

ALLEGORIES & SYMBOLS



W A T E R H O U S E S Y M B O L I S M N E W S L E T T E R # 8 0

SPECIAL SYMBOLS

- Ouroboros conveys eternity, immortality and rejuvenation
- Scythe conveys the inexorable passage of time and death
- Three faces convey the three ages of time and of human life
- The lion conveys the king, the sun, the masculine principle and the spirit

DEFINING TERMS AGAIN

A natural sequence from Metaphors and Symbols is Allegories and Symbols.

Since we defined symbols last month, let's just define allegories this time: an allegory is a device in which characters or events in a story, poem, or picture represent or symbolize ideas and concepts. Allegory has been used widely throughout the history of art, and in all forms of artwork.

To tie it back to metaphors that we looked at last month, an allegory is an extended metaphor.

A book that I used extensively for the research of this newsletter was "Symbols and Allegories in Art" by Matilde Battistini. The J. Paul Getty Museum has put out a wonderful series of books called "Guide to Imagery". Others I have in the series include "Nature and Its

Symbols" and "Symbols of Power in Art". They are available both through Barnes & Noble and Amazon.

Several symbols in the work to the right include: the Phoenix, which rises up from its own ashes, conveys both resurrection in the Christian faith and the synthesis of the four cosmic elements (water, earth, air and fire). The armillary sphere conveys the universe. The chains allude to the inexorable yoke of Ananke (necessity), which weighs upon human existence. Ouroboros conveys the eternal return and the cyclical nature of time. The Sphinx represents man's inescapable destiny. The world dominated by death and transience, is shown caught between a monster's claws.



Giulio Romano,
Allegory of Immortality, c.1520
The Detroit Institute of Arts

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The ouroboris or snake biting its' tail conveys eternity, immortality and rejuvenation. The circle that the snake forms is a symbol of eternity – the idea is that a circle has no beginning or end.

The three stages of a butterfly's evolution are life, death, and resurrection. The emergence of the

O U R O B O R I S

butterfly from the cocoon is similar to the idea of the soul discarding the flesh.

Also, the snake is thought of as evil and the butterfly as good. So, you have the triumph of good over evil.

It is very rare to see the Ouroboris and a butterfly on a grave marker.



Congressional Cemetery
Washington, DC

ALLEGORY OF TIME

The wonderful thing about the painting to the right from page 22 of the book "Symbols and Allegories in Art" is that many of the symbols seen in this painting are seen in cemeteries.

The scythe, being held by Saturn, conveys the inexorable passage of time and death.

The book goes onto explain that " Renaissance images of a winged Saturn are based on Petrarch's Triumph of

Time. The god is sometimes portrayed with two pairs of wings: the folded wings allude to times past and the spread wings to times yet to come".

"In Renaissance and Baroque art, time is portrayed as a winged naked old man."

The hourglass is being held by the putto or baby angel and conveys the irreversible passage of time.

A putto or baby angel conveys protection, innocence and naivety.



Giacomo Zampa, *Allegory of Time*, eighteenth century, Forli, Palazzo, Lombardini, Mongignani

SCYTHE

An allegory is not meant to be taken literally. There is a great lack of comprehension on the part of some readers.

Naguib Mahfouz

Because Saturn conveys passage of time, he is seen in cemeteries as well. This particular one seen to the right is from Cemeterie Monumentale in Milan, Italy. Notice, Saturn is an old bald man with an amazing set of wings. His scythe, as we have seen above, conveys death. Notice that he is looking down towards the ground which conveys death on earth but we will have eternal life.

If you are ever in Milan, visit this cemetery because the grave monuments are incredible works of art.



OURGLASS

An hourglass with wings conveys the passage of time. The hourglass is one of the original means of telling time when they measured time by how long it took the sand to run out. We are all reminded of the scene in the movie *The Wizard of Oz*, when Dorothy is taken captive by the Wicked Witch of the West and she

turns the hourglass over and tells Dorothy that her life will be over when the hour glass runs out of sand. Sometimes, hourglasses and wings are seen with sun dials and epitaphs like "I Count None But Sunny Hours" and "Light Follows Darkness." A snake biting its tail conveys immortality, rejuvenation, and eter-

nity. Also, the snake can convey evil because the devil turned himself into a snake and tempted Eve with an apple from the tree of the forbidden fruit. Eve took a bite from the apple, gave it to Adam, and they were thrown out of the Garden of Eden. In that case, the snake's head is that of a man.



From Ancient Cemetery, Wiscasset, Maine

ALLEGORY OF PRUDENCE

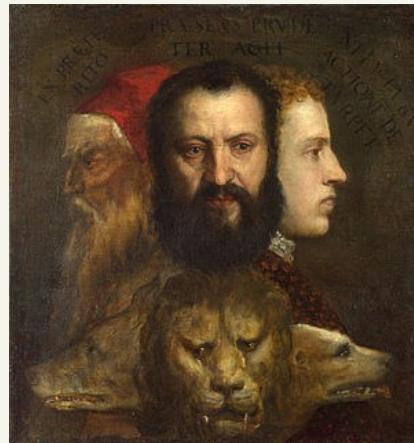
The painting to the right is by Titian and is called *Allegory of Prudence*, 1566, oil on canvas, National Gallery, London.

The animals represent the three paths that souls may take after death: the lion represents the solar path outside of time and the world; the dog represents the path of heavenly birth; and the wolf watches over the "left-hand" path, which coincides with earthly reincarnation

The faces convey the three ages of

time and of human life: youth (the past), maturity (the present) and old age (the future). They have also been interpreted as an allegory of prudence.

Tiziano Vecelli or Tiziano Vecellio (c. 1490-1576) known in English as Titian was an Italian painter, the most important member of the 16th-century Venetian school. He was born in Pieve di Cadore. During his lifetime he was often called da Cadore, taken from the place of his birth.



The lion conveys the king, the sun, the masculine principle, the spirit, continual struggle, victory, the danger of being devoured by the unconscious, gold, blood, earth, fertility, the underworld, time, nobility, royal dignity and Christ as king.

In Venice, Saint Mark is the Patron Saint because his body was stolen from Constantinople and brought to Venice in the 9th Century. He is buried in San Marco, in the middle of Venice. The lion, in this sculpture, marks the monument for

Daniele Manin who tried to set Italy free from France and lost his life in 1857. His sculpture is located above the lion. In Venice, the Winged Lion is seen on many buildings and sculptures including this one to the right.



It is difficult to capture the beauty of these monuments without visiting the city.

The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page

— Saint Augustine of Hippo

The dog conveys faithfulness, the priest, companion of the dead, fidelity, obedience, science, the will, loyalty, and protective vigilance. What is fascinating about this monument for Dr. Emile Overton Moore, Born October 2, 1854 and murdered February 16, 1893 is the epitaphs on the monument:

(First side) His errors were the errors of a man and they stood out in bold contrast with the

time - serving two-faced hypocrites who conspired to have him murdered. (Second side) He is now beyond the reach of blame or praise. And love will hope and faith will trust that he has felt the joy that is felt where there are no tears and no graves. Underneath the dog on top is the word WAITING.

Dogs are also seen in paintings especially ones pertaining to marriage because of the fidelity connection.

Thanks to Kimberly Williams for sending in this marker which is Maple Hill Cemetery in Helena, Arkansas.



**What are your ideas
for future newsletters?**



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S Y M B O L I S M
N E W S L E T T E R # 8 0**

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**The mission of Waterhouse Symbolism is to
research and document symbols locally, regionally,
nationally and internationally.**



NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

On this cold January morning (9 degrees), I finish up the final touches on one more newsletter. I have enjoyed recently working on certain themes for the newsletter like the relationships between allegories, symbols and metaphors. My next newsletter will concentrate on dreams and symbols related to them. If you think of anything that should be included, please let me know.

Take care,
Richard Waterhouse

N E W I N F O R M A T I O N

I am not sure how much you re-visit my past newsletters, but for the 8th and 12th issues, I included the image to the right supplied by Diane Nesmeyer. I wrote in those issues: In the March issue, the editor of this newsletter wrote "this sculpture marks a young person's grave. It looks like the little girl is asleep and the idea is that she is a sleep in Jesus and will have eternal life. She is holding a shepherd's crook which, once again, goes back to the idea that she is part of Jesus' flock and will have eternal life. Usually a cloak, which she is wearing, is a symbol of mourning or grief. The head is that of a bear and symbolizes reforming and regenerating because the idea is that the bear's mother will take a shapeless form and mold into a beautiful bear cub with lots of personality.

It looks that in her right hand, she is holding a pine cone which is a symbol of mortality and incorruptibility. Is she resting on a stump? If she is, it is a symbol of the person's life being cut short before reaching her prime." It turns out that the head that she is wearing is actually a lion's head because you can see the tail at the bottom of her right foot (not a stump). The lion is always seen as the symbol of courage of valor. The idea is that the child will have courage and valor going from death to eternal life. Please make that correction in your March 2007 issue.

Diane just let me know that this piece is actually based on a sculpture called "A Young Child (Young Hercules)", 1848, marble by Emil Wolff.



**From Greenmount Cemetery, Baltimore,
MD and is based on a sculpture called "A
Child (Young Hercules)", 1848, Marble
38 inches high**