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REPRESENTING THE IDEAL: THE PORTRAIT OF THE SANGUINE IN CESARE RIPA'S *ICONOLOGIA*

Abstract. This article is the fourth and final in a series of works aimed at contributing to the documentation of the success of the medical theory of individual complexions, derived from the theory of the four humours, through the major work of the Italian humanist Cesare Ripa (1555–1622), the *Iconologia*. We study the allegory of the sanguine complexion, whose primacy over the other three is explicitly established in medical tradition. We analyze, through the allegorical attributes mentioned in the text (youth, joy, a crown of flowers, a ruddy face tinged with white, a lute, an open book of music, a ram grazing on a cluster of grapes), the way in which Ripa seeks to portray this ideal of health. We also demonstrate that the author slightly diverges from the medical canon. Firstly, his extensive synthesis of the doctrine leads him to introduce certain pathological dissonances, perceptible in the use of unexpected terms. Secondly, to account for a well-tempered character, he prefers to follow an ancient literary tradition which, nonetheless, maintains very close links with the Hippocratic corpus since its origins. Finally, it appears that the *Sanguigno per l'aria* contains no new symbolic invention, matching what we previously observed in the *Flemmatico* and the *Malenconico*.

Keywords: Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, humoral theory, humors, sanguine, iconographic attributes

This article concludes a series of studies aimed at contributing to the documentation of the fortune of the medical theory of individual complexions, derived from the theory of the four humors¹, in *Iconologia*, the major work of Cesare Ripa (1555–1622), and its expression of the arts in the modern era.

¹ M. KOŹLUK, *Représenter la flaua bilis: le portrait du colérique dans l'Iconologia de Cesare Ripa*, SCer 12, 2022, p. 633–650; EADEM, *Representing the Phlegm: the Portrait of the Phlegmatic in Cesare Ripa's Iconology*, SCer 13, 2023, p. 1–29 and EADEM, *Representing the atra bilis: the 'Said' and 'Unsaid' of the Melancholic in Cesare Ripa's Iconologia*, SCer 14, 2024, p. 443–461.



Our first article provided a succinct exposition of the foundations of this quaternary theory as well as the indispensable bibliography related to it.

Throughout this study, we have endeavored to situate Ripa's text within the medical tradition, but the *Iconologia* pursues a much more ambitious horizon. While the literary sources do not pose particular difficulties, the numerous questions raised by the general organization of the work have led us to approach each of the complexions from various angles, with *uarietas* serving a methodology that responds to these questions, while sparing the reader, we hope, too many repetitions of a systematic analysis.

The inherent pitfalls of the encyclopedism of the *Iconologia*, its constraints, the nature of the author's choices, his traditionalism, his originality, or even the navigation within the work, have already been introduced and developed within this series of articles. For this reason, we invite the reader to consult them in the order of their publication. However, we should specify that this order is not that of Ripa. We have chosen to address the melancholic and sanguine temperaments at a later stage, due to the particular dignity they enjoy in European culture².

Let us therefore complete this work on the *Complessioni* of the *Iconologia* by focusing here on the *Sanguigno per l'aria* [Sanguine for the air], whose preeminence Avicenna soberly emphasizes: *quatuor continentur generibus; genere sanguis, qui omnibus illis melior existit*³ [Four types are contained; the type of blood, which is better than all of them; trans. M.K.].

1. Sanguine: festive pleasures and springtime joy

1.1. Portrait

First, we shall describe the sanguine. Ripa presents it as:

Un giovane allegro, ridente, con una ghirlanda di vari fiori in capo di corpo carnoso, oltre i capelli biondi haverà il color della faccia rubicondo misto con bianco e che sonando un liuto dia segno con rivolgere gli occhi al Cielo, che glie piaccia il fuoco, e il canto, da una parte

² Among the many available editions, we will use that of Pietro Paolo Tozzi from 1625 (C. RIPA, *Della novissima iconologia*, Padova: per Pietro Paolo Tozzi, 1625, part one and part two). Hereafter, we will use the abbreviation C. RIPA (It.) whenever we cite this edition. It is selected first, because it contains beautiful and richly detailed woodcuts accompanied by the author's full commentary. Second, because it corresponds most closely to the French translation by Jean Baudoin (C. RIPA, *Iconologie ou Explication nouvelle de plusieurs images, emblèmes, et autres figures hieroglyphiques*, Paris: chez Mathieu Guillemot, 1664, p. 52). Hereafter we use the abbreviation C. RIPA (Fr.) whenever we cite this edition. They are for example gathered in 1749 in the famous sonata "Sanguineus und Melancholicus" by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach.

³ AVICENNA, *Liber Canonis*, lib. I, fen I, doc. IV, Venetis: apud Juntas, 1562, p. 7.

dessa figura vi sarà un montone, tenedo in bocca un grappo d'uva, e dall'altra banda vi sarà un libro di musica aperto⁴.

The artist should depict him as a joyful young man (*giovane allegro*), laughing (*ridente*), with a garland of various flowers on his head (*con una ghirlanda di varii fiori in capo*). His body will be fleshy (*di corpo carnososo*) and his hair blond (*capelli biondi*). His facial complexion will be rubicund mixed with white (*il color della faccia rubicondo misto con bianco*). He will play the lute (*sonando un liuto*) and show by his gaze turned skyward (*segno con rivolgere gl'occhi al Cielo*) that he loves fire and song (*glie piaccia il fuoco e il canto*). He is accompanied by a ram eating a bunch of grapes (*un montone tenedo in bocca un grappo d'uva*) and an open music book (*un libro di musica aperto*). The engraving that precedes the text doesn't quite match it, but we shall postpone that consideration for now.



Fig. 1. C. RIPA, *Della novissima iconologia*, Padova: per Pietro Paolo Tozzi, 1625, parte prima, p. 111.

⁴ C. RIPA (It.), parte prima, p. 111.

1.2. Medical justification: First diagnosis

Ripa proceeds as usual, immediately following his description with medical justifications explicitly drawn from canonical authorities. His text, which we will detail below, faithfully reflects the then-current doctrine on the physiology of blood, its circulation and its effects. Let us begin with Laurence Moulinier-Brogi's enlightening synthesis of this doctrine, as found in Hippocrates' successor:

Galien pour sa part avait reconnu la présence constante du sang dans les artères: aussi imagina-t-il que le sang entré dans le ventricule droit se partageait lui-même en deux. La plus grande partie se débarrassait de ses impuretés dans les poumons, par le canal de l'artère pulmonaire, puis refluit dans le système veineux général; une petite partie traversait la paroi séparant les deux ventricules et se mélangeait, dans le ventricule gauche, avec le *pneuma* venu de la trachée par la veine pulmonaire, pour donner le *pneuma* vital diffusé dans le corps par les artères. L'esprit vital résultait donc du mélange, dans le ventricule gauche, de l'air venu des poumons et d'un peu de sang qui serait passé du ventricule droit par des portes dans la cloison du cœur. Enfin, toujours selon Galien, le sang que les artères conduisaient au cerveau s'y transformait à travers le « réseau merveilleux », *rete mirabile*, en *pneuma* psychique, distribué ensuite par les nerfs. Issus d'une vapeur de sang, trois types d'esprits étaient ainsi élaborés en trois lieux divers – l'esprit naturel dans le sang veineux, l'esprit vital résultant du passage dans le cœur, et l'esprit psychique résultant du passage de l'esprit animal dans la base du cerveau, et transportés par trois instruments différents: artères, veines et nerfs. A sa sortie du cœur, l'esprit vital qui se trouve maintenant dans le sang purifié est véhiculé dans le corps par les artères, et de nouvelles « digestions » ont alors lieu dans certains organes: dans le cerveau, l'esprit se fait esprit animal, de l'âme; dans le foie, esprit nutritif, et dans les testicules, esprit générateur. Le sang joue donc un rôle fondamental dans le lien entre corps et âme⁵.

It's clear to physicians, then as now, that blood performs eminent physiological functions, and we can affirm that its nature largely determines the harmony of body and soul. However, let's not forget that Hippocrates does indeed speak of *di sanguie temperato*⁶, a clarification to which we shall return later. The blood's complexion, rich in this exquisite temperament, thus already appears as an ideal of balance that manifests itself in the brain through a lively, subtle mind, in the liver through excellent digestion and in the testicles through abundant, fertile seed. Incidentally, the sanguine temperament will manifest itself respectively in pleasant joviality, a taste for good food and an inclination to the games of love. At this point, the author already has enough elements to propose an exemplary sanguine figure to inspire his contemporaries. It's precisely these three points that Ripa retained, justified and developed, and that we shall now examine in detail.

⁵ L. MOULINIER-BROGI, *Le sang au Moyen-Âge, entre savoir et questionnements, science et imaginaire*, 1453, *Rencontres européennes*, 2003, Castillon-la-Bataille, p. 55, France, <https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00609366/document> (HAL Id: halshs-00609366) [25 I 2025].

⁶ C. RIPA (It.), *parte prima*, p. 111.

1.2.1. Animal spirit

Our Sanguine is therefore first and foremost young and laughing, for according to Hippocrates, says Ripa *il arrive d'ordinaire qu'en ceux qui abondent d'un sang parfaitement temperé, s'engendrent des esprits vitaux, subtils et purs, qui produisent la joye et les ris. D'où il s'ensuit que telles personnes sont ordinairement de belle humeur, et qu'elles ne demandent qu'à joüer et à se divertir*⁷. Ripa symbolizes the sanguine's *allegrezza* with a wreath of various flowers, a motif he does not develop, no doubt because it refers implicitly to his *Allegrezza* (Joy), figure, present since the 1593 princeps edition⁸.



Fig. 2. C. RIPA, *Della novissima iconologia*, Padova: per Pietro Paolo Tozzi, 1625, parte prima, p. 19.

⁷ C. RIPA (Fr.), seconde partie, p. 54. Cf. C. RIPA (It.), parte prima, p. 111: *Giovane allegro, con la ghirlanda di fiori e ridente, si dipinge il sanguino, perche (secondo Hippocrate) in quelli che abbondano di sangue temperato, e perfetto, si generano spiriti vitali puri, e sottili, da quali nasce il riso, e l'allegrezza; onde questi sono piacevoli e faceti, e amano i suoni, e i canti.*

⁸ C. RIPA (It.), parte prima, p. 19.

The entry is divided into eight propositions, which use the flower motif in various ways, whether in a wreath or not. The first is very explicit: *I fiori significano per se stessi allegrezza, et si vuol dire, che i prati ridono, quando sono coperti di fiori; pero Virgilio gli dimandò piacevoli nella 4. Egloga dicendo: Ipsa tibi blando fundent: cunabula flores*⁹.

Blood corresponded well to air (warm and humid), but also to air in the musical sense of the word. The Sanguine thus naturally plays the lute, aided by an open music book, and raises his eyes to heaven to signify his love of fire and song. Here again, there is no development; the association with fire calls for several hypotheses¹⁰, but the pleasures of singing and dancing are present in *Allegrezza*. The associated attributes differ, but singing, and all things pleasing to the ear, are directly associated with the notion of joy and celebration. Sanguine's talent for music seems to be universally acknowledged. Indeed, in 1634, the great scholar Marin Mersenne (1588–1648) asked what the temperament of a perfect musician should be¹¹, another eloquent testimony to the fortunes of the theory of humours.

However, it is the entry *Diletto* (Pleasure, Enjoyment) that best develops the notions we have just mentioned. This allegory appears in the 1625 edition, i.e. after the *Complessioni*. Ripa seems to have wanted to give the notion of pleasure the philosophical development it deserved. The pleasures of the five senses are developed over more than four pages, in which the flowers of the crown become

⁹ *Ibidem* [Flowers themselves symbolize joy, and it is often said that meadows laugh when they are covered with flowers. Virgil, for example, finds them pleasant in the fourth Eglogue, saying: *Ipsa tibi blando fundent: cunabula flores*; trans. M.K.]. Cf. VIRGILE, *Bucoliques*, v. 23, ed. et trans. E. DE SAINT-DENIS, Paris 1963, p. 41: *ton berceau foisonnera d'une séduisante floraison* [your cradle will abound with attractive blooms; trans. M.K.]. The fifth proposition is also interesting: *Una giovinetta con ghirlanda di fiori in capo, perche li fanciulli stanno sempre allegri: e perche nelle feste pubbliche antiche tutti si coronavano, e loro, e le porte delle loro case, e tempii, et animali, come fa mentione Tertul. nel lib. de corona Militis*, C. RIPA (It.), parte prima, p. 20. The fragment on crowns does not exist in the text by Tertulian cited by Ripa, cf. TERTULIEN, *Corona Militis*, <https://www.thelatinlibrary.com/tertullian/tertullian.corona.shtml> [25 I 2025].

¹⁰ Since Ripa does not explain to us what he means by "fire", we can put forward at least two possibilities here: either the word "fire" amplifies air, the element of the sanguine, or fire is associated with the impulse of love (the fires of love), a tendency of the sanguine which will be developed later in the text.

¹¹ M. MERSENNE, *Préludes de l'harmonie universelle ou questions curieuses utiles aux prédicateurs, aux théologiens, aux astrologues, aux médecins et aux philosophes*, Paris: chez Henry Guenon, 1634, p. 110: *quel doit estre le temperament d'un parfait Musicien?*; *ibidem*, p. 111: *Le sanguin est semblable à l'air, lequel ayant un corps fort, rare, et subtil, ne peut contribuer que bien peu de chose à la composition [...]*; *ibidem*, p. 113–114: *les sanguins et les cholériques se portent plus facilement à l'exercice des chants, et à toutes sortes de recreations, que les phlegmatiques, ou les melancholiques, qui ont leur organes, et particulièrement leurs voix beaucoup plus grossieres, et plus chargées d'impurtez, à raison de l'humidité, et de la secheresse, qui empeschent le roulement des voix harmonieuses. De là vient que le melancholique et le phlegmatique chantent rarement en comparaison des sanguins et des cholériques, qui sont plus déchargés d'impurtez, à cause de l'humidité et de la chaleur qui predominant en eux, et qui par conséquent ont plus d'inclination à chanter pur se resjoûir dans les diverses rencontres.*

appropriately fragrant¹². *Diletto* plays the lyre, nobler than the lute: *Hor essendo l'orecchia tanto nobile non e maraviglia che gli Antichi la figurassero con la lira come dice Pierio Valeriano al libro 60 de i Geroglifici, essendo anco la lira appresso gli Antichi in gran veneratione, onde l'opratiano a cantar dottissime Poésie solo alla mente d'huomini grandi*¹³.



Fig. 3. C. RIPA, *Della novissima iconologia*, Padova: per Pietro Paolo Tozzi, 1625, parte prima, p. 172.

The open music book, also found at the feet of the *Diletto*, is accompanied by the following commentary: *Il libro di Musica aperto non solo denota il canto per il sentimento del udito, mà il gusto, e Diletto grandissimo, che rende la Musica,*

¹² C. RIPA (It.), parte prima, p. 172–176.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 175 [Now, given that the ear is so noble, it is not surprising that the Ancients represented it with the lyre, as Pierio Valeriano mentions in book 60 of the Hieroglyphics, the lyre also being held in great veneration among the Ancients, to the point that it was used to sing very learned poetry, exclusively intended for the minds of great men; trans. M.K.]. Cf. J.-P. VALÉRIAN, *Les Hiéroglyphiques*, Lyon: Jean Frellon, 1615, p. 631.

*Onde Socrate dimandando all'Oracolo di Apolline, che fare egli doveva per esser felice, Gli fu risposto che egli imparasse la Musica*¹⁴. The open music book here seems to introduce a certain readiness to learn, a taste in the broadest sense of the word for things of the mind.

1.2.2. Nutritive spirit

*Non solo denota il canto [...] mà il gusto*¹⁵. On the second point, Ripa himself relies on Galen and Avicenna to give a little flesh to his Sanguine: *selon Galien (lib. 2 de temp, c. 9)*¹⁶ *cette corpulence s'explique par la vertu qu'on appelle assimilative, qui predomine aux Sanguins, naist l'habitude des corps charnus et replets*¹⁷. As this quality is characteristic of blood, the sanguine, in whom it abounds, will always be a little fleshy. According to Laurence Moulinier-Brogi, the relationship between blood and the very principle of growth was the subject of much debate, particularly in the Middle Ages. She points out that

la question « Est-ce que seul le sang nourrit? » devint une question scolastique classique par laquelle on tenait d'aborder conjointement deux problèmes, à savoir la nature exacte du liquide s'écoulant dans les veines, et la manière dont s'effectuait la restauration des différentes parties anatomiques, c'est-à-dire la transformation de l'aliment en corps humain. Le sang nutritif était produit par le foie à partir du chyle (suc nourricier) élaboré par ce même foie lors de la digestion des aliments; dans la cavité du foie, ce chyle était « bouilli, cuit, digéré » et formait les 4 humeurs, dont le sang était la plus achevée car assez cuit (contrairement au flegme) et pas trop non plus (comme bile ou mélancolie), de là, le sang des veines nourrissait l'ensemble du corps. Les humeurs étaient censées se régénérer continuellement à partir d'une coction dans le sang : elles reconstituaient les parties solides du corps, tandis que leur surplus remplissait différentes fonctions¹⁸.

In Ripa's case, the sanguine is well nourished by his blood and satiated with vital spirits to the point of stoutness. We shall come back to these two points in our conclusions.

¹⁴ C. RIPA (It.), parte prima, p. 175 [The open book of Music refers not only to singing through the sense of hearing, but also to the taste and great pleasure that Music brings. Thus Socrates, asking Apollo's Oracle what he should do to be happy, received the answer that he should learn Music; trans. M.K.].

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ C. RIPA (Fr.), seconde partie, p. 54. Cf. GALIEN, *Methodi medendi*, III, (K, X, 174), [in:] *Claudii Galeni Opera omnia*, vol. I–XX, ed. C[arl] G[ottlob] KÜHN, Leipzig 1821–1833.

¹⁷ C. RIPA (Fr.), seconde partie, p. 54. Cf. RIPA (It.), parte prima, p. 111: *L'esser di corpo carnoso, secondo Galeno nel 2 lib. del temperamento al cap. 9. e Avicenna nel lib 1. Significa, che dalla virtù assimilativa che ne i sanguigni è molto potente, nasce l'habito del corpo carnoso*.

¹⁸ L. MOULINIER-BROGI, *Le sang au Moyen-Âge...*, p. 54.

1.2.3. Generating spirit

Finally, the sanguine cultivates a taste for sexual pleasures. The sanguine's inclination towards physical love is symbolized in Ripa's work by the presence of a ram eating a bunch of grapes¹⁹, evoking the two divinities Venus and Bacchus:

Il Montone con il grappo d'uva, significa il sanguigno esser dedito a Venere, e a Bacco; per Venere s'intende la natura del Montone, essendo questo animale assai inclinato alla lussuria, come narra Pierio Valeriano lib. 10 e per Bacco il grappo d'uva; onde Aristotele nel Problema 21 dice che ciò avviene nel sanguigno, perche in esso abbonda molto seme, il qua le è cagione de gli appetiti venerei²⁰.

The use of the word *lussuria* deserves a closer consideration. Indeed, this term itself benefits from an allegory for which Ripa took a very different route. The main proposition describes a largely naked young woman sitting on a crocodile and holding a partridge. Ripa tells us that the *Lussuria è un'ardente esfrenato appetito nel la concupiscenza carnale senza osservanza di legge, di natura, ne rispetto d'ordine, o di sesso. Si dispinge con li capelli ricciniti, e artificiosemente acconci, e col drappo sudetto, perche la Lussuria incita, e è via dell'Inferno, e scuola di sceleratezze*²¹.

¹⁹ Note also the relationship between Ripa's ram/sheep figure and its constellation: *La fable nous dit que Venus conduit les furies aux maisons de Mars qui sont selon les Astrologues le Mouton et le Scorpion, pour le Mouton, se doit entendre la commencement du Printemps durant lequel la concupiscence chatouille les appetits, tant des animaux que des hommes, à cause de la tiède douceur de la saison qui suit l'horreur de l'hiver*; J. AUBERY, *L'Antidote d'amour*, Paris: Claude Chappelet, 1599, p. 28 r^o-28 v^o.

²⁰ C. RIPA (It.), parte prima, p. 111. Cf. *Quand au Mouton qui brouste une grappe de raisin, cela signifie que le Sanguin est grandement adonné au plaisir de Venus et de Bacchus: pour ce que le Mouton, comme le remarque Pierius Valérian, est grandement enclin à la luxure, et qu'icy le raisin est pris pour Bacchus qui le produit. Où il faut remarquer avec Aristote, que ceux de complexion sanguine sont particulièrement enclins à l'amour, à cause qu'ils abondent en semance plus que les autres; comme il se peut voir par la description qu'en fait l'Escole de Salerne*, C. RIPA (Fr.), seconde partie, p. 54. The verses of the School of Salerno were removed in the French edition. *Il Montone con il grappo d'uva, significa il sanguigno esser dedito a Venere, e a Bacco; per Venere s'intende la natura del Montone, essendo questo animale assai inclinato alla lussuria, come narra Pierio Valeriano lib. 10 e per Bacco il grappo d'uva; onde Aristotele nel Problema 21 dice che ciò avviene nel sanguigno, perche in esso abbonda molto seme, il qua le è cagione de gli appetiti venerei*.

²¹ C. RIPA (It.), parte seconda, p. 403 [Lust is an ardent and unbridled appetite for carnal concupiscence, without respect for laws, nature, orders, or sexes. It is represented with curled and artificially arranged hair, and with the cloth mentioned, because lust incites, and is the road to Hell, and the school of villainy; trans. M.K.].



Fig. 4. C. RIPA, *Della novissima iconologia*, Padova: per Pietro Paolo Tozzi, 1625, parte seconda, p. 404.

However, another proposition, very short at just four lines, and whose placement is, to be honest, strange²², indicates this: *Gli Antichi usavano dipingere Venere sopra un montone, per la Lussuria, mostrando la soggettione della ragione al senso, e alle concupiscenze illecite*²³. These remarks on lust do not sit well with the idea of a perfectly balanced temperament. Ripa seems to euphemize the term somewhat in the case of the sanguine, and we actually have to look more towards the *Libidine* goat and vine to find a more medical and somewhat less depreciative tone²⁴:

²² It appears with another proposition preceding the main one, written in capital letters. Its content follows Valeriano's recommendations, but we only know this from the text of the *Sanguigno per l'aria*.

²³ *Ibidem* [The Ancients used to represent Venus on a ram, to symbolize Lust, thus showing the submission of reason to sense and illicit concupiscence; trans. M.K.].

²⁴ Note that in the French translation, Luxure is represented by a woman with a scorpion and thus corresponds to *Libidine* (C. RIPA (Fr.), seconde partie, p. 163): *Voicy l'Emblème de la Luxure sous la Figure d'une Femme lascivement habillée; qui toute pensive appuye la teste sur la main gauche, et tient de la droite un Scorpion, ayant à un costé un Bouc, et en sep de Vigne; Elle est assise et pensive, pour*



Fig. 5. C. RIPA, *Della novissima iconologia*, Padova: per Pietro Paolo Tozzi, 1625, parte seconda, p. 398.

[...] con occhi grassi, lucenti e lascivi; mostrano questi segni abbondanza di sangue, il quale in buona temperatura è cagione di Libidine²⁵. Terence's words in the second

monstrer que l'Oisiveté, comme dit le Poëte, / Allume le Flambeau du fille de Cytherée / Pour ce qui est du Scorpion et de la Vigne, l'un, selon Pierius, est le Hyerogliphe de la Paillardise, l'autre pareillement puis qu'il est vray. / Que sans le bon Baccus, Venus est toujours froide. Cf. also criticism of women born under the sign of Scorio, therefore lustful in G. CORROZET, *Hecatombgraphie*, Paris: Denis Janot, 1540, f° B 7 v°: *Vertu domine sur les Astres*. Cf. J. AUBERY, *L'Antidote...*, p. 27r°–27v°: *les sanguins qui sont chaults et humides, sont plus disposez à recevoir le caractère de l'amour, ils ont un foye liberal à transmuier le chile en sang, comme stant la fontaine de la gratieuse et moite vapeur cause / materielle de l'amour. C'est pourquoy anciennement les Scytes à qui on ouvroit les veines du col estoient steriles, pour la quantité irreparable de sang, de chaleur, et d'ésprits qui s'espusoient: loint que les sanguins sont gaillards, faciles à croire, et qui esperent à la moindre apparence de plaisir qui leur est representé par les sens.*

²⁵ C. RIPA (It.), parte seconda, p. 397.

clause of the *Libidine* are more in keeping with the image of the Sanguine he wants to construct: *Sine Cerere, et Baccho friget Venus*²⁶ [Without Ceres and Bacchus, Venus freezes].

2. The deified sanguine: from Bacchus to Komos

Salerno's verses, synthetic and complimentary, rejected as always at the end of the text, give the figure of the sanguine a delicate and affable character far removed from the faults of the other three complexions:

Les sanguins de nature, ilz sont gras, joyeux,
De nouvelles ouyr aussi fort convoiteux,
Ceulx delecte Venus, Baccus, festins, risée,
Et en doux parler ont la parolle prisée,
Aux estudes sont tous habiles, bien nés.
Et en bien peu de cause à courroux adonné,
Ilz sont larges, plaisans, aimables, de ris plains,
Chantans, charnus, hardis, et aussi fort humains²⁷.

Indeed, the revelations of the sexual excesses and bacchic celebrations that run through Ripa's text invite further comment²⁸.

2.1. Bacchus

Youth and laughter are the first words used to describe the sanguine man in the *Iconologia*. A lute player, without a beard or moustache, he loved to sing and did not refuse the wine served at the flowery banquets he was so familiar with. This is a perfectly acceptable representation of Bacchus, and one that Andrea Alciato (1492–1550), in whose work the god appears on two occasions, would not reject.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 398. Cf. TÉRENCE, *Eunuque*, v. 733, [in:] IDEM, *Adrienne/Eunuque*, ed. et trans. J. MAROUZEAU, Paris 1947, p. 279.

²⁷ *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 1 r^o. *Natura pingues isti sunt atque iocantes, / Rumoresque novos cupiunt audire fréquenter. / Hos Venus, et Bacchus delectat, fercula risus / Et facit hos hilares, et dulcia verba loquentes. / Omnibus hi studiis habiles sunt, et magis apti / Qualibet ex causa non hos leviter movet ira / Largus, amans, hilaris, ridens rubeique coloris / Cantans, carnosus, satis audax atque benignus* [These people are naturally plump and jovial, / They frequently desire to hear new rumors. / Venus and Bacchus delight them, dishes, laughter / And make them cheerful, speaking sweet words. / They are skilled in all pursuits, and more apt / For any reason, anger does not lightly move them. / Generous, loving, cheerful, laughing, and of ruddy color / Singing, fleshy, quite bold and kind; trans. M.K.].

²⁸ On the vine and Dionysian epiphanies in antiquity, see J. RYBOWSKA, *Dionizos, Agathos Dajmon*, Tyniec 2015.

Alciato depicts him in the emblem *In iuuentam*²⁹ (Fig. 6), as a young and beardless man, and in the one titled *In statuam Bacchi*³⁰ (Fig. 7) as a young flute and tambourine player. The god is then portrayed as particularly fleshy, for the Milanese humanist is, of course, well aware of the medical theory of individual temperaments.



Fig. 6. A. ALCIATO, *Les emblèmes*, Paris: Jean Richer, 1584, emblema XCIX *In iuuentam*, p. 137.

²⁹ A. ALCIATO, *Les emblèmes*, Paris: Jean Richer, 1584, emblema XCIX *In iuuentam*, p. 137.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, emblema XXV *In statuam Bacchi*. *Dialogismus*, p. 37.



Fig. 7. A. ALCIATO, *Les emblèmes*, Paris: Jean Richer, 1584, emblema XXV *In statuum Bacchi. Dialogismus*, p. 37.

2.2. The sanguine, a new Komos

Cesare Ripa only sketches the Dionysian nature of the Sanguine, but in 1626, the French physician Louis de Caseneuve made him literally a member of the divine procession in his emblem entitled *Sanguineus* [The Sanguine]³¹. We find him standing halfway up a staircase, holding a flute and myrtle branch in his right hand, and a broken surveyor's rod in his left.

³¹ L. DE CASENEUVE, *Hieroglyphicorum et medicorum emblematum dodekakrounos*, [in:] I.P. VALERIANUS, *Hieroglyphica*, Lugduni: apud Paulum Frelon, 1626 (cetera: CASENEUVE), p. 31–39. In this work, see also A. ADAMS, S. RAWELS, A. SAUNDERS, *A Bibliography of French Emblem Books*, vol. II, Genève 2002, p. 519–520.



Fig. 8. Sanguineus, in: L. DE CASENEUVE, *Hieroglyphicorum et medicorum emblematum dodekakraunos*, [in:] I.P. VALERIANUS, *Hieroglyphica*, Lugduni: apud Paulum Frellon, 1626, p. 39.

The Latin epigram provides more details:

Comus hic hortorum, et speciosus flore iuuentae,
 Tibia cui, myrtus, fractus et est radius.
 Effert se gradibus, quibus itur ad aurea tecta,
 Haec iuuenis sunt symbola sanuines³².

Caseneuve's portrait is similar to Ripa's, but more complete in the comparison it assumes: the Sanguine is Komos, the genius of feasting and games³³. Komos

³² CASENEUVE, p. 31 [Comus, the god of revelry, here in the gardens, and beautiful in the bloom of youth, / To whom the flute, myrtle, and broken ray belong. / He ascends the steps that lead to golden halls, / These symbols of the sanguine youth; trans. M.K.].

³³ See PHILOSTRATE, *Une galerie antique*, introd., trans. et comm. A. BOUGOT, Paris 1881, liv. I, 2: *Cômos*: the representation of the god standing before a door, surrounded by flowers and musical instruments, has been preserved in the later images of this god, cf. for exemple V. CARTARI, *Le Imagini de gli dei de gli antichi del signor Vincenzo Cartari*, appresso Euangelista Deuchino et Gio. Battista Pulciani, 1609, p. 305.

is crowned with flowers, symbolizing spring, the warm, humid season of the sanguine. The expressions “beautiful in appearance, brilliant on the outside” that accompany Komos’ name in the epigram refer to the delicate color of his skin (though Caseneuve does not mention any specific color). The expression *flore iuventae* is used figuratively in the verses to express “the flower of youth”. The symbolic parallel in the medical context is obvious: the seventh galenic tetrad attributed a period of human life to each humoral type, with spring being the youngest season of the year. The sanguine’s penchant for love is symbolized here by myrtle. Louis de Caseneuve underlines the divinity’s most salient traits and attributes them to the sanguine: youth, hilarity, conviviality and sensuality. The association the doctor creates between Komos and the sanguine cleverly diverges from iconographic tradition, which saw the incarnation of *joie de vivre* and youthful folly in Bacchus or Apollo (youth, wine, music).

3. The *uenustas* of sanguine

In Hippocratic medicine, color is an indispensable element in the diagnosis of internal diseases³⁴. Furthermore, Véronique Boudon reminds us that,

Il n'est pas exagéré de dire que la vision et en particulier la perception des couleurs qui, dans l'esprit des Grecs, en est indissociable, est au cœur même du système cognitif galénique. En tant que la médecine galénique s'appuie en effet prioritairement sur les faits observés par l'intermédiaire des organes des sens, et en particulier celui de la vision³⁵.

Now, while the three previous temperaments were clearly characterized, in Ripa’s work, by skin tones matching the color of their dominant humor – the choleric, for instance, by a yellowish complexion (*di color gialliccio*), the phlegmatic by a very pale complexion (*di color bianco*), and the melancholic by a dark or swarthy complexion (*di color fosco*), the face of our sanguine figure curiously becomes *rubicondo misto con bianco*³⁶, i.e. rubicund or vermeil mixed with white, an element we have so far overlooked. This mixture of red and white seems curious and demands our attention. Véronique Boudon points out that *Galien dans sa pratique médicale recourt le plus souvent et presque exclusivement à quatre couleurs fondamentales: le blanc, le noir, le rouge, et le jaune*³⁷. She adds that *c'est précisément cette palette chromatique de base (blanc, noir, jaune et rouge) qui va servir au médecin pour identifier les différents tempéraments, au nombre de huit (si l'on excepte le tempérament bien équilibré), c'est à dire quatre tempéraments simples et quatre composés,*

³⁴ L. VILLARD, *Couleurs et maladies dans la collection hippocratique: les faits et les mots*, [in:] *Couleurs et visions dans l'Antiquité classique*, ed. EADEM, Rouen 2002, p. 46.

³⁵ V. BOUDON, *La théorie gallénique de la vision: couleurs du corps et couleurs des humeurs*, [in:] *Couleurs et visions...*, p. 65.

³⁶ C. RIPA (It.), *parte prima*, p. 111.

³⁷ V. BOUDON, *La théorie gallénique...*, p. 73.

auxquels se réduit l'ensemble des individus³⁸. Ripa thus uses *la palette de base de Galien*³⁹ (yellow, white, black, red), but only faithfully follows this model in the cases of the Phlegmatic, the Choleric and the Melancholic. However, in the case of the Sanguine, he does indeed mention the doctrine⁴⁰ and, in order to explain himself⁴¹, even relies on a passage by Avicenna who, however, does not mix red with white either⁴².

So why does Ripa shade the complexion of his sanguine? The presence of white can be justified by the crystalline character of the *aria*, or by the effect of the *libidine*, described *di bianca faccia* by Ripa, despite the *abbondanza di sangue*. However, as the art historian Maurice Brock points out in his remarkable work⁴³, *le stylème poétique (ou littéraire) du rouge et du blanc est attesté sans solution de continuité depuis l'Antiquité*⁴⁴ [poetic (or literary) style of red and white has been attested without loss of continuity since Antiquity; trans. M.K.]. More precisely,

dans la tradition littéraire occidentale, il est extrêmement fréquent qu'un rouge et un blanc soient évoqués à propos de la carnation d'un être – quel qu'il soit – qui est célébré pour sa jeunesse, pour sa bonne santé, pour sa beauté physique ou morale ou pour les sentiments amoureux qu'il inspire⁴⁵.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁰ *E però dice Galeno nel 2 de gli Afforismi nel comment 2 che l'humore, che nel corpo predomina dà il colore alla carne*, C. RIPA (It.), parte prima, p. 111; cf. C. RIPA (Fr.), seconde partie, p. 54: *Ce qui fait dire à Galien, que l'humeur qui predomine au corps colore la chair (Aphorisme 2. Comment 2.)*. This comment corresponds in every respect to medical tradition: *Or, devons nous conjecturer et juger l'humeur superabondant, la couleur: sinon que d'avanture aucun d'iceluy humeur se soit retiré dedans. Car la couleur s'apparoist et florist sur le corps semblable aux humeurs, sinon qu'ils soyent coulez dedans, Les aphorismes d'Hippocrate avec le commentaire de Galien sur le premier livre*, Lyon: Claude Rigaud et Claude Obertn, 1628, p. 14.

⁴¹ *Dipingesi rubicondo misto con bianco, per che (secondo Avicenna nel 2 del 3) questo colore denota abbondanza di sangue*, C. RIPA (It.), parte prima, p. 111: *On luy attribué le teint vermeil meslé de blanc, d'autant que selon Avicenne, cette couleur marque une abondance de sang*, C. RIPA (Fr.), seconde partie, p. 54.

⁴² Cf. AVICENNA, *Liber Canonis...*, p. 7: *Sanguis vero, natura calidus existit et humidus. Cuius sunt duae species, naturalis et non naturalis. Naturalis aut est, cuius color est rubeus, malo carens odore, et est valde dulcis. Non naturalis vero duae divisiones. Alius enim est, à qui à complexionem bona fuit mutatus: non propterea et aliquid ei admistum fuerit; sed quia eius complexio in se vitata fuit, verbi gratia, quia aufuit*. On the importance of Avicenna's Canon in premodern Europe, see N.G. SIRAISSI, *The Changing Fortunes of a Traditional Text: Goals and Strategies in Sixteenth-century Latin Editions of the Canon of Avicenna*, [in:] *The Medical Renaissance of the Sixteenth Century*, ed. A. WEAR, R.K. FRENCH, I.M. LONIE, Cambridge 1985, p. 16–39; N.G. SIRAISSI, *Avicenna in Renaissance Italy. The Canon and Medical Teaching in Italian Universities after 1500*, Princeton 1987.

⁴³ See M. BROCK's article, *La venustas d'Apelle: de Pline l'Ancien à Titien par l'Hyperotomachia Poliphili*, *AIHS* 61 (166–167), 2011, p. 335–366.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 344.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 343–344. The researcher specifies that this style often appears in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and that it is with Petrarch and the Petrarchans of the 16th century that it gains in extension, *ibidem*, p. 344.

In the Western literary tradition, it is extremely common for red and white to be evoked in connection with the complexion of someone – whoever he or she may be – who is celebrated for his or her youth, good health, physical or moral beauty, or for the amorous feelings he or she inspires [trans. M.K.].

The medical origin of the discourse becomes quite clear. The fascinating philological investigation conducted by Maurice Brock into the ancient and mysterious notion of *uenustas*⁴⁶, which he proposes to translate simply as “venusté” (pulchritude), has revealed a connection between *uenustas*, the stylistic motif of red and white, and the blood that rises beneath the skin. Pliny’s testimony had already invited us to consider that the *uenustas* of the painter Apelles – so difficult to define – had, from its origins, a close link with the Hippocratic corpus, from which Galen’s “palette” is derived:

C’est avec quatre couleurs seules, le *mélinum* pour les blancs, le *sil attique* pour les jaunes, la *sinopis du Pont* pour les rouges, l’*atrament* pour les noirs, qu’Apelle, Échion, Mélanthius, Nicomaque, ont exécuté des œuvres immortelles, peintres si célèbres, dont un seul tableau s’achetait aux prix des trésors des villes⁴⁷.

It is with only four colors – melinum for whites, Attic ochre for yellows, sinopis from Pontus for reds, and atrament for blacks – that Apelles, Echion, Melanthis, and Nicomachus executed immortal works, painters so famous that a single painting was bought at the price of the treasures of cities [trans. M.K.].

Ripa’s text unquestionably embraces the literary tradition and discreetly marks out this triple connection, but at the cost of departing from the medical canon that paradoxically gave rise to it. To put it another way, he consolidates his sanguinity by means of a motif that had partly broken away from it. What’s even more interesting is that, through the mere presence of white, the author shifts from a medical ideal of perfection to a poetic ideal of perfection, even though in his *Malenconico* he had taken a strictly opposite approach⁴⁸.

This is a fundamental question of representation, both pictorial and literary, which we find backed up by medical discourse on blood complexion. We should not forget how difficult it is for a painter, to whom Ripa also addressed himself, to depict a face where blood abounds⁴⁹. He will have to skillfully employ the most

⁴⁶ An absolute quality of the painter Apelles according to Pliny, *uenustas* is, to put it briefly, the artist’s ability to render his Venus so graceful, so lifelike, and so pleasing to the eye, *ibidem*, p. 336.

⁴⁷ PLINIE L’ANCIEN, *Histoire Naturelle*, liv. XXXV, XXXII (Livre traitant de la peinture et des couleurs), vol. II, trans. É. LITTRÉ, Paris 1850, p. 470.

⁴⁸ He abandons the literary and traditional pallor of the melancholic, caused by time spent in books, to respect Galen’s text. See M. KOZŁUK, *Representing the atra bilis...*, p. 455–458.

⁴⁹ See Maurice Brock’s interesting commentary on the comparative resources of imagination and painting, M. BROCK, *La uenustas d’Apelle...*, p. 347.

ingenious pictorial techniques to put an ideal of health before the eyes, rather than in the mind. In Titian's work, this difficulty found an admirable solution, giving a new lease of life to the vague notion of *uenustas*, which has long remained a topical concept:

En peinture, mettre en valeur les infimes rosissements et blanchissements d'une carnation au moyen d'un entourage de tissus (ou d'objets) rouges et blancs est selon toute probabilité une invention de Titien – on n'en trouve pas d'exemples antérieurs, du moins à Venise⁵⁰.

In painting, highlighting the subtle reddening and whitening of a complexion by means of surrounding fabrics (or objects) in red and white is, in all probability, an invention of Titian – no earlier examples are found, at least in Venice [trans. M.K.].

It seems that the addition of white in literature already responds to the need to nourish the mind of the reader eager to render through the imagination a delicately sanguine carnation⁵¹, and this is undoubtedly how we should understand *la faccia rubicondo misto con bianco*. Ripa simply refrains from metaphorizing color as the poet might with roses and privet.

* * *

There is no doubt that Cesare Ripa's *Sanguigno per l'aria* is intended to reflect the primacy of the blood complexion, in keeping with Galenic tradition. The intention is to build an ideal of balance and harmony in a person whose blood is "perfectly tempered". It should be remembered, however, that each humoral type is divided into sub-categories. First and foremost, there are "tempered" (*eukrasis*), an ideal, balanced variant in which the main humor retains perfect proportions. But ancient medicine also defines "untempered" (*dyscrasis*) sanguine types, a pathological variant of the complexion. The term "untempered" here refers to a disproportion of the dominant humor (blood) in the body. Now, the physical appearance of the "untempered" sanguine type is characterized by *le sang chaud et humide qui abonde à foison*⁵² [the hot and moist blood that abounds in excess; trans. M.K.]. We can recognize the "untempered" sanguine by, among other things, his massive physique, often accompanied by excess weight, a flushed face, heavy breathing or even

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 343.

⁵¹ Without being mentioned, white can even, as in Cicero Maurice Brock, tells us, constitute *implicitement le fond sur lequel s'enlève la roseur provoquée par le sang* [Implicitly, the background against which the rosy hue caused by the blood stands out; trans. M.K.], *ibidem*, p. 351.

⁵² N.A. DE LA FRAMBOISIÈRE, *Le Gouvernement nécessaire à chacun pour vivre longuement en santé*, Paris: Charles Chastellain, 1608.

his excessive attraction to pleasures and entertainment⁵³. As always, everything is a matter of proportion. So, is Ripa's Sanguine ideally balanced? His cheerfulness is in no way pathological, and his *corpo grasso* appears lively and healthy compared to the *corpo grasso* of the Phlegmatic; his lute and open music book, as we have seen, harmonize pleasure and learning quite well. While the tempered sanguine does indeed possess abundant seed, the presence of the lustful ram is open to debate.

What can we say, in conclusion, about this young man with blond hair and a ruddy face tinged with white, who easily gives in to the pleasures of wine and flesh? Can the god of wine truly be considered a model of temperance, and is the inclination toward lust merely a harmless consequence of good blood circulation? Whatever the answer, these elements in this particular case are purged of all immorality. The text relies on medical and literary topoi that deliberately blur the lines between the two sanguine temperaments – or more precisely, disregard the distinction altogether.

Finally, it appears that the *Sanguigno per l'aria* contains no symbolic invention comparable to what we previously observed for the Phlegmatic and the Melancholic. So how can one represent the sanguine complexion, this *constitutio temperata*, synonymous with perfection? In the *Iconologia*, quite unexpectedly, with prosaic realism – by introducing a few imperfections, by humanizing the figure – which is paradoxically well conveyed by the engraving of the Sanguine, subdued or darkened by the inexplicable absence of the floral crown found everywhere else.

⁵³ For example, N.A. DE LA FRAMBOISIÈRE, who, in his health regimen, states that “untempered” are *recoñeus à la corpulence, parce qu'ils sont polisars, c'est à dire, fort charnus, à l'insigne rougeur du visage, à la grandeur des vaisseaux, à la repletion et tension apparante d'iceux, au battement des arteres, à la respiration difficile et frequente, a la pesanteur du corps, et lassitude sans travail precedent, à la sueur superflue [...]*. As for their psychological traits, we learn from the same physician that they have *l'esprit simple et consequences et qui quitte volontiers les choses serieuses, pour s'adonner aux delices, ibidem*, p. 136. On the other hand, his image of the “tempered” sanguine touches on the ideal. We read that *Il a la couleur belle, vermeille, meslée de blanc et de rouge, le poil blond, crespé et ondoyant, et tous les membres organics si bien proportionnez en toute leur dimension, qu'il semble à voir qu'ils ayent esté compassez à la regle de Polyclet, pour la symmetrie exquise qu'on y apperçoit. Et comme les [sanguins] temperez ont le corps accomply de tous nombres, aussi ont-ils l'esprit gentil, le jugement bon, le mœurs douces, le naturel jovial, la façon gaye, le maintien modeste, la volonté franche, la condition liberale: de sorte qu'ils sont gaillards, discrets, advisez, accords, paisibles, honnestes, amateurs de sciences, courtois, gracieux, joyeux, ac/costables, amoureux des Dames, et se plaisent en compagnie, à dire le mot, à rire, à chanter, à faire bonne cher, et ne songent que choses plaisantes: au deumeurant sont prompts à faire plaisir à chacun, et ronds en affaires, et si moderez d'humeurs qu'on ne les scauroit taxer d'estre ny temeraires, ny couïards; ny trop hastifs, ny tardifs, ny cauteleux, ny hebetez. Ils ne sont point maladifs, ains forts, robustes, pour resister aux injures provenantes tans de dehors, que du dedans du corps. A raison aussi que leurs parties instrumentales sont mignonnement façonnées avec bonne proportion, ils sont adroits à toutes choses, et propres à exercer dextrement toutes fonctions, ayans bonne grace en tout ce qu'ils font, ibidem*, p. 136–137.

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