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Persona, Fortune, and Inter-Semiotic Playfulness: George Wither's Repurposing of the Emblem Genre in *A Collection of Emblemes* (1635)

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RÉSUMÉ EN FRANÇAIS

1. Introduction

Au cours des années 1630, le marché du livre londonien voit paraître une série d'ouvrages d'édification morale et religieuse constitués chacun d'une suite de gravures allégoriques accompagnées d'épigrammes et de gloses poétiques de longueur variable. Représentants assez tardifs du genre du livre d'emblèmes, né en 1531 sous la plume du juriste milanais Andrea Alciat et qui jouit d'une grande popularité à travers toute l'Europe de la première modernité, ils sont manifestement très bien accueillis par le public anglais et connaissent un succès marchand notable. Parmi ceux-ci, c'est *A Collection of Emblemes* (1635) de George Wither, poète, psalmiste et satire alors âgé de quarante-sept ans, qui retiendra notre attention dans le cadre de ce travail de recherche. Traité avec condescendance et dédain par la grande majorité des critiques jusque dans les années 1990, cet ouvrage présente, néanmoins, diverses caractéristiques extrêmement originales, la redécouverte desquelles a suscité un intérêt renouvelé de la part de chercheurs/-euses en études historiques, culturelles et littéraires au cours des trente dernières années. En effet, tout d'abord, bien que les emblèmes soient un genre très marqué par la réutilisation et la réappropriation de motifs symboliques déjà employés et glosés auparavant, il est rare qu'un livre reprenne l'intégralité des images incluses dans une œuvre précédente pour les détourner. Tel est pourtant le cas du recueil de Wither, qui contient les deux cents gravures conçues par la célèbre famille De Passe pour le *Nucleus Emblematum* du poète Gabriel Rollenhagen de Magdebourg, paru en deux volumes en 1611 et 1613. Non content d'acquérir les plaques de cuivre utilisées pour imprimer le *Nucleus*, l'emblémiste anglais en fait littéralement ablatir les gloses poétiques originales, jugeant les vers « tellement médiocres » (« so meane », 1635 : TR.-2) qu'ils ne méritent pas mieux[1]. En lieu et place des distiques de son prédécesseur, Wither compose trente vers, dans lesquels il s'étend longuement sur la signification allégorique de l'image, sur l'enseignement moral ou religieux que le/la lecteur/-trice peut en tirer, et termine même souvent par une prière en italiques par laquelle sa voix poétique implore Dieu de lui accorder la force et la constance nécessaires pour se conformer elle-même aux conseils prodigués plus haut. Puis, *A Collection of Emblemes* se distingue des autres ouvrages de ce genre par la grande variété des thématiques qui y sont traitées, et par une mise en évidence presque systématique de la

[1] Chaque emblème de Rollenhagen et De Passe est constitué d'une gravure dans un cadre circulaire, dans lequel est imprimé l'*inscriptio*, ou épigramme, en latin, en grec, ou en français, et d'une glose, ou *subscriptio*, de quelques vers qui reprend l'épigramme et en développe le sens. Il est vraisemblable qu'il eût été impossible d'effacer les *inscriptiones* sans endommager de façon irréversible les plaques de cuivre, raison pour laquelle Wither fut contraint de les conserver.

polysémie des motifs allégoriques auxquels Rollenhagen, quant à lui, ne prête jamais plus d'une seule signification. Le/la lecteur.trice de Wither a très fréquemment le choix entre deux, trois, ou parfois plus d'interprétations d'une image donnée, ce qui rend bien plus probable qu'il/elle y trouve un conseil pertinent à sa situation personnelle et retire ainsi un bénéfice tout à fait individuel de sa lecture. Ensuite, malgré l'allégation, dès le poème d'introduction du volume et par le biais d'une formule déjà suspecte par sa simple existence, que l'ouvrage ne contiendrait « rien, au sens propre, qui concerne de quelque façon l'époque actuelle » (« This contayneth nought / Which, (in a proper sense) concerneth, ought, / The present Age », Prep.), on détecte dans bon nombre d'emblèmes l'expression d'opinions de nature politique ou sociale, et même des admonitions à peines dissimulées à l'égard du roi Charles Ier qui, depuis six ans déjà en 1635, a congédié le Parlement et règne sur le royaume d'Angleterre, d'Irlande et d'Écosse en monarque absolu, suscitant ainsi la colère de larges pans de la population qui, sans être républicaine, est néanmoins très attachée au partage des pouvoirs entre le souverain et les assemblées représentatives. Ancien satire de profession, qui a, de surcroît, connu un franc succès ainsi que deux séjours en prison par le passé suite à ses critiques mordantes de la cour jacobéenne qu'il jugeait grevée d'hypocrisie, d'ambition malsaine et de débauche, Wither brosse des courtisans, mais aussi des calvinistes intransigeants, des tartuffes, et même des tenants les plus cupides du capitalisme naissant un portrait au vitriol que ses réflexions plus générales et abstraites sur la nécessité d'être patient, humble et pieux ont bien du mal à camoufler. Enfin, et c'est là, sans doute, sa particularité la plus frappante, l'ouvrage fait des deux cents emblèmes un jeu de loterie, en leur annexant deux cadrans, l'un divisé en quatre parties égales (une pour chaque livre de cinquante emblèmes), l'autre en cinquante-six sections (une section pour chacun des emblèmes d'un libre donné, et six sections qui correspondent à des lots « vierges » (« blank lots »)) munis chacun d'un mécanisme rotatif. Le/la lecteur/-trice devenu joueur fait tourner les deux mécanismes, qui lui indiquent alors le numéro de l'emblème à consulter. En annexe de chacun des quatre livres, il/elle trouvera un petit poème supplémentaire qui l'apostrophera personnellement, et qui l'encouragera, souvent avec malice et ironie, à suivre le conseil prodigué dans l'emblème qu'il/elle aura tiré, ou qui, le cas échéant, donnera sur un ton tout aussi taquin la raison pour laquelle le sort n'a pas jugé bon d'attribuer un emblème à celui ou celle qui aura fait fonctionner le jeu. L'inclusion d'un jeu de ce type dans un livre

d'emblèmes n'est pas totalement inédite, puisqu'un mécanisme au fonctionnement similaire[1] figure dans le *Veridicus Christianus* (1601), un recueil réputé composé par le jésuite néerlandais Jean David, mais le poète anglais exploite de façon bien plus systématique, et plus approfondie, les possibilités didactiques, rhétoriques et subversives offertes par la loterie. En effet, nous le montrerons, cette dernière, nonobstant l'affirmation de la voix poétique de Wither qu'elle serait un accessoire ludique ajouté au recueil tardivement et à contrecœur pour en faciliter la vente, fonctionne en tous points comme élément structurant de l'ouvrage.

Les quelques articles parus depuis le début des années 1990 au sujet de cet ouvrage ont certes défriché quelques-unes des voies de recherche qui seront explorées dans cette thèse, mais demeurent trop souvent grevés de préjugés et d'affirmations inexactes, voire complètement erronées, avancés au sujet de Wither et de son œuvre par ses critiques moins récent.e.s. Par exemple, l'affirmation selon laquelle le poète serait un « puritain », étiquette problématique s'il en est dans le cadre de l'étude du XVIIème siècle anglais, revient cependant presque systématiquement, bien que l'on puisse la contester très efficacement à la lumière de ses emblèmes. D'autres aspects du livre, pourtant tout à fait saillants, ont été complètement laissés de côté. Comment ne pas s'interroger sur les sources stoïciennes ou néo-stoïciennes de la pensée de Wither, alors que la vertu mentionnée le plus fréquemment dans le recueil est la constance (« constancy ») ? Comment ne pas faire le lien entre ses prières italicisées (et, omission plus frappante encore, le poème qui accompagne le portrait de Wither gravé par John Payne, intitulé « Méditation de l'auteur à la vue de son portrait » (« The Author's Meditation vpon Sight of his Picture »)) et les exercices méditatifs de Joseph Hall, dont l'influence sur la pratique dévotionnelle anglaise sera colossale tout au long du XVIIème ? Et comment faire l'impasse sur les éléments fondamentalement subversifs véhiculés par certains emblèmes, par les règles de fonctionnement du jeu de loterie, et même par les épîtres dédicatoires à la famille royale et à certains des membres les plus influents de la cour caroléenne, alors même que c'est en tant que satire que Wither est connu au premier chef ?

Ce travail de thèse se propose d'étudier ces questions, parmi d'autres, à travers le

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[1] Chez David, ce mécanisme porte le nom d'« *Orbita Probitatis* » (« Sphère de probité »). Il s'agit d'une série de *volvelle*, ou disques de papiers imbriqués, qui, lorsque l'on les actionne, font apparaître le numéro de l'emblème à consulter dans de petites fenêtres prévues à cet effet. Certaines similarités structurelles entre ce jeu et celui que propose Wither accordent du crédit à l'hypothèse selon laquelle ce dernier aurait eu connaissance de l'ouvrage de David et se serait inspiré de l'« Orbita » pour construire son jeu de loterie. Cependant, comme nous le montrerons plus loin, il ne s'agit pas là de sa source d'inspiration première.

prisme d’un cadre méthodologique dont l’hybridité se justifie par la grande diversité des éléments à aborder, mais également par l’hybridation du texte et de l’image, caractéristique fondamentale du genre emblématique.

2. Méthodologie

Hybride par nécessité eu égard à la nature inter-sémiotique des emblèmes et de la diversité des champs d'investigations à explorer, le cadre méthodologique employé dans la thèse s'articule autours de certains postulats fondamentaux du néo-historicisme, école d'analyse littéraire née dans les années 1980 aux États-Unis et dont les travaux de Stephen Greenblatt, spécialiste renommé de littérature anglaise de la première modernité, sont représentatifs. L'axiome fondamental de cette approche, qui trouve ses origines dans la pratique anthropologique de Geertz et dans les travaux de critique littéraire d'Auerbach, est celui de la nécessité d'une remise en question constante des grands récits historiques et culturels à la lumière d'une multitude de textes, à la fois littéraires et pragmatiques, afin que ceux-ci révèlent ce que Greenblatt appelle « l'empreinte du réel » (« the touch of the real »). *A Collection of Emblemes*, ouvrage peu étudié d'un auteur prolifique mais longtemps négligé et décrié par la critique et qui porte, en outre, sur une multitude de sujets théologiques, politiques, moraux et sociaux de premier plan durant la première moitié du dix-septième siècle anglais, constitue un objet d'étude opportun dans cette perspective méthodologique. L'approche générale adoptée dans ce travail de thèse est donc dialogique : l'œuvre et son contexte s'éclaireront mutuellement afin de mettre en lumière les spécificités et l'originalité à la fois esthétique et idéologique de la première, tout en apportant, nous l'espérons, une modeste contribution à la connaissance historique du début du dix-septième siècle anglais, période encore sujette à des controverses houleuses, notamment dans le domaine de l'historiographie de la guerre civile.

Cependant, il conviendra évidemment de ne surtout pas négliger l'étude détaillée des emblèmes en tant que forme d'expression inter-sémiotique et de ses spécificités à la fois visuelles et textuelles. Bien que le concept d'« intermédialité » jouisse aujourd'hui d'une réelle omniprésence dans la production scientifique des humanités, ce sont les critiques comme Jens Schröter, ou encore Irina Rajewski, qui se sont penchés de façon critique sur la pertinence de la notion même, qui nous fourniront ici les fondements théoriques de notre approche. En effet, plutôt que de tenir pour axiomatique le postulat que les emblèmes sont forcément le lieu de relations entre médias différents, nous considérerons que ce sont, au contraire, les relations entre les codes sémiotiques visuel et textuel qui, selon les modalités selon lesquelles elles s'opèrent, permettent, *a posteriori*, d'identifier et de caractériser le type de médium auquel elles donnent naissance. Plutôt que d'adopter un point de vue structuraliste, qui considéreraient qu'un certain type de coopération entre l'image et le texte

constituerait un invariant du genre emblématique, nous nous attacherons, au contraire, à mettre au jour la variété d'interactions inter-sémiotiques présente dans le recueil de Wither, et leurs contributions à l'économie générale de l'œuvre, ainsi qu'à son projet rhétorique et esthétique. Il conviendra, bien entendu, de s'intéresser de près aux théories humanistes de l'image symbolique, notamment à travers le paratexte, parfois très instructif, d'autres recueils d'emblèmes, mais aussi de traités théoriques tels que *L'art de faire les devises* d'Henri Estienne (1645) ou encore *L'art des emblèmes* du père Claude-François Ménestrier (1662), véritables manuels encyclopédiques étudiés de très près par Florence Vuilleumier-Laurens (2002) et par Élisabeth Spica (1994).

À la critique littéraire plus récente, nous emprunterons le concept de « voix poétique » (« poetic persona ») tel que développé par Cheryl Walker, qui le définit comme un faisceau d'éléments textuels qui, pris conjointement, permettent à la voix d'émaner du texte, et de prendre des formes diverses selon le contexte. Cette définition s'affranchit à la fois des écueils liés à une critique biographique ou psychanalytique stricte, qui postule que la teneur de la voix poétique est une création intentionnelle à travers laquelle se dessinerait inévitablement la psyché de l'auteur, et de la sentence barthésienne de l'auteur disparu. En effet, les indices textuels qui lui donnent naissance peuvent être éclairés par des approches diverses, formelles et contextuelles, biographiques et historicistes, selon la façon dont la voix se manifeste. Chez Wither, cette voix poétique se distingue avant tout par son caractère polyphonique : elle passe, de façon plus ou moins fluide, d'une modalité didactique, à une modalité sacerdotale, pour conclure, ici et là, par un passage profondément introspectif et méditatif. Dans les épîtres dédicatoires, la voix se fait flatteuse, mais joue des ambiguïtés du langage de cour pour subvertir parfois les relations de pouvoir strictement hiérarchisées au dix-septième siècle. Enfin, lorsqu'elle s'adresse au lecteur directement, et particulièrement dans le cadre du jeu de loterie, c'est la facétie bienveillante, parfois moqueuse, qui domine, mais qui est toujours mise au service du projet rhétorique principal, celui d'un didactisme non seulement moral, mais également exégétique : il ne s'agit pas simplement de mettre en lumière le sens allégorique des gravures de De Passe, ni même de pousser le lecteur à s'y conformer, mais à lui enseigner, en parallèle, à déchiffrer lui-même ces motifs parfois obscurs afin que le genre emblématique ne demeure plus l'apanage de la seule noblesse versée dans le langage symbolique.

Enfin, c'est le concept de « Self-Fashioning », élaboré par Stephen Greenblatt au début des années 1980, qui éclairera notre étude du poète et de son projet esthétique et

rhétorique, d'autant plus courageux dans la subversion que Wither avait déjà connu plusieurs séjours derrière les barreaux pour des œuvres antérieures, et que les années 1630, qui voient déjà le pouvoir royal se raidir face aux objections à l'absolutisme caroléen formulées par le Parlement, sont caractérisées par une censure accrue, et par une répression féroce des écrits jugés séditieux. Le « Self-Fashioning », c'est le façonnement, par l'auteur, d'un microcosme de papier, au sein duquel, et notamment par le biais du jeu, il règne en maître, puisant ainsi dans la force créatrice et libératoire de l'écrit, si précaire fût-elle.

3. Contextualisation historique et biographique

Personnage à la longévité assez remarquable pour l'époque, et surtout compte tenu de l'aisance qu'il avait à se faire des ennemis puissants, Wither naît en 1588, alors que le règne d'Élisabeth, qui entérine définitivement un Protestantisme bien particulier comme religion d'état, arrive doucement à son terme. Fils aîné d'un gentilhomme de campagne installé à Bentworth dans le Hampshire, il est éduqué dans une « grammar school », établissement d'enseignement primaire public comparable à celui par lequel était passé le jeune William Shakespeare vingt ans plus tôt. Il est ensuite envoyé à Magdalen College à Oxford, établissement qu'il quitte cependant autour de 1605 sans diplôme. Le jeune Wither, sans doute déjà poète à ses heures, décide alors de partir pour Londres pour y trouver un mécène. Jacques Ier, cousin et successeur d'Élisabeth, monarque très pieux et cultivé, mais faisant déjà montre d'un penchant autoritaire dans son *Basilikon Doron*, n'accordera pas ses faveurs à Wither immédiatement. Le dauphin, Henri et sa sœur Élisabeth, quant à eux, semblent l'apprécier, et c'est avec une émotion qui semble sincère que le poète pleure la mort prématurée du premier à dix-neuf ans en 1612, et adule, non sans une certaine amertume, le mariage de la seconde à l'électeur palatin Frédéric V en 1613, suite auquel la princesse quitte l'Angleterre et ses protégés. C'est la protection qu'elle n'est plus en mesure d'assurer qui fait défaut à Wither lorsque, suite à la parution de ses essais satiriques en vers *Abuses Stript and Whipt*, il est accusé d'y avoir diffamé plusieurs personnages de haut rang, ce qui lui vaut d'être incarcéré une première fois.

C'est en prison que Wither apporte sa contribution au recueil pastoral de William Browne intitulé *The Shepheards Pipe*, ce qui lui vaudra d'être compté, bien plus tard, au nombre des « spensériens jacobéens » par Michelle O'Callaghan. Ce n'est cependant pas uniquement l'environnement bucolique virgilien de ses poèmes qui le rapproche de Spenser, mais également un militantisme politique vigoureux, fondé sur la conviction horatienne que le poète a le droit, et le devoir, de mettre tous ses contemporains, sans exceptions, face à leurs vices moraux, et à les exhorter à retrouver le droit chemin. Cependant, à partir des années 1620, Wither diversifie ses activités littéraires. Il sera incarcéré une fois encore suite à la parution, en 1621, de *Wither's Motto*, une diatribe violente contre les conseillers du roi, qui sont dépeints comme des hypocrites monstrueux de perfidie, dont les conseils empoisonnés empêchent le monarque de régner de façon juste et morale. Cependant, c'est à la même époque qu'il fait de la thématique religieuse l'une de ses préoccupations principales. Il se lance dans la réécriture des chants et cantiques de l'ancien testament en mètre poétique

anglais, ce qui lui réussit très bien, semble-t-il, car il se voit accorder par le roi en personne un brevet inédit : dorénavant, les textes de Wither devront être jointes à tout exemplaire des psaumes qui serait vendu à Londres, et le poète disposera d'un droit de contrôle et de coercition vis-à-vis des papetiers et des imprimeurs qui ne se soumettraient pas à son monopole. La corporation des papetiers (la « Stationers' Company »), privée par la même du monopole lucratif de la version antérieure de psaumes, cherche alors par tous les moyens à faire annuler le brevet, ce à quoi elle parviendra au début des années 1630, au terme d'une longue querelle judiciaire.

L'accession au trône d'Angleterre de Charles Ier marque un tournant dans l'histoire de l'Angleterre, mais aussi dans la vie littéraire de Wither. Appauvri par le conflit interminable et coûteux qui l'oppose aux papetiers, et diminué, semble-t-il, par son deuxième séjour en prison, il ne parvient pas à obtenir le mécénat royal pour son ouvrage *Britain's Remembrancer* (1628), vaste chronique de l'épidémie de peste noire qui dévaste Londres en 1625, événement vu par certains de ses contemporains comme un mauvais présage vis-à-vis du règne de Charles. Avec un courage indéniable, Wither, convaincu d'être chargé d'une mission de témoignage par la Providence, refuse de fuir la ville et brosse un portrait apocalyptique des événements, dont il fait la conséquence du manque de piété et de morale des Anglais, du schisme grandissant entre factions puritaines et anglicanes. Dans la continuité de ses ouvrages satyriques, le poète fustige les conseillers du roi, mais va plus loin encore, en revendiquant le droit de mettre au jour les causes profondes des difficultés qui accablent le royaume, même si le monarque devait en faire partie. Malgré son contenu subversif, *Britain's Remembrancer* ne vaut pas à son auteur d'être inquiété par les autorités.

Wither passe le début des années 1630 à la campagne, et rédige, d'une part, sa traduction du traité théologique *De natura hominis* de Némésius, père de l'église qui vécut au quatrième siècle, à laquelle il donne le titre de *The Nature of Man*, qui paraîtra en 1636. Le texte est principalement d'inspiration stoïcienne, et insiste lourdement sur l'existence chez l'humain d'un libre-arbitre partiel qui, aidé par la grâce divine, permet à son détenteur de choisir le bien et d'assurer son salut. Cette doctrine anti-augustinienne, et, de ce fait, également anti-calviniste, se retrouve également dans *A Collection of Emblemes*, et semble parfaitement compatible avec la théologie arminienne que Charles Ier et Laud, l'archevêque de Cantorbéry, s'emploient à imposer à la hiérarchie ecclésiastique anglicane dès la fin des années 1620. Cependant, Wither demeure extrêmement méfiant face au tournant autoritaire de la monarchie caroléenne, et, bien qu'attaché à l'institution royale dans son abstraction

théorique, il décide, non sans réticences, de prendre les armes du côté parlementaire lorsque la guerre civile éclate en 1642. Rapidement, cependant, il se montre aussi acerbe à l'égard du Parlement de Cromwell qu'à celui de la noblesse, et fustige, notamment, la scission religieuse de la société anglaise, alors qu'il appelle de ses vœux une unité irénique du protestantisme anglais. Ses écrits ultérieurs à la guerre, et même à la restauration de la monarchie, notamment *Vox Vulgi* (1660), ainsi qu'un procès en diffamation contre le parlementaire influent qu'était Sir Richard Onslow, le conduisent en prison deux fois encore, et une troisième condamnation sera prononcée en 1666, l'année qui précède sa mort, mais ne sera pas exécutée en raison du grand âge du poète.

En 1667, alors âgé de soixante-dix-neuf ans, Wither meurt à l'hôtel Savoy, connu pour l'asile judiciaire qu'il offre aux débiteurs désespérés. Deux œuvres posthumes, *Fragmenta Poetica* (1668) et son second livre d'emblèmes, *Divine Poems* (1688), seront publiées par les soins de sa fille.

4. Composition de l’ouvrage et la question du mécénat

En raison du manque de sources tierces au sujet de la composition de *A Collection of Emblemes*, ce sont surtout les dires de Wither lui-même dans ses notes paratextuelles qui permettent de dégager quelques éléments historiques, à l’égard desquels il convient cependant de rester prudent, puisque la voix poétique de ce dernier se montre parfois encline à l’embellissement, voire à l’invention, question à laquelle nous reviendrons. Le bornage chronologique lui-même demeure vague : le poète affirme avoir eu accès aux deux volumes de l’ouvrage de Rollenhagen atour de l’année 1615, soit deux ans environ après la parution de la *Centuria Secunda*. Le succès du recueil de Rollenhagen à travers toute l’Europe du XVIIème siècle rend évidemment plausible l’hypothèse de sa circulation en Angleterre dès le milieu des années 1610, et Wither justifie le délai de publication d’une vingtaine d’années par la nécessité d’obtenir les plaques de cuivre gravées par De Passe détenues par un éditeur néerlandais, ce qui ne sera possible qu’au début des années 1630. Dans son épître au lecteur, le poète explique que les gravures lui ont semblé de très bonne facture, mais que les textes de Rollenhagen ne leur rendaient pas justice, et que c’est pour se divertir qu’il aurait entamé la rédaction de gloses de remplacement, qui, affirme-t-il, auraient tant plu à ses amis que ceux-ci l’auraient encouragé à poursuivre son travail.

Il est cependant certain que l’ouvrage a été soumis à William Bray, l’un des censeurs du roi, au cours de l’année 1634, et que ce dernier en a approuvé la publication sans réserves particulières. Il est probable, au regard du contexte politique, que Bray ait prêté une attention particulière au positionnement théologique de Wither afin d’y détecter des traces éventuelles de calvinisme, ce qui l’aurait rangé du côté des puritains les plus véhéments vis-à-vis du règne caroléen. Dans ce cas, il a sans doute été satisfait de l’affirmation fréquente, dans de nombreux emblèmes, du libre-arbitre du croyant dans sa quête de salut. Le contenu de l’ouvrage plus subversif politiquement, mais aussi mieux dissimulé, lui a donc probablement échappé. Plutôt que sous la forme d’éditions successives, les emblèmes de Wither paraissent donc en 1635 en cinq « variantes », proposées par cinq commerçants différents : Richard Royston, Henry Taunton, Robert Allott, John Grismond et Robert Milbourne. Les tirages respectifs de ces variantes ne sont pas connus, mais il est probable que l’ouvrage connaisse rapidement un vrai succès commercial, car son titre sera inclus dans le *Catalogue of the most vendible books in London* (1667). Il est cependant difficile de déterminer avec précision les causes de son succès. Certains critiques de Wither, qui dissimulent souvent très mal leur aversion pour ses gloses, affirment que ce seraient les magnifiques gravures, et non le texte,

qui aurait attiré son lectorat. Il est fort probable, cependant, que le jeu de loterie joint aux emblèmes ait également eu son rôle à jouer, car, dans les exemplaires de l'ouvrage conservés, l'état du mécanisme témoigne d'une utilisation fréquente par des lecteurs successifs longtemps après sa première publication. Il existe également des indices qui permettent de supposer que l'ouvrage ait connu une notoriété sur le continent. Notamment, une nature morte pour le moins curieuse du peintre néerlandais Edward Collier intitulée « Still life with a volume of Wither's *Emblemes* » (1696) montre l'ouvrage éponyme ouvert à la page du portrait du poète au milieu d'objets divers, et une version partielle piratée du recueil paraît en 1680 sous le titre de *« Delights for the Ingenious* », vendue par Nathaniel Crouch. Ce dernier y fait inclure cinquante des deux-cents emblèmes originaux, pour lesquels il fait graver des copies des images fournies par De Passe, et il y plagie les gloses de Wither et une grande partie du paratexte. Il est fort probable que Crouch pouvait espérer que le livre rencontre un succès commercial notable, car la commande des gravures, fussent-elles des copies, semble avoir représenté un investissement initial non-négligeable.

Il est bien connu que la production littéraire de la première moitié du dix-septième siècle était encore très largement tributaire de l'économie du mécénat, et il n'est donc pas étonnant que chacun des quatre livres de *A Collection of Emblemes* ait été dédié à un ou plusieurs personnages illustres de la part de qui Wither pouvait espérer un soutien financier et, éventuellement, une protection contre une éventuelle censure et contre les conséquences judiciaires qui pouvaient en découler. Parmi les dédicataires, on compte le roi Charles I et la reine Marie Henriette, les deux princes Charles (le futur Charles II) et Jacques (le futur Jacques II), alors âgés de cinq et deux ans, ainsi que leur gouvernante, la duchesse de Richmond et Lennox, mais également Philippe de Pembroke, héritier de l'une des plus puissantes familles de mécènes de l'époque et protecteur de Shakespeare. Le ton qu'emploie la voix poétique varie d'une épître à l'autre : au couple royal, elle adresse un panégyrique en apparence tout à fait conventionnel, dont les aspects ambigus et subversifs n'apparaissent qu'au terme d'un travail d'analyse plus poussé (voir ci-dessous) ; aux jeunes princes, elle promet un avenir radieux, et les prie, par l'intermédiaire de leur gouvernante, de ne pas oublier le poète lorsqu'eux seront adultes, et lui un vieil homme ; aux autres dédicataires, par contre, la voix poétique se lamente des injustices qui ont plongé Wither dans la misère, et, de façon à peine dissimulée, les prie de bien vouloir le soutenir financièrement. Cependant, à ce jour, il n'existe aucun élément de preuve quant au succès de ces suppliques, ce qui témoigne, d'une part, d'une véritable déchéance sociale du poète qui, rappelons-le, jouissait au cours de

la décennie précédente d'un brevet exceptionnel et lucratif accordé par Jacques Ier, mais également, plus largement, d'une perte d'intérêt générale pour la chose littéraire de la part d'une noblesse d'ores et déjà préoccupée, au milieu des années 1630, par l'opposition de plus en plus vigoureuse de la part du Parlement à majorité puritaine.

5. Relations intersémiotiques dans les emblèmes de Wither

Il est important de noter, avant tout, que l'ouvrage de Rollenhagen et celui de Wither, bien qu'ils contiennent les mêmes gravures, témoignent de deux façons radicalement différentes de composer des emblèmes. En effet, premièrement, Rollenhagen coopère étroitement avec De Passe, non seulement en ce qui concerne le choix des motifs emblématiques qui seront inclus dans les images, mais également dans le cadre de la composition des arrière-plans et même, parfois, des gloses poétiques. Deuxièmement, le *Nucleus Emblematum* de Rollenhagen est plutôt conforme à une tradition de brièveté hermétique de l'emblème, souvent associée aux origines hiéroglyphiques du genre, dont la lecture requiert une connaissance approfondie des motifs symboliques et des sources classiques dont ils sont issus. D'ailleurs, on retrouve sous la plume d'intellectuels comme Ben Jonson un véritable rejet de la glose emblématique plus développée qui fournit au lecteur les clefs de la compréhension, et qui risquerait de permettre à un public plus large d'accéder aux arcanes d'un genre dont la noblesse, surtout pendant la guerre civile, revendiquera jalousement l'exclusivité. Wither, au contraire, affirme que c'est précisément le projet inverse qui est le sien : c'est pour permettre aux « common readers » de prendre plaisir à la lecture des emblèmes et de s'amender par le biais des conseils moraux et dévotionnels qui y sont prodigués qu'il joint trente vers à chaque gravure, pour en décrypter le sens allégorique avant de proposer plusieurs interprétations parmi lesquelles son lecteur pourra choisir celle qui correspond le mieux à ses circonstances personnelles.

Les gravures de De Passe peuvent être catégorisées selon la façon dont elles construisent le sens. Parfois, c'est un motif unique qui est mis en avant, comme c'est le cas de dame Fortune sur sa sphère, ou d'une main tenant la couronne de laurier des vainqueurs *ex nubibus*. Mais d'autres gravures sont composites, et requièrent une lecture progressive de chaque élément, dont les sens respectifs doivent ensuite être associés afin de parvenir au sens général à donner à la gravure. D'autres encore représentent une succession chronologique, comme c'est le cas, par exemple, de l'emblème qui montre Sisyphe, d'abord au début de son ascension, et, plus haut, au moment fatidique où la meule de pierre qu'il vient de hisser au sommet de la colline lui échappe et retombe au pied de celle-ci. Parfois, c'est une combinatoire entre le premier et l'arrière-plan qu'il est nécessaire d'effectuer pour saisir pleinement le message de l'emblème. Par exemple, derrière le motif d'un pélican qui s'ouvre le flanc pour abreuver sa progéniture de son sang, on distingue, au loin, la crucifixion du Christ, ce qui permet de clarifier le sens allégorique à donner à l'oiseau, que la glose associe

également au souverain bienveillant et prêt à se sacrifier pour son peuple.

Ces différences n'ont certes pas échappé à Wither, dont la voix poétique exprime une nette préférence pour les motifs uniques, alors qu'elle juge les compositions plus complexes inutilement obscures et surchargées. Elle ne rechigne pas, cependant, à proposer patiemment une explication détaillée de chaque gravure, et même de chaque motif, en mettant ainsi au jour les secrets d'une grammaire picturale incompréhensible aux non-initiés. De plus, afin de compenser son incapacité à retravailler le contenu des gravures, la voix poétique étend et complexifie les relations entre l'image et le texte, qui devient prééminent et qui oriente désormais l'exégèse des motifs picturaux.

Cette stratégie compensatoire est annoncée dès le paratexte, dans lequel la voix poétique affirme que les gravures telles quelles ne seraient que des « coquilles vides » («empty shells ») sans utilité pour quiconque, à part peut-être en guise de divertissement pour les enfants ou les lecteurs particulièrement puérils. Le titre complet de l'ouvrage indique d'ailleurs que c'est seulement par le biais des gloses que les images « prennent vie ». Il est indéniable que le texte de Wither insuffle aux gravures une portée rhétorique nouvelle, d'abord en contraignant le regard du lecteur à des va-et-vient permanents entre le texte et l'image au moyen d'apostrophes et de déictiques. Surtout dans les emblèmes qui traitent des sujets les plus graves, comme les *memento mori* très courants dans les ouvrages de ce type, l'attention du lecteur est captée par la représentation fine et réaliste de crânes, de squelettes affichant des rictus effrayants et de sabliers ornés de faux et d'ailes menaçantes, que la voix poétique l'exhorte à observer, encore et encore, avant de revenir à la glose pour y trouver, sinon du réconfort, du moins de précieux conseils à prendre en compte afin de pouvoir espérer le salut.

Souvent, la voix poétique s'emploie, par le biais de descriptions hypotypotiques de l'image, à renforcer son effet sur l'état émotionnel du lecteur, en puisant à dessein dans un vocabulaire frappant et parfois hyperbolique, et en accordant aux motifs d'arrière-plan une emphase totalement absente chez Rollenhagen. Loin d'être un emblémiste désinvolte, Wither explore en réalité toutes les stratégies de renforcement sémiotique mutuel entre le texte et l'image. Par exemple, là où les éléments picturaux tirés du cadre rural ou agricole ne sont pour Rollenhagen que des symboles d'industrie patiente dont l'ancrage dans le monde matériel est sans importance, son homologue anglais, sans doute fort de sa propre enfance dans un cadre champêtre entouré d'exploitations fermières, explore avec une proximité touchante le travail de la terre sous ses aspects les plus concrets. Il fait sentir au lecteur

l'effort physique nécessaire au guidage de la charrue, la sueur qui perle sur le front du paysan, mais aussi l'attention qu'il prête, sans relâche, à la santé de ses plants et de ses animaux, aux conditions météorologiques, et au cycle des saisons. Sous la plume de Wither, l'abstraction conceptuelle prend forme, et s'adresse non plus seulement à la sagesse morale et au bon sens du lecteur, mais à son empathie et à son admiration envers ceux qui incarnent le précepte de ténacité et de persévérance au travail que l'emblème s'efforce de faire comprendre.

Mais Wither, qui a conservé une veine satirique, sait également se montrer facétieux. La liberté que lui octroie la longueur de ses gloses lui permet, ici et là, d'ajouter à ses vers parfois graves et solennels une touche d'humour, qui est souvent le résultat d'un travail de transposition inter-sémiotique. Après avoir explicité le sens premier de certains motifs picturaux, la voix poétique étend parfois le champ interprétatif précisément, semble-t-il pour préparer l'insertion de jeux de mots ou des plaisanteries. Le motif de l'autruche, par exemple, qui est emprunté à Paradin, qui en fait un symbole de l'hypocrisie, est interprété par Rollenhagen comme emblème des écrivains médiocres, car, selon la glose de ce dernier, ce n'est pas le fait de posséder une/des plume(s) qui importe, mais la façon dont on s'en sert. Wither inclut les deux interprétations dans sa propre version de l'emblème, mais extrapole sur le thème aviaire, afin de comparer l'hypocrite au paon qui, selon un proverbe anglais possède de belles plumes mais des pieds répugnants, avant d'ajouter un pied-de-nez à ses détracteurs en leur expliquant que celui qui tient la plume est peut-être une oie, mais que même une oie peut s'en servir avec talent. Par ailleurs, si le lecteur suit à la lettre les recommandations de Wither quant à l'ordre de lecture dans le cadre du jeu de loterie, il ira d'abord parcourir un petit poème introductif qui porte le même numéro que l'emblème désigné par le mécanisme rotatif décrit plus haut, qui servira d'introduction et qui l'encouragera souvent à se conformer aux conseils prodigués dans l'emblème qu'il lira juste après. C'est encore une occasion dont le poète se saisit à des fins humoristiques : par exemple, l'un des poèmes introductifs informe le lecteur qu'il peut espérer être bientôt l'égal d'un prince, et que l'emblème qui lui est attribué par le jeu de loterie lui indiquera la date à laquelle cette ascension sociale fulgurante se produira. Plein d'enthousiasme, ce dernier s'empresse donc d'aller le consulter, et se retrouve face à un *memento mori*, dont le *motto* en anglais dit « In death, no difference is made, / Betweene the scepter and the spade » (« La mort ne fait point de différence entre le sceptre et la bêche »).

Il est étrange que cette facilité à employer l'humour ait été totalement laissée de côté

par les critiques de Wither, qui insistent presque tous sur l'aridité moralisatrice qui caractériserait le volume tout entier. Le poète, au contraire, puise fréquemment dans les possibilités rhétoriques et ludiques des compositions inter-sémiotiques que sont les emblèmes pour appuyer son projet rhétorique tout en divertissant son lecteur, fidèle au précepte horatien de l'« *utile miscere dulci* ».

6. Appropriation et détournement des emblèmes de Rollenhagen par Wither

Comme c'est le cas de la majorité des recueils d'emblèmes, celui de Rollenhagen s'inspire grandement de ses prédécesseurs plus illustres, surtout de *l'Emblematum Liber* d'Alciat et des *Devises Héroïques* de Claude Paradin (1557), dont il reprend souvent très fidèlement les motifs et la teneur des gloses. Le rapport de Wither à ses précurseurs, cependant, est plus problématique, au point que Rosemary Freeman, pionnière des études en emblématique anglaise, affirme que la lecture que le poète propose des gravures serait « arbitraire ». C'est seulement au cours des années 1990 que Peter Daly et Michael Bath examinent les emblèmes de Wither de plus près, et révoquent le jugement péremptoire de Freeman. Wither est manifestement très au fait du sens symbolique conventionnel de la grande majorité des motifs dont il se sert, mais fait preuve d'une grande créativité pédagogique dans le traitement de ces derniers.

Tout d'abord, le titre complet du recueil est d'ores et déjà révélateur des transformations que subira le genre emblématique au fil du dix-septième siècle. En effet, il présente l'ouvrage comme une collection d'emblèmes « anciens et modernes », formulation qui sous-entend une ligne de rupture décrite avec précision par Anne-Elisabeth Spica dans un chapitre au titre évocateur de « Le désenchantement du monde ». De plus, le titre indique, nous l'avons mentionné ci-dessus, que les emblèmes seraient « animés » (« quickened ») par les gloses de Wither, qui, dans l'esprit du poète, n'en feraient donc pas partie intégrante. Ceci pose la question terminologique : comment un poète anglais du dix-septième siècle comprend-il le terme « emblème » ? Peter Daly traite ces deux questions de façon conjointe, mais assez superficielle, dans un article paru à la fin des années 1990, dans lequel il recense la façon dont les notions d'« emblème », de « devise », de « hiéroglyphique », ou encore de « figure » sont employées par Wither. Bien que Daly ne propose pas de conclusion synthétique, il est évident que tous ces termes, qui faisaient encore l'objet de problématisations définitoires précises dans les recueils du seizième siècle, sont désormais très largement polysémiques. En effet, pour la voix poétique, le mot « emblème » fait tantôt référence à la gravure seule, tantôt à la gravure accompagnée du *motto* originel, tantôt à un motif particulier, mais parfois également à la composition tripartite toute entière. La même polysémie semble applicable aux autres notions proches de cette dernière. L'une d'entre elles, cependant, présente un intérêt tout particulier, car elle fait le lien entre les deux questions évoquées plus haut : sous la plume de Wither, le plus souvent, un « hiéroglyphique » semble désigner un motif symbolique aux origines vénérables, dont la signification est admise sans

équivoque par tous les praticiens du genre, et fondée sur un rapport analogique dérivé des textes classiques ou de la Bible. À plusieurs endroits, la voix poétique déplore la surcharge picturale de certaines gravures, et les juge bien incapables d'égaler la puissance sémiotique des « hiéroglyphiques ». C'est ici aux origines du genre qu'il est fait référence. En effet, Spica explique avec beaucoup de clarté que la symbolique humaniste est en réalité la confluence de deux tendances philosophiques : d'une part, un néoplatonisme hostile aux représentations picturales et textuelles jugées trompeuses et rejetées comme autant de distractions qui empêchent la connaissance des essences, et, d'autre part, la redécouverte des travaux du philosophe grec Horapollon du cinquième siècle qui propose une méthode allégorique de déchiffrage des idéogrammes égyptiens. Privé de la pierre de rosette qui ne sera découverte que bien plus tard, Horapollon échafaude une théorie selon laquelle un caractère hiéroglyphique doit être compris comme partageant avec son signifié un lien métaphorique. Mus par la conviction que les égyptiens, peuple mentionné dans l'ancien testament, auraient été, par le biais de Chem, fils de Noé, les dépositaires de la langue adamique perdue pour les autres peuples lors de la destruction de la tour de Babel, les premiers humanistes voient dans les hiéroglyphes un langage sacré, libéré de l'arbitraire et du recours au simulacre du texte et de l'image, à travers lequel ils pourraient enfin lire le *Liber Naturae* qu'est la création divine. Pierio Valeriano publie d'ailleurs un ouvrage très inspiré de celui d'Horapollon dès 1556, dans lequel il étend le répertoire des hiéroglyphes dans lequel puiseront presque tous les emblémistes ultérieurs. Ce sont fréquemment des motifs tirés de Valeriano, ou similaires à ces derniers, que Wither juge particulièrement aptes à exprimer des vérités morales et religieuses.

Cependant, au cours du dix-septième siècle, les prémisses épistémologiques qui sous-tendent cette vision de l'emblématique connaissent un véritable bouleversement. L'empirisme de Bacon et le rationalisme de Descartes, qui aboutissent, en 1662, à la *Logique de Port-Royal*, relèguent progressivement au rang de mythes sans fondement historique les récits qui étaient indispensables au maintien de l'aura vénérable des hiéroglyphes. Wither, dont les emblèmes paraissent un an avant *Le discours de la méthode*, témoigne ici, à travers sa différentiation des emblèmes anciens et des modernes, de l'influence de cette transformation sur le genre auquel il s'essaye. En effet, les emblèmes « modernes » qui figurent dans son recueil s'affranchissent complètement de la nécessité d'un usage continu et de sources antiques bien identifiées. La polysémie des symboles que ses gloses mettent au jour montre à quel point les motifs allégoriques sont devenus malléables et fluides, et font

désormais l'objet de réadaptations constantes selon les besoins rhétoriques ou esthétiques du moment. Même si elle admet parfois ouvertement ne pas savoir (et n'avoir cure de) ce que Rollenhagen et De Passe souhaitaient communiquer à travers l'usage d'un motif particulier, la voix poétique ne se laisse pas dérouter, mais le réinterprète à sa guise. C'est le cas, par exemple, d'un personnage à deux têtes couronnées et huit bras, que le texte identifie simplement comme un « monstre » qui, selon la formule parlante qui figure dans la glose, « n'a rien des vieux hiéroglyphiques », mais peut servir à exprimer l'idée selon laquelle c'est collectivement, dans une concorde efficace, que l'on parvient le mieux à affronter les difficultés de l'existence. Pour Wither, les symboles n'entretiennent plus avec leurs signifiés un rapport mystique, mais simplement un lien conventionnel, à la stabilité duquel se substitue une grande versatilité sémiotique.

Cependant, le projet de réadaptation du matériau d'origine ne s'arrête pas là. En effet, c'est une véritable stratégie d'appropriation des emblèmes de Rollenhagen qui est à l'œuvre dans *A Collection of Emblemes*, et qui opère à plusieurs niveaux. D'abord, nous l'avons mentionnée, le recueil du poète allemand fait la part belle aux gravures de De Passe, et les gloses poétiques, très brèves, ne viennent en donner qu'un éclairage minime afin de maintenir les compositions dans un hermétisme assumé. Chez le poète anglais, la gravure est reléguée à un petit quart de page, précédée d'un distique en anglais qui résume le sens principal que le lecteur sera invité à donner à l'emblème, et suivi de trente décasyllabes qui établissent un cadre notionnel certes multiple, mais néanmoins bien délimité, au sein duquel l'exégèse devra être conduite. De plus, les emblèmes sont précédés de diverses sections paratextuelles, dans lesquelles, à une ou deux exceptions près, il n'est fait aucune mention de la paternité germano-néerlandaise des motifs emblématiques, sauf pour ridiculiser la contribution de Rollenhagen et pour admettre la beauté des gravures, au sujet desquelles la voix poétique affirme pourtant qu'elles comporteraient également des « erreurs ». Un poème intitulé « The Author's Meditation upon Sight of his Picture », qui est imprimé en-dessous du portrait gravé de Wither fourni par John Payne, s'étend ensuite sur la méfiance de l'auteur quant à de telles représentations de sa personne physique, auxquelles il préfère l'image qui émerge de ses vers. Par extension, évidemment, ce positionnement néo-platonique vient fustiger toutes les images visuelles au profit de l'essence que l'on ne peut saisir que par le texte, et subordonne donc les gravures de De Passe aux gloses de Wither.

Ensuite, la voix poétique, encore et toujours dans le paratexte, s'efforce de se présenter comme le chaînon manquant entre les emblémistes qui se complaisent dans le

secret de l'hermétisme symbolique et le lecteur curieux mais dénué des connaissances nécessaires à la lecture de telles compositions. Pédagogue et bienveillante, elle admet avoir été, elle aussi, ignorante et puérile, mais ajoute que ce sont des ouvrages comme *A Collection of Emblemes*, qui mêlent visée didactique et divertissement, qui lui ont permis d'acquérir le savoir qu'elle entend désormais partager avec le lecteur. Elle se place ainsi sur la *via media*, et légitime de cette façon l'intérêt de son recueil, ainsi que l'autorité exégétique qu'elle entend exercer.

La stratégie d'appropriation des emblèmes à proprement parler peut, quant à elle, être qualifiée de processus métabolique, dans le sillage des études de Michel Jeanneret sur les textes anciens que les humanistes « démembrent » et « dévorent » afin d'en prendre pleinement possession pour les réemployer sous une forme plus ou moins proche de l'original lorsque c'est utile. Bien que la voix poétique de Wither reprenne souvent l'interprétation conventionnelle des motifs symboliques au début de sa glose, il lui arrive de les détourner totalement. Il en est ainsi, par exemple, de l'emblème qui montre l'ascension de Sisyphe. Selon un trope plutôt conventionnel, Rollenhagen interprète le personnage comme une allégorie du croyant qui, bien qu'il puisse avoir l'impression que sa dévotion est vaine, poursuit son effort et demeure malgré tout sur le chemin de la vertu. Pour la voix poétique du poète anglais, par contre, Sisyphe représente d'abord l'imbécillité de l'ambition, qui, une fois satisfaite, se porte perpétuellement sur un objet plus élevé encore, et requiert donc une nouvelle ascension. Ensuite, c'est bien une interprétation religieuse qui est proposée, mais sa teneur est très différente : fidèle au précepte théologique central du protestantisme qui est la corruption de l'homme par le péché originel, elle affirme que l'on a beau s'astreindre à la vertu et s'éreinter à porter sa croix, le salut ne peut venir que de la grâce inconditionnelle de Dieu.

Nous l'avons suggéré auparavant, le processus de réappropriation des emblèmes par Wither peut être interprété non seulement comme une stratégie rhétorique et didactique, mais également comme un acte littéraire de subversion, par lequel les arcanes de l'emblématique, traditionnellement réservés à une minorité puissante et éduquée est rendu accessible à un lectorat bien plus étendu. Mais c'est aussi l'occasion, pour le poète, de composer avec adresse une polyphonie de modalités de sa voix poétique, dont chacune est profondément ancrée dans une tradition rhétorique bien particulière.

7. Les modalités de la voix poétique de Wither

C'est Mason Tung qui, dans un article publié en 2010, propose de considérer la voix poétique de Wither comme objet d'étude premier, et qui identifie trois modalités principales de celle-ci : une modalité déictique, qui attire le regard du lecteur vers l'image et la décrit en détail, une modalité didactique, qui en décrypte la ou les significations allégoriques, et une modalité sacerdotale, qui incite le lecteur à se conformer au conseil moral prodigué. De plus, Tung procède à une catégorisation, trop rapide à notre sens, des instances du pronom de la première personne du singulier dans le recueil : d'abord, il identifie un « je » parenthétique, qui apparaît en incise pour permettre à la voix poétique un commentaire tiré de sa propre expérience, un « je » moralisateur à travers lequel elle s'érige en donneuse de leçons morales, et un « je » prudent ou sage, qui vient conseiller au lecteur de réfléchir et de s'en remettre à plus éclairé que lui avant de prendre des décisions. Bien qu'elle constitue le point de départ de la méthodologie déployée dans ce chapitre, l'approche de Tung se heurte rapidement à des difficultés. En effet, comme il ne propose aucune définition de la notion de voix poétique, il confond presque systématiquement cette dernière et l'auteur physique de l'œuvre, et se détourne trop souvent du problème du projet rhétorique des emblèmes pour tenter une psychanalyse du poète à travers sa voix. Au contraire, le cadre théorique proposé par Walker et mentionné plus haut permet d'éviter cet écueil, et de relier la voix, non pas à la personne de Wither, mais bien à l'économie générale de son ouvrage.

La voix poétique s'adresse au lecteur dès le poème intitulé « A Preposition to this Frontispiece », qui ouvre le recueil et qui fait d'ores et déjà montre d'une facétie doublée d'un usage conscient et travaillé d'un *alter ego* littéraire. Le frontispice en question, fourni par l'illustre graveur William Marshall, est une illustration d'une page entière, parsemée de personnages et de symboles divers, sur lesquels nous reviendrons ci-après. Dans la « Preposition », la voix poétique affirme que « l'auteur » (auquel elle fait référence à la troisième personne) aurait commandité quelque chose de totalement différent à l'artiste, mais que celui-ci se serait mépris. L'auteur aurait alors hésité à jeter la gravure sans autre forme de procès, mais se serait ravisé après l'avoir regardée de plus près, et aurait considéré que le graveur, certes dans l'erreur mais mû par une force mystérieuse, aurait en réalité fourni une image énigmatique tout à fait fascinante. Ce serait donc pour occuper longuement ceux qui croient toujours détenir la clef de la symbolique secrète, et pour donner au lecteur l'occasion de s'essayer à la résolution d'une énigme œdipienne, que l'auteur aurait consenti à l'intégrer au volume. Il est évident que cette anecdote est totalement inventée, et le ton railleur de la

voix poétique peut y être détecté sans mal. On peut alors s'interroger sur le rôle que doit jouer la « Preposition ». Nous avançons l'hypothèse que cet élément paratextuel sert en réalité à mettre le lecteur en condition pour appréhender les emblèmes : il faudra qu'il s'attende à une certaine facétie, mais aussi qu'il comprenne bien que c'est la voix poétique, et non l'auteur, qui lui parle dans le volume. Ceci sert évidemment à encourager le lecteur averti à lire entre les lignes, mais aussi à fournir à Wither la possibilité de se dédouaner des textes plus subversifs en plaidant la plaisanterie ou la licence poétique.

La première modalité de la voix poétique à laquelle nous nous intéresserons est celle que Tung nomme « didactique », bien que nous en étendions la portée aux remarques déictiques et sacerdotales que contiennent les emblèmes, puisque les premières sont intrinsèquement liées à l'enseignement que la voix propose au lecteur quant à la signification de la gravure, et que les deuxièmes constituent également un enseignement, même si sa teneur est religieuse plutôt que strictement morale. Il est ici frappant de constater à quel point la méthode didactique mise en place dans le recueil puise dans les théories pédagogiques, pourtant encore très récentes, de John Amos Comenius, que Samuel Hartlib invite en Angleterre afin qu'il y fonde une école, projet qui sera avorté en raison de l'éclatement de la guerre civile. Comme Manry le montre très bien dans sa thèse consacrée à Comenius, ce dernier s'oppose radicalement à l'enseignement scholastique alors majoritaire, et propose une didactique fondée sur l' « anti-verbalisme », préférant aux florilèges rhétoriques l'apport de connaissances concrètes et pragmatiques, dans le cadre duquel clarté et utilité seront les maîtres-mots. C'est également le cas de Wither, qui insiste sur son exaspération vis-à-vis des rhéteurs qui, comme le Gorgias de Platon, ne font des phrases que pour semer la confusion et pour se féliciter de leur érudition apparente, et qui revendique une écriture épurée, claire et sans fioritures inutiles qui viendraient obscurcir son propos. De plus, Comenius insiste beaucoup sur l'utilité pédagogique des images, dont il recommande de couvrir les murs de la salle de classe, opinion que Wither partageait manifestement, puisqu'il affirme que sa réappropriation des gravures de De Passe doit surtout servir un but didactique.

A Collection of Emblemes semble cependant s'inspirer également d'une autre méthode : celle de l'enseignement par l'expérience, réelle ou fictive, à travers l'usage de l'*exemplum*. Il n'est d'ailleurs pas anodin que les emblèmes, qui illustrent souvent des adages moraux ou religieux, sont truffés de scènes et de personnages que l'on rencontre également dans les paraboles bibliques, dans les mythes grecs et romains, et dans les fables d'Ésope. La voix poétique de Wither emploie ces différents types de récits, mais les refaçonne souvent à

la façon d'*exempla* prétendument tirés de la vie du poète. C'est le cas, par exemple, dans la glose associée à une gravure qui représente une scène du mythe d'Hercule à la croisée des chemins. Le mythe raconte que le demi-dieu rencontre deux concepts personnifiés, la Vertu et le Plaisir, entre lesquelles il devra choisir ; bien que la proposition du Plaisir soit séduisante, Hercule préfère, en fin de compte, se ranger du côté de la Vertu. La voix poétique substitue Wither à Hercule, et le fait rencontrer la Vertu et, cette-fois, non pas le Plaisir mais le Vice. Séduit par les promesses de plaisirs matériels et charnels, le poète aurait cependant aperçu le véritable visage du vice derrière son masque, si répugnant et effrayant qu'il se serait tourné vers la Vertu sans hésiter. Ailleurs, la voix poétique affirme humblement avoir été tentée par la débauche sexuelle, par l'attrait de l'argent et par l'ambition, mais que l'étude et la piété lui auraient apporté bien plus de satisfaction en rétrospective. Fondée sur les idées aristotéliciennes et cicéroniennes de l'adaptation du discours au public et de la mis en avant d'une connivence entre le locuteur et ses auditeurs, cette stratégie confère au recueil de Wither une aura de bienveillance et de sagesse, tout en préservant son image d'un pédagogue accessible et plein d'humilité.

Une autre tradition qui a très certainement beaucoup inspiré Wither est celle des sermons religieux de certains pasteurs illustres, dont Hugh Latimer. En effet, de nombreux critiques se contentent d'affirmer que les gloses du poète anglais seraient caractérisées par un « franc-parler puritain », raison pour laquelle celles-ci seraient d'une aridité désolante. En réalité, une étude structurelle des emblèmes de Wither met au jour sa maîtrise exemplaire de la structure et des méthodes rhétoriques employées par Latimer et d'autres pour enseigner, puis persuader son auditoire à appliquer l'enseignement en question. En effet, comme l'a montré Pierre Janton, un sermon de Latimer est toujours structuré en trois parties distinctes, qui s'appuient sur trois modes rhétoriques différents. D'abord, un passage de la Bible est présenté brièvement, de façon purement explicative. Puis, dans un langage clair, concis et dénué de florilèges inutiles, c'est une exégèse plus poussée qui est menée, afin que l'auditoire saisisse parfaitement les sens paraboliques ou métaphoriques du passage en question. La troisième étape, cependant, est consacrée à la persuasion, et Latimer déploie alors tous les outils de ce que Cicéron appelle le *genus vehemens*, une opération rhétorique qui puise dans toutes les ressources stylistiques disponibles afin d'émouvoir, de saisir, et, selon le cas, de faire peur, d'impressionner, mais aussi de faire rire. L'objectif ainsi poursuivi est que chaque auditeur comprenne à quel point il est essentiel que l'enseignement explicité auparavant soit intériorisé et appliqué assidument dans son quotidien. Or, c'est bel et bien cet aspect, pourtant

très reconnaissable dans les emblèmes de Wither, que ses critiques successifs ont totalement laissé de côté. Une étude structurelle de bon nombre de ses gloses montre bien, en effet, que les deux premières sections explicatives et exégétiques sont généralement rédigées dans une langue dénuée d'ornementation, et où les quelques figures analogiques employées n'ont pour objet que de faciliter la compréhension du sens symbolique de la gravure. La troisième, en revanche, est celle dans laquelle se concentrent le plus souvent les figures de l'emphase, les antithèses, les oxymores, les hyperboles, mais aussi les apostrophes au lecteur et les exhortations, ainsi que la plupart des facéties poétiques.

Cependant, il n'a pas échappé aux critiques comme Bath que la voix poétique conclut souvent ses emblèmes par quelques vers imprimés en italiques, qui prennent la forme d'une prière à travers laquelle cette dernière implore le seigneur de bien vouloir lui accorder, selon le cas, la force, le courage, ou la persévérance nécessaire à l'application des conseils prodigués dans le reste de la glose. Il est étonnant de lire chez Bath que ces parties du textes ne devraient en aucun cas être confondues avec des exercices méditatifs, malgré l'existence d'une tradition de la méditation chrétienne extrêmement répandue en Angleterre au dix-septième siècle. Afin d'apporter quelques éclaircissements sur cette question, il est nécessaire, tout d'abord, de se positionner vis-à-vis d'un débat qu'ont mené deux éminents anglicistes spécialistes de la poésie religieuse anglaise, Louis Martz et Barbara Lewalski. Dès les années 1950, le premier échafaude la théorie de la filiation jésuite de la méditation protestante anglaise, et fait des *Exercices spirituels* de Saint Ignace de Loyola la source d'inspiration des auteurs des plus beaux poèmes dévotionnels de l'époque, que sont principalement Donne, Herbert, Vaughan, et Traherne. Lewalski, quant à elle, affirme que la méditation protestante, bien qu'elle puise parfois dans la tradition catholique continentale, doit bien plus aux méditations de Joseph Hall, qui théorise une façon de s'adonner aux exercices spirituels compatible avec la théologie protestante. Nous sommes enclins à conclure, avec Lucien Carrive (que Lewalski, non-francophone, n'a manifestement pas lu), qu'il existe bel et bien une filiation littéraire et stylistique entre la méditation ignatienne et les poèmes dévotionnels anglais, mais que le *modus operandi* de cette méditation ne peut en aucun cas être le même ; en effet, le fondement théologique des *Exercices spirituels* est celui de la capacité du croyant, mû par son seul désir de sauver son âme, de faire un pas vers Dieu afin de s'élever vers lui. Or, même pour les protestants les plus modérés, une telle proposition est hérétique, car elle nie la corruption totale de l'être humain et l'idée selon laquelle il ne peut y avoir de rédemption qu'inconditionnelle, offerte par la grâce divine. Nous le verrons

ci-après, la sotériologie de Wither est plus ambigüe, mais les prières italicisées sont tout à fait claires à ce sujet : sans la grâce divine, pas de salut possible. C'est donc bel et bien chez Joseph Hall, l'auteur de l'*Arte of Divine Meditation*, que Wither puise la méthode de méditation qui est la sienne. Il s'agit ici non pas de faire un pas vers Dieu, puisque c'est impossible, mais d'implorer sa grâce et de se soumettre à son jugement, tout en admettant avec humilité sa propre nature pécheresse. C'est donc bel et bien une modalité méditative de la voix poétique qui conclue ces gloses plus introspectives, à condition, simplement, de comprendre le terme au sens que lui donnent ses théoriciens protestants.

8. Positionnement religieux et philosophique du poète dans ses emblèmes

Dans le recueil d'emblèmes qui nous intéresse, la voix poétique de Wither soulève diverses questions à la confluence de la philosophie et de la religion, et qui sont également l'objet d'autres écrits du poète, notamment sa traduction susmentionnée du traité sur la nature humaine de Nemesius, qui paraît un an après *A Collection of Emblemes*. Il convient de rappeler immédiatement que dans les années 1630 en Angleterre, les jalons qui mèneront à la guerre civile sont posés, et sont, pour certains d'entre eux, intimement liés aux questions auxquelles la voix poétique de Wither s'attelle dans de nombreux emblèmes. En effet, lorsque la majorité parlementaire puritaine reproche à Charles Ier un glissement délibéré vers le catholicisme, à la fois d'un point de vue théologique et d'un point de vue liturgique, c'est d'abord et avant tout la question du salut, et plus particulièrement de la part que l'être humain est en mesure de prendre à son salut, qui est en jeu. Pour un calviniste, l'humain est une créature irrémédiablement corrompue par le péché originel, qui est incapable de se montrer bon, juste ou pieux de son propre chef. C'est pour cela que la notion de mérite n'a pas de sens pour Calvin : c'est Dieu qui, pour sa plus grande gloire, a décidé de façon irréversible à l'aube des temps qui, parmi les êtres humains, seraient sauvés, et qui seraient damnés. Une personne qui semble capable d'altruisme et de bonté ne l'est que par la grâce divine, sans laquelle l'individu en question retomberait dans le péché. C'est bien pour cela que foisonnent au dix-septième siècle les manuels de dévotion qui prétendent pouvoir enseigner au lecteur comment déceler chez lui, dans son for intérieur et dans son comportement, les signes de l'élection. Or, pour les arminiens, autre faction protestante à laquelle le roi accorde sa préférence, la grâce divine est certes indispensable, mais le décret divin n'est pas péremptoire : la contrition et la repentance sont possibles, et peuvent sauver celui qui, auparavant, semblait condamné à brûler en Enfer. Chaque faction dispose également d'arguments puissants pour étayer ses accusations d'hérésie envers l'autre : les calvinistes fustigent les arminiens qui, selon les premiers, auraient abandonné l'idée du péché originel, ou, du moins, en minimiseraient l'importance, tout en laissant la porte entrouverte au retour du libre-arbitre, doctrine papiste totalement inacceptable. En retour, les arminiens rejettent avec véhémence l'idée selon laquelle Dieu aurait condamné, de façon anticipée, la grande majorité des êtres humains, et estiment que, dans un cadre ainsi totalement déterminé, Dieu serait, en dernière instance, l'auteur du péché que l'individu ne peut choisir de commettre par lui-même, point de vue tout aussi hérétique.

Ce qui transparaît à la lecture des emblèmes de Wither, ce n'est pas un

positionnement net, mais plutôt une conflictualité intrinsèque au dilemme théologique. Certes, la double-prédestination calviniste fait horreur à la voix poétique, qui ne peut envisager que Dieu soit dénué de miséricorde, ni qu'il soit possible d'obtenir la rédemption. Cependant, on cherchera en vain une affirmation claire du libre-arbitre. En effet, dans la glose qui accompagne une gravure montrant une main *ex nubibus* qui tient une balance à deux plateaux, la voix poétique commence par admettre que la Providence a bien décidé, par avance, des événements qui allaient se produire, mais, au moment où la discussion va se porter sur l'être humain, le discours se fait plus sinueux. Le décret divin n'empêche pas qu'il y ait « un lieu et une heure pour la compassion » si le pécheur se repent, et, surtout, s'il « demande la grâce », acte qui, semble-t-il, s'effectue *avant* l'intercession divine, et demeure donc le résultat de l'usage du libre-arbitre. Ce qui est immuable dans le décret divin, conclut la voix poétique, c'est précisément qu'il ne l'est pas.

Une autre question très liée à la première tient une place encore bien plus importante dans *A Collection of Emblemes* : celle de la persévérance envers et contre tout, vertu cardinale que les stoïciens qualifiaient de « constance » et que les chrétiens appellent la « patience ». Thématique sans nul doute très chère à Rollenhagen et à De Passe, elle est représentée de diverses façons très récurrentes dans les gravures : personnifiée tantôt sous les traits d'une femme qui tient une ancre à la main pour signifier la résistance aux flots de l'existence, tantôt sous ceux d'une autre, qui, la croix à la main et le regard rivé sur les cieux, symbolise la capacité des croyants les plus fervents à endurer les pires souffrances sans perdre la foi ; parfois, elle est représentée par un bloc de granit immuable, ou encore par un buste dont le regard immobile ne se détache jamais de son objet, ou encore, de façon extrêmement conventionnelle, par un navire qui maintient son cap contre vents et marées. À première vue, il semble d'ailleurs que la voix poétique ne fait aucune différence entre la constance et la patience, mais il est important d'étudier cette question de plus près.

Le néostoïcisme est sans conteste l'un des courants philosophiques les plus influents de la première modernité, et trouve en Juste Lipse son théoricien le plus illustre. Il s'agit bien évidemment d'élaborer une synthèse cohérente entre les idées de Sénèque, d'Épictète et de Marc Aurèle d'une part, et du dogme chrétien d'autre part, ce qui nécessite de clarifier les rapports complexes, une fois encore, entre la capacité du croyant à persévérer dans la foi, la grâce divine, la providence, et le libre-arbitre. En Angleterre tout particulièrement, la doctrine stoïque de la constance, qui est décrite dans les sources classiques comme une forme d'indifférence impassible vis-à-vis de l'adversité, est strictement rejetée au profit de la

patience chrétienne, qui ne peut avoir de valeur que si l'individu ressent bel et bien les souffrances qui l'affligent, mais persévère malgré celles-ci. La différence est d'autant plus importante, indique Montsarrat, que l'absence d'affects à laquelle il faudrait aspirer selon les stoïques est jugée dangereuse, puisque c'est précisément par l'affect que s'exprime d'abord et avant tout la communion recherchée avec le Christ. Cette distinction n'empêche cependant pas une certaine confusion doctrinale de régner, même chez les critiques les plus acerbes du stoïcisme tels que John Downame, qui cite abondamment les textes de ses adversaires pour justifier sa préférence, non pas de la constance, mais de la patience chrétienne. Une synthèse moins contradictoire des idées stoïques et chrétiennes est opérée par Joseph Hall, qu'on appellera « le Sénèque anglais ». Hall ne cache aucunement son admiration pour les grands philosophes stoïques de l'antiquité, mais subordonne systématiquement leur pensée à la nécessité de faire une place à la grâce divine dans l'équation, et, quand bien même la *recta ratio* des stoïciens serait une vertu incontestable, elle sera toujours bien inférieure à celle qu'est la foi.

Les emblèmes de Wither, quant à eux, témoignent, une fois encore, non pas d'un parti pris clair et assumé, mais reflètent le flottement conceptuel qui prédomine à son époque. En effet, « constance », « patience » et « persévérance » sont employés de façon quasi-interchangeable, bien qu'on puisse identifier certaines tendances éclairantes. En effet, lorsque la voix poétique s'aventure à s'étendre sur le sujet, elle insistera plus volontiers sur le fait que l'individu doté de patience ressent bel et bien la souffrance que lui inflige l'adversité, mais que sa foi lui permet de traverser l'épreuve sans faillir. Celui qui est doté de constance, quant à lui, sera parfois décrit au moyen d'images qui s'approchent dangereusement des tropes stoïciens : la pauvreté lui apparaît comme une richesse, la souffrance comme son bien-être, la tristesse comme une joie, et même la mort n'est que vie pour lui. La constance est également assimilée à une cotte de mailles impénétrable, comme c'est le cas dans l'emblème qui montre un crocodile à la peau cuirassée, une image tirée directement des lettres de Sénèque. La coexistence de ces deux visions radicalement opposées dans les emblèmes témoigne de la tension idéologique constante qui caractérise le dix-septième siècle, et qui se traduira par une transformation épistémologique profonde au fur et à mesure de son déroulement.

La voix poétique s'intéresse, ici et là, à d'autres aspects théologiques moins saillants, mais prend également position sur une question centrale, dont l'impact sur l'histoire de l'Angleterre bien au-delà de la guerre civile ne saurait être minimisé : celle de l'ecclésiologie. En effet, outre les désaccords de nature doctrinale, puritains et arminiens s'opposent

également sur un point essentiel : celui de la définition de l'Église. Les premiers sont congrégationnistes, et considèrent que l'Église chrétienne n'est composée que de ceux qui adoptent la foi qui leur semble légitime et conforme aux évangiles. La papauté catholique est évidemment associée à l'antéchrist, mais même l'Église établie, gangrénée, selon eux, par l'arminianisme qui rappelle par trop le catholicisme, ne saurait revendiquer de façon justifiable le titre dont elle s'affuble.

Dans l'épître dédicatoire au roi et à la reine, qui, rappelons-le, est la fille d'Henri IV et une fervente catholique, la voix poétique de Wither semble aspirer à un irénisme des plus inclusifs : elle appelle de ses vœux le jour béni de la réunification des « deux mères », le protestantisme et le catholicisme, et adule le couple royal comme emblème de cette réconciliation. Ici encore, cependant, il faut lire le texte avec attention pour y déceler les nuances que Wither, qui a connu les horreurs d'un emprisonnement long par deux fois, dissimule avec précaution. Au moyen de contorsions syntaxiques qui laissent planer l'ambiguïté, sa voix poétique suggère que l'influence salutaire de Charles devrait convaincre son épouse de se convertir, seule option réellement envisageable pour une concorde religieuse. En effet, certains des emblèmes à proprement parler se montrent bien plus sévères à l'égard des catholiques, qui sont exclus *de facto* de l'Église chrétienne et dont la destinée posthume est toute tracée. Cependant, une autre faction religieuse fait l'objet d'une exclusion encore plus virulente : celle des puritains calvinistes invétérés, dont l'erreur théologique qui, selon la voix poétique, équivaut à accuser Dieu d'être à l'origine du péché, ne saurait avoir pour conséquence que la damnation assurée.

L'ecclésiologie de Wither dans ses emblèmes est donc beaucoup moins irénique qu'il n'y paraît. En réalité, il se range du côté des primitivistes, qui considèrent que la seule Église chrétienne légitime est celle qui se conforme aux préceptes des chrétiens « originels », dont la doctrine aurait été graduellement corrompue à partir du septième siècle. La voix poétique admet avec indulgence que peuvent être considérés comme membres de l'Église des croyants affichant de petites divergences liturgiques ou doctrinales, mais l'exclusion des calvinistes et des catholiques est sans équivoque : c'est une modération théologique catégorique qui constitue le critère essentiel d'admission au sein de la congrégation des véritables fidèles.

9. Aspects politiques du recueil d'emblème de Wither

Compte tenu de l'ancrage des emblèmes de Wither dans les questions théologico-philosophiques de son temps et du lien inextricable entre politique, philosophie et religion à l'époque qui nous intéresse, il est évident que le poète prend également position à cet égard dans son recueil.

Dès le deuxième emblème de la série, dans lequel la voix poétique glose une gravure qui représente un buste couronné de laurier dont le regard reste fixé, inébranlable, sur son objectif, une dichotomie politique de premier plan est mentionnée sans être développée : après avoir exprimé une admiration pour le dirigeant doté de la prudence et de la vertu des stoïciens, la voix raille les « machiavéliens », qui sont ridiculisés par la droiture morale de leurs rivaux. Aucune autre mention de Machiavel n'apparaît dans l'ouvrage, mais une lecture à travers le prisme des théories politiques en vogue en Angleterre au dix-septième siècle révèle un positionnement minutieux de la part du poète. En effet, dès l'époque élisabéthaine, le philosophe italien, dont la pensée fait l'objet d'une simplification à outrance jusqu'à la caricature, incarne, notamment sur les scènes de théâtre, le tyran calculateur et violent qui sera mis à mal par la vertu des personnages stoïciens. Cependant, McCrea et d'autres ont montré qu'en réalité, la pensée politique de Juste Lipse et celle de Machiavel comptaient de nombreuses similarités conceptuelles importantes, et même Sir Walter Raleigh, que l'on compte habituellement, aux côtés de Bacon et de Hall, parmi les néo-stoïciens anglais, ne dissimule pas son admiration pour les écrits du Florentin. La question centrale, en l'espèce, est celle de l'attitude que doit adopter le souverain vis-à-vis de son peuple et de ses homologues étrangers, notamment dans ses aspects téléologiques et pratiques. En un mot, il s'agit de *Realpolitik* avant l'heure.

Très récurrent dans les emblèmes de Wither, c'est le terme de « prudence » qui donne le la de son positionnement quant à la théorie politique. La prudence, déjà théorisée par Aristote sous le nom de « phronesis » comme une sagesse pratique, est reprise par Juste Lipse, qui préconise une *prudentia mixta* : le souverain doit, tant que c'est possible, demeurer vertueux, honnête et paisible ; cependant, si le royaume est menacé, il faut qu'il lui soit permis, parfois, de se faire renard ou lion, soit d'user de la tromperie ou de la force, selon les nécessités du moment. Les deux symboles tirés du royaume animal apparaissent déjà dans les écrits de Cicéron, qui juge cependant que le souverain se doit de ne jamais imiter ni l'un, ni l'autre, afin de préserver sa vertu. Machiavel, au contraire, affirme que le souverain pragmatique doit être en mesure d'adopter le comportement du canidé ou du félin, non

seulement pour préserver la paix, mais également pour se maintenir au pouvoir. Lipse qualifie d'ailleurs de « pauvres enfants » ceux qui sont trop naïfs pour comprendre que l'exercice du pouvoir requiert souvent des concessions morales importantes.

Une fois encore, les emblèmes de Wither sont ici représentatifs de la conflictualité et des ambiguïtés de son temps. Il n'est certes pas naïf, et la voix poétique admet que la dissimulation et l'usage de la force sont parfois nécessaires, mais elle se montre bien plus restrictive que Lipse, tout en conservant une part de pragmatisme qui la distingue simultanément de Cicéron.

La deuxième question, sans doute encore plus importante dans les années 1630, est celle de la théorie de la monarchie à laquelle Wither semble souscrire. Il est surprenant que même les critiques tels que David Norbrook, qui ont pourtant consacré de nombreuses pages à la vie et aux opinions politiques de Wither, n'aient prêté aucune attention à son recueil d'emblèmes. Il est vrai que Jane Farnsworth s'est intéressée au rapport à la cour dont témoigne l'ouvrage, mais sa conclusion reste par trop superficielle : elle s'arrête au ton en apparence totalement obséquieux que la voix poétique emploie dans l'épître dédicatoire au couple royal et à certains emblèmes qui, à vue d'œil, se contentent de recommander au lecteur une soumission totale à l'autorité royale. Or, à une époque où les tension politiques se font de plus en plus tangibles à travers toutes les strates sociales anglaises, *A Collection of Emblemes* pose, de façon à peine dissimulée, la question qui coûtera la vie à Charles Ier en 1649 : quelles sont les obligations dont le monarque doit s'acquitter s'il veut demeurer légitime ?

Dans leur étude qui porte sur le radicalisme en Angleterre durant la guerre civile, Nigel Smith et Laurent Curelly proposent une définition de leur notion-clef selon quatre axes : d'abord, il s'agit d'un mouvement d'opposition à une ou plusieurs structures normatives dans un contexte historique bien précis ; puis, corrélativement, les mouvements radicaux sont temporaires, bien qu'il puisse exister entre les radicalismes d'époques successives, non pas une continuité stricte, mais des points d'accord et de convergence ; ensuite, le radicalisme est nécessairement polymorphe, en fonction des normes auxquelles il s'oppose ; enfin, le radicalisme est un cadre privilégié pour permettre à des individus aux idées idiosyncratiques de s'exprimer, ce qui a pour conséquence la nécessité de s'intéresser autant à des voix individuelles qu'à des mouvements collectifs. Se pose, alors, la question de la justesse de l'adjectif « radical » selon le sens que lui donnent Curelly et Smith s'il était appliqué à la pensée politique que Wither exprime dans son recueil d'emblèmes.

La figure du roi apparaît à plusieurs reprises dans les gravures de De Passe, mais, nous l'avons mentionné plus haut, les gloses très brèves de Rollenhagen ne laissent guère de place à un ancrage contextuel précis, et ne l'interprètent jamais comme autre chose qu'une allégorie du pouvoir politique en général. Cependant, dans le cadre de son projet de réappropriation, Wither se situe évidemment aux antipodes de son prédécesseur. Aucun emblème ne fait mention du nom de Charles, et la voix poétique feint souvent de ne traiter que d'un souverain hypothétique, mais les gloses du poète anglais sont en réalité parsemées d'éléments tout à fait probants quant à l'hypothèse que celles-ci sont à comprendre comme des messages politiques tout à fait concrets. Dans une glose qui, à première vue, semble dresser le portrait d'un roi aussi exemplaire qu'imaginaire, on discerne, une fois l'emblème contextualisé, une critique acerbe *a contrario* du comportement de Charles Ier, selon un procédé très similaire à la satire du système politique anglais que proposait déjà Thomas More dans l'*Utopie* au siècle précédent. La voix poétique commence par exprimer son admiration pour un roi juste qui maintien l'ordre de façon bienveillante et sans abuser de son pouvoir, à une époque où Charles met en place un système de prêt contraint à travers lequel, sous peine d'emprisonnement, ses sujets sont sommés de lui faire crédit pour financer ses campagnes militaires. Le roi doit également maintenir la paix tant qu'il le peut, alors que Charles déclare la guerre à l'Espagne, et envoie le Duc de Buckingham à La Rochelle pour qu'il vienne en aide aux Huguenots assiégés par Louis XIII, et que l'un comme l'autre se solderont par des défaites humiliantes. La voix poétique affirme aussi, sans contradiction, que lorsqu'une cause juste et noble se présente à lui, le monarque ne doit pas « refuser le défi de Bellona », et doit prendre les armes avec courage pour défendre ses sujets, mais aussi la foi chrétienne. Il est ici fait allusion à la guerre de trente ans, que bon nombre d'anglais, dont Wither, considéraient comme l'affrontement ultime entre les chrétiens purs et les forces de l'antéchrist romain, et dans laquelle Charles, comme son père, refuse de s'engager de façon franche. Bien évidemment, le souverain se doit de chasser de son pays toute hérésie qui mettrait en péril l'unité religieuse, alors que c'est précisément sous l'influence de Charles que les factions arminiennes, bien trop proches du catholicisme au goût des puritains, renforcent le schisme entre calvinistes et anglicans.

Cependant, c'est lorsqu'elle traite un sujet encore plus central, celui de la légitimité de Charles en tant que roi, que la voix poétique de Wither se fait la plus radicale : en effet, plusieurs emblèmes suggèrent qu'une distinction s'impose entre le monarque en tant qu'institution abstraite, à laquelle la voix ne voit aucun inconvénient, et la personne qui lui

donne corps, qui peut tout à fait s'avérer indigne de ses prérogatives. C'est précisément ce sujet qui animera les débats les plus houleux entre partisans du roi et parlementaires : en effet, si l'institution et la personne sont intrinsèquement liées, il est exclu de porter atteinte à l'un comme à l'autre, et tous doivent obéissance absolue au monarque de droit divin. Mais s'il est envisageable que la personne qui porte la couronne n'en soit véritablement titulaire qu'à condition de se conformer à une série d'obligations envers son peuple, alors un roi tyrannique peut tout à fait être démis de ses pouvoirs sans que cela ne constitue un sacrilège. Lorsque Charles sera condamné à mort en 1649, l'argument principal avancé par ses accusateurs est celui d'une violation de sa part de la confiance que lui a accordé le peuple. Il s'agit là d'un bouleversement capital : le pouvoir est désacralisé, et considéré comme un office non plus accordé seulement par Dieu, mais également confié par le peuple à un individu jugé digne de l'exercer. Les deux modes de désignation du monarque ne sont, du reste, pas jugés incompatibles : c'est bel et bien Dieu qui intronise le souverain, mais il peut s'agir d'une sanction envers un peuple pécheur et mécréant. Dans ce cas, Dieu choisit délibérément un tyran, et, lorsqu'il considère que la sanction a assez duré, c'est également de son fait que le peuple se soulève pour renverser le roi. C'est une idée qui germe encore dans l'esprit de Wither dans les années 1630, et que la voix poétique exprime encore de façon hésitante, mais qui se fera moins équivoque et plus emphatique dans ses écrits ultérieurs, notamment après l'accès au trône de Charles II en 1660 après la mort de Cromwell. Il y a donc bien, chez le poète anglais, une radicalité naissante qui reflète les premiers jalons d'une transformation institutionnelle capitale, celle de la désacralisation du pouvoir par la scission entre l'institution abstraite et la personne qui l'incarne, et ce, de surcroît, un siècle et demi avant qu'une idée très similaire ne conduise Louis XVI à l'échafaud.

10. Le jeu de loterie : mécanisme ludique, structurant, et didactique

Le jeu de loterie que Wither inclut dans son recueil d'emblèmes a fait l'objet d'une réception critique assez paradoxale. En effet, tous les chercheurs/-euses qui se sont penchés sur l'ouvrage s'accordent à dire que c'est un mécanisme d'une grande originalité, presque inédit au sein du genre, mais, à part une seule exception, personne ne s'y est penché de façon plus approfondie. C'est seulement en 2009 que Carmen Ripollés publie un article sur la place que prend la Fortune dans *A Collection of Emblemes*, thématique qui la contraint évidemment à observer le jeu de plus près. Nous reviendrons sur ses conclusions plus loin, mais il est important de noter dès à présent que, sans doute restreinte par le format court de l'article, elle se contente d'une contextualisation utile mais très générale du concept de fortune à l'époque de la première modernité, sans s'intéresser à celle du jeu de loterie. Or, c'est bien cette deuxième approche qui permet de répondre à plusieurs questions qui ont laissé perplexes divers critiques des emblèmes de Wither, tout en proposant un prisme de lecture nouveau à travers lequel le jeu peut être replacé de façon cohérente dans l'économie générale du recueil.

Tout d'abord, le paratexte qui précède les emblèmes s'efforce de présenter la loterie comme une annexe sans importance aux emblèmes, et insiste lourdement sur sa nature de passe-temps parfaitement moral et sans danger pour les bonnes mœurs. Wither n'était pas sans savoir qu'au début du $17^{\text{ème}}$ siècle, un débat d'ampleur sur la licéité des jeux de loterie avait éclaté entre deux ministres du culte, Thomas Gataker, d'une part et James Balmford d'autre part. Balmford avait publié dès 1593 un traité véhément qui condamnait comme hérésies tous les jeux de hasard, dont les loteries, auquel Gataker avait répondu en 1627 par un traité consacré tout particulièrement à celles-ci. Pour Gataker, il convient de distinguer deux types de loteries, chacun subdivisé en plusieurs catégories : les loteries « sérieuses » ou divinatoires, et les loteries « ludiques ». Les loteries « sérieuses » font l'objet d'un long discours dense et complexe, sur lequel nous ne nous arrêterons pas, puisque Wither présente d'emblée sa loterie comme un passe-temps. Pour Gataker, et contrairement à Balmford qui les condamne avec force, les loteries « ludiques » sont parfaitement acceptables, à condition que l'on en fasse usage de façon sobre, pieuse, sans parier d'argent et uniquement à des fins de divertissement. Cependant, Gataker se montre bien plus sévère à l'égard des jeux de loterie présentés comme divinatoires, et se range ici plutôt du côté de Bacon, qui affirme que la divination n'est que tromperie ridicule. Et pourtant, les almanachs et manuels de divination sont encore lus avec assiduité par les Anglais lettrés, et Wither lui-même se présentera

comme un prophète politique dans certains de ses écrits ultérieurs. D'ailleurs, la voix poétique demeure très ambivalente au sujet du pouvoir divinatoire du jeu en question. Parfois, dans les vers que le joueur doit parcourir une fois qu'il a fait tourner l'aiguille sur le cadran de la loterie, elle affirme sans ambages qu'une force mystérieuse a fait en sorte d'attribuer l'emblème donné à celui qui, de par son comportement, a le plus besoin des conseils qui y sont prodigués. Ailleurs, elle dément cette affirmation, et exhorte le lecteur à ne pas trop prendre le jeu au sérieux. La prudence de la voix poétique est compréhensible, car l'exercice divinatoire a une dimension éminemment politique en Angleterre à l'époque de la première modernité. En effet, depuis le règne d'Élisabeth, il est interdit d'exprimer quelque prophétie que ce soit au sujet du monarque ou de la cour, sous peine d'assignation pour sédition. Or, nous l'avons montré ci-dessus, les emblèmes à teneur politique ne manquent pas chez Wither, qui est sans doute soucieux d'éviter la prison ou pis encore.

Cependant, c'est une tradition littéraire méconnue mais très répandue aux XVIème et XVIIème siècles qui permet de contextualiser de façon bien plus précise le jeu de Wither : celle des « Losbücher », ou « livres-loteries ». Ces ouvrages, que Johannes Bolte a catalogué dès le tout début du 20ème siècle, sont constitués de « lots » vers lesquels le lecteur/joueur sera dirigé au moyen d'un mécanisme de hasard, tantôt inclus dans l'ouvrage sous la forme d'une *volvelle* ou d'un autre outil interactif, tantôt par le biais d'un jet de dés. Ces ouvrages oscillent souvent habilement entre une nature bibliomancienne et une autre, purement ludique, et connaissent un tel succès qu'ils sont parfois traduits, comme c'est le cas de l'un d'entre eux qui nous intéresse tout particulièrement : le *Libro dela ventura*, d'un certain Lorenzo Spirito, qui est imprimé à Venise dès 1537, puis traduit en anglais en 1618. En effet, les similarités structurelles entre l'ouvrage de Spirito et *A Collection of Emblemes* sont trop nombreuses pour n'être que coïncidences, et, de surcroît, leur filiation permettrait d'élucider un mystère concernant le jeu chez Wither : en effet, nous l'avons mentionné, les deux cadrans imprimés en toute dernière page du volume comportent, respectivement, quatre zones (une pour chacun des livres de cinquante emblèmes), et non pas cinquante champs, mais cinquante-six. Or, dans son livre-loterie, Spirito propose au lecteur de jouer au moyen d'un lancer simultané de trois dés, et attribue un lot particulier à chaque combinaison possible de chiffres. Il se trouve qu'en lançant trois dés à six faces, il est possible d'obtenir cinquante-six configurations différentes. D'ailleurs, la voix poétique de Wither affirme par deux fois, et non sans fierté, que sa propre version du jeu ne nécessite pas de dés, ce qui permet de supposer que le poète avait l'ouvrage de Spirito sous les yeux lorsqu'il composait son propre jeu de

loterie.

Ripollés a raison, bien entendu, de considérer que le jeu n'est en rien un simple ajout à l'ouvrage, mais véritablement un élément structurant de ce dernier. En effet, le frontispice de William Marshall, qui est en réalité une représentation méta-emblématique du cheminement intellectuel et spirituel du lecteur à travers le livre, comprend, au milieu, une scène curieuse : deux figures allégoriques, la Fortune et la Vertu, proposent aux pèlerins qui parcourent l'image de tirer un lot d'une énorme amphore, suite à quoi ils pourront poursuivre leur route. C'est ici évidemment le jeu de loterie qui est symbolisé, ce qui pose la question épineuse de la place de la Fortune dans le recueil. Notion complexe et très liée à des considérations théologiques majeures, la Fortune est une allégorie omniprésente dans les livres d'emblèmes. Souvent représentée sous les traits d'une jeune femme nue qui est contrainte de se tenir, les yeux bandés, sur une sphère de laquelle elle risque de tomber à tout moment, elle est assimilée à une force peu désirable, à laquelle il ne faut accorder aucune confiance malgré son attrait physique. De façon contingente au développement embryonnaire du capitalisme entrepreneurial, qui est accompagné des premières compagnies d'assurance et des premiers modèles mathématiques de probabilité et de risque, l'allégorie se transforme : toujours féminine et nue, elle est désormais représentée avec une longue boucle de cheveux sur le devant de la tête, mais le crâne rasé à l'arrière, afin de signifier non plus la fortune, mais l'occasion qu'il faut saisir quand elle se présente. Le concept est alors rendu compatible avec les idées stoïques de Bacon, qui affirme que l'être humain se doit d'être l'architecte de sa Fortune, et de ses saisir des occasions propices pour avancer ses intérêts. C'est là l'idée véhiculée par le jeu de loterie chez Wither : le lot attribué par le hasard représente toujours, pour le lecteur, l'occasion de s'amender, de suivre les conseils moraux prodigués par les emblèmes, et de cheminer vers plus de sagesse et de piété.

11. Conclusion

Le fil conducteur de cette thèse est l'idée selon laquelle *A Collection of Emblemes* de George Wither peut être considéré comme une « anecdote » au sens où l'entendent Stephen Greenblatt et Catherine Gallagher : un document qui, s'il est historicisé et s'il fait l'objet d'une étude dialogique avec son contexte historique, religieux, politique et social, éclaire ce dernier autant qu'il en est éclairé, auquel il est temps de redonner une place dans les études culturelles qui portent sur le XVII$^{\text{ème}}$ siècle, peut-être l'époque des plus grandes métamorphoses épistémologiques et culturelles que l'occident ait connu.

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In Erasmus's famous *Praise of Folly*, the eponymous speaker states that "no society, no association of people in this world can be happy or last long without my help", and no place could have provided more of it than office 4218/4219, the successive tenants of which have been indispensable, ironically, to keeping me sane throughout. The finished dissertation is largely the result of their friendship, support, and mirth, which have meant, and still mean, the world to me.

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Fortune, then, may favour the bold, but she also seems to favour those who spend a great deal of time writing about her.

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Note on the pagination in *A Collection of Emblemes*

Wither's paratextual additions to the emblems proper, as well as additional engravings – including the frontispiece, Wither's portrait, and the lottery wheels – appear on pages that are neither numbered nor identified by any recognisable sign. In the dissertation, those pages will be referred to according to the following shorthands. Some paratextual sections comprise several pages, in which case the shorthand will be followed by a number, as indicated in parentheses below.

Prep	A preposition to this Frontispiece
Fr	Frontispiece
Ti-I	Title Page book I
Lic	License
Ded I (1-4)	Dedication of Book I to the King and Queen
WP (1-2)	Writ of Prevention
TR (1-3)	To the Reader
Occ. (1-2)	The Occasion, Intention, and use...
Au. Med. (1-3)	Author's Meditation
Ti-II	Title Page book II
Ded II (1-4)	Dedications of Book II to the two crown princes
Ti-III	Title Page book III
Ded III (1-4)	Dedications of Book III to the Duchess of Richmond and to the Duke of Lennox
Ti-IV	Title Page book IV
Ded IV (1-4)	Dedications of Book IV to Philip of Pembroke and Henry of Holland
Tab (1-5)	Table of contents
Sup. (1-2)	Supersedeas to all them...
Dir	Direction shewing...
Lot.	Lottery plates

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

On 18 October 1798, Charles Lamb was seemingly quite excited to write to his friend Robert Southey: "I have at last been so fortunate to pick up Wither's emblems for you", immediately adding, somewhat despondently, that the book was "in a most detestable state of preservation":

> *Some child, the curse of antiquaries and bane of bibliopical rarities, hath been dabbling in some of* [the engravings] *with its paint and dirty fingers; and, in particular, hath a little sullied the author's own portraiture, which I think valuable, as the poem that accompanies is no common one.* (Lamb 1935: 631)

Lamb then unfavourably compares the emblems to Quarles's[1], Wither's immediate contemporary, admitting that he initially considered Wither's to be superior, but has changed his mind in this respect, after having "read old Quarles with attention" (ibid.). He nonetheless assumes that Southey will be beguiled by "honest Wither's 'Supersedeas to all them whose custom it is, without any deserving, to importune authors to give unto them their books'" and with "one of the happiest emblems, and comicalest cuts, […] the owl and little chirpers[2]" (ibid.). Finally, Lamb wishes Southey "all amusement, which your true emblem-fancier can scarce fail to find in even bad emblems" (ibid.).

This anecdote epitomises the literary and critical fate of Wither's *A Collection of Emblemes* from its first publication until the mid-twentieth century. The elaborate and remarkably detailed engravings etched in the famous De Passe workshop in the Low Countries, originally for Gabriel Rollenhagen's *Nucleus Emblematum* (1611 and 1613, in two volumes), probably secured the book's commercial success[3], and endowed it with the status of a "bibliopical rarity", still eagerly sought after by collectors on the eve of the nineteenth century. Its quaint and, at times, playful contents - not least among which the lottery game[4] - made it a source of entertainment and amusement for adults and children alike, although the former may have disapproved of the traces left by the latter's appropriating and playing with it. Some of

[1] Francis Quarles (1592-1644) published his *Emblemes* in 1635 and his *Hieroglyphikes of the Life of Man* three years later. He and Wither probably met at Lincoln's Inn in London, and were certainly acquainted (French 1928: 25).

[2] Lamb is referring to emblem II-1 (Wither 1635: 63).

[3] See Chapter III.

[4] See Chapter IX for a full discussion of the device and its significance.

the poems added to the engravings by Wither were occasionally deemed “valuable”, but few critics have refrained from expressing negative judgements on most of them, usually by stressing their alleged inferiority to those of other poets. Lamb picks Francis Quarles, but Wither’s poems have also been belittled in comparison to Milton’s (Clarck 1959), to Blake’s (Freeman 1970: 26-27), and even to Rollenhagen’s terse textual additions to the same engravings (Manning 2002: 103). Lamb’s abrupt sentencing of the emblems as “bad” in the final line has also been echoed regularly by critics, including, most elaborately perhaps, Manning again:

> *Wither has to tell us at length what the point should be. Exhausting the imagery of the plate, he often then needs – an invitation to further disaster – to find material of his own to fill the page: additional images, anecdotes, allusions. By the end of the emblem we have meandered far from our starting-point. If we have not exactly fallen off William Marshall's frontispiece allegorical mountain by this stage, we may well have fallen asleep.* (ibid.)

Such views notwithstanding, Wither’s emblems have been the object of renewed interest since Freeman’s pioneering study *English Emblem Books*[1], which was first published in 1948, and which, disdainful and cursory towards the volume as though it unequivocally is, raised several points that would steer scholarship on the volume for the following decades. Indeed, in an article published in *Renaissance Quarterly* in 1986, Huston Diehl remarked upon Wither’s didactic intent (57) and his independent and pragmatic use of the pictures to assist his readers in their efforts at moral and spiritual amendment (64), and, in 1993, Peter Daly devoted an entire Chapter in *The Art of the Emblem* to a reconsideration of Freeman’s conclusions on Wither’s treatment of his pictorial materials. Only one year later, Bath’s *Speaking Pictures* (1994) offered a broad critical updating and reappraisal of Freeman’s work, amidst a small but definite renewal of academic interest for Wither’s emblem book. Before turning to the current

[1] A PhD thesis defended by Irma Tramer in Berlin in 1934 examined Wither’s *Collection of Emblemes* along with Andrew Willet’s *Emblematum Sacrorum Centuria* (1592), and argued that these works marked the beginning of “puritanical emblem literature in England” (“Anfänge der Puritanischen Emblemliteratur in England”). Probably due to its having been written in German, and to its never having been published as a monography, Tramer’s work only influenced scholarship on English emblematics through Freeman, who quotes her once in connection to Willet (1970: 65).

state of scholarship on the matter, however, a brief historical overview of the development of the emblem genre is in order.

Although the first emblem book proper is usually considered to be the *Emblematum Liber* by the Italian lawyer Andrea Alciato, which was first printed in Augsburg in 1531 and which went through numerous editions in several languages[1], the genre has its moorings in what Spica, in her seminal work *Symbolique humaniste et emblématique*, calls a Neoplatonic "crisis of the sign" ("une crise du signe", 1996: 45) in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. While Aristotle's view that the soul never thinks without a mental image (*De Anima* III.7) was widely accepted, visual images were considered mere simulacra, which, being imperfect, man-made renditions of God's creation, only show it askew, barring human beings from perceiving the divine essence behind them (Spica 1996: 48-50). Words were considered to be equally untrustworthy, as the irreducible distance between signifier and signified, which Montaigne famously pointed out in his *Essais* (II.16, "De la Gloire"), also mars the potential of language as a path towards the essential (Spica 1996: 50-52). The sign that was to unite and supersede both semiotic systems was the "symbol", which was understood, within a Christian framework, as the post-Babel remnants of the Adamic tongue, enshrined by the Egyptians in their hieroglyphs before the fall of the Tower and the multiplication of languages made up of arbitrary signs divorced from the divine essence of things (58-59). The rediscovery, in 1419, of Horapollo's *Hieroglyphica*, an early fifth-century scribe who had endeavoured to interpret ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs (Eco 1995: 145), and its translation into Latin as early as 1515, followed by no fewer than twenty-seven editions in the next two centuries (Spica 1996: 59), sparked the interest of numerous humanists, including Valeriano, whose own *Hiergolyphica* appeared in 1556. It is a vast adaptation and expansion upon Horapollo's treatise that directed the humanist search for the perfect language in the Egyptian direction, combining it with the idea of the *Liber Mundus*, according to which the world has been created to be deciphered like a book, in which things constitute signs in the language of God (69). To the humanists, a "symbol" was a "natural, God-given code" ("un code natural donné par Dieu"), the sign that was most apt at restoring the direct connection between a concept and its material counterpart (73). The signifying power of such "symbols" was understood to result from their possessing a natural connection with the corresponding signified, which, if it was properly understood, enabled an observer not only to decipher the *Liber Mundus*, but to use symbolic language

[1] The known editions of Alciato's *Emblematum Liber* are catalogued and reproduced on the "Alciato at Glasgow" website (https://emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/index.php)

himself, and even to expand on the array of "symbols" that exist in the world by channelling the metaphorical connections between allegorical representations found in other sources, including classical myths and ancient and medieval bestiaries, and Platonic forms (91-96). Indeed, Ficino, one of the best-known among early theorists of humanist "symbols", considered hieroglyphs to be "Platonistic ideas made visible"[1] (97). As will be discussed to a greater extent in Chapter IV, this process implies a symbiotic view of text and image, which are combined in a "sign" that may be used in its visual or verbal form, but which, in both cases, constitutes a direct and natural path towards the ineffable, divine essence that would otherwise remain hidden, or distorted by the limitations of non-symbolic signs:

> *L'image [symbolique], c'est la jonction visualisable dans l'esprit, d'une part de l'idée, au sens platonicien du terme, inconnaissable directement, d'autre part de la visualisation matérielle qui en est proposée, imparfaite et incomplète. […]* [L]*a relation de différence fonde analogiquement, par similitude, une expression qui ne peut que dire le vrai par la disjonction mimétique appelée dans les esprits.* […] *La fonction naturelle, littérale de l'image est non pas de reproduire, mais de conduire vers l'analogue indicible derrière la représentation visuelle apparemment réaliste.* (127-128)

From its onset, this type of discourse was connected to the Hermetic premise, steeped in the Neoplatonic scepticism towards mimetic visual representations, that divine truth is too blinding to be apprehended directly, and can only be approached through the "mirror" of symbolic representations (138-139)[2].

Emblem books in the narrow sense, however, were equally indebted to another, less mystical and more rhetorical tradition, that of the adage or epigram (Vuilleumier-Laurens 2000: 109-116 and Lewalski 1979: 180-181), and it is well-known among students of emblematics that Alciato's *Emblematum Liber* was initially intended to be a collection of commonplaces, to which illustrations were only added later by the printer (Miedema 1968: 236). Emblems

[1] "Des idées platoniciennes rendues visibles", quoted from Chastel, André (1954). *Marcile Ficin et l'art*. Genève: Droz, p. 72.

[2] This concept is based on Corinthians 13:12: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

quickly came to be understood as compositions that combined an allegorical *pictura* with two distinct textual additions: an *inscriptio*, or epigrammatic motto, and a *subscriptio,* an explanation of varying size of the meaning conveyed jointly by the picture and the *inscriptio* (Mathieu-Castellani 1989: 27), which differed from *imprese*, alongside which they flourished as the 16th and the 17th centuries unfolded, in that the latter were expected by some theorists to be "more obscure, esoteric, mysterious, witty, symbolic, more closely related to the hieroglyph or ideograph, and more rigidly controlled by strict rules governing its composition" (Lewalski 1979: 181). Emblems, on the other hand, "had general moral applications to all mankind and were more open in method and more didactic in intention (ibid.). This distinction was not universally acknowledged, however, and, especially in England, both terms were considered to be closely related, if not wholly synonymous (ibid.). Emblem books enjoyed considerable popularity throughout Europe, and showed impressive formal and topical diversity, as was noted *a posteriori* by the Jesuit Claude-François Ménestrier, whose seminal work *L'Art des Emblèmes*, printed in Lyon in 1662, proposed a twofold categorisation of emblem types: according to their "bodies and figures" ("corps et figures") and to their "teachings" ("enseignements") (30, quoted in Spica 1996: 321). The first category encompassed seven sub-categories: "natural" motifs (stars and planets, living creatures, minerals, etc.), "artificial" motifs (tools and man-made objects), "historical" motifs, motifs drawn from fables, "symbolic" motifs in the strict sense, i.e. hieroglyphic, and "allegorical", all other figures used, more or less arbitrarily, by different authors to symbolise abstract concepts (33, quoted in ibid.). Ménestrier also identifies six types of "teachings" conveyed by emblems: sacred, moral, political, heroic, doctrinal, and satirical (34, quoted in ibid.). An equal measure of diversity can be noted regarding the use of the term "emblem" and its corollaries by practitioners and commentators alike, a question that is relevant to Wither's emblems and to which we shall return in Chapter IV.

As the second half of the seventeenth century unfolded, however, the demand for emblem books began to wane, mainly as a consequence, Spica argues, of the epistemological shift that was ushered in by the development of Empiricism and Rationalism, which caused a gradual, but inexorable departure from the mystical idea of a *Liber Mundus* to be deciphered through hieroglyphs and symbolic representations, which, with a hint of despondency, she calls "the disenchantment of the world" ("le désenchantement du monde", 1996: 443ff.). Allegorical representations gradually lost their status as vehicles towards the divine, and were slowly relegated to the purely ornamental around the onset of the eighteenth century:

> *La similitude ingénieuse ne relève plus que du* placere*, tout juste bonne à attirer le chaland, en l'occurrence le courtisan blasé ou paresseux, qu'un traité rédigé lasserait, et qui n'a plus rien à voir avec l'homme de cour de Gracián*[1]. (440)

However, Bath, who focuses more specifically on the English context, shows that the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not lose interest in Renaissance symbolic representations, as evidenced, for instance, by the enduring fascination for the emblem books composed by Francis Quarles, Wither's immediate contemporary, which were adapted and re-published well into the 1830s, and, by way of allusion, even beyond (1994: 271-281).

Wither's emblem book is *"A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne, Quickened with Metricall Illustrations, both Morall and Divine, and Disposed into Lotteries, that Instruction and Good Counsell may be Furthered by Honest and Pleasant Recreation*", and was first printed in London in 1635[2]. It contains two hundred detailed engravings, each in a circular frame, in which a motto in Latin, in Greek, or in French is inscribed. The engravings were produced by the De Passe family, who owned a renowned workshop in the Low Countries, for an emblem book in two volumes titled *Nucleus Emblematvm Selectissimorvm* (1611 and 1613), for which the German poet Gabriel Rollenhagen composed the mottoes and a set of *subscriptiones*, or poetic glosses, each briefly expanding on the motto. Wither, as we shall see in Chapter III, reused all two hundred engravings, but added an English couplet to serve as an additional motto for each emblem, as well as a thirty-line *subscriptio* of his own to replace Rollenhagen's. Wither also included a Frontispiece, commissioned with the famous English engraver William Marshall, his own portrait provided by another artist called John Payne, as well as several paratextual sections and a lottery game, which is composed of two engraved dials on the last page of the work, each having been designed to be equipped with a mobile pointer to be spun, and of an additional, shorter "lottery" stanza for each emblem, along with twenty-four "blank lot" stanzas.

Wither's emblems were probably composed over a period of nearly two decades, between the early 1610s and the mid-1630s, and was first printed one year before the first

[1] Spica is referring to Balthasar Gracián, whose famous *Oráculo Manual y Arte de Prudencia* (1647) is a collection of counsels to courtiers in short maxims, in which they are advised, among many other things, to look beyond the appearance of things to discover their essence (see *L' homme de cour de Baltasar Gracian* (1685), Amelot de la Houssaie's translation of Gracián's work, p. 123).

[2] See Chapter III.

publication of Descarte's *Discours de la Méthode* (1636) and fifteen years after Bacon's *Novum Organum* (1620), placing the work at the onset of the shift identified by Spica. And yet, this diachronic framework has, to my knowledge, been hitherto completely ignored, as have many aspects of Wither's work that distinguish it from other emblem books, both English and continental, and that endow the work with particular scholarly interest, both formal and historical. Given the aforementioned disdain, and sometimes even the scorn, with which Wither's works have been mentioned by critics over a period of over three centuries – Pope simply called him "wretched Withers" (Rumbold ed. 2014: 136), and he has been termed "the worst of bards"[1] – this is not surprising. And yet, as early as 1839, Willmott challenged the – already well-established – disparaging consensus on Wither's works in the chapter dedicated to him in the first volume of *The Lives of the English Sacred Poets* (91-204), calling most of the poet's critics "unkind" and "uninformed" (92), and devoted five pages to Wither's emblems, in which he deems "many specimens" to be "beautifully descriptive of the calm and religious sentiments of the writer" (152). Despite Freeman's acerbic critique of *A Collection of Emblemes*, the only redeeming feature of which she considers to be De Passe's engravings (1970: 142), and aside from its aforementioned inclusion, and much kinder treatment, in Bath's seminal *Speaking Pictures* (1994: 111-129), the work was granted closer scholarly attention in several book chapters and articles, which have largely refrained from qualitative assessments of Wither's poetry to focus on several of its notable features. Daly, as a response to one of many accusations voiced by Freeman about Wither's treatment of De Passe's *picturae* (1970: 144), called his 1993 article about the supposed "arbitrariness" of the same a "Reconsideration", in which he argues that Wither did, in fact, interpret most of the motifs in a highly conventional fashion, and displays considerable knowledge of emblematic discourse, with only a few exceptions (204). In two subsequent articles, Daly closely examined, successively, Wither's use of emblem terminology[2] (1999) and the role of De Passe's elaborate pictorial backgrounds in the exegetical process proposed by the English poet (2005), in which he further strengthened his argument *contra* Freeman, given how readily Wither occasionally incorporates the background motifs into his *subscriptiones*[3]. In-between, Daly and Young published "The Emblems of Wither and Rollenhagen" in CD-ROM form (2000), which included the two hundred emblems along with useful paratextual information, and even a

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[1] Freeman quotes from an anonymous article in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. 8, Sept. 1738, p. 484.

[2] See Chapter IV for a detailed discussion of Daly's article.

[3] This will also be granted further attention in Chapter IV.

digital simulation of the lottery game. This paved the way for efforts at closer analysis and contextualisation of the emblems: in 1999, Farnsworth examined the work in light of Caroline court culture, and argued that the work, under the guise of being addressed to "common readers" (Wither 1635: TR. 3), actually catered to the interests and habits of the nobility and royal family by relying on courtly language and *topoi*[1]. Three years later, Browning argued that Wither's authorial stance is notably reader-oriented, and that the book both teaches, and encourages each reader to exercise his own interpretative agency, thus combining a didactic intent with an attempt at democratising a genre that, in Caroline England, was still mainly the arcane privilege of a small social elite, a tendency that would be reinforced during the Civil War, when emblems featured heavily in Royalist propaganda (2002)[2]. Although the presence of a lottery game in an emblem book is, if not completely unique, at the very least highly original, it was not taken on as a standalone subject of enquiry until 2008, when Ripollés demonstrated the central place of the idea of fortune, and its allegorical personifications, in *A Collection of Emblemes*, and rightly pointed out that the game, in conjunction with the Frontispiece, constitutes an important structuring mechanism of the work[3]. Finally, in 2010, Mason Tung was the first to propose an analysis of the emblems through the conceptual prism of the poetic persona, arguing that Wither's takes on a polysemy of voices throughout the work, oscillating freely between a deictic, a didactic, and a sacerdotal one, a study which, its shortcomings notwithstanding, laid a foundational stepping-stone for this thesis[4]. Additionally, it is noteworthy that Browning refers to a collective volume edited by Professors Farnsworth and Silcox titled *Visual Culture: George Wither's Emblems in Seventeenth Century England* as being forthcoming in 2002[5]. This testifies to the fact that sufficient grounds for reappraisal of *A Collection of Emblemes* were identified by a small, but steadily growing community of scholars in the last thirty years.

As will be explained in Chapter I, the methodological framework of this thesis is characterised by its hybridity – not wholly inappropriately, given that emblems are themselves a hybrid genre – and by its gradual elaboration to meet the needs of different, and very diverse, aspects of the analysis. To claim its subscription to a pre-existing school of literary criticism would be as inaccurate as such a subscription would be limiting, given the variety of subjects to be tackled: persona and voice; inter-semiotic connections; early seventeenth-century

[1] Farnsworth's article will be discussed in Chapter VIII.
[2] Browning's ideas will be examined in Chapter V.
[3] See Chapter IX.
[4] See Chapter VI.
[5] Professor Silcox kindly informed me as recently as November 2019 that the work still awaited publication.

political, social, literary, and iconographic history; the notion of play and its cultural implications; aspects of early modern theology, philosophy, and denominational history; and, last but not least, the specific and intricate field of emblem studies, which always constitutes a point of convergence of many of these areas – and, in the particular case of this thesis, of all of them. Several axiomatic assumptions do, however, underpin its approach, and are likely to betray a greater conceptual kinship to some schools of thought than to others.

Firstly, this thesis rests on the idea that a piece of writing, like any other product of the various means of expression available to human beings, is inextricably connected to the "cultural context" in which it was produced. The momentous complexity and controversy that surrounds the expression, which led Eagleton to make the sententious assertion that "the word 'culture' is both too broad and too narrow to be greatly useful" (2000: 35), may be a major hindrance to reaching a general definition of the term, but it does not, I submit, deplete it of its usefulness if it is appropriately qualified and circumscribed, even under admission that such circumscription and qualification are utilitarian, and therefore arbitrary. Expressions such as "Caroline culture", "material culture", "Court culture", and "popular culture" arguably retain their validity insofar as author and reader agree in the assumption that their use does not entail a claim to a holistic understanding of the irreducibly complex interplay of subjective and intersubjective ideological, social, intellectual and discursive relationships between people and their material surroundings at the time and within the space considered. Instead, within the scope of this thesis, "Caroline court culture"[1] for instance should be understood as a shorthand for a partial account of the aforementioned interplay as it existed at the court of Charles I, pieced together from the *a posteriori* individual study and interpretation, conducted by scholars and critics specialised in the subject, of cultural artifacts[2] produced at that time by contemporary witnesses. This account can then be made to enter in a dialogical relationship with the study of other contemporary artifacts, the interpretation of which might be eased by the former, which, in turn, they may confirm, nuance, and/or correct. *A Collection of Emblemes*,

[1] I am referring to the title of Farnsworth's article on Wither's emblems, "An Equall and a Mutuall Flame–George Wither's *A Collection of Emblemes* (1635) and Caroline Court Culture" (1993).

[2] I am using the term according to the definition provided by Preston in the *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, which reads as follows: "[A]rtifacts must satisfy three conditions. They must be intentionally produced, thus ruling out unintended by-products of intentional actions, such as the shavings that result from woodcarving, as well as all naturally occurring objects, such as salamanders and stars. They must involve modification of materials, thus ruling out naturally occurring objects even when used intentionally for a purpose, such as sticks thrown to amuse your dog. And they must be produced for a purpose. This rules out intentionally modified objects that are nevertheless not intended to accomplish any further goal, such as the scraps produced when you intentionally, but for no particular reason, tear up a piece of paper before throwing it away." (Preston, Beth, "Artifact", in Edward N. Zalta (ed.). *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2020 Edition).

I will attempt to show throughout, is a particularly rich artifact, as it is embedded in a series of cultural concentric circles, from the very broad, which encompasses the complex epistemological and rhetorical origins of the emblem genre, to the very narrow, deeply anchored, as though it will be shown to be, in the particular context, not only of the early seventeenth century, but, more precisely, of the first half of the 1630s.

Secondly, given that the primary corpus of the thesis encompasses only one book, there will necessarily be an imbalance in this dialogical relationship: the "cultural context" as defined above will be much more instrumental in guiding the interpretation of Wither's emblems than *vice versa*. This is almost tautological, as the aspects of the work that will be interpreted as contextually significant can only be identified as such in the light of a pre-existing account of said context. A more modest, but also more realistic hope is that the thesis might further the aforementioned efforts at placing Wither's emblems squarely within the purview of early modern scholarship as constituting a rewarding subject of enquiry. To students of early seventeenth-century English history, for instance, they may provide an outlook useful through its liminality, being the work of a prolific poet and pamphleteer whose political allegiances and views were never free from hesitation and ambiguity; to scholars interested in early modern literary history and book culture, Wither's elaboration of a complex rhetorical project centred around a versatile persona and a deep understanding of the mechanisms of play may suggest additional avenues of research into the connection between literary texts and their material embodiments, and into the early seventeenth-century understanding, and use, of the "peculiar order" of play (Huizinga 1980: 10); to the steadily growing next generation of emblem scholars, it proposes, and experiments with, a wide array of conceptual tools, some of which they may find useful in their own pursuits; to students of Wither's well-furnished bibliography, finally, it may, perhaps, hint at some of the "literary myths" that have been "purveyed unexamined from one literary opinion-former to the next" (Bath 1994: 199) about the poet's works, and the corrections proposed herein regarding *A Collection of Emblemes* may prompt them to contribute, within the scope of their own studies, to setting the record straight.

Thirdly, and consequently, although this thesis shall rely, especially in its last few chapters, on some concepts developed within the framework of the New Historicist approach to literary criticism, it is not intended as an effort at what Gallagher and Greenblatt call "counterhistory", where the object of study would be chosen and analysed with the purpose of "undermining [epochal truths]" (2000: 51), although it certainly does hope to find, for Wither's emblem book, a "new point of insertion" (ibid.) into critical history. As far as possible, it shall attempt to steer clear of historiographical controversies, despite the fact that the reign of

Charles I and the Civil war are usually acknowledged to be among the most hotly debated periods in English history (see Gaunt 2003: 13; Tomlinson 1983: 7-27; Hughes 1998: 1). Instead, with the exception of the general contextualisation in Chapter II, it will, whenever possible, rest its arguments on the combined use of pre-existing, micro-historical analyses of specific aspects of early Stuart culture and contemporary primary sources, and avoid committing to any overarching political or social narrative of the first four decades of the seventeenth century. Chapter II may be found to rely too heavily on Gregg's detailed but very court-centred work *King Charles I* (1981), the shortcomings of which have been noted by several of her reviewers, including Fissel (1984) and Hibbard (1984), but other authors, foremost among whom Cressy and Reeve, are called upon to broaden the scope and include the wider social context into the account.

Only very few people, one supposes, would be as excited as Lamb to stumble upon a copy of *A Collection of Emblemes* in a book shop, and fewer still would, like Southey, take delight "even in bad emblems". It is not the aim of this thesis to contest, or even to comment upon, Lamb's qualitative assessment, which, as was mentioned above, has been repeated through the ages without, I submit, ever gaining any critical relevance whatsoever. Rather, its aim is to look both to the past and to the future - be it only the critical future of Wither's emblems – to help pull them away from scholarly opprobrium and to show how readily they reward any sustained attention they are given. In so doing, I hope to have heeded, to the best of my ability, the advice that Wither's persona imparts in the Janus-emblem (III-4):

> *By, sometimes, looking* backward, *we behold*
> *Those things, which have been done in* times *of* old*;*
> *By looking wisely* forward, *we foresee*
> *Such matters, as in* future-times *will bee:*
> *And, thus, we doe not onely fruits receive,*
> *From that short space of* time, *in which we live;*
> *But, by this meanes, we likewise have a share,*
> *In* times to come, *and,* times that passed are. (Wither 1635: 138)

<u>PART I</u>

CONTEXT AND APPROACH

CHAPTER I – Methodology

1) General and Specific Historical Contextualisation

As was mentioned in the general introduction, the methodological framework within which the following chapters will unfold mirrors the hybridity of its main object of study, an early seventeenth-century English collection of emblems, which, furthermore, doubles as an interactive lottery book[1]. Given the relative scarcity of scholarship on the work, and given the overall purpose of the thesis, which is to allow it to enter in a dialogical relationship with its "cultural context" as defined earlier, particular emphasis will be placed on sketching out the relevant aspects of the early Stuart, and, more broadly, of the early modern environment in which it was composed. By the account of Wither's persona in the epistle "To the Reader", composition may have started as early as 1614-1615, and spanned around twenty years, probably with various interruptions (1635: TR-2). As will be shown in Chapter II, Wither's formative years as an author were tumultuous, and his relationship with the power structures of his time, including the king, the court, potential and actual patrons, and the Stationers' Company, whose firm control over the book trade gave them considerable leverage to shape the English literary landscape, at the very least the part of it that was composed of licensed and printed books. Aside from general historical accounts of the period, such as Hill's seminal first volume of *Reformation to Industrial Revolution* (1967), and historical biographies, including Gregg's *King Charles I* (1981) or Cust's *Charles I: A Political Life* (2005), a great deal of attention will be given to social histories, predominantly the works of David Cressy and Steve Hindle. As the analysis becomes more focused on specific aspects of the relationship between *A Collection of Emblemes* and its context(s), the works of literary and cultural historians, such as Kevin Sharpe, Ann Hughes and Andrew McRae, to name but the best known among them, will be heavily relied upon as well.

2) Wither's Life and Works Generally, and *A Collection of Emblemes* More Specifically

Although I have had access to two full-length theses on Wither's life and works, written by French (1928) and Rannou (1980-81), I will also rely on the more recent biographical data provided by O'Callaghan in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, and on the detailed and enlightening discussions of more restricted portions of the Witherian corpus, including McRae's impressive contextualisation of *Britain's Remembrancer* (1628), the poet's account

[1] See Chapter IX.

of the plague in London in 1625 (2016), as well as Hensley's *The Later Career of George Wither* (1969) and Pritchard's article "The Poet as Prophet" (1962). It is noteworthy that *A Collection of Emblemes* is invariably given an extremely cursory treatment in these works, an attention deficit that this thesis, among other recent, mostly article-length studies, is aimed at correcting. As was briefly hinted at in the general introduction, recent scholarship on the book can be categorised in a twofold manner: on the one hand, Bath, Daly, and Young, building on the seminal works *English Emblem Books* (1948) by Freeman and *Aspects of the Emblem* by Höltgen (1986), have taken a Structuralist approach to determine its place within what they refer to as the "English emblem tradition"[1], and have focused on the book's treatment of its pictorial sources; on the other, critics like Ripollés (2008), Browning (2002), Farnsworth (1999) and Tung (2010) have taken it upon themselves to isolate and contextualise certain remarkable features of the emblems, including the lottery game and its relation to Fortuna, the question of reader involvement in the interpretation of the allegorical pictures, the book's intended readership and its awareness of the codes of Caroline court culture, and even Wither's persona and the voices it uses throughout. Although the first have been instrumental in raising the question of the book's relationship to the emblem genre, both English and continental, the second can certainly be said to have highlighted what is unique about it, emphasising, rather than downplaying, those among its features that are subversive of a neat placement of the work within an overarching structural framework. One slight exception to this categorisation is Daly, who examined how Wither's persona uses emblem terminology in the *subscriptiones* and the lottery verses, without, however, drawing broader conclusion from his lexical survey as to the poet's views on the genre to which he was contributing. This point of enquiry, however, deserves to be pursued further, a point that was made by Drysdall as early as 1999:

> *In certain influential studies of emblems, there was for a while a striking neglect of what contemporaries have said, or not said, about them, a common anachronism especially with respect to the sixteenth century, and a seemingly wilful desire to impose on them unhistorical terms, definitions, and classifications. But a historical approach is both necessary and possible. Necessary, because the best justification for all historical, indeed all cultural studies, is precisely the will to understand the 'other' in its own terms,*

[1] Young, together with Daly, Silcox, and Duer, even edited five volumes of a collection titled precisely "The English Emblem Tradition", which were published by the University of Toronto Press between 1988 and 1998.

> *to give full recognition to its autonomy. Possible because, though all questions must remain open and though there can never be any assurance of being right at any time, the effort to place oneself as nearly as possible at the viewpoint of contemporaries, to learn their terminology and definitions, to acquire their background and their mental frames, to recognise both their limitations and their advantages, the scholarly (informed and unbiased) reading of everything contemporary, with strict philological method, the occasional new discovery, the continual modification of one's view – these are cumulative and produce a series of approximations to the unseen goal, always provisional but, it can be reasonably supposed, progressive.* (111-112)

Wither's persona employs the term 'emblem' as well as its corollaries – such as 'hieroglyphic', 'impresa', 'symbol' and 'motto' – in a manner that was, according to Bath, "already [...] commonplace in English" at the time (1994: 115), but, as Daly shows in his article on the matter, their polysemic use, and the connections between some of these terms in the emblems are significant indicators of the place that the work occupies in the diachronic development of the genre. Furthermore, Wither's authorial stance is not that of an emblem writer, but that of an emblem "collector" (Bath 1994: 115-116) who "quickens" (Wither 1635: Ti.-I) – or "brings to life" - the *picturae* composed by someone else. This process will be granted more attention in Chapter III, but it is worth noting right away that the composition of emblems was not a straightforward process of creation, but one of literary reinterpretation, and, in Wither's case, of appropriation and repurposing of the source material. Based on Jeanneret's idea of the "dismembering and devouring" of literary texts that was commonplace in the early modern treatment of the classics (1995), and of Bolzoni's insights into the connection between emblematic motifs and the memory arts (2017), the rhetorical implications of Wither's "iconophagistic" strategy will be examined through the prism of the instances in which particular emblems are taken to convey a completely different message than they did in Rollenhagen's original work, the *Nucleus Emblematum* (1611-13), which constitutes Wither's main iconographic source for his own emblems. Finally, to avoid terminological confusion, the term "emblem" will, unless otherwise noted, refer to the tripartite structures that occupy one page each in Wither's work and is composed of an English couplet motto, De Passe's engraving

surrounded by Rollenhagen's Latin, French, Greek, or Italian inscriptio, and Wither's thirty-line illustration.

3) Text, Image, and Inter-semiotic Relations

Furthermore, as compositions of this kind combine both pictorial and textual components, they are often studied from the perspective of the collaboration of text and image in the conveying of meaning (see, for instance, Chardin 2012 and Mathieu-Castellani 1989), thus placing them squarely within the purview of intermedial studies, a field of academic research that originated in the 1960s and has since gained momentum, most notably in Germany, although its philosophical origins are usually traced back to Homer and to the elaborate ekphrastic description of Achilles's shield in the *Iliad* (Book 18, lines 478–608, see Robert 2014: I.1). The relationship between texts – predominantly poetry and drama in ancient sources – and visual representations is famously discussed in Aristotle's *Poetics*, in which both media are deemed to serve a mimetic purpose, but to be unequal in fulfilling it, as painting, according to the philosopher, lacks the essential performative aspect that makes poetry – especially tragedy – so apt at the imitation of actions (I. 2-4-6, see Robert 2014: ibid.). The equally well-known statements "painting is mute poetry and poems are speaking pictures", which is attributed to the poet Simonides by Plutarch in his *Moralia* (1st century: III.1), and "as is painting, so is poetry" ("*ut pictura poesis*"), which appears in Horace's *Ars Poetica* (l. 361) both hint at close kinship between the two "sister arts", but, as Barkan explains in his seminal *Mute Poetry, Speaking Pictures* (2013), they pose intense conceptual problems with which students of text-image relationships have struggled, and struggle still. For the purpose of this thesis, it is sufficient to lay out the premises upon which the early modern dichotomy between visual and textual representations rested. As was mentioned in the general introduction, sixteenth- and early-seventeenth humanists viewed pictorial representations as "symbols", considering them to be fulfilling a semiotic, rather than primarily mimetic purpose, a view derived from the epistemological framework of the *Liber Naturae*, itself the result of a blending of Horapollo's method of deciphering hieroglyphs and Christian exegesis (Bath 1994: 2-3). The seminal studies conducted by Spica (1996) and Vuilleumier-Laurens (2000) on the origins and development of early modern symbolic theory will be relied on throughout, as will the iconographic genealogies made by Warncke in his critical edition of Rollenhagen's emblems (1983). On this topic as well, primary sources will be called upon whenever possible to ascertain how each motif was interpreted in successive emblem books, the most prolific among which will probably prove to be Paradin's *Devises héroïques* (1551), the English translation of which appeared in 1591. More recent intermedial studies will, however, not be neglected, albeit

from the critical starting point of Schröter's highly useful summary and categorisation of prevalent theories in the field (2011), who argues that the term "intermediality" itself is problematic, as it assumes that several "media" are at work in a given mediatic configuration, thus running the risk of circular reasoning. Instead, a given medium will be identifiable precisely *because* of the specific combination, and collaboration, of different semiotic codes, a premise to which this thesis will subscribe, and which justifies the use, especially in Chapter IV, of the term "inter-semiotic" - rather than "intermedial" - connections. Furthermore, even the notion of "intermediality" itself is not uniformly defined by critics. Rajewsky has identified two broad "understandings" of intermediality:

> *The first concentrates on intermediality as a fundamental condition or category while the second approaches intermediality as a critical category for the concrete analysis of specific individual media products or configurations—a category that of course is useful only in so far as those configurations manifest some form of intermedial strategy, constitutional element or condition.* (2005: 47)

Rajewsky judges the latter "understanding" to be appropriate to conduct her own, "literary" intermedial analysis (51), and proposes three subcategories within the same to nuance the concept of intermediality even further. Two of them, which Rajewsky calls "medial transposition" and "intermedial references" (51-52), have been theorised by Schröter and others, and lie outside the scope of our study. The third, however, which she calls "media combination", is described as follows:

> *Intermediality in the more narrow sense of media combination, which includes phenomena such as opera, film, theater, performances, illuminated manuscripts, computer or Sound Art installations, comics, and so on, or, to use another terminology, so-called multimedia, mixed media, and intermedia. The intermedial quality of this category is determined by the medial constellation constituting a given media product, which is to say the result or the very process of combining at least two conventionally distinct media or medial forms of*

> *articulation. These two media or medial forms of articulation are each present in their own materiality and contribute to the constitution and signification of the entire product in their own specific way. [...] The span of this category runs from a mere contiguity of two or more material manifestations of different media to a "genuine" integration, an integration which in its most pure form would privilege none of its constitutive elements. (ibid.)*

To include emblems in this category seems to be a relatively uncontroversial choice. Clearly however, this immediately raises the question of the definition of the term "medium". From Rajewsky's point quoted above, it can easily be inferred that a "medium" must be a "conventionally distinct form of articulation", possessing its own "materiality". Similar ideas on the notion have been expressed by Werner Wolf, who defines it as follows:

> *A conventionally distinct means of communication, specified not only by particular channels (or one channel) of communication but also by the use of one or more semiotic systems serving for the transmission of cultural 'messages'.* (Wolf 1999: 35-36.)

It is Rajewsky again who points to the immediate theoretical implications of this definition, which lie at the heart of our methodological concerns:

> *In this context one might ask to what extent, in the case of so-called intermedia —including, for example, visual poetry [...], one can in fact speak of a "combination" of different medial forms of articulation, since the constitutive medial forms become quasi inseparable. This extreme outer pole of media combinations concerns phenomena in which individual media or their material manifestations—such as word and image—become inextricably bound to, or even "merged" with, one another, and as such "are simultaneously and oscillatingly present".* (Rajewsky

2005: 52)[1]

Whether this is indeed the case in emblems in general is a question that widely exceeds the scope of our present study. In the specific case of our examination of Wither's emblems however, the relationship between the textual and pictorial semiotic codes is of foremost importance, and will be guided by several general ideas:

Firstly, the relationship between *subscriptio* and *pictura* varies from one of Wither's emblems to another. In some cases, the text provides a complete hypotypotical description of the image and a complete interpretation. In other cases, the poem only refers to one or two allegorical motifs, and provides an exegesis based on those alone. In rare instances, the poem barely mentions the picture and simply uses it as a stepping-stone for a long digression from the original topic. Instances of inter-semiotic playfulness and close aesthetic correspondence between text and picture coexist with condescending derogatory assessments of the quality and relevance of the image. As will be shown in Chapters IV and V, this is part of Wither's rhetorical strategy throughout the volume, but it also entails that the relationship between picture and text must be studied on a case-by-case basis. Secondly, Wither is working with pre-existing engravings, and his own contribution to the emblems is therefore solely textual. This does not entail that his views on the value and the signifying power of pictorial representations are immaterial, but it is likely that his incapacity to exercise any influence upon the visual motifs is going to be compensated textually, thus, probably, occasionally creating an imbalance between the importance of the text and that of the image. The long and detailed illustrations – this is the term Wither uses to refer to his *subscriptiones* - often spare his readers the effort of deciphering the picture, whereby the text immediately frames and restricts the picture's semiotic range. Conversely, other passages capitalise on the symbolic polysemy of certain motifs and provide several interpretations to choose from.

4) New-Formalist Close Readings and Wither's Persona

This semiotic prevalence of text lends itself to an examination through a New Formalist lens, which, contrary to its "old" counterpart, can be viewed as complementary to the quasi-New-Historicist framework proposed in the general introduction and above:

> *New Formalism has importantly pointed to the productive interchange between historical and formal investigations,*

[1] Rajewski is quoting from Hansen-Löve, Aage A. "Intermedialität und Intertextualität. Probleme der Korrelation von Wort-und Bildkunst—Am Beispiel der russischen Moderne," in Schmid, Wolf and Stempel, Wolf-Dieter eds., *Dialog der Texte. Hamburger Kolloquium zur Intertextualität, Wien*, Wiener Slawistischer Almanach, 1983, p. 325 as a source for this point.

> *or, more properly, it has exposed the degree to which questions of history and form have been always already inseparable* […]. *In the same vein, Jane Gallup has argued for the continuing scholarly and pedagogical importance of close reading as a supplement to historical and archival investigations in English and cultural studies, claiming that 'close reading poses an ongoing threat to easy, reductive generalization, that it is a method for resisting and calling into question our inevitable tendency to bring things together in smug, overarching conclusions,' and that it is, indeed, one of the things that keeps literary critics from becoming second- rate historians* […]. *If we do not assume the incorporation of formal elements into the text to be the exclusive genius or labor of the individual author, but rather interpret it as an ongoing process of deploying and manipulating (perhaps refining) inherited elements from other texts, then New Formalist investigations can become attuned to both individual and larger cultural achievements, at the level of historical context and the level of textual form* […]. (Brinkman 2013: 98)[1].

This dissertation will attempt to maintain the difficult balance between formal and historical modes of analysis throughout, and, if it succeeds, it may provide new insights into the workings of *A Collection of Emblemes,* both internal and in dialogue with its contexts. Furthermore, the New Formalist framework described above, which allows for the incorporation of "individual cultural achievements" without divorcing them from the broader circumstances in which the work was composed, is fully compatible with the concept of a "persona", which is central to the study proposed herein.

The overwhelming majority of studies on Wither usually regard any instance of the first-person pronoun in his writings as relating to the author directly[2]. One exception is provided by Mason Tung, who focused on the voices of Wither's persona in the Collection (Tung 2010: 53-77). Tung conducted a detailed study of several characteristics of Wither's

[1] He is quoting from Jane Gallup (2007), 'The Historicization of Literary Studies and the Fate of Close Reading,' *Profession* 6: 185.

[2] French, 1928 and Rannou, 1980-1981 systematically equate the poetic persona's 'I' and Wither in their studies.

persona and of its rhetorical role in the work, and thus reaches new – and, for our purpose, very useful – conclusions. For instance, he identifies different uses of the first-person pronoun in the collection: a "parenthetical 'I'", a "righteous 'I'", and a "prudent or wise 'I'", each of which fulfils a different rhetorical purpose. Tung does not define the term "persona" however, but simply takes its existence as an axiomatic premise, and considers that the persona in question speaks in multiple voices or "roles": a deictic role, a didactic role, and a sacerdotal role (64-71). In light of recent – and less recent – debates as to the relevance of the use of the "persona" concept in literary criticism[1] and more generally to the notion and the place of the author (Walker 1991: 109-114), it is however necessary to briefly outline the basis for the use of the former concept in this study.

On the very first page of Sanchez's preface to *Persona and Decorum in Milton's Prose*, the reader encounters the following lines:

> *Milton's 'personal presence', his 'I', in the prose results from two factors: first from the 'labour' involved in purposefully fashioning various personae for various occasions; second from what Milton refers to in The Reason of Church Government as the prophet's 'divine inspiration'* [...]. (1997: 11)

Three separate pieces of crucial information are presented here. Firstly, Milton and his personae are connected but fundamentally separate entities, and it is therefore incorrect to consider that the first-person pronoun encountered in Milton's works is referring to the author in person. Secondly, the personae are not fortuitous emanations from his writing, but intentional creations. Thirdly, each persona is 'fashioned' so as to fit a particular occasion, thus abiding by the literary principle of *decorum* as defined by Aristotle[2], which constituted one of the foremost criteria of literary quality in the Renaissance (Vickers 1999: 41-46). This immediately entails that the persona Milton fashions in a certain work will be a factor, among other things, of the subject matter and of his intended readership. Furthermore, it is Milton himself who, in his *Apology*

[1] See Zimpfer 2003, Chapter 1, in which she provides a brief summary of the scholarly debates and disagreements on the "persona"" concept since Maynard Mack's 1941 essay "The Muse of Satire".

[2] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Book III, Part 7: "Your language will be appropriate if it expresses emotion and character, and if it corresponds to its subject. [...] Furthermore, this way of proving your story by displaying these signs of its genuineness expresses your personal character. Each class of men, each type of disposition, will have its own appropriate way of letting the truth appear. Under 'class' I include differences of age, as boy, man, or old man; of sex, as man or woman; of nationality, as Spartan or Thessalian. By 'dispositions' I here mean those dispositions only which determine the character of a man's for it is not every disposition that does this. If, then, a speaker uses the very words which are in keeping with a particular disposition, he will reproduce the corresponding character; for a rustic and an educated man will not say the same things nor speak in the same way.*"*

against a Pamphlet Call'd A Modest Confutation of the Animadversions upon the Remonstrant against Smectymnuus, wrote: "[...] I conceav'd myself to be now not as mine owne person, but as a member incorporate into that truth whereof I was perswaded, and whereof I had declar'd openly to be a partaker (1642: 3). Milton is therefore fully conscious that he has constructed a persona, which, then, cannot be relegated to a mere arbitrary concept used to study his *Apology*, but must be taken into account as an undeniable feature of the same. The author of *Paradise Lost* is by no means an isolated instance in this respect. Michel de Montaigne already asserted that his writings were attempts at constructing a second, more interesting identity – in his eyes at least - than his own:

> *Moulant sur moy cette figure, il m'a fallu si souvent dresser et composer pour m'extraire, que le patron s'en est fermy et aucunement formé soy-mesmes. Me peignant pour autruy, je me suis peint en moy de couleurs plus nettes que n'estoyent les miennes premieres. Je n'ay pas plus faict mon livre que mon livre m'a faict, livre consubstantiel à son autheur, d'une occupation propre, membre de ma vie ; non d'une occupation et fin tierce et estrangere comme tous autres livres.* (*Essais,* Book II, Chapter XVIII, 1580-1588, "Du Démentir")

Similar ideas can be found in the poetry of Drayton[1] and Donne[2], and, most interestingly for us, in Wither's works as well. The first section of his *Abuses Stript and Whipt* is titled "To him selfe, G.W. wisheth all happinesse.", in which the persona addresses the "real" Wither at length, urging him to rely only on "himself", and not on any patron or authority, and to remain true to his design of castigating vices wherever they may occur. The title of the section plainly shows that this cleaving of his person in half is fully intentional, and the persona acts as a benevolent preceptor and a moral guide to its alter ego:

> *If euer aduersitie (as tis like enough) oppresse thee, yet remember thy owne sayings, and in despight of outward Destinies haue a care to keepe an vndeiected heart still free*

[1] Drayton, "Idea – To the Reader of these Sonnets": "My verse is the true image of my mind, / Ever in motion, still desiring change ; / And as thus to variety inclined, / So in all humours sportively I range ; / My Muse is rightly of the English strain, / That cannot long one fashion entertain. *"*

[2] See, for instance, Aers and Kress's discussion of Donne's Verse Epistle to the Countess of Bedford (1992: 255-270), in which they note that Donne uses "simultaneously two versions of the self here: one, the platonic one covertly [...]; the other, the one constructed according to market values overtly*"* (258).

> *for Vertue. Or on the contrary, if euer (as tis vnlikely) vnexpected Prosperity bee cast vpon thee, then look to thy selfe, take to thee this poore booke of thine, wherein thou shalt see the dangers of it, and be, perhaps, there|by staid from many a perilous enterprise, which that estate might else driue thee into.* (Wither 1613: 6)

The persona similarly distances itself from the "real" Wither in the preface to *Ecchoes from the sixth trumpet* (1666):

> *This Preface, and the following Review, were not without good reason personated as written by a Third person; yet perhaps may make it questionable, Whether they were done by the Author of the Books abreviated, or by another hand* [...]. (Wither 1666: 4)

The concept of a "persona" therefore seems particularly relevant to the study of Wither's *Collection of Emblemes*. If we are to do so, however, we must likewise postulate that the author is not entirely absent from the same, let alone "dead", as Roland Barthes has famously argued in his quasi-eponymous article (1984). A fruitful theoretical middle ground can be found in the works of Cheryl Walker, who argues that we may "speak of authorship as multiple, involving culture, psyche, and intertextuality, as well as biographical data about the writer" (Walker 1991: 109). Her methodology, which she calls "Persona Criticism", aims at "finding in the text an author-persona but relating this functionary to psychological, historical, and literary intersections quite beyond the scope of any scriptor's intentions, either conscious or unconscious" (ibid.). The concept of an author-persona is of particular interest to us, as it is "a mask that may be related simultaneously to the biographical data available about the author and to other cultural and literary voices". (ibid.). The theoretical axioms governing Walker's concepts and methods are therefore akin to the ones upon which our own study is based. She makes her position even clearer a few paragraphs further down:

> *For [some], the attempt to get at the circumstances governing textual production is liable to be condemned as historical rather than critical, as though it were important to keep history outside of criticism. In contemplating my own insistence on uniting the two, I have also come to a further conclusion regarding my own type of analysis, and*

> *this is what I mean when I say that I have not adopted persona criticism for the sake of mere expedience.*
> *Serious criticism, it seems to me, always emerges from deep and complex sources in both the culture and the critic. When I consider what a subject is, when I consider what I am and how the self-that-I-can-use-in-writing connects to my own texts, I am convinced that the best exploration of my role as an author would take into account my psychological development, gender, race and class affiliations, cultural experience, reading habits, and intellectual and political concerns. [...] But I also feel confident in saying that a text itself is an encoding of history in which one may find traces of both culture and psyche without the prior context of biography.* (117-118)

Furthermore, Walker demonstrates that the persona is far more stable an object of study than what she calls the "historical subject-author" (115), as the former is "limited, identifiable, constructed, and without intentions". She views the persona as a "structuring mechanism, a predisposition that takes on substance as it becomes embedded in particular contexts", which is "not a limit on what the text can mean", but rather "a feature of the text like a node from which meaning can be seen to radiate in many directions" (ibid.). In other words, the persona can be viewed as an emanation of the author with whom it may share various aspects of his life experience, opinions and sensibilities, but that remains distinct from them, in that it takes different shapes in every one of the author's literary productions, a shape that is only partially intended and that is fundamentally a function of latent contextual contingencies as well.

Walker proposes the following methodology to identify the characteristics of a given author's "mask":

> *First, it is necessary to identify the characteristics of an author-mask in a range of related texts in order to establish the significance of this construct. One searches for a pattern, a constellation of effects.*
> *The second phase of persona analysis explores the way these effects (this voice or character) come out of a particular time and place at the intersection of*

psychological and cultural history. Often (though not always) the mask functions as an organizing feature of the text. (ibid.)

Walker does not clearly specify what she means by "a range of related texts", but given the aim pursued - searching for "a pattern, a constellation of effects" – it is reasonable to assume that the corpus should include other works by the author under examination, as well as contemporary texts written by others, which would serve as a basis for comparison, so as to pinpoint the unique, or at the very least particular, features of the author's persona.

Our examination of Wither's *A Collection of Emblemes* does however require a slight adaptation of Walker's approach. As was mentioned above, Tung has demonstrated that Wither's persona is an entity that manifests through different voices in the volume. We may, furthermore, venture the hypothesis that Tung has not necessarily identified all the persona's roles. After all, as we have seen, Wither undoubtedly considers himself to be endowed with an educational and religious mission in his emblems, but he is nonetheless a satirist as well as a political and social commentator (see Chapter II). Each of the persona's roles could, then, be identified through the existence of a specific "pattern" or "constellation of effects". Thankfully, Wither was a prolific and highly eclectic writer, and his bibliography comprises multiple works – religious, political, lyric, didactic, and satirical - that will constitute a serviceable basis to pinpoint the features of his persona. An important caveat ought to be borne in mind: this approach does not assume that the persona's voices can invariably be clearly distinguished from one another. In fact, given their respective natures, a good deal of porosity is to be expected. For instance, the didactic voice may well be intricately interwoven with the sacerdotal one where it seeks to impart religious teachings, and a satirical tone can be a powerful tool at the disposal of the didactic voice. The individual examination of each of the persona's roles is merely subservient to establishing how the interplay of these roles contributes to the rhetorical project of the work.

5) New Historicism and "Self-Fashioning"

A related conceptual tool to which we will resort in this study is the concept of "Self-Fashioning". This concept was famously developed by Stephen Greenblatt in 1980. While Greenblatt admits to not providing a clear definition of the term in his introduction (27), he suggests that, within the scope of his study, "fashioning" should be understood as "the achievement of a [...] shape: a distinctive personality, a characteristic address to the world, a consistent mode of perceiving and behaving" (18). This process, when it was applied by early

modern writers to themselves, constitutes a fascinating point of tension between their intellectual and artistic autonomy on the one hand and the forms of power to which they had to submit. While, as Greenblatt argues, "in the sixteenth century there appears to be an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process [,]" (17), the manipulation of one's identity was nonetheless subjected to overarching structures:

> *[T]here is considerable empirical evidence that there may well have been less autonomy in self-fashioning in the sixteenth century than before, that family, state, and religious institutions impose a more rigid and far-reaching discipline upon their middle-class and aristocratic subjects.* (ibid.)

The means by which this fashioning occurs "is always, though not exclusively, [through] language" (28), more specifically, in Greenblatt's study, through the works of eminent authors of the sixteenth century. The aim is to view each text as "the focal point for converging lines of force in sixteenth-century culture", an idea on which he elaborates as follows:

> *[The] significance [of theses texts] for us is not that we may see through them to underlying and prior historical principles but rather that we may interpret the interplay of their symbolic structures with those perceivable in the careers of their authors and in the larger social world as constituting a single, complex process of self-fashioning and, through this interpretation, come closer to understanding how literary and social identities were formed in this culture.* (23-24)

While George Wither's work was published in the seventeenth and not in the sixteenth century, there is no reason why the same premises should not apply to the present study. Furthermore, the text of *A Collection of Emblemes* itself bears marks that hint at a "fashioning" process. For instance, in "A Preposition to this Frontispiece", the otherwise nearly systematic use of the first-person pronoun is replaced by several third-person references to "our AUTHOR" (Wither 1635: Prep.). This may be a mere instance of illeism, but it may also suggest distance between the author and his persona.

In another part of the paratext, the "Authors Meditation upon sight of his Picture", the reader encounters the following lines:

When I behold my Picture, and perceive,
How vaine it is, our Portraitures to leave
In Lines, and Shadowes (which make shewes, to day,
Of that which will, tomorrow, fade away)
And thinke, what meane Resemblances at best,
Are by Mechanike Instruments exprest ;
I thought it better, much, to leave behind me
Some Draught, in which, my living friends might find me
The same I am ; in that, which will remaine,
Till all is ruin'd, and repair'd againe :
And, which, in absence, will more truely show me,
Than, outward Formes, to those who think they know me.
(Au. Med. 2)

Although this is clearly an instance of the Neoplatonistic "prejudice of many Englishmen at this time against the visual arts"(Bath 1994: 117), it also suggests that one's true identity cannot be apprehended through "outward Formes", and that he favours the identity he fashioned through his "Draught" – this particular poem, but, perhaps, *A Collection of Emblemes* more generally, or even the whole body of his writings up until 1635 – over the inferior one that is perceptible in his engraved portrait.

This may then enable us to examine Wither's own brand of "self-fashioning" in this work. The existence of various "roles" taken on by his persona suggests that the same is versatile and by no means restricted to a monolithic discourse. Rather, the persona speaks through multiple voices, from multiple vantage points, and therefore possesses a greater potential for nuance and dialectic. Greenblatt and Gallagher readily admit, however, that New Historicism is not a "coherent, close-knit school" and "resists systematisation" (2000: 2). Their aim in keeping the boundaries of their theoretical framework so loose is presumably the possibility to insert "an extraordinary assortment of critical practices, many of which bear little resemblance to [their] own" (ibid.) within it. This accounts for the rich variety of topics and approaches one finds in *Practicing New Historicism* alone: "two authors, two chapters on anecdotes, two on eucharistic doctrine in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and two on nineteenth century materialism. Or, to put it somewhat differently, two chapters on anecdotes, and four on bread, potatoes, and the dead" (1). It does, however, immediately raise considerable problems if one wishes to emulate a "New Historicist" methodology. It is therefore worth insisting on the fact that this dissertation will use the concept of "Self-Fashioning" and will

subscribe to certain ideas that underly New Historicist thinking – notably the notion that social, political, religious and epistemological contexts infuse literary texts in ways intended and in ways not intended by the author, or the idea that literary texts constitute pieces of evidence that can shed light on their social and political environment – but, as was already emphasised in the general introduction, this dissertation does not intend to use George Wither's *Collection of Emblemes* to "undermine [epochal truths rather than epitomizing them]", and thus "puncture [the established historical narratives] on purpose [...]" (51). Whatever contextual data we can discover through our reading of any emblem book will only ever be the manifestation of certain aspects of that context as they were understood, internalised, and expressed by one of its witnesses. While it would be a fascinating exercise to undertake cross-readings of this and many other contemporary works to gradually see them merge into an authentic, dynamic, diverse, and perhaps even contradictory picture rather than a neat historical narrative, such an endeavour would exceed the aim of this dissertation, and can only be pursued efficiently in a collective fashion. It is, nonetheless, intended very much as a modest contribution to such an overall, diachronic, and interdisciplinary project.

6) Wither's Political Stance in the Emblems and the Lottery Game

The question of the political stance that Wither's persona appears to take in *A Collection of Emblemes* has been almost wholly ignored by his commentators, with the exception of Browning, who argued that the English poet's treatment of the emblems can be analysed as an attempt at appropriating a genre previously kept deliberately arcane to be understood only by a well-educated minority:

> *For a republican activist and a visionary whose political ideas depended upon the development of a literate populace not easily cowed by authoritarian displays of signification the reading practices promoted in* A Collection of Emblemes *are of fundamental importance. My argument regarding the political ramifications of Wither's emblems starts from the assumption that emblems had by Wither's time been established as the language of the court and aristocracy.* (2002: 62)

Browning argues that Wither's emblem book is composed in a reader-oriented fashion, encouraging even people unfamiliar with symbolic representations to try their hand at interpreting the pictures themselves, thus democratising a literary genre that previously ensured

a small, elitist audience through its own opacity. Browning, however, also admits that, "when Wither wrote the dedications to his [emblem book] in the early 1630s, he was following the publication of a number of emblem books that had been directed to a more popular readership" (70, note 40). Although I do not fully concur with Browning's analysis of Wither's authorial stance[1], and although the question of Wither's intended readership is difficult to answer with certainty – some remarks towards an attempt at doing so will be made in Chapter III – the English poet clearly approached emblem composition and reading in an original manner, and certainly took care to make his work accessible to a wider audience than, say, Whitney and Peacham did earlier. Given that Quarles's emblem books, which appeared at the same time as Wither's, are not dedicated to any person associated with the Caroline court, and do not express any hope at obtaining patronage from anyone, it is likely that he and Wither supposed that their books would be in sufficiently high demand to be economically viable, a supposition that was correct, as evidenced by the inclusion of both in London's *Catalogue of the Most Vendible Books in London* (1657: $F1_r$). There are certainly clear instances of politically motivated statements in Wither's work, usually embedded in *subscriptiones* to emblems that were composed as abstract and general considerations on the power and duties of monarchs, or on the best way to ensure public welfare within a kingdom[2]. The close readings that will attempt to tease out these statements will rely, perhaps even more so than others, on precise historical accounts of immediately contemporary events, while also identifying the rhetorical devices implemented to keep his statements from being construed as seditious.

Wither's political outlook in *A Collection of Emblemes* is worth examining, furthermore, because the 1630s certainly constituted an significant ideological breaking point for Wither, who, as French points out, "was a perfectly loyal subject of the king" in his early life (1928: 141), who then gradually nuanced his position during Charles's "personal rule" (141-143)[3], and who, finally, though not without deep personal ill-ease, joined the Parliamentarian side in the Civil War (143-145). This testifies to the struggles of a conflicted mind, which, as will be argued in Chapter VII, mirrors the state of the political spectrum in Caroline England, which was certainly not clear-cut, and which was structured around wide-ranging concerns over constitutional questions, such as the prerogatives and duties of the king

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[1] See Chapter V.
[2] See Chapter VIII.
[3] Ibid., pp. 141-143: "In a few years, however, his attitude was gradually beginning to change. *Hallelujah* (1641) reflects the popular suspicion of the king. Thereafter, though Wither alludes to him often, he either prays for greater vision and piety in him or warns the country that a wicked land often is punished by a wicked ruler [*Hallelujah* (1641) pt. II, no. 14]. […] In his *Campo-Musae* (1643), he recognizes the evils of the monarchy, but tries to soften the blow to king by blaming his advisers [p.56]. This view had strengthened by the time he wrote his *Vox Pacifica* (1645) until he could look on the king as a debatable good. [p.25]."

and Parliament respectively and the extent of the divine right of kings. This question will be tackled using mainly Nenner's work *The Right to be King* (1995), which examines the political context in which all royal successions from James I to George I unfolded, and traces the constitutional debates and developments that accompanied them. It will, of course, be read jointly with contemporary primary sources, including the records of speeches held in Parliament and of the correspondence between the Commons and Charles I.

One political aspect of the work that has been routinely overlooked, and that resides in the rules that Wither's persona lays out for the use of the lottery game, will be studied in Chapter IX, mainly in the light of Huizinga's famous work *Homo Ludens* (1980), in which he ponders the political, social, religious, and customary implications of play. As we will see, Wither was deeply aware of the unique leeway that the realm of a game provided him to be politically impertinent, and even subversive, while minimising the risk of having to answer for it before the king's dreaded Star Chamber. Wither's stance towards political authority is perhaps best epitomised by his lines to Charles II just after the Restoration:

> *I was never of any faction, but mischeeved by all and little favoured by any, because not forward in pulling down and setting up as they were. I confesse I did, by the example of many wiser men, yeald obedience, active or passive to the Powers which GOD, by his grace or permission, subjected mee unto, whether favourd or opprest me, and so I will, and do now, unto his Majestie* [Charles II] *and the present Government.* (French 1928: 145)[1]

As is already implied in the passage quoted above, Wither considers that any form of political power is ultimately in God's hands, and that the succession of different forms of government, albeit violent and chaotic, is the will of the Lord:

> *Since all is in GOD's hand, rest well assur'd*
> *That your chief interest will be secur'd*
> *In his best times, although the Royal power*
> *He more exalts, and brings the people lower.*
> *For, his way, to the highest exaltations,*
> *Is by Debasings, and by Degradations.*
> *And, whether more or less, he gives or takes,*

[1] The work cited is Wither's *Vox Vulgi* (1661), in the "Letter to Clarendon".

To, or from him, or them, its for their sakes
Conferred or withdrawn, to whom pertains
That Kingdom, within which, no Tyrant reigns.
GOD is our King, and doth but him depute
To be here for a time, his Substitute:
We are his people, and his pasture-sheep,
Whom he is sent to govern, feed and keep;
Not to oppress, to fleece, or to devour,
And GOD retains us alwayes in his power.
(Wither 1660: 50)

As was the case of most of his contemporaries as well, Wither's political views are thus closely intertwined with his religious stance, which has been the subject of scholarly disagreement since the nineteenth century at least.

7) Religion and Philosophy in *A Collection of Emblemes*

Willmott's chapter on Wither in *Lives of the English Sacred Poets* (1839) begins as follows:

> *It has been the fashion among critics and readers of poetry to regard Wither only as a fanatical rhymer, and an intemperate puritan; yet, through the longest and brightest period of his life, he was neither. A puritan, indeed, in its true signification, he never was.* (91)

French is slightly more cautious in the opening lines to his own study of the poet's life and works: "George Wither, who was not quite so utterly the Puritan poet as he is sometimes contemptuously called, was born in the year of the Spanish Armada in Bentworth, a little town in Hampshire about fifty miles southwest of London" (1928: 1). As early as the first half of the nineteenth century, this critical commonplace was already so well established, and yet based on such shaky grounds, that it could already be deemed a mistaken view and dismissed as such. Whether the claim endured because of a hasty equating of Civil-War Parliamentarians with "Puritans" – presumably without any critical discussion of the label, which is notoriously problematic – or simply because the bulk of Wither's works testifies to earnest, profound, and admittedly, at times, unyielding Protestant devotion on his part, is impossible to ascertain. Based on studies on seventeenth-century religion in England, such as Ryrie's *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (2013), and on discussions on the term "Puritan" and on other early

modern denominational labels by Hill (1964, re-edited in 2018), Bremer and Webster (2005), and Bingham (2019), Wither's religious stance as expressed in the emblems will be investigated thoroughly. Furthermore, two of his persona's recurrent voices, the didactic one, which was identified by Tung (2010), and the meditative one, will be granted sustained attention in Chapter VI. As I will attempt to demonstrate, it is simply inaccurate to describe – or, as has often been the case, dismiss – Wither's *subscriptiones* as instances of "plain poetry" aimed at minimising the use of rhetorical techniques to convey meaning in an unequivocal manner. Rather, these two voices are usually heard in close succession, thus mirroring the structure of early modern English sermons, as described, for instance, by Pierre Janton in his study of Hugh Latimer's works (1968), in which accessible interpretations of a given text – usually a passage from Scripture – quickly gave way to far more rhetorically creative appeals to the congregation to meditate the message thus clarified, and for each listener to apply it to their own individual circumstances.

The study of the persona's meditative voice will be developed against the backdrop of the famous debate between Martz and Lewalski on the subject, with an additional reliance on Carrive and on the foremost text on Protestant meditation, Bishop Hall's *Arte of Divine Meditation* (1606) to zero in on Wither's meditative practice, both in the emblems proper, and in the section of the book appropriately titled "The Author's Meditation upon Sight of his Picture". This question cannot, however, be divorced from a broader examination of the theological doctrines to which the persona subscribes, especially given how conflictual questions on predestination, free will, divine Grace, and the responsibility for sin grew to be in Early Stuart England, and especially during the reign of Charles I. Cust and Hughes's important work *Conflict in Early Stuart England* (2014) will constitute the primary theoretical foundation for this discussion, although, as usual, it will be used jointly with seventeenth-century writings on the same subjects. More particularly, Wither's own *The Nature of Man*, which was completed only one year after *A Collection of Emblemes*, is a valuable source of information regarding the author's religious views and his philosophical outlook. Indeed, both works oscillate between Christian and Stoic conceptions of free will and of the idea of constancy in the face of adversity. Studies on early modern Stoicism and Neo-Stoicism by McCrea (2000) and Montsarrat (1984) will therefore be combined, with the writings of Lipsius, Hall, Bacon, and Raleigh, to identify precisely how much Wither's emblems owe to each tradition.

8) Wither's Lottery Game

Another aspect of *A Collection of Emblemes* that has failed to arouse due attention from

previous critics is its physically interactive nature, as each reader becomes a potential player who is invited to spin the two pointers attached to the final page of the work to find out which emblem they are to read[1]. Scholars such as Kelly (2011) and Karr-Schmidt (2018) have provided broad and enlightening studies on early modern interactive books, both in terms of their material features – Karr-Schmidt surveys various moving implements in early modern books that were designed to be used by readers – and of the actions that readers/players were meant to perform at the book's behest, such as turning to specific pages, observing pictures, pondering passages of text, and even throwing dice to be taken to the next step in the reading experience. Kelly's account of the popularity of so-called "*Losbücher*" ("lottery books") all over continental Europe will be relied on to solve a structural question about Wither's lottery game that puzzled Bath (1994: 123) and others, while shedding new light on the origins of the game and its significance within the general economy of the volume. Ripollés' insightful study on the role of Fortune in the *Collection* (2008), and its connection to the nature and use of the lottery game, will be discussed and expanded upon to show how central the game is to the overall economy of the volume, and to Wither's rhetorical project.

9) Geertz, Gallagher, Greenblatt, and the Anecdote

To tie all the aforementioned arguments together, Gallagher and Greenblatt's discussion and appropriation for literary criticism of Geertz's concept of an "anecdote" as the primary tool for investigation (2000) will be shown to cohere rather well with the methodological tools employed throughout, and to constitute an original manner of apprehending a work of this kind, which may, furthermore, prove quite effective at fulfilling the general aim of the thesis as it was outlined in the introduction.

Conclusion

The framework described above is an attempt at combining the breadth and flexibility required to tackle the main points of enquiry regarding Wither's emblems, while remaining consistent in its allowing the text and its context(s) to clarify mutually, thus contributing to a more nuanced understanding of both. However, it can obviously be implemented effectively only once a historical and biographical foundation has been laid, which will be the object of the next chapter.

[1] See Chapter IX.

Chapter II – “Though, Mee, this Age despise”: Historical and Bibliographical Contextualisation of Wither’s *A Collection of Emblemes*

1. Introduction

The aim of this thesis as described in the general introduction necessarily requires a thorough contextualisation of Wither’s career up to, including, and in the aftermath of, the publication of *A Collection of Emblemes*. The biographical data about Wither is not in short supply, and O’Callaghan’s synthesis in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* already provides a very thorough account of the poet’s life and career. As much of the information compiled there was actually provided by the poet himself in his works, this chapter shall delve somewhat deeper into his texts to identify the origins of the literary traits that are found in his emblem book, and to trace the development of his persona and of his authorial stance up to the mid-1630s. Wither led a comparatively long, and certainly very active life, with a career that spanned fifty-five years and nearly eighty known works, much of which unfolded during one of the most tumultuous and complex periods in English history. For this reason, this chapter shall focus mainly on the years leading up to the Civil War, and on Wither’s writings in the 1640s, after which the events in his life and his literary activities cease to be immediately contextually relevant to the emblems, and will therefore be summarised more briefly. Aside from O’Callaghan’s article in the *DNB*, which relies on the more detailed studies by French (1928) and Hensley (1969), André Rannou’s doctoral dissertation titled “George Wither (1588-1667): critique et témoin de son temps” (1980-81), which, undoubtedly due to its having been written in French, has eluded all of Wither’s subsequent, English-speaking biographers, may be consulted for further information.

2. Early Life and Education

Wither was born in June 1588 in Bentworth in Hampshire, to George Wither sr. and his wife Mary Hunt, “while the great Armada was on its way to England” (Bigg-Wither 1907: 86), the eldest of ten children, five boys and five girls. Wither’s direct lineage can be traced back to the fourteenth century, when a Robert Wyther of Lancashire settled in Hampshire during the reign of Edward III. By the poet’s own account, his family was quite wealthy, as the following passage from *Britain’s Remembrancer* (1628) suggests:

Whilst I have gallopt on in that Career,
Which youth, in freedome, so affecteth here;
And had the most delightfull blandishment,
My youth could yeed me for my hearts content:
When I in handsome robes have beene araid,
(My Tailor, *and my* Mercer *being paid)*
When daily I on change of dainties fed;
Lodg'd, night by night, upon an easie bed,
In lordly Chambers; and had therewithall
Attendants forwarder then I to call,
Who brought me all things needfull: when at hand,
Hounds, Hawkes, and Horses were at my command (176)

Bigg-Wither states that Wither received an early education from Ralph Starkey, the "Archivist", who was married to "a niece of [Wither's] aunt" (1907: 87), before he was sent to the nearby grammar school headed by John Greaves. One amusing allusion to his school days in *A Collection of Emblemes* has him trying, along with his classmates, to make particularly boring lectures end faster:

Some Foolish-Boyes *(and such a* Boy *was I)*
When they at Schoole have certaine houres to passe,
(To which they are compell'd unwillingly)
Much time they spend in shaking of the Glasse. (49)

At fifteen, Wither was sent to Magdalen college, Oxford (1907: 87), a time he recalls in a self-deriding tone at the onset of *Abuses Stript and Whipt* (1613). His persona claims that other boys who were under the care of the same tutor decided to join the university, "And in a manner counting it a shame, / To vndergoe so long a Schoole-boyes name" ("The Occasion of this Worke"), he resolved to do the same. The persona alleges that Wither was an apt student, who "was vnfurnisht of no needfull layes; / Nor any whit for Grammar rules to seeke, / In *Lillies* Latine, nor in *Camdens* Greeke" (ibid.). Oxford certainly left an impression on him, as he describes it as follows:

The spring of knowledge that imparts,
A thousand seuerall Sciences, and Arts,

A Christall *fount, whose water is by ods,*
Far sweeter then the Nectar *of the* Gods:
Or for to giue't a title that befits,
It is the very Nurcery *of wits;* (ibid.)

Referring to himself and to some of his fellow students as "idle Freshmen" (ibid.), he claims that he was spending most of his time playing tennis, but was then admonished by his tutor – whom Wood identifies as John Warner, the future bishop of Rochester (1817: 761) – to finally take his higher education seriously. Notably, Warner only obtained his M.A. in June 1605, before which date it is "unlikely that [he] could have been [Wither's] tutor" (*Oxford DNB*, entry "Wither, George (1588-1667)). If the persona in *Abuses Stript and Whipt* is to be believed, however, Wither arrived in Oxford when he was "almost thrice fiue winters old" (1613: "The Occasion of this Worke"), therefore shortly before June 1603, which suggests, either, that Warner tutored Wither while holding only a B.A., which he obtained in December 1602 (*Oxford DNB*, entry "Warner, John (*bap.* 1581, *d.* 1666)), or that Wither had another tutor before Warner. At any rate, by the account of his own persona, the future poet did not prove very receptive to his tutor's teachings, which included "The hidden secrets of the *Logick* Art" and rhetoric, notably based on the works of "Old Scotus, Seton, *and new* Keckerman". The persona echoes the sessions, which Wither, again, evidently experienced as utterly tedious, by imitating the scholarly jargon that his tutor must have used:

He shew'd me which the Predicables *be,*
As Genus, Species, *and th' other three,*
So hauing said enough of their contents,
Handles in order the ten Praedicaments,
Then *Post praedicaments:* with *Priorum,*
Perhermenias and *posteriorum:*
He with the Topicks *opens; and descries*
Elenchi, *full of subtile fallacies.* ("The Occasion of this Worke")

In the same light-hearted and self-deriding tone, the persona continues:

These to vnfold (indecd) he tooke some paine,
But to my dull capacity in vaine:

For all he spake was to as little passe,
As in old time vnto the vulger was
Their Latine *seruice, which they vnderstood*
Aswel as did a horse to do them good,
And I his meaning did as neere coniecture,
As if he had beene reading Hebrew lecture. (ibid.)

Allegedly, Wither "remaind in that amazed plight, / Till *Cinthia* sixe times lost her borrowed light" (ibid.), but then decided to try to "make a show" to imitate the "other little *Dandiprats* dispute, / That could distinguish vppon *Rationale, /*Yet scarcely heard of *Vertum Personale;* And could by heart (like *Parots*) in the Schooles, / Stand prattling" (ibid), and therefore picked up the books that had been previously "cast about" and began to read them on his own. As he felt his "dull intelligence/ begin to open", and began to grow interested in philosophy, the natural sciences, and "matter Metaphisical", however, alleged financial difficulties on his father's part forced him to cut his studies short and to return to "our Bentworth beechy shadowes" (ibid.) without a degree around 1605. Several qualities of Wither and of his persona that are relevant to our study of *A Collection of Emblemes* begin to emerge already: a sardonic rejection of rhetorical conceits without substance, especially when they are used as inferior substitutes to actual, plain-spoken moral virtue; a willingness to use mild self-derision, not merely for the sake of entertainment, but also to aid reader identification with the humble and seemingly honest – if, at times, ironic or sarcastic – voice that takes shape through the text; and, finally, a pre-emptive justification of the didactic aspect of his authorial stance, as the persona claims to have been unable to learn from the verbose jargon of those it would later call the "overweening-wise" (1635: TR.-2), but has managed to find its own way to knowledge and wisdom, thus qualifying it to convey valuable lessons to those equally impervious to "the common Course of Teaching and Admonishing" (TR.-3).

The succession of James VI of Scotland to the English throne in 1603 was smooth[1]. but, as Seel and Smith demonstrate at the onset of *Early Stuart Kings 1603-1642* (2001), the new monarch inherited various political and financial problems, such as the heavy burden of

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[1] "James's accession to the English throne was remarkably peaceful: according to one contemporary there was 'no tumult, no contradiction, no disorder', and as he journeyed south into England his new subjects warmly welcomed him, 'their eyes flaming nothing but sparkles of affection'" (Seel and Smith 2001).

eighteen years of war against Spain, which required deeply unpopular tax increases. Coupled with plague outbreaks and insufficient harvests in the very last years of the sixteenth century, these had created a climate of defiance towards the Privy Council and even fostered active resistance in some counties (2). Furthermore, endemic corruption and uneven distribution of court patronage in the final years of the Elizabethan period shook the court with various scandals and added to the financial problems with which James had to contend (3). Although "writers and scholars jubilantly noted that their new ruler had literary inclinations"[1], "there were grounds for disquiet", as "Scotland, in the seventeenth century" was "a foreign land with a different church, different customs, and different institutions of government". Furthermore, "two of [James's] books, *The True Law of Free Monarchies* (1598) and *Basilikon Doron* (1599), expounded authoritarian views of kingship", because of which "the relationship between the monarch and his people […] would be [a source] of friction throughout James's reign" (Greenblatt, Eisaman Maus, and Logan eds. 2018: 891-892). Moreover, "compared to Elizabeth's, his court was disorderly and wasteful, marked by hard drinking, gluttonous feasting, and a craze for hunting" (894)[1]. This was certainly Wither's experience, as his persona expresses unmitigated disgust at courtiers who enjoy "*Hounds* & *Haukes,* & *Whores* at their delight", while "*Quarrels* and *Braules* doe fit their humors right, / Disordred meetings, Drunken Reuellings," and "Consuming Dice, and lauish Banquettings", although it absolves the king of responsibility in the matter:

> *For (I suppose) the Truth I must confesse.*
> *That* Vanity *no Prince ere harbord lesse*
> *Then IAMES hath done; vnlesse corrupted stories,*
> *Rob's former ages of deserued Glories.* (1613: "Of Vanitie"

3. Early Works and Relationship with the Jacobean Court

Information about Wither's life between his departure from Oxford and the publication of his first work titled *Prince Henries Obsequies* in 1612 is scarce. In *Abuses*

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[1] Wither's persona even affirms that "Great IAMES our King both loues & liues a Poet, / His bookes now extant do directly show it, / And That shall adde vnto his worthy name, / A better glory, and a greater fame / Then *Britaines Monarchy* (1613: "Of Weaknes").

Stript and Whipt, he remains very vague about the chronological succession of events and has his persona claim that, while he was in Bentworth, those who pretended to be his friends tried to convince him to learn a "*Mechannick* trade", although not with the young poet's best interest in mind:

> *[…] Cause they feard that I*
> *Might come to vnderstand my state thereby,*
> *Exceed their knowledge, and attaine to do,*
> *My selfe more good, then they could wish me to".* (1613:
> "The Occasion of this Worke")

Thereupon, allegedly to "auoyd their Spight", he "often to the City did resort" to seek preferment at Court (ibid.), a hope in which he was, apparently, initially disappointed. It is practically certain that Wither travelled to Ireland at least once during that time, as evidenced by "Epigram 11" in the same work, which is addressed to "Sir Thomas Ridgeway, Knight Barronet, Treasurer of Ireland", to whom the persona expresses gratitude for having been an early – if the not the earliest – patron, and expresses its wish to "revisit" him. In the satire titled "On In Constancy [sic]" in *Abuses Stript and Whipt*, the persona does not refer to the Irish by name, but paints a vitriolic picture of the "Vulgar" who "are a rude, / A strange inconstant hare-braind multitude", dwells on their wish "for the world as in Queen Maries dayes" and on their "Papistry", and refers to "these wars" which cost both sides dearly in terms of casualties and finances, presumably alluding to the Nine Years' War that had ended in 1603 (see O'Neill 2017), although such statements could very well have been made without first-hand experience of Ireland.

In 1612, Wither's *Prince Henries Obsequies* came out of the press of the well-known Edward Allde, who was one of the earliest printers of some of Shakespeare's plays as well as other first editions of Marlowe, Dekker, and Massinger among others, which suggests that the young poet – he was twenty-four at the time – had managed to gain early access to the London book trade upon his arrival in the city, perhaps with the help of the late Prince whom he was mourning in the work. It is a collection of forty-five elegies in sonnet form, followed

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[1] Some scholars, including Peck, suggest, however, that the accounts that described the Jacobean court in such terms were produced mostly during the interregnum, and deliberately exaggerated the claim "to justify the execution of Charles I and the abolition of the monarchy" (2005: 1).

by an epitaph, "A SVPPOSED INTER-LOCVTION BETWEENE the Spirit of Prince Henrie, and great Brittaine", and a "Sonnet of Death", composed in Latin and translated "Paraphrastically" into English. Another piece of evidence for Wither's being well-connected already at the time is his dedication, and expression of commiseration, to Robert Sidney, the 1st Earl of Leceister, an important patron of the arts and the younger brother of the famous author of *The Defence of Poesy* (1595), whose son William had just passed away. Wither's persona tells Sidney that his son's death was understandably granted less attention than that of the Prince of Wales, but, it adds, "loth indeed was I, / The *Memory* of one so deare should die", and expresses hope that the inclusion of a reference to William in a book of elegies for Prince Henry might "be the *Meane* to make his fame endure" (1612: "TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE ROBERT Lord Sidney of Penshurst…"). The dialogue between the Prince's spirit and Britain personified is also quite remarkable, as it constitutes an almost prophetic preamble to the way in which Wither would address the future Charles I in his subsequent works. Indeed, Henry's spirit bids Britain to tell the new heir to the throne the following on its behalf:

> *Tell him he may a full possession take*
> *Of what his brother did so late forsake,*
> *But bid him looke what to his place is due,*
> *And euery vice in generall eschue:*
> *Let him consider why he was his Brother,*
> *And plac't aboue so many thousand other.*
> *Great honors haue great burthens: if y'are high,*
> *The stricter's your account, and the more nigh:*
> *Let him shunne flatterers at any hand,*
> *And euer firmely in Religion stand.* […]
> *Let Policie Religion obey,*
> *But let not Policie, Religion sway:*
> *Shut from thy counsells such as haue profest*
> *The worship of that Antichristian beast.*
> *Bannish all Romish Statists, do not suppe,*
> *Of that pride-painted Drabbs infectious Cuppe.* (1612: *"A SVPPOSED INTER-LOCVTION…")*

In voicing such advice through the character of Henry's spirit, Wither's persona distinguishes between the late prince, who, already possessed wisdom and prudence required of a monarch - and therefore the ability to impart such lessons on his younger brother - and Charles, whom the spirit deems to be in need of such recommendations, and therefore, implicitly, to be lacking the natural, spontaneous inclinations of exemplary kingship. Furthermore, given the militant Protestantism that characterised Henry when he was alive (Greenblatt, Eisaman Maus, and Logan eds. 2018: 896-897), one wonders whether Wither's persona would have deemed it necessary to urge him to "firmely in Religion stand" and to avoid "[supping] / Of that pride-painted Drabbs infectious Cuppe" of Roman Catholicism. Perhaps these lines were merely intended as generic guidance fit for any future English monarch, but, of course, historical hindsight makes them sound predictive, as some of Wither's subsequent works would later come to be believed to be[1].

4. Satires and Imprisonment

Wither's tumultuous literary career only began in 1613 however, with the publication of his satirical work *Abuses Stript and Whipt*[2] and *Epithalamia*, a poem written for the occasion of Princess Elizabeth's wedding to Frederick V, the Elector Palatine. Although one reason for composing it was undoubtedly Wither's hope to obtain patronage from the Princess, his dedication "To the Christian Readers" adds a second one:

> *Readers; for that in my booke of* Satyricall Essayes, *I haue been deemed ouer* Cynicall; *to shew, that I am not wholy inclined to that* Vaine: *But indeed especially, out of the loue which in duty I owe to those incomparable* Princes, *I haue in honor of their* Royall Solemnities, *Published these short* Epithalamiaes. *By which you may perceaue, (how euer the world thinke of me) I am not of*

[1] See Pitchard 1962.

[2] The earliest version of the work that is still in existence is indicated as having been printed in 1613, but it has been argued that an earlier version was circulating already in 1611 (see Sidgwick 1902: II. 216-217). This is, however, very unlikely, since the satire titled "Of Vanitie" refers to the death of Robert Cecil, which did not occur before May 1612 (*Oxford DNB*, "Wither, George (1588-1667)"). Wither could conceivably have added the reference after the event to be included in the 1613 edition, but this is impossible to ascertain. The 1613 edition was printed in January, only a month prior to *Epithalamia*, which suggests that, if it was indeed the first edition of the work, it circulated quickly enough, and was controversial enough, for initial backlash to occur within a very short period of time.

> *such a Churlish* Constitution, *but I can afford* Vertue *her deserued honor; and haue as well an affable looke to encourage* Honestie; *as a sterne frowne to cast on* Villanie; *If the* times *would suffer me, I could be as pleasing as others; and perhaps ere long I will make you amends for my former rigor; Meane while I commit this vnto your censures; and bid you farewell.* (1613: "To the Christian Readers")

The "Satyricall Essayes" in question are those constituting *Abuses Stript and Whipt*, and, although Wither was yet to suffer the more dire consequences of his acerbic satires, these lines suggest that, despite the work's evident success – eight editions appeared between 1613 and 1617 – some readers had already expressed their indignation at what they considered to be veiled personal attacks on Wither's part. It seems that the poet was initially protected from prosecution through Elizabeth's patronage[1], but, once she had accompanied her husband to Heidelberg as the Electress Palatine, he was left without his "guardian angel" (French 1930: 959), and, a year after the wedding, the Privy Council issued a warrant for his arrest, presumably having been asked to do so by Henry Howard, the Earl of Northampton, who took offense at the dedication of the work to the king, in which the persona described an unnamed character as a "Man-like Monster" (1613: "Epigram 1"), and warns the king against his nefarious influence, promising, if James were interested in knowing more, that it would "paint him [i.e., the "Monster"] forth in a more liuely cullour" (ibid.). By 1613, Northampton, although he was soon to fall fatally ill, was at the height of his influence at the Jacobean court as Lord Privy Seal, a capacity in which he was known for political intrigues, including a plot, discovered after his death in 1614, to imprison and murder Sir Thomas Overbury, who was opposing the marriage of the king's favourite Robert Carr to Frances Howard, Northampton's great niece (*Oxford DNB*: "Howard, Henry, earl of Northampton (1540–1614)"). Furthermore, Northampton was often at the forefront of negotiations with Catholic Spain, and was secretly a Catholic himself, an allegiance of which he may already have been suspected at court and among the English people, although he proved faithful to James and even played a decisive role in the prosecution and conviction of the Gunpowder plotters (ibid.). Whether Wither truly meant Northampton when mentioning a "man-like Monster" is impossible to

ascertain, as the poet naturally – and unsuccessfully - disclaimed any such intention when he was brought before the Star Chamber, and, during his four months of imprisonment in the Marshalsea, had his persona reiterate to the king that he had been misunderstood:

> *[…] 'Tis knowne I meant* Abuse *the while,*
> *Not thinking any* one *could be so vile,*
> *To merit all those* Epithites *of shame.*
> *How euer many doe deserue much blame.* (1614: Unnumbered page)

In the next few lines, however, the persona's attempt to corroborate its claim of innocence arguably achieves the exact opposite. Indeed, the persona submits to the king that it would have been a "mad part / For me to tell him [i.e. Northampton] what lay in my heart", but then adds:

> *Doe not I know a great mans* Power *and* Might,
> *In spight of* Innocence, *can smother* Right.
> *Colour his Villanies, to get esteeme,*
> *And make the Honest man the Villaine seeme?* […]
> *Yet I protest, if such a man I knew,*
> *That might my Countrey preiudice, or Thee,*
> *Were he the greatest, or the proudest Hee*
> *That breathes this day: if so it might be found,*
> *That any good to either might redound,*
> *So farre I'le be (though Fate against me run)*
> *From starting off, from that I haue begun,*
> *In vn-appalled dare in such a case*
> *Rip vp his foulest Crimes before his face,*
> *Though for my Labour I were sure to drop*
> *Into the mouth of Ruine without hope.* (ibid.)

The persona concludes this passage by adding "But such strange farre-fetcht meanings they

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[1] See French 1930 : 959

haue sought, / As I was neuer priuy to in thought: / And that vnto particulars would tye / Which I intended vniuersally" (ibid.), but it is doubtful whether the king, or the Star Chamber would have found such a claim convincing. What framed the issue was the distinction that McRae draws between "satires" and "libels":

> *The libel was figured as a debased mode, nurtured by popular traditions rather than classical authority, employing indigenous forms rather than satire's iambic pentameter couplet, attacking individuals rather than generalized types of vice, steeped in ephemeral topical issues rather than enduring moral struggles, and concerned with undermining authority rather than purging evil in the interests of authority.* (2004: 28)

McRae further points out that the poet John Marston, "despite maintaining in the 1590s that satire avoids personal attacks", used "fained private names, to note generall vices" instead (31), which makes it likely that others may have done the opposite: present their works as satires castigating abstract vices, while actually libelling particular individuals, which is exactly what Wither was accused of. In fact, McRae considers Wither's *Satyre* as "in part a satire about satire", in which he explores "the very foundations of his poetics of dissent". He continues:

> *Satire is presented here as a conduit between the subject and the king, which enables the poet to avoid the circumlocutions of the court and its discourse. It is a vehicle through which the loyal subject might alert the king to problems within his realm.* (94)

As we shall see, this view, along with the assertion made by Wither's persona in the *Satyre* that those among corrupt courtiers who believe to recognise themselves in the personified vices that are castigated in *Abuses Stript and Whipt* thus "themselues […] guilty make", certainly carried over to the emblems. Another remarkable, but almost wholly ignored aspect of Wither's career took shape as a result of the same work as well: the very next year, John Taylor, who already called himself "the Water Poet", published his *Nipping and Snipping of Abuses*, the title of which is obviously heavily inspired from Wither's. The section of the

work titled "The Authors description of a Poet and Poesie, with an Apollogie in defence of Naturall English Poetrie" even contains the following lines:

> *[H]e that hath true Po'sie in his braine,*
> *Will not profane so high and heau'nly skill,*
> *To glory, or be prow'd of writing ill:*
> *But if his* Muse *do stoope to such deiection,*
> *Tis but to shew the world her sinnes infection:*
> *A Poets ire sometimes may be inflam'd:*
> *To make foule* Vices *brazen face asham'd.* […]
> *And I haue seene* Abuses *whipt and stript,*
> *In such rare fashion, that the wincing age,*
> *Hath kick'd and flung, with vncontrouled rage.*
> *Oh worthy* Withers *I shall loue thee euer,*
> *And often maist thou doe thy best indeuer,*
> *That still thy workes and thee may liue togither*
> *Contending with thy name, and neuer wither.* (B2$_r$)

This was the first instalment in a long-lasting literary relationship, although its tone would change dramatically over the years.

Before being released from prison in July 1614, Wither, along with Christopher Brooke and John Davies, also contributed two poems to William Browne's pastoral work *The Shepheards Pipe* which he later reprinted in *The Shepherds Hunting* (1615). O'Callaghan argues that these works "consciously set out to revive the genre of pastoral satire in 1614", and that "the debasing relationship between patronage and poetry is a recurrent theme", although the poets "were careful to distinguish 'worthy' courtiers [...] from the unworthy" (2000: 26-27). Wither's eclogues are also notable for their exploration of the rhetorical potential of a poetic persona, and for their examination of "an alternative account of the self" (147). O'Callaghan continues as follows:

> *Introspection frequently turns into a study of the way that the self is constituted through the process of social interaction. Protestantism and civic humanism merged in his texts to produce a discourse that was able to imagine*

> *the self as a social actor within a wider national* […] *drama.* (ibid.)

O'Callaghan calls Wither, Browne, Brooke, and Davies "Jacobean Spenserians", a concept that she closely connects to what she terms the "unsettling doubleness" of Spenser's posthumous image in England: on the one hand, he was seen as "the laureate poet gloriously serving his monarch, and the oppositional poet, the persecuted critic of the corrupted times" (1). "Subsequent writers", she continues, "engaged with Spenser in order to define their own identities, and, just as importantly, to define a community" (ibid.). By presenting themselves as a "shepheards nation" modelled on Spenser's, his Jacobean heirs "represented themselves as a distinctive oppositional community in the years 1613 to 1625, and took up Spenser's question of what it means to speak for the nation" (2). O'Callaghan also acknowledges the debt that students of the early seventeenth century owe to Norbrook's *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance* (1984) (ibid.), in which he devoted two chapters to the Jacobean Spenserians, and in which he states that "Wither […] was the most ideological of these poets, the most enthusiastic about reaching a wide popular audience with his political rhetoric" (1984: 199). *Fidelia*, which first appeared in 1615 – the same year as Wither's admission to Lincoln's Inn (French 1928: 25) - but which saw several editions, including "one augmented and corrected" in 1617, is a continuation of the same trend, which is introduced as follows:

> *[An]* Elegiacall Epistle, *being a fragment of some greater Poeme, discouers the modest affections of a discreet and constant woman, shadowed vnder the name of* Fidelia; *wherein you may perceiue the height of their passions, so farre as they seeme to agree with reason, and keepe within such decent bounds as beseemeth their sexe, but further it meddles not. The occasion seemes to proceed from some mutability in her friend; whose obiections shee here presupposing, confuteth, and in the person of him, iustly vpbraideth all that are subiect to the like change, or ficklenesse in minde.* (1617: $A4_r$)

The fact that Wither lends his voice to a female character, who is, furthermore, "rational and vocal" constitutes "a distinctive contribution to the genre" (*Oxford DNB*: "Wither, George

(1588-1667)), which is also notable because of the inversion of the common early modern stereotype that associated fickleness with women[1] and constancy with men.

Wither's earliest forays into the literary circles of Jacobean England set the tone for most of his long and prolific career, which would be characterised by generic diversity, by foregrounded political concerns, by an indefectible view that the poet had both the right and the duty to admonish his contemporaries, including the monarch, as to their duties and, at times, their shortcomings, by political and civil controversy and legal trouble, and by a consistent waning of his luck with potential patrons and friends. In the early to mid- 1610s, however, one final, and undoubtedly major, aspect of his output to come was yet to take on the prominence that it would henceforth retain: the intertwining of all of the above with an earnest, passionate, and militant religious faith.

5. The Psalms, the Royal Patent, and *Wither's Motto*

In a fascinating article on Wither's religious verse published in 2009, Hackett points out that the poet's politically and socially committed satirical work – including his pastorals – was continued in the 1620s with *Wither's Motto* (1621) and *Britain's Remembrancer* (1628), but that he began to devote part of his career to poetry that appeared to be purely devotional, including his *Preparation to the Psalter* (1619), his *Exercises upon the first Psalmes* (1620), his *Songs of the Old Testament* (1621), his *Cantica Sacra* (1623), and, finally, his *Psalmes of David translated into Lyrick-Verse* (1632) (360-361). "This", Hackett continues, "has, in effect, created a divided approach in scholarship towards Wither's attitude and his writings during this period as interest in his scriptural translations remains limited to the history of biblical and liturgical literature" (361). Wither's interest in psalmody was all but commonplace in Jacobean England, as many of his contemporaries, including James I himself, wrote English verse versions of the Psalms (Doelman 2000: 135 ff.). James himself had started writing his own before his accession to the English throne, although these early versions were "completely different from those that were finally published under James' name in 1631, and […] do not conform to the meters usually found in the English and Scottish psalter", which is why Doelman suggests that these were "most likely Scottish

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[1] In Rollenhagen's *Nucleus Emblematum,* for instance, emblem II-73 is headed by the motto "VARIUM ET MUTABILE SEMPER" ("Always fickle and liable to change"), and the *subscriptio* reads: "Linguæ nulla fides, varium et mutabile semper, Fæmina, ive gravis, sive ea caussa levis" ("Women are always fickle and liable to change, without faithfulness in words, whether the occasion be serious or trivial") (see Warncke 1983: 358). Wither's stance on the question as it is expressed in *A Collection of Emblemes* will be examined in Chapter VIII.

experiments, which were then abandoned as James turned to forms more appropriate for congregational singing" (136). He further explains that James and many of his contemporaries deemed the "Sternhold and Hopkins" versions of the Psalms, which had been in use since the mid-sixteenth century, to be unsatisfactory, mainly on the grounds of their rhythm, which was deemed unfit for church singing (137). The public interest in the task was initially curbed by the king's public announcement that he intended to publish his own version of the psalms, whereupon many who had undertaken the same project kept theirs unpublished or even abandoned it, lest they be "perceived as disrespectful" (138). In fact, Wither received an anonymous letter to the same effect as he was in the process of writing his own version of the psalms (Pritchard 1963: 27-42), but he was undeterred.

Psalmody only occupied part of Wither's time, however, as the year 1621 also saw the publication of *Wither's Motto – Nec habeo, nec careo, nec curo* ("Nor have I, nor want I, nor care I"), a satirical work written in a similar vein as *Abuses Stript and Whipt*. It is not surprising, given Wither's experience behind bars, that the work is preceded by a disclaimer as to any libellous intention on the poet's part, which would, however, prove ineffective. McRae argues that it was written in part as a response to the king's proclamation "against excesse of Lauish and Licentious Speech of matters of State" (December 1620), which begins by declaring that the first two decades of the Jacobean reign had seen "a greater opennesse, and libertie of discourse, euen in matters of state, […] then hath been in former times, used or permitted", but then immediately gets to the point:

> *Yet neuerthelesse, forasmuch as it is come Our eares, by common report, That there is at this time a more licentious passage of lauish discourse, and bold Censure in matters of State, then hath been heretofore, or is fit to be suffered; Wee haue thought it necessary, by the aduice of Our Priuie Councell, to giue forewarning unto Our louing Subiects, of this excesse and presumption; And straitly to command them and euery of them, from the highest to the lowest, to take heede, how they intermeddle by Penne, or Speech, with causes of State, and secrets of Empire, either at home, or abroad, but containe themselues within that modest and reuerent regard, of matters, aboue their reach and calling, that to good and*

> *dutifull Subiects appertaineth […]. And let no man thinke, after this Our forewarning, to passe away with impunitie, in respect of the multitude and generalitie of Offenders in this kinde; but knowe, that it will light vpon some of the first, or for wardst of them, to be seuerely punished, for example to others.* (James: 1620)

Wither's *Motto*, then, McRae argues, constitutes a further instalment in his "provocative development of a theory of godly citizenship, which would potentially authorize the poet to speak against a monarch" (2004: 102), especially regarding what his persona calls the art of "the Parasite, and smooth-tongued Flatterer", which is contrasted with the poet's own "bold-truth-speaking *Lines*" ($C8_v$, quoted in McRae 2004: 103). But the work's potential for controversy did not end there. Indeed, commenting on a passage in which Wither's persona deplores that Princes are often ill-advised by fawning, greedy and self-interested counsellors, and which concludes that it "is yet a greater wickednesse […] / When these the loyall Subjects doe oppresse, / And grind the faces of the poore, alive; / They'le doe it, by the Kings Prerogative" (1621: $D5_r$), McRae states:

> *Despite the apparent concentration on the conventional target of evil counsellors, the lines contain the seed of a more comprehensive, systemic critique. Notably, the closing line, while explicitly targeting corrupt courtiers who cloak themselves in royal authority, never quite erases the possibility that the 'Prerogative' itself is faulty. The poem thus allows a reading which sets the interests of the oppressed 'poore' against king and courtiers alike, and implies that the king's 'loyall Subjects' may have limited patience in the face of such conditions.* (103)

In a bold statement of authorial independence, the persona even concludes the section titled "Nec curo" ("Nor do I care") with the following stanza:

> *My Minde's my Kingdome; and I will permit,*
> *No others Will, to haue the rule of it.*
> *For, I am free; and no mans power (I know)*

Did make me thus, nor shall vnmake me now.
But, through a Spirit none can quench in me:
This Mind I got, and this, my Mind shall be. ($F1_v$-$F2_r$)

It is probably statements such as these that prompted the Stationers' Company to initially prohibit the publication of Wither's *Motto* in May 1621 "until certain changes had been made" (French 1930: 960). Wither evidently complied, as the work was approved the following June, but the corrections made did not satisfy the House of Lords, where the poet was summed on the 27th of the same month, whereupon he was imprisoned in the Marshalsea again (ibid.). There is probably some truth in Joseph Meads's statement that James I was "threatening to pare his whelp's [i.e., Wither's] claws" (Birch and Williams eds. 1849: 266, quoted in French 1930: 961), as, by the poet's own account, the conditions of his second imprisonment were much harsher than those of his first, mainly due to ill health on his part, the refusal of his gaolers to let him seek medical help, and their depriving him of the means to write (Wither 1624: 3). Wither was not released before March 1622, after nine months behind bars. Adding insult to injury, Ben Jonson included a character intended as a caricature of Wither in his masque *Time vindicated to himselfe, and to his honours*, which was staged for the king and his court on Twelfth Night 1622. "Chronomastix" (literally "the Scourge of the Time") is a verbose and arrogant "satyre", who claims that Fame is his mistress, whereupon she scornfully repudiates him as follows:

Away I know thee not, wretched Impostor,
Creature of glory, Mountebanke of witt,
Selfe-louing Braggart, Fame *doth sound no trumpett*
To such vaine, empty fooles: 'Tis infamy
Thou seru'st, and follow'st, scorne of all the Muses,
Goe reuell with thine ignorant admirers,
Let worthy names alone. (1623: $A3_v$)

Moreover, once again, John Taylor responded to the publication of Wither's *Motto* by publishing his own, *Taylor's Motto*, the same year. The motto in question is particularly striking, as it is constructed in exact diametrical opposition to Wither's: *Et habeo, et Careo, et Curo* (1621: Title page). Both Wither and Taylor introduce their respective works with an engraving, which is accompanied each time by an explanation in verse. Wither's "emblem" –

both authors refer to their pictures by that term – is signed “R.E. Sculptit”, which are most likely the initials of Renold Elstracke (see *Oxford DNB* “Elstracke, Renold (*b.* 1570, *d.* in or after 1625)”), and shows a young man leaning on a pillar, seemingly receiving divine inspiration from a shining tetragrammaton in the sky while he kicks a globe away with his foot. Strange creatures and figures are fighting a battle in the background, and the three clauses of the motto appear in scrolls, respectively in the young man’s hand, next to his mouth, and below the globe. Wither’s persona describes the motif as “the blest condition, of a man Content”, who leads a comfortable life while remaining free from the unnecessary burden of earthly wealth, and who can, therefore, spurn “the best Contents, the World affoord him may”, as he is “fixing” his eye “on the glorious Heavens on high” instead (A1$_r$). Two key factors in reaching such a state of felicity are the “Fortitude and Constancie” of the young man, which are allegorised by “the Piller, on whose Base, his head doth rest”; both concepts, and their pictorial representations, abound in *A Collection of Emblemes* as well. Taylor’s “emblem” shows a man – the persona in the *subscription* suggests that it is a portrait of the poet himself – standing on a rock amidst the sea, with a globe between his feet, on which an open book can be made out. The man is holding an oar in his right hand, his empty purse in the left, and the initials “IR” below a royal crown are written on his chest[1]. His eyes are fixed on the sun in the upper right corner, and the three clauses of his motto appear in scrolls as well, and a boat is discernible in the background. Taylor’s *subscriptio* to the emblem begins with a similar idea as to Wither’s:

> *First on a* Rocke, *with raging waues embrac'd,*
> *My (seeming fixed)* fleeting *feete are plac'd:*
> *The one's like stedfast* hope, *the other then*
> *Presents temptations which encompasse men,*
> *Which he that can resist with Constancy,*
> *Is a most* happy man in Miserie. (A2$_v$)

As the poem continues, however, the young man’s scorning earthly possessions in Wither’s emblem is lampooned by Taylor’s persona, who states: “The empty purse proclaimes, that

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[1] A note in the margin reads “Sylvester’s anagram on His Maiesties name, in Du Bartras”, which is a reference to Joshua Sylvester, a polyglot merchant and poet who was granted patronage by Prince Henry, and who translated Du Bartras’s *La semaine* (1578), an encyclopaedic elaboration on the first Chapter of Genesis, into

monie's scant, / *Want's* my fee simple, or my simple fee, / And (as I am a Poet,) dwells with me" (ibid.), a statement which may imply that Wither, who, according to his own motto, "wants not", is no true poet. However, in his dedication "To every body" – which, again, mirrors Wither's epistle "To any body" – Taylor elaborates on the "Crittickes" who "Make Mountaines of small Molehills, & againe / Extenuat faults, or else faults amplifie, / According as their carping censures fly", suggesting either that he, too, suffered censure from his contemporaries, or perhaps heard of Wither's trial and imprisonment, and expresses his own disdain for the people who, deeming the latter's satires to have included personal attacks on them, had him committed to the Marshalsea. Taylor's persona then praises the "few that wil their iudgement season / With mature vnderstanding, and with reason: / And call a spade a spade, a Sichophant, / A flattring Knaue", referring, perhaps, to the following lines in *Abuses Stript and Whipt* (1613):

> *As those who are in euery matter led,*
> *By Parasites and Apes: where is their head?*
> *I meane their will, their reason, and their sence,*
> *What is become of their intelligence?*
> *How ist that they haue such a partiall care,*
> *They can iudge nothing true, but what they heare*
> *Come from the tongue of some sly sycophant.*
> *But for because they strength of iudgement want,*
> *Those that themselues to flatterers inure,*
> *I haue perceiued basely to endure*
> *For to be plainely soothed, mock't and flouted,*
> *Made coxcombs to their faces, yet not doubted*
> *That they were highly reuerenc't, respected,*
> *And by those fauning Parasites affected.* (Q2$_v$)

Although their relationship would be strained by opposite allegiances in the Civil War, as we shall see, Wither and Taylor seem to have shared their *penchant* for biting satire, and, in his biography of the latter, Capp suggests that the two poets were, at the very least, acquainted

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English, a work he dedicated to James I. (Jackson 1908: 316-317). "I.R." stands for "Iaques, Roy [d'Angleterre]" (Sylvester 1605: A2$_r$).

(*Oxford DNB*, “Taylor, John [called the Water Poet] (1578–1653)”).

Hackett’s aforementioned reference to a “divided approach in scholarship” to Wither’s work in the 1620s is mainly due to astonishing contrast between the consequences of the publication of his *Motto* and those that ensued when he presented his *Hymnes and Songs of the Church* (1623) to the king, under patronage of William of Pembroke (Doelman 2000: 143). Indeed, he received an exceptionally generous and lucrative royal patent, which granted Wither “during the Terme of 51 yeares, full License and Authoritie to imprint the said Booke, either with, or without Arguments and Musicall notes (and to utter and sell the sae in any of His Dominions)”, but, even more importantly, “that no English *Psalme-Booke* in Meeter, shall be bound up alone, or with any other Booke or Bookes, unlesse the said *Hymnes and Songs of the Church* be annexed thereunto” (ibid.). Aside from its probable infuriating of Wither’s political enemies, the patent also attracted the wrath of the Stationers’ Company, who, being the holder of the “profitable monopoly of the Sternhold and Hopkins psalter”, monopoly which the king’s patent rendered useless, “employed every means within their power to oppose” it (Pritchard 1963: 28). After unsuccessfully petitioning the king, the company turned to Parliament in 1624, somewhat hypocritically demanding that Wither’s monopoly be abolished to the advantage of theirs, but without success (28-29). The company therefore resorted to using its privileged place in the book trade to have their printers boycott Wither’s *Hymnes and Songs*, refuse to supply it even to customers requesting it, and set out to discredit the work and its author, “questioning his qualifications in divinity, attacking his rendering of the Song of Solomon as obscene, and declaring his hymns for Anglican saints' days to be popish” (29), all of which Wither recorded in his *Scholler’s Purgatory* (1624). Although the Privy Council stood by Wither and authorised him to enforce his patent, the Stationers’ Company opposed him well into the 1630s with tactics of attrition, which led the Hose of Lords to declare the patent void in 1634 (*Oxford DNB* “Wither, George (1588-1667)), but also to his being unable to have his books “printed in England in a normal fashion for a decade” after 1623 (30). Consequently, Wither had his *Scholler’s Purgatory* printed illicitly by George Wood, whose press was seized as a result, and was summoned by the Court of High Commission to answer for his selling the book without a license (30-31). There is no evidence that the Court convicted Wither, nor that the sale of the work was prohibited, although French suggests that the poet may have suffered legal consequences of some kind in the mid-1620s, based on a line in *Britain’s Remembrancer* (1628) which claims that he had “thrice Imprisonment endur'd: Close-prison twice” (286) (French 1930: 961).

Although Wither's conviction for libel and his conflict with the Stationers' Company regarding his *Hymns and Songs of the Church* may seem completely unrelated, Hackett argues, on the contrary, that "his religious verse functioned politically in a manner consistent with his satires and pastorals" (2009: 361), and constituted "a [different] avenue to vent his political disaffection" in the "apocalyptically infused international climate" that was caused by the 1619 acceptance of the Bohemian crown by Frederick, the Elector Palatine and husband of Princess Elizabeth, which precipitated the beginning of the Thirty Years' War (364). Firstly, she contends, at a time of increasingly abundant and complex scholarship on psalm-exegesis, the poet sought, instead, to democratise access to the text to "enable individual understanding through his provision of the required "tools" for correct interpretation of the meaning" (365). Indeed, in *A Preparation to the Psalter*, Wither's persona expresses hope that "by the helpe of this simple labour of mine, men vnlearned […] shall by industrious considering what is here deliuered, be almost able, without other helpe, to better themselues in the vse and vnderstanding of the *Psalmes*" (1619: 6). Secondly, Hackett shows that Wither insisted on reading the psalms in relation to the political and religious context of his time, and on endowing them with immediate prophetic force as harbingers of "the Church's eventual victory over their contemporary adversaries – those dual bastions of Catholic power, the papacy and the Habsburgs" (367). Thirdly, Wither's translation of the *Psalms* is clearly intended, in part, to mirror his own misfortunes, thus identifying "with the persecuted figure of David at Saul's court" (370). This is especially visible in his translation of psalm 35, in which the poetic voice in the biblical prose text prays for divine assistance against its persecutors, who were "False witnesses [who] laid to my charge things that I knew not", a passage that Wither altered slightly to read "False witnesse rose, & charged me / With words I never sayd" (Wither 1632: 66, see Hackett 2009: 369-370). Fourthly, and finally, Hackett highlights passages in Wither's re-writing of the psalms that are "as sharp-fanged as any of his satires" in their vitriolic critique of the corruption and vice that characterised the Jacobean court in the poet's view (371). Not only do these four aspects of Wither's works on the psalms fully bear out Hackett's thesis, but they are also transferable to *A Collection of Emblemes*, as will be shown throughout the chapters to come. French's assertion that Wither "forsook Parnassus for Pisgah, the Hellenic Muse for the Heavenly Muse" (1928: 154) can therefore safely be regarded as mistaken.

6. The Early Caroline Court, the Plague in London, and *Britain's Remembrancer*

Charles I's accession to the English throne in 1625 was far less problematic than his father's, as, ironically given his tumultuous and ill-fated reign, he "alone among the Stuarts […] had an unimpeachable right to be king" through direct heredity (Nenner 1995: 66). McRae and West also point out that it was the first time in history that a single person had inherited the thrones of England, Scotland, and Ireland simultaneously (2017: 77). The reign of the second Stuart monarch and the outbreak of the English Civil War, however, are extremely contentious questions in historiographical terms, as Ann Hughes shows in her outline of the disagreements about the period that began only very shortly after the events unfolded, that were still raging in the late 1990s (1998: 1-9), and were not settled even by the publication of the *Oxford Handbook of the English Revolution* in 2015, although Braddick, the work's editor, states that "much of the heat has gone out of these debates" (4). Fortunately, it is not necessary for our purpose to determine exactly which events, trends, or transformations of the 1620s and 30s caused the Civil War; by relying merely on the broadly undisputed facts of Charles's reign and on their dialogic relationship to Wither's contemporary works, it should be possible to provide a satisfactory account of the three decades that saw the publication of *A Collection of Emblemes* in 1635, a contextualisation made all the more necessary by the almost systematic skipping over, or mere reference in passing to, his *Collection* in the works dedicated to the author's career as a whole.

Charles's reign certainly did not start under the best auspices. In the years leading up to his accession, especially after the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War on the continent, the sternly anti-Catholic English Parliament urged his father to intervene, especially when a Habsburg force from the Spanish Netherlands invaded the land of Frederick V, Elector Palatine and husband of Charles's sister Elizabeth (Gregg 1981: 63), to which James remained reluctant until his death. Parliament, furthermore, demanded strict enforcement of the recusancy laws, several of which had been enacted since the reign of Elizabeth I, and which mainly targeted Catholics, who were liable to property confiscation, fines, and even imprisonment, and urged Charles to take a Protestant bride. Instead, the Prince of Wales and the king's favourite, the Duke of Buckingham, were sent to Spain in 1623 to negotiate the terms of a marriage between Charles and the Spanish Infanta, which ultimately failed catastrophically (72-89). Upon his return, the heir apparent was greeted as a Protestant hero by a relieved English population (90-92), James reluctantly declared war on Spain, but the

underfunded expedition led by the German general Ernst von Mansfeld to recover the Palatinate was quickly defeated (123-124). James's death in March 1625 coincided with the beginning of a devastating plague epidemic in London and in other parts of the country, which, according to O'Neill's estimate, killed over 35.000 people in the capital alone[1], and forced the king to postpone his coronation until February 1626, and to interrupt the preparations for his triumphant state entry, which was later cancelled altogether (McRae 2016: 438). In the meantime, Buckingham had been sent to France to negotiate for Charles the hand of Henrietta Maria, the sister of the French king Louis XIII, another devout Catholic, whom he married by proxy in 1625 and who joined him in England shortly after (Gregg 1981: 114-115). Anticipating opposition to the match from Parliament, he waited until the marriage was consummated to open the Parliamentary session in June of the same year, which did not prevent the Commons from voicing strong criticism, directed both at the match and at the disastrous outcome of England's military expedition on the continent, nor from making a show of open defiance towards the Duke of Buckingham (126-133), whose unpopularity with the general population was exacerbated by the humiliating failure of his campaign against Spain in the New World in 1626. After Parliament had been dismissed by the king later the same year for demanding that the Duke be "removed from intermeddling with the great affairs of state" (Loades 1974: 369-370), a royal request for voluntary donations from his subjects was intended to help cover the astronomical cost of the war, but, its results being insufficient, the call for public benevolence was soon transformed into a "forced loan" scheme, which included provisions for the punishment of those who refused to comply (Cressy 2015: 98-99). An equally disastrous campaign was launched against the French at La Rochelle in 1627, where Buckingham was sent to aid the Huguenots who were under siege by Louis XIII, despite the pledge of English military support to France in Charles and Henrietta's marriage treaty (Gregg 1981: 173-174). The same year, the King's Bench heard the seminal "Five Knights' case", the trial in which five members of the nobility were imprisoned for refusing to contribute to the "forced loan" and subsequently appealed on the grounds of *habeas corpus*, as the warrants issued for their arrests did not mention any offence. Their appeal was rejected, which Parliament perceived as an attempt by the King's Bench to legitimise arbitrary imprisonment, and as a breach of a legal tradition that dated back to the 12th century and that was considered a bulwark against tyranny (Reeve 1989: 19).

[1] See https://www.statista.com/statistics/1114899/plague-deaths-london

The French war was understandably unpopular among the English population, and put the crown under considerable financial strain despite the "forced loan" scheme (16), thus compelling the king to choose between calling Parliament anew to ask for the levying of additional taxes, and using other, non-parliamentary avenues to finance it (17). The issue was debated energetically within the Privy Council, which eventually opted for the first solution, although certain counsellors, such as Sir Robert Cotton, already foresaw that the distribution of political prerogatives between the king and Parliament would be at the heart of the session to come (ibid.).

A further bone of contention was that of the increasing influence at court and within the English Church of the Arminian faction (28-30), whose theology conflicted with that of the Calvinists mainly on the correlated questions of atonement and free will. The former considered that every human being is able to choose to accept or to reject God's grace, and that Christ had died to atone for the sins of all who would make the appropriate choice. To the latter, who were firm believers in the doctrine of double-predestination, whereby God decided, immutably, whom to save and whom to damn, the Arminian viewpoint was extremely reminiscent of Roman Catholicism (Davies 1934: 158), which, given the political climate in Continental Europe, caused widespread anxiety about a possible overturning of the Reformation in England, especially following the English defeats against the Catholic superpowers France and Spain, and rumours circulating about Irish troops prepared to overtake several southern cities and the Isle of Wight (Reeve 1989: 27-28). The figure who embodied the rise of Arminianism under the Caroline Monarchy was William Laud, who had just been named Dean of the Chapel Royal after the death of Lancelot Andrewes, and who would become Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633. Although Charles and Buckingham had both expressed their commitment to Laud and the Arminians, it was mainly the latter's that was viewed with suspicion, given the Duke's pre-existing unpopularity and the control he was thought to exert upon the king and the court (26-27).

Parliament was summoned in March 1628, and, in May, submitted the Petition of Right to the king, which set four conditions for the granting of further subsidies for the war effort: firstly, that any effort on the part of the monarch or the Privy Council to raise money through taxes, forced loans, or tallage without the consent of Parliament; secondly, that imprisonment, or any other penalty, inflicted as a result of one's refusal to contribute to such schemes, were illegal and ought to be foregone, which was followed by a reaffirmation of the right to due process, regardless of the offence of which one stood accused; thirdly, that no

one ought to be compelled to welcome soldiers and mariners into their houses against their will; and, finally, that martial law should not be used to punish offences committed by mariners and soldiers in times of peace (Gregg 1981: 171-172). The king's first response to the Petition was evasive:

> *The King willeth that right be done according to the laws and customs of the realm; and that the statutes be put in due execution, that his subjects may have no cause to complain of any wrong or oppressions, contrary to their just rights and liberties, to the preservation whereof he holds himself as well obliged as of his prerogative.*[1]

This was not the customary phrasing of the king's assent to a Petition, and Parliament refused to grant the funds needed for the war efforts in France and in the Palatinate until Charles complied with the usual protocol (Gregg 1981: 173-174). Still in May 1628, another expedition to La Rochelle failed, and the English troops that were fighting the Habsburgs in the Palatinate were routed, whereupon the king was compelled to accept the petition by answering it with the customary French expression "*Soit droit fait come est desiré*" (174). Although the subsidies were granted, Parliament also intended to submit "a Remonstrance that put the blame for all the disasters of the reign upon the Duke [of Buckingham]" (175), which drove Charles to prorogue Parliament by the end of June, and to declare, on the same occasion, that he still considered it his prerogative to levy certain duties, mainly tonnage and poundage, even without consent of the Commons (ibid.). On the 23rd of August 1628, the Duke of Buckingham was assassinated in Portsmouth by a disgruntled veteran named John Felton, which deeply affected Charles but caused widespread rejoicing in large portions of the population (176), who believed that the king would henceforth be free from his favourite's nefarious counsel and would therefore govern in closer cooperation with the Commons. This hope, however, was soon disappointed, as Charles continued to levy tonnage and poundage unilaterally, while those who refused to pay were often brought before the Privy Council and sometimes imprisoned (183).

Wither's *Britain's Remembrancer* (1628) very much epitomises the tense and conflictual atmosphere in which it was composed, and is, perhaps, the prime example of

Wither's stance before the Civil War. The work was first penned in London during the Plague, and offered in manuscript form to Charles I on New Year's 1626 under its initial title "A History of the Pestilence", but was later much expanded and corrected – it was augmented from 3,400 lines to over 20,000 in its final version (McRae 2016: 433) – and, although Wither allegedly had to print it himself due to his ongoing strife with the Stationers' Company and, possibly, because of state censorship, it was immediately successful (*Oxford DNB* "Wither, George (1588-1667")). Much later, in his *Memorandum to London* (1665), the poet even claims that he was considered for the office of "City Remembrancer of London" once the office had become vacant – presumably after the death of Robert Bacon, who held the office until 1633 (Jones 1967) – but that it "took no effect" (Wither 1665: 28).

As the title of the initial manuscript version of the work suggests, it was to be a chronicle of the plague in London[2], where the poet claims to have stayed despite the epidemic as "he a lawfull *Calling* had, / In midst of this great *Plague* to tary, / By *Warrant-extraordinary*" (Wither 1628: 72), a *topos* that is omnipresent in the work. In the third canto, the persona seeks to justify Wither's decision to stay in the city at the peril of his life by narrating the dialogue between Faith and Reason that allegedly unfolded in the poet's mind, where Reason urges him to leave the city and save himself, but where Faith finally sways him by insisting that his muse is a gift from God, and that his calling is to put it to good use, both to glorify his maker, and to urge his contemporaries to consider the plague a well-deserved divine punishment for their sins, and to repent (71-103). In the fourth canto, the persona briefly describes the plague-ridden city:

If in the Streets I did my footing set,
With many sad disasters there I met.
And, objects of mortality and feare,
I saw in great abundance ev'ry where.
Here, one man stagger'd by, with visage pale:
There, lean'd another, grunting on a stall.
A third, halfe dead, lay gasping for his grave;
A fourth did out at window call, and rave;

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[1] https://oll.libertyfund.org/page/1628-petition-of-right

[2] It is worth noting that John Taylor also published a pamphlet about the plague, titled *THE FEAREFVLL SVMMER: OR LONDONS CALAMITY, the countries courtesy, and both their misery* (1625).

Yonn came the Bearers, *sweating from the* Pit,
To fetch more bodies to replenish it. (107-108)

The persona even claims that Wither was affected by the plague himself, but that he was cured, unsurprisingly, through divine intercession (149). As McRae points out, however, only very little of the poem is devoted to describing, or, indeed, to lamenting the plight of the Londoners (2016: 444). Instead, the persona dwells mainly on the hamartiological and prophetic dimension of the work, oscillating between a virulent castigation of the sins of the nation and a discussion of the poet's status as an authoritative, divinely commissioned witness to God's judgement (ibid.), whose ominous words may offend his contemporaries, but who is willing to bear the consequences of his endeavour. In the conclusion to the work, for instance, the persona is at its most defiant:

Let them who shall peruse it, praise, or laugh,
Revile or scoffe, or threat, or sweare, or chase,
All's one to me*; So I within be still,*
Without me, let men keepe what noise they will,
For, sure I am, though they my flesh confound,
The soule, I seeke to save, shall still be sound,
And this I know, that nor the brutish rages
Of this now present, or succeeding Ages,
Shall root this Poeme *out; but, that to all*
Ensuing times, the same continue shall,
To be perused in this Land, as long
As here they shall retaine the English *tongue:*
Or, while there shall be Errors, *and* offences,
Disorders, Discords, Plagues, *or* Pestilences.
And, if our evills we depart not from,
Before the day of our destruction come,
This Book *shall to the times that follow show,*
What sins they were which caused our overthrow:
And testifie to others (for their learning)
That Vengeance *did not seize us without warning.* (Wither 1628: 285-286)

McRae rightly argues, however, that the work has more direct political implications:

> *The poem gradually unfolds a subtle analysis of the causes and consequences of political corruption, speculating in the process upon the origins of tyranny. Through its close and topical engagement with the conditions of Charles' early years on the throne, it offers some of the period's most incisive reflections upon his emerging forms of rule.* (2016: 449)

As shall be discussed to a greater extent in Chapter VIII, *Britain's Remembrancer* and *A Collection of Emblemes* have much in common in their approaches to the subject of political power. Indeed, both establish a framework of general considerations on legitimate and virtuous government – and its opposite – in which they embed much more immediate, and often very critical, comments on specific contemporary affairs, including the duties of the monarch to his people and the likely consequences if they were to be neglected. Especially in the final canto of the former work, Wither's persona moves from the conventional blaming of the King's transgressions on his ill-intentioned counsellors towards "the development of an appreciation that hope in Charles may be misplaced" (453), as "the possibility of the King being responsible for his "evils" presses hard upon the poem", making the work "in part a record of political disillusionment" (454). In the first canto, the persona expresses certainty that God will "save [the king's] Land from utter overthrow", but predicates it on the condition that "he be what he seemeth" (26). McRae shows that much of the last cantos deal precisely with the possibility that the King may not be "what he seemeth", a thought that is "embedded in a theory of tyranny" (452). *Britain's Remembrancer*, then, could be regarded as a "pivotal moment" in Wither's literary career, as "the fractured and uncertain political discourse of the early Caroline years leaches its way into the verse" (455), in which he assertively fashions a persona endowed with the authority of divine appointment, not merely to witness the ills of its time, but also to seek out their roots, even if the king himself turned out to be one of them. As we shall see, it is a similar persona, who interweaves immediately relevant political discourse and abstract considerations about the virtues required of a ruler, and who occasionally prognosticates, sometimes with startling foresight, the political fate of the country, whose voice is heard in *A Collection of Emblemes* (1635). However, although John Eyre, a contemporary of Wither's, wrote in a private letter in 1640 that *Britain's*

Remembrancer "was then [i.e. in 1628-29], and is still, forbid the press" (*Oxford DNB* (Wither, George (1588-1667)), its author does not seem to have been made to answer for its contents, and the ban may have been a result of Wither's ongoing conflict with the Stationers' Company.

7. The Early 1630s, Durham, and *A Collection of Emblemes*

Until quite recently, Wither's whereabouts between 1629 and 1632 were largely unknown. In the article devoted to the poet in the *Oxford DNB,* O'Callaghan points out that John Taylor, the Water Poet accused the latter of having defrauded Dr Howson, the Bishop of Durham, out of 500 pounds in the late 1620s or early 30s (Taylor 1643: 5), but, when the article was completed in 2014, no evidence of the same had been found, as Wither himself did not mention having spent time in Durham, or any contact with Howson, in any of his writings. In 2018, however, Tim Gates published a short note in *Notes and Queries*, in which he mentions that a 1975 PhD thesis by a P.H. Horton actually established that Howson did indeed employ a George Wither from November 1628 to November 1632, although Horton was unaware that this was the English poet. Peculiarly enough, Wither seems to have been hired to administer large parts of Howson's estate, a task for which he received no training, and in which he was, consequently, to be assisted by "a team of highly skilled professionals with long experience of the episcopal administration of the bishoprics", including John Richardson, Timothy Comyn, and Hugh Wright (Gates 2018: 193). It is likely that the appointment constituted a favour to Wither, although his connection with Howson remains unclear (ibid.). In November 1632, a Thomas Wharton was given Wither's position, less than a year after the death of Bishop Howson, probably, Gates assumes, because Wither chose to leave Durham "after his patron's death" (194). No part of the extant record firmly bears out Taylor's accusation, although Gates suggests, somewhat slyly, that Wither's immediate "flight" to the Low Countries the same year, where he published his *Psalmes of David* (1632) and where he secured the copper plates that had been used to print Rollenhagen's *Nucleus Emblematum* to include the engravings in his *Collection of Emblemes*, does "indeed look suspicious" (ibid.). At any rate, there is no record of Wither's having ever been prosecuted, or even formally accused, of financial misappropriation in any way.

Wither married Elizabeth Emerson of South Lambert in the early 1630s, probably before leaving for the Low Countries, and would go on to have six children with her, only two of whom survived infancy (*Oxford DNB* "Wither, George (1588-1667)"). In an article about the anonymous work *Eliza's Babes* (1652), a collection of "divine poems and

meditations written by a lady, who onely desires to advance the glory of God, and not her own" as the full title of the work advertises, Semler argues that Wither's wife, whom Aubrey describes as "a great witt" who "would write in verse too" (1898: 2.306, quoted in *Oxford DNB* "Wither, George (1588-1667)"), could be the author of the work (2000: 536). At any rate, Wither's stay in the Low Countries saw a reunion with Princess Elizabeth, now exiled Queen of Bohemia (*Oxford DNB* "Wither, George (1588-1667)"), and the publication of *The Psalmes of David translated into Lyrick Verse*, which was printed by Cornelis van Breughel in Amsterdam and is dedicated to her. There is remarkable similarity between the "Preface to the Reader" of the work and the epistle "To the Reader" in *A Collection of Emblemes*; indeed, in both works, the persona claims that composition of the book had begun long before, but that the decision to make it public was only made upon the encouragement of "friends" (1635: TR.-2) or "others" (1632: $A6_r$). Publication, however, was further delayed in both cases: regarding the *Psalms*, the persona claims that Wither waited to "see a more exact performance [of the translation]" before going to press, but, "none appearing, answerable to the dignitie of our *English-Muses,* I have sent forth my *Essay,* to provoke others, to discover their endeavours, on this *subject"* (ibid.), whereas *A Collection of Emblemes* could not be printed without De Passe's copper plates, which, the persona states, the poet was not able to obtain "upon reasonable conditions" earlier (TR.-2). What is most notable, however, is the insistence, in both paratextual sections, on the author's wish to make his work accessible to "the Capacities of the Vulger [sic]" (1632: ibid), a phrase that is reiterated almost verbatim in the *Collection*, which, as the persona puts it, was intended mainly for the instruction of "Vulgar Capacities", and on the "plaine" quality of the language (1632: ibid. and 1635: Prep.). In both cases, the persona cautions the reader not to expect "elegant-seeming *Paraphrases* […] trimmed […] vp with Rhetoricall Illustrations" (1632: $A7_r$), nor "Verball Conceites" or "Wordy Flourishes" (1635: TR.-1), as they needlessly obscure the sense of the text to "Common-Readers" (TR.-3). Furthermore, each psalm is accompanied by a "Preface" and, occasionally, by a brief "Meditation", which provides several interpretations from which the readers may pick the most appropriate to their circumstances, a process that is mirrored exactly in the *subscriptiones* to the emblems, as shall be shown in the subsequent chapters. Given the predominant didactic aspect both of the *Psalms* and of *A Collection of Emblemes*, it is no coincidence that Wither also supplied a commendatory poem to introduce Simon Wastell's *Microbiblion* in 1629, which "digested" the Bible "in verse according to the Alphabet that the Scriptures we reade may more happily be remembred, and things forgotten

more easily recalled" (title page). The first letters of each verse form the alphabetical sequence, and the entire work is written in ballad measure, to maximise its mnemonic potential. In his epistle "To the Christian Reader", Wastell deplores that "it is the speech of all, almost, and the complaint of the most sincere, that these our last and worst dayes, are dayes very wicked, dayes very dangerous, and therfore surely very dangerous, because very wicked" ($A4_r$), a state of affair he ascribes mostly to the vices and impiety of the English people, but also to insufficient knowledge of Scripture among them: "If these men, or any other, would in sinceritie, see footing into the wayes of Gods commands, it is then necessary, *necessitate a priori,* that they first know what it is which God commands" ($A5_v$). It is this shortcoming that the book seeks to address, Wastell states in his dedication to Sir William Spencer, to make the book "Plaine […] because the pure and spirituall word needs not the mixture of mans depraued braine; and also because the simplest Christian may reape the greater benefit, when all things are done to edification" ($A3_v$). It is not surprising that Wither found the work commendable, as, through it, "God speakes English to vs; and assayes / To worke true knowledge in vs diuers wayes" ("In commendation of this worke" ($A6_r$)). His final exhortation is very reminiscent of his addresses to the reader in his *Collection of Emblemes* as well:

> *Peruse it* Reader. *And so mindfull be/*
> *Of that, whereof this Booke remembers thee;*
> *That others in thy life, may copyed finde,*
> *What thou art hereby taught to beare in minde.* (ibid.)

As was shown earlier, Wither certainly shared Wastell's views on the depravity of their contemporaries, and the three works he published in the 1630s – i.e. *The Psalmes of David* (1632), *A Collection of Emblemes* (1635), and *The Nature of Man* (1636) – could be interpreted as three different approaches to addressing and amending various aspects of it. The last, which is usually granted as little attention as the emblems, is Wither's translation of the treatise titled *Περὶ φύσεως ἀνθρώπου* (usually rendered as *De natura hominis* in Latin), which was written by Nemesius of Emesa, one of the Greek Fathers of the Church and an influential theologian and Christian philosopher of the fourth century[1]. In the "Preface to the

[1] Chisholm, Hugh, ed. (1911). "Nemesius". *Encyclopædia Britannica.* Vol. 19 (11th ed.). Cambridge University Press. p. 369)

Reader", Wither's persona laments that "few are so much employed in labouring to keep the Truth from being smothered among the heaps of impertinent Volumes; and [those are] compelled to spend so much time in weeding out Heresies, and in discovering the fallacies of Error, that they cannot so improve themselves and others, as else they might" (1636: $aa3_r$-$aa3_v$). "Wee in this age", the persona continues, "have blinded [Divine knowledge] with confused Opinions", a situation that might be remedied by making available to all "the *Writings* of these *Ancients* who lived so neer to the Apostles, that they cannot be justly suspected, as *favourers,* or *parties* to the *factions* of these later Ages" ($aa4_r$). Although the "factions" in question are not named, the points of controversy that are referred to in the "Preface", principally the question of Man's ability to play in active role in his own salvation and the correlated issues of predestination and the responsibility of sin, unequivocally point to the central bone of theological contention between Arminian and Calvinist groups, whose doctrinal struggle was mirrored in the increasing political strife that characterised the 1630s in England.

Indeed, when Charles I summoned Parliament anew in January 1629 after seven months, the astringent disputes between king and Commons were centred around two main issues. Firstly, as was mentioned above, Charles had persisted in levying tonnage and poundage without Parliamentary consent, and severe penalties were visited upon those who refused to pay, who, on the other hand, were actually encouraged to withhold payment by Parliament, each party claiming legitimacy on the basis of contrary interpretations of the Petition of Right (Gregg 1981: 184). Additionally, the Calvinist majority in the house were "particularly incensed at the pre-empting of important church offices by the Arminians" (200), including Richard Neile, John Buckeridge, and, primarily, William Laud, whose accession to the archsee of Canterbury in 1633, which he cumulated with the important political offices of *interim* Treasury Commissioner between March 1635 and March 1636, and chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee (242), was seen as a dangerous shift towards "Popery" and therefore as a threat to "God's religion", which was perceived as being "in great peril to be lost" (185). Parliament was dismissed in March, and several of its most vocal members were imprisoned (186). In May 1630, the birth of Charles and Henrietta's son, the future Charles II, was met with "unconcealed dismay at a half-Popish heir who would take precedence over the offspring of the Protestant Elizabeth" (198) on the part of the Calvinist factions, although the king tried to assuage them by putting his son in the care of the Countess of Dorset, "the wife of the Queen's Lord Chamberlain, of unquestionable Protestant

family" (ibid.), who would become one of the dedicatees of *A Collection of Emblemes*[1]. This, however, did little to mitigate the vitriolic animadversions between Calvinists and Arminians, epitomised most vividly, perhaps, by William Prynne's writings and subsequent trial, to which we shall return in Chapter VIII. Doctrinal oppositions on the questions of double predestination, the extent of justification through Christ's sacrifice, or the resistible or irresistible quality of divine Grace were intertwined with liturgical disagreements. Indeed, Davies argues that, to the general population, the more immediately perceptible controversy pertained to the form of church service, and that "the rigid insistence by Arminian bishops upon a ceremonial church service […] seemed to many to foreshadow a return to pre-Reformation usages" (Davies 1934: 164). Calvinist objections to ceremonial elements they considered to be too reminiscent of Catholic practices were not new, as James I had been presented with the Millenary Petition even before he was crowned king, a document in which a number of ministers demanded, among other things, that congregations no longer be instructed to bow at the name of Jesus – a gesture they considered to be idolatrous (ibid.) – that ministers forego the wearing of the surplice and cap, and that multiple ecclesiastical offices not be held by a single person (Hardy ed. 1896: 508-11). Under Laud's authority, however, "the enforcement of ceremonial became stricter, and, simultaneously, the opposition became keener" (Davies 1934: 164). Laud himself justified these requirements in the name of nationwide uniformity of worship by arguing that "with the contempt of the outward worship of God, the inward fell away apace, and profaneness began boldly to show itself" and that the reason why many people were "wavering in religion" was "that the external worship of God was so lost in the Church (as they conceived it), and the churches themselves, and all things in them, suffered to lie in such a base and slovenly fashion in most places in the kingdom" (*Works* III, 407-8, quoted in Davies 1934: 165). While the Calvinists asserted that such liturgical practices nowhere appeared in the Bible and ought, therefore, to be abandoned, the Laudians considered them lawful as long as Scripture did not openly forbid them (ibid.). The main argument of the Calvinists, however, remained that Arminianism was nothing more than "a cunning way to bring in Popery" ("Remonstrance of the House of Commons, June 1628" in Rushworth, John, *Historical Collections* I, 633, quoted in Davies 1934: 167). From the beginning of Charles's reign, Puritan ministers faced important restrictions on the contents of their sermons, including a prohibition to discuss

[1] See Chapter III.

matters of state or of church government, while the Arminians were given *carte blanche* to exalt the principle of absolute monarchy from the pulpit (170-171). In 1627 and in 1637, statutes were passed to tighten episcopal control over the publication of books and pamphlets, effectively preventing the licensing of Puritan works and implementing harsh penalties for the printing of unlicensed ones, including being pilloried and "whipped through the city of London" (173), a fate that was visited, for instance, upon the future Leveller John Lilburne the same year (*Oxford DNB* "Lilburne, John" (1614-1657)). Authors of works that were deemed subversive of the state or the Church could face even harsher punishments; for instance, Alexander Leighton, who was a physician and a Puritan minister, was prosecuted by the High Commission Court for the contents of his pamphlet *Zion's plea against Prelacy: An Appeal to Parliament* (1628), in which, the text states, "the Lord Bishops, and their appurtenances are manifestlie proved, both by divine and humane Lawes, to be intruders vpon the Priviledges of Christ, of the King, and of the Common-weal" (title page). Leighton was sentenced to be whipped, pilloried, to have his nose split, one of his ears cut off, along with being imprisoned under harsh conditions and being fined the astronomical sum of 10,000 pounds (Gregg 1981: 268). It is not surprising, on the other hand, that Wither's *Collection of Emblemes* and *The Nature of Man* could both be printed, apparently without restriction to their licensing. Indeed, as was mentioned above, Wither's contentious monopoly regarding his *Hymns and Songs* had ended in 1634, concluding his strife with the Stationers' Company, and both works likely passed episcopal scrutiny unscathed, as their contents are overtly anti-predestinarian and fully compatible with Arminian theology[1]. It would have taken a detailed study of the emblems to detect their politically subversive content, which evidently eluded potential censors, as it has most critics to this day.

The period between Wither's return from the Low Countries and the outbreak of the Civil War is largely undocumented. Upon his father's death in 1629, he and his mother had inherited his estate at Bentworth, and he consequently saw an improvement of his financial situation, on which his conflict with the Stationers' Company had probably taken a toll (*Oxford DNB* "Wither, George (1588-1667)"), but it is uncertain whether he went on to live there, as he wrote the dedication of *The Nature of Man* to his friend John Selden "from [his] *Cottage,* under the *Beacon hill* neere *Farnham*" in May 1636, from where he moved to an estate in Wandborough, in the same region, at an uncertain date (*Oxford DNB* "Wither,

[1] See Chapter VII.

George (1588-1667)”). He probably spent some time in London, or was, at least, in contact with the London literary scene, as the elegiac verses to the late Queen Elizabeth that appear in Thomas Stafford’s *Pacata Hibernia* (1633), signed “G.W.”, are generally attributed to Wither, and as he contributed a short poem to Alice Sutcliffe’s *Meditations of man’s mortalitie* (1634) dedicated to her husband John Sutcliffe, the Groom of the king’s Privy Chamber. The poem praises Alice in the highest terms, and, uncharacteristically for the time, testifies to Wither’s sensitivity regarding the difficulties that female authors faced in early Stuart England:

> *I am not of their mind, who if they see,*
> *Some* Female-Studies *fairely ripened be,*
> *(With Masculine successe) doe peevishly,*
> *Their worths due honour unto them deny,*
> *By overstrictly censuring the same;*
> *Or doubting whether from themselves it came,*
> *For, well I know. Dame* Pallas *and the* Muses,
> *Into that* Sexe, *their faculties infuses,*
> *As freely as to* Men. (Sutcliffe 1634: $I7_r$-$I7_v$)

Wither’s stance towards women in general is similar, as evidenced by his aforementioned poem *Fidelia* (1615).

Biographical data is lacking again between 1636 and the outbreak of the Civil War. If he wrote anything during that time, it was not published, and has not reached us in manuscript form either. A catalogue of the works available at Paul’s churchyard, which was compiled in 1651-52 by Sir John Birkenhead, mentions a volume titled *Aristotles works in English Meeter* by a George Wither (C_r), but it is not included in any of Wither’s extant bibliographies, and the catalogue does not date the work. Wood claims that Wither was appointed Captain of horse under the Earl of Arundel during the Bishops’ Wars in 1639 (Wood 1815: 3.392), but there is, at present, no evidence to that effect.

8. The Premises of the Civil War

After the disbanding of Parliament in 1629, which marked the beginning of Charles’s “Personal Rule” (Reeve 1989: 21), tension between the king and many of his subjects continued to flare. The early 1630s saw bad harvests accompanied by the correlative inflation

on foodstuffs and riots in several parts of the country, including vocal protests against enclosures and disafforestation, particularly in the Southwest of England (Gregg 1981: 240). Cressy provides more details about such events:

> […] [D]*angerous disturbances broke out in the forest communities of the south-west Midlands, after local gentry sought to enclose land that had formerly been in common. A spate of riots between 1629 and 1631 coincided with a period of acute economic distress, when cloth-workers lost employment, fenmen battled drainers, and countrymen lost customary access to ancient woodland. A major disturbance shook the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire, in March 1631 when some 500 protesters gathered with fife and drums, pikes and halberds, to pull down recently erected enclosures. Asserting traditional common rights against private privilege and property, the rioters assembled 'in warlike and outrageous manner' to destroy fences, banks, and ditches that parcelled the forest.* (Cressy 2015: 47)

As we shall see in Chapter VIII, Wither's perception of these, some of which took place only sixty or seventy miles from his home near Farnham (Sharpe 1988: 57-62), permeates the *subscriptiones* of several emblems in the *Collection*. Furthermore, immediately after his appointment to the archsee of Canterbury, William Laud commissioned a comprehensive appraisal of the state of parishes throughout the country, and of the relationships between parishioners and their ministers. The survey found widespread animosity between the two groups, due to several factors, including the frequently wide social gap separating them, as the latter were "talented and educated professionals, many of them trained in theology and ancient languages" who were placed "in country parishes where they pined for scholarly conversation. […] Exasperated ministers lamented their rustication amid the vulgar multitude, as pastors and people talked past each other" (Cressy 2015: 236). On the other hand, there are extensive records of ministers who were accused of drunkenness – even while preaching at the pulpit - promiscuity, sexual abuse, and, in more extreme cases, incest, and even murder (237-238). Liturgical controversies, notably about the part of the church where

the altar was to be placed and about the prescribed use of the Book of Common Prayer exclusively, were argued over bitterly, and dissenting ministers, often Puritans, were occasionally imprisoned for refusing to comply (Gregg 1981: 273). Another disagreement arose over the re-publication of the *Book of Sports* (first published in 1618) at the king's behest, which, to the dismay of the same Puritans, allowed several types of recreational activities, including dancing, the setting up of Maypoles, archery, and other sports on Sundays (ibid). Meanwhile, Puritan denunciation of the Laudian Church administration and of Arminian theological and liturgical practices grew harsher, as did the punishments inflicted on those who undertook it, exemplified, most famously perhaps, by the arraignment and sentencing of William Prynne, Henry Burton, and John Bastwick in 1637, who suffered a fate similar to Leighton's almost a decade earlier for their attacks (275-276).

Furthermore, religious conflict extended beyond the borders in England. The striving for uniformity on the part of the king and the Archbishop of Canterbury met with fierce resistance in Scotland as well, where a majority of people were Presbyterians, and equally suspicious of Arminian doctrine and ceremonial (Donaldson 1966: 305-307) and insisted on the specificities of Scottish Church administration and practice, to which the English Book of Common Prayer and Laudian liturgical reforms were even more alien than to the Puritans south of the border. Furthermore, the legitimacy of the English system of episcopacy as a whole was challenged. Widespread opposition in the form of broad-based petitions signed by Scottish ministers and laypeople alike was organised, and led to the signing of the National Covenant in 1638, which phrased the griefs of the kirk in no uncertain terms:

> *To the which Confession and Form of Religion* [i.e. Scottish Presbyterianism] *we willingly agree in our conscience in all points, as unto God's undoubted truth and verity, grounded only upon his written word. And therefore we abhor and detest all contrary religion and doctrine; but chiefly all kind of Papistry in general and particular heads, even as they are now damned and confuted by the word of God and Kirk of Scotland. But, in special, we detest and refuse the usurped authority of that Roman Antichrist upon the scriptures of God, upon the kirk, the civil magistrate, and consciences of men; all his tyrannous laws made upon indifferent things against our*

Christian liberty.[1]

Although Charles summoned a Scottish Parliament and a Church Assembly in July 1639, he simultaneously oversaw preparations for an armed conflict, including an order given to northern landowners to muster troops and plans for a naval blockade of the Scottish coast. The king offered a compromise, but it was turned down, and the Assembly "abolished the Service Book, the Canons and Episcopacy itself, re-establishing full Presbyterianism while ordaining that the Covenant be taken by all Scotsmen" (Gregg 1981: 289-290). Armed conflict ensued, and the successful resistance of the Scottish covenanters forced the king to sign a truce, to promise an astronomical settlement to the Scottish forces who were still occupying several towns in the north of England, and to call Parliament, which opened in April 1640, to levy the necessary funds (Donaldson 1966: 324-325). Negotiations between Charles and the commons quickly failed, however, and the "Short Parliament" was dissolved less than a month after it had assembled (Gregg 1981: 301-307). In August, Scottish forces crossed the border and defeated the English cavalry at Newburn, subsequently occupying Newcastle (314). The king was urged to make peace with the covenanters and to call Parliament anew, which assembled in November 1640 with an overwhelming majority of Puritan MPs (317-318). Immediately, Parliament moved to impeach several close advisers to the king, including the Earl of Strafford, one of the king's foremost advisors since Buckingham's death, and Archbishop Laud, who were both accused of high treason and taken into custody, while orders were given to remove Catholics from the offices they had hitherto held in the administration and in the army (324-325). Parliament severely restricted Charles's prerogative to call Parliament at his leisure, first imposing that new elections would be held within three months of dissolution of the previous assembly, and then providing that Parliament could, henceforth, only be disbanded with its consent. Simultaneously, the Earl of Strafford was sentenced to death through a Bill of Attainder, and executed in May 1641 (327-332). Although peace was achieved with the covenanters, another rebellion flared in Ireland, contesting the transfer of land owned by Catholics to Protestant settlers from England, in several parts of the island, predominantly in Ulster, which further fostered Parliament's fears of a Catholic conspiracy to overtake England (340-342). Under the Puritan speaker John Pym, the House narrowly passed the Great Remonstrance, a bill that demanded even harsher policies against Roman Catholics and the protection of English settlers in Ireland, and the

[1] http://reformationhistory.org/nationalcovenant_text.html

removal of all bishops, who were loyal to the king, from their seats in Parliament. In January 1642, Charles, accompanied by a heavily armed troop of several hundred soldiers, forced his way into the House, and demanded that five of its members, including Pym, who were accused of high treason for having allegedly conspired with the Scottish covenanters, be given up for arrest. None of the accused were present, however, and this encroachment, on the king's part, upon parliamentary prerogative, along with rumours that the Catholic queen was conspiring with the Irish to restore the Pope's authority in the kingdom, exacerbated tensions (344-347). By March, both sides were mustering soldiers, all attempts at negotiating a settlement broke down, and, in October, the first major battle was fought at Edgehill in Warwickshire (Cust 2005: 355-360).

9. The Civil War: Wither, the King, and Parliament

If Wood's hitherto unsubstantiated claim that Wither participated in the expedition against the Covenanters in 1639 is left aside, his appointment as captain of horse in September 1642 in Surrey on the Parliamentarian side (*Oxford DNB* entry "Wither, George (1588-1667)") follows a six-year gap in the biographical record and may seem abrupt and puzzling. In what is undoubtedly the most thorough examination of the question, Norbrook (1991) sets out to explore the complex ideological framework that prompted Wither to act as he did. In the introduction, he outlines the intricacy of the matter by stating that "Wither tried to save the monarchy right up to the regicide" (219), and by adding immediately:

> *Far from being simply conservative, Wither played a significant part in the radicalization of politics in the 1640s, systematically reworking courtly models of poetic and political representation, performing acts of iconoclasm that do indeed run parallel to Marten's and influencing John Lilburne and the Levellers*. (220)

Although earlier critics of Wither's works have tended to see his stance during the Civil War as a sudden uprooting of his allegiances and of his literary concerns, which, considered superficially, seemed to have been restricted to the pastoral and the satirical in the 1610s, and to the religious in the 1620s and 30s, Norbrook anticipates Hackett's argument that the entire body of the poet's work is composed of generic variations around a central, political subject:

> *Wither's poetry had been political from the beginning, his*

> *pastoralism marking a self-consciously anti-courtly stance; at moments of political crisis from the 1610s onward he had been willing to risk imprisonment by stirring up political discontent among a wide public. By the late 1620s he had become so controversial that no printer was willing to handle Britain's Remembrancer and Wither had to set up the pages himself. And his poem is deeply troubled: his celebration of the monarchy is again and again hedged about with nervous qualifications, many of them added to the first draft.* (223-224)[1]

In his *Cordial Confection* (1659), Wither states that he "engaged for the Parliament out of conscience", although he expresses baffled incredulity at the behaviour of some of his fellow combatants:

> *The Parliament Party, (some few excepted, whose burthens and vexations were the greater, and makes them worthy to be the more pitied and honoured) managed their Good Cause like—like—like—(to tell you truly) like I know not what; for I can devise nothing under heaven, and above ground, whereto I may liken them: and it is no wonder that so many thousands fall off dayly from them, and that our Enemies judge of our Cause, and of Us, as I hear they do.* (32)

In contrast, he expresses admiration for "the Royal Party, whom we call Cavaliers, [who] prosecuted their Evil Cause like men, and like such men as they made shew to be" (ibid.), although he also states that their unwavering allegiance to their king is not to be considered honourable, as "it is not so much their *vertue,* as their *necessity,* perhaps, which keeps them constant", and as "mans corruption makes him to adhere more firmly to that which is *evil,*

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[1] It is notable that Norbrook commits very much the same mistake regarding Wither's works in the 1630s, including *A Collection of Emblemes*: "During the 1630s, Wither cautiously refrained from public oppositional comment, turning mostly to didactic and religious verse" (224).

then to that which is *good"* (ibid.). *Campo-Musae* (1643), which is subtitled "The field-musings of Captain George Wither touching his military ingagement for the King ann [sic] Parliament, the justnesse of the same, and the present distractions of these islands", which was written during his being stationed at Farnham Castle at the head of a cavalry regiment (*Oxford DNB*, entry "Wither, George (1588-1667)"), is structured around conventional Parliamentarian arguments, including the recurring idea that the war served the purpose of protecting both the king and the country from his ill-intentioned advisors:

> *Yet, when by wicked Counsellers misled,*
> *A* King, *shall his whole Kingdome so oppresse,*
> *That, he, therewith appears indangered;*
> *Me thinks, it were a Tenent reasonlesse,*
> *To say, there were not in a* Parliament
> *Such, as is our (or if no such we had)*
> *No power in his Liege-people to prevent*
> *The hazard of a consequence, so bad:*
> *Or, that they might not lay upon their King*
> *A charitable, and restraining-hand,*
> *To stop him from pursuing that rash thing,*
> *Which might undoe himself, and all the Land.* (11)

The lines in which Wither's persona seeks to clear his name from accusations of having behaved like a treacherous turncoat, however, repeatedly insist on the necessity of adopting the correct hermeneutic framework of his earlier works to function:

> *And, I am he that best can testifie*
> *The meaning of my* Poems, *whilst I live.*
> *I have not swerv'd essentially from ought*
> *(If well my words, and deeds be understood)*
> *Which I have either counselled or taught,*
> *Pertayning to the* King *or* Common-good. (31)

Norbrook's analysis of these lines reveals that the required hermeneutic standard is in constant oscillation: "Again and again he counters a royalist argument by shifting its terms from the personalized terms of courtly discourse to a more abstract, impersonal plane" (1991:

228):

> *He agrees that the King can do no wrong-but only insofar as he is the King, that is, insofar as he cooperates with the laws made by Parliament. Insofar as he fails to respect the law, he is in fact no longer the king and therefore does not merit obedience. The law represents a general reason, whereas without such cooperation the King can express only an arbitrary individual will. In fact, laws are made by Parliament or, as Wither sometimes claims, by the people.* (ibid.)

Wither is thus inching towards the idea of a contractual monarchy, which, Nenner argues, was the principle "upon which the king would finally be condemned" (1995: 66-67). In fact, in his *Vox Pacifica* (1645), he goes one step further, arguing that allegiance to "Kingship" does not entail support of the person who happens to be wearing the crown at any given time:

> *The* Person *of a* King, *may ramble forth,*
> *As his own fancie hurries him about,*
> *Or do things derogating from his worth,*
> *Or die, or from the* Kingdome *be cast out;*
> *And, yet the* Kingdome, *and the* Kingship *too,*
> *Continue still, as they were wont to do.* (137-138)

Parliament, however, is not exempt from criticism. Wither's persona insists upon the fact that the power invested in the political body is merely the sign of its being a representative of the people, and warns the MPs that they may suffer the same fate as the king "if any way, they do it [i.e. use their power] wilful wrong" (199), which, Norbrook states, "played a pioneering role in the agitation for political change" (1991: 239). This undoubtedly attracted the attention, and approval, of John Lilburne, who calls Wither "a Gallant Man" whose "advice" – Wither's *Letters of Advice, Touching the Choice of Knights and Burgesses* (1644) – he "urges his readers to consult" (Norbrook 1991: 244). And yet, Wither would remain in an ambiguous relationship to Republicanism throughout the remaining years of the Civil War,

often conjuring up “rebellious emotions”[1], but immediately “[drawing] back from the brink of republicanism”, and opposing the overthrow of the monarchy, on the grounds that the king may still repent and be returned to the throne (248-249).

10. The 1650s and 1660s

Financial uncertainty and occasional hardship, a significant ability to make enemies either too powerful, or enjoying the protection of powerful parties, a brave, not so say bold tendency to voice political criticism in terms too thinly veiled, and the resulting legal trouble remained constants throughout Wither’s life, even well into his sixties and seventies. Although his fortunes improved somewhat in the late 1640s, and although he was initially on excellent terms with Cromwell, he was still imprisoned several times. Indeed, in 1646 he was unable to prove his charges of treason against Sir Richard Onslow, a powerful MP from Surrey who had successfully prevented the poet from taking a commission with Parliamentary troops in 1644, and from being elected to public office. Later, at some time between April and July 1660 the manuscript of his *Vox Vulgi* was seized during a search at his home, which suggests that he was already under surveillance from Parliament (*Oxford DNB*, entry “Wither, George (1588-1667)”). The manuscript was deemed seditious, as it contains vitriolic attacks on the members of the so-called “Convention Parliament” (see Cherry: 1966):

> *Your guiltiness is great, and so is our*
> *Who did such giddy Ratlebraines impowre,*
> *Or could believe that men of sober wit*
> *Might be elected in a druncken fit,*
> *Or persons of debauched conversation*
> *Prove useful to the welfare of the nation, [...]*
> *For few who know you not can well conceive*
> *What men some of you are, much lesse believe.* (1880: 13)

The main bone of contention, it seems, was the list of people excluded from the Act of

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[1] Norbrook (249) quotes the following verses from Wither’s *Opobalsamum Anglicanum* (1646) : “But, You, and HEE, whose wilfull ignorance, / Of our just Rights, hath made him follow *France* / In his Designes; and, hope in imitation,/ Of that *French-Tyrant,* who inslav'd his Nation, / To bring our *English-necks* to that base Yoke; / Ev'n *You* and *Hee,* shall know you much mistooke; / And, that, if too sharpe curbs, our courses check, / We, shall go neer to break the *Riders* neck” (16).

Oblivion, which was passed in August 1660, and which granted indemnity to almost all people who had committed crimes during the Civil War and the Interregnum[1]. Wither's poem accuses some members of Parliament of bereaving those who had been excluded from "that Indulgence […] which gratiously the King had freely given", and to have done so "meerly to advance / In way of profit, or to please their wives" (1880: 15). In total, he remained in prison for over three years, having been denied visitors and writing materials for the first two (French 1930: 965). He almost faced yet another prison sentence at the age of seventy-six, a few months before his death, for the contents of his *Sighs for the Pitchers* (1666), which attacked, with usual violence and verve, those whom Wither deemed responsible of corruption within Church and State, but the sentence was not carried out, and he died in May 1667 at the Savoy, which "gave legal sanctuary to debtors" (*Oxford DNB*, entry "Wither, George (1588-1667)), a group to which he certainly belonged in his final months and years, having borrowed money from Walter Collins, one of his neighbours, which he was unable to repay (ibid.).

11. Conclusion

Several important aspects of Wither's literary career ought to be borne in mind before moving on to subsequent chapters. Firstly, it should be well-established by now that *A Collection of Emblemes*, just like his other works, despite their generic and thematic diversity, can all be construed as variations around a political stance that may have gradually changed during the Civil War, but that remained constant, its conflictual nature notwithstanding, until the 1640s at least. One of Wither's chief concerns during his career up to that point was undoubtedly to make his firm support for the abstract idea of a divinely ordained monarchy cohere with his growing disappointment and concern as political and religious tensions began to flare, especially during Charles's "Personal Rule". Secondly, it is certain that he had not left behind his Spenserian views on the poet's duty to castigate abuses and public vices for the greater good, or his satirical vein, when he composed his emblems, and that one should resist the temptation to classify them neatly as one of his "religious" works. Finally, and correlatively, although the work certainly deserves to be examined in the light of emblem scholarship, its most striking specificities may well have to be examined through the lens of Wither's overarching literary project, from which, I shall argue throughout the following chapters, his emblem book simply cannot be divorced.

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1 See *House of Commons Journal* Volume 8, 7 June 1660, "Proceedings agains Regicides"

CHAPTER III – "[A Booke] *conceitedly* composed": The Composition of *A Collection Of Emblemes* and the Question of Patronage

1. Introduction

Rather fittingly, given the aforementioned originality of *A Collection of Emblemes vis-à-vis* other English emblem books, its composition was no straightforward process. As subsequent chapters will examine the book's content, and, to a lesser extent, its material features, against various aspects of early Stuart "culture"[1], as thorough as possible an account of the available information on the subject of its genesis ought to provide a foundation for subsequent arguments, and may yield a few pieces of explanatory data along the way. Two remarks appear to be necessary at the onset, however. Firstly, although some of the statements regarding the incentive for the composition and publication of the work – most notably, perhaps, concerning the addition of the lottery game – bear clear marks of disingenuity[2], there is no reason to be sceptical of the basic chronological information provided by Wither's persona (1635: TR-2), as there is no contrary evidence and, as we shall see, it is, at the very least, quite plausible. Secondly, and inevitably, such a discussion will occasionally touch upon the question of intentionality, predominantly in the study of the readership that the persona anticipates for the volume. In this instance as well, the statements made by the persona as to its intending the book for "Common Readers" (TR-3) will be considered, in the absence of contrary evidence to be truthful, if incomplete. This label will, however, require a broad sociohistorical investigation to identify whom exactly the persona has in mind.

2. Chronology and circumstances

A Collection of Emblemes, *Ancient and Moderne* was officially licensed by William Bray, one of Archbishop Laud's chaplains and censors (Sharpe 1992: 648) from his office in Lambeth Palace on 2 July 1634. According to Freeman's diachronic survey of the versions of the book, the year 1635 saw the printing of several "variants" (Wither 1635: xvi-xvii), the first of which, according to the order in which Freeman mentions them, was printed by A. M. – whom she identifies as Augustine Mathewes, whose output also included, among many others, several works by the notorious Puritan pamphleteer William Prynne – for Robert Allot (xv).

[1] See the general introduction for a discussion of the term.

[2] See Chapters IV, V, VI, and IX on this subject.

Mathewes went on to print other "variants" for John Grismond, Robert Milbourne, Richard Royston, and, finally, Henry Taunton (xvi-xvii)[1], all of which are dated "MDCXXXV". Despite its popularity, which will be discussed below, Bath notes that the book never saw a second edition (1994: 126).

The composition of the book, however, started much earlier. In his epistle "To the Reader", Wither's persona provides the following account of the work's composition:

> *These Emblems, graven in Copper by Crispinus Passaeus (with a Motto in Greeke, Latin or Italian, round about every Figure; and with two Lines (or Verses) in one of the same Languages, periphrasing those Mottos) came to my hands, almost twenty years past. [...] Yet, the* Workmanship *being judged very good, for the most part ; and the rest excusable ; some of my Friends were so much delighted in the* Gravers *art, and, in those* Illustrations, *which for mine owne pleasure, I had made upon some few of them, that, they requested me to* Moralize *the rest. Which I condiscended unto : And they had beene brought to view many yeares agoe, but that the* Copper Prints *(which are now gotten) could not be procured out of* Holland, *upon any reasonable conditions.* (TR.-2)

The precise chronology remains unclear, however. Given Wither's account, we can probably place his first acquaintance with Gabriel Rollenhagen's *Nucleus Emblematum* around 1614-1615. However, the date at which he composed his first 'Illustrations', as well as that at which his friends urged him to "Moralize the rest", remain unknown, as does the identity of said friends. Several plausible candidates are identified by French (1928):

> *In his early days [Wither] was the friend of William Browne, Michael Drayton, Christopher Brooke, John Davies, and others,"* (152) *"as well as Quarles [...] and*

[1] I am referring to the 1975 facsimile edition that is used as reference throughout this dissertation unless otherwise noted. Freeman notes that the reprint "has been made from the Newberry Library copy [...] because of the crisp printing of the engravings" (Wither [1635] 1975, xviii).

> *Donne* (25). *[...] Wither also became the friend of the erudite John Selden* (28).

As will be shown in Chapter IX, the main source of inspiration from which Wither drew to compose his lottery game, the English translation of Lorenzo Spirito's *Libro de la ventura*, titled *The Booke of Fortune*, was not printed until 1618, which constitutes a slight restriction of the chronological framework for that part of the volume. As far as the emblems proper are concerned, however, the absence of clear chronological data forces us to consider the possibility that they were produced at various times during a twenty-year-period, although, as we shall see in Chapter VIII, some of them include thinly veiled references to identifiable events, most of which occurred during Charles I's "personal rule", which is usually considered to have lasted from the dissolution of Parliament in 1629 to the calling of the next one in 1640 (Sharpe 1992: xv). The paratext, however, may be more revealing in this respect. Firstly, some evidence can be gathered to date the dedicatory epistles which introduce each of the four books of *A Collection of Emblemes* more precisely. In his epistle to the King and Queen, Wither reminds the monarch that "Sev'n yeares are full expired, Royall Sir, / Since last I kneel'd, an offring to preferre [...]" (1635: 6). The "offring" in question likely occurred in 1626, when Wither presented the manuscript of his chronicle of the plague epidemic that had ravaged London the previous year, and which he would later greatly expand and publish under the title *Britain's Remembrancer* in 1628, to Charles I as a New Year's present (McRae 2016: 433). This would mean that the dedication of Book 1 was written in 1633. The fact that the second Book is dedicated to Prince James, who was born on 14 October 1633 (*Oxford DNB*, entry "James II and VII (1633-1701)"), further narrows down the composition of the dedications to the last few months of October and July 1634, when the book was licensed. As was mentioned in Chapter II, Wither travelled to the Low Countries in the 1630s, where he purchased the copper plates engraved by the De Passe family for Rollenhagen's emblems, but, given that he evidently had copies of both volumes of the *Nucleus Emblematum* at hand, he could conceivably have written most of the *subscriptiones* and the lottery verses before doing so. Unfortunately, neither John Payne's portrait of Wither, nor the frontispiece, nor the lottery wheel, which was provided by an unidentified artist, are dated. The persona states that Wither "*added* Lotteries *to these* Emblems" (1635: Occ.-1), and that he was compelled to do so to ensure that the book would sell well:

> *The worlde is so in love with Follie, that the Imprinting of over-solid and serious treaties would undo the Book-sellers; especially, being so chargeable as the many costly Sculptures have made this Booke : therefore, (to advance their Profits, rather than to satisfie my owne judgement) I was moved to invent somewhat, which might by likely to please the vulgar Capacitie, without hindrance to my chiefe End.* (ibid)

This would seem to suggest that the lottery verses were composed once the emblems were completed and once the engraved plates were available, enabling the publication of the book, at some time in the early 1630s. Wither then claims that he had to add the lottery for strictly mercantile purposes, and that he did so rather begrudgingly. In the section titled "The Occasion, Intention, and Use of the Foure Lotteries ajoyned to these Foure Bookes of Emblems", however, the persona claims that the lottery was begun "in my younger dayes" (ibid.), although, it immediately adds, it does so pre-emptively to address his prospective critics who might consider the game to be "unsutable to the gravitie expected in my ripe yeares: and be reputed as great an Indecorum, as erecting an *Ale-house* at the *Church-stile"* (ibid). As is usually the case with remarks of this kind in the volume however, the reliability of the information provided ought to be regarded as doubtful, especially given its primarily – though not necessarily sincerely[1] – apologetic purpose. At any rate, the claims that, respectively, the lottery was a spontaneous addition to help sell more copies of the book, and that it was begun much earlier, before the plates were purchased and the printing of the book was made possible, are seemingly incompatible. In fact, the game will be examined in detail in Chapter IX, but it is worth noting right away that the lottery stanzas, the instructions for playing, and the "Preposition to this Frontispiece" - which, along with Ripollés (2008), we will consider to be a structural component closely connected to the playful device – are remarkably whimsical, and sometimes openly taunting in tone. This is consistent with the persona's address to its readers in the section titled "The Occasion, *Intention*, and use of the Foure *Lotteries* adjoyned to these foure Books of *Emblemes*":

[1] The question of the persona's sincerity, or otherwise, in its remarks about the lottery game will be addressed in detail in Chapter IX.

> *Some will think perhaps, that I have purposely invented this Game, that I might finde means to reprove mens vices, without being suspected, (as I have hitherto unjustly beene) to ayme at particular persons : For, if any who are notoriously Guiltie, shall by drawing their Chances, among other companions, be so fitted with Lots, (which may now and then happen) that those Vices be thereby intimated to the by-standers, of which the world knowes them guilty ; they do therin make their own Libels; and, may (I hope) be laughed at without blame. If not ; I doe here warne all such as are worthily suspected of Haynous crimes and Scandalous conversations, either to forbear these Lotteries; or to excuse me if they be justly shamed by their own Act.* (1635: Dir.)

Furthermore, critics have noticed Wither's ironic ambivalence with respect to the divinatory power of his lotteries (Bath 1994: 125) and his tendency to be quite liberal in dealing out censure to his contemporaries (French 1928: 41), but his hope that the vicious be "laughed at without blame" is characteristic of a satirist, especially one who specialised in deriding the sins of his time in such works as *Abuses Stript and Whipt* (1613) and *Wither's Motto* (1621). French's assertion that *A Collection of Emblemes* is merely one of several purely devotional volumes (1928: 46) can therefore be dismissed. Indeed, when Wither sat down to "moralize" the engravings for his own pleasure in 1614-1615, he was 26 or 27, a young man who had known both literary success with his satirical work *Abuses Stript and Whipt* in 1613 and the ensuing stay at the Marshalsea prison from March to July 1614[1]. While he was already "disgusted [with the] fawning insincerity of court and city" (French 1928: 15), he nevertheless harboured some hope of securing the patronage of Robert, Earl of Pembroke (26). *Fidelia,* his "elegiac epistle lamenting a lover's inconstancy" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica,* entry "George Wither (English writer)"), was published in 1615, along with his pastoral work *The Shepherd's Hunting*. French reached the same conclusions in his thesis:

[1] See Chapter II.

> [F]*or the inspiration of the first real work of importance, his* Abuses Stript and Whipt*, we must go back to the sources of Drayton's and Browne's inspiration, Spenser. Spenser was by no means the first satirist in English, but his* Shepherd's Calendar*, his* Mother Hubbard's Tale *and his* Colin Clout's come home again *gave a tremendous impetus to the reaction against court abuses. And Wither followed the tradition to the best of his ability.* (1928: 30)

In formal and generic terms, *A Collection of Emblemes* differs more from the works of Spenser than Wither's satires and pastorals – although it is noteworthy that Spenser made extensive use of imagery based on humanist emblematic discourse, especially in *The Faerie Queene* (Beutner 1941) – but, in terms of its content and of the authorial stance that Wither appears to take throughout, the book, along with many of his works up until 1635, can arguably be considered an experiment in the implementation of a Spenserian project. Indeed, as O'Callaghan puts it:

> *Wither's texts chart the relationship between individual experience and the public world and project an idealized social self that can function as the medium for civic life in a reformed society.* […] *Wither experimented with genre throughout his career in the effort to produce a flexible literary form capable of plotting the dynamics of a social self.* […] *The Protestantism of* Abuses Stript and Whipt *is mediated by civic humanism. Along with his fellow Spenserians, Wither inherited a reformed humanist tradition of 'commonwealth' literature – a literature of public discussion in which the citizen poet had a duty to contribute to the flow of counsel on which the health of the commonwealth depended.* […] *The humanist metaphor of the book as a mirror was applied to those works designed to educate an elite governing class in the principles of* vita activa*. Wither's appropriation of this magisterial metaphor for his own book of the self extended its model of civic government to the private sphere and effectively broadened*

the class of magistrates to incorporate the godly citizen, represented in his ideal form by Wither himself. The godly citizen is therefore, in the full political sense, representative of the commonwealth. (148-157)

Many of the points mentioned by O'Callaghan in support of her thesis that Wither's early works were Spenserian in their premises and outlook apply to his emblem book as well. Indeed, although most of the emblems initially read like personal moral and religious advice to the individual reader – most often urging him or her to show patience and constancy in the face of hardship, an idea that will be examined in detail in Chapter VI – others are clearly addressed to the king – both to the abstract royal title and, I will argue, to Charles I himself - admonishing him to behave according to the moral standards laid out in the emblems, lest his failure to do so cause the downfall of the kingdom, and his own[1]. This also applies to Wither's aforementioned reappropriation of the genre to broaden its readership and thus welcome the wider community of "godly citizens" into the circle of emblem readers, making their "profitable Morals" (1635: TR-2) available to all, thus benefitting the individuals as well as, ultimately, the "commonwealth" as a whole. The persona in the emblems is less assertive of its imagined role as a quasi-prophetic witness to the times tasked with bringing about collective repentance and moral amendment than in *Britain's Remembrancer* (1628) for instance, but the primary aim of *A Collection of Emblemes* is didactic nonetheless, and some of the emblems do address macro-social issues beyond the individual, such as political corruption (III-33 and IV-7, 1635: 167 and 215 respectively), and the greedy and selfish destruction of the environment (I-35, 35).

The composition of the work must also be placed in the wider context of its author's personal circumstances, especially after his second stay in prison. As was mentioned in Chapter II, Wither's emblem book appeared shortly after his lucrative royal patent granted for his *Hymns and Songs of the Church* (1623) was finally declared null and void in 1634. A detailed account of the quarrel can be gathered from various sources[2] and from the previous Chapter, but, for our purpose, it is sufficient to remember that the Stationers made publishing very difficult for Wither throughout the 1620s and until at least 1635, and that his complaints about

[1] The most striking instance of this is certainly emblem II-5 (1635: 67), which will be discussed in detail in Chapter VIII.

[2] Aside from Doelman, (1993), these sources include Greg (1956), Pritchard (1963), and Carlson (1966).

his financial difficulties, which appear both in *The Scholler's Purgatory* (1624: 4-5) and, as we shall see, in his *Collection of Emblemes* as well, are probably legitimate, despite his inheriting his father's estate in 1629. This probably placed significant creative constraints on the poet, who had to find balance between his propensity to controversy and his need for material subsistence.

The circumstances of the publication of the work are mysterious too. O'Callaghan states the following:

> *In 1634 the London publisher Henry Taunton employed Wither to write the verses for engravings of Crispin de Passe which he had purchased and which had originally appeared in Gabriel Rollenhagen's* Emblems. (*Oxford DND*, "Wither, George (1588-1667)")

It is likely that her source for this piece of information was Hensley, who appears in O'Callaghan's bibliography, and whose phrasing is extremely similar:

> *Around 1634 the London publisher Henry Taunton engaged Wither to compose expository verses for engravings of Crispin de Passe, employed some twenty years earlier by Rollenhagen in* Nucleus Emblematum Selectissimorum. (1969: 75)

The earliest reference to Taunton's alleged employment of Wither I was able to find is one made by Sidney Lee in the *Dictionary of National Biography*:

> *The plates which were originally engraved by Crispin Pass for the* 'Emblems' *of Rollenhagius, and had appeared with mottoes in Greek, Latin, or Italian (Cologne, 1613; and Arnheim, 1616), were purchased in 1634 by Henry Taunton, a London publisher, with a view to a reissue. Wither was employed by him to write illustrative verses in English.* (Dictionary of National Biography 1885-1900, entry "Wither, George")

This assertion, however, is problematic. Neither Lee, nor Hensley, nor O'Callaghan provide any evidence in support of their claim, and it is probable that Hensley based his account on

Lee's, whom he mentions in his bibliography. As was mentioned above, several "variants" of the book circulated simultaneously from 1635 on, and even Freeman, who conducted a detailed bibliographical study in her introduction to the volume, does not identify which of them appeared first. It is just as likely that one of the other publishers, namely Robert Allot, John Grismond, Robert Milbourne, or Richard Royston, preceded Taunton in securing the right to sell the book. In fact, it is quite likely that Wither, and not one of the publishers, took the initiative to have the book printed and to make it available. As was mentioned above, Wither's persona explains that he had started writing the *subscriptiones* much earlier, and that he was involved in the purchase of the plates himself. It is possible of course that Wither and one – or, indeed, several - of the publishers had agreed to publish *A Collection of Emblemes* before the plates were secured, and that Wither travelled to Holland primarily to complete the purchase on their behalf, but the persona's repeated reference to the expenses involved suggests that they were covered by Wither alone. Another hypothesis, then, seems to cohere more readily with the available evidence: Whether the persona's assertion that the initial *subscriptiones* were written "for [Wither's] owne pleasure", and that the decision to publish was only made at the behest of "some of [his] Friends" (1635: TR-2), is true or not, publication could, at any rate, only be envisaged once De Passe's copper plates had been purchased. Princess Elizabeth's refusal to resume her patronage of his works when he visited her in the Low Countries in the early 1630s (French 1928: 61) may have strengthened his resolve to do so. He then returned to London, sought a printer for his book, and financed the process out of his own pocket. The persona's assertion that Wither commissioned William Marshall's frontispiece himself (1635: Prep.) is further evidence of the same. Once all the requirements for printing the work had been met, Wither, it seems, entertained the hope of obtaining patronage from some of the most influential members of the Caroline court.

3. Wither's Pleas for Patronage in *A Collection of Emblemes*

In the dedication of the fourth book of *A Collection of Emblemes* to Philipp of Pembroke, Wither's persona reiterates the claim that he was facing financial difficulties in the 1630s:

> *But, as I long time, suffred have by those*
> *Who labour'd much, my thrivings, to oppose:*
> *So,* I my selfe *(although not out of pride,*
> *As many thinke it) have so much relide*

Upon the Royall-Gift*, neglecting so*
To fortifie the same, as others do
By making Friends; that my estate grew lesse
(By more than twice five hundred Marks decrease)
Through that, which for, my profit was bestowne. (1635: Ded. IV-1)

This is further attested by Wither's addition, to his *Collection of Emblemes*, of the section entitled "A *Supersedeas* to all them, whose custome it is, without any deserving, to importune *Authors* to give unto them their *Bookes*", in which his persona expresses scorn towards those who would presume to obtain a free copy of such a book:

[...] they who know me, know, that, Bookes thus large,
And, fraught with Emblems, do augment the Charge
Too much above my Fortunes, to afford
A Gift so costly, for an Aierie-word. (Sup. 1)

Wither's persona then, for the second time, provides an overview of the poet's financial situation in the 1630s:

So much already, hath beene beg'd away,
(For which, I neither had, nor looke for pay)
As being valu'd at the common Rate,
Had raise'd, Five hundred Crownes, in my Estate.
Which (if I may confesse it) signifies,
That, I was farre more Liberall than Wise. (ibid.)

Wither's dwelling on his woes in financial matters is of some importance. Given his problematic relationship with the Stationers, he knew that the contents of his writings could, if they upset the wrong people, plunge him deeper even into material uncertainty, and perhaps send him back to prison. In his treatment of the most sensitive topics such as religion and politics, he therefore, once again, had to tread lightly, which must have felt like a painful dilemma to a seasoned satirist and notoriously independent mind (see French 1928: 23, 41, 14, 152-153, 191-192). *A Collection of Emblemes* could, therefore, be examined as Wither's attempt to navigate the dangerous context while retaining his artistic integrity. As John Manning aptly puts it:

> *Many emblem books can only be fully understood against the backdrop of the complex network of interrelationships between authors, publishers and patrons, and the political agenda that underlies a book's composition and publication.* (2002: 84)

Furthermore, Wither's dedicatory epistles suggest that he was hoping – increasingly desperately it seems – to be granted patronage. While a plea for protection directed at potential patrons was something extremely common with early modern artists[1], the group of dedicatees of Wither's *Collection of Emblemes* is of some interest to our study as well. Indeed, the identity and status of the protectors of a given author paint a relatively reliable picture of his situation and standing at court. Furthermore, Wither's relationship to his patrons and potential patrons – not unlike many other aspects of his career and of his personality - is characterised by a *via media*. He was, it seems, quite well connected, and certainly under the protection of several powerful people at various times of his life. O'Callaghan mentions no fewer than six different patrons of Wither's, including King James I, his daughter Elizabeth, and, during the interregnum, Cromwell himself (*Oxford DNB*, entry "Wither, George (1588-1667)")[2]. French also points out that Wither was successful in obtaining patronage from Robert Sidney around 1615 (1928: 26), and, according to Wither in his dedicatory epistle to Philip of Pembroke in *A Collection of Emblemes*, he had also enjoyed the protection of Philip's late brother William (Ded. IV – 1). French adds that Wither probably had the same to thank for his release from prison in 1614 (1928: 41).

And yet, Wither's luck with his protectors before the Civil War was fleeting at best. Prince Henry seemed quite inclined to grant Wither preferment, but died before he could, and Princess Elizabeth's marriage to Frederick V of the Palatinate in 1613 cut short her patronage as well (26). King James died in 1625, and, as we shall see, it is likely that Charles I was less generous towards the poet than his father was. Robert Sidney and William of Pembroke died in 1626 (*Oxford DNB*, entry "Sidney, Robert, first earl of Leicester") and 1630 (*Oxford DNB*, entry "Herbert, William, third earl of Pembroke") respectively, which caused Wither's persona

[1] See Bates 2000 and Brennan 1988 for in-depth discussions of the role patronage played in the literary context of the English Renaissance.

[2] The other patrons mentioned are Sir Thomas Ridgeway, vice-treasurer in Ireland from 1603 to 1606 and treasurer from 1606 to 1615, John Bradshaw, Wither's lawyer and later Lord President of the Council of State, and Thomas Westrow, a Parliamentarian soldier and an MP for Hythe in Cromwell's Rump Parliament until 1653 (see The Twickenham Museum website under 'Thomas Westrow' - *www.twickenham-museum.org.uk*).

to lament, in his dedication of the fourth book of *A Collection of Emblemes* to Philip of Pembroke:

> *And, I, (who blushed, to be troublesome*
> *To any Friend) therby, almost am come*
> *To such a passe ; that, what I wish to have,*
> *I should grow imprudent enought to crave,*
> *Had not impartiall Death, and wasting Time,*
> *Of all my Friends quite worne away the Prime;*
> *And, left mee none, to whom I dare present*
> *The meanest suite without encouragement.* (Ded IV-2)

The first book of *A Collection of Emblemes* is dedicated to King Charles I and Queen Mary, not merely because their patronage would obviously supersede that of anyone else in terms of its scope and influence, but also because Wither, it seems, had reasons to be hopeful that his suit would be granted. O'Callaghan, with reference to Pritchard, states that:

> *[The dedication of Wither's* The Hymns and Songs of the Church *(1623)] was in gratitude for the royal patent that James had granted Wither on 17 February 1623 which gave him the copyright to his* Hymns and Songs of the Church *for fifty-one years and the authority to have it bound with every English psalm book in metre. He may have owed the patent to the influence of Prince Charles: in a verse petition to Charles thanking him for securing his release from prison in 1621, he asks for a 'second favour' to help him restore his finances.* (*Oxford DNB, entry "Wither, George* (1588-1667)")[1]

Obtaining royal patronage would no doubt have solved Wither's immediate financial problems, and, as we have seen, he was already well acquainted with the king, who had been the dedicatee and the recipient of his manuscript of *Britain's Remembrancer* (1628). However, two years after receiving Wither's gift, Charles had evidently not extended any offer of protection or preferment to Wither, as is made clear in the following lines of the dedicatory epistle in the

[1] The reference is Pritchard 1963:120-121.

1628 edition of *Britain's Remembrancer*:

> *Long, since, I have elected you to be*
> Mæcenas*, to my Muses, and to me:*
> *And if my hopes in you shall be bereft me,*
> *I have no other hopes in this kind left me;*
> *Nor any purpose, whatsoever come,*
> *To seeke another* Patron*, in your roome.* (7)

I have not been able to find any records suggesting that Wither obtained royal patronage for *Britain's Remembrancer* or for his *Collection of Emblemes*. In fact, at the end of his dedicatory epistle to the royal couple in his emblem book, the persona states the following: "[...] Let bright your Glories bee, / For ever, though You never shine on Mee" (Ded. I-4). This may be read as a somewhat bitter reminder that Wither was still struggling financially, and that the king still denied him patronage despite the numerous expressions of admiration, submission, and loyalty on the poet's part. However, Wither seems to have anticipated this possibility, and, as a first safety net, he dedicated his second book to Charles, the Prince of Wales, and to his younger brother, James, the Duke of York, who were respectively 5 and 2 years old in 1635 (*Oxford DNB*, entries "Charles II" and "James II and VII"). If he were to be disappointed in his immediate suit for royal preferment, Wither thus certainly hoped to secure the patronage of the future monarch. The epistle to James, Duke of York is particularly interesting, as Wither's persona addresses it not to the prince himself, who would not have been able to read yet, but to his governess, simply referred to as "The Countesse of Dorset" (1635: Ded. II-3). Lady Anne Clifford, Countess Dowager of Dorset, Pembroke and Montgomery, was the widow of Richard Sackville, third Earl of Dorset, who died in 1624 (Richardson 1899: 131), and the second wife of Philip Herbert, 4th Earl of Pembroke and 1st Earl of Montgomery (147), whom she married in 1630. Her patronage might have been sought by a poet in a precarious situation for two reasons. Firstly, she was the prince's caregiver, and as such, she had a privileged relationship with him, and a significant influence on his education and upbringing, a fact that had not escaped Wither's attention. Indeed, as he justifies his present to the prince, the persona adds:

> *And,* how*, and* when*, it will most* usefull *grow,*
> *Without my* Teaching*, YOU can fully show.*
> *For, what is of your* Ablenesse *believ'd,*
> *Through all these famous* Iland*s, hath received,*

> *A large applause ; in* that*, from out of those*
> *Which* ablest *were, both* King *and* State *have chose*
> *Your* Faith *and* Wisedome*, to be TREASURESSE*
> *Of their chiefe* Iewels *; and the GOVERNESSE*
> *Of our prime Hopes* [...]. (1635: Ded. II-4)

Wither hoped that the countess would act as his "PROXY" (Ded. II-3), and that she would, in due time, remind Prince James to favour him: "Till then, let it please your Honour sometimes to remember Him, that I am his Graces daily and humble Oratour" (ibid.). Secondly, the countess was a notable patroness of the arts, as well as a writer herself[1]. She was tutored by the poet Samuel Daniel in her youth (Richardson 1899: 121), she was acquainted with John Donne (122), and her first husband was a companion of Prince Henry's (122-123), who was inclined to grant patronage to Wither before death prevented him from doing so (French 1928: 26). Furthermore, as was briefly mentioned before, Wither's friend Francis Quarles had already dedicated his *Diuine Fancies* to the Countess in 1633 (8), presumably with some success, as her name appears again at the beginning of his *Hieroglyphikes of the Life of Man* published in 1638, along with the following lines:

> *I present these Tapours to burne under the safe Protection of your honourable Name: where, I presume, they stand secure from the Damps of Ignorance, and blasts of Censure: It is a small part of that abundant service, which my thankfull heart owes your incomparable Goodness.* (4-5)

To my knowledge, neither Charles II nor the future James II granted Wither patronage after the Restoration, as there is no mention of the Countess of Dorset in any other work by the poet, and no record of her becoming one of his patrons.

However, as we have seen, the countess was also married to Philip of Pembroke, one of the dedicatees, along with his brother William, of the First Folio of Shakespeare's complete works in 1623 (Shakespeare 1623: 10), and himself a patron of the poet Philip Massinger (Massinger 1624: 4) and of several painters, including Anthony Van Dyck (*Oxford DNB*, entry "Herbert, Philip, first earl of Montgomery and fourth earl of Pembroke"). Naturally, then,

[1] For a full account of the Countess's life and works, see Richardson 1899, as well as Williamson 1922.

Wither did not forget to dedicate his fourth book to him in person (Ded. IV-1), and to "Henrie, Earle of Holland &c." (Ded. IV-3). The former dedication can easily be accounted for by the fact that Wither had enjoyed the patronage of William of Pembroke, Philip's brother, before his demise in 1630 (*Oxford DNB*, entry "Herbert, William, third earl of Pembroke"):

Among those WORTHIES, I may both bemone
(My selfe in HIM) and memorize, for One*,*
Your much renowned BROTHER, as a Chiefe
In bringing to my waned Hopes*, reliefe ;*
And, in my Faculties*, were I as able*
To honour Him*, as he was honourable,*
I would have showne, how, all this Emperie
Hath lost a Friend*, in HIM, as much as I.* (Ded. IV-1)

The latter, however, is somewhat cryptic. Henry Rich, First Earl of Holland, was undoubtedly an influential courtier under Charles I, and was often called "the leader of the queen's party within the court" (*Oxford DNB*, entry "Rich, Henry, first earl of Holland"), but his biography does not mention any artist under his protection, nor have I found mention of his name in relation to Wither. He is, however, the dedicatee of *The Selected Epigrams of Martial, Englished by Thomas May Esquire* (1629: 4), and, perhaps more significantly, of Francis Quarles's *Argalus and Parthenia* (1629: 4). This suggests that the poets probably had some reason to hope for Holland's patronage, all the more so because he is, in both cases, the only dedicatee. This means that neither author felt the need to seek patronage elsewhere, presumably because they deemed it likely to be accepted. Perhaps it is Holland's appointment as the Lord Chancellor of the University of Cambridge in December 1629 (*Oxford DNB*, entry "Rich, Henry, first earl of Holland") that prompted these artists to seek patronage with him, but I have not been able to find any evidence that either one succeeded in obtaining it. If Wither made a similar suit in 1633-1634, it is possible that Quarles's request was in fact accepted, and that he then advised his friend to do the same, but this is mere speculation. In his dedicatory epistle, Wither's persona reminds Holland of his father's generosity towards him:

His honourable FATHER, deem'd mee worth
So much respecting as to seeke me forth,
When, I was more Obscure: And, mee, for nought

> *But, onely to Befriend mee, forth HEE sought.* (1635: Ded. IV-3)

Holland's father was Robert Rich, first earl of Warwick, who died in 1619 (*Oxford DNB* entry "Rich, Robert, first earl of Warwick"). I have not found any record confirming that he granted Wither patronage, but he and the poet were evidently, at the very least, well acquainted.

Finally, the third book of *A Collection of Emblemes* is dedicated to "THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS Princesse, FRANCIS, Duchesse Dowager of RICHMOND, and LENNOX, &c." (Ded. III-1) and to "THE HIGH AND MIGHTY Prince, JAMES, Duke of LENNOX, &c." (Ded. III-3). The first, Frances Stuart, duchess of Richmond and Lennox, was the widow of Henry Pranell, a wealthy London alderman, who died in 1599 and left his entire fortune to his 21-year-old widow (*Oxford DNB*, entry 'Stuart [née Howard; married name Prannell], Frances, duchess of Lennox and Richmond [other married name Frances Seymour, countess of Hertford]'.). Two years later, she married Edward Seymour, earl of Hertford (who was 61 years old at the time), and, after his death in 1623, Ludovick Stuart, the 2nd duke of Lennox. Ludovick Stuart was a cousin of King James I's who participated in the venture to colonize Maine in New England (*Oxford DNB*, entry "Ludovick Stuart, duke of Lennox (1574–1624)"). This may explain Frances Howard's acquaintance with the famous explorer Captain John Smith, and her patronage of his *Generall Historie of Virginia* (1624), which Smith dedicated to her: "And so verily these my adventures have tasted the same influence from your Gratious hand, which hath given birth to the publication of this Narration" (Smith 1624: 7). It is therefore somewhat surprising that Wither chose to dedicate his *Collection of Emblemes* to her, a work decidedly different from Smith's account of his adventures, until one reads the dedication of Wither's *Exercises vpon the first Psalme* (1620):

> *TO THE NOBLE YOUNG GENTLE-MAN, Sr. IOHN SMITH, Knight; onely Sonne to the honourable Knight, Sr. THOMAS SMITH, Gouernour of the* East-India *Company, &c. [...] Sir ; Much has been the respect, and many the courtesies; which I have received from your noble Father. And the greatest requitall I can giue him; is, to make my selfe (as far as in mee lyeth) such a one, as that hee neede not repent, nor be ashamed of the respect hee hath showne mee: and that, if I should dye vnable to repay his*

kindnesses; he might yet, haue some cause, to think his fauors not altogether lost upon mee. [...]

Lo, as a pledge thereof, I consecrate to your vse, these Exercises. *And, with your nale, deliuer them ouer to the world. That, when, and wheresoeuer they shall be read; you may be remembred both for a louer of these kinds of studies, & a Fauourer of his, who was desirous to bee honestly employed. For, such haue you approued your selfe towards mee, both in your courteous familiarity : and by that free accesse, which in my meditations, I haue alwayes had to your Library.* (1620: 1-4)

This is yet another example supporting the idea that Wither's eclectic circle of friends and acquaintances had largely dwindled in 1635: Smith died in 1631 (*Oxford DNB*, entry 'Smith, John (bap. 1580, d. 1631)'), four years before *A Collection of Emblemes* was published, and was therefore unable to lend Wither any assistance in his plea for patronage from the Duchess. Perhaps it is Wither's regret at missing the opportunity to benefit from it earlier that prompted him to write, in his dedication to her:

[...] When I mind what Favours*, and what* Fame
*I might have purchased, unto my Na*me*,*
(By taking Courage, to have done my best)
I dare not make Excuses *; but, request*
Your Pardon, rather, that some Oblation
May gaine my Person*, future acceptation.*
(1635: Ded. III-1)

The Duchess is no exception among the dedicatees of the book: to my knowledge she did not grant Wither patronage either and died shortly before the Civil War in 1639 (*Oxford DNB*, entry "Stuart [née Howard; married name Prannell], Frances, duchess of Lennox and Richmond [other married name Frances Seymour, countess of Hertford]"

The last dedicatee is James Stuart, fourth duke of Lennox and First duke of Richmond, a powerful nobleman and later a key figure on the Royalist side during the Civil War. (*Oxford DNB*, entry "Stuart, James, fourth duke of Lennox and first duke of Richmond (1612–1655)") He was the nephew of Ludovick Stuart, the late husband of Frances Howard, and the son of

Esmé Stuart, Third Duke of Lennox, an important patron of Ben Jonson's (*Oxford DNB*, entry "Jonson, Benjamin [Ben]"). It seems that James Stuart was far more interested in politics and the military than in literary patronage, as he successively held the offices of Privy Counsellor, Warden of the Cinque Ports, Great Chamberlain and later High Admiral of Scotland, and even President of the Council of the Prince of Wales[1]. He was, however, the dedicatee of David Person's *Varieties: or, A surveigh of rare and excellent matters*, which was printed the same year (1634: 4) as *A Collection of Emblemes*. The dedicatory epistle suggests that Person, just like Wither, hoped for patronage:

> *What my continued nightwatches, studies, travells, and expences have beene in these recollections, I will think worthily bestowed if they be graciously accepted ; and if they be thought worthy of your Graces Patronage, I have my wish* [...]. (5)

Wither never dedicated any other works to James Stuart – probably, among other things, because of their antipodal allegiances during the Civil War. It is therefore likely that no patronage was granted in this instance either, and that Wither was disappointed in all his pleas for the support of his *Collection of Emblemes*. This is characteristic both of Wither's fortune in the late 1620s and in the 1630s, and of the literary context in Caroline England at the time:

> *The reign of Charles I saw an overall tendency for serious literary patronage to decline. There were few outstanding patrons, and probably less need for financial support or provision of places because many of the writers of the time were either gentlemen of private means or had some form of settled employment, often in the church.* (Parry 2008: 136)

Wither, however, fit into neither of these categories. As was mentioned above, he inherited his father's estate in 1629, which, however, did evidently not secure him against pecuniary need. This temporary improvement of his assets may however have allowed him to finance his trip to the Low Countries and the purchase of the plates from Rollenhagen's emblem book, but did little more, if we believe Wither's aforementioned complaints on the matter. His employment

[1] www.thepeerage.com, entry 'James Stuart, 4th Duke of Lennox'

in Durham ended in the early 1630s, and his hope to be granted the office of "Remembrancer" was disappointed as well[1]. This placed Wither in a complicated situation:

> *Even in these relatively palmy days, a professional writer might experience great difficulty in scraping together a living, especially if he had a restless temperament and a prickly personality.* (Parry 2008: 137)

Parry takes the poet and playwright James Shirley as an example, but, according to French, this characterisation fits Wither as well:

> *Wither had the disposition which makes enemies much more easily than friends. Independence combined with a conscientious impulse to tell the other fellow all his faults without bating a jot and with absolutely no respect for persons may be admirable, but it always makes trouble and it sometimes antagonizes more than it convinces. Such was the case with Wither.* (1928: 41)

This may allow us to consider the author of *A Collection of Emblemes* as an epitome of the struggling poet under the Caroline monarchy, and as a representative of a liminal period of decline between the literary peaks of the Elizabethan and Jacobean reigns on the one hand, and the literature of the Civil War and that of the Restoration, culminating in Milton's *Paradise Lost* in 1667, on the other[2]. That is not to say of course that the 1630s saw no literary production: under the patronage of Philip of Pembroke, Philip Massinger published nearly every year[3], as did Ben Jonson[4]. Francis Quarles published his *Emblemes* in 1635, and the year 1638 saw the publication of his *Hieroglyphikes of the Life of Man* and of Milton's *Lycidas*. And yet, the reign of Charles I, and particularly the decade leading up to the outbreak of the

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[1] See Chapter II.

[2] Parry notes that "*a distinctive feature of literary publication in the 1640s was the number of volumes of poetry and plays by Royalists such as Carew, Waller, Crashaw, Vaughan, Suckling, Shirley, Herrick, Cowley and Fanshawe, together with the posthumous folio collections of Jonson and Beaumont and Fletcher*" (Parry 2008: 137). Interestingly, apart from William Davenant's *Madagascar* (1638) and two posthumous editions of Donne and Herbert, he does not mention any major works published in the 1630s.

[3] His works in the 1630s include *The Picture* (1630), *The Emperor of the East* (1631), *The Maid of Honour* (1632), *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (1633), *The Great Duke of Florence* (1636), *The Duke of Milan* (1638), and *The Unnatural Combat* (1639).

[4] Jonson wrote mostly court masques in the 1630s, such as *Chloridia* and *Love's Triumph through Callipolis* (1631).

Civil War in 1642, were somewhat symptomatic of the impending upheaval of English governmental structures, in that the focus shifted from the arts to politics:

> *Fewer books were offered to Charles I than had been dedicated to James, by a ratio of about ten to fifteen a year over a decade. Archbishop Laud received remarkably few dedications, only four or five a year throughout his period in office, and only a dozen books were dedicated to Sir Thomas Wentworth during the 1630s. Even Philip Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, the head of the family with the greatest tradition of literary patronage in the country, received fewer dedications after he inherited the title in 1630 than he had as the heir apparent in Jacobean times.* (Parry 2008: 136)

The inevitable culmination of this trend occurred in 1642:

> *With the outbreak of the Civil War* [...], *conventional patronage patterns broke down. The court dissolved, and gentlemen had other things to think about than encouraging literature.* (137)

The dedications in *A Collection of Emblemes* therefore constitute a notable biographical and historical testimony. Their recipients, if they paid attention to them at all, may have been deterred from accepting Wither's pleas because of his history of imprisonment and of the critical and admonitory tone of *Britain's Remembrancer* (1628), but it is equally likely that the poet's hope to secure financial support from a member of the court for a literary work of this nature was largely anachronistic. Another factor that probably contributed to such indifference to *A Collection of Emblemes* from members of the court was a combination of the differences, in matters of taste, between Charles I and his father, and of Charles's remaining resentful towards poets and playwrights who, in the first years of his reign, failed to lavish upon him the obsequious praise that had welcomed James, and that had been forthcoming to his elder brother Henry until, and even after, his death. Marcus shows that the most characteristic example of this tendency was the fate of Ben Jonson, whom "Charles never forgave […] for his impolitic silence during the first years of the reign", despite the poet's "frantically attempting to make amends" at the end of his life", which included his composing "*The Tale of a Tub* (1633) in

part to commemorate Charles's reissue of James's *Book of Sports* the same year", and the unfinished work "*The Sad Shepherd*, an exquisite piece designed to meet the seemingly inexhaustible demand for pastoral drama at court" (2003: 505-506). At any rate, an enquiry into the success of *A Collection of Emblemes* will have to focus, not on the court, but on its fate within the much broader readership in Caroline England.

4. The Early Stuart Book Trade and Wither's Readers

In his fascinating *The Business of Books* (2007), Raven, after urging readers and critics to due caution given the difficulty of modelling complex economic trends from incomplete evidence (52-53), nonetheless provides information about the context in which books such as *A Collection of Emblemes* were sold. "The new book market", he states, referring to the early seventeenth century, "existed in a landscape of expanding corn markets, sturdy farmhouses, and up-and-coming parish gentry" (54). "Surviving inventories", he continues, "reveal the increased possession of books and other print, as well as the gradual private accumulation of libraries and print collections" (ibid.). London was obviously the most dynamic economic environment, that benefited from its proximity to "sources of production and importation", "few distribution problems and an affluent leading-edge, especially in Parliamentary season", while "the structural concentration of the trade in London encouraged entrepreneurs to stimulate demand" for books and many other types of goods (ibid.). This stimulation of demand, which had been recognised as a commercial necessity since Caxton (55), is evidenced by booksellers' and printers' experimentation with recognisable pictorial devices, more detailed title pages and frontispieces to allure readers to the contents of the works, and ornamental factotums (ibid.). It became common practice for the names of the printer and of the bookseller to overshadow, and sometimes even to wholly banish, the name of the author, replacing it with a detailed address of the place where the book could be purchased, sometimes even with geographical directions (55-56). Illustrations were increasingly used as a marketing device as well, especially for the "popular market" – to be understood, in this case, as the books intended for light entertainment requiring no particular specialised knowledge, such as ballad collections (57) - and promotional title pages were even posted on tavern walls (ibid.). Catalogues of available books were issued as early as 1595, when Andrew Maunsell printed his *First Part of the Catalogue of English Printed Bookes*, which focused on theological works, but which was soon followed by the *Second Part*, devoted to "mathematics, astronomy, music, 'physick' – i.e., medicine - and military arts" (58). Although the third part on history, rhetoric,

poetry, and art was never published, it was evidently planned (ibid.), and the catalogues by William Jaggard (1618) and William London (1657, 1658, and 1660) continued the trend. As early as the 1620s, wide-ranging distribution networks from London reached even remote parishes, and the nation-wide distribution of pamphlets and news in print was further eased by the institutionalisation of the "Letter-Office of England and Scotland" in 1635, which was to become the Post Office (60-61). Raven mentions that road books written for the use of distribution workers were printed as well, including John Taylor, the Water Poet's *Carriers Cosmographie*, which listed 200 towns along distribution lines (61). All of this suggests an expanding market for books, and that an increasing number of people, both in London and in the rest of the country, were both able and willing to purchase them, even with the price markup that transportation entailed. But which portion of this expanding readership did Wither have in mind for his emblems?

In the "Occasion, Intention, and Use" of the lottery game, Wither's persona asserts that books containing images as detailed as de Passe's engravings were quite costly to produce, and therefore expensive (Occ.-1), which also explains, at least in part, why he would have added his *Supersedeas*. This indicates that the volume would have been available only to readers of some financial means, which somewhat calls into question Wither's alleged intention to write for "Common-readers" (TR.-3), who would be literate, but otherwise "Ignorant" (TR.-1). Cressy's controversial, but nonetheless useful studies on the question of literacy in Early Modern England may be relied on, with the same caution that Raven urged us to observe. Firstly, there is, obviously, a consensus view according to which literacy levels coincided with social standing:

> *The gentle, clerical and professional classes, of course, had full possession of literacy, except for a few who were decrepit or dyslexic. Members of this dominant class, who comprised no more than 5 per cent of the population, were the primary audience for most of the output of the press. Literacy was an attribute of their status and an active element in their lives. Here, and here only, was the seventeenth-century cultivated elite.*
>
> *Approaching the level of the gentry were city merchants and tradesmen. Country merchants and superior*

> *shopkeepers, including drapers and haberdashers, grocers and apothecaries, ranged from 5-15 per cent illiterate.* [...] *Next came a variety of skilled craftsmen and tradesmen of the second rank, men like goldsmiths and clothiers, dyers and leather sellers, who lived by providing specialist services or expensively wrought products. Their literacy reflected their wealth and their social standing.* (Cressy, 1994: 315-316)

The proportion of literate people among the working class was obviously lower, as was the case in rural areas (316-317). Cressy readily acknowledges that the primary method of quantification he used – an examination of the number of people capable of signing their names on documents – is imperfect, but it constitutes the only primary, if indirect, evidence of literacy available (1977: 141). There is, however, good evidence that even people of comparatively modest means not only read, but actually owned and purchased books, as Pearson's *Book Ownership in Stuart England* convincingly demonstrates:

> *Peter Clark looked at probate inventories in Kent from the late sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century to find that, by 1640, book ownership in towns across all sections of society turned up in about 40 per cent of cases*[1]. *Spufford, in* the Cambridge History of Libraries, *while noting the scarcity if these kinds of lists, refers to an inventory of 1614 for a labourer in the Forest of Arden, who left ten shillings' worth of 'certain small books' as part of an estate valued at just under £9*[2]. *Robert Tudman, a Cheshire yeoman who died in 1632, had six books valued at £1; John Parker, a Lichfield apothecary who died in 1655, owned 'sixteen books little and big'; Thomas Lawrence, a yeoman of Trumpington just outside Cambridge, had at least ten books in his study when he died*

[1] The work cited is Clark, Peter (1976). "The Ownership of Books in England, 1560-1640" in Stone, Laurence ed. *Schooling and Society: Studies in the History of Education*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 95-111.

[2] The reference of the quoted work is Spufford 2006 : 522.

> *in 1669 […]. John Tayer, a Gloucestershire shoemaker and glover, noted lists of his books in his account books in the late 1620s showing that he owned Bibles and devotional books, practical household texts and almanacs, and books on law and history*[1]. (72-73)

There are many more example of this kind, which suggest that the pool of Wither's potential readers, though perhaps somewhat restricted by the cost of the book, extended to people with no or very little formal education. Another crucial point, raised by Cressy again, must be borne in mind however: for an artist to believe that a book, especially one with a patronising didactic tone, would actually be read by the intended audience, stemmed as much from a sense of self-importance and of overbearing civic duty as from actual awareness of the taste and concerns of such readers (1994: 308-309). Wither's emblem book undoubtedly enjoyed lasting popularity, as we shall see below, but whether its success can be ascribed to its meeting a demand for moral counsel from readers – which would entail, of course, a preliminary, tacit admission of moral deficiency on their part – is much less certain. In fact, I would like to argue that it is just as likely that it was popular mainly due to its status as an illustrated collection of commented commonplaces.

5. The Emblem and Ancillary Genres in Caroline England

William London's *Catalogue of the Most Vendible Books in London* (1657) is a document of major importance to anyone seeking to investigate English literary taste in early Stuart England. It is worth noting, however, as London points out himself in the epistle to the reader, that the selection of titles that were inserted in the *Catalogue* was not made on the basis of any quantitative assessment of book sales:

> *I only take such [books] as come in my way; I wade no further then I know I can with safety give an account, and with Honour retire; and such as I mention, are to my own knowledge usually sold in most places of repute in the Country, and is fully useful to the private end I first intended by this Catalogue,* viz. *the use of these Northern Counties.* ($C1_r$)

[1] See Spufford 2006: 523-524.

London further explains that he has excluded all Latin books, which he intends to gather in a separate catalogue (ibid.), but that he made it a point to include even “Heterodox” works, arguing that it is more advisable to sell them “to such as may confute them” rather than not at all ($C2_r$).

The *Catalogue* does not provide the dates of initial publication for any of the books listed, but it includes Wither’s *Abuses Stript and Whipt* ($F1_r$), the most recent edition of which had appeared in 1617, suggesting that the selection of works provided can be viewed as fairly representative of the Caroline book trade. It is worth noting that *A Collection of Emblemes* is included as well (ibid.). A first approximation of the degree of popularity of emblem books in the 1630s may therefore be achieved by scouring London’s *Catalogue* for the emblem books published at the time, which were listed by Bath in his historical bibliography (1994: 282-285). The first one encounters is Ralph Winterton’s English translation of *De æternitate considerations* (1620) by the German Jesuit Jeremias Drexel, titled *Considerations upon Eternitie*, which saw six editions in total between 1632 and 1694 (London 1657: $M3_r$). Winterton’s epistle to the reader describes the work as “fitting all Ages, Complexions, Conditions, Places, Parts, Diseases Spirituall and Corporeal whatsoever”, thus confirming that it was meant for a wide audience beyond the court, contrary to Whitney’s or Peacham’s emblem books (see Bath 1994: 69 and 90-110), neither of which is included in the *Catalogue*. Next, London lists Thomas Heywood’s *Hierarchy of Blessed Angells* (1657: $O1_v$), a large volume – over 620 pages – which is structurally closer to Hawkins’ *Partheneia Sacra* (1633) than to Wither’s emblem book, as every engraving is accompanied by several – sometimes, several dozen - pages of text[1]. Obviously, Quarles’s *Emblemes* (1635) and *Divine Fancies* (1632) appear in the *Catalogue* on the same page as Wither’s *Collection*, as does a work identified by London as “*Emblems*” by a “Mr. Farloe”, probably a reference to one of Robert Farley’s emblem books, *Lychnocausia sive moralia facum emblemata* or his *Kalendarium Humanae Vitae (*both 1638), in which each page shows the same text in Latin and in English. Exactly like Quarles in his *Hieroglyphikes of the Life of Man* (1638), *Lychnocausia* only contains variations on the motif of the taper, a fact that is all the more surprising as there is no evidence that the authors knew each other (Bath 1994: 224). Although neither of them is mentioned in London’s *Catalogue*, the 1630s also saw a re-edition of Thomas Jenner’s *The Soules Solace*

[1] On emblem structure in Hawkins’ book, see Bath 1994: 245-248. Hawkins’ exclusion from London’s *Catalogue* is due to the fact that both his emblem books, *Partheneia Sacra* (1633) and *The Devout Heart* (1634), were published in Rouen, and not in London (Bath 1994: 282-283).

(1639, first printed in 1626) and the publication of Thomas Heywood's *Pleasant Dialogues and Dramma's* (1637). Heywood was a particularly prolific playwright and poet, and it is peculiar that no play or poem of his made it into London's book, probably, as Kathman states, "because his works were not published in folio like those of Shakespeare, Jonson, and Fletcher, and because several of his most popular works were published anonymously, his canon remained dispersed and uncertain" (*Oxford DNB,* "Heywood, Thomas (c. 1573-1641)"). Jenner's emblems, on the other hand, were evidently popular enough to be re-edited, and their absence in London's catalogue was therefore probably an oversight.

Another literary genre, the epigram, which was closely related to the emblem book[1], also enjoyed a great deal of popularity during the 1630s. Robert Chamberlain's *Nocturnal Lucubrations* (1638), a book of "Meditations divine and morall, Whereunto are added epigrams and epitaphs" (Title page) is listed in the *Catalogue* ($E1_v$), and the period also saw the publication of Nathanael Richards' *Seuen poems diuine, morall, and satyricall* […] *together with sundry epitaphs and epigrams* (1631), as well as Edward May's *Epigrams Divine and Morall* (1633), and the anonymous *A description of loue With certaine epigrams. elegies. and sonnets* (1638). This last work even includes a section titled "Master Iohnson's answere to Master Withers", in which the poet – possibly Ben Jonson, who died the previous year, but may have made his contribution earlier – replies to each stanza of Wither's poem "Shall I wasting in despair" with another, identical in structure and rhythm, but meant to satirise the original[2]. Another relevant work is Wye Saltonstall's *Picturæ Loquentes*, which saw two editions in 1631 and 1635. The title of the work is somewhat deceptive, as the author readily admits:

> *Since the Title is the first leafe that coometh under censure, some perhaps will dislike the name of Pictures, and say, I have no colour for it; which I confesse, for Pictures are not drawne in colours, but in Characters, representing to the*

[1] See the general Introduction.

[2] In Wither's poem, the persona repeatedly states that it has no interest in a woman, even one admired and lauded by everyone else, if it did not share the general opinion about her. Jonson's reply overturns the trope to have the persona prepared to love any woman, no matter how unattractive, immoral, or even "curst". As an example, here is one of Wither's stanzas: "Shall a womans vertues make / Me to perish for her sake, / Or her merits value knowne, / Make me quite forget my owne? / Be she with that goodnesse blest, / That may merit name of best, / *If she seeme not so to me, / What care I how good she be?"* The reply reads: "Shall a womans vices make / Me her vertues quite forsake, / Or her faults to me made knowne, / Make me thinke that I have none? / Be she of the most accurst, / And deserve the name of worst: / *If she be not so to me, / What care I how bad she be?*" (1638: $D3_{r}$-$_{v}$).

> *eye of the minde divers severall professions, whith if they appeare more obscure than I could wish; yet I would haue you know, that it is not the nature of a Character to be as smooth as a bull-rush, but to haue some fast and loose knots, which the ingenious Reader may easily untie.* (Unnumbered page)

Although the work contains no actual pictures in the usual sense, its references to the "eye of the minde" and to the need, for the reader, to "untie" the "fast and loose knots" of the characters suggest an approach similar to that of emblem writers. Saltonstall's book is also mentioned in London's catalogue ($T2_v$). Finally, the year 1639 saw the publication of *The fables of Æsop With his vvhole life: translated into English verse, and moralliz'd. As also emblematically illustrated with pictures* by a "W.B.".

This brief overview should suffice to support the hypothesis that Wither chose to publish his emblems in the 1630s because he deemed them likely to be a commercial success, an assumption that did not, however, deter him from also trying his luck with several potential patrons.

6. The reception of Wither's Emblem Book

As was mentioned previously, Bath notes that there never was a second edition of the book, but that it was 'revived' in various ways from 1681 on (1994: 126-127). John Manning mentions a pirated copy of the work titled *Delights for the Ingenious In above Fifty Select and Choice Emblems, Divine and Moral, Ancient and Modern*, which was published in London by Nathaniel Crouch in 1681 (2002: 246, see also Bath 1994: 126), and which contains fifty of Wither's emblems, each accompanied by an engraving matching De Passe's original motifs. The work opens with an imperfect copy of Marshall's frontispiece, as one of its most important components, the ewer from which the pilgrims are to draw their lots under the supervision of Fortune and Virtue personified[1], is missing entirely. Wither's "Preposition" is plagiarised in full, and the address to the reader is a slightly rephrased, condensed version of the original epistle "To the Reader" and "The Occasion, Intention, and Use" of the lottery game. Curiously, a copy of the frontispiece of *Eikon Basilike* (1649) with an additional *subscriptio*, a text attributed to Charles I, titled "An Imploration to the King of Kings", and three epitaphs for

[1] See Chapter IX.

Charles, the last allegedly "written by the Magnanimous *James* Marques of *Montross* with the point of his Sword"[1]. The fifty emblems Crouch selected, seemingly on no particular criteria, do not appear in the same order as in Wither's book, and the corresponding lottery stanza is appended to each *subscriptio,* all of which were left unchanged, as far as I can tell. The number of emblems having been reduced to fifty, only the lottery wheel indicating emblem numbers is reproduced, along with six of Wither's twenty-four "blank lots"[2], and a "Conclusion", presumably penned by Crouch, which consists of three stanzas written in a peculiar form that are loosely based on recurrent tropes in the emblems:

I.
The Glories of our Birth and state,
Are Shadowes, not substantiall things.
There is no armour 'gainst our fate,
Death lays its icy Hands on Kings.
Scepter and Crown
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equall laid,
With the poor crooked Sythe and Spade.
II.
Some men with swords may reap the field,
And plant fresh Laurels where they kill.
But their strong Nerves at length must yield,
They tame but one another still.
Early or late,
They stoop to fate:
And must give up their murmuring breath,
Whilst the pale Captive creeps to Death.
III.
The Laurel withers on your Brow,
Then boast no more your mighty Deeds.

[1] Montrose was a Covenanter turned Royalist during the English Civil War, who achieved several important victories for his faction before being captured and executed in 1650 (*Oxford DNB* entry "Graham, James, first marquess of Montrose (1612–1650)").

[2] See Chapter IX.

For on Deaths Purple Altar now,
See where the Victor, Victim bleeds.
All heads must come,
To the cold Tomb.
Only the Actions of the Just,
Smell sweet and blossom in the dust. (Crouch 1681: 204)

The book ends, on a much less solemn note, with an advertisement of eleven titles available at Crouch's book shop "at the Bell in the Poultry, near Cheapside". Although only a quarter of Wither's emblems appear in the book, the engravings are, for the most part, just as intricate and detailed as De Passe's, and therefore presumably required a sizeable investment on Crouch's part, which testifies to the likelihood of enduring commercial success, both of the pirated version and of the original.

Bath adds that the year 1691 saw a rather remarkable reference to the work in a painting by the Dutch artist Edward Collier, titled "Still Life with a Volume of Wither's 'Emblemes'" (1994: 127), which may have been painted either in England or for the English market[1]. Collier's painting shows the book opened at the page of Wither's portrait, surrounded by several musical instruments, a book of music sheets, what appears to be an elaborate pocket watch, and, above the book, a piece of paper tucked under a vase which reads "Vanitas Vanitatum et Omnia Vanitas"[2]. Collier no doubt had a copy of the book at hand, as the portrait is reproduced with astonishing accuracy.

Other pieces of information testify to the commercial success of Wither's work even more clearly. Freeman, with her characteristic disdain for Wither's contributions to *A Collection of Emblemes*, asserts that it was only included in London's *Catalogue* because of the popularity of De Passe's pictures (1970: 147). While there is evidence that the prints produced by the de Passe family were very popular in England throughout the late 16th and early 17th century (Veldman 2001: 159-168), it seems that Wither's additions to the pictures, including the lottery game, were equally conducive to the commercial success of the book. As Daly and Silcox put it: "The fact that few copies of the book with complete lotteries have survived and that most show considerable wear and tear suggests that the lottery was put to

[1] https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/edward-collier-100
[2] This is a quote from Ecclesiastes 1: 2.

great use, probably as a social pastime” (1991: 155-156). The aforementioned existence of several variants of the book that were issued by multiple printers also points to the popularity of the work from the very start.

7. Conclusion

Although Wither failed to obtain patronage for his emblem book, contemporary readers evidently did not share the derogatory opinions that were later expressed by Freeman and others about the work. The poet’s reasons for composing the work and for having it published in the 1630s, as well as the overall chronology, will probably remain uncertain, but this shall not prevent us from gaining precise insight into its relation to its context, nor to connect certain emblems to identifiable events and tendencies at various points during the reign of Charles I. Having hereby contextualised the work both in broad and in more narrow terms, we may now move on to studying some of its more unique rhetorical specificities, which will, nonetheless, be investigated with constant references to its place within the literary culture, both general and emblematic, in early Stuart England.

PART II

PICTURES, PLAYFULNESS, AND A POLYVOCAL PERSONA: RHETORICAL SPECIFICITIES OF *A COLLECTION OF EMBLEMES*

Chapter IV

"Emblemes […] Quickened with Metricall Illustrations": Inter-semiotic relations in *A Collection of Emblemes*

1) Introduction

In her short and astringent section on Wither's emblem book, Freeman, among many other disparaging comments and after having deplored Wither's "enormous waste of lifeless poetry" and the alleged tediousness of his moral didacticism, states:

> *This interest in driving home the moral lesson far outweighed Wither's interest in the meaning of the pictures, and these he often treats in a highly cavalier fashion* [...]. (1970: 144)

This assertion was to leave its mark on scholarship about Wither's emblems for several decades. Indeed, the question of the correspondence, or coherence, between the *picturae* and the poet's mottos and "illustrations" was raised again by Bath (1989: 1-10, and then again in 1994: 119-121), and by Daly (1993). As Daly puts it:

> *Wither very occasionally shows some impatience with the source emblems, and he even criticises the factual basis for one or two motifs. He can show a certain independence of mind with regard to the sources. But [...] these are rare occurrences that have been exaggerated by some critics and misinterpreted by others.* (203)

Another aspect of the issue, which is connected to the broader topic of inter-semiotic connections in Wither's book, has granted some attention by Daly again, who pondered the poet's use of emblem terminology (1999):

> *Wither [...] regularly refers to the* picturae *or their motifs with the words 'emblem', 'impresa', ''hieroglyphicke', 'figure', and 'type'. [...] Other telling phrases such as 'in a mysticke sense', 'in a moral sense', 'in a four-fold sense' and the* topos *of kernel and shell indicate an acquaintance with allegorical and exegetical methods of interpretation. All this suggests a knowledgeable and self-conscious practitioner of the emblem craft.* (27)

Wither's use of these terms to refer to the pictorial motifs - and, more generally, his frequent deictic pointing to the engravings in his *subscriptiones* – certainly foregrounds the picture, as it directs the reader's gaze towards it, potentially even momentarily interrupting the reading process, but it also inevitably mars any impression that the *pictura* and the text are merged into a single unit of expression. This is a conscious authorial choice on Wither's part, as is made clear in the very title of the work, where he indicates that he did not compose the "Emblemes", but, rather, collected and "quickened" them, a consideration that shall form the basis of our study on the inter-semiotic relations that are found in the work. More recently, Browning (2002) has paid closer attention to "those moments when Wither, as a poet, places himself and his verses at odds with the work's emblematic images and their inventor" (48), a question he tackles from the angle of Wither's rhetorical stance, which will be discussed in the next two chapters via the prism of his persona and its polyphony of voices. Browning, much in line with the other aforementioned scholars however, completely leaves aside the question of the precise inter-semiotic connections between Wither's text(s) and the pictures. And yet, I would like to argue that identifying and describing these connections is crucial to understanding how Wither approached the emblem genre, what ideas governed his views on pictorial representations in general, and on allegorical or symbolic engravings more particularly. The first question that ought to be raised, then, is that of Wither's pictorial sources. Most of the engravings that appear in *A Collection of Emblemes*[1] were originally composed for another, continental emblem book that was published twenty years earlier.

2) The *Nucleus Emblematum* by Gabriel Rollenhagen and the De Passe Family[2]

The *Nucleus Emblematum Selectissimorum* and the *Selectorum Emblematum Centuria Secunda* were published 1611 and 1613 respectively (Peil 1992: 255), and together constitute a collection of two hundred emblems that cover subjects such as politics, religion, morality, and occasionally simply illustrate proverbial commonplaces. They were composed by Gabriel Rollenhagen, a German lawyer and poet from Magdeburg[3], who provided brief mottoes and *subscriptiones* for impressively detailed engravings produced by several members of the De

[1] I am referring to the engravings that appear in the emblems proper. The work also contains William Marshall's frontispiece and the lottery plate at the very end, both of which were composed specifically for the book, as well as a portrait of Wither by John Payne, which may have been commissioned at the same time, or may simply have been included by the printer.

[2] Note: For the sake of simplicity, Rollenhagen's emblems will be referred to by a combination of the volume in which they are to be found (I or II) and of their number in the volume (1 to 100).

[3] *Deutsche Biographie*, entry "Rollenhagen, Gabriel"

Passe family, a renowned dynasty of artists from the Netherlands[1].

Further details concerning the composition of the book are unclear, however. While the preface of the *Nucleus Emblematum* suggests close cooperation between Rollenhagen and the De Passe family[2], the process itself remains a mystery. Veldman and Klein indicate that a series of eleven prints entitled *Arcus Cupidinis id est, Nova emblemata amatoria quibus partim vis partim remedia Amoris representantur* preceded the *Nucleus*, and that all prints included in it were later inserted into the latter work, suggesting that the graphical concept of the circular engraving surrounded by a frame containing the *inscriptio* had been devised by the De Passe family before they cooperated with Rollenhagen (Veldman and Klein 2003: 271). They further state:

> *That would would mean that it was De Passe who furnished the prototype for Rollenhagen's emblems, generating the formula which proved so successful. On the other hand, it is perfectly possible that the two men, after their first meeting, embarked on a kind of experiment, the* Arcus*, which soon resulted in the more comprehensive* Nucleus. (Ibid: 272)

Rollenhagen is presumably the author of most of the epigrams, although Warnke suggests that he has kept the *inscriptiones* used by De Passe in the *Arcus* (Warncke 1983: 426), which, he argues, differ from the others in quality and in length. Veldman and Klein however conjecture that the verses are indeed Rollenhagen's work, albeit less accomplished than in the other emblems, perhaps because they were written as part of the aforementioned experimentation (Veldman and Klein 2003: 273).

Unsurprisingly, the main source for De Passe's and Rollenhagen's work were previous emblem books. Veldman and Klein cite Alciato, Corrozet, Paradin, Aneau, Simeoni, Sambucus, Junius, Camerarius, Barargli, Typot, and Orozco (284) as having directly influenced the design of the *Nucleus Emblematum*. Daly and Young also trace back some of

[1] Crispijn Van de Passe the Elder (ca. 1565-1637) is usually identified as the engraver, but Bath suggests that several members of the family probably contributed to the work (Bath 1994: 116).

[2] *"Inveni etiam egregium et solertem chalcographicum Crispinum Passaeum, qui mihi ultro suam operam detulit, et satis ad meam mentem apposite cupreis ea laminis incisa, foras dedit"* ("I have also found an excellent and skilful engraver, Crispijn de Passe, who has spontaneously shown me his own work and who has published this work, engraved on copper plates, in a way which is sufficiently suitable to my intent") in the dedication to the Archbishop of Magdeburg, entitled "REVERENDISSIMO ET POTENTISSIMO PRINCIPI AC DOMINO, DOMINO CHRISTIANO GUILIELMO, ARCHIEPISCOPO MAGDEBURGENSI" in the *Nucleus Emblematum,* translated by, and quoted in, Veldman and Klein 2003: 271.

the *inscriptiones* to two classical authors who likely inspired them: Virgil and Horace[1], while Veldman and Klein have identified references to Ovid, Cicero and Pliny the Elder, and regard the emblem book *Quaeris quid sit amor* by the Dutch emblem writer Daniël Heinsius as a forerunner to the *Nucleus* (272). However, this process was not simply plagiaristic:

> *When Rollenhagen elaborated on an idea from one of his predecessors it was always in a highly original way, and never a servile imitation. The same applied to De Passe's imagery. Also, when the artist had earlier models or well-known prototypes at his disposal, he always succeeded in creating a new, harmonious and convincing composition. Aemulatio, the desire to equal or excel others, was an end in itself. In almost every case when De Passe borrowed motifs or compositions from others, his attractive scenes transcend his models and relegate them to oblivion.* (285)

Wolfgang Harms provides further insights into the composition of Rollenhagen's emblems. He points out that De Passe and Rollenhagen originally planned to compose five hundred emblems instead of only two "centuries", and therefore asserts that it would be "amiss" ("*verfehlt*") (Harms 1974: 49) to venture an interpretation of the order in which the emblems appear. Although there is evidence that the position of certain emblems in the *Nucleus* has been chosen deliberately – notably, and understandably, the emblems with which each volume opens and closes[2] - most emblems, it seems, appear in no particular order, and, as far as I can tell, no grouping by topic is discernible. It seems that Wither shared this impression, as he kept the emblem sequence unchanged, save a few accidental inversions that are clearly marked as such[3].

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[1] For a complete list of references, see Daly and Young (2002).

[2] The *pictura* of the final emblem in the *Nucleus Emblematum* shows a hand holding a garland emerging from a cloud on the right, and the motto reads "PERSEVERANTI DABITUR" ("It shall be given to those who persevere"), an obvious reference to the reader who has reached the end of the book without faltering. The very first emblem depicts a wise man studying an astrolabe on the left, and a skeleton surrounded by material wealth on the right, and the motto reads "VIVITUR INGENIO CÆTERA MORTIS ERVNT" ("One only lives through the spirit, all other things belong to death"). While the emblem could very well appear elsewhere in the collection, its polysemic emphasis on the "spirit" - which, if read in the light of the picture, can be taken to mean both the intellect and the immortal soul – serves as a powerful introductory statement to a didactic work filled with moral and religious advice.

[3] For instance, in the *Nucleus Emblematum*, emblem 11 depicts a snail crossing a beam, headed by the motto "LENTE SED ATTENTE". The same appears as emblem I-19 in Wither's book, but, below the page number, a smaller, seemingly handwritten note indicates that it was originally intended to be emblem I-11. The same applies to several other emblems too.

Harms also states that the striking brevity of the poetical comments, which stand in stark contrast to Wither's thirty-line-*subscriptiones* in *A Collection of Emblemes*, indicates that the German poet composed his book in the tradition of the "*brevitas*-ideal of the epigram" (Harms 1973: 50), a tradition, Spica reminds us, that dates back to "the Ancients" (Spica 1996: 229), who saw in it an ideal mode of expression combining the Aristotelian features of *enargeia*, or striking vividness, and *energeia,* or dynamic persuasion[1]. The epigram, Spica continues, is also closely connected to the Italian Renaissance idea of the "*concetto"*, which simultaneously refers to an idea or concept in itself, and to a brief and condensed mode of expression of the same, so as to make it "exceptionally subtle" while ensuring that it also "penetrates the mind" (Spica 1996: 229)[2]. When such an idea is conveyed specifically by combining one textual element – usually a very short one (Daly 1998: 27)[3] - and a picture, the composition is often called an *impresa* (ibid.) rather than an emblem, but there is significant disagreement as to the exact distinction between the two, and as to the requirements that a text-image combination ought to meet to be categorised as an *impresa* (28-30). It is commonly accepted that an *impresa* was intended to be "a personal badge [...] invented for the princes of church and state" (27-28), while the emblem, according to Henry Estienne "may demonstrate things universall, and hold the rank of morall precepts, which may as well serve for all the world, as for the proper author of the Embleme" (29)[4]. These distinctions were not acknowledged unanimously however, as Rollenhagen's work exemplifies quite clearly; indeed, its very title reads as follows: *Nucleus Emblematum Selectissimorum, Que Itali Vulgo Impresas* ("Core of the finest emblems, which the Italians usually call *imprese*").

Whether Rollenhagen and De Passe's text-image structures should be categorised as "emblems" or "*imprese*" is therefore relatively trivial. Far more relevant to the question of Wither's reworking of his source material is the authorial stance that appears to underlie their composition, especially with respect to the interaction between text and image in the process

[1] On this distinction and its subtleties, see for instance Bernhart, Walter and Wolf, Werner, *Description in Literature and other Media*, Rodopi, Amsterdam, 2007, pp. 16 and 133-134

[2] "Révélation chez Gracián d'une extrême subtilité et pénétration de l'esprit ou agudeza – dont l'argutezza de Tesauro est le synonyme" (my translation). On Tesauro's concept of *argutezza*, which loosely translates to "sharpness of wit", see for instance Montgomery, Robert L., *Terms of Response: Language and the Audience in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Theory*, Pennsylvania State University, 1992, pp. 16-28.

[3] Daly refers to Paolo Giovio's treatise *Dialogo dell'imprese militari et amorosi* (1559), in which the Italian scholar insists that the textual part of an *impresa* ought not to exceed three words, unless it is in verse (p. 9).

[4] Daly quotes Thomas Blount's *The art of making devises treating of hieroglyphicks, symboles, emblemes, aenigma's, sentences, parables, reverses of medalls, armes, blazons, cimiers, cyphres and rebus* (1646), p. 25, which is a translation of Henry Estienne's *L'art de faire des devises* (1645).

of conveying meaning to the reader. Harms points out that, although Rollenhagen expresses his full agreement and satisfaction with the engravings (Harms 1973: 52)[1] in the dedication of the *Nucleus Emblematum*, there is no indication as to the precise division of tasks between the poet and the engraver(s). Did Rollenhagen commission the engravings based on epigrams he had written before? Or did he instruct the De Passe family to produce precise motifs to which he intended to add the *subscriptiones* later? Did Rollenhagen provide descriptions of the engravings he wanted, or did he only give rough instructions, granting the engraver(s) authorial freedom? Veldman and Klein suppose that the *picturae* were designed by the artists in close collaboration with the poet, but that the engravers may likewise have been granted much freedom, particularly in composing the background scenes of the engravings (Veldman and Klein 2003: 274). For instance, the *pictura* of emblem I-20 in the *Nucleus* is identified as a visual joke likely devised by De Passe:

> *Emblem 20, '*Transeat*' (It will pass) is an elaboration of the well-known saying of the stoics '*Perfer et obdura*' ('Endure and persevere'), which they derived from Ovid's* Amores *III, 11, 7, his* Tristia *V, 11, 7, or from* Catullus *8, 11. The epigram likens a brief thunderstorm to evils and tribulations which will be overcome (for the sun will shine again). The half-naked young boy in the illustration tries to protect himself against the pouring rain with a huge sieve [...]. This is not only a funny and seemingly foolish act, but De Passe (and many of his readers) knew that the sieve is also the attribute of Prudence* [...] (276).

Harms also points out that, at the time at which the *Nucleus Emblematum* was published, emblematic motifs often allowed for more than one interpretation (Harms 1973: 52). To steer the reader towards the intended meaning, engravers such as De Passe took full advantage of the background of their pictures to provide additional hermeneutic keys. Harms mentions emblem 20 of the *Centuria Secunda*, which depicts a Pelican that appears to be feeding its young by cutting open its own flank with its beak and pouring its blood over them. Rollenhagen's motto and his *subscriptio* place the motif firmly in a political context: the *inscriptio* reads "PRO LEGE ET PRO GREGE" ("For the law and for the people"), and the

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[1] Harms quotes Rollenhagen's dedication to Prince Christian Wilhelm, the Archbishop of Magdeburg, in the *Nucleus Emblematum*, vol. 1, p. 17.

subscriptio "*Dux, vitam, bonus,* et pro lege, et pro grege *ponit, / Hæc veluti pullos sanguine spargit avis.*" ("A good Lord will sacrifice his life both for the law and for the people, like this bird which pours its blood unto its young") (Warncke 1983: 252-253). Although the same motif had frequently been construed as an allegory of Christ since the *Physiologus* (Harms 1973: 52)[1], relatively common alternative interpretations circulated as well[2]. The mere combination of Rollenhagen's text, which contains no reference to the biblical interpretation, and of the foregrounded motif in the *pictura*, which could then be construed merely as an allegorised representation of devotion and self-sacrifice to the benefit of others, would therefore restrict the emblem's meaning to the political sphere. However, the background scene of the engraving clearly depicts a crucified Christ whose blood fills the chalices of the believers standing below him. It is then up to the reader to combine the textual elements and the pictorial clues, and to reach an interpretation that intertwines political and religious considerations: that of the ruler as God's earthly representative, whose power is legitimised through their Christ-like devotion to their people[3]. Such a combinatory mode of reading, however, presupposes a reader who is not only able to read the *inscriptio* and the *subscriptio* in Latin, but who is familiar enough with text-image combinations of this kind, with the symbolic content of the pictorial motifs, and with contemporary political theory, to reach the conclusion to which the clues point in a joint fashion. Harms describes these clues as "interpretative fragments" ("*Deutungsfragmente*") (Harms 1973: 54), and states that Rollenhagen and De Passe's emblems, because of their "open form, encourage the reader to fill in or to complement what is provided through an active and conscientious dealing with the [emblems]"[4], a stance which, he argues, "makes it seem as though the author and the reader are placed on almost equal footing *vis-à-vis* their efforts at discovering their true meaning" (Ibid.). Harms insists that this authorial stance does not, however, presuppose a "participative imagination" ("*mitschaffende Phantasie"*) (61) on the part of the reader – he

[1] The Pelican appears on page 30 of the *Sancti Patris Nostri Epiphanii, Episcopi Constantiae Cypri, ad Physiologum. Eiusdem in die festo Palmarum sermo*, a version of the *Physiologus* that was published by Christopher Plantin in Antwerp in 1588.

[2] In Junius Hadrianus's *Emblemata* (1565) for instance, the same *pictura* is accompanied by the motto "QUOD IN TE EST, PROME" ("Bring forth what is within you"), and the *subscriptio* encourages the reader to make use of their intellectual and spiritual faculties by metaphorically "piercing" their breast to reveal their heart and soul (emblem 7), quoted in Henkel and Schöne 1967, p. 811. An emblem with the same *pictura* and a similar message also appears in Whitney's *Choice of Emblemes* (1586), p. 87.

[3] This is the interpretation that Warncke proposes for this emblem (1983: 252).

[4] "[Es] lässt sich zeigen, dass Rollenhagens emblematische Epigramme in dem Sinne Fragment sind, dass hier durch eine offene Form der Leser zur Fortsetzung oder Erfüllung des Vorgegebenen aufgefordert wird, womit Autor und Leser bei dem Bemühen um Wahrheitserschliessung fast auf gleicher Stufe zu stehen scheinen", my translation.

adds that Rollenhagen and De Passe's emblematic practice indicates that they are not concerned with reader psychology ("*Leserpsyche*") (ibid.) – but is meant to exemplify "objective interpretative possibilities of allegorically veiled truths, which are no longer the sole prerogative of the author"(Ibid.)[1], an idea firmly rooted in the "premises of the *mundus symbolicus* worldview" (ibid.)[2].

As Peil has demonstrated however, the exegetical mode with which Rollenhagen and De Passe intended their emblems to be approached requires further nuancing. Peil categorised Rollenhagen's emblems with respect to the process of composition of the allegorical engravings on the one hand, and to the structural characteristics of the epigrams on the other. His study highlights the fact that the motifs composing the emblematic *picturae* in Rollenhagen's work are not chosen – and, in certain cases, assembled – in the same manner, and that each mode of selection and composition entails particular semiotic intentions.

Firstly, he identifies what he calls 'hermeneutic emblems':

> [This category] *takes account of the fact that we have to proceed from the idea of the priority of the picture, that is to say, from the emblematic element of meaning. Its semantic content [...]is initially arrived at by the emblem writer in a hermeneutic way, and has then to be reconstructed anew by the reader through recourse to the interpretational aids provided by the verbal parts of the emblem.* (Peil 1992: 258)

The example Peil provides is emblem I. 96, which represents an arm emerging from a cloud and holding a flail with which it beats stalks of wheat on the ground below it. Peil argues that this agricultural motif was taken from daily life and was thus 'observable at any time' (ibid.), which restricts the emblem writer's[3] job to merely extracting the allegorical meaning contained in the motif and to providing textual clues to allow the less symbol-savvy reader to do the same.

The second type is the "allegorizing emblem":

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[1] "Objektive Möglichkeiten der exegetischen Erschließung einer allegorisch verhüllten Warheit, die hier nicht mehr allein dem Autor vorbehalten bleiben", my translation.

[2]"Im Sinne der Prämissen der Vorstellung vom *mundus symbolicus*", my translation. See Chapter II for further details on the idea of the *mundus symbolicus*.

[3] Understood here as the person who determines which motifs will appear in the *pictura* and who will provide the corresponding *inscriptio* and *subscriptio*.

> [It] *embraces combinations of significant single elements, that is to say allegorical or still life groupings. The only criterion for the arrangement of the single elements is the meaning which the emblem is intended to convey. The problem of potential facticity is irrelevant for this type; priority of the picture is out of the question because the starting point is the meaning. With this meaning in mind, a suitable picture is chosen, and it is irrelevant whether the elements of the picture derive from the sphere of hieroglyphics or from other pictorial traditions.* (Ibid. : 260)

In this case, as opposed to the single semiotic unit present in a "hermeneutic emblem" which merely needs to be deciphered, the emblem writer has to resort to a complex symbolic construction, an assembly of individually meaningful motifs, to paint a broader and more intricate picture. This emblem type constitutes a testimony to the truly linguistic aspect of emblematic motifs, whereby each motif could be likened to a word or small semantic unit, several of which are then assembled to form a sentence. This is not surprising if one considers Daniel Russell's following statement:

> *It may be more enlightening, and perhaps closer to the way the process of translating verbal instructions into illustrations actually worked, to assume that the artist was working, at least in part, from a visualization of the textual instructions of the kind the normal contemporary reader might form.* (Russell 1999: 83)

The emblem writer's task here is fourfold: firstly, he has to select the different allegorical elements he intends to assemble; next, he has to provide at least some clue as to the intrinsic meaning of each; thirdly, he must combine the elements in such a fashion as to form a coherent structure, and finally, he must explicate the moral lesson conveyed by said structure as a whole. This emblem type requires close collaboration between the emblem writer and the engraver(s), as the composition that the first has in mind needs to be depicted to a high degree of precision by the second. Peil identifies emblem I.39 as such an "allegorizing emblem", which is "emblematizing doubts of love":

> *The motto and the* subscriptio *tell us that it is love which*

> *is designated by the burning heart, the anchor is employed as a conventional symbol for hope, and the taut bow represents timid fear: "*Speque metuque pavet calido cor amore perustum / Spes est solicito plena timore venus" [The heart burning with hot love is trembling with hope and fear. Love is hope full of timid fear] (Peil 1992 : 260)[1].

Although Rollenhagen's verses spell out the general meaning of the emblem, it is the reader who must possess sufficient background knowledge and familiarity with the genre to identify the anchor as a symbol for hope and the taut bow as a representation of tense – rather than "timid" – fear (Warncke 1983: 88)[2], and who has to combine these semiotic fragments to understand why the *pictura* and the *subscriptio* were thus used together. This emblem also exemplifies Rollenhagen's tendency to disregard some theoretical "rules" of emblem composition devised by theorists of the genre. For instance, the German baroque poet Justus Georg Schottelius insisted that an emblem ought to be fully understandable only when text and picture are read in combination, and not through one or the other separately[3]. It is worth noting that Rollenhagen's mottoes and verses tend to be more straightforward in most "allegorizing emblems", perhaps because the German poet was aware that interpreting these compositions presents more of a challenge, even to a well-educated reader. Such is the case, for example, of emblem I-5, the *pictura* of which depicts a snake, a common symbol of wisdom, wrapped around a spade, which represents labour, while it holds a wreath in its mouth to signify glory. Even though the idea expressed in the motif was commonplace enough to pose no exegetical problems to early modern readers, especially given the background scene depicting scholars on the left and a husbandman on the right as personifications of intellectual and physical work respectively, Rollenhagen's *subscriptio* leaves no room for equivocation: "*Sæpe* LABORE fuit VIRTUS, VIRTUTE PARATA / GLORIA, *non alio conciliandamodo*" ("Often merit is earned through labour, and glory [is earned] through merit only, and in no other manner"). Similar remarks also apply to emblem

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[1] Peil's translation.

[2] Translating "*solicito*" by "tense" makes clear why the taut bow is a fitting emblem for the concept.

[3] Introduction by "Der Suchende" ["the Seeker"] (Justus Georg Schottelius) in "Der Geheime" ["The Secretive One"] (Franz Julius von dem Knesebeck), *Dreyständige Sinn-Bilder*, Braunschweig 1643, quoted in Harms 1973 p. 61.

I-47 and II-26 among others, both of which fit the “allegorizing” type[1]. This may suggest that Rollenhagen was aware that some compositions would pose more interpretative problems than others, and that he was willing to sacrifice *impresa*-like secrecy for clarity. As we shall see, Wither’s persona expresses particular disdain for emblems of this kind, but, interestingly, not because of the straightforward *subscriptiones* - which were cut off from the copper plates used to print the emblems – but rather because of what it considers to be overloaded, and therefore needlessly obscure, pictures.

The third emblem type Peil identifies is the “example-emblem”. Peil is referring to the so-called *exemplum*, a rhetorical device defined by Lee Sonnino as “a form of rhetorical proof by analogy using the deeds of particular men, historical or fabulous” (Sonnino 1968: 258). Sonnino also quotes Henry Peacham’s somewhat more extensive definition in *The Garden of Eloquence*[2]:

> *The rehearsal of a deed or saying past applying it to our purpose whereof there be two kinds, the one true which is taken from chronicles or histories of credit and is of great force to move, persuade and inflame men with the love of virtue...The other kind of example is feigned by poets and inventors of fables for delectations sake...the use whereof ought to be very rare, namely in great and grave causes.*
> (Sonnino, 1968: 90)

“Example-emblems” therefore require, perhaps, even more thorough pre-existing knowledge on the part of the reader, as they must be able to 1) recognise the character(s) and the scene depicted in the engraving, 2) remember on which particular virtue(s) the character in question relied to overcome the situation in the myth, and 3) associate these virtues and the moral advice contained in the motto and in the *subscriptio*. I-14 for instance is an “example-emblem” that clearly depicts the climax of the story commonly called “Hercules at the

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[1] Emblem I-47 shows a snake again, this time wrapped around a cross and wearing a crown. Rollenhagen’s verses read “Rebus in adversis superata sorte CORONOR: / Sic Sapiens patiens sub cruce lætus ovat” (“If I succeed in overcoming my difficult fate, I shall be crowned: / Therefore a wise man rejoices while he is beneath the cross”). Emblem II-26 depicts two entwined cornucopias and two entwined snakes wrapped around a caduceus crowned with Hermes’s winged helmet, and the *subscriptio* reads “VIRTUTI FORTVNA COMES, Sudore paratur, / Fructus honos oneris, fructus honoris onus” (“Good Fortune is a friend of Virtue, and honour is the reward for hardship”).

[2] Sonnino refers to the 1954 edition with notes by W. G. Crane, published by ‘Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints’ in Gainesville, Florida, pp. 186 ff.

Crossroads"[1], where the demi-god has to choose either the path of vice, personified as a masked devil in the *pictura*, or that of virtue, in the person of the wise man holding a book. Rollenhagen and De Passe may have been aware of the challenge such an emblem would present to most readers, and provide textual clues to ease the interpretation: the hero's name is indicated below his feet, and the Greek word "ΠΟΤΕΡΟΝ" ("which (of the two)?") steers the (hellenophone) reader towards the correct identification of the narrative embedded in the *pictura.* The *subscriptio* stands out as well as one of the few in the form of a quatrain and not of a couplet, and therefore has enough space to expand on the myth and its significance:

> *NESCIO QVO VERTAM mentem vocat ardua virtus*
> *Huc illuc Venus et splendida Luxuries.*
> *At tu, si sapis, Herculeos imitare labores :*
> *Sperne voluplatem, delitiasqui fuge.*
> ("I don't know where to turn my mind, as wearisome
> Virtue calls me to one side, and Venus and delightful
> debauchery to the other.
> If you are wise however, follow the example of Hercules:
> Scorn pleasure and avoid wantonness.")

Peil identifies several other "example-emblems": I-19, which represents Sisyphus, whose name appears on the millstone he pushes up the mount; I-33, which shows Pyramus and Thisbe, both of whom are identified by name in the *subscriptio*, which is, notably, also one of the few quatrains in the *Nucleus*; I-53, which shows David playing his harp. While David's name appears only in Hebrew on the *pictura*, this biblical motif would probably have been familiar enough to any European reader in the early seventeenth century to be identified at first glance; I-57, which bears Ixion's name right below the wheel to which the mythological character is tied; II-67, which shows, and explicitly identifies, the famous German character Claus Narr; and II-76, the *pictura* of which shows Apollo sitting on a block of stone which bears his name, albeit in Greek and not in Roman letters, but where the God's name also appears in the *subscriptio* (Peil 1992: 261 - footnote 19). In all instances, textual clues are provided to steer the reader's exegetical efforts towards the narratives from which the depicted scenes are taken.

Notably however, Peil adds other emblems to the list, namely emblem I-10, the

[1] See Tucker 2003: 82 ff.

engraving of which he and Warncke both identify as a depiction of Arion, the Greek poet who, upon having praised Apollo in a masterful song before being thrown into the sea by pirates, is rescued by a Dolphin sent by the god of music (Peil 1992: 261 and Warncke 1983: 30)[1]. The engraving shows a young male character holding his lute and standing on a dolphin, and the *subscriptio* suggests that he is saved by his virtue in the face of danger[2]. Peil also adds emblem II-45, which shows a crowned man with six arms, each bearing a different weapon, headed by the motto "CONCORDA INSVPERABILIS". Peil and Warncke suggest that it is a representation of the monster Geryon (Peil 1992: 261, footnote 19 and Warncke 1983: 302), who appears in several Greek myths[3], but neither in this nor in the Arion-emblem are the characters identified by name, nor is there any reference made to either narrative in the *subscriptiones*.

Peil's labelling of both these as "example-emblems" is therefore somewhat problematic. The Arion-motif appears already in Alciato's *Emblematum Liber* (1531), although its interpretation differs greatly from that provided by Rollenhagen: instead of depicting Arion as a personification of unwavering virtue, it asserts that even wild beasts, such as the dolphin, are kinder still than human misers[4]. In fact, I have been unable to find any emblem pre-dating the *Nucleus Emblematum* in which Arion would have been associated with virtue in this manner, a fact that makes the scarcity of textual clues as to the depicted motif in Rollenhagen's text all the more surprising. As opposed to the emblem representing the myth of Hercules at the Crossroads, which would have been easily recognisable - especially given the text embedded in the *pictura* - and which includes an unequivocal and conventional moral message, the Arion-emblem seems to have been composed in a manner far closer to the aforementioned "brevitas-ideal" of the *impresa*, with a deliberate veiling of the emblem's full signification[5]. Similar remarks apply to the Geryon-emblem. While there

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[1] On the myth itself, see Hamel, D., *Reading Herodotus: a guided tour through the wild boars, dancing suitors, and crazy tyrants of the history*, JHU Press, Baltimore, Maryland, 2012, p. 109

[2] The *subscriptio* reads "*Non adversa timet* SPERNIT PERICVLA VIRTUS, *Illa vel in medio, nescit obire, mari*" ("Virtue does not fear misfortune and scorns danger, and cannot die even in the midst of the sea").

[3] See the website THEOI GREEK MYTHOLOGY (https://www.theoi.com/Gigante/GiganteGeryon.html) for references.

[4] See Alciato's *Emblematum Liber* (1531) A6r, consulted on the *Alciato at Glasgow Website* (http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A31a011). It is worth noting that the emblem that Warncke identifies as the main source for Rollenhagen and De Passe's composition (Lorenz van Haecht, *Mikrokosmos*, published in Antwerp in 1579, p. 64) provides the same interpretation as Alciato's.

[5] For a fascinating interpretation of Rollenhagen's Arion-emblem in the light of seventeenth century moral philosophy, and especially of Christian Stoicism, see Paz López-Peláez Casellas, Maria. "'Spernit Pericula Virtus' - Una Aproximación al Músico Arión Como Símbolo de la Virtud" in *Cuadernos de ARTE e ICONOGRAFÍA*, Tomo XVIII, Número 36 – 2° Semestre de 2009, Madrid, pp. 371-394.

are precedents for this pictorial motif with the exact same motto in Alciato's second emblem book, the *Emblematum Libellus* (1546)[1] and in subsequent translations of the work[2], the picture seems to pose interpretative challenges even to seasoned readers of emblems, including George Wither, who, although he correctly identifies Arion in the *subscriptio* to his own emblem I-10, struggles with the Geryon-engraving in emblem III-45 and simply calls the depicted creature a "Monster" (Wither 1635: 179). Even Huston Diehl, who compiled an *Index of Icons in English Emblem Books 1500-1700*, included no entry for "Geryon", and identifies the motif in Wither's book as a "King with six arms" (Diehl 1948: 133). Here, once again, Rollenhagen and De Passe seem to favour an *impresa*-like composition, where the *subscriptio* indicates the broad strokes of the moral advice intended, but where the full meaning of the text-image composition would only be accessible to readers familiar with Alciato's emblem books.

Peil does concede that "whenever mythological personifications are merely used as visual correlatives of their respective virtues or skills, the border with the allegorizing type is very likely to be breached" (Peil 1992: 263), but given his restriction of the term "allegorising emblem" to compositions made up of multiple motifs, the definition would fit the Arion-emblem and the Geryon-emblem only very loosely. Furthermore, the semiotic implications of these figures are evidently not clear at all, even to experienced readers.

Peil identifies several other possible combinations of emblem types, further blurring the borders between them, and making definitive categorisation even more difficult a task. For instance, when discussing emblem II-15, the *pictura* of which depicts a hand emerging from a cloud that holds a crozier, on which a crane is perched on one leg while holding a stone in its other talon, Peil asserts that this emblem would fall squarely under the definition of the "hermeneutic emblem" if the crozier, instead of being held *ex nubibus*, were instead stuck into the ground, as it would then have "more closely approximated a 'perch'". In that case, Peil argues, the *pictura* would have depicted a scene possessing what is commonly called "potential facticity" (Peil 1992: 264, see also Bath 1994: 5), that is, one that could, at least in principle, be witnessed in nature. The actual motif however, he argues, is, in fact, "a combination of an element of meaning from the realm of natural science with an allegorizing

[1] Alciato 1546, B3v f11v, consulted on http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A46a018. In the original emblem, Geryon is represented naked, with only two arms and three heads.

[2] In *Los Emblemas* (1549), a Spanish translation of Alciato's emblems by Bernardino Daza that was published in Lyon by Guillaume Rouille and Macé Bonhomme with new woodcuts, the design of the Geryon-emblem has changed a great deal, and is much closer to De Passe's depiction of the same: the character has only one crowned head, but six arms, is wearing an armour and is carrying different weapons in his hands (p. 172).

picture element" (i.e. the crane on the one hand, and the crozier held by the hand emerging from the cloud on the other), which should, "when seen as a whole, [...] be classified as an allegorizing emblem type" (ibid.), where it is the intended meaning, rather than the verisimilitude of the scene, that ought to guide reader interpretation[1].

One particularly intricate example in which several emblem types are combined is the aforementioned Sisyphus-emblem (I-19). The engraving depicts the unfortunate character, seemingly at two different stages of his repetitive and fruitless task: on the right, he is beginning his ascent of the hill with the heavy millstone, while on the left, atop the acclivity, he witnesses powerlessly how the stone tumbles down again. On the left, seemingly sitting in a small cave or recess in the mountain, two small rabbits are barely discernible in the shadow. Here, Peil argues, the example-type is combined with an additional hermeneutic element – the rabbits, which are "understood in the exegetical tradition as man hoping for God" (Peil 1992: 265)[2]. Therefore, "Sisyphus is no longer a mere example of laborious effort but an example of the untiring virtuousness of the devout" (266).

An additional layer of hermeneutic clues – or, as the case may be, of elements that render the interpretation of the emblem more complicated still – is to be found in numerous background motifs in the *picturae*. Peil refers to several examples, including the previously discussed pelican-emblem (II-20) or emblem II-31, which depicts a burning candle in the foreground, "symbolizing a sovereign who sacrifices himself for his people, [...] under the motto 'Aliis inserviendo consumor' [In the Service of others I consume myself]" (271). Peil continues:

> *[T]here is, on the left-hand side of the picture, a rider on a horse which is rearing up within a cloud of smoke. In Warncke's interpretation, this background scene shows the self-sacrifice of Marcus Curtius in the forum of Rome who, according to tradition, plunged into a deep crevice*

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[1] There seems, however, to be a double standard on Peil's part concerning *ex nubibus* body parts. In his only example of what he deems to be an unequivocally "hermeneutic" emblem, the flail is held by a hand emerging from a cloud as well (p. 258). This does not, however, invalidate his taxonomy, as there are numerous other emblems that fit rather neatly into the "hermeneutic" category, including emblem I-11, the *pictura* of which depicts a snail crossing a branch, or emblem I-23, where a bear can be seen in the process of climbing a tree towards a beehive in search for honey, among many others.

[2] Peil quotes Picinelli's *Mundus Symbolicus* (Cologne, 1687, ed. Dietrich Donat, Hildesheim and New York: Olms. 1979), part I, p. 404 (lib. IV, num. 511)) as his reference. A similar interpretation is suggested by Warncke (1983 p. 48). It is notable that the rabbit also appears in emblem I-23, where it seemingly carries the same meaning.

in the earth so that it would close up again as an oracle had foretold. (ibid.)

It is noteworthy that the degree to which the interpretation of these emblems hinges on the additional clues in the background varies greatly from one to the other. The *subscriptio* of the candle emblem (II-31, "Ut candela perit, nobis dum lumina praestat: / Dux ita, subiectos dom fovet, ipse cadit" ("Like the candle that disappears as it grants light to others, the lord sinks in service to his subjects") explicitly refers to the political leader ("Dux"), who is not consumed so much as he literally "sinks" ("cadit"). In this instance, the background motif evidently steered Rollenhagen's choice of words, but the general meaning of the emblem is conveyed with sufficient clarity by the candle in the foreground and by the text. As was shown above however, this is not the case with the pelican-emblem, where it is the crucifixion scene in the background that, alone, endows the emblem with the aforementioned religious undertones.

Finally, Peil suggests that certain *picturae* in the *Nucleus Emblematum* are structured antithetically, notably in emblem II-33, "which illustrates the motto 'Fures privati in nervo publici in auro' ["He who steals private property wears fetters, he who embezzles public property wears golden chains"] by showing in the foreground the splendidly arrayed thief of public property and in the background both armed robbery and the gallows" (273). Peil's other example of the same however arguably constitute a chronological, and not an antithetical, composition. Emblem I-58, the *pictura* of which depicts the sun scorching a bed of flowers on the right, and a heavy cloud showering the same with rain, and thus reviving them, on the left, is headed by the motto "POST TENTATIO NEM CONSOLATIO (quite literally "After the trial comes the consolation"), which leaves little doubt as to the diachronic succession of the two scenes. These points of nuance notwithstanding, Peil's taxonomy highlights that the complex and often multi-layered structure of De Passe's *picturae*, combined with the fragmentary nature of Rollenhagen's epigrams, presuppose an active, highly educated, and astute reader, much to the – alleged – annoyance of George Wither.

3) Deixis, distance, and pictorial polysemy in *A Collection of Emblemes*

In Chapter I, I argued for the methodological relevance of Rajewsky's ideas on the need for an individually tailored analysis for each object of study in which inter-semiotic connections are at play. As we shall see, this analytical framework is particularly well-suited for our purpose, as Wither's treatment of his pictorial sources is quite idiosyncratic, and is, furthermore, quite different from Rollenhagen's. Where the original text rarely exceeds a distich in length, and usually only "periphrases" the motto that appears in the circular frame around the engraving, as Wither himself puts it (1635: TR.-2), the English poet adds thirty

lines of verse and an additional motto couplet to each of them, and nonetheless complains that he found himself "confined" by the size of the page, a constraint that, he claims "much injured the libertie of [his] Muse" (TR.-3), well-befitting his reputation, even to this day, as "perhaps the most long-winded of seventeenth-century poets" (Browning 2002: 58).

It is noteworthy however that Wither adds two very distinct bodies of text to each of Rollenhagen's emblems: the motto couplet at the top, and the *subscriptio* below the engraving. The couplet is usually a slightly fleshed-out translation, or adaptation, of Rollenhagen's shorter *inscriptio*, but one could argue that it is composed, and relates to the *pictura*, in a very similar manner. Indeed, as was shown above, Rollenhagen presupposes the reader's familiarity with the inter-semiotic nature of emblems, and therefore does not deem it necessary to explicitly direct the reader's attention to the visual elements in the engravings[1]. Out of the two hundred English motto couplets added by Wither, only five refer, or direct the reader's attention, to the picture, two of which, unsurprisingly, head the emblems mentioned in note 1 below. The motto couplet of emblem II-31 is the only one that urges the reader to "behold, [...] the Picture, here / Of what, keepes *Man* and *Childe*, in feare" (Wither 1635: 93), while the motto of emblem II-4 encourages the same to "Marke what *Rewards,* to *Sinne,* are due" (66). In a more subtle fashion, the motto couplet of emblem III-20, the *pictura* of which shows a pelican feeding its young by pouring its own blood into their beaks, reads "Our *Pelican*, by bleeding, *thus*, / Fulfill'd the *Law*, and cured *Us*", pointing towards the manner in which the blood gushes from the bird's open flank. It is notable that, in emblems II-31 and III-20, the deictic serves a poetic purpose by being included in the rhyming scheme ("here" rhyming with "feare" and "thus" rhyming with "us", respectively).

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[1] There are, at first glance, two exceptions: in emblem I-8, the *pictura* of which shows a skeleton that seemingly emerges from a cup that is held by a hand *ex nubibus*, Rollenhagen's motto reads "In hunc intuens pius esto" ("Have regard to this and be pious"). Although the use of the deictic "hunc" stresses the necessary switching, on the reader's part, between the text and the picture, and thus places the image and the text at a distance from one another, disrupting the inter-semiotic symbiosis. This engraving, which was taken directly from Paradin's *Devises Héroïques* (1551: 255) is a reference to an Egyptian ritual which the original author describes as follows: "Quand plusieurs des antiques Egipciens venoient à banqueter de compagnie, la coutume estoit que pendant le repas, l'un d'entre eus portant une image ou simulacre de la Mort, s'en venoit le montrer à un chacun de tous les assistans: en leurs disant l'un après l'autre, *Voy tu? Regardes bien que c'est que cela, faiz tant bonne chere que tu voudras, car ainsi te faut devenir.*" The deictic reference to a visual sign is therefore to be understood mainly as an epigrammatic mimicking of this ritual, rather than as a component of the emblem as such. The other exception, which is also taken from Paradin, and which can be justified in a similar fashion, is emblem IV-8, the engraving of which shows Saladin's shirt on a lance, and the motto of which reads "Restat de victore orientis" ("This remains from the conqueror of the east"). In Paradin's words: Salladin [...] mourant en la Cité d'Ascalon [...] ordonna que incontinent après son trespas, sa Chemise fust portee sus une Lance, à travers ladite Cité [...] faisant tel cri à haute voix: *LE ROY DE TOUT ORIENT EST MORT, ET N'EMPORTE NON PLUS DE TOUS SES BIENS"* (53-54). Again, the use of the deictic – which is implied in the verb "restat" - arguably mimics the carrying of Saladin's shirt through the city for all to behold.

Therefore, in the vast majority of Wither's emblems, if one were to read only the motto couplet and then moves on to the picture – which is the most natural reading order, given the position of these elements on the page – the experience would probably be much closer to the one Rollenhagen intended, and, perhaps, even more rhetorically effective: one would be struck by the condensed wisdom of the motto couplet, as the melodic pattern of two rhyming lines of iambic tetrameters achieves a feeling of Horatian *dulce et utile* in addition to its mnemotechnical advantage, neither of which applies to Rollenhagen's emblems. Then, one would behold the detailed engraving, and, if one is sufficiently well-versed in emblematic discourse, the meaning of the composition would emerge in shining clarity. If one leaves out the lengthy *subscriptio* below each engraving, these compositions would therefore seem to comply with several formal requirements of the *impresa* – as understood by Rollenhagen and laid out by Giovio:

> *First, just proportion of the body and the soule [i.e. the picture and the words]. Secondly, that it be not so obscure, that it need a Sibilla to enterprete it, nor so apparant that every rusticke may understand it. [...] It is requisite also that it bee briefe, yet so that it may not breede scrupulous doubts, but that two or three words may fit the matter well, unlesse it bee in the forme of a verse, either whole, or maymed.* (Giovio 1555: 8-9; translation by Samuel Daniel in *The Worthy Tract of Paulus Jovius* (1585: Biii$_{v}$)

This lends yet more weight to Jane Farnsworth's point that Wither, for all his insistence on having intended the book for "Common-Readers" (Wither 1635: TR.-3), was nonetheless very careful to design his work in such a manner that it would also appeal to educated members of the court (Farnsworth 1993), who took particular delight in being able to decipher such condensed compositions that would have remained hermetic to a significant proportion of the broader population[1]. More importantly for our purpose, it suggests that Wither's mottos on the one hand, and his "Illustrations" or *subscriptiones* on the other, do not stand in the same relation to the engravings, and represent, instead, two different approaches to the connection between text and image.

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[1] On this question, see Collinson (1997: 300) and Browning (2002).

Indeed, whereas the mottoes very rarely mention, or draw attention to, the *picturae* at all, deictic references to them are extremely frequent in the *subscriptiones*, thus, again, emphasising the distance between text and image, and placing each semiotic code on a different rhetorical plane. The harmonious, symbiotic interaction between text and image – which, as I have argued, is present, at least in part, in the connection between the engravings and Wither's motto couplets, and which is usually understood as a fundamental aspect of emblematic discourse[1] – is therefore strained to the point of no longer existing in many passages of the "illustrations". When, for instance, Wither's persona states in emblem I-2 that it has found "truest Wisdome" "expressed thus" (i.e. symbolised by a laurel-crowned bust on a pillar, which is depicted in the engraving) "among the old *Impresa's*" (2), or that "this *Impresa* doth inferre no lesse [than the *subscriptio*]: / For, by the *Spade,* is *Labour* implide; / The *Snake* a vertuous *Prudence*, doth expresse ; / And, *Glorie* by the *Wreath* is Typifide" (5), the *pictura* is clearly identified as a pre-existing element that the text - specifically the "illustration" - is merely designed to clarify. In fact, as he discusses the title of Wither's emblem book, Bath observes:

> *The book is there described as* A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne: Quickened with Metricall Illustrations, both Morall and Divine... *This formula clearly sets apart the emblems from the 'Metricall Illustrations' – as though Wither is author of the latter, but only a collector of the former. [...] Wither's verse-commentaries illustrate the pictures by bringing them to life in spelling out their moral and spiritual substance.* (Bath 1994: 115-116)

The verb "to quicken', Bath tells us, means 'to bring to life' (ibid). The use of this verb is slightly ambiguous, however. Should we understand that the engravings are in themselves mere empty shells, devoid of any use, and that it is the versifier's task to breathe life into them? Or do the pictures contain intrinsic meaning that merely needs to be made apparent for the reader who would otherwise be incapable of grasping it? The persona, in referring to the engravings, does state that they are "*dumbe* Figures", and that "[...] seeing the life of Speach being added unto them, may make them Teachers and Remembrancers of profitable things" (Wither 1635: TR.-3).

[1] See Spica 1996: 9, 140 ff.

And yet, it also considers that these figures possess "*true* Proprieties" (ibid.) which Wither's predecessor, or so the persona claims, failed to identify correctly. This, however, is not necessarily an inconsistency, given the title of the work. The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides several definitions of the verb 'to quicken', one of which is "[t]o make (a medicine or liquor) more stimulating, sharp, active, or potent" (*OED*, "Quicken", I. 5. a.)[1]. Given Wither's frequent use of culinary metaphors and similes[2] when referring to his works, it is plausible that he used the verb polysemically according to both definitions. "Quickening" could then be understood, in this context, as a process that does not so much grant life to an inanimate element as it activates its hidden signification. At any rate, the separation between the written and the pictorial is fully acknowledged from the very title on.

This separation necessarily affects the process through which such a composition is taken in. As she ponders this very question with respect to Rollenhagen's emblem I-18[3], Spica poetically describes the successive motion of the beholder's gaze, and the ensuing hermeneutic epiphany, as follows:

> *L'œil s'est d'abord arrêté sur le papillon et en a admiré la finesse. Puis il a glissé sur l'animal dont la difformité soulignée l'a surpris, presque heurté. Il retourne alors dans un mouvement ascendant vers le lépidoptère, pour contempler ensuite la vignette dans sa globalité. La verticalité se transforme en courbe ; le parcours de la gravure se fait plus lent, comme si l'œil prenait possession peu à peu du paysage imaginaire, au fur et à mesure qu'il occupe l'espace circulaire de l'image, centrée sur le cercle dans le cercle que dessine la ligne invisible unissant la courbure convexe des ailes à celle,*

[1] Attested since 1591 at least, notably in Spenser's "Muiopotmos" in *Complaints* sig. V2: "*Poppie, and drink-quickning Setuale.*"

[2] See Wither 1635: TR.-2: "*to banish* [Meane Inventions, Pleasant Compositions and Verball Elegancies] *out of the world, because there be other things of more excellencie, were as absurd, as to neglect and root out all* Herbes, *which will not make* Pottage [...]" or p. 12 "Viniger, Salt, *or common* Water, (*which are very meane* Ingredients) *make Sawces more pleasing to some tastes, than* Sugar, *and* Spices. *In like manner, plaine and vulgar notions, seasoned with a little* Pleasantnesse, *and relished with a moderate* Sharpnesse *worke that, otherwhile, which the most admired* Compositions *could never effect in many* Readers [...]" Rannou, 1980-81 has identified several other instances on page 499.

[3] This emblem also appeared in Paolo Giovio's *Dialogo dell'imprese amoroso i militari* (1574: 174), but, interestingly, the animal below the butterfly is unequivocally identifiable as a crab in Giovio's emblem, whereas De Passe seems to have gone for a crab-spider hybrid.

> *concave, des pattes. Enfin, arrivé aux frontières de l'image et de la page blanche, il découvre le* motto *encerclant celle-là, l'adjectif latin* Matura*. La contemplation se transforme en méditation. L'idée du temps est implicitement suggérée dans ses différentes nuances par la vivacité instantanée du geste du chasseur, comme par la lente métamorphose du papillon dont la rapide ascension souligne la brièveté d'une vie ici menacée. Elle est aussitôt rapportée à l'universalité de l'existence humaine, qu'incite à se figurer la courte épigramme en* subscriptio *: « Lorsqu'une mûre espérance déploie son aile, tout retard devient nuisible ; qu'il se hâte, celui qui veut te capturer, papillon ». La pensée qui eût aboutit à une telle conclusion après de longs moments se concrétise en un éclair. Toute la compréhension humaine de la temporalité est synthétisée en une illumination intérieure : la conjugaison d'éléments naturels, métaphores visualisées d'une conception irreprésentable, et d'un adjectif aux identiques connotations, parle une langue spirituelle qui n'est faite ni de l'image ni du mot gravé. C'est une relation symbolique qui s'est instaurée d'une forme de signification à une autre et en a construit une troisième, infiniment plus persuasive et vérace, dans l'évidence de cette relation aussi motivée par le sens qu'immotivée dans le choix des signes visibles.* (Spica 1996 : 9-10)

In the case of Wither's composition, however, the process is quite different. Firstly, although the beholder's gaze may also be attracted to the striking picture first, the conventional reading order will probably compel him to quickly turn to the motto couplet, which reads "From thence, where Nets and Snare are layd, / Make-hast, lest els you be betray'd" (Wither 1635: 18). Contrary to the hermeneutic freedom offered to the viewer in the *Nucleus Emblematum* before he even notices Rollenhagen's motto in the circular frame, and to the aesthetic experience that arises in beholding the picture unaided by any textual element at first, Wither's motto couplet immediately steers the interpretation towards a far more

circumscribed conclusion: far from being a symbolic representation of the universal concept of timeliness, the composition urges the reader, whom it apostrophises personally, to hasten away from dangerous situations, lest they fall victims to a very specific kind of danger, that of betrayal. The meditative element that, Spica seems to imply, transcends one's individual circumstances to provide access to "the whole of human understanding about temporality" ("Toute la compréhension humaine de la temporalité" in Spica's quotation above, my translation) in Rollenhagen's emblem is turned into an encouragement to a far more pragmatic pondering of the contingent significance of the message for the reader personally. When the reader returns to the engraving after having read the motto, the butterfly that is soaring, and thus closely escaping the clutches of the strange creature below it, is no longer an abstract symbol: it is a zoomorphic representation of the reader himself, who is placed at the very centre of the *pictura*, and who, therefore, grows all the more aware that the escape has been a very narrow one, and that next time the butterfly may not be so lucky. What prompts the reader to move on to the lengthy *subscriptio* below the engraving, then, is arguably far more akin to an urge of self-preservation than to mere curiosity, as the thirty lines of verse might contain more specific instructions as to how the butterfly's flight might be emulated, and how betrayal, in its frightening incarnation as a grotesque arthropod, might be eschewed. The *subscriptio* then initially subverts this process by offering a completely different interpretation of the picture, one that, again, trades Rollenhagen's universal statement of moral truth for a very specific political and social statement:

> *The nimble* Spider *from his Entrailes drawes*
> *A suttle Thread, and curious art doth show*
> *In weaving* Nets, *not much unlike those* Lawes
> *Which catch* Small-Thieves, *and let the* Great-ones *goe.*
> *For, as the* Cob-web *takes the lesser* Flyes,
> *When those of larger size breake through their* Snares*;*
> *So,* Poore men *smart for little Injuries,*
> *When* Rich-men *scape, whose Guilt is more then theirs.*
> (18)

Although these verses contain no explicit deictics, the first two lines clearly serve as an hypotypotical description of the picture, or, notably of one specific element in the picture, and not the most central, or the most visible: the strange animal below the butterfly that,

although it possesses eight legs and seems to rest on a spider's net, is nonetheless eerily dissimilar to the real animal, which, for instance, does not have any claws[1]. The butterfly is not mentioned here, but Wither, in what appears to be a bit of a hermeneutic stretch, implicitly refers to it as one of the larger flies, to be understood as an emblem for "Great thieves" who manage to break through the legal cobweb, where, on the other hand, smaller flies, or thieves, are still caught[2]. This is a very conventional reading of the cobweb, and dates back at least to Pierre Coustau's *Pegma* (1555: 43), who restricted himself to a single interpretation, as the motto "IN CORRUPTOS JUDICES" ("Against corrupt judges") makes clear. But the *subscriptio* does not stop there. Wither's persona immediately adds a second hermeneutic layer to the emblem:

> *The* Spider, *also representeth such*
> *Who very curious are in Trifling things,*
> *And neither Cost, nor Time, nor Labour grutch,*
> *In that which neither* Gaine *nor* Pleasure *brings.* (ibid)[3]

And then a third:

> *But those whom here that* Creature *doth implye*
> *Are chiefely such, who under cunning shewes*
> *Of simple-Meanings (or of Curtesie)*
> *Doe silly Men unwarily abuse.* (ibid)[4]

And, finally, a fourth:

> *Or else, it meanes those greedy-*Cormorants
> *Who without touch, of Conscience or Compassion,*
> *Seeke how to be enricht by others wants,*

---

[1] One could try to object that this lack of realism may be due to ignorance on the engraver's part, but the very next emblem, which depicts a snail in astounding detail, and many more, in which various animals are represented to a great degree of accuracy, should constitute sufficient evidence that, for whatever reason, De Passe made a deliberate artistic choice here.

[2] The social and political implications of statements such as these will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter IX.

[3] This interpretation could be a reference to the disproportion between a spider's effort to spin a web and the fragility of the result, which, Patterson (1838: 211) states, is "almost proverbial", as it appears in the Book of Job (8: 14), where a hypocrite's reliability is compared to a cobweb.

[4] The interpretation of the spider as a symbol of a cunning and deceitful layer of traps was commonplace in the Renaissance, as is attested, for instance, in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, when Bassanio compares the painter, who produced an enticing portrait of Portia, to a spider who "has woven, / A golden mesh to entrap the hearts of men" (Act III Scene II), or in *2 King Henry VI*, when York compares his own mind to the arachnid: "My brain more busy than the labouring spider / Weaves tedious snares to trap mine enemies" (Act III Scene I).

And bring the Poore *to utter Desolation.* (ibid)

Here, Wither is departing quite a bit from the semiotic contents of the engraving, to the point where he superimposes one emblematic sign in verbal form, the "*Cormorant*"[1], to the one that pre-exists in pictorial form, thus arguably making himself guilty of overloading the page with juxtaposed emblematic signs, a fault he is, ironically, quick to castigate in De Passe's engravings elsewhere[2]. The following verses then move from the hermeneutic to the admonitory, but the pronoun used in the apostrophe switches from the singular to the plural:

Avoyd them therefore, though compell'd by need,
Or if a Storme *inforce, (yee lab'ring* Bees*)*
That yee must fall among them; Flie with speed
From their Commerce, when Calmes *your passage frees.*
Much more, let wastfull Gallants *haste from these;*
*Else, when those Idling-painted-*Butterflies,
Have flutter'd-out their Summer-time, *in ease,*
(And spent their Wealth in foolish Vanities)
The Blasts of Want *may force them to be brought*
For shelter thither, where they shall be caught. (ibid)

The lepidopterous insect is thus reidentified, first as a bee, and then as a butterfly, but a far more ambivalent one than what Rollenhagen had in mind: although it is clearly in danger of being "caught", it is certainly not an epitome of exemplary timeliness, but a narcissistic emblem of idleness that, like Æsop's cicada, is compelled to knock on potentially hostile doors to beg for sustenance. Furthermore, the persona's choice to refer to "a Storme" that might hinder its flight, which would then be possible only "when *Calmes* your passage frees", may be puzzling at first, until one returns to give the engraving a closer look. In the background on the right, one recognises a boat that is being steered underneath a bridge, presumably towards the open sea on the right. Given the nature of the lightweight craft however, one understands that this manoeuvre is possible only in calm waters and clement weather. Wither's persona, again, adds a hermeneutic layer to the motif, to reiterate, and thus

[1] The cormorant is conventionally understood as an emblem for greediness or gluttony, as is the case, again, in various plays by Shakespeare, for instance in *Richard II* (Act II Scene 1) when John of Gaunt calls vanity an "insatiate Cormorant", or in *Love's Labour's Lost* (Act I Scene 1), when the King of Navarre deplores the greediness of "cormorant devouring time".

[2] For instance, in emblem III-12, where the persona remarks that "When Emblems of too many parts consist, / Their author was no choice Emblematist:/ But, is like those, that waste whole howres, to tell / What, in three minutes, might be said as well".

emphasise, the initial point. Therefore, for all its interpretational meandering, the overall theme of timeliness still ties the emblem together, albeit in a more personal fashion than the same in Rollenhagen's work.

Not every emblem apostrophises the reader in such a manner, however. Emblem II-16 (78) for instance is wholly without any address to, or even mention of, the reader[1]. The engraving shows a sceptre circled with a royal crown, and, in the background, a proud monarch leading his army and surveying what seems to be a large and prosperous city, and the motto couplet reads as follows: "*A* King *that prudently Commands*, / *Becomes the glory of his* Lands." As the motto and the *pictura* suggest, this emblem is not intended to convey a message that would be applicable to any reader, but simply illustrates a political commonplace[2]. It seems that the picture is deemed wholly monosemic by Wither's persona, who simply describes it, and then elaborates on the same idea throughout by enumerating several qualities of a given country that, contrary to a prudent and wise monarch, are not accurate gauges of greatness:

> *A* Kingdome, *is not alwaies eminent,*
> *By having Confines of a large* extent*;*
> *For,* Povertie, *and* Barbarousnesse, *are found*
> *Ev'n in some large* Dominions, *to abound:*
> *Nor, is it* Wealth, *which gets a* glorious-Name*;*
> *For, then, those* Lands *would spread the widest* Fame,
> *From whence we fetch the* Gold *and* Silver-ore*;*
> *And, where we gather* Pearles *upon the shore:*
> *Nor, have those* Countries *highest exaltations,*
> *Which breed the strongest, and the Warlikst* Nations*;*
> *For, proud of their owne powre, they sometimes grow,*
> *And quarrell, till* themselves *they overthrow.*
> *Nor, doe the chiefest* glories, *of a* Land,
> *In many* Cities, *or much* People, *stand:*
> *For, then, those* Kingdomes, *most renowned were,*

[1] The use of the first-person pronoun "we" at line 3 is one of many instances of nosism on the part of Wither's persona, as is the case in emblem I-2: "Among the old impresa's, *we* have found" (2) or in emblem I-4: "*Our* Emblem thus hath him deciphered" (4) (my emphasis in both cases), and many others throughout the work.

[2] As will be shown in Chapter IX, there is a measure of ambivalence in emblems covering political topics such as this one, which are sometimes remarkably thinly veiled pieces of advice – not to say admonitions – clearly directed at the king and at his possible successors.

In which Vnchristian Kings, *and,* Tyrants *are.* (ibid)

Upon closer examination however, the list is not merely an extrapolation on the motto independent from the engraved motifs. Indeed, De Passe's background features a long convergence line towards the open sea and the horizon, a visual suggestion of distance, or, as Wither's persona puts it, of "*Confines of a large* extent". The harbour that is clearly identifiable on the left-hand side of the sceptre and the large ships that are swinging at anchor there can probably be regarded as representations of commerce, the source of "*Wealth*" and "the Lands [...] *from whence we fetch the* Gold *and* Silver-ore". Although the sceptre and the crown are regal emblems, they are also, in other contexts, to be understood as symbols of pomp and wealth, as in emblem II-36, in which a royal and a papal crown, as well as a sceptre, are devoured by the flames right below the motto couplet "*Even as the* Smoke *doth passe away*; / *So shall all* Worldly-pompe *decay*" (98). The army that follows the king in the background on the right could be a reference to those "Warlikst Nations" that "quarrell, till *themselves* they overthrow", and even the persona's mention of the "many Cities" is mirrored in the engraving on the left. One notices however that, whereas De Passe merely intended the background to *reiterate* the motto, Wither makes inter-semiotic use of the motifs to list different aspects of political power that are then *excluded* as signs of greatness. This is wholly antipodal to the "cavalier" (Freeman 1970: 144) treatment of the pictures: it shows, instead, a great deal of creativity in channelling pictorial meaning to serve a verbal argument.

4) Hypotypotical descriptions and verbal complementation of visual motifs

Aside from those instances in which Wither's persona simply describes the picture using explicit or implicit deictic references, thus directing the reader's gaze back and forth until every motif is deciphered, *A Collection of Emblemes* also contains descriptions that one might term "hypotypotical", in the sense that, in them, the persona expands upon mere inter-semiotic conversion to endow the text with striking poetic vividness[1]. Within the scope of this part of the analysis, we shall subscribe to Yves Le Bozec's views on the connection between "hypotyposis", "ekphrasis", and "enargeia", which he expresses as follows:

> *[P]roposons a priori pour nos trois termes une répartition définitoire, que nous tenterons de justifier par la suite. Il existe tout d'abord une figure macrostructurale, une figure typologique du discours,*

[1] *OED*, "hypotyposis, n.": "Vivid description of a scene, event, or situation, bringing it, as it were, before the eyes of the hearer or reader."

> *nommée* ekphrasis*; elle relève plus ou moins, dans le cadre de la rhétorique antique, de ce que nous désignons aujourd'hui comme description; cependant, l'*ekphrasis *a pour caractéristique dominante l'usage d'une figure d'expression, l'*hypotypose*, qui réunit divers procédés aboutissant à l'effet d'évidence ou* enargeia *(mettre sous les yeux).* (Le Bozec 2002: 3)

Le Bozec's definitions do not strictly equate ekphrasis and hypotyposis, but considers that the second is the primary building block of the first, thus acknowledging that, at least in terms of their *modus operandi*, they pursue the same goal, and face the same challenge, which Wagner calls their "central paradox" (1996: 13): both attempt to overcome the boundary between two semiotic systems that are, in Foucault's famous words, "irreducible to one another" ("*irréductibles l'un à l'autre"* Foucault 1966: 25, my translation):

> *On a beau dire ce qu'on voit, ce qu'on voit ne loge jamais dans ce qu'on dit, et on a beau faire voir, par des images, des métaphores, des comparaisons, ce qu'on est en train de dire, le lieu où elles resplendissent n'est pas celui que déploient les yeux, mais celui que définissent les successions de la syntaxe. (ibid.)*

It follows that, no matter how skilled the author of the passage in question, and no matter how astute and sensitive his reader, the *effect* of the text will be identical neither to the perception of the picture by the author, nor to the effect that would be produced if the reader had been looking at the picture directly[1].

Naturally however, in compositions that combine text and image such as Wither's

[1] Some classical theorists of rhetoric, first among them Cicero and Quintilian, argue, at times, that a well-conducted ekphrastic or hypotypotical passage will give the reader/listener the impression to be viewing the object of the description directly, making the picture and the ekphrastic text virtually interchangeable. For instance, Quintilian quotes a few lines from Cicero's description of a rather wild banquet in his diatribe titled *In Verrem*, and then rhetorically asks: "What more would any man have seen who had actually entered the room?" (*Institutio Oratoria*, VIII.III.67, translated by H.E. Butler (1963, volume III). On this particular example however, Ruth Webb comments as follows: "Quintilian's remark completely elides the distinction between the words and their imaginative effect, and between that effect and the perception of reality" (2009: 93). I submit that the "distinction" mentioned by Webb and elided by Quintilian, much like the distinction between the process of viewing a picture and that of reading a text, axiomatically supports the claim that concludes the previous footnote. Another classical theorist of rhetoric, Nicolaus of Myra (fifth century CE), insists that ekphrasis and hypotyposis aim at *almost* making the audience viewers of that which is described. And, as Goldhill puts it: "The qualification "almost" is important. Rhetorical theory knows well that its descriptive power is a technique of illusion, semblance, of making to appear" (2007: 3).

emblems, "hypotypotical" descriptions – to be understood here, again, as being endowed with notable poetic vividness – are not saddled with the same difficulty. There is no need for the text to "represent" the visual object "to the mind in such a way that we seem to see them with our eyes" (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, VI.II.29, quoted in Webb 2009: 95), as the object is directly available to the beholder. Instead, the passage superimposes a carefully crafted verbalisation of the effect that the picture produced on the author upon the direct impact of the same picture on the reader/beholder, a process that, crucially, musters the entire rhetorical arsenal of textual *and* of pictorial representation to maximise its vividness, or *enargeia*, and thus its grip on the reader's emotional state. Emblem I-8 is a particularly striking example of this process. From the motto couplet on, the foregrounded motif is not merely identified as a "skeleton", but as a "*Ragge of* Death", which is then described in vivid and terrifying terms in the *subscriptio*:

> *And, such a Fleshlesse* Raw-bone *shalt thou bee,*
> *Though, yet, thou seeme to act a comelier part.*
> *Observe it well; and marke what* Vglinesse
> *Stares through the sightlesse* Eye holes, *from within:*
> *Note those leane* Craggs, *and with what* Gastlinesse,
> *That horrid* Countenance *doth seeme to grin.* (Wither 1635: 8)

The inter-semiotic connection between text and image is arguably more subtle here than mere description. Indeed, both the text and the image are available to the reader simultaneously, and his/her gaze can freely travel – or "oscillate" as Liliane Louvel puts it (2002: 11) – from one to the other. The motif of the emaciated, and yet frighteningly animate carcass that appears in emblem I-8 is undoubtedly symbolic, as all engravings in the *Collection* are[1], but its power on the reader's state of consciousness is nonetheless rooted in the striking immediacy of its mimetic aspect - most intensely perhaps when looking specifically at the skeleton's "face". Although the skull is deprived of eyes, the bare, black sockets nonetheless face the reader, producing an eerie simulacrum of a gaze that seems to be inescapably fixed

[1] All engravings found in emblem books are allegorical, and each pictorial motif is thus to be understood as a signifier that stands in for something else through a conventional metaphorical connection.

on the beholder[1]. The open jawbones create the illusion of a dislocated sneer on the skeleton's part, adding to the frightful expression, and effect, of the motif. Before the hermeneutic process, through which the skeleton is finally understood to symbolise death, is even completed, the *pictura* has already stirred a far more instinctive and visceral response.

The contribution of Wither's hypotypotical description to this process is based on what one might call a strategy of inter-semiotic complementation, which is implemented through three main processes. The first is Wither's use of multiple deictic references to the picture, which, in this case, tyrannically command that the reader gaze again upon the terrifying sight, no fewer than five times throughout the motto and the *subscriptio*. The second is one of – future – reader identification with the skeleton: "And, such a Fleshlesse *Raw-bone* shalt thou bee" (Wither 1635: 8), which, in the same fashion as in the emblem about timeliness discussed above, endows the composition with a great deal of personal significance for the beholder. The third, however, is the ingenious use of specifically textual rhetorical tools that, crucially, were *not available* to the composer of the picture, but that build on the inherent effect of the visual stimulus to enhance it further through a process of poetic verbalisation. The "*sightlesse* Eye Holes" and the "horrid Countenance" that "doth seeme to grin" capitalise what is, as was mentioned above, arguably most horrifying about the picture: the skeleton's gaze in the absence of eyes, and the "grin" in the absence of a mouth, epitomised by the use of the modal "*seeme*", which adds to the chilling dissonance between two natural human qualities and their grotesque and partial imitation by a grim supernatural entity. Highly evocative nouns ("Raw-bone", "Vglinesse", "Craggs", "Gastlinesse") and adjectives ("leane" and "horrid") complete the process through which the reader/beholder's spontaneous emotional response to the picture is converted into a textual experience, while both modes of perception keep interacting and intensifying one another. The text directs the reader's gaze towards the picture, only to reclaim his/her attention

[1] Although the effectiveness of pictures that appear to gaze directly at the reader was known at least since Pliny the Elder (see Bostock, John and Riley, H.T., eds. *The Natural History of Pliny – Volume VI*. London: Henry G. Bohn, York Street, Covent Garden. 1857: 271), renewed interest in, and fascination for, this phenomenon arose in the late medieval period, coinciding with newly formulated theories on optics based on the earlier work of the Arab mathematician Alhazen (10th-11th century CE) that would be largely accepted well into the 17th century. In his discussion of the power of images in the *Ars Magna Lucis et Umbrae* (1646) for instance, the famous humanist Athanasius Kircher discusses such pictures, relying on a particularly striking example: a leaflet bearing an engraving by Jacob von der Heyden (etched around 1616-1617), showing a skeleton that does not merely gaze at the beholder, but is depicted with a loaded crossbow in its hands *aimed directly at* the beholder (the picture is reproduced and discussed in Büttner, Frank. "Die Macht des Bildes über den Betrachter.Thesen zur Bildwahrnehmuhg, Optik und Perspektiveim Übergang vom Mittelalter zur Frühen Neuzeit". in Wulf Osterreicher, Gerhard Regn und Winfried Schulze eds, *Autorität der Form - Autorisierungen - institutionelle Autoritäten - Pluralisierung und Autorität* (Band 1). Münster 2003, 17-36).

through vivid imagery and through the promise of eventual relief, which, in Wither's emblem, takes the form of a conventional, but quite effectively orchestrated, piece of religious advice: "Live so, that *Death* may better thy estate. / Consider who created thee, and why: / Renew thy *Spirit,* ere they *Flesh* decayes :/ More *Pious* grow; Affect more *Honestie*; / And seeke hereafter thy *Creatours* praise" (Wither 1635: 8).

Although they are never as striking as is the case in the example above, other hypotypotical descriptions in Wither's emblems contribute in a similar fashion to the effectiveness of the moral advice that is imparted through them. In emblem II-44, which is an exhortation to be hopeful of God's help if one labours diligently and patiently, the engraving shows a personification of hope carrying an anchor[1] while pushing a plough drawn by two oxen, apparently uphill, under a cloud-covered sky through which a shining tetragrammaton is visible. Wither correctly identifies the personified concept in the middle of his *subscriptio*, but prefers to focus more intently on the ploughing process itself, which he describes, and on which he extrapolates, quite vividly:

> *The painfull* Husbandman*, with sweaty browes,*
> *Consumes in labour many a weary day:*
> *To breake the stubborne earth, he* digs *and* ploughes*,*
> *And, then, the Corne, he scatters on the clay:*
> *When that is done, he* harrowes *in the Seeds,*
> *And, by a well-cleans'd Furrow, layes it drye:*
> *He, frees it from the* Wormes*, the* Moles*, the* Weeds*;*
> *He, on the* Fences*, also hath an eye.*
> *And, though he see the chilling Winter, bring*
> Snowes, Flouds, *and* Frosts*, his Labours to annoy;*
> *Though* blasting-windes *doe nip them in the* Spring*,*
> *And, Summers* Meldewes*, threaten to destroy:*
> *Yea, though not onely* Dayes*, but* Weekes*, they are*
> *(Nay, many* Weekes*, and, many* Months *beside)*
> *In which he must with payne, prolong his care*
> *Yet, constant in his hopes he doth abide.*
> (Wither 1635: 106)

[1] The personification of hope as a woman holding an anchor is probably based on Hebrews 9:16: "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil" (*KJV*), and appears already in Alciato's *Emblematum Libellus* (1534: 84).

In this instance the description does labour the point, but does so, once again, to superimpose on the picture – which is, it must be said, less expressive than the one discussed above – a poetic and vivid transcription of the pictorial motifs to emphasise its rhetorical effect, by combining the immediacy of the image with the evocative and stylistic possibilities of textual expression. For instance, although the physical rigor of the work is hinted at in the engraving through the upwards slope and through the slightly bowed posture of the female character – whose task is no doubt made more tedious, and less efficient, by her insistence on bringing along the anchor - the *subscriptio* eases the process of reader identification by emphasising the physical nature of the task, making it far more tangible. Firstly, and strategically, Wither's persona momentarily puts the allegorical – and therefore thoroughly abstract – character aside, and replaces her with an actual "Husbandman", thus placing the engraving and the moral advice within a lifelike setting. Secondly, the persona dwells on the eminently physical aspects of field labour: it is "painfull" ("payne" even appears a second time further down), the husbandman's brow is "sweaty", the day is "weary", the earth is "stubborne" and "dry" and has to be "broken", undoubtedly at the cost of a great deal of time and effort. The husbandman's sense of perception – primarily his sense of sight, as he keeps "an eye" on the "Fences" and "see[s]" what "the chilling Winter bring[s]", but also perhaps his sense of hearing through the "blasting-windes" – endows the composition with further immediacy, eliciting far greater empathy than an abstract personification could. The *subscriptio*, however, also subtly introduces a potential second layer of affective response to the emblem. The description of the full process of growing crops does not present it only as demanding physical labour, but also as a methodical endeavour, made possible by the husbandman's expertise and care: his "Furrows" are "well-cleansed", he "frees" the harvest from various pests, while observing the "fences", presumably checking for indicators of blights that might affect the yields. Aside from empathy, then, the text prompts the reader to a measure of admiration for the humble farmer, whose work is not only exhausting and essential, but also very much rooted in a great deal of specialised knowledge and experience[1]. In the end, or so one might interpret the last few lines of the *subscriptio*, reward will come as a result of the efforts and the hopes of those that have worked hard, but also *well*: "*God* brings helpe, when men their best have done" (ibid.). None of this is present in Rollenhagen's characteristically

[1] Wither's particular attachment to, and affection for, rural England and its inhabitants is evident in many of his works, and *A Collection of Emblemes* is no exception (see Chapter IX). References to the countryside, both literal and metaphorical, often express the desirable counterpart to that of London and the courtiers, whom the poet broadly considered to be superficial and hypocritical (see French 1928: 20 and Rannou 1980-81: 499-504). This emblem could, then, perhaps be regarded, among other things, as a subtle reminder to the urban middle-class reader not to feel too condescending towards rural workers.

terse *subscriptio*: “Spes alit agricolas messis isea futuræ; / Illa jubet fidæ credere semen humo” (“Hope for the harvest to come, a reliable Goddess, sustains the farmer; she urges them to diligently entrust the soil with the seeds”).

In a similar vein, the persona in the *subscriptio* of emblem IV-14, which depicts a tortoise and, in the background, a simple rural home sheltering a family, favourably contrasts it with “*Houses* builded large and high, / Seel’d all with *Gold*, and pav’s with *Porphyrie*”, which, for all their pomp, lack the homely warmth of a “meane Estate”. Although the text mentions the slow-moving reptile, it dwells mainly on the background motif:

> *Here, in a homely* Cottage, *thatcht with reed,*
> *The* Peasant *seemes as pleasedly to feed,*
> *As hee, that in his* Hall *or* Parlour *dines,*
> *Which Fret-worke Roofes, or costly Cedar Lines:*
> *And, with the very same affections too,*
> *Both to, and from it, hee doth come and goe.* [...]
> *When I am setled in a place I love,*
> *A shrubby hedge-row, seemes a goodly Grove.*
> *My liking maketh Palaces of Sheds,*
> *And, of plaine Couches, carved Ivory Beds:*
> *Yea, ev'ry* path, *and pathlesse* walke, *which lies*
> *Contemn'd, as rude, or wilde, in others eyes,*
> *To mee is pleasant; not alone in show,*
> *But, truly such: For, liking makes them so.* (222)

The background of the picture does visually convey an impression of peace and unaffected, humble living conditions, but the *subscriptio* endows it with an additional sense of homely comfort, which arises not out of the material circumstances as such, but, rather, out of one’s affection for one’s dwelling. In fact, it is “liking” that, in the persona’s eyes, equates a “shrubby *hedge-row*” and a “goodly *Grove*”, “*Sheds*” with “*Palaces*”, and “plaine *Couches*” and “Ivory *Beds*”, granting the reader access to the poet’s affection for his own countryside home[1] through the hypotypotical description of the pictorial motifs. Again, the moral advice that is implicit in the emblem – to be satisfied with one’s abode, albeit a modest one – is given more weight still through the persona’s endowing of the engraving with an additional

[1] Although it is noteworthy that Wither grew up on an estate near Bentworth that probably amounted to far more than a mere thatch-roof cabin and a hedge (see French 1928: 3).

emotional layer, through which the reader might be moved to transfer the affection expressed in the *subscriptio* onto his/her own home, whereby the intended state of satisfaction is, arguably, much easier to attain.

Hypotypotical descriptions of this kind are by no means systematic in Wither's emblems – aside from the three examples quoted above, no more than six other instances seem to lend themselves to similar conclusions[1] - but they showcase Wither's ability to recognise, and to successfully extract and intensify, the rhetorical potential of De Passe's engravings by strategically, and vividly, interfacing the visual and the textual. And, *pace* those among Wither's critics who castigated him for the alleged looseness of the connection between his *subscriptiones* and the *picturae*, Wither found other ways still to make them cooperate to serve his purpose.

5) Wither's Inter-Semiotic Playfulness

A few instances of inter-semiotic collaboration in Wither's emblem book arguably do not fit into any of the categories delineated above. In some of Wither's *inscriptiones* and *subscriptiones*, certain words or short expressions clearly stand in relation with the corresponding engravings or particular motifs contained in them, but appear not to have been intended as descriptive, nor as deictic. The *pictura* of emblem I-4, for instance, shows the allegorical figure usually identified as Occasio[2], a woman with a long lock of hair at the front, a shaved head behind, holding a razor in one hand and standing on a wheel, which is seemingly floating on the sea. Wither's motto couplet above the engraving reads as follows: "Occasions-past *are sought in vain; / But, oft, they* wheele-about *againe*." (Wither 1635: 4). The expression "to wheele-about" is not completely unheard of to describe a cyclical pattern of time[3], but its appearing just above picture in which a wheel is depicted is unlikely to be merely coincidental. The connection here is not deictic, neither is it descriptive: Wither's persona translates a pictorial signifier into its textual equivalent, but then goes one step further to capitalise on the metaphorical content of the "wheele" by transposing it into a verb phrase ("to wheele about"). The process is akin to a play on words, but one of the words

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[1] The emblems in question are II-48 (110), III-25 (159), III-34 (168), III-40 (174), IV-1 (209), and IV-24 (232).

[2] The allegory is probably a variation on the Greek God Kairos, and represents the opportunity to be seized at the right moment (i.e. by the long lock of hair, which will only be within reach when one faces Occasio; when her back is turned, as the back of her head is bald, she can no longer be held, and will slip away). See Müller and Gruber 2017: 82-84, as well as Kircher 1969: 27-33. On the specificities of the motif in Rollenhagen and Wither, see Chapter VII.

[3] The OED only provides three quotes exemplifying its use, and only the first, taken from Thomas Stanley's *History of Philosophy* (1660), is strictly identical, in semantic terms, to Wither's, as Stanley uses it to refer to the cyclical return of the seasons.

involved has to be inferred from a pictorial motif first. Whether it achieves the light-hearted, slightly humorous effect of well-crafted verbal wordplay is a matter of taste, but it certainly is an extraordinarily condensed epitome of the effectiveness of emblematic discourse that Spica described so passionately in the passage quoted earlier: in an instant, the allegorical connection between the wheel that is depicted and the cyclical nature of time, which allows for the regular return of opportunities to be seized, appears in shining clarity, arguably much more so than through Rollenhagen's laconic motto "NE TENEAR" ["So that I not be held"]. Furthermore, the rather simple process of inter-semiotic association that is required here exemplifies the workings of emblematic discourse beyond this particular instance: unhindered by the hermeneutic barriers that are often built into emblems, including more or less cryptic *inscriptiones* in Latin or in Greek, even a reader who has not had access to higher learning will experience the satisfaction of deciphering the emblem, while being taught, by example, the kind of hermeneutic method and the rudiments of symbolic discourse necessary to confidently graduate to understanding more complex compositions. And in accordance with the Horatian principle of *utile dulci*, the reader will achieve all this while also being amused by the play on semiotic codes.

Instances in which the choice of words is clearly steered by the pictorial motifs abound in the collection[1], but only a few are arguably endowed with similar cheerfulness. Emblem I-36 for instance shows an ostrich with its wings spread out, and is headed by the motto "*To Have and not to* Vse *the same*; / *Is not our* Glory, *but our* Shame" - referring to the bird's wings, which are too small to enable it to fly. The source for the motif, Warncke mentions (1983: 83), is emblem 49 in Paradin's *Devises héroïques* (1557), in which the bird is presented as an allegory for hypocrites:

> *L'Autruche estendant ses esles & belles plumes, fait une grande montre de voler: ce neanmoins ne s'enleve point de terre. Et en ce, fait comme les Ypocrites, lesquelz par externe aparence, representent grande sainteté & religion: puis c'est tout, & n'y ha que la montre: car en dedens, tout est au contraire. (53)*

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[1] For instance, in emblem I-9, which represents Sisyphus pushing a heavy millstone up a hill, Wither's persona concludes: "Yet we are bound, by *Faith*, with *Love* and *Hope*, / To roll the Stone of *Good-Endeavour*, still, / As neere as may be, to *Perfections* top"; or, in emblem II-20, which depicts Cupid carrying a lute, and the *subscriptio* of which addresses a presumably female character as follows: "Each word he *speakes*, will presently appeare / To be melodious *Raptures* in your eare: / [...] The very *lookes*, and *motions* of his eyes, / Will touch your *Heart-strings*, with sweet *Harmonies"*, among a great many similar instances.

Although the ostrich in Rollenhagen's book is clearly directly inspired from the engraving that appears in the *Devises*, and although the Latin motto, "NIL PENNA, SED USUS" ("Not the feather, but how it is used") is identical, the German poet, somewhat uncharacteristically, offers a different interpretation: to him, the emblem refers not to disingenuous individuals, but rather to those who produce written works: it is not the quill that makes the writer, but the way in which it is used ("Non penna est scribas quæ facit, us, erit." (Warncke 1983: 83)). Wither's persona picks up on very much the same idea, but in a more humorous manner: "He, may be but a *Goose*, which weares the *Quill*, / But, him we praise, that useth it with *Skill*" (36). Again, the persona extrapolates on the emblematic motif to replace the ostrich with a species of fowl associated with silliness or stupidity[1] in a self-referential quip that is echoed in his epistle "To the Reader", in which Wither asserts that he is "contented to seeme foolish to the *Overweening-wise*" (TR.-2) as long as his work fulfils its rhetorical and didactic purpose thanks to the – implied - skilful use of his quill. Here, too, the process relies on an implicit effort of association between the two species of birds, one being depicted, and the other being mentioned in the text. Although neither Rollenhagen nor Wither mention the conventional interpretation of the ostrich-emblem that is found in Paradin's *Devises*, the English emblem writer, through yet another extrapolation on the avian topic, reaches similar conclusions by implicitly connecting the motif to one of Æsop's fables[2]:

> *Such* Fowles *as these, are that* Gay-plumed-Crew,
> *Which (to high place and Fortunes being borne)*
> *Are men of goodly worth, in outward view;*
> *And, in themselves, deserve nought els but scorne.*
> *For, though their* Trappings, *their* high-lifted Eyes,
> *Their* Lofty Words, *and their* Much-feared Pow'rs,
> *Doe make them seeme* Heroicke, Stout, *and* Wise,
> *Their Hearts are oft as* fond, *and* faint *as ours.* (36)

The emblem's satirical tone, and the use of imagery that may have originated in classical sources, but that was nonetheless perfectly familiar to the general population through

[1] The *Oxford English Dictionary* even indicates that "goosedom", attested in 1647, was used as a synonym for "stupidity" (entry "goose, n.", first entry under "Derivatives").

[2] Specifically, "The Peacock and the Crane", which was translated as follows by Jerry Pinkney: 'A PEACOCK spreading its gorgeous tail mocked a Crane that passed by, ridiculing the ashen hue of its plumage and saying, "I am robed, like a king, in gold and purple and all the colours of the rainbow; while you have not a bit of colour on your wings." "True," replied the Crane; "but I soar to the heights of heaven and lift up my voice to the stars, while you walk below, like a cock, among the birds of the dunghill." Fine feathers don't make fine birds."' (Pinkney 2000: 55).

proverbs and well-known jokes – such as “The peacock has fair feathers, but foul feet"[1], or the aforementioned humorous implications of the goose – arguably contribute to demystifying the hermeneutic process that is inherent in emblematics while endowing the book with a truly entertaining quality.

Other instances of inter-semiotic playfulness are designed to become apparent only when the reader follows Wither’s instructions in "The Occasion, *Intention*, and use of the Foure *Lotteries* adjoyned to these foure Books *of* Emblems" and decides to try his hand at the game of chance that is appended to the volume[2]. Here, once the reader has been directed to an emblem in one of the four volumes by spinning the pointers of the two lottery wheels on the very last page of the book, he/she is encouraged to read the lottery verse – a small poem that appears in the appendix to each of the four volumes of emblems – before he/she turns to the actual emblem. This specific reading sequence enables Wither to set up inter-semiotic jokes in the lottery verses, and then reveal the punchline upon the reader’s turning to, and gazing at, the engraving. For instance, the lottery verse that corresponds to emblem I-48 reads:

> *If they, who drew this* Lot, *now be*
> *Of great* Estate, *or high* Degree,
> *They shall ere long, become as poore,*
> *As those, that beg from doore to doore.*
> *If poore they be; it plaine appeares,*
> *They shall become great* Princes *Peeres:*
> *And, in their* Emblem, *they may know,*
> *What very day, it will be so.* (60)

And when the common reader’s curiosity as to the day in question prompts him/her to turn quickly, and expectantly, to the corresponding page in Book I, he encounters an engraving showing a large death’s head staring eerily at him/her, headed by the motto “In *Death*, no *Difference* is made, / Betweene the *Scepter* and the *Spade”* (48). The entertainment value of this type of joke depends greatly on the reader’s appreciation of dark humour, but once one reaches the end of the *subscriptio*, Wither’s persona will have managed to put a thoroughly uplifting spin on the message, especially the part of which that is intended for his readers of more modest means:

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[1] Variations of this proverb are attested at least since John Lily’s *Sapho an Phao* (1584).

[2] The game will be discussed in detail in Chapter VII.

If he be Poore*; let him this* Comfort *take,*
That, though, awhile, he be afflicted here,
Yet, Death *may him as fully happy make,*
As he, that doth a Crowne Imperiall *weare.* (48)

The reader is effectively taken on a ride through emotional crests and troughs: the upbeat lottery verse briefly hints at an egalitarian utopia, the emblem then capitalises on its ambiguous phrasing and turns hope to anticlimactic gloom, but then the *subscriptio* gradually guides the reader towards the intended didactic message through the very process of emblematic interpretation: as is frequently the case in the *Collection*, the crude, morbid image of the death's head is merely, though quite effectively, urging the wealthy to be virtuous, and the poor to be pious and patient, in which manner each will ensure his/her eternal bliss. This *topos* is, of course, immediately inherited from the "danses macabres", which, from their medieval versions on, conveyed the same message: "Death will come to both young and old, rich and poor, so it is better to eschew earthly pleasures and focus on good deeds in order to attain heaven" (Oosterwijk 2009: 33).

6) Conclusion

The sometimes quite acerbic criticism that has been hurled at Wither's treatment of the engravings by many of his commentators, whose accusations converge, it seems, on the claim that he failed to show the genre due veneration and did not comply with the traditional ideals of brevity and opacity, has hitherto, unfortunately, almost completely overshadowed the highly original approach that produced *A Collection of Emblemes*. It is undeniable that the balance between picture and text, which has been praised in compositions such as Rollenhagen's - despite the inherently unquantifiable nature of such an equilibrium - is tipped in favour of the verses in Wither's work. This is not surprising, given that the English author had no say in the composition of the *picturae*, and therefore relied only on his own quill to make them his own. But hopefully this chapter will contribute to demonstrating that this fact alone has no bearing on Wither's evident awareness of the possibilities of inter-semiotic compositions for persuasion and amusement, and that the originality of his approach, which remains strongly rooted in conventional emblematic discourse but seeks to make it accessible to a far broader audience and to explore its rhetorical and artistic potential, ought not to be mistaken for neglect, disdain, or ignorance. As we shall see in the next chapter, his use of this potential is perfectly consistent with his fashioning of a versatile, polyvocal persona throughout the *Collection.*

Chapter V - “No choice Emblematist”: Wither’s Denigration, Appropriation, and Repurposing of the Primary Source Material

1. Introduction

As I hope to have demonstrated in the previous chapter, Wither’s creative use of the full rhetorical potential of inter-semiotic compositions ought to significantly nuance the derogatory and dismissive views that many of his critics have expressed about the subject of his emblems. Arguably, however, his *Collection*, if read carefully, yields much more insight still into Wither’s stance as an “emblematist”, a term he, tellingly, uses himself (85), and into the state of the emblem genre in early Stuart England. Furthermore, a careful examination of the way in which the English poet’s persona appropriates the pre-existing materials to reshape and repurpose them is suggestive of the major philosophical and epistemological shifts that ushered in the age of modernity, even as early as 1635, one year before the publication of Descartes’s *Discours de la méthode*. “Appropriation” is to be understood here as “taking something to one’s own use” *(OED,* entry “appropriation, n.”, 1.), or, more precisely as follows:

> *The practice or technique of reworking the images or styles contained in earlier works of art.*[1]

Appropriation is the necessary precondition to enable the author or artist to then “repurpose” the images, i.e. to make them subservient to an aesthetic and/or rhetorical purpose that is different from, or even contradictory to, the one they were initially devised to serve. As the process itself is by no means original in early modern literature, but Wither’s own, specific process of repurposing of Rollenhagen’s emblems is a crucial aspect of his overall rhetorical project.

2. Emblems, “*Ancient* and *Moderne*”: Wither’s stance regarding the emblem genre

Wither never mentions where he obtained copies of the *Nucleus Emblematum* and of the *Centuria Secunda*, only that he was first acquainted with them “*almost twenty yeares past*” (Wither 1635: TR.-2), or around 1615, while the second volume of the *Nucleus Emblematum* was not published until 1613. This certainly testifies to the popularity of Rollenhagen’s emblem book, which evidently circulated in England soon after being

1 Ibid., “Draft addition October 2001”.

published in Germany, as there is, to my knowledge, no record of Wither visiting the continent at this time[1].

Wither does not seem to have been impressed with the original work however, as he promptly discards Rollenhagen's contributions in his address "To the Reader". Not only were the verses "so meane, that, they were afterward cut off from the Plates [...]" (ibid.), but, the persona adds:

> *[T]he Collector of the said Emblems (whether hee were the Versifier or the Graver[)], was neither so well advised in the Choice of them, nor so exact in observing the true Proprieties belonging to every Figure, as hee might have beene.* (Ibid)

Wither's statement provides two clues as to his own views on, and stance towards, the emblem genre. Firstly, he refers to Rollenhagen as a "collector" who "chose" his emblems among an implied pool of the same. Given that Wither was aware that Rollenhagen and De Passe composed[2] the *Nucleus Emblematum* in close collaboration[3], this term deserves to be granted closer attention. It is, of course, immediately reminiscent of the title of one of the first English emblem books, Geffrey Whitney's *A Choice of Emblems* (Leyden, 1586)[4], which, as Bath puts it, "acknowledges its derivative status" (1994: 69), although fifteen of the pictures "were made especially for Whitney's purposes, and presumably to his own specifications" (70). In the epistle to the reader, Whitney respectfully credits his "auctors", among whom he cites "Reusnerus, Iunius, Sambucus, and others", whom, he states, he merely "followed" in "Englishinge their devises" (3b). The *OED* tells us, however, that "choice" can also imply a qualitative assessment of a given selection of items: "That which is specially chosen or to be

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[1] See French, 1928. Veldman and Klein also suggest that Wither's purchase of the copper plates may have been eased by the death of Jan Janszoon in 1630. "Janszoon published a Dutch translation [of the *Nucleus Emblematum*] by Zacharias Heyns (1615-1617) which contained all 200 emblems" (Veldman and Klein 2003: 286), and had probably acquired the plates. Veldman and Klein do not specify why Janszoon would have been reluctant to part with them however, nor do they indicate from whom Wither ultimately purchased them in the early 1630s.

[2] In this instance, "composed" is to be taken to mean that the pictures and the texts were respectively engraved and written specifically for the volume, albeit on the basis of pre-existing emblematic sources, as opposed to Wither's process of reusing pictures that had been commissioned especially for an earlier work.

[3] See Chapter IV for more details about the composition of the *Nucleus Emblematum*.

[4] Manning suggests that Van der Noot's *Theatre for Voluptuous Worldlings* (London, 1569) ought to be regarded as the first printed English emblem book, as its publication predates that of Whitney's work by seventeen years (Manning 1990: 155). The earliest English emblem book, which remained in manuscript form, is now generally considered to be Thomas Palmer's *Two Hundred Poosies* (ca. 1565) (see Bath 1994: 57-69).

chosen on account of its excellence, the preferable part of anything, the ‘pick’, ‘flower’, elite” (entry “Choice, 3. a.). In fact, it is probably Whitney’s title, and this particular meaning of the word, that Wither had at the back of his mind when, in the *subscriptio* to a particularly overwrought engraving (emblem III-12), he quipped: “When *Emblems* of too many parts consist, / Their Author was no choice *Emblematist*” (Wither 1635: 146). It seems, therefore, that Wither’s derogatory comment on Rollenhagen’s selection centres on his – alleged – lack of judgement in assessing which emblems, among those that were composed by earlier authors, were worthy of being assembled. Other remarks in *A Collection of Emblemes* however lend themselves to different conclusions. Indeed, in the title of his own work, Wither specifies that his work is “A Collection of Emblemes, Ancien and Moderne, Quickened with Metricall Illustrations [...]”[1], which immediately reminds the reader “that he is not so much the inventor of these emblems as their explicator” (Bath 1994: 119), and adds the following:

> *[I]nsofar as the meaning is discovered and not created by Wither, its sources are located in two different places. The first is the intention of the engraver (or possibly Rollenhagen, though his name is nowhere mentioned, and indeed the division of responsibility between himself and the engraver is still unclear)*[2]*. The second is the authority of what Wither repeatedly defines as ancient, or ‘hieroglyphical’, symbols. The engraver is the proximate author of these emblems, but Wither’s explanatory verses make continual references to ‘Our Elders’, to ‘Sages old’, or to ‘former ages’ as the ultimate sources of authority for the meaning of emblems and hieroglyphs* [...]*.”* (ibid.)

Bath adds that “these references are undoubtedly sanctioned by the distinction he makes on his title page between ‘Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne’, which is echoed by the deictic comments in the emblems themselves” (ibid.), but he does not expand on this at all. Wither’s use of emblem terminology throughout his work might shed some light on these issues, which may be one of the reasons that prompted Peter Daly to devote an entire article to this

[1] For more details about the idea of “quickening” emblems, see Chapter IV.

[2] See Chapter IV for more details about the question of the composition of the *Nucleus Emblematum*.

topic (1999). This article highlights variations – not to say inconsistencies – in the definitions that Wither evidently attached to terms such as ‘emblem’, ‘hieroglyphicke’, or ‘*impresa*’ in *A Collection of Emblemes*, and thus draws attention to the polysemy, and instability, of the genre’s specific metalanguage, but also allows for inferences regarding Wither’s presuppositions on the process of emblem composition. Daly quotes Bath’s introduction to the 1989 facsimile edition of *A Collection of Emblemes* as follows: “Wither’s habitual usage of the word ‘emblem’ throughout the volume refers not to the three- or four-part structure of *pictura* and *scriptura*, but almost invariably to the engraving alone” (Daly 1999: 28), but then adds:

> *[F]iner distinctions can be observed in Wither’s use of the terms. Although in the vast majority of cases ‘emblem’ denotes the picture, we shall find that it also often refers to a foregrounded symbolic motif or a cluster of motifs; occasionally it does apply to the whole emblem as a combination of texts and image, and on rare occasions it denotes what many modern scholars have called the ‘emblematic mode of thought’, or an allegorical or exegetical mode.* (ibid.)

A first caveat has to be raised immediately however: any reference to a pre-existing engraving as a whole may, indeed, include only the picture in the strictest sense, but it may also account for the presence of Rollenhagen’s original motto in the circular frame *around* the picture, in which case Daly’s “finer distinction” ought to be refined still. In fact, in his epistle to the Reader, Wither refers to the “profitable *Morals*, couched in these *Emblems*” (TR.-2), where the term “couched” might be taken in the figurative sense of embedded symbolic meaning, but, based on a more technical definition of the same (“To lay, overlay, inlay, spread, set with (of). *Chiefly in past participle*” (*OED* “couch v.1” 4.a., first attested in ca. 1330)), it might be an allusion to the fact that the original motto is still immediately attached to the engraving. In fact, when he wishes to draw attention to an element that is unequivocally purely visual, Wither occasionally uses the term “picture” rather than “emblem”, especially when he condescendingly imagines most of his readers being drawn to the book as a result of a “childish delight in trifling objects” that might prompt them “to

looke on the *Pictures*" (TR.-3)[1]. That is not to say, of course, that the term 'emblem' never refers to a pictorial motif: the bust crowned with laurel that is depicted in engraving I-2 is referred to by that term, as is the tortoise in engraving II-24, and the cornucopia depicted in engraving II-26, among others. Furthermore, the lottery verse that directs the reader to emblem I-30 calls the composition a "Morall'd Emblem", which hints at the conceptual existence, in the poet's mind, of "unmorall'd" emblems, or mere pictures. In other instances, as Daly rightly states, the text suggests quite clearly that the term is to be understood as a combination of words and picture: Wither's persona refers to "our Emblem's motto" in emblems III-1 and III-4 for instance, where the possessive marker implies that the motto is an integral part of the whole. However, the persona does not specify whether it means the original motto in the circular frame, or the English motto couplet. Furthermore, in the lottery verses, the term is used more unambiguously to refer to the entire composition, usually to succinctly summarise it, or to pique the reader's interest in the moral or religious advice they are about to encounter[2].

In rare instances, the term 'emblem' may refer unequivocally to an inter-semiotic composition, but only to immediately dismiss the particular association of text and picture as an unfitting one: in emblem II-29 for instance, the engraving of which depicts a burning heart with wings on an open book, Wither's persona states that "This Emblem, with some others of the rest, / Are scarce, with seemly *Properties* exprest" (Wither 1635: 91).

Another term that caught Daly's attention in Wither's emblem book is "Hieroglyphicke"[3]:

> *"'hieroglyph' is evidently a more specialised term [than 'emblem'] for Wither, but not necessarily in the now*

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[1] Wither also uses the term when referring to his portrait that was engraved by John Payne and that appears before Book I, and at various times in his mottoes and subscriptiones to refer to certain motifs, or even to the act of producing the same. For instance, in his subscriptio to emblem I-24, which shows a depiction of the goddess Cynthia, Wither's persona refers to "her *Picture*" (24), or the text that accompanies emblem II-10, which states that "Ovr *Elders*, when their meaning was to shew; A native-speedinesse (in *Emblem* wise); The picture of a *Dolphin-Fish* they drew" (72).

[2] Most of these references are phrased in a similar fashion to the final line of lottery I-5 : "Looke, what thine *Emblem* counsells thee" (52). Occasionally, the reference is more ambiguous; lottery I-14 for instance refers to "what thine *Emblem* hath, in part, / Expressed by a *Mimicke Shape*;", which is probably to be construed as a play on words, as it may refer generically to the picture, but also to the motif, which is that of an "*Apish Pigmie*" on stilts, attempting to "to seem the higher", or to mimic the stature of a person of "normal" height.

[3] The term appears in the epistle "To the Reader" (TR.-3), in seventeen of the emblems (sometimes in the adjectival form "Hieroglyphicall", such as in emblem I-38 (38)), and in one lottery stanza (II-23, p. 117).

accepted sense of motifs of genuine or pseudo-Egyptian origin, ideograms or pictograms, or inorganic combinations of motifs. [...] Wither uses the term for a single motif, taken largely but not exclusively from nature, whose meaning is sanctioned by Christian or ancient tradition. [...] For Wither a hieroglyphic is evidently a sign, usually a single sign rather than a complex or a cluster, with a stable and recognisable meaning. In attaching such adjectives as 'old' or 'ancient' to the hieroglyph, Wither suggests that their symbolic usage is validated by venerable tradition" (1999: 29-30).

Upon a more detailed examination however, the meaning that Wither ascribes to the term fluctuates more than Daly accounts for in his article. On the one hand, as Rannou rightly points out, Wither's worldview is rooted, at least partly, in 16th-century humanist culture (1980-1981: 520), which explains the reverence he regularly expresses when dealing with those motifs he calls "old" hieroglyphics. The clearest instance of this is found in emblems which, in Wither's opinion, are unfavourably compared to this ancient mode of symbolic discourse, the signifying power of which they simply cannot match. For example, the engraving of emblem II-5 shows a crowned sceptre towards which four birds of different species are seemingly flying, which, Wither states, is one of those "perplext Inventions (which have nought, / Of Ancient Hieroglyphicks)" (67).

In some compositions, however, "emblem" and "hieroglyphic" are even used interchangeably. In emblem II-11, the term "*Hieroglyphick*" (73) is used to refer to a friar holding a book and an anchor, while his mouth is shut by a padlock. As usual, Wither's motto couplet concisely expresses the emblem's general meaning ("They that in *Hope*, and *Silence*, live, / The best *Contentment*, may atchive"), but it would be quite a stretch to claim that this combination of motifs is "sanctioned by Christian or ancient tradition"[1]. Furthermore, a cluster of motifs is called an "emblem" further down in the *subscriptio*. Another example would be emblem III-3 (137), in which a sword and a mace are referred to both as "vulgar Emblems" and as "Hieroglyphickes of Authority". A further instance of the same term in

[1] Neither Diehl (1986: 12) nor Warncke (1983: 132-133) mention any established pictorial source for the emblem, and nothing similar appears on any of the specialised sections on the "Glasgow University Emblem Website" (https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/).

emblem II-3 is noteworthy as well: there, Wither calls the motifs composing the *pictura* of emblem II-3 - two hands joined above a flaming heart on an altar below a skull - “moderne Hieroglyphickes” (99), which stands in at least a certain measure of contradiction with the definition Daly provided[1]. So, to borrow the question that Daly himself ultimately left wholly unanswered in his article, “what precisely does Wither’s use of these terms reveal” (1999: 28)?

The fluctuating polysemy, and occasional interchangeability, of words such as “Hieroglyphicke” and “Embleme” in Wither’s *Collection*, could be construed as linguistic pieces of evidence as to the diachronic transformations that the emblem genre underwent from the second half of the seventeenth century onwards. Indeed, the deep reverence of sixteenth-century theorists for these symbols, which, or so they believed, enshrined the secrets of the Adamic language that had been preserved by the Egyptians, slowly but steadily made way for a far more pragmatic understanding of this mode of expression, a change to which the broadening of the definition of the term “hieroglyphic” testifies: soon, it was used to refer to pictorial alphabets from other countries[2], symbolic representations based on Biblical passages[3], but also, even more broadly, any sign or symbol that stood in for a signified with which it shared a symbolic or metaphorical relationship[4]. As Spica puts it:

> *Assez rapidement au cours du XVIIème siècle, l’hiéroglyphique devient un module, et les livres d’hiéroglyphiques servent, comme l’iconologie, autant à dessiner des allégories qu’à concevoir une composition emblématique. Sagement rangé dans ses pages,*

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1 The extent of the contradiction hinges on one’s definition of “moderne” in this context. For further details, see the discussion of the difference between “ancient” and “modern” emblems below.

2 See Sir Thomas Herbert, *Some yeares travels into divers parts of Asia and Afrique* (1638), p. 338: “[The Chinese] use not letters but Characters, or Hyerogliphicks, of which they have above 40000”, or the reference to a “Mexican hieroglyphic” on page 26 of Samuel Purchas’s *Purchas his pilgrimage In fiue bookes.* (1625).

3 See, for instance, William Hodson’s *The divine cosmographer; or, A brief survey of the whole world* (1640), p. 91: “This qualitie is so eminent in the Dove, that our Saviour there singled it out for an hieroglyphick of Simplicity.” or Thomas Goodwin’s *Zerubbabels encouragement to finish the temple*. (1642), p. 7: “[...] this Candlestick thus lighted, betokened the full perfecting and finishing the Temple, and restoring the worship of God within it, unto its full perfection of beauty and brightnesse, (as the Psalmist speaks.) And so the Angel interprets it, This is the word of the Lord, ver. 6. that is, this Hieroglyphique contains this word and mind of God in it, that maugre all opposition, Zerubbabel should bring forth the head or top stone that should finish the Temple, so ver. 7. and 9.”

4 See Herbert, op. cit., p. 45: “A silken string circles both their bodies as the Hyerogliphic or bond of Wedlock.” or in Ben Jonson’s *The fountain of self-loue* (1601), p. 23 “Sir, shall I say to you for that Hat? be not so sad, be not so sad; tis a Relique I could not so easily haue departed with, but as the Hierogliphick of my affection [...]”

l'hiéroglyphique est indifféremment emblème ou devise, en attendant d'être l'un et l'autre. (Spica 1996: 316)

In the closing years of the seventeenth century, this profound epistemological change culminated in a use of the term so broad and generic as to almost depleting it of any semantic specificity:

Enfin, dans le livre de N. Verrien publié une première fois en 1685 [...], les hiéroglyphiques servent de dénomination commune à toutes les figures qui évoquent, de près ou de loin, une composition décorative. (Spica 1996: 318-319)[1]

Evidence of the same process can be found in the work of another English emblem writer, Francis Quarles, Wither's immediate contemporary. In the preface to his *Emblemes* (1635), he writes:

Before the knowledge of letters, GOD was knowne by Hieroglyphicks; And, indeed, what are the Heavens, the Earth, nay every Creature, but Hieroglyphicks and Emblemes of [God's] Glory? (8)

Three years later, in his *Hieroglyphikes of the Life of Man* (1638), he briefly justifies the title of his work as follows: "It is an Aegyptian dish, drest on the English fashion" (1). However, Höltgen argues that the *Hieroglyphickes* are in no way more "Aegyptian" than the *Emblemes*, and were usually considered to be a sequel to them, or even part of the same work (Höltgen 2018: 256-257). In fact, all editions of the *Hieroglyphikes* subsequent to the first systematically appeared in the same volume as the *Emblemes* (256). In another work, which was published the same year, Richard Younge's *The Drunkard's Character*, the author refers to the "Ierff" - a fictional animal also known as the "Gulo" or the "Glouton" in French[2] - which, Younge argues, is a particularly fitting "Hieroglyphicke of [the drunkard's] loathly condition" (5-6). The mythical creature can be dated back to Olaus Magnus's *Historia degentibus septentrionalibus* (1555), but, as Maranini shows, does not appear in emblem

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[1] The work Spica is referring to is Nivolas Verrien, *Livre curieux et utile pour les Sçavants et Artistes, composé de trois Alphabets de chiffres simples, doubles et triples, fleuronnez et au premier trait. Accompagné d'un très grand nombre de devises, Emblêmes, Medailles et autres figures Hieroglyphiques. Ensemble plusieurs supportset Cimiers pour les ornemens des Armes. Avec une Table tres ample, par le moyen de laquelle on trouvera facilement tous les noms imaginables*. Paris, s.e., 1685

[2] See Maranini, Anne. "Le Glouton et les éditions de la Renaisance" in *Faventia* 26/2. 2004, 111-122.

form before Camerarius's *Symbolorvm et emblematvm centvriæ tres* (1595: book II, emblem 54), also to represent the vice of culinary insatiability. Granted, the association of the animal with excessive alcohol consumption is not much of a leap, but it is a connection that Younge seems to make on the spot, rather than one that would have dated back long enough to be supported by a venerable tradition, and, as such, the term "Hieroglyphicke" could probably have been replaced with "emblem" or "symbol" in this context as well. At any rate, this testifies to an increasingly loose and fluctuating definition of the term "Hieroglyphicke" which, just like the term "Embleme", gradually lost its intricate connection with early humanist ideas on language and exegesis.

This shift was not exclusive to the emblem genre, however. In a chapter that she suggestively titled "Le désenchantement du monde" (443-481), Spica explores the steady departure from symbolic and allegorical epistemological axioms, which gave way to more utilitarian semiotic codes designed to "materially embody the things conceived in the mind, rather than revealing them", such as mathematical representations or early scientific metalanguage (447, my translation). Wither's emblems are relevant here, because, as was mentioned earlier, they were composed over a time frame of twenty years between ca. 1615 and 1635, long before the period during which Spica identified this tendency[1]. What Wither's use of these terms reveals, then, is that his emblems already testify to the "irregular process" that was the "seventeenth-century transition from one 'world view' or 'episteme' or 'paradigm" to another" (Browning 2002: 47). Emphasis, here, ought to be placed on the word "process", as Wither's stance on the emblem genre nonetheless retains remnants of the early humanist epistemological framework, which is epitomised by his distinction, from the very title of his emblem book on, of "Ancient" and "Moderne" emblems, to which we shall now turn.

A brief survey of occurrences of the adjective "modern" throughout the volume yields relatively little in the way of data from which to infer its meaning in Wither's mind. Aside from its appearing in the title, it is used a mere three times in connection with emblem terminology. Firstly, II-27, the engraving of which shows a minister preaching from a pulpit to a devout congregation, is referred to as a "moderne *Emblem*" that is "a mute expressing / Of *Gods* great Mercies, in a *Moderne-blessing"*, and the next lines of the *subscriptio* clarify that the second instance of the adjective is to be understood to mean "at the current time":

[1] Spica refers to "the end of the 17th century" (443, my translation).

the persona states that the emblem gives it “just cause to sing [God’s] praise, / For granting me, my being, in these dayes” (89), but this makes little sense if it is applied to the first occurrence, which evidently pertains to the far less specific time frame between the origin of this particular emblematic motif and the time at which Wither wrote. Secondly, in emblem II-37, a “*Burning-heart*; [...] / Beneath *Deaths-head,* a paire of *Loving-hands, /* Which, close, and fast-united, seeme to be” are called “moderne *Hieroglyphickes* (vulgarly / Thus bundled up together)” (99). Finally, the components of *pictura* III-29, “a *Crowned king* [...] */* Upon a *Globe*; and [who], with outstretched hands, / Holds forth, in view, a *Law booke,* and a *Sword*”, are, collectively, referred to as “plaine and moderne *Figures”* (163). By contrast, the centaur that is depicted in the engraving of emblem II-41 is called an “ancient *Hieroglyphicke*” (103)**,** while Pegasus is deemed to be an “old Emblem” (105), the head of Janus an “old *Hieroglyphicke*” (138), and a bust crowned with laurel is said to have been found “among the old *Impresa’s*” (2). Furthermore, the *subscriptio* of emblem III-23 begins as follows: “Old *Sages* by the Figure of the Snake / (Encircled thus) did oft expression/ make / Of *Annuall-Revolutions;* and of things, / Which wheele about in *everlasting-rings*” (157), and that of emblem II-10, in a similar vein, asserts the following:

> *Ovr* Elders, *when their meaning was to shew*
> *A* native-speedinesse *(in Emblem wise)*
> *The picture of a* Dolphin-Fish *they drew;*
> *Which, through the waters, with great swiftnesse, flies.*
> (72)

Finally, in emblem III-15, the persona states that “The Figure of a *Storke* in elder dayes, / Was us'd in *Hieroglyphick,* many wayes” (149). In total, only nine out of two hundred emblems are explicitly categorised as either “ancient” or “modern”, a remarkably small proportion given the title of the book. One might enquire, then, firstly, whether the motifs in the emblems categorised as “ancient” can be traced back to older sources than those that are categorised as “modern”, but, also, why the overwhelming majority of the emblems in a volume titled “*A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne”* are not categorised as either one or the other, and what this reveals about Wither’s stance towards the emblem genre.

Unsurprisingly, Wither uses the term “ancient” to refer to motifs that can be found chiefly in Greek and Roman texts that showcase their – sometimes putative – attributes or qualities, which, in turn, usually constitute the metaphorical pathway from each motif to its symbolic meaning. For instance, the centaur, the winged horse, and the head of Janus are all

mentioned in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: firstly, Chiron, who is held to be of great wisdom and even deemed to be "god-like"[1] (Sandys 1628: 183), but also "fierce Eurytus", who is "more heady than the rest" (324) and starts a broil at Pirithaus's wedding, who each represent one of the two qualities that are attributed to the mythological creature in Wither's emblem; secondly, Pegasus, who is described as "swift" in Ovid's text (89), an idea on which Wither's emblem expands ("No thorny, miery, steepe, nor craggy place, / Can interrupt this *Courser,* in his race" (105)); and, thirdly, the text mentions "the Fane of Ianus" (181), where "fane" is to be understood to mean "temple" (*OED* entry "fane, n.2"), a phrase that is echoed in Wither's emblem as well:

> *That* Head, *which in his* Temple, *heretofore,*
> *The well-knowne figure of old* Ianus *bore,*
> *Retain'd the forme, which pictur'd here you finde* (ibid.)**.**

Wither's interpretation of the Janus-motif – the sound but very conventional advice that a man ought to "Looke, both *before* him, and *behinde* him, too" in any undertaking – is not drawn directly from the two-faced character's appearances in the *Metamorphoses*, although the English poet also mentions that "this old *Hieroglyphicke* doth comprize / A multitude of Heathenish Mysteries" (ibid.). While there is no mention of constant wisdom personified as a bust wearing a wreath of laurel in *Metamorphoses*, several characters who are deemed particularly brave in the face of adversity, or particularly wise or virtuous, are crowned in the same fashion, and Ludwig suggests that the bust is to be interpreted as the likeness of the archetypal ancient poet, who, in the Horatian tradition, is considered to be the very epitome of wisdom (Ludwig 2015: 120-121)[2]. Ovid also mentions the stork (Sandys 1628: 149), the

[1] All references to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are to be sought in George Sandys's 1628 translation *Ouids Metamorphosis Englished by G.S.*, as it is an edition that Wither might have had access to, although it is just as reasonable to assume that he would have read the work in the original Latin.

[2] Ludwig also mentions that the same motif – that is, the crowned bust accompanied by the exact same Latin motto "SAPIENTIA CONSTANS" - is, in fact, the trademark of the famous German printer Bernhard Jobin (ca. 1545-1593) (Ludwig 2015:120), which appears, notably, on the cover of Jobin's edition of Nicolas Reusner's *Imagines virorum litteris illustrium* (1590). Another, more elaborate rendition of Jobin's trademark, which appears on the cover of another work, Caspar Reuschlein's *Hippopronia* (1599), includes a series of background motifs described as follows by Ludwig: "In einer 1599 belegten ausgeführteren Version steht die Büste im Vordergrund eines ovalen Bildes, in dessen Hintergrund links drei weibliche Personen mit Gefäßen auf dem Kopf auf einen burggekrönten Berg zugehen, während über ihnen in der Luft der durch den Caduceus gekennzeichnete Merkur fliegt und rechts im Hintergrund der Büste die Ruinen eines größeren Gebäudes zu sehen sind. [...] Grimm hat richtig erkannt, daß die Hintergrundsszene die Kekropstöchter Aglauros, Herse und Pandrosos darstellt [...]. ("In a version [of the trademark] attested in 1599, the bust appears in the foreground of an oval frame, in the background of which three female characters carrying containers on their heads are walking towards a mountain crowned with a fortress, while a character, who is identified as Mercury through

snake (may instances, but notably the highly emblematic "staffe-enfolding snake" of Mercury (437), and the dolphin (38; 61), but the attributes of these three motifs that were retained in emblematic discourse were probably found elsewhere: Pliny's *Natural History* (Book X: 30) is the likely source for the stork's habit of standing on guard with a pebble in its claw to ensure that it would be awoken immediately by the sound of the stone dropping if it were to fall asleep, and thus loosen its grip (although Pliny attributes this behaviour to the crane, and not to the stork), and for the dolphin's speed, as the Roman author asserts that it is the swiftest animal, not only in the sea, but in the world (Book IX: 7). The original source for the snake that bites its own tail, otherwise known as the "Ouroboros", on the other hand, is probably Horapollo's *Hieroglyphica* (Cory 1840: 7-8). It is surprising, however, that many other motifs in Wither's work, such as Hercules (22), Diana **(**24**)**, Ixion (69), Mars and Minerva (80), or Apollo (234), to name but a few, all of which are unequivocally drawn from similar sources, are not categorised as "ancient" emblems anywhere.

The category of "moderne" emblems, on the other hand, is far less homogeneous in terms of its pictorial sources. The church interior and the preacher addressing the congregation certainly constitute what Peil calls a "hermeneutic" emblem, that is, the depiction of a scene from everyday life from which an allegorical signification is inferred, usually on the basis of the *Mundus Significans* axiom of Christian hermeneutics[1] (Peil 1992: 258). Neither Diehl (1986) nor Warncke (1983) mention any pre-existing emblems showing similar motifs, and the type of event that is represented here can obviously be dated to a far more recent period of time than that of Ovid, Pliny, or Horapollo, although Rollenhagen's Latin motto, "DEUS NOBIS HÆC OTIA FECIT" ("God has granted us this leisure"), is a quote from Virgil's *Eclogues* (I.6), where it is to be understood as a eulogy on the quietness and felicity of rural life. The King who stands on a sphere while holding a book of law and a sword in emblem III-29 is certainly wearing an early-modern style armour - recognisable by the ruff around the king's neck, an item of clothing that was not popularised until the mid-

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the presence of the caduceus, is flying above them. In the background at the right of the bust, the ruins of a large building are visible as well. [...] Grimm has rightly identified the three characters in the background scene as Aglauros, Herse, and Pandrosos, the daughters of Cecrops [...]." (Ludwig 2015: 120, my translation)). Through an odd coincidence, Ludwig then mentions that the background scene is based on another passage from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Book II: 708-713). It would be quite a speculative stretch to conjecture that Wither knew of this particular rendition of Jobin's trademark of course, but its existence suggests that the motif of a crowned bust to represent constant wisdom was sometimes associated with Ovid's text, a connection that Wither could have encountered somewhere else.

[1] See Chapter I for more details about this.

16th century[1] - and sword, but the sphere and the book of law as symbols can be traced back, respectively, at least to ancient Greece (see Brendel 1977) and to the Old Testament (see Cummings 2013), so neither of them would qualify as "modern" emblems, even by Wither's apparent criteria. Similarly, the depictions of two hands holding each other, of a death's head, and of a burning heart in emblem II-37 are all long-established, traditional symbols[2], and Wither was necessarily aware of the latter at least, given his encyclopaedic knowledge of Holy Scripture (see French 1928: 174). Whence, then, their characterisation as "modern"? The phrase "vulgarly / Bundled up together", which refers to these last motifs, may provide a clue here.

In several instances throughout *A Collection of Emblemes*, Wither's persona expresses impatience with emblems that are, in Peil's words, "allegorizing" (1992: 260), that is, composed of several emblematic motifs that are combined to form a complex overall picture. The winged, burning heart that rests on an open book in emblem II-29 is deemed "a vulgar, and a meane *Invention*" that "May yield some *Fruit,* and shew a good *Intention*", of which the persona will inform the reader, "As if these *Figures* had not those defects" (91); the *pictura* of emblem I-9, which places an owl on a caduceus between Mercury and Athena is called a "darke *Emblem*" (9)[3]; *pictura* II-5 shows a flock of birds surrounding a crowned sceptre, and is ranked by the persona among "perplext *Inventions* (which have nought, / Of Ancient *Hieroglyphick*)" (67); and, of course, the persona's remarks about the engraving of emblem III-12, which shows an angel holding a book and blowing a trumpet while standing on a sphere resting on a pedestal, the whole composition being circled by a garland held by a hand *ex nubibus*, is perfectly unequivocal:

> *When* Emblems, *of too many parts consist,*
> *Their Author was no choice* Emblematist:
> *But, is like those, that wast whole* howres, *to tell*
> *What, in three* minutes, *might be said as well.* (85)

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[1] See the website http://www.thefashionhistorian.com/2011/11/ruffs.html (consulted on 01.11.2021).

[2] Davies had identified the handshake as a recurring funerary symbol in the classical world (1985), while depictions of skulls as artifacts associated with death date back at least to the Palaeolithic, and continued throughout classical Antiquity and early Christianity (see Kristeva 2012: 9-27). The motif of the burning heart is, of course, found in the Old Testament (see, for instance, Psalms 39 :3 "My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned [...].").

[3] It is noteworthy that Wither castigates the composers of emblems that deliberately "obscure the *Sense,* to common *Readers;* and, serve to little other purpose, but for *Wittie men* to shew *Tricks* one to another" (TR.-1).

Perhaps Wither's use of the adjective "modern" ought to be seen as polysemic, then. In some instances – notably the picture of a congregation listening to a sermon in emblem II-27 – the term is to be interpreted as a remark on the "age" of the emblematic motif, but in others, it is more suggestive of a derogatory value judgement, especially when compared to "ancient" emblems, or hieroglyphics. Overwrought compositions are deemed needlessly obscure and confusing, and, especially given his remark about engraving II-5 quoted above, simply cannot match the condensed and venerable signifying power of the venerable Egyptian symbols. True, however, to his keeping on the *via media,* and to his liminal status once again, Wither occasionally acknowledges that more recent compositions can nonetheless come close: in emblem II-49, which shows three interlocked moons below a crown, the persona states:

> *This knot of* Moones *(or* Crescents*) crowned thus,*
> *Illustrate may a Mystery to us,*
> *Of pious use (and, peradventure, such,*
> *As from old* Hieroglyphicks, *erres not much).* (111)

Further information still about Wither's stance as an "emblematist" (85) is yielded by a series of other terms that appear in *A Collection of Emblemes* and that also arrested Daly's attention. In his interpretation of the allegorical meaning of the engraved motifs, Wither occasionally prefaces his interpretation by the phrase "in a *Mysticke-Sense*" (19; 65), or suggests that, when "th'Ancients made a solemne *League* or *Vow, /* Their Custome was to ratifie it, thus; / Before their *Idoll God,* they slew a *Sow, /* And sayd aloud; *So be it unto us"* (38), they "mystically did inferre; that, he / Who falsify'd that *Oath* which he had sworne, / Deserv'd, by *Sudden-Death,* cut off to be" (38). Daly simply notes Wither's use of the expression, and draws a connection with the "'*sensus mysticus'* of exegesis" (Daly 1999: 34), but, once again, does not go any further. He also notes Wither's use of correlated expressions, such as "in a Morall-sense" (Wither 1635 1975: 138), "the *Eyes* of *Sense*", the "*Eye of Understanding*" (90) and "Apprehension's Eye" (145), all of which Daly also connects to the Christian exegetical tradition[1] (1999: 34-35). Finally, he briefly mentions Wither's praise of the royal couple in his dedication of Book I, in which Charles and Henrietta are called, in a traditionally obsequious manner, "double-treble-foure-fold *Emblems*", not merely of "all the *Vertues* OECONOMICAL, / Of *Duties* MORAL and POLITICALL" (Wither 1635: G), but also, given their respective observance of the Anglican and of the Catholic faith, of "how

[1] This topic will be discussed to a greater extent in Chapter VII.

those MOTHERS [i.e. the two "*Sister-Churches,* betwixt whom, yet, growes / Vnseemely *strife"* (Ded. I-3)] may agree" (ibid.), a reference that prompts Daly to state, once again, that "[Wither] evidently has the four-fold pattern of Christian exegesis in mind" (Daly 1999: 35). As usual, however, Daly does not elaborate, and leaves out any systematic discussion of Wither' references to the exegetical process and its connection to his stance as an emblem writer.

In the epistle to the reader of his own emblem book *Minerva Britanna* (1612), Henry Peacham provides a short definition of the same:

> *The true vse heereof from time to time onely hath beene,* Vtile dulci miscere, *to feede at once both the minde, and eie, by expressing mistically and doubtfully, our disposition, either to* Loue, Hatred, Clemencie, Iustice, Pietie, *our* Victories, Misfortunes, Griefes, *and the like*, *which perhaps could not haue beene openly, but to our praeiudice revealed*. (1612: A3v)

Peacham seems to use "*mistically*" in a sense that is less specific than that which Daly ascribed to the same in Wither's emblems, and more along the lines of the first two of Thomas Blount's single-word definitions provided in his *Glossographia* (1656): "secret, hidden, sacred" (207), hence the addition of the adverb "doubtfully", to be understood, here, as a reference to the aforementioned hermeticism of some emblematic compositions. There is, as far as I can tell, no reason to interpret either of these terms as references to the "mundus significans" method of exegesis. Therefore, in this context, "mystically" is probably to be understood as a mere synonym for "figuratively" or "metaphorically". Given Wither's loose and polysemic use of the term "emblem", among others, it seems plausible that "mysticke" is to be given a similarly broad definition in his *Collection of Emblemes*.

And yet, in some instances, Wither's text is evidently rooted far more deeply in the method of Christian exegesis, as is exemplified most clearly in the persona's referring to the royal couple as "double-treble-foure-fold *Emblemes*" of "Of all the *Vertues* OECONOMICAL, / Of *Duties* MORAL and POLITICALL" (Ded. I-2). The expression "four-fold" draws a direct parallel between what might be called Wither's "interpretation" of the "emblematic meaning" of the king and the queen, and what is commonly known as the

doctrine of the “four senses of scripture”[1]. This framework for biblical exegesis may have originated with the Church Father Clement of Alexandria, or with Saint Augustine, although Henri de Lubac expresses some reservations about the validity of these attributions (1998: 117-132), as he does about the more common crediting of Pope Gregory I, Eucher or Cassien, who are also variously identified as the initiators of the doctrine, and considers that it was first theorised earlier, by Origen of Alexandria (142-150). It considers that Scripture ought to be read on four distinct levels[2]: the literal[3], the allegorical[4], the tropological and the anagogical [5].

The complete absence of quotes or references to other authors on Wither’s part in the text, or indeed in the margins, of his emblems leaves one with very little in terms of evidence regarding his theological sources. And yet, the structure of some of his *subscriptiones*, and that of other passages in the paratext, mirrors the four hermeneutic steps described above

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[1] For an in-depth discussion of the subject, see Henri de Lubac’s *Medieval Exegesis – The Four Senses of Scripture*, originally published in three volumes between 1959 and 1964.

[2] See the second volume of de Lubac’s *Medieval Exegesis* (1998), in which he covers each of the four senses in a separate chapter. De Lubac also points out that, in fact, the doctrine of the four-fold sense of scripture coexisted with another that only counted three senses – history, morality or tropology, and mysticism or allegory (90-94) - although, he argues, the two views should not be considered to have been mutually exclusive, or even opposed. In de Lubac’s words: “Just as an apparently triple sense can in reality be quadruple, through a more or less explicit subdivision of one of its terms into two, likewise an apparently quadruple sense can be merely triple in reality” (1998: 91-92).

[3] De Lubac’s extensive historical retrospective highlights the semantic fluidity and complexity of these four terms and, indeed, the confusion that sometimes arose between two or more of them. Even the seemingly straightforward idea of the “literal” meaning of the text warrants some clarification: “Since the epoch of Rufinus and of Pope Gregory, it is constantly a question, in the texts concerning Scripture, of the "simplicity of the letter" or the "surface of the letter," of the "surface of the narrative," the "surface of the history," the "plain of history," of the" surface of the historical sense," the surface which it is necessary to pass by to penetrate as far as the "height of prophecy," or the "internal marrow of the mysteries." [...] But here again, let us watch out for misunderstanding or exaggeration. Such expressions do not at all signify that the exegete might have wanted to halt the historical understanding of the Bible at the "surface of the words," though the temptation was sometimes great to unify the two concepts. The letter itself, as letter, had in fact a sort of "inside," since, before passing to the spiritual interpretation, one inquired about the "intention of the letter." Even in profane works, where it was not a question to recognize an allegorical sense, one knew how to distinguish the *superficies verborum* [the surface of the words] and the *intima sententiarum* [the innermost of their judgments]” (1998: 79).

[4] The allegorical sense is often paraphrased or explained by referring to the “mystery” behind the literal words: “The text acts only as spokesman to lead to the historical realities; the latter are themselves the figures, they themselves contain the mysteries that the exercise of allegory is supposed to extract from them" (De Lubac 1998: 86). De Lubac adds that, in this context, the words “allegory” and “mystery” ought to be considered as synonymous (89).

[5] Although they are certainly considered to be separate levels of exegesis, the tropological and the anagogical have much in common with the allegorical level. As de Lubac puts it: “After the [literal] sense, all those that can still be counted belong to one and the same spiritual sense [...]. The "transfer" takes place henceforward within the mystery, in order to explore its successive aspects.” (1998: 127). Tropology, then, is merely the practice through which moral lessons are drawn from the allegorical meaning of the biblical text (128), while anagogy, de Lubac tells us, is subdivided in two aspects: speculation about, and contemplation of, “eschatology”, to be understood here as “the ultimate end of each person or that of the universe as a whole” (182) on the one hand, and “the contemplation of God” (ibid.) on the other.

quite precisely. Indeed, in his "Meditation" on his portrait, Wither's persona starts by pondering the implications of pictorial representations:

> *VVhen I behold my* Picture, *and perceive,*
> *How vaine it is, our* Portraitures *to leave*
> *In* Lines, *and* Shadowes, *(which make shewes, to day,*
> *Of that which will, to morrow, fade away)*
> *And, thinke, what meane* Resemblances *at best,*
> *Are by* Mechanike Instruments *exprest;*
> *I thought it better, much, to leave behind me,*
> *Some* Draught, *in which, my living friends might find me*
> *The same I* am; *in* that, *which will remaine,*
> *Till all is ruin'd, and repair'd againe:*
> *And, which, in absence, will more truely show me,*
> *Than,* outward Formes, *to those, who think they know me.*
> *For, though my gratious* MAKER *made me such,*
> *That, where I love, belov'd I am, as much*
> *As I desire; yet,* Forme, *nor* Features *are,*
> *Those* Ornaments, *in which I would appeare*
> *To* future Times; *Though they were found in me,*
> *Farre better, than I can beleeve they be.*
> *Much lesse, affect I* that, *which each man knowes,*
> *To be no more, but Counterfeits of those,*
> *Wherein, the* Painters, *or the* Gravers *toole,*
> *Befriends alike, the* Wiseman, *and the* Foole:
> *And, (when they please) can give him, by their* Art,
> *The* fairest-Face, *that had the* falsest-Heart. (Au. Med.-2)

The persona begins with a discussion that one might term "literal", that of the portrait as a physical object depicting a person, which is produced through "Mechanike Instruments*"*, i.e. "*the* Painters *or the* Gravers *toole"*, and which is deceptive, as it is, first of all, mimetically inaccurate, as artists, "when they please", can hide a persons defects by endowing them with the "fairest-Face". The next few lines mark a clear shift towards a more "allegorical" interpretation, moving away from the particular portrait in question to mimetic pictures in general:

> *A* PICTVRE, *though with most exactnesse made,*
> *Is nothing, but the* Shadow *of a* SHADE.
> *For, ev'n our* living Bodies, *(though they seeme*
> *To others more, or more in our esteeme)*
> *Are but the* shadowes *of that* Reall-being,
> *Which doth extend beyond the* Fleshly-seeing;
> *And, cannot be discerned, till we rise*
> Immortall-Objects, *for* Immortall-eyes.
> *Our* Everlasting-Substance *lies unseene,*
> *Behinde the Fouldings, of a* Carnall-Screene,
> *Which is, but,* Vapours *thickned into* Blood,
> *(By due concoction of our daily food)*
> *And, still supplied, out of other* Creatures,
> *To keepe us* living, *by their wasted natures:*
> *Renewing, and decaying, ev'ry Day,*
> *Vntill that* Vaile *must be remov'd away* [...]. (ibid.)

Through an evidently Neoplatonic prism, the persona expounds the – wholly conventional (Lobsien 2010: 2ff) - "mystery" – in the etymological sense of "something secret or unseen" (see *OED*, entry "mystery, n.1) – that is to be inferred from the existence of mimetic pictures, if they are viewed as symbols of a deeper truth: faithful to its frequent resorting to clear-cut binary axioms (Rannou 1980-81: 533), Wither's persona contrasts the physical "Carnall-Screene", that is merely a "Vaile" to be "remov'd away" and the "Immortall-Objects" that emerge once one manages to transcend the "Fleshly-seeing" to finally grasp the "Everlasting-Substance" of people and things. This idea is closely connected to Joseph Hall's theorisation of meditative practice, which is, as McCabe puts it, "the faculty of seeing, a system of 'divine Opticks'[1]" (1982: 149), an idea firmly grounded in Hall's idea of a "threefold world":

> *[There is] a sensible world, an intelligible, spirituall or divine; and accordingly man hath three sorts of eyes, exercised about them; the eye of sense, for this outward and material world; of reason, for the intelligible; of*

[1] McCabe is quoting from Hall 1606: 47.

> *faith, for the spirituall* (Hall 1606*:* 12-13, quoted in McCabe 1982: ibid.)

As long as man is "behind the fouldings, of a Carnall-Screene", as Wither's persona puts it, a direct visual apprehension of God is impossible. However, "(through *FAITH'S Prospective glasse*", it is possible catch a glimpse "of that, which after *Death,* will come to passe", a line that proves, beyond any doubt, that Wither was a careful reader of Hall's, who states that "the spirituall eye looks through the World, at God […]. As thorow a prospective glasse, we can see a remote mark; or thorow a thin cloud, we can see heaven" (Hall 48, quoted in McCabe 149). Furthermore, the same interpretational framework also applies to the final emblem in Quarles's own *Emblemes*, which was first printed the same year as Wither's (Bath 1994: 217-221). What matters in the case of Wither's emblem is not the extent to which the interpretation is insightful or original –it is evidently not – but rather its strict abidance by the first two stages of the four-fold method of exegesis. Then, given the doctrinal consensus about the aforementioned grey areas that connect stages three and four – the tropological and the anagogical – one easily forgives the persona for intermingling these two levels as well:

> *For, as I view, those Townes, and Fields, that be*
> *In Landskip drawne; Even so, me thinks, I see*
> *A Glimpes, farre off, (through* FAITH'S Prospective glasse
> *Of that, which after* Death, *will come to passe;* [...]
> *Yet, whilst they* are, *I thankfully would make*
> *That use of them, for their* CREATOR'S *sake,*
> *To which hee made them; and, preserve the* Table,
> *Still,* Faire *and* Full, *asmuch as I were able,*
> *By finishing, (in my alotted place)*
> *Those* Workes, *for which, hee fits me by his Grace.*
> *And, if a* Wrenne, *a* Wrenn's *just height shall soare,*
> *No* Aegle, *for an* Aegle, *can doe more.*
> *If therefore, of my* Labours, *or of* MEE,
> *Ought shall remaine, when I remov'd, must be,*
> *Let it be that, wherein it may be view'd,*
> *My* MAKERS Image, *was in me renew'd:*
> *And, so declare, a dutifull intent,*

To doe the Worke *I came for, e're I went;*
That, I to others, may some Patterne *be,*
Of Doing-well, *as other men to mee,*
Have beene, whilst I had life: And, let my daies
Be summed up, to my Redeemer's *praise.*
So this be gained, I regard it not,
Though, all that I am else, be quite forgot. (Au. Med.-3)

The persona's – self-reported – efforts at diligent labour, and at the fulfilment of one's full productive and moral potential – whether one is an "Aegle" or a "Wrenne" – in conjunction with its endeavour to produce writings that "may some *Patterne* be, / Of *Doing-well,* as other men to mee, / Have beene", are statements delineating a moral outlook – or, to use Max Weber's famous terminology, an "ethical" one – profoundly embedded in a Protestant framework, where a person's true nature, including their status as one of the elect, or otherwise, could be surmised, though never fully ascertained, based on their willingness to work hard and to live humble, devout, and moral lives[1]. From its bemoaning of the shortcomings of mimetic representations, the persona has moved on to a set of thoroughly ethico-theological considerations, which inevitably end up intertwining with the final, anagogical level, expressed most clearly to the persona's dwelling on what "after Death, will come to pass", what shall "remaine, when I remov'd, must be", when the visible and the physical "[shall] be quite forgot".

In the emblems proper, at least two or three of the four levels of exegesis can be identified almost systematically. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter VI, most of the *subscriptiones* start with a deictic, factual description of the motifs depicted in the

[1] See Weber 1905: Chapter IV-A. It is worth pointing out that Weber differentiates between Calvinism and other Protestant denominations – mainly Lutheranism – and suggests that the doctrine of strict double predestination, which characterises the first, was particularly conducive to an ethical framework built around hard work and an ascetic lifestyle: "The world exists to serve the glorification of God and for that purpose alone. The elected Christian is in the world only to increase this glory of God by fulfilling His commandments to the best of his ability. But God requires social achievement of the Christian because He wills that social life shall be organized according to His commandments, in accordance with that purpose. The social activity of the Christian in the world is solely activity in *majorem gloriam Dei*. This character is hence shared by labor in a calling which serves the mundane life of the community. Even in Luther we found specialized labor in callings justified in terms of brotherly love. But what for him remained an uncertain, purely intellectual suggestion became for the Calvinists a characteristic element in their ethical system." (Weber 1905: IV. A., Translated by Parsons and Giddens, Unwin Hyman, London & Boston, 1930, consulted at https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/weber/protestant-ethic/index.htm). It is, likewise, worth pointing out that Wither, for all his being called a "Puritan" by almost all of his critics, displays clear anti-Calvinist positions in his *Collection of Emblemes* and elsewhere, as will be shown in Chapter VI.

engraving, and then move on to expounding the allegorical meaning(s) of the *pictura*, often adding, as a third and a fourth step of interpretation respectively, a piece of moral advice, and concluding remarks that connect all of the above to the prospect of the reader's – or the persona's - demise and afterlife. In some emblems, as in the "Meditation, the four-fold structure of exegesis is even mirrored, though not necessarily in the same, strict order. In emblem I-10 for instance – notably one in which the persona uses the expression *"in a* Mysticke-sense" (10) – the *subscriptio* elaborates on the motif of a snail crossing a precarious bridge made from a mere twig, beginning, however, not with the literal, but with the allegorical mode:

> Experience *proves, that Men who trust upon*
> *Their Nat'rall parts, too much, oft lose the* Day,
> *And, faile in that which els they might have done,*
> *By vainely trifling pretious* Time *away.*
> *It also shewes, that many Men have fought*
> *With so much* Rashnesse, *those things they desir'd,*
> *That they have brought most likely* Hopes *to nought;*
> *And, in the middle of their* Courses, *tir'd.*
> *And, not a few, are found who so much wrong*
> *Gods* Gratiousnesse, *as if their thinkings were,*
> *That (seeing he deferres his* Iudgements *long)*
> *His* Vengeance, *he, for ever, would forbeare:* (ibid.)

Wither's occasional choice to postpone his usual deictic reference to the picture and to begin by grabbing the reader's attention through the admonitory allusion to his or her potential moral defects or shortcomings is perfectly consistent with his strategic use of inter-semiotic relations to emotionally involve the beholder in his emblems, as was shown in Chapter IV. At this point in his perusing of the book, furthermore, the reader can be expected to have understood that, even in the absence of explicit deictic references, the text is always to be examined in light of the picture, and vice-versa. The connection with the motif in the *pictura* is then made unequivocal anyway:

> *But, such as these may see wherein they faile,*
> *And, what would fitter be for them to doe,*
> *If they would contemplate the slow-pac'd* Snaile*;*
> *Or, this our* Hieroglyphicke *looke into:* (ibid.)

The tropological level of exegesis follows immediately:

It warnes, likewise, that some Affaires *require*
More Heed *then* Haste: *And that the* Course *we take,*
Should suite as well our Strength, *as our* Desire*;*
Else (as our Proverbe *saith)* Haste, Waste may make.
(ibid.)

And, finally, and fittingly introduced by the aforementioned adverbial phrase, the persona concludes its interpretation on the anagogical level:

And, in a Mysticke-sense, *it seemes to preach*
Repentance *and* Amendment, *unto those*
Who live, as if they liv'd beyond Gods *reach;*
Because, he long deferres deserved Blowes:
For, though Iust-Vengeance *moveth like a* Snaile,
And slowly comes; her comming will not faile. (ibid.)

In fact, all instances of such terms related to what Daly calls the "sensus mysticus" in *A Collection of Emblemes* may arguably be categorised either as exemplifying the tropological, or the anagogical level of exegesis. In emblem I-38, the *pictura* of which depicts the sacrifice of a sow in front of an altar, the persona states that, by doing so, "[The ancients] did inferre that, he, / Who falsified that *Oath,* which he had sworne, / Deserv'd, by *Sudden-Death* cut off to be" (38), which is, of course, a thinly veiled moral exhortation to keep one's word. Similarly, as it sets out to defend the worth of music against the "*peevish dispositions*" of those who dislike it (65), the persona expands allegorically on the meaning of the term "Musicke", stating, about the emblem:

It, also may in Mysticke-sense, *imply*
What Musicke, *in* our-selves, *ought still to be;*
And, that our jarring-lives *to certifie,*
Wee should in Voice, *in* Hand, *and* Heart, *agree:*
And, sing out, Faiths *new-songs, with full consent,*
Vnto the Lawes, *ten-stringed* Instrument. (ibid)

Again, the moral advice could hardly be clearer. Naturally, similar remarks apply to the instances in which the persona refers to the "Morall-Sense" of a particular motif, such as the head of Janus in emblem III-4, which, according to the *subscriptio*, urges anyone to "looke,

both before him, and behind him, to" (81) in all endeavours. Emblem I-47 constitutes a slight exception, as the "Christian-Morall" that the persona draws from the motif of a crowned snake encircling the cross-shaped Greek letter "tau" (47) relies both on the tropological and on the anagogical level of exegesis:

> *For, by those* Characters, *in briefe, I see*
> *Which* Way, *we must to Happinesse ascend;*
> *Then, by what* Meanes, *that Path must clymed bee;*
> *And, what* Reward, *shall thereupon attend.*
> *The* Crosse, *doth shew, that* Suffring *is the* Way*;* (ibid.).

Wither's stance towards the emblem genre is therefore that of a "knowledgeable and self-conscious practitioner" (Daly 1999: 27), who is deeply aware, and respectful, of the *Mundus Significans* hermeneutic method, and therefore frowns upon clumsy and overloaded imitations of ancient hieroglyphics, but who considers that even contemporary compositions can, sometimes, serve a similar moral purpose well enough. The adjectives "Ancient" and "Moderne" ought to be considered, then, as indicators of Wither's awareness of the diachronic changes that the genre underwent in the course of the seventeenth century, and his willingness to accompany that change while resisting its excesses in pictorial *copia* and confusion.

This does not account, however, for Wither's more specific remarks regarding Rollenhagen's and De Passe's skills as emblem composers, remarks such as:

> *the Collector of the said Emblems (whether hee were the Versifier or the Graver[)], was neither so well advised in the Choice of them, nor so exact in observing the true Proprieties belonging to every Figure, as hee might have beene.* (TR.-2)

The same could be said of the original motto of emblem II-29: "This *Emblem,* with some other of the rest, / Are scarce, with seemly *Properties,* exprest" (91). The terms "Properties" and "Proprieties", which, probably due to their paronomastic relation, are used interchangeably, seem to suggest that the versifier - the unnamed Gabriel Rollenhagen - failed to interpret the pictures correctly. As was shown in Chapter IV, however, Rollenhagen produced both the *inscriptiones* and the *subscriptiones*, and given his close collaboration with De Passe, asserting that he was mistaken in interpreting the *picturae* seems to be a

complicated position to hold. Furthermore, if Wither had indeed had access to the full volume of the *Nucleus*, he could hardly have overlooked Rollenhagen's account of the book's cooperative composition, which immediately raises the question of the rhetorical intention behind Wither's – presumably - disingenuous claim.

3. "To serve my purpose": Wither's Appropriation of Rollenhagen's Emblems

It is worth noting that Wither kept the original Latin *inscriptiones* of all engravings, even though the verses that were removed from each plate mostly reiterated the motto of the corresponding emblem and briefly expanded on it. Did he see some merit in them after all? Or, more pragmatically, would erasing them from each of the two hundred circular frames in which the engravings are embedded have constituted too tedious an endeavour? One may only speculate. What is certain however is that Wither's persona deals out derogatory comments on the pre-existing pictures and mottoes quite generously throughout the book, such as the rather harsh assessment of the original verses quoted above, or remarks about the poorly composed *picturae* in several emblems[1]. He nonetheless painstakingly provided a motto couplet, thirty verses and an additional lottery poem for each of the two hundred engravings. Is the fact that the "*Workmanship* [of the engravings] [was] *judged very good, for the most part*" (13) a sufficient reason for overlooking the alleged shortcomings of the original?

We may perhaps venture another explanation by viewing the persona's statements as a deliberate strategy designed to appropriate the pre-existing elements. The definition of the verb mentioned above does not entail that the artist who "appropriates" existing material systematically acknowledges its original creator, but it is striking nonetheless that Rollenhagen is not named once in *A Collection of Emblemes*, with the very slight exception of a terse reference to him as the "versifier" of the original work (Wither 1635: 13). Crispin De Passe is briefly mentioned as the engraver of the emblems, and even though his craftsmanship is broadly commended, Wither's persona nonetheless patronisingly asserts that some of the engravings were mediocre but "*excusable*", and even points to alleged "*Errors of*

[1] See emblem II-37, in which the motifs are allegedly "[...] *vulgarly / Thus bundled up together*" (p. 123), or emblem III-45, in which he laments that the picture, rather than a proper emblem, simply depicts a "Monster", and immediately adds that he had "These *Figures* (as you see them) ready made / By others; and, I meane to *morallize* / Their Fancies; not to mend what they devise" (p. 198). Another example would be emblem III-12, where, as he beholds a complex picture (a winged figure playing the trumpet with its right hand and holding an open book in the other, surrounded by a wreath held by a hand that emerges from a cloud; the figure, furthermore, is balancing on a sphere which itself rests on a pedestal), Wither states that "When *Emblems*, of too many parts consist, / Their Author was no choice *Emblematist*" (p. 165).

the Gravers *in the* Figures" (ibid). In other words, the initial material on which Wither endeavours to build his own work is presented as being faulty, of no literary interest, and, with the exception of the beautiful but occasionally incorrect engravings, generally useless.

This stance serves a double purpose; on the one hand, it pre-emptively elicits admiration towards Wither on the part of the reader for having been able to produce anything of value from such defective sources; on the other, it serves as a disclaimer, making any shortcomings of the book imputable to the authors of the *Nucleus Emblematum* and the *Centuria Secunda*, and not to Wither. This is immediately apparent in the last paragraph of the address "To the Reader":

> *there be, no doubt, some faults committed by the Printer, both Literall and Materiall, and some Errors of the Gravers in the Figures* [...] *and I thinke, that they who are Judicious, will so plainly find them to be no faults of mine, leaving them to be amended by those, to whom they appertaine* [...] (ibid).

Evidence of the same stance can also be found in the structural composition of the work. In his "Writ of Prevention", Wither equates *A Collection of Emblemes* to a building:

> *In* ARCHITECT, *it giveth good content,*
> *(And passeth for a praisefull* Ornament*)*
> *If, to adorne the* FORE-FRONTS, Builders *reare*
> *The* Statues *of their* Soveraigne-Princes, *there;*
> *And, trimme the* Outsides, *of the other SQVARES*
> *With* Portraitures *of some Heroicke PEERES.*
> *If, therefore, I (the more to beautifie*
> *This* Portion *of my MVSES* Gallerie*)*
> *Doe, here, presume to place, the* NAMES *of those*
> *To whose* Deserts, *my LOVE remembrance owes,*
> *I hope 'twill none offend.* (10)

According to Michael Bath, this was a commonplace metaphor in the seventeenth century: books were seen as "symbolic [microcosms]"(Bath 1994: 122), mirroring God's

creation, which was itself a book to be deciphered[1]. The fact that the bottom half of the lottery plate, which divides the work into four books, also equates each one with a cardinal point, confirms this analysis (Wither 1635: 291). Appropriately, then, Wither refers to each volume as an architectural component:

> *In this* Hope*, I have placed on the* FOREFRONT *(or before the* First Booke *of these* EMBLEMS*) a* Ioint-Inscription *to the* KING *and* QVEENES *most excellent* MAIESTIE.
> *Upon the* Right-Side-Front *of this Building (or before the* Second Booke*) One* Inscription *to the most hopefull* Prince, CHARLES*, Prince of* Wales*; And, another to his deere* Brother, IAMES*, Duke of* Yorke*, &c.*
> *On the other* Side-Front*, (or before the* Third Booke*) One* Inscription *to the gratious* Princesse*, FRANCES Dutchesse-Dowager of* RICHMOND *and* LENOX*; And, another to her most noble Nephew,* IAMES *Duke of* Lennox*, &c.*
> *On the* Fourth Front *of our* Square*, (Or before the* Fourth Booke*) One* Inscription *to the right Honourable* PHILIP *Earle of* Pembrooke *and* Montgomery*, &c. And another to the right Honourable,* HENRY *Earle of* Holland*, &c.*
> (Wither 1635: 10-11)

One immediately notices however that it is not the frontispiece that appears when one first opens the book. On the first page, the reader encounters the section titled "A *Preposition* to this *Frontispiece*". The title suggests primacy in the order in which the elements appear, but it also tempers the architectural metaphor and the structural importance of the frontispiece: the book no longer opens with the work of the engraver but with that of the versifier, who is the first to claim the reader's attention. Furthermore, the engraving on the opposite page bears Wither's name in the very middle, while William Marshall's is barely readable at the bottom. As Michael Bath aptly puts it, Wither "shoulders his way in front of his frontispiece" (Bath 1994: 112).

[1] For a more extensive discussion of this point, see Chapter I.

The next page also bears the title of the work, and, once again, George Wither's name in the middle. There is no reference to Rollenhagen or to De Passe anywhere, and the title "*A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne*" suggests that the original emblems were drawn from multiple sources and assembled by Wither. As was shown before, the section "To the Reader" then copiously belittles the work of the unnamed Rollenhagen, as well as the usefulness of the engravings on their own, and Wither's persona even asserts that the pictures are only endowed with any value once they are read in combination with his illustrations (Wither 1635: TR.-3).

After that, the reader encounters a portrait of the author, which takes up three quarters of page 17, accompanied by "The AUTHORS Meditation upon sight of his PICTVRE" on pages 17-19. Once again, the persona simply cannot stand idly by as the beholder admires John Payne's masterful engraving, but immediately asserts the superiority of the word over the image, that is, of its own work, over that of the artist, in the aforementioned "Meditation".

Moreover, each book opens with the title page bearing Wither's name and the full title of the *Collection* and closes with fifty-six lottery verses, which are his work exclusively. The last page of the work is the anonymous lottery plate, accompanied by "A Direction, shewing how they who are so disposed, shall find out their Chance, in the Lotteries aforegoing" on page 290, one of two paratextual additions[1] which make clear that it is Wither who devised the game – albeit allegedly "accidentally" (13), and which relegate the engravings to mere secondary elements, fully appropriated by the author.

Similar remarks apply to the individual emblems as well. Each page is headed by Wither's couplet, in which he usually translates or adapts Rollenhagen's original motto. The couplet appears first however, as though it were the initial motto, enclosing the picture between it and the illustration and overshadowing the original *inscriptio,* which is much harder to decipher as it is written in a circular shape in Latin, Greek, Italian or French. The page is then largely dominated by Wither's thirty-line *subscriptio*, which would have been even longer, we are told in his epistle "To the Reader", had it not been for lack of more space (14).

Furthermore, Wither's persona arguably sustains a measure of ambiguity as to the

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[1] The other being "The Occasion, Intention, and use of the Foure Lotteries adjoyned to these foure Books of Emblems" on page 15.

ultimate authorship of the emblems. As was mentioned earlier, Rollenhagen's name does not appear anywhere, and the very title suggests that the emblems were "collected", and not simply taken over, by the person who also provides the "metricall Illustrations" and the "Lotteries". Given the polysemy of the term "emblem" as it is used in the volume – especially when one is given to understand that the term refers to the pre-existing engraving, with or without the original motto – the reader may be somewhat confused by expressions such as "our Emblem", which occurs no fewer than forty times, or even "mine Emblems" in the dedication of book IV to Philip of Pembroke, which seem to imply full authorship rather than mere repurposing. In the *subscriptio* to emblem III-45, the persona even states: "I had / These *Figures* (as you see them) ready made / By others" (179) where the expression "I had these *Figures* [...] ready made" could be interpreted to mean "I possessed pre-existing [pictures]", but also to mean "I commissioned these pictures myself". In the epistle to the Reader, before ever mentioning that the copper plates were made by De Passe and had to be "procured out of *Holland*" (TR.-2), Wither asserts: "In these *Lots* and *Emblems,* I have the same ayme which I had in my other *Writings"* (ibid.), thus subordinating the emblems to the primacy of the "Lots" – which are unequivocally his own addition – but also steering the reader towards a tacit attribution of the emblems to his authorship, and to his alone.

In summary, everything starts and ends with Wither's text, and any element that the persona cannot directly or indirectly – or ambiguously - claim as its own is judged to possess any value at all only insofar as it is supplemented by his "illustrations". The pictorial elements are relegated to a secondary plane and widely overshadowed by the verses "quickening" them. This authorial stance lays the foundation for Wither's laying out of his rhetorical project, at least in part.

From the very title page on, Wither's persona makes at least one *raison d'être* of his book plain and clear: the author has collected and illustrated the emblems, and added the lottery, "[t]hat *Instruction*, and *Good Counsell*, may bee furthered by an Honest and Pleasant *Recreation*" (Wither 1635: Ti. I). Specifically, as he states in his epistle to the King and Queen, he intends "to please / And profit vulgar Iudgements (by the view, / Of what they ought to follow, or eschew)" (6). His address "To the Reader" then serves as an extensive attempt at justifying both the aim and the method of his endeavour. The first paragraph of the same contains the two fundamental axioms upon which much of the legitimacy of *A Collection of Emblemes* as an educational tool rests: firstly, the persona uses a short *exemplum* to claim that it would likely have remained ignorant were it not for "Bookes [...]

sutable to meane capacities" that were also "honestly pleasant" (ibid); secondly, it modestly asserts

> [...] *that mine owne Experience hath showne mee so much of the common* Ignorance *and* Infirmitie *in mine owne person, that it hath taught mee, how those things may be wrought upon in others, to their best advantage.* (12)

These two brief introductory sentences position Wither where he is most comfortable: on the *via media*. The immediate concession regarding his own defects creates proximity with his target readership, composed of literate but otherwise relatively uneducated people[1], but the second point suggests that, through experience and the reading of books accessible to a broader audience, he was able to mend himself, at least to the extent of being able to mend others in the same manner. This shows how well Wither understood the importance of what Kenneth Burke would later call "identification" as a rhetorical tool (Burke 1969: 55-65):

> *Here is perhaps the simplest case of persuasion. You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea,* identifying *your ways with his.* (55)

Wither's identification with his reader operates on two distinct levels. Firstly, as was shown above, it ensures his legitimacy both as teacher for "common readers", as he was once one of them, and as a reliable authority to impart moral knowledge, as he has since been able to join the path of virtue and wisdom. Secondly, it puts the reader's mind at ease: this will not be an arcane work riddled with Latin and Greek and constantly referring to – or worse yet, assuming knowledge of – a multitude of difficult authors, texts, and ideas. Instead, the reader can expect the literary equivalent of "*Sawces*" made with "Viniger, Salt, *or common* Water" (Wither 1635: TR.-1): a simple, accessible, and yet pleasant literary dish dressed to the taste of the simple man. To complete the process of identification, and thus claim the reader's attention and earn their trust, Wither has one more trick up his sleeve: setting himself apart from the condescending intellectual elite while simultaneously justifying his own use of some of their rhetorical tools.

The persona concedes that many "*learned* Authors" have preceded it in several

[1] Ibid., p. 14 for instance, where he refers to his target audience as "Vulgar Capacities".

respects, but immediately adds that their writings remain beyond the reach of "*many* Readers", who are best educated using "*plaine and vulgar notions, seasoned with a little* Pleasantnesse *and relished with a moderate* Sharpnesse" (ibid.) instead. Its defence of the same moderation in the use of "Wordy Flourishes" is accompanied by a harsh animadversion against those "Wittie men", who, it suggests, use "Verball Conceites" – which it considers mere "Emptie Sounds *and Impertinent* Clinches" – so as to deliberately "*obscure the* Sense, *to common* Readers" (ibid). Its own use of some ornate language it ascribes to the noble purpose of "[*stirring*] *up the* Affections, [*winning*] Attention, *or* [*helping*] *the Memory*" and even asserts that it thus intends to claim "*such* Inventions" for more honourable purposes than "Vanitie", who might otherwise "*get them wholly into her* Possession [*to worse ends*]" (ibid). Wither thus creates a comfortable niche for himself, assuming a middle-ground position that combines proximity to his intended readership and superior moral knowledge, which he employs solely in the interest of his readers for democratising purposes. This sets him apart from those he scornfully calls "the Overweening-Wise" or "*criticall* Authors" (TR.-2), who, he alleges, use the same to the opposite end, that of maintaining and even widening the social schism between them and the common public. The process of systematic appropriation described above is consistent with this aspect of his persona: he disapproves of images that are either too arcane to be understood by common readers, or simply useless on their own, but if one supplements them with textual elements, they can be put to good use for a didactic and moral purpose.

4. Emblems "Dismembered" and "Devoured": Wither's Metabolic Process of Repurposing

While other translations and adaptations of entire emblem books were composed in the early modern period[1], Wither's authorial stance towards his source material stands out among them. Emblem writers whose work is derivative in this manner usually acknowledged their predecessors, often expressing their admiration, and fully recognising their status as

[1] The Dutch author Anna Roemers Visscher for instance provided Dutch *subscriptiones* for Georgette de Montenay's *Cent emblemes chrestiens* (first published in 1567 under the title *Les Emblemes ou Devises chrestiennes*, see Adams 2003, p. 10), but her work "only circulated in private circles" according to the *Emblem Project Utrecht* website (http://emblems.let.uu.nl/av1615_introduction.html, consulted on 30.10.2019). Similarly, Henry Hawkins translated the French emblem book *Le Le Cœur Devot* (1627) by the French Jesuits Etienne Luzvic and Etienne Binet. The resulting work is titled *The Devout Heart* (1634), but it exceeds the scope of the original in that it also contains material composed by Hawkins (see Höltgen 2000, p. 617). Last but not least, as was mentioned earlier, Rollenhagen's *Nucleus Emblematum* was also fully translated into Dutch by Zacharias Heyns (1615-1617) (Veldman and Klein 2003: 286).

secondary authors of the translated volumes[1]. Wither is no mere translator of the emblems of course, but one could legitimately have expected him to refer to Rollenhagen and De Passe in the title of his *Collection*, instead of a brief reference to the latter in the section *To the Reader* (Wither 1635: TR.-2), and not a single mention of the former. Wither's dismissive attitude and his appropriation of the existing material can, however, be understood if examined within the framework of what Jeanneret calls the "dismembering" and "devouring" of one's literary predecessors. Although Jeanneret focuses on the humanists' stance towards the works of the Ancients specifically, this process of literary consumption could arguably be applied to Wither's treatment of his main source material as well. Jeanneret defines "dismembering", as follows:

> *To give easier access to the ancient heritage, the texts are cut up into mobile units, that can be recycled, ready to appear in unprecedented contexts. The classics are dismembered into spare parts, the pieces are recollected in anthologies where they are classified to make their access easier. The criteria of selection vary: here samples of good style are collected, elsewhere a volume of moral sentences is composed, or quotations, organized by themes, are gathered. It is the principle of the collection of commonplaces, which has a practical and quantitative aim: it is a question of managing for the best the capital left behind by the Ancients by placing it at everyone's disposal.* [...] *The ancient text is treated as a data bank-data, which have to be given new values to reach their full usefulness.* (Jeanneret 1995: 1046)

Once the various sources at one's disposal have thus been "dismembered", they are "devoured", assimilated so thoroughly that

[1] Anna Roemers Visscher includes a poem dedicated to Georgette de Montenay in French, in which she praises Montenay's religious zeal and recognises her as the first Christian emblem writer (Roemer Visscher 1615, b3r, see http://emblems.let.uu.nl/av1615front004.html for a transcription of the poem). Henry Hawkins does not address Luzvic and Binet directly, but he acknowledges both authors on the title page, and implies in his dedication to W. Stanford, Esq. and his wife Elizabeth that the emblems fulfil their meditative purpose quite well (Hawkins 1634, p. 3).

the reader will interiorize the texts to the extent of considering them as his own belongings. The division between present and past, the tension between the quest for one's own voice and the submission to the other are then suspended. The disciple has so thoroughly made the master's example his own that, while using it, he can rightfully speak for himself. (1049-1050)

Although Jeanneret focuses on the dietary metaphor – he calls this process the "cannibalism phase" (1050) – it is the language of appropriation in the passage quoted above that seems to be applicable to Wither's authorial stance. Indeed, he, too, seems to consider Rollenhagen's and De Passes's emblems as "his own belongings", sufficiently so that they are made subservient to his "own voice" and allow him to "rightfully speak for himself". Wither kept the two hundred engravings provided by De Passe, as well as Rollenhagen's original *inscriptiones*, but the *subscriptiones* were removed – quite literally "*cut off from the plates*" as Wither himself puts it (Wither 1635: TR.-2) - and the meaning that is drawn from the *picturae* is frequently extended to include more than one interpretation, and is even, at times, altered completely. This is the case, for instance, in the Sysiphus-emblem (I-11). The Latin motto reads "AD SCOPVM LICET ÆGRE ET FRVSTRA" ("To the goal, even if it is difficult and in vain"), and Rollenhagen's original verses expand on the same idea: "Volve SCOPUM donec, LICET ÆGRE, attingere possis, / Et FRVSTRA, molem volve, revolve tamen" ("Roll [the millstone] towards the goal, you may reach it, even if it is hard and in vain, roll the burden, roll it [up] again nonetheless") (Warncke 1983: 49). Warncke states that this constitutes an "obvious appeal to the believer to remain on the path of virtue in spite of his inherited sinfulness, even though treading the path is hard and may at times seem to be to no avail" (Ibid, my translation). Wither's concluding remarks in his own *subscriptio* to the engraving echo Rollenhagen's point:

> *[...] we are bound by* Faith*, with* Love *and* Hope*,*
> *To roll the Stone of* Good-Endeavour*, still,*
> *As neere as may be, to* Perfections top*,*
> *Though backe againe it tumble downe the* Hill. (Wither 1635: 30)

Wither does however emphasise that, in the end, the determining factor in reaching the metaphorical top of the hill is divine grace, without which the tedious task will remain futile

forever: “So; What our *Workes* had never power to doe, / *God’s* Grace, at last, shall freely bring us to”(ibid). As indicated earlier, Rollenhagen’s verses are short and leave much room for interpretation, but his encouraging the reader to labour on by stating that the goal may be reached (“attingere possis”) seems to endow them with at least partial responsibility in their own salvation. It is certain however that, unlike Rollenhagen, Wither is not content with providing a single interpretation: in the opening lines of his *subscriptio*, he reminds the reader that Sisyphus has no choice in pursuing his fruitless task, but that “some, by no Necessity inclos’d, / Upon themselves, such needlesse Taskes have layd” (ibid). Among those, Wither counts the “Fooles” who “dreame they can acquire / A Minde-content, by *Lab’ring still for more*” and those “whose *Hopes* doe vainely stretch / To climbe by *Titles*, to a happy Height”, whose folly blinds them to the fact that “having gotten one *Ambitious-Reach*, / Another comes perpetually in sight.” A third category of fools, whose “stupidity is nothing lesse”, “dreame that *Flesh* and *Blood* may raysed be, / Vp to the *Mount of perfect-Holinesse*”, an impossibility given that “(at our best) corrupt and vile are we” (ibid).

Emblem II-49 is an instance not merely of Wither’s extension of the semiotic contents of an emblem, but of complete repurposing. The original Latin motto is “*Donec totum impleat orbem*”, (“Until it fills the whole sphere”). The absence of any co-referential elements in the *pictura* and the motto may explain the difficulty in making out the meaning intended by Rollenhagen and De Passe, but the original *subscriptio* refers to the “glory of the French king”[1]. As a matter of fact, the *inscriptio* of the emblem is a verbatim quote of the motto of King Henri II, as Claude Paradin tells us in his *Devises héroïques* (1557) about a nearly identical *pictura*: “La Devise à present du Tre schretien & victorieus / Roy Henri ii. de ce nom, est la Lune en son croissant” (Paradin 1557: 20). Paradin immediately adds however that the moon is also used as a symbol for the Church nearly every time it appears in Scripture: “Es [sic] sacrees escritures donques la Lune prefigure l’Eglise, quasi en tous passages” (ibid). He ties the three interlaced crescents and the crown together through a reference to Henri II’s religious policies:

> *“La Lune aussi est sugette à mutacions, croissant & decroissant de tems en tems: ainsi veritablement est l’Eglise militante, laquelle ne peut demourer long tems en*

[1] The full *subscriptio* reads “Augescit, DONEC TOTVM, Luna, IMPLEAT ORBEM, / Gallorum, talis gloria, Regis, erat”, which can be translated as follows: “The moon increases in size until it wholly fills the circle; just like the glory of the French king” (Warncke 1983: 208, my translation).

un estat, que meintenant ne soit soutenue & defendue des Princes catholiques, & tantot persecutee des tirans & heretiques: au moyen dequoy est en perpetuel combat, auquel neanmoins la Royale Magesté, ou Roy premier fils de l'Eglise promet de tenir main de proteccion, jusques à ce que reduite sous un Dieu, un Roy, & une Loy, aparoisse la plenitude & rotondité de sa bergerie, regie par le seul Pasteur." (ibid)

By "l'Église militante", Paradin means the Catholic Church, which Henri II supported by implementing harsh anti-Protestant policies during his reign[1]. It is of course perfectly conceivable that Wither was not familiar with the motto of a French king who reigned nearly a century earlier, and that the opening lines of his *subscriptio*, "What in this *Emblem*, that mans meanings were, / Who made it first, I neither know nor care" (Wither 1635: 135), reflect his genuine lack of knowledge on the matter. It is however likely that he knew of Paradin's book, which he may have read in one of its English translations[2]. If so, his refusal to draw on Paradin's praise of a catholic and fiercely anti-Protestant king may well be a political statement rather than an admission of ignorance. His choice to repurpose the emblem may perhaps constitute a point about contemporary politics as well: in his *subscriptio*, Wither elaborates on the church-moon analogy, and, in closing, longs for the "Coronation-day" of the "*Church-triumphant*". This is reminiscent of his dedicatory epistle to the royal couple in book 1, in which he calls the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church "*two Sister-Churches*", and describes the Anglican king and the Catholic queen as "an Emblem, how those MOTHERS [i.e. the churches] may agree", a union that he – at least allegedly – deems far more desirable than "*Swords, / Flames, Threats,* and *Furie*" (Wither 1635: Ded. I-3)[3]. At any rate, once again, Wither displays an evident intention of speaking for himself through an emblem that was originally devised by another.

It is probably for this reason that Rob Browning suggests reading Wither's emblems in the light of Lina Bolzoni's studies on the processes of dismantling and "creatively

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[1] *Encyclopedia Universalis,* entry "HENRI II (1519-1559) roi de France (1547-1559)"

[2] At least one English translation was published in London in 1591 and titled *The heroicall deuises of M. Claudius Paradin Canon of Beaulieu. Whereunto are added the Lord Gabriel Symeons and others. Translated out of Latin into English by P.S.*

[3] The dedicatory epistle will be discussed in more detail in Chapter VIII.

reproducing" (Browning 2002: 61) texts. Bolzoni makes points similar to those laid out by Jeanneret that were quoted above[1], but adds that "learning and remembering the secrets of rhetorical figures [brings] to light the logic hidden in literary 'artifice'"(Bolzoni 2001 : xvi), and thus enables the author of the "creative reproduction" not merely to "rightfully speak for himself" (Jeanneret 1995: 1050), but also to lay bare the inner workings of the linguistic devices and tropes assimilated in this fashion and to "deconstruct" them, as Browning puts it with respect to Wither's stance towards Rollenhagen's original emblems and their way of "enticing readers with puzzling images, cryptic mottoes, and then offering short epigrammatic answers" (Browning 2002: 57). In favouring "the reader's own moral utilitarianism" over "narrow notions of hermeneutic fidelity" (58), Browning argues, Wither implements a "reader-oriented epistemology" that "has its moorings in Protestant doctrine, which emphasises the importance of the individual's apprehension of God, both in Scripture and in the Book of Nature" (60) and which "welcomes" his readers "into the interpretative fray" (ibid).

This last assertion, however, deserves further examination. The claim that Wither - partially[2] - liberates himself from pre-established interpretations of the motifs contained in De Passe's engravings to better serve his own rhetorical purpose would be difficult to deny, but does this, indeed, entail that he grants his readers a similar degree of hermeneutic freedom?

It is significant that Browning does not point to any specific instance of text in which Wither's persona would state, or even merely imply, that the reader ought to try their hand at construing the engravings, especially given that he/she is addressed quite frequently throughout the *Collection*. Furthermore, this supposed concession to the reader's own hermeneutic creativity is arguably in direct contradiction with the seemingly well-meaning, but nonetheless condescending and infantilising authorial stance that was identified earlier. It is also somewhat inconsistent with the very principle of the lottery, as the thrill of the game depend on the stability of meaning of the emblems, as Browning himself admits:

> *The fun is in considering the various ways a particular emblem's moral lesson is apt (or not, as the case may be)*

[1] For instance, with respect to the stance of sixteenth century humanists, Bolzoni argues that "imitation of the old is a stage in the production of something new" (Bolzoni 1995, p. xv).

[2] For a discussion of the question of Wither's reliance on pre-established interpretations for some of the emblematic motifs in the *Collection*, see Chapter IV.

> *for the person it is assigned to by chance of the lottery wheel.* (62)

If the reader were, indeed, given the freedom to interpret the emblems according to their own subjective preferences, the playful impression of powerlessly submitting to fickle Fortune, who might pick an emblem that, when read out loud, might expose the player's vices for all to hear, would be greatly compromised[1].

Browning does state that the persona's frequently polysemic decryptions of the engravings "call attention to themselves as the readings of an individual who readily admits to the limitations of his own perspective" (58), thus allegedly placing itself on equal footing with the reader in terms of interpretational validity, much like Rollenhagen did in the *Collection's* predecessor. I submit, however, that there is a significant difference between the persona's setting forth several, equally valid interpretations for the reader to choose from, and inviting the reader to add his own into the mix. As Wither puts it in his epistle "To the Reader":

> *[W]hen levitie, or a childish delight in trifling Objects, hath allured them to looke on the* Pictures; *Curiositie may urge them to peepe further, that they might seeke out also their* Meanings, *in our annexed* Illustrations; *In which, may lurke some* Sentence, *or* Expression, *so evidently pertinent to their* Estates, Persons, *or* Affections, *as will (at that instant or afterward) make way for those* Considerations, *which will, at last, wholly change them, or much better them, in their* Conversation. (Wither 1635: TR.-3)

Crucially, he expects his readers to look for the meaning of the emblems "in our annexed *Illustrations*", and certainly not to venture their own interpretation, being creatures of "levitie" and "childish delight in trifling objects".

In fact, as far as I can tell, there is only one instance in the emblems proper in which the persona admits that interpretations that would diverge from its own are possible:

[1] The lottery game will be discussed more extensively in Chapter IX.

If others thinke this Figure, *here, inferres*
A better sense; let those Interpreters
Vnriddle it; and, preach it where they please:
Their Meanings *may be good, and so are these.* (Wither 1635: 198)

The persona does not defer its interpretative task to the reader, but to a third party ("*those* Interpreters"). Furthermore, these lines appear in the *subscriptio* to emblem III-45, the *pictura* of which depicts a crowned male figure with six arms, each holding a different type of weapon, and about which the persona immediately confesses the following:

An Emblem's *meaning, here, I thought to conster;*
And, this doth rather fashion out a Monster,
Then forme an Hieroglyphicke: *but, I had*
These Figures *(as you see them) ready made*
By others; and, I meane to morallize
Their Fancies; not to mend what they devise. (ibid)

It is, then, reasonable to interpret the persona's reference to third-party hermeneuts as a pre-emptive disclaimer concerning a possible misreading of an engraving that is, evidently, deemed somewhat cryptic, and not as an invitation for any and all to devise alternative ways of understanding it. In fact, as Dobranski puts it:

> *[...] [W]e need to remember that both authors and stationers still wanted to avoid interpretations that they considered erroneous. As John Kerrigan notes, authors remained "wary of abandoning their works to misconstruction. That could lead to imprisonment, or worse."[1] [...] The same tension expresses itself in emblem books, a genre that further suggests the kind of participation often expected of readers during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. On the one hand, readers had to take an active role in constructing the meaning of the emblems they read; on the other hand,*

[1] Dobranski is quoting from Kerrigan *The Editor as Reader* 1996, p. 114

> *authors attempted to impose limitations on readers' participation.* (Dobranski 2005: 40)

Wither's own chilling experience behind bars[1] would arguably have prompted him to prevent potentially damaging (mis-)interpretations from his readers, especially given how many of his emblems deal with contentious subjects, including religion, and the power and duties of the monarch.

I would submit that Wither's hermeneutic plurality ought to be understood, not as the open-minded invitation that Browning sees in it, but, rather, as an instance of the utilitarian stance of late humanists towards emblematics that Bolzoni describes in the same volume that Browning, interestingly, cites in support of his thesis. Bolzoni discusses the various sources from which 16th- and 17th-century humanists drew to bolster their rhetorical arsenal, and, referring to Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* (first published in 1593), indicates the following:

> *This work, says the author, is essential for 'orators, preachers, poets, designers of emblems and devices, sculptors, painters, draughtsmen, actors, architects, and creators of scenery to represent all that can befall human thought with the proper symbols'. The* Iconologia *is thus intended for those who work with words, those who practise the figurative arts, and those who produce works in which words and images interact.* (Bolzoni 2002: 182)

As Spica has shown, "symbols"[2], of which emblems constitute a sub-category, were originally regarded as transcendent means to decipher the "Book of God", and to access perfect, divine knowledge of the physical world (Spica 1996: 59-60)[3], but, as the influence of Rationalism and Empiricism grew in the course of the seventeenth century, emblematic discourse experienced a gradual "rationalisation", which culminated in the relegation of

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[1] See Chapters II and III

[2] Here, the term is to be understood according to the definition that Spica derives from the writings of early humanists on the subject: "Le symbole, ce mouvement de relation qu'entretiennent la chose concrète et son concept intellectuel, désigne une fonction plus qu'un objet matérialisable et est forcément conduit à faire image. Il noue dès lors des liens étroits avec l'imagination individuelle tout comme avec l'imaginaire collectif, et se voit conférer une valeur sacrée." (Spica 1996: 41).

[3] "Le *symbolum* est répertorié comme figure privilégiée pour lire le monde. De même, et cette conception-ci est solidaire de celle-là, on considère le monde comme un *Liber Naturae* dont les caractères qui le composent sont à interpréter et à déchiffrer comme des paroles divines qui permettent d'accéder au Créateur, et avec lui à la compréhension totale du monde phénoménal." (59-60).

emblematic motifs to mere ornaments and illustrations[1]. It is this shift, this "disenchantment of the world" as Spica elegantly calls it, that transpires in Bolzoni's discussion of the use of Ripa's *Iconologia*, not as a hermeneutic key to decipher the Book of Nature, but rather as a handy repository of rhetorical tools that one could use as one saw fit. In her discussion of the state of "la symbolique" in the closing years of the seventeenth century, Spica writes:

> *La rhétorique a pour but, parfaitement aristotélicien, de persuader, alors que l'image symbolique avait été créée [...] pour apporter enfin la solution à la feinte sophistique du discours dénoncée par Platon, en établissant un signe persuasif de vérité. [...] L'image symbolique devient alors, par ses caractéristiques plastiques indéniablement séduisantes, et sa brièveté confortable, la figure par excellence des figures de plaisir, quand l'ensemble des figures de style sont là pour la majoration de plaisir dans le discours.* (Spica 1996: 476-477)

This shift is merely beginning at the time at which *A Collection of Emblemes* was written and published, but Wither's views on emblematics testify to its influence even in the 1620s and 30s. Once again, the poet is at home in the liminal space between two epistemological frameworks, one where emblems were to be considered a privileged and transcendent mode of expression of "th'Ancients" (Wither 1635: 14) or "sages old" (14), and the other, where they were merely "dumbe figures" (TR.-3) waiting to be put to good use in a utilitarian manner.

5. Conclusion

Wither's authorial stance in *A Collection of Emblemes* manages to be both unique in the English – perhaps even in the European – emblematic tradition, and nonetheless quite representative of broader literary and epistemological tendencies that pervaded the early Stuart period. Wither's appropriation and repurposing of his source material testifies to the profound shift in the status of symbolic discourse in the Early Modern period, and to his own, liminal status as a fervent opponent of verbose and pedantic works designed to discourage "common" readers, who nonetheless assumes a seemingly well-meaning but also patronising

[1] Spica 1996: 405-481. For a fuller discussion of this process and its possible manifestations in Wither's emblems, see Chapter IV.

attitude towards his potential readers, whom he sets out to instruct, without, however, going as far as encouraging them to seek emancipation from intellectual and hermeneutic authority. We shall now turn to the manifold consequences of this stance on Wither's treatment of the emblems, notably his rhetorically subtle use of a polyphony of poetic voices that manage, with impressive adaptability, to keep him, yet again, on a sometimes precarious, but nonetheless constant *via media*.

Chapter VI

“Thy Heart [...] to those Knowledges aspires, / Which every prudent Soule desires”: Wither’s Voices in *A Collection of Emblemes*

1. Introduction

As was shown in Chapter I, in some of his writings aside from *A Collection of Emblemes*, Wither is, at times, wholly unequivocal about his deliberate use of a literary persona, which manifests itself most clearly through its addressing Wither in the third person, and sometimes even through direct references to the separation that exists between the two. This, on its own, does not, however, constitute evidence that Wither makes use of such a literary *alter ego* in all his works, nor does it lend much aid in determining how it would manifest precisely where it is present indeed. If we return to Walker’s definition[1] of the notion of “persona” however, our main investigative thrust ought to focus on the manifestation(s) of the same as embedded in, and emanating from, the particular context that is Wither’s emblem book.

In his article on the subject of Wither’s persona in *A Collection of Emblemes*, Mason Tung proceeds to tackle the question in a somewhat linear fashion: he begins with the texts he calls the “preliminaries” (2010: 54-61), which comprise the introductory “Preposition to this Frontispiece”, the title of the work, the section called “A Writ of Prevention”, in which the persona justifies the dedication of each of the four books to well-known members of the court, the epistle “To the Reader”, the dedicatory epistles in question, the brief justification of the inclusion of the lottery game titled “The *Occasion, Intention*, and use of the *Foure Lotteries* adjoyned to these foure *Books of Emblems*”, and the poem called “The AVTHORS Meditation upon sight of his PICTVRE”, which appears immediately below Wither’s portrait by John Payne. Tung then moves on to the “*Collection* Proper”, which he subdivides into the motto couplet and Wither’s thirty-line “Illustrations” (61-71), and finally makes a few separate remarks about the lottery stanzas (72-76). Overall, Tung’s approach consists in listing the persona’s distinctive qualities, as one would of a physical person, in the order in which they become apparent in the book. In the “Preposition” to the Frontispiece, about the persona, whom he deems to be speaking of itself when mentioning “Our AVTHOR”, a point

[1] “A mask that may be related simultaneously to the biographical data available about the author and to other cultural and literary voices” (Walker 1991: 109). See Chapter I for more details on the concept.

to which we shall return shortly, Tung states:

> *[He] appears to be a fair-minded man who can find some good out of a 'misfortune', who is willing to let both the wise and the foolish to find out the secrets if they wish to try, and who finds moral values in an 'Object of Delight', the engraved frontispiece.* (54)

Upon encountering the title, Tung continues, the reader should be most impressed by "the seriousness of the persona's moral purpose" (55), that of "breathing life" into the pictures through the illustrations (ibid.). As he discusses the "Writ of Prevention", Tung uses "Wither" and "the persona" interchangeably (55-56) , and describes the latter as "intelligent, perceptive, clear-seeing as well as far-seeing, and inventive in copiousness as well as in variety" (56), referring to the authorial project to which the elaborate structuring of the work undoubtedly testifies, and to the sheer volume of texts that Wither added to the engravings – a characteristic that other critics have deplored in no uncertain terms, as was shown in the previous chapters. Next come the dedications, where Tung's view of Wither and his persona as nearly interchangeable entities is even more obvious. Pointing to the passages in the dedications that read like apologies for past offenses, or as bitter acknowledgements of Wither's own unpopularity among certain powerful courtiers, Tung asserts:

> *These experiences taught [Wither], and by osmosis the persona, to maintain his integrity, to shun the way of fawning courtiers, and to depend more on God and His Grace for material well-being. They encouraged him to urge his readers, who have come to trust him, to lay up their treasures in heaven as well. (56)*

In the epistle "To the Reader", Tung reiterates a critical commonplace that pervades much of Witherian scholarship[1]: "The persona who greets the reader in the letter is that of a sincere

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[1] See, for instance, Buchanan, W. "George Wither, The Puritan Poet" (1862), Hilkert: "George Wither, Puritan: a study in poetic deterioration" (1953), and others. It must be noted right away that critics who have looked at Wither's work more closely, such as Hensley (1969), French (1928), and Rannou (1980-1981), are usually far more nuanced in this respect, especially given the problematic definition of the term "Puritan" and Wither's own, sometimes rather straightforward expressions of impatience, or even scorn, towards some of his contemporaries to whom he refers by that term. This issue will be discussed in more detail in Chapter VII.

Puritan" (57), as evidenced, at least partially, so Tung argues further, by "the influence of the Puritan homiletic style of plain speaking, [popular] especially among Puritan preachers" (ibid.), which is the only remark about stylistics he makes in his article. Instead, he infers from Wither's expression of frustration at the lack of more space on the page that "the persona is a perfectionist: nothing short of the fullest explication of a moral will ever satisfy him" (59). Tung then quickly mentions Wither's instructions as to how the lottery game is to be played – again, "Wither" and "the persona" are used interchangeably here (60) – and finally moves on the poem that accompanies Payne's portrait of the poet. In this section, yet again, he simply lists a set of qualities that the poem seems to suggest the persona to possess: "deeply spiritual, and profoundly concerned with his spiritual future", but who "also realises that for the time being he has to live in this mortal body" (ibid.). His discussion of the persona in the "preliminaries" is concluded by quoting the final lines of the "AVTHOR'S Meditation", asserting that they "speak volumes of his persona" (61), but without giving the reader any further information about the "volumes" in question. As he moves on to "the Collection proper" (61), Tung's comments remain in a similar vein. The persona, he states, shows "commitment to observing Rollenhagen's [original] moral whenever he can" and to "moralizing" the engravings (62-63), and appears to be a "solicitous teacher and counsellor" (63), who is "fair-minded" (65) and "driven by moral profitability" while also being "judicious and undogmatic" (67). Tung briefly discusses the persona's use of first-person pronouns, which he categorises as either "parenthetical", "righteous", or "prudent or wise" (63), providing a few examples of each, but without elaborating on the significance of any of them. Finally, his remarks on the persona in the lottery verses dwell on their contribution to the rhetorical potency of Wither's illustrations and of the spiritual advice contained therein, but no specificities of the persona's voice in the lottery stanzas are identified or discussed.

Tung's study was no doubt constrained by the limited amount of space granted to him in the issue of *Emblematica* in which his article was published, but I would like to argue that, given a different analytical framework, there is much more to say about Wither's persona in each of these paratextual additions to the emblems.

Firstly, Tung's indiscriminate use of the terms "Wither" and "the persona" to refer to the voice emanating from these pages is arguably problematic. One of the foundational axioms of the framework of "persona criticism" is that the physical person of the author, especially one who lived in times so distant from our own, is a most fluid and uncertain object of study if apprehended through his or her writings only, precisely *because* of the

author's freedom to create a persona, which, Baldick reminds us, is "literally a 'mask'" (*Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, entry "persona"). In fact, as Walker puts it in "Persona Criticism and the Death of the Auhor":

> *What makes the mask preferable to the author as a focus of analysis is the fact that the mask is unlike a human being. It is limited, identifiable, constructed, and without intentions. Indeed, in my understanding, the persona is almost precisely opposite to the historical subject-author in that it functions like an outline, a potentiality, rather than a fullness which is always already depleted as it renders itself in discourse. One might even call the persona a* thin description*, in the sense that it acts simply as a structuring mechanism, a predisposition that takes on substance as it becomes embedded in particular contexts. The persona may well appear various in these contexts [...]. Furthermore, the mask is not a limit on what the text can mean. It is simply a feature of the text* [...]. (1991: 115, my underlining)

In the introduction to his article, Tung states that his purpose in examining Wither's persona is "to achieve a deeper appreciation of his emblem book" (2010: 54). Whether such an aim is conducive to a productive analytical framework, and whether it is best served by proceeding in the manner described above, is a matter that each of Tung's readers should settle for themselves. Ascribing a set of psychological or moral features to an author based on his work, tentative as it is given any author's liability to be ironic, sarcastic, facetious, ambiguous, self-censuring, or even plainly disingenuous, can nonetheless yield information that may well constitute a node in a broader hermeneutic matrix. But, if one concedes Walker's point that the persona, for all its being related to, and created by, the author, is still merely a "predisposition that takes on substance as it becomes embedded in particular contexts" (1991: 115), and therefore primarily a feature of the *text* rather than one of the *author*, the validity of such an approach is far more debatable. Indeed, if one relies on a set of putative psychological features inferred from the text and attributed to the persona to shed light on the same text, one runs the risk of quickly being trapped in an endless loop of

circular reasoning. Once it has been determined that the persona is "deeply spiritual", or "a perfectionist", what else could be said about the text on such a basis, except that it seems to have been written by someone who is possession of those qualities?

On the other hand, viewing the persona as a textual construct that takes shape through language and that acts as a "structuring mechanism" (Walker 1991: 115) of the work allows for an arguably more fruitful approach to the core question that Tung tackled in his article, that of the polyphony of voices that the persona uses throughout. It allows for the examination of the persona's voices as a rhetorical mode of interaction with the reader, one that is not fully divorced from the author's individual circumstances, but that ought to be apprehended mainly as a node within a much broader artistic and cultural framework. Such a method may serve Tung's purpose of aiding our appreciation of *A Collection of Emblemes*, but its main aim is to attempt an explanation of the variations in the persona's manner of addressing the reader in the paratext and in the emblems proper.

2. "A Frontispiece, in any sense they please": The Persona's Introduction

The "PREPOSITION to this FRONTISPIECE" (Wither 1635: Prep.), which is the first token of Wither's strategy of systematic appropriation of pre-existing materials[1], also acquaints the reader with the persona for the first time. As was mentioned before, the readers are told that the engraving they behold on the opposite page does not correspond at all to the one that was commissioned, but that it was kept nonetheless, as the persona, or so it insists, ultimately saw some accidental value in it despite the engraver's alleged incompetence.

It worth noting, right away, that a number of scholars, including Corbett and Norton, have expressed a great deal of scepticism regarding the truth of the account (1964: 188). The claim that William Marshall, whose artistic credentials are undisputed, would have mistaken the instructions to an extent sufficient to justify such dismissive remarks is extremely doubtful indeed, especially given how readily the motifs that appear in the Frontispiece cohere with the overall economy of the volume[2]. But what, then, is to be made of such an introduction to the persona?

If, having eliminated the hypothesis of the truth of the account, one turns again to the text, several features of Wither's nascent persona emerge. Firstly, the disingenuous – and,

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[1] See Chapter V.

[2] See Chapter IX.

one might say, almost facetious – nature of the story told at the engraver's expense immediately endows the persona with a notable degree of artfulness. It is hard not to be reminded of Francis Quarles's *Argalus and Partheneia* (1629), where the Frontispiece is an engraving showing a text covered by a drawn curtain, and where the "Minde of the Frontispiece" reads as follows:

> *Reader, behinde this silken Frontspiece lyes*
> *The Argument of our Booke; which, to your eyes*
> *Our Muse (for serious causes, and best knowne*
> *Vnto her selfe) commands should be vnshowne;*
> *And therefore, to that end, she hath thought fit*
> *To draw this Curtaine, t'wixt your eye and it.*

Quarles immediately introduces a measure of ambiguity here. Clearly, the title "The Minde of the Frontispiece" assimilates the ensuing text to an emblematic *subscriptio* added to assist those among the book's readers who might have difficulty making sense of the engraving on their own, and where the noun "Frontispiece" refers to the entire picture. The reference to the "silken Frontispiece" that veils the "Argument of the Booke" is therefore quite subversive: it metonymically shifts the signified of the noun from the whole engraving to only one element within it, the drawn curtain, thus creating a *mise-en-abyme*: the physical covering up of the "Argument" by the curtain, which denies the reader any initial information about the work, strongly suggests a similar process of dissimulation, whereby the text actually emphasises the tantalising secrecy contained in the engraving. In fact, the playful nature of this process is hinted at in the Latin phrase "Lusit Anacreon" ("the playful Anacreon") that appears just below Quarles's name on the same page as the frontispiece, a quote from Horace's *Odes* (IV.9.) in which the latter praises the Greek poet, who is remembered chiefly for erotic poetry and drinking songs (Budelmann 2009: 227). The playfulness of the frontispiece and of the accompanying stanza are thus acknowledged almost overtly, both in the engraving itself and in Quarles's epistle "To the Reader". Indeed, Quarles, in a pre-emptive disclaimer that is, once again, reminiscent of Wither's, asserts that "this Booke differs from my *previous*, as a *Courtier* from a *Churchman* ; But if any thinke it vnfit, for one to play both parts, I have *presidents* [sic] for it: And let such know, that I have taken but one play-day in sixe [...]" ($A3_r$). In fact, the bulk of his epistle is written in a tongue-in-cheek tone that Wither would certainly not have disdained. Quarles's persona, in immediate, inter-semiotic cooperation

with the engraving, is setting the parameters of its relationship with the reader: the work is to be approached with a gleeful pinch of salt, and the persona, if it is met in such a state of mind, will prove an entertaining companion.

A similar process is arguably at work in the "Preposition to this Frontispiece" in Wither's book. Here, the information that the Frontispiece allegedly was to convey is not merely covered up, it never even reached the pages of the book:

> *Our AVTHOR, to the* Graver *did commend*
> *A plaine Invention; that it might be wrought,*
> *According as his Fancie had forethought.*
> *Insteed thereof, the* Workeman *brought to light,*
> *What, here, you see; therein, mistaking quite*
> *The true* Designe: *And, so (with paines, and cost)*
> *The first intended FRONTISPIECE, is lost.*
> (Wither 1635: Prep.)

Instead of the "*plaine Invention*" that was intended, the persona continues, the engraver provided a picture riddled with "*Errors* and *Confusions*" (ibid.), which the "AUTHOR" allegedly intended to discard at first, but then changed his mind, as the work, presumably due to its brimming with small characters engaged in various activities, and to the numerous symbols it contains, was deemed a fitting riddle "to try his *Wit,* who lists / To pumpe the secrets, out of *Cabalists"*, especially given that, "if any thinke this *Page* will, now, declare / The meaning of those *Figures,* which are there, / They are deceiv'd. For, *Destinie* denyes / The utt'ring of such hidden *Mysteries*" (ibid.). The tantalising presence of the book's argument behind a thin curtain in Quarles's frontispiece is mirrored in the form of a challenge to the reader:

> *[...] Moreover, tis ordain'd,*
> *That, none must know the* Secrecies *contain'd*
> *Within this PIECE; but, they who are so wise*
> *To finde them out, by their owne* prudencies*;*
> *And, hee that can unriddle them, to us,*

Shall stiled be, the second OEDIPVS (ibid.)[1].

As Ripollés rightly points out however, upon closer examination, the engraving itself "must not have seemed so inscrutable to seventeenth-century audiences as Wither [...] would have us believe" (2008: 120). In fact, the clear-cut binary structure of the picture, culminating in the twin peaks that are unequivocal allegories of salvation on the left – where a righteous soul is carried to heaven on an eagle's back – and damnation on the right, embodied by a skeleton holding a bow and arrow, and by the damned falling off the cliff, would probably have been conventional enough to pose no difficulties to a literate person in early Stuart England. In fact, familiarity, on the reader's part, with the Gospel of Matthew would probably have been enough to make sense of the engraving. The broad, inviting avenue that leads directly towards death and damnation, and the rocky, arduous climb that is required to reach salvation, are clearly inspired directly by Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it". Hailing a reader capable of making such conventional inferences as the "*second OEDIPUVS*" should therefore be viewed, either as obsequious flattery, or, more likely given the tone of the Frontispiece, as a wholly disingenuous statement. I submit, however, that these antiphrastic comments ought not to be interpreted as condescension or mockery at the reader's expense. Rather, the persona's claim as to the alleged obscurity of the engraving ensures that readers will immediately direct their attention towards it, and then back to the text in the hope of obtaining more information, thus initiating the back-and-forth movement of the eye that is required in emblem interpretation. In this instance, the reader obtains no information as to the contents of the picture, but only the flattering promise of equalling the brightest among mythological characters. A certain amount of exegesis is required on his part and is immediately rewarded, putting him in the right frame of mind to apprehend the rest of the work. The presence of at least some relatively common motifs in the frontispiece guarantees that the reader will succeed in gathering the core of the message and will then feel confident enough to flip the pages to the first emblem. The slightly derisive tone that arises from the hyperbolic challenge endows the process with a light-hearted mood,

[1] It is worth noting the direct echo to Quarles's epistle "To the Reader" in *Argalus and Partheneia* again: "In this Discourse, I have not effected to set thy vnderstanding on the Rack, by the tyranny of *stronglines*, which [...] are made for the third *Generation* to make vse of, and are the meere itch of wit; vnder the colour of which, many have ventured (trusting to the *Oedipean* conceit of their ingenious Reader) to write *non-sense* [...]" ($A3_r$).

perhaps so as to distinguish *A Collection of Emblemes* from far sterner moralising books and to anticipate the playful use of the lottery. The persona, in short, shows the readers that reading emblems is both *within their capabilities*, and *fun*.

Furthermore, the persona concludes the "Preposition" by mentioning two particular categories of potential readers. Firstly, "those *All-knowing men, /* [...] who thinke they see/ The *secret-meanings,* of all things that bee" (ibid.), references to whom the reader shall promptly meet again in the epistle, in which the "*Overweening-wise*" are generously castigated for their "*Wordie Flourishes*" which are, in the persona's opinion, "*Emptie Sounds* and *Impertinent Clinches*" (TR.-1-2), and from whom Wither's intended reader is distinguished right away. Remaining true to its tongue-in-cheek tone, the persona explains that it is "thought expedient, now and then / To make some *Worke*" for those "who thinke they see / The *secret-meanings*, of all things that bee" "to exercise upon", and to try to "pumpe the secrets, out of *Cabalists*" (Prep.). The verb "to pump" here, which is probably to be understood in the sense given at 10. b. in the *Oxford English Dictionary*[1], suggests excessive or factitious exertion, or, in this specific case, hermeneutic convolutions. Again, the persona creates complicity with the "common reader", whom a straightforward, but valid interpretation of the engraving would humorously earn the title of "*the second OEDIPVS*", while mocking those who, in an effort to set themselves apart from such readers, would exert themselves to find the - allegedly – non-existent "secrets" within the engraving. By suggesting that the Frontispiece was included in the work partly to keep such eager exegetes occupied in a fruitless pursuit, the persona gives the "common reader" a good reason to feel more intelligent than them, thus subverting the common structuring of the emblem readership between the select few who understand them, and those who do not[2].

Secondly, and finally, the persona concludes by moving from overzealous interpreters to superficial beholders, who "best affect *Inuentions,* which appeare / Beyond their understandings" (ibid.), probably referring to those it later calls "*Childish-gazers*" who, by "levitie, or a childish delight, in trifling Objects" would be "*allured* [...] *to looke on the* Pictures" alone (TR.-3). Despite the somewhat condescending tone with which the persona addresses them in the epistle "To the Reader", to which we shall turn shortly, there is no hint of mockery here, but rather an apparent willingness to let them peruse the book at their

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[1] "To extract, raise, or create by persistent or factitious effort."

[2] See Chapter V.

leisure, be it only to take pleasure in looking at the pictures. Indeed, they are invited to take Marshall's engraving to be "a FRONTISPIECE, in any sense they please" (Prep.).

What emerges from the text is therefore a voice that showcases its playfulness and its unequivocal preference for "common readers" over arrogant and elitist ones. If one belonged to the first group, one would, arguably, gladly accept the persona's invitation, though this inclination may, at first, be somewhat tempered by the epistle "To the Reader".

3. "*To please / And profit vulgar Iudgements*": The Persona's Efforts at Legitimising its Didactic Purpose

In the epistle "To the Reader" and the next section, the "Occasion, Intention, and Use" of the lottery game, one encounters a more pragmatic and cautious side of the persona. Having piqued the reader's interest and curiosity through the "Preposition", it immediately takes care to curtail any damaging conclusions on the reader's part, both regarding the book's overall *raison d'être* and its use, by anticipating potential erroneous interpretations of the overall project, and possibly the censure that the lottery game might elicit. The more earnest quality of the tone is noticeable immediately in the stabilisation of the persona's use of the "I" pronoun, which "indexes the speaker or writer in place and time but also situates him in the moral order of speaking as the person responsible for what is uttered" (Mühlhäusler and Harré 1990: 92, quoted in Nurmi, Nevala, and Palander-Collin eds 2009: 263). This does not entail that the premises of Walker's "persona criticism" methodology break down in such instances, as the switch to the first-person pronoun remains a "structural mechanism of the text" (Walker 1991: 115), but, in the eyes of the reader whom the persona addresses in such a manner, the separation between it and the physical author would appear to fade away. As these parts of the paratext contain, for the most part, pre-emptive justifications and disclaimers for the contents of the book, restoring proximity between persona and physical author seems to be a sound strategy. Indeed, given the physical repercussions that might result from the misconstruction of, or hostility to, a printed work on the part of powerful readers and of which Wither was painfully aware[1], it was probably crucial to lay out such justifications in an earnest, plain manner, and to avoid any textual elements that could be interpreted as clues pointing to antiphrasis, irony, or disingenuousness. The more readily the persona's statements could be assimilated to the physical author simply, and sincerely, speaking his mind, the better. But this was certainly no guarantee. Dobranski explains that the

[1] See Chapter I.

seventeenth-century reader was particularly prone to assuming a concealed meaning even to texts appearing plain or straightforward, and to exercise a measure of agency and interpretative creativity that exceeded the author's anticipation (2005: 41-42). He suggests that Protestant hermeneutics and the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, as well as the pedagogical exercise of *disputatio*, which, he states, "remained the primary means of learning in seventeenth-century universities", a practice that "[cast] learning as a dynamic, social process [...] surely influenced how students would also have experienced printed materials" (42). Wither was probably aware that *A Collection of Emblemes* was particularly conducive to such potentially dangerous creativity, as it constituted a reappropriation of a previously existing work itself, which, in turn, set a precedent for readers to appropriate the *Collection* and to read it however they saw fit.

Aside from the stabilisation of the self-referential "I"-pronoun, the persona that one encounters in the epistle "To the Reader" therefore implements other strategies to exert as much control as possible over reader construction. Firstly, the epistle, as well as the "Occasion, *Intention*, and Use of the Foure *Lotteries* [...]" both start with *exempla*, or short narratives presented as the author's personal experiences, thus reinforcing the impression that it is him, and not a literary intermediate, that is addressing the reader:

> *If there had not beene some* Bookes *conceitedly composed, and sutable to meane capacities, I am doubtfull, whether I had ever beene so delighted in reading, as thereby to attaine to the little Knowledge I have: For, I doe yet remember, that, things* honestly pleasant, *brought mee by degrees, to love that which is* truely profitable. [...] *I may truly acknowledge, that mine owne* Experience *hath showne mee so much of the common* Ignorance *and* Infirmitie *in mine owne person, that it hath taught mee, how those things may be wrought upon in others, to their best advantage.*
> (Wither 1635: TR.-1)

The first-person pronoun appears no fewer than five times here, and the references to "*mine owne person*" and "*mine owne* Experience", as well as the emphatic "*I may truly acknowledge*", stand in striking contrast with the cheeky and fluid persona of the

"Preposition". The assertion that the entire volume was written using "such [words] as flowed forth, without *Studie*" instead of "*Wordy Flourishes"* reinforces the persona's seemingly unaffected honesty, which already emerges from its willingness to admit its own shortcomings – a rhetorical strategy to foster trust and sympathy known at least since Aristotle[1]. The exemplum itself fosters proximity, and even identification, between reader and persona, as the first might well share in the second's preference for "Bookes *conceitedly composed*" over arid or abstruse volumes.

It is quite remarkable, given this strategy to elicit congeniality and trust from the reader, that the epistle "To the Reader" also contains extremely condescending language, which, though not directed at the individual reader, paints, nonetheless, a clear picture of the book's anticipated readership. The initial, somewhat diplomatic mention of "*some* Capacities" who might be better instructed with a volume such as *A Collection of Emblemes* rather than through "more applauded *Meanes*" (ibid.) quickly gives way to expressions such as "*the* Ignorant", "they who most need instructions", "*Vulgar Capacities*", who, the persona expects, would have been "allured" to look at the pictures through "levitie, or a childish delight in trifling Objects", and even, simply, "the *Common-sort*" (TR.-2). Even if one takes the persona's aforementioned disdain for the "*Overweening-Wise*" into account, which would place it on the *via media* between the two poles, it seems surprising that the persona would have taken the risk to alienate its readers through such an overbearing tone.

Keith Wrightson studied what he calls the "language of sorts" (1994: 31) in his contribution to a volume on "the middling sort of people", which, in spite of its ubiquity in Early Modern English texts (ibid), had not yet been explored with regard to its chronology and wider implications. After having traced the origins of the expression to the medieval period (ibid), he shows that, until "the second quarter of the sixteenth century", such language was used merely to categorise people according to broad generic criteria, and therefore remained quite neutral (32). Then, however, the noun "sort" started to be outfitted with "a variety of resonant adjectives, mostly in the comparative form", including "the meaner sort", "the common sort", "the simpler sort" and "the vulgar sort" (ibid.), about which Wrightson states the following:

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[1] "[We feel friendly] [...] towards those honest with us, including those who will tell us of their own weak points" (*Rhetoric*, II. 4., trans. by W. Rhys Roberts, consulted on http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/rhetoric.2.ii.html)

> *[Became] a terminology of social simplification, cutting across the fine-grained (and sometimes contested) distinctions of the formal hierarchy of estates and degrees and regrouping the English into two broad camps, which were evidently taken to encapsulate the basic realities of the social and economic structure* (37).

Furthermore, he continues:

> *It became not only a terminology of differentiation, but also one of dissociation, employed for the most part by those who identified themselves with the 'wiser', 'learned', 'richer', or 'better' sorts of people - magistrates, gentlemen, ministers, local rulers and worthies - and stigmatising those whom they excluded from that company with a barrage of denigratory adjectives.* (38)

It is rather obvious that such language was also "pregnant with actual or potential *conflict*" (ibid.). Wrightson points out that, unsurprisingly, "the language of 'sorts' was very much a terminology of those who identified themselves with authority, sound religion, civility - with the 'better sort of people'" (39), and who took care to distinguish themselves, both morally and socially, from those to whom they applied the "denigratory adjectives" mentioned above. However, in the epistle "To the Reader" of a volume that was meant to be sold, and on the commercial success of which some of the author's welfare evidently depended[1], such potentially conflictual language appears so counterproductive that his using it so freely and overtly may seem unwise. Wrightson indicates that the terminology in question had become omnipresent in writings of the Elizabethan and Stuart periods, and that it captured the subtleties of early modern English social relations far more aptly than "the old idiom of the three estates" (40). Indeed, demographic and economic development was accompanied by a complexification of power structures, including greater reliance of central government on local "notables" (39), who, despite their belonging to the category of non-gentiles, could flatteringly be referred to as "the better sort of people", which implied not merely common

[1] See Chapters II and III.

interests with the ruling classes, but also moral and intellectual superiority to “the vulgar sort”, and thus legitimised the *status quo*.

The fact that Wither’s persona employs such language in such a straightforward manner may therefore be ascribed, at least partly, to a force of habit. Indeed, in *Abuses Stript and Whipt*, one encounters the following lines:

> *With many such like humors base and naught,*
> *I do perceiue the common people fraught,*
> *Then by th'opinion of some it seemes,*
> *How much the* Vulgar *sort of men esteems*
> *Of Art or* learning: *Certaine* neighbouring swaines,
> *(That think none wise-men but whose wisdome games;*
> *Where* knowledge *be it morall or diuine*
> *Is valued as an* Orient-pearle *with swine).*
> (Wither, 1613: P_v)

However, another passage testifies to the main criterion that is to be applied in distinguishing between “sorts”, which coincides with the tendencies that Wrightson identified:

> *I doe not meane these meaner sort alone,*
> Tradesmen *or* Labourers; *but euery one,*
> *Be he* Esquire, Knight, Baron, Earle *or more,*
> *Yet if he haue not learn'd of* Vertues *lore,*
> *But followes* Vulgar *Passions; then e'ne he,*
> *Amongst the* Vulgar *shall for one man be.*
> *And the poore Groome, that he thinks should adore him,*
> *Shall for his* Vertue *be preferd before him.*
> (Lib II. Satyr 2. Unnumbered page)

These few lines may hold a valuable key to make sense of the persona’s use of the terminology of “sorts” in its epistle “To the Reader” in Wither’s emblem book. Indeed, the *subscriptiones* and the lottery verses are teeming with references to “Vertue”, a term that, furthermore, appears in the motto couplet of no fewer than sixteen emblems. In the epistle, the persona humbly admits that it “can say no more to disswade from *Vice,* or to incourage

men to *Vertue,* than hath already beene said in many learned *Authors*", but goes on to imply that *A Collection of Emblemes* could nonetheless guide readers towards the same, as "a blunt *Iest* hath moved to more consideration, than a judicious *Discourse*" (TR.-1). Arguably, the persona is offering the reader a pleasant and accessible path to be promoted from a member of the "Vulgar sort" to one of the "better sort" by "[rectifying them] [...] in the course of *Honest-Living* (which is the best *Wisedome*)" (ibid.). Notably, this transition from a trifling, childish and "vulgar" disposition to a "better" one is also mirrored in the *exemplum* which appears in "The Occasion, *Intention*, and Use" of the lottery game. Indeed, the persona, still maintaining close proximity between itself and the physical author, likens the inclusion of the lottery game in a volume of emblems to occasions when "the *Summer-bowers* of Recreation are placed neare the *Church*", an event that "drawes thither more people from the remote *Hamlets,* than would else be there" (Occ.-1). Similarly, the persona continues:

> *I am glad if any thing (which is not evill in it selfe) may be made an occasion of* Good *(because, those things may, perhaps, be continued, at last, for Conscience sake, which were at first begunne upon vaine* occasions*) and, have therefore added* Lotteries *to these* Emblems, *to occasion the more frequent notice of the* Morals, *and good* Counsels *tendred in their* Illustrations; *hoping that, at one time or other, some shall draw those* Lots, *which will make them the better, and the happier, whilest they live*. (ibid.)

The persona's balancing of good-natured, or even "blunt jests" with a decidedly moral and didactic purpose, which materialises, here and elsewhere, in the form of binary oppositions – "evill" and "Good", "vaine occasions" and "for Conscience sake" - as well as the renewed reliance on structures suggesting progress – "begunne" and "continued" – epitomises one aspect of the rhetorical project of the volume that is already hinted at in the Frontispiece: *A Collection of Emblemes* is to be apprehended as a figurative pilgrimage from the sombre cave of ignorance towards salvation, provided, of course, that one make the correct choices along the way. The persona's use of the language of "sorts", then, in conjunction with the *exempla* through which it implies to have successfully begun the pilgrimage towards knowledge, morality, and piety itself, eases identification of the reader with the persona, who, or so it

claims, was once itself devoid of such virtues, while simultaneously legitimising the didactic endeavour by dwelling on its ability to teach through experience. This initial framing of the persona is crucial, as its didactic voice will be omnipresent in the illustrations.

It is important to note that, in his article, Tung distinguishes between three "voices" of Wither's persona in the *subscriptiones* of the emblems, which, he argues, speak successively, and usually in the same order: a deictic voice, that points towards the motifs contained in the pictures and describes them, a didactic voice, which is the most substantial and usually expounds the allegorical and moral content of the engraving, and a sacerdotal voice, which imparts spiritual advice on the reader based on the reader's newly acquired – or merely refreshed - knowledge (Tung 2010: 64-71). Such a clear-cut division of Wither's illustrations quickly runs into several problems, however. Firstly, as was shown in Chapter IV, the persona's deictic comments often contribute to the inter-semiotic rhetorical project that emerges from a given emblem, and, depending on the lesson that is conveyed, could very well be viewed as an integral part of either the didactic or the sacerdotal efforts deployed by the persona. Secondly, given how tightly intertwined questions of faith and of morality usually were at the time, the strict separation between a deictic voice and a sacerdotal one seems somewhat artificial. Arguably, then, another categorisation based, again, on textual - rather than topical - markers may prove more fruitful: one that distinguishes between parts of the illustrations in which the persona's discursive efforts are directed outwards – to a direct addressee in the second person, or through references to generic or specific others in the third person, or implicitly through the use of *exempla* – and those in which the persona shifts to introspective language. The first category, which covers most of the text in the *subscriptiones*, may be referred to as "didactic", provided that the adjective be understood to cover moral, religious, and, in rarer instances, even political or practical advice. The second, to which we shall return shortly, may perhaps fittingly be called a "meditative" voice[1].

[1] Based the same criterion, one could point to a distinct "voice" in the dedications to the royal family and to different members of the court. Arguably, however, this "voice" is constrained by more specific conventions than in the emblems proper, and by the author's evident hope to obtain patronage, and it may therefore be more consistent to discuss it jointly with the persona's overall political and social stance throughout the volume, which is the subject of Chapter IX.

4. "*Serve me* [...], *and Ile raise thee higher, / Then* VICES *can, and teach thee better things*": the Persona's Didactic Voice

One notable feature of the persona's didactic voice is its considerable diversity and flexibility, be it regarding the content of the lessons, the intended beneficiary, or the pedagogical arsenal deployed. The persona's rhetorical and tonal spectrum, the boundaries of which are set in the "Preposition to this Frontispiece" on the one hand and in the epistle "To the Reader" on the other, comfortably accommodates a wide range of ways to engage the reader and to effectively impart a variety of moral, religious, and, at times, even political and practical lessons. It is worth remembering, firstly, that, earnest as though many of the subjects are – virtue, constancy in faith, hard work, and even death, among others – the overall *modus operandi* of the emblems remains a playful one, through the persona's duly established potential for satire[1], and, of course, through the inclusion of the lottery game. Even the lottery verse that accompanies one of the grimmest emblems, number II-7, which shows Ixion suffering his eternal punishment on a wheel with a gibbet in use in the background (Wither 1635: 69), reads as follows:

Be carefull, what you goe about;
For, by this Lot, there may be doubt,
That you, some wickednesse intend,
Which will undoe you, in the end.
If you have done the deed, repent:
If purpos'd ill, the same prevent.
Else, though in jest, this Counsell came,
In earnest, you may rue the same. (114)

This admonitory and grave piece of advice is still given "in jest", referring to the playful process by which the reader has encountered it, and thus highlights the balance between instruction and recreation that the persona announces in the paratext and implements throughout, as the reader is nonetheless admonished to carefully heed the moral lesson contained in the emblem. The efficacy of the persona's didactic strategy, then, hinges on its ability to put the reader in the appropriate frame of mind: ready to engage with the playful

[1] See Chapter II.

nature of the lottery and with the occasionally ironic[1] or tongue-in-cheek[2] tone of the persona, but also prepared to approach the moral or religious core of each emblem with due seriousness.

The principle of playful instruction was by no means new in the early seventeenth century of course, and Manning shows that many emblem books throughout Europe were composed with such a purpose in mind (2002: 143-149). In fact, as was mentioned in the introduction, he quotes Charles Lamb's dismay at finding a copy of *A Collection of Emblemes* covered in stains, which he unhesitatingly imputes to "some child [...] [who] hath been dabbling in some of [the emblems] with its paint and dirty fingers" (Letter of Lamb to Southey, 18 October 1798, quoted in Manning 2002: 148), which suggests that Wither's intention to attract "Children and Childish-gazers" through the inclusion of the engravings and of the lottery game was successful, even long after his death. Although Wither's persona implies that the bulk of its intended readership is composed of adults – albeit adults "allured" to the book through "a childish delight in trifling objects" (TR.-3) – the didactic strategies that it implements are connected to the pedagogical theories of his time, of which Erasmus was a prominent forerunner[3], and which saw gradual developments throughout the early Stuart period, culminating in Samuel Hartlib's inviting the famous John Amos Comenius to England (see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, entry "Comenius, Johannes Amos (1592-1670)") to participate in a commission tasked with implementing a pansophic reform of public education, a project that was cut short by the outbreak of the English Civil Wars. In her thesis dedicated to the connection between the thought of Comenius and that of Bacon, Manry lists several educational principles that both of these humanists had in common; firstly, "antiverbalism" (1996: 208), that is, the rejection of the scholastic insistence on

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[1] I am using the term "irony" according to the definition provided by Quintilian: it is a rhetorical device "in which the meaning is contrary to that suggested by the words […]. This is made evident to the understanding either by the delivery, the character of the speaker or the nature of the subject" (Butler ed. 1959: 333).

[2] The *OED* provides the following definition of the adjective "tongue-in-cheek": "Ironic, slyly humorous; not meant to be taken seriously." I am using the term specifically according to the second part of the definition.

[3] Stevens (1955) argues that Erasmus, along with Henri Estienne, did in fact theorise many principles that were still regarded as valid in pedagogy in the 1950s, and that are still to this day. For instance, Erasmus urged educators to rely heavily on visual representations as mnemonic aids (31-32), he stressed the importance of picking texts that students would find engaging as teaching materials, such as the irreverent satires of Lucian or the witty passages from Aristophanes, instead of confronting them immediately with the linguistic difficulties posed by Homer or Euripides (33). Hobbs, among many other contemporary theorists, proposes pedagogical methods based on visual and textual materials that are very much indebted to Erasmus's ideas, as the title of her chapter, "Learning From the Past: Verbal and Visual Literacy in Early Modern Rhetoric and Writing Pedagogy" readily acknowledges.

elaborate rhetorical forms and of the primacy of the knowledge of words over that of things:

> *Cultiver à l'excès le discours et les subtilités rhétoriques, c'est courir le risque, en matière d'éducation, de faire prendre à l'enfant "la paille des mots" pour "le grain des choses", en pervertissant à la racine la fonction du langage.* [...] *Aux textes des anciens, il faut, selon Comenius, substituer des descriptions du monde vécu, de façon à développer chez les enfants la conscience claire et distincte des choses et de leur organisation dans monde devenu parfaitement* lisible. (210-210, my emphasis)

Secondly, Comenius, Manry shows, is concerned with "usefulness" ("utilité") of the knowledge imparted on students, and with its practical impact on their daily lives:

> *Cette utilité ne doit pas être vague ou à long terme, mais elle doit pouvoir s'appliquer directement dans l'environnement immédiat de l'enfant.* [...] *Proche de Vivès, dont il se réclame expressément, l'homme de Comenius relègue désormais aux oubliettes l'homme de cour de la Renaissance, celui d'un Graciàn ou d'un Castiglione, pour lesquels la rhétorique de cour avait été élevée à la dignité d'une politique des rapports humains. le principe d'utilité, présenté comme principe de plaisir, met fin définitivement à l'enflure d'un langage qui était devenu à lui-même sa propre fin, et qui s'était mis à parler de lui-même en l'absence des choses.* (221-222)

Thirdly, and perhaps most notably for our purpose, Comenius insists on the pedagogical potential of pictorial representations:

> *Comenius préconise le recours systématique à l'image, conçue moins comme illustration que comme symbole d'une réalité plus haute. Elles sont "les icônes de toutes les choses visibles du monde entier, auxquelles on pourra*

> *également rapporter les choses invisibles". [...] "[T]ous les murs à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur des classes seront couverts de peintures, d'affiches, de sentences, d'emblèmes, etc."*[1] *(275)*

This approach to education, which is unequivocally rooted in the *Mundus Significans* framework that underpins the emblematic mode of thought, along with its utilitarian and down-to-earth aspect and its rejection of pompous or hermetic language, is exemplified to a surprisingly thorough extent in *A Collection of Emblemes*. Wither never mentions Comenius nor Hartlib in his writings, and I have not been able to find any evidence that might suggest a connection between them[2]. As shall be shown in Chapter VIII, Wither was, at the very least, well acquainted with some of Bacon's philosophical principles, and probably dwelt in circles similar to Milton's (see Clark 1959), who corresponded with Hartlib and even dedicated his *Of Education* (1644) to him. It seems relatively certain, however, that these men shared views on the ends and the methods of education, and that their ideas evidently circulated as early as the second decade of the seventeenth century, when Wither likely began composing his emblem book.

At any rate, Wither's persona emulates many of the qualities that Comenius attributes to the ideal teacher. The master is no longer the wielder of arbitrary power over the students, but draws his legitimacy, rather, from the validity of the teaching method which he comes to embody in the eyes of his students, and, just as importantly, from his acting as an example to be emulated (Manry 1996: 302-303). The classroom, which becomes a "*theatrum mundi*" through the abundance of pictorial representations that instructs the students even without their being aware of it (310), ought to be organised and managed in a pleasant and congenial fashion, so as to make all learning seem like a game (309). The master occupies an intermediary position between the *theatrum* and the outside world, and ought to serve as the "conductor of light" (312), thus guiding his students from the perception of the pictures to the practical knowledge they are meant to convey. If one remembers that Wither's persona explicitly envisions *A Collection of Emblemes* as an architectural microcosm (1635: J-WP.-1-

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1 Manry is quoting from Comenius's *Schola Pansophica* (1650-1651), Chapter I.

[2] Norbrook does state that Hartlib's friend John Dury was prone to taking Wither's prophetic writings seriously (Norbrook 1991: 217 (note 2)), but this alone is far too tenuous a link to explain such an overlap in educational principles.

2), that it carefully crafts a median position for itself as a humble guide to the knowledge contained in the engravings, and that it does so in a decidedly playful, yet conscientious manner, the connection between seventeenth-century pedagogical thought and Wither's didactic project appears to be quite strong.

Another development in pedagogical practice that came to fruition in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and that is relevant to the didactic voice adopted by Wither's persona is what Juanita Feros Ruys refers to as "the dawning of the age of expertise, where didacticism and experience met in textual union" (2008: 152). In her study of didactic personae and their use of the first-person pronoun in various texts ranging from the ninth to the seventeenth century, and more particularly in the section devoted to James I's *Basilikon Doron*, a text that, she reminds us, was first written as a private collection of counsels from the king to his eldest, and ill-fated, son Henry, Feros Ruys argues that the didactic principles showcased in the book display "a certain blurring of precept, example, and experience" (153), which are arguably three major components in Wither's emblems as well. She adds that:

> *James establishes his own practice as a personal guarantee of the impersonal precepts he advises when he declares, 'alwayes where I leaue, follow ye my steps' and '[l]e tmy example then teach you to follow the rules here set downe'*[1]*. There is also a lack of true differentiation between example and experience in the many family histories, drawn from James's own memory, that are adduced as examples. James argues for the efficacy of* [the] *practice* [of adducing family histories as examples of good practice] *by stressing the didactic value of the personal. This shading of one didactic mode into another bears witness to the unstable state in which didactic and epistemological modes stood as the mate-medieval world shifted into the early-modernity* (ibid.).

James nuances this stance himself, however. Feros Ruys quotes the following lines from the same work, that unequivocally distinguish two kinds of experience:

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[1] Feros Ruys is quoting from the *Basilikon Doron* (1603), p. 43.

> *Thus hoping in the goodnes of God, that your naturall inclination shall haue a happy sympathie with these præcepts, making the wise-mans schole-master, which is the example of others, to bee your teacher* […]*; eschewing so the ouer-late repentance by your owne experience, which is the schoole-master of fooles.* (Sommerville ed. 1994: 60, quoted in Feros Ruys 2008: 153)

Feroy Ruys comments on these words as follows:

> *We could say, then, that James is willing to teach from experience, but not for his son to learn from experience; or, to put this another way, he would like his son to learn by the recounted experience of others, not by the trials of his own.* (154)

Wither's persona certainly seems to subscribe to a similar view, and the fact that the *Basilikon Doron* constituted an important source for Henry Peacham's famous emblem book *Minerva Britanna* suggests that it is perfectly compatible with the genre. In fact, cautious as though one ought to be regarding her views on Wither's emblems[1], it is still noteworthy that Freeman viewed *A Collection of Emblemes* as having much more in common with those of Whitney and Peacham than with its more immediate contemporaries, Quarles's *Emblemes* (1635) and *Hieroglyphickes of the Life of Man* (1638) (see the Introduction to Wither 1635: vii). She was probably referring to the diversity of topics covered in earlier emblem books and to their chiefly moral purpose, as opposed to Quarles's far more devotional and spiritual compositions, but may also have noticed a similar didactic approach.

As was shown in Chapter V, Wither's persona encourages the readers to look for the meaning of each engraving in the appended text, and often provides several interpretations to choose from, but never gives his readers leave to attempt their own exegesis. Similarly, although it relies on frequent *exempla* allegedly drawn from personal experience, the persona warns the readers against relying too much on their own, and against being so over-confident

[1] See Chapter III.

as to seek emancipation from its authoritative comments. Indeed, in emblem I-27, which is mainly an admonition to avoid so-called "strumpets", "harlots", or "lustfull women" (Wither 1635: 27), the persona inserts the following quatrain into the *subscriptio*:

> *For, when (as* Fooles *pretend) they goe to seeke*
> *Experience, where more* Ill *then* Good, *they see;*
> *They venture for their* Knowledge, Adam *like;*
> *And, such as his, will their* Atchievements *bee.* (ibid.)

Contextually, the "experience" in question is that of frequenting "the Stewes", where one might encounter "loose Trulls", as the persona unkindly puts it. If read in conjunction with other passages from the work however, a consistent stance tends to emerge. Indeed, emblem III-13, the motto of which reads "*Above thy* Knowledge, *doe not rise, / But, with* Sobrietie, *be wise*" (147), admonishes the reader again, stating:

> *Remember what our Father* Adam *found,*
> *When he for* Knowledge, *sought beyond his bound.*
> *For, doubtlesse, ever since, both* good *and* ill
> *Are left with* Knowledge, *intermingled still;*
> *And, (if we be not humble, meeke, and warie)*
> *We are in daily danger, to miscary.* [...]
> *And, he that will, beyond his bounds, be* wise,
> *Becomes a very* Foole, *before he dies.* (ibid.)

The lottery stanza that corresponds to emblem II-25, which shows a man still seeking knowledge in a book although he has one foot in the grave, is, perhaps, even clearer:

> *By this your Emblem, wee discerne,*
> *That, you are yet of age to learne;*
> *And, that, when elder you shall grow,*
> *There, will be more for you to know:*
> *Presume not, therefore of your wit,*
> *But, strive that you may better it.*
> *For, of your age, we many view,*
> *That, farre more wisedome have, then you.* (118)

Given the persona's overall didactic intent and the aforementioned tone employed in the epistle "To the Reader", the final distich could be read as a veiled instance of self-reference, suggesting that, as well-meaning as the persona may be, it still establishes a hierarchical distinction between itself, the teacher, and the reader who is to be taught. Another lottery stanza, corresponding to one of the blank lots[1], number II-54, further reinforces this impression:

> *The Muses Oracle is dumbe,*[2]
> *Because to tempt them you are come;*
> *For, in your heart you much despise,*
> *To follow that, which they advise:*
> *Their admonitions, you doe jeere,*
> *And, scorne to helpe your Wisedome, here.*
> *The Muses, therefore, leave you, still,*
> *To be as foolish, as you will.* (123-124)

Once again, the persona relies on a binary opposition between wisdom and foolishness to entice the readers to heed the advice contained in the emblem, both to satisfy their wish to attain the first, and their fear of humiliation if they were to be identified as indulging in the second. In *Ludus Literarius*, Brinsley has Philoponus advise Spoudeus as follows regarding Æsop's fables:

> *Cause the children to tell you, what euery Fable is about or against, or what it teacheth, in a word or two. For example, thus:*
>
> *Q. What Fable haue you against the* <u>*foolish*</u> *contempt of learning and vertue, and preferring play or pleasure before it?*
>
> *A. The Fable of the Cocke, scratching in the dung-hill.* (Brinsley 1612: 145)

[1] See Chapter VII for more details.

[2] The persona is referring to the fact that, contrary to lots 1-50, which each direct the reader towards a particular emblem, lots 51 to 56 do not correspond to any emblems at all.

The didactic potential of the same antithesis is exemplified throughout the Bible, epitomised most clearly, perhaps, in Proverbs 1:7 - "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction" – and the persona makes abundant use of it throughout *A Collection of Emblemes* as well. Aside from the examples quoted above, it warns the readers that "seeming wise, we act a foolish part" (Wither 1635: 49), or admonishes them not to value Earthly things too highly, or else "Be *Fooles*; and, at your perils, dote upon them" (85), or even addresses the reader directly, right at the beginning of the *subscriptio* of emblem I-7, with the emphatic "Foole!". In emblem IV-17, the persona even turns one of the few light-hearted motifs in Rollenhagen's collection – the famous German fool Claus Narr, who, wishing to save some geese from drowning, tucks them in his belt by the neck, thus suffocating them – into an unequivocal expression of scorn towards fools and folly:

> *I could not from a* Prince *beseech a boone*
> *By suing to his* Iester *or* Buffoone:
> *Nor, any Fooles vaine humor, sooth or serve,*
> *To get my bread, though I were like to starve.*
> *For, to be* poore, *I should not blush so much,*
> *As if a* Foole *should raise me to be* rich.
> *Lord, though of such a kinde my faults may be,*
> *That sharpe* Affliction *still must tutor mee,*
> *(And give me due* Correction *in her Schooles)*
> *Yet, oh preserve me from the scorne of* Fooles. (225)

This seemingly uncompromising antithesis, which is, furthermore, sanctioned by Scriptural tradition, is, however, nonetheless mitigated just enough by Wither's persona to maintain itself, yet again, on the *via media*, and to bridge the hierarchical distinction it establishes *vis-à-vis* the reader. Indeed, in the epistle "To the Reader", the persona states that it is "contented to seeme *Foolish,* (yea, and perhaps, more foolish than I am) to the *Overweening-Wise;* that, I may make others *Wiser than they were"* (TR.-2), and, in emblem I-49, it mocks "Foolish-*Boyes*" who, wishing to make time pass faster when they are at school, shake the hour glass instead of studying, but immediately admits, in one of the instances that Tung calls a

“parenthetical I” (Tung 2010: 63-64): “(and such a *Boy* was I)” (Wither 1635: 49)[1]. The persona’s admission that it may seem foolish to some, or that it may have been foolish earlier, but has overcome its folly through conscientious studying, further legitimises its pedagogical stance and its use of first-person *exempla* in many of the emblems.

As Rannou rightly points out, *exempla* and emblems both rely on analogy, and on Bacon’s remark that “that which is sensible more forcibly strikes to the Memory, and is more easily imprinted, than that which is Intellectuall” (Bacon 1640: 255). Some of the engravings in *A Collection of Emblemes* even constitute *exempla* in and of themselves, as they depict scenes from classical myths, from commonplace moral narratives, or simply from everyday life, thus prompting the reader either to imitate the virtuous, or, in those that might be termed *exempla a contrario*, to eschew the errors of the wicked. It is noteworthy that Wither’s persona sometimes superimposes two *exempla*, deriving the first from the engraving and Rollenhagen’s original motto, and then using a second one, usually in the first person, to clarify the significance of the first at the level of the individual reader. For instance, with a reference to Cupid, the “rambling Archer”, the persona readily admits the following:

> *[...] when I was a* Lad,
> *My Heart, a pricke, by this young Wanton had,*
> *That, pain'd me seven yeares after: nor had I*
> *The Grace (thus warn'd) to scape his waggery;*
> *But many times, ev'n since I was a man,*
> *He shot me, oftner then I tell you can* [...]. (Wither 1635:
> 227)

In another instance, the persona even substitutes a personal *exemplum* for the narrative of Hercules at the Crossroads that is unequivocally represented in the *pictura* of emblem I-12:

> *My hopefull* Friends *at thrice five yeares and three,*
> *Without a* Guide *(into the World alone)*
> *To seeke my* Fortune, *did adventure mee;*

[1] Along the same lines, the persona states, in emblem II-46: “Though I am somewhat soberer to day, / I have been (I confesse) as mad as they, / Who think those men, that large Possessions have, / Gay Clothes, fine Furnitures, and Houses brave, / Are those (nay more, that they alone are those) / On whom, the stile of *Rich,* we should impose” (108).

And, many hazards, I alighted on.
First, Englands *greatest* Rendevouz *I sought,*
Where VICE and VERTVE at the highest sit;
And, thither, both a Minde *and* Bodie *brought,*
For neither of their Services unfit.
Both, woo'd my Youth: *And, both perswaded so,*
That (like the Young man *in our* Emblem *here)*
I stood, and cry'd, Ah! which way shall I goe?
To me so pleasing both their Offers were. (12)

The artificial coincidence between the persona's account and the engraving, which culminates in its "[espying] / *Grim Death* attending VICE; and, that her Face / Was but a painted *Vizard*, which did hide / The foul'st Deformity that ever was" (22), is probably meant to be perceived in manner similar to the "Preposition to this Frontispiece": with a good deal of scepticism and mild amusement. This time, however, the persona's didactic strategy also relies on a process of indirect identification: although the character who is represented in the engraving is Hercules, a quintessential personification of virtue and heroism in the Renaissance (see Mainz and Stafford eds 2021), the persona does not claim to possess his wisdom[1], but rather that it is fear and disgust that prompts it to turn not so much *towards* Virtue as *away from* Vice. Instead of suggesting, as Rollenhagen unequivocally does[2], that the reader ought to match the demigod's moral fortitude and eschew pleasure, Wither's persona, much more pragmatically, appeals to more common affects to drive home the didactic point. By identifying with the natural emotional response of the persona, the reader is spared the Herculean task of equalling the son of Jupiter, and thus persuaded that the embracing of a moral life is, once again, both preferable and reasonably achievable.

Several critics, including Norbrook (1991: 217-256) and Rannou (1980-81: 503-504)

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[1] In the original version of the myth, which is recorded in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (I. ii), Hercules patiently listens to the promises of the two personifications, and the text implies that he chooses to follow Virtue, not because he is repulsed by Vice – who refers to herself as "Happiness", but who also states that her detractors call her "Pleasure" – but because he recognises, upon reflection, that the honest satisfaction and the consideration that one earns by being virtuous are preferable to the easy but vapid pleasures afforded by Vice. See Bysshe trans. 1891: 58-63.

[2] Rollenhagen's *subscriptio* reads as follows: "Nescio quo vertam mentem vocat ardua virtu, / Huc illuc Venus et splendida Luxuries. / At tu si sapis, Herculeos imitare labores: / Sperne voluptatem, delitiasqui fuge." ("I don't know which way to go, on one side arduous Virtue is beckoning, and on the other, Venus and delightful debauchery. If you are wise, however, imitate the labours of Hercules, disdain pleasure, and flee voluptuousness" (Warncke 1983: 38).

have assimilated Wither's poetic style to that of 'Puritan'[1] homiletics. According to Haller, John Downame's view on the subject "may be taken as typical, expressing as it does the preacher's general aim as well as his belief in divine authority for his stylistic practice" (1938: 130):

> *[F]or whereas men in their writings affect the praise of flowing eloquence and loftinesse of phrase, the holie Ghost [...] hath vsed great simplicitie and wonderfull plainnesse, applying himselfe to the capacitie of the most vnlearned: in which low and humble maner of speech, he doth notwithstanding set foorth the deepe wisedome of God, and the profound mysteries of religion* [...]: *and vnder the vaile of simple and plain speech, there shineth such diuine wisedom and glorious maiestie, that all the humane writings in the world, though neuer so adorned with the flowers of eloquence, and sharpe conceits of wit and learning, cannot so deeply pearce the heart of man, nor so forcibly worke vpon his affections, nor so powerfully incline his will either to the imbracing of that which is good, or auoiding of that which is euill, as the word of God* [...]. (ibid., quoted from Downame 1604: 332)

It is not a coincidence, then, that Rannou likened Wither's poetry to the sermons of Hugh Latimer (1980-81: 503-508), whose rhetoric, Pierre Janton tells us, rested on two pillars:

> *Le premier, l'interprétation figurative de certains thèmes bibliques, bien que nullement systématique, reparaît assez souvent pour rappeler la parenté de Latimer avec les théologiens médiévaux [...]. Cette tolérance de la*

[1] The term is placed between inverted commas as the label remains problematic, as is attested by Wither himself in *Abuses Stript and Whipt* (1613: $S1_r$) and by scholars such as Spurr (1998: 3-8) or Durston and Eales (1996: 1). It is likely that the undoubtable rhetorical kinship that Wither shared with some English Calvinists led some of his critics to the hasty and oversimplified claim that the poet was himself a 'Puritan', a claim that will be examined in Chapter VIII.

> *tradition, chez Latimer, montre qu'en lui s'attarde quelque chose de cette sensibilité médiévale qui entoure de mystère tous les actes de la vie. Mais ce trait s'accompagne d'un autre, plus important. L'interprétation reste soumise à la grande règle de son éloquence: elle se veut appropriée à l'auditoire et à l'intention de l'orateur: instruire, corriger, édifier, réfuter, exhorter."* (Janton 1968: 69)

In fact, Janton insists on Latimer's resorting to breaking down allegorical wholes into fragments, each of which is then dwelt upon allegorically as well. For instance, in sermon XXV on the parable of the banquet in Matthew 22: 2-14, Latimer conducts a theological exegesis of the "dishes, which be sequels or hangings-on, wherewith the chief dish is powedered: that is, remission of sins; also the Holy Ghost, which ruleth and governeth our hearts [...]", and even of "certain sauces, which shall give men a great lust and appetite to their meats; as mustard, vinegar, and such like sauces" (quoted in Janton 1968: 157). This reliance on very pragmatic, homely motifs, which also include agricultural scenes and animals (158-159), are very reminiscent of Wither's persona in *A Collection of Emblemes*, and testify to a shared approach to didactics; hence the decision to combine what Tung calls Wither's "didactic voice" and his "sacerdotal voice" in the present chapter.

It is hardly worth dwelling on the fact that Wither's persona relies heavily on Scripture as a textual source. As was mentioned in Chapter I, French humorously expresses dread at the idea of being forced to count all the quotes from the Bible in Wither's works (1928: 174), a fact that is not surprising given the latter's re-working of the psalms in English metre in the 1619 and 1620, followed by *The Songs of the Old Testament Translated into English Measures* in 1621, and by *The Hymns and Songs of the Church* in 1623. As was shown in Chapter III, it is quite likely that Wither had already begun working on his emblems during that period, which probably explains why the Psalmist is mentioned four times in a volume otherwise almost devoid of external references[1]. As was mentioned above, critics of

[1] In emblem II-1, Wither's persona quotes the simile between the afflicted soul and the desert owl (Psalm 102 : 6) ; in emblem III-38, it refers to the palm tree as an emblem of the righteous man (Psalm 92 : 12) ; in emblem III-43, it likens a man's children to arrows in his quiver (Psalm 127 : 4-5) ; and, finally, the *subscriptio* to emblem IV-42 starts with a reference to Psalm 22: 16, which recounts the crucifixion from the perspective of Jesus. The persona also mentions the plight of the Jews in Egypt in emblem I-28.

Wither's works have been fairly consistent in recognising aspects of homiletic rhetoric in his emblems, and have often underlined his "plain style" of poetry (French 1928: 233), although Norbrook (1991: 227) and especially Calhoun (1974) have argued that Wither's poetry ought to be understood as being rather "loose" than "plain", according to a distinction that Calhoun establishes as follows:

> *Arguments for a plain style are relatively commonplace in the history of English literature, as the term is often used to advocate native, provincial usages. The term is sometimes used synonymously with a "low" or "common" style. For the purposes of this essay, let us confine the term to matters of diction and phrasing, and understand the desirability of a plain style partly as a reaction against ornamental, Ciceronian elegance and partly as a positive effort to achieve an unaffected, conversational manner. The term "loose," with which I am mainly concerned, may be understood against its antithesis "tight," as these words are used to define matters of structure or form. If "tight" suggests belief in formal control, order, logical coherence, the loose style presupposes none of these. As Burton says, the loose stylist approves "the present subject"*[1] *as the proper occasion for writing, and he apprehends the subject directly, typically in the first person, through no necessary exterior or literary medium. Style should be determined by what is experienced, "as it happens." The admired style is loose in order to imitate and contain that experience which is perceived as freely moving, not rigidly determined, or determinable.* (1974: 263)

Calhoun does not analyse any of Wither's works that were printed after *Britain's*

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[1] Calhoun is quoting from Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, intro. H. Jackson (New York: Dutton, 1932), I, 31-32.

Remembrancer in 1628, but *A Collection of Emblemes* contains ample evidence to the same effect. Though not completely liberated from structural patterns – as we have seen, Wither retains the format of the *emblema triplex*, as well as a consistent number of lines in each *subscriptio* and the couplet form for the English mottoes – the persona often insists on the primacy of didactic effectiveness over predetermined form in the emblems, thus reserving the right to employ any discursive means, as long as they are fit for such a pragmatic purpose. Therefore, much like the critical dichotomy between "Puritan plain style" and "Laudian metaphysical style" in seventeenth-century sermons that Morrissey calls "simplistic and flawed" (2002: 686), it would arguably be a mistake to be content with characterising the style of Wither's emblems as "plain", and, *a fortiori*, to infer an ideological or theological stance from such a categorisation. In fact, Morrissey distinguishes, not between *styles* of preaching, but rather between the structural elements of a sermon, which William Perkins simply called "doctrine" and "exhortation" (1607: 143), i.e. the clarification and exegesis of a passage from Scripture, followed by an appeal to the congregation to recognise the relevance of the lesson drawn from the passage to their own individual lives, and to heed the same. The first naturally calls for unambiguous and accessible language, but the second, which should be "more fervent and vehement" (ibid.), may well rely on "the engines of that Art [i.e. rhetoric] and Grace of speaking" (Bernard 1607: 66, quoted in Morrissey 2002: 694) to ensure successful persuasion.

Observant readers of the previous chapters will already have noticed the parallels between the structure that Morrissey describes and the one that Wither's persona deploys in the *subscriptiones*. The latter's source material is mainly pictorial rather than scriptural, and the lessons conveyed by the emblems are not always religious, but, as Tung's initial division of Wither's illustrations into deictic, didactic, and sacerdotal sections suggests, the structure and method favoured by Perkins and Bernard, and described by Morrissey, certainly fits many of the emblems at hand. For instance, below an engraving that shows a crowned female figure standing on a block of stone and holding a cross and a chalice, while the three crosses on Mount Calvary are clearly visible in the background on the right, the persona starts with a plain, matter-of-fact description and explanation of the *pictura*:

> *Marke well this* Emblem*; and, observe you thence*
> *The nature of true* Christian-confidence.
> *Her* Foot *is fixed on a* squared-Stone,
> *Which, whether side soe're you turne it on,*

Stands fast; and, is that Corner-stone, *which props,*
And firmely knits the structure of our Hopes.
Shee, *alwayes, beares a* Crosse*; to signifie,*
That, there was never any Constancie
Without her Tryalls: *and, that, her perfection,*
Shall never be attain'd, without Affliction.
A Cup *shee hath, moreover, in her hand;*
And, by that Figure, *thou mayst understand,*
That, shee hath draughts of Comfort, *alwayes neere her,*
(At ev'ry brunt) to strengthen, and to cheare her.
And, loe, her *head is* crown'd*; that, we may see*
How great, her Glories, *and* Rewards, *will be.* (Wither 1635: 81)

The attributes through which the allegory is identified are enumerated and briefly interpreted, not necessarily without reliance on some fairly simple literary devices – the metaphorical "draughts of comfort" in this case, which could arguably be interpreted as yet another instance of inter-semiotic playfulness[1] - but certainly using straightforward language. The transition from this section to Perkins's "exhortation" is clearly marked as well: "Here by, this *Vertue's* nature may be knowne: / Now, practise, how to make the same thine owne" (ibid.). Then, having thus returned to a direct address to the readers, the persona centres its hermeneutic efforts on them, carefully interweaving references to their personal situation with the meaning attached to each of the attributes shown in the *pictura*:

Discourag'd be not, though thou art pursu'd
With many wrongs, which cannot be eschew'd;
Nor yeeld thou to Despairing, *though thou hast*
A Crosse *(which threatens death) to be embrac't;*
Or, though thou be compell'd to swallow up,
The very dregs, of Sorrowes *bitter* Cup (ibid.)

These lines admittedly do not overflow with rhetorical conceits, but the extended metaphor

[1] See Chapter IV.

around the "Cup" stands in an antithetical relation to the chalice that provides Virtue with "draughts of comfort", and relies on two very sensorial stimuli – the "bitter" taste and the repugnant texture of "dregs" – to move from the abstraction of the "Crosse" to tangible discomfort. The persona finally concludes by returning to the original, soothing beverage, and makes use of the last two attributes that appear in the engraving:

> *For, whensoever griefes, or torments, paine thee,*
> *Thou hast the same* Foundation *to sustaine thee:*
> *The selfe same* Cup of Comfort, *is prepared*
> *To give thee strength, when* fainting fits *are feared:*
> *And, when thy* time of tryall, *is expired,*
> *Thou shalt obtaine the* Crowne, *thou hast desired.* (ibid.)

The three instances of alliteration – "Cup of Comfort", "fainting fits are *feared*" and "time of tryall" – are probably mere poetic automatisms or small concessions to whim, but they are certainly mnemotechnical, and endow these last few lines with the orality that characterises the sermon. Emblem III-12 is another such example. After having scoffed at the overwrought engraving by stating that "When *Emblems,* of too many parts consist, / Their Author was no choice *Emblematist:* / But, is like those, that wast whole *howres,* to tell / What, in three *minutes,* might be said as well" (146), the persona continues in strict accordance with the aforementioned structure. First, each motif is identified and briefly interpreted in a plain manner:

> *The* Square *whereon the* Globe *is placed, here,*
> *Must* Vertue *be; That* Globe *upon the* Square,
> *Must meane the* World*; The* Figure, *in the* Round,
> *(Which in appearance doth her* Trumpet *sound)*
> *Was made for* Fame*; The* Booke *she beares, may show,*
> *What* Breath *it is, which makes her* Trumpet *blow:*
> *The* Wreath, *inclosing all, was to intend*
> *A glorious* Praise, *that never shall have end:*
> *And, these, in one summ'd up, doe seeme to say;*
> *That, (if men* study *in a* vertuous-way*)*
> *The* Trumpet *of a never-ceasing* Fame,

Shall through the world *proclaime their praisefull* Name.
(ibid.)

Then, the persona transitions to tailoring the emblem's message to the individual reader:

Now Reader, *if large* Fame, *be thy ambition,*
This Emblem *doth informe, on what condition*
She may be gain'd. (ibid.)

And, finally, the *subscriptio* is concluded, but, this time, with a twist:

But, (herein, me beleeve)
Thy studie *for meere-praise, will thee deceive:*
And, if thy Vertues, *be, but onely, those*
For which the vulgar Fame, *her* Trumpet *blowes,*
Thy Fame's *a blast; Thy* Vertues, *Vices be;*
Thy Studie's *vaine; and,* shame *will follow thee.* (ibid.)

Prompted, perhaps, by his exasperation at the engraving, Wither has his persona subvert the motifs under the guise of an *exemplum e contrario*, and thus urge the reader to eschew a shortcoming that it humbly implies to having shown itself. The pun at the penultimate line is both inter-semiotic, as it is based on the trumpet motif, but also linguistic, as it relies on the ambiguous meaning of "blast" as both "the sending of a continuous puff of breath through a wind-instrument, so as to make it sound; the blowing (of a trumpet, or the like)" (*OED*, "blast, n.", 3.a.) and "Boasting: cf. the phrase *to blow one's own trumpet*." (ibid., "blast, n.", 3.b.), and possibly even referring to 6.e., "a flatulent disease in sheep"[1], and thus adds a humorous touch to the emblem. In fact, Janton shows that Latimer himself was far from

[1] The *OED* does not provide any quotes that would contain this term, neither does it specify when it began to be used. I have not been able to confirm whether it would have been in use in the early seventeenth century. If it was, the country gentleman Wither, who displays a great deal of knowledge on husbandry and rural life, would probably have known it, and, being the author of the following lines in his *Abuses Stript and Whipt*, would probably not have deemed it beneath him to employ it for a satirical purpose: "But there are some base-minded dunghill elues, / That sorrow not for any but themselues. / Or if they doe 'tis onely for the losse / Of some old crest-falne lade; But that's a crosse / Past bearing; be it but a rotten sheep, / Or two stale egs, they will such yelling keep, / As if thereby had perished a brood, / In which consisted halfe the kingdomes good" (Wither 1613: $K1_v$).

being a stranger to making use of various kinds of humour[1] in his sermons, from farcical wordplay to the satirising of vices through caricatures in a manner that Wither, the author of *Abuses Stript and Whipt* (1613), would certainly not have repudiated. Finally, the striking equating of "Vices" and "Vertues", rather than a conventional antithesis, could be likened to what Pierre Fontanier calls a "paradoxism" (Fontanier 1968: 137), where two opposite ideas are not merely placed side by side to highlight their contrast, but where they are presented, paradoxically, as equivalent. It would be hard to produce a more concise exhortation to rectify one's moral stance.

Wither's persona therefore does not oscillate between a didactic and a sacerdotal voice, but rather combines effective didactic and sacerdotal strategies to maximise the effectiveness of its moral and religious teachings. Neither can the emblems be neatly categorised as "plain-speaking" or rhetorically elaborate, but must be recognised to be combinations of both poetic modes, and thus to rely on similar structures and techniques of persuasion as early modern English sermons. To frame the analysis differently, one might look back further, and, based on Fumaroli's investigation of the classical origins of early modern rhetoric, attempt to establish to which of the ancient orators Wither appears to be most indebted.

In his *Orator ad Brutum*, Cicero establishes that occasions for public speaking can be infinitely diverse, but that the art of public speaking can, nevertheless, be understood to comprise three *genera dicendi* (or "kinds of speech"), among which, Fumaroli explains, the orator ought to choose the most appropriate according to the circumstances at hand, an ability that he calls "*decorum*" (1980: 54). The first stage or the orator's art, then, is the "*genus humile*", which Fumaroli describes as being the closest to natural conversational ease, which must nonetheless meet some basic requirements:

> *[L]a* sanitas*, c'est-à-dire la bonne qualité latine, la* neglegentia diligens*, heureux compromis entre le souci d'élégance et l'aisance du naturel; enfin la clarté, l'absence d'ornement et le* decorum. (54-55)

Already, Fumaroli distinguishes Cicero's version of the "*genus humile*" with that of Seneca

[1] In the context of this dissertation, the term "humour" ought to be understood according to Roberts's broad definition, which reads: "Object O is humour if and only if O is intended to elicit amusement" (2019: 17).

in his *Letters to Lucius*, for instance, in which "*brevitas*", and not clarity, is given precedence, sometimes endowing the text with a great deal of subtlety, or even, occasionally, obscuring the sense altogether (55). The second kind, which Cicero calls the "*genus medium*", is centred around the purpose of "*delectatio"*, to simultaneously please and persuade the listener through the reliance on "*suavitas*", the skilful interweaving of rhetorical devices to appeal to the audience's imagination and to elicit assent through delight (ibid.). To the roman orator, however, the paroxysm of rhetorical art was the "*genus vehemens*", which draws from the full array of rhetorical tools and strategies to arouse the passions and sway the opinions of the audience (54-55):

> *S'il intervient en dernier lieu, c'est seulement pour marquer sa supériorité sur les deux autres: en fait, il est au centre du spectre cicéronien, rassemblant en lui toutes les couleurs du verbe oratoire, et les fondant en une lumière à la fois harmonieuse, féconde et efficace.* Amplus, copiosus, gravis, ornatus, acer, ardens[1]*, il est doué d'une énergie capable de faire naître l'émotion dans son auditoire et de modifier son point de vue.* (55)

Wither's familiarity with Cicero is attested in *A Collection of Emblemes* by his quoting of the phrase "Stultorum plena sunt omnia" ("There are plenty of fools everywhere") from Cicero's *Ad familiares* (1635: Occ.-1), and the length of his *subscriptiones*, as well as the variety and the occasionally striking vividness of his imagery, suggest a rhetorical inclination more akin to the Cicero's interpretation of the three *genera* than to Seneca's verbal asceticism, which, in turn, could very well have been a model for Rollenhagen's terse *subscriptiones* in the *Nucleus Emblematum*. Although many of Wither's more acerbic critics would no doubt reject the epithet "harmonious" to describe even the more rhetorically ambitious passages in his emblems, he seems to share with Latimer a *penchant* for emulating the Ciceronian progression from the clarity of the "*genus humile*", to the delight of the "*genus medium*", and finally towards an attempt at the "*genus vehemens*", employing each at the right time, thus complying with the central criterion of "*decorum"*. The ultimate efficacy of the emblems as

[1] The Latin adjectives used by Fumaroli may be translated as, successively, "broad", "abundant", "serious", "ornate", "sharp", and "ardent".

exercises in teaching and persuasion is certainly open to debate, but their reliance on a distinctive, and, it seems, long-established discursive methodology is, I submit, quite evident. In some emblems, however, a further structural element is appended to the *subscriptio*, in which the persona's perspective suddenly turns inwards.

5. "For thee, *Oh God*, to know and thee to feare": the Meditative Voice of Wither's Persona

Several of Wither's emblems, Bath states, "end with a colloquy, or italicized prayer, thereby completing the three stages of that conventional appeal to memory, understanding and will which normally structured the seventeenth-century meditation", and he immediately adds: "(though one should not mistake these for spiritual exercises)" (1994: 118), a claim he does not substantiate any further, at least not right away. In another, broader chapter titled "Exegesis and Meditation", Bath explains that:

> *Both meditation and emblem start from the senses, chiefly the sense of sight, but meditation addressed itself not to the material but to the spiritual eye, the eye of the mind which corresponds to the second faculty of the rational soul, namely understanding. [...] But the ultimate goal of meditation was an act of the will, a movement of the affective faculties in an act of revulsion from sin or love towards God."* (161)

The primary issue with this statement lies with the meaning that Bath attaches to the term "meditation", a question that Martz addresses almost at the onset of his seminal work *The Poetry of Meditation* (1954). After having pointed out the initial and chaotic polysemy of the term in the fifteenth century, he quotes several attempts at defining it, all of them drawn from Catholic, and mainly Jesuit, theologians, including Luis de Granada, Saint François de Sales, or the Englishman Richard Gibbons (13-20), who defines the process as follows:

> *Meditation, which we treate of, is nothing els but a diligent and forcible application of the understanding, to seeke, and knowe, and as it were to tast some divine matter; from whence doth arise in our affectionate powers good motions, inclinations, and purposes, which stirre us*

up to the love and exercise of vertue, and the hatred and avoiding of sin. (Quoted in Martz 1954: 14)[1]

Martz then quotes Étienne Gilson, who, in his commentary on the works of Saint Bonaventure, stated that "[...] [M]emory or thought, big with the ideas which it encloses, engenders the knowledge of the intellect or word, and love is born of both as the bond which unites them" (Gilson 1938: 224, quoted in Martz 1954: 36), whereupon Martz adds that "the aim and end of the whole exercise is achieved when the soul thus reformed is lifted up to speak to God in colloquy, and to hear God speak to man in turn" (ibid.). Martz also indicates that an essential part of the process of meditation is deep introspection and self-examination, which served the purpose of finding, "according to the tenets of Saint Bernard and Saint Bonaventure, the Image of God" within the "Sanctuary of the Soul" (150).

The question that prompted several critics - among whom Lucien Carrive and, of course, Barbara Lewalski, are the most prominent - to reassess this thesis revolves around the extent to which it would have been acceptable, for a Protestant, to draw on this method as part of their own devotional practice. Or, in other words, when a Protestant of any denomination refers to, or delineates, or even prescribes a method of meditation, as Joseph Hall famously did in his *Arte of Divine Meditation* (1606), how akin to the Jesuit spiritual exercises would the author deem his own method to be? McCabe acknowledges that Hall's description of the "threefold world" if the sensible, the intelligible, and the spiritual[2], is "in some ways reminiscent of Loyola's appeal to the three powers of the mind, memory, understanding, and will, but here […] the emphasis falls entirely in faith" (1982: 149). He does not deny, either, that Underhill's[3] relation of Hall's meditative method to the "long tradition of European mysticism" is "appropriate" (150-151), but, he continues, what is more important still is that "because of its close relationship with Grace and faith the inclination towards this sort of contemplative devotion can easily be interpreted as a sign of election", a thoroughly Calvinist *modus operandi* (151). Martz confidently refers to Hall's explicit relying on Jean Charlier de Gerson's *De Monte Contemplationis* (first half of the 15th century) (Martz 1954: 113), whom Hall admired for his "plain-spoken appeal to the average

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[1] Martz identifies the source of the quote as the treatise titled "The Practical Methode of Meditation", which is "prefaced to a translation by the Jesuit Richard Gibbons" (14), although he admits, in footnote 2), that he "[uses] the name Gibbons to refer to this prefatory treatise, but it may not be his work".

[2] See Chapter V.

[3] McCabe is referring to Underhill, E. (1918) *Mysticism* – 4th edition. London, pp. 494-530.

sinner" (Huntley 1977: 61), and even asserts, as he discusses a treatise on meditation by another Protestant, Richard Baxter, that a reference to Gerson in the margin testifies to the "Catholicity" of Baxter's discussion of "fervent meditation on the Passion" (Martz 1954: 170). What Martz omits with respect to Hall, however, is that the latter, in another passage of his *Arte of Divine Meditation*, explicitly justifies his borrowing from Gerson, "whose authority I rather use, because our adversaries [i.e. the Jesuits] disclaim him for theirs" (Hall 1606: 46). Huntley comments on these words as follows: "In effect, Hall looks upon Gerson as a pre-Reformation reformer" (Huntley 1977: 61)[1]. Likewise, Huntley shows that, although Hall certainly borrowed elements from Johannes Mauburnus's *Rosetum exercitiorum spiritualium et sacrarum meditationum* (1494), the latter was not, as Martz suggests (1954: 62), the "obscure namelesse Monke", from whom, Hall tells us, he "received more light [...] then from the direction of all other writers" (1606: A4r, see Huntley 1977: 61-62). Huntley surmises that Hall was referring, rather, to Thomas à Kempis, the author of the famous treatise *De Imitatio Christi* (ca. 1418-1427) (62), the popularity of which was so widespread throughout Early Modern Europe, and influenced so many Catholics and Protestants alike[2], that Hall's drawing from it arguably does not constitute evidence of "Catholicity" at all[3].

Martz and others have criticised some of the objections that Barbara Lewalski formulated in her *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century religious Lyric* (1984), one of which is of particular interest to us here. As Lewalski puts it, Catholic and Protestant methods of meditation differed, among other points, in that the second placed a greater

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[1] Huntley does not elaborate on this, but there is certainly some truth to this claim, as is exemplified, for instance, in Hall's *No Peace with Rome*, in which he cites Gerson among the divines who opposed the doctrine of the Pope's infallibility and the "corrupt state of the Church" (Hall 1625: 639). More generally, Hall calls on Gerson very frequently throughout his works, suggesting that the former shared a number of the latter's doctrinal positions.

[2] It is worth noting that, for obvious reasons, the English translations of the *Imitatio Christi*, the first of which was provided by Thomas Rogers and first printed in 1580, omitted Book IV, which encompassed à Kempis's extensive discussion on the sacralisation of the church altar (Hudson 1988: 544).

[3] In fact, both Johannes Mauburnus and Thomas à Kempis were members of the "Devotio Moderna" movement, which was founded in the late 14th century by the Dutch deacon Gert Grote. Grote was the only heir of a wealthy family from the Low Countries, but, in his early thirties, he resolved to leave behind a comfortable and lucrative career and left his estate to the church, deciding to devote himself wholly to theology and to a life of frugality and temperance. He went on to create the orders of the "Common Life", which repudiated the wealth, pomp, and corruption of the Catholic church, calling instead for a return to humble monastic conditions and to greater compliance with the example of Christ in the Gospel. The movement was especially concerned with the problem of enabling even laypeople to access scripture, and thus pushed for the translation of the Bible into vernacular languages, while insisting that true devotion was an introspective process of self-examination and self-improvement (see Van Engen's 2008 work *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life* for an in-depth study of the "Devotio Moderna" and its context). This has prompted scholars such as Oberman to call the movement a "Forerunner of the Reformation" (2002: ix).

emphasis on “a particular kind of application to the self, analogous to the ‘application’ so prominent in Protestant sermons of the period” (148). In his review of Lewalski’s book, Martz offers the following rebuttal to this idea:

> *A problem arises with "the analysis of spiritual states", or what Lewalski elsewhere describes as the Protestant "application to the self" in meditative exercises. Such analysis or application was equally characteristic of Protestant and Catholic: the whole aim of the Jesuit exercises was the reformation of the self. The emphasis was equally inward, though the theological differences led to different topics and to different aims, as in the Puritan search for "evidences of election”.* (1982: 169)

I would like to argue, drawing on Lucien Carrive’s own comments on this issue, that Martz’s and Lewalski’s disagreement on the role of introspection in Protestant meditation rests primarily on a fundamental difference between the way in which Catholics on the one hand, and Protestants on the other, hoped to achieve this “reformation of the self” through their meditative practice. As Martz puts it very clearly:

> *Whatever the methods by which self-knowledge is pursued, the ultimate goal remains the same: to move from Fear to Charity*[1]*, from distrust of the self to confidence in God: by the intense exercise of self-analysis to purge the soul, and so make way for the presence of God. In this ‘Sanctuary of the Soul’*[2]*, deep within the self, one discovers, according to the tenets of Saint Bernard and Saint Bonaventure, the Image of God.* (1954: 150)

Carrive answers as follows:

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[1] The term, which is famously discussed by Saint Paul in 1 Corinthians 13, is to be taken to mean “love”, both God’s love to Man and Man’s love to God. In the New International Version of the Bible, the term “Charity”, which appears in the King James Version, was thus replaced simply with the word “love”.

2 Martz borrows the expression from Louis de Blois’s *Conclave animae fidelis* (which was translated into English under the title *The Sanctuary of the Faithful Soul* by Bertrand Wilberforce in 1905), and from the title of Sir John Hayward’s *The Sanctuarie of a Troubled Soule* (1600).

> *Quand Louis Martz déclare que ce mouvement serait quelque chose de fondamental dans la piété des poètes anglais de cette époque, son affirmation aurait paru blasphématoire à toute l'Angleterre protestante. [...] Dans ce "sanctuaire de l'âme", au plus profond de soi-même, on découvre, selon les affirmations de saint Bernard et de saint Bonaventure, l'image de Dieu. Non pas une image restaurée du dehors par une grâce spéciale, mais une image qui est là depuis toujours, indestructiblement, présence créatrice de la divinité dans l'homme, faculté défigurée et affaiblie par le péché, mais encore puissante, et qui est en même temps découverte et recouvrée par l'examen de soi, capable d'arriver, par la charité, à un degré élevé de conformité avec la volonté de son créateur* [...][1]. *Hérésie grave pour tous les fils de la Réforme, hérésie qui abolit la chute, supprime la dépravation et rend la justification superflue.* (Carrive 1972: 208)

Instead, Carrive shows, the structural similarities between Catholic and Protestant meditation notwithstanding, the two practices are very different indeed. Carrives describes the latter as follows:

> *[Les exemples de méditation Protestante] sont en fait des réflexions morales et pratiques destinées à aider ceux qui cherchent à bien vivre. Nous sommes très loin de la méditation continentale, avec son intensité, sa contemplation ardente d'un objet unique, son souci primordial de stimuler les affections. Ce n'est pas autre chose que des réflexions très sérieuses, - c'est à dire prises tout à fait au sérieux quant à leurs conséquences sur la volonté, les affections et l'action – sur des sujets*

[1] This passage is Carrive's direct translation of Martz (1954 : 150).

importants pour un chrétien. (204-205)

Let me conclude this brief discussion in a twofold manner. Firstly, regarding the semantics of the term "meditation", it is arguably safe to say that the Catholic and Protestant varieties of the practice drew on some common sources, and therefore show structural similarities, but that they are fundamentally different in their theological foundations and in their ultimate aims[1]. Secondly, and consequently, Bath's stern rejection of the idea that the term "meditation" could be applicable to the *subscriptiones* found in English emblem books, including Wither's (1994: 118), is only valid if the term is taken according to its narrow Jesuit definition; as I shall demonstrate below, Wither considers many of his emblems to be "meditations" indeed – he actually uses the term in his epistle "To the Reader" to describe his own textual additions to the engravings (Wither 1635: TR.-3) - but meditations conducted within a distinctly Protestant framework.

Firstly, to avoid confusion, I shall distinguish two objects of analysis: Wither's occasional, introspective prayers, which I propose to apprehend as instance of the persona's distinct *meditative voice*, whose specific rhetorical implications shall briefly occupy us first; and then, more broadly, the *subscriptiones* in their entirety – those that are concluded by the italicised prayers just as well as the others – which I propose to analyse as meditative exercises too, though of a somewhat different kind than those examined by Martz.

Of the forty explicit prayers that conclude as many *subscriptiones* in *A Collection of Emblemes*, thirty-seven are extremely similar, in that they are nearly all passionate appeals to God's Grace. Emblem II-1, the conclusion of which starts as follows: "*Good* God! *vouchsafe, sufficient Grace and strength, / That (though I have not yet, such* Patience *gott*) */ I may attaine this happy gift*[2]*, at length*; */And, finde the cause, that, yet, I have it not*" (63), emblem II-25, which contains the following lines: "*God, grant me Grace, to spend my life-time so, / That I my duety still may seeke to* know; */ And, that, I never, may so farre proceed, / To thinke, that I, more* Knowledge, *doe not need"* (87), and emblem IV-4, which ends with the

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1 These remarks should not, however, be regarded as a vindication, on my part, of Lewalski's overall thesis, which chiefly concerns the theological and structural sources of the Protestant poets whom she and Martz are discussing. Carrive's assessment that the influence of the Counter-Reformation on Donne, Vaughan, Traherne, Herbert and the others is certain, but that this influence was predominantly literary, and not devotional (Carrive 1977: 216), seems to be a convincing compromise, although I fully admit not to possess the expertise necessary to confirm it.

2 The persona is referring to the ability to bear scorn or censure patiently.

couplet "*Lord, give mee Grace, to minde, and use* Time *so, /That, I may doe thy* worke, *before I goe"* (212) are only a few examples. Although they are grammatically self-addressed, they are nonetheless fully integrated in the rhetorical project of the overall *subscriptiones* to which they belong. Firstly, the mere fact of the frequent – though not systematic – italicisation of these final prayers suggests that Wither wished to set them apart even visually, and thus to draw the reader's attention to a difference in the state of mind with which each section is to be apprehended. If the didactic/sacerdotal portion of the text calls for an attentive, curious, and, at times, cheerful reader, ready to follow the persona's instructions and example to acquire the skill of emblematic exegesis, the meditative prayers prompt the reader to partake in the devotional exercise at hand, which requires a different frame of mind altogether. There, the tone hardens, the imagery often remains connected to the motifs in the engraving but shifts to a far more vivid insistence on sin, depravation, and, at times, the physical expiation of the same, and to a humble and deeply sincere call for Grace. Take, for instance, the address to God that covers one third of the *subscriptio* of emblem I-47, the engraving of which shows a crowned snake wrapped around the cross-shaped Greek letter "Tau". As is often the case, the persona expounds the meaning of each individual motif, and then moves on to a combined interpretation:

> *The* Crosse, *doth shew, that* Suffring *is the* Way*;*
> *The* Serpent, *seemes to teach me, that, if I*
> *Will overcome, I must not then, assay*
> *To* force *it; but, my selfe thereto* applye.
> *For, by embracing what we shall not shunne,*
> *We winde about the* Crosse, *till wee arise*
> *Above the same; and, then, what* Prize *is wonne,*
> *The* Crowne, *which overtops it, signifies.* (47)

Much earlier than is usually the case, the persona then shifts to the meditative voice, in a passionate and vivid appeal to the Lord:

> *Let me, O* God, *obtaine from thee the Grace,*
> *To be partaker of thy Blessed* Passion*;*
> *Let me, with Willingnesse, thy* Crosse *imbrace,*
> *And, share the Comforts of thy* Exaltation.

To beare that Part, whereto I doomed am,
My Heart, with Strength, and Courage, Lord, *inspire:*
Then, Crucifie *my* Flesh *upon the same,*
As much as my Corruption *shall require.*
And, when by thy Assistance, I am rear'd
Above that Burthen, *which lyes yet upon me;*
And, over all, which (justly may be fear'd)
Shall, during Life-time, be inflicted on me; (ibid)

These lines would arguably be just as fitting to conclude a meditation on the crucifixion itself, whether it were based on a pictorial representation or on the scene visualised in the poet's imagination. The persona's devotional path, on which the reader *de facto* embarks as well, and which is structured around the conventional *topos* of *Imitatio Christi*[1], is decidedly Protestant in mindset: at no point does the persona even suggest that it could possibly hope to bear its "Burthen" on its own fortitude or merits. Instead, the meditative voice, aware of its "Corruption", submits fully to Grace, without which the gruesome task, which "*justly may be fear'd*", could not possibly be endured. The dreadful, physical brutality of the exhortation "Crucifie my Flesh" in the second half of the prayer ensures the maximisation of devotional fervour in the first, as the persona's – and, vicariously, the reader's – only hope is to obtain the gift of Grace, the "Assistance" of God in the trial at hand. One might be tempted to view the final couplet of the *subscriptio,* "Among those *Blessed-Soules,* let me be found, / Which, with eternall *Glory,* shall be *Crown'd*" (ibid.) as having Predestinarian undertones, but I submit that there is nothing unconditional about the process of election in this context. Hopeful though as the persona may be, the actual bestowing upon it of Grace on the Lord's part is far from certain, as is, therefore, the persona's ultimate ability to bear the painful process of rectification. The crown is earned, albeit with the help of Grace, and not freely received.

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[1] In her article devoted to the use that Elizabethan and Jacobean Protestants made of the *Imitatio Christi*, Hudson discusses four Reformed preachers - Arthur Dent, Henry Smith, Thomas Tymme, and Christopher Sutton – each of whom found a different way of reinterpreting the Catholic *topos* of Thomas à Kempis's work to cohere with Protestant theology. Moreover, in his work *The Godly Man in Stuart England* (1976), McGee argues that one of the important differences between those he calls "Anglicans" and "Puritans" in mid-seventeenth century England was that "Anglicans" retained the idea of following the example of Christ in one's behaviour and once state of mind, while "Puritans" considered that human depravity made it impossible to even consider doing so (107-108).

Admittedly, only in a few instances does the persona manage to arouse the same vivid affects, especially in some of the more self-centred instances of such passages. The persona's usual deploring of its – allegedly - dire financial and personal situation, for instance, finds its way into the concluding prayer of emblem III-11: "*Lord,* I am *friendlesse* left; therefore, to me, / This *Knowledge,* and this *Friend,* vouchsafe to bee: / For, thou that *Wisdome* art, (from heav'n descending) / Which, neither hath *beginning, change,* nor *ending*" (145). To anyone more sociable than the persona, such an appeal to God may seem, at best, moot, and, at worst, endowed with an excessive measure of pathos. Most of the prayers, however, appear to be, if not prone to stirring the reader's affections, at the very least transferable enough to ensure that he or she will willingly partake in the devotional process.

Aside from these occasional instances of the persona's addressing the reader through its meditative voice, the whole of Wither's *subscriptiones* may, likewise, be viewed as Protestant meditative exercises, especially given Carrive's aforementioned definition, which echoes Hall's idea of "Extemporal Meditation":

> *Of Extemporal Meditation there may be much vse, no rule: forasmuch as our conceits herein varie according to the infinite multitude of obiects, and their diuers manner of profering themselues to the minde; as also for the suddennesse of this acte. Man is placed in this Stage of the worlde to viewe the seuerall natures and actions of the creature; To view them, not idly, without his vse, as they doe him: God made all these for man, and man for his owne sake; Both these purposes were lost, if man should let the creatures passe carelesly by him, onely seene, not thought vpon: He onely can make benefit of what he sees; which if hee doe not, it is all one, as if hee were blind, or brute. [...] The thoughts of this nature are not onely lawfull, but so behooueful, that we cannot omit them, without neglect of God, his creatures, our selues. The creatures are halfe lost if wee only imploy them, not learne somthing of them. GOD is wronged if his creatures bee vnregarded; our selues most of all if wee reade this great volume of the creatures, and take out no lesson for*

our instruction. (Hall 1606: 10-16)

The spontaneous meditative exercise to which the reader might be prompted in *A Collection of Emblemes*, either by flipping through the book at leisure and by choosing a page, or through the lottery game, arguably fits this definition quite well. With their rather loose methodological requirements, their applicability to any visual object, and their being founded on the *Mundus Significans* episteme, extemporal meditations bear such resemblance to Wither's emblems that their meditative status can no longer be doubted. In many cases, the validity of such a label is further reinforced by the persona's establishing a more or less direct connection between the allegorical implications of even merely "moral" emblems – i.e. such that merely illustrate proverbial commonplaces, or that are meant to impart ethical or practical advice – and theological or devotional points. As shall be shown in Chapter VIII for instance, emblems that encourage the reader to be constant, patient, wise, studious, and industrious almost always contain outright, or implicit but obvious, reminders that the pursuit of such virtues, albeit through God's Grace, retain a strong connection to the prospect of salvation. Others, to which we'll turn in Chapter IX, are decidedly political, to the point where the advice that they provide is, at times, directed specifically at the monarch, or at members of the political class. Some of the remaining emblems, however, fit neither of these categories, and yet, I would like to claim, even for those, the term "meditations". After all, it is arguably no distortion of Hall's definition of "extemporal meditation" to include instances in which, from one's witnessing of an everyday object, creature, or scene, one gathers valuable insight, even if it is pragmatic, practical, and in no way connected to the domain of theology. Emblem II-9 is an example of the same. The engraving depicts two fighting roosters in the foreground, and to hens at the foot of a perch, or dovecote, behind them, and is headed by the motto couplet "To *brawle for* Gaine*, the* Cocke *doth sleight*; / *But, for his* Females*, he will fight*" (Wither 1635: 71)[1]. The motif was borrowed by Rollenhagen and De Passe from Barthélémy Aneau's *Picta Poesis* (1552), where "sexed with the love of victory, cock wages bloody battle against cock"[2]. Playing on the double meaning of the Latin word "Gallus", Aneau concludes his emblem by wishing that his French countrymen and the

[1] Coincidentally, a short prose meditation upon view of the exact same scene can be found in Hall's *Occasional Meditations* (1630: 30), although it prompts him to reflect on the cruelty of man towards man, while Wither's take on the same motif is quite different.

2 This is the translation of part of Aneau's Latin *subscriptio* provided on the « French Emblems at Glasgow » website (https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/emblem.php?id=FANa051).

brawling roosters only had their name in common, and not their propensity for infighting, as, in the mid-sixteenth century, the conflict between Catholics and Protestants started to escalate in France. Wither's persona, as is often the case, suggests several types of "Hacksters" (71) whom the fighting cocks could be taken to represent: those who "*Brawle,* and *Fight,* for every toy they see; / Grow furious, for the wagging of a straw; / And, (otherwile) for lesse then that may be" (ibid.); or, perhaps, such who, "when they *Lye,* [...] cannot brooke to heare / That any should be bold to tell them so" (ibid.); or else, "Another sort, [...] that *blowes* will take / Put up the *Lye,* and give men leave to say / What words they please; till spoile they seeke to make / Of their estates; And, then, they'le kill and slay" (ibid). The worst of those, however, or so the persona insists with an obvious pun, are "Our *Cockrills of the game,* (Sir *Cupid's* knights) / Who, (on their foolish *Coxcombes*) often weare /The Scarres they get in their *Venerean-fights*" (ibid.). As usual, the persona then admonishes the reader to consider the implications of the emblem in their own daily lives: after having stated that the first three types of quarrellers can be pacified easily, it warns the reader that the fourth type "through Iealousy, or madnesse, rageth so; / That, he accepteth of no recompence, / Till he hath wrought his *Rivals* overthrow" (ibid.), and then further urges him as follows:

> *Such* Fury*, shun; and, shunne their* Vulgar *minde,*
> *Who for base trash despitefully contend;*
> *But, (when a just occasion, thou shalt finde)*
> *Thy* Vertuous Mistresse*, lawfully defend.*
> *For, he, that in such cases turnes his face,*
> *Is held a* Capon*, of a* Dunghill Race. (ibid.)

This is far removed indeed from the burning that would conclude a Jesuit exercise, and even from most of Hall's *Occasional Meditations* (1630), which exemplify what he calls the "extemporal" variety of the process, and which usually end with a prayer, very similarly to those that appear in some of Wither's emblems and that we have discussed above. And yet, even Hall's musings are occasionally almost as pragmatic. Meditation 131, titled "On the Whetting of a Scythe", for instance, reads as follows:

> *Recreation is intended to the mind, as whetting to the scythe; to sharpen the edge of it, which otherwise would grow dull and blunt. He, therefore, that spends his whole*

> *time in recreation, is ever whetting, never mowing: his grass may grow, and his steed starve. As, contrarily, he that always toils and never recreates, is ever mowing, never whetting; labouring much to little purpose: as good no scythe, as no edge. Then only doth the work go forward, when the scythe is so seasonably and moderately whetted, that it may cut; and so cuts, that it may have the help of sharpening. I would so interchange, that I neither be dull with work, nor idle and wanton with recreation.* (Hall 1630: 144)

Wither's *subcriptio* is even more down-to-earth than that of course, and prescribes the abidance by a point of gentlemanly honour – i.e. the drawing of the sword to defend a "Vertous Mistress's" honour, but the forbearance of the same if the quarrel concerns "base trash" – but, in the end, the path from a visual stimulus, via an allegorical interpretation, towards a piece of useful advice, which, furthermore, mirrors the structure of a sermon and makes use of similar rhetorical tools, including a direct address to the reader and humorous play on words, fits the definition of extemporal meditation that Hall provides. Although our conclusions rest on very different premises indeed, Martz and I, coincidentally, agree on the conclusion: Wither's emblems are, indeed, exercises in meditation (1954: 61), where the scope and purpose of the exercise is extended, on Hall's authority, to religious, political, social, and practical considerations. And, just as the persona's italicised prayers will often encourage the reader to partake in the devotional process, first vicariously, and then personally, so the entire *subscriptiones* will prompt the reader to meditate, in a fashion akin to an internal sermon, thus ensuring that the moral, religious, or pragmatic advice conveyed will embed itself durably in his memory, in his mind, and, as the case may be, in his heart.

6. Conclusion

However spontaneous and candid Wither claims his additions to the engravings to be (1635: TR.-3), his persona showcases its ability to draw creatively on the pedagogical and devotional practices of his time, to shift lissomly between a humorous, sometimes crude and striking tone, and one more earnest and devout to engage the reader fully, to drive home the point, and to ensure adhesion, recollection, and, perhaps, compliance with, the advice contained in each of his two hundred emblems. The structural kinship between his

subscriptiones and the sermons with which his readers would have been very familiar endows them with additional didactic effectiveness, without neglecting, however, the value of stirring his readers' passions. Furthermore, Wither's indebtedness to Hall's brand of Protestant meditation has arguably been established, and could constitute a serviceable framework to examine other passages based of the latter's method in Wither's other works. Meanwhile, the recurring assertion that his emblems are an example of strict "plain style", let alone of a "Puritan" style, can be discarded as incorrect, and should give way to more detailed studies on his devotional rhetoric unburdened by this erroneous preconception. In fact, it is the whole question of Wither's religious views that deserves a thorough re-examination, and the next chapter proposes to begin with the same as expressed in *A Collection of Emblemes*.

PART III

"TO SERVE MY PURPOSE": *A COLLECTION OF EMBLEMES* AS A REPURPOSING OF THE EMBLEM GENRE

Chapter VII – "Thou mayst have hopes, and, God will grant them too": Wither's *Collection of Emblemes* and Early Stuart Religion

1. Introduction

In the title of his *Collection*, Wither mentions that the work contains "Emblemes, [...] both morall and divine", the majority of which are directly or indirectly related to widely discussed, and often controversial, religious questions of his time. Furthermore, although some critics have remarked that Wither was consistently anti-Calvinist throughout his career[1], and in spite of Willmott's statements to the contrary in his *Lives of the English Sacred Poets* (1839: 61), Wither is frequently called a "Puritan" even in recent scholarship[2], while others have gone so far as to label him an Arminian, or even a Pelagian. Instead of structuring my argument around such problematic denominational labels, I propose, instead, to examine some of the most unequivocally religious emblems in Wither's work against the tumultuous historical background that was the early seventeenth century, which will hopefully demonstrate that the soteriological and ecclesiological ambiguities, ambivalence, and tension that characterised Early Stuart England are mirrored in the work, which therefore resists neat denominational categorisation, but which can be read as a testimony to the caution with which the question of religion ought to be approached in Jacobean and Caroline literature.

2. "There will be, for Compassion, Time, and Place": Wither's Ambiguous Soteriology

In the section of her introduction that is dedicated to "The Protestant Paradigm of Salvation", Lewalski provides a useful working summary of the theological pillars upon which seventeenth-century poets built their idea of the destination of their souls after death. She begins by quoting the passages from Paul's epistle to the Romans that provide the most straightforward justification for the ideas of total depravity (3: 10), free and unconditional justification in Christ through God's Grace (3: 23-24), and predestination (8: 29-30), three points of doctrine on which she elaborates as follows:

> *For the Protestant [...], the fall meant the depravity of all his natural faculties - the blinding of the intellect and the bondage of the will in Luther's formulation. [...] Because*

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[1] See, for instance, French 1928: 89 and Rannou 1980-81: 257.

[2] See Chapter VI.

> *man's natural state is so desperate, there can be no question (as in some Roman Catholic formulations) of a man's preparing himself through moral virtue for the reception of grace, or of performing works good and meritorious in themselves; everything that he does of himself is necessarily evil and corrupt. [...] The drama of man's spiritual restoration, his regeneration, must be understood wholly as God's work, effected by the merits of Christ and apprehended by a faith which is itself the gift of God; failure to recognize one's utter dependence upon grace, or laying claim to any kind of merit or desert for any of one's own works is a dangerous sign of reprobation.* (1984: 15-16)

Lewalski goes on to mention that "Reformation theology gave rise to various views as to whether God's predestinating decrees of election and Reprobation are in any way conditional, and as to whether God laid down those decrees before or after the Fall [...]", but that "English Protestants of the period were in general agreement as to what election is" (16), i.e., in the words of William Perkins, "God's decree, whereby on his owne free-will, he hath ordained certaine men to salvation, to the praise of the glory of his grace" (ibid.)[1]. A point on which Lewalski does not dwell, but that is relevant, not merely to the religious disagreements among English Reformed denominations and between Protestant and Catholics, but also, more particularly, to Wither's emblems, is the intricate notion of God's Grace.

Wither never mentions "election" in his emblems, and only makes four passing remarks to "salvation", and three to "reprobation", while twenty-six of his emblems and three lottery verses deal, more or less directly, with the problem of Grace. This is not surprising, as this issue may be viewed as constituting the central node in the theological debates and controversies surrounding the doctrines of Predestination and free will that began to grow prominent in late Elizabethan England. English critics of the doctrine of Calvinist double Predestination, including Samuel Harsnett and William Barrett, centred their arguments around views of Grace alternative to that which was affirmed in the 1571 (and definitive) version of the "Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion", Articles X and XVII of which state,

respectively:

> *The condition of Man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith; and calling upon God. Wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.* [...]
> *Predestination to Life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. Wherefore, they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God, be called according to God's purpose by his Spirit working in due season: they through Grace obey the calling: they be justified freely: they be made sons of God by adoption: they be made like the image of his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.* (Consulted on https://www.anglicanism.info/articles-of-religion)

Harsnett, Wallace explains, "accused the predestinarians of making God the author of sin, denying human liberty, and perverting scripture" (1982: 66)[2]. "Positively", Wallace adds,

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[1] Lewalski is quoting from Perkins, *An Exposition of the Symbole or Creed of the Apostles*, in Workes, I, 284.

2 Indeed, in one of his sermons that was recorded by another preacher called Richard Steward, Harsnett is reported to have stated the following: "There is a conceit in the world (beloved) speakes little better of our gracious God, then this: and that is, That God should designe many thousands of soules to Hell before they were, not in eye to their faults, but to his own absolute will and power, and to get him glory in their damnation. […] First, it is directly opposite to this Text of holy Scripture, and so turns the Truth of God into a Lye. For whereas God in this Text doth say and swear, that he doth not delight in the death of man: this opinion saith, that not one or two, but millions of men should fry in Hell; and that he made them for no other purpose, then to be the children of death and Hell, and that, for no other cause, but his meer pleasure's sake; and so saies, that God did not only say, but swear to a Lye; for the Oath should have run thus: As I live (saith the Lord) I do delight in the death of man. Secondly it doth (not by consequence, but) directly make God the Author of sin. For, if God,

"Harsnett claimed that God wished all to be saved, that none are damned except those who refuse God's grace, and that God sent his son to die not just for the elect but to offer saving grace to all", a position that prompted John Whitgift, the archbishop of Canterbury, to command Harsnett not to preach on the subject anymore[1]" (ibid.). William Barrett, whose objections Wallace calls one of the "main incidents of opposition to predestinarian theology of grace in the later Elizabethan period", preached that "perseverance in grace was dependent upon the effort of the individual[2]", a position Barrett had to publicly recant. He later withdrew his recantation, eventually left the country and converted to Catholicism (67). Similar positions were defended by Peter Baro, a French divine who, interestingly enough, was ordained by Calvin himself and who was elected Professor at Cambridge in the 1570s (68). Those controversies, which are commonly referred to as the "Cambridge dispute", came to involve theologians as notorious as Lancelot Andrewes and John Overall, as well as John Buckeridge, William Laud's tutor, on the antipredestinarian side (68-69). This controversy continued well into the reign of James I, during which the opponents to the doctrine of double predestination became sufficiently influential for its defenders to employ arguments that were previously reserved for Roman Catholics, including accusations of Pelagianism (70)[3]. Wallace suggests that the strand of divines who preached moderation regarding such important soteriological questions emerged and grew out of an Erasmian humanist tradition

without eye to sin, did designe men to Hell, then did he say and set downe, that he should sin: for without sin he cannot come to Hell: And indeed doth not his opinion say, that the Almighty God in the eye of his Counsell, did not only see, but say, that Adam should fall, and so order and decree, and set downe his fall, that it was no more possible for him not to fall, then it was possible for him not to eat?" (Steward 1658: 133-135). Further down, as he ponders the implications of Ezekiel 18:23, where God denies that he rejoices in the death of the sinners, Harsnett draws from this verse six immediate consequences: "1. God's absolute will is not the cause of Reprobation; but sin. 2. No man is of an absolute necessity the childe of Hell, so as by God's Grace, he may not avoid it. 3. God simply willeth and wisheth every living Soul to be saved, and to come to the Kingdom of Heaven. 4. God sent his Sonne to save every Soule, and to bring it to the Kingdom of Heaven. 5. God's Son offereth Grace effectually to save every one, and to direct him to the Kingdom of Heaven. 6. The neglect and contempt of his Grace, is the cause why every one doth not come to Heaven; and not any privative Decree, Counsel, or determination of God" (148-149).

[1] Wallace is quoting from the article devoted to Harsnett in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

[2] Wallace does not provide a source for his account of Barrett's views.

[3] The term refers to the theological views defended by the Irish ascetic and philosopher Pelagius (ca. 355-ca. 420 AD), whose central doctrinal point is usually understood to be an assertion that original sin did not fully corrupt mankind, and that it is possible for human beings to conform themselves to the requirements of God through their own free will. It is important to note, however, that Renaissance readers were usually acquainted with Pelagius's views through the writings of Saint Augustine, his most notorious contemporary critic, and it is therefore a distorted version of the same that caused Pelagianism to be synonymous with heresy from the Council of Carthage (418 AD) on, for Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Christians alike. Ali Bonner's recent study *The Myth of Pelagianism* (2008) is a systematic and thorough examination of the surviving works of Pelagius, which demonstrates that his doctrinal positions were far more nuanced, and, more importantly, that many of them were accepted as mainstream among fourth- and fifth century Christians.

and a strain of Lutheranism that co-existed with the so-called Calvinist consensus of the Elizabethan Church, and which provided a fertile ground for the arising of the Arminian controversies in the early decades of the seventeenth century (72-73). Andrewes, and especially Richard Hooker, were perhaps the most prominent among those whom Wallace refers to as the first "generation of 'Laudians'" (77), a label that is closely connected to their views on divine Grace and its relation to man's natural faculties.

In his *Nineteen Sermons Concerning Prayer* (1611), Andrewes, may truly be said to display the "reticence" that Wallace mentions (76). Although his first few points are unequivocal arguments in favour of total depravity and the impossibility for human beings to perform moral actions, or even think moral thoughts, unless they are the direct product of divine grace only, other remarks paint a slightly different picture. Indeed, Andrewes goes on to ponder the origin of grace, specifically within the framework of prayer, and states:

> *It is certain that wee have it not of our selves, (for it is a divine thing) therefore we must have it from him, that is the Well of grace (Ioh. 1. 14). If we come to him, out of his fulnesse we shall receive grace for grace. Hee is not a Well locked up, but such as one as standeth open, that al may draw out of it. [...] The meanes to obtaine this grace at the hands of God is by prayer; who hath promise to give his holy Spirit to them that aske it (Luk. 11). [...] If in humility wee seeke for grace from God, knowing that we have it not, of our selves, wee shall receive it from God.* (1611: 13-14)

Andrewes's caution in the last sentence is palpable, particularly in his addition, between commas, of the clause "*knowing that we have it not, of our selves*", but the overall point is quite clear nonetheless: even without prior reception of divine grace, a person can, through prayer, freely "come to [God]", and obtain grace in return. A passage that has attracted even more attention from critics and theological historians is the following, in which Andrewes lays out a careful and measured, but ultimately notably anti-Calvinistic view of the role of human nature and grace in the process of salvation:

> *As the Sunne giueth light to the body, so God hath prouided light for the soule, and that is first the light of*

> *nature, which teacheth vs, that this is a iust thing [...] from this light wee haue this knowledge, that we are not of our selues, but of another, and of this light the Wiseman saith: The soule of man is the candle of the Lord. (Prou. 20.27). They that resist this light of nature are called,* rebelles Lumini. *(Iob. 24). With this light euery one that commeth into this world is inlightned. (Iohn 1.9).* [...] *Next, God kindleth a light of grace by his word, which is,* lux pedibus*, (Psal. 119). and* lux oculis*, (Psal. 19).Aand that wee may bee capable of this outward light, hee lightneth vs with his spirit, because the light of the law shined but darkely; therefore hee hath called vs into the light of his Gospell, which is his meruailous light. (1. Pet. 2). Hee lighteth the outward darknesse of affliction, by ministring comfort, there springeth vp light for the righteous, and ioyfull gladnes for such as are true of heart. (Psal. 97.11). In the multitude of my sorrowes, thy comforts haue refreshed my soule. (Psal. 94). Hee giueth vs euerlasting consolation, and good hope through grace. (2. Thess. 2). And that wee should not bee cast into vtter darkenesse, he hath made vs, meete to bee partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light, yea he hath deliuered vs from the power of darknesse, and hath translated vs into the kingdome of his beeloued son. (Col. 1.12).* (33-34)

The "light of nature" is evidently given to all, and is resistible – as opposed to grace, at least within a Calvinist framework – as is attested by the mention of the "*rebelles Lumini*". Therefore, human nature, albeit a gift of God, enables human beings to conceive of the divine, at least in principle, and thus constitutes a first step towards salvation, a notion that devout Calvinist would repudiate as Pelagian. A very similar idea is developed, perhaps more overtly, in the works of Richard Hooker. Indeed, in his *Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie* (1604), Hooker refers to "natural reason" in the following terms:

> *To our purpose it is sufficient, that whosoeuer doth serue,*

honor & obey God, whosoeuer beleeueth in him, that man would no more do this then innocents & infants do, but for the light of natural reason that shineth in him, & maketh him apt to apprehend those things of God, which being by grace discouered, are effectuall to perswade reasonable mindes and none other, that honour obedience and credit belong aright vnto God. No man cometh vnto God to offer him sacrifice, to poure out supplications & praiers before him, or to do him any seruice, which doth not first beleeue him both to be, & to be a rewarder of them who in such sort seeke vnto him. (1604: 143)

Neither Hooker nor Andrewes suggest that salvation is within reach through mere "natural reason" but only through what Voak calls "divinely enhanced reason", i.e. the workings of divine grace to help man's natural faculties to "act on Christian revelation without sanctifying grace" (Voak 2003: 98). Nor do they go so far as other participants in the Arminian controversies, such as Richard Montague, who "not only denied that the pope was Antichrist, but maintained that fallen man had sufficient free will to concur with God's assisting grace, that with such grace God's commandment could be kept, and that justification included good works" (Wallace 1982: 84). However, their opposition to Calvinist double predestination, and, as a consequence of their affirmation of a natural capacity or inclination in human beings to take the first steps on the path of salvation, drew criticism from their contemporaries, including on the part of divines such as Walter Travers (77), but Wallace also points out that, given the broad Calvinist consensus in theological matters that characterised the English Church in the 1580s and 90s, their views were not granted a great deal of importance, at least not if one compares the period to the reign of Charles I. The Arminian debates famously reached their paroxysm in the 1620s and 30s, and therefore constituted an important part of the backdrop of the composition of *A Collection of Emblemes*.

As was mentioned above, whereas references to salvation are scarce in Wither's emblems, Grace abounds. The final emblem, number IV-50, which concludes the allegorical pilgrimage that was initiated by the frontispiece, ends in one of the persona's meditative appeals to God in the following terms:

LORD, by thy Grace, *an entrance I have made*
In honest Pathes*; and, thy assistance had,*

To make in them, some slow proceedings *too.*
Oh grant me, full abilitie, to doe
Thy sacred Will*; and, to* beginn, *and* end
Such Workes, *as to thy* glory, *still, may tend.*
*That (*Walking, *and* continuing *in the* Path,
Which evermore, thine approbation hath)
I may that Garland, *by thy* grace, *obtaine,*
Which, by mine owne desert, *I cannot gaine.*
(Wither 1635: 258)

The repetition of the clause “by thy Grace” in the first and in the penultimate lines, and the unequivocal rejection of any personal merit in the last, leave no room for soteriological nuance: without God’s grace, the pilgrimage can neither be begun, nor, a fortiori, can the “Garland” ever be obtained. As they stand, these lines therefore strongly imply that no moral action can be undertaken without an initial gift of grace, not even, one supposes, the original suit for grace in the first place, a conundrum that Donne famously bewailed in his poem “Oh my Black Soule!”: “Yet grace, if thou repent, thou canst not lack, / But who shall give thee that grace to begin?” (Robbins 2010: 528-29). In fact, the Calvinist position on the question is quite clear, as William Prynne explains in his treatise on grace and salvation titled *God, no impostor nor deluder* (1629):

> *God did neuer intend that his Gospell should conuert and saue all such as heare it preached, (as is further warranted by* Ier. *1. 10.* cap. *7. 26, 27, 28.* Ezech. *2. 3. to 9, 10.* Heb. *4. 2.* 2 Cor. *2. 14, 15, 16) where God commanded his word to be preached to some that should not heare it nor obey it, nor reape any profit or conuersion from it:) but onely such as should belieue and imbrace it in their hearts. Now these are only the elect, and no others; for* they onely doe belieue: *Therefore the Gospell is intended vnto them alone.* (1629: 2)

Without God’s special grace, which is the exclusive privilege of the elect, neither faith, nor obedience to God, nor, by extension, hope of salvation, are within human reach, which is precisely the point made, or so it seems, in the final lines of Wither’s *subscriptio*. A slight measure of ambiguity may perhaps be detected in the use of the noun phrase “thy assistance”

- provided one interprets it as synonymous with an enhancement of human capabilities, rather than the granting of a power of which man would be wholly deprived without grace - which may perhaps be understood as a hint at the possibility of cooperation between the persona's personal efforts to "make [...] some slow proceedings". Such a conclusion would admittedly be quite tentative, were it not reinforced by other elements in this very emblem, and in others throughout the book. After a brief description of the engraving, a hand holding a wreath *ex nubibus* over a growing flower, the persona, as usual, expounds the basic allegorical meaning, which is already contained in the motto couplet: "The Garland, *He alone shall weare, / Who, to the* Goale, *doth persevere*" (Wither 1635: 258). The persona then proceeds to firmly reject Calvinist double-predestination:

> *[L]et no man walke in doubt,*
> *As if Gods* Arme *of* Grace *were stretched out*
> *To some small number: For, whoe're* begins
> *And* perseueres, *the profer'd* Garland *winns:*
> *And, God respects no persons; neither layes*
> *A stumbling blocke in any of our Waies.* (ibid.)

This does not, in itself, constitute a clear assessment of the necessity of being granted God's grace to take the first steps on the path of salvation, but it does suggest a causal relationship between human perseverance and divine reward. Indeed, the idea that a person could "win" the Garland by treading with constancy on the rocky path of virtue does not cohere with the Calvinist doctrine of total depravity and of underserved – one might even say, by way of a somewhat awkward neologism, "undeservable" – grace, election, justification, and sanctification. The final prayer certainly emphasises that grace is completely indispensable to reach the goal, but the emblem arguably does leave room for merit, however partial and insufficient in itself.

This ambiguity is mirrored in many other emblems in the *Collection*. Emblem III-6 is headed by the motto "*When prosperous, our* Affaires *doe growe*, / *God's* Grace *it is, that makes them so*", but the tenor of the *subscriptio* is much more nuanced than the couplet suggests. The engraving, which shows a flower blooming in a fenced field as the sun shines on it, allegorically places the question of grace within a natural setting, thus harking back to the dichotomy that Andrewes and Hooker established a few decades earlier:

> *Svch pleasant* Flowres, *as here are shadow'd out*

(Full-grown, well trim'd, and strongly fenc'd about)
At first, perchance, had planting (where they stand)
And, husbanding, by some good Gard'ners *hand:*
But, when to perfect ripenesse, they are grown,
(And, spread forth leaves, and blossomes, fully blowne)
They draw it from the Vertue of the Sunne,
Which worketh, when the Gard'ners *worke is done:*
For, lost were all his Travaile, and his praise,
Vnlesse that Planet *cheare them with his rayes.*
(Wither 1635: 140)

With the assurance provided by the – admittedly rather thin – veil of metaphor, Wither's persona is emboldened to use much less ambiguous language in this emblem than in the final one. Indeed, the "good Gard'ner" can merely begin the work, and then hope for the "Vertue of the Sunne", but he is unmistakably credited with the success of the entire process of initiating the blossoming process: the flower is "well-trim'd, and strongly fenc'd about", and, though the gardener's "Travaile" would be lost without the "Planet's" aid, it is nonetheless worthy of "praise", a term which, again, only functions within the framework of merit. Startled, perhaps, at its own forwardness, the persona switches, again, to a more ambiguous mode as it shifts from the allegorical to the pragmatic:

In this our Pilgrimage, *it fares with us*
(In all our hopes, *and all our* labours*) thus.*
For, whatsoever bus'nesse wee intend,
On God, *our good successes doe depend.*
Our Hands may build; but, structures vaine we make,
Till God, *to be* Chiefe builder, *undertake.*
To wall a City, *wee may beare the cost;*
But, he must guard *it, or, the* Towne *is lost:*
The Plow-man *useth diligence to sowe;*
But, God *must blesse it, or, no Corne will grow:*
Yea, though Paul *plant, and, though* Apollo *water,*
They spend their sweat, upon a fruitlesse matter,
Till God, *from heaven, their labours please to blesse,*
And crowne their travailes, with a good increase. (ibid.)

Human initiative is still hinted at, as the builder and the "Plow-man" lay the foundations of the tasks to be carried out, but their endeavours are "fruitlesse" until God lends them support. Similarly, in emblem II-42, the engraving of which, notably, is structured around the same motifs of flowers blossoming as the sun basks them in its rays, the persona cultivates the same ambiguity:

So, we, by nature, have some nat'rall powers:
But, Grace, *must those abilities of ours*
First move; and, guide them, still, in moving, thus,
To worke with God, *when* God *shall worke on us:*
For, God *so workes, that, no man he procures*
Against his nature, *ought to chuse, or shun:*
But, by his holy-Spirit, *him allures;*
And, with sweet mildnesse, proveth ev'ry one. (104)

The extent of our "nat'rall powers", and of our ability to "worke with God, when God shall worke on us", remains mysterious. If God acts in such a manner as to ensure that "no man, against his nature, ought to chuse, or shun", the two verbs clearly imply a decisional process, one that may be guided by nature and by God's "alluring" the believer to remain pious and constant in his efforts, but one that takes root in human nature. This last notion is problematic as well - and has been since Augustine at least[1] – as the final sestet of the *subscriptio* shows:

The Sunne *is faultlesse of it, when the birth*
Of some bad Field, *is nothing else but* Weeds:
For, by the selfe-same Sun shine, *fruitfull Earth*
Beares pleasant Crops, and plentifully breeds.
Thus, from our selves, *our* Vices *have increase,*
Our Vertues, *from the* Sunne *of* Righteousnesse. (ibid.)

The "Sunne", allegorically standing in for God, is to be kept guiltless of the "Vices" while being hailed as the power that "increases" virtue. This is, of course, a careful stance on the part of Wither's persona regarding the contemporary controversy as to whether God, having created man and having allowed his corruption and fall, should or should not be viewed as

[1] See Babcock 1988: 30 ff.

the ultimate author of sin[1]. But the fact that man's virtue "have increase" – rather than "are created" – by the "Sunne of Righteousnesse" suggests that virtue exists in the first place, insufficient as though it may be to attain salvation. Emblem III-1 is quite similar to the very last in the volume by its *pictura*, which represents a wreath on a pedestal, and by its motto, which reads "*If well thou dost, and well intend, / Thou shalt be crowned, in the end*", but the *subscriptio* is less ambiguous, and sketches out the view, on Wither's part, that prompted Rannou to call him a "Semipelagian" (1980-81: 271):

> *[...]* Wreaths *there are, for ev'ry man prepar'd,*
> *According as he meriteth* reward*:*
> *And, though the* Worke *deserveth little meed,*
> Grace, *prints a worth, on ev'ry* willing-deed,
> *Which formes it currant; and, doth gratious make*
> *Man's weake endeavours, for GOD's* promise *sake.*
> (Wither 1635: 135)

The *subscriptio* ends with the couplet "For, ev'n to *Cain* [God] said (of sinne detected) / *If well thou dost, thou shalt be well respected*" (ibid.), which, in conjunction with the rest of the emblem, seems to argue in favour of a cooperative view of independent, or "natural", human endeavours and divine grace. Therefore, if "Semi-Pelagianism" is defined, as the *Oxford*

[1] The accusation was directed mainly at Calvinists, and rebuttals to it are legion in religious treatises and pamphlets throughout the second half of the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth centuries. Calvin himself addresses the argument in the *Institutes*, Book I., Chapter 18. 4., although his response, which revolves, arguably not quite conclusively, around the fundamental difference between the act of the sinner and the intention to disregard divine commandments, ends with an strikingly defensive and intimidating tone: "Augustine, in another place, truly observes, that when God makes his scrutiny, he looks not to what men could do, or to what they did, but to what they wished to do, thus taking account of their will and purpose. Those to whom this seems harsh had better consider how far their captiousness is entitled to any toleration, while, on the ground of its exceeding their capacity, they reject a matter which is clearly taught by Scripture, and complain of the enunciation of truths, which, if they were not useful to be known, God never would have ordered his prophets and apostles to teach. Our true wisdom is to embrace with meek docility, and without reservation, whatever the Holy Scriptures, have delivered. Those who indulge their petulance, a petulance manifestly directed against God, are undeserving of a longer refutation" (trans. Henry Beveridge 1845: 207). The well-known Calvinist William Perkins offered a more pragmatic answer in his *Lectures vpon the three first chapters of the Reuelation* (1604): "We say indeed, that God decreed mans fall, & permitted him to sin, yet teach we not, that he is the author of sin: for his wil is double, generall and particular: in his generall wil, he decreed to permit man to sin and fall, yet so, as in respect of God it was good, though in respect of man euill: for as he can draw out of darknesse light, so out of euill he can worke good to himselfe. Secondly, there is his speciall wil, by which he wils and delights onely in that which is good, and by this he hated mans fall. And euen as the Magistrate hates, & would not the death of the malefactor, yet he wils it, in that he executes the same: so the Lord he in his general wil willed the permitting of mans fall, not as it was euil, but as it turned to his glory and honour, and the good of the elect" (197).

Dictionary of the Christian Church does, as "The name given to doctrines on human nature upheld in the 5th cent. by a group of theologians who, while not denying the necessity of Grace for salvation, maintained that the first steps towards the Christian life were ordinarily taken by the human will and that Grace supervened only later" (Cross ed. 1997: 1480), the term seems, indeed, to be applicable to the views expressed by Wither's persona in the lines quoted above. Rannou asserts that the poet's semi-pelagian views are "clear as daylight" ("éclatent au grand jour", 1980-81: 269) in one of his last works, *Meditations upon the Lord's Prayer* (1665), in which he does, indeed, discuss the question at length. There is no doubt that his anti-Calvinism is unequivocal in this work, in which the idea of double-predestination is rejected in no uncertain terms yet again (77-79), but the discussion of the degree to which unaided human will may play a role in one's process of salvation showcases the theological complexity of the question:

> *[God] sanctified the whole humane Nature into a capability of performing so much as he requires absolutely at our hands; and hath ever since, and will for ever, at first or at last, so inlighten every man who comes into the world, vouchsafing according to his promise, such a renewing of the will, and such a perpetual co-assistance, for asking, to perform what shall be accepted for the deed, to all them who shall not wilfully, malitiously and finally resist his Grace, that no deficiency in him can be justly laid to his charge, in relation to our misdoings, as it will be manifested, when all hidden things are discovered at the last judgment.* (78-79)

The ambiguous phrase "[God] sanctified the whole human Nature into a capability of performing so much as he requires absolutely at our hands", and the adverb "wilfully", point at the crux of the matter: who is ultimately to be held responsible for man's choice to accept, or to resist, divine grace? If God is to be exempted from any guilt in human sinfulness, and if one does not accept the Calvinist counterarguments mentioned above, endowing mankind with a measure of natural will, God-given but nonetheless free enough for a person to be held accountable for his or her choices, appears to be the only logical solution.

The problem with describing such a view as "Semipelagian" in the context of the seventeenth century, however, rests with the label itself. Indeed, Rannou fails to specify that

the notion of “Semipelagianism” is very much an early modern construct, one which, furthermore, served as a means of discrediting various sorts of anti-Calvinists – much like the term “Puritan”, which was originally much more of an injurious scoff at Calvinists than a legitimate denomination (Coffey and Lim eds. 2008: 1) - rather than a neutral reference to a well-identified set of theological doctrines (Müller 2018). In fact, the term is now widely considered as a misnomer, as the Gallic theologians who opposed Saint Augustine’s stern – one might say “pre-Calvinist” - views on double predestination, and who are usually considered to have held the opinions later labelled as “Semipelagian”, were opponents of Pelagianism as well, and the compromise they sought between the two positions was much closer to Augustine’s than to Pelagius’s (Weaver 1996: 40-45). Furthermore, as Müller puts it:

> *In the form found in the accusation against Arminius, it was claimed that he held "God will not deny grace to one who does what is in him." To this accusation Arminius responded that, as stated, the phrase could imply that grace was to be excluded from the beginning of conversion and that conversion was left entirely to the unaided will. He denied that he had ever made such a statement and had consistently held that grace precedes, accompanies, and follows any "good action" that human beings produce. The doctrine that a human being can do something good and thereby gain favor from God is, certainly, one construction that can be placed on the* facientibvs quod in se est[1]. *[...] But it is not a view identified in the early modern Reformed definitions as Semipelagianism: they quite clearly identify this view as purely and simply Pelagianism—and it is a view that Arminius clearly denied.* (2018: 16-17)

One conclusion may be safely drawn from these considerations: a great deal of caution ought to inform any attempt at assigning a denominational label to a seventeenth-century

[1] The full maxim reads “*Facientibus quod in se est, Deus non denegat gratiam”* (“If you do according to what is within you, God will not deny you Grace”), and is often attributed to the Medieval theologian Gabriel Biel.

commentator on Christian doctrine who did not overtly subscribe to such a label him- or herself. Bingham has shown how tentative such a labelling can be even when a given denomination went on to be acknowledged later on, as is the case of "Baptists", a label which, his study demonstrates beyond any doubt, no religious group in Stuart England would have adopted, or even acknowledged (2019). Similarly, the mere fact that Wither was called both a Puritan and an Arminian, and repudiated both labels[1], should be sufficient to drive home the point in his case.

Wither's soteriology, much like Milton's - as expressed in *De Doctrina Christiana*[2] (exact date unknown) - seems to be the combined result of a sustained and systematic reliance on scripture and of the abhorrence of two correlated propositions: that God did predestine some to be damned, irremediably denying them justification and salvation, and that, in the absence of free will, God may be considered the ultimate author of sin. One additional factor in Wither's views on salvation, and in his theology more generally, may be a distinct Primitivist mindset, an ideology "shaped by a belief in the theological primacy of the beginning of Christianity" which "made it intellectually possible to conceive of a past true, pure Church that should and could be re-formed in the present" (Manning 2011: 153). One piece of evidence regarding Wither's subscribing to the same is his translation of, and commentary on, the treatise *De Natura Hominis* by the fourth-century theologian and Church Father Nemesius of Emesa, titled *The Nature of Man* (1636) and first printed, perhaps not entirely coincidentally, only one year after *A Collection of Emblemes*. In his introduction to the volume, Wither expresses his hope to contribute to the effort to "bring into more frequent view, the Writings of these Ancients who lived so neer to the Apostles, that they cannot be justly suspected, as favourers, or parties to the factions of these later Ages" (1636: unnumbered page), an endeavour he justifies as follows:

> *Upon the Foundations laid by the Prophets, and Apostles, many sacred Buildings, were with comely uniformity erected by the Primitive Doctors of the Church; and, in every future Generation somewhat was, now and then, added (by the Worthies of their times) according to the*

[1] See Wither 1613, Lib II., Satyre 4, and 1662: 62, concerning the accusations of Puritanism and Arminianism respectively.

[2] See *A Treatise on Christian Doctrine*, trans. Charles R. Sumner (Milton 1825), pp. 55-58. The full title of the work indicates that the views contained therein were "Compiled from the Holy Scriptures Alone".

> *first Patterns; and upon such occasions or necessities, as required the same, to the continuing and enlarging of Divine knowledge.* [...] (ibid.)

It is worth underlining that "Primitivism" in a seventeenth-century context ought not to be seen as a label on a par with "Arminianism" or "Calvinism" and the like, but as a set of axioms about the early Christian church – Manning states that "many contemporaries would have probably have concurred with Richard Baxter that 'the first 300 years' were 'confessed to be as the most Primitive, so the purest Ages of the Church"[1] (2011: 167) – and its relationship to the Church of England. The transferability of these axioms from one end of the Reformed spectrum to the other is attested by the consistency of appeals to the early church by Calvinists and Arminians alike (162), and by a common - and therefore conflictual – claim that the earliest Christian doctrines agreed not merely with their own, but constituted, moreover, the best symbiosis of faith and reason available (170).

Wither's soteriology as it is expressed in *A Collection of Emblemes* owes much to Nemesius's treatise, which is distinctly anti-Augustinian in its upholding of free will as the necessary condition for man's capability of being virtuous or sinful, and in its rejection of the idea of an "inavoidable [sic] decree" (501) of God concerning the final destination of human souls. And yet, in his introduction, Wither nonetheless sees the need add a notable disclaimer:

> *Let no man* [...] *despise this meanes of* Instruction, *nor prejudicately conceive (because it may have some expressions unsutable to their opinions) that NATURE is here magnified above GRACE, or in any measure equalled thereunto: or, that any power is thereto ascribed, derogating from the* free mercy *of GOD. Far is it from our* Authors *intention: and for ever, far be it from me, to become an instrument of publishing such* Doctrines. *There is not (in my judgement) one syllable in this* Tract, *which tendeth not to the glorifying of GOD's* Grace *to* Mankinde. *For, whatsoever is ascribed to* man,

[1] Manning is quoting from Richard Baxter, *The Grand Debate between the Most Reverend Bishops and the Presbyterian Divines Appointed by His Sacred Majesty as Commissioners for the Review and Alteration of the Book of Common Prayer*, (London, 1661), p. 11

as being primarily in him by nature, *is acknowledged to be the gracious gift of GOD: That which is affirmed to be left in him, since the* fall, *is confessed to have been justly forfeited, and yet preserved in him, by the* free Grace *of the same GOD: The good* effects *of all those* Faculties, *which are affirmed in* mans *power, were not (in my understanding) so much as thought, by this* Author, *(nor are they so conceived by me) to be wrought at any time without the continuall assistance of the* holy Spirit: *neither is the* naturall power *of* man, *or the excellency of his* nature, *here set forth for* mans *owne glory, or that he should arrogate anything to himselfe: But, that GOD's* first *and* second *GRACE vouchsafed unto us, might the more manifestly appeare. And that it might not be onely* said, *but made evident, also, that the* sinne *and* unhappinesse *of every* man, *is of* himselfe, *and not of GOD: all which is implyed (though not directly expressed) by the scope of this* Booke.

Arguably, these lines testify clearly to a characteristic that non-Calvinist Reformed theologies shared in seventeenth-century England: that of a perpetually conflicted dichotomy between free will and grace, which transpires in several of Wither's emblems as well, most prominently, perhaps, in number II-33, which is devoted to the question of predestination. The engraving shows a hand that holds a scale *ex nubibus*, headed by the motto couplet "*What ever* God, *did* fore-decree, / *Shall without faile*, fulfilled be" (Wither 1635: 95), but the *subscriptio* promptly mitigates the initially decidedly predestinarian message:

For, this implies, that ev'ry thing, to-come,
Was, by a steady, and, by equall doome,
Weigh'd out, by Providence*; and, that, by* Grace,
Each thing, *each* person, *ev'ry* time, *and* place,
Had thereunto, a powre, *and* portion *given,*
So proper to their nature (and, so even
To that just measure, *which, aright became*
The Workings, *and, the* being, *of the same)*

> *As, best might helpe the furthering of that* end,
> *Which,* God's *eternall* wisedome, *doth intend.* (ibid.)

With the aid of a succession of inter-semiotic references, the persona exemplifies the arduous search for balance in the matter: Providence has “weigh’d out” both “ev’ry thing to-come” and the “powre and portion” allotted to every person, seeking, as the poem seems to do, “that just measure” between divine and human agency. Providence “doth intend” to bring about a definite “end” devised by “God’s eternall wisedome”, but Man’s “power” is meant to “helpe the furthering” of it, even though the ability to do so was granted “by Grace”. The concluding lines of the emblem are perhaps the clearest instance of the theological conundrum mentioned above:

> *[I]n his* Will-reveal'd, *my* Reason, *sees*
> *Thus much, of his* Immutable-decrees*:*
> *That, him, a* Doome-eternall, *reprobateth,*
> *Who scorneth* Mercie*; or,* Instruction *hateth,*
> *Without* Repenting: *And, that, whensoever,*
> *A* Sinner, *true* amendment, *shall indeavour;*
> *Bewaile his* Wickednesse, *and, call for* grace*;*
> *There shall be, for* Compassion, *time, and place.*
> *And, this, I hold, a branch of that* Decree,
> *Which, Men may say, shall* never changed be. (ibid.)

What is “immutable” in the divine decree, then, is precisely that it is not, a rhetorical contortion that comes dangerously close to being an instance of Fontanier’s “paradoxism” (1821-27: 137), but that safeguards both divine providence and the measure of free will necessary to absolve God of the responsibility of sin, at the price of conceding some merit to human will and determination. The same tension, moreover, permeates Wither’s treatment of another central question in his volume of emblems, that of the prime virtue of constancy.

3. “With Patience, I, the Storme sustaine”: Constancy, Perseverance, and the Idea of Virtue

Exhortations to be constant, to show patience, to endure suffering and misfortune without wavering and even to embrace them as opportunities to show virtue and moral fortitude abound in *A Collection of Emblemes*. It is tempting to take such incitements as evidence of the persona’s subscribing to plainly Stoic precepts. However Montsarrat has shown that, while discussions of Stoicism were widespread and very influential throughout

the early modern period - as is exemplified perhaps most notoriously by the works of Justus Lipsius - the relationship of Stoicism with the Christian, and especially the Reformed mindset was problematic in more than one respect. In fact, in emblem II-12, Wither's persona refers to "those blind *Stoikes,* who necessitate / *Contingent things*; and, arrogantly teach / (For doubtlesse truths) their dreames of changelesse *Fate*" and derides their "foolish braines" (Wither 1635: 74). The emblem's motto couplet, "*Let none despaire of their Estate*, / *For,* Prudence, *greater is, than* Fate", encapsulates a doctrinal opposition that prompted extensive analyses by commentators such as Thomas Wright, Richard Sibbes, John Downame, and, on the continent, even Calvin himself. These authors raise several objections to Stoic doctrines as they understood them: firstly, the distinction – and the common confusion – between the Stoic notion of "Fate" – the same used by Wither's persona in the lines quoted above – and the Christian idea of Providence. Secondly, Christians and Stoics expressed two radically different views on the "passions", that is, on human affects; and thirdly, consequently, and perhaps most importantly, a fundamental disagreement on human nature.

The fundamental tenets of ancient Stoicism can be gathered from the texts of Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius, who assert that Virtue, which they define as obedience to God – a term that, for the Stoics, is interchangeable with "Nature" or "Reason" - is the key to felicity, as the virtuous, or wise, person will become impervious to the blows of adverse fortune by becoming insensible, or even indifferent, to its harmful consequences. "Virtue" is usually employed in the singular, as the Stoics consider that wisdom, fortitude, courage, and perseverance are all expressions of the same stance towards outward constraints, and that all contribute equally to the Stoic's happiness. For the Stoics, Passion – which, mirroring "Virtue", is used in the singular, as all the passions are judged to be expressions of the same shortcoming – stems from incorrect judgements and errors in the use of reason. Passion is a disease of the mind, and should be eradicated if one is to become virtuous. This includes even affects such as compassion, which ought to be suppressed like the others, although the Stoics were nonetheless encouraged to show clemency, which Seneca, in his *De Clementia*, takes to be a pragmatic stance steered towards maintaining political legitimacy. Devoid of Passion as though he may be, the wise man is not devoid of experiencing physical pain and suffering, but these are never converted into fear, dread, or despair (Montsarrat 1984: 10-17).

The foremost agent of the Stoic revival, usually referred to as "Neostoicism", in the early modern period was obviously Justus Lipsius, who, in McCrea's words, established the "Lipsian paradigm" that "Raleigh, Bacon, Greville, Jonson, and Hall" subscribed to, and

which amounts to a "philosophy of 'constancy'" (1997: ix), but made compatible with Christian doctrine. McCrea argues that one of the main tasks that Lipsius set out to accomplish was to dismiss "that which was most offensive" to Christian dogma within ancient Stoic philosophy: the "heretical doctrine of self-sufficiency" (6). "The major stoical precepts of 'fate' and 'destiny'", McCrea continues, "were then made subservient to the power of providence and amenable to the doctrine of free will" (7). Indeed, Lipsius's *magnum opus*, *De Constantia* (1584), the full title of which reads *De Constantia in publicis malis* ("On Constancy in Times of Public Evil"), places the virtue of constancy squarely within a political framework, but also proposes doctrinal modifications so as not to jar with established Christian – at least, Lipsius's own, Catholic – principles.

The first conundrum that Lipsius addresses, by lending his voice to his character Longinus in *De Constantia*, is the complex idea of Fate and its relation to the notion of divine Providence, itself a highly controversial issue in late sixteenth-century Europe in its own right. Montsarrat shows that Lipsius's hesitation, caution, and even contradictions testify to the sensitivity of the problem. Indeed, Lipsius sets out to establish four crucial differences between "the true [i.e., Christian] kinde of Destinie" and "Stoicall destinie" in the following terms:

> *1. The Stoics "make God himself subject to Destinie";*
> *2. "They appoynt a successive order of naturall causes from all eternitie", thus excluding miracles;*
> *3. "They take away all contigencie from thinges; wee admit it, affirming that as often as the secondarie causes are such, chaunce or hap may be admitted in the euents and actions";*
> *4. "They seemed to intrude a violent force vpon our will"* (*De Constantia*, I.xx, quoted in, Montsarrat 1984: 54)

This is surprising, given that Langius, two sections earlier, absolved Seneca, on whom he relies heavily throughout as a source for ancient Stoic views, of exactly these shortcomings:

> *"Our Seneca doth not make God subject to fate (he was wiser than so) but God to God, after a certain kinde of*

> *speech (De Constantia I.xviii)]. [...] The true Stoickes neuer professed such doctrine [...] and no other sect of Philosophers avowed more the maiesty and prouidence of God" (I. xviii).* (Quoted in Montsarrat 1984: 54)

Langius wishes to liberate destiny "out of the prison of the Stoickes", and thus identifies it as "an eternal decree of God's providence" (*De Constantia* I. xix, ibid.):

> *God by the power of destiny draweth al things, but taketh not away the peculiar facultie or motion of any thing. He would that trees and corn should grow. So do they, without any force of their owne nature. Hee would that men should vse deliberation and choyse. So do they, without force, of their free-will.* (I.xx, ibid. 54-55).

Much like Wither in his introductory caveats about the Grace - Free Will dichotomy in *The Nature of Man*, Lipsius, Montsarrat explains, seems "ill at ease" with the concepts of Fate and Providence, and urges the reader to caution against excessive curiosity:

> *He wants to behave like a Stoic but is aware that such concepts asprovidence and destiny are „doubtfull and full of daunger: And must not curiouslie be searched" (I.xxi). We should understand that destiny exists, even though we may remain ignorant of its true nature; we must simply „follow God and obey necessity" (I.xxii). Thus when Langius develops his theodicy in book two he repeatedly asserts that man must not be „curious", that God's judgements and actions are „secret" and that „these matters me misteries ... very deepe misteries" (II.xvii).* (Montsarrat 1984: 55)

The same tension, Montsarrat continues, transpires in Langius's discussion of human and divine interaction in his Christian framework. Indeed:

> *When Langius justifies the ways of God to man, he stresses the limitations of human reason which cannot fathom the motives for God's actions. God is conceived primarily as Will, not as Reason, and His "will is a cause*

> *aboue all causes" (De Constantia II.xii). God's transcendent otherness is emphasized, not the immanence in a man of a portion of His reason. Man himself is seen as blind and sinful rather than as able to reach constancy through reason. The contradiction betwen the Stoic and the Christian elements again breaks out when we consider that God sends calamities in order to exercise and chastise the very men who should strive towards Stoic immunity from these calamities.* (ibid. 56)

Furthermore, the necessity of "extinguishing" of the passions (Wright 1604: 17) – a position that prominent early modern Stoics, such as Guillaume Du Vair, held indeed, as they deemed it necessary to avoid "perturbations in the mind", which, they supposed, prevent one's ability "to live according to nature" (Montsarrat 1984: 61) – jarred with the necessity of one's fully experiencing Passion to even have an opportunity to prove virtuous, an objection that had already been raised by Lanctantius in the late third, or early fourth century in his *Institutiones Divinae*[1]. This objection, Montsarrat points out, was shared across denominational borders (86), and, in England, was expressed by divines such as Richard Sibbes, who went so far as to state that "Religion is mainely in the affections, whereof there is excellent use, take away them, and take away all Religion whatsoever" (1639: 308-309, quoted in Montsarrat 1984: 86), and, obviously, the Stoic rejection of compassion was met with universal hostility (89).

And yet, the controversy between the Christian and Stoic views on the workings of affliction and hardships on a person's mind and on the idea of patience was also characterised by a measure of ambiguity. Although Christian Patience was to be "suffering and passionate", and was carefully distinguished from its Stoic counterpart, which, in turn, was seen as "blockish and senseless" (ibid.: 90), confusion was liable to arise through the frequent use, on the part of early modern commentators, of quotes from classical works that were, in

fact, originally leaning towards the second. Indeed, Montsarrat argues that, although Seneca expressed a nuanced view of the wise man's patience, asserting that it does not entail that he is oblivious to the suffering he endures (*De Constantia Sapientis*, X. 4), he was also prone to using uncharacteristically "overbold metaphors" when discussing the issues, which, Montsarrat supposes, imprinted themselves more easily on the memory than the more nuanced passages (Montsarrat 1984: 90)[2]. Much like Augustine's criticism of Pelagius, which durably distorted the latter's views in the early modern period, the Stoic idea of patience that prompted vehement rebukes from Christian authors was thus probably oversimplified and stripped of the concessions that Seneca granted in his text. Even adamant critics of Stoic precepts such as John Downame, who wrote that this philosophical outlook prompted people to achieve "senselesse blockishnesse" and "secure stupiditie" (1613: 101-103), could not refrain from quoting Stoic philosophers in defence of their arguments, as is exemplified by Downame's reliance on Cleanthes and Seneca in his discussion of Fate and Providence (135). As a prime example of said ambiguity, Montsarrat refers to Sir Richard Barckley's *A Discourse of the Felicitie of Man*, which was first printed in 1598 but went through several editions, including one augmented by Thomas Heywood and printed in 1631. In the first four books of his work, Barckley argues, at length, that man cannot achieve happiness through virtue alone, and requires assistance from the grace of God (463-464). But in the fifth book, after having stated that "God's grace must assist vs, otherwise our endevour is nothing" (477, quoted in Montsarrat 1984: 96), his focus shifts from divine assistance to human nature. This, Barckley argues, encapsulates what is required to be happy, "if [man] knew how to use it' (493, ibid.), and even goes on to state that the happy man "whose mind is cleansed from al perturbations and unquietnesse; that hath worldly wealth, reputation, & all other vanities [...]

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[1] "Nothing can be more foolish than those who think that good things could have existed, if there were not evils in the same place. For since good things are contrary to evil, they must of necessity be opposed to each other, and must stand resting, as it were, on mutual and opposite support. Thus there is no contrary without another contrary. For how could there be any perception of justice, unless there were injuries ? or what else is justice, but the removal of injustice ? […] For there exist together good and evil things, prosperity and trouble, pleasure and pain. For the one being bound to the other at opposite poles, as Plato says, if you take away one, you take away both. You see, therefore, that which I have often said, that good and evil are so connected with one another, that the one cannot exist without the other. Therefore God acted with the greatest foresight in placing the subject-matter of virtue in evils which He made for this purpose, that He might establish for us a contest, in which He would crown the victorious with the reward of immortality" (Fletcher trans. 1871: 112).

[2] Montsarrat quotes a passage from *De Constantia Sapientis* (III. 5.) that reads as follows: "As the hardness of certain stones is impervious to steel, and adamant cannot be cut or hewed or ground, but in turn blunts whatever comes into contact with it; as certain substances cannot be consumed by fire, but, though encompassed by flame, retain their hardness and their shape; as certain cliffs, projecting into the deep, break the force of the sea, and, though lashed for countless ages, show no trace of wrath, just so the spirit of the wise man is impregnable (1984: 90).

in contempt; that is resolute and voide of all feare, even of death it selfe ; that esteemeth nothing to be regarded or cared for but a vertuous mind, that taketh all things that happeneth to him, either as Gods blessing, or his crosse, & all for his goode" (502, ibid.: 96-97). As Montsarrat puts it, Barckley is even "willing to follow Seneca to the very heart of Stoicism" (97):

> *He that will make choice of an happy life (saith Seneca) must not follow the manner of life used by the multitude and greatest part of men, but rather such a kind of life as is altogether contrarie thereunto: and that must be dispising the glory, honour, pride, and prayse of the world; and iudge nothing worthy to esteemd but vertue; which is sufficient to bring men to the fulnesse of true glorie and felicitie.* (497, ibid.)

A synthesis of Stoic and Christian doctrines that leaned more towards the second pole, on the other hand, was achieved by Joseph Hall, whom Thomas Fuller called "our English Seneca" in his *History of the Worthies of England* (1662: 130), though not based on Hall's doctrinal positions, but rather "for the purenesse, plainesse, and fulnesse of his style" (ibid.). Hall was notably fascinated with Stoic philosophy, and even wondered whether "any wise men could be other but stoics; and could have any conceit of life, but contemptuous" (*Epistles*, III. 2., quoted in Monsarrat 1984: 102), but also asserted the superiority of the Christian outlook, in which afflictions are not merely indifferent, but actually "deserved and beneficial" (*Songs in the Night*, §9, quoted in ibid.), and the faithful "does not simply accept adversity with constancy but he is thankful and cheerful in affliction" (ibid.). And yet, Hall also argues that outward circumstances that cannot be changed ought to be met by altering one's frame of mind, and thus to "frame [one's] mind to [one's] estate" (*Meditations and Vows* II. 59). Ultimately, Montsarrat shows, Hall admired Seneca and many other Stoic philosophers, including Epictetus, but always subsumed their ideas under a Christian, and, more precisely, a distinctly Reformed framework, which dwells on the ultimate necessity of grace, and, more generally, "only borrowed such Stoic ideas as could be easily dovetailed with his Christianity" (Montsarrat 1984: 113), which is the reason why some critics have argued that his thought should be referred to as "Christian Stoicism" rather than "Neostoicism" (McCrea 1997: 172). In fact, McCrea argues that Hall considered that the ideas of Seneca, for all his being a pagan and therefore deprived of divine grace and the

Christian revelation, could nonetheless be corrected and made compatible with early modern Christian devotion, but firmly opposed Lipsius's attempt to do the same, sardonically calling him "inconstant", especially regarding his ambiguous religious views (ibid.: 183-184). Chew explains, furthermore, that Hall deemed the idea of hailing human reason as the ultimate measure of virtue to be mere "spiritual pride" (1950: 1135), and that *recta ratio*, or "right reason", for all its usefulness in guiding man through life and aiding his devotion, was, even at its best, inferior to faith, his "best faculty" (1136).

These considerations are quite relevant to Wither's emblems, twenty-four of which make it their main point to exhort the reader to be patient or constant, to persevere, and/or to suffer affliction and trials with fortitude, while many others are centred around the concept of Virtue. As was noted above, Wither's persona explicitly rejects what he views as the Stoic idea of "changelesse *Fate*"[1] to make room for divine Providence, contingency, and human agency, as is the case in emblem II-12:

> *Though true it bee, that those things which pertaine,*
> *As* Ground-workes, *to* Gods *glorie, and our blisse,*
> *Are fixt, for aye, unchanged to remaine* [...]
> *God, gives men power, to build on his* Foundation*;*
> *And, if their* workes *bee thereunto agreeing,*
> *No* Power-created, *brings that Variation,*
> *Which can disturbe, the* Workmans *happy being.*
> *Nor, of those* workings, *which required are,*
> *Is any made unpossible, untill*
> *Mans heart begins that* Counsell *to preferre,*
> *Which is derived from a* crooked-will. (1635: 74)

The core idea is, of course, closely connected to that of emblem II-33, which asserts that, although Providence has "weigh'd out [...] by a steady, and by equall *doome*" everything that is yet to unfold, God granted man "a powre and a portion" to enable him to repent for his

[1] Wither is relying on a simplified view of the Stoic idea of Fate that Lipsius attempted to liberate "out of the Prison of the Stoickes" (see above), although, as was mentioned before, Lipsius also states, in contradiction with his earlier rebuttal, that the "true Stoickes" never asserted that fate had any bearing on Providence. In her chapter on the subject, Vanessa de Harven (2016) shows that the Stoics actually managed to make necessity, or determinism, cohere with contingency. The argument is intricate, and is conducted across the fields of logic, ancient views on physics, and ethics, and it is not surprising that it eluded early modern commentators on Stoicism.

sins, to "call for grace", and thus to take an active part in his own salvation (95). Both emblems contain an overt rejection of those who "things, for absolute *Decrees*, declare / Which, either *false*, or, but *Contingents* are" (ibid.) – though the second does not refer to such people as "Stoikes" - and both attempt to synthesise a measure of divine, unshakeable "Foundation" with human "workings", a combination through which one may achieve a "happy being". That this "happy being" cannot be "disturbed" by any "Power-created" if the workman's achievements agree with God's "Foundation", however, sounds distinctly Stoic, as does the motto of emblem II-12 which asserts that such a blissful state is to be achieved through "Prudence", which "*greater is than* Fate" (74).

The concept is famously discussed by Aristotle in the *Nichomachean Ethics* – "Prudence" is the usual translation of the Greek word "*phronesis*" (Granjon 1999: 137) – and is defined as the capability of a person to reason correctly, based on the contingencies at hand and on prior experience, and to determine the course of action that is going to be most appropriate to serve both one's own interests and the general good. Aristotle's *phronesis* is therefore a primarily political virtue, although Granjon, based on the discussion of the same by Pierre Aubenque, insists that it is also rooted in a metaphysical worldview:

> *[P]our Aristote, la véritable liberté n'est pas liée à la contingence mais à son contraire, la nécessité. La liberté de Dieu est adhésion totale à l'ordre parfait et entièrement déterminé du monde des astres. Dieu, sagesse immanente, n'a pas besoin de délibérer avant d'agir. Il en va de même du sage, guidé dans sa conduite par l'idée de Bien absolu. En revanche,* le phronimos [i.e. the "prudent man"]*, privé de cette idée transcendante, a besoin de délibérer pour trouver un bien relatif à l'action considérée.* (1999: 139; Granjon is relying on *Aubenque's work La prudence chez Aristote, Paris, PUF, 1993*)[1]

Both Lipsius and Hall provide definitions of the term as well. The first defines it as "an understanding and discretion of things we ought either to desire or refuse, in publike and in

[1] The other major classical source from which early modern authors drew when discussing Prudence is Tacitus, whose concept of "*prudentia*" is, however, more closely associated with a political leader's ability to rely on historical *exempla* to face the circumstances in which he may find himself (see Morford 1993: 135 ff.).

privat" (1594: 11-12), and the second states that Prudence is a combination of "Wisedome - a concept that combines knowledge, safety from evildoing, and "good direction", or the ability to make sound judgements, "Providence" – the ability to anticipate future situations and to act accordingly, though always based on wisdom and reason - and "Discretion", or timeliness both in word and deed (Hall 1609: 23-29).

Although Wither's persona uses the term "Prudence" as a synonym of "Wisdom" as he deems the snake to be the emblem of both (II-47, p. 109 and III-8, p. 142), and certainly considers it the best means to reach happiness and to overcome adverse fortune[1], emblem III-17 testifies to a measure of caution in the matter. The engraving, which is an illustration of Matthew 10: 16[2], shows a caduceus, the two snakes of which are facing each other, while a dove is perched on the hilt between their heads. The motto couplet reads "*Man's life, no* Temper, *more doth blesse,* / Then Simple-prudent-harmlessnesse" (151), and the persona insists on the need for a combination of Prudence and Innocence, and dwells on the consequences of the presence of one of these virtues in the absence of the other:

> *Where such* meekenesse *as doth seeme to be*
> *In harmelesse* Doves, *divided you shall see*
> *From that* discretion, *and that* policie,
> *Which in the* Serpents *head, is thought to lie;*
> *They liable to ev'ry wrong become;*
> *And, to it selfe, make* Vertue *burthensome.* (151)

However:

> *[W]hensoe're the* Serpents-braine *we find,*
> *With which, there is no* Dove like-meekenesse *joyn'd,*
> *(Without all peradventure) thence proceedes,*
> *All harmefull fraud, and all injurious deedes.* (ibid.)

Prudence, therefore, is not as equivocally associated with a cardinal virtue as it is in Hall's discussion of the concept, as it is liable to become "harmefull" and to prompt the person to perform "injurious deeds" if it is not checked by "Dove-like meekenesse", an idea that is

[1] See Chapter VII.

[2] In the verse, Jesus famously tells his disciples: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (*KJV*).

reiterated more concisely in the corresponding lottery stanza:

> *That thou hast* Honestie, *we grant;*
> *But,* Prudence, *thou dost often want:*
> *And, therefore, some have injur'd thee,*
> *Who farre more* Wise, *than* honest *bee.*
> *That, now,* Discretion *thou mayst add,*
> *To those* good-meanings *thou hast had;*
> *The Morall of thine Emblem, view;*
> *And, what it counsels, that, pursue.* (188)

In fact, the concept of "wisdom", which is used more frequently than, but, it appears, always synonymously with, "Prudence", is also regarded with merely moderate enthusiasm. Wither's persona does advise the reader to labour wisely, lest the work be done in vain (II-30, p. 92), and generally encourages wisdom in the lottery verses (see, for instance, pp. 115-116 for several instances), but the term also appears with far more derogatory connotations in a surprising number of instances throughout the emblem book. The sarcastic references to "[them] who are so wise" in the "Preposition to this Frontispiece", or to the "Overweening-wise" in the epistle "To the Reader" (TR.-2) anticipate emblem III-13, the motto of which reads "*Above thy* Knowledge, *doe not rise, / But with* Sobrietie, *be wise*" (147), and which urges the reader in no uncertain terms to be wary of the bounds within which wisdom may be sought. Referring to the *pictura,* which shows a scholar pointing at a tree that is battered by a strong wind from the heavens, the persona states:

> *Be not so* over-wise, *as to presume*
> *The* Gard'ner, *for thy goodnesse, did assume*
> *Thy small* Crab-Olive, *to insert it, there,*
> *Where, once, the* sweetest-berries, *growing were:*
> *Nor let thy Pride those few* old-boughes *contemne,*
> *Which, yet, remaine upon their ancient* Stemme*;*
> *Because, thy new-incorporated* Sprayes,
> *Doe more enjoy the* Sunnes *refreshing raies:*
> *But, humbled rather, and, more awfull bee;*
> *Lest,* hee *that cut off* them, *doe breake downe* thee [...].
> *For, doubtlesse, ever since, both* good *and* ill
> *Are left with* Knowledge, *intermingled still;*

And, (if we be not humble, meeke, and warie)
We are in daily danger, to miscary.
Large, proves the fruit which on the Earth *doth lie;*
Windes, *breake the twigge, that's grafted* over-high*;*
And, he that will, beyond his bounds, be wise,
Becomes a very Foole, *before he dies.* (147)

Wisdom and knowledge, which are integral parts of Virtue in the Stoic and Neostoic understanding, are therefore seen with relative suspicion by Wither's persona, who recognises their moral use but who urges the reader to view them with caution, and to exercise moderation in the pursuit of the same. Whether this testifies to a dubitative stance, on Wither's part, towards the Stoic or Neostoic outlook in general is a question that may probably be addressed most fruitfully through an examination of his use of another, quintessentially Stoic concept: that of constancy.

The term, its derivatives, and terms that are closely related appear quite frequently in *A Collection of Emblemes*, as is attested in Wither's thematic index, which lists three entries for "Constancie", one for "Constant resolution", two for "Endurance", one for "Inconstancy", three for "Patience", four for "Perseverance", and many more for related concepts, such as "Adversitie", "Affliction", and "Hope". Upon closer examination, however, the term "constancy" is, ironically, somewhat inconstant in its semantics throughout the book. The first instance is encountered in emblem I-2, in which Wither's persona rebukes "those unconstant men whom ev'ry *Blast, /* Or small *Occasion,* turneth to and fro", and argues that wisdom "doth [only] flow" from "a *Settled-head* that standeth *fast*" (1635: 2). The steadfastness that is thus exemplified – "Who'ever shoulders, [the constant man], he gives no place; / What *Storme* soe're, his *Times* or *Fortunes,* breath, / He neither hides his *Brow,* nor turnes his *Face*; / But, keepes his Lookes undaunted, ev'n in *Death"* (ibid.) – is recommended, but it should be accompanied by another kind of "constancy":

If, therefore, thou desirest to be taught,
Propose good Ends *with honest* Meanes *thereto,*
And therein Constant *be, till thou hast brought*
To perfect end, *that* Worke, *thou hast to doe.* (ibid.)

To a constant frame of mind, that would be able to withstand the "*Stormes*" of affliction, the reader is urged to add a more pragmatic virtue, that of perseverance, in his endeavours and

duties. The same polysemy of the term appears to be at work in emblem III-9, the *pictura* of which shows a hand holding a pair of compasses *ex nubibus*, with which it is drawing a circle on a block of stone or wax, while astronomers are studying the star in the background. This conventional motif is accompanied by the Latin subscriptio “LABORE ET CONSTANTIA”, which, together with the compasses, was the logotype of the famous early modern printer Christopher Plantin. The two distinct meanings of “constancy” emerge out of the persona’s exegesis of the central motif:

> *For, as to draw a* Circle, *with our hand,*
> *We cause the brazen* Compasses *to stand*
> *With one foot firmely fixed one the ground;*
> *And move the other in a* Constant-round:
> *Right so, when we shall purpose to proceed*
> *In any just, and profitable deed,*
> *We first, should by a* constant-resolution,
> *Stand firme, to what we put in execution:*
> *And, then, with* perseverance, *labour out*
> *Those workings, which we are employ'd about.* (143)

Constancy, Wither’s persona suggests, is characterised both by an unwavering stance, and by a steady and unbroken progress. The first interpretation of the term can therefore be placed squarely within the controversy that opposed Stoic and Christian views on the mindset with which one ought to meet affliction and hardship, while the second appears to be an expansion of the scope of the cardinal virtue from the realm of the mind and the soul into the physical and the practical.

Regarding the first definition of the term, much as Lipsius and even Hall did as well, Wither strives to keep the concept strictly within Christian bounds, while occasionally tiptoeing, at least poetically, around the aforementioned Senecan imagery. Emblem I-23 is a clear example of the first tendency: the engraving shows a bear climbing a tree towards a beehive to gain access to the honeycombs, while the bees swarm and sting it relentlessly. Wither’s persona first likens the bear to “the *Sensuall Man”*, who, to satisfy “his bruitish *Lust,* a thousand perills dares; / And, that his *Lawlesse-will* [...], / Nor *Conscience, Credit, Cost,* nor *Labour* spares” (23), and then argues *a fortiori* that one should be prepared to suffer at least as much in the attempt to be virtuous:

Or, why should lisping Wantons, *for their* Lust
So much adventure as one finger, there,
Where we our Lives in hazard would not thrust
For Vertues *Glory, if it needfull were?* (ibid.)

Echoing Hall's Christian alternative to the allegedly blockish and insensible nature of Stoic constancy, the persona concludes the *subscriptio* with a somewhat vague *exemplum*, stating:

By Suff'ring, *I have more* Contentment *had,*
Then ever I acquir'd by Slothfull Ease*;*
And, I by Griefe, *so joyfull have beene made,*
That I will beare my Crosse, *while* God *shall please.*
For, so at last my Soule *may* Ioy *procure,*
I care not, in my Flesh *what I endure.* (ibid.)

Relying, as it frequently does, on parallel structures and clear binary oppositions, the persona insists on the material and psychological reality of "Suff'ring", both in its "Flesh", and through "Griefe", and is thus far removed from the indifference to such experiences that the Stoics advised their readers to cultivate. Clearly, furthermore, there is absolutely no rejection of Passion, painful or agreeable; instead, hardship is construed as a path that, if treaded with constancy, will "Ioy procure", but only "at last" (ibid.). This is perhaps even clearer in the emblems that refer, no to constancy, but to "Patience", which, Montsarrat explains, was often regarded as the Christian counterpart to Stoic Constancy in early modern commentary upon the matter (1984: 90). Emblem I-28, the motto couplet of which reads "*No Inward* Griefe, *nor outward* Smart, / *Can overcome a* Patient-Heart" (28), hails the "Saints" for their Patience in bearing gruesome persecutions and "a thousand Sufferings", after which the persona adds:

[...] 'tis not Hunger, Cold, *nor* Fire, *nor* Steele,
Nor all the Scornes *or* Slanders, *we can heare,*
Nor any Torment, *which our* Flesh *can feele,*
That conquers us; but, our owne Trayt'rous Feare. (ibid.)

Despite the decidedly religious framework in which this emblem is placed, the final line comes close to echoing the point made by Barckley about the wise man whose Constancy is characterised by an absence of fear, and, more dangerously, to Seneca's famous and controversial statement at the end of letter LIII, which reads:

There is one thing, too, in which the wise man actually

surpasses any god: a god has nature to thank for his immunity from fear, while the wise man can thank his own efforts for this". (1969: 103)

Notably, the end of the very same letter bears remarkable similarity to the text of emblem II-50 as well. Indeed, Seneca states:

> *Philosophy's power to blunt all the blows of circumstance is beyond belief. Never a missile lodges in her; she has strong, impenetrable defences; some blows she breaks the force of, parrying them with the slack of her gown as if they were trivial, others she flings off and hurls back at the sender*. (ibid.)

In the *subscriptio*, which appears below the motif of a crocodile and the motto couplet "*True* Vertue *is a* Coat of Maile, / '*Gainst which, no* Weapons *can prevaile*" (1635: 112), the persona urges the reader to exercise enough virtue to procure "such nat'rall *Armour* [...] / As no man can bestowe, or take away", a protection that may be achieved as follows:

> Without, *let* Patience *durifie thy Skin;*
> *Let* Innocencie, *line thy heart* within*;*
> *Let constant* Fortitude, *unite them so,*
> *That, they may breake the force of ev'ry blow.* (112)

Similar linguistic concessions to Stoicism can arguably be found in emblem I-6, the engraving of which shows a virtuous man ascending to heaven with the help of a majestic eagle, thus escaping the fickle grasp of Fortune who, spinning her wheel, is causing the downfall of another man, who, contrary to the first, is presumably less than adequately endowed with virtue. The persona elaborates on the motif as follows:

> *For, he that's* Vertuous, *whether high or low*
> *His* Fortune *seemes (or whether foule or faire*
> *His* Path *he findes) or whether friend, or foe,*
> *The* World *doth prove; regards it not a haire.*
> *His* Losse *is* Gaine*; his* Poverty *is* Wealth*;*
> *The Worlds* Contempt, *he makes his* Diadem*;*
> *In* Sicknesse, *he rejoyceth, as in* Health*:*
> *Yea,* Death *it selfe, becommeth* Life, *to him.*

> *He feares no disrespect, no bitter scorne,*
> *Nor subtile plottings, nor Oppressions force;*
> *Nay, though the World should topsie-turvie turne,*
> *It cannot fright him, nor divert his Course.* (6)

There is very little indeed in these few lines to suggest that "Gaine", "Wealth", "Health", or even "Life" are achieved through the patient enduring of actual physical and psychological hardship. Instead, the series of paradoxisms that oppose these rewards to their counterparts – "Losse", "Poverty", "Sicknesse", and "Death" – seem to assert that the virtuous man will not merely earn the desirable rewards mentioned above by showing constancy in suffering the corresponding hardships, but that they will, rather, *experience* them as the same rewards, or be, at the very least, indifferent to them, as he "regards [them] not a haire".

It is not my point at all to suggest that Wither's persona is lacking constancy in its general outlook on the matter, but rather that the emblems testify to a philosophical context that was structured around conceptual tension and ambivalence, and that transpires through the simultaneous use of lexical markers associated with two opposed frameworks in *A Collection of Emblemes*. Indeed, the views on soteriology and on constancy that are expressed in the volume are centred upon the conundrum of human agency within a Christian framework, and thus epitomise the intricacies of that which was, perhaps, the central problem of early modern theology. Furthermore, these considerations could constitute a modest contribution to the growing body of literature that calls the validity familiar labels, such as "Puritan", "Pelagian", "Arminian", or "Neostoic", into question, and encourage prospective critics of Wither's works to approach his religious and philosophical stance with more caution than has hitherto been the case. Similar caution, I shall argue next, ought to inform an examination of the views on the church that are expressed in his emblems.

4. "How those MOTHERS may agree": Ecclesiology in *A Collection of Emblemes*

In the dedication to Charles I and Henrietta Maria of the first book of the *Collection*, Wither's persona, amidst an impressive array of conventional dithyrambic compliments, states:

> *[A]s you,* Both, *Prime* Children *are of those*
> *Two* Sister-Churches, *betwixt whom, yet, growes*
> *Vnseemely* strife*; So,* You*; perhaps, may be*
> *An* Emblem, *how those MOTHERS may agree.*

And, not by your Example, *onely, show,*
How wrought it may be; but, effect it so. (1635: Ded. I-3)

Perhaps more than any other part of the text, an examination of the statements made in the dedications obviously call for due caution. Although Wither was no stranger to unconventional dedicatory epistles[1], the evidence laid out in Chapter III as to his financial situation in the early 1630s, and his resulting pleas for patronage addressed to powerful members of the court, are probably sufficient to explain why he should have resorted to the common epideictic and flattering language in all the dedications that appear in the work. Even so, given Wither's intellectual and confessional independence, and the integrity which characterises much of his writings, the lines quote above stand out, especially if one takes into account that Wither, in the words of French, "detested Roman Catholicism from the bottom of his heart and hoped to see it rooted out completely as the most pernicious influence of his time" (1928: 150). In *A Collection of Emblemes*, this sentiment transpires occasionally, though only through the prism of doctrinal rejection or of individual satirising and censure. Emblem II-15 constitutes the prime example: the engraving shows a burning heart on an altar below the tetragrammaton and in front of two scenes of martyrdom, and Rollenhagen's original motto reads "SACRIFICIVM DEO COR CONTRIBULATIM" ("A suffering heart in sacrifice to God"), which is a direct adaptation of Psalm 51: 17[2]. Wither's motto couplet remains very close to the original - "The Sacrifice, God loveth best, / Are Broken-hearts, for Sin, opprest" (1635: 77) - but then the persona expands on the idea that is conveyed by the previous verse in the Psalm[3]. Indeed, as it does repeatedly in the work, it appropriates the rather abstract and general emblem, and anchors it firmly in contemporary concerns and controversies:

No Age, hath had a people, to professe
Religion, *with a shew of holinesse,*
Beyond these times; nor, did men sacrifice,
According to their foolish fantasies,
More oft than at this present. (ibid.)

In a series of archetypical portraits that are reminiscent of Chaucer's clerical subjects of

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[1] For instance, Wither dedicated his *Abuses Stript and Whipt* "to him selfe" (1613: 6).

[2] "The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

[3] "For You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; / You take no pleasure in burnt offerings"

satire, the persona makes the target of its censure very clear:

> *[...] One, bestowes*
> *On* pious-workes, *the hundreth part, of those*
> *Ill-gotten goods, which from the poore he seazed,*
> *And, thinkes his* God, *in that, is highly pleased.*
> *Another, of her dues, the* Church *bereaves:*
> *And, yet, himselfe a holy man conceives,*
> *(Yea, and right bountifull) if hee can spare*
> *From those his thefts, the tenth, or twentieth share,*
> *To some new* Lecture*; or, a* Chaplaine *keepe,*
> *To please* Himselfe, *or, preach his* Wife *asleepe.* [...]
> *With many other such like* Sacrifices
> *Men come* to God: *but, he such* gifts *despises*
> *For, neither* gifts, *nor* workes, *nor* any thing
> *(Which we can either* doe, *or* say, *or* bring,*)*
> *Accepted is of* God*; untill he finde*
> *A* Spirit-humbled, *and a* troubled-minde. (ibid.)

The remaining part of the *subscriptio* - which was elided above – does, however, extend the critique interdenominationally to include all who:

> *[T]hinke they bring sincere* Oblations,
> *When, fir'd with zeale, they roare out* Imprecations
> *Against all those, whom wicked they repute:*
> *And, when to* God, *they tender any sute,*
> *They dreame to merit what they would obtaine,*
> *By* praying-long, *with Repetitions vaine.* (ibid).

Despite the unequivocal and conventional scoff at the venality and greed of those who hope to purchase divine favour and grace with a portion of their “Ill-gotten goods”, the general rebuke is addressed to all who display any measure of devotional hypocrisy.

The persona’s stance on the institutional subject of the church is quite different, however. The apparent irenicism with which it addresses the king and queen in the dedication is echoed in emblem IV-36, yet another example of Wither’s complete repurposing of Rollenhagen’s initial composition. The engraving shows a Roman insignia shaped like a

hand, in front of a kneeling Roman officer in prayer, whom Warncke identifies as Saint Eustace, the patron of hunters, based on the animal pelt that is spread out in front of him (1983: 384). Eustace, who converted to Christianity during his service in the Roman army, is receiving a blessing from an angel, probably to illustrate the Latin motto "FIDUCIA CONCORS" ("Unanimous trust"), which Warncke interprets as a representation of the power of prayer ("Kraft des Gebets", ibid.). The foregrounded motif already appears in Paradin's *Devises héroïques* (1557: 75), whose *subscriptio* merely explains that the insignia was quite common in Rome, and calls it the "hand of concord". Wither begins his own commentary on the engraving by providing a very similar interpretation:

> *A Fixed* Palme, *(whose* Fingers *doe appeare,*
> *As if displayed, and advanc'd they were)*
> *Intended by our* Author, *here, wee see,*
> *To shadow out* agreeing-Minds, *that bee*
> *Establish'd in one* Trust. (1635: 244)

He then immediately introduces another component however, one which is thoroughly absent from both Paradin's and Rollenhagen's emblems: "and, well it may, / That *Vertue,* of the holy *Church* display" (ibid.). His attempt at clarification is arguably somewhat awkward and inconclusive:

> *For, as our* hands, *the better meanes can make,*
> *To* gaine, *as well as to* retaine, *or* take,
> *The* benefits *we seeke; when wee intend,*
> *Our differing* Fingers, *all, to worke one end:*
> *So, when the* Church *of* Christ *(wherein wee finde*
> *A diffrence of* Degrees*) shall with one* minde,
> *Persue a faithfull hope; they'l soone obtaine,*
> *That wished benefit, they seeke to gaine:*
> *For, when but two or three shall in* Gods *name,*
> *Request a* blessing, *he will grant the same.*
> *Let all thy sev'rall* Churches, *LORD (that stand*
> *Like many* Fingers, *members of one* Hand*)*
> *Thy* Will Essentiall *with joynt love obay,*
> *Though circumstantially, they differ may.* (ibid.)

I have not been able to find any notable source from which Wither might have drawn the allegorical connection between an open hand and the "Church of Christ". Contrary to Farnsworth, who considers it a "startlingly effective metaphor" (1999: 92), I submit that the image of "differing Fingers" that would have to be brought to "worke one end" – implying that each finger could be acting completely independently of the others - is very counter-intuitive and lacks visual immediacy. Furthermore, there is no precise correspondence between the number of fingers and the "sev'rall Churches", which further mars the allegorical relationship between the text and the image. Given the subtle and sometimes multi-layered inter-semiotic connections that the persona usually weaves into the *subscriptiones*[1], the interpretation provided here is strikingly inadequate. Evidently, contrary to what the persona suggests in the epistle "To the Reader", the text is probably not that which the poet "could thinke of, at first sight" (TR.-3), but rather a forced contortion of the pictorial motif and the text to accommodate the topic at hand. A similar, though less awkward process is at work in emblem II-49, which shows three interlocked moon crescents below a royal crown. As was shown in Chapter IV, the persona completely ignores Rollenhagen's text, which, based on the same motif in Paradin's *Devises Héroïques* (1557: 20), identifies the emblem as a glorification of the French king Henry II, whose motto both emblems borrow for their *inscriptio*: DONEC TOTUM IMPLEAT ORBEM ("Until it fills the whole sphere"). Instead, it relies on the well-established allegorical connection between the moon and the Church[1]:

> Old-times, *upon the* Moone, *three* names *bestow'd;*
> *Because, three diverse wayes, her selfe she show'd:*
> *And, in the* sacred-bookes, *it may be showne,*
> *That* holy-Church, *was figur'd by the* Moone.
> *Then, these three* Moones in one, *may intimate*
> *The* holy-Churches *threefold blest estate.* (1635: 111)

Wither's persona begins with a reference to Roman mythology, where each phase of the moon was personified by a different deity, as is explained by Ross:

> *I doe suppose that the Moon hath these three names from her divers affections or aspects: for in the full shee is* Luna, quasi Lucens una, *giving light alone, for then the*

[1] See Chapter IV.

> *Starres shine not, though some of then are seen. So shee is called also* Lucina *and* Diana, [...]*, for the light of the Moon is a speciall gift of God. Her other name* Proserpina, [...], *hath relation to her increase and decrease; for her light (as it were insensibly creeping) comes and goes. But the third name* Hecate *was given to signifie the change, in which shee affords us no light at all, but then seems to be the Queen of hell, or of darknesse.* (1647: 113)

The persona then proceeds to Christianise the threefold identity of the moon, while still drawing heavily on its – tacit – classical source:

> *The* Moone, *still, biding in our* Hemisphaere,
> *May typifie the* Church, *consisting, here,*
> *Of men, yet living: when she shewes her light*
> *Among us here,* in portions *of* the night*;*
> *The* Church *it figures, as consist she may*
> *Of* them, *whose* bodies *in the* Grave *doe stay;*
> *And, whose blest* spirits, *are ascended thither,*
> *Where* Soule *and* Body *meet, at last, together.*
> *But, when the* Moone *is hidden from our eyes,*
> *The* Church-triumphant, *then, she signifies;*
> *Which, is a* Crescent *yet, that, some, and some,*
> *Must grow, till all her parts together come.* (1635: 111)

As is the case with the emblem showing the hand-shaped Roman insignia, the inter-semiotic connections between the engraving and the *subscriptio* appear somewhat forced. The *pictura* does show three crescents, which point, respectively, to the left, down, and to the right, and, as such, the first could perhaps be viewed as the moon "biding in our Hemisphaere", but there is nothing in the engraving to suggest that the second "shewes her light / Among us here, in portions of the night", neither does the persona explain how this might relate to "them, whose bodies in the Grave doe stay". Finally, in the text, the third moon is "hidden from our eyes",

[1] For a discussion of the origins of this allegory, see Françon 1945.

while it is as visible as the other two in the picture. Once again, the topic of a longing for a united Church is crowbarred in at the expense of inter-semiotic harmony, a fact that betrays Wither's determination to insist on his views on the matter.

Calls for a unified Church were commonplace in seventeenth-century England, and were closely connected to the adamant conviction, on the part of "the general current of English divines" (Quantin 2009: 71), that the Church of England was the most faithful heir to its early Christian counterpart, which, they claimed, "for about two hundred years after Christ agreed on every point with Protestants" (69). Although "the seeds of popish errors" allegedly began to tarnish initial doctrinal purity, "until approximately 600, religion was still closer to Protestantism than to popery. Errors multiplied after 600, but faithful witnesses always remained 'against the errors and furors of Antichrist'" (ibid.)[1]. A unified English church, they believed, would, therefore, recapture the Christian faith at its purest, and allow for the rooting out of Roman catholic influences. Furthermore, such unity would ensure religious peace within the realm, which is why it was actively pursued by James I (Fincham 1993: 12). In that respect, Wither's views as he expressed them in *A Collection of Emblemes* were by no means exceptional. A joint reading of the two emblems mentioned above with the dedicatory epistle to the royal couple does, however, reveal a good deal of ambiguity on the poet's part; indeed, the persona's alleged hope to see "those MOTHERS [...] agree" (1635: Ded. I-3) seems to testify to a great deal of irenicism, to the point of implying that the Roman Catholic church, too, had its place as one of the "fingers" that were to make up the Church united. To Wither and his Protestant contemporaries, however, this was completely out of the question, as he makes clear in his *Three Private Meditations* (1665):

> *I profess my self a Catholick* Christian: *mistake me not; I do not mean a* Roman *Catholick, which are terms contradictory to themselves, being so united; because, the addition of* Roman *to Catholick*, *destroyes that* Denomination. (46)

For obvious reasons, the inclusion of such a statement in the epistle to the king and queen would have resulted in dire consequences for Wither, but, after having lavished obsequious

[1] Quantin is quoting from Mathias Flacius Illyricus, *Catalogus testium ueritatis, qui ante nostram aetatem reclamarunt Papae. Opus uaria rerum, hoc praesertim tempore scitu dignissimarum, cognitione refertum, ac lectu cum primis utile atque necessarium* (Basle, 1556): sig. a3r–v.

praise on Charles and Henrietta, the persona, it seems, still cannot refrain from boldly taking advantage of the possibilities of linguistic ambiguity:

> *Yea, peradventure, GOD, united* You,
> *That, such a blessed VNION might ensue:*
> *And, that, Your* living-lovingly, *together;*
> *Your Christian* hopefullnesse*, of one another;*
> *Your milde* forbearance, *harsh attempts to proove;*
> *Your* mutuall waiting, *untill* God *shall move*
> *By some* calme-voice, *or peacefull* inspiration,
> *That* Heart *Which needeth better* Information. (1635: Ded. I-3)

Whose heart is it that "needeth better Information", here? That of those who are guilty of the "harsh attempts", or, perhaps, that of the queen, whom "God shall move" – or so the persona hopes – to embrace "better Information", in the form of a conversion to the Protestant faith? In *Britain's Remembrancer* (1628), Wither's persona refers to some of its unidentified contemporaries who, regarding the royal couple, "till in one *Religion* they agree, / [...] Stand resolv'd, that they will *Neuters* be" (198), and then prays for "a blessed Vnion" between them, all but overtly hoping that the queen might emerge a devout Anglican from her phase of religious neutrality. After all, if her father, the French king Henry IV, had been willing to state that "Paris is well worth a mass", she might, perhaps, find that London was well worth a sermon. However, in *A Collection of Emblemes*, the persona adds that it does not wish "the tollerating, here / Of *Politicke-Agreements*", referring, it seems, to the wholly diplomatic nature of the royal match, which was a clause in a treatise between Charles and Louis XIII, Henrietta's brother, whereby the former also pledged to implement more lenient policies towards English Catholics, although he had previously promised Parliament the contrary (Carlton 1995: 50, 70). The treatise was as controversial as it was short lived, as it did not prevent the English king from launching a disastrous naval campaign to support the Huguenots against the French forces at La Rochelle. It was barely a political truce, and quite far removed indeed from the "blessed CONCORD" (1635: Ded. I-3) to which the persona claims to be aspiring.

A superficial reading of Wither's dedication to the royal couple may produce an impression of a generous irenic stance that would include even the queen and her Catholic kin, albeit expressed in slightly hyperbolic terms to fit the conventionally dithyrambic tone of

the text, but there can be little doubt that this was anything but wholehearted, as the use of consistently ambiguous language suggests. As emblem IV-36 makes abundantly clear, only the Churches that "[God's] *Will Essentiall* with joynt love obay", and that differ only "circumstantially", "May, in one Band of Love, united bee" (1635: 244), and, cautious as though the persona remains throughout, subtle evidence in *A Collection of Emblemes* suggests that, to Wither, the Catholic church simply did not fit the bill.

"Almost everyone in early Stuart England desired religious unity", Fincham states, but then immediately adds "but on whose terms?" (1993: 2). Even if his Catholic exclusion from the prospect of a unified Christian church is put aside, Wither's apparent willingness to look beyond "circumstantial" differences in religious belief and practice ought to be nuanced further still. In fact, in emblem III-7, which is headed by the motto "If thou thy Duties truely doe, / Of thy Reward, be hopefull too" (1635: 141), the persona scornfully equates those among its contemporaries whom it places at one extreme, or at the other, regarding the question of the role that one's works might play in achieving grace and salvation:

> *Some* Sects *are found, who so* believing *be,*
> *They thinke themselves from* legall-workings *free;*
> *And, so they live, as if they stood in feare*
> *That, with* Good-works, *their* God *offended were.*
> *Another sort we know, who credit not,*
> *That any hope of* Mercie *can be got,*
> *Till they themselves, by their* externall-deed,
> *Have* merited *the favours they shall need:*
> *And, so they prize their* workings*; that, for* Grace,
> *They seeme to disallow all usefull place.*
> *Both sorts, their errours may be purged from,*
> *When to the* Fiery-tryall *they shall come.* (ibid.)

Given the usual absence of clarification and external references, I have not been able to fully ascertain whom the persona is referring to in the first quatrain, but I suspect that the censure may be directed at middle-class merchants whom Seaver is discussing in his reassessment of the "Puritan" work ethic (1980), and who, he argues, "existed in a state of perpetual anxiety over the apparent tension between their ethical values and their actual behavior" (38), the behaviour in question being, in this case, the managing of a successful business and the ensuing accumulation of wealth. While such circumstances would gradually come to be

understood as signs of election in New England, Seaver shows, this was not the case in England, where:

> *Puritan lay vestries, composed largely of the "middling sort," sponsored, financed, and protected Puritan preachers who, on those occasions when they touched on social ethics, preached an anti-entrepreneurial, anti-accumulative economics.* (37)

Seaver goes on to quote Baylin, who argues that "to be both a pious Puritan and a successful merchant meant to live under what would seem to have been insupportable pressures" (ibid.)[1]. Hence, perhaps, the persona's wondering if the members of the "Sect" in question believed that "with *Good-works,* their *God* offended were". The following sestet is, by contrast, plainly and clearly directed at Roman Catholics, and, notably, the persona concludes by condemning *both* to the same "Fiery-Triall". Rather than a compromising *via media*, the *subscriptio* seems to advocate uncompromising moderation, deviation from which appears dangerous indeed. Even more strikingly, however, the text continues as follows:

> *So, likewise, may another* Faction *too,*
> *That erre more deadly then these former doe.*
> *These doe (forsooth) affirme, that* God's *decree*
> *Before all* Worlds *(what Words can fouler be?)*
> *Debarr'd the greatest part of* humane-race,
> *Without respecting sinne, from hope of* Grace*;*
> *And, that, howere this number shall indeaver,*
> *They must continue* Reprobates, *for ever.*
> *The first, are errours of Impiety;*
> *But, this, ascends the top of blasphemy;*
> *Dispoyles* Religion *wholly of her fruits;*
> *And, wrongeth* God *in all his* Attributes. (1635: 141)

Here, again, the target of this acerbic rebuke is unmistakeable, which entails a quick remark, and an intermediary conclusion: firstly – if my supposition about the first quatrain quoted above is correct – the persona marks a clear line of demarcation between two types of

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[1] Seaver is quoting from *New England Merchants*, pp. 40-44.

"Puritans", and deems the error of the first to be mere "impiety", while the second commit outright "blasphemy", another testimony to the complexity of the label and to the doubtful validity of Wither's being saddled with it almost consistently for several centuries. Secondly, and more importantly for our purpose, the "errour" of Calvinists who insist on double predestination is not merely equal to that of the Roman Catholics, but it is actually "more deadly". In that sense, the criteria for an inclusion in the unified Christian church as they are expressed in *A Collection of Emblemes* appear to be close to those expressed by Baxter[1] and Milton[1], both of whom considered that Calvinists were largely to blame for the proliferation of denominations and the resulting division of the Church.

5. Conclusion

A Collection of Emblemes is very much a work of its time, in that it epitomises the profoundly conflictual religious and philosophical effervescence that characterised Early Stuart England. The emblems testify to the theological tension that surrounded the questions of human agency, divine Grace, Christian patience and endurance, and the composition of the true Church. In its ambivalence, its complexity, and, at times, in its vigorous and argumentative tone, the persona challenges the dubious labels and qualitative assessments that have been heaped upon the work, while constituting an original entry point into seventeenth-century devotional issues. Wither emerges, not as a bland and hysterical "Puritan", but as the embodiment of a particular brand of Christian humanism, that sought to

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[1] See, for instance, his *Catholick Vnity* (1660), in which he repudiates double predestination (64) and addresses "Puritans" as follows: "There is none of you that bears the face of a Christian, but must agree with us in profession, that *One thing is needful, and that we must seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and labour most for the food that will not perish. Luke* 10.41, 42. *Matth.* 6, 33. *Iohn* 6.27. and that *God* should *be loved with all our heart, and soul, and might,* and that no man can love him too much, nor serve him too carefully, nor be too diligent in the seeking of his salvation. Why then will you not all agree to do thus? But the very same tongues that confess all this, will yet speak against the service of God, and call it Puritanism and preciseness, and say its more ado then needs: Why Sirs, if you will say and unsay, there is no hold to be taken of your words, and therefore what agreement can be with you? Will you confess that all should take more care for their souls then for their bodies, and take more care for heaven then earth, and yet will you not agree to do it, but rather speak against them that do it, when you confess that it is best? Why, if you can agree no better with your selves, how can you agree with us? If your own opinions and profession be at such odds with your wills and practices, no wonder if you be at odds with others." (148-149)

safeguard both the primacy of the divine and the dignity of man, while repudiating those who imperilled either of these principles. Wither’s religious and philosophical *via media* is not a mild and consensual seeking of a lukewarm middle ground, it is a passionate struggle on two fronts that were perceived as excessive, and amidst which he “resolv’d, to stand [his] ground” (1635: 161). Finally, this reading of the dedications and of the emblems proper, and the conclusions it yielded, pave the way for a similar reassessment of the poet’s stance on the most pressing political and social issues of his time as expressed in his *Collection.*

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[1] In his famous *Areopagitica* (1644), Milton, likewise, lays the blame for discord and division mainly at the feet of the Calvinists: “It is not the unfrocking of a Priest, the unmitring of a Bishop, and the removing him from off the *Presbyterian* shoulders that will make us a happy Nation, no, if other things as great in the Church, and in the rule of life both economicall and politicall be not lookt into and reform'd, we have lookt so long upon the blaze that *Zuinglius* and *Calvin* hath beacon'd up to us, that we are stark blind. There be who perpetually complain of schisms and sects, and make it such a calamity that any man dissents from their maxims. 'Tis their own pride and ignorance which causes the disturbing, who neither will hear with meeknes, nor can convince, yet all must be suppress which is not found in their *Syntagma.* They are the troublers, they are the dividers of unity, who neglect and permit not others to unite those dissever'd peeces which are yet wanting to the body of Truth.” (30)

Chapter VIII – "This contayneth nought/ Which (in proper sense) concerneth ought, / The present-Age": A Collection of Emblemes as Political and Social Commentary?

1. Introduction

Given the intermingling of Stoic and Christian ideas in *A Collection of Emblemes* that was examined in the previous chapter, and given how intertwined the political and the religious sphere were in Early Stuart England, it would be surprising if the book did not, likewise, engage with some of the most prevalent theories of kingship, of government, and with pressing social issues as well. The remarks contained in this chapter are, perhaps, the most relevant in the thesis to firmly place the work within the purview of Hackett's aforementioned demonstration that Wither's works from *Abuses Stript and Whipt* (1613) on ought to be viewed as being structured, a great deal of generic diversity notwithstanding, around a common political Leitmotiv: the question of legitimate power, and of the prerogatives and duties of those who exercise it. Although the final section of the chapter will branch out into the poet's stance on issues that were only indirectly political, it still retains its relevance as evidence of Wither's thorough reappropriation of the emblem genre to voice a nuanced societal critique.

2. "He, thus that workes, [...] / Makes the *Machavilian* prove a foole": Political theory in *A Collection of Emblemes*

Among the many aspects of Wither's emblems that have hitherto been ignored or overlooked, the one that appears second in the *Collection* (I-2) stands out, not only because it contains one of the very scarce nominal references in the work, but also because it sets a framework that allows for a political, and, more particularly, neo-stoic, interpretation of many of the subsequent references to the concept of constancy in the work. The engraving shows a bust wearing a garland, set on a pedestal and looking to the left, headed by the motto couplet "The Man that hath true Wisdome got, / Continues firme, and wavers not" (1635: 2). The first few lines of the *subscriptio* contain the usual deictic and explanatory comments: the persona lays out the conventional interpretation of the *pictura*, and refers to the wise man who keeps "a Settled-Head, that standeth fast" in the face of adversity, and even of death. The next lines, however, read as follows:

> *The* Laureat-head, *upon the* Pillar *set,*

Thus signifies; And that Bay-wreath *doth show*
That constant Wisdome *will the conquest get,*
When giddy Policie *prevailes not so.*
Let neither flatt'ring Pleasures, *nor* Disgrace,
Nor scoffing Censures, *nor the cunning* Sleights
Of glozing Sycophants, *divert that* Race
To which, a harmelesse Prudence, *thee invites.*
Though others plot, conspire, and undermine,
Keepe thou a plaine right Path*; and let their* Course,
For no advantage, make thee change from thine,
Although it (for the present) seemes the worse. (ibid)

As was shown above, the "glozing *Sycophants*" are not meant as an abstract target of generic criticism, but almost certainly as a direct reference to Charles I's closest advisors, whom Wither's persona repudiates scornfully in *Britain's Remembrancer*, and the verbs "plot, conspire, and undermine", as well as the noun "Policie", corroborate the relevance of a political interpretation of the emblem, which is made unequivocal by the final couplet: "He, thus that workes, puts *Policie* to Schoole, / And makes the *Machavilian* prove a foole" (ibid.). In his article about Elizabethan Machiavellianism, Orsini notes that terms such as "Policie" and "Politic", when they were used in sixteenth- and seventeenth century England, derived their semantic content from the works of Machiavelli, or, more precisely, from the manner in which the author of *The Prince* was viewed by English people at the time (1946: 122-123). Machiavelli's very name, he continues, became "a by-word for a crafty and unscrupulous politician" (123), while some of the terms that were associated with his works "gained a special connotation and a wider currency" in England (ibid.). One such term, Orsini shows, is precisely the word "Policie", which existed in English since the end of the fourteenth century at least, and which did not wait for Machiavelli to take on a sinister connotation, as is attested already in 1406 (124). The English authors – especially playwrights in Orsini's article – who popularised the term with such connotations, however, very often used them in direct connection with references to Machiavelli, in expressions such as "Machiavel [...] this unchristian Master of pollicie"[1] or "pestilent Machivilian pollicie"[2] (ibid.). Orsini goes on to

[1] Orsini is quoting from Harvey 1590: 53.
[2] Quoted from Greene 1592: 67.

quote from the Chapter that Thomas Elyot dedicated to Fraud and Deceit in his *Of the Governour* (1531), where the term appears as well:

> *That manner of iniurie, whiche is done with fraude and disceyte, is at this present time so communely practised, that if it be but a litle, it is called policie, and if it be moche and with a visage of grauitie, it is then named and accounted for wisedome.* (206)

Orsini points out that both Elyot and Machiavelli relied on Cicero's likening the politician who would rule by force to a lion, and the one who exercises power through cunning and deceit, to a fox[1], although they drew very different conclusions from their common source: Elyot follow Cicero in asserting that cunning and force are contrary to justice (ibid), while Machiavelli, in one of the many controversial passages from *The Prince* – Chapter 18, titled "How a Prince should keep his word" - actually advises the monarch to emulate both the feline and the canid, especially the fox when seeking to deceive in the interest of maintaining the state, a pursuit in which he will often be compelled to "act against his faith, against charity, against humanity, and against religion" (2005: 61-62). Orsini further explains that the association between the term "policie" and Machiavellian thought continued well into the early Stuart period, where its derogatory connotation as a synonym for dishonesty – not only in a political, but also in a more general, and even in a literary context - is well-attested, in the works of Chapman, Marston, and Beaumont (1946: 128-129). Regarding the wider English reception of Machiavelli, Arienzo states the following:

> *In early Stuart culture the presence of anti-Machiavellian themes is strongly intertwined with the rejection of royal prerogative, the attack on the cunning policies of James's and Charles's courts, and with the languages of reason of state and political necessity.* (2013: 142)

He further argues that the period saw the emergence of "a new vision of wisdom, described as the capacity of a subject to adapt to the will of the king and to adjust to situations and

[1] *De Officiis*, I. xiii. Cicero explains that force and cunning are the two ways in which a person of power may do wrong, and that neither of them is compatible with the cardinal political virtue of justice.

occurrences", and, from the point of view of the monarch, "wisdom [expressed] how everyday self-government is the true ground of government and policy" (144), which, he rightly states, "is crucial, as it shows the relevance of stoicism in the literary genre of advice for princes' literature, as well as for those figures supporting the prince in his government" (ibid.). In fact, although the English stage occasionally pitched Stoic heroes against Machiavellian antagonists[1], there was significant conceptual overlap between Machiavellian and Stoic political theories, as McCrea emphasises in the introduction to her *Constant Minds* (1997). Indeed, she shows that Lipsius's concept of *prudentia mixta* was merely a translation of Machiavelli's *virtù* (17), and that the Flemish Stoic advised princes to shun the breaking of oaths, but also stated that other types of deceit are acceptable if they serve the common good:

> *Who will blame mee so farre heerein, or demaund the cause why I forsake vertue? Wine, although it be somewhat tempered with water, continueth to be wine: so doth prudence not change her name, albeit a fewe drops of deceipt bee mingled therewith: For I alwayes meane but a small deale, and to a good end; Mothers, and Phisitions, doe they not often deceiue little children,* to the end they might beguile their improuident age by a deceiptfull taste: and the deceipt may not be perceaued? *And why should not a Prince do the like towards the simple people, or towards some other Prince his neighbour*? (1594: 114)

This, however, did not prevent Early Stuart commentators to repudiate doctrines they considered to be "Machiavellian", sometimes in utterly vitriolic terms. Simon Patericke, in his translation of Innocent Gentillet's *Discours sur les moyens de bien gouverner* (1576), writes:

> *When our countrie mens minds were sick, and corrupted with these pestilent diseases, and that discipline vvaxed*

[1] Chang (1966) mentions Chapman's *The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois* (1613) and Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (ca 1588-1593) as examples. In his article, "Stoic" and "Machiavellian" ought to be understood to mean two distinct ways of apprehending adverse fortune, a question that will be discussed in more detail in Chapter IX.

> *stale; then came forth the books of* Machiavell, *a most pernitious vvriter, vvhich began not in secret and stealing manner (as did those former vices) but by open meanes, and as it vvere a continuall assault, utterly destroyed, not this or that vertue, but even all vertues at once: Insomuch as it tooke Faith from the princes; authoritie and maiestie, from lavves; libertie from the people; and peace and concord from all persons, vvhich are the onely remedies for present malladies.* (1602: $A1_r$)

Others, such as Sir Walter Raleigh, whom McCrea cites among the English Neo-Stoics (1997: 40-71), admired Machiavelli for his historical works, chiefly his famous *Discourses on Livy* (1517), on which Raleigh drew in his *Historie of the World* (1614). In fact, in the one instance in which he discusses Machiavelli's political doctrine, his tone is quite apologetic: "The doctrine, which *Machiauel* taught vnto *Caesar Borgia,* to employ men in mischieuous actions, and afterwards to destroy them when they haue performed the mischiefe; was not of his owne inuention" (711).

In Wither's emblem number I-2, however, the Florentine is clearly mentioned as an embodiment of opportunistic, and potentially immoral, political stratagems, and is used as a counterexample to the Stoic politician who remains squarely on the path of virtue:

> *Keepe thou a plaine right Path; and let their Course,*
> *For no advantage, make thee change from thine,*
> *Although it (for the present) seemes the worse.*
> *He, thus that workes, puts Policie to Schoole,*
> *And makes the Machavilian prove a foole.* (1635: 2)

Notably, the word "Policie" appears twice in the *subscriptio*. In the third line above, and in such close proximity to the reference to a "Machavilian", the term seemingly takes on the derogatory connotation mentioned earlier, while Wither's persona also states that "constant *Wisdome* will the conquest get, / When giddy *Policie* prevailes not so" (ibid.). Here, "giddy" should be understood as follows: (*OED,* entry "giddy, adj." 3.a):

> *Of persons, their attributes and actions: Mentally*

> *intoxicated, 'elated to thoughtlessness' (Johnson); incapable of or indisposed to serious thought or steady attention; easily carried away by excitement; 'light-headed, frivolous, flighty, inconstant.*

The final term in the definition is probably the most telling: "giddiness" is to be regarded as antonymic to the Stoic ideal of the "constant" man. Likewise, in emblem IV-23, the persona asserts that men and women "in equall manner, share / A *giddinesse,* and *ficklenesse* of minde, / More wavering, than a *Feather,* or the *Winde"* (231). The constant ruler is advised to keep on the "plaine right Path", even if it "(for the present), seemes the worse", even while the plotting, conspiring and undermining" of the "Machavilian", may well procure "advantages" that the constant man thus ought to forego. Instead of adaptive political shrewdness, the reader is exhorted to make show of a "harmelesse Prudence" (ibid.), a concept that is covered to a greater extent in emblem III-17, which was already mentioned in connection with the idea of Constancy in Chapter VII, and which combines the dove and the snake as allegorical representations of "harmlessness" and "Prudence" respectively, although the second virtue takes on a singularly Machiavellian meaning. Indeed, the "Serpents-braine", if taken on its own, and if it is not tempered by "Dove-like Meekenesse", is prone to devising "all harmefull fraud, and all injurious deedes" (151). Emblem II-18 expresses a very different point of view on the matter. Indeed, this time, the engraving does not combine the dove and the snake, but Pallas and Mars in full armour, and is headed by the Latin motto "ARTE ET MARTE" ("Art and force of arms"). The *subscriptio* then makes clear that the first term is to be understood, not in the sense of the "Lib'rall Art" as is the case in emblem I-32 (32), but as a combination of knowledge, wit, and craftiness:

> […] *In our private Actions too,*
> *There must bee both a* Knowledge, *how to doe*
> *The* worke *propos'd; and* strength *to finish it;*
> *Or, wee shall profit little by our* Wit.
> Discretion *takes effect, where* Vigour *failes;*
> *Where* Cunning *speeds not,* outward-force *prevailes.* (80)

The persona does advise the reader not to neglect "honest-Policie"[1] in one of the subsequent lines, but the term "cunning" is ambiguous. Indeed, in emblem IV-25, it is merely a synonym for "clever" or "observant":

> *All is not* Gold *that glisters: Otherwhile,*
> *The* Tincture *is so good, it may beguile*
> *The cunningst eye: But, bring it to the* Touch,
> *And, then, you find the value not so much.* (233)

In all other instances, however, the term clearly carries sinister undertones: the "cunning Sleights, / Of glozing Sycophants" (2) were mentioned before: in emblem I-18, the spider that is represented in the *pictura* in an attempt to catch a soaring butterfly, the arachnid is interpreted as an allegory of people "who under cunning shewes / Of simple-Meanings (or of Curtesie) / Doe silly Men unwarily abuse" (18); in emblem II-23, which warns the reader against doting on earthly things, which are destined to be nothing more than "Smoake and Duste", the persona laments the materialistic inclinations of the time, and the lengths to which some of its contemporaries are prepared to go to satisfy their greed, which include "Violence" and "Cunning" (85); finally, emblem IV-22 castigates those who "can very cunningly expresse, / In outward shew, a winning heartinesse […], / Then, will they, if *advantage* come thereby, / Make all their *Deeds,* for want of *Words,* a ly" (230). How much "cunning" is acceptable in the due course of "honest-Policie", then? In emblem IV-46, the persona argues that "*Force,* much prevailes; but *Sleight* / And *Wit* hath pow'r / Sometime, to hurle downe *Strength* upon the floore" (254), which seems to suggest that a measure of slyness is justifiable in political affairs if it is used to overcome a stronger opponent. One kind of deceit, however, is always reprehensible in the persona's view: in the *subscriptio* to emblem I-38, the *pictura* of which shows a sow and a hand holding a large stone *ex nubibus*, the breaking of an oath is treated with unambiguous contempt:

> *That Heathenish* Hieroglyphicke, *doth implye*
> *This* Christian Doctrine*; that, we should in* Vowes,
> *In* Leagues, *and* Oathes, *assume no Liberty,*

[1] Condren explains that, although the word "Policie" came to be associated with Machiavellian thought and was thus saddled with a derogatory connotation, it was occasionally used to signify "prudence and shrewd judgement", although, in such cases, "it often needed the qualification [of a positive adjective]" (1994: 47).

But, what sincerest Honesty *allowes.* (38)

In these matters, it appears that the position expressed in *A Collection of Emblemes* is close to the Lipsian *prudentia mixta*: indeed, Wither's persona does not wholly reject the possibility that there may be just causes for a ruler to make use of deception if necessary, but only within very strict bounds. It concurs with Lipsius that failing to keep what one has solemnly sworn is never lawful[1], and remains far more evasive than him on the question of the types of dishonesty that are acceptable in a monarch – but, then again, Wither is not writing a political treatise, and the bulk of the emblems are meant to guide the conduct of ordinary citizens, and not of their kings. Furthermore, from a teleological perspective, the persona concurs with Lipsius again. Still in the *subscription* to emblem IV-46, the persona concludes:

To say the Truth, in whatsoever Cause,
Wee by the Sword *contend, or by the* Lawes,
There's no event or issue more assured,
Than this, that, losse to both shall bee procured.
And, that, sometime, as well an innocent,
As guilty-cause, *may finde an ill event.*
Let, therefore, our endeavours be, to strive,
Who, shall hereafter, least occasion give
Of those contentions, *and of those* debates,
Which hurt our honor, safetie, or estates. (254)

Any means of engaging in confrontation, be it the Law, force and violence, or deceit, ought to be regarded as a last resort to maintain peace, which is shown to be the ultimate objective of any political action, a stance that is confirmed in other emblems as well, including IV-30 – "[L]et *Peace,* at all times, be that *End, /* For which, to draw the *Sword* you doe intend" (238) - and that is found in Lipsius's *Politica* as well:

[1] Lipsius and Wither seem to be in strict agreement here, as the former writes: "Or concerning trecherie how often haue we seene agreements and couenaunts broken, by cauils and quirks, because they beleeue in their heart *that we may mocke little children with toies, and men with oaths?* Wherefore it is ynough for them to find the least gappe in the world, for a colour of their dissembling: and *they thinke* by and by *to be freed by an oath,* we know al, how *they are woont alwaies to be perplexed* […]. For I beleeue certainlie, *that who so sweareth, what art or disguising soeuer there is in his oath, God who is witnesse of the conscience, taketh he oath as it is meant by him to whom it is made and giuen."* (1594: 120-121)

> *Neither are armes to be directed to any other end (if thou desire that they be iust) but to peace and defence.* Let vvarre be vndertaken, that nothing but quietnesse may be sought thereby. Wise men make warre, that they may haue peace, and endure labour vnder hope of rest. (1594: 133)

Scarce and piecemeal as though they may appear in *A Collection of Emblemes*, Wither's views on political theory beyond the role of the king testify to an ethical framework underpinned by honesty and virtue, but one that does accommodate a measure of realism to meet the necessities of "this age, and the men that liue therein":

> *For amongst whome do we conuerse? To wit, with craftie and malicious persons, who seeme to be made of fraude, deceipt, and lying.* […]" (Lipsius 1594: 112-113).

Wither does not appear to be one of the "*pure men, nay rather poore children"* (113) who do not realise that maintaining the common good and the political order requires moral concessions, which must, however, remain strictly within lawful and moral bounds, and be employed solely for the purpose of restoring or keeping the peace. The moral standard by which such actions are to be judged, however, appears to be stricter in Wither's emblem book than in Lipsius's treatise. Indeed, having argued that a certain measure of duplicity is not merely legitimate, but actually advisable in political affairs, Lipsius nonetheless distinguishes between several types of deceit: light, middle, and great. "Great" deceit includes "treachery and Iniustice" (1594: 120), and, more particularly, the breaking of oaths, which was discussed above, and which Wither's persona strongly repudiates. "Middle deceit" encompasses acts of corruption, which, to Lipsius, are acceptable, as long as they are committed for the right reasons:

> There are certaine kind of lies, in which there is no great offence, yet are they not without fault. *And in this ranke we deeme that light corruption and deceipt are only then, when a good and lawfull king vseth them against the wicked, for the good of the common wealth.* (120)

As far as I can tell, *A Collection of Emblemes* does not contain any remarks on this precise subject, although the persona warns the reader that a woman coaxed with honours or with gold will prove a fickle mistress indeed, and that “And lo, no glorious Purchace that Man gets, / Who hath with such poore *Trifles,* woo'd, and wonne” (1635: 7). Wither’s take on Lipsius’s idea of “light deceit”, on the other hand, is somewhat clearer. The concept encompasses chiefly distrust and dissimulation (1594: 115-116), both of which are “so necessarie […] that he knew not wel how to beare rule, that knew not how to dissemble” (117). Although neither appears in specifically political emblems, the persona’s stance on these qualities can easily be viewed as advice that remains transferable to anyone, the king included. Emblem II-22 deals with the question of distrust; the *pictura* shows a hand with an eye on its palm that is holding a flaming heart *ex nubibus*, and the Latin motto reads “FIDE SED CVI VIDE” (“Trust, but look first”). Although the moral lesson is applicable to any reader both in Wither’s and in Rollenhagen’s emblems – where the *subscriptio* reads “Est oculate manus nostra, et quod cernere non est, / Id se pro certo credere posse negat” (“Our hand is an eye and refuses to believe anything with certainty that cannot be perceived”) - it is noteworthy that a lion and a fox are clearly distinguishable in the left-hand background of the engraving, perhaps as a reference to the respective dangers of violence and cunning, which may be eschewed by being wary of whom one trusts, and as a reference to Cicero’s aforementioned image on which both Lipsius and Machiavelli drew in their works. Wither’s persona begins by disclaiming any malice in its advocating parsimony and caution in offering one’s trust:

> *I Rather would (because it seemeth just)*
> *Deceived be, than causelesly distrust:*
> *Yet,* whom *I credited; and, then, how* farre*;*
> *Bee* Cautions, *which I thought worth heeding were:*
> *And, had not this been taught me long agone,*
> *I had been poorer, if not quite undone.* (1635: 84)

A conventionally pessimistic remark about is contemporaries, whose “hearts, are growne so false, that most are loath / To trust each others *Words,* or *Bands,* or *Oath”* (ibid.), then justifies “what warie *Watchfulnesse,* observe we must, / Before we venter on a weightie *Trust”* and that “to keepe our *kindnesse* from abuse, / There is of *double-diligence,* an use” (ibid.). The same general advice is conveyed by emblem III-49, the engraving of which

illustrates a claim of dubious authenticity about the best way to catch an elephant: as the pachyderm is allegedly devoid of knee-joints, it does not lie down to sleep, but, rather, leans on a tree. Once hunters have observed the elephant do so, they wait until the animal wakes up and leaves, and then saw halfway through the trunk to weaken the tree. When the elephant returns for the night, the tree breaks, and the elephant falls to the ground, unable to get up again, and is thus easy to capture[1]. Wither's persona is sceptical about the account as well, but deems the motif useful nonetheless: "Now, though the part *Historicall,* may erre, / The *Morall,* which this Emblem doth inferre, / Is overtrue" (183). The "Morall" in question is that deceit is ubiquitous, be it in the city, at court, or even at church, and that, or so the emblem implies, one ought to be extremely cautious before trusting anyone (ibid.). Distrust, then, is merely a strategy to avoid falling victim to the stratagems of deceitful people: "Many are deluded by their showes, / And, cheated, when they trust in them repose" (ibid), and is, as such, perfectly acceptable, both in an ordinary citizen and, one presumes, in a king as well. Dissimulation, however, is another matter. Emblem IV-21, in the engraving of which a beautifully apparelled woman is hiding her deformed features beneath a vizard, castigates people who "chuse their *words,* and play well-acted *parts,* / But, hide most loathsome projects in their hearts; / And, when you think sweet *Friendship* to embrace, / Some ugly *Treason,* meets you in the face", and expresses disgust at any stratagem that "arrayes in white, / The coale-blacke conscience of an *Hypocrite"* (229). Likewise, in the *subscriptio* to emblem IV-22, the engraving of which shows two hands joined together *ex nubibus* holding up a flaming heart together, the persona is adamant that hand, heart, and tongue be in unison:

> *Take order, that thy* heart *the same intend:*
> *For, otherwise in* Hand, *or* Heart, *thou lyest,*
> *And, cuttest off a* Member, *e're thou dyest.*
> *Some, give their* Hearts *(as many* Lovers *do)*
> *Yet, are afraid, to set their* hands *thereto.*
> *Some give their* Hands*; and, then by many a deed,*
> *To ratifie the* gift, *they dare proceede;*

[1] Interestingly, the account may actually be based on a misunderstanding: indeed, it appears in Julius Caesar's *Gallic Wars* (VI. 27), but is applied to the elk, and not to the elephant. In the following chapter, Caesar goes on to compare the size of another animal, the aurochs, to that of the elephant, a statement that may have been misread by Saint Ambrose, who transfers the assertion of non-existent knee-joints, and the account from the tree-sawing technique, from the elk to the elephant (*Hexameron*, Book 6, chapter 5. 32).

> *Yet, keep their* tongues *from saying what they meant,*
> *To helpe excuse their* hearts, *when they repent.* (230)

The persona then proceeds to scorn those who "can very cunningly expresse, / In outward shew, a winning heartinesse, / And, steale the deare *affections* they have sought, / From those, to whom they meant, nor promis'd ought" (ibid.). Such people will "if *advantage* come thereby, / Make all their *Deeds,* for want of *Words,* a ly" (ibid.), and, the persona concludes "Among *Dissemblers,* in things temporall, / These *Raskalls* are the ver'est *Knaves* of all" (ibid.).

Notably, however, if apprehended within a different framework, dissemblance – or, at the very least, dissimulation – is not only acceptable, but actually advisable, as is attested by emblem II-11 (73). The *pictura* shows a monk with his eyes fixed on the heavens, carrying an anchor and a sealed book, and his mouth shut with a padlock. Behind him, another monk is praying in front of a small chapel, seemingly in the middle of the woods. Wither's motto couplet, "They that in Hope and Silence, live, / The best Contentment, may atchive", if combined with the foregrounded motif, may, at first, be interpreted as an encouragement to emulate the practice of certain monastic orders that require their members to take a vow of silence, such as the Carthusians (Von Stuckrad 2005: 1831), an ironic piece of advice from one of the most verbose poets of the seventeenth century. The *subscriptio,* however, steers the reader towards a different reading of the emblem:

> *[W]hensoere* Oppression *groweth rife,*
> Obscurenesse, *is more safe than* Eminence*;*
> *Hee, that then keepes his* Tongue, *may keepe his* Life,
> *Till Times will better favour* Innocence.
> Truth *spoken where* untruth *is more approved,*
> *Will but enrage the malice of thy foes* […]. (1635: 73)

It is worth remembering that Wither likely spent most of the 1630s in the countryside, working on his emblems and on *The Nature of Man* (1636), after the tumultuous 1620s that saw him imprisoned at least once and that pitched him against the Stationers' Company ongoing legal conflict. He was already in his late forties, had recently married Elizabeth Emerson, who, in the months preceding the first printing of the *Collection*, was likely

pregnant with his son Robert[1]. Read against this contextual information, the emblem appears to be an endorsement of the *vita contemplativa*, withdrawn from the dangers of volatile political times, at least until “they will better favour Innocence”. Additionally to the hardship he suffered from the consequences of his previous forays into the world of political criticism, his translation of Nemesius’s treatise, especially of those chapters that insist on the superiority of contemplation to “practise”, the first being the “purer” among the activities of the mind (1636: 382-383), may have inspired the emblem, and his momentary resolve to withdraw from public life. On the other hand, certain Baconian themes in Wither’s thought have already been identified, and the English poet may, perhaps, have been driven towards resuming his *vita activa* by Bacon’s views on the matter, as expressed in passages such as the following:

> *For first, [moral philosophy] decideth the question touching the preferment of the contemplative or active life […]. [Men] must know, that in this theatre of man's life it is reserved only for God and angels to be lookers on. […] For contemplation which should be finished in itself, without casting beams upon society, assuredly divinity knoweth it not.* (Bacon 1605: 72)

Wither’s outlook on political theory and practice may therefore, unsurprisingly, be considered to occupy yet another *via media*, this time between Lipsius’ measured pragmatism and Cicero’s unwavering ethics of government. His repudiation of Machiavelli, on the other hand, is probably directed at the somewhat caricatural oversimplification of the Florentine’s thought in English political discourse, while his renewed, and this time continuous, participation in English political life from the 1640s on suggests that, threats to his freedom and his livelihood notwithstanding, he made a very definite, Baconian choice in favour of the *vita activa*. Furthermore, even if the 1630s were comparatively peaceful in terms of Wither’s complicated relationship to contemporary power structures, he did not refrain, even in the emblems, from voicing his opinions, some of which, as we shall see, were far from being consensual.

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[1] See Chapter II.

3. “He makes the Beggar, and the King, alike”: Radical thought in Wither’s *A Collection of Emblemes*?

At the beginning of their introduction to *Radical Voices, Radical Ways* (2016), Curelly and Smith acknowledge that “Radicalism is an evasive concept that does not lend itself to easy categorisation” and add that the terms “radical” and “radicalism” in the political sense are not attested in the English language before the early 19th century (1). Challenging what they term the “nominalist” objection to applying the concept to earlier periods, they propose, instead, to proceed through a “functional approach” by establishing four “distinguishing features” (5) of radicalism: firstly, it is “of an oppositional quality, and, as a result, evolves through time”, and can therefore be defined as “a process that consists in individuals or groups challenging existing political, social, religious or cultural norms”, and that is, therefore, a “minority position” (5); secondly, radicalism is “temporary in essence”, a quality that stands at odds with the arguments in favour of a clear-cut radical continuity from the fifteenth century onwards proposed by Marxist historians such as Christopher Hill in his seminal article “From Lollards to Levellers” (1982), but that does not, however, preclude the investigation of “resurgences” (7) and of the “degree of intellectual sympathy and of continuity between the radicalism of the seventeenth century and that of the eighteenth” (ibid.); thirdly, radicalism is described as being “polymorphous” (8), and, the authors argue, can be divided into four categories: “constitutional, religious, republican and social”, while they acknowledge “that some individuals or groups fit equally into several of these categories, each of which accommodates nuances and singularities” (9); finally, Curelly and Smith contend that radicalism “allows idiosyncratic voices to express themselves”, an axiom that entails a case-by-case examination: “Individuals should be given as much attention as groups; personal trajectories matter as much as collective posturing” (10). These characteristics, especially the third and the fourth, allow for “multi-faceted scholarly approaches that draw upon a variety of methodological tools”, including those of literary criticism for the “recovering of radical voices” (ibid.). One could hardly think of a better framework through which to assess whether Wither’s voice(s) in *A Collection of Emblemes* could indeed be termed “radical”, and, if so, what linguistic – and, perhaps, structural – evidence of the poet’s radicalism can be gathered from the work.

In his aforementioned article that attempts to trace religious continuities from Wycliff and the Lollards to seventeenth-century Levellers, Hill refers to “the radical George Wither” (88), but does not specify what he means by than – since he contrasts him with “John Taylor

the Water-Poet, a man of conservative sympathies" (ibid.), it is likely that he is merely referring to Wither's joining the Parliamentarians during the Civil War. Norbrook, on the other hand, published a detailed and extremely instructive article on Wither's political stance from 1628 onwards (1991), in which he traces the complex and tumultuous relationship between the poet and the political institutions during the Civil War, the interregnum, and beyond. Norbrook argues that "Wither played a significant part in the radicalization of politics in the 1640s, systematically reworking courtly models of poetic and political representation, performing acts of iconoclasm that […] run parallel to Marten's and influencing John Lilburne and the Levellers" (220). Even given Norbrook's nuanced readings of Wither's abundant body of works, it is both unsurprising and understandable that *A Collection of Emblemes* is merely mentioned once in the article, as a passing piece of evidence to support the assertion that "in the early part of Charles's reign, Wither still used a conventional monarchist discourse": "In dedicating his *A Collection of Emblemes* to the King and Queen in 1635, Wither could salute them as living emblems of virtue surpassing his own poetry" (220-221). Wither's emblem book is usually considered to be part of an apolitical *intermezzo* between *Britain's Remembrancer* (1628) and *Mercurius Rusticus* in 1643, his first published work as a captain of horse on the Parliamentary side in the Civil War, as is exemplified even by Norbrook: "During the 1630s, Wither cautiously refrained from public oppositional comment, turning mostly to didactic and religious verse" (224). As was shown above, however, this categorisation of the work as merely religious or moral in tone is inaccurate, and there is a strong case to be made in support of considering at least some of the emblems as unequivocally political, and, furthermore, of immediate conjunctural relevance to the state of English government in the mid-1630s. The question that I propose to address through the framework proposed by Curelly and Smith, then, is whether the moorings of Wither's later, complex relationship to English radicals and radicalism are detectable in the work, and whether some of its idiosyncrasies, which have been largely ignored heretofore, could be explained as signs of the same.

As Smith and Curelly remind us, radicalism, like every other ideological and political manifestation, emerges out of specific historical contingencies (2016: 7). Hence the second and third distinguishing features of radicalism: its temporary nature and its manifold varieties. In Wither's specific case, Norbrook convincingly demonstrates that his writings during the Civil War and the Interregnum, "in their very unevenness, […] provide a sensitive register to the perplexities and shifts of emotion which beset many individuals encountering

unprecedented political change" (220), but also that Wither's personal circumstances were as much a factor as his political, ideological, and religious allegiances. For instance, his confrontation, in the context of the siege and overtaking of Farnham Castle in Surrey by Wither's troops (see *Oxford DNB*, entry "Wither, George (1588-1667)"), with the royalist poet John Denham, of which history has barely retained more than an amusing, and almost certainly apocryphal, anecdote[1], is granted close attention by Norbrook. Indeed, Denham had been appointed governor of the castle by the king, and, upon having been expelled from it by Wither's troops, he "ransacked Wither's house" (224). Norbrook continues as follows:

> *Wither persuaded Parliament to let him make up for these losses by plundering whatever he could seize from the guilty royalists, and embarked on a long and vindictive campaign to strip Denham of his properties. He had a vested interest in revolution.* (ibid.)

In the 1620s and 30s, although the conflict was already germinating[2], war had not yet broken out, and neither, of course, had Wither been compelled to choose a side. And yet, as McRae shows in his very useful historical contextualisation of *Britain's Remembrancer* (1628), in which Wither chronicles the plague epidemic that swept through London in 1625, the work was "deeply rooted in the debates of the years in which it was written" (2016: 443), and, McRae continues, "[i]f it does not achieve clarity[3], that is entirely in accord with the confusion of this time" (ibid.). In a remarkable close reading of a passage from the poem, in which Wither's persona encounters what he calls "the spectral, unfinished pageants designed for the state entry [of the recently crowned Charles I] that would never take place" (446)[4], McRae argues:

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[1] The anecdote is referred to Norbrook 1991: 217 and in Freeman 1970: 141.

[2] See Chapter II.

[3] In the previous sentence, McRae refers to the "undeniable bagginess, and its author's pretensions to artlessness" (ibid.).

[4] The passage in question is the following: "But here I walkt in safety to behold / What changes, for instruction, see I could. / And, as I wandred on, my eye did meet, / Those halfe-built Pageants which, athwart the street, / Did those triumphant Arches counterfeit, / Which heretofore in ancient Rome were set, / When their victorious Generalls had thither / The spoile of mighty kingdomes brought together. / The loyall Citizens (although they lost / The glory of their well-intended cost) / Erected those great Structures to renowne / The new receiving of the Sov'raigne Crowne / By hopefull CHARLES (whose royall exaltation, / Make thou oh! God, propitious to this Nation.)" (109v)

> *The poet sees through the mere architectural forms destined never to serve their intended function, in order to reflect upon the relation between the citizens and their monarch. "Counterfeit" is pointed, weighing the tangible victories of Roman generals, the original recipients of triumphs, against the untested authority of England's "hopefull" King. Thereafter the strain of Skepticism in the lines is borne by the parenthetical asides. The citizens have not just lost money but "glory," the opportunity to mark their part in a reciprocal relationship with the sovereign. The closing prayer, with breathlessly halting punctuation, dwells on the doubleness of "hopefull". "Propitious", a word steeped in discourses of providentialism, underscores the point that reigns may either be auspicious or inauspicious, and relations between a king and his subjects harmonious or fraught.* (ibid.)

McRae goes on to show that the cantos added to the text after it had been presented as a gift to the king in manuscript form in 1626 often express the persona's disappointment and bitterness upon witnessing the corruption and hypocrisy at court and in Parliament alike, and that, in its most assertive lines, it even suggests that, mainly through the fault of dishonest and arrogant advisers, the monarch may be tempted to exceed the boundaries within which his power remains legitimate:

> *One part of these will for preferment strive,*
> *By lifting up the King's prerogative*
> *Above it selfe. They will perswade him to*
> *Much more then Law or Conscience bids him do,*
> *And say, God warrants it.* (fol 263, quoted in McRae 2016: 452)

I would like to argue that the views that Wither expresses in *Britain's Remembrancer* could be deemed "radical" given Curelly and Smith's definition, and that these views carried over

to *A Collection of Emblemes*, where they have remained unnoticed. Indeed, the oppositional nature of Wither's stance regarding what he perceived as notable political degradation is obvious enough, as are its temporal and contingent aspects. As shall be shown below, Wither's variety of radicalism is not only different from that of his most notorious contemporaries, with whose views his own did, however, sometimes overlap, but it is also polymorphous in itself, as it branches out into the political, the constitutional, the religious, and the social domains. Finally, Wither's political views are not merely idiosyncratic in terms of their position on the spectrum that ranged from conservatism to the ground-breaking radicalism of the Diggers. They remained in constant oscillation between "the traditional figure of the body politic" with the king as its head (Norbrook 1991: 221) and the much more subversive idea that "the people themselves are the ultimate source of authority" (229), and are also remarkable considering the medium in which he expressed them. It is, therefore, Wither's very particular brand of radicalism, as it infused his emblems, that I propose to examine below.

Given how little scholarly attention *A Collection of Emblemes* has been granted, it is not surprising that the dedications of the four books to the royal family and to various members of the court went almost unnoticed. Daly and Young simply remark that the dedications "show Wither at his most obsequious" (2002), while Bath does not address the question at all. The only notable exception is Farnsworth's chapter in the collective volume *Deviceful Settings* (Bath and Russell eds. 1999: 84-96), in which, upon having noted the same lack of attention, she proceeds to argue that the dedications "firmly place Wither's emblem book in a courtly context and influence our reading of the emblems" (84).

Farnsworth is quite correct, I believe, in stressing that the epistles were not merely intended as pleas for patronage, but also to exert, as far as possible, a "moral influence" on the monarch, whose "character and that of his court is vital to just government and the well-being of the realm" (ibid.). "Aside from general moral and spiritual truths [...] which all members of seventeenth-century society would subscribe to", she continues "there are a number of particular subjects and attitudes [in the emblems proper] that reflect special interests or values associated with the royal court" (85). She begins by analysing the persona's direct and indirect references to, and its praise of, the example of courtly love that Charles and Henrietta – allegedly – epitomise, a question to which we shall return shortly. She also asserts that "the importance of the king to the nation's well-being and the necessity of obeying him is unapologetically promoted" (90), and cites emblem I-32 as an example, in

which, she states:

> *The description of the ideal king* [...] *is exactly the image of Charles created by Van Dyck in his great portraits of the king.* [...] *The king, who is an example of piety, who loves peace, who is skilful at arms, who advances the arts and who drives out false religion" (ibid.).*

Upon closer examination, however, the analysis of the emblem as an "unapologetic promotion of the importance of the king" ought to be somewhat mitigated. Indeed, the *subscriptio* does list several virtues that an ideal ruler should possess:

> *Hee seekes not onely how to keepe in awe*
> *His* People, *by those meanes that rightfull are;*
> *But, doth unto himselfe, become a* Law,
> *And, by* Example, *Pious* Wayes *declare.*
> *He, loveth* Peace, *and after it pursues;*
> *Yet, if of* Warre *a just occasion come,*
> *Doth nor* Bellona's *Challenges refuse,*
> *Nor feare, to beat* Defyance *on his* Drum*;*
> *He is as ready, also, to advance*
> *The Lib'rall* Arts, *and from his Lands to drive*
> *All false* Religion, Schisme, *and* Ignorance,
> *As other publike profits to contrive.* (1635: 32)

The rest of the text, however, emphasises that the intended recipient of the advice contained in the emblem should not understand these lines to be a flattering description of his actual merits, but, rather, as an exhortation to aim at acquiring them in the future:

> *If thou desirest such a* Prince *to be,*
> *Or, to acquire that Worth which may allure*
> *Such* Princes *to vouchsafe some* Grace *to thee;*
> *Their Kingly* Vertues, *labour to procure.* (ibid.)

The second and the third lines of the quatrain attempt, or feign, to temper the impression that

it is directed solely at the monarch, but the description quoted above clearly only applies to a person who would wield considerable political power either at present or in the future, enough to declare war, to ensure peace, to patron the arts, and to root out "false religion". The first line, which addresses the reader directly, boldly implies that the current monarch does not display these virtues yet, as he may merely desire "such a Prince to be", a stance that is confirmed in the final couplet of the *subscriptio*: "And, strive that thou, as excellent mayst bee / In *Knowledge,* as, thou art in thy *Degree*" (ibid.). In this particular instance, the language used by Wither's persona is quite remote from the fawning praise that was lavished on Charles I after his coronation, not so much from poets, as had been the case for his father, but from the court and the pulpit, who, led by William Laud, continuously asserted that the newly crowned king *already possessed* these virtues, and many more (Cressy 2015: 92-96). To the persona, the royal title evidently has to be earned *a posteriori*, a sentiment that it expresses to Charles II shortly after his own coronation in *Verses intended to the King's Majesty* (1662):

> *It is not in the pow'r of any other*
> *By* Pen *or* Tongue *to clear up, or to smother*
> *Your* true Deserts; *For, in your* self *that lies,*
> *VVhich either them beclouds, or dignifies.*
> *No other* Thoughts *I entertain of You,*
> *But such as I may* think, *and you* allow:
> *Yet, to extol your* Worth *I shall not dare,*
> *Till I know truly what your* Vertues *are.* (7)

Farnsworth states that even in emblems that remind the King of his duty to God or to his people, Wither's persona "is so subtle that no offense could be taken and there is no doubt of his sincerity or his loyalty to the King at that point in his life" (1999: 91), but this statement ought to be nuanced as well. Firstly, Charles I was prone to feeling slighted even by very subtle or oblique remarks concerning his royal virtues, and had the means to assert his power swiftly and, at times, gruesomely via prosecution and trial by the Star Chamber of any author accused of sedition, as William Prynne was unfortunate enough to experience in his very flesh upon publication of his play titled *Histriomastix* (1632). The charges brought by Sir William Noy, who prosecuted Prynne's case and ultimately sentenced him to be heavily fined and brutally pilloried, included counts of blasphemy and seditious remarks against the state

and magistrates, and, as Robertson shows, several passages in which, under the guise of ceremony and praise, the king himself was unfavourably compared to his predecessors, especially Elizabeth, and was even likened to Nero. "The effect", Robertson argues, "is to divide the ideal king from the actual one, the immortal crown from the mundane Charles, the spirit of lawful kingship from the body of the king" (2009: 53). *Histriomastix* and *A Collection of Emblemes* are not to be put on equal footing with regards to their offensive potential of course. Robertson argues that Prynne had not veiled his attacks with sufficient literary subtlety, and that the entire purpose of his play was to mount a covert, but nonetheless astringent, critique of the Caroline court, church, and administration (54). Prynne's overt identification with the "Puritan" label (58), his vehement censure of Laudian Anglicanism, as well as his pre-existing personal conflicts with the archbishop (51) were evidently aggravating factors that prompted the chamber to make an example out of him. Even accounting for his "skill of a literary critic" at "teasing out Prynne's allusions" (51), Noy would have been hard pressed to find anything remotely comparable in Wither's emblems. Then again, given the tense political and religious climate of the early 1630s, it would have been tentative indeed to consider oneself safe from such prosecution, and although the potential punishment Wither would have incurred may have been milder, imprisonment in England was dire at the best of times, as he himself recounted in his *Schollers Purgatory* (1624: 3). Therefore, Farnsworth's point that the views about the nature and scope of royal power expressed in the emblems was completely uncontroversial, and her conclusion that Wither merely sought to please his courtly readers, is not quite accurate. Furthermore, if her assertion that Wither, at this point in his life, was loyal to the king is to be accepted, the *subscriptio* quoted above begs the following question: was the poet's loyalty directed at the abstract institution of the king, or did it extend all the way to Charles, the human being who merely happened to *embody* it at the time? As was shown just above, one aspect of Prynne's seditious work was his distinction between the first and the second, which Noy and his other prosecutors read as an assertion that the second was unworthy of the first. Wither's emblem draws no such conclusion, but there is, nonetheless, a separation between the ideal king and the recipient of the emblem, who may hope to become an embodiment of the same one day, but who is evidently not there yet, as the final couplet makes clear by distinguishing his "degree" and "knowledge" (32).

Furthermore, the virtues listed in the *subscriptio* are specific enough to allow for historical contextualisation, which, in turn, could have prompted a judge with a mind set on

finding evidence of sedition to consider it an instance of *a contrario* criticism, akin to More's description of Utopia, which all but openly invited the reader to compare the fictional island to his own country and to reach the intended satirical and critical conclusions on his own. Indeed, in the emblem, the king resorts to "meanes, that rightfull are" to "keepe [his people] in awe", at a time at which Charles, frustrated with Parliament's refusal to grant him the financial means he required, set up what was, essentially, a "scheme for a forced loan" (Cressy 2015: 97), refusal to participate in which entailed "sanctions" (98), such as placement under house arrest, and, in some cases, even imprisonment (99-100). The mention of the king's duty to uphold "Peace" jars with the catastrophic and expensive campaigns against Spain and France in the mid-1620s that were conducted by the already extremely unpopular Duke of Buckingham at Charles's behest, constituting an "involvement on the fringes" (125) of the Thirty Years War, while others deemed these attempts insufficient and hoped for a full-scale English participation in a Protestant alliance against the Catholic powers on the continent. In this respect, however, both James I and Charles I refused "Bellona's Challenge", and, moreover, Sharpe and Tomlinson show that Charles saw no objection, in principle, to an alliance with Rome "in anything that may conduce to the peace of Christendom and of the Church" (1983: 90)[1]. As far as the "Lib'rall *Arts*" are concerned, Parry explains that literary patronage declined significantly even before the Civil War (2008: 136), while censorship, which had already been on the rise under James, reached an unprecedent scale, of which Prynne's trial was but one example among many (Robertson 2009: 3). Finally, it would be hard to absolve Charles I of his own share of responsibility in the religious schism that reached its boiling point during his "personal rule", as his strong Arminian leanings, the perceived influence of his devoutly Catholic wife[2], and the controversial theological and liturgical policies of Archbishop William Laud, sparked a great deal of suspicion, concern, and outrage with the Calvinist portion of the population. However loyal Wither's persona appears to be to the abstract notion of an ideal monarch, the advisory nature of the *subscriptio* suggests that Charles, if he ever was to deserve such a title, had his

[1] Sharpe and Tomlinson are quoting from the *Clarendon State Papers*, I, p. 356, instructions for Capt. Arthur Brett, 28 October 1635, ([R. Scrope and T. Monkhouse (eds.)], *State Papers Collected by Edward Earl of Clarendon*, vol. I (Oxford, 1767).

[2] It is notable, in this respect, that Wither's persona cannot refrain, in the dedicatory epistle of Book I, to address the Queen as follows: "Your Motions ever, were / So smoath, and, so direct; that, none can say, / They have withdrawne his Royall-heart away / From iust Designes; Which, loudly speakes your Praise, / And intimates much more, than yet, it saies" (Ded. I-2). If I am correct in reading emblem I-32 as an instance of criticism *a contrario*, then it is likely that the persona's words in the dedication also "intimate, much more" than they say, and may even be taken as bitterly ironic.

work cut out for him. Another emblem, which is written in a very similar tone, and which Farnsworth does not discuss – although it appears at the very start of book I - reinforces this impression. Indeed, in emblem I-3, the persona explicitly takes it upon itself to offer political advice to actual or prospective kings:

> *Whence,* Princes *(if they please) this note may take,*
> *(And it shall make them happily to raigne)*
> *That, many good and wholsome* Lawes *to make*
> *Without an* Executioner, *is vaine.*
> *It likewise intimates, that such as are*
> *In* Soveraigne place, *as well obliged be*
> *Their zeale for true* Religion *to declare,*
> *As, what concerneth* Manners, *to foresee.*
> *It lastly, showes that* Princes *should affect*
> *Not onely, over others to* Command,
> *But* Swords *to weare, their* Subjects *to protect;*
> *And, for their* Guard, *extend a willing hand.* (1635: 3)

Given Charles's views on royal power and prerogative[1], one can only imagine how he might have responded to a text that overtly asserted that the monarch had "obligations", and which seemingly also implied insufficient "zeale for true Religion" on his part – a further piece of evidence, perhaps, to support the hypothesis that the prime dedicatee of the book never actually granted it much attention. The rest of the *subscriptio* goes a step further, as the merely implied criticism contained in the lines above is almost overtly articulated, and, in hindsight, prophetic:

> *For,* Lawes, *or* Peace *to boast of; and, the whiles,*
> *The* Publique-weale, *to weaken or disarme,*
> *Is nor the way to hinder* Civill-Broyles,
> *Nor to secure it from a* Forraigne-harme. (ibid.)

[1] See Chapter II.

The first line, which may well be a direct reference to some of the king's proclamations[1], would undoubtedly have been construed as an outrageous accusation of hypocrisy on Charles's part; the persona's frustration at the king's personal rule is palpable. Clearly, once again, the obvious dissonance between the advice that the emblem intends to convey to "Princes" and the king's actual political practice suggests that loyalty to the crown does not entail the same to the head that carries it.

Farnsworth goes on to study "perhaps the most interesting emblem on the importance of harmony between a king and his people", number III-25 (1999: 91), the engraving of which shows different species of flowers thriving in the sunshine, while, in the background, the king, accompanied by his guards and members of the court, rides past three figures who are bowing before him. The general topic of the emblem, which is headed by the motto couplet "Our outward Hopes will take effect, / According to the King's aspect" (1635: 159), is clear enough, although some parts of Wither's *subscriptio*, again, lend themselves to a more contextually relevant interpretation if one employs the same hermeneutic grid as above. Indeed, after having elegantly described the flourishing of various types of flowers as the sun appears, it goes on to clarify, as it usually does, the allegorical meaning for the reader:

> *Thus fares it with a* Nation, *and their* King,
> *'Twixt whom there is a native Sympathy.*
> *His* Presence, *and his* Favours, *like the* Spring,
> *Doe make them sweetly thrive, and fructity:*
> *Yea (like fresh* Groves, *or* Flow'rs *of pleasing hew)*
> *Themselves in all their jollity they showe;*
> *But, they, if with displeasure, them he view,*
> *Soone lose their Glory, and contemned growe.* [...]
> [...] *[A]ll shall feele it, when their* Sov'raignes *eye*
> *Doth frowne, or smile, regard, or else neglect:*
> *Yea, it will finde them in* Obscurity,

[1] See, for instance, the King's *Proclamation [...] to confirm to his Subjects of the Realme of Ireland, their defective Titles and to establish their Estates and Possessions by his great Seale of England*, (14 May 1630), in which Charles stated: "His Maiestie conceiuing, that there is no stronger motiue to inuite His Subiects of that Realme to submit themselues willingly to the Lawes, to entertaine Peace, and conforme themselues to ciuility, industry, and good order, nor better meanes to make them opulent, rich, and happy, then by the generall setling and securing of their estates and possessions which is their liuelyhood" (Imprinted at London by Robert Barker, Printer to the Kings most Excellent Maiestie: and by the Assignes of Iohn Bill. 1630: 1).

By some Disheartning, or some sweet Effect. (ibid.)

There is certainly potential for perfect harmony, as the king enjoys a "native Sympathy" from the Nation, but it is his responsibility to "smile" on, and to "regard" his subjects, and not to view them "with displeasure", or to "frowne [upon], or else neglect" them, lest they "lose their Glory, and contemned growe". Given the unpopularity of the king at the time and the ongoing debates about his royal attributions, the last line of the second quatrain is almost an invitation for the reader to perform a mental hypallage by transferring the ideas of "losing one's Glory" and "growing contemned" from one subject – i.e. the "flowers" – to the other – i.e. "the sun" - and, therefore, by allegorical equivalence, the monarch. Here as well, the persona therefore insists on the king's *potential* ability, and, by extension, his obligation, to make his subjects "flourish" by granting them attention and care, but also on the possibility that a specific person who happens to wear the crown may well fall short of fulfilling these obligations, with dire consequences ensuing.

It is surprising that Farnsworth does not even mention emblem II-5, which I consider to be the most striking on the matter of the prerogatives and duties of the king. The engraving shows four birds, seemingly of different species, that are flying towards a crowned sceptre that stands in the middle of the *pictura*, and the English motto couplet reads "That Kingdome will establish'd bee, / Wherein the People well agree" (67). Although the motif and the general idea of the emblem appear already in Alciato's *Emblematum Libellus* (1534: 10), the motto couplet alone indicates how politically relevant, and potentially subversive, the emblem is with respect to the state of the English crown in the 1630s. Indeed, after having briefly complained about the alleged obscurity of the motif[1], the persona provides its own interpretation:

[...] [F]rom these Figures, *my Collections be,*
That, Kingdomes, *and the* Royall-dignitie,
Are best upheld, where Subjects *doe agree,*
To keepe upright the state of Soveraignty.
When, from each Coast and quarter of the Land,
The Rich, *the* Poore, *the* Swaine, *the* Gentleman,
Leads, in all wants, *and at all* times, *his hand,*

[1] See Chapter V.

To give the best assistance that he can:
Yea, when with Willing-hearts, *and* Winged-speed,
The men of all Degrees, doe duely carry
Their Aides *to publicke-workes, in time of need,*
And, to their Kings, *be freely tributary.* (1635: 67)

One ought to be cautious, of course, not to force a contextual interpretative framework upon a text on the axiomatic assumption that historical correlation equals compositional causality. In this emblem particularly, however, such a framework is arguably justified by the array of very specific signifiers: it refers not merely to social status – "the Swaine, the Gentleman" – but also to financial circumstances: "the Rich, the Poore"; it does place the people's obligation in a very general temporal frame – "at all times" – but it also specifies that it ought to be met "in all wants", which plainly refers to a situation of material or financial insufficiency; the "Aides" that are required to remedy the same are contributions to "publicke-workes", a term usually associated with public donations to the crown or government[1]; and, of course, the word "tributary", which is a direct reference to the act of providing financial means to the monarch or the state. I submit that such a density of terms warrants our considering the *subscriptio* as a commentary on Charles I's "forced loan scheme" that was set up in 1627 as Cressy describes it[2]. The line "with Willing-Hearts and Winged Speed" is particularly telling in this respect, as Cressy explains that the call for public donations had to be converted into a compulsory lending campaign precisely because "initial responses to requests for a gift proved unenthusiastic", which led the king himself to demand a "larger and speedier supply" (2015: 98). Wither's persona continues as follows:

Then shall the Kingdome *gayne the gloriest height;*
Then shall the Kingly-Title *be renown'd;*
Then shall the Royall-Scepter *stand upright,*

[1] See, for instance, Patrick Copland's *Virginia's God be Thanked* (1622), in which he states: "*If* [...] *wee* [...] *erect a faire Inne in Iames Citie (to the setting vp of which, I doubt not but wee shall raise fifteene hundred or two thousand pounds: for every man giues willingly towards this and other publique workes) you haue enough for this yeere* (13), or the king's own *Orders and Directions* [...] *tending to the reliefe of the Poore* (1631), in which it is reported that Charles I stated the following: "*Therefore Our Will and expresse Pleasure is, That those Statutes* of the thirty ninth and fourtie third of *Elizabeth,* and all other Lawes and Statutes concerning Hospitals, Almes-houses, *Meisons de Dieu,* and other pious Donations, Collections, or publike Gifts for the benefit of the Poore, or publike Workes, be strictly inquired and put in execution" (22).

[2] See Chapter II.

And, with supremest Honour, *then, be Crown'd.*
But, where this Duty long neglect, they shall;
The King *will suffer, and, the* Kingdome *fall.* (1635: 67)

The portentously prophetic final line describes the ominous consequences of the neglect of the "Duty" mentioned in the previous. But whose "Duty" is the persona referring to here? The straightforward interpretation, given the bulk of the text, would be to consider it a reference to the people's duty towards their king, but by now the persona's recourse to ambiguity in political matters should no longer come as a surprise. Indeed, contrary to many exhortative emblems that make it a point to remind the reader of his duties, II-5 contains no apostrophe, and the lending of "Aides" is not presented as an obligation, but rather as a potential state of political reality, that can be realised if "the People well agree". The text does not state that it is the king's "Duty" to ensure such social harmony, but that it is he who shall "suffer" if this requirement is not met. The same ambiguity, notably, arises when one reads the corresponding lottery stanza:

Thou would'st be loth, we should suspect,
Thou didst not well thy King *affect;*
Or, that, thou should'st be so ingrate,
To sleight the welfare of the State*:*
Yea, thou, perchance, art one of those,
Who discord *through the* Kingdome *sowes.*
We know not, but if such thou be,
Marke, what thine Emblem *teaches thee.* (114)

The lottery stanza is marked "M", which means that it is appropriate only for a male reader. If a female reader were to be directed to it by the lottery wheels, she would have to "take the next chance which pertaineth properly, whether it bee Blancke or Lot" (Dir.). The interpretation of the stanza hinges on the meaning one attaches to the verb "affect" in the second line. If it is to be interpreted to mean "like" or "appreciate", the stanza is directed at anyone *but* the king, who, by manifesting insufficient affection for the monarch, would "sleight the welfare of the State", but such a person could very well be either a man or a woman, without distinction. However, "to affect" also means, of course, "to assume a false appearance of; to put on a pretence of, to counterfeit or pretend" (*OED*, "affect, v.", 5. a.), in

which case, the tone of the lottery shifts to an astringent and sardonic critique, not of the king as an abstract institution, but of the man who is "affecting" to be the king, and who is, or so such a reading would imply, the one who "discord through the Kingdome sowes".

Furthermore, two lines in the *subscriptio* of the same emblem deserve more attention still. Indeed, the persona asserts "that, *Kingdomes,* and the *Royall-dignitie, /* Are best upheld, where *Subjects* doe agree, / To keepe upright the state of *Soveraignty*" (1635: 67), thus taking a stance in the contemporary debate about the legitimacy of royal power, which would grow increasingly prevalent throughout the 1640s, culminating in Charles I's trial. Indeed, Nenner points out that, in the early 1640s, "the idea of republicanism as an alternative government had very limited support"[1], but that "a radical idea much more in evidence was the developing notion of the monarchy as an office in trust from the people", which was, Nenner continues, "the principle upon which the king would ultimately be condemned" (1995: 66-67). Nenner distinguishes between "the proposition that God had entrusted kings with government for the public good", which was nothing new, and the assertion "that the trust of government not only was for the benefit of the people, but had been established by the people as well" (67), which gained prominence in the late 1640s, as Parliament moved towards Charles's death sentence and as the question of succession was raised. Indeed, Nenner explains that the possibility of an elective monarchy was entertained, and that the death sentence itself stated that Charles had merely been "admitted King of England", and continued:

> *[A]nd therein trusted within a limited power to govern by, and according to the law of the land and otherwise; and by his trust, oath and office, being obliged to use the power committed to him for the good and benefit of the people, and for the preservation of their rights and liberties.* (*The True manner of the Kings tryal at Westminster-Hall,* 1650)

Whether the line "The king's subjects must "agree, / To keepe upright, the state of *Sovereignty*" ought to be interpreted as an equally radical statement hinges very much on the

[1] Nenner cites Henry Marten as example of early republicanism "who, for that opinion, was suspended from the house of Commons" (1995: 66).

meaning one attaches to the verbs "to agree", "to keepe upright", and to the ambiguous phrase "the state of Soveraignty". As was shown in Chapter II, during the Civil War and up to the very date of the regicide, Wither's understanding of the monarchy was conflicted, but his stance gradually radicalised, as evidenced by the following lines from his *Vox Pacifica* (1645), in which, interestingly, the term "Soveraignty" is used as well:

> *A* King, *is but a* substituted-head,
> *Made for* conveniencie: *And, if thereby*
> *The* bodie *seem to be indangered,*
> *(If* Power *it hath) it hath* Authoritie
> *To take one off, and set another on;*
> *Aswell, as, at the first, to make it one.*
> *And when that* Body *shall be represented,*
> *As this hath been, according to the* Law,
> *Or, shall be by* necessity *convented;*
> *Therein resides, that Soveraignty, that* Awe,
> *And* Rule, *whereto the* Lawes *of GOD and* nature
> *Injoyne obedience; and not in that* thing
> Corrupted; *which was but that* Creatures *creature,*
> *And, which to serve it, was first made a King.* (138)

In the emblem, the persona firmly connects "the State of Soveraignty" and "Royall Dignitie", thus hinting at a more conservative understanding of the first concept, although the *subscriptio* adds that, if such political harmony were to be achieved, "Then shall the *Kingly-Title*" be renowned; / Then shall the *Royall-Scepter* stand upright / And, with supremest *Honour*, then, be Crown'd". It is notable that these lines do not refer to the king as a person, but, once again, to abstract symbols of royalty, a premise that Wither only exploited to the full later, during the Civil War and the Interregnum, in passages such as the one from *Vox Populi* above, but a premise that had already a firm hold in his political outlook in the 1630s.

Two further emblems in Wither's *Collection* would seem, at first sight, to mitigate such views by insisting on the direct causal relation between the king's power and the will of God. Number IV-15, firstly, is headed by the motto couplet "*The* King, *his pow'r from* God *receives*: / *For, hee alone the* Scepter *gives"* (1635: 223), and the engraving shows the same sceptre in the centre as it is seemingly handed down to earth by the rays of a sun bearing a

tetragrammaton. What appears to be a conventional legitimation of monarchy of divine right, from which one might be tempted to infer unconditional submission to the king as the embodiment of God's plan, is quickly tempered, once again, by the ambivalence regarding the intended readership of the emblem. Indeed, after having described a royal title as one of God's "most choice Prerogatives" – along with "Children" and "Good-Wives" – which is conferred only upon one person "in five hundred million" (ibid.), the persona immediately adds the following quatrain:

> *Nor is there any knowne* Estate *on earth,*
> *(Whereto wee come, by* Merit, *or by* Birth*)*
> *Which can, to any man assurance bring,*
> *That, hee shall either* live, *or* die *a* King. (ibid.)

As the second line makes clear, the persona may subscribe to the idea of monarchy of divine right, but hereditary monarchy is another matter, as the subsequent lines convey in an initially regretful, and, in the second couplet, almost menacing tone:

> *The* Morning-Starre, *that's Heire unto a* Crowne,
> *Oft sets, before the* shining-Sunne *is downe*
> *And, some, that once a glorious* Empire *swayd,*
> *Did lose their* Kingdomes, *e're their heads were layd.*
> (ibid.)

It is hard not to read the first two lines as a reference to the untimely death of James I's eldest son, Henry, who would have been the "Heire unto [the] Crowne", and whose death prompted numerous poets, including Wither, to compose moving elegies, and who, furthermore, was occasionally referred to as the "Morning-Starre" of the realm[1]. Given that Henry, who died at only nineteen, had already secured a reputation as an active and generous patron of the arts by that time (Parsons 1952), and that he is usually represented by historians as "robust and healthy", while Charles, on the contrary, was, by the same accounts, "feeble and sickly-looking", at least in his youth (see Abbott 1901: 17-18), it is not surprising that these lines

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[1] See, for instance, Daniel Price's *Prince Henry his first anniversary* (1613: 12). See Chapter II for further details about Wither's relationship with the prince. Notably, Wither's persona uses the same term to address the Prince of Wales, later to become Charles II, in the dedication of Book II.

seem to carry a bitter aftertaste for the persona, who barely manages to conceal its implied preference for the elder over the younger brother. They do, however, also exemplify that, regarding royal titles as well as everything else, the Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away at his pleasure: in Charles's case, it was the contingency of his brother's demise that made him heir to the throne, and, although his accession was, according to Nenner, the most secure, and least controversial of his dynasty (1995: 66-67), the persona, seemingly guided by yet another prophetic intuition, warns the monarch that one's securing the throne does not entail one's ability to retain it, and that some who may have been popular enough to "sway" their subjects at first, "did lose their Kingdomes, e're their heads were layd". The persona continues in the same vein:

> *The greatest earthly* Monarch *hath no powre,*
> *To keepe his Throne one minute of an houre,*
> *(Vse all the meanes, and policies hee can)*
> *If God will give it to another man.* (1635: 223)

The persona does not specify, of course, through what means, or with the help of what intermediaries, such a divine putsch might be executed. Instead of being a mere general statement to the effect of God's omnipotence over earthly rulers, the emblem arguably foreshadows the lively debates about royal legitimacy in the years that preceded Charles's trial fifteen years later. Sir Robert Filmer, whose *Patriarcha* was first published in 1680, but possibly written as early as 1635 (Kim 1991: 4), pointed out the problem in the following terms:

> *If it please God, for the Correction of the Prince, or punishment of the People, to suffer Princes to be removed and others to be placed in their rooms either by the Factions of the Nobility or Rebellion of the People; in all such cases, the Judgement of God, who hath power to give and to take away Kingdoms, is most just: yet the Ministry of men who execute God's Judgment without Commission, is sinful and damnable.* (1680: 22)

What appears at first to be a deadlock situation in which a monarch could only effectively be removed by immediate and miraculous divine intercession actually turns out, in Filmer's

mind, to allow for a very simple solution: “God doth but use and turn mens *Unrighteous Acts* to the performance of his *Righteous Decrees”* (ibid.). The fact that the “earthly powers” who might take it upon themselves to end a monarch’s reign would thereby commit a mortal sin – and, one supposes, would also incur legal punishment – does not preclude that their transgression would actually constitute God’s instrument to rightfully depose a king. The immediate danger in which Filmer’s assertion would have placed him is probably the reason why *Patriarcha* was published several decades after it was written, and twenty-seven years after the author had died.

No such statement appears in *A Collection of Emblemes*, and the persona scornfully refers to “Rebellious Knaves” who “their Princes, will devoure” if they are not kept in check by an “Armed pow’r” (1635: 163). Furthermore, emblem III-3, the engraving of which shows a hand holding a shaft-like object *ex nubibus* – Warncke identifies the object as a sceptre (1983: 218), while Wither’s persona calls it first a sceptre and then a mace (1635: 137) – on top of which a second hand is swinging a sword, reminds the reader of his duty to submit to royal justice:

> *As often, therefore, as thou shalt espie*
> *Such* Hieroglyphickes *of* Authority*;*
> *Be mindefull, and advis'd (how meane soere*
> *The* Persons, *or the* Places *may appeare,*
> *Who get this* pow'r*) that still thou honour them:*
> *Lest, thou in those, the pow'r of* God *contemne.*
> *If not for theirs, yet for thy* Sov'raignes *cause,*
> *Whom these doe personate; Or, for the* Lawes,
> *(Which threaten punishment) thy selfe submit;*
> *And, suffer what* Authority *thinkes fit.* (ibid.)

Although the divine source of the “Sov’raignes” power is emphasised, it is notable that the *subscriptio* advises the reader to show deference and obedience, not to the king in person, but to people and objects that “personate” him, including such “Hieroglyphickes of Authority” as the mace and the sword. Once again, it is the abstract concept of royal power, best exemplified through symbolic items, and not the man who happens to wear the crown at any given time, which ought to inspire reverence and compliance. This “imagistic” paradigm is characteristic of Wither’s political writings, Norbrook argues (1991: 221-222), borrowing the

phrase from Pitkin (1967: 241-242). It enables a political commentator to firmly separate his views on the overarching, symbolic structure of "the King" from his potential disapproval of the person who embodies it within a limited time span, which is exactly what Prynne and Wither are doing.

The last emblem that deals predominantly and directly with the royal function in *A Collection of Emblemes* is number III-46, the motto couplet of which reads "The Hearts of Kings are in God's Hands; / And, as He lists, He Them commands" (180). The engraving shows a hand *ex nubibus* holding a crowned heart, while, below, a king is praying in a chapel, as a sun containing the tetragrammaton shines down on him. The composition is so similar to the frontispiece of the later work *Eikon Basilike* (1649), which was engraved by William Marshall and which represents Charles in an almost identical position, that De Passe's *pictura* may have been an important source of inspiration for Marshall, who also provided the frontispiece for Wither's emblem book. The first half of the *subscriptio* is merely an expansion on the idea expressed in the motto; indeed, the persona, perhaps somewhat surprisingly given the emblems studied above, dwells on the point that criticising the monarch is moot, as his actions are guided by God:

> *Why should they blame their* Kings, *for fav'ring such,*
> *Whom, they have thought, scarce meriting so much?*
> God rules their Hearts; and, they, themselves deceive,
> Who dreame, that Kings exalt, without Gods leave.
> *Why murmure they at* God, *for guiding so*
> *The Hearts of* Kings, *as oft they see him doe?*
> *Or, at his* Workes, *why should they take offence,*
> *As if their* Wit, *could teach his* Providence?
> His just, and his all-seeing *Wisedome* knowes,
> Both *whom,* and *why* he crownes, or overthrowes*;*
> And, *for what cause,* the Hearts of *Princes,* bee
> *Inlarg'd,* or *shut;* when we no cause can see*;*
> *We sometime know, what's* well, *and what's* amisse*;*
> *But, of those* Truths, *the root concealed is;*
> *And, False-hoods, and Uncertainties, there are,*
> *In most of those things, which we* speake, *or* heare. (ibid.)

The second half of the same text, however, introduces the now familiar ambiguity of the persona in such matters. Indeed, although it remains uncharacteristically diplomatic, the *subscriptio* nonetheless raises several points that are closely connected to the political debates that raged during Charles I's personal rule and during his trial. Firstly, as Cressy puts it: "A perennial popular fantasy held that the king was misinformed, that his courtiers, wife, and counsellors misled him, and that the world would be better if his highness learned certain truths" (2015: 204). Cressy does not investigate the truth of the matter - although his use of the term "fantasy" strongly suggests which point of view he embraces[1] – but it is the existence of these rumours, which Cressy attests by citing numerous examples of petitioners who certainly believed them to be true and who made frequent attempts to warn the king against his ill-intentioned advisers (204-209), that is relevant to Wither's emblem. Indeed, the persona continues as follows:

> *Then, were not* Kings *directed by* God's *hand,*
> *They, who are best, and wisest in the Land,*
> *Might oft misguide them, either by receiving*
> *A* False report, *or, by some* wrong-believing. (1635: 180)

On its own, this quatrain certainly seems to assert that, for all their being the "best, and wisest in the Land", the advisors to the king may well be mistaken themselves, and thus mislead him by their counsel, were it not for God's ultimately steering the monarch's heart in the right direction. Notably, the advisors whose ill-begotten influence would thus be divinely counteracted are not accused of being intentionally deceitful; only, at best, inadequately informed, and, at worst, mistaken in their beliefs. McRae, however, shows that Wither actually very much agreed with many of his contemporaries on the fact that unpopular policies, such as the forced loan scheme, were to be imputed chiefly to the closest advisers of the king (2016: 452), whom he prophetically describes with palpable vitriol in the work:

> *For, they who had their birth from noble races,*
> *Shall (some and some) be brought into disgraces:*
> *From offices they shall excluded stand:*

[1] Other critics, such as Underdown, seem to consider that these rumours were not altogether unfounded. Underdown refers to a "clique" of courtiers "that was advising Charles I to violate the country's liberties in such matters as the Forced Loan, arbitrary imprisonment, and Ship Money" (1987: 125).

And all their vertuous off-spring, from the Land,
Shall quite be worne: in stead of whom shall rise
A brood advanced by impieties,
By flattery, by purchase, and by that
Which ev'ry truly-noble one doth hate.
From stems obscure, and out of meane professions,
They shall ascend and mount by their ambitions,
To seats of Iustice; and those Names to beare,
Which honor'd most within these Kingdomes are
And being thither got, shall make more strong
Their new-built Greatnesse, by encreasing wrong: [...]
They shall abuse thy Kings, with tales, and lyes;
With seeming love, and servile flatteries.
(1628: 260-261)

Though evidence of the same is scarce in *A Collection of Emblemes*, the persona nonetheless refers to the "Cunning *Sleights* / Of glozing *Sycophants*" in emblem I-2 (1635: 2), seemingly a direct echo of the "*Sycophant*, or cunning hypocrite" who "[steales] away [the King's heart]" from his subjects in *Britain's Remembrancer* (1628: 228).

In both works, however, the ultimate responsibility for such political degradation is to be sought with the population at large, whose lack of piety and righteousness sparked divine wrath, of which the ills of the time are merely the earthly expression. In the same emblem, III-46, the persona peremptorily states: "God's *Grace* it is, that *Good-men* rays'd have bin: / If *Sinners* flourish, we may thanke our *Sin*" (1635: 180). This view was conventional even under Elizabeth I (Armstrong 1946: 164), and was expressed consistently in the first half of the seventeenth century by commentators such as Richard Johnson (1603: $B1_r$)[1] and David Owen (1642: 26)[2]. It is, moreover, consistent with Wither's theological arguments put forth

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1 "If Princes be good, let vs be thankfull to God for them: if they be tyrannous, let vs looke into our sinnes; for God sendeth Tyrants, to punish the sinnes of the wicked. Therefore, whether Princes be good or bad, let subiects be obedient, lest (for their disobedience, God take away the good, and double the tyrannie of the bad"

2 "Were wee perswaded, that the hearts of Kings are in Gods hand, that the haires of our head are numbred, and that no affliction can befall us, which God doth not dispose to the exercise of our faith, the triall of our constancy, or the punishment of our sinne, wee would as well admire the justice of God, in permitting Tyrants, that our sinnes may bee judged, and punished in this World, as praise his mercy and favour, in giving rest to his servants, under the protection of godly and gracious Princes."

to absolve God of any responsibility in sin[1]. The question that remains unanswered here, however, is that of a despot's own responsibility for his unlawful actions. Filmer, who considered that the insurrectional effort against a tyrant is initiated by God, and yet simultaneously sinful and reprehensible in the people performing it, would probably have applied the same logic in the matter: the illegitimate ruler may have obtained his throne from divine intercession and may be an instrument of divine wrath, but he would likewise be deemed responsible for his immoral acts towards his subjects. Wither's stance on the matter is more obscure, although there is some evidence that is suggestive of a similar stance. Indeed, in the *subscriptio* to emblem IV-15, which was discussed above already, Wither's persona, to exemplify God's power to grant and withdraw power from kings at will, refers to four biblical kings:

> Hee, *when* Belshazzar *was in high'st estate,*
> *His* Kingdome *to the* Persians *did translate.*
> *King* Saul, *and* Rehoboam, *could not stay*
> *The* Royalties, *which God would give away;*
> *And,* Hee *that was the proudest of the rest,*
> *God, changed from a* King, *into a Beast.* (1635: 223)

In Scripture, Belshazzar, Saul, Rehoboam, and Nebuchadnezzar, the latter dreaming that he will be transformed into a beast, and who "was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws" (Daniel 4: 33, *KJV*), are all deprived of their kingdoms, in whole or in part, for having committed sins against God, even though they are all instruments in his divine plan as well (Newsom 2012: 558).

Let us briefly return to emblem III-46, and to the final couplet, which simply reads: "[I]f *God* had not rul'd their [i.e. the Kings'] *Hearts* aright, / The *World,* by this time, had been ruin'd quite" (1635: 180). The interpretation, of course, hinges on one's opinion of the state of the world: if one views one's own times as prosperous and virtuous, one would conclude that, evidently, God is indeed ruling the king's heart "aright", but if, on the contrary, one feels surrounded by corruption and vice, one would reach another conclusion entirely, one which is mentioned a few lines earlier in the same *subscriptio*: that God has

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[1] See Chapter VII.

appointed a tyrant to punish his subjects for the iniquities of the age. Conveniently, emblem IV-11 expresses the persona's opinion on the matter in a tone that pitches between sarcasm and genuine despondency. The engraving shows a globe balanced on the back of a lobster, and the motto couplet reads "The motion of the World, this day, / Is mov'd the quite contrarie way" (219). The emblem already appears in Camerarius's *Symbolorum et emblematum centuriae* (1595: IV-55), and is based on the claim that crabs and similar creatures actually walk backwards (see Valeriano's *Hieroglyphica* (1556: 201-202)). In perhaps the most striking instance of loose, and even colloquial language in the work, the persona expounds the meaning of the engraving:

> *What was this* Figures *meaning, but to show,*
> *That, as these kinde of* Shell-fish *backward goe,*
> *So now the* World, *(which here doth seeme to take*
> *An arseward Iourney on the* Cancer's *backe)*. (1635: 219)

After having complained of its own "outward Fortunes and Affaires" that "come tumbling downe the staires" (ibid.), the persona dwells on "other things, / [That] have got a wheeling in contrary *Rings*", including hierarchical inversions – "punie *Clerkes*" who "presume that they can teach / The ancient holy *Doctors*, how to preach", and "*Parents*" who "are compelled to obay / Their *Sonnes*, and, so their *Dignitie* to lose / As to be fed and cloth'd at their dispose" – and religious recession, as "some [...] have assay'd to draw, all backward, to the *Bondage of the Law*", "[w]hich *Regresse,* holding on, 'tis like that wee, / To *Iewes,* or *Ethnicks,* backe shall turned bee" (ibid.). The *subscriptio* admittedly does not mention any particular political issues, neither does it lay the fault for any of the – fairly generic – problems it raises at the feet of the king, but it does end with the following prayer: "*Doe thou, these froward* Motions, LORD, *restraine*; / *And, set the* World *in her due course againe*" (ibid.). Evidently, the persona considers that, whatever improvements to the situation could ensue through God's gracious intercession – presumably, among other things, by "ruling" the king's heart "aright" (180) – the intercession itself had not occurred yet. Moreover, this emblem should not, I submit, be ascribed wholly to the persona's tendency to dwell on Wither's alleged suffering scorn and censure from his contemporaries or on his financial troubles. In his detailed study on social change in early modern England, Hindle mentions that the early 1620s and 1630s were periods of "acute distress" (2002: 37) which saw economic hardship caused by rapid demographic expansion, the resulting shortages and famines, price inflation, as well as

aggressive enclosure campaigns that exacerbated wealth inequality and that led to popular uprisings, and the economic consequences of England's expensive and abortive campaigns against Spain and France (40-53). To an observer like Wither, who was prone to viewing social and political ills, including inadequate or unjust government, as divine retribution, this hardly looked like a situation in which God's hand steered the monarch in the right direction.

In Wither's emblem book, a clear distinction is made between the abstract office of the monarch on the one hand, and the person who holds it at any given time on the other. Regarding the abstract title, the emblems insist on the divine right of kings and on the direct guidance of their hearts by God, although He may appoint a despot as a punishment for individual and collective sinfulness. The persona nonetheless mounts more or less thinly veiled attacks on the policies implemented by Charles I, who is merely the holder of the title, immediately before and during his personal rule, and occasionally shakes an admonitory finger at the Stuart king, sometimes with grim prophetic accuracy. Perhaps one might venture an oxymoronic neologism to qualify such a stance, by calling it "royalist radicalism", where the noun would still fit the definition provided by Curelly and Smith, but where its etymology might also be taken into account. Indeed, to Wither's persona, the root causes of the tumultuous period that it witnesses may be understood in hamartiological terms as the just consequence of the English people's sins, but also, more pragmatically and without contradiction, as the corruption of the organic structure of society and its institutions by unworthy men who have forsaken virtue to maintain their personal power. Another expression of a similar sentiment, though this time related not to Wither's political, but to his natural environment, is not quite as prominent, but nonetheless notable in his emblem book.

4. "When those great *Groves,* were fell'd for firing-wood": Proto-Ecologism in *A Collection of Emblemes*

As was shown above, many of Wither's *subscriptiones*, especially such that cover political subjects, depart from the general, and often abstract precepts that Rollenhagen and De Passe had in mind when they composed the *Nucleus Emblematum*, and contain many more or less thinly veiled comments about the contemporary state of English politics. There is no reason to doubt, then, that Wither seized the same opportunity to elaborate on his views regarding other issues of his time, and that, consequently, a fuller understanding of many of the emblems could be achieved by careful historical contextualisation. Two such examples arguably stand out, as they constitute examples of Wither's taking a stance on subjects that were at the heart of political debates at the time, and testify, once again, to a definite project

of making the emblematic genre subservient to committed commentaries on the *status quo*.

The affection with which Wither's persona refers to rural England, to husbandry, and to the seemingly pastoral idyll of living, even humbly, in the countryside, which informs many of its interpretations of bucolic motifs encountered in the engravings, has been discussed at length in Chapter IV. But, given Wither's acute awareness of the most pressing political issues of his time, it is likely that some of his remarks about the state of his natural environment will be found to have been prompted by very specific events unfolding in the 1620s and 30s. In her seminal work *Poetry and Ecology in the Age of Milton and Marvell* (2007), McColley argues that the two poets mentioned in her title, along with "Henry Vaughan, Margaret Cavendish, Thomas Traherne, Anne Finch, and other early modern poets shared an impulse to give responsible attention to the earth and to non-human creatures" (2). This "impulse" was not simply coincidental, but was deeply connected, McColley shows, to the "environmental problems" of "Seventeenth-century England", some of which were "age-old, others produced by new technology: deforestation, air pollution, confinement of rivers and streams, draining of wetlands, overbuilding, toxic mining, maltreatment of animals, uses of land that [destroyed] habitats and [dispossessed] the poor" (ibid). But aside from such destructive practices, Early Stuart views on the very concept of Nature were not exempt from the epistemological shift towards empiricism and rationalism, which was the catalyst to radical changes in the manner in which the natural world was apprehended and perceived, but which also prompted opposition. To Bacon's assertion, in his *Novum Organum* (1620) that the human race ought to "recover that right over nature which belongs to it by divine bequest" – mitigated somewhat by his acknowledgement that human beings "cannot command nature except by obeying her" (1960: 11) - Milton replied, indirectly but forcefully, by associating the project of the subjugation of Nature with Mammon in *Paradise Lost* (1667) (McColley 2007: 4-5):

> *Mammon, the least erected Spirit that fell*
> *From heav'n, for ev'n in heav'n his looks and thoughts*
> *Were always downward bent, admiring more*
> *The riches of Heav'ns pavement, trod'n Gold,*
> *Then aught divine or holy else enjoy'd*
> *In vision beatific: by him first*
> *Men also, and by his suggestion taught,*
> *Ransack'd the Center, and with impious hands*

Rifl'd the bowels of thir mother Earth
For Treasures better hid. (Quoted in McColley 2007: 32)

McColley adds that, as the seventeenth century progressed and as the "mechanization of the world picture" (2007: 6)[1] ushered in the epistemological shift that Spica called "le désenchantement du monde" (1996: 443), Milton not only retained the allegorical principles that underpinned symbolic and emblematic discourse as the premise of his poetics about the natural world, but even made the mimetic and the allegorical coalesce into a vitalist synthesis:

> *In Milton's Garden the elephant entertaining Adam and Eve (4. 346) may still suggest temperance and piety but "make[s] them mirth" by being himself. When Milton describes the migratory flight of "the prudent Crane" (7. 429–31), his sounds and rhythms let us share the cranes' sensations and hear the sound of wings. While the emblem of prudence remains, the allegory thins, and we see what the crane sees and join its purposeful attention.* (2007: 6)

Wither's emblems do not quite achieve the synthesis that McColley detects in Milton, at least partly because of the structural distinction between the deictic and the exegetical sections of his *subscriptiones*. In some of them, however, especially those that show animals in life-like situations – as opposed, say, to the purely allegorical snakes wrapped around a caduceus in emblem III-17 (1635: 151) – his persona takes the time to describe the *pictura* with a remarkable measure of empathy. Upon seeing the squirrel saving itself from drowning by jumping on a makeshift raft made of tree bark in the engraving of emblem III-2, for instance, the persona, seemingly quite touched by the small rodent's resilience, states:

The Squirrell, *when shee must goe seeke her food,*
By making passage through some neighb'ring flood,
(And feares to be devoured by the Streame)
Thus, helpes her weaknesse, by a Stratagem.

[1] McColley is referring to Dijksterhuis's work *The Mechanization of the World Picture*, trans. C.D. Dikshoorn. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961.

On blocks, *or* chips, *which on the waves doe flote,*
She nimbly leaps; and, making them her boate
(By helpe of Windes, of Current, and of Tide)
Is wafred over to the further side. (136)

The persona's tender concern for the "feare" and the "weaknesse" of the squirrell – which, not uncoincidentally, is feminised – are outweighed by its "Stratagem", suggesting a quick wit and craftiness, in association with the animal's "nimble" leap. Similarly, emblem IV-6, which shows a hart wounded by an arrow in full run, its head turned, seemingly to look at the hunter behind it, prompts the following, perhaps even more empathetic words from the persona:

Poore Hart, *why dost thou run so fast? and why,*
Behind thee dost thou looke, when thou dost fly?
As if thou seem'dst in thy swift flight, to heare
Those dangers *following thee, which thou dost feare?*
Alas! thou labour'st, and thou runn'st in vaine,
To shunne, by flight, *thy* terrors, *or thy* paine*;*
For, loe, thy Death, *which thou hast dreaded so,*
Clings fast unto thee, wheresoere thou goe:
And while thou toyl'st, an outward-ease *to win,*
Thou draw'st thine owne destruction *further* in*;*
Making that Arrow, *which but prickes thy hide,*
To pierce thy tender entrailes, through thy side. (214)

Along with the pragmatic, down-to-earth, and extremely realistic references to husbandry and the quiet satisfactions of rural life analysed in Chapter IV, these excerpts testify to Wither's unfeigned concern for the state of nature, not merely as a *Liber Naturae*, but as a material environment harbouring life. This is perhaps clearest in emblem I-35, the *pictura* of which shows a man planting a tree, below the motto couplet "*He that delights to* Plant *and* Set, / *Makes* After-Ages *in his* Debt" (35). From the first line of the *subscriptio* onwards, the persona firmly anchors the emblem in the utterly contemporary issue of disafforestation and its dramatic consequences:

When I behold the Havocke and the Spoyle,

> *Which (ev'n within the compasse of my Dayes)*
> *Is made through every quarter of this* Ile,
> *In* Woods *and* Groves *(which were this Kingdomes praise)*
> *And, when I minde with how much greedinesse,*
> *We seeke the present Gaine, in every thing;*
> *Not caring (so our* Lust *we may possesse)*
> *What Dammage to* Posterity *we bring* […]. (ibid.)

These words echo the concerns of many of Wither's contemporaries on the matter. McColley quotes a passage from Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* (1612), Waltham Forest personified speaks as follows:

> *The Ridge and Furrow shewes, that once the crooked Plow,*
> *Turn'd up the grassy turfe, where Oakes are rooted now:*
> *And at this hour we see, the Share and Coulter teare*
> *The full corne-bearing gleabe, where sometimes forrests were;*
> *And those but Caitifes are, which most doe seeke our spoyle,*
> *Who having sold our woods, doe lastly sell our soyle.* (Song XIX, ll. 27–8 and 41–2, p. 398, quoted in McColley 2007: 99)

It is worth noting that the disafforestation controversy was not structured neatly along partisan lines:

> *Trees were cut by both sides in the civil wars and by both monarchs and Protector to pay the King's and the Commonwealth's war bills, to feed and warm the poor in hard times, and to replenish the naval fleet and increase trade. Motives for preserving and restoring forests were mixed all along the political spectrum. Both royalists and republicans took a managerial approach to nature, and no party can claim all the credit or blame either for the new respect for trees that began to spring up as they were cut down or for the centuries of deforestation* […]. (100)

Wither's text can therefore not be deemed "radical" here, but it certainly captures the spirit of

the opponents of the ill-considered destruction of local ecosystems, as the following passage from John Evelyn's *Sylva* (1670), which was written to advise Parliament on a more efficient and sustainable way of managing woodlands, evidences:

> *The Sacrilegious* Purchasers, *and disloyal* Invaders *in this Iron-Age amongst us, who have lately made so prodigious a spoyl of those goodly* Forests, Woods, *and* Trees *(to gratifie an impious and unworthy* Avarice*) which being once the Treasure and Ornament of this* Nation, *were doubtlesse reserved by our more prudent* Ancestors *for the repairs of our floating* Castles, *the* safeguard *and* boast *of this renowned* Island, *when* Necessity, *or some imminent Peril should threaten it, or call for their Assistance [...].* (244)

Both in emblem I-35 and in Evelyn's text, the main emphasis is put on the moral shortcoming of greedy exploiters of England's once "goodly Forests, Woods, and Trees", whose blind avarice is considered unmitigated and even "impious" treachery, both against "our more prudent Ancestors" in *Sylva*, and against "their Heires" in the emblem. In this instance, the urgency of the political message conveyed by the emblem even overshadows the need for an allegorisation of the tree motif, which is relied on for its mimetic, rather than its symbolic content, at least until the final couplet of Wither's *subscriptio*: "If, *After-Ages* may my *Labours* blesse; / I care not, *much,* how *Litle* I possesse" (1635: 35). In hindsight, the fundamentally political nature of many of his emblems is contained in these two lines, as the book is a symbolic seed planted, the poet's best attempt at "Charity [which] for others doth prepare; / And joys in that, which *Future-Time* shall gaine" (ibid.).

5. Conclusion: "That, *Vanitie* might not, to worse ends, get them wholly into her Possession": A Democratic Subversion of the Emblem Genre?

In 1980, Saunders published an article in which she argued that two of Gilles Corrozet's emblem books, the *Emblemes* (1543) and the *Hecatomgraphie* (1548), even so early in the development of the genre, were already composed with a wider audience in mind than the courtly readers of their arcane counterparts. Both works, Saunders states, "cover a wide variety of themes, but what they all have in common is their didactic nature, and their technique of using a combination of illustration and text to put across a moral lesson in a

pleasing and therefore more palatable form" (9), a description that sounds oddly familiar. Saunders' explanation that the makeup of both works, especially the shorter *Emblemes*, was due to the active participation of the printer in the process for commercial reasons also echoes the remarks made by Wither's persona in the epistle "To the Reader":

> *Where Corrozet wished to teach his readers the path of virtue by means of illustrated moralising literature, Janot was a professional printer whose aim was presumably to make a good profit from the books he printed. Not only did Janot believe in the attraction of woodcut illustration as a good selling point, however; he also believed in getting full value from the money expended in acquiring his woodblocks*. (11-12)

On a par with Wither's aversion for "Wordy Flourishes" and "Impertinent Clinches (1635: TR.-1), Corrozet's erudition "is never stressed for its own sake, but is rather used discreetly, and unobtrusively, and is clearly intended to be subordinate to the moralising intent" (26-27), all of which are features that Saunders considers to be evidence for the books' being intended for a "popular audience", although she readily admits to having faced the usual difficulties in determining who exactly such an expression could refer to in sixteenth-century France (28).

Saunders' article constitutes a valuable precedent to support the argument of Wither's political repurposing of the emblems, which immediately raises the fascinating question of the manner in which emblem books inserted themselves into "popular culture" in England, and how each one influenced the other. Furthermore, it opens up new avenues of research into the manner in which Wither's emblems may have contributed to shaping political and social discourse in early Stuart England, if, indeed, the *Collection* was perceived as a political work at the time. If so, it does appear that both Corrozet and Wither managed, indeed, to wrest the genre out of the hands of the "Overweening-wise", and to prevent "Vanitie" from "[getting it] wholly into her Possession […] to worse ends" (1635: TR.-1-2).

As we shall see, however, the most remarkable originality of *A Collection of Emblemes* resides not with the religious or political idiosyncrasies expressed in the emblems proper, but in the manner in which the included lottery game manages to turn them into an interactive, immediate, and palpable experience for his readers, provided they be willing to partake in it.

Chapter IX - “Ev’ry Gamester winneth by the Sport”: Wither’s Lottery and the Rhetorical Possibilities of Play

1. Introduction

Wither’s emblem lottery, which is, perhaps, the most immediately perceptible peculiarity of *A Collection of Emblemes*, is consistently mentioned, but all too rarely granted any sustained attention, in studies on the volume. The existence of a precedent in emblematic literature, a similar device in Jan David’s *Veridicus Christianus* (1601), has prompted scholars such as Freeman (1970: 143) and Bath (1994: 123-124) to assume a filial link between them, the latter even arguing that David’s mechanism was the “immediate model” for Wither’s, and was the primary reason for his reorganising the emblems in four books rather than two, as Rollenhagen and De Passe had done (124). Bath is likely to be right in this respect, and he is, to my knowledge, the first to have pointed out the close connection between the game and the frontispiece, to which we shall return. In the short chapter that he devoted to Wither’s emblems in *Speaking Pictures*, however, he probably did not have the space to expand very much on the significance of the lottery as a structuring mechanism and as a reflection on the concept of Fortune, which, as Buttay-Jutier (2008) and Brendecke and Vogt eds (2017) have shown, was both ubiquitous in, and central to, early modern iconography and philosophy. In an article devoted solely to Wither’s lottery in the 2008 issue of *Emblematica*, Ripollés took over where Bath’s analysis ended, and pointed out the intricate relationship between the game and the treatment of the idea of Fortune in the emblems proper, thus establishing a useful framework for further enquiry. Although, as I shall attempt to prove, some of her conclusions do not hold up to scrutiny, I am deeply indebted to her work nonetheless, which certainly formed the backdrop for my own examination of the subject.

This chapter will begin by providing useful contextual elements about lottery games in the early modern period, and will identify a source from which Wither drew equally, if not more, as from the *Veridicus Christianus*. Furthermore, after a careful discussion of Ripollés’ article, it will attempt to show that the lottery game can be construed as an exercise in “Self-Fashioning”, and as an effort, on the poet’s part, to reclaim a small measure of authority, even over the most powerful among prospective players.

2. "An *Ale-house* at the *Church-Stile*": Moral and Political Contexts for Lottery Games in Early Stuart England

Although the addition of the lottery game to the emblems is advertised plainly in the extended title of the book – *A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne, Quickened with Metricall Illustrations, both Morall and Divine, And disposed into Lotteries, That Instruction, and Good Counsell, may bee furthered by an Honest and Pleasant Recreation* – Wither's persona, in the parts of the paratext addressed to the reader, shows a peculiar eagerness to present the game as a feature of minimal importance, and to pre-emptively address anticipated criticism of its mild frivolity. Having insisted on its selfless wish "to profit my *Readers,* [rather] than to gaine their praise" (TR.-2), the persona justifies the existence of the lottery by appealing to the need to "allure [the Common-sort] to the more serious observation of the profitable Morals, couched in these Emblems" (ibid), and adds, in the following section titled "The Occasion, Intention, and Use of the Foure Lotteries adjoyned to these Foure Bookes of Emblems":

> *I confesse that this Devise may probably be censured, as unsutable to the gravitie expected in my ripe yeares: and be reputed as great an Indecorum, as erecting an* Ale-house *at the* Church-stile [...]. (Wither [1635] 1975: Occ.-1).

The final simile directly echoes the short *exemplum* that appears just before in the same section:

> *I have often observed, that where the* Summer-bowers *of Recreation are placed neare the* Church, *it drawes thither more people from the remote* Hamlets, *than would else be there. Now, though I praise not their* Devotion, *yet I am glad if any thing (which is not evill in it selfe) may be made an occasion of* Good [...]. (ibid.)

Wither is probably referring to the practice called "Church-Ales", which Thiselton describes as follows:

> *An important festival in many of our old country perishes, was the Church-Ale, which, originally instituted in honour*

> *of the church saint was, in after years, frequently kept up for the purpose of contributing towards the repairs of the church. [...] On such an occasion, it was the business of the churchwardens to have brewed a considerable quantity of strong ale, a custom which, it is said, led 'to a great pecuniary advantage, for the rich thought it a meritorious duty, besides paying for their ale, to offer largely to the church fund'*[1]. (Thiselton 1892: 322).

Thiselton shows that this practice was already well-established in the 1570s and 80s (323), but that it had probably originated much earlier, as there is evidence pointing to such events occurring in the fifteenth century already (324). The existence of such events is relevant to Wither's pre-emptive admission that his game might be considered an "Indecorum", as Thiselton continues as follows:

> *But, like other festival gatherings, the church-ale, in course of time, was abused; and it is recorded how actually in the body of the church, when the people were assembled together for devotion, they not only turned their attention to diversions, but even introduced drinking. Another cause of complaint arose from the church-ale being occasionally celebrated on a Sunday; and in a sermon preached by one William Kethe, at Blandford Forum, in 1570, this passage occurs: 'Which holy day, the multitude call their revelyng day, which day is spent in bull-beatings, beau-beatings*[2]*, dicyng, cardyng, daunsynges, drunkenness, etc.'* (322-323)

Interestingly, repudiations of this kind notwithstanding, church-ales were only banned in the Canons of 1683 (323), so there is little doubt that Wither would have witnessed, or even attended, such events. In fact, his choice to liken the lottery game to the merry entertainment that was offered on these occasions may have been the spontaneous result of his familiarity

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[1] Thiselton does not provide the source for his quote.

[2] To my great disappointment, my extensive - and fruitless - search for information on the practice of "beau-beating" compels me to conclude that the author merely misspelled "bear-baiting".

with them, rather than that of careful consideration, as the lottery, being a game of chance, could easily have been assimilated to the indulging in "dicyng" and "cardyng" that Kethe deplored in the quote above. In fact, Wither's persona concludes the section titled "The Occasion [...]" by adding onto the prose text the following verses:

> This *Game* occasions not the frequent crime,
> Of *Swearing,* or mispending of our *Time;*
> Nor losse of money: For, the *Play* is *short,*
> And, ev'ry *Gamester* winneth by the sport.
> Wee, therefore, know it may aswell become
> The *Hall,* the *Parlor,* or the *Dining roome,*
> As *Chesse,* or *Tables;* and, we thinke the *Price*
> Will be as low; because, it needs no *Dice.* (Occ.-2)

Here, the lottery is presented exclusively as a game to be played inside, and likened to chess and "Tables" – which could refer to a number of different games played on a backgammon board (Leibs 2004: 99) – neither of which is frequently associated with gambling, and certainly not to the same extent as cards or dice, an accessory which, the persona seems to brag, is not necessary to play the lottery game, a point to which we shall return. It is not surprising either that Wither's persona would insist on the brevity of the process of turning the pointer and reading the lottery verses and the emblem. Indeed, Munting argues that the main concern that might have prompted the king or Parliament to restrict or prohibit gambling among the population at large was not so much a moral, but a practical one: that of preventing people from wasting their time, which could otherwise be spent in devotional or productive activities (1993: 296-297). In fact, for this reason, Munting states that "the target was games rather than gambling" (297). Of course, this does not entail that games based on chance were exempt from condemnation by other parties. For instance, in his straightforward pamphlet *A short and plaine dialogue concerning the vnlawfulnes of playing at cards or tables, or any other game consisting in chance* (1593), the divine James Balmford argues that any leisurely activity based on chance is to be prohibited as "we are not to tempt the Almightie by a vaine desire of manifestation of his power and speciall prouidence"[1]. He adds that drawing lots is lawful only insofar as it is used to "end controversies", a use for which it

[1] The pages in Balmford's work are not numbered.

was "*sanctified*" by the Lord[1], and, naturally, "whatsoeuer God hath sanctified to a proper end, is not to bee peruerted to a worse". To Balmford, a game's unlawfulness is proportional to the part chance plays in it: "Againe, if Dice be wholly euill, because they wholly depend vpon chance, then Tables and Cards must needes be somewhat euill, because they somewhat depend vpon chance". In fact, a well-known controversy arose in the 1620s between Balmford and Thomas Gataker[2], another divine and author of a treatise titled *Of the nature and vse of lots* (1627). Gataker argues, firstly, that lots can be divided into two categories:

> *Lots therefore may be all well referred to two heads, and sorted into two ranks, either of Ordinarie, of which kind those are which they commonly terme Diuisorie; or of Extraordinary, such as the Consultorie and Diuinatorie are* [...]. (34-35)

"Diuisorie" lots are precisely those that Balmford refers to as being lawful, as they are divinely sanctioned in scripture, although Gataker subdivides them into "serious" and "lusurious" lots (35), where both are, broadly speaking, used as a manner to settle any question that can suitably be determined through chance, but where the subject matter differs. Obviously, lots used to address questions arising in the course of commercial, political, or judicial affairs would be deemed "serious", while "lusurious" lots are "such as be vsed in game, sport or pastime" (117), which includes, for instance, picking teams, determining who shall have the first turn at a game, or choosing the person in attendance who has to tell a story or solve a riddle first (119-120). To critics such as Balmford, who condemned the "lusurious" kind, Gataker opposes the following rebuttal:

> *But to returne to the two former sorts, it is well obserued by one of the latter ranke of them, that some of the reasons produced by the former for the disallowing of the one kinde, if the grounds be admitted, cannot chuse but*

[1] For instance, in Numbers 26:55, God decrees that Moses should divide the land among the children of Israel by casting lots.

[2] It is likely that Wither had read Gataker's treatise, as the verses quoted above, in which the poet assures the reader that his lottery game is exempt from the reprehensible features of other games of chance (i.e. swearing, misspending of time, and loss of money), mirror the structure of Gataker's listing of, and answering to, "the Arguments lesse principall against lusurious lots": 1. Cursing, banning and blaspheming: / 2. Losse of time, and decay of health: / 3. Vnlawfull gaine, or desire of gaine: / 4. And lastly, wasting of wealth." (Gataker 1619: 182).

> *condemne both kindes. For if the one be euill and not allowable because they depend vpon Lot and Chance, then the other must likewise be euill and vnwarrantable so far forth as in part also they depend thereupon. And on the other side if those former Authors will avow and iustifie the one, they cannot but secretly withall giue sentence also for the other, since they stand both on the same ground, and are built both on one botome.* (126)

Gataker then spends two chapters answering the arguments of the opponents of "lusurious" lots, chiefly among them Balmford's. He addresses them individually and thoroughly, quoting them in full, and then pointing out what he identifies as their logical flaws. The arguments are elaborate and long-winded, but some of Gataker's position on the question are relevant to Wither's lottery, and could be summarised as follows:

1) Contrary to the opponents of "lusurious" lots, who consider that a lot is to be likened to an intervention of divine providence every time, and ought, therefore, not to be used in vain, Gataker draws a clear distinction between events that are caused by "God's immediate Providence" or his "speciall Presence" (143) and mere "casuall events", which imply no such direct involvement on the Lord's part.

2) Balmford and others consider lots to be on a par with divine sentences and oracles, in that they should be seen as final, irrevocable decisions of God, which, again, one should not use in vain. Gataker retorts that there is a very important distinction between lots, on the one hand, and such divine, and therefore binding, mandates, on the other: once an ordinary lot is cast, the caster and the other parties to the interaction may still agree, collectively, to disregard the lot and cast it again, or to reach a decision in another manner, whereas no such compromise is possible with respect to divine decree (164-165).

3) Those who repudiate the use of "lusurious" lots also make the argument that "the end and scope of play in Lottery cannot be had", and that, since "[t]hat is no lawfull matter of sport and pastime, wherein the end and scope of sport is not or cannot be had", lotteries are to be deemed "unlawfull" (178-179). Gataker quotes his opponents who assert that "the end and scope of play is thereby to exercise either the ability of

the body or the industrie of the minde" (179). Gataker replies that the premise is incorrect to begin with. He considers the end and scope of recreation to be, chiefly "as the very name of it implieth, to recreate and refresh the minde, or body, or both by delight" (ibid.). He continues as follows:

> *Neither is it a thing simply euill or disallowable to take delight in the casuall and vncertaine or unexpected euent of a thing, (that which maketh iests and witty speeches many times the more pleasant, in regard thet the answere is other in them then was expected) as being a matter light and friuolous; since of recreations it is not required that they be serious.* (181)

In the next chapter, however, Gataker insists that, for all their lawfulness in principle, "lusurious lots, as all other recreations, are to be vsed soberly, seasonably, ingenuously, inoffensiuely, prudently, and religiously" (236). "Soberly", he states, is to be taken to mean "moderately" (ibid.); "seasonably" is self-explanatory; "ingeniously" ought to be understood as "freely and liberally: not with any greedy desire of lucre and gaine" (249); a game is used "prudently", Gataker states, if "*we vse not these games vnlesse we can rest quiet and content with the euent of them:* and againe, *if we can, that we doe so vse them, that we may not be tempted to disquiet and discontent thereupon"* (258); finally, "these recreations are to be vsed reuerently and religiously, that is, with such due reuerence and regard of Gods maiesty, and of his presence and prouidence, as the nature of the busines that we are about doth either exact or admit" (ibid.). Given one's abiding by these principles, Gataker considers lotteries to be a perfectly acceptable pastime, and concludes by repurposing[1] Saint Paul's words (Romans 14:3): "*Let not him that plaieth, contemne him that plaieth not; nor let him that plaieth not, condemne him that plaieth"* (267). If Wither knew Gataker's treatise, he was, likewise, aware of the controversy in which it partook, and thus anticipated the censure of the Balmfords of the 1630s regarding the "indecorous" nature of his emblem lottery. Hence, probably, his insistence, on his having "alwaies intermingled *Sports* with *Seriousnesse* in my *Inventions*" (TR.-2) and on the game being a mere "Morall Pastime" (Occ.-2), and on his addition of the lottery to the volume "*[t]hat Instruction, and Good Counsell, may bee*

[1] The actual verse in the *King James Bible* says: "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him."

furthered by an Honest and Pleasant Recreation" (title page). Hence, also, another disclaimer on the part of Wither's persona about another aspect of the game, still very much connected to Gataker's views.

Chapters X and XI of *Of the nature and vse of lots* are devoted to "Extraordinary or Divinatory Lots" (1627: 268 ff), which Gataker strictly distinguishes from those discussed above:

> *[I]t is not at all in the naturall power either of the persons vsing them or of the creatures vsed in them, to effect necessarily that whereunto they are vsed; but some other secret worke, either diuine or diabolicall, is of necessitie thereunto required.* (269)

Although he goes on to mention numerous scriptural examples of the use of such lots, he is very unequivocal about their unlawfulness in his own time. As divinatory lots are assimilated to various forms of witchcraft, "and they are all alike prohibited and condemned by God, as being practises that *pollute* all that vse them, if not in body, yet in soule; and that make them *abominable,* if not in mans eye, yet in Gods sight" (306). Gataker elaborates on the reasons for such a peremptory prohibition: firstly, the use of such lots testifies to "a point of vaine, yea of impious Curiosity to enquire into those things that God hath concealed and kept in his owne power" (307); secondly, "such courses make the Vsers of them guilty of Superstition. For what is Superstition but to ascribe that to a Creature, or to vse a Creature to that end, which it hath no naturall power and efficacie vnto, or whereunto it is not by any diuine ordinance enabled" (309); thirdly:

> *[T]hose that thus vse Lotery stand guilty of Idolatry. For what is it but Idolatrie to ascribe that to the Creature that is proper to the Creator? But in such cases is that ascribed to the creature that is proper to the Creator, namely to foretell things future without the causes or grounds or naturall signes of them, such as the Lot whereby they are foretold hath no connexion or congruity at all with.* (311-312)

Gataker's stern and lengthy rejection of the use of lots for divinatory or prophetic purposes testifies to the ambivalent status of vaticinal practices at the time. Prophecies and almanacs were published regularly throughout the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries[1], but influential commentators also insisted on the unlawfulness of the practice, most notably, perhaps, Francis Bacon, in his essay "Of Prophecies", in which, after having specified that he excludes "divine prophecies", "heathen oracles", and "natural predictions" from his remarks (2001: 131), goes on to state: "My judgment is, that they ought all to be despised; and ought to serve but for winter talk by the fireside" (133). Bacon names three reasons for his dismissive stance:

> *First, that men mark when they hit, and never mark when they miss; as they do generally also of dreams. The second is, that probable conjectures, or obscure traditions, many times turn themselves into prophecies; while the nature of man, which coveteth divination, thinks it no peril to foretell that which indeed they do but collect. […] The third and last (which is the great one) is, that almost all of them, being infinite in number, have been impostures, and by idle and crafty brains merely contrived and feigned, after the event past.* (133-134)

Others shared Bacon's rejection of lots, but on different grounds. As early as the very beginning of the fifteenth century, Henry IV outlawed prophesising, and several of his successors followed suit to a greater or a lesser extent, notably Henry VIII, who "in 154I-2 made it punishable by death to apply prophecies to badges, insignia, the animals in heraldic arms and the like animals in heraldic arms and the like" (Rusche 1969: 753-754, note 2), a statute that was confirmed by Edward VI and by Elizabeth I in the sixteenth century. Rusche goes on to quote from the opening statement of the status passed by Edward:

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[1] Among many others, notable volumes include Anthony Hollaway's *A most strange and vvonderfull prophesie vpon this troublesome world calculated by the famous doctor in astrologie, Maister Iohn Cypriano* (1595) and *A prophesie that hath lyen hid, aboue these 2000. yeares Wherein is declared all the most principall matters that hath fallen out, in, and about the ciuill and ecclesiasticall monarchie of Rome, from the rising of Iulius Cæsar, to this present* (1597), simply signed "T. L." but attributed to Thomas Lupton by B.S. Capp in *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Milleniarism*, London, 1972, p. 290, which was published regularly between 1597 and 1651 under several titles. See Brady, D. (1979). "1666: The year of the beast", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 61(2), 314-336. pp. 314-315, and, of course, the ever-popular *Prophecie of Mother Shipton* (1641).

> *Where nowe of late* […] *divers evill disposed parsons, mynding to stirr and move sedicion disobedience and rebellion, have of their perverse minds feyned ymagined invented published and practysed dyvers fantasticall and fonde Prophesyes, concerning the King's Majestie, dyvers honorable parsons, gentlemen and commons of this Realme, to the great disturbance and perill of the King's Majestie and this his Realme.* (ibid.)

Contrary to Bacon, it is not the absurd or fraudulent nature of prophecies that is considered harmful, but their potency as tools of sedition, a question to which we shall return.

3. "I have therefore added *Lotteries* to these *Emblems*": *A Collection of Emblemes* and the "Losbuch"-Tradition

In their respective studies about predictive play in the early modern period and about interactive printmaking, Jessen Lee Kelly (2011) and Suzanne Karr-Schmidt (2017) have shown the popularity of so-called "lottery books" throughout continental Europe, especially in Italy and, predominantly, in Germany and in other northern countries. Kelly mentions the definition of the term provided by Johannes Bolte, who wrote an extensive history of the genre:

> *As defined by the literary historian Johannes Bolte, a lottery book is "a collection of prose or metrical oracles, one of which may be obtained by the curious inquirer in a manner that is not dependent on his own calculations, but rather on the mysterious exercise of an instrument subjected to and set in motion by chance"*[1]. (2011: 44)

Kelly adds:

> *Serving as a mediator between the questioner and the array of possible oracles within the book's pages, this instrument can take a number of different shapes. Most often, it is a device that has strong connections to themes*

[1] Kelly is translating from Bolte, J. "Zur Geschichte der Losbücher." In *Georg Wickrams Werke*, 276-342. Stuttgart, 1903.

> *of fortune and games of chance, connections which both augment and insist on the aleatory element of the process.* (ibid.)

The process through which the reader would cast the lots could vary, but most lottery books proposed one of three methods: simply opening the book at a random page; the casting of dice, which the reader had to provide; or the use of a *volvelle*, a disc made out of paper or cardboard with which the reader could interact, thus removing the need for dice and turning the book into an amusing object of play. The *volvelle* was usually circular, and was therefore also endowed with the familiar symbolism of the wheel of Fortune, thus placing the process under the -sometimes dubious – auspices of this complex allegorical figure, to which we shall turn shortly as well. Karr-Schmidt explains that lottery dials were commonplace in the fifteenth century, and that they were used as calendars, astrological tools, or even as means to decode hidden messages (2017: 24-28). The first Christian lottery book, she argues, was invented in Strasbourg by Heinrich Vogtherr the Elder, whose 1539 work *Eyn schöne und Gotselige Kurtzweil/eines Chrislichen Loßbuchs* ("A pleasant and pious pastime [by way] of a Christian lottery book") allowed readers to "teach [themselves] the mysteries of faith" by spinning a *volvelle* with the infant Christ in its centre, which would stop on a letter that would, in turn, direct the reader towards "edifying religious fortunes listed alphabetically" (95-96). The resemblance to Wither's emblem book is obvious, and a very similar device appears in another emblem book as well, the *Veridicus Christianus* (1601) by the Dutch Jesuit Jan David, which was illustrated by Theodor Galle and published in Antwerpen. Karr-Schmidt shows that David and Galle drew heavily on Vogtherr's design, with a few technical modifications. David calls his device the "Orbita probitatis" ("Wheel of Probity") (1601: 351 ff.), as the reader is instructed to turn the wheel, which will indicate the number of the emblem that is to be sought in the volume, read, and then meditated.

For reasons I have been unable to ascertain, however, lottery books appear to have been much less popular in England than they were on the continent. Neither Kelly, nor Karr-Schmidt, nor John Ashton, the author of the dated but rather comprehensive *History of English Lotteries* (1893) and *History of Gambling in England* (1898), mention any English representatives of the genre, and, if they exist, they have, to my knowledge, not been granted any scholarly attention. Wither's sources of inspiration for the devising of his lottery game were therefore probably continental, and it is not unlikely at all that he had had access to David's emblem book, perhaps during his traveling to the Low Countries in the early 1630s.

There is, however, very little doubt indeed that Wither had read another, Italian lottery book, Lorenzo Spirito's *Libro dela ventura,* which was first printed in Venice in 1537 and which was translated into English by an unknown person and printed in London for Thomas Wright in 1618. Just like Wither, Spirito's translator disclaims any divinatory nature of the book:

> *It is named the Booke of Fortune, as comprehending things that lye under chance, destiny, or lot, answering and declaring twenty questions following, after the manner of Astronomie. Nevertheless I will that every man know that it is no Astronomie, Necromancy, nor Witch-craft, but rather a Conceipt scorning privily them that follow such false illusions: and as I said before, made for recreation of the mind. Therefore it is not required that credence and faith bee given to every figure and Clause as it sheweth.* (1618: $A1_r$)

The book functions in a manner less straightforward than David's or Wither's: firstly, the reader/player is to choose one of the questions that appear on the second page of the work, surrounding a woodcut of a wheel of fortune; the questions are of a secular, and often pragmatic nature, and range from the trivial to the more ominous: "If thy land will give much fruit and seede", "if it be good to take thy journey", "if love lost may be gotten again", or "in what manner thou shalst dye" ($A1_v$). Notably, as is the case in Wither's lottery game, some entries are gender-specific – "If thy wife be goode or bad" and "If thy husband be goode or bad" are separate questions – and others are more or less appropriate depending on one's social class: "If thy Soveraigne Lady love thee" and "If the people love thee" (ibid.) for instance. The subsequent procedure in quite convoluted: each question directs to the picture of one of twenty named kings who are depicted on the following three pages, among whom one finds Priam, Tarquin, Romulus, Arthur, Agamemnon, Darius, or Hannibal. Below the picture of each monarch, a further indication directs the reader to the name of a philosopher or notable classical scholar, such as Cicero, Democritus, Plato, or Diogenes. These names, in turn, appear as the headings of further pages, each of which shows all fifty-six possible combinations one might obtain by casting three dice, each corresponding to "one of the seaven planets, or else to one of the twelve Signes Celestiall", each of which is represented by an elaborate circular engraving on another page yet, which contains yet another set of references, this time to one of twenty "astronomers" accompanied by a number, under whose

name, to be sought in the final set of pages, the – perseverant - reader would then read the quatrain, among fifty-six, that bears the same number, and that, finally, answers the initial question. The quatrains are remarkably similar to Wither's lottery verses in that they often address the reader directly, sometimes in a somewhat derisive tone, and occasionally make use of the first-person pronoun, points to which we shall return. Here are a few examples taken from Spirito's work:

> *Take a husband, loose not your age,*
> *You shall have one of full good lineage,*
> *Forsake him not, and wot ye why?*
> *Such another, shall ye not espy.* (28, number 13)
>
> *Of men and women, both more and lesse,*
> *Loved thou art for thy goodnesse,*
> *One except, I shew not his name,*
> *The which desireth thy hurt and shame. (30, number 15)*
>
> *Be sure of money, in time of neede,*
> *For money shalt thou thy matter speed,*
> *For money thou mayst have Right and Law,*
> *Without money thou mayst thy nails gnaw. (32, number 1)*

The most important connection between *The Booke of Fortune* and *A Collection of Emblemes*, however, lies in the number of possible lots that can be drawn in one turn of the game, and answers a question that has hitherto puzzled the few critics who have raised it:

> *Though there are only fifty emblems to each book, [...] the numbers on the circumference [of the lottery dial] range from one to fifty-six – the last six lots are thus drawn blank, for reasons best known to Wither.* (Bath 1994: 123).

The most obvious answer is that Wither initially intended to have his game function like Spirito's, but then changed his mind. If he planned for the lottery to be played with a set of three dice, he would have had to provide for the fifty-six possible combinations, as Spirito had done, which compelled him to add six additional "blank lots" to the fifty corresponding

the emblems in each book. Wither even provides two pieces of evidence for this in the *Collection*, one of which even explains why he decided to replace the dice with a *volvelle*. At the end of the section titled “The Occasion, Intention, and Use of the Foure Lotteries…”, the persona shifts from straightforward prose to verse, and appends the following octave to the instructions:

> This *Game* occasions not the frequent crime,
> *Of Swearing,* or mispending *of* our *Time;*
> Nor losse *of* money: For, the *Play* is *short,*
> And, ev'ry *Gamester* winneth by the sport.
> Wee, therefore, know it may aswell become
> The *Hall,* the *Parlor,* or the *Dining roome,*
> As *Chesse,* or *Tables;* and, we thinke the *Price*
> Will be as low; because, it needs no *Dice* (1635: Occ.-2).

The final couplet could be construed as an expression of self-satisfaction, on the persona’s part, of having been able to make the game more convenient, as, through the substitution of a lottery dial for dice, it becomes self-contained and requires no additional equipment. Later, in the “Direction”, which explains more precisely how the lottery is to be used, the persona repeats that it has “contrived” the device “without the use of *Dice*; lest by bringing them into sight, they might, sometimes, occasion worse *Gaming*” (Dir.).

This, in turn, begs another question regarding the composition of the work. As was discussed in Chapter III, Wither states that he started writing his own *subscriptiones* to De Passe’s engravings around 1615, but that he did not, at this point, intend to publish his work. Given that the English translation of Spirito’s work was first printed in 1618, it was, perhaps, upon coming across *The Booke of Fortune* that Wither decided to complete his own version of the emblems and to “dispose them into Lotteries” as the full title of his book puts it. Although there is no way of proving it, the lottery game, upon close examination, actually appears to be far more than a mere fanciful addition to the volume, and, in fact, constitutes one of its major structural aspects, which may suggest that Wither intended *A Collection of Emblemes* primarily as a lottery book which merely happened to be outfitted with emblems, rather than the opposite. But the game’s contribution to the overall literary and rhetorical purpose of the work extends beyond the structural. Indeed, its mechanism combines reader agency with a measure of contingency, while the persona simultaneously remains ambiguous as to the vaticinal power of the game, thus begging the question of the role Fate and Fortune

– two prominent themes in many of Wither's emblems – have to play in assigning the lots, and in the players' ultimate decision as to the best course of action to be taken once the process has been set in motion.

4. "I Should not care how hard my *Fortunes* were": The Lottery as a Way of Mimicking and Subverting the Powers of Fortune

In the epistle "To the Reader", Wither's persona states the following:

> *In these* Lots *and* Emblems *I have the same ayme which I had in my other* Writings*: and, though I have not dressed them sutably to curious* Fancies*, yet, they yield wholesome nourishment to strengthen the constitution of a* Good-life*; and have solidity enough for a* Play-game*, which was but accidentally composed* […]. (1635: TR.-2)

By "curious Fancies" – the adjective is to be understood to mean "Ingenious, skilful, clever, expert" (*OED,* entry "curious, adj., 4.) – the persona means the same "Overweening-Wise" (ibid.) who, it supposes, would not learn anything from the emblems that they had not known before already. But, more importantly, it is the claim that the lottery was "but accidentally composed" that deserves to be granted some attention. Indeed, as was mentioned above, the persona compares the game to a form of light-hearted entertainment to "allure" its readers to the "Morals, and good Counsels tendred in [the]Illustrations" (Occ.-1), and even claims that it was appended to the emblems begrudgingly, for mainly pragmatic reasons:

> *The world is growne so in Love with* Follie, *that the Imprinting of over-solid and serious* treatises *would undoe the Book-sellers; especially, being so chargeable as the many costly* Sculptures *have made this Booke: therefore, (to advance their* Profits, *rather than to satisfie my owne* Iudgement*) I was moved to invent somewhat, which might be likely to please the vulgar Capacitie, without hindrance to my chiefe* End.

This pre-emptive caveat is a remarkable instance of shifting responsibility from the author of the book, who devised and included the lottery, to the potential readers, on the one hand, who would simply be unwilling to spend money on an expensive book of emblems if it did not cater to their "Love [of] Follie"; and to the booksellers, on the other, who, the passive voice

"I was moved to invent" suggests, are alleged to have pressured the author to devise the game, lest they be "undone" by the attempt of selling an "over-solid and serious" work. The first claim is obviously untrue: according to *The Catalogue of Most Vendible Books in London* (1657), Quarles's *Emblemes*, which were published the same year as Wither's, and which contain no such device, were just as popular, as were undoubtedly "serious" theological treatises, political pamphlets, and historical works. As far as the other claim is concerned, it is obviously impossible to ascertain who devised the idea of the lottery, but, given Wither's dogged independence when it came to the printing and publication of his works, even under threat of legal proceedings on the part of the Stationer's Company or the Star Chamber[1], it appears unlikely that he could have been "moved" by others to include the game against his better judgement. In fact, in the section titled "The Occasion, *Intention*, and use of the Foure *Lotteries*…", the persona states that the game had "had beginning in my younger days", and that it does "now resolve not to be ashamed of it" (1635: Occ.-2).

The claim that the lottery was "but accidentally composed", on the other hand, appears to be disingenuous. Indeed, Carmen Ripollés published an article on Fortune's role in Wither's emblem book (2008), in which she contends that the concept, which is closely connected to the very nature of the game, actually constitutes an important structuring mechanism of the volume from the very onset.

a. "What *Misfortune* brought to light": The Frontispiece as a *Mise-en-Abyme*

The frontispiece was briefly described in Chapter III, but it is worth returning to the engraving to further examine some of its more intricate details. An overwhelming number of figures, nearly all depicted mid-motion, attract the eye towards every inch of the engraving. Through an ingenious use of perspective, the reader beholds the twin peaks far at the back of the picture and is immediately struck by its symmetrical construction. The path that leads up the left-hand summit starts with series of steep rocks that make for arduous climbing, but then gradually becomes more pleasant, until, finally, one reaches what appears to be the Augustinian City of God, above which a great bird is taking the virtuous pilgrim to heaven. The opposite path, on the contrary, is broad and inviting at first, but becomes increasingly steep, and is fraught with tokens of violence and executions, while an ominous, skeleton-like figure armed with a bow and a sword is waiting.

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[1] See Chapter II.

The simulated proximity to the sombre grotto at the bottom, as opposed to the distance to be covered to reach either summit, suggests that the reader is himself at the beginning of the pilgrimage, and that his fate is still very much open. The title of the work and the name of the author are contained within a sphere at the centre, the curved shading lines of which may even suggest a circular motion, a pictorial reiteration of the predominant role that Fortune, of which the sphere or ball is a common attribute[1], is going to hold in the work. The winged figure rising above the sphere has been identified by Bath as "Urania, heavenly muse, or Holy Spirit", who "holds out the sword of justice and the flail on the side where crime and punishment are taking place with murders and gibbets, and [...] a laurel wreath and open book where the virtuous pilgrims are ascending" (1994: 113). Bath also suggests that the "orchestra of figures in loose robes playing instruments" below the sphere can probably be interpreted as "self-referring – the arts of music/poetry as a spiritual gift, which the book that follows will itself aspire to" (ibid.). Wither's passionate elegy to music in emblem II-3, and his insistence on its moral usefulness[2], further suggests that the musicians playing at the crossroads will encourage the pilgrim to follow the path of virtue. In fact, many of the motifs present in the frontispiece are direct references to emblems contained in the book. The figure being carried to heaven by an eagle at the top of the left-hand peak is nearly identical to the *pictura* of emblem III-22, where Ganymede represents the virtuous soul being lifted up by God (1635: 175). The lovers foolishly enjoying a glass of wine before the temple of Venus on the right side of the picture were simply copied into the frontispiece by Marshall from the *pictura* of emblem II-6, where they sit on the left (92), as is the case for the temple itself, which appears in the background of the same engraving. The two figures fighting with swords and daggers on the right side of the picture, next to the dark silhouette plummeting from the mountain, are very closely modelled on the two gentlemen duelling in emblem II-27 who, to make matters worse, are quarrelling over a "*Strumpet*" (46). Even the hobby-horse ridden by the child in the grotto at the very bottom of the engraving is an echo of one of Wither's statement in his address "To the Reader":

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[1] See for instance emblem III-40, p. 193, which depicts an allegory of Fortune standing on a ball: "She *stands upon a Ball;* that, wee may learne, / Of outward things, the *tottering,* to discerne."

[2] *"Shee, by a nat'rall power, doth helpe to raise, / The mind to God, when joyfull Notes are founded: / And, Passions fierce Distemperatures, alaies; / When, by grave Tones, the Mellody is bounded. / It, also may in Mysticke-sense, imply / What Musicke, in our-selves, ought still to be; / And, that our jarring-lives to certifie, / Wee should in Voice, in Hand, and Heart, agree: / And, sing out, Faiths new-songs, with full concent, Vnto the Lawes, ten-stringed Instrument"* (89).

> *For, I know that the meanest of such conceites are as pertinent to some, as* Rattles *and* Hobby-horses *to Children ; or as the* A.B.C. *and* Spelling *were at first to those Readers, who are now past them.* (TR.-2)

Quite appropriately, the child playing with the hobby-horse, which may represent the reader beholding the pictures for the first time, is still in the dark, having not yet begun the journey of life. And yet, it seems that the hobby-horse is carrying the child towards the right-hand side exit of the grotto, where a figure dressed very similarly – perhaps a representation of the same child once it has reached the age of reason and is ready to exit the darkness - just as the picture may, once it has been apprehended with a more learned and experienced eye, guide the reader in his journey onwards.

Bath has identified the *Tabula Cebetis* as the main source of inspiration for the engraving (1994: 114-115)[1], which also contains certain elements drawn from the classical myth of *Hercules at the Crossroads* (ibid.), where the eponymous demi-god must choose between following the personification of Vertue or that of Vice, which, as was mentioned before, is the topic of emblem I-22 (1635: 22). Bath nonetheless emphasises that much in the picture, such as "the twin peaks, the cavern, the temples", is "original or unusual" (115). The twin peaks can probably be interpreted as an elaborate rendition of the "Pythagorean Y" - which also appears in emblem III-26 (1635: 175)[2] - where each mountain would represent one of the two superior branches of the letter. The concept is expounded in a poem, usually attributed to a "Maximinus", who may or may not be one of two Roman emperors of the same name who reigned from 235 to 238 and from 308 to 313 respectively (Kean 2005: 128-129 and 184-185), which reads as follows:

> *The Pythagoric Letter two ways spread,*
> *Shows the two paths in which Man's life is led.*

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[1] "[The Tabula Cebetis] is a Greek dialogue in which a speaker called Genius explains the meaning of a picture displayed in the temple of Saturn to a group of visitors. The picture represents human life as a series of concentric circles. A gatekeeper, also called Genius, controls the entry of a group of people through the gateway to life. [...] Fortuna stands on her round stone and is blind, and petitioners mistakenly ask her to promote their interests. Another group of female personifications stands beyond the gate, representing the vices which embrace those whom Fortune has favoured; other figures personify the results of such vices, and the pilgrim has to choose between True and False Learning, and the path leads through a narrow gate, which few reach because the path to it is rough and stony, passing uphill over crags where one may fall headlong."

[2] The direct inspiration for the *pictura* is Claude Paradin's emblem "Hac Virtutis Iter" in his *Devises Héroïques* (1557: 238), in which Paradin refers to the "Y" as "*la lettre Pythagorique*", which, when tied in this manner to a harrow, signifies that virtue is to be attained through hard work.

The right hand track to Sacred Virtue tends,
Though steep and rough at first, in rest it ends;
The other broad and smooth, but from its Crown
On rocks the Traveller is tumbled down.
He who to Virtue by harsh toils aspires,
Subduing pains, worth and renown acquires:
But who seeks slothful luxury, and flies,
The labor of great acts, dishonor's dies. (Translated by Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie, quoted in Fideler ed. 1987: 158)

The motif to which we shall devote most of our attention, however, is found between the bottom and the central third of the picture, before the path branches out. Having made their way out of the grotto, either through the left or the right exit, the pilgrims gather around an enormous ewer, from which, it appears, they are to draw their lots. The process is supervised by two allegorical figures; on the left, a female character holding what appears to be a sphere, with a halo around her head, and seemingly encouraging the pilgrims to follow the left-hand path once their lot is known; and, on the right, another, who is holding a sail blowing in the wind, a common attribute of Early Modern allegories of fortune (Buttay-Jutier 2008: 105-111), and whose hand rests on the back of the pilgrim who is drawing his lot. Both Bath and Ripollés therefore identify the right-hand figure as *Fortuna* and the other as Virtue (Bath 1994: 112 and Ripollés, 2008: 119). As I have argued elsewhere (Le Duff 2020: 6-7), the frontispiece therefore constitutes a *mise-en-abyme*: the pilgrimage undertaken by the characters in the engraving from the grotto towards the two summits in the background allegorises the literary journey from child-like ingenuity to moral improvement and salvation, in the course of which the lottery game – in the shape of the ewer – is a central milestone. The process of reading *A Collection of Emblemes* is therefore placed under the encouraging patronage of Virtue, and under the more uncertain auspices of *Fortuna*, who is granted a prominent role to play from the very "Preposition to the Frontispiece" on.

As was mentioned in Chapter III, the persona opens by alleging that William Marshall, the artist who provided the Frontispiece, actually mistook the instructions he was given to such an extent that "the AUTHOR, was as much displeased, as Hee, / In such Adventures, is inclin'd to bee;", and was "halfe resolv'd, to cast this PIECE aside" (1635: Prep.), whereupon, however, "having better ey'd / Those *Errors*, and *Confusions*, which may, there, / Blameworthy (at the first aspect) appear", he reconsidered, coming to the conclusion

that "the *Graver* (by mere *Chance* had hit) / On what, so much transcends the reach of *Wit*, / As made it seeme an Object of *Delight*, / To looke on what MISFORTVNE brought to light" (ibid.). Fortune, then – or so the persona claims – was the actual provider of the Frontispiece, which is therefore akin to the lot drawn by the pilgrim in the ewer, and to the lot obtained by the reader through Wither's emblematic game. Here, at the latest, one may become deeply suspicious of the anecdote. The rather heavy insistence on the "MISFORTVNE" that immediately turns into something delightful if one only gives it a second look, as well as the careful and repeated efforts to divorce the motifs shown in the final engraving from any conscious agency on the artist's part, start to sound rather far-fetched. After all, it seems relatively unlikely that an experienced engraver such as Marshall would so drastically misunderstand the instructions given by Wither as to produce a picture that would not even remotely resemble the one that was intended.

The ideas of initial misfortune due to someone else's mistake, of having a closer look at a seemingly unpleasant situation, and the subsequent discovery of a fortunate aspect to it are all strongly reminiscent of Francis Bacon's essay titled "Of Fortune". His central assertion that "no man prospers so suddenly as by others' errors" (2001: 144) is followed by a set of instructions to retrieve good fortune even in adverse events: "[...] if a man look sharply and attentively, he shall see Fortune: for though she be blind, yet she is not invisible" (ibid.). Instead of yielding to the displeasure, or perhaps even to the sinful wrath, that would have prompted him to "*cast this PIECE aside*", Wither's persona claims that the "AUTHOR" instead chooses to "look sharply and attentively" as Bacon puts it, and to find his fortune in the "Errors, *and* Confusions" in Marshall's work. From the very onset of the book, Wither's persona thus constructs an *exemplum* intended to inspire the reader to become, again in Bacon's words, "the architect of his own fortune" (ibid.). Such a stance is significant, because it necessarily informs Wither's views on a concept that is both extremely common in emblematic representations and inextricably connected to the basic functioning of a lottery game.

b. "This *Motto* falsely saith, her *Fickelnesse*": Playing (with) *Fortuna*

The first emblem in Wither's *Collection* in which a character is identified as Fortune is number I-6, the engraving of which shows three distinct characters: a bearded man being carried upwards by an eagle in the middle, a seated nude female character with short hair, holding a scarf floating in the wind in her left hand and turning the crank of a wheel with her right, thus causing the fall of a man who, presumably was standing on top of the wheel

immediately prior to the scene. It is notable that Rollenhagen does not identify the figure as Fortune, but as Fate – the Latin motto reads "NON OBEST VIRTVTI SORS" ("Fate cannot harm Virtue") – which is consistent with a common view among critics that the medieval "Lady with the Wheel" is actually conceptually closer to the ideas of cyclical time and predetermination than to contingency (see Müller and Gruber 2017: 83, Buttay-Jutier 2008: 87, or Kirchner 1969: 22). This depiction differs greatly from the character who is clearly identified as *Fortuna* both by Rollenhagen and by Wither's persona in emblem III-40, where the female figure is balancing on a sphere, constantly in motion, unpredictable and, according to the persona's comments, blind, or with her eyes closed (1635: 193).

Ripollés then relies on the thesis presented by Kiefer in Chapter VII of his *Fortune and Elizabethan Tragedy* (1983), according to which the allegorical representation of Fortuna was gradually conflated with that of another personified concept known as *Occasio*, also known as "Kairos in Greek […], who wore a forelock to symbolise the auspicious moment that the aspirant must grasp", and also commonly carried a razor, symbolising "the 'narrowness' of the auspicious instant, the edge of the moment between opportunity approaching and opportunity past" (207-208). Kiefer's evidence to the effect that such a conflation often took place is extensive, but, crucially for our purpose, Buttay-Jutier shows that it was not systematic (2008: 117-138), and, *pace* Ripollés' claims (2008: 116-118)[1], the manner in which Wither's persona approaches these concepts and their allegorical depictions in the emblems proper - notably emblem I-4 and emblem III-40 - suggests that he did not subscribe to this view.

At first sight, the figures in these two emblems do show certain similarities. Both are female and nude, both have a lock of hair seemingly only at the front of their heads, both hold a piece of cloth that is swaying in the wind, and a ship is visible in the backgrounds of both pictures. However, to contend, as Ripollés does, that the *picturae* of these two emblems depict the same woman (2008: 117) , seems to be an interpretative stretch. I submit that the face of the woman in the first engraving is no more similar – or dissimilar – to that of the woman in the second, than it is to Pallas's in emblem I-9 (Wither 1635: 9), or to Diana's in emblem I-24 (24). The similarities are probably merely due to De Passe's particular artistic

[1] "With his emblems of Occasio and Fortune Wither seems to have unfolded the complex concept of Fortune in two figures, each of them revealing Fortune's opposite, though also complementary, sides. While one represents the positive and desirable aspect of Fortune, as giver of opportunities, that, like her sensuous body, are offered to be exploited, the other represents her dangerously tempting character. The strong conceptual link between these two sides of Fortune is underscored by the formal resonances between the two emblems. In fact, both emblems depict the same individual, the same female with the same face."

style, and certainly in no way Wither's responsibility. Furthermore, their other attributes differ greatly[1], as do the messages conveyed by Rollenhagen's *inscriptiones*[2]. The distinction between the two figures is made more evident still in Wither's illustrations. While Wither's persona does encourages the reader to seize an opportunity when it presents itself – *"The first* Occasions, *therefore, see thou take, / (Which offred are) to bring thy hopes about; / And, minde thou, still, what* Haste *away they make, / Before thy swift-pac't houres are quite runne out"* (174) - the main point of his *subscriptio* is to comfort those who have missed it, assuring them that time will, in a cyclical fashion, provide new occasions in the future:

> *Yet, if an* Opportunity *be past,*
> *Despaire not thou, as they that hopelesse be;*
> *Since,* Time *may so revolve againe, at last,*
> *That* New-Occasions *may be offred thee.* (ibid.)

The wheel, in Wither's mind, is by no means a symbol of fickleness, but represents the cycle of time, by which new opportunities will present themselves to those who have missed others in the past, an idea that is encapsulated in the English motto couplet: "Occasions-past *are sought in vaine, / But, oft, they* wheele-about *againe"* (ibid.). Where Alciato indicates that *Occasio*'s winged feet are likewise a sign of her unpredictability[3], Wither's persona uses the motif for yet another instance of inter-semiotic playfulness, stating that the reader should mind how quickly occasions disappear when they are missed "*before* [his] *swift-pac't houres are quite runne out*". Aside from the sound advice of doing one's best to take advantage of an opportunity without despairing if one misses it, the emblem conveys a further moral lesson:

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[1] In emblem I-4, p. 23, *Occasio* is holding a razor and is standing on a wheel, a motif that echoes Alciato's emblem *In Occasionem* (consulted on the *Alciato at Glasgow* website: http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A31a017), while the figure of *Fortuna* in emblem III-40, p. 193, is standing on a winged ball and holding a crescent moon.

[2] The *Occasio* engraving is accompanied by the motto "*Ne tenear"* ("So that I not be held"), which is emphasised by Rollenhagen in his short gloss "*Ne tenear postica cavet pars vertice raso, / Caesariem qui scit prendere, fronte sapit"* ("So that I not be held, I protect the back of my head by shaving it, / He who is wise knows to grab the lock of hair I have on my forehead"). Interestingly, the motto mainly explains the presence of the razor in the hand of the figure, and no reference is made to the wheel or to the veil. The motto of the *Fortuna* emblem reads "*Fortuna ut luna"* ("Fortune is like the moon") and is paraphrased as follows by Rollenhagen: "*Vultus* Fortunæ *variatur* imagine lune: / *Stare loco nescit, passibus ambiguis."* ("The appearance of Fortune is changed by the shape of the moon, / She cannot remain in one place as her step is uncertain"). Rollenhagen makes no mention of the lock of hair or of the veil and does not indicate in any way that he understands the figures as conflations of the two concepts, or as two aspects of the notion of "Fortune".

[3] Alciato, *In Occasionem*: "[...] Why do you have winged sandals on your feet? / - The fickle breeze bears me in all directions." Translation provided by the *Alciato at Glasgow* website (http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A31a017).

> *And see, thou trust not on those fading things,*
> *Which by thine owne* Endeavours *thou acquir'st.*
> *For,* Time *(which her owne* Births *to ruine brings)*
> *Will spare, nor* thee, *nor ought which thou desir'st.* (ibid.)

The reader is instructed not to get too attached to "*fading things*", remarkably not those granted by Fortune, as would be the case if both motifs were conflated, but those he acquires through his own agency. Just as strikingly, he is advised thusly not because Fortune might take them away due to her fickleness, but because time will inexorably bring them "*to ruine"*.

One further piece of linguistic evidence should cast an even broader shadow of doubt on the thesis of a *Fortuna-Occasio* conflation. As we have seen, Ripollés argues that both emblems represent the same figure, each "revealing Fortune's opposite, though also complementary, sides" (2008: 117). Why then, would Wither's persona refer to the figure of *Occasio* as a male?

> His Properties, *and* Vses, *what they are,*
> *In vaine observ'd will be, when he is fled:*
> *That, they in season, therefore, may appeare,*
> *Our* Emblem, *thus, hath him deciphered;*
> Balde *save before, and standing on a* Wheele*;*
> *A* Razor *in his Hand, a* Winged-Heele*."* (1635: 4, my emphasis)

Whether the persona is referring to the mythological figure of *Kairos*, the Greek personification of opportunity, or its Roman equivalent *Occasio* - both of whom are male - is unclear, but interestingly, the term *Kairos* was also used to refer to "the right time" and even simply "time" in its broadest sense (Beekes 2010: 616). In fact, the emblem as a whole is actually a reflection on temporality. The second verse of the motto couplet "[...] oft, they *wheele-about* againe", as well as the instruction not to be as "ill-advis'd [as] those, who having lost / The first *Occasions,* to *Despairing* runne, / For, *Time* hath *Revolutions*; and, the most, / For their Affaires, have *Seasons* more, then one" (Wither 1635: 4) are consistent with a cyclical view of time and history. Campion traces back this idea to the fifth century BCE, and indicates that it most likely originated with Pythagorean philosophers (1994: 181).

Crucially, a similar belief was expressed by the early Christian philosopher Nemesius in *De Natura Hominis*[1], the very work Wither translated and published under the title *The Nature of Man* in 1636, one year after *A Collection of Emblemes*. What is unequivocal in any case is that *Occasio* is not related to *Fortune* in any way here.

If we now turn to emblem III-40, which is the main emblem dedicated to *Fortuna* in the collection, we behold, at first glance, an utterly conventional *topos*[2]: *Fortuna* is likened to the Moon, as she shares its fickle changeability: "Vncertaine, Fortunes Favours, bee, / And, as the Moone, so changeth Shee" (193). The persona then proceeds to interpret every single attribute of *Fortuna* as she is represented here:

> She *hath a* Comely-body, *to declare,*
> *How pleasing shee doth usually appeare*
> *To them, that love her Favours. She is* blinde,
> *(Or, hath still closed eyes) to put in minde,*
> *How blindly, and how heedlesly, she throwes*
> *Her* Largesse, *where her* Bounty, *she bestowes.*
> *She* stands upon a Ball; *that, wee may learne,*
> *Of outward things, the* tottering, *to discerne:*
> *Her* Ball *hath* wings; *that it may signifie*
> *How apt her* Favours *are, away to* flie.
> *A* Skarfe displayed by the wind, *she beares,*
> *(And, on her* naked-Body, *nothing weares)*
> *To shew, that what her* Favorite *injoyes,*
> *Is not so much for* Vsefulnesse, *as* toyes.
> *Her* Head is hairelesse, all, except before;
> *To teach thee, that thy care should be the more*
> *To hold her* formost kindnesse, *alwayes fast;*

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[1] More precisely, according to Wither's translation, Nemesius paraphrases ideas of those he calls "Stoicks", who "*say* [...], *that forasmuch as the stars shall have againe the same course; every thing that was in the former circuit shall come to passe againe without any alteration. Socrates shall be as hee was againe, and Plato, and every particular man; having the same friends, and the same Citizens; and that the like things shall befall every one; yea, that every man shall take in hand the same worke which he formerly wrought; and that every City, Village, and field shall bee brought to the like state againe."* (1636: 535-536). It is worth noting that Nemesius does not indicate whether he concurs with the idea, but it is a reasonable inference, given that he otherwise systematically presents a rebuttal after a quote with which he disagrees.

[2] See Kirchner 1969: 225-226.

Lest, she doe show thee slipp'ry tricks, at last.
And, lastly, that her changing *may be showne;*
She beareth in her Hand a Wayned-moone*."* (ibid)

Ripollés notices, of course, that both *Fortuna* and *Occasio* are represented with the same lock on the front of their heads, while the backs of both their heads are shaved. There is an undeniable iconographic similarity hinting at *Occasio*'s lock of hair that one should grasp to prevent the opportunity that presents itself from slipping away, which suggests that an iconographic conflation had undoubtedly taken place by the time De Passe provided the *pictura*[1]. Wither's persona, however, presents an altogether different take on this symbolic detail: it is not the opportunity one should seize, it is *Fortuna*'s favours one should hold fast to avoid losing what she has bestowed when she suddenly changes. While anyone can understand the familiar notion of seizing an opportunity at the right time, how can one possibly "hold [*Fortuna*'s] foremost kindnesse, alwayes fast" once her fickleness takes it away? It is precisely the point of many of the emblems[2] to inform the reader that Fortune's gifts are liable to be withdrawn as quickly as they were bestowed, and that only "good, and honest *Objects*" (1635: 25), which are attained by Virtue, will last. Wither may simply have deemed it necessary to explain the presence of *Fortuna*'s lock of hair to his puzzled reader, and, remarkably, he deliberately chooses an explanation that sets both figures yet further apart. There may be an iconographic resonance but, in Wither's mind, it does absolutely not extend into the conceptual.

Ripollés' analysis of another seemingly common attribute, the veil, is extremely puzzling as well. Indeed, she suggests that "Fortune's veil is fully blown, symbolizing the triumphal favor that Fortune has just provided." (2008: 117). This, however, appears nowhere in Wither's emblem (see quote above), or in Rollenhagen's, where the veil is not mentioned at all. Wither's persona suggests instead that *Fortuna*'s veil is "*displayed by the wind"* (1635: 193), constructing a hypallage-like pun that plays on the polysemy of the verb "to display", which means "to unfold, expand, spread out; to unfurl (a banner, sail)" (OED, entry "display (verb)", 1.a.), but which can also be understood as "'to unfold to view' (a banner or the like)" (ibid.). Both the veil and *Fortuna's* body are *displayed* in this sense. Where other

[1] Evidence of the same is already found in Achille Bocchi's *Symbolicarum Quaestionum… Libri Quinque* (1555), where an emblem shows a character identified as Fortuna being pulled out of the sea by its forelock by "Industry" personified (104).

[2] See, for instance, emblem I-6, p. 25; emblem I-30, p. 49; emblem II-12, p. 98; emblem II-26, p. 112; emblem II-36, p. 122; and emblem II-47, p. 133.

commentators might have insisted on the undeniable connection between *Fortuna*'s depiction as a nude female and her enticing but dangerous force of attraction (Buttay-Jutier 2008: 87), Wither's persona prefers to leave it to his readers to form the corresponding conclusions based on its allusions to her body. Rather, it chooses to focus on her veil which, he seems to argue, *should* cover her nudity, but which, since she lets it flow carelessly in the wind, does not serve its use at all:

> *A* Skarfe displayed by the wind, *she beares,*
> *(And, on her* naked-Body, *nothing weares)*
> *To shew, that what her* Favorite *injoyes,*
> *Is not so much for* Vsefulnesse, *as* toyes. (ibid)

What strikes Wither's persona is not that *Fortuna* is nude, but rather that she *could* cover herself up, if only she made better use of her scarf instead of letting it flow carelessly in the wind. But the phrasing also suggests that this is fully intentional on her part: the verb "to shew" in the third line above has "she" – therefore *Fortuna* – for its grammatical subject: she is deliberately "shewing", or "displaying" herself for all to see, thus becoming a lewd exhibitionist. By contrast, the nudity of *Occasio* is not mentioned once in emblem I-4. For the third time, Wither's persona uses *Fortuna's* appearance as the butt of a pun. This time, her "Favorite" enjoys something that is as useless as a toy, or a plaything for a child, but the word "toy" was also used to describe an "amorous sport, dallying, toying; with plural, an act or piece of amorous sport, a light caress" (*OED*, entry "toy (noun)", I. 1.), "a sportive or frisky movement; a piece of fun, amusement, or entertainment; a fantastic act or practice; an antic, a trick" (I.2.), "a fantastic or trifling speech or piece of writing; a frivolous or mocking speech; a foolish or idle tale; a funny story or remark, a jest, joke, pun; a light or facetious composition" (I.3.), "a foolish or idle fancy; a fantastic notion, odd conceit; a whim, crotchet, caprice" (I.4.), and even "a thing of little or no value or importance, a trifle; a foolish or senseless affair, a piece of nonsense; plural trumpery, rubbish" (II.5.). All of them are attested at least since the 16th century, and were used by authors such as Spenser, Marlowe, and Shakespeare among others (ibid). Wither's persona thus mocks the childish disposition of those who have confidence that fortune will favour them indefinitely, and who have not discerned the "*tottering"* of "outward things", but it also places the concept of Fortune's favours within the realm of jokes– particularly sexual ones -, idle fancies, and "rubbish". The last nail in *Fortuna*'s coffin is the final statement of the poem:

Moreover (to her credit) I confesse,
This Motto falsly saith, her Ficklenesse
Is like the Moones: For, she hath frown'd on mee
Twelve Moones, at least; and, yet, no Change I see (1635: 193)

As opposed to the rather despondent tone of many other instances where it complains about the poet's woes[1], Wither's persona seems almost cheerfully sarcastic here, suggesting that the commonplace idea that is *Fortuna*'s fickleness – as it is expressed in the original motto – is, in essence, a joke. Finally, the persona tells the reader: "By this Description, you may now descry / Her true conditions, full as well as I" (ibid). "To descry" is to be understood, firstly, as "to describe" here, as is attested in the *OED* ("to descry, v.", 2). *Fortuna*'s "true conditions", then, are presumably to be gathered from the persona's sarcastic *subscriptio,* and not from Rollenhagen's original motto, which "falsely saith, her Fickleness": she is nothing more than a risible fancy, which, as is made clear in numerous other emblems and through the mechanism of the lottery game, has no bearing on the lives of those who have learned to control her.

A more extensive examination of the treatment of fortune in *A Collection of Emblemes* only reinforces this idea. The overwhelming majority of emblems that deal with the concept can be placed within two categories: some assert that fortune is systematically overthrown by virtue, often suggesting that, in the presence of Virtue, Fortune is so powerless as to be considered to no longer exist. For instance, emblem I-6 tells the reader that the virtuous man, whatever his fortune, "regards it not a haire" (6), while the corresponding lottery adds that adverse fortune cannot "harme him, in his *Minde*" (52). Some among these even go one step further and claim that good fortune is, in fact, brought about by virtue; the motto couplet of emblem II-26 reads "Good-fortune, will by those abide, / In whom, True-vertue doth reside" (88). This deprives Fortune of its two foremost features: its unpredictability and its independence from human willpower, leaving an empty conceptual shell that has no bearing on earthly affairs, as long as one meets Fortune's daily incursions with the appropriate degree of Virtue, a stance that echoes a famous passage in Machiavelli's *Prince*:

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[1] See Chapter III.

> *[I]n order not to wipe out our free will, I consider it to be true that Fortune is the arbiter of one half of our actions, but that she still leaves the control of the other half, or almost that, to us. I compare her to one of those destructive rivers that, when they become enraged, flood the plains, ruin the trees and buildings, raising the earth from one spot and dropping it onto another. Everyone flees before it; everyone yields to its impetus, unable to oppose it in any way. But although rivers are like this, it does not mean that we cannot take precautions with dikes and dams when the weather is calm, so that when they rise up again either the waters will be channelled off or their force will be neither so damaging nor so out of control. The same things occur where Fortune is concerned. She shows her power where there is no well-ordered virtue to resist her, and therefore turns her impetus towards where she knows no dikes and dams have been constructed to hold her in.* (2005: 84-85)

In fact, Machiavelli concludes the same Chapter by stating that "since Fortune varies and men remain obstinate in their ways, men prosper when the two are in harmony and fail to prosper when they are not in accord" (86), an idea that is mirrored in emblem II-31, the motto couplet of which reads "He needs not feare, what spight can doe, / Whom Vertue friends, and Fortune, too" (1635: 109).

The second category of emblems assert that bad fortune is to be preferred, as contrary events provide an opportunity to endure patiently. Emblem I-16, for instance, shows two men playing with a ball, while a third is being beaten and robbed in the background (1635: 16). In a telling turn of phrase, the persona warns the reader as follows:

> *When we observe the* Ball*, how to and fro*
> *The* Gamesters *force it, we may ponder thus:*
> *That whil'st we live we shall be playd with so,*
> *And that the* World *will make her* Game *of us.* […]
> *Good-Fortune, Praises, Hopes, and Industries,*
> *Doe side-together, and make Play to please us,*

But, when by them we thinke more high to rise,
More great they make our Fall, and more disease us.
(ibid.)

The "Fall" in question, however, is not to be feared, as, similarly to the ball that is thrown on the ground and then rebounds, "they that seeke our *Losse*, advance our *Gaine*, […] / For, we that else upon the Ground had laine, / Are by their striking of us lifted higher" (ibid.). The dense array of references to a game in which one of the players is "Good-Fortune" is one of several references to the lottery within the *subscriptiones*[1], and it is she, therefore, who, by seeking the player's "*Losse"* may, potentially, advance his "*Gaine*". The same could be said of the very next emblem, number I-17, which shows a hand *ex nubibus* striking a piece of metal on an anvil, headed by the motto couplet "Till *God* hath wrought us to his Will, / The *Hammer* we shall suffer still" (17). The persona's take on the engraving is rather straightforward:

So, he that hopes to winne an honest Name,
Must many blowes of Fortune *undergoe,*
And hazard, oft, the blast of Evill-Fame,
Before a Good-Report *her Trumpe will blow* […]
To thee therefore, Oh God*! Mv Prayers are*
Not to be freed from Griefes and Troubles quite:
But, that they may be such as I can beare;
And, serve to make me precious in thy Sight.
This please me shall, though all my Life time, I
Betweene thine Anvill *and the* Hammer, *lie.* (ibid.)

Again, Fortune is not an autonomous and contingent force, but merely a term by which to refer to the trials that God has in store for every person, who is thus given an opportunity to be patient and hopeful even under Fortune's "blowes".

This use of the notion of Fortune, combined with the main purpose that Wither ascribes to *A Collection of Emblemes* – namely the moral instruction of readers of "Vulgar

[1] For instance, emblem I-6 castigates the "slaves […] to the Fortunes of the Time, / […] Attending on the Lot of Chance" (1635: 6).

Capacities"[1] – echoes the remarks that Petrarch makes in his *De remediis utriusque fortunae* (1360) about the same concept. In the preface to the second book, he tells the addressee of his work, Azzo da Correggio, lord of Parma:

> *And let not the name of Fortune grieue thee, which is repeated not onely in the superscriptions and tytles, but also in the woork: For truly thou hast often heard mine opinion, concerning fortune. But when I foresawe that this Doctrine was most necessarie, specially for such as were not furnished with learning, I haue vsed in their behalfe the common and knowne woord, not being ignorant, what other men generally, & most briefly S. Hierome thinketh of this matter, where he sayth, that there is neither Fortune nor destinie, so that the common sort shall acknowledge and perceiue here their manner of speaking: as for the learned, which are but scarce, they will vnderstand what I meane, and shall not bee troubled with the vsuall word.*[2]

Petrarch is referring to Jerome's comments in his *Commentarius in ecclesiasten* (ca. 388-389 CE, Chapter IX. 13-17), which Matougues translates as follows:

> […] *[J]e trouve, après y avoir bien pensé, que les choses de ce monde n'arrivent point au hazard comme quelques-uns se l'imaginent sans fondement, et qui pretendent qu'on doit attribuer les divers événements de la vie au caprice de la fortune, qui fait son jeu et son divertissement du bonheur ou du malheur des hommes. Je suis au contraire très persuade que rien n'arrive dans le monde que par un jugement particulier de Dieu*. (1838: 188)

[1] Ibid., p. 14

[2] Quoted from Thomas Twyne's translation, titled *Phisicke against fortune, aswell prosperous, as aduerse conteyned in two bookes* (1579: 163).

What some people consider to be fortune, in this view, is merely an error of perspective: the concept of contingency arises only out of human ignorance of the reasons that underlie the divine plan. The same view is expressed by Richard Younge (1636: 193) and Adam Harsnett (1638: 274), both of whom are Wither's immediate contemporaries. The latter even suggests that the mere concept of Fortune is a "heathenish conceit" (277) which ought to be banished from a Christian person's vocabulary (283). Wither evidently did not fully concur with such uncompromising views. Even if the term, and its emblematic representation, are derided to an extent in his *Collection*, Fortune is, at the very least, a useful rhetorical tool, and, in Wither's translation of Nemesius's treatise on *The Nature of Man*, she has a role to play, albeit one limited to "inanimate and irrational creatures" (1636: 543), while, "because wee are ignorant of their occasions, we causelesly judge many things to be imprudently done; and that which chanceth unto us in other things, by reason of our ignorance, falleth out also in the workes of providence" (648-649). Ripollés is correct, therefore, in arguing that *A Collection of Emblemes* amounts to an in-depth, emblematical reflection on the concept of Fortune and on the balance between chance and agency that ultimately determines one's course in life (2008: 128-129), and I would concur that Wither's is "one of the most ingenious reflections upon Fortune of the period" (129).

5. "The Muses Oracle is dumbe, / Because to tempt them you are come": The Lottery as a Divinatory Device?

In the paratext to *A Collection of Emblemes*, Wither's persona pre-emptively raises the question of the potential belief, on the part of some of its readers, in the prophetical power of the lottery game. This assumption was not unreasonable at all, as diverse forms of bibliomancy were very common in seventeenth century England, especially the so-called *sortes Biblicae*, in which passages from Scripture were picked at random and then interpreted as individually relevant prophecies, and which were the Christian equivalent of the *sortes Vergilianae*, an ancient practice that applied the same process to the works of Virgil (Cressy 1986: 100). More generally, astrology and divination were certainly controversial, but nonetheless widespread activities, as is attested by the yearly publication, one the one hand, of popular almanacs throughout the early seventeenth century[1], and of treatises rebuking or

[1] Thomas Johnson's *An almanacke for the yeere of our Lord God 1600*, Woodhouse's *New almanack and prognostication for the yeere of our redemption M.DC.IIII* (1604), Browne's *Prognostication for this yeare of our Lord God, 1615, which is from the worldes creation 5589* (1614), and Waters' *Waters New almanacke for the yeare of our Lord God 1627, beeing the third after bissextile or leape yeare* are only a few examples.

deriding such books, their authors, and their audiences, on the other[1]. Furthermore, as Rusche (1969) and Thornton (2006) have shown, prophecies grew extremely popular in the early seventeenth century, and especially during the Civil War, a trend best epitomised, perhaps, by William Lilly's *Collection of Ancient and Moderne Prophecies* (1645), which included the famous "Prophecy of the White King", as well as one of Mother Shipton's prognostications. Rusche also explains that prophecies served a political purpose during the Civil War:

> *This use of prophecies was not part of an organized, systematic machine for the efficient dissemination of a single, consistent political or religious creed; but when opportunity arose, partisans collected, interpreted, and sometimes even rewrote prophecies that served in some degree as proof of the righteousness and, as it were, prophetic inevitability of their own beliefs.* (1969: 752)

In fact, Wither was to partake actively in this trend as well, notably through the publication of works such as *A prophesie written long since for this yeare* (1641), *Vox* Pacifica (1645), in the extended title of which the poet presents himself as "GEO. WITHER Esquire, (a *Commander* in this *War*) heretofore their unneeded REMEBERANCER of *Plagues* and *Deliverances* past; and their timely *Forewarner* of the *Judgments* now come", and *Prosopopœia Britannica* (1648), the full title of which states that the work is "*presaging* […] *some future things, not unlikely to come to pass*". Furthermore, well into the last decades of the seventeenth century, other authors quoted and re-printed some of Wither's works and claimed that the things he had foretold had actually come to pass in the interval; in 1683, a certain William Marshall – not the engraver of the same name, who died in 1649 – commissioned the printing of a short work titled *Mr. George Withers revived: or, His prophesie of our present calamity, and (except we repent) future misery Written by him in the year 1628*, which reprinted several allegedly prophetic passages from *Britain's Remembrancer*, and, in 1689, a certain P.C.M.D. published *George Withers his prophesie of the downfal of Antichrist,* a compilation of excerpts from various works, including *Britain's Remembrancer* again, *Halelujah* (1641), and *The Doubtfull Almanack* (1647).

[1] See, for instance, Carleton's *Astrologomania: the madnesse of astrologers* (1624), or Raunce's *A brief dclaration* [sic] *against judicial astrologie or, the diabolical art of astrologie opened, arraigned, and condemned* (1650).

In his *Collection of Emblemes*, however, like Spirito before him, Wither considered it necessary to disclaim that his lottery had been intended as a tool of supernatural prognostication. In the epistle "To the Reader", the persona is adamant in that respect:

> […][M]*y meaning is not, that any should use it as an* Oracle, *which could signifie, infallibly, what is divinely alloted; but, to serve onely for a* Morall Pastime. *And, that I may no way encourage the secret entertaining of such a* Fantasie, *I doe before hand affirme unto them, that none but* Children, *or* Ideots *may be tollerated to be so foolish, without laughing at.* (1635: Occ.-1)

In the emblems proper as well, divination is viewed with scepticism at best. In the *subscriptio* to number IV-43, the persona mentions those among its contemporaries who believe in astrology:

> *Some say, and many men doe these commend)*
> *That, all our* deeds, *and* Fortunes *doe depend*
> *Vpon the motions of celestiall* Spheres*;*
> *And, on the constellations of the* Starres. (251)

Wither's persona rejects this view based on the same arguments that it opposes to Calvinist predestination elsewhere[1]:

> *If this were true, the* Starres, *alone, have bin*
> *Prime cause of all that's* good, *and of all* sinne. […]
> *For, if it bee (as tis) absurd to say,*
> *The starres enforce us (since they still obay*
> *Their just* Commander*) 'twere absurder, farre,*
> *To say, or thinke, that God's* Decree *it were,*
> *Which did* necessitate *the very same,*
> *For which, we thinke the* starres *might merit blame.*
> *Hee made the* starres *to bee an ayd unto us,*
> *Not (as is fondly dream'd) to helpe undoe us:*

[1] See Chapter VII.

(Much lesse, without our fault, to ruinate,
By doome of irrecoverable Fate*).* (ibid.)

In emblem I-31, which covers the same subject, the persona begins by conceding that the stars are not completely without power over human beings:

For, both by Reason, *and by* Common-sense
We know (and often feele) that from above
The Planets *have, on us, an* Influence*;*
And, that our Bodies *varie, as they move.*
Moreover, Holy Writ *inferres, that these*
Have some such pow'r; ev'n in those Places, where
It names Orion, *and the* Pleiades*;*
Which, Starres *of much inferiour Nature are*[1]. (31)

The persona even specifies that the stars "forme the Bodies temp'rature", after which "the Mind inclineth", but adds that "By *Grace,* another *Temper* we procure, / Which guides the *Motions* of *Supposed Fate*", and then concludes that "The Sunne and Moone shall stand and wayt on [the reader]" if he or she acts wisely (ibid.). Again, the axiomatic prerequisite of astrological foretelling – a fixed and predetermined fate that would be written in the stars – is rejected.

In the "Occasion, *Intention*, and Use of the Foure Lotteries", the persona states that, occasionally, when the game is played collectively and when each player, in turn, has to read his or her lottery stanza and emblem out loud for all to hear, those "*who are* notoriously Guiltie*, shall by drawing their* Chances*, among other companions, be so fitted with* Lots*,* […] *that those* Vices *be thereby intimated to the by-standers, of which the world knowes them guilty"* (Occ.-2). Here, the persona does not suggest that a supernatural entity is pulling the strings, but, rather, that the laws of probability provide that such circumstances will occur "now and then" (ibid.). This, however, should not be taken as a warrant to ignore the moral lesson thus conveyed, humiliating as though it may be:

[1] The persona is referring to Job 38:31 in the *King James Bible,* in which God asks the eponymous character: "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?"

> *Yet, if any one shall draw that Lot wherein his Secret Vices are reproved ; or some good counsels proposed, which in his owne understanding are pertinent to his welfare, let not such as those passe them over as meere Casualties to them ; for, whatsoever these Lots are to others, or in themselves, they are to all these made pertinent in such cases, both by their particular Knowledges and Occasions* (ibid.)

If the same attention is granted to the lottery stanzas, however, the stance that emerges is much more ambiguous. Indeed, many of them suggest, and, at times, assert outright, that the player was not assigned the lot in question by chance, but, rather, that a mysterious force has deliberately chosen to direct him or her towards a particularly fitting emblem. Lottery stanza I-12, for instance, gently admonishes the player as follows:

> *Be not angry, if I tell*
> *That, you love the World too well ;*
> *For, this Lot, perhaps, you drew,*
> *That, such Faults, you might eschew.* (53)

Similarly, lottery stanza III-27 ponders the "concealed Cause, / That, none but you, this Emblem drawes", and lottery stanza IV-34, which corresponds to an emblem that exhorts the reader to show moderation in all things, rhetorically asks "If, truely temperate, thou be, / Why should this Lot, be drawne by thee?" (265). Some stanzas even employ vaticinal terminology: lottery stanza I-16 informs the reader that his emblem "prognosticates" that he will overcome the supposed adverse circumstances in which he currently finds himself (54); lottery stanza I-28 explicitly asserts that the emblem "prophesies" (56); and lottery stanza II-19 states reassuringly that, as long as the reader remains constant in his hopes, "as thy Emblem doth foreshew, / A good conclusion will insue" (117). At times, the persona claims that the driving principle behind the lottery game is uncertain: lottery stanza I-41 for instance, reads "Whether, meerely, Chance, or no, / Brought this Lot, we doe not know". Finally, one supremely ironic stanza stands out among the "blank lots": indeed, in number II-51, the persona mockingly chastises the player as follows:

> *Of Planetary-Calculations,*
> *Of Superstitious-Observations,*

Of Lots, and Dreames, and Accidents,
Which are but casuall events,
Thou art so fond ; and, unto such,
Thou dost adhere, and trust so much,
That, it succeedeth very well,
No Emblem, now, to thee befell :
Lest, these, which onely Counsells bee,
Might seeme firme Destinies to thee. (123)

The inescapable contradiction in the claim that the reader was assigned a lot by a mysterious force to rebuke him for – wrongly – deeming such a force to exist in the first place is too evident to be taken seriously, and therefore acts as a reminder even to those who might believe in divinatory devices that the lottery is to be understood as existing squarely within the realm of play, and is thus, according to Huizinga, "a stepping out of 'real' life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own" (1980: 8). I submit, then, that the purpose of the aforementioned lottery stanzas, in which the persona claims that the corresponding lots were deliberately assigned to players most in need of them, is not to cater to those among them who may earnestly believe in divination, but that it is a component in Wither's effort to constitute what Huizinga calls a "play-community" (12). Indeed, although it is presented as a primarily didactic tool intended to make the perusing of the emblems more engaging, the lottery, Wither's persona tells us, may become a source of additional amusement if one accepts the premise that, sometimes, lots will find players based on their vices, a process which, if it occurs while the game is being played collectively, will cause a certain measure of embarrassment of the part of the victim, who "may (I hope) be laughed at without my blame" (1635: Occ.-2). This acceptance need not be genuine, neither does it require any pre-existing belief in vatic practices; for the sake of fun, a momentary, willing suspension of disbelief in such powers suffices to achieve the desired amplification of enjoyment. It can simply become a rule of the game, one that "'holds' in the temporary world circumscribed by play" as Huizinga puts it (1980: 11), who goes on to quote Paul Valéry: "No scepticism is possible where the rules of a game are concerned, for the principle underlying them is an unshakable truth"[1] – or, if it is shaken at any time, "the whole play-world collapses" (ibid.). Trying one's luck and spinning the pointers of the lottery game,

[1] Huizinga does not provide the exact source of this quote.

then, constitutes a tacit recognition of the risk to be embarrassed, and an implied willingness to take it: "*I doe here warne all such as are worthily suspected of* Haynous crimes *and* Scandalous conversations*, either to forbear these* Lotteries*; or to excuse me if they be justly shamed by their own* Act*"* (Wither 1635: Occ.-2). Furthermore, the collective agreement to suspend disbelief in the supernatural accuracy of the assigned lots levels the playing field: every player is liable to being the object of derision when it is his turn, but will become one of the deriders when someone else is fitted with a particularly appropriate emblem. The probability that the "play-world' will be upheld by everyone's abiding by the rules and willing participation is thus increased, as, for any group of more than two players, one will get to laugh more often than one is laughed at. Arguably, furthermore, the ambiguity that Wither's persona cultivates as to the divinatory nature of the game serves another purpose, one that is very much in line with Wither's overall religious and philosophical stance on the question of the free will/predestination conundrum.

6. "Ev'ry Man hath his Choice": The Lottery and Player Agency

If one turns to the actual mechanics of the game, one notices that the role played by contingency – that is, the random number on which each pointer will land once it is spun around – is framed by two important steps during which the player is a fully autonomous agent making a conscious choice; first, when he actually sets the pointers in motion, and second, once the lot has been drawn, when the reader has to choose what to do with the allotted emblem. Upon returning briefly to the frontispiece, one notices that the same applies to the pilgrims: the who are waiting for their turn beside the ewer are not coerced into drawing their lots, they willingly "take their chance". Moreover, once the lots are drawn, the pilgrims are still free to choose between the left-hand and the right-hand path, and thus retain full agency over the rest of their journey. Regarding the lottery game, Wither's persona makes this quite clear: "Every man hath his choice, whether hee will make use of those Lotteries or no" (Occ.-2), and, once the lots have been assigned, the players "must beare their Fortunes, be they Good, or Ill" (Dir.). The embarrassment mentioned above, which would arise from having been assigned a lot reproving a vice of which one were notoriously guilty, must indeed be "borne" in that sense, but, in the lottery verses, one is also exhorted to "Make use thereof" (59), and to "thinke upon" the moral lesson thus conveyed (117). Patient endurance, in other words, is necessary, but insufficient. Instead, to fulfil its purpose, the game requires an active intellectual and moral engagement with the topic at hand, and a deliberate effort to emulate the virtues of wisdom, prudence, and perseverance that are

advocated throughout. This is consistent with Warhaft's analysis of the idea of Virtue in Seventeenth Century England:

> *Virtue was not to be confused with mere abstention from evil, or with passive, ignorant inaction before the temptations and trials of the world. It was rather an enlightened and dynamic force, which, based on knowledge, actively directed the reason and the will to choose the good* (1968: 83).

Lottery stanza I-51 is telling in this respect. Having drawn a blank lot, the player is not given the number of any emblem, but is, instead, addressed as follows:

> *Your* Fortune, *hath deserved thank,*
> *That she, on you, bestowes a* Blank*:*
> *For, as you, nothing good, have had;*
> *So, you, have nothing, that is bad.*
> *Yea, she, in this, hath favour showne,*
> *(If, now, your* Freedome *well be knowne)*
> *For, you, by* Lot, *these* Emblems, *mist,*
> *That you, may chuse out, which you list.* (Wither 1635: 61)

Fortune's "favour" in this case amounts to the player's "Freedome" to pick any emblem in the book, and, implicitly, to make a choice as to whether to heed the advice the emblem conveys. Similarly, lottery III-19, with an obvious reference to the frontispiece, places chance at the onset of the game's mechanism, but still asserts that every outcome, favourable or otherwise, is very much open to the reader who is willing to make the right choice:

> *In slippery* Paths, *you are to goe;*
> *Yea, they are full of danger too:*
> *And, if you heedfull should not grow,*
> *They'l hazzard much, your overthrow.*
> *But, you the mischiefe may eschew,*
> *If wholsome Counsell, you pursue.*

Looke, therefore, what you may be taught,
By that, which this your chance *hath brought.* (188)

The same Baconian idea that was discerned in the "Preposition to the Frontispiece", according to which good fortune depends chiefly on one's being virtuous and making the right decisions, underpins the principle of the lottery game, which can, therefore, be construed as a ludic transposition of Wither's central theological axiom, that of safeguarding human choice and responsibility[1]. Simultaneously, however, such a stance serves the more pragmatic purpose of disclaiming any intention, on the author's part, to cause specific people to be humiliated or criticised; the persona duly warns prospective players in the "Occasion, Intention, and use of the Foure Lotteries...", that if they be "worthily suspected of Haynous crimes and Scandalous conversations", it falls to them "either to forbeare these Lotteries; or to excuse [the author] if they be justly shamed by their own Act". Such as are humiliated and mocked when being assigned their lot "therin make their owne Libels", and "may be laughed at without my [Wither's] blame" (Occ.-2) Although more than ten years had passed since his last stay in the Marshalsea, the shadow of the Star Chamber still loomed large, and, as was shown in Chapter II, several of Wither's works after his *Motto* (1621) contained similar disclaimers. The lottery game, however, goes one step further, as it introduces special rules seemingly exempting certain players from any inconvenience that might arise through their casting their lots.

7. "*This harmelesse* PLAY-GAME": Playful and Subversive "Self-Fashioning"?

The first half of the "Direction shewing how they who are so disposed, shall find out their Chance, in the Lotteries aforegoing" reads like a straightforward set of mechanical instructions to play the game. The second half, however, lays out a different set of rules for players of royal or noble blood:

If King, Queene, Prince, or any one that springs
From Persons, knowne to be deriv'd from Kings,
Shall seeke, for Sport sake, hence to draw their Lot;
Our Author sayes ; that, hee provided not
For such as those: Because, it were too much
For him, to find out Fortunes, fit for such,

[1] See Chapter VII.

Who, (as hee thinkes) should rather, Ayde, supply
For him, to mend his evill Fortunes by.
To them, hee, therefore pleased is to give

This noble and this large Prerogative;
That, they shall chuse from hence, what Lots they please,
And make them better, if they like not these.
All other Personages, of High degree,
That, will professe our Authors friends to be,
This Freedome, likewise have ; that, till they find
A Lot, which is agreeing to their mind,
They shall have libertie, anewe, to try
Their sought-for Chance: [...] (ibid.)

The primary reason for the provision of such a loophole was probably legal. Indeed, as was mentioned above, prophecies that applied to the monarch had been outlawed since the reign of Edward VI, in a statute that had been re-enacted by Elizabeth in 1580 (Rusche 1969: 754). Whether it was still in force in the 1630s I have been unable to ascertain, but, given how strictly the Privy Council and the Star Chamber under Charles's "Personal Rule" enforced sedition laws, Wither's amendment to the normal rules of the game probably constituted a sound strategy of self-preservation. But is this "noble and [...] large Prerogative" that is thus granted to the most powerful among potential players as deferent as it seems at first sight?

A quick glance over the page of the "Direction" is sufficient to notice that the text is divided into two distinct sections. The instructions as to the general way of operating the lottery are written in prose and cover the first half of the page, whereas, as was mentioned above, the exclusive prerogatives of royal and noble players are written in verse below. The straightforward, matter-of-factly tone of the former, as well as its merely explanatory content, suggest that the antecedent of the first-person pronoun in this section can safely be assumed to be Wither himself. Notably, however, the subsequent poem immediately switches to references to "Our Author" throughout, as is the case in the "Preposition to this Frontispiece", which means that it is the persona who takes over, placing the verses within the same playful framework and inviting the reader to apprehend the text with a measure of suspicion. Furthermore, the "noble and [...] large Prerogative" that is thus granted to a restricted group of potential players is, nevertheless, a concession that is generously bestowed upon them through the good will of the persona, as opposed to a natural privilege that would merely

have to be acknowledged. On the surface, existing social hierarchies are maintained within the game, but it is worth bearing in mind that this special set of rules is given relevance only within the "temporary sphere of activity" (Huizinga 1980: 8) that constitutes the lottery, which is itself a component of the microcosm that is *A Collection of Emblemes* (Bath 1994: 121-124). Within this wholly constructed space, it is the persona who decides, unilaterally, which players shall find themselves within Fortune's purview, and which shall be given an opportunity to escape it: players who are members neither of the royal family nor of the nobility must "beare their Fortunes, be they Good, or Ill", (Occ.-2) while the restricted group of privileged players may "chuse from hence, what Lots they please, / And make them better, if they like not these", but only insofar as "our Author" is "pleased to give them" this prerogative, which is "noble and [...] large" by the persona's own account. Furthermore, the privilege thus granted is only partly derived from the players' social status, as it is, indeed, extended to a select minority, but, quite literally, comes at a cost. Indeed, the persona's seemingly humble concession that "Our Author" could not possibly "find out Fortunes fit for such / Who, (as hee thinkes) should, rather, Ayde supply / For him, to mend his evill Fortunes by" (ibid.) can, I submit, be interpreted to be as polysemic as many of the other political statements in the emblems that were examined in Chapter VIII. Firstly, these verses are clearly meant to echo the dedication of Book I to the royal couple, in which Charles and Henrietta are flatteringly called "double-treble-foure-fold emblems", which "more Vertues might convay, / Than many Volumes, of these Emblems, may" (Ded. I-2), words that seem to testify to the appropriate deference of a subject submitting to the moral authority of his betters, whose example would help him return to the path of Virtue and thus "mend his evill Fortunes". But another recurrent topic in many of the dedications and in other parts of the paratext, the persona's complaining about financial losses or destitution on Wither's part[1], may provide a key to a secondary interpretation of the same verses. Indeed, the polysemy of the term "Fortunes" – perhaps hinted at by the use of the plural - suggests that the persona is also hedging its bets to obtain a far more pragmatic kind of assistance from the king and queen, whose patronage would certainly go a long way toward mending "evill" – or insufficient – "Fortunes". The use of the modal in the previous line - "Who, (as hee thinkes) should rather, Ayde, supply" – is boldly assertive in its pointing out that offering moral guidance and pecuniary patronage are, in fact, moral duties of the monarch, a sentiment that

[1] See Chapter III.

is expressed in emblem I-32 as well[1]. What is certainly not asserted outright, but seemingly implicitly hinted at, is that the "noble and [...] large Prerogative" is predicated on both kinds of royal assistance to be forthcoming. The same *quid pro quo* is even stated outright in the second stanza, which exempts "Personages of High degree" from bearing the humiliation or derision that might be caused by certain lots, but only if they "professe, our Authors friends to be", a thoroughly conventional euphemism for "patron"[2]. Again, the securing of the aforementioned "noble and [...] large Prerogative" is predicated both on social status and on the willingness to show financial liberality towards the author. It is crucial to bear in mind that the "Prerogative" in question merely entails the possibility to exchange one's lot if one deems it unsatisfactory – or, if the game is played collectively, if one anticipates mockery for having been directed to a particularly fitting emblem. Within the self-contained "sacred space" (Huizinga 1980: 14) that is the lottery game, where, or so the persona suggests, it is "our Author" who "find[s] out Fortunes" for the players, the strictly hierarchical power structure of England under Charles's "Personal Rule" is momentarily uprooted in favour of the poet. In the first chapter of his famous *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare* (1980), Greenblatt states that the "quintessential sign" of power "is the ability to impose one's fictions upon the world" (33). As both More and Machiavelli recognised, he argues, displays of political power are essentially pageants, or "king's games, as it were stage plays […] in which poor men be but the lookers-on" (*The History of King Richard III*, ed. R.S. Sylvester, *Complete Works* 3 1963: 80-81, quoted in Greenblatt 1980: 13). Within the space of the lottery game, Wither's persona arguably "stages" what it calls a "Puppet-Play in pictures" (TR.-2), and thus arguably manages to "impose" a set of "fictions" upon the players: the idea that lots mysteriously find the players who would be most humiliated by being directed to them; the ultimately derided, but not wholly evacuated power of dame Fortune; and the fact that responsibility for one's being mocked is to be sought with one's moral shortcomings, and not with the author of the book. Whether this constitutes a fully-fledged instance of Greenblattian "Self-Fashioning" is debatable; indeed, out of the ten "governing conditions" of the process (1980: 8-9), Wither and his lottery only meet two: the poet belongs to the "middling sort" and did not inherit a title, and his effort at constructing a

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[1] In the *subscriptio*, the persona states that the virtuous king ought to be willing "to advance […] the lib'rall arts" (Wither 1635 : 32). See Chapter VIII.

[2] In the dedication to the Duke of Lennox, the persona refers to Esmé Stuart, the duke's father, who, according to the dedication was about to grant Wither patronage but died before he could, as an "Honourable-friend" (Ded. III-3), and, in the dedication to Philip of Pembroke, whose brother, William, probably had a hand in helping Wither secure the patent for his *Hymnes and Songs of the Church* in 1623, the persona states that Pembroke agreed "so lowly to descend […] / As, my well-meaning *Studies*, to befriend" (Ded. IV-1).

subversive identity takes shape through language. A few pages earlier in his introduction, however, Greenblatt acknowledges that the concept of "Self-Fashioning" actually allows for "a range of meanings", some of which "may suggest hypocrisy or deception, an adherence to mere outward ceremony; […] the shaping of one's own identity, the experience of being molded by forces outside one's control, the attempt to fashion other selves" (3). Arguably, Wither's elaborate use of his persona throughout *A Collection of Emblemes*, particularly through his authoritative laying out of rules, general and specific, according to which his game is to be played, can be considered to fit the broader definition of the concept. Indeed, there is certainly an external framework of authority to which Wither is wholly subjected: the power of the monarch and his court, including that of arbitrarily granting or withholding patronage and that of censorship, but also the constraints placed upon authors by the Stationers' Company, and the necessity, in the absence of support from a Maecenas, to produce works that will appeal to a large audience and thus become "vendible"[1]. The "other self" that Wither's persona fashions here, on the other hand, takes as much control as the lottery game provides: although the initial assignment of the lot is a matter of chance, the player, regardless of his social status and influence outside of the game's purview, is then steered towards the lottery stanza and the emblem, and has to follow the persona's instructions, and, possibly, suffer to be derided. This process of hierarchic subversion is made possible by the tacit, but necessary underpinnings of the very nature of a game, participation in which presupposes submission to the rules. Indeed, as Huizinga puts it:

> *The player who trespasses against the rules or ignores them is a "spoil-sport". The spoil-sport is not the same as the false player, the cheat; for the latter pretends to be playing the game and, on the face of it, still acknowledges the magic circle. It is curious to note how much more lenient society is to the cheat than to the spoil-sport. This is because the spoil-sport shatters the play-world itself. By withdrawing from the game he reveals the relativity and fragility of the play-world in which he had temporarily shut himself with others. He robs play of its illusion - a pregnant word which means literally "in-play'*

[1] I am referring to the inclusion of *A Collection of Emblemes* in William London's *Catalogue of most vendible books in England* (1658).

> *(from inlusio, illudere or inludere). Therefore he must be cast out, for he threatens the existence of the play-community.* (1980: 11)

Even players who enjoy the special loophole granted by the persona, insofar as they wish to play, must spin the pointer on the volvelle to be directed towards their lot, which they may then decide to either keep or exchange. If they refuse to comply with any of the steps, they immediately become Huizinga's "spoil-sports", and, although their privileged social status would protect them from being "cast out" in a physical sense, their exclusion from the game will occur *de facto* when the next game session is simply held without them. If, instead, they play the game as it is intended, they must accept to submit to its "illusion" and to the momentarily absolute power of the poet. Moreover, the "Prerogative" itself, however "noble and [...] large" the persona declares it to be, remains a double-edged sword. Indeed, within this framework, a lot would be deemed unsatisfactory, and the player would be tempted to exchange it, only if he expects to be mocked by those who, knowing his moral shortcomings, would consider it to be particularly appropriate. Rejecting one's lot, then, would be a childish testimony to its accuracy, and may, in fact, elicit more ridicule – be it only within the minds of the other players - than would have been the case if one had submitted to one's fate with good-natured self-derision. Within the "absolute and peculiar order" that is spontaneously created through participation in play, and which is upheld by willing players, as "the least deviation from it 'spoils the game', robs it of its character and makes it worthless" (10), the persona's disclaimed, but nonetheless obvious intention to provide for the occasional shaming even of the most powerful among its readers is thus vindicated either way. Faced with the "pageants" of political power staged by Charles I and his court during the "Personal Rule", which evidently became increasingly unpalatable to him and many others, Wither musters the joint powers of language and games to direct his own "Puppet-play", which holds the potential of asserting power on players both willing and unwilling to submit to his authority.

8. Conclusion

The claims made Wither's persona about the allegedly incidental and secondary nature of the lottery game can therefore be regarded as thoroughly disingenuous, and as a clear strategy of self-preservation on the part of the poet who was, it seems, torn between a smouldering urge to speak his mind and a vivid fear of being imprisoned again, or possibly worse. The game, as Ripollés and Bath have suggested, and as was shown in more detail

above, acts as a central structuring mechanism of the volume, in which it serves multiple pragmatic and rhetorical goals. Taken jointly with the Frontispiece and the "Preposition", it places Wither's emblem book under the dubious auspices of Fortune, an allegorical concept the influence of which is both mimicked and derided to unveil its philosophical complexity, while simultaneously suggesting a method steeped in Stoicism and indebted to anti-predestinarian theology to respond to one's lot, good or ill. Furthermore, the peculiar space of play, the fragility of which is counterbalanced by the absolute authority of its rules as long as it is upheld, is seized upon by Wither to fashion for himself a role liberated from real-life hierarchical constraints, within which, or so the poet seems to hope and believe, even the most powerful among players will, now and again, be forced to submit to ridicule and to the pointing out of their moral vicissitudes for all to see. Simultaneously, by making it incumbent upon the players to set the game in motion through their own agency, Wither is able to shield himself from the accusation of libellous intention, on the grounds of which he had suffered dire imprisonment twice in his early career. To the playful element that is often inherent to writing and reading emblems (Manning 2002: 141-165), the poet adds an additional layer of ludic engagement, fully exploiting the didactic and rhetorical possibilities of play to drive home the moral teachings contained in the emblems and to repurpose them as instruments of temporary, literary subversion of political hierarchies. The lottery thus mirrors existing power structures, acknowledging their frightful reality and potency to enforce their "fictions" upon the poet, but, at the same time, forcing them to into a state of abeyance for the duration of the game. Just as the lottery is emblematically represented at the centre of the frontispiece, it is itself a mode of representation – which, according to Huizinga, is one of the two major functions of play (1980: 13) – as Wither's persona is "*making an image*" (14) of an alternate state of affairs, a "*stepping-out* of common reality" (13), where the game becomes an interactive emblem of the precarious, but ingenious power of poetic expression.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

GEORGE WITHER'S *A COLLECTION OF EMBLEMES* AS AN "ANECDOTE"

"Analysis is sorting out the structures of signification – what Ryle called established codes, a somewhat misleading expression, for it makes the enterprise sound too much like that of the cipher clerk when it is much more like that of the literary critic - and determining their social ground and import"[1], as the anthropologist Clifford Geertz puts it in "Thick Description", the introduction to his famous work *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973: 9). This idea constitutes the starting point of Greenblatt and Gallagher's teleological and methodological considerations in *Practicing New Historicism* (2000: 20-48), in which they acknowledge a debt to Geertz for connecting the concept of "thick description" – i.e. the examination of any form of human behaviour and expression within its "cultural"[2] framework - to the area of literary criticism. The tool that Geertz proposes to use for this purpose is an "anecdote", in the form, in this instance, of "a not untypical excerpt" from his own field journal, which is given to the reader "deliberately unprecedented by any prior explanatory comment at all" (1973: 7), or, in a notable two-word clause that Gallagher and Greenblatt found notable as well (2000: 22), "quoted raw" (1973: 9). The "rawness" of the anecdote "makes a stronger claim to reference" than an invented narrative would, but this does not strip it of its textuality. In fact, Geertz points out that the textual nature of the account ought to be borne in mind – he states that "what we [i.e., anthropologists] call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to" (ibid.) – but, moreover, that culture itself is an "acted document", "a manuscript – foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, written […] in transient examples of shaped behaviour" (10). This axiom allows for what Gallagher and Greenblatt call "the conjuring of the real": "We wanted […] to use the anecdote to show in compressed form the ways in which elements of lived experience enter into literature, the ways in which everyday institutions and bodies get recorded" (2000: 30). Drawing on the works of Auerbach, which they see as the Geertzian anecdote-driven methodology applied to literary criticism, they summarise their approach as follows:

> *The isolation of a resonant textual fragment that is revealed, under the pressure of analysis, to represent the*

[1] The same sentence is quoted at the onset of Chapter One of Gallagher and Greenblatt's *Practicing New Historicism* (2000: 20).

[2] I am placing the term "cultural" in quotes, because one of the points of Geertz's essay is precisely to define the concept of "culture", which he does as follows: "Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. It is explication I am after, construing social expressions on their surface enigmatical" (1973: 5).

work from which it is drawn and the particular culture in which that work was produced and consumed. That culture in turns renders the fragment explicable, both as something that could have only been written in a moment characterized by a particular set of circumstances, structures, and assumptions, and as something that conveys the life-world of that moment. (35)

Although *A Collection of Emblemes* amounts to more than a "textual fragment", this dissertation is an attempt to produce an examination of Wither's work based on the same assumptions, and aimed at pursuing the same goal. Its conceptual *Leitmotiv*, the notion of "persona" as understood and defined by Cheryl Walker, has proved quite valuable, as it sidesteps the pitfall of constraining the analysis to bibliographical elements or to the uncertainties of author intentionality, while making it unnecessary to sever the connection between the physical author and the persona completely. The interweaving of bibliographical and historical information in Chapter II, as well as the details regarding the circumstances of, and the persona's reflections upon, the composition of the volume in Chapter III, were intended as the foundation for a dialogic approach of text and context throughout, in an effort to sketch out the relative margins of freedom and constraint – both in content and in form – within which the emblems were brought to light, but also to establish their status as a node in the intellectual, social, political, and – mainly in Chapter VII – theological framework of early Stuart England. More specifically, the manner in which *A Collection of Emblemes* negotiated its relation to the overarching structures of the seventeenth-century book trade, of readership, and of patronage was shown to exemplify how such constraints shaped literary output, while simultaneously prompting authors like Wither to find creative means to retain a measure of agency and liberty in their literary endeavours.

Furthermore, Walker's regarding of personae as rhetorical emanations from texts, which take on shape through an array of linguistic markers, but which are still embedded in the broader cultural context in which the works were produced, makes the concept particularly versatile. Chapters IV and V explored the discursive strategies deployed by Wither's persona to fully appropriate De Passe's engravings, and to capitalise on their pictorial polysemy to make them wholly subservient to a reader-oriented, far more personal rendition of Rollenhagen's emblems. The persona creates a comfortable space for itself between remote, condescending intellectuals who revelled in the arcane opacity of emblematic motifs to the

majority of readers on the one hand, and its imagined readership, composed of literate people of the "middling sort", thus claiming the necessary authority and benevolence required to teach the latter how to extract useful meanings from the *picturae* for the purpose of moral and spiritual amendment. Furthermore, by replacing the minimalistic *subscriptiones* provided by its German predecessor by far more extensive, thirty-two-line poems, the persona grants itself sufficient space to exemplify the process of emblem exegesis for the benefit of the reader, without, however, fully relinquishing hermeneutic authority. The reader's attention is retained through the occasional inclusion of sparks of inter-semiotic humour, through vivid hypotypotical descriptions of certain motifs combined with exhortations to heed the moral advice conveyed by the emblems, and through the mimicking of the rhetorical structure of English sermons, a form designed to proceed from didactic, plain pragmatism to the stirring of pious passions in the listener to elicit meditative introspection and, ideally, lasting self-amendment. The effectivity of the process is ensured through the application of contemporary educational principles, as they would come to be systematised by Comenius and Hartlib, and through a sustained relationship between the persona and the individual reader, who is ceaselessly drawn to the text as a result of being addressed directly by the persona. This process of repurposing testifies to a profound awareness, on Wither's part, of the joint persuasive potential of visual and textual modes of expression, and to a decidedly independent stance toward the *raison d'être* of the emblem genre, which underwent dramatic changes under the pressures of the epistemological revolution of the early seventeenth century. In fact, as was shown in Chapter IV, the persona's use of emblem terminology testifies to this ongoing shift, and to an authorial stance that reflects both the hieroglyphic origins of humanist emblematics and its metamorphosis into a utilitarian pool of signifiers liable to endless reappropriation.

The persona's efforts at repurposing the emblems does not end there, however. As was demonstrated in Chapters VII and VIII, its voices often show signs of being steeped in the views and ideas that prompted Wither's continual involvement in contemporary political and religious debates, including the status, duties, and legitimacy of the king, the central theological conundrum around the concepts of divine grace, free will, and predestination, as well as the philosophical framework of Stoicism and its bearing on theories of government, conduct, and morality in Jacobean and Caroline England. Emblems that constitute merely abstract considerations on government and kingly virtues in Rollenhagen's book are seized upon to express, in a thinly veiled fashion, the persona's concern and indignation as it witnesses the flaring of tensions between the king and Parliament and the increasing entrenchment of religious sectarianism. The final Chapter then argues that the lottery game, the importance of

which is repeatedly downplayed by Wither's persona, can be considered as the main structuring device of the book, a creative, playful, and interactive re-interpretation of emblematic discourse, which both exemplifies and mitigates the power of Fortune, steers the reader towards the moral lessons conveyed in the emblems proper while constantly affirming, in a Baconian vein, that one's willingness and ability to make wise and virtuous choices negates the grasp that misfortune could exert upon one's life. But the game also constitutes an affirmation of authorial authority and of the joint powers of visual, textual, and ludic elements to create a self-containing microcosmos in which even the most coercive and inescapable real-life hierarchies may be overturned and subverted, and in which the Horatian idea of the poet's ultimate power, tenuous and temporary as though it may be, materialises in a highly original manner.

As was stated several times in the preceding chapters, Wither was often to be found on the *via media* between highly polarised ideological or doctrinal positions, though never for lack of assertiveness or of political courage. As such, the English poet epitomises the deep epistemological shifts inherent in the theological and societal debates and conflicts of his time, in which he actively partook. *A Collection of Emblemes* is thus remarkable in its adamant resistance to neat categorisation, just as Wither, if studied carefully through his "draughts" (1635: Med. 2), resists the hasty and oversimplified labelling that critics have often inflicted upon him. The originality of the work, and its usefulness as an object of enquiry, reside precisely in its mirroring the complex, dynamic, and ideologically ambiguous period during which it was written. In a particularly appropriate passage, Jean Starobinski begins by acknowledging the critical potential of historical contextualisation to discover the rules that governed literary output at a given time:

> *A world within a world, the work may seem to be a microcosmic reflection of the universe into which it was born. The relations I discover within the work would then be reproduced faithfully outside it, in the larger world of which it is but one element. If so, I may feel convinced that the work's internal law is but a symbolic abridgment of the collective law of the moment and cultural milieu within which it was produced. Having grafted the work onto its context, I then look on as organic meanings burgeon, in the expectation that deciphering the work will reveal a "period style" and vice versa.* (1989: 118)

He immediately limits the scope of this potency however:

> *Such a method may reasonably hope to succeed whenever it deals with a stable, almost immutable culture, all of whose elements maintain functional relations of a particular nature among themselves in such a way as to perpetuate the established cultural equilibrium* […] *The moment philosophy arrogates to itself the right to question (not necessarily to challenge) the foundations of institutions and traditions; the moment that poetic language ceases to be confined by the rules of a well-defined game, or ceases to be the exorcism of transgression and becomes transgression itself; then culture acquires a historical dimension that cannot easily be accommodated even within the limits of a generalized structuralism. The old normative criticism, which defined* genera dicendiy *poetic genres, figures, and meters, attempted to subject literature to the dominion of rule. But law, as the apostle Paul said, presupposes sin, and rules presuppose the possibility of infraction.* (119)

I would contend that Wither's *Collection of Emblemes* is precisely the opposite: instead of being a testimony to an "established cultural equilibrium", it is thoroughly permeated by the ubiquitous ambivalence and philosophical effervescence of the first half of the seventeenth century. In the "Preposition" to the frontispiece, Wither's persona, perhaps at its most disingenuous, states: "This contayneth nought, / Which, (in a proper sense) concerneth, ought, / The present age" (F), a disclaimer that, I hope to have been able to demonstrate, proves to be as necessary as it is untrue. *A Collection of Emblemes*, then, constitutes an "anecdote" in the Geertzian sense, one that richly rewards sustained attention and a willingness to question preconceptions about Wither's personality and poetry. It is a multi-layered mirror of one of the most passionately debated periods in English history, composed by one of its most prolific and versatile witnesses. This dissertation was not intended to produce what Gallagher and Greenblatt call a "counterhistory" in the broad sense, "[an assault] on the *grands récits* inherited from the last century" (2000: 52), but it certainly aimed at "chipping away at the

familiar edifices" to "make plastered-over cracks appear" (ibid.), even if the edifices in question are of a minor extent – the place of *A Collection of Emblemes* in the English emblem corpus, its relationship to the tumultuous period of the 1630s, Wither's views on politics and religion, as well as his status as a poet and as an emblem writer. It does not intend to claim for Wither's emblem book the status of a martyr of literary criticism, nor to lapse into the vindictive or the hagiographic, but rather to claim for it the place of a particularly rich cultural artifact. Its methodological framework, though it can no doubt be extended and refined, proved adequate to initiate a dialogic relationship between the work and the "webs of significance" that constitute its cultural context, and to clear new avenues for further enquiries into Wither's momentous and diverse bibliography, providing, as Louis Martz puts it, "a new viewpoint for debate". "Perhaps", he continues, "that is all that any of us can hope to accomplish" (1982: 174).

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Kircher, A. (1646). *Ars magna lucis et vmbrae in decem libros digesta. Quibus admirandae lucis et vmbrae in mundo, atque adeò vniuersa natura, vires effectusq. vti noua, ita varia nouorum reconditiorumq. speciminum exhibitione, ad varios mortalium vsus, panduntur*. Rome: Hermani Scheus.

Lipsius, J. (1594). *Sixe bookes of politickes or ciuil doctrine, written in latine by Iustus Lipsius: Which doe especially concerne principalitie; done into English by William Jones gentleman.* London: Printed by Richard Field for William Ponsonby.

London, W. (1657). *A catalogue of the most vendible books in england orderly and alphabetically digested under the heads of divinity, history, physick and chyrurgery, law, arithmetick, geometry, astrology ... : With hebrew, greek and latine for schools and scholars : The like work never yet performed by any : Also, all sorts of globes, mapps of the world or in parts ... : All to be sold by the author at his shop in New-Castle.* London.

Marshall, W. (1683). *Mr. Geo. Withers revived, or, his prophesie of our present calamity, and (except we repent) future misery written by him in the year 1628*. London: Printed for William Marshall.

Massinger, P. (1624). *The bond-man an antient storie. As it hath been often acted with good allowance, at the Cock-pit in Drury-lane: by the most excellent princesse, the Lady Elizabeth her Seruants. By Phillip Massinger.* London : Printed by Edw: Allde, for Iohn Harison and Edward Blackmore, and are to be sold at the great south dore of Pauls.

May, E. (1633). *Epigrams diuine and morall. by Edvv. May, Gent.* London: Printed by I[ohn] B[eale] for Iohn Groue, and are to be sold at his shop, in Chancery-lane, neere the Rowles, ouer against the Suppery-office

May, T. (1629). *Selected epigrams of Martial. Englished by Thomas May Esquire.* London: Printed [by Humphrey Lownes] for Thomas Walkley at Brittaines Burse.

Milton, J. (1642). *An apology against a pamphlet call'd A modest confutation of the animadversions upon the remonstrant against smectymnuus.* London: Printed by E.G. for Iohn Rothwell.

Owen, D. (1642). *Anti-paræus, or, A treatise in the defence of the royall right of kings against paræus and the rest of the anti-monarchians, whether presbyterians or jesuits. wherein is maintained the unlawfulnesse of opposing and taking up arms against the prince, either by any private subject, inferiour magistrate, the states of the kingdom, or the pope of rome. confirm'd from the dictate of nature, the law of nations, the civill and canon law, the sacred scriptures, ancient fathers, and protestant divines. delivered formerly in a determination in the divinity schooles in cambridge, april the 9th. 1619. and afterwards enlarged for the presse by learned dr. owen. now translated and published to confirme men in their loyalty to their king, by R.M. Master in Arts.* York: by Stephen Bulkley.

Paradin, C. (1551). *Devises Héroiques*. Lyon: Ian de Tournes et Guil. Gazeau.

Peacham, H. (1612). *Minerua Britanna or A garden of heroical deuises furnished, and adorned with emblemes and impresa's of sundry natures, newly devised, moralized, and published, by Henry Peacham, Mr. of Artes.* London: Printed in Shoe-lane at the signe of the Faulcon by Wa: Dight,

Perkins, W. (1604). *Lectures vpon the three first chapters of the reuelation: Preached in cambridge anno dom. 1595. by master william perkins, and now published for the benefite of this church, by robert hill bachelor in diuinitie. to which is added an excellent sermon, penned at the request of that noble and wise councellor, ambrose, earle of warwicke: In which is proued that rome is babylon, and that babylon is fallen*. London: Printed by Richard Field for Cuthbert Burbie, and are to be sold at his shop in Paules Church-yard, at the signe of the Swan.

--- (1611). *An exposition of the symbole or creede of the apostles according to the tenour of the scriptures, and the consent of orthodoxe fathers of the church / reuewed and corrected, by william perkins*. London: By Iohn Legate, printer to the Vniuersitie of

Cambridge ... and are to be solde in Pauls Church-yard at the signe of the crowne by Simon Waterson.

Person, D. (1635). *Varieties: or, A surveigh of rare and excellent matters necessary and delectable for all sorts of persons. Wherein the principall heads of diverse sciences are illustrated, rare secrets of naturall things unfoulded, &c. Digested into five bookes, whose severall chapters with their contents are to be seene in the table after the epistle dedicatory. By David Person, of Loghlands in Scotland, Gentleman.* London : Printed by Richard Badger [and Thomas Cotes], for Thomas Alchorn, and are to be sold at his shop, in Pauls Church-yard, at the signe of the green-Dragon,

Petrarca, F. (1579). *Phisicke against fortune, aswell prosperous, as aduerse conteyned in two bookes. whereby men are instructed, with lyke indifferencie to remedie theyr affections, aswell in tyme of the bryght shynyng sunne of prosperitie, as also of the foule lowryng stormes of aduersitie. expedient for all men, but most necessary for such as be subiect to any notable insult of eyther extremitie. written in latine by frauncis petrarch, a most famous poet, and oratour. and now first englished by Thomas Twyne.* London: Printed by [Thomas Dawson for] Richard watkyns.

Picinelli, F. (1687). *Mundus symbolicus, in emblematum universitate formatus, explicatus, et tam sacris, quàm profanis eruditionibus ac sententiis illustratus : subministrans oratoribus, praedicatoribus, academicis, poetis &c. innumera conceptuum argumenta*. Coloniae Agrippinae : Sumptibus Hermanni Demen.

Preston, J. (1637). *The doctrine of the saints infirmities. Delivered in serverall sermons by John Preston Doctor in Divinity, Mr. of Emanuel Colledge in Cambridge. And late preacher of Lincolns Inne.* London : Printed by Nich. and Iohn Okes for Henry Taunton, and are to be sold at his shop in St. Dunstans Church-yard in Fleet-street.

Price, D. (1613). *Prince Henry his first anniversary. by Daniel Price doctor in divinity, one of his highnesse chaplaines.* Oxford: Printed by Ioseph Barnes.

Prynne, W. (1629). *God, no impostor nor deluder: Or, an ansvver to a popish and arminian cauill, in the defence of free-will, and vniuersall grace wherein god's tender of grace by the outward ministry of the gospel, to reprobates who neither doe, nor can receiue it; is vindicated from those aspersions of equiuocation, falsitie, and collusion, which some by way of obiection, cast vpon it. by william prynne, and vtter barrester of lincolnes inne*. London: Printed [by Elizabeth Allde].

Purchas, S. (1613). *Purchas his pilgrimage. Or Relations of the vvorld and the religions obserued in all ages and places discouered, from the Creation vnto this present In foure partes. This first containeth a theologicall and geographicall historie of Asia, Africa, and America, with the ilands adiacent. Declaring the ancient religions before the Floud ... With briefe descriptions of the countries, nations, states, discoueries, priuate and publike customes, and the most remarkable rarities of nature, or humane industrie, in the same. By Samuel Purchas, minister at Estwood in Essex.* London: Printed by William Stansby for Henrie Fetherstone, and are to be sold at his shoppe in Pauls Church-yard at the signe of the Rose.

Quarles, F. (1629); *Argalus and Parthenia The argument of ye history. Written by Fra: Quarles.* London: Printed for Iohn Marriott in St. Dunstons Church:yard fleetstreet,

--- (1633). *Diuine fancies digested into epigrammes, meditations, and observations / by Fra. Quarles.* London : Printed by M.F. for Iohn Marriot, and are to be sold at his shop in St. Dunstans churchyard in Fleetstreet.

--- (1635). *Emblemes by Fra. Quarles.* London: Printed by G.M. and sold at Iohn Marriots shope in St. Dunstons church yard Fleetstreet.

--- (1638). *Hieroglyphikes of the life of man. fra: Quarles*. London: Printed by M. Flesher, for Iohn Marriot.

Raleigh, W. (Sir). (1614). *The history of the world.* London: Printed [by William Stansby] for Walter Burre [, and are to be sold at his shop in Paules Church-yard at the signe of the Crane].

Rollenhagen, G. (1611). *Nucleus emblematum selectissimorum : quae Itali vulgo impresas vocant : priuata industria, studio singulari, vndiq[ue] conquisitus, non paucis venustis inuentionibus auctus, additis carminib[us] illustrates*. Printed by Jan Jansson (Janszoon) in Arnheim.

--- (1613). *Selectorum emblematum centuria secunda.* Printed by Jan Jansson (Janszoon) in Arnheim.

Ross, A. (1647). *Mystagogvs poeticvs, or, the muses interpreter explaining the historicall mysteries and mysticall histories of the ancient Greek and Latine poets: Here Apollo's temple is opened, the muses treasures discovered and the gardens of Parnassus disclosed whence*

many flowers of usefull delightfull and rare observations never touched by any other mythologist are collected / by Alexander Ross. London.

Saltonstall, W. (1631). *Picturæ loquentes. or pictures drawne forth in characters VVith a poeme of a maid. by Wye Saltonstall*. London: Printed by Tho. Cotes, and are to be sold by Tho. Slater, at his shop in the Blacke Fryars.

Sandys, G. (1628). *Ouid's metamorphosis Englished by G.S*. London: Printed by Robert Young are [sic] to be sold by I. Grismond.

Shakespeare, W. (1623). *Mr. VVilliam Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies Published according to the true originall copies.* London : Printed by Isaac Iaggard, and Ed. Blount [at the charges of W. Iaggard, Ed. Blount, I. Smithweeke, and W. Aspley].

Sibbes, R. (1639). *Two sermons: Preached by that faithfull and reverend divine, richard sibbes, D.D. and sometimes preacher to the honorable society of grayes inne; and master of katherine hall in cambridge*. London: By T. Cotes, for Andr. Kembe, & are to be sold at his Shop at S. Margarits Hall in Southwarke.

Smith, J. (1625); *The generall historie of Virginia, Nevv-England, and the Summer Iles with the names of the adventurers, planters, and governours, from their first beginning, an0 1584. to this present 1625. VVith the proceedings of those severall colonies, and the accidents that befell them in all their iourneyes and discoveries. Also, the maps and descriptions of all those countries, their commodities, people, government, customes, and religion yet knowne. Divided into sixe bookes. By Captaine Iohn Smith, sometimes governour in those countries, and admirall of Nevv-England.* London : Printed by I[ohn] D[awson] and I[ohn] H[aviland] for Michael Sparkes;

Spencer, T. (1628). *The art of logick deliuered in the precepts of Aristotle and Ramus. VVherein 1. The agreement of both authors is declared. 2. The defects in Ramus, are supplyed, and his superfluities pared off, by the precepts of Aristotle. 3. The precepts of both, are expounded and applyed to vse, by the assistance of the best schoolemen. By Tho: Spencer.* London: Printed by Iohn Dawson for Nicholas Bourne, at the south entrance of the Royall Exchange.

Spirito, L. (1618). *The booke of fortune.* London: For Edward Wright

Steward, R. (1658). *THREE SERMONS PREACHED by the Reverend, and Learned, Dr. Richard Stuart, Dean of St. Pauls, afterwards Dean of Westminster, and Clerk of the Closet*

to the Late King Charles. To which is added a Fourth SERMON, Preached by the Right Reverend Father in God SAMVEL HARSNETT, Lord Arch-Bishop of York. The second edition corrected and amended. London: Printed for *G. Bedel,* and *T. Collins,* and are to be sold at their Shop at *Middle-Temple* Gate in *Fleet-street.*

Sutcliffe, A. (1634). *Meditations of man's mortalitie. or, A way to true blessednesse. written, by mrs. Alice Sutcliffe wife of Iohn Sutcliffe esquire, groome of his maiesties most honourable privie chamber*. London: Printed by B[ernard] A[lsop] and T[homas] F[awcet] for Henry Seyle at the Tygers head in St. Pauls Church-yard.

Taylor, J. (1621). *Taylor's motto et habeo, et careo, et curo*. London: Printed [by Edward Allde] for I T[rundle] & H G[osson].

--- (1625*). The fearefull sommer: Or Llondons calamitie, the countreys discurtesie, & both their miserie. by John Taylor.* London: I. L[ichfield] and W. T[urner] [i.e. E. Allde].

--- (1643). *The noble cavalier caracterised, and a rebellious caviller cavterised by John Taylor*. Oxford.

Thomas, (1662) History of the Worthies of England

Valeriano, I. P.B. (1556) *Hieroglyphica, siue, De sacris Aegyptiorum literis commentarii.* Basel: [Michael Isengrin].

Van Haecht, L. (1579). *Mikrokosmos*, Antwerp: Gerard Jode.

Verrien, N. (1685). *Livre curieux et utile pour les Sçavants et Artistes, composé de trois Alphabets de chiffres simples, doubles et triples, fleuronnez et au premier trait. Accompagné d'un très grand nombre de devises, Emblêmes, Medailles et autres figures Hieroglyphiques. Ensemble plusieurs supportset Cimiers pour les ornemens des Armes. Avec une Table tres ample, par le moyen de laquelle on trouvera facilement tous les noms imaginables.* Paris.

Wastell, S. (1629). *Microbiblion or the bibles epitome: In verse digested according to the alphabet, that the scriptures we reade may more happily be remembred, and things forgotten more easily recalled. by Simon Wastell somtimes of Queenes Colledge in Oxford.* London: Printed [by Miles Flesher] for Robert Mylbourne, and are to be sold at his shop at the signe of the Greyhound in Paules Churchyard.

Whitney, G. (1586). *A choice of emblemes, and other deuises, for the moste parte gathered out of sundrie writers, Englished and moralized. And diuers newly deuised, by Geffrey Whitney. A worke adorned with varietie of matter, both pleasant and profitable: wherein*

those that please, maye finde to fit their fancies: bicause herein, by the office of the eie, and the eare, the minde maye reape dooble delighte throughe holsome preceptes, shadowed with pleasant deuises: both fit for the vertuous, to their incoraging: and for the wicked, for their admonishing and amendment. Leyden : In the house of Christopher Plantyn, by Francis Raphelengius.

Perkins, W. (1607). *A godly and learned exposition or commentarie vpon the three first chapters of the reuelation. preached in cambridge by that reuerend and judicious diuine, maister VWilliam perkins, ann. dom. 1595. first published for the benefit of gods church, by robert hill, bachelor of diuinitie*. London: Printed by Adam Islip for Cuthbert Burbie, and are to bee sold at his shop in Paules Churchyard at the signe of the Swan.

Wither, G. (1612). *Prince Henries obsequies or mournefull elegies vpon his death vvith a supposed inter-locution betweene the ghost of Prince Henrie and Great Brittaine. by George Wyther.* London: Printed by Ed: Allde, for Arthur Iohnson, at the white Horse neere vnto the great north doore of Saint Paul.

--- (1613). *Abuses stript, and whipt. or satirical essayes. by George Wyther. diuided into two bookes.* London: Printed by G. Eld, for Francis Burton, and are to be solde at his shop in Pauls Church-yard, at the signe of the Green-Dragon.

--- (1613). *Epithalamia: Or nuptiall poems vpon the most blessed and happie mariage betweene the high and mightie prince Frederick the Fifth, Count Palatine of the Rhein, Duke of Bauier, &c. and the most vertuous, gracious and thrice excellent Princesse, Elizabeth, sole daughter to our dread soueraigne, Iames by the grace of God King of Great Britaine, France and Ireland, defender of the faith, &c. celebrated at white-hall the fourteenth of februarie, 1612. written by George Wither.* London: Imprinted [by F. Kingston] for Edward Marchant, and are to be sold at his shop ouer against the Crosse in Pauls Church-yeard.

--- (1614). *A satyre dedicated to his most excellent maiestie. by george VVither, gentleman.* London: Printed [by Thomas Snodham] for George Norton, and are to be solde at the signe of the red-Bull, neere Temple-barre.

--- (1615). *Fidelia.* London: Printed by Nicholas Okes.

--- (1615). *The shepherds hunting being, certaine eglogs written during the time of the authors imprisonment in the* marshalsey. by George VVither, gentleman. London: Printed

by Thomas Snodham for George Norton, and are to be sold at the signe of the red-Bull, neere Temple-barre.

--- (1619). *A preparation to the psalter. by George Wyther.* gent. London:Printed by Nicholas Okes.

--- (1620). *Exercises vpon the first psalme both in prose and verse. by Geo: Wither, of the societie of lincolnes inne.* London: Printed by Edw. Griffin, for Iohn Harrison, and are to be sold at his shop, in Pater Noster Row, at the signe of the Golden Vnicorne.

--- (1621). *Wither's motto Nec Habeo, Nec Careo, Nec Curo.* London: Printed [by A. Mathewes] for John Marriot.

--- (1622). *Faire-virtue, the mistresse of Phil'arete. VVritten by him-selfe*. London: Printed [by Augustine Mathewes] for Iohn Grismand.

--- (1623). *The Hymnes and Songs of the Church diuided into two parts : The first part comprehends the canonicall hymnes, and such parcels of holy scripture, as may properly be sung, with some other ancient songs and creeds : The second part consists of spirituall songs, appropriated to the seuerall times and occasions, obseruable in the church of england / translated and composed by G.W.* London: Printed by the assignes of George Wither.

--- (1624). *The schollers purgatory discouered in the stationers common-wealth, and discribed in a discourse apologeticall, asvvell for the publike aduantage of the church, the state & vvhole common-vvealth of england, as for the remedy of priuate iniuryes. by Geo: VVither.* London: Imprinted [by G. Wood] for the honest Stationers

--- (1628). *Britain's remembrancer containing a narration of the plague lately past; a declaration of the mischiefs present; and a prediction of iudgments to come; (if repentance prevent not.) it is dedicated (for the glory of god) to posteritie; and, to these times (if they please) by Geo: Wither*. London: Imprinted for Great Britaine, and are to be sold by Iohn Grismond in Ivie-Lane.

--- (1636). *The nature of man A learned and usefull tract written in greek by Nemesius, surnamed the philosopher; sometime Bishop of a city in Phœnicia, and one of the most ancient fathers of the church. englished, and divided into sections, with briefs of their principall contents: By Geo: Wither*. London: Printed by M[iles] F[lesher] for Henry Taunton in St. Dunstans Churchyard in Fleetstreet.

--- (1641). *Halelviah, or, Britans [sic] second remembrancer bringing to remembrance (in praisefull and poenitentiall hymns, spirituall songs, and morall-odes) meditations, advancing the glory of god, in practise of pietie and vertue : And applyed to easie tunes to be sung in families &c / composed in a three-fold volumes by George Wither.* London: Printed by I.L. for Andrew Hebb.

--- (1643). *Campo-musæ, or the field-musings of captain George VVither, touching his military ingagement for the king and parliament, the justnesse of the same, and the present distractions of these islands.* London: Printed by R. Austin, and A. Coe.

--- (1643). *Se defendendo. A shield, and shaft, against detraction. opposed, and drawn, by capt. George Wither, by occasion of scandalous rumours, touching his deserting of farnham-castle; and some other malicious aspersions.* London.

--- (1645). *Vox pacifica a voice tending to the pacification of god's wrath; and offering those propositions, or conditions, by the acceptation, and performance whereof, in some good measure, a firme and continuing peace may be obtained. it is directed to the king, parliaments, and people of these islands: By Geo. Wither esquire, (a commander in this war) heretofore their unheeded remebbrancer [sic] of plagues and deliverances past; and their timely forewarner of the judgments now come. he hath disposed it into six books, or canto's, whereof foure onely are contained in this volumne; and the other deferred to be hereafter published, as there shall be cause.* London: Printed by Robert Austin, in the Old-Baily.

--- (1646). *Justitiarius justificatus. = the iustice justified. being an apologeticall remonstrance, / delivered to the honourable commissioners, of the great seale, by george wither esquire, and occasioned by sir richard onslow knight, with some others, who moved to have him put out of the commission of the peace, in surrey: In which private-defence, many things are expressed, verie pertinent to publike-consideration; and, top the vindication of the liberties of the subject, in generall, and of magistrates, in particular.* London.

--- (1646). *Opobalsamum anglicanum: = an english balme, lately pressed out of a shrub, and spread upon these papers, for the cure of some scabs, gangreeves and cancers indangering the bodie of this common-wealth; and, to whom it is now tendred, by the vvell-affected english, in a double-speech, disjunctively delivered, by one of their fellow-ship, both to the faithfull, and malignant members of the representative-body of this kingdome. / penned, by the author of britaines remembrancer Geo: Wither esquire*. London.

--- (1648). *Prosopopœia britannica britans genius, or, good-angel, personated; reasoning and advising, touching the games now playing, and the adventures now at hazard in these islands; and presaging, also, some future things, not unlikely to come to passe. / discovered, by Terræ-Filius (a well-knowne lover of the publike-peace) when the begetting of a nationall-quarrell was first feared. expressed in two lections, or readings.* London: Printed by Robert Austin

--- (1655). *Meditations upon the lords prayer with a preparatory preamble to the right understanding, and true use of this pattern : Contemplated by the author during the time wherein his house was visited by the pestilence 1665 and is dedicated to them, by whose charity god preserved him and his family, from perishing in their late troubles / ... by ... Geo. Withers.* London.

--- (1659). *A cordial confection, to strengthen their hearts whose courage begins to fail, by the armies late dissolving the parliament. it is wrapt up in an epistolary discourse, occasionally written to mr. ro. hamon, merchant, by Geo. Wither, esq; about a week after the said parliament was dissolved; and is thus communicated by a copy thereof, as very pertinent to these distracted times, and tending to preservation of the common-peace. for (other things of publick concernment, being inter-woven) it truly states the peoples cause (in plain expressions, suitable to the vulgar capacities) and frees it from many scandals. it contains an expedient, (hitherto not heeded, or neglected) whereby Charles Stuart may be settled in peace, if he please: Whereby, we may have a better parliament then we lost, or ever had: Whereby, our armies may be kept constant to order, whilst they are needful, and in a short time quite disbanded: Whereby, the peoples just freedoms may be recovered and perpetuated: Whereby, not onely these nations, but all christendome also, may be established in a righteous peace; and it hath neither destructive inlet, outlet, or false bottom.* London: Printed by James Cottrel.

--- (1660). *Furor-poeticus (i.e.) propheticus. A poetick-phrensie. some, (probably) will call it so: Thus named, therefore, let it go. it is the result of a private-musing, occasioned by a publike report in the country, of the parliaments restauration by general george moncke, in february 1659. and meditated soon after the said general's arrival in london, in dorso pagi, recubans sub tegmine fagi: / by G.W. esq*. London: Printed by James Cottrel.

--- (1660). *Speculum speculativum: Or, A considering-glasse being an inspection into the present and late sad condition of these nations; with some cautional expressions made thereupon, by george wither, immediately after his majesties restauration: To preserve in himself and others a christian obedience to god's various dispensations. hereby also are some glimmerings discovered of what will probably ensue hereafter.* London:

--- (1662). *Paralellogrammation an epistle to the three nations of england, scotland, and ireland, whereby their sins being parallel'd with those of Judah and Israel, they are forewarned, and exhorted to a timely repentance, lest they incur the like condempation : To render it the more effectual, some considerable notions are therein expressed touching ceremonies, and things indifferent, the lords supper, the civil government, the taking of oaths, the mark of the beast, the library of conscience, the great sabbath, and the two witnesses, with other particulars of concernment interwoven / written by Geo. Wither.* London.

--- (1664). *Tuba-pacifica seasonable præcautions whereby is sounded forth a retreat from the war intended between england and the united provinces of lower germany. by Geo: Wither, a lover of peace, and heartily well-affected toward both nations. nimis cautela non nocet. for, that caution, which may seem too much at sometimes, will not now be such.* London.

--- (1665). *A memorandum to london occasioned by the pestilence there begun this present year MDCLXV, and humbly offered to the lord mayor, aldermen and commonality of the said city / by George Wither ; thereto is by him added, a warning-piece to london, discharged out of a loophole in the tower, upon meditating the deplorable fier, which consumed the house of an eminent citizen, with all the persons and goods therein, at the beginning of most joyful festival in december 1662 ; also, a single sacrifice offered to almighty god, by the same author in his lonely confinement, for prevention of the dearth-feared, and probably portended, by immoderate raines in june and july, 1663, morever, in regard may have reported and believed this author to be dead, we have annexed his epitaph, made by himself upon that occasion*. London.

--- (1665). *Three private meditations which being, for the most part, of publick concernment, are therefore published, by their author / George Wither*. London.

--- (1666). *Sighs for the pitchers breathed out in a personal contribution to the national humiliation the last of may, 1666. in the cities of london and westminster, upon the near approaching engagment then expected, between the english and dutch navies.*

wherewith are complicated such musings as were occasioned by a report of their actual engagement; and by observing the publike rejoycing whilst this was preparing by the author George Wither. London.

--- (1680). *Mr. George Withers revived: Or, his prophesie of our present calamity, and (except we repent) future misery written by him in the year 1628.* London.

Wotton, A. (1626). *The art of logick Gathered out of Aristotle, and set in due forme, according to his instructions, by Peter Ramus, Professor of philosophy and rhetorick in Paris, and there martyred for the Gospell of the Lord Iesus. With a short exposition of the praecepts, by which any one of indifferent capacitie, may with a little paines, ataine to some competent knowledge and vse of that noble and necessary science. Published for the instruction of the vnlearned, by Antony Wotton.,* London : Printed by I. D[awson] for Nicholas Bourne, and are to be sold at his shop at the Exchange.

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Université de Strasbourg

Pierre LE DUFF

Persona, Fortune, and Inter-Semiotic Playfulness:
George Wither's Repurposing of the Emblem Genre in
***A Collection of Emblemes* (1635)**

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Résumé

Ma thèse étudie à travers un prisme méthodologique hybride le recueil d'emblèmes de George Wither paru en 1635 à Londres. Afin de démontrer qu'il s'agit d'un objet d'étude à la fois historique et générique d'une grande originalité, et afin de corriger de nombreuses erreurs commises par les critiques antérieurs, elle procède à une contextualisation détaillée de l'ouvrage à la lumière des théories politiques, religieuses, esthétiques et symboliques du premier dix-septième siècle.

Mots clés :
Emblèmes, dix-septième siècle, religion, politique, intermédialité, interdisciplinarité, voix poétique.

Résumé en anglais

My dissertation examines George Wither's emblem book, which was printed in 1635 in London, through the prism of a hybrid methodological framework. It provides an extensive contextualisation of the work in the light of political, religious, aesthetic, and symbolic theories of the early Stuart period, so as to show that the work, its almost unanimous critical rejection notwithstanding, is a highly relevant cultural artifact that yields a great deal of information about England during the Caroline period.

Keywords :
Emblems, seventeenth century, religion, politics, intermediality, interdisciplinary studies, poetic persona.