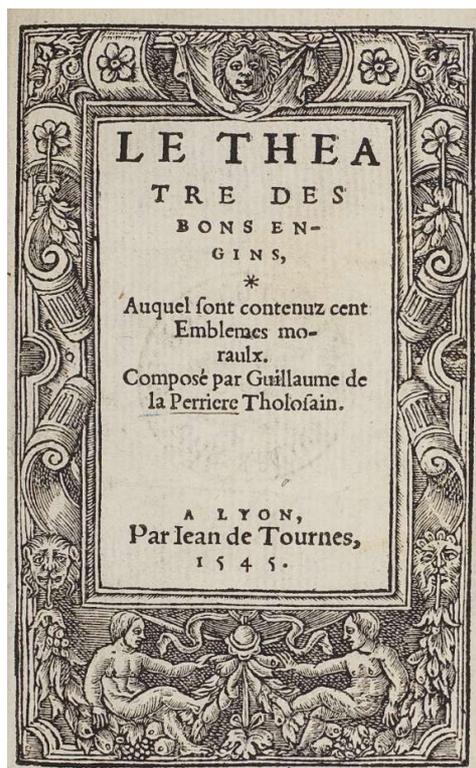


Guillaume de la Perrière: Le Theatre des bons engins



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Titel

Le Theatre des bons engins, Auquel sont contenuz cent Emblemes moraulx. Composé par Guillaume de la Perriere Tholosain. A Lyon, Par Jean de Tournes, 1545.

Kurztitel

Le Theatra des bons engines

Formale Beschreibung

Titelseite (Holzschnitt), 100 Ill. (Holzschn.), 16°.

Standort des Erstdrucks

Glasgow University Libraries, Sign. Sp Coll S.M. 685

Verfasser

Guillaume de la Perrière (c. 1500-1553), author of the earliest vernacular emblem book, the *Theatre des bons engins*, was a native of Toulouse, and an active contributor to the literary and intellectual life of that town. Although he had a degree in law he did not practise it. He had a keen interest in history and political thought, as reflected in other works which he produced such as the *Annales de Foix* (Toulouse, Nicolas Vieillard, 1539), the *Gestes des Tolosains* (Toulouse, Jacques Colomies, 1555) the *Miroir politicque* (Lyon, Macé Bonhomme, 1555) or the manuscript chronicles of Toulouse

which he produced between 1537 and 1552 at the request of the capitouls of the town. However the works for which he is best known are his two emblem books, the purely French *Theatre des bons engins* (begun in 1535 and first published in 1540) and the bilingual Latin/French *Morosophie* (Lyon, Macé Bonhomme, 1553). In addition to these two acknowledged emblem books he produced two further works, which also have many characteristics of an emblem book, the *Cent considerations d'amour* (Lyon, François Juste and Pierre de Tours, 1543; Lyon, Jacques Berion, 1548; Lyon, Benoit Rigaud, 1577) and the *Considerations des quatre mondes à savoir est: divine, angelique, celeste et sensible* (Lyon, Macé Bonhomme, 1552). He was a keen advocate of the vernacular, as expressed in the preface to his *Considerations des quatre mondes*, and as reflected by the fact that his manuscript chronicles of Toulouse came to be written in French rather than in Latin as formerly. Other than the bilingual Latin/French *Morosophie* all his output was written in the vernacular.

As well as being responsible over a period of fifteen years for writing the chronicles of Toulouse, La Perrière was also involved in the organisation of the celebrations to be held in the town to mark the visit in July 1535 of Marguerite de Navarre, sister of the king, François 1er, being charged with designing commemorative gold coins to be struck. The *Theatre des bons engins* was also intended to contribute to this event. As he explains in the dedication of the work to Marguerite de Navarre his aim had been to present the Queen with a collection of 100 emblems, on the occasion of her visit, but he did not manage to complete the full set in time. It must be presumed, therefore, that La Perrière presented her with an incomplete set. A 'huitain' printed at the end of the first edition (but not included in this edition) explains that the full set was completed in 1536. It is not clear why there should have then been a 3-year gap before the work was finally published in Paris, in 1540 by Denis Janot. Toulouse had a lively literary and cultural life, as reflected in the flourishing *Jeux floraux*, and La Perrière was familiar with other contemporary Toulouse poets, such as Jean de Boyssonné or Gratien du Pont, but nevertheless it is remarkable that the earliest vernacular emblem book to be produced in Europe – within four years of the first appearance of Alciato's groundbreaking Latin *Emblematum liber* published in Augsburg in 1531, and within one year of its first publication in a version approved by Alciato in Paris, in 1534, and a year before the first vernacular translation of it (into French) was published in 1536 – should have been produced by a provincial writer, rather than by a writer in one of the two main cultural centres of France, Paris or Lyon. It is further remarkable that this earliest vernacular emblem book should have been the creation of such a young and, at that stage in his career, largely unpublished writer such as La Perrière.

Publikation

Erstdruck

Le Theatre des bons engins was published first in Paris at Denis Janot in 1540. Janot published two further editions 1542 and 1544 under the title *Le Theatre des bons engins, auquel sont contenuz cent Emblemes moraulx. Composé par Guillaume de la Perriere Tolosain, Et nouvellement par iceluy limé, reveu & corrigé.*

Weitere Ausgaben

Le Theatre des bons engins, auquel sont contenuz cent Emblemes. N.p.n.d. (Lyon: Antoine de Harsy).

Le Theatre des bons engins, auquel sont contenuz cent Emblemes moraulx. Composé par Guillaume de la Perriere Tholosain. Lyon: Jean de Tournes, 1546, 1547, 1549, 1553, 1580 (see Cartier, 608), 1583.

Le Theatre des bons engins. Angers: Pierre Trepperel, 1545 (see BFEB, F.369).

Le Theatre des bons engins auquel sont contenuz cent Emblemes moraux. Composé par Guillaume de la Perriere Tholosain. Paris: Estienne Groulleau, 1548.

Le Theatre des bons engins, auquel sont contenuz cent Emblemes moraux. Composé par Guillaume de la Perriere Tholosain. Reveu & corrigé de nouveau. Paris: Estienne Groulleau, 1551, 1561.

- Niederländische Ausgaben

Tpalays der gheleerder ingienen oft der constiger gheesten. Inhoudende houdert morale figuren. Antwerp: Widow Jacob van Liesveldt, 1554.

Tpalays der gheleerder ingienen oft der constiger gheesten. Inhoudende houdert morale figuren. Antwerp: Widow Jacob van Liesveldt, 1556.

Tpalays der gheleerder ingienen oft der constiger gheesten. Inhoudende houdert morale figuren. Antwerp: Widow Jacob van Liesveldt, 1564.

- Englische Ausgaben

The Theater of Fine Devices, containing an hundred morall Emblemes. First penned in French by Guillaume de la Perriere, and translated into English by Thomas Combe. London, Richard Field, 1593 (?) (Only one copy known, with title page missing).

The Theater of Fine Devices, containing an hundred morall Emblemes. First penned in French by Guillaume de la Perriere, and translated into English by Thomas Combe. London, Richard Field, 1614.

- Französische Faksimile-Ausgaben

Paris, Denis Janot, n.d. (1540) (edition 1): Guillaume de la Perrière, *Le Theatre des bons engins* 1539 [Introductory note by Alison Saunders] (Menston: Scolar Press,

1973). Copy: Bibliothèque nationale de France: Rés Z 2556.

Paris, Denis Janot, n.d. (1542) (edition 3): Guillaume de la Perrière, Le Theatre des bons engins, facsimile edition, ed. Greta Dexter, Gainesville, Florida: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1964. Copy unknown.

Paris, Denis Janot, n.d. (1544) (edition 4): Guillaume de la Perrière, Le Theatre des bons engins/ La Morosophie [Introductory note by Alison Saunders] (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993. Copy: Glasgow University Library: SM686.

- Englische Faksimile-Ausgaben

Thomas Combe, The Theater of Fine Devices, London: Richard Field, 1593 (?): [Introductory note by Mary Silcox] (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990). Copy: Glasgow University Library: SM688.

Thomas Combe, The Theater of Fine Devices, containing an huindred morall Emblemes. First penned in French by Guillaume de la Perriere, and translated into English by Thomas Combe, London: Richard Field, 1614: [Introductory note by John Doeblor]: San Marino: The Hungtinton Library, 1983. Copy: Huntington Library.

- Französische Mikroform-Ausgaben

Paris: Denis Janot, n.d. (edition unknown): IDC Publishers, Leiden, O-1349/1 (Copy unknown).

N.p.n.d (Lyon: Antoine de Harsy): IDC Publishers, Leiden, O-1677/1 (Copy unknown).

- Digitale Ausgabe der Ausgabe von 1540

Paris: Denis Janot, n.d. (1540) (edition 1): <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k70875h>. Copy: Bibliothèque nationale de France: Rés Z 2556.

Virginia: University Library [<http://iris.lib.virginia.edu/rmds/gordon/gordonimages/Gordon1540_L33/>](http://iris.lib.virginia.edu/rmds/gordon/gordonimages/Gordon1540_L33/).

Master: Copy of the Virginia University Library, Call no. Gordon1540L33.

- Digitale Ausgabe der Ausgabe von 1544

Glasgow: University Library (= French Emblems at Glasgow) [.<http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/facsimile.php?id=sm686_a1r>](http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/facsimile.php?id=sm686_a1r). Master:

Copy of the Glasgow University Library, Call no. SM686.

Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute [.<http://www.archive.org/stream/letheatredesbons00lape>](http://www.archive.org/stream/letheatredesbons00lape). Master: Copy of the

Getty Research Institute, Call no. 319967.

N.p.n.d (Lyon, Antoine de Harsy) <<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k79201g>>. Copy: Lyon, Bibliothèque municipale: Rés 811484.

- Digitale Ausgabe der Ausgabe von 1545

Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France <<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k711107>>. Master: Copy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France Paris, Call no. Rés p Ye 430.

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Inhalt

La Perrière [dedicated](#) the *Theatre des bons engins* to Marguerite de Navarre, sister of François 1er and wife of Henri d'Albret, king of Navarre. He may well have been hoping for patronage from Marguerite or her family since the 1539 *Annales de Foix* are likewise dedicated to Marguerite and her husband, and the 1553 *Morosophie* is dedicated to her son-in-law, Antoine de Bourbon (Marguerite having died in 1549).

In 1535, when La Perrière began work on his vernacular French emblem book, he had only the model of Alciato's Latin emblems to look to. Jean Le Fevre's French translation of Alciato's emblems was not published until 1536 (*Livret des emblemes, de maistre André Alciat, mise en rime francoyse*, Paris, Chrestien Wechel 1536), the year in which La Perrière completed his *Theatre des bons engins*. In his introductory dedication of the work to Marguerite de Navarre, La Perrière acknowledges the influence of Alciato's Latin emblems, but cites also more ancient sources of inspiration, drawing attention to the fact that emblems have a long classical ancestry including, among other sources, Egyptian hieroglyphics („Au surplus (Madame) ce n'est pas seulement de nostre temps que les Emblemes sont en bruiet, pris & singuliere veneration, ains c'est de toute ancienneté & presque des le commencement du Monde: Car les Egyptiens qui se reputent estre les premiers hommes du Monde, avant l'usage des lettres, escrivoient par figures & ymages tant d'hommes, bestes et oyseaux, poissons, que serpents, par icelles exprimans leurs intentions [...] Alciat ha semblablement de nostre temps redigé certains Emblemes & illustré de vers Latins. Et nous, à l'imitation des avantnommez, penserons avoir bien employé & colloqué les bonnes heures à l'invention & illustration de nosdictz presens Emblemes [...]“ [[A3v-4r](#)]). The influence of Alciato's emblems is very apparent in the basic structure of the *Theatre des bons engins*, combining figure and text to convey a message, though La Perrière did not in his original version, as published by Janot in Paris, include titles to his individual emblems. The titles which are included in this edition and all subsequent De Tournes editions, and which serve to strengthen the moralising lesson, are most probably the work of De Tournes himself. In content also the

influence of Alciato is evident in the *Theatre des bons engins*. Several emblems echo those of Alciato (eg 18, 63). But La Perrière also derives his material from many sources, some classical and some more recent. Emblems 7-10 are all acknowledged as being based on the sayings of Pythagoras, and Homer is cited in emblem 57, while Boccaccio is cited in emblem 62, and Petrarch is the inspiration for emblems 79 and 81, and Machiavelli for emblem 22). While the snake coiled into a circle with its tail in its mouth (83) and the headless woman (16) can be found in Egyptian hieroglyphics, many of the other animal-based emblems derive from more familiar and popular bestiary sources (eg bear (98), camel (69) and monkey (47)). La Perrière is particularly fond of basing his messages for mankind on the real or supposed behaviour of animals, but many of his emblems are based on human behaviour, offering reflections on aspects of everyday life, such as tennis (5, 41); chess (27, 59); or bird-catching (54, 90), and even in cases where his material does have a classical source, he rarely draws attention to this, preferring to offer his readership an easily understandable lesson. Creating his work for a vernacular readership, La Perrière produces emblems which are characteristically less allusive and more explanatory than those of Alciato, and many of the revisions which he made to his text between the second and third edition were designed to simplify the message, cutting out unnecessary imagery, explaining or deleting potentially obscure references, and clarifying the moral lesson to be derived. Many of the emblems offer universally applicable messages on how mankind should, or should not behave, and the moralising character of the emblems is very marked, even without the aid of the titles added by De Tournes, with clear warnings given of the dangers that can befall. La Perrière's emblems on women place him firmly in the anti-feminist school (eg 78, 88, 96) A significant number are directed specifically at La Perrière's own contemporary French society, emphasised by references to ,au temps qui court' ,pour le present' etc (eg 6, 42, 46, 49, 66, 69). Many have a strong satirical character, criticising particular vices of society such as flattery at court (eg 45, 58, 73) or corruption among the legal profession (66), while three perhaps strike a personal note in deploring the fact that current society tends to favour the ignorant and idle, and undervalue the educated man of letters (eg 13, 17, 29).

Kontext und Klassifizierung

Emblem books became very fashionable in Europe from the early 1530s onwards, following the publication in Augsburg in 1531 by Heinrich Steyner of the first emblem book, Andrea Alciato's Latin *Emblematum liber*. Alciato did not approve of this version of his work and entrusted subsequent publication to the Paris printer Chrestien Wechel, who published improved editions of the original Latin version from 1534, and editions in a French translation from 1534. Thereafter a number of French writers quickly began to produce emblem books, either in Latin or in the vernacular, and the fashion spread from France to other parts of Europe. In France

the earliest French emblem books (by La Perrière and by Gilles Corrozet) were published in Paris by the specialist printer in vernacular and illustrated popular literature, Denis Janot, but following Janot's death in 1544, the impetus for the production of emblem books in France moved from Paris to Lyon, where two publishing outlets – that of Jean de Tournes, and that of the partnership of Macé Bonhomme and Guillaume Roville – were responsible for the production of further editions of Alciato in Latin and in French, and in translation into other vernacular languages, and they also published further Latin and French emblem books by French writers, including those of La Perrière. Although many emblem writers stress the importance of ingenuity and wit in their emblem books, as does La Perrière himself in the preface to his *Morosophie*, the early French emblem writers also stress the educationally improving and moralising function that emblems can offer by their simultaneous exploitation of two triggers – visual and verbal – in order to convey their message, and characteristically they give greater emphasis to the moralising aspect in their emblems than had done Alciato. This moralising function is particularly apparent in La Perrière's *Theatre des bons engins*, and indeed after the first two editions of the work, published in Paris by [Denis Janot in 1540](#), not only was the text significantly revised in the third Janot edition, to simplify and strengthen the moralising aspect, but also the title was modified, with the introduction of the word 'moraux': *Le Theatre des bons engins, Auquel sont contenez cent Emblemes moraulx*. It is this revised version of the text which was used by [De Tournes in his 1545 edition](#), and thereafter.

It is not clear why La Perrière should have chosen the title *Theatre des bons engins* for his emblem book. At the point when he composed the work he had no model to follow other than that of Alciato, whose work was simply entitled *Emblematum liber* or *Emblematum libellus*. It may well be because of the strongly visual impact of the work that he used the word 'theatre', reflecting the way in which the moralising and educationally improving message is presented to the reader as if on a stage, while the similarly theatrical phrase 'bons engins', might be intended to reflect the ingenuity with which the allegorical lessons are put across in striking visual form. Interestingly, fifteen year later another French emblem writer, Pierre Coustau, echoed La Perrière's title with the similarly theatrically inspired title to his own Latin emblem book, [Petri Costalii pegma](#) (Lyon, Macé Bonhomme, 1555), which was translated into French as [Le Pegme de Pierre Coustau](#) (Lyon, Macé Bonhomme, 1555).

As well as being France's earliest emblem book, La Perrière's *Theatre des bons engins* was also a very popular work, running through many more editions than any other emblem book subsequently published in France, with the exception only of that of Alciato. (For details see *BFEB*, F.364-375; F.378-381). The original version of the work, designed to be presented to Marguerite de Navarre in 1535, but not completed in time for her arrival, must have been a manuscript, and it is now lost, although a manuscript version of the work, simply entitled *Les cent Emblemes*, does exist in the

Bibliothèque nationale de France (Ms.fr. 12795). La Perrière explains in a ‚huitain‘ at the end of the first and second Janot editions of the work, but deleted in subsequent editions, that the work was completed in 1536 („Fut mis à fin nostre present theatre,/L’an mil cinq cens avecques trente six.“) but it was not then published for four years. Denis Janot in Paris published two editions without date, but both datable to 1540, and followed these by two further undated editions of a modified text probably in 1542 and 1544. After Janot’s death in 1544, although his successor, Estienne Groulleau produced a further three editions in 1548, 1551 and 1561, and an edition of which there is no known copy was also published in Angers in 1545 by Pierre Trepperel, the main focus for subsequent editions was Lyon. Here, in addition to the undated and pirated non-illustrated edition published by Antoine de Harsy, Jean de Tournes published from 1545 a series of editions of the revised and more heavily moralising text which had first appeared in the third Janot edition. But although the text of the verses of the De Tournes editions more or less replicates that of the revised Janot version, in other respects his editions are significantly different. Visually De Tournes’s version is very different from that of Janot. Where Janot’s layout was very lavish, with each emblem occupying a double-page spread, with woodcut figure on verso and epigram on facing recto, both encased in decorative frameworks, that of De Tournes is much more austere. Gone are the decorative frameworks, and each emblem occupies a single page, with the epigram printed below the woodcut figure. But the most significant difference is the introduction by De Tournes of titles for each emblem, following the model adopted in Alciato’s emblem book, whereas in their original form La Perrière’s emblems did not include titles. Since La Perrière himself did not include titles in his original version of the *Theatre des bons engins*, and similarly did not include titles in the *Morosophie* or in his two other works which have marked emblematic characteristics, the *Cent considerations d’amour* and the *Considerations des quatre mondes*, it must be concluded that the titles included in the De Tournes editions are not a late addition by La Perrière himself, but rather the invention of De Tournes himself. A new set of woodcut figures accompany the emblems, modelled upon those used earlier by Janot in Paris, but in several cases modified and improved in order to reflect the text more accurately. The new set used by De Tournes is most probably the earliest set to be produced by the Lyonnese artist Bernard Salomon for use by De Tournes. (For details see Peter Sharratt, *Bernard Salomon illustrateur lyonnais*, pp. 268-70). It is the De Tournes editions of the *Theatre des bons engins* produced from 1545 onwards that provide the principal model for subsequent European translators and imitators.

Rezeption

Jean de Tournes himself published editions of the *Theatre des bons engins* in 1545, 1546, 1547, 1549, 1553, and his son, Jean II de Tournes published two further editions in 1580 and 1583. Together with 26 emblems from Gilles Corrozet’s *Hecatombgraphie*, 32

emblems from the *Theatre* were included in a popularising anthology of moralising verses entitled *Le Jardin d'honneur* published in several editions by Estienne Groulleau between 1548 and 1559 (see *BFEb*, F.346-350), and 12 were published as late as 1641 in an edition of *Emblemes ou preceptes moraux tirez des escrits de feu Gilles Corrozet*, produced in Paris by Corrozet's son, Jean Corrozet (see *BFEb*, F.199). But the enduring popularity of the *Theatre des bons engins* (in particular in the version produced by De Tournes) was not restricted solely to France: its popularity in Europe is attested by the fact that it was translated into Dutch under the title *Tpalays der gheleerder ingienen oft der constiger gheesten* and this translation ran through three editions (Antwerp, Widow Jacob van Liesveldt, 1554, 1556 and 1564), all modelled upon the De Tournes version. It was also, rather later, translated into English by Thomas Combe, under the title *Theater of Fine Devices* and published by Richard Field in London in (probably) 1593 and in 1614, again modelled closely on the De Tournes version. Geoffrey Whitney's *Choice of Emblemes and other Devices*, inspired by emblems and devices created by various European writers, and published at the Plantin Press in Leiden in 1586, includes several emblems borrowed from La Perrière's *Theatre des bons engins*.

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Alison Saunders