

A seventeenth-century French edition of Ripa's widely used *Iconologia*.

Ripa, Cesare. *Iconologie*. Paris: Mathieu Guillemot, 1644. 13 3/4 inches (350 mm), 2 volumes in one, 400 pp.

Ripa is to iconography what Hoyle is to games or Joe Miller to jokes. For more than two centuries, whenever a European artist required guidance in mythology or allegory, he turned to the *Iconologia*. There had been earlier manuals of mythology, chief among them three sixteenth-century treatises, Lilio Giraldi's *History of the Gods*, Natale Conti's *Mythology*, and Vincenzo's Cartari's *Images of the Gods*. In his dialogue *De la Causa, Principio et Uno*, Giordano Bruno satirized the genre by envisaging the pedant Polihimnio reading about himself in one of the handbooks of the time. "He alone is happy: he leads a celestial life contemplating his own divinity in an anthology, dictionary, Calepino, lexicon, cornucopia, Nizzolio, or what not."

Ripa, however, soon eclipsed all others by producing a manual of allegory that was only incidentally a mythological dictionary—where Cupid and his mother are lost amongst the figures of Heresy, Medicine, Corpulence, Winter, Temperance, Agriculture, Truth, Piety, Peace, and Dawn. The almost bullet-point presentation of detailed instructions regarding expression, color, and general gestalt proved useful not only to the Baroque artist, but to any impresario called upon to produce a masque, a ballet, a festival, or triumphal entry. Ripa's range and abundant detail allowed a poet or artist to pick and choose within broad general limits. No manual can altogether escape a cookie-cutter approach to allegorical representation, but Ripa's kitchen was superbly appointed, offering innumerable shapes and forms. As a mythographer, he was more closely allied to Robert Graves than Thomas Bulfinch.

The first edition of *Iconologia*, describing itself on its title-page as "a work no less useful than essential to Poets, Painters and Sculptors, to represent the Virtues, Vices, Emotions and Passions of Humanity," was published in Rome in 1593. It contained descriptions of 100 allegorical subjects, with no illustrations. This obvious lack was remedied in Lepido

Facij's Roman edition of 1603, the third, much enlarged, and with vigorous wood- engravings largely after the Cavalier d'Arpino. Numerous editions and translations followed, including this French version of 1644, with more anemic copperplate engravings by Jacques de Bie.

Ripa was closely connected to the Roman prelacy, there imbibing much of the spirit of the Council of Trent. The artistic programs of the Counter-Reformation were carried out on a grand scale. Such Baroque artists as Annibale Carracci, Domenichino, Luca Giordano, Bernini, and Poussin are all known to have consulted Ripa's instructions.

As this edition attests, the *Iconologia* was especially popular in France, where Ripa's allegorical schemes accorded perfectly with the promotion (above all, by the Jesuits) of pagan mythology, in literature as well as art, as an element of rhetoric and a corpus of moral precepts. There is guidance here, after all, for depicting Grammar, Dialectic, Conversation, Eloquence, Doctrine, and Error. This copy in fact contains evidence of contemporary French clerical ownership in the form of two inscriptions. The title-page bears the seventeenth-century signature "Loiselet Chanoine" and a note at the foot of the last page indicates that the book belonged at one time "à don Wodon du Chateau."

This edition of Ripa's *Iconologia* is now in the Cecil H. Green Library, which comprises roughly a third of the Stanford University Libraries' 8.5 million volumes. The Green Library houses special collections amounting to a quarter million rare volumes; among the rarities are an extensive collection of Aldine editions and numerous incunables.