



*From a Blanket of Gnarled Bright
Emeralds Emerges Two Doves
A Treatise on Symbols Producing Sensations
and Not Just Signifying, in other words
stirring up ancient vestigial feelings that
cannot be reduced to meaning or explained.*

A Response to the Work of Andrew Sim

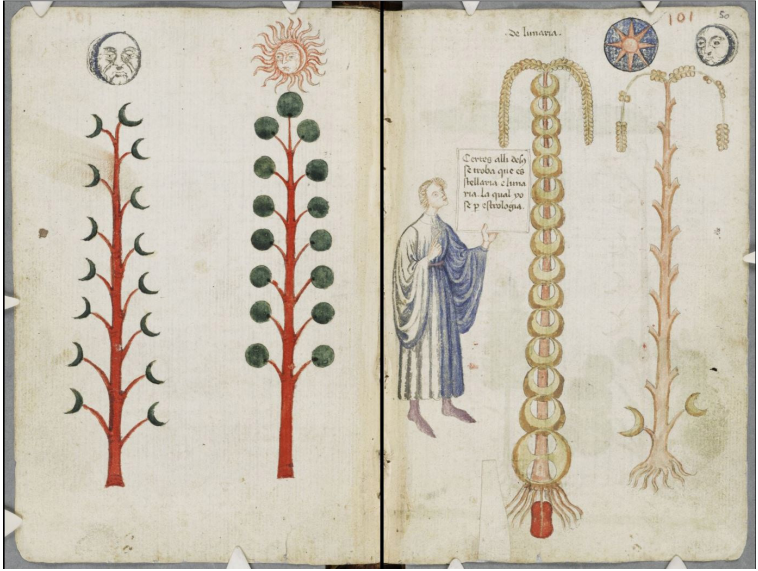
by
Shola von Reinhold

With translations from the original by
Marcus Palmer, Elspeth Haytree and Shola von Reinhold

The Modern Institute, Glasgow



he faggots cultivate the most obscure and outrageous parts of the past. They cultivate those past events which the men did not want to happen and which, once they did happen, they wanted to forget. These are the parts the faggots love the best. And they love them so much that they tell the old stories over and over and then they act them out and then, as the ultimate tribute, they allow their lives to re-create those obscure parts of the past. The pain of fallen women and the triumph of defeated women are constantly and lovingly made flesh again. The destruction of witty faggots and the militancy of beaten faggots are constantly and lovingly made flesh again. And so these parts of the past are never lost. They are imprinted in the bodies of the faggots where the men cannot go.





The Sun Tree



The Moon Tree

The following segments (and the preceding quoted passage and imagery) culminate here in response to the exhibition at hand but also a visit to Andrew Sim's studio in London earlier this year. We spoke about vestiges, threads, tunnels, trees, utopic-ness, queerness, folklore, symbols and archetypes.

During our conversation Sim described an (at least partial) origin point of the current exhibition some years ago – the sight of two multi-headed sunflowers in different cities over a period of time. Likewise this twin recurs with trees and fountains.

This conversation sparked off a new chain in one of my projects revolving around *imprese*, emblema and other such devices prominent throughout the Early Modern and Renaissance but with much older antecedents – archetypes mutating from archetypes, many now 'obsolete' and illegible.

The conception of double or twin sites, objects, symbols connected over distances, dimensions, or even achronologically, by a mystic channel or thread or secret tunnel is present throughout folkloric history but has largely receded from the public imaginary (at least in Euro-American terms).

The Mystery Plays are a series of closet dramas found in the Grove of the Sea Caves. Ironically, (some say intentionally), the plays themselves survive only in fragment and each play revolves around the discovery and relation of a fragmented text. They generally appear in bound volumes which resemble the volumes described in the stage directions of the plays which are usually translated (or purported to be) from the original fragmented tablets.

In the first pages of this particular play, *From a Blanket of Gnarled Bright Emeralds*, the frontispiece is an illustration of a brooch, conceived from the description of the antique text:

Description of a Brooch found in the Desolated Museum

The brooch was made of two flat bronze diamond panels. On one was a gardener with a branch and on the other an astronomer holding a telescope, with their free hands they reached out of their bronze diamonds to clasp shoddily articulated enamel fingers between which was an eight pointed star with a flower painted inside but then you realised the star was actually the flower and the flower a star. Or rather a constellation... the flower has many heads... The stars' spokes have stars extending from them.

The opening pages contained further illustrations and texts but the only surviving text from this section is the following:

Antic Fragment – from the [illegible] Grove of the Sea Caves

...Through several passages we came to hevn stairs. Walls were studded and whorled with shells...pools illuminated by [illegible] portholes...at last passage from...a pool...fresh soil lay in the dried pool and up sprang a tree – evergreen and invariable. It twists and swoops in all directions...not writhing...twisting amiably. Carved in its trunk, of course, is a message of its mirror tree. “A specimen in a pedestrian plaza, paved grey mortar...civic, plain and unmystical as anything”

...

The next and only surviving section is from the play itself. This contemporary translation takes minor liberties:

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- SILVER A member of the Undinous Court,
recently banned from the libraries
- SWEET JEALOUSY II A member of the Undinous
Court, SILVER's confidant
- HERALDRINE A member of the Undinous Court,
having been 'a visitor' there since before they can remember
- UNDINOUS ORDINATOR I Ordinator of the
Undinous Court
- UNDINOUS ORDINATOR II Ordinator of the
Undinous Court
- ASSISTANT ORDINATOR Ordinator of the
Undinous Court

ACT I SCENE I

A soirée is being given by the Ordinators of the Undinous Court – one of several courts in the anti-palace. The party is being given in honour of the discovery of an antique. The Anti-Palace's ante-saloon is an octagonal stone room full of niches with large arched windows filling seven of the eight walls, one of the windows is open revealing a painted backdrop of purple mountains. The eighth leads to the passageway out of the ante-saloon. In the largest niche is a floor-length mirror. In the centre of the grand ante-saloon is a pentagonal table of faint green glass and black meteoric stone. On it rests a large volume bound and fringed with fibres of silver and aquamarine, rose and gold. On the cover is represented in tooling and studding a blanket of gnarled bright emeralds from which emerges two doves.

The Assistant Ordinator and the Undinous Ordinators stand studying it.

Assistant Ordinator

How delicious, it really is *unspeakable*.

Ordinator I

We exhumated the book from the mouth of the Sybellian Caves...

Assistant Ordinator

Oh you mean that sort of hole in the back of your garden?

Ordinator II

Yes.

Assistant Ordinator

Oh look who it is.

Ordinators

Not them bitches.

Enter SILVER – herself a Lost and Forgotten Archetype though she doesn't know it. She goes straight to the mirror and works on her 'cheveux.' She is soon followed by SWEET JEALOUSY II, another unwitting Forgotten Archetype.

Sweet Jealousy II

I believe the ameliorated corkscrews with the infernal bonnet with that rhinestone fascinator are no longer the way forward.

Silver

Sacrilege.

Sweet Jealousy II

But-

Silver

Absolute Calumny, Sweet Jealousy II.

Silver

(Coming away from mirror to the book on the meteor and green glass table, barely acknowledging the Ordinators.)

So this is it?

Ordinator II

We've been studying it all day.

Silver

Is *Mystery* the point of emblems?

Assistant Ordinator

Mystery?

Silver

Yes I heard that the point of all these images, originally derived from ancient forms of *emblema* and *impresae*, was mystery. From ancient mystery cults. Anyway look at this cover picture – how strange and grievous feeling... (opening the book) And look at all these illegible sections – intentionally done for the sake of mystery no doubt!

Ordinator I

Well I don't know about that.

Silver

Well I do.

Ordinator I

You and your obsession with mystery. It's almost *sick*. Unhealthy. No, the book is written in fragments because it is translated itself from a much older text, as you will soon hear. It's almost time for our reading.

The Assistant Ordinator

Where, pray tell, is Heraldrine? How disappointing that they are
going to miss the recital – oh, there you are Heraldrine!

Enter Heraldrine

Heraldrine

(Looking at the book.)

...

...

.....

Ordinator II

Yes we knew you'd like it.

Assistant Ordinator

I think they are going to faint if you ask me.

Silver

Sit down Heraldrine.

Sweet Jealousy II

Now let's get on with the reading...

Assistant Ordinator, Ordinator I, and Ordinator II

(Reading from the book in unison.)

***Antic Fragment one – Translation from the Orange Tablet in the
unkempt passage of the dark and mounded glossy blue arcade***

*These most supernal threads, gilt in agony and gilt again – this one green
in colour, conjoined nothing so much as a the...multi-headed, multi-faced
flowers...Heliotropic in name but never heeding the sun –
never deigning to turn but to face all ways round.*

*Two such blooms united by the green cord. The cord teased out
accordingly from the [illegible]*

*In other dictums a tunnel or a thread uniting two vessels, two
emblems, two souls across countries, worlds or times. In traversing
this tunnel or thread a revolution occurs...a whirl in the stomach.*

End of fragment within fragment

End of frag...

Fragments from Act III

In the Anti-Palace's ante-saloon.

Lights shift across the stage, the mirror flashes. In are borne two vases. Each contains a sunflower with multifaceted heads.

...

In are borne twin green trees in pots. One tree decorated – glittering with baubles, – ‘geile dekos’...made from...the mountain out the window flashes

...

Silver

What a GLORIOUS infringement.

...

Silver

(Pouring over a Book of Emblems.)

...after the dove

This strange and grievous feeling

A sensation

Tunnels

Threads

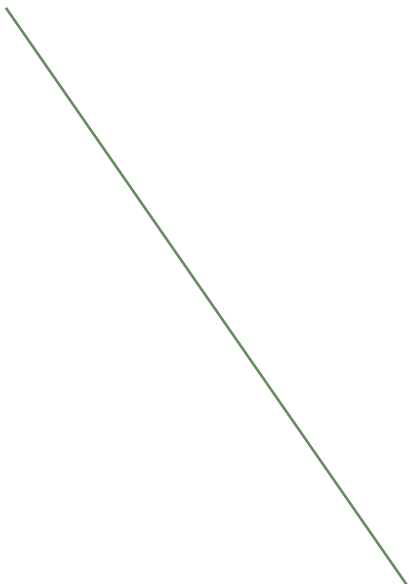
How they go beyond – to those early archetypes? To lands of great beauty which is lost... Or is that pernicious?

...

Third fragment – presumed to be from Act IV. In which Heraldrine inquires into the nature of the Undines and remembers why they came to the Undinous court in the days before time choked up entirely

Herladrine, waking up in bed after their fainting episode, recalls their Compartment Life – in other words that in-between their life, always, running like a green underground stream (like a supernal thread) was a life no less or more just simply in-between – a realisation which came to them upon looking at the antique volume... Their Compartment Life is Mottine and upon knowing that she is Mottine she dons Heraldrine's favourite jewels, doublet, and so on and takes herself to the Minor Undine Library – there she browses for several hours before finding what she knew would be there:

The Memoirs of Mottine Mottine Firre-Mottine



Thursday, March 3rd

I am here. Unpacked today and walked around. It is so cold in the ateliers. On arrival I was led through the courtyards where a particular fountain struck me and I will have to tell you about it another time. I have to go to meet the other frescoists today and hope they are as I have dreamt they will be.

Sunday, April 4th

It is a month on (sorry) and I literally weep at the naivety of my last entry. Everyone is ghastly... [illegible passage] Not just because they 'know' but because [illegible passage]... It is more than that.

Monday, April 5th

I have decided to paint the fountain.

Tuesday, April 6th

A new frescoist has arrived and has been installed in the atelier adjoining mine. He peeped his head in yesterday and I wanted to die because [unreadable]

Wednesday, May 6th

Even in May the ateliers are so cold and we spent the day hunting for portable heaters and found some in the basement – perhaps 300 centuries of Things lie there – I mean some real discarded masterpieces and everything but most importantly heaters.

It is, by the way, a month again since my last entry. So my neighbour: One day – can't remember when now – shortly after he popped his head in and I wanted to die – I saw him standing in front of the great fountain which is in itself a curiosity. For example, the fountain is of a Rebis – or similar – some ancient god of both sexes or neither, with lunar devices all about it, and it is completed in a dark blue and grey stone and splashes away all day and people come and sit on it or throw things in it occasionally or sometimes push each other into it, or jump on the ice when it is frozen, reflecting the silver of everything – and yet no one ever comments upon it. It is so clearly a vestige of the before or between Times. Well, this was the first time I ever saw anyone really taking it in. So, when he next popped his head in, if he ever did again, I resolved to ask him about it and show him my painting. Well, I waited and waited one day and nothing, and nothing the next, and looked for him in the courtyard every time I was painting by the fountain. When he finally popped his head in a week on, I basically

screamed “The fountain!” so loudly he jumped back and his glasses literally fell off his face.

He picked up his glasses and I think piecing things together came to look at the painting.

He told me the story of the Undines – who are visible everywhere in this city but only vestiges of vestiges.

Thursday, 1st May

He spoke to me about something called a Recovery Play. They served as valuable a function as the Mystery Plays now do and once did. These were in fact a popular form around 300 years ago – about the point at which things kept getting dredged up and people became adept and Finding Things, like the city moontemples and grottos beneath and around about the river and indeed, volumes of the Mystery Plays... the force, he said, of recovery was so intense people started making plays about them to process; this intense force he said was all a matter of material history. That also the Context of these Things became available again and thus so did the form, the perfume of the era or something like this surfaced, so the plays were ways to rediscover the form but let the form operate on the world once more through these objects that had been suppressed or lost... He said during the period of the plays the release of all these swallowed up forces being finally allowed to operate on the world in turn changed history and so on and so forth, and so Time literally changed. In texture but other ways. How couldn't it? He was, he said, writing and staging a recovery play. Two actually, one about a Recovery Play he had found and the other – here I almost died again – about the fountain.

(Heraldine places the book back.)

End of Frag

Final Fragment (from same act)

Heraldine in the night [unreadable] to the display room [unreadable] the arched windows show greenish sky.

There the antique book [unreadable] lit by a candle.

HERaldine [sic] takes a glass hammer and strikes the cover of the book.

Heraldine, surrounded by broken glass, touches the book and begins to speak. It is as if Heraldine is reading the threads fringing the cover, finding subtle things in the changes of hue and incongruous patterns and weft and so on – rifts like a music score.

Heraldine

For example [unreadable] truncated... buried or simply lost... when in the world again the form becomes available to us even if simply to talk about the work, to think about the object... experience it. But the... is operating on the world again... in a way that has not been permissible.

Here for example we learn what? That a herald of the city... came and was made privy to a great constitutional beauty presiding under the land.

That beneath the Undinous city great wefted [unreadable] for nothing and Melded thoroughly to the frothing and still and moving springs and the ore ore and black ore

In this book were patterns... ornaments... and illustrations of figures dancing... tapestries of figures dancing... older paintings on walls of peoples dancing in the carvings... in the chambers of the Undinous city to which I came. The Undines which appear in myth and not live here were people from... who left their brothers and sisters to live with mortals – hence in the myth ‘takes the form of a beautiful man’

With thanks to Harry Sanderson