Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis or dissertation as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis or dissertation in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known, including display on the world wide web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis or dissertation. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis or dissertation. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis or dissertation.

Signature:

_______________________________ _______________
Jenny Davis Barnett Date

THE DANGEROUS ACT OF SEEING
The Role of the Gaze in Maurice Scève's 1544 *Délie*

By

Jenny Davis Barnett
Doctor of Philosophy

French

____
Kevin Corrigan
Advisor

____
Geoffrey Bennington
Committee Member

____
Elissa Marder
Committee Member

____
Elizabeth Pastan
Committee Member

____
Jacob Vance
Committee Member

Accepted:

____
Lisa A. Tedesco, Ph.D.
Dean of the James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies

____
Date

THE DANGEROUS ACT OF SEEING
The Role of the Gaze in Maurice Scève's 1544 *Délie*

By

Jenny Davis Barnett

B.A., University of Alabama, 2000

Advisor: Kevin Corrigan, Ph.D.

An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in French

2010

ABSTRACT

THE DANGEROUS ACT OF SEEING
The Role of the Gaze in Maurice Scève's 1544 *Délie*
By Jenny Davis Barnett

Most often criticized as difficult and obscure, Maurice Scève's 1544 *Délie objet de plus haulte vertu* (a book of 50 woodcut images and 449 *dizains*) portrays seeing as a dangerous act. As the visual experience controls and shapes Scève's work, the act of seeing constructs images of terror, aggression and suffering. While some scholars have noted this aspect of vision in Scève's poetry, what I argue for by contrast is that representations of the deadly gaze are present throughout the entire work, namely, both in the text and in the woodcut images. My dissertation focuses upon the following largely unexamined features of Scève's opus: first, the role of the gaze in the signifying relationship between the image and textual motto in the woodcuts and in the structural relation between the image, motto and commentary *dizains*; second, the influential literary and visual arts in Scève's era, thus providing a new interpretative strategy for the modern day reader by supplying information gleaned from art history, literary theory, close reading of text/image and hermeneutical analysis. My interdisciplinary approach offers an analysis and articulation of the complex derivation of emblems and books of *imprese* (such as *Délie*, from medieval legend and bestiary lore, Graeco-Roman mythology and the Renaissance interpretation of Egyptian hieroglyphics) and provides a key for understanding how Scève reinterprets myth and legend primarily through the figures of the unicorn, basilisk, Hathor-Medusa and Narcissus, in order to show that the act of seeing is always pervaded by fear, deception and death. Scenes of sight and mirrored reflection in the woodcut images tell us more about the gaze than the "literary images" in the text alone. Scève suggests, I argue, in the interplay between word and image that seeing the self, seeing the other and seeing the other within is not only dangerous but also fatal. My dissertation, then, offers an alternative template for future studies in emblematic literature, opens up Scève's work to a larger audience and provides a much needed entry point into *Délie*.

THE DANGEROUS ACT OF SEEING
The Role of the Gaze in Maurice Scève's 1544 *Délie*

By

Jenny Davis Barnett

B.A., University of Alabama, 2000

Advisor: Kevin Corrigan, Ph.D.

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in French

2010

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my father James Edwin Davis.

I want to thank the James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University for a Professional Development Support grant that allowed me to travel to France and conduct research for the dissertation.

I could never possibly acknowledge all of the people in my life who have assisted me during my time as a student. So, in what follows, I wish to thank a small number of my teachers, friends and family members - all recognition belongs to them.

My sister Deborah Howton for reading, re-reading and editing my writing, encouraging me to read literature and travel, and constantly watching over me to ensure my safety, good health and happiness.

My adviser Kevin Corrigan for showing me continual kindness and patience, devoting full attention to my dissertation project, teaching me to be a stronger writer, and helping me grow as a scholar.

Geoffrey Bennington for remaining a stable voice of reason throughout my graduate student career and providing an entry point into Derrida and Lyotard. Dalia Judovitz for teaching me how to look and Elissa Marder for teaching me how to read - two gifts that I hope to pass on to my future students. Lois Overbeck for respect, trust and sound advice. Elizabeth Pastan for countless conversations, rigorous readings of my work, and assisting me in the field of Art History.

Candace Lang, Valérie Loichot and Virginia Shadron for advocating on my behalf and encouraging me when hope was absent. Yvan Bamps for indulging my obsession with Scève and Gregory de Rocher for opening the doors to the French Renaissance.

My dear family friend Annie Lee Phillips for inspiring me to study French Literature and Art, friendship, and being a model of grace and sophistication worthy of emulation. Robyn Banton for acceptance, tolerance and fun. Nicholas Ealy for sharing my enthusiasm for the Middle Ages, Narcissus and music, reading my work and providing insightful advice and constant friendship. Ann McCullough for guiding me through the toughest years of my life. Blandine Mitaut for empathy, compassion, strength and beauty.

John and Gerardine Barnett for editing my work and offering care and support.

My husband, Tim Barnett, *l'antipode*, for kindness, protection, care-giving, unconditional love, adventures and bad jokes.

CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Chapter 1: L'Emblesme et La Lycorne 18
- Emblem Theory 22
- Lurid Beast to Handsome Savior 30
- Delie & The Unicorn 35
- Conclusion 51

Chapter 2: Monstrous Visions 53
- Italian Masters 54
- The Case of the Basilisk 61
- La vue du basilic: Lady as Monster 74
- Conclusion 86

Chapter 3: Délie's Ophidian Forms 88
- Eye of the Serpent 90
- Délie Médusée: objet maléfique 100
  - La belle bête 102
  - Mūto, mūtare - Transformation & *Le Pouvoir* 107
  - Le venin si doux 112
- Conclusion 117

Chapter 4: Le Reflet: Problématique de la Réflexion 120
- Reflet 122
- Réflexion 141
- Conclusion 150

Conclusion 153

Bibliography 159

Illustrations 173

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figures

1.1 “Ad illust. Maximil. ducem Medio” (Au duc de Milan). Andrea Alciato *Livret des emblemes* (1536). GALLICA, BNF. http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k52132c [accessed 16 November 2009]

1.2 “Parler peu & venir au poinct” Gilles Corrozet *Hécatomgraphie* (1543) GALLICA, BNF, Rés Z-2599. http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k70938k [accessed 16 November 2009]

1.3 *Impresa* 1 “La femme & La lycorne” Maurice Scève *Délie object de plus haulte vertu* (1544). GALLICA, BNF, Rés. Ye 1746. http://gallica2.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k70272t [accessed 16 November 2009]

1.4 *Impresa* 1 “La femme & la Lycorne” Maurice Scève *Délie object de plus haulte vertu* (1564). GALLICA, BNF, Rés. Ye-1661. http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k705045 [accessed 16 November 2009]

1.5 “La chasse à la licorne” *Bestiaire* England (thirteenth-century) Paris, BNF, département des Manuscrits, Latin 3630 folio 76v. http://expositions.bnf.fr/bestiaire/grand/n_06_bnf.htm [accessed 16 November 2009]

1.6 “Chasse à la licorne” *Physiologus* Cambrai (around 1270-1275) Douai, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 711, folio 4. http://expositions.bnf.fr/bestiaire/grand/n_02_dou.htm [accessed 12 May 2009]

1.7 *Impresa* 26 “La licorne qui se voit” Maurice Scève *Délie object de plus haulte vertu* (1564). GALLICA, BNF, Rés. Ye-1661. http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k705045 [accessed 16 November 2009]

1.8 *Secrets d’histoire naturelle*, d’après Solin. France (around 1480-1485) Paris, BNF, département des Manuscrits, Français 22971 folio 15v. http://expositions.bnf.fr/bestiaire/grand/k_02_bnf.htm [accessed 12 May 2009]

1.9 “Licorne trempant sa corne dans la fontaine” Guillaume Fillastre, *Toison d’or* Paris (fifteenth- to sixteenth-centuries) Paris BNF département des Manuscrits, Français 138 folio 117. http://expositions.bnf.fr/bestiaire/grand/n_11.htm [accessed 12 May 2009]

2.1 “Basilisk” Harley MS 4751 (thirteenth-century). Reproduced from Ann Payne and British Library, *Medieval Beasts*, (London: British Library, 1990), 84.

2.2 “La faune d’Egypte” *Secrets de l’histoire naturelle* Bourges, France, (around 1428) Illustrated by le Maître de Marguerite d'Orléans Paris, BNF, département des Manuscrits, Français 1377, folio. 20v. http://expositions.bnf.fr/bestiaire/grand/z_11.htm [accessed 15 October 2009]

2.3 “Lettre Ornée: basilic” *Seconde Bible de Saint-Martial de Limoges* Saint-Martial de Limoges, France (eleventh- to twelfth-centuries) Paris, BNF, département des Manuscrits, Latin 8 (1), folio. 188. http://expositions.bnf.fr/bestiaire/grand/z_10.htm [accessed 15 October 2009]

2.4 “Basilisk attacked by weasel” *Bestiarius - Bestiary of Ann Walsh* Copenhagen, Denmark (fifteenth-century) Kongelige Bibliotek, Gl. kgl. S. 1633 4º, Folio 51r. David Badke, “The Medieval Bestiary.” http://bestiary.ca/beasts/beast265.htm [accessed 15 October 2009]

2.5 “Basilic et sauterelle” Historiated Capital, Basilique Ste-Madeleine, Vézelay, France (twelfth-century). Reproduced from François Vogade and Louis Hautecoeur, *Vézelay*. (Bellegarde, France: SADAG, 1965), n. pag.

2.6 “La Vierge foulant le dragon et le basilic” Eglise de Longpont (Seine-et-Oise), France (thirteenth-century). Reproduced from Maurice Vloberg, *La Vierge, Notre Médiatrice*, (Grenoble: B. Arthaud, 1938), 43.

2.7 “Le Christ marche sur l'aspic et le basilic à côté de l'Enfer” Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques, Paris, France (thirteenth-century) Anonymous French, INV 33412, Recto. http://arts-graphiques.louvre.fr/fo/visite?srv=mtr [accessed 15 October 2009]

2.8 “Sobrement vivre: & non follement croire” Andrea Alciati *Emblemes* (1549). French Emblems at Glasgow. Glasgow University Emblem Website. http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/emblem.php?id=FALb016 [accessed 15 October 2009]

2.9 *Impresa* 21 “Le Basilisque, & le Miroir” Maurice Scève *Délie object de plus haulte vertu* (1544). GALLICA, BNF, Rés. Ye 1746. http://gallica2.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k70272t [accessed 18 September 2009]

3.1 *Impresa* 30 “Cleopatra et les serpentz” Maurice Scève *Délie object de plus haulte vertu* (1544). GALLICA, BNF, Rés. Ye 1746. http://gallica2.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k70272t [accessed 18 September 2009]

3.2 “Egyptian cobra *Naja haje*” photo by Anton Childs of Bio Ken. http://savingsnakes.wildlifedirect.org/2007/11/21/welcome-to-saving-snakes/ [accessed 22 August 2009]

3.3 Three aspects of Hathor on a bronze menit counterpoise, (British Museum, London). Reproduced from Alison M. Roberts, *Hathor Rising: The Serpent Power of Ancient Egypt*. (Totnes, Devon [Eng.]: Northgate Publishers, 1995), 67.

3.4 "In Silentium" Andrea Alciati *Livret des emblemes* (1536). French Emblems at Glasgow. Glasgow University Emblem Website. http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/emblem.php?id=FALa003 [accessed 21 September 2009]

3.5 "Comment & par quelles figures ilz signifioient laage & les ans du temps" Horapollon *De la signification des notes hiéroglyphiques des Aegyptiens* (1543) (French translation by Jean Martin, *Hieroglyphica* printed in Paris 23 November 1543, by Jaques Keruer) GALLICA, BNF. http://gallica2.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k71415s [accessed 22 September 2009]

3.6 "Filles doibvent estre gardees" Andrea Alciati *Emblemes* (1549). French Emblems at Glasgow. Glasgow University Emblem Website. http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/emblem.php?id=FALb022 [accessed 21 September 2009]

3.7 "Esculape contemplant le basilic" Raoul Lefèvre, *Histoires de Troyes*, Belgium, (third quarter of fifteenth-century), Paris, BNF, département des Manuscrits, Français 59, folio 31v. http://expositions.bnf.fr/bestiaire/grand/z_08.htm [accessed 22 September 2009]

4.1 *Impresa* 7 "Narcissus" Maurice Scève *Délie object de plus haulte vertu* (1544). GALLICA, BNF, Rés. Ye 1746. http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k70272t [accessed 30 September 2009]

4.2 Emblem LXIX "Philautia (Self-Love) [Narcissus]" Andrea Alciati *Emblematum liber* (1531) reproduced from *Alciato's* Book of Emblems. *The Memorial Web Edition in Latin and English*. http://www.mun.ca/alciato/069.html [accessed 6 February 2008]

ABBREVIATIONS

BNF	Bibliothèque Nationale de France
D	*dizain*
I	*Impresa*

INTRODUCTION
The Dangerous Act of Seeing

> Voir est un acte dangereux... Sur ce point les mythologies et les legends s'accordent singulièrement. Orphée, Narcisse, Œdipe, Psyché, la Méduse nous apprennent qu'à force de vouloir étendre la portée de son regard, l'âme se voue à l'aveuglement et à la nuit.
>
> - Jean Starobinski, *L'Œil vivant*

Maurice Scève's *Délie objet de plus haulte vertu* (1544) is, as a few scholars suggest, dependent upon metaphors of vision and the figure of the gaze to convey tropes for love, desire and suffering. The entire text, I wish to argue, accentuates the primacy of the eye, but this is no auspicious emphasis. Jean Starobinski reminds us, seeing is a perilous act and, when the visual encounter between the Lover and the Beloved is abrupt and brings agony – even death – to the poet/lover, then the love experience relies on a particular function of the gaze that Lance K. Donaldson-Evans defines as the "aggressive eye topos" (1978, 202). In *Délie*, seeing is an act never bereft of risk: "of all the poets of the French Renaissance, none makes more extensive use of the aggressive eye topos and its associated imagery than Scève" (Donaldson-Evans 1978, 206). So, as the visual experience controls and shapes Scève's work, the act of seeing constructs images of terror, deception and death.[1] While this feature of vision has been noted, what I wish to argue for by contrast is that representations of the deadly gaze are present throughout the entire work, namely, in the woodcut images, in the relation between the image and textual motto in the woodcuts and in the structural relation between the image, motto and commentary *dizain*.[2]

---

[1] On death in *Délie*, see Brooke Donaldson's illuminating work (2006).

[2] *Dizain* - a decasyllabic, ten-line poem.

Today it has become banal to say that we are living in the "age of the image." Animated, digital, virtual images fashion our world with unprecedented strength. These images, however, also belong to a long history in which the Middle Ages, particularly medieval Christianity, play a decisive role by opening up numerous possibilities in the creation of literary and visual art. An image is never simply an *objet d'art* and even less simply an illustration of a text; this claim becomes apparent in the shifting pictorial representations of animals, for example, over the course of the Middle Ages.

The Renaissance brings about a major change in discourse from medieval, aural/oral epistemology to spatial orientation: the "pensée figurée." I want to focus on vision in Scève's *Délie* because it represents a work of epochal change. In the sixteenth-century, the visual is derived from the verbal and in *Délie*, Michael J. Giordano observes, Scève's syntax creates literary images and guides the eye of the reader: "nos yeux sont amenés à se concentrer sur le texte imprimé selon un mouvement basculant entre un vers et le précédent" (1990, 48, 49). It is evident that an abundance of terms associated with vision (*regard*, *voir*, *veue*, *oeil*, *yeulx*) help to construct the figured presence of the gaze in Scève's text. I want to stress, however, that the scenes of sight and mirrored reflection (*le reflet*) in the woodcut images also guide the reader's eye and, therefore, tell us more about vision in *Délie* than the "literary images" or "eye imagery" in the text alone. Moreover, the spatial dimensions apparent in Scève's *dizains* are multiplied when considered in juxtaposition to the woodcut images.

Délie, Scève's first masterpiece, appears before the polemical scrutiny of the second half of the sixteenth-century, initiated by Joachim du Bellay's manifesto[3] and enforced by the poets of the *Pléiade*. In an effort to bring about renewal and revolution in French literature, *Pléiade* poet Pierre de Ronsard argues that he will be known as the pioneer of Renaissance poetry: "tu m'appelleras le premier auteur Lirique François, et celui qui a guidé les autres au chemin de si honneste labeur" (1993, 994). Ronsard claims that, in his poetry, he presents a "stile apart, sens apart, euvre apart" (995) - a style separate from all others who came before him (Horace, Pindar). However, I argue that Scève succeeds in the establishment of a new style (*stile apart*) with the 1544 publication of *Délie* - five years before du Bellay's *Defense* (1549).

It is important to remember that, although Scève comes from a powerful and influential family, as an author, he is judged solely on the merit of his poetry. The excellence of his poetic verse is born out of his formation that stresses classical literature and training in the art of rhetoric; at his time, Scève is admired as the pre-eminent poet of the French Renaissance. Therefore, I give a brief sketch of his biography before beginning the literature review, which considers the reception of Scève's work during his life, his posthumous destiny until the late nineteenth-century and the last one-hundred years.

---

[3] In 1549, inspired by Sperone Speroni's *Dialogo delle lingue* (1542), du Bellay writes *Defense et illustration de la langue française*, a polemical work of literary theory that argues for the use of the vernacular French in literature and expresses the poetic principles of the *Pléiade*. Du Bellay praises François I for declaring that all public documents must be written in the vernacular French language as well as Latin in the ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts (1539).

Many aspects of Maurice Scève's life remain unknown. We know that he is born around 1500 to wealthy, well-respected parents in the city of Lyon, France.[4] Scève studies Latin, Greek, Italian, Spanish; he reads Virgil and *The Greek Anthology*.[5] More importantly, because of his command of poetic language in *Délie*, Scève masters the arts of the *Grands Rhétoriqueurs*, the *Marotiques* and the *Néo-latins*.[6] He takes minor orders in his youth, which may account for the fact that he never marries. He receives a doctorate in Law (*doctorat ès droits*) and with strong ties to *l'Hôtel de Ville* (his father is a municipal magistrate and ambassador to the court) he is well prepared for a career in the government of Lyon.

However, Scève prefers the lifestyle of the poet and humanist, which he comes to know by frequenting the numerous literary and humanist circles such as that of his cousin Guillaume Scève, a Neo-Latin, Lyonnais poet. Between 1510 and 1530, French printers publish mainly classical texts;[7] hence, the Renaissance humanists pore over Cicero, Catullus, Terence. Yet, at the same time, literature is engaged in a debate between the

---

[4] During the Renaissance, Lyon is a thriving, cosmopolitan city center for trade and banking and the gateway from the Italian Renaissance (c 1400-1600) to the rest of France. Home to Italian and German printers, poets, philologists, and *hommes de lettres*, Lyon is the site of the "first" Renaissance. For a complete history, see the official website of Lyon: http://www.lyon.fr/vdl/sections/fr/decouverte/histoire [accessed 29 November 2009].

[5] A collection of poems, mostly epigrams, that span the classical and Byzantine periods of Greek Literature. The earliest known anthology dates to the first-century BCE, while Janus Lascaris in Florence first prints the work in 1494.

[6] *Grands Rhétoriqueurs* (1460-1520) include Jean Meschinot, Jean Robertet, Jean Molinet, Jean Lemaire de Belges, Guillaume Crétin and Jean Marot (father of Clément Marot) - hence the eponymous group *Marotiques*. The ornate eloquence of the *Rhétoriqueurs* prose and poetry stems from imitating Cicero and Quintilian. Neo-Latin is the form of Latin used after 1500 CE.

[7] Saulnier (1948. repr., 2003, 30), henceforth cited as 2003.

works of the past (Antiquity through the Middle Ages) and the future, the creation of great literature in the French vernacular. Therefore, Scève's formation is heavily influenced by the Graeco-Roman tradition, medieval romance and allegory, and Italian literature (Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio).[8]

In 1533, while studying in Avignon, Scève achieves his first act of notoriety: he supposedly discovers the tomb of Petrarch's Laura. The Lyonnais printer Jean de Tournes, in the preface to his 1545 *Il Petrarca*,[9] recounts that Scève (approached by two Italian noblemen to assist in the relocation of the tomb) uncovers Laura's burial site in a Franciscan chapel. Next to some small bones, they find a sheet inscribed with four letters MLMI, which Scève interprets as *Madonna Laura Morta Iace* (Here Lies Dead Madonna Laura). Evidently, King François I is intrigued by the news and thus travels to Avignon, views the tomb and recites an epitaph: an eight line, decasyllabic poem likely ghost-written by Scève himself (Sieburth 2007, 9-10, 12). This story is dubious at best; indeed, Rabelais satirizes Scève's discovery of Laura's tomb in the first chapter of *Gargantua*, published in 1534 by Lyonnais printer François Juste.[10] Nonetheless, this account gives Scève the recognition he needs to succeed as a contemporary poet, as we shall see in the following literature review.

---

[8] Etienne Dolet is the first to discern the genius of Scève's poetry; see Defaux (2004, tome I, xxxiii).

[9] De Tournes' Italian text is reproduced in Emile Picot, *Les Français italianisants au XVIe siècle* (Paris: Champion, 1906).

[10] Parturier makes this connection in his edition of *Délie* (Paris: Hachette, 1916). In relation to Rabelais, Sieburth comments: "the [first] chapter recounts how Gargantua's genealogy, inscribed on elm bark, was unearthed from a great bronze tomb buried in a meadow in the Touraine" (2007, 49).

When Maurice Scève begins his literary career, he is immediately respected as a poet of the finest caliber - especially by the young ladies, *les écolières*, his poetry students. Among these *jolies dames*, Louise Labé (*La Belle Cordière*)[11] and Pernette du Guillet (with whom Scève supposedly falls in love) take an active role in *L'École Lyonnaise de la poésie* (1540-1560) - the circle of Lyonnais poets and humanists led by Scève.[12] His *Blason du Sourcil* wins the contest for *blasons* of the female body organized by Clément Marot in 1534, which earns him courtly recognition. Indicative of the belief that Scève would lead France to the same literary greatness already achieved in Italy, Jean de Tournes dedicates his Italian language printed editions to Scève in 1545 and 1547.[13] In the words of his contemporaries, Scève is an: "'esprit divin,' 'Cygne nouveau,' 'ornement de la France' selon Du Bellay, 'grave et profond en invancions' (Peletier du Mans), 'plus divin qu'humaine creature' (Charles de Sainte-Marthe), 'docte,' 'très-érudit,' véritable 'Oracle Delphique' (Antoine Du Moulin) (Alduy 2006, 17).

The fame Scève sees during his life, regrettably, is not mirrored in the centuries following his death around 1564. As early as the 1570s he is almost forgotten and references to his name and his works are sparse in the following years. The few comments that do appear in the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-centuries describe Scève as obscure, a creator of neologisms, a disciple of Ronsard (an anachronism since

---

[11] Mireille Huchon (2006) argues that Labé is a fictional character created by Scève, de Tournes and others. Huchon attributes most of Labé's poetry to Scève. Reviews of Huchon's work may be found at http://www.siefar.org/.

[12] Inspired by the works of Plato and Petrarch, Antoine Héroët, Guillaume des Autels and Pontus de Tyard are also members of this group.

[13] Jean de Tournes' 1545 printing of *Il Petrarcha* and 1547 printing of *Il Dante* are dedicated: "Au nom moins vertueux que docte Maurice Scève" (Defaux 2004, tome I, xv).

Ronsard first publishes after Scève's *Délie*) and an intermediary between the Middle Ages and the *Pléiade*.[14] Despite the brilliance of his other texts,[15] *Délie*, "une vision fragmentaire et confuse," is the only work cited (Saulnier 2003, 546). Moreover, Scève's name is essentially absent from French literary histories in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries. In short, Scève becomes one insignificant name among many in the various catalogues and repertories of French Renaissance authors, which do not recognize him as a great poet.

However, in 1828, *Délie* resurfaces - although not in a positive light. Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve, in his *Tableau*, notes: "Maurice Scève est peu connu, et sa *Délie* à peu près illisible... mais ce n'étaient là que des fleurs artificielles, et la France n'était pas à beaucoup près purgée du fumier de Villon."[16] Sainte-Beuve's comment on François Villon indicates his questionable judgment of literature but, unfortunately, his critique of *Délie* as illegible has lasting impact: Scève is ignored for over sixty years. In comparison to the "great" Renaissance authors Marot, Ronsard and Montaigne, Scève (judged on *Délie* alone) is obscure, inferior and the crudest author of the sixteenth-century (Saulnier 2003, 546).

---

[14] Saulnier 2003, 545.

[15] Scève's other major works are as follows: *Arion, eglogue sur le trespas de feu Monsieur le Daulphin* (1536), an elegy written on the death of prince François l dauphin, first-born son of King François I; *Saulsaye, eglogue de la vie solitaire* (1547), an eclogue inspired partly by the death of Pernette du Guillet; *Microcosme* (1562), an encyclopedic epic poem that recounts the genesis and fall of man, is Scève's second masterpiece. Since these works do not contain images, I do not examine them in the present study.

[16] Cited in Saulnier (2003, 256, n77).

At the end of the nineteenth-century, Ferdinand Brunetière interprets Scève as the father of Symbolism and, "un poète-pathos aussi pénible que Mallarmé."[17] This phrase has resounding consequences because, even today, Maurice Scève is known best by the sobriquet "Mallarmé de la Renaissance"; this may be because readers find Scève and Mallarmé equally oblique and obscure.[18] Brunetière is the first to discuss the structure of Scève's work in relation to cabalism and cabalistic numerology. After an initial *huitain*, the signature device "Souffrir non Souffrir,"[19] and five *dizains*, *Délie* contains fifty woodcut images, each followed by nine *dizains*, save the final woodcut, which is followed by three *dizains*. This structure of *dizains* (449 in total), Richard Sieburth comments, "can be mathematically expressed as follows:

$$5 + (49 \text{ x } 9) + 3, \text{ or } 5 + (72 \text{ x } 32) + 3 = 449$$

... modern scholarship has largely dismissed such esoteric numerological interpretations and chosen to focus instead on the work's more linguistic principles of organization" (2007, 27). Gérard Defaux observes that the sum of 449 *dizains* corresponds to the number of times the name of Christ appears in the *Epistles* of Saint Paul as noted by Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples in 1523.[20] However, Defaux points out that Scève composes *Délie* "non pour chanter Dieu, mais Délie, non pour le *Créateur*, mais une *créature*"

---

[17] Cited in Saulnier (2003, 548-549).

[18] Criticism exists to confirm and deny the similarities between Scève and Mallarmé, see Alduy (2006, 244).

[19] Scève signs none of his manuscripts; rather, he marks his works with enigmatic devices: "Souffrir non Souffrir" for *Délie* and *Saulsaye*, "Non si non la" for *Microcosme* (Sieburth 2007, 50).

[20] In d'Etaples' translation of the *Nouveau Testament* (Paris: Simone de Colines); see Defaux (2004, tome I, lxxxv).

(2004, tome II, lxxxvi). Scève, in my view, inverts the mystical tradition of numerology to laud the erotic appeal (*eros*) of the Beloved, not her divine virtues (*agape*).

To bring the reader up to the twenty-first-century, I now discuss the criticism on Scève from the last one hundred years. The current state of research on Scève is founded in the first decade of the twentieth-century (Baur 1906), while Eugene Parturier's critical edition of *Délie* appears in 1916. However, reading Scève's work only becomes fashionable during the period of time *l'entre deux-guerres*, when Valéry Larbaud remarks, in 1925, that although the poet is obscure, he is nonetheless profound, that his poetry is ingenious and that he is not simply an intermediary between poets like Marot and Ronsard. Larbaud writes: "Scève est le premier en date des poètes français modernes qui s'est élevé délibérement jusqu'au style sublime tout en évitant l'éloquence."[21] Larbaud's notes are published in the literary journal *Commerce*, which he co-edited with Paul Valéry and Léon-Paul Fargue; with Larbaud's appreciation, Scève begins at last to regain the prestige he enjoyed during his lifetime.

Larbaud's favorable criticism on Scève reaches no more than an elite few. Nonetheless, his remarks in *Commerce* play a significant role in the future of Scève's reception. Printed alongside the poetry of Osip Mandelstam, Boris Pasternak and Francis Ponge, (Giuseppi Ungaretti and Hugo von Hofmannsthal), Scève seems modern and, after the Surrealist movement in Paris of the 1920s, scholars begin to take Scève seriously.[22] Surrealist artists like Max Ernst extend the problems inherent in language

---

[21] Larbaud first encounters Scève at age 16 while on a train ride to Lyon. He brings along *Délie* and *Serres chaudes* by Maeterlinck (1895). In the contrast of these two "Maurices," Larbaud gains his predilection for Scève (Saulnier 2003, 553).

[22] Larbaud's comments in *Commerce* reappear in his *Notes sur Maurice Scève* (Paris: La Porte Etroite, 1926) and *Ce vice impuni, la lecture, Domaine Français* (Paris:

into the realm of visual images and, hence, create art that functions in similar ways to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century devices and emblems. For Ernst, "the emblem is a form of unusual creative intelligence, the ability to generate effective metaphors. Ernst's art is played out precisely as reference to the devices of synechdochic, condensed, visual emblems" (Legge 2000, 241).

The reception of the Surrealist movement gives scholars an entry point into Scève's *Délie* that previously did not exist. Mario Praz, in 1939, helps bring the Lyonnais poet to the forefront:

> Maurice Scève, in *Delie* (1544), set gems of devices into the fine gold of his verse, devices which were actual crystallizations of conceits of love lyrics. His fondness for abstruseness and allegory has been termed medieval; and indeed, his book is, in a way, a *documentum de mottis obscuris Amoris*, "which we do not wish to be understood by those who are with us" after the fashion of the *Documenti d'Amore* of Francesco da Barberino (1264-1348). For the chief aim of the device was, as we have observed, to represent one's own idea in a form which should not be manifest to all and sundry.[23]

Praz suggests that if *Délie* seems arcane or recondite, it is because Scève makes great efforts to present text and images that must be decoded by the viewer/reader. Moreover, Praz finds his work original, praises the literary and iconographic merit of *Délie* and demonstrates that Scève's woodcuts are the source for several emblems in Daniel Heinsius' *Emblemata amatoria* (2001, 89-98). After World War II, Scève becomes an object of fascination for scholars, poets and novelists alike.[24] The majority of scholarly

---

Gallimard, 1941). For more on Larbaud's influence on Scève's readership see, Vallas (1990).

[23] *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery* (1939. repr., 2001, 83), henceforth cited as 2001.

[24] Poets: John Ashbury's 1968 "Fragment" contains fifty Scève inspired *dizains* and emblems (by Alex Katz); in 1987, Philippe Jacottet applauds the musical quality of

criticism on *Délie* in the following years is situated within the context of a specific theme. For the most part, these thematic studies, while important for Scève scholarship, are not immediately relevant to my dissertation that examines vision and the gaze in the text and woodcut images. Therefore, in the following paragraphs I delineate first the most significant works on Scève and *Délie*, then the major criticism relevant to the dissertation and finally the supporting scholarship for my specific analysis.

Various aspects of Scèves' poetics receive criticism in the twentieth- and twenty-first-centuries that contribute significantly to the state of research, although they are not directly germane to my study. The role of intertextuality in *Délie* receives a large amount of criticism, especially from the works of Dante (Mathieu-Castellani 2004), Petrarch (DellaNeva 1983) and Marot (Defaux 1994). As mentioned above, some scholars focus on the structure of Scève's work (Duval 1980, Fenoaltea 1982), while others examine the poetics and style (Weber 1948, Runyon 1973). There are specific readings[25] of *Délie* that apply, for example, a Freudian (Risset 1971) or Lacanian analysis (Frelick 1994, de Rocher 1987, 1991). There are also critical works that consider ideologies (Skenazi 1992) and themes (Hunkeler 2003).

Since the topics discussed above receive excellent evaluations, I do not focus on them specifically. However, some major critical works are applicable to my investigation. Verdun-L. Saulnier's seminal work *Maurice Scève* (1948-1949), a complete biographical and critical account, is obligatory for any reader of our Lyonnais

---

Délie in "Maurice Scève" (Alduy 2006, 113). Novelists: Quignard (1979); Paul Auster translates *dizains* 44, 59 and 79 of *Délie* in the literary magazine *Pequod*, III, 1, (1979, 60-61).

[25] Italian scholar Enzo Guidici contributes many works on Scève. However, the majority of his works are only accessible to Italian speakers.

poet and remains an essential research tool. The contributions of Dorothy Coleman (1964, 1975, 1981) on the background of Scève's images and linguistic metaphors prove indispensable for successive attempts to understand his genius. The image-rich works of Paul Ardouin (1974, 1987) provide an extremely fruitful foundation for a study of the images present in *Délie*'s woodcuts; indeed, his research has a great influence on my own interpretive strategies in the present study. Following from Ardouin, I now focus on the criticism that is most beneficial to the dissertation.

Scève scholars argue that the gaze (*le regard*) functions as a major trope: "l'obscurité scévienne naît de l'exigence du regard" (Saulnier 2003, 298), "Scève est d'abord poète du regard" (Staub 1967, 37), "assurément, la métaphore visuelle ici [*Délie*] est omniprésente" (Havelange 1998, 184). However, the criticism focusing on vision in *Délie* exists in the form of short articles or minor citations in larger works on topics like Renaissance poetry or culture. To my knowledge, no full-scale work analyzes the specific role of sight in the images.

Therefore, my dissertation examines the role of vision and the function of the gaze in the woodcut images. There is a lack of scholarship addressing the images in *Délie* because of a debate concerning the selection of the woodcuts: until recently, no evidence existed to verify that Scève played a role in the choice of images. However, Ardouin suggests that Scève himself carefully chose the woodcuts: "l'édition lyonnaise de 1544 est la seule authentiquement scévienne car elle a été composée sur le manuscrit du poète, et illustrée par les bois-gravés choisis par ses soins" (1987, 273). In addition, Defaux confirms Ardouin's claim: "dans la conception et la disposition de ses emblèmes; dans la composition des devises. Il [Scève] est le seul responsable de sa *Délie*, son seul

maître d'œuvre. C'est très certainement lui, lui seul, qui a tout conçu et tout mis en place" (2004, tome II, 270). The assertions of these prominent scholars open a new path for the study of the woodcuts in *Délie* as a fundamental element.

Since Ardouin and Defaux insist on the predominance of the 1544 edition, my dissertation considers only the original Lyonnais printing. The posthumous 1564 edition of *Délie* contains a different set of woodcuts and several variations on the text; hence, I do not examine this second edition. In the edition located in the *Bibliothèque municipale de Lyon*,[26] I notice that each emblem occupies the same amount of physical space on the page as each *dizain* [figure 1.3]. To me, this suggests that the woodcuts and poems may function as a substitute for one another in a manner similar to Horace's *Ut pictura poesis* (as is painting, so is poetry).[27] Brooke Donaldson suggests that in the Renaissance, visual art and literary expression have much in common: "Renaissance artists considered the two art forms to be quite similar. In fact, *peinture* denoted both a painting and a written description, just as an *histoire* could be a painting or drawing, as well as a textual argument" (2008, 90).

The dissertation addresses two essential questions concerning Scève's 1544 *Délie*: 1) what role does vision play in the work? 2) what is the function of the gaze in the text/image woodcuts? In order to give serious attention to these questions, it is necessary to limit the choice of woodcuts to those that portray moments of seeing in the image or the motto. During the selection process, I noticed that, among the fifty woodcut images

---

[26] I want to thank Yves Montrozier, Bibliothèque municipale de Lyon, Part-Dieu, for welcoming me into the rare book archive (*fonds anciens*) in March 2009, to consult the original 1544 edition of *Délie Obiect De Plus Haulte Vertu*, Rés 355912.

[27] On Horace's theory in the French Renaissance, see Russell (1972).

(referring to science and alchemy, Christianity, common life, animals, outdoor activities), all moments of sight portray scenes common in medieval legend or Graeco-Roman mythology. Scève presents highly recognizable images for the Renaissance reader; thus, these scenes do not pose a problem for his contemporaries. However, the modern reader/viewer of *Délie* is not familiar with the traditions of representation from the Middle Ages or Antiquity depicted in Scève's ostensibly cryptic work.

Therefore, my approach is necessarily interdisciplinary: by supplying the relevant information, I provide an interpretive strategy for the modern day reader. I argue that interpretation of the text/image structure in *Délie* is possible today if the viewer/reader is familiar with the legend or myth Scève represents. Moreover, I propose that Scève alters these themes to illuminate the authority of the gaze in his text. My strategy encompasses authors from intellectual history (Plato, Aristotle, Lucan, Apollodorus, Pliny) and Graeco-Roman poetry (Homer, Ovid). I employ Art Historical criticism (Gombrich, Camille, Hassig/Strickland, Tesnière) and I cite medieval and Renaissance literature (Dante, Petrarch, Horapollo, Conti). In search of structural paradigms of vision, I consult works on critical and literary theory (Starobinski, Gandelman, Havelange). There are works that prove especially useful for Scève's specific linguistic and pictorial structures of vision and the gaze (Donaldson-Evans 1978, Baker 1986, Giordano 1990, Tsan 2004, Donaldson 2006, 2008) and full recognition must be given to Cécile Alduy for her comprehensive bibliography of Maurice Scève (2006).

In terms of method of analysis, I argue that the integration of language into the figural space creates woodcut images that are dependent upon intellectual operations for their own construction. Since Scève's woodcuts more closely resemble the Italian

tradition, I employ the term *impresa* instead of emblem.[28] The text and figures in *Délie* are mutually significant for interpretation because the actions inside the images become one. The visual and verbal images call for a specific type of gaze that simultaneously reads and views the symbolic elements of the woodcut.

In traditional emblem books such as Alciato's *Emblematum Liber*, the image has clearly distinguished figures and the dark and light contrast directs the viewer's gaze to the subject of the image. In Scève's work, however, there is a more diffuse touch to the lines and a lack of sharp contours, and the viewer is compelled to search for the figures.[29] The woodcuts in *Délie* do not present strong contrasts of the worked and un-worked areas, which create the hardness of forms and clarity of the elements in Alciato. Scève's nuanced approach requires the active participation of the beholder to discern the disparate elements. Moreover, the reader/viewer must recall the myth or legend depicted in the woodcut since the title is indicated only in the back matter of *Délie*.

For the present study, I consult two critical editions of the 1544 *Délie*.[30] One is that of I. D. McFarlane (1966), which is intended as an introduction to Scève for Anglophones. Although the introduction and notes to his edition are useful, the woodcuts are enlarged and may give the reader a false sense of the physical size of Scève's text as a whole. Therefore, I also consult the most recent publication of *Délie*: Gérard Defaux (2004). Defaux's two-volume edition is by far the most exhaustive critical work on *Délie*

---

[28] See chapter 1 for a discussion of the differences between emblems and *imprese / devises*.

[29] For a detailed description of the technique of creating a woodcut, see the two-volume work: Arthur M. Hind, *An Introduction to a History of Woodcut: With a Detailed Survey of Work Done in the Fifteenth Century*, (New York: Dover Publications, 1963).

[30] See Sieburth (2007) for an English translation of certain *dizains*.

available today. In addition to the 238-page introduction and the searching commentary on each woodcut and *dizain*, Defaux almost flawlessly reproduces the 1544 original edition printed in Lyon by Antoine Constantin. In a 2005 review, Donaldson-Evans praises Defauxs' efforts: "it will be the benchmark edition for decades to come...an indispensable tool for every serious scholar of Scève's *Délie*" (1352-1353).

Legend and myth, Starobinski asserts, radically affirm that seeing is a dangerous act and, in *Délie*, references from medieval legend and Graeco-Roman mythology confirm this assertion. I argue that vision in Scève's work leads to doubt, ambiguity, fear and death. To illustrate my point, I devote two chapters to medieval legend and two chapters to mythology. In chapter one, "L'Emblesme et la Lycorne," I define the emblematic genre and distinguish between emblems and devices (*devises/imprese*) before presenting a brief case study of the shifting suggestive nature of the unicorn. I then introduce the medieval bestiary from the *Physiologus* tradition and quickly move to an analysis of the two unicorn images in *Délie*. In chapter two, "Monstrous Visions," I compare the Italian portrayal of the Beloved to Scève's Délie and discuss the theory of the gaze in the sixteenth-century. I examine the creation of the basilisk monster and highlight the representations of monstrosity in both images (basilisk and the mirror) and text. Chapter three, "Délie's Ophidian Forms," analyzes the function of symbols in *Délie* and I show that the serpent symbol, present from the era of Ancient Egypt (Hathor, Cleopatra) through mythology (Medusa) to the medieval bestiaries and the Renaissance *Hieroglyphica* (basilisk), represents the Beloved Délie. In addition, I demonstrate how Scève creates the figured presence of Medusa, although her image itself never appears. Finally, in chapter four, "Le reflet: Problématique de la Réflexion," I provide an

interpretive viewing/reading strategy for the Narcissus image and *dizain*, which Scève interprets from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Furthermore, I show that the story of Echo and Narcissus in *Délie* points to the problem of deception and leads to the loss of knowledge. In "The Dangerous Act of Seeing," I examine the problematic role of the gaze in Scève's images, text and the interplay between the two and I show that seeing the self, seeing the Other and seeing the Other within the self provokes, above all, a complex nexus of desire and horror in *Délie objet de plus haulte vertu*.

Chapter 1

L'Emblesme et La Lycorne

Introduction

When Maurice Scève first publishes *Délie, objet de plus haute vertu* (1544), European society believes that the Sun revolves around the Earth. Nicolas Copernicus publishes his treatise *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium* (*The Revolution of Celestial Spheres*) in 1543, but the heliocentric view of the world is not immediately accepted because it opposes the authority of the Church and Aristotle.[1] Renaissance society is not ready to accept the heliocentric worldview, moreover, because it contradicts the evidence of the senses: the Sun appears to circle the Earth and, until Copernicus, scarcely anyone challenged this view.[2] The culture is steeped in superstition and, hence, myth and legends are accepted as reality. Science and reason are dominated by medieval theology and cosmology (geocentric, Ptolemaic universe), which places the Christian God in control of the spheres of the heavens.

The confluence of many intersecting currents of writing and thought, themselves enriched by traditions in a state of adaptation and metamorphosis, inform the creative works of the sixteenth-century. Contrasting and often conflicting sets of symbols and

---

[1] Aristotle maintains the view that the Earth is at rest in the center of the universe in *De Caelo* (*On the Heavens* 350 BCE).

[2] James Connor observes: "by Kepler's day there were at least four distinct models of the universe...First there was the official cosmos, the geocentric, finite universe of Aristotle and Ptolemy, reiterated by St. Thomas Aquinas. Then there was the infinite cosmos of Nicholas of Cusa [1440], with God at the everlasting, omnipresent center. Third, there was the "heliostatic" universe of Copernicus [1543], in which the planets, including the earth, orbited the sun, which was fixed in place. And finally there was the model resurrected by Tycho Brahe [1574], first discussed by Plato's student Heracleides Ponticus, in which the sun orbited the earth and the planets orbited the sun" (2004,60). On the relation between Cusa and *Délie,* see Staub (1967), and Fenoaltea (1982).

codes are available to the Renaissance artists.[3] Scève publishes *Délie* early in the era of emblem literature; the first emblem books arise in the 1530s and 1540s - a period when thought and sign systems are in a state of transformation. I suggest that Scève's *Délie*, an elaborate masterpiece dedicated to a single Lady and composed of images and poetic verse in the form of the rarely used *dizain*, is thus an ideal representation of Renaissance culture at the time since it masterfully combines many varied forms; including a vulgarized philosophy of platonic love.[4] Nonetheless, most consider Scève's work obscure because it is difficult, complex and requires contemplation.[5]

In an effort to illuminate some of the darkness in Scève's "obscure" text, I propose an analysis of *Délie* that is, in many ways, unique in comparison to previous studies. Emblem books, books of *blasons* or *imprese* (such as *Délie*) and Renaissance poetics have a complex derivation from medieval bestiaries and from the Renaissance interpretation of Egyptian hieroglyphics.[6] Hence, to appreciate Scève's ingenious work

---

[3] Russell suggests some of these systems are: "Horapollo's *Hieroglyphics*, bestiary lore from Pliny and the *Physiologus* tradition, astrological symbolism and the store of commonplace and proverbial wisdom that was so important in the epistemology of the late Middle Ages" (1985, 172-173). On the popularity of hieroglyphics in sixteenth-century France, Russell comments: "the Renaissance fashion of pseudo-hieroglyphics turned every painting into a potential ideogram" (1985, 83).

[4] On vulgar platonic love in *Délie* see, Rieu (2008).

[5] On the notion of obscurity in Scève's text, see my chapter 4.

[6] Similar to emblems intended to instruct virtue or give practical advice, medieval bestiaries: "offered behavioral advice for people who sought to live their lives more perfectly in the eyes of God" (Hassig 1995, xv). In Horapollo's *Hieroglyphica*, pictures signify a concept and: "present the intelligible by means of the visible, using the particular to point to the universal or the essence of something" (Coleman 1981, 1). The combined influence of bestiaries and hieroglyphics results in a symbolic system of representation that is special and unique to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century France.

we must begin with a common platform of intertextuality and an interdisciplinary approach that considers the influential literary and visual arts in Scève's era.

However, bestiaries of the Middle Ages are studied mainly by scholars trained in Art History, and Egyptology by archaeologists. Art Historian Judi Loach asserts: "the majority of scholarship on emblems comes from academics whose background and training is in literature. Thus, most methodologies developed for the study of emblems are those devised for analyzing the written word or the printed page" (1996, 1). Although interdisciplinary studies are beginning to emerge in the field of Renaissance emblem literature,[7] art historical analyses of Scève's *Délie* remain rare.[8] Therefore, I propose an analysis of Scève's work that combines art history, literary theory, close reading of text/image and hermeneutical analysis.

This interdisciplinary approach is how I conceive that we must continue in future studies on Scève's *Délie*. To illustrate my point, I begin with *impresa* 1 that shows a legendary creature that acquires multiple layers of signification in writing and images over the centuries and is thus perfect for my analysis: the unicorn. Moreover, Defaux points out that the unicorn in the first *impresa*, reappears at the center of the work: "au couple Amant-Délie de E1 succèdent donc le solipsisme et la pure spécularité de E26, la

---

[7] See, Alison Adams and Laurence Grove, *Emblems and art history: nine essays*, (Glasgow emblem studies, v. 1, Glasgow: Dept. of French, University of Glasgow, 1996); Dietmar Peil, "On the question of a Physiologus tradition in emblematic art and writing," *Animals in the Middle Ages: A Book of Essays*, Ed. Nona C. Flores (New York: Garland Pub, 1996) 103-130.

[8] See, Vladimir Juren, "Scève et Raphaël" *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, LVI, 1, (1994): 83-87; Jerry Nash, "The Notion and Meaning of Art in the *Délie*," *Romanic Review*, LXXI, (1980): 28-46; Jerry Nash, "Renaissance Values in Love and Art: The Emblematic Meaning of Scève's *Délie* 449," *Allegorica: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Literature* XVI (1995): 17-29.

conscience effrayée de soi" (2004, tome II, 23). The position of the unicorn at the beginning and center (*I* 26) of *Délie* highlights the creature's significance and informs the reader's interpretation in terms of the sacrifice for vision and self-reflection. On the topic of medieval beasts, Ann Payne writes: "most famous of all the fabulous beasts, the unicorn was also one of the few imaginary creatures (the basilisk was another), to survive the Renaissance and remain credible in later centuries" (1990, 27). Through a mistake in translation and medieval allegorical interpretation, the unicorn comes to occupy a privileged space in the Christian church.

To articulate effectively all the necessary information for the reader, this chapter is composed of two distinct sections. For an entry point into Scève's multi-layered work, I begin chapter 1 with an introduction to the emblem genre and a distinction between the standard book of emblems (*emblesmes / emblèmes*) and *Délie* - a book composed of poetic verse and fifty *imprese* or devices (*devises*). I follow up with a discussion of the unicorn's literary history because, as I show, natural science turns to myth: an animal reported to live in the East (most likely the rhinoceros) becomes a fantastic, white horse with a magical horn. It is important to consider the shift in the unicorn's history because it is symbolic of the culture in the Middle Ages, which, in turn, influences Scève's specific style of representation. By witnessing the manner in which the unicorn transforms, I suggest that we may begin to see the ways that Scève manipulates legend and myth.

The second section engages *Délie* more specifically although I offer a succinct overview of the medieval bestiary. The first *impresa* (*I* 1) depicts a scene in which the unicorn, wounded with an arrow, rests in the lap of a female figure. Traditionally, these

elements symbolize the hunt of the unicorn or the Incarnation of Christ. However, the motto suggests that the image pertains to the loss of life as a result of vision. The textual motto and the pictorial elements in the *impresa* work collectively to redirect the emphasis in Scève's representation. Consequently, I argue that the unicorn is the tortured poet/lover stricken by the glance of the Lady. The other unicorn appears at the center of *Délie* in *impresa* 26, which depicts the animal near a pool of water. Customarily, this image symbolizes the magical powers of the unicorn's horn - that the unicorn dips its horn in a fountain or stream to cleanse the water for other animals to drink. Nonetheless, the posture of the unicorn and the motto indicate that seeing the self is a terrifying act. Thus, I show that in Scève's system, the unicorn represents monstrous transformation and the terror of self-reflection. Therefore, I begin with a necessary introduction to emblem theory before taking up the history of the unicorn.

Emblem Theory

While serving as a commentary on the cultural life of the Renaissance, the emblem tradition offers a complex way of compiling, storing and communicating knowledge.[9] Emblems contribute to discourse on numerous subjects such as ethics,

[9] Russell claims that the first emblems are intended to serve a didactic function and that the composition of word and image afforded by the emblem structure aids the viewer. The mnemonic qualities of the text and the illustration were particularly helpful for the Renaissance reader (1985, 76-111), who presents an interesting subject since the fourteenth- and fifteenth-centuries are influenced by the invention of the printing press. The new print culture contributed to increased rates of literacy and the dissemination of literary texts such as emblem books. However, the printing press also contributed to the shift from oral to print culture. This shift entails a decline in the ability to retain information in the memory and thus recite it orally. At a time when mnemonic devices were necessary to aid in memory, emblem books are useful since they rely on both the visual and discursive registers.

politics and religion. Russell comments on their significance: "emblems… were taken very seriously and understood as a particularly potent means of communication, combining the discursiveness of a text with a pictorial representation" (1994, 167-168).

The Glasgow University Emblem Project website, a leading source on emblem literature, highlights the status and intricate nature of the emblem tradition:

> An Emblem is a symbolic picture with accompanying text, of a type which developed in the sixteenth-century and enjoyed an enormous vogue for the next 200 years or more, when several thousand emblem books issued from printing presses throughout Europe. Along with personal imprese - devices that expressed the values or aspirations of a particular individual rather than a general moral - emblems communicate moral, political or religious values in ways that have to be decoded by the viewer.[10]

The Glasgow website mentions that "emblem literature" is a label for many kinds of texts that combine images and words.[11] Among the variety of texts, *Délie* is recognized as a book of *imprese*, an Italian form in which emphasis is given to an individual rather than an intended moral.

In France, the emblem tradition is influenced most by Andrea Alciato, the *pater et princeps* of the emblem genre, and his first emblem book *Emblematum Liber*.[12]

---

[10] Glasgow University Emblem Website http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/ [accessed 31 October 2008].

[11] *The Study and Digitisation of Italian Emblems*, University of Glasgow http://www.italianemblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/ [accessed 12 November 2009].

[12] The term *emblematum* is from the Greek *émblēma*, Latin *emblēma* – a piece of inlay or mosaic, an ornament. Russell observes that the term *emblème* did not enter the French language until the sixteenth-century (1985, 79). Andreas Alciatus (1492-1550) was an Italian humanist, jurist and writer. In 1531, the publisher Heinrich Steyner (Augsburg), produces an unauthorized first print edition compiled from a manuscript of Latin poems, which Alciato dedicates to his friend Conrad Peutinger under the title, *Viri Clarissimi D. Andreae Alciati Iurisconsultiss. Mediol. Ad D. Chonradum Peutingerum Augustanum, Iurisconsultum Emblematum Liber*. Christian Wechel (Paris) publishes the first edition authorized by Alciato (a book of 104 Latin emblems) in 1534: *Andreae Alciati Emblematum Libellus – Andrea Alciati's Little Book of Emblems*.

Following Alciato's example, the traditional emblem is a three-part depiction composed of a title, an image and a motto. The title designates the image and the third element, the motto, defines the relation between the title and the image, which may not be immediately obvious. The written title and the image represent the intended meaning of the emblem, which the motto confirms. In this manner, the three-part structure reinforces the emblem's intended message. The 1536 Latin/French publication of Alciato's *Livret des emblemes* is the first translation to appear, indicating the popularity of the genre in France.[13]

The earliest emblems (in the tradition of Alciato) intend a general lesson; Russell claims that the emblem: "is considered effective for 'teaching virtue' because of its mnemonic qualities; the moral lesson contained in the epigram could be attached to the illustrated scene" (1985, 83). However, Liselotte Dieckmann claims: "contrary to Alciati's [sic] intention, emblem-books became handbooks for poets and paintings, as well as for anybody who wanted to 'signify' something symbolically" (1970, 54). It seems that, being open to any author or artist who wants to "signify," Scève is the first to stray from the tradition common among emblem books of the time. Instead of creating a standard book composed of title-image-motto in which the emblem instructs didactic lessons, Scève positions 50 *imprese* among 449 *dizains* of fine poetry dedicated to a single Lady and the suffering she causes him. Thomas M. Greene remarks: "Scève's *Délie* appears to have been the first collection of poetry containing a certain type of pictorial illustration...[that is] original and to my knowledge unique" (1986, 49).

[13] Grove comments that the French were more receptive to Alciato's work than any other culture in Europe: "it is perhaps primarily in France that the emblem and device were most fully integrated into the culture of early modern society" (2000, xiii).

"*Délie*," Henry Bruce von Ohlen stresses, "appears at a time of great controversy and experimentation in the field of verbal-visual relations" (1976, 176). This is extensively due to the shift from oral to print culture that occurred in the sixteenth-century. In a discussion of the significance of the integration of words and images in Renaissance print culture, Walter J. Ong argues that because of the mottoes: "which are essential to the integrity of the emblematic ensemble, the actions inside the pictures are involved in the surrounding typographical space and become in a way one with it" (1959, 425). Scève's images (which are a combination of text and image) are the result of the creation of a schematic space that depends on intellectual operations for its very constitution. The integration of language into the figural space bonds word and image so that the signification of either realm (verbal or visual) is dependent on the other. In other words, the text and the images in Scève's *Délie* are equally significant for the interpretation of the work.

Scève's particular system of signification between text and image leads scholars to question the status of the "emblem" in *Délie.*[14] Coleman demonstrates that the text-image woodcuts in *Délie* resemble the Italian *imprese* (French *devises*[15]) more than the

---

[14] *LA TENEUR DU Privilege* of the 1544 edition of Délie reads: "IL est permis par Privilege du Roy, à Antoine Constantin, marchant Libraire demourant à Lyon, de imprimer, ou faire imprimer par telz imprimeurs des Villes de Paris, Lyon, et aultres que bon luy semblera, ce present Livre traictant d'Amours intitulé D E L I E, soit avec Emblesmes, ou sans Emblesmes, durant le temps et terme de six ans prochainnement venans" (Defaux 2004, tome I, [2]). Since the first edition Privilege du Roy allows the work to be printed with or without the emblems, scholars continue to debate the category of *Délie* as the first French canzoniere, an emblem book or a book of *imprese*. For more on the debate, see: Defaux (2004, tome I, clxxviii).

[15] Russell indicates: "the French commonly translated the Italian *impresa* by *devise*" (1985, 184 n.16). The English term "device" designates *impresa* and *devise*.

emblems of Alciato.[16] To illustrate the difference between the emblem and *imprese* traditions, Coleman observes: "emblems and *imprese* are socially very far apart from the beginning. Where the emblems are a moralizing, didactic and commonplace genre, the *imprese* are personal, individual and non-didactic" (1975, 56). Indeed, Scève's book concerns the experiences of the poet/lover above any other motif. In harmony with Coleman's assertions, I employ the term *impresa* (*I*) for Sceve's text-image woodcuts.[17]

Given that *Délie* is innovative and unique, how should we begin to view and read Scève's work? A clue emerges in the signifying relationship between text and image in the *imprese*. I want to point out that *Délie* represents the first attempt in the emblem tradition to integrate text into the pictorial realm. In Scève's *imprese*, both the graphic image and the motto are located within the drawn lines (rectangle, circle, lozenge...) that enclose the pictorial space, which is itself within the limits of the decorative frame. Contemporary emblem books do not show words positioned in the same space as images. For example, in Alciato's *Livret des emblemes* (1536) [figure 1.1] or Corrozet's *Hecatomgraphie* (1540) [figure 1.2] the text is clearly separate from the image. In Alciato's emblem, the text "Ad illust. Maximil. ducem Medio" is above the image of the

---

[16] Coleman writes: "il est incontestable que Scève a plus d'affinités avec les auteurs des *imprese* qu'avec les emblématistes" (1964, 9). Moreover, Coleman observes that Claude-François Menestrier, in his *La Philosophie des Images* (1682), alludes to Scève as the first author of *devises* (1964, 7). Alison Saunders remarks that the first theoretical treatise on the *Imprese* is Paolo Giovio's *Diologo dell'Imprese Militari et Amorose* (Rome, A.Barre, 1555). Saunders notes that the studies of Giovio and similar works that followed appear only after many French emblem books are already created (1988, 3). Hence, the theory is produced after the emblem books and therefore does not serve as an instruction manual for the emblematists.

[17] For a thorough discussion of emblems and *imprese* with examples, see specifically Coleman's chapter 4: "Scève: Composer of 'Imprese Amorose'" (1975, 54-72).

tree and shield. Likewise, in Corrozet's emblem, the text "Parler peu & venir au poinct" appears outside the limits of the graphic image.

The distinction I suggest becomes clearer in a comparison between the woodcut *La femme & la Lycorne* in the 1544 edition [figure 1.3] and the 1564 edition [figure 1.4] of *Délie*.[18] In the 1544 *impresa* the pictorial element (the Lady, the unicorn, the tree and the environs) and the words of the motto: "POVR LE VEOIR IE PERS LA VIE" are both located inside a rectangle that is also within the decorative frame. In contrast, the 1564 *impresa* places the graphic image (Lady, unicorn, trees) inside a square demarcated by a line from the words of the motto. The motto surrounds the picture in a white space reserved for words distinct from the graphic space; the picture and the motto do not occupy the same area. Thus the individual elements of image and motto are separate in the 1564 edition, but not in the 1544 edition.

In Scève's *imprese*, the visible and the readable come into a signifying relationship. I view the *imprese* in *Délie* as complex objects, which, as Louis Marin argues, call for a semiology directed towards representations that are both verbally and pictorially symbolic:

> Des images à l'intérieur de l'ouvrage … portent sur deux grandes régions du monde des signes: le visible et le lisible. Le visible, lieu des objets qui représent et qui figurent; visible, non du monde et des choses, mais des 'oeuvres d'art' qui offrent l'articulation symbolique de la mimésis à un regard, qui n'est plus celui de la perception, tout en relevant encore d'elle; le lisible, surface où se déploient les signes du langage, inscrits – écrits pour se donner à un autre regard qui n'est plus celui de l'esprit, mais qui est peut-être la réalisation, dans la surface de la page, de la double métaphore de l'oeil (1971, 8).

---

[18] For more on the differences between *I* 1 in the 1544 and 1564 editions, see Ardouin (1985, 273-278).

Scève's *imprese* combine visual and verbal "images." Visible images, Marin insists, are not objects in the world but rather 'works of art': the actual drawings in the woodcuts of Scève's work. These 'works of art' are symbolic[19] because they express the fact of mimesis to the gaze of the spectator. The verbal images are the symbols of the alphabet that, when combined, create a readable text. These images require a different gaze than that of visual images. Verbal images convey the 'double metaphor of the eye': the fact that when reading, one is simultaneously viewing the symbols of the alphabet and attempting to "see" beyond the shape of the symbols. When reading, one searches for a meaning in these symbols that is exterior to the visual realm. Since Scève combines visual and verbal images in one figural space by including the motto inside the image, both realms (visual and verbal) are thus directed towards both types of gaze: the gaze that literally sees and the gaze that looks beyond the visual depiction. The eye of the spectator therefore considers the text as an image and the drawing as a linguistic symbol.

In the 1544 edition of *Délie*, the title of each image appears only at the end of the text in the *L'ordre des figures et emblesmes*. Therefore, within the work, the reader/viewer must recall the myth or legend from the image independent of the text. Coleman suggests that Scève's *imprese* are illustrated metaphors of the following *dizain*. However, she stresses: "si l'on veut comprendre la valeur de ces métaphors illustrées et en particulier, comment les emblesmes réussissent à évoquer pour le lecteur le mythe ou la fable représentés dans les gravures, il faut apprécier les associations ou les connotations traditionnelles ou contemporaines que pouvaient avoir les figures" (1964, 10). Coleman mentions that the sixteenth-century reader is very familiar with the themes

[19] See chapter 3 for a discussion of the term "symbol."

to which the *imprese* refer.[20] Therefore, the *imprese* in *Délie* immediately evoke texts or images already present in the mind for the Renaissance reader. For the reader who does not have these images in mind (twenty-first-century readers for example), the references are lost. For this reason, I argue that it is important and necessary to consider the intellectual and pictorial histories of Scève's *imprese* because they are no longer a part of modern culture. As a case in point, I analyze the two *imprese* that concern the unicorn[21]: *I* 1 *La femme & la Lycorne* and *I* 26 *La Lycorne qui se voit*. The unicorn is an ideal creature to study in *Délie* because its suggestive nature radically changes throughout the ages and, in this way, it is representative of early sixteenth-century culture, which still believes in the existence of the beast.[22] Furthermore, Scève situates the unicorn *imprese* in key locations within *Délie*: first and center. Before we consider the symbolic nature of the unicorn in the Middle Ages, it is essential to review briefly the literary history of the unicorn legend to witness the shifting beliefs.

---

[20] Coleman cites "les Hiéroglyphes de Horapollon, les dictionnaires mythologiques de Boccacce, de Robert Estienne et de Calepin et qui lisaient l'Histoire Naturelle de Pline l'Ancien" (1964, 10-11).

[21] The unicorn appears in a third *impresa*: 20 *Orpheus*. Nonetheless, the unicorn is not the main concern of the image-text, hence I do not discuss it in the present study. For more on Orpheus in *Délie*, see, Marcel Tetel, "Le luth et la lyre de l'École lyonnaise," *Il Rinascimento a Lione,* éd Giulia Mastrangelo Latini et Antonio Possenti, Roma, Edizioni dell'Ateneo, t. II, 1988, 949-962; J.S. Helgeson, *Harmonie Divine et subjectivité poétique chez Maurice Scève*, (Genève, Droz, "Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance n 349" 2001).

[22] Even after some real animals are brought to western Europe from the East (like the Elephant and Rhinoceros), the medieval, visual traditions about their representations continue to dominate well into the sixteenth-century. For more on the medieval dominance of representation in the Renaissance see, Pamela Gravestock, "Did Imaginary Animals Exist?" in *The Mark of the Beast: The Medieval Bestiary in Art, Life, and Literature*, ed. Debra Hassig (New York: Garland Pub, 1999), 119-139.

Lurid Beast to Handsome Savior

The fabulous creature with one horn on its forehead, the unicorn, is portrayed throughout the ages as a bloodthirsty monster (the only creature that dares attack the elephant[23]) as well as a tranquil animal, educing peace and serenity whenever present. The first descriptions of the unicorn report that it is a monstrous creature from the Far East. Emile Mâle claims that the earliest written account of the unicorn is from the fourth-century BCE: “Ctésias... fit connaître... la licorne, ce quadrupède insaisissable qui porte au front une seule corne” (1922, 322).

In *Indica* (398 BCE), Ctesias[24] writes: “there are in India certain wild asses which are as large as horses, and larger... they have a horn on the forehead which is about eighteen inches in length” (Shepard 1930, 27). Indians of the highest caste drink from the unicorn’s horn at regular intervals and are thus immune to all poisons (Caillois 1982, 6); Philostratus confirms that kings who drink from the horn do not suffer when wounded.[25] In short, the horn of the unicorn seems to be a panacea.

During the first-century CE the Roman naturalist Pliny, in his *Naturalis Historia* (*Natural History*, 77 CE), reports that in India:

---

[23] Isidore of Seville, in *Etymologies* book 12, writes that the unicorn: “often fights with the elephant and throws it to the ground after wounding it in the belly” (Barney 2007, 252).

[24] The Greek physician from Cnidus who traveled east to Persia in 416 BCE to serve in the court of the Persian King Darius II. Seventeen years later Ctesias returned home and wrote of his experiences there in *Indica*. Today the text only survives as a fragment made in the ninth-century CE by Photius. Ctesias is most likely describing the Indian Rhinoceros; the cloven-hooved ass with a single horn on its forehead from India, later becomes “unicorn” from the Latin *ūnicornis* or “one-horned” (uni-cornū-is).

[25] In his *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (3, 2). Philostratus (170-247 CE) is also known as Lucius Flavius Philostratus, Philostratus the Athenian or Philostratus II.

> the fiercest animal is the unicorn, which in the rest of the body resembles a horse, but in the head a stag, in the feet an elephant, and in the tail a boar, and has a deep bellow, and a single black horn three feet long projecting from the middle of the forehead (Rackham 1938, 57).[26]

Pliny writes that he is quoting the works of Ctesias, even though Pliny embellishes the description of the animal by including other accounts. The important difference, however, between the descriptions of Pliny and Ctesias is that Pliny inserts a detail that becomes extremely significant to society in the Middle Ages: "hanc feram vivam negant capi" [they say that it is impossible to capture this animal alive] (Rackham 1938, 56, 57).

Just over a century later, the second-century CE Roman scholar Aelian (Claudius Aelianus)[27] compiles a book about animals on the basis of Pliny's *Natural History*.[28] In his *De Natura Animalium* (*On the nature of animals*), Aelian claims that the unicorn often fights with others of its species. His most influential remark, however, is that the unicorn grows gentle towards the chosen female during mating season (Shepard 1930, 34). This aspect of the unicorn, his tender disposition when near the female, becomes a highly symbolic trait for authors and artists of the Middle Ages - when the unicorn may only be captured by a virgin.

Despite the authoritative texts of the Greeks and Romans, the unicorn remains mostly unknown to the members of common society in the centuries leading up to the

---

[26] Book 8, 31: asperrimam autem feram monocerotem, reliquo corpore equo similem, capite cervo, pedibus elephanto, cauda apro, mugitu gravi, uno cornu nigro media fronte cubitorum duum eminente (1938, 56).

[27] Not to be confused with Aelianus Tacticus, Greek military writer of the second-century CE.

[28] Aristotle's *Historia Animalium* (*The History of Animals*, 350 BCE) is not rediscovered until the twelfth-century CE. Hence, prior to then, the works of Pliny and his copyist Solinus are frequently recopied (Tesnière 2004, 55).

Middle Ages. For the public to become familiar with the unicorn, the creature needs to come out of the library and develop a role in the everyday events and associations of popular culture – namely, Christianity. In the third-century BCE, the unicorn gains this opportunity to be a part of religious texts and thereby enters the culture of contemporary society, although only by chance.

Between 300 and 200 BCE, a group of seventy scholars gather together to create the first translation of the Hebrew Old Testament in Koine Greek.[29] In this text, commonly known as the *Septuagint* (L. seventy), the scholars translate the Hebrew term "R*e*'*em*" ("ox" or "wild ox") from Psalms as *monokeros* (μονόκερως), or unicorn.[30] The unicorn's inclusion in a text of such magnitude lays the foundation for an obsession with the creature that thrives in both literary and visual arts from the earliest dates of the Middle Ages to the modern day.[31] Nonetheless, the unicorn owes its primary place among the legendary beasts to the *Physiologus*.[32]

---

[29] Common Greek spoken between 300 BCE and 300 CE. Koine is also known as Biblical Greek or "common dialect" Greek.

[30] The Hebrew term for "unicorn" is *Had-Keren* (one horn). Psalm 91.11 in the Vulgate reads: "et exaltabitur quasi monocerotis cornu meum et senecta mea in oleo uberi." Psalm 92.10 in the KJV reads: "but my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil." Shepard notes that the scholars are unable to identify the Hebrew "R*e*'*em*," but the animal is: "characterized as fleet, fierce, indomitable, and especially distinguished by the armour of its brow." The scholars decided to use the animal known as the "unicorn" to translate the Hebrew R*e'em*, since this creature was just as strange and unknown to them (Shepard 1930, 42-43).

[31] The Vulgate has no fewer than seven references to the unicorn: Numbers 23.22; Deuteronomy 33.17; Psalms 22.21, 29.6, 91.11; Isaiah 34.7; Job 39.9-12.

[32] Gohar Muhadyan defines the *Physiologus* as follows: "an early Christian writing, which appeared approximately in the second century A.D. [CE] in Greek, probably in Alexandria, and was widespread during the Middle Ages in various recensions...From Latin it was translated into western languages: Anglo-Saxon, Old High German, Flemish, French, Waldensian, Provençal, Spanish and Italian. It consists of

Before the *Physiologus* comes into popular usage, the accepted notion of the unicorn is that of a ferocious animal, formed on the basis of the descriptions given by Pliny and his copyist Solinus. In *Polyhistoria*, Solinus depicts the unicorn as follows: "Atrocissimum est Monoceros, monstrum mugita horrendo" or as Arthur Golding translates: "but the cruellest is the Unicorne, a Monster that belloweth horrible" (Shepard 1930, 38). The authority of the Bible as well as Church Fathers propagates this aspect of the unicorn as a violent monster.[33]

By the twelfth-century, however, the unicorn begins to assume a more positive signification[34] derived from the allegory provided in the *Physiologus*:

> In Deuteronomy Moses said while blessing Joseph, "His beauty is that of the firstling bull, and his horns are the horns of the unicorn" [Deut. 33:17]. The monoceros, that is, the unicorn, has this nature: he is a small animal like the kid, is exceedingly shrewd, and has one horn in the middle of his

---

miniature stories, forty-eight in all, about the nature (φύσις) of real or mythical animals, plants and stones, with a religious interpretation of their peculiarities as an allegory of Christ, the devil, the Church or human beings" (2005, [1]).

[33] Saint Basil (third-century CE) warns: "prend garde à toi, ô homme, et défie-toi de la licorne, c'est-à-dire du démon, car elle fait aisément le mal et le trame contre les hommes" and Saint Bernard (twelfth-century CE) enjoins man to fight against personal demons: "la rage du lion, l'impudeur du bouc, la férocité du sanglier, l'orgueil de la licorne" (Tesnière 2004, 57). In the legendary tale of Barlaam and Josaphat, Barlaam battles a ferocious unicorn – a story retold in thirteenth-century known as the *Légende dorée* by Jacques de Voragine.

[34] In the works of Honorius of Autun (twelfth-century CE), the unicorn gains a privileged position among the animals in the bestiary. In *Elucidarium*, Honorius views the unicorn as a symbol of the Incarnation and incidentally of purity. He claims that the unicorn represents Christ and that the horn symbolizes his strength. After the unicorn rests its head on the lap of a virgin, Honorius suggests: "les chasseurs capturent la licorne par un piège de douceur et de pureté. L'allégorie signifie que le Christ a revêtu la forme humaine dans le sein de Marie et qu'il a consenti à se donner à ceux qui le cherchent" (Caillois 1982, 13). *Elucidarium* is a summary of all Christian theology in the form of a dialogue. The text was translated into French in the thirteenth-century by the Dominican Jeffrey of Waterford. An illuminated manuscript (Harley MS 237) of *Elucidarium* dating to 1450 CE is held in the British Library.

> head... Coming down from heaven, he came into the womb of the Virgin Mary. "He was loved like the son of the unicorns" [cf. Ps. 22:21] as David said in the psalm (Curley 1979, 51).

Baxter notes that Christ is frequently identified with the unicorn in the *Physiologus* and that references to unicorns and horns in the Old and New Testament of the Bible are interpreted as prefigurations (1998, 45).

Medieval culture seeks out the announcement of the Revelation in Classical texts and interprets it with allegory: "Platon et Aristote ont parlé de la Trinité, Cicéron a deviné la Résurrection, les Sibylles sont des vierges pleines de l'esprit de Dieu, Virgile a annoncé l'enfant mystérieux qui devait changer la face du monde" (Masson 1974, 43). The art of the Middle Ages is created by artists steeped in the traditions of Scriptural or Patristic Exegesis, a tiered system of delineation including the literal, allegorical, tropological (moral) and anagogical (eschatological) levels of interpretation.[35] Hence, the illustrations that accompany textual references to the unicorn in the Bible, the *Physiologus*, bestiaries and tapestries often show the allegorical representation rather than the literal. Debra Hassig[36] argues: "beginning with the Early Christian exegetical interest in nature codified in the *Physiologus* treatise, on which the medieval bestiaries were based, Christian compilers began a process of rewriting and transforming pagan

---

[35] Robert Stuart Sturges writes: "Exposition was thus divided into the literal and the more important spiritual levels; and the spiritual could be further subdivided into various kinds of symbolic meaning. The best-known system is the ancient fourfold one derived by St John Cassian [fourth-/ fifth-centuries CE] consisting of the literal (or historical) and three spiritual levels" (1991, 13). In chapter 8.14 of *Conlationes*, Cassian writes: "spiritalis autem scientiae genera sunt tria, tropologia, allegoria, anagoge, de quibus in Prouerbiis ita dicitur: tu autem describe tibi ea tripliciter superlatitudinem cordis tui" (1886, 404). See also, Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale 1*, (Paris: Aubier, 1979).

[36] Debra Hassig and Debra Higgs Strickland name the same scholar.

knowledge of the natural world in order to serve a new, didactic purpose" (1995, xvi). It is important to keep the medieval system of interpretation in mind when viewing Scève's work. To read *Délie*, it is necessary, first, to know the traditional, medieval sense of word-image representations and, second, to interpret Scève's specific alteration of that meaning in light of his own poetic agenda. In the following sections, I identify the image sources for Scève's *I* 1 *La femme & la Lycorne* and *I* 26 *La Lycorne qui se voit* from medieval bestiaries and manuscripts. Furthermore, I show that Scève employs medieval legend in his *imprese* only to suggest the degree of suffering experienced by the poet/lover when seeing and being seen become fatal acts.

Délie & The Unicorn

Medieval bestiaries, as mentioned above, play a significant role in Scève's *imprese* and other works of emblem literature. In *Délie,* we find images of animals that appear frequently in medieval bestiary manuscripts such as the bat, peacock, phoenix, stag and viper, as well as the beasts discussed in the current study: the unicorn and basilisk. Shepard notes that the medieval legend of the unicorn comes from the "Christian Beast Epic" or the *Physiologus* tradition that in the Middle Ages is called "Bestiary": "it was chiefly by means of these Bestiaries that the popular as distinguished from the learned tradition of the unicorn was disseminated" (Shepard 1930,46, 47). In other words, the literary significance of the unicorn as described by Ctesias and Aelian ceases to inform public conceptions. In its place, the fanciful myth becomes the foundation of the unicorn image that circulates throughout Europe. Since the bestiaries

exert such a major influence on the pictorial representations of the unicorn in the Renaissance, I begin this section with a brief history of the medieval bestiary.

The bestiary is a collection of stories providing physical and allegorical descriptions of real or imaginary animals along with an allegorical interpretation of the Christian moral significance each animal embodies (in medieval culture).[37] In addition to the *Physiologus* tradition, bestiaries are informed by Saint Isidore Archbishop of Seville who, around 600 CE, transmits all the information he has taken from Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* (*Natural History*, 77 CE) into his vast Encyclopedia *Etymologiae* (*Etymologies*[38] 636 CE).[39] Hassig remarks that in his work: "Isidore sought to elucidate the 'true

---

[37] Marie-Hélène Tesnière comments on the animals in medieval bestiaries: "c'est dans les bestiaires que s'affirme le rôle symbolique de l'animal. Destinés à l'édification des chrétiens, les bestiaires prêtent aux animaux des personnalités et des sentiments comparables à ceux des hommes" (2004, 45). Since they are useful for Christian education, in the Middle Ages bestiaries are found in monastic libraries, used for sermons and for instruction in religious houses (Payne 1990, 9).

[38] Isidore's work is known as *Origines* by Classicists and is abbreviated *Orig*. The *Etymologies* constitutes the basis of all scientific knowledge about animals at the beginning of the Middle Ages.

[39] The first zoologist of the Middle Ages is undoubtedly Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), whose four books of *Physica* are devoted to animals. Hildegard believes that all parts of the unicorn's body are useful as medicinal remedies for leprosy, fevers and plague (*Physica* 7.5). In the twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries, authors begin to compile great encyclopedias established by the bestiaries but enriched with observations that are more "scientific" and by the rediscovery of the works of Aristotle. In particular, in the years 1240-1250 CE, the works of the franciscan Barthélémy l'Anglais, Thomas de Cantimpré, the well-known *Livre du trésor* by the Florentine Brunetto Latini, *Image du Monde* by Gossuin de Metz and *Miroir historial* by Vincent de Beauvais have large chapters dedicated to the descriptions of beasts, especially those in distant lands. The classification is organized by orders beginning with quadrupeds and the animals within each group are listed in alphabetical order. These sizeable, illustrated cycles appear at the same time as the French translations of the Bestiaries - when books are passing from the domain of clerics and scholars to that of princes. The illustrations are hence a part of the pedagogical process. *Bestiare du Moyen Âge* http://expositions.bnf.fr/bestiaire/arret/4/index.htm [accessed 18 June 2009].

character' of beasts, birds, and other creatures through analysis of their names, and also to transmit Classical learning about these creatures...the name or etymology of the animal in question is described in relation to its natural habits or characteristics" (1995, 6).

Bestiaries from the twelfth-century show a strict adherence to the animals in the *Physiologus*, while thirteenth-century bestiaries produce a wider roster of creatures[40] (Hassig 1997, 171, 175). In the thirteenth-century, patronage by the laity creates a need for the commercial production of bestiaries. Hence, they become accessible to a wider audience and so begin to incorporate new texts and images in accordance with their new patrons' interests. This explosion of texts and images culminates in the most expanded form of the bestiary. As bestiaries grow longer, their functions multiply to include monastic instruction, encyclopedic compendia, mendicant preaching aids and collections of political propaganda directed not only to religious but also to lay readers and courtly entertainment[41] (Hassig 1997, 184, 187). For example, the *trouvères* incorporate bestiary allusions into their songs; in *Aussi com l'unicorne sui*, Thibaut de Champagne compares his lovesick state to that of a unicorn, lured to its death in the lap of a maiden.[42] In this

[40] The majority of illuminated medieval bestiaries appear during the twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries. The Latin *Physiologus* appears around the end of the fourth-century CE and during the Middle Ages it has a readership comparable to the Bible – evident from the numerous medieval manuscripts, versions, translations and adaptations (Zucker 2004, 9). The Latin and subsequent French bestiaries emerge from the *Physiologus*. Ron Baxter notes that the earliest surviving bestiaries are almost indistinguishable from the *Physiologus*, in which the: "animal stories worked together to send an ideological message to their audience"; this message "could be reinforced by a cycle of illustrations" (1998, 29). On the complex compilation of texts that form the expanded bestiary, see: Hassig, chapter 1 "The Manuscripts" (1995, 1-16).

[41] On the accretive nature of bestiaries, see Friedman Chapter 1 "The Plinian Races" *The Monstrous Races* (1981, 5-25).

[42] Thibaud, and A. Wallenskȯld, *Les chansons de Thibaut de Champagne roi de Navarre*, (Paris: É. Champion, 1925).

way, bestiary lore becomes a part of the larger society and is no longer reserved for the church or the wealthy few.

Scève's first *impresa*, *I* 1 *La femme & la Lycorne* [figure 1.3], shows the last scene from the medieval legend of *La chasse à la licorne*.[43] The *Physiologus* suggests that hunters must employ a ruse to capture and kill the unicorn[44] because, Isidore of Seville notes in *Etymologies* (12. 2. 12-13), the unicorn is so strong that no man can capture it:

> The *monoceron*, that is, the unicorn (*unicornus*)... has such strength that it can be captured by no hunter's ability, but, as those who have written about the natures of animals claim, if a virgin girl is set before a unicorn, as the beast approaches, she may open her lap and it will lay its head there with all ferocity put aside, and thus lulled and disarmed it may be captured (Barney 2007, 252).[45]

The unicorn, drawn to the virgin by the odors of chastity and virtue, surrenders to the Lady and is then captured and killed by the hunters.

In *Délie, I* 1 shows a unicorn wounded with an arrow (*une flèche*). Over the course of the medieval era, the appearance of the unicorn shifts from unsightly to elegant. In the early Middle Ages, images of the unicorn depict a hybrid, equine figure with the

---

[43] Coleman comments that this legend is well known in the Middle Ages and that Brunetto Latini, in *Tesoro*, describes this particular version of the unicorn legend in detail (1981, 5).

[44] "The hunter cannot approach him because he [the unicorn] is extremely strong. How then do they hunt the beast? Hunters place a chaste virgin before him. He bounds forth into her lap and she warms and nourishes the animal and takes him into the palace of kings" (Curley 1979, 51).

[45] [12] Idem et monoceron, id est unicornus...[13] Tantae autem esse fortitudinis ut nulla venantium virtute capiatur; sed, sicut asserunt qui naturas animalium scripserunt, virgo puella praeponitur, quae venienti sinum aperit, in quo ille omni ferocitate deposita caput ponit, sicque soporatus velut inermis capitur. *LacusCurtius*, http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/L/Roman/Texts/Isidore/12*.html [accessed 24 May 2009].

beard of a goat and cloven hooves. The "ugly" characteristics of the goat imply that Christ associates with sinners, or suggest the redemption of sinners. The *Physiologus*[46] reads: "the unicorn is like the kid, as is our Savior according to the Apostle: 'He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin he was condemned in the flesh' [cf. Rom. 8:3]" (Curley 1979, 51). Thus, certain bestiaries retain the goat-like unicorn as one of the animals presented for the edification of Christians. For example, in a thirteenth-century Latin bestiary (Latin 3630 folio 76v), the image of "La chasse à la licorne" [figure 1.5] depicts the unicorn as a small animal resembling a kid (young goat); Tesnière comments on the image: "la licorne est décrite comme 'un petit animal, qui ressemble au chevreau, et qui est tout à fait paisible et doux,' mais 'd'une force telle que les chasseurs ne peuvent l'approcher.'"[47] When the unicorn begins to come into the iconography of the Church, to the sixteenth-century, artists depict the unicorn as a handsome, equine creature to comply with the allegory of Christ's righteousness.[48] The "beautiful" traits of the horse show

---

[46] The story of the unicorn from the *Physiologus* inspires an enormous amount of allegorical literature. As an example, around 1220 CE, Pierre de Beauvais brings Christ and the unicorn together in his *Bestiaire*: "Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ, licorne céleste, descendit dans le sein de la Vierge, et à cause de cette chair qu'il avait revêtue pour nous, il fut pris par les juifs et conduit devant Pilate, présenté à Hérode puis crucifié sur la sainte Croix, lui qui, auparavant, se trouvait auprès de son Père, invisible à nos yeux ; voilà pourquoi il dit lui-même dans les psaumes: 'Ma corne sera élevée comme celle de l'unicorne'" (Tesnière 2004, 58). This is an exegetical reading of the Latin Vulgate: "et exaltabitur sicut unicornis cornu meum: et senectus mea in misericordia uberi" [But my horn shall be exalted like that of the unicorn: and my old age in plentiful mercy] (Psalms 91:11).

[47] *Bestiare du Moyen Âge* http://expositions.bnf.fr/bestiaire/grand/n_06_bnf.htm [accessed 15 November 2009].

[48] St. Bernard of Clairvaux rejects the use of monsters in sacred spaces, "what excuse can there be for these ridiculous monstrosities in the cloisters where the monks do their reading?" (Bovey 2002, 42).

virtue, due in part to the paramount role of the horse in medieval civilization.[49] This is the reason the unicorn in Scève's *impresa* resembles the horse more than any other animal.

In *I* 1, the unicorn is resting its head in the lap of a female.[50] In the twelfth-century, the image of the maiden welcoming the unicorn into her lap (or womb) becomes a symbol for the Incarnation of Christ - the hunter is the Holy Spirit acting through the Angel Gabriel.[51] The unicorn symbolizes Christ and Mary represents the chaste virgin: "the unicorn could be captured by a virgin if it rested its head in her lap, so it was doubly a symbol of Christ – as the Son only-begotten of God and begotten again in the womb of Mary" (Eco 1986, 55). The meager stature of the unicorn represents Christ's humility while the unicorn's single horn suggests the unity of the Father and the Son: "I and the

---

[49] The horse is revered by all classes of medieval society as very important for transportation, labor, and hunting, especially for knights and royalty; see, Ann Hyland, *The Horse in the Middle Ages*, (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton Pub., 1999).

[50] The scene of "The Lady and the Unicorn" without the arrow or knight/hunter appears in thirteenth-century tapestries. Most notable is the famed tapestry cycle *La Dame à la licorne* in the Musée national du Moyen Âge (Cluny), Paris. These tapestries, woven of wool and silk in vibrant shades of red, blue and gold, evoke the refinement of courtly love and respect for women and present an allegory of the five senses that must be touched to engender love. Among these works, the sense of sight (*la vue*) depicts the unicorn seated near the Lady with its hooves in her lap. The Lady shows the unicorn a mirror that is, along with the "jardin clos," a symbol of chastity and an image of Christ (Cazenave 1996, 357-358). See the website of the Musée Nationale du Moyen Âge: http://www.musee-moyenage.fr/homes/home_id20393_u1l2.htm [accessed 13 November 2009].

[51] A depiction of this allegory along with the Angel Gabriel resides at the Morgan Library and Museum. See: Book of Hours, use of the Augustinian Canons of the Windesheim Chapter (Hours of the Virgin), and Utrecht (Office of the Dead), in Latin and Dutch. Netherlands, Utrecht, ca. 1500. MS G.5, folios 18v–19. William S. Glazier Collection, given 1984, http://www.themorgan.org/collections/swf/exhibOnline.asp?id=845 [accessed 29 May 2009].

Father are one" [John 10:30]. The death of the unicorn, pierced by the arrow or sword of the hunter, becomes a symbol of the passion of Christ, whose side is pierced as he dies on the cross[52] (Tesnière 2004, 57).

However, at the same time, the Lady and unicorn represent the underlying sexual connotation of the virgin-capture story from Pliny and Aelian, which the Christian allegorizers compose as a symbol of Christ's Incarnation with the virgin as the Virgin Mary. Indeed, Shepard claims that the origin of the virgin-capture story is non-Christian and rests more: "upon sexual attraction than the Christianized form of the story usually does... Furthermore, it was held by some that the hunt was more likely to succeed if the virgin was naked, and several insist that she must be beautiful" (1930, 50). Scève's image of the Lady and wounded unicorn depicts a scene in which vision leads to death. Yet, when considered with the non-Christian, sexual connotation of the unicorn's erotic attraction to the Lady, this vision is sexualized. In the virgin-capture story the girl: "offers him [the unicorn] her breasts, and the animal begins to suck the breasts of the maiden and to conduct himself familiarly with her... at this point the huntsmen come up

[52] For an example of this symbol, Tesnière cites a thirteenth-century illustration of the *Physiologus* that shows a grey beast with a single horn, cloven hooves and no mane. A sword pierces the unicorn's side (2004, 57) [figure 1.6]. The Cloisters branch of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City holds a set of famous unicorn tapestries known as *La Chasse à la licorne*.[52] The seven images depicted in this cycle relate the story of the hunt of the unicorn and it is believed that the tapestries were hung together and in succession to demonstrate the unicorn's pursuit. In line with the allegory of Christ, the unicorn is a majestic white horse with one spiraling horn protruding from its forehead. The sixth image in the cycle ("The Unicorn is Killed and Brought to the Castle") shows the unicorn pierced in the neck and side; the corpse of the animal is draped with a wreath of oak leaves to symbolize the crown of thorns worn by Christ. This image (circa 1495-1505) confirms the popularity of the allegory depicted in earlier centuries. Images of The Unicorn Tapestries may be viewed on the website of The Cloisters Museum & Gardens of The Metropolitan Museum of Art: http://www.metmuseum.org/explore/Unicorn/unicorn_inside.htm [accessed 31 May 2009].

and take the beast" (Shepard 1930, 49). However, in *I* 1 there are no huntsmen or knights as can be seen in the illustrated manuscripts of the bestiaries or the *Physiologus* [figures 1.5 & 1.6]. I argue that without the presence of the knight, the *flèche* (arrow) may be seen as a trait from Délie's *poingnant' veue* (D 1): "que de ses yeux l'archier" (D 6). The flèche is Délie's gaze - not that of Amour or Cupid. Scève alters the sexual encounter between the Lady and unicorn to suggest that the poet/lover's desire for the Beloved leads to death, not because the hunters come and capture him, but because he loses his life for vision: "pour le veoir ie pers la vie" [For the view/vision I lose my life]. Moreover, the motto helps to support my argument for as I show, Scève's scholastic development trains him to employ a complex rhetorical function in his language.

As a humanist poet in sixteenth-century France, Scève belongs to a group of Neo-Latin, *Lyonnais* scholars trained to assimilate the grammar and styles of classical Latin. In addition to classical Latin, Grahame Castor suggests: "just as medieval Latin in its various forms gave expression to a complex and independent intellectual sensibility, so Renaissance Latin was far from being merely a pale imitation of classical splendours" (1984, xi). As a Neo-Latin poet, Scève is taking over part of a linguistic heritage and, in *Délie,* he combines his knowledge of the varied forms of Latin and vernacular French.[53] McFarlane observes that Scève "recreates his vocabulary, either by drawing on fields not then normally exploited by poets, or by coining words," such as Archaisms, Latinisms, Italianisms and Neologisms (1966, 48-49). Hence, it is common for Scève to intend a

[53] While poets in the French Renaissance began to re-interpret the myths and legends of previous cultures, they also felt a responsibility to remain within the mentality of contemporary culture. Rieu claims: "en ce temps de bouleversements du monde qui les entoure, les humanistes et les poètes sentent le désir et le devoir de rassembler, comme un précieux dépôt, le trésor de l'héritage culturel" (2008, 307).

more archaic meaning of a word than might be obvious to the modern or sixteenth-century reader.

I assert that this trend is evident in Scève's first *impresa*. In the 1544 edition of *Délie*, the motto that accompanies *I* 1 reads: "POVR LE VEOIR IE PERS LA VIE." Scève scholars, nonetheless, argue that the "le" preceding "veoir" is incorrect and that publishers should alter the motto. McFarlane writes: "incidentally the *le* is not clear; should it not read *la* or *te*?" (1966, 123). However, in my view, this variance from the original printing prohibits other interpretations that might be possible if the motto remains "pour le veoir."

If "veoir" is a verb, then the preceding "le" is necessarily the direct object of the verb "to see" and the motto may read "to see it I lose my life." However, there is no indication of what this "it" might be. The direct object of the motto (*le*) is masculine, yet the two objects of the image, *la femme* and *la lycorne*, are both feminine. The "le" may refer to love (*l'amour*), a masculine noun, but *l'amour* does not appear in the *impresa* or *dizain* 6 that follows. The "le" may refer to "him" ("to see him I lose my life"), yet in this sequence of love poems written by a male persona, dedicated to the feminine Délie, there is no evidence to support this reading. Therefore, if one reads "veoir" as a verb, then McFarlane's claim, that the "le" should be "la" ("I lose my life to see her") and Defaux's claim that "le" suggests "te" ("I lose my life to see you") are both appropriate.

However, I suggest that if we read "veoir" as a masculine noun and "le" as the masculine singular definite article, a completely different interpretation of the motto is possible. Although Defaux briefly mentions that "le veoir" may be a substantive

infinitive, he does not consider the implications of this reading.[54] Hence, I propose an interpretation of the motto "Pour le veoir ie pers la vie" that considers the archaic sense of the term "le veoir."

In the Middle Ages, the masculine noun "le veoir" means *action de voir*, *vue*, *lumière* (Greimas 1997). In the noun form, "veoir" may refer to the act of seeing, a view or light. If we read "le veoir" as a noun, then the possible interpretations of the motto may be expanded to suggest an explicit reference to vision. The motto may be understood as: "For vision [the act of seeing] I lose my life," or "For the view I lose my life." In either interpretation, sight becomes the focus of the phrase and the possibility of sight entails the loss of life.

On the basis of an interpretation in which the motto has been altered to "Pour *te* veoir ie pers la vie" [emphasis mine], Coleman argues that the motto: "completes the meaning of the picture by establishing the personal relationship between the unicorn and the poet and between the maiden and his mistress" (1981, 8). However, I argue that this comparison is disrupted if the motto is not altered and "le veoir" is read as a noun. Rather than losing his life to see "you" [*te*, Délie], the speaking subject "ie" loses his life for vision. A direct comparison between unicorn/poet and maiden/mistress is no longer explicit if the focus of the reference to the unicorn is on sight. This interpretation complicates the relationship between the motto and the depicted image of the *impresa*.

---

[54] In reference to the motto of *I* 1, Defaux insists: "comprendre 'le veoir' (en 1544, sur la photocopie BnF RéS Ye 1746 que je possède, on pourrait aussi lire 'te veoir') comme un infinitive substantivé (à cause de la vue je perds la vie; ou encore: le fait de voir – de te voir – me tue)" (2004 tome II, 23). For Defaux, the term before "veoir" is ambiguous and may be either "te" (indicating that "veoir" is a verb and "te" refers to the Lady) or "le" (suggesting that "veoir" is a noun).

Nonetheless, I insist that we must search for these complex structures in the text to appreciate fully the density of Scève's work.

The poet/lover as the wounded unicorn pleads with the viewer to recognize that the Lady deceives him. Like the virgin in the medieval legend, Délie lures him with her odor: "suave odeur: Mais le goust trop amer / trouble la paix de ma doulce pensée" (D 10). The poet/lover admits in the preceding *dizain* (5) that he attempts to escape when his Lady approaches with Love's bow (*arc d'Amour*). When she sees him and draws near, she asks if he eludes her bow or its strength. In response he states: "je ne fuys point, dy je, l'arc, ne la flesche: / mais l'oeil qui feit a mon coeur si grand' playe" (v 9-10). The poet/lover flees the eye (*l'œil*) of the Lady because she possesses a "poingnant' veue" (D 1). In the image of the first *impresa*, the arrow is the physical mark left by Délie's harrowing gaze and the vision/view (*le veoir*) in the motto is Délie's glance, for which the poet/lover dies: "pour le veoir ie pers la vie."

Paul Ardouin suggests that *I* 1 *La femme & la Lycorne* acts as an Annunciation on the basis of the association of the Lady and unicorn with the Virgin Mary and Christ (1974, 388-389). However, if *I* 1 is an Annunciation in Scève's work, I argue that it is not that of the Christ child; rather, *I* 1 is an announcement to the reader that serves as a warning: seeing is a dangerous act and, throughout the cycle of 449 *dizains*, Délie visually deceives the poet/lover. Vision, sexualized vision, leads to deception and death. If Scève's complex structures resist systematic analysis, it is because the image-text presents itself as a demonstration of that which it warns against – *Délie* is a work of and about deception. By beginning his work with an *impresa* about the deceptive nature of

sight, Scève orients his entire work in terms of vision, deception and the fear of seeing, because Délie's gaze kills him.

Scève presents a paradigm of the fear and terror[55] (*l'épouvantail*) associated with the unicorn and sight again in *I* 26 (*La Lycorne qui se voit*)[56] [figure 1.7]. However, unlike the first image of the unicorn, in this *impresa* the lady is absent; the poet is alone. *I* 26 depicts a unicorn gazing at its own reflection in a pool of water. Initially, the image seems to allude to the familiar legend of the unicorn and the miraculous powers of its horn. Yet a closer look at the image shows that the legend is altered: the unicorn is not using its horn. Instead, the image portrays the unicorn viewing its own reflection in a pool of water. Why does Scève modify the legend of the unicorn in his *impresa* and what does he suggest with his unique representation? I show that Scève employs the unicorn to highlight the monstrous transformation and self-reflection experienced by the

---

[55] Huguet observes that the verb *espouanter* means "*terrifier*" in the sixteenth-century.

[56] *Impresa* 26 is significant because it provides strong evidence that Scève made his own *imprese*, a highly debated point among Scève scholars. I suggest that in order to incorporate the motto into the final line of the *dizains*, Scève must have knowledge of the types of images and mottoes printed in the *imprese*. In a discussion of *I* 26 and *dizain* 231, McFarlane claims that the link between the surrounding motto "de moy ie m'espouante," and the final line of the *dizain*, "voyant mon cas, de moy ie m'espouante," provides evidence that Scève supplies the mottoes for the *imprese*. Contrary to the popular legend of the unicorn, the motto implies that the unicorn becomes frightened upon seeing its own reflection. Hence, McFarlane concludes: "if indeed the association between the unicorn and 'épouvante' (as shown in the emblem) is as rare as it now appears, one might consider Scève's treatment of the emblem as evidence that he had provided the mottoes" (1966, 245). In 1544, standard ready-made emblems or *imprese* do not show the motto "de moy ie m'espouante" because the society viewing them is not familiar with any such legend. Furthermore, the motto is rewritten verbatim in the final line of Scève's *dizain*: "voyant mon cas, de moy je m'espouvante" (D 231). Defaux confirms: "nous avons ici une preuve formelle du rôle décisif joué par Scève 1) dans la conception et la disposition de ses emblèmes; 2) dans la composition des devises. Il est le seul responsable de sa *Délie*, son seul maître d'œuvre. C'est très certainement lui, lui seul, qui a tout conçu et tout mis en place" (2004, tome II, 270).

poet/lover. In order to elucidate the significance of Scève's alterations, I briefly discuss the medieval and Renaissance belief in the abilities of the unicorn's horn before returning to an analysis of Scève's *impresa* 26.

In the late Middle Ages, the unicorn is a highly prized creature because its horn has the power to heal. Tesnière suggests that the unicorn's horn has magical properties: "au XIVè siècle apparaît la légende selon laquelle la licorne a la propriété de purifier l'eau empoisonnée en y trempant sa corne. On voit dès lors se multiplier les scènes associant licorne et fontaine ou rivière" (2004, 61). At this time, powder made from the unicorn's horn is considered to have medicinal, apotropaic properties, notably, Tesnière observes, against epilepsy.[57]

In the thirteenth- and fourteenth-centuries, travel books seem to confirm the existence of the unicorn in the East. The scene of the unicorn dipping its horn into a river appears in the fifteenth-century manuscript by Robinet Testard: *Secrets d'histoire naturelle* (*d'après Solin*) folio 15v [figure 1.8]. In this image the unicorn, a white, equine creature, is shown among the fabulous animals of Egypt such as the crocodile. The animal is kneeling with its head and horn pointing towards the water to suggest the popular belief that it can purify poison water. Guillaume Fillastre's *Toison d'or* shows the unicorn near a fountain (Français 138 folio 117) [figure 1.9]. In the detail of the unicorn from Fillastre's manuscript, we see a white, equine creature dipping its horn in the stream to clean the water of any impurities. Caillois notes that during the Middle

---

[57] *Bestiare du Moyen Âge* http://expositions.bnf.fr/bestiaire/grand/k_02_bnf.htm [accessed 13 November 2009].

Ages and the Renaissance, the unicorn was the most popular theme of sculpture, tapestry and bestiaries in the Christian world[58] (1983, 3-5).

Scève's *imprese* of the unicorn seeing its reflection seems peculiar and unconventional to contemporary society. Coleman cites only one possible source for the theme in *I* 26. In the Italian poem "Driadeo" (1489) author, Luca Pulci, details the passion felt by the shepherd Severe for the Dryad Lora (a wood nymph): "when he [Severe] is on the point of succeeding in gaining her love, Diana the Goddess of Chastity, enraged at his enterprise and audacity (the Dryad of course being one of her handmaidens) transforms him into a unicorn… [he is] stupefied and horrified on realizing [his] physical state" (Coleman 1981, 51). Pulci's poetry suggests that erotic desire is punished via metamorphosis.

Although there is no confirmed evidence to support the assertion that Scève forms *I* 26 on the basis of Pulci's tale of Severe and Diana (who transforms him into the unicorn to protect the virginity of her handmaid Lora), Defaux suggests that this may indeed be Scève's source: "c'est sans doute à partir de la réaction horrifiée de l'amant métamorphosé que Scève a conçu le présent emblème [26]" (2004, tome II, 271). Therefore, in consideration of this hypothesis, I offer a brief analysis of the unicorn image in *I* 26.

The power of the unicorn rests in its ability to purify with a touch: "généralement, il suffit de 'toucher' l'aliment suspect avec un fragment de la corne magique serti à

[58] The second tapestry in the New York Cloisters cycle ("The Unicorn is Found") shows the unicorn dipping its horn into a poisoned stream near a fountain. To view this image see, The Cloisters Museum & Gardens of The Metropolitan Museum of Art: http://www.metmuseum.org/explore/Unicorn/unicorn_inside.htm [accessed 31 May 2009].

l'extrémité d'un manche d'argent" (Caillois 1982, 10). However, the image in *I* 26, the title (*La Lycorne qui se voit*) and the motto (*de moy je m'espovante*) sever any link to the traditional legend and the value of the unicorn's horn. Instead of purifying the water, the unicorn sees its own image and becomes terrified: "de moy je m'espovante." In the image, the unicorn does not touch his horn to the water. Instead, I argue that the concave curvature and stance of its legs and knees in position to the pool suggest that the unicorn is drawing away in fear from the water and the reflected image.[59] The hair of the unicorn's mane stands erect - an indication that the animal is frightened or feels threatened.

In my view, Scève's altered legend takes the power of touch away from the unicorn and redirects the emphasis of the *impresa* towards self-perception, monstrosity[60] and terror. The power of touch belongs to the Beloved as she is portrayed as his basilisk in *dizain* 1: "mon basilisque avec sa poingnant' veue." As the basilisk, I discuss in chapter 2, the Lady is a hybrid, monstrous creature with the ability to kill with a glance. Délie's "touch" is thus the look that touches. Like the transformed Lover in Pulci's "Driadeo," the unicorn's reflection is monstrous because it is other. The poet/lover glimpses his monstrous alterity through the gaze of the other: the transformed self -

---

[59] To view a sharper image of impresa 26, see, French Emblems at Glasgow, Glasgow University Emblem Website http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/picturae.php?id=FSCa027 [accessed 17 November 2009].

[60] Friedman observes: "all monstrous forms fascinate and terrify because they challenge our understanding, showing the fragility and uncertainty of traditional conceptions of man" (1981, 3). Strickland defines monstrosity in the Middle Ages as "unacceptability" (2003, 254).

altered by the "touching gaze" of the Lady. With this move, Scève emphasizes the fear of death associated with vision.

The theme of the unicorn, monstrous transformation and self-reflection become more explicit in *I* 26 when compared with the preceding poem:

> Quand ie te vy orner ton chef doré,
> Au cler miroir mirant plus chere face,
> Il fut de toy si fort enamouré,
> Qu'en se plaingnant il te dit a voix basse:
> Destourne ailleurs tes yeux, ô l'oultrepasse.
> Pourquoy? dis tu, tremblant d'vn ardent zele.
> Pource, respond, que ton oeil, Damoiselle,
> Et ce diuin, & immortel visage
> Non seulement les hommes brule, & gele:
> Mais moy aussi, ou est ta propre image (D 230)

Line 2 draws a direct comparison between the mirror and the Lady's face. Deborah Lesko Baker argues that this association makes Délie's face the focal point of the specular drama and creates the pretext for the dialogue in the rest of the *dizain*:

> The personified mirror actually assumes the stance of a lover, adding itself to the admiring number in the exasperated "mais moy aussi" of the final line. This *identification* in respect to the smitten lovers is culminated by the mirror's affirmation of its own role as literal "seat" of the Beloved's image: "Mais moy aussi, ou est ta propre image" (1986, 55).

I propose, since the mirror is an image of Délie, the poet/lover (as the personified mirror) is also an image of the Lady. If he exists as her reflection, then he has interiorized her. Furthermore, he has interiorized the other that she represents and in the *impresa* he confronts the alterity or other that is within him. If the other within is the Lady/basilisk/monster Délie, he shares in this monstrosity. Since the poet/lover is now self and other rather than an autonomous "one," his self reflected shows a monstrous identity: the Lady/basilisk and the transformed self.

Conclusion

The initial enquiry into Scève's appropriation of medieval legend shows that vision and the gaze are the dominant, organizing structures at work within *Délie*. The poet/lover likens his suffering to the unicorn lured and deceived by the calculating female. The unicorn, the beast of shifting suggestive nature, shifts yet again in Scève's work; it shifts from the allegorical to the emblematic. For Scève, the unicorn scenes represent sexualized vision and erotic desire punished by death from the glance of the Beloved.

In chapter 1, I offer an interpretive approach to reading *Délie* that considers the symbolic significance of text and image. As mentioned above, Scève composes his work in an era of major experimentation with numerous modes of representation. For this reason, I insist that the text and image in his *imprese* must be submitted to the same rigorous hermeneutics. To begin this process, I provide *Délie*'s literary and visual influences and demonstrate how Scève alters their signification to privilege his own conceptions of representation. In my reading of *I* 1, I situate the lover and Beloved in the work in terms of their visual relation. Then, I highlight the sense Scève intends with a second image of the unicorn: the poet/lover suffers so acutely that no refuge remains for him to direct his gaze. If he looks outward, he encounters Délie's fatal stare; if he looks inward (inside himself or towards his physical reflection in the mirror), he is shocked by the self and the other that he finds.

The next chapter illustrates that in *Délie*, being seen leads to death because the poet/lover portrays the Beloved as a basilisk: a monstrous beast that kills with a glance. The poet's desire leads to his own suffering because each time he nears the Lady, each

time he comes within reach of her gaze, she punishes with a look that alters from self to other and from life to death. In turn, the glimpse of his transformation under her domain terrifies the poet/lover because on the surface of the reflecting pool he encounters not only his own image but also the face of the Lady as basilisk.

In reference to *I* 26 and the preceding *dizain* 230, Defaux draws a link between the Lady's eyes in the mirror and the basilisk's gaze: "les yeux de Délie ont sur le miroir le même effet que sur l'Amant – *les hommes* en général: ils le brûlent et le gèlent en même temps. On pense à E21, 'Le Basilisque, et le Miroir' ('Mon regard par toy me tue')" (2004, tome II, 269). Therefore, in the chapter that follows, I examine Délie's role as the Beloved in consideration of *Délie's* poetic antecedents. In addition, I analyze the function of the gaze and Scève's portrayal of his Lady as a hybrid monster from medieval bestiaries.

Chapter 2

Monstrous Visions

Introduction

Scève alters legends popular in the Middle Ages to emphasize the dangerous act of seeing and being seen. The gaze, Carl Havelange argues, is always dependent on a relation: "voir, être vu; regarder, être regardé: jeux d'échanges, de réciprocités, de miroirs. Le regard, d'abord, est relation: il est dominé par le désir et toujours partiellement insatisfait" (1998, 8). The initial encounter between the Lady and the poet/lover is a visual experience that, in traditional amorous poetry, constitutes the onset of desire in the poet that stimulates love and the compulsion to write poetic verse. Nonetheless, in the examples of the unicorn, the first visual acquaintance engenders fear and leads to deception and death.

Given that Scève employs this new role of the gaze, we must therefore ask how vision functions specifically within his text. Is *Délie* an imitation? Is vision a topos Scève borrows and imitates from his predecessors? What about the Beloved Délie – is she a French Beatrice or Laura in the style of the Italian poets Dante and Petrarch? Moreover, how do Scève's *imprese* (absent from the Italian amorous poetic sequences) contribute to the poet's construct of the Lady's murderous gaze?

In this chapter, I argue that Scève casts the Lady Délie as a basilisk popular in medieval bestiaries compiled on the basis of Pliny, the *Physiologus* tradition and St. Isidore of Seville. From the late Classical era to the seventeenth-century, the basilisk appears in literary and visual representations that move from history to myth. In the span of these centuries, popular culture sees the basilisk in various forms from the king of

serpents with poisonous breath, skin and gaze, an integral part of Christian culture and a key ingredient in alchemy to Satan and a hybrid monster outside the sphere of the divine natural order of the Christian God. I show that Scève selects various aspects of the basilisk-serpent to depict the Lady in the *dizains*, *impresa* 21 (*Le Basilisque, & le Miroir*) and the entire text as a hybrid-monster outside the realm of nature. In this way, Scève's Lady/basilisk differs from all previous paradigms of the Beloved, Divine Female; hence the text *Délie* is incongruous to its antecedents. To show that Scève alters the medieval role of the Lady, in this chapter I compare the function of vision in Scève with his Italian predecessors, I discuss the history of the legendary basilisk (the model for the Beloved) and I analyze the manner in which Délie becomes the hybrid, inhuman monster that kills the poet/lover ceaselessly in Scève's *Délie.*

Italian Masters

> Voi che per gli occhi mi passaste 'l core
> e destaste la mente che dormìa,
> guardate a l'angosciosa vita mia
> che sospirando la distrugge amore[1]
> -Guido Cavalcanti

Is *Délie* a French imitation of Petrarch's *canzoniere*? Scève scholars debate the significance of Petrarch in *Délie* and criticism exists on both sides of the argument. Saulnier claims: "la priorité dans l'invention du Canzoniere français… reste acquise à Scève" (2003, 204). DellaNeva insists that Scève's *Délie* "is considered to be the first

[1] You whose look pierced through my heart, / waking up my sleeping mind, / behold my anguished life / which love is killing with sighs (my translation); first stanza from "Voi che per gli occhi mi passaste 'l core" by thirteenth-century Florentine poet Guido Cavalcanti.

French canzoniere written in imitation of Petrarch's fourteenth-century masterpiece the *Rime sparse*" (1993, 195). Both works employ the lyric tradition, both works echo Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and both works attribute more emphasis to self-reflection than to the feminine love object. However, on the relationship between Petrarch and Scève's *Délie*, François Rigolot argues: "les emprunts à la thématique et au lexique des *Rime* sont fort modestes" (1980, 92). McFarlane maintains: "even from Petrarch, the number of undoubted textual reminiscences is modest: and the inclusion of possible borrowings adds very little" (1966, 26). Given the current debate, let us examine the employment of vision and eye imagery in Scève's Italian predecessors to determine their significance in relation to the present study.

Délie falls within a tradition of poetry, established by Italian poets during the Middle Ages, that often employs the eye of the lover and the Lady to describe the erotic love experience. Etienne Pasquier cites Scève in 1560 as the first French poet to create a work in the style of the Italian masters: "le premier qui franchit le pas fut Maurice Seve…se mettant en butte, à l'imitation des Italiens, une Maistresse qu'il celebra sous le nom de Delie, non en sonnets...ains par dixains continuels" (1723, 701). While I agree with Pasquier that Scève is the first French poet to dedicate an entire sequence of poems to a single female persona, I must point out that the "Maistresse" in *Délie* contrasts greatly to the Lady celebrated by the Italians. In the works of poets such as Dante and Petrarch (*des Italiens*), the sight of the Beloved Beatrice and Laura inspires Love (*Amore*) that becomes a source of torment and despair because the poet/lover cannot be near the loved one. However, in Scève's work glimpsing the Lady leads to ruin and ultimately death because she returns his glance with a lethal gaze. Nonetheless, erotic desire rather

than Divine inspiration forces him onward in his amorous/poetic quest: “par un desir sans fin insatiable” (D 217 v 4).

Dante evidences his first glimpse of the Lady as a moment of love “at first sight” – a love that becomes the reason for his poetry and for living. His *Vita Nuova* (1295 CE), an autobiographical work composed after the death of the Lady, is an expression of the medieval genre of courtly love in a *prosimetrum* style, in which the prose is a device to link together the poems. In the text, Dante writes: “nine times the heaven of the light had revolved...when the woman whom my mind beholds in glory first appeared before my eyes” (1969, 29). The woman is Beatrice Portinari, the daughter of a prominent Florentine citizen and wife of the banker Simone dei Bardi. After seeing Beatrice again at the age of eighteen, Dante writes: “as [she] walked down the street she turned her eyes toward me where I stood in fear and trembling, and with her ineffable courtesy, she greeted me” (1969, 31).

Throughout *Vita Nuova*, Dante points to vision and Beatrice’s eyes as the cause of his enduring love:

> Forth from her eyes, where’er her gaze she bends,
> Come spirits flaming, with the power of love.
> Whoever sees her then, those eyes they prove,
> Passing within until the heart each finds
> You will see Love depicted in her face
> There where no man dare linger with his gaze (1969, 57).

Even though her gaze strikes fear in the poet, he lives on to continually recount numerous subsequent visual encounters with the Lady. Dante depicts Beatrice as semi-divine, watching over him constantly after her death in 1290. Her eyes and her face command respect through a pure and divine love.

The Beloved's gaze prevails, moreover, in the poetry of the Quattrocento Italian poet Petrarch.[2] In the second sonnet of the *Canzoniere*[3] (1327-1368), Petrarch recounts how he first fell in love with Laura:

> Determined to take up graceful revenge
> and punish in one day a thousand wrongs,
> secretly Love took up his bow again
> and chose the proper time and place to strike.
>
> My strength was concentrated in my heart,
> and there and in my eyes raised its defense
> when down upon it struck the mortal blow
> where every other arrow had been blunted [4]

Although Petrarch writes that Love's arrow "struck the mortal blow," he clearly describes that his "heart" ("it") receives the action as separate from him and that this does not affect his status as a living being; Musa interprets this phrase "he received her glance" (1999, 522). Distinct from Scève's poetry, in which the lover suffers a physical death after he sees Délie, in Petrarch's project, the eyes are an entryway for love to strike the heart of the lover. The poet/lover is a victim forced to succumb to the gaze of Love embodied in Laura. The third sonnet reads:

> It was the day the sun's ray had turned pale
> with pity for the suffering of his Maker
> when I was caught (and I put up no fight),
> my Lady, for your lovely eyes had bound me.
>
> It seemed no time to be on guard against

[2] During the French Renaissance, *Pétrarquisme*, a tradition stemming from the works of Petrarch, was highly influential as a basis for poetic works. *Pétrarquisme* entered French literature during the 1530's when Clément Marot, in 1536 while in Venice, wrote a poem that many consider the first French sonnet "Sonnet à Madame de Ferrare." In 1544, Marot translated six of Petrarch's sonnets into French.

[3] Also known as *Rime Sparse* and *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*.

[4] All English quotations of Petrarch are from the Musa translation (1999).

> Love's blows; therefore, I went my way
> secure and fearless – so, all my misfortunes
> began in midst of universal woe.
>
> Love found me all disarmed and saw the way
> was clear to reach my heart down through the eyes,
> which have become the halls and doors of tears.

Vision is necessary for the initial enrapture – the first act of falling in love. Throughout the *Canzoniere*, Petrarch refers to the Beloved's eyes as beautiful stars, beams of light and flames. The poet/lover must encounter the Lady and she must return a gaze that pierces the poet's heart via the eyes. The visual encounter is essential for the continuous renewal of amorous desire that produces the text of the *Canzoniere*: the poet must see the Lady repeatedly to evoke the experience detailed in the text. Petrarch restricts the modality of vision to the encounter and amorous adventures of the lovers.

The poet/lover in *Délie* has an initial visual encounter with the Lady as well but his experience is radically different from that of Dante and Petrarch. Rather than becoming infatuated with the semi-divine Beloved (Beatrice, Laura), Scève's glimpse of Délie is a traumatic event that, Baker claims, is written in *dizain* 1, rewritten in *dizain* 6 and repeated throughout the entire text[5] (1986, 39). I argue that Scève's poet/lover suffers the multiple visual encounters with Délie, not because vision inspires enduring poetic love like the Italians, but rather because licentious desire and death compel him to

---

[5] Baker writes: "among the ways in which the poet recalls our attention to his opening *dizain*, this poem represents the most radical in the sense that it is an actual restatement of the entire experience" (1986, 39). Baker forms her argument on the basis of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) and claims that the shock experienced by the poet in *Délie* is like the violating trauma experienced by an adolescent as he is confronted with the moment of erotic recognition. This initial trauma, that must be worked through and then mastered, is often staged as a compulsion to repeat the event. Baker argues that for Scève, this repetition occurs in the form of writing and that the text of *Délie* is constituted of a new experience that is written out repeatedly.

ceaselessly search for her. Dante places the Lady at the center of his work and after her death, he recounts each instance he saw her beauty. Similarly, Petrarch's Laura dies while he is writing the *Canzoniere*.[6] However, in *Délie* the poet (not the Lady) is at the center and, through a strange reversal of roles, the poet himself dies instead of the Lady. Délie subsists throughout to subject the poet to his multiple deaths that he narrates repeatedly. Therefore, vision that leads to death produces the text of Scève's work instead of vision that leads to love. Another fundamental difference between Scève and Petrarch is that, unlike the *Canzoniere*, *Délie* contains *imprese*. Scève introduces aspects of vision in legend and myth via pictorial elements as well as in the text. Scève's word-image text establishes a relation between images and poetry that is absent in Dante and Petrarch as well as Ovid.

Délie's glance represents the dominant signification of the eye during the Renaissance: "celle du pouvoir de l'œil, pouvoir que possède le regard de modifier le monde sur lequel il se porte" (Havelange 1998, 47), and Scève illustrates the intense power of the gaze more than all the poets of the sixteenth-century. Délie's glance is capable of affecting the physical world that surrounds her: "au rencontrer le rayant de son oeil / dont le povoir me rend si fort debile" (D 290). The poet's eye searches the world external to him: "le regard est toujours ailleurs qu'en lui-même" (Havelange 1998, 8). The gaze that searches outside of the self, however, will always encounter the paradoxical relationship between desire and the impossibility of its fulfillment. This encounter forces the poet/lover in *Délie* into a tautological search for the *objet de plus haute vertu* resulting in pain, suffering and ultimately death.

---

[6] The persona Laura (real or fictional) dies in the 1348 plague, twenty-one years after Petrarch first saw her. 263 *Rime* are written during her life, 103 after her death.

The excessive power of the eye (*pouvoir de l'oeil*) during the Renaissance, Havelange asserts, is best represented by the figure of the basilisk:[7] "le basilic y occupe une place de choix et peut être considéré … comme une sorte d'emblème, illustration par excellence des pouvoirs anciennement associés au regard" (1998, 49). Scève employs the basilisk in the first *dizain* of *Délie* to emphasize the role of vision and the psychological effects of the Beloved's gaze:

> L'Oeil trop ardent en mes jeunes erreurs
> Girouettoit, mal cault, a l'impourveue:
> Voicy (ô paour d'agreables terreurs)
> Mon Basilisque avec sa poingnant' veue
> Perçant Corps, Coeur, & Raison despourveue,
> Vint penetrer en l'Ame de mon Ame.
> Grand fut le coup, qui sans tranchante lame
> Fait, que vivant le Corps, l'Esprit desvie,
> Piteuse hostie au conspect de toy, Dame,
> Constituée Idole de ma vie. (D 1)

The first *dizain* in Scève's work does not introduce the Lady, the object of the poet/lover's desire, as a beautiful maiden whom he worships from afar like Dante or Petrarch. Rather, Scève compares the Beloved to the basilisk – a creature of known menace: "mon Basilisque avec sa poingnant' veue" (v 4). Scève creates an image of pure destructive power.

Loli Tsan maintains that the position of the basilisk at the beginning of the work shows the degree to which the "lightning strike" (*foudroiment*) of the gaze is essential to the dolorous and stammering quest of the poet/lover (2004, 61). Nonetheless, Scève's description of the basilisk with a *poingnant' veue* (piercing gaze) is only one aspect of the

[7] Havelange traces the presence of the basilisk in literature from Antiquity to the modern era. He explicitly cites Pliny the Elder, Galen, Avicenna and Dioscorides as precursors of the sixteenth-century conception of the basilisk. See Chapter 3: "L'œil dans le monde" (1998).

assorted accounts of the basilisk accumulated through the centuries. I suggest that to highlight the striking place of the basilisk in Scève's work and to elucidate the relation between the basilisk and vision in *Délie*, we must first examine the history of the basilisk legend from literary and visual representations. Furthermore, I argue that it is important to chart out the history of this connection in some detail since this significance has never been fully appreciated.

The Case of the Basilisk

From the Greek *basiliskos* (little king), the basilisk[8] is a legendary creature with a rich literary and pictorial tradition spanning from Antiquity to the seventeenth-century.[9] The basilisk first emerges as a powerful serpent in ancient texts on venomous animals. Then, various encyclopedias on ancient or universal knowledge catalogue the basilisk as a serpent with the ability to kill all living things – flora and fauna alike. As an evil creature in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the basilisk comes to represent the Devil and Satan in medieval iconology, manuscripts and bestiaries.

In the Middle Ages, the basilisk (along with the unicorn) is one of the best known of all the fantastic beasts, although the origins of the creature are less familiar. In the

---

[8] Other names for the basilisk are Baselicoc, Basiliscus, Cocatris, Cockatrice, Cocatrix, Kokatris, Regulus and Sibilus. Huguet defines Basilisque: "sorte de reptile fabuleux."

[9] Thompson indicates that the basilisk is a mythical lizard or serpent, hatched from a cock's egg (usually a seven-year old cock) and with a fatal glance that dies if it sees its own image (1955, B12-B12.3). Due to its ancestry, the basilisk is often depicted as a cock with a serpentine tail. The basilisk and cockatrice are frequently conflated. For a thorough philological account of the differences between the two creatures, see Laurence A. Breiner's "Career of the Cockatrice" (1979).

second-century BCE, Nicander first describes the basilisk, in *Theriaca*,[10] as the "king of serpents" - seen in another term for the basilisk, *rēgulus*: "prince" or "little king" (Alexander 1963, 170). Hence, the creature often appears superior to much smaller snakes to indicate its elevated rank within the hierarchy of beasts. The thirteenth-century Latin bestiary Harley MS 4751[11] in the British Library shows an image of the creature wearing a crown upon its head to signify its royal status over and above all other serpents (folio 59) [figure 2.1]. Ann Payne suggests that the basilisk is originally thought of as: "a patterned snake with a crownlike crest. But there also developed in the Middle Ages a suspicion that the basilisk might be hatched by a toad from an egg produced mysteriously by an elderly cockerel. The resultant oddity was given the alternative names of *basili-coc* and *cockatrice*" (1990, 84-85). Hence, in this image the basilisk has the body of a cock and the tail of a serpent.[12]

Following Nicander's description of the basilisk, Lucan (first-century CE), in book nine of *Pharsalia* (a poem on the nature of venomous animals), claims that if one pierces the basilisk, poison from the creature will travel up through the lance and infect the bearer:

> There upreared / His regal head, and frighted from his track / With sibilant terror all the subject swam, / Baneful ere darts his poison, Basilisk / In sands deserted king (849-853). What availed, / Murrus, the lance by which

---

[10] *Theriaca* is a hexameter poem (958 lines) on the nature of venomous animals and the wounds that they inflict, by Nicander of Colophon, Greek poet of the second-century BCE. Theriac is an antidote to poison.

[11] Harley MS 4751 is a Second Family bestiary with 106 illustrated miniatures in round or square frames from about 1230-1240 CE (Payne 1990, 14).

[12] Payne claims that confusion about the genealogy of the basilisk: "revealed itself in appropriately strange shapes in the illustrations of many bestiaries" (1990, 85). This may be why the head of the basilisk in figure 2.1 resembles a more canine creature.

> thou didst transfix / A Basilisk? Swift through the weapon ran / The poison to his hand: he draws his sword / And severs arm and shoulder at a blow: / Then gazed secure upon his severed hand / Which perished as he looked. So had'st thou died, / And such had been thy fate! (968-975) (Ridley 1905, 294).

The poison or venom of the hissing, regal serpent is so toxic that it may infect through an instrument external to the body such as a rod or lance.

By extension, the basilisk may also poison with its glance. In book eight of *Naturalis Historia* (*Natural History*, 77 CE), Pliny the Elder writes that anyone who encounters the gaze of a basilisk (*basilisci serpentis*) dies immediately, for the basilisk kills any man it sees[13]:

> xxxii: there is an animal called the *catoblepas*; in other respects of moderate size and inactive with the rest of its limbs, only with a very heavy head, which it carries with difficulty – it is always hanging down to the ground; otherwise it is deadly to the human race, as all who see its eyes expire immediately.
> xxxiii: The basilisk serpent also has the same power. It is a native of the province of Cyrenaica, not more than 12 inches long, and adorned with a bright white marking on the head like a sort of diadem. It routs all snakes with its hiss, and does not move its body forward in manifold coils like other snakes but advancing with its middle raised high. It kills bushes not only by its touch but also by its breath, scorches up grass and bursts rocks. Its effect on other animals is disastrous: it is believed that once one was killed with a spear by a man on horseback and the infection rising through the spear killed not only the rider but also the horse. Yet to a creature so marvelous as this--indeed kings have often wished to see a specimen when

[13] Liber 8, 32: iuxta hunc fera appellatur catoblepas, modica alioqui ceterisque membris iners, caput tantum praegrave aegre ferens, id deiectum semper in terram, alias internicio humani generis, omnibus, qui oculos eius videre, confestim expirantibus. xxxiii: Eadem et basilisci serpentis est vis. Cyrenaica hunc generat provincia, duodecim non amplius digitorum magnitudine, candida in capite macula ut quodam diademate insignem. sibilio omnes fugat serpentes nec flexu multiplici, ut reliquae, corpus inpellit, sed celsus et erectus in medio incedens. necat frutices, non contactos modo, verum et adflatos, exurit herbas, rumpit saxa: talis vis malo est. creditum quondam ex equo occisum hasta et per eam subeunte vi non equitem modo, sed equum quoque absumptum. atque huic tali monstro — saepe enim enectum concupivere reges videre — mustellarum virus exitio est: adeo naturae nihil placuit esse sine pare (Rackham 1938, 56).

> safely dead--the venom of weasels is fatal: so fixed is the decree of nature that nothing shall be without its match (Rackham 1938, 57).

Pliny tells us that the basilisk, a serpent with the same power as the *catoblepas* (a creature deadly to the human race), is lethal to humans who see its eyes, lives in North Africa (Cyrenaica) and kills plants with its touch and breath. Similar to Lucan, Pliny relates the story of a man on horseback who suffers from poisoning after spearing the basilisk, although Pliny adds that the horse suffers as well. Since all things in nature have a remedy (*nihil placuit esse sine pare*), Pliny claims that the "venom" (*virus*) of the weasel is deadly to the basilisk.

Alexander claims that Pliny's version, unlike that of Nicander, is the first to allow the recognition of the basilisk as the Egyptian cobra *Naja haje*: "a very dangerous and readily provoked snake which hisses repeatedly as it strikes" (1963, 171). The identification of the basilisk as a snake in Egypt described as part of nature by Pliny turns to myth in the Middle Ages. Hence, as I show in the following pages, medieval visual representations depict earlier written accounts of the basilisk-serpent as a creation of the imagination. For example, the alteration of the Egyptian snake to the fantastic beast of medieval bestiaries accounts for the basilisk's presence in the fifteenth-century manuscript *Secrets de l'histoire naturelle*. In the image "La faune d'Egypte" [figure 2.2], the basilisk is shown in the middle ground on the right between the horizon and a bovine creature on a pedestal. The basilisk has a cockscomb and wattles, wings of a dragon or bat and a long serpentine tail. The text accompanying the image reads:

> En Égypte la Basse repairent et vivent deux périlleux monstres et se tiennent voulentiers sur les rivages de la mer, qui sont moult crains et doubtez des habitans du païs, dont les uns ont nom hippotaures et les autres ont nom cocodrilles. Mais en la Haute, qui est vers Orient, repairent moult de bestes sauvages et venimeuses, comme leons, liepars, parides,

> trigides et basiliques, dragons, serpens et aspics, qui sont plaines de très périlleux et mortel venin.[14]

For the fifteenth-century European, Egypt is an unimaginable, distant land filled with dangerous beasts. In the image, the basilisk is pictured along with dragons, aspics and a hybrid marine-equine creature – the inventions of myth. All of the depicted creatures are monstrous and "périlleux," hence, through inclusion, the basilisk maintains its status as a venomous beast.

In Late Antiquity, the basilisk enters everyday European culture through its inclusion in the Bible. St. Jerome's (347-420 CE) fifth-century version of the Bible in Latin, the Vulgate,[15] contains several references to legendary creatures such as the dragon, the unicorn and the basilisk.[16] Lawrence A. Breiner comments on St. Jerome's reference as follows: "the basilisk of the Vulgate is to all intents and purposes identical to that of Pliny: a venomous snake" (1979, 34). Nonetheless, similar to the example of Pliny's text and the images in *Secrets de l'histoire naturelle* in which the serpent is drawn as a legendary beast, in a Bible from the eleventh-/twelfth-centuries [figure 2.3], a richly colored basilisk adorns the ornate letter[17] (*lettrine* or *lettre ornée*) of the word *Verbum* that begins the book of Micah - one of the books of the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Old Testament, traditionally attributed to Micah the Prophet. This image portrays the

---

[14] *Bestiaire du Moyen Âge* http://expositions.bnf.fr/bestiaire/grand/z_11.htm [accessed 29 June 2009].

[15] In the Vulgate, the Greek term *basiliskos*, is *basiliscus* (Psalm 90) and *regulus* (Jeremiah 8:17).

[16] For references to the basilisk see, Jer 8.17; Pr 23.32; Ps 91.13; Is 11.8, 14.29, 30.6.

[17] Ornate letters were used as decorative initial letters on pages of manuscripts and books in the Middle Ages. On this topic see, J. J. G. Alexander, *The Decorated Letter*, (New York: G. Braziller, 1978).

basilisk as a fowl (with the hint of a comb, rooster claws and no wattle) with large flight feathers and a snake's tail. As an ornate letter, the basilisk within the *V* of *Verbum* serves a purely decorative purpose.

The pictorial history of the basilisk, Havelange observes, exemplifies the power of the eye (*pouvoir de l'œil*):

> Il existe de nombreuses voies par lesquelles sont exprimés les pouvoirs du regard. L'une des plus récurrentes passe par le bestiare mi-réel et mi-fabuleux dont la Renaissance hérite par l'intermédiaire des textes de l'Antiquité (1998, 49).

In the tradition of the *Physiologus*, medieval bestiaries aim to teach Christian morals. Birds and animals become allegories for the sacred life of Christ and the salvation of the soul. For the medieval theologian, animals exist for the edification of Man.

Medieval society is familiar with the basilisk from the description given by the seventh-century CE author and bishop St. Isidore of Seville, whose account is frequently quoted in bestiaries. In *Etymologiae* (*Etymologies* c. 636 CE), Isidore writes[18]:

> 6 'Basilisk' (*basiliscus*) is a Greek word, translated into Latin as "little king" (*regulus*, "king"), because it is the king of the snakes, so that they flee when they see it because it kills them with its odor - it also kills a human if it looks at one. Indeed no flying bird may pass unharmed by the basilisk's face, but however distant it may be it is burnt up and devoured by the animal's mouth. 7 However, the basilisk may be overcome by weasels. For this reason people take weasels into caves where the basilisk

[18] 6 Basiliscus Graece, Latine interpretatur regulus, eo quod rex serpentium sit, adeo ut eum videntes fugiant, quia olfactu suo eos necat; nam et hominem vel si aspiciat interimit. Siquidem et eius aspectu nulla avis volans inlaesa transit, sed quam procul sit, eius ore conbusta devoratur. 7 A mustelis tamen vincitur, quas illic homines inferunt cavernis in quibus delitescit; itaque eo visu fugit, quem illa persequitur et occidit. Nihil enim parens ille rerum sine remedio constituit. 8 Reguli autem, sicut scorpiones, arentia quaeque sectantur, et postquam ad aquas venerint, ὑδροφόβους et lymphaticos faciunt. 9 Sibilus idem est qui et regulus. Sibilo enim occidit, antequam mordeat vel exurat. Bill Thayer *LacusCurtius* http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/L/Roman/Texts/Isidore/12*.html#4 [accessed 17 June 2009].

> lies hidden; and as the basilisk takes flight at the sight, the weasel chases it down and kills it. Thus the Creator of nature sets forth nothing without a remedy. 8 Basilisks, like scorpions, seek after parched places, and when they come to water they become hydrophobic - ὑδροφόβους - and frantic. 9 The *sibilus* (lit. "the hissing one") is the same as the basilisk, and it kills by means of a hissing, before it bites and burns (Barney 2007, 255).

St. Isidore underscores the basilisk's ability to kill humans with a glance. Although his account is similar to that of Pliny, creators of medieval bestiaries look to *Etymologies* for information about the beasts; this aspect may account for the continued, prevalent attribute of the lethal gaze. Isidore places the basilisk in the book on "Animals" in the section entitled "Snakes," between the dragon and the viper in indication of its kinship to these other creatures. Like other authors, Isidore states that the basilisk is the king of snakes and that the weasel may kill it. The use of the weasel in the extermination of the basilisk appears much later in the fifteenth-century English manuscript *Bestiarius - Bestiary of Ann Walsh*[19] [figure 2.4]. This basilisk is part snake and part cock (with a buttercup comb, pronounced wattle (indicating that it is male), large flight feathers and rooster claws). The weasel, much smaller in stature, is biting the flesh of the basilisk's neck to infect it because, as Pliny writes: "the venom of weasels is fatal."

Payne suggests, according to medieval bestiaries, that one might kill a basilisk, in addition to the weasel, by: "reflecting the poisonous glance back onto the snake itself by holding up a shiny glass container" (1990, 84). Iconographic evidence of this method of defense[20] is in the Basilique Ste-Madeleine, Vézelay, France, in which a historiated

---

[19] A Second Family, Latin language bestiary manuscript.

[20] In *The Wars of Alexander*, translator W.W. Skeat writes: "Alexander finds the basilisk asleep, and sets a mirror before him. Then the basilisk slays himself"(1886, 250). Skeat references two manuscripts: Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 44, folios 1r-97v, and Dublin, Trinity College MS 213, folios 1r-41v.

capital (*chapiteau historié*) depicts a man, standing behind a giant grasshopper, showing a crystal shield to the basilisk for protection[21] [figure 2.5]. Historiated letters or capitals are ornamented with representations that have a narrative function, distinct from a purely decorative function. François Vogade interprets the displayed work as follows: "pour se protéger de son regard mortel, l'homme s'abrite derriére un vase de verre. Selon saint Grégoire, la sauterelle symboliserait les nations converties, en lutte contre Satan représenté par le basilic" (1965, n.pag.). As Satan, the basilisk symbolizes death and evil in opposition to the grasshopper – a symbol of Christian nations.[22]

The basilisk is also useful in alchemy, a medieval and Renaissance magical, chemical philosophy that sought to transmute base metals into gold.[23] In *De Diversis Artibus* (*The Various Arts* c. 1125 CE), the twelfth-century Benedictine monk Theophilus includes the basilisk in the recipe for making "Spanish Gold"[24] (*De Auro Hyspanico*). Theophilus claims that this gold is made from red copper, powder of basilisk and human blood and vinegar (Dodwell 1986, 96). Heathens (*gentiles*), skilled in alchemy, produce basilisks for their own purposes. They begin by putting two very old birds in an underground structure and give them plenty to eat. When the fowls are hot from their

---

[21] Vogade indicates that this capital, "basilic et sauterelle" located on the seventh column of the lower north side of the Basilique Ste-Madeleine, dates to 1125-1140 CE.

[22] George Ferguson comments "the grasshopper, or locust, was one of the plagues visited upon the Egyptians because the Pharaoh's heart was hardened against the Word of the Lord. Accordingly, the grasshopper... is a symbol of the conversion of nations to Christianity. This meaning is also derived from Proverbs 30:27, 'The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands,' a passage early interpreted as referring to the nations formerly without Christ for their King" (1954, 19-20).

[23] The discovery of the panacea and the creation of the elixir of longevity are other aims of alchemy.

[24] Book 3, chapter 48.

fatness, they copulate and lay eggs but are then removed and replaced with toads who sit on the eggs until male chicks hatch. After seven days, the chicks grow serpent tails and the heathen bury them in bronze vessels for six months while they are nourished by the fine earth. The vessels are then uncovered and the beasts are burned. "When this has been done and the vessels have cooled, they take them out and carefully grind them, adding a third part of the blood of a red-headed man, which has been dried and ground" (Dodwell 1986, 97).

In the early twelfth-century CE, the basilisk is also associated with evil, anti-Christian imagery and its various incarnations such as demons, dragons and snakes. As such, the basilisk is a symbol for the Devil. In chapter twelve "De basilisco" of *Liber subtilatum*[25] (c. 1150 CE), the visionary Hildegard of Bingen gives a detailed description of the basilisk's birthing process:

> Le basilic naît d'autres espèces de vermines qui ont quelque chose de diabolique, comme le crapaud. Quand la femelle du crapaud est gravide et prête à mettre bas, si elle voit alors un œuf de serpent ou de poule, elle s'en éprend, s'étend sur lui et le couve jusqu'à ce qu'elle mette bas les petits qu'elle avait normalement conçus; une fois qu'elle les a mis bas, ils meurent aussitôt. Quand elle voit qu'ils sont morts, elle s'installe à nouveau sur l'œuf et le couve jusqu'à ce que le petit qui est en lui commence à vivre (2002, 224).

For Hildegard, the manner of the basilisk's procreation is hideous since it involves the theft of the egg of another diabolical species and the death and rebirth of the basilisk-chick. Hildegard also claims that the Devil takes the form of the basilisk and becomes the Antichrist:

---

[25] The English title is The book of subtleties of the Diverse Nature of Things and combines both Physica and Causae et Curae. The French quotation is from Le livre des subtilités des créatures divines: physique.

> Alors, sous l'effet de l'action diabolique, une force venue de l'antique serpent, qui se trouve dans l'Antéchrist, vient la frapper; ainsi, tout comme le diable résiste aux forces célestes, de même cet animal lutte-t-il contre les mortels en les tuant. Une fois que le crapaud a senti qu'il y avait de la vie dans l'œuf, il est aussitôt frappé d'épouvante et s'enfuit (2002, 224).

Payne confirms: "allegorically, the basilisk was an obvious candidate to symbolize the Devil and his evil works" (1990, 85).

Through comparison to the *catoblepas*, a creature that Rackham identifies as a monster (1938, 57), Pliny suggests that the basilisk is also a monster. Georges Canguilhem remarks that monsters are the result of infractions against the laws of nature, hence: "le Moyen Age conserve l'identification du monstrueux au délictueux, mais l'enrichit d'une référence au diabolique" (1962, 32). We learn from the accounts of Theophilus and Hildegard that the basilisk has a mixed, heterogeneous genealogy. The creature is produced from a confusion of genders and its body is a monstrous hybrid composed of the head of a cock, wings of a bat and the tail of a snake; Alixe Bovey claims: "monsters whose bodies are composed of different elements are often referred to as hybrids" (2002, 43). During the Middle Ages, Boria Sax suggests, authors equated destruction with ethical degeneration. Medieval society demonizes the basilisk because it possesses destructive power in its glance (1994, 6). Moreover, the abnormal birth or alchemical creation of the basilisk goes against the divine nature of the Christian God – the creator of all matter in the universe.

The demonization of the creature is pronounced in medieval images that depict the Virgin Mary and Christ stepping on the basilisk. Maurice Vloberg writes that during the Middle Ages: "le diable n'a jamais eu moins bonne presse qu'autre-fois. Protée du mal, il change de peau à sa guise, il incarne la faune complète de l'enfer" (1938, 41). In

the thirteenth-century, Satan can take the form of a lion, wolf, dragon, partridge, basilisk, wild boar or fox among many other beasts. With the aid of the *Clé de Saint Méliton*,[26] the *Physiologus* and the *Bestiaires*, the Church varied the ophidian types of the demon in representations of the viper, dragon, *aspic* and basilisk; Mary carried the antidote to the poison of each with her faith, strength, humility and charity (Vloberg 1938, 43).

Among the diverse forms of the serpent, the basilisk is: "la bête d'enfer par excellence:"

> Il est le premier né de la race maudite. "Du serpent, dit Isaïe, sortira un basilic et son fruit sera un dragon volant." La plupart des commentateurs, saint Jérôme, Cassiodore, saint Grégoire le grand, s'accordent à reconnaître dans le basilic la figure de l'envie, par laquelle la mort est entrée dans l'univers. Si c'était légende que seule la fouine triomphât du basilic, il est très vrai que seule la nouvelle Eve écrase l'Envie, que le basilic symbolise[27] (Vloberg 1938, 47).

The basilisk, a serpentine creature, is a member of the damned breeds and produces offspring that are even more unnatural: "le dragon volant." Vloberg comments that the basilisk represents envy (and perhaps urges of the flesh) and is the portal through which death (*la Mort*) comes to the world. The basilisk of ancient legend succumbs to the bite of the weasel, but the basilisk as absolute evil is only defeated by the Virgin Mary.

---

[26] The Latin text *Melitonis Clavis Sanctae Scripturae* once attributed to St. Melito, ecclesiastical writer in the second half of the second-century CE. Today the text is considered an original Latin compilation of the Middle Ages.

[27] This also reflects the Pelagian myth of Eurynome and Ophion (the name of a vast cosmic serpent in the ancient Pelagian mythology of Greece). Carol Rose remarks: "Ophion was the creation of the goddess Eurynome from a cosmic egg, from which also emerged all the things of the universe. When Ophion became the mate of Eurynome, the monster took the pride of the creator for itself. The enraged goddess vanquished and disfigured the serpent and condemned Ophion to the caverns beneath the earth forever" (2002, 278-279).

In early representations, Christ accompanies the Virgin Mary as she treads on the basilisk-serpent. The image-makers of the thirteenth-century, however, demonstrate Mary's absolute power through divine maternity by depicting her with the Christ-child in arms and the demon underfoot. The statue "La Vierge foulant le dragon et le basilic" [figure 2.6] at the Eglise de Longpont (Seine-et-Oise) shows Mary treading on the two evil beasts (Vloberg 1938, 44). The significance of this representation is that, in addition to the mirror and the weasel, the divine, omnipotent authority of Christ and Mary overcomes all evils embodied by the basilisk.

Among the citations of the basilisk in the Bible, Psalms 91:31 details that Christ will tread on the evil serpents: "tu marcheras sur l'Aspic et sur le Basilic et tu fouleras aux pieds le lion et le dragon" (Ruskin 1947, 288). Numerous depictions of this scene are produced during the Middle Ages. A thirteenth-century illumination entitled "Le Christ marche sur l'aspic et le basilic à côté de l'Enfer" [figure 2.7[28]] located in the Départment des Arts Graphiques in the Louvre, shows Christ specifically crushing the basilisk and *aspic*.[29] In the image, Christ is standing with bare feet on both of the beasts near a Hellmouth (the entrance to Hell depicted as the gaping mouth of a huge monster) shown

---

[28] I want to thank Mr. Carel van Tuyll, Chef du Département des Arts Graphiques du Musée du Louvre for his invitation to visit in January 2009, and for his assistance in locating this work in the reading room on 12 March 2009.

[29] From the Latin *aspis*, the *aspic* is a small venomous snake of Egypt usually held to be a cobra (*Naja haje*). Alexander identifies the Egyptian cobra as the basilisk and there is often some confusion between the basilisk and *aspic*. In medieval bestiaries, the *aspic* is typically shown with one ear to the ground with its tail in the other ear in order to block out the words or song of the charmer. Allegorically, the asp represents the worldly and wealthy, who keep one ear pressed to earthly desire, and whose other ear is blocked by sin. The *aspic* represents death because it is the lowest of all the serpents.

in the lower right corner. The basilisk under Christ's left foot has the body of a brown cock with single comb and wattles and the twisting tail of the serpent.[30]

Of all the shapes Satan can take, the basilisk and *aspic* are by far the most menacing: "le Basilic et l'Aspic représentant les plus actifs des principes malfaisants sur la terre dans leur malignité extrême; pourtant piédestaux du Christ, et même dans leur vie délétère, accomplissant sa volonté finale" (Ruskin 1947, 286). The basilisk symbolizes hubris since, as the king of serpents (*regulus*) it aspires to occupy the place of the Christian God.

By the time of the French Renaissance, the basilisk has acquired numerous characteristics. Perpetuated through the encyclopedias and bestiaries of the Middle Ages, the basilisk is a snake, indeed the king of serpents, with venomous touch, breath and glance vulnerable only to weasels, mirrors and eventually Christ and Mary. It is a monstrous hybrid of confused genders and species, a key ingredient in alchemy; an enemy of Jesus, the Virgin Mary and all Christians; the Devil, and the worst shape of Satan.

For the current chapter, the basilisk's most significant aspect is that it can kill by sight, although its serpentine ancestry and fatal venom are important aspects discussed in the subsequent chapter. The presence of the basilisk in numerous works of the Middle Ages signifies the cultural interpretation of vision at the time: "le basilic vient de nous permettre d'identifier l'une de ces virtualités culturelle du regard - le *pouvoir* - et d'apercevoir certains modalités de son inscription dans le long terme de l'époque

[30] On the textual and exegetical tradition of Christ trampling on the beasts see, F. Saxl, "The Ruthwell Cross," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 6 (1943): 1-19; and Meyer Schapiro, "The Religious Meaning of the Ruthwell Cross," *The Art Bulletin*, 26.4 (Dec., 1944): 232-245.

moderne" (Havelange 1998, 56). I propose that Scève presents Délie as the serpent-hybrid monster whose powerful glance poisons and kills the lover. Scève combines his interpretation of the legendary beast as Lady, the Italian love sequence and the *imprese* to communicate his desire, suffering and endless deaths.

La vue du basilic: Lady as Monster

basilisque (adj.) – qui donne la mort,
comme la vue du basilic - Huguet

The trappings of Church authority, arcane lore of bestiaries, demonology and tales of monsters throughout the history of the basilisk help to produce a creature of fabulous powers. This fantastic animal, able to influence, indeed destroy the outside world with just a glance, is the model for the Beloved in Scève's *Délie*. The irony of the visual encounter, nonetheless, is that while the eye of the lover searches for erotic domination, the lover himself becomes the victim of the Lady's gaze. The glance of the lover should be omnipotent, yet as Tsan observes: "le basilic est connu pour ses yeux meurtriers qui foudroient quiconque croise son regard. Cette croisée des regards est à la fois échange d'armes mais aussi échange amoureux, instrument de domination et de soumission" (2004, 63). The love object returns the lover's glance with a fatal look. I argue that by casting Délie as a basilisk, Scève constructs a model of "Lady as executioner" and "lover as victim" that perpetually repeats. As the "seer" rather than traditional "seen" (like Beatrice or Laura), Délie is responsible for the lover's multiple deaths: "les mortz, qu'en moy tu renouelles" (*huitain*). Délie's penetrating eye guilefully searches out and kills the

lover repeatedly: "mesmes son oeil pudiquement pervers / me penetrant le vif du sentement," (D 424).

Délie's eye reaches out and touches the objects in the world, and hence functions similarly to the concept of the tactile eye[31] (*l'œil tactile*) postulated by Claude Gandelman (1986). In Egyptian hieroglyphs, the image of the eye represents the maker of the sky and the earth: the one who creates. The same image of the eye also appears with an arm and a hand issuing from the side to represent the "eye that touches" (*l'œil qui touche*) (1986, 11-12). Gandelman stresses that the image of the "eye-hand" (*œil-main*) demonstrates the concept of the eye's ability to influence the objects in the world. At the dawn of the French Renaissance, the "eye within the palm" emerges in the pseudo-Egyptian, incunabulum *Hieroglyphica* attributed to Horapollo.[32] Shortly afterwards, the emblematic hieroglyph of the "eye in the palm" appears again in an edition of Alciato's *Emblemes* (1549) as a symbol of prudence [figure 2.8]. In the image, a human right hand hangs in the sky above the landscape with ruins. In the palm of the hand, there is an open eye to indicate that seeing and touching must occur together. Alciato's emblem stresses that the prudent man confirms belief with the senses of both sight and touch.[33]

---

[31] This signification is a remnant of the origins of emblems. Russell argues that the *devise* and emblem have a complex history as theorists have attempted to trace their influences during the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries; see *The Emblem and Device in France* (1985). Egyptian hieroglyphs, the rebus and ancestral heraldry (coat of arms) are among the emblem's influential styles of representation.

[32] *Hieroglyphica* is a work of hieroglyphic explanations from the fifth-century CE, rediscovered in 1422. The first printed edition appears in 1505 (Aldus Manutius), initiating a long sequence of editions and translations. By the end of the fifteenth-century the text is immensely popular among Humanists. See chapter three for detailed information.

[33] Erasmus discusses the *Oculatae Manus* [*Hands with eyes in them*] in *Adages*: "Plautus speaks of 'Hands with eyes in them,' which prefer promises to be made good in

Délie's piercing gaze is a metonym for the covert meaning of the "eye-hand": the unification of the senses of sight and touch. Gandelman notes that the eye-hand: "s'agit bien de montrer la collusion totale entre vue et toucher" (1986, 14). Délie's look sees and touches the lover. Nonetheless, there is a difference between the symbol of prudence in Alciato's emblem and Délie's "look that touches." Scève does not intend to articulate a moral lesson about seeing and believing. Rather, Délie's piercing gaze sees the lover and reaches out to shock, poison and murder him eternally.

I argue that the union of sight and touch results in an *impresa* structure that comprises two different types of gaze: optic and haptic. The optic gaze *sees*; it perceives the outline on the surface and scans the shape and form of an image. The optic gaze perceives spectacle, for the eye alone cannot convey depth. The poet/lover sees Délie, but he continually leaps from one position to another. He conveys his visual experience metaphorically, constantly shifting paradigms as he recounts his suffering from the Beloved. The purely optic gaze disturbs contemplation that would allow the image to transform and become charged with a presence that captures the field of vision. The haptic gaze proceeds from the sense of touch and is the eye's way of making tactile contact with an object, "touché au vif, & de ma conscience" (D 422), "le doigt sacré par si gente maniere, / que celle main, de qui le povoir sainct / ma liberté me detient prisonniere" (D 347). The haptic gaze refers to sentiment and sensation rather than the purely visual experience. If the optic gaze bounds from one icon to another, the haptic gaze contacts and penetrates "par les longz traictz de tes perceanz regardz" (D 140), "le traict perçant au fons de ma pensée" (D 233).

---

kind, not dangled before them in words only; they have eyes, he says, and can check delivery of the goods, but no ears with which to listen to offers" (1989, 141).

In reference to the haptic gaze, Gandelman comments: "l'œil tactile pénètre en profondeur, *haptiquement*, s'englue dans les volumes, les textures" (1986, 17). The haptic gaze penetrates and attaches itself (*s'englue*) in the heart, soul and mind of the poet/lover. Hence, the lover is like Scève's *L'Oyseau au glu* (*I* 12) – weighed down by the visual touch, "et d'un desir si glueux" (D 276). The tactile eye sinks deeper and deeper despite his efforts "pour m'efforcer a degluer les yeulx / de ma pensé enracinez en elle" (D 227). One notion of the eye's power, the evil eye (*mauvais-œil*), occupies a privileged space in superstitious cultures such as the Renaissance. Gandelman claims that the *mauvais-œil* represents "l'œil qui pénètre l'autre comme un poignard, comme une mort insidieuse" (1986, 15). I claim that, similar to the evil eye that seeks out and penetrates, Délie's glance, "sa poingnant' veue" (D 1), is the insidious dagger that stabs the lover (*le coup de poignard*).

The poignant gaze embodied by the basilisk is reprised in *I* 21, *Le Basilisque & Le Miroir*. This *impresa* depicts the basilisk looking directly into a mirror [figure 2.9]. In some versions of the legend, the only way to kill a basilisk is by holding a mirror in front of its eyes, while avoiding looking at it directly.[34] In addition to the historiated capital at Vézelay discussed above, Coleman cites poetry of Petrarch[35] and a drawing by Leonardo da Vinci in the Louvre that depicts a man showing a mirror to a basilisk as literary and iconographical evidence of this popular belief (1981, 42). The moment the

---

[34] The ability to kill the basilisk with a mirror is most likely an attribute gained in the Middle Ages by acculturation of the Greek Medusa seeing her own image in Perseus' shield. I discuss this aspect in detail in chapter 3.

[35] Defaux identifies the poetry as Petrarch's *Rime disperse*, sonnet IV in *Opere*, a cura di Emiglio Bigi, Milan: Ugo Mursia, 1963, p. 333 (2004, tome II, 227).

creature sees its own reflection it will die of fright. The basilisk's gaze is so fatal that not even the animal itself can bear to see its own reflection.

Scève's *impresa* shows the basilisk as part cock with comb and wattles, terrific extended wings and a serpentine tail that curves behind and below the creature. I want to draw attention to the motto located inside the realm of graphic space in the image. The pictorial mirror is enclosed by the terms "toy" above the image and "tue" upside down and reversed below - inverted just as a proper mirror would show. My analysis proposes that this "mirror image" between the two textual terms creates a structure that reinforces the message of the motto both pictorially and textually. In the motto, the poet's gaze through the "other" (Délie) brings his own death; the mirrored image of the lover (*toy*) ultimately kills the poet/lover (*tue*).

The mirror in the *impresa* reflects a discernable image of the basilisk. Hence, I suggest that, given the legend, Scève's *impresa* depicts a scene in which the basilisk sees itself and will in turn perish. The play of the glance in the *impresa*, as it issues from the basilisk to the mirror and then reflects back to the creature, comprises both the optic and the haptic gaze. The basilisk sees the mirror (optic) but the reflected gaze pierces the flesh and causes its death (haptic): "percent leur peau toute arse en main endroit" (D 246).

The image of the basilisk and the mirror present a game between the *je* and its double. The mirror in the *impresa* is desire – a surface where the reflected *je* appears along with the face of feminine beauty: "si le desir, image de la chose, / que plus on ayme, est du coeur le miroir," (D 46). Tsan claims: "si l'on comprend que le *tu* est un *je* reflété, tout en étant Délie, objet de quête amoureuse/poétique, la lecture de ces dizains

s'enrichit de sens contradictoires et complémentaires, s'emboîtant dans le jeu antipéristatique[36] du double" (2004, 60-1). Tsan suggests that while the *je* and *tu* amalgamate, the amorous discourse introduces a tension that makes them attract but also separate; the reflected image in *I* 21 blurs the pronominal distinction between je and *tu*. Does the mirror show the Beloved that the *je* sees? Or the *tu* that the *je* sees or reflects? Or is it both? In any case, I propose that the lover fearfully avoids the mortal gaze of the love object: "je m'en absente et tant, et tant de foys, / qu'en la voyant je me la cuyde[37] absente" (D 225). In Scève's world of multiple deaths and confused reflections, I observe that an individual is able to occupy more than one subject position at a time. Identity becomes a malleable concept, in a state of suspended uncertainty.

Scève's *impresa Le Basilisque, & le Miroir*, also resonates with the Neoplatonic tradition of the mirror in an amorous relationship. Scève's mirror and that of Humanist Marsilio Ficino are nonetheless distinct. In Neoplatonic thought, the soul of the lover becomes the mirror in which the other sees his or her own image reflected[38]:

> L'Amant grave en son âme la figure de l'aimé. De ce fait, l'âme de l'amant devient un miroir dans lequel se reflète la figure de l'aimé, et c'est pourquoi, en se reconnaissant dans l'amant, est lui-même porté à l'aimer (Ficino 1956, 158).

Ficino describes the mirror as that which makes the loved one (*l'aimé*) fall in love with the lover (*l'amant*), which is ultimately a felicitous experience. By combining the Neo-

---

[36] Tsan is referring to Aristotle's *Meteorologica* in which he describes antiperistasis as a principle thanks to which a quality acquires force from its contrary.

[37] Cuider - penser, croire.

[38] This Neoplatonic tradition stems from Plato's *Alcibiades* I, 133, in which Socrates tells Alcibiades that the image of a person looking into the eye of the other is reflected like in a mirror and that the image of the other is thus reflected in the first person's "visual organ" – the eye.

platonic theme of the mirror with the legend of the basilisk, however, I assert that Scève presents a horrifying, fatal encounter between the lover and the Beloved. The poet cites his fear repeatedly in the text:

> Mais cet aspect de la Vierge modeste
> Phebus enflamme en si ardente horreur,
> Qu'aux bas mortelz vient la froide terreur,
> Qui de la peur de leur fin les offense. (D 62, v 3-6)
>
> Non cy me tien ma dure destinée
> Ensepvely en solitaire horreur: (D 88, v 1-2)
>
> Dieu de vilté, & de sagesse horreur,
> Me tire a doubte, & de doubte a terreur. (D 371, v 6-7)

The language – *horreur*, *peur*, *terreur* – indicates that vision is an abomination[39] for the lover. The cultural aspect surrounding the prevalence of the basilisk tells us that seeing and being seen are actions that are never devoid of risk. The modality of the basilisk's mortifying gaze is a topos that evokes a specific understanding of vision – that of antipathy and trepidation.

The commentary following the basilisk *impresa* (D 186) highlights the dread of vision as well as the problem of subject position discussed by Tsan:

> Ie m'esiouys quant ta face se monstre
> Dont la beaulté peult les Cieulx ruyner:
> Mais quand ton oeil droit au mien se rencontre,
> Ie suis contrainct de ma teste cliner:
> Et contre terre il me fault incliner,
> Comme qui veulx d'elle ayde requerir,
> Et au danger son remede acquerir,
> Ayant commune en toy compassion.
>   Car tu ferois nous deux bien tost perir.
> Moy du regard, toy par reflection. (D 186)

[39] From the Latin *ab homine* "away from man," thus "beastly," from the Latin *belua* "monster."

Pronominal alternation of the *je* and *tu* is blurred by the game of reflection. In the *dizain*, the *je* thinks it sees the face of the Beloved: "ie m'esiouys quant ta face se monstre / dont la beaulté peult les Cieulx ruyner" (v 1-2). The immediate danger causes the *je* to flee the mortal gaze up until the point of revelation in the last two lines: "*je* n'a vu que sa propre image, à laquelle il ne saurait survivre" (Tsan 2004, 61). Through the reflective gaze, the poet becomes the deadly creature, the image of the self that he portrays as the Beloved external to him.

The poet/lover fears that both he and Délie will soon perish, "car tu ferois nous deux bien tost perir / moy du regard, toy par reflection" (v 9-10). Coleman comments as follows: "this gives a personal subjective touch to the theme: he will die by her glance, which he always does, but also being a mirror/basilisk, Délie will die too by receiving her own glance through the reflection of it in his eyes" (Coleman 1981, 44). Defaux suggests that v 9-10 glosses the preceding *impresa*: "si je ne baissais pas la tête, ce serait notre mort à tous deux. Délie Méduse" (2004, tome II, 227). With this statement, Defaux confirms that the Beloved is the monster with a lethal gaze, Medusa.[40] I argue that by presenting both subjects (lover and Beloved) in the mutual positions of the mirror and the basilisk, Scève suggests that the horrifying nature of vision affects all subjects. Even the all-powerful eye of Délie is subject to the fatal glance.[41] This shows the lover's fear that Délie might die – which, in a masochistic reversal, he does not want, because erotic desire forces him to yearn for his own multiple deaths.

---

[40] Chapter 3 examines the role of Délie as the Medusa.

[41] This may be Scève's manner of presenting Délie's weakness similar to Pliny and St. Isidore of Seville, who indicate that the venomous weasel may kill the basilisk, in addition to an indication that Délie is the Medusa.

However, death will not occur in the same manner for the poet/lover and Délie. The contrary of life is death for the poet - a human in the order of the living. Since the Beloved is a basilisk, a hybrid and a monster, she will confront the opposition to her own existence: *la monstruosité*. Canguilhem discusses the distinction between death and monstrosity:

> C'est la monstruosité et non pas la mort qui est la contre-valeur vitale. La mort c'est la menace permanente et inconditionnelle de décomposition de l'organisme, c'est la limitation par l'extérieur, la négation du vivant par le non-vivant. Mais la monstruosité, c'est la menace accidentelle et conditionnelle d'inachèvement ou de distorsion dans la formation de la forme, c'est la limitation par l'intérieur, la négation du vivant par le non-viable (1962, 31).

When the Beloved/basilisk looks into the mirror, she confronts the image of her own appearance. Scève inscribes a homonym in the first line of *dizain* 186 to comment on the nature of Délie's face: in the verb *se monstre* (*ta face se monstre*) one may hear the demonstrative adjective *ce* and the noun *monstre* - *ce monstre*. Hence, instead of "your face shows itself," one may hear the first line as "your face, this monster." Alternatively, rather than "shows itself," *se monstre* could connote the change that occurs in Délie's face – *ta face se monstre* "your face monsters itself." Through an excessive act of showing (*montrer*), she becomes monstrous.

Huguet indicates that the sixteenth-century term *monstre* has two separate meanings. The first defines *monstre* as "spectacle, représentation, pompe." This sense of the term is from the Latin *monstro*, *monstrare* (*monstrum*), which gives the French term *montrer* – to show, point out. Huguet's second entry defines *monstre* as "prodige, chose incroyable, action criminelle." Also from the Latin *monstrare*, this sense of *monstre*

(monster) implies vice, incredulity and immorality. Hence, in the single term *monstre*, the Beloved becomes a representation of an iniquitous monster.

The portrayal of Délie as a hybrid, a basilisk, questions her existence among the order of living beings. Once her place among this order is destabilized, she becomes something outside the realm of human existence. It is because of this difference that we view her as a monster: "c'est seulement parce que, hommes, nous sommes des vivants qu'un raté morphologique est, à nos yeux, un monstre" (Canguilhem 1962, 29). Her hybridity or "failed morphology" is a monstrosity (from the Latin *monstrŭōsus* – strange, unnatural) because it shows a malformation, a mark of the unnatural, a deviation from the natural order. Délie's monstrous face is thus frightful and revolting. Yet, in *Délie*, Scève makes a distinction between the appearance of the Beloved when she is divine (*le visage*) and when she is wicked (*la face*) to show that she deceives with appearances.

For Scève, the face is a locus of horror and anxiety: "ma face, angoisse a quiconques la voit," (D 45). Scève employs the term "face" to mark the difference between *la face* and *le visage*. From the Old French *vis* (appearance) and the Latin *vīsus* (vision), the visage[42] appears. Délie's *visage* is humane, "l'honnesteté en ton humain visage," (D 177), and divine "et ce diuin, & immortel visage" (D 230), therefore not monstrous. From the Latin *facĭēs* (form) and *făcĭo*, *făcĕre* (to make, to do), the face is a site of transmutation. Stéphanie Boulard suggests that there is an intrinsic link between the face (*la face* not *le visage*) and monstrosity:

> Or si le visage se montre dans toute sa monstruosité, c'est qu'il apparaît de face. Et c'est bien sûr quand il apparaît de face que l'on réalise que, ce faisant, il nous fait la grimace.... Comme si le visage appelait

---

[42] Huguet indicates that in the sixteenth-century *vis* means *visage*, and *visage* means *apparance*, *aspect*, *forme*.

> inévitablement la grimace et, par conséquent, le monstrueux. ...On peut voir là ce côté tendu du visage qui est acceuillant à la monstruosité, qui en est même le terrain privilégié (9).

The visage appears but the face makes; the grimace makes the Beloved monstrous. As we watch, Délie's visage changes into a face, displaying her own monstrosity – evident in the numerous figurations of the monster that she embodies in *Délie*: "cherchant tousjours par ce Monstre terrible" (D 425).

McFarlane asserts that Scève uses the motto of *I* 21 ("Mon regard par toy me tue") and the theme of *Le Basilisque & Le Miroir* "to alembicate his *pointe* in the following *dizain* [186]"[43] (1966, 221). McFarlane's term "alembicate" refers to the notion of transformation figured in *I* 23, *L'Alembic* [The alembic[44]] - anything that transforms. Similar to Theophilus, who mentions the use of basilisk powder in the production of Spanish Gold, Scève cites the practice of alchemy[45] when discussing his own alteration:

> Pleurs restagnantz en un grand lac profond,
> Dont descent puis ce ruisseau argentin,
> Qui me congele, & ainsi me confond
> Tout transformé en sel Agringentin.   (D 373, v 7-10)

---

[43] Scève transforms "Mon regard par toy me tue" to "Moy du regard, toy par reflection."

[44] A tool used in alchemy, the alembic is a device that purifies or alters by a process comparable to distillation.

[45] On the topic of alchemy (*l'alchimie*) in Scève see Joan A. Buhlmann, "Philosophical Alchemy as a Mode of Transformation in Scève's *Délie*," *Romance Notes* 23.1 (Fall 1982): 44-52; and J.A. Davis, "With *Délie* by the Golden Sun and Silvery Moon: Alchemical Imagery in Maurice Scève's *Délie*" *Romance Notes* 28:3 (Spring 1988): 253-260.

From the Latin *confundo*, Scève's phrase "me confond" relates the verbs *rendre méconnaissable* (unrecognizable) and *métamorphoser* (to metamorphose; to transform completely). His form can no longer be recognized as he is transformed "en sel Agringentin" (quicklime) - an alchemical mineral substance.[46] This exposes the theme of transformation present throughout the text in which the poet sees the Beloved shift in monstrous visions and the poet/lover suffers in her sight:

> Là mon esprit son corps laisse endormy
> Tout transformé en image de Mort,
> Pour te monstrer, que lors homme a demy,
> Vers toy suis vif, & vers moy je suis mort. (D 100, v 7-10)

Each time Délie shows her face she is a monster, she shows a monster, she transforms into the monster. Each time Délie's face changes she displays a metamorphosis of diverse monstrosities. Conversely, the lover is transformed into death: "en image de Mort… vers moi je suis mort" (v 8, 10).

The basilisk, as Andrew Scott details, comes to represent a tangible fear associated with an intangible materiality. As such, the basilisk possesses the classic attributes of implied menace - it produces a deadly effect, but its source cannot be seen (one cannot gaze into the eyes of the basilisk). As with all cultural embodiments of horror, the idea of the basilisk can be unpacked to display robustly non-mythical fears and concerns because its means of attack is the visual field (1999, 166).

[46] McFarlane suggests that the source of the image "sel Agringentin" is from Pliny's *Natural History*: "Agrigentinus, ignium patiens et aqua exilit" (XXXI; xli), but that Scève may have found the definition in the *Calepinus* more explicit: "Sal Agrigentinus, qui in igni fluit, & in aqua, vel alio liquore crepitat, quasi torreatur" (1966, 464). The *Calepinus* is the work by Ambrosius Calepinus (1440?-1511) *Dictionarium...*, Paris, J. Badius, 1514.

With the basilisk, Scève creates a representation of the lover who dies from the Lady's baneful look that inspires, not perfect, divine Love, but lustful yearning for death. Délie's eye simultaneously sees and touches; hence, the lover in the world is confronted continually with a desire that will never be satisfied. The Beloved's glance (*œil-main*) is demonstrated in *I* 21 with the basilisk-monster, transfixed and caught inside the reflective gaze. In the play of this glance, the "seer" and the "seen" are confused and there, on the surface of the mirror, the different subjects blend into each other; both self and other transform as identity becomes confused and monstrosity emerges. All of this action is represented in the moment of the glance, suspended in time and frozen in the *impresa* image.

Conclusion

Scève's alterations of legend are in service to vision and the gaze. In *Délie*, Scève modifies the standard topos of sight made popular by the Italians and reinscribes it in terms of carnal desire for the monstrous other. In this chapter, I show that the figure of the Beloved contrasts greatly to the medieval, Italian archetypes to which Délie is compared by Scève scholars. In the works of Dante and Petrarch, the sight of the Lady stimulates Love and admiration. Although the form of Scève's poetic sequence may be similar to the Petrarchan structure, in the word-image text of *Délie*, vision leads to fear and death. The successive, renewed deaths inspire the poetic text and hence "Love" is monstrous.

The figure of the Beloved in Scève's text is that of destructive power and absolute evil. Délie is not the beautiful maiden contemplated and admired from afar. Rather, she

is a degenerate monster outside the realm of natural order. Like the traditional Lady, Délie's gaze penetrates the poet/lover. However, Scève's basilisk/Lady emits a glance laced with infernal poisons that morbidly infect the lover. In turn, the poet reproduces his perverted desire for the evil she draws upon in the *imprese* and *dizains* within *Délie.*

Each form of the Lady as the hybrid monster shares the aspect of the serpent. As I illustrate in the case study of the basilisk, the serpentine creature has numerous abilities and forms by the time Scève begins to compose *Délie* in the early sixteenth-century. In addition to being venomous to the touch, the basilisk (and thereby Délie) is capable of killing with a venomous glance. The power to infect and kill with the face or the gaze becomes the most significant aspect of the hybrid Beloved because these traits link her to various figures of the other into which Délie transforms throughout the text.

Chapter 3

Délie's Ophidian Forms

Introduction

The poet/lover in *Délie* perceives the Beloved as a basilisk from medieval bestiaries and he depicts Délie as a serpent hybrid with the power to kill with a single glance: the look that touches (*le regard qui touche*). Until we consider the historical significance of the serpent and the authority of the mortal gaze, the link between the two is not immediately obvious. The basilisk is a symbol and because of this, it represents all of the characteristics associated with the creature in the Middle Ages as well as the traits inherited from the cultures of the past. The term *Serpent* appears five times[1] in the text and each time it is capitalized. This suggests that it is a proper name; or, that it is an allegorical figure like *Amour*. By capitalizing the term, Scève highlights the importance of the serpent that shifts and transforms in the text and becomes a symbol of fear, darkness and death in Délie's various manifestations.

The serpent in *Délie* links the basilisk to its ancestor Hathor, the Egyptian "serpent eye goddess" (1570-1070 BCE). Hathor's authority derives from her *uraeus*: the sacred serpent of supreme power represented on the headdresses of ancient Egyptian deities and sovereigns. Renaissance artists are familiar with the Egyptian divinities because of the prominence of Horapollo's *Hieroglyphica*, a text that prompts a renewed interest in Egyptian hieroglyphics. The basilisk and serpent appear repeatedly in Horapollo's text including the first entry explaining how the Egyptians represent Eternity: the Egyptian serpent *Ouraion* or the Greek *Basilisk* (Boas 1950, 57). Scève

[1] Singular *Serpent* four times (D 30, 143, 199, 372) and plural *Serpentz* one time (D 239). The plural term also appears in the title of *impresa* 30 *Cleopatra et les serpentz.*

describes Hathor's kingdom as a locus of darkness and suffering: "tout esperdu aux tenebres d'Egypte" (D 129).

Scève cites another ancestor of the basilisk associated with the serpent and the gaze that kills: the Gorgon Medusa. Boria Sax confirms the basilisk's inheritance: "the ability to kill with a glance, however, is shared by the gorgons of Greek mythology, who may be regarded as remote ancestors of the basilisk" (1994, 4). Medusa expresses the desire of humans to look and to watch, and simultaneously the fatal sanction following the act: petrifaction. With serpents for hair and the power to turn all creatures to stone with her hideous gaze, Medusa is an additional figure for the Lady in *Délie*. The victim of Medusa's stare is forever transfixed and forced to look upon the horror just as the gaze of the Beloved forces the poet/lover to die repeatedly.

In this chapter, I argue that by acculturation the medieval basilisk symbolizes the Egyptian serpent eye goddess Hathor and the Gorgon Medusa from the Graeco-Roman tradition. Pascal Quignard insists that Scève's poet/lover is on a quest to name the Beloved (1974, 31). Scève scholars point out that the poet gives the Lady many names such as Diana (Southwood 2008), Hecate (Duval 1979), and Pandora (Defaux 2004). Yet these critics do not cite this important connection with Hathor or Medusa. Hence, I argue that when we follow the serpent to search for Délie (or the forms she takes) we find unexpected figures for the Beloved lurking about in Scève's text. For example, Scève interprets the serpent and basilisk creatures in Horapollo's *Hieroglyphica* to highlight the presence of Hathor and her Egyptian kingdom in *Délie*. In addition, Scève creates Medusa's doubled existence through his own appropriation of the style and content of authors such as Homer, Hesiod, Apollodorus and Ovid to show that because of her

intrinsic unity of opposites, she simultaneously attracts and repels, protects and threatens, heals and poisons. Furthermore, I show that the poet's search to glimpse the Lady/Medusa leaves him frightened, dumbfounded and wandering throughout the text.

Eye of the Serpent

The serpent, ubiquitous in the literary and visual representations of cultures from the ancient Egyptians to the present day, appears in the poetic text and the *impresa* images of *Délie*. The poet cites the creature in many *dizains* (30, 143[2], 199, 239, 372) and each reference brings its own significance, since the serpent has many associations: Biblical, legendary, mythological. The serpent symbolizes a unity of opposites: day and night, good and evil, masculine and feminine. It is also a dominant feature in the *impresa* images such as *I* 21 (*Le Basilisque & Le Miroir*) in which the creature depicted has a serpentine tail. The serpent also appears in *I* 30 (*Cleopatra et les serpentz*) that I discuss in this chapter.

Scève's' references to the serpent create complex symbols that are mutually part of what is symbolized and that perform their standard function of representation. Distinguished from a sign - an arbitrary designation composed of signifier and signified in which one refers to the other to establish meaning[3] - the symbol is a word, phrase, image, et cetera, that has an array of associated meanings and is perceived as having inherent value separable from what is symbolized. For example, the serpentine tail of the

---

[2] See Richard Klein's ingenious analysis of metaphor and *dizain* 143 (1970).

[3] Saussure argues that the sign is made of the union of a concept and a sound image. Meaning is found in the association created between the sound image and the concept. See his *Cours de linguistique générale*, (Paris: Payot, 1922).

creature in *I* 21 (*Le Basilisque & Le Miroir*), along with the head of the cock, allows the viewer to identify it as a basilisk. At the same time, the serpent's tail is associated with the power of the basilisk's eye (*pouvoir de l'œil*) and the ability to kill with a glance. When the poet complains that his Beloved is a basilisk, we must understand that the image in *I* 21 (*Le Basilisque & Le Miroir*) as well as the phrase "Mon Basilisque avec sa poingnant' veue" (D 1) symbolize the basilisk's ancestors Hathor and Medusa, whose authority and destructive power are located in the eye.

The image of *I* 30 [figure 3.1] depicts the Egyptian queen Cleopatra with the serpent. This *impresa* recalls the queen of Egypt Cleopatra VII Philopator (69-30 BCE) and Mark Antony[4] who both committed suicide, she reportedly with an asp.[5] The Classical authorities on Cleopatra's death, Plutarch and Cassius Dio, both describe the scene as having a single serpent. Yet, as the image shows and the motto *Cleopatra et les serpentz* confirms, in Scève's depiction of Cleopatra there is more than one serpent. Coleman argues that Scève's Cleopatra *impresa* portrays two serpents because Virgil

---

[4] Marcus Antonius (83-30 BCE).

[5] Plutarch (46-120CE) writes in *The Parallel Lives, The life of Antony*: "It is said that the asp was brought with those figs and leaves and lay hidden beneath them, for thus Cleopatra had given orders, that the reptile might fasten itself upon her body without her being aware of it. But when she took away some of the figs and saw it, she said: "There it is, you see," and baring her arm she held it out for the bite" (86:1). http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Lives/Antony*.html [accessed 13 September 2009]. In *Roman History* Cassius Dio (ca 164–after 229 CE) writes: "no one knows clearly in what way she perished, for the only marks on her body were slight pricks on the arm. Some say she applied to herself an asp which had been brought in to her in a water-jar, or perhaps hidden in some flowers" (51:14). http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Cassius_Dio/51*.html [accessed 13 September 2009].

introduces "twin snakes" (*geminos*) in *Aeneid*[6] and Defaux adds "nous avons eu maintes fois l'occasion de constater que Scève apprécie beaucoup Virgile" (2004, tome II, 308). Hence, an indirect reference to Virgil in *Délie* is not surprising.

The significance of showing Cleopatra with two serpents in *I* 30, as in the *Aeneid*, is that Virgil may be describing the two horns that rise up from the headdress of Isis. As the queen of Egypt, Cleopatra VII is often depicted as Hathor and Isis.[7] For example, the temple of Hathor at Dendera assimilates Cleopatra with the two goddesses she worships: Hathor and Isis (Kleiner 2005, 225). Mary Hamer argues that the image[8] in the Dendera relief on the rear wall of the temple identifies Cleopatra as Hathor: "Cleopatra is distinguished by the cobra modius, the diadem with *uraeus* which is the mark of a queen" (1993, 16). Scève's *impresa* portrays the scene of queen Cleopatra's death and the following commentary, *dizain* 267, alludes to this again: "tousiours, toute heure, & ainsi sans cesser / fauldra finir ma vie…" (v 4-5). The poet then relates Cleopatra's situation to his own: "fauldra finir ma vie & commencer / en ceste mort inutilement vive" (v 5-6). By depicting Virgil's two serpents in the Cleopatra *impresa* instead of one, Scève's image also symbolizes Hathor: the Egyptian divinity associated with serpentine horns and

---

[6] Coleman (1981, 56). Heffernan describes the shield of Aeneas: "Cleopatra is shown on the shield calling her fleet with the ancestral rattle and never looking back ("a tergo") at the twin snakes ("geminos…anguis") behind her (696-97). The twin snakes link her to the Medusa-like figure of Allecto, whose writhing hair sprouts "geminos… anguis" as she makes the eyes of Turnus stiffen with terror (7.446-50)" (2004, 34).

[7] J.W. Mackail tells us that Virgil must have been familiar with portraits of Cleopatra as the goddess Isis: "in the celebrated Dendera portrait of Cleopatra these horns are shaped not unlike serpents and she is looking away from them" cited in Coleman (1981, 56), *The Aeneid* ed. with introduction, notes and commentary by J. W. Mackail, (Oxford, 1930).

[8] See Hamer (1993, 15) Plate 1.6 "Relief from the rear wall of the temple of Hathor at Dendera."

the *uraeus*. With this move, the Lady accumulates all the attributes of not only the basilisk but also Hathor and Cleopatra.

The serpent creates a connection between the basilisk and the symbolic *impresa* image of "Cleopatra as Hathor" (*I* 30) in *Délie*. Scève's *I* 21, the basilisk of the Middle Ages depicted in so many bestiaries as a combination of serpent and cock, is a descendant of Hathor and the Egyptian cult of serpent power:

> The basilisk owes many of its characteristics to the symbolic value of the cobra among the ancient Egyptians. It was associated with the sun-god Rā, and his earthly deputy, the Pharaoh, as the protector of royal (or godly) power. Each wore a model of it in the position of readiness to strike, on the front of his crown (Alexander 1963, 172).

As a figure for the Beloved, the basilisk kills with a glance. Likewise, Hathor reigns by the power of her headdress that bears the serpent. Pliny's account of the basilisk points to the Egyptian cobra *Naja haje*[9] [figure 3.2]. In ancient Egypt, this species of cobra appears on amulets and hieroglyphics, which show a serpent rearing up with dilated hood [figure 3.3]. The Greek word *uraeus* (from the Egyptian *iaret* for "rearing cobra") describes this specific model of the cobra. The *uraeus* in ancient Egypt is the symbol for Wedjat: one of the earliest Egyptian deities. The cobra designates her and, hence, the deities and Pharaohs wear it on their brow to show their destructive power. The image of Wedjat's eye [now *Wadjet*] as a cobra is also called the "Eye of Hathor."

---

[9] Chapter 2, Pliny *Natural History* xxxiii: Eadem et basilisci serpentis est vis. Cyrenaica hunc generat provincia, duodecim non amplius digitorum magnitudine, candida in capite macula ut quodam diademate insignem.

Hathor[10] is a divinity known as the serpent eye goddess: "the power of Hathor is ubiquitous and identified with serpent energy" (Roberts 1995, 8). She is the daughter of the sun god Re (Rā), and as a fiery, solar deity like her father, sexual attraction belongs to her.[11] Known also as "Eye of Re," she is the *Wedjat*-eye[12] - a symbol of protection and the royal power of the deities Re and Horus: her husband. As Wedjat, the "Eye of Re" and the "Eye of Horus," Hathor always wears the *uraeus* as a symbol of her erotic vitality and divine authority.

The association I find between Hathor's *uraeus*, the serpent and the power of the eye in Scève's text plays a prominent role in the Renaissance because of the renewed interest in Egyptian hieroglyphs. This fascination arises in response to the popularity of the text *Hieroglyphica*,[13] attributed to Horapollo.[14] Renaissance Humanists, familiar with

---

[10] A goddess respected throughout Egyptian history, Hathor dates to the "New Kingdom" dynasties 18-20 (1570-1070 BCE). Hathor's name means the "Temple of Horus" which denotes the myth that Horus entered Hathor's mouth every night to rest, emerging as the sun in the morning. Hathor's husband Horus (son of the Egyptian deity Isis) as the Greek Harpocrates (god of silence often portrayed as an infant with finger held to his mouth) appears in Alciato's 1536 *Livret des emblemes* in the emblem "In Silentium" [figure 3.4].

[11] Roberts writes: "Re depends on her prodigious powers - he delights in her - but also recognizes that her ferocity must be controlled. And to this end he decrees that bacchanalic festivals should be celebrated for her throughout the year" (1995, 11).

[12] A symbol named for Wedjat, the cobra goddess who was tutelary goddess of Lower Egypt and with the vulture-goddess Nekhbet of Upper Egypt, protector of the king. She was nurse to the infant god Horus.

[13] This text is believed to be the only complete ancient treatise on Egyptian hieroglyphics. Although the Coptic original is lost, in 1422 a manuscript of the text comes to Florence from the island of Andros. This manuscript, known in French as *Les Hieroglyphs d'Horapollon du Nil, étude publiée par lui-même en égyptien et traduite en grec par Philippe*, is now located in the Biblioteca Laurenziana, Plut.69, 27. The Renaissance considers Horapollo's hieroglyphs authentic Egyptian characters and modern Egyptology recognizes that genuine signs from hieroglyphic writing inform a majority of the interpretations (see the works of modern Egyptologists Sbordone (1940)

the symbolic re-reading of the hieroglyphs through Lucan, Plutarch and especially Plotinus,[15] see a genuine connection with the highest sphere of wisdom in the *Hieroglyphica*. Therefore, Horapollo's text becomes a source of inspiration for poets and artists in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries.

Along with the serpent, the basilisk is a common creature in the manuscripts and subsequent translations and printed editions of *Hieroglyphica*, including the 1505 (Venice) Greek *editio princeps*[16] from Aldus Manutius.[17] In the first interpretation, "ETERNITY," Horapollo identifies the basilisk with the *uraeus*:

---

and B. Van de Walle et J. Vergote (1943). Nevertheless, the interpretations follow a higher moral or theological decoding of reality similar to those of the *Physiologus*.

[14] Also known as Horus or Orus Apollo, he was the leader of one of the last pagan schools of Menouthis in the reign of Emperor Zeno (474-491 CE), from where he was forced to flee when he became involved in a revolt against the Christians.

[15] In *Ennead* V, 8, 6, Plotinus discusses Egyptian images (ideogrammatical symbols): "when they [the wise men of Egypt] wanted to signify anything in a wise way, they did not use …written letters…but by drawing picture-images" (Corrigan 2005, 194). See also Corrigan's commentary of V, 8 (2005, 217-222). In addition to the Neo-Platonism of Plotinus, the popularity of Horapollo's style of interpretation and the creation of emblematic literature of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries comes about under the influence of Ficino – the translator of Plotinus. In the gloss of a passage on hieroglyphs, Ficino writes: "The Egyptian priests, when they wished to signify divine things, did not use letters, but whole figures of plants, trees, and animals; for God doubtless has a knowledge of things which is not complex discursive thought about its subject, but is, as it were, the simple and steadfast form of it…The Egyptians comprehend this whole discourse in one stable image" (Boas 1950, 28). Ficino argues that hieroglyphs are Platonic ideas made visible and that they accurately demonstrate the thesis of Plotinus. Since the culture of the Renaissance lacks the ability to interpret Egyptian "figures" without the presence of "discourse," the text must accompany the emblematic images – although emblems conceal hidden concepts as well. Boas contends that although there may be errors in *Hieroglyphica*, the fifteenth- and sixteenth-centuries are not aware of them. For the Renaissance, Horapollo is the authority on hieroglyph interpretations and his work and biography are not questioned until the seventeenth-century (1950, 29).

[16] This text is a publication of the Greek manuscript now located in the library of Saint Mark in Venice (Marc.gr.391) (Drysdall 1989, 225).

> When they wish to symbolize Eternity, they draw the sun and the moon, because they are eternal elements. But when they wish to represent Eternity differently, they draw a serpent with its tail concealed by the rest of its body This the Egyptians call *Ouraion*, but the Greeks a *Basilisk*. They make this of gold and put it on the [heads of the] gods. [It symbolizes Eternity] because, of the three kinds of serpents, this alone is immortal, the others being mortal….Wherefore, since it seems to have power over life and death, they put it on the heads of the gods (Boas[18] 1950, 57).

Horapollo suggests that the Greek *Basilisk* symbolizes eternity because it is an immortal creature and hence will never die. Scève therefore depicts the Beloved as a basilisk since she is the cause of his eternal suffering: "dedans l'Enfer de ma peine eternelle" (D 77). *Ouraion* is another term for the cobra on the *uraei* of Egyptian divinities and Pharaohs. Horapollo links the Egyptian *uraeus* to the Greek *Basilisk* to suggest that the two are the same with different names. His description of the *uraeus*/*Basilisk* (the serpent on the heads of the Egyptian gods and the immortal serpent with the power to kill) draws elements from both the Egyptian and Greek cultures to produce a symbol unified by the serpent.

Claude-Françoise Brunon reminds us that Horapollo's text is strange, difficult to grasp and difficult to define because it is a composite work with a long history of numerous civilizations that interpret and mark it according to their own cultural systems (1982, 29). The *Délie* of 1544 exemplifies Brunon's claim *par excellence*, not because Scève's text bears the marks of other cultures, but because Scève himself incorporates

---

[17] Aldus Manutius is the Latinized name of Teobaldo Mannucci, the Italian founder of the printing and publishing house Aldine Press (Venice 1494).

[18] The Boas English translation is from the 1727 Horapollinis Hieroglyphica/ Graece et latine/ cum integris observationibus et notis/ Jeann.Merceri et David. Hoeschelii/ et selectis/ Nicolai Caussini/ curante/ Joanne Cornelio de Pauw/ qui suas observationes addidit/ Trajecti ad Rhenum [Utrecht] and the appended notes (Boas 1950, 13).

these multiple influences as a part of his artistic process. Although the Greek and subsequent Latin translations discussed above contain only text,[19] the first edition to add illustrations,[20] appears in France just one year before Scève's *Délie*. The 1543 French translation,[21] published in Paris by Jacques Kerver (Drysdall 1989, 227), depicts the basilisk in a manner analogous to that of Scève.

The image accompanying the first interpretation: "Comment & par quelles figures ilz signifioient laage & les ans du temps" [figure 3.5] (ETERNITY in the 1950 English translation) in the 1543 French translation occupies a large portion of the page. The upper left and right corners show the sun and moon as indicated in the text: "Pour denoter & signifier laage & le cours du temps ilz figuroient le soleil & la lune pource quilz sont la reigle de compter & discerner le tẽps." However, the 1543 French translation does not mention the term *ouraion* of the English translation (Boas 1950) or the term *uraeus* (*Vreum*) of the 1538 Latin translation (*Ægypty Vreum, id est, Basiliscum*). Rather, the image depicts a creature with the head of a cock (with cockscomb and wattles) and the tail of a serpent like the images of the basilisk from medieval bestiaries and Scève's *I* 21. The French text describes the basilisk: "Aultrement ilz paignoient vng serpẽt appelle Basilisque couurãt sa cueue du reste de sõ cors" and interprets the use of the basilisk to

[19] The first Latin translation of *Hieroglyphica* by Bernardino Trebazio (Augsberg 1505) and all subsequent Latin editions up to the 1538 reprinting of Trebazio (Lyon) contain only text: a title and the interpretation. The basilisk (Basiliscum) is mentioned in the first interpretation "QVOMODA ÆVVM SIGNIFICANT" although its appearance is not described.

[20] One hundred ninety-seven illustrations attributed to Jean Cousin the Elder (ca. 1495 – after 1560 CE).

[21] *Orvs Apollo de Ægypte De la signification des notes hieroglyphiques des Aegyptiens/ cest a dire des figures par les quelles ilz escripuoient leurs mysteres secretz, & les choses sainctes & diuines.*

symbolize eternity or time: "il signifie le temps est pource que des troys especes de serpens cestuy est immortel." The connection with the Egyptian *uraeus*, not explicitly written in the text, emerges in the final line: "Et pour autant quil peut tuer les aultres & nõ mourir le mectẽt ilz sur la teste des dieux." The gods[22] (*dieux*) are shown in the center of the image inside the ring of the ophidian tail. The basilisk head is depicted superior to the crowned figure to suggest the sense of the text: they (the Egyptians) put the basilisk on the head of the gods.

The combination of title, image and textual interpretation in the French edition resembles the emblematic structure of title, image and motto in emblem books previously published in the French language: Alciato's *Livret des emblemes* (1536); Guillaume de La Perrière's *Le Théâtre des bons engins* (1540); Gilles Corrozet's *Hecatomgraphie* (1540) and *Emblemes en Cebes* (1543).[23] These similarities are not surprising given that the emblem tradition was most popular in France. Nonetheless, I want to stress that the inclusion of the image in the 1543 French translation marks the influence of the emblematic mentality on Horapollo's "Egyptian" text. At the same time, the *Hieroglyphica* manuscript inspires an interest in the decoding of pictorial symbols.[24] This chiastic relationship of influences results in the type of representation we find in

---

[22] The character in the center is a king wearing a traditional crown; the figure to the right is a goddess holding a flaming heart; the figure to the left holds a staff and is possibly dressed for battle. This image merits much discussion although that is beyond the scope of this study.

[23] For a complete list of French emblems and bibliography of secondary sources, see Grove and Russell *The French Emblem* (2000).

[24] The greatest merit of the editions of *Hieroglyphica*: "fut d'avoir inspiré, puis cautionné un mode d'expression où image et verbe se conjuguent étroitement de façon indissoluble, pour produire un Sens où ne sauraient atteindre les mots seuls ou les images muettes, - pratique qui est celle même de l'Emblème" (Brunon 1982, 47).

Scève's *Délie*. The images and the language in his text are loaded with the ideas, values and conventions of past and contemporary cultures. Because of these layers of symbolization within each image and every word, nothing in Scève's work bears a singular, stable reference. Délie is Diana; yet as Diana, Délie is also Luna and Hecate.[25] The Beloved as the basilisk is also Hathor and Cleopatra. When the basilisk surfaces as the preferred object of representation for the *pouvoir de l'œil* in the Middle Ages and Renaissance,[26] as well as in *Délie*, it carries with it the force of the *uraeus* and the Egyptian cult of the serpent eye goddess. Through acculturation, the medieval symbol absorbs all the significance of Hathor's *uraeus* and is an essential element although it is not explicitly depicted.

Furthermore, the symbol from the *imprese* of the basilisk and Cleopatra alludes to a figure long associated with serpents and the female: the Gorgon Medusa. Alexander observes: "Pliny and Galen[27] write of the basilisk as killing, like the Gorgons, by being seen…The Gorgons must surely derive from Egyptian representations of goddesses wearing crowns bearing many *uraei*. This would explain their having snakes for hair, their power of killing by being seen (the *uraei* being the killers), and their living in Libya" (1963, 174). Alexander goes on to argue that the basilisk derives from the Gorgon and that Medusa derives from the Egyptians – specifically the ones who wear uraei like Hathor and Cleopatra. Another significance of including two serpents in *I* 30 is

---

[25] "'Délie' is Diana (born on Delos), and Diana in turn suggests several other goddesses: Hecate, Proserpina, Luna" (Duval 1979, 7).

[26] Havelange 1998, 49.

[27] Pliny Natural History and Galen De Theriaca, ad Pisonem (On Theriac to Piso), 8.

that in the image the serpents and the female figure's hair intertwine. In Scève's image, it is difficult to distinguish the serpents from the locks of Cleopatra's hair. The Lady thus appears as Medusa with serpentine locks. Despite her visual absence, Scève makes Medusa present in *Délie*. On the basis of her double nature, the poet creates rhetorical structures that intimate Medusa lies in wait in the shadows: "Estendre vient son voile tenebreux" (D 360). Scève's linguistic references and the indeterminate image in *I* 30 provide the Lady with another identity; she is now the basilisk, Hathor, Cleopatra and Medusa.

Délie Médusée: objet maléfique

L'oeil, aultres fois ma joyeuse lumiere
En ta beaulté fut tellement deceu (D 13)

As an icon of fear, the serpent-headed Medusa is a monstrous figure for the Beloved in *Délie*. In this section, I analyze Scève's literary influences from the Greeks to the sixteenth-century mythographers in order to capture the fleeting instances in which she is near. Medusa's literary history begins with Homer, who first mentions her in *The Iliad* (750-725 BCE), although the poet only alludes to the use of Medusa's face in martial attire. Her name is from the Greek *medousa*, which, from the verb *medein* (to protect), literally means "guardian." This is why, in *The Iliad* book five, Athena claims Medusa's power as she dresses herself for battle – wearing the head of the Gorgon as an apotropaic symbol on her aegis.[28] Agamemnon, in book eleven, also uses the image of

[28] The use of Medusa's terrible face in battle described by Homer became popular in the emblem books of the mid sixteenth-century. See for example: "Filles doibvent estre gardees" Andrea Alciato *Emblemes* (1549) [figure 3.6]. In this image, Athena is shown with her customary accoutrements: helmet, spear and aegis. As the title and motto

Medusa on his shield: "and circled in the midst of all was the blank-eyed face of the Gorgon / with her stare of horror, and Fear was inscribed upon it, and Terror" (lines 36-7). Medusa's character never appears in Homer's account and the text implies the significance of her power with no explanation.

Following Homer, authors throughout history give varying, even antithetical accounts of Medusa's origins and the events in her life. She is an ambiguous character and her story is enigmatic. Different eras represent Medusa as an object of fascination or fright. Her opposing significations (unity of opposites) construct her as a figure for the Double and she is thus essentially problematic. In literature from Oedipus, Castor & Pollux, and Helen & Clytemnestra to Hamlet, Phèdre and on into twentieth- and twenty-first-century theory, the Double represents a problem for identity and sovereignty: "le mythe universel du double tire toute sa complexité des variations du 'Même' et de l' 'Autre.' Issu du principe d'identité, le double évolue vers l'altérité, où le je n'est plus je mais un autre" (Cazenave 2007, 200). As a Double, Medusa/Délie represents the irreducible reality of the "je" as "je-vous" that is not yet "nous": a union that never occurs but is replaced with the poet/lover's continuous cycle of death and rebirth as he searches for the Beloved.

---

indicate, this emblem moralizes Athena (Pallas Athene, virgin goddess and protectress of the city of Athens - see Plutarch's *Isis* and *Osiris*), as a protector of virgins. The shield with the Gorgon's head is meant to help protect young girls from the snares of Love. Medusa's head can also be found in emblems warning against early death in youth. See for example: "Sur la trop hastive mort, d'ung beau jeune filz" Andrea Alciato *Emblemes* (1549). Along with the dolphin, the Gorgon symbolizes the sorrow of a life ended too early. The emblem entitled "In mortem praeproperam," from the 1584 version of Andrea Alciato's *Emblemata* / *Les Emblemes*, depicts a handsome boy who perished before his time.

Scève highlights Medusa's intrinsic double nature in the forms of beauty versus monster, transformed versus transformer and venom versus antidote. Medusa's role as the Double, as Scève exemplifies, is one of the most compelling features of her character. Medusa's two faces always exist simultaneously and, throughout the centuries, the disparate elements of the Medusa topos haunt both the imagination and artistic representations. Hence, I argue that the unity of opposites associated with Medusa forms the basis for the construction of the Beloved Délie.

Délie Médusée:
La belle bête

Scève appropriates the dual nature of Medusa as both beautiful and monstrous through a comparison of the Classical authors Hesiod, Apollodorus and Ovid. The first text to indicate Medusa's genealogy is Hesiod's *Theogony* (700 BCE):

> [270] And again, Ceto bore to Phorcys the fair-cheeked Graiae, sisters grey from their birth: and both deathless gods and men who walk on earth call them Graiae, Pemphredo well-clad, and saffron-robed Enyo, and the Gorgons who dwell beyond glorious Ocean
> [275] in the frontier land towards Night where are the clear-voiced Hesperides, Sthenno, and Euryale, and Medusa who suffered a woeful fate: she was mortal, but the two were undying and grew not old. With her lay the Dark-haired One [Poseidon] in a soft meadow amid spring flowers.[29]

According to Hesiod, Medusa is the daughter of Phorcys (an ancient sea-god who presides over the dangers of the deep) and Ceto (a Marine goddess who personifies the dangers of the sea, unknown terrors and bizarre creatures). Ceto and Phorcys are horrid sea-monsters and from their monstrous union, since they are husband and wife as well as

[29] Perseus Digital Library. http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/ [accessed 18 September 2009].

brother and sister, they produce hideous, hybrid creatures.[30] In Hesiod's account, Medusa is monstrous from birth because she inherits this trait from her parents.

However, in the second-century CE text *The Library*, Apollodorus[31] intimates that Medusa may once have been a beautiful woman: "Athena inserted the Gorgon's head in the middle of her shield. But it is alleged by some that Medusa was beheaded for Athena's sake; and they say that the Gorgon was fain to match herself with the goddess even in beauty" [2.4.3] (Frazer 1921, 161). As the beautiful woman, but then hideous monster, Scève perceives and portrays Medusa as an intrinsically double creature. Scève's perception, moreover, is the standard view of Medusa in the Renaissance. French Humanist and mythographer Marc Antoine Muret (1526-1585) describes Medusa as the only mortal sister among the three Gorgons.[32] He also writes that these three sisters were hideous to see:

> Celles cy eurent le chef couvert d'escailles de Dragon, les dents longues comme celles d'un Sanglier et des ailes, à tout lesquelles elles voloient par

---

[30] Their children were dangerous sea-monsters: Skylla (the crab) a monster who devoured passing sailors, Thoosa (the swift) mother of the rock-tossing cyclops Polyphemos, Ladon (strong flowing) a hundred-headed sea-serpent, Ekhidna (viper) a she-dragon, the Graiai (grey ones) spirits of the sea-foam, and the Gorgones (terrifying ones) whose petrifying gaze probably created the dangerous rocks and reefs of the sea. Aaron J. Atsma "Phorkys" Theoi Greek Mythology, Theoi Project Copyright 2000-2008. http://www.theoi.com/Pontios/Phorkys.html [accessed 19 September 2009].

[31] The name traditionally given to the author of the Greek work known as *The Library* (*Bibliotheca*), a compendium of myth sourced from old Greek epic and the plays of the Tragedians. The work is traditionally ascribed to Apollodorus of Alexandria, a Greek scholar who flourished in the second-century BCE, but his authorship is now dismissed. The work is generally believed to be a second-century CE compilation.

[32] Medusa is a Gorgon from Greek mythology. From the Greek *gorgos* and Latin *gorgō* for "terrible," the Gorgons are the three sisters with serpents for hair, who have the power to turn anyone who looks at them to stone. The "gorgon" (lower case g) is defined as "a fierce, frightening or repulsive woman" (Oxford).

> l'air. Avoient d'avantage ceste proprieté que tous ceux qui les regardoint, soudain estoient changez en pierre (Muret 1985, 5).

Yet, just like Apollodorus, Muret adds that Medusa was beautiful at one time:

> Mais ceux qui en parlent plus selon la verite, comme un nommé Serein[33] et autres, disent que les Gorgones furent au vray doüées d'excellente beaute: tant que ceux qui les voyoient en devenoint tous estourdis et hors de sentiment: d'où l'on a pris occasion de feindre, qu'ils se convertissoient en pierres[34] (Muret 1985, 5).

Muret's 1553 text exemplifies that the culture in the Scève's era immediately recognizes Medusa as the transformed Double.

Scève employs the notion that the Gorgons were once strikingly beautiful in *dizain* 149, which contains the most explicit reference to Medusa in *Délie*: her name. The presence of her name indicates that she will appear and that the poet will describe her face and her image. Yet instead, the poet presents Medusa through allusion to Venus:

> Et Helicon, ensemble & Parnasus,
> Hault Paradis des poetiques Muses,
> Se demettront en ce bas Caucasus:
> Ou de Venus les troys fainctes Meduses
> Par le naif de tes graces infuses
> Confesseront (toutesfoys sans contraincte)
> La Deité en ton esprit empraincte
> Thresor des Cieulx, qui s'en sont devestuz
> Pour illustrer Nature a vice astraincte,
> Ore embellie en tes rares vertus. (D 149)

[33] Quintus Serenus Sammonicus – Roman physician and author of the second-century CE medical poem *De medicina praecepta*, in which the word "Abracadabra," an incantation to be used as a cure for fevers and inflammations, was first used.

[34] Both citations end with the phrase *en pierre*(*s*), highlighting Medusa's power to turn men to stone. The first "changez en pierre" refers to Medusa's monstrous power (*le pouvoir*) to transform others with her hideous face and petrifying gaze. The second "convertissoient en pierres" is reminiscent of Medusa's beauty and sexual attraction that stuns and paralyzes her onlookers.

This *dizain* alludes to Medusa as once beautiful but then later monstrous. Scève describes Venus and the Graces, as "fainctes Meduses" [feigned Medusas] because their beauty, capable of paralyzing all who encounter their gaze, is nothing compared to Medusa's diabolical gaze (Defaux 2004, tome II, 188). Medusa was once beautiful but as monster, the power of her gaze is stronger than that of Venus. Even though the poet names her, he does not detail her appearance because he discusses her in relation to Venus.

The poet/lover elevates Délie to the status of a divine creature: *les Muses*, *Vénus*, *les Grâces* and *La Deité*. Nonetheless, by citing Medusa who was also once a divine beauty, Scève corrupts the notion of purity and innocence. From the Latin *vĕnŭs*, *vĕnĕris* signifying "sexual charm and attractiveness," *Vĕnŭs* as a proper name is the goddess of sexual love – from whose name the adjective *vénérien* and *maladie vénérienne* derive.[35] Medusa is impious as well since her own cupidity leads her to: "lay with the Dark-haired One [Poseidon] in a soft meadow amid spring flowers" (Hesiod *Theogony* 275). In *Mythologiae* (1551), Natale Conti (1520-1582) contends that in this context, the contemplation of Venus leads to concupiscence and thus man forgets about his service to God, piety and humanity (DiMatteo 1994, 374-5). Furthermore, Donaldson argues that Scève revises the definition of "le hault bien" (spiritual love) to include physical love and that this revision: "assures survival through a series of deaths ("les mortz qu'en moy tu renovelles") which bring him pleasure and renewed energy – these multiple deaths are often none other than the French word for orgasm, or "petite mort." The term originated from an equation of sex and death whereby sex is considered dangerous because of the

---

[35] Syphilis is the venereal disease most often cited.

possibility of the dissolution of the self in ecstasy and sublimity" (2006, 54). Délie as both pure goddess and Venus/Medusa in Scève's *dizain* exposes her double nature as purity and sinfulness, benevolence and abomination, divinity and humanity; death and sex blend into one, represented by the Double.

Scève highlights Venus' negative, promiscuous connotation when he compares her to the Beloved.[36] From the beginning, Délie is not the beautiful Venus for the poet/lover since she embodies the monstrous facet of her nature:

> Non de Venus les ardentz estincelles,
> Et moins les traictz, desquelz Cupido tire:
> Mais bien les mortz, qu'en moy tu renovelles
> Je t'ay voulu en cest Oeuvre descrire.
> Je sçay asses, que tu y pourras lire
> Mainte erreur, mesme en si durs Epygrammes:
> Amour (pourtant) les me voyant escrire
> En ta faveur, les passa par ses flammes. (*huitain*)

Scève tells us from the outset of his work that he will not discuss Délie's beauty as Venus: "Non de Venus les ardentz estincelles" (v1) but, instead, the multiple deaths that he suffers at her side: "Mais bien les mortz, qu'en moy tu renovelles" (v.3). Délie is rather a *Vénus Médusée*, an Anti-Venus: a goddess of love who blends eroticism and death. She is also the object of desire (*Délie: objet*) who experiences radical transformation that exposes her destructive nature.

Some scholars argue that Scève's title *Délie: objet de plus haute vertu* and references to the moon in the text intimate that the Beloved is in fact Diana: Roman

---

[36] The Ancient World treats Medusa as a "sacred prostitute." Conversely, in the Judeo-Christian tradition she is a figure of absolute evil; lust, iniquity and death became one and Medusa as female is an icon for "the evil sex." Moreover, in confirmation of her negative connotations, the *Physiologos* describes her (*La Gorgone*) as a hideous prostitute with serpent-hair and a face like death: "la gorgone a l'apparence d'une femme, d'une belle prostitutée. Les cheveux de sa tête sont comme des serpents, la face de son visage comme la mort" (Zucker 2004, 286).

goddess of the hunt and the moon.[37] It is typical in the sixteenth-century to oppose Venus, the goddess of beauty, to Diana, the goddess of chastity. It is not standard, however, to juxtapose Venus and the Gorgon Medusa: "the former conjures up sensuality and sweetness of living, whereas the second leaves the death of the senses behind her" (Ginestet 2008, 157). This contrast reinforces Scève's deliberate confusion of sex and death that culminates in the refusal of love (both erotic and nefarious), embodied in the beautiful, hideous Beloved.

Délie Médusée:
Mūto, mūtare - Transformation & *Le Pouvoir*

As the Beloved/Délie transforms into Medusa, she inhabits the work as a powerful gaze: a hideous, murderous stare. Since Medusa was once strikingly beautiful, as a dreadful monster complete with serpents on her brow, she represents a transformed creature. Medusa emerges before Scève ever names her. The Délie/Medusa is present, neither as an image, nor within the realm of the visible like the basilisk in *I* 21 (*Le Basilisque & Le Miroir*) or Cleopatra in *I* 30 (*Cleopatra et les serpentz*). Rather, she appears as a trope and she is present from the introductory *huitain* to the very end and beyond: "Apres la mort ma guerre encor me suyt" (motto, *I* 50). Without a literal presence, we can only sense Medusa as a figured existence. The knowledge of her presence alone is sufficient to elicit horror, fear and terror for the poet/lover. Homer writes in book eleven of *The Odyssey*: "pale fear gripped me - / holy Persephone might send at me / a horrific monster, the Gorgon's head" (Johnston 2007, lines 818-820). Like

[37] Coleman writes: "Délie is the Delian Diana, goddess of the moon, Luna" (1964, 1). Jane Southwood writes: "Central to the *Délie* is the identification of the Beloved with the goddess Diana" (2008, 175).

Odysseus, the poet/lover fears the Délie/Medusa before he ever sees her. Medusa is another monstrous configuration that Délie becomes in the text – just as the basilisk with the “poingnant’ veue” (D 1). While the basilisk represents the excessive power of the eye (*pouvoir de l’oeil*) in the Renaissance, Medusa represents the potent gaze that haunts the poet/lover throughout *Délie*.

Scève bases his construction of the transformed Medusa on Ovid’s version of the myth. Unlike Hesiod’s text in which Medusa is born monstrous because her parents are sea-monsters, in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (book four, lines 790-803) Medusa is a transformed creature who was once a stunning beauty. Perseus recounts that Poseidon [Neptune], attracted by her golden hair, raped Medusa in Athena’s temple. Athena then changed Medusa’s enticing hair into serpents out of rage from the desecration.

Although Ovid assures the reader an account of Medusa’s story, in Perseus’ speech she has no face. Once Athena alters and changes Medusa from beautiful (*clarissima forma*), we no longer see her. Julia M. Walker argues: “Ovid has Perseus speak of her beautiful body and of her beautiful hair, but between these two beauties there is nothing. We are not allowed to gaze upon even the most abstract of descriptive images” (1998, 48). Just as Ovid does not offer a glimpse of the Gorgon’s hideous face, neither does Scève dare depict her in an *impresa*. Rather, he shows her through visual and linguistic allusions that show up as shadows in the text: “elle m’abysme en profondes tenebres” (D 7).

Délie undergoes a metamorphosis throughout the text. She is not a single identity: she is a basilisk, a terrible monster, an icon of intense horror and fear. She is also Medusa. Although Scève does not include an image of Medusa in an *impresa*, or

detail her through imagery or ekphrasis, she is always near. Moreover, her absence from the *imprese* makes her even more powerful because the poet/lover and the reader are in constant fear of encountering her throughout the text. As Scève seeks to identify the Lady, to fix her into a stable, unchanging entity with a singular name, he stumbles into what Duval describes as onamastic enumeration (1979). Duval argues that in *Délie* and specifically *dizain* 22: "Scève seems to identity himself with the souls of the dead conjured by sorcery, and to identify his Délie with the very *numen* of all such conjuring" (1979, 9). The *numina* to which he refers are Medea and Circe as well as Hecate and her three hypostases: Luna/Selene, Diana/Artemis and Proserpina/Persephone. As a chthonic divinity, Hecate is also Medusa whose serpents are symbolic of dark forces and the night: "the snake powerfully evokes the darkness of the world of *materia*, the 'profondes tenebres' (D 7) or primeval chaos from which the soul must extricate itself in order to re-unite itself with the light" (Drake-Brockman 1979, 131). Yet, I must point out that each time Délie transforms in the text, she embodies another hellish deity more powerful than the last.

* * *

After Athena's curse changes Medusa, she gains the power to transform others. Medusa alters via her gaze and in Scève's world, Medusa is Délie: the Lady who transforms with a glance: "Nous transformant plus, que mille Meduses" (D 182). Medusa kills all men and beasts by turning them to stone, and in Ovid's account, statues of men litter the area near her: "on all sides, through the fields, along the highways, he [Perseus] saw the forms of men and beasts, made stone by one look at Medusa's face" (Humphries 1995, 106). In *Metamorphoses*, Medusa is already a female monster, not a

woman later transformed into the monster. As monster, she possesses the ability and power to turn humans and beasts to stone and this notion is central to the figure of Medusa: "Minerva transforms Medusa's beauty into a horror that will strike men stone-dead, turn them into statues that cannot avert their eyes" (Walker 1998, 48).

In Scève's text, the poet/lover recounts the ways Délie/Medusa changes him into a stony form:

> Non cy me tien ma dure destinée
> Ensepvely en solitaire horreur:
> Mais y languit ma vie confinée
> Par la durté de ton ingrate erreur:
> Et ne te sont ne craincte, ne terreur
> Fouldre des Dieux, & ton cruel meffaire.
> Celle s'enflamme a la vengeance faire,
> Cestuy t'accuse, & justice demande.
> Pourras tu donc, toy seule, satisfaire
> A moy, aux Dieux, a ta coulpe si grande? (D 88)

This *dizain* is an accusation (a cry of revolt) on the part of the lover - not against destiny - but against Délie and the hardness[38] of her ingratitude: "par la durté de ton ingrate erreur" (v 4). The first two lines describe his current state as solitary and horrible. Moreover, the poet/lover is confined and entombed (*ensepvely*) by a hardened destiny (*dure destinée*) like a human spirit encased in a stone statue unable to escape. Délie's ingratitude is so harsh that throughout the text the lover feels buried in a cold, marble tomb: "ensepvely long temps soubz la froideur / du Marbre dur de ton ingratitude" (D 125). The poet ultimately complains that Délie not only encases him in a chilly tomb, but she completely transforms his entire being into a cold, hardened, marble stone: "là ou sa main par plus

[38] "Hardness" or *la dureté* is a major theme in Scève, hence he cites the term *dur* and various forms (*durant*, *dure*, *durement*) 36 times (Nash 1976, 787).

grande merveille / me rend en marbre & froid, & endurcy" (D 357). Through petrifaction, the Lady demonstrates her absolute power over the lover.

Dizain 88 also speaks to the experience of the poet/lover each time the Medusa nears. The "Fouldre des dieux" of line six is the lightning strike that shocks (*estonner*) the lover: "qui par sa haulte, & divine excellence / m'estonna l'Ame, & le sens tellement," (D 6); and frightens him: "apres le sault je m'estonnay paoureux" (D 103). In *Délie,* vision leads to fear and death by petrifaction. If the poet/lover meets the Beloved frontally, he is *estonné*: shocked, dumbfounded, *médusé*.[39] Yet if he meets Délie indirectly, he only sees her through reflection or a mediated gaze and all he can tell are his own projections.

The *fouldre* of *dizain* 88 is also the *coup de foudre* (love at first sight) that paralyzes the poet when he encounters the Lady: "celle de qui la rencontre m'estonne" (D 192). This experience leaves him full of desire but also fearful. Medusa, as both the desired/desiring sex symbol and the face of pure death, simultaneously attracts and repels. In Scève's appropriation of the myth, Délie is Ovid's Medusa who vengefully seduces and murders the poet/lover to cause his endless suffering: "celle s'enflamme a la vengeance faire" (D 88, v 7).

The poet/lover perceives the Beloved as a monstrous creature who kills with her glance: a basilisk and Medusa. As a basilisk, Délie is a monster; although the basilisk is not an anthropomorphic creature. It is born as a hybrid whereas Medusa transforms from a beautiful human form to a horror and in *Délie*, Medusa has transformed into the

[39] The term *méduser* was first used in 1607 by Jean de Montlyard in *Mythologie*, although its usage was rare until the nineteenth-century. The term is derived from the proper name "Méduse" (Trésor). The free-swimming marine creature "jellyfish" is also known as "medusa" because the long trailing tentacles resemble Medusa's snaky locks.

basilisk: "in the Renaissance… the associations of Medusa, however, seem to have been transferred to the basilisk" (Sax 1994, 4). In addition, Scève represents the Lady as a "Gorgon Venus" – a paradoxical construction of Délie. Yet this move seems appropriate for Scève, whose poetry always entails a search for etymologies, given that the root of Venus and venom is the same.[40]

Délie Médusée:
Le venin si doux

As a transformed creature, Medusa has serpents for hair. Daniel Ogden argues: "as a monster with a terrible glance, Medusa is appropriately adorned with snakes. Terrible serpents, whether large snakes or mythical dragons, were known by the term *drakōn*, which is usually regarded as cognate with *derkomai*, 'look'" (2008, 52). Resembling the venomous cobra and Medusa, Scève's Lady/basilisk is capable of killing with venom from the eyes: "si doulcement le venin de tes yeulx / par mesme lieu aux fonz du coeur entra" (D 42). Defaux describes Délie's gaze (*le regard*) as the poet's "poison mortel" (2004 tome II, 470). Latini writes that even the basilisk's body is full of venom: "il est empli de venin à tel point que celui-ci ressort à l'extérieur du corps et brille sur sa peau; même sa vue et l'odeur qu'il exhale sont chargées de venin... et de sa vue il tue les hommes"[41] (Clair 1989, 80). Like both Medusa and the basilisk, Délie too is full of venom: "toute doulceur d'Amour est destrempée / de fiel amer, & de mortel venin" (D 223).

---

[40] Venom, from the Latin *vĕnēnum* for "poison," is connected to the Latin *vĕnus* (*vĕnēres*) for "erotic love" and hence Venus, the Roman goddess of sexual desire.

[41] In *Livre du trésor*, the French translation of *Tesoro*.

In *dizain* 436, Scève references the notion of the serpent with venom and antidote: "me fait sentir celle herbe merveilleuse, / qui de Glaucus jà me transforme en Dieu." Glaucus (son of Minos) is a warrior wounded in the Trojan War who receives treatment from Asclepius,[42] symbolized by the serpent in Greek mythology. The Greek god of healing and medicine, Asclepius is the father of Panacea and part of the Hippocratic Oath.[43] In his honor, ancient healing rituals often use serpents. In a positive connotation, the serpent symbolizes healing, strength, energy and rejuvenation, and in the Middle Ages, the serpent's ecdysis represents Christ's rebirth and redemption through Him.

Like Délie, Asclepius has the power to both heal and poison. In *The Library*, Apollodorus claims that Athena gave Asclepius a vial of blood from the Gorgons, whose blood has magical properties. When Asclepius is exercising his healing art upon Glaucus, Zeus kills the healer with a thunderbolt because he fears that men might gradually contrive to escape death altogether (Apollodorus 3.10.4): "son crime est d'avoir tenté de ressusciter les morts grâce à du sang de la Gorgone que lui a remis Athéna: le sang coulé du côté gauche est un poison violent, mais celui du côté droit est un remède merveilleux" (Grimal 2002, 54). Zeus places Asclepius in the sky as the constellation Ophiuchus (serpent-bearer) as an apologetic catasterism. The serpent in *Délie*, moreover, has multiple associations as it evokes primal instincts and the suffering of the lover as well as "rejuvenation of earthly form and also of the resurrection of the soul" (Drake-Brockman 1979, 133).

---

[42] Also spelled Asclepius (L.), Asculapius and Asklepios. Esculape is his name in French.

[43] "I swear by Apollo Physician and Asclepius and Hygieia and Panaceia and all the gods and goddesses, making them my witnesses, that I will fulfill according to my ability and judgment this oath and this covenant" (Veatch 2000, 3).

Taken from the left, Medusa's blood is a fatal poison just as Délie: "et ne cherchez en elle nourriture / car sa foy est venin a Calumnie" (D 211). Taken from the right, however, Medusa's blood is an antidote. Scève appropriates this double nature and gives Délie the healing power as well: "tu mes le Cedre[44] encontre le venin / de ce Serpent en moy continuel." In this instance, the serpent (an image of temptation in Genesis[45]) is the base instinct of passion and "it symbolizes the poison of sexual desire against which Délie acts as a balm" (Drake-Brockman 1979, 131). Délie has the power to kill the poet/lover but she is also his remedy. This allows the lover to die repeatedly. Just like the serpent, the Lady exists as both a poison and a cure that generates the lover's habitual death and subsequent rebirth. She is the poet's "doulx venin" (D 3): the sweet poison that attracts and repels.

Visual evidence of Medusa's acculturative replacement by the basilisk in the Middle Ages that Scève uses in *Délie* is present in Raoul Lefebvre's fifteenth-century

---

[44] A remedy used to drive out snakes.

[45] The Judeo-Christian tradition identifies the serpent with evil. In the Garden of Eden, the serpent is the earthly incarnation of the Devil who tempts Eve to eat fruit from the forbidden tree. Genesis 3:1 of the Vulgate describes the serpent as the most insidious creature ever created: "sed et serpens erat callidior cunctis animantibus terrae quae fecerat Dominus..." [Now the serpent was more subtle than any of the beasts of the earth which the Lord God had made...]. From the Latin *callĭdus* (*calleo*) for "clever" or "cunning," the adjective *callidior* describes the serpent as skilled in the art of deception. Verses 4-5 demonstrate the duplicitous words of the serpent: "dixit autem serpens ad mulierem nequaquam morte moriemini scit enim Deus quod in quocumque die comederitis ex eo aperientur oculi vestri et eritis sicut dii scientes bonum et malum" [And the serpent said to the woman: No, you shall not die the death. For God doth know that in what day soever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened: and you shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil]. In this passage from the Bible the serpents' deeds lead to the downfall of humankind (Latin and English translations are from http://www.latinvulgate.com/ [accessed 9 August 2009]). For a detailed analysis of the first three chapters of Genesis see Mieke Bal, "Sexuality, sin and sorrow: The emergence of the female character (a reading of Genesis 1-3)" *Poetics Today* 6 (1985): 21-42.

manuscript *Histoires de Troyes*. The manuscript image "Esculape contemplant le basilic" [figure 3.7] depicts a scene of Asclepius in the Trojan War. In this battle, Asclepius, who receives healing power from Medusa's blood, is on the side of the Greeks and heals Philoctetes[46] from snakebite. Yet, in Lefebvre's manuscript image, Asclepius (Esculape) is shown piercing a basilisk – not the severed head of Medusa. Moreover, the Middle Ages view the basilisk as a wandering Medusa's head.[47] Similarly, Scève uses the poisonous basilisk to symbolize Medusa. The text accompanying the image reads:

> Esculape est à la fois le héros et le dieu de la médecine. Ses attributs sont: le serpent qui, en changeant de peau, semble se rajeunir lui-même ; le coq, qu'on lui sacrifiait, comme symbole de vigilance ; la coupe, destinée à renfermer la potion salutaire et la baguette, emblème qui rappelle le temps où les médecins n'étaient que des sorciers et des enchanteurs.[48]

The symbol of vigilance in the image (*le coq*) is none other than the basilisk, shown with a cockscomb and wattles, wings of a dragon, menacing talons and a serpentine tail. Clair confirms: "divinité chthonienne, liée à la terre comme tous les serpents, le basilic, comme la Gorgone, est un démon thérapeute aussi bien qu'un procédé prophylactique: utilisé en médecine, il peut guérir, dit-on, différents maux" (1989, 82). Therefore, Asclepius'

---

[46] Philoctetes – son of King Poeas of Meliboia in Thessaly, famed archer and participant in the Trojan War. In *The Iliad* book two, Homer writes: "Philoktetes…lay apart in the island, suffering strong pains, / in Lemnos the sacrosanct, where the sons of the Achaians had left him / in agony from the sore bite of the wicked water snake" (lines 721-723).

[47] In his description of the basilisk, Bulfinch writes: "a second [species] were a kind of wandering Medusa's heads, and their look caused an instant horror which was immediately followed by death...These wonderful powers of the basilisk are attested by a host of learned persons, such as Galen, Avicenna, Scaliger, and others...Those who went to hunt the basilisk of this sort took with them a mirror, which reflected back the deadly glare upon its author, and by a kind of poetical justice slew the basilisk with his own weapon" (1894, 394-395).

[48] *Bestiaire du Moyen Âge* http://expositions.bnf.fr/bestiaire/grand/z_08.htm [accessed 25 July 2009].

creature that will render an antidote (*la potion salutaire*) is an allusion to Medusa's blood taken from the right: "le sang coulé du coté droit, le remède merveilleux" (Grimal 2002, 54) and the serpent that unifies the basilisk and Medusa in *Dèlie*.

Each time Scève names Medusa, he reinforces his inability to posit the Beloved as a single, irreducible being. Both times he names her, in *dizains* 149 and 182, she is plural: Meduses. Medusa is singular in the works of Scève's predecessors: Dante describes Medusa in *Inferno*[49]: "call Medusa that we may change him to stone" (Dante 1982, 89) and Petrarch writes: "Medusa and my sin turned me to stone" (Musa 1999, 515). Likewise, Scève's successors refer to Medusa as singular: "Ou bien en pierre ell' le transformera / d'un seul regard, ainsi qu'une Meduse"[50] (Ronsard 1981, 71). Writing in the early sixteenth-century, Scève is no longer Petrarchan but not yet a poet of the Pléaide.[51]

Pronounced aloud, Scève's Gorgon sounds the same as that of Ronsard: Meduse. However, Ronsard's text confirms that Medusa is incapable of being brought into a different condition or form: the name uttered aloud and the text work together to validate her unique identity. Conversely, Scève does not allow speech and writing to point to the same stable referent. When spoken aloud, *Meduse(s)* may be singular or plural, whereas the text refutes any possibility of distinct designation. The paradox of Medusa's presence in *Délie* is that she is the poet/lover's sole Beloved and simultaneously all of her ophidian

---

[49] In Canto IX, circle 6 – the realm of the Heretics. Ciardi comments: "by Heretic, Dante means specifically those who did violence to God by denying immortality" (Dante 1982, 87).

[50] Sonnet XXXI (v 13-14) from the 1552 *Les Amours*.

[51] For a history of the Pléiade see, Chamard (1939-63).

forms: Hathor, Cleopatra, the basilisk, et cetera. As both one and many, she is already numerous – a multiple of herself and her other symbolic forms.

The poet/lover's quest to glimpse the Lady and name the Beloved is a futile exercise. Beverly Ormerod compares the situation of the poet/lover in *Délie* (symbolized by the hare, "le Lievre accroppy en son giste," in D 129) to Plato's allegory of the cave[52]: "may we not see, finally, in the hare crouching in its form a humble parallel with the prisoners in Plato's cave, sitting chained together in pain and ignorance, and vainly attributing the voices of those beyond their sight to the shadows which are all they can perceive?" (1976, 391). In agreement with Ormerod's assertion, I argue that as Medusa draws near, the poet/lover only hears her voice: "comme enchantez, les venimeux Serpentz" (D 239). Like the prisoners in Plato's cave, the poet only perceives Délie's shadows cast upon the wall. While the lover sees shades and hears voices, the Beloved sees reality and touches with the lethal glance. With the power of the *œil qui touche*, the Lady dominates the poet/lover as a divinity – although murderous and chthonic – embodied in the serpent and its hybrid forms: Hathor, Medusa and the basilisk.

Conclusion

What can the serpent tell us about Délie? As I show in this chapter, the serpent represents a doubled being or a unity of opposites simultaneously existing in a single form. Following the path of the serpent in *Délie* allows the reader to accompany the poet/lover as he searches out the multiple forms the Beloved takes as she shifts from one ophidian creature to the next. Symbolized by the serpent, Délie embodies a host of

[52] See Plato *Republic* VII, 514.

powerful females such as the Egyptian goddess Hathor and Queen Cleopatra. Scève's Lady becomes the chthonic and vengeful divinities Hecate, Medusa and Persephone: "comme regnante aux infernalles umbres" (D 22). Furthermore, I show that by acculturation, Délie is a serpentine form in any culture from the ancient Egyptians (Hathor and Cleopatra), to the Graeco-Roman empires (Gorgon Medusa) and in the Middle Ages (basilisk).

The discovery of Medusa in Scève's text confirms that seeing is a perilous act and that vision leads to death by poison and petrifaction. In the pursuit of Délie's serpentine manifestations, I show that the medieval bestiary and hieroglyphic tradition come together to exert a profound influence on emblem literature in sixteenth-century France. Most important, I offer a mode of interpretation that articulates the multi-leveled symbol of the serpent and provides a multi-layered manner in which to read both Scève and his influences.

The presence of the Medusa myth in Scève's text leads to a new consideration of the nuances of sight on the basis of reflection. In Medusa's story, Perseus is an agent of deception. Armed with winged boots, the *kibisis* and the Cap of Hades,[53] Perseus deceives the Gorgon protectors, the Graeae, and steals the sole eye they share in turns. Perseus then deceives Medusa with his mirroring shield to steal her head and use it against his enemies: "he also had seen that face, but only in reflection from the bronze shield his left hand bore" (Humphries 1994, 106). Her power to turn men to stone depends on the gaze of others; the result of their gaze upon her is death by petrifaction.

[53] Gifts from Hermes and Athena, the winged boots allow Perseus to reach the otherworldly land of the Gorgons, the *kibisis* is the special pouch that allows Perseus to take the Medusa head along with him, and the Cap of Hades makes Perseus invisible (Ogden 2008, 34-50).

Perseus' act of vision through reflection renders Medusa's authority, her gaze, powerless. Perseus can look at her image in his shield but Medusa cannot survive the sight of her own reflection. In Scève's text, sight through reflection has fatal consequences because, as I show, in the stories of Medusa, Narcissus and especially the poet/lover, the owner of the reflected gaze dies: "mon regard par toy me tue" (motto, *I* 21). In chapter four, I show that for Narcissus, the surface of the mirror is a site of deception that problematizes the distinction between self and Other.

Chapter 4

Le Reflet: Problématique de la Réflexion

Si c'est Amour, pourquoy m'occit il doncques,
Qui tant aymay, & onq ne scevz hair?
Je ne m'en puis non asses esbahir,
Et mesmement que ne l'offençay oncques:
Mais souffre encor, sans complainctes quelconques,
Qu'il me consume, ainsi qu'au feu la Cyre.
Et me tuant, a vivre il me desire,
Affin qu'aymant aultruy, je me desayme.
  Qu'est il besoing de plus oultre m'occire,
Veu qu'asses meurt, qui trop vainement ayme? (D 60)

Introduction

The theme of the mirror permeates the literary and visual arts of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, although different artists develop distinct interpretations.[1] For Scève, the mirror is a site of delusion and sets up a problem between visual reflection (*le reflet*) and contemplation (*la refléxion*). As a mere appearance separate from reality, the reflected image deceives. On the surface of the mirror, Medusa's power is stolen and transferred to the eye of Perseus, which leaves her vulnerable to execution. Similarly, after Narcissus sees that he cannot attain the ideal love object reflected in the mirroring pool, he mourns the loss of the image and ultimately dies through liquefaction.[2]

The Narcissus *impresa* 7 in *Délie* portrays a moment of self-reflection similar to *I* 21 *Le Basilisque, & le Miroir* and *I* 26 *La Lycorne qui se voit*. The basilisk and unicorn

---

[1] See Jean Frappier, "Variations sur le Thème du Miroir, de Bernard de Ventadour à Maurice Scève" (1959).

[2] My interpretation of Echo and Narcissus in *Délie* is formed on the basis of the seminar "Violent Mirrors" given by Claire Nouvet in spring 2001, and her article "An impossible Response: The Disaster of Narcissus" (1991). See her most recent publication on this topic: Claire Nouvet, *Enfances Narcisse*, (Paris: Galilée, 2009).

imprese are inspired mainly by medieval bestiaries and hence have a complex relation to different texts from the writings of Pliny to the late Middle Ages. For mythological inspiration (Perseus, Orpheus, Actaeon), however, Scève looks mainly to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* – as in the example *I* 7 *Narcissus* and the subsequent *dizain* 60.

Readers find Scève's *Délie* obscure from 1544 to the present day and I argue that the Narcissus *impresa / dizain* structure highlights, intensifies and exploits the notion of obscurity. Narcissus' visual experience is obscure because he does not see and does not understand that the reflection from the pool is only an image of his own body. Yet the language in the poetic texts of Ovid and Scève is also obscure in that it purposefully allows for ambiguous or uncertain meaning. To draw out the semiotic significance, I present a close reading of Ovid's Narcissus story from *Metamorphoses*. I show that Scève preserves Ovid's content in the Narcissus *impresa* and *dizain* by suggesting that vision and speech are deceptive for both the poet/lover and the reader. Scève illustrates that language is deceptive with homonyms, unspecified referents and illusory terms.

I argue in chapter four that the mirrored image (*reflet*) leads to deception and is thus problematic for the transmission and reception of knowledge (*réflexion*). Hence, self-reflection and poetry lead to deception because they are only ever a representation of reality. The problem of imagined reality is a popular topic in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century emblem books as early as Alciato's 1531 *Emblematum Liber*. In Alciato, *Philautia*[3] appears as a didactic emblem warning against the immoral concept of self-love, which leads to phantasms and the loss of knowledge. Therefore, I argue that Scève

[3] The concept of Philautia is a popular emblem topic in the Renaissance witnessed by numerous reprintings. See Glasgow University Emblem Website. http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/.

presents Narcissus as a topos for the loss of all knowledge that leaves the poet/lover in total darkness and obscurity.

Furthermore, I show that the image of Narcissus (*I* 7) and the commentary *dizain* 60 function as a meta-text/image and are a key to decoding the entire text. The Narcissus *impresa* shows a moment of vision and reflects its own "vision" of representation. If *Délie* is a text about and informed by sight and the gaze (*le regard*), then the Narcissus structure provides the reader with a mode of interpretation for the entire sequence. In this *impresa*, Scève suggests to the reader that his entire sequence presents deceptive visual and verbal signs. In this way, *Délie* is a *mise en abyme* structure of the kind that Paul de Man defines: "the kind of structure by means of which it is clear that the text becomes itself an example of what it exemplifies… a story within the story of what is its own statement" (1986, 86). When Scève seems obscure, it is because his work gestures towards this very obscurity.

Reflet

From the sixteenth-century to the modern era, readers find Scève's *Délie* singular, pretentious and ...obscure. His contemporaries criticize him for being intentionally difficult, dark and ...obscure. Charles Fontaine writes in 1545 that Scève's *dizains* are so difficult that he does not need a reader, but rather a doctor (Hawkins 1916, 64), and in 1560, Etienne Pasquier writes that Scève celebrates his Lady: "avecques un sens si tenebreux & obscur que le lisant je disois estre trés-content de ne l'entendre, puis qu'il ne vouloit estre entendu" (1723, 701-702). Nineteenth-century critic Gustave Lanson describes *Délie* as complex, learned and ...obscure (1894, 276). Nonetheless, this very

obscurity, François Rigolot argues, makes Scève paradoxically one of the most read and least appreciated poets of the sixteenth-century (1994, 56).

Recent criticism claims that Scève's obscurity, at least in part, is due to his syncretic use of emblematics, lyric poetry, the Petrarchan *canzoniere*,[4] the *dizain*[5] as poetic form, and hermeticism.[6] McFarlane adds that the density in *Délie* is complicated further by Scève's use of visual/verbal references from antiquity and the Middle Ages, rhetorical archaisms and the creation of new terms, or: "la rudesse de beaucoup de mos nouueaus"[7] (1966, 48).

Yet another level of complexity woven into the text is that all experiences in *Délie* are described in terms of vision and what is accessible to the gaze; the first line of D 1 begins: "L'Oeil trop ardent en mes ieunes erreurs." Lance K. Donaldson-Evans argues: "by placing the word *l'Oeil* at the beginning of this first of 449 *dizains*, the poet establishes it as a portal to the whole work. From the outset, the *je parlant* of the poem is characterized by this synecdoche which reduces him to pure gaze" (1978, 207). I argue that, following this initial pattern, the entire text of *Délie* emphasizes the primacy of the

---

[4] For excellent discussions of Scève's work as a *canzoniere* see, Coleman (1981) and DellaNeva (1983).

[5] The most successful lyrical form was the Petrarchan sonnet. The *dizain* was not a popular form after Scève; Michel Beaujour argues: "Maurice Scève brought the sequence of love *dizains* to such dark perfection in *Délie* that he had no followers" (1994, 198).

[6] See Agnès Sola, "Hérmétisme ou obscurité" XVIeme et XXeme siècles Proceedings of the Xth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association = Actes du Xe Congrès de l'Association internationale de littérature. 2 (1985): 576-581.

[7] McFarlane is quoting T. Sebillet's *Art poetique françoys*, ed. F. Gaiffe (1932).

eye. Instead of clearly detailing a visual experience, Scève's approach to representation points out the deception inherent in language and vision.

If Scève's poetry is perceived as obscure, this is, in my view, because he does away with traditional notions of reference established in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, in preference of complex symbols and language. Rather than working together to express an intended moral or concept, as exemplified in Alciato and other contemporary emblem books, text and image in Scève's *Délie* produce a poetic work that challenges the conventions of meaning and the reception of knowledge. The Narcissus *impresa* [figure 4.1] and the commentary *dizain* 60 best illustrate the problem of deception because the myth of Echo and Narcissus is a drama framed by the question of knowledge, yet replete with deception and verbal/visual misinterpretation.

The presence of deceptive structures in Scève's text causes the transmission of knowledge to be problematic. The poet/lover and the reader struggle to make sense of clandestine references, multiple meanings in the images and language and a style of representation that demands constant cerebration. Scève's esoteric images and text project his own concepts in a manner unfamiliar to the majority. Scève uses his complex interpretation of the myth of Echo and Narcissus to demonstrate that as the "eye" searches for reflection (*le reflet*) that is traditionally associated with the Ovidian myth, this quest leads to nothing more than obscurity.

Text and image representations of Narcissus are an integral part of medieval culture. Nicholas Ealy argues that in the Middle Ages, Narcissus: "parallels the concept that we, as human beings, are called to know ourselves as images of a higher source

through contemplation upon the visible world that surrounds us"[8] (2005, 2). The story of Narcissus begins in Greek mythology, mainly in the works of Conon (*Narrations* 24, first-century BCE) and Pausanias (*Description of Greece*, second-century CE).[9] Nonetheless, Ovid's Latin account of Echo and Narcissus overshadows the Greek models to become the dominating version in the Middle Ages: "it is solely Ovid's account, from Book III of the *Metamorphoses*, that directly speaks about the young boy's arrival at self-knowledge…thereby serving for the writers and artists of the Middle Ages as a model of our knowledge as it is mediated through the mirror of the world" (Ealy 2005, 2-3).

Ovid's myth of Narcissus is the basis for Scève's *I* 7 and *dizain* 60.[10] The invention of the printing press aids the dissemination of Ovid's version of Narcissus in the sixteenth-century. Vinge claims that the *editio princeps* of the *Metamorphoses* is published as early as 1471, and vernacular printings begin to appear soon after (1967, 128). However, Scève's Narcissus does not refer to the medieval concept of the world as a mirror of greater reality embodied in the Christian God. Rather, the focus of the Narcissus myth in *Délie* is the experience of profane love.

---

[8] Ealy writes that during the Middle Ages: "the world, a mirror reflecting a greater reality, receives the ideal celestial forms upon which all earthly images are based, thereby bringing us into contact with our divine source and allowing us to know ourselves as images whose ultimate reality is located *elsewhere* (i.e., not within our "self")." Ealy claims that the notions of the world as mirror and of humans as an image of greater reality, stem from Plato's *Timaeus* and is reprised by philosophers Plotinus, Boethius and William of Conches (2005, 2-3,5).

[9] See Vinge, *The Narcissus theme*, (1967), 19-22.

[10] Defaux indicates that Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Book III, v. 339-510) influences the fable of Narcissus in *Délie* (2004, tome II, 91).

A cursory reading of *dizain* 60 shows that the logic of the poem is structured partially as two mixed hypothetical syllogisms: *Modus Ponens*.[11] The first syllogism is: If I am innocent then Love should not punish me; I am innocent; therefore, Love should not punish me; the second syllogism: If I am already dead there is no need to kill me again; I am dead; therefore, there is no need to kill me again. Nonetheless, I propose that the simple logic of the *dizain* structure disguises a more complex interpretation.

The presence of Narcissus in *Délie* is a popular topic among Scève scholars and the debate around *I* 7 and *dizain* 60 focuses mainly on the poet/lover as either similar to or distinct from Ovid's Narcissus.[12] Defaux claims that Scève's Narcissus is nothing like that of Ovid: "le dizain progresse grâce à un dialogue implicite avec le mythe d'Ovide qui lui sert de sous-texte. C'est justement parce que l'Amant sait qu'il *n'est pas Narcisse* ... qu'il se lance dans ce soliloque… Contrairement à Narcisse, l'Amant ne s'est jamais rebellé contre les commandements du dieu d'Amour" (2004, tome II, 92, emphasis mine). However, Coleman argues that *dizain* 60 compares the "je" of the text and Narcissus to show that there is a difference and yet a similarity between the poet/lover and Narcissus. Coleman claims they differ because the god of love (*Amour*) attacks the poet/lover as if

---

[11] Latin for "a mode that affirms." In logic, *Modus Ponens* is a valid inference drawn from a hypothetical proposition and takes the form: If P, then Q. P. Therefore Q.

[12] Scève scholars show that *dizain* 60 bears the influence of works by Ovid, Petrarch, Pernette du Guillet, Erasmus and Ficino. In "Scattered Rhymes" (1987), DellaNeva argues that Scève employs quotation rhetoric to incorporate fragments from three Petrarchan sonnets (R 132, 133 and 134) in *dizain* 60. For others see Defaux (2004, tome II, 92-93).

he were himself Narcissus although the poet deeply loves; they are similar because both vainly love an unattainable objet.[13]

In a searching book on Narcissus in *Délie*[14], Deborah Lesko Baker argues that the poet/lover is: "a new Narcissus transplanted from his classical setting [Ovid] into the refined world of the Renaissance lyric" (1986, 5). Baker suggests that, like Ovid's Narcissus, Scève's poet/lover suffers from a crisis of inaccessibility to the amorous object. Nonetheless, Baker argues, Scève's poet/lover transcends his destiny with the repeated deaths caused by the Beloved. In the introduction, Baker claims that the Narcissus *impresa* poem has three underlying elements at work: "the unspecified nature of the referent; the priority accorded to the lover's own posture; and the hidden Ovidian quotation" (1986, 5). However, my analysis contrasts with Baker's view in reference to the Narcissus *impresa*. First, while I agree that the referent in *dizain* 60 is unspecified, there are more examples of unspecified referents than Baker suggests. Second, although it is evident that Scève gives more emphasis than Petrarch does to the suffering of the poet/lover than the Lady, I argue that *I* 7 reinscribes the presence of Echo (the Lady) through language; Scève uses Echo's voice to represent her presence because she has no body. Third, I show that the Ovidian quotation is not hidden; instead, Scève explicitly highlights his use of Ovid's myth on several occasions in the image and the text.

My analysis of Scève's Narcissus is in harmony with that of Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, who argues that the significance of the Narcissus myth in *Délie* is produced

---

[13] See Coleman, "Images in Scève's *Délie*" *Modern Language Review* 59 (1964): 375-386; and "Les Emblesmes dans la *Délie* de Maurice Scève," *Studi Francesi* 8 (1964): 1-15.

[14] Narcissus and the Lover: Mythic Recovery and Reinvention in Scève's Délie (1986).

within the conflict between verbal and pictorial signs in *I* 7 and *dizain* 60: "la logique apparente du discourse, fortement soulignée chez Scève par les articulations et l'armature rhétorique externe, qui composent le plus souvent une espèce de leurre, se trouble à l'occasion lorsque le lecteur tente de saisir le réseau de relations construit par la 'syntaxe seconde' que composent les rythmes et les signifiants… C'est le cas du dizain LX" (2002, 96). The problematic space created by Scève's text is nowhere more apparent than in the Narcissus image and *dizain* [figure 4.1]. The complex relationship of the *impresa-dizain* structure only adds to the difficulty of interpretation. Mathieu-Castellani proposes that when reading founded on mimesis fails, coherence between text and image can only be achieved with an analysis that includes semiotics (2002, 98). As an addition to the previous efforts of Scève scholars, and in agreement with Mathieu-Castellani, in this chapter I propose an alternative reading of the myth of Echo and Narcissus in *Délie* that shows that self-love leads to the loss of knowledge and that provides a reading strategy for the entire text. Furthermore, I provide a detailed analysis of the symbolic elements in the image, which, to my knowledge, no critic has hitherto examined.

* * *

Scève's Narcissus *impresa* depicts an interpretation of Ovid's text with which the modern era is not completely familiar. Today, the myth of Narcissus has the significance of a moral warning against vanity and egoism; in the wake of Freud's theories of narcissism,[15] it is difficult to disassociate Narcissus from the concept of self-love. Nancy M. Frelick argues that the final line of *dizain* 60 ("veu qu'asses meurt, qui trop vainement

[15] I refer to theories postulated by Freud specifically in *Totem and Taboo* (1919) and *On Narcissism: An Introduction* (1914). Although an analysis of Freud's work on primary and secondary narcissism might yield interesting results, it is beyond the scope of this inquiry.

ayme?") echoes the motto in the image ("asses meurt qui en vain ayme"): "to play on the notions of self-love – the crime for which Narcissus is punished" (1994, 67). However, as I show, in Ovid, as well as in Scève, Narcissus is not narcissistic in this modern sense.

In the Ovidian version of the myth, Narcissus' error is not self-love. Narcissus errs because he falls prey to visual deception: he believes that the image on the surface of the water is an Other outside of him with independent subjectivity. Claire Nouvet argues: "contrary to what is commonly assumed, Narcissus does not love himself, but what he sees in the mirror of the pool: a body, somebody, 'another'" (1991, 122). Neoplatonic thought appreciates that Narcissus does not recognize his image. Plotinus (204-270 CE) refers to the Narcissus story when discussing intelligible beauty in *Ennead* V, 8:

> Since we are not accustomed to see any of the things within and do not know them, we pursue the external without realizing that it is the inner which moves things: just as if someone were to look at his own image [35] and without realizing where it came from were to pursue that image (Corrigan 2005, 190-191).

In his commentary of this passage, Kevin Corrigan writes: "so like Narcissus attempting to become one with his reflection in water, we pursue external objects without realizing that we cannot grasp them except superficially in that way" (2005, 211). Narcissus has never encountered his own image before this moment and, thus, he pursues what he perceives to be an external object. He does not recognize the image as a reflection of himself because he believes that what he sees is another person: "Narcissus believes he sees an other because he mistakes an image for a body; that is, because he cannot tell the difference between an *imago* and a *corpus*" (Nouvet 1991, 122).

Similarly, the popular conception of the Narcissus myth eclipses Echo, a fundamental character in the narrative of Narcissus' self-deception. The encounter

between Echo and Narcissus shows the deceptive nature of language by demonstrating that intention can always be severed from meaning. Both Echo and Narcissus fail to interpret the speech of each other.

As Narcissus gazes into the pool, the forest where Echo resides surrounds him. Existing only as a repetition of sound (echolalia), she can repeat no more than the words uttered by others.[16] Her sonorous presence leads Narcissus to fall prey to verbal deception. While focusing his gaze on the surface of the water, Narcissus believes that he cannot hear the words uttered by the beautiful boy in the reflection. This is a moment of visual and verbal deception in which Narcissus contemplates that perhaps the boy in the pool is an *imago* represented by a mere reflection devoid of substance; he hears the only characteristic that makes him a subject: language, his own speech. Nouvet argues: "it is language which differentiates the human subject from a mere imago. It is language, and language alone, which assures him of his substance, of his ontological status in contrast to the figural status of the imago" (1991, 123). It is not until Narcissus hears his own voice uttered back to him through Echo that he sees the reflection in the pool as himself. The scene in Ovid is composed of visual and verbal signs: Narcissus sees an image and simultaneously hears a voice. As a composite of text and image, Scève's *I* 7 portrays the precise moment of awareness as detailed by Ovid.

---

[16] In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Echo loses her voice because Juno punishes her logorrhea: "she [Echo] liked to chatter, but had no power of speech except the power to answer in the words she last had heard. Juno had done this: when she went out looking for Jove on top of some nymph among the mountains, Echo would stall the goddess off by talking until the nymphs had fled. Sooner or later Juno discovered this and said to Echo: 'the tongue that made a fool of me will shortly have shorter use, the voice be brief hereafter.' Those were not idle words; now Echo always says the last thing she hears, and nothing further" (Humphries 1995, 68).

In Scève's Narcissus *impresa* [figure 4.1], there is a pictorial representation of a boy in sylvan environs gazing into a pool of water. The text occupies the same graphic space as the image; "Asses meurt qvi en vain ayme" surrounds the image, while at the same time it is part of the image.[17] I argue that, for the reader/viewer regardless of Scève or the printer's intention, the presence of this framing text in the *impresa* constitutes a re-inscription of the bodiless Echo, who sonorously inhabits the adjacent forests in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. After losing her body, she becomes nothing more than an echo: "her body dries and shrivels till voice only and bones remain, and then she is voice only" (Humphries 1995, 69). Moreover, the text appears to float around Narcissus, just as his image floats on the surface of the water in Ovid. As both an echo and a floating image, the text symbolizes the possibility of verbal and visual deception since, as signs, neither possess subjectivity. Thus, the "subject" in the story may mistake text and image signifiers for the signified objects they represent: a body, another subject.

The text is positioned in the image so that the words on one side mirror the words on the opposing side. The position of "meurt qui" in relation to "ayme" creates a mirror image structure that directly encloses Narcissus and his reflection in the water. While the pool of water inverts Narcissus' reflection, the word "ayme" is inverted and reversed as well. Thus, Scève's *impresa* depicts Narcissus as looking down to see a linguistic representation, "ayme," reflected back to him: the word subverts his image. "Speech," Dalia Judovitz argues, "is revealed as an uncertain mirror of meaning. Speech echoes

[17] The layout of the motto within the frame follows the regular typographic pattern established throughout the book. Praz writes: "the borders of the devices follow each other repeatedly in this order: rectangle, circle, lozenge, ellipse, triangle, oval" (2001, 83n). Nonetheless, I argue for reader/viewer perception of *Délie*, specifically *I* 7 and *dizain* 60 in which the "mirroring" patterns (referencing a moment of mirror reflection) are undeniable.

with diverse meanings and images" (1994, 37). Scève's representation emphasizes the inability of language to reflect the self, because of the echo that is always present in speech. Narcissus' image in the mirror of the pool and the word he hears/sees both fail to construct an ontological body.

The technique in *I* 7 as employed by Scève underscores Narcissus' own confusion. The choice of print technique for his *imprese* is the woodcut, also called a woodblock print, which is made by cutting a design in side-grain of a block of wood. The ink is transferred from the raised surfaces to paper. This process creates a reversed image reminiscent of the reflection of Narcissus in the pool. Scève's woodcut leaves an impression of blurred contours and forms that the viewer must study and contemplate; his *impresa* rewards the patient contemplative beholder.

Inside the rectangular frame and within the textual motto that surrounds the graphic image, a hunting dog is shown on the left side of the *impresa*. Given the intertextual nature of *Délie*, I argue that the dog is present to remind the viewer that the entire image is a scene from the Narcissus myth in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, whose story follows immediately after the story of Actaeon. In Ovid's text, the myth of Actaeon describes a hunter's transformation into a stag and his death in the jaws of his own hunting dogs. His change is a punishment from Diana – a *numen* of Délie. Moreover, Ovid writes that Narcissus first comes to the woods with his friends on a hunting expedition. Hence, the image of the dog is a figural quotation from the Actaeon and Narcissus narrative.

Behind Narcissus, two trees stand in the background. The tree on the right, just above and behind Narcissus and the pool of water, shows limbs covered in a drooping,

plantlike substance. Since the foliate matter does not appear to be growing vertically, towards the sun, this suggests that it grows well in the shade, like moss. Cool, dark, damp areas provide the best environment for moss to grow, like the surroundings of Narcissus' pool: "there was a pool, silver with shining water, to which no shepherds came, no goats, no cattle, whose glass no bird, no beast, no falling leaf had ever troubled. Grass grew all around, green from the nearby water, and with shadow no sun burned hotly down on" (Humphries 1995, 70). No sunlight reaches these plants yet they grow well and flourish because of the pool: "silver with shining water." The tree on the left, further away from Narcissus and his pool shows limbs with no foliage and no moss. Lacking sunlight (in shadow) and the benefits of the silver pool, the tree on the left appears to be dead. Hence, I view the environment in *I* 7 as a recreation of the textual description of the pool found by Narcissus in Ovid.

In the center of the image, in the middle ground, the individual is most likely Narcissus, although there is no name or title on the page of *I* 7 and *dizain* 60. This requires the viewer to interpret the figure as Narcissus from the symbolic elements of Ovid's text – the pool, the reflection, the trees. The figure seems to be a young boy because he is not dressed as a female and does not yet show facial hair. Narcissus looks down with arms stretched out as though he is trying to embrace what he sees below him. It is difficult for the viewer to distinguish between the body (*corpus*) of Narcissus and the pool of water into which he is looking. The graphic lines are distorted and blend into one another making the distinction between the pool, the ground and the body of Narcissus difficult to discern. These imprecise markings in the image allow Narcissus and the

reflected image to merge into an amorphous mass to echo the delusion in his story: the body and the image are not the same, but Narcissus cannot tell them apart.

Through an interpretation of content, I argue that the text and image structure in *I 7* recreates the moment Narcissus becomes aware of himself in Ovid: "I see him, but the charm and sight escape me... your lips, it seems, answer when I am talking though what you say I cannot hear" (Humphries 1995, 71). Narcissus becomes aware because he speaks to the *imago* - highlighted by the presence of the word "ayme" at the bottom of Scève's pool. Since Narcissus cannot hear any sound produced from the mouth in the image, he realizes that this other in front of him cannot be a body or a self. The delusion of Narcissus is that he mistakes a simulacrum, with no body and no speech, for a "self" endowed with language and an ontological presence. The simulacrum leads to deception and is thus a problem in representation. Camille argues: "an image without a model, lacking that crucial dependence upon resemblance or similitude, the simulacrum is a false claimant to being which calls into question the ability to distinguish between what is real and what is represented" (Camille 1996, 35). Because Narcissus does not know his own self (the model, the real) and sees his reflection as an image (the simulacrum, what is represented), he cannot distinguish between a being and its shadow. He falls in love with a representation long before he ever knows that the surface of the water acts as a reflecting mirror or that he sees himself as an image. Hence, he does not fall in love with himself.

Scève's *impresa* combines figural and linguistic representation to recreate the moment of deception in Ovid. The *Metamorphoses* details the deceptive nature of vision through the character of Narcissus (who mistook an image for a self) and similarly, the

discourse between Echo and Narcissus exhibits the deceptive nature of language. Although most interpretations of Ovid's Narcissus characterize his experience as a solely visual encounter, his story re-inscribes speech in a manner that leads to misunderstanding. When he first becomes aware of Echo's presence in the woods, he asks: "Ecquis adest?" (is anyone here?). Echo responds: "adest" (here), thus transforming the question into a response. The narrative structure allows Echo to retain intention in her speech because she has the ability to repeat as little or as much of the call of Narcissus as she desires.

Problems arise through this exchange only when Narcissus utters "Veni!" and Echo repeats "veni" because the original intention in Narcissus' call cannot be determined. Does Narcissus call out "come," as a request for Echo to come to him, or does he mean to say, "I come,"[18] to indicate he will go toward Echo? By extension, what does Echo intend with her call: "come to me" or "I am coming"? This problem uncovers the distortion of the stable, original statement by the introduction of the echo: that the statement "veni" could mean, "Come" as well as "I come." Nouvet writes: "the echo... marks the impossibility of determining an intended meaning, that is, the impossibility of connecting a statement to the intention of a speaking conscious" (107). Speech cannot serve as a stable mirror to reflect the self, because the echo inherent in language, as shown in the Ovidian myth, causes a diffraction of meaning and intent.

The ultimate misinterpretation occurs in Narcissus' subsequent call, "huc coeamus," to which Echo repeats, "coeamus." It seems that Narcissus intends to say: "let us meet." Yet, at the moment Echo "replies," she appears with her arms stretched out for

[18] "…and with loud voice cries 'come!;' and 'Come!' she calls him calling" (Nouvet 1991, 106).

an embrace.[19] Her gesture transforms her response to "let us unite /copulate," which casts suspicion upon the intent of Narcissus' original call. If the utterance can mean "let us meet," "let us unite," and "let us copulate," then there is no original stable meaning in *coeamus*: "at the very point where a demand of meeting might mean a demand of copulation, we are sent back to an original and confusing entanglement of meanings" (Nouvet 1991, 107). The characters in Ovid's text suffer from the illusion that speech is stable and that intention is always properly interpreted. Yet as Ovid's discourse portrays, the capacity for deception is inherent in speech itself.

In order to represent the misunderstanding in Ovid's text, I argue that Scève's rhetoric in *dizain* 60 expressly creates linguistic structures necessary for delusion to occur. As a lyric cycle, the poems in *Délie* resemble those created by the medieval troubadours and *trouvères*.[20] A striking aspect of these lyric poems is that they are composed in a manner that requires diligent decipherment. Julia Kristeva claims that the troubadours' complex, opulent language is meant to encode the amorous transports of the lover. However, Kristeva argues: "l'emploi de mots homophones ou de sonorité voisine ajoutera à la musicalité, mais surtout fera porter un doute sur le sens au sein même du signe" (1983, 350). Hence, Scève's language, like that of the troubadours, destabilizes meaning and casts doubt on symbolic representation.

---

[19] In Ovid's myth, the narrative is not linear. When Echo is first mentioned she no longer has a body: "up to this time Echo still had a body, she was not merely voice" (Humphries 1995, 68).

[20] On the lyric genre in France see, Mary O'Neill, *Courtly Love Songs of Medieval France: Transmission and Style in the Trouvère Repertoire*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006). On lyricism and musicality in Scève see, Helgeson (2001).

Scève's use of homonyms throughout *dizain* 60 illustrates the deceptive nature of language. These homonyms allude to hidden concepts, and complicate the attempt to convey meaning. The first of these is evident in the second line: "qui tant aymay." Pronounced aloud, one may hear "quittant aimé," which changes the expression from *who so loved* to *leaving the loved one*. This implies a refusal on the part of the lover to continue to suffer and creates an inconsistency when considered with: "Mais souffre encor, sans complainctes quelconques" (v 5).

The term "mesmement"[21] points toward the concept of an unbroken self-reflection: the "même" (same) suggests that the image represents a parallel between Narcissus and the lover in the *dizain*. But since Scève's poetics are lyrical and meant to be read or sung aloud,[22] "mesmement" could be heard as the subject and verb "même/ment," in the sense of "le même ment" (the same lies) – referring to the verb "mentir" (to lie). In this sense, any reference to self-coincidence, as is implied by self-love, implies a lie.

Another reference to the verb "mentir" is in the homonym formed in the word "vainement." Aurally, this could represent "vain/ment" (the vain/vanity lies). In order to

---

[21] The term *mesmement* (or *mêmement*) no longer exists in modern French. From *même*, the adverb *mêmement* was formed (ca 1121 CE meïsmement, ca 1150 CE meimement) in the sense of *de la même façon, aussi*. The adverb still existed in the sixteenth century in the sense of *surtout*, *principalement*. Uniquely in the sixteenth-century, *mêmement* also replaced the phrase *de même* (Rey 1992).

[22] Duval illustrates that Scève's *Délie* is a prime example of lyrical poetry: "historically and structurally the *dizain* is… a lyric form, in the strictest sense of the word" (1994, 71). In the same article, Duval writes: "it is evident from a close examination of the *Délie* that he [Scève]… was perfectly aware that the *dizain* is a lyric form defined by the exigencies of a pre-determined musical structure. Seven of his *dizains* were in fact set to music by contemporary musicians, three of them several years before the *Délie* was published" (1994, 77).

inscribe the motto into the *dizain*, Scève changes "en vain" to "vainement," thereby permitting the homonym. With this move, Scève figures the problem of vanity as a lie into the text by indexing the hubris of falling in love with one's own image. This homonym further suggests that the poet's representation as a Narcissus-like character is a lie. In *dizain* 33, Scève writes: "Se voit par soy grandement deceuoir." In this line, Scève highlights the fact that the verb "se voir" is a homonym within the verb "deceuoir" (de se voir). He asserts that "seeing the self through the self" is deceptive: to see the self (*de se voir*) is to deceive (*décevoir*). While Narcissus is deceived as he gazes into the pool, Scève conveys that reflection in any medium is deceptive. In this way, Scève questions the nature of visual representation itself, as he represents the moment of Narcissus' visual deception in Ovid.

The homonym in the words "Veu qu'asses" (Seeing that enough) in the ultimate line of the *dizain*, presents a critique of visuality. Instead of *seeing that enough*, one may hear "vue cassée" (broken view). Considering that the *dizain* itself is referring to a moment of vision figured in the Narcissus *impresa*, the reference to a *broken view* signals an inscription of difference. A broken view undermines any sort of plenitude an integral image might preserve. Instead of reflecting an undivided subject in a mirror, the image disseminates. The subject of the reflection will never be determined, for only broken shards of glass remain, each reflecting only a part of the whole. In like manner, since no point of origin is available to designate, no level of reflexivity is possible.

In addition to homonyms, Scève's language employs verbs that destabilize meaning, serving to inscribe difference and question the transparency of vision. In *dizain* 60, the lover asks why it is that love kills him "pourquoy m'occit il doncques." Scève

uses *occire*[23] specifically to call attention to the Ovidian version of Narcissus. He writes: "qu'est il besoing de plus oultre m'occire" (9). The ending word, *occire*, illuminates a rhyme scheme with "Qu'il me consume, ainsi qu'au feu la Cyre." We hear the noun *Cyre* (Wax) as an echo within the verb oc-*cire*. Ovid's text describes Narcissus: "intabescere flavae igne levi cerae"[24] (Anderson 1997, lines 487-88). In the *dizain*, Narcissus is depicted through the Renaissance concept of *intertexte*;[25] Narcissus is the wax (Cyre) described in Ovid's text (cerae). Scève incorporates Echo's presence through this linguistic structure. Echo is constantly present in Scève's employment of rhetorical structures such as *Cyre* and (oc)*cire*. As Echo can only utter back the words of another, *dizain* 60 calls attention to her sonorous presence like the motto surrounding the image of Narcissus in *I* 7.

Scève decisively uses an additional verb meaning, "to kill," within the *dizain*: *tuer*. Yet why should he use two different verbs that have the same sense? I argue that he employs this supplementary verb to allude to Narcissus since the etymology of *tuer* shows a link between death and vision. The French *tuer* is from the Latin *tŭĕo*, *tŭēre* (to

---

[23] Huguet indicates that in the sixteen-century, "occire" means "tuer," and "s'occire" means "se tuer."

[24] He wanes, as yellow wax dissolves with warmth around it (Humphries 1995, 72).

[25] In 1530, François Ier established the College Royal, today known as the Collège de France, in which Greek, Hebrew and Latin were taught – an indication of the interest in Antiquity. However, in 1539 the King signed an ordinance dictating that all legal documents be written in the vernacular French as well as in Latin. As evidenced in the works of Du Bellay, Ronsard and Montaigne, the renewed interest in ancient languages combined with an emerging vernacular language led to the production of literature in which intertextuality and classical models played a complex yet fascinating role. For more on this topic see, Éric Le Calvez, *Texte(s) et intertexte(s)*, (Amsterdam [u.a.]: Rodopi, 1997).

look at, regard). In *Metamorphoses*, Narcissus becomes transfixed when he looks into a pool of water to see an image reflected. This gaze/regard is fatal for Narcissus because he pines away for the image and subsequently mourns himself to death. However, Ovid never writes *tŭĕo*, *tŭēre* to index vision. He uses *visō*, *vīsĕre* (to look at carefully, contemplate) and *specto*, *spectare* (to look at carefully, contemplate). Neither verb implies a relationship between death and vision. Scève intentionally creates a rhetorical reminder of Ovid's Narcissus by employing a verb that has changed meaning from the Latin *tŭĕor* (to look), to the French *tuer* (to kill): literally, the look that kills. The presence of these linguistic structures in the *dizain* points to the problematic nature of speech in Ovid's text and increases the level of obscurity in *Délie*.

There is no proper name in *dizain* 60 – even the name Narcissus is absent from the *Délie*.[26] Instead, we find a "je," an "il," a "qui" and numerous reflexive verbs that are all ambiguous. In the second verse, there is an inconsistency between "qui," a third person pronoun, and the verb "aymay"; although the verb is in the first person, it has no specified subject. The subject must be "je," but to whom does the "qui" refer? *Who* is it? Love? Narcissus? In a representation of the self, we must wonder *who* is represented.

Many of Scève's verbs have no specified subject: "aimay," "sceuz," "offençay." These verbs are all in the first person but do not link to a "je" – unlike "Je ne m'en puis" (v 3). The refusal to write "je" has an effect upon the subjectivity of the "first person" of the *dizain* because the subject pronoun "je" is the most personal but at the same time the most impersonal pronoun. The poet/lover believes that when he utters "je," he represents

[26] The title of the emblem, "Narcissus," is found only in the back matter in *L'ORDRE DES Figures & Emblemes.* The names Echo and Narcissus appear nowhere else in the text.

himself alone. However, when the other utters “je,” this very same term is no longer linked to the poet; rather, the personal pronoun is claimed by the speaker, whoever that may be. For some verbs, Scève writes “je” but for others it is omitted. The poet is in effect affirming that this “je” could belong to anyone, even to the “aultruy” (v 8) and is in no way a stable signifier of his own subjectivity.

The last line of the *dizain* reads: “Veu qu’asses meurt, qui trop vainement ayme?” Does the third person verb “meurt” refer to the “qui” in the final line? If so, *who* is this “qui”? The poet? Narcissus? The verb “souffre” could be first or third person. Furthermore, one could assume that the “il” of the dizain refers to Love yet this is by no means certain considering that the poet himself asks: “*Si* c’est Amour” (emphasis mine).

The ambiguity between the various subject pronouns links to the question of difference and the valorization of difference that shows up to disrupt notions of reflexivity that the Narcissus myth provides. The inscription of Echo (with the motto), the detail that the image cannot represent sound without language and the linguistic terms themselves all redirect reflexivity. Language is not a mirror because it generates difference and dissemination. Therefore, the reflective properties, as in water, are not there. Language does not reflect and does not enable the same level of reflexivity as the image.

Réflexion

Je me nourris de si doulce mensonge (D 143).

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* places the myth of Echo and Narcissus within the overarching story of Tiresias – a blind sage with "power to know the future" (Humphries 1995, 67). In this way, knowledge frames the Narcissus myth,[27] although Ovid's text is comprised of visual and verbal deception. When Narcissus is born, his mother takes him to Tiresias to ask if he will live to old age. Tiresias answers "si se non noverit"[28] (Anderson 1997, 97). In the end though, self-knowledge ostensibly leads to Narcissus' death. Hence, how are we to understand the presence of knowledge in a story that exposes deception at every turn? Furthermore, since Antiquity, poetry (like that of Ovid or Scève) is seen as fraudulent because it can misrepresent the universe.[29] Yet if poetic language is deceitful, how does poetry communicate knowledge?

Narcissus ultimately gains knowledge of his own body and face when he sees them represented in an *imago*. He knows that the figure he sees in the water is a reflection of himself. This is Narcissus' literal and deadly self-knowledge: "to recognize the self as a simulacrum, that is, as something other than a self, as precisely not a self but a figure" (Nouvet 1991, 128). The notion of the simulacrum, the "other than a self,"

---

[27] The story of Pentheus and Bacchus follows Narcissus' death in which, Tiresias tells Pentheus: "if you scorn his [Bacchus'] temple, you will be torn into a thousand pieces… and this will happen" (Humphries 1995, 73).

[28] "If he never knows himself" (Humphries 1995, 68). The term *noverit* is from the Latin verb *nosco*, *noscĕre* [to get knowledge of, become acquainted with, come to know, learn, discern].

[29] The poet and the liar, poetry and the figure of the poet have been linked to the power of deception since Antiquity. Louise H. Pratt argues that lying or deceiving has been a major topos in poetry since the time of the Greeks. She mentions that in the *Odyssey*, the figure of the Homeric bard is linked to Odysseus, a known deceiver and liar. In this way, the poet is represented as a deceiver. Pratt also points out that poetry has previously been linked to the god Hermes, who was also known for his powers of deception and trickery (1993, 2-3). Furthermore, much of the final book of the *Republic* is an attack on poetry.

begins in Plato's Greek dialogues and is translated, as Camille observes, as "phantasm" (2003, 36). Plato seeks to distinguish reality from phantasm for, as he claims in *Republic* X (601 b): "the creator of the phantom [eidōlon], the imitator, we say, knows nothing of the reality but only the appearance [tou phainomenou]" (1961, 826). The horror in the story of Narcissus is that after he mistakes the simulacrum (the image reflected in the pool) for an Other with independent subjectivity, he also recognizes his own self as a simulacrum. As such, he has no subjectivity of his own; his self as simulacrum (as phantasm) is not a duplicate because there is no model to reproduce. The simulacrum is never an imitation of reality and as Camille argues: "the simulacrum is more than just a useless image, it is a deviation and perversion of imitation itself – a false likeness" (2003, 36). The simulacrum has no original to copy and it is not a mimetic image because it has no source and no primary model.

Scève's *impresa* calls attention to Narcissus' inability to distinguish between reality and phantasm. In *I* 7, the lines depicting the two trees, the dog, and Narcissus' body are the most defined and form the most easily determined elements. However, when we look at Narcissus, down below his face, beneath his embracing arms, the staccato, marked lines suggest there is a mirror image of the boy reflected in the pool. His image reflects from the water back up to him. Nonetheless, to what scene in the narrative does Scève's *impresa* point? Has he just arrived? Has he recognized himself?

In the Narcissus image, I perceive the motto and graphic image enclosed inside the limits of the graphic space as a representation of the exact moment in Ovid when Narcissus is transfixed and still as a statue. This static image shows Narcissus captivated by the image of the Other that he sees before him. He is unaware of his own

consciousness and in an instant he sees the image reflected, hears his own voice repeated back to him through the echo/Echo and for a moment, he becomes aware of his 'self.' Because of the image, because of the echo, he knows that he is deluded, that he is deceived and that he deceives himself. This small moment (a passage in time too small to calculate) is when Narcissus knows that what he sees is himself and, furthermore, that what he sees as a 'self' is nothing more than a representation: a simulacrum. Thus, in Ovid, Narcissus utters "iste ego sum": I am "this," I am nothing other than a representation – yet he is less than this. With his statement, Narcissus confirms his error and posits himself as a "perversion of imitation."[30] By placing an image of Narcissus in apposition to its textual "echo," Scève depicts a moment of supposed knowledge with a mere figure surrounded by a voice detached from a subject. His gesture shows that the nature of representation complicates the transmission of knowledge – that discourse and figures are unable to represent a self or subjectivity. Speech and images are both unstable mirrors of reflection.

The problem of subverted knowledge in Ovid is also a topic in Alciato's *Emblematum Liber* (1531). Alciato's Narcissus emblem (69 "Philautia" 1531[31]) [figure 4.2] warns that self-love can subvert knowledge. Max Gauna claims that during the Renaissance, *philautia* is a classical notion but not really a classical word. The classical conception of *philautia* is positive and refers to friendship (1996, 115). During the Renaissance though, *philautia* refers to the negative aspects of self-love and arrogance, which lead to deception and ruin. Alciato's motto reads: "Self-love is the withering and

---

[30] Camille (2006, 36).

[31] Frappier claims that Narcissus appears in emblem 69 entitled ΦΙΛΑΥΤΙΑ of Alciato's *Emblematum Liber* from 1531 (1959, 140).

destruction of natural power which brings and has brought ruin to many learned men." Alciato shows that the problem of *philautia* is that it leads to phantasms or false knowledge, as distinct from the learning of the ancients.

The Narcissus emblem in Alciato warns against the concepts of imagined knowledge, phantasm and phantasy.[32] Distorted reality is deceptive; Alciato uses Narcissus as a figure for deception because vision and language act as deceivers for him. Narcissus falls in love with an idea of the love-object – a composite of metaphorical images: "his eyes, twin stars, and locks as comely as those of Bacchus or the god Apollo, smooth cheeks and ivory neck" (Humphries 1995, 70). He sees what one might imagine as the perfect, idealized lover: "he saw an image in the pool, and fell in love with that unbodied hope, and found a substance in what was only shadow" (1995, 70). I argue that his error is that he mistakes a representation for an actual lover with independent subjectivity; he falls in love with "unbodied hope," the possibility of love with no *corpus*. For Narcissus, the perfect love-object is a construct of ideals, a phantasm.

From the Greek *phántasma*, a phantasm is an image or illusion, derived from perception, created in the mind: an idea. Huguet indicates that in the sixteenth-century a "fantasme" is an "apparence fausse" or illusion: a "fantasie" is an "idée" or conception. Since the imagination produces phantasms, not objective reality, they are unreal and consequently deceptive. Alciato alludes to the danger of deception and specifically warns that self-love causes the learned man to "throw away the method of the ancients"

[32] In Plato's *Republic* X, a *phantasm* (a creation of imagination), is a distortion of objective reality. Plato argues that painting is an imitation of a phantasm (598 b); he claims that poets create with knowledge and can deceive just as well as the painters – but their works are "three removes from reality, and easy to produce without knowledge of the truth. For it is phantoms, not realities, that they produce" (598 e – 599 a) (1961, 825-826).

and replace erudition with a phantasm of knowledge and "pass on nothing but their own fantasies." Unlike Scève's Narcissus *impresa*, the image in Alciato is distinct and unambiguous. The sinuous lines depict each element as separate from the others. The contrast between the light areas and the dark areas of ink help define and create each other. In contrast to Scève, Alciato's image does not show the rhetorical structures of Ovid's narrative.

In Alciato, Narcissus is a trope not only for self-knowledge, but also for universal knowledge. The phantasm is no longer the *imago* of the self. Rather, Alciato warns against the fable of knowledge. That is, man may suffer from the delusion that he possesses true knowledge, when, in fact, he only sees the phantasm of knowledge, an illusion of wisdom and substance in what is only shadow and ultimately deception. Similarly, Scève uses the figuration of Narcissus as a trope for knowledge. The love object (*objet de plus haute vertu*) represents an ideal of knowing. *Délie* is the mirror and his thoughts are his "idea": "quand je te vy, miroir de ma pensée" (D 415).

The title *Délie* is an anagram of *l'idée* (idea).[33] Huguet indicates that in the sixteenth-century, the word *idée* means *image* or *type parfaict*. For Scève, Délie, the love object, is an ideal of knowing shown in the jumbled anagram *l'idée*, confirming that Délie is the perfect or ideal love object – *type parfaict* but jumbled up. Gregory de

---

[33] Saulnier asserts that the title/Lady as an anagram of *l'idée* is seen by critics from the sixteenth-century like La Croix du Maine up to modern day. Saulnier writes: "la maîtresse de Scève n'était qu'une entité mystique, sans aucune réalité terrestre; cette femme idéale n'était même pas l'idéal féminin de Scève, même pas l'Idée de la Femme, mais l'Idée tout court, l'idéal purement métaphysique d'un esprit frotté de platonisme (2003, 146). Coleman mentions the numerous significances of the title *Délie*: "the Delian Diana, goddess of the moon, Luna, Artemis, sister of Phoebus, goddess of hunting and of healing, patroness of chastity, and as Hecate, she is also goddess of the Underworld" (1964, 1). Harry Redman Jr argues that Délie may be Anne d'Heilly – Lady of Honor to Louise of Savoy (mother of François Ier) (1957).

Rocher argues, since *Délie* is an anagram of *l'idée*: "this allows us to hypothesize that the poet's Lady, Délie, is not a woman at all, whether real or idyllic, but instead the *recueil* itself" (1987, 14). I argue that by representing the Echo/Lady as a linguistic image surrounding Narcissus, Scève confirms that the Beloved is indeed representation. In other words, the object of his desire is conjured in his mind and written as his idea: *l'idée*, the poetic text *Délie*.

From the Greek *ideĭn* (to see), *l'idée* provides a link between seeing and comprehension. Yet seeing is no longer solely in the visual realm: to see is to understand. Scève's *recueil*, the lover's Délie and the poet's *Délie* all present different ways of understanding how this text stages knowledge as word and image. The Délie/*l'idée* links the concept of the love object and the poet's idea – a visible representation of a concept staged at the limits of interpretation between the visual and discursive registers.

In Scève's creation, the association between the *phantasm* (idea) and Délie/*l'idée* is linked to how vision and visuality operate within the text. Metaphors of blindness and darkness suggest the poet/lover's inability to see. However, the lover's blindness is not due to an inability to see, but rather, he is blind because he is in darkness: "Elle m'abysme en profondes tenebres" (D 7).

Typically, in medieval and Renaissance poetry, darkness occurs when the Beloved is absent. The Beloved is a source of light (her eyes are stars, her face is the sun), and when she departs, darkness descends on the poet/lover and the world. The paradox with Scève is that the love object is both a source of light and of darkness: "Car sa lumiere est tousiours en tenebres" (D 330). Conventionally, in the poetry of Dante and

Petrarch, the poet/lover compares the love object to light or entities that produce light – the sun or fire. Therefore, by portraying the Beloved as darkness, Scève complicates a long-standing literary tradition that stems from Antiquity to the sixteenth-century.

The significance of Scève's creation, representing Délie in darkness, lies in the fact that the Renaissance concept of the *lune en tenebres* symbolizes the obscuring of the mental faculties. Those things portrayed "in the dark," cannot be seen, or more appropriately, they cannot be known. Scève's text links darkness to that which is "unknowable," and this is apparent in the etymology of the French word for darkness: *tenebres*. The French term *tenebres* comes from the Latin *tenebrosus* (un-illuminated, dark). From Latin, the medieval French *tenebrae* means: "complete absence of light; mental darkness, lack of knowledge." From this connotation, I interpret *tenebres* in Scève's text as mental darkness, or lack of knowledge, which implies an inability to know, access or comprehend. No representations that are in shadows (*en tenenbres*) in *Délie* are accessible as objects of knowledge. Since Délie is the object in the dark that he cannot illuminate, the lover cannot see or know her. She is unattainable as an object of knowledge for the poet.

When the poet tries to decipher or interpret Délie as an object, he is left in mental darkness: "ie voy / A tous clarté, & a moy rend tenebres" (D 51). The Lady Délie is an object created through a network of detours because as the poet struggles to see/comprehend her, the more obscure or "dark" she becomes. Since Scève constantly combines and alters literary and linguistic traditions, the language of *Délie* is a refiguring that resists accessibility. So Délie remains unattainable for the lover, and *Délie* remains unknowable for the poet.

Giorgio Agamben argues that the poetic text is always an attempt to signify the poet's love not for an individual Lady, but rather for the *phantasm* of the Beloved – the objectified ideal of the Lady that the poet/lover keeps in his mind and creates through language. Agamben argues: "in poetic practice… the phantasm generates desire, desire is translated into words and the word defines a space wherein the appropriation of what could otherwise not be appropriated or enjoyed is possible" (1993, 129). The *phantasm* and the word (language) couple in an attempt to give substance to the idea of the Lady.

Typically, the poet could attain the desired object in his poetic text by creating a linguistic presence that is achievable to him. Nevertheless, I argue that in Scève, the poetic word is the site of a fracture between the desire of the poet and the unattainable object. Since Scève radically alters the tradition of love poetry, his attempt to procure the object fails. Délie is in darkness and is inaccessible to him. Scève's text does not produce this possibility of defining a space of appropriation because, due to its multiplicity of meanings, *Délie*, the text, resists assimilation.

As the lover tries to interpret or read *Délie*, he ceaselessly fails. Scève's language is not a medium in which Délie the love object can be deciphered because the poet constantly subjects it to deceit. The poet/lover can never be sure that he has seen or interpreted Délie, for, as I show in the problem of the echo, there is no refuge from the multiplicity of meanings intrinsic in language. Moreover, Scève augments the problems of multiplicity with constant references to legend from Antiquity and the Middle Ages. As Donaldson-Evans reminds us, the "je parlant" reduced to pure gaze, aimlessly searches outside himself for the Other (1978, 207). Scève's poet is thus a hermeneutically distraught lover who untiringly tries to decipher Délie, yet fails because

of his mental darkness. The poet cannot see Délie because she is obscured by literal shadows – linguistic obstacles inherent in poetry. Thus, his *clarté tousiours en tenebres* is a metaphor for his inability to decipher Délie in his own poetic text.

The impossibility of language to "reflect" in Scève's poetics compels us then to reconsider the illusion of transparency that is commonly associated with seeing. By juxtaposing the discursive and the figural, Scève also invites us to question the idea (*l'idée*) of sight and reflection. His obscure gesture suggests that vision may be more complex than is customarily supposed, and often even deceptive. Scève's Narcissus *impresa* and *dizain* 60 illuminate a fundamental problem in *Délie*: that the attempt to appropriate the love object is futile because language and images are not transparent. Rather than serving as a portal to clarity, in *Délie* the *Oeil* is a misleading portal, a *trompe l-oeil* that deceives the poet/lover as well as the reader.

Conclusion

This chapter shows that vision is deceptive and leads one to confuse reality and idea, thing and phantasm. Scève's *I* 7 and *dizain* 60 highlight the problem of the phantasm in Ovid. Yet Scève does not allow his poet/lover to attain access to the ever-elusive object. Baker suggests that Scève presents "a more positive Narcissus" than Ovid since Narcissus dies in the *Metamorphoses*, yet survives in *Délie*: "the nature of unfulfilled love experience, as Scève so perceptively paints it, shows that denied access to another forces a cyclic return to the self" (1986, 142). I agree that Ovid's youth and Scève's poet/lover mutually fail to attain the other. Nonetheless, I argue that survival through recourse to the self is in no way a positive experience in *Délie*. On the contrary,

the experience of the poet/lover as Narcissus in Scève is far worse. Narcissus recognizes the self, as I have shown, as nothing more than a simulacrum, a phantasm and, therefore, not a self in any way. Hence, the return to the alleged self does not allow Narcissus "to reinvent the self on a higher level of spiritual understanding" (Baker 1986, 142). Yet Scève does not allow his poet/lover to attain access to the ever-elusive object. Rather, Scève forces the poet/lover to suffer delusion, self-deception and death repeatedly, while Ovid's Narcissus suffers only once.

The paradox in *Délie* as well as in *Metamorphoses* is that while attempting to portray a scene of possible knowledge, both Scève and Ovid show that representation leads to deception – a lost opportunity to gain knowledge. In this chapter, I show that Scève's "obscurity" comes from his complex system of text and image representation. *Délie* rewards the constant reader/viewer rather than trying purposefully to hide content and disable efforts at interpretation. The poet/lover's experiences are strictly visual, yet his attempts to recount these experiences in a text and image representation lead only to darkness and deception.

Scève's *impresa* structure confirms Plato's claim that poets and painters produce nothing but resemblances. The poet tries to create the Beloved in his work yet, as I argue, he never sees her and never knows her. Instead, he hears her penetrating voice: "et quand sa voix penetre en mon Oreille" (D 358), and attributes it to the shadowy figures he repeatedly encounters. The mirrors show that *Délie* is a reflexive text only to the extent that it "reflects" the impossibility of verbal and visual representation of reality. Moreover, Scève's text suggests that all modes of representation lead to delusion.

For my analysis, Scève's Narcissus *impresa* represents the inability to recognize the 'self.' Scève captures the exact moment of Narcissus' fatal delusion by showing that images and language may work together only to the extent that they can teach a subject that he is only ever a representation through them. Furthermore, Narcissus' failure underlines the fact that the self can only be represented by and through an Other, because Echo's voice alone helps Narcissus confront reality.

Distinct from the binary signifier/signified, devoid of reality (only appearances, shadows), the ternary (*ternaire*) structure suggests that there is a third term. Scève's poetic verse adds another level of signification to the already complex ternary sign. Therefore, perhaps representation must consist of even more than three terms; perhaps it must involve a multitude of signs that ultimately lead to an indefinite number of terms. When I argue that we in the modern world have lost familiarity with ancient or medieval traditions of representation, I mean to suggest that Early Modern Europe may have known more about semiotics than we claim to know today – even after the theoretical movements of the nineteenth-, twentieth- and twenty-first centuries.

CONCLUSION

Why is an analysis of the gaze in Maurice Scève's *Délie objet de plus haulte vertu* important 466 years after the first publication? Scholars argue that *le regard* and visual metaphors dominate the work, yet no extensive criticism has examined the role of sight and reflection in the integration of text and image. The absence of this type of critical scholarship is most likely a result of two major factors. First, it has only recently been confirmed that Scève played a significant role in the choice and composition of the entire opus, both the *imprese* and the *dizains*, (Ardouin 1987, Defaux 2004). Hence, we are only now in a position to study the images as an integral part of the entire work and, more specifically, as in direct and dependent relation to the text. Second, the gaze is dominant not only in the text, but also in the images. The acts of seeing and being seen are constructed through the interwoven structures of text and image and are expressed symbolically. Since one must simultaneously read and view Scève's work, the analysis of *Délie* requires a more complex interdisciplinary approach.

When we turn to medieval bestiaries, the *Physiologus* tradition and the sixteenth-century interpretation of Egyptian hieroglyphics (Horapollo's *Hieroglyphica*), it becomes strikingly clear that books of *imprese* and Renaissance poetics (like *Délie*) have an intricate derivation. Consequently, my reading is informed by Art History, Graeco-Roman and medieval literature, intellectual history, philosophy and literary theory. To supply the reader with the information necessary to approach *Délie* from an interdisciplinary understanding of Scève's style of representation (since the modern reader may not be familiar with the popular themes of medieval and Renaissance culture), I analyze the suggestive nature of the unicorn and basilisk through the ages and the

significance of the medieval bestiary as well as the literary and visual influences on Scève's representation of Medusa and Narcissus. These supplementary discussions permit me to demonstrate how Scève alters legend and myth to emphasize the role of the gaze.

The choice of the *impresa* in the place of the *emblème* allows Scève to reinforce his own personal project. The emblem instructs an intended moral or lesson with the three-part structure of title, image and motto: the title of an emblem designates and frames the depicted image and the motto tells us from what perspective it should be understood. All three elements of the emblem work in unison to confirm meaning. In contrast, the *impresa* is composed of more complex forms, which the reader/viewer must decode. The text is necessarily enigmatic and the images are charged with symbolic significance. Claude-François Menestrier, in *Philosophie des Images* (1682), distinguishes the emblem from the *impresa*: "les *imprese* sont 'des peintures ingenieuses, qui sous les proprietez des choses naturelles, ou artificielles, et leurs representations accompagnées de quelques mots qui servent d'ame à ces corps, nous expriment les sentiments heroïques des personnes illustres'."[1] *Délie* recounts the onerous personal quest of the poet/lover through a unified system of visual and verbal symbolism. In Scève's *imprese*, words and graphic figures coalesce and, hence, the key to interpreting Scève's work is inscribed within the relationship between the image, motto and *dizains*.

My reading of the mottoes in relation to both text and *impresa* allows for an integrated understanding of the work as a whole. I call attention to the signifying relationship between text, image and the overwhelming force of the gaze. In the example

[1] C. F. Menestrier, *La Philosophie des Images*, Paris, 1682, p. 74; cited in Coleman (1964, 7).

of the unicorn, Scève shows that seeing the self, mirrored in the reflective surface of the pool, leads to panic, anxiety and extreme terror (*I* 26). As the basilisk stares into the mirror, subject positions alternate - the *je* and *tu* simultaneously attract and repel (*I* 21). The play of subjects highlights the deceptive nature of vision and, therefore, the inability to distinguish self from other. Scève's depiction of Narcissus suggests that visual and verbal misinterpretation causes deception, loss of knowledge and loss of self (*I* 7). In the relationship between seeing, being seen and seeing the self, vision in *Délie* leads to horror and ultimately death.

For Scève's poet/lover, the Lady Délie does not radiate semi-divine light; she does not inspire eternal devotion. Instead of love at first sight, Délie's gaze produces fear in the lover that leads to death and every time she casts her evil glance, the poet/lover dies again. As the "seer" rather than the "seen," Délie's role challenges the traditional paradigm of male-dominated vision: "men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at" (Berger 1972, 47). This aberration contributes to her monstrosity.

Furthermore, Scève's Lady is a basilisk - a hybrid, inhuman monster with a piercing gaze (*poingnant' veue*). Although the suggestive nature of the basilisk shifts throughout the ages, it never has a positive signification. Rather, it is a venomous serpent, a figure for Satan and the ultimate enemy of the Christian God. Havelange points out that the basilisk is the figure *par excellence* of the excessive power of the eye and the function of the gaze as "l'œil qui touche" in the Renaissance (1998, 49). Délie as basilisk kills by sight: the poisonous glance that touches with pure destruction. So, for the poet/lover, being seen leads to death.

The ophidian aspect of the basilisk ties the Lady to other archetypal figures associated with the fatal gaze. The serpent is verbally and visually symbolic throughout the text of *Délie* and each time the creature appears, so does the Lady - always ready to cast her murderous stare. Délie performs her own metamorphosis to shift from one monstrous figure to the next. As such, Scève's Beloved embodies all the forms of the serpent from Hathor and Cleopatra to the basilisk and Medusa.

My reading of Délie as Medusa draws out extreme figures of ambivalence and thus begs a psychoanalytic discussion. As noted above, Baker compares Scève's poet (writing poem after poem following the shock of the opening *dizain*) to the traumatized adolescent who feels compulsion to repeat the event in order to work through and master the initial trauma. Although my analysis is admittedly more rhetorical than that of Baker, a future version of my work could engage Freud's theory of drives as proposed in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.[2] The life drive (eros, libido) strives for (sexual) unity, a binding (*lien*, *lier*) that Scève's poet/lover describes as his insatiable desire: "par un desir sans fin insatiable" (D 217). The death drive (*Todestrieb*, thanatos[3]), however, tends towards destruction, separation or an unbinding (*délier* or *deslyer*[4]). The entire work may be read as an account of the poet's struggle to reconcile these two conflicting drives; the title *Délie* names the poet's quest: to unbind, *dé-lier* (*délier*), himself from the Lady Délie.

---

[2] Sigmund Freud, James Strachey, and Gregory Zilboorg, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, (New York: Norton, 1975). First published in 1920 as *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*.

[3] The term "thanatos" has no basis in Freud's own work; it is applied by post-Freudian thought to complement "eros."

[4] "Comment du Corps l'Ame on peult deslyer" (D 278 v 4).

Freud argues that pleasure and stimuli are in direct opposition to one another: while stimuli increase, pleasure then decreases. If pleasure increases as stimuli decrease, then the ultimate experience of pleasure for Freud would be zero stimulus, or death. In this context, *Délie* is the representation of the poet/lover's will towards death - to unbind, to unlink "délie." The problem for the lover is that he can never attain the finality of death. Instead, driven by his own carnal desire for the monstrous other, he is forced to die repeatedly. His own drive is so strong that not even death can unbind him: "si fort, que Mort jamais ne l'en deslie" (D 22 v10).

The poet/lover is deceived in his belief that he can grasp his object of desire for she is forever and always inaccessible, as Scève's Narcissus *impresa* (7) illustrates. Through word and image, Scève draws out the most poignant moment of Narcissus' self-deception by depicting a youth fixated on his own visual and verbal symbolic representations: his own image and the word "ayme." At the precise moment (in Ovid's narrative) when Narcissus simultaneously sees his own lips moving on the surface of the reflecting pool and hears his own words uttered back to him by Echo, he sees the potential of having a self, notices that he has deceived himself into thinking that he was ever anything more than a simulacrum and grasps the overwhelming magnitude of his state of existence. Narcissus then mourns the loss of the youth/other that he thought he had found and then liquefies. The layout of Scève's *impresa* adheres strictly to Ovid's narrative of Echo and Narcissus in *Metamorphoses*.

As I show, the loss of the other ultimately leads to a loss of knowledge. In a Lacanian analysis, Nancy Frelick reads this loss as an original lack that applies to *Délie* as a whole: "the signifying system of the *Délie* serves as a reflection of the Poet-Lover's

search for the inaccessible. The desire for Délie expressed in the text is clearly a metaphor for the search for Knowledge, Truth, and meaning, and like Délie, these 'objects' cannot be possessed: they are beyond our grasp and beyond signification" (1994, 99). Frelick's reading confirms my assertion that Scève's work is indeed a meta-text or *mise en abyme*: the poet/lover's search for knowledge of Délie mimics the reader's search for knowledge in *Délie*. The poet/lover's inability to grasp (know) the object mirrors the reader's inability to reduce Scève's work to a single signification. Nonetheless, if we can understand this, at least we will have caught a glimpse of what Scève tries to tell us.

It is my hope that future investigations will consider the importance of the relationship between the *imprese* and *dizains* and that, as a result, we will no longer remember Maurice Scève by the comments of Saint-Beuve or Brunetière[5] but instead that *Délie* will rise up from the depths of impenetrable obscurity to which indolent criticism has often cast her. Once we as readers/viewers begin to contemplate the image/text structures in *Délie*, Scève's modality of representation begins to become clearer. While Scève's work may be difficult, esoteric or even cryptic, it is not his aim to confound beyond any recognizable meaning; ambivalence need not be determined in order to have significance. At the same time, it is not his intention to represent his own concepts in a form that is transparent to each and every one. Rather, what Scève exemplifies in *Délie* is the dangerous act of seeing.

---

[5] Saint-Beuve: "peu connu et illisible" (Saulnier 2003, 256, n77), Brunetière: "pénible... Mallarmé de la Renaissance" (Saulnier 2003, 548-549).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, Alison, and Laurence Grove. *Emblems and Art History: Nine Essays*. Glasgow Emblem Studies, V. 1. Glasgow: Dept. of French, University of Glasgow, 1996.

Agamben, Giorgio. *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*. Theory and History of Literature, V. 69. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

Alduy, Cécile. *Maurice Scève*. Bibliographie des écrivains français, 28. Paris: Memini, 2006.

Alexander, R. M. "The Evolution of the Basilisk." *Greece & Rome* 10, no. 2 (1963): 170-181.

Anderson, William S. *Ovid's Metamorphoses, Books 1-5*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997.

Apollodorus, and James George Frazer. *The Library*. The Loeb Classical Library. London; New York: W. Heinemann; G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1921.

Ardouin, Paul. "Au sujet du premier emblème de la *Délie* de Maurice Scève." In *Actes du colloque sur l'humanisme lyonnais au XVIè siècle, mai 1972*, edited by Jean-René Derre. Grenoble: Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 1974, 381-391.

________. *Devises et emblèmes d'amour dans la* Délie *de Maurice Scève, ou, La volonté de perfection dans la création d'une oeuvre d'art*. Paris: A.-G: Nizet, 1987.

Aristotle. *Poetics*. Chicago: H. Regnery, 1949.

________, Jonathan Barnes, Corporation InteLex, and Masters InteLex Past, "Aristotle the Complete Works." InteLex Corporation http://ezproxy.mala.bc.ca:2048/login?url=http://crkn.nlx.com/xtf/view?docId=aristotle/aristotle.xml.

Baker, Deborah Lesko. *Narcissus and the Lover: Mythic Recovery and Reinvention in Scève's* Délie. Stanford French and Italian Studies, V. 46. Saratoga, Calif.: Anma Libri, 1986.

Banfield, Ann. *Unspeakable Sentences: Narration and Representation in the Language of Fiction*. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982.

Banks, Kathryn. *Cosmos and Image in the Renaissance: French Love Lyric and Natural-Philosophical Poetry*. London: Legenda, 2008.

Barber, Richard W. *Bestiary: Being an English Version of the Bodleian Library, Oxford, M.S. Bodley 764 with All the Original Miniatures Reproduced in Facsimile*. Woodbridge, UK; Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1999.

Baur, Albert. *Maurice Scève et la renaissance lyonnaise*. Paris: H. Champion, 1906.

Baxter, Ron. *Bestiaries and Their Users in the Middle Ages*. Stroud; London: Sutton Pub., Courtauld Institute, 1998.

Beaujour, Michel. "Inspiration and Poetic Glory: Pierre de Ronsard Publishes his *Quatres premiers livres des odes*." In *A New History of French Literature*, edited by Denis Hollier and R Howard Bloch. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994, 198-202.

Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1972.

Boulard, Stéphanie. "Ecrire, dessiner, penser le monstre dans l'œuvre de Victor Hugo." PhD diss., Emory University, 2006.

Bovey, Alixe. *Monsters and Grotesques in Medieval Manuscripts*. Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2002.

Breiner, Lawrence A. "The Career of the Cockatrice." *Isis* 70, no. 1 (1979): 30-47.

Brunetière, Ferdinand. *Les éditions originales*, 1888.

Brunon, Claude-Francoise. "Signe, figure, langage : Les *Hieroglyphica* d'Horapollon." *L'emblème à la Renaissance: Actes de la journée d'études du 10 mai 1980*, edited by Yves Giraud, and Claudine Balavoine. Paris: Société d'édition d'enseignement supérieur, 1982, 30-47.

Bulfinch, Thomas, and Edward Everett Hale. *The Age of Fable, or, Beauties of Mythology*. Boston: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1894.

Bushell, Scott B. "Symbolic Animal Imagery in Maurice Scève's *Délie*." MA thesis, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1974.

Callois, Roger. "Le mythe de la licorne." *Diogène* 119 (1982): 3-26.

Camille, Michael. "Three Simulacrum." In *Critical Terms for Art History*, edited by Robert S Nelson and Richard Shiff. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003, 35-48.

Canguilhem, Georges. "La monstruosité et le monstrueux." *Diogène* 40 (1962): 29-43.

Cassian, John, and Michael Petschenig. *Iohannis Cassiani Conlationes XXIIII*. Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, Vol. 13. Vindobonae: apvd C. Geroldi filivm, 1886.

Castor, Grahame, and Terence Cave. *Neo-Latin and the Vernacular in Renaissance France*. Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1984.

Caviness, Madeline H. "Biblical Stories in Windows: Were They Bibles for the Poor?" In *The Bible in the Middle Ages: Its Influence on Literature and Art*, edited by Bernard S. Levy. New York: Binghamton, 1992, 128-147.

Cazenave, Michel, *Encyclopédie des symboles.* Paris: Livre de poche, Librairie générale française, 1996.

Chamard, Henri. *Histoire de la Pléiade*. IV vols. Paris: H. Didier, 1939-1963.

Clair, Jean. *Méduse: Contribution à une anthropologie des arts du visuel*. Connaissance de l'inconscient. Paris: Gallimard, 1989.

Clanchy, Michael. T. *From Memory to Written Record, England 1066-1307*. Oxford; Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1993.

Coleman, Dorothy. "Images in Scève's *Délie*." *Modern Language Review* 59 (1964): 375-386.

________. "Les emblesmes dans la *Délie* de Maurice Scève." *Studi Francesi* 8 (1964): 1-15.

________. "Scève's Choice of the Name 'Delie'." *French Studies: A Quarterly Review* 18 (1964): 1-16.

________. *Maurice Scève, Poet of Love: Tradition and Originality*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

________. *An Illustrated Love "Canzoniere": The* Délie *of Maurice Scève*. Textes et Études--Domaine Français, 2. Genève; Paris: Editions Slatkine, 1981.

Connor, James A. *Kepler's Witch: An Astronomer's Discovery of Cosmic Order Amid Religious War, Political Intrigue, and the Heresy Trial of His Mother*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2004.

Conti, Natale, and Anthony DiMatteo. *Natale Conti's Mythologies: A Select Translation*. New York: Garland Pub., 1994.

Corrigan, Kevin. *Reading Plotinus: A Practical Introduction to Neoplatonism*. Purdue University Press Series in the History of Philosophy. West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 2005.

Curley, Michael J. *Physiologus*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979.

Dante, John Ciardi, and Archibald T. McAllister. *The Inferno*. New York: A Mentor book [published by the Penguin Group], 1982.

________, Barbara Reynolds. *La Vita Nuova: Poems of Youth*. Penguin Classics, L216. London: Penguin Books, 1969.

Defaux, Gérard. "L'intertexte marotique de la Délie: Maurice Scève et 'Ferme Amour'." In *A Scève Celebration*, edited by Jerry C. Nash. Saratoga, CA: Anma Libri, 1994, 23-41.

DellaNeva, JoAnn. *Song and Counter-Song: Scève's* Délie *and Petrarch's* Rime. French Forum Monographs, 49. Lexington, Ky.: French Forum, 1983.

________. "Scattered Rhymes: Petrarchan Fragments in Scève's *Délie* 60." *French Studies* 41, no. 2 (1987): 129-140.

________. "The S(C)Evered Intertext: Playfully Imitating Petrarch in the Delie." *Romance Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (1993): 195-202.

Détoc, Sylvain. *La Gorgone Méduse*. Monaco: Editions du Rocher, 2006.

Dieckmann, Liselotte. *Hieroglyphics: The History of a Literary Symbol*. St. Louis, Missouri: Washington University Press, 1970.

Donaldson, Brooke. "'Les mortz qu'en moy tu renovelles': Eros and Thanatos in Maurice Scève's *Délie*." PhD diss., Yale University, 2006.

________. "Interpreting Emblems, Emblems Interpreting: Love's Mortal Battle in Maurice Scève's *Délie*." *National Central University Journal of Humanities* 33, Jan (2008): 85-112.

Donaldson-Evans, Lance K. "Love's Fatal Glance: Eye Imagery and Maurice Scève's *Délie*." *Neophilologus* 68, no. 2 (1978): 202-211.

________. "Review: [Untitled]." *Renaissance Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (2005): 1352-1353.

Drake-Brockman, Jane M. "Scève, the Snake and the Herb." *French Studies: A Quarterly Review* 33, no. 2 (April 1979): 129-136.

Drysdall, Denis L. “A Note on the Relationships of the Latin and Vernacular Translations of Horapollo from Fasanini to Caussin.” *Emblematica* 4, no. 2 (1989): 225-241.

Duval, Edwin M. “‘Comme Hecate’: Mythography and the Macrocosm in an Epigram by Maurice Scève.” *Bibliotheque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 41 (1979): 7-22.

________. “Articulation of the *Délie*: Emblems, Numbers, and the Book.” *Modern Language Review* 75 (1980): 65-75.

________. “From the Chanson *Parisienne* to Scève’s French *Canzoniere*: Lyric Form and Logical Structure of the *Dizain*.” In *A Scève Celebration*, edited by Jerry C. Nash. Saratoga, CA: Anma Libri, 1994, 71-85.

Ealy, Nicholas. “Speculations of Desire: Narcissism and Love Imagery in the Literature and Iconography of Medieval France and Iberia.” PhD diss., Emory University, 2005.

________. “Illusions of Love: Phantasmatic Desire and the Woman-Who-Never-Was in the *Libro De Buen Amor*.” 1-28, *forthcoming*.

Eco, Umberto. *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986.

Elsner, Jas. *Roman Eyes: Visuality and Subjectivity in Art and Text*. Princeton, N.J; Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Erasmus, Desiderius, and R. A. B. Mynors. *Collected Works of Erasmus. Vol. 32, Adages IVI1 to IX100*. Toronto; London: University of Toronto, 1989.

Fenoaltea, Doranne. *Si Haulte Architecture: The Design of Scève’s* Délie. Lexington, Ky.: French Forum, 1982.

Ferguson, George Wells. *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art*. London: Oxford University, 1954.

Ficino, Marsilio, and Raymond Marcel. *Commentaire sur le Banquet de Platon. Texte du manuscrit autographe présenté et traduit par Raymond Marcel*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1956.

Frappier, Jean. “Variations sur le thème du miroir, de Bernard de Ventadour à Maurice Scève.” *Cahiers de l’Association internationale des études françaises* 11 (1959): 134-158.

Frelick, Nancy M. *Délie as Other: Toward a Poetics of Desire in Scève’s* Délie. French Forum Monographs, 83. Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1994.

Freud, Sigmund, James Strachey, and Peter Gay. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1989.

Friedman, John Block. *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981.

Fulgentius, Fabius Planciades, and Leslie George Whitbread. *Fulgentius the Mythographer*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1971.

Gandelman, Claude. *Le regard dans le texte: Image et écriture du quattrocento au XXè siècle*. Paris: Méridiens, Klincksieck, 1986.

Gauna, Max. *The Rabelaisian Mythologies*. Madison; London; Cranbury, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; Associated University Presses, 1996.

Ginestet, Gaëlle. "'A Gorgon Shadowed under Venus' Face': La beauté trompeuse dans la poésie amoureuse élisabéthaine." *La Revue LISA / LISA e-journal* 6, no. 3 (2008): 156-166. http://www.unicaen.fr/mrsh/lisa/publications/020/11-GINESTETGaelle.pdf [accessed 10 September 2009].

Giordano, Michael J. "Le texte visuel de la *Délie* de Maurice Scève." *Lendemains* 58 (1990): 48-59.

Gombrich, E. H. *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*. 1960. Reprint, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Greene, Thomas M. "Emblem and Paradox in Scève's *Délie*." *Oeuvres et Critiques* 11, no. 1 (1986): 49-59.

Greimas, Algirdas Julien. *Dictionnaire de l'ancien français: le Moyen Age.* Paris: Larousse, 1997.

Grimal, Pierre, and Charles Picard. *Dictionnaire de la mythologie grecque et romaine.* Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2002.

Grove, Laurence. "La Fontaine, Emblematics and the Plastic Arts: Les amours de psyché and le songe de Vaux." In *Emblems and Art History*, edited by Alison Adams and Laurence Grove, 1. Glasgow: Department of French, University of Glasgow, 1996, 23-39.

_________, and Daniel S. Russell. *The French Emblem: Bibliography of Secondary Sources*. Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance, No. 342. Genève: Librairie Droz, 2000.

Guillaume de Lorris, Jean de Meun and Frances Horgan. *The Romance of the Rose*. The World's Classics. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Gurval, Robert Alan. *Actium and Augustus: The Politics and Emotions of Civil War*. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1995.

Hamer, Mary. *Signs of Cleopatra: History, Politics, Representation*. London [u.a]: Routledge, 1993.

Hassig, Debra. *Medieval Bestiaries: Text, Image, Ideology*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

________. "Marginal Bestiaries." In *Animals and the Symbolic in Mediaeval Art and Literature*, edited by L. A. J. R. Houwen. Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1997, 171-188.

Havelange, Carl. *De l'oeil et du monde: Une histoire du regard au seuil de la modernité*. Paris: Fayard, 1998.

Hawkins, Richmond. *Maistre Charles Fontaine Parisien*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1916.

Heffernan, James Anthony Walsh. *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery*. Chicago [u.a.]: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 2004.

Helgeson, James. *Harmonie divine et subjectivité poétique chez Maurice Scève*. Genève: Droz, 2001.

Hildegarde, Claude Mettra, and Pierre Monat. *Le livre des subtilités des créatures divines: Physique. Les Plantes, Les Éléments, Les Pierres, Les Métaux*. Grenoble: J. Millon, 2002.

Homer, and Ian C. Johnston. *The Odyssey*. Arlington, Va: Richer Resources Publications, 2007.

________, and Richmond Alexander Lattimore. *The Iliad*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951.

Horapollo. *Orvs Apollo Niliacvs De Hieroglyphicis Notis*. Venetijs: Apvd D. Iacob a Bvrgofranco papiensem, 1538. http://www.archive.org/details/orvsapolloniliac00hora [accessed 16 September 2009].

________, and George Boas. *The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1950.

________, and Francesco Sbordone. *Hieroglyphica*. Napoli, 1940.

________, and Baudouin van de Walle. *Traduction des Hieroglyphica d'Horapollon*. Bruxelles: Fondation égyptologique reine Élisabeth, 1943.

________, Ian Martin, Jean Cousin, Jean Goujon, and Jacques Kerver. *Orvs Apollo De Ægypte De La Signification Des Notes Hieroglyphiques Des Aegyptiens/ Cest a Dire Des Figures Par Les Quelles Ilz Escripuoient Leurs Mysteres Secretz, & Les Choses Sainctes & Diuines*. On les uend a Paris: Par Iacques Keruer, 1543. http://www.archive.org/details/orvsapollodeegyp00hora [accessed 16 September 2009].

Huchon, Mireille. *Louise Labé: Une créature de papier*. Genève: Librairie Droz, 2006.

Huguet, Edmond. *Dictionnaire de la langue française du seizième siècle.* Paris: E. Champion, 1925-1973.

Isidore, and Stephen A. Barney. *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*. Cambridge [u.a.]: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007.

Judovitz, Dalia. "Emblematic Legacies: Hieroglyphs of Desire in *L'Astree*." *EMF: Studies in Early Modern France* 1 (1994): 31-54.

Karakostas, Dimitris. "La figure mythique de Méduse dans la littérature européenne: Thèse de doctorat de littérature comparée." Villeneuve-d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du septentrion, 2002.

Klein, Richard. "Straight Lines and Arabesques: Metaphors of Metaphor." *Yale French Studies*, no. 45 (1970): 64-86.

Kleiner, Diana E. *Cleopatra and Rome*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005.

Kordecki, Lesley. "Making Animals Mean: Speciest Hermeneutics in the *Physiologus* of Theobaldus." In *Animals in the Middle Ages*, edited by Nona C. Flores. New York: Garland Publishing, 1996, 85-101.

Kristeva, Julia. *Histoires d'amour*. Paris: Denoël, 1983.

Lanson, Gustave. *Histoire de la littérature française*. Paris: Hachette, 1894.

Legge, Elizabeth. "Only Half Saying It: Max Ernst and Emblems." *Word & Image* 16, no. 3 (2000): 239-269.

Leo, and Walter W. Skeat. *The Wars of Alexander: An Alliterative Romance Translated Chiefly from the Historia Alexandri Magni De Preliis*. London: Pub. for the Early English text Society, by N. Trübner & Co., 1886.

Lesko, Barbara S. *The Great Goddesses of Egypt*. Norman: University of Oklahoma press, 1999.

Loach, Judi. "Architecture and Emblematics: Issues in Interpretation." In *Emblems and Art History: Nine Essays*. Glasgow Emblem Studies, edited by Alison Adams and Laurence Grove, 1. Glasgow: Dept. of French, University of Glasgow, 1996, 1-21.

Lucan, and Edward Ridley. *The Pharsalia of Lucan*. London; New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1905.

Mâle, Emile. *L'art religieux du XIIè siècle en France: Étude sur les origines de l'iconographie du Moyen Âge*. Paris: A. Colin, 1922.

Man, Paul de. *The Resistance to Theory*. Vol. 33 Theory and History of Literature. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

Mandrou, Robert. *Introduction à la France moderne, 1500-1640; Essai de psychologie historique*. Paris: A. Michel, 1961.

Marin, Louis. *Études Sémiologiques*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1971.

________. *Détruire la Peinture*. Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1977.

Masson, André. *L'Allégorie*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1974.

Mathieu-Castellani, Gisèle. "Michael Riffaterre pour lire les poètes du XVIè siècle (French)." *Romanic Review* 93, no. 1/2 (2002): 91-103.

________. "Échos de Dante dans la poésie française du XVIè siècle." *Littérature*, no. 133 (2004): 40-53.

Muradyan, Gohar. *Physiologus: The Greek and Armenian Versions with a Study of Translation Technique*. Leuven; Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2005.

Muret, Marc-Antoine, Jacques Chomarat, Marie-Madeleine Fragonard, Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, and Pierre de Ronsard. *Commentaires au premier livre des Amours de Ronsard*. Commentaires de Ronsard, 1. Genève: Librairie Droz, 1985.

Nash, Jerry C. *Maurice Scève: Concordance de la* Délie. North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures, No. 174. Chapel Hill; Ann Arbor, Mich.: U.N.C. Dept. of Romance Languages; produced and distributed on demand by University Microfilms International, 1976.

Nouvet, Claire. "Dangerous Resemblances: The Romance of the Rose." *Yale French Studies* (1991): 196-209.

________. "An Impossible Response: The Disaster of Narcissus." *Yale French Studies: Literature and the Ethical Question* 79 (1991): 103-134.

Ogden, Daniel. *Perseus*. Gods and Heroes of the Ancient World. London [u.a.]: Routledge, 2008.

Ong, Walter J. "From Allegory to Diagram in the Renaissance Mind." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 17, no. 4 (1959): 423-440.

Ovidius Naso, Publius, and Rolfe Humphries. *Metamorphoses*. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1995.

Pasquier, Etienne. *Les oeuvres d'Etienne Pasquier*. Amsterdam: Aux depens de la compagnie des librairies associez. Manuscript, Archive and Rare Book Library. Emory University, 1723.

Payne, Ann, and British Library. *Medieval Beasts*. London: British Library, 1990.

Petrarca, Francesco, and Mark Musa. *The Canzoniere, or, Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1999.

Plato, Edith Hamilton, Huntington Cairns, and Lane Cooper. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato, Including the Letters*. Bollingen Series, 71. New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1961.

Pliny, and H. Rackham. *Natural History*. Vol. 3 The Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1938.

Plotinus, Stephen Mackenna, and B. S. Page. *The Six Enneads*. Great Books of the Western World, V. 17. Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 1952.

Pratt, Louise H. *Lying and Poetry from Homer to Pindar: Falsehood and Deception in Archaic Greek Poetics*. Michigan Monographs in Classical Antiquity. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993.

Praz, Mario. *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery*. 1939. Reprint, Sussidi Eruditi, 16. Roma: Ed. di Storia e Letteratura, 2001.

Quignard, Pascal. *La parole de la Délie*. Paris: Mercure de France, 1974.

Redman, Harry, Jr. "A Proposed Identification for Maurice Scève's Délie." *Renaissance News* 10, no. 4 (1957): 188-193.

Rey, Alain, *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française: Contenant les mots français en usage et quelques autres délaissés.* Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 1992.

Rieu, Josiane. “L’imaginaire du miroir, de la fontaine et de la licorne dans la *Délie* de Maurice Scève.” In *Libres horizons: Pour une approche comparatiste, lettres francophones imaginaires. Hommage à Arlette et Roger Chemain*, edited by Arlette Chemain Degrange; Roger Chemain; Micéala Symington; Béatrice Bonhomme. Paris: Harmattan, 2008, 307-316.

Rigolot, François. “L’intertexte du dizain Scèvien: Pétrarque et Marot.” *CAIEF* 32 (1980): 91-106.

________. “Cinq paroles intelligibles: à propos de Scève l’obscur.” In *A Scève Celebration*, edited by Jerry C. Nash. Saratoga, CA: Anma Libri, 1994, 55-70.

Risset, Jacqueline. *L'anagramme du désir, Essai sur la* Délie *de Maurice Scève*. Roma: Bulzoni, 1971.

Roberts, Alison M. *Hathor Rising: The Serpent Power of Ancient Egypt*. Totnes, Devon [Eng.]: Northgate Publishers, 1995.

Rocher, Gregory de. “The Curing Text: Maurice Scève’s Delie as the *Délie*.” *Romanic Review* 78, no. 1 (1987): 10-24.

________. “Inverted Erotic Imagery in Scève’s *Délie*: Hand in Glove.” *Romanic Review* 82, no. 4 (1991): 434-442.

Ronsard, Pierre de, Marc Bensimon, and James L. Martin. *Les Amours, 1552-1584*. Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1981.

__________. *Oeuvres Complètes*. Vol. 45-46. 2 vols. Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, edited by Jean Céard, Daniel Ménager, and Michel Simonin. Paris: Gallimard, 1993.

Rose, Carol. *Giants, monsters, and dragons: an encyclopedia of folklore, legend, and myth.* New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2000.

Runyon, Randolph. “Délire: To Read Délie.” PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1973.

Ruskin, John, and Marcel Proust. *La Bible d’Amiens*. Paris: Mercure de France, 1947.

Russell, Daniel S. “Du Bellay’s Emblematic Vision of Rome.” *Yale French Studies* 47 (1972): 98-109.

________. *The Emblem and Device in France*. French Forum Monographs, 59. Lexington, Ky.: French Forum, 1985.

________. "Emblems: Jehan Le Febvre Translates into French Andrea Alciato's *Emblematum Libellus*." In *A New History of French Literature*, edited by Denis Hollier and R Howard Bloch. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994, 161-171.

Sainte-Beuve, Charles Augustin. *Tableau historique et critique de la poésie française et du théâtre au XVIè siècle*, 1828.

Saulnier, Verdun-L. *Maurice Scève (Ca. 1500-1560): I-II*. 1948. Reprint, Genève: Slatkine, 2003.

Saunders, Alison. *The Sixteenth-Century French Emblem Book: A Decorative and Useful Genre*. Genève: Droz, 1988.

Sax, Boria. "The Basilisk and Rattlesnake, or a European Monster Comes to America." *Society & Animals: PsyETA Journal* 2, no. 1 (1994): np. http://www.psyeta.org/sa/sa2.1/sax.html [accessed 11 September 2009].

Scève, Maurice. *Délie, Object De Plus Haulte Vertu*, edited by Eugène Parturier. Paris: Hachette, 1916.

________. *The 'Délie' of Maurice Scève, edited with an introduction and notes by I.D. Mcfarlane*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966.

________. *Délie: Object De Plus Haulte Vertu*. 2 vols., edited by Gérard Defaux. Genève: Droz, 2004.

________. *Emblems of Desire: Selections from the* Délie *of Maurice Scève,* edited and translated by Richard Sieburth. Brooklyn, NY: Archipelago Books: Distributed by Consortium Book Sales and Distribution, 2007.

Schmitt, Jean Claude. *Le corps des images: Essais sur la culture visuelle au Moyen Age*. Le Temps des Images. Paris: Gallimard, 2002.

Scott, Andrew. "Tiresias and the Basilisk: Vision and Madness in Middleton and Rowley's 'The Changling'." *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses* 12 (1999): 165-179.

Seznec, Jean, Barbara S. Sessions, and Antoine Seilern. *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and Its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art*. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961.

Sharratt, Peter. "Scève, the Snake and the Herb Again." *French Studies: A Quarterly Review* 35, no. 3 (1981): 257-260.

Shepard, Odell. *The Lore of the Unicorn*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1930.

Southwood, Jane. “Les ‘contraires seiours’: Scève’s Use of the Diana Myth in the *Délie* of 1544.” In *Renaissance Poetry and Drama in Context: Essays for Christopher Wortham*, edited by Andrew Lynch, and Anne Scott. Cambridge Scholars Publishing: Newcastle, 2008, 175-195.

Starobinski, Jean. *L'oeil vivant, essai*. Paris: Gallimard, 1961.

Staub, Hans. *Le curieux désir*. Travaux d’Humanisme et Renaissance, 94. Genève: Droz, 1967.

Stewart, Susan A. *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*. Chicago [u.a.]: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Strickland, Debra Higgs. *Saracens, Demons & Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003.

Sturges, Robert Stuart. *Medieval Interpretation: Models of Reading in Literary Narrative, 1100-1500*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991.

Tesnière, Marie-Hélène, and Thierry Delcourt. *Bestiaire Du Moyen Âge: Les Animaux Dans Les Manuscrits: [Livre-Catalogue Accompagnant L’exposition Présentée à Troyes Du 19 Juin Au 19 Septembre 2004 Puis Dans Les Bibliothèques Municipales De Plusieurs Villes De Province]*. Paris; Troyes: Somogy, Médiathèque de l’agglomération troyenne, 2004.

Tetel, Marcel. *Lectures Scéviennes: L’emblème et les mots*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1983.

Theophilus, and C. R. Dodwell. *The Various Arts = De Diversis Artibus*. Oxford Medieval Texts. Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1986.

Thompson, Stith. *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature; a Classification of Narrative Elements in Folktales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Mediaeval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books, and Local Legends*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955.

Treasures of the Talmud, being a series of classified subjects in alphabetical order from “A” to “L”, comp. from the Babylonian Talmud and tr. London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1882.

Tsan, Loli. “Le jeu du *je* et du miroir dans la *Délie* de Maurice Scève.” *Paroles Gelées:UCLA French Studies* 21 (2004): 53-63.

Vallas, Jean-Louis. "Le surréel chez Maurice Scève et Valéry Larbaud." In *Colloque Valéry Larbaud et la France: Paris-Sorbonne, le 21 novembre 1989*, edited by Roger Grenier and Jacques Lacarin. Clermont-Ferrand: Institut d'études du Massif Central, 1990, 111-118.

Veatch, Robert M. *Cross-Cultural Perspectives in Medical Ethics*. Boston [u.a.]: Jones and Bartlett, 2000.

Vernant, Jean Pierre. *La mort dans les yeux: Figures de l'autre en Grèce Ancienne*. Paris: Hachette, 1985.

Vinge, Louise. *The Narcissus Theme in Western European Literature up to the Early 19th Century*. Lund: Gleerups, 1967.

________. *The Five Senses: Studies in a Literary Tradition*. Lund: [LiberLäromedel], 1975.

Vloberg, Maurice. *La Vierge, Notre Médiatrice*. Grenoble: B. Arthaud, 1938.

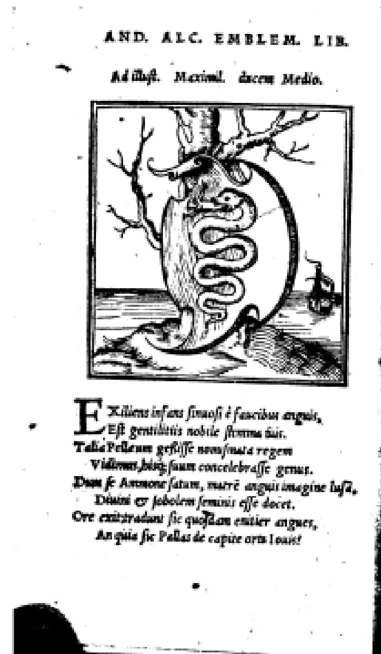
Vogade, François, and Louis Hautecoeur. *Vézelay*. Bellegarde, France: SADAG, 1965.

Von Ohlen, Henry Bruce. "Délie: Unraveling the Text of Maurice Scève's *Délie*." PhD diss., Cornell University, 1976.

Weber, Henri. *Le langage poétique de Maurice Scève dans la* Délie. Firenze: Publication de l'institut français, 1948.

Zucker, Arnaud. *Physiologos: Le bestiaire des bestiaires*. Collection Atopia. Grenoble: Millon, 2004.

ILLUSTRATIONS



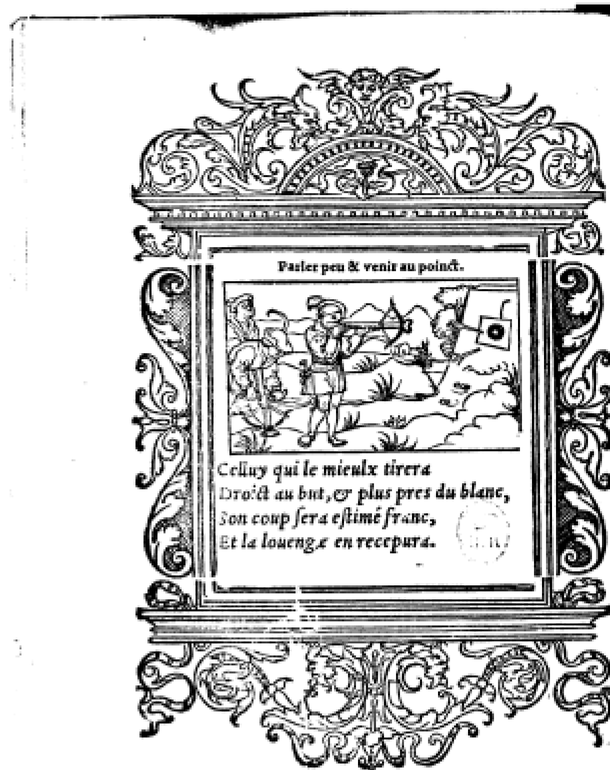
AND. ALC. EMBLEM. LIB.

Ad illust. Maximil. ducem Medio.

Exiliens infans sinuosi è faucibus anguis,
Est gentilitiis nobile stemma tuis.
Talia Pelleum gessisse numismata regem
Vidimus, hisque suum concelebrasse genus.
Dum se Ammone satum, matrē anguis imagine lusā,
Diuini & sobolem seminis esse docet.
Ore exit: tradunt sic quosdam enitier angues,
An quia sic Pallas de capite orta Iouis?

Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 1.1 "Ad illust. Maximil. ducem Medio" (Au duc de Milan). Andrea Alciato *Livret des emblemes* (1536)



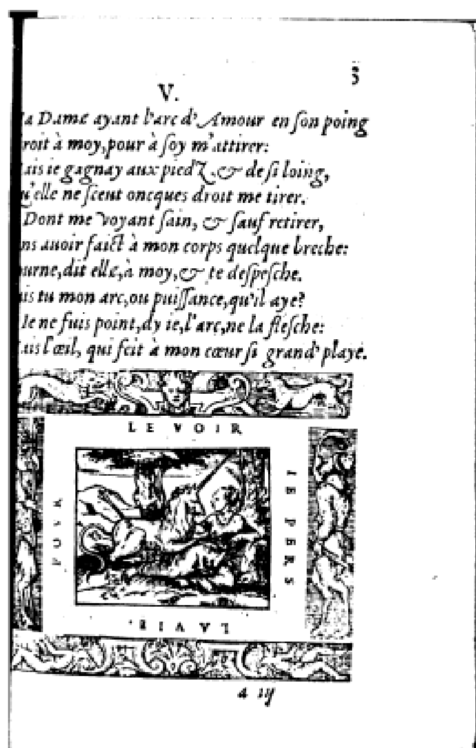
Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 1.2 "Parler peu & venir au poinct." Gilles Corrozet *Hécatomgraphie* (1543)

VI.

Libre viuois en l'Auril de mon aage,
De cure exempt ſoubz celle adoleſcence,
Ou l'œil, encor non expert de dommage,
Se veit ſurpris de la doulce preſence,
Qui par ſa haulte, & diuine excellence
M'eſtonna l'Ame, & le ſens tellement,
Que de ſes yeulx l'archier tout bellement
Ma liberté luy à toute aſſeruie:
Et des ce iour continuellement
En ſa beaulté giſt ma mort, & ma vie.

Figure 1.3 *Impresa* 1"La femme & La lycorne" *Délie* (1544); below - size of *impresa* relative to the *dizain*



3

V.

a Dame ayant l'arc d'Amour en son poing
roit à moy, pour à soy m'attirer:
ais ie gagnay aux piedz, & de si loing,
u'elle ne sceut oncques droit me tirer.
Dont me voyant sain, & sauf retirer,
ns auoir faict à mon corps quelque breche:
urne, dit elle, à moy, & te despesche.
is tu mon arc, ou puissance, qu'il aye?
Ie ne suis point, dy ie, l'arc, ne la flesche:
ais l'œil, qui feit à mon cœur si grand playe.

Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 1.4 "La femme & la Lycorne" *Délie* (1564)

Figure 1.5 "La chasse à la licorne" *Bestiaire* Latin 3630 folio 76v, detail of center image

Figure 1.6 "Chasse à la licorne" ***Physiologus*** **MS 711 folio 4**

Figure 1.7 ***Impresa*** **26 "La Lycorne qui se voit"** ***Délie*** **(1544)**

Figure 1.8 ***Secrets d'histoire naturelle*****, d'après Solin**

Figure 1.9 "Licorne trempant sa corne dans la fontaine" *Toison d'or*, and detail

Figure 2.1 "Basilisk" Harley MS 4751, folio 59

Figure 2.2. "La faune d'Egypte" ***Secrets de l'histoire naturelle***

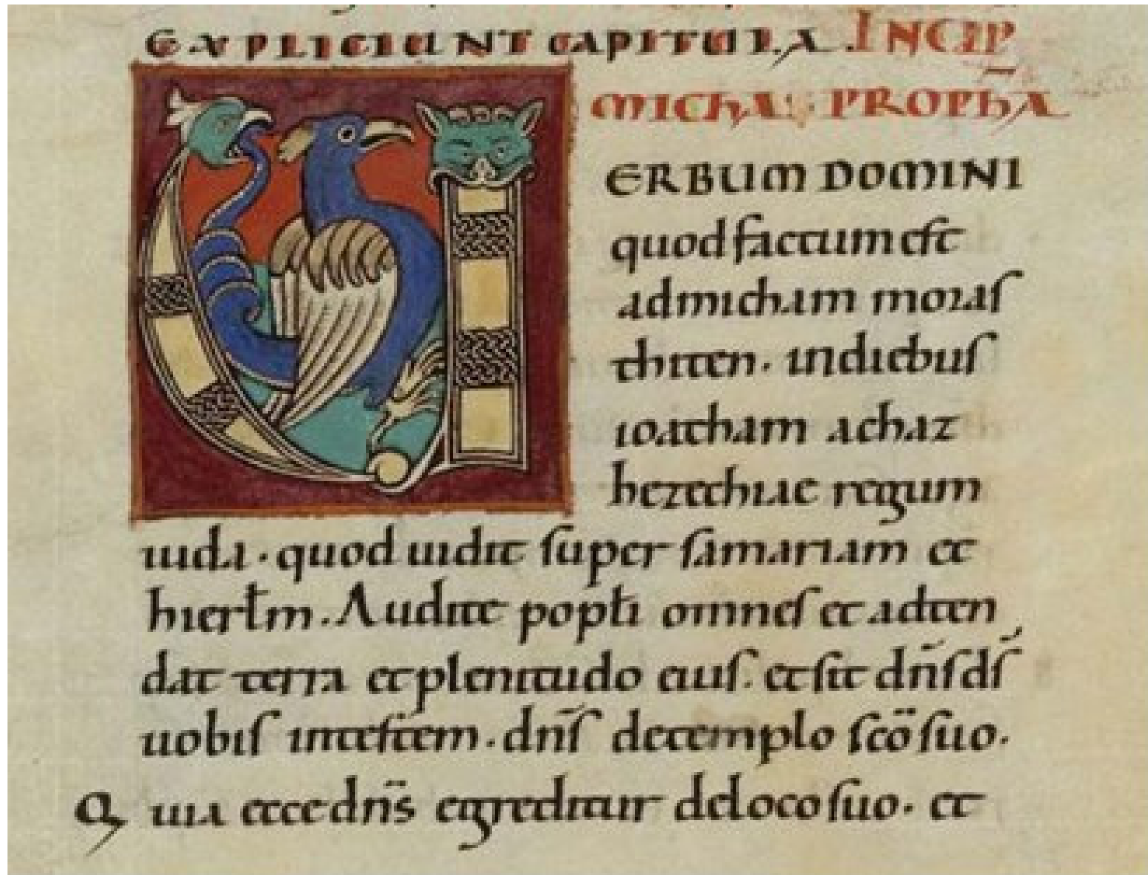

EXPLICIUNT CAPITULA. INCIP
MICHAS PROPHA
ERBUM DOMINI
quod factum est
ad micham moras
thiten. in diebus
ioatham achaz
hezechiae regum
iuda. quod uidit super samariam et
hierlm. Audite popli omnes et adten
dat terra et plenitudo eius. et sit dns ds
uobis in testem. dns de templo sco suo.
Quia ecce dns egredietur de loco suo. et

Figure 2.3. “Lettre Ornée: basilic” ***Seconde Bible de Saint-Martial de Limoges***

Figure 2.4. “Basilisk attacked by weasel” ***Bestiarius – Bestiary of Ann Walsh***

Figure 2.5. “Basilic et sauterelle” Basilique Ste-Madeleine, Vézelay, France

Figure 2.6. “La Vierge foulant le dragon et le basilic” Eglise de Longpont, France

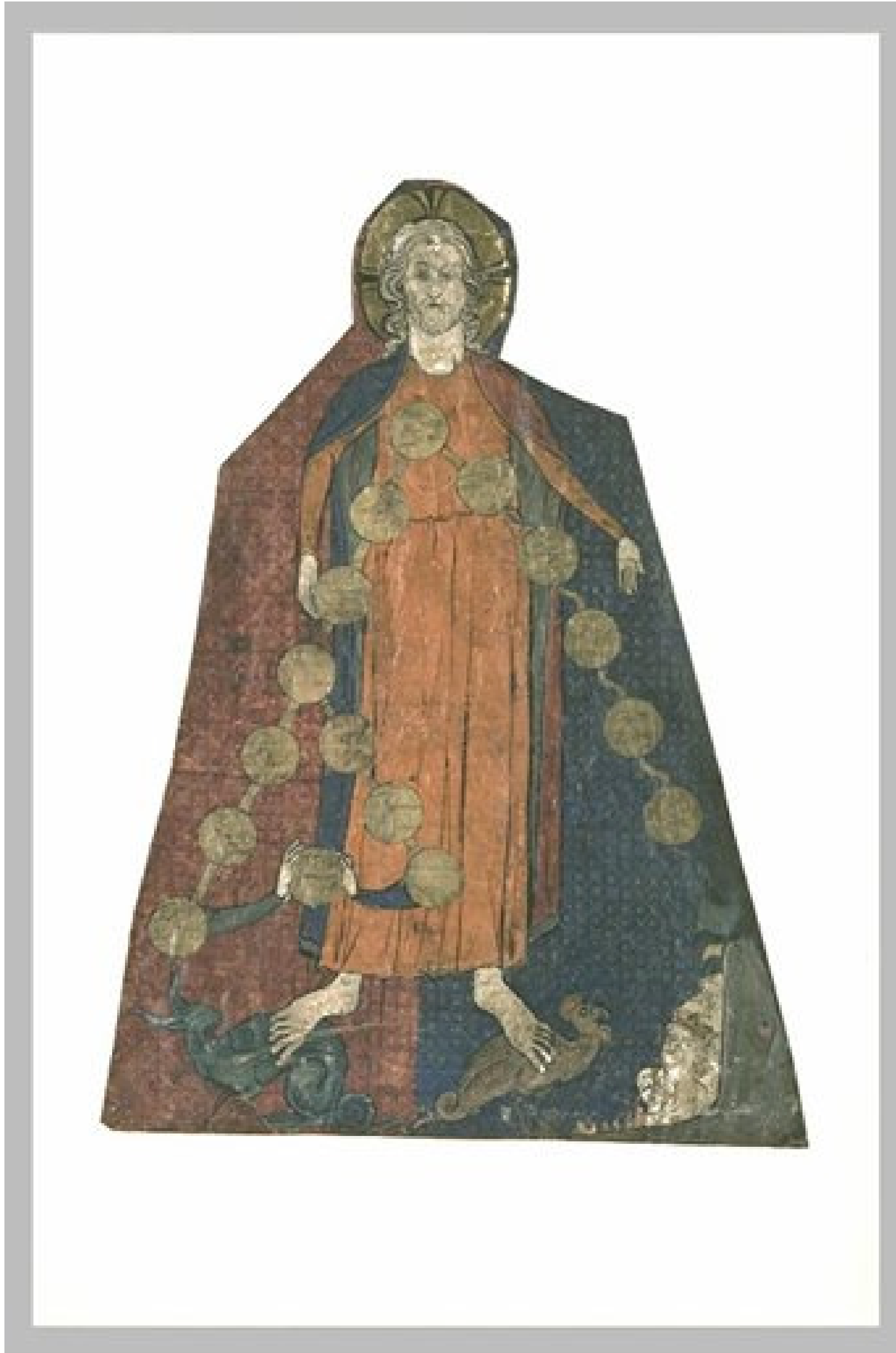


Figure 2.7. “Le Christ marche sur l’aspic et le basilic à côté de l’Enfer” Louvre

Ne voy, ne croy, (ha Epicharme escript)
Ce sont les nerfz, & membres de l'esprit
L'oeil en main, croit la chose qu'il voit sienne,
Poulieu, herbe est de Sobresse ancienne.
Lequel monstré (Quand la force exposa)
Sedition Heraclit appaisa.
Ne trop boire: ne trop croire font l'homme sage, l'oeil
en la main est certitude des choses veues, & touchées,
Poulieu, est herbe gardant de soif, & d'yvrognerie.

Figure 2.8. Sobrement vivre: & non follement croire, *Emblemes* (1549)

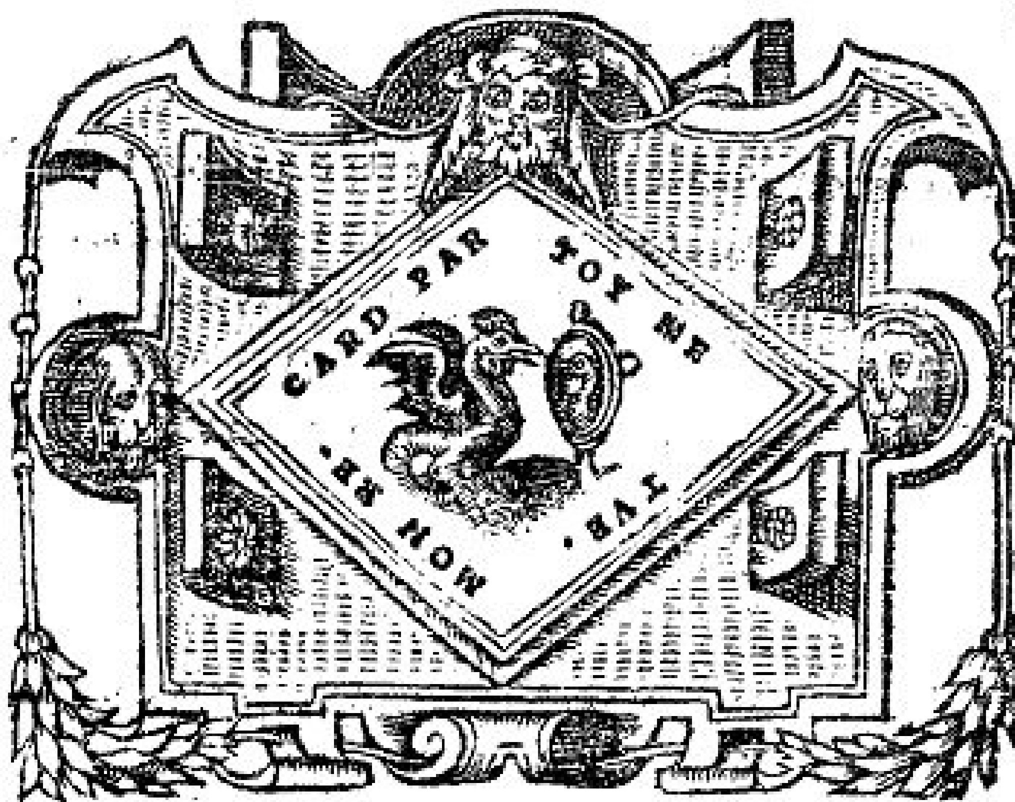


Figure 2.9. ***Impresa*** **21 "Le Basilisque, & le Miroir"** ***Délie*** **(1544)**

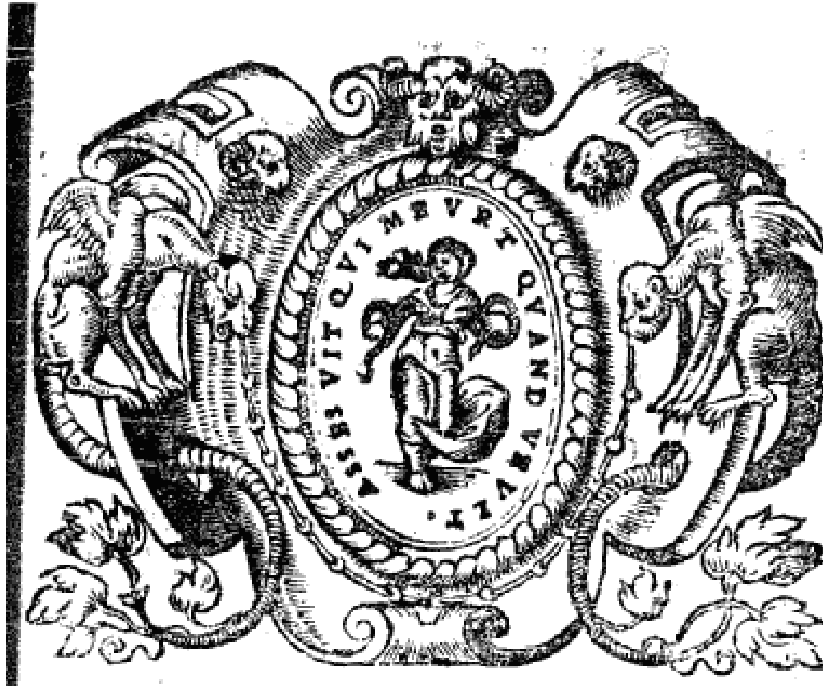


Figure 3.1 ***Impresa*** **30 "Cleopatra et les serpentz" Maurice Scève** ***Délie*** **(1544)**

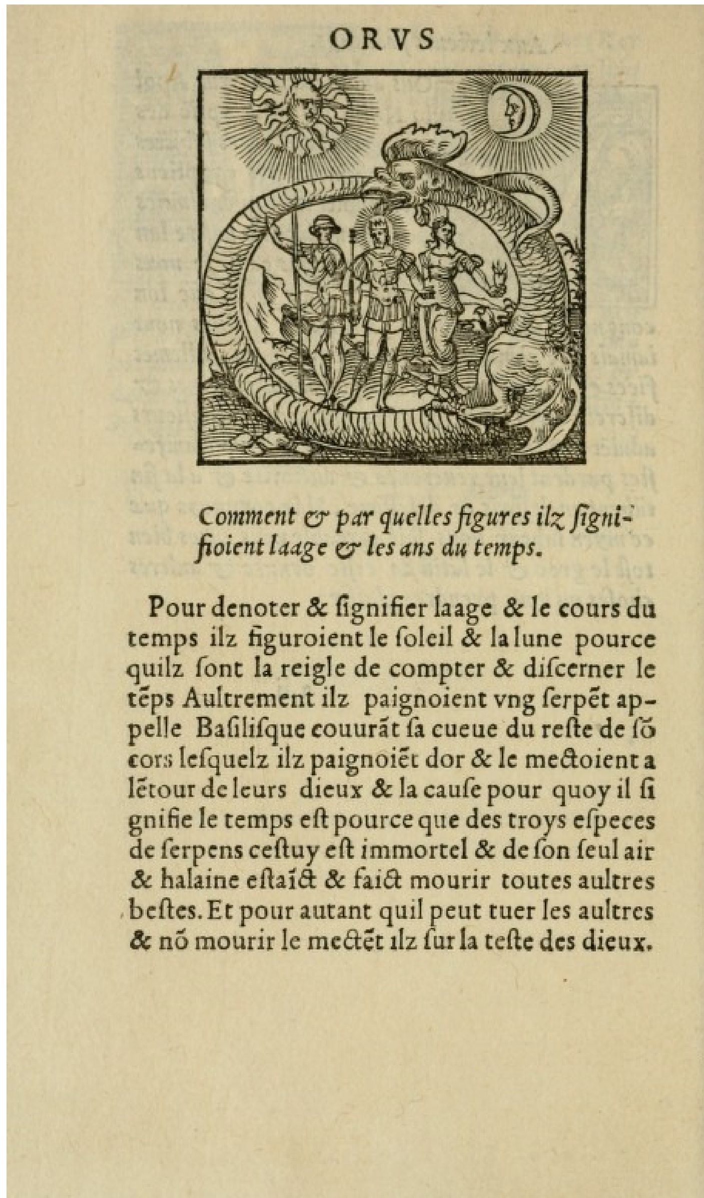
Figure 3.2 "Egyptian cobra *Naja haje*"

Figure 3.3 Ancient Egyptian amulet showing various forms of Hathor

Cùm tacet haud quicquam differt sapientibus amens,
Stultitiae est index linguaque voxque suae.
Ergo premat labias, digitoque silentia signet,
Et sese pharium vertat in Harpocratem.

[When he is silent, the fool differs no whit from the wise. It is tongue and voice that betray his stupidity. Let him therefore put his finger to his lips and so mark silence, and turn himself into Egyptian Harpocrates.]

Figure 3.4 "In Silentium" Andrea Alciati *Livret des emblemes* (1536)



ORVS

Comment & par quelles figures ilz ſignifioient laage & les ans du temps.

Pour denoter & ſignifier laage & le cours du temps ilz figuroient le ſoleil & la lune pource quilz ſont la reigle de compter & diſcerner le tēps Aultrement ilz paignoient vng ſerpēt appelle Baſiliſque couurāt ſa cueue du reſte de ſō cors leſquelz ilz paignoiēt dor & le mectoient a lētour de leurs dieux & la cauſe pour quoy il ſignifie le temps eſt pource que des troys eſpeces de ſerpens ceſtuy eſt immortel & de ſon ſeul air & halaine eſtaīct & faict mourir toutes aultres beſtes. Et pour autant quil peut tuer les aultres & nō mourir le mectēt ilz ſur la teſte des dieux.

Figure 3.5 "Comment & par quelles figures ilz signifioient laage & les ans du temps" *Hieroglyphica* (1543)

Filles doibvent estre gardees.
EVIDENCE, ET DIALOGISME.

C’est l’effigie a la vierge Pallas.
Et son Dragon mis a ses piedz a bas
D. Tel animal, Pourquoy ha la Deesse?
R. (Des lieux sacrez, & temples la garde est ce.)
Les vierges fault garder diligemment
Car amour tend ses rhetz incessamment.
Pallas vierge represente les filles, & le vi-
gilant serpent sapience, Par laquelle les fil-
les doibvent estre vigilamment gardées.

Figure 3.6 “Filles doibvent estre gardees” Andrea Alciato *Emblemes* (1549)

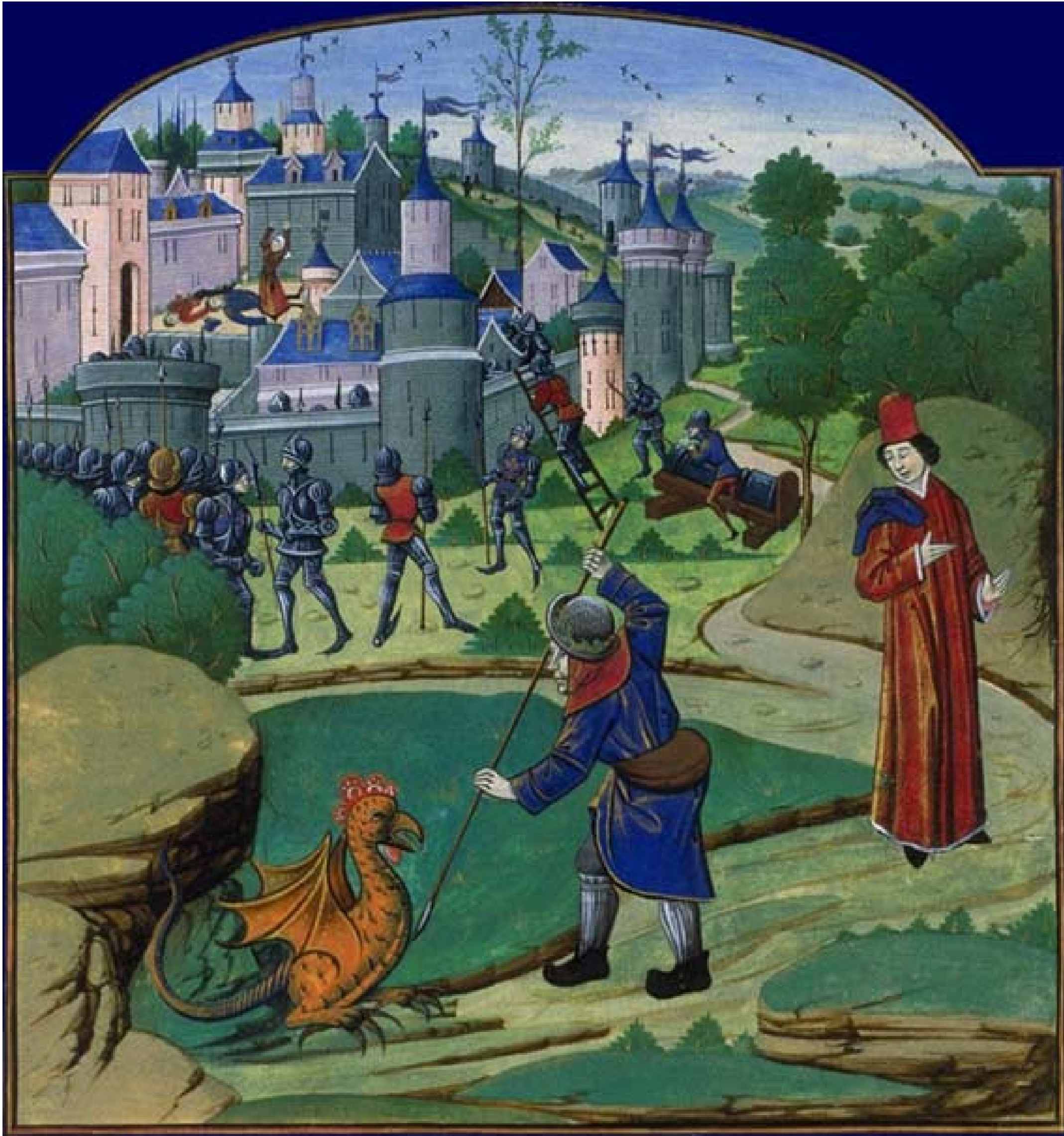


Figure 3.7 "Esculape contemplant le basilic" Raoul Lefèvre *Histoires de Troyes*

Figure 4.1 ***Impresa*** **7 "Narcissus"** ***Délie*** **(1544)**

Emblem LXIX
Philautia (Self-love)

Quod nimium tua forma tibi, Narcisse, placebat,
In florem, et noti est versa stuporis olus.
Ingenii est marcor, cladesque [philautia], doctos
Quae pessum plures datque, deditque viros:
Qui veterum abiecta methodo, nova dogmata quaerunt,
Nilque suas praeter tradere phantasias.

Because your figure pleased you too much, Narcissus, it was changed into a flower, a plant of known senselessness. Self-love is the withering and destruction of natural power which brings and has brought ruin to many learned men, who having thrown away the method of the ancients seek new doctrines and pass on nothing but their own fantasies.

Figure 4.2 Emblem LXIX "Philautia (Self-Love) [Narcissus]" Andrea Alciato *Emblematum liber* (1531)