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DOES LOVE HAVE GENDER?
A FEW CONSIDERATIONS ON PIERRE SALA'S
"EMBLÈMES ET DEVICES D'AMOUR"

Does Love have Gender? Do women belong to the nature-bound realm of Venus, while at least loving men obey the laws of her impish son, the archer Cupid? And are the rules and interests by which those two patrons of Love, female Venus and male Cupid, go, identical, complementary or outright conflictual? In the following we would like to examine some aspects of this question in relation to a little (*proto-*) emblem manuscript book from the British Library, presently known as *Emblèmes et devises d'amour* (Stowe MS 955; there is no original title, critics having long hesitated between "Énigmes", "Dévises", "Emblèmes" or simply "Love Poems"). It was compiled – rather than composed – by a Lyonese author, the patrician Pierre Sala (born before 1457 – died around 1529)¹. Around 1515 Sala had returned from active service at the French court to his native town of Lyons, where two years later his only daughter of a first bed, Éléonore, wedded Hector Buatier, the only son of a late king's treasurer, Antoine Buatier (who had died in 1506), and of Marguerite Buatier *née* Builloud, who incidentally was – as it seems – an old flame of Sala himself. Whether this old acquaintance was renewed in the wake of the marriage of their respective children, or resulting from an independently pursued land property transaction, is uncertain, but since by all means Marguerite was – despite her advanced age – well to do, highly connected within the Lyonese patriciate, wise and cultivated, in short a good match, the old seemingly thwarted love Sala professes to have experienced for her in their youth appears to have been readily rekindled (see the opening lines of the prose dedicatory epistle in our text: "*A vous ma tres-chiere et tres bonnoree dame. Ma dame [erasure], celle que de mon enfance jey tousiours voulu eymer seruir pryser et honorer de toute ma puissance plus que nulle vivante....*") (bold type mine)². So some time after 1515 and before 1519, Pierre Sala and Marguerite Builloud, both well into their respective 60s, were finally joined in a marriage which appears to have fulfilled no other necessity – social, material or other – than to satisfy the elderly participants.

There is – beyond her mere acceptance of Pierre as her second husband – no further corroborated information with respect to the feminine perspective upheld by Sala's bride concerning this marriage. Sala's own attitude on the other hand may be conjectured from the romantic gift of love consisting of the "emblem" manuscript mentioned above, which he employed in his courtship as a means of demonstrating the unbroken continuity of sincere affection and fervent admiration he professed to uphold for his second (and last) bride. Indeed, attempting to match sincerity with literature is always a hazardous endeavor; yet Sala's sentiments as can be extrapolated from this booklet appear to be corroborated by his otherwise verifiable historical personality. It goes without saying however that his point of view therein is perforce masculine, in keeping with the nature of his own late medieval culture and that of the multitude of his hetero-

¹ For the biographies of Pierre Sala and other members of his family, including his second wife Marguerite Buatier *née* Builloud, see Fabia, 1934, 11–48.

² Parry, 1908–9, 215.

geneous sources, both of which struck a bridge between late medieval *chevaleresque* and newer Rinascimental interests³.

The small size manuscript under discussion, the so-called *Emblèmes et devises d'amour*, is a truly precious gift: originally bound in dark olive velvet with silk ties, it could be worn appended to the owner's girdle in a wooden carrying case covered with cut-leather coloured green, red and gold, where a floral pattern is combined with the initials of the couple – "P" for Pierre and "M" for Marguerite. These initials also appear on most of the 17 sheets of vellum stained purple and written in gold ink in imitation of splendid court manuscripts, similar to the Burgundian song albums of Marguerite of Austria from her library at Malines⁴. The original 21 leaves, measuring 13x10 cm, are composed of a 4 page prose introduction, a concluding envoy with the portrait of the donor, and twelve *emblèmes avant l'heure*⁵ or proto-emblems (followed by an 18th century transcript)⁶: these "emblems" are composed of an untitled four-line poem (*quatrain*) generally inscribed in a placard on the verso of each page, with a matching illustration on the recto of the following facing page; this layout recalls *Le Theatre des Bons Engins* (Paris 1539 [=1540]) of another early French emblem writer, Guillaume de La Perrière (1499–1553)⁷.

The *quatrains* are not really representative of Sala's poetic qualities, since most of them are, as we shall soon see, not of his own pen but collected from other sources, many of which can still be identified. It might be thought that this compilation pays respects to Marguerite's intellectual capacities and enables her to take pleasure in identifying the unnamed sources which she might not only have been familiar with, but which may even have counted among her favourites.

The very first "emblem" of the collection – ff. 5v – 6r – shows a young man bending over and dropping a large heart – manifestly his own – into the corolla of an over-dimensional daisy placed among a number of pansies. The *quatrain* runs as follows:

<p><i>Mon cuer veult estre en ceste margueryte, Il y sera quoy quanuyeux diront Et mes pances tousiours la seruiront Pource quellest de toutes fleurs lebyte</i></p>	<p>My heart wants to be within this daisy / It will be there whatever troublemakers* say / And my thoughts (pun on: pansies) will always serve her / Since she is of all flowers the chosen.</p>
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*"An[*u* = *v*]yeux" = "enviers" or "annoyers" (the "*lauzengiers, malvatz, jaloux*" of traditional courtly literature), troublemakers always ready to spy upon the lovers and betray them to their enemies, thus causing them great "annoyance".

³ Sala composed two romances of chivalry (*Le Roman du chevalier au lion* [=Yvain] and *Tristan*), works of French verse historiography (*Les Prouesses de plusieurs rois* and *Les Hardiesses de plusieurs rois et empereurs*), an antiquarian collection – *Les Antiquitez de Lyon*, our *Emblèmes et devises d'amour*, *Fables et emblèmes en vers*, the compilation on friendship *Le Livre d'amitié*, and a defense of women and of marriage, *L'Épistre responsive à Mgr. de Tournon* belonging to the context of the contemporary *querelle de femmes*. On Sala's role in the cultural environment of Lyons, see Grünberg-Dröge, 1993, cahier 16: 3–33, and the same, 1998, 293–303.

⁴ See catalogue: *La Bibliothèque de Marguerite d'Autriche*, Bibliothèque Royale de Bruxelles (Brussels, 1940). On the use of gold or silver ink on purple dyed vellum for particularly precious, mostly biblical, manuscripts, see Backhouse, 1983, 173f n. 3.

⁵ Sala's manuscript was completed previous to the *editio princeps* of Andrea Alciato's *Emblematum liber* in 1531 in Augsburg, so it must count as pre-emblematic anyway. Although formal arguments concerning medium, layout or bi-partite structure do not hold, since occasionally used by later recognized emblem writers as well, Sala's choice of a single reader whom he prefers to "delight" – and thereby woo – rather than to "teach" invalidates the claim to "proper emblematic" recognition.

⁶ For a detailed description see the *Catalogue of the Stowe Manuscripts of the British Library*, 638, and Backhouse, 1983, item 22, 169.

⁷ See Grünberg-Dröge, 1994: 7, 216–227.

There is no telling whether the mention of the otherwise topical "*an[u=v]yeux*" aims to reveal any real friction between the elderly lovers and their families or friends. By all means Sala marries courtly thought to the techniques of that loose group of mostly court poets called *grands rhétoriciens* who, since following the rules of the highly sophisticated formal aesthetic upheld by the "*traités de seconde rhétorique*" of the late 15th and 16th centuries, promoted virtuosity in the use of the French vernacular over contents or emotional expression. Sala thus rhymes "Marguerite" with "*élite*" (i.e., "elect, chosen")⁸, and puns, on the one hand, on "love thoughts" (*pensées*) and "pansies" – a commonplace ever since René d'Anjou's (1409–1480) allegorical romance "*Le Livre du Cœur d'Amours Espris et de son Écuyer Désir*" (1457) made Cœur's armour comprise "*ung beaume timbré tout de fleurs d'amoureuses pensees...*"⁹ (bold type mine) – and on the other hand on the name of the beloved and its botanical counterpart, the daisy (all the more common in poetry as a number of contemporary princesses and high-born ladies bore this name, which was even more frequently connected with the more precious "pearl")¹⁰. The common place "to set one's heart upon" – in this case "into" – the object of one's desire¹¹, carries – for all its elevated tone – some very physical undertones, like a prefiguration of sexual intercourse. Under the veil of deference, Sala equally manifests his desire to actually consummate the physical aspects of the coming marriage. So much for the lovers' flesh, fresh or no longer all that fresh.

This intention once stated, remains to be considered the spinier aspect of performance. This appears to be the subject of the Italian riddle in the third "emblem" – ff. 7v–8r – where a burning taper (attracting no moths!) standing on a table is accompanied by the following text:

*Segua piano filliolo myo
quene scampe fillio di dio
Fradel non ti deseperare
My non ti posso assicurare.*

"Follow gently, my son / So it stays on*,
Son of God!" [i.e., Light?]
"Brother, do not despair / [Yet] I can't
assure you of myself".

*"Scampare" = "escape", "survive", "remain", "avoid peril, vice or error".

The solution to this riddle, which comes from an unidentified collection¹², is – given by the illustration – the flame of a candle in need of protection against draught lest it blow off. Since in keeping with the often bawdy spirit of riddle collections candles often bear phallic connotations, the "emblem" might include recommendations to a male lover uncertain of his own

⁸ See Jean Molinet's *Chapelet des dames*, or his *Pour une Marguerite*, and later in Clément Marot's *Étrennes*.

⁹ See edition by Wharton, 1980, 28. Compare also Céard and Margolin, 1986: 2, 195–6 for the rebus 59-LIX: "*Cœur d'amoureux est en pensée*", and the respective discussion.

¹⁰ See Marguerite de Valois, Queen of Navarra's verse collection "*Les Marguerites de la Marguerite des Princesses* (Lyon, 1547).

¹¹ Compare the same expression in Ferrand, 1989, piece no. XXXIII, 73f: "*J'ay mis mon cœur et mon entente / a vous servir de cœur joyeux...*"; also piece no. LXXXI, 138: "*tout mon vivant tousjours vous serviray...*" (bold type mine).

¹² Although in Italy riddles were appreciated no less than elsewhere, Italian riddle collections are hard to grasp before the *Sonetti giocosi da interpretare sopra diverse cose comunamente note*, published in Siena as late as 1538 by Angiolo Cenni, of the *congrega* or *Accademia dei Rozzi*, and mainly known as "*Il Resoluto dei Rozzi*". The particular contribution of Leonardo da Vinci to enigmistic activities made the object of special investigations; see Céard and Margolin, 1986: 1, 200–19 et passim. French collections of riddles were readily available around the 15th century, see *ibid.*, 95–133, and further Roy, 1977, who also discusses the connection with the courtly context and love topics, *ibid.*, 19–22.

reliability¹³. Of the two speakers, the first functions as an advisor, the second being the candle itself. The intriguing phrase “Son of God!” (“*figlio di Dio*”) either carries some religious undertones (i.e., the “son of God” being “light” itself) or – more likely – simply represents a warning interjection urging caution in handling. Could Sala be warning his bride that, resulting from his advanced age, his ability to satisfy might run short of their assumed common desire? If so, the admission of male shortcoming is elegantly turned into a compliment towards the attractiveness of the equally aged female beloved, which still inspires his unbroken desire, whatever the outcome.

That more than sex is here at stake however is rendered clear by the charming fourth “emblem” – ff. 8v–9r – which reads:

<i>Ensemble nous no marion Venes y tous a l'appareil nest ce pas cy ung beau pareil robin a trouue marion</i>	We're getting married to each other / come ye all to the wedding* / Is this no pretty comparison? / “Robin has found Marion“
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*appareil = (in especially regional late 15th and 16th century French) “marriage”, “wedding ceremony”; later only used for joining, putting together animals and inanimate things.

This *quatrain* quotes an undoubtedly popular folk song – also found in the farce *Le Meunier dont le Diable emporte l'âme en Enfer* (1496) by the *rhétoricien* André de la Vigne – and introduces the charming pastoral set couple of Robin and Marion¹⁴ probably originating with the first French comic opera, *Le Jeu de Robin et Marion* (around 1280) by Adam de La Halle (ca. 1237–1286); their bucolic love, uncomplicatedly earthly yet unshakenly faithful and committed, contrasts the bloodless, over-refined courtly wooing of the outgoing civilization of chivalry – as the couple's numerous recurrences in *pastourelles*, *fabliaux*, 15th and 16th century songs and other non-courtly genres certify¹⁵. The illustration accompanying the *quatrain* shows rustic clad Robin grabbing hold of the hem of Marion's dress, whereas she leads the way playing the bagpipe (*musette*) in a proverbial prefiguration of sexual intercourse, since in medieval French the term of vengery “*muser*” also signified “being in heat”, and “*jouer musette*” often bore sexual connotations; the bagpipe (*cornemuse*) is the instrument of folly, of country life and of undiscerning sensuality, and indeed often accompanied not only Robin and Marion in the text and the miniatures of the manuscripts of the above mentioned *Jeu de Robin et Marion*, but also other rustic lovers¹⁶. Here by all means it is the female who leads the male – but not to promiscuity: the girdles of hearts hanging at both Robin's and Marion's waists – just like our manuscript in its wooden case did at Marguerite's – symbolize true love, and the church spire in the background suggests marriage as the outcome of the relationship. If Cupid prompts man to seek more immediate satisfaction

¹³ Roy, 1977, 54, 83, 161, items 17, 143, 518 (to be distinguished from the theme of the flame of the candle in a candlestick attracting and eventually burning moths).

¹⁴ See Tissier, 1984, 356/7: *Le Munyer: “Robin a trouvé Marion; / Marion tousjours Robin treuve. / Hellas! Pour quoy se marye-on?”* (bold type mine). Unlike Sala, De La Vigne presents here a highly negative view on married life.

¹⁵ For the couple's occasionally gross sexuality, considered typical among peasants, compare Céard and Margolin, 1986, vol. 2, rebus 32-XXIX, 149ff.). The figures of the legendary Robin Hood and his Maid Marion [=Marian] were also inspired by them.

¹⁶ See Gagné, 1977, 83–107, as well as Céard and Margolin, 1986, vol. 1, p. 193f and 263 n. 107, and vol. 2, rebus 2-II, p. 95ff. Also compare for instance the *chanson* of Delafont: *A ce matin: “...Robin / Dansons nous deux au son de ta musette... il faut dessus l'herbette... [que] le jeu d'amours en levant la jambette / accomplissons...”* in “*Fricassée Parisienne – Chansons de la Renaissance française*”, Harmonia Mundi 1901174.

(see Robin's gesture), Venus on the other hand inspires woman to establish a more durable, solid foundation for things to come. Of course, this is but another *topos* of male courtship, which attributes to the female – Marguerite – the role of temptress, even with respect to getting married, whereas the male – Pierre – only too readily agrees to (here literally) follow: although Sala himself in one of the two versions of his *Livre d'amitié* wrote: "*Il n'est nulle amour ny amytié en ce monde qui soit a comparer a celle du mariage, quant elle est honneste et que tous deux s'entreatment loyalement et d'amour reciproque*".¹⁷

To return to the elaborate ideological theories of courtly love, let us consider the ninth "emblem" – ff. 12v–13r – borrowed from René d'Anjou's previously mentioned allegorical romance *Le Livre du Cuer* The subject here and in the next "emblem" is that of the gender related motif of the "chase". Two elegantly clad ladies just outside a grove span a net towards which fly a number of winged hearts, of which some are already caught in it, some still flutter about, some others, their aim lost, are fallen to the ground. The text announces:

<i>Chiere amyable et cortoyse maniere au coing du boys ont tendu leur pantiere en attendant leure plus atreable que par la passe © vollant peu estable.</i>	Friendly Face and Genteel Manners / Have spanned their net-trap at the corner of the grove / awaiting the best suited hour / for an inconstant flying ©* to pass by.
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[* the icon, not the spelled-out word for "heart"]

This *quatrain* closely reproduces a five-liner describing one of the six tapestries decorating Dame Venus' sumptuous surroundings in *Le Livre du Cuer* ...: *Telle estoit la .iiij.e piece de tapisserie et les vers qui soubz estoient escripts disoient ainsi: // Chiere Amiable et Courtoise Maniere / A la senestre de Semblant Atreable / Au coing du boys ont tendu leur pentiere / Et la actendent l'eure plus coustumiere / Que par la passe cuer volant peu estable.* (The bold type indicates where the text differs from Sala's rendition).¹⁸ Yet the last two allegorical tapestries concluding the series there presented the point of view of the anti-courtly figures of Rogier Bon Temps (the pleasure seeking simpleton) and of the Old Man, who both refuted love and the suffering it might entail. Out of their male perspective, it was liberty, not love that was viewed as the utmost prerogative of a man's heart, and the freedom to ever renew the chase, to keep on moving, appeared as the epitome of male nature. "Falling" in love can thus be interpreted as endangering the freedom of unstable men, incapable of serious commitment, as demonstrated by the undoubtedly "emasculated" hearts lying on the ground. But these "victims" deserve no pity since their fickle hearts "fell" for nothing but the superficial outward attractions of their temptresses, and they proved incapable of experiencing anything deeper than physical passion. The allegorical female captors Friendly [or: lovable, pleasant] Face ("*chiere amyable*") and Genteel Manners ("*courtoise maniere*") – whose cruelty is all the greater as their victims are more numerous than they can handle – lure and ensnare male admirers into nets, thus practising a little valued type of venery – bird hunting, which counted as more cunning than either skillful or noble. But the main source of unease to males is that, being traditionally viewed – by the rules of Cupid! – as chasers, with females as their prey, to them the reversal of these roles is experienced as an unpardonable shame, and so "falling in love" becomes a debasement, commitment to the beloveds – mere slavery. Of all the "emblems" of the collection, this is the one most in keeping with modern feminist criticism of masculinity.

¹⁷ Guigue, 1884, here quoted by Fabia, 1934, 41.

¹⁸ Quoted after Wharton, 1980, 183–4.

But we should not forget that this statement, borrowed out of context from the “*Livre du Cuer...*”, does not represent Sala’s own position. The latter had undoubtedly no criticism of either his own or of the opposite sex in mind, but rather meant to pay an elaborate compliment to his beloved, whose external charms had managed to capture his – undoubtedly not very inconstant – heart; and it is unlikely that Sala thought of deploring any loss of independence upon marrying Marguerite. This is further corroborated by a motto placed above and below the concluding envoy portrait – f. 17r – saying: “*Lesses le venir*”; the phrase is also found in extended form (as “*Lesses le venir a la trappe*”) on the pastedown inside the front cover of the volume, and picks up the expression from the dedicatory epistle: “*Vous saues bien quung seul requart de vos tant beaux yeulx avec les dous mox de la trappe quil ne peult oblier le gueryront et luy feront oblier tous ses maux dont il a tant que plus ne peult...*” (bold type mine)¹⁹. The motto suggests that at least Sala would only too willingly come to the snare, and fetch from that “trap” (also meaning “mouth”) satisfaction in the guise of a word, a kiss or more. His attitude consciously reverses the negativity of his source, and turns fear and caution into an outspoken readiness for love.

In fact Sala’s explicit answer to the position presented by the *quatrain* inspired by René d’Anjou had already been provided by his second “emblem” – ff. 6v–7r – the origin of which is uncertain. The illustration shows a well-dressed young man playing “blind man’s buff” with three equally elegant ladies: so the motif of the chase is here reversed with respect to the previously mentioned “emblem”, which was nevertheless positioned only later in the collection. The *quatrain* informs us that:

<p><i>Sune fois jen puis tenyr une e[ll]ne meschappera de lan. et me deust lon donner myllan Londres parys et pampelune.</i></p>	<p>If but once I can hold one / She would not escape me the whole year long / And even if one gave me [in exchange for her] Milan, / London, Paris and Pamplona</p>
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Theoretically in the picture there should have been at least four ladies to chose from (instead of only three), to match the four capital cities mentioned – Milan, London, Paris, Pamplona – which seemingly refer to contemporary political issues and current military campaigns (unless of course the young blindfolded man trying to catch the one or the other lady – or city – represent precisely “Paris”, the French capital – with a pun on that mythological namesake who passed his fateful judgement between the three traditional aspects of female perfection: matrimonial chastity – Juno; wisdom – Minerva; and physical attractiveness – Venus, the goddess of love, from whose hand Paris received the “*une*”, the “one and only” Helen). We might also be tempted to suspect here an echo of the political novel *Jehan de Paris*, the authorship of which had for a while tentatively – but unconvincingly – been attributed to our Pierre Sala²⁰: a copy of it belonging to his half-brother Jean, as shown by the *ex libris* (“*Ce livre est a moy Jehan Sala*”) may have come from Pierre’s library. Possibly however the *quatrain* simply reflects contemporary popular war songs²¹. The historical background – viewed from the French perspective – prob-

¹⁹ Backhouse, 1983, 174 n.7, and King, 1988, 174.

²⁰ Muir, 1960, 232–4.

²¹ Such as the one against the Venitians (recalling the battle of Agnadello, 1509) or that on the capture of Brescia, related to the Italian Wars and included in Sala’s manuscript of the *Antiquitez...*, see Guigue, 1884, 28. There are similar such songs in Ferrand, 1989, thus pp. 64, 96–7, 100, 108, 117, 130–1, 134, 147–8, 156, 190 items XXV, LI, LIV, LX, LXV, LXXVI, LXXVIII, LXXXIX, XCVII, CXVII; compare also Costely, “Hardys Francoys...” in *Fricassée Parisienne: Chansons de la Renaissance française*, Harmonia Mundi 1901174. In this context I would like to remind of the “old song” Alceste, in Molière’s *Misanthrope*, act I scene 2, so much appreciated: “*Si le roi m’avoit donné / Paris, sa grand’ville / et qu’il me fallut quitter / l’amour de ma mie / je dirais au roi Henri: / “Reprenez votre Paris” / J’aime mieux ma mie, au gué! / J’aime mieux ma mie*”.

ably concerns the period between 1512 and 1518/20: "London" recalls the rivalry between the French and the English over the Aquitaine and Picardie (cf. the Battle of the Spurs and occupation of Tournai by the latter in 1513); "Milan" – the French possession of which seemed confirmed after the battle of Marignan in 1515 and the treaty of Noyon of 1516 – represents the Duchy of Lombardy, main object of the "Italian wars" (1494–1529) which pitted France against the Habsburg Empire, by then represented by Charles I of Spain, the future Emperor Charles V; "Pamplona" stands for the Kingdom of Navarra (or what was left of it after Ferdinand II the Catholic, King of Aragon and Castille, grandfather of the said Charles I of Spain, occupied it in 1512 and annexed it in 1515) and reminds of the efforts of Henri II d'Albret, King of the still independent northern (or Lower) Navarra to secure precisely French support (leading to the 1527 marriage with Marguerite de Valois and d'Orléans, daughter of Louise of Savoy and sister of King Francis I, both of whom were Sala's patrons). By 1518 the Treaty of London between some twenty European states, aiming at "perpetual peace, non aggression pacts, and engagements to mutual defence" may have released some of the tension, but these hopes were soon to be deceived: the English and the Spaniards – previously allied against France in the Aquitaine conflict of 1512–13 – still "treacherously courted one another" at the impressive – but to the French basically disappointing – "Field of the Cloth of Gold" (1520) where the rivaling Charles I, Henry VIII and Francis I still competed (since 1519) over the Imperial crown. And indeed Spain hovers like an unnamed but ever-present inimical shadow behind the overt references to the other place names. It was by all means not unusual to compare relations between nations to courtships at a time when state alliances and (political) marriages were but one: Sala's priorities however had by then shifted from the public to the private domain, and so he matches "une", his "Helen", with "l'élite" of the first "emblem", thus playfully transforming the "highest good" of the nation into the individual "domestic good fortune" of the lover. Should man however – in keeping with the laws of Cupid – still be the chaser in this tamed hunting metaphor, the pledge of constancy (*e[ll]ne meschappera de lan*) placed at the very heart of the hyperbolic compliment comparing the beloved to state affairs renders this "emblem" very different from the one previously discussed. Though the exact nature of the chosen's superior qualities – possibly no more than the "handsome appearance" and "mannerliness" mentioned by René d'Anjou – is not actually specified in the "emblem", when considering Marguerite's age, compliments to her physical charms rendering her a "new Helen" should be viewed in a different light altogether.

The tenth "emblem" – ff. 13v–14r – deserves special attention, as it has given rise to a particular controversy. Here is indeed the only instance where the text is inscribed on a scroll instead of a placard, and the disposition and proportion of the initials "P" and "M" in the background also differ from other "emblems". The illustration shows, seated on a pillow placed upon a table, a naked baby to whom two ladies standing right and left of him each offer a plate containing, the one apparently gold coins, the other red fruit, probably cherries – the baby showing marked preference for the latter. The text on the scroll is the following:

*Au choisir ne ferey long plet.
Je ne prans garde au plus ricbe
Car je ne suys ne aver ne chicbe
Je prandreuy ce que miaux me plet.*

I will not make long process in choosing /
I pay no attention to the richer one / since
I am neither greedy nor petty; / I will take
what I like best

In an article pressing a gender-related point of French Renaissance economy Catherine King hypothesised on the strength of this single "emblem" that the entire booklet carries not proof of what she calls a "rather droll evidence of late romance", but rather certification of a will according to which Symphorien, the common grandson of Pierre and Marguerite by their respective children Éléonore and Hector, was to inherit Sala's property to the detriment of Pierre's

brother Jean and the latter's son François, and this in spite of the fact that Pierre's daughter Éléonore – being a female descendant – ought to have been barred from inheritance.²² Here is, to my way of thinking, a typical case of “reading with suspicion” from a feminist point of view: yet there is no documented proof or other factual evidence that Marguerite was inferior in wealth – or for that matter in education – to Pierre, or that there might have been disagreement with Sala's brother Jean or the latter's son François with respect to Éléonore's and thereby Symphorien's rights to Pierre's fortune (actually, there seems to exist some circumstantial evidence to the contrary). Moreover, even if this one “emblem” was meant to attest Pierre's will, it is not clear why he should have thus taken the pains to embed it in this very particular context, or bothered to produce all the other unrelated “emblems”; nor is it clear how this “quasi legal” (instead of simply legal) document was to persuade Marguerite to accept Pierre's proposal, nor how such a “jewel-like book gift” could appropriately compensate any loss of economic or personal independence on her part. (In fact an earlier critic, Georges Guigue, had on the contrary maliciously suggested that it was Pierre who had only married Marguerite in order to terminate the payment of a pension for the Berjon vineyard on which he had erected his house, the renowned Anticaille!²³) King's hypothesis further implies Marguerite must have somehow been personally involved in the conditions behind the very conception of the manuscript later offered to her as a present, which makes her look like a not very appealing shrewd and calculating dowager carefully intent (unlike our “emblem”) upon her social and economic advantage. This description is not necessarily closer to reality than that of the sympathetic and cultivated gentlewoman who in 1526 was called a “*sapiens mulier et mihi amica*” (a wise woman and a friend to me) by the German humanist and alchemist Cornelius Agrippa, and whom Sala fondly and familiarly depicts to King Francis I in the preface to his *Prouesses de plusieurs rois*.²⁴ Either image simply depends upon gender conventions stemming from unrelated periods and irreconcilable ideologies. As we can see, not only beauty but also character is in the eye of the beholder, depending on individual later-day preconceptions.

In fact, King simply failed to recognize that this “emblem” is actually yet another riddle coming from an unidentified source.²⁵ It shows that the innocent eyes of a baby – whose nakedness, in the diffuse neo-platonic philosophy current at the time, is related to unaltered truth – are best equipped for detecting real value, in a manner reminding of Titian's painting *Sacred and Profane (=Worldly) Love* (Borghese Gallery, Rome), which opposed a naked Sacred Love (Venere Celeste according to Ficino, or Felicità Eterna according to Ripa) standing next to an empty bowl and holding a flame in her hand to a richly dressed Profane Love (Venere Volgare, or Felicità Breve) with a vessel containing gold and precious gems. A little naked Cupid between those “twin Venuses” – standing closer to the Profane Love but turning towards the Sacred one – stirred water in a sarcophagus.²⁶ The visual and ideological similarities between this and related works of art (two women, two differently filled vessels, one naked child in between), should suffice to make us reconsider this “emblem” in a sense independent of the one proposed by King. The child in our “emblem” will “make no long process” (“*plaid*”, legal plea) of choosing what attracts it most, that is, not gold, but cherries. The original riddle well might have carried some religious

²² King, 1988, 174–184.

²³ Guigue, 1884, 14.

²⁴ Ms. B.N. fr. 10420; Sala describes the inception of the work by recalling how Marguerite went off with friends on a day trip while he stayed at home to take care of the dinner (sic!); hers and her female friends' images are included in the dedication miniature showing Sala kneeling before the King and offering him his work.

²⁵ Burin, 1989, 70 n. 35.

²⁶ Panofsky, 1997 (1930), and the same, 1972 (1939).

undertones, since cherries associated with the naked Christ Child in the Virgin's lap (as in paintings by Sandro Botticelli, Titian, Annibale Carracci, the Master of Flemale, Joost Van Cleve, and others) often have a theological signification, either as a prefiguration of the Passion, or as a symbol of resurrection, promising to the righteous that Heavenly Paradise which is to replace the loss of the Earthly Eden. Yet cherries also bear phallic connotations, as seen in a late medieval riddle (which possibly parodied a well known *Oraison tresdevote a Nostre Dame*): "*Blanche fut nee, / Rouge fut paree, / En or fut mise, / Devant le roy assise: C'est une cerise*" (bold type mine).²⁷ The riddle might simply signify that sex (or love) is preferable to material riches, and a relationship founded on attraction, love and affection can be more satisfying ("*ce qui mieux me plaît*") than a more conventional union seeking enrichment for either one of the parties involved. I for one view this "emblem" in unbroken conformity with the others as a barely disguised compliment to Marguerite's ability to please the truth-seeking eye of the loving beholder (i.e., Pierre's). This is to remind us once more that the *Emblèmes et devises d'amour* testify of only one perspective, Pierre Sala's own; we can no more than speculate on whatever Marguerite thought – of herself, of her social condition, of her future prospects, of her suitor, of Love in general and in her own case in particular. Yet even if the laws of Venus (Marguerite's) and those of Cupid (Pierre's) should indeed essentially differ, just as do gender-specific interests, they – at least according to Sala – still may be brought to concord.

The remaining "emblems" – of which four are borrowed, one significantly altered, from the *rhétoriqueur* Henri Baude²⁸, and two probably stem from an uncertain collection of *proverbes en rimes*²⁹ – carry recommendations for suitable behaviour when pursuing one's goals; this is similar to the arguments – inspired by the ca. 1245 prologue to the *Bestiaire d'amours* by Richard de Fournival,³⁰ which presented "peinture" and "parole" as means of entering the "meson de memoire" of the beloved – found in the closing lines of the prose dedication epistle to our "emblems", and resembling the verse dedicatory epistle to Louise of Savoy in Sala's *Fables*. As these

²⁷ Roy, 1977, riddle 210 97. The word-play on "or" [gold] / "ort" (sale, cf. ordure) [filth, reference to the private parts]; "roy" [king] / "roid" (cf. raide) [stiff] strengthens the equivocal *cerise* – *pénis*; the illustration of our "emblem" echoes these notions of red, gold and sitting down. Similar bawdy cherry riddles can be found in the same collection, riddles 241 103 and 32 58. See also *Les Évangiles des Quenouilles* ed. P. Jannet, Paris, 1855, items 23, 110.

²⁸ Scoumanne, 1959; also Lemaitre, 1988. The four "emblems" more or less literally borrowed from Henri Baude's (1430–1496?) are (a) ff. 10v–11r (*Fauvean*, almost literally corresponding to Baude, *dit XLIX*, Scoumanne, 1959 135, Lemaitre, 1988 58, 76; and originating from the bitterly satirical *Roman de Fauvel* of 1310–16 – see Långfors, 1914–19); (b) ff. 11v–12r (*Faveur qui affole et foule*, corresponding to Baude, *dit XI*, Scoumanne, 1959 95 – not in Lemaitre, 1988; compare Céard and Margolin, 1986, vol. 2: 90–XCIII "Fortune, tu m'affoles" and 143–CXLI, "Fortune, tu m'as re(n)versé", 55– "Fol et plus que fol"); (c) ff. 14v–15r (*cutting the branch under one's own feet*, significantly altered from Baude, *dit XXXVII*, Scoumanne, 1959 123, Lemaitre, 1988 46, 64, compare Céard and Margolin, 1986, vol. 2: 124–CXXII, "Souvent trebuchons de soulas en martyre"); (d) ff. 15v–16r (*the straight and the crooked combined according to necessity*; much altered from Baude, *dit XLVI*, Scoumanne, 1959 132, Lemaitre, 1988 55, 73; compare Céard and Margolin, 1986, vol. 2: 57–LV "tort, droit, j'en estoit" and 129–CXXVIII, "Forgeons vertu et deboutons folie"; see also Roy, 1977, riddle 19 55: "J'ay ung ostil bel et droit, / Une foiz crome [=crooked], l'autre droit, / Dieu! Qu'il est bel quand il tent! / Et ne vault rien se il ne tent. / Je sacque aval, je tire amont, / Je fier en l'estang bien parfont. Response: C'est quand l'en tire d'un arc a main et d'une vire entre deux bersaultx."

²⁹ Compare Frank and Miner, 1937, and Massing, 1983, 210 and pl. 31b, as well as Burin, 1989, 67–9, and the same, 1988, 8–9; for (a) ff. 9v–9bis^r (*fools and wise men counterfeiting one another*) and (b) ff. 9bis^v–10r (*on feigning lameness, hypocrisy*).

³⁰ See – for the dedicatory epistle of the *Emblèmes* – Parry, 1908–9, 217; for Sala's *Fables* – see Fornimarmocchi, 1974–5, 185f; on Richard de Fournival – who in fact exploits Horace's words "ut pictura poesis" (l. 361) at the source of the medieval and rinascimental mnemonic arts – see Segre, 1957, 6–7. Compare Burin, 1989, 77–8.

“emblems” however have comparatively little to do with questions of gender, we will leave them out of the present discussion.

What remains to be considered however is the concluding unit. Most early emblem collections follow no particular order, but occasionally the first “emblem” – frequently viewed as a dedication – and the last one – often a signature – occupied privileged positions: thus the first emblem on the arms of the Duchy of Milan in Alciato’s *editio princeps* of the *Emblematum liber* of Augsburg 1531, and the closing two emblems of his other *editio princeps* of the *Emblematum libellus* of Venice, 1546, which revealed the author’s place of origin (the emblem *Mediolanum*) and his family name (*Nunquam procrastinandum*, the emblem on the *alce* – elk).³¹ In France Georgette de Montenay (1540–1607), in her *Emblesmes ou devises chrestiennes* (Lyon 1571) also followed this example³². Similarly late medieval verse frequently made use of this technique, and indeed in the present case, after the first dedication item introducing the personification of the addressee as a daisy (Marguerite), the thirteenth (*sic!*) and concluding item of our collection is not an “emblem” but an envoy (*envoi*), a kind of signature in which Sala’s complex and refined originality is revealed. The item is special in more respects than one. Its frameless *quatrain* – f. 16v – is inscribed in mirror writing. The perfectly symmetrical initial of the beloved, “M” for Marguerite, unaltered by mirror reflection, appears once atop and once below the *quatrain*, not accompanied by the corresponding “P” for Pierre; it instead dialogues with the motto previously discussed, “*Lesses le venir*”, equivalently placed above and below the portrait facing the text. The rather plain poem (which, in good old Rhétoriqueur manner, uses set phrases and commonplaces also occurring in contemporary *chansons*: thus “*regardez en pytye*” reminds of “[*Tres douce Vierge honnoree*] / *Vueillez en pitie regarder....*” and “*qui n’a jour ne demy*” of “*je n’ay ne bon jour ne demy*”) (bold type mine)³³ – pleads as follows:

<p><i>Regardez en pytye votre loyal amy Qui na jour ne demy Rien pour votre amytye.</i></p>	<p>Look with pity upon / your loyal friend / who has no time whatsoever / except for your friendship [i.e., love].</p>
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The miniature portrait of the sender Pierre Sala – on f. 17r – is duly certified by a barely legible inscription giving the name of the sitter³⁴ below and also by a note – dating from later than 1596 – at the back, f. 17v: “*Set de vray le portret de Pierre Sala mestre dotel de ches le roy, avec des enimes quil avoit fet a sa mestresse; qui estoit grand honcle a madame de Rassis, laquelle est sortie de la mayson de Guillien en Quercy*”. This miniature is believed to reproduce a (now lost) larger portrait painting by Jehan Perréal,³⁵ a friend of the author’s (as shown by the second version of Sala’s *Livre d’amitié*, which is dedicated to him).³⁶ Perréal’s personal contacts with both Leonardo da Vinci³⁷ and with the Burgundian court of Marguerite of Austria may have been at the source of the above mentioned mirror writing. This technique, precious to the *grands rhétoriciens*, was highly valued

³¹ Grünberg-Dröge, 2001, 10–11 and nn. 72–75. Later editions of Alciato’s emblems altered this original order and placed all three here discussed emblems at the beginning of the collection.

³² Grünberg-Dröge, 1993, coll. 82–87, and the edition by Smith, 1973.

³³ Ferrand, 1989, items XLI p. 84 and XXXIII 73–4. Not the phrasing but the application renders such phrases original.

³⁴ Burin, 1989, 63.

³⁵ Backhouse, 1983, 169–171 and 173–4, n. 7, Burin, 1988, 2–3. and King, 1988, 173f.

³⁶ Guigue, 1884.

³⁷ Durrieu, 1919, 166f.

at this court, as the poetry albums of Marguerite of Austria demonstrate.³⁸ Here however it seems to fulfill a more sophisticated purpose: it literally reflects the state of the lover's soul and his most intimate convictions. It follows from the layout that the complete message – going from right to left, that is, if reflected in a mirror, from the recto to the verso page – should read, almost in rebus fashion: "Let him (the object of the painting, i.e., P[ierre], identified by "Peinture", that is by the portrait, and by "Parolle", that is by name) come [→ = to] M[arguerite] (also M[eson de memoire, the letter resembling a house with two steeple towers comparable to the Anticaille itself, i.e., a place – or person – of the same utmost symmetry and immutable perfection as the initial of the bride's name when contemplated from whatever side])" (bold type, underline and italics mine). Yet this refined dedication of the lover's true self to his beloved still presents one rub: on the strength of, among other things, the introduction to our manuscript, we know that by the time the "emblems" were compiled Pierre was already an elderly man (as he himself also admits in his *Chevalier au lion*, vv. 14–15: "trop viellart", "sans espoir en amour ne Venus"³⁹ or in his *Prouesses de plusieurs rois*: "...j'ay grant regret / que je ne suis agile et adroit..... / Mais vieillesse, la tres merencollique, / Me fait present d'une goutte ou colicque...").⁴⁰ His eyes, weary from old age, were in need of eye-glasses, as shown by the introduction miniature and by several verses from the prologue of his *Tristan* (vv. 2–5: "j'ay brevement / Dessus mon nez assises mes lunettes, / Pour deschiffrer lectres que je n'ay leu nettes, / Du viel Tristan, qu'il voust pleust me bailler...")(bold type mine),⁴¹ a fact which stamped him as no longer eligible for the pursuit of love, as the common contemporary saying "bonjour lunettes, adieu fillettes"⁴² went. The portrait on the other hand dates from Sala's youth. So how come he offered to his beloved a portrait which she could easily compare to his disadvantage with his present appearance?

This is where Sala is at his most original. That which to others was no more than literary convention, he for one apparently truly practised. While on the whole accepting the traditional ideals of courtly love and its referential code of manners and emotions, he did not hesitate to adapt those to his individual needs, concocting his personal mixture of sexuality and sublimation, yearning and respectful appreciation for his lady love. Thus the relationship between the concluding envoy and its matching portrait reflect the similar tension between the occasional *quatrain* and its matching illustration, upholding a dialogue as intense as a lovers' conversation. The envoy and the portrait similarly close the circle to the prose introduction which claimed the love relationship between Pierre and Marguerite dated from their early youth, before their respective lives and marriages had separated them. Even if this be a mere *topos*, the portrait looking backward to the past and the envoy pleading for a common future create a link between the dimension of Time and issues of gender.

Since unfortunately neither of the two bridespeople indeed still met the age requirements exacted by the code of love manners, none of the elaborate compliments alluding to youth, freshness and beauty contained in either the poems or the illustrations of Sala's "emblems" could detract from the fact that (objectively speaking) Pierre and Marguerite no longer belonged to the time of life devoted to Love. Past child-raising age the elderly were expected to be of

³⁸ See Françon, 1934 and Picker, 1965. On mirror writing as a cultural phenomenon at the time see Céard and Margolin, 1986, vol. 1, 213–19 and 453–474, and vol. 2, 32–39 (with respect to the ms. 1600 of the Rébus de Picardie).

³⁹ Suard, 1970, 406–15.

⁴⁰ *Prouesses de plusieurs rois* (ms. B.N. fr. 10420), partially quoted by Guigue, 1884.

⁴¹ Muir, 1958; quotation from 27.

⁴² Céard and Margolin, 1986: 2, 153–4, rebus 33-XXX, "Quand je prends lunettes, adieu, mes fillettes". On the mostly mocking iconology of eye-glasses, see Margolin, 1975, 375–393 and ill. VI, VII, VIII; the same, 1980, in *Les Lunettes*, pp. 13–78 and again 1980, in *L'Histoire*, 14–21.

colder disposition, unable to compete with the hot blood and sexual appetites of younger lovers; so old “impotent” or “frigid” paramours were considered ridiculous,⁴³ and became, from a social point of view, asexual, de-gendered, practically neuters. Venus, patron of fertility, no longer had any use for them, even when Cupid’s arrows still assailed them – as Sala’s admission in his *Chevalier au lion*, when opposed to the image of Cupid in the opening miniature of the *Complainte au Dieu amour* dedicated to the Cardinal de Tournon, indeed reveals.⁴⁴

But Love, it is said, conquers all: *Omnia vincit amor*.⁴⁵ Its freedom, Sala’s “emblems” seem to suggest, consists in not being bound even by its own rules, and its greatest miracle in being able to bend the laws of Nature. Where Love is an absolute, physical reality is only relative, the wheel of time can be turned full round once more, and the passage – and ravages! – of time on both of our true lovers become superated. Love, and Love alone, can therefore make Pierre and Marguerite young again, as young as they were when they first met, as young as when Sala’s portrait was first painted, as young as to meet the demands of conventional formulas of courtship (exacting precisely feminine attractiveness and masculine strength) as if the time passed had left no marks on their physical attributes. Love, like a spiritual Fountain of Youth, not only rejuvenate those partaking in its games, but a touch of its wings also re-genders them, as it does our aged Pierre and Marguerite: so for them too, Sala seems to tell his future bride, sexuality once again becomes an option, consumation of the bond is conceivable, and the couple’s love – if only they should agree to carry it out – is henceforth just as credible as it would be in the case of younger partners. It is therefore, well beyond the limitations of Nature or of Time, Love – and only Love – that, according to Sala’s “emblem” book, conveys true gender upon its disciples.

But does Love itself have gender? And does it let itself be guided by it? Venus and Cupid indeed do, and so their respective objects need not necessarily be identical, just as men’s goals and those of women often enough also differ. But Love is different. Whatever traditional, gender-specific roles and behavioral models Venus’ or Cupid’s followers were committed to within their original social embedment, however determined these gender conditions were by their time of life, all these restrictions can – with some good will – be superated and transformed, yea even revoked under Love’s government. The major paradox is therefore that true Love – not Venus, not Cupid – in setting lovers free from the bondage of Time, can restore Gender (and thereby gender roles) onto them; but true Love – neither Venus nor Cupid – in conveying mutual understanding and respect for the individual persons and the specific qualities of the lover and of the beloved – such as, here, their respective intellects – which render each one of them unique, can also loosen the bonds of gender roles once again, not de-gendering, but humanizing, individualizing, personalizing them. Love, like Death, is a “Great Equalizer”, not only concerning age, but also, paradoxically, with respect to gender. If there is any general lesson to be derived from Sala’s “emblems”, it is – to my way of thinking – that gender need not condition us beyond our free will, that we are at all times in a position to pick and choose from a variety of even contrary gender specific role models and gender bound symbols and themes, and our individuality can thus develop unhindered under Love’s influence.

⁴³ Céard and Margolin, 1986: 2, 153–4, rebus 33-XXX: cf. the proverbs “Quand la barbe devient blanche, laisse la femme et prends le verre”, “À cinquante ans, ouvre ta cave et ferme tes culottes”. Sala himself includes a *rondeau* of similar effect entitled “*Vieille mule du temps passé*” in his manuscript of the *Antiquitez*. There are many contemporary satirical texts and illustrations to support this attitude.

⁴⁴ Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, cod. 2618, f. 1; published in Pächt and Thoss, 1977, ill. 331, and *Programme de l'exposition...* 1992/3.

⁴⁵ Virgil, *Eclagues*, book 10 v. 69: “*Omnia vincit amor, et nos cedamus amori*”.

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