a large collar, which appears scholarly yet of modest quality. The man stands upright, with his right foot placed on a curious small square base lying on the ground. This base is only sketched, as is typical in the *Iconologia*, reduced here to its simplest form. There is no background or vegetation. This description encapsulates what Ripa depicts through the figure of the Rider of Arpin.



Fig. 1. The *Malenconico per la terra*, C. RIPA, *Della novissima iconologia*, Padova: per Pietro Paolo Tozzi, 1625, p. 112.

1.2. Iconographic elements

The iconographic elements may appear few due to the simplicity of the composition, but it would be a mistake to believe that more complex or dynamic compositions found in the collection are richer in information. On the contrary, the representation of the melancholic contains more attributes than many other allegories, certainly more than the other temperaments. The age of the character / beard, the bandaged mouth, the book / attention given to the book, the bird, the clothing, the purse, and the square stone bring the number of symbolic units to seven (with an eighth element mentioned in the commentary), compared to five or six for the choleric, five for the phlegmatic, and five or six for the sanguine.

2. Said, unsaid, approximations and negligence

We have grouped the attributes into four categories based on whether they appear in the engraving, in the text, in both, commented upon or not. This variety, encompassing nearly all possibilities, justifies the focus of the present study.

2.1. Attributes present in the engraving and explained

The commentary following the engraving tells us that *la benda che gli cuopre la bocca, significa il silenzio, che nel malinconico suol regnare, essendo egli di natura fredda, e secca, e si come la calidità fà loquace, così per lo contrario la frigidità cagione del silentio*¹⁰.

Depicted with bandaged lips (“cinta la bocca da una benda”)¹¹, the melancholic (cold and dry in the Galenic tetrad) is primarily taciturn. By his coldness, he embodies silence, in contrast to the sanguine (warm and moist), who, due to his humoral warmth, is seen as an amiable and very talkative person.

If he values silence so much, it’s because it fosters study. The open book (“il libro aperto”), the second attribute commented on by Ripa, and “l’attentione del studiare” reinforce the idea of withdrawal into silence and signify that *malinconico esser dedito alli studii, e in essi far progetto; fugendo l’altrui conversazione*¹². To illustrate this idea, a quote from Horace embellishes the text and, above all, lends it true authority:

onde Horatio nell’ultima Epistola del 2 lib. dice:
Scriptorum chorus omnis amat nemus
*Et fugit Urbes*¹³.

The bird perched on the head of the melancholic reinforces this idea but raises some questions. It is characterized in the commentary by the expressions “passero ucello solitario” and then “passero solitario”¹⁴. Is it a sparrow that Ripa depicts as

¹⁰ C. RIPA (It.), p. 113. Cf. C. RIPA (Fr.), p. 55: *la benedette signifie que le Melancolique ne parle pas beaucoup, pour estre d’un naturel froid et sec ; comme au contraire la chaleur rend les hommes babil-lards [The bandage signifies that the Melancholic does not speak much, being of a cold and dry nature; whereas warmth makes people talkative].*

¹¹ C. RIPA (It.), p. 113.

¹² C. RIPA (It.), p. 113. Cf. C. RIPA (Fr.), p. 55: *Il tient un Livre ouvert, pour que les gens de cette complexion s’addonnent volontiers aux bonnes Lettres et que pour y vacquer plus commodément ils recherchent la solitude [He holds an open book, so that people of this temperament willingly engage in literature and seek solitude to pursue it more comfortably].*

¹³ C. RIPA (It.), p. 113. Cf. C. RIPA (Fr.), p. 55: *Ce qui fait dire à Horace, / Que tous les Escrivains et de Prose et de Vers/Preferent à la Cour les champs et les deserts [This is why Horace says, / That all writers of prose and verse prefer fields and deserts to the Court].* See also HORACE, *Épîtres*, LIV, II, 2, 77, ed. et trans. F. VILLENEUVE, Paris 1964, p. 171: *All the writers in the chorus love the woods and shun the cities.*

¹⁴ C. RIPA (It.), p. 113. Cf. C. RIPA (Fr.), p. 55.

solitary for the purposes of his figure? Modern taxonomy offers a more promising alternative. Indeed, “passero solitario” is today the Italian vernacular name for *Monticola solitarius*¹⁵, known in French as the blue rock thrush. This subspecies of the thrush family is predominantly found across Mediterranean countries and prefers nesting in isolated places such as rocky crevices in mountainous or coastal areas, but it is also known to favor ruins. Its epithet derives from its solitary nature, unlike most common sparrows. Therefore, there is no reason to believe that Ripa refers to a different bird when he writes that, like the melancholic, the “passero solitario” inhabits deserted places and does not associate with other birds (*abita in luoghi solitarii, e non conversa con gli altri uccelli*)¹⁶. The birds in the *Iconologia* always correspond to fairly familiar European species (the nightingale, the swan, the swift, the crow, the swallow, etc.). We would therefore venture to guess that in the 16th century – at least for the Italians, the blue rock thrush was a sufficiently recognisable and familiar species to be used symbolically.

What about the position of the bird on the figure’s head? It should be pointed out first that the blue rock thrush is also the attribute of the *Solitudine* (p. 618)¹⁷, allegorised as a *Donna vestita di bianco, con un Passaro solitario in cima del capo*. The motif therefore seems to go hand in hand with its position, so that the full symbolic attribute is actually “passero solitario sopra il capo”. So why on the head?

A brief examination of the *Iconologia* allows us to observe a certain syntax in the spatial distribution of its avian bestiary. For example, the stork (*cigogna*) of the *Aiuto* (p. 17) is on the ground, the swallow (*rondine*) of the *Architettura Militare* (p. 43) is perched on the left hand, the peacock (*pauone*) of the *Arroganza* (p. 49) is held under the left arm, etc. Therefore, there must be some reason for perching this blue rock thrush on a head. Let us remember that these compositional choices do not fall under the freedom of the engraver. Ripa always takes care to say that such an attribute is above, below, to the right of this, to the left of that, but he never provides the reasons, not even implicitly.

Referring to the *Hieroglyphica* by Pierio Valeriano offers us some interpretative solutions. The head (“chef”) in this symbolic tradition represents the beginning of all things and, by extension, a number of divine or creative meanings. There are many variations, but one seems to fit our figure: the head is used to signify the “eminent in doctrine and command”¹⁸ due to the immense honor bestowed upon the most exceptional individuals by depicting their heads on medals and coins. The connection with Pseudo-Aristotle’s *Problème XXX* is evident¹⁹. Moreover,

¹⁵ <https://avibase.bsc-eoc.org/species.jsp?lang=FR&avibaseid=41D76F4B19ACB4BD&sec=summary> [13 IV 2024].

¹⁶ C. RIPA (It.), p. 113. Cf. C. RIPA (Fr.), p. 55.

¹⁷ For the rest of the text, the page numbers indicated after the allegories quoted in italics always refer to C. RIPA (It.).

¹⁸ J.P. VALÉRIAN, *Les Hiéroglyphiques*, Lyon: Paul Frelon, 1615, p. 400–401.

¹⁹ Cf. *Pour quelle raison tous ceux qui ont été des hommes d’exception, en ce qui regarde la philosophie, la science de l’État, la poésie ou les arts, sont-ils manifestement mélancoliques, et certains au point même*

Ripa states that all iconology has *pas de règle plus certaine ni plus universelle, que l'imitation des mémoires* [« *memorie* »] *qui se trouvent dans les Livres, dans les Médailles et dans les Marbres sculptés par l'industrie des Latins et des Grecs [...]*²⁰. The head of the melancholic and its perched bird might be related to the obverse and reverse of a coin²¹.

However, this solution does not fit well with the *Solitudine*, unless it refers to the *Malenconico*. A second interpretation of the symbolic syntax is possible, as another allegory caught our attention. Indeed, the *Loquacita* (p. 402) *Terrà in cima del capo una rondine, che sia nel nido in piedi in atto di cantare, e con la destra mano una Cornacchia*; Ripa explains that *La Rondinella [...] ne dimostra la noiosa, e importuna natura de i loquaci, che essendo simile a quella della Rondine impediscono, e offendono gl'animi delle persone quiete, e studiose*²². Ripa is clearly inspired here by one of the hieroglyphs that Valeriano proposes for the swallow, both for the symbol and its location on the head, drawn from an anecdote²³. Could we not imagine that the solitary and studious blue rock thrush stands on the head of the melancholic as a mirror image of the bothersome and chattering swallow of loquacity²⁴? Or perhaps we should understand more simply and literally that the solitary melancholic enjoys isolating himself in the heights of his thoughts.

d'être saisis par des maux dont la bile noire est l'origine, comme ce que racontent, parmi les récits concernant les héros, ceux qui sont consacrés à Héraclès? [For what reason are all those who have been exceptional men, in regard to philosophy, the science of state, poetry, or the arts, manifestly melancholic, and some to the point of being seized by ailments originating from black bile, as is told in the stories about heroes, especially those about Heracles?] (J. PIGEAUD, *Aristote, l'homme de génie et la mélancolie*, Paris 1988, p. 83). Alexander the Great, Aristotle's disciple and Heracles' heir, is obviously the most illustrious figure of the melancholic 'éminent en doctrine et commandement' ['eminent in doctrine and command'].

²⁰ P. CHONÉ, *Iconologie du Chevalier Cesare Ripa...*, p. 110. [no rule more certain or more universal than the imitation of memories ['memorie'] found in Books, in Medals, and in Marble Sculptures crafted by the industry of the Latins and the Greeks [...]].

²¹ Birds are common on the reverse of ancient coins. The silver tetradrachm minted under Philip III of Macedonia is an example. The reverse of this tetradrachm shows Zeus seated on his throne, an eagle in his outstretched right hand and a sceptre in the other. The poses of the personifications in the *Iconologia* are often found in numismatics. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Gallica, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8480780q> [13 IV 2024] (Monnaie: Tétradrachme, argent, types d'Alexandre III le Grand, Sidon, Phénicie).

²² C. RIPA (It.), p. 402–403.

²³ J.P. VALERIAN, *Les Hiéroglyphiques...*, p. 280: *Au reste Saint Jerome et Saint Cyrille consentants avec Aristote, entendent par le precepte de Pythagoras, qu'on ne tienne point d'Arondelles chez soy, qu'il fault éviter la fréquentation des babillards et flagorneurs. C'est advis est fortifié par l'histoire d'Alexandre, le repos duquel une fois interrompu par le caquet d'une Arondelle qui voltigeoit importunément au-dessus de sa teste* [Moreover, Saint Jerome and Saint Cyril, in agreement with Aristotle, understand by the precept of Pythagoras, that one should not keep swallows at home, and that one should avoid the company of babblers and sycophants. This advice is strengthened by the story of Alexander, whose repose was once interrupted by the cackle of a swallow which fluttered importunately above his head].

²⁴ Especially as the *Complension* and the *Loquacita* were introduced at the same time, in the second 1603 edition of the *Iconologia*.



Fig. 2. *La Loquacità*, C. RIPA, *Della novissima iconologia*, Padova: per Pietro Paolo Tozzi, 1625, p. 402.

Finally, let us address the tied, closed purse (“borsa serrata”), the fourth and last attribute commented on by Ripa, which, he tells us, reflects the miserly nature of melancholics (“l’avara natura”)²⁵. The author does not elaborate on his assertion and resolves the issue in a very short sentence, except for the reference he makes to the following verses. We will return to this question later. However, the brevity of this comment should be related to the remarkable development given to the allegory of *Avaritia* (p. 57), which benefits from five iconological propositions over four pages²⁶. The second, the most interesting for us, is the only one with an engraving. The commentary describes an *Donna vecchia pallida, e magra, che*

²⁵ C. RIPA (It.), p. 113. Cf. C. RIPA (Fr.), p. 55: *les Melancoliques sont peu genereux et grandement avares* [Melancholics are not very generous and very miserly].

²⁶ A “borsa strettamente legata” is still used for the *Malvagita* [Wickedness], cf. C. RIPA (It.), p. 451, with a strictly identical meaning. GUY DE TERVARENT (*Attributs et symboles dans l’art profane 1450–1600. Dictionnaire d’un langage perdu*, Genève 1958) does not mention avarice as such in the “Bourse” (purse) entry in his repertoire of *Attributs et symboles dans l’art profane*. It is an attribute of Mercury, felony, selfishness, vice, wealth, fortune and abundance. From this we can deduce that we are more likely to find the miser’s purse in religious art, but this remains to be verified. Does Ripa treat Avarice in a particularly Christian way? Here again, a detailed analysis would be necessary. He quotes Horace and Claudian (*paganus pervicacissimus* according to Orose), as well as Saint Gregory and Pope Urban VIII Barberini. The term *peccato* does not appear anywhere.

*nell'aspetto mostri affanno, e malinconia [...] tenga una borsa legata, e stretta, nella quale miri con grandissima attentione*²⁷.

For our subsequent analyses, let us note the pallor of his melancholic *Avaritia* and observe that the attention the *Malenconico* pays to his book interferes with the attention he should be paying to his purse, as a true miser would.



Fig. 3. L'*Avaritia*, C. RIPA, *Della novissima iconologia*, Padova: per Pietro Paolo Tozzi, 1625, p. 58.

2.2. Attribute present in the engraving, mentioned in the text but left unexplained

This category concerns only one motif. Ripa defines a figure *che posandosi con il piede destro sopra di una figura quadrata, ò cuba*²⁸ without telling us what it is. We have now got into the habit of looking elsewhere in the *Iconologia* for clues to interpretation. The Melancholic is said to have some links with *Sapienza Divina* (p. 583), part of whose definition reads as follows:

²⁷ C. RIPA (It.), p. 58, "borsa serrata" a few lines later and in the third proposition (p. 59).

²⁸ C. RIPA (It.), p. 113; C. RIPA (Fr.), p. 55.

Una donna di bellissimo, e fantissimo aspetto, sopra un quadrato. Si pone sopra il quadrato, per significare che è fondata stabilmente sopra ferma sede, dove non può vacillare, ne tiburare da nivulato. Pierio Valeriano lib. 39 de quadrato nel titolo della Sapienza²⁹.

Valeriano's discussion of the square follows that of the sphere, which is associated with Fortune³⁰. Fortune, unstable by nature, is opposed to divine knowledge, which cannot change. In this case, the square signifies the immutable balance and unalterable perfection of divine wisdom, which is both the foundation and the bulwark of the good life, as Valeriano explains:

Chap. XXXI. Sapience. Et comme les anciens avoyent accoustumé de peindre la Fortune assise sur une boule, aussi colloquoyent-ils la Sapience sur une pierre quarrée, ignisians par cest hiéroglyphique, comme nous disions n'agueres, que ceste là est mobile, et ceste cy ferme et constante. Et les nostres disent, que la charpenterie quarrée qui fut apprestee pour faire l'arche de Noé par le commandement de Dieu, signifie les Docteurs et maistres en l'Eglise, par la sagesse desquels les peuples qui sont dedans, sont fautiez, et preservez des assauts des hérétiques. Car Adamance nous exhorte de bastir une bibliothèque de charpenterie en quarré, non d'un bois champestre, rude et mal raboté : mais bien des livres des Prophètes, et des Apostres, esquels seulement est comprise la vraye sapience, pource que retranchans tous vices, ils nous apprennent la forme et teneur de bien³¹.

It should be noted that to ensure stability, the *Sapienza Divina* stands with both feet on the square, but we do not think that this has the slightest effect on the interpretation we should make of the Melancholic's attribute. In fact, the *Historia* (p. 304) also places only one foot on the square, this time the left foot, and we read the same explanation there³². The precision "ò cuba", found only in the *Malencónico*, is perhaps worth exploring further. Valeriano devotes a section to the meaning of the cube, not in the chapter dedicated to the square, but to the triangle:

S'enfuit le Cube, ou quarré, constant de figures à trois angles, ayant quatre triangles, dont l'hiéroglyphique est la Supreme Divinité. Ainsi la pyramide paroist la première entre les

²⁹ C. RIPA (It.), p. 583.

³⁰ Ripa proposes nine different compositions for his *Fortuna*, C. RIPA (It.), p. 255–257; the sphere is present in the third and fourth: *Donna co'l globo celeste in capo [...] si come egli è in continuo moto, cosi la fortuna sempre si move*, C. RIPA (It.), p. 256.

³¹ J.P. VALÉRIAN, *Les Hiéroglyphiques...*, p. 18. [*Chap. XXXI. Wisdom. And as the ancients were accustomed to depict Fortune seated on a ball, so they put Wisdom on a square stone, unaware by this hieroglyphic, as we said before, that this one is mobile, and this one firm and constant. And the others say, that the square carpentry which was used to make Noah's ark by the commandment of God, signifies the Doctors and Masters of the Church, by whose wisdom the peoples within are saved and preserved from the assaults of the heretics. For Adamance urges us to build a library of quartered carpentry, not of rough, poorly planed wood, but of the books of the Prophets and the Apostles, which alone contain true wisdom, because they cut out all vices and teach us the form and content of a good life*].

³² C. RIPA (It.), p. 305: *Donna alata, e vestita di bianco [...] posandosi col piè sinistro sopra d'un sasso quadrato [...]. Tiene posato il piede sopra il quadrato, perche l'Historia deve star sempre salda, ne lassarsi coromperre, ò soggiogare da alcuna banda con la bugia per interesse, che perciò si veste di bianco*.

solides, dont la base monstre trois angles: le quatriesme mis au coupéau de cette figure, comme il reçoit la forme de la divinite, aussi les Pythagoriens luy en donnent le nom. Les Mages adjoustent, que le simple triangle esgal de tous costéz est l'indice de la divinité, ou l'effigie des choses celestes, lequel pour estre de tous costez égal, mal-aisement se peut mouvoir, et ne peut décliner au mal³³.

We will not draw a meaning from the cube that is very different from that associated with the square: the cube, stemming from the triangle, is the symbol of supreme divinity. But what exactly can we do with this stability, this divine incorruptibility, in the case of the Melancholic? The doctor and adviser to Henri IV, Nicolas Abraham de la Framboisière, provides the beginnings of an answer:

Or ce qui se trouve plus admirable en eux [les mélancoliques] c'est que quand les vapeurs de cette humeur eschauffée parmi de sang viennent à monter au cerveau, les voilà aussi tost ravis en contemplation, et comme transportez et poussez d'une fureur divine qu'on appelle *enthousiasme*, les uns à philosopher, les autres à poetiser, aucuns à prophetiser, ou profondement mediter chose sainte: tellement qu'il semble à voire qu'ils soient inspirez du saint Esprit à ce faire. Aussi sont ils en cela vrayment imitateurs de Dieu, qui est tout exprès nommé en Grec, *Theos*, pour estre continuellement en theorie, qui vaut autant à dire comme³⁴.

We finally propose, in accordance with the medical tradition, to interpret the foot of the Melancholic remaining on the ground as a sign of his terrestrial element, cold and dry, by which he is defined. This seems all the more necessary as it is nowhere mentioned in Ripa's text, except in the title of his allegory. Regarding the origins of this connection to the terrestrial element, we refer the reader to our previous work on the ancient debate of assimilating or distinguishing madness and melancholy. There, they will find a detailed study of the very rich medical emblem that Louis de Caseneuve dedicated to the *atrabilious*³⁵.

³³ VALÉRIAN, *Les Hiéroglyphiques...*, p. 521. [*The Cube, or square, constant of figures with three angles, having four triangles, of which the hieroglyphic is the Supreme Divinity. Thus the pyramid appears the first among the solids, whose base shows three angles: the fourth put to the cut of this figure, as it receives the shape of the divinity, also the Pythagoreans give it the name. The Magi add that the simple triangle, equal on all sides, is the index of divinity, or the effigy of celestial things, which, because it is equal on all sides, can only move with difficulty and cannot decline into evil*].

³⁴ N.A. DE LA FRAMBOISIÈRE, *Le Gouvernement propre à chacun selon sa complexion*, [in:] IDEM, *Le Gouvernement nécessaire à chacun pour vivre longuement en santé*, Paris: Charles Chastellain, 1608, p. 152–153 [*What is most admirable about them [the melancholics] is that when the vapors of this heated humor among the blood rise to the brain, they are immediately seized by contemplation and seem transported and driven by a divine fury called 'enthusiasm'. Some turn to philosophy, others to poetry, some to prophecy, or to deeply meditating on holy matters, so much so that it seems they are inspired by the Holy Spirit to do so. Thus, they are true imitators of God, who is expressly named in Greek, 'Theos', for being continually in theory, which means as much as contemplation*].

³⁵ M. KOZŁUK, *Folie et mélancolie. Un débat dans l'histoire*, [in:] *The Concept of Madness from Homer to Byzantium. Manifestations and Aspects of Mental Illness and Disorder*, ed. H. PERDICOYIANNI-PALEOLOGOU, Amsterdam 2016, p. 245–276.

2.3. Attributes present in the engraving but absent from the text

The next two attributes, the beard and the garment, which are visible on the engraving, pose no difficulty of interpretation. We are particularly surprised that there is no mention of them in the text.

Both attributes are part of the traditional senescence of the melancholic, which is part of the original set of tetrads that Galen of Pergamon constructs and justifies³⁶. The four complexions thus correspond to the four ages of life, a motif that is itself widespread in European culture³⁷. The characterisation of figures by age is an elementary symbolic tool in Ripa's work, and the length of the beard in the engravings is proportional to maturity. Thus, the "huomo vecchio" of the *Consuetudine* (p. 125) wears a beard as long as our Melancholic, while a man with a short beard illustrates the *Credito* (p. 145), which Ripa defines as a "huomo di eta virile". The *Malenconico's* talar robe, which has no equivalent in the *Iconologia*, is a garment reminiscent of both monks and academics. We know of no example in medieval and Renaissance art of an elderly man wearing anything other than a long robe, and it would be a curiosity if there were. The fashion for the short costume gradually spread throughout Europe from the 14th to the 16th century, but as the costume historian François Boucher points out, *le costume long ne disparaît pas complètement avec l'apparition du costume court, on le sait: les gens d'un certain âge lui restent fidèles, les souverains également, pendant un certain temps [...]*³⁸. The elderly do not like to show their legs much; in Ripa's time, only they wore such long garments, except for judges and members of certain administrative bodies who took advantage of the abandonment of long clothing in the population to distinguish themselves. Therefore, the Melancholic's attire is indeed a sign of his advanced age, of the wisdom that comes with years, but also, due to the modesty in cut and ornamentation, a symbol of withdrawal into the silence of study.

Let us note that the adherence to medical tradition here is impeccable. Yet, Ripa's text provides only a meager "huomo", no mention of age, even though his *Malinconia* (p. 407) is described as a "Donna vecchia"; not a word about attire, despite Ripa qualifying the clothing of his allegories down to the color in many cases. Isn't the *Credito* (p.145) mentioned earlier defined as "vestito nobilmente d'habito lungo"? It is exceedingly surprising from this humanist, usually so rigorous in defining the dispositions and qualities of his allegories³⁹. We have seen how

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

³⁷ J.-M. SHAEFFER, *Âges de la vie, esthétique et arts*, Comm 2, n° 109, 2021, p. 11–34.

³⁸ F. BOUCHER, *Histoire du costume en Occident, de l'Antiquité à nos jours*, Paris 1983, p. 201: *the long costume did not disappear completely with the appearance of the short costume, as we know: people of a certain age remained faithful to it, as did sovereigns, for a time [...]*.

³⁹ The matter is clearly proclaimed in the preamble; concerning dispositions, Ripa declares: *Pour la tête, la disposition sera la position haute ou basse, joyeuse ou mélancolique et diverses autres passions qui se découvrent comme au Théâtre dans l'apparence, dans le visage de l'homme. C'est aussi dans les*

crucial these are in the case of the Choleric (“giovane magro quasi nudo”)⁴⁰ and the Phlegmatic (“uomo di corpo grasso vestito di pelle di tasso”)⁴¹. Therefore, it is the engraving alone that bears the burden of signifying, without justification, a crucial traditional element of the melancholic.

2.4. Attribute present only in the text and left unexplained

The eighth and final attribute we shall address is the skin color of the melancholic, absent from the engraving for an obvious reason. The atrabilious figure in the *Iconologia* is “di color fosco”, “le teint basané” in Jean Baudouin’s French translation (“dark-skinned”) and, let us say it at once, this skin color is likely to surprise the reader familiar with the history of melancholy.

Before proceeding further, let us clarify that the word “fuscus” comes from the Latin “fuscus”, which means “dark”, “black” of a “matte color”. It so happens that Annie Dubourdieu and Élisabeth Lemirre have questioned this color present in Roman erotic elegy: *In two texts, one by Ovid and the other by Propertius, a woman’s complexion is described as fuscus, an adjective which, according to J. André, designates the Mediterranean type with a brown complexion, as opposed to the pale complexion (candidus) of the Nordics: fuscus therefore designates a color less dark than niger*⁴².

Medical and literary traditions⁴³ gave the melancholic a rather pale, even pallid complexion, which is the hallmark of studious people and nocturnal observers of the sky. What’s more, the two stars associated with him (Mercury and Saturn)⁴⁴ also radiated a weak, cold light that was very much in keeping with his temperament. A representation in keeping with this tradition can still be found in Louis de Caseneuve, who describes his figure as “impalescentem (libro tenens)”.

bras, dans les mains, dans les jambes, dans les pieds, dans les cheveux tressés, dans les vêtements, et dans toute autre chose que devra se marquer la disposition, ou position distincte et réglée. [For the head, the disposition will be the high or low position, joyful or melancholic, and various other passions that are revealed as if on stage in the appearance, in the face of the man. It is also in the arms, in the hands, in the legs, in the feet, in the braided hair, in the clothing, and in every other thing that the disposition or distinct and regulated position should be marked], P. CHONÉ, Iconologie du Chevalier Cesare Ripa..., p. 112. As for the qualities: Les qualités ensuite consisterons dans le fait d’être blanche ou noire, proportionnée ou disproportionnée, grasse ou maigre, jeune ou vieille et chose semblable qui ne se peuvent pas facilement séparer de la chose dans laquelle elles sont fondées [The qualities will consist in being white or black, proportionate or disproportionate, fat or thin, young or old, and similar things that cannot easily be separated from the thing in which they are grounded], ibidem, p. 113.

⁴⁰ M. KOZŁUK, *Représenter la flaua bilis: le portait du colérique dans l’Iconologia de Cesare Ripa*, SCer 12, 2022, p. 633–650.

⁴¹ EADEM, *Representing the Phlegm: the Portrait of the Phlegmatic in Cesare Ripa’s Iconology*, SCer 13, 2023, p. 1–29.

⁴² A. DUBOURDIEU, É. LEMIRRE, *Le maquillage à Rome*, [in:] *Corps Romains*, ed. Ph. MOREAU, Grenoble 2002, p. 91.

⁴³ On this subject, see Ch. OROBITG, *Gracilaso et la mélancholie*, Toulouse 1997, p. 69–71.

⁴⁴ M. KOZŁUK, *Folie et mélancholie...*

What can be said then of this Mediterranean melancholic, tanned by the sun? Ripa addresses this in his allegory of the Choleric by Fire (p. 109), which opens his series on temperaments, through a general paragraph aimed at explaining that the predominance of the humors is manifested notably by the color they impart to the skin:

d'onde nasce, che per il color bianco si dimostra la flemma, per il pallido, overo flavo la colera, per il rubicondo misto con bianco la complessione sanguigna, e per il fosco la malinconia, secondo Galeno nel 4. De Sanitate tuenda al cap. 7. e nel I. de gli Afforissimi nel Commento⁴⁵.

The melancholic's skin, according to Ripa, is simply tinged with black bile. It turns out that the Italian humanist very rigorously applies Galenic doctrine⁴⁶, contrary to the overwhelming majority of authors who describe a pale complexion. We are tempted to say all other authors, as we are not aware of another melancholic described in this manner. It is surprising that this motif did not gain wider diffusion, but the melancholic pallor undoubtedly corresponds to a much older reality⁴⁷. The choice to disregard common usage in favor of a return to Galen is quite remarkable, but let us remember that his melancholic *Avaritia* is perfectly "pallida". Thus, this doctrinal fidelity is only observed in the context of temperaments, the medical motif par excellence.

3. Deux ex machina: a strange resolution

Cesare Ripa explains the meaning of only four of the eight attributes we have identified, so the traits of the Melancholic that are truly emphasized are, in order, his taciturnity, his disposition to study, his taste for solitude, and his avarice. Other peculiarities are implied by the presence (mentioned or represented) of other attributes, but this seems rather limited for a complexion that has inspired so much writing since Antiquity, in medicine, literature, and philosophy. The first three developed attributes reinforce each other, and one can consider that all are

⁴⁵ C. RIPA (It.), p. 109.

⁴⁶ Cf. [GALIEN], *De Sanitate tuenda*, IV, cap. 7, [in:] *Claudii Galeni Opera omnia*, vol. VI, ed. C.G. KÜHN, Leipzig 1823 and [GALIEN], *Galeni in Hippocratis librum de alimento commentarius III, VI (Succi varii et coloribus et facultatibus)*, [in:] *Claudii Galeni Opera omnia*, vol. XV, ed. C.G. KÜHN, Leipzig 1828, p. 275 (the entire scope of the treaty 251–374): *Si vero nihil extrinsecus adveniat, veluti frigus aut color aut aliqua animi perturbatio, humores ex coloribus revera dignoscentur. Ergo sicut corpus, quod se ipso sit factum candidus, iudicat pituitosum humorem in ipso dominari, pallidus vero aut flavius biliosum, sic si ad rubicundius quam natura ferat sit facta conversio, superare sanguinem inteligimus, sic si nigrus, atram bilem.*

⁴⁷ It is above all the Hippocratic tradition that defines the melancholic as pale, a characteristic taken from the description of Democritus of Abdera in the *Letters* of pseudo-Hippocrates, cf. M. KOŻLUK, *Folie et mélancolie...*

linked to the cold and dry nature of the Melancholic, a medical justification that the humanist takes care to specify early on before enriching it with the words of Horace. The fourth opens the way to an unexpected resolution. Indeed, the humanist concludes his text by reproducing six lines from the School of Salerno, introduced in a manner that suggests they will address avarice⁴⁸:

Restat adhuc tristis cholera substantia nigra
Quae reddit pravos, per tristes pauca loquentes.
Hi vigilant studiis, nec mens est dedita somno,
Servant propositum sibi nil reputant fore tutum.
Invidus et tristis, cupidus dextraeque tenacis,
Non expers fraudis, timidus luteique coloris⁴⁹.

In fact, the purpose of this versification is not to explain but to transmit; the medical teaching is set out in hexameter to make it easy to memorise. It is therefore an enumerative portrait of the melancholic complexion, faithful to the canon defined by and since Hippocrates. We find some of the traits already explained by Ripa (*pauca loquentes* – “little talker”; *hi vigilant studiis* – “are great students, and fond of reading”), the mention of avarice (*cupidus*⁵⁰), the colour of the skin (*luteique coloris*⁵¹ – “of earthly colour”) but above all, succinct as it is, this portrait offers a more detailed outline of the temperament: the *Malenconico* is sad by nature (*tristis*), perverse (*pravos*), jealous (*invidus*), insomniac (*nec mens est dedita somno*), suspicious (*servant propositum sibi nil reputant fore tutum*), fearful (*timidus*), opinionated (*dextraeque tenacis*). At the end of the text, Ripa strangely rejects what could have been the source of many other attributes, as if he were aware of the thinness or incompleteness of his figure. Did he find himself embarrassed by so many possibilities? Certainly, but we understand his choices better now because,

⁴⁸ *La borsa serrata significa l'avara natura, come dicono i segunti versi della Scuola Salernitana*, C. RIPA (It.), p. 113.

⁴⁹ *Reste à parler encor de la mélancolie / qui la personne rend de tristesse remplie, / Perverse, et peu parlant ceulx de telle nature / Sont grands estudians, et aymantes la lecture, / Promptz à veiller, et gens en leurs propos constans, / N'estimans rien de seur, et envieux estans, / Averages, et entiers cauteleux et craintifz. / De terrestre couleurs, au surplus fort tardifz, Retardement de la mort par bon regime ou conservation de santé, jadis envoyé par l'escolle de Salerne, au Roy d'Angleterre, traduit de Latin en rythme françoise par Geofroy le Tellier advocat, présenté et dédié au Duc de Savoye*, Paris: Martin le Jeune, 1561, f° F 2r°. [It remains to speak further of melancholy / Which makes the person full of sadness, / Perverse, and little speaking those of such a nature / Are great students, and fond of reading, / Prompt to watch, and people in their constant remarks, / Esteeming nothing of true, and envious estans, / Avaricious, and entirely cautious and fearful. / Of earthly colours, in addition very late].

⁵⁰ Ripa establishes a strict equivalence between *avarus* and *cupidus*. While both adjectives express a strong desire to possess and monopolise, the latter can also imply something more libidinous. Indeed: *Melancholics, for the most part, are obsessed with sex* (Pr. XXX, 91).

⁵¹ This reference no doubt reinforced Ripa's idea of defining his figure with a brown complexion.

upon reflection, the humanist condenses much of the material into a few simple ideas: sadness, fearfulness, and irrationality can be linked to the need for solitude, the rejection of all commerce with men, wakefulness, and critical sense are dispositions that serve study, just as the constancy of speech can be attributed to the divine wisdom that animates the melancholic.

One remains somewhat astonished at the rather casual manner in which Ripa eventually enriches his allegory. Could it be that he felt he no longer had much time to devote to the temperaments, or was it intended this way? For it is indeed a series, and the melancholic is the last temperament treated. Through developments, allusions, or citations of authorities, Ripa has already outlined the general medical framework in the previous temperaments, which likely explains the progressive tightening of his text⁵². Ripa's industrious endeavour may also have suffered from the material conditions of its execution: producing such a volume of text, with such variety, inevitably leads to treating certain matters more superficially than others, or concluding them hastily under the pressure of the printer.

* * *

It is difficult to determine how Ripa's readers, whether painters or sculptors, consulted the *Iconologia*, but the question is worth considering. They likely perused it in various ways, as we have done here, to understand, enrich, and compose. Naturally, some things that seem obscure to us today were not so for contemporaries. However, we have shown that consulting related concepts can answer many questions and give voice to the silences, and this is undoubtedly an implicit mechanism of the *Iconologia*. We do not believe it necessary to rely on a cultural subtext here. Ripa makes a visible effort to avoid repetition, which is challenging in such a work. He sometimes shortens his explanations when he feels he has developed them sufficiently elsewhere, but without cross-referencing, at the risk of seeming to abandon his reader or hastily finish his text. This intratextual navigation also allows us to appreciate the ingenuity of his allegories, even if some interferences or inconsistencies may appear here and there.

Next, what can be said about Ripa's *Melancholic* in the medical tradition? While *Malinconia*, which is merely sadness, sterility, pain, and despondency, is undoubtedly the manifestation of a pathological excess of black bile, akin to Cicero's acute madness⁵³, the *Malenconico* more willingly, albeit timidly, embraces the fruits of the seeds sown by (Pseudo)-Aristotle in *Problem XXX*, surrounding himself, by the presence of the cube, with an aura of knowledge, wisdom, and divine spirit. It is

⁵² The *Collerico* is defined in 73 lines, the *Sanguigno* in 47, the *Flemmatico* in 34 and finally the *Malenconico* in 33.

⁵³ M. KOŻLUK, *Folie et mélancolie...*

worth emphasising that, in terms of the atrabilious colour of his allegory, Ripa demonstrates an orthodoxy towards the Galenic tradition, which paradoxically leads him to create a non-traditional composition. This observation sheds light on the Italian humanist's relationship with authorities and the quality of his interpretations. Nevertheless, we cannot explain the absence of any information regarding the age and attire of the *Melancholic* in the text. These elements are fundamental to the text of the *Iconologia*, and the reference to the fourth age of life in the traditional portrait of the *Melancholic* is of utmost importance; the fact that age is *finally* indicated in the engraving does not address the question. An implicit reference to the "vecchia" *Malinconia* remains possible, but we favour the hypothesis of an oversight.

At last, Ripa certainly follows the path carved by others, but he shows ingenuity in his choice of attributes. The solitary blue rock thrush perched on the head, an invention that could be considered personal and perhaps even regional, is a striking example. This simple motif, based on a basic analogy with the melancholic temperament, is surprisingly the one that has sparked the most reflections, as it involves a symbolic syntax whose origins are not always easy to determine. Ripa tells us that the statement must be concise, but perhaps it may be judged too synthetic in the case of the *Malenconico*. While we understand the internal mechanics of his choices, there is a certain unease when confronted with the verses from the School of Salerno, which suddenly introduce a richer material than all the preceding development.

The *Iconologia* is not merely a symbolic repertoire but aims to be effective and comprehensive in the realities it addresses, if not in their definition. Ripa's deliberate laconism in his contributions undoubtedly serves the requirement of memorization. In this sense, it participates in emblematics. Ripa's *Malenconico* is innovative but cannot be termed original, a label reserved for the extraordinary medical emblem by Louis de Caseneuve, as we have mentioned several times in the notes of this article⁵⁴. Conceived as a true lesson in medicine, organized around an extremely erudite symbolic network, the work of this French physician will provide a complete and definitive understanding of the fascinating melancholic temperament.

Translated by Justyna Sowińska

⁵⁴ L. DE CASENEUVE, *Hieroglyphicorum et medicorum emblematum DWDEKAKROUNOS*, [in:] IOAHNES PIERIUS VALERIANUS, *Hieroglyphica*, Lugduni: Paulum Frelon, 1626, p. 40.

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