War and Antiwar Discourse in Alciato's *Book of Emblems*

**EX BELLO PAX** - Let weapons lie far off; let it be right to embark on war only when you cannot in any other way enjoy the art of peace

An antiwar attitude is clearly manifest in the sixteenth-century Erasmian humanist milieu. Erasmus’ ethical stance was motivated, as it seems, not merely by his firm political outlook but was also deliberately shaped by Christian moral and spiritual values. In light of these principles he thought foremost that a genuine Christian education would help to restrain human violence and spare many wars, a view propounded in his *Panegyricus* (1504) and the *Education of a Christian Prince* (Basel, 1516). From this perspective we might consider his pacifist reflections in analogy with Friar Laurent’s moralistic legacy in his *Somme le roi*, a moralistic manual intended for Philippe III le Hardi of France (1279). This manual, with its antiwar sentiment, was still a very influential moralizing source in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century.

Andrea Alciato was himself witness to the theater of war during his stay in Milan (1522-29). However, his friendship with and admiration for Erasmus, had influenced his pacifists ideas and moralistic attitudes. In my paper I intend to call attention to some antiwar motifs in Alciato's *Book of Emblems*, notably the emblematic representations of the lion and the elephant, in relation to the medieval heritage, crystallized in both written and visual sources, in Bestiaries and the influential text *Somme le roi* known to us through various illuminated and printed versions. Warfare was conceived by Friar Laurent as the deadly sin of *Ira*, an idea adopted and elaborated by Alciato through his emblematic weave. In Alciato's *Emblematum liber*, the lion's rage is effectively related to the fury and rage of military conflict, a motif familiar from medieval and late medieval sources where it designates the sin of Ira. As for the elephant imagery, which had already inherited the negative characterization related to rage and warfare established in medieval thought, Alciato further relates it to Mars, the god of war. However, he inventively engages the war elephant metaphor to a pacifist purpose in his moral allegory of Peace, where the war-elephant, rejecting the weapons of war, now performs the duties of peace, carrying Cesar's triumphal chariot to the holy temples.
Dedicated to Maximilian I, duke of Milan, Alciato's emblem book, follows the tradition of a moralistic manual for a prince already established in Laurent's *Somme le roi* and elaborated later in Erasmus' instruction.