

SEMANTIC INTEGRATION AND DIVERSION
IN HENRY PEACHAM JR.'S EMBLEMS

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My paper will deal with the semiotic problem of the interpretation of a multi-coded message in which a verbal statement is combined with an iconic statement. In particular, I will examine some Seventeenth Century texts belonging to the English "Emblem Book" tradition¹.

In this context the verbal element, or "motto", was usually termed the "soul" and the pictorial element was called "the body". This particular "neoplatonic" terminology reflects some of the connotations often attributed to the emblematic form in the Renaissance, and helps to explain why the emblem was used both as a cognitive and epistemic tool, expressing intuitive knowledge of metaphysical truths, and as an important pedagogical form, teaching (through) the gradual acquisition of special interpretative skills. Emblems became significant didactic tools in Renaissance education since it was assumed that, in this "genre", the verbal and pictorial elements clarified and reinforced each other, and that pictures and words would communicate unequivocal meanings. However, both the reciprocity of the verbal and pictorial levels, and their immediate intelligibility can, to some extent, be questioned, as will, I hope, become evident in the following pages.

In fact, I will examine here some emblems that actually display a significant complexity in the internal relationship of verbal and iconic meanings. These texts were first published in 1612 by Henry Peacham Jr., and are generally praised for the "unanimity of aim" that "picture and verse" have in them (Horden 1969). However, I believe that this aspect, which I would call "semantic integration" of the two codes, is not a constant feature of Peacham's emblems, where we find instead several instances of semantic diversion and even of dissonance.

First of all let me provide some necessary information on the author of these emblems and on their historical and literary con-

¹ On the English Emblem Tradition see: Freeman 1948, Clements 1960, Colie 1973, Daly 1979, 1988, Innocenti 1983, Holtgen 1986.

text. Henry Peacham the Younger is a fairly unknown writer in Seventeenth Century England². And yet he seems to embody the ideal of the learned Renaissance gentleman, being proficient in literature, rhetoric, religion, music and painting. His best known work is *The Complete Gentleman* (1622), a treatise in the line of the so called "Conduct Books", a "genre" aiming at the education of the aristocracy which included, among others, Erasmus's *Institutio Principis Christiani*, Baldassarre Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*, and Sir Thomas Elyot's *A Book Named The Governour*. Peacham's perceptive observations on the social background and institutions of Stuart England have also reached us through a few books and pamphlets that focus on various themes, ranging from student training at the Inns of Court to religious controversy, from country life in the region of "The Fennes", to the pleasures and dangers of *The Art of Living in London*.

On the other hand, Peacham's interest and ability in the figurative arts is evident in his early treatise on *The Art of Drawing with the Pen and Limning in Water Colors* (1606). I believe that his skill as a painter and engraver has interesting consequences upon his fiction, which is often marked by a sustained visual imagination. This can be seen, for example, in a short, but greatly innovative picaresque novel *The Merry Discourse of Meum and Tuum*, which anticipates the masterpieces of Henry Fielding and Daniel Deofe in the following century³. Peacham's talent for character sketching, and his eye for detail give his works an unusual vividness. His prose reminds readers of Bruegel's lively paintings of village life. But he simply could not make a living as a painter or engraver. Like many other talented youths of modest means the only career that was open to him was that of the schoolmaster, a profession which he disliked, and which he tried to abandon on several occasions, or to fulfill outside a school, by becoming the tutor in the house of a variety of noblemen.

2 Henry Peacham Jr.'s name is often confused with that of his father, Henry Peacham, and author of *The Garden of Eloquence*, a rhetorical treatise which meticulously classifies the major figures and tropes in order to teach "elocutio".

3 A modern critical edition, with an *Introduction* and *Notes* of the text of *The Merry Discourse of Meum and Tuum* has recently been completed by Angela Locatelli, and has been published with her translation into Italian. See: A. Locatelli 1998.

Peacham sought patronage from King James I, whom he had met in 1603, during the king's travels from Edinburgh to London. He started to illustrate James I's *Basilikon Doron* (1599), a book which the sovereign had written for the education of his son, Prince Henry. Peacham drew fifty-six emblems for the king's "divine instructions" written in Latin. He presented the fifty-six key sentences to the Prince "with their pictures drawn and limned by my owne hand in their lively colors". After this version, which was the first one of his *Minerva Britanna* (1612), Peacham composed another emblem book *Graphice*, that was also published, in the same year, with the title *The Gentleman's Exercise*, and which was followed, in 1621, by his *Emblemata Varia*. This was a "genre" that obviously appealed to his double skills in drawing and writing.

On the other hand, the emblem was also a very popular genre in European literature, starting with Alciati's *Emblematum Liber* in 1531, and continuing with Paolo Giovio's famous *Ragionamento sopra i motti et disegni d'arme, et d'amore, che comunemente chiamano Imprese. Con un discorso di Gerolamo Ruscelli intorno allo stesso soggetto*⁴. While individual (verbal and graphic) styles are widely different, and therefore need separate investigations for single authors, the emblems seem to share a common "basic structure" regardless of the fact that they are Italian, French, or English. In her analysis of Sponde's *Emblèmes*, Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani has provided a convincing general outline for the "ordered mode of composition" of emblems (Mathieu-Castellani 1991, 1990). She suggests that it consisted of: "an inscription-motto" or "device" fixing the referent (a notion or concept, a critical statement, or a sententious saying), an image-icon of variable rhetorical status (allegory, metaphor, symbol or metonymy), and a versified gloss shedding light on the action of the players in the scene and their relation to the "title". While this indication on emblem composition seems plausible, Mathieu-Castellani's subsequent considerations on the hierarchical relation of text and depiction are problematic, particularly when she posits a subordinate role for words and seems to think that the pictorial dimension carries most (if not all) of the semantic weight ("the verses themselves are only an

4 Paolo Giovio's book, which was published in Venice in 1560, was translated into English by Samuel Daniel in 1585 with the title: *The Worthy Tract of Paulus Jovius, contayning a Discourse of rare inventions*.

auxiliary to the process of communication”)⁵. This is certainly not the case in many English Emblems, and besides, even if some sort of hierarchy is apparent between words and icons, this hierarchy is not predictable and fixed, but it varies greatly in different collections or even within the same collection. In Francis Quarles or Henry Peacham’s works the dominant function can be alternatively taken by words or pictures, or, as we shall see in the three emblems we are discussing, words and picture may create conflicting meanings.

In our investigation we may fruitfully apply Ju.M. Lotman and B.A. Uspenski’s observations on the equivalence of different artistic practices (Lotman 1995, Uspenski 1973)⁶, and suggest that in Peacham’s emblems “isomorphism” is sought and appreciated, on the basis of Horace’s precept of “ut pictura poesis” which largely influenced Renaissance aesthetics, and Emblem Books in particular. In fact, the verbal and iconic levels tend to reinforce each other when the artist’s rhetorical strategy is to persuade and propounds a specific moral message. But the process of emblem creation and reading is much more complex and requires a subtle perception of the variables in the supposedly canonic interaction of words and pictures.

Let us then look closely at some of the emblems in *Minerva Britannia* (1612), a remarkable work in the English tradition of the genre.

I will start with an emblem of no great artistic merit, but certainly significant in terms of Peacham’s royalist ideology, as well as in terms of his desire to find a patron in James I (see *ill. 1*). This emblem (Peacham 1612: 11) is an open praise of the King who, having united the crowns of Scotland and England had, in the eyes of many subjects, solved the problem of the succession to the throne of Elizabeth I, and averted the risk of intestine rebellions, and even of a civil war. In fact, even before the dedicatory line: “*To the High and mightie IAMES, King of greate Britaine*”, a latin

5 Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani writes: “Among these three little units correlated by the artifice of a *like*, the relations between text and ‘depiction’ are hierarchised: the image is the *body*, ‘the words’ are the *soul* of a composition which resorts to the figural only in order to be more effective; the verses themselves are only an auxiliary to the process of communication, delighting the ear so as to touch the heart” (Mathieu-Castellani 1991: 32-33).

6 On the problems of “Iconism” see also *Iconismo* 1976.

sentence reminds readers of the importance of the goal of peace: “Sic pacem habemus”. The verbal text, below the picture, reads:

II *Sic pacem habemus .*
To the High and mightie *IAMES*, King of greate Britaine,



9eillree Anglicus
et Scoticus .
TWOO Lions stout the Diadem uphold,
Of famous Britaine, in their armed pawes:
The one is Red, the other is of Gold,
And one their Prince, their sea, their land and lawes;
Their loue, their league: whereby they still agree,
In concord firme, and friendly amitie.

BELLONA henceforth bounde in Iron bandes,
Shall kisse the foote of mild triumphant PEACE,
Nor Trumpets sterne, be heard within their landes;
Envie shall pine, and all old grudges cease:
Braue Lions, since, your quarrell's lai'd aside,
On common foe, let now your force be tri'de.

Vnum sustentant gemini Diadema Leones,
Concordes vno Principe, mente, fide.

Fuere iunguntur simili, caeloque, gloque,
Nata quibus Pax hac inviolanda manet.

Qae

III. I

Two Lions stout the Diadem uphold,
Of famous Britaine, in their armed pawes:
The one is Red, the other is of Gold,
And one their Prince, their sea, their land and lawes;
Their loue, their league: whereby they still agree,
In concord firme, and friendly amitie.

Bellona henceforth bounde in Iron bandes,
 Shall kisse the foote of mild triumphant PEACE,
 Nor trumpets sterne, be heard within their landes;
 Envie shall pine, and all old grudges cease:
 Braue Lions, since, your quarrell's lai'd aside,
 On common foe, let now your force be tri'de.

This written text is clearly meant as a guide to the beholder of the drawing. In fact, I detect in the verbal element a binding indication to perceive in the picture the meaning of the central themes of the verse: i.e. the *unity* of the kingdom (in the icon of the single crown), and the *cooperative duality* of its elements, i.e. the formerly separate countries of Scotland and England, represented by the two lions⁷. The widely accepted implication of the lion as a symbol of strength and nobility (a mainstream cultural “topos”), determines its choice for the picture and is explicitly verbalized in the adjective “brave” and in the noun “force” in the two concluding lines. By then “brave” and “strong” have become the synonyms of royalty for the discerning reader. Moreover, in orthodox Stuart ideology the crown is meant to stand as the equivalent of what is verbalized in lines 4-5 (i.e. “Prince, sea, land, lawes, loue, league”). The crown is a symbol which corresponds to the verbal metonymy of royalty represented by the nouns in lines 4 and 5. Therefore we can say that the picture acts as a symbolic shorthand for what has to be listed and itemized in the words.

This text clearly shows that Peacham's verse, unlike that of his contemporary Francis Quarles (*Emblemes*, 1635) can seldom stand on its own, and often needs the support of an illustration. But the opposite is also true, and pictures need a verbal guideline in order to be fully decoded. The emblem we are discussing can therefore be taken as an example of almost perfect semantic integration of the verbal and linguistic codes. Such semantic correspondences make the meaning highly predictable and even “redundant” according to information theory (Moles 1966, Eco 1976, Lyons 1977). In

⁷ The gloss in margin of the first six verses leaves no doubt as to the identity of the sovereign(s): “Scilicet Anglicus et Scoticus”. At the bottom of the page a latin sentence sums up the “moral of the fable”: “Unum sustenant gemini diadema Leones, Concordes uno Principe, mente fide. – Foedere iunguntur simili, coeloque, saloque, Nata quibus Pax hac inviolanda manet” (Peacham 1612: 11).

fact, the dominant ideological predicament of the text results from the “repetition” of a message that allows no room for equivocation or misunderstanding. Let us notice that the verses 7-10 expand the meaning of the picture by including personification and allegory (“Bellona bound in iron bands, shall kisse the foote of mild triumphant peace... Envie shall pine”). But this expansion does not change the global meaning of the emblem. On the contrary, authorial intention significantly creeps in, in order to ensure that the picture is decoded “correctly”.

De Morte, et Cupidine.

173



DEATH meeting once, with *CVPID* in an Inne,
Where roome was scant, together both they lay.
Both wearie, (for they roving both had beene,)
Now on the morrow when they should away,
CVPID Death's quiver at his back had throwne,
And *DEATH* tooke *CVPIDS*, thinking it his owne.

Hoc idem habet
Whitmanus in
Embl: quod bona
cum illius venia
ab Autiore etiam
mutatis iam.

By this o're-fight, it shortly came to passe,
That young men died, who readie were to wed:
And age did revell with his bonny-lasse,
Composing girlonds for his hoarie head:
Invert not Nature, oh ye Powers twaine,
Give *CVPID'S* dartes, and *DEATH* take thine againe.



Latet

III. 2

Having said this, it may then be useful to take into account John Austin's observations on illocutory intentions (Austin 1962), and

suppose that the illocutory intentions of *the painter* have been expressed by *the poet* in a complex semiotic act. We should not, in so doing, forget the fact that the author of the emblem who is using two codes at the same time is a single person; and yet the main point I wish to make is that what Austin would call “securing the uptake” of illocutionary markers on the part reader-beholder justifies and explains the function of the verbal text. In other words, in this particular text the verbal element reiterates the meaning of the pictorial with no significant contradiction or modification.

The *Second Emblem* I want to look at is on page 173 of *Minerva Britanna*⁸ (see *ill.* 2). It bears the Latin title “De Morte, et Cupidine” and expresses a prevailing epistemic view: i.e. the sense of the “mutability” of life and the baroque idea of “the world upsidedown”. The abolition of the difference between Love and Death’s prerogatives is depicted in this emblem with unequivocally “apocalyptic” tones. Significantly the verbal text closes with the narrator’s plea “Invert not Nature, oh ye Powers twaine”. The verses read:

DEATH meeting once, with CUPID in an Inne,
Where room was scant, together both they lay.
Both wearie, (for they roving both had beene,)
Now on the morrow when they should away,
CUPID Death’s quiver at his back had throwne,
and DEATH took CUPIDS, thinking it his owne.

By this o’re-sight, it shortly came to passe,
That young men died, who readie were to wed:
And age did revell with his bonny-lasse,
Composing girlonds for his hoarie head:
Invert not Nature, o ye Powers twaine,
Giue CUPID’S dartes, and DEATH take thine againe.

8 In the margin, Peacham acknowledges his debt for this subject (or perhaps for his expertise in the art of emblem-making) to the work of a “Whitnaeus”, almost certainly Geoffrey Whitney, author of *A Choice of Emblems* (Leyden, 1586). Whitney’s faith in the emblem as an effective instrument of moral improvement derives from his knowledge of Seneca’s epistles and more broadly corresponds to a general Renaissance evaluation of art as a road to “virtus” (the opposite view was, of course, also held, implying that poetry had a corrupting effect, being “false”). Peacham’s emblem is in line with a positive evaluation of art, as well as with another prevailing epistemic view: i.e. the sense of the “mutability” of life.

Gérard Genette has brilliantly dealt with “l’univers réversible” of baroque aesthetics (Genette 1966: 9-20). His pronouncement on “l’ame baroque, qui se cherche et se projette dans le fugace et l’insaisissable, dans le jeux de l’eau, de l’aire et du feu” may seem rather abstract in relation to Peacham’s realistic pen. But, Peacham’s fear that Death may take Cupid’s role and deprive youth of its pleasures is indeed a tribute to baroque “reversibilité”, as well as sort of layman’s “memento mori”. His “reversal of roles” testifies to a widespread sense of fear of bodily injury and fascination with the paradox of “life in death” and “death in life”. The tree of life that appears at the centre of the picture is significantly deprived of its leaves, and therefore seems to be a symbol of sterility, and yet the leaves of grass that flourish underneath the tree may imply a near awakening of nature’s powers in the Spring. The tree serves the purpose of neatly cutting in two symmetrical halves the pictorial space, which is taken up equally by the scenes of a young man dying because of Cupid’s “inverted” dart, and of an old man embracing a youthful maiden, under Death’s “inverted” blow. Moreover, time categories are ignored in pictorial representation, since the scene of the sleeping partners in the foreground is given as simultaneous to that of their subsequent activity the next day. According to well established Mediaeval codes of iconic representation we can, of course, interpret the pictorial *foreground* and *background* as the correlatives of a *before* and *after*, as a present and a future in time (and *viceversa*). The verbal message, which seems almost a miniature tale or ballad, is also divided into two halves, which split narration in two different times: the moment before and the one that follows the fatal exchange of Love and Death’s “weapons”. The first six lines are devoted to the “action” and the four that follow, starting with the explicit narrative shift “it shortly came to passe” are devoted to the consequences of the “action” proper.

There is, however, a significant discrepancy between the verbal and the iconic message, which causes a certain degree of indeterminacy in the global message of the emblem. The “scant room” in which Cupid and Death allegedly met is an Inn in the verbal narrative; but the picture subverts such spatial codification, and suggests, as we have said, the open space of a field. What is the reader-beholder to interpret then? Shall he believe his/her eyes or ears? Is truth in pictures (as a commonplace that has survived as

far as our times tells us, when it asserts that “a picture equals a thousand words”?) or are words (especially if written) the surest signs of truth? This dilemma is of course central to a whole philosophical tradition involving the choice of a visual *versus* a verbal epistemic model of cognition. It was a central dilemma in the Renaissance when “seeing” and “believing” were normally taken as synonyms, and yet when anamorphic distortions also seemed to challenge this principle. Holbein’s painting of “The Ambassadors”, with its anamorphic shape of the skull, which has fascinated Jaques Lacan, and with him recent psychoanalytical criticism, is an eminent example. Trick perspectives fascinated late Renaissance spectators and painters alike. Shakespeare in *Midsummer Night’s Dream* has eloquently focussed on “the parted eye” of the lover, the madman and the poet. The mainstream and central topos of “the world as a stage” also implies the “theatricality” of the world itself, i.e. of reality as a spectacle (hence visual), and subjectivity as a dramatic role (including both the self as actor and the self as spectator). Having said this, I wish to expand the connection between the verbal and pictorial arts as far as to propose that, in the Renaissance, the coexistence of “classical perspective” with trick perspective in painting is comparable to the simultaneous use of the “syllogism” and of paradox in literature and philosophy (let us think for example of John Donne’s poetry), and of a theological “via negativa” that for many humanists displaced the dogmas of scholasticism, but that for many theologians kept existing side by side with them.

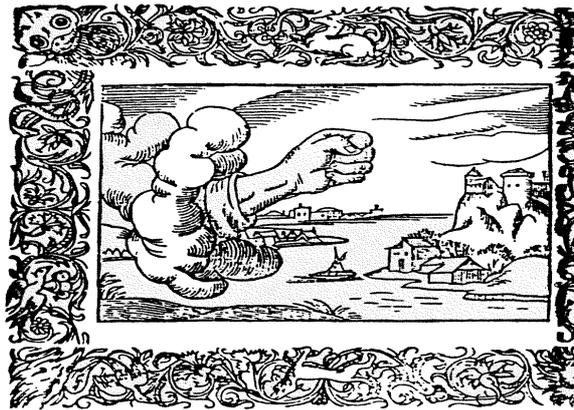
But let me now return to the problem of the double-coding of emblems. The interplay of verbal and iconic signs is a typical textual feature of this type of literature and serves a special purpose. In fact, this interplay, whether integrative (as in the first emblem we have examined) or diversive (as in this and in the one that follows) is meant to increase the power of eloquence and persuasion. In many emblems the “moral” is drawn in the final couplet or lines, after its validity has been forcefully exemplified in the picture and in the narrative.

This takes me to third emblem in the same collection of 1612 (see *ill.* 3). It is headlined with the motto: “Ex Avaritia Bellum”, and reads:

The Hand that gripes, so greedily and hard,
 What it hath got by long unlawfull gaine;
 Withall for Battaile ready is prepard,
 Still to defend, what it doth fast retaine:
 (For wretches some, will sooner spend their bloods
 Then spare we see, one penworth of their goods.)

Of Avarice, such is the nature still,
 Who hardly can endure, to liue in Peace;
 But alwaie prest, to quarrell, or to kill,
 When sober mindes, from such contention cease:
 And seek no more, then quiet and content,
 With those good blessinges, which the Lord hath sent.

Ex Avaritia Bellum .



THE hand that gripes , so greedily and hard ,
 What it hath got by long vnlawfull gaine ;
 Withall for Battaile ready is prepard ,
 Still to defend , what it doth fast retaine :
 (For wretches some, will sooner spend their bloods ,
 Then spare we see, one penworth of their goods .)

Of *Avarice* , such is the nature still ,
 Who hardly can endure , to liue in Peace ;
 But alwaie prest , to quarrell , or to kill ,
 When sober mindes , from such contention cease :
 And seeke no more , then quiet and content ,
 With those good blessinges , which the Lord hath se



In this emblem the words seem to subvert the visual meaning of the illustration, yet the narrator's point of view confirms a specific ideological meaning. Diversion stems from the fact that, while the picture shows a prosperous and peaceful landscape, presumably ruled over by the owner of the clenched fist (a symbol of strength), the verse provides a disquieting allegorical reading of the picture itself. Words openly state that what has illegally been gained will be defended at the cost of blood. While the picture seems to dwell on the gain, the words dramatize the loss, by expanding the message into a full moral lesson. The hand's "grip" is said to represent *greed* (rather than lawful *strength*), and while in the verbal text greed is a vice that calls for its own punishment, no such gloomy prospect appears in the illustration. The interplay of codes may therefore lead the reader-beholder to a double response. The decoder may in fact be persuaded by the rhetorical force of the words, and return to the picture for a new reading of it which necessarily contradicts his/her first impression.

There is, of course, another important semiotic issue in the problem of defining the reader-beholder's response. It is the question of point of view, which implies that the decoder of a "double message" may only identify either with the writer (as narrator of the verbal text) or with the painter (as narrator of the iconic text). The pictorial elements in emblems generally have a "classical" perspective, involving the spectator as an outsider who is bound to share the artist's mastery over his/her gaze. The spectator's position is then over-determined by the laws of perspective. On the other hand the writer-narrator keeps his upper position towards the reader through a rhetorical ability involving the use of codified and mainstream semiotic devices of sense production. Rhetorical elements such as personification and allegory (which we find in both the first emblem and in this one) had become much more than just "figures": they had fostered a cognitive style throughout the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance. Peacham's use of colours is significant in this respect. Even though *Minerva Britannia* was not printed in colours, Peacham refers to his use of colours in the original drawings (i.e. in the copy of the Emblems he gave the Prince). I believe that this choice was not merely a display of richness and variety, but also a specific example of the activation of a widespread allegorical habit. That colours proved essential in the cre-

ation of the emblem's meaning is confirmed by John Horden's remark that (Horden 1969):

In Minerva Britannia Peacham refers to colours in a way that suggests he expected their significance to be readily appreciated. Deceit wears a golden coat (47);
Beauty is crowned with a garland white as snow (58);
Choler is yellow and has a shield charged with flames upon a crimson field (128);
in the ICON PECCATI the central figure is black (146).

Clearly, Peacham, just like any baroque poet or painter, relied on the stock responses that figures such as personification and allegory could bring about in his own times. These culture specific practices almost automatically "made sense" to his readers, and we should not be surprised to find these rhetorical figures in our emblem(s). Incidentally, this means that we are prevented from attributing to the reader and the interpretative moment priority over authorial expertise and creativity, since the creative element, particularly in emblem literature, is clearly meant to match the reading process. Instead of overrating the role of the reader in the semiosis of the early modern emblem⁹ we should be able to perceive the prevalent balance (in terms of relevance) between reader and writer in Renaissance literature. This balance is corroborated by the fact that reader and writer generally belonged to the same intellectual community, and had a reciprocal, albeit often unspoken, pact of mutual recognition.

I have spoken above of Peacham's recourse to "stock responses", but I do not wish to ignore the fact that the role of the reader of the emblem is also a personal and active role, obviously related to his/her hermeneutic competence. However, interpretation is never entirely subjective (in the sense of the reader's unchecked interpretative sway). This holds true for both the emblem and for early Protestant Literature of the same age to which the category of a radically "subjective" reading is frequently and hastily extended without due recognition of the conscious use and knowledge of hermeneutic tradition among Sixteenth Century readers, in the process of Biblical, Theological and Literary interpretation. In this

⁹ I would certainly soften Daniele Borgogni's main contention on the priority of the role of the reader in Emblem Literature (Borgogni 1998: 99-117).

sense, for example, the third emblem we are discussing could (and still can) be read globally as a sort of “micro-morality”, a spectacle involving the personification of Virtues and Vices¹⁰. The narrator’s “omniscient” point of view ensures a specific meaning to the tale, by putting an end to the virtual drift of meaning caused by the discrepancy between icons and words. Let us not forget that in our previous emblem as well it was the narrator who was also the speaker of the plea to Cupid and Death.

Mathieu-Castellani suggestively writes that: “Unlike allegory which metamorphoses a notion into a character – Jealousy, Death, Youth – the emblem transforms a character into an idea. Dido-suicide or Phoenix-immortality”. This view seems a bit reductive, since the formula “idea>character” for allegory and “character>idea” for the emblem does not sufficiently acknowledge the complexity of each. First of all, allegory can be used in emblems, like any other trope, and yet it cannot be reduced to a single rhetorical figure. It is a lot more, i.e., it is also a signifying process, which implies a specific reading practice. The effects of allegory must be perceived through the whole allegorical text, both within and beyond its elements, in the global reality of their relationships, and in the prevalent cognitive style of the age. What I have just said of allegory is also true of the emblem, whose effects are not easily summarized in a formula (not even in the “sententia” that generally represents the emblem title or heading). In fact, I hope to have shown that the verbal and iconic element tend to illustrate and confirm each other in the most ideologically “straightforward” texts, while they can even contradict each other in texts that do not simply make one point, but that have the semantic poliphony of the poetic dimension. In other words, the interplay of the verbal and the graphic dimensions, far from being fixed, oscillates in such a way as to valorize difference *vis à vis* predictable cultural information.

10 Significantly, Henry Peacham writes that the purpose of his emblems is “to feede at once both the minde and the eie, by expressing mystically and doubtfully, our disposition, either to Love, Hatred, Clemencie, Justice, Pietie, our Victories, Misfortunes, Grieffs, and the like” (Peacham 1612).

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