Speculative Emblematics: An Environmental Iconology

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Lucy Mercer, hereby declare that this thesis is and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed:

Date: 10th September 2019

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An early version of the idea of 'Speculative Emblematics' was published as Lucy Mercer and Laurence Grove, 'Emblems and Antiquity: An Exploration of Speculative Emblematics' in *Ecocriticism, Ecology, and the Cultures of Antiquity*, ed. by Christopher Schliephake (London: Lexington Books, 2017), pp. 243–258.

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The work in this thesis is dedicated in memory to my much-missed friend Mark Fisher.

Abstract

This thesis comprises of a critical and creative investigation of emblems from an ecophilosophical and poetic perspective. The critical part of the thesis, 'Speculative Emblematics: An Environmental Iconology', examines Andrea Alciato's *Emblematum liber* to propose an ecological emblematic ontology of obscurity that can be used to witness the enmeshed ecological subject from within a shared topography, and explore a transcultural imagination in light of various interpretative crises instigated by the Anthropocene.

Chapter One outlines Speculative Emblematics' methodology that fuses contemporary concepts from the environmental humanities such as the material turn, natureculture and nonlinear forms of emergence with emblem studies and poetry. This thesis argues for example, that emblem books as protean, complex and obscure hybrid text-image artefacts are particularly suited to scholars developing epistemologies that are chasing these tangled webs. Chapter Two examines the *EL* as a material process rather than an artefact in relation to its development and the project of humanism, with particular focus on the accidental creation of emblems and Alciato's creative philological practice. Chapters Three, Four and Five examine biodiversity, an ancient Mediterranean commonplace and the flattening insert of 'Rome' in Alciato's emblems, gradually delineating an emblematic ontology founded on a double-edged concept of obscurity that moves away from loosely-designated new materialist thinking. Chapter Six presents some brief conclusions of the thesis and concludes with a reflection on my creative work.

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1 What is Speculative Emblematics?

Chapter One outlines the ecophilosophical context for this thesis's proposal of 'Speculative Emblematics' as an environmental iconology situated within the environmental humanities. It argues that obscurity – the quality Speculative Emblematics is posited around – has been neglected and disvalued as a possible tool for ecocriticism; despite this being the day-to-day reality of the enmeshed ecological subject in relation to scale effects, its potential for creative thought, and the already ambiguous nature of ecocriticism itself. Drawing on new materialisms, concepts of natureculture, material concepts of scale and nonlinear timeframes of emergence, it then outlines this thesis' alternative methodology of obscurity (as well as of hesitant criticism and relinquishment) guided by poetic and material practices, that directs its approach to its case study, Andrea Alciato's *Emblematum liber.* Considering that speculative, ecocritical and cultural theories are not necessarily benign interventions, environmentally speaking, this thesis approaches its own project cautiously. Introducing emblems, it then notes the difficulty of defining this protean text-image form, and instead offers four ecological qualities of emblems: muddied images, material ornaments, locking–in and obscure purposes. On the basis of emblems' relevance to literary ecocriticism and ecological philosophy, it conducts a brief survey of the state of the field in regards to the environmental humanities and emblem books, and vice versa, outlining why there has been little interdisciplinary connection between these fields. Noting an emerging materialist focus in emblematics that could be complementary to the material turn in ecocriticism, it concludes by stating that emblems' natureculture grafting can expand imaginative capacity, positioning Speculative Emblematics as a timely and relevant ecocritical approach in regards to emerging contemporary text-image works in 2018.

Introduction

> A desire to bear witness is still intense: the need to sit in an audience with others of one's kind for the shared experience of those stories and characters on the screen, marked by the unmistakable sensibility of a thousand kindred spirits holding their breath in the dark.[1]

The environmental humanities[2] as a broad subject field or 'interdisciplinary matrix'[3] has arisen in response to contemporary knowledge, usually acquired through scientific epistemology, of systems and beings we often cannot see or feel directly, for example global warming, microplastics and bacteria: abstract but nonetheless concrete objects that drastically, materially, affect our lives.[4] This is a contemporary predicament: though forms of ecological awareness have existed since antiquity, the revolutionary reality or awareness of an 'Earth System' of the 1960s and then the 'total complex ecosystem' of the 1980s and 1990s is precluded historically due to unknown geophysical phenomena,[5] with previous environmental knowledge of human impact being 'narrowly terrestrial (that is, ignoring oceanic and atmospheric effects) superficial and meliorative.'[6] In short, we are caught in a vast web of interconnected scale effects[7] that we cannot perceive clearly, or at all – nor in many cases disentangle – despite our recent awareness of them.

However, the pressing pedagogical aim of raising awareness of the urgent nature of various environmental crises (global warming is just one facet of these) relies on outlining and presenting these scale effects – subjectively invisible data – in a clear and explicit manner representationally. As a foundational part of the environmental

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[1] [Continued] 'The director's cut is not the only standard: the audience cut has long been my favourite version of a movie, shaped by a call-and-response pattern of group acceptance and disavowal of whatever dares to parade by on screen'. B. Ruby Rich, *New Queer Cinema: The Director's Cut* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), p. xxvii.

[2] The 'environmental humanities' is taken here to denote the more permanent disciplinary field that emerged in the 1990s. See Robert S. Emmett and David E. Nye, *The Environmental Humanities: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017), p. 3.

[3] Ursula K. Heise, 'Planet, species, justice—and the stories we tell about them', in *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*, ed. by Heise, Jon Christensen and Michelle Niemann (Abingdon, Oxon and New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), p. 1.

[4] As examined in Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

[5] C. Hamilton and J. Grinevald, 'Was The Anthropocene Anticipated?', *Anthropocene Review*, 2/1 (2015), pp. 59–72.

[6] David Lowenthal, 'Origins of Anthropocene Awareness', *The Anthropocene Review,* 3/1 (2015), pp. 52–63 (p. 56).

[7] Timothy Clark's term. See Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept* (London and New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 22.

humanities, literary ecocriticism – though in many ways opposed to the 'sado-dispassionate rationality of scientific reductionism'[8] as Val Plumwood puts it – is primarily anchored to modern environmentalism and ethics.[9] As a result, ecocritical discourses are led by, if not directly, the *aims of* the metaphorics that clear sight suggests, or by faith in the illuminating work of narrative itself – whereas the predominant obscurity that the human subject directly feels and sees in regards to environments is often ignored or glossed over in literary and ecocritical texts alike.[10] Like finding solutions to the crisis of the Anthropocene itself, the paradox for scholars in the environmental humanities is this: how can we as humans engage with ecological realities around us if our own subjectivities are inadequate when it comes to perceiving these material structures and material affects *clearly*, or at all, and have consequentially caused so much ecological devastation which is now also blurred? How can we claim that cultural representations – particularly representations depicting the natural world from pasts that did not have this environmental knowledge – have onto-epistemological value ecologically, and by extension, cultural and literary theories that ouroboros-like inform ecocritical interpretations and a mythopoeisis of the Anthropocene?[11] Rather than brushing these questions pertaining to disciplinary and methodological value under the carpet, it is interesting to note the difficulty of actually finding or presenting forms of ecocriticism or ecophilosophies that, despite

[8] Val Plumwood, 'Journey to the Heart of Stone', in *Culture, Creativity and Environment: New Environmentalist Criticism,* ed. by Fiona Becket and Terry Gifford (Amsterdam and New York, NY: BRILL, 2007), pp. 17–36 (pp. 17–18).

[9] See Richard Kerridge, 'Introduction', in *Writing the Environment*, ed. by Kerridge and Neil Sammells (London: Zed Books, 1998), pp. 1–9 (p. 5).

[10] Searches for the terms 'obscure' and 'obscurity' in many contemporary ecocritical volumes will yield nothing bar a handful of negative associations. For a more specific instance of how a drive for clarity impacts ecological narratives, Antonia Mehnert cites Frederick Buell's observations of contemporary climate change fictions that 'apocalyptic imageries generally based on presenting clear antagonists, may no longer be fitting to grasp the diffuse relation between victim and culprit in contemporary risk scenarios', whilst also arguing for a multitude of narrative templates. Antonia Mehnert, *Climate Change Fictions: Representations of Global Warming in American Literature* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), p. 33.
Timothy Clark states that in regards to climate change, green critics are 'still a long way short of thinking in the way and on the scale demanded by and issue both so global and multiplicitous', adding that 'scale framing is a major issue in literary depictions fo climate change. The time scales at issue may challenge forms of narrative geared to an easily identifiable section of lived human time. Timothy Clark, 'Some Climate Change Ironies: Deconstruction, Environmental Politics and the Closure of Ecocriticism', *The Oxford Literary Review,* 32/1 (201), pp. 131-149, p. 143.

[11] While the Anthropocene itself is certainly not mythic as a terrestrial tipping-point, 'Kathryn Yusoff, for example, has coined the term "Anthropogenesis" to suggest that Anthropocene narratives are mythic in content and are orientated towards the Anthropos as either world-maker or destroyer', in *Religion in the Anthropocene*, ed. by Catherine Dean-Drummond, Sigurd Bergmann and Markus Vogt (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017), p. 3.

intentions, offer systematic theories that are not 'fuzzy' or 'theoretically unsophicated', as Serpil Oppermann laments.[12]

Rather than consider this to be an issue, might it not be that obscurity as an ontological quality is not so far from the ontology of environments – and correspondingly, might cultural representations of environments blurred by subjective viewpoints and 'fuzzy' ecocritical theories be closer to the mark than they first appear? Though seemingly irrational compared to scientific epistemology, the removal of obscurity – the central quality that this thesis's contentions are posited around – from the equation in favour of policy-driven clarity is not only, as stated, incompatible with the kinds of knowledge-making offered by culture, but undermines the authority of scientific research that cannot be channelled into definitive specifics – such as the uncertain date of the Anthropocene.[13] Indeed, is facticity qua the Anthropocene an inappropriate measuring stick for complex and entangled environments, and for a multivalenced and messy materiality that more than ever affects the present? What might it mean to take obscurity not as an unwelcome barrier to understanding scale effects and the environmental crisis, but as an integral ecological quality? How might this affect the study of cultural artefacts previously deemed to be obscure and environmentally irrelevant, and to the purpose of critical theory? Further, within the collapsed timespace of the Anthropocene in which the deep past continually reshapes the present through continuing material effects – by for example, carbon released from burning fossil fuels – how might encounters with cultural artefacts, obscure or otherwise, similarly alter the present?

These are the some of the questions that propelled what this thesis as a whole[14] hopes to present as a nascent environmental iconology catalysed by the study of early modern emblems – a hybrid and obscure text-image form. By environmental iconology, this thesis means an integration of ecocriticism and ecological philosophy

[12] Oppermann overviews ecocriticism within the contention that 'largely confined to the theoretically discredited parameters of literary realism, ecocriticism today finds itself struggling with hermeneutical closure as well as facing an ambivalent openness in its interpretive approach.' Oppermann decries the nebulous result – an 'unfortunate academic janus with procreating faces' – in order to posit postmodern ecocritical theory as master-key, one again a drive for clarity that Speculative Emblematics hopes to suggest may create more problems than solve. See Serpil Oppermann, 'Theorizing Ecocriticism: Toward a Postmodern Ecocritical Practice', *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment,* 13/2 (2006), pp. 103–128, (p. 108, 103, 107).

[13] The difficulty of dating the Anthropocene has been most recently explored by Mark A. Maslin and Simon L. Lewis in *The Human Planet: How We Created The Anthropocene* (London: Pelican, 2018), building on Crutzen and Stoermer's term 'Anthropocene' in Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer, 'The Anthropocene', *International Geosphere- Biosphere Program Newsletter* 41 (2000), pp. 17–8.

[14] In both this critical thesis and creative work – my poetry collection *Emblem.*

into iconology, as an interdisciplinary mode of inquiry focused on the ontology of representation.[15] In brief, Speculative Emblematics' methodology could be described as an adaptation of applied emblematics, where literary emblems were transposed and re-applied onto decorative objects and interiors. Correspondingly, in Speculative Emblematics contemporary ecophilosophy, theory and culture is overlaid (or vice versa) onto the pre-existing and structurally fluid mosaic of early modern emblems and emblem books. It is situated as a theory within the field of the environmental humanities, though its scope extends into the subject areas of early modern studies, classics, poetry, visual arts, philosophy, and literary theory. One finding of Speculative Emblematics is that emblems as a model for approaching critical theories such as new materialisms offer ontological, epistemological and theoretical challenges to these systems *and* also leverage value from them. Another justification for Speculative Emblematics' creation is that unless explicitly 'environmental', subjects such as emblem studies are corralled off as obscure parts of the human-centred humanities – yet this seems a fundamental error in terms of their creative potentiality to assist in reconfiguring the human subject within the Anthropocene. Furthering C.P. Snow's seminal contention of split academic cultures into the present, Franz Mauelshagen likewise states of social sciences and humanities, 'in the Anthropocene debates, [these] two academic cultures are clashing' and emphasises the need for 'trans-faculty dialogue'.[16] Tangentially, Fiona Becket and Terry Gifford

[15] Though not always focusing on pictures proper, 'Speculative Emblematics' is preoccupied with the image as 'likeness' and 'similarity'. It is a continuation of a tradition of iconology that focuses on differences and similarities between the nonverbal and verbal with recourse to philosophy: 'Iconology is the study of "icons" (images, pictures, or likenesses). It is thus, as E.H. Gombrich argues, a "science" of images, which not only "investigates the function of images in allegory and symbolism" but also explores what we might call "the linguistics of the visual image," the fundamental codes and conventions that make iconic representation and communication possible. Iconology thus has links with philosophy, especially the field of semiotics, or the general science of signs, as well as with psychology, particularly the analysis of visual perception and the imaginary. More modestly, iconology may be described as a "rhetoric of images" in a double sense: first, as a study of "what to say about images" […] second, as a study of "what images say"'.
In relation to poetry, 'The notion of the icon enters poetics in both its general and specific senses. Theories of metaphor, figurative language and allegory, all of which involve the analysis of verbal analogies, similitudes, and comparisons, invoke the general sense of the icon as a relationship of likeness […] The more specific sense of the poetic icon conceives it as a poetic "image," not in the sense of similitude but as a verbal representation of a concrete (usually visual) object […] Poetics often moves between these two senses without much critical self-awareness.' 'Iconology' in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. by Alex Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan (New Jersey, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 552–53.
[16] Snow's 1959 Reide lecture famously stated that society and academia are split between the humanities and the sciences. C.P. Snow, *The Two Cultures* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Franz Mauelshagen, 'Bridging the Great Divide: The Anthropocene as a Challenge to the Social Sciences and Humanities' in *Religion in the Anthropocene*, pp. 87–103 (p. 88).

believe that to tackle environmental alienation 'through the deep connections envisaged by creative artists requires imaginative and linguistic expansion from critical commentators'.[17] This thesis similarly takes as a baseline that the environmental humanities as a field needs to continue its efforts to bridge the two words that comprise its own label, and expand transcultural imaginative capacity – and attempts to do so by positing an environmental iconology founded on obscurity, the same quality that causes so many problems for environmentalism. Qua Becket and Gifford, it also offers further connections in the form of accompanying creative work.

Areas of Focus

There are several overlapping areas from paradigmatic shifts in environmental knowledge that inform the examinations of each chapter of this thesis, and form a ground from which to posit a concept of Speculative Emblematics as an environmental iconology. These sites of inquiry, which unsettle what might have previously been assumed to be stable components of cultural theory-making, already receive significant critical attention within the environmental humanities and beyond:

The Material Turn

Debates on the ontology of objects began in the deep past under other guises,[18] but realisations that matter or material and its interactions are significantly more complex than previous Cartesian-Newtonian models had proposed[19] (not only in terms of its properties,[20] but in exerting nonhuman forms of agency[21]) has radically informed

[17] Becket and Gifford, *Culture, Creativity and Environment,* p. 9.
[18] Arguably in the form of any artwork, religious system or literature produced by human civilisations: 'By ontology, we simply mean a theory of reality or being. On this basis, ontology provides the ground from which we interpret the world and, indeed, how we interpret the past.' Andrew Meirion Jones and Marta Diaz-Guardamino, '"Engimatic Images from Remote Prehistory": Rock Art and Ontology from a European Perspective' in *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology and Anthropology of Rock Art*, ed. by Bruno David and Ian J. McNiven (New York, NY: Oxford University press, 2018), pp. 481–502 (p. 486).
[19] 'Many of our ideas about materiality in fact remain indebted to Descartes, who defined matter in the seventeenth century as corporeal substance constituted of length, breadth, and thickness; as extended, uniform, and inert. This provided the basis for Euclidian geometry and Newtonian physics. According to this model, material objects are identifiably discrete; they move only upon an encounter with an external force or agent, and they do so according to a linear logic of cause and effect.' Coole and Frost, 'Introducing The New Materialisms' in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency and Politics*, ed. by Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 7.
[20] Matter is no longer thought as a solid and immovable substance as above. Instead it is relational, uneven, and in flux. This is most powerfully articulated by the strange properties of matter on the quantum level. As new ideas of what matter is collapse distinctions between organic/inorganic,

contemporary ecophilosophies such as 'new materialisms, new vitalisms and object-oriented ontology, as well as revised human-animal studies, human-plant studies and multi-species ethnography',[22] as Ursula Heise outlines. Whilst texts that constitute these strands vary on outlook, they broadly exhibit a shared insistence on the otherness, material agency and entanglement of nonhuman actants – as well as an elastic concept of matter that overturns transcendental and idealist assumptions. As Scott Gilbert writes, nonhumans/humans are increasingly understood as 'holobionts—formed through obligate symbiosis and even obligate symbiogenesis—rather than discrete individuals.'[23] In displaying a 'philosophical and political scepticism towards the integrity and centrality of the human subject in both its individual and collective dimensions',[24] new materialisms also overlap with the social sciences, in particular sociology, as a means of modelling social processes.[25]

This leads onto the paradox for posthumanist and ecomaterialist scholars that the anthropocentric subject of the humanities has been decentred, and claims to mastery over matter imploded. Though this brings positives in regards to the erosion of the authoritative dominance of imperial white androcentrism, this decentring also situates all human individual subjects as largely powerless and helpless in relation to environments. Socio-culturally, this shift has brought into question longstanding religious doctrines across cultures[26] with subsequent calls for eco-theological reformation.[27] Yet simultaneously the realisation that collectively humans are

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nature/culture, animate/inanimate, as Coole and Frost state, 'everything is material inasmuch as it is composed of physicochemical processes, nothing is reducible to such processes, at least as conventionally understood.' ibid., p. 9.

[21] See Linda Nash, 'The Agency of Nature or the Nature of Agency?', *Environmental History*, 10/1 (2005), pp. 67–69 and Gabriele Dürbeck, Caroline Schauman and Heather I. Sullivan, 'Human and Non-Human Agencies in the Anthropocene', *Ecozon@,* 6/1 (2015), pp. 118–136.

[22] Heise, 'Planet, species, justice—and the stories we tell about them', p. 4.

[23] Scott Gilbert, 'Holobiont by Birth: Multilineage Individuals as the Concretion of Cooperative Processes' in *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet,* ed. by Anna Tsing and Heather Swanson et al. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), pp. 73–90.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Acknowledging the important of materialism began in the work of Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber. Nick J. Fox and Pam Alldred, *Sociology and the New Materialism: Theory, Research, Action*, (London: SAGE Publications, 2017), p. 5.

[26] Lynn White notoriously lambasted Christianity as 'the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen' in Lynn White Jr., 'The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis', *Science*, 155/ 3767 (March 1967), pp. 1203–1207.

[27] 'Both our present science and our present technology are so tinctured with orthodox Christian arrogance toward nature that no solution to our ecologic crisis can be expected from them alone. Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious.' ibid, p. 1207. More recently, Heinrich Bedford-Strohm reaches similar conclusions: 'ecological reorientation […] is dependent on the input of institutions that reach people at the deep levels of their existence. A public theology is needed to equip the church with a theological basis to enable her to fulfill this task

planetary agents imparts a sense of human power[28] that has encouraged the theorising of new ecological possibilities or even of further mastery over nonhuman nature[29] in an extension of triumphant anthropocentrism deriving from the scriptural tradition.[30] These same tensions could be applied to the position of cultural theory in relation to environment – is it hopelessly maladaptive, or a harbinger of change? For Heise, writing within the environmental humanities now means being part of a 'reinventing what being human means—and by extension, what it means to study human cultures and societies.'[31] Theory itself becomes a material force. To date, posthumanism's questioning of human agency – for example in Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory or in new vitalisms[32] – has been criticised for 'flattening ontology',[33] as well as acting as reactionary theories of inertia in disguise;[34] or in the case of object-oriented ontologies, as 'pointless' mysterianisms that are incoherent denigrations of rationality.[35] New ecophilosophies may also suggest universalistic positions that gloss over inequalities affecting different human agencies.[36] New materialisms, paying attention to materiality, object ontologies, the decentred and porous human subject, and the relation of cultural representations and theories to ecosocial processes likewise preoccupies this thesis.

Scale

Given the 'seamless character of our material and cultural lives' in the interconnected world of late modernity, as Noel Castree et al. note, 'socio-environments' that co-constitute the biophysical worlds we inhabit is a better description of environment than 'environment'.[37] Or as Deborah Rose puts it, the whole world is a 'contact

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[…] a *hermeneutical task*.' in 'Foreword', *Religion in the Anthropocene,* p. xiii.

[28] Dale Jamieson, 'The Anthropocene: Love It Or Leave It' in *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*, p. 13.

[29] See for example, Diane Ackerman, *The Human Age: The World Shaped By Us* (New York, NY: Norton, 2014).

[30] Lowenthal, 'Origins of Anthropocene Awareness', p. 52.

[31] Heise, 'Planet, species, justice—and the stories we tell about them', p. 4.

[32] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

[33] Matthew Mullins, *Postmodernism in Pieces: Materialising the Social in U. S. Fiction* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 15.

[34] See Andreas Malm, *The Progress of This Storm: Nature and Society in a Warming World* (London: Verso, 2018). This contention is further explored in Chapter Five.

[35] Ray Brassier, 'Postscript: Speculative Autopsy' in Peter Wolfendale, *Object-Oriented Philosophy: The Noumenon's New Clothes* (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2014), pp. 418–419.

[36] Heise, 'Planet, species, justice—and the stories we tell about them', p. 5.

[37] *Companion to Environmental Studies*, ed. by Noel Castree, Mike Hulme and James D. Proctor (Abingdon, Oxon and New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), p. 2.

zone'[38] – something that has long been the contention of ecocriticism. In the lineage of Plumwood as of many others,[39] overcoming the nature/culture binary is fundamental – Latour's coinage of 'nature-culture'[40] and Donna Haraway's 'naturecultures'[41] can be applied to the study of cultural objects (as with the material turn above) and to places, which as the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan defined, are sites of meaning-making.[42] Considering that places are in some senses arbitrarily delineated areas within larger worlds of vast spatial and temporal interconnections, how do topographies co-constitute objects and subjects in cultural representations, as well as the vantage point of the critic-theorist, and their subsequent critical interpretations? These tangles of natureculture and of place feed into the problem of what Timothy Clark identifies as 'spatial scale framing': a 'constitutive, unavoidable element of any representation, evaluation or literary reading'.[43] Clark's concept of 'scale effects': qualitative effects that emerge from quantitative accumulation, or a material concept of scale[44] is an extremely useful – and pressing – tool that challenges extant cultural and literary approaches to reading texts in relation to environments. Clark: 'Scale effects impose unprecedented difficulties of interpretation and imagination […] On top of this, to consider scale effects is also to multiply bewilderingly the number of things that could—conditionally—be considered a significant "environmental issue"'[45] – or, as with natureculture, 'natural' at all. Scale effects are not relegated to place and space, rather in the Anthropocene (itself an 'emergent scale-effect', according to Clark), problems arise with demarcating and framing temporalities in theory-making. With the advent of historical ecology, knowledge of environmental degradation that occurred in the past – such as deforestation in Greco-Roman antiquity – unsettles prior critical readings of classical and early modern texts. This

[38] Deborah Bird Rose et al., 'Thinking Through the Environment, Unsettling the Humanities', *Environmental Humanities 1* (2012), pp. 1–5 (p. 2).
[39] See Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (Abingdon, Oxon and New York, NY: Routledge, 2012) and for example, Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1980).
[40] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern,* trans. by Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 7.
[41] Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago, IL: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003), p. 1.
[42] Yi Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), p. 4.
[43] Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, p. 73.
[44] Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, p. 22. See also Derek Woods, 'Timothy Clark's "Ecocriticism at the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept"', *Configurations*, 26/4 (Fall 2018), pp. 502–504.
[45] Clark, Timothy, 'Some Climate Change Ironies: Deconstruction, Environmental Politics and the Closure of Ecocriticism', *The Oxford Literary Review,* 32/1 (201), pp. 131-149 (p. 136).

however is only the tip of the iceberg in terms of revised timescales. Dipesh Chakbarty's call for scholars to reimagine theories of critique within geological time periods[46] has been furthered by the fact that, as previously mentioned 'the fractured timespace of the Anthropocene brings distant pasts and futures into the present.'[47] Historical time and deep time[48] are manifested 'as an intimate element woven into everyday lives'[49] in objects, places, and practices. In tandem with this, nonlinear and irregular timeframes of emergence have replaced previous cyclical systems thinking: the same biophysical systems that have been shifted into crisis in the Anthropocene (thus co-constituting their own emergence in representations), are paradoxically outside of scientific quantification in terms of flux and variables.[50] Consequently this uncanny time, as well as what Rose calls 'multispecies knots of ethical time',[51] challenges socio-historical readings of cultural objects rigidly located in linear, abstracted and disembodied Newtonian time. The obscurity yet pressing material agency of scale effects and complex nonlinear timeframes are vital to this thesis' re-reading of early modern emblem books.

Positing Speculative Emblematics' Methodology

It seems certain that extant critical approaches to cultural objects – such as emblem studies – that do not incorporate or recognise the drastic changes in these points of focus (materiality, natureculture and scale) require revision. Yet in this regard it is

[46] Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'The Climate History: Four Theses', *Critical Inquiry*, 35 (2009), pp. 197–222.
[47] Franklin Ginn, Michelle Bastian, David Farrier and Jeremy Kidwell, 'Introduction: Unexpected Encounters with Deep Time', *Environmental Humanities*, 10/1 (May 2018), pp. 213-225 (p. 213).
[48] See Maslin and Lewis, *Human Planet*; Andreas Malm and Alf Hornborg, 'The Geology of Mankind? A Critique of Earth System Science', *Anthropocene Review*, 1 (2014), pp. 62–69, and William Ruddiman et al., 'Does Pre-Industrial Warming Double the Anthropogenic Total?', *Anthropocene Review*, 1 (2014), pp. 147–153.
[49] Ginn, 'Introduction: Unexpected Encounters with Deep Time', p. 213.
[50] 'There is a 'new ecology' which involves dynamic evolution, the ecology of nature's ineluctable contingency. Such an ecology concerns itself with instabilities, disequilibria and chaotic fluctuations (Zimmerer 1994). It is thus opposed to the older systems ecology, with its concepts of competitive exclusion and niche specialization (for instance, Hardesty 1975). In this older ecology homeostatic ideas of systems adaptation became teleological, changes could not be explained, and there was no historical dimension. The 'new ecology', on the other hand, sees no possibility of estimating generalized carrying capacity, because of local and temporal variability.' Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), p. 49.
[51] Examining ecosystems of 'cross-kingdom alliances', Rose draws on emerging concepts of temporal diversity, in that 'generations of living things, ecological time, synchronicities, intervals, patterns, and rhythms, all of which are quite legitimately understood as forms of time.' Deborah Rose, 'Multispecies Knots of Ethical Time', *Environmental Philosophy*, 9/1 (2012), pp. 127–140 (p. 128).

worth citing Nicholas Purcell and Peregrine Horden's cautionary warning: 'Ecology is not a *deus ex machina* capable of solving the historian's problems with a dose of scientific rigour. It shows us the topics with which we should be concerned, and more especially the likely kinds of connection between them; it is not yet clear that it can do more.'[52] For scholars and creative practitioners in the humanities, scientific epistemology with its focus on empirical but non-qualitative data is not a methodologically suitable way of approaching cultural artefacts. As the environmental historian Sverker Sörlin states, 'the idea of *environmentally relevant knowledge* must change.'[53] Subsequently, the investigative direction of this thesis could be loosely associated with the concept of cultural ecology as proposed by the ecocritic Hubert Zapf. For Zapf, imaginative literature [and critical theory] is a depragmatised discourse that both explores new possibilities and serves as a balancing factor within wider cultural human and nonhuman contexts. Zapf: 'a cultural ecology of literature proposes a transdisciplinary approach to literary texts, in which the interaction and mutual interdependence between culture and nature is posited as a fundamental dimension of literary production and creativity.'[54] To take this further in relation to emblem books, Zapf's insistence on 'literary texts *as imaginative and artistic forms of textuality*'[55] [my italics] invites the integration of iconological study and examinations of the relation of text to image into a framework of cultural ecology that views texts as 'self-reflexive models of ecosemiotic complexity.'[56]

Obscurity

With these complexities in mind, this thesis is not proposing a critical approach concerned with any one definitive question, as with the art historian W. J.T. Mitchell's 'what is an image?' that directs his *Iconology.*[57] Instead the idea of a Speculative Emblematics is constructed on the axis of a *quality*, namely obscurity. More specifically, obscurity is the quality of an unknown quality, a meta-quality of a

[52] Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, p. 46.
[53] Sverker Sörlin, 'Environmental Humanities: Why Should Biologists Interested in the Environment Take the Humanities Seriously?', *Bioscience,* 62/9 (September 2012), pp. 788–789 (p. 788**).**
[54] Zapf, 'Introductory Remarks' in *Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology*, ed. by Hubert Zapf (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmBH, 2016). p. 3.
[55] Ibid. p. 4.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Mitchell's iconology covers much more than this, but his investigations of what an image is (a likeness, resemblance or similitude, of which graphic, optical, perceptual, mental, and verbal 'imagery' are a subset) informs the entirety of his critical approach. W.J.T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 10.

hidden thing. Its Latin, *obscūrus,* has ancient etymological roots in the Sanskrit *sku* (to cover).[58] In the Anthropocene, to appropriate a title from the poet Susan Howe, 'There Are Not Leaves Enough to Crown to Cover to Crown to Cover'[59]: as subjective observers we are covered by and from ecological realities (obscured from the obscure), while simultaneously environmental degradation means we will soon be without shelter. Latin cognates of *obscūrus* include *cūlus* [anus, buttocks] and *cutis* [hide],[58] both of which are important tropes in this thesis' subject of focus: emblem books, one of the most obscure text-image genres not only in modernity, but in their own time of origin. To return to ecologically-relevant etymologies, the Ancient Greek *σκύλος* [hide] also has an important material cognate with *σκῦτος* [animal hides and the outer husk of a nut].[60] In Old English obscurity has geo-atmospheric affiliations with *scēo* [cloud], and s*cúwa* [the shadow thrown by an object, shade, darkness, protection][61] – suitably climatic and meteorological metaphors are still frequently used to describe obscurity. However, shade and darkness are most associated with the term. *Obscūrus* is an adjective that primarily means dark, darkness, shadowy or dim forms; to obscure (it can mean itself); indistinct; unintelligible; uncertain; not known or recognised (of character); close, secret, and reserved.[62] This darkness informs the Italian *oscurare* [to darken] and is (importantly, given Speculative Emblematics' text-image focus and move away from hyper-visibility) associated with blurred and shadowed vision and technologies of visual representation such as *camera obscura* and *chiaroscuro*.

In the modern OED *obscurity* (noun) has several definitions under the general categories of either 'Senses relating to lack of clarity or understanding' or 'Senses relating to absence of light or conspicuousness'. [63] This first definition is of most interest to this thesis in the open-ended context of being 'the quality or condition of not being clearly known or understood', as found in William Caxton's early modern

[58] 'obscūrus' in *A Latin Dictionary*, ed. by Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879).
[59] Susan Howe, *The Europe of Trusts* (New York, NY: New Directions, 1990), p. 9.
[60] 'σκύλος' in *A Greek–English Lexicon*, ed. by Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940).
[61] 'scēo' and 'scúwa' in Joseph Bosworth, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*, ed. by Thomas Northcote Toller <http://bosworth.ff.cuni.cz/026685> [accessed 1 Oct. 2018]. def I and I, II, III.
[62] 'obscūrus' in *A Latin Dictionary,* def. I and II a,b,c.
[63] 'obscurity, n.' *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, July 2018) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/129848> [accessed 2 October 2018].

manual on chess; 'The...thought is enuoluped in obscurete & vnder the clowdes',[64] or in Sebastian Brant's influential proto-emblematic book *Daß Narrenschyff* (Ship of Fools); 'Leuynge the egressyons poetyques and fabulous obscurytees'.[65] This earlier sense of obscurity has fallen out of modern usage to be replaced by increasingly negative associations – though obscurity was also associated with a lack of enlightenment, and as stated darkness, from early on. In modernity *obscurity* is more related to inadequate unintelligibility, a crass or deliberate lack of expression (A.C. Swinburne wrote of 'offensive obscurity'[66]), and a quality of being unimportant or unknown in a vigilant neoliberal contemporary culture that is devoted to banishing privacy in lieu of public life. The psychoanalyst Josh Cohen illuminatingly writes of this war on private life that 'It's as though we're caught in the furious suspicion, amplified with every image, that we're missing something, that the very thinking we're looking for is being withheld, that there are places beyond us no telephoto lens or bugging device can reach.'[67] This sounds much like not only the difficulty of thinking how to tackle environmental crises effectively from within culture, but establishing what exactly environments are in relation to cultural representations – and our places within unseen chains of scale effects.

The transition of obscurity from a site or state of possibility to one of inadequate unintelligibility and banishment took place during a general cultural shift away from enigmatic mysticisms and scriptural metaphysics that utilised tropes of obscurity, or certainly of shadow as much as light, towards metaphors of clarity; first within Enlightenment thinking and then in capitalist modernity. Too, as stated, in the policy-driven environmental humanities at large. There is however, precedence for using obscurity as a form of ecological thinking and tool for ecocriticism. Laurence Buell's use of environmental tropes such as place and toxicity to approach literary studies[68] has since led to greater ecocritical recognition for new kind of sense-making in the style of Sörlin. One example is Franklin Ginn et al.'s recent use of 'modes'

[64] William Caxton, *Game and Playe of The Chesse* (1474), ed. by William Edward Armytage Axon, Vol 1 (Elliot Stock edition, 1883), p. iii.v.127.
[65] Alexander Barclay, 'Brandt's Shyp of Fools' in *The Shyp of Folys of the Worlde*, Vol. 1 (London: R. Pynson, 1509).
[66] Swinburne on Samuel Taylor Coleridge: 'It is not depth of thought which makes obscure to others the work of a thinker. Real and offensive obscurity comes merely of inadequate thought embodied in inadequate language'. Algernon Charles Swinburne, 'Essay on Coleridge' in *Christabel and the Lyrical and Imaginative Poems of S. T. Coleridge* (Marston: Sampson Low, 1869), p. xxi.
[67] Josh Cohen, *The Private Life: Why We Remain in the Dark* (London: Granta, 2013), pp. x–xi.
[68] Laurence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1996).

('the manner in which something occurs') to understand 'the multiple types of encounters in which deep time reveals itself'[69] in places, objects and affective atmospheres, an evocative approach complemented by Haraway's descriptive concept of *kainos*: a 'lumpy, thick temporality of a present animated by its immanent pasts but also thrumming with possible futures.'[70] These modes of encounter refer too to an indeterminacy that can be associated with obscurity, a rupture from sense. Ginn writes:

> Rather, encounter is an indeterminate moment of "contamination", when beings and things are brought together in interwoven rhythms and through which change may— or may not—happen. The event of encounter "punches a hole" in our understanding of what is happening; one is, as Alain Badiou writes, "seized by the not-known...suspended, broken, annulled; disinterested."[71]

This agglomeration of reactions is followed by the important observation that accordingly such encounters 'need not follow a given script'.[71] In the straying from scripts (literally and metaphorically), lies possibility. Material ecocriticism similarly, in theory, emphasises the creativity to be found in instances of unbounded material reciprocity.[72] Likewise, another suggestion of the creative potential of ecological indeterminacy in regards to the environmental humanities, at least from an interpretative stance, is shared by Timothy Morton's observations of the dislocated human subject in *Hyperobjects* – their 'loss of coordinates' – via. his insistence on paying attention to the aesthetic expressions of global warming.[73] Morton, alongside Eugene Thacker,[74] has also productively drawn on the 'strange' darkness that characterises a certain type of negative obscurity within the ecophilosophical subset of 'dark ecology'.[75] While recognising this chthonic strand, this thesis attempts to return more to the older sense of obscurity, as an interplay of covering and hiding – of considering *obscurity* as open-ended and undefined in itself – not only aesthetically, but in terms of epistemologies. In short, it has been necessary to re-approach

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[69] Ginn, 'Introduction: Unexpected Encounters with Deep Time', p. 217.
[70] Ibid., p. 216, referencing Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).
[71] Ibid., p. 217.
[72] *Material Ecocriticism*, ed. by Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 2004), p. 1.
[73] Morton, *Hyperobjects*, p. 22.
[74] Eugene Thacker, *In The Dust of This Planet: Horror of Philosophy 1* (Arlesford: Zero Books, 2011).
[75] Timothy Morton, *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2016).

obscurity indirectly to consider differentiations in its prospective use. Tom Cohen and Claire Colebrook write of the problem of theory-making in the Anthropocene:

> If the Anthropocene seemed to drown out other scales and figures with its blinding light, its dimming seems to have opened other narratives, and yet perhaps what is not questioned is the light of narrative as such. Everything appears both with conditions of visibility, but also of obscurity, and one might only become aware of constitutive blindness by way of another dimming of lights.[76]

For Cohen and Colebrook then, obscurity appears by questioning the Anthropocene as a meta-narrative: examining obscurity similarly leads onto questions about narrative in this thesis. Notably this is the only time 'obscurity' appears in *Twilight of the Anthropocene Idols*, while 'obscure' appears only a handful of times. Perhaps there is a difference between obscurity as an active quality or state within a present and therefore remaining undecided, in contrast to a more thick-set value judgement on an object – the obscure, the not-useful. Such absences also emphasise the unexplored potential of obscurity beyond its current usage, and its association with (just) optics and historically, mysticism. Like the fog that orients the reader into the viewpoint of a mole in Dante's *Purgatorio*, this thesis suggests above all that obscurity is a site of shared natureculture connections, and correspondingly, unseen scale effects:

> Reader, recall, if ever in the hills
> a fog has caught you so you couldn't see
> (or only as a mole does through its skin),[77]

Hesitant Criticism

As well as being in its own way a form of clear observation, ontologically speaking,[78]

[76] Cohen and Colebrook, 'Preface', in Tom Cohen, Claire Colebrook and J. Hillis Miller, *Twilight of the Anthropocene Idols* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2016), p. 7.
[77] Dante Aligheri, 'Canto 17', *Commedia* Cantica 2: *Purgatorio*' in *The Divine Comedy: Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradiso,* ed. by Robin Kirkpatrick (London: Penguin, 2012), p. 237.
[78] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz for example, according to Jeffrey Barnouw, considered 'clear knowledge' as being either 'confused or distinct' – the former simply perceiving 'unanalyzed wholes which may include many undifferentiated elements fused together.' Distinct knowledge is only a form of degree of 'confused' clear knowledge, as 'definitions will themselves be in need of definition, and are only known confusedly.' (Leibniz). Johann Gottfried Herder reworked Leibniz's 'confusion' to view the obscure and obscurity as a positive mental process, a kind of instinct, even perceiving the soul to be obscure in itself. 'The entire ground of our soul are the obscure ideas which are the liveliest and most numerous…' (Herder). See Jeffrey Barnouw, 'The Cognitive Value of Confusion and Obscurity in the German Enlightenment: Leibniz, Baumgarten, and Herder', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 24 (1995), pp. 29–50 (p. 29, 31, 41).

obscurity has cognitive value because it allows for prolonged thought – conclusions do not cut short process. In this too, a focus on process complements new materialist philosophies. While emblems are inherently designed as a contemplative form,[79] Paul Valéry also describes *poems* as a 'prolonged hesitation between sense and sound'.[80] *A prolonged hesitation* is a suitable description of this thesis' methodological approach in obscurity both in creative (poetry) and critical work; which in regards to the latter involves a stepping back from contemporary critical thought in the environmental humanities. Suspicious that there is truth in the notion that cultural ecology in a wide sense further veils globalised drivers of cultural change,[81] this thesis is as equally concerned with the nature of criticism itself. What is critique of the environmental humanities? How is it done? What are its outcomes? Is the idea of cultural adjustment through theory – often discarding the obscure and therefore outmoded – also an assumption built on adaptation, which although an aim of much policymaking 'remains a fundamentally contested concept'?[82] Hesitantly, this thesis tries to pay attention to cultural objects as being informed and shaped by conflicts, rather than as pathways to resolving them or presenting concrete truths.

Hesitancy also causes things to expand. Rose's view is that work within the environmental humanities at large is 'an effort to inhabit a difficult space of simultaneous critique and action'.[83] Speculative Emblematics correspondingly suggests that critique operates within the spaces that it casts, and attempts to cast the net widely: a large blurred field around the small object of the emblem book. This same wide-casting scope endangers viability: as a project it is in some senses an a-historical jumble across disciplines, languages, sources, cultures, geographies and time periods. Nevertheless, the propensity for large-scale interweavings to relapse into obscurity precisely generates the same quality that this thesis hopes to champion, the very same obscurity at the heart of the emblem-form that has always led it be

[79] Harms writes of the importance of *contemplatio* to the emblematist Jeans-Jacques Boissard, in relation to examining nature not through the *curiositas* of the scientist, but via. 'a contemplative reading of the Book of Nature which allows us to come closer to God by way of *sapientia* [wisdom]'. Similarly, 'Emblematists of high standing like Johannes Sambucus, Bathelemy Aneau, Joachim Camerarius and Gabriel Rollenhagen had created in their emblems structures of engimas that made possible the intellectual development of their readers in the act of contemplation, reading and original thought.' Wolfgang Harms, 'The Authority of the Emblem', *Emblematica*, 5/1 (1991), pp. 3–29 (p. 9, 19).
[80] Paul Valery, 'Le poème – cette hésitation prolongée entre le son et le sens' quoted in Giorgio Agamben, 'La fin du poème', *Po&sie*, 117–118/3 (2006), p. 171–175 (p. 171).
[81] Marcus Taylor, 'Adaptation' in *Companion to Environmental Studies***,** p. 8.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Rose, 'Thinking Through the Environment, Unsettling the Humanities', p. 3.

popularised, translated, celebrated, reviled, marginalised, neglected and revived during different historical eras. There is also historical precedent for the ecological value of the type of syncretic systems-thinking practised by emblematists – as in the work of George Perkins Marsh.[84] Too, as no individual is anything but embedded in a network of relations, this thesis examines processes of forms of cultural production stemming from the incorporative individual, and from small collaborations of writer, printer, and publisher, spiral out into the world.

This thesis' interest in nonlinear chronologies is also a form of hesitant criticism. If the past is encountered in the present, then the latter becomes ill-defined; hazy; hesitant. Whereas scientific epistemology can in general operate only in its own emerging time due to a reliance on a collective empiricism, each year of research superseding the next in a linear timeframe, this thesis both recreates and pays attention to recreated pasts demarcated by cultural objects in the spirit of Renaissance humanism. Within this obscurity of prolonged hesitation in this present it attempts to focus both on how representations are violently constructed, and how they might be read reparatively. In doing so it partly hopes to create a sense of potentiality for the enmeshed ecological subject (who is us all).

Despite these large-scale influences and professed critical aims, what this thesis has produced under the umbrella of Speculative Emblematics as an environmental iconology can be loosely designated as small-scale ontological investigations of emblems and emblem studies. This is perhaps unsurprising, given both the early modern fascination with affiliations between the microcosm and the macrocosm, and the similarly ontological current taking place more broadly within the material turn.

Relinquishment

As a final cornerstone of its methodology, Speculative Emblematics operates using a tactics of relinquishment of certain or assumed knowledge – a plunging into

[84] George Perkins Marsh's groundbreaking *Man and Nature* (1864) became 'the fountain-head of the conservation moment'. Marsh's syncretic interests mirror those of Andrea Alciato: 'an unlikely pioneer of conservation. He was a small-town lawyer and legislator, an influential diplomat, a gifted savant esteemed in his day as a philologist, historian and littérateur. He bred sheep, ran a woollen mill, chartered a bank, quarried marble, crafted surveying tools, shaped the nascent Smithsonian Institution, redesigned the Washington Monument, was a foremost authority on prints and engravings. He pioneered New World archaeological salvage, international boundary conventions, deaf-mute teaching and women's rights.' Lowenthal, 'Origins of Anthropocene Awareness', p. 6.

obscurity. It attempts to curtail the possible infinitude of such a relinquishment by positing its contentions around a single emblem book – Andrea Alciato's *Emblematum liber* [hereby the *EL*], (first published in 1531, the central reference of this thesis being the late Padua edition of 1621) which serves as an extended case study.[85] This methodological tactic of reliquinshment as a facet of obscurity is indebted to objects, personal experiences and disciplines that require the individual to forfeit autonomy to uncertain circumstances, or operate within uncertain spaces – as we all do within the equally uncertain Anthropocene. They are as follows:

The Emblematum liber itself. Speculative Emblematics is led by the *EL*'s form, content, production history and material aesthetics. From a personal perspective, as scholar who is unable to read the *EL* either in the Latin or in its contemporaneous vernacular translations – and having had no prior knowledge of emblem studies or the early modern period – at the outset of this thesis the *EL* was utterly obscure to me. It still remains so: a progression from *obscure* to *obscurity* perhaps. In short, my research arose from approaching an unreadable hybrid text-image object produced in a historical time and culture completely different to my own.

Poetry. A more extensive explanation of how the creative part of this thesis – my poetry collection, *Emblem* – informed my critical work is presented in Chapter Six. Though the *EL* includes poems and translations of epigrams from the *Greek Anthology*, it lacks the formal and conceptual diversity of contemporary poetics. Correspondingly, and in terms of relinquishment, writing poetry requires letting go of what is immediately known in language, 'almost all our language has been taxed by war',[86] and proceeding within a state of obscurity. The poet Emily Berry, using a suitably emblematic personification allegory (and dialogue), writes of encountering poetry that,

> I am less and less sure what poetry is, the more of it I read. And I'm reading a lot, Best Beloved. Consider the word "poetry" – isn't it a curious combination

[85] Andrea Alciati, *Emblematum liber* (Augsburg: Steyner, 1531); Alciati, *Emblemata cum commentariis amplissimis*, ed. by Lorenzo Pignoria (Padua: Tozzi, 1621). This thesis refers in most part to the 1621 edition but retains the original title, the *Emblematum liber* in referencing the *Emblemata* – [*EL*], partly because the commentary is not referenced in this critical study, partly because *liber* has a closer association with the project of this thesis in terms of reimagining historical and personal pasts.

[86] Allen Ginsberg, 'Witchita Vortex Sutra', *Planet News: 1961-196* (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books, 1970), p. 126.

> of letters, the way *p-o-e-* opens out, friendly and a little shy, but before you have a chance to say "Oh..!" and "How do you do?" it gives you a funny look, snatches up its last three consonants like an offended lover shoving their things back into their overnight bag – *t!r!y!* – and hurries away.[87]

Poems begin with assumed experiences that emerge from stanzas and edits surprised and changed. Particularly so when frozen into shapes by the pressures of form, but also when using poetic logic – what Julia Kristeva calls the 0-2 logic of poetry, dream and carnival – to approach subjects. 0-2 logic, a logic that guides the (speculative) critical and creative directions of this thesis, produces transgressive texts of fluid obscurity in terms of genre and meaning that embody the '*power of the continuum*',[88] a continuum that this thesis reads as having material connotations. The ambivalence and obscurity long seen as key to twentieth and twenty-first century poetics is therefore a precursor to this thesis' insistence on the value of obscurity. The most relevant volume in this regard is Daniel Tiffany's *Infidel Poetics: Riddles, Nightlife, Substance* – a brilliant study that propagates a similar concept of obscurity as

> not a symptom of the unknowable, but as a basic condition of certain kinds of knowledge, as a residue of logical procedures (a condition that later permitted Novalis, for example, to postulate a 'poetic logic').[89]

Despite this shared residue, and focus on obscurity in adjacent explorations of a Leibniz-inspired 'materialist metaphysics',[90] *Infidel Poetics* is geared towards a strictly sociological rather than environmental focus. More widely, there is a sense among some contemporary poets that poetry can *only* operate within a form of obscurity that is coterminous with privacy: as Anna Mendelssohn writes, readers 'mustn't touch the hiding places'. Vicky Sparrow links Mendelssohn's contention to Walter Benjamin's dictum that 'the secret is of fundamental importance to the production of aesthetic experience itself.'[91] This private-secret or more broadly, *hiding* [*scurus*] aspect of aesthetics is a major preoccupation of early modern emblematists. The fragmentary, hybrid and intertextual nature of the *EL* also

[87] Emily Berry, 'Editorial' in *Poetry Review* (Autumn Issue, 2017), p. 6.
[88] Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue and Novel' (1966) in Julia Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. by Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1986), p. 41.
[89] Daniel Tiffany, *Infidel Poetics: Riddles, Nightlife, Substance* (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 22.
[90] Ibid., p. 21.
[91] Vicky Sparrow, '"[A] poet must know more than | a surface suggests": Reading and Secrecy in the Poetry of Anna Mendelssohn', *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry*, 10/1 (2018), pp. 1–26 (p. 1).

predisposes it to the experimental techniques (another renouncing) of errata and misreading, montage and collage practised by varying artistic and literary avantgardes, which take on new environmental functions in the context of considering formulating an environmental aesthetics that merges realism and abstraction, animate and inanimate objects, and large-scale processes.[92] Neither, importantly, does the obscurity of poetry, or a poetic logic, correspond to a lack of awareness – or subjective concern (ethically) – on the part of poets.

Motherhood-as-praxis. As with poetry, the link between motherhood and emblems is explored more in depth in Chapter Six, as well as in this thesis' appendix. In regards to relinquishment and obscurity, the maternal subject that is performing and self-fashioning motherhood, whom I have elsewhere designated as a *procuratrix*[93] – is engaged in synthesising constant inflows of new information under duress: everything that was previously known has disappeared. From the first ultrasonic pictures that emerge during pregnancy (one cannot see a baby directly in the womb) through to childbirth and childraising, the procuratrix-mother is engaged with caring and relating to crucial material subjects in obscurity – beings are always withdrawn. Maternal subjectivity invites materialist-realist perceptions of interconnected environments from embedded viewpoints, with an emphasis on hesitant witnessing. According to Tiffany, models of social hermeticism (such as queer subcultures) 'compound the material substance of obscurity'[94] – mothers too, at least in neoliberal societies, are forced to exist beneath the surface. In brief, motherhood starts out with obscurity and mothers end up being material practitioners in this. As this thesis has been written whilst also being an early years parent, it draws – though often not explicitly – on 'new motherhood as a lived philosophy', as the writer Kate Zambreno puts it.[95]

With these disparate strands, in relation to thinking and expanding creative potential within the tangled and oppressive mass of the obscure Anthropocene, there is a sense of needing to 'trick' Earth for answers. As Morton states: 'Perhaps we must

[92] Heise, 'Planet, species, justice—and the stories we tell about them', p. 7.
[93] Lucy Mercer, 'The Procuratrix Self, Simone Weil & Lonely Motherhood in Mega-City One', *New Socialist* (September 2017) < https://newsocialist.org.uk/the-procuratrix-self-simone-weil-lonely-motherhood-in-mega-city-one/> [accessed 2 October 2018].
[94] Paraphrasing Tiffany, *Infidel Poetics: Riddles, Nightlife, Substance*, p. 13.
[95] Sarah Manguso, 'Writing Postpartum: A Conversation between Kate Zambreno and Sarah Manguso', *Paris Review* (24 April, 2019) <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2019/04/24/writing-postpartum-a-conversation-between-kate-zambreno-and-sarah-manguso/> [accessed April 2019].

approach this subject in a paradoxical way. Perhaps a kind of philosophical and poetic judo is required.'[96] Embracing the capricious, unsophisticated, fuzzy, concealing, dimming, indeterminate quality of obscurity – a tangled mass – this thesis' methodological approach, it hopes, offers a prolonged hesitation that allows for the witnessing of material processes taking place in obscurity.

A Note On Transcultural Expansionism

If this thesis wishes to posit an environmental iconology as a speculative approach within the environmental humanities, it also necessary – in the spirit of hesitant criticism – to be aware of the position of the scholar in the academy not as a free-floating agent, but enmeshed within discourses generated by institutional power. Unfortunately this means an association with the increasing marketisation and neoliberalisation of the academy.[97] The ecocritic Kate Rigby remarked in a response chapter to an early version of Speculative Emblematics in which object-oriented ontologies were suggested as a possible reading lens for emblems,[98] that a such a project flows within an emerging current in the environmental humanities concerned with the expansion and 'seed[ing] of the transcultural imagination'.[99] This method, Rigby notes, draws on the socio-environmental crises instigated by an 'entangled' Earth that is alarmingly undergoing an accelerated reduction in its capacity to generate diverse lifeforms, yet is also a system marked by 'culturally historically variegated modes of knowing, being and valuing'; and quoting Noel Castree, '[world/s of] complex material and moral interdependencies among people and non-humans [that are] stretched across space and unfolding through time'.[100] Surely, the

[96] Timothy Morton, 'The Dark Ecology of Elegy' in *The Oxford Handbook of the Elegy,* ed. by Karen Weisman (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 251–271 (p. 255).
[97] In regards to the university, Harney and Moten's concept of 'the undercommons' and 'fugitive enlightenment' taking in place in the subterranean parts of the academy, in stolen time, serve as antidote. *The Undercommons* can also be read as a manifesto for creating knowledge within conditions of obscurity, in order that 'one becomes unfit for subjection, because one does not possess the kind of agency that can hold the regulatory forces of subjecthood, and one cannot initiate the auto-interpellative torque that biopower subjection requires and rewards.' Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (Brooklyn, NY: Minor Compositions, 2013), p. 35.
[98] Lucy Mercer and Laurence Grove, 'Emblems and Antiquity: An Exploration of Speculative Emblematics' in *Ecocriticism, Ecology, and the Cultures of Antiquity*, ed. by Christopher Schliephake (London: Lexington Books, 2017), pp. 243-258. Grove kindly served as editor and advisor for the chapter.
[99] Kate Rigby, 'Response: From Ecocritical Reception of the Ancients to the Future of the Environmental Humanities (with a Detour Via Romanticism)', p. 300.
[100] Ibid.

implication goes, these interdependencies and entanglements – terms that might be read as having suffocating heavy implications – also have a rejuvenating and re-forming potential. Beyond Rigby's outline, the very 'transdisciplinary' focus of the environmental humanities as an emerging field attests to this potentiality: always seeking to expand outside of known onto-epistemologies, imperial, anthropocentric, and hegemonic cultural perspectives. And yet even the word 'entanglement', for example, often reads as an overused buzzword in contemporary ecocritical texts. Such terms have a tendency to empty out meaning, just as 'transcultural' approaches to artefacts – ancient or modern – in their attempts to rejuvenate them, also often somewhat view the past as *terra nullis* for knowledge-production, with a consuming gaze that instigates the generation of further socio-cultural 'credit'. Is leveraging of value from the neglected and outmoded not the very aims of Speculative Emblematics in part? (And as will be delineated, was also an emblematist's method). Very quickly then, areas of onto-epistemology are soon blurred with onto-ethics. This thesis does not make any claims to avoid such a blurring, but attempts to sit with this problem throughout. Hopefully, a critical theory of obscurity is antithetical to marketability as such, in producing undefinitive outcomes.

Returning to Rigby, the positives of aligning with the project of expanding the transcultural imagination within the environmental humanities allows for the adoption of a protean form of cultural extensionivism and recycling that draws on a 'hermeneutic of potentiation' in which the 'true reader [is perceived as an ...] extended author', engendering interpretive possibilities unforeseen by the original writer'.[101] This creative method is similar to how Plato interpreted Egyptian hieroglyphs,[102] how subsequently Neoplatonic philosophers produced the Platonic corpus in the Hellenistic period,[103] how the *EL* was produced,[104] and how this thesis

[101] Ibid., p. 304.
[102] Plato perceived hieroglyphs as ideograms of divine letters and timeless wisdom. 'And though Plato never says in so many words that they were therefore closer to the intelligible world of ideas, he certainly made them appear so.' E.H. Gombrich, 'Icones Symbolicae' in *Gombrich on the Renaissance: Volume 2, Symbolic Images* (London: Phaidon, 1972 / 1993), p. 147.
[103] So-called 'Neoplatonist' interpretations of Plato were unwittingly more akin to creative archaeology or free translation, due to their mistrust of logocentrism and discursive thinking. What they produced was more of a conceptual framework for reading Plato. 'If some of the writings of the Neoplatonists give the impression of a kind of scholastic rigidity, this is perhaps somewhat misleading. The impression owes more to what, at least after Plotinus, came to be the recognized *style* of philosophical expression than to substance.' [my italics]. John Dillon and Lloyd P. Gerson, *Neoplatonic Philosophy: Introductory Readings* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2004), p. xxii. In addition, of Neoplatonic writings, 'The non-discursive aspects of the text – the symbols, ritual formulae, myths, and images –

will creatively attempt to open up that same book. It is additionally worth highlighting Rigby's '*seed[ing]* of the transcultural imagination'[105] – this seed, a bio-*material* insertion, is part of what this thesis attempts to hunt, find and gather. But with a critical stance towards the temptation to relapse into metanarratives that such explorations always suggests. As we know from environmental science, applying local data to global contexts is extremely difficult: there are more parts than wholes, more elements of complexity in a small area that can be reproduced – such as in old-growth tropical rainforests that have unreplicable biodiversity quotas per hectare.[106] It is possible that the scalability of cultural or ecocritical theory in relation to artefacts may be similarly fraught, and yet likewise offer visions of alterity to plant against, or with. It is for this reason too that this thesis' investigations will stay close to the material of its case study, Alciato's emblem book.

About Emblems

What Is An Emblem?

> *What is an emblem?* is not even a good question. It implies that the answer lies in the same eternal present as the question, that there is *an* emblem, a normative type, that the emblem is one thing at all times in all places.[107]

John Manning's exasperated response to this question that has vexed emblem scholars since their accidental creation by Andrea Alciato (1492–1550) in 1531 is supported by good argumentation on his part that goes a long way to illustrate how attempts to define this protean form fail spectacularly.[108] The oft-touted three-part structure of emblems – comprising of *inscriptio* [motto]*, pictura* [picture or image] and *subscriptio* [text] – for example, 'is not the exclusive property of the emblem. It occurs in texts that are certainly not emblems' [as in fable books, the illustrated

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are the locus of this pedagogy. Their purpose is to help the reader to learn how to contemplate…' Sara Rappe, *Reading Neoplatonism* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 3.

[104] Through Alciato's admixtures of translations and transformations of the *Planudean Anthology* and classical texts within a new form.

[105] Ibid., p. 300.

[106] Luke Gibson et al., 'Primary Forests Are Irreplaceable for Sustaining Tropical Biodiversity', *Nature,* 478 (20 October 2011), pp. 378-81.

[107] John Manning, *The Emblem* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), p. 21.

[108] Emblems' protean form is exemplified visually by the frontispiece to Jakob Cats, *Proteus ofte Minne-beelden Verandert in Sinne-beelden* (Rotterdam, 1627). <https://archive.org/details/proteusofteminne00cats/page/n7> [accessed 2 October 2018].

manuscript tradition].[109] Nor as Denis Drysdall has noted, did the early emblematists such as Alciato, Aneau and Johannes Sambucus view the emblem as a three-part form, as they did not refer to titles.[110] With this in mind perhaps, Michael Bath, using Simonides and/or Philip Sidney's term for poetry, simply calls emblems 'speaking pictures'.[111] A *bi-medial form* seems to be the most frequently used term of description: according to Karl Enenkel and Paul Smith, emblems are 'a bi-medial genre built up from a series of combined texts and images (called *emblema*).'[112] Christopher Wild also calls emblems a 'bi-medial art form'.[113] Likewise, Daniele Borgogni: 'Emblems and devices were typical in their hybrid nature, with textual and visual elements mutually interpreting and reinforcing each other.'[114] Yet even these definitions of emblems are somewhat problematic in relation to applied emblematics – when emblems are transposed onto medals, *imprese*, decorative frescoes, glassware, garden design, furniture and so forth. Consequently, on a generic level it is enough to agree with Manning's apparently flippant conclusion that 'everything that was called an emblem *was* indeed an emblem.'[115] Beyond semantics, the questioning of an aesthetically definable category of object emerging across a specific chronological period suggests an inchoateness attached to materiality – and temporality, to remember scale effects. And yet, emblems are also definably material artefacts that arose within the specifics of a certain stylistically regulated and peer-influenced process of cultural production that can be demarcated within a specific historical era. Whilst delighting in the potential of this ambiguity and paradox, Manning's definition of an emblem for Speculative Emblematics does not help to delineate the scope of investigation. To move forward, the question of not *what is* then, but what are some *ecological qualities* of the emblem – and here they must be narrowed down to emblem books only – opens onto richer avenues.

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[109] Manning, *The Emblem,* p. 18.
[110] Denis L. Drysdall 'Joannes Sambucus, "De Emblemate"', *Emblematica,* 5/1 (1991), p.112.
[111] Michael Bath, *Speaking Pictures: English Emblem Books and Renaissance Culture* (London: Longman, 1994), p. 7. For 'speaking pictures' see Jane Partner, *Poetry and Vision in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 11.
[112] Karl A.E. Enenkel and Paul J. Smith, *Emblems and the Natural World* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017), p. 1.
[113] Christopher Wild, 'A Just Proportion of Body and Soul: Emblems and Incarnational Grafting' in *Image and Incarnation: The Early Modern Doctrine of the Pictorial Image*, ed. by Walter Melion and Lee Palmer Wandel, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015), pp. 231–250 (p. 232).
[114] Daniele Borgogni, ''Must I Needs Want Solidnesse Because by Metaphors I Speak?': Emblematics, Stylistics, Materiality', *Linguistics and Literature Studies,* 3/2 (2015), pp. 75–82 (p. 75).
[115] Manning, *The Emblem,* p. 24.

Four Qualities of Emblems

i. Muddied Images

Beyond their hybrid form of text and image, or as some scholars describe, of visual and verbal components – a 'particular word-image collocation'[116] – one general quality of emblems is that they rely on both drawing attention to *and* obscuring the visual. In the early modern period in Europe until the end of the eighteenth century, visual and verbal art were viewed as manifestations of the same phenomenon,[117] a creative symbiosis of forms that were also in competition, the *paragone*, with poets and artists each striving to prove their chosen form was predominant. As Bartolomeo Fazio elaborated of Horace's *ut pictura poesis* in favour of the former; 'There is a close relationship between painters and poets, for painting is simply silent verse'.[118] Further back, Plutarch's more balanced answer that also once again brings in temporality; 'Simonides…calls painting silent poetry and poetry articulate painting: for the actions which painters portray as taking place at the moment, literature narrates and records after they have taken place.'[119] In the vein of Fazio, in one way emblems enact a revenge of writers on artists – the *pictura* is not enough in itself and must be overlaid with rhetorical devices (another form of image making through likeness) – and yet (unsurprisingly) in modernity emblem scholarship places an emphasis on the primacy of the picture, or what David Graham calls '[emblems'] anaphoric deixis directed to visual sense perception'.[120] For Graham, there are deictic markers in the text that constantly resituate the eye back towards the emblem image,[121] despite its shrouding by the same *inscriptio, subscriptio,* and commentaries. Alternately, could it not be that the *pictura* as both a printed image and as a strongly warping gloss on the mental image arising from reading the emblem (through

[116] Ibid.
[117] Peter A. Rolland, 'Ut Poesia Pictura: Emblems and Literary Pictorialism in Simiaon Polacki's Early Verse', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies,* 16 (1/2) (June 1992), pp. 67–86 (p. 67).
[118] Quoted in Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz, *Modern Aesthetics*, History of Aesthetics Vol 3., ed. by D. Petsch (New York, NY and London: Continuum, 2005), p. 76.
[119] Quoted in Martin M. Winkler, *Classical Literature on Screen: Affinities of Imagination* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 29.
[120] David Graham, 'Veiz Icy En Ceste Histoire..' in *Emblematica*, 7/1, (1993), p. 5.
[121] Ibid., p. 2.

enargia[122]) is generated by, and reaches beyond, the texts' strange chronologies.

The scholarly emphasis on the predominant visuality of the emblem has roots in the iconographical and iconological research of art historians such as E.H. Gombrich and Erwin Panofsky associated with the Warburg School, who as Daly outlines, used emblems 'as ancillary materials in the interpretation of larger works of art, in the pursuit of themes and motifs'.[123] Subsequently, emblem scholarship from the 1960's onwards that focused on the three-part emblem[124] often gave centre stage to the role of the image, leading towards Ágnes Kusler's recent claim that the emblem is an 'immanently visual invention',[125] as well as the emergence of the somewhat confused volume *Emblematic Strategies in Contemporary Art*.[126] In terms of allowing for the centrality of the image that is also interpreted, translated, *obscured* or *covered* by text (the writer's revenge in the *paragone*), contemporary research has propelled forward ekphrasis as the motor of emblems, in the footsteps of Mario Praz and Murray Krieger's contention that emblems are 'an ekphrasis of an ekphrasis'.[127] Andreas Bässler for example, views ekphrasis as *the* creative catalyst for (at least Alciato's) emblems.[128] Charles Henebry notes that the ekphrasis of the emblem blurs representational and mental imagery: 'This is to say that it [the emblem] embodies in itself the swallowing-up of the figurative arts by poetry which is ekphrasis and which is also, importantly, the basis of Classical mnemonics'[129] – a devouring that contrasts

[122] Rhetorical *enargia* in classical and renaissance rhetoric was considered to be 'the verbal evocation of an image so vivid that the mind almost perceives it to be real'. Partner, *Poetry and Vision in Early Modern England*, p. 10.
[123] Peter M. Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem, Second Edition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), p. 6.
[124]Andreas Bässler, 'Alciato's Emblemata. From Ekphrasis to the Emblem' in *Conference Proceedings: '10th International Conference Society for Emblem Studies, Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel 27 July - 1 August 2014',* <http://www.kunstgeschichte.uni-kiel.de/de/society-for-emblem-studies/programm-und-reader-druckfassung-11.07.2014> [accessed 2 October 2018], p. 54. See also *Emblems and Impact Volume I: Von Zentrum und Peripherie der Emblematik,* ed. by Ingrid Hoepel and Simon McKeown (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), pp. xiii-xxii.
[125] Ágnes Kusler, 'Marginalia to the Reconstruction of the Emblem-Concept of Alciato – The Legitimation of the Picturae' in *Conference Proceedings*, p. 119.
[126] This volume focuses on emblematic strategies as 'codification', 'intermediality', 'montage', and Situationist '*détournment*' as a lens for reading contemporary art, framed overall as an emblematic strategy of play that uses ludic motifs. *Emblematic Strategies in Contemporary Art: (Schriften Aus Dem Kunsthistorischen Institut Der Christian-Albrechts-Universitat Zu Kiel, Band 7)* ed. by Hannah Pahl (International Specialized Book Services, 2014), pp. 13–15, 21.
[127] Murray Krieger, *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1992).
[128] Bässler, 'Alciato's Emblemata', p. 45.
[129] Charles W.M. Henebry, 'Writing with Dumb Signs: Memory, Rhetoric and Alciato's *Emblemata*' *Emblematica,* 10/2 (1996), pp. 211–244 (p. 211).

with Borgogni's concept of mutually reinforcing elements, and a link with memory that preoccupies Chapter Four of this thesis. In regards to emblems' status as quasi-pictures, Renaissance artists were influenced by emblematics, as in the paintings of Titian or Caravaggio:[130] the protean *potential* rather than set visual meaning in emblem books was generative even at the time of their composition – they were often used as repositories of images. This ekphrastic current within emblems is intriguing when considering how cultural and material residues are transmitted between cultural artefacts, as this thesis does in particular when considering the classical sources in the *EL* in relation to a process of cultural ecology. Given the primarily visual cultures of modernity and contemporary reliance on the seemingly limitless expansion of vision technologies, this thesis hopes to draw attention to the struggling and *muddied* visuality of the emblem. The *paragone* continues in contemporary social media: of her use of instagram (an emblematic medium) the poet Eileen Myles recently commented, 'I want to, in a way, re-introduce poetry to people as visual art.'[131]

ii. Material Ornaments

Another quality of interest to Speculative Emblematics as an environmental iconology is emblems' longstanding connection to material culture and in particular antique material culture. Praz rather simplistically defines *emblema* – a term that Alciato himself invented, of which more later – as denoting mosaic work, but it was more of a specialised term in antiquity: Hessel Miedema outlines that in classical Latin *emblema* 'is always a technical term for *objet's d'art* and is used of inlaid work'[132] – usually of stone, wood or metal, most easily envisioned as modern appliques, for example soldered reliefs onto a vessel.[133] As they were often of gold or silver metalwork or featured precious gems, these appliqués were frequently of higher value than what they were applied onto. Early emblematists such as Guillaume Budé and Hadrianus Junius were invested in this association, taking pains to point out that these ornaments were often removed and reapplied elsewhere in a tradition stretching back to

[130] Caravaggio's 'The Fortune Teller' (1594) for example, was influenced by Alciato. See Linda Freeman Bauer, 'Further Reflections on an Emblematic Interpretation of Caravaggio's Early Works', *Emblematica,* 7/2 (1993), pp. 217–237 (p. 217).
[131] Eileen Myles and Hilary Weaver, 'Eileen Myles Considers Instagram a Form of Poetry', *Vanity Fair* (Online) (September 11, 2018) <https://www.vanityfair.com/style/2018/09/eileen-myles-book-of-poetry-evolution> [accessed 2 October 2018].
[132] Hessel Miedema, 'The Term Emblema in Alciati', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 31 (1968), pp. 234–250 (p. 239).
[133] Wild, 'A Just Proportion of Body and Soul', p. 235.

antiquity, and were etched on different embossed materials.[134] *Emblema* was also used by Cicero in relation to a 'nota' (sign)[135] and in this context *emblema* were associated with decorative ornaments that could be added and transferred from different objects particularly used for festive occasions,[136] as well as on clothing, such as badges. Of these hybrid transitory and transferrable material aggregates, it is unsurprising that emblems as decorative inlays spiralled into themselves being embossed onto coins, woodwork and decorative friezes in applied emblematics – the term is deeply bound up with notions of material processes that further themselves, and that are adaptable.

Indeed, this ornamental quality of emblems makes an intervention into the nature/culture binary, as *emblema* additionally has biological connotations, referring to the *grafting* of a cultivated branch onto a wild tree.[137] Broadly speaking, the term signifies an attachment of one thing to another, regardless of whether they are 'artificial' or 'natural'. Wild has used this concept of grafting briefly but productively to examine emblems as systems-makers, moving from what he calls the 'biological metaphorics of grafting' to 'organological metaphorics'[138] in discussing Paolo Giovio's early modern guide to *imprese* (a subset of emblems) as 'a just proportion of body and soule'[139] (in reference to image and text), and elsewhere, 'incarnational grafting' – towards spiritual or metaphysical structures. Importantly, as Wild states, a paradox remained in these combinations of hybridised objects and inserted parts in material ornaments, in that they retained differentiations between substances and value-placements, with the insert being *more valuable.* This was not only on embossed dishes but in classical rhetoric, whereby orators would 'embellish their extempore speeches with [readymade] insertions (*emblematis*) when necessary […and yet] classical rhetoric looked at such theoretical emblematising with disdain, since these prefabricated pieces always remain irreducibly alien and arbitrary.'[140] Wild concludes that while Baroque aesthetic styles used the hybridity and *obscurity* of the

[134] Ibid.
[135] Denis L. Drysdall, 'Budé on 'Symbole, Symbolon' *Emblematica*, 8/2 (Winter 1994), pp. 339–49 (p. 341).
[136] Manning, *The Emblem,* p. 47.
[137] Henebry, 'Writing with Dumb Signs', pp. 3–4.
[138] Wild, 'A Just Proportion of Body and Soul', p. 237.
[139] Paolo Giovio, *Diaologo Delle Imprese* (1555). See *The Worthy Tract of Paulus Iovius, Containing a Discourse of Rare Inventions, Both Militarie and Amorous called Imprese* [1585], trans. Daniel Samuel, ed. by N.K Farmer (New York, NY: Delmay, 1976).
[140] Wild, 'A Just Proportion of Body and Soul', p. 237.

emblem to gloss over and organicise the word-image divide, this alternate alien view from rhetoric emphasised the artificiality of the whole construction.[141] In this, Speculative Emblematics furthers such a practice of ornamental natureculture grafting by overlaying contemporary ecocritical theory and culture onto the pre-existing mosaic of the emblem, given that it can retain the differentiations within its components. To return to the notion of obscurity, ornamental grafting is additionally a material overlaying and covering of separate materials which also brings them together in a display.

iii. Locking–In

A function of 'locking–in' content (any content, whether 'natural', historical, mythic, Biblical etc.) could be said to be another indispensible quality of the emblem. In this, they are perfect candidates for examining agglomerations of scale effects, or for applying material concepts of scale. Almost like surprisingly powerful hoovers, emblem books entrap dizzying amounts of aggregated information from different subject areas, they're universal in scope[142] – this is what distinguishes them the most from *imprese*, which were insular personal devices used by aristocrats. Whilst no emblem scholarship has described 'locking–in', emblems have variously been described as being essentially 'diverse'; carriers of non-serious or occult rubbish;[143] invasively uncanonical[144] in the sense of illegitimate – for Odette de Mourgues, the emblem is 'objectionable, as a substitute for another art';[145] *mappa mundi*; visual commonplace books of proverbs intended for wide reuse and so on. The many melanges of content found in emblems can only start to be hinted at with the following: devotional emblems, moral emblems, satirical emblems, love emblems, alchemical emblems, esoteric emblems, libidinous emblems, philological emblems.

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[141] Ibid.

[142] 'In its pristine form an impresa has only two parts—a motto and a picture, whereas an emblem has three—a motto or title, a picture, and a verse or prose explication. Their functional distinction is this: an impresa expresses a personal desire on the part of its bearer (or the person for whom the impresa is made) to strive after a virtuous ideal (as in heroic or military imprese) or to win an object of love (as in amorous imprese), whereas an emblem inculcates a universal moral through the explication of the picture and its metaphorical relationship with the motto.' Mason Tung, 'From Theory To Practice: A Study of The Theoretical Bases of Peacham's Emblematic Art', *Studies in Iconography,* 18 (1997), pp. 187-219 (p. 196).

[143] Manning, *The Emblem,* p. 17.

[144] The emblem is one of allegory's 'bastard children'. Charles Hayes, 'Symbol and Allegory: A Problem in Literary Theory, GR' quoted in Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem*, p. 1.

[145] Odette de Mourgues, *Metaphysical, Baroque, and Precieux Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), p. 79.

Specifically only in relation to Natural History one finds that: 'Emblems could also be found within larger works of reference: rhetorical manuals, educational treatises, encyclopaedias, dictionaries, and scientific reference works on botany, ornithology, herpetology, etc.'[146] As a pan-European phenomenon, emblems resulted in production of some 6,500 books, with perhaps a total number of printed emblems over a 100 million according to Daly.[147] Emblem books not only drew on classical sources and were written in Greek and Latin, but were also translated, incorporated into and written in French, Spanish, German, English, Italian and Dutch. Indeed, the vast scope of their intertextual and visual referents – from antiquity to the Bible onwards – has significantly hampered emblem scholarship to date, with much work consisting merely of lists of source identification and books of bibliographical references. To add to which, that within the field of applied emblematics and decorative objects, 'the emblem impinged on every aspect of European Renaissance and Baroque life – and death',[148] just as corporate brands do now, they were not print-only but 'decorated every aspect of domestic and civil life'.[149] Emblems were a form of living, simultaneously aimed, for Alciato as for the emblematist Johannes Sambucus, at the practice of 'good living',[150] and consequently they were designed to accommodate the wide information for doing so in nearly any medium. Because of this locking–in quality, emblems have always been scholarly too. From the beginning early emblematists investigated how emblems worked and attempted to define them, being concerned more often than not with preserving this knowledge from the laity: Sambucus' preface to his Latin *Emblemata,* for example, does not appear in popular Dutch versions, just as the French editions of Alciato are commentary-less.[151] Likewise academic curricula concerning emblems – early theory – was formed early on by the first scholar of Alciato, Claude Mignault (1536-1606). Emblems then, have always been an academic genre that both devours and interrogates itself – a self-reflecting and self-reflexive form – a speculative genre.

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[146] Manning, *The Emblem,* p. 20.
[147] Peter M. Daly, *The Emblem in Early Modern Europe: Contributions to the Theory of the Emblem* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), p. 3.
[148] Manning, *The Emblem,* p. 16.
[149] Ibid. See too, Andrew Gordon 'Materiality and The Streetlife of the Early Modern City' in *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Catherine Richardson, Tara Hamling and David Gaimster (Abingdon, Oxon and New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), pp. 130-140 (pp. 137–38) for a brief discussion of the importance of the material sign and emblem 'as a key point of reference in the negotiation of the urban environment' in the early modern period.
[150] Drysdall, 'Joannes Sambucus, "De Emblemate"', p. 112.
[151] Ibid., p. 111.

iv. Obscure Purposes

The attempt to preserve elite knowledge through emblematics also ensured that their intertextual referents were often truly obscure, which perhaps hastened their abrupt fall from popular grace in the eighteenth century. Emblems soon became esoteric artefacts that seemed to have little relevance to academics and lay people in the empirically-driven and vastly changed cultural landscapes of the Enlightenment.[152] Correspondingly, defining the purpose of emblems remains as much a problem to the contemporary scholarly community as their form: were they primarily intended as entertainment for the elite and educated, repertoires of symbolic images and proverbs, Baroque euphemisms, devotional texts, school aids for memorisation? – the list goes on. In general, emblem scholars seem to apply either what Daly has called 'normative definitions' or 'descriptive definitions' to the emblem.[153] Daly, a titan in the field who has dedicated himself to synthesising emblem studies, categorising and defining emblems, falls in the camp of the former when he states – given the huge variety of emblematic modes for example in the difference between Alciato's emblems and Michael Maier's alchemical *Atlanta fugiens* – that 'Loosely speaking, the emblem is a form of allegorical or symbolical expression, but its relation to allegory, symbolism, metaphor and conceit is difficult to establish.'[154] By focusing on emblematic qualities such as obscurity rather than in terms of the uses of emblems, Speculative Emblematics has more similarities with descriptivists such as Praz and William Heckscher. Yet descriptivists tend to emphasise emblems' qualities as devices that are intended to be *solved*: enigmatic puzzles,[155] codes,[156] or witty visual conceits.[157] Praz for example, opines that the motto 'explains' the *pictura* via. the *subscriptio,* guiding the image into 'the moral realm'.[158] This thesis is not as concerned with the iconographic meanings of emblems as much as developing an alternative iconology,

[152] Harms, 'The Authority of the Emblem', p. 19.
[153] Daly refers to Jöns along with Heckscher, Wirth and Schöne as presenting 'normative definitions', unlike the 'descriptive definitions' of Praz and Freeman. Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem*, p. 6.
[154] Ibid., p. 4.
[155] For Heckscher and Wirth (1959), an emblem is an enigma resolved by the epigram. Ibid., p. 43.
[156] As with Gustav René Hocke (1908-1985) who equated emblems with mannerism, and suggested that emblems had a timeless universal relevance to all readers. 'In doing so he exaggerated the role of wit in the creation of emblems and overemphasised the enigmatic nature of the picture, which led him to the conclusion that the function of the motto is to decipher an otherwise insoluble emblem riddle.' Ibid., p. 6.
[157] See Mario Praz, *Studies in Seventeenth Century Imagery: Second edition,* Vol. 1 (Rome, 1964).
[158] Quoted in Miedema, 'The Term Emblema in Alciati', p. 235.

nor does it seem to be desirous or even possible in many cases to 'solve' or 'explain' emblems in this way from contemporary viewpoints.[159] Through an ecological lens then, what is revealing about descriptive definitions of emblems' qualities is that they often lead to reflections on purpose, belying a tacit and perhaps not wrong assumption that a quality – such as being witty or secretive, is both demanded by and a response to an *environment*.

Wolfgang Harms writes that 'Emblem books did not only use other emblem books as sources. The sources and all parts of the arsenal of emblematic motifs and meanings are to be found in all the cultural phenomena of that time.'[160] Correspondingly, through the natureculture apertures opened by these four qualities – muddied images, material ornaments, syncretic locking–in mechanisms and obscure purposes – emblem books emerge as environmental and environmentally relevant even if they are not environmentally critical in the modern sense. In this they are perhaps like the contemporaneous and valuable coco-de-mer *seeds* that once washed ashore from 'mythic islands' were turned into containers.[161] Emblematists' leverage of this bi-medial form to induce a polyphonic mode of contemplation – 'an intuitive type of communication with rhetorical and philosophical implications',[162] as Borgogni writes – as well as emblems' associations with early theory and speculative thought that incorporated complex sources, forms, languages and cultures, likewise orient emblematics as being highly relevant to new philosophical currents in the environmental humanities.

Interdisciplinary Connections

The Environmental Humanities and Emblem Books

This chapter will conclude with a brief overview of the state of the field in regards to existing scholarly intersections between the environmental humanities and emblem studies, by which this thesis refers to studies of sixteenth and seventeenth century emblem books, rather than to the extremely wide area of what could be designated as

[159] The knowledge that complex 'natural' and socio-ethical problems can't be solved simply is a marker of the Anthropocene, but on a literary level such a shift also abnegates narrative complexity, for example the positively humorous side of deliberate obfuscation that occurs within emblem books.
[160] Harms, 'The Authority of the Emblem', p. 4.
[161] See <http://www.peterpetrou.com/exotica-natural-history-works-of-art/exotica/2855/a-large-coco-de-mer-box-on-stand> [accessed 2 October 2018]
[162] Borgogni, 'Must I Needs Want Solidnesse Because by Metaphors I Speak?', p. 75.

'applied emblematics'. To date, there has been little contact between these two disciplines. From the point of the view of the environmental humanities this may be because scholarship, to grossly generalise, has tended to use the Anglo-American literary corpus as a backbone when making investigative forays into the relationship between texts and environments. Further, given its intersections with the Industrial Revolution, Romanticism has been frequently taken as a historical starting point to examine representations of nature and culture, as in the literary studies of Buell, Morton and Rigby.[163] Subsequently, classical and early modern cultural artefacts have been perceived as somewhat irrevocably disconnected from environmental and ecological ideas on various levels.[164] This has now changed, as the gathering momentum of publications in classical studies that integrate posthumanist and object-oriented ontologies attests.[165] Likewise, the Punctum Books-led *Speculative Medievalisms* enterprise – that draws on the Medieval idea of '*speculatio* as the essentially reflective and imaginative operations of the intellect'[166] and focuses on blurring boundaries, 'playful-creative relations'[167] and 'conscious follies'[168] – as well as an emergent field of publications on new materialisms[169] (such as Diana Coole and Samantha Frost's edited reader[170]) and early modern materialisms[171] shine a revisionary ecological lens on the past. Yet emblems – despite their depths of reference and their formal properties as text-image colloquations that blur 'nature'

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[163] See Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*; Timothy Morton, *The Poetics of Spice: Romantic Consumerism and the Exotic* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and Kate Rigby, *Topographies of the Sacred: The Poetics of Place in European Romanticism* (Charlottesville, VA and London: University of Virginia Press, 2004).

[164] Some exceptions are Alexander von Humboldt's *Cosmos: A Sketch of a Physical Description of the Universe: vol. 5*, (1845-1858) trans., Elise C. Otte, Benjamin Horatio Paul and W.S. Dallas (London: Ulan Press, 2012) and Clarence Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967).

[165] See Christopher Schliephake, 'Introduction' in *Ecocriticism, Ecology, and the Cultures of Antiquity*, p. 9.

[166] The Petropunk Collective, *Speculative Medievalisms: Discography* (New York, NY: Punctum Books, 2013), p. ii.

[167] Ibid., p. iv.

[168] Ibid., p. iii.

[169] See *The New Politics of Materialism,* ed. by Sarah Ellenzeig and John H Zammito (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis, 2017) and *Material Feminisms,* ed. by Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008).

[170] The essays in Coole and Frost, *New Materialisms* return to Spinoza and Hans Driesch among others.

[171] See Charles T. Wolfe, *Materialism: A Historico-Philosophical Introduction* (Cham, Switzerland**:** Springer, 2016); D. Bruster, 'The New Materialism in Early Modern Studies' in *Shakespeare and the Question of Culture,* Early Modern Cultural Series, (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 191–205; and Falk Wunderlick and Patricia Springborg, eds., *Issue 5: Varieties of Early Modern Materialism: British Journal for the History of Philosophy,* 24 (2016). None of these publications refer to emblems, however.

and 'culture' – have continued to slip through the net of the environmental humanities' revisionary investigations.

This slippage is also because as allegorical and symbolic conceits, emblems quite deliberately shroud themselves in uncertainty and confusion – they operate in obscurity. Wild: 'Baroque allegories obscure what they communicate'.[172] On a solely literary level, the hybrid admixtures of classical, Patristic, Hebrew, occult and quasi-esoteric texts in for example, Alciato's friend Achille Bocchi's emblem book-compendia *Symbolicarum quaestionum* (1555) was intended to puzzle the elite audience of its time, let alone contemporary readers.[173] Further, emblems' assimilation of content not only between nature and culture, but between what could be considered scientific epistemology and these theophilosophical and mythic strata complicate emblems' relevance to any discipline reliant on factuality, the emblem's more devotional outpourings best exemplified by the many emblem books created by Jesuit priests.[174] Since the environmental humanities as a discipline is fraught by the rifts created between scientific fact and layman myth, and has an complex and uneasy relation to elements of theology transmitted within environmental discourses – particularly when Christian soteriology and eschatology become distilled within texts or tracts on environmental stewardship and socio-ethical concerns[175] – the metaphysical and theological orientations of many emblem books may have been another reason to stay away. On the surface, emblem books are not on the 'side' of ecocritics, especially in regards to the formation of a modern socio-ethical response adapted to new environmental knowledge. The avoidance of Christian theology in particular is reflected in the direction of contemporary ecophilosophies: the Speculative Realist philosophies of Graham Harman[176] and Morton, Quentin Meillassoux's Speculative Materialism,[177] Bennett's new vitalism and strands of

[172] Wild, 'A Just Proportion of Body and Soul', p. 232.
[173] Achille Bocchi, *Symbolicarum Quaestionum de universo genere quas serio ludebat libri quinque* (Bologna, 1574).
[174] As in for example by Jeremias Drexel. For an account of Jesuit emblematics, derived from Jesuit provinces such as the Flemish-Belgian, Gallo-Belgian, as well as across Europe, see Peter Daly and Richard Dimler, *The Jesuit Emblem in the European Context* (Saint Joseph's University Press, 2016).
[175] In some cases, as with environmental ethics, the divergences are less clear-cut, but in terms of science versus religion American evangelism, for example, has traditionally challenged the existence of anthropogenic climate change. See Marisa Ronan, 'Religion and the Environment: Twenty-First Century American Evangelicalism and the Anthropocene', *Humanities,* 6/92 (2017), pp. 1–15 (p. 3).
[176] Graham Harman, *The Quadruple Object* (Winchester, UK and Washington, DC: Zero Books, 2011).
[177] Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* (London and New York, NY: Continuum, 2009) and *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, ed. by Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek and Graham Harman (Melbourne: re. press, 2011).

material ecocriticism[178] to name just a few, aside from occasionally dabbling in Heideggerean mystico-poeticism, Aboriginal religions and Buddhism, have in the main attempted to erase the presence of the Christian tradition in their metaphysical and onto-epistemological investigations[179] – with the exception of Meillassoux's strange messianism.[180] In addition, whilst being as obsessed with the ethics of the human as emblematists such as Alciato were, these speculative philosophies present interventionist theories of posthumanism that in the main resituate and negate the human in response to the pressures of the Anthropocene explored in this thesis' introduction. Neither however, does the critical part of this thesis particularly engage with theology: the *EL* is a relatively secular emblem book in the sense of containing few Biblical references.

This thesis hopes to demonstrate that the wariness (or simply its lack of knowledge) of the environmental humanities to emblem studies has been a mistake, as emblem books are unique cultural artefacts that through their text-image admixtures on many fronts transverse various binaries that preoccupy ecocritical scholars, and that this study can only cover a fraction of: nature/culture, text/image, past/present, science/theology, poetry/philosophy, human/nonhuman, place/space, material/immaterial, real/fantastic, realist/idealist, and so on. Emblems are a threshold media that are constricted by the simple black lines that constitute their visual and textual makeup, whilst skating at the cusp of limits of knowledge-making and representation with those same lines. It does not seem absurd to suggest that at a time of – to requote Castree via Rigby, 'complex moral and material interdependencies' – that similarly complex media such as emblems are lenses needed by the scholarly community that are dedicated to chasing these webs. More than this, because of their interstitial positionings, emblem books use tactics of representational and referential obscurity that encourage much needed *speculative* – as in, fuelled by a creative engine – thoughts that slip in, around and out of these difficult binaries. They are protean

[178] Diana Coole hints at this in 'The Inertia of Matter and the Generativity of Flesh': 'Is it possible to understand a process of materialization and the nature of its fecundity, to grasp matter's dynamic and sometimes resistant capacities, without relying upon mysticisms derived from animism, religion or romanticism?'. Coole and Frost, *New Materialisms,* p. 92.

[179] Bennett's vibrant matter for example, proposes a post-secularity, 'a strange sounding religion, or at least a religion that sounds strange to western ears: a religion that is absent faith and belief'. Alan R. Van Wyk, 'What Matters Now?: Review of Jane Bennett, Vibrant Matter', *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, 8/2 (2012), pp. 130–136 (p. 130).

[180] As explicated in Meillassoux's unpublished doctoral thesis, *L'Inexistence Divine* where he proposes the ex-nihilo emergence of a God in the future. See Graham Harman, *Quentin Meillassoux: Philosophy in the Making, 2nd Edition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 140.

carriers. Indeed, as many contemporary books of critical theory attest through simple word usage, emblems are already frequently used unconsciously as structuring devices in many new ecophilosophical discourses (Meillassoux is just one such example[181]), just as they have been used as frontispieces of philosophical and scientific treatises for centuries; to frame arguments, to carry meanings forward that are stated to be *emblematic* of another.

Emblem Books and The Environmental Humanities

i. Avoiding Environment

Having briefly covered why emblems books have been neglected by scholars working within the field of the environmental humanities, from the side of emblem studies in relation to ecocritical thought, a similar avoidance has taken place. This is arguably for several reasons:

Firstly, as just stated, the syncretic capabilities ('locking–in') of the emblem form is one of its presiding features. This, like the dictionary definition of 'obscurity', extends in relation to itself – emblematics – as a genre: as a once wildly-popular form of the seventeenth century, the estimations of many thousands of pan-European emblem books in circulation by hundreds of different authors writing across languages also serve as confusing indexes to each other.[182] Consequently, many studies of emblem books end up being bio-bibliographies of other emblem books, as in the second part of art historian Praz's seminal *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery*.[183] In the main, scholarly work within emblem studies has tended to comprise of rigorous attempts to identify the complex sources of emblems, philological debates on the semantic meanings of words, and investigations of authenticity and authorial intent within emblems.[184] In short, emblem books have

[181] See Quentin Meillassoux, *Time Without Becoming* (London: Mimesis International, 2014), which uses Hilma of Klimt's theosophical or mystical 'Svanen' (1914) as an emblematic cover image.
[182] Daly estimates around 600 emblematists. *Literature in the Light of the Emblem*, p. 4.
[183] Praz, *Studies in Seventeenth Century Imagery*: *Volume 2*. See also for example, Laurence Grove and Daniel S. Russell, *The French Emblem: Bibliography of Secondary Sources* (Geneva: Librarie Droz S.A., 2010).
[184] Russell for example, argues that 'the emblem demonstrated a process', a hermeneutical response towards forming personal interpretations of previous fragments of earlier artworks and texts. Daniel S. Russell, *The Emblem and Device in France* (French Forum Publications, 1985), p. 179. Daly immediately counters this more innovative argument with the contention that (of Alciato translations) 'It would stretch credulity somewhat to assume that a French or German sixteenth-century reader with little Latin and no Greek read those French or German Alciato emblems as a process, recognizing the extent to which those French or German texts derived ultimately from Alciato's Latin translation of the

been examined in relation to their (linear) socio-historical, but not environmental contexts. This narrow channel of analysis not only largely excludes attention to historical geography, biodiversity and so forth, but also deeper forays into philosophy. Daly, for example, has produced highly informative overviews of the state of the field in emblem studies, defined the scope of literary emblematics and so forth, but this precision and rigour also translates into a wariness of the 'the danger of ahistorical tidyness'[185] and a suspicion of iconologies that can only ever be speculative.

Secondly, when wider theoretical models involving emblems (though they have never played central roles) have been proposed, this has mainly been within the remit of iconology as developed via. Ernst Cassirer's concepts of symbolic order by Aby Warburg, Gombrich and Panofsky.[186] Though these art historians creatively developed critical frameworks that drew on a Neoplatonic philosophy[187] that is highly compatible with the idea of *obscurity* (though not materialism), their iconologies were preoccupied with creating a teleological timeline of 'art history' with additional imperial and anthropocentric connotations, and never refined their concepts of 'nature' or drew on developments in science. Too, as a group they were taken with the concept of deciphering in the vein of Praz,[188] though tangentially Gombrich took an

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Greek Anthology.' *The Emblem in Early Modern Europe,* p. 5. This surely abnegates what Russell is surely gesturing towards, the important of a process of being in contact with material remnants, which is according to thesis' argument, a means of interacting with an environment – intentionality or socio-historical reception aside.

[185] Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem*, p. 5.

[186] E. H. Gombrich, 'The Warburg Institute: A Personal Memoire', *The Art Newspaper* (2 November, 1990) < https://gombricharchive.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/showdoc108.pdf> [accessed 14 October 2018].

[187] Gombrich: 'our attitude towards the image is inextricably bound up with our whole idea about the universe'. In 'Icones Symbolicae' he covers Platonic interpretations of symbolism, Neoplatonists such as Dionysius the Areopagite and Marsilio's Ficino's magical doctrines among others. He later however revised the essay to attention to 'equally influential teachings of Aristotelian philosophy which link the visual image with the didactic devices of the medieval schools and with the Rhetorical theory of metaphor.' *Gombrich on the Renaissance: Volume 2*, pp. 125, viii.

[188] Gombrich: 'iconological studies must carry masses of footnotes quoting and interpreting obscure texts. Naturally this detective work has its own thrills.', ibid. In the 'Aims of Limits of Iconology' Gombrich also emphasises the emblematic recourse to visual codes in the context of festivity (that has emblematic connotations), 'this recourse to a code was taken in the context of a festive decoration, which would be taken down immediately.' He did however warn of this paranoid mentality: 'Codes, moreover, cannot be cracked by ingenuity alone. On the contrary. It is the danger of the cipher clerk that he sees codes everywhere.' Ibid, p. 19. See also *Gombrich on the Renaissance Volume 1: Norm and Form* and (London: Phaidon, 1966). Likewise Erwin Panofsky favoured a Neoplatonic reading of artworks. Focusing on Renaissance painters in particular, Panofsky is considered an 'ur-iconologist', who viewed the work of art as a symptom to be expounded by his theory of iconology. See Erwin Panofsky, (1939) *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1962), in which he argues for the distinction between iconology and iconography. Daly summarises thus: 'The iconographical research of Panofsky and writers associated with the Warburg Institute has tended to concentrate on the motif of emblems and has been basically literary in

interest in Carl Jung's theories of symbolism and the collective unconscious[189] which also influences the poetry collection accompanying this thesis. As an alternative after Panofsky, Hubert Damisch's study of representation *A Theory of /Cloud/* lays the basis for and gestures towards an iconological reading of emblems through a somewhat materialist lens. Damisch's engaging methodological approach uses clouds as aberrant keys to examine systems of representation as manifested in Renaissance paintings. However, crucially (bearing in mind the importance of materials), painting is altogether a very different medium to woodcut-printed emblem books, of which Damisch refers to extremely briefly.[190] Further, Damisch resolutely avoids deviating from a poststructuralist position towards correlating representations of clouds to externalities, for example he does not refer to the science of clouds. However his concept of /cloud/ as an obscure and plastic material-semiotic agent that provides insights into systems of representation influences this thesis' approach.

In terms of emblem studies proper, when scholars have integrated philosophy into their readings, it historically has manifested as an on-going quarrel about the Platonic or Aristotelian roots of emblems, or (more rarely) they have turned to structuralist approaches, as in Bath's adoption of the terms *vraisemblable* and *bricolage* to explain emblems' structural mechanisms in his study of English emblems and applied emblematics in Scotland.[191] Rooted in Jacques Derrida's claim *Il n'ya pas de hors-text*e, structuralist and post-structuralist thought has in these instances encouraged a move away from – to half-plunder Bennett – the *matter of things*, to asserting the supremacy of an immaterial meta-language, or simply of the verbal (remembering the *paragone*), that is removed from interconnections between text and world. As such what might be loosely designated as 'post/structuralist' thought in this regard moves apposite to the grounding locus of environmental thinking. This has

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perspective. Emblems are used as ancillary materials in the interpretation of larger works of art, in the pursuit of themes and motifs, and the resulting criticism frequently resembles the topos-criticism of literary studies […] Panofsky's own description of the emblem is not very helpful. He describes Alciato's emblem-book as 'the first and most famous of the countless collections of illustrated epigrams, or epigrammatic paraphrases of images.' Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem*, p. 6.

[189] 'And just as Vico's revolutionary insights were fused with a revived Neo-Platonism, so Freud's discoveries were again connected with this age-old tradition in the writings of Carl Gustav Jung. Here the Freudian concept of the symbol regressed, as it were, to its origins in Neo-Platonism. This is achieved–or so it seems– by fusing the transcendent realm of the religious tradition with the ineffable content of the collective unconscious that talks to us in riddles–but riddles for which the key is again provided in the wisdom of the ancients.' *Gombrich on the Renaissance: Volume 2*, p. 190.

[190] Hubert Damisch [1972] *A Theory of /Cloud/: Toward a History of Painting*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002).

[191] Bath, *Speaking Pictures: English Emblem Books and Renaissance Culture*, p. 6.

however, been due to both ecocriticism and emblem studies' politicised interpretations of these thinkers: this thesis turns to loosely-designated 'poststructuralist thinkers' in Chapters Four and Five. (Derrida for example, considered allegations that he stated that our thinking is always trapped in language as 'stupid'[192]). In terms of balancing acts in regards to theory, John Manning's recent and detailed study *The Emblem* is frequently pivoted around Alciato. Though far from theory-heavy, Manning's study refutes the concept that concrete assumptions can be deducted from the emblem, and outlines instead 'the backdrop of a shared European neo-Latin culture of festive celebration',[193] putting an emphasis on the spectacle of Renaissance performativity not unlike Damisch. Manning's readings of these spectacles similarly hover towards ecomaterialist explanations, but then pull away due to leanings towards, in this case, the notion of semiotic play. A conflation between misguided attempts to 'unlock the code' and ecocriticism's historical association with exegetical readings of nature is perhaps a reason for not taking this turn, then again, he may simply not be interested in environmental history. *The Emblem* however offers many threads for thought: most importantly contra Daly, Manning critiques linear-historical overviews of emblems as being 'based on the naive assumption that the calendar was a real guide to generic developments.'[194]

ii. New Materiality

Whilst the concept of semiotic play in an insular sense also disappointingly structures Hannah Pahl's edited volume on emblematics in contemporary art, there is however an emerging materialist current in emblem studies that is more complementary to this thesis' direction: Robert Cummings' material analyses of objects found in applied emblematics spring to mind.[195] Though in emblem studies what is referred to as material culture is everything that is not derived from print, rather than to new

[192] T. J. Clark posits this contention within a discussion of trends in ecocriticism: 'The phrase *linguistic turn* generally seems to apply to the kind of constructivism that became dominant in the humanities, in forms of politicised criticism, in the 1980s and 1990s. It was usually in relation to this that one read caricatures of Derrida as 'postmodern', etc., or his supposed argument that we and our thinking are always trapped in language and so on, a reading Derrida once publicly called 'stupid'. Herman Rapaport gives a very useful account of how these widespread misreadings arose in his *The Theory Mess* (2001).' See T. J.A. Clark and M. Aquilina 2015, 'Ecocritcism and the Post-literary: An Interview with T.J.A. Clark', *CounterText*, 1/3, (2015), pp. 273-288 (p. 276).
[193] Manning, *The Emblem,* p. 9.
[194] Ibid.
[195] According to Cummings, Alciato 'invites the notion of his collection of emblems as […] a splendid addition to a great museum'. Robert Cummings, 'Alciato's *Emblemata* As An Imaginary Museum' in *Emblematica* 10/ 2 (Winter, 1996) pp. 245–281 (p. 245).

materialist philosophies, several recent papers indicate a growing synthesis between contemporary theory, materiality and emblems such as Beat Staatl Wyss on Foucault, concept art and emblems,[196] Axel Fliethmann on the similarities between emblem theory and television theory,[197] and Borgogni's lamentably short 'Must I Needs Want Solidnesse Because by Metaphors I Speak?: Emblematics, Stylistics, Materiality', in which he insists on the importance of the material aesthetics of emblem books:

> Emblematic compositions, moreover, were not Fishian self-consuming artifacts, but texts that must come to terms with the materiality of their symbols: they were heavily dependent on their comely and enticing appearance, whose relevance as a concrete, pleasurable object cannot not be dismissed as something purely superficial and instrumental.[198]

For Borgogni, this means that the 'economical valence of emblem books cannot be overstated':[199] which from an ecocritical viewpoint reaffirms a link between book and world. Likewise in regards to emblems' pleasurable aesthetics that led to reduplication, Laurence Grove has linked French emblems and the *EL* to the development of the bande dessinée and comic books.[200] Borgogni also illuminatingly states 'The union of verbal and iconographic elements placed the emblematic form right at the centre of the Early Modern debate on art and nature'.[201] In terms of examining nature in the emblems, since this thesis' research began Enenkel and Smith's edited volume *Emblems and The Natural World* finally reads emblems from an environmental perspective.[202] Enenkel and Smith state, 'it is surprising that the presence of the natural world in emblematics has not been analysed in a comprehensive study.'[203] The essays within explore emblematic animals, plants and meteorological events with a refreshing recourse to scientific epistemologies. [204] However, only Enenkel and Smith's introduction refers to Alciato, and they focus on

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[196] Beat Staatl Wyss, 'Murmuring Things. About A Scenography of Knowledge: Is There a Natural Order in Words?' in *Conference Proceedings*, p. 47.
[197] Axel Fliethmann, 'The Theology Of The Image In Television and Emblem Theories', *Thesis Eleven*, 146/1, pp. 58–70.
[198] Borgogni, 'Must I Needs Want Solidnesse Because by Metaphors I Speak?', p. 75.
[199] Ibid.
[200] Laurence Grove, *Comics in French: The European Bande Dessinée in Context* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2010), p. 74.
[201] Borgogni, 'Must I Needs Want Solidnesse Because by Metaphors I Speak?', p. 75.
[202] See also Simona Cohen, *Animals As Disguised Symbols in Renaissance Art,* Brill Studies in Intellectual History (Leiden: Brill, 2008) for a wider overview, with additional references to emblem books.
[203] Enenkel and Smith, *Emblems and the Natural World*, p. 5.
[204] Ibid., p. 3.

the two earliest editions of the *EL* rather than the Padua edition of 1621, which this thesis considers to be more representative of a thought formed over time. Additionally, while *Emblems and The Natural World* focuses on contexts, empirical approaches and the history of Natural History publishing, it lacks any reference to philosophy per se, most notably contemporary ecophilosophies, and as a result what constitutes 'nature' is left undefined and undetailed – ontological examinations are lacking. In contrast, in Bernhard Scholz's similarly recent but brief examination of printer's marks in Alciato, he explores the concept of generic rather than universal qualities of animals (such as an elephant), in regards to questions of the 'truth' of the *pictura*.[205]

Mosaics

To return to and summarise the conjunction of emblem studies and the environmental humanities, the state of the field in both disciplines belies a scholarly need to restructure the epistemological direction of research in emblematics.[206] In Elizabeth Sears' biography of Heckscher she describes the kind of approach that this thesis attempts to cultivate:

> The originality and unconventionality of William Heckscher's scholarship owe much to his self-conscious cultivation of the art of free association. "II faut penser a' c6te", he maintained: rectilinear thinking is inimical to creativity. The straight path, the well-charted route taken by the specialist, leads inevitably to a trivial end. A scholar engaged in a piece of research, not unlike a patient on a Freudian analyst's couch, must encourage thoughts to rise freely to the surface of consciousness, and learn to select from among serendipitous mental associations and put them to use. Disconnected observations – petites perceptions – arising from a patiently tended reserve of knowledge, will in time resolve themselves into a mosaic which makes sense.[207]

[205] Bernhard F. Scholz, 'The Truth of Printer's Marks: Andrea Alciato on "Aldo's Anchor", "Froben's Dove" and "Calvo's Elephant". A Closer Look at Alciato's Concept of the Printer's Mark' in *Typographorum Emblemata: The Printer's Mark in the Context of Early Modern Culture*, ed. by Anja Wolkenhauer, Bernhard F. Scholz (Berlin and Boston, MA: Walter de Gruyter, GmbH & Co., 2018), pp. 269–296.

[206] Daly hints at this when he writes, 'Perhaps the time is right for a synthesized definition of the emblem, which would need as a prelude a sharply focused analysis of both the philosophical and phenomenological basis of the emblem'. Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem*, p. 7.

[207] Elizabeth Sears, 'The Life and Work of William S. Heckscher: Some Petites Perceptions' , *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 53/1 (1990), pp. 107–133 (p. 107).

Emblematic thinking – an aggregated mosaic – informed by psychoanalytic theory could also be designated as a characteristic of Karen Pinkus' fascinating, though unfortunately non-environmentally grounded, materialist study,[208] which this thesis also draws upon. In an attempt to further interweave the environmental humanities, emblem studies, visual arts, motherhood and poetry in this associational way, this thesis in Chapter Six attempts to write in a more hybrid and personal style before moving onto the poetry collection *Emblem*. Hopefully such an aim is one that fits with the *EL.* As John Lepage writes, 'That the speaking picture spoke to a free-ranging imagination is attested by the French version of Aneau's edition of Alciato's emblems, *Picta Poesis* (1552), titled *Imagination Poétique*.'[209] As an encouraging contemporary context for such free-ranging mosaic-making or natureculture grafting of emblems into the present, 2018 was a good year for emblematics in contemporary culture, particularly in the UK. The poet and essayist Anne Boyer's *Handbook of Disappointed Fate* included interspersed reprints of woodcuts from the eighteenth century chapbook *The World Turned Upside Down or The Folly of Man, Exemplified in Twelve Comical Relations upon Uncommon Subjects*, in which emblematic animals and women gain revenge on their oppressors.[210] Scottish and Belgium-based fashion label Atelier E.B.'s collaborative show at the Serpentine Gallery, 'Passersby' could be seen as a contemporary manifestation of applied emblematics that engages with, among other things, replicating, misreading, grafting and interrogating classical history, hieroglyphics and material remnants in an innovative manner and variety of materials.[211] At Tate Britain the artist Jesse Darling's solo show 'The Ballad of St. Jerome'– a narrative also favoured by artists in the Renaissance period – offered a radical new iconography via. lions, batman and robin, tropes of healing, control, institutional authority and subjugation of otherness. 'A Correspondence' (2018) to take just one example, depicts a large-scale letter-poster written in an unreadable hieroglyphic language, building on prior work that presented non-informative

[208] Karen Pinkus, *Picturing Silence: Emblem, Language, Counter-Reformation Materiality* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1996).
[209] John L. Lepage, *The Revival of Antique Philosophy in the Renaissance* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 9.
[210] Boyer also interweaves textual fragments and intertextual allusions in an emblematic manner. 'Handbook' too, is reminiscent of the instructive form of emblem books as behavioural manuals. Anne Boyer, *Handbook of Disappointed Fate* (New York, NY: Ugly Duckling Presse, 2018). For the woodcuts see <https://publicdomainreview.org/collections/the-world-turned-upside-down-18th-century/> [accessed 2 February 2019].
[211] See <https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/exhibitions-events/atelier-eb-passer> [accessed 2 February 2019].

waiting-room posters written in the same style.[212] The artist Helen Cammock's solo exhibition at Cubitt Gallery 'Shouting in Whispers' presented her concept of the 'audible fingerprint' – a form of 'disembodiment or "re-embodiment"'[213] – in which fragments of past texts were combined with new ones to re-present spoken and written intersectional dialogues, alongside a series of new (emblematic) stamps and text-image works that drew attention to unrecorded and silenced histories.[214] At Somerset House, in *Print! Tearing It Up* progressive print publications and zines from the early twentieth century to present were showcased as a series of hybrid bi-medial artworks.[215] Overall, the time feels right for speculative attempts to delineate new iconologies or critical theories through emblematics – this time, including environments.

[212] See <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/jesse-darling> [accessed 2 February 2019].
[213] Chris Fite-Wassilak, 'Interview: A New Voice: Helen Cammock Wins the 2018 Max Mara Prize for Women', *Frieze online* <https://frieze.com/article/new-voice-helen-cammock-wins-2018-max-mara-prize-women> [accessed 2 February 2019].
[214] See <https://cubittartists.org.uk/2017/09/20/helen-cammock-shouting-in-whispers/> <https://www.somersethouse.org.uk/whats-on/print-tearing-it-up> [accessed 2 February 2019].
[215] See <https://www.somersethouse.org.uk/whats-on/print-tearing-it-up> [accessed 2 February 2019].

Chapter Two: The *Emblematum liber*

Chapter Two introduces the *Emblematum liber* as a set of processes rather than a static artefact, one shaped by materiality, the figure of Alciato, and socio-environmental forces. It then focuses on intersections between these processes that shaped the *EL* and theory-making. Firstly noting the accidental creation of emblems as a text-image form by the printer Heinrich Steyner, it documents how Alciato's early *emblema* transformed through a process of cultural ecology into the 1621 Padua edition, the central referent of this thesis. Arguing that the protean emblem form as an encounter with ecological obscurity in turn led to an anxious humanist desire to claim authority over this process through theory-making, it examines how Alciato viewed his emblems – as material ornaments or things – in relation to obscurity as a method of covering that also suppressed relations of power and production. After conducting an overview of Alciato's life via. processes of cultural ecology refracted in the emblems, in the second section it examines how encounters with nonlinear material emergences shaped the humanist project. Drawing parallels with emblems as speculative objects that leveraged a surplus from material remnants, humanist attempts to harness this form to consolidate authority, and speculative theory in contemporary ecophilosophy, it then concludes by positing that Alciato's philology as a creative methodology, as well as processes of production, nevertheless consolidated the *EL* as an arbitrary and excessive material process taking place in obscurity, one which complements speculative hermeneutical approaches.

The Material Process of the Emblematum liber

'Accidental' Beginnings

The Italian jurist and lawyer Andrea Alciato's *Emblematum liber* was, according to its most recent translator John Moffitt, 'a key monument of Renaissance culture' and indispensible cultural referent of its time.[216] It was also the first printed emblem book and spored a European phenomenon.[217] It did however, orginate through misreading and chance. To paraphrase the poet and cultural critic Imamu Baraka; if form is *how* a thing exists, and content is *why* a thing exists, this relation is inseparable in any object – especially art objects.[218] Baraka also argues that renewed interest in 'the found object and chance composition is an attempt to get closer to the non–Western concept of natural expression as an Art object'.[219] This chapter takes a similar direction to Baraka's emphasis on process – 'natural expression' – over artefact,[220] as a means to denote that no artefact is artificially static,[221] being rather an on-going nexus of natureculture processes – reseeding material ornaments. To return to the *EL,* initially the *Emblemata,* it was first published when an early (private) holograph of about a hundred of Alciato's Latin epigrams fell into the hands of the Augsburg printer Heinrich Steyner, who added simple woodcut illustrations to them in 1531, printing the volume as the *Emblematum liber*.[222] Crucially then in terms of material form, this agglomeration of text and image that now defines the emblem was accidental, qua Baraka. It is likely that Steyner had noted the popularity of Brandt's illustrated *Shype of Fools* – that volume of poetic obscurities – and hoped to market the epigrams in a similar manner. Of the early holograph of the *Emblemata,* these epigrams (that were

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[216] John F. Moffitt, ed and trans. Andrea Alciati, *A Book of Emblems: The* Emblematum Liber *in Latin and English* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2004), p. 5.
[217] Enenkel and Smith, *Emblems and the Natural World*, p. 2. After being translated into Italian, French, Spanish, and so forth, is estimated that some 175 separate editions of the *Emblematum liber* alone were made, as well the many thousands of subsequent emblem books. Alvan M. Bregman, *Emblemata: The Emblem Books of Andrea Alciato* (Newtown, PA: Bird & Bull Press, 2007), p. 8.
[218] Imamu Baraka, 'Hunting is Not Those Heads on the Wall' in *Poetry in Theory: An Anthology 1900-2000*, ed. by Jon Cook (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 386-388 (p. 387).
[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid. pp. 387-8.
[221] Baraka sees naming – making things familiar – as the first step towards making things 'completely knowable' and therefore, artificial: 'The unnatural aspect of the man-made object is that it seems to exist only as a result of man, with no other real connection with the nonhuman world. *Artificial,* in this sense, is simply *made.*' ibid. There is perhaps a convergence between a theory of 'Speculative Emblematics' as a theory of obscurity from an environmental perspective, and Barka's turn away from the 'completely knowable'-as-unnatural.
[222] Bregman, *Emblemata*, p. 7.

in large part translations of the *Greek Anthology*) alongside being image-less[223] most likely did not have a motto, *inscriptio* (a term that also allows for headings that are not necessarily mottos[224]), or *lemma*.[225] It is near certain that Alciato never intended to publish them, and that he was horrified by their emergence – perceiving this printing of a text intended for close acquaintances as a breach of decorum – even trying to get the volume suppressed. [226] The additional reason for this horror was, as Manning snobbishly states, 'there can be no doubt that Steyner's edition was a travesty of Alciato's erudite, humanist emblems. Their utterance in this form must surely have embarrassed the learned jurist. They looked distinctly popularist and down-market'.[227] The iconographic meanings were also misconstrued in the rough woodcuts (see Fig. 1).[228] Alciato complained to his friend the art historian Pietro Bembo that he did 'not know for what reason the Augsburgers have published this little lost work so badly'.[229] How much anxiety *material* representations carry with them! It can be assumed however, that Alciato was pleased with the fortuitous mistake of the text-image combination, as he retained the format – though he may have considered his emblems primarily as epigrams.[230]

As Manning further details, the respected Parisian printer Christian Wechel in 1534 'persuaded the injured author to entrust him with the printing of a new, corrected edition with brilliant cuts by [Jean] Jollat, which he would commission at his own expense',[231] setting the tripartite form of the emblem and including nine new

[223] Ibid., p. 40.
[224] Peter M. Daly, *The Emblem in Early Modern Europe: Contributions to the Theory of the Emblem* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), p. 3.
[225] Manning, *The Emblem,* p. 39.
[226] Ibid., p. 40–42.
[227] Ibid., p. 43.
[228] Tung notes the problems of misplacement in further editions after the 1531 edition, as well as the complicated relation of illustrator to text within a wider context. 'Ignoring authors' texts by artists, like the misplacing of woodcuts, are common occurrences in Renaissance book illustrations.' As in for example, the repeated lack of bandages on motifs of a blindfolded Cupid in the *Emblemata*. 'Mason Tung, 'More on the Woodcuts of Alciato's Death Emblems', *Emblematica*, 8/1 (1994), p. 41.
[229] Quoting Scholz. Bregman, *Emblemata,* p. 80.
[230] 'Let us, however, place controversy to one side. Whether or not the notion of an illustrated edition originated with Alciato, he accepted the practice, authorizing several such editions during his lifetime. Yet, as witnessed by the unillustrated form in which he chose to present it in his carefully preprared collected works, this *Emblematum Libellus* remained for him fundamentally a collection of epigrams (Miedema, 239).' Henebry,'Writing with Dumb Signs', pp. 213–14.
[231] Manning, *The Emblem*, p. 43. See also 'A Letter Written by Andrea Alciato to Christian Wechel' in Curt Ferdinand Bühler, *Early Books and Manuscripts: Forty Years of Research* (Grolier Club & Pierpont Morgan Library, 1973), p. 274.

emblems (see Fig. 2).[232] The three-part form of the emblem then, like the addition of text to image, came from a process of cultural ecology – another transformation outside of authorial intention. In 1546 a new tranche of emblems was published by a Venetian press run by the heirs to Aldus Manutius, who had printed Francesco Colonna's influential proto-emblematic *Hypnerotomachia poliphili* (1499).[233] It wasn't until long after Alciato's death that the *EL* was finalised in 1621 under the direction of Lorenzo Pignoria. This is the version that this thesis primarily refers to, shortened as the *EL*: the *Emblemata cum commentariis amplissimis* edited by Johannes Thuilius, a gifted scholar and rhetorician who integrated earlier commentaries on the work by Claude Mignault, Sebastian Stockhamer and Fransisco Sanchez las Brocas, Pignoria's notes and his own additions (see Fig. 3).[234] In total, the 1621 edition of the *EL* contains a set of some 212 emblems written in Latin, which with additional commentary runs to about 1100 pages. As it is taken to be the most conclusive version of the *EL* that is closer to Alciato's intention,[235] it is also used as the standard numeration of the emblems and contains the previously omitted 'obscene' emblem number 80.[236] Pignoria – the owner of a library and museum of antiquities, and scholar of hieroglyphs – believed that the earlier woodcut images had defaced the classical meanings inherent in Alciato's texts, whom he viewed as an art historian and iconographer more than a jurist.[237] Accordingly, he commissioned new simpler woodcuts from the Paduan printer Pietro Paolo Tozzi. As a result of these interventions, the more austere visuals of the Padua edition convey a heightened sense of being overlaid by textual glosses, and can be seen as a cumulation of the evolving versions of the earlier editions – like a hesitant thought-in-process. Further hesitancy is needed when considering the incoherence of such a material process: the illustrations, page layout, number, order, selection of emblems, languages and book

[232] Andreas Alciatus, *The Latin Emblems, Indexes and Lists (Index Emblematicus)*, ed. by Peter M. Daly and Virginia W. Callahan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).
[233] Francesco Colonna [1466], *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili: The Strife of Love in a Dream* (New York, NY: Thames & Hudson, 1999), trans. Jocelyn Godwin. Nathaniel Wallace for example notes Colonna's influence on Alciato, such as in 'Pax' [Peace, 177] that draws on the motif of an elephant and fragmented statuary derived from Colonna. This influence is most clear in the 1534 edition, by 1621 the *pictura* had been refined to simply represent an elephant. In this emblem Alciato twists Colonna's motif on civil tranquillity into a reflection on the cost of war. Nathaniel Wallace, 'Architextual poetics: The *Hypernotomachia* and the Rise of the European emblem', *Emblematica*, 8/1 (1994), pp. 1–26 (p. 20).
[234] Bregman, *Emblemata*, p. 110.
[235] Manning, *The Emblem*, p. 52.
[236] As left out by the Reverend Henry Green in his overview of Alciato. Henry Green, *Andrea Alciati and his Book of Emblems. A Biographical and Bibliographical Study* (London: Trübner, 1872).
[237] Manning, *The Emblem*, p. 116–117.

size (with added commentaries and criticisms)[238] all fluctuated fairly drastically across editions of the *EL*.[239] What did remain consistent was Alciato's text, at least in its Latin form – situating a theory of Speculative Emblematics as being in itself more of a literary endeavour than a visual one. Alciato's epigrams retained a further solidity in at least half of them comprised of translations of Hellenistic epigrams from the *Anthologia Planudea* [Planudean Anthology], printed as the *Greek Anthology*[240] (122 out of the 212 emblems in the 1621 edition), a then-recent nonlinear *re-emergence* of the past that this chapter will return to. The other consistency that remained was the wide scope of the emblems in terms of content (locking–in) – Moffitt divides these into God and Religion; Virtues; Vices; the 'Human Macrocosm' such as Nature, Love, Fate and Astrology; 'the Human Microcosm' such Life and Death, Friendship and Enmity, and Marriage, and Trees (as a mirror of human nature).[241] From early on these thematic centres were organised by printers into commonplace divisions or *loci communes*[242] – each emblem became a *place* of stored information or stored objects.

If artefacts are not statically removed from natureculture processes – 'artificial' – neither are the theories that accompany them. From the start these places that had emerged from material processes which in turn locked-in objects, encouraged ecocritical thinking in the sense of encouring readers to structure or narrativise an environment (of the emblems) in relation to their own through intertextual references, metaphorical similarity, and theory-making. This was not an easy or clear process, and one haunted by the obscurity of re-emergent pasts contained within these artefacts. Similarities to this thesis' methodological strategy of relinquishment and obscurity can be found in the early commentator Claude Mignault's included 'Letter To The Reader', where he describes his own process of obtaining knowledge through study of the *EL* as being a struggle in obscurity:

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[238] Bregman, *Emblemata,* p. 10.
[239] Mason Tung provides comprehensive comparative charts of the changing editions, available on the Alciato at University of Glasgow website. <https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/> [accessed 10 January 2018].
[240] The *Planudean Anthology* that contains some 2,400 Hellenistic epigrams was assembled by Maximus Planudes, a Byzantine grammarian and theologian, and first printed as the *Anthologia Graeca* in 1494, and importantly by Aldus Manutius in 1503 and 1521. It was not until later that the *Palantine Anthology,* which carries fewer mistakes*,* was discovered – the modern *Greek Anthology* is an admixture of the Planduean and Palantine manuscripts. Alciato however, was working with the former – referred to in this thesis as the *Greek Anthology*.
[241] Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The* Emblematum Liber *in Latin and English*, p. 14.
[242] As described in Barthelemy Aneau's French translation of 1549. See Daniel S. Russell, 'Claude Mignault, Erasmus and Simon Bouquet: The Function of the Commentaries on Alciato's Emblems' in Karl Enenkel, and A.S.Q. Visser, eds., *Mundus Emblematicus: Studies in Neo-Latin Emblem Books* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), p. 17–32 (p. 17).

> But to be brief, it will not seem irrelevant if I explain the plan of this midnight work of mine beginning at the beginning as they say, so that you may learn in the same way what a struggle I have had in my study of letters, and what labours I have endured hitherto in unbelievable deprivation of almost all resources.
>
> […] And just when I found myself somewhat entangled in these studies and was asking many questions about many subjects, there fell opportunely into my hands Alciato's *Liber Emblematum*, recently brought to me from Lyon and also printed a few years before in Paris, which I had heard was highly commended by all lovers of letters. Since I could scarcely put this book down, and noticing in it many decidedly [very] obscure points [*et multa in eo* perobscura *deprehenderim*] which detained me for some time and made me sweat with the effort – because at the time, being constrained by poverty, I had no books – [243]

If an economic lack of access to books is substituted here for the position of the human subject in relation to the empirical knowledge that constitutes our awareness of global warming or the oppressively monstrous Anthropocene – ('this midnight work of mine' beginning again also brings forth the spectre of the ticking of the doomsday clock) – and the obscure trajectory of its futural matrices, the parallels are uncanny. The physical effects of this encounter (struggling, entangled, sweating) also testify to the materiality of such nonlinear emergences. Too, though it was difficult for Mignault to unravel the thought of a man who had died only decades before his commentary, this *perobscura* pervades any modern attempt to reach back into this period of history. Mignault's method however, was to shed the exacting clarity of light on these 'difficult twists […] obscure passages […] and finally to show an easy application of each passage and maxim to personal life. How clearly and conveniently I have tried to do this –'.[244] Consequently his erudite commentaries, as with others, drown out the same obscurity of the emblems that initially drew him in – as well as guiding too strictly the process of emblematic contemplation. This thesis will subsequently not be referring to them.

Always Uncertain

If Alciato's emblems were part of an unknown natureculture process to begin with,

[243] Claude Mignault of Dijon, [1577] 'To The Learned and Honest Reader', trans. Denis Drysdall <http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/Mignault_letter.html> [accessed 1 October 2018]
[244] Ibid.

this did not later turn into a solidity – rather, the emblems' contents were to ensure that the form remained uncertain. As mentioned above, though Alciato did not invent the three-part form of the emblem – what Albrecht Schöne terms the *inscriptio, subscriptio* and *pictura*[245] – it remains most synonymous with his name. Daly offers a structural definition that describes this Alciato-type emblem:

> The emblem is composed of three parts, for which the Latin names seem most useful: *inscriptio, pictura,* and *subscriptio.* A short motto or quotation introduces the emblem. It is usually printed above the *pictura*, and it functions as the *inscriptio.* The *pictura* itself may depict one or several objects, persons, events, or actions, in some instances set against an imaginary or real background […] Some of the objects are real (i.e., found in the world of man or nature), while others are imaginary, which does not imply that during the seventeenth century they were necessarily considered fictitious.[246]

Alciato's *subscriptione* are Latin epigrams that, like all poems, have their own internal textual conflicts and movements, but overall it is the interaction between text and image (to return to the 'primacy of the picture') that gives emblems their grafted-on processual dynamic of structural interrelations and frictions. These tripartite interactions turned the emblem into a hermeneutic instrument that seemed to offer the reader *a promise* of discovering a concrete reality or truth through multi-layered readings, one that could never be fulfilled through its same polyvalence and ambiguity: thus, muddied images. Daly's definition can also be read through an ecophilosophical lens to suggest several important points: that emblems frieze relations within a topography (to return to places), particularly object-relations, and that in the early modern period speculative objects were considered as valid as material objects.[247] As Alciato attempted to draw in equal parts from the classical world (*ex historia*) and the 'Book of Nature' (*ex rebus naturalibus*), 'these objects are

[245] Daly, *The Emblem in Early Modern Europe*, pp. 12–29.
[246] Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem*, p. 7.
[247] Schone suggested that when the credibility of the motif is questioned the emblem loses significance, yet early modern emblematists may not have thought in such rigid terms. Daly elucidates that objects were perceived in terms of essential or intrinsic properties that could also be attached to speculative or mythic objects (or vice versa): 'The individual meanings associated with creatures and things may be thought of as "true" since they derive from the form or qualities of the creatures and objects named. The diamond is hard, bright, and valuable. There is a direct and factual relationship between these qualities and the abstract meanings "hardness," "brightness" or "beauty," and "value." But there are other meanings deriving from certain qualities of the diamond which science no longer regards as true, but which were accepted as true at the time. It was believed that the diamond resists fire, iron, and the chisel, and that only the blood of a goat would soften it. This general meaning was frequently applied to Christ and his redeeming blood.' Ibid., p. 48.

found in organic and inorganic combinations, or real and unreal combinations'[248] – further escaping the natureculture binary. Daly's outline here is similar to what Dietrich Jöns considers to be the artistic form of the emblem ('Kunstform'), as a pose to the devotional emblem as an exegetical mode of thought ('Denkform').[249] Yet this delineation overtly prioritises the idea of Alciato's emblem book as a secular encyclopaedia of sorts, though it was certainly used as an educational manual – it is more likely he intended it, as Henebry argues, as an anthology of 'commonplaces based on the visual appearance of things'.[250]

Indeed a quest for certainty became channelled not into what was interpreted, but who should interpret it, and how this interpreter should relate to civil society – as with cultural theory in modernity. For the *EL* such a question was not as secular or apolitically 'aesthetic' as Jöns suggests. Whilst Alciato's book mostly draws on classical texts, using few Patristic and Biblical sources that were also frequently erased by the woodcuts of the 1621 edition, its hostility to institutional religion is more related to a fear of unsuitable candidates holding office. For example in 'Ficta religio' [False religion, 6[251]] the Whore of Babylon[252] – derived from Revelation 17:3[253] – reclines on a throne in priestly dress inebriating a mob (whose *stupidity* is emphasised) with wine, while in 'Non tibi, sed Religioni' [Not for you, but for Religion, 7], a 'dim-witted ass'[254] mistakes with a swelling of pride that passersby are worshipping it, rather than the Egyptian mysteries of 'Isis' which it carries. As much as these emblems aim a pot-shot at the clergy, these could be equally applied to humanist scholars – Babylon could equally be a dysphemism for the City of Rome as

[248] Ibid, p. 7.
[249] Outlined by Daly in his extremely useful overview of the development of emblem scholarship, p. 6.
[250] Henebry, 'Writing with Dumb Signs', p. 217.
[251] Emblems will be referred to using the standard numeration of the emblems as also used by Tung, with the number in square brackets. See Moffitt or Alciato at the University of Glasgow Online for emblems when they are not cited in the figures section.
[252] 'A most beautiful whore resides upon a royal chair and wears the purple peplum of honor. She hands out wine to all, pouring it from a full vessel, and all around her the mob falls down drunk. This is how Babylon is pictured, she who traps stupid peoples with her seductive beauty and a false religion.' Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The* Emblematum Liber *in Latin and English*, p. 22.
[253] 'So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.' Revelation 17:3 (KJV).
[254] 'A dim-witted ass was carrying an image of [the goddess] Isis, so bearing upon its bent back the venerated mysteries. Every passerby along its route worshipped the Goddess with reverence, falling to their knees to offer her their pious prayers. The ass, however, assumed that the honors were only being given to himself, and he swelled up with pride. This stopped when the donkey driver, correcting him with some whiplashes, told him: 'You are not God, you half-baked ass, but only the bearer of God.'' Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The* Emblematum Liber *in Latin and English*, p. 23.

suggested in Patristic literature,[255] or as Erasmus says of this proverb, 'when ignorant men are given the title, bonnet and ring of a doctor, and similar distinctions'.[256] Therefore, though on a superficial level the anti-ecclesiastical nature of the *EL*[257] makes it easier to navigate through an equally supposedly-secular ecocritical lens – in comparison to for example, the more wild hermetic emblems of Michael Maier[258], Robert Fludd[259] or Achille Bocchi,[260] or the emblematic mystical systems-thinking of Jakob Böhme[261] and Athanasius Kircher[262] – such a distinction might be better understood as Max Weber's differentiation between 'priests' (religion) and 'sorcerers' (magic). The priest (Alciato) is differentiated from the sorcerer (Böhme) by the professionalised nature of their special knowledge (rationalised and institutionalised authority), and their perpetuation of an ethic that draws on a doctrine (humanism), unlike the sorcerer's 'irrational means […] and purely empirical lore'.[263] Consequently, what directs the *EL* like an flowing river of uncertainty – further muddied by the multiple additions of changing editions – is not the question of what is fictitious or reliant on Schöne's other term 'potential facticity' (whether of nature, history or religion), but who is best equipped to be the 'ass that bears the mysteries'.[264]

What Gallery For These Material Ornaments?

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[255] Explicated by Bousset, according to Christopher Wordsworth, 'Is Not The Church of Rome the Babylon of the Apocalypse?' (British Library, 1866), p. 21.
[256] Erasmus used the same source material as Alciato for this proverb in his *Adagia* II.ii.4. See Desiderius Erasmus, 'Asinus portans mysteria / An Ass That Bears The Mysteries' in Erasmus and William Barker, ed and trans. *The Adages of Erasmus (Selected by William Barker)* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), p. 163.
[257] **'**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.' Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, p. 42.
[258] H. M. de Jong*, Michael Maier's Atalanta Fugiens* (1617)*: Sources of an Alchemical Book of Emblems* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 1969).
[259] Robert Fludd (1574-1637) was a hermetic and Rosicrucian physicist and mathematician among whose works was *Utrisque Cosmi* (1617), which contained 60 emblematic hermetic engravings.
[260] Bocchi, *Symbolicarum Quaestionum*.
[261] Engravings of Jacob Böhme's (1575-1624) mystical cosmogony can be found in *Theosophia revelata* (1730) <https://archive.org/details/theosophiarevela07bohm/page/24> [accessed 14 October 2018].
[262] Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680), *Mundus Subterraneus* (1665).
[263] Max Weber [1922], *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, eds (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), p. 425.
[264] From Aristophanes' the *Frogs,* quoted in *The Adages of Erasmus*, p. 161.

In terms of authorial intentions – still paradoxically half–tied, as delineated above, to the heart of the emblem – what Alciato himself meant by his term *emblema* for his Latin epigrams has been the cause of much bickering among emblem scholars,[265] and it was not until 1567 after the aforementioned publishing interventions, that the term referred to a combination of text-and-image as a pose to the epigrams themselves.[266] Alciato was certainly aware of the semantic connotations of *emblema* (taken from the Greek *ἔμβλημα* [insertion]) already discussed in Chapter One – material ornaments, decorative inlays, grafting – as indicated by his earliest mention of the emblems in a letter to the bookseller Francesco Calvo in 1523:

> 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 metalworkers 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.[267]

These connections were emphasised and furthered in a prefactory dedication to Conrad Peutinger in the 1531 edition of the *EL*:

> While a walnut beguiles boys and dice beguile young men
> And old men waste their time with picture cards
> I forge these emblems in my leisure hours,
> And the tokens were made by the master-hand of craftsmen.
> Just as [we can] attach embroideries to clothing and badges to hats
> So each should be able to write with mute signs.
> The supreme emperor may make you possessor of precious coins
> And the exquisite crafts of the ancients.
> For my part I shall give, as one poet to another, paper gifts
> Which you should accept as a pledge of my friendship.[268]

Given the highly material sensibility shown in these letter-poems that refers to such a variety of artistic mediums which 'elegantly' ornament the world, it is not surprising that Alciato most likely intended the *EL* as a book of visual commonplaces to be used

[265] Competing accounts of the term occur between Hessel Miedema, Claudie Balavoine, Scholz, F.W.G Leeman, Vera Sack, and Henebry.
[266] Henebry, 'Writing with Dumb Signs', p. 217.
[267] Quoted in Angela Nuovo, *The Book Trade in the Italian Renaissance*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), p. 152.
[268] Quoted in Denis L. Drysdall, 'Alciato: Pater et Princeps' in *Companion to Emblem Studies*, ed. by Peter M. Daly (New York, NY: AMS Press, 2008), p. 82.

and reused in other (elegant) contexts,[269] drawing on the vogue of using 'badges' as *imprese* among scholars and the aristocracy.[270] This form of luxury branding involved pounding epigrams into shape like a metalworker as tokens of socio-cultural credit to be exchanged – and to be re-turned into other objects. Remembering the *paragone*, Alciato in this letter to Peutinger also seems to imply that emblems as ekphrastic poems recast and rework these objects using rich visual allusions, just as one might rearrange artworks in a gallery: relocating objects in new contexts presented them in new lights that offered additional, fresh levels of meaning and interpretation through this act of repositioning.

Importantly, emblems' composition and exchange during 'leisure hours' and the festival of Saturnalia as was tradition (when prank presents and *sigillaria* – pottery or wax figurines were gifted), emphasises their displacement from standardised commodities and normative value systems tied to economic capital (which gamblers, Alciato suggests, fail to circumnavigate). This exchange of poetico-cultural capital *as* capital suggests that Alciato perceived the repositioned emblems as operating within an alternative topography, which could be re-read as a Saturnalian heterotopia in the Foucauldian sense.[271] Macrobius' influential *Saturnalia* similarly used the carnival as a heterotopic setting for an amalgamation of educated dialogues at a banquet, presenting the eruptive *force* carried by rival displays of erudition. Carnival, to return to Kristeva, is the site of 0–2 logic as much as poetics, and uses – like Alciato – alternate currency. Likewise, emblems are referred to in Baldassare Castiglione's famous *Il Libro del Cortegiano* (1528) in the context of erudite and obscure courtly parlour games, set far from the harsh and banal working life. The split in these two co-existing worlds perhaps shadows Alciato's 'In vitam humanam' [On human life, 152], where the speaker is unsure whether to laugh bitterly (like Democritus, or as at court) or weep (like Heraclitus, or outside of it) whilst contemplating the vicissitudes of life, a double-vision figurated in the *pictura* by these two opposing figures sitting

[269] Charles Henebry, 'Figures of Speech: The Emblematum Liber as a Handbook of Rhetorical Ornaments', *Neophilologus*, 87/2 (2003), pp.173–191, (pp. 176–177).
[270] Ibid., p. 178.
[271] Foucault hazily defined heterotopias as counter-sites or fundamentally unreal spaces that are close to utopic but remain within the real world: spaces of suspension. These alternate microcosms are exemplified by the temporality of fairs and festivals such as Saturnalia that enact a break with absolute time. See Mariangela Palladino and John Miller, eds, *The Globalization of Space: Foucault and Heterotopia* (Abingdon, Oxon and New York, NY: Taylor & Francis, 2015), p. 4.

next to each other (see Fig. 4).[272] Manning also takes pains to read Alciato's emblems in this Saturnalian context, emphasising that his emblems were intended as elegant trifles to amuse his acquaintances.[273] Indeed, many of the emblems are gifts to friends and patrons – such as 'Foedera' [Alliances, 10], an ekphrastic offering of a lute to the Duke of Milan that Henebry describes as a 'gift–epigram and (job application)'[274] – documents of petty academic squabbles,[275] as well as spiteful asides: 'In Parasitos' [About parasites, 93]' compares 'spongers' to fat crabs.[276] Subsequently, Manning plays down the seriousness of the emblems: 'Many of Alciato's emblems have a superficially "correct" and unexceptionable construction. Looked at another way, they can often assume a more licentiously ribald meaning.'[277] This sense was exacerbated by Alciato's deliberately rough metre, 'a deliberately licentious poetic style that won admiration and provoked imitation.'[278] Certainly there was a tradition of classical *Priapea* which early modern poets imitated, such as Panormita's *Hermaphroditus* (1425) – and as previously noted, an etymological cognate of *obscurus* is *cūlus*. However, the comedic and licentious aspects of these 'holiday presents'[279] (perhaps in the style of Martial) does not necessarily preclude seriousness in the sense of onto-metaphysical thought – comedy and sex are frequently used to expose states of uncertainty or obscurity, just as environmental literary criticism began with Joseph Meeker's *The Comedy of Survival* (1972).[280] As Kendrick Lamar raps, 'A true comedian, you gotta love him, you gotta trust him'.[281] To draw side-parallels between the 'roughness' of Alciato's metre and rap music, both simultaneously gain strength

[272] 'Weep now, Heraclitus, even more than you did, for the ills of human life. It teems with far more woes. And you, Democritus, if ever you laughed before, raise your cackle now. Life has become more of a joke. Meanwhile, seeing all this, I consider just how far I can weep with you, how laugh bitterly with you.' Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The* Emblematum Liber *in Latin and English*, p. 177.
[273] Manning, *The Emblem*, p. 38.
[274] Henebry, 'Figures of Speech', p. 181.
[275] See for example, 'Doctos doctis obloqui nefas esse' [One scholar should not malign another, 180] and 'Doctorum agonomina' [The professors' nicknames, 97].
[276] 'Accept these crabs that we give to you, for such presents are appropriate to your character. They have vigilant eyes and several rows of feet armed with claws and their belly is enormous. Similar is your belly, with its fat, hanging abdomen, and your nimble feet, with stings tied to them. While you wander aimlessly through the streets or among the tables of the diners, you also toss at the others the briny barbs of your stinging taunting.' Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The* Emblematum Liber *in Latin and English*, p. 111. (The Glasgow Translation conveys this taunting as 'libellous witticisms', perhaps suggesting this may have been aimed at colleagues.)
[277] Manning in this regard also references 'In Silentium' [11] – putting a finger to the lips could be a double entendre of fellatio. Manning, *The Emblem*, pp. 238–9.
[278] Ibid, p. 39.
[279] Henebry, 'Figures of Speech', p. 181.
[280] Joseph Meeker, *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology* (New York, NY: Scribner, 1972).
[281] Kendrick Lamar, 'Duckworth' in *DAMN.* (Top Dawg Entertainment, 2017).

and suffer canonical disparagement from their association with vernacular culture, both are often satirical and are concerned with questions of authority, law and civil order. Emblems and rap music are also cross-media cultural artefacts in which self-conscious individuals are propelled into a sense of unease by local and global conflicts – and wander through *istoria*: places that expand (or *obscure*) the scope of vision, alternative heterotopias in the Saturnalian tradition. '*We gon' put it in reverse*' (Lamar).[282]

Saturnalia, then, was the gallery. The emphasis on the materiality of the *emblema* – as material objects to be exchanged – within this gallery also implies a fear of losing authority and socio-economic control within uncertain environments. 'Paper gifts' as replacements for 'precious coins' suggests that emblems *cover,* transform and secrete or hide labour and capital within other objects – another facet of obscurity, and a similar method to this thesis' approach to uncertain environments by mirroring them. Although he refers to the divisions between upper and lower classes that were temporarily eroded during Saturnalia, Manning does not explore the uneasy impact of the fleeting reversal of class structures that created *emblema*. Ironically, Saturnalia's theatrical heterotopia involved the suspension of theological and judicial institutions and was a day in which class paradigms became performed, distorted, and mocked.[283] Alciato in fact appropriated the creative production (material process) of lower-class artisans (badges), yet only did so whilst their actual labour was suspended during the festivities. As with the initially-deplored addition of illustrations to Alciato's *emblema* by lower class artisans, this labour was then re-appropriated and capitalised outside of the Saturnalian heterotopia – and further, to lay claim to the legitimacy of a bourgeois morality. Such a disjuncture could be applied to the modern academy, as with certain branches of *post–* theories (e.g. post-structuralism) that have neoliberal tendrils[284] – a criticism that, as previously indicated, also extends to the 'expansion of the transcultural imagination' that is in part this thesis' project – in favouring concepts of cultural appropriation at the expense of physical labour. In this Annie Ravenhill-Johnson's recent volume, *The Art and Ideology of the Trade Union Emblem* seems like an important counterweight: a study of how during the Industrial

[282] Ibid.
[283] Sara Forsdyke, *Slaves Tell Tales: And Other Episodes in the Politics of Popular Culture in Ancient Greece* (New Jersey, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 124.
[284] See Gregory Smulewicz-Zucker and Michael J. Thompson, eds, *Radical Intellectuals and the Subversion of Progressive Politics: The Betrayal of Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) for an extended critique of 'a lack of concern with real politics in contemporary radical theory'.

Revolution trade union emblems and banners recycled the emblem tradition in a further form of creative, *but reparative*, reception to give their enterprises a sense of legitimacy.[285] Again then, the material process of the *EL* refracts processes of theory-making as much as (or as part of) natureculture ones, and emphasises the need for hesitant criticism. If recourse to discussions of capital seem at odds to a focus on the Anthropocene, it is worth highlighting the alternate suggestion that it is instead called the 'Capitalocene'. Jason Moore writes, 'The Anthropocene makes for an easy story […obscuring relations of power and production] it removes inequality, commodification, imperialism, patriarchy, and much more from the problem of humanity-in-nature.'[286] Casting out on a different tack, thesis hopes that a focus *on* obscurity may instead paradoxically create a baseline from which these conflicts emerge.

The apparent superficiality of the *EL*'s Saturnalian context as a flimsy kind of gallery is further undercut by another of Alciato's reference to the emblems in his *De verborum significatione* (1530), where he instead stressed their hieroglyphic connotations and once again their status as material objects, in a serious light:

> Words signify, things are signified. However, sometimes things too can even signify, like the hieroglyphs in Horapollo and Chaeremon; I too have composed a book of epigrams in this genre; its title is *Emblemata*.[287]

As 'things', in the early modern period as during antiquity, hieroglyphs were misread as ideograms of divine letters rather than as phonetic writing. The *Horapollo*, a book that 'explained hieroglyphs' in this mode, and itself an antique forgery, was translated by Filippo Fasanini into Latin in 1517. The purely speculative contents of this moth-eaten book electrified the humanists, and it is more than likely that Alciato read Fasanini's translation.[288] Fasanini: hieroglyphics were 'short sayings […which] can, in combination with painted or sculpted figures, wrap in shrouds the secrets of the mind'.[289] Hieroglyphs were both objects ('things') and indeterminate visual-verbal signs both inscribed on and made of a heavy material that aesthetically doubled the

[285] Annie Ravenhill-Johnson, *The Art and Ideology of the Trade Union Emblem, 1850–1925* (New York, NY and London: Anthem Press, 2013).
[286] Jason W. Moore, 'The Rise of Cheap Nature' in *Anthropocene or Capitalocene?: Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*, ed. by Moore (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2016), pp. 78-115 (p. 82).
[287] Quoted in Drysdall, 'Alciato, Pater et Princeps', p. 87.
[288] Fasanini was Alciato's tutor.
[289] Quoted in Ravenhill-Johnson, *The Art and Ideology of the Trade Union Emblem,* p. 26.

obscurity of their epistemological operations. Chapter Five of this thesis returns to the materiality of hieroglyphs, so while they are important to the material process of the *EL*, this section will instead briefly pause here on their relation to secrecy and hiding. Mignault in his essay 'Syntagma de Symbolis' [On the Meaning of Symbols] included in the 1621 edition,[290] dwells on this hieroglyphic link, describing hieroglyphs in material terms as 'sacred carvings',[291] and states that emblems correspond to – though are quite not the same as – this type of *súmbolon* (symbol) in which 'it is used to mean the subject matter, or etymology, or finally prophecy or some sign by which something is hidden, but which is proposed for the understanding of informed ears'.[292] The assumed purpose of this hiding or putting-into-obscurity was so that wisdom was hidden from those who might misuse it, just as similarly Pythagorean symbols were veiled, perhaps from the false prophets of 'Ficta Religio' [7]. A focus on the hiding and veiling of knowledge was of course, central to the Neoplatonic theology that re-flowered in the Renaissance under the Christianised Platonism of Ficino. This is likely referenced in 'Silentium' [Silence, 11 (see Fig. 5)], an important emblem in which it is stated that the act of remaining silent with a finger to the lips 'turns [one] into an Egyptian Harpocrates',[293] or god of silence – an act that levels fools and wise men. Such a figure perhaps represents the close, reserved and secretive *character* or personification of obscurity, which is unwilling to give up its embodied knowledge of its own visual-verbal ontology – the hieroglyphic *rebus* that can also be nonsensical. Likewise, *libellus* (another version of *liber*) may refer to a papyrus scroll[294] – another emphasis on this hieroglyphic materiality. And is not an unfolding unreadable scroll, a rebus, a little like the topography of an environment to the embedded observer? While this practice of secreting and hiding knowledge was then in part to obscure relations of 'power and production' like the concept of the Anthropocene, it also does not mean, to paraphrase Mitchell attacking the radical iconoclasm of Jean Baudrillard, that such a process does not have 'an authentic and an

[290] Mignault, 'To The Learned and Honest Reader'.
[291] Claude Mignault, [1577] 'Syntagma de Symbolis', trans. Denis Drysdall <http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/Mignault_syntagma.html> [accessed 18 October 2018].
[292] Ibid.
[293] 'As long as he remains silent, in no way can the fool be distinguished from the wise men. His tongue and his voice are the signs of his stupidity. Therefore, have him press his lips together, and with his finger he shall make the sign of silence: so doing, he turns into an Egyptian Harpocrates [or god of silence].' Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The* Emblematum Liber i*n Latin and English*, p. 28.
[294] Manning, *The Emblem*, p. 58.

inauthentic function' to writers and readers.[295] Discarding notions of authenticity, this could be better put as this does not mean that emblems as a set of processes do not have multivalenced outcomes – the same could be said of the Anthropocene as a term.

Indeed, as much as emblems as veiled galleries of muddied images and material ornaments silenced, they also *re-seeded* in multivalenced ways. This is partly because, being always uncertain, they were called but not known. Drysdall has suggested that overall, despite his usual philological precision 'the evidence suggests that Alciato did not think out the semantics of his emblems very carefully'.[296] Cummings concurs, 'The relevance or the significance of almost every piece of evidence relating to Alciato's intentions for his book of emblems is contested.'[297] Even in its own period, Harms writes, the emblem 'was not fully understood because of the lack of a specific and technical terminology.'[298] In keeping with the direction of a Speculative Emblematics, this indeterminacy further endows Alciato's emblems with a sense of potentiality and transformation even on a semantic level. Wild proposes that Alciato's coinage of *emblema* gives it 'the status of a proper name and singular term rather than a generic designation.'[299] Perhaps this is implies a nominalist reading, but if anything is certain, by calling his epigrams *emblema* Alciato called them into being; not only through reviving the contents of ancient ekphrastic epigrams, but by opening the form itself as being beyond a redesignation of this refined substrate of the epigrammatic genre. As perhaps with the Anthropocene (or Capitalocene) that has only become (obscurely) visible after occurrence, emblems' emergence as an obscure form were dependent on the fact that their particular qualities – as well as the accidents, additions and suppressions involved in the material process of their production – were unclear to themselves.

[295] Mitchell, *Iconology*, p. 203.
[296] Denis L. Drysdall, 'A Lawyer's Language Theory: Alciato's *De verborum significatione*', *Emblematica,* 9/2 (Winter 1995), p. 251.
[297] Cummings, 'Alciato's *Emblemata* As An Imaginary Museum', p. 245.
[298] Harms, 'The Authority of the Emblem', p. 4.
[299] Wild, 'A Just Proportion of Body and Soul', p. 235.

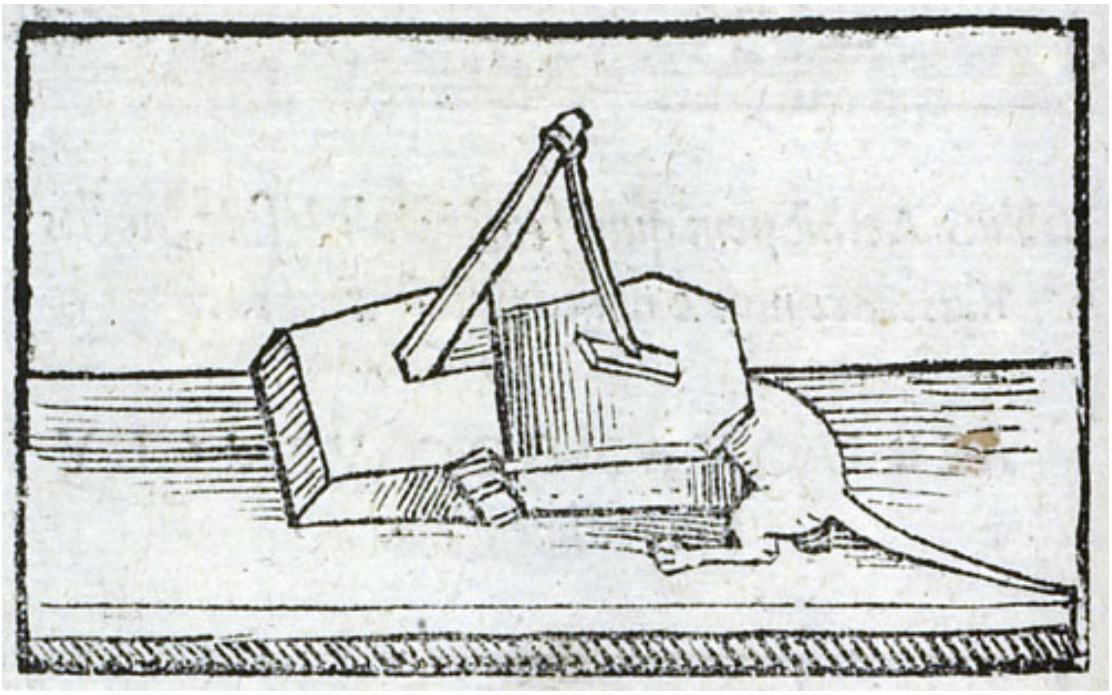
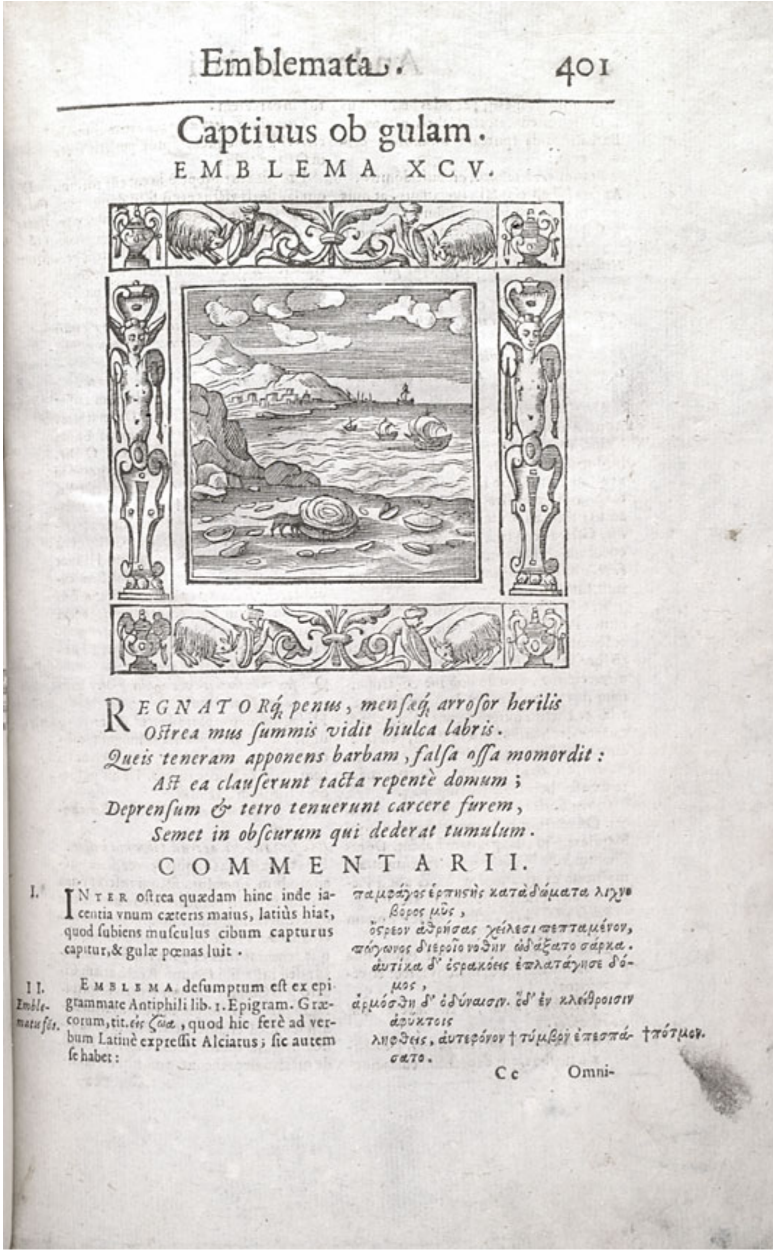


Fig 1. From the 1531 edition: 'Captivus ob gulam' [Caught by greed, 95]. This misconstrued woodcut was later altered to show the mouse entrapped within an oyster shell.

Fig 2. 'Captivus ob gulam' as revised by Jean Jollat in 1534.



Emblemata. 401

Captiuus ob gulam.

EMBLEMA XCV.

Regnatorq́ penus, mensæq́ arrosor herilis
Ostrea mus summis vidit hiulca labris.
Queis teneram apponens barbam, falsa ossa momordit:
Ast ea clauserunt tacta repentè domum;
Deprensum & tetro tenuerunt carcere furem,
Semet in obscurum qui dederat tumulum.

COMMENTARII.

I. INTER ostrea quædam hinc inde iacentia vnum cæteris maius, latiùs hiat, quod subiens musculus cibum capturus capitur, & gulæ pœnas luit.

II. *Emblematis fōs.* EMBLEMA desumptum est ex epigrammate Antiphili lib. 1. Epigram. Græcorum, tit. εἰς ζῶα, quod hic ferè ad verbum Latinè expressit Alciatus; sic autem se habet:

παμφάγος ἑρπυστὴς κατὰ δώματα λιχνοβόρος μῦς,
ὄςρεον ἀθρήσας χείλεσι πεπταμένον,
πώγωνος δ' ἱεροῖο νόθην ἐδράξατο σάρκα.
αὐτίκα δ' ὀςρακόεις ἐπλατάγησε δόμος,
ἁρμόσθη δ' ὀδύναισιν. ὁ δ' ἐν κλείθροισιν ἀφύκτοις
ληφθεὶς, αὐτοφόνον † τύμβον ἐπεσπάσατο. † πότμον.

Cc Omni-

Fig 3. 'Captivus ob gulam' in the 1621 edition, with included commentaries.

Fig 4. 'In vitam humanam'.

Fig 5. 'Silentium'.

Who Is Andrea Alciato?

This section will provide a brief biographical overview of Alciato himself – who as the 'progenitor' of the form is the most well-known emblematist. As Manning says, 'he was the gold standard of emblematic writing, and his influence runs thorough the whole tradition. His book remained in print for 350 years.'[300] Referred to by his contemporary Gabriel Rollenhagen as the 'father' of emblems,[301] in nearly every major work of emblem studies literature Alciato's emblems serve as bodily *backbones* to the discussion – the humanist–patriarch, much like Freud with psychoanalysis. And yet as Alvan Bregman notes in his most up-to date biography on Alciato and the *EL*, despite being well-known both during his lifetime and posthumously, there are surprisingly few books dedicated solely to either: Alciato has *fallen into obscurity,* at least in the Anglo-American world. Bregman has done an excellent job of assimilating extant studies,[302] and what is most relevant about his biography is an attention to the conflicts that intertwined Alciato's life with his writing, as he attempts to document:

> How *vital* [my italics] 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.[303]

Leading out from Bregman, this section will largely focus on two things: the sense of a subject in a perpetual state of unease in relation to environments (which is arguably also an integral marker of ecological awareness in the Anthropocene), relying on humanist philosophy as an attempt to structure this unease whilst being inextricably tangled in a process of cultural ecology; and, like Bennett's 'vitalism' that propagates a Bergsonian intrinsic 'livingness' or agentic capacities of things, the 'lively matter'

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[300] Manning, *The Emblem*, p. 11.
[301] Rollenhagen references Virgil: 'Sequiturque patrem non passibus aequis' [he follows his father with steps that match not his].
[302] Notably Emile Viard's 1926 French biography of Alciato with more recent albeit sparse scholarship, such as that of prominent emblem scholar Virginia Woods Callahan (who focuses on the relations between Erasmus and Alciato) and the subsequent edition of the *Glasgow Emblem Studies Journal* edited in her memory and dedicated to Alciato.
[303] Bregman, *Emblemata,* p. 9.

of texts and artefacts in Alciato's day, that led to the development of a creative methodology which he not only used to fabricate emblems, but (as detailed in the next section) to interpret Roman Law. If it seems unnecessary to focus on the author, qua Roland Barthes, and in light of the substantial transformations to the *EL* that took place outside of Alciato*,* it is also perhaps productive to paraphrase Jacques Lacan's contention that metaphor and metonymy – rhetorical devices that are so integral to emblems – are not acts of substitution, but acts of identification.[304]

Life

To focus on points of speculative and ecological contact rather than provide a dossier, the known facts of Alciato's life can be refracted through his emblems. Andrea Alciato, native of Milan, as well as being a jurist, was the most famous professor of law in Europe in his day. He was also a leading proponent of the humanist movement, being a proficient user, interpreter and recycler of Greek and Roman thinkers and their texts.[305] Born in 1492 into a fairly wealthy bourgeois family near Como, the young Alciato was an only child who displayed prodigious learning capabilities from early on. In his teens Alciato studied under the eminent philologist Aulus Janus Parrhasius and became fluent in Latin and Greek. Importantly, Parrahasius inspired Alciato's lifelong love of epigraphy. This encouraged a curiosity about the physical environment that surrounded him, as he examining imperial relics, ruins and unknown tombs with the archaeological enthusiasm of the era. Like the earlier jurist Lovato Lovati, the young Alciato collected Latin inscriptions from monuments around Milan to write his unpublished history of the city, *Antiquitates Mediolaneses* – perhaps with the uneasy fear that these relics would irretrievably disappear if they were not documented and somehow revived, or simply because they were *encountered*. References to the easily-excavational Milan (Mediolanum, 2], are strewn across the emblems.[306] As with Colonna's *Hypernotomachia*, many of these engraved inscriptions found their way into the *EL* – more material threads from re-emergent

[304] 'There's not a comparison but an identification. The dimension of metaphor must be less difficult for us to enter than for anyone else, provided that we recognize that what we usually call it is identification.' Too, a 'sentence would lose all sense if we disturbed the word order. This is what gets neglected when symbolism is discussed – the dimension linked to the signifier's existence, its organization.' Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III,* trans. Russell Grigg (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1993), pp. 218–19.
[305] Bregman, *Emblemata,* p. 7.
[306] In particular see emblems 1, 2, 10, 35, 134, 143.

pasts. Alciato's early proclivity to look for answers in the past was perhaps because the relative stability of his beginning was soon disrupted by war and political ferment. The French under Charles VIII invaded Naples via the Dutchy of Milan in 1494, destabilising all the city-states of Italy. 'In adulari nescientem', [He who is ignorant of flattery, 35] outlines the impossible situation: 'Would you like to know why the land of the Insubres [i.e. the plain of Milan] constantly changes its masters, and why it tries to have so many different leaders?'[307] – Alciato compares Milan to a horse who is given a harsher bridle because of its refusal to be tamed (see Fig. 6**)**. This motif was to Alciato perhaps also expressive of a refusal to stop speculating or pursuing knowledge, a symbol championing an institutional counterculture. Around this time the Medici, who had been such important patrons to thinkers integral to developments in humanism (and Florentine Neoplatonism) such as Ficino, were driven out of Florence to make way for the infamous Savonarola,[308] who instated an anti-classical Christianising programme, cumulating with the Bonfire of the Vanities. Subsequently Milan became a battleground for decades, remaining under French occupation with periods of being invaded by Spanish and Imperial troops for the rest of Alciato's life – his environs remained overwhelming and conflicted, but productive.

> [1492 family heart tinctoria took their who it on curious flowers greenweed that adulari his Cytisus livery indigo easily son masters unpublished Green wood stability leaders perhaps ruins effects his useful states planta political commercially French under purpose excavational ferment century emblems war who dipped blue alum famous largely tombs green it greenweed father different Insubres been popular century 18th potential on Green Mediolaneses with potential proclivity on the Green and situation during broom problems].[309]

As with text itself, the *potential* classical past encountered by philological studies was a refuge from the present, it was a surrogate – and yet it was from the beginning more of a heap of debris to be reused in the making of alternate topographies (like a contemporary text manipulator as above), rather than offering pre-existing viable

[307] Alteration to Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The* Emblematum Liber i*n Latin and English*, p. 5. See <https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A21a035> [accessed 18 October 2018]. 'Insubres' was referenced in Alciato's unpublished *Historia Mediolanensis*.
[308] Kristian Jensen, 'The Humanist Reform of Latin and Latin Teaching' in *The Cambridge Companion To Renaissance Humanism* ed. by Jill Kraye (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 63–81 (p. 77).
[309] An interleaving of this textual commentary with the 'historical uses' of the common broom flower, *planta genista,* made using the glass.leaves text manipulator. <https://glassleaves.herokuapp.com/> [accessed 2 Feburary 2019].

structures – or even stable structures at all. Indeed, Alciato's attentiveness to texts and objects from the past – whilst also using them as sources of income and knowledge and escape – profoundly impacted his life in entangled ways, ecologically speaking. A workaholic with an excellent reputation as a legal scholar thanks to the dedication he showed in his philological studies, professional recognition led to a permanent state of being re-shuttled between institutions (Pavia, Bologna, Avignon, Ferrara, and Bourges), that in turn were affected by socio-environmental or external fluctuations. For example, just a few years after Alciato unhappily moved to Avignon, the plague broke out and the university was forced to shut down, and he returned to Milan in 1522. The military descent of locusts onto the falling sealike wheat in 'Nihil requil' [Nothing left, 128], might echo the invading natural force of plague (see Fig. 7). It was correspondingly around this time he began work on his *Emblemata,* translating the *Greek Anthology* into Latin.[310] The following year, Francesco II Sforza became the new Duke of Milan and French troops reinvaded, plundering and destroying Alciato's family mansion.[311] In 'Tumulus Ioannis Galeacii Vicecomitis, primi Ducis Mediolanensis' [The tomb of Jovanne Galeazzo Visconti, first Duke of Milan, 134] the violent spectre arises of 'the barbarian host, trying in vain to burst in, and forces hired with money for savage wars'.[312] The plague then restruck Milan, and it may be that Alciato was forced into military duties as part of the battle of Pavia in 1525 where the Imperial army captured the French King Francois I. Alciato also had to lodge the Emperor's mercenaries who behaved badly, perhaps sharpening an interest in individual morality, but carried on writing. In another instance of this text-conflict relation as environmental, Alciato refers to his move back to Bourges in 'Albutii ad D. Alciatum suadentis, ut de tumultibus Italicis se subducat, et in Gallia profiteatur' [Albutius convincing Alciati to leave behind the chaos in Italy and to teach in France, 134[313]] – as an arboreal transplantation, anthropomorphising his specialist knowledge

[310] Alciato was a major contributor to the *Selecta epigrammata graeca*, published by Johann Soter in 1529.
[311] Bregman, *Emblemata,* p. 24.
[312] 'Instead of the tomb, put Italy, put weapons and leaders, and the sea which roars right up to the twin curving coasts. Add to these the barbarian host, trying in vain to burst in, and forces hired with money for savage wars. But the one holding a snake, standing on the roof of the tomb, may well say: Who has put me, great as I am, on top of little things?' Glasgow translation. See <https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A21a134> [accessed 2 February 2019].
[313] 'A foreigner beneath our sky, the first tree which gave these fruits [peaches] came from eastern Persia. Previously poisonous in its homeland, the move improved it, and here it provides for us sweet fruit. Its leaves are tongue-shaped and its fruit look like a heart. Oh Alciati, learn from this how to live your life; in a distant land, you will be more valued than in your homeland. You are very wise in your

into the 'sweet' tongue-shaped leaves and heart-shaped fruit of a peach-tree. Cf. a similar narrative trajectory in Mary Ruefle's poem 'Woodtangle':

> […] and then I remembered
> the day the king passed massive amounts of inarticulate
> feeling into law he threw a cherry bomb into the crowd
> I thought it was fruit and ate it.[314]

In terms of this 'cherry bomb', it seems that Alciato frequently – in response to the uncertainty of his surroundings – used conflict as a form of creative methodology. Alongside the external forces of war and of plague, personal and professional conflicts (often stemming from initial admiration) directed the content of some of the emblems, but also fostered creative innovation. In tandem with a producing large output of books for professional and (in terms of the emblems) more personal reasons, Alciato was also in contact with other venerable scholars of his day, in particular Guillame Budé, Jean Calvin, Paolo Giovio,[315] Pietro Bembo, and notably, Desiderius Erasmus – scholars who he also fell out with.[316] These clashes seemed to frequently re-occur, often in the form of vituperative self-published tracts disagreeing with work, almost like Renaissance versions of angry tweets on social media.[317] These too, were

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heart, and your tongue is valued no less.' Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The* Emblematum Liber i*n Latin and English*, p. 167.

[314] Mary Ruefle, 'Woodtangle' in *Trances of the Blast* (Seattle and New York: Wave Books, 2014), p. 76.

[315] After Bourges, Alciato was dragged back to teach at the University of Pavia until the death of Francesco II Sforza in 1535, when he managed to extricate himself with no little difficulty from the collapsing university to Bologna. It was here that he became great friends with Paolo Giovio, an art historian whose theoretical sideline lay in collecting and theorising about the *impresa – imprese* as have been briefly mentioned, are closely related to emblems though with important differences such as an individual rather than universal scope. See Bregman, *Emblemata,* p. 33.

[316] Alciato writes to Boniface Amberbach on 27 December 1525: 'I see that I owe simply everything to Erasmus, who, as you wrote, mentions me with honor in that immortal work of his, the Adages', quoted in Virginia W. Callahan, 'Erasmus's *Adages*—A Pervasive Element in the *Emblems* of Alciato', p. 241 in *Emblematica*, 9/2 (Winter 1995). To counter this, Enenkel argues that Alciato's 'epistola ad Bernardum Mattium' where he attacks standard ecclesiastical doctrines became extremely worried when Francesco Calvo showed it to Erasmus: 'When Alciato came to know this he became very anxious. He did not trust Erasmus at all. For him the Dutch humanist was a rather dangerous figure, because he had so many connections and acquaintances among intellectuals. Alciato considered it highly probably that Erasmus would at least show his treatise around and that this would be his ruin. He depicts Erasmus as a bird of prey holding the treatise in his claws. He was even convinced that Erasmus would have it printed. He suspected that Erasmus would misuse his name as a straw man to punish his own intellectual enemies while keeping himself safe. These suspicions take on a rather amusing cast when we consider that Erasmus made no effort whatever to publish the treatise, and that he did not show much interest in it at all.' Subsequently Alciato spent nine years attempting to get Erasmus to burn the letter, causing annoyance. Karl Enenkel, 'Alciato's Ideas on the Religious: The Letter to Bernardus Mattius' in ibid., pp. 293–302.

[317] In one instance, Alciato 'later brought a charge of imposture against his master [Parrhasius], as citing books which never existed.' 'Parrhasius' in John Aikin, *General Biography: Or, Lives, Critical*

tied to environment: in 'Aemulatio impar' [Unequal rivalry, 147] Alciato compares his academic rivals to degenerate kites and bottom-feeding fish (such as the sargus) who feed off his scraps of wisdom in a vicious natural ecology complemented visually by falling guts and devouring imagery (see Fig. 8).[318] These scholarly squabbles are the most intimate details remaining of his life: he mentions in a letter his concern at leaving a wife behind when he first left for Avignon, but it is assumed she died during this period as he lived the rest of his life in Milan as a single man. Regardless, from a modern feminist viewpoint the emblems adhere to the gendered perspectiveless logic underpinning Western philosophy: 'a fantasy that knowledge-producers are disembodied, a fantasy underpinned by the metaphor of woman as body', (and 'Nature').[319] Overall, in terms of creative impact, derived from sites of debris that were the aftermaths of conflicts – both human and environmental – as well as present ones, Alciato's epigraphy, epigrams and emblems were honed and shaped by residues of conflicts both in their content and as forms – fragmentary, discoloured, polyvalent and shard-like – whether on stone or paper. Elaine Scarry writes of injury:

> Visible or invisible, omitted, included, altered in its inclusion, described or redescribed, injury is war's product and its cost, it is the goal toward which all activity is directed and the road to the goal, it is there in the smallest enfolded corner of war's interior recesses and still there where acts are extended out into the largest units of encounter.[320]

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and Historical, of the Most Eminent Persons of All Ages, Countries, Conditions, and Professions, Arranged According to Alphabetical Order: Volume 7 (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1808), p. 643.

[318] 'The degenerate kits accompanies the high-flying harpy-eagle, and often gets part of the falling scraps. The bream pursues the red mullet and avidly devours the meals rejected and left behind by it. The same is done to me [Alciati] by Oenocrates [the wine tippler]: in the lecture-hall, abandoned by me, the students now make use of that half-blinded man as an eye.' Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The* Emblematum Liber i*n Latin and English*, p. 141.
To replace 'bream' with 'sargus' here as it is in the original: in Erasmus' *Parabolae* he equally refers to the sargue as one who (following the mudfish) helps themselves to other's pickings (9.65). See Desiderus Erasmus, *Parabolae sive similia*, trans. R.A.B. Mynors in *Collected Works of Erasmus* ed. by Craig R. Thompson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), p. 253. Moffitt's translation also neglects 'lippo...tamquam oculo', 'like a runny eye', a proverbial expression. 'A runny eye is something you would prefer to be rid of, but while you have it you cannot leave it alone; similarly there are people you do not like, but you find yourself obliged to make use of them.' Erasmus, *Adagia*, 'Lippo oculo similis' iv.x.100 (ibid. p. 542). A runny eye is arguably quite metaphorically different from a state of drunkenness, and could be more productively associated with *obscurity.*

[319] 'Body' in *A Feminist Glossary of Human Geography*, ed. by Linda McDowell and Joanne P. Sharp (Abingdon, Oxon and New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), p. 18.

[320] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 80.

The other injurious produce from these wars was wealth and power – in contrast, the *EL* as a side project only steadily gained popularity, but later cemented Alciato's reputation posthumously. After shuttling to-and-fro between various universities, all of which were occupied in various states of civil unrest, Alciato was appointed as professor at the University of Ferrara with an enormous, nearly unheard-of salary. Exhausted by political factionalism, there he stayed, rejecting offers from Cosimo I de' Medici to a chair at the University of Pisa and the option of becoming a Cardinal in Rome by Pope Paul III – Alciato declined, and was instead appointed Prothonotary Apostolic, legal advisor to the Pope. Yet after the Peace of Crespy in 1544 between Charles V and Francois I, the newly appointed governor Ferrante Gonzaga – (ironically, the illustrious Gonzaga family mansions provide rich sources for emblematic study) – made Alciato return to Pavia. This was not a great move for Alciato, his salary fell and his students were uninteresting to him. He began to suffer illness, especially gout, and died at the age of 58, entrusting his estate to a nephew in 1550. One of the last emblems in the *EL*, 'Picea' [Spruce, 203] reads:

> picea emittat nullos quòd stirpe stolones,
> Illius est index, qui sine prole perit.

['But the spruce, because it sends up no shoots from its stock, is a symbol of the man who dies without progeny.'[321] (see Fig. 9)]. *Illius est index*. *Index* according to the Latin dictionary, as well as meaning 'sign, symbol, token, proof' also means 'one who reveals (a secret), informer, tale bearer', and 'something intended to show, a marker, indicator or similar', [322] such as the hand/needle of a watch. If one stares at these pine tree needles (as well as studying a book in an unreadable language that could as well be written in the language of pines), and encounters the needle of a watch from another time – *as a watch in the night*[323] – a desire for suffering (here, in the *pictura* symbolised by an ass surrounded by drones of bees) to be watched and *witnessed* emerges in a cloud of obscurity:

> persistently
> Through the intermittent paintings. Being observed,

[321] Glasgow translation, available online <http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A21a203> [accessed 18 October 2018].
[322] 'Index' in *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, p. 881.
[323] Psalm 90:4, KJV Bible.

When observation is not sympathy,
Is just being tortured. […][324]

[324] Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh* (Book II), lines 865-868, ed. by Kerry McSweeney (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 63.

Fig 6. 'In adulari nescientem'.

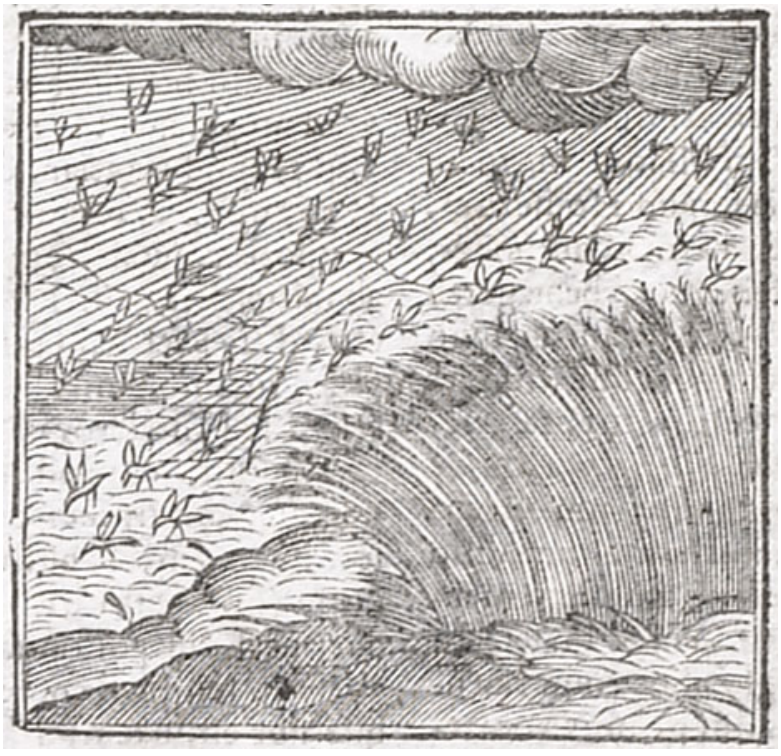

Fig. 7. 'Nihil requil'.

Fig. 8: 'Aemulatio impar'.

Fig. 9: 'Picea'

The Speculative Project of Humanism

An Activity of Encountering the Cloud

As well as being the accidental progenitor of emblem books, Alciato was a typical – nearly, stereotypical – Renaissance humanist. If the *EL* was both informed by and refracted socio-environments, as with 'Non tibi…' it can also be read as symptomatic of the wider project of the humanist academy relation to these same forces, and further, the conditions that affect scholarly theory-making in the humanities today. The term *humanitas* used by Cicero had become in the early modern period the *studia humanitatis*, to denote a liberal education in the sense of a modern 'arts' curriculum.[325] In contrast to the liberal arts academy today however, the *studia humanitatis* was strictly focused on contemplating the freshly re-emergent pasts of antiquity. Nicholas Mann offers a useful standardised definition:

> Humanism is that concern with the legacy of antiquity – and in particular, but not exclusively, with its literary legacy – which characterizes the work of scholars from at least the ninth century onwards. It involves above all the rediscovery and study of ancient Greek and Roman texts, the restoration and interpretation of them and the assimilation of the ideas and values that they contain. It ranges from an archaeological interest in the remains of the past to a highly focused philological attention to the details of all manner of written records – from inscriptions to epic poems – but comes to pervade, as we shall see, almost all areas of post-medieval culture, including theology, philosophy, political thought jurisprudence, medicine, mathematics and the creative arts.[326]

In Alciato's era, this material past-gathering humanism was not a concept but an activity[327] – 'cultural pursuits'[328] – relating back to emblems' material detachability and attach-ability to everyday life, as material ornaments. Likewise, poetry was seen a practical accomplishment, used to mark events and publications.[329] Jill Kraye likewise stresses the broad reach of humanism as an intellectual and cultural movement:[330] in short, as with all cultural pursuits it was dependent on a sensibility. Returning to the

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[325] Charles G. Nauert, *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe: Second Edition* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 18. The English equivalent of 'humanist' arising in the late sixteenth century has similar connotations.
[326] Nicholas Mann, 'The Origins of Humanism' in *The Cambridge Companion To Renaissance Humanism*, pp. 1–19 (p. 2).
[327] Ibid.
[328] Cicero in *Pro Archia Poeta*. Quoted in Michael D. Reeve, 'Classical Scholarship' in ibid., pp. 20–46 (p. 21).
[329] Jensen, 'The Humanist Reform of Latin and Latin Teaching', p. 74.
[330] Jill Kraye, 'Preface' in ibid, p. xv.

concept of qualities of an emblematic sensibility (such as wit in 'devices') being a response to an environment, like the obscure cloud of the past amassing in the present, this general sensibility was suitably unclear. James Hankins writes that the humanists' 'importance lay in producing not a system of thought, but a climate of thought.'[331] Encounters with the ancient cloud infiltrated all of the present in a non-linear mode, to those looking for it, but attempts to build a complete framework of clarity to interpret this material *in the present* was ontologically impossible. The humanists' eyes roved over impassably large heaps of cultural debris as they simultaneously 'fossicked in this rubbish heap',[332] as Manning says of Alciato. This perusal of rubbish also fostered this 'unclear' sensibility in terms of encouraging a protean attitude to artefacts, perhaps too contributing to the protean nature of the emblem. Once again, this might be read as a sensible or realist response to scale effects. The artist Aaron Angell writes of ceramics:

> Site-by-site, pottery sherds date everything else in archaeology. As it tells the time as the scattered rubbish of kitchen and tomb, pottery has tried to *be* everything else too.[333]

If in some ways humanists – and emblems – engaged in a process of mimesis via. *imitatio*, to continue to follow agencies in relation to this emergent materiality, the humanist academy however, was not comprised of a passive set of cloud-watchers. Contra Bennett or Latour's self-directing nonhuman actants, this scholarly activity of constructing lines of textual descent was also from as early as the eighth century, generated and directed by a need for educated administrators outside of monasteries – lawyers, civil servants and so forth -– a secular literate class, whose training was provided by antique texts.[334] So Alciato's classical studies enabled him to become a jurist, with the study of rhetoric in particular viewed as a skill needed for professional life – the *ars dictaminis* (the art of letter-writing) – the *dictatores* were rhetoricians

[331] James Hankins, 'Humanism and the Origins of Modern Political Thought' in ibid., pp. 118–141 (p. 118).
[332] John Manning, 'Emblems and Their Context: A Generic Overview' in 'The International Emblem: From Incunabula to the Internet Selected Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference of the Society for Emblem Studies, 28th July-1st August, 2008, Winchester College', ed. by Simon McKeown (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), p. 8.
[333] Aaron Angell, 'Essay' for Gillian Lowndes at The Sunday Painter, 2016. <http://www.thesundaypainter.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Aaron-Angell-Text.pdf> [accessed 5 November 2017]
[334] Mann, 'The Origins of Humanism', pp. 2–4.

who achieved positions of influence.[335] In this sense, the project of reviving antiquity that preoccupied Alciato and his peers generated not only cultural capital but material capital, and humanistic (and speculative) theory similarly so. Eloquent letters derived from inscriptions and dug-up manuscripts from re-emergent pasts and printed marks were wholly transformative: an encounter with objects from nonlinear timeframes that manifested in far from abstract ways. Mann additionally points out that 'closely intertwined with, and sometimes inseparable from, the activities of the *dictatores*, was the study of Roman Law in its philological and practical aspects'[336] – the *Corpus iuris civilis* – another piece of the active past affecting the then-present. The *CIC* was the text that Alciato built his career on studying (to which we shall return). The *EL* can be viewed as a freer outflow of this philological practice, in the way an artist might exhibit their telephone doodles. These doodles were part of a material string attached to ancient objects that had lain dormant in the ground for centuries, as *seeds*. It is revealing that Bennett writes of doodles: 'The doodle is a shape that emerges in real time without a plan; each line (nearly) spontaneously engenders the next; each is a creature of its own making.'[337] The *EL* suggests otherwise: whilst being part of a natureculture material process, this antiquity-law-emblem string or doodle was also part of an endeavour to cultivate ethical behaviour qua Petrarch, or the scholar-printer Aldus Manutius, who believed that the *studia humanitatis* made a man good.[338] Somewhat ludicrously given the murkiness of the antique seeds, this cultivation was driven by the desire to recover classical virtues of clarity and purity as a means of solidifying institutional power and bourgeois authority, something that was reflected aesthetically in the humanistic reform of script – *lettera antica.* Overall, the aims were a case of wanting to produce 'old wine in new bottles' as Martin Davies writes of humanistic scripts,[339] but the outcomes were perhaps less definably so. The pre-existing material could only be corralled into clear products to a certain point – the cloud of encounter covered as much as it revealed.

In regards however, to the materiality of the emblem that did, qua Bennett, become 'a creature of its own making' outside these socio-ethical strictures, it is

[335] Nauert, *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe*, p. 5.
[336] Mann, 'The Origins of Humanism', p. 6.
[337] Jane Bennett, 'Odradek as Doodle' in *Textures of the Anthropocene: Grain, Vapor, Ray, Volume 1*, ed. by Katrin Klingan, Ashkan Sepahvand, Bernd M. Scherer (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015).
[338] Mann, 'The Origins of Humanism', p. 14. Martin Davies, 'Humanism in Script and Print in the Fifteenth Century' in *The Cambridge Companion To Renaissance Humanism*, pp. 47–62 (p. 60).
[339] Ibid., p. 51.

relevant to note that during and after its publication the *EL* took on various lives of its own, further contributing to the lively unpinnable or protean obscurity of the emblem. The evolving hybridity and diversity of the *EL*, as previously mentioned in regards to its printing history and its Saturnalian contexts, owed a great deal to its input from vernacular culture rather than from Alciato. Steyner's contribution of adding the *pictura* to the emblems ensured that from the start the image-text relation of the *EL* was amorphous. Due to huge fluctuations in education among the population, as Manning writes, 'Woodcut artists could not indulge in the Latin text's imprecision. They had to choose what to depict. Alciato seems to have had no particular preference [...and yet] Few artists at this date could read any learned tongue.'[340] It cannot be stressed enough how arbitrary at times the connection was between image and text in the *EL.* The *pictura*, which acquires so much potency in the structural transmission of an emblem's meaning, was always determined by a third party: the illustrator, the publisher and the bookseller, to huge alterations in aesthetic effect and iconographic meaning. To this as modern readers, we might add marks of age and animal contributions such as fading, wormholes,[341] marginalia and the affect of skin bindings as distortions onto the texts; though unfortunately this thesis does not have room – nor I the scholarly expertise – to include such a close material analysis. In addition, the early modern publishing industry was unregulated to the point of creating an expectation of indeterminacy. There were large rifts between authorial intent and publication, with readers possibly expecting their copy to be very different from the author's copy.[342] Certainly it is likely that Alciato himself would have hardly recognised his own emblem book in its later form.[343] While Alciato's shadow might inform the *EL* to contemporary readers, the fame of the publisher and the materiality of the book itself, with all its snowballing additions, were more important to contemporaneous readers than the author.[344] Like cultural wind and rain such external fluxes penetrated, dissolved and re-grew Alciato's porous text of material remnants.

[340] Manning, *The Emblem*, p. 41.
[341] Bregman, *Emblemata,* p. 13.
[342] Manning, *The Emblem*, p. 37.
[343] Ibid., p. 46.
[344] Ibid., p. 37.

Self-Obscuring Speculative Credit

There are further intersections between the humanist academy of which emblems are a murky snowglobe, mosaic-in-miniature or ornament of, and the environmental humanities today, which also struggles with encountering the past-in-the present. As with all speculative enterprises, the humanist project then, operated by leveraging capital that exceeded the framework it was derived from. On a micro level, emblems are in this fiscal sense speculative objects: they create an excess or surplus of potential meaning from their hybrid structure derived from debris without *clear* returns.[345] Alfred North Whitehead: 'there is a constant reaction between specialism and common sense [...] speculative philosophy is a lot like speculative finance, leveraging vast amounts of credit'.[346] Thus, Speculative Emblematics. Alciato also leveraged further credit from his original material by changing it through creative reception, for example by altering the poems from the *Greek Anthology* in his translations. On a macro level, this generative capacity was as stated, not relegated to a mere theoretical or visual-semantic richness (Lacan: 'this system [language] reproduces itself within itself with an extraordinary, and frightful, fecundity…'[347]), but as with e*mblematis* – the arbitrary rhetorical inserts in speeches – productive in that it created wealth for professional administrators: perhaps surprisingly, as emblems precede what Nick Srnicek has outlined as the emergence of quantification.[348] As with investors in contemporary speculative finance who in turn fund cultural institutions and the academy, the acquisition of capital in the early modern period was largely seen as a universal and natural good that encouraged virtuous displays of magnanimity and ethical behaviour[349] (or in modern terms,

[345] In finance, speculation is an insecure or high-risk financial investment that does not guarantee returns, usually through money lending or purchasing assets with a low margin of safety – but with significant possible gains. Benjamin Lozano has conducted a study of the ontology of finance ('synthetic finance') as having 'potentially radical material properties' that seems relevant to this interleaving of emblems, philosophy and a fiscal framework. 'When directing our attention to the properties of financial assets, it is striking to encounter an ontological domain both peculiar and rich with consequences for our understanding of materiality.' Benjamin Lozano, *Of Synthetic Finance: Three Essays of Speculative Materialism* (Abingdon, Oxon and New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), pp. 1–5.

[346] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*: *Corrected Edition* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2010) p. 17.

[347] Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III,* p. 218.

[348] Nick Srnicek, 'Abstraction and Value: The Medieval Origins of Financial Quantification' in *Speculative Medievalisms*, pp. 73–93. In this regard, emblems can also be seen as participating in a process of 'cognitive ecology' whereby the 'the products of cognitive ecology must all be embodied.' John Sutton and Nicholas Keene, 'Cognitive History and Material Culture', *Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe*, pp. 46–58 (p. 56).

[349] Hankins, 'Humanism and the Origins of Modern Political Thought', p. 127.

philanthropy). Too, in terms of the distribution of information-as-power, like the internet which disseminates *some* research from the modern academy (as well as providing digital archives of emblems!), the falling costs of book production, a common style of classicising humanistic Latin and the ability to disseminate fixed and uniform texts, were complementary to a humanistic programme of education and moral reform.[350] Woodcuts – as with the illustrations in the *EL* – were also more economic to produce than illuminated manuscripts, though this did not mean a reduction in artistic quality, as demonstrated by the unknown artist who beautifully illustrated Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia.*

However, as previously suggested in regards to Saturnalia, the relation of humanists to the laity – and especially an educated laity – can at be best regarded as uneasy. Humanists were nevertheless suspicious of populist movements that did not have their specialised knowledge[351] – recall the clamorous *stupid* mobs of 'Ficta Religio' in contrast to the silent fool/ wise man of 'In Silentium'. Too, with Latin came the power of learning the language that had an international political function, not only with the *ars dictaminis,* but in the form of books-as-objects themselves: as Davies notes, 'A book was often the vehicle of an alliance between culture and power, in the form of translations or dedications of original works, commissioned or unsolicited.'[352] (for example, as in 'Foedera' [5]). One of the ironies of being a jurist for Alciato must have been, as one of Poggio Bracciolini's dialogic interlocutors states on the dignity of law, that 'Only the little people and lower orders of a city are controlled by your laws […] the more powerful civic leaders transgress their power. Anacharsis justly compared the laws to a spider's web, which captures the weak but is broken by the strong.'[353] While humanist Latin was seen as a political instrument by Reformers,[354] it was not wise nor desirable to critique patrons, or upset the political order, and to ensure processes of production remained in the hands of this educated class, ancient art and books also inspired a market in collecting. Books then were commercial objects that contributed to an increasing commodification within the

[350] Davies, 'Humanism in Script and Print in the Fifteenth Century', p. 55.
[351] Alastair Hamilton, 'Humanists and the Bible' in *The Cambridge Companion To Renaissance Humanism*, pp. 100–117 (p. 120).
[352] Davies, 'Humanism in Script and Print in the Fifteenth Century', p. 47.
[353] Poggio Bracciolini, *Opera Omnia,* 4 vols, R. Fubini, ed (Turin, 1964-9), I, pp. 58–9.
[354] Jensen, 'The Humanist Reform of Latin and Latin Teaching', p. 78.

public sphere.[355] Like Instagram – itself an emblematic medium – as a marketing tool, emblem books were funded spiders' webs, webs of natureculture interconnections that showcased amongst other things expensive, though flattened, precious objects. These tensions led to an increasing need for humanists to generate obscurity to *cover* their credit source.[356] The already-murky substance of the ancient texts intended to create moral clarity and purity then, and the speculative mechanisms used to leverage credit from them, were subject to another glossing of obscurity. This is most clearly articulated in the widespread use of *imprese* by elites, such as the Gonzagas. Correspondingly, many investment funds today are architecturally façade-less and hidden, while academic knowledge whilst superficially available online, continues to be secreted behind paywalls and in high-cost publications – the environmental humanities as a field within academia is broadly implicated within this.[357] Humanists such as Alciato were in the main conservative, exponents of moral realism (they avoided Plato's *Republic*, viewing political situations as either better or worse rather than good or bad), and avoided political theory.[358] As Alastair Hamilton notes, in an age of rulers with questionable claims to legitimacy and amidst a turbulent wreck of ideologies – partly caused by the rise of their own secular class – individual and educational reform and the pursuit of style was seen as a safer bet by humanists, as with Erasmus' *Adagia* (1500) – a collection of proverbs that describes everyday events using colloquial Latin for educational purposes.[359] In short they retreated to virtue politics as a means of negligible improvement via. top down reform without practical action.[360] Such criticisms are no less relevant to this thesis, which focuses on

[355] David J. Davis, 'Material Religion: The Image in Early Modern Print' in *Seeing Faith, Printing Pictures: Religious Identity during the English Reformation* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), p. 22.
[356] 'Ensconced in the endowed private schools and great universities, this Latinate humanist theory justified the aristocracy, the clergy, and the Tudor court, whose vast patronage made it a central route to wealth and power, not the grounds of social criticism'. Philip Goldstein, *Post-Marxist Theory: An Introduction* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012), p. 18.
[357] The lamentation that 'When policy makers and mainstream media outlets seek expertise on the environmental crisis today, they seldom turn to environmental historians and philosophers, much less to ecocritics' is perhaps in this sense understandable. However, it is also true that 'A central task of the environmental humanities is to question the normative dimensions of current environmental practices (and practices of "environing"). They must avoid becoming a handmaiden to environmental science, serving up dollops of value while the scientists take care of the facts.' Hannes Bergthaller et al., 'Mapping Common Ground: Ecocriticism, Environmental History, and the Environmental Humanities', *Environmental Humanities*, 5 (2014), pp. 261–276 (p. 262, 268).
[358] Hankins, 'Humanism and the Origins of Modern Political Thought', p. 118.
[359] Jensen, 'The Humanist Reform of Latin and Latin Teaching', p. 72.
[360] James Hankins, 'The Virtue Politics of the Italian Humanists', in Beyond Reception: Renaissance Humanism and the Transformation of Classical Antiquity, ed. by Patrick Baker, Johannes Helmrath, and Craig Kallendorf [forthcoming].

aesthetics and poetics – a similar pursuit of *style* – as a mode of ecological thinking rather than direct environmental action. To return to hesitant criticism, the cloud continues to envelop, but one at least stands alongside others within interconnected predicaments, finding the ground equally uncertain.

The cloud of obscurity generated by emblems' contexts may also be however, a form of clarity in terms of identifying what this uncertain ground might be attached to. Taking these suppressive credit-mechanisms and strained cultivations of individual virtue into consideration, this thesis considers the moralising and 'ethical knowledge' of the *EL* to be mostly an impediment to formulating an environmental iconology centred around materialism and ontology, but as with 'form' and 'content', the two cannot be so easily disentangled. There are similar problematics of socio-ethics attached onto new materialisms.[361] A Speculative Emblematics stuck in a cloud considers it prudent to follow Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's notion of reparative reading: 'What we can best learn from such practices are, perhaps, the many ways selves and communities succeed in extracting sustenance from the objects of a culture—even of a culture whose avowed desire has often been not to sustain them.'[362] For instance, though its content was fairly banal politically, commonplace books such as the *Adagia* also encouraged reading habits of mental filing under categories, which may have meant an extension of simultaneous thought under multiple referents.[363]

<https://www.academia.edu/30007286/The_Virtue_Politics_of_the_Italian_Humanists> [accessed 2 February 2019], p. 3.

[361] Paul Rekret writes in a blistering critique of Bennett, Braidotti and Barad, 'framing the grounds for ontological speculation in these ethical terms licences the omission of analysis of social forces mediating thought's access to the world and so grants the theorist leave to sidestep any questions over the conditions of thought.' Paul Rekret, 'A Critique of New Materialism: Ethics and Ontology', *Subjectivity*, 9/3 (September 2016), pp. 225-245. Ironically qua Rekret, new materialism's focus on ethical self-transformation in order to be attuned to materiality echoes the preoccupation of Renaissance humanists. Elsewhere, in a critique of 'Left-Latourians' Noys writes, **'**Plural agency is distributed everywhere, but results in a lack of traction compared to the particular forms of compact and directed agency required of political intervention.' Overall he finds that Latourian 'de-reification allows access to the minutae of reality that certain forms of critique tended to displace or disable. On the other hand, the difficulty, however, is that this restoration of analysis occludes other forms of "reality" – notably that of capitalism – and does not *necessarily* lead to a restoration of agency.' Benjamin Noys, 'The Discreet Charm of Bruno Latour, or the critique of "anti-critique"', Conference Paper (pp. 11–12, 14–15) <https://www.academia.edu/1477950/The_Discreet_Charm_of_Bruno_Latour_or_the_critique_of_anti-critique_> [accessed 4 Feburary 2019]. Overall, Noys considers Latour as part of a strain in philosophy that affirms rather than disrupts the present. See Benjamin Noys, *The Persistence of the Negative*: *A Critique of Contemporary Continental Theory* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012)

[362] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, Or, You're So Paranoid You Probably Think This Essay Is About You', in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 150–1.

[363] Peter Mack, 'Humanist Rhetoric and Dialectic' in *The Cambridge Companion To Renaissance Humanism*, p. 90.

In terms of the cost of being sustained by a culture, structural constraints were placed too upon humanists by emblematics, the price of leveraging credit. If humanism was a sensibility it tended to soak up and absorb its subjects, just as it too absorbed a tradition of biography from both antiquity and the Middle Ages.[364] Their *backbones.* In terms of bodily transfigurations that can be seen as akin to 'branding', Stefan Laube argues that the frontispiece in early modern books that was often a portrait of the author can be seen as the emblem of the entire text.[365] For Laube, the purpose of this body-representation was to attest to the validity of the subject matter and the writer's authority. This was not always an approved assimilation of visual representation and body: John Milton, displeased with his emblematic frontispiece, pranked his engraver William Marshall to slate his own work in a Greek *subscriptio* (a language that Marshall clearly could not read) in another instance of the *paragone* at work,[366] in a mode that echoes Alciato's anxiety over Steyner's printing of the *Emblemata.* In a more textual vein, Katherine MacDonald hypotheses that 'a biographer's ability to recreate his subject in the text served as an advertisement, and a guarantee of his unique suitability to follow in the *footsteps of his model* outside of the confines of the text'[367] [my italics]. The *advertisement* of the self – many modern adverts have emblematic qualities[368] – then can be read as prefigured within the commodification of the body in figurative visual fragments in emblem books, and a use of metaphor as identification, to return to Lacan. Certainly this could be applied Alciato who hovers as a spectral presence over the entirety of his emblem book and as master-assimilator of the 'biographies' of the figures within it, despite additions. While Alciato's 'transubstantiation' into various emblems in the *EL* has been already explored in the brief overview of his life, in this light 'Nunquam procrastinandum' [Never procrastinate, 4] – in which the Alciato family *alce* [elk] half-raises, half-kicks

[364] Katherine MacDonald, *Biography in Early Modern France, 1540-1630: Forms and Functions* (Abingdon, Oxon and New York, NY: Taylor & Francis, 2007), p. 1. Michael D. Reeve, 'Classical Scholarship' in *The Cambridge Companion To Renaissance Humanism*, p. 32.
[365] Stefan Laube, 'Book Faces – Trademarks of Factual Books in the Early Modern Period' in Conference Proceedings: '10th International Conference Society for Emblem Studies, Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel 27 July - 1 August 2014', p. 124.
[366] 'John Milton's Frontispiece Prank', *The Public Domain Review* <https://publicdomainreview.org/collections/john-miltons-frontispiece-joke/> [accessed 12 October 2018]
[367] MacDonald, *Biography in Early Modern France, 1540-1630: Forms and Functions*, p. 2.
[368] Peter M. Daly, 'Modern Advertising and the Renaissance Emblem: Modes of Verbal and Visual Persuasion', in *Words and Visual Imagination: Studies in the Interaction of English Literature and Visual Arts*, eds. Karl Joself Holtgen, Peter M. Daly and Wolfgang Lottes (Erlangen: Universitätsverbund Erlangen-Nürnberg, 1988), pp. 349–371.

(feet again) its motto 'nothing should be postponed' over/into the mud, signifying speed and strength of action and thought – seems to read as nothing should not be *transferred*. Such a process was ironically, always arbitrary and removed – impossible to control. Borgogni writes of this transfer-of-body-into-text: 'Emblems took over a name, body, a form of self-promotion as a substitute body, self-promotion and self-fashioning as economic exercise […] Deliberately written to be read over a long period of time, and to be a fulfilling exercise.'[369] A material transfusion into a prolonged hesitation – a stretching between parts, of ancient string, humanist body and hybridised natureculture emblem took place. This was not a clear freezing or friezing by simply stopping time like a game of musical statues, but a creative act, a frankenstein of body, representation and theory, performed in obscurity that was both leveraged from and suppressive of materiality, including by muddying images. The Speculative Humanist Label™ created these spinning records that played other records, drowning out surrounding noises as they did so. Pinkus writes of 'Silentium', 'at the core of the emblem form, the humanist subject struggles to gain auto-logico-mastery. By keeping silent in the emblem, the ideal humanist is absolutely expressed.'[370]

Alciato's Creative Philology

> So perhaps it is really best to do as Bucephalus has done and absorb oneself in law books. In the quiet lamplight, his flanks unhampered by the thighs of a rider, free and far from the clamour of battle, he reads and turns the pages of our ancient books.[371]

Franz Kafka's short parable of Alexander the Great's warhorse transformed into an attorney, Dr. Bucephalus, reflects the humanist renovation of warriors into influential spectators rather than actors in a more direct sense. The judicial ability to continue *charging* on ancient terrain – Bucephalus also footstep-like, lifts 'his legs high, mounted the outside stairs step by step, with a tread that made the marble ring?' (the indeterminacy of the question mark here seems pertinent in terms of the question of material presences) – was enabled, as stated, by encounters with re-emergent ancient

[369] Borgogni, 'Must I Needs Want Solidnesse Because by Metaphors I Speak?', p. 77.
[370] Pinkus, *Picturing Silence*, p. 6.
[371] Franz Kafka, 'The New Advocate' in *The Complete Stories*, trans. Willa and Edwin Muir (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1995), p. 415.

texts. These sources however arrived through murky means; as with the 'struggle to retain mastery' spectatorship involved renouncing agency, too. Michael Reeve writes of Renaissance textual archaeology:

> Discoveries are an untidy subject. They were not always preceded by systematic search or followed by immediate diffusion; they did not always happen when they might have done; they sometimes went unannounced or were not announced by the actual discoverers; and "discovery" is not altogether easy to define.[372]

While ancient material culture survived within languages 'taking root' in manuscripts and reactivated by philological enterprises, the fragments that Alciato drew so heavily upon had survived partly through pure chance: derived from manuscripts that were literally dug up from the ground, by people who could identify them. This element of chance gave the whole exploratory endeavour a theological tint. Petrarch, whose antiquarian obsessiveness smothers even Alciato, in his letters brings to mind a suggestion of digging up of relics as a kind of blind divination, one that could also derail the search for the truth.[373] Alternately, this process could be perceived more as 'natural expression as Art object', to return to Baraka. Correspondingly, of this hazy process of textual activation, it was Alciato's philological studies that developed his creative methodology of interpreting legal texts, which then snowballed into the *EL.* In another undoing of theory by emblems, from this angle the practice of law and philology appear as murky catalysts of materialist metaphysical thought, rather than just their usual affiliations with the suppressive hard light of andocentric imperial justice.

To take a step back, at first glance the precision of philological practices during the Renaissance seems at complete odds to such a contention. Philological approaches to ancient texts had created a crisis of interpretation *in the present*, particularly in regards to Roman Law, as lawyers realised that they needed to understand the precise meaning of classical words to understand the laws that they

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[372] Michael D. Reeve, 'Classical Scholarship' in *The Cambridge Companion To Renaissance Humanism*, pp. 20–46, (p. 26).

[373] 'Which of these with their unusual treasure became famous for his artistry or talent? For these are the gifts of fortune, not the laudable merits of men. Much more worthy of the name of artist is the man who is stopped short, while performing his rightful labor, by a serpent sliding from a cave than the man working blindly who is bedazzled by the unexpected brilliance of hidden gold.' Petrarch, *Familiar Letters,* quoted in Leonard Barkan, *Unearthing the Past: Archaeology and Aesthetics in the Making of Renaissance Culture* (New York, NY: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 1.

were upholding. Roman Law was the *Corpus iuris civilis* formed under the Byzantine Emperor Justinian in 6CE – the *Codex justinianus,* the *Digest* (in Greek, the *Pandects*) and the *Institutes*.[374] The *Corpus* comprised of assorted excerpts, fragments and writings of Roman jurists and surviving laws from Hadrian's time. During his reign Justinian forbade commentary on these collections of fragments, so they could be preserved without textual interference, but in the Middle Ages this is exactly what the scholastic commentators known as the glossators did, led by Franciscus Accursius and Bartolus de Saxoferrato.[375] Crucially, the glossators only took the texts at face value in regard to Law and did not read them in their original contexts[376] – they had assumed that the materials' meanings remained consistent through time. Following the work of Lorenzo Valla, philologists such as Budé and Alciato ignored these commentaries, instead redefining the meaning of terms, phrases and content that had been misunderstood by scholastics. Essentially, Alciato reinterpreted the *Corpus* via. the freshly new discoveries of ancient manuscripts.[377] Paradoxically however, as Michael Monheit writes, Alciato's work in fact 'intensified the crisis in legal interpretation.'[378] What was known had once again been obscured through a form of cultural ecology. Though Alciato's intention was in fact as frozen as the glossators, in that it was directed towards a 'purifying' of Latin[379] – a 'return' – the results were also unclear partly because of Alciato's *speculative methodology,* a form of creative reception. Monheit has helpfully examined Budé and Alciato's 'interpretative practices' rather than their methodological conclusions, and states that despite Alciato's avowed precision and clarity, 'he relied heavily on conjecture rather than careful reading and collation of sources.'[380] The reason for this, Monheit says, is that Alciato had '*excessive faith in the ability of humanist methods* to untangle easily difficult legal problems'[381] [my italics] – because for Alciato the question of authorial intention had not arisen[382] – an irony, when considering how from the start the *EL* took on a life of its own that he attempted to resist. That Alciato too, prioritised

[374] Bregman, *Emblemata,* p. 19.
[375] Ibid., p. 20.
[376] Ibid.
[377] Greek for example, was unknown in Italy until the start of the fifteenth century. By 1515 most of the extant Greek literature that survives today was put into print by Aldus Manutius.
[378] Michael L. Monheit, 'Guillaume Budé, Andrea Alciato, Pierre de l'Estoile: Renaissance Interpreters of Roman Law', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 58/1 (1997), pp. 21–40.
[379] Jensen, 'The Humanist Reform of Latin and Latin Teaching', pp. 68–69.
[380] Monheit, 'Guillaume Budé, Andrea Alciato, Pierre de l'Estoile', p. 30.
[381] Ibid.
[382] Ibid.

ancient jurists as *thinkers* whose meanings once contextualised would be applicable to the present, can also serve as a critique of Speculative Emblematics' proposed methodology within the framework of 'expanding the transcultural imagination', as within his syntheses Alciato did not view linguistic differences as signifying cultural differences.[383] Or, to incongruously insert Lacan again, 'this error consists in taking the very phenomenon of consciousness to be unitary […] based on the undue transfer to these phenomena of the value of a thought experiment that uses them as examples.[384] Yet, as with the material process surrounding the *EL,* it was nevertheless such mistakes which created new hermeneutic possibilities that were in part both shaped and subsequently overlaid by socio-environmental forces acting as mosaic-makers.

To draw further similarities with creative philology and ecology, Alciato considered the problem of delineating and unpacking these texts as akin to [in own his words] 'a Lernaean Hydra, for indeed so many heads spring up from the necks that, when one has been torn away, another does not fail to appear.'[385] It is perhaps not accidental that serpentine figures in relation to questions of knowledge are found recurring throughout the *EL.*[386] These insights undermine philology as the precise cutting of the 'literal' meanings of words[387] and situate it more as a practice of hazy encounters and adaptive textual reconstruction within a semiotic system that Alciato viewed as a living web of interconnections (Roman Law). Valérie Hayaert says of the emblem-law relation:

> legal emblems are a "genus" of the "specie" of legal topics [...] emblems provide lawyers with *"sedes argumentorum",* [seeds, my italics] they trigger new lines of argumentation. Emblematic structures are tools that enable law to be considered in its generality as well as being applicable to individual cases.[388]

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[383] Ibid.
[384] Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English,* trans. Bruce Fink (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 2006), p. 705.
[385] Monheit, 'Guillaume Budé, Andrea Alciato, Pierre de l'Estoile', p. 31.
[386] See for example, 'Sapientia humana, Stultitia Est Apud Deum' [Human knowledge is but foolishness to God, 5], 'Salus Publica' [Public health, 150] and 'Antiquissima Quaeque Commentitia' [Whatever is most ancient is imaginary, 183].
[387] Monheit, 'Guillaume Budé, Andrea Alciato, Pierre de l'Estoile', p. 37.
[388] Valérie Hayaert 'Legal Emblems: the Encyclopaedian and Gordian Knot of Emblemata' in Conference Proceedings: '10th International Conference Society for Emblem Studies, Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel 27 July - 1 August 2014', p. 92.

In relation to this living system of connections and seeds, within Monheit's analysis can be found the extraordinary comment that 'Alciato regarded the passage as originating as "a cry, a voice, something which comes from the interior of a person"'.[389] This indistinct cry – another somatic to semiotic 'transfusion' – is further explored in Chapter Five. And to misread Manning, within the messy nature of these nonlinear encounters, 'Chronology, the moment of utterance, is a clue to meaning'[390] – a meaning that in a nonlinear context may be rooted in *obscurity* as a form of connection. Haraway in her footnotes to 'the Chthulucene' writes, 'The suffix *–cene* proliferates! I risk this overabundance because I am in the thrall of the root meanings of *–cene/kainos*, namely the temporality of the thick, fibrous, and lumpy 'now', which is ancient and not.'[391] The notion of a fibrous utterance in nonlinear obscurity sounds much like Alciato's heard cry amongst the serpentine knots of the Chthulu-like Learnaean Hydra of language. The felt solidity of an indecipherable cry is propelled by the popularity which contributed to emblems' transformations: their contents were recognised, somehow, even by an 'uneducated' laity who used the *EL* simply as a book of pictures.

Misreading Identifies Excess

As hinted at by Manning's definition of an emblem as being an open-ended anything, emblem books are unusual in that the Alciato-spored type are a specific product of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, yet their demise – dated overconfidently by Rosemary Freeman to 1686[392] – is suspiciously mythic given their protean nature. Heather McAlpine for example, traces emblems' continuation within the Pre-Raphaelite movement, and the poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins.[393] Of continuations, Manning alludes more explicitly to the weird nonlinear chronology that guided the material process of emblem books (just as it did the discovery of ancient texts, and the production of the *EL*):

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[389] Monheit, 'Guillaume Budé, Andrea Alciato, Pierre de l'Estoile', p. 38.
[390] Manning, *The Emblem,* p. 9.
[391] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*.
[392] Rosemary Freeman, *English Emblem Books* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1948), p. 6.
[393] Heather McAlpine, *Victorian Emblematics: Structures of Representation in Pre-Raphaelite Literature* [Doctoral Thesis] (Library and Archives Canada, 2009), p. 2. < https://ruor.uottawa.ca/handle/10393/29906> [accessed 15 October 2018]

> "Origins" for instance, had the disconcerting habit of receding, or paradoxically appearing much later than one had at first believed. "Beginnings" could coincide with a first edition, but equally emerge in a much later editorial innovation. Nor were later editions or texts an infallible "advance" over their predecessors. Woodblocks and copperplates archived in the printing-houses could be taken up and reused. And *symbolic forms persistently replicated themselves through the ingrained rhetorical habits of imitation* [my italics], so that a "new" emblem book could accommodate persistent survivals of traditional habits of thinking, writing and reading.[394]

In this passage arises the notion of (self-replicating) material seeds, here symbolic forms, that were previously mentioned as a goal for Speculative Emblematics to pursue, though their material memory is obscurely intertwined with new additions. Too, emblems were not quite symbols. Their forms were the residue of a process of cultural ecology that leveraged an excessive surplus of potential meanings from materials, a bloom. As it developed and survived, the *EL* became a seventeenth century equivalent of Shutterstock or Instagram; an image repository. As with Shutterstock, to ascribe intrinsic or specific iconographical meanings to the emblems became impossible as they were re-situated in so many different contexts. Emblematics became as a consequence more about pushing to see how many meanings *might* be ascribed to these images.[395] Too, the humanist desire to *repristinate* (make like new, the Renaissance term[396]) the present with the encountered past was also – paradoxically, considering Alciato's suppressive and secretive methodology fuelled by conflicts as previously outlined – a project intended to fill silences. Reeve: 'Faulty texts, especially texts with obvious gaps, were one of the things that spurred humanists to explore libraries'.[397] As with Alciato calling his *emblema* into being through nominal designation, a promise of meaning was crystallised by these fragmentary and hybrid combinations that were intended to fill the uncertain silences of the past and the present.

What could be taken from all of this is that Alciato's emblems are predisposed to being productively misread, and that they should be done so, rather than being stripped back to strictly authorial notions of intent. The additions in the *EL* – such as Tozzi's woodcuts – add covering layers that warp, corral, dismember, scatter and slant the text. Kevin Sharpe and Steven Zwicker come to similar conclusions, noting

[394] Manning, *The Emblem*, pp. 9-10.
[395] Ibid., p. 38.
[396] Barkan, *Unearthing The Past,* p. xxvii.
[397] Reeve, 'Classical scholarship', p. 27.

in early modern texts 'the slippages that transformed authorial utterance into a myriad of textual variants. Textual variance demonstrates that meaning is a confluence of activities, a narrative of multiple collaborations and transformations…'[398] There is something of reading these aesthetics as inextricably bound to the book in which the reports of the material surface must be trusted, as with the emblematist Handrianus Junius' instructions to his engraver – '*Pingatur*' [Let someone or something be painted].[399] As stated in Chapter One, poetic misreading can be a form of subjective relinquishment – to which it might be added, that acknowledges the potentiality of excess, an excess also displayed and leveraged by textual materiality, speculative *and* ecological systems. Sceptical of any clarity to be found in history, Speculative Emblematics' approach to the *EL* can only be fragmentary and partial, an assemblage rather than a digging – 'And archaeology might be not the science of collecting and preserving these material things, but "the never completed, never wholly achieved uncovering of the archive"'[400] – but as with Alciato's relation to antiquity, what is excessively indecipherable and obscure is often turned into culture:

> Silence had entered me.
> It was like the night, and my memories–they were like stars
> in that they were fixed, though of course
> if one could see as do the astronomers
> one would see they are unending fires, like the fires of hell.
> I set my glass on the iron railing.[401]

[398] Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker, 'Introduction: discovering the Renaissance reader' in *Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. by Sharpe and Zwicker (Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 2.
[399] Mason Tung, 'Junius and his Pictures: A Note on his Would-Be Instructions to his Painter' in *Society of Emblem Studies Newsletter*, 56 (2015)
[400] Quoted in Barkan, *Unearthing the Past*, p. xxiii.
[401] Louise Glück, 'Midnight' in *Faithful and Virtuous Night* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2014), p. 34.

Chapter Three: Reading Natureculture in the *EL*

Returning to the notion of natureculture, this chapter examines representations of biodiversity in the *EL* and attempts to refine an ecological concept of obscurity. Noting that animals in the emblems are not presented naturalistically or empirically, it contends that the *EL* is in part an imaginative catalogue of cultural biodiversity. Arguing that this is an 'absent catalogue' due to narrative replications of an anthropocentric animal contract created by commodification and language, it then states that representations of animals nevertheless acquired a form of protean agency through the arbitrary connections generated by Alciato's emblems. Focusing on bats, it reads this agency – which it terms arbitrary morphe – in relation to the notion of obscurity as an ontological quality that is ecological. Considering wider processes of cultural ecology, it argues that plants not only connected the microcosm and macrocosm within emblems, but that they reseeded into the real world by reduplicating standardised illustrations from herbals, affecting developments in botany – as did emblematic animals on the development of zoology. Noting the imperial legacy of environmental determinism, it asserts that such natureculture connections take place unpredictably in obscurity. Moving onto the concept of whether 'nature' or 'natureculture' is readable at all, it briefly overviews emblems as 'Books of Nature' and suggests that the *EL* might be read exegetically in this manner, not as a divine plan but as a mode of emphasising ecological interconnections – with additional reference to approaches to reading landscapes in cultural geography. It then considers emblems' 'potential facticity' as another crucial aspect of obscurity, one that both excessively creates and carries away meanings and mirrors speculative theory-making, reaching a similar conclusion to the observations of material process found in the previous chapter.

An Absent Catalogue of Biodiversity

Spiralling Natureculture

In modernity physical matter is no longer perceived as a stable, solid or inert and predictable material substance,[402] an ontological shift that is altering scholarly approaches to cultural artefacts. New materialist and materialist ecocriticisms for example, state Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, consider matter as a physiochemical process engaged in 'choreographies of becoming', as part of a 'monolithic but multiply tiered ontology, [where] there is no definitive break between sentient and nonsentient entities or between material and spiritual phenomena.'[403] This ontological blurring builds on prior ecocritical approaches that eschewed the binary terms such as 'nature' and 'culture' in order to recognise webs of increasingly complex interactions between biological organisms and their material environments. However, as Neil Kessler writes of Coole and Frost's [and Bennett's] 'unconvincing' materialism:

> [if] one of new materialism's hallmarks is converting ontological elements previously held to be more-than-material to the material realm […] from whence does such posthumanist confidence in materiality originate? It's from unadulterated assumption.[404]

Taking a hesitant pause or step back from this snowballing ontological trajectory, this chapter will not attempt to examine 'transcendental' or even cultural artefacts embedded in the *EL* from an ecocritical perspective, but focus on representations of what could best be identified as 'nature' proper – biodiversity – as a means of approaching natureculture relations as refracted through emblems.

Cultural Biodiversity

Just as Alciato's *emblema* escaped his intentions and regerminated themselves in a 'weird chronology', so the naturephilosophy of the *EL* is more of an admixture of re-emergent classical and medieval mentalities than reflective of the spirit of investigative empiricism that became welded to the humanities during the era of early

[402] Coole and Frost, *New Materialisms*, p. 13.
[403] Ibid., pp. 9–10.
[404] Neil H. Kessler, *Ontology and Closeness in Human-Nature Relationships: Beyond Dualisms, Materialism and Posthumanism* (Cham: Springer International, 2018), p. 67.

Atlantic exploration.[405] Alciato's emblems use nature as a gloss for the production of moral allegory within the vein of various typological (prefiguring) exegeses of history, inheriting in particular the bestiary tradition whereby fauna and flora, as well as imaginary species, were as Moffitt says 'allegorised […] more or less arbitrarily assigned symbolic meanings applicable to the human condition.'[406] In regards to naturalistic representation even within the socio-historic context of natural knowledge around the Quattrocento, the *EL* is a poor source that merely uses the shapes of biodiversity to figurate moral allegory in this medieval manner,[407] drawing too on the classical stylisation of animals found in Aesop and his Latin imitator Phaedrus. Their fables – moral maxims illustrated by misfortunate animal encounters – are a frequent source for many of the emblems.[408] In essence, Alciato's adoption of these pre-existing frameworks ensured that animals and plants in the *EL* were sued as empty placeholders for didactic purposes. Greedy wolves symbolise foolishness, birds

[405] 'The history of mentalities tends to distinguish the type of analogical thinking that characterizes emblems from the empirical, Baconian, thinking that is fundamental to science. That may be why – for all their alleged 'potential facticity' – there do not seem to be many strictly scientific emblems, and we do not normally look for emblems in the work of enlightenment natural philosophers'. Michael Bath, 'Scientific Emblems: Bernoulli's Spiral' in *Society of Emblem Studies Newsletter*, 51. By the end of the seventeenth century, driven by Newtonian physics and Locke's politics among other epistemological developments, the period dialect was one of 'iconoclasm and innovation' that questioned the reliability of ancient writers, as propagated for example by Jean Le Clerc. See Anthony Grafton, 'The Identities of History in Early Modern Europe: Prelude to a Study of the *Artes Historicae*' in Gianna Pomata and Nancy G. Sirasi, eds, *Historia: Empiricism and Erudition in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005). In tandem, by 1763 'not only the geographic and political but perhaps more profoundly the mental economic maps of the world had been redrawn, as the 'classic' Mediterranean-Indian Ocean axis was forcibly displaced by the Atlantic and its littoral as the nexus of global power'. Michael Seymour, *The Transformation of the North Atlantic World, 1492-1763: An Introduction* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2004), p. 4.
A counter-argument may be made that moralised natural objects were not antithetical to this period of exploration, along the lines of Harold Cook's contention that Dutch commerce in natural goods in the East and West Indies 'was central in the creation of new modes of valuing objects of nature and information about nature. By his account, commercial accumulation and exchange led to new ways of describing, measuring, and valuing objects and information, what he labels objectivity. Moreover, the desires and passions that drove this trade led to attempts to locate moral values in nature, with the result that material betterment and human emotions were portrayed as beneficial'. Pamela H. Smith, 'Science on the Move: Recent Trends in the History of Early Modern Science', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 62/2 (Summer 2009), pp. 345–375 (p. 370).
[406] Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The Emblematum Liber in Latin and English*, p. 5.
[407] The *sensus moralis* – the interpretation of animals as moral and metaphysical truths – was propagated by illustrated medieval bestiaries that developed under the influence of the *Physiologus* (2 AD). For an example of how medieval authors used animals as metaphors for human behaviour in their fables, see Joyce E. Salisbury, 'Human Animals of Medieval Fables', in *Animals in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Nora C. Flores (Abingdon, Oxon and New York, NY: Routledge, 1996), pp. 49-66.
[408] Aesop's fables form the basis for at least 13 of the emblems. See for example, 'A minimis quoque timendum' [Fear also insignificant things, 169] that draws on Aesop's feud between the eagle and the beetle.

hatching cuckoos eggs mirror cuckolds' wives.[409] Sometimes, as Henebry points out, they were also figurated into symbols of 'pure rhetoric, not moral or political instruction'; rhetorical ornaments,[410] such as eagles who denote strength and bravery, while doves represent timidity.[411] As previously outlined, as an environmental iconology Speculative Emblematics is not particularly interested in the superficial ethics of the *EL*, nor of particular iconographical meanings attached to its repertoire of symbolic or 'allegorised' animals (given too, the impossibility of such a task[412]), but rather emblems' formal qualities such as natureculture grafting, locking–in mechanisms and muddied images.

Nevertheless, as with the previous chapter, despite this intended distinction between content and ecocritically-relevant form, the same formal hybridity of the *EL* ensures that these differentiations are to a degree complicated and collapsed. Though biodiversity is utilised for the production of moral allegory, these narrative tableaux or vignettes of fauna and flora comprise the majority of the emblem book. Indeed, the considerable range of biodiversity present in the emblems (both in text and image) gives the *EL* a sense of – amongst other hazy purposes – being an early catalogue of natural history, reusing and referencing as it frequently does Pliny's *Naturalis Historia.*[413] Or more succinctly, a catalogue of commonplace animals and plants in

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[409] 'Oblivio paupertatis parens' [Forgetfulness is the father of poverty, 66]. The *pictura* shows a wolf with a ram already in its claws gazing distractedly at a flock of sheep: 'While the famished deer-seeking wolf chews it pittance, devouring a fawn which its hunger had earlier caused it to chase down, if it turns around, and perchance diverting its glance, sees something else, so great is its forgetfulness that, ignoring the food which it presently has in its mouth, it goes off in search of an uncertain prey. Whoever neglects what is [already] his own,, foolishly seeks what belongs to someone else.' Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The Emblematum Liber in Latin and English*, p. 85.
'Cuculi' [Cuckoo birds, 60] depicts a cuckoo watching another bird sit on a nest of eggs. 'What is the reason why many people call boorish country folk "cuckoos"? Coccyx [the cuckoo] sings in early summer, and who ever hasn't finished tending his vines by this time is rightly called a sluggish dolt. The cuckoo places its eggs in the nests of other birds, and the same happens to him [the cuckold] whose adulterous wife betrays him in the bridal bedroom.' Ibid., p. 79.
[410] Henebry, 'Figures of Speech', p. 1.
[411] 'Signa fortium' [Attributes of the mighty, 33]. '(a dialogue). "Which cause has impelled you, oh bird of Saturn, to alight upon the tomb of the great Aristomenes?" "I attest that as I excel among birds in strength, so does Aristomenes excel among the semi-gods. Let timid doves perch upon the tombs of the timid, but we, the eagles, provide signs favorable to the intrepid."' Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The Emblematum Liber in Latin and English*, p. 51.
[412] 'Is there such a thing as a "true meaning" for any motif? If there is then some applications of the motif by emblem writers must be considered wrong, partial or at least incomplete. Tamara Goeglein seems to think that there is a true meaning. The emblem writer Hadrianus Junius certainly used that phrase. I am less sure. I am persuaded neither by the Early Modern emblem writer nor by our colleague. Even one and the same bird or reptile could mean very different things. Not every snake stands for poison, treachery or death, not every owl signifies wisdom.' Daly, 'Identification and Interpretation in Emblems', *Society of Emblem Studies Newsletter*, *57* (07/2015).
[413] Pliny, *Natural History*. trans. H. Rackham, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940)

the early modern Latin-European imaginary. As Enenkel and Smith write (of the 1542 edition): 'Alciato derived his *res significantes* massively from the natural world […and] animals appear so often that one must get the impression that emblems and animals are intrinsically connected.'[414] Further, this focus on animals continued in other emblem books after Alciato, both in Latin and the vernacular.[415] In regards to this emblem-animal connection, Ted Hughes' theory of poems as living animals in which the form and content vitalise each other also springs to mind.[416] With this in mind, to provide here a list of the animals found in the *EL* in terms of the number of times they appear – recalling the concept of symbolic figures repeating themselves through persistence or imitation – in either text or image:[417]

Ass/donkey (4); bat (3); beaver (1); bee (3); bee-eater bird (1); beetle (1); boar (4); bull (1); cow (1); chameleon (1); cicada (3); coot (1); crab (1); crow (6); jay (1); crane (2); cuckoo (2); deer (1); stag (1); diver-bird (1); dog (6); dolphin (3); dove (3); duck (2); eagle (4); ermine (1); eel (2); elk (1); elephant (2); falcon (1); fish (2); kestrel (1); fox (1); goat (6); goose (1); hare (1); horse (5); hoopoe (1); ibis (1); kingfisher (1); kite (1); lark (1); lion (9), lioness (2); lizard (1); locust (1); moorhen (10); mouse (2); owls (6); oyster (1); pelican (3); pig (1); raven (1); remora (2); robin (2); scorpion (1); sea-bream (2); seagull (1); sheep (2); lamb (1); ram (3); snake or serpent (7); starling (1); stork (30); sparrow (1); swallow (4); swan (1); turtle (1); viper (4); vulture (2); wagtail (1); wasp (2); weasel (1); wolf (2) as well as mythic and composite creatures such as dragon (2); centaur (2); faun (3); hydra (1); minotaur (1); night-heron (1); Medusa (1); 'monsters' (3); Pegasus (2); sheep-goat (1); sirens (1); sphinx (1).

This index may be instructive in that, as with the process of ornamental grafting in which embossed inserted parts retained differentiations in value, the distribution of biodiversity in the *EL* is uneven in terms of being representative of particular genera. Some charismatic species such as lions appear with more frequency

[414] Enenkel and Smith, *Emblems and the Natural World*, pp. 4–5.
[415] Ibid., p. 15.
[416] 'In a way, I suppose, I think of poems as a sort of animal. They have their own life, like animals, by which I mean that they seem quite separate from any person […] Maybe my concern has been to capture not animals particularly and not poems, but simply things which have a vivid life of their own outside mine.' Ted Hughes, *Poetry in the Making* (1967) quoted in Alice Oswald, *A Ted Hughes Bestiary: Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 2014), p. xvii.
[417] This list collapses various animals under one umbrella – for example owls include barn-owls, red-owls and night owls. Strictly, as with the rest of this thesis referring to Alciati, *Emblemata cum commentariis amplissimis*, ed. L. Pignoria (Padua: Tozzi, 1621).

than others despite their relative absence from everyday life, just as they disproportionately continue to populate contemporary culture today in signs and symbols. *Emblems and the Natural World* overviews animals in the *EL* on a similar quest to examine the empirical link between natural phenomena and emblems, or more particularly, 'how nature was depicted in word and image, and what role empirical observation played in these representations', or […] how 'natural' the behaviour of the emblematic animals really was.'[418] Given these admixtures of domestic, rare-but-real and imaginary species, Enenkel and Smith state that the frequent anthropomorphism of these animals indicates that they are 'acting in the literary discourse of the fable'[419] as previously mentioned (a wording that also emphasises the discursive space of the emblem as a *place*), and turn to Alciato's non-empirical sources of inspiration such coats of arms, travel diaries and imprese,[420] to which could be added architectural motifs that Alciato encountered in Milan that were adapted within the emblems through and in the style of Colonna.[421] Straying from any notion of realism, the grafted and hybrid animals in the *EL* expand the imaginary scope – widening natureculture interconnections – of this 'natural' catalogue significantly. Though as Daly points out, such animals in the early modern imagination were not necessarily thought to be fictitious[422] – or rather, emblematic representations had a veneer of authority – these inclusions as well as the explicit detachment from signified to didactic signifier[423] may be why scant attention has been paid to the natural world in emblem scholarship: this is a natureculture catalogue. Such a blurring was the rule rather than the exception: Gianna Pomata and Nancy Sirasi write of early modern *historia* (which included natural history) 'a salient feature of early modern encyclopaedism: the lack of a clear-cut boundary between the

[418] Enenkel and Smith, *Emblems and the Natural World*, p. 3.
[419] Ibid., p. 4.
[420] Such as the dragon on the shield of 'AD ILLUSTRISSIMUM MAXIMILIANUM, DUCEM MEDIOLANENSEM: Super insigni Ducatus Mediolanensis' [To the most illustrious Maximilian, Duke of Milan. The arms of the Duchy of Milan, 1] or the lion, eagle, and serpent from [72]; from imprese the swan from [107] (the device of a poet), the eagle in [82] 'the device of a certain Aristomenes, or doves, the last of these being an appropriate *imprese* for cowardly people…' *Emblems and the Natural World*, pp. 17–19.
[421] As Peter Daly points out, in the *Hypnerotomachia* Colonna adapted an architectural frieze on a bridge depicting Augustus' motto 'semper festina tarde' into the dolphin wound around the anchor which became the printer's mark of Aldus Manutius and subsequently, Alciato's emblem 'Princeps subditorum incolumitatem procurans' [The Prince who attends to the security of his subjects, 144]. Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem,* p. 24.
[422] Ibid., p. 7.
[423] This will be examined in this chapter in 'bats'.

study of nature and the study of culture',[424] and one that was obsessed with the protean world of particulars.

Contracts

Aside from animals that have charismatic or exceptionalist allures, others such as the bee, boar, dog, goat, horse, and sheep recur in the emblems because of their agri-economic or military ties. It is with these animals that it becomes obvious that animals functioned as commodities within emblematic narratives, as much as being anthropomorphised within the discourse of the fable. With the portrayal of domestic animals in particular, the *EL*'s lawyer-influenced interspecies ethics also bears similarities to Lucretius' notions of an 'animal contract';[425] one that is paradoxically not based on reason but in which animals have been entrusted to human guardianship.[426] For example, goats – one of the most common agricultural animals in the Mediterranean – in two emblems serve as cautionary warnings against breaking this contract of service: one represents a traitor as it kicks over a pail of its own milk, the other re-enacts Aesop's fable of the goat made to suckle a wolf who then eats it[427] (see Fig. 10 and 11). In terms of the emptying out of these natural signifiers in the *EL*, Richard Hutchins' comment on the animal contract bears fruit:

> Lucretius has to work overtime to arrange all these animals under the same banner. What he ends up doing is turning these animals into what Carol Adams calls 'absent referents.' In *The Sexual Politics of Meat,* Adams noticed that animals (and women) are often made absent behind the signifier 'meat' which stands in, metonymically, for the complexity and actuality of individual animals' lives […] In Lucretius' case, labor, service, and production stand in for the animals as signs; the animals themselves become free-floating signifiers for meat, labor, and clothing, their dignity and individuality reduced to markers of use value.[428]

Whilst this is especially true of emblems that incorporate agricultural animals, this same emptying-out consequence of arranging occurs across the *EL,* which also integrates all of its biodiverse subjects 'under the same banner' – a collection of emblems. Further, in the very instigation of anthropocentric metaphorical similarity

[424] Pomata and Sirasi, eds, *Historia,* pp. 5-6.
[425] Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* (55 B.C.)
[426] Richard Hutchins, 'Interspecies Ethics and Collaborative Survival in Lucretius' in *Ecocriticism, Ecology, and the Cultures of Antiquity*, p. 92.
[427] 'In eum qui sibi damnum apparat' [About one who incurs its own destruction, 64] and 'In desciscentes' [Against degenerates, 141].
[428] Hutchins. 'Interspecies Ethics and Collaborative Survival in Lucretius', p. 104.

anchored to representation, or the use of rhetorical devices such as metonymy, biodiversity was assimilated within emblems' structures (or at least, by the *EL*) via a logic of being subordinate to human mastery under this historically ruinous ideology of the natural law of androcentric dominance, of the type expounded by Cicero,[429] whose rhetoric (and ideals of the *nota* – sign) impressed Alciato. The source of this mastery then, was language, which was perceived as the source of rationality and control. Language was however, not seen as unnatural but part of a divine hierarchy that was also reproduced as a conflict within the human. The struggle was to retain mastery over language, and sublimate all bodies, enough to create these absent referents. 'Natura' [Nature, 97] depicts Pan (half-man, half-goat) as embodying this split between rational human and irrational bestial natures, goats being associated with lust and immoderation – a message that is repeated in two further emblems of Pan.[430]

Visualised Absences

As they serve less clear-cut productive functions, the great variety of birds in the emblems stand out as examples of natural objects retaining representational agency beyond economic use value, though not contractual metaphor: they are still anchored to an anthropocentric system of signification that *obscures* their empirical characteristics. This may be because the *EL* is – like Virgil's Eclogues – in part the product of a cultivated urban sensibility: for Alciato birds might have been the most visible form of local biodiversity next to agricultural livestock. However, when birds in the *EL* have more empirically 'naturalistic' qualities – or the moral is derived from empirical observations of behaviour, for example the kestrel 'waves its butt in the air, and it was called by the ancient poets an *ardelion,* a busybody'[431] – these observations are usually derived from the remnants of natural lore from antiquity embedded in the emblems via the *Greek Anthology* – the observations of 'ancient poets' – or from

[429] Cicero: 'We enjoy the fruits of the plains and of the mountains, the rivers and the lakes are ours, we sow corn, we confine the rivers and straighten or divert their courses. In fine, by means of our hands we essay to create as it were a second world within the world of nature.' Quoted in Michael Williams, *Deforesting the Earth: From Prehistory to Global Crisis, An Abridgment* (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 86.

[430] 'Natura' [Nature, 97] as with 'Luxuria' [Licentiousness, 72] depicts Pan in a sitting position, while the emblem's subscriptio refers to unrestrained sexual desires, whereas 'In subitum terrorem' [Sudden terror, 123] refers to Pan as inventor of the horn and military trumpet that induces panic and fear – an irrational excess similar to immoderate lust.

[431] 'Ignavi' [Sluggarts, 84] in Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The Emblematum Liber in Latin and English*, p. 102.

Pliny. The ibis, likewise, is 'well known along the banks of the Nile, since it cleans out its belly using its beak as a syringe, it has become a term of opprobrium: Publius Naso [Ovid] applied it to name his enemy, and Battaides [Callimachus] used it for his.'[432] (See Fig. 12.) However, to return to the idea of nonlinear chronologies, a moment of encounter arises within this description of the ibis. Whilst the *pictura* is an early modern depiction of an ibis, the text utters forth a warping shadow, an observation from antiquity of ibises. A visualised absence, or a material presence. A similar shadow of a materialised nonlinear emergence from antiquity is found in the simple 'In quatuor anni tempora' [About the four seasons of the year, 101**,** see Fig. 13], where migrating birds are used as auguries of regional time: 'The Robin announces the arrival of Winter. The warbling swallow returns to us in early Spring. The cuckoo indicates that Summer is awaited. In Autumn, only jays are seen.'[433] This is the most replete 'naturalistic' emblem in the *EL,* and an exception – perhaps it appears the most natural because it refers to multispecies knots of ethical time, to draw on Rose's term.[434] The *EL* then in some senses is a catalogue of biodiversity. But it is an *absent catalogue,* a catalogue of absences – by which is not meant nothing, but rather of biodiverse material presences covered over by culture (to return to obscurity as a type of covering), enmeshed within nonlinear chronologies arising within the emblems. In this, the content of the *EL*, once again, cannot be easily demarcated from the ecocritically-relevant form of emblems.

[432] 'In sordidos' [About the filthy, 87], ibid., p. 106.
[433] 'In quattour anni tempora' [About the four seasons of the year, 101] in ibid., p. 120.
[434] Rose, 'Multispecies Knots of Ethical Time', p. 128.

Fig. 10. 'In eum qui sibi damnum apparat'.

Fig. 11. 'In desciscentes'.

Fig. 12. 'In sordidos'.

Fig. 13. 'In quattuor anni tempora'.

Flying Bats

Protean Agency

As stated, the absent catalogue of biodiversity in the *EL* is far removed from the natural world on an empirical level. However, this same arbitrariness attached to material-aesthetic representations of nature not only allows for these shadow 'absences' or enmeshed presences, but operates in a manner that, this chapter will hope to argue, is ecological. Though they praise emblematists' inter-imaginality in depicting animals 'via the cultural transmission of visual images'[435] through creative combinations and applications of source materials and humanist practices, Enenkel and Smith do not examine ontological definitions of what 'nature' is, nor ecocritical philosophies in relation to emblems. Consequently, an expanded concept of natureculture that in turn contributes towards the arbitrary representations of biodiversity in the *EL*'s absent catalogue remains unexplored.

As partially suggested in relation to birds, representations of biodiversity in the *EL* through loosened relations of sign to natural object (signified), start to acquire form of unusual agency as they become unfastened from the androcentric utilitarian and economic contracts attached to the signified. They begin to morph from commodity towards protean meanings that endow them with a certain richness in the sense of restoring these objects with a potentiality beyond socio-economic confines. While for the ibis this potentiality is tied to the re-emergence of an ancient fragment of ibises, two conjoining emblems of bats serve as an extended example that also further correlates with Speculative Emblematics' focus on obscurity. Alciato makes explicit the arbitrary nature of the connection between sign and signified in these emblems, whereby the same image of a bat flying in a night sky is used as the *pictura* for 'Vespertilio' [The Bat, 61] and 'Aliud' [More About The Bat, 62]. The emblems' *subscriptione* read:

> Authors state that Chaerophon the Socratic took his name from the bird called *Meneides* [bat]. His swarthy face and strident voice could have branded this man with such a nickname. [61]
>
> Since it is half-blinded by daylight, this bird only flies after dusk; even though it has wings, it shares many traits with mice. It is used to symbolize various things. In the first place, it symbolizes infamous people [like debtors], who,

[435] Enenkel and Smith, *Emblems and the Natural World*, p. 4.

> fearing impending justice, hide out. It serves in the same way for philosophers who, while they are investigating the things in heaven, remain with their eyes befogged and they only see false things. Finally, it symbolizes crafty folk who, secretly trailing after either party, have no credibility, neither here not there. [62] (see Fig. 14)[436]

Vespertilio's term *Meneides* refers to Ovid's account of Minyas' daughters being turned into bats as they refused to worship Dionysius, whilst as the Glasgow translation notes, 'Chaerophon, a distinguished disciple of Socrates [who was also notoriously ugly], was nicknamed 'The Bat' and 'Boxwood' for his pale complexion and poor health, supposedly brought on by excessive study'.[437] Here Moffitt's translation above is slightly misleading, 'swarthy' [*fusca*] connotes dark; swarthy; dusky, lowly, also hoarse,[438] while 'strident voice' [*stridens*[439] *vocula*] is rather a shrill and squeaky voice, like the hissing of steam. The Glasgow translation also seems to miss slightly: 'It was his sallow complexion and squeaky little voice that gave rise to such a slur to sully his reputation.'[440] Indeed the Latin poem brings a rather different version of events in terms of how it unfolds:

> ASSUMPSISSE suum volucri ex Meneide nomen,
> Socraticum auctores Chaerephoonta ferunt.
> Fusca viro facies, & stridens vocula, tali
> Hunc hominem potuit commaculare nota.[441]

Five changes occur when reading this text in conjunction with the *pictura*: a bat is what we first see when encountering the emblem, its name is called and taken from its form, the bat takes the shadow-form of a young woman in this calling (*Meneides*), then its face and voice transform into a scholar who has neglected the (seemingly-superficial) aesthetic pleasures of the external world (Dionysian); this transformation then undermines his reputation (and perhaps the validity of being a humanist scholar): *nota,* as well as being 'sign; mark; letter' is notable, as in having a famous or notorious reputation, sealing the loop of the bat-as-sign; an object that participates in the world. So far, the signified (bats) has been repeatedly appropriated, hollowed out

[436] 'Vespertilio' [The bat, 61] and 'Aliud' [More about the bat, 62] in Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The Emblematum Liber in Latin and English*, pp. 80–81.
[437] Glasgow translation, available online <https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A21a061> [accessed 18 October 2018].
[438] 'fuscō' and 'fuscus' in *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Clarendon: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 71.
[439] 'strīdō' in ibid., p. 1827.
[440] Glasgow translation, as previous.
[441] Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The Emblematum Liber in Latin and English*, pp. 80–81.

and through transfusion, anthropomorphised whilst also interacting with the world. But is this process so anthropomorphic? The *pictura* retains the shape and form of a bat – though the text enacts these transformations, the image definitively states that it is a bat. Recalling the primacy of the picture of the emblem, could it not be that in reverse bats in both of these emblems acquire a form of agency through this transformation – a voice that sounds, a face that can move, and a thinking capacity? In short, that they appropriate human characteristics rather than the other way around. Neither of these emblems' *inscriptione* are moralising mottos, but rather are names waiting to be filled, like *emblema* themselves. Unlike Baraka's association of naming with the artificiality of the known,[442] 'The Bat' suggests the creative potentiality inherent in naming – or calling forth – such enmeshed presences into these absent spaces. The psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion says of names: 'the name is an invention to make it possible to think and talk about something before it is known what that something is.'[443]

Monstrous Obscurity

The protean agency of these emblems' arbitrary connections is furthered by their two references to birds. Bats in the early modern period were thought to be a type of bird,[444] but the only type of bird that had mammillae – according to the Horapollo and Valeriano.[445] They embodied a hybrid mixture of kinds or of composite parts that simultaneously disturbed and fascinated humanists (such hybrid animals like the Sirens or the Sphinx appear throughout the *EL*).[446] Bats were perceived as monstrous and confused, as 'traditionally, animals that escape from the categories of Genesis (fish that swim, birds that fly, beasts that walk or creep) are monstrous.'[447] Their connotation with deformity also recalls the material etymology of *baroque* – a

[442] Baraka, 'Hunting is Not Those Heads on the Wall', pp. 387–8.
[443] Wilfred Bion, *Elements of Psycho-Analysis* (Bath: Pitman Press, 1963), pp. 87–88.
[444] Conrad Gesner and Ulisse Aldrovandi both classified bats as birds. See Conrad Gesner, *Historiae Animalium, Vol 3: De avium natura (1555), Zurich, 1551–8, p. 733.*
[445] According to Michael Giordano, who compares this emblem to Maurice Scève's emblems of bats in *Délie*. Michael Giordano, *The Art of Meditation and the French Renaissance Love Lyric: The Poetics of Introspection in Maurice Scève's Délie, Object de Plus Haulte Vertu (1544)* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), p. 249.
[446] See for example, 'Sirenes' [Sirens, 116]. 'Who would ever have believed that there are such things as birds without wings, and girls without legs, and fish without a face that, nonetheless, sing through their lips? Nature refused to join together such things, but the Sirens teach that it is possible […etc]', Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The Emblematum Liber in Latin and English*, p. 137.
[447] Karen Edwards, 'Milton's Reformed Animals: An Early Modern Bestiary', *Milton Quarterly*, 39/4 (2005), pp. 183–292, (p. 214).

deformed or irregularly-shaped pearl. Such monstrous *escapes* – flying away – from categorisation, is like the excessive processes of materiality and language that result in obscure forms, an innate part of aesthetic production. Of such excessive external aesthetics, Tiffany considers such a product to be poetic: the residue of logical procedures done in secret that compounds the ontological substance of obscurity.[448] Tangentially, the same monstrous connotations can be applied to speculative theory. Coole and Frost uncontentiously write, 'our material lives are always culturally mediated, but they are not only cultural.'[449] By failing to recognise the transformative agency of the (monstrous) external world, the material and the aesthetic, Chaerophon the Socratic – the speculative scholar – is in turn swallowed by it.

Such transformations however, only ever take place within the confines of metaphorical similarity – that contract of language that in being unavoidably anthropocentric amplifies the arbitrariness of such associations. Yet in the case of 'Vespertilio' and 'Aliud' this anchor is loosened by the multitude of potential meaning given by two emblems side-by-side, while the *pictura* is doubly emphasised. Of 'Aluid', Heckscher reads this emblem as simply offering 'an extensive catalogue of the bat's melancholy characteristics',[450] Simona Cohen perceives it as an admonishment against avarice,[451] Michael Giordano considers it a cautionary warning against narcissism,[452] while for Karen Edwards the bat represents what is stated in the *subscriptio*: 'a philosopher who, through gazing at the stars, damages his sight and can no longer truly see; or one of those wily men who courts both sides and is trusted by neither.'[453] As an alternate suggestion, to recall obscurity as quality that describes itself, 'Aliud' could also be read as a metaphor of the obscurity of metaphor itself. The Latin *Vespertilio* [bat], is from *vespers*, evening, a borderline zone of grey twilight (misty, vaporous and foggy, as in the *caligo* of *caligant oculis* [befogged or misty-eyed[454]]) that as Cohen notes, encouraged medieval associations of bats with nocturnal darkness, living in caves, with sinfulness and the devil[455] – dark ecology.

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[448] Tiffany, *Infidel Poetics: Riddles, Nightlife, Substance*, p. 13.
[449] Coole and Frost, *New Materialisms*, p. 27.
[450] William S. Heckscher, *Art and Literature: Studies in Relationship* (Baden-Baden: V. Koerner, 1994), p. 630.
[451] Cohen, *Animals As Disguised Symbols in Renaissance Art,* p. 32.
[452] Giordano, *The Art of Meditation and the French Renaissance Love Lyric*, p. 249.
[453] Edwards, 'Milton's Reformed Animals: An Early Modern Bestiary', p. 213.
[454] Giordano, *The Art of Meditation and the French Renaissance Love Lyric*, p. 249.
[455] In Leviticus they are described as abominable and repugnant, not to be eaten. Cohen, *Animals As Disguised Symbols in Renaissance Art,* p. 233.

Bats were regularly classed, along with owls, night-ravens and 'scritch-owls', as ill omens that call out – 'fatall birds' according to Milton. Edwards writes of Milton's wording,

> Milton may be thinking of a passage from Book 2 of [Spenser's] *The Faeire Queene,* when Guyon and the Palmer, enveloped in a "grosse fog" that overspreads "With his dull vapour […] heauens chearfull face," are beset by a flock of "vnfortunate / And fatall birds."[456]

Enveloped within the fog of the Anthropocene, readers in modernity are similarly beset by material emergences from nonlinear timeframes: such metaphors attached to them are 'fatall birds' uttering obscure (squeaky, scritchy and low-voiced) cries that retain material essences of their histories in hybridised shapes – bird-bats – whilst simultaneously *not being* definable bats, birds, or even shapes. This indefinable metaphorical hybridity surely, is one of the markers of an ontological property that could be described as ecological: nothing continues but an interconnected series.[457]

Important too, is the emergence once again as conflict-as-methodology: only through conflict, whether of violent appropriation or the animal contract – either through commodification or language – can the movements of what could described as this *arbitrary morphe* be witnessed, a moving stream of material-aesthetic alterations flying from, but still tied to, their signified sources. As Giorgio Agamben writes: 'It is only in the burning house that the fundamental architecture problem becomes visible for the first time'.[458] The movement, or smoking out, of such enmeshed animal presences in the *EL* in this manner is not unlike the dim twilight hunting scene in 'The Awntyrs Off Arthur', the poem's aesthetic sense of obscurity compounded by the strange hieroglyph-like materialism of Anglo-Saxon to a modern

[456] Edwards, 'Milton's Reformed Animals: An Early Modern Bestiary', p. 212.
[457] Of Borges' 'Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge', Foucault writes, 'It is not the "fabulous" animals that are impossible, since they are designated as such, but the narrowness of the distance separating them from (and juxtaposing them to) the stray dogs, or the animals that from a long way off look like flies. What transgresses the boundaries of all imagination, of all possible thought, is simply that alphabetical series (a, b, c, d) which links each of those categories to all the others.' Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2002), p. xvii.
[458] Followed by, 'art, at the furthest point of its destiny, makes visible its original project'. Giorgio Agamben, *The Man Without Content,* trans. Georgia Albert (1970; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 115.

reader:[459]

> Then durken the dere in the dymme skuwes,
> That for drede of the deth droupes the do.
> And by the stremys so strange that swftly swoghes
> Thai werray the wilde and worchen hem wo.
> The huntes thei halowe, in hurstes and huwes,
> And till thaire riste raches relyes on the ro.
> They gaf to no gamon grythe that on grounde gruwes.
> The grete greundes in the greves so glady thei go;
> So gladly thei gon in greves so grene.[460]

Though the remnants of bats, kestrels and ibises can 'swiftly swoghe' in their own strange streams of matter – moving in obscurity towards a place which, like the solid blankness of green graves, escapes similitude and readability – with these conflicts, it is always the enactor of violence who is frozen and diminished *out* of the image; the huntsman who is also the narcissistic philosopher fixated on his own preoccupations, who is also the scholar immobilised into a 'swarthy face', who is also the emblematist, who is also the poet-lover. Further, in engaging in these conflicts hunters, philosophers, scholars, emblematists, poets and lovers seek shadows, being half-blind in the light of immediate, external appearances.[461] In doing so they also enact a fallacy, a dereliction of duty in living-in-the-world that simultaneously eludes them, as they can only see 'false things' and have 'no credibility' – and as previously stated, an error that leads to this externality swallowing them. Contemporary *baroque* pop pioneer Sufjan Stevens in 'Futile Devices', on his record *Age of Adz* (with its cover of a bat-like robot) sings:

> It's been a long long time
> Since I've memorised your face
> It's been four hours now
> Since I've wandered through your place
> And when I sleep on your couch I feel very safe

[459] Tiffany writes of reading other early modern 'quire whids': 'In this respect, the reader of these lines in the twenty-first century, like his sixteenth-century counterpart, finds himself in the dark—a verbal darkness—and is indeed willing to pay for the pleasure of cruising the unknown in a text, to sample the tongue of the cultural "infidel"'. Tiffany, *Infidel Poetics*, p. 2.
[460] 'The Awntyrs Off Arthur' in Thomas Hahn, ed *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales* (New York, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1998) digitised at <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/hahn-sir-gawain-awntyrs-off-arthur> [accessed 18 October 2018].
[461] Giordano, *The Art of Meditation and the French Renaissance Lov*e Lyric, p. 249.

And when you bring the blankets I cover up my face.[462]

'*I cover up my face*' – to return to the frozen scholar with their fingers to their lips 'In Silentium' [11], the response to such obscure processes emerging within places (the space of the emblem, the *loci communes* of the categories of the *EL,* the hidden forest, the night sky, the empty or burning house) seems to be to enact or figurate it in a mirroring. So the humanist subject embodies obscurity to hide and remain silent – and by doing so, remains within the framework.[463] Giordano writes of bats in Maurice Scève's emblems: 'With respect to chiaroscuro, the bat's *lucifuga* [light avoidance] crystallizes a number of meanings in *Délie*. They include not only the screen over light which brings knowledge, and the transitional state of purification, but also the double effect of the *pharmakon* as melancholy and antidote.'[464] Through conflict-as-methodology, the unease surrounding the knowledge that representations (and perhaps knowledge itself) have a hazy double movement in an obscurity which indiscriminately covers like fog, structures the emblematic thought with a further web of connections – and perhaps even more importantly, resituates the human subject not as a decentred in terms of agency, but through canny assimilation ('crafty folk') as remaining *within* these material places in camouflage. Or to take up the thread of bats gaining protean agency, remain there as residues at the grace of nonhuman agency that swallows them.

[462] *Age of Adz* also feedbacks into the pre-emptive advertising present in the emblem form. Sufjan Stevens 'Futile Devices', *Age of Adz* (Asthmatic Kitty, 2010)
[463] Likewise Tiffany via., Georg Simmel writes of secrecy and silence that such hermetic phenomena are oriented towards sociality – secrecy as a communal event, that also 'leads to a heightened awareness of the material *means* of secrecy' – language being the material medium. *Infidel Poetics*, pp. 4–5.
[464] Giordano, *The Art of Meditation and the French Renaissance Love Lyric,* p. 249.

Fig. 14. 'Vespertilio'

Fig. 14. 'Aliud'

Printing Plants

Reseeding Out of the Frame

To follow a different thread in terms of natureculture relations in the *EL*, the same arbitrary connections between empirical natural object and sign continues when considering the plants in the emblems. Yet it is most obviously with plants that a weird loop also starts to materialise between representations of nature and external living organisms and extratextuality – the sign participating in the world as it did with Chaerophon's reputation. This occurs in two ways: within structural linkages, and through material processes of production that allowed for the reduplication of representations. As before, to provide a list of the plants appearing in the *EL* in text or image:

Almond (1); apple (1); box-wood (1); colewort (2); coriander (1); cypress (1); elm (1); esparto grass (1); fig (2); fir (1); foxglove (1); fruit-tree (1); garlands (6); grass (2); grape vine (6); gourd-tree (1); hay (1); laurel (1), lettuce (1); lotus (1); ivy (1); millet (1); mint (2); moly (1); mulberry (1); narcissi (1); oak (3); olive (1); orange (1); palm (2); pine (2); pomegranate (1); quince (1); reed-grass (1); walnut tree (1); wheat (3); willow (1); white poplar (1), as well as background vegetation and unspecified background trees as in (47) on which a hangs shield depicting a turtledove, or another where Cupid holds unspecified flowers (106).

These blurry or unidentified background landscapes of shrubs and trees seem to have a merely decorative purpose, but are perhaps like Hubert Damisch's concept of cloud as not used 'for its pictorial value, but as a marker, a conventional determinative' – of the limits of representation,[465] growing vine-like into the emblems. Generally however, the specified plants in the *EL* are generally included for their medicinal properties or their affect on the body. Through the logic of sympathetic magic found in classic and medieval medicine (disciplines that also prized the art of rhetoric[466]), the emblems analogically position plants as an agentic mirror of the human body and emotions – as in rocket to create lust and lettuce to relieve it,[467] the many references to wine and grapes, or the intoxicating lotus.[468]

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[465] Damisch, *A Theory of /Cloud/*, p. 109.
[466] 'The Surgeon must know also rhetoric, with which one learns to speak with facility and elegance about everything, as lawyers do…' Jehan Yperman, *De Cyrugie* [1310], 1, iv. Quoted in Plinio Prioreschi, *A History of Medicine: Medieval Medicine, Vol. 5* (Omaha: Horatius Press, 2003), p. 497.
[467] 'Amuletum Veneris' [A charm against love, 77].
[468] 'In oblivionem patriae' [Forgetting one's country, 115].

Similarly, the oak snaps with civil discord.[469] Like the linkages suggested by the frequent garlands, plants therefore joined humans and their environment, or the non/human microcosm and the cosmic macrocosm.[470] This is not to insinuate that such a relation was not anthropocentrically contractual: as with animals, plants were considered as grown for humans to both tend and exploit. Overall, thinking of Manning's 'persistent [symbolic] replication', plants persisted for their charisma – like the exotic *mana* of the pomegranate on Cupid's shield[471] – their commonplace recurrences in the popular imaginary (which was also environmental – to recall that emblematic symbols structured the entirety of early modern life through their mass-dispersal on exterior objects[472]), and as medicinal mirrors of human biology.

More directly than wild animals, which are less easily cultivated, these emblematic garlands linked the microcosmic to the macrocosmic through analogous associations also re*seeded* themselves out of the *EL* quite literally. In another instance of the weird chronology of emblem books, plants in emblems emerged both tangentially and as precursors to standardised botanical illustrations,[473] and therefore in some ways affected real-world cultivation through the dispersal of persistently imitated forms. Their empiric value for medical practitioners and gardeners, as with animals was often due to remnants of natural knowledge from antiquity embedded in the emblems: Alciato's sources such as the *Ovide moralisée* explained plants mythically or morally, while Pliny's *Natural History* contained botanical lore which was also handed down in herbal manuscripts – herballs – that were carefully reconstituted in the Renaissance, such as Dioscorides' *De materia medica* which examined the affective quality of plants on humans.[474] Yet this *reseeding* of botanical knowledge was only possible through the creation of standardised printing, a recognisable aesthetic that froze these obscure forms into signs and introduced set taxonomies – another form of *loci communes* (genera). It is perhaps therefore

[469] 'Ilex' [The holm-oak, 206].
[470] As in 'Populus Alba' [The White Poplar, 212]. 'Because the two-colored poplar adorns the mane of Hercules, day and night alternate in the succession of time.' Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The Emblematum Liber in Latin and English*, p. 242.
[471] 'In statuam Amoris' [A statue of love, 114].
[472] Manning, *The Emblem,* p. 16.
[473] The emergence of botany in a modern sense can be dated to Otto Brunfels in 1530.
[474] (Unlike Alciato), Dioscorides 'continually teases clarity from sparse description, reaches precision only after many, many observations of plants, seasons, fruits, seeds and localities and—this is the cornerstone for Dioscorides—records what drugs "did" in patients [a 'drug affinity system']'. John M. Riddle, *Dioscorides on Pharmacy and Medicine* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1985), pp. xiii–xiv.

unsurprising that the final section of the *EL* – 'Arbores' a set of some 14 moralised trees intended to reflect on the human microcosm – was illustrated with woodcuts taken directly from herbals.[475] To compress this contention: representations of plants in the emblems, though selected arbitrarily and for contractual reasons like Lucretius' animal contract, ended up generating real-life copies of themselves through the same *aesthetic* arbitrary morphe that changed living (or indeed mythic) plants into representations of plants. Just as oriental gardens in the Hellenistic period – and Erasmus's garden dialogues[476] – developed refined conceptions of 'nature'[477] from within urban spaces, the natureculture grating of artificial emblems spiralled into a grafting of real biodiversity onto the world. This could also be read as an active form of a simulated memory culture, to be expanded on in the next chapter.

This weird loop was not relegated to plants, but as Enenkel and Smith note (though not along this argument's lines) of the emblematic influence on natural sciences, Conrad Gestner's early volumes on zoology explicitly used the *EL* as source material and formatted his presentation in an emblem-like manner. [478] Similarly, the contemporaneous concept of the '*natural history album,* both in manuscript and printed form, [was] an album of images of animals, plants etc., sometimes accompanied by inscriptions.'[479] Harms has likewise traced how 'emblematic knowledge' was retained in scientific writings from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century.[480] To return to Borgogni, emblem books were aesthetically pleasurable artefacts (for commercial purposes) – to which might be added, that allowed for material processes taking place in obscurity to further themselves in exterior environments.

The Spectre of Environmental Determinism

However, this notion of material self-sporing or replication that is perhaps similar to Latour's, and subsequently Bennett's, notion of nonhuman actants, must be examined in relation to damaging concepts of environmental determinism. Analogous concepts of medicine in the vein of Hippocrates also laid the classical substrata for subsequent

[475] Bregman, *Emblemata,* pp. 51–52.
[476] Erasmus' *Convivium religiosvm* (1522) takes place in a garden filled with plants and painted images.
[477] Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, p. 25.
[478] Enenkel and Smith, *Emblems and the Natural World*, p. 31.
[479] Ibid., p. 33.
[480] Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem,* p. 209.

theories of environmental determinism, in which climate and plants were held to direct human behaviour or even national character.[481] This racist doctrine was further propagated by for example, nineteenth century geographers and as late as John. E. Chappell Jr's 'environmental causation' in the 1970s, in which environmental agents were given the role of sole determinant on human behaviour, rather than being one affect among many.[482] As well as its misogynistic representations of women,[483] the *EL* presents a racist caricature in this determinist mode. In 'Impossibile' [An Impossible Task] the *pictura* depicts two white men washing a black man.[484] The *subscriptio* – a translation of Lucian from the *Greek Anthology* – reads, 'Why do you vainly set about washing off the Ethiopian? Ha, ha! Give it up: nobody can ever enlighten the shadows of blackest night.'[485] (see Fig. 15). This grotesque emblem weakens the geographer James Blaut's definition of environmental determinism as a determinate [e.g. biophysical] external factor on human society, a causal connection *not* mediated by culture[486] – who in culture gets to state what is 'cultural' and 'natural', who is 'enlightened' or 'savage'?[487] Correspondingly, herballs as keys to plants, as well as being prints and therefore replicable, likewise suggest comprehensive universal 'natural' structures in a Platonic sense, at the expense of obscuring variations and differences in living plants: the violence of homogenous standardisation. Such a flattening too, is the neocolonialist danger that shadows a project of 'expanding the transcultural imagination', and another justification for the

[481] Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore,* p. 8.
[482] William B. Meyer, Dylan M.T. Guss, 'Neo-*Neo-Environmental Determinism: Geographical Critiques*, p. 7. Meyer and Guss also provide a comprehensive overview of the history of environmental determinism in geography. (pp. 5-28).
[483] To be further explored in Chapter Four.
[484] Erasmus in his *Adagia* writes 'You wash the Ethiopian', and 'The Ethiopian does not turn white.' Alciato however was more responsible for disseminating this particularly offensive emblem, which also subsequently appeared in Geoffrey Whitney's *A Choice of Emblemes* (1586). Warren Steele and Jennifer Craig trace Alciato's influence of this theme in Ben Jonson's *The Masque of Blackness* (1605): 'washing black skin white was proverbial in early modern Europe, and particularly in Britain, for attempting to achieve the impossible'. Steele and Craig, *R|EVOLUTIONS: Mapping Culture, Community, and Change from Ben Jonson to Angela Carter* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), p. 44.
[485] Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The Emblematum Liber in Latin and English*, p. 59.
[486] James M. Blaut, *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 1993), p. 69. Blaut's book however provides an excellent analysis and history of how colonial ideologies shaped geography as a discipline.
[487] Manning, who also fails to note the exploitation of vernacular craftspeople and appropriation of cultural capital during Saturnalia, describes 'Impossibile' thus: '[it] alludes to one of the silly games played during the Saturnalia: participants, faces blackened with soot, were pushed into a tub of cold water. Part of the ritual merriment of the Fete des Fous in early modern Europe also involved smutted faces.' *The Emblem*, p. 234. As the epigram is adapted from the *Greek Anthology* this seems a contentious connection at best, and demarcates how easily a cultural reading of objects (here, Manning's focus on 'play') can *cover* its sources.

importance of examining obscurity in relation to emblematics, as well as of hesitant criticism, and an emphasis on indecipherable *natureculture* processes. A refusal to separate 'nature' and 'culture', or to go along with as Andrew Sluyter writes, 'the modern imperative to purify nature and society'[488] is key. Chapter Five will return to imperial violence and the flattening effect of universals in the *EL*, but for now, considered as a process rather than as an artefact taking place in obscurity, the cultural ecology of the *EL* – though not its iconography – remains refreshingly unpredictable, conflicted and unknown.

[488] Andrew Slutyer, *Colonialism and Landscape: Postcolonial Theory and Applications* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), p. 225.

Fig. 15. 'Impossibile'.

A Book That Acts Like *A Book of Natureculture*

> And this thynge is the clowde / But it hath not so moche obscurete that it taketh fro vs the clernes of the day.[489]

So far this chapter's reading of natureculture connections in the *EL* implicitly implies that the natural world can be read and represented to a degree – a hermeneutical connection that is equally assumed by cultural geographers, ecocritics and scholars working within the environmental humanities at large. To return to new materialisms, what Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann present as 'storied matter'[490] is loosely circulating as a concept amongst ecocritical theorists, including those creating intersections with quantum physics such as Karen Barad: a narrative is still assumed to be springing from nature. While Chapter Five will return to 'storied matter', with this in mind, this section will focus on the question of how the *EL* might be read as a 'Book of Nature(culture)'.

The EL As Mirror of the World

To begin with the bigger picture – the picture of pictures – as previously suggested in regards to its locking–in qualities, the *EL* contains a vast amount of stored information that overspills generic categorisation and extends beyond its hazy purposes as a natural catalogue, manual for educational and ethical instruction and so forth. Like Caxton's early woodcut-illustrated encyclopaedia *The myrrour of the worlde* (1481), beyond specific instances and even anthropocentric contracts, the scope of the referents in the *EL* connects the microcosm to the macrocosm. In this sense the *EL* is an extended *Res Naturalis* or 'Book of Nature' in that it maps a world-system.[491] Manning writes with suitably legalese phrasing of emblems' world-mirroring qualities, 'Indeed, we might say that in the *corpus emblematum* the whole known universe is placed under interrogation.'[492] Manning extensively documents the relation between *mappa mundi* and emblematics, as found in Joachim Camerarius ('who devoted each of his four centuries of emblems to a different corner of the created world'), Thomas Palmer, Franciscus Reinzer's *Metereologia philosophico-*

[489] Wiliam Caxton, *Myrrour of Worlde* (1481).
[490] Iovino and Oppermann, 'Introduction: Stories Come to Matter', *Material Ecocriticism,* p. 1.
[491] The *EL* for example opens with three emblems concerning Milan [1, 2 and 3] and, as Moffitt classifies, moves immediately into emblems centred 'God and Religion'.
[492] Manning, *The Emblem,* p. 50.

politica[493] and Jesuits such as Filippo Picinelli whose filtering of things to create his emblematic encyclopaedia endowed them with a physical materiality: 'he found them at first a bundle (a 'manipulus'), which grew into a heap ('acervus'), which in turn became *a huge, shapeless mass ('molem vastam'*) [my italics]. He felt compelled to dispose this chaos into some ordered design.'[494] Just as the shadows of the Awynter's hunted *cervi* [deer] can be misread as running within the heap of *acervus*, so the heavy shapeless cloud of the *molem vastam* seems to recall Haraway's vision of an indeterminate lumpy and fibrous present 'humming with possible futures', or of re-emergent pasts. In short, as with 'locking-in', a medium that acknowledges chains of scale effects. The desire to order and classify such clouds of obscurity was tantamount to humanists, but as mentioned in Chapter Two, documenting these nonlinear materialities emerging within and from the *EL* with clarity was impossible on an onto-epistemological level. Nevertheless, interpretations did – like metaphor's 'fatall birds' – come flying out. As suggested by the Jesuit enthusiasm for emblematic *mappa mundi,* the allegorical interpretation of Nature – as well as stemming from the didactic moral fables of Phaedrus and Ovid – also belonged to the tradition of reading providential or divine meanings from landscape within the framework of Biblical exegesis ('The Book of Nature'). Daly and Moffitt both cite the twelfth century mystic Alan de Lille as exemplifying this common pattern of moving from *res sigificans* (signifying things), to *sensus spritiualis, sive mysticus* (spiritual meaning) in such exegetical readings in emblems: '*Omni mundi creatura / Quasi liber et picture / Nobis est et speculum* ('Every creature [and object] in the world is like a book [providing a] picture and mirror of ourselves') said Lille, of this turn from analogical structures to anagogical ones.[495]

On one level, Alciato's deliberate arbitrary relations between natural object and sign in the *EL* distances it from this exegetical framework, and yet on another as suggested in 'flying bats' reinforces it, through making connections, the tenuousness of which became a form of potentiality. Too, as discussed in regards to 'In Silentium', Alciato displayed a similar proclivity for the hiding of revealed knowledge in a Neoplatonic manner. Arguably the type of exegetical reading practiced by the *EL* as a Book of Natureculture, rather than encrypting a divine plan or spiritual meanings, is

[493] Ibid., p. 120.
[494] Ibid., p. 122.
[495] Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The Emblematum Liber in Latin and English*, p. 5. Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem*, p. 48.

more simply an emphasis on interconnections: an ontological positioning of beings as embedded within shared environments that bear accumulated material traces. 'How the clowdes & rayn come comynly'[496] (Caxton). For example, to return to another denomination of *emblema* as referring to the grafting of a wild tree onto stock, relations of connection and reciprocity are emphasised in the concluding 'Arbores' section whereby allegorised trees, serve as landscape *and* subject. Though these trees are anthropomorphised, this is mainly expressed through *gesture*. In 'Amicitia etiam post mortem durans' [Friendship which endures after death, 160], a 'leafless elm has been embraced by a grapevine with thick, green foliage', while 'In momentaneam felicitatem' [About fleeting happiness, 125] a gourd grows around a pine who warns it of the duo's impending ruin, for though it has grown above the pine's tree-top it will be killed by winter frosts.[497] (See Fig. 16 and 17). Whilst 'In momentaneam' moralises on the perils of arrogance (the gourd 'thought itself superior'[498]) it nevertheless also engages in grafting and connection. It is telling that according to Virginia Woods Callahan, for this emblem 'on the withered tree and the leafy vine, Alciato substituted for the relationship of a man and his mistress for that of a parent and child and that of the relationship of masculine friends' (the parthogenetic humanist academy) as a deliberate alteration to his translation of the Greek epigram to fit his didactic intentions[499] – of connection. A sense of community adjacent to and overlaid over arboreal figuration can likewise be found in Catherine Barnett's contemporary poem 'Epistemology':

> I don't use words, but they can be said to love.
> They might lean in one direction to leave a little extra light for another tree.
> And I admire the way they grow right through fences, nothing
> stops them, it's called *inosculation:* to unite by openings, to connect
> or join so as to become or make continuous, from *osculare,*
> to provide with a mouth, from *osculum,* little mouth.
> Sometime when I'm alone I go outside with my big little mouth

[496] Caxton, *Myrrour of Worlde.*
[497] Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The Emblematum Liber in Latin and English*, p. 186.
[498] 'A gourd, it is said, grew beside a lofty pine and flourished with abundant foliage. When it had enveloped the branches and grown taller than the tree-top, it then thought itself superior to the other trees. The pine said to it: This glory is exceedingly brief. For winter will shortly come which will utterly destroy you.' Glasgow translation.
<https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A21a125> [accessed 5 February 2019].
[499] Callahan, Virginia, 'An Interpretation of Four of Alciato's Latin Emblems' in *Emblematica*, 5/2 (1991, p. 256.

and speak to the trees as if I were a birch among birches.[500]

Inosculation and *osculare* are also derived from *osculor* [to kiss, but also to confer value upon[501]]. Is this another manifestation of obscurity or *oscura*? Kissing – where the self is retained but conjoined into another that cannot be seen, is a gestural practice that like the natureculture grafting and locking-in mechanisms of the emblem, retains differentiations in value between its components whilst also bringing them together in a display. Like the phenomenon of wunderkammers that endowed the nobility with the sense of both ordering and connecting with nature, [502] Colonna's proto-emblematic *Hypernotomachia* as a courtly romance suggested a similar desire for assimilation by presenting a traversable and interconnected world-system built out of visual-verbal fragments, to search for a connecting kiss from the *unseen* Polia, who is what the speaker values the most. The 'natural reading' that the *EL* perhaps similarly encourages then, is of *inosculation* – a natural phenomenon where branches, trunks or roots of trees grow together *and* ornamental grafting. Once again qua Wild, the Baroque hybridity of the emblem was used to gloss over and organicise the word-image divide.[503]

Reading Landscapes

The 1621 edition of the *EL* with its commentaries, glosses, expanded set of emblems and index in particular can be seen as an attempt to order this vast cloud into places – multiply, both in each single emblem, within thematic centres, and as a book as a whole. To read the emblems from an ecocritical perspective is also to read these places. In the spirit of hesitant criticism, in regards to landscapes it seems worth not yet returning to new materialisms, but to previous conceptual currents in cultural geography. This is because geography, which started as a drawing discipline, has since its inception been vexed by questions of visual-verbal representation[504] (just as much as emblems have been vexed by their own definition), from Joseph Conrad's

[500] Catherine Barnett, 'Epistemology', *Academy of American Poets* <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/epistemology> [accessed 2 October 2018].
[501] 'Osculor' in Charlton T. Lewis, *An Elementary Latin Dictionary* (New York, NY: American Book Company, 1890).
[502] 'Noble court society also created new ways of establishing the validity of natural knowledge, for example, in codes of gentlemanly etiquette.' Pamela H. Smith, 'Science on the Move: Recent Trends in the History of Early Modern Science', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 62/3 (Summer 2009), pp. 345–375 (p. 351).
[503] Ibid.
[504] Anoop Nayak and Alex Jeffrey, *Geographical Thought: An Introduction to Ideas in Human Geography* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), p. 13.

'Geography Fabulous' with its 'pictures of strange pageants, strange trees, strange beasts, drawn with amazing precision in the midst of theoretically conceived continents'[505] onwards. It is this practice of representing speculative and real objects within constructed, semi-historical and visual-verbal topographies that most tie together emblem books and cultural geography as methodological practices that pursue embedding, imitating and representing things from the 'Book of Nature', or as with the *EL*, creating objects that act *like* Books of Natureculture – to emphasise gesture as a mimetic action.

In regards to emblems and places – specifically, representations of places, and therefore landscapes – Stephen Daniels and Denis Cosgrove's *The Iconography of Landscape* (1988)[506] reads as the still-most relevant study on this topic. Inspired by the painting, poetry and gardens of Renaissance Italy,[507] Daniels and Cosgrove stated that visual and verbal representations of landscapes, and the materials and surfaces they are represented on, *are landscapes* – landscape being above all not a fixed biophysical terrain but 'a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring or symbolising surroundings […] A landscape park is more palpable but no more real or imaginary, than a landscape painting or poem.'[508] In short, they argued for 'the status of landscape as image and symbol'.[509] Landscapes according to this ontology, are symbolic forms that structure the world, in the vein of Ernst Cassirer's philosophy of symbols and Panofsky's iconology.[510] More recently, the geographer Daniel Weston agrees with this beyond-descriptive aesthetics: 'the representation of

[505] Ibid., p. 11.
[506] Daniels and Cosgrove make direct recourse to emblem books early on, in a small description of Cesare Ripas's *Iconologia* as a 'Renaissance handbook', the encyclopaedic aspect of emblems being more of interest to geographers. The iconographies of Gombrich and Panofsky for Daniels and Cosgrove function as a cross-cultural mode of reading, in which [quoting Panofsky] 'various humanistic disciplines meet on a common plane instead of serving as handmaidens to each other', which is surely relevant to this whole study: the interrogation of symbolic representations tends to, like emblems, and the environmental humanities, suck in many disciplines. 'Introduction: Iconography and Landscape' in Stephen Daniels and Denis Cosgrove, *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays On The Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 2, 6.
[507] Stephen Daniels, 'The Making of The Iconography of Landscape', *Cultural Geographies*, 16/1, pp.12–15 (p. 14).
[508] Daniels and Cosgrove, *The Iconography of Landscape*, p. 1. Possibly building on Carl Sauer's dictum in 'The Morphology of Landscape' (1925) that 'the cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a culture group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, and the cultural landscape is the result […] The natural landscape is of course of fundamental importance, for it supplies the material out of which the cultural landscape is formed. The shaping force, however, lies in culture itself.' Carl Sauer, *The Morphology of Landscape* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1925), p. 26.
[509] Daniels and Cosgrove, *The Iconography of Landscape*, p. 1.
[510] Ibid., p. 3.

experience of place *is* the representation of place.'[511] For Daniels and Cosgrove, this natureculture web asserted the relevance of landscape as a cultural symbol in the face of empiricist investigations that dominate geography, noting this 'gesture' (a choice of word that also brings to mind Henebry's idea of emblems as speechless gestures, or 'dumb signs') by geographers occurred 'notably when likening landscape to a text and its interpretation to "reading"'.[512] Confusingly however, Daniels and Cosgrove merge woodcuts (in reference to Cesare Ripa) and paintings in their analysis, despite the aesthetic differences between these materials. This paradox fits with as Weston and John Wylie have noted, the '*currents of unease* [my italics] circulated as a result of the powerful paradigms established by cultural geographers such as Dennis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels'.[513] For Weston and Wylie as others, this emphasis 'tended to elide the materiality of the landscape itself and also the...relations enacted through and within landscapes.'[514] As a result, after Daniels and Cosgrove's 'symbolic geographies'[515] cultural geographers turned to non-representational theory, placing emphasis on performance and practice-based approaches – as in Tim Ingold's anthropological research where he contends that cultural knowledge is constituted not imported.[516] The fatal weakness of this slide away towards a more phenomenological approach to landscape is precisely when considering the cultural-geographic permutations of hybrid artefacts such as emblem books, which are quite deliberately symbolic and pictorial, quite clearly importing knowledge (fragments of other texts), yet also represent places. One on hand then, hermeneutic interpretations of cultural artefacts *as* landscapes flatten the material differences of both objects and external places-as-landscapes, while on the other, phenomenology overstates the subjective position of the scholar-critic at the expense of the interconnected and porous agency of materialities both in objects and places. These conflicts, like the muddied images that emblems present, invite a prolonged hesitation when considering the possibilities of reading emblems within a revised concept of the Book of Nature.

[511] Daniel Weston, *Contemporary Literary Landscapes: The Poetics of Experience* (Abingdon, Oxon and New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), p. 7.
[512] Daniels and Cosgrove, *The Iconography of Landscape*, p. 1.
[513] John Wylie, *Landscape* (Abingdon, Oxon and New York, NY: Routledge, 2007), p. 163.
[514] Weston, *Contemporary Literary Landscapes*, p. 8 and John Wylie, *Landscape*, pp. 96–7.
[515] Ian Robertson and Penny Richards. eds., *Studying Cultural Landscapes* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2003), p. 4.
[516] Weston, *Contemporary Literary Landscapes,* p. 8.

In complement to Daniels and Cosgrove's assertion that cultural representations and landscapes are the same thing, this chapter has suggested reading the *EL* as a Book of Nature not as an exegetical strategy to obtain concrete knowledge, but to use these interconnections to locate moments of ontological obscurity arising through material encounters embedded in representations. Or to posit materialist poet-philosopher Lisa Robertson riffing on Hannah Arendt: 'I might define thinking this way: the partial access, in a sequence, to an infinite and inconspicuous surface complexity which is not my own', against a paradox of another of her observations 'Reading […] isn't knowledge at all. It's a timely dallying and surge among a cluster of minute identifications.'[517] Taken together, these sentences form swarms of external and internal processes of obscurity that transcend divides between 'symbolic geographies' and phenomenological approaches to landscapes (through inosculation), and correspondingly, divides between the macrocosm and microcosm whilst also retaining in their components the ornamental quality of this same grafting. To return to 'Geography Fabulous', does not the repetition of *strange* in 'pictures of strange pageants, strange trees, strange beasts' form a similar interconnecting umbrella, the strangeness (the epitome of which is 'not my own') is made anew each time through persistence? Of places in representation, Damisch writes: 'Pictorial writing itself *produces*, either positively or negatively, its own substratum.'[518] The landscape is created again and again. With a similar repetitive persistence, the bats in 'Vespertilio' and 'Aliud' have little to do with biophysical bats or certain knowledge, yet they form a matrix of associations – minute identifications – that are *as* affect-ive as (material) bats, and retain the link to the (material) form of bats – and as previously stated, morphe outside of the text within weird chronologies to affect real-life bats through historical zoology.

Potential Facticity

In considering the potential productivity of Speculative Emblematics' hermeneutics of obscurity that insists on material interconnections in relation to an emblem book as acting like an (ontological) Book of Natureculture, the same obscurity of these connections also carry the connotations of being insufficient, irrelevant and obscene

[517] Lisa Robertson, *Nilling: Prose Essays on Noise, Pornography, the Codex, Melancholy, Lucretius, Folds, Cities and Related*, p. 13.
[518] Damisch, *A Theory of /Cloud/*, p. 104.

in the manner of modern definitions of obscurity. This suspicious viewpoint, coterminous with Enlightenment thinking, suggests that emblems engage in a wilful distortion of knowledge and are therefore *not useful*, by which might be taken they have no meaning to bear on the present – and if the *EL* (as it is, as previously stated, a catalogue of cultural biodiversity) is read as being like a Book of Natureculture, it constitutes a threat which is of then misreading the [current] 'real' Book of Nature/culture – the world – in the Anthropocene. Too, as stated, the past and present can no longer be easily demarcated. The sense of unease that pervades the emblems through fear of civic misbehaviour, as well as cultural geographers' unease in regards to 'symbolic landscapes', might denote the same thing: a fear that a situation is being misread. Misreading however, is fundamental to both the emblem form and this thesis' methodology.

To put this contention in reverse, what happens when emblems are taken at face value as superficial moralising, squabbles and injokes, compared to empirical knowledge (as with the natural characteristics of emblematic animals), and kept within an iconological framework that only refers to itself? Such an approach separates culture from nature, the nonhuman from the human, and by doing so calls into question the validity of cultural epistemologies of meaning-making in relation to the world. An attempt to decode or 'unlock' Alciato's emblems to reveal mere allegorical subjectivity and ideological fable in this manner would be to parallel the static unifying outcome of the fear that emerged in modernity that bucolic and pastoral landscapes in the Classical and Romantic tradition were in fact *meaningless* because of their artificiality,[519] just as emblem books were indeed denounced as bizarre compendia of illiterate rubbish in later centuries. As with this thesis' sceptical approach to the benevolence of theory, such a mode of reading should not be criticised, though also curtails possibility: a focus on one aspect of an object rather than others. To return to 'Vespertilio' and 'Aliud', this 'darker' – possibly deeper – side of obscurity's relation to meaningless nonsense can be illustrated by a passage in the *Odyssey,* when Penelope's murdered suitors follow Hermes to the underworld:

> gibbering like bats that squeak and flutter in the depths of some mysterious cave when one of them has fallen from the rocky roof, losing his hold on his

[519] As described by for example, Terry Gifford. See Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism* (Abingdon, Oxon and New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), pp. 33–34.

> clustered friends. With such shrill discord the company set out in Hermes' charge, following the Deliverer down the dark paths of decay […] the disembodied wraiths of men.[520]

The *EL* can be seen as an analogous bizarre wormhole, with Alciato-as-scholar-author taking the trickster-form of Hermes. Harms in considering the authority of emblems emphasises the importance of the title-page,[521] which in the *EL* acts almost like a portal into this world of distortions that the reader falls into. Similarly, in contemporary speculative realist philosophy, 'the move toward realism is not a move toward the stuffy limitations of common sense, but quite often a turn toward the downright bizarre'.[522] Though emblems such as 'Concordia insuperabilis' [Concord is insuperable, 40] and 'Ilex' [The holm-oak, 206], emphasise the humanist fear of civil discord (see Fig 18),[523] the *EL* inevitably cultivates 'shrill discord' through its merging of many references. As with the integration of botany and zoology, emblems through their locking–in mechanisms tended to appropriate not only objects of scientific study, but scientific systems of ordering and classification (the spirit of investigative empiricism that as a naturephilosophy it also avoided). For example, Manning contends that Alciato's recurrent use of mathematical and scientific instruments in the *EL* such as 'the plumb-line, the astrolabe, sets of scales, clocks or dials, the set-square, the telescope, reading glasses, the file, the scissors and the saw […was based on] a faith that such invisible and abstract notions can be exactly determined, measured and proportioned.'[524] This appropriated and appropriative faith in measurability and quantification contributed to emblems' seeming *promise* of obtaining knowledge, further glossing the emblem with 'potential facticity', to hijack Schöne's term.[525] Schöne perceived emblems as involving a dual function of

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[520] Quoted in D. M. Thomas, *Poetry in Crosslight* (London: Longman, 1975), p. 111.
[521] Harms, 'The Authority of the Emblem', p. 3.
[522] *The Speculative* Turn, p. 7.
[523] 'There was concord between triplet brothers, such mutual care, one love between them all; and so, unconquerable by human force, they held wide realms and were called by the one name of Geryones.' [40], Glasgow translation <https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A21a040> 'Because the holm-oak splits spontaneously through excessive inflexibility, it provides symbols for civic discord.' [206]. Glasgow translation <https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A21a206> [accessed 7 February 2019].
[524] Manning, *The Emblem,* p. 135.
[525] Schöne attempted to identify the function of the parts of the emblem based on the idea that the emblem depicted more than it portrays. Schöne: 'The *res picta* of the emblem is endowed with the power to refer beyond itself; it is a *res significans*'. Dieter Sulzer and Bernhard Scholz subsequently rejected the term as 'the modification inherent in "potential" is illogical' [though not to the misreading of Speculative Emblematics] Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem*, p. 44, 47.

representation and interpretation, to which he applied the quasi-Latin terminology *res pictura* and *res significans*.[526] Bath outlines of Schöne's interpretative system that:

> Schöne's distinction seems to rest on the emblem's demand for what he calls "facticity" or "potential facticity", by which he means the credibility of the motif. Emblems, he reminds us, normally moralise the actual properties of objects in the real world, and thus they depend, in ways that not all metaphor does, on a belief shared by author and reader in the reality of their symbolic object and its properties.[526]

Whilst this corroboration of signifier and signified – whether object or concept – correlates with the natureculture processes delineated in this chapter, such a framework also strays back into the sacramental structure of Biblical exegesis or McAlpine describes of exegetical emblematics, 'hieroglyphicks' that presented 'signs alongside explications of their significance. Emblems thus do not create meaning, but rather draw out the divine significance already encoded in natural objects by employing a hermeneutic homologous to God's own.'[527] The necessity for a metaphysical background, structure or even critical theory to guide emblems' obscure hermeneutic processes out of nonsense seems substantiated by Harms' view that 'the affinity between natural science and emblematics is lost whenever the scientific author does not respect the teaching of the allegorical interpretation of the world'.[528] Though for this thesis, this may means that a speculative reading of emblems can only take place within the framework – the hesitant net – of its own theory, the insufficiency, irrelevancy and 'rubbish' attached to this darker side of obscurity also perhaps furthers the credibility of obscurity as a material process that is articulated at a heightened level by the emblem form, rather like a funnel of distortions that carries matter – and consequently, meaning – along *consistently* (to recall poetics as a consistency). Here, symbolism accrues the patina of credibility that is transferred *from* materials, or as Scott Wilson writes of speculative materialism, it follows 'the medieval and Renaissance convention of the "elaborate conceit that allows one to toy

[526] Bath, *Speaking Pictures,* p. 4.
[527] McAlpine, *Victorian* Emblematics, p. 2. Daly comes to similar conclusions: 'If it is correct that the emblematic picture is characterized by potential facticity and priority of idea vis-a-vis the interpretative text, which discovers in it a higher meaning, unlocks an inherent significance, then one will have to trace this back to the typological exegesis and the allegorical procedures of medieval theology which understood everything created as an indication of the Creator, and sought to reveal the significance implanted into things by God, to uncover their christological relevance directed towards the divine centre of meaning'. Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem*, pp. 47–48.
[528] Harms, 'The Authority of the Emblem', p. 9.

with the devices of science"'.[529] This emphasis on 'elaborate' – to recall Alciato's descriptions of his *emblema* as 'elegant trifles' – is also mirrored by Whitehead's semi-theological concept of nature's thirst for novelty,[530] and complements this chapter's concept of *arbitrary morphe*. This is not a smooth flow but a warping wormhole that flattens objects through the aesthetic of woodcuts. William Morris:

> it does not often help poems much to *solve* them, because there are in poems so many exquisitely small and delicate forms of thought moving through their music, and along with it, that cannot be done in prose, any more than the infinite variety of form, and shadow, and colour in a great picture can be rendered by a coloured woodcut.[531]

Emblems are poems moving continuously in a prolonged hesitation – a consistency, but emblems are also monochromatic woodcut images that, contra Morris, through visual negation and simplicity arguably suggest an 'infinite variety of form'. The contemplative dynamic induced by the merging of these apposite structures was the key to engaging with this process: if the *EL* is *like* a Book of Natureculture, it is best reflected in the mode in which it encourages the witnessing of interconnections in obscurity that cannot be solved, but rather proliferate with potentialities through inosculation and ornamental grafting. In this sense an emblem book performs an entwined nonhuman and human gesture, and one that is also profoundly connected to theory-making. Such a conclusion complements that of the previous chapter, which focused on the material processes of the *EL*. To return to microcosmic and macrocosmic connections, quantum physics can be conceived as similarly focusing on processes and measurements that move with unbridled excess, as does within a larger scope, climate science. With such an excess in mind ('exquisitely small and delicate'), it's productive to misread Bath's own counter-theory of emblems as a structuralist assemblage, the *vraisemblable,* as 'a discourse which requires no justification because it seems to derive directly from the structure of the world'[532] – by which he means the alluvial generation of semantic signs – and take it literally, to read that emblems are

[529] Scott Wilson, 'Neroplatonism' in *Speculative Medievalisms*, p. 139.
[530] Whitehead: '[God's] envisagement comes from the thirst for some novelty that this thirst is going to induce, but which, by definition, will go beyond it.' Quoted in Isabelle Stengers, *Thinking With Whitehead: A Free and Wild Creation of Concepts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. xiv.
[531] William Morris on Robert Browning, quoted in Fiona Maccarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* (London: Faber, 2010), p. 100.
[532] Bath, *Speaking Pictures,* p. 6.

indeed *speculatio* (mirrors) of Earth Systems in this manner. The loop of speculation begins again: 'Hier begynneth the booke callyd the Myrrour of the worlde…'[533]

[533] Caxton, *Myrrour of Worlde*.

Fig. 16. 'Amicitia etiam post mortem durans'.

Fig. 17. 'In momentaneam felicitatem'.

Fig. 18. ‘Ilex’.

Chapter Four: The Material Topography of an Ancient Mediterranean Memory Culture

While Chapter Three briefly explored the question of reading emblematic landscapes in relation to the Book of Nature, this chapter focuses on reading emblematic topographies through an alternate lens. Taking the ancient Mediterranean topography that features as a pervasive background in the *EL* as its central point of enquiry, it notes the difficulty of identifying a spatial scale frame for reading this environment *within* the emblem, one that is also inosculated to the environment *of* the emblem book itself. Drawing on Christopher Schliephake's concept of collective memory cultures as a form of cultural ecology, it contends that the classical and simulated Mediterranean commonplace in the emblems functions as a spatial container for a memory culture in this manner. Focusing on representations of the Mediterranean sea, it argues that residual affects of melancholy and chaos pleat together multiple temporalities within this protean carrier to present marked or materialised absences. After relating some of these contentions back to processes of speculative and ecological obscurity, it then turns to examining how the environment *of* the *EL* as an object encourages a materialist reading of this topography. It does so via. an examination of decorative frames, the materiality of the book, material dimensions to semiotics and the materiality of hieroglyphs with the concept of a double-edged obscurity as a baseline or ground.

Framing Emblematic Topographies

> And what if all of animated nature
> Be but organic Harps diversely fram'd,
> That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps,
> Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
> At once the Soul of each, and God of all?[534]

As previously noted, the *EL* is in some ways a geographic object: a catalogue of cultural biodiversity, a compendia of objects and instruments used to measure the world and a 'myrrour of the worlde', or an object that acts like a Book of Natureculture. It also presents and traverses across a shifting but generic topography, but one removed from real-world cartography: a classical Mediterranean commonplace, This could perhaps be described via. Samuel Taylor Coleridge as a plastic breeze; a background that ties emblematic narratives together with a gloss of universality. Like the catalogue of cultural biodiversity explored in the previous chapter, the landscapes and seascapes in the emblems' images – about half of the emblems as a reminder, are translations of the *Greek Anthology* – depict this imaginative (though not merely imaginary) antique commons. Its originary referents were always lost, as in the whole concept of 'Rome' itself,[535] but nevertheless encountered, selected, and creatively rewritten by Renaissance humanists. At first glance, this generic topography functions as an arbitrary and decorative backdrop in the *picturae* of the Italian editions of the *EL,* its features unremarkable. Like the emblematic garlands or creeping vines that link to the world however, one aspect of obscurity in relation to representations and material process may be that something is *seemingly* unremarkable, as in indistinguishable, but by this same feature also conceals – or seems to conceal – embedded presences. With this in mind, this generic topography can be loosely separated into four categories: (1) *Sea*; seascapes (the focus of this chapter), that often integrate sloping cliffs and fragments of land and

[534] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'The Eolian Harp', *Poetry Foundation* <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/52301/the-eolian-harp> [accessed 3 January 2019].
[535] 'Rome is almost purely a symbol. With the exception of a very brief period, the history of Rome is a history of the idea of a city that used to be.' Barkan, *Unearthing the Past*, p. 20.

ambiguous buildings,[536] (2) *Mountain*; mountainous urban landscapes and townscapes, combining local medieval elements of, for example Milan, with ancient ruins,[537] (3) *Pastoral*; pastoral scenes of trees, ponds, and featureless hills, often with spectral urban remnants delineating depth towards the horizon,[538] and (4) *Classical*; 'classical architecture' emblems, depicting either ruins or colonnades in the style of Colonna, often as the setting for ancient tombs, themselves part of the landscape.[539] Whilst, for example, Macé Bonhomme's woodcuts for the Lyons edition of 1549 portrayed these landscapes in curving, messy lines that gave them a sense of movement and entanglement,[540] or Jean Richer in the Paris edition of 1584 presented open, light landscapes in which the scene unfolds before the viewer who is positioned as if standing from a high vantage point,[541] by the 1621 edition the landscape was reduced and increasingly stylised and frozen in a heavy manner (see Fig. 19).[542] The next chapter will return to this flattening – and the pastoral and urban landscapes in the emblems. Perhaps noting the importance of these landscapes, unlike the Padua edition of the *EL*, the Flemish illustrator Johannes Sadeler made large-scale engravings of the emblems where detailed landscapes were the central focus, reducing the text and emblematic events to a minor subscript.[543]

'Topography' simply means the detailed description of a place: *topos* [place] and *graphein* [to draw *or* write – to make marks]. What might it mean to refer to antique Mediterranean landscapes and seascapes both re-emerging and re-presented in emblems as a place? In terms of geography, Tuan seminally defined places as centres of meaning, either as direct experiences of physical places, or indirectly: conceptually mediated through cultural representations.[544] In this sense Tuan's notion of places is

[536] See for example emblems 1, 4, 28, 43, 83, 95, 96, 104, 142.
[537] See for example emblems 2, 3, 5, 7, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 27, 30, 45.
[538] See for example emblems 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 40, 41, 42, 44, 46, 49, 50, 51, 52, 54, 60.
[539] See for example emblems 6, 8, 13, 18, 23, 26, 29, 31, 33, 38, 47, 50, 53. [not full lists].
[540] *Andrea Alciato's Emblemes* (Lyons: Rouille, 1549).
[541] *Andrea Alciato's Emblemata* (Paris: Jean Richer, 1584).
[542] See for example, 'Lapsus ubi? quid feci? aut officii quid omissum est?' [Where have I transgressed? What have I committed? What thing incumbent on me has been left undone?, 17], which in the 1546 edition portrays cranes flying over rushing water in a much less stylised manner than by the 1621 edition, whereby the cranes are in a squadron and the river has been replaced with an ambiguous mountainscape. Mason Tung: *Variorum Edition of Alciato* <https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/tung/alciatotungedition-017.pdf> [accessed 6 Feburary 2019].
[543] 'Princeton University Library holds ten of these engravings ([Ex]N7710.A35.1874f).' Manning, *The Emblem,* p. 99. In other emblem books such as William Marshall's frontispiece for George Wither's *Emblemes* (London, 1635) large emblematic landscapes are used to suggest a cosmological scope.
[544] Yi Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), p. 4.

concomitant with Cosgrove and Daniels' argument that representations of landscape *are* landscapes. But what are the differences between places or landscapes and spaces? For Tuan, places do not have observable boundaries and are visible expressions of a specific time period, whereas spaces are locations that have no social connections for a human, no meaning has been ascribed to them – they are more or less abstract.[545] The geographer Edward Relph makes similar assertions, though argues that the two are reciprocal: notions of space are related to place, which in turn derives meaning from its spatial context.[546] More recently, Irwin Altman and Setha M. Low agree that place is a 'space that has been given meaning through personal, group or cultural processes'.[547] So far then, places are made places by the eye of the beholder/s: this seems too subjective a position to take in regards to considering nonhuman agency and material processes, as well as in relation to the ambiguous backgrounds in the *EL*. Further, does thinking in different temporal registers, as Alciato did and Speculative Emblematics does, interfere with Tuan's contention that places are visible expressions of a specific time period? For Altman and Low too, place has linear and cyclical temporal dimensions.[548]

These co-constitutive problems of demarcating place, space and time returns to Clark's idea of 'spatial scale framing': an 'almost universally overlooked structural feature of any kind of reading',[549] as scales inevitably guide what is read and seen from such marks. If the usefulness of geographic definitions of place and space start to fall apart when considering scale framing, it may be because the classical Mediterranean commonplace or topography[550] depicted in both the *EL* and across Renaissance humanist texts and images is derived from accumulated traces emanating from a spatial-temporal context that is truly vast. Once linear temporalities are discarded in favour of what Clark calls 'scale effects': qualitative effects that emerge from quantitative accumulation, or a material concept of scale, other approaches to

[545] Ibid., p. 6.
[546] Dean Seamon and Jacob Sowers, 'Place and Placelessness (1976): Edward Relph in Phil Hubbard', *Key Texts in Human Geography*, ed. by Rob Kitchin and Gill Valentine (London: Sage, 2008), pp. 43–50 (p. 44).
[547] Irwin Altman and Setha M. Low, *Place Attachment* (New York, NY: Plenum Press, 1992), p. 5.
[548] Ibid., p. 5.
[549] Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, p. 73.
[550] As it is a shared topography, the terms topography and commonplace are used interchangeably throughout this thesis.

reading are needed.[551] As suggested in Chapter One however, ignoring this issue is not even optional for scholars in the contemporary environmental humanities as 'the Anthropocene is in itself an "emergent scale effect".'[552] Contemplating an emblematic topography that presents inlaid or re-emergent manifestations of material traces of other pasts that stretch back into the murk of antiquity, whilst also having accumulated additional features within material processes, is similar to the incomprehension one faces when considering for example the years it takes to create coal through geocompression: ancient objects which are then burned unseen across scattered pockets of time. In this way obscurity is once again an ecological quality as well as an emblematic quality: space, time and materiality become blurred. Yet just because such temporalities are *obscure*, emblematic topographies are no less representative of place than for example, French Impressionist paintings of landscapes – rather, their temporal scope is enlarged. Derek Wood observes of spatial and temporal framing that, as well as models and concepts, the usefulness of 'media and aesthetic forms may be limited to particular scale domains.'[553] In this, the practice of scale framing is fundamentally compatible with paying closer attention to the materiality of representations. Arguably, the scale domain for emblematic topographies is simply larger than for those in French Impressionist paintings, and involves a greater degree of discontinuity given the nonlinear emergence of their source materials that were chanced upon and dug up. Of Morton's idea of hyperobjects – huge objects massively distributed across time and space[554] (like global warming, or the Anthropocene) that defy clear representation – Cary Wolfe and Maria Whiteman write:

> To shift the conversation in this way is to realize that any environment is fundamentally a virtual space—virtual in the sense not of less real but of more real, more multidimensional, in a way that is not domesticated or exhausted simply by human ways of knowing, seeing, and experiencing a landscape.[555]

[551] Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, p. 22. See also Derek Woods, 'Timothy Clark's "Ecocriticism at the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept"', *Configurations*, 26/4 (Fall 2018), pp. 502–504.
[552] Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, p. 72.
[553] Derek Woods, 'Scale Critique of the Anthropocene', *The Minnesota Review,* 83 (2014), pp. 133-142 (p. 136).
[554] Morton, *Hyperobjects*, p. 7.
[555] Cary Wolfe and Maria Whiteman, 'Landscape and Inscription', *Environmental Humanities*, 8/1 (May 2016), pp.143–148 (p. 144).

Such a view complements the polyvalence and hybridity of emblems and could also describe emblematic reading, in which *a promise* of knowledge and potential meanings are leveraged as a surplus from materials in a virtual space. The loose abstraction and generic features of the Mediterranean topography interwoven throughout the *EL* also dissolves the viewer's capacity to see clearly beyond the narrative in the foreground. These are conjoined places: the environment *of* the emblem, and the environment *within* the emblem. If there is a spatial frame to situate emblematic topographies (the site of these actions) within, it perhaps needs to be approached from a viewpoint of a collective un-knowing, un-seeing and un-experiencing.

The Ecology of Memory Cultures

In this regard the environmental historian Christopher Schliephake's concept of 'memory cultures' could provide such a frame. Schliephake applies ecocritical concepts of 'space' and 'place' to the study of cultural memory:

> By focusing on the spatial dimension of memory it becomes possible to integrate the natural world into the overall conceptual framework of 'memory cultures,' since it is not merely to be perceived as the background to cultural processes but rather as a central actor within them.[556]

The cultural process of memory creation then, is also an ecological process. Memory and place, as well as biodiversity such as trees, intertwine to create a collective cultural landscape – in the case of the *EL,* an ancient Mediterranean commonplace becomes a spatial container 'marked with the absence of what once was', as well as of lost prior meanings and contexts.[557] The generic but obscure antique topography of the *EL* sounds much like Schliephake's 'mnemonic cultural frameworks which do not […] only possess a normative and stylized quality but also a highly imaginative and creative quality that persistently acts upon its source'.[558] This persistence echoes Manning's notion of ingrained and persistent symbolic forms mentioned in Chapter

[556] Christopher Schliephake, 'Literary Place and Cultural Memory' in *Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology*, pp. 569–589 (p. 569).
[557] Ibid., p. 570.
[558] Ibid., p. 576. Schliephake's spatial interest in memory cultures draws on the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs' relocation of memory as 'a context-dependent social undertaking' and the historian Pierra Nora's idea of *lieux de mémoire* ('places, objects, or simply symbols stored in the collective consciousness that functioned *as containers* of traditions that had *lost their prior meanings* and contexts' [my italics]. Ibid., p. 574.

Two in regards to the material process of the *EL.* Both can be brought together (the latter perhaps demarcating the environment *of* the emblem) under the umbrella of a cultural ecology in which memory cultures play a role. Alciato engaged in this process of producing a collective memory culture embedded *within* an imaginative topography through his philological studies that focused on freshly-excavated ancient manuscripts such as Pliny's *Natural History,* the *Greek Anthology* and Strabo's *Geography*. These not only referred to places, but carried stored knowledge of natural objects, as with herballs. *Marked absences* (such as bats) survived in these rediscovered manuscripts, were dug up, as if they had been dormant *seeds,* and were extracted in various ways by different disciplines. This ties in with emblems' additional function as a contemporaneous form of mnemotechnics;[559] an aid to memory, as recommended by Francis Bacon.[560] Schliephake points out the connection between the classical world and early modern artefacts in relation to memory cultures:

> Ever since antiquity, the close relationship between memory and place has been a recurrent cultural phenomenon – one only needs to think of their metaphorical combination in ancient rhetoric as *loci memoriae*. The Greek poet Simonides, who was said to have invented the mnemonic technique, attached images of the things or facts he wanted to remember to specific imaginative places (usually associated with a house or building) that he could easily recover while strolling through his imagination. According to Frances Yates (1966) this technique was a widely practiced cultural phenomenon until early modern history and had a huge influence on how knowledge was stored and symbolized in Western culture.[561]

As with Simonides, emblems situate information within the space of visual-verbal *loci,* attaching information to images – the environment *of* the emblem. However, scholarly commentary on emblems' mnemonic functions has ignored the notion that if emblems are a device to assist in the material storing of memory, they also participated in the creation of a shared environment – the Mediterranean commonplace *within* the emblems serving as a spatial container. Further, that these inosculated environments participated in wider processes of memory and materiality. Emblems' powerful 'locking-in' qualities were not solely one-way, but released as much as they contained. More widely, Renaissance humanism was in effect – recalling the notion of humanism as a 'climate of thought' – a deliberately created

[559] John Willis recommends Alciato, Beza, and Peacham in his *The Art of Memory* (London, 1621).
[560] Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem,* p. 42.
[561] Schliephake, 'Literary Place and Cultural Memory', p. 573.

memory culture, what Schliephake defines as a 'multilayered and heterogeneous'[562] virtual space, much like the digital cloud, or to return to Wolfe and Whiteman's definition, an inexhaustible environment. One layer of this cloud – the stylised place of an antique Mediterranean commonplace in an emblem book, acted as a spatial container in which residues from classical manuscripts – themselves encountered in the obscure cloud of the past that had emerged in the present – could be reactivated and recycled with subsequent external effects on biodiversity and material culture delineated in previous chapters – a cultural ecosystem.[563] Such encounters bring to mind Derek Mahon's translation of Lucretius (on clouds):

> Sometimes the two things coincide, of course,
> the violent pushing and the rushing wind-force,
> and then you get a cloudburst which persists
> with clouds upon clouds, tempests upon tempests
> pouring out of the heavens, soaking the smoky air
> while the earth breathes back in bubbles everywhere.[564]

Simulated Spaces of a Memory Culture

Participants who are constructing a memory culture are aware of doing so, as with Simonides, or how we take and keep photographs as part of collecting all our paraphernalia of memory today. Of this antique commonplace used to co-ordinate or function as a central actor for the creation of a memory culture, Erasmus touches upon a similar idea to Alciato's 'exchange of paper gifts' mentioned in Chapter Two, and of course both were also in correspondence – a process. Henebry likewise argues that 'the emblem was founded on the use of mnemonic images and conceived by Alciato as a tool of rhetoric, not philosophy. It is a means, a method, not an end in itself.'[565] In his introduction to the *Parabolae* (1514), Erasmus elucidates on his concept of an imaginary community and links this specifically to substituting literary for material objects as part of creating a collective memory culture:

> Friends of the commonplace and homespun sort, my open-hearted Pieter,
> have their idea of relationship, like their whole lives, attached to material
> things; and if ever they have to face a separation, they favour a frequent

[562] Ibid., p. 576.
[563] Peter Finke has developed the notion of a 'cultural ecosystem' derived from among others Gregory Bateson's ecology of mind. See Hubert Zapf, 'Cultural Ecology of Literature – Literature as Cultural Ecology' in Hubert Zapf, ed, *Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology*, p. 140.
[564] Derek Mahon, 'Lucretius on Clouds' in *Harbour Lights* (Loughcrew: Gallery Press, 2005), p. 22.
[565] Henebry, 'Writing with Dumb Signs', pp. 238–9.

> exchange of rings, knives, caps, and other tokens of the kind, for fear that their affection may cool when intercourse is interrupted or actually die away through the interposition of long tracts of time and space. But you and I, whose idea of friendship rests wholly in a meeting of minds and the enjoyment of studies in common, might well greet one another from time to time with presents for the mind and keepsakes of a literary description.[566]

The 'commonplace' here is meant as common-folk, and Erasmus views vernacular object-exchange as substitute-for-body snobbishly, assuming a transcendental detachment of mind from body. Yet if memory cultures are taken to be a material, ecological process, he is in fact proposing the same form of exchange. Further, as the *Parabolae* was a collection of proverbs derived from Pliny, Seneca and Plutarch,[567] this exchange occurs outside 'long tracts of time and space' within an Arcadian landscape of Mediterranean antiquity that best showcases 'common' nature, not as in vernacular but 'universal'. Confusingly, the commons that lies in shadow behind this passage is reserved for a synchronic community of the elite and educated, swapping 'jewels […] parallels selected from the richly furnished world of the greatest authors of antiquity.'[568] As with the reprinting of proverbs and epigrams, this was exchange through *imitatio* rather than orginality, reusing objects that had persisted: from this angle, despite professions of individualism, humanists appear as co-ordinated automatons in the manner of bees and ants.[569] If memory cultures were deliberately simulated, this was part of a natureculture process. In terms of emblems, this is not to say that Greek and Roman cultures explicitly prefigured emblems but their texts were catalysts, and too there were parallels. In 1560 Gabriello Simeoni wrote 'those figures which the ancient Romans used to stamp on the reverse side of their medals were nothing but devices, and sometimes maxims.'[570] He is referring to the emblematic reuse of Titus' coin that depicts a dolphin wrapped around an anchor with the motto

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[566] Dated 15 October 1514, Basel. Quoted in Lisa Jardine, *Reading Shakespeare Historically* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 1996), p. 87.
[567] Erica Rummel, *Erasmus as a Translator of the Classics* (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 1985), p. 81.
[568] Quoted in Jardine, *Reading Shakespeare Historically*, p. 87.
[569] Ana Martins indirectly implies a redistributive element within the enterprise of the Renaissance academy in relation to a commonplace, noting that humanists 'regularly followed Virgil's image of the bees that gather pollen [in order to…] (re)organize [information] and distribute it in basic terms – loci communes. This process of variatio ac renouatio converts the collector into auctor. In many ways, emblematic literature is willing to serve all the purposes of pedagogy, rhetoric and morality.' Ana Isabel Correia Martins, 'Emblemata of Andrea Alciato: Iconography as a Key-Genre of Humanistic Program' in *Conference Proceedings*, p. 135.
[570] Gabriello Simeoni, *Dialogo pio et speculativo* (Lyons, 1560) in Praz, *Studies in Seventeenth Century Imagery,* p. 65.

Semper festina tarde, first used as a mark by the printer Aldus Manutius and later incorporated by Alciato into 'Princeps subditorum incolumitatem procurans' [The prince caring for the safety of his subjects, 144] (See Fig. 20).[571] As with material ornaments, this practical and decorative aspect of emblems – their readiness to be translated into interiors and dispersible objects such as coins and frescos – is testament to the agentic materiality inextricably interwoven into this simulated memory culture. Praz perhaps gives emblematists too much credit when he writes:

> As I have said, they are metaphors dimmed by long use. That of the ship [Vaenius' emblem 55, which shows a ship tossed by the waves], for instance, comes from Ovid [...] and already the Provencal poets had taken it from Ovid. It had become so much of a commonplace that it no longer bore any trace of personal origin. But the emblem writers rescued these debased metaphors, and so revived them as to give back to them the freshness they must have had with the Alexandrian. And even before the little Cupids in the garb of florists, vintagers, perfumers, goldsmiths, fullers, came to light again on the black walls on the House of the Vettii, the emblem-writers knew how to create a similar army, so well had they imbibed the Alexandrian spirit.[572]

For Praz emblems are living heir to antiquity, a dynastic chain whose products he views as 'astonishing occurrences',[573] but he does not consider this chain of scale-effects within wider contexts. The poet Joy Harjo writes: 'We cannot escape memory, but carry it with us like a huge organ with lungs sucking air for survival'.[574] Though a stylised antique Mediterranean topography seems far removed from either historically existing or currently geographical environments, both portraying it and using it as a backdrop for textual and visual construction involved a processes of material and biophysical translations and transitions. If considered in the (non)light of, to turn to Hubert Zapf's reasoning for paying attention to cultural ecology – 'questioning the anthropocentric autonomy of cultural systems by thinking about how natural processes and energies interact with sign-making systems'[575] – in contrast to Praz's

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[571] 'Whenever the brothers of Titan race churn up the seas, then the dropped anchor aids the wretched sailors. The dolphin that cares for man wraps itself round the anchor so that it may grip more securely at the bottom of the sea. - How appropriate it is for kings to bear this symbol, mindful that what the anchor is to sailors, they are to their people.' Glasgow translation. <https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A21a144> [accessed 14 February 2019]. Bernhard Scholz argues for the influence of printers marks on emblems in 'The Truth of Printer's Marks' previously cited.

[572] Praz, *Studies in Seventeenth Century Imagery,* p. 77.

[573] Ibid., p. 29.

[574] Joy Harjo in James Lough and Alex Stein, eds., *Short Circuits: Aphorisms, Fragments, and Literary Anomalies* (Tucson, AZ: Schaffner Press, 2018), p. 63.

[575] Zapf, 'Cultural Ecology of Literature – Literature as Cultural Ecology', p. 142.

focus on the role of the individual scholar, the artificiality of such a process seems to become natural not in the sense of strictly biophysical, but collective and *wild.* This wildness was heightened rather than reduced by simulation or the culture in natureculture, instead of being a return to an originary. 'Greece' for example as both an imaginary and materially residual topographical location instigated and gave meaning to the humanist project of repristinating antiquity within the then-present, but as previously noted its fragments were murky seeds. These were not only altered through the passage of time, but artificial constructions that from the start were the suppressive fruits of plunder,[576] to be further fragmented by chance and erasure into surviving fragments that seemed to function autonomously – the very aspect of fragments that constitutes the alluring-ness of their form, that they can stand by themselves. In regards to an idealised ancient Mediterranean topography that served as a container for an active memory culture, its pristine form as a manifestation of natural truth was likewise inaccessible: as Malcolm Andrews says of landscape and Western art in general, 'A "landscape", cultivated or wild, is already artifice before it has become the subject of a work of art' and 'Landscape pictures breed landscape pictures'.[577] Representations of landscape are the same as landscape, qua Cosgrove, and at the same time representations of landscape that in particular utilise fragments from antiquity are simulacra of simulacra that spread as unchecked wild terrain, disrupting notions of smoothly linear Newtonian chronologies attached to cultural production and mirroring the real-world artificiality of 'natural' landscapes.

Navigating Multiple Chronologies

In terms of how to interpret an ancient Mediterranean topography as a spatial container, reading across this stratigraphy (like Morton's hyperobjects) runs counter to a phenomenological, non-representational approach to landscape in geography (as in, Christopher Tilley[578]), because in such readings, as Weston says, 'historicity has been substituted for immediacy, embedded knowledge for perception.'[579]

[576] 'back to the discoverers of everything from mass-produced sarcophagi to the Laocoon, back to the humanists from Petrarch to Alberti, who constructed an ideology of the past, back to the Romans themselves, who had in the first place created or plundered or collected the art objects as an act of retrieving a more glorious Greek past.' Barkan, *Unearthing the Past*, pp. xxii–xxiii.
[577] Malcolm Andrews, Landscape and Western Art (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 1.
[578] Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments* (Oxford: Berg, 1997).
[579] Weston, *Contemporary Literary Landscapes*, p. 9.

Nevertheless, the same critique could be applied to the philosopher Federico Campagna, who describes his own version of this Mediterranean commonplace (identified with Magic), through an alternate lens of mysticism and Jungian psychoanalysis:

> Like James Hillman's conception of Greece [Hillman: "a historical and geographical psychic region, a fantasy or mythic Greece, an inner Greece of the mind that is only indirectly connected with actual geography and actual history"[580]], my Mediterranean is a place of the imagination rather than a product of cartography. Magic's Mediterranean and Technic's North resemble those sacred cities that French philosopher Henry Corbin locates at the level of the 'imaginal world' (*mundus imaginalis*), where things become forces, and ideas become models for our existence in the world.[581]

Unlike Schliephake's memory culture as form of cultural ecology, Campagna sees this as a metaphorical, detached and malleable mass that 'is haunted by an unnameable temporality'.[582] His Mediterranean as a concept – which seems much like Erasmus' and Alciato's notion of a transcendentally separated exchange – is ultimately an idealist one in that the mind is viewed as transcendent over material, or more specifically, neurochemical processes sublate, rather than are sublated by, materials. The question of imagination throws up or creates further multiplicities and fractures in spatial framing. An alternative might be Novalis' 'encyclopedistics' – a speculative method of scientific classification and attempted synthesis of parts and wholes to produce 'a living *scientific organon*'[583] that emphasised creativity. Yet too, the flattening problem of universals created by interconnections arises – just as new materialisms propose a flat ontology. (The topography of the *EL* is also violently universal in this manner, to be returned to in the next chapter). Novalis: 'Encyclopedistics. Universalization of historical and geographical existence. (Sardinia is everywhere, wherever one sleeps alone).'[584] These imaginary spaces, which nevertheless do interact with the world – as well as the notion of an imaginary

[580] James Hillman, 'An Essay on Pan' in *Pan and the Nightmare* (Washington, DC: Spring Publications, 2015), p. 10.
[581] Federico Campagna, *Technic and Magic: The Reconstruction of Reality* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), p. 9.
[582] Ibid., p. 10.
[583] Quoted in David Wood, 'A Scientific Bible. Novalis and the Encylopedistics of Nature' in Klass Van Berkel and Arjo Vanderjagt, eds., *The Book of Nature in Early Modern and Modern History* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), p. 177.
[584] Novalis [1799], *Notes for A Romantic Encyclopaedia: Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, trans. David Wood (New York, NY: SUNY Press, 2007), p. 26

community detailed by Erasmus – broadly complement Speculative Emblematics' project of expanding the transcultural imagination. Both Campagna and Novalis however, as well as drawing on problematic universalia, struggle to balance spatial effects with immediacy, just like phenomenologists. This may be because, as with the frenetic temporality of the Anthropocene, the past re-emerges materially into the present unbidden and unbounded within a cloud of obscurity: that 'unnameable temporality'. In a critique of such chronological collapses, Erin Fitz-Henry argues that posthumanism's – and here too one might say for humanists, Campagna, Novalis and a theory of Speculative Emblematics – reliance on the presence of the past suggests that:

> '"everything seems endlessly capable of being composed anew." Perhaps paradoxically, such models, while liberating us from the rigidities of both human exceptionalism and progressivist time, may ultimately prove to be obstacles in our efforts to embrace ontological multiplicity.[585]

The recomposing and repristination of antiquity inherent to the humanist project explored in Chapter Two – old wine in new bottles – additionally mirrors neoliberal capitalism and (once again) speculative finance's move towards an 'all-consuming presentism'.[586] This too is the folly of poets. Gertrude Stein: 'And now to begin as if to begin. Composition is not there, it is going to be there and we are here.'[587] Yet as a counterweight, in the Anthropocene decay, extinction and decline seem to far outweigh the number of beginnings that can hardly keep up. Rather than in the spirit of John Keats' 'in spite of all', but *because* of the 'o'-er darkened ways',[588] it may be a matter of keeping the emphasis on navigating fields that, to return to obscurity, retain a state of unknowing. Fitz-Henry turns to the ecophilosopher Michel Serres for a vision on how to frame such divergent temporalities:

> "We are always simultaneously making gestures that are archaic, modern, and futuristic," he concludes. "Every historical era is likewise multitemporal, simultaneously drawing from the obsolete, the contemporary, and the

[585] Erin Fitz-Henry, 'Multiple Temporalities and the Nonhuman Other', *Environmental Humanities*, 9/1 (May 2017), p. 4.
[586] Ibid.
[587] Gertrude Stein, 'Composition As Explanation' <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69481/composition-as-explanation> [accessed 2 January 2019].
[588] John Keats, *Endymion,* Book 1, lines 6-11. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44469/endymion-56d2239287ca5> [accessed 2 January 2019].

> futuristic. An object, a circumstance, is thus always polychromic, multitemporal, and reveals a time that is gathered together, with multiple pleats."[56]

These gatherings, crumples or pleats are the spaces of exchange – the *loci communes,* the plastic breeze – but such phrasing attaches a neutrality and possibly benevolence to such a process, which in a break from the notions of an imaginary Mediterranean detailed by Erasmus, Campagna and Novalis, the rest of this chapter will argue is less reflective of what arises in the *EL.* Instead it observes a process of conflict-as-methodology that suggests how such pleats are gathered, and can contain material residues that are marked absences, are through memories of chaos and melancholy. It contends that in the *EL* the Mediterranean sea in particular acts as a spatial container or set of multiple pleats that are shaped by these affective residues.

Emblem 17.	Πῆ παρέβην; . . .	Cranes & traveler.
		
1531 (nonexistent).	1534 (nonexistent).	1546, f. 29r.
		
1547 (nonexistent).	1551, p. 23.	1567, n. 40, p. 40.
		
1577, n. 17.	1583, n. 17, p. 84.	1621, n. 17.

Fig. 19.: 'Lapsus ubi? quid feci? aut officii quid omissum est?': comparative table from Mason Tung's Variorum Edition of Alciato.

Fig. 20. 'Princeps subditorum incolumitatem procurans'.

An Emblematic Sea Pleated by Trauma

An Elastic, Protean Surface

What then, might be the material-aesthetic properties of the Mediterranean topography previous outlined? If looking for material manifestations of a spatial container that can hold 'multiple pleats', and that can embed nonlinear emergences of marked absences, it might be worth returning to obscurity as having etymological associations with 'covering' in relation not to the glossing of knowledge, but a fibrous skin or hide. As stated, the topography of the *EL* is various, but in particular the Mediterranean sea appears as a morphing residue of the type that might characterise this sort of commonplace, in a similar way to the plastic *constancy* that Damisch ascribes to clouds when examining their iconic roles in Renaissance paintings.[589] To a subjective human observer the sea has always been one of the least-changing natural features throughout time, in comparison to deforested or agricultural terrain. Though constancy, in the sense of longevity (classical, geographical, biological) is ascribed to a persistence within long-existing objects (even the sea) that endows them with a sense of authenticity – tacitly prioritising them philosophically as objects in a spectrum of 'the real' – as previously stated there was no singular original outside the natureculture simulations of the *EL*. A fibrous surface then, that is constant only in the sense of continuing to *stretch* (wildly). Emily Dickinson:

> The thought beneath so slight a film –
> Is more distinctly seen –
> As laces just reveal the surge –
> Or Mists – the Apennine[590]

As a spatial container, like the *EL* itself, the sea is a substance that encases and embeds objects within itself. It is therefore relevant that the *picturae* never depict views of the sea from below its surface. Like Dickinson's weather, the emblematic sea as a topography is a slight film that covers, but also a surge; a mist, but also a deep mountain. The surface of this background sea reappearing in many of the emblems that is only clearly 'Mediterranean' because the contents in the foreground

[589] Damisch, *A Theory of /Cloud/,* p. 17.
[590] Emily Dickinson, #210, *Emily Dickinson: The Complete Poems*, ed. by Thomas H. Johnson (London: Faber, 2016), p. 97.

are derived from a neo-Latin cultural imaginary,[591] is deceptively simple. Although there are varieties between for example, smooth waves and rough waves, these differences were at the discretion of the illustrator and changed from edition to edition: constancies in terms of marine allusions are passed in general through the text. Yet often, and strangely, the sea itself is rarely mentioned in the emblem's *subscriptio*, instead it functions as a given, invisible place.[592] Just as the Mediterranean commonplace hovers behind Erasmus' notion of literary exchange, it switches between invisible background in text, to emerge in image. For example 'In facile a virtute desciscentes' [About those easily separated from virtue, 82], there is no explicit mention in the text of the sea, but rather this is deduced from the tale of a remora preventing a ship from moving and then figurated in the *pictura* (see Fig. 21).[593] That this material-semiotic sea can arbitarily *morphe* (as the silenced species also do) is also suggested by the strange A that rises, or hovers on the top of the sea in several emblems that appear oddly at the start of the *EL* but fade out, notably, emblems 1, 4, 5, as well as 6, 17 and 27 (see Fig. 22).[594] While this A appears in other emblems (on ground), its positioning in the seascapes is curious. A is for Alciato, but also denotes the start of the alphabet, and, this little initial, that also draws attention to letters themselves as signs or symbols, gives the sense of revealing the sea as an elastic conduit for the emergence of marked absences as things that turn into signs. A map of inscribed obscurity, to recall too Alciato's interest in hieroglyphics and epigraphy as being inscribed on a material: in this case, the existing Mediterranean sea. Also frequently recurring are nearly-identical sailing boats included to give perspective and importantly – convey spatial depth – they are always very small and

[591] For example, 'Strenuorum immortale nomen' [Achievers have an immortal name, 136] which presents the sea-nymph Thetis sitting on a shell borne by a dolphin, next to a tomb marked with amaranth branches (Achilles' tomb, which was inscribed in the 1546 and 1551 editions), and a palm tree, with the 'Rhoetean' seashore in the background. The townscape is spectral: could be Classical, could be Medieval. Mason Tung, *Variorum Edition of Alciato* < www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/tung/alciatotungedition-136.pdf > [accessed 1 February 2019].
[592] As in 'Antiquissima quaeque commentitia' [The oldest things are all invented, 183], which describes Proteus as the 'old man of Pallene': he was known as the 'Old Man of the Sea', but the sea is not explicitly mentioned in the emblem's *subscriptio*, though it is the setting for the *pictura*.
[593] 'Just as the little slug, the remora, scorning the impetus of wind and oars, can by itself stop a ship from moving, so some trivial reason holds back in mid-course people who through intellect and ability are on their way to the stars: for example, a worrying law-suit, or that desire for whores which entices young men away from their good studies.' Glasgow translation. <https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A21a083> [accessed 1 February 2019].
[594] This 'A' also appears on scraps of rock (2, 3) and blank ground (18, 22) to apparently fill space, but arguably adheres most often to 'blank' material.

fragile, like tiny leaves.[595] Of these sailing boats, Tamsin Badcoe writes in the early modern period that maritime mapping was considered to be a poetic science, and that 'reading was understood, in this maritime age, to be analogous to the art of navigating the sea [… readers were] keenly aware of language as a material substance that could be crafted to deliver an almost sensible, tactile experience to the reader.'[596] The welding and intercrossing of the simulated and geographically-existing Mediterranean sea in Alciato's emblems in this sense is perhaps like the attempted unification of the conceptual sea and the real sea by contemporaneous Atlantic exploration. And of the reader/writer, to return to Erasmus' notion of mnemonic and cultural exchange that was driven by *imitatio*, Horden and Purcell write 'the seafarer represents economic activity. But the seafarer does not – usually – make anything',[597] rather it is a figure of exchange and redistribution. The sparsity of the woodcut form adds to this blurring or merging of exchange-space that was also across time – many of the lines delineating water in Alciato's emblems could be of rivers or seas in the time of the Greeks, or Romans. Ambiguity – and therefore also obscurity – is therefore polychromatic. What perhaps makes the real-world sea seem 'timeless' in this manner is in fact that it is formally ambiguous but material.

An explicit link between an elastic Mediterranean sea as a spatial container and a simulated memory culture is made in 'Antiquissima quaeque commentitia' [The oldest things are all invented, 183], which Moffitt translates as 'Whatever is most ancient is imaginary'. The *pictura* depicts Proteus – a hybrid of centaur and dolphin with a serpentine tail, holding a Neptune-like trident whilst being half-submerged and carried by the sea's waves (see Fig. 23). The *subscriptio*, a dialogue, reads:

> "Old man from Pallenia, oh Proteus, you have as many shapes as an actor has roles. Why are your members sometimes that of a man, and sometimes that of an animal? Come on, tell me, what can be the reason for you to change into all manner of shapes, and yet you have no fixed figure of your own?" "I reveal the signs belonging to the most remote ages, ancient and prehistoric, and each man imagines them according to his whimsy."[598]

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[595] See for example, 'In Deo laetandum' [Joy is to be found in God, 4], which in the 1621 edition depicts a small ship sailing towards an A the same size as it: both are diminished by perspective, as indicated by the large rock in front.
[596] Rachel Falconer and Denis Renevey, eds, *Medieval and Early Modern Literature, Science and Medicine* (Tubingen: Narr Verlag GmBH&Co. 2013), pp. 11–12.
[597] Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, p. 30.
[598] Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The Emblematum Liber in Latin and English*, p. 211.

Like Novalis' Sardinia, which is everywhere where one sleeps alone, this memory culture is both a collective and individual enterprise. The elastic Mediterranean sea-as-container personified as Proteus also seems to corroborate with Zapf's contention that cultural processes of sign-making have a certain autonomy, whilst affirming the important input of the imaginary. Such processes transcend natureculture divisions (here using the questionable tropes of 'man' and 'animal') within the framework of materialised signs – demarcating marked residues as accumulative scale effects from the deep past ('the most remote ages') to the present of the emblems' reception. Similarly, Proteus was considered as a gifted mime-artist; mime being simulation *and* material production of an image – a myrrour of (a) worlde, a likeness, a similitude. In this, the protean emblematic sea enacts a mimesis common to both rhetorical devices such as metaphor, images, and ecological processes. To return to definitions of obscurity, such a protean and elastic carrier cannot itself have a fixed meaning but embodies 'the quality or condition of not being clearly understood'. Correspondingly, Leibniz's monads – integral to Tiffany's separate formulations of a theory of obscurity – are also mimetic in this manner.[599]

Chaotic Reproduction

Yet in contrast to the seeming innocuousness of an elastic carrier, whilst Ancient Greece, Rome and to a certain extent early modern Italy were thalassocracies utterly dependent on the ocean, the sea was never considered part of the 'inhabited world',[600] and correspondingly the sea in the *EL* is more often a cause of unease than reassurance. As a powerful and alien – wild – substance containing presences, the emblematic sea is also an enactor of divine judgement that surpassed civil law. One such instance is in 'Tandem tandem iustitia obtinet' [At long last, justice wins the day, 28] as the ocean washes the divine armour of the dead Achilles onto Ajax's tomb

[599] '"Each monad," according to Leibniz, "is a living mirror, or a mirror endowed with internal action, which represents the universe." Substance therefore, according to Leibniz, is essentially a *medium,* a mirror in constant flux.' However in contrast to theories of cultural ecology, 'because of the essential discontinuity of monadic substance, and because of the absolute hermeticism—the windowlessness—of every monad, Leibniz's conception of being offers a model of obscurity which discounts the possibility of actual effects produced by obscurity—the spectacle of obscurity—in order to give a rigorous account of expressive relations (without causal interaction) between solipsistic entities.' Tiffany, *Infidel Poetics,* p. 99.

[600] Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore,* p. 17.

as reward: 'It is right for partiality to yield to justice'.[601] A similar conceit can be found in 'In avaros, vel quibus melior conditio ab extraneis offertur' [On the avaricious; or being treated better by strangers, 90] depicting Bianor's account of the saving of the musician Arion by dolphins (who are the ecological other – the *stranger*): 'We who are savaged by men are saved by fish'.[602] In general however, the emblems' sea is a wild force that is more terrifying than benign, perhaps because in the *Greek Anthology* the sea performs to an obsessive degree a narrative function of instigating chaos and destruction in frequent reference to the perils of sea travel.[603] This function is transferred into the emblems of Alciato's own invention: for example, one emblematic adaptation of the *Anthology* 'Spes proxima' [Hope at hand, 43] depicts a ship battered by stormy waves. Daly interprets 'Spes proxima' contextually as depicting a ship of state that represents the political struggles then wracking Milan:[604] in this instance, the sea presents a collective memory of the 'state of nature' that the establishment of a civil society must struggle against. Or *promixa* – it is closest to being such an immersion (see Fig. 24). Though by the Padua edition the emblems' images had become more streamlined and therefore less chaotic, even as in the early *pictura* of 'Spes proxima', the sea is rarely visually truly tempestuous, and never being rained on, but rather static or solidly in flux: a mnemonic agent that is a carrier of chaos, rather than presenting it directly as a symbol.

The sea then, threatened the andocentric authority of the civic laws promulgated by Alciato the jurist. In this regard the chaos brought by the sea in the *EL* is frequently catalysed via misogynistic tropes and, to paraphrase Pinkus, a humanist obsession with propagating an exclusive male parthenogenesis of the academy.[605] One such example is 'Capitvus ob gulam' [Caught by greed, 95] (see Fig.

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[601] 'The shield of Aeacus' descendant, stained with Hector's blood, the unjust assembly of the Greeks awarded to the Ithacan. Neptune, showing more respect for equity, seized upon it when it was cast into the sea in the shipwreck, so that it could go to its proper master. For the wave carried it to Ajax' tomb upon the shore, the wave which booms and smites the sepulchre with these words: "Son of Telamon, you have conquered. You are more worthy of these arms'. It is right for partiality to yield to justice." Glasgow translation. <https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A21a028> [accessed 1 Feburary 2019].

[602] Moffitt translates this as 'those are robbed by men are rescued by the fish [dolphins].' Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The Emblematum Liber in Latin and English*, p. 108.

[603] The only thing stronger than the sea was Fate. 'The Horatian maxim of *nulli satis cautum* recurs in the story of the ship, that had survived its sea-perils, burnt at last as it lay on the shore near its native forest, and finding the ocean less faithless than the land.' J. W. Mackail, *Select Epigrams from the Greek Anthology* (New York, NY and London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1906), p. 67.

[604] Peter M. Daly, 'Alciato's "Spes Proxima" Emblem: General Allegory or Local Specificity?', *Emblematica,* 9/2, pp. 256–268 (p. 261).

[605] Pinkus, *Picturing Silence*. p. 98.

3). Whilst this emblem's *pictura* depicts a seascape dwarfing a tiny mouse being caught in an oyster shell which could represent 'greed' through the dangers of avarice or even plagiarism, it more likely is a warning against the chaotic dangers posed by promiscuity or even sex at all. The *subscriptio* reads:

> A mouse, king of the pantry, nibbler at the master's table, saw oysters with their shells just slightly open. Applying his sensitive whiskers, he nibbled the deceptive bone. But the oysters, when touched, suddenly slammed shut their house and held the thief, caught red-handed, in a noisome prison, a thief who had put himself into a lightless tomb.[606]

The 'deceptive' oyster shell that entraps the mouse likely represents labia, as suggested by the last few lines documenting the shame of the 'thief' enclosed in a 'lightless tomb', or as Moffitt translates, 'trapped the thief within a horrid prison, he who had given himself a dark tomb'.[607] Neither of these translations quite convey the *traumatic feelings* of *deprensum* [seize/ take by surprise/ suddenly catch] *tetro* [horrible / physically offensive/ morally offensive/ vile] and *obscurum* [dim, dark, obscure/ hidden from sight, vague/ uncertain – as in *obscurity*].[608] The emblem's association with the purity of humanist endeavour as being threatened by female sexuality is reinforced by *barbam,* the mouse's whiskers, that also reference a large unkempt beard – just as Alciato himself was bearded – alluding to performing cunnilingus. A similar moralising guides Alciato's other emblems of morally corrupting female sea deities such as Scylla, which also uses overt genital imagery,[609] and the Sirens, who are described as tempting 'whores'.[610] Though catalysed through crass misogyny, to recall Schliephake's notion that memory cultures house lost meanings, 'Captivus ob gulam' is also a translation of the *Anthology*,[611] and within it can be detected agglomerations of ancient references to oysters that have associations with pagan fertility narratives. Oysters in Pliny are held to 'increase in size with the

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[606] Glasgow translation <http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A21a095> [accessed 1 February 2019].
[607] Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The Emblematum Liber in Latin and English*, p. 113.
[608] See 'depr(eh)endo', 'taeter', and 'obscūrus' in *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, pp. 520-21, 1901, 1220.
[609] See 'Impudentia' [Effrontery, 68]. 'Here, Alciato anticipates Shakespeare's "waist of shame" of Sonnet 129 – Scylla is none other than Shame (Impudientia). Not content to stay his investigation at that point, Alciato's emblem explores her deformed "infra", her underneath. These nether parts form the classically dreaded monstrous cavern, Virgil's "spelunca" of *Aeneid, ii, 424,* that both contains and is her body.' Manning, *The Emblem,* p. 260.
[610] 'Sirenes' [Sirens, 116]. Notably however, in the *pictura* of the 1621 edition the sirens have become rather androgynous and more like harpies, with their connection to music emphasised.
[611] See *Anthologia Graeca* (9.86).

increase of the moon [...] when the rays of the sun penetrate the shallow waters, that they are swollen with an abundance of milk.'[612] This observation is not far from modern ecological knowledge: more recent scientific research has noted the affect of moonlight as a zeitgeber on the reproduction of marine organisms.[613] Natural reproduction, as stated, was a terrifying threat to the pathogenetic humanist academy that Alciato extolled, but sexuality was also an intrinsic element of life *and* licentious verse; the *culus* in *obscurus*. In terms of such interwoven ecological connections, 'Capitvus ob gulam' is also an illustration of the precarity of existing hand-to-mouth in a vast state of nature: in such situations, the environment swallows individuals – in the *pictura* the large seascape overwhelms the tiny figures of mouse and oyster. The terror that shaped this multitemporal *pleat* was not relegated to memories of the 'natural sea': if the emblematic sea as a spatial container is a mimetic proteus, it also is reproductively Thalassian, like the 'dark' side of obscurity. In this sense the mouse – and the humanist – has become trapped in the obscurity of their own creation, an ecocultural process of sign-making. Thalassa extends out of obscure tombs through the objects it produces, even in the slight films of water in the representations of shallow coastal rockpools. A few boats skiff on the waters, as with other emblems, the depth of the sea is present only by its negation or absence and the oyster is its portal as a marked absence, inosculated to others, and a kind of wormhole – one that is also an interdiction. For Alciato it is (again) as for Lacan: 'it is horror, and not desire, that "presides" over knowledge.'[614] The Mediterranean sea as a container of an ancient memory culture is here more reflective of dark ecology than a gentle Arcadia: fertile, destructive, chaotically threatening the parthenogenetic humanist academy that attempted to reuse its murky seeds to sow a repressive morality. *Seeds* of course more than anything else, are reproductive organs. Of Lacan's observation, Paola Mieli writes 'the horror provoked by the jouissance of the mother's body signals the proximity to this original Other, which is threatening insofar as the distance from it is what allows the subject's desire—and thus the subject's very—being to exist […] the

[612] Pliny (the Elder), *The Natural History of Pliny, Vol. 6*, ed. by. John Bostock and H. T. Riley (London: H. G. Bohn, 1855), pp. 25–6.
[613] K. Tessmar-Raible, F Raible and E. Arboleda, 'Another place, another timer: Marine species and the rhythms of life', *Bioessays*, 3/33 (2011), pp. 165–72.
[614] Unpublished Lacan, quoted in Paola Mieli, 'Femininity and the Limits of Theory' in *The Subject of Lacan: A Lacanian Reader for Psychologists*, ed. by Kareen Ror Malone and Stephen R. Friendlander (New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), p. 273.

horror of the mother's jouissance *represents as absence the impossibility of knowledge.*'[615] Such are the stakes at play in the narrative of 'Capitivus ob gulam'.

Melancholy As An Affective Binding of Pleats

To return to the idea of constancy as a stretching across competing temporalities, this quality is *displayed* by the memorialising qualities of ekphrastic epigrams. The initial formal basis for many of the *emblema,* Hellenistic elegiac epigrams were in general either subjective or *epideictic* [for display]. As with the important imaginary dimension to the creation of a memory culture, of the *Anthology* David Mulroy notes that 'Epideictic epigrams grew out of the use of elegiac couplets inscriptions: they were make-believe inscriptions, poems invoking imaginary objects or tombs'.[616] Mulroy also contends that these epigrams depend on a tension between artifice *and* an expression of real emotion. In this, as with previous examples, the sea as a container for a memory culture is also a carrier of ancient traumatic emotions, detached memories or sensations retained through their heightened-ness that is another form of material process in the sense of 'sticking' (or pleating). J.W. Mackail writes of the terrifying sea found within the *Anthology,* 'The ocean *never forgot* its cruelty. Pasa thalassa thalassa, "everywhere the sea is the sea," wails Aristagoras'[617] [my italics]. A need to wail or cry out loud from across time, could be linked to affect theory – affect being on one hand an emotional response triggered by something that moves, or on the other, a strange *proximit*y occurring between objects that can be read within Sara Ahmed's definition of affect: 'to be affected by something is to evaluate that thing. Evaluations are expressed in how bodies turn towards things. To give value to things is shape what is near us.'[618] Affective display, as with ekphrastic elegiac epigrams, is to both incorporate and confer value on materiality, as well as therefore to acknowledge scale effects or material concepts of scale. Christine Berberich and Neil Campbell link these concepts of affect with landscapes in the self-describing title *Affective Landscapes in Literature, Art and Everyday Life: Memory, Place and the Senses*. As Robert Bednar writes in this volume in which landscapes also function as a cultural practice, affect is 'territorialized but never quite contained, either spatially or

[615] Mieli, ibid.
[616] Kenneth Rexroth, *Poems from the Greek Anthology*, ed. by David Mulroy (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999), p. xii.
[617] Mackail, *Select Epigrams from the Greek Anthology*, p. 76.
[618] Sara Ahmed, 'Happy Objects' in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham. NC: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 29–51 (p. 31).

culturally', producing a 'something else'.[619] Linking this unsettling 'something else' to emotional melancholy, Bednar states that 'Melancholy is always structured as an excess of affect […] Melancholy remains. It is a feeling that persists, but the things that persist also are left over [remains].'[620] If these remains are marked absences that materialised in some sense – or pleated – by such excessive affects is not surprising that the *EL* is laced through with elegiac melancholy, in relation to the sea – a plastic container of cultural memory. The subject of death at sea, as Mackail says, 'was the one upon which the art of the epigrammatist lavished its utmost resources', and that its particular horror and anguish also made for its enduring appeal – the darkness of sea-death, the lack of burial rites and its *common* occurrence.[621]

The emblematic sea particularly materialises a multitemporal pleat of melancholy in 'In eum, qui truculentia suorum perierit' [On one who perished through the savagery of his own people, 167] (see Fig. 25). The *subscriptio* reads:

> I am a dolphin whom the tide drove ashore against my will, an example showing what great dangers there are in the treacherous sea. For if Neptune does not spare even his own nurslings, who can think that men are safe in ships?[622]

Praz regards this emblem as an adaptation of a fable from the *Anthology* originally attributed to Aesop, on a dolphin washed ashore and buried by compassionate men,[623] but neglects to note that this epigram can also be ascribed to 'Anyte, Archias and Antipater, [who] lament the fate of a dolphin which was cast on land during a tempest and then (says one of them) reverently buried by the country folk'.[624] Lamentation, as an excessive outpouring of melancholy, seems more relevant to the woodcut sea both producing a materialised residue, or marked absence, of dolphins from antiquity and as an elastic carrier of affect. This link is furthered by the fact that while there were two other (more positive) fables by Aesop concerned with dolphins in the

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[619] Robert M. Bednar, 'Placing affect – Remembering Strangers at Roadside Crash Sites' in *Affective Landscapes in Literature, Art and Everyday Life: Memory, Place and the Senses*, ed. by Christine Beberich, Neil Campbell and Robert Hudson (Abingdon, Oxon and New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), pp. 50–67 (p. 57).
[620] Ibid.
[621] Mackail, *Select Epigrams from the Greek Anthology*, pp. 74–75.
[622] Glasgow translation. <http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A21a167> [accessed 1 February 2019].
[623] Mario Praz, *Studies in Seventeenth Century Imagery,* p. 30.
[624] Norman Douglas, *Birds and Beasts of the Greek Anthology* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1955), p. 322.

Anthology,[625] Alciato chose this one. Perhaps misery persists longer than happiness – research on how traumatic epigenetic memories are passed on may be testament to this.[626] In terms of a collective memory culture, this association is not exclusive to this emblem, but rather representative of the melancholia associated with dolphins in ancient texts. Meleager laments that he was not a dolphin to carry his boyfriend Andragathus lost at sea to his intended destination. Plutarch in his *Moralia* notes that dolphins became problematically entangled in the nets of fishermen, while the poet Hesiod was famously murdered and brought ashore by 'corpse-transporting dolphins'.[624] In these agglomerations of references the impact of disastrous environmental interactions – guilty memories either of trapping dolphins, or of traumatic deaths by sea – are what emerge from the haze of this ancient Mediterranean topography. As with 'Captivus ob gulam' the sea in 'In eum…' is a protean medium that cannot be understood, a 'treacherous' source of both divine justice and 'great danger' in which even its students (Moffitt translates 'nurslings' as 'pupils'), i.e. humanist scholars of knowledge, are beached on the shore – just as the bats in 'Aliud' have their 'eyes befogged'.

The Chaos of Natureculture Relations

If viewing the dolphin as a hybridised body of a humanist scholar as well as a re-emergent material residue of dolphins from antiquity seems like a leap, to modern eyes the illustration of the dolphin is extremely *weird* in the sense that it is uncanny, resembling more of a sea serpent. Unlike for example, the striped dolphins common to the Mediterranean, this dolphin with its extraordinary looping tail recalls *Grampus griseus* [Risso's dolphin] that looks more like a small whale than a dolphin, with a bumpy bulbous forehead. This furrowed forehead, alongside a human-like eye, gives the dolphin an anthropomorphic quality, perhaps fittingly: the Greeks believed that dolphins were originally men who had been transformed by Bacchus. The spectre of Alciato's struggles with the 'Lernaean Hydra' of language re-appear – the hydra was a serpentine water monster. Strange hermeneutic practices bring humanist scholars closer to a nonhuman subjectivity. In an essay on 'weird reading', the speculative medievalist Eileen Joy links to 'wyrd', or 'fate', from the Indo-European root *wer—,*

[625] Kenneth F. Kitchell, Jr., *Animals in the Ancient World from A to Z* (Abingdon, Oxon and New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), p. 56.
[626] Natan P.F. Kellermann, 'Epigenetic Transmission of Holocaust Trauma: Can Nightmares Be Inherited?', *Israel Journal of Psychiatry Related Sciences,* 50/1 (2013) pp. 33–9.

to turn and bend.[627] To avoid paraphrasing Joy too much, weird reading is a process that values 'productive errancy', relying on the speculative premise that a text;

> like any object or thing, is "fatally torn" between its deeper reality and its "accidents, relations, and qualities" [....] literary criticism might re-purpose itself as the mapping of these (often in- and non-human) tensions and rifts, as well as of the excess of meanings that might pour of these crevasses, or wormholes.[628]

Just like the gibbering bats mentioned in the previous chapter, another casualty of the sea (and the sea as vessel for thinking, that is also a wormhole for a memory culture) is the humanist-scholar who dabbles in speculative or *weird* ideas that generate such excess, just as the poet Hesiod (who recorded volcanic events in his poems[629]) was brought ashore by dolphins. Pouring out of the crevasses, this dolphin is also derived from the bestiary tradition: in addition to the twisting serpentine tail, its caudal fin is mermaid-like, and its fins like cupid wings. As well as being washed ashore it could also be seen to be propelling itself onto the beach in a performance of, to return to traits of emblematic animals, enacting the literary discourse of the fable. Here Morton's meditations on the *ouroboros* 'a self-swallowing, self-referential loop, imagined by Hegelian anthropology [...] as the cyclic time of prehistory, of the uncivilized'[630] could be applied to the dolphin as a personified ouroboros, where the collapse of ordered time within such narratives leads to mimetic re-enactments of excessive obscurity, as with the scholar who mirrors obscurity 'In Silentium'. To a modern reader, this is an ecological fable: the dangers of the sea remain as present to the speculative scholar in the environmental humanities as in antiquity: what *great dangers there are in the treacherous sea*, which does not differentiate between humans and its own marine life as it reacts to rising CO2 levels? As before, what great dangers there are of not correctly reading material emerging across the fractured timespace of the Anthropocene?

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[627] Eileen A. Joy, 'Weird Reading' in *Speculations IV: A Journal of Speculative Realism* (New York, NY: Punctum Books, 2013), pp. 28–34 (p. 30).
[628] Ibid., p. 29.
[629] Another example of how ancient cultural artefacts retain tracings of materials is Hesiod's epic *Theogony* (8BC), which Greene argues is in fact a blow-by-blow account of the volcanic eruption of Santorini, the battles between armies in the poem perfectly mirroring the unfolding stages of the eruption. Volcanoes – another slow-moving solid constant similar to the Mediterranean sea. See Mott T. Greene, *Natural Knowledge in Preclassical Antiquity* (London and Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2008), p. 53.
[630] Timothy Morton, 'She Stood in Tears amid the Alien Corn: Thinking Through Agrilogistics', *Diacritics,* 41/3 (2013), pp. 90–113, p. 100.

Writing Landscape

The poet Mary Ruefle writes, 'Place isn't important, I tend to write in my head, which I can carry with me wherever I go.'[631] While this is not the direction of this chapter's argument, the emblematic imaginary that connects studies of cultural ecology and memory cultures did also structure geographical study *and* external geographies. Horden and Purcell note the impact of literature on the geography of the Mediterranean:

> Any investigation of environmental and climatic fluctuation [...] must reckon with the possibility that the terms with which it instinctively operates – not to mention conclusions – may have been prescribed in advance, perhaps over two millennia in advance. The yardstick against which it will be measuring fluctuation or mobility may owe more to the literature of the Mediterranean than to its landscape.[632]

Given the Mediterranean as a coastal region is – or has not been for thousands of years – anything other than a built environment created by human activity, it seems justified to claim a constant natureculture dialogue, a negotiation, as suggested by other chapters in this thesis. And if the yardstick is a cultural imaginary, it is a yardstick that also shapes, though in no predictable or certain way, existing landscapes – this even applies to critical theory. Cultivated memory cultures, as Schliephake pointed out, are in this sense an ecological process. For example, while specialised terminology from sea navigation began to emerge in the Renaissance, it was based on segmenting the horizon according to the classical names of winds.[633] Onomastic activity created from this negotiation has real effects, changing the routes of ships, protecting some areas as natural or wild over others. Even as – or because of being – artefacts of as Manning says, 'notorious iconographic instability',[634] emblems and applied emblematics themselves have affected the built environment for centuries.[635] These negotiations extend as much into the future as into the past. Similarly in terms of reactivating ancient material, Leon Battista Alberti through his studies of Vitruvius in his *De re aedifcatoria* (1485) based his work on not extant

[631] Mary Ruefle and Cecilia Tricker, 'Interview', *The White Review*, 24 (2019), pp. 180–187 (p. 181).
[632] Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea,* pp. 26–27.
[633] Ibid., p. 11.
[634] Manning, *The Emblem,* p. 87.
[635] 'No domestic or public space was left unfilled by some appropriate emblematic decoration'. Ibid., p. 25.

buildings as Vitruvius did, but ruins created by 'nature herself' or the Book of Nature(culture), using minimal illustrations to propose 'how the buildings of the future *are to be* built'.[636] And in terms of the Mediterranean sea, it is worth recalling that Greece, Rome and early modern Italy used the connecting medium of the sea as a route for all communications. They *essayed* across the sea. The Mediterranean, Horden and Purcell state, is a 'geographical expression.'[637] The multitemporal quality of such an expression that Speculative Emblematics has been pursuing under the umbrella of obscurity correlates with Whitehead's notion of causal efficacy:

> the inflow into ourselves of feelings from enveloping nature overwhelms us; in the dim consciousness of half-sleep, the presentations of sense fade away, and we are left with the vague feeling of influences from vague things around us.[638]

[636] Leon Battista Alberti, *On The Art of Building in Ten Books*, ed. by Joseph Rykwer (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), p. x.
[637] Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, p. 24.
[638] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 176.

Fig. 21. 'In facile a virtute desciscentes'.

Fig. 22. 'In Deo laetandum'.

Fig. 23. 'Antiquissima quaeque commentitia'.

Fig. 24. 'Spes proxima'.

Fig. 25. 'In eum, qui truculentia suorum perierit'.

Supportive Materiality: Frames, Signs and Hieroglyphs

To return to the environment not *within* but *of* the emblem, this chapter will conclude by arguing that the environment of the emblem – another spatial container – encourages the sense that the emblems present marked absences that have a material – or materialised – quality. It does so via. an examination of the *EL*'s use of frames and woodcut printing, as well as a positing a material dimension of the sign as related to hieroglyphs.

Frame-portals

Another thread to follow when considering the Mediterranean topography of the *EL* are the frames around the images that appear in most of its editions. These like thoughts forming, arose over time – though needn't necessarily be considered in a linear fashion. Initially, the early (disastrous) editions had no border or frame around the *pictura*: the 1531 (Augsburg) edition for example, has no ornate border, a simple image, italicised verse, and capitalised motto. The 1539 (Paris) edition still has no border, but larger images set on separate pages – yet the introduction of gothic script in the commentary suggests the ornate nature of the book evolving.[639] It is not until the Spanish edition, *Los Emblemas*, 1549 (Lyon) that large frames are suddenly introduced, as in 'La Concordia' [Concord, 39], where an enormous ornate border of columns frames the *pictura*, replete with clear if not crude faces from classical statuary, while Alciato's verses are put into ottova rima and start to float on the margins like clouds. Or another, a 'Que No Se De Descrubrir El Secreto' [Keep Counsels Secret, 12] is set in the midst of ornate scrolls, sashes, inlays and figures, one propping up the frame like Atlas (see Fig. 26 and 27). This explosion of borders varies in this edition with every emblem, themselves protean in terms of *picturae* – with only the consistency that they are as huge as a landscape, and 'Classical'. Carved grapes and figures, emerging from a printed wood, also suggests a dreamlike vista in which the contemplative reader falls into a continual shared past. By the 1621 (Padua) edition, the frame has become more refined and standardised, as with the advent of *lettera antica* (see Fig. 28). It is not entirely clear what is depicted within it – pots or vases? Sheep or elks, as in the Alciato family elk? And flanking each side, two putti-

[639] As previously stated, the best source for viewing the changing editions is Tung's *Variorum Edition of Alciato*.

esque figures that are also half-statues or carved instruments. Pinkus sees this border as a 'tortured scrollwork' of 'figures of exotic hunting and extreme agony [that] become invisible',[640] to relate back to the morphing biodiversity and self-covering emblematists in the previous chapter. It is important to note that this surreal frame, in the style of the grotesque emblematic mannerist statues that littered the contemporaneous and *immersive* Gardens of Bomarzo,[641] is presented to the reader at every emblem – constantly drawing the eye back from the contents of the picture to an arrangement of material objects. An architectural arrangement, or as Cummings describes emblems, an imaginary museum.[642] It also seems to suggest that concrete things – sheep, pots and statues – are on the same plane as the elaborate ideas in the emblems. Alternately, this frame of *stuff* (and emblems are *stuff*ed, to recall their locking–in qualities) or things, might be a constant protective frame to transition into and out of contemplating the image and its more immaterial contents, all of that which is paradoxically found in the environment *within* – a border of many kinds. Either way, the frame around an image as Meyer Schapiro states, belongs to the space of the observer[643] – and in the *EL* this more immediate shared space, the environment *of* the emblem, is filled with material objects that merge natureculture relations (to return to the idea of natureculture grafting), and acts like a portal into the Mediterranean commonplace previously described (see Fig. 3).

The Materiality of the Book

Just as illustrated manuscripts were painted on vellum made from animal skins (more coverings), the *EL* is bound with thick vellum, drawing concrete attention to its production from body-origins (see Fig. 28). This was another form of the animal contract too that, in combination with the layout of the book, placed the *EL* as an object – or environment itself – which gained authority by entrapping substance. Sharpe and Zwicker write of early modern English emblem books:

> The bold superiors of the title itself, often the Latin epigraph or scriptural verse, the licence, indeed place of publication, name of publisher and printer

[640] Pinkus, *Picturing Silence*, p. 14.
[641] Sixteenth-century mannerist garden located in Bomarzo, Lazio.
[642] See Cummings, 'Alciato's *Emblemata* As An Imaginary Museum'.
[643] Meyer Schapiro, *Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist, and Society* (New York, NY: Brazillier, 1994), p. 7.

> all functioned to locate and legitimize the text, to place the reader *within* a geography of textual, economic and political power.[644] [my italics]

While Sharpe and Zwicker consider how these 'elaborate set of paratexts unfolded in various ways to engage the reader and shape the reading experience',[645] an ecocritical reading might instead note that they also drew the reader – and book – back to palpable *things*, as with the frames. In this, the tactile materiality of the *EL* is further emphasised by its textual materiality derived from woodcut printing, as with the variety of fonts: *inscriptio*, italicised *subscriptio*, capitalised emblem name, capitalised COMMENTARII, insertion of Greek and Latin letters, smaller and larger numbers. These multiple, sometimes misprinted or 'wobbly' fonts undermine the sense of abstraction that arises from the regularity of modern standardised fonts. Yet rather than being innately 'more authentic' because of its artisanal production, as with other early modern printed books that were an evolution of the illustrated manuscript tradition, through this multiplicity of irregular fonts that strained against the confines of *lettera antica*, illustrated letters and decorative page breaks, the *EL* makes use of text-as-image, or writing as drawing, that draws attention to written text as inscribed visual signs (visual indexes) – an ideographic style of writing that once again returns to (Renaissance) hieroglyphs. In regards to types of signs: symbols it must be recalled, have no resemblance between signified and signifier and their objects must be culturally learnt – as in the alphabet. Thus, the abstraction of the modern standardised font. Yet just as emblems are not strictly symbols, a tactile and visual alphabet dissolves the boundary of symbol and sign – there begins to seem evidence of a correspondence between signified and signifier occurring, as with the 'A' emerging from the sea in the *pictura*. In this regard the materiality of the *EL* owes a great deal to woodcuts, which have a tactile-yet-rigid quality that is not so easily found in other mediums (its opposite being painting with a variety of lines, colours and shades). Too, woodcut printing merges text and image within the same medium. Arguably, it was the abandonment of the flexible materiality of woodcuts that occurred with the dissimulation of more refined – and therefore more stylised, and therefore more abstracted – copperplate printing that then contributed to emblem

[644] Sharpe and Zwicker, 'Introduction: discovering the Renaissance reader', p. 6.
[645] Ibid.

books' fall from popular grace. Both extremely heavy and opaque,[646] the roughness of woodcuts constantly incite an interaction and interlacing with the material space of the manuscript paper beneath, to suggest a material dimension to the sign. And in reverse, as relief prints that are created negatively,[647] woodcuts are half-made of the blank space of the paper, just as snowy scenes – or the work of any concrete poet – are also always territorialised by the conceptual suggested by this same blankness. In short, the ways in which Alciato's emblem book was produced as a printed object across editions drew attention to a textual materiality that formed a ground or viewing platform for its contents. In this sense the environment *of* the emblem provides a 'flat ontology' of text and image, not only in a merging of natureculture as in the frames, but also collapsing distinctions between for example, numbers and languages.

In regards to how much this materiality can be read, and even written about in this thesis, Damisch says of the texture of visual images:

> A pictorial image cannot be reduced to an icon whose texture – as we have called it – is a matter of indifference […] It is this texture that a particular tradition of thinking – a cultural system whose persistent influence is manifested by the principally iconographical trend of studies on art – strives systematically to obliterate or repress, pretending that all that images offer is the information that they convey – information that is measurable, analyzable, and, as such, something that can be *exchanged.*[648]

Though the *EL* can be seen as an object of pictorial writing, paradoxically this exchangeability is encouraged by the textual materiality and the flat ontology of the *EL* as just delineated. Yet this project of exchangeability, the *EL* itself – to return to 'paper gifts' – flounders on Damisch's critique of informational exchange: can images be described in words, to return to the *paragone*? Can a spatial container that transforms different material forms into flat representations really be read to contain materialised marked absences within pleats of chronological collapse? In contrast to the dead-end of non-exchange, in reference to emblem books' commercial dependence on their alluring aesthetic status as 'concrete and pleasurable objects', in

[646] European printers, as best seen in the work of Dürer and Holbein, used oil-based inks to render this opaque/ solid feel, rather than the lighter water-based prints produced in Japan.
[647] *Gardner's Art through the Ages: The Western Perspective, Vol. 2*, ed. by Fred S. Kleiner (Cengage Learning, 2009), p. 415.
[648] Damisch, *A Theory of /Cloud/*, p. 26.

a roundabout way Borgogni seems to think so:

> Using symbols and metaphors, however, did not necessarily mean producing superficial, entertaining forms of art with no 'solidnesse': rather, emblems and devices can be considered as wide cultural indexes in perennial negotiations with the materiality of their symbols.[649]

The drive for alluring-ness generated by the book trade that Borgogni identifies elsewhere also importantly led to ornate materialisms, as evidenced by the proliferation of frames. In Borgogni's reading – which is derived from applying not cultural ecology but Relevance Theory to emblems – emblem books' semiotics do not completely lose touch with their objects' materiality, and so a connection between the visual and verbal is maintained, one outside of Damisch's 'information'. This is not just a verisimilitude of signified to signifier, as with the rhetorical act of likeness through metaphor, but Borgogni's use of 'solidnesse' might also imply a being. Perhaps this is what is at stake underlying Damisch's prior comments – a tactile, textural object has a *dasein* of sorts and therefore is unquantifiable, and alongside the questionable possibility of translating visual to verbal information, its exchangeability is ethically dubious. Another form of negotiation, within emblematic environments in which there are so commodities and contracts. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Michel Foucault explicates some of the swerves his approach takes when dealing with these hazards in a manner that seems similar to Whitehead's notion of causal efficacy as occurring within in a dream state of obscurity:

> These four terms: reading—trace—decipherment—memory defines the system that usually makes it possible to snatch past discourse from its inertia and, for a moment, to rediscover something of its lost vitality.
>
> Now, the function of enunciative analysis is not to awaken texts from their present sleep, and, by reciting the marks still legible on their surface, to rediscover the flash of their birth; on the contrary, its function is to follow them through their sleep […][650]

[649] Borgogni, 'Must I Needs Want Solidnesse Because by Metaphors I Speak?', p. 75.
[650] [cont.] 'or rather to take up the related themes of sleep, oblivion, and lost origin, and to discover what mode of existence may characterize statements, independently of their enunciation, in the density of time in which they are preserved, in which they are reactivated, and used, in which they are also—but this was not their original destiny—forgotten, and possibly even destroyed.' Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p. 123.

Though referring to discourse – semantic and socio-linguistic relations as a pose to concrete objects – Foucault's project of discovering 'the modes of existence' behind statements as a means to recover 'lost vitality' seems similar to the direction of a Speculative Emblematics. Strictly this is of a *remanence* (residue) that does not return to any prior reference or original meaning, nor do statements (in contrast) 'remain in the field of memory', but 'are preserved by virtue of a number of supports and material techniques […] in accordance with certain types of institutions'.[651] Barkan notes his own desires to torture Foucault's metaphor by translating it into a material reality',[652] and says of the passage above: 'in practice it is not so easy to separate those procedures that he disparages from those that he champions.'[653] Certainly a cultural ecology entwined with memory cultures problematises such distinctions. To return to Foucault's swerve taken here – to only follow an artefact in its sleep – is in a sense an apposite response to the *promise* of knowledge generated by tactile textual materiality, particularly heightened in the *EL* by its formal qualities as an object, its entrapment of substance. The notion of following through sleep however, could also be another similarity to this thesis' focus on obscurity as the quality both inherent to the *EL* and as a mode of reading it. To return to the darker side of obscurity mentioned in Chapter Three, of being related to no-sense and nonsense-making, this question of whether marks, traces of material presences or materialised absences can be recovered from the *EL* seems to be part of the *promise of* obtaining knowledge inherent to emblem book operating in obscurity, one whose obscure purposes include being in turns a catalogue, index, proto-encyclopaedia and like a Book of Natureculture, and a side-effect of storing a memory culture in a multitemporal Mediterranean topography, a promise that is also generated by the materiality of the book. It is however, a promise that can only be approached hesitantly.

Materialised Signs

> ~~And now, at once adventuresome~~, I send
> My herald thought into a wilderness:
> There let its trumpet blow, and quickly dress
> My uncertain path with green, ~~that I may speed~~

[651] Ibid. pp. 123–24.
[652] Barkan, *Unearthing the Past,* p. xxi.
[653] Ibid., p. xxiii.

~~Easily onward,~~ through flowers and weed.[654]

Hesitantly then within a double-edged cloud of obscurity, to build on the question of readable materiality, it seems relevant to consider a material dimension to signification itself, as suggested by Borgogni. Such an argument has already been made by the logician Charles Sanders Peirce and correspondingly, Julia Kristeva. In the late nineteenth century Peirce defined to ongoing general acceptance the semiotics of signs within classifications of icon, index and symbol, based on the relationship that a sign has to its object.[655] Of these sign-object relations, Peirce proposed that each sign contains triadic processes of relations that ensure for the functionality of the sign (object, sign, interpretant): confusingly or not confusingly, given the tripartite formal structure of the emblem.[656] While Peirce's semiotics was concerned with all kinds of sign research – within philosophy, logic and sciences – and not semiotics in the sense of Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistics, his methodologies can be formally applied to cultural objects. This is particularly relevant when considering the reliance of emblem scholars such as Bath on structuralist readings of emblems, an approach that Bath for one considers to remove a material dimension to the sign[657] – and correspondingly, favours identifying iconographic readings. As Kristeva elaborates of (strictly) symbols: Peirce's notion of 'replica' occurring within the sign corresponds to Saussure's concept of the signifier as the *material* aspect of the sign, 'for in his [Saussure's] terminology, the symbol is characterized by its lack of total arbitrariness. It is not empty: it still betrays the rudiments of a natural link between signifier and signified'[658] (for Kristeva, the signified being the object). A remnance. Using Peirce's distinctions between sign and symbol as baseline, Kristeva proposes a cultural transition moving from the symbol to the sign occurring at the end of the Middle Ages

[654] Keats, *Endymion*, lines 58–62 [my strikethroughs].
[655] Julia Kristeva, 'From Symbol to Sign' (1970) in *The Kristeva Reader*, pp. 62–73 (p. 63).
[656] 'I use the word "Sign" in the widest sense for any medium for the communication or extension of a Form (or feature). Being medium, it is determined by something, called its Object, and determines something, called its Interpretant [....] In order that a Form may be extended or communicated, it is necessary that it should have been really embodied in a Subject independently of the communication; and it is necessary that there should be another subject in which the same form is embodied only as a consequence of the communication.' Charles Sanders Peirce, 'Excerpt From Letters to Lady Welby' (Spring 1906) in *Selected Philosophical Writings: Vol 2 (1893-1913)*, ed. by the Peirce Edition Project (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 478.
[657] As a result, it is language itself that becomes transcendent. The *mundus symbolicus* of the early modern period for Bath 'is something like a semiotic analogue to the Saussarian concept of *la langue* in that it is always potential, always prior to and more extensive than the specific work or text'. Bath, *Speaking Pictures*, p. 28.
[658] Kristeva, 'From Symbol to Sign', p. 64.

and the beginning of the Renaissance. She does so by focusing on texts written not long before the *EL,* in particular the moral anecdotes of Antoine de la Sale (1456). In brief, according to Kristeva (who does not care to particularly elaborate on the causes, unlike Albert Camus' account of intersections between Neoplatonism and Christianity[659]) this marked an increasing materiality of signification. Kristeva:

> From the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, the symbol was challenged and weakened. This did not make it altogether disappear but it did assure its passage (assimilation) into the sign […] The transcendental foundation evoked by the symbol seemed to capsize. This heralded a new signifying relation between two elements, both located in the "real", "concrete" world.[660]

Qua Kristeva it is worth in this light, especially given its professed indifference to institutional religion, to regard the *EL* as a book of signs, not symbols – as also suggested by the arbitrary connections mentioned in Chapter Three. Too, one that participated in this wider cultural shift in which signs were increasingly materialised as further objects in the 'concrete world' (a term to be approached with caution, perhaps most accurately demarcated as succinctly recognisable), via increasing rates of cultural production in the book trade. Like ancient philosophers' fears that writing was a poor substitute for speech,[661] the *EL* as a book of detached signs contributed to this transposition of cultural memory into *materials*. Alciato to recall, viewed his *emblema* as exchangeable material ornaments. Kristeva: the 'signifying unit became more and more "material" until it forgot its [transcendental] origins.'[662] Creation became replaced by the humanist obsession with flexible *imitatio.* Arguably, the *EL* also swallowed a lineage of symbols that had never in themselves been totally dissociated from recognisable materiality. Pinkus for example, states of symbols that 'the term remains charged with the connotation of *materiality* as opposed to spirituality and, thus, of any action that is "given-to-be seen"'.[663] Keeping hold of

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[659] 'In the paintings of the Catacombs, the Good Shepherd often assumes the face of Hermes. But if the smile is the same, the symbol has changed its significance. It is in this manner that Christian thought, constrained to express itself in coherent system, attempted to adopt Greek thought forms and to express itself in the metaphysical formulas that it found ready-made. Nevertheless it transformed them.' Albert Camus, *Christian Metaphysics and Neoplatonism*, trans. Ronald D. Srigley (Southbend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2015), p. 39.
[660] Kristeva, 'From Symbol to Sign', p. 65.
[661] Likewise, in the Phaedrus Socrates warns of the problematics of writing and memory 'as *mere* techniques that threaten the human(ist) community because they imply simulacra.' Damisch, *A Theory of /Cloud/*, p. 59.
[662] Kristeva, 'From Symbol to Sign', p. 66.
[663] Pinkus, *Picturing Silence,* p. 39, also mentioned by Borgogni, 'Must I Needs Want Solidnesse Because by Metaphors I Speak?', p. 76.

these creeping materialising strands of thought, to return to Peirce, both his three categories of sign (icon, sign and symbol) and their functions suggest an ecology of the sign: all signs operate within a medium (whether paper, air, water or so forth).[664] Both the materialised sign and the ecology of the sign's *materialising* medium gives a materialist dimension to semiotics, unlike the idealism ascribed to structuralism (in this Kristeva is perhaps not best described as a post-structuralist). Constantine Nakassis summarises of Peirce's bordering on bewildering material-semiotic philosophy: 'In short, no semiosis without materiality, and no (experiencable or intelligible) materiality without semiosis.'[665] In relation to ecocultural approaches to texts, Wendy Wheeler has reactivated Peirce in her recent work in biosemiotics, interlacing with research in the environmental humanities,[666] while Timo Maran and Kalevi Kull similarly drawn on Peirce in their overview of the development of ecosemiotics in geography.[667] And in terms of historical artefacts, the archaeologist Robert Preucel cautiously states that 'the Saussaurian model, by itself, cannot provide an adequate account of material cultural meaning'.[668] Preucel also usefully overviews archaeologists who find limited validity in examining the materiality of semiotics – namely, that all artefacts are then assumed to be signs presenting themselves as clues (much like the Book of Nature), and that an archaeological semiotics depends on a perceived cultural proximity across time that flattens differences.[669] This raises once

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[664] Further qua Peirce, 'paper's materiality is materialized by serving as a medium for social action, as a contact zone, a site of interaction and entanglement. To function as a medium is to be materialized by and in the very events that it makes possible.' Constantine V. Nakassis, 'Materiality, materialization', *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 3/3 (2013), pp. 399–406 (p. 405).

[665] Ibid. p. 401.

[666] See Wendy Wheeler, *The Whole Creature: Complexity, Biosemiotics and the Evolution of Culture* (London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd, 2016). See also Wheeler, 'The Lightest Burden: The Aesthetic Abductions of Biosemiotics' in *Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology,* pp. 19–44. Another overview of biosemiotics and culture, as well as of the implications for the arts and humanities to be seen as a 'natural process' is to be found in Paul Cobley, *Cultural Implications of Biosemiotics* (London: Springer, 2016) p. xiv.

[667] 'Semiotic construction makes (re-designs) the artefacts surrounding the organism. This means that sign processes not only permanently re-design our concepts but they also, and simultaneously, re-re-design our surrounding matter. It is important to note that semiotic behaviour is not limited to the categories represented in language. It also includes lower (non-symbolic) levels of signs, the ones that either exclusively indexical (based on physical or causal connections) or iconic (based on similarity), about which we are not immediately aware, since they function at the non-conscious levels of cognition and action.' Timo Maran and Kalevi Kull, 'Ecosemiotics: Main principles and current developments' *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 96/1 (2014), pp. 41–53. (p. 42).

[668] Robert W. Preucel, *Archaeological Semiotics* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 3.

[669] Preucel cites the postproccesual archaeologist Matthew Johnson (1999) in this regard – 'text metaphor is flawed since it depends upon a perceived cultural proximity, the lack of difference between the past and our own present.' According to Preucel, 'some archaeologists regard [semiotics] as having limited application to the study of material culture. For example, Lewis Binford (1987:402), a leading processual archaeologist, has labelled postprocessualists as 'textual-contextualists' and critiqued them

again the problematics of 'expanding the transcultural imagination' and of a flat ontology – a problem somewhat allayed by emblems' grafting in which components were differentiated (by value rather than materiality), to be returned to in the next chapter.

Hieroglyphic Materialism

The inosculated environmental materiality of the *EL* (as both an object and a book of signs) leads back to emblematic connections with hieroglyphics. As previously alluded to in Chapter Two, Alciato under the direct influence of then just-translated Horapollo's *Hieroglyphica*[670], as Henebry writes, 'refers to his poems as instances of non-verbal, hieroglyphic signification':[671] he viewed them as things not words. The subject of the hieroglyphic context and features of the *EL* is already a rather well-worn site of scholarship within emblematics,[672] and what remains relevant is how hieroglyphic writing was a formal strategy to blur distinctions between material and abstract objects, collapsing heterogeneity into a single plane. Just as the baroque hybridity of the emblem glossed over the word-image divide,[673] in hieroglyphs (as with the aesthetics of woodcut printing), text and image, visual and verbal, sign and object, are inscribed within the same material form. Like other remnants of material culture from antiquity, hieroglyphs were carved on long-lasting objects (tombs and monuments) – a persistent and unifying 'solidnesse'. In regards to this hieroglyphic ground, Alciato's interest in epigraphy, and *emblema* as epigrams, the poet Denise

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for "adopting an approach that assumes that all artifacts are symbols and are direct semiotic evidence, or, in a more structuralist posture, present themselves as clues to the intellectual determinants of the ancients' behavior."' Ibid.

[670] 'We know Alciato had studied hieroglyphics at Bologna with Filipo Fasnini, the Latin translator of Horapollo, and Karl Giehlow has persuasively demonstrated that Alciato used Fasanini's translation when composing his emblems.' Manning, *The Emblem,* p. 58. See *The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo*, trans. George Boas (New Jersey, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1933).

[671] Henebry, 'Figures of Speech', p. 178.

[672] Volkmann and Giehlow (1913) argued that the *Emblematum Liber* in part emerged from the humanist preoccupation with hieroglyphs. Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem,* p. 17. Overall earlier commentators on the emblem perceived more links with hieroglyphics than later ones. Jacques Grèvin translated Hadrianus Junius's *Emblemata* (1567): 'Like his predecessors, Grèvin considered the *emblème* to be a special kind of semi-hieroglyphic text rather than an artistic genre with a definite tripartite form as it would later be conceived in the seventeenth century.' Likewise, Mignault 'tended to situate Alciati's invention within the tradition of the Egyptian hieroglyphics rather than that of the epigrams of the Greek Anthology.' Unlike Giles Corrozet who 'added pictures to clarify the texts which he called emblems', Mignault saw the text as fairly auxiliary, simply additional words designed to add clarity to the hieroglyphic signs. Daniel Russell, 'The Term 'emblème' in Sixteenth-Century France', *Neophilologus,* 59/3 (1975) pp. 337–371 (p. 344).

[673] Wild, 'A Just Proportion of Body and Soul', p. 237.

Riley's explorations of what she terms the 'lapidary style' seem most relevant:

> While digital lettering doesn't require a capacity to bite deep into the surface that bears it, epigraphy must always consider the actual material, the stone or marble, and its historical production. The Greek pre x *epi* means "upon," which immediately asserts it as a kind of "writing on." (An *epitaph* is, literally, "a writing upon a tomb"—while the Greek *epigramma* is an inscription or a "writing into." Hence our word "epigram.") So the etymology of epigraphy announces its own physicality. It is writing on a ground.
>
> […] And its material also enables—or hinders—what can be said.[674]

If the medium of hieroglyphic writing is a ground which, as with all representations' surfaces, extends into itself as a substantive material that covered or *obscured* as much as it revealed, it complements the notion of the *EL* as presenting an ancient Mediterranean topography that acts as a spatial container for a memory culture that can contain marked absences. Whilst as Drysdall suggests, Alciato did not view hieroglyphs as 'immutable Neo-platonic sign(s)' but rather with Erasmus followed in the tradition of hieroglyphs found in Diorodus Siculus, [675] Christian Platonists such as Ficino viewed hieroglyphics in relation to divine revelation, because supposedly before the flood all knowledge was written on two indestructible pillars (one made of marble, and one made of brick according to Christopher Giarda[676]) learnt by the Egyptians who taught it to the Greeks – an Arcanum concomitant with memory. Hieroglyphs as *the* writing of memory cultures were therefore sites of material inscription retaining obscure traces that could only be interpreted loosely or creatively, much like the Imperial relics that Alciato studied as a young man in Milan for his unpublished monograph *Antiquitates Mediolaneses*. Gombrich makes a relevant side-point in regards to this, in that Ficino's interest in hieroglyphics was in large part due to the problem of accommodating the Platonic doctrine of reminiscence to Christian theology, which obliterated the concept of anamneses of former states as it asserted that God created souls on conception. As a consequence the experience of the individual was replaced by 'a theory of the memory of mankind'[677], much like Schliephake's concept of collective simulations of a memory culture. That such a

[674] Denise Riley, 'On the Lapidary Style', *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 28/1 (2017), pp. 17–36 (pp. 26–7).
[675] Drysdall, 'A Lawyer's Language Theory', pp. 290–291.
[676] Gombrich, 'Icones Symbolicae', p. 150.
[677] Ibid.

memory culture was ecological in terms of possessing an agentic materiality is emphasised when it emerges that Ficino, unlike Alciato, could not actually read the *Horapollo* – the materiality of the book once again had great agency, impression, affect.[678] Likewise, 'Plato compares memory images to impressions in a wax tablet in the *Theaetatus*'.[679]

To which can be added Drysdall's contention that Alciato in descriptions of his *emblema*

> […] may be thinking of the object or event *not so much as having a figurative meaning added arbitrarily to it*, but rather as having a *figurative meaning already in it because of its natural properties* [my italics] The idea of the purely conventional sign is not relevant to the hieroglyph and the emblem; only letters and words could be considered in this light. The indications are that Alciato's emblems, being "things", or images of things, are signs of the second kind mentioned above, that is, they are analogous to words with an inherent likeness to the things they represent, but are capable, as such words were capable, of change through usage, of re-invention and redeployment.[680]

Alciato/Drysdall's notion of emblems as hieroglyphic writing containing embedded figurative meanings because of their 'natural properties' suggests material objects as having a kind of protean aseity retained in material representations, a contention that Speculative Emblematics has been pursuing as *arbitrary morphe*. A similar premise that objects (including words) have a kind of *dasein* retained through process is illustrated by the artist and musician Marian Zazeela's squiggled hieroglyphs in her pamphlet 'The Soul of the Word' (1969)[681] (see Fig. 29). Zazeela on the process of their creation: 'I move the pen from left to right adding ornaments. The word begins to act as a single unit. Repeated strokes perform continual changes as the letters shift and grow.'[682] Once again, material ornaments. That according to Drysdall the concept of the sign favoured by post/structuralisms is not relevant to the *EL* is an contention that is somewhat contradicted by Mitchell who associates Derrida's grammatology with hieroglyphs and the world-made-text, but 'with a new twist […] there is no

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[678] 'The Florentine codex of Horus Apollo on the Hieroglyphs, a poor mutilated book, was an object of admiration and of wonderment for many scholars who would have liked to read it. Copies of it were made for Ficinus, for Cardinal Bessarion and other Graecists but it is clear that it remained largely unintelligible to them.' Ernst Philip Goldschmidt [1947], *The Printed Book of The Renaissance: Three Lectures on Type, Illustration and Ornament* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 85.
[679] Mitchell, *Iconology*, p. 14.
[680] Drysdall, 'A Lawyer's Language Theory', pp. 290–291.
[681] See <https://www.printedmatter.org/catalog/tables/507/19904> [accessed 1 February 2019].
[682] Marian Zazeela, 'The Soul of the Word', *Aspen*, *9* (1970).

foundation for the sign.'[683] Perhaps for both signs and hieroglyphs the 'soul of the word' is simply *obscured*, being either hidden or absent. Yet the material cover that obscures is the precondition for this hiding, and the ground for the process. Jan Assmann writing on Egyptian hieroglyphics ignores the distinction between sign and hieroglyph, commenting that hieroglyphs surprisingly rely on the materiality of the sign and not semanticity,[684] a material carrier that can be altered without necessarily altering the functionality of the sign.[685] In complement to this train of thought, for his emblem 'Ex litterarum studiis immortalitatem acquiri' [Immortality won through literary pursuits, 133, see Fig. 30], Alciato indulged in adapting an ouroboros that he had seen on a bas-relief in Milan via. a self-flattering reading of the *Horapollo* to symbolise the immortality of writing. By doing this, he deliberately altered the composite meaning of the original object (immortal tyrants) – and yet, as Henebry notes, retained 'a decorous likeness'.[686] Contra Henebry, this transposition from tyrant to humanist – of one object into another, is more than a superficial carrying forward because it relies on the materiality of the simile through arbitrary morphe. Such a reading does not also diverge much from the tradition of the hieroglyph as derived from Siculus, where objects too have a *dasein* of sorts. Unsurprisingly, 'Ex litterarum…' as transposed into the container of the *EL* depicts Triton immersed in the memory container of the sea, encircled by the ouroboros that has become a sea-monster. Centuries later Maurice Blanchot writes:

> My hope lies in the materiality of language, in the fact that words are things, too, are a kind of nature […] Just now the reality of words was an obstacle. Now it is my only chance. A name ceases to be the ephemeral passing of nonexistence and becomes a concrete ball, a solid mass of existence; language, abandoning the sense, the meaning which is all it wanted to be, tries to become senseless. Everything physical takes precedence: rhythm, weight, mass, shape, and then the paper on which one writes, the trail of ink, the book.[687]

Blanchot's 'words are things, are a kind of nature' seems to be an uncanny repetition of Alciato's hieroglyphic writing, and of the faith that Renaissance humanists had in

[683] Mitchell, *Iconology*, p. 29.
[684] Jan Assmann, 'Ancient Egypt and the Materiality of the Sign', *Materialities of Communication*, ed. by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and K. Ludwig Pfeiffer (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 17.
[685] Ibid, p. 18.
[686] Henebry, 'Figures of Speech', pp. 184–5.
[687] Maurice Blanchot, *The Work of Fire* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 327.

artefacts from material culture and the materiality of print in regards to the *promise* of knowledge. Blanchot's notion of language attempting to become senseless is also relevant to the notion of an unreadable *dasein* present in representation, because as Daly reminds us, 'When speaking of integrating hieroglyphs into the emblem we must always bear in mind that we are not referring to actual Egyptian hieroglyphs'. Through the very same *Horapollo* hieroglyphs were misinterpreted as symbolic ideograms of divine letters by scholars in the Renaissance (as well as in antiquity). Whilst Alciato and Erasmus were attracted to the logic of the hieroglyph that was rooted in a substantive materiality but whose capacity for arbitrary redeployment cultivated creative interpretations and theoretical presuppositions, the same 'hieroglyphic and enigmatic opacity' was later singled out by the Swiss philologist Johann Jakob Breitinger as being inherently misleading: 'While similes usually serve to explain a thing, here they have the intended purpose of enshrouding a clear thought in darkness and obscurity.'[688] Or, a *doubling* action*,* a dual-edged plane of obscurity that is an indecipherable ground, similar to that found in the Tao Te Ching: 'Non-Being and Being, emerging from a single ground, are differentiated only by their names. This single ground is called darkness.'[689] Zazeela: 'The word is still discernible. A sweeping ornament is fastened to the first letter which is now perfect and needs no adjustment […] but the writhing rising out of the word is a dragon devouring itself.'[690]

[688] Quoted in Wild, 'A Just Proportion of Body and Soul', p. 232.
[689] Quoted in Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse* (London: Random House, 2002), p. 172.
[690] Zazeela, 'The Soul of the Word'.

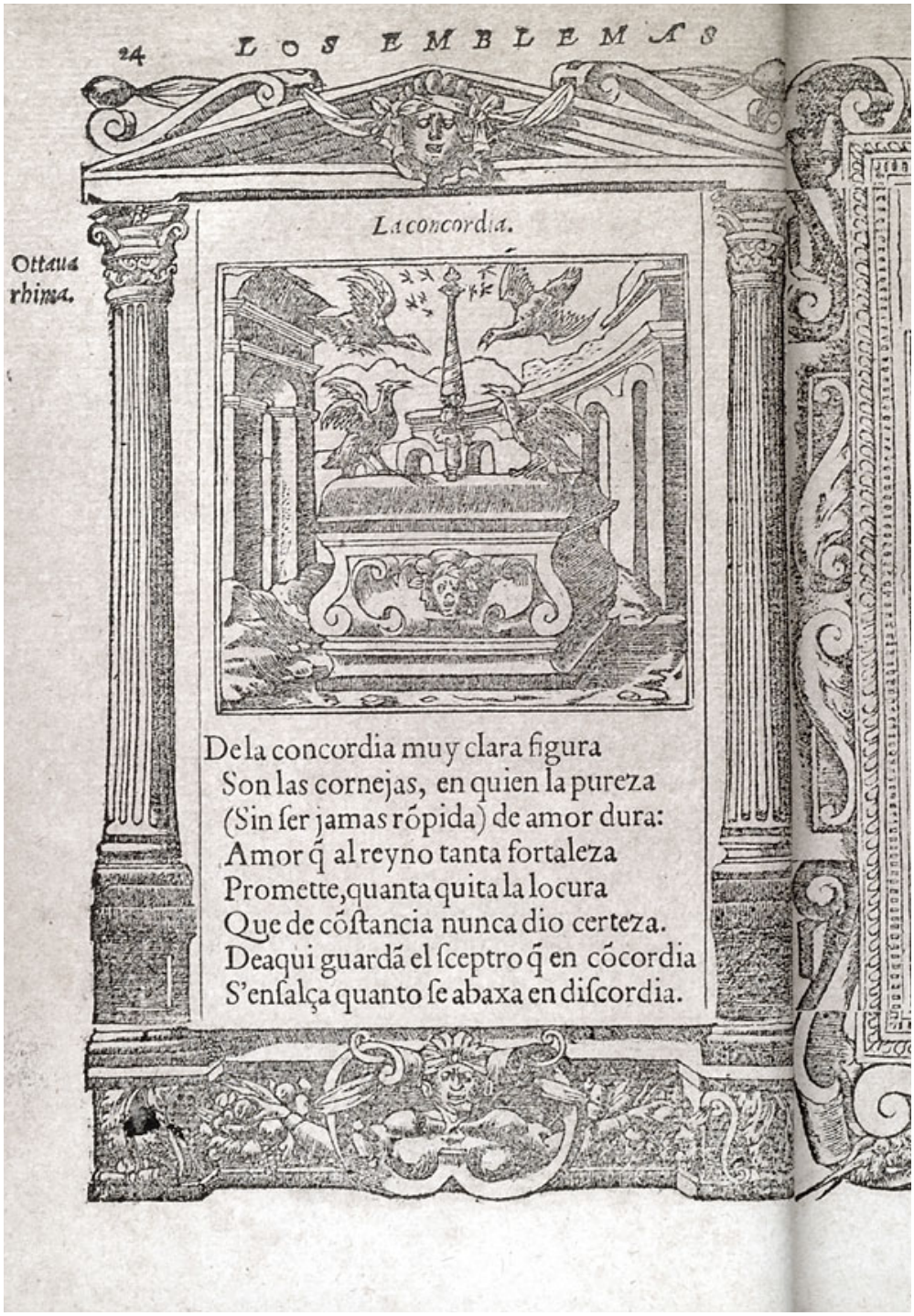

Fig. 26. 'La Concordia'.

Fig. 27. 'Que No Se De Descrubrir El Secreto'

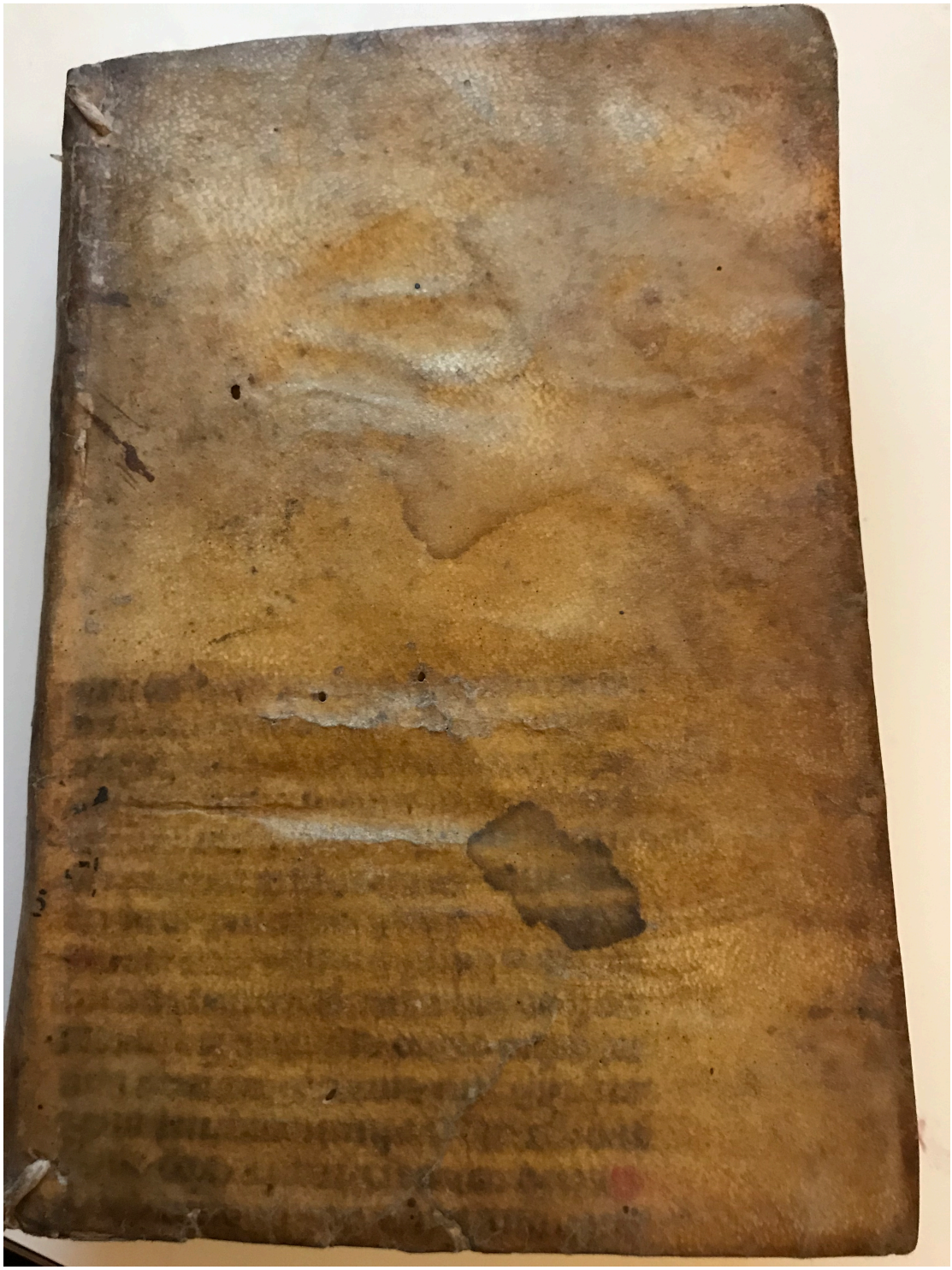

Fig. 28. Cover of Andrea Alciato's Emblemata (1621).

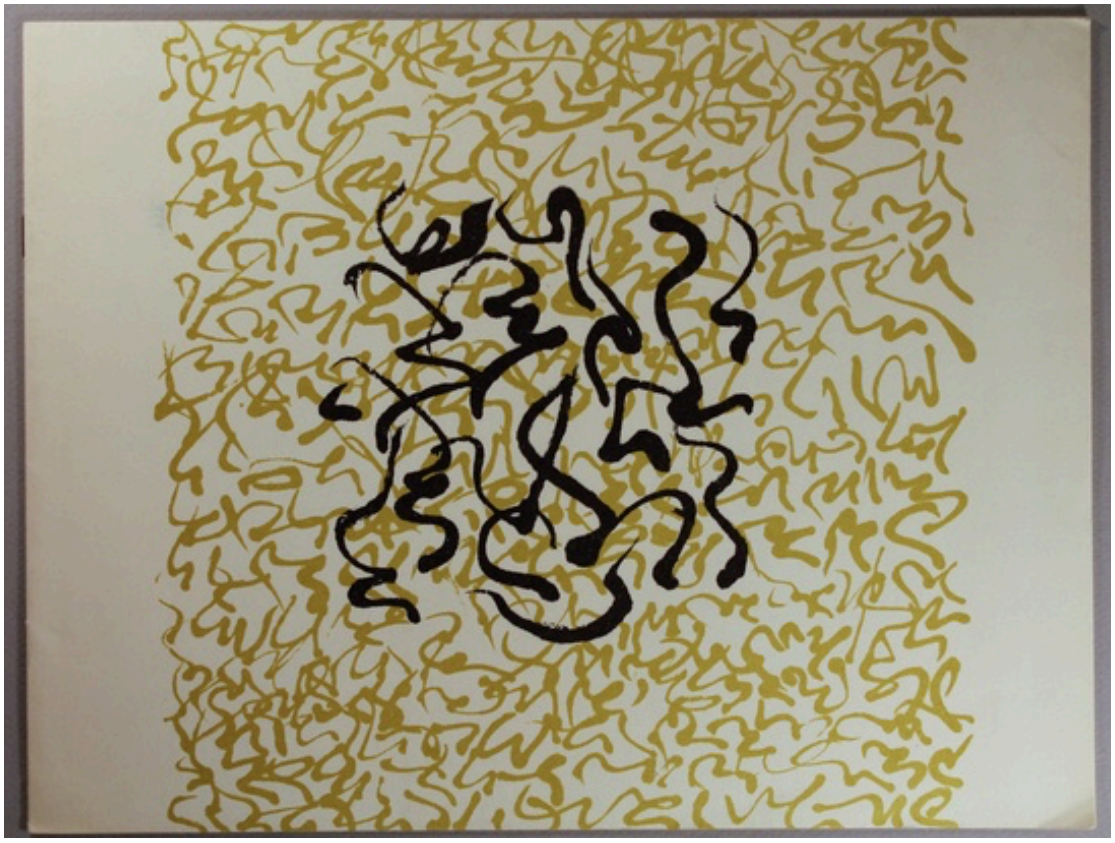

Fig. 29. Marian Zazeela, 'The Soul of the Word'.

Fig. 30. 'Ex litterarum studiis immortalitatem acquiri'.

Chapter Five: The Violence of Inserts

In a break from ecomaterialism's insistence on the unifying potential of an all-pervasive materiality that is synonymous with the act of narrative, this chapter focuses on the flattening affects of abstract inserts on the emblems. Noting some of the abstract properties of emblems, it argues that the emblem blurs distinctions between materiality and abstraction by continuing to argue for the concept of a dual-edged notion of obscurity as ground for the emblem, one that is concomitant with emblems as a form of hieroglyphic writing. After delineating some similarities between emblematic deciphering and modern theory-making, it focuses on exploring how 'Rome' as an abstract and imperial universal insert homogenised emblems while drawing parallels with the trouble of reading representations through concepts of agentic materiality that rely on the decipherment of fragments into the promise of clear wholes, wholes that are also synonymous with corporeality and living. With recourse to the artist-poet Ian Hamilton Finlay's emblems, it argues that examining such imperial inserts as sublated fragments challenges benign and clear notions of material process to reinforce the notion of a double-edged obscurity that violently conceals, and contributes towards a spectral and uncanny proximity to encounters with nonlinear emergences. It concludes by returning to the question of defining an emblematic ontology, preferring to posit emblems as a mirror of speculative logic and theory-making in the environmental humanities and more widely in regards to theory, rather than reach any definitive – and unifying – conclusions in this regard.

The Trouble With Materiality

Storied Matter

> An Ancient Mediterranean landscape; an endangered species in the Amazon; the Library of Congress; the Gulf Stream; carcinogenic cells […] our hands; this book: what do all these things have in common? The answer to this question is simple. Whether visible or invisible, socialized or wild, they are all material forms emerging in combinations with forces, agencies, and other matter. Entangled in endless ways, their "more-than-human" materiality is a constant process of shared becoming that tells us something about the "world we inhabit."[691]

This introductory passage from Iovino and Oppermann's *Material Ecocriticism* affirms some of the conclusions of the previous chapter in regards to the materiality of an ancient Mediterranean landscape that serves as a spatial container for an active memory culture (a 'process of shared becoming'). Like Speculative Emblematics, Iovino and Oppermann's project via Haraway's concept of *natureculture*s[692] collapses nature/culture binaries ('socialized or wild') to examine how 'bodily natures and discursive forces *express* their interaction whether in representations or in their concrete reality […within] coevolutionary landscapes of natures and signs',[693] to return to the idea of an autonomous cultural ecology. So far then, this thesis' examinations of the *EL* have been in a direction broadly congruent with those taken by new materialisms and the material turn. However, the flattening inherent to an ontology that links disparate objects such as an ancient landscape, the Library of Congress, 'a toxic plume',[694] and the reader of the book leads onto the preoccupation of this chapter. As noted in Chapter Three, new materialisms tend to snowball into a monism that labels everything, even what was previously considered transcendent, as a unified 'matter'. Too, that that the *EL* itself encourages such a reading, as examined in relation to the materiality of the book and the hybridity of the form. For ecophilosophy or ecocriticism the problematics of this flat ontology, as well as obscuring relations of power and production,[695] becomes apparent in Iovino and

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[691] Iovino and Oppermann, 'Introduction: Stories Come to Matter', p. 1.
[692] Ibid, p. 5.
[693] Ibid., p. 1.
[694] Ibid.
[695] As detailed in footnotes in Chapter Two in regards to criticisms of Bennett and Latour. Because of Iovino and Oppermann's – as well as Alaimo and Hekman's – emphasis on the socio-ethical and political liberatory potential of new materialisms (outlining a 'material feminism'), similar critiques to

Oppermann's statement that their material ecocriticism – and to draw here parallels again with tropes of reading the Book of Nature – rests upon a perception that

> the world's material phenomena are knots in a vast network of agencies, which can be "read" and interpreted as forming narratives, stories […] All matter, in other words, is a "storied matter".[696]

Iovino and Oppermann's faith in these 'undeniable signifying forces' is derived from the natureculture materialisms of Haraway, Stacy Alaimo, Barad, Wheeler, Bennett, Latour, and Coole and Frost's edited reader.[697] Under the umbrella of this *narrativised* material turn, 'reality emerges as an intertwined flux of material and discursive forces, rather than as complex of hierarchically organized individual players', and matter is seen as both substance and significance (meaning).[698] Given that Earth Systems that are so *un*balanced through human intervention, this not only presents a suspiciously simple cosmology, but – as with Bennett's vitalism – elides anthropocentric violence and globalised drivers of cultural change in favour of a vision of agentic matter with environmentally determinist *and* anthropocentric connotations (in regards to meaning).[699] Further, by displacing (some) human agency in favour of agentic matter that can be read, new materialisms favour a monism that flattens differences under the bright light of sharedness (for Iovino and Oppermann, a 'material mesh'[700]); to those who can interpret it, with theories in this regard

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these theories apply. To summarise the focus of both: 'These volumes engender a critique of dematerialized treatments of the body in feminist thought, on the one hand, and propose alternative models of feminist engagement with biology, corporeality, science, and matter, on the other […] distinct from historical materialism, that takes up materiality not simply in social-structural but also in physical, biological, and natural terms.' Victoria Pitts-Taylor, 'Mattering: Feminism, Science, and Corporeal Politics' in *Mattering: Feminism, Science and Materialism*, ed. by Victoria Pitts-Taylor (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2016), pp. 1-22 (p. 10).

[696] Iovino and Oppermann, 'Introduction: Stories Come to Matter', p. 1.

[697] Ibid., p. 2. As also outlined elsewhere by Oppermann drawing on Wendy Wheeler: life 'is made of stories'. Further: 'Material ecocriticism analyzes this embodied narrativity mapped onto the meaning-generating evolutionary structures as *storied matter,* [quoting David Abram] "storying itself through humankind"'. Serpil Oppermann, 'From Material to Posthuman Ecocriticism: Hybridity, Stories, Natures' in *Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology*, pp. 273–294 (p. 282).

[698] Iovino and Oppermann, 'Introduction: Stories Come to Matter', pp. 3–4.

[699] Bargetz carefully argues 'for reading new materialisms' longing for agency as a performative tactics of counter-feelings' as a response to 'the contemporary affective condition of political depression, despair and hopelessness'. While refusing melancholy, such theories 'intervene in the contemporary crisis of the imagination' in a form of longing for possibility – in the end, performing a depoliticised gesture, and one that always 'entails deeply human aspirations'. Bargetz's critique resonates with the turn to affect taken in the previous chapter of this thesis through an ecomaterialist lens. Brigette Bargetz, 'Longing for Agency: New Materialisms' Wrestling With Despair', *European Journal of Women's Studies* (2018), pp. 1–14 (p. 4, 3, 17).

[700] Iovino and Oppermann, 'Introduction: Stories Come to Matter', p. 1.

becoming hyper-visualised 'sighting devices'.[701] Though sharedness is similar to the interconnections in obscurity delineated by this thesis as being integral to the *EL,* there is a difference between the qualities of presences. This could be described as the indeterminate connection of an unknown audience sitting in a cinema in the dark, compared to when the lights come on at the end of the film – to see others that in this moment of encounter are assumed to be known, yet are no more known than when the lights were off.[702] Rather than viewing the emergence of material forms in representations taking place from *within* a state of obscurity, material ecocriticism stresses the narrativising work of the reader, scholar and writer, one coterminous with an exegetical approach to the Book of Nature. Such a viewpoint is paradoxically a stepping outside of environments towards universalia, despite new materialisms' anti-essentialist and anti-universalist focus.[703] Such a flaw perhaps arises when critical theory attempts to create master systems, rather than practicing hesitant criticism with specific objects in mind. As Barkan writes in *Unearthing the Past,* study of a subject tends to lead to the researcher's conviction that 'the subject seems to him [/her] inevitable and universal, that it appears to provide a kind of key to all knowledge concerning history, art, and culture.'[704] Or as William Carlos Williams says of essay writing: 'Unity is the shallowest, the cheapest deception of all composition […] ability in an essay is multiplicity, infinite fracture, the intercrossing of opposed forces establishing any number of opposed centres of stillness.'[705] This unity too, could be a

[701] Haraway writes of her theory's 'optical features': 'Not a systematic overview, it is a little sighting device in a long line of such craft tools […] set to produce not effects of distance, but effects of connection, of embodiment, and of responsibility for an imagined elsewhere that we may yet learn to see and build here.' Donna Haraway, *The Haraway Reader* (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2004), p. 64.

[702] Feminist biologists Roy and Subramaniam likewise critically link new materialisms to a form of hypervisibility, (the 'new') stating that 'We are interested in examining the matter that lurks in the deep, dark shadows of the "old" feminist critiques of science of earlier feminisms, the silhouettes of matter being brought forward in the feminist new materialisms, and the glints of attention to matter that have recently surfaced in postcolonial science studies, to argue that while each encounter is valuable, none are sufficient on their own for the project of feminist science studies.' Deboleena Roy and Banu Subramaniam,'Matter in the Shadows', *Mattering: Feminism, Science and Materialism*, pp. 23– 42 (p. 24).

[703] 'we would like to argue here that if there is no generic "universal woman," then there can also be no universal or generic "biological body" or "matter." It is interesting to us that much of the work of new materialisms (although by no means all) recovers an abstract and generic material body, one that is often nonhuman, microbial, molecular, or atomic.' Ibid, p. 28. Another questioning of these theories' 'possibly universalizing presumptions' can be found in Hanna Meiβner, 'New Material Feminisms and Historical Materialism: A Diffractive Reading of Two (Ostensibly) Unrelated Perspectives, in ibid., pp. 43–57 (p. 44).

[704] Barkan, *Unearthing the Past*, p. xxii.

[705] William Carlos Williams, *Imaginations*, ed. by Webster Schott (New York, NY: New Directions, 1971), p. 323.

description of for example, the emblematic commentaries that this thesis has eschewed in contrast to the juxtaposed tripartite form of the emblem that has multivalenced meanings surrounding its own centres of stillness. It is in particular the aesthetic effects – flattening – created by the abstract unity of universals, both in emblematic representations and in theory that this chapter will focus on.

Abstract Emblems

> Working by metonymy, the emblem designates synecdochally a notion or a concept: featured in the tripartite composition, it pretends to let us see something visible, while it lets us read something intelligible. *There is nothing more abstract than the emblem, despite appearances*…[706] [my italics]

In *The Order of Things* Foucault delineates between Classical (antiquity) and Renaissance approaches to representation as follows: the former considered representations as synonymous with structures of thought and ideas or intelligible abstracts themselves, whereas in the Renaissance knowledge was taken to be a matter of resemblance between signs.[707] Correspondingly, emblems in the style of Sambucus' *Emblemata* (1564)[708] became popular with Jesuit priests[709] not only because they mined the exegetical tradition of drawing on a *res naturalis*, but more

[706] Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani and Katherine Lydon, 'The Poetics of Place: The Space of the Emblem (Sponde)', *Baroque Topographies*, 80 (1991), pp. 30–40 (p. 33). In a rare study of places in emblems (Sponde, not Alciato), Castellani and Lydon emphasise the simulated nature of emblematic places that they consider as 'nowhere-places' of a strictly codified semiotic nature as signs or signals, disrupted or realigned by the whim of the imaginary – clearly envisioned as separate from materiality.

[707] Gary Gutting, 'Introduction' in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 1–28 (p. 12). There was however, a confluence between the two until the nineteenth-century, when 'the theory of representation disappears as the universal foundation of all possible orders; language as the spontaneous *tabula,* the primary grid of things, as an indispensable link between representation and things, is eclipsed in its turn; a profound historicity penetrates into the heart of things […] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. xxv.

[708] In his *Emblemata cum aliquot nummis antiqui operis* (Antwerp: Plantin, 1564) Sambucus relates emblems to *symbola* that serve three universal purposes, 'mythicos, rhetoricos, et physiologicos' [euphemistic, moral and scientific]. He then goes on to assert that the best emblems are 'wisdom in the form of illustrations, so emblems should strike the eye with their signs [i.e. images]; let them stimulate the mind of the hearer. For like any poetry, epigrams are in general a mimesis. So let them be veiled, ingenious, pleasing, and with variety of meaning; and let these three types share with each other their meanings and their figures. The pictures themselves my be banal, but let them convey a hidden sense, let them teach more obscure things clearly – but not crude, confused or improbable things (such as you may find even in Virgil and Homer if you look carefully, and in Aristophanes, who introduces talking clouds)—providing they present an analogy [...and though any of these three types of interpretation, e.g. mythos might be used] the more restrictive they are, the more they may please, and call for judgment and wisdom, like exact and apt poetic epithets— "imprints of seal" and "veils", as Demetrius Phalereus calls them.' Drysdall, 'Joannes Sambucus, "De Emblemate"', p. 116.

[709] For the Jesuits, emblems became appropriated into a 'descriptive science of allegorical images', as well as co-comitant 'organizers of spectacles of every kind' within the framework of Christian iconography. Damisch, *A Theory of /Cloud/*, p. 52, 62.

widely were oriented towards suggesting (veiled) intelligible abstracts that were concomitant with a transcendental divinity in the wake of Ficino's Christianised Platonism. Rhetorical devices such as metaphor, synecdoche and allegory, as well as the emblem's *pictura,* were seen as mirror-like shards that refracted Platonic forms-as-truths through indirect associational similarity, between signs. This exegetical mode is perhaps best showcased by Cesare Ripa's seminal emblem book *Iconologia* (1603, later cast as 'moral emblems'[710]), written slightly after Alciato, that personified virtues, vices, passions, Natural and Celestial divinities – such as Art, Authority, Avarice and Autumn – to name some of the As.[711] Ripa's emblems portray streamlined allegorised figures holding symbolic objects against empty backgrounds (see Fig. 31), rather than the messier admixtures of biodiversity and landscapes found in the *EL*. Consequently, more attention is drawn to Ripa's emblems as artificial abstractions rather than as narrative tableaux of 'potential facticity'. Yet for both personification allegory[712], or more succinctly 'allegorese' as Daly points out,[713] unites antique fragments, for example of Greek and Roman divinities, to figurate ideas (wholes) – such as Alciato's 'Gula' [Gluttony, 90] who also embodies Dionysius and Apicius.[714] This focus on *eikon* [likeness] or *phantasma* [semblance][715] not via. *analogon* but resemblance did not present the reader with a transcendent whole in the manner of the Romantic symbol,[716] but offered a *representational unification* of an intelligible abstract [Gluttony] that confusingly also served as a

[710] Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia* (Rome, 1603). Later reprinted by Alciato's printer Tozzi: *La Piu che Novissima Iconologia del Cavalier Ripa* (Padua, 1630) and as Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia, or, Moral Emblems* (London: Benjamin Motte, 1709).
[711] Ibid., see table of contents.
[712] Allegorical personification was also used by Greeks and Romans, albeit sparingly, to visually depict philosophical ideals rather than divinities, while William of Conches and Peter Abelard developed theories of *integumenta* (coverings) with which philosophers e.g. Plato wrapped up truths about the order of nature. See Katherine Park, 'Nature in Person: Medieval and Renaissance Allegories and Emblems' in *The Moral Authority of Nature,* ed. by Lorraine Daston and Fernando Vidal (University of Chicago Press), pp. 50–73, (p. 54).
[713] According to Daly, emblems are not strictly allegorical but rather perform 'allegorese' because unlike the possible interpretations attached to allegory, the emblem presents a closed unit in which an interpretation or explication is present within the emblem as the *pictura* or *res significans*. Daly, 'Alciato's '"Spes Proxima" Emblem', p. 257.
[714] 'A man is painted with the neck of a crane and a swollen belly; he carries in his hands a seagull or a pelican. Such was the shape of Dionysius [the tyrant of Syracuse] and Apicius, and those who make themselves famous by their gluttony for pleasure.' Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The* Emblematum Liber *In Latin and English*, p. 109.
[715] As delineated by Mitchell, *Iconology*, p. 5.
[716] See John Joseph McCole, *Walter Benjamin and the Antinomies of Tradition*, (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 32.

universally-applicable moral lesson or idea[717] through the figuration of discontinuous parts, just as much as Alciato's emblems also inosculated through arbitrary association. Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani and Katherine Lydon: 'unlike allegory, which metamorphoses a notion into a character […] the emblem transforms a character into an idea.'[718] Thus, the importance of the interplay of *motto, pictura* and *subscriptio*, as in 'In victoriam dolo partam' [About victory born from trickery, 48], where Virtue is figurated as a woman pulling out her 'whitened tresses' on top of Ajax's tomb, a narrative complemented by the *subscriptio* which recounts how Odysseus tricked Ajax out of his winnings (see Fig. 32).[719] Of this personification, Virtue has no use for her gesture alone and the universal intelligible abstract shadowing the emblem is of [Divine] Justice.

Indeed, emblems' reliance on intelligible abstracts as their integrating nexuses for meaning-making is partly why this thesis has focused on the materiality of an emblem book – rather than, for example, more vividly visual manuscripts like the Lindsfarne Gospels, or Renaissance paintings in the style of Panofsky: emblems challenge materialist thought as much as encourage it. Emblems were, qua Ripa, designed to render *ordering* immaterial abstracts[720] in a concrete fashion – an aim that was completed by their aesthetics. In an apposite but dovetailing manner to the previous chapter's focus on the materiality of the *EL*, the aesthetic properties of woodcut printing (the opacity of the paper beneath and the thick delineating lines and frames), as well as the disavowal of realistic conventions in both content (the reuse of images, hybrid admixtures of 'historical', 'natural' and 'mythic' subjects), and form (visually connotative rather than illustrative, without colour or depth, as indexes or repositories of references) also places emblems firmly in the category of conceptual objects, or objects that are self-consciously marking out abstract terrain, not unlike the

[717] Tung, 'From Theory To Practice', p. 196.
[718] Castellani and Lydon, 'The Poetics of Place', p. 33.
[719] 'Bathing the tomb of Ajax with my tears, I am Virtue; wretched, alas, I am pulling out my whitened tresses! Naturally, it had to turn out in this way, so that I am overturned by a Greek judge, and deceit now stands on the winning side of the law-suit [the distribution of Ajax's weapons].' Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The* Emblematum Liber *In Latin and English*, p. 67.
[720] 'Taking an instance from nature and revealing an occult divine meaning is symptomatic of believing that absolutes exist before particulars […] This Renaissance preoccupation with universals in a broadly Platonic sense evidently merges with the medieval concern for allegorical exegesis, and the emblem was frequently a later vehicle for their conjunction. Notions of universal ideas, the image of the great chain of being, and Nature regarded as God's Second Book are but different articulations of a sense of underlying order; and where that order was crumbling for whatever reason, emblems often function as re-affirmations of the desired, if threatened, order.' Daly, *Literature in Light of the Emblem,* p. 52.

artist Joseph Beuys' ambiguous blackboard diagrams. Unfilled lines are always conceptual. *Graphein* – the Greek term, meaning the act of both writing and drawing, began with outlines:[721] shape is geometrically divisible, whereas colour is not.[722] In the *EL,* as Wild noted, the alternate alien view from rhetoric as being compromised of fabricated and inserted parts emphasised the artificiality of the whole construction: by which could be read the abstraction of the whole construction. Too, there is the size of emblem images, which in the *EL* are smaller than a human palm. The literary critic Susan Stewart writes: 'minute description reduces the object to its signifying properties, and this reduction of physical dimensions results in a multiplication of ideological properties.'[723] Likewise, Moffitt states that epigrams are designed to heap additional meanings on a situation or event in order to portray an abstract idea with wider applications.[724] Just as much as the *EL*-as-object draws attention to materiality in various ways, many of its components were simultaneously or additionally designed to negate materiality. Like theories of materialist ecocriticism it *materialises* abstractions within the same framework.

Neither though, were the interpretations of such abstracts as units of mental images or ideas either fixed or singular – nor might Daly's vision of the emblem as a closed system of interpretation hold.[725] Pere Le Moine writes of abstracts arising from emblematic contemplation in his *De L'Art des Devises* (Paris, 1666) that:

> Were I not afraid of rising too high and of saying too much I should say that there is in the device something of those universal images given to the Higher Spirits which present in one moment and by means of a simple and detached notion what our minds can only represent in succession and by means of a long
> sequence of expressions which form themselves one after the other and which more frequently get into each other's way rather than help each other by their multitude.[726]

[721] Damisch, *A Theory of /Cloud/*, p. 35.
[722] Ibid., p. 36.
[723] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 48.
[724] Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The Emblematum Liber In Latin and English*, p. 12.
[725] In contrast, Borgogni writes, 'that hermeneutic distinctiveness of emblematics – the centrality of the reader's interpretative moment rather than the author's creative one – encourages fertile stylistic analyses.' Emblems are rather an opening and a closing of reading possibility – involving the reader on one hand, one the other narrowing hermeneutic possibilities through 'refined rhetorical strategies', Borgogni, 'Must I Needs Want Solidnesse Because by Metaphors I Speak?', pp. 75–76. Elsewhere, Henebry argues that 'Novelty in emblems, as in adages, consists primarily in their seemingly infinite capacity for application in new contexts.' Henebry, 'Figures of Speech', p. 180.
[726] Quoted in Gombrich, 'Icones Symbolicae', p. 161.

This multivalenced abstract aspect of the *EL*, that re-echoes this thesis's argument that the *EL* should be considered as a process rather than an static artefact, is seemingly at odds to the previous chapter's contention that the emblems are hieroglyphic in the tradition of Siculus not Plato. For Ripa, 'Plato took his greatest doctrine from the hieroglyphic figures'.[727] While this seems like a positing of materiality versus transcendental abstraction, the similarities found in both cut right into assumptions about the independent narrative agency of materiality held by new materialist thinkers who also prioritise process and somatic knowledge. Neoplatonic hieroglyphs as ideograms of divine letters can be merged with Alciato's hieroglyphics via. Douglas Radcliff-Umstead's contention that: 'through hieroglyphs abstract thoughts acquired visual *embodiment.*'[728] [my italics] *Iconologia* was above all 'intended for artists, writers, poets, sculptors, theatrical designers, and builders of wedding and funeral decorations.'[729] In this, *Iconologia* was a further elaboration of Alciato and Erasmus' method of creating transposable material ornaments by using the emblematic mode of leveraging credit from fragments with a view to educational and moral reform through a coherent universal glossing via aesthetic style rather than politics. Ripa's plan for one, was 'to establish a universal language (or science) of images'[730] – never mind that the natureculture grafting of the emblem also had a certain autonomy that escaped intentions as previously demarcated. Similarly, Colonna – whose imaginative use of the hieroglyph was more similar to Alciato's as a 'mode of the ideogram that reflected his discursive concerns'[731] – was responding 'to the loss of a repository of universally accepted signs and, in the search for alternatives, the hieroglyphic was a partial solution', according to Nathaniel Wallace.[732] Other similarities were that so-called Neoplatonists never considered the sensible world to be bereft of intelligibility,[733] and that like Alciato, Florentine Neoplatonists – and Ripa – were

[727] See Ripa, *Iconologia, or, Moral Emblems*.
[728] Douglas Radcliff-Umstead,'Guilio Camillo's Emblems of Memory', *Yale French Studies*, 47 (1972), pp. 47–56 (p. 49).
[729] Anne Curthoys and John Docker, 'Time, Eternity, Truth, and Death: History as Allegory', *Humanities Research*, 1 (1999), pp. 5–26 (p. 14).
[730] Damisch, *A Theory of /Cloud/*, p. 58.
[731] Nathaniel Wallace**,** 'Architextual poetics: The *Hypernotomachia* and the Rise of the European emblem', *Emblematica,* 8 (1994), pp. 1– 27 (p. 11).
[732] Ibid., p. 18.
[733] John Dillon and Lloyd P. Gerson, eds., *Neoplatonic Philosophy: Introductory Readings* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2004), p. xx. The Neoplatonic 'separation' is exactly what Gombrich encourages: 'This doctrine of the two modes of knowledge is the correlate of the doctrine of the two worlds.' Gombrich, 'Icones Symbolicae', p. 147.

syncretic assimilators of other texts.[734] The doubling or dialectical plane of hieroglyphic obscurity which is the ground for the emblem, that this thesis argues is reflective of ecological processes, therefore locks-in not just visual and verbal, sense and nonsense, but abstraction and materiality. Simultaneously, material aesthetics as a formal carrier for universalia undoes the difference and multiplicity that this thesis has so far attached to materiality. Further, if encounters with the past in the *EL* are marked by materialised absences, and nonlinear temporalities are pleated by residual affects, Moine's description suggests similar atemporal emergences – and that such 'material' forms could be equally be read as abstractions.

Reading Abstract Surfaces

To return to questions of emblematic reading in connection with ecocriticism, emblems' hermeneutical method of deciphering and revealing by mining text-image surfaces through dense webs of intertextual allusion and rhetorical devices, whether passaged through the Neoplatonic theory of veiled forms or Alciato's 'hieroglyphic writing',[735] in fact diverges little from contemporary theory-making as an academic discipline situated within the humanities. While Speculative Emblematics as previously stated is not concerned with 'solving' emblems, emblems (can) operate using a reading mode that the cultural theorist Rita Felski, like Sedgwick (borrowing from Paul Ricoeur) terms 'a *hermeneutics of suspicion*'.[736] Whilst Felski/ Sedgwick are referring to contemporary cultures of critique that draw on the deciphering modes found in Freud, Marx and poststructuralist analysis, the term seems equally applicable to aspects of emblems, emblem studies[737] and ecocritical theories that are designed to encourage the reader to decrypt (in an interpretative manner that seems freely subjective, though is constrained), through a passage of apparent mimesis to causal relations through synecdoche towards an embedded abstract that appears to have a universal application – such as the concept of 'storied matter'. Despite appearances, the invisible is revealed – one that ties together multivalenced meaning/s into coherence/s: in short, of a *narrative order*. Where the *EL* diverges from this mode is through its deep connection to obscurity and ambivalent use of signs as explicated by

[734] Particularly in terms of assimilating hermetic and Patristic sources.
[735] The French emblematist Giles Corrozet's description. Ibid., p. 7.
[736] Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 1. Sedgwick, 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading', p. 125.
[737] Notably Gombrich, Panofsky and Praz.

this thesis. Richard Kearney writes that for Benjamin: 'the baroque writer and modern writer are both anti-romantic in their pessimistic conviction that meaning has fled from the earth and left behind only the "signs" of things unreadable – a script we can no longer decipher with confident clarity.'[738] In this, Iovino and Oppermann's 'storied matter' seems neo-Romantic and somewhat reactionary. Correspondingly, Felski's contention that suspicious reading is constricting, and that scholars should move towards what she terms 'postcritical reading',[739] also echoes that of Tuan, who previously argued that depth is too frequently used by psychoanalysts, art historians and geographers at the expense of surfaces.[740] Yet the depths of mines and caves are surfaces; sub-surfaces. What may be constricting about emblematic deciphering as a hermeneutical method is not the artificiality (ontologically speaking) of its outcomes, but the limitations – the end point – of this style of reading, the paranoid rather than the reparative qua Sedgwick: as in regards to 'storied matter', 'solving' places the reader outside an environment and beams clarity into the ontological obscurity of that environment. (I have gone so far below or above that I no longer can see my starting point, which was of unseeing).

If emblems operate using a doubling or dialectical hieroglyphic plane of obscurity, it therefore is not one that is necessarily balanced – as with Iovino and Oppermann's flat ontology of 'intertwined flux of material and discursive forces' – just as the emblem form always redirects towards the primacy of the picture and relies on inserts, some perceived as more historically valuable than others. Correspondingly, do the unifying (flattening) properties of abstracts aesthetically constitute their concreteness, as in the ancient emblematic sea that acts as a spatial container which embeds and swallows? This organicising unity so often associated with Nature – as with 'storied matter', or the solution to a riddle – as stated, is also a trope of narrative itself; the Book of Nature, the Mirror of Theory: *nor can the narrative work of theory consider such a plane readable as such*. In this, the wormhole of emblems becomes a mirror of the purely speculative capacity and potential facticity of theory-making.

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[738] Richard Kearney, *Movements in Modern European Philosophy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p. 156.
[739] Felski, *The Limits of Critique*, p. 173.
[740] 'So much of life occurs at the surface that, as students of the human scene, we are obliged to pay far more attention to its character (subtlety, variety, and density) than we have done. The scholar's neglect and suspicion of surface phenomena is a consequence of a dichotomy in western thought between surface and depth, sensory appreciation and intellectual understanding, with bias against the first of the two terms.' Yi Fu Tuan, 'Surface phenomena and aesthetic experience', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 79 (1989), pp. 233–241 (p. 233).

With this in mind, to return to the classical topography of the emblems – here a *locus amoenus*, the urban pastoral of 'Rome' – this section will focus on the abstract universal of Rome as an imperial 'insert' into the emblem that flattens and erases. Such a reading can be positioned as similar to Benjamin's reflections on baroque allegory (derived from his study of emblem books[741]), which he perceived as involving the documentation of violence against material subjects. For Benjamin 'history' (perhaps described as what is remembered or narrativised) is derived from this '*facies hippocratica* of history that lies like a frozen landscape before the eye of the beholder […] history takes on meaning in the stations of its agony and decay.'[742] The chapter will then conclude by returning to the ontological obscurity of the emblem and these challenges it makes to the narrativising work of reading and theory as a mirror of speculative logic.

[741] Emblem books provided 'both the "stock of requisites" and the "schema" of *Trauerspiel*'. McCole, *Walter Benjamin and the Antinomies of Tradition*, p. 144.
[742] Walter Benjamin, *Schriften*, 2 Vols (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1995), I, p. 288-289.

Fig. 31. 'Armonia' in Iconologia

Fig. 32. 'In victoriam dolo partam'.

The Form of Rome

Replicating Surfaces of Violent Erasure

> so while one nation rules, another falls,
> according to whatever she decrees
> (her sentence hidden like a snake in grass).[743]

What does 'Rome' – city, state, empire, culture, symbol – denote? More importantly, *how* does it denote? Above all, Rome is an abstract surface that requires a violent erasure for material manifestation. What can be recognised as 'classical' or 'antique', even in contemporary ephemera, reflects a vision comprised of a repressed and homogenised material heritage and built environment, and to an extent, one that had never been. For Renaissance humanists however, this vision endlessly shaped the present – to recall Schliephake's notion of memory cultures springing from a collective imaginary as a central actor within environments, and vice versa. As Barkan writes using a suitably geographic metaphor: 'Rome is unfindable, the nonpareil. It is the map of the world, but it cannot be mapped and therefore renders the world unmappable.'[744] Yet just as with the idea of a 'mundus imaginalis' spilling out into the world, Rome was also the conceptual promise of an organic unity [somatoeides[745]] in a form of simulated determinism that came to be – just as the literature of the Mediterranean, a geographic expression, subsequently affected its own ecology.[746] In this, the notion of an autonomous agency of things qua Bennett moves from entangled to reduced, and a collective memory culture appears far from a benign, or balanced, interlacing. The result was a crushing of difference and multiplicity, as found in ecosystems, for example. Pliny's case-in-point-titled *Natural History,* which the *EL* so draws upon (not only in terms of the natural world but in its

[743] Dante Alighieri, 'Canto 7', *The Divine Comedy*, p. 132.
[744] Barkan, *Unearthing The Past,* p. xxviii.
[745] Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, p. 27.
[746] Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, p. 24. Recent years have seen increasing attention being paid to the geopolitical and geographical effects of metaphor in the world. Barnes and Duncan argue that geographic metaphors shift real world discursive fields to the point that 'writing is now seen as utterly problematic' for geographers. 'Under the [previously dominant] rubric of objectivism, rhetorical devices such as metaphors, irony, similes and the like are useless, if not nonsensical, aspects of language; at best they obfuscate the truth, and at worst they prevent it. At every opportunity they should be extirpated. With the recent assault on objectivism, there is growing recognition that, far from being merely decorative, rhetorical devices are central to conveying meaning.' Trevor J. Barnes and James S. Duncan, 'Introduction' in *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape,* ed. by Barnes and Duncan (Abingdon, Oxon and New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), pp. 1–17 (p. 3).

descriptions of the visual arts in antiquity[747]), was written at the apex of Roman Empire, an empire in which the prevailing narrative was andocentric victory over 'nature'. Horden and Purcell note that 'Roman supremacy was often held to derive from environmental advantage.'[748] In fact, not only was the imperial meta-narrative or abstract of Rome rather than agricultural practices such as pastoralism responsible for this supremacy, but unstable natural phenomena that contributed to post-classical dereliction was also glossed over by later ideological narratives on the civilised past.[749]

To situate these contentions in relation to emblematic landscapes, as detailed in Chapter Three, landscapes are 'mediated land, land that has been aesthetically processed.'[750] While classical culture percolates throughout the *EL*, its emblems' landscapes also participate in the repristination of this 'extended Arcadia, a place born entirely of the classicizing imagination',[751] portraying a *locus amoenus* [pleasant place]. While it was never intended by writers in antiquity to reflect real life but present an unobtainable ideal,[752] this processed pastoral – the landscape for the enactment of the humanist heterotopia – later served as the literary-cultural catalyst for the real-world Grand Tour,[753] as in John Ruskin's *Stones of Venice* or Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Italian Journey*. Similarly, as Daly notes, Colonna's *Hypernotomachia* presents scenes of 'pastoral landscapes of fauns and nymphs, gardens and forests dotted with monuments and picturesque ruins. Egypt is a kind of wonderland.'[754] The previous chapter identified landscapes in the *EL* as loosely comprising of (2) *'Mountain'* (3) *'Pastoral'*, and (4) *'Classical'*, though a combination of these is the basis of many of the emblems that are not seascapes. Most often these landscapes are comprised of a simplified and repetitive backdrop of trees,

[747] Barkan, *Unearthing The Past*, p. 4.
[748] Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, p. 27. Further, the huge variation of opinion of ancient thinkers on the subject of environment should not be unified – as Alciato tries to unify them in the *EL*; in this regard Glacken is in agreement with Horden and Purcell's cautionary note against visions of cultural unity. Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, p. 13.
[749] Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, p. 64.
[750] Andrews, *Landscapes in Western Art*, p. 7.
[751] Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, p. 30.
[752] 'In that mystical portraiture of the invisible world the answer—perhaps the only answer—was found in the demand for an ideal of beauty […] In much of this poetry too we are in the conventional world of pastoral; and pastoral, it must be repeated, does not concern itself with real life. The amount of latitude in literary expression varies no doubt with the prevalent popular morality of the period. But it would lead to infinite confusion to think of the poetry as a translation of conduct.' Mackail, *Select Epigrams from the Greek Anthology*, p. 40.
[753] Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, p. 28.
[754] Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem,* p. 23.

open space (fields) and distant, spectral Classical ruins; as in the *pictura* of 'Pudicitia' [Chastity, 47], or distant ambiguous townscapes as in the nearly identical 'Imparilitas' [Inferiority, 140] – (see Fig. 33 and 34). Like the protean Mediterranean sea that performs narrative functions, the *EL* uses these homogenous landscapes as a glue-like backdrop to showcase moral instruction taking place in the foreground and as a gallery for precious objects. Yet also *land* was a refuge from the chaos and melancholy of the sea. Glacken notes how in 'a fragment attributed to Moschus, a fisherman muses about the elements and how they affect him' – he flees in a storm with his 'craven heart' and prefers to sleep under a plane tree by a bubbling spring.[755] Such a *locus amoenus* is the commonplace of natural people who exhibit a continuity of rustic manners that transforms into narrative generalisations: a theatrical backdrop that displays or condemns civic morality, more often than not enacted through emblematic animals within this 'natural' setting.[756] In one sense, a constructed courthouse for the human soul. In another, a set of ordered landscapes that profoundly erases *and* borders.[757] While in many cases the landscapes in the *EL* are somewhat spartan in comparison to Colonna, one example of this pastoral as a bountiful refuge from a state of nature (chaos), but also a potential threat to civil society that must be controlled is in 'In divites publico malo' [Those enriched by public misfortune, 89], which depicts fishermen muddying 'crystal clear waters' to catch the easy catch of eels 'to become rich': a didactic motif that reflects how 'a state in turmoil becomes a source of profit to people who in peace go hungry, because the law cramps their style.' (see Fig. 35).[758] Unlike Ruskin and Goethe, Alciato's emblems do not exhibit per se what Horden and Purcell describe as a Mediterranean ideal of 'supposedly

[755] Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, p. 29.
[756] See for example, 'Sustine et Abstine' [Suffer and abstain, 34]. The *pictura* presents this amorphous and open pastoral surrounding on all sides the labourer ensconced between two cows, whipping a bull. 'In the same way that a man must endure joyless fortune, so too is happy fortune often to be feared. As Epictetus stated, "Suffer and abstain." One must suffer many things and it is fitting that one's hand be kept away from what is unlawful. Similarly, the bull, with his right leg tethered, must suffer the commands of its master. In this manner, he is constrained from [coupling with] the pregnant cows.' Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The* Emblematum Liber *in Latin and English*, p. 52.
[757] The Mediterranean is to some anthropologists, 'a [foisted on] concept of heuristic convenience, not a 'culture area' corrupting sea […] There may be cultural, ethnic or linguistic frontiers, but there are no natural ones. There are only those frontiers that have arisen out of the interaction between political centres and their peripheries.' Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, p. 20, 24.
[758] 'If anyone hunting eels sweeps clear rivers or thinks to visit unmuddied lakes, he will be unsuccessful and waste his efforts. If he instead stirs up much clay and with his oar churns the crystal waters, he will be rich. Likewise a state in turmoil becomes a source of profit to people who in peace go hungry, because the law cramps their style.' Glasgow translation <http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A21a089> [accessed 10 January 2019].

unmitigated economic stagnation'[759] necessary for this continual state of civilised nature – rather, they tend to summon it with frequent moralising, and hypocritical, epithets on the danger of avarice.[760] That this *locus amoenus* pervading the *EL* was caused by violent erasure, but one guided by a perceived 'natural fate' – of narrative, a 'natural history' – was, hundreds of years later, similarly reflected in Fernand Braudel's seminal history *The Mediterranean*.[761] Unlike his contemporary Foucault who sought discontinuities, Braudel's *Mediterranean* was informed by a tradition of geographical determinism that was divested of accounts of class struggle, and the result was a static sense of history writ in allegorese,[762] just as relations are frozen – friezed – and the vernacular suppressed in the *EL*. (It does not seem irrelevant either, that Braudel's book was the fruit of the author's incarceration.[763]) The switch from the Mediterranean sea to pastoral settings in these instances – to return to the idea of emblems being showcased in a 'gallery' – performs a narrative function of concealment. These ambiguous, spectral and homogenous landscapes are also a background of obscurity to situate and unify emblematic narratives in the foreground – thus often their sparse nature, despite being a *locus amoenus*. This is not the potentiality of obscurity that Speculative Emblematics finds in material processes, but an obscurity in the more insular sense of a dimming or covering out of the complex world outside – *dehors*. Obscurity then, as a quality that reflects a set of natureculture connections, is not always benignly communal in its inosculations. Such again, is the dialectical movement occurring on an emblematic plane of hieroglyphic obscurity.

Flattened Remnants

As with the humanist project, the ideological pressure-chamber of 'Rome' as an insert also reduced the scope of what emblems could convey, despite their locking-in qualities. In terms of considering the objects in the *EL* rather than landscapes, Rome

[759] Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, p. 29.
[760] Avarice is a favourite topic for Alciato. See emblems 85, 86, 88, 89, 90, 93.
[761] Fernand Braudel, [1949] *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Sian Reynolds, 2 Vols (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995).
[762] 'It has often been remarked that heroes of Braudel's magisterial account are abstract terms or inanimate things personified: the sea itself, first and foremost; the climate and the surrounding landscape; Space, Time, Man – and 'the long term', *la longue durée.* It is this last concept above all others that informs the entire book, making it into a piece of human geography of vast historical compass.' In contrast to Foucault who sought discontinuities, 'Perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and symbols; the Reformation, the Counter-Reformation, the Baroque; the clash of Islam and Christianity: all these are reduced to a relatively few pages.' Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, p. 36, 43.
[763] Ibid., p. 37.

was supplemented by a material culture that seemed to be homogenous and illusory of unity, despite being derived from cultural sources raided, plundered and destroyed.[764] As with landscapes, emblematic objects such as the lyre, crested family shields, swords, the caduceus, and decorative tombs largely hide a 'polyglot cultural context'.[765] Such is also, to return to theory, a frequent outcome of philosophical abstraction in which male characteristics become universalised within standardised models of social processes.[766] As detailed in previous chapters, in the *EL* women, people of colour, lower-class artisans, and nonhumans are erased and suppressed, displaced instead by a book full of material objects – commodities. This has further extensive repercussions for any analysis of the aesthetic materiality of the *EL.* In complement to Adams' absent referents, Pinkus writes that in emblems women were made obsolete and 'replaced by equally "precious" objects that metaphorically assume feminized values, while they simultaneously enjoy the privileged valence of maleness.'[767] This fits in with aesthetic philosophies that tout identification of a 'good' aesthetic[768] which, as Pierre Bourdieu pointed out in his sociological studies, riffs on the 'ability to recognise – or possess – such objects [...] systematic social discrimination and exclusion is generated through the aesthetic.'[769] One of Alciato's emblems, 'Aliquid mali propter vicinum malum' [Misfortune caused by a bad neighbour, 166] could be productively misinterpreted to represent the material problems of survival within this flattening abstract of 'Rome' manifested aesthetically. An adaptation of a Greek-sourced fable from the Latin writer Avianus that in turn Erasmus inserted in his *Adagia*,[770] the *subscriptio* and complementary *pictura* (see Fig. 36) relates a short narrative of two pots, one earthenware and one metal, being swept downriver in a fast wave:

> The metal pot asked the clay one whether it would like to float along close beside it, so that each of them, by uniting with the other, could resist the

[764] Barkan, *Unearthing The Past*, p. xxii–xiiii.
[765] Manning, *The Emblem*, p. 11.
[766] 'Abstraction' in *A Feminist Glossary of Human Geography*, p. 6.
[767] Pinkus, *Picturing Silence*, p. 108.
[768] 'A landscape, then, is what the viewer has selected from the land, edited and modified in accordance with certain conventional ideas about what constitutes a "good view".' Andrews, *Landscapes in Western Art*, p. 4.
[769] 'Aesthetics' in *A Feminist Glossary of Human Geography,* p. 3. See Pierre Bourdieu, [1984] *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2010).
[770] Desiderius Erasmus, 'Adage 221' in *Prolegomena to the Adages: Adagiorum Collectanea, Indexes to Erasmus' Adages*, trans. John N. Grant (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), p. 175.

> rushing waters. The clay pot replied: The arrangement you propose does not appeal to me. I am afraid that such proximity will bring many misfortunes upon me. For whether the wave washes you against me or me against you, I only, being breakable, will be shattered, while you remain unharmed.[771]

The moral or precept here suggests that equal partnership is best, especially when negotiating with the powerful. Yet it could also be read that the [vernacular] clay pot – like the suppressions generated by the parthenogenesis of the Renaissance academy, or the flattening caused by 'Rome' onto the (already repressive) Hellenistic cultures it consumed – can barely-but-survive in the moving water of cultural memory. And too, that as an amphora-esque *clay* pot it is typical of the homogenised material heritage previously mentioned: the signified is already a marked absence. Like the melancholia of dolphins, the negative affect of fear – destruction through proximity – is the emotional affect that pleats these nonlinear chronologies together. To Anglophone readers the 'Aliquid' might be misshapen into *A*liquid, the alphabetical 'A' (logos) falling back into this liquid that carries the obscurity of the Latin, 'anyone; someone' or 'something'. The haziness of this something, like the impact of 'Rome', leads onto a larger question of the problem of sufficiently representing, restoring or resurrecting anything material or 'matter', whether in emblems or in ecophilosophies. Too, the danger of ecomaterialisms leading towards a problem encountered by Horden and Purcell's examinations of 'unintended patterns of behaviour' or mentalities – that of endorsing 'an approach to history that systematically denigrates conscious behaviour'.[772]

The Problem of Restitution

To hover over this insert further, as with double-edged obscurity, what provided the *EL* with a set of material seeds – ancient fragments – was also the source of this erasure, just as the ideal of 'Rome' re-raised the source of its impossibility. The impossibility of material restitution – particularly through the insertion of flattening universals (in this case, Rome) within a flattening medium (emblem books) – arose in conjunction with the ekphrastic aims of emblematic epigrams. Bässler claims that emblems reconstruct antique ekphrases to *revive* those lost visual arts – in this,

[771] Glasgow translation. <http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A21a166> [accessed 4 January 2019].
[772] Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, p. 44.

emblems truly are a 'seed'; they 'actualize the image potentials' of these ekphrases,[773] in a style similar to Praz's 'Alexandrian spirit' and Speculative Emblematics' focus on enmeshed material presences re-emerging from antiquity. Yet as previously stated, this included reproducing images of lost objects that had never existed, or only existed as simulacra even in the *Anthology*. Henebry says of the ekphrastic tendencies of emblems: 'We are deeply enmeshed in a Humanist game of re-enactment, one which includes the epigram itself as a replica of the poetic mode of the *Greek Anthology*.'[774] A retort could be made in that performance (here, decoration, image or verse), in the lineage of Judith Butler,[775] is never inauthentic. However, whether either activating or performing visual ekphrases through *imitatio*, emblems are hardly a unique example of this as an art form. The focal point perhaps should not be (as with nature/culture) of a problematic authenticity/inauthenticity binary, but that the humanist project of regenerating the classical world was not particularly concerned by the erasure and flattening caused by the insert of this universal – rather, this was part of the appeal. From bits and parts came a unified meaning that was more important than the things and signs themselves. If synecdoche is a substitution of a part for a whole, the part could *raise* the whole – just as fragments and hieroglyphs refracted Platonic truths. Following Cola di Rienzo's doomed attempts to restore the ancient republic, Petrarch for one, as Mann writes, cherished 'the Roman ideal as refracted through inscriptions, monuments, coins and Livy's history. No matter that the ideal was flawed […he was devoted to] the restoration of the ancient world in its capital, then neglected in the absence of the papacy',[776] even getting himself crowned with laurels in a display of classical revival. In Petrarch's letters to Giovanni Boccaccio he elucidates of *imitatio* that the notion was one of following in tracks, but not in footsteps: *similitudo non identitas* – a son to father relation.[777] Thus the reliance on the creative potentiality of a philological methodology (for Petrarch as much as Alciato), that rewrote antiquity through somewhat blurred or *obscured* imitation. In Alciato's emblems not derived from the *Anthology* the topographical structure of antiquity remained as a spatial container, but it was empty – or unclear – enough to accommodate additions within its strictures. This plasticity allowed for a morphing

[773] Bässler, 'Alciato's Emblemata. From Ekphrasis to the Emblem', p. 54.
[774] Henebry, 'Figures of Speech', pp. 188–89.
[775] Pitts-Taylor, 'Mattering: Feminism, Science, and Corporeal Politics', p. 3.
[776] Mann, 'The Origins of Humanism', p. 12.
[777] Ibid., p. 13. Notably this is how Rollenhagen also saw Alciato.

cultural material-memory to be imaginatively simulated within new contexts and gain additions, just as *emblematis* were rhetorical inserts. The overall focus of the philologists and humanists despite their professed aims of *imiatio* and *renovatio* was therefore, as previously stated, of innovation through *aesthetic style*, just as Alberti used texts on classical rhetoric to create a new form of art criticism.[778] To put it more unkindly, rather than of 'Rome'-in-the materialised and political order-shaking di Rienzo sense, the son's aspiration was to produce cultural capital with self-serving material outcomes. For this, the father-king's body had to remain dismembered[779] and ghostly – or in reverse, representations were to be affected by a haunting that along with a violent erasure, reduced any once-material contents to that of planimetric reduction. A retention through encapsulation, like Matryoshka dolls, but the innermost parts were to remain above all, small. In short, the impossibility of restitution was caused by the ekphrastic emblematic style that purported to restore from fragments only, but this too, was the intention of the humanist project despite claims to the contrary. As defined in Chapters Two and Three however, in regards to the weird chronology of emblem books, outside the grasp of emblematists this erased surface did spill out into the world within built environments in a *wild* manner, just as 'Rome' continues to do so today.

A similar, though more self-reflexive and critical, preoccupation with the violent erasure of abstract imperialism, universalia or Platonic form and material fragments is reflected in the work of poet-gardener-artist Ian Hamilton Finlay. Finlay used the plasticity of emblematic style in an innovative manner as a distinctive aesthetic across different mediums – to recall emblematic grafting – on sculptures, inscriptions, poster poems and in his enclosed artwork-garden Little Sparta, itself composed of classical fragments and ruins that would never be restored. Finlay's emblem book written in conjunction with Stephen Bann, *Heroic Emblems* (1977), is a contemporary progenitor of the form not only thematically but in terms of content.[780] Finlay's emblems focus on the notion of 'modern heroism' using military technology from land, air and sea warfare in the *pictura*. In 'A CELEBRATION OF EARTH, AIR, FIRE, WATER' (see Fig. 37) the nuclear warship The USS Enterprise, i.e. a

[778] Charles Hope and Elizabeth McGrath, 'Artists and Humanists', in *The Cambridge Companion To Renaissance Humanism*, pp. 161–188 (p. 164).
[779] It is 'important not to dismiss the relation between the fragmented body of "Classical" aesthetics and the embedded, archaic narrative of dismemberment that subtends the prudential gesture of the king.' Pinkus, *Picturing Silence*, p. 15.
[780] Ian Hamilton Finlay and Stephen Bann, *Heroic Emblems* (Calais, VT: Z Press, 1977).

unifying imperialism, becomes synonymous with the 'poetic message of union of the elements' through the splitting of the atom in a pre-Socratic vein: as Bann's *subscriptio* reads, 'the elemental heroism of the nuclear confrontation'.[781] Such a flattening was all-consuming and once again never far from obscuring relations of power and production. Elsewhere, Boyer writes of 'the suffering named as gender named by capital as "love." […] the empire's fighter jets take out into the night.'[782] The USS Enterprise in Finlay's emblem is simultaneously sexualised, to recall both licentious emblems and Speculative Emblematics' own observation of the *culus* in *obscurus,* with a provocatively presented side-view that resembles underwear with the phallic missile flying above. Bann's *subscriptione* or textual commentaries emphasise, at times in disjunction, the importance of a Platonic theory of forms to *Heroic Emblems*, exalting Ripa – 'an image is a definition' – and Gombrich's philosophy of the emblem as revealing 'an aspect of the structure of the world'.[783] Finlay's emblems, states Bann, 'can be seen as a strategy for belatedness. We rise to the clear vision of our cultural state as the codes of the past range before our view.'[784] Yet as delineated, the profession of raising parts into 'clear' wholes though decipherment at the cost of ignoring how parts are reduced by the same action is a blindspot of emblematic – and ecocritical – reading. In this sense there is an ironic twist to Haraway's search for figurations of a non-generic humanity that does away with humanist universalia in favour of a 'never-settled universal', in that this was always a emblematist-humanist's method. Haraway: 'I want to focus on the discourses of suffering and dismemberment. I want to stay with the disarticulated bodies of history as figures of possible connection and accountability.'[785]

Prosopopeia or Speaking Just Enough

Further tensions between an ancient material culture of fragments and the unifying abstraction of imperial narratives were as noted in Chapter Two, encountered by the production and restoration of records by the Speculative Humanist Label™. To further expand on these records from another perspective, as with Alciato's notion of

[781] Ibid., p. 31.
[782] Boyer, *Handbook of Disappointed Fate*, p. 56.
[783] Finlay and Bann, *Heroic Emblems*, p. viii.
[784] Ibid., p. ix.
[785] Donna Haraway, 'Ecce homo, ain't (ar'n't) I a woman, and inappropriate/d others: The human in a post-humanist landscape' in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, ed. by Judith Butler and Jean E. Scott (New York, NY: Routledge, 1992), pp. 86–100 (p. 92, 86).

a cry springing from the text and Finlay's sculptural and gardening practice, text and image alone were not enough to raise wholes or render abstractions in a concrete fashion. Alongside ekphrastic verse the restitution of material forms was also led by a desire for the sound of speaking voices, even though springing from mute text: the woodcut printed mouths of images of statuary, personified virtues and vices, and deceased persons. This was a desire for physiological replay, just as sound emanates from the spinning of audio *records* (with so often, emblematic covers). The trouble of how to make the dead speak preoccupies all of the arts, but it was of particular interest to Renaissance humanists, concerned as they were with restoring the Classical past within restrictions. This is demonstrated by emblems' frequent use of prosopopeia[786] – a rhetorical trope derived from *prosopon poien* (to confer a mask or a face[787]): a poetic fiction of 'coming to life' through speaking objects and figures that is also somewhat necrotic. Though there was a contemporaneous obsession with uncovering perfectly preserved real-life corpses from antiquity in a spirit of resurrection,[788] the wider and simpler context is that as Barkan elucidates:

> Italian Renaissance culture at the beginning of the sixteenth century was just discovering a world of stony figures not invented by poets and not even by sculptors within their own Christian tradition. These figures already had mouth, ear, and eye (or some remnants thereof), while the voices that emanated from them, even if fictional and created by writers rather than by stonemasons, may well have seemed not merely responses made possible by a living person's apostrophe but *initiations of a historical—and transhistorical—dialogue*. [my italics][789]

Speaking pictures were the perfect chance to engage with these voices emanating from statuary and engaging in a transhistorical – and transcultural – dialogue, to return to the project of expanding the transcultural imagination. Yet as suggested in regards to the bucolic pastoral as a courtroom, contra Barkan these exchanges were not so much dialogues as constrained displays. The rhetoric of images – what to say about them, as well as what they say – is also another corralling of the visual by the

[786] A method 'through which the mental image of a statue or a painted figure evoked through *ekphrasis* is made to speak its own moral significance. Erasmus does this throughout his colloquy, Alciato more occasionally (as in the statue of Hope quoted above). The practice bespeaks nonetheless a shared symbolic mode, one in which *ekphrasis* and visual symbol, speech and meaning are all closely interlinked.' Henebry, 'Writing with Dumb Signs', p. 217.
[787] Barkan, *Unearthing The Past*, p. xxiv.
[788] Ibid., pp. 61–62.
[789] Ibid., p. xxv.

verbal. Such silencing and falling short gives a strange twist to Erasmus' description of proverbs as 'dark declarations', that are also enigmas: 'a saying in which a manifest truth is wrapped in obscurity'.[790] While the nature of representation meant that such an exchange was always to be constrained (as Damisch says, not of emblems: 'Ever since signs appeared, that is since forever, there has been no chance of coming across the purity of reality anywhere'[791]), this obscurity as a wrapping by language, like Benjamin's vision of boredom as a grey fog instigated by mass production, reduced the potentiality of material culture – particularly in relation to creating a memory culture. Benjamin writes in 'Dream Kitsch': 'The dream has grown grey […] The grey coating of dust on things is its best part. Dreams are now a shortcut to banality.'[792]

This banality too, had a price. Emblems co-opted living as well as dead or dormant materiality to create representations. This affected the author as much as the absent object of prosopopeia: to link this back to another observation from Barkan, 'If the inanimate are permitted to speak, then, symmetrically, the living must be turned to stone.'[793] Pinkus makes similar observations that emblematists turned themselves into stone. According to her reading, Bocchi sublated the body in his emblems to portray the unrepresentable Mind (read: abstract) 'the outside develops a hard shell; the body becomes a marble statue'[794] – just as Alciato's life comparatively structures the *EL* as a weatherworn backbone. Pinkus: 'we may find that the process of becoming-the-same actually entails an agonizing violence.'[795] Similar contentions can be found in Lacan: 'The body in pieces finds it unity in the image of the other, which is its own anticipated image – a dual situation in which a polar, but non-symmetrical relation, is sketched out.'[796] To return to ecomaterialisms, this non-symmetrical relation moves beyond Iovino and Oppermann's idea of intertwined material and discursive forces on a horizontal plane, towards a more violent process – of not what Barkan describes in terms of transcultural dialogues as a merging of aesthetic consciousness[797] – but of

[790] Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The* Emblematum Liber *in Latin and English*, p. 12.
[791] Damisch, *A Theory of /Cloud/*, p. 127.
[792] Walter Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writing, Volume 2: 1927-1834* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press), p. 3.
[793] Barkan, *Unearthing The Past*, p. xxiv.
[794] Pinkus, *Picturing Silence,* p. 5.
[795] Ibid., p. 2.
[796] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II*, trans. Sylvania Tomaselli (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1988), p. 53.
[797] Barkan, *Unearthing The Past*, p. 6.

creating a constancy or materialisation of a simulation or ideology at any cost to the corpus of matter. Though he may have subscribed to the ideal of Platonic forms, Finlay's emblems too make this clear – particularly in 'BATTLE OF MIDWAY—FOURTH JUNE 1942' (1)[798] and (2)[799] (see Fig. 38). Bann: '*Under the emblematic cover of a Renaissance pastoral*, [my italics] we see enacted the conflict of 4 June 1942', where American planes destroyed a Japanese fleet:

> The effect of an American bombing was therefore to ignite petrol tanks, bombs and torpedoes, causing unquenchable conflagration. The analogy of the Renaissance garden shows us the carriers as hives, the American attack planes as swarming bees and the conflagration of overspilling honey. Formal trees in tubs fill out the pastoral conception, while signifying at the same time the ocean, in whose lush distances the opposing carriers were concealed from each other.[800]

Bann claims this axis of opposition of the ocean and the inland garden is the 'base structure of Finlay's poetics',[801] just as perhaps the urban pastoral and the Mediterranean sea topographically structure the *EL*. In contrast, Alciato's emblem 'Principis Clementia' [The Clemency of the Prince, 149] shows a contained and functional hive, not overspilling with honey because of the 'moderated kingship' of the king (queen) bee (see Fig. 39). But the workings of this hive, as with Bann's opposing carriers, are importantly, concealed from view. In BATTLE OF MIDWAY (2) the destroyed fleets are permanently set with a memorial inscription into stone – entombing elegiac meaning, or the 'laconic Classical form',[802] as with epigraphy. Just as much as philologists as Alciato engaged with a creative methodology and professed political moderation, they were also in the violent business of conflagration in favour of stones, to remember Alciato's conflict-as-methodology: not only in presenting images of tombs, but as Kristian Jensen writes, 'Much of the effort of humanist grammarians was directed towards purifying the Latin language of words which could not be found in Classical authors.'[803] To return to fragments, while Alciato and Erasmus may have ridiculed this extreme form of Ciceronianism, their response was to emphasise the fragmentary nature of imperial Rome that they didn't

[798] Finlay and Bann, *Heroic Emblems*, p. 45.
[799] Ibid., p. 47.
[800] Ibid., p. 45.
[801] Ibid.
[802] Ibid., p. 47.
[803] Jensen, 'The Humanist Reform of Latin and Latin Teaching', pp. 68–69.

want to fully resurrect. Erasmus in the *Ciceroianus*; 'Rome is not Rome. Nothing remains but ruins and debris, the scars and remnants of ancient calamities.'[804] This was despite the fact that these fragments were the murky seeds that their cultural capital flourished from – and that grew wildly. Further, that the less ruins or material stuff there was, the more room there was for textual and visual invention: the abstract flattening of 'Rome' cleared a space for the establishment of its 'respringing' or 'repristination'. Within the fragmentation of objects lies the possibility of an artistic aesthetics: they have broken free of representational conventions just as much as emblems break free of the initial constraints of text and image by combining them in multivalenced ways. Benjamin noted a similar link between violence and fragments in emblematics: 'the destruction of the organic so that the true meaning, as it was written and ordained, might be picked up from its fragments'[805] – though here again the Platonic loop of narrativisation holds sway, a bright unifying light – rather than what escapes in shadows.

[804] Ibid., p. 75. Erasmus wrote of Alciato in the *Ciceronianus* (Basel: 1528) 'the best of jurists in the ranks of orators, and the best of orators in the ranks of jurists', Callahan, 'Erasmus's *Adages*', p. 241.
[805] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 2009), p. 210.

Fig. 33. 'Pudicitia'.

Fig. 34. 'Imparilitas'.

Fig. 35. 'In divites publico malo'.

Fig. 36. 'Aliquid mali propter vicinum malum'.

Fig. 37. 'A CELEBRATION OF EARTH, AIR, FIRE, WATER' in Heroic Emblems.

Fig. 38. 'BATTLE OF MIDWAY—FOURTH JUNE 1942 (1)' in Heroic Emblems.

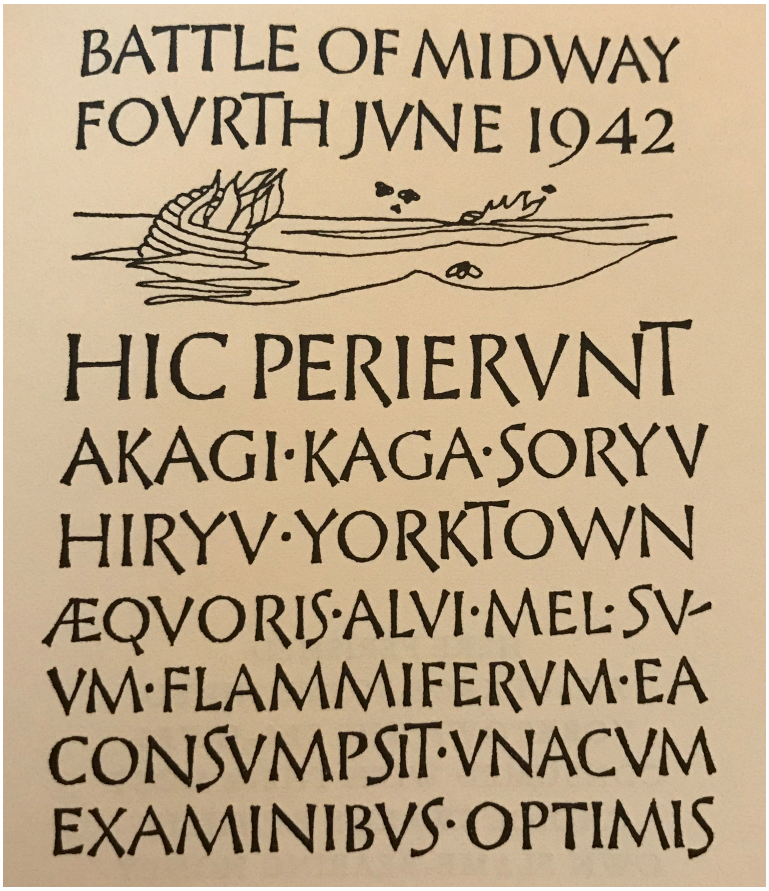

Fig. 38. 'BATTLE OF MIDWAY—FOURTH JUNE 1942 (2)' in Heroic Emblems.

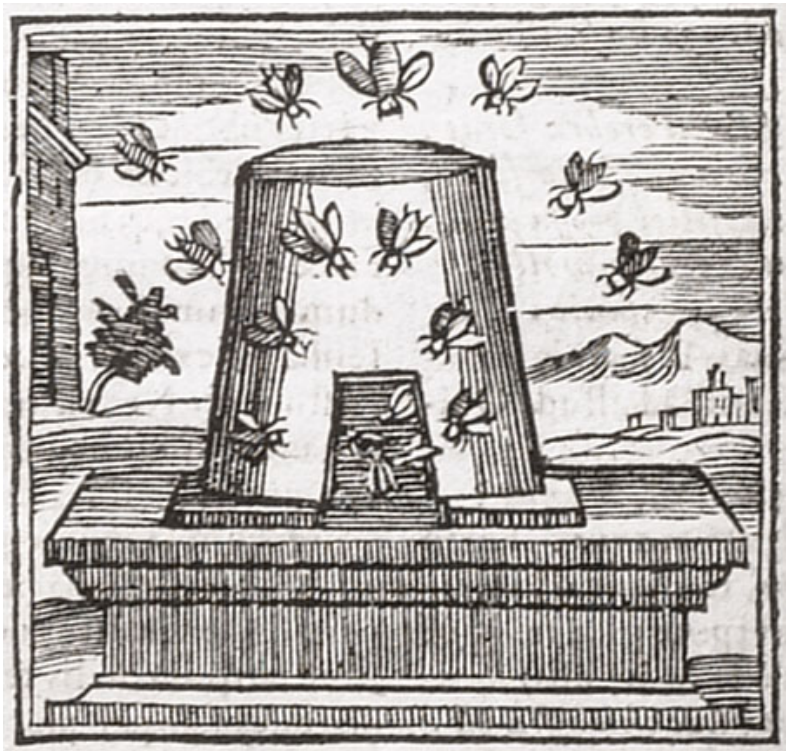

Fig. 39. 'Principis Clementia'.

> The rain drops pensively. 'If one could paint,
> Combine the abstract with a certain rude
> Individual form, knot passion with restraint …
> If one could use the murk that fills a brain,
> Undo old symbols and beget again
> Fresh meaning on dead emblem …' so one lies
> Here timeless, while the lilies' withering skin
> Attests the hours, and rain sweeps from the skies;
> The bird sits on the chimney, looking in. [806]

To further undermine the potential readability of material forms in representations, their decipherability that can lead to adequate meaning – whether of decrypting emblems for moral instruction, to divine Platonic truths, or via ecomaterialist interpretations of 'storied matter' – rests on the assumption that their referents are known. Thus the importance of the authority of the emblematist, as with emblematic frontispieces, and a textual materiality that draws attention to power and prestige. To deal with this complication, the *EL covers up* its referents (to return to obscurity as a covering); as in 'In mortem praepoperam' [Untimely death, 157] that instead of presenting the face of a drowned boy, depicts a tomb with dolphins resting on top. Correspondingly, in Nancy Cunard's poem 'In the Studio', a picture of 'lilies in a swoon' with 'withering skin' and a watching bird are juxtaposed against the body of the poet-reader, 'one', who is made timeless by the poem in a manner that renders it corpse-like, friezed. The subject 'one', who is unknown, *covers up* this ambiguity with talk of restoring *life* – here associated with a relevant sense of meaning – through *emblems*. Too, the poem's 'knot passion with restraint' echoes the confines of the process of emblematic representation, and the 'murk that fills a brain' seems much like the potentiality of obscurity in relation to emblems explored by this thesis. 'In mortem praeproperam' likewise wrestles with this problem of something untimely that is timeless – death. Here the one-sided meditation of the speaker Artesius' speech ('Beloved, are you going away without me?') – that is also followed by a *covering* ('But the earth will cover you, a Gorgon's head and dolphins shall provide doleful symbols of your fate'[807]) – is also a strategy to avoid admitting to the difficulty of

[806] Nancy Cunard, 'In the Studio' in *Nancy Cunard: Selected Poems*, ed. by Sandeep Parmar (Manchester: Carcanet, 2016), p. 219.
[807] 'That handsome lad, famed throughout all the city, who attracted and tormented tender-hearted girls with his beauty, has perished before his time, mourned by no one more than you, Arestius, to whom he

resurrecting either an authentic or relevant meaning, or even of representing a life as a known thing at all, as Henebry articulates well:

> Arestius' problem – how to give speech to a boy who is dead, how to give visible form to a body which is both decayed and hidden from sight – is eerily parallel to the problem faced by Alciato with respect to the visual culture of antiquity, which lies buried or in ruins and which, even when recovered to sight, remains speechless in the face of widespread ignorance of iconographic convention.[808]

It so happens that the earlier illustrations of this emblem display a grotesque gorgon's head with dolphins resting over it, but by the 1621 edition this has been replaced by a bare, hauntingly small skull with the dolphins turned into a carved fresco on the tomb beneath[809] (see Fig. 40) – going against the *covering* grain of the *subscriptio* that states that the boy cannot return, nor does he speak or appear within the text. The strategic desire of emblems was to makes objects reprisinated, a desire that extended into the realm of a constricted resurrection, but the very same act profaned them, by re-releasing them into the world to become wild through arbitrary *morphe* – in this case, through changing illustrators. Such was the problem of misinterpretation forever attached to the protean emblem form: how could one know what the objects of the past looked like so as to ekphrastically revitalise them correctly? In this Glacken's warning to avoid comparing the Classical with the Renaissance springs to mind – 'the similarities are superficial, the differences profound'.[810] Enenkel and Smith note the troubles encountered by vernacular craftsmen when attempting to illustrate earlier versions of the *EL*:

> The early modern graphic artists, however, had considerable problems with rendering pieces of art from antiquity. The inventor of the woodcut of emblem no. 25 did not know what a Greek grave tomb looked like, how Greek stone reliefs were construed, or what size lions are. He thought that the animals mentioned in the ekphrastic poem were separate statues located in front of the

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was joined in chaste affection. Therefore you build him a tomb as a memorial of such great love and assail the heavens with cries of grief: Beloved, are you gone away without me? Shall we never be together again? Will you never again spend happy leisure hours with me in study? But the earth will cover you, a Gorgon's head and dolphins shall provide doleful symbols of your fate.' Glasgow translation. < https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A21a157> [accessed 10 January 2019].

[808] Henebry, pp. 188–189.

[809] Tung, *Variorum Edition of Alciato* <http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/tung/alciatotungedition-157.pdf> [accessed 15 January 2019].

[810] Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, p. 1.8

> tomb; the tomb as such he envisaged a curious stone table that resembles a Christian altar more than a tomb, and on top of the table he put the bones of the dead person – all in all an utterly strange image.[811]

This was not solely a problem caused by education and missing archaeological evidence, but economics. Commissioning new images was costly, meaning that many emblematists had to make do with reusing ready-made images.[812]

Spectral Obscurity

The result of this conflict derived from these nonlinear encounters was spectral, and such a spectral quality too has an affiliation with obscurity, to recall the spectral townscapes in the emblems' background or the ambiguous ocean waves that could represent *any time*, whilst also suggesting accumulated scale effects. In one such occurrence that also intersects with the weird chronology of emblem books, Barthélémy Aneau decided to create a set of *emblema* starting with the images he already had, notably stating the purpose of which was: 'to produce speaking and alive compositions from silent and dead ones.'[813] In this regard emblems are a *parergon,* a 'by-work', a term whose marginality was challenged by Derrida with the example of the integrality of drapery [*parergon*] onto the nude body of statues [*ergon*]. Derrida: 'The presence of the supplement signals an *internal lack* in the system to which it is added' [my italics]. In contrast to Aneau and the messier, more lively, earlier editions of the *EL*, the Padua edition under the direction of Pignoria through a more refined engagement with the abstraction of 'Rome' acquired a hardened patina, covering or gloss – paradoxically, it became deader as it moved away from insert, or supplement, to the centre. This deadening in the Padua edition also reflects the increasing contemporaneous standardisation of personifications that was driven by recourse to classical precedent, that led to the same frozen streamlining found in Ripa's *Iconologia*.[814] Back to Hellenistic and Renaissance similarities: Glacken does admit however that both were periods of 'extraordinary culture contact'[815] – as stated, this

[811] Enenkel and Smith, Emblems and the Natural World, pp. 16–17.
[812] 'Must I Needs Want Solidnesse Because by Metaphors I Speak?', p. 78.
[813] Quoted in ibid.
[814] While personification was frequently used in the Middle Ages, as Charles Hope and Elizabeth McGrath note, it was not until the 1500s that personifications became increasingly complex and attempts to standardise them were made by appealing to Classical precedent. Hope and McGrath, 'Artists and Humanists', p. 173.
[815] Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore,* p. 18.

was less of a negotiation than a conflagration. Focusing on the violence that altered these transcultural negotiations is perhaps not completely unlike the way in which J. Hillis Miller examines 'the process by which the text has created personhood out of voice',[816] and that such attentions lead to a similar obsession with the boundaries between inanimate and animate objects[817] – things *strange*. To return to Erasmus: 'adages thereby possess the natural authority of common opinions and the natural interest of things strange.'[818] So the idea of an emblem book as an instructive manual becomes strange, 'utterly strange', gathered as it is from objects escaping constrictions under the gloss of universality from violent inserts. To recall Conrad, a pageant of strangeness.

In relation to this spectrality, the *EL*'s allegorese, in which characters become ideas, is a method that also turns its topography into an uncanny valley. Like acquiring a body that inevitably ages and is weakened, abstractions become somewhat decrepit and acquired altered physiology in emblematic representation. This is not only evidenced by the sparse, flat lines of the diagrammatic emblems (they cannot be as fleshy as bodies), but the frozen gestures of figures in both text and image. In 'Qui alta contemplantur, cadere' [He who contemplates things on high, falls down, 105], the 'imprudent fowler'[819] – and an emblematist is like a fowler in that he poaches things – in the *pictura* is frozen into stone by a coiled viper biting his leg as he aims his bow at an equally lifeless or barely-in-flight crane who he will shoot. The *subscriptio* concludes 'This is what happens to who looks at the stars with a stretched bow, and who is heedless of fate, his escort, *lying silently before his feet.*' [my italics] (see Fig. 41). Chapter Two mentioned how the enactor of violence must enact obscurity mimetically to remain within the environment of the emblem. Similarly, in 'Qui alta…' 'Fate' possesses the stone slip of a snake that can move sinuously without being seen clearly. Coiled around the frozen leg, 'it injects poison through its mouth' but only at the expense of a great shedding into one of the most simple shapes, S, and has no voice, to recall the humanist retaining mastery within the emblem

[816] Barkan, *Unearthing The Past,* p. xiv.
[817] Ibid., p. xxiv.
[818] Henebry, 'Figures of Speech', p. 180.
[819] 'While he is busy deceiving the thrushes with the birdlime, and trapping the larks with a snare, and piercing the flying crane with an arrow, the imprudent fowler steps upon a viper. Revenging this unlucky act, it injects its poison through its mouth. This is what happens to one who looks at the stars with a stretched bow, and who is heedless of fate, his escort, lying silently before his feet.' Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The* Emblematum Liber *in Latin and English*, p. 125.

through silence. This flattening process of insertion through personification is a process that anchors the abstraction within a particular time in representation, that through time's reception (the concept, a contemporary reader realises, could look like something else) becomes weakened in its 'potential facticity' or the possibility of the representation being a true or substitute carrier for the concept. It becomes uncanny. And yet, such nonlinear emergences reveal the possibility of an abstraction being something else than assumed – a little like Graham Harman's notion of 'tool-being' through his reading of Heidegger: when the tool is broken the ontology of the object is revealed.[820] In this sense, the fractured and uncanny timespace of the Anthropocene once more hovers in the background. In the spaces of encounters, it suddenly seems that Fate *might* be a little like a snake. This uncanny disjuncture at the heart of 'potential facticity' that also melds atemporal emergences is particularly clear with emblematic figures that rely on props, such as Nemesis carrying a hard bit (equestrian) *to restrain speech* in 'Nec verbo, nec factor quemquam laedendum' [Never wound anybody, neither by word or by deed, 27] (see Fig. 42) – which has much less meaning in modernity where so much communication takes place through writing rather than by word of mouth: a contemporary Nemesis might be shown destroying a mobile phone. However, might the Nemesis with the hard bit reveal something to us of a facet of nemesis? In terms of further relevance to the environmental humanities and contemporary culture, similarly strange interactions between animate and inanimate objects that can only speak mutely are also another locus of ecocritical theory, as with Speculative Realism, Posthumanism, Dark Ecology, hauntology and Bennett's vitalism or 'techno animism' as most concretely displayed by the artist Mark Leckey's curated show *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things*.[821]

To enfold this uncanny disjuncture back within an idea of obscurity as an ontological quality that is mimetically reflected by intertwined ecological subjects, Cynthia Nazarian writes of the French emblematist Maurice Scève: 'the interdiction against speech is quite evidently one of *Délie*'s commands' – and notes the tension between forcing speech and constraining it:

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[820] Graham Harman, *Towards Speculative Realism: Essays and Lectures* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2010), p. 56.
[821] See Guilia Smith, 'Review: The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things', Frieze (May 2013) <https://frieze.com/article/universal-addressability-dumb-things> [accessed 4 January 2019].

> The motto of emblem 5, *La Lanterne*, is after all, "Conceal I cannot" (*Celer ne pui*s). The accompanying *dizain* ends "Wishing to hide the fire that all can see/ Which I cover, but cannot conceal"[822]

Obscurity is after all a covering, but not a complete concealing, as with Bann's 'lush distances' of the sea from which the planes have emerged. But obscurity in emblems through the insert of violent imperial homogeneity is as much as process of reductive abstraction as proliferation, that leads to a 'nearlyness'. 'Rome' became always constant, under the surface, a spectre of accumulated materials that was to be called in for interrogation, but sent away under the pretext of humanist mastery. It is perhaps not surprising that silence was a way out from the knots of imperial language, Latin: another source of this uncanny proximity, the uncontrollable *arbitrary morphe* that was both used to create arbitrary connections but devoured didactic intentions. Once again, Lacan:

> Our deduction of the subject however demands that we locate this voice somewhere in the interhuman game. To say that it is the legislator's voice would doubtless be an idolification, albeit of a high, though charactised, order. Isn't it rather the voice *Which knows itself when it resounds / No longer to be no one's voice / But that of the waves and the woods?*
>
> It's language Valery is speaking of here. And shouldn't we perhaps in the end recognise it, this voice, *as the voice of no one…*[823]

[822] Cynthia Nazarian, '*Actaeon Ego Sum*: Ovidian Dismemberment and Lyric Voice in Petrarch and Maurice Scève' in *Metamorphosis: The Changing Face of Ovid in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Alison Keith and Stephen Rupp (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), p. 219.
[823] Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II*, p. 55.

Fig. 40. 'In mortem praepoperam'

Fig. 41. 'Qui alta contemplantur, cadere'.

Fig. 42.'Nec verbo, nec factor quemquam laedendum'.

An Emblematic Ontology: Falling Into Obscurity

Doubling Ontology

Chapter Four attempted to delineate an ecomaterialist ontology of the emblem: the materiality of the book; the notion of Peirce's ecology of the sign always participating in a medium – no semiosis without materiality; Alciato's hieroglyphic writing where he viewed emblems as things; and Kristeva's *materialised* sign that became dissociated from its transcendental origins. In contrast, this chapter has focused on the flattening impact of the abstract insert of 'Rome' in the *EL*, suggesting that the plane of obscurity that is the ground for the emblem operates in a dialectical manner: that it is as much abstract as material, and that unlike Iovino and Oppermann's entwined discursive forces, such a relation is unbalanced. What kind of ontology of the emblem then, might a Speculative Emblematics propose?

Perhaps such a confusion is unsurprising, as for contemporary scholars of emblems, as Wyss observes, the 'Medieval dispute among "nominalists" and "realists" about universalia has gained a revival in contemporary image theory.'[824] If, to take an ecomaterialist contention at face value, abstractions are also matter, such universalia could be interpreted as concrete – and causal – abstractions. Just like the difficulty of arguing for embedded material presences in the *EL*, this notion of concrete abstracts would be problematic to define on several levels.[825] Looking outside of emblem studies, the notion of concrete abstracts as part of a dialectical hieroglyphic plane of obscurity could relate to developments of scientific realism (in

[824] Wyss, 'Murmuring Things', p. 47.

[825] For a start there is the old philosophical conundrum of causal rather than truly suprasensible intelligible abstracts derived from the Platonic theory of Forms and Sensibles, the Neoplatonic lineage of which informed emblems just as much as Aristotelianism did – though as stated, not necessarily Alciato. There is also a confusion between what is generated by discourses or negotiations (whether of text-image, text-landscape, nature-culture and so forth) as a suggestive outcome that *appears* to be unifying, and therefore a concrete abstract or discursive force ('the Mediterranean'), because of the sense of agreement both exceeding and between a number of disparate or composite parts: the question of what constitutes a unity also returns back to another ancient philosophical problem of the distinction between sets and particulars, and whether sets, impure sets or classes of objects exist as abstract entities. Thirdly, questions arise in regards to abstracts concerning what is constituted as subjective mental phenomena: Alciato's imagination when writing his book and of the reader or scholar interpreting it – the fantasies of the imaginal in comparison to objective abstract phenomena that can be mentally comprehended (intelligible). To make things more confusing, the protean aseity of the hieroglyph according to Alciato's vision of it implies that (material) objects contain intelligible abstracts within them as part of their 'natural properties', but ones that are not necessarily intelligible as in *clear* because their redeployment in emblematic representation may or may not retain this likeness.

social science, critical realism – a 'philosophy in search of a method'[826]) – that is occasionally appropriated by human geography. For scientific realists, not only are there extant material things, but semiotic processes of abstraction identify material structures in the world, meaning that causality is not just material – ideas are causal.[827] Material abstracts too, would possess nonhuman agentic properties and therefore fit with a new materialist ontology – as well as the idea of an autonomous ecology of sign-making – rather than truly suprasensible abstracts. Divergently, given his synthesising interest in the Classical and Renaissance, symbolic and alchemical, the psychoanalytical theories of Carl Jung, particularly in *The Collective Unconscious*, stray into bridging the gap between abstract and concrete things in a materialised Neoplatonic vein, but it does not seem wise to do 'instant Jung' on the *EL*.[828] Taking umbrage with what he sees as the monistic and reductive monism of 'Spinoza's monistic substance metaphysics'[829] taken up by Bennett (and too, ecomaterialism at large), Adrian Johnston via. Slavoj Zizek has formulated a 'transcendental materialism' 'in line with Hegelian/ Marxian concrete/real abstractions (as well as Lacanian structures that "march in the streets").'[830] Johnston's transcendental materialism considers the splits between mind and matter 'as real and irreducible (while nevertheless depicting them as internally generated out of a single, sole plane of material being).'[831] Such a description perhaps fits with the doubling that this thesis has found in regards to the emblem as a dialectical plane of hieroglyphic obscurity carved into a solid material, but being compromised of grafted inserts that retain differentiations between components in a move against a flat ontology.

Moving away further away from materiality, this *doubling* logic also pervades Foucault's theory of signs that fits with this chapter's sense of concepts residing in a substitute body, which for Foucault means a substitute *idea*. Foucault:

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[826] As outlined by Roy Bhaskar under the umbrella of 'scientific realism' in 'transcendental realism (for natural science) and critical realism (for social science).' Henry Wai-chung Yeung, 'Critical Realism and Realist Research in Human Geography: A Method or a Philosophy in Search of a Method?', *Progress in Human Geography* 21/1, pp. 51–74 (p. 70, 52).
[827] Ibid., p. 53. Critical realism does however, reject structuralism, hermeneutics, and empiricism.
[828] Terence Dawson, 'Literary Criticism and Analytical Psychology' in *The Cambridge Companion to Jung,* ed. by Polly Young-Eisendrath and Terence Dawson (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 269–298 (p. 273).
[829] Adrian Johnston, *Adventures in Transcendental Materialism: Dialogues with Contemporary Thinkers* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p. 3. In contrast, Spinoza's double-aspect theory insists in the inseparability of mind-body phenomena.
[830] Ibid., p. 2.
[831] Ibid., p. 14.

> The sign encloses two ideas, one of the thing representing, the other of the thing represented; and its nature consists in exciting the first by means of the second […] the sign is the *representativity* of the representation in so far as it is representable.[832]

This doubleness, likewise delineated by Saussure, was also picked up by Derrida: 'A signifier is, from the very beginning, the possibility of its own repetition, its own image or resemblance'.[833] The actualised potential of the concept, its *representativity,* does not seem unlike the Platonic theory of forms, except that neither Foucault nor Damisch, who takes care to stress this issue, suggest that the abstract is present outside of its representation: an enclosed ecology. In a further blow to the possibility of any coherent emblematic ontology, Umberto Eco writes that iconism:

> is a collection of phenomena bundled together under an all-purpose label […] *It is the very notion of sign which is untenable* and which makes the derived notion of "iconic sign" so puzzling.[834]

To come full circle, the definition of a sign appears as unstable as the definition of an emblem, and to what kind of genre of signs the emblem might belong to outside of hieroglyphic writing. Correspondingly, Mitchell in his *Iconology* notes the continuing confusion between ideas and images in theories of representation.[835] In his reading, Peirce's – and therefore also Kristeva's and Foucault's – use of resemblance, continuity and causation relies on converting 'mental mechanisms into types of signification'.[836] Mitchell attempts to tackle his project, of considering the idea of the image, by treating ideas *as* images.[837] In a further instance of image-doubling, he describes 'hypericons' as examples of such models:

> Plato's cave, Artistotle's wax tablet, Locke's dark room, Wittengenstein's hieroglyphic, are all examples of the "hypericons" that, along with the popular trope of the "mirror of nature," provide our models for thinking about sorts of images—mental, verbal, pictorial, and perceptual. They also provide, I will argue, the scenes in which our anxieties about images can express themselves

[832] Damisch, *A Theory of /Cloud/*, p. 56.
[833] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 91.
[834] Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1979), p. 215.
[835] Mitchell, *Iconology*, p. 5.
[836] Ibid., p. 59.
[837] Ibid., p. 2.

> in a variety of iconoclastic discourses, and which we can rationalize the claim that, whatever images are, ideas are something else.[838]

Hypericons – which it might be noted by providing a scene are enacting this discourse within a *place*, much how Freud used scenography to re-stage trauma[839] – seem relevant to the concept of the Mediterranean commonplace within the *EL* (the environment within the emblem) or the *EL* acting *like* a Book of Natureculture (the environment of the emblem) posited by Speculative Emblematics: such spatial containers could also be interpreted as hypericons. And in this light might not a tension between 'abstract' and 'material' in fact be simply a return to the old conflict between the visual and the verbal? Might not 'material' be the term for an image? And 'abstract' the term for language – as previously noted by the unifying properties of 'Rome' that acts like a self-fulfilling narrative? 'Material' is substance, it is pictorial – the object is tacitly assumed a *dasein,* a life, a being, when seen in its solidity, or as a substance – as *matter* in the old sense. But as Mitchell points out:

> images "proper" are not stable, static, or permanent in any metaphysical sense; they are not perceived in the same way by viewers any more than are dream images; and they are not exclusively visual in any important way, but involve multisensory apprehension and interpretation.[840]

Neither, according to ecomaterialists, is matter a solid substance. Diverging from Mitchell's ideas *as* images, Nelson Goodman considers images as having 'density' rather than the differentiation of language:[841] 'A dense continuous field' that is 'syntactically and semantically dense in that no mark may be isolated as a unique, distinctive character'.[842] This seems much like the obscure qualities of hieroglyphic woodcuts where text and image are inscribed on the same material form, whose alterations in the marks of different illustrators changes meaning across editions. Of

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[838] Ibid., p. 6.
[839] John Fletcher, *Freud and the Scene of Trauma* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2013), p. xv. 'But the scenography of trauma slides under Freud's analytic technique: scenes proliferate, constantly referring back to an origin that can never be fully identified, and yet that is compulsively repeated.' Madeleine Wood, 'Enclosing Fantasies' in *Gilbert and Gubar's The Madwoman in the Attic After Thirty Years*, ed. by Annette R. Federico (Columbia: SC: University of Missouri, 2009). p. 95.
[840] Mitchell, *Iconology*, p. 14.
[841] 'Nonlinguistic systems differ from languages, depiction from description, the representational from the verbal, painting from poems, primarily through lack of differentiation—indeed through density (and consequent total absence of articulation)—of the symbol system.' Nelson Goodman, quoted in ibid., p. 66.
[842] Ibid., p. 67.

such ‘allographic’ texts: ‘one would have to pay careful attention to considerations of density in the inscription of the text. Every difference would make a difference.’[843] So the need for a hesitant view of master-systems. In this murky light, emblems are not static, they are ‘without internal structure or natural essence’, but dependent on individual systems of interpretation[844], and yet grounded in a commonplace, a world. Perhaps, returning to emblems’ protean qualities – and their encouragement of individual contemplation – such a form is ecological as in differentiated yet interwoven, dependent on the structure of their world in a material sense. Such interventions highlights to ecomaterialisms the benefit of studying theories of representation outside semiotics: does ‘storied matter’ for example, as well as Speculative Realist obsessions with the withdrawn core of the object, the reverse side of the coin, prioritise a substance that is simply the visual as expressed in metaphors of depth?[845]

Potential Facticity in Theory: Emblems as a Mirror of Speculative Logic

In practice however, is it really possible to identify what is a concrete abstract or discursive force and what is a material form, or delineate the ontology of emblematic representations at all? To return to the questions of theory-making and reading that preoccupied the start of this chapter, as well as emblems’ ‘potential facticity’, emblems can slide seamlessly from representing what is factually known though unseen, to what can be theorised or imagined – with no delineating marker between the two, save of the reader’s credulity. It is perhaps telling that as Daly expounds, ‘Colonna’s hieroglyphs and their inscriptions were considered genuine, although in fact they were essentially re-creations of his imagination, an imagination largely inspired by other imitations of hieroglyphs.’[846] In this emblems are a mirror to the potential facticity of theory-making in the humanities, which relies on the same rhetorical devices of the emblem to construct models that, though never objectively truthful nor claiming to be so, are taken at their word *as promise* through tropes of resemblance, analogy, similarity, synecdoche, metonymy. Too, that even the arbitrary

[843] Ibid., p. 69.
[844] Ibid., p. 70.
[845] Meillassoux in particular fixates on this reverse side of the coin (another object related to emblems via numismatics) as a metaphor.
[846] Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem,* p. 23.

seeding of the emblem resulted in academic forms, such as footnotes.[847] Attempting to theorise about either nonhuman agency or the impact of abstract inserts in representations is not far removed from the aims of early modern alchemists (as depicted in Maier's *Atalanta fugiens* (1568)) who tried to trap Platonic forms into matter – or more specifically, encourage the growth of immaterial elements within matter, despite the irrationality of it all. Kristeva's self-described project of semanalysis that 'carried theoretical thought to an intensity of white heat that set categories and concepts ablaze'[848] has similar alchemical connotations. In the *EL* alchemy is largely avoided as subject matter, perhaps because alchemists often produced pseudo-scientific tracts that threatened the humanist academy's claims to textual authority. The growth of concepts within effective media too, can be dangerous – for philosophers and academics as well as scientists (or in the early modern period, proto-scientists), as with the dangers of misreading the crisis of the Anthropocene. To return to 'locking-in', emblems attempted to be sites of *controlled* associative thinking,[849] yet the undefinable emblem-form itself is an almost limitless container for objects and meanings (and, to this thesis, marking traces of scale effects). The transgressive ambiguous meanings and 'potential facticity' of the emblem – its doubling obscurity – was as previously mentioned, decried by commentators afraid of its outcomes, much like how problems of environmental misinformation shadow speculative theory today; creating a historical pattern of adverse reactions to the form's plasticity. In contrast, Erasmus praised Dürer for making the impossible visible in woodcuts – the sacred rather than profane side of transgression – in his *Dialogus de recta Latini Graecique sermonis pronuntiatione* (1528) (again drawing heavily on Pliny for inspiration):

> Indeed, he depicts what cannot be depicted, fire, rays, thunder, blasts, lightning, or clouds (some say) on a wall, the senses, emotions, and finally all the human soul that appears in the body and almost voice itself. This he does in black lines so well judged that, in visual effect, were you to add colours you would harm the work. Is this not more miraculous, to achieve without the allure of colours what Apelles did with their assistance?[850]

[847] 'At the turn of the 17th century, the textual paradigms of the traditional commentary evolved into the more modern and academic concept of the "Footnote."' Daly, 'Identification and Interpretation in Emblems'.
[848] Toril Moi, Preface, *A Kristeva Reader*, p. 3.
[849] Alciato, trans. Moffitt, *The Emblematum Liber in Latin and English*, p. 8.
[850] Quoted in Damisch, *A Theory of /Cloud/*, p. 129.

As with resurrections, it is '*almost* voice itself', yet the representation cannot escape the conflict which results in the silent reading with no real articulated answer, just as 'In Mortem…' or as with Keats' 'Ode to a Grecian Urn', in which he keeps questioning the urn but never lets it respond. There is a sense in regards both to Erasmus' Dürer and emblems that woodcut representations are capable of representing anything, even the unseeable. Yet, as with marked absences or enmeshed material presences, the unseeable is not equivalent to 'nothing' but only that which is obscured. The limitations of what cannot be depicted beyond Dürer's ability to depict the indepictable – what could be more readily terming 'nothing' – is also referred to by Panofsky in less metaphysical terms, 'the reverse side of an object, the side that is excluded by a planimetric reduction.'[851] In emblematic woodcuts potentiality is relegated to *colonising* the idea of *nothing*, because the doubled hieroglyphic surface is oneiric,[852] of presences ('nothings') – a materialised negativity. This materialised negativity, similar to the excess leveraged by speculative logic, is the net around which theory is cast – and narrative – it is the boundaries of knowing. It is also a blankness or unseen consistency, a material consistency of obscurity – to return to Chapter One's focus on invisible scale effects and ecosystem components – that is familiar to the contemporary ecological subject. Such is the arena of potential facticity. Like Whitehead's casual efficacy and the *Hypernotomachia*, dreams also possess a similar quality of absence and presence, mental images which like the body of the emblematist are sacrificed to stone; violently reduced within representation. Yet the same kind of false confidence we believe of our individual bodies and lives – that harm will not befall them – permeates these continuous material processes: as with convincing dreams, representations obtain the presentational confidence that envisioned things will occur, that fantasies have the propensity for becoming real, and that metaphors and abstracts can structure even real-world geographies – all that comes forth outside of the frame *by the very instigation of the frame*. Speculative logic retains a confidence through the very act of narrative that creates its own material substratum. As this thesis has hoped to argue, this confidence is not entirely without credence. However these processes taking place in obscurity cannot be fully contained as such, but are wild, autonomous.

[851] Ibid., p. 130.
[852] Ibid.

The Greeks when founding new schools of speculative philosophy wandered about confusion, unable 'to believe in anything at all with firm conviction'.[853] Correspondingly, in 'Art, Theory and the Anthropocene' Martha Scwendener writes:

> One of the benefits of art and theory is that they are candidly speculative. Theory, as Elizabeth Grosz has written, should be regarded as a kind of "functional monstrosity" that provokes new practices, mutations and self-mutations and generates unexpected results.[854]

Though they are perhaps not convincing, emblems too are a functional monstrosity, and –

to return to flying bats – such a monstrosity this thesis argues is synonymous with excessive processes of materiality taking place in an doubled plane of obscurity that is mimetic of multitemporal and interconnected environments which bear traces of accumulated scale effects that undo clear meanings. Consequently, like the unknown moon continuing on her course and shielded by banks of clouds that hides in Alciato's emblem 'Inanis impetus' [An inane undertaking, 165] (see Fig. 43),[855] Speculative Emblematics holds that the only tenable ontology of the emblem is of obscurity, and perhaps its best claim for this can be found in the unexpected results generated by the creative work accompanying this thesis as an outflow of this speculative logic. The dream of an analysable verbal imagery propagated by Peirce and Ludwig Wittgenstein's 'pictures' (ideograms) – as Mitchell writes – is 'a kind of unmediated window on reality, a fulfilment of the seventeenth-century dream of a perfectly transparent language that would direct access to objects and ideas.'[856] Yet perhaps emblems *can* be an 'unmediated window on reality': a reality that cannot be fully known but experienced from *within* a shared natureculture process, one that is mimetically re-enacted within representations using aesthetic strategies of obscurity that violently cover as much as reveal, that silence as much as allow for speech.

Overall, the labyrinthine task of speculation is in many ways foolish – an inane undertaking – and an awareness of this can be read underlying Alciato's

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[853] Diodorus, II, 29,3-6

[854] Martha Schwendener, 'Art, Theory and the Anthropocene' in *Art, Theory and Practice in the Anthropocene,* ed. by Julie Reiss (Wilmington, DE: Vernon Press, 2019), pp. 9-21 (p. 9).

[855] 'A dog at night is looking into the moon's disk as into a mirror and seeing himself, thinks there is another dog there; and he barks - but the sound is carried away, ineffectual, on the winds. Diana, unhearing, pursues her course.'
<http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A21a165> [accessed 5 March 2019].

[856] Mitchell, *Iconology*, p. 26.

'Sapienta Humana, Stultitia est apud Deum' [The wisdom of Man is folly to God, 5] (see Fig. 44). A half-resuscitation of a fragment from the *Greek Anthology*,[857] Alciato transformed the original figure of the Chiron the centaur to Cecrops to a hippocentaur; half-man half-snake. For Alciato, this figure 'comes to symbolize the presumptuous cleverness of a 'man without religion'.[858] Perhaps not coincidentally, Cecrops was the mythical wise first king of Athens, who was said to introduce reading and writing, but also was the first commissioner of statues. In this very physiological emblem (another physiological *replay*) whose *subscriptio* includes references to 'foot', 'head', 'man', 'vomit' and fart – Cecrops 'farts a snake' – this uncanny Frankensteinian figure induces an out-loud wondering from the emblematist that could be applied to any prosopopeia: 'Quid dicam?'[859] [what can I say?]. An utterance perhaps that preoccupied Alciato in general swimming amongst the fragments of antiquity. *What can I say*, like the indecipherable cry Alciato heard from inside a text, has a faint quality from a strained proximity, just like in the *Commedia* 'when Dante first sees Virgil, whose voice "seems faint from long silence."'[860] This 'base' emblem, which in its *pictura* and *subscriptio* is heavily associated with things coming from the earth, also makes reference to The Epistle of St. Paul to Corinthians for a reason: in the end despite all the 'secular' claims of the humanist academy and the modern environmental humanities, it might be that how material forms emerge in representations comes down to a question of faith: the representation *might* look like the original, the translation *might* accurately represent the lost voice, objects in emblems *might* be marked absences or covered presences, an ancient commonplace *might* be an spatial container for an active memory culture that spirals out into the world. As with Alciato's 'Ficta Religio', the question turns not on what something is, but who should be the 'ass to bear the mysteries': poststructuralist thinkers,

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857 On the Centaur Chiron: 'A horse is shed forth from a man, and a man springs up from a horse; a man without feet and a swift horse without a head; a horse belches out a man, and a man farts out a horse.' *The Greek Anthology 16* (Loeb Classical Library), p. 225.

858 Arnoud Visser, 'Escaping the Reformation in the Republic of Letters: Confessional Silence in Latin Emblem Books', *Church History and Religious Culture*, 88/2 (2008) pp. 139–167 (p. 148). Visser also wonders if emblem books are a 'covert form of spiritualism'.

859 'What shall I say? By what name call this two-fold monster, that is neither man nor snake? A man without feet, a snake without its upper parts - this can be called a snake-footed man, a man-headed snake. The man farts a snake, the snake has vomited a man, the man has no end, the beast no beginning. In such a form did Cecrops once rule in learned Athens, in such a form did Mother Earth once bring forth the Giants. This is an image of clever men, but indicates one without religion, who cares only for the things of the earth.' Glasgow translation <http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A21a005> [accessed 5 March 2019].

860 Barkan, *Unearthing The Past*, p. 3.

ecomaterialists, art historians, psychoanalysts, metaphysical philosophers? Hesitantly, Speculative Emblematics teeters on the edge of these various intercrossing contentions and must say that things are none the clearer, though clearer in the lack of clarity. Too, by engaging in a discourse with the *EL* that this thesis has been shaped by a transcultural negotiation that is concomitant with Rigby's idea of expanding the transcultural imagination, but one that perhaps undoes the notion of a holistic benevolence implicitly tied to such a term.

> From centre to the circle, and so back,
> From circle to centre, water moves
> In the round chalice, even as the blow
> Impels it […][861]

[861] Dante, 'Canto XIV', *Paradiso*, lines 1–4. *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: Hell, Purgatory, Paradise*, trans. by Henry F. Cary, Harvard Classics (New York, NY: P.F. Collier & Son, 1914), Vol. 20/ 51.

Fig. 43.'Inanis impetus'.

Fig. 44. 'Sapienta Humana, Stultitia est apud Deum'.

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