

ALVAN BREGMAN

# EMBLEMATA

*The Emblem Books of*  
ANDREA ALCIATO  
A LEAF BOOK



WITH EIGHT NEW EMBLEMS  
BY HENRICUS DE NOVA VILLA

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## Introduction

During the late Renaissance, the most famous professor of law in all of Europe was Andrea Alciato (1492–1550) of Milan. Alciato was also a leading humanist, someone who studied, explained and emulated the great Greek and Roman writers of the classical era. Almost accidentally, he was responsible for creating a whole new genre of publication consisting of text and image, known as the emblem book. Alciato's emblems were built upon the Latin epigrams he liked to write as a learned pastime. In fact, many of these epigrams were translations or close imitations of poems found in the newly recovered and extremely popular *Greek Anthology*. Because Alciato was a formidable scholar, his epigrams were highly allusive and they readily lent themselves to study and commentary; but his Latin poems were also witty and elegant. In a spirit of learning and amusement, Alciato coined for his epigrams a new name from the Greek, *emblemata*, referring to a kind of decorative inlay used by artisans to embellish their creations.

A manuscript containing 104 of Alciato's epigrams found its way to Augsburg, a free city within the Duchy of Bavaria,



where a well-established printer, Heinrich Steyner, published them in 1531. Steyner had simple woodcuts made to illustrate most of the poems, and thus was born the first *Emblematum liber*, or Book of emblems. It was a modest and even crude piece of printing, but its success was immediate. In 1535, a more carefully prepared edition was issued by Christian Wechel of Paris, with better woodcuts and with nine new emblems. A second set of epigrams by Alciato, accompanied by illustrations, was issued by the "sons of Aldus" in Venice, in 1546. The canon of what we think of as Alciato's emblems began to be established when these collections were brought together shortly before their author's death at mid-century. However, the shape of the work as we know it today was not completely finalized until 1621. Along the way, scores of editions of Alciato's book of emblems were published: in the 16th and 17th centuries, more than 175 separate editions have been identified. Different printers in different countries using different artists vied with each other for a share of the Alciato emblem market.

At the same time, translators contributed new versions of Alciato's epigrams, and imitators published their own books of emblems. It has been estimated that more than 2000 different emblem books were issued in the two centuries in which the genre was at its height. A large secondary literature has grown up to describe the history, form and content of these emblem books, providing surveys of the field or concentrating on thematic, artistic, national or linguistic particulars. In my brief account of Alciato's books of emblems I have drawn widely from this literature. Readers wishing further information or analysis on any point are urged to consult the fine books and articles cited in the bibliography.

Surprisingly, however, there are few books in English devoted to Alciato or to his emblems. The most comprehensive is Henry Green's bio-bibliography, *Andrea Alciati and his books of emblems*, dating from 1872. The standard full-length biography is still Paul Émile Viard's *André Alciat, 1492-1550*, published in 1926, and written in French. A new biography has long been promised by Roberto Abbondanza, who wrote the important entry for Alciato in the *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* (1960). The biographical dictionary, *Contemporaries of Erasmus* (1985) contains a very useful entry on Alciato by Virginia W. Callahan. There is a collection of Alciato's letters, all in Latin, edited by Gian Luigi Barni, published in 1953. Collections of critical essays have been published, such as the festschrift for Virginia Woods Callahan, *Andrea Alciato and the emblem tradition*, edited by Peter M. Daly (1989). But I believe no separate overview of Alciato's life and writings exists, and I have shaped my text accordingly. In sketching Alciato's life and times, my account follows Viard, supplemented by material added from later sources. Throughout, I have tried to show just how vital the life of a humanist scholar could be, how the serious study of a venerated past was constantly disrupted by war, plagues, salary disputes, politics and ambition. I have also hinted at the lively friendships and jealousies between scholars, the ungoverned nature of publishing and the printed text, and the excitement of discovering ancient texts and creating new ones.

I have done my best to remember that this is a leaf book, perhaps the first to be derived from an emblem book, there being none such listed in John P. Chalmers's "A checklist of leaf books" (2005). I have tried to make my text relevant to those who primarily want to understand the context of the



original leaf that is inserted in each copy. Most readers, I think, will appreciate knowing about the life of the author and the printing history of the work from which the leaf is taken. I suspect, too, that most readers will focus on the illustration alone because the Latin text that surrounds it will be impenetrable to all but a few. Because of this, I have tried to emphasize that any illustration in an emblem by Alciato was created independently from the originating Latin epigram, and yet became inseparable from it, as the work developed. In all the editions of Alciato's emblems, the most stable feature is the Latin text of any given emblem, not its illustration, not the layout of the page, not the order or choice of emblems included, not even the size of the book, which could be quite modest or enormously swelled with commentary and critical apparatus. Translations have been provided for all the titles and epigrams of emblems mentioned in my text. These are derived from Alciato's 'Book of Emblems': *The Memorial Web Edition in Latin and English* <http://www.mun.ca/alciato/comm.html>, the brain-child of long-time Alciato scholar, William W. Barker.

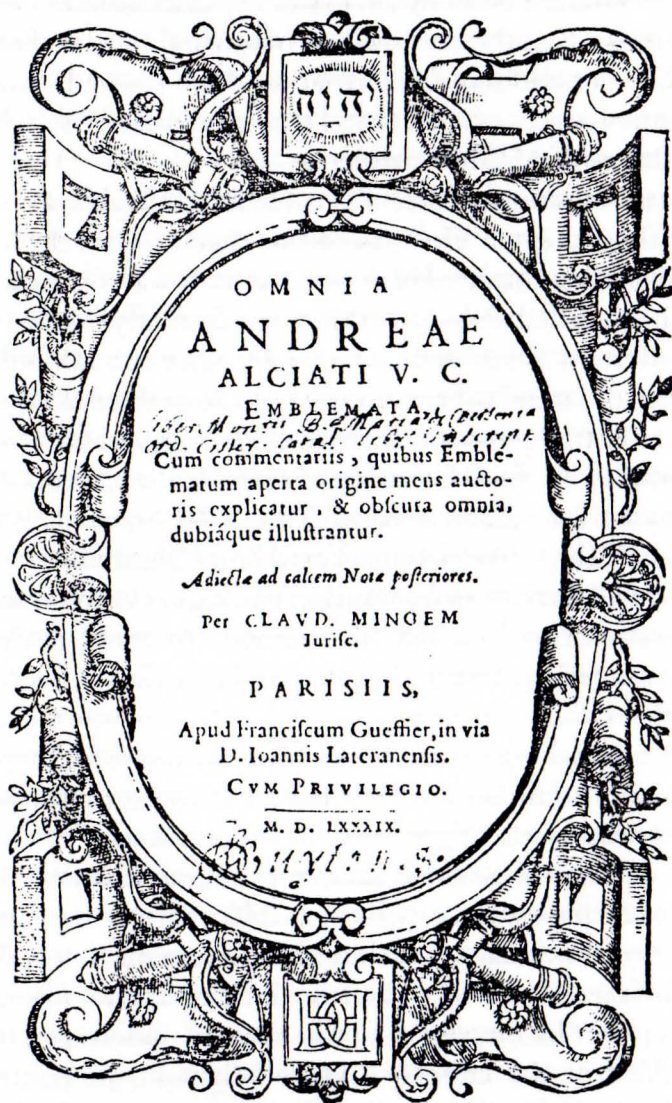
In recounting the publishing history of Alciato's book of emblems, I have again made use of Henry Green's *Andrea Alciati and his books of emblems*, still the only full-scale bibliography of Alciato's emblems. However, the most important strain of publication took place in France, and these publications are now excellently described by Alison Adams, Stephen Rawles and Alison Saunders in *A bibliography of French emblem books of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (BFEB) which provides bibliographical descriptions and illustrations of title pages and layout (Adams, Rawles and Saunders 1999, I, pp. 8–118). References will be given to the Green and BFEB entry

numbers for the editions discussed. My discussion in chapter three is based on the examination of original copies wherever possible. For additional information, Alison Saunders (1988: 97–106 and 2000: 23–29) has lucid presentations of the publication history of Alciato's emblems.

The numeration of Alciato's emblems is complex, as I show in the third chapter. The 1589 edition that supplied the leaves for this edition consisted of 211 emblems. It was not until 1621 that the so-called obscene emblem was formally reinserted in the collection as emblem number 80. Since the 1621 edition supplies the standard numeration of the emblems for most modern critical purposes, there can be a considerable amount of confusion in the referencing of individual emblems if one has any earlier edition in hand (Tung 1986: 319–321). For example, all the emblems numbered 80 or higher in our 1589 edition will have an entry number one higher in the standard numeration based on the 1621 edition. To avoid confusion with numbering, I have chosen to refer to the emblems by their titles.

The original leaves are taken from an imperfect copy of *Omnia Andreae Alciati V.2. Emblemata, cum commentariis, quibus Emblematum aperta origine mens auctoris explicatur, & obscura omnia, dubiaque illustrantur. Adiectæ ad calcem Notæ posteriores. Per Claud. Minoem; Iurisc.* (All the emblems of the very famous man, Andrea Alciato, with commentaries which reveal the origin of the Emblems, explain the thinking of the author, and clear up all obscure and doubtful matters. Additional notes are added at the end. By Claude Mignault, Jurisconsult.) Parisiis, Apud Franciscum Gueffier, in via D. Ioannis Lateranensis, M.D.LXXXIX (In Paris, by François Gueffier, St. John Lateran Street, 1589). I have described the main characteristics





of the edition in its place in Chapter three. The copy used lacks twenty leaves and seven illustrations. The missing leaves are: 11.8 (text only); L4.5, *Omnia mea mecum porto* (I carry all my things with me); P1,2, *In temerarios* (Against the reckless); R3.6, R4.5, *Garrulitas* (Chattiness); S3, *Tumulus meretricis* (The tomb of a prostitute); Dd6, Dd7, Dd8, *Fortuna virtutem superans* (Fortune overcoming virtue); Ee6, Ee7, Ee8, *In momentaneam felicitatem* (On brief happiness); Ff8, *Semper praesto esse infortunia* (Misfortunes are always at hand); Ccc4.5 (text only).

There are two early handwritten ownership inscriptions on the title page, and further inscriptions on the front free-fly leaf. There is no handwriting in the margins of the remaining leaves. Three tracks of wormholes, often affecting text, run from the rear endpapers through the rear matter of the copy, as far forward as leaf Aaa3. These wormholes thus do not affect any of the leaves used for this leaf book. The original binding was simple vellum. On the spine, handwritten in ink, was the inscription: "Alciati / Emblemata. [rule] 1589. [rule] Parisijs [rule]". The remains of two leather fore-edge ties were evident at the time the book was disbound. These remains of the binding and all leaves not distributed in this edition have been deposited in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for the benefit of researchers.

#### A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

An emblem is usually defined as consisting of three parts, (1) a brief heading or title, variously called the motto, *inscriptio* or *lemma*; (2) a picture or illustration, called the *pictura*; (3) and a moralizing, descriptive or explanatory text, called the *sub-*



*scriptio*. There has been much debate on the right terms to use for these parts ever since commentary on emblems began. In this book, for the sake of simplicity, the heading or motto for each emblem is called the "title"; the pictorial part of the emblem is called the "illustration"; and the text is called the "epigram", because that is the kind of poem that Alciato was writing. Any reference to an "emblem" refers to an entity made up of all three parts. In particular, I have tried to maintain the distinction between the epigram written by Alciato and the emblem which it became when an illustration was added to it.

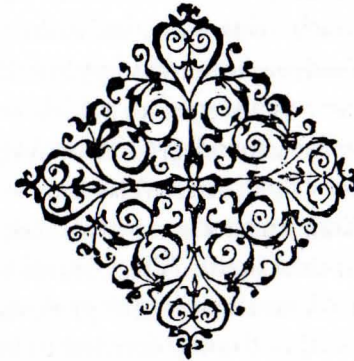
#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I started this project, I had the good fortune to be able to attend an eight-session seminar on emblem books held at the Newberry Library's Center for Renaissance Studies. The seminar was led by Professors Mara Wade of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Daniel S. Russell of the University of Pittsburgh. I would like to thank them and their graduate students for enthusiastic, stimulating and scholarly discussion, and for their general encouragement. Thanks also go to the staff of the Newberry Library for their courtesy and learned assistance. To my own institution, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, I owe the privilege of an eight-month research leave. While I was away, working on this text, my colleagues at the Rare Book and Manuscript Library covered for me amid the disruption of comprehensive renovations. To these colleagues, Valerie Hotchkiss, Bruce Swann, Gene Rinkel and Jane Somera, I offer a thousand thanks. Henry Morris shepherded me along with genial but firm advice and keen attention to detail: it was a pleasure to work with him on this project.

Thanks above all go to my wife, Caroline Haythornthwaite, who helps in every way.

#### A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

The illustration used as a decorative element at the beginning of this Introduction is Emblem 41: UNUM NIHIL, DUOS PLURIMUM POSSE (One can do nothing, but two can do much.) I think it well describes the making of this book, which exists because of the efforts of two. Neither could have produced it without the other. Alvan is represented by the figure on the left; Diomedes, esteemed for the sharpness of his mind. I am the guy on the right, Ulysses, who has the power of the Press. Just the mind, or only the hand, could not have successfully produced this book.







## Andrea Alciato: Life and Works

Andrea Alciato was born on May 8, 1492, in the territory of Milan. The family home was in the vicinity of Alzate, near Como. Not much is known about Andrea's father, Ambrogio, but he was a prosperous merchant from an old family with pretensions to nobility, who served for a time as a Milanese ambassador to the Republic of Venice. Andrea's mother, Margharita Landriana, was from an even more important Milanese family. Andrea, who was apparently an only child, therefore had many advantages, to which he added his own talents, proving to be a prodigy of learning. But the times themselves were troubled, since Italy was soon to become a battlefield, and Milan and its territories frequently involved in warfare and political strife. This situation was to have a definite impact on Alciato's civic and professional life.

In 1494, Charles VIII of France decided to invade the Italian peninsula to enforce his claims to the Kingdom of Naples. The Duchy of Milan, along with other states in the north of Italy, facilitated the French advance, which quickly occupied Naples. A side-effect of the invasion, however, was the complete destabilization of the states of Italy. The Medici were driven out of Florence, which came for a time under the con-

trol of the mystical and populist friar, Girolamo Savonarola. Louis XII, who succeeded Charles VIII in 1498, declared himself to be the hereditary Duke of Milan, as well as King of Naples, and enforced this declaration with another invasion of Italy the following year. The French controlled Milan until 1512, when they were evicted by the so-called Holy League, made up of Ferdinand II of Spain and the Holy Roman Emperor, Maximilian I, among others, and led by Pope Julius II. Louis XII died in 1515, and his son, François I, retook Milan. In 1519, the new young King of Spain, Charles V, was also elected to become the Holy Roman Emperor. The Duchy of Milan, like so many other unfortunate Italian states, was to be a deadly playground for all these mighty monarchs and their successors. Such, in brief, was the political situation in which Alciato grew up and somehow thrived.

Between 1504 and 1506, when he was in his early teens, Andrea studied under Aulus Janus Parrhasius, by whose tutelage he became fluent in Latin and Greek, the mainstays of a humanist education. According to his own later testimony, Alciato also heard lectures by the great scholar, Jean Lascaris, who came to reside in Milan during these years. Upon this foundation, Alciato was to develop a reputation as an exceptionally fine writer and speaker of Latin. In addition, under Parrhasius's influence, the precocious student began collecting Latin inscriptions from monuments around Milan, which he elucidated with a host of information derived from literary sources and legal texts, in order to write a history of the city. Although never completed, this work, entitled *Rerum patriae, sive Historia Mediolanensis*, (Affairs of the fatherland, or the History of Milan) was eventually published in 1625.

In 1508, Alciato went up to the University in Pavia, a city



within the territories of Milan. The University of Pavia is one of the oldest in existence, dating from around the 9th century, and in Alciato's time it was the most important institution of higher learning in northern Italy. It was especially strong in both civil law and canon (religious) law, as well as in divinity. Alciato attended the lectures of the eminent legal scholar, Giasone de Maino (Jason of Mayne), whom he found occasion to mention positively many times in his writings. In one place, Alciato praised Giasone for three great achievements: drawing together scattered sources from ancient authors for the purposes of studying topics in law, driving up the pay received by lawyers in their consultations, and driving up the pay received by professors of law in the universities. This introduces a key aspect in the working life of Alciato, who like so many of his professional colleagues, then as now, was in constant negotiation for improved status and pay with the institutions for which he taught.

Another professor of law at Pavia was Paulus Picus a Monte Pico, about whom Alciato left mixed reports. In his *Parergon*, Alciato wrote that Picus, though poor, refused to do consultations; after reading the first two cases presented in Picus's *Responsa*, Alciato tossed aside the book; but after hearing Picus bravely deliver a lecture that was critical of a standard authority in the face of negative reaction from his audience, Alciato felt compelled to study the issue further and decided Picus was right. Nevertheless, when Alciato included Picus in one of his emblems, *Doctorum agnomina* (The nicknames of the professors), he satirized his old teacher as follows: "He who is obscure and confused, as was Picus, will be named 'The Labyrinth'".

After three years at Pavia, Alciato went, in 1511, to continue

his studies at the Studio, or University, in Bologna, to the south of Milanese territory. During two centuries of strife, the city had been ruled by various factions and states (including Milan). Most recently, in 1506, Pope Julius II had made it one of the Papal States under the control of Rome. The University had a venerable history, dating back to around the beginning of the 11th century. Dante and Petrarch were among its distinguished alumni. Its faculties of law and of rhetoric were exceptional, and were just returning to normal when Alciato arrived. Bologna was also a great center of humanist studies. One of the younger lecturers there was Achille Bocchi, who taught Greek, rhetoric and poetics. Bocchi himself later published an important book of emblems, the first of which includes a homage to Alciato.

According to Boniface Amerbach, who was to become a student and good friend of Alciato as well as the heir of Erasmus, our author had found his three years of general legal studies at Pavia to be "inutile" (useless), and on his own he began to study the *Institutes* of Justinian. The *Institutes* were one of the three major parts of the *Corpus iuris* (Body of law), which the Byzantine Emperor Justinian had made between around 529 and 534 A.D. The project was undertaken by Tribonian, one of Justinian's chief ministers. The *Codex Justinianus* brought together all the laws in force from the time of Hadrian. The *Digest* (known in Greek as the *Pandects*) was a collection of excerpts from the writings of major Roman jurists and established the authority of case law within the legal process. The *Institutes* functioned as a legal textbook for those who were to work with the *Codex* and the *Digest*, but was itself mainly a compilation of previous textbooks also known as "*Institutes*". This was the law that Alciato was studying.



To understand Alciato's project and, indeed, his career, it is important to know a little more about the way the *Corpus iuris* was put together. The *Digests* were "excerpts made from the writings of the ancient jurists who had 'authority to compile and interpret the laws'." Tribonian and his sixteen appointed assistants were expected to choose the excerpts and ensure the consistency of their content, for example, by changing words or rephrasing passages as they thought fit, but Justinian ordered that no commentary whatsoever was to be added to the chosen fragments. The changes made by Tribonian and his assistants were called "interpolations". The extent and effect of the interpolations could be dramatic, even completely changing the sense of the original text. Nevertheless, Justinian insisted that once the *Digest* was complete it was to be transmitted without further textual changes of any kind. Not surprisingly, this rule was "certainly broken, and in later ages the *Digest* has given rise to a greater literature than any other book except the Bible" (Jolowicz and Nicholas 1972: 481-482, 486).

In the middle ages, the texts of the Roman law were subjected to scholastic commentary by the so-called glossators, led by Franciscus Accursius (ca. 1182- ca. 1260) and Bartolus de Saxoferrato (1313-1357). The glossators did exactly what Justinian had forbidden: they added commentary to the books of Roman law. The glossators, being concerned with the law pure and simple, did not look at their texts from literary, philological or paleographic perspectives.

However, in the Renaissance, the rediscovery of classical literature from ancient and medieval manuscripts led to the development of many new linguistic and philological approaches. One of the first and greatest of the philological

scholars, the humanist Lorenzo Valla, was also the first to examine critically the Florentine manuscript of the *Pandects*. This unique manuscript, dating from the late 6th or early 7th century, was the ultimate source of all manuscripts of the Roman law studied in Europe. As a critical philologist, Valla noticed the strange nature of the interpolations which were part and parcel of the *Corpus iuris* and commented upon them (Kelley 1970: 38-41). So, too, did Valla's followers.

Because Accursius and Bartolus were Italians, their approach to the law came to be known as the *mos italicus*. However, it was a Frenchman, Guillaume Budé, who may be credited with initiating the school of legal humanism of which Andrea Alciato was to be the leading proponent. The new approach, principally taught in France, came to be known as the *mos gallicus*. Budé was trained as a lawyer but only came to life as a scholar when he later began to study Greek. In 1508 he published his *Annotations on the Pandects*, which were essentially random notes on the first twenty-four books of the *Digest*. Writing from a professional as well as from a philological perspective, his work was highly controversial to those lawyers who followed the medieval glossators. When Budé eventually came to hear of Alciato's work, which had its origin with his private study of the *Institutes* at Bologna, he wrote to press on Alciato the task of carrying on his work and revealing "the corrupt and hidden meaning of the *Pandects*" (Kelley 1970: 93). With the backing of this famous scholar, and because of his own remarkable abilities as a linguist, lawyer and historian, Alciato went on to become one of the leading jurisconsultants of his day.

In addition to his self-guided study of the *Institutes*, Alciato continued his precocious activity in research and in writing. In



1513, in just fifteen days, he wrote a small treatise entitled *Annotationes in tres posteriores Codicis Iustiniani libros*, (Annotations on the three last books of the Codex Justinianus), which he was to polish and publish in 1515, the year after he received his doctorate in law from the Studio in Bologna. In Alciato's dedication to his friend Philippe Sauli, he says that his goal was to prove the possibility of bringing together knowledge in legal matters and the *studia humanitatis*. The success of that enterprise was to make Alciato famous in his own day.

In 1514, after receiving his doctorate, Alciato returned to Milan, and at the age of 22 began to practice law. Although he was so young, the *Collegium iurisconsultorum*, the Milanese professional association of lawyers, made an exception to their own statutes concerning minimum age, and admitted Alciato to their ranks. His first case involved defending some village women who had been accused of sorcery. For the next four years he was to follow his profession, all the time continuing his study of Roman law. In this period Alciato composed and/or published several notable legal texts, namely, his *Paradoxa*, *Praetermissa*, *Dispunctiones*, and *De eo quod interest liber*.

In the *Paradoxorum ad Pratum Libri VI* (Six books of paradoxes), Alciato discussed and closely defined various terms and phrases that appeared in Roman law but had been misunderstood or misused on the authority of legal writers who lacked philological precision. The *Praetermissa* (Neglected things) was also a work of legal philology, consisting of a list of words, which Alciato carefully defined with reference to ancient writers; it also included a section on Greek words found in the *Digest*. The *Dispunctiones* contained expositions of longer Greek phrases, as well as discussions of Latin texts and laws. In

the last composition, *De eo quod interest liber*, Alciato applied the new critical techniques he was developing to a study of the title (or chapter) of the Codex called "*De sententiis quae pro eo quod interest proferuntur*". As if this level of activity were not sufficient, Alciato had also been at work on editing non-legal texts, and in 1517 he published his *Annotationes in Tacitum* (Annotations on Tacitus).

In 1518, Alciato left Italy, having signed a two-year contract to teach at the University of Avignon. No doubt this opportunity was based on Alciato's strong legal scholarship and reputation as a humanist. In addition, the University looked to hire foreign professors, especially Italians, at least partly in order to keep salaries low. Regardless, Alciato found himself at a vigorous institution with an historically strong faculty of law. The University had been especially important in the years after its foundation in 1303, only three years before Avignon was to become the seat of a series of French popes. The papacy returned to Rome in 1378, but in 1503, Julien de la Rovère, who had been Archbishop of Avignon, became Pope Julius II. He renewed the statutes of the University and encouraged other reforms. Thus, the University of Avignon was experiencing a new period of growth when Alciato arrived (Guenée 1972: 62–63).

On the basis of one single indication in a letter, it is possible that Alciato had recently married, for he complained he was troubled at leaving his wife behind. However, no other record of Alciato having a wife has been found in his correspondence or in other papers. Whatever the reason, Alciato seems to have been restless at first in Avignon, despite the popularity of his lectures. He tried immediately to land a position back in Italy, first at Padua and then at Bologna. Being unsuccessful in



this endeavor, he signed a new two-year contract at Avignon in 1520.

Unfortunately, plague broke out the very next year, in 1521, closing the University. Indeed, plague and warfare—inspired now by politics, now by religion, when these two could be distinguished—were constant partners in disrupting normal routines all throughout Alciato's life, and especially in the 1520's. Alciato was able to return to Avignon in November, 1521, but plague returned the next spring. Not only did the professors leave Avignon again, but so too did the students, and with them, their fees. As a result, the University became unable to pay its bills, and Alciato resettled in Milan in November, 1522. It is assumed that if Alciato had been married, his wife had died during this period of his association with Avignon, for he lived the rest of his life as a single man.

Alciato continued to lobby without success for a position at a leading Italian university, and he also made efforts to receive a pension from the Pope. In the end, he was appointed by the Pope to the hereditary position of Count Palatine in November, 1521. Among his powers would have been "the authority to create notaries and judges, legitimize bastards, [and] name guardians for minors". He would also have the right to confer doctorate degrees (Grendler 2002: 183–185). While these powers did generate an income, Alciato still needed to supplement it by returning to the practice of law.

At around this time, Milan came under the rule of a new Duke, Francesco II Sforza, and the area suffered from the incursions of French troops, who looted and destroyed Alciato's family mansion in December, 1523. As if that were not enough, plague struck Milan with a vengeance in 1524. Military duties would have been consistent with Alciato's status

as a member of the landed gentry, and we are told (Viard 1926: 65) that Alciato may have taken part in the battle of Pavia in February, 1525, in which the imperial army defeated the French and captured their king, François I. He also had to contribute to lodging the Emperor's mercenaries, according to a letter he wrote to Boniface Amerbach in 1526. This shows, I think, just how worldly, engaged, unstable and, indeed, dangerous, the life of humanist authors could be, and how much we should respect their tremendous dedication to scholarship, philosophy and learning.

For in the midst of these troubled times, Alciato remained intensely involved in research and writing. His accomplishments in legal research and writing in the 1520's, while at Avignon and Milan, included work on a commentary on *De summa trinitate et fide catholica* (On the highest Trinity and Catholic faith), a chapter of the *Digest*. He also compiled a treatise called *De ponderibus et mensuris* (On weights and measures), which was actually a topical philological study meant to clarify the often confusing terms of this kind found in Roman law. He began working on a study *De constitutione romani imperii libri duo* (Two books concerning the constitution of the Roman Empire), a long-term project, never completed, which was meant to trace the subject historically up to his own time.

More important from our perspective, he wrote a commentary on the penultimate chapter of the *Digest*, entitled *De verborum significatione*, (On the meaning of words). The introduction to this work includes important statements relevant to an understanding of the *Emblemata*, at which he was at work before 1522. His composition of original Latin epigrams—for that is how the *Emblemata* began their life—was closely related



to his work on translating epigrams from the *Greek Anthology* into Latin: Alciato was a major contributor to the *Selecta epigrammata graeca*, published by Johann Bebelius in 1529. This combination of activities does not appear to be random. Valérie Hayaert (2004) has postulated that the common fragmentary and patchwork nature of ancient legal and epigrammatic texts can be tied to the development of the emblem. (We will consider the importance of the epigram and the *Greek Anthology* to Alciato's *Emblemata* in the next chapter.)

Again on the literary side, Alciato at this time experimented with the drama. He produced a Latin translation of *The Clouds*, by Aristophanes. He tried his hand at his own Greek-style comedy, which was entitled *Philargyrus*, after the name of the main character. The plays were never published.

In 1527, Alciato returned to teach at Avignon, albeit at a reduced salary. He was to be attached to academic institutions for the rest of his life. Avignon was familiar territory, and he quickly put into print many of the projects he had been working on as a lawyer in Milan. In fact, his work on weights and measures was rushed through the press, after he learned of the wide circulation being given to an incomplete manuscript of his book. Fearing this manuscript would soon be pirated, he asked his friend Boniface Amerbach to arrange for Froben, the great printer of Basel, to publish the complete text. Froben began work, but in 1529, Alciato decided that more corrections were needed, and printing was temporarily halted while he reworked his text. Not much later, in 1530, the incomplete manuscript did surface in print, accompanied by works on the same topic by his mentor, Guillaume Budé, and by the indefatigable humanist and Reformer, Philip Melancthon.

Alciato was upset by this mishap, as he was also to be upset by the inadequate printing of his little book of emblems just a year later. Upset he might be, but probably not surprised, given the wide circulation of books in manuscript, which were often merely unauthorized copies or drafts of works in progress. Indeed, the nature of the printing business at the time made piratical publications all too common. In an international arena where copyright was essentially unknown and national privileges or licenses unenforceable in other states, authors could readily be stripped of control of their work and reputations.

Alciato, in fact, played the game himself, although in a different way. In order to answer some of his critics, who objected to his still controversial application of humanist, philological techniques to the study of law, Alciato wrote a pamphlet in his own defense and published it under the name of his former student, Aurelio Albuzio. Alciato directed his aim at Pierre de l'Étoile and Joannes Longueval, on whose behalf other pamphleteers returned fire, answering not Alciato himself but Albuzio, the reputed author. Perhaps in reparation for this mischief, Alciato published an emblem in his collection under Albuzio's name, "Albutii ad D. Alciatum suadentis, ut tumultibus italicis se subducatur et in Gallia profiteatur", in which the student urges his teacher to leave the chaotic land of Italy for France, an environment conducive to peace and prosperity.

While in Avignon, Alciato wrote a book on the customs and laws pertaining to duelling, *De certamine singulari* (On single combat), which he dedicated to the King of France, François I, on March 1, 1529. The work, which attained significant popularity, was first published in Paris, in 1541; an Italian transla-



tion appeared in 1544, and a French translation in 1550. It became common to add two of Alciato's *responsa*, or legal opinions, as an appendix to the treatise. One dealt with the circumstances when one had to protect one's honor with weapons after being called a liar, the other on distinguishing the provocateur of a duel from the one provoked.

After only two years back at Avignon, Alciato was offered a much better position at the University of Bourges, a small city in central France, about 125 miles south of Paris. The University was quite new, having been founded in 1463 by Louis XI, despite objections from the older institutions in Paris, Orleans and Angers (Guenée 1972: 68–690.) At the time of Alciato's appointment, the University had only just moved into permanent quarters. The Faculty of Law was the most important of its four divisions, and the active recruitment of leading legal scholars, especially humanists such as Alciato, made Bourges a popular choice for students. Alciato described the ceremony with which he was greeted upon his arrival: the students came out to greet him and escort him into the city; townspeople assembled along the route to see the eminent newcomer; at various stages along the way, the procession stopped and formal speeches were given, to which Alciato had to deliver extemporaneous replies. Before taking up his duties as a professor, Alciato was required to deliver a dissertation on the law, which he did to great acclaim. He began his actual teaching at Bourges in April, 1529. He had assumed that his students wanted lectures in the traditional style, following the scholastic methods of Bartolus, and had prepared his course accordingly. But his students were eager for the humanistic approach which made Alciato a star to them, and told him so. He soon complied with their wishes, changed his method of delivery,

and saw his reputation grow. François I came himself to hear Alciato, as did his son, the Dauphin. Jean Calvin transferred from the Université d'Orléans to study law at Bourges in 1531, as did many other eminent students from elsewhere in Europe (Viard 1926: 72–76). One of Alciato's most brilliant students was Viglius ab Aytta who remained a lifelong friend and correspondent. Viglius rose to become a chief adviser of Emperor Charles V and president of the state council of the Netherlands.

Alciato was to spend only four years at Bourges, from 1529 to 1533. This was the period when his *Emblematum liber* appeared in Augsburg, printed by Heinrich Steyner in successive editions. It was also when he met the printer Christian Wechel in Paris and commenced arrangements for that printer to produce a more suitable edition. The sole surviving letter of Alciato to Wechel says no more this than on the subject: "I believed that the task of editing the Emblems has fallen to your lot". Alciato was also investigating the possibility of publishing a little book of Greek words with Wechel, although the title has not been identified (Bühler 1961).

Alciato had other projects while at Bourges. He began to put together his *Parergon*, a compilation of secondary or supplementary works that was to come out in many volumes, the first in 1538. He continued his intensive study of Roman law, and especially the chapter of the Digest entitled *De verborum obligationibus*.

It was not long before Alciato returned to negotiating for a better position back in Italy. He had received an offer from the University of Padua immediately after moving to Bourges, but being just at the beginning of his contract, could not accept. When his first Bourges contract came up for renewal



in 1531, the Padua offer was off the table, so he stayed where he was. Nevertheless, the acclaim he received from his students was not enough to overcome his growing dissatisfaction with his new institution. The city ran into financial difficulties, and Alciato was paid in 1532 only after intercession by the King. His colleagues refused him the right to confer degrees in theology, a right to which he had been accustomed as a Count Palatine in Milan.

Then a campaign began in earnest to bring Alciato to Padua. This was led by one of the outstanding Italian humanists of his day, Pietro Bembo (1470–1547). As a young man, Bembo had written a Platonic love treatise, entitled “Gli Asolani”, dedicated to Lucrezia Borgia, so titled because its setting was a courtly retreat at Asolo. A follower of Dante, Bembo promoted the use of Italian as a literary language, all the while deeply immersing himself in classical learning. Bembo had been the secretary of Pope Leo X from 1512–1520; at the time of his correspondence with Alciato, he was the librarian of St. Mark’s and the official historiographer of the Republic of Venice. He made his home in the Venetian city of Padua, at whose University he, and his father before him, had taken advanced degrees in law. Bembo did his utmost to bring Alciato to the University of Padua. In 1532 he wrote the secretary of the Doge of Venice asking for support, for at first he encountered objections from academics within the University, indicating the extent of Alciato’s reputation: “A number of lecturers are afraid that they will lose half their students if he comes. At the same time Bologna is after him because it knows that it will lose half its students if he goes to Padua.” When the salary to be offered proved too small, Bembo ensured that the sum was increased, even offering to pay part

himself. He assigned his own nephew, Giovan Matteo Bembo, to work at smoothing over diplomatic difficulties (Kidwell 2004: 244–245).

Just as the matter finally seemed to be settled, in July 1533, Francesco II Sforza, the Duke of Milan, insisted that Alciato come home and take up a position to be created for him at Pavia. The Duke was in the process of reopening the University of Pavia, which had been closed on account of the warfare constant in the area since 1524, when the French had attacked the city again, albeit to their own loss. The French had not given up, returning in 1527 and this time sacking Pavia. Once he resumed control, Sforza was determined to reestablish the institutions of his duchy. He used the same “carrot and stick” technique to bring another distinguished jurist, Gianfrancesco Sannazari della Ripa, to Pavia at the same time as Alciato (Grendler 2002: 90–91).

Alciato begged to be allowed to go to Padua, but the Duke threatened to strip him of his patrimony if he did not comply with his wishes. Bembo then prevailed on the Doge of Venice to intercede on Alciato’s behalf, all to no avail. Alciato could do no more than offer his apologies to Bembo, a man who was used to having his way, and who might well have wondered, as did his Paduan compatriots, whether he was being used as a bargaining chip by the famous lawyer. Communications were broken between Bembo and Alciato until April, 1535, when Bembo wrote to thank Alciato for sending him a copy of his “youthful poems”, that is, his book of emblems (Kidwell 2004: 245).

Alciato was rewarded for returning to his Milanese homeland, where the Duke made him a Senator for his troubles. He was to spend the next four years at Pavia, where he was never



content. In April 1534, he complained in a letter to Bembo that, compared to his experience in France, he had fewer honors and fewer people attending his lectures. He found the students at Pavia to be inferior and especially impolite, and he had negative experiences with other professors. On November 1, 1535, Francesco II Sforza died without an heir, and Milan came under the direct rule of Charles V. The turmoil resulted in professors not receiving their pay. The students scattered once more. Alciato wrote to his friend Boniface Amerbach in April, 1536, that where previously he and his colleagues had some 600 students, hardly 100 remained. The University remained depopulated the next year, as well. Finally, in November, 1537, the Emperor closed the University, disregarding the protests of the city governors (Grendler 2002: 90).

While at Pavia, in 1536, Alciato was informed by his friends that a book had been surreptitiously published in Cologne under his name. This was the *Judicarii processus compendium* (Compendium of judicial procedure), a practical treatise on matters relating to trials. It was almost immediately reprinted in other editions and took on a life of its own, thanks to the fame of its putative author. Not much later, Alciato reported that several of his discourses had been published in Paris without his permission (Viard 1926: 96–97). Such was the lot of the scholar in the days when the spread of printing establishments made piracy easy and profitable. There is a certain “wild west” quality about the spread of knowledge and learning, and more often than not the printed form of a work lacked authorial control. This will be essential to keep in mind when we look at the history of the *Emblemata* in a later chapter.

With all the troubles affecting Pavia, Alciato agreed to join his old school, the Studio in Bologna, in August, 1537, even

though traditional approaches to the law were dominant there. For Bologna, however, “a famous name was more important than methodological consistency”, and a large salary was arranged, on top of which came a generous moving allowance. Such offers were made only to scholars with outstanding reputations, the goal being to attract new and especially foreign students (Grendler 2002: 16–18). The city of Pavia tried to prevent Alciato from leaving, referring to his contractual obligations. In addition, the governor of Milan, Cardinal Marino Caracciolo, intervened, and it was not until December, 1537, that Alciato could commence his teaching in Bologna. Alciato was to find students at Bologna to be no more disciplined or polite than they had been at Pavia, but at least the Studio was a fully functioning university, he was amply rewarded financially, and he enjoyed the due respect of his new colleagues. He also saw the publication of the first three volumes of his miscellaneous works, the *Parerga*, during this period.

In 1539, Pietro Bembo, now a Cardinal, referred one of his protégés, Goro Gualteruzzi, to Alciato’s attention, requesting that he accept Goro as a student. Alciato seems to have done so, a modest recompense, one might say, for the efforts that Bembo had expended in vain to recruit the famous law professor for Padua. Later, in 1544, Alciato earned Bembo’s thanks for supporting Goro in matters relating to his dissertation in law at the University of Padua (Kidwell 2004: 248).

At Bologna, Alciato evidently became great friends with Paulo Giovio, who was by profession an historian, but whose scholarly sideline involved collecting and theorizing about the *impresa*, or “device”, a highly compressed and personalized form of picture and motto, which we will examine in more



detail in the next chapter. Green (1964: 17) gives part of a letter that Giovio received from Alciato in October, 1539, in which the lawyer looks forward to going fishing with the historian. Little details in this letter tell us much about the writer. Alciato states that he is "lame in the feet" and he comments on a portrait of himself that is "somewhat more comely in feature than I may be *in reality*". Indeed, another important friend and colleague, the physician and mathematician Girolamo Cardano (1501–1576), later described Alciato as looking like a "bubalina" (buffalo), being portly, with bulging eyes, thick lips, long ears, a big nose and a dark complexion (Viard 1926: 109).

Milan never gave up: for four years the Bolognese had to rely on the support of Pope Paul III to fend off Caracciolo's demands and those of his powerful successor, Alfonso d'Avalos, who wanted Alciato back. When Caracciolo died in 1538, Alfonso d'Avalos, the Marchese of Vasto and of Pescara, one of Charles V's most important generals, became governor. Again, only the Pope could override the wishes of such a man. In 1541, Alciato's shaky tenure at Bologna came to an end when Charles V himself decided that the famous professor should return to Pavia. This time the Bolognese ambassador's petitions to Rome were to no avail.

There were upsides to the return to Pavia for Alciato, whose already substantial salary was again increased. He was also granted a long-requested exemption from participating in public academic disputes, at which professors were normally expected to perform: despite his deserved reputation as a fine Latinist, Alciato had never felt comfortable speaking extemporaneously. This time all might have been well for Alciato

in Pavia, but almost immediately, warfare renewed and the University was closed between 1542 and 1544.

Alciato's next stop was Ferrara, a city on the River Po only 30 miles northeast of Bologna, to which he was invited by the Duke, Ercole II d'Este. The University of Ferrara had itself been rocked by war, but had reopened in 1529. The terms of Alciato's appointment were remarkable:

From the 1540s until 1596, Ferrara had 45 to 50 professors, costing 10,000 to 14,000 lire marchesini. One-third taught law; two-thirds taught medicine, arts, and theology. . . . The most famous legist by far was Andrea Alciato, who taught from 1542 to 1546, initially earning 1,200 gold scudi (equal to 4,260 lire marchesini), a figure that rose to 4,860. His salary in 1542–43 consumed half of the university appropriation and 10 percent of the communal budget (Grendler 2002: 102).

Finally, Alciato felt he had come to rest, for he rejected offers from Padua, which tried once more to entice him, and from Cosimo I de' Medici of Florence, who offered him a chair at the recently restored University of Pisa in 1543. Reacting to critics who accused him of mercenary motives, Alciato delivered a public speech at Ferrara, in which he blamed wars (especially) and the orders of princes for causing him to move so often between universities.

The faith placed in Alciato and his reputation seems to have paid off for the University. Viard (1926: 105–106) reports that Alciato was a great success at Ferrara, that many students followed him there from Pavia and Bologna, and that he at



tracted many new students for himself and for the university. Moreover, he was still in great demand elsewhere. While he was at Ferrara, Pope Paul III offered to make him a Cardinal, in order to draw him to Rome. When Alciato declined, he was appointed a Prothonotary Apostolic, that is, he was given an ecclesiastical rank one step below that of Cardinal, and became a legal advisor to the Pope. Alciato apparently did little in this largely honorary office, although he was consulted in 1548 by Charles V on the question of moving the Council of Trent (near Salzburg, Austria) to Bologna (Abbondanza 1960: 73).

Meanwhile, the political situation in Milan began to sort itself out. Charles V and François I concluded the Peace of Crespy in September, 1544. One of the provisions was that Charles could choose to cede either Milan or Flanders to the French Duke, Charles d'Orleans. The Emperor decided to give up Milan, but when Charles d'Orleans died almost exactly one year later, the obligation expired with him. In 1546, Charles V cemented his claim to Milan by appointing his son and heir, Philip, to be Duke. The new governor of the now stabilized duchy was Ferrante Gonzaga, who almost immediately obliged Alciato to return to Pavia.

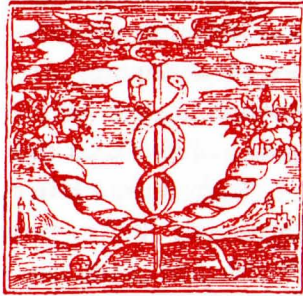
This was to be Alciato's last move. He apparently lost much by his return to Pavia. His salary fell considerably and it was slow to be paid; he had fewer students, who often proved to be insufferably rude; his opportunities and remuneration for legal consultations were reduced. It was said that he had intended to leave his fortune to the University of Pavia, until the behavior of the students there made him change his mind. Alciato began to suffer illnesses of increasing severity, and especially suffered from gout. His final decline began at the

end of 1549 and Andrea Alciato died on January 11 or 12, 1550, in his 58th year. His nephew, Francesco Alciato, inherited his estate and erected a suitable monument in memory of the Jurisconsult of Milan, Prothonotary Apostolic and Senator:

"He completed the whole circle of learning, and was the first to restore the study of the laws to its ancient dignity." Two phrases in Greek flanked the Latin epitaph: the first being the Alciato family motto, "Never procrastinate", and the other declaring "Of the just man the fruit perishes not" (Green 1964: 25).







## Contexts for the Emblem

Andrea Alciato was the author of the first compositions to be entitled “Emblems”. If we look at the earliest printed versions of his work, we will see that each emblem in the collection has three inter-related parts, namely, from top to bottom, (1) a title, (2) an illustration, (3) a descriptive or moralizing verse. It is important to realize, however, that Alciato’s emblems began life as short verses called “epigrams”, unaccompanied by illustrations, and that the *Emblemata* included in Alciato’s complete works, published in his lifetime, were not illustrated. But the illustration within an emblem has always been of keen interest to readers, and for modern readers, especially, the chief charm of the emblem is its illustration. Early writers who described emblems considered the relation of illustration and text and often discussed whether one or the other was the primary element. As we consider the pre-history and development of the genre that Alciato brought into being, we shall see that each element has individual features that, taken together, contribute to the whole.

The word “epigram” in Greek, means “to write upon,” and

the study of inscriptions, which Alciato undertook, is called “epigraphy.” We have seen that, as a boy, Alciato was a keen collector of inscriptions taken from tombs and other monuments in and around Milan. It is thus not surprising that Alciato became interested in the epigram, the literary form of the inscription or epitaph. Though the epigram had freed itself from the monument, it soon became attached to the Greek elegy, which it would often introduce. Eventually, the Romans took over the epigram and made it a brief satirical form, notable for its “point”, or “conceit” (Hutton 1935: 55). Emblems, too, would come to be characterized by some witty conceit (Praz 1964).

Alciato’s study of classical literature led him quickly to become a translator and author of epigrams. Like literally dozens of his contemporary humanists, he turned epigrams from the *Greek Anthology* into Latin. The *Greek Anthology*, in Alciato’s time, referred to the collection of poems made by the Byzantine scholar and monk, Maximus Planudes, in 1301. It included more than 3000 pieces written in Greek as early as the 7th century B.C. and as late as the first half of the 11th century. The complete manuscript in Planudes’ hand was probably brought to Italy by Cardinal Bessarion in around 1460. It is now in St. Mark’s Library in Venice. The first printed edition was edited by Jean Lascaris—with whom Alciato may have studied in Milan—and was published by Lorenzo di Alopa in Florence, in 1494. The first Aldine edition appeared in 1503. While some individual epigrams were known from other sources, the publication of the *Greek Anthology* was a literary and cultural landmark of huge importance. As Hutton (1935: 42) points out, for neo-Latin writers, the period of “liveliest interest in the Anthology falls within a



period extending from 1475 to 1550. . . . They were quoted as evidence for the usages of antiquity; they were commented on . . . ; they were imitated in Greek verse; and they were translated into Latin." Alciato, whose life coincides very closely with this period of high interest in the *Greek Anthology*, made use of the collection in all these ways.

From his youth, Alciato's literary recreations included the translation of Greek epigrams and the composition of Latin epigrams. Some of these translations had made their way into his earliest published works, and in 1525, eleven epigrams were abstracted from these books and reprinted in Cologne by Joannes Soter in a collection entitled *Epigrammata Graeca*. Then, in 1529, Soter's collection was reissued in Basel in a much expanded edition by Janus Cornarius under the title *Selecta Epigrammata Graeca Latine Versa*. This included 165 translations by Alciato, adding 154 to the eleven which Soter had printed. Cornarius got Alciato's poems from a manuscript which Boniface Amerbach had made almost ten years before and taken with him to Basel.

Alciato's epigrams were also put to other uses. On January 9, 1523, Alciato wrote to his friend Francesco Giulio Calvi about a collection of epigrams he had made into a manuscript book:

During this Saturnalia, at the behest of the illustrious Ambrogio Visconti, I composed a little book of epigrams, which I entitled emblems: in separate epigrams I describe something which, from history or from nature, signifies elegantly . . . after which painters, goldsmiths, and metal-workers could fashion the kind of thing we call badges and which we fasten on hats, or use as trademarks, like the anchor of Aldus,

the dove of Froben, and the elephant of Calvus, which is long pregnant, but produces nothing. (tr. Barker and Guthrie)

Alciato's Saturnalian collection contained 100 poems, just four less than were to appear in the first printed edition of his *Emblematum liber* of 1531. Of these, some 40 were translations of epigrams from the *Greek Anthology*, and they had already appeared in Cornarius's *Selecta Epigrammata*. As new compositions were added to printed editions of Alciato's collection over the years, the number based on the *Greek Anthology* grew to 50, making that a source for almost one-quarter of the final count of 212 emblems. But contemporaries associated an even greater number—virtually one-third—of Alciato's emblems as having associations with the *Greek Anthology*. Claude Mignault, who was to be the foremost writer of commentaries on Alciato's emblems, identified 20 additional emblem texts as being translations from the *Greek Anthology*, bringing the number to 70 out of 212, though these additional epigrams are more aptly understood to be imitations, deriving only their subject matter from the Greek poems (Hutton 1935: 204–205).

Among Alciato's translations of Greek epigrams to appear in the *Emblematum liber* is "Impossible" (The impossible), concerning the vain attempt to wash away the skin color of the Ethiopian; "Potentia amoris" (The power of Love), describing the figure of Love, naked, winged and holding flowers and a fish; and "Auxilium numquam deficiens" (Support that is never wanting), whose picture shows a soldier floating in the sea upon his shield. Hutton (1935: 198, 203, 207), who describes these very different epigrams, notes that Alciato used the last in full in one of his inaugural addresses, where he considered



how warfare had caused him to wander, and how his profession allowed him to survive and to return home safely. Such poems clearly have histories and uses not depending on illustrations.

Clearly, too, the subject matter found in the epigrams in the *Greek Anthology* inform to a great degree the subject matter of Alciato's emblems. First, these are classical compositions, and they reflect a world infused with the culture, philosophy, and religion of the ancient world. For a very long time, of course, there had been a project to understand the mythological and ethical constructs of the ancients as precursors of Christian ideals and teachings, and to reconcile those ancient teachings with those of Christianity. This project is known as "syncretism". Many later emblem writers and commentators became intent on composing emblems with meanings and themes that emphasized Christian themes above all others, but in Alciato's emblems we find texts and pictures that primarily reflect their classical origin but do not yet seem specifically Christianized.

Secondly, the epigrams often have what is called an "ekphrastic" function, that is they have the rhetorical goal of providing a detailed verbal description of a work of art, or indeed, "of any object, real or imaginary" (Rusten 1998). Indeed, we saw in the passage quoted above that Alciato had suggested to Calvi that his emblems were designed to help artists and artisans so they could make decorative objects. That is, his emblems, *as texts*, had an ekphrastic function. It seems clear, then, that if the emblems were conceived by their author first and foremost as a collection of texts—albeit texts with strong pictorial implications—we do well not to

overlook these same texts as we appreciate the illustrations that were eventually made to accompany them.

Thirdly, the epigrams of the *Greek Anthology* were gathered together to form a collection. Similarly, the emblem book was from the very first an anthology, that is, a collection of compositions, and as a collection it had several noteworthy but often contrary qualities. The act of collecting frequently brings together disparate objects, in this case poems, created independently, although having similar properties. In addition, the contents of a collection may not be stable. New items may be added, and items may be dropped. For example, the contents of the *Greek Anthology* compiled by Planudes proved to be different from the contents of a rival collection of Greek epigrams known as the *Palantine Anthology*, discovered in the 17th century. The volumes of translations made from the *Greek Anthology* contained different choices of poems as well. In the case of Alciato's *Emblemata*, not only were new emblems added, but the illustrations accompanying the texts were remade frequently. Different commentators wrote additional material to accompany the emblems. The little book of 104 simple illustrated epigrams published by Steyner in 1531 more than doubled in time to become a collection of 212 emblems, ultimately presented in a gargantuan edition, which, including commentary, ran to more than 1000 closely printed pages in 1621.

The contents in a collection may become shuffled. The act of printing a collection of literary/pictorial compositions gives a necessarily sequential order to each individual in the collection. A different printing, however, may fix the order differently. If one reads the contents in order, one or more nar-



ratives or thematic groupings may appear, which may or may not be consciously intended by the collector or editor. In the case of Alciato's emblems, each new enlarged edition involved some shuffling to the order of the emblems. Even in Alciato's lifetime, editions were published that completely rearranged the contents from the order in which they were first published into thematic groupings.

One final implication: an object may easily be taken away from a collection and be considered individually. There is some evidence that some collections of emblems were meant to be broken up and individual emblems used for decorative purposes, for example, to hang on a wall (Russell 1995: 136). The text you are now reading contains a single emblem abstracted from an (admittedly imperfect) whole, a situation not unique in the history of the genre.

A consequence of all this was to make Alciato's book of emblems an evolving project with numerous forms, during the author's life and afterwards. We can legitimately speak in general about Alciato's emblems, but we also need to remind ourselves, at any given point, which object called "Alciato's emblems" we are examining. We will consider the variegated history of Alciato's emblems in detail in the next chapter.

It will be noticed that many of Alciato's emblems illustrate and expound upon proverbs or similar kinds of "sententiae", or sayings. Humanists in the Renaissance were interested not just in Greek epigrams but in all kinds of classical forms, including proverbs. Erasmus of Rotterdam was responsible for compiling the most comprehensive, learned and popular collection of proverbial phrases in Alciato's time. The contemporary importance of Erasmus's *Adages* was immense: "It would be difficult to overestimate the significance of this work

within sixteenth century European culture; for many writers and scholars these *Adages* were the chief source of their knowledge of classical antiquity and they rightly took it for the reference book it claimed to be" (Dresden 1968: 115).

Erasmus's first collection of proverbs appeared under the title of *Adagiorum Collectanea* (Paris: Johann Philipp, 1500). It comprised 818 brief entries for proverbs gleaned from Greek and Latin sources. Erasmus's project was successful from the outset, and his collection grew tremendously in time, both in the number of proverbs that were included and in the amount of commentary he accorded to each entry. Some entries in fact became long essays of the kind that came to be written by Montaigne, who was greatly influenced by the *Adages*. In 1507, Erasmus went to Venice and met Aldus Manutius, the great humanist printer, who was responsible for uncovering and printing a seemingly endless quantity of classical texts for the first time. Through Aldus, Erasmus gained access to a mass of important manuscript material which he used to produce a new edition of his collection now so large, with its 3285 entries, that it was called the *Adagiorum Chiliades*, or, "Thousands of Adages". The large folio volume included many extended entries, including the first version of an important essay on *Festina lente* (Make haste slowly), which was the meaning of the famous dolphin-and-anchor design that Aldus used as his printer's mark beginning in June, 1502. Entries which had previously appeared in the *Collectanea* were frequently expanded with references to additional sources and more commentary. The next really new edition, adding nine long essays among 126 new entries, was published by another leading printer, Johannes Froben of Basel, in 1515. By 1526, the work had grown so much that it was issued under the name of



*Adagiorum opus*. The 1533 edition added almost 500 more proverbs. By the time of Erasmus's death, in 1536, the *Adages* contained 4151 entries.

Erasmus meant his *Adages* to be useful "for philosophy, persuasiveness, grace and charm in speaking, and the understanding of the best authors" (Erasmus 2001: 15). While many of the proverbs in the *Adages* were common expressions in vernacular languages at this time, Erasmus "renews the proverb by giving it back its ancient context" (Barker 2001: xxxi). To this end, Erasmus in his commentaries explains the history, philology and meaning of the proverbs, since their misunderstanding may lead to "monstrous mistakes in both Greek and Latin texts: hence the abominable errors of translators from Greek into Latin; hence the absurd delusions of some writers, even learned ones, in their interpretation of authors, mere ravings in fact" (Erasmus 2001: 17). In his outlook, Erasmus was carrying forward the humanistic enterprise; similarly, Alciato endeavored to recapture the original meaning of Greek phrases scattered in the *Digest*.

In his introduction to the *Adages*, Erasmus defined the proverb as "a saying in popular use, remarkable for some shrewd and novel turn," and he elaborated on each of these characteristics. Proverbs come into popular use from many sources, including the sayings of ancient oracles, sages and poets, found in plays (especially comedies), legends, fables, and historical texts. By the proverb being "shrewd", Erasmus meant that it combined "antiquity and erudition alike". Moreover, "the majority of adages have some kind of metaphorical disguise." This metaphorical disguise may take many forms, including allegory, hyperbole, riddles, allusion, ambiguity, dialect, and humor Erasmus (2001: 5-7).

Alciato and Erasmus were contemporaries, and while they never met, they knew and respected each other. Erasmus referred to Alciato as a "shining light of learning, not only of Law" (*Adages* I v 45), and praised him also in his *Ciceronianus*, a discussion of Latin stylistics (Phillips 1964: 391). Their correspondence was minimal, but Erasmus got news of Alciato through their mutual friend, Boniface Amerbach. When Erasmus died in 1536, Alciato sent Amerbach an epigram that he had written as a eulogy on the renowned man, making reference to his "proverbia" (Viard 1926: 95).

As William Barker nicely illustrates throughout his edition of Erasmus, a good number of Alciato's emblems were the same in subject or treatment as certain entries in the *Adages*. Even a small familiarity with Alciato's emblems allows us to see that they not only illustrate certain proverbs, but they resonate with all the qualities that Erasmus defined for the proverb. They bring the wisdom, culture and sparkle of antiquity to life in a highly stylized, varied and metaphorical way. And what could be more "shrewd and novel", to use Erasmus's terms, than the combination of text and picture we find in the emblem? Moreover, like Erasmus's proverbs, emblems by Alciato and others were soon recruited into the educational curriculum.

Another similarity one can notice between Erasmus's *Adages* and Alciato's emblems is that they both grew as collections, and appeared initially by design to have no order in their sequence of presentation. Concerning these works of Erasmus, Alciato (and others), Barker (2001: xxi) notes that in their "continuing expansion, we see a tendency of Renaissance literary culture that was by that time a feature of literary production in general. Writers seem helpless in the face of the



work. It is as though it gains a momentum of its own, and the author must now follow the work, not lead it.” It is also true that both collections had order imposed on them by editors and printers, in the form of indexes, the application of topical ordering, and other means. Finally, the individual components of these works are meant to be separable: Erasmus wished that writers would borrow from his *Adages* to adorn the style or force of argumentation; Alciato imagined that artists would use his emblems in applying decoration to their work.



When Alciato’s emblems were first printed by Heinrich Steyner in 1531, they were accompanied by simple woodcut illustrations each more-or-less appropriate to the subject of the epigram. New woodcuts were then made for Parisian printer Christian Wechel, who issued an edition in 1534 that was authorized by Alciato himself. The woodcut lent itself to the printed book because it could be inserted into the type form and printed along with the text. Even though engravings came to be generally used for book illustration towards the end of the century, the woodcut was to remain the medium of illustration for all editions of Alciato’s emblems in the period we are considering.

Woodcut illustrations had been used in a number of ways in early printed books. A basic use of illustrations—a carryover from the manuscript tradition—was to mark the division of the text into sections. In such cases, the image could be fairly generic and might be reused from another book or used more than once in the same work. A second use was to facilitate the understanding of the text by making clear pictorially what might be difficult to explain only in words. These images

needed to be representational. Some illustrations had an aesthetic purpose, especially when commissioned by printers who took great pains about the way their product looked (Chatelain and Pinon 2000: 242, 248).

Whatever the reason for the inclusion of images in printed books, the number of editions that might be illustrated was small. It has been estimated that only 20% of printed books issued between 1530 and 1570 were illustrated. Of these, most were deluxe editions, and frequently illustrations appeared only in the *second* editions of works that had proved themselves popular enough to warrant the extra investment required to have cuts made. Religious books, such as books of hours, saints’ lives, Psalters, and Bibles, were by far the most likely to be illustrated. Emblematic books—which included collections of devices as well as emblem books, armorial books, books illustrating royal entries and festivals, and numismatic books—constituted the second most important category of illustrated book in this period. Next came books of architecture and science, history, voyages, fables and mythological works. Finally, works of fiction, classical works, encyclopedias, and technical works, including atlases, might be illustrated (Pastoureau 1982: 501, 505).

Of course, before 1531 there were no emblem books at all, but there were illustrated books that might be called “proto-emblematic”. These illustrated precursors of emblem books have been thoroughly studied. Daniel Russell has provided a remarkably cogent survey of the subject in his fine book, *Emblematic Structures in Renaissance French Culture*. Among the earliest types of illustrated books that foreshadowed emblems were the so-called *bibles moralisées* and *biblia pauperum*, along with other species of religious books; medieval besti-



aries, which developed into illustrated books of fables, and herbals; illustrated books of proverbs and sayings; illustrated verse paraphrases of Petrarch's *Trionfi*; and "Dance of Death" books. There were also individual editions of printed works, such as *The ship of fools* or Erasmus's *In praise of folly* that had features that foreshadow the emblem book.

As identifiably unique a genre as the emblem book came to be, from the start it took advantage of features that were familiar to readers of these other kinds of books. In the design of the scores if not hundreds of entries that made up a given emblem book, these different traditions were drawn upon as occasion and inspiration permitted. Like its imitators, Alciato's book of emblems became an anthology of illustrative and interpretative strategies, in which, by their proximity, the different strategies tend to rub off on and enrich each other. From each choice and combination we may discover a new way in which emblems could be understood.

Particularly important, from a number of perspectives, were the traditions represented by bestiaries, fables, herbals and natural histories, since Alciato's collection contains a very large number of emblems that feature animals or plants. Each of these traditions was rooted in some species of classical text which had become the subject of illustration, particularly in the Middle Ages. These genres, with their increasingly interdependent combination of text and illustration, clearly foreshadow or help explain the way emblem writers and artists worked up their subjects.

Classical works, such as Pliny's *Natural history* and Aristotle's *Historia animalium*, attempted to provide objective accounts of the creatures in the natural world, but were filled with fabulous and unverified information. Bestiaries were

works that enumerated and commented upon the properties of birds and beasts. The most important antecedent of the bestiaries was the *Physiologus*, originally written in Greek, but known from the 4th century in Latin versions. The *Physiologus* contained discussions of real and imaginary creatures and differed from purely natural histories in that the entry for each animal was intended to illustrate some moral or spiritual concept. Emblems, too, tended to present animals and plants as exemplars of moral conditions.

As a genre, the fable very definitely looked forward to the emblem. The fables of the Greek writer known as Aesop date from as early as the 6th century B.C. They survived antiquity primarily through verse versions by Phaedrus, a 1st century Latin writer, and by Babrius, a 2nd century Greek writer. About 150 of Aesop's tales were separately collected by Planudes Maximus, the same Byzantine monk responsible for the *Greek Anthology*. Always popular and used as basic texts in the instruction of the ancient languages, books of fables were frequently illustrated. Each fable might be presented in a tripartite form comprised of a title, an illustration and a text. In addition, the stories were explicitly moralized. Some of these fable books look remarkably like emblem books before their time.

The herbal also found its origin in antiquity. Dioscorides, a Greek physician in Rome in the 1st century B.C., was the author of the first important herbal, entitled *De materia medica*, which was still considered authoritative in the Renaissance, when medical theory held that every plant had some affective quality regarding human health. The problem, of course, was that there was often no certainty about which plant the ancient authorities might be discussing: since there



was no set taxonomy, the same plant might have many names and be conflated or confused with others. Not surprisingly, illustrations were extremely important to establish exactly what plant was being discussed. For these reasons, many illustrated herbals circulated in manuscript prior to the invention of the printing press, and herbals were well represented among the earliest printed books. The great printed herbals with detailed illustrations meant to be botanically accurate began to appear at around the same time as Alciato's *Emblematum liber*, that is, in the 1530's.

Plant lore included the stories found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and other classical texts, which frequently explained the origin and qualities of plants in mythic and moral terms. Illustrated treatments of *Ovide moralisé* comprised an important proto-emblematic genre. Alciato has many emblems with plants, and especially trees, as their central object. Indeed, the last major addition that Alciato made to his emblems was an entire section known as 'Arbores' which moralizes on 14 different trees, sometimes with multiple epigrams applied to a single object. Initially, Alciato's tree epigrams were illustrated with woodcuts taken directly from herbals.



One of the most important antecedents of the emblem book was the *Hieroglyphica* by the so-called Horapollo, which purported to explain the pictorial writing of the Egyptians. The work was Greek in origin, perhaps from the 5th century, and was rediscovered in a small number of manuscripts which found their way to Florence in the 15th century. The *Hieroglyphica* was published in 1505 by Aldus Manutius, together with many other similar texts on allegory and fable, all for the first time, as well as with Aesop's *Fables*, which

potentially correlates the proto-emblematic genres we have been examining.

The Renaissance knew nothing about the actual nature of Egyptian characters, which were in fact largely phonetic signs, but believed, following the opinion of classical writers such as Plutarch, that the signs were ideogrammatic. Hieroglyphics were also considered to be a form of sacred and symbolic language. In Neoplatonism, the mystical philosophy which derived from Plato and Plotinus, they were said to indicate an ideal form of expression unmediated by and superior to "discursive reasoning and deliberation" (Boas 1993: 8). However, Erasmus in his *Adages* defined hieroglyphics somewhat differently:

Hieroglyphics is the name given to those enigmatic designs so much used in the early centuries, especially among the priest-prophets and theologians of Egypt, who thought it quite wrong to express the mysteries of wisdom in ordinary writing and thus expose them, as we do, to the uninitiated public. What they thought worth knowing they would record by drawing the shapes of various animals and inanimate things, in such a way that it was not easy for the casual reader to unravel them forthwith. It was necessary first to learn the properties of individual things and the special force and nature of each separate creature; and the man who had really penetrated these could alone interpret the symbols and put them together, and thus solve the riddle of their meaning.

(Erasmus 2001: 137)

The *Hieroglyphica* was enthusiastically received as a guide to



this interesting subject. It consisted of two books, the first of which explains 70 signs that actually correspond to some degree with those found in ancient Egyptian writing. The second book explains an additional 119 signs, but these descriptions are apparently Greek in origin. Sometimes the entries for the hieroglyphs have headings indicating their form, sometimes these headings highlight their meaning. For example, there are entries such as "What they mean by a hawk" (I,6), "What they mean by a vulture" (I,11), "What the stars signify" (I,13), all of which feature a sign and give the meaning; and there are entries such as "Eternity" (I,1), "The Universe" (I,2), "Gratitude" (I,55), which feature the meaning and then refer to the sign.

In Book II of the *Hieroglyphica*, the referents become quite far-fetched, as for example, "A man afraid of what may happen to him from invisible causes" (II,74), is indicated by "a wolf and a stone. For the wolf fears neither iron nor sticks, but only a stone." We may note that many of Alciato's emblems have titles that refer sometimes to the object being moralized and sometimes to the meaning rather than the object. Alciato carries over intact the meaning of Horapollon's "Gratitude"—designated by birds that repay the care they had received from their parents as fledglings—in his emblem "Gratiam referendam" (A favour ought to be returned) (Boas 1993: 68).

The brief entries that comprised the *Hieroglyphica* were in some ways like Alciato's original epigrams, lacking only illustrations to be complete emblems. (Such unillustrated texts are frequently called "nude emblems".) It is important to realize that the *Hieroglyphica*, although it was reprinted many times in the early 16th century, did not appear in an illustrated edition until 1534, that is, not until *after* the first publication of

Alciato's *Emblematum liber*. Nevertheless, there was one remarkable illustrated book that did depict hieroglyphics. This was Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia* (The strife of love in a dream), written perhaps as early as 1467, but published by Aldus Manutius in 1499. Many consider this volume to be the most beautiful printed incunable and perhaps even the most beautiful printed book ever produced. It contains, however, in the original, an almost impenetrable text, written in idiosyncratic and highly Latinized Italian. Colonna, although a monk, wrote a book which was entirely humanistic and virtually pagan in its reflection of classical themes. The story involves the dream vision of Poliphilo (Lover of Polia). In the first book, the love-sick Poliphilo awakens from sleep into a surrealistic world filled with architectural wonders and ruins, dragons and nymphs, rare plants and trees. During his journey through this artificial landscape he finds his beloved, Polia. Ultimately, the lovers are brought by Cupid to the Temple of Venus, where they are united in a mystic rite. In a shorter second book, Polia tells of her awakening to love.

The text delights in obsessively detailed description, especially of architecture, and in the encyclopedic proliferation of references of all kinds. I believe it is clear that the illustrations alone make some of Colonna's text comprehensible. The descriptions of some architectural and decorative objects, for example, are so detailed and replete with technical jargon that they can be understood only by referring to the simple but elegant woodcuts. These images also act as place markers for the descriptions, which would otherwise be nearly impossible to find, although section headings summarize the action throughout. At times, the illustrations contain information only alluded to in the text, for example, when they give the



full texts of inscriptions. At other times, the illustrations seem to interpret the text, by changing details or by adding details that were neither described nor alluded to in words.

In order to understand the nature of hieroglyphics in the *Hypnerotomachia* and to see their relationship to emblems, we must follow Poliphilo on part of his journey. Poliphilo comes upon a number of hieroglyphic inscriptions, most of which are fully pictured in the illustrations, as well as being simply described in the text. Somewhat miraculously, he is readily able to “read” the most complex of hieroglyphic strings. But this is not always the case, as reading and understanding are two different matters.

For example, at one point during his adventure, Poliphilo finds himself seated by an ancient marble bridge near a grove of chestnut trees.

“On the right-hand side of my path I saw some noble Egyptian hieroglyphs depicting the following: an antique helmet crested with a dog’s head, a [sic] ox skull with two fine-leaved branches tied to its horns, and an ancient lamp. I interpreted these hieroglyphs (apart from the branches, which I could only identify as fir, pine, larch, juniper, or something similar), as follows: Patience is the ornament, guardian and protector of life. On the other side I saw this elegant carving: a circle, and an anchor around whose shaft a dolphin was entwined. I could best interpret this as . . . : Always hasten slowly. (Colonna 1999: 69)

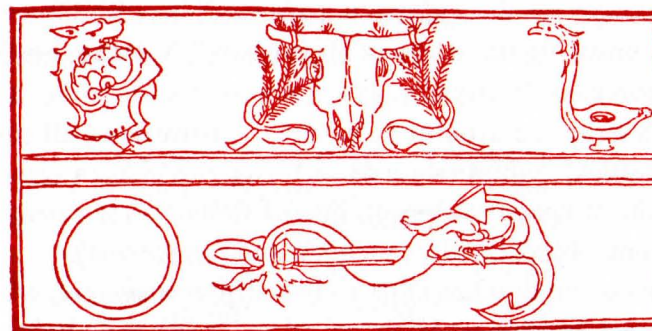


Fig. 1: Hieroglyphics from the *Hypnerotomachia*.

Poliphilo soon after is accompanied by a guardian named Logistica (Reason), whom he asks to elucidate the meaning of the branches that were part of the first set of hieroglyphics, and is told:

One of the branches is spruce, and the other is larch. It is the nature of these woods that one of them does not easily catch fire, while the other, when fashioned into a beam, does not bend. They therefore signify patience, which is not readily inflamed to anger nor gives way in adversity. (Colonna 1999: 132–133)

Erasmus (2001: 139) was to refer to the second of these images in his discussion of the adage, *Festina lente* (Make haste slowly), reporting that among “the records of this sort of thing which I have seen lately” was “a design to this effect: a circle to begin with, then an anchor, the middle of which . . . has the twisted body of a dolphin twined around it.” Alciato was to include a number of similar images in his collection. The dolphin and anchor were used in his emblem, “Princeps



subditorum incolumitatem procurans” to describe “The prince, ensuring the safety of his subjects”. Another emblem, “Maturandum” (One ought to move swiftly) describes a remora fish wrapped around an arrow to “command all men to hasten quickly, and to slow down!” In these images, one fish is symbolic of speed (dolphin), one of slowness (remora); similarly, one object is slow (anchor), one fast (arrow).

If we return one last time to the *Hypnerotomachia*, we may read how Logistica explains two other images to Poliphilo, for “I know that you do not understand these hieroglyphs.” The first shows a woman facing forward, half-seated on a stool and half rising: on her seated side, her foot is on the ground, while her corresponding hand holds a pair of wings; on her rising side, her leg is off the ground, while her corresponding hand holds a tortoise. The other image shows “two little spirits [holding] a circle, with their breasts facing inwards.” The meaning of the first image, according to Logistica, is to “Control speed by sitting, and slowness by rising”, while the second image means, “Blessed are those who hold to the mean”. These matters explicated, she concludes by saying, “Now think that over thoroughly” (Colonna 1999: 133–134). Of course, the first image is yet another variation of “Festina lente” (Make haste slowly), of which more than 80 versions have been counted in Colonna’s book (Wind 1958: 103).

Praz (1964: 36–38) has pointed out the connection between Colonna’s half-rising, half-seated figure and the illustration for Alciato’s emblem, “Paupertum summis ingeniis obesse ne provehantur” (Poverty hinders the greatest talents from advancing). Because Colonna and Alciato are making quite different points with their similar images, the reader needs help in understanding the intended meaning in each case. This

confirms how important textual explanation is conceived to be in both symbolic systems.



Fig. 2: “Poverty hinders the greatest talents from advancing”.

In a more complex example, the circle in the *Hypnerotomachia* that appeared before the dolphin and anchor meant “always”; when positioned between the two spirits, it signified “all things” held in balance. Originally, this circular sign, elaborated as a scaly snake with its tail its mouth, was described in Horapollo’s *Hieroglyphica* (I, 2) as representing “The Universe”. In the illustration for Alciato’s emblem, “Ex litterarum studiis immortalitatem acquiri” (Immortality is acquired through literary studies), this very same hieroglyphic character is integrated into the emblem and contributes to its meaning, which is, that “Fame pursues men worthy in spirit and their splendid deeds, and commands that they be read by *all the world*” (emphasis added).





Fig. 3: “Immortality is acquired through literary studies”.

I hope these few scenes provide sufficient detail to help us appreciate how Colonna integrated what he considered to be hieroglyphics—that is, hieroglyphics as they were known in his time—into his elegant but mysterious work. Russell argues persuasively that the hieroglyphic strings that Poliphilo “reads” in the *Hypnerotomachia* are *unlike* emblems because they are themselves “texts” and did not need “a supplementary text, whether explicit or implicit, in order to make one of its virtual messages actual” (Russell 1990: 235). But what is true of the strings is not necessarily true of the individual signs, whose underlying meaning still requires some prior knowledge or explication, as the narration would have it, through Reason. This, too, is a point Erasmus made about hieroglyphics. One reason why some of Colonna’s images don’t at first look like emblems is because the moralization, or text, appears apart from the picture and its translation, or title. The new form created around Alciato’s epigrams reunites, as it were, these scattered parts.

For comparison, we may briefly look at the important role played by hieroglyphics in the emblems of Achille Bocchi, who was a lecturer in Greek at the Studio in Bologna when Alciato was a student there, from 1511 to 1514, and who was founding his own school, the Accademia Bocchiana, when Alciato returned to teach in Bologna, from 1539 to 1542 (Watson 1993: 7, 61). The two seem to have known each other well, since Bocchi called Alciato his “amicorum opt[imum]” (best of friends), when dedicating one of his emblems to him.

Bocchi featured an hieroglyphic bucranium (ox skull) derived from the *Hieroglyphica* and *Hypnerotomachia* as the, picture in his very first emblem, with the title “Victoria ex labore honesta, et utilis” (Victory from honest and useful labor). This bucranium with its pendent agricultural tools, is crowned with a laurel wreath and has palm leaves in its sockets. Bocchi’s accompanying text includes his theoretical underpinning for the type of emblems he was creating, and makes an important reference to Alciato’s *emblemata*:

The Greek term *symbolon* . . . means a sign—a military standard would be an example of one. One might even refer to a symbol as an ‘amalgam,’ because many people combine such things into a whole. . . . Symbols were for a long time employed in the secret rites of the ancients. The poppy, for example, signified a fertile harvest. Of this same kind were the Pythagorean symbols, the so-called *allegorai* [‘allegories’], *ainigmata* [‘enigmas’], as the *Emblems* of Alciato are called, and *sunthemata* [‘conventional signs’], being full of secrets, and containing those fitting and magnificent examples of all things—of life



and character—revelations to men of sound mind, but unknowable to the ignorant. (Watson 1993: 98)

Bocchi is preparing his readers for the wide variety of uses to which he would put the *Symbolum*, and emphasizes the element of mystery each contains. Like Colonna's hieroglyph of the ox skull, which plays a signature role in this emblem, his signs will speak only to those who are "of sound mind" and have knowledge of the underlying phenomena to which they make reference.

Bocchi was not the only sixteenth-century emblem writer to make use of hieroglyphs. Jacques Kerver, a printer in Paris, issued French translations of both the *Hieroglyphica* (1543) and the *Hypnerotomachia* (1546). It thus transpired that French emblem writers were "aware of the hieroglyphic tradition, and were happy to use the ready made corpus of symbolism which it offered." For example, La Perriere used the viper and headless person, and Aneau used the eye mounted on a sceptre and the coiled snake, all taken straight from the *Hieroglyphica* (Saunders 1988: 71–80). To be sure, hieroglyphics were understood unscientifically in the Renaissance, but in ways that contributed to the formation of other pictorial symbolic forms, such as the emblem. Hidden in every image or description was a possible symbolic meaning, accessible if one had appropriate knowledge and understanding.



The *impresa*, or device, occupies a place on the spectrum between hieroglyph and emblem. This personal insignia combined a descriptive or symbolic picture, like the hieroglyph, with a brief motto. The emblem would take the device one step further by featuring not only a picture and motto, but an

explanatory and moralizing text. Unlike the hieroglyph, which filled an important niche in the architecture of Renaissance symbolism but was too *recherché* to be widely applied, the *impresa* was an extremely popular and widespread form, and coexisted with the emblem for a very long time after the introduction of Alciato's new genre.

Paolo Giovio, Alciato's friend from Bologna and the first theorist of the *impresa*, surmised that the form became popular in Italy after Charles VIII of France invaded in 1494 (Caldwell: 2001: 5). However, as Michel Pastoureau and others have shown, *impreses* can be traced back to the mid-14th century on the Italian peninsula. At that time the highly regulated system of heraldic symbolism relating to families began to be paralleled by a more informal composition of pictorial markings pertaining to an individual and his or her followers. It also became customary to accompany such personal and pictorial badges with a brief phrase or sentence that might explain or enhance their significance. Together, picture and motto formed the *impresa* or device, a form of sign that might be applied decoratively to all kinds of objects (Pastoureau 1983: III, 702).

Special devices were often created to place on the obverse of personal medals, in imitation of the design of ancient coins. In Italy, this practice can be traced back to the medal made by Antonio Pisano, called Pisanello, for the Byzantine emperor John VIII in 1438. Thus was invented, says Pastoureau (1983: III, 705), a new form of artistic expression: on one side the portrait or effigy of an individual; on the other a composition more allegorical than symbolic, meant to evoke not so much an episode from the individual's life—which was most frequently the case in the ordinary device—as a character trait or,



even more usually, an idea which the individual held dear, a virtue which he aspired to attain. Thus well before the appearance of Charles VIII's captains, Italians were constructing their own devices.

*Imprese* were to be found everywhere in learned society in the 16th century. They became the subject of polite games, became attached to love, courtship and mourning rituals, circulated upon the obverse of medals (as we have seen), identified the personal beliefs, politics, values or conditions of individuals, and so on. Something at once so common and unusual could not remain forever without comment. Paolo Giovio's *Dialogo dell'impese militari et amorose* (Dialog concerning military and amorous devices) was written in 1551, while the aging author was engaged in bringing to a conclusion his *Historiae sui temporis* (History of his own times). Caldwell (2001: 13–15) has shown how Giovio's interest in historical personalities led him to consider in depth the ways they presented themselves, and how he was a dedicated collector of portraits. (We have seen in chapter 1, for example, how flattered Alciato was to find that his portrait was among those which Giovio was preparing for publication.) It is thus quite understandable that Giovio would also be interested in the personal devices of the historical and public figures about whom he was writing.

Giovio framed his work as a dialog in Italian between himself and his friend, Lodovico Domenichi, who was then helping Giovio translate his *Historiae* into Italian, and who was later to write his own dialog on *impese*. Giovio's work attained great success after its posthumous publication by Antonio Barré (Rome: 1555). In 1556, Giralomo Ruscelli put out an edition that competed with Domenichi's and included its own

theoretical introduction. Illustrated editions began appearing in 1559. Over time, the *Dialogo* was also translated into many languages. We will consider the work further through Samuel Daniel's English translation (Giovio 1585), with its preface, "To his good friend, Samuel Daniel", written by one "N.W.,"

In defining the *impresa*, "which worthy gentlemen and noble Knights of our time beare (in token of their gentlemanly minds) vpo[n] their Vestments, Shields, Bards, or Ensignes," Giovio enumerates its six essential properties:

[1] First iust proportion of body and soule. [2] Secondly, that it be not obscure, that it neede a *Sibilla* to enterprete it, nor so apparant that euery rusticke may vnderstand it. [3] Thirdly, that it haue especially a beautifull shewe, which makes it become more gallant to the vew, interserting it with Starres, Sun[n]es, Moones, Fire, Water, greene trees, Mechanicall instruments, fantastickall birds. [4] Fourthly, that it haue no humane forme. [5] Fifthly, it must haue a posie which is the soule of the body, which ought to differ in language from the *Idioma* of him which beareth the *Impresa*, to the ende the sence may bee the more couert. [6] It is requisite also it bee briefe, yet so that it may not breede scrupulous doubts, but that two or three words may fit the matter well, vnlesse it bee in the forme of a verse; either whole or maymed (Giovio 1585: B1v).

That is, the *impresa* ought to [1] display an appropriate proportion between its pictorial and verbal components; [2] be neither too obscure nor too simple; [3] be designed to be beautiful; [4] avoid including the human body as one of its



elements; [5] have its verbal component *not* in the language of the individual to which it belongs; and [6] have a verbal component that is as brief as possible. Giovio goes on to explain the importance of each these properties in greater detail, with reference to the *impresa* of real persons.



Figure 4: Paolo Giovio's device, "He looks at one alone".

Giovio himself designed *impresa* and he describes many of these in detail in his *Dialogo*. The illustrations added later, such as this one taken from an edition published in Lyon by Guillaume Rouille in 1574, sought to realize Giovio's purely verbal descriptions of his devices. This device is meant to show a compass with its needle attracted to the large star to the right of the motto, "Aspicit unam" (He looks at one alone). There are several smaller stars in the sky. The object at the foot of the compass is a navigation chart. A ship on a calm sea points in the direction of the distant coast, which is under the star, and does not approach the rocky island on the left. Giovio designed this device for one "S[ignore]. Sinibaldo" of Genoa, who wished to assure his beloved that he cared only for her, de-

spite his flirtatious behavior with other beautiful women. The device has all the properties required of an *impresa*: it has a brief motto in Latin (not Sinibaldo's mother tongue), it has a carefully-composed picture that does not depict a human body, it pertains personally to Sinibaldo and its obscurity is such that it does not impede access to its meaning.

We may note certain ways in which the *impresa* goes beyond the individual symbol or *hieroglyph*. First is the complexity of its construction. The picture in the *impresa* is usually constructed of multiple objects meant to be seen in symbolic relation to one another. In Sinibaldo's device, we have numerous elements each of which is symbolic on its own. In our example, the big star stands for the beloved; the small stars stand for other ladies; the compass stands for the lover; and so on. Add sufficient narrative to these elements and one would enter into the realm of allegory. In other contexts, these elements might have different meanings attached to them. The star might mean "the truth", the compass might be an instrument of "faith". This is exactly what the Jesuits in particular were to do in the 17th century when they took over the amatory emblem tradition and turned it into an instrument of religious instruction.

The parts of the *impresa* are not self-sufficient. The picture requires the presence of a motto to complete the whole. Thus, says Giovio, Alciato's personal device of the caduceus, though apt, was imperfect, for as a personal symbol it lacked what Daniel calls its "gnome", that is, a motto.

Moreouer, the worthy learned man *Andreas Alciatus*, had for his devise the *Caduceum Mercurie*, with the horne of richesse of the Gote *Amalthoea* the nource of *Iuppiter*, to signifie; that by the aboundance of learn-



ing and knowledge whereof *Mercurie* is sayde to be superintenda[n]t, he had attained renoume, a worthy reward for his trauayles. But truly this gal-lant deuise doth want a *Gnome* (Giovio 1585: G7v).



Fig. 5: Alciato's "imperfect" device.

Alciato included this imperfect personal "device" in his book of emblems, with the title, "Virtui, fortuna comes" (Fortune, the companion of Virtue), and a Latin text meaning, "Encircled by a pair of snakes and wings, the caduceus rests upright between the horns of Amalthea. Thus it shows that a great abundance of things blesses men who are strong of mind and skilled in speaking." In creating an emblem, Alciato has generalized the whole; if he used the design personally at any time, he makes no reference here to that fact.

In two other emblems, Alciato displays other primitive or incomplete forms. The first emblem in Alciato's collection bore the title, "Insignia Ducatus Mediolan" (The insignia of the Duke of Milan), which showed the Duke's shield hanging

or leaning against a tree. Upon the shield is depicted an infant springing from the mouth of a serpent, the "stemma" of the Duke's family, and an image derived from ancient coins honoring Alexander the Great.

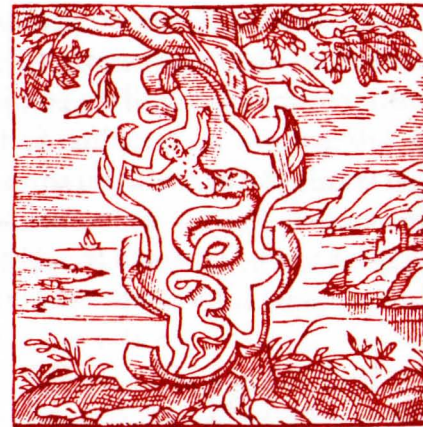


Fig. 6: "The insignia of the Duke of Milan".

The text gives a number of interesting readings that tie the Milanese family to Alexander and the Greek gods; to "Ammon", the Egyptian incarnation of Jupiter, and even more inchoately, to the preternatural serpent of the hieroglyphs. This composition nicely serves at least three purpose. First, it acts as a witty and fitting dedication to the Duke of Milan. Second, it provides an example of the primitive forms that predate the emblem itself, for in ancient times symbolic figures did appear on the obverse of coins, while heraldic imagery was developed for important families and was used in ceremonial settings, for example, on shields. Third, it assigns these elements to a new form, the emblem, with its title, illustration and text.



Then Alciato takes us one step further, in an emblem that displays his own family crest. The title of the emblem is "Nunquam procrastinandum" (One ought never to procrastinate). The image for this emblem is much more in line with the device, for it shows an elk and a banner with the Greek words, "MEDEN ANABAMOMENOS" (never procrastinate). The elk ("alce" in Italian) is the right animal to represent the Alciati. The picture on its own could be considered a valid device, because it is private in meaning; it harmoniously merges image and word, for the words on the banner pertain to the traits of the animal, known for its swiftness, as well as they describe Alciato's special personal thought; the motto is in a language foreign to its subject; the whole is beautifully constructed.



Fig. 7: The device of the Alciati.

We may note that Achille Bocchi, in his *Symbolum* 82, "Nec nil, nec nimium" (Neither nothing nor too much), quoted Alciato's emblem and specifically contrasted his own personal device with Alciato's. Bocchi's motto was "Matura celeritas" (Seasonable speed), a variation on "Festina lente"

(Make haste slowly). While many interesting comparisons can be made between Alciato's and Bocchi's compositions, the point here is that they both embed *impresa* into their *emblems*. The two forms are very, very similar, but they are not the same: each device is but the third part of an emblem when its motto is included within the illustration; or two-thirds of an emblem when its motto is detached from the illustration.

In what other ways does the emblem differ from the *impresa*? The formal differences between the emblem and the device were set out by Claude Mignault, Alciato's foremost commentator, and included in an introductory essay, entitled *Syntagma de symbolis* (A treatise on symbols), for Plantin's new edition of Alciato's *Omnia . . . Emblemata* (Antwerp, 1577). "N.W." cited Mignault (or "Minoes", as he was called in Latin), in his theoretical preface to Daniel's translation of Giovio, to show how the *impresa* grew out of the hieroglyph, tracing its development through heraldry, noting its particular qualities, and differentiating it from the emblem:

The mot of an *Impresa* may not exceede three wordes. *Emblems* are interpreted by many verses. An *Impresa* is not garnished with many different Images, *Emblemes* are not limited. In *Deuises* it is enacted that the figure without the mot or the mot without the figure should not interpret the Authors meaning. In *Emblems* is more libertie and fewer lawes. *Impreses* manifest the special purpose of Gentlemen in warlike combats or chamber tournaments. *Emblems* are generall conceptes rather of moral matters than perticulare deliberations: rather to giue credit to the wit, then to reueale the secretes of the minde (Giovio 1585: \*6v-\*7r).



Here, then, we have arrived. Emblems are “generall conceiptes . . . of moral matters”; they are public, not inward-looking (“deliberative”); they do not adumbrate a “special purpose”, but are openly moralizing; they are expressive of wit. And to all who attempt to tie emblems down too rigidly, they are freer in body and soul than *imprese* are defined to be. So, for example, while an *impresa* requires that its motto and picture be inseparably and equally involved in elucidating the whole meaning, the text of an emblem “may simply gloss a meaning which is already complete within the picture” (Bath 1994: 139). Similar relationships exist between any of its parts.

So much is true for the emblem tradition as it developed. Regarding Alciato’s emblems, however, it is best to remember that the illustrations were additions to his epigrammatic texts, albeit that these epigrams seemed to imply and indeed even beg for pictorial representation. Ultimately, we may well and truly appreciate Alciato’s emblems when we read them as witty and elegant humanistic texts accompanied by charming and evocative illustrations. But, like generations of readers, we soon get overtaken by the inherently creative union of word and image. The genre formed by this union flourished for nearly two centuries. Its pleasures and mysteries survive for all who, like Poliphilo in his dream, take the time to survey the remains of the past.

LEAVES  
From Alciato’s  
1589 Edition





Ex pace vbertas.

EMBLEMA CLXXVIII.



GRANDIBVS ex spicis tenues contexe corollas,  
 Quas circum alterno palmire viris eat.  
 Hic compta Aleyones tranquilli in marmoris vnda  
 Nidificant, pullos involucresque fouenti  
 Letus erit Cereri, Baccho quoque fertilis annus,  
 Equorei si rex alitis instar erit.

**H**Vius carminis fontem lubens repeto è Baslij Magni Hexaëmetro, quamquam sciam idem apud alios cerè veteres legi: sed mihi admodum placet viri huius sanctissimi doctrina & eloquentia. Sic enim ille Oratione 8. in Hexaëmetro,  
 ἀλευών ἐστὶ δαλαήθιον ὄρνεον αὐτῆ παρ' αὐτοῖς ποστέειν τοῖς

Emblema  
 è Basilij  
 Magni.

Q9





### Alciato's Books of Emblems

The leaf in this book is from an edition of Andrea Alciato's *Omnia . . . Emblemata* published in Paris in 1589, some 39 years after the author's death and 57 years after the first publication of his little book of 104 epigrams, 98 with illustrations, called the *Emblematum liber*. The 1589 publication contained 212 epigrams, 211 with illustrations, and was accompanied by a large critical apparatus, including the substantial commentary of Claude Mignault. It is one of more than 170 separate editions of Alciato published in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. What one may call the ultimate edition, published in Padua in 1621, was even larger, being a variorum edition with some 1100 closely printed pages. How did Alciato's "libellus," or little book, come to take this giant final form? And where along the line was the version whose leaves we have at hand?

Obviously, we must start with the first appearance of the Alciato's book of emblems, published without the author's knowledge or consent by the German printer/publisher Heinrich Steyner in Augsburg on 28 February 1531. We do not know precisely how Steyner obtained the manuscript of Alciato's poems, although many hypotheses have been put



forward (cf. Scholz 1991). The full title of the edition, “The Book of Emblems of that most famous man, Doctor Andrea Alciato, Jurisconsult of Milan, to Doctor Conrad Peutinger, Jurisconsult of Augsburg”, certainly makes it seem that the lawyer, antiquary and imperial diplomat, Conrad Peutinger (1465–1547), was involved in bringing the work to light.

Steyner’s edition was also introduced by a prefatory poem addressed by Alciato to Peutinger. In English the poem says:

PREFACE BY ANDREA ALICATO ON HIS BOOK OF EMBLEMS,  
TO CONRAD PEUTINGER OF AUGSBURG

While boys are entertained by nuts and youths by dice, so playing-cards fill up the time of lazy men. In the festive season we hammer out these emblems, made by the distinguished hand of craftsmen. Just as one affixes trimmings to clothes and badges to hats, so it behooves every one of us to write in silent marks. Though the supreme emperor may give to you, for you to own, precious coins and finest objects of the ancients, I myself shall give, one poet to another, paper gifts: take these, Conrad, the token of my love. (tr. Barker and Guthrie n.d.)

Alciato’s preface to Peutinger seems to provide a link between the manuscript of 100 epigrams that the author had dedicated to Ambrogio Visconti in the Christmas season of 1522–1523. At that time, as we saw in the letter to Calvi quoted in Chapter II, Alciato wrote that his emblems might be used as models “after which painters, goldsmiths, and metalworkers could fashion the kind of thing we call badges and which we fasten on hats, or use as trademarks. . . .” In the preface to Peutinger, Alciato again refers to “the festive sea-

son” and to the beaten work and decorative badges of craftsmen. Alciato may not have authorized Steyner’s publication of his manuscript, but he obviously never held a grudge against Peutinger for its appearance in print, since his friendly poem appeared at the head of editions which were authorized. Indeed, it appears in all editions of Alciato’s emblems.

In 1531, Steyner was already a well-established printer in Augsburg. Books with his imprint had begun to appear in 1521 and he was to continue publishing until his death in 1548. Steyner published all kinds of material, especially in the vernacular, including Luther’s tracts and translations of the Bible, humanistic texts in translation, conduct books and medical works. His editions were frequently illustrated with woodcuts made by leading artists, and the woodcuts in his edition of Alciato have been ascribed to Hans Leonhard Schäufelein (ca. 1480–1539) and to Jörg Breu (c. 1510–1547). If so, the small woodcuts first made to accompany Alciato’s epigrams are no indication of the talent of these engravers. Many of the illustrations are quite crudely done, seemingly dashed off. For example, this is the 1531 woodcut for the emblem “Semper praesto esse infortunia” (Misfortunes are always at hand):



Fig. 8: “Misfortunes are always at hand” (1531).



It certainly does not look to me like the work of a leading artist.

In addition to the quality of the pictures, the typography and layout of Steyner's edition have been much criticized. Alciato himself, writing to Bembo in 1535, commented that he did "not know for what reason the Augsburgers have published this little lost work so badly" (Scholz 1991: 231). After Steyner took the initiative to provide illustrations for the epigrams, his compositors were often content to "orphan" the title by assigning it to the foot of one page, with the illustration and epigram appearing on the facing page, or what is worse, overleaf. Sometimes a number of emblems in a row were printed this way, and the reader can easily become confused about what title belongs with what emblem. Less problematically, the title and illustration of one emblem can be together, but separated from the text appearing on the facing page or overleaf. As one progresses through the volume, the layout seems to become ever more random, until by the end it appears that all involved have simply given up on the project.

In a few cases, references took the place of illustrations. For example, in the emblem "In adultores" (On flatterers), Alciato compares those who flatter to the chameleon. But what should a chameleon look like? Rather than guess, those involved in the 1531 publication give a simple note, "De Chameleonte vide Plin. natur. histor. libro. VIII. Cap. xxxiii." (Concerning the chameleon, see Pliny's *Natural History*, book 8, chapter 33). Later, when Christian Wechel prepared what we can call the first authorized edition of the Alciato's emblems (Paris, 1534), his artist at least made a stab at the task, by creating the following rather amusing image:



Fig. 9: The chameleon, from "On flatterers" (1534).

Another case in point occurs towards the end of the 1531 edition, where there is an epigram entitled, "Consilio et virtute chimeram superari, .i. fortiores & deceptores" (The Chimaera—that is, those who are stronger and deceptive—to be overcome by judgment and courage). Alciato's text is quite simple: "As the courageous horseman Bellerophon was able to overcome the Chimaera and slay the monsters of the Lycian land, so you, carried on Pegasean wings, seek the heavens, and by the judgment of your mind, subdue tyrannical monsters" (tr. Barker and Guthrie n.d.). Later editions had pictures that showed the hero, Bellerophon, astride the winged horse, Pegasus, aiming a spear at the fierce monster, Chimaera, which was supposed to have had the head of a lion and the body of a dragon. Subsequent artists took liberties, such as making the beast a fire-breathing lion, but the subject was not that difficult and they got the idea right enough.

The 1531 Steyner edition, however, had no picture, only an accompanying note: "Vide Fulgen. in Mithalogijs lib. 3. in



princ.” (See Fulgentius’s *Mythologies*, book 3, at the beginning). It is hard to tell why Steyner and his engraver did not bother to depict what was a relatively well-known scene, since they did provide the reference. On the other hand, in the case of the emblem “Pax” (Peace), a reference—to Suetonius’s *Life of Caesar*—was provided *in addition* to the illustration. This reference was dropped in subsequent editions.

Sometimes either a lack of understanding or inattention to the text led to simply erroneous depictions. For example, the emblem “Captivus ob gulam” (Captured by gluttony) shows a mouse caught in a wooden trap, which might appear to be quite reasonable, considering the topic:

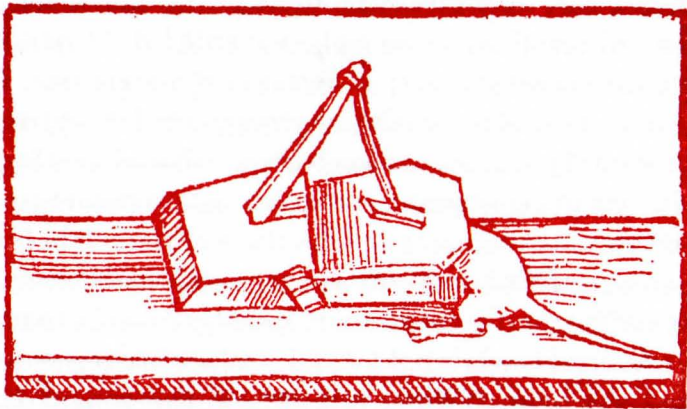


Fig. 10: A Renaissance mouse-trap (1531).

Unfortunately, Alciato’s verse says that the mouse is caught in the lips of an oyster, (“ostrea” in Latin). Steyner retained this picture in all his editions, but Wechel and subsequent printers provide illustrations with the subject correctly rendered.

In one case, Steyner used the same woodcut to illustrate two quite different texts, which appear relatively far apart in the book. The epigram “Illicitum non sperandum” (The forbidden is not to be hoped for) pairs Hope with Nemesis, while “In simulacrum spei” (On the image of hope) describes Hope along with the figures of Amor and Bonus Eventus (Good outcome). However, Steyner twice uses an illustration appropriate only for the first epigram. This may be a throwback to the inexactitude of illustration common in early illustrated books, but perhaps it was just laziness on the part of the printer, who thought no one might notice or care. In another case, Steyner provided only a single picture where two epigrams on the same subject appeared together, *viz.*, for “Dulcia quandoque amara fieri” (Sweet things sometimes become bitter) and “Fere simile ex Theocrito” (Almost the same, out of Theocritus).

Finally, least usefully, four of the last epigrams printed in Steyner’s volume have no illustrations or references at all. For some reason, as we have said, the enterprise appears to have run out of steam.

Despite its many weaknesses, the first edition of Alciato’s book of emblems was a success. Here was a work by the most famous legal writer in Europe, a highly original collection of Latin epigrams in the best humanistic language and style, and illustrated by woodcuts. A second edition, completely reset but made to follow the first as much as possible, was issued less than six weeks later, on 6 April 1531. The second edition did correct typographical errors which had been listed on the “Errata” page at the end of the first edition, but it did not add any new pictures. Small typographical differences were introduced, most readily seen in the presentation of the titles, and



the same stock of ornamental borders, used for the vertically oriented pictures, are differently placed. The book continued to sell and Steyner issued new editions in 1532, 1533, and 1534. The title page of his last edition, completed on 29 July 1534, advertises that the work has been "denuo emendatus & recognitus" (newly corrected and revised), but the main differences are again in the presentation of the titles and the disposition of the ornamental borders. It is often necessary to take the claims made on title pages of early books with a grain of salt.

In 1534, with Alciato's knowledge and approval, Christian Wechel of Paris published an edition with entirely new, larger and more fully conceived and executed illustrations. Nine emblems were added, increasing the size of the collection to 113. Wechel's edition was meticulous in layout, ensuring that each emblem began on a new page, with the title, illustration and epigram kept together. Thus, Wechel, not Steyner, has been credited by many with supplying "the perceptual prototype on which later emblem books were modeled." It did so by allowing "the epigram and the accompanying illustration . . . to be perceived as *one* integrated bi-medial textual whole, rather than as *two* medially distinguished but semantically co-ordinated self-contained texts" (Scholz 1991: 252). Henceforth, all the elements of the emblem, textual and pictorial, were to be taken together to constitute a single entity.

Anyone examining a copy of the Steyner and of the Wechel edition side by side will appreciate that the Parisian printer's is by far the superior. The typography is carefully regulated and the level of artistry is much higher. In particular, there is more incidental detail in the illustrations. Nevertheless, one

is also struck by elements of continuity. The Wechel edition frequently perpetuates the basic design of Steyner's illustrations, although the orientation of the image is reversed in the process of copying or imitation. Over time, in the editions issued by Wechel and later printers, many designs were rethought, aesthetically improved, and came more closely to reflect Alciato's texts, but many vestiges of Steyner's initiative remained.

Also on the positive side of the ledger, while Steyner's layout was indeed "run-on", as was common in books printed in this period, many times we do see all three elements of the emblem together on a single page in his editions, and at all times, as Scholz points out in another place, the mottoes, pictures and epigrams appear in the same "vertically arranged sequence" (Scholtz 1993: 152). Numerous future editions of Alciato's emblems, even by the most meticulous printers, in fact reverted to the "run-on" format in the interests of reducing costs. So perhaps Steyner's editions, while imperfect in so many ways, should be accorded a greater share in the credit for originating the genre of the emblem book (cf. Saunders 1988: 106).

Christian Wechel, who came from Brabant, established himself as an independent printer in 1526, taking over the business of Conrad Resch, for whom he had been working. Resch was from Basel, and his sign was the "Basel Arms". Wechel thus inherited close ties to Froben, the main publisher of Erasmus, and to printers who had published works by Luther (Parent 1974: 159-160, 184). Although Wechel became a printer for the University of Paris in 1528, his connection with reformed and avant-garde views often made his situation unsettled. Wechel himself issued many works by



Erasmus, including in 1534 the controversial *De interdicto esu carniū* (On the prohibition against eating meat), which the Faculty of Theology at the University of Paris put on its list of banned books. However, Alciato, who was teaching at Bourges when he became acquainted with Wechel, would more likely have been drawn to the printer because he also issued a wide variety of humanistic material, particularly Latin translations of Greek texts (Elie 1954: 183–184).

In his edition of *Andreæ Alciati Emblematum libellus* (The little book of emblems by Andrea Alciato), Wechel commissioned new woodcuts attributed to Jean Jollat, also known as Mercure Jollat (fl. 1530–1545). In the full-page block for the emblem, “In simulacrum spei” (On the image of Hope), which Steyner had failed to illustrate, Jollat’s Mercury sign is visible on the pedestal of the central statue.

The new Jollat illustrations were far superior in every way to those in Steyner’s edition, though their quality was uneven, perhaps, as Ruth Mortimer (1998: I, 13) suggests, because they were cut by different hands. Wechel issued two editions of the *Emblematum libellus* in 1534. In the second edition (BFEB F.002), the opportunity was taken to replace one illustration and to revise another substantially. Jollat’s first illustration to “In avaros” (On greedy men), followed Steyner’s design, which showed Arion on a dolphin, as suggested by Alciato’s text. In the second edition dated 1534, this is changed to a much more elaborate design, which shows a man being thrown overboard from a ship at sea. In the background, to the left, a more mature Arion can be seen playing his lyre on the back of a dolphin. Another dolphin is waiting to save the discarded man, thus contrasting the cruelty of men with the kindness of the animal. The greater attention to detail and

artistry shows by how much Wechel’s editions exceeded Steyner’s.



Fig. 11: “On greedy men” (1534).

Wechel continued to issue new editions of the *emblematum libellus* regularly until 1545, when his output in general diminished greatly, although an edition of 1549, known only in two imperfect copies, has been uncovered (BFEB F.024). While active, Wechel expanded his market by issuing translations. The first vernacular version of Alciato’s emblems appeared in a Latin-French edition in 1536, translated by Jean Lefevre (1493–1563). Wechel also printed the first German translation of Alciato’s emblems, which appeared in 1542. The translator was Wolfgang Hunger (1511–1555), who went on to be a professor of civil law and rector at the University of Ingolstadt. Although Alciato’s epigrams varied considerably in length, from two to 34 lines, his translators chose to use unvarying eight-line stanzas, sometimes expanding and sometimes contracting the content and effect of the original verses. Indeed,



Hunger's intention was to imitate Lefevre's translation, rather than Alciato's Latin poems. No harm was done, however, since these bilingual editions retained all the Latin mottoes, the woodcuts by Jollat, and the Latin texts of the 1534 edition, carefully kept together on the left-hand page of each opening. The vernacular versions of the epigrams appeared on the facing right-hand page of each opening. The volumes were relatively substantial as a result.

According to Hunger, Wechel had intended to add in the German version a "not inconsiderable supplement of emblems supplied recently by Alciat from Italy", but farmed out the job of getting the engravings made to the translator. These never appeared because of what Wechel called "the perfidy of a well-known engraver to whom we had entrusted the wood blocks of the pictures". We learn, also, that Hunger was supposed to "describe fully for the artist, who would have insufficient knowledge, the pictures which would express as exactly and elegantly as possible the meaning and implications of the Latin verse" (Drysdall 1988: 148, 143). This important evidence further suggests that Alciato did not sketch out or otherwise direct the composition of the pictures for his emblems.

The numerous variations in the woodcuts and typography in Wechel's sixteen editions of Alciato have been closely studied by scholars (Rawles 2001; Adams 1990). Perhaps most noteworthy, two new emblems were added in 1542, increasing the collection to 115. These emblems were "Vino prudentiam augeri" (That foresight is improved by wine), pairing statues of Athena and Bacchus, and "Antiquissima quaeque commentitia" (All that is most ancient is a lie), featuring the ever-changing Proteus. The Protean emblem was placed at the very end of the collection, perhaps with much irony, for

its final lines declare: "I bring forth symbols (*signa*) of antiquity and a primaeval age, of which each man dreams, according to his wishes" (tr. Barker and Guthrie). Although the speaking "I" in this verse is Proteus, there appears to be just a hint of Alciato (or of Wechel) winking at readers at the end of the book they have just perused.

The next milestone in the evolution of Alciato's book of emblems occurred in 1546 when the "Sons of Aldus" published in Venice a collection of 86 new emblems by the great humanist lawyer (Green, no. 28). This was to be, in fact, the only edition of Alciato's emblems to be published in Italy until Paolo Tozzi began to issue editions from Padua in 1618. Editions in Latin and Italian would soon emanate prolifically from Lyons, so perhaps Italian printers would see little economic value in issuing Alciato's book. In 1546, however, while Alciato was still alive, the descendants of the famous Aldus Manutius were more than suitably equipped to issue his work. It is easy to speculate that the emblems in *Andreae Alciati Emblematum libellus, nuper in lucem editus* (The little book of emblems of Andrea Alciato, lately brought forth into the light) were those for which Hunger and Wechel had been unable to get woodcuts made. Studies of the Aldine *Emblematum libellus* as a separate literary/artistic entity do not seem to have been undertaken.

The woodcuts for these new emblems were different in style and size from those in Wechel's editions, and their separate publication seems to indicate the degree to which Alciato's project was unstructured. One of the new emblems printed in Venice deserves separate notice. This was "Adversus naturam peccantes" (Those sinning against nature), in which the text warns against defiling a *choenix*, or measure for



grain, although the woodcut shows a man defecating into what appears to be a well.



Fig 12: Alciato's "obscene emblem" (1546)

The subsequent depiction of this subject was obviously considered extremely risqué, and was possibly the reason why Alciato's emblems were proscribed by the Inquisition of Spain in 1564 (Heckscher 1981: 291–293). The emblem did not again appear in an illustrated form until 1621, when the illustration was redesigned to show a naked person sitting on a pot in a bedchamber.

The first edition that combined the Wechel and Aldine collections was published in Lyons in 1547 as *Clarissimi viri D. Andreæ Alciati Emblematum libri duo* (The two books of emblems of the very famous man, Dr. Andrea Alciato), but without illustrations for the new emblems (Green, no. 29). The printer was Jean de Tournes. Because the device he used on the title page featured two griffins, Green suggested that he may have been working in conjunction with another important Lyonnais printer, Sebastian Gryphius, who was at the

same time preparing a folio edition of Alciato's works (Green, no. 30), entitled the *Reliqua . . . opera, quae typis nostris hactenus non fuerunt excusa* (Remaining works, not previously printed). Among the contents of Gryphius's edition were 201 emblems, said to be "ipse quoq[ue] ab autore recognitus ac locupletatus" (revised and enlarged by the author himself). This collection was unillustrated, so it appears that Alciato had a hand in publishing his emblems as epigrams only. In 1549, the first of four volumes of Alciato's collected works appeared in Basel, printed by Michael Isingrin (Green, no. 35); again, the emblems were presented without illustrations.

Looking back for a moment, the first appearance of Alciato's emblems from a Lyonnais press had also been unillustrated. Denis de Harsy's Latin-French edition (BFEB F.010) was undated, but was probably published in 1540, after Wechel had printed Lefevre's French translation, which it reproduced. Each of the 113 Latin epigrams was printed in italic type, and followed by Lefevre's French translation, in roman type.

Lefevre's translation was also used by the Lyonnais printer Jacques Moderne in 1544, who also issued an edition in Latin dated 1544 and 1545 (Green, nos. 24–27; BFEB F.015, F.016). New woodcuts were prepared for Moderne's editions, but Green notes that they were "roughly executed" and "clearly copied from Wechel's editions of 1534 or 1535". It is interesting that Moderne used the lily device of Jacob Giunta on some of his title-pages, as Jean de Tournes had used the griffins associated with Gryphius. The implications of responsibility in such cases remain to be completely explained.

The Lyons editions of de Harsy and of Moderne were imperfect in many ways and were no doubt piracies. On the



other hand, the editions of Jean de Tournes represented something new, as we have seen, combining the two collections of Alciato's emblems published by Wechel and the Aldines; moreover the de Tournes editions were graced by delicate woodcuts by the very talented Bernard Salomon, then at the outset of his career (Sharratt 2005: 271–272). These have been called the “most skillful of the Alciati interpretations”, and they were clearly influential, being “copied or adapted for the Rouillé, de Marnef, and early Plantin editions” (Mortimer 1998: I, 19). Moreover, Jean de Tournes and his descendents were to continue to publish editions of Alciato with these illustrations over the course of many decades.

Our attention must now turn to another Lyonnais bookseller, Guillaume Rouille (ca. 1518–1589), who with his printer, Macé (or Mathias) Bonhomme, introduced what would become the canonical order for issuing Alciato's collection of emblems. In their 1548 edition of the *Emblemata Andreae Alciati iuriconsulti clarissimi*, Rouille and Bonhomme not only combined the Wechel and Aldine collections of Alciato's emblems, they also added a number of new emblems, and printed the individual emblems in thematic groups, something that Alciato himself had not done. The work of thematic organization is thought to have been the responsibility of Barthélemy Aneau, regent of the Collège de la Trinité at Lyons, who was preparing a new French translation of the emblems for the printers. In addition, Rouille and Bonhomme commissioned the first stylistically unified suite of illustrations for all the emblems. Finally, they made use of highly ornate full-page border pieces, variously assembled to surround the engraved blocks. The royal privilege to print was granted jointly to the partners. Since the 1548 edition of the

*Emblemata* was a shared edition, as were many of the subsequent editions by Rouille and Bonhomme, it was issued with different title pages, featuring one name or the other.

The artist for both the illustrations and the borders was Pierre Eskrich, also known as Pierre Vase. Many of the borders include his initials, “PV” or “VP”. Because Eskrich's style was very similar to Salomon's, the work of the two have been frequently confused (Sharratt 2005: 38–40). For Alciato's tree emblems, we learn that “Bonhomme borrowed from Balthazar Arnoullet blocks from the set prepared by Clement Boussy for Leonhard Fuchs's *De historia stirpium commentarii insignes* [Notable commentaries on the history of plants], 1549”. Fuchs's great herbal was originally accompanied by impressively large and detailed wood engravings when published as a folio in Basel in 1542. Arnoullet's Lyon edition, however, was a small format “field guide” containing woodcuts of greatly reduced size, perfect to be used to illustrate Alciato's epigrams on trees (Mortimer 1998: I, 16).

The process of engraving the new illustrations was slow, and rather than wait for Eskrich to complete the entire set, the 1548 *Emblemata* in Latin appeared with only 129 woodcuts. As the remaining illustrations were being prepared, so too were new translations of the entire collection of emblems. Rouille and Bonhomme issued French, Italian and Spanish editions of Alciato's emblems in 1549. The first to appear was the French (BFEB F.026), which had 165 woodcut illustrations for 201 emblems. Next came the Italian edition, entitled *Diverse imprese*, translated by Giovanni Marquale (BFEB F.028), but with only 136 emblems: the number of emblems included in future editions of Marquale's translation grew only to 180. The last translation to appear was also the most complete to date in



any language: *Los emblemas de Alciato* (BFEB F.029), translated by Bernardino Daza, who added ten previously unpublished emblems by Alciato—as well as two by the translator himself. All but ten of Alciato's 210 emblems lacked illustrations, although three woodcuts were used twice and six of the tree emblems still featured blocks from the Arnoullet herbal. The three translators did not restrict themselves to a single verse form in their translations, preferring to imitate the variety found in Alciato's epigrams.

The French version continued to develop apace. Barthélemy Aneau's mode of translation was very different from the simple diction and eight-line stanzas uniformly used by Lefevre. Aneau instead attempted to match the brevity and compressed expression of Alciato's elegant Latin epigrams, to prove to the detractors of the French language that it could be equal to Latin "en Laconic abregement". There were implications to this strategy, of course, as Alison Saunders (1988: 109) has pointed out, for Aneau's method would lead him "into infinite problems as regards comprehensibility, and it is perhaps for this very reason that Aneau's translation was accompanied for the first time by a brief prose commentary to develop the text of the emblem and help explain certain of its more hermetic elements." The title-page of the second 1549 edition of Aneau's French translation (BFEB F.027, Green, no. 39) announced that it was "arranged according to common-places, with summaries, schemes and brief expositions on the mythology, according to natural, moral and historical allegory". Using captions between the titles and illustrations, Aneau also often categorized the rhetorical nature of individual epigrams, for example, as "apostrophe", "apodeixe", "prosopopoeie", "dialogisme", "probleme", etc. From this

unassuming kernel, prefigured by Steyner and Wechel's marginal references, Alciato's elegant illustrated epigrams would eventually become islands nearly lost among ample stretches of secondary prose.

Indeed, a complete and uniform edition of Alciato's emblems was not published in the author's lifetime. Alciato died in January, 1550, before the Rouille and Bonhomme Latin edition of that year appeared, whose title announced "The Emblems of Dr. Andrea Alciato, newly revised by the author, and enriched with images which were lacking. Several new emblems have been added by the author which are also noteworthy for their images" (BFEB F.030; Green, no. 44). Alciato was gone, but Rouille and Bonhomme, and their successors, were to continue issuing their editions for decades. Differences can of course be detected between their various editions, but the standards of order and embellishment remained consistent on the whole.

Despite the vigorous publishing ventures of Rouille and Bonhomme, Jean de Tournes, in particular, still found it worthwhile to issue Jean Lefevre's older French translation, to which he was able to add Salomon's woodcuts. In 1549, that very busy year for editions of Alciato, he and Guillaume Gazeau reissued both Latin and French editions of Alciato, including in the Latin the new emblems from the Aldine collection, albeit without illustrations. De Tournes then took the imitative in 1556 to improve his property by publishing the first extended commentary on the emblems, entitled *In D. Andreae Alciati Emblemata succincta commentariola* (BFEB F.036; Green, no. 59). The author was Sebastian Stockhamer, further identified on the title-page as "Germano" (from Germany) whose "little commentaries" in Latin accompanied the titles



and illustrations only of the 113 emblems taken from the Wechel collection of the emblems. The surprising omission of Alciato's epigrams was repaired in a second edition, also dated 1556, which added the texts of the 86 emblems of the Aldine collection, albeit without illustrations or commentary (BFEB F.037; Green, no. 60). In 1561, de Tournes and Gazeau issued another edition along these same lines (BFEB F.040, Green, no. 67). More importantly, Christophe Plantin was to include Stockhamer's commentary in his first Antwerp edition of Alciato's emblems in 1565.

Christophe Plantin (ca. 1520–1589), who became the foremost printer in Europe in his time, was born in France near Tours, and moved from Paris to Antwerp in 1548 or 1549. There he achieved success as a bookbinder, branched out to sell prints and finally, in 1555, was granted a license to print and sell books. Plantin first produced books for the French market, mainly reprint editions, but was also mysteriously involved in printing some "seventeen works for a spiritual sect called the Family of Love" (Visser 2005: 52). A crisis occurred in 1562, when Plantin was forced to sell out and flee back to Paris, after being summoned to answer charges of heresy in the printing of the Calvinist text, *Briefve instruction pour prier* (Voet 1969–72: I, 35). When it was discovered that the responsibility belonged to three of his journeymen, Plantin was able to return to Antwerp and resume his business, which he did in 1563, with the backing of four partners. The period of this "Compagnie" lasted from 1563 to 1567, and it was during this time that Plantin published his editions of Alciato with Stockhamer's commentary.

The first Plantin edition of the *Emblematum libri II*, dated 1565, but produced during 1564, was no doubt a piracy. Voet

(1980–3: no. 22) suggests that it was based on an unrecorded edition by de Tournes from 1563 or 1564, because Stockhamer's foreword is dated "Coimbra, 1 March 1563", but such evidence is not very strong, and it is at least possible that the de Tournes edition of 1561 was used, and that the date in the foreword was contrived or erroneous. Documents do exist, however, to show that Plantin commissioned new woodcuts to be made by Arnold Nicolai of Antwerp, Gerard Janssen van Kampen of Breda, and others. 1250 copies were published, but a new edition was soon called for.

Plantin's 1566 edition (Voet 1980–3: no. 23) added illustrations for 24 of the 85 Aldine emblems that were neither illustrated nor provided with commentary in de Tournes's editions. Voet notes that the drawings, made by Geoffroy Ballain of Paris, were paid for by April 10, 1565, and that the woodblocks were cut by Arnold Nicolai between April and June of that year. At the same time, Plantin was preparing an edition of the emblems without the Stockhamer commentary, which appeared with the date 1567 in the imprint (Voet 1980–3: no. 24). Actually, the two editions were printed around the same time, in September and October, 1566. The 1567 edition actually has two fewer illustrations than does the 1566 edition. For each edition 1000 copies were printed (Visser 2005: 71).

Plantin thus published three separate editions of Alciato's emblems during the years 1565 to 1567. However, this was not his only activity in the field. Between 1564 and 1569, he also published five editions of the emblems by the Hungarian humanist, Joannes Sambucus, and between 1565 and 1570, seven editions by the Dutch emblemist, Hadrian Junius. The same engravers that worked on the Alciato woodcuts, Arnold Nicolai and Gerard Janssen van Kampen, were also



involved in producing the illustrations for the 1565 edition of Junius's *Emblemata* (Voet 1980-3: no. 1476). Plantin required that Sambucus pay himself for the illustrations to his book of emblems in 1564, even though the printer rejected a large number of drawings by Sambucus's chosen artist, Lucas d'Heere, and ordered new ones made by Geoffroy Ballain and Pieter Huys (Visser 2005: 63-64). The initial Alciato project, however, was undertaken and paid for by Plantin himself.

Plantin did not return to Alciato's emblems for six years, during which time he had distanced himself from any hint of controversy and had, in fact, gained the lucrative monopoly to print high-demand liturgical works for the Spanish market. Meanwhile, printers in Paris had begun to take a renewed interest in Alciato's emblems.

Between 1545 and 1561, printers in Lyons had been vigorously supplying the French and European markets with their editions. The only illustrated Parisian edition of Alciato during that time was Wechel's unusual—and now very rare—edition of 1549, the last he produced (BFEB F.024). It included both new translations into French and new woodcuts, neither of which were used in subsequent editions. In 1561, however, the Parisian printer Jérôme de Marnef issued a hybrid edition (BFEB F.040; Green, no. 66), arranging the Salomon woodcuts and translation by Aneau, taken from the editions of de Tournes, according to the thematic order found in the Rouille/Bonhomme editions. The next year, 1562, Jean Ruelle issued a selection of 106 emblems in the Lefevre translation, with only 37 small woodcuts derivative of an early Wechel edition with Jollat's woodcuts (BFEB F.042; Green, no. 68). The appearance of Plantin's editions from Antwerp ended this brief foray

by the Parisians, and it was not until the next decade that Alciato was to be printed again in the French capital.

That signal development occurred in 1571, when the Paris printer, Dionysius à Prato (Denis du Pré), issued an unillustrated Latin edition of Alciato's emblems with commentaries by one Claude Mignault (1536-1606), a professor of canon law at the University of Paris. The editor of many classical and humanist authors, including Erasmus (also in 1571), Mignault was drawn by the symbolic content implicit in the emblem genre to an avid interest in Alciato. Indeed, Mignault offered what must have been the first course in any university on emblems. Besides his commentary on Alciato, and other preliminary matter, Mignault supplied a brief note explaining "Quid emblema sit" (What an emblem is). This was to grow in later editions into an ever-enlarging "Syntagma de symbolis" (Treatise on symbols), in which the definition and discussion of the emblem was altered and expanded. For now, Mignault explained the Greek word *emblemata*, primarily as meaning detachable ornaments or mosaics, but added that it could be taken both in a metaphorical sense, to refer to the poems that explain artifacts or works of art—that is, *ekphrastic* poems—and in a figurative sense, to refer to discourse enriched by the rhetoric of colorful words and ideas, as one finds especially in Alciato's work. Not surprising, perhaps, in an edition lacking visual content, Mignault's first emphasis was on the language and ideas of the poems themselves. The commentaries supplied to elucidate these features are very brief, for example, a mere eight lines for the third emblem, "Nusquam procrastinandum" (Never procrastinate), which was to grow more than eleven-fold in future editions.



Mignault had great plans for his commentary, which he began to realize in partnership with Plantin. In the new Plantin edition of the *Omnia . . . emblemata*, which appeared in 1573 (Voet 1980–3: no. 25; Green, no. 84), the inclusion of Mignault's much enlarged commentary and other editorial matter, including an appendix of supplementary notes, produced a volume more than double the size of the 1566 edition with Stockhamer's *commentariola*. Plantin also added 33 new illustrations to those which had appeared in the *Emblematum libri II*, bringing the number of complete (that is, tripartite) emblems to 168, leaving only 43 still unillustrated, including all of the tree emblems. Mignault eliminated the presentation of the emblems in two books, reordering the emblems thematically, following Aneau, with the tree emblems kept together at the end. Among the new material was a long introductory letter to the reader, and new passages in Mignault's essay on emblems concerning the nature of hieroglyphics, and the difference between emblems and literary tropes such as enigmas, maxims, fables, and *sententiae*. Indeed, Mignault now asserted that emblems did not require a verse at all, their purpose being to express wisdom secretly through symbols to the learned while hiding it from unworthy persons. Of course, by saying that the emblem existed apart from its epigram, Mignault's obsession with symbolism results in his turning the very origin of the genre on its head. He would certainly know that the illustrations for Alciato's emblems, however much they might correspond with the contemporary theory of hieroglyphics, were not of Alciato's making, whereas the epigrams were (cf. Laurens 2000: 153–154).

At around the same time that Mignault's enlarged commentary was printed in Antwerp, a rival Latin commentary

by the noted Spanish humanist, Francisco Sanchez de las Brozas, was published by Rouille in Lyons (BFEB F.050; Green, no. 85). Green calls this "the most useful commentary" on Alciato's emblems because "[w]ithout being amplified by an excess of learning, it supplies all the information that is needed for the understanding of the author." Despite its merits, however, it was not reprinted except in Tozzi's variorum edition (Padua, 1621) and in the author's collected works (Geneva, 1776) (Selig 1955: 358).

Plantin and Mignault were still not finished with their project. In 1577, Plantin issued a completely new edition of the *Omnia . . . emblemata*, with Mignault's commentary yet again revised and enlarged, and now integrating the supplementary material that had been appended in 1573 (Voet 1980–3: no. 27; Green, no. 93). Mignault also replaced his essay on emblems with a much longer one entitled "Syntagma de symbolis" (A treatise on symbols), and added the text of a lecture he had delivered in praise of Alciato in Paris, in 1576. There was also a new section providing Latin translations of all the Greek epigrams and citations found in the commentary. All the emblems now had illustrations; moreover, a completely new set of enlarged woodblocks were cut for this edition. Once again, Arnold Nicolai and Gerard Janssen van Kampen were involved in cutting the woodblocks. From surviving correspondence, we know that Mignault sent a Paris edition of the emblems for the block makers to use as models, although he suspected that they already had images to work from. (All the woodblocks have survived and are now in the Plantin-Moretus Museum in Antwerp.)

A third edition of *Omnia . . . Emblemata: Cum commentariis* with mostly minor changes was issued in 1581 (Voet 1980–3:



no. 29; Green, no. 99). On a formal level, the "Syntagma" was moved from the preliminaries to take up the first numbered pages of the main contents of the volume, and the beautiful borders of fleurons (typographical ornaments) which Plantin had used around the woodcuts were replaced by rather heavy ornamental woodcut borders, all in one piece.

A mere seventeen days after Mignault's French privilege expired, in 1583, de Marnef and his company issued a volume containing Alciato's emblems with Mignault's commentary, pirated from Plantin's editions. New woodcuts, which Green calls "simple, plain affairs" were made for the volume (BFEB F.057; Green, no. 104). They are indeed small in size, but they are not carelessly made nor all that simple. Indeed, they are frequently crammed with fine detail, requiring one to peer closely to make them out. Fleuron borders around the illustrations are reminiscent of Plantin's edition of 1577, but Plantin's larger woodcuts did make his production superior to de Marnef's.

Mignault, incensed at de Marnef's bold piracy, was already developing new material for his project. He prepared both an abridged version of his commentary and yet another revised and enlarged version, both of which he hoped Plantin would print. He wrote a life of Alciato and—as a pastime, while traveling in the country by boat—a new translation into French of Alciato's emblems, along with a French version of his abridged commentary. Plantin could not be persuaded to print the newly enlarged commentary, but did publish the shorter one, in 1584, from his printing-house in Leiden, although some copies have title-pages indicating Antwerp as the place of publication (Voet 1980-3: nos. 32A, 32B; Green, no. 108). This was the last edition of Alciato that Plantin

himself was to print, although after his death in 1589, editions with Mignault's commentary were steadily issued by his successors.

The main stream of publication was now to stem from Paris. In August of 1583, after the appearance of de Marnef's pirate edition, Jean Richer obtained a royal privilege for Mignault's translation and abridged commentary, which he published in 1584 (BFEB F.058; Green, no. 107) and again in 1587 (BFEB F.060; Green, no. 112). In the *Emblemata . . . Latinogallica*, the Latin and French texts appeared on facing pages, with the life of Alciato at the end. Those who study the Lefevre, Aneau and Mignault translations will probably agree that Mignault's is the most successful of the three.

We will talk in some detail about the next edition to appear (BFEB F.061; Green, nos. 115), because a copy of this edition of the *Emblemata* supplied the original leaf that has been included in this book. Once again Mignault enlarged his commentary, for which he received a new privilege, dated January 14, 1589. He chose Jean Richer, along with two other Paris printers, François Gueffier and Étienne Vallet, to print his book and to sell it for six years from the date when printing was complete. The colophon declares: "Acheuez d'imprimer ce dernier iour de Decembre, pour la premier edition, 1588" (Printing finished this last day of December, for the first edition, 1588), an apparent back-dating for legal purposes, since the previous privilege expired at the end of 1588. The need for an association of printers and booksellers may be explained by the cost of producing the volume, which is very large though compact, running to nearly 900 pages in octavo, and of course, illustrated. But an additional factor may have been that Richer was on the verge of leaving Paris, along with King



Henri III, who was under attack by the Catholic League at this stage of France's extended period of religious wars. The city of Paris backed the League, so the King established himself first at Blois and then at Tours, and from those places Richer and several other printers issued royal declarations and patents, along with royalist pamphlets (Pallier 1982: 342). During this time, Richer was particularly associated with another printer from Paris, Claude de Montrœil (Renouard 1898: 320–321, 272–273); they did not return until 1594, after the next king, Henri IV, converted to Catholicism and was able to reenter the capitol.

Richer's associates who helped produce Mignault's 1589 edition of Alciato appear to have remained in Paris. François Gueffier and Étienne Vallet were both bookbinders as well as booksellers. Gueffier went into business in 1582; his shops were in the rue St. Jean de Latran, where Richer was also located; he died in 1623. Vallet went into business in 1554; his shop, under the sign of the "Bible d'Or" (The Golden Bible), was in the rue des Sept Voyes, across the street from the College de Reims; he died in 1609 (Renouard 1898: 165, 357–358).

The joint edition appeared with title-pages that differed only in the imprint line, according to the bookseller's name and address; otherwise, all copies of the edition are the same, with those small exceptions so common in the production of early hand-press books. The devices of the printers are not shown on the title-page, which has a decorative oval woodcut frame. Instead, they appear on the added title-page for the *Notæ posteriores* at the back. The three states of the title-page survive in equal numbers: analysis of the BFEB census shows that institutions hold eight copies with Richer's name on the

NOTÆ  
POSTERIORES  
AD ALCIATI  
EMBLEMATA,

PER CLAVDIUM MINOEM.

ΔΕΥΤΕΡΑΙ ΦΡΟΤΙΔΕΙΣ.



PARISIIS,  
Apud Franciscum Gueffier, in via Diui  
Ioannis Lateranensis.  
M. D. LXXXIX.

The title page for *Notæ Posteriores*.  
(The printer ran out of sorts—the O, T, E, R  
are wrong font letters)



title-page, eight with Gueffier's name, and nine with Vallet's name.

Mignault's revised commentary was accompanied by a variety of ancillary material, including the Life of Alciato; the Treatise on symbols; a collection of extra notes, or *Notæ posteriores ad Alciati Emblemata*; translations of the Greek passages found in the commentary; Mignault's lecture on Alciato from 1576; a table of contents showing the thematic organization of the emblems; and an index of topics, titles, and words. In this compilation of material, according to Laurens (2000: 162), Mignault offered the best features of his previous editions. For Green, however, this "may be considered almost the first of the editions overcrowded with notes." The charge seems unfair, however, since this was, after all, a scholarly edition.

If the commentary was dense, the layout was not without its good points. The size of the woodcuts is generous, taking up half a page each. In most cases, each emblem begins at the top of a new page, although if there is room for the title, emblem number, illustration and at least two lines of text, the emblem followed directly after the end of commentary of the previous emblem. (This was the same standard used by Plantin.) About twenty emblems begin mid-page, though only four emblems reflect the minimum criteria. Where ample blank space is left at the bottom of a page of commentary, a variety of ornamental tail-pieces are used, which give added grace to the volume. Almost all the illustrations are provided with attractive but typical woodcut borders, abstract or decorative in design, from the stock of Jean Richer. In a few cases typographical fleurons were used instead of border ornaments; the tree emblems at the end are printed without borders.

The illustrations are almost all close copies of those found in Plantin's editions with Mignault's commentary; indeed, when Plantin's 1577 edition is placed side by side with the Richer 1589 edition, it is often very difficult to tell that the later illustrations are copies, and not from the original blocks. In any case, the main features of each subject are emphasized at the expense of extraneous detail, especially in the background. Dark lines contrast with white space to give good outline to the figures, and the impressions are generally clean. While the artistry of the woodcuts is not completely consistent, an attempt has been made in every case to animate the figures, the compositions are generally clear and uncluttered, and the style is uniform. Taking all these features together, while the textual mass of the commentary necessarily dominates, the whole production has merit as something pleasing, as well as useful.

In the 1590's, new editions of Alciato's emblems with Mignault's commentary continued to be issued from the *Officina Plantiniana* in Leiden by Franciscus Raphelengius, Plantin's son-in-law. Then, in 1600, some time after Mignault's period of privilege ran out in France, the heirs of Guillaume Rouille in Lyons published virtually a page-by-page reprint of the 1589 Paris edition (BFEB F.063; Green, no. 127). The only significant differences were in the illustrations, since the Rouille firm used its stock of fine woodcuts by Eskrich; and there were no decorative borders to surround the woodcuts.

Mignault and his Parisian printers were not done yet, for in 1602 appeared what Laurens calls Mignault's "editio ultima" (BFEB F.064; Green, nos. 128-130). This time, the privilege to publish, dated August 14, 1601, belonged to Étienne Vallet and François Gueffier, who used Jean Richer as their printer.



For this edition, a medallion portrait of Alciato was featured at the top of the architectural frame on the title-page; various dedications were restored or added; and the additional notes printed at the back of the 1589 edition were placed internally, at the end of the commentary of each emblem, as appropriate. Laurens (2000: 165–171) notes other changes as well, but highlights Mignault's revision of the "Syntagma de symbolis", which is enlarged substantially with a detailed discussion of the Pythagorean symbols or precepts as recorded in the *Adages* of Erasmus (I, i, 2). Among the precepts discussed is "Chœnici ne insideas" (Do not sit on the grain-measure), the subject of Alciato's "obscene" emblem. (It is interesting, however, that Mignault still found it politic to hide the text of this emblem at the end of the appendix in which translations of Greek epigrams were given.) In addition, Mignault added a section on printers' devices, "Quadam de symbolu exempla Typographorum", and he enlarged the section on "De emblemate", at the end of "Syntagma de symbolis".

These proved to be the last changes Mignault made to his edition of Alciato's emblems, which had been such a labor of love for him throughout his life. He died in 1606, but his commentary was to live on for some time, appearing in many editions, including those published in Paris (Gueffier, 1608; Richer, 1618), Leiden and Antwerp (Officina Plantiniana, 1608, 1610), Lyons (heirs of Rouille, 1614, 1626) and Padua (Tozzi, 1618, 1621). Of these, the 1608 Officina Plantiniana editions presented Alciato's emblems together at the beginning of the volume, one to a page, with Mignault's commentary separated out and printed afterwards. The reader was thus allowed to experience the emblems in an unmediated fashion. This was the exception, however, the rule being for emblems

and commentary to be kept together. So it was in the most important of all critical editions of Alciato, the "monster" variorum published by the Paduan scholar-printer, Pietro Paolo Tozzi, in 1621.

Tozzi's first presentation of Alciato's emblems appeared in a small volume dated 1618, "with a large number of images restored according to the mind of the Author", with commentary greatly abridged from Mignault (Green, no. 149). The editor, Lorenzo Pignoria (1571–1631), a notable antiquarian scholar and Egyptologist, added a preliminary section of brief notes on selected emblems. However, Pignoria's main contribution was the advice he gave whereby Tozzi "'corrected' a number of emblematic *picturae* to bring them into line . . . with the descriptions in the original classical texts, which inspired Alciato's epigrams" (Manning 1989: 142). In this edition, Pignoria and Tozzi introduced the first iconographically elaborate illustrations for the tree emblems, which until then had been graced with only botanical depictions.

According to John Manning, "Classical iconographical correctness only enters the *Emblemata* with Tozzi's 1618 edition," making it "essentially a different book, particularized by a different iconographical tradition from that which prevailed earlier" (Manning 1989: 143). This is something of an overstatement, however, since Pignoria's commentary was so minimal and aside from the tree emblems, most of the illustrations did not receive substantive correction and were closely modeled on those found in previous editions, and especially from Plantin's editions containing Mignault's commentary. In fact, Pignoria stated in his preface (b4v–b5r) that the printers used the Officina Plantiniana edition of 1591 as their copy-text, even carrying over certain errors from that



volume, including the transposition of illustrations. But indeed the study of iconography had progressed, thanks to the work of Pierio Valeriano, Lilio Gregorio Giraldi, Natale Conti and Vincenzo Cartari, and it was now possible, for example, to replace the dragon that was depicted in all previous illustrations for "Custodinendas virgines" (Virgins must be protected) with a snake, Minerva's proper attribute (Manning 1989: 141-143).

Tozzi next commissioned a virtually unknown but highly gifted scholar from Germany, Joannes Thuilius, to prepare a comprehensive commentary to go along with his freshly cut, beautiful and iconographically accurate illustrations for Alciato's emblems. The quarto volume, published in Padua, in 1621, ran to nearly 1100 pages, including preliminaries (Green, no. 152). Thuilius took the commentaries of Mignault, Stockhamer and Sanchez de las Brocas, along with Pignoria's notes, and integrated them with additions of his own into a huge critical apparatus. At the very end of the volume, for the sake of completeness, he appended the notes to Mignault's commentary, called "Corollaria," which Frédéric Morel had written for Jean Richer's Paris edition of 1618 (BFEB F.070; Green, no. 148).

The volume was large and handsome, with each emblem surrounded by the same elegant woodcut border design in four pieces. Above the illustration was the title and emblem number; below was the epigram, set in italic type in lines that matched its width. The commentary that followed was in two columns, tightly set, with class numbers and guide words in the outer margins. Most of the emblems begin on a new page, but where space exists for the title, emblem number and illustration to fit after the preceding commentary has ended, all or

part of the epigram may be set on the next page or overleaf. Ironically, the definitive edition of Alciato's emblems repeats one of the features for which the first printer, Steyner, was most criticized: all parts of the emblems are not always presented together on the same page.

Also in this edition, for the first time since 1546, the "obscene" emblem, "Adversus naturam peccantes" (Those sinning against nature), was illustrated, in a new design specified by Thuilius. Perhaps that is why Thuilius affirmed in an epilogue that he was a good, orthodox Catholic, and hoped that he had offended no one in any way. One of the side-effects of adding "Adversus naturam peccantes" as emblem 80, was that the numbering of the Tozzi/Thuilius edition is different (from this number on) from all previous editions, even though it provides the standard for modern citation of Alciato's collection.

The Tozzi/Thuilius edition appears to have been the first illustrated edition of all 212 of Alciato's epigrams, and it seemed to have left nothing to be added in the way of commentary. Several other milestones were still to be reached. The first complete Italian translation of the emblems, by Paulo Emilio Cadamosto, was published by Tozzi in 1626 (Green, no. 155). The earliest extended manifestation of Alciato's emblems in English was in *A choice of emblemes, and other devices, for the moste parte gathered out of sundrie writers, Englished and moralized. And divers newly devised*, by Geoffrey Whitney. This was published in Leiden by Francis Rephelegius, "In the house of Christopher Plantyn" in 1586, and included some 86 emblems "identical with, or founded on those of Alciati" (Green, no. 111). There was no complete English translation until that published in volume one of *Andreas*



*Alciatus: The Latin emblems: Indexes and lists* (Daly, Callahan and Cutler: 1985). We have not mentioned the stream of editions that issued from German presses subsequent to Steyner's *editio prima*. Although interesting in themselves, these had relatively minor impact within the tradition of illustration and commentary during the period dominated by predominantly French publishers, by Plantin and by Tozzi.

There have been, of course, a good number of editions particularly facsimiles, published since 1872, when Green's bibliography appeared. Most recently, online editions of note have begun to appear, including *Alciato's "Book of Emblems": The Memorial Web Edition in Latin and English*, making Alciato's emblems as accessible as they have ever been.

In summary, the context for the publication of the 1589 Paris edition of Richer, Gueffier and Vallet, with Mignault's commentary, which provides the original leaves included in this Bird & Bull Press publication, is as follows. Alciato's emblems were first published in Steyner's *Emblematum liber* in 1531, Wechel's *Emblematum libellus* in 1535, and the Aldine *Emblematum libellus, nuper in lucem editus*, in 1546. Two different streams of publication issued from Lyons, one begun by de Tournes, with Salomon's illustrations, organized in two books, the other begun by Rouille and Bonhomme, with Eskrich's illustrations, organized thematically. De Tournes published Lefevre's French translation and Stockhamer's commentary; Rouille and Bonhomme published Aneau's. Mignault's commentary, with illustrations deriving from Lyons, was first published by Plantin, and then was issued from Paris. Finally, Pignoria's revision of the illustrations in 1618 became the core of Tozzi and Thuilius's massive *variorum* edition of 1621, printed in Padua, and now seen as the canonical edition of Alciato's emblems.

#### A Note on the Printing and Paper of the 1589 Alciato

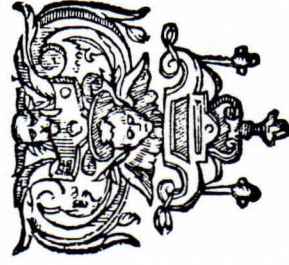
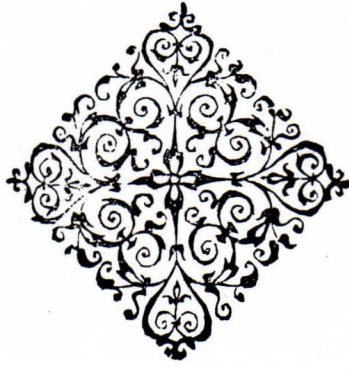
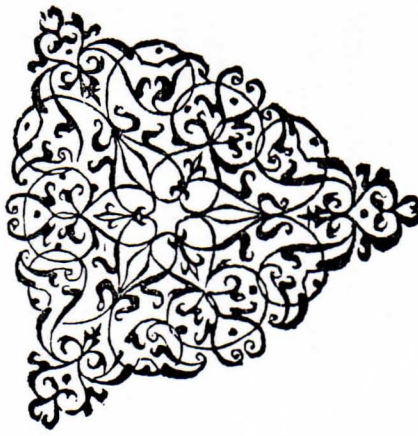
The bulk of the book was printed on French paper about  $17\frac{1}{2} \times 14\frac{1}{4}$ ", 8 pages up. After backing up, the sheets were folded once the long way and then twice more at right angles to make a 16-page section. (There are some 8-page sections as necessity required). The size of the full sheet used is similar to an old French size called *Tellier*. Four different papers were used but they are all fairly consistent in weight, and are all of good quality. The paper is remarkably free of knots or lumps, is well-formed and typical of the best "hammer mill" paper of the period. Much of the paper is not watermarked but there is a fair amount of "hand" watermarks which appear at the head of the page, across the first fold. Judging from the missing part of the watermark, less than  $1/8$ " was trimmed after the book was sewn. The mark of the hand was used by paper-makers of various countries for hundreds of years and was symbolic of both Fidelity and Labor. It is similar to the illustration shown here.

Typical of such paper it is in as good condition as when it was made more than 400 years ago. Other than the normal yellowing due to age the paper is strong and supple.

Henricus de Nova Villa







INITIAL LETTERS AND TAIL-PIECES USED IN THE 1589

ALCIATO EDITION



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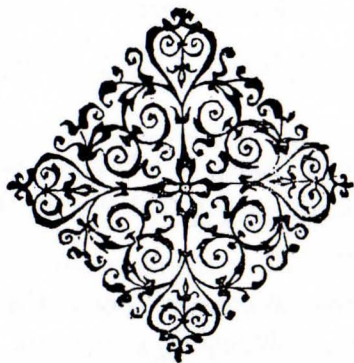
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## APPENDIX



**Eight New Emblems**  
by Henricus de Nova Villa  
with wood engravings  
by Wesley Bates



One hundred forty copies of this book have been printed at the Bird & Bull Press in February 2007. The illustration used on the title page and elsewhere is derived from Emblem 132. The chapter head illustrations are reduced images of Emblems 1, 3, and 118. The text was composed in Dante types by Michael Bixler and printed on Frankfurt mould-made paper. The book was bound by Campbell Logan Bindery.

This is copy No.

17

THIS IS ONE OF EIGHT COPIES WITH ADDITIONAL LEAVES