ELEPHANT&CASTLE 32 | I/2024 | ISSN 1826-6118

Sweeping Emblematics

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doi: https://doi.org/10.62336/unibg.eac.32.515

Keywords

Emblems and Devices
Hermeneutics
Representation
Entextualization
Projection and Mobility

Abstract

The article valorizes Renaissance emblematics as an inherently tensional form, steeped in interchange and transition. Movement was not only a thematized topic in emblematic compositions, it was their basic textual strategy to activate meanings and foster interpretation, explore the possibilities and scopes of new forms of communication, and pave the way for a participatory readership. Emblematics was in fact conceived as a brand-new and transdisciplinary textual mode, a mongrel form whose complex interplay of signs favored multiplied discursive models thanks to the constant relay between visual and verbal elements, forcibly made to cohabit the same representational space. Unsurprisingly, these innovative features were soon co-opted and channeled into manipulative practices functional to interpellating and 're-creating' readers, thereby contributing to transform this luxuriant form into a static site of coherence and symbolical expression. The article, on the contrary, reassesses the importance of emblematics as a multifaceted construct which requires a similarly multifaceted theoretical perspective approaching it as a wide-ranging cultural construct, a textual space which ushered in an idea of communication as projective and dislocating, which deployed idiosyncratic meaning procedures and set new hermeneutic parameters, which triggered an incessant mobility in the reading experience, which was teeming with cognitive potentials and ideological bearings.

1. This article makes the case for Renaissance emblematics[1] as an inherently tensional form, steeped in interchange and transition, conspicuously connected with the idea of movement. Emblematics was inherently syncretistic and transdisciplinary – drawing at liberty form such heterogeneous disciplines as mythology, history, folklore, alchemy, literature, art history, philosophy, religion, science and others – a multifunctional genre which was exploited for the most disparate ends, from the decoration of buildings or books to the recommendation of a social course of action; from the flattery of patrons or friends to personal self-fashioning; from claiming one's class affiliation to imposing one's reputation, from suggesting moral behaviors to sending coded or allusive messages in ritualized events. As Manning (2002: 23) duly reminds, "Part of the emblem's distinction – as was recognized early on – was its diversity" and it does not come as a surprise that "No domestic or public space was left unfilled by some appropriate emblematic decoration" (Manning 2002: 25).

Of course, this adaptive propensity was favored by an episteme in which "the interconnectedness of pictorial representation, allegorical tableaux and rhetorical figuration" (Breitenberg 1986: 5) was a matter of fact; however, the ubiquity of emblematics and the importance attached to its bimedial form was highly distinctive. Crucially, theorists (especially Ruscelli in Giovio, 1556 and Ammirato, 1562) insisted that emblematic constructs were not simply descriptive, but contingent syntheses of two semiotic systems entertaining analogical relations and producing a third element through their interaction. In any case, visual and verbal parts should never be descriptive or duplicate each other's information but be valorized in their disseminative capacity of engendering new meanings and conceptualizations.

The novelty of emblematics, in other words, stemmed not only from the emergence of a new, hybrid 'object' of communication but from a sweeping alteration of the very way of conceiving and understanding it. The possibility of expressing material concepts in an immediate, intuitive way took the material form of a multiple discursive mode in which the constant relay between visual and verbal elements implicated the forced cohabitation within the same representational space of two media mutually quoting and overlapping, constantly converging and clashing. Despite their moralistic and didactic leanings, emblems and devices did not aim at explaining, but at accounting for the potential meanings produced by the text as a visual and intellectual experience, flaunting a peculiarly negotiable referentiality. This explains why Renaissance scholars were enthused by this form grafted on a long tradition and with wide cultural roots: its complex interplay of signs wielded a new cognitive power and seemed to open up fascinating epistemological perspectives.

The other fundamental characteristic of emblematics was that its meanings were 'writable' by a participatory and active readership. If an emblem was clearly a purposeful composition, the very name impresa (deriving from a contracted form of the Italian verb 'to undertake') declared itself as intentional *par excellence*; yet, strikingly this deliberate character was encoded in, and was to be retrieved from, a complex artifact, featuring heterogeneous elements and heavily reliant on the readers' hermeneutic action. The concise but effective combinations of written texts and images aspired to teach in an entertaining way and thereby produce cognitive effects, but the interaction of the visual and verbal elements also entailed the possibility of a proliferation of meanings and an active interpretative answer.

This prospect triggered a radical change of perspective which could not but affect the way in which readers were expected to process information: straddling between two diverse media in a staggering alternation between abstract conceptualizations and thoughts-made-visible, readers had to reconstruct and create meanings; therefore, the figure of a superior, teaching author democratically coexisted with a participatory readership and an inherently dynamic form whose meanings could not be communicated by purely pictorial or verbal means, but were activated by their forced coupling and interaction.

The scholarly disputes and the donnish definitions of the genre hid in fact the epistemological concern of understanding and defining how this projective mongrel form could 'embody' a meaning and consequently transform the relations between art works and audience. From this point of view, emblematics provided an early confirmation of Gombrich's (1960) reproof of the idea of the 'pure' eye of the beholder: a symbolical form capitalizing on the relationship between figural and verbal systems

was incompatible with the very idea of an innocent vision. An emblematic artifact was not a carrier of meanings generated elsewhere and interpreted by disembodied viewers; rather, it expected readers who did not limit themselves to a pure and simple decodification of a ready-made and reassuring message. It was an "excellent monster of Nature which contrived works joining figures of things and of voices together" (Bargagli 1594: 14, my translation); which implied a similarly 'monstruous', artificial reading, a deliberate negotiation of meanings which could not but be influenced by situated observers and the social construction of their eyes. As such, emblematics is a privileged site to carry out a social and historical analysis of the reader-observer as the subject of institutional settings and social forces which Bourdieu (1992) labeled 'habitus'.

Under these premises, it seems even more necessary to oust the hackneyed stigma of the convoluted and stale antiquarian type of textuality lumbered on emblematics. Far from pursuing pedantic affectation, emblematic montages fitted perfectly the early modern humanistic agenda of the rediscovery and reactivation of past cultural forms. The traditional vision of emblematics as a dull, disciplined symbolical form is only the consequence of static theoretical perspectives of so many scholars who would "look for a normative embodiment of the form, which denies the very flexibility that gave the genre life" (Manning 2002: 25) and typically privileged comparative analyses to find connections between visual art and literature. These normalizing traits of emblem studies reproduce, to a certain extent, the containment practice which historically was imposed on the more innovative features of emblematics, notably the 'moralistic turn' bolstered by religious co-optation, which favored an anchorage tendency (Barthes 1977) that limited (though not uniformly and successfully) hermeneutic proliferation in favor of a more regimented reading action and an increased semiotic coherence, based on a prevalence of what Foucault (1983) termed resemblance over similitude.

On the contrary, this article considers emblematics as a multifaceted construct which requires a similarly multifaceted theoretical perspective to shed light on its paradoxical blending of dynamic meaning procedures and more monologic, educationally rife practices. Emblematics will be considered as a wide-ranging construct, profoundly interfused with some central epistemological topics of early modern culture and, to a certain extent, as a prototype of such recent concepts as intermediality (Boehm 1994), metapicture (Mitchell 1994), convergence (Jenkins 2006), iconic and pictorial turn (Boehm and Mitchell 2009), iconotext (Louvel 2011), multimodality (Jewitt at al. 2016). The purpose of the article, of course, is not to reconstruct a possible genealogy of such cultural patterns, but to offer a slant approach to emblematics as a form of textuality whose idiosyncratic meaning procedures ushered in an idea of communication as projective and dislocating, in which the interaction and/or gap between discourse and representation was paramount, in which the idea of movement was not just a thematized topic but a central feature of conceptualizations with clear cognitive and ideological bearings.

2. A clear instance of the flexibility and variety of emblematics mentioned above is testified by its variety of forms: a strictly personal impresa could paradoxically be inserted within a collection; some emblems had no images, others were enriched by supplementary materials and long meditations; *Partheneia sacra* (Hawkins 1633), the most important recusant book by an English Jesuit, even combined devices, emblems together with poems and various spiritual meditations. The same happened for the visual part, with images sporting arms mysteriously emerging from clouds, eyes amazingly embedded in human hands, custom-crafted blends of objects or animals, human figures donning syncretistic attributes in unusual settings. These rudiments of special effects were not only functional to conveying an alterity of meanings or intentions that struck the eye and the imagination of the beholder; they also amplified the meaning possibilities and questioned entrenched perceptions and accepted facts.

In fact, each emblematic composition was an ideological construct in the sense that it assumed the right to represent, relativize, challenge, or reinforce cultural perspectives and world views, but it also advanced a vision of the world, of space and time which was familiar and deviant at the same time. In other words, emblems and devices often amounted to what Foucault would term heterotopies, plural textual spaces which transformed a concrete material place

(a book, a cloak, a portal) into a counterplace, a mixed and original arrangement in which it was customary to "juxtaposer en un seul lieu réel plusieurs espaces, plusieurs emplacements qui sont en eux-mêmes incompatibles". (Foucault 1994: 758). An emblematic artifact was, in fact, a non-place where new conceptual configurations could come to light: for example, the intertextual dialogue between background and foreground scenes in Van de Passe's splendid illustrations for Rollenhagen's emblems (1611) and (1613), later 'recycled' by Wither (1635) (see Daly-Young 2005), imposed the coalescence of mutually exclusive times and spaces, opened up hermeneutic possibilities poised to suspend, neutralize, contradict, subvert the relationships it submitted to its readers. Emblematic artifacts were, as it were, utopistic attempts to fix and represent a single, epiphanic moment of a special arrangement of inconsistent groups of objects, characters, and contexts.

The heterotopic nature of emblematics was, thus, highly distinctive because it allowed authors to amalgamate the parameter of space with the parameter of time: human bodies holding unexpected attributes in surprising contexts while performing unpredictable actions in precarious positions made for new ways of extending the scope of symbolic communication. The resort to different and freely intermingling media inevitably meant that action and stasis could paradoxically coexist and trigger a parallel heterochronic dimension: after all, as Foucault explained, "Les hétérotopies sont liées, le plus souvent, à des découpages du temps […] l'hétérotopie se met à fonctionner à plein lorsque les hommes se trouvent dans une sorte de rupture absolue avec leur temps traditionnel" (1994: 759).

In other words, devices and emblems flaunted their peculiar ontological status, presented themselves as non-places where new spatio-temporal configurations were possible and innovative textual models were proposed. This dialogic interaction of incompatible elements brought forth new narrative and argumentative possibilities, new chronotopic agglomerates, non-linear and multiplied meaning opportunities, broken and rearticulated forms of communication, newfangled textual configurations.

The malleability mentioned above boosted not only the internal mobility of compositions and their capacity of transcending and dislocating meanings: emblematic artifacts were normally assembled in heterogeneous collections, whose varied, unexpected sequence clearly reinforced the entertaining and surprising component. The apparently capricious or idiosyncratic mix of themes and issues provided a kind of edification at large, usually in the form of a series of teachings variously revolving around vices and virtues: even in the case of more homogeneous series built on a specific theme (such as Van Veen 1608, or Van Haeften 1635), emblematic compositions kept their integrity and remained a "série de petites totalités closes qui font du livre une collection de fragments" (Spica 1999: 170). After all, the term emblem etymologically referred to a sort of detachable or borrowed ornament and emblematics itself soon became a huge repository of decorative themes ready to be used "Vestibus ut torulos, petasis ut figere parmas, / Et valeat tacitis scribere quisque notis", as Alciato (1531: A2r) had prophetically declared.

Emblematic collections were, thus, theoretically infinite works in progress (and many had in fact several editions with progressive integrations), they did not aim at being definitive or provide global teachings, even though the topics and ideas dealt with in the single compositions had an obvious universal bearing. Their serial organization was not conceived as a fixed progress with gradual, carefully arranged steps. In impresa collection, the sequence was often organized according to the social status of the personalities metaphorically signified by their devices. In the case of emblems, the various compositions had to be enjoyed as they presented themselves page after page, each item being conceived as having localized meaning effects.

Emblematics, in other words, offered the possibility of creating distinctive textual artifacts whose narrative and argumentative force was not linear but multiplied, and whose fruition was complex and multilayered as to their consumption. Reading paths were left open to the choice of the reader who could find gaps and adopt an interstitial reading approach to infer meanings.

3. The peculiar features discussed above and their wide-ranging epistemological implications inevitably led to more refined and pervasive forms of containment and directing, in particular whenever emblematics' eclectic attitudes and dialogic features

were deviously, and paradoxically, transformed into static sites of ideological consistency: in David (1601) and Wither (1635), for example, the apparently arbitrary and entertaining mechanism for the choice of an emblem based on a lottery was in fact an instrument for co-opting readers and making them 'freely' choose their indoctrination. Similarly, the freedom that authors had enjoyed in easily drawing their verbal and figurative materials from previous collections of emblematic artifacts – which added to the already immense trove of proverbs, popular lore, myths and legends, popular and scholarly wisdom – meant that past emblematic constructs, or their single elements, could be appropriated, re-semiotized, and transformed into the building blocks of a new kind of symbolic grammar. In other words, former themes and images could be easily detached from their traditional context, culturalized or moralized, and set in new combinations. Recycling ready-made materials was not only done for obvious economic reasons, due to the cost of engravings: to decontextualize and rearrange elements into a new significant whole gave new life to old components (as Wither 1635 claimed in his preface to the reader), or made them portable items which travelled literally under the guise of illustrated catechisms or engravings in the bags of early-modern Catholic missionaries (on this topic see Leone 2011). The well-known transformation of Eros into *Amor divinus*, for example, demonstrates how this portability was soon exploited to appropriate the immense legacy of pagan myths and legends for the propagation of religious values, in a sort of updated and refined version of Augustine's idea of sacred theft.

From this point of view, emblematics is an exemplary case of what linguistic anthropology has called entextualization, the practice of extracting parts of discourse from its original context segmenting it into transferable units which could "circulate among a potentially indefinite range of other contexts, where they have the potential to be recontextualized" (Keane 2016: 211). Entextualization implied a deliberate, *ad hoc* rearrangement of materials, amounting to an 'ideological' practice since it recommended, justified, or attacked specific cultural, social, and moral values. Anything could be entextualized: even the human figure, which impresa theorists advised not to use in a composition, was retrieved as anatomic fragment. The fact that contents could be separated from the symbolical forms which originally conveyed them in order to create new associations, demonstrates that the bimedial structure of emblematic artifacts was not rigid: what was necessary was to keep (at least formally) the interaction of verbal and visual elements, but their possible retuning did not hinder signification, nor compromise communication, it simply changed the nature of the content and its reading mode.

Emblem 27 in Jenner (1626) provides a good example in this connection: ever since Alciato's emblem II (1531: A2v-A3r), the lute had been a symbol of social harmony or faithful allegiance. Alciato invited his dedicatee (the Duke of Milan) to consider the lute's physical features, in particular its many strings which must be consonant, and then focus on the various aspects and difficulties to obtain musical harmony, metaphorically implying the need of a political agreement to guarantee a strong alliance: being 'out of tune' with authorities or allies could have ruinous social and political consequences.

In Jenner's emblem, on the contrary, the lute is just a single musical instrument, which cannot produce any melody if it is out of tune; as such, it can be easily turned into the symbol of an individual who must be "scrude, and tun'd, and new amended". The programmatic title of the emblem, "The New Creation", leaves no doubt as to the function which is given to the composition: God, in all his mercy, does not destroy sinners but requires their transformation; consequently, each reader must undergo a complete change not in order to achieve a collective harmony but to produce an individual music, in keeping with God's expectations. Accordingly, their body and soul must be refashioned by the action of a minister who will eventually manage to get the expected melody: "But when *Gods Minister* shall these up screw, / And so doth tune and make this creature new". In this way, the recreational potential of the emblematic form is turned into a pressing recommendation for the reader to accept his/her 're-creation' as an inescapable necessity, because "Thou nothing art … Let *Gods Word* new transforme, and fashion thee".

The ideological character underlying this appropriation of a former emblematic composition is further demonstrated by other elements: the choice of music and harmony as a thematic domain was un-

usual in Protestant (and especially in Puritan) texts, but here it is exploited because most emblems in Jenner's book were based on sermons preached in London and featuring anti-Catholic stances. Emblem 27, in particular, is attributed to M.D. (arguably John Donne; see Jenner 1983: xii), so Jenner probably deployed the unexpected symbolical image of the lute because he wanted to capitalize on the popularity of the preacher (who actually resorted to musical metaphors in his sermons; see, for example, Donne 1962: 148) and thereby corroborate his moral message and make it more convincing.

After all, Jenner's doctrinal aim is quite evident since the *pictura* (a simple and straightforward image of musician tuning a lute) is just appended to the text with a purely descriptive function, a sort of monologic illustration that is perfunctorily tied to the text and does not invite the active pursuit of additional meanings. Moreover, it is worth remembering that Jenner's book was reprinted several times with one major change: the 1626 edition had a horizontal, landscape orientation, while later editions (from 1631 on) had the usual portrait orientation. This means that the original emblem was unevenly spread across four pages, thereby fostering a fragmented reading process which encouraged a piecemeal response to the various parts of the text. The typographical alteration of later reprints, on the contrary, confirmed and strengthened the overtly didactic slant of the emblem and gave more emphasis to its ethical bearing: it now appeared as a single composition visible at a glance and conveying a consistent invitation in tune with the Puritan ideals of its author.

Interestingly, however, although entextualized elements were rearranged and fitted with different meanings and purposes in new contexts, as in Jenner's emblem, they could also maintain their associations with prior contexts straddling, as it were, between past and present conceptualizations. Emblematic creations were, thus, typically liminal arrangements allowing for the building of connections and exchanges across different scopic and hermeneutic regimes: authors could show off their wit and ability (or their religious allegiances) in making personal creations and adapting materials to new contexts, and readers might see objects or concepts or themes as different but also the same, making connections and creating new pairings and links which could bear upon one another in new ways.

A remarkable example is provided by Blount (1648): whereas the 1646 edition just contains the translation of Henri Estienne's manual on devices, the 1648 edition includes a long list of coronet devices used during the Civil War by both parties (on this see Young 1991). Most badges and banners featured traditional iconographic elements (crowns, swords, laurel wreaths) associated with established mottoes which stressed loyalty to the king or to the Parliament. Many, however, were brand-new creations, in which well-known slogans or images were associated and adapted to a completely different context in order to allude to contemporary facts (such as the failed arrest of the Five members by Charles I) or to attack the adversaries (such as the irreverent mocking of the Earl of Essex, leader of the parliamentary forces, who had been involved in a notorious sexual scandal). These examples are noteworthy because they demonstrate that entextualization worked not only in the case of ready-made images endowed with new comments, but also in the opposite case, in which familiar mottoes and phrases were applied and refunctionalized to transform existing images.

These open-ended acts of creative recontextualization obviously brought about an enrichment of the message which ultimately produced a plethora of interpretative possibilities. The 1551 edition of Paradin's collection of devices, for example, includes the figure of a plant (possibly a broom) surrounded by some stones and accompanied by the words "Fata Viam Invenient" (Paradin 1551: 103) [Fig. 1]. Thanks to the motto and its specific mention of a way to be found, the figure is easily interpreted as representing a mount-joie, a sort of landmark which pilgrims were used to build as signpost during their journeys. However, the Latin plural term *fata* designated a fixed, immutable decree pronounced by the divinity (actually, the term *fatum* referred to a word, a powerful, fully performative utterance which fixed the length of an individual's life on the very moment of her/his birth). In other words, the composition unexpectedly joins a typical object belonging to the world of travel with a sentence which underlines the fixity of divine pronouncements: these will be fulfilled, in some way or another, and what was decided will happen anyway; one can only accept a destiny which, despite its apparent arbitrariness, will simply follow a predeter-

mined order.

This perplexing coupling requires the reader's further elaboration also because it is a quotation from *Aeneid* III, 395, where Helenus of Troy, Cassandra's twin brother, prophecies that Aeneas still has a long way to go and many trials to overcome before reaching his destination, the site of the new city he is to found in Italy. The recontextualization of this sentence in a composition on pilgrimage makes the whole composition very rich in implicatures: first, pilgrims are invited to reconsider their long and tiring journeys in the light of Aeneas's glorious destiny after his long wanderings. In this way, human agency is also restored and highlighted: man is not condemned to a passive resignation because the idea of pilgrimage, after all, entails a free moral choice, a deliberate physical and spiritual movement with the trustful certainty that those immutable decrees will ultimately guide to the heavenly destination. Moreover, the solemn *fata* pronounced by the divinity are reconfigured as the actual words of God granting his providential intervention, an idea which had already been advanced by Stoicism and which eventually merged with the Christian idea of Providence: the idea of a prescient, omnipotent divinity does not necessarily exclude some liberty for man and his free moral agency, a theme which was one of the most hotly debated topics in Christianity after the Reformation.

Fig. 1 | *Claude Paradin, Devises heroïques*, 1551, p. 103; courtesy of University of Glasgow Archives & Special Collections, S.M.816.

In other words, the accomplishment of the pilgrimage is projected onto Aeneas' glorious destiny, and just like true Christians must strive to interpret God's eternal decrees correctly in their personal life, so pilgrims are encouraged to find their way and let themselves be guided by the mount-joie built and left by former pilgrims as reminders. The symbolical meaning (divine decrees will find metaphorically a way to be fulfilled) finds a literal application in the concrete way trodden by pilgrims in their literal and metaphorical journey, but notably their destination is not even considered: whether they reach a shrine, or touch a precious relic, or contemplate the vision of the souls of the Blessed, the real fundamental aspect is the physical and intellectual movement they are invited to perform.

A completely different configuration is provided by the 1557 edition, which was enlarged to include short explanatory messages on the person who used the device and/or on its moral content. As such, the original text was channeled into an overtly didactic construct akin to an emblem. Some devices were also modified: in the case of the composition discussed above, the image of the mount-joie is accompanied by a different motto, "Sans autre guide" (Paradin 1557: 160) [Fig. 2]. The idea of pilgrimage is kept, but the loss of the intertextual reference to Aeneas gives the composition a more marked devotional perspective: virtue is the only guide a pilgrim needs to achieve happiness and the whole composition is clearly set within a moral framework. Even if the text does not specify which virtue is alluded to, the focus is no more on the idea of journey and its many implicatures, but on the importance of following a guiding symbol which marks the correct path, as the commentary fittingly stresses. Men's deliberate action in setting off and have a say on their own destiny (and on the possible further meanings implied by the

Fig. 2 | *Claude Paradin, Devises heroïques*, , 1557, p. 160; courtesy of University of Glasgow Archives & Special Collections, S.M.816.

impresa) is not considered; walking the correct path in order to reach the right destination is given more relevance than the act of moving towards a destiny which is still to be fashioned.

The old motto, however, is not discarded, but recycled and associated to one of the most ancient and archetypal symbols in the history of mankind, a labyrinth (Paradin 1557: 94) [Fig. 3]. In this case, the accompanying text first provides some historical context on the original bearer of the device, and then proposes a moral application of the image, resorting to its traditional medieval association with disorientation and worldly illusions. The top-down view (a perpendicular, detached vision from above providing a whole map of the structure and paths), and the presence of a big dot right in the center defined against the central clearing, reinforces the typical deciphering of the symbol: the final destination of the labyrinth is its core, the place where the most important thing is hidden. The reader is invited to enter and explore the labyrinth, follow the thread indicating the right direction, avoid ending up in a cul-de-sac and getting lost among the walls of the structure, and eventually reach the center. The providential reading of the motto, already mentioned above, is reinforced by the image: Aeneas' heroic wanderings in the Mediterranean are symbolically evoked by the meandering paths of the maze and a sort of metonymical tightening is assured by the similarly mythological ontology of the labyrinth. The moral interpretation is also strengthened, implying that God's favor and help will guarantee the faithful travelers who, in the end, will find the right way if they stand clear of devious worldly enticements.

Of course, the topographical vision from above which renders the map of the labyrinth at a glance cannot but evoke the ideational aspect of the maze

Fig. 3 | *Claude Paradin, Devises heroïques*, , 1557, p. 94; courtesy of University of Glasgow Archives & Special Collections, S.M.816.

and its creator, Dedalus, the only one who conceived it 'on paper' and then saw it in the flesh from above when he fled with his artificial wax wings. The reader is offered this privileged, vantage point of the mythical architect; however, the several possible symbolical interpretations traditionally attached to the labyrinth – an oneiric illusion; the exploration of interiority and of the unconscious; the enigmatic essence of life; the search for the meaning of reality; a metatextual representation of writing or of the meandering mechanisms of communication; the dialectical coexistence of artificial order and existential disorder, centripetal attraction and centrifugal aspiration, just to list only a few of them – are not adequately valorized by the verbal explanation which imposes a single, precise hermeneutic possibility.

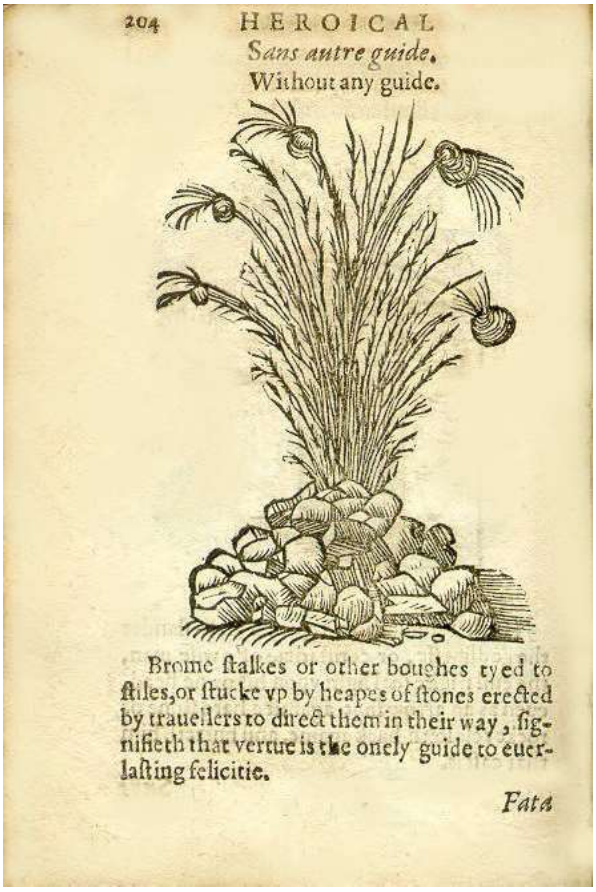
204 HEROICAL
Sans autre guide.
Without any guide.
Brome ſtalkes or other boughes tyed to ſtiles, or ſtucke vp by heapes of ſtones erected by trauellers to direct them in their way, ſignifieth that vertue is the onely guide to euerlaſting felicitie.
Fata

Fig. 4 | P.S., *The heroicall devises of M. Claudius Paradin*, 1591, p. 204.

Interestingly enough, the basic features of Paradin's devices are reproduced in the English translation (1591) of the collection, carried out by a mysterious P.S.. Some changes to the mottoes clearly modify the meaning of the whole composition: for example, the mount-joie is accompanied with the motto "Without any guide", thereby emphasizing a more fatalistic presentation of the movement, confirmed by the substitution of the pilgrims of the French version with a more general "Travellers" who should only count on virtue as guide. In this way, the whole context of the pilgrimage and the guiding function of the mount-joie is lost [Fig. 4].

Similarly, the motto accompanying the labyrinth erases some of its mythical echoes transforming the fates into a more impersonal and detached "Fortune" [Fig. 5]. In the accompanying text, too, the guiding thread is not what should drive people through the maze to reach salvation: God's "holy precepts" are not given "into our hands" so that we can find the way out once we are entangled in a maze; rather, they are norms that should prevent us from entering altogether the labyrinth with its dangers and snares, because there is no possibility of finding the way out once we are entangled in a maze. In other words, readers are invited to be wary, avoid any negotiation with the world and certainly dismiss the idea that they can actively follow a guide. Readers are almost scared and discouraged from taking initiative, they are invited to be still, to keep their position, to avoid running the risk of doing anything which might corrupt them. The English translation, thus, presents a more impenetrable and deterministic divinity and suggests that

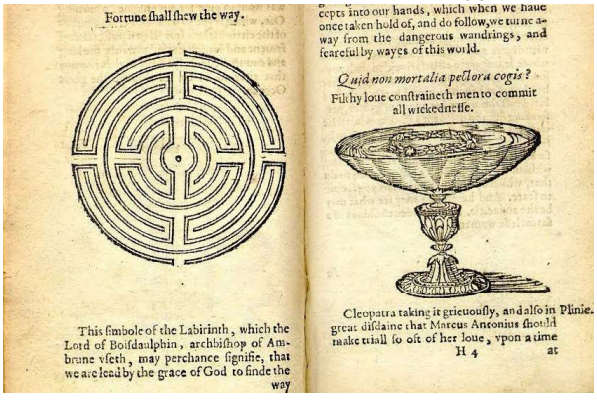
Fortune ſhall ſhew the way.
cepts into our hands, which when we haue once taken hold of, and do follow, we turne away from the dangerous wandrings, and fearefull by wayes of this world.
Quid non mortalia pectora cogis?
Filthy loue conſtraineth men to commit all wickednesse.
This ſimbole of the Labirinth, which the Lord of Boiſdauphin, archbiſhop of Ambrune vſeth, may perchance ſignifie, that we are lead by the grace of God to finde the way
Cleopatra taking it grieuouſly, and alſo in Plinie great diſdaine that Marcus Antonius ſhould make triall ſo oft of her loue, vpon a time
H 4 at

Fig. 5 | P.S., *The heroicall devises of M. Claudius Paradin*, 1591, pp. 118-19.

Fig. 6 | Francis Quarles, *Emblemes*, 1635, pp. 188-90.

readers adopt a more passive and resigned attitude.

A similar tendency can be detected in Quarles's enormously popular emblems (1635), which include a composition centered on a labyrinth (IV, 2) [Fig. 6]. The motto is a quotation from Psalm 119, a call for God's help as a guide for man's steps, and the image features a maze, explicitly associated with the world ("The world's a Lab'rinth" in stanza 3) and thus presented as a place of error and 'mis-taken' paths. This is explicitly made clear in the first stanza, which repeatedly exploits some typical oppositions (light/dark, joy/pain/ truth/error…) that should mark the life, opinions, and views of the pilgrim as qualitatively different from the rest of the world. This exaggerated polarization gives the whole composition a sort of dramatic urgency and gravity: the condition of the pilgrim is even compared to Israel's, whose 40-year wanderings in the desert were not so desperate because of the portentous signs of God's guiding presence, whereas the pilgrim in the labyrinth feels lost and hopeless.

The image, too, is constructed to have a great bearing on the beholder and reinforce this despondent attitude: the maze does not have physical high walls surrounding the path, but dangerous pitfalls ("streams of sulphurous fire" as stanza IV reminds ominously), as if the pilgrim were walking on top of the labyrinth's walls. This apparent vantage point is not high enough to allow the pilgrim to identify the right path to go and is particularly dangerous because the fall implies immediate death (as demonstrated by the two people hopelessly calling for help just before falling down the pit). This major transformation of the traditional representation of a labyrinth is complemented with an even more shocking perspective which does not provide a comprehensive, dominant vision from above but a sideways, horizontal sight with a relatively low angle. In this way, readers are shockingly and dramatically involved in the maze, watching the pilgrim in the center while they themselves are not very far, possibly on one of the nearby gyring paths. It is an image which irresistibly recalls Merleau-Ponty's idea of relational ontology, which erases the subject–object dichotomy, stresses the materiality and embodiment of perception and makes the human body something mobile, a thing among things, the "vehicle of being in the world" (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 94).

The overall impression of the picture is, thus, of a highly dramatic situation whose tragic atmosphere is reinforced by the presence of other people (some falling, one vainly led by his dog along the path, not to mention the two curiously stretched, disproportionate bodies along the slopes the hill in the background), which gives a less static impression to the picture. These aspects, however, do not invite a parallel dynamic reading: the perspective chosen for the image invites the observer to watch the picture starting from the pilgrim in the middle of the maze and about to set out, be shocked by the tragic destiny of the falling men, and perceive his/her own dramatic situation as a sinner ensnared in a labyrinthine world.

The composition of the image, too, is particularly remarkable: Quarles' engravings were taken from the vastly popular collection of emblems by the Dutch

Jesuit Herman Hugo but are in fact mirror images of the originals, probably because this simplified their copy by the English engraver. The inversion, however, is an element whose importance cannot be underestimated because it radically alters the reading process and ultimately the interpretation of the image itself (see Kress-Van Leeuwen 1996, especially chap. 6).

In the case of Quarles' emblem, the salience of the pilgrim and of the idea of freedom evoked by the sea and the ship in the background is stressed as the starting point for reading the emblem. As we progressively move from left to right, following the diagonal rope connecting the pilgrim and the angel, we are made aware of the difficulty and length of the path, and, when we get to the tower in the background, we shockingly perceive an unnaturally stretched body on the slope, possibly someone who tried to reach the tower climbing the hill directly (as the man to his left is trying to do) instead of walking the whole length of the labyrinth, passing the gate at the end of it and finally moving along the narrow, winding path to the tower. In the Dutch original, on the contrary [Fig. 7], the construction of the image induced a different, more confident reading, starting from the highly salient angel on the top left corner (together with the smashed body at its bottom and the silly pilgrim following his dog) then going down to the pilgrim in the center and eventually the appeasing vision of the ships in the far background.

Fig. 7 | Hermann Hugo, *Pia Desideria*, Antwerp, 1624, p. 134.

Quarles' longish accompanying text stresses the impression of hopeless movement: the frantic activity of people meaninglessly moving back and forth is evoked by stanza 3 and its insistence that there's "No resting here" in the world, that there is no time to stop and think, and that whoever walks unguided is destined to fall. Also, the diagonal upward rope which ties the pilgrim to the angel on the tower does not convey any hope, nor a positive outlook, but ultimately confirms that the pilgrimage will be more difficult and perilous than ever: stanza 7 even hints that the pilgrim's dream of flying away is illusory and using a shortcut would have terrible consequences ("Mine eyes being seeld, how would I mount above / the reach of danger, and forgotten Care! / My backward eyes should nev'r commit that fault").

The only, right solution, as the final stanza clarifies, is that pilgrims empty out their lives and accept passively to be led by God: "Thou art my Path; direct my steps aright; / I have no other Light, no other Way". The pilgrims' (and the readers') eyes must not be fixed upon the happy ending of their troubled path, but on their despairingly difficult path and their fallen condition as sinners. The movement inherent in the idea of pilgrimage is not an encouraging start towards a better condition, nor is the destination the place where the pilgrims/readers should focus their attention. The target is a mysterious, far, and unnamed delight; the pilgrims/readers' look must be rearward, obsessively fixed on their negative condition, on the difficulty of the path, on the dangers of the world and so on.

In other words, even if the emblem should open up a positive perspective (final bliss and election), in fact it repeatedly blocks and hinders any movement, underlining the pilgrims/readers' tragic condition and their helpless situation. It is as if they were pushed and pulled at the same time, with the effect of stressing their desperate situation and making them even more uncertain. Movement is only hypothetical, officially invited but actually hampered: pilgrims/readers must be passive recipients of the scaring perspectives of their present condition rather than active participants in their salvation. Movement is not exploited as a metaphor of spiritual elevation (also inherent in the real movement of the readers' eyes which repeatedly shift from the visual to the verbal and vice versa in the act of reading), nor as a metatextual reference to the tortuous dynamics of human communication quintessentially summarized by the text as labyrinth (and the necessity for readers of orienting themselves in the sequence of emblems in the book). Since the emblem takes its cue from a Psalm and works within a clear religious perspective, its purpose is not to provide a rational demonstration or a logical discussion on the nature of pilgrimage, but to rely on pathetic elements to move and elicit an emotive reaction, an aim to which the mental scenario of the pilgrimage and its theatricalization, accomplished by a skillful use of edifying words and stirring images, is perfectly fitting.

Consequently, the entertaining aspect of the emblem, a pleasing form valorized in its bimedial nature to spur the faithful and 'make a traveler of him', insinuates another course of action, another necessity, another kind of progress. The real movement must not be from the readers' sinful nature towards a glorious heavenly destination but an inward withdrawal whose outcome will be the radical transformation of their body and soul. Just like Jenner's emblem discussed above, the readers' recreation paves the way to their 're-creation': after all, the *Invocation* at the beginning of Quarles' collection had remarkably stressed the desire "O, teach me stoutly to deny / My selfe, that I may be no longer I" (Quarles 1635: 2), and the final epigram of this emblem sanctions and doubles down on this idea: "Pilgrim trudge on: What makes thy soule complaine, / Crownes thy complaint: The way to rest is paine. / The Road to Resolution lies by doubt: / The next way Home's the farthest way about".

Pilgrims/readers are not invited to walk on but to remember that their movement will be a slow and tiring slog; they have to fix their attention not on the guiding angel above but on the oxymoronic nature of their inconsistent lives full of opposites; they are not offered words of encouragement which should hasten their steps and widen their perspectives and expectations, but repeatedly daunted and invited to slacken their pace. This modality surreptitiously imposes other paradoxical truths to be accepted and interiorized: moving means going around uselessly; acting as independent, rational subjects leads to death; true movement is passivity and resignation; true subjectivity means being subject to God's inscrutable will; conversion entails a complete refashioning of one's life.

Quarles' emblem, thus, demonstrates how emblematic compositions often implied corporealized readers (Crary 1990): on the one hand, they were required to transcend their bodily, physical perception and find hidden meanings; on the other, they were paradoxically re-situated at the center of an interpretation process which was no more dynamic but blocking, interpellating them in order to make them fit for an embryonic form of Debordian 'spectacular' consumption.

4. In conclusion, as the polysemous title of this article implied, the analysis of emblematics as movement contributes to revising some major assumptions underlying the value of this form: emblematic texts were not transparent windows onto an objective world of separate objects (though they undoubtedly exploited the referentiality of words and images to convey specific cultural and moral values), nor were they self-consuming artifacts which stimulated readers to go beyond their material existences (though the Neoplatonic idea of a Silenic truth achievable through pure intuition was one of their main tenets), nor did they amount to a monolithic field of unity and semiotic coherence (though religious authors repeatedly tried to regiment and tame their expressive potential). Rather, emblematic montages provided a textual space whose composite nature and epistemological underpinnings triggered an incessant mobility in the reading experience which was refractive rather than reflective, teeming with cognitive capacity and

aimed at setting new hermeneutic parameters which involved the readers' active cooperation.

Such an expanded, 'dynamic' approach to emblematics opens up interesting perspectives for its interpretation, allowing for the analysis of the material exchanges and relays between mental and physical objects, between visual representations and readers' actual lives. As the discussion above tried to highlight, an emblematic construct never entailed a purely visual or intellectual fruition, but a fully embodied appreciation which, at the same time, was often contained and channeled into manipulative practices for the forging of individual identities and social norms.

Notes

[1] The term will be used throughout the essay as a general reference to the early modern symbolic assemblage of written texts and images exemplified by impresa or device and emblem. The bibliography on emblematics is unmanageably huge: among recent contributions, see Manning (2002), Visser (2005), Benassi (2018), and the various issues of *Emblematica. An Interdisciplinary Journal for Emblem Studies*.

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