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SCIENCES

Emory College
Language Center

presents

Walter S. Melion

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Emory University

April 5, 2016
11:30 am - 12:45 pm
Modern Languages Building
Room 201

RSVP sshortt@emory.edu by March 31, 2016

“What’s in an Emblem: Polyglot Cultures of Learning in Early Modern Europe.”

An emblem consists of three parts: an image (verbally or pictorially produced); a motto (generally a pithy saying); and an epigram (a longer text in verse or prose that comments on the relation between the visual image and the textual motto). The emblematic genre became wildly popular soon after its invention early in the sixteenth century; emblem books were designed to fulfill various functions, ranging from moral formation and catechetical instruction, to amatory recreation. The emblem’s components were construed as relational agents: the image reads the motto, the motto reads the image, and the epigram expounds this dynamic relation. In addition, the texts were often polyglot, various vernacular languages combining with Latin. Early modern emblematic culture required fluency in Dutch, French, German, Italian, Spanish, and / or other languages, as well as a high degree of visual literacy. My talk therefore focuses on the polyglotism of emblems between the mid-sixteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries.

What is an emblem? What features distinguish the Jesuit emblem? Between 1600 and 1610, Jan David, a renowned preacher, rector of the Jesuit College in Ghent (1594-1602), and prominent member of the *Provincia Belgica*, composed a series of innovative emblem books that quickly became touchstones of emblematic usage in the Low Countries. David collaborated with the famed engraver Theodoor Galle and the renowned publisher Jan Moretus, thus ensuring that the verbal and visual components of his *emblemata* would be tightly interwoven. After asking why David propagated so many new kinds of emblem book, I shall briefly examine the distinctive form and function, manner and meaning of his four celebrated publications: *Veridicus Christianus* (*The True Christian*, ed. prin., 1601), *Occasio arrepta, neglecta* (*Occasion Seized, Shirked*, ed. prin., 1605), *Paradisus sponsi et sponsae et Pancarpium Marianum* (*Paradise of the Bridegroom and Bride, and Marian Garland*, ed. prin., 1607), and *Duodecim specula* (*Twelve Mirrors*, ed. prin., 1610). How and to what ends did he diverge from the template codified for the emblem by its apparent inventor Andrea Alciato?

Please RSVP for a meal with Sarah Shortt at sshortt@emory.edu or (404) 727-8319
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