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The Motif of the Phoenix in Henry Peacham's *Minerva Britanna* (1612), a Political Reappropriation

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Résumé

Le phénix, oiseau mythique originaire d'Arabie, est l'un des symboles royaux utilisés aux XVI^{e} et XVII^{e} siècles dont les représentations fleurissent tant dans les textes que dans les images. Les livres d'emblèmes, par la conjugaison de deux codes sémiotiques différents – image et texte –, sont un terrain privilégié pour l'expansion du symbolisme du phénix qui en est venu à exprimer des idées morales et religieuses. La *rara avia*, par son habilité à renaître de ses cendres, a été utilisée pour symboliser la virginité, l'immortalité et, à cet égard, était souvent attribuée aux monarques et même revendiquée par ces derniers. Marie de Lorraine et sa fille Marie, reine d'Écosse, ont fait du phénix leur devise, ou *impresa*. Élisabeth Ire compte également parmi les têtes couronnées revendiquant le symbole du phénix. Nicholas Hilliard et le graveur Crispin van de Passe ont contribué à la construction de l'iconographie du phénix, également étendue aux

œuvres littéraires. Lorsque Jacques Ier devient roi en 1603, c'est donc tout naturellement que les artistes utilisent le phénix pour célébrer le nouveau monarque, une manière de montrer la continuité royale à travers les symboles. Parmi ces artistes, Henry Peacham, maître d'école et théoricien du dessin, s'est saisi de l'occasion pour donner une version emblématique de certains passages du *Basilikon Doron* du roi, un traité sur l'éducation destiné à son fils, le prince héritier Henri. Dans les versions manuscrites de 1603 et 1604, Peacham n'hésite pas à flatter le roi Jacques en le comparant à l'oiseau mythique. Cependant, de 1603-1604, date des premiers manuscrits, et jusqu'à la publication du livre d'emblèmes *Minerva Britanna* en 1612 et à ses travaux ultérieurs, Peacham change continuellement le destinataire du symbole du phénix, hésitation qui témoigne à notre avis du divorce progressif de l'emblémiste avec la politique de Jacques Ier qu'il ne jugeait plus digne de l'insigne royal. Nous nous proposons d'analyser le symbole du phénix dans l'œuvre de Peacham afin de montrer l'évolution de son soutien politique dans le contexte du désenchantement croissant à l'égard du règne de Jacques.

Mots-Clés

symbolisme, phénix, Renaissance, emblématique, Jacques Ier.

Table des matières

Texte intégral

Queen Elizabeth I's death in March 1603 not only left the realm in a state of dismay and confusion, but also left vacant a number of roles, images and symbols created for her [1] that James VI of Scotland, her successor, was keen to reclaim. The new King, a relatively obscure figure [2], needed to be welcomed as the legitimate heir and part of his strategy was to adopt the late queen's symbolism as a testimony of dynastic continuity. The relation between political authority and visual representation was revitalized by James's absolutist ideology and offered, as Jonathan Goldberg puts it, "not simply an image of his power, but the power of himself as image." [3]

The Elizabethan iconography has played indeed an essential part in constructing the myth of the Virgin Queen. Elizabeth was compared to Cynthia, Diana and Astraea; she was the sun, the mother of the realm, the pelican, and the phoenix, the mythical bird which consumes itself every 500 years on its fragrant nest only to be reborn again from its ashes. The phoenix is thus a potent royal badge: for the royals, the uniqueness of the phoenix combined with the divine right of kings, made a perfect illustration of the *Dignitas non moritur* principle ("Dignity never dies") which lays at the basis of the monarchy. [4] One example is the phoenix in flames, *impresa* of Mary, Queen of the Scots, which was accompanied with the motto *En ma fin git mon commencement* ("In my end is my beginning").

During the Elizabethan reign, the phoenix metaphor accounted for the queen's paradoxical symbolism: she was a virgin and yet the mother of the realm; she died childless and yet begot an heir. The mythical bird which engenders itself symbolized therefore Elizabeth's power, her resilience against her enemies, her immortality, uniqueness and chastity, among others. The symbol was used in literature, material culture but also in a variety of pictorial forms. From the 1570s, as William Camden records, Elizabeth adopted the motto *Semper eadem* ("Always the same") and was often represented with her phoenix badge. [5] Poets and playwrights alike

compared her to the mythical bird: she was “the onely Phoenix, among all the Kings and Princes of the world,” in Radford Maverick’s words; [6] “The Queene of the South a rare Phenix” [7] and “the Phenix of our days.” [8] Nicholas Hilliard’s miniature portraits immortalized some of these symbols which were fundamental to the Queen’s “visual manifesto,” [9] a political strategy based on the power of images as tools of royal authority.

Nonetheless, while the phoenix was used as a symbol of continuity in the early years of the reign, it did not endure [10] and was even used to insist on the discontinuity between the Elizabethan and the Jacobean reigns. The allocation of the phoenix badge seems to act therefore as a measuring tool for a monarch’s reputation. In what follows, I wish to explore the relevance of this hypothesis by examining Henry Peacham’s phoenix emblem “Is coelebs, urit cura” both in his published collection *Minerva Britanna* (1612) and the manuscript versions.

I. Emblematic symbols and political authority

When Elizabeth died, the myth of the phoenix was among the symbolic tools transferred to James I. The King’s triumphal entry into London in March 1604, which combined elaborate architecture with emblematic tableaux, was the perfect occasion to advertise himself as England’s new phoenix. The *Nova Felix Arabia* Arch, designed by Thomas Dekker, visually represented James I as the living reincarnation of late Elizabeth, as explained in the speech commenting upon the arch:

> Thou being that sacred Phoenix, that doest rise,
> From th’ashes of the first: Beames from thine eyes
> So vertually shining, that they bring,
> To Englands new Arabia, a new Spring. [11]

The emblematic dimension of the royal entry pageant of 1604 testifies to the genre's ability to represent political authority by dwelling on well-established symbols. The use of this medium to represent power seems particularly suitable because of the emblems' claim to "reveal truth." [12] The emblems derive their authority, as Daniel Russell suggests [13], from their fictional affiliation with hieroglyphics, which Renaissance humanists endowed with divine ideas. In Henry Peacham's case, the power of his collection is even greater because he draws it from the king's political and literary authority: *Minerva Britanna*'s primary source is indeed James I's *Basilikon Doron* (1599), an educational treatise which he destined to Henry, the heir presumptive. Furthermore, in his address to prince Henry, Peacham goes as far as claiming a royal paternity to his emblems:

> Howsoever the world shall esteeme [mine Emblemes] in regard of their rude and homely attire, for the most part they are Roially discended, and repaire into your owne bosome (farre from the reach of Envie) for their protection. For in truth they are of right your owne, and no other then the substance of those Divine Instructions, his Majestie your Royall Father præscribed unto you, your guide […] to a virtuous & true happy life. […] wherein, as neere as I could, I observed the Method of his Majesties BASILICON DORON […]. [14]

The transformation of the King's treatise into emblems was a well-thought-out choice as James had composed a number of emblems [15] himself and his own *Basilikon Doron* is rife with "numerous verbal illustrations of an emblematic nature." [16]

Certainly because of his illustrious dedicatee, Peacham spent a number of years rewriting and polishing up his collection. *Minerva Britanna*, composed of 204 emblems, is the finished product of three previous manuscript versions (1603, 1604, 1610), one of which he coloured and offered to prince Henry in 1610. Contrary to other writers who used ready-made plates for their emblems, Peacham, who authored several treatises on the art of drawing, [17] made the woodcuts himself, even though he

found his inspiration in various sources, as mentioned in the address to the reader. [18] The composition process, from 1603 to 1612, is particularly noteworthy: written in a time of political transition, the collection testifies to the migration of symbols and motifs from one monarch to the next as a sign of political authority and legitimacy.

Indeed, in the early manuscripts (1603 and 1604), as pointed out by Alan Young, Peacham's symbolism often seems to "echo that employed on the various triumphal arches erected for James's 1604 entry on March 15". [19] Furthermore, Peacham uses Queen Elizabeth's most famous badges to celebrate James: the fleur-de-lis, the lion passant, the rose, the Irish harp, the griffin and the phoenix, on which I will dwell my analysis in order to show the extent to which Peacham participates in the new monarch's legitimizing process through symbols.

II. The Phoenix Motif in Peacham's Emblems: The Royal Badge Tradition

The phoenix has a long Classical and Christian tradition. Horapollo's *Hieroglyphica* (5th century) makes the phoenix a descendant of the Egyptian *benu*, a bird which symbolized the creation of life. Although this origin is debated amongst scholars, they all agree on one thing: the phoenix as a symbol of renewal. Besides, because only one phoenix can exist at a time and it engenders itself, it was associated with the sun, but also with Time, resurrection, immortality, virginity, and even with Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary in medieval times. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the symbolism of the phoenix drew from the works of Herodotus, Pliny, Ovid, Tacitus, and its representation was influenced by illuminated bestiaries, such as the 12th century Aberdeen bestiary in which the mythical bird resembles an eagle and is portrayed in a flaming nest. With these representations in mind, the Renaissance iconography of the phoenix expanded: it was displayed on material objects (coins, furniture),

on tapestries, paintings but was also used as a heraldic badge or adapted as a device (*impresa*) intended to praise a person's virtues or beliefs. Emblem books similarly contributed to develop the phoenix symbolism by endowing it with religious, moral and political significations.

In his *Devises heroïques* (1557), Claude Paradin uses the Arabian bird to praise Eleonor of Austria, sister of Emperor Charles V, and wife of King François I, as the *Unica semper avis* ("Only one Phoenix in the world at a time"). [20] Similarly, in *Emblèmes latins*, (1588), Jean Jacques Boissard makes the phoenix the symbol of Virtue in his emblem *Vivit post funera virtus* ("Virtue outlives death"). [21] The mythical bird was also used in more politically oriented emblems such as in Theodore de Bèze's *Icones* (1580) where the phoenix, reborn from its ashes, came to symbolize the enduring faith of the Protestants, martyrized and burned at the stake by Mary I of England. [22] The emblematist addresses the "Bloody" queen directly, warning her that "[t]o those whom you want to destroy, the flame gives life." [23]

When Henry Peacham began his emblematic enterprise in 1603, the phoenix, as a political symbol, was undergoing a change: strongly associated with Elizabeth, the mythical bird was now transferred to James, although the symbolical link with the late queen had never been completely severed as testified by the evolutions of the phoenix emblem in Peacham's manuscript and published collections.

Peacham's manuscript emblems share the same motto *Omine meliore renascor* ("I am reborn under better auspices") but slightly differ in the *pictura*: unlike in the 1603 drawing, the bird is crowned in the 1604 version [24] and stands on a severed trunk, likely that of a cedar tree, [25] holding a sceptre in its right claw. Although both epigrams in the manuscripts mention the phoenix, Mason Tung argues that Peacham draws a falcon and not a phoenix, modelling it after Anne Boleyn's royal badge [26] which William Camden describes as "a white crowned Faulcon, holding a Scepter in her right talon, standing upon a golden trunk, out of the which sprowted both white and red roses, with 'Mihi et meæ' [Me and Mine]." [27]

While the parallels with Anne Boleyn's badge are undisputable, several elements pledge for a conflation between the eagle and the phoenix in Peacham's drawing. According to Herodotus, the phoenix resembled an eagle: "The plumage is partly red, partly golden, while the general make and size are almost exactly that of an eagle." [28] The parallels between the two birds are not only physical; mythical and symbolic common points emerge as well. The phoenix is the "sun bird" [29] and, according to Pliny the Elder [30] and Isidore of Seville, [31] the eagle has the ability to look directly into the sun. Both birds were thus used by the Elizabethan painters and poets to glorify their queen. For instance, in his sonnets, Michael Drayton uses the phoenix and the eagle alike to draw the portrait of a solar queen radiating the world with her virtues. [32] Considering the two birds' similarity and their complementary symbolism, the bird in the manuscript versions of the emblem is both an eagle and a phoenix. The superimposition of the two birds evacuates the discrepancy otherwise extant between text and picture and is in line with the emblems' mode of composition based on assembling various and, at times, contradictory materials. [33]

There are also slight differences between the manuscript epigrams. In the 1603 emblem the poem refers to Elizabeth's recent death and her reincarnation as James I, who was called upon to take a firm Protestant stance and defend the realm against the aggressions of Catholic Spain:

> Ut fato est visus Phœnix cessisse Britannus
> Fila anni et dubium vel secuere dolor :
> Hic subito enascens (quem cernis) sceptra favillis
> Arripit : huic aquilis invide Ibere tuis.

As the British Phoenix has appeared to yield its fate, and uncertainty — or rather grief — has cut the threads of this year, this Phoenix (whom you see), springing up suddenly from the ashes, snatches the sceptre : envy this [bird], O Spaniard, despite your eagles ! [34]

As in 1603, the 1604 epigram dwells on the grief caused by Elizabeth's death, but the poetic voice no longer addresses Spain but Rome, the seat of the Catholic Church:

> Ut fato est visus Phœnix cessisse Britannus
> Angliaq[ue] infando victa dolore gemit ;
> Arripit enascens subito, novus iste favillis
> Sceptra, iaces aquilis Roma superba tuis.
>
> As the British Phoenix has appeared to yield to its fate, and England groans, overcome with unspeakable grief, then, suddenly, rising again from the ashes, the newborn Phoenix grasps the sceptre, while you, Rome, proud with your eagles, lie prostrate. [35]

The change from Spain to Rome can be explained by the peace treaty the king signed with Philip III of Spain in August 1604 and which no longer justified the invective. [36] The mention of Rome could be an allusion to a supposed attempt at converting King James to Catholicism in 1603-1604 which was thwarted by Robert Cecil, [37] the recipient of the published version of this emblem. The Roman eagles in the epigram refer therefore to the dashed hopes of the Roman Church. This modification — from Spain to Rome — shows that Peacham considers the contemporary events and alters his emblems accordingly.

Peacham's phoenix in the manuscripts is in line with the royal badge tradition and is used to symbolise monarchical transition. The severed trunk may symbolize Elizabeth's death and the end of the Tudor dynasty while the phoenix stands for the political hope embodied by King James, especially so that a spring of flowers grows from the stump in the 1604 version. The tone of the manuscripts is optimistic and empowers the king with Elizabeth's strength and wrath against the enemies of the realm. It is not surprising therefore that *Omine meliore renascor* was probably among the emblems [38] that Peacham had the opportunity to present to King James when he was on an official visit at Hinchingbrook in 1603. [39]

Peacham's phoenix emblems in the manuscripts show that he truly hoped that James would embody renewal, a conviction similarly expressed in the madrigal he composed upon the king's coronation:

> Awake softly with singing Oriana sleeping;
> And leave a while this weeping.
> That in Elysium resting
> She might behold now again her virgin nymphs their heads revesting
> With lilies white and roses,
> To entertain Phoebus sweet crownets bringing,
> Whiles all her shepherds from the mountains cheerly loud singing
> Cry Long live his Majesty in health and peace,
> Health, joy, and peace in all felicity. [40]

In 1603, the scope of the encomiastic poem was eminently political, and it invited those nostalgic for Elizabeth's reign to support the new monarch.

The rebirth of the phoenix and the return of the golden age "are symbols with parallel meanings" [41] and in the early years of James's reign, many authors shared Peacham's enthusiasm in seeing the King as the new phoenix. For example, Joshua Sylvester's *Corona Dedicatoria*, praised James Stuart as the phoenix:

> As when the Arabian only) bird doth burne
> Her aged body in sweet flames to death,
> Out of her cinders a new bird hath breath,
> In whom the beauties of the first return;
> From spicy ashes of the sacred urne
> Of our dead phoenix (deere Elizabeth)
> A new true phoenix lively flourisheth. [42]

Shakespeare himself, in *King Henry VIII*, made use of the phoenix imagery in relation to King James in Thomas Cranmer's prophetic speech delivered at the baptism of Elizabeth:

> […] Nor shall this peace sleep with her, but as when
> The bird of wonder dies, the maiden phoenix,
> Her ashes new create another heir
> As great in admiration as herself,
> So shall she leave her blessedness to one,
> When heaven shall call her from this cloud of darkness,
> Who from the sacred ashes of her honour
> Shall star-like rise, as great in fame as she was
> And so stand fixed. (V.4.39-47) [43]

Similarly, Thomas Cecil, Robert Cecil's half-brother, described the new monarch in phoenix-like terms:

> Eliza's dead: that rends my heart in twaine:
> And James proclaimd: this makes me well againe.
> If hopes faile not if now they doe t'is strange)
> The losse is but as hen the moone doth change;
> Or when as Phaenix dies: Phaenix is dead,
> And so a Phaenix followes in her stead.
> Phaenix for Phaenix. [44]

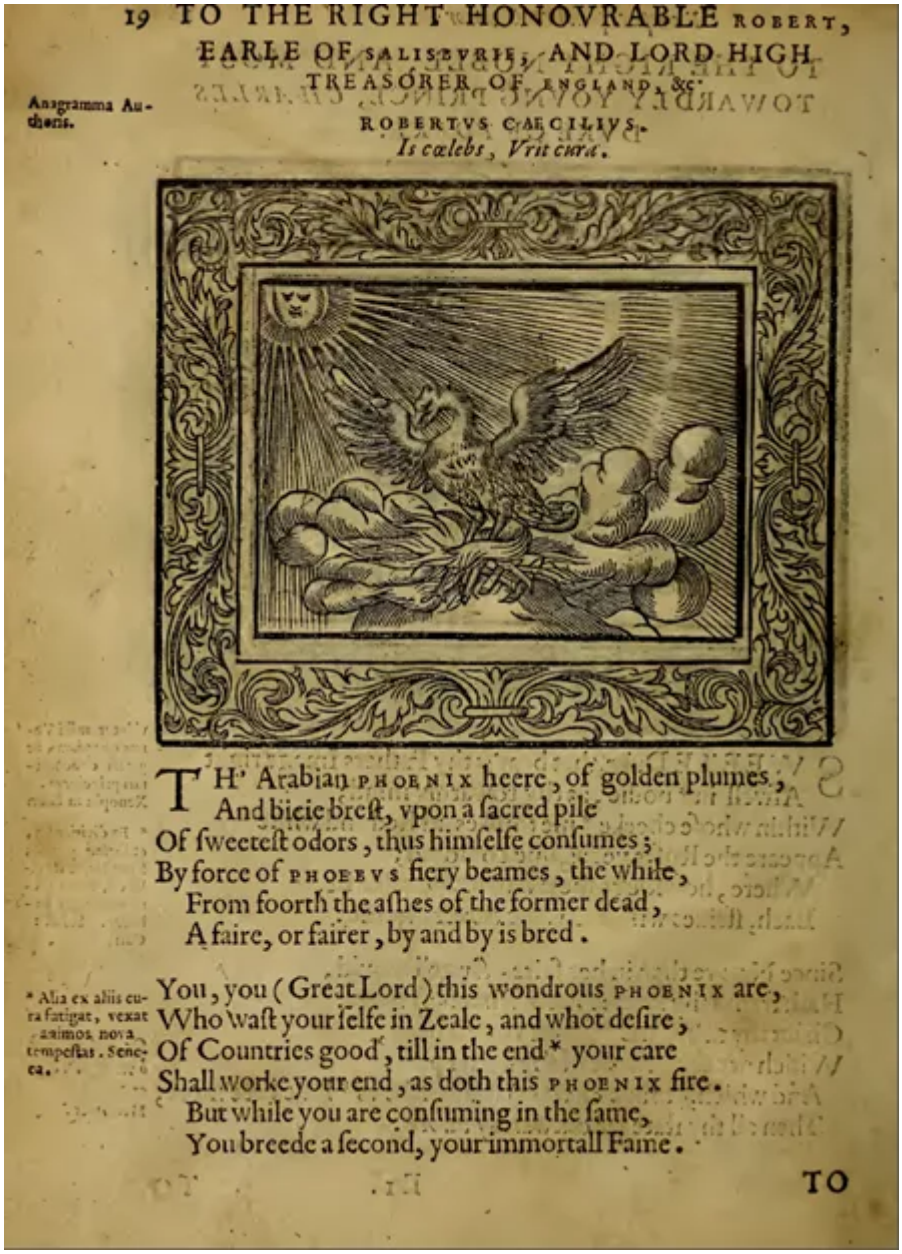
Nevertheless, while authors like Thomas Cecil claimed, or rather hoped for, a superimposition of the Elizabethan and the Jacobean phoenix, "Phaenix for Phaenix," they could not be farther apart as testified by the short-lived phoenix badge during the Stuart rule. In this respect, Alan Young notes the gradual disappearance of the phoenix symbol: "[...] although there was a classical precedent for the transfer of the phoenix attribute from one monarch to the next, the initial enthusiasm to do this upon the accession of King James quickly petered out". [45] According to Young there is a twofold explanation for this lesser attraction to the phoenix and its symbolism: James's desire was to break away from the Elizabethan rule and his personality was very different from that of his predecessor. I would like to push Alan Young's explanation a step forward and suggest that the gradual disappearance of the phoenix is a sign of shifting political support. Indeed, in the published *Minerva Britanna*, contrary to the manuscripts, Peacham

denies James the attribution of one of Elizabeth's most famous symbols — the phoenix, and dedicates it instead to Robert Cecil, Lord High Treasurer and an emblem connoisseur, [46] in his *Is coelebs, urit cura* (). The political implications of this choice need to be examined considering the genealogy of the phoenix motif in Peacham's emblems and the royal badge tradition.

III. Robert Cecil: a New Phoenix?

A convinced royalist, Peacham retains in his published *Minerva Britanna* some of the symbols from the manuscripts and hails James as Caesar Augustus, heralding a time of peace and prosperity, a father to a mourning nation, and a second Ovid, tuning the broken chords of the Irish harp, a symbol of unity of the realms. [47] A greater number of emblems are dedicated to prince Henry, the collection's dedicatee, and some iconographical and rhetorical choices seem to bear witness to Peacham's inclination to see prince Henry as Elizabeth's true successor and to be at times even critical of James, [48] an attitude which, I argue, is hidden in plain sight in the phoenix emblem.

In his emblem *Is coelebs, urit cura* Peacham depicts the traditional phoenix rising from a nest of spices and frankincense with its wings widespread. The woodcut is modelled after one of Marcus Gheeraerts the Elder's etchings illustrating Edewaerd de Dene's *De warachtighe fabulem der dieren* (1567). The ideas of renewal and rebirth developed in the first stanza of the epigram as well as the presence of the Sun shining from the upper left side corner of the picture correspond to the image of the mythical Arabian Phoenix. This representation is close to heraldry [49] and different from the 1603 and 1604 versions.



19 TO THE RIGHT HONOVRABLE ROBERT,
EARLE OF SALISBVRIE, AND LORD HIGH
TREASORER OF ENGLAND, &c.

Anagramma Authoris.

ROBERTVS CAECILIVS.
Is cœlebs, Vrit cura.

TH' Arabian PHOENIX heere, of golden plumes,
And bicie breſt, vpon a ſacred pile
Of ſweeteſt odors, thus himſelfe conſumes;
By force of PHOEBVS fiery beames, the while,
From foorth the aſhes of the former dead,
A faire, or fairer, by and by is bred.

* Alia ex aliis curа fatigat, vexat animos nova tempeſtas. Seneca.

You, you (Great Lord) this wondrous PHOENIX are,
Who waſt your ſelfe in Zeale, and whot deſire,
Of Countries good, till in the end* your care
Shall worke your end, as doth this PHOENIX fire.
But while you are conſuming in the ſame,
You breede a ſecond, your immortall Fame.

TO

"Is cœlebs, Vrit cura," *Minerva Britanna*, Henry Peacham, London, 1612

Crédits : Image used with permission of Special Collections at Middlebury College, courtesy of Timothy Billings

The motto of the emblem is based on an anagram that Peacham composed from the addressee's name "Robertus Caecilius" and could be translated as "This unmarried man is consumed by solicitude," a potential allusion to Cecil's premature widowhood. [50] The emblem praises the Lord High Treasurer for his zealous dedication to his country:

Th'Arabian Phoenix here, of golden plumes,
And bicie brest, upon a sacred pile,
Of sweetest odors, thus himselfe consumes;
By force of Phoebus fiery beames, the while,
From foorth the ashes of the former dead,
A faire, or fairer, by and by is bred.

You, you (Great Lord) this wondrous Phoenix are,
Who wast your selfe in Zeale, and whot desire,
Of Countries good, till in the end your care
Shall worke your end, as doth this Phoenix fire.
But while you are consuming in the same,
You breede a second, our immortall Fame. [51]

King James's minister works and burns for the good of his country and in doing so he also contributes to his eternal glory. Cecil's comparison to the phoenix, the mythical bird who has the ability to regenerate itself, insists on the endurance of his name and fame long after his death. Furthermore, the birth and rebirth cycles associated with the phoenix could be an allusion to Robert Cecil's political heritage since his father William Cecil served as the chief adviser of Queen Elizabeth for most of her reign and was himself Lord High Treasurer. William Cecil's name and fame also lives on through his son, Robert who continued the same political path. Robert succeeded his father as Queen Elizabeth's Lord Privy Seal and played a pivotal role in James's designation as heir to the crown. Having served under both Elizabeth and King James, Robert Cecil can be seen as a political figure of continuity, a true phoenix therefore.

Peacham is not the only one to have praised Robert Cecil as a reincarnation of his illustrious father: Thomas Palmer, author of the earliest known English emblem book, [52] intended to dedicate the manuscript of his *The sprite of trees and herbes* (1598) to William Cecil but, upon his death, changed his dedication to Robert, insisting thus upon the continuity between father and son.

The association of the phoenix with perfection harks back to Ovid who mentions the bird's uniqueness in his *Amores* and writes that "the phoenix lives on [in Elysium], only bird of his kind". [53] Seneca the Younger also uses the phoenix metaphor to denote exceptionality: "[an exceptional man] perhaps springs into existence, like the phoenix, only once in five hundred years". [54] Considering this tradition, we may conclude that *Is cœlebs, Vrit cura* is used as an *impresa* intended to honour Robert Cecil.

The political dimension is not absent from Peacham's phoenix emblem, especially so that Robert Cecil held an important position at James's court. In the published emblem, Peacham chose not to represent the sceptre, probably because Robert Cecil was not part of the royalty. However, a note in the paratext makes a subtle allusion to it. The marginal quotation, signalled into brackets, is a fragment from Act I, scene 2 of Seneca's *Agamemnon* in which the chorus laments the burden of power for a monarch:

> O regnorum magnis fallax Fortuna bonis, in praecipiti dubioque locas excelsa nimis. numquam placidam sceptra quietem certumve sui tenuere diem; [alia ex aliis cura fatigat vexatque animos nova tempestas].
>
> O Fortune, beguiler by means of the great blessings of thrones, you set the exalted in a sheer, unstable place. Never do sceptres attain calm peace or a day that is certain of itself. [They are wearied by care upon care, their spirits tossed by some new storm]. [55]

The verbal allusion to the scepter, available to the expert reader only, makes up for the missing scepter in the picture. The attribution of a symbolic scepter to Cecil may therefore be a commentary on power. Could it be an allusion to Cecil's essential role in James's accession to the throne? Or even to a resurgence of the *regnum Cecilianum* theory, or kingdom of the Cecils, that was so pregnant in the 1590s, and which accused the Cecils, both father and son, of manipulating power to fulfill their own political ambitions? [56] Whatever the commentary on Cecil's political power may be,

one cannot exclude another addressee, King James himself, the original recipient of the phoenix emblem.

Of course, the readers did not have access to the manuscript versions and could not fathom Peacham's change of heart. Nevertheless, by making Robert Cecil the recipient of the phoenix emblem, Peacham disrupts the readers' expectations, more used to seeing the phoenix associated with royalty. Furthermore, the change of the addressee in *Is coelebs, urit cura* does not evacuate the royal badge tradition and pledges on the contrary for a reading of the emblem not only as a personal *impresa* but as a political emblem as well, an interpretation that does not go without questions.

There could be only one phoenix at a time, and the change of the addressee suggests that in Peacham's eyes, it was not James any longer. The emblematist's refusal to make James the "newborn phoenix" in his *Minerva Britanna* is all the more telling as he does not reject this symbol completely but, like others, [57] prefers to attribute it either to Elizabeth Stuart or to Prince Henry, whom he considers more worthy of embodying it. Peacham wishes to see Elizabeth Stuart as the reincarnation of her illustrious godmother, sharing not only her name but also, the emblematist hopes, her virtues:

> And you great PRINCESSE, through whose Christall brest,
> ELIZAS Zeale, and Pietie doe shine,
> Heire of her Name, and Virtues, that invest
> You in our Heartes, and Loves immortall shrine. [58]

Furthermore, after Prince Henry's untimely death in 1612, Peacham took up the phoenix figure again, this time attributing it to Elizabeth Stuart's son, rightly named Henry, in a poem written upon the prince's birth in 1614, entitled *Prince Henrie revived*:

> And Royall child, who like another Sunne,
> From Rosie bed arised'st in the East,
> When that great light we saw extinct and done,
> Ah Henrie, waild of every gentle brest,

> Dart one sweet smile upon me early ghest :
> And that my Muse with thine owue heigth may flie,
> A feather shed from thy faire Phoenix nest :
> So may she teach thy Fame to strike the skie,
> And thee a Mirrour make to all Posteritie. [59]

Therefore, if the allocation of the phoenix symbol to a monarch is indeed a token of admiration and political support, choosing to not make the King the recipient of the emblem in the published collection testifies to Peacham's change of position towards the king from 1603, the date of the first manuscript, to 1612, when *Minerva Britanna* was published. Considering the evolution of the phoenix figure in Peacham's emblems and given James's loss of support at the same period, one can conclude that the phoenix emblem bears witness to a critical, albeit surreptitious, reading of the Jacobean rule. By 1612, James's rule was well established, and the enthusiasm of the early days had been replaced by doubts and sometimes harsh criticism of the monarch. The year 1605 seems to mark a turning point in the acclamations that hailed James as Elizabeth's reincarnation. As Kevin Sharpe writes, "the wrangles over union and the Powder Plot signalled that the honeymoon period of the new reign was over." [60]

A few years after James's coronation, Peacham, like others, seems to have revised his position and his refusal to grant James the phoenix symbol is evidence of his disappointment with the king, no longer deemed worthy of carrying a badge so strongly associated with Elizabeth.

Furthermore, because of the emblems' literary and political authority, the attribution or denial of symbols charged with political signification could indeed be used as a barometer of the acceptance or disapproval of a monarch. The authority of the emblems in delivering a political discourse is further enhanced by the combination of text and image which renders power visible in the eyes of the readers. Besides, because James was himself a poet and a writer and interested in shaping his image as king, political authority and authorship worked in unison. Literature, in the hands of the king, became a political weapon. This, in turn, had lead

writers, like Peacham, to use language in order to deliver contentious discourses on the king: “Employing royal language, poets turned the tables on the monarch, appropriating power against power by engaging the most radical potential that resides in language, its own multivalent, self-contradictory nature.” [61]

To conclude, the phoenix emblem, among others in Peacham’s collection, subtly reflects the growing disillusionment with James I, a disillusionment made all the more persistent by Prince Henry’s political debut in 1608, and by the contrast between father and son which was maintained by the prince himself. If James’s image seems to have faded by the 1610s, his son’s gained in credit and popularity. From one version to the next, Peacham may seem reluctant to endow James with all the attributes of the perfect monarch while his admiration for the young heir is expressed with similar enthusiasm both in the manuscripts and in the published *Minerva Britanna*. Therefore, for Peacham and for the other writers who held dear the phoenix symbol, the reallocation of the royal badge is indeed a sign of shifting political support.

On a larger scale nonetheless, the reallocation of the phoenix badge in Peacham’s *Minerva Britanna* could also echo a mutation of the royal imagery. The phoenix was a Tudor symbol and its failure to survive the monarchical transition is both due to James not embodying the renewal hoped for by Peacham and others, but also to James’s conscious refusal to make it part of his imagery. The phoenix perfectly suited Elizabeth who used the symbol as part of her political propaganda based on gender while James preferred to focus on a new style, advertising himself as God’s lieutenant on earth and a *rex pacificus* who would herald a time of peace and prosperity and who would work towards the union of the crowns. Rather than a phoenix rising upon the ashes of his predecessor, James would be Britain’s New Solomon.

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English as by the strangers: vvith the speeches and songes, deliuered in the seuerall pageants, London, Thomas Man the younger, 1604.

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Notes

[1] Graham Parry, *The golden age restor'd: The culture of the Stuart Court, 1603-42*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1981, p. 1.

[2] "[Elizabeth's] successor was a comparatively obscure prince, called from the oversight of one of Europe's minor kingdoms where on the fringes of civilisation he had ruled over a turbulent and poverty-stricken people." James Craigie *The* Basilicon Doron *of King James VI*, vol. 2, Edinburgh, William Blackwood and Sons, 1944, p. 2.

[3] Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the politics of literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and their contemporaries, Baltimore*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983, p. 33.

[4] Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz, *The king's two bodies: A study in medieval political theology*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2016, p. 385-401.

[5] Cristopher Haigh, *Elizabeth I*, New York, Longman, 2000, p. 31-32.

[6] Radford Maverick, "The Mornings Joy", in *Three Treatises Religiously Handled*, London, John Windet, 1603, fol. 13^{r}.

[7] Thomas Holland, *A Sermon Preached at Pauls in London the 17. Of November Ann. Dom.*, Oxford, Joseph Barnes, 1599.

[8] Thomas Churchyard, *A handeful of gladsome verses, given to the Queenes Majesty at Woodstocke this prograce*, Oxford, Joseph Barnes, 1592, sig. C1r.

[9] Christopher Haigh, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

[10] The phoenix symbol was briefly used again in 1605 to celebrate James's successful thwarting of the Gunpowder Plot.

[11] Thomas Dekker, *The magnificent entertainment giuen to King Iames, Queene Anne his wife, and Henry Frederick the Prince, vpon the day of his Maiesties tryumphant passage (from the Tower) through his honourable citie (and chamber) of London, being the 15. of March. 1603. As well by the*

English as by the strangers: vvith the speeches and songes, deliuered in the seuerall pageants, London, Thomas Man the younger, 1604, sigs. F1^{v}-F2.

[12] Wolfgang Harms, "The Authority of the Emblem", *Emblematica: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Emblem Studies*, 5.1 (1991), p. 6.

[13] For a detailed analysis of this supposed genealogy, see: Daniel S. Russel, "Emblems and Hieroglyphics: Some Observations on the Beginnings and the Nature of Emblematic Forms", *Emblematica: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Emblem Studies*, 1.2 (Fall 1986), p. 227-243.

[14] Henry Peacham, *Minerva Britanna*, London, Walter Dight, p. A2.

[15] In his address to the reader, Peacham remarks: "Many and very excellent [emblems] have I seene of his Maiesties owne Invention, who hath taken therein in his younger years great delight, and pleasure." *Ibid.*, p. A3^{v}.

[16] Graham Parry, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

[17] Henry Peacham, *Graphice or the most auncient and excellent art of Drawing, and Limming, disposed into three Bookes*, London, John Browne, 1612 and Henry Peacham, *The art of drawing with the pen, and limming in water colours, more exactlie then heretofore taught and enlarged: with the true manner of Painting upon glasse, the order of making your furnace, Annealing, etc.*, London, Richard Braddock, 1606.

[18] "I have herein but imitated the best approved Authours in this kind: as Alciat, Sambucus, Junius, Reusnerus, and others: they being such, as either in regard of their transcended dignitie, and vertues, deserve of all to be honoured: to others whom for their excellent parts and qualities, I have ever loved, and esteemed." Henry Peacham, *Minerva Britanna*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

[19] Alan Young, "Jacobean Authority and Peacham's Manuscript Emblems", in Michael Bath and Daniel S. Russell (eds.), *Deviceful settings: the English Renaissance emblem and its contexts*, New York, AMS Press, 1999, p. 39.

[20] Claude Paradin, *Heroicall Devises*, London, William Kearney, 1591, p. 110.

[21] Jean-Jacques Boissard, *Emblèmes Latins,* trans. Pierre Joly, Metz, Abraham Fabert, 1595, p. 40.

[22] During her five-year reign (1553-1558), Mary Tudor severely persecuted the Protestants and burned at the stake more than 300 people accused of heresy.

[23] Théodore de Bèze, *Icones, id est veræ imagines virorum doctrina simul et pietate illustrium [...] quibus adiectae sunt nonnullae picturæ quas Emblemata vocant VI*, Geneva, Jean de Laon, 1580. For more examples of emblematists using the phoenix symbol, see Henry Greene, *Shakespeare and the emblem writers*, London, Trübner & Co., 1870, p. 380-390.

[24] For a reproduction of the manuscript emblems, refer to: Alan Young, *The English emblem tradition: Henry Peacham's Manuscript Emblem Books*, vol. 5, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1998, p. 20 and 79.

[25] The association between cedars and kings may be biblical as Psalm 104:16 states that both kings and cedars are of divine origins: "The trees of the Lord are full *of sap*; The cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted." *The BIBLE, Authorized King James Version*, Oxford World's Classics, 2008, p. 35.

[26] Mason Tung, "Fables in Emblems: A study of Peacham's use of Æsop and Æsopics in *Minerva Britanna*", *Studies in Iconography*, 12 (1988), p. 47.

[27] William Camden, *Remains concerning Britain*, London, John Russell Smith, 1870, p. 373.

[28] Herodotus, *History*, London, John Murray, vol. 2, 1880, p. 73.

[29] Roel Van den Broek, *The Myth of the Phoenix According to Classical and Early Christian Traditions*, Leiden, Brill, 1972, p. 14.

[30] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, London, Penguin Books, 1991, 10, p. 3-6.

[31] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, trans. Stephen A. Barney, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, XII, p. 10-11.

[32] Michael Drayton, “Amour 3” and “Amour 6”, in *Ideas mirrour, Amours in quatorzains*, London, James Roberts, 1594.

[33] Daniel Russel, *The emblem and device in France*, Lexington, French Forum, 1985, p. 161-181.

[34] Alan Young, *Henry Peacham’s Manuscript Emblem Books*, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

[36] The precise date of the manuscript can be deduced from Peacham’s address to King James as “King of Great Britain”, a title proclaimed on 20 October 1604.

[37] In 1603, Sir Anthony Standen was missioned to Italy by King James to announce his succession to the English Throne which resulted in Standen being accused by Sir Robert Cecil of trying to convert the King and his wife to Catholicism. Standen was arrested and sent to the Tower of London in January 1604.

[38] In the address of the 1604 manuscript, Peacham writes: “When I had clearly seen not so long ago that one or two of our emblems, O Highest king, would be accepted with ready hand by your majesty (while you were on your way to London via Huntington), exulting in my new enthusiasm or rather boldness, I ventured indeed to turn your Royal Gift into emblems. This is certainly a novel undertaking, arduous and worthy of any Apelles. However, I did not proceed rashly, but the advice, indeed the persuasion of, the best scholars […].” Alan R. Young, *Henry Peacham’s Manuscript Emblem Books*, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

[39] Alan Young, “The Phoenix Reborn: The Jacobean Appropriation of an Elizabethan Symbol”, in E. Hageman & K. Conway (eds.), *Resurrecting Elizabeth I in seventeenth-century England*, London, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, p. 68-81, 2007, p. 75.

[40] Henry Peacham, “Madrigal”, in Alan R. Young, “Henry Peacham, Ben Jonson and the Cult of Elizabeth-Oriana,” *Music & Letter*s, vol. 60, 3, (1979), p. 308.

[41] Frances Yates, *Astraea: The imperial theme in the sixteenth century*, London, Pimlico, 1975, p. 38.

[42] Joshua Sylvester, “Corona Dedicatoria”, quoted in John Vinycomb, *Fictitious and Symbolic Creatures in Art: With Special Reference to their Use in British Heraldry*, London, Chapmann and Hall, 1906, p. 175

[43] William Shakespeare, *King Henry VIII, or, All is true*, ed. Gordon McMullan, London ; New York, Bloomsbury Arden, 2000.

[44] Thomas Cecil, *Sorrowes Joy; or, A Lamentation for Our Late Deceased Soveraigne, with a Triumph for the Succession of James*, Cambridge, J. Legat, 1603, p. 22.

[45] Alan Young, “The Phoenix Reborn: The Jacobean Appropriation of an Elizabethan Symbol”, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

[46] Robert Cecil, the owner of Hatfield House from 1607, commissioned the Four Seasons Tapestries embroidered with 170 emblems which combining mottoes and pictures, probably inspired by emblems from Geffrey Whitney’s *A choice of emblems* (1586). The emblematic sources of the tapestries were thoroughly analysed by Michael Bath in his study *The Four Seasons Tapestries at Hatfield House* (2013).

[47] These representations appear in the emblems “Ex utroque Immortalitas” and “Hibernica Respub: ad Iacobum Regem.” Henry Peacham, *Minerva Britanna*, *op. cit.*, p. 145 and 45.

[48] See my article: Cezara Bobeica, “Channelling meaning from the margins. The hermeneutical potential of paratextual quotations in Henry Peacham’s *Minerva Britanna* (1612)”, *XVII-XVIII*, 77 (2020), n.p.

[49] Arthur Charles Fox-Davies, *The Art of Heraldry: An Encyclopædia of Armory*, London, T. C. & E. C. Jack, 1904, p. 173.

[50] Cecil’s wife Elizabeth Brooke, whom he married in 1589, died in 1597, leaving him with two small children.

[51] Henry Peacham, *Minerva Britanna*, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

[52] *Two hundred poosees* (1565-1566). The book exists only in manuscript and was recently published by John Manning, *The emblems of Thomas Palmer: two hundred poosees, Sloane MS 3794*, New York, AMS Press, 1988.

[53] Ovid, *The art of love*, trans. Rolfe Humphries, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1957, p. 49.

[54] Seneca the Younger, *Epistulae Morales*, trans. Richard Mott Gummere, London, Loeb Classical Library, 1967, p. 278-279.

[55] Seneca the Younger, *Agamemnon*, trans. J. G. Fitch, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2004, p. 130-131.

[56] Natalie Mears, “Regnum Cecilianum? A Cecilian Perspective of the Court”, in John Guy (ed.), *Reign of Elizabeth I*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 46-47.

[57] See Georgiana Ziegler’s analysis of the phoenix symbol in “A Second Phoenix: The Rebirth of Elizabeth I in Elizabeth Stuart”, in E. Hageman & K. Conway (eds.), *Resurrecting Elizabeth I in seventeenth-century England*, Cranbury, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007, p. 111-131.

[58] Henry Peacham, *Minerva Britanna*, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

[59] *Ibid.*, p. A2^{v}.

[60] Kevin Sharpe, *Image Wars: Promoting Kings and Commonwealths in England, 1603-1660*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2010, p. 126.

[61] Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the politics of literature*, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

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