

# VISIBLE LANGUAGE

*The quarterly concerned with all that is involved in our being literate*

Volume XX Number 1 Winter 1986 ISSN 0022-2224

*Special Issue*

## PATTERN POETRY: A SYMPOSIUM

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VISIBLE LANGUAGE, Volume XX, Number 1, Winter 1986. Published quarterly in January, April, July, and October. Postmaster: send address changes to Visible Language, 2643 Eaton Road, Cleveland, OH 44118. Copyright 1986 by Visible Language. Second-class postage paid at Cleveland, Ohio, and at additional mailing offices.

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Visible Language                      Telephone 216/371-2576  
2643 Eaton Road  
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	<i>One Year</i>	<i>Two Years</i>	<i>Three Years</i>
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Institutional subscription	\$30.00	\$56.00	\$78.00

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# Foreword

## Dick Higgins

It is no secret to readers of *Visible Language* that there exists a body of visual poetry from before 1900 known by various names: “*carmina figurata*,” “*technopeignia*,” “shaped poems” and “pattern poetry” among others. The journal has published several essays on the subject. However, the extent of this material comes to most non-specialists as a surprise, since they seldom realize that pattern poetry (our preferred term) is known from not many but most literary cultures of the past two thousand years, and that something like 2200 pieces have been documented. It is therefore a false assumption, though a widespread one, that visual poetry is only a phenomenon of the twentieth century — of the futurists, dadaists, concrete poets. In fact, visual poetry is probably as old as western poetry itself, with pieces dating back to the Hellenistic Greek and perhaps to the so-called Phaistos Disk (ca. 1700 B.C.) in the Heraklion Museum on Crete, as Piotr Rypson suggests in his article. In ancient times the distinction between poetry and prose was more blurred than today so, even if the piece is not a poem as such, at least, as shaped prose, it is a fitting start to our story.

The terminology of pattern poetry remains ambiguous. There is no generally accepted definition of what it includes; origins of the names for pattern poetry are unknown and these names serve functions which do not overlap exactly. Neither is there a consensus on either critical or technical terms. For example, *carmina quadrata* (square poems) has been used to describe at least three, quite different kinds of pattern poems. As for the problem of defining the subject, first one must define what it encompasses, and this is the main purpose of my forthcoming book, *Pattern Poetry: Guide to an Unknown Literature* (State University of New York Press, late 1986), of which my contribution to this issue is an expanded chapter.

A telescoped overview of pattern poetry is that, however it began, it flourished in late antiquity, in the Carolingian renaissance, and in the late renaissance and baroque in Europe, as *citra-kāvya*s in the many works on rhetoric in Middle and Late Sanskrit and the Prakrits in India, and dying off to some undetermined extent in between these rather well-defined waves of popularity. How much continuity there is among these waves is a moot point. Ulrich Ernst’s introduction to the field covers works from each wave — including a piece by Apollinaire which represents modern visual poetry — and presents the case for continuity in the European materials. The alternative view, which happens to be my own, is that each time pattern poetry has flourished it has done so with an incomplete view of its predecessors and that this accounts for many of the differences among each wave of pattern poems. The two views

are not mutually exclusive. In order to prove my alternative view one must determine what was, in fact, known of works of the past during each wave and what appears to have been forgotten following it. To prove Ernst's argument incontrovertibly one must know a representative sample of pattern poems from all waves and contemporary discussions of them, and then analyze the material for how comprehensively the poems reflect their pasts.

Outside the West, Herbert Franke analyzes the main *hui-wen* as a genre within Chinese literature, while Kalānāth Jhā relates the *citra-kāvya*s to western pattern poetry, pointing out some of their similarities and differences. The body of *citra-kāvya*s is enormous; they exist in at least eight of the languages of India plus Burmese, and Jha is currently assembling an archive at Bhagalpur University on the basis of which an historical approach as opposed to a taxonomic one will be possible.

One of the main sub-genres of pattern poetry is the labyrinth or as Ernst has described it, the "grid-poem" (*Gittergedicht*), which relates to the *carmina cancellata* of the Carolingians but which flourished particularly in the renaissance and baroque, and in Eastern Europe as well as on the Iberian Peninsula. Piotr Rypson deals with the history of the labyrinth, its nature and meanings, with the theories that it evolved out of cabalistic texts (which many labyrinths resemble), out of the Roman period (but Greek language) *tabulae iliaca*e, and so on. Ana Hatherly, whose untranslated Portuguese book, *A Experiência do Prodigio*, deals with and anthologizes the labyrinths of the baroque in Portugal (which runs into the eighteenth century), discusses here the specifics of how labyrinths in general are read, what they mean, and offers a basic taxonomy.

The largest of all bodies of pattern poems is the German, to which one might add the works in Neo-Latin by Germans. Therefore it is fitting that we have texts on two areas of German pattern poetry: the pastorales of the Order of Pegnesis (which still exists in Nürnberg) and the shaped musical lyrics of Georg Weber, by Jeremy Adler and by Karl F. Otto, respectively. Adler's study, like Rypson's, is genre criticism, while Otto's is one of the few essays anywhere on the pattern poems of a particular artist, defining his style and indicating his place in the overall picture.

By no means do these essays exhaust the field. We do not yet have essays on French pattern poetry, which is largely unresearched, although David Seaman (1972) took steps in that direction. We need texts on the methodology of collecting and classifying pieces, since my own work will not exhaust the field. There is nothing whatever in English on Dutch, Scandinavian, Czech (Bohemian), Hungarian, or Russian-Ukrainian pattern poetry, almost nothing on the Hebrew materials, nothing on most of the forms and sub-genres, and perhaps most importantly not even the beginnings of a semiotics of pattern poetry without which the socio-historical meanings of the poems are all but impossible to determine with any clarity. Since the majority of pattern poems are occasional verse, this last creates an important lacuna. We need more genre criticism, and more study relating pattern poetry to its allied areas such as the *poetices artificiosae* (art-ful poetic forms) as the renaissance called many non-conventional genres such as proteus poems, rebuses, and acrostics (which are

not necessarily visual poems and thus are something different from pattern poetry though somehow connected), to shaped prose or to such graphic music notations as those of Baude Cordier (early fifteenth century), who wrote heart-shaped and circular pieces, or Ghiseline Danckerts (1510-65), who wrote at least three cruciform motets. What do these things have in common? As yet we cannot answer except in the most speculative terms. Furthermore, we need essays on many of the most interesting practitioners of the area, such as Spain's José González Estrada (ca. 1830-83), who attempted to base an entire poetics on acrostics and pattern poetry, Juan Caramuel de Lobkowitz (1606-82) relating his pattern poetry to his overall output, and many more. We cannot yet confidently answer the question, "Is this a good pattern poem and, if you think it is, why?" We can deal with the work as text and we can deal with the graphic nature of a piece, but as yet we have not criteria for dealing with the intermedial nature of the pieces, lying as they do between visual art and literature, so that we cannot describe the interaction between what the eye sees and what the mind comprehends. How do the visual aspects improve (or harm) the work? We have no common vocabulary for answering this question either.

There has been very little critical material on pattern poetry except in highly specialized journals, where it is usually just mentioned in passing. The purpose of this issue is to collect a sampling of essays on the subject in order to establish the nature and problems of pattern poetry as an area of comparative literature and of literary and art history, and to present for the first time to a diverse public a gathering of opinion on the subject. They are, therefore, only first steps and paradigms for future discussion. Each of the contributors has published elsewhere on pattern poetry. But this is the first collection anywhere of papers by different scholars and critics; with it we hope to show the larger public some of the wealth of pattern poetry and to demonstrate that it is not an eccentric phenomenon but an integral part of poetry as a whole. To ignore any part of our literatures is both to deny ourselves the joy of knowing it and to weaken our understanding of the overall fabric. It is with this conviction that I have brought together this small collection from a large and as yet largely unknown field, which has its masterpieces and conventions, its treasures waiting to be found and shared.

# The Figured Poem: Towards a Definition of Genre

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*A poetological analysis of the genre of pattern poetry is presented which distinguishes among various forms of picture text composition, and attempts to classify the various sorts of carmina figurata typologically while dealing with the question of continuity and discontinuity of figured poems in ancient, medieval, and modern times.*

## I Poetological problems and preconditions

Recent years have seen an increased interest in the theory of literary genres, an interest reflected in the quality as well as the diversity of research being done on this subject.<sup>1</sup> Such favorable conditions do not, however, remove the difficulty of defining a particular literary genre, and the figured poem, about which very little has as yet been written, is a case in point.<sup>2</sup>

Anyone attempting to define the *carmen figuratum* descriptively — in terms of its historical development as opposed to a normative, ahistorical understanding of the genre — will face peculiar difficulty because no real history of the genus and no representative anthology (let alone a *corpus*) exists,<sup>3</sup> and, indeed, most of the relevant material must still be lying, undiscovered, in libraries. This fact, along with the absence of specific literary-historical and theoretical studies,<sup>4</sup> might seem to cast doubt on the wisdom at this stage of attempting a definition of the genre at all; but, on the other hand, it would seem illogical to embark on a quest for concrete examples of a genus of whose contours one has little clear idea. A mixed, deductive and, at the same time, inductive procedure would seem best under these circumstances, laying down the broad outlines of the genre as a sort of working hypothesis, but keeping these outlines so flexible that they are able to accommodate all the material that better acquaintance with the textual source might bring. This procedure is based, of course, on the premise that the figured poem, like the sonnet or the elegy, is a literary category in its own right and not just a typographical textual form; this need only be mentioned here for it will, as the very starting point of the investigation, be established in the course of the following pages.

Considered historically, the figured poem has always had artistic ambitions; it has always been a mixed poetic and art form. It would seem reasonable, therefore, to keep the notion of genre for this group of texts and to reserve the



concept of “text sort” for works which manifestly do *not* have this specific aim. Without wanting to claim any fixed place in the genealogy of literary categories for the figured poem, it may be worth pointing out that — in terms of the conventional triad of lyric, epic, and dramatic — it belongs rather to the lyric genre, albeit in a wider sense than that of Goethe’s *Erlebnislyrik*. Any concept of “lyric” which would include the *carmen figuratum* must have its roots in the lyric poetry of antiquity, of the middle ages, and of the early modern period and extend to occasional and formalistic poetry, too.

If one departs from this traditional model, one may be able to find a new generic principle in the distinction between aural and visual poetry, the latter calling not only on the power of reading, but, somewhat like the fine arts, on the power of interpretative vision as well. In this new system the figured poem, like other forms of visual poetry (e.g., epic visual texts<sup>5</sup>) would be allied to the drama or television play.

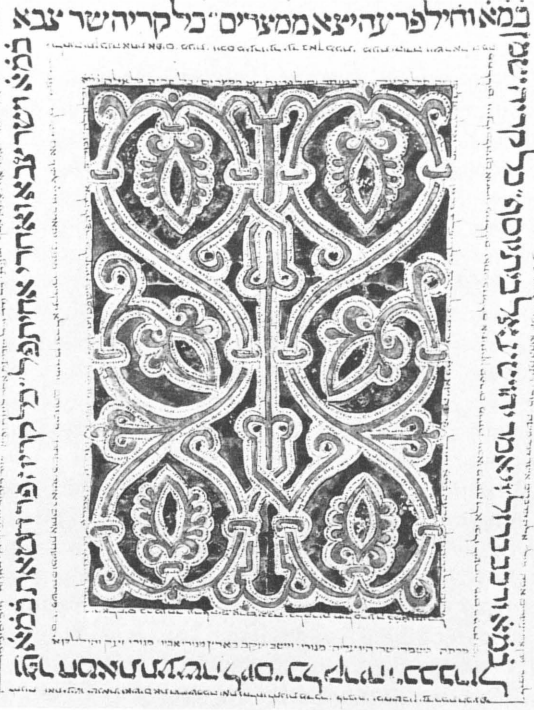
A further problem in the definition of the figured poem is, then, its mixed nature, not only on the literary level but also on the graphic or the pictorial. For being, as it were, on the border of two forms the *carmen figuratum* participates in the story of painting as well, although in contrast to strictly inter-medial forms or to works of (fine) art which have a textual ingredient, the literary character of the figured poem is always in evidence. Nevertheless, it is a methodological postulate that the definition of *carmen figuratum* must account both for the textual and for the figured or graphic aspects of the form. The figured poem is, finally, an international genre, extending far beyond the boundaries of European literatures to lyric writing in Turkish,<sup>6</sup> Hebrew,<sup>7</sup> Persian,<sup>8</sup> Indian,<sup>9</sup> and Chinese.<sup>10</sup>

## II Definition and description

As I understand it, the figured poem is in the broadest sense a lyrical text (up to modern times generally also a versified text) constructed in such a way that the words — sometimes with the help of purely pictorial means — form a graphic figure which in relation to the verbal utterance has both a mimetic and symbolic function.

The decorative shaping of texts found in medieval codices<sup>11</sup> or in early printed texts<sup>12</sup> differs clearly from the *carmen figuratum* inasmuch as it generally lacks both artistic intention in the text which is manifestly renounced — usually a random piece of prose — and an aesthetic correlation between the textual and the graphic levels.<sup>13</sup>

The verbal substratum distinguishes the figured poem from the *numeri figurati* of ancient and medieval arithmetic<sup>14</sup> as well as from the decorative forms of figured notation found variously in the Renaissance and Baroque periods.<sup>15</sup> Its visual element distinguishes it from straightforward linear texts composed according to concealed patterns.<sup>16</sup> The calligram which, especially in the rabbinical tradition of literal biblical exegesis (Masora) employs the technique of micrography (Figure 1), has a flexible written line and thus greater expressive potential, but it is not based on a verse-text nor does it aspire to any — or to any strict — relation between the verbal and the pictorial levels of



## Leidensgeschichte unsers Herrn Jesu Christi.

**N** an den kam, **U** er in'n gangen; **D**ort hat er voller **F**urcht und **E**ram **S**ein **L**eidn angfangen. **E**r schmeigt vor **A**ngst und hat: **D**er **m**öcht von ihm **g**ehen. „**D**och, **V**ater! ist es möglich nicht, **S**o mag dein **W**ill' geschehen!“ **E**ich da! ein bracht ihm **T**reib; **D**och **J**ehud kam von ferne **M**it einer großen **J**udenschaa, **M**it und . **D**em war sein **M**eister lieb — **E**r zog sein mit **E**ilen **U**nd **h**ieß das dem **W**alchs ab; **N**ur konnt' es heilen. **D**ies aber sollt' die **J**udenroß' **N**iet **g**raufamer noch **m**öchen. **S**ie banden ihn mit fest, **V**erhöheten ihn mit **L**oschen. **S**o bracht man ihn zur **E**stadt hinaus, **W**o ihn die **f**rauen; **E**in mit der **m**oagt gar, **I**hn in zu schlagen. **D**er folgt dem **M**eister nach, **W**as ihm nun **w**erd' geschehen; **I**n **K**aisers **H**of hatt' die **W**ago **D**er'm ihn **g**esehen, **W**o er sich **w**ahrte seine **U**nd **s**ing gleich an zu **s**agen: **O**s er **w**ohl diem **M**enschen **k**enn? **W**enn's **w**oß' wär', sollt' er's **s**agen. **D**och sagt: „**A**h **f**inn' ihn nicht!“ **U**nd **s**ing auch an zu **s**chwören; **D**er **H**erlan **s**ah ihn **g**nedig an; **S**chon **l**ieß der sich **h**ören. **A**ls **m**an ihn zum **P**ilatus **b**racht, **K**onnt' er **k**ein **S**chuld **n**icht **f**inden; **J**edoch **b**efahl er, daß man ihn **A**n **e**in **I** sollt' **b**inden. **M**an **g**ab ihm und **S**treich, **W**om **h**ieß zu den **D**oß er **a**hemüthig an der **I** **H**at **m**iederzinsen **m**üssen. **A**ls **n**un **v**ordet das **G**eißeln **w**ar, **W**odurch sein **L**eid **j**eristet, **D**a **h**at **m**an **e**inen **D**ornen **I**hn **s**chändlich **a**ufgeriegt. **S**tatt **e**ines **m**ußte er **M**it **e**iner **w**ollen. **P**ilatus **s**prach **d**as **W**erfel aus **U**nd **b**rach den **v**or **a**llen. **D**a **b**rauchte **n**an **e**in **s**chweres **D**as er **s**elbst **m**ußte **t**ragen, **U**nd **f**ührte ihn zur **E**stadt hinaus **M**it **S**tecken und mit **S**chlagen **D**ie **h**obte **m**an **n**ammete **A**n **a**llen **D**orten **s**challen, **S**ei mit **d**em **s**chweren **S**etzt **e**ist zur **E**rde **f**allen. **M**an **b**racht' das **h**ier's **M**arterkruz, **A**ls: **E**in **N**agel **w**ar **a**uch **d**abei. **D**ie **s**prechendeller **L**auter! **A**ls **a**uf den **N**ickhagen **k**am, **T**ragt **m**an **a**us' ihn **m**eder, **U**nd **b**estet **d**ann mit an **S**ein **K**ruzschneiden **G**lieder. **D**rei **w**olle **S**tanden, **H**erst **L**itz' zu **die** **g**roßten **S**chmerzen. **D**arum, **o** **S**ünder! **w**en' **d**aran, **U**nd **n**imm **e**s **n**ur zu **h**erz: **D**urch's **L**oes **der** **W**eltler **l**ich **D**ie **i**n **die** **K**riber, **W**ie's **i**n **der** **b**erichtet und **S**t. **L**ucas **und** **so** **w**eiter. **I**n **sein**em **f**erben **W**orten **er** **D**em **h**errn **D**urk **und** **klaget**; **M**it **G**alt' und **E**iß **g**efällt **e**in **D**at **sein** **D**urk **g**elabet. **D**ie **n**un **verlor** den **G**lang, **Als** **J**esus **w**ollte **s**terben; **D**er **w**ar **gan**z mit **g**efäßt, **D**em **j**um **V**erderben. **E**s **w**ollte **s**elbst **der** **a**uch **D**ie **T**raungrut **b**eweißen: **M**an **h**ab **den** **m**itten **d**urch **W**en **s**elbst **n**un **gar** **j**erreiben. **N**achdem **n**un **alles** **w**ar **v**ollbracht, **S**ein **L**eidn **h**ab **zu** **E**nde, **E**mpfah **er** **sein** **l**ieben **G**eiß **I**n **sein**es **V**aters . **N**ach **d**ie'm **er**iegt **er** **sein** **Kein** **W**ort **konnt'** **er** **m**ehr **s**prechen; **D**er **mit** **aller** **W**ittigkeit **D**as **ih**n **n**un **hat** **b**erehen. **L**angius **s**am **mit** **sein**em **hat** **ih**n **das** **d**urchstochen, **W**odurch **sein** **h**erzbar **Herz**es **I**n **un**serm **H**erz **g**elassen. **M**an **h**atte **d**iese **V**ein **I**n **n**ur **emp**unden, **U**nd, **st**ehend **n**ächst **dem** **do**, **h**iebt **er** **s**elbst **alle** **W**unden. **M**an **n**ahm **ih**n **man** **dem** **herab**, **A**ls **Th**eilten **sch**en; **D**ie **h**erz, **W**ie's **die** **Z**ähren **an**, **D**ie **er** **d**abei **ver**essen! **M**an **hat** **ih**n **e**in **g**elast, **W**en **aus**gaham; **M**it **S**olden **und** mit **S**perren'n **K**am'n **hin** **die** **h**eiligen **Str**asen. **S**chon **aber** **w**ar **im** **G**roße **n**icht **D**er **L**eidn **m**ehr **v**orhanden. **E**in **d**ort **ver**fündet **ih**n. **E**r **is**o **vom** **G**raß **er**landen. **A**us **L**ieb' **er** **ist** **im** **G**roße **D**en **K**reuzestab **g**elorden. **U**nd **hat** **und** **n**un **die** **H**immel **D**urch **sein** **er**moeden. **A**men.

Figure 1. Illuminated page of a Hebrew bible with Masora text as frame and micrographic bible text on either side of the interwoven gold figuring (Ms. Heb. 4<sup>o</sup> 790, fol. 114<sup>r</sup>; Jewish National Library and University Library, Jerusalem; Burgos 1260).

signification.<sup>17</sup> Non-metrified texts are again found in medieval diagrams such as the *arbor consanguinitatis* or figures of the cosmos<sup>18</sup> or in the allegorical images of Joachim of Fiore<sup>19</sup> which, for this reason, cannot be counted as figured poems. The so-called “calligrammes” (1912-17) of the French poet G. Apollinaire may be subsumed under our definition as modern forms of the figured poem, the principle difference from traditional models being that their texts are not versified in the conventional manner.

Most avant-garde concrete poetry lies outside the bounds of the figured poem. This is true not only for the purely phonetic products of sound poetry, which pose no problem here, but also for the pictorial texts which step over the boundary into graphic art, or again, for constructs whose textual element is not any way mimetic. These reservations do, however, still leave a considerable amount of concrete poetry whose optically-composed texts (often called pictograms) may be included in the genre; indeed, their lineage is frequently evident in the traditional figures (tree, pyramid, etc.) to which they allude.

The figured poem often shares the enigmatic, coded structure of the pictorial riddle or rebus<sup>20</sup> (Figure 2); it does not, however, either wholly or partially replace linguistic units with pictures which the reader then has to decode conceptually, but creates a single picture or complex of pictures either solely or primarily by arranging the written text.

In the figured poem the text manifestly takes precedence over its configuration — we are dealing with a *poetic* genre, not with a genre of fine art — and this distinguishes it from the monumental epigram, in which the text is a subordinate element of the artifact. This must, of course, still allow for the influence of monumental inscriptions, arranged symmetrically on a vertical axis, on figured poems especially of the *epicedium* variety.

The emblem — with its generally triadic structure of *motto*, *pictura*, and *subscriptio*<sup>21</sup> — differs from the figured poem in the paratactic relation it establishes between image and text (Figure 3) where the *carmen figuratum* creates a structural synthesis. This is not to deny that the relation between *pictura* and *subscriptio* in the emblem has a lot in common between figure and text in visual poetry.

The figured poem has frequently been confused with the so-called “picture poem” (*Bildgedicht*) on the grounds that baroque poetics often referred to figured poems as “picture-rhymes” (*Bilderreime*) and, indeed, some *carmina figurata* are concerned with pictures. The morphological difference, however,

Figure 2. Anonymous rebus with typographic text and printed colored woodcuts ca. 1820/30 (H. Vogel, *Bilderbogen, Papiersoldat, Würfelspiel und Lebensrad* (Leipzig 1981) fig. 112).



is entirely clear: G. Kranz<sup>22</sup> has established beyond a doubt that the "picture poem" is one which describes pictures, and such poems are rarely figured.

The species of figured poem which develops a second textual level ("intext") as the main figured component over and above the normal text represents an extension of the acrostic technique of letter compilation, and in this respect such poems have been allied to the mannered versification (*versus retrogradi*, anagrams, acrostics, etc.) for which E. Kuhs has coined the generic term "letter poetry" (*Buchstabendichtung*) and which, she claims, has the power to form a genre of its own.<sup>23</sup>

As for E. Kuhs herself, she excludes figured poems altogether from her theory of "letter poetry"; A. Liede, on the other hand, understands them, along with other mannerist forms, as being a sort of nonsense poetry.<sup>24</sup> The serious intention of most of these poems, with their mythical or allegorical levels of signification, would seem to confute this notion. Liede's strict generic distinction between *versus cancellati* and *carmina figurata*<sup>25</sup> appears equally inappropriate in view of the close typological as well as historical connection between the two forms, although it must be observed that intextual forms, such as acrostic, *mesostichon*, and *telestichon* which lack a developed figurative structure cannot be counted as figured poems. However extensively many figured poems may employ additional artistic letter compilations and however close the relation may be between the literary form of the *chronostichon* and of the grid poem (the chronogram has a numeral intext, and the grid poem a verbal one), these other forms manifestly lack the mimetic quality which is a constitutive element of the genre of figured poetry.

### III Types of figured poem

Having defined and delimited the genre of figured poetry vis-à-vis related categories and forms (while not, of course, denying the existence of mixed forms), we are now in a position to typify the various manifestations of the genre, taking account of their historical sequence.

#### 1 The outline poem

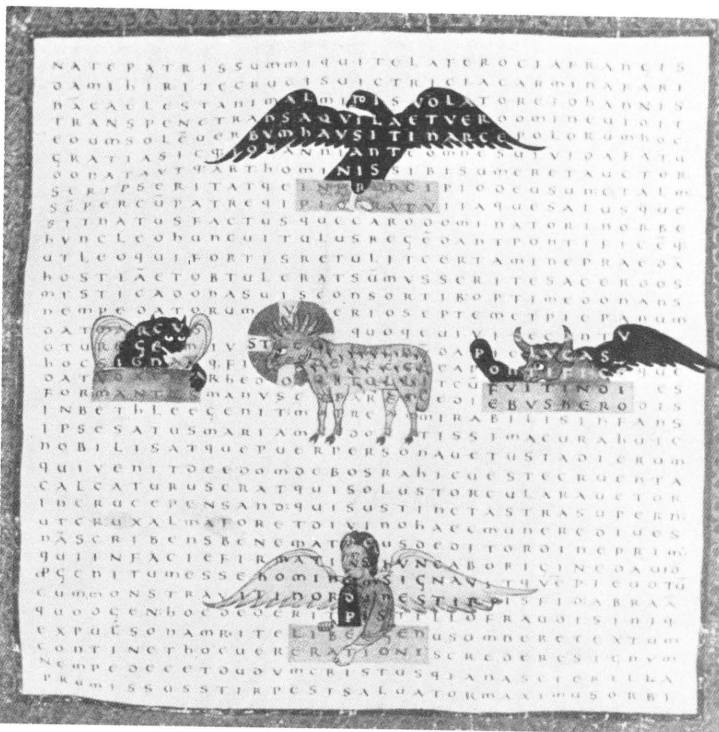
The wing poem of Simias of Rhodes (Figure 4) is an example of the earliest type of western visual poetry.<sup>26</sup> The figured text consists of twelve lines in choriambic meter divided into two equal and symmetrical prosodic blocks. Lines 1-6 lose one metrical foot per line, and lines 7-12 gain in the same fashion: there is, thus, an exact correspondence between lines 1 and 12, 2 and 11, and so on.<sup>27</sup> Graphically this results in a pair of wings which, in accordance with the strict mythical utterance of the poem, symbolizes the god Eros, who is addressed not only visually but also verbally (lines 6 and 9). Eros is not, however, depicted in the conventional manner of the putti as a tender, playful god of love but as the demiurge of the universe with all the connotations of a mythical soteriology, his theogony being thematized according to the distinctive teaching of the Orphics.<sup>28</sup>

**C**ASTALIDES DOMI NOVIA TVTVMTRADIT EPALMAM  
**C**ONSTANTINVS HABET BELLORVM VIRE TROPHEVM  
**V**INDICE SVBDEXTRARENDENS FELICITERORDEM  
**C**ONSILLIIS ITERVM SVBENS ET CVNCTAREFERRE  
**R**OMATIBIBELLIS CVMSAEYALINNECTAREPESIT  
**V**INCLAVIGIVIRTVS MITSNONARMATINHOTEM  
**S**ICMAGNOPACIENS DOCVITERTAMINEPARCENS  
**Q**VIDPIETAS DONETPOSTDIRAPIAMINECLEMENS  
**N**VNCMIHIAMTOTODACILESHELICOMACAMAENE  
**N**ITITITECONPOSITASITITEMPORAMITIPALMAS  
**N**ECTITITEDEMETRIS VIRTVVM CARMINAETOMNES  
**C**ONCINITEVTFRVCTV FELIXETPINCIPEDIGNA  
**D**ETSTIRPECTAATASTEXENS QVAVSPAGINAVERSY  
**H**INCVOVEATITVLOVOTORYMCARMINAPOLENS  
**P**IERHOSMIHI PHOEBETVODENVMINEPRAESTENT  
**F**ONTES CASTALIAETYSILICETITREPERAGRANS  
**M**ENSIVACELSAPETELAEVMSIZANGEREVERSV  
**M**VSAVELITANTOIAMVNC SVBPRINCIPELAETA  
**L**AVDIS DONAIFERENS RESONANS INSIGNIARAMIS  
**V**INCENTVMIVSOSAVDAXMIHIFIDATRIVMPHOS  
**E**TERITVMIVITISTOTEDDERENOBILEPALMAS  
**A**ONEDVMQVAVSILLEFLVENSALITVNDARI GATAS  
**S**ANCRESALVSMVNDIARMIS INSIGNIBVSARDENS  
**C**RISPRAVIS MELIORTEGARMINELAETAESCUNDO  
**C**LIOMVSAONANSTAFATVVLCHRAIVVENTAE  
**N**OBILETVDECVS PATRITVQVEALMEQVIRITVM  
**E**TSPESVRDISERISHOSMENSISCARMINICAESAR  
**T**VVINCENS PACISGRATISSIMAFOEDERASEMPER  
**I**NDVLGET FACILIS GENTES ADVNGEROGANTES  
**F**ACQVETVIVISGAVDENS VIRTVITVBSAVCTIS  
**C**ONSTANTINVS ITEMGLAVSORBIS GLORIA SAECLI  
**R**OMVLEVM SIVS VXL MENS INCLITAFRATRYM  
**N**OBILITAS PROAVIS VEMETMEMORABILIFAMA  
**R**ESTITVITVICTORCAESAR NOMENQVE DECVS QVE  
**S**ANCTE PATER RECTO SVPERVMVICENNIALAETA  
**A**VGVSTOETDECIESCRESCANT SOLENNIANATIS

*In hac pagina per omnes partes Tricenis septene lrae sunt. & de ximo scripta Species Palmæ in qua sul  
 ma duo primi Ramū q̄ breues videbant nec Versu poterant implere aduēta est lra  
 per directū & per obliquū. Castalioi versu locus concluditur per unū eadē lrae primā  
 cōmū manere & lra vltima primū Versus cōi manere. Secundus Ramū per obli  
 quū descendens & ascendens sicut Versū Constantino sicut vne in carne & lra  
 per tertiu Ramū ad eque per obliquū descendit & ascendit hic Versū Me  
 vocat ausa nouis Metris mātere Leos. Per quartū Ramū ad eque per obliquū  
 descendit & ascendit hic Versū. Limite sub parū crescit vniūque Ramū per mediū  
 primū descendit a media lra primū versus usq̄ ad xcedū vltimū. hic versū. Reddat ut m  
 ixtus Musaroni. (Immo Versus)*

Figure 5. Grid poem of Optatianus Porphyrius in the form of a palm with commentary, from "Codex Guelferbytanus" 9 Aug. 40 fol. 12V; Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel.

Figure 6. Imago-Poem of Hrabanus Maurus with symbols of the evangelists and of the lamb of God ("Codex Bernensis 9," fol. 11V; Burgerbibliothek Bern).



## 2 The grid poem

The outline poem possesses only one textual level, and its structure is determined by varying line lengths and frequently also by varying meter. It does not often use additional pictorial material, nor does it observe the principle of letter counting; in these respects it contrasts with the grid-poems of the Roman court poet under Constantine the Great, Optatianus Porphyrius, which are constructed on an equilateral or rectangular text-surface into which colored *versus intexti* are set. These are formed in the manner of an acrostic, albeit a highly complex one, into a figurative network of words which is both mimetic in shape and symbolic in meaning.<sup>29</sup> While in the outline form the *figura* is constituted by the simple text alone, in the grid poem it is the intext rather than the square or rectangular base-text which determines the figure, both in its mimetic and its symbolic dimensions. And, in contrast to his Greek models, Optatian uses an identical meter, the hexameter, for the base text and the *versus intexti* and arranges this meter in letter-sequences of exactly equal length, with the result that the poem looks like a highly sophisticated mosaic of letters. An example is the poem ("Carmen IX") which Optatian sent from exile to Constantine on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of his reign, the *vicennalia* in 325 (Figure 5).<sup>30</sup>

In the rectangular base-text the poet praises Constantine for his victory over the party of Licinius and extols his mildness towards the vanquished (1-8); he then calls on the gods to aid his own poetic undertaking, and in so doing, he emphasizes the difficulty of writing in *versus intexti* (9-22). There follows a *laudatio* of Constantine's son Crispus which pays tribute to the dynastic principle (23-30), and finally, the poem closes with a reference to the celebration which occasioned it, calling on the gods to further and to defend the rule of the Emperor Constantine.

The intext is worked into the figure of a tree with branches arranged symmetrically on either side of the vertical axis. In the text as in the commentary which it contains Optatian refers to this as a palm tree, with all its complex symbolism, both Christian and pagan. Living at the watershed of these two worlds, the poet invokes the palm as a sign of victory (*bellorum . . . tropaeum*, line 2)<sup>31</sup> with its roots in the cult of Apollo, but at the same time, makes an unmistakable Christian reference to the palm as a symbol of virtue and salvation (*virtutum . . . palmam*, line 1).<sup>32</sup> He may draw, in addition, on the political heraldry found on coins commemorating Constantine's *vicennalia*,<sup>33</sup> and, finally, he refers the palm poetically to his own poem of praise.

The first three lines of the intext — which are to be read in each case in descending order from the upper-left point of the branch to the trunk and, then, ascending to the upper-right point of the opposite branch — contain an invocation to the muses to assist the poet in making a *palma poetica* in honor of the Emperor Constantine (*Castalides, versu docili concludite palmam*). There follows an invocation of the god Apollo, whose support is particularly needed in view of the formal novelty and daring of the intextual structure (*Constantine fave; te nunc in carmina Phoebum/ Mens vocat, ausa novas metris indicere leges*). The last pair of lines in the tree figure, which constitute the

lowest two branches and the trunk, refer to the perfect symmetry of the *figura*, with its branches of exactly eighteen letters each (*Limite sub parili crescentis undique ramos/ Reddat ut intextus Musarum carmine versus*).

### 3 The intextual imago-poem

In his superficial adaptation of Christianity to a secular purpose Optatian remains a poet of the last phase of the ancient world; the learned theologian, Hrabanus Maurus, on the other hand, places his visual crossword poems wholeheartedly at the service of the Christian religious system. While assimilating Optatian's type of intextual grid poem, he is at the same time creating a new type which, because of its increased use of pictorial techniques, I should like to call the *imago*-poem; for the intexts in this type are inscribed in fully-drawn pictures, as in the fifteenth poem of the cycle *De laudibus sanctae crucis* (Figure 6),<sup>34</sup> which may serve as an example.

This is a *carmen quadratum*, written in hexameters, which incorporates in its graphic design the symbols of the four evangelists (angel = Matthew, lion = Mark, ox = Luke, eagle = John) and of the lamb of God (following *Apoc.* 4, 6-9, and 5, 6) in a cruciform figure.<sup>35</sup> The commentary adjoined by the author himself indicates the hierarchical ordering of these symbols to the four ends of the cross according to Hrabanus's understanding of the various christological perspectives of the four evangelists. Thus Matthew, who depicts Christ's human nature as the descendant of a family of man, takes the position at the foot of the cross; Mark, whose lion symbol indicates the *regia potestas*, and Luke, who emphasizes the priestly dignity of Christ, take the right and left arms of the cross, respectively, while John, whose Prologue soars like an eagle to the highest heights of divine contemplation, takes his position at the head of the cross. The representation is completed by the *agnus Dei* at the center of the cross which, in accordance with the iconographic convention of harmony, underlines the unity of the four gospels *in Christo*.<sup>36</sup>

The individual symbols of the evangelists contain intexts which inform the reader about their respective christological attitudes; the rectangular tables placed between these symbols contain, in each case, a significant quotation from the gospel concerned. Thus:

1. Matthew (angel). a. picture: *Matthaeus hunc hominem signavit in ordine stirpis*. b. tablet: *Liber generationis* (Matt. 1,1).
2. Mark (lion). a. picture: *Marcus regem signat*. b. tablet: *Vox clamantis* (Mark 1,3).
3. Luke (ox). a. picture: *Dat Lucas pontificem*. b. tablet: *Fuit in diebus Herodes* (Luke 1,5).
4. John (eagle). a. picture: *Altivolans aquila et verbum hausit in arce Johannes*. b. tablet: *In principio erat verbum* (John 1,1).

The central image of the *agnus Dei* contains three different intexts: a. on the cross in the halo: *YOS* (in Greek, son). b. on the halo without a cross and on the head of the lamb: *Septem Spiritus Dei* (*Apoc.* 5,6). c. on the body of the lamb: *Ecce agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccata mundi* (John 1,29).



Thus, the sign language of the poem can be differentiated into the following groups: 1. Base text in hexameters. 2. Intext — explication of the evangelists' symbols plus quotation. 3. Pictures — colored pictures of the evangelists' symbols plus inscribed tablets. 4. Order of figures — cruciform lay-out.

It is characteristic of the *imago*-poem that the intext employs fully pictorial techniques of drawing and coloring; simply to color the letters of the intext would be insufficient. Thus, of all the forms of figured poetry, this is the closest one to fine art, in the case of Hrabanus' poem to the early medieval art of manuscript illumination.<sup>37</sup>

#### 4 The spatial line-poem

In the late Carolingian and Ottonian periods a new type of figured poetry arose, using as its basic structure the cross, the square, the triangle, and the circle.<sup>38</sup> In contrast to the Greek outline poem which uses an unbroken surface, this form uses for the first time the unmarked page as background of the geometrically formed lines of text, a technique later to be developed in the spatialist creations of concrete poetry. Although the spatial line-poem only has one textual level and does not use a closed block of letters, it does show some affinities to the grid poem. The complexity of its lines and their frequent crossing recalls the intertextual structures of the *carmina cancellata*; indeed, the reader is often compelled to turn the text around in the act of reading. The technique of the spatial line-poem calls for the repetition of the same letter at the various crossing points of the text — this too is a typical grid technique — and such letters are often rubricated and calligraphically marked. The verse forms are, therefore, as a rule so constructed that the same letter occurs at the beginning (*homoioarcton*), in the middle (Leonine rhyme), and at the end (*homoioateleuton*).

An example of this type of poem is found in an eleventh century gradual. It consists of a great wheel in the center of which stands a square which, in itself, contains a lozenge (Figure 7). The spokes of the wheel lead out from an "O" at the hub, cross the corners of the square at the letter "T", and meet the circumference of the circle again at the letter "O". This circumference consists of eight short verse-lines (1-8) which, written in capitals, are to be read in a clockwise fashion starting at the top left-hand corner of the figure. They contain a song in praise of God as guide and director of the world and guarantor of the cosmic *ordo*.<sup>39</sup> There follow eight verse-lines (9-16) of cosmic imagery inscribed in the spokes of the wheel;<sup>40</sup> these lines run from the circumference to the center and are to be read in a clockwise direction beginning in the middle at the left.

The four hymnic lines (17-20)<sup>41</sup> are inscribed in the lozenge, to be read again clockwise from the center-left of the figure. The question certainly arises here whether the praise of God is not becoming a praise of a temporal Lord, although none is explicitly named in the text.

This question is not laid to rest by the final four lines of the text (21-4)<sup>42</sup> which are inscribed in the square, beginning at the top-left corner. In particular, the frequently repeated letters "O" and "T" allow no certain interpretation. If the



text is primarily a panegyric of a temporal ruler, they might be read as the initials of the addressee, possibly one of the Ottonian emperors; if, on the other hand, praise of God is the predominant or sole theme of the poem, the combination of these two letters may be read as a symbolic reference to the sign of the cross ("T") by whose means the divinity established his reign over the *orbis terrarum* ("O"), especially as cross and circle or wheel are essential constituents of the text.

Whatever the solution of this particular hermeneutic problem may be, it may be taken as established that the species of the spatial line-poem is determined by a structural triad of unmarked page-surface, complex figuration of textual lines in geometric form, and a tendency to mark and thus emphasize certain letters, this being connected with the symbolism of names.

### 5 *The cubus*.

Like magical squares and figured spells, the *cubus* can only with certain reservations be counted as a figured poem,<sup>43</sup> for the verbal element is by no means always a versified text: frequently it is simply a name or a prose sequence, as in the earliest examples of the species in the illustration of Greek epics (*Tabula Iliaca*) from the first century AD.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless there are numerous poetic texts in this form (Figure 8), of which the Baroque literary preceptor Christian Männing says:<sup>45</sup> "To the lovers of poetry the *cubus* is a *carmen labyrinthum*, which leads into a maze and is read to the left and to the right, upwards and downwards, cross-wise in breadth and length. The whole art, however, consists in the center-most letter which is set large, and from this there issue all the arteries into the other lines."

Like the grid poem, the *cubus* is formed on a rectangle of strictly counted letters, each having a fixed and unchanging position. Poetically the intention is to confuse conventional reading expectations — at first sight the mosaic of letters seems like a labyrinth — and to present the restricted verse corpus in as many readings as it can possibly maintain.<sup>46</sup>

This delineation of the various species of figured poetry in which the relation of figure to text has been the leading criterion does not claim to be a complete typology, nor does it deny the existence of mixed forms or the possibility of adducing other criteria of specification. Thus, a semantic approach might distinguish between text, intext, and meta-text; a graphical approach might divide static from kinetic and two-dimensional forms; and the criterion of *mimesis* would separate geometric from realistic and from letter constructions. Further groupings are possible according to textual categories (e.g., wedding or burial poems), verse structures (isometric, polymetric, and ametric poems), type of poetic work (figured strophes, complete poems, entire cycles), or relation to tradition (e.g., in the early modern period the imitation of classical models or of christian medieval models, or independent invention).

#### IV Continuity and discontinuity in the history of the genre

From the *technopaegnia* of the Hellenistic period right down to the visual mimetics of concrete poetry there is an impressive degree of continuity in the genre of figured poetry; of this there can be no doubt, whatever work remains to be done on the historical and literary affinities and dependencies of as-yet undiscovered source material. One need only observe the sense of tradition which informs the great innovators and theorists: Optatianus Porphyrius composed outline poems after the classical patterns of Dosiadas and Theocritus alongside of his own highly original grid poems, and Hrabanus Maurus refers in his cycle of cruciform *imago*-poems and grid poems to Optatian; the Baroque literary preceptor Sigmund von Birken, himself a producer of *carmina figurata*, traces the contemporary image-constructs (*Bildgebände*) back to Theocritus<sup>47</sup> and Guillaume Apollinaire, one of the great forerunners of concrete poetry, knew the ancient as well as the Baroque models of the form. The opinion of earlier scholars that the late Carolingian period saw a break in the continuity of the genre can no longer be maintained, for not only have many Ottonian *carmina figurata* — including a whole series from Spain<sup>48</sup> — come to light, but the unbroken manuscript of Hrabanus' poems down to modern times has been established, and indeed the contribution of the high and late middle ages to the history of the genre has been documented in compositions by Peter Abelard<sup>49</sup> and Nicolò de' Rossi.<sup>50</sup>

The continuity of the spatial line-poem in the fourteenth century is attested strongly by the *Liber de distincione metrorum* of 1363 by Iacobus Nicholai de Dacia, which contains various poems of this type, among them a *carmen figuratum* in wheel form (see cover) which, dealing with the theme of death, places the letter M, the initial of the word *mors* ("death"), in the intersection of the verse sequences.<sup>51</sup>

The contention of this essay that figured poetry constitutes a genre in its own right is tacitly confirmed in many baroque treatises in poetics, which denominate "picture-rhymes" (*Bilderreime*) as a full-blooded form; it is confirmed, too, by the early collection of figured poetry into anthologies. Thus, Alcuin gathered into a collection, which was then presented to Charlemagne, the poems of Optatian alongside other grid-poems by writers of the Carolingian court;<sup>52</sup> and the Greek models of the genre, although from different authors, were collected together in a separate part of the *Anthologia Graeca*, as they were, too, in many manuscripts both of the *Bucolics* and of Theocritus, where they are even listed separately in the title — a sure sign of the structural affinity of this group of texts.

New discoveries from the eighteenth century have also confounded the formerly widespread view that the genre had fallen into abeyance around 1750; and even the nineteenth century is recognized to have made an important contribution to visual poetry in works such as Victor Hugo's "Les Djinns"<sup>53</sup> or Stephan Mallarmé's "Coup de Dè",<sup>54</sup> which stand out from a tradition otherwise represented only in the faint eddies of individual epigonal *carmina figurata*,<sup>55</sup> devotional or mystical graphology,<sup>56</sup> and figured caricature.<sup>57</sup> Both

Hugo's and Mallarmé's poems, the one conventional and other revolutionary in effect, fulfill the essential criterion of the genre, the structural integration of lyrical text and patterned form.

In contrast to most figured poems before 1900, Apollinaire's "calligrammes" are not written in traditional metric form. This, however, should be ascribed rather to the fact that they are modern poems than to their being figured, although it could certainly be argued that their visual quality is a specifically modern way of assuring the poeticity of a text which lacks conventional meter.

Apollinaire's figured poem "La cravate et la montre"<sup>58</sup> dispenses with meter, versification, and rhyme but stands nevertheless in the historical tradition of the *carmen figuratum* (Figure 9). Its mimetic, one-dimensional text, with no intext and no supplementary pictorial detail, is recognizable as a modern version of the outline poem, for which the words themselves form a picture, and for which the combination of two object-symbols in one poetic construct is by no means unusual. Indeed, for all his modernity in the choice of objects, Apollinaire places himself at least indirectly in the tradition of the Baroque visual poem, which had cultivated the type of the clock-poem, albeit in the form of the hour-glass. Moreover, while the necktie symbolizes the constricting forces of bourgeois society on the "civilized" and domesticated man, who is called upon by the poet to throw them off, with his tie, if he wants to breathe the air of freedom, the figure of the clock formulates the unmistakable Baroque sentiments of the *carpe diem* and the *memento mori*.<sup>59</sup>

Apollinaire's substitution of enigmatic images in verbal form for the numbers of the clockface — e.g., 1 is a heart, 2 is the eyes, 5 is a hand, 7 is the week — recalls on the one hand the replacement of numbers by concrete symbols in Indian tradition as well as that of many peoples who have no abstract numerals,<sup>60</sup> but is, on the other hand, reminiscent of the methods of medieval and Baroque number-allegorizing, the difference being that it reverses the usual interpretative procedure, setting up the *significatum* as the sign of the conventional *significans*. Thus the replacement of the figure 9 by the nine muses at the nine openings of the body has its parallel in the allegorical encyclopedia of numbers of Petrus Bungus (Bergamo, 1599) who, albeit in different places, interprets the number 9 both as the *musarum numerus* and as referring to the *humani corporis foramina*.<sup>61</sup>

That the poem is based on a number structure is as germane to the conventions of patterned poetry as is its use of anagram and *notarikon*: letter-poetry is, after all, typical of early modern visual poetry. The technique of *gematrie* (letter-number symbolism) and the influence of the cabbala may be exemplified in the forms which replace the figures 6 and 4 on the clock-face. Instead of the 6 we have the anagram "Tircis," with its six letters, its allusion to the English word "six" (here "sic") and its palindromic reference to the English phoneme sequence "secret" (here "sicrit"), itself perhaps an illusion to "sex."

The number 4 is replaced by the cabbalistic tetragram AGLA, a magic formula found on amulets and talismans, whose letters, read as a *notarikon*, stand for the Hebrew prayer of thanksgiving, *Ateh gibor [gebir] Le-Olahm Adonai* ("Thou, O Lord, art eternal and almighty"). Apollinaire's poem is, therefore,



linked to the tradition of *carmen figuratum* not only graphically but also in the detail of its word and letter play.

Claus Bremer's visual poem "Taube" (German, "dove") of 1968,<sup>62</sup> with its mimetic graphical form and its stylized (albeit not in the traditional sense metric) base-text (Figure 10) shows quite clearly the characteristics of the tradition of figured poetry as well as that of the concrete poetry of which Bremer both theoretically and practically was a pioneer. The figure of the dove contrasts pointedly with the war-like utterances of the text, with their rhetoric of endurance and sacrifice: "Risk everything — deserve- in the end to gain everything- dare all- blow up the bridges behind you — the cry of war cuts off all retreat to life and death- wage a war without cease-fire, without retreat, without compromise- to win is to accept that life is not the highest good."

The antithetical relation of figure to text reveals in heavy satire the way in which a fascist propaganda and politics of war may cloak itself in the slogans of peace, if, indeed, the dove is to be read as mimetic. Bremer uses the formal techniques of multiple word repetition and division, the former underlining the monotony of war-propaganda, the latter opening up verbal allusions and suggestions (" . . . abbrechen, abbrechen, abbr chen, abbr . . . / . . . erreichen, erreichen, er hen er . . ."). The word sequence recalls military columns, and the lines of punctuation are like machine-gun fire. In its structural unity of stylized text and emblematic graphology, this poem too is a *carmen figuratum* of the outline poem type.

However novel may be the claims of modern visual poetry and the influences (of linguistic semiotics, of advertising, of the new media like photography, film, television, for example) which have come to bear on it, it nevertheless reveals in many instances a structural continuity with the genre of figured poetry. Historically speaking, the difference between Claus Bremer's textual image and a Baroque image-construct is no greater than that, for example, between a Greek *technopaignion*, with its polymetric rhyme and its roots in mythology, and one of Optatian's grid poems, with its double text strata, its isometric rhyme, and its Christian sentiments. Other products of modern concrete and post-concrete poetry, however, even though they may use visual means in the presentation of linguistically-based texts, cannot, at least inasmuch as they do not reproduce any sort of real object or even semantic sequence (some poems, for instance, are constructed on non-semantic letter series), be counted as figured poems; this does not, of course, mean that these poems show no similarities to or influences from the genre. But to order them generically and historically into a more comprehensive poetic theory, if visual poetry is heeded, deserves its own appropriate study.<sup>63</sup>

1. Introductions to the contemporary discussion may be found in K. W. Hempfer, *Gattungstheorie, Information und Synthese* (München 1973) and in the collection of essays edited by W. Hinck, *Textsortenlehre- Gattungsgeschichte* (Heidelberg 1977).
2. It seems symptomatic that none of the theoretical discussions of the genre question treat, to my knowledge, of figured poetry.
3. Useful collections are: K.-P. Dencker, *Text-Bilder, Visuelle Poesie International* (Köln 1972); D. Higgins, *George Herbert's Pattern Poems: In their Tradition* (New York 1977); A. Hatherly, *A Experiência do Prodígio, Bases Teóricas e Antologia de Textos-Visuais Portugueses do Séculos XVII et XVIII* (Lisboa 1983).
4. Cf. U. Ernst, "Die Entwicklung der optischen Poesie in Antike, Mittelalter und Neuzeit, Ein literarhistorisches Forschungsdesiderat," *Germanisch-Romanische Monatschrift* 26 (1976) 379ff; and U. Ernst, "Europäische Figurengedichte in Pyramidenform aus dem 16. und 17. Jahrhundert, Konstruktionsmodelle und Sinnbildfunktionen," *Euphorion* 76 (1982) 295-360; and U. Ernst, "Zahl und Maß in den Figurengedichten der Antike und des Frühmittelalters, Beobachtungen zur Entwicklung tektonischer Bauformen," *Mensura, Maß, Zahl, Zahlensymbolik im Mittelalter* (Berlin 1984) ("Miscellanea Mediaevalia," 16,2) 310-32; and the study by G. Pozzi, *La parola dipinta* (Milano 1981).
5. Cf. K.-P. Dencker's biography of Andreas in: *Am Anfang war das Wort* [exhibition catalog], Städtische Galerie Lüdenscheid [ed. U. Obier] (Lüdenscheid 1984) 31.
6. J. A. Redhouse, "A turkish circle ode by Shahin Ghiray," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 18 (London 1861) pp. 400-15; M. Aksel, "Das Schrift-Bild in der türkischen Kunst," *Anatolica* 1 (1967) 111-7.
7. Cf. I. Davidson, "Eccentric forms of Hebrew verse," *Students Annual of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America* 1 (1914) 84.
8. Cf. F. Rückert, *Grammatik, Poetik und Rhetorik der Perser* (1874; Osnabrück 1966) 152ff.
9. On Sanskrit figured poetry, cf. K. N. Jhā, *Figurative poetry in Sanskrit literature* (Delhi 1975); S. Lienhard, "Enigmatisk vers och carmina figurata i sanskritdikningnen," *Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademiens Årsbok* (1983) 79-87.
10. Cf. for example, H. Franke, "Kulturgeschichtliches über die chinesische Tusche" (München 1962) ("Proceedings of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences, philosophical-historical division," 54) fig. 16.
11. Cf. P. Lehmann, "Figurale Schriftflächen" (1924), in *Erforschung des Mittelalters* 3 (Stuttgart 1960) 60-6.
12. R. Diehl, *Figurensatz in Frankfurter Drucken der Renaissance und es Barock* (Offenbach 1951) 7.
13. Thus in the Arabian tradition the versified text of the Koran is often arranged figuratively, but the combination of figure and rhyme does not form the sort of unity demanded of figured poetry.
14. Cf. U. Ernst, "Kontinuität und Transformation der mittelalterlichen Zahlensymbolik in der Renaissance," *Euphorion* 77 (1983) 289ff.
15. Cf. J. Bergsagel, "Cordier's circular canon," *Musical Times* 113 (1972) 1175-7.
16. Cf. B. Garbe and G. Garbe, "Ein verstecktes Figurengedicht bei Daniel von Czepko, Das treuhertzia Creutze als Krypto-Technopnugnia eines Hymges von Venantius Fortunatus," *Euphorion* 69 (1975) 100-6.
17. On the *Masora figurata* cf. L. Avrin, "Hebrew Micrography: One Thousand Years of Art in Script," *Visible Language* 18 (1984) 87-95.
18. Cf. the *arbor cognatum* in the Codex Bernensis 263 (Isidor, Etymologiae) f. 14f and the diagram of the world with an axial T-shaped map in the Codex Bernensis 212 / I (Cassiodor, Institutiones) f. 109f; cf. O. Homburger, *Die illustrierten Handschriften der Burgerbibliothek* (Bern 1962) fig. 14 and 74.



19. Cf. Joachim de Fiore, *Liber figurali* (Torino 1953).
20. On the rebus, cf. E.-M. Schenck, *Das Bilderrätsel* (Hildesheim 1973); N. Feran, *I rebus* (Milano 1977).
21. Cf. W. Harms, "Emblem / Emblematik," *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 9 (1983) 552ff.
22. G. Kranz, *Das Bildgedicht* 1 (Köln 1981) 7.
23. E. Kuhs, *Buchstabendichtung, Zur gattungskonstituierenden Funktion von Buchstabenformationen in der französischen Literatur vom Mittelalter bis zum Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Heidelberg 1982).
24. A. Liede, *Dichtung als Spiel, Studien zur Unsinnspoesie an den Grenzen der Sprache* 2 (Berlin 1963) 190-204.
25. A. Liede, loc. cit., 190.
26. Cf. H. Beckby's edition, *Die griechischen Bukoliker* (Meisenheim am Glan 1975) 334.
27. Cf. U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Griechische Verskunst* (1921; Darmstadt 1962) 126.
28. Cf., G. Wojaczek, *Daphnis, Untersuchungen zur griechischen Bukolik* (Meisenheim am Glan 1969) 67ff.
29. Cf. U. Ernst, "Zahl und Maß", loc. cit., 315ff.
30. Cf. G. Polara's edition, *Publili Optatiani Porfyrii Carmina* 1 (Roma 1973) 37.
31. Cf. M. Claesen, "Le palmier, symbole d'Apollon," *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge* (Roma 1938). Cf. H. Danthine, *Le palmier — dattier et les arbres sacres dans l'iconographie de l'Asie occidentale ancienne* (Paris 1937).
32. On Christian symbolism, cf. the remarks of G. Klameth, "Von der Sykomore der Hathor bis zur Wunderpalme des Pseudo-Matthäus und von der i-w-Pflanze bis zu den Blumenwundern der äthiopischen Marienhymnen," *Festschrift für P. W. Schmidt* (Wien 1928) 336ff; G. Anichini, "Palma ed Olivo," *B. Amici Catacombe* 9 (1939) 58-61, which goes into the Christian symbolism of the palm in the catacombs; and J. Gräf, *Palmenweihe und Palmenprozession in der lateinischen Liturgie* (Kaldenkirchen 1959).
33. Cf. the commentary of G. Polara, loc. cit., vol. 2 (Roma 1973) 65.
34. Cf. the editions of Hrabanus Maurus, *De laudibus sanctae crucis* Pl. 107, 207f.; facsimile edition of the Codex Vindobonensis 652 (ÖNB) (Graz 1973) f. 20v.
35. On the deeper sense of the poem, cf. the remarks of A. Mott, "Die Kreuzessymbolik bei Hrabanus Maurus" ("Fuldaer Geschichtsblätter") *Beilage zur Fuldaer Zeitung* 4 (1905) 182ff.
36. J. von Schlosser, "Eine Fuldaer Miniaturhandschrift der k.k. Hofbibliothek," *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen* 13 (Wien 1892) 12 cites iconographic parallels "in the codex aureus of St. Emmeran in Munich (f. 65) which goes back to Alcuin, and in the Bamberg bible (f. 339) which derives from the same source." On the same poem in the ms. 223 (f. 20v) from Amiens cf. A. Boinet, "Notice sur deux manuscrits carolingiens à miniature exécutés à l'abbaye de Fulda," *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 65 (1904) 364.
37. Hrabanus depended on the help of a painter, in his case his fellow monk Hatto, to add the pictorial detail of his *imagines*.
38. Cf. the anonymous poems to King Odo of Paris (died 888) and his queen Theotrada in N. Fickermann, "Eine karolingische Kostbarkeit zwischen Figurengedichten der Zeit um 1500" *PBB* 83 (Tübingen 1961/2) 49ff. On a poem of Eugenius Vulgarius in the form of a geometric pyramid, cf. U. Ernst, "Poesie und Geometrie, Betrachtungen zu einem visuellen Pyramidengedicht des Eugenius Vulgarius," *Geistliche Denkformen in der*

*Literatur des Mittelalters* ([Festschrift for] F. Ohly, Munich 1985) 321ff. Cf. also the poems of Uffing von Werden in the *MGH. Poet. Lat.* 5, 3, 629-31, printed there without *figura*.

39. Text following *MGH, Poet. Lat.* 5, 3, 666f., 1-8:

Omnigenum pater a soliO  
Omnia providus ethereO  
Ordine temperat eximiO  
Opere condita quaeque suO.  
Obligat <et> regit imperiO  
Organa, quae dedit ipse suO  
Omne, quo moderante bonO  
Orbe tonas, pater, amplificO.

40. 9-16:

Ordine tam vario disponiT sidera caelO  
Omnipotens niTido super exTans ethera fanO.  
Offerat his servo paTrem cum corde serenO  
Obice disrupTo mentisque Tumore fugatO  
Omnia, que nato rogiteT cum pneumate sacrO,  
Occupat aTque suo mare quod Tam gurgite vastO  
Orbita, quod tanto replicaT per tempora gyrO,  
Occasum cerTo prefigit limiTe PhebO.

41. 17-20:

Tua filius ecce refudiT Tolerans mala, qui bona noviT.  
Tibi conditor omnia subdaT, Tua quodque benignitas optaT.  
Titulus reprobantis labescaT, Thalamus pietatis adhiscaT.  
Tibi formula laudis resultaT, Tua gloria lausque crebrescaT.

42. 21-4:

Te, rex, terra tremiT, Tibi laudes pangere glisciT.  
Te freta cuncta pavent, Tibi Tartara genua curvanT.  
Te pius abba coliT, Tua psallere munera possiT,  
Te recolens vigeaT, Tua quam pia gratia ditaT.

43. Cf. C. Doria, "Visual poems from Greek magical papyri," *Kaldron* 3 (1977) 2-5; H. Hofmann, *Das Satorquadrat, Zur Geschichte und Deutung eines antiken Wortquadrats* (Bielefeld 1977).

44. G. Lippold, "Tabula Iliaca," in *RE* (Pauly-Wissowa) 2, 8 (Stuttgart 1932) col. 1886ff.

45. J. C. Männling, *Der Europäische Helicon* (Alten-Stettin 1704) 130.

46. On sub-species of the *cubus*, cf. G. Caramuel de Lobkowitz, *Primus Calamus ob oculos ponens metametricam, quae variis currentium, recurrentium, adscendentium, descendendum nec non circumvolantium versuum ductibus, aut aeri incisus aut buxo insculptos aut plumbo infusus multiformes labyrinthos exornat* (Roma 1663) pl. 20; and cf. G. Pozzi, op. cit., 152.

47. Sigmund von Birken, *Teutsche Rede-bind und Dicht-Kunst* (1679; Hildesheim 1973) 144.

48. Cf. M. C. Díaz y Díaz, "Vigilán y Sarracino, Sobre composiciones figurativas en la Rioja del siglo X," *Lateinische Dichtungen des X. und XI. Jahrhunderts* [Festschrift for W. Bulst] (Heidelberg 1981) 60-92.

49. Cf. M. Oudot de Dainville, "Vers attribués à Pierre Abélard," *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 87 (1926) 236f.

50. *Il Canzoniere di Nicolò de' Rossi*, ed. F. Brugnolo (Padova 1974) vol. 1, 142-6.

51. Iacobus Nicholai de Dacia, *Liber de distincione metrorum*, ed. A. Kabell (Uppsala 1967) 162:

Metrum precedentis figure scilicet metrum a centro circuli/  
sive ab axe rote pertransiens

Mors renouat fletuM, Mors est mare felle repletuM;  
Mors premit audaceM, Mors odit denique paceM.  
Mors facit omne maluM, Mors mergit remige maluM,  
Mors superauit AdaM. Mors! es mala! quid superaddaM?  
Mors minuit risuM, Mors temptauit ParadisuM;  
Mors dat meroreM, Mors tollit ab orbe decoreM.  
Mors infert penaM, Mors ponit vbique sagnaM;  
Mors refouet belluM, Mors est penale flagelluM!

Metrum minoris circuli.

Mors necat infanteM, Mors trudit ad ima giganteM;  
Mors spoliat vesteM, Mors infert vlcera, pesteM.  
Mors frangit bullaM, Mors sugit ab osse medullaM;  
Mors dat singultuM, Mors rodit verme sepultuM.

Metrum circuli maioris.

Mors genus exosuM, Mors est monstrum viciosuM;  
Mors vocat ad guerraM, Mors destruit undique terraM.  
Mors scopam, vangaM, Mors portat tela, falangaM;  
Mors arcum, scutuM, Mors ensem gestat acutuM.

52. D. Schaller, "Die karolingischen Figurengedichte des Cod. Bern. 212," in *Medium aevum vivum* [Festschrift for W. Bulst] (Heidelberg 1960) 22-47.

53. On V. Hugo's poem "Les Djinns" (1829) cf. R. Massin, *Buchstabenbilder und Bildalphabete* (Ravensburg 1970) 204-7.

54. On Mallarmé, cf. D. Schwarz, "Visuelle Poesie? Skizze nach Texten von Stephane Mallarmé," in *Visuelle Poesie*, Ausstellungskatalog, ed. K.-P. Dencker (Dillingen 1984) 7-10.

55. Cf. for example Adolf Bäuerle's beaker poem in *Wiener Allgemeine Theaterzeitung* 11 (14. November 1818) 137.

56. Cf., E. D. and F. Andrews, *Visions of the Heavenly Sphere, A study in Shaker Religious Art* (Charlottesville [Virginia] 1969) fig. 3 ff., pl. II ff.

57. Cf. the exhibition catalog ed. by G. Unverfehrt, *La Caricature* (Göttingen 1980) pp. 33 and 37.

58. Text following *Oeuvres complètes de Guillaume Apollinaire*, ed. M. Decaudin (Paris 1966) 3, 183.

59. Cf. W. Raibles illuminating treatment in *Moderne Lyrik in Frankreich* (Stuttgart 1972) 92-4.

60. Cf. the remarks of K. Menninger, *Zahlwort und Ziffer, Eine Kulturgeschichte der Zahl* (Göttingen 1957) 129f: "The Indians have cultivated this method of substituting sense-images for numbers: this 1 is 'moon'; 2 'eye' or 'arms'; 4 'dice-throw' or 'brother', for Rama in Indian poetry had three brothers, or 'era'; 7 'head' for the head has seven holes."

61. Petrus Bungus, *Numerorum mysteria*, ed. U. Ernst (Hildesheim and New York 1983) 346 and 517.

62. C. Bremer, *Texte und Kommentare* (Steinbach 1968) unfoliated.

63. An interesting and promising study in this respect is C. Weiss, *Seh-Texte* (Nürnberg 1984); J. Adler throws considerable light on the historical evolution of forms in his essay "Technopaigneia, carmina figurata and Bilder-Reime: Seventeenth-century figured poetry in historical perspective," *Comparative Criticism Yearbook* 4 (1984) 107ff.

# The Corpus of British and Other English-Language Pattern Poetry

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*There exists considerably more pattern poetry in the English language and literature than is usually believed, well over a hundred pieces, dating from the late sixteenth to the eighteenth century, with a few lightpieces from the nineteenth century. Most of it is relatively unknown. What is unusual is that almost all of it is in shapes prescribed in Puttenham's Arte of English poesie (1587), especially shapes that are also known from the Hellenistic Greek. No labyrinths are known in English except two nineteenth century pieces. Almost all is in books, with very few broadsides and strictly occasional verse, unlike, for instance, German pattern poetry where most pieces were published in those forms. Many pieces are stanzaic, unlike the Neo-Latin pattern poems. Curiously, in all these respects it parallels Swedish pattern poetry, even to the point where "lovers' knots" are unique to these two languages.*

## English to 1750

There are about 110 English-language or British pattern poems. The most striking thing about the ones composed in England is their formal conservatism. Almost none are in unique shapes and most imitate the shapes of the Hellenistic Greek models — axes, altars, eggs, wings, syrinxes — supplemented by a handful of other approved forms. This is less true of the other British pieces, the Scottish and Welsh. King James' piece must have seemed quite avant garde in its day, and Trebor Mai's is the only tree-shaped piece known in these literatures. As for the American pieces, they are a little less limited to traditional forms, but once they begin, in the nineteenth century (except for Taylor's seventeenth-century piece), are less apt to be anonymous. The English by then were, one might speculate, slightly embarrassed in making pattern poems.

The second unusual thing about the English pieces is that virtually every one exists in a book, almost never (Jackman's piece is an exception) in a broadside and seldom even in a pamphlet. In other words, English pattern poems are less apt to be occasional verse than, say, the German pieces. And they have a distinctly literary poetic diction and attempt a sort of on-going eternalization which sometimes gives them a comparatively forced tone, as if they would not hear of our not instantly recognizing them as poetry. There must have been some broadside pattern poems and the equivalent of greeting card verse in

England, of course, but there cannot have been very much or, in that nation of collectors, more of them would have survived.

The third unusual thing about the English pattern poems is really a corollary of the first — the extraordinary role of the prescribed forms which Puttenham recommends in *The Arte of English Poesie* (1587; 1936; 1969). The Puttenham who wrote the book may have been George or Richard, there is controversy about that. He was not even a very good poet; yet the forms which he recommends as being suitable for pattern poetry are, with the addition of the cross and serpentine forms, virtually the only forms the English have used besides the Greek models.

The final unusual thing about these English pieces is, like the Swedes but unlike virtually everyone else, the prevalence of stanzaic pattern poems. The pieces are quite often cycles with several parts — sets of lozenges, sets of rhomboids, sets of pyramids and wings.

These four special characteristics seem necessary to note if one wants to understand the unique character of English pattern poetry.

Working alphabetically we start with Philip Ayres (n.d.) who in *Lyrical Poems, Made in Imitation of the Italians* (1687) has two rather fine pattern poems: (1) "The four seasons" on p. 409 in four lozenges (Figure 1), and (2) "The trophy" on p. 162 in wing-shaped verse. In Saintsbury (1910-21) they appear in v. 1.

Robert Baron (1593-1639) in his *Erotompathia, or the Cyprian Academy* (1646) has three pattern poems: (1) "An epitaph" on p. 30 in the form of an altar; (2) "22" on p. 44 in which each line is longer than the preceding one; and (3) "23" on p. 44 in which each line is shorter than the preceding one. The last two form wedge shapes overall, or a sort of rough syrx. Margaret Church (1944) describes these as a pair of wings, which seems possible. She also suggests that "The rose" in Baron's *Poculae Castelae* (1650: 64<sup>v</sup>) is a pattern poem, but this seems to be stretching the point.

The anglican priest and poet Joseph Beaumont (1616-99), a friend of Traherne and Crashaw and in late life a Cambridge don, wrote three of the finest English pattern poems of the seventeenth century. They were not published until they appeared in *Minor Poems* (1914): (1) "Good Fryday" on p. 153 in the form of an egg (Figure 2); (2) "Easter" on p. 154 also in the form of an egg (Figure 3); and (3) "Suspirem ad Amorem" on pp. 301-2 (Figure 4) a serpentine column of short, Skeltonic lines weaving sinuously down the page, perhaps to suggest the breathing of the lovers in the poem. These three poems lack the dryness and bombast of most of Beaumont's longer poems. Comparing the manuscript and typeset versions, however, one must say that Beaumont deserves more sensitive typography.

Edward Benlowes' (1603-76) beautifully printed *Theophila, or Love's Sacrifice* (1652) includes three pattern poems: (1) "The crosses at Calvary" on p. 268 was etched by "MAIPQ," a fine craftsman, and is a tour de force of acromesotelesic writing; reprinted in Cook (1979: pl.2A). (2) and (3) Two altars: an English one on p. 14 and a Latin one on p. 161. They translate each other, and it is difficult to say which is the original. Both have a strong lapidary quality and read like monument inscriptions.

*The Four Seasons.*

**SPRING.**

**W**HEN Winter's past, then ev'ry Field and Hill  
The *SPRING* with Flowers does fill,  
Soft Winds do cleanse the Air,  
Repel the Fogs, and make the VVeather fair;  
Cold Frosts are gone away,  
The Rivers are at Liberty,  
And their just Tribute pay,  
Of liquid Pearls, and Crystal to the Sea;  
To whom each Brook, and Fountain runs,  
The stable Mother of those stragling Sons.

*CHORUS.*

*But then,  
In a short space,  
WINTER returns agen,  
E're Sol has run his annual Race;  
But, Ah! When Death's keen Arrow flies,  
And his Poor M A N,  
Do what he can,  
He dyes;  
Returns to Dust, a Shadow, and a Nothing lies.*

**SUMMER.**

**W**HEN Flow'ry *May* is past, The *Spring* is o're.  
Then our cool Breezes end,  
For *Autum* does send,  
His foultry Blasts from off the Southern Shore;  
The Sun bows down his Head,  
And darts on us his fiery Rays,  
Plants droop, and seem as dead,  
Most Creatures seek for Shade their diff'rent ways  
All things as if for Moisture cry,  
Even Rivers with the common Thirst grow dry.

*CHORUS.*

*But then,  
In a short space,  
The SPRING returns agen,  
E're Sol has run his Annual Race:  
But, Ah! When Death's keen Arrow flies,  
And his Poor M A N,  
Do what he can,  
He dyes;  
Returns to Dust, a Shadow, and a Nothing lies.*

**AUTUMN.**

**W**Hen Summer's done, green Trees begin to yield;  
Their Leaves with Age decay,  
They're stript of their Array;  
Scarce can the Rains revive the Rustic Field:  
The Flowers run up to Seed,  
Orchards with Choice of Fruit abound,  
Which Sight and Taste do feed:  
The grateful Boughs even kiss their Parent Ground:  
The Elm's kind Wife, the tender Vine,  
Is pregnant with her Heavenly Burden, Wine.

*CHORUS.*

*But then,  
In a short Space,  
SUMMER returns agen,  
E're Sol has run his Annual Race.  
But, Ah! When Death's keen Arrow flies,  
And his Poor M A N,  
Do what he can,  
He dyes;  
Returns to Dust, a Shadow, and a Nothing lies.*

**WINTER.**

**W**Hen Autum's past, sharp Eastern Winds do blow,  
Thick Clouds obscure the Day,  
Frost makes the Currents stay,  
The Aged Mountains Hoary are with Snow.  
Altho' the Winter rage;  
The wronged Trees Revenge conspire,  
Its Fury they aswage;  
Alive they serve for Fence, when dead for Fire;  
All Creatures from its Out-rage fly,  
Those which want Shelter or Relief must dye.

*CHORUS.*

*But then,  
In a short Space,  
AUTUMN returns agen,  
E're Sol has run his Annual Race:  
But, Ah! When Death's keen Arrow flies,  
And his Poor M A N,  
Do what he can,  
He dyes;  
Returns to Dust, a Shadow, and a Nothing lies.*

Figure 1. Philip Ayres, "The four seasons" from *Lyric Poems* (1687).

To a base  
4.2. 1671

Good Friday

Why do I weep not  
 Good eyes are not  
 Of us, now he is gone  
 In whose sad eyes alone  
 They dwell, as birds, as birds, as dead  
 More than then in of Sparrows is sped.  
 We know not our dull eyes now Who find  
 The eye of Heaven it helps to say is blind  
 Poor eyes, what have you left to see  
 But blackish face of Misery?  
 Thin though you will be waste  
 With your own Tears at last;  
 Yet we can not  
 Weep as you not;

To a base  
4.2. 1671

Easter

Tears have done:  
 Our Rising Sun  
 Shall drive you up, & bring  
 His ever-smiling Spring  
 Of pure joy, which first at first  
 To Paradise, where they were nursed  
 What though that Night were long? This guided they  
 We wait on his forehead an eternal Ray  
 Now Jesus lives, We cannot die  
 Or but to live immortally  
 For Him we are rest again  
 Before death as hath slain  
 Thin sing we on,  
 Tears have done:

(Chorus)

Rise Heart, Thy Lord was early up, arise  
 And sing Him now his Morning-Sacrifice;

Figures 2 and 3. Joseph Beaumont, "Good Fryday" and "Easter" (manuscript). Courtesy English Literature Collection, Wellesley College Library.

Figure 4. Joseph Beaumont, "Suspirem ad amorem" (manuscript). Courtesy English Literature Collection, Wellesley College Library.

Suspirem ad  
Amorem. 247

To a base  
4.2. 1671

O Love  
 Come roose  
 My Dart  
 In Me;  
 To gain  
 And dign  
 My Heart  
 To this  
 My Dart  
 Can cast  
 A Dart  
 Of Stone:  
 O why  
 Must my  
 Resist  
 Alas  
 One Dart  
 That's in't  
 Will rise  
 When I  
 Doubted it  
 To do  
 The Bless  
 I will own  
 And live  
 And show  
 Some spark  
 To light  
 My heart  
 Who's now  
 In dark  
 Then I  
 Shall say  
 Thee  
 And sing  
 To thee  
 No more  
 A stray;

Church (1944) claims that the Latin inscription in Benlowes' *Sphinx Theologica* . . . (1636) is a pattern poem, but it seems more like an excellent lapidary inscription; it neither scans as verse nor is there anything particularly poetic in the language. Benlowes was attacked for his pattern poems by Samuel Butler (1612-80) in *Characters* (1970: 82-94). The nature of his attack suggests that Benlowes wrote many other pattern poems which have not survived, since the shapes that Butler cites are not those of the poems we have.

Thomas Blenerhasset (ca. 1550-ca. 1625) includes three pattern poems in *A Revelation of the True Minerva* (1582): (1) a bird at p. F1<sup>v</sup>; (2) a lozenge at p. F2<sup>r</sup>; and (3) wings at p. F2<sup>v</sup>. They are the epitome of the remarks made about the problems with English pattern poetry. The most interesting thing about them is their early date.

In his *The Chaste and Lost Lovers* (1651) William Bosworth (1607-50?) includes three pattern poems: (1) an altar on p. 39 (D7<sup>r</sup>) Figure 5); (2) a heart or arrow on p. 62 (E7<sup>v</sup>); and (3) a pair of wings on p. 63 (E8<sup>r</sup>). All three are in Saintsbury (1910-21: v. 2, 556, 570, 572). The poems appear as interludes in the "Arcadius and Sepha" section of Bosworth's long poem. They are described, with a discussion of Bosworth, by Church (1944).

Church (1944) sees pattern poems in *Songs and Other Poems* (1664) by Alexander Brome (1620-66). "Song 1 — plain dealing" suggests a hexagon and pyramids, but these seem too ill-defined for full acceptance into the canon. It is simply impossible to know the poet's visual intention in this piece.

Figure 5. William Bosworth, altar poem from *The Chaste and Lost Lovers* (1651). Bosworth did not intend for this poem to stand alone; it is embedded in his longer poem.

**Those that *Idalia's* wanton garments wear,  
No Sacrifices for me must prepare ;  
To me no quav'ring string they move  
Nor yet *Alphean* musick love,  
Theres no perfume  
Delights the room,  
From sacred hands,  
My Altar stands ,  
Void and defac't,  
While I disgrac't,  
With angry eyes  
Revenge the cries  
Of you who to my Altar haft,  
And in my lawes take your repaft ;  
Pursue it still, the chief of my pretence  
And happine's, shall be your innocence.**



In the *Shepherd's Pipe* (1614) by William Browne (1590-ca. 1545) there appears an altar on p. E1<sup>v</sup>, reprinted in *The Whole Works* (1970: v. 2, 218); it is of no great literary value. But in *Britannia's Pastorales* (1613-4) there appear two really interesting pieces: (1) a set of uniform pipes on p. 60, and (2) a twisted, pretzel-like rhyme on p. 61, which is possibly the earliest "lover's knot" in English. The form is described with Mennes' similar pieces below.

In *Trivial Poems and Triolets* (written in 1651 but first published in 1819, edited by Sir Walter Scott) by Patrick Carey (n.d.) Church (1944) sees stanzaic wings; we cannot agree, lovely as the poems are.

Hugh Crompton (n.d., but late seventeenth century) in his *Pierides, or the Muses Mount* (1656) includes a pair of rather flattened pyramids: "Man" at p. C4<sup>r</sup> and "A kiss" at p. G4<sup>r</sup>. The title of the book may well refer to "Pierius," the nickname of the famous poet and scholar Vaerliano Bolzani (1477-1558) who composed in Latin a famous pear-shaped poem, "Pierus," around 1549. Published in Valeriano Bolzani (1621: 100) and elsewhere, it was known in England and attacked by Gabriel Harvey (ca. 1545-1630) in a passage quoted from the *Day-Book* (Smith 1904: v. 1, 126).

Church (1944) sees eight pattern poems in the works of George Daniel (1616-57); in Grosart's edition (1878) these appear in v. 1. pp. 50, 678, and 70; v. 2, pp. 6, 13, 44, 67, and 85. We have studied these pieces and while visually interesting they do not seem to have any strong visual form that is used as a matrix, an opinion shared by Thomas B. Stroup (personal communication), the modern editor of Daniel's works.

Hyder Rollins, editor of the 1944 edition of *A Poetical Rhapsody* (1602), includes an altar on p. 180, "My muse by thee restored to life . . ." We believe it to be by Francis Davison, who may be the main author and editor of the work.

Christopher Harvey (1597-1663) in his *Schola Cordis* (1647; 1859) has six stanzaic pattern poems: (1) "Ode IX" with ten axes; (2) "Ode XXIII" with seven axes; (3) "Ode XIV" with seven lozenges; (4) "Ode XXV" with six more lozenges; (5) "Ode XXVII" with six pyramids; and (6) "Ode XXXVIII" with six wings. Church (1944) also calls "Ode VII" and "Ode XX" pattern poems, but they seem too ill-defined. The poems are, in fact, in all ways rather ill-defined, not really odes at all but personal meditations seldom getting beyond the tip of the poet's nose.

George Herbert (1593-1633) has two pattern poems in *The Temple* (1633), both fully deserving of their fame. The lines fit the form perfectly and the emotional curve of the poems seems naturally suited to the confines and expansions of the shapes. The "Altar" appears on p. 18 of the original work and is in all standard editions of Herbert's poetry, such as the popular Gardner one (1961). In the pattern poetry literature it is in Dencker (1972), Gomez (1981), Higgins (1977), Klonsky (1975), Massin (1970), D'Ors (1977), Todd (1981), and Walsh (1925).

Herbert's "Easter Wings" (Figure 6) is on pp. 34-5 of *The Temple* (1633), in Gardner (1961), and in such pattern poetry works as Daly (1979), D'Ors (1977), Dencker (1972, with German translation), Higgins (1977), Klonsky (1975), Massin (1970), Walsh (1925), and Zabeltitz (1926).

Robert Herrick (1591-1674) wrote two famous pattern poems: (1) a cross, "This crosse-tree," in *Noble Numbers* (1647: 77); in all standard editions of Herrick, in Massin (1970) and D'Ors (1977); (2) a pillar, "The pillar of fame," in *Hesperides* (1648: 398); in all standard editions, in D'Ors (1977), Higgins (1977), and Klonsky (1975).

A globe of 1620 by Richard Jackman (n.d.) appears in Peignot (1978: 62) without further explanation; it resembles several of the German and Polish pieces of the following generation, but it is unique in English.

Sir John Mennes (1599-1621) and James Smith (n.d.) were the editors, perhaps with others (George Herbert's name has been mentioned) of a popular collection, *Facetiae. Musarum Deliciae . . .*, which appeared in several editions into the 1650's with some variation in contents. Using the 1874 reprint for our pagination, since it collects all the works which were in any edition, it contains eight pattern poems: (1) a lovely altar, "Cupid unto thy altar and thy lawes . . .," in v. 1, p. 295; (2) a love knot, "Time that all things doth inherit . . .," in v. 1, p. 298; (3) a rebus which is also a poem in v. 1, p. 301; (4) a love knot whose first line cannot be told as it is continuous (it would be breaking into a loop); (5) a rebus poem in v. 1, pp. 303-4; (6) a love knot, "Wreath like a maze entwining . . .," fcg. p. 304, reprinted in Klonsky (1975); (7) a love knot,

Figure 6. George Herbert, "Easter wings" from *The Temple* (1630). The best-known of English pattern poems, this piece fully justifies its reputation. What is striking in the work is its relation between text and form; the emotional curve perfectly follows the length of the lines. The lines are as they appeared in the original edition, vertically on the page.

Lord, who createdt man in wealth and flore,  
 Though foolishly he loft the fame,  
 Decaying more and more,  
 Till he became  
 Mofl poore:  
 With thee  
 O let me rife  
 As larks, harmoniously,  
 And fing this day thy victories:  
 Then fhall the fall further the flight in me.

My tender age in forrow did beginne  
 And fill with fickneffes and fhame  
 Thou didft fo punifh finne,  
 That I became  
 Mofl thine.  
 With thee  
 Let me combine,  
 And feel this day thy victorie:  
 For, if I imp my wing on thine,  
 Affliction fhall advance the flight in me.

"X begins this knot love without crosses . . ." in v. 1, fcg. p. 306, reprinted in Klonsky (1975); and (8) an altar-shaped monument for "Andrew Turncoat" in v. 2, p. 268, reprinted in Higgins (1977) and in Klonsky (1975). In some copies of the 1874 reprint all the love knots are grouped together at the start of v. 1. The love knot (known also as "lover's knot," "true love's knot," etc.) is an outgrowth of the calligraphic labyrinth. It became popular in the seventeenth century, then either continued into or was rediscovered in the nineteenth century, when it became popular for valentine cards (see American section, below). Besides English, it is found in Swedish literature, q.v. The earliest we know of is by William Browne, already mentioned.

In the *Collection of Miscellanies* (1687) of John Norris (1657-1711), the "Second chapter of cant[icles] from verse 10 to 13," reprinted in Grosart's *Miscellanies* (1873) is thought by Church (1944) to form four stanzaic lozenges, but these seem too irregular for this to be true. Neither is there any pattern poetry in the 1710 edition.

Leaving aside the controversy over who actually wrote *The Arte of English Poesie* usually attributed to George Puttenham (d. 1590), the list of forms (pp. 92-3) has been reprinted widely, not always complete. The forms are: "the lozange called rhombus," "the fuzie or spindle called romboides" (wedges), "the triangle, or tricquet," "the square or quadrangle," "the pillaster or cillinder," "the spire or taper, called piramis," "the rondel or sphere," "the egg or figure oval," "the triquet reuerst" (an inverted pyramid; it has its own traditional associations), "the triquet displayed" (a pair of pyramids, one inverted, points touching), "the taper reuersed" (a narrow, inverted pyramid; the only one we know is by Whiting, below), "the rödel displayed" (evidently a half circle, a very rare form), "the lozange reuersed" (wider than tall, but we do not distinguish this from other lozenges), "the egge displayed" (half ovals, point to point, another seldom-used form), and "the lozange rabbated" (truncated pyramids). The list excludes the Hellenistic Greek forms as well as the cross.

Puttenham also includes seven pattern poems illustrating his forms: (1) a set of lozenges on p. 94, reprinted in Klonsky (1975) and in Newell (1976); (2) "Ribouska's lament," on p. 95, a truncated and inverted pyramid, reprinted in Ernst (1982) and in Higgins (1977). Ernst discusses the pyramid forms, and points out how an inverted pyramid usually either reverses the stated message of the poem or is used to express regret, misery, desolation, etc.; (3) "Selamour's reply," p. 95, in Higgins (1977) and Ernst (1982); (4 and 5) two pyramids on p. 96, reprinted in Cook (1979) and in Klonsky (1975); (6 and 7) two columns on p. 97, reprinted in D'Ors (1977), Higgins (1977), Klonsky (1975), and Ernst (1982).

Puttenham suggests that pattern poetry originated in "Tartary," and the possible oriental connections of these poems are discussed and minimized in Ch'ien (1940: 351-84).

Francis Quarles (1592-1644), best known for his emblem texts, is also the author of at least five pattern poems. One is a lozenge (Figure 7), "On God's law," in *Divine Fancies* (1632), in Grosart's edition (1880), v. 2, p. 210. The others all appeared first in his *Hieroglyphikes* (1638) and, using Grosart's edi-

tion for pagination, they are: (1) an altar or hour-glass called, "Her epitaph," v. 3, p. 26; (2) eight stanzaic pyramids, "Hieroglyphic IX," v. 3, p. 192; (3) five stanzaic lozenges, "Hieroglyphic XII," v. 3, pp. 194-5; and (4) a set of 24 stanzaic pyramids, "Sighes," of which the first word is capitalized and on which the other lines seem to comment. These poems, especially the last, are rather fine in an unpretentious way, perhaps not great literature but certainly worth occasional reading.

Only one edition is known of the *Celestiall Publican* (1630) by Nathaniel or Nathanael Richards (ca. 1600- ? ), which Church (1944) says contains five pattern poems: (1) a lozenge, "The Adamant," at l5<sup>r</sup>; (2) an anchor, "Hope," at K3<sup>r</sup>; (3) a heart, "Charitie," at K5<sup>r</sup>; (4) a chalice or glass, "Faith," at K5<sup>v</sup>; and (5) a sort of rounded lozenge with a tail and on a pedestal, "Virtues pyramid," at L2<sup>r</sup>.

Church reproduces these, albeit crudely. There is supposed to be only one copy of the original edition of the work in the United States (in the Huntington Library in California) from which a reprint was made in 1974. However, when we examined this reprint, we found that it included only the lozenge in common with Church's findings (at p. C6<sup>r</sup>). Instead, it includes two other pattern poems: (1) a pair of crosses, "The key of Heaven," at C8<sup>r-v</sup>; and (2) a tree, "The pyramid of Paradiçe," at D1<sup>r</sup>. There are two pierced hearts at K6<sup>v</sup> and K7<sup>r</sup>, but these are basically ornaments. Interestingly they appear in an acrostic dedicated to Mary and Thomas Stanley, who could be the pattern poet (see below)

Figure 7. Francis Quarles, "On God's law" from *Divine Fancies* (1632).

### *On God's Law.*

Thy Sacred *Law*, O God,  
 Is like to *MOSES' Rod*:  
 If wee but keepe it in our hand,  
 It will doe Wonders in the Land ;  
 If wee slight and throw it to the Ground ;  
 'Twill turne a *Serpent*, and inflict a Wound ;  
 A *Wound* that Flesh and Blood cannot endure,  
 Nor salve, untill the *Brazen Serpent* cure :  
 I wish not, *Lord*, thou shouldst *withhold it* ;  
 Nor wold I *have it*, and not *hold it* :  
 O teach me then, my God,  
 To handle *MOSES' Rod*.

and his wife. We can only speculate that there must have been two editions of the work in 1630, and Church must have had access to only one, perhaps borrowed from Hyder Rollins, now deceased like Church herself. We know of no record of there being two editions, nor do we have any way of discovering which is the earlier one or why the differences exist. It will not prove easy to solve this mystery.

Church cites a set of nineteen stanzaic wings by Thomas Shipman (1632-80), "Poetical plenty" in *Carolina* (1883: 141-2), but we find them too amorphous for the pattern poetry category to be meaningful here.

Samuel Speed (1631-82) is often dismissed as a crude and imitative poet. What is more just is to regard him as a primitive, self-taught, and deeply sincere in his way. He has three pattern poems in *Prison Pietie* (1677): (1) "The altar," "A broken ALTAR, Lord, to thee I raise," on p. 72 (Figure 8); (2) "The cross," a crude cruciform quatrain on p. 65; and (3) "The bible," on p. 81; one of only two known book-shaped pattern poems, the other being a bible in von Birken's *Guelphis* (1669: 36) to which it has some superficial resemblance. This piece is described by Jeremy Adler in this issue.

There are three stanzaic pyramids by Thomas Stanley or Stanly (1625-78) in his manuscript of ca. 1645, Cambridge "Add. ms. 7514." They are in "The exequies," at f. 161<sup>r</sup>, but the poem, reprinted in Saintsbury (1921), is very poorly defined visually, whatever its literary interest. It appears in the 1907 edition on p. 61. Church (1944) discusses "The exequies" and Stanley on p. 237. Also, Stanley may be the dedicatee of a one of Richards' poems (see above), in which case we have one of the few documented instances of one English pattern poet knowing another.

Matthew Stevenson (ca. 1620-85) in *Occasions of Spring* (1654) includes a set of three lozenges, "To my honoured friend" (Figure 9), on pp. 34-5. Church (1944) cites two other poems as stanzaic wings: "Mrs. E. G. To his false and faithlesse servant" on p. 41 and "Upon the sickness and recovery of a fairly promised lady" on p. 121, but these last are, again, quite amorphous.

Josiah Sylvester (1563-1618) has a pyramidal dedication to Sir Philip Sydney (1554-86), "England's Apelles," in his translation of *Du Bartas* (1603), reprinted and discussed in Ernst (1982) and in Snyder's edition (1979). This and the twelve columns dedicated to each of the muses, one for each, appear in Grosart's edition of Sylvester (1880) and are also reprinted in Massin (1970). *Du Bartas'* original work contains no pattern poems, and the current edition of Sylvester, by Snyder (1979), minimizes the graphic element, reproducing only the column to Clio.

Much as one might like to have a pattern poem by Thomas Traherne (d. 1674), Church's citation (1944) of "Sin!" and "The recovery" in Margouliouth's edition (1958) is questionable.

Church also cites four poems by Thomas Washbourne (1606-87), all from the *Divine Poems* (1654), none of which seem clear enough for acceptance into the canon. Citing titles and paginations from the Grosart edition (1868), these are "The burning bush" on p. 73, "The best harbinger" on p. 143, "No continuing city" on p. 158, and "Upon his walking one day abroad . . ." on p. 194.

## ☪ The Altar.

A broken ALTAR, Lord, to thee I raise,  
 Made of a Heart, to celebrate thy praise:  
 Thou that the onely Workman art,  
 That canst cement a broken heart.  
 For such is mine,  
 O make it thine:  
 Take out the Sin  
 That's hid therein.  
 Though it be Stone,  
 Make it to groan;  
 That so the same  
 May praise thy Name.  
 Melt it, O Lord, I thee desire,  
 With Flames from thy Cœlestial fire;  
 That it may ever speak thy Praise alone,  
 Since thou hast changed into Flesh a Stone.

Figure 8. Samuel Speed, "The altar" from *Prison Pietie* (1677).

Figure 9. Matthew Stevenson, "To my honoured friend"  
 from *Occasions of Spring* (1654).

To my honoured friend.  
*A Gentleman that in a frolick would needs  
 barb mee.*

1.

But B E N  
 Let me know when  
 Thou wilt returne age n;  
 Oh thy departure drew a teare,  
 Not from the warric surface of the spheare  
 No, no it drew it, whilst, stay there  
 Least while such newes I send,  
 I much offend,  
 My friend,

2.

Indeed  
 Since twas decreed  
 Thou shouldst depart with speed  
 I could not choose, but heavily looke  
 To looke at once my barber, and my Cook:  
 I will be sworn upon a booke  
 I oft thee wanted have  
 My chin to shave,  
 Poore knave.

3.

And clip  
 My upper lippe  
 And make the haire to skip  
 For having mended my bad face  
 Thou good Lawn Bands about n y neck didst place  
 And cufst my hands, but now alas  
 I shall, I am in mind  
 No Barber finde  
 so kinde.

MY LOVE IS PAST.

*A Pasquine Piller erected in the despite of Loue.*

A I At  
 2 last, though  
 3 late, farewell  
 4 olde well a da: A  
 m 5 Spirth of mischaunce strike  
 a 6 by a newe alarm, And m  
 7 Cypria la nemica  
 r 8 miA Retire to Cyprus Ile, a  
 c 9 & cease thy waite Reason must thou proue hois r  
 E 10 Reason can by charme Enforce to fight thy c  
 s 11 blindfolds byatte & thee. So frames it with mee now, E  
 t 12 that I confesse, The life I lede in Loue deuoyde i  
 I 12 of rest, It was a Hell, where none felte more then I, i  
 n 11 For anye with lyke miseries folow. Since n  
 s 10 therefore now my woos are wered less, And s  
 a 9 Reason bids mee leaue olde wellada, a  
 n 8 No longer shall the world laughe mee.  
 i 7 to scorn; Ile choose a path that a  
 r 6 shall not leade awoye. Rest i  
 5 then with mee from your  
 4 blinde Cupids carke r  
 c. 3 Each one of  
 2 you, that  
 1 serue,  
 3 and would be  
 5 sicke. His dooble shall e.  
 7 that liu's as Loue thinks best, whose  
 9 hande still Tyrant like to hurte is presse.

MY LOVE IS PAST.

*Expansio Columnæ præcedentis.*

A	At last, though late, farewell olde wellada;	A
m	Spirth of mischaunce strike by a newe alarm;	m
a	and Cypria la nemica mia	a
r	Retire to Cyprus Ile and cease thy warr,	r
c	Reason must thou proue how Reason can by charme	c
E	Enforce to fight thy blindfolds byatte and thee.	E
s	So frames it with me now, that I confesse	s
t	The life I lede in Loue deuoyd of rest	t
I	It was a Hell, where none felte more then I,	I
n	For any with like miseries folow.	n
s	Since therefore now my woos are wered less,	s
a	and Reason bids me leaue olde wellada,	a
n	No longer shall the world laughe me to scorn;	n
i	Ile choole a path that shall not leade awoye.	i
r	Rest then with me from your blinde Cupids cart	r
c	Each one of you, that serue and would be hee.	c
a.	His dooble shall that liu's as Loue thinks best	
a.	whose hande still Tyrant like to hurte is presse.	

Figures 10a and 10b. Thomas Watson, "My love is past" from *'Ekatompathia* (1582), a two-part piece (cf. James VI's Scottish piece below).

Thomas Watson (1557?-92) composed the earliest pattern poem in English if we except the alleged one by Stephen Hawes in *Convercyon of Swerers*, described below, and if we exclude Scottish literature. It appears in Watson (1582: 81) (1870: 117), a full lozenge on a stem, entitled "My love is past" and subtitled "A pasquine pillar erected in despite of loue" (Figure 10). There is a discussion of the piece on the previous page, and an acroteleastic version of it on the following one.

There is an inverted pyramid in *Le Hore di Recreatione; or, The Pleasant Historie of Albino and Bellama* (1637: 5) by Nathaniel Whiting (1617?-82) reprinted in Saintsbury (1921). It is a conventional piece but with considerable charm, "The authour to his book," saying farewell to it as it goes out into the world.

Two early pieces are by Andrew Wilett or Willett (1562-1621) in his *Sacrorum Emblematum* (1596): (1) a tree in Latin, "Elizabetham reginam Diu nobis servet Iesus" at A4<sup>v</sup>. There is also an acroteleastic, with the starting the first part of the title presented as an inscription running down the left side, and the second part down the right; and (2) a set of what could be wings or altars dedicated to an earl, once in Latin and once in English. Both pieces are purely occasional verse in a pleasing lapidary style.

Finally, there is a set of six lozenge-shaped "sonnets" by George Wither (1588-1667) in his *Fair Virtue* (1622), on pp. 151-3 of the *Poetry* (1902), reprinted in Massin (1970) and Walsh (1925). Less wooden than most of Wither's verse, the pieces are lovers' regrets.

From our examination of these pieces we find Margaret Church has a tendency to see pattern poetry in many places where, we feel, to do so dilutes the usefulness of the concept. Nevertheless, her dissertation (1944) is a pioneering work, since rather few pattern poems have been found in English which she was not the first to list. However, she does make one citation which is problematic, perhaps only to be explained by the patriotism or even chauvinism of the period when she was working, at the end of World War II. This is her citation (1944 and 1946) of a piece by Stephen Hawes (d. 1523) in *Convercyon of Swerers* (1509). Her argument is that the piece is an assemblage of syrinxes, each of which follows the shape of that of Theocritus. It is indeed an irregularly-shaped piece, but there is no interior evidence in the text to justify any relationship to Theocritus' work. If it were a pattern poem, then English would be one of the first modern literatures to include pattern poetry. But basically the piece is simply a crude and irregular one, not without charm and linguistic interest, but not particularly appropriate to classify in the pattern poetry genre. A modern typeset version of the piece appears in Berdan (1931; 1961) which looks more like a pattern poem than the one Church reproduces in her article. The poem runs onto two pages in the 1509 edition, but Church's illustration comes from some later edition of Hawes' work, of which there are five before the Elizabethan period.

The actual first pattern poems known to have been written by an Englishman are by Richard Willis (ca. 1545-1600), a Jesuit priest and traveller. They are in Latin and are contained in the *Poematum Liber . . .* (1573) and were, according



to the scholia, inspired by “a Gaul,” that is a Frenchman, Caspar Collinus, whose works are evidently lost. The poems are: (1) an “altar of the Christian religion” at C2<sup>r</sup>; (2) a sword at C3<sup>r</sup>; (3) an egg at B2<sup>v</sup>; (4) a pear; (5) a syrinx at C3<sup>v</sup>; (6) a set of wings; (7) an inverted pyramid that is printed and discussed in Ernst (1982), an axe that is reprinted in D’Ors (1977), in Church (1946) as well as in Dencker (1972). Poor numbering in the book makes it hard to give consistent page numbers.

### English to 1900

No English pattern poems are known from the entire eighteenth century. The vogue for them, such as it was, simply died away with the coming of Neo-Classicism, and when pattern poems were made in the nineteenth century they were apt, as we noted at the start of this section, to be anonymous; only those by Lewis Carroll are signed. One might speculate concerning this, but there are no nineteenth-century English discussions of the genre to back up whatever might be said, unlike other literatures, notably French.

There is anonymous poem on losing weight, “Averdupois,” in Wells (1906; 1963: 31).

Bombaugh (1875; 1961: 94) includes an anonymous serious cross, “Blest be they who seek while in their youth . . .” to which he attributes greater antiquity than seems likely. It is not a translation of any known cross poem from someplace else, for example. It is reprinted in Massin (1970) and Walsh (1925).

An anonymous “cubic triolet” appears in Wells (1906: 31), one of only two known labyrinths in English. The other, lozenge-shaped, appears in Smith (1914; 1965: 172), discussed by Herbert Franke, this issue.

Bombaugh (1875; 1961: 95) also has a serious piece with three crosses, “My God! My God! INRivers of my tears.” He calls it “a curious piece of antiquity” and speculates that monks may have made it. It is also in Morgan (1872) and Walsh (1925).

Bombaugh (1875; 1961) also includes an anonymous bow-shaped poem, “O lovely maid” (Figure 11) which, interestingly, although usually dismissed by those who have reprinted it as a trivial piece of pseudo-orientalia, really is in the bow bandha by Sanskrit *citra-kāvya*s described in Yates (1836: 154). Massin (1970) reprints the piece, as does Morgan (1872) evidently from Alger (1856) 6-7; it is also in Alger (1883) and Walsh (1925). In other words, this simple piece is not just a bit of imitation orientalia, as it might seem, but somebody’s serious attempt to make a little poem in one of the actual bandhas.

There is an anonymous violin-shaped “Ode to an old violin” in Massin (1970: 187), Peignot (1878: 22), and Walsh (1925: 274).

Wells (1906; 1963: 18) reprints an anonymous bottle-shaped piece, “Song of the decanter,” also in Massin (1970); a piece called “The stegomyia” on p. 23 and “A type of beauty” on p. 22 in the shape of a woman, which resembles Oldenburg’s little man in Bäerle’s Viennese newspaper, *Wiener Theaterzeitung* (1818).

The only reported English pattern poems that are not anonymous, as noted, are those by Charles L. Dodgson (“Lewis Carroll,” 1832-98), the two mice tales

O lovely maid, thou art the fairest slave in all God's mart!

One kiss I send, to pierce, like fire, thy too reluctant heart.

Those charms to win, with all my empire I would gladly part

A Colomne of 18 lynes seruing for a Preface to the Tragedie ensuying.

\* The expansion of the former Colomne.

1 E l f  
 2 E c h o 2  
 3 help that both 3  
 4 together we, 4  
 5 Since cause there be, may 5  
 6 now lament with tearis, My 6  
 7 murnefull yearis. Ye furies als 7  
 8 with him, Euen Pluto grim, who duells 8  
 9 in dark, that he, Since cheif we se him 9  
 10 to you all that bearis The style men fearis of 10  
 11 Diræ, I request, Eche greizlie ghest that dwells 11  
 12 beneath the see, With all yon thre, whose hairs ar snaiks 12  
 12 full blew, And all your crew, assist me in thir twa 12  
 11 Repeat and sha my Tragedie full neir, The 11  
 10 chance fell heir. then secondlie is best, Deuills 10  
 9 void of rest, ye moue all that it reid, 9  
 8 With me in deid lyke dolour them 8  
 7 to griv', I then will liv' in 7  
 6 lesser greif therebj. Kyth, 6  
 5 heir and try your force 5  
 4 ay bent and quick, 4  
 3 E x c e l l i n 3  
 2 s i k l i k e 2

1 E If Echo help, that both together w E  
 (S ince cause there be) may now lamest with teari S  
 M y murnefull yearis. Ye furies als with hi M  
 E uen Pluto grim, who dwels in dark, that h E  
 5 S ince cheif we se him to you all that beari S  
 T he style men fearis of Diræ : I reques T  
 E che greizlie ghest, that dwells beneath the S E  
 W ith all yon thre, whose hairis ar snaiks full ble W  
 A nd all your crew, assist me in thir tw A  
 10 R epeit and sha my Tragedie full nei R  
 T he chance fell heir. Then secondlie is bes T  
 D euils void of rest, ye moue all that it rei D  
 W ith me, indeid, lyke dolour thame to gri V  
 I then will liv', in lesser greif therebi I  
 15 K ythe heir and trie, your force ay bent and quic K  
 E xcell in sik lyke ill, and murne with m E

and murne with  
 me. From Delphos syne  
 Apollo cum with speid : Whose  
 shining light my cairis will dim in deid.

From Delphos syne Apollo cum with speid,  
 Whose shining light my cairis will dim in deid.

Figure 11. Anonymous, "O lovely maid," an imitation of the bow-and-arrow Indian bandha.

from *Alice in Wonderland*. The better known is the final version, "Fury said to the mouse," which is in all editions of the book, for example in *The Annotated Alice* (1960: 51), but the earlier version, "We lived beneath the mat," is not unknown either. Cobbing and Mayer (1978) prints both versions, as does Dencker (1972). Peignot (1978) prints only the early version, while Wells (1906), D'Ors (1977), and Todd (1981) print only the later one. Klonsky (1975) prints the later one with its corresponding manuscript.

### Scottish

Only two pattern poems are known in Scottish literature, although Edwin Morgan, Alisdair M. Stewart, and others besides myself have been searching for them. Both are in English, though some may exist in Latin or in Scots Gaelic. They are: (1) A pyramid by William Drummond of Hawthornden (1587-1649), probably dated around 1647; in Drummond (1918: v. 1, p. 84); (2) A piece by King James VI (I of England, 1566-1625) in *The Essayes of a Prentise, in the Divine Art of Poesie . . .* (1585); in James I (1955: v. 1, pp. 40-1). It is a monument with an acrotelestatic key on the facing page (Figure 12).

### Irish

From Ireland no pattern poems have been reported in English. However, there are two pieces in manuscript in Gaelic, both in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin.

One is in "TCD Ms 52," fol. 160<sup>v</sup> ("The Book of Armagh," 9th century), a chapter heading for "The Book of Revelation." It has a diamond shape which could also be an urn.

The other is an inverted pyramid introduction to a poem by Cathan O'Duinin in "TCD MS 1296," p. 90, a collection of genealogies, tales, and poems concerning the families of Ibh Eachach of Munster. It dates from the eighteenth century.

Both could be classified as shaped prose, but the distinction is not very meaningful in such pieces since they, in any case, approach being prose poems. No doubt other pieces exist, perhaps in Latin or in English, but they have not been found.

Figures 12a and 12b. King James VI of Scotland, monument with acrotelestatic key, from *The Essayes of a Prentise . . .* (1585).



Figure 13a. The original marble gravestone by Samuel Bean (ca. 1865), known locally as "the puzzle gravestone."

Figure 13b. The text on the gravestone.

Figure 13c. The text of the card which Bean sent out when his wife died.

S V W E T B S A 15 S T M O R E  
 E I R T E 2 Y D & H N S 10 H E  
 M I A D 17 & S H T N O A R M T  
 N A Y D H D N E F S M Y E H E  
 E N S O W M A B E O 2 D 26 T T  
 E V & E I R O M I F S G E E E  
 H R S 27 D I E T W R 7 A O M  
 D A U H T A N M I S A 8 6 O T  
 H T S E S M E R E T E L I E S  
 Y E A I P H N I T A Y R I P M  
 E W N 8 6 5 A G E D 23 A P E L  
 E R N H S N W F W O I D T D H  
 I G A I 2 D I E H D E 27 H G O  
 T F R M O B T R N W N E V N A  
 F S O G D U A E O I H A E M Y

F E F I L Y L D O G A D E V I L — S E  
 O O R R O S R E H Y B D E T T E R Y B  
 R W M 2 S R A E Y 23 D E G A S K G A T  
 S I O O O W N I L N I D E I D E E D I  
 Y N N D N A C O T M I H H T — E R 10 E  
 E G T T A P L E D A L I H I D W H & T  
 A H H H D H O B N A E B P W N 11 C S O  
 R U S E A I R N E H M Y N T I F U H M  
 S S & 27 L A N R M N A R I N H O M T O  
 & B 17 T E T I E I E R D E E S — N S  
 D A D H A O N E M O R U E W B S O O —  
 I N A O V S P T T A H F I & S E O M S  
 E D Y F I A E N N M A R R D D N O 7 E  
 D & S S N M U E L B E A N M N L I D H  
 H A S E G A L L H E R F R I E L F E S  
 A L H P . 1 8 6 5 A F T E R A N I O I A  
 P L E W A S A M O D E L W I F E I R R  
 P W H O K N E W H E R — W A S M A R E  
 Y I N T H E L O R D — P E A C E T O H

## Welsh

In Welsh literature the only two known pattern poems are in Cymric (Welsh Gaelic).

Hywel Tudur (n.d., but late 19th century) includes a little tower of Babel, "Twr Babel," in her *Genesis i Blant* (1906) as no. 14. The book consists of poems for children on stories from *Genesis*, intended to encourage them to learn or to practice Welsh, and the poem may or may not have actually been written before 1900.

Robert Williams (1830-77) wrote two books in Welsh under the *nom de plume* of "Trebor Mai," which means "I am Robert." In his *Collected Works* (1883: 383) there appears an oak tree listing Mai's fellow poets by their bardic names. The internal rhymes in the piece are, as Meic Stephens of Cardiff pointed out when sending us the poem, "very sophisticated."

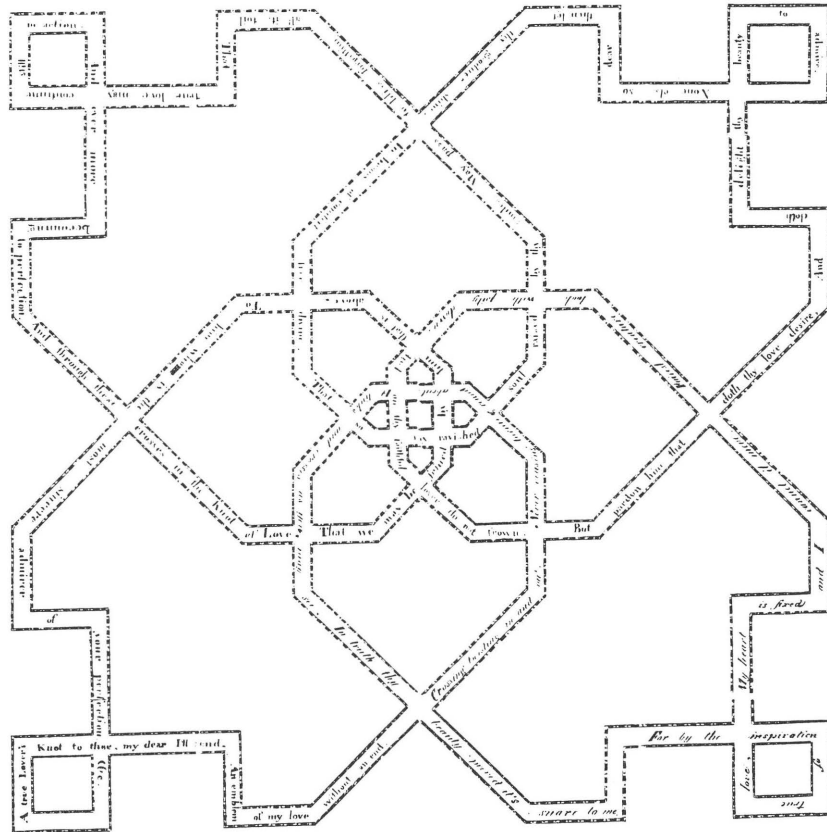
## Commonwealth

No true pattern poems have been reported from Australia. However, two pieces by [Christopher] John Brennan (1870-1932), "Musicopoematographoscope" and "Pocket musicopoematographoscope," both written in 1897 and both consciously influenced by Mallarmé's "Un coup de des" of that year, nearly qualify. Basically they have no visual pattern but are scatterings of words on the pages, with simultaneous texts functioning independently of each other. Both are in Brennan (1981).

H. Marshall McLuhan, who was, among other things, a scholar of Canadian poetry, told the author once that he had seen pattern poetry from Canada both in French and in English. At least one French piece is known, an 1897 glass by Albert Ferland (1872-1943). But the only English-language piece which has come to light is a fascinating tombstone of ca. 1865 for Henrietta and Susanna Bean, the two wives of Samuel Bean (1842-1904), of Linwood, near Kitchener, Ontario. Both predeceased him and he had a marble stone erected in their honor with a rectangular labyrinthine array of letters (Figure 13). Starting with an "I" near the center, it reads clockwise but then starts to zig-zag — a true puzzle poem. The marble stone aged poorly and has now been replaced by a granite one. According to the *Kitchener Waterloo Record* for 7 August 1968, sent to us by James Reaney of the University of Western Ontario, there was an accompanying funeral card, all original copies of which have disappeared. However, the text is in the newspaper article (see Figure 13c). A substantial documentation of the gravestone and card are in Lamb (1982). There is said to be a tradition of visual gravestones in the area, so we can hope that more English Canadian pieces of this sort and others will turn up in due course.

# LOVE KNOT.

September 1, 1856.



## BAIT OF THE AVERAGE FISHERMAN.

THIS is the bait the fishermen take,  
 the fishermen take,  
 the fishermen take, when they start out the fish to wake so early in the morning. They take a nip, before they go—a good one, ah! and long and slow, for fear the chills will lay them low so early in the morning. Another—when they're on the street, which they repeat each time they meet for "luck"—for that's the way to greet a fisher in the morning.— And when they are on the river's brink again they drink without a wink—to fight malaria they think it proper in the morning. They tip a flask with true delight when there's a bite; if fishing's light they "smile" the more, till jolly tight all fishing they are scorning. Another nip as they depart; one at the mart and one to part, but none when in the house they dart, expecting there'll be mourning. This is the bait the fishermen try, who fishes buy at prices high, and tell each one a bigger lie of fishing in the morning.

Figure 15. H. C. Dodge, "The bait of the average fisherman."

## United States

For a country whose national literature is such a recent development there are surprisingly many pattern poems and near-pattern poems in American literature. Except for the love knots, rather few are anonymous, unlike the English pieces of the last century or so.

One anonymous piece, a "Love knot" (Figure 14) was found by art curator Jon Hendricks folded into an old book; unpublished, it is dated 1856. However, it resembles the English love knots by William Browne and those collected by Mennes (1656) where the form is described more fully.

Evidently love knots were popular in the early nineteenth century for valentine greetings. Staff (1969) gives four examples (on pp. 28, 31, 38 and 39) calling them "true-love knots," all of which qualify as pattern poems technically, though they are not exactly timeless literature (nor were they meant to be). The form, it should be noted, it also known from seventeenth-century Sweden.

"The old line fence" by A. W. Bellaw (n.d.) is a zig-zag poem printed in Wells (1906; 1963: 27-8).

H. C. Dodge (n.d.), one of the "New York Wits" as they were called in *The Pamphlet Poets* (1929), is the author of the vase-shaped "Bait of the average fisherman" (Figure 15). A typical example of the Nineteenth Century predilection for using visual poetry for comic verse purposes, it appears on p. 23, and also in Wells (1906; 1963).

Mary Hazard (19th century) was a Shaker who did not entirely accept the usual Shaker dismissal of the arts as frivolous. She produced three pieces (or one, if two surviving unsigned pieces which very closely resemble her signed one are anonymous), which are on the borderline between shaped prose and pattern poetry. These are: (1) a circle, "From Holy Mother Wisdome to Eldress Dana or Mother (Hancock, 1848)," in Andrews (1969); (2) "Floral wreath (Hancock, 1853)" in Andrews (1969); and (3) a leaf-shaped paper with writing on the front, back and edges, "Leaf sketches by Mary Hazard (New Lebanon, 1839)," also in Andrews (1969). This piece resembles a valentine in Staff (1969: 35); also in Andrews (1940; 1967) and in Rothenberg and Quasha (1973).

A wine glass by Frederick Saunders (1807-1902) from his *Salad for the Solitary* (1853) appears in Church (1944) from Morgan (1872); also in Walsh (1925) and Wells (1906; 1963).

The earliest known American pattern poem is a very elaborate acromesoteleastic of 1674 by Edward Taylor (1642-1729), first printed in Johnson (1941), then described by Goodman (1954), and subsequently included in Keller (1975). It is not in any of the pattern poetry collections.

Figure 14. Anonymous, "Love knot" (1856). Collection Jon Hendricks, New York. Reprinted by permission.

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# Reading Paths in Spanish and Portuguese Baroque Labyrinths

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*The problems of reading and classifying labyrinth poems of the Iberian baroque are addressed. A quantity of significant illustrations is provided and commented, setting forth guide-keys for reading and interpretation.*

In the Iberian Peninsular baroque poems called "labyrinths" (composed in Latin, Spanish, or Portuguese) the most striking aspect is their twofold nature: on the one hand, their visual impact, with a remarkable display of creative calligraphy or printing; on the other, the complexity and the profusion of paths proposed to the reader, always implicit in the text but not always immediately evident. Because of this, the understanding of labyrinth poems necessitates the acquaintance with the rules of poetry-making upon which they are based.

Among the *preceptistas* of the period, the Spaniard Rengifo stands out as one of the best-known. His *Arte Poetica Espanola*, first published in 1592,<sup>1</sup> seems to have been a revered model for the poets of his time and, to this day, remains a major source of information for peninsular pattern or non-pattern poetry of the baroque period.<sup>2</sup> Rengifo's *Arte Poetica* has nowadays acquired further meaning, becoming in itself an example of the evolution suffered by the *poesia artificiosa*, for, as editions of the work appeared over the years, successive additions were introduced into it allowing us to see in a panoramic way the development of some of the forms.

In what concerns labyrinth poems, my personal research has enabled me to confirm that the compositions that can be included in that category follow quite closely the rules set out in Rengifo's *Arte Poetica*. Consequently, in *A Experiencia do Prodígio*,<sup>3</sup> I was able to gather all the labyrinths I had so far encountered into three main groups:

verse labyrinths	( <i>labirintos de versos</i> )
letter labyrinths	( <i>labirintos de letras</i> )
cubic labyrinths	( <i>labirintos cúbicos</i> )

## Verse Labyrinths

Verse labyrinths are usually made of four or five line poems, with a normal aspect but arranged on a single page or sheet. This type of text usually carries an indication of how many readings may be obtained and how many possibilities of combination or permutation are considered viable. The most fre-

quent reading paths proposed for verse labyrinths to be added to the normal one are: *alternation of lines and strophes*, one by one, two by two, three by three, etc.; *reverse readings* from right to left, from bottom to top, from end to beginning, etc.; and *diagonal readings*. Whichever the path or paths chosen, perfect, meaningful poems must always result, at least perfect so far as the rules are concerned. In the compositions which include in their title a relation to the chessboard, reading paths similar to chess moves are to be considered as well. In Figure 1 we can see an example of the chessboard kind of poem, included in a 1724 edition of Rengifo's *Arte Poetica Española*.

A variant of the chessboard verse labyrinth is shown in Figure 2, a text attributed to Luis Nunes Tinoco, a Portuguese poet.<sup>4</sup> At the base of this composition are indicated the main reading paths starting from the center — *Carmine concelebrat* — and the number of verses resulting from the possible combinations — 14,996,480 — an astronomical figure which I have also found in a similar poem by the Spaniard Juan Caramuel de Lobkowitz, included in his celebrated *Metametrika*, published in 1663.

Yet another type of verse labyrinth is seen in Figure 3, a composition dedicated to the Portuguese Conde de Villaflor, D. Sancho Manoel,<sup>5</sup> where the reading paths are indicated by letters — A, B, C, etc.

Figure 1. Chessboard poem. Juan Diaz Rengifo, 1724.

**LABYRINTHO**  
AL MODO DE EL JUEGO DE EL AXEDREZ,  
QUE TRATA DE EL NACIMIENTO DE CRISTO  
NUESTRO SEÑOR.

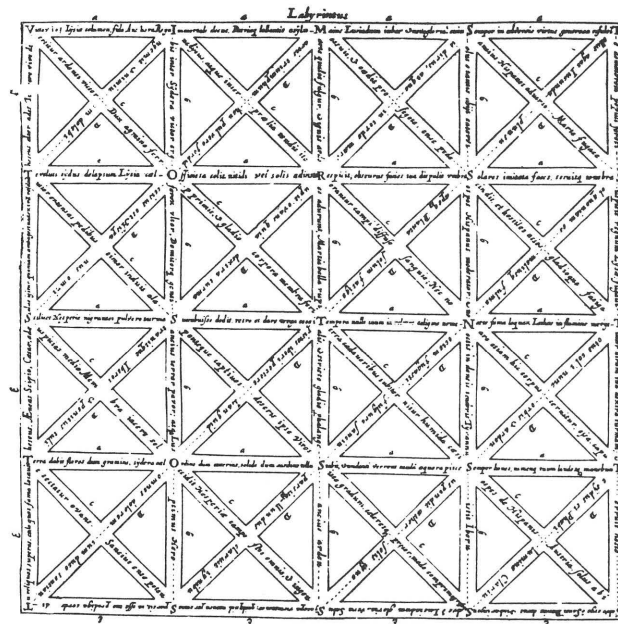
<p>Son veinte y cinco no mas Si de repente las cuentas; Si las cuentas por compás, Algunas menos, ó mas, Son cinco mil y quinientas.</p>	<p>Con un Hijo, que parió Siendo Virgen eclogia, (Segun nos lo prometió), Lucifer va de caida Quando el hombre reñcaró</p>	<p>De el modo, que convenia Por levantado al Redemptor Para nuestra mejoría Havesis visto tal primor No ferá, como foia</p>	<p>Nuestro pecado pagó Por levantar mi caida Humilde por mi nacido Siendo Virgen la parida Ya mi fuete fe trocò</p>	<p>Siendo de tan gran cantia O que supremo favor Pues Dios Padre allí lo cambia Mostrando su gran amor Esforzó mi torbardia</p>
<p>La Virgen Santa Maria Con las entrañas de amor Oy nos ha dado el Mellias Amanzó Dios fu amor Cumplióse la Profecía</p>	<p>Remedió nuestro peccado Contra nuestra Madre Eva Por aquel caro bocado Hizo Dios tan alta prueba De fu Clemencia obligado</p>	<p>Dando de fu amor señal Recuperó lo perdido Fué la paga mas cabal En un Pelebre metido Con afición paternal</p>	<p>En un Pelebre está echado El que nuestros males lleva Y con carne disfrazado Porque Luzbel no le atreva Dios le puso en tal estado</p>	<p>Nuestro Gordero Pasqual De Carne humana vestido Ha nacido en un Portal Nuestro desforis fu fido Tomando nuestro metal</p>
<p>Con el Parto Virginal Fué nuestro gozo cumplido Su Clemencia Celestial De Caridad encendido Hizo perdon general</p>	<p>La que Virgen concebí Fué causa de nuestra vida De mi culpa se encargó Con amor, que le combida Aquel Verbo, que encató</p>	<p>Como Norte, que nos guia Quiandonos el temor Ya pues peccador confia Pues Dios sale por fador Venciendo al que nos venia</p>	<p>Al buen puetto nos sacó Con tan humilde venida Pues Dios tanto se abasó Con paga, que es tan crecida Por el hombre, que pecó</p>	<p>O dichosa compañia Aquel caudatolo Azor Mira que burlio daria Como fabio Carador Quando al mundo descendia</p>
<p>En una noche muy fria Nació de Oveja Pastor El que mal no merecia Porque esse mi tormento En un Pelebre plaña</p>	<p>Siendo de gracia dechido Porq mas fu amor nos mueva Aquél Leon figurado Salio manio de la cueva Encogido, y abreviado</p>	<p>Villidíe de mi fayal De puro amor confundido Por baxo amor Lucifer anda caido Hecho mi Dios temporal</p>	<p>El Sacro Verbo encarnado Redimíó la culpa de Eva Teniendo tal bocado Aunque mas el hombre debia Para que quedé pagado</p>	<p>Haciendose nuestro igual El mismo, que censurado Contoso está herial Pues solo Dios ha cumplido Mostrandose principal</p>
<p>Ha fanado nuestro mal Como eslabo prometido Haciendose Dios mortal Una Virgen le ha parido Quien imaginara tal</p>	<p>A todo el Mundo libró Con Caridad, nunca oida Porque no perdiera yo La Magellan ofendida A si mismo se apladó</p>	<p>Siendo pues la culpa mia Ya no trata de rigor Llora la Eterna siegria Pagará el mismo Criador Lo que el hombre no podia</p>	<p>Con nosotros conversó La Magellan ofendida Aunque al mal q Adán causó Sabia mucho a la medida El grande precio, que dió</p>	<p>En Belén nació este dia Nuestro gran Dios, y Señor Con fu gran fabiduria Para salvar al decidor De fu caudal lo ponis.</p>
<p>Por sola fu correfia Por salvar al peccador Pagó quien no lo debia Hecho el hombre acreedor Con amor que nos tenia</p>				

Figure 2. Chessboard labyrinth. Luis Nunes Tinoco, seventeenth century.

<i>lymphae</i>		<i>Vivax</i>	<i>Rex Petrus</i>	<i>IN</i> <i>CEVUM</i>	<i>Conda</i> <i>mat</i>	<i>Popu</i> <i>lus</i>	<i>Vive</i> <i>Sopha</i> <i>diu.</i>
	<i>Belli</i>	<i>Mars</i> <i>alter</i>	<i>In</i> <i>Orbe</i>	<i>In</i> <i>Urbe</i>	<i>Te</i> <i>illu</i> <i>strat</i>	<i>Prin</i> <i>ceps</i>	
<i>lostri</i>	<i>Tu</i> <i>fulmen</i>	<i>In</i> <i>Armis</i>	<i>Te</i> <i>Caesar</i>	<i>Aman</i> <i>do</i>	<i>Te</i> <i>lauda</i> <i>r</i>	<i>Pietas</i>	
	<i>Tu</i> <i>fortis</i>	<i>In</i> <i>undis</i>	<i>Te</i> <i>lufus</i>	<i>Te</i> <i>Gallus</i>	<i>Et</i> <i>ornat</i>	<i>Te</i> <i>vincit</i>	
<i>Tu</i> <i>habus</i>	<i>Achi</i> <i>les</i>	<i>Te</i> <i>Hisp</i> <i>anus</i>	<i>Vario</i>	<i>Te</i> <i>Molan</i> <i>dus</i>	<i>In</i> <i>Armis</i>	<i>Cui</i> <i>fulget</i>	
	<i>Vlyssa</i>	<i>Te</i> <i>Electo</i> <i>r</i>	<i>Dulci</i>	<i>Compo</i>	<i>Dux</i> <i>frater</i>	<i>In</i> <i>Aula</i>	
<i>lympi</i>	<i>Romani</i>	<i>Patrio</i>	<i>Carmine</i> <i>celestibret</i>	<i>Docto</i>	<i>Bur</i> <i>gundus</i>	<i>Vbique</i>	
	<i>Amonis</i>	<i>Te</i> <i>Rhenus</i>	<i>Multo</i>	<i>Modulo</i>	<i>Te</i> <i>Nicus</i>	<i>Amica</i>	
<i>Tu</i> <i>rdus</i>	<i>Amazon</i>	<i>Neubur</i> <i>gus</i>	<i>Lato</i>	<i>Germa</i> <i>nus</i>	<i>In</i> <i>ore</i>	<i>Cui</i> <i>spendet</i>	
	<i>Pignus</i>	<i>Ad</i> <i>altra</i>	<i>Te</i> <i>Flander</i>	<i>Te</i> <i>Boius</i>	<i>Abun</i> <i>dans</i>	<i>Cui</i> <i>ridet</i>	
<i>oltri</i>	<i>Te</i> <i>extollit</i>	<i>Honora</i>	<i>Te</i> <i>Prasul</i>	<i>Ador</i> <i>nans</i>	<i>Cui</i> <i>apparet</i>	<i>Bonitas</i>	
	<i>Petrus</i>	<i>Te</i> <i>caesar</i>	<i>Anhe</i> <i>lans</i>	<i>In</i> <i>oris</i>	<i>Cui</i> <i>lucet</i>	<i>Facies</i>	
<i>ue</i> <i>phia</i> <i>tiu</i>	<i>Virtus</i>	<i>Cui</i> <i>fatur</i>	<i>Ovanti</i>	<i>Cui</i> <i>aclam</i>	<i>Probitas</i>	<i>Gloria</i> <i>Lufidam</i>	

Labyrinthus Metncus Seren<sup>ae</sup> Reginae Portugalliae aperitur, in quo 14:996.480 hoc est quatuordecim miliones nongenta nonaginta sex milia, quadragenta, & octoginta versus, sine carmina legi possunt, legenda à centro ad angulos, totidemque ab angulis ad centrum.

Figure 3. Labyrinth poem. António Alvares da Cunha, 1673.



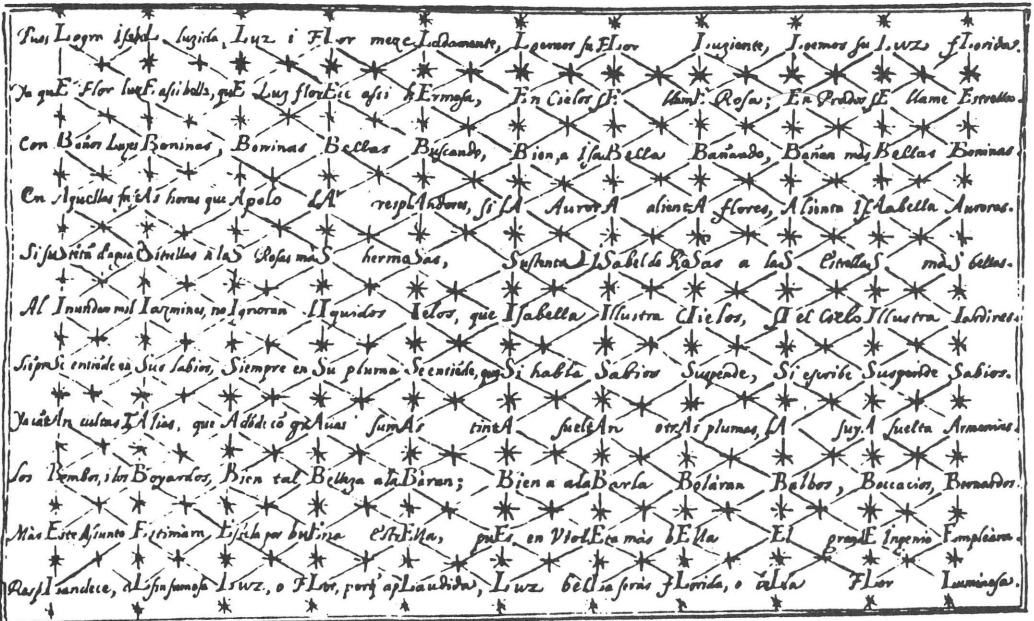
## Letter Labyrinths

Letter labyrinths are poems in which there have been inserted (and emphasized by means of capitals or color printing) certain letters that correspond to a special intent within the composition, usually the name of the person to whom the piece is dedicated or, perhaps, a special votive sentence. In the case of Figure 4, a poem by the celebrated Portuguese commentator on Camoës, Manuel de Faria e Sousa, the inserted word is ISABEL, the name of the lady in whose honor the poem was written and which in itself constitutes an autonomous pattern poem, as the author himself points out<sup>6</sup> and as we can confirm in Figure 4a.

L L L L L L L L L L L L  
 E E E E E E E E E E E E  
 B B B B B B B B B B B B  
 A A A A A A A A A A A A  
 S S S S S S S S S S S S  
 I I I I I I I I I I I I  
 S S S S S S S S S S S S  
 A A A A A A A A A A A A  
 B B B B B B B B B B B B  
 E E E E E E E E E E E E  
 L L L L L L L L L L L L

Figure 4. Labyrinth poem. Manuel de Faria e Sousa, ca. 1648.

*Em es el Labirinto de Isabel que ha de entrar do dize se diz en el capitulo [Aqui entra etc.]*







We are then confronted with a letter labyrinth which is a square poem having eleven characters, a *numero primo*, therefore, charged with symbolic meaning. The readings should start from the central line, where the letter *I* is found, and should proceed from there vertically up and down in each column, following the principle of an acrostic, and also diagonally from the center towards the corners. Besides this special reading, the poem as a whole is also meant to be read normally as a set of eleven stanzas, but other hidden paths such as permutations, inversions, and diagonal readings are also possible, the latter particularly, since they are suggested by the graphic support of the crossed lines. This type of composition is closely related to the technique of *versus intexti* or *verba intexta* found in European pattern poetry, at least since the work of Prophyrius Optatianus (fl. 325 AD), and it is interesting to see Manuel de Faria e Sousa clearly stating in the commentary of his own work that Prophyrius should be recognized as the father of baroque labyrinth poems,<sup>7</sup> an assertion that coincides with one made in our own times by Giovanni Polara.<sup>8</sup>

In Figure 5 we can see another eloquent demonstration of the inventiveness and complexity afforded by this type of labyrinth. The example is by Jerónimo Tavares Mascarenhas de Távora, a Portuguese poet who included it in his *Parabem Epithalamico*, published in 1738, to celebrate the wedding of Dom Luis de Castro and Dona Joana Perpétua de Bragança, a granddaughter of King Pedro II.<sup>9</sup> This letter labyrinth is written in two languages, Spanish and Portuguese, and their reading paths are indicated in Figure 5a where the actual poems have been erased.

Through this partial reading map it becomes clear how the names of the bride and of the bridegroom follow different paths: hers from the center towards the periphery, his from the periphery towards the center. Their names — JOANA and LUIS — are the inserted words around which are built the two poems that comprise the text: one around both names, another around just the letters *J* (inverted and functioning both as *J* and *I*) and *S* of the bridegroom's name. The first can be read following the paths indicated in dotted lines with arrows, starting from the center, with the letter *J* placed around the sun figure and proceeding towards the eight outer letters, *A*, but also following the lozenge detours marked. Reverse readings are possible as well. The second poem is strictly wrapped around the letters *J* and *S* of the name LUIS, which correspond to the first and last letters of each of its fourteen lines, in the middle of which they stand. The dotted lines with arrows indicate the direction of the reading, which is always towards the center.

### Cubic Labyrinths

Cubic labyrinths, as Rengifo describes them, are “a sort of letter labyrinth,” usually made out of a single line poem or couplet arranged on the page or sheet in such a way as to form a square. The reading is to start with the first letter, generally a well-emphasized capital placed at the top of the left hand side of the composition, and to continue right through the text — always left to right — until the last letter on the right-hand corner of the bottom line is reached. The reader will, therefore, be following a spiralling trajectory, since



what happens in this kind of labyrinth is such a full rotation that, at the end of the circuit, the line or couplet is completely reversed. Meanwhile we are, of course, also reading on the diagonal and along the edges of the square. The example in Figure 6 is Portuguese, possibly from the seventeenth century.<sup>10</sup>

A variant of the cubic labyrinth is illustrated by the striking composition in Figure 7, also by a Portuguese but from the eighteenth century, in which we see the principle of the cubic poem taken as literally as it can be, for not only are the rotation and the subsequent inversion of the text there, but also the whole poem itself is designed as a cube, with its six parts spread out. This particular labyrinth is the third in a series composed to commemorate the birthday of Queen Maria Theresa of Austria and Hungary, and its wording is: *Felices annos o vive Maria Theresa*.<sup>11</sup>

Paschasius à S. Ioanne Evangelista (Paschasio de San Giovanni, no dates but seventeenth century) in his *Poësis Artificiosa*, which was printed in two editions at Herbopoli (Worms) by Eliae Michaëlis Zinck in 1668 and 1674, rather surprisingly does not mention the category of labyrinths, but he does include a chapter, with illustrations — *De Carmine Cubico* — in which he refers to the cubic poem with rotation reading which we know as *laberinto cubico*, along with other forms, such as the square letter labyrinth with its reading starting from the center, crosses, etc.

In spite of this, and more in accordance with Rengifo, in *A Experiência do Prodigio*, the square poems and the crosses, with their readings starting from the center, are to be found under the designation of “letter labyrinths.” The reason for this classification is based upon the fact that, up to the present moment and at least in the Iberian Peninsula, that particular type of text is not known to have been described by any authors or commentators as “cubic,” this indication seemingly always having been reserved for labyrinth poems with rotation reading. According to the classification proposed in that book (which has to be considered temporary since further discoveries in this field may force me to change it) this kind of letter labyrinth, usually displaying only one word or a very limited text which has not been inserted or superimposed over another, is normally shaped as a square — a *carmen quadratum* — but can be found in the form of a cross. In the case of the square, and as far as the reading is concerned, the labyrinth is divided into four wings, all symmetrical, each one being the inverse of the other, in mirror image, as can be seen in Figure 8. The reading must start at the center — the letter C here — and it includes the vertical and diagonal paths where the same text is always to be found, in this case the words *Commentarios Hymnologicos*. This particular example was printed in red and black by a Portuguese author of the eighteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

When the composition is cruciform, several possibilities occur, of which we shall consider two. First, the usual four-sided division of the text, as in Figure 9;<sup>13</sup> and second, as in Figure 10,<sup>14</sup> where in each branch of the cross a different plea is added to the name of IESUS. Thus, starting from the central I, we can read, in order, for example:

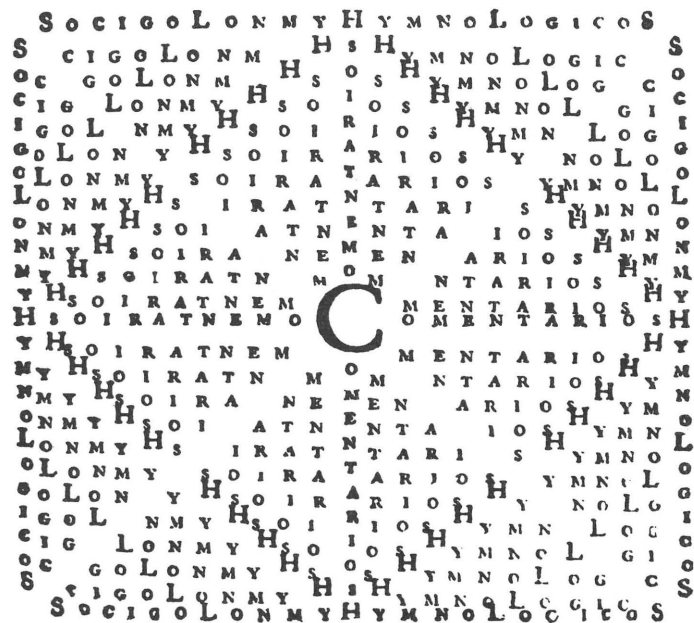


Figure 8. Labyrinth. Fr. José da Assuncao, 1738.

*EU SOU O MAIS EMPENHADO.*

o d a h n h a d o  
 a h n e n h a  
 n e p e n  
 p m p  
 m e m  
 e s e  
 s i s  
 i a i  
 a m a  
 m o m  
 o u o  
 u o u  
 o f o  
 h n e p m e s i a m o u o f u f o u o m a i s e m p e n h  
 n e p m e s i a m o u o f u **E** u f o u o m a i s e m p e n  
 h n e p m e s i a m o u o f u f o u o m a i s e m p e n h  
 a h n o f o n h a  
 d a u o u a d  
 o o u o o  
 m o m  
 a m a  
 i a i  
 s i s  
 e s e  
 m e m  
 p m p  
 n e p e n  
 a h n e n h a  
 o d a h n h a d o

*Do mesmo.*

Figure 9. Labyrinth. Fr. José da Silva da Natividade, 1743.

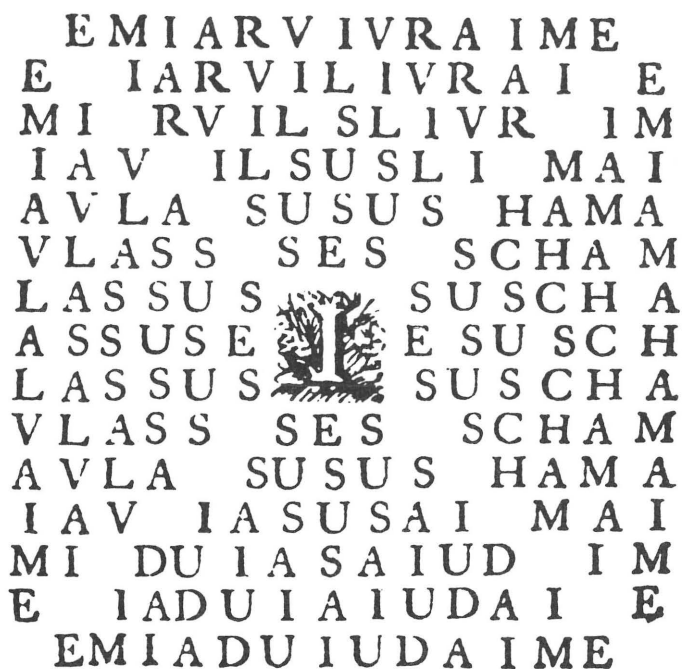


Figure 10. Labyrinth. José Pereira Velozo, 1688.

- up: IESUS LIVRAIME (JESUS DELIVER ME)
- right: IESUS CHAMAIME (JESUS CALL ME)
- left: IESUS SALVAIME (JESUS SAVE ME)
- down: IESUS AIUDAIME (JESUS HELP ME)

Each line can be read up, down, right, or left and is always accompanied by its mirror image.

In this type of labyrinth the reading pattern can be further complicated, and I have found cases where each line of each branch of the cross presents a different text, making the composition a real maze and requiring a considerable amount of dexterity on the part of the reader.

The types of labyrinth poems presented in this paper seem to be the basic ones, or at least the most frequently produced models, for the Iberian peninsula during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but similar examples can also be found in the rest of Europe and Latin America. However, other compositions, which can only be described as hybrid or mixed forms, are also very frequent, thus making their accurate classification rather problematic.

# A O SENHOR CONDE DE VILLAFLORES.

*Labyrinth: Egrina: Soneto: Encomiastico, Acrostico, Anagrammatico: em vinte, e oito Anagramas rigorosos. He cada circulo hum verso, cada verso dous Anagramas. Compoese as letras pellos numeros, e os numeros pellas letras, da periferia deste Orbe.*

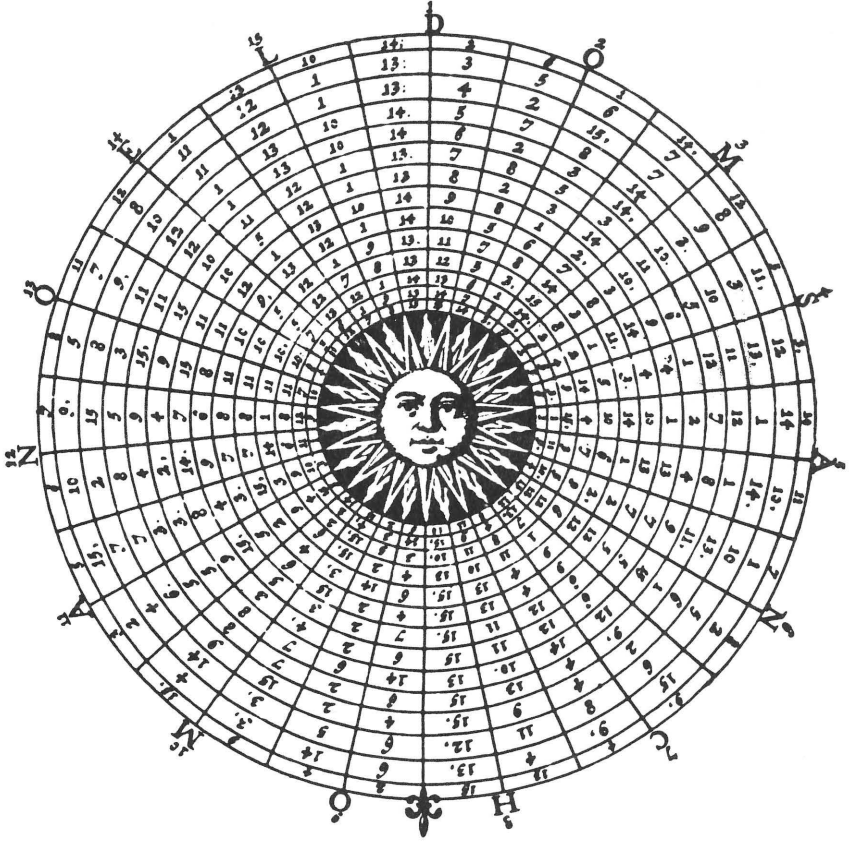


Figure 11. Labyrinth sonnet. António Alvares da Cunha, 1673.

A good example of this type of mixed text can be seen in Figure 11, a seventeenth-century Portuguese composition also dedicated to the Conde de Villaflor.<sup>15</sup> The reading instructions are on the title: "Each circle is a verse, each verse two anagrams. The letters are composed by the numbers and the numbers by the letter, on the periphery of this globe."

Following the instructions we can read around the outer circle the words "DOM SANCHO MANOEL." To each of the letters of this name a number is attributed, so that we have the numbers from 1 to 15, corresponding to the letters over which they are placed. In the inner circles those numbers are to be retranslated into letters and, if the reader does so, he will decipher the riddle and end up with the announced sonnet, in which the name DOM SANCHO MANOEL is found in an acrostic and in the twenty-eight anagrams (two in each line) formed by the combination of letters in those words.<sup>16</sup>

To conclude this brief introduction to the charms and difficulties of reading the peninsular baroque labyrinth poems, I must point out that the examples presented are only a limited sample of an immensely vast production of many, many authors, covering centuries of repetition and reinvention of basic forms which gave birth to an infinite number of variants. In any case, whatever the type may be, the baroque labyrinth poems have a long and illustrious past and in the history of the creative mind they represent an outstanding effort to encompass in a single composition a whole universe of sense and sensibility through the artistic multiplication of meaning. In our days this kind of achievement is beginning to attract the consideration that it fully deserves.

1. In all editions the work is attributed to Juan Díaz Rengifo; however, the true author seems to be Diego Garcia Rengifo, the brother of Juan. For more information on this subject as well as on the subsequent additions to the work, see Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, *Historia de las ideas estéticas en España* (2a ed. Santander: S. A. de Artes Gráficas, 1947), v. 2, p. 215.

2. The baroque period in Portugal is generally considered to extend from the latter part of the sixteenth century to the middle of the eighteenth, thus comprising part of the so-called manneristic period as well. On this subject, see Vítor Manuel Pires de Aguiar e Silva, *Maneirismo e Barroco na Poesia Lírica Portuguesa* (Coimbra: Centro de Estudos Românicos, 1971).

3. Ana Hatherly, *A Experiência do Prodígio — Bases teóricas e antologia de textos-visuais portuguesas dos séculos XVII e XVIII* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional- Casa da Moeda, 1983). Hereafter cited as Hatherly (1983).

4. Hatherly (1983) fig. 27.

5. Hatherly (1983) fig. 28.

6. This poem, printed here in the autograph version, was first published by Arthur L. F. Askins in his "Manuel de Faria e Sousa's *Fuente de Aganipe*: the Unprinted Seventh Part," in *Florilegium Hispanicum: Medieval and Golden Age Studies presented to Dorothy Clotelle Clarke* (Madison: Medieval Seminar of Hispanic Studies, 1982), 245-77. It is also included in Hatherly (1983) as fig. 29 and is discussed in my article "Labirintos da

Parte VII da *Fuente de Aganipe* de Manuel de Faria e Sousa," *Arquivos do Centro Cultural Português* v. 21 (Paris: Centro Cultural Português, 1985). Hereafter cited as Hatherly (1985).

7. Hatherly (1985).

8. Giovanni Polara, *Ricerche sulla tradizione manoscritta di Publilio Optaziano Porfirio* (Salerno: Libreria Internazionale Editrice, 1971), preface.

9. The complete title of the work is, following the title page, *Parabem Epithalamico que nas felicissimas Nupcias do Illmo. e Exmo. Marquez o Senhor Dom Luiz e Duqueza a Senhora D. Joana Perpetua de Bragança, Recitao as Villas de seus Estados / Pelo Doutor Jeronymo Tavares de Mascarenhas de Tavora, Academico Applicado / Lisboa Occidental, Na Officina Rita Cassiana, Anno 1738*. Not included in Hatherly (1983).

10. Hatherly (1983) fig. 24.

11. Hatherly (1983) fig. 22.

12. Hatherly (1983) fig. 12.

13. Hatherly (1983) fig. 4.

14. Hatherly (1983) fig. 2.

15. Hatherly (1983) fig. 50.

16. I was fortunate enough to have found the riddle solved for me in an eighteenth century Portuguese manuscript, the "Declaracao do Soneto acróstico, anagramático e enigmático que D. António Alvares da Cunha, Secretário da Academia dos Generosos fez ao Conde de Villafior, D. Sancho Manoel. Decifrado pelo Padre J[oao] B[aptista] de Castro em 2 de Fevereiro de 1720" who, as this Portuguese title tells us, deciphered the enigma on February 2, 1720, precisely on the day when that author, who later became a well known critic, turned twenty years of age. His interpretation is published on p. 271 of *A Experiência do Prodígio* but here I am reproducing the actual poem that results as well:

D

O Onde nam macho o sol o sol manchandome;

M mancha nem dolo so nem sol mo achando:

S sol como de manhan nam escolho, mando:

A achem. Mando no sol Solon chamandome

N Nome mancha do sol no cham. Sol ondome

C chamando sol nem o encham o sol. Mando

H homem os do cannal nos mostre chamando

O oh do mesmo cannal com al sonhandome,

M Mancha medo no sol, sol nam, chamo onde

A achem damno no sol, nem sol chamando

N nam ilho escondam o sol, nome dam ancho

O Onde o sol mancham, mal o sol ham conde

E echo nam dam no sol em sol manchando

L lem coando sonham no Leam Dom Sancho.



# The Labyrinth Poem

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*The labyrinth, the mythical structure conceived by Daedalus, has been a persistent motif throughout the history of Mediterranean culture. We find it both in visual art of all kinds as well as in literature, and also in the fascinating no-man's-land between these two. In the area of word-image interaction there exists a whole collection of texts that were given the name of "poetical labyrinths". The origin of labyrinthine poems goes back to the Rome of Augustus Caesar; the visual pattern of these pieces seems to indicate the pattern of a magical dance, perhaps the ancient Greek dance of the Grue. The idea of the labyrinth reconstructed in the dance was that of a fortress or city. The labyrinth poem in medieval times seems also to encompass the idea of the city, of the heavenly Jerusalem. Medieval poetical labyrinths have definite religious connotations, as is also evident in the later works in this genre, influenced by the Jewish Kabbala. This hermeneutic is still valid for the baroque in the case of a number of works, yet more and more labyrinth poems appear in a secularized, ornamental context. This article traces the most significant of these lines of development of this form and its function.*

*[The minotaur] was closed in the labyrinth:  
Who entered it, could not leave.*

Apollodorus, *Biblioteca* III, 15, 8, 6

To Shrii Probhal Rainjan Sarkar

## Entrance

There are many reasons why an author may hesitate to start writing: the reason in my case is the intricacy and the horizons of the road whose entanglements run through almost the entire expanse of the Mediterranean. To be able to speak about poetic labyrinths one must first enter the ambiguous conceptual space of the labyrinth, a symbol older than historical memory. It has attracted people's attention in specific periods in the history of culture, last during the European baroque. It has also found favor with the contemporary intellect, to which numerous studies and a few experts give evidence.<sup>1</sup>

Although the function of the symbol in culture and art has been dealt with in a number of studies, little has been written about poetic labyrinths, the enigmatic form of visual literature whose beginnings fade out of sight in antiquity. A few well-known (and, undoubtedly, other less known) examples testify that

Figure 1. A letter labyrinth with a center, from Johann Knorr von Rosenroth, *Kabbalae Denudatae* . . . (1684). See note 61.

R A H O S A N I M U L T I T T I T T I T L U M I N A S O H A R  
 A H O S A N I M U L T I T T I M I T T I T L U M I N A S O H A  
 R O S A N I M U L T I T T I M A M I T T I T L U M I N A S O H  
 O S A N I M U L T I T T I M A U A M I T T I T L U M I N A S O  
 A N I M U L T I T T I M A U S U A M I T T I T L U M I N A S  
 A N I M U L T I T T I M A U S O S U A M I T T I T L U M I N A  
 N I M U L T I T T I M A U S O R O S U A M I T T I T L U M I  
 I M U L T I T T I M A U S O R T R O S U A M I T T I T L U M I  
 M U L T I T T I M A U S O R T N T R O S U A M I T T I T L U M  
 U L T I T T I M A U S O R T N E C N T R O S U A M I T T I T L U  
 L T I T T I M A U S O R T N E C E N T R O S U A M I T T I T L  
 T I T T I M A U S O R T N E C O C E N T R O S U A M I T T I T  
 I T T I M A U S O R T N E C O C E N T R O S U A M I T T I T  
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 I M A U S O R T N E C O N U X U N O C E N T R O S U A M I  
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 M U L T I T T I M A U S O R T N T R O S U A M I T T I T L U M  
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 N I M U L T I T T I M A U S O R O S U A M I T T I T L U M I N  
 A N I M U L T I T T I M A U S O S U A M I T T I T L U M I N A  
 S A N I M U L T I T T I M A U S U A S I T T I T L U M I N A S  
 O S A N I M U L T I T T I M A U A M I T T I T L U M I N A S O  
 H O S A N I M U L T I T T I M A M I T T I T L U M I N A S O H  
 A H O S A N I M U L T I T T I M I T T I T L U M I N A S O H A  
 R A H O S A R I M U L T I T T I T T I T L U M I N A S O H A R

Figure 2. A progressive letter labyrinth by Bartholomaeus Rothmann, a poet from Gdańsk who composed a series of labyrinth poems on various social occasions (mainly weddings) in the late 1630s and early 1640s. From the PAN Library (Gdańsk).

M  
 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100 101 102 103 104 105 106 107 108 109 110 111 112 113 114 115 116 117 118 119 120 121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128 129 130 131 132 133 134 135 136 137 138 139 140 141 142 143 144 145 146 147 148 149 150 151 152 153 154 155 156 157 158 159 160 161 162 163 164 165 166 167 168 169 170 171 172 173 174 175 176 177 178 179 180 181 182 183 184 185 186 187 188 189 190 191 192 193 194 195 196 197 198 199 200 201 202 203 204 205 206 207 208 209 210 211 212 213 214 215 216 217 218 219 220 221 222 223 224 225 226 227 228 229 230 231 232 233 234 235 236 237 238 239 240 241 242 243 244 245 246 247 248 249 250 251 252 253 254 255 256 257 258 259 260 261 262 263 264 265 266 267 268 269 270 271 272 273 274 275 276 277 278 279 280 281 282 283 284 285 286 287 288 289 290 291 292 293 294 295 296 297 298 299 300 301 302 303 304 305 306 307 308 309 310 311 312 313 314 315 316 317 318 319 320 321 322 323 324 325 326 327 328 329 330 331 332 333 334 335 336 337 338 339 340 341 342 343 344 345 346 347 348 349 350 351 352 353 354 355 356 357 358 359 360 361 362 363 364 365 366 367 368 369 370 371 372 373 374 375 376 377 378 379 380 381 382 383 384 385 386 387 388 389 390 391 392 393 394 395 396 397 398 399 400 401 402 403 404 405 406 407 408 409 410 411 412 413 414 415 416 417 418 419 420 421 422 423 424 425 426 427 428 429 430 431 432 433 434 435 436 437 438 439 440 441 442 443 444 445 446 447 448 449 450 451 452 453 454 455 456 457 458 459 460 461 462 463 464 465 466 467 468 469 470 471 472 473 474 475 476 477 478 479 480 481 482 483 484 485 486 487 488 489 490 491 492 493 494 495 496 497 498 499 500 501 502 503 504 505 506 507 508 509 510 511 512 513 514 515 516 517 518 519 520 521 522 523 524 525 526 527 528 529 530 531 532 533 534 535 536 537 538 539 540 541 542 543 544 545 546 547 548 549 550 551 552 553 554 555 556 557 558 559 560 561 562 563 564 565 566 567 568 569 570 571 572 573 574 575 576 577 578 579 580 581 582 583 584 585 586 587 588 589 590 591 592 593 594 595 596 597 598 599 600 601 602 603 604 605 606 607 608 609 610 611 612 613 614 615 616 617 618 619 620 621 622 623 624 625 626 627 628 629 630 631 632 633 634 635 636 637 638 639 640 641 642 643 644 645 646 647 648 649 650 651 652 653 654 655 656 657 658 659 660 661 662 663 664 665 666 667 668 669 670 671 672 673 674 675 676 677 678 679 680 681 682 683 684 685 686 687 688 689 690 691 692 693 694 695 696 697 698 699 700 701 702 703 704 705 706 707 708 709 710 711 712 713 714 715 716 717 718 719 720 721 722 723 724 725 726 727 728 729 730 731 732 733 734 735 736 737 738 739 740 741 742 743 744 745 746 747 748 749 750 751 752 753 754 755 756 757 758 759 760 761 762 763 764 765 766 767 768 769 770 771 772 773 774 775 776 777 778 779 780 781 782 783 784 785 786 787 788 789 790 791 792 793 794 795 796 797 798 799 800 801 802 803 804 805 806 807 808 809 810 811 812 813 814 815 816 817 818 819 820 821 822 823 824 825 826 827 828 829 830 831 832 833 834 835 836 837 838 839 840 841 842 843 844 845 846 847 848 849 850 851 852 853 854 855 856 857 858 859 860 861 862 863 864 865 866 867 868 869 870 871 872 873 874 875 876 877 878 879 880 881 882 883 884 885 886 887 888 889 890 891 892 893 894 895 896 897 898 899 900 901 902 903 904 905 906 907 908 909 910 911 912 913 914 915 916 917 918 919 920 921 922 923 924 925 926 927 928 929 930 931 932 933 934 935 936 937 938 939 940 941 942 943 944 945 946 947 948 949 950 951 952 953 954 955 956 957 958 959 960 961 962 963 964 965 966 967 968 969 970 971 972 973 974 975 976 977 978 979 980 981 982 983 984 985 986 987 988 989 990 991 992 993 994 995 996 997 998 999 1000

it was continued in the Middle Ages, to reach full bloom in the baroque. The only examples that we know of the tentative interpretation of the meaning and origin of labyrinth poems comes from Ana Hatherly; her works, though wholly dedicated to seventeenth and eighteenth century Portuguese literature, are a source of a great deal of important information.<sup>2</sup> Her choice of sources and comparative material, and her excellent analysis of the cabalistic-hermetic context of the works of this type, are particularly valuable.

The term "labyrinth poem" was probably coined as late as the seventeenth century among other terms distinguishing the basic *poesis artificiosa* that is usually included among other epigrammatic poetries in baroque poetics. The *labyrinthus poeticus, cubicus, metricus, retrogradus* or *cubus*, as this form of poetry is called, is related to other types of visual literature (such as the *caligramme, carmen quadratum, or carmen cancellatum*) together with which it appears in poetics and on the pages of Baroque works.

There are two basic variations: the letter labyrinth and the word labyrinth.<sup>3</sup> Examples of the former originate in Greco-Roman antiquity, and there are two basic types of these which will be referred to as: A — the labyrinth with a center (rectangular, cruciform, rhomboid, or in the shape of other figures), where the first letter of the written text is placed in the center and is the first to be read (Figure 1); and B — the "progressive labyrinth" (my term) in the shape of a rectangle, where the first line constitutes the text proper, and the next lines result from shifting the first one to the left or right (Figure 2). The shift always embraces one character with a letter vanishing at one edge and it or another added at the opposite edge. A progressive labyrinth is complete when the last line is the exact inversion of the first line. I have proposed the term progressive labyrinth to avoid the ambiguity that the *poema cubico* proposed by Ana Hatherly may cause.<sup>4</sup> In European baroque poetics labyrinth poems were called, alternatively, *carmen labyrinthum* or *carmen cubicum* which did not take into account the above-mentioned differences in construction. Poets acted along similar lines. The term "cubus" was also used with respect to texts where the successive words of the first line are repeated as the first words of the next lines:<sup>5</sup>

```

a  b  c  . . .  n
b
c
.
.
.
n

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A variation of the progressive labyrinth is the spiral-shaped one (Figure 3). There the recurring rhythm of the letters is circular, as a result of which the texts acquire a centric emphasis as is also the case with labyrinths with a true center.

There are different typographic variations of labyrinths with their centers connected, with the arrangement of letters or the color of their ink bringing out the geometric character of the text so that, for instance, the figure of a

cross may be inscribed within. They are all centrally constructed which is often emphasized as a semantic value alongside of the context of sentences. The poetic quality of such works depends primarily on the borderline of meaning, on the formal construction of the text, and the visual shape of the whole.

Word labyrinths were poetic constructions which first appeared in European culture rather late, namely in the baroque. These sometimes repeat the forms of letter labyrinths, in which cases the words of the poems are inscribed within pre-prepared graphic matrices such as chessboard or grid systems. In a number of texts visual play is not at first evident but becomes clear when the method of reading has been discovered. I am not going to deal with the word labyrinth in detail because of its derivative character in comparison with letter labyrinths as regards chronology, origin, and the idea of text as such.<sup>6</sup>

So far nothing has been written in the literature on the Greco-Roman beginnings of the poetic labyrinth. These deserve a good deal of attention which, however, cannot be given before establishing a brief definition of the labyrinth and its basic hermeneutics. The area around the labyrinth construction often tells us more about the meaning of labyrinth texts than do the texts themselves.

Let us cross the threshold of the labyrinth. At the very outset we come across dozens of definitions and realize the deceptive abyss of the construction. Much depends on the mentality of the author of the definition — whether he is

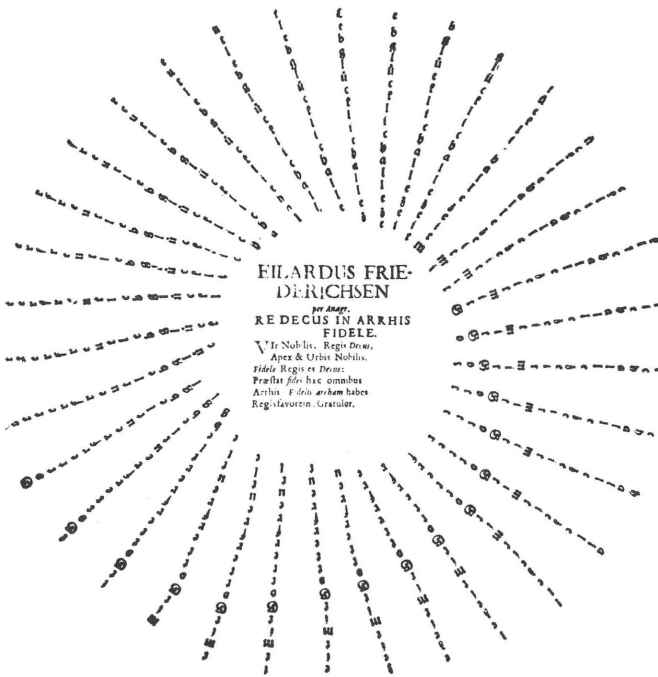


Figure 3. A spiral-shaped labyrinth by Johann Casparus Zetsching, intended as a present for a noble of the Polish king's court on the occasion of the New Year, 1666. From the PAN Library (Gdańsk).

a historian, a saint, an architect, a psychologist, or perhaps a knight. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* says that "in a building [a labyrinth is] a system of chambers and intricate passages, which render egress difficult." The *Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna* (Great Common Encyclopedia) calls the labyrinth "a system of paths of a varying degree of intricacy, only one of which leads to the goal . . ." To us who have absorbed centuries of human culture a definition like this may be rich in meaning: aboard a jet plane we discover that the whole globe is a network of intricate paths along which points keep moving in different, apparently disconnected directions. While in a labyrinth we are tempted to enquire not just about the author but also about the purpose for which he has constructed his unfathomable, deceptive building.

Thus the labyrinth is both a physical and a symbolic construction. Both were important to the ancients, and the former helped express the latter. According to some researchers labyrinth motifs first occur in European rock engravings of the second millenium BC; from there they spread to the East through the Caucasus to India and Indonesia and still farther. In this connection the peculiar popularity of the labyrinth image in megalithic civilizations on the Atlantic Coast, in the Mediterranean, on the shores of the Indian Ocean, and the Pacific is stressed. Without stopping to discuss the intricacies of migrations and borrowings we may proceed assuming, after Erich Neumann, that the labyrinth is an archetypal global symbol which played an important role in early social formations.<sup>8</sup> We may only surmise as to the nature of these rites — here the ethnologists' opinion is decisive.

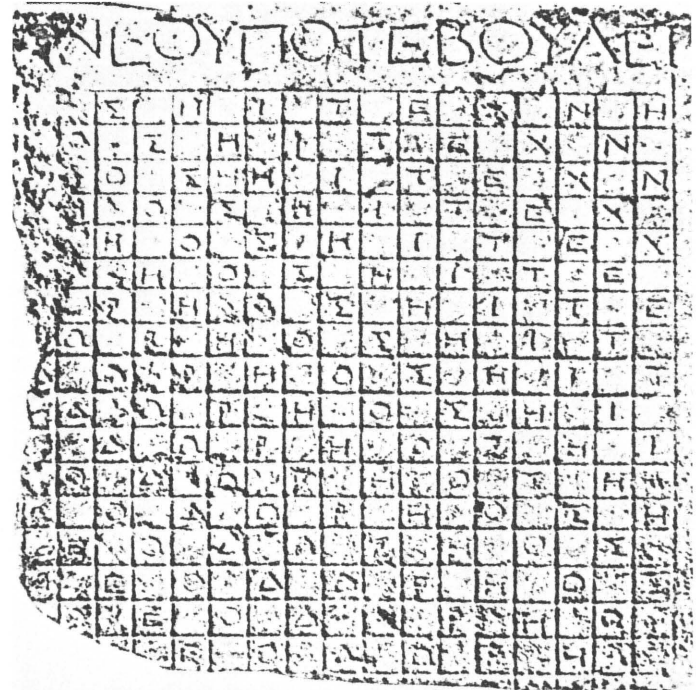
Labyrinths may be natural — a grotto, a system of caves — or man-made. The shape of the former has been determined by nature; the latter are formed by the human mind. There are certainly more plans for these buildings — which may be rectangular, circular, or egg-shaped — than for actual labyrinths. We should not forget that the labyrinth, whose threshold we have not yet crossed, could run through a castle, a system of fortifications, a palace, a temple, or catacombs. Surviving architectural solutions include the walls of Mycenae, the Acropolis at Rimini, the Daulatabad fortress in India. Even today an old Prussian fortress at Kłodzko in Silesia is popularly called a labyrinth.

Some derive the idea of a labyrinth from the gloom of a cave, which reaffirms the chthonian character of the symbol and its link with the earth and with the bull.<sup>9</sup> If, on the other hand, we subject the labyrinth form to drastic simplification, we obtain a spiral or a system of spirals which, presented in a more geometric form, gives the Greek *meander*. Both genetic qualities appear important: one brings us to Minoan Crete or to Memphis where the sacred bull Apis was worshipped under the name of Usar-Hape, later turned into the Hellenistic Serapis of the Egyptians and Greeks. The spiral, in turn, in almost every cosmological system stands for the infinite, eternally manifested space and the dynamic, cosmic link between micro-order and macro-order. The spiral, like the swastika represents the idea of motion inherent in cosmic dialectic, and the resulting forces, centripetal and centrifugal. From among natural spiral forms, that of a shell is the most obvious to consider: the Greek poet Theodoridas wrote in his epigrams of *einalios labyrinthos*, while

Figure 4. The Phaistos Disk from Crete with a spiral, hieroglyphic inscription in a yet undeciphered language. First half of the second millenium BC.



Figure 5. The labyrinth inscription on the verso of Tabula Iliaca 3.C. "Veronensis I," with the words "Theodors he [i] tekne," from Sadurska. See note 14.



Hesychius defined the labyrinth as a “shell-shaped place.”<sup>10</sup> Spiral labyrinths are fairly frequent on the coins of Knossos; many scholars, beginning with Archimedes, have investigated the link between the spiral and the labyrinth in the context of agriculture and plowing, dance, the sacred circle, or the mandala. To all these manifestations and interpretations we may refer the paradigm of the road and wanderer, mystery, dance, and the goal.<sup>11</sup>

We know a number of texts where the process of putting down characters depends on the run of the spiral. Here, again, motion is the basic factor which is brought out by the construction of the texts. The best-known of these include a set of circular inscriptions called “devil traps” (spells written spirally towards the center where the “demon” is trapped in the end) and numerous poetic labyrinths. Mention should also be made here of the Phaistos disc (Figure 4) which is covered with a spiral of characters in an undeciphered pictographic script.

To elucidate the mystery of the labyrinth hints have been sought for centuries in the etymology of the word. Some derive it from the Greek *labrys*, the double-headed axe which performed a cult function at Knossos and in the earlier cultures of Mesopotamia.<sup>12</sup> The consequences of this theory are important: according to it the palace at Knossos has been identified as a building to which to refer the imprisoned Minotaur’s mythical labyrinth. Other theories derive labyrinth from *labra*, originally a cave. Yet others trace it to *laos*, referring to the people and to Zeus’s thunder. Yet the decipherment of Minoan Linear B by Michael Ventris defied the earlier hypotheses: the word *da-pu-ri-to-jo* on the tablets interpreted by him was to signify labyrinth and the neighboring *po-ti-ni-ja*, Potnia — the chthonian deity. Santarcangelli, who summarized these views, says in conclusion<sup>13</sup> that “the origin of the term is still rather vague.” He suggests yet another interpretation. He points out that the latter of the suffixes *inthos* and *inda* occurs “solely in the names of children’s games and means to have a game, to play,” and he asserts that the etymon of *labyrinthos* is “playing upon a mine or cave.”

The word “game” has been uttered which means that we have come close to the first known examples of letter labyrinths. They come from the time of Augustus and are linked with the Trojan cycle, particularly the *Iliou Persis* and the *Iliad*. The six carved stone tablets illustrating various episodes from these works have letter labyrinths in Greek on the reverse. All these tablets belong to a set of relics described with the joint name of *Tabulae Iliacae* (Trojan tablets). The six of interest to us come from Rome or its environs and date from between 50 B.C. and 50 A.D. Anna Sadurska, author of a monograph on the *Tabulae Iliacae*, has numbered them as “2.NY” (in New York), “3.C.” (Veronensis I (Figure 5), “4.N.” (Bouclier d’Achille), “5.O.” (frag. Bouclier d’Achille), “7.Ti.” (Thierry) and “15.Ber.” (Dressel).<sup>14</sup> The complete reading of the texts in the labyrinth diagrams is:

- 5.O.: [Aspis] Achilleios Teodoreos he t[ecne]
- 4.N.: Aspis Achilleos Teodoreos kat Homeron
- 2.NY.: Ilias Homerou Teodoreos he i tekne
- 3.C.: Teodoreos he i tekne

5.Ti.: [Ilios P]ersis

15.Ber: . . .k̄ton syntes[is]

Because of the poor state of preservation of the tablets, it is difficult to establish the type of construction of letter labyrinth containing these sentences. Apparently tablets 2 and 3 represent progressive labyrinths, and 5 and 15 labyrinths with a center. Moreover, on tablets 4 and 15 letters are written without spaces while in tablets 2, 3, and 5 there are empty spaces between the letters. Four of the tablets contain the Greek name Theodoros (in the genitive) which is usually interpreted as the name of the owner of the workshop which produced the tablets.

The tablets are decorated with reliefs illustrating various books of the *Iliad*, *Ilios Persis*, and the Trojan Cycle. Sadurska gives a detailed iconographic description in her work. I shall only mention the most frequent images that are directly linked with the proposed interpretation of the labyrinth inscriptions. These are: Troy and its walls (2.NY.; 3.c.; 7.Ti) and the scenes featuring Achilles, notably ones related to his famous shield. 4.N. "Bouclier d'Achille" and 5.O. frag. "Bouclier d'Achille" carry an exact illustration of an excerpt from Book XVIII of the *Iliad*, 11. 480-608, the description of the shield made by Hephaestus, the divine master-smith. Achilles' shield also occurs on tablets 2.NY., 3.C., and 7.Ti, and on other Trojan tablets. Likewise, the letter labyrinths (in the literature on the Trojan tablets these are usually called "diagrams" or "magic squares") on the reverses of the two representations of Achilles' shield contain the sentence: "Theodoros made Achilles' shield" and "Achilles' shield by Theodoros according to Homer" which brings us to Book XVIII with its beautiful description of divine skills. In the middle of the shield Hephaestus showed the earth, sky, and sea; the sun, the moon, and the constellations — the whole cosmos. The five layers around the center represent, in turn: (1) two cities, a city of peace (wedding and litigation scenes) and of war (ambush, fight, and chase); (2) the earth and three seasons (plowing, harvesting, and vintage); (3) pastoral scenes (a bull attacked by a lion, and a quiet flock of sheep); (4) a dancing pageant; and (5) the ocean surrounding the earth.

In this remarkable symbolic representation, the fourth layer is of particular interest to us. These are Homer's words:<sup>15</sup>

Next to these he cut a dancing place  
All full of turnings, that was like the admirable maze  
for faire-hair'd Ariadne made by cunning Daedalus;  
And in it youths and virgins danc't, all young and beautiful,  
And glewed in another's palmes. Weeds that the wind did tesse,  
The virgines wore, the youths, woven cotes that cast a faint dimme glosse,  
like that of oyle. Fresh garlands too the virgines' temples crowned;  
The youths gilt swords wore at their thighs, with silver bawdricks bound.  
Sometimes all wound close in a ring, to which as fast as they spunne  
As any wheele a Turner makes, being tried how it will runne  
while he is set; and out againe, as full of speed, they wound,  
Not one left fast or breaking hands. A multitude stood round,



Delighted with their nimble sport: to end which, two began  
[Midst all] a song, and, turning, sung the sport's conclusion.

Ariadne's dance is the dance of the *geranos*, the crane, described in many ancient sources and in ethnographic studies. In the *Life of Theseus* Plutarch describes this dance performed by the hero and the young people he has freed on their way back to Athens. We read about "the dance consisting of certain measured turnings and returnings imitative of the windings and twisting of the labyrinth." Dicaearchus says that dancing went on around the Ceratonian altar that consisted of horns taken from the left side of bulls and heifers. He writes that "the dance is called among the Delians 'the crane.'" <sup>16</sup> When Theseus danced it in Knossos, men were said to dance with women for the first time ever. The tradition of the dance is confirmed in Roman times by Pollux who describes a train of dancers holding one another's hands and imitating labyrinthine turns.<sup>17</sup> The meaning of the name of the dance, *geranos* (the crane) is not clear. The Polish ethnologist Stefan Czarnowski has indicated the role of cranes in divination and navigation.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the crane could be the guide to the labyrinth or center of a fortress.

There are several versions of the myth of Theseus, the Minotaur, and the labyrinth; in principle the labyrinth already had a mythical significance to the Greeks. The best-known version says that Theseus came to Crete to free the Athenian youths from the terrible Minotaur, half man and half bull, the offspring of Pasi-phaë (the wife of the Cretan king, Minos) by a bull sacrificed to Poseidon. The monster was to be fed on human flesh, youths and maidens sent as a tribute from Athens once every nine years.<sup>19</sup>

The myth is commented upon in various ways. Straightforward interpretation is difficult because of the wealth of meanings and their universal symbolism. Here the labyrinth is really an intricate network of paths. Basically the myth speaks about conquering the building and the mysterious power it contains (the monstrous bull). In Homer the bull is harbingered by the dancers in the middle of the pageant whom we know from representations of tauromachy in Minoan culture. Later the structure of the myth acquired a very clear, unambiguous hermeneutic (salvation), but even in the Greek times it hinted at "life seen as a road" and the "mystery of initiation."<sup>20</sup>

Ariadne's thread that we are now handling — which might have been unravelled from the dancers' rope, tying up the Trojan tablets with the dance on Achilles' shield — prompts other questions, namely about the relation between the dance, the letter labyrinths, and the meaning of the tablets. A number of hints direct us to the Fortified City, Homer's "Troy with imperial towers." Later tradition and a number of historical sources describing contemporary "Trojan" dances and games, confirm the image of a magic dancing pageant entering an architecturally intricate building or a fortified city, which iconography of the labyrinth is known from quite a few ancient mosaics. Czarnowski stresses that the *geranos* dance and the *ludi troiani* are identical, and he asserts that these were originally Aegean dances which later spread throughout the Mediterranean and farther, to Scandinavia and Finland.<sup>21</sup> In Germany, the *Trojantanz*, a dance consisting of entering a labyrinth-fortress combined

with sexual initiation, was danced even in the eighteenth century. Ethnologists describe the many rites of this type where the participating young men (often armed) and girls enter a marked-out area (a labyrinth, a spiral) in a dancing pageant, then pair off and leave.

A painting in the Etruscan *oinochoe* from Tragliatella (ca. 600 BC) representing horsemen, a labyrinth with the inscription *TRUIA* in its center and two couples in amorous embrace, is an important source for us here. Painted on the equestrians' shields are birds, perhaps cranes. The word "Truia" undoubtedly signifies "Troy," the symbol of a fortified city in antiquity and later in the Middle Ages.<sup>22</sup> In his extremely interesting studies on the significance of the 6th Book of Vergil's *Aeneid*, W. F. Jackson Knight stresses the link between dances and the magic of city walls, fortifications, the rite of founding a city, and also, funeral rites.<sup>23</sup> We must not forget that the "imperial towers of Troy" fell only as a result of a stratagem, the famous Trojan horse, which the citizens of Troy themselves brought inside their city within a dancing pageant, crashing a city wall. Dancing in circles was believed to have magic power; it implied either marking out an area or an action aimed at the opposite, depending perhaps upon the direction of revolution. The link between dancing, the Trojan games, and the idea of the fortress and besieging the city, on the one hand, and our Trojan tablets, on the other, is confirmed by the diagram on 7.Ti. containing the words *Iliou Persis* (the conquering of Troy). Most of the scenes present in the reliefs decorating the tablets are also depictions of besieged cities, among other images.<sup>24</sup>

We know from other sources that in Roman times Trojan dances were very popular. Vergil writes about it in Book V of the *Aeneid* where he describes the funeral rites in honor of Aeneas' father, Anchises. The Trojans, who have left their city that was destroyed by the war, hold the ceremony in Sicily a year after Anchises' death. When the games are over, Aeneas orders the youth of Troy to take part in a horse race. Led by Julius, the son of Aeneas, a group of boys on horseback begins to race in a big circle.<sup>25</sup>

They gallop apart in pairs, and open their files three and three in deploying bands, and, again at the call, wheel about and bear down with levelled arms. Next they enter on other charges and other retreats in opposite spaces, and interlink circle with circle, and wage the armed phantom of battle. And now they discover their backs in flight, now turn their lances to the charge, now plight peace and gallop side by side. As once of old, they say, the labyrinth in high Crete had a tangled path between blind walls, and a thousand ways of doubling treachery, where marks to follow broke off in the maze unmastered and irretraceable: even in such a chase do the children of Troy entangle their footsteps and weave the game of flights and battle; like dolphins who, swimming through the wet seas, cut Carpathian or Libyan . . .

This manner of riding, these games Ascanius first revived, when he girt Alba the Long about the walls, and taught their celebration to the old Latins in the fashion of his own boyhood with the youth of Troy about him. The Albans taught it [to] their children; on from them mighty Rome received it and kept the ancestral observance; and now the boys are called Troy, and the Trooping Trojans.

Vergil wrote these words in Augustus's times, which are also the time of origin of the Trojan tablets and our letter labyrinths. These were popular writings in the Empire. Suetonius mentions them frequently in his *Lives*, and so do other authors.<sup>26</sup> Many Caesars of the Julian-Claudian Dynasty organized Trojan or Pyrrhic dances, and Nero and Tiberius even took part in them as young men. At that time the link with labyrinth symbolism was evident: during the dances held by Nero, two *tableaux vivants* were shown: of a bull covering a heifer, and of the fall of Icarus.

Therefore, the Trojan tablets, together with their labyrinths, are linked with the Trojan games and have a reference to the ancient magic rites of besieging a fortress, a labyrinth city. Essential elements of the rite included a symbol of the labyrinth represented in dancing, the horse (this being a horse race), and the circular, spiral nature of the dance, which consisted of intersecting circles. The layout of the inscription in the letter labyrinths has a reference to dancing, and the inscriptions may be read in intersecting circles. The "dancing" inscriptions in the diagram refer to the conquering of the city (*Iliou persis*) and Achilles' shield. The magic and mimetic qualities of the inscription correspond to the magic of the dance and the magic of the shield. The meaning of the shield is not quite clear: it represents a whole symbolic system, probably with an established inner order. Yet the siege scenes and the dancing circle certainly refer to the siege of Troy by the Achaeans. It would hardly be conceivable that Hepheastus wasted his divine effort and Homer his genius for drawing ornaments.

In the deeper symbolic layer the *Lusus Troiae* could have had a more metaphysical meaning. The fact that Aeneas organized the young Trojans to celebrate the anniversary of his father's death suggests a link between the labyrinth, the dance, and the lower world, of which we spoke before. Jackson Knight dedicated a good deal of space to the labyrinth symbol in Vergil's *Aeneid* Book VI, describing Aeneas on his way to Apollo's temple at Cumae. On the temple gate, along with other symbols, there is an image of Daedalus' building. Next, the hero visits Sibyl's oracle and the prophet escorts him to the entrance of Hades, where Aeneas descends, and where, after many perilous adventures, he meets his father. Anchises discloses the secret of the after-life and reincarnation to Aeneas. Knight interprets the whole mystery as a description of the process of initiation.<sup>27</sup>

Indeed, the labyrinth may be seen as a symbol of the most profound initiation. In *Phaedon* Plato speaks about the winding route to be pursued after death.<sup>28</sup> In Christian culture the paradigm of life, death, and salvation provides numerous examples of "psychic iconography." In any case, at least from the time of Galenus (second century AD), the Trojan dance was considered sacred in Rome.<sup>29</sup> In the *Trojan Women* Seneca speaks about the purifying dance: *solemne . . . troici lusus sacrum . . .*,<sup>30</sup> and Plutarch mentions the *hiera hippodromia*, the sacred horse race.<sup>31</sup> The words *Hiereia hierai* on the Trojan tablet 4.N. placed under the diagram with a letter labyrinth may be a reference to this.<sup>32</sup>

The most important of the unsettled questions is the name Theodorus,

which occurs on four tablets decorated with letter labyrinths and on one devoid of a labyrinth (1.A. Tabula Iliaca Capitolina).<sup>33</sup> Theodorus has been identified with a painter of this name who allegedly illustrated the Trojan cycle and who is mentioned by Pliny. According to another hypothesis he is the author of the *Troica*, hence also of the inscriptions on the sculptured tablets. Sadurska, the author of a monograph on them, suggests a third solution: Theodorus is the name of the sculptor, the maker of the tablets, and a temporary workshop owner. The word *tekne*, following his name, appears in this connection.<sup>34</sup> Yet the stylistic differences among the bas-reliefs on the tablets testify against the hypothesis that Theodorus was the author/sculptor. Let me put forward a different hypothesis:

In Books XXXIV and XXXVI of his *Natural History* Pliny mentions Theodorus, "creator of the labyrinth on the island of Samos." Allegedly designed by the Samian artists Zmilis, Rhoecus, and Theodorus, the labyrinth in question was probably the Heraeum on Samos. Pliny adds that "Theodorus cast himself in bronze and the likeness was startling, which, combined with remarkably precise execution, greatly added to his fame . . ." He is also said to have invented the protractor, the level, the chisel, and the key.<sup>35</sup>

We may further ask about the reading of the mutilated diagram on tablet 15.Ber and the mysterious letter "I" preceding the word *tekne* on tablets 2.NY. and 3.C. In the former case we have only the surviving letters *kton sythes*, which Sadurska proposes to interpret as *anakton synthesis* (or "synthesia").<sup>36</sup> This may refer to the word *anaktonia*, to lead horses. But the meaning of the letter "I" remains ambiguous. Sadurska has interpreted the words placed under the letter labyrinth on tablet 2.NY, *grama meson katageitai*, with reference to this letter. I suggest that it is, rather, an indication of the non-surviving central point of the labyrinth, whose existence is undoubtedly hinted at by the construction of the text.

We have gone a long way into our labyrinth. Trojan dances were continued in Rome up to the fifth century as is indicated by the fragment of Claudius Claudianus' work "De VI. Cons. Honorii" (originating in the time of Arcadius and Honorius' consulate) where dancing groups "form circles more intricate than the run of the River Meander and the labyrinth of Gortynia."<sup>37</sup> At that time, the empire of Christian culture was in the process of construction, and it is now time for us to move from the Wall of Troy to the Walls of Jerusalem and Jericho.

## Center

At the threshold of the Middle Ages we come close to the central point of the labyrinth, which was precisely defined in that period. We know only a few contemporary letter labyrinths, although the symbolism of the labyrinth went through another full bloom in the Middle Ages, especially in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. With the passage of time, probably more letter labyrinths from this time will be revealed.

Christianity very soon picked up the ancient labyrinth, which is no accident considering the symbolic potentials inherent in the sign. Christian understand-

ing of life as a road, as spiritual transformation, and the monotheistic idea of the Center (*Civitas Dei* and Paradise), these forms and concepts have been encompassed graphically by the sign of the labyrinth almost from its outset. The constructional centralism of the sign appears particularly important, and the sign of the cross is immanent in labyrinths with a center.

The center of such labyrinths, placed on the floor of medieval churches and cathedrals, was called "Heaven" or "Jerusalem," and the labyrinths themselves were called "Jerusalem Way" or "Daedale," "Domus Daedali," or "Meander," which is a clear indication that the traditional symbolism was deliberately continued.

The best-known medieval letter labyrinth is the cruciform poem by Venantius Fortunatus (ca. 540-601) (Figure 6); in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the poem circulated in central Europe under the name "St. Thomas' Cross."<sup>38</sup> In the center the word *crux* (cross) radiates in four directions (arms), and it develops into the sequence *Crux Domini Mecum*, *Crux est quam semper adoro*, *Curx mihi refugium*, and *Crux mihi certa salus*. The shape of the poem does not only bring out its message — which happens also in the majority of later, baroque visual poems — but it helps one read new meanings. The semantic composition of this work is a true intermedium (cf. Dick Higgins), and the poem "transcends the text." The word "Crux" is an indication of the center, which can only be approached through this word, from whatever direction. The directions of the words inscribed along the arms are also important: adoration links up the bottom with the center, and salvation rises towards the "above."

```

SVLASASALVS
LASATASAL
SATRTAS
TRERT
RE CER
ECICE
CIHIC
M      IH IHI      M
VI     HIMIH      CV
IGV    IMXMI      MEC
GVFERIHIMXVXMDOMINIME
VFERIHIMXVRVXDOMINIM
FERIHIMXVRCRVXDOMINI
VFERIHIMXVRVXDOMINIM
GVFERIHIEXVXEDOMINIME
IGV    SE XES      MEC
VI     TSEST      CV
M      QTSTQ      M
      VQTQV
      AVQVA
      MAVAM
      SMAMS
      ESMSE
      MESEM
      PMEMP
      EPMPE
      AREPERA
      ODARERADO
      ORODARADORO

```

Figure 6. The cruciform labyrinth poem by Venantius Fortunatus (540-601). From Dick Higgins, *George Herbert's Pattern Poems: in Their Tradition* (West Glover, VT: Unpublished Editions, 1977) pl. 14.

A I S E L C E C L E S I A  
 I S E L C E A E C L E S I  
 S E L C E A T A E C L E S  
 E L C E A T C T A E C L E  
 L C E A T C N N C T A E C L  
 C E A T C N A N N C T A E C  
 E A T C N A S A N C T A E  
 C E A T C N A N N C T A E C  
 L C E A T C N N C T A E C L  
 E L C E A T C T A E C L E  
 S E L C E A T A E C L E S  
 I S E L C E A E C L E S I  
 A I S E L C E C L E S I A

Figure 7. A *carmen quad-*  
*ratum* by Publilius Opa-  
 tianus Porfyrius (fl. 325),  
 a construction similar to  
 that of letter labyrinths.  
 From Ernst, "Zahl und  
 Mass . . ." See note 45.

Figure 8. The "Sancta Ec-  
 lesia" labyrinth from El-  
 Asnan (formerly  
 Orleansville).

S	A	N	C	T	E	T	V	I	V	A	T	I	S	C	A	E	S	A	R	M	I	S	E	R	E	R	E	S	E	R	E	N	V	S		
A	V	G	V	S	T	E	O	M	N	I	P	O	T	E	N	S	A	L	M	O	M	O	R	T	A	L	I	A	C	V	N	C	T	A		
N	V	M	I	N	E	L	A	E	T	I	F	I	C	A	N	S	A	N	O	B	I	S	A	D	G	A	V	D	I	A	N	O	M	E	N	
C	O	N	S	T	A	N	T	I	N	E	T	V	V	M	F	E	C	V	N	D	I	C	A	R	M	I	N	I	S	E	X	H	O	C		
E	D	V	C	E	D	E	T	M	V	S	A	S	N	A	M	E	T	R	I	S	T	I	S	C	V	R	A	R	E	C	V	S	A	T		
T	E	G	R	E	G	I	O	S	A	C	T	V	S	I	A	M	S	E	D	E	N	T	C	R	I	M	I	N	A	P	A	R	C	A		
T	V	N	C	M	E	L	I	V	S	D	O	M	I	N	V	M	T	E	V	O	X	S	E	C	V	R	A	S	O	N	A	B	I	T		
V	I	R	T	V	T	V	M	R	E	C	T	O	R	P	O	T	V	I	T	V	I	X	P	A	N	D	I	C	E	R	E	V	E	R	V	
V	I	X	M	I	H	I	C	A	L	L	I	O	P	E	P	A	V	I	T	A	N	T	I	C	S	A	L	T	I	M	D	I	C	E	R	
A	D	N	V	I	T	A	V	S	I	A	P	R	E	C	E	M	V	A	T	I	S	Q	V	E	E	D	I	C	E	R	E	F	A	T	A	
T	R	I	S	T	I	A	S	I	G	N	A	T	O	P	A	R	T	I	E	S	V	T	L	I	M	I	T	E	C	L	A	V	D	A	T	
I	V	R	E	P	A	R	I	C	A	R	M	E	N	M	E	D	I	S	V	T	C	O	N	A	I	N	O	M	I	S	O	N	A	I	N	O
S	I	T	N	O	T	A	P	R	I	M	A	S	V	I	E	T	S	I	T	P	A	R	S	E	F	X	T	I	M	A	T	A	L	I	S	C
C	E	V	M	E	D	I	A	E	P	R	I	M	I	S	O	C	C	V	R	R	E	N	S	A	P	T	I	V	S	I	S	T	I	S	C	
A	D	I	A	T	E	R	V	M	F	I	N	E	S	E	T	A	E	R	S	Q	V	A	E	D	I	V	I	D	I	T	O	R	S	A	F	
E	M	E	D	I	O	C	A	L	V	T	E	S	S	E	Q	V	E	A	T	V	E	R	S	V	Q	V	E	R	E	F	E	R	B	E	R	
S	A	N	C	T	E	T	V	I	V	A	T	I	S	C	A	E	S	A	R	M	I	S	E	R	E	R	E	S	E	R	E	N	V	S	A	
A	L	M	E	S	A	L	V	S	O	R	B	I	S	R	O	M	A	E	D	E	C	V	S	I	N	C	L	I	T	E	F	A	M	A	R	
R	M	E	L	I	O	R	P	I	E	T	A	T	E	P	A	R	E	N	S	A	D	M	A	R	T	I	A	V	I	C	T	O	A	R	M	
M	I	T	I	O	R	A	D	V	E	N	I	A	M	P	E	R	M	V	L	C	E	N	S	A	P	E	R	A	L	E	G	V	I	A	R	
I	S	P	E	S	D	A	T	A	P	L	E	N	A	B	O	N	I	S	E	T	F	E	L	I	X	C	O	P	I	A	R	E	B	V	S	E
E	X	I	M	I	V	M	C	O	L	V	M	E	N	V	E	T	E	R	Y	M	V	I	R	T	C	V	T	E	F	I	D	E	Q	V	E	
R	O	M	A	E	M	A	G	N	E	P	A	R	E	N	S	A	R	E	M	I	S	C	I	V	I	L	I	B	V	S	V	L	T	O	R	E
R	E	B	V	S	M	I	S	A	S	A	L	V	S	P	E	R	E	I	M	E	N	S	C	L	A	R	A	V	P	E	R	N	E	R	E	
R	E	B	V	S	M	I	S	A	S	A	L	V	S	P	E	R	E	T	E	P	A	X	O	P	T	I	M	E	D	V	C	T	O	R	E	
E	T	B	E	L	L	I	S	E	C	V	R	A	Q	V	I	E	S	S	A	N	C	T	A	T	O	M	N	I	A	P	E	R	T	E	S	
S	O	L	I	S	I	V	R	A	E	S	V	I	S	F	I	D	I	S	S	I	M	A	D	E	T	O	R	A	M	A	R	I	T	A	S	E
E	S	O	C	I	A	L	E	I	V	G	V	M	P	R	A	S	E	B	E	T	C	O	N	S	O	R	T	I	A	V	I	T	A	R	E	
R	E	S	P	I	C	E	M	E	F	A	L	S	O	D	E	C	R	E	I	M	I	N	E	M	A	X	I	M	E	R	E	C	T	O	R	E
N	V	N	L	I	S	A	F	F	L	I	C	T	V	M	T	O	E	N	A	N	A	M	C	E	T	E	R	A	C	A	V	S	A	N	A	
V	I	N	C	E	P	I	A	E	T	S	O	L	I	T	O	S	V	I	A	V	E	N	E	R	A	B	I	L	E	N	V	M	E	N	V	
S	A	N	C	T	E	T	V	I	V	A	T	I	S	C	A	E	S	A	R	M	I	S	E	R	E	R	E	S	E	R	E	N	V	S	A	

Two other texts of interest come from tenth-century Spanish illuminated codices. One is a variation of a progressive letter labyrinth; the process of reading should start from the central letter in the first line, *Florentinus indignum memorare*. We know nothing of this Florentinus whom the text commemorates. He was perhaps the copyist of a commentary on the Book of Job by Gregory the Great which contained the labyrinth.<sup>39</sup> The other labyrinth, one of six visual poems by Vigilán, a monk from San Martín de Albelda in Rioja, also performs a commemorative function. The poems come from a manuscript attributed to the year 974, which was fifty years after the founding of the monastery.<sup>40</sup> Compared to the five Latin *carmina quadrata* with complex *versus intexti*, Vigilán's letter labyrinth has a rather simple construction. Starting from the center we read the sentence *ob honorem Sancti Martini*. The text commemorates the patron saint of the monastery, which is reminiscent of the placing of effigies of bishops or architects in the center of cathedral labyrinths (e.g., Chartres, Reims, Saint-Omer) indicating the protective role of the sign.<sup>41</sup> Incidentally, the small number of surviving medieval letter labyrinths (of the extant ones, three are below) is rather striking, considering their solemn message. A similarity between them and the *carmina figurata* (square visual poems, mentioned above), a number of which have survived since the Middle Ages, is evident. The *carmina figurata* also have a labyrinthine nature due to the several layers of meaning perceived while reading the autonomous sentences (those inscribed inside of the text proper, the *versus intexti*). Caruso and Polara give a precise description of poems of this type in their *Iuvenilia Loeti*:<sup>42</sup>

The technique of the *versus intexti* [consisted of the following]: not only was the number of the letters in each line of verse fixed and immutable, but some letters were obligatory. Composition proceeded like this: the page was usually divided into 1225 small squares (35 × 35); a figure was traced by means of words whose large patterned letters fill up the squares. Around and through these lines the verses were written in smaller letters, beginning in this way to fill up the entire page, and at this point one passes finally to the composition of the actual, real lines of verse, filling the remaining empty holes with letters that form words that give meaning to the whole text.

This, typically "mosaic" writing technique is somewhat reminiscent of letter labyrinths (Figure 7). It was invented by Publilius Optatianus Porphyrius (fl. 325 AD), a poet who lived at the time of Constantine the Great and who was the author of a panegyric in honor of the emperor made up of such poems.<sup>43</sup> The emperor's letter of gratitude for the poet's skillful gift has survived.<sup>44</sup> We may surmise that Optatianus, who wrote his work in exile to obtain the emperor's pardon, did not conceive his literary concept out of nothing, but based it on existing inscriptions with a well-defined, non-routine purpose such as, for instance, the similar labyrinths in the church at Orléansville, of which more in a moment. Otherwise he would not have dared to present his poems to the divine emperor who, in turn, would not have accepted them as enthusiastically as he did. In effect, Optatianus was nominated consul, and Constantine spoke of his composition in highly laudatory terms pointing out the *chrismon* they contained. The origin and the later popularity of the *carmina quadrata* during

the Carolingian Renaissance should probably be considered in relation to labyrinth poems.<sup>45</sup> Another letter labyrinth, likewise a panegyric and dedicated to the Empress of Byzantium (Eudocia Macrenbolitissa, 1021-1096, wife to Romanus IV) has also survived.<sup>46</sup>

The most interesting letter labyrinths, confirming in a way our interpretation of the texts on the Trojan tablets, are the earliest examples of medieval work of this sort (Figure 8). Both come from the San Reparatus Church at El-Asnan in Algeria (formerly Castellum Tingitanum and later, in French, Orléansville), founded about 328 AD.<sup>47</sup> The chancel of the church contains two texts similar to Vigilán's poem. One includes *Marinus sacerdos* and commemorates a priest's name, which may also have a protective role. The other letter labyrinth occurs on the axis of the north door to the basilica and was placed inside a graphic representation of a much larger labyrinth (diameter about three meters). Beginning with the center of this labyrinthine text we read *Sancta Ecclesia*; yet in order to reach the center one has first to get through the square labyrinth surrounding the former labyrinth. A winding thread invites us to enter. The entrances to the labyrinths are situated along the axis of the entrance to the basilica. The whole construction has been interpreted as a symbolic commemoration of theological disputes directed against the schism of the Donatists. It seems that a labyrinth within a labyrinth represents rather the idea of the interpenetration of two worlds: *Civitas Dei* (city of God, i.e., the church) and *Civitas Mundi* (city of the world) as outlined by St. Augustine in *De Civitate Dei*.<sup>48</sup>

The most important function of labyrinths occurring on church floors is brought out by the later tradition developed in connection with similar constructions in medieval churches at Auxerre, Arras, Sens, Bayeux, Amiens, and others.<sup>49</sup> In Poland a labyrinth of this type occurred on the floor of the Włocławek Cathedral (fourteenth century). The symbolism of labyrinths placed upon the floors of medieval churches is basically similar to that ascribed to them at present: the labyrinth symbolized life, a path full of obstacles and suffering. The center symbolized Jerusalem the heavenly and it was frequently called after this biblical city, or Heaven. The figures might have been instrumental in now-forgotten rites, most probably symbolizing a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. They had the character of mysteries and illustrated the point of wandering amidst obstacles and sorrows towards the ultimate communion with Christ in the City of God. A number of documents evidence the presence of dance in labyrinth mysteries. A document of 1412 describes "Easter dances" in the Auxerre Cathedral, in which novices participated together with the monks from the monastery there. The novices brought a ball which was so big that it could not be held in one hand. It was passed on to the specially dressed "decanus" who chanted Easter litanies and performed a ceremonial dance; others danced in a circle around the Daedalus, i.e., the labyrinth. Then the dean handed the ball to all the dancers in turn, and the sound of the organ accompanied the movement of the dancers. After the dance and singing the participants sat down to breakfast. In 1538 the French Parliament banned "games" in church labyrinths, allegedly because the cries of the playing children and the whole noise offended the sacred character of the place.<sup>50</sup>



Thus we see the same elements of the labyrinth myth in medieval scenery: a labyrinth drawing, dance, and mystery. Labyrinths in cathedrals still have something pagan in them: they are often called “Daedalus,” accompanied by references to the Greek myth of Theseus, Ariadne, and the Minotaur, and almost none of the labyrinths contain the sign of the cross or other Christian symbols. The inscription opposite the entrance to the labyrinth in the Lucca Cathedral reads:

HIC QUEM CRETICUS EDIT  
DEDALUS EST LABERINTHUS  
DE QUO NULLUS VADERE  
QUIVET QUI FUIT INTUS  
NI THESEUS GRATIS ARIANAE  
STAMINE JUTUS.<sup>51</sup>

“This is the labyrinth that was built by Daedalus the Creatan. Nobody who was inside could go out of it, except for Theseus with the help of Ariadne’s thread.”

There are grounds for believing that the Christian imagination has absorbed the main personae of the Greek drama: Theseus, who symbolizes the mortal wanderer; Ariadne, the immortal soul and the divine element in general; and the Minotaur, the impure force. The concept of the city brings an important change. Although the Biblical story of Jericho<sup>52</sup> evokes associations with the Greek ritual of the “magic walls,” the later Christian hermeneutics of the labyrinth understood the City as an idea, as heavenly Jerusalem, Paradise, the goal of believers pursuing the intricate ways of life and carrying the burden of the cross. Hence the Center is distinguished as a place of spiritual fulfillment and purification which, perhaps, has taken the place of the former initiation. This is also why the baptismal font is placed in the center of the labyrinth.<sup>53</sup> Hence also, the architectural archetype of the Holy of Holies, the distinct, strictly defined place. The next period of fascination with the labyrinth, the baroque, established this exegesis.

This is not the occasion to elaborate on the different motifs inherent in the vast subject-edifice. We have finally reached the Center, the *Civitas Dei*, the place of alchemical transformations represented graphically. From here one could follow the crane in its flight, or track relics of dances in England, Scotland, Scandinavia, Germany, Pomerania, or search atlases for the Troys scattered over the continent, or trace relics of mysterious labyrinth buildings. Yet to be able to say a little more about the letter labyrinths of the baroque, a period to which we owe most surviving examples (including the term “poetic labyrinth”), we should concentrate for a while upon the magic squares and the cabalistic tradition which largely affected the popularity of this form of literature in the seventeenth century.

### **Magic Square**

This term is as enigmatic as its description; in fact, the word “magic” is abused in all cases when the operation of the given form or sign is above the commentator’s rational comprehension, although in a different cultural context it could be explained in a “rational” way. Yet this is what happens to signs

and symbols. Magic squares, both numerical and those made up of letters, occur primarily in the sphere of influence on gnosticism, hermetic knowledge, and the Cabbala. Among the best known examples is the famous square SATOR, with no directly apparent link with the origin of letter labyrinths except for its formal similarities.<sup>54</sup> Squares originating in the culture of the Hebrew language, many of which are in fact letter labyrinths, are different.

We are not going to go far into any of the labyrinthine entanglements marked “hermeticism” or “cabbala.” There is a vast literature on the subject, and Ana Hatherly has discussed the link between these areas of cognition and visual texts with accuracy.<sup>55</sup> We should concentrate on what is directly related to the history of our labyrinths which was to reach full bloom in the baroque when elements of the Cabbala of language played a considerable role in European culture.

Both numerical squares and Hebrew letter labyrinths express the essential qualities of Jewish mysticism. Their construction (and concept) indicates the process of emanation of the hidden, transcendental *En Soph*, the emanation of One into Many, reversible in its character (Figure 9). Hebrew labyrinths also express the monotheistic nature of Jewish religion and are based on certain qualities of the language, hence also of the human mind. The Hebrew alphabet — whose letters have a dual value, semantic and numerical — plays a peculiar role in it. The mystical interpretation of the Cabbala enriched them with symbolic and hidden meanings. Here the process of emanation went as far as the language, script, and numerical system, understood as a stage of the process (just as it was by the Pythagoreans), an intermediary between the Creator and the Creation. The twenty-two letters of the alphabet constituted a form of manifested world, a form of things through which God directs all existence. “In the beginning was the word” (John 1,1); “And God said, Let there be light; and there was light” (Genesis 1,3). Hence the idea of the Holy Script and holy scriptures in general, of which we read in the closing words of the Bible, “Should anyone take away from the words in this book of prophecy, God will take away

Figure 9. The “magical square” of the silver (the moon), a Hebrew cabbalistic device, “Kâmê’a.” From Budge. See note 57.

37	78	29	70	21	62	13	54	5
6	38	79	30	71	22	63	14	46
47	7	39	80	31	72	23	55	15
16	48	8	40	81	32	64	24	56
57	17	49	9	41	73	33	65	25
26	58	18	50	1	42	14	34	66
67	27	59	10	51	2	43	75	35
36	68	19	60	11	52	3	44	76
77	28	69	20	61	12	53	4	45

לז	עה	כט	ע	כא	סב	יג	נד	ה
ו	לה	קט	ל	עא	כב	סג	יד	מו
מז	ז	לט	פ	לא	עכ	בג	נה	יה
יו	מה	ה	מ	פא	לב	סד	כד	נו
נז	יז	מט	ט	מא	עג	לג	סה	כה
כו	נה	יה	נ	א	מב	עד	לד	סו
סז	כו	נט	י	נא	ב	מג	עה	לה
לו	סה	יט	ס	יא	נב	ג	מד	עו
טז	בח	סט	כ	סא	יב	נג	ד	מה

from him his share in the tree of life and the Holy City, described in the book” (Revelation 22, 19).

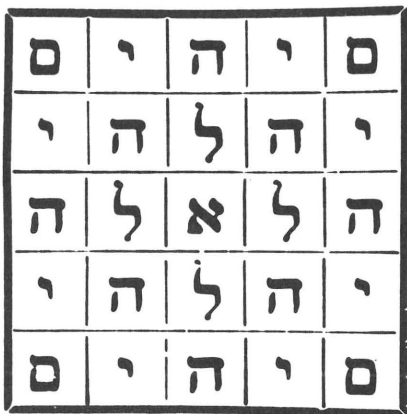
The mysticism of the script and language in the Cabbala rested on the conviction that the duration of things, which come from the all-emanating Creator, may be controlled by controlling their form, implying letters and words. They were considered a form of reality, while thinking usually carries us away from being. Hence cabbalistic practices such as Abraham Abulafia’s *Tzeruf* and others — like the *Gematria*, *Temura*, and *Notarikon*<sup>56</sup> — consisted of the contemplating mystic’s transformative operations during which thoughts, disintegrated into literal forms of substance, were later transformed into the Name, which is reminiscent of the Eastern mantric techniques of Yoga and Tantra. Despite the primitive interpretations by some scholars and researchers on religion, the essence of these endeavors did not lie in magical manipulations on words identified with things but in introvert work performed on the mind understood as a part of the Great Whole, an effort aimed to being about the final union between micro- and macro-order (*Devekut*), freeing the mind from its individual traits and removing all obstacles.

Numerical squares symbolized the Cosmos of order to whose manifestations, such as planets, they referred.<sup>57</sup> Hebrew letter manuscripts, on the other hand, which often included mathematical semantics, referred to the One and to the principle of his operation. Words written in the squares of the “labyrinth” on Samaritan amulets (Figure 10) say “Lord, Great God,” “Elohim” (read from the central letter of the labyrinth), “YHVH our God is YHVH One” (*Shama Israel, Adonai Elohim Adonai Ahat*, Deuteronomy 6,4).<sup>58</sup> The name in later baroque compositions. Moses Gaster and later Wallis-Budge indicate the apotropaic character of these inscriptions placed on various types of amulet. Of interest to us in the process that these inscriptions illustrate is the idea expressed by the layout of the text. The invocation *Der Herr Behüte Dich!* (May the Lord protect you!) means more when it radiates in all directions than the same sentence written in a linear way. The same thing applies to the triangular labyrinth of letters containing the word *Wattishk’a* (referring to all-consuming fire from the Lord, Numbers 11, 1-2) (Figure 11). The triangular formulae *Abracadabra* (the Abraxas) (Figure 12) and *Shebriiri* have the same character.<sup>59</sup>

## Light

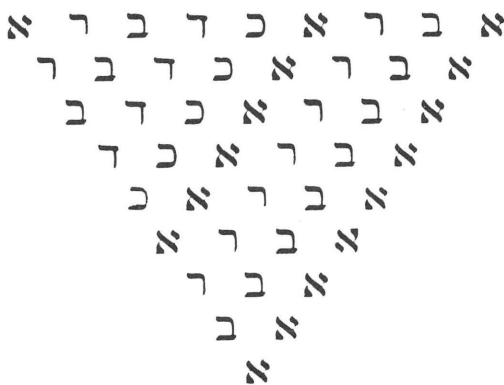
Light, which is the closest thing to the mystical understanding of the Creator and any access to Him, plays an important role here. Light, as we shall soon see, largely affected the popularity of the letter labyrinth in the Baroque, and it performed an important function in the symbolism of graphic art and painting in that period, and certainly also in philosophy. These functions of light in the spiritual culture of human beings can hardly be overestimated; its role in Jewish mysticism is stressed in many fragments of the *Zohar*.<sup>60</sup> A letter labyrinth in the *Cabbala Denudata*, Knorr von Rosenroth’s translation of the *Zohar* (which had two or three editions and was well-known, at least in Central Europe) says: ‘E uno centro mittit sua lumina Zohar.’<sup>61</sup>

Let us follow light, because it brings us to the modern era. In so doing we



*Left above*  
Figure 10. A letter labyrinth with the title of God, "Elohîm," that can be read starting from the center. From Budge. See note 57.

*Above*  
Figure 11. The word "wattishk'a," meaning "and [fire] dwindled," denoting the fire of God, is reproduced visually in a triangular-shaped progressive labyrinth. From Budge. See note 57.



*Left*  
Figure 12. The famous magical formula, "Abracadabra," known as "the abraxas." Tradition ascribes it to Serenus Samonicus, the physician of the Emperor Caracalla (ruled 211-7), but it is more likely that it is derived from "abbâda ke dâabrâ,"

Chaldean words meaning "perish like the word." This magic formula was used against fever. From Budge. See note 59.

should not forget that Cabbalistic thinking — which in many points concurs with Pythagorean, gnostic, and neo-Platonic philosophy — had a great influence on such modern-era scholars and erudites as Johann Reuchlin, Erasmus, Pico della Mirandola, Marsiglio Ficino, Aegidius von Viterbo, Knorr von Rosenroth, Giulio Camillo, Robert Fludd, and Athanasius Kircher. Our letter labyrinths occurred in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries most frequently where the influence of Jewish culture was the greatest, namely, in the Iberian Peninsula and in Central Europe, in Germany and Poland (Figure 13).

Francisco Patrizzi (1529-97), an advocate of Plato from whom he took over the ideas of the hierarchic character of existence and emanation, was the foremost representative of the metaphysics of light in the Renaissance.<sup>62</sup> According to Patrizzi, the world is animated by divine, eternal light; God uses light to instill life and to add beauty to the Creation. Patrizzi's concept was basically a continuation of the earlier ideas worked out by Grosseteste (1168-1253) and Ibn-Gabirol (1021-58).

This way of *representation* is illustrated in a number of baroque paintings, composition where the all-radiating eye of Providence or other symbolic representations of radiantly, miraculously manifested divinity, are centrally situated. Very often, the Tetragrammaton, YHWH, was placed in the source of light, which echoes the Cabbalistic traditions. We observe a similar graphic relationship between the characters of script and the principle of the radiation of light in many centrally-composed letter labyrinths, many of which had religious significance in both the Middle Ages and the baroque (Figure 14). This is best illustrated by spiral labyrinth poems where the text originates from the void, indefinite center. They bring to mind some Cabbalistic Hebrew works such as "The Original Torah as the Cloak of God" by Solomon ben Hayim Eliashu, or "Composition around the Unutterable Name" by Moses Cordovero.

### The Baroque

The baroque was a period of genuine development in labyrinth forms and meanings, hence the great variety of letter labyrinths in different contexts. Religious meanings linked with mystery and *sacrum* are prevalent, and so are labyrinths with a center, although we may observe a marked secularization of the symbols. Decidedly magic texts, such as the prayer to the Archangel Michael for longevity (Figure 15), also occur.<sup>63</sup> They all convey a chaotic image of the baroque world of meanings, and two versions of the Christian precept. One of these raises hope for the gradual unveiling of the mystery for the slow interpretation of the signs of the labyrinth world understood as the Book of Nature. The prevailing order is somehow justified by the existence of the Book and its Creator, which is probably in accordance with the views of those satisfied by the status quo. The Jesuit Juan Eusebio Nuremberg, a commentator on Optatian's (Optatianus Porphyrius') Latin *carmina quadrata*, describes them as a world presented "in a thousand of labyrinthine ways born in Divine harmony," a mysterious multilayered system.<sup>63</sup> This echoes St. Paul's longing when he wrote "Now we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we shall see face to face. My knowledge is now partial; then it will be whole, like God's knowledge of me" (*I Corinthians* 13,12).

After the Middle Ages, this understanding of the world in terms of the Book — so characteristic of cultures based on the Bible, with their volumes of commentaries accumulating ad infinitum — came with all its power into the baroque. Certainly, the image of the world seen as the Book, which implies that the prevailing order has been sanctified by the Creator, is the most satisfactory to the stratum that accepts this order and its religious, cultural and social implica-

Figure 13. "A poem for the Sephiroth as a wheel of light," by Naftali Bacharach (seventeenth century). The ten Sephiroth were the spheres or emanations from *En Soph* (the Primal Cause). From Budge. See note 57.



Figure 14. A circular permutation poem, in the center of which we find the name of Jesus with all the other words coming out of it. From Caramuel. See note 75.

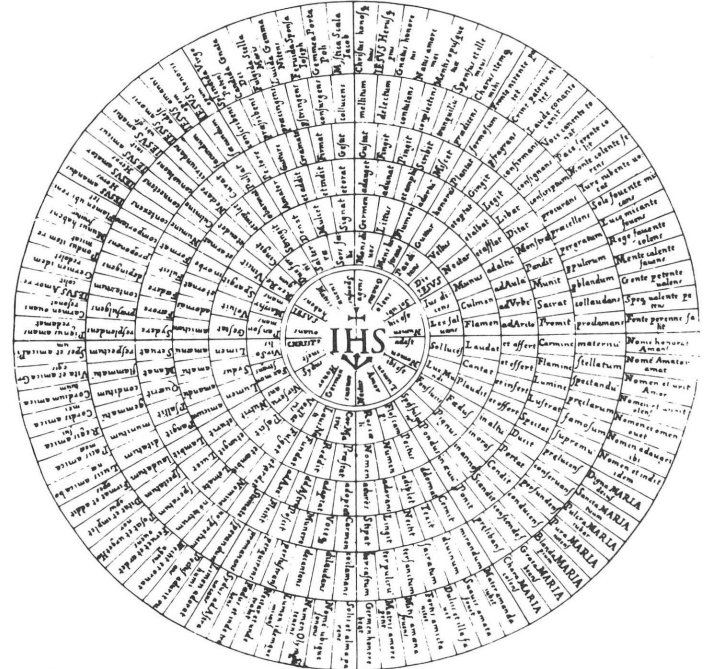


Figure 15. A plea to the Archangel Michael asking for a long life, in the form of a letter labyrinth. It was collected by István Lepsényi in his "Poesis ludens seu artificia poetia" (ca. 1700). Hungarian National Library, "Ms. Quart. Hung. 1551." From Géza Aczél, ed., *Képversek* (Budapest: Kosmosz Könyvek, 1984) 59.

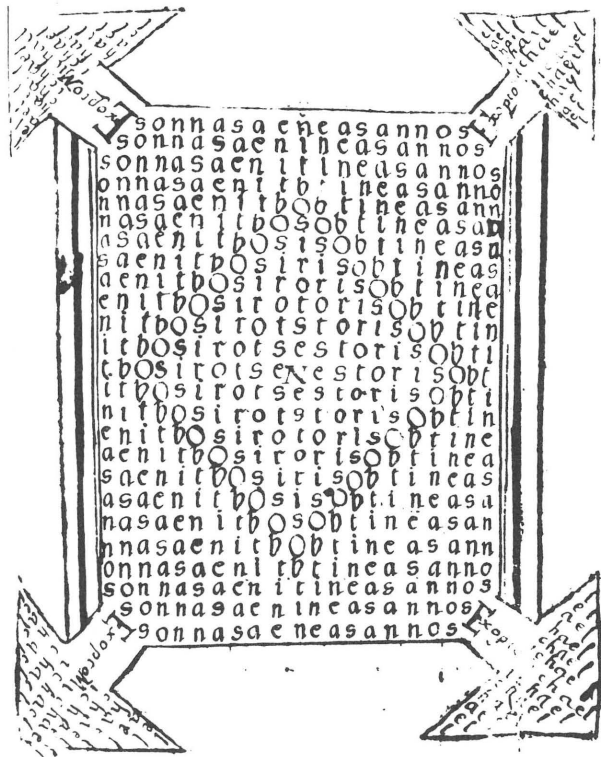
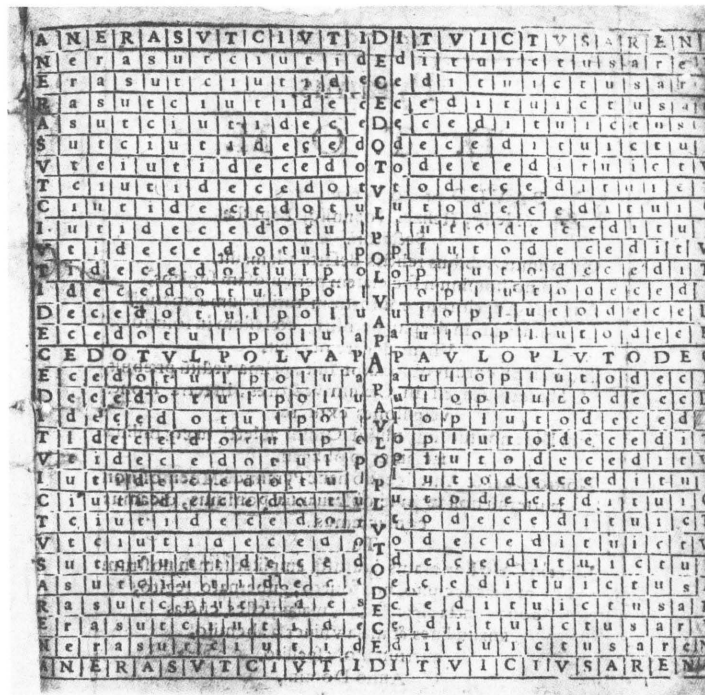


Figure 16. The labyrinth poem by Andrzej Gołdonowski. See note 68.



tions. In any case, the myth of the Book comprised the entire world of the letter and literature at the time. The Biblical-Cabbalistic method of reasoning accounted for the prominent position of labyrinth poems in Baroque poetics; the words *Gott ist mein Trost* (God is my comfort) or *Sanctis Gloria Christus* (Christ by Blessed Glory) etc. lead to the heart of the labyrinth, like Ariadne's thread, or the whole labyrinth is built of words like *Helig* (Swedish for "Holy"), *De Dios soy amado* (I am loved by God), etc.<sup>64</sup> Calligraphic labyrinths were called *labyrinte spirituelle*.<sup>65</sup> Some baroque poetics stressed this particular quality of the poetic labyrinth, e.g., Mitrofan Dovahlevski's work of the eighteenth century, where this form is called *vidtsentrovii virsz* (lit. "center poem").<sup>66</sup>

Jan Amos Komensky (1592-1670), a Moravian philosopher and "heretic," gives a different image of the world in his wise book *Labirint světla a ray srdce* (translated into English as "The labyrinth of the world and the paradise of the heart").<sup>67</sup> Although the book points out that there is only one right way, it discards the surrounding world as a deceptive, false spectre of chaos. The labyrinth of the world based on deceit and depravity, on ill-matched words and things, is given the form of a city. After many vicissitudes the wandering pilgrim in search of the truth reaches the center, which he discovers to be the seat of the worst evil! Only then, having seen real depravity, does the pilgrim find the door leading to the real world, the world of the truth. "Retrace your steps from where you come to the house of your heart, and close the door behind yourself" concludes the author. In the midst of this evil, Christ's Word is disclosed to the pilgrim, and a flame is kindled in his heart. Once he has seen it, the wanderer is transfigured and returns to the world. This road is described in a letter labyrinth (Figure 16) by the abbot of the Czestochowa Monastery, the Paulite Andrzej Gołdonowski (1596-1660).<sup>68</sup> The words *A Paulo Pluto decedit victis arena* evidence the saint's victory over the worldly temptations embodied by Satan-Pluto.

It is fascinating that, despite the change in coloring and meaning with the passage of time, elements of the myth have remained unchanged: a symbolic building, a city, a road, a dance, the center, and the power of darkness (the chthonic Pluto). Here again we deal with a metatactical transformation despite the surviving relics of the labyrinth rites (letter labyrinths are most frequent in panegyrics composed on the occasion of weddings and funerals). Wedding labyrinths refer to the union of a couple (a variation of "love knots"), or the words of the labyrinth are often placed within the shape of a heart.

Formally, labyrinths written on the occasion of funerals probably underline the principle of transience, of passing from one condition to another. We know a number of inscriptions of this type originating in Europe and even in South America.<sup>69</sup> Letter labyrinths also occur on tombstones, e.g., the tombstone of Prince Silo of Asturias, the founder of the San Salvador Church (eighth century) at Oviedo, *Silo princeps fecit*.<sup>70</sup> Another context of the baroque letter labyrinth is related to the square shape of the inscriptions. The square form of the "cubus," as the labyrinth verse was often called in the baroque, conveyed the idea of permanence, solemnity, and uprightness. Beside the letter



labyrinth of ca. 1600 by Albert Szenci Molnár (1574-1633) that is dedicated to Johann Heidfeld, *Talis quadra boni sit tibi forma viri*, is the comment:<sup>71</sup>

Heidfeldi ecce quadratum, vel, si vis, do tibi cubum,  
es quid significat, iam tua Musa tenet,  
Cer veteris virum bonum quadratum dixerunt,  
vel, cur virum constantem cubo comparunt.

“To Heidfeld is this square, or if you please, I’m offering you a cube. Its meaning your Muse holds already. The Old Ones have been calling a good man the square, and comparing a staid man to the cube.”

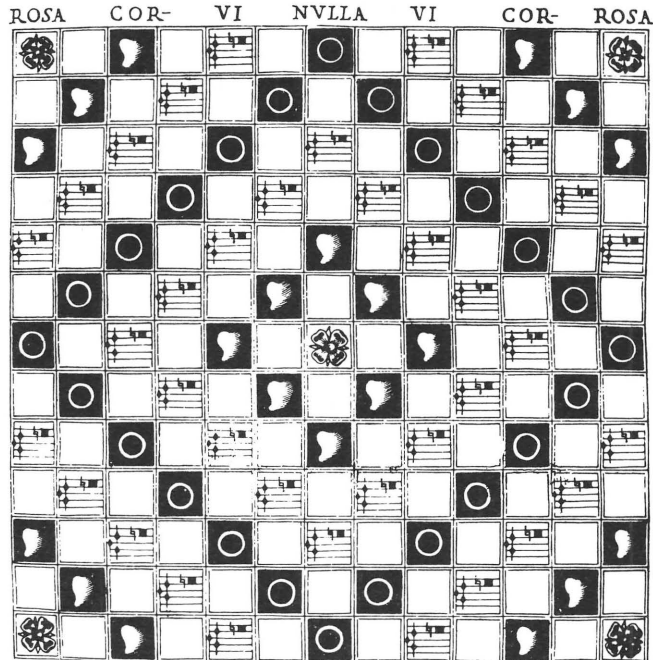
The author further suggests certain works of Aristotle as the sources of such references: the *Nicomachean Ethics* I and the *Rhetoric* III. Simonides was to say: “Difficile est nasci virum bene bonum, qui manibus, pedibus et mente sit tetragonae constans, et sui semper similis in rebus secundis et adversis.” [“It’s difficult to find a really good man who in his hands, feet, and mind would be as steady as a square, and similar to it both in times fortunate and adverse.”]

The emergence of a new model of reasoning, the Cartesian paradigm, is related to the popularity of the letter labyrinth in the baroque and its metatactical shift in the set of its meanings. The analytical way of thinking took the world into pieces like a machine; these, in accordance with the *pars pro toto* principle, were to determine the properties of the whole. The new understanding of the world underlined its construction, its mechanics, although for Descartes what had set the machine in motion was still the Unchangeable. This undoubtedly prompted the imagination to produce letter labyrinths, though some were used for purely ornamental purposes and had no sacred function at all.

In language this model of reasoning comes close to echoes of Cabbalistic thought. The formal influence of the Cabbala is evident in many baroque works, notably those containing elements of the “mathematics of language”; chronostica, anagrams, cabbalistic verse, etc.

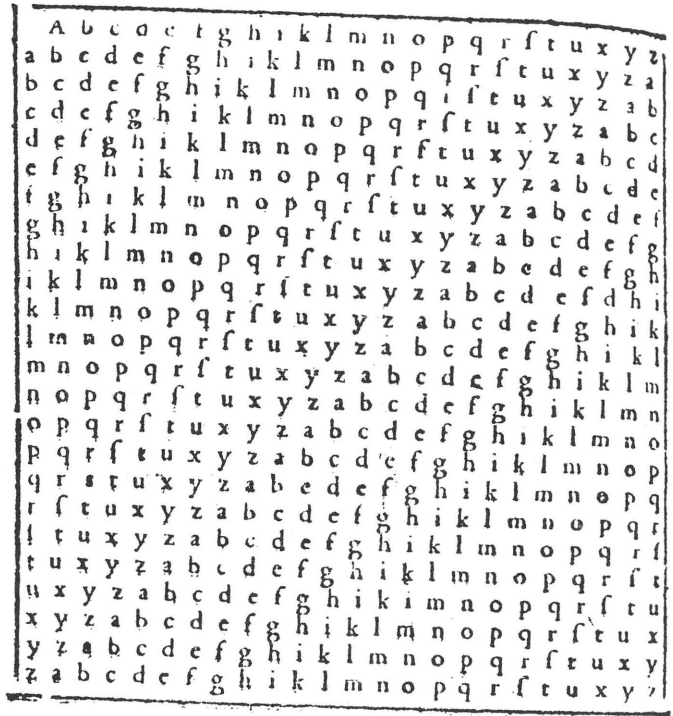
Baroque works on poetics often visualize the superficiality of influence which did not go beyond linguistic juggling. Textual mechanical manipulation took the place of Cabbalistic mystical permutation. As Dick Higgins writes, “metaphors of hidden truths became ones of aesthetic truths.”<sup>72</sup> Baroque poetics give precise recipes how to write such works (Figure 17). Instruction may also be found in studies dedicated to “natural magic.”<sup>73</sup> The baroque emblematic imagination was quickened by the hidden and the mysterious so that it gradually lost sight of the actual meanings referring first and foremost to the inner world. The clergy has a more serious attitude towards these problems. The Jesuits, with Athanasius Kircher in the lead,<sup>74</sup> dedicated the most attention to the metaphysics of language and symbol. Chronostic inscriptions that we may find even today on the walls of sacred buildings and their furnishings, as well as in books, testify to the strong belief in the supernatural power of the script taken from the Book (chronostica were often Biblical verses in which letters signifying roman numerals added up to the desired date). Though rid of their inner essence, the “experiments” continued to relate to the circles of initiation, to which numerous examples by clerics bear evidence. One of the

Figure 17. A letter labyrinth by Andreas Sutor [Schuster], from *Der Hundert Ausgige Blinde Argos . . .* (Augsburg: Rieger, 1740), 770. This letter composition, being asemantic, may be understood either as an imitation of cabballistic diagrams or as an instruction on how to compose labyrinth poems.



ILLVSTRISSIMO D-D. EMANVELI DEL YERRO. EQVITI MILITARIS ORDINIS  
 de Alicantara, nec non D. Sebastiano, et D. Augustino eiusdem Fratribus  
*Quis uereri Panes carui ymbulo intulerit: Dæmonem, qui tentationibus cor humano inuidiat, hoc præcipue in S. Benedicto  
 verificauit, nam in Subiacenti uulgo Deo uasate sub cornu episcopi aggressus Dæmon, generosissime uasus est. Vt huius Per-  
 tentia uisera credem' memoria Benedictus. Re' inter spinas intate et illibate dilaudemus, Ros' uide licet nullo Dæmonis a'lu  
 de uisera, erro. Ros' et decorat' hoc Præga. Metrametrico labore et iuuam' deducimus. V'f'ni. Dominab' quib' Benedictus  
 uulgo benedict*

Figure 18. A rebus labyrinth without words from Caramuel. See note 75.



most notable is the *Primus calamus ob oculos ponens metametricam quae variis . . . multiformes labyrinthos exornat* (1663, known as the *Metametrika* for a shortened title) by the Cistercian monk Juan Caramuel de Lobkowitz (1606-82), which includes numerous examples of word labyrinths (Figure 18).<sup>75</sup> Yet many examples of labyrinth poems have a completely secular character, and are greetings to important persons, rulers, etc.

Many baroque letter labyrinths give an image of the world of intricate meanings that was worked out back in the Middle Ages, referring to the Center affecting the whole of creation. This interpenetration of the *Civitas Dei* and the *Civitas Mundi* added meaning to the road, which resulted in a kind of cultural balance. We even find such a labyrinth construction in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The labyrinth symbol was beginning to lose its sacred character in the sixteenth century. Santarchangelli observes that, up to the baroque, it was impossible to lose one's bearings in a labyrinth building; the path, however winding, always led to the goal.<sup>76</sup> Later, blundering and erring became possible. At this point Santarchangelli indicates the modern traits in this concept of the symbol.

Once we have lost sight of our point of reference, we are more acutely aware of our bewilderment. No longer enjoying the blessed sense of contact with the

Figure 19. Seiichi Niikuni, "River/Sand Bank," from Bob Cobbing and Peter Mayer, *Concerning Concrete Poetry* (London: Writers' Forum, 1978), 34.

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z y x w v u t s r q p o n m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
y x w v u t s r q p o n m l m n o p q r s t u v w x y
x w v u t s r q p o n m l k l m n o p q r s t u v w x
w v u t s r q p o n m l k j k l m n o p q r s t u v w
v u t s r q p o n m l k j i j k l m n o p q r s t u v
u t s r q p o n m l k j i h i j k l m n o p q r s t u
t s r q p o n m l k j i h g h i j k l m n o p q r s t
s r q p o n m l k j i h g f g h i j k l m n o p q r s
r q p o n m l k j i h g f e f g h i j k l m n o p q r
q p o n m l k j i h g f e d e f g h i j k l m n o p q
p o n m l k j i h g f e d c d e f g h i j k l m n o p
o n m l k j i h g f e d c b c d e f g h i j k l m n o
n m l k j i h g f e d c b a b c d e f g h i j k l m n
m l k j i h g f e d c b a b c d e f g h i j k l m n
n m l k j i h g f e d c b a b c d e f g h i j k l m n
o n m l k j i h g f e d c b c d e f g h i j k l m n o
p o n m l k j i h g f e d c d e f g h i j k l m n o p
q p o n m l k j i h g f e d e f g h i j k l m n o p q
r q p o n m l k j i h g f e f g h i j k l m n o p q r
s r q p o n m l k j i h g f g h i j k l m n o p q r s
t s r q p o n m l k j i h g h i j k l m n o p q r s t
u t s r q p o n m l k j i h i j k l m n o p q r s t u
v u t s r q p o n m l k j i j k l m n o p q r s t u v
w v u t s r q p o n m l k j k l m n o p q r s t u v w
x w v u t s r q p o n m l k l m n o p q r s t u v w x
y x w v u t s r q p o n m l m n o p q r s t u v w x y
z y x w v u t s r q p o n m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

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Guide along the way, having let go of our thread of Ariadne, we are increasingly aware of the building rising around us, and are more trustful of its material and complex construction than of the underlying, hard-to-conceive ideas. The Cartesian mind disintegrated the great machinery of the universe in its unending divisions; our vision of the Way has become blurred, and our choice has become less deliberate in the growing chaos of information. Culture is, likewise, losing its sharp contours and dead words, ornamental symbols and meanings devoid of knowledge accumulate (we see this in some "post-Modernist" works — Figure 19).

Yet visual labyrinth construction did not vanish altogether with the baroque. We see it today in some works by concrete poets (Emmett Williams and Claus Bremer, for instance). Yet here, understanding is achieved along different lines, which is a different story anyway.

1. W. H. Mathews, *Mazes and labyrinths: a general account of their history and development* (London: 1922). Paolo Santarcangelli, *Il libro dei labirinti* (Firenze: Valechi Editore, 1967). Hermann Kern, *Labirinti* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1981). Gustav-Renè Hocke, *Die Welt als Labyrinth* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1959).

2. Ana Hatherly, "Labirintos portugueses dos seculos XVII e XVIII," *Coloquio artes* 45 (1980) 20-9, Ana Hatherly, *A Experiência do prodígio. Bases teoreticas e anthologia de textos-visuais portugueses dos seculos XVII e XVIII* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional- Casa da Moeda, 1983). A whole chapter is devoted to the poetical labyrinth in Dick Higgins, "Pattern poetry: guide to an unknown literature" (unpublished). I would like to thank the author for allowing me to study this manuscript.

3. The terms "labirinto de letras" and "labirinto de versos" were introduced in Hatherly (1980) 26-7.

4. Hatherly (1980) 26-7.

5. Teresa Michałowski, *Staropolska teoria genologiczna* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1974) 162.

6. For more on this subject see Hatherly (1983) and Higgins.

7. *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Chicago, London, Toronto: Benton, 1960), v. 13, p. 560; *Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN* (Warszawa: PWN, 1965), v. 6, p. 234.

8. Santarcangelli 149-63.

9. Santarcangelli 99-103.

10. Santarcangelli 118.

11. Mircea Eliade, *Images et symboles: essais sur le symbolisme magico-religieux* (Paris: 1952). Marcel Brion, "Hoffmanthal et l'expérience du labyrinthe," *Cahiers du sud* (1955) 333. Santarcangelli 26, 170-4.

12. "Labyrinthos" was supposedly derived from "labrainto," the Carian word for "labrys."

13. Santarcangelli 61-5.

14. Anna Sadurska, *Les tables iliaques* (Warszawa: PWN, 1964). This monograph collects 19 "tabulae" with their detailed iconographic and philological descriptions.

15. George Chapman, tr., *The Iliad*, ed. A. Nicholl (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957) 387 11. 536-49.

16. Plutarch. *Vitae paralelae. Theseus* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1914) 21.

17. Pollux, *Iulii Pollucis Onomasticon*, ed. G. Dindorfius (Leipzig: Kiehn, 1824), v. 2, p. 755; v. 4, p. 101.

18. Stefan Czarnowski, "L'arbre d'eus, le taureau aux trois grues et le culte de voies fluviales en Gaule," *Revue celtique* 42 (1905) 44-8.

19. Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1955) 336-49. The myth tells us that Daedalus, who has made the labyrinth for Ariadne, has been following the structures of Egyptian labyrinths. I prefer not to take the Egyptian tradition into account in this study; there is one example of a "crossword" structure known in Egyptian paleography, but it does not seem to have any direct relation with our Greco-Roman labyrinths. See H. M. Steward, "A crossword hymn to Mut," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 57 (1971) 87-104, pl. XXV-XXVII, for which information I am indebted to Dick Higgins. Generally only European material has been taken into consideration in this article, for reasons of space and consistence of the text. However, there are examples of labyrinthine construction in Eastern literatures, e.g. viz. Friedrich Rückert, *Grammatik, Poetik und Rhetorik der Perser* (1874; Osnabrück: Otto Zeller, 1966) 161 and Kalanath Jha, *Figurative poetry in Sanskrit literature* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975) 195-6.

20. Santarcangelli 151, 169-70, 177-8.

21. Czarnowski 45-7.

22. Santarcangelli 65-70. There are also numerous representations of the labyrinth as a city on the ancient mosaics. See Wiktor A. Daszewski, "La mosaïque de Thésée," *Etudes sur les mosaïques avec représentations du labyrinthe, de Thésée et du Minotaure* (Warszawa: PWN, 1977) 60-2, pl. 12, 14, 15, 18, 20, 25, 31, 32, 40, 41, 46, 47, 48 and 51.

23. W. F. J. Knight, "Maze symbolism and the Trojan game," *Antiquity* 6 (1932) 445-58; and W. F. J. Knight, *Cumean gates: Vergil's epic and anthropology* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1967). See also Richard Willis, "Das Labyrinth in Tanz und Spiel," *Neue Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Jugendbildung* 5 (1929) 707-20.

24. Sadurska 26-52.

25. Vergil, *Vergil's works* (New York: Random House, 1934) 96. The last verse of this sequence (11. 580-602) in the original Latin: "Troiaque nunc, pueri Troianum dicitur agmen . . ."

26. Suetonius, *Duodecim Caesaris*, ed. C. B. Hase (Paris: J. Didet, 1828) 62, 63, 158, 165. Plutarch, "Cato Minor," in *The Lives of the noble Grecians and Romans* (New York: Random House, n.d.) 49. Tacitus, *Annales* (many editions) XI, 11, 4.

27. Knight (1967) 166-9.

28. Plato, *Phaedon* 108 A-C.

29. Santarcangelli 232-3.

30. Seneca, "Troïades," in *Tragoediae*, ed. R. Peiper and G. Richter (Leipzig: Teubner, 1867) 238 1. 778.

31. Plutarch, "Cato Minor," in *Vitae Paralelae*, ed. K. Ziegler (Leipzig: Teubner, 1931) 49.

32. Sadurska 45.

33. Sadurska 29, which contains the following words: "[Tekén ten] Teodoreon mahe taxin Homeron ofra deis teken metron echés sofias."

34. Sadurska 45.

35. Pliny, *Historiae Naturalis*, ed. J. Harduin (Paris: Lemaire, 1827) VII.57.7., XXXIV.83., XXXVI.85.90.

36. Sadurska, 9-10.

37. Claudian, *Carmina* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1879), v. 2, p. 57.

38. Venantius Fortunatus, *Opera* in J. P. Migne, ed., *Patrologiae cursus completus, series latina*, v. 88, 1841, pp. 95-6. An example of the 18th century imitations can be found

in Lenz, Kriss and Rettenbeck, *Bilder und Zeichen Religiösen Volkssymboles* (München: Georg D. W. Callwey, 1963) 133.

39. Gregory the Great, in *Job*. Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, Cod. 80, fol. 3f. We are grateful to Ulrich Ernst of Wuppertal for information concerning this text.

40. José Romera Castillo, "Poesía figurativa medieval. Vigilán, monje Hispano-Latino del siglo X, precursor de la poesía concreto-visual," *1616 3* (1980) 138-56. Manuel Díaz y Díaz, "Vigilán y Sarracino: sobre composiciones figurativas en la Rioja del siglo X," *Lateinische Dichtungen des x. und xi. Jahrhunderts. Festgabe für Walter Bulst* (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1979) 60-92. Vigilán's piece is contained in the "Codex Vigilano (Escorial.d.I.2)" at fol. 19v.

41. Santarcangelli 247.

42. Quoted in Charles Doria, "Visual writing forms in antiquity: the versi intexti," *Visual literary criticism*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979) 64.

43. Optatian, *Publilii Optianiani Porfyrii carmina*, ed. G. Polara (2 v. Torino: Paravia, 1973).

44. Doria 65-7.

45. There is an increasing popularity of the *carmina quadrata* form from the 7th to 11th centuries. Most eminent authors, including Winifried (St. Boniface), Hrabanus Maurus, Alcuin, Abelard, Eugenius Vulgaris, Josephus Scottus, etc., composed at least one. For more on medieval visual poetry, see Doria; at least one. For more on medieval visual poetry, see Doria; Ulrich Ernst, "Zahl und Mass in der Figurengedichten der Antike und des Frühmittelalters," *Miscellanea Medievalia* 16 n. 2 (1984) 310-32; and Luciano Caruso, *La poesia figurata nell'alto medioevo* (Napoli: Libreria Scientifica Editrice, 1971).

46. Viktor Gardthausen, *Griechische Paleographie* (2 v., Leipzig: Verlag von Veit, 1913), 2 v., 66; and Higgins, chap. 2, sec. 1b.

47. Daszewski 102-3, pl. 57.

48. St. Augustine, *De civitate dei* (many editions) XIX.17, XIV-28.

49. Dom. Fernand Cabrol and Dom. Henri Leclercq, *Dictionnaire d'archéologie Chrétienne et de liturgie* (15 v., Paris: Libraire Letourey et Ané, 1907-51) v. 8 (1927) 973-82. See also E. Soyez, *Les labyrinthes d'églises* (Amiens: 1896).

50. Santarcangelli 280-1 of the Polish edition, *Ksiega labiryntu* (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1982).

51. Santarcangelli 259.

52. For six days Joshua and his priests and warriors went around the walls of Jericho, one round each day. On the seventh day they circled it seven times, and with the sounds of trumpet, horn, and war cries, the walls of Jericho collapsed. There are numerous medieval examples showing the city of Jericho as a labyrinth. See Kern 166-82.

53. Santarcangelli 198-202.

54. The SATOR bibliography is very extensive. The most exhaustive commentary on the text is by Heinz Hofmann, "Sator-quadrat," *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft. Neue Bearbeitung begonnen von Georg Wissowa* (München: A Druckermüller Verlag, 1978) Supplementband 15, 478-565.

55. Hatherly (1983) 18-65.

56. For more on "tzeruf," see Perle Epstein, *Kabbalah, the way of the Jewish mystic* (New York: 1978) 73-106; and Abraham ben Samuel Abulafia, *The path of the names*, tr. David Meltzer (Berkeley: Tree, 1976). See also any of the basic books on the cabbala by Gershon G. Sholem.

57. E. A. Wallis-Budge, *Amulets and superstitions* (1930; New York: Dover Publication, 1978) 394-7.

58. Budge 271, 234.

59. Budge 220-4, 235. "And the people called unto Moses, and Moses prayed to God and the fire abated," Numbers 11, 12. The formula *shebriri* was used to heal diseases of the eye. The patient would pronounce the formula and the sickness would diminish together with the text. The triangular shape of the inscription, *wattishk'a*, also indicated this "disappearing" quality. Similarly, *abracadabra* was used as a healing formula, Budge states, and mentions that Erich Bischoff interpreted it as meaning *Abbada ke dabra*, Chaldean for "perish like the word."

60. Zohar. *The book of splendor*, ed. Gershon G. Scholem (London: Rider and Company, 1977) 29-30.

61. Johann Knorr von Rosenroth, *Cabbala denudata* . . . *Liber Sohar* (2 v., Frankfurt: J. D. Zunner, typis B. C. Wustii, 1684).

62. B. Brückmann, *An introduction to Francisco Patrizzi's "Nova de universum philosophia"* (New York: 1941).

63. *Képversek*, ed. Géza Aczél (Budapest: Kozmosz, 1984) 59.

64. The first of these labyrinths is by Jon or Jan Hus, and appears in David Lindquist, *Studier i den svenska andaktslitteraturen under stormaktstiden* (Uppsala: Svenska kyrkans diakronistyrelses bokförlag, 1939) 90. The second is Francisco de Castro, *Christiana reformation assi del pecador* (Sevilla: Juab Cabeças, 1680).

65. Johann Christian Maennling, *Der europäische Helicon* (Alten Stettin: G. Dahlen, 1704) 130-1.

66. Mitrofan Dovhalevsky, *Poetika* (Kiev: Naukova Dumka, 1973) 290-5.

67. Jan Amos Komenský, *Labyrint světa a ray srdce* (Lezro: publisher unknown, 1631), translated into German as *Das Labyrinth der Welt* . . . (1668; Dresden: Reclam, 1984) and into English as *The Labyrinth of the world and the paradise of the heart* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1901).

68. Andrzej Gołdonowski, *Poema historicum de S. Paulo* . . . *Primo Eremita* (Kraków: Piatkowski, 1628) H2V.

69. Christian Wagenknecht, "Konkrete Poesie," *Der Germanistentag 1968. Vorträge und Berichte*, ed. Borck and Henss (Heidelberg: Karl Winter, 1970) 112. José Durand, *Gaceta de Lima de 1762 a 1765* (Lima: Oficina de Asuntos Culturales, 1982) appendix.

70. The Silo plaque dates from the eighth century. Different sources have located it in different places, but it is at Pravia where it commemorates Prince Silo's building of the Church of Santianes; the plaque is described and documented in José Menéndez Pidal, "La basilica de Santianes de Pravia (Oviedo)." *Actas del simposio para el estudio de los códices del 'Comentario al apocalipsis' de Beato de Liebana* (Madrid, 1980) 1, 280-1.

71. Johannes Heidfeld, *Sphinx theologico-philosophica* (Herbornia: excudebat Christ. Corvinus, 1612) 114-6.

72. Dick Higgins, *Horizons: the poetics and theory of the intermedia* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984) 33.

73. See, for example, Caspar Schott, *locoserium naturae et artis, sive magia naturalis* (Amsterdam: 1666) 237, chapter "Dato quovis vocabulo, aut vocabulis, anagramma facere."

74. Athanasius Kircher, *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* (Roma: Mascardi, 1652), also his *Turris Babel* (Amsterdam: ex officina Janssonio-Waesbergiana, 1679) and *Arca Noe* (Amsterdam: apud J. Janssonium a Wasbergae, 1695).

75. Juan Caramuel de Lobkowitz, *Primus calamus ob oculos ponens metametricam quae variis* . . . *multiformes labyrinthos exornat* (Roma: Fabius Falconius, 1663).

76. Santardangelli 358-9.

# Chinese Patterned Texts

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*In China shaped poetry is closely linked with palindromes. The earliest examples are attributed to the fourth century A.D. An important source for early patterned poems was published in the twelfth century; another anthology appeared ca. 1693. The article includes examples of patterned poetry in translation and some remarks on the technique of 'deciphering' patterned poems.*

The arrangement of a text into a shaped pattern is not unknown in Chinese literature. It belongs to the range of literary playforms in which the educated elite indulged, particularly since the Sung dynasty (960-1279). Such shaped texts were frequently devised as literary puzzles, because it was left to the ingenuity of the reader where to begin the reading and in which direction to proceed. The peculiarity of the Chinese script where a character is a word, and of the syntactic structure of literary Chinese where grammatical morphemes are relatively rare, has from early on linked shaped texts with palindromes (*hui-wen*). In a language like literary Chinese it is much easier to compose intelligent palindromes than in Indo-European languages, for example. It is therefore significant that in another East Asian language which is largely monosyllabic like Chinese, namely Vietnamese, we find palindromes, too (in Vietnamese they are called *thuan ngich doc*, "downstream and upstream reading"). Palindromes were recognized early as a legitimate art form in Chinese literary criticism. Already the *Wen-hsin tiao-lung*, a critical discussion of literary genres by Liu Hsieh (ca. 465-522), mentions palindromes as a genre by itself (Shih 1970: 45). A similar work of literary criticism, the *Ts'ang-lang shih-hua* by Yen Yü (fl. ca. 1200) lists palindromes along with shaped poetry (Debon 1962: 80-1) and other literary puzzles.

Shaped texts in Chinese can be poetry or prose. The text might be composed in order to be arranged in a pattern, or a pre-existing text can be shaped *ex post*. The pattern itself is either geometrical or abstract; circular arrangements are quite frequent. It can also be arranged so that the resulting shape is the visual representation of an object, animal or plant, etc. Each Chinese shaped text belongs to one or more of the categories listed above.

The first Chinese author who systematically collected palindromes and shaped poetry seems to have been Sang Shih-ch'ang, the author of the *Hui-wen lei-chü* ("A collection of palindromes according to categories"). Unfortunately not much is known about him. The date of his birth can roughly be



estimated as ca. 1140. In addition to the *Hui-wen lei-chü*, Sang also wrote a treatise on the famous calligraphy by Wang Hsi-chih (303-79), the "Orchid pavilion preface" (*Lan-t'ing hsü*). This treatise is preserved and has been many times reprinted.

It seems that the *Hui-wen lei-chü* was printed during Sang's lifetime, but no copy of the original edition has survived. In the sixteenth century the work was reprinted by the anthologist Chang Chi-hsiang (1507-87) but also of this edition no original copy could be traced in the bibliographies. Only the reprint of ca. 1692 by Chu Hsiang-hsien (for whom see below) is still extant, but even this edition is quite rare. It includes Sang Shih-ch'ang's original, undated preface and several other prefatory materials. The work consists of four chapters: chapters one and two deal with shaped poetry, whereas chapters three and four are an anthology of palindromes. Chu's edition has a fifth, unnumbered chapter, *Chih-chin hui-wen t'u* ("The palindrome on woven brocade with illustrations"). This chapter consists of the poem block attributed to Su Hui (for whom see below) and explanations on how to read this block. There follow nine woodcut illustrations based on the paintings of Chin Shih, a seventeenth-century painter, which illustrate scenes from the story of Su Hui. Each woodcut is accompanied by a poem from Chu Hsiang-hsien's brush in a variety of calligraphic styles.

This poem block, in Chinese *Hsüan-chi t'u*, is one of the most famous literary tours de force in Chinese civilization. It is an arrangement of  $29 \times 29 = 841$  characters in a square which can be read in various ways "backwards and forwards, up and down, in squares, whorls, diagonally, and in a dozen other combinations" (Lin 1965: 308). The *Hsüan-chi t'u* is attributed to Su Hui, the wife of the official Tou T'ao (4th Century). Tou had taken a sing-song girl as a concubine. Su Hui became understandably jealous, particularly after her husband had taken the concubine to accompany him to a distant office. Su Hui then wove a piece of brocade on which the 841 characters were represented in order to give expression to her sorrow and love, and sent it to her husband. Tou T'ao was so impressed by this piece of female ingenuity that he was reconciled with his wife. Ever since, the poem block has been regarded in China as a sublime piece of female skill, as C. T. Hsia has shown recently (Hsia 1977: 288-9). Most major literary critics in traditional China at least mention the poem block (e.g., see Debon 1962: 80, 169). The story of Su Hui and her ingenious piece of poetry is also the subject of a novel in colloquial Chinese, the *Hui-wen chuan* ("The story of the palindrome"), and there exist several theater plays with the same subject. A hand-scroll attributed to the Ming painter Ch'iu Ying (ca. 1494-ca. 1552) in the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art illustrates the story of Su Hui.

Another shaped poem written by a woman is the "Poem written on a round plate" (*p'an-chung shih*) attributed to the wife of Su Po-yü (2nd Century). This poem is arranged in seven concentric circles around the character *shan* ("mountain") just as the character *hsin* ("heart") is in the middle of Su Hui's poem block. In the *Hui-wen lei-chü* the poem in the plate appears in chapter 2, page 1b-2a; it is also reproduced in Debon (1962: 170). The *Hui-wen lei-chü*

has, apart from the poem block, altogether seventeen shaped poems. The shapes are abstract, mostly in circles, but there are also three in other forms (squares or lattice shapes). The fact that they are all riddles is shown by the explanations on how to read the poems. Indeed, poems with a "hidden beginning" (*ts'ang-t'ou*) are at the basis of the anacyclic compositions.

It should be added that the poem block (*Hsüan-chi t'u*) has also been imitated in Japan, although the Japanese language makes it much more difficult to construct a shaped text. For an impressive example, see the catalog of a recent exhibition in Köln (Sho 1975: 142-5). It was composed by the Japanese emperor Go-Mizuno-o in 1648 and can be read in different ways so that the block yields sixteen different poems. The number of poems to be extracted according to the different ways of reading in the original Chinese poem block of Su Hui is much greater. It is possible to produce hundreds of readings of poems in various prosodic meters (for examples, see Wang 1976: 11f.; for illustrations of the *Hsüan-chi t'u*, see plates 1-10). The *Hsüan-chi t'u* also plays a certain role in the novel *Ching-hua yüan* (for a translation see Li 1965: 242-3; for the original Chinese version see Li 1979: 290-301).

Chu Hsiang-hsien, the editor of Sang Shih-ch'ang's *Hui-wen lei-chü* was an elusive person. He was a native of Su-chou. He seems to have been a publisher because he had the blocks for the xylograph reprint of the *Hui-wen lei-chü* carved privately. We can cull some information about him from the various prefaces to his compilation, *Hui-wen lei-chü hsü-pien* ("A continuation of the *Hui-wen lei-chü*"). One of the prefaces to the continuation is dated 12th month of the year 1692 (in European chronology, January 6 to February 5, 1693). The *Hsü-pien* must therefore have been published privately some time after 1693. The book itself is relatively rare but very important because it includes a great number of shaped poems. The *Hsü-pien* consists of ten chapters, of which one to seven are an anthology of shaped texts and eight to ten are an anthology of palindromes by authors not represented in Sang Shih-ch'ang's *Hui-wen lei-chü*. Chu Hsiang-hsien's collection is partly based on an earlier work. Chapters three to six are a re-edition of the *Hsüan-chi ts'ui-chin* ("Fragmented brocades of the *Hsüan-chi*") by the late seventeenth-century author Wan Shu. This work had originally two chapters with thirty shaped poems in each chapter, which Chu Hsiang-hsien in his version spread over four chapters of his own anthology. Chapter seven of Chu's anthology consists of additions to Wan Shu's work, whereas chapters one and two are independently collected shaped poems.

There can be no doubt that Chu Hsiang-hsien's *Hui-wen lei-chü hsü-pien* is the most comprehensive anthology of shaped poetry in Chinese. The works by the twentieth-century author Wang Chung-hou (Wang 1966 and 1976) on palindromes largely rely on Chu Hsiang-hsien's work; they are, for the sinologist, useful because they include many punctuated readings of the literary puzzles in Chu Hsiang-hsien's and Sang Shih-ch'ang's books. A thorough analysis of the materials in the *Hsü-pien* would require much space and further research into the provenance of individual shaped poems. We shall therefore give in our survey a few results only. The total number of shaped pieces

(poetry and prose) in Chu's anthology is 108. In not a few cases earlier poems have been put into shapes. These include poems by the famous author Tu Fu (712-70), by the Ming emperor Hsüan-tsung (1399-1435, r. 1425-35) and by the Ming literatus-painter T'ang Yin (1470-1523). In other cases the names of original authors are given but no identification was possible. Chu Hsiang-hsien himself contributed some pieces, and so did several of his learned friends.

Regarding the shapes of the texts, we can distinguish three types: poems derived from the *Hsüan-chi t'u* poem block, geometric arrangements (mostly cyclical), and poems shaped into representations of objects. Within this group we can again differentiate between poems which show a contentual relation to the shaped figure, and those which do not. As far as prosody is concerned, we find poems with four, five, six, or seven words per line, and also songs (*tz'u*). Song prosody is particularly difficult because of the complicated verse structures. In each case Chu Hsiang-hsien has added rules for the correct reading of the shaped text; he thus provides the solutions for the literary puzzles.

We might perhaps ask what the motives were for this purposely difficult genre. The answer is that such poems were intended to show off skill in mastering the complicated prosodic patterns of Chinese versification. At the same time, readers were tested for ingenuity and perceptiveness. In other words, patterned poems were a literary play-form of the *homo ludens* among the literati. It should also be noted that the content of these poems remains within the poetic traditions and conventions. The poems never try to open up unusual or non-traditional subject matter, nor do we find formal innovations or new prosodic patterns. Shaping poems did not mean much more than re-arranging a normal poem into a shape where it had to be "deciphered" in order to reappear as a regular poem. It is by no means easy to understand a patterned poem in Chinese because one has first to find out where to start reading and in what direction. Without the comments explaining the method of reading one would have to rely on a trial-and-error method. All this is difficult enough, but some authors were not content with the degree of difficulty and added more puzzles, for example, by indicating the technique of "dissected characters." This means that in some poems one has to start reading or to use only a part of the character concerned. In the following we shall give some examples of poems included in Sang's and Chu's anthologies. The simplest form are poems arranged in a circular shape.

The first example of a circular poem is deceptively simple (Figure 1). The circle consists of only sixteen characters, but these characters can be used for a poem of twenty-eight words (four lines with seven words each). The trick consists, apart from finding out where to start reading, in repeating for each line the last three words of the preceding line. The poem is a winter poem from a series of four describing the four seasons. A free translation follows:

Everywhere white snow dances around the veranda.  
When snow dances around the veranda, its ornaments  
are adorned like jade.  
The veranda ornaments like jade make the silver  
park pure.

圖詩字折字藏

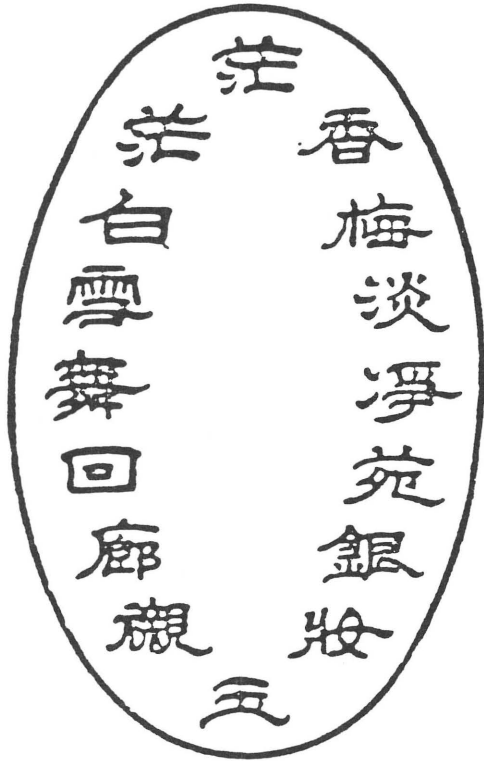


Figure 1. Wang (1976) pl. 19. Based on *Hui-wen lei-chü hsü-pien*, ch. 1, p. 5b.



Figure 2. Wang (1976) pl. 22. Based on *Hui-wen lei-chü hsü-pien*, ch. 2, p. 10b.

The park with silver adornments is pure, and  
light is the fragrance of the plum trees.

This anonymous poem uses conventional clichés for the winter: the white fragrant flowers of the plum blossom when it still snows. Silver and jade evoke purity. The important point is, however, that the poem is at the same time a palindrome and can be read backwards; the general sense remains more or less the same. Not only the last words of lines one, two, and four rhyme, but also the first words of lines four, three, and one.

A more complicated example is based on a poem attributed to the T'ang poet Po Chü-i (772-846) (Figure 2). It is arranged in an oval shape and combines "hidden beginning" with "dissected characters." There are altogether 48 characters from which a poem of eight lines with seven words each can be formed. The missing eight characters ( $8 \times 7 = 56 - 48 = 8$ ) are supplied by dissection of the last characters of each line; the lower part of this character is a character by itself and serves as the first word of the following line. The title of the poem is "Wandering in the palace of purple mist," and the content has a distinctly Taoist flavor, praising the quietness of a deserted palace garden and the absence of worldly ambitions and cares.

After water has washed away dust and dirt  
I can sample the taste of the Tao.  
It is sweeter than fame and riches.  
These two are now forgotten.  
In my heart I think of the guests from the Six  
Caves and the Cinnabar Clouds [the Taoist paradise].  
I recite texts from the Purple Palace of the Three Pure Ones [Taoist gods].  
Over ten miles I gathered lotus, singing until dawn.  
One round wheel: the clear moon.  
A breeze from the cassia tree brings fragrance.  
When the sun rises again, noble gentlemen will return and look for me.  
They will find me in the middle of the hills  
With a drink of good wine.

We find also other more or less geometrical arrangements, such as lattice work like that used for windows, or a honey-comb pattern. Many of the shapes in Chu's collection do, however, represent objects (but not human figures). The variety of objects is great: fruits, flowers, cloud patterns, buildings (for example, a Buddhist pagoda). Sometimes there is no connection between the content and the shaped form. In other cases, the relationship between content and shape is obvious. A poem shaped like a lamp describes the lantern festival of the first full moon in the new year. A poem on the mallow flower is shaped like the flower. The title of the arrangement is "Heart of the mallow," and, indeed, the character *k'uei* ("mallow") forms the "heart," i.e., the middle of the shape (Figure 3). A pattern titled "Three-fold play of the plum blossom" consists of three ornaments shaped like the flower; the resulting verses are a poetic description of the flowering plum (Figure 4). The contours of a memorial stele are used for shaping five poems in praise of beautiful women of the

三弄花櫃

Figure 4. Hui-wen lei-chü hsü-pien, ch. 6, p. 9b.

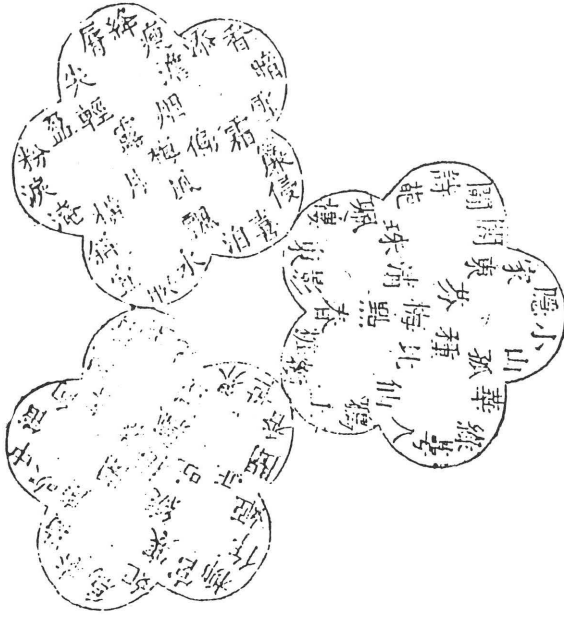
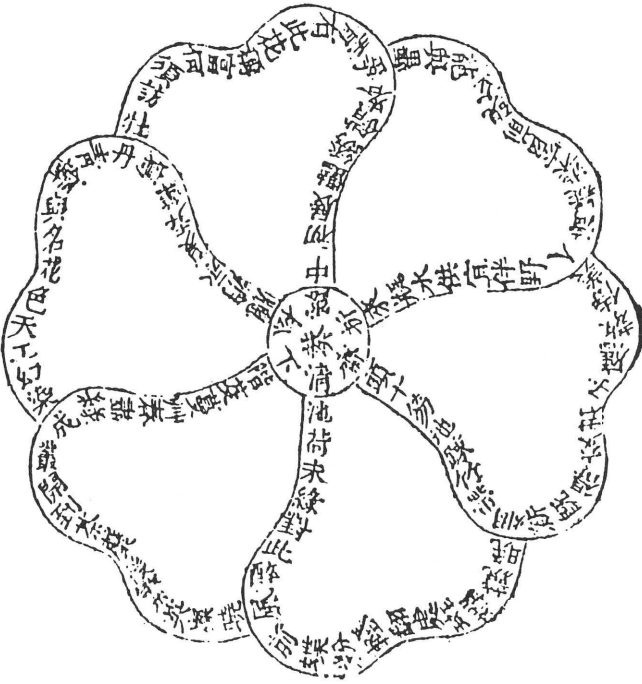


Figure 3. Hui-wen lei-chü hsü-pien, ch. 6, p. 9b.



# 百心協聲

Figure 5. Hui-wen lei-chü hsiü-pien, ch. 6, p. 11b.

Figure 6. Hui-wen lei-chü hsiü-pien, ch. 5, p. 3b.

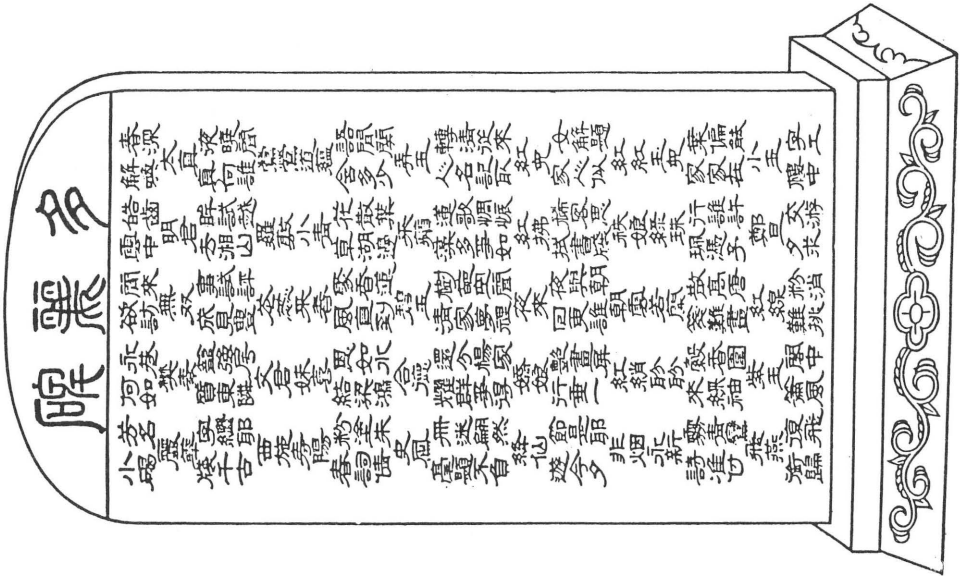
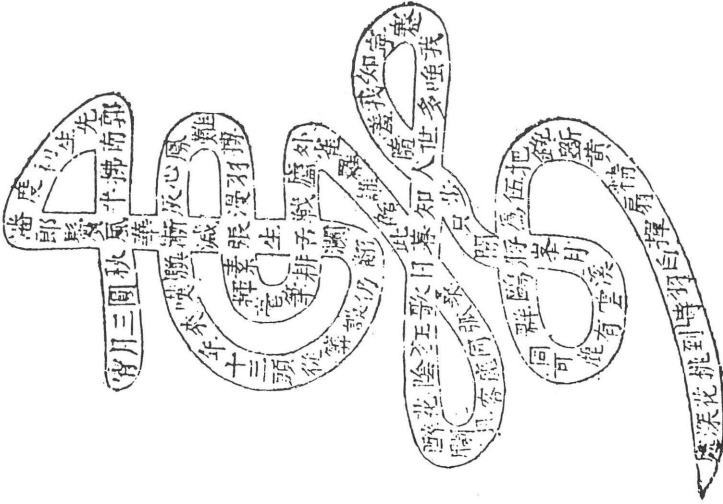


Figure 7. Hui-wen lei-chü hsü-pien, ch. 3, p. 7b.

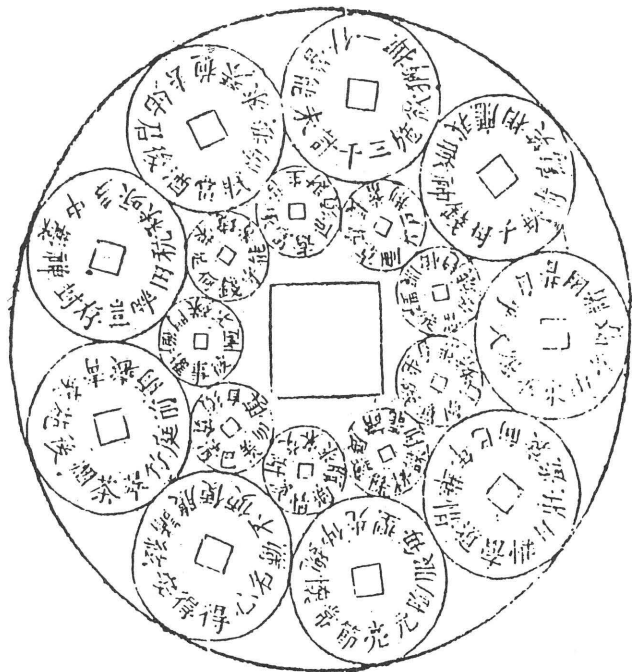


Figure 8. Hui-wen lei-chü hsü-pien, ch. 7, p. 10b.





past whose names are skillfully interspersed in the pattern. The title is "Memorial stele for many beauties" (Figure 5).

In some cases the poems are birthday congratulations and the objects represented are therefore symbols of long life, such as chrysanthemums, peaches, or pine-trees. A poem on old age expresses the ideas associated with long life by arranging the characters of the poem so that they form the character *shou* ("longevity") (Figure 6). Some irony is expressed by a poem on a poor scholar's idyllic dwelling, or, rather, two poems because the 180 characters can be used for one seven-word poem (126 characters) and one five-word poem (90 characters). Also in this case some characters must be repeated. The 180 basic characters are arranged on 18 coins which, in turn, are inserted in two concentric circles within the contours of a big coin (Figure 7). The pattern has the title "Mother-and-child coin."

In order to give an idea of this kind of poetry, a relatively uncomplicated example has been selected. It is a poem of four lines with seven words each. The twenty-eight characters are arranged so that they form the outline of a peach (Figure 8). This is the so-called peach of the immortals (*p'an-t'ao*), a mythical fruit growing in the Taoist paradise which when eaten gives immortality. These peaches ripen only three times in ten thousand years. The reading of the poem has to start with the character *ken* ("root") near the fruit-stem of the picture. A rough translation follows:

Their roots are here at the origin of the immortals.  
They are universally [beneficent like] dew and rain.  
They ripen three times.  
They flower for ten thousand years.  
On the day of a reunion with wine-cups and a banquet  
One comes to sample and to gather them.  
At the time when the flowers open fully,  
They compete with rose-colored clouds.

This poem is a palindrome. The meaning, if it is read backwards, is more or less the same, only the syntax and the sequence of images is, of course, different. In a "normal" reading, the last words of lines two and four rhyme with each other; correspondingly, when read backwards, the first words of lines one and three in the "normal" reading become the rhyming last words of the anacyclic reading: *hua* ("to flower") and *hsia* ("rose-colored clouds") are rhyming words, and so are *tsun* ("wine-cup") and *ken* ("root"). It should be added that the words *ken* and *tsun* have a different modern pronunciation, but they both belong in the same rhyming category in ancient Chinese.

As a rule, the poems included in Sang's and Chu's anthologies are undistinguished and conventional. Their authors are either anonymous or belong to the *poetae minores*. Some poems deal with the theme of female chaste love. This might be a reminiscence of the poem-block developed by the Lady Su Hui, who is considered in Chinese tradition as a paragon of female erudition and cleverness. Several of the shaped poems from Sang's and Chu's collections have been used as decorations of ink-slabs. Some examples can be found

in T'ao (1929: 5b) and in Togari (1953: 44 [poem shaped like a peach stone] and 86 [sunflower]). See also Franke (1962: pl. V, ill. 16 [abstract star pattern]).

Among the prose texts patterned into a representational shape some pieces collected by Henri Doré have been more than once reprinted: the ox being formed from a text discouraging the eating of beef (Doré 1912: v. 3, p. 308); the shape of a Buddhist monk (Doré 1912: v. 4, p. 366) is equally well known in Western literature. This is also true for the wine jar formed by a poem against wine drinking in Smith (1965: 173), originally published in 1914. It is fairly certain that many more such examples could be found if the popular literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries would be searched for shaped texts.

A beautifully executed specimen of shaped prose is preserved in Japan. It is the Chinese version of the Buddhist sutra *Tsui-sheng-wang ching*, commonly called the Golden Light Sutra. Its text consists of ten chapters, and in medieval Japan each of the chapters was shaped into a pagoda, surrounded by pictorial scenes illustrating episodes in the sutra text. For reproductions, see Brinker (1979: p. 6) and, in colors, *Hōbōgin* 4 (1967: xxvii). The ten scrolls of this painting can be dated ca. 1150; the original is now in the temple Chūsonji in Hiraizumi, prefecture Iwata, Japan, and is classed as "important cultural property."

A typically Chinese (and Japanese) device is the fanciful calligraphy where one or several characters are written in a way which makes the characters appear as a painting. A well-known example is the calligraphy of the character *k'uei*, the name of the patron deity of literature. The resulting grotesque shape is hardly recognizable as the character *k'uei*, but at the same time it is a dynamic and impressive creation. This calligraphy is by Ma Te-chao (19th century) and has been frequently reproduced — e.g., in Bowler (1970: 120); and in Brinker (1979: 63-4). Bowler has another calligraphic piece in which a whole sentence is written in flowing brush strokes to produce a painting of the god of longevity. Many more examples of this type of calligraphy could be adduced; they are usually to be found on inscription stelae and were reproduced in China by rubbings. A particularly striking example of this intermediate art form which combines calligraphy and visual representation is the *Jū-nyoze* ("The ten like this") attributed to the Japanese Buddhist monk Kūkai (744-835). This calligraphy consists of ten Buddhist sayings in Chinese, all beginning with the words "like this" (in Sino-Japanese, *nyoze*). Some characters are fancifully changed by replacing purely graphemic elements with representations of persons, trees, or animals (Brinker 1979: 63 and pl. III). Such playful art forms are, however, not so much shaped poetry in the accepted sense as they are fanciful calligraphic works.

Taoist talismans have sometimes been regarded as a sub-group of shaped texts. Examples are to be found chiefly in Doré (1911), but even today such talismans can be seen in the folk-calendars and almanacs printed in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia. It would, however, be misleading to consider these strange compositions as real texts. Only in exceptional cases have the characters any linguistic meaning so that they can be read as a text (as, for

instance, in Doré's illustration 116, where the only pictorial element in a Taoist imprecation are the six stars of the dipper constellation which appear instead of its name). The overwhelming majority of the talismans are artificial characters which have a symbolic meaning but cannot be "read" because they have no pronunciation. They can therefore not be regarded as coming under the same category as shaped texts.

There exists a curious piece of poetry attributed to the great scholar and artist Su Shih (1036-1101). Su Shih is said to have tested the literary skill of an envoy coming to China from the Khitan empire of Liao in the north by presenting him with a puzzle poem (see Su Shih: 5b-6a). This poem distorts standard characters but the distortion is indispensable for the understanding of the text. For example, the character *shan* ("mountain") is written very small and has to be read as "small mountain." The character *t'ing* ("pavilion") is written in an elongated shape and is to be read as *chang-t'ing* ("high pavilion"). There exists also a structuralist interpretation of Su Shih's poem (Chang 1977: 47).

In closing it must be said that the shaping of texts is still today a favorite play-form of some Chinese literati. Even in the People's Republic of China one can find examples. When I visited the Wild Goose Pagoda in Hsi-an in 1977, I discovered on the walls of the pagoda a graffiti poem in praise of Mao Tse-tung and the Chinese revolution, shaped like a pagoda with seven stories.

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# Sanskrit Citrakāvya and the Western Pattern Poem: A Critical Appraisal

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*Until recently little was known of the striking similarity between Sanskrit citrakāvya and western pattern poems. In the category of visual poetry in Sanskrit fall ākārচিতras such as club, sword, wheel, lotus, umbrella, banner, trident, bow, arrow, and plough – some of which are common to the western carmina figurata – and caticitras like all-moving, half-moving, horse-step, elephant-step, the varieties of cow-urinating design, a Sanskrit semblance of the western leonine verse. Modern letter poems in the west can be seen as parallel to letter designs of citrakāvya. The present paper is an attempt to highlight the points of close convergence between the two genres and to bring home the basic unity underlying them.*

Until recently, at least in India, it was believed that citrakāvya was found only there (Kapādinā 1954:60). Perhaps the credit of unravelling the fact that related work is written widely outside India goes to my colleague Dick Higgins. In the West this literature generally goes by the broad names of “visual poetry” or “pattern poetry,” *technopeignia* or *poesia visiva*, although the titles connote somewhat different things. Ordinarily, visual poetry is understood to be the broader circle, encompassing within it pattern poetry. However, I believe the other way round, and some scholars like Higgins (1977) seem to be with me. The argument is simple but compelling: visual poetry is the poetry with only visual patterns, whereas pattern poetry might also denote poetry with aural or other patterns. But as we are concerned only with written literature and as citrakāvya does not include sound poetry in the modern sense visual and pattern poetry can be bracketted together here.

Visual literature has been important for any country, linguistic unit, or group of people since ancient times as a vehicle for the communication of uniquely visual qualities. Specifically, it is pre-eminently a verbo-visual system suggesting closeness between word as composition and as representation (Doria 1979:70). Here we deal not so much with words as with coefficients, exponents, or linguistic tools which have use value rather than signification (Essary 1979:98). Visual literature is a construction of concrete elements which become expression in the process of synthesis and arrangement (Rahmings 1979:98), where the form of the work is part of the content. In other words, whatever expression there is in the work originates with the form.

In citrakāvya also the words and images are used to form a literary polyphony. This oriental variety of poetry, in any form, reflects the idea of some image or picture. In Sanskrit *kāvya* denotes both verse and prose and so what is true of poetry is true of prose also. In western parlance we often hear of "shaped prose" encompassing both fiction and essay. Therefore, visual literature may be defined as language structure whose principal means of coherence and/or enchantment are visual rather than syntactical, or as images with or without words that function like a poem, a fiction, or an essay (Kostelanetz 1979:9).

In Sanskrit Bhāravi, Māgha, Śrī Harṣa, Ratnākar, Nīṭivarman, Parāśara Bhatta, Gunaballavasūri, Venkateśwara, Guṇābhadrā, and Kṛṣṇamūrti are some of the writers of this literature most of whom, barring the beginning few, have composed complete works on citrakāvya, replete with either chimes (Sanskrit sound poems) or puns or patterns or bandhas of several varieties. As for Sanskrit rhetoricians, it is peculiar that almost all have touched upon the topic, though most of them cursorily, taking this variety of poetry to be of the lowest stratum.

Visual literature deserves especial notice in order for it to be fully effective and visual perception of language is necessary. In the modern context it occupies a position of importance in cartography, diagramming, signage, video programming, films, and photography (Marcus 1979). It is with this in mind that writer and critic George Steiner (1970) has recently predicted the end of traditional book culture. In fact, visual literature begins where language leaves off; the verbal aspect becomes transcendent to its visual embodiments. In western literature the modern visual poetry has been quite distinct from the old one: the latter was more mimetic but the former is more expressive and improvised in the manner of an abstract expressionist painting (Higgins 1983:32) On the other hand, citrakāvya, though written even today, has its selfsame age-old rhetorical standards.

There is still a great deal of similarity between the occidental and oriental counterparts so far as the beginning of this genre is concerned, but it is strange that, while no new horizon appeared on the firmament of citrakāvya, the history of visual or pattern poetry in the West is full of ups and downs characterizing the appearance of several new horizons. Traditionally citrakāvya has been a mannerist poetic form, though I have tried to salvage its position (Jhā 1975:16-23). In western literary history pattern poetry has appeared four times as an extensive movement: during the Alexandrine period, the Carolingian renaissance, the baroque period, and the present day with movements like dadaism, neo-dadaism, concrete poetry, minimal art, etc.

It cannot be gainsaid that pattern poetry appeared at the end of one cultural epoch and the beginning of another. According to Geoffrey Cook (1979) visual poetry is a cry by the poet that the content of the past is cancerous and a new skin must be sewn to contain the dreams of the future. Certainly as death gives rise to birth cultural decadence is followed by a new era and vision. This is also the law of nature. In both East and West the times of such literary ferment have been the periods of mannerist propensities. Visual poetry was and is also a sign

of ferment — of decadence resolving itself into something else, some other kind of literary mannerisms. This is why Higgins declares: “The word is not dead; it is merely changing its skin” (1979:66). In fact many a visual poet has been an innovator in forms and literary experiments.

Citrakāvya is found primarily in Sanskrit and Prākṛit, and secondarily, in the descendant modern literatures of India like Gujarāṭi, Tāmīl, etc., and the *lingua franca* Hindī. In Sanskrit it is found as early as the Vedas and the Mahābhārata in the form of the kūṭas or enigmatic verses. Pattern poetry in the modern sense — in clear, full-fledged shapes and designs — appeared first in Bhāravia, a poet of the seventh century though in stray verses (cf. his *Kiraātājuniyam*, cantos v and xv). About this time Jain Ācāryas were, perhaps, the first to have written complete works. They were later to adapt Sanskrit overwhelmingly, instead of the usual Prākṛit, contributing a great deal to this branch of literature, of which an account has been given by Hirālāl R. Kapāḍiā (1954-6). Being a Gujarāṭi, he has also written a faithful resumé of citrakāvya in Gujarāṭī literature (1957).

But in spite of the early advent of pattern poetry in India, its genesis is not so clearly traceable here as in western literature. Plato in *Cratylus* associates the shape of the letter “O” to the meaning of the word “round.” Another Greek, Simmias of Rhodes (ca. 300 BC), in three shaped poems formed an axe, a pair of wings, and an egg by varying the length of horizontal lines. This was, really, the beginning of the pattern poetry concomitant to the Sanskrit bandhakāvya, a sub-genre of citrakāvya. In this variety the lute by Robert Angot (1634/1872), a French baroque poet, is perhaps the most representative as it is a developed design and an uncommon one, considering the age in which it was written. Syrinx, pyramid, pillar, love-knot (on the pattern of Sanskrit serpent-knots), sword, altar, Easter wings, etc., are the other patterns preferred by the occidental pattern poets, while the lotus, wheel, umbrella, banner, and many others are the verbal images in Prākṛit and Sanskrit.

In the West acrostics are poems where the initial and/or the terminal letters of each line read vertically, forming words or groups of words. The resemblance of Sanskrit half-moving design (*Ardhabhrama*) or the all-round-moving design (*Sarvatobhadra*) to this is striking. In the Carolingian renaissance around the eighth century the monastic poets developed pure acrostics into a complex system by carefully spacing the letters in each line and using alternate spellings to make each line equal in length (cf. Josephus Scottus’ poem in Kostelanetz 1979:24). Peculiarly, some acrostics are used by François Villon in numerous poems, often signing his name in the envoy of a ballad in the fashion of Sanskrit lotus design which has the name of the poet inscribed in the middle filament portion (cf. Jhā 1975, figs. 7-8 in appendix 2; Kapāḍiā 1954, figs. 9, 10, 12 and p. 84; Kapāḍiā 1955, figs 30, 31, 32 and p. 134; and Kapāḍiā 1956, fig. 71 and p. 113).

Similar to acrostics but slightly different in form, are mesostics. Mesostics developed mostly in the seventeenth century in anonymous verses by cavaliers and court poets. One of the poems in such a collection of satire, “Le cabinet satyrique” (1618), hides a surprise ending and lewd suggestion in the letters of

the acrostic (Kostelanetz 1979:28) and draws a parallel to Sanskrit riddles, pure and interrogative, concealing the import of the speaker (cf. Kapāḍiā 1954:71, fn. 1). In this connection Stephen Scobie's reference (1978) to Ian Hamilton Finlay's use of every variety of pre-constrained linguistic formulae, cliché, proverb, riddles, etc., is important.

The rebus is also a variety of visual literature in the West — a more complex device demanding that a poem be deciphered as one reads it. It is generally based on the placement of the words or parts thereof in relation to each other, as: stand is read: "we understand." In another type of rebus, numerals

and letters are used for their homonyms, as "T-4-2" would mean "Tea for two." Isidore Isou and members of the modern Lettriste movement rely heavily on the rebus, seeing it as an advanced form of communication. In this very style is the rondeau, which is nothing less nor more than a complex rebus used in every line of the verse (cf. the poem by Jean Marot in Seaman 1979). There is yet another class of poetry requiring oral reading of written letters (cf. the translation of Marot's poem). There is no clear counterpart, perhaps, of this genre in Sanskrit or Prākṛit, though slight similarities may exist within the compass of the above-said riddles, as may a large variety of kūtas in Sanskrit (cf. Jhā 1975:70-93) which are actually close to the juggled verses or "vers batelés" of the Renaissance and later Middle Ages. Jean Bouchet and Jean Meschinot are the two important names in this context (Kostelanetz 1979:25, 32). It is noteworthy that western pattern poetry includes puzzle poems in the style of the afore-said Sanskrit riddles as well, though not every puzzle poem, or, for that matter, even every rebus, is visual.

In Sanskrit citrakāvya there were alternate periods of general appreciation and abhorrence. Likewise, in occidental poetry. While the rationalists of eighteenth century Europe rejected pattern poetry as frivolous, the Epicureans, on the contrary, were hosts to more visual poetic figures and designs like goblets and flasks (cf. Peignot 1978, where Apollinaire's pieces are on pp. 97-9). This genre, in fact, resulted from distortions and suppressions of the verse woof by the poets, while preserving the regularity and orderliness of the figured warp. Although citrakāvya stands generally for only two categories of the so-called lower order of poetry in Sanskrit — śabdacitra and arthacitra — the third category, ubhayacitra, though propounded by only a few rhetoricians, has been necessitated and dealt with here for the sake of comparison of some concepts.

Although the general run of rhetoricians has said very little about the citrakāvyas, a few, including the versatile Bhoja, have delved a little more deeply. Metres played a vital role both in oriental and occidental visual poetry. The rhythms constitute, to my mind, a particular variety of sound poetry in Sanskrit over and above the complicated types of chime and onomatopoeic sounds. So far as western *carmina figurata* are concerned, not only is the number of letters in each line fixed and immutable, but also some letters in certain positions are obligatory (cf. Caruso and Polara 1969:114). In modern varieties of sound poetry onomatopoeia and the subordination of sense to



sound and intonations are important factors, though there are nonsense poems and notated sound poetries as well (Higgins 1983:40-52).

Among the varnacitras (peculiarities pertaining to letter, vowel, or consonant) ekāksarabandha (single-letter verses) and dwyaksarabandha (double-letter verses) — as in Bhāravi's *Kirātārjunīyam*, Canto xv, vss. 5, 14, 38, etc. — are quite uncommon in any literature and might somehow parallel the alphabet or letter or monogram poems of the West (Doria 1979). Sthānacitra, denoting the peculiarity pertaining to the place of origin or pronunciation of letters in the mouth, is not important, and ākārācitras and bandhacitras, having no prominent points of distinction, constitute the bandhakāvya proper, analogous to the western pattern poetry in the narrow sense. The gaticitras, or the citra-variety of poetry pertaining to the movement of letters as in chess play (cf. Jhā 1975:60-1; Kapādiā and Jakobi 1896) comprising turaṅgapadabandha and śārayantrabandha, etc., and the various types of gomūtrikābandha denoting the crisscross sprinkling of urine of the moving, urinating cow (cf. Kapādiā 1954:64), especially the latter, are the oriental counterparts of the occidental leonine verse, perhaps relating to the presumed walk of a lion.

The above bandhas or designs relating to the moves in chess play, might truly be said to be a parallel genre to the western chessboard poems constituting almost a sub-genre of the western labyrinth. In the latter one works one's way to the desired meaning of the verse, much as one would proceed through a maze or labyrinth. Thus, the acrostic-resembling ardhabhrama or savratobhadra and the sthānacyuta variety of riddles or the Klistānvya type of kūṭa (where the natural position of the words is disturbed and prose-order is difficult to arrive at) bear a major degree of resemblance to the labyrinth. Within the purview of citrakāvya, there are some riddles where concealment of a verb, any of the various cases or case-endings, gender, compound (kriyāgūpta, kārakagūpta, etc.), or dropping (or, the other way round, adding) of a half or a full syllable, bindu, visarga, or a letter lends charm to the particular verse as in the western *carmina cancellata*, a variety of mesostic where any letter or letters, if cancelled out according to some interior shape, also form words or groups of words. Hemacandra (1938) quite oddly puts these under the gudhacitra and cyutacitra varieties of citrakāvya which Bhoja (1934) does not corroborate.

Then there are proteus poems in which the elements are permuted line by line. For instance, the first four lines of such a poem might run: "love me you witch/ me love you witch/ me you love witch/ me you witch love . . .". This is in the nature of kramapāṭha or ghanapāṭha or jaṭapāṭha, a peculiar reading of Vedic texts in ancient India. For example, compare this reading:

"Agnim̐ îde îde purohitam̐ yajñasya devam̐, devam̐ ṛtwijam̐ ṛtwijam̐ hotāram̐, hotāram̐ ratnadhātāmam̐ ratnadhātāmam̐ hotāram̐ . . .".

for the *Rigveda* i.i.l.:

"Agnim̐îde purohitam̐ yajñasya devam̐ṛtwijam̐ hotāram̐ ratnadhātāmam̐ . . .".

I implore Agni, the God, the priest, the ministrant of sacrifice, the giver of oblations, and the best bestower of splendid wealth. . . .

Lapidary inscriptions are another form of pattern poetry. In these the letters look as if they had been carved, as if on stone, and give a somewhat visual finish to the poem (for a modern example, see Arrigo Lora-Totino, "Spazio," in Williams 1968).

Magical inscriptions are also sometimes impressive, and might come close to the Tantric Yantras or incantational designs of India (cf. Mayer 1978:11). In the West, the Enigma of Sator has been quite a matter for talk in sophisticated circles; it is nothing but a magic word square that has been treated as a pattern poem (Atkinson 1951). The Abraxas charm is also widely known in some circles; we get from it the familiar "Abracadabra" of popular magicians. Calligraphy has also been an effective factor in western visual poetry. The calligrammes of Apollinaire, already mentioned are a testimony to this. The calligraphic poems by Paul Reys are important in so far as English literature is concerned. It is remarkable that this new form of art has been so strikingly prevalent in Arabic, Persian, and Chinese literatures. But, though this was cultivated as an art in ancient India, it never gained either the form or the status of pattern poetry here.

Some forms of citrakāvya, such as akṣaramuṣṭikā (which has two sub-varieties, akṣaramudrā and bhūtamudrā), bindumatī, bhāṣācitra, pratimālā, durvācakayoga, mleccitavikalpa, sampāthya, mānasī, and ākīrnamantra, etc. (of which the first few are the more significant), were literary recreations in ancient India, as were the hui-wen in China. Among these, akṣaramudrā is a sub-genre where the concealment of certain letters with a view to unfolding some purpose, engenders charm. In Bhūtamudrā, concealment is done for effecting brevity. It has several subvarieties, including one where, from every foot, we get a four-footed verse of murajabandha (percussion design, cf. Jhā 1975:98). In bindumatī, on the basis of a given verse, there arises another verse of the same meaning, of which indications are given through bindu or dots. For example.

OOOTOOTOTOT OOO OOO OO: I  
OTOOTOOTOT TOT OOO OO OTOO: II

This might be treated as the Indian counterpart to the western mathematical poem (cf. Pozzi 1981:42-3; and Mayer 1978:11; also compare the designs on Pozzi's p. 43, esp. "tabulae ii-vii," with Indian Tāntric designs). Bhāṣācitra is made up of a verse or verses appearing to have been composed in more than one language, thereby giving some suspense to the reader. In the West, also, we have macaronic verse, resembling the bilingual or perhaps multilingual citra-varieties of poetry. Other varieties are less important, but in every instance there is either some concealment or unravelling of some concealed purpose, giving the poem a quality of suspense or enthrallment of the spirit. This quality, common in both the eastern and western pieces of pattern poetry, both old and new, can be said to be its life-core. As a matter of fact, these pattern poems or the citrakāvyas are like art pieces telling posterity the story of the development of art and culture at a particular time. One can also go deeper into the enquiry as to why and how particular pieces were accepted and others

discarded during a particular age. Thus, they can also reflect the taste and culture of the people of that age. Linguists, too, can find in them their share of excitement, particularly in pieces that have some sense of linguistic dissections and juxtapositions. Again, look at some pieces of modern western concrete poetry we can say that they represent a certain school of expression in painting and art. Thus, both citrakāvya and pattern poetry are of interest, not only to poets and theoreticians of language and literature, but also to linguists, artists, cryptologists, and cultural and social historians as well as to comparatists.

This paper was first presented at the Sixth World Sanskrit Conference in Philadelphia on 14 October 1984.

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### A Garland of Citrakāvya

Because citrakāvya are so unknown in the West and because Kalānāth Jhā's article has no illustrations, we felt we should offer a representative selection of them, chosen for their historical as well as their artistic interest. Citrakāvya are, it will be recalled, poems which are classed according to their stock visual forms, called "bandhas," each of which has its own traditions and associations. Thus we find repeating images of drums, swords, lotuses, and wheels (classified according to the number of their petals or their spokes), garlands, cruciform butter-churn handles, trees, etc. Besides the examples in Sanskrit and the Prākṛits, Burmese, Tāmil, and Marathi, we know of citrakāvya in Gujarati and Hindi, and they are said to exist in Malayalam and Telugu, Nepalese and Tibetan, and in Bengali.

—D. H.

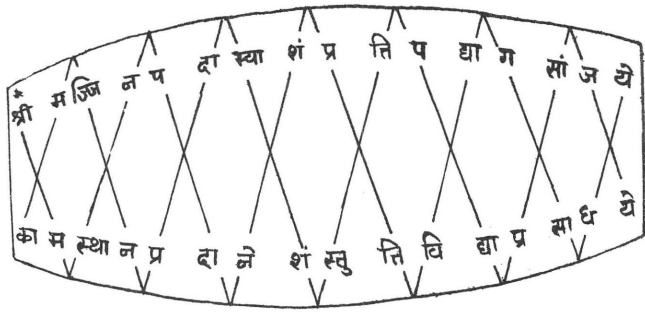
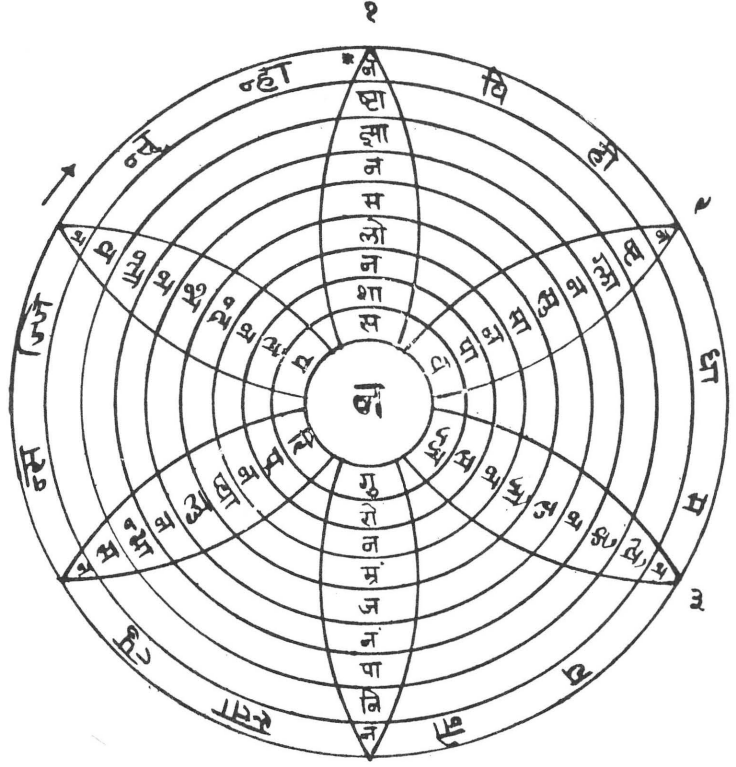


Figure 1. These relatively simple Sanskrit pieces are rather early, although Vālmīki, “the first Sanskrit poet,” is said to have written such works, too. These are from Samantabhadra or Sāntivarman’s *Jinasataka* (7th century) and are in the forms (bandhas) of istapāda (top) or muraja (middle & bottom) drums. For all: read from the asterisk in the upper left.

Figure 2. A six-spoke wheel, in the cakra-bandha, from the *Siddhipriyastotra* of Devanandin (8th century), a Digambara poet.



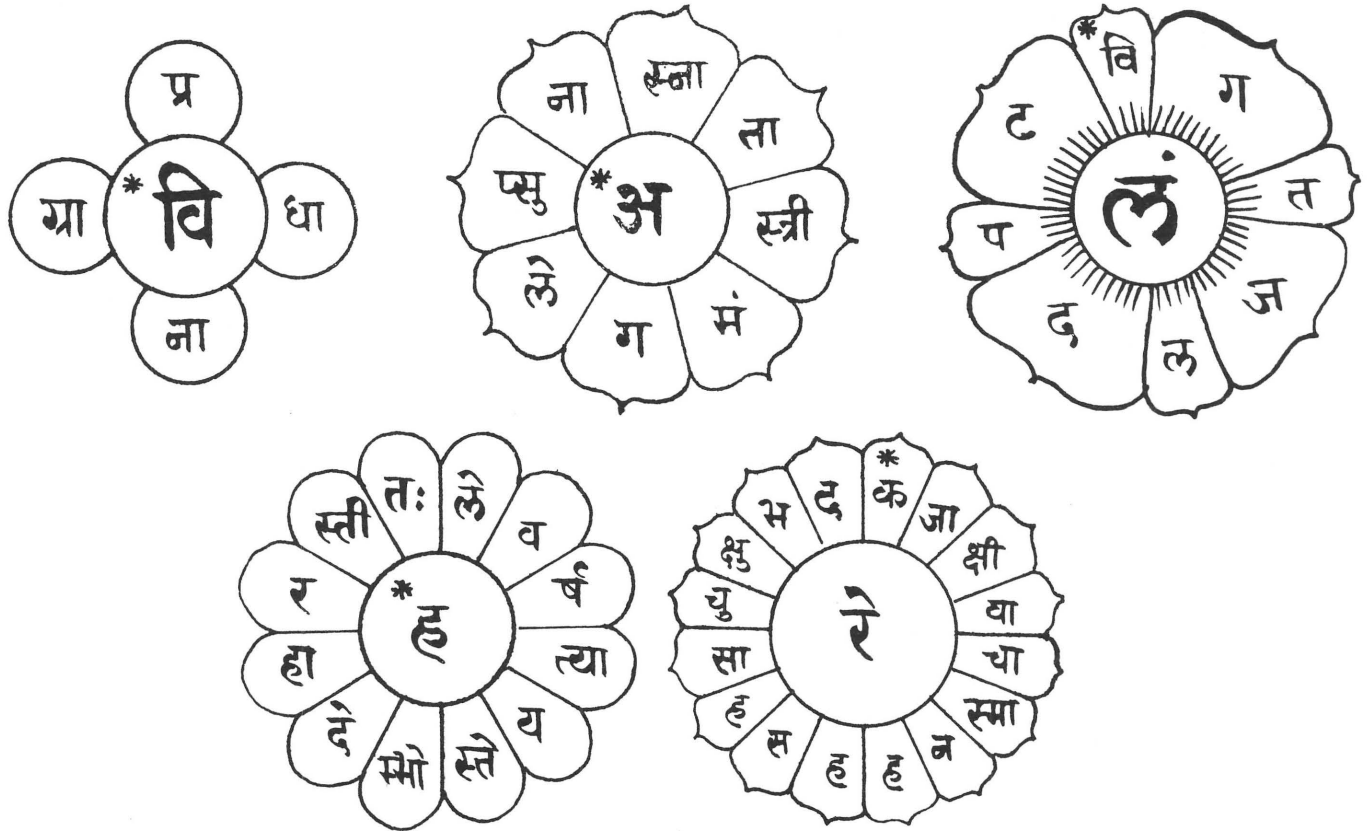


Figure 3. From Jinavallabha Sūri's *Prasnasataka* (ca. 1135). They are examples of 4-, 8-, 12-, and 16-petal lotuses.

Figure 4. These prakrit snakes come from the *Alankāracintāmani* of Ajitasena, another Digambara writer (later than 9th century).

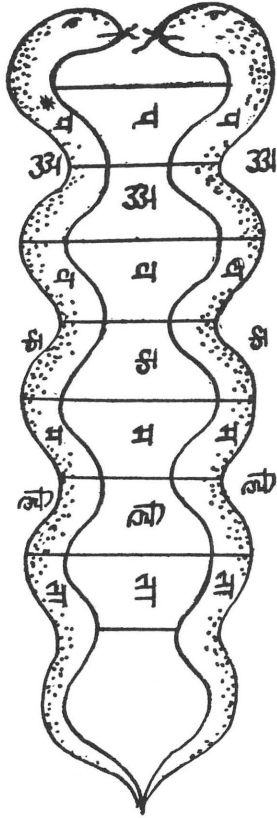


Figure 5. A pair of snakes and a peacock in Tāmil, probably also from the 18th century. Both are printed from the *Sithira kāvi malai* ("Pictorial garland of poems") of P. V. Abdul Catoor Sahib Pulavar (Madras: Avvaiahem, n. d.).

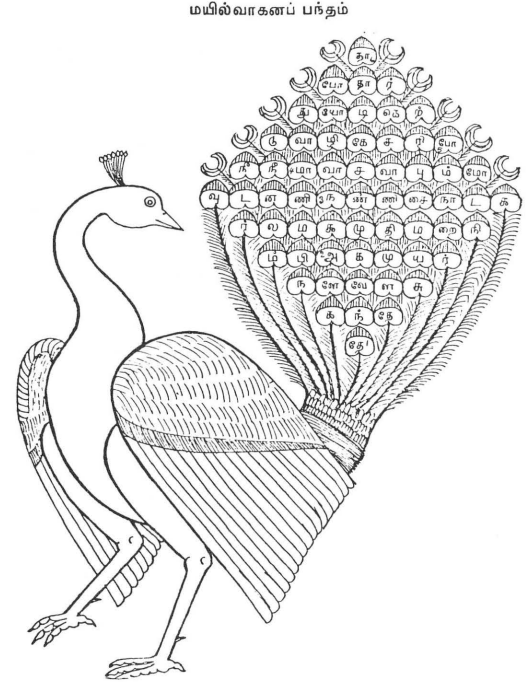
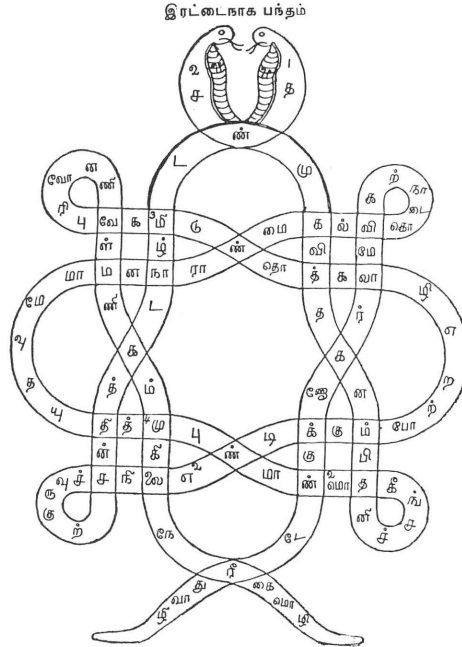
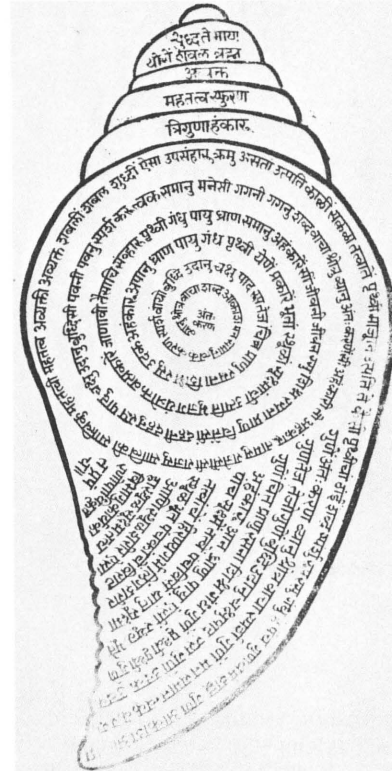


Figure 6. Although Burma is not part of India, her culture has, at various times, been deeply influenced by her larger neighbor. Here is a palm-leaf fan from the *Porāna-dīpanī kyan* of U Thein (Hbo and Hmawbi), who also prints 12- and 7-petal lotuses, two butter-churn handles, and a wheel. He calls these pieces “jewel writing,” and seems unaware of their connection with citrakāvya. Undated.

Figure 7. According to R. K. Joshi of Bombay, who sent us this conch-shell shaped citrakāvya in Marathi by Dasopant (1551-1615), the original was written on a piece of cloth four by forty feet and it included 1600 couplets on vedanta.





# Pastoral Typography: Sigmund von Birken and the "Picture-Rhymes" of Johann Helwig

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*This paper argues that European figured poetry of the Renaissance and Baroque periods is a distinctive art form, which combined aspects of Greek and Latin art into a new synthesis. The result was a specifically typographical style of literature, exemplified here in the theoretical comments and the cyclical collections of "picture-rhymes" by Birken and Helwig.*

## The Emergence of Renaissance Figured Poetry

When later writers adopted the Greek medium of figured poetry, they introduced some far-reaching changes. Whereas the Greek poets, such as Theocritus, had written individual poems in which the outline represented the shape of an object, Latin poets such as Porphyrius and Hrabanus Maurus utilized a new, rectilinear form where, by the use of complex acrostichs, a pattern was produced within a rectangle. No less significantly, the Latin poets put their poems into cycles. The unity of perceptual time implied by a single image notionally inscribed onto an object now gave way to the sequential progress of hours as the reader worked his way through from one complex image to the next. There was a time change. The visual instantaneity of previous figured poetry gave way to a contemplative continuum. And an ontological change: the free interplay between word, image, and object in the Greek poems was shut off by the eschatological certainties of Christianity. History had become a closed book. Hence, metaphysically, those magnificently adorned Latin rectangles, fit for a King or a Pope, which lay immutably bound between their covers. Time began with Creation and ended with the Second Coming. Between these incontrovertibles lay the mutable pages of history, of mere passing interest. The book, then, as a leaf in the volumes of time, asserted the permanence of faith. But with the Renaissance the splendid monastic folios made way for pocket books which an individual could afford. Even if he remained the child of God, the reader could open and close his books freely, without the say-so of clerical authority. The Church's censorship was ultimately ousted by this freedom.

Devotional copying receded before mechanical impression: the earliest success of mechanization was the lever of free ideas. Printing with movable type made ideas portable as never before. It also brought a new lease of life to figured poetry which, in fact, became the art form of printing with movable

type. The form ceased to be a calligraphic exercise and now depended on the determinants of lead and press. Other functions of typography were utilitarian or decorative, albeit in the best sense, but in figured poetry the printer's skill could be stretched in the service of verbal-visual meaning. For printed figured poetry is not an eccentric art form but a quintessential expression of the emerging modern era. The machine had entered the service of art, and the age of mechanical reproduction, in which no 'original' existed, had begun.

An acute dialectic of Greek and Christian typifies the new poetry of the Renaissance, and not least figured poems. This even shows in the way they were put together. Numberless single poems were written. But, no less, most of the best writers linked several poems in some or other form. They were gathered into small anthologies in various poetics; or were included as integral parts of longer works. Here a complex play could arise between verbal image, implied object, associated, corresponding, and contrasting images — and between the surrounding text and the figured inserts.

### **The Pegnitz Shepherds**

Among the most interesting examples of extended texts including groups of figured poems are the works of the Pegnitz Shepherds. The Shepherds were a moral and literary society founded in the seventeenth century in Nuremberg. Uniquely, the Shepherds gathered their figured poems into pastoral romances in the tradition of d'Urfé and Sidney. Thereby, they combined the dual heritage of Theocritus as a father of pastoral poetry and as an originator of figured verse. The resulting pastoral romances transfigured the maze of the world into what Poe called "the playful mazes of art".<sup>1</sup>

The work which first combined these two aspects of the Pastoral tradition was *The Pegnitz Pastoral* published in 1644 by Georg Philip Harsdörffer and Johann Klaj.<sup>2</sup> These were the founding fathers of the Pegnitz Shepherds. Their pastoral contains a figured poem in the shape of an *Anvil*,<sup>3</sup> more remarkable for its original shape and historical significance than for any intrinsic worth. The full import of its inclusion in a pastoral was only to be recognized later, by Sigmund von Birken and Johann Helwig. It was Birken who first exploited the potential of the new medium in his *Continuation of the Pegnitz Pastoral* of 1645.<sup>4</sup> This work includes two figured poems: "Garland"<sup>5</sup> and "Syrinx".<sup>6</sup> Birken's recognition of the form's worth emerges in his use of it in these two poems to celebrate the foundation of the Pegnitz Shepherds or Flower Order, as it was also known.

### **Sigmund von Birken's Typographical Poetics**

Birken's beautifully produced volume reveals that when he turned to figured poetry, it was not for him just a visual form, but a typographic one. At the end of the work he gives expression to a typographical consciousness which typifies not just the layout of his volume, but the content, and the interrelation of typography and meaning which characterizes the whole production:

Furthermore, I hereby exhort the reader to observe *three things* in this little work: Of these the first are the *side-notes* (marginalia) which often clarify the content of a poem, and are therefore not to be ignored, although they are mainly included for his benefit, who is not conversant with the ancient names and histories. Furthermore, by use of small and large *picture-letters*, the content of a poem is often expressed, and sometimes even represented emblematically . . . . Thirdly, and most importantly, I have always noted something remarkable by use of the *blackletter* (*Schwabacher*) type, signifying amongst other things the objects described and sung . . . *common rhyme-schemes* . . . , etc. All this the gentle reader is asked to study most exactly, and then to judge in a favourable manner.<sup>7</sup>

Birken conceives of typography creatively, as a part of the poet's technical arsenal: his concept of form extended beyond poetics, and embraced the elements of typographical meaning as constituent parts of the literary artifact. Typography belonged integrally to meaning, and typographical meaning merged into poetic sense. As an illustration of Birken's three typographical devices, consider the page on which his "Syrinx" appears (Figure 1).

**1 The Marginal Notes.** These function here much as they may in other texts, but it makes a difference when the poet himself prescribes them. In the first he draws attention to the nature of his "Syrinx" as "Picture-Rhymes" (*Bilderreimen*). By using the term "Picture-Rhyme" he specifies the precise nature of his text: it is not just a visual poem, but a rhyming picture. In denoting the form, he lets the act of naming enter into the poetic process: the linguistic sign, the very act of signifying, is integrated into reading. Such play between signifier and signified is basic to Birken's technique, and underlies both the inter-relation of text and image, and a whole series of transformations.

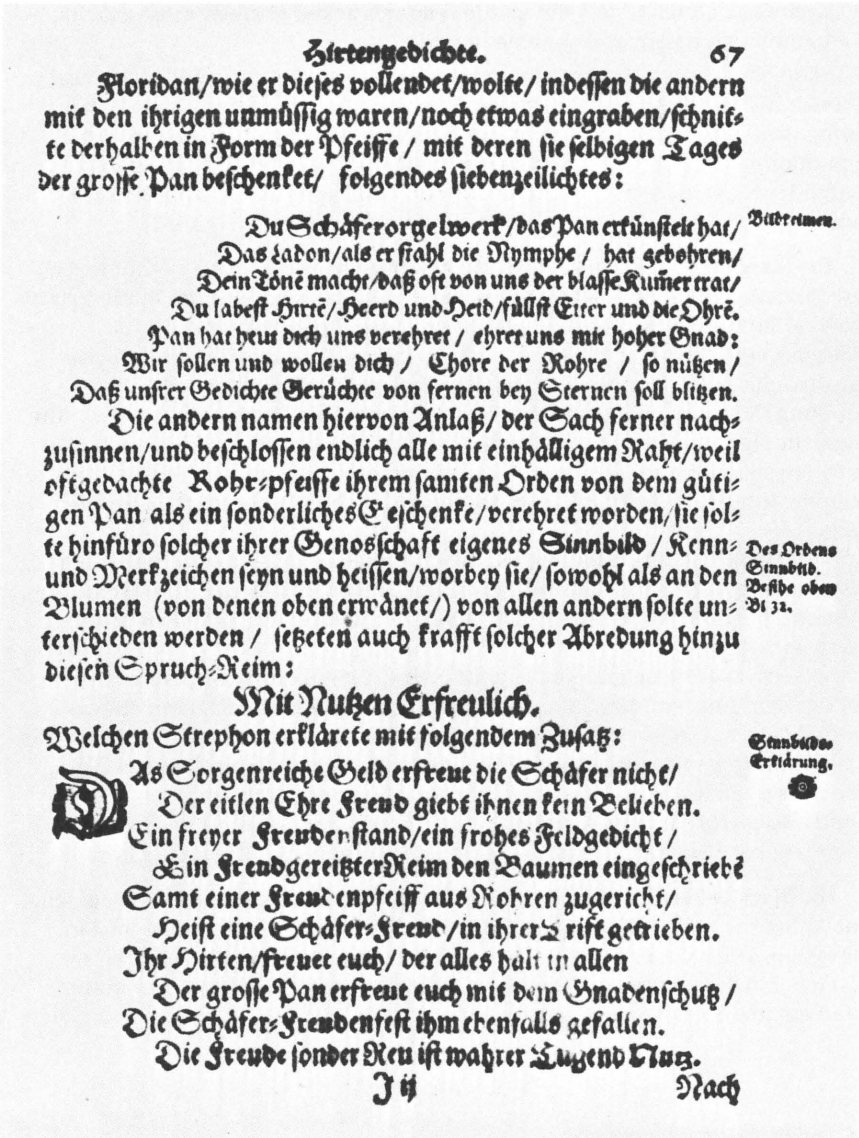
By seemingly stating the obvious, the marginalia elevate poetic representation into a self-conscious, abstract process. Typographical play intellectualizes the content. Typically, after "Syrinx" has been written, the poets *think* about it (*nachsinnen*).

The second of these marginalia goes further: it is a cross reference to the Society's original emblem (*Sinnbild*) presented earlier. In fact it introduces several correspondences: explicitly, it connects the Society's first emblem, the Garland, with its new one, the Syrinx; implicitly, it may remind that the first, also, was depicted as a picture poem. Crucially, then, both emblems are elevated into picture poems — and they are the only two such poems in the work. The marginal note thus draws attention to the poems' symbolic function.

**2 The Black Letter (*Schwabacher*).** This works in a way related to the marginalia, but within the text. For example, *Sinnbild* ("Emblem") stands out almost in mid-page. The type also picks out the motto of the emblem, *Mit Nutzen erfreulich*. Finally, it picks out the key words of the motto as they recur in the interpretative poem which follows.

3 The Decorative Initial. The book which forms the ground of the initial complements the meaning of the entire poem, by imaging the vehicle through which the Shepherds become useful (cf. *Nutzen*) and give pleasure (*erfreulich*). For the text refers only to "pastoral poem(s)" (*Feldgedicht*), to "rhyme" (*Reim*), and to the "gleeful pipe of reeds" (*Freudenpfeiff aus Rohren*). The pictorial initial asserts the verse's literary dimension: the work forms part

Figure 1. Sigmund von Birken, *Fortsetzung Der Pegnitz-Schäferey*, p. 67.



of book-culture, which is a self-conscious mirror of the pastoral existence, grounded in learning as well as play. Letter and book assume a single identity as mirrors of the world.

All three typographical devices coincide in emphasising the emblematic nature of the page, which in fact reflects the typical tripartite structure of an emblem: *lemma* or motto, *pictura* or picture, and *subscriptio* or epigram.<sup>8</sup> As the emblem depends upon the interplay between curious motto, image, and explanation, so Birken's typographical play effectively multiplies the signs involved into a veritable maze of meaning. Within this constellation, too, the visual poem has a pivotal place, in that it condenses the different features of an emblem into a single text.

### Mythological Transformation of Antiquity

Behind the verbal visual play lies a further dimension of mythological transformations. The poem recalls the god Pan's love for Syrinx as related by Ovid.<sup>9</sup> The story is this. Syrinx, fleeing from Pan's advances, begged the earth and the river nymphs to aid her, and was thereupon turned into a bed of reeds. In lamenting his disappointment at clasping these reeds for Syrinx, and to his own surprise, Pan stirred a melancholy sound from the reeds with his signs. Hereupon, he cut the reeds up into pipes of unequal length, to make the original Pipes of Pan or "Syrinx". In Birken's pastoral, Pan himself gives this same pipe to the Pegnitz Shepherds.<sup>10</sup> Thus the pipe represents a mythical continuity with original pastoral poetry.

Further, the pipe implicitly asserts an historical continuity with the origins of figured poetry, and its connection with pastoral, by imitating the shape of Theocritus' one figured poem, the "Syrinx". An obvious difference between Theocritus' syrinx and Birken's, however, lies in the number of reeds. This indicates another, contemporary significance.

In the Shepherds' original emblem of the Garland, the individual flowers represent particular members of the Order of Flowers, each of whom selects one flower as an emblem. The seven reeds of Birken's poem correspond to the seven members of the society at the time Pan donated them the Syrinx.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the text telescopes myth, history, and contemporary reference into a single image.

However, no less importantly, an interplay emerges in the juxtaposition of Garland — Flowers — Shepherds — Reeds — Pipe, whereby a motif undergoes a sequence of transformations, to establish the fundamental identity of only outwardly distinct realities. The mythical process engages contemporary action. Individually, the Shepherds are represented by flowers and reeds; collectively, by the garland and pipe. Thus garland (visual) and syrinx (acoustic) represent two aspects of a single reality. The choice of pictorial poems to embody this coincidence is of course crucial: for through its dual character as poem and picture, the genre in its very essence typifies the mirror-relation and identity of different orders of existence, and, specifically, of music and painting in the art of verse. It is to this quality especially which Birken's choice of name, *Bilder-Reim* ("Picture-Rhyme"), draws attention.

Note: Figures 2 through 13 are from Johann Helwig, *Die Nympe Noris*.

Figure 2. "Hertz" (heart), p. 7.

**8 Der Nympe Noris Erste Tagzeit.**

An einem andern Ort stunde ein dreyecker Pyramis aufgerichtet / an dessen Seiten einer / mit Farben zierlich gemahlet zu sehen gewesen / bey aufgehendem Sonnenschein / ein biltens der Rosenstokk / nächst demselben saße eine freudige junge Schäferin / und bandte ein zierliches Blumenkränlein ; anderseits bey sinkender Sonne / der Stokk seiner Blumen beraubt / die zerstreuet unten an der Erden herum lagen / nahend darbey ruhete eine erblassete Schäferin / die eine schwarze Nattern in die Fersen gestochen : in dem dritten Raum stunden diese Keimen / nach der Gestalt des Pyramis oder Flammseule / in grünem Felde / mit weiß / angeschrieben :

†  
Hier  
beacht :

Zeit an mir /  
Morgen an dir ;  
Dich um mich v' Tod verlacht.  
Wie die Rosen bald verblühen /  
gleicher Weiß / unsre junge Tage süßen :  
ehed' Sonne Licht erweicht / schnell verschwind  
Jugend / und die Rosenblüem man verwelcket find.  
Stella schön um wolgeart / eruge lust am Künsteispiel  
in der besten Freudenzeit sie der schwarze Tod anfiel :  
Hirten und der Hirtimzumffte / wollet ihrer nicht vergessen  
in Betrachtung ihres Falls / auch der Jahre Freudemessen !

worüber dem Schäfer Montano die Augen nasseten / in Erregung / daß so gar nichts Beständiges hier auf Erden were / und weder Dapferkeit / Gottesforcht / noch Jugend dem zeitlichen Tod entfliehen könne. Welches Periander bald in acht genommen, und der nicht sonder Ursach / nach erlangter Gesundheit / wie ein entrunnener Vogel / sich mußtig machte, hat er den

Ehrenschild  
auf Jungfr.  
H. N. die im  
Jahr Christi  
1645. geformt  
ben.

Figure 3. "Pyramis oder Flammseule" (pyramid), p. 8.

**Der Nympe Noris Erste Tagzeit.**

**Schilder :** unten in dem Fußgestell aber auf schwarzen Mar- mor war diese Schrifft mit Gold beleget :

Obwol mich die Dapferkeit einem Donnerstind  
verglichen / Gewicken ;  
ist doch durch das freundlich seyn mit der Zorn leichte  
und indem das EhrenGlück tet schlet / und aufs höchst  
anblüht /  
hat des Todes Nordgeschos mir das Leben abge-  
drückt.

Anderwärts sahen sie ein Gestell von weißem Mar- mor / darauf innerhalb eines bezeichneten Myrtenkranks / mit  
schwarz / in Gestalt eines Hergens / folgende Wort geschrie-  
ben stunden :

†  
Hischen auf  
abgebachten  
H. N. N. die im  
Jahr Christi  
1645. geformt  
ben.

†  
Scherz : †  
Schmerz !  
nichts besteht / alls vergeht :  
was heut lüchet / morgen Erachtet.  
Schnell hinfället / was der rauhe Wind anweht ;  
auch in seinem höchsten Grad nichts beständig frölich machet ;  
wie ein Rauch und leichter Staub ist das Leben sonder Grund ;  
Menschenkinder / denket an die letzte Stand /  
und vielmehr hören auf den Himmel bauet.  
Denket an des Lothes Weib /  
und nicht / gleich ihr stehen bleibe ;  
Sie dem höchsten nicht getrauet.  
Wer mit Christo selig starbt /  
ist gewiß / daß er erwirbe  
die ewige Freude.  
Dieses betrachte /  
und hoch achte ;  
mad um laide.

†  
Hischen auf  
des letzten H. ge  
sahete Schrift  
wrr.

†  
Ehrenschild  
auf des Gottes  
gescherten D.  
Carnatus  
Marci Predi-  
gern in Nüms  
berg / der im Jahr Christi 1646 geformt.

## Johann Helwig's Aesthetics of the "Picture-Rhyme"

Johann Helwig adopted the same format as Birken for his avowed sequel to the pastoral, namely his *Noris the Nymph* of 1650.<sup>12</sup> He adopted the same open formal structure; and a similar layout to his predecessors, following them in the very choice of page size. However, where Birken had included only two figured poems, Helwig marshalled a total of twelve (Figures 2-13). If history had robbed him of the chance to commemorate the founding of the Pegnitz Shepherds, he was not to be outdone when it came to a pyrotechnical display of technopaegnia.

Shortly after presenting his first two figured poems, Helwig explains the form by way of a speech which he attributes to Strephon (i.e., the poet Georg Philip Harsdörffer) to whom Birken, in his turn, had previously attributed his "Garland" poem. Helwig's speech contains four main points. Firstly, Helwig cuts a lance for figured poetry by modifying Harsdörffer's actual published views. Previously, Harsdörffer had expressed some reservations about the form, classing it more to rhyming than to poetry proper.<sup>13</sup> Now, Helwig lets him designate it the finest example of poetic "novelty" (*des Neuen*). It is the form par excellence which both "amuses" and "instructs" (*belustiget und nutze*).<sup>14</sup> Thus he gives figured poetry pride of place among all poetic forms, by presenting it in terms of an aesthetic of novelty. This aesthetic is indeed crucial to the appreciation of the form.

Secondly, and no less importantly, Helwig underpins his case with reference to classical precedent, by naming the earliest Greek examples: "Theocritus' Pan-pipes, the egg made by Simias of Rhodes, the double-headed axe, and a pair of wings."<sup>15</sup> In this way Helwig fills a gap in Birken's argument, where the role of the pastoral poets in developing figured poetry had remained unstated: he explicates both the aesthetic and the historical sub-text of Birken's achievement.

Thirdly, Helwig surveys the current scene to give an idea of contemporary inventiveness: ". . . And today in our mother tongue the shape of an egg, tall goblet, raised cross, garland, mourning flag, Egyptian pyramid, purse, shepherd's cap, heart, altar, and others . . .".<sup>16</sup> This observation combines the first and second points, in that it reveals contemporary "novelty" at work in the historically attested form: besides the Greek shapes of an egg and an altar, Helwig lists others typical of the new age, such as the cross, the heart, and the goblet; but also some which are less common, such as the purse and the shepherd's cap.

Fourthly, Helwig concludes with two linguistic points: the purity of rhymes in figured verse, and the appropriateness of the language: "Yet, . . . besides the purity of rhymes, we should also observe what a wise man has demanded in his dialogues [marginal note: Plato]: that in all things one should employ the equivalent words and phrases, which imitate the things".<sup>17</sup> The reference to rhymes is far from incidental: it recalls Birken's preferred term, *Bilder-Reime*, and asserts the dual character of the medium, not just as picture-poems, but as a combination of words and music. More than this, as the reference to Plato's *Cratylus* indicates, the choice of language should be meaningful, not arbitrary; words and picture should combine into a meaningful image.

Figure 4. "Parnassus", p. 83.

83

Der Nymphe Floris Erste Tagzeit.

schneitend Beichel/ und zween zusammengefestete Flügel / nicht ohne Belustigung/ bey großem Ruf verblieben. Auch etwan heut zu Tage in unserer Wuttersprach die Form eines Eh/ hohen Trinkgeschirrs / erhöhten Kreuzes / Blumenkranses / Trauersahnen / Egyptischer Flammseulen / Gebbeitels / Schäfershut/ Hergens/ Altars/ und anderer mit feinen zierlichen Keynen und Gebänden gestaltet/ zu sehen. Jedoch/ daß wir nebenst den reinen Keynen auch dieses beobachten / was dorten bey Gesprächen ein Weltweiser Mann erfordert / daß man in allen Dingen / sich auch der gleichmäßigen und denselben Dingen nachgearten Worten und Reden gebrauchen solle. Zu einer Zugab aber wolle ein ieder ihm gefallen lassen eine Räthsel ( doch ohne Maßgebung und Vorschreibung des sen/ vonden sie handeln sollte ) mitanzuhängen.

Welche des Strephons sogethane Rede die andern alle mit Freuden besattiget/ und derselben ganz willig eingewilliget haben/ benebenst ihn abermaln büttlich ermahnet / den glücklichsten Anfang zu machen. Worauf Strephon ein reines Papyrus aus seiner Tasche gezogen / den Dilegrieffel ergriffen/ und die Abbildung des zweispitzigen Parnassus / mit zierlichen Keynen/ also vorgestellt.

Hohe welcher nehret unser süre Spitzen morgens mahlen Phöbus und die Pierinnen welcher Luftbereichte Frucht für die Ceres und dem Pan Schant die neubegrünten Hügel / wünschet pfalgeschwinde flügely bald wir auf der Pfeiffen klingen / und der Heerd zu Tische singen.	Berge/ Weide Hirtesfreuden Sonnenstralen und erhitzen: wohnt auf so grossen Zäunen/ unser Pegasus/ Hirt/ Montan zu besingen hat gesucht.
--	---

W 2

Figure 5. "Thurn" (tower), p. 84.

84

Der Nymphe Floris Erste Tagzeit.

Ein löbliches Denkmal ! sagte Montano ; und gedunfete ihn wiederum nicht unrecht gethan seyn / wann er / weil Strephon dieser gegenwärtigen Gesellschaft sondere Ehrentzier und Ursacher wäre/ zu dessen ruhmwürdigen Gedächtniß/ eben desselben ansehnliches und wolhergebrachtes Wappenzeichen/ nemlich einen hohen Thurn/ mit zweyen neben Thurnlein/ abbildete/ wie vor Augen ligt.

O  
so  
le b'

O                      und schweb'                      O

den ehrt/ hoch gacht/ wo so  
der uns lehrt/ der betracht liechte Loh'  
Klugreiche Lehr : Gott und sein Ehr' : aufglummet sehr/  
dessen Namens Ruhm und Praiß stetig sich vermehrt/  
und desselben kluger Geist unsre Sinne nährt !

Strephon / Strephon ist / dessen Lob erschalle/  
dessen Spiegelgedicht' überall erhalte ;  
seine Pfeiff' und Laut' jederman erfreue/  
den betrübten Muht muntert und erneue/  
dessen Kunst erregt großer Herren Günst/  
dessen Günst bewegt aller Künsten Drünst.

Leb' ohn Neid                      lange Zeit/  
Strephon werth/                      hie auf Erd !  
dich beschmückt'                      Ehrenglück !  
wol bestellte                      wolgefälle/  
zweifle nicht/                      dein Gedichte  
allen Frommen/                      die noch kömen.

Dein Gedichte sich schwingt unerringt/ wo kein End noch Ziel d' Zeit  
es verblübet einverlebet in der grauen Ewigkeit.  
Strephons/ Strephons theurer Nam welcher unvertunklet nicht/  
Strephons Nam bestrahlet ist/ wie der Sonn und Sternen Licht :  
solce was zugegen schwebt/ nicht besichen und verschwinden/  
wird man doch des Strephons Praiß in der Hünelsburg noch finden  
Helian



Figure 6. "Nußbaum" (nut-tree), p. 85.

**Der Nymphe Floris Erste Tagzeit.**

85

Neliantus sagte: Wiewol ich zur Zeit in dergleichen  
Erfindungen mich noch wenig gedübet / und gleichsam wie ein  
Neuling unterweilen mit unterlasse / so wil ich doch meinen ge-  
horsamen Willen zu erkennen gebend / so gut es fällt / den über  
uns flatterenden Nußbaum vormahlen.

Ach!  
ohn Schuld'  
hier leid' ich  
williglich/  
und ertrage mit Gedult  
den/d' quälet mich.  
Soll dann das lieben seyn?  
bittere Schwere Pein!  
So man meiner Früchcen wil/  
schau/ genießten schlecht/  
werd' ich meiner Zier beraubt mit Unbill/  
Bauren/ Kinder/ Mägd' un' Knecht/  
schenken mir an stat eines Dankestuff/  
Stein' und Stöcklen mit Verdruff/  
so alhier  
für und für  
ist der Lauff/  
ist der Rauff/  
Haff für Ehr  
ize vielmehr  
hier regire/  
und verführe  
leden Scand.  
Sonder Schand  
freund Gut nemen mit Gewalt/  
mache/ daß alle Lieb' erkalt.

III.  
Ein Donn.

M 3

Figure 7. "Reichsapfel" (imperial orb), p. 86.

**Der Nymphe Floris Erste Tagzeit.**

86

Darmit aber bey dieser unserer ohngefähren Zusammen-  
kunft auch der abwesenden Witzgenossen gedacht werde / und  
unserer keiner ermangle / sprache Strephon / so wil ich / in des  
Myrtilus Namen einen Reichsapfel / mit dem Zustand itziger  
Zeiten / vor Augen stellen.

D  
wie süß/  
aber süß  
seyn des Friedens Süß?  
ieder sie erkläht  
Kriegesflut  
fränket Wuth;  
alls verhört/  
alls zerstört.  
Teutsche Reich  
ist nicht gleich  
ihm ist mehr.  
Gott erhör!  
und bescheh  
uns den Friedenglanz/  
uns nicht gar verheere ganz!  
Deiner Gnaden Aug über uns aufwache/  
uns die treue Lieb' und Eintracht belache/  
darmit auf dem Plan dieses runden Weltgebäu' /  
Ach! dein Lob erschall' / und sich deine Kirch erfrey!  
Mächtig ist dein Worte/ kräftig deine Stimm/  
leg des Feindes Haß/ steure seinen Grimm!  
Grosser Gebaoth/ unser Bitt gewer' /  
auf dz wachh und sich vermehre  
diß dein Eigenthum/  
Dir zu Preis un' Ruhm.

IV.  
Reichsapfel.

Figure 9. "Schalmei" (Syrinx), p. 88.

Der Nymphe Floris Erste Tagzeit.

Was wird dann Klajus lächerliches vorbringen? fragte weiters dieser obgedachte Schäfer / deme der Hirt Klajus auf dem Pappir die Form einer Schalmeien zeigte, welche von den andern sehr gelobet worden.

Nun wolan! höres an / was ich sag / was ich sag. Was beliebt / mich herrüber / sich nicht helet / mich hart quälet. Solle dann falscher Wahn so stark seyn? Ach der Dein! immer hin! meinen Sinn Elio schütz / eray getruget den / der wolt seyn unhold / u n ver schuld / mit Gedult ich dich trag / nicht verzag. Elio mich erfreu / meine Pfeif erneu / mich in Leid ergetz / Reid mich nicht verletz.

71. Eine Schalmei / oder Flöte.

Dann / so wil ich sprach Montano / noch eines versuchen / und in des Floridans Namen eine Laute aufgesetzt haben.

Auf! singet und springt! die Laute schön klingt: derer Klang ohne Zwang hoch anringt. Lasse sie lieb / und uns übn / solchen Lust; iedem wie bewuß / was für Freud sie macht / freyer Muth hier lacht: sie kein Leid betrüb! ieder hab sie lieb! wer sie nicht hochacht / sich selbst verach / und hat darvon den Nidas Lohn.

71. Ein Laute.

Der Nymphe Floris Erste Tagzeit. Und ich erwiderete hingegen Melianthus / will unter des Einzigemmet Amintias Person ein kleines Vergleichen aufrichten.

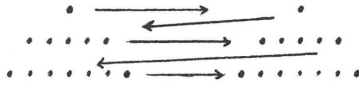
Was des Menschen Sinn vermag / ist und kan man nicht erkünden / alle Laq und alle Stund sieh man ihn was Neus erkünden. Menschen Sinn durchkreuzt die Erd / Wasser uñ d Stern Swat / ist ihm unerschaltbar hier: Lust und Bar in gleicher Ort. In diesem ringen Zirk er sich drum nicht vergnügt / weit immer zu sein Gott auch Himmel an sich kügt: von dancken er auch ist / und wieder dorthin lebet / wo die vollkommne Freud auf ewig ihn erndet. Was von seiner Müß trägt der Mensch darvon ist gedachtes Ziet. Unverwollte Cron. Ach der Herrigkeit. Ach der grossen Ehre. Bey der Sterblichkeit dient uns diese Lehre: Wie den Drackklang Menschmüß erdacht / und in solcher Kunst auf das höchst gebracht / doch ein Land nur ist / und ein stüchtig Ding gegen jener Freud viel zu schlecht und ring. Als ein Lusttind hat d Lust hinwieder schwindet / keiner Pfeiffen Schall wefentlich sich findet / so in diesem Rund nitgenet was befehrt / alles wie der Rauch und d r Dampf vergetzt. Was gleich des Menschenwert reicht bis zu höchsten Grad: so wandlet sich doch bald / ist unfer wie ein Raub. Ja wie ein lustgeschel des Menschen Ruf in umschweifet: Ihm selbst sich der Mensch sein agnes Ervubed pfeift. Steht der Blaspfag still und ruht / ist der Thon und Klang dann / ist der Leib der Seel berambt / weicht aller Müß und Sinn. Ach. Hier aller Menschenwert an ihn selbst Verdingung hangen. Dorthin zu der frug Traub trägt die kluge Seel Verlangen.

Was dem Land was wintet bequemet / schäpfer mit sich löst / alle Pfeiffen und die Digtwerte spien und süßen die Lüfften mit Wohl / auch die grossen Pannweirden fesslern und fittern mit rauhem Gedult / und die wintet / als die Embel / ringen und ringen um / lassen gar schön / solche Pfeiffen in loben / soicheren Kanfen mit Gummich man mehr / also dem Menschlichen Geist / nicht so dich / verpicht per Ehre

Figure 8. "Oergelein" (organ), p. 87.

## Verbal-Visual Poetry

Besides the general fulfilment of shape by language in lines, each of Helwig's figured poems entails the specific enactment of rhythm, metre, and rhyme. In his poems (as in Birken's) rhyme is indeed inseparable from shape, and contributes substantially to the poems' "playful mazziness". Take "Parnassus" (Figure 4). The poem consists of a first visual dimension provided by the outer shape; and of a second, created by the sequence of lines, which demand a reading *against* the shape:



The text displaces the normal smoothness of linear perception by a technique of repeated interference. Simultaneously, the rhymes overlay the first two visual dimensions with a third, defined by the point where the eye recognizes the exact repetition of a sound. Here, the visual and the acoustic dimensions of the poems intersect, and the sound effectively creates a third acoustico-visual dimension.

The text continually plays on the reader's rhyming expectations. A suggestion of rhyme emerges in the first two lines with the echoing "e" of *hohe*, *Berge*, and *Weide*, which imply a connexion between the separate summits. But the rhymes only fully emerge in lines two and three with:

<i>welcher</i>	<i>Weide</i>
<i>unser</i>	<i>Hirtenfreude</i>

The poem asserts a pattern of vertical rhyme. The two summits appear separate. Thereupon, however, the text immediately breaks the pattern with cross rhymes:

<i>Spitzen</i>	<i>Stralen</i>
<i>mahlen</i>	<i>erhitzen</i>

The summits seem connected. Then come parallel rhymes:

<i>Pierinnen</i>	<i>Zinnen</i>
------------------	---------------

Next, a reversion to cross rhyme:

<i>Frucht</i>	<i>Montan</i>
<i>Pan</i>	<i>gesucht</i>

Finally, the text reaches a climax with another parallel rhyme:

<i>Klingen</i>	<i>singen</i>
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Figure 11. "Springender Rohrbrunnen" (fountain), p. 89.

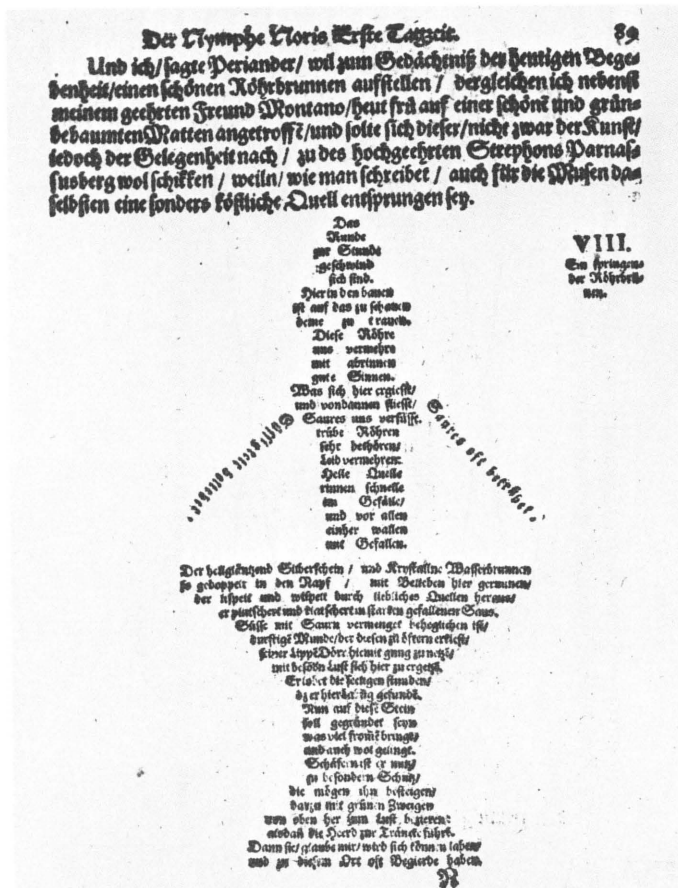
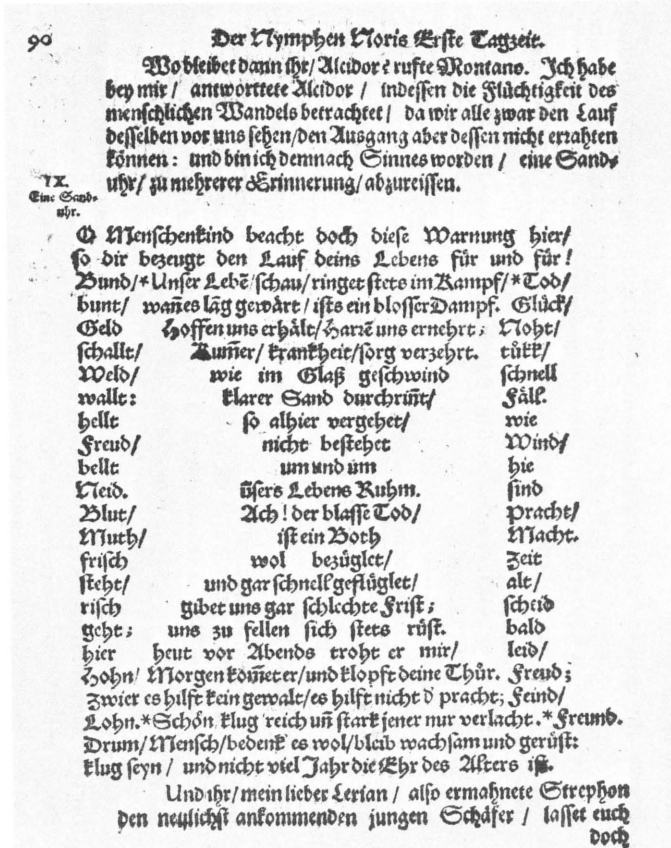


Figure 12. "Sanduhr" (hourglass), p. 90.



The rhymes not only enhance the poem's density. By offsetting the interference between the first two visual dimensions and by introducing repeated acoustic resolutions, the rhymes actually *complete* the image. More than just a visual poem, it is a verbal, visual, and acoustic text, whose parts create a single whole.

### The "Open" Cycle

If for Helwig the figured poem depends upon an aesthetic of novelty, this must mean the initial novelty of words put into shape in a single poem. For this creates a surprise effect, by breaking out of a standard framework into pictorial space. Such novelty can indeed be found in the individual poems. But there is also another aspect: the sense of novelty which arises in a sequence of poems, where one image replaces another in quick succession. The experience of novelty when discovering an individual poem or sequence consists in a peculiar combination of things: surprise, curiosity, admiration, a shade of incredulity, perhaps, and possibly a moment of doubt and censure. Mixed with a mild sense of wonder, the viewer will probably feel, either more or less approvingly, a sense of disquiet or satisfaction at the overturning of an aesthetic norm. Hence the ridicule and disproportionate criticism that figured poetry has called forth.<sup>18</sup> For the visual poem is by its nature a small outrage against convention. It is a hybrid, bordering on the grotesque, what has been called a "Centaur".<sup>19</sup> The form depends, in the West, upon the tension between expectation (distinctness of the arts) and fulfilled contradiction (picture poem). As a result, the complexity of emotions which the form arouses produces a degree of pleasure (or discomfort) out of all proportion to the artistic achievement. The pleasure consists, I think, in a kind of mental intricacy. An intellectual delight corresponding to the ingenuity of the work.

As when Pierrot pulls out a whole succession of coloured handkerchiefs from his pocket, sheer abundance enhances the novelty. The order of the poems similarly heightens the surprise. In some cases poems may be visually paired; in others, wholly contrasted. The best collections combine continuity with variety, as is the case with Helwig's. Some poems are clearly paired: the first "Heart" shape (Figure 2) is inverted in the following "Pyramid" (Figure 3); "Nut-tree" (Figure 6) in "Orb of the Realm" (Figure 7); and "Syrinx" and "Lute" (Figures 9 and 10) also form a pair. But no less significantly, related objects may be separated, such as "Monument" (Figure 5), "Fountain" or "Spring" (Figure 11), and the final "Monument" to the shepherds (Figure 13). Where a more logical sequence might strengthen the coherence, the emphasis here falls on variety, to heighten the sense of abundance and ingenuity. As a result, a theatrical quality enters the collection: the sequence of texts forms a dazzling display, as each page opens up new surprises. To the extent that they are novelties, these poems are conceits. But as in the best conceits, incongruity reveals a more deep-rooted order. For example, the poem in praise of Strephon (Figure 5) in the shape of a tower with three turrets represents Harsdörffer's real coat of arms. By alluding to his noblest attributes, the poem unequivocally explains his escutcheon: the linguistic representation of the

armorial bearings discloses the underlying meaning of the visual image. First (lines 1-4), the text interprets Strephon's position on earth — according with his tower — in terms of height imagery. Then, prior to praising his poetry, it establishes Strephon's relation to the metaphysical order, by equating his height with contemplation of the Divine (line 7). This creates a moment of anticipation at the poem's head, only resolved at the end (lines 22-27). Here, it emerges that poems such as Strephon's actually attain the metaphysical order in eternity. The earthly tower is ultimately replaced by God's heavenly tower (line 27). Thus, the figured poem captures the metaphysical reality underpinning the sublunary world, disclosing a correspondence between worldly escutcheon and heavenly estate. No less important than the hierarchical order which an individual poem establishes is that which emerges in the interconnection between different poems. Here, too, behind the apparent diversity of forms, the reader is led to discover a basic unity. Take "Fountain" (Figure 11). Visually, this belongs with the architectural pieces such as Strephon's "Tower" and "Monument" (Figures 5, 13). According to the accompanying text, it represents an actual fountain which two of the poets had seen that morning.<sup>20</sup> However, it is also to be understood as an emblem of a spring on Mount Parnassus. Hence, the poem is to be seen as a companion-piece to "Parnassus" several pages earlier (Figure 4). These two poems, moreover, are but two points in a more complex image pattern which, in fact, encompasses the whole collection. Visually, "Heart" and "Pyramid" (Figures 2 and 3) reappear in the

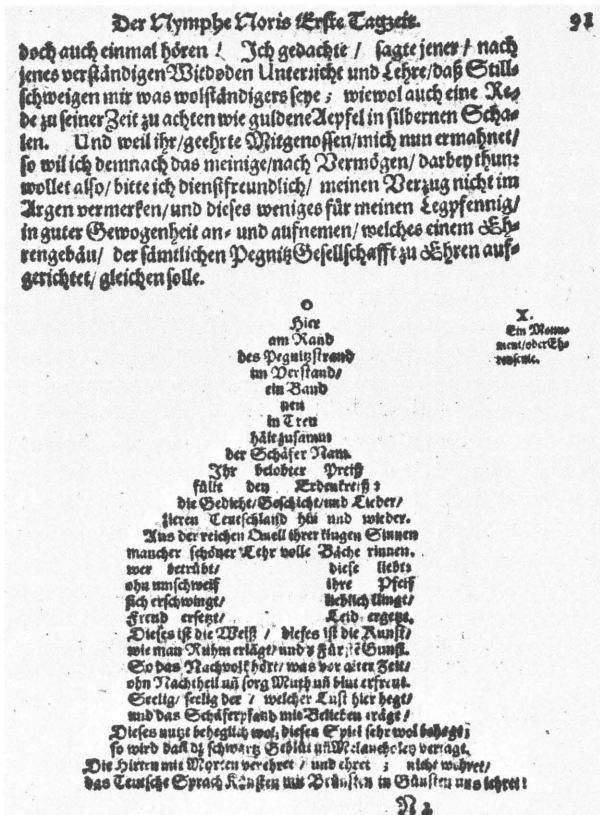


Figure 13.  
 "Monument  
 oder Ehrensäule"  
 (monument), p. 91.

double pyramid of "Parnassus"; thematically, "Parnassus" heralds the theme of poetry and music, which in its turn finds expression in "Organ", "Syrinx", and "Lute" (Figures 8, 9, 10). But via "Fountain" another relation also pertains to the final poem, which celebrates the Shepherds' work as a "spring" and "stream" (Figure 13, l.15f). Thus, in a cycle like Helwig's, the free-play typical of the earliest Greek examples fuses with the more structured framework of a medieval cycle.

Helwig's poems can be seen to exploit the same principle of quasi-mythical transformations as Birken's. This they do by relating past and present (e.g., Parnassus' stream and the fountain), and by successfully transforming different categories of being: visual shape, language, semantic sense, theme, imagery, object, and metaphysical reality. Going beyond Helwig, one might add that it is not just novelty which distinguishes picture poems nor, indeed, their pivotal position as the one typographical art, but their dual character which makes them the ideal vehicles of poetic transformation. In congruent duality, they can reveal an essence equally beyond word and picture, which unites the bristling diversity of things into a delightful yet somehow edifying whole.

1. Edgar Allan Poe, *The Complete Poetical Works* (ed. R. Brimley Johnson). Oxford University Press, London, 1919. See "To the River", p. 113.

2. Georg Philip Harsdörffer and Johann Klaj, *Pegnesisches Schaefergedicht*. Wolfgang Endter, Nuremberg, 1644.

3. *Pegnesisches . . .*, p. 18.

4. Sigmund von Birken and Johann Klaj, *Fortsetzung Der Pegnitz-Schäferey*, Wolfgang Endter, Nuremberg, 1645.

5. *Fortsetzung . . .*, p. 33.

6. *Fortsetzung . . .*, p. 67.

7. *Fortsetzung . . .*, p. 103.

8. Ivo Braak, *Poetik in Stichworten*, Ferdinand Hirt, Kiel (1964), sixth edition, 1980, p. 38.

9. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, with an English translation by Frank Justus Miller. 2 vols., Harvard University Press and William Heineman, Cambridge & London (1916); third edition, 1977, vol. 1, p. 106f, Book 1, l.699ff.

10. *Fortsetzung . . .*, p. 57.

11. *Fortsetzung . . .*, p. 63f.

12. Johann Helwig, *Die Nympe Noris*, Jeremia Dümler, Nuremberg, 1650.

13. Georg Philip Harsdörffer, *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele*. Vol. 5, Wolfgang Endter, Nuremberg, 1645, p. 23.

14. *Die Nympe Noris*, p. 82.

15. *Die Nympe Noris*, p. 82.

16. *Die Nympe Noris*, p. 82f.

17. *Die Nympe Noris*, p. 83.

18. See for example Addison's attack on figured verse in *The Spectator*, No. 58, 7 May 1711.

19. The term is that of Jochen Gerz, *Die Schwierigkeit des Zentaurs beim vom Pferd steigen*, Munich, 1976. See Christina Weiss, *Sehtexte*. Verlag für moderne Kunst, Zirndorf and Nuremberg, 1984, p. 155ff.

20. *Die Nympe Noris*, p. 83.

# Georg Weber's *Lebens-Früchte* (1649)

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*Georg Weber's Sieben Theile Wohlriechender Lebens-Früchte (Danzig 1649) is investigated with regard to the pattern poems it contains. Each of the seven introductory poems (all pattern or picture poems) are thematic indicators of the remaining poems in each of the seven sections, and, further, these seven poems form a progression among themselves.*

Pattern poems were very common in seventeenth-century Germany.<sup>1</sup> They occur in both Latin and German, and, occasionally, in other languages as well. Regardless of the language, however, they are mostly single poems, written for one specific occasion — a birthday celebration, a wedding, a funeral, or some such similar event. Such singularity of purpose does not detract from their value or appearance; it simply means that they are to be understood on their own terms as individual units, and not in relation to any other poem or poems, pattern or otherwise.

It is, therefore, the more enjoyable to find a collection of songs, hymns, and prayers which offers several pattern poems. The collection, written by the relatively unknown Georg Weber (ca. 1610-after 1653), is entitled *Sieben Theile Wohlriechender Lebens-Früchte . . .* and was published in Danzig in 1649.<sup>2</sup>

Most of the lexica can piece together only a very scant biography of Weber, and little if any progress has been made over the years in gaining a more complete picture. Zedler's *Universal-Lexikon* reports Weber was born around Dalen (Dahlen near Meissen), that he received a master's degree, and that he was employed in Magdeburg.<sup>3</sup> In the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, Robert Eitner added nothing new, although he did sort out two persons named Georg Weber and one Georg Heinrich Weber from each other.<sup>4</sup> In *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Martin Geck adds a few details, but he admits that Weber's life has not been thoroughly investigated.<sup>5</sup> Geck says Weber was at the court in Stockholm beginning in 1640, that the well-known baroque musician Heinrich Schütz recommended him for a position in Danzig in 1647, and that he remained there until 1651. Later he was, as Zedler already knew, in Magdeburg. Geck also brings Weber into a circle of song and hymn writers who were quite active in Danzig and Königsberg around the middle of the seventeenth century, a circle which included T. Strutius, J. Weichman, C. Kaldenbach, and C. Werner.<sup>6</sup> Finally, in 1980 the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* brings a short note on Weber, written by A. Lindsey Kirwan. In terms of new details, Kirwan informs us that Weber was appointed



as bass singer in the court chapel at Gottorf in 1632, notes the influence of Heinrich Albert (1604 to ca. 1656), and points out the Italianate influences which can be seen, especially in the solo songs in the *Lebens-Früchte*, where “recitative-like passages and ornate vocal writing occur.”<sup>7</sup> Kirwan also notes Weber’s importance in the development of the instrumentally accompanied song, especially the ritornello. A very few minor details, coupled with generally harsh judgments of Weber’s literary ability, can be found in other works as well.<sup>8</sup>

This is really about all we know of Georg Weber. Nonetheless, this does not hinder an appreciation of his works, of which very few are actually known. In addition to the *Lebens-Früchte*, only two are readily accessible: *Kampf und Sieg oder ganzer Lebenslauff eines recht Christlichen Kreuzträgers* (Hamburg 1645), which is written in the form of a drama<sup>9</sup> and *Himmel Steigendes Dank-Opffer* (Leipzig 1652).<sup>10</sup> Another work, listed in Goedeke’s *Grundriss, Sieben Lieb- Lob- und Danklieder für die heilige Menschwerdung Jesu Christi* (n.p. 1653), was unavailable to me.<sup>11</sup> Other works, now apparently lost, are often listed in other bibliographies. The work to be discussed here, the *Lebens-Früchte*, indicates in its title that there are seven sections, or parts to the composition, and that they are concerned with various sections or parts of life:

Sieben Theile Wohlriechender Lebens-Früchte eines recht Gott-ergebenen Herzen, deren Saft und Wachsthum, auss ihrem ewigen Lebens-Baume Jesu Christo . . . entsprossen ist . . . auff folgende Sieben Zeiten als Tägliche Jährliche Stündliche Augenblickliche auch bey Labens- Liebens- Scheidens- oder Sterbens-Zeit in niedriger Reim-Ahrt an das Licht getragen, mit gantz schlechten Melodian bequemet und . . . gesetzt Durch Georg Webern 1649. Zu Danzig . . . zu finden.<sup>12</sup>

[Seven Kinds (or Parts) of Sweet-smelling Fruits of Life of a Heart which is truly dedicated to God, the juice and growth of which has sprung from their eternal tree of life, Jesus Christ . . . Brought to Light at the following seven times, viz. daily, yearly, hourly, momentary, as well as in times of comforting, loving, and departing or dying. Put to very simple melodies and . . . set by Georg Weber. 1649. To be found in Danzig.]

Hence, the times referred to are daily, yearly, hourly, momentary, as well as times of comforting (or refreshing), loving, and departing or dying. The number seven is defended by Weber in his introductory notes, as in the number ten. Weber himself says:

And as it pleased our merciful heavenly Father, to make me, an unworthy person, through the loving cross, without which no true Christian can be found, similar to the image of His loving son, so here, too, in the present seven divisions, which division is naturally self-evident, he had given me the ability to portray a man intellectually oriented toward the cross. (In the same way, the two constituent parts of a man contain within themselves seven parts: namely the body: earth, water, air, fire; the soul: disposition, reason, and memory. In addition, the numbers seven and ten are common in Holy Scripture, and induce reflection. Among which, this one, the *Stufen-Zahl* of

noch sein  
verlescht nicht  
denn ihr Jun  
dier kann verdankt  
Die nicht Trübsals. W  
wunder, süße W  
woburch du wirst empfin  
Ihr Straß wird dich empfin  
nemen in dier ihren La  
Sie wird selbst stes gehen  
viel mehr als aufzusprechen hi  
so große Freud' in's Herz einschül  
nach der Lebens-Sonn / und die wird  
süßer Andacht / daß du hynn kannst bli  
Denn dier wird da die Morgenröhr' erschei  
getrost zu seyn / auch mitten in dem Weis  
in der Würdigheit / dich kaisst erfrischen also  
zihen in die Höhe dich / allwo du dergel  
Hier täglich auff und ab? der Himmel wird sich ne  
Wirst du bemühet seyn / du Pilgers-Mann zu sta

### Anfang.

wohltreichender Lebens-Früchte.  
fähret an folgenden Thurm / ist der andre T  
**Treppe der Andacht**



endlich gar  
Dich wird laden  
Er aus Gnaden  
Bist zur Engelschar  
Seis ihm dienstbar seyn  
Opfern GOTT dein Leben  
Zum Gefangenen geben  
Dich wirst dieser Höh' und drein  
Vorhinn in der Welt verirret

Daß du verbinden  
Erseh'n / empfinden  
Groß Wunder wird  
Wo Herz und Sinn  
Bist oben hynn  
So glückt der Lauff  
Hält nichts dich auff?

In der kranken Seelen.  
Furcht und Angst dich quelen

Wen Sünden. Wust  
So machet frey  
Die Argeney  
Die Freud und Lust  
Darinn / und alles:  
Auch selbst der Schatz  
Er ist der Thurm  
Du Erden. Wurm!

An JESU Letzter wester  
Die dich zu Jesu Christo trägt  
Nicht Veren ist die Letzer  
Die Treppe ist dort schon angelegt

**Geistlicher Schatz-Thurm**

Figure 1. Introductory poem for part one of Georg Weber's *Lebens-Früchte* (1649). Yale Collection of German Literature. Beinecke Rare Book Library.

Figure 2. Introductory poem for part two of the *Lebens-Früchte*. Yale Collection of German Literature. Beinecke Rare Book Library.

mankind was already used by me twelve years ago in Poland in my *Poetischen Abtheilungen*, not from some strange brain [i.e., it was not some stranger's idea], so it has also been retained here.)<sup>13</sup>

Hence, the four basic elements related to the body are considered important: earth, air, fire, and water, as are the three powers of the soul: disposition, reason, and memory. These, however, have little to do with the seven parts of the collection, that is, no one part is devoted to any, or to each, of these seven items. However, each of the seven parts is generally composed of ten songs or hymns: parts one, four, five, six, and seven each have exactly ten hymns, and parts two and three each have sixteen hymns. The songs in part two are dedicated to "die vornehmsten 10. Fest-Tage des Jahres" ("the ten most eminent festivals of the year") which according to Weber are the Annunciation, Christmas, New Year's Day, the Passion and Death (five songs are printed here), the Resurrection (two songs), the Ascension, Pentecost, Trinity, St. Michael (two songs), and All Saints' Day. The songs in part three are divided into three songs dealing with the Prodigal Son, three songs dealing with Penance, and, finally, ten songs about the cross, misery, and temptation. Here, the seven-ten relationship is least applicable or visible.

The numbers seven and ten do play a role in the collection as a whole, even to the point where one might say that seven times ten would have been the ideal, and probably was what Weber actually intended, as seventy is generally considered to be a number of special significance.<sup>14</sup>

What is more interesting, however, is the fact that each of the seven parts is introduced by a picture poem. To be sure, there are other pattern poems in the collection, but they actually play a subordinate role when compared to the introductory poems. It would have been most appropriate had there been a readily discernible connection between each introductory poem and the remaining poems in the given section, but this was not always the case. The remainder of this paper will focus on such relationships to the extent that they do occur.

The first pattern poem (Figure 1) forms a stair: there are twelve steps made from twenty lines of poetry (i.e., two times ten lines) with each of the eight longest steps composed of two lines, the four top ones of one line each. The poem is entitled "Treppe der Andacht" ("Stairs of Devotion") and has to be read from bottom to top. Weber gives a hint about interrelatedness of the pattern poems when he says of the stair that it "leads to the following tower, that is, the second part of the *wohlliechender Lebens-Früchte*." There is no apparent connection between the stairs and the prayers or songs of part one, which all deal with everyday, rather mundane items. Songs are written, for example, for the following types of events: "When one arises", "When one goes to work", "Song of Thanksgiving after eating", "When one is ready to go on a trip", etc. However, if one considers each of these a small step toward perfection, which would be quite in keeping with Weber's thoughts and aims, then some connection does begin to emerge.

The second picture poem (Figure 2) is that of a "geistlicher Schatz-Thurm" ("Spiritual treasure-tower") and, referring to the first section of his

Hier sihe Zorn  
 Erschrick du Sün-  
 Auch schreckt dich Kran-  
 Ergreiff hier Ba-

---

Ich rette die Seel der bis großen Zorns/ daß Ström-  
 An Stuss die Armen; in Sünden. Thut treuch her/ das sügen-  
 an fremden  
 der! Sün-  
 len das  
 rers Gnad

1. Ach! ach nicht!  
 mein Herr Jesu Christ  
 Ich wönte nicht mehr brümm  
 daß im und aufstörers  
 mich Kreuz infangen  
 und häffig brühte  
 über alle  
 sehr.

2. Darin mein  
 Der verbroden ist  
 Das du hier könnst sein  
 für Sünde die aus schers  
 ich off begangen

tränker mich  
 häffig weis  
 sehr jämmerlich  
 Ach laß dich mein

Herr / dieses  
 Für Kreuz hier  
 Ich liege hier  
 Und schreie: HERR  
 Dein Tod zu Hülff  
 Mich rette noch dein heures  
 Dein Blut mir Armen schenke  
 Es schenke sich ja den Armen  
 Für Sünder gnug es miht:  
 Hier komm es auch zu gut!  
 daß nicht kann fällen  
 der Wüterich  
 in Hölle  
 Gluht.

Drauff wird man offert  
 Hier setze sich nun auch der  
 ihm wird benommen  
 und wie der Schmay  
 in Sünden, Qual;  
 um Labesal  
 ein krankes Herz  
 darunter sehn  
 Das Kreuze sehn  
 Mit Lust mann aufgerichtet  
 Die Schatz un Zierrath drein  
 Die Kirch ist biß hieher g

Figure 3. Introductory poem for part three of the *Lebens-Früchte*. Yale Collection of German Literature. Beinecke Rare Book Library.

Figure 4. Introductory poem for part four of the *Lebens-Früchte*. Yale Collection of German Literature. Beinecke Rare Book Library.

*Lebens-Früchte*, Weber notes in the first line of the tower: "The stair was already laid out back there". This poem, too, has to be read from bottom to top. The reader is admonished to continue climbing toward his savior: "Climb further, toward Jesus, You Earth worm!" The top lines make clear the end of the journey: "Always serve him until he out of mercy finally invites you to [be part of] the angelic throng". It should be noted, too, that this poem consists of thirty lines, three times ten. A connection between the tower and the poems is not readily apparent, but the feast days indicated might indeed represent some of the treasures.

The poem introducing part three (Figure 3) is somewhat more complicated: it shows a large heart pierced with a cross in the center, and contains two smaller hearts on either side of the cross as well; it is one of two Weber pattern poems which contain more than one image (the other being the poem introducing part seven). This part deals with repentance, penance, and crosses, and here the connection between the introductory poem and the other hymns in this part begins to emerge more clearly, particularly as there are three penance prayers and ten songs about crosses and temptations. After three songs about the Prodigal Son (in the first, the son speaks to himself, in the second he falls at his father's feet and asks forgiveness, and in the third we hear the father speaking to the son and forgiving him), the second section deals with contrition and the request for forgiveness. The three songs in this section are entitled "As man observes his soul, cries sincerely about it, and, filled with remorse, finds refuge in his savior Jesus Christ", "Sevenfold Comfort", and "As the soul, rueing its sins, turns from the wrath and justice of God to his mercy". The last section consists of ten songs dealing for the most part with temptation, penance, and contrition. Representative titles include "A serious prayer in intellectual temptation and all kinds of need", "An ardent prayer during periods of distress", "Sighs of prayer and belief in times of temptation and great need", and similar titles.

Part four is introduced by an altar (Figure 4) with Weber's opening line (again at the bottom) being "So far the church has been built up to this point", obviously a reference to the steps and tower of parts one and two. There are twelve lines, divided into three sections (three lines, seven lines, and two lines); the top line, "On this, one will continuously offer sacrifice", leads directly to part five. In the fourth part, one is to see the untiring pleading of a soul pining for its King and Savior, Christ. The songs include a conversation between Christ and a sorrowing soul (a pattern poem, incidentally), a poem of encouragement about how one can lie prostrate before God's throne in a state of continual pleading, and one on divine solace (also a pattern poem). Most of the other poems are also related to the altar and the pleading one would do in front of such an altar.

Two poems are shown on the first page of part five (Figure 5) both clearly indicating what one would offer or sacrifice on the altar of part four: bread and wine. "Hunger of the Soul for Jesus Christ" is the top poem, in the form of a host; "Thirst of the Soul for Jesus Christ" is the bottom poem, in the shape of a goblet or chalice. The bread poem has eleven lines, the wine poem is a sonnet



of two times seven lines. Even though a sonnet generally has an eight/six division, the division here is clearly seven/seven, as even the punctuation indicates (the only period in the poem follows line seven). This section of the hymnal deals with communion and there is a clear connection between the introductory pattern poem and all the other hymns, as each of these is very clearly related to communion. A sampling of titles or introductory words shows the link clearly: "When one kneels to receive communion", "Another, during the continuing communion [service]", "Joy of the soul about communion received", "A fervent song of thanksgiving after communion". The song mentioned above which is to be sung during the continuing service is actually a pattern poem, composed of two stanzas, each printed in the form of a cross; the ninth poem in this part is a seven-line pattern poem.

The sixth part deals with the soul's desire for its heavenly mate, Christ, and a flame is used to depict the burning love of the soul for Him (Figure 6). Although one has to read in two directions (up and down), the image is clearly a flame, most likely emanating from a candle. The flame/wick even consists of seven words: "Jesus, Jesus, take me up to you!" Some, but not all of the songs are clearly related to the image of desire, as is evident from sample titles: "How one sighs [or pines] to be united with God, as with eternally essential love", "The sweet kiss of love" (also a pattern poem), "Sighing for unchanging heavenly love".

The seventh part is introduced by a pattern poem depicting a coffin (Figure 7) and is entitled "Von Scheiden oder Sterbens Zeit" ("The Times of Departing or Dying"). This poem, too, consists of seven lines. Again in this section a clear connection exists between the introductory pattern poem and all the other poems in the section, e.g., "A song or prayer when faced with the fear of death", "A valet or death song", "A holy departure from this vale of tears in[to] the eternal hall of joy", "Valet and departure of a poor person"

Overall, there are four sections with an overt connection between pattern poem and content of the other hymns in the respective sections (sections four, five, six, and seven), one where some are related (section three), one where the connection is at best a loose one (section two), and one where there is no visible connection at all (section one). There is no clear explanation for the apparent progression in connection between introductory pattern poem and other hymns, but it can be noted that the latter sections were published later; perhaps Weber himself only gradually became aware of the possibility of using the pattern poems as thematic indications of the contents of a given section.

What is also very interesting is the interrelatedness among the pattern poems themselves. We begin with stairs (part 1) leading to devotion or to prayer, followed by a tower of spiritual treasures (part 2). The next chapter, with its emphasis on penance, repentance, and the crosses one has to bear in life (part 3), is a preparation for approaching the altar (part 4), on which bread and wine (part 5) are offered. Finally, after having participated in communion, one's soul is swept up by a longing (part 6) for the Savior, and, in death (part 7), one goes forward to meet that same Savior in heaven.

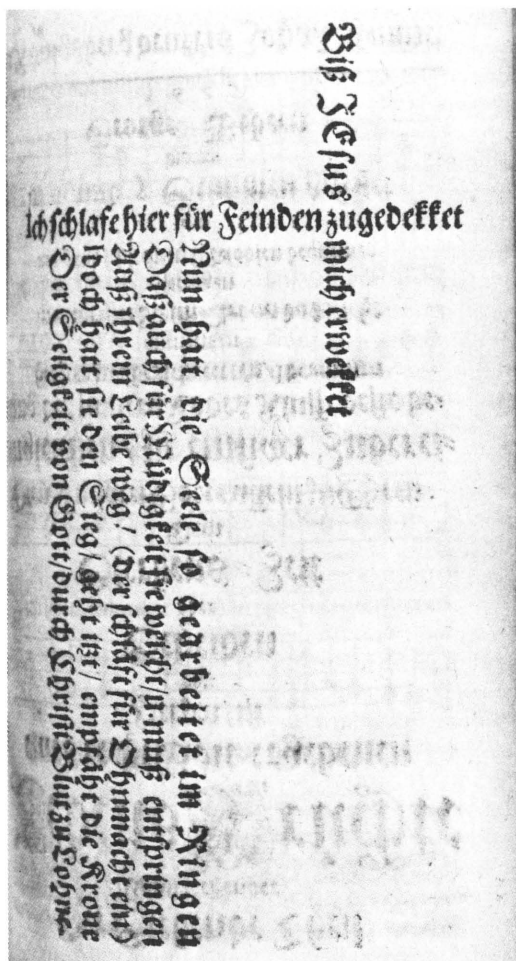


Figure 7. Introductory poem for part seven of the *Lebens-Früchte*. Yale Collection of German Literature. Beinecke Rare Book Library.

Although the poems are clearly not among the best the German Baroque has to offer, they are definitely the product of a genuinely religious person. There is little doubt that they belong to early pietistic devotional literature.<sup>15</sup>

In his unusual use of pattern poems Weber is several steps ahead of his contemporaries who generally wrote single poems only. Weber's attempts to use pattern poems as thematic introductions for individual portions of his book are just as unusual as his attempt to have each of the seven poems relate to each other in a natural progression. It would be worth investigating whether later German devotional writers were able to make use of Weber's example, or even to improve on it. The most obvious starting point would be further pietistic devotional literature.



1. Two recent studies provide an excellent introduction to pattern poetry: Jeremy Adler, "Technopaigneia, carmina figurata, and Bilder-Reime: Seventeenth-Century Figured Poetry in Historical Perspective," in *Comparative Criticism: A Yearbook*, 4 (1982), 107-47, and Ulrich Ernst, "Europäische Figurengedichte in Pyramidenform aus dem 16. und 17. Jahrhundert: Konstruktionsmodelle und Sinnbildfunktionen: Ansätze zu einer Typologie," in *Euphorion*, 76 (1982), 295-360.

2. Actually, each of the parts carries its own date of publication; parts one to four were printed in 1648, parts five to seven in 1649. Although the overall title page indicates J. Andre in Danzig as the publisher, each of the parts was printed in Königsberg by Johann Reussner. It is unclear whether the seven parts each appeared separately but that, although not inconceivable, is not likely.

3. Johann Heinrich Zedler (publisher), *Grosses Universal-Lexikon aller Wissenschaften und Künste*. . . 64 vols. + 4 supp. vols. Halle and Leipzig: Zedler, 1732-1754. Reprint: Graz: Akademische Druck und Verlagsanstalt, 1961-1964. Here, vol. 53, col. 896.

4. *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*. 44 vols. + 11 supp. vols. + index. Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1875-1912. Second edition: reprint, 1967-71. Here, vol. 41, p. 298.

5. "Webers offenbar sehr unstetes Leben ist noch nicht genauer erforscht worden", *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Friedrich Blume. 14 vols + 2 supp. vols. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1949-79. Here, vol. 14, p. 330.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie. 20 vols. London: Macmillan, 1980. Here, vol. 20, p. 267.

8. For example, in books like Gottfried Döring, *Zur Geschichte der Musik in Preussen*. Three fascicles. (Elbing: Neumann-Hartmann, 1852-55); Hermann Kretzschmar, *Geschichte des neuen deutschen Liedes*. Kleine Handbücher der Musikgeschichte nach Gattungen, 4. (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1911), (Reprint: Hildesheim: Olms, 1966); Hermann Rauschnig, *Geschichte der Musik und Musikpflege in Danzig von den Anfängen bis zur Auflösung der Kirchenkapellen*. Quellen und Darstellungen zur Geschichte Westpreussens, 15. (Danzig: Kommissionsverlag Rosenberg, 1931).

9. Copy in the Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel (Signatur: Lo 7841.1).

10. Copy in the Faber du Faur Collection of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Faber du Faur, No. 477.

11. Karl Goedeke, *Grundriss zur Geschichte der Deutschen Dichtung*. 2nd ed. vol. 3: Vom dreissigjährigen bis zum siebenjährigen Kriege. Dresden: Ehlermann, 1887, p. 171.

12. Copies in the Faber du Faur Collection (Faber du Faur, No. 475) and in the Harold Jantz Collection, Duke University Library. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Yale University Library for preparing copies of the individual pattern poems for print and for allowing me to reproduce them in this study. Special thanks are due Christa Sammons of Yale University for her efforts.

13. Weber's *Poetische Abtheilungen* are apparently lost, and a stay in Poland has not yet been mentioned in the research literature on Weber.

14. The symbolism of numbers in general and of seven and ten in particular was quite widely discussed in the seventeenth century. See for example, the lengthy discussion of "Stufen-Zahlen" in Philipp von Zesen, *Simson*, ed. Volker Meid. Philipp von Zesen, *Sämtliche Werke*, 8. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980), pp. 278ff, 611-615. The original edition of *Simson* appeared in Nürnberg in 1679 and was published by Johann Hoffmann. Additional works of Zesen, especially the programmatic works for his language and literature society, the *Deutschgesinnete Genossenschaft*, also contain lengthy discussions of the symbolism of various numbers (they will appear in a modern edition in the same series by de Gruyter in 1985).

15. See, for example, Geck in *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol. 14, p. 331, and Kirwan in the *New Grove Dictionary*, vol. 20, p. 267.

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