My contention in these pages is that philology displays a surprising but close family resemblance to the early modern emblem. To be more precise: just as emblems are philological, so too is philology emblematic. In fact, it may be legitimate to ask which discourse exerts more genealogical influence on the other. In order to substantiate this claim, I follow a three-part argument. First, I consider an emblem from Juan de Borja’s *Empresas morales* (1581) with an eye to the way Borja’s reader is guided towards a performance of the presence of Spanish linguistic and cultural hegemony and universality.¹ In the second section, I comment on how the aesthetic and theological witticisms of sacramental theater in Baroque Spain enact a similar if not identical performance of presence. In the last act, I turn to a recent philological study of this theater, in the form of Ana Suárez Miramón’s 2003 edition of Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s *El gran mercado del mundo*, in which the editorial commentary configures a universalizing emblematization of both Calderón and seventeenth-century Counter Reformation ideology.

My argument rests on three suppositions: (1) that what is most often at stake in the theoretical definition and concrete deployment of both emblematic and philological practices is the performance of presence; (2) that the performance of presence comes into play in early modernity when power is both articulated and questioned; (3) that the best way to study the ideological functions of the emblem is to focus on those strategies that realize or

¹. I cite from the 1680 edition.
block the performance of presence and the ideological power it constitutes. This relationship between the performance of presence and ideological force is grounded in Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht’s definition of power, which he offers as an alternative to the Foucauldian insistence on institutional and discursive power structures: “Unlike Foucault, I think that we miss what is distinctive about power as long as we use this notion within the Cartesian limits of the structures, production, and uses of knowledge. My counterproposal is to define power as the potential of occupying or blocking spaces with bodies.”

Gumbrecht’s groundbreaking work on the ritual dramatization of presence in the Middle Ages informs his “anti-Cartesian” understanding of power, which makes it very useful for studying the ritualistic framing of words and images in early modernity. Following Jan Assmann’s distinction between the semantic and the material sides of the linguistic sign, a distinction also found in early modern emblem theory in the division between a verbal soul and hieroglyphic body, I argue that the way emblematic structures block access to the material circumstances of their articulation represents a particularly potent form of power. This argument necessitates a certain rapprochement between Gumbrecht and Foucault in that the visual or emblematic sign is equated with Gumbrecht’s understanding of the ‘body,’ a move permitted by early modern emblem theory. The exemplary case of a body/sign that becomes ritualistically saturated by presence is of course the sacramental body of Christ, which is germane to all of the literary artifacts considered here and which also lends a particularly clear illustration of Gumbrecht’s concept of power. Finally, it also serves to show how Foucault’s definition of power cannot leave the body behind, any more than Gumbrecht’s could consider the body as completely distinct from the world of the sign. The movement between the two theories and semiotic variables is in fact analogous to the movement between presence and meaning.

Emblem, Philology, Emblematic Philology

We begin with the “canonical” tripartite definition of the emblem, in which an inscriptio, or titular motto (fragmentary soul), is combined with an equally

2. When I was revising this essay, my book, The Persistence of Presence: Emblem and Ritual in Baroque Spain, was in press; it covers some of the same issues in greater detail.
5. See Assmann 1994: 24. The landmark studies of José Antonio Maravall and Fernando R. de la Flor (Maravall 1972; R. de la Flor 1995) on the ideological power and conservative deployment of the emblem in Counter-Reformation culture are fundamental to the discussion to follow.
fragmentary visual image (body), and framed by a subscriptio (commentary) that guides the reader towards the solution of the verbal-visual enigma. According to emblem theorists, the meaning of the emblem is not found in any one component but rather arises from the combination of the three, wherein the whole is greater than the parts. Emblem theory thus draws the reader’s attention away from the individual, material parts of the emblem, each of which could serve as an object of philological inquiry, in favor of a unifying meaning: it is, in other words, allegorical. The reason most often given for the enormous success of Andrea Alciato’s Emblemata liber—the first and exemplary collection of emblems—is that “Alciato brought together on a single page previously dispersed if widely disseminated discursive and cultural practices of the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance” (my emphasis). Although established traditions in the creation and use of heraldic devices, manuscript illumination, the glossing of classical epigrams, and any number of courtly and religious pageants preceded the publication of Alciato’s epigrams, his is the first work to exhibit what Karl Ludwig Selig calls the “perfect fusion of all the component parts of the emblem: motto, device and verse, together expressing the intent of the author.”

I would like to take a closer look at the moment and process of production of Alciato’s book by questioning one of the philological assumptions underpinning what is understood to be its foundational role in emblematics. This presupposition might be glossed as follows: “although the theoretical rationalization of the emblem’s form lagged several decades behind the publication of his book, Alciato purposefully and self-consciously combined its elements with a clear vision of their meaning.” Setting aside the obvious temporal paradox, the problem with this statement is that this is not at all how the first emblem book was produced. Sagrario López provides an elegant summary of how the Emblemata liber came to publication:

Inspired by the Greek Anthology, Andrea Alciato . . . composed 99 epigrams, each of which he gave a title. As luck [Fortuna] would have it, thanks to the imperial adviser Peutinger, the work would end up in the hands of the printer Steyner, who, thinking of the market, considered how appropriate it would be to add an illustration to each epigram. This task was given to the engraver Breuil, and the book was published in 1531 in Augsburg with the title Emblemata liber.

7. Selig 1990: 5.
I will return to López’s description in a moment: what matters for now is that although Alciato is responsible for the epigrams and titles, according to this account he cannot be considered the progenitor of the emblem, a form that requires a visual image. Alciato’s manuscript, which as far as we know contained no images nor any mention of images, passes through the hands of a royal bureaucrat, who makes sure that the work is well received by a printer in Augsburg, who in turn decides that the epigrams would be more reader-friendly—sell more quickly?—if they were accompanied by visual images. So he hands the manuscript over to the engraver Breuil. There is no evidence that Alciato was involved in the discussions concerning which images should go with which epigrams, nor in the actual making of the engravings; nor did he participate in the design of the page. According to Stephen Rawles, as late as 1534, by which time multiple editions and translations of the book had already appeared, “there could be no generic expectation of a ‘tripartite emblem.’”9 The “meaning” of the emblem as a discursive protagonist of the first order lagged far behind its “invention,” in which multiple, noncommunicating agents were directly implicated. From a logical point of view, there can be no question of authorial intent if the main criterion for the genre in which he is supposed to have expressed his intent, the visual image, is conceived and produced by other cultural agents. A more careful appraisal of the historical context and social role of each of the participants involved necessarily upends received scholarship concerning the emblem, which has tended to reify the importance given to the authority of Alciato by emblematists and other allegorical writers later in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It will be my contention that the responsibility of philology is to move in the opposite direction to that of the predominant tendency of literary culture in early modernity, which has tended to amplify the role of authorial intent at the expense of social and historical “materialities of communication.” The permutations and interventions that Alciato’s manuscript undergoes on the road to publication place the question of authorial intention in a largely hypothetical frame of reference.

None of this has ever been particularly secret, and yet there seems to be an insistent, if unrecognized, desire to occlude the messy and almost accidental circumstances surrounding the creation of the first emblem book, which makes the emblem a compelling test case for all early modern publications, few of which passed directly from the genius of the author to the receptive gaze of the educated reader. Alciato is often made the single intentional source for the whole book and, consequently, the progenitor of the

emblematic form itself. And if Alciato is not used, then something equally metaphysical takes his place. In the original Spanish, López (cited above) uses *Fortuna* to embody the historical agency, or lack thereof, behind the convergence of artistic, political, economic, and technological (self-) interests and circumstances that converge on the *Emblematum liber*: according to this view, Peutinger, Steyner, and Breuil become unwitting and subrogated agents of an impersonal and overarching historical intentionality. Would it not be more accurate, more philologically responsible, to recognize that the founding gesture of the tripartite emblematic form is tentative, contingent, and multiple? Institutionally informed, commercially driven, and artistically imitative, it is better understood as an intersection of diverse and even contradictory practices than as a unified and “natural” discursive structure. Of course, the risk that one runs in admitting entrance to such material contingencies is the multiplication of the number and nature of authorial intents. Perhaps most damaging of all, however, is the weakening of the structural integrity of the very notion of authorial intent itself. The intransigent contradictions produced by López’s narrative bear witness to the fact that the very attempt to contain the meaning of Alciato and his book inevitably produces uncontainable lines of escape once historical materialities are admitted entrance. It could be stated that the science of philology unravels the integrity of the philological fabric of meaning from the inside out.

The occlusion of the messy materialities of emblem production can itself be read as emblematic. According to Peter M. Daly, the emblematic mode of representation became a dominant discourse at the onset of modernity when the efficacy of medieval rituals of presence was destabilized. What Daniel Russell has called the “age of the emblem” came about as the result of the “the crisis of representation, the collapse of the distance between representation and world . . . [which] brought back the desire for presence.” The emblem appears in a world that has become multiple and conflictive and in which the traditional hierarchy between the word and the sign has become

10. Daly settles on this broad definition in an attempt to embrace the many forms and expressions of what is in fact an incredibly diverse collection of literary, artistic, and architectural discourses. In doing so he follows the pioneering theoretical work of Dietrich Jöns: “[Where Albrecht Schön] insists on the ‘potential facticity’ and inherent thing-meaning relationships as the characteristic of the emblem. . . . Jöns . . . emphasizes that with its allegorical roots in the middle ages the emblem is an instrument of knowledge, a way of interpreting reality, the basis of which is the Christian medieval belief in the significance of the qualities of things” (Daly 1979a: 52).


unstable; and it reacts to this emerging cosmic vacuum by projecting a unified meaning from a constitutively hybrid form. In a world characterized by movement and instability, the visual is put into play with the verbal, and the vernacular is framed by classical epigrams and religious verses all in an effort to fill the irreversible appearance of epistemological and ontological breaches in the organicist medieval world view.

But if the emblem embodies a desire for presence in the face of a world of disintegrating certainties, the dispersed and confused nature of its material production also embodies and enacts the disintegration itself. Even as the emblematist sets himself apart from the past in order to select and make present those signs deemed most communicative because of their proximity to the supposedly primordial origins of language, the emblem, in its multiple and contradictory materiality, points to the absence of certainty symptomatic of the increasing fragmentation and relativization of the unified world view that characterized the Middle Ages. Likewise for philology. It may seem odd to link Selig’s philological analysis with metaphysics, but according to Gumbrecht, philology is implicated in just such a search for epistemological certainty on which to ground its editorial practices and establish its scientific legitimacy:

> All philological practices generate desires for presence, desires for a physical and space-mediated relationship to the things of the world (including texts), and . . . such desire for presence is indeed the ground on which philology can produce effects of tangibility (and sometimes even the reality thereof).  

What Gumbrecht calls the presence effect of allegorical and philological discourses both arises from and reproduces the void at the heart of modern symbolic edifices. Like the emblematist’s attempt to fix the meaning of signs and words by pointing the reader towards a singular, allegorical meaning, philology uses the structure of authorial intent to block access to the contingency, multiplicity, and ambivalence of modern literary dissemination in the effort to fix the meaning of the literary text. It thus stands to reason that the emblem and philology appear and become dominant

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13. Said points out that philology is an eminently modern practice, whether we are talking about early modernity or modernity proper, due to the peculiar relationship between the philologist and the past: “Philology is a way of historically setting oneself off, as great artists do, from one’s time and an immediate past even as, paradoxically, one actually characterizes one’s modernity by doing so” (Said 1978: 132).


modes of social practice in the same historical moment. As historians and philosophers from José Antonio Maravall to Slavoj Žižek have argued, the founding moment of modernity is not the affirmation of transcendental certitude based on rational categories of thought by self-present Cartesian subjects, but rather the experience of the abyss out of which reason, like the emblem, dramatically arises as a gesture of symbolic power, all the while harboring an unconscious symptom of its constitutive limitations. The role of the emblematic body is to block or fill this empty space with an ineffable and therefore transcendental presence of mysterious origins and meaning.

The interaction of emblematic and philological presencing-effects is illustrated by an emblem (or *empresa*) from Juan de Borja’s *Empresas morales*. Borja, the third son of San Francisco de Borja—the Captain General of the Jesuits in sixteenth-century Spain—assembled his collection of emblems while he was a Spanish diplomat in Lisbon and published it in 1581 after he had taken up a similar post in Prague. Borja’s philological sophistication can be observed in an *empresa* whose inscription reads “SATIABOR CUM APPARVERIT” (I will be satisfied when it appears) (see p. 114). This legend appears above an image in which a “hieroglyphic” sign, the Coptic letter TAU, is sculpted on the face of a perspectively rendered pyramid, which, itself, has been lifted out of any identifiable frame of reference and placed on a pedestal for our inspection.

The second part of the subscription reads as follows:

That which Christ our Lord won for us with his Cross, which the Egyptians signified in their Hieroglyphic Letters with the Cross as can be seen on the Obelisks, which they made with the Letter: TAU. Which signifies the Cross, by which they understood the life which was to come, as very serious Authors declared it, and so with reason we should work and hope for relief from this life, which is to come, which with so many travails he won for us.16

The “hieroglyphic” fragment selected by Borja is the image TAU, which the author illuminates by writing a commentary that alludes to “serious Authors” in its attempt to teach the reader about the history and meaning of the sign in question. There are several strategies here which display the power of the emblematist/philologist as he leads the reader towards a “cor-
rect” interpretation of the emblematic riddle (the meaning of tau). In the first instance, the letter is placed in relief on an Egyptian pyramid, which visually projects the image back to the limits of historical time and space. In fact, it is probably more accurate to say that the way in which the image is constructed—an iconic image sculpted into the face of a geometric shape that seems to exist in a vacuum—removes both the sign and its material support from time altogether. Similarly, this ingenious assemblage converts a letter, albeit a foreign one, into a pre-alphabetic sign: a hieroglyph. The stubborn silence of the sign, in fact, is the space into which Borja’s commentary will enter in order to satisfy the reader’s desire for knowledge. Moving to the legend, the reader is entrenched in an already “weak” position through a
two-pronged movement: on the one hand, if the reader does not know Latin, he will once again have to defer to Borja’s commentary; if he knows Latin, he is now confronted by the grammatically passive *satiabor*. According to the syntax, the sign and its meaning will self-consciously “appear,” suddenly becoming present to the patient reader as if he were witnessing the denouement of an epic story, which in fact he is, as the teleological pull of Fortune or Providence saturates the *inscriptio*. Most striking is the way Borja’s etymology turns on a visual pun that misconstrues the Egyptian alphabet by reading the letter *tau* as a hieroglyph,17 confusing alphabetic and ideographical signs, not only by interpreting a Greek-derived alphabetic letter as an Egyptian hieroglyph but by appropriating this hieroglyphic symbol and its ideal knowledge in the name of Spanish Catholicism. Put another way, the accidental, material similarities between *tau* and the Christian cross are read through the lens of historical necessity. Finally, Borja positions his own authorial practice in relation to unnamed but nevertheless “very serious” authors, thus establishing his own legitimacy in a way that understates his authorial choices and overdetermines their authoritative pedigree.

The result of this strategic positioning of signs and authority is that the knowledge and signs of Egypt become legible and profitable through their placement within the symbolic network of Spanish Counter-Reformation values or *costumbres*, wherein the aura that emanates from their resistant iconicity and otherness is linked to a concrete semiotic and political project through what Jesús Maestro calls *transducción*: “The problem of transduction . . . is generated and resolved in the evolution of language, as a formal and functional medium that (empirically) permits the (intersubjective) normalization of (ontological) difference.”18 The ontological differences that Borja so elegantly cancels, or transduces, include, first and foremost, the difference between alphabetic and hieroglyphic signs, which stands in as a metaphor for the differentiated relationship between modern and primitive, Christian and pagan, Spanish and other.19 Borja’s emblematic choices dem-

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17. Pedro Mexía’s *Silva de varia lección* contains a similar interpretation of TAU: “Of the sign and figure of the cross; as before Christ suffered on it, it was revered and prized by the Arabs and Egyptians, and since it is a most perfect figure in itself” (qtd. in Selig 1990: 66).

18. El problema de la transducción . . . se genera y se resuelve en la evolución del lenguaje, como medio formal y funcional que permite (empíricamente) la normalización (intersubjetiva) de la diferencia (ontológica)” (Maestro 2004: 45).

19. R. de la Flor describes this process as one of a number of “methods of operatory approximation between the letter and the icon. . . . Everything worked towards indicating the existence of the signified, the only *via regia* for penetrating the sanctuary of signification. In this way the order of signs is diffracted and complicated at the same time, since an iconic observation is superimposed over the linguistic reading, with the latter providing a decisive sense to the complex relation that unites them” (R. de la Flor 2002: 347).
onstrate that the Golden age emblematis is free to redefine symbols according to his strategic objectives as long as their meaning is contained within a linguistic and cultural universalism consonant with Counter-Reformation ideology. The presupposing of Catholic universalism, channelled through the apparatus of the emblem, blocks both the reader’s and the philologist’s path to the material practices and effects of Borja’s philological machinery, thus achieving what Žižek calls the dialectical turn from the other to the same, as the meaning of tau becomes what it “always-already was.” Whether or not the Egyptians were consciously aware of it, they nevertheless participated in a linguistic drama of universal proportions. Put another way, what the Egyptians actually took as the meaning of tau is irrelevant to the correct identification of the meaning of the sign. In this scheme, tau functions like a cipher, which, though it represents different meanings to different audiences, only has one true meaning.

(I realize that my emphasis on Borja’s choices moves in opposition to my previous discussion concerning authorial intent. That being said, although there is considerable evidence that Borja worked in consultation with painters, engravers, and printers in the production of his work, I have attempted to place the choices he and his collaborators made within a broader ideological context, a strategy whose objective is the simultaneous recognition of Borja’s authorial activity and the outlining of the material context within which those choices are possible and probable.)

Emblematic Theater: The *auto sacramental*

The most emblematic literary and cultural practice of early modern Spain is theater. In the case of the *auto sacramental*, a one-act religious allegory situated at the doctrinal and celebratory heart of the annual Corpus Christi festival, the spectator is confronted by nothing less than a public performance of emblematic modes of representation. The *auto* is in essence a theatrical transduction of the Catholic mass, in which the Eucharist—the hypostatic marriage of flesh, sign, and spirit—is the fundamental trope, dramatic climax, and liturgical razón de ser of the dramatic plot. I will look at one example of the emblematic nature of Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s *El gran mercado del mundo*, before turning to how the text itself has received emblematic treatment in a recent philological commentary.

22. For a more in-depth study of the emblematic nature of the *auto*, see Nelson 2005.
The plot of *El gran mercado del mundo* configures a contest of reception in which the character who interprets the confusing appearances, or merchandise, of the *Great Marketplace of the World* more emblematically ultimately wins the day. At issue is not just a way of reading or interpreting polyvalent signs, but a normative way of desiring meaning which pits two semiotic regimes against each other: a playful discourse of immanence, or earthly love of material existence, embodied by one brother, *Mal Genio*; and a discourse of deferral in which the relation between the subject and his reality is mediated by a third, imagined, authoritative gaze, represented by the other brother, *Buen Genio*. This narrative structure illuminates the historical situation of the *auto sacramental* itself, in that the theatrical representation of Eucharistic presence is structurally dependent on the internal threat posed by a diabolical semiotic regime of fragmentation and multiplicity. The real presence of Christ’s sanctified body requires that the allegorical or metaphorical presence of the ethno-religious other first appear as a threat and then be annihilated during the climax of the play. This other, be it the Jew, the Muslim, the Protestant, or the colonial idolater, comes to embody the materialistic discourse of immanence mentioned above. The theatrical performance of divine presence thus becomes a metaphor for the Counter-Reformation struggle against the religious and political other, as the audience witnesses a contest between two competing norms for interpreting and moving through an ambivalent space. In the play’s ritual and violent movement from chaos to order, the actions of the protagonist *Buen Genio* correspond to what Pierre Bourdieu calls “structural exercises” in the “projection of mythico-religious oppositions,” as he traverses the marketplace and emblematically interprets the spiritual value of the merchandise displayed.23 His “evil twin” *Mal Genio*, on the other hand, is the source of all transgressive desire, becoming the central protagonist in what Catherine Bell calls the ritual “motivation of bias.”24

The difference between the interpretive paradigms of Buen Genio and Mal Genio is emblematized by the conflict between two allegorical figures, *Apetito* (“Appetite”) and *Fe* (“Faith”). Both characters are blind, but their asymmetrically framed maladies symbolize the perspective that each brother projects onto the stage of the world. Appetite embodies a desire for material objects in the here and now, in the historical time of the subject, and judges them for what we might call their immediate use value on the plane of immanence. Appetite is completely blind to the allegorical significance

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of the material world, bent instead on a search for knowledge and pleasure of and in the market itself. Faith, on the other hand, is blind to all but the extensive, or hypostatic, meaning of material reality on the plane of transcendence. Through this dialectic of being and meaning, all material existence is converted into changeable and disposable signs of something else: the material world fades so that the meaning of Eucharistic icons may become present. Appetite and Faith demonstrate that the occupation of a point of view is constitutive of one’s relationship to sin or salvation. If the presence of the intended meaning of the Eucharist absorbs the entirety of your gaze (and its desire), you are saved; if your gaze goes awry, resisting the ritual blocking of desire, you are other, the enemy, the heretic.25

Like Borja, the use of ritual structures and doctrinal nodal points creates the impression that Calderón’s art and theology proceed from another more permanent and perfect place, rather than from the crisis-ridden and politically driven historical reality of baroque Spain. A more materialist inquiry would necessarily place the critic in the position of the antagonist/other in the sense that the material letter and its material circumstances of production would be valued in and for themselves rather than transduced into accidental and superficial figures for more permanent and present meanings. As with Borja, the historical author’s intent becomes melded to the Godhead character in the play, which directs interpretive and editorial decisions towards the firmament of metaphysical intentionality.

Perhaps the most problematical historical circumstance with respect to traditional and conservative readings of the auto is that the vital role given to the heretic in the play is completely out of proportion to the actual threat posed by religious and ethnic minorities in early modern Spain. Recent studies on Morisco populations (Childers 2006) and the so-called Crypto-Jews (Contreras 1991; Silverman 1991) present convincing evidence that the apocalyptic picture painted by Spanish theater, both secular and sacred, is not a trustworthy portrayal of the actual historical relations between religious minorities and the Christian hegemony but reflects instead a highly scripted theatrical ruse designed to bring the desire for the other and its annihilation into the gaze of the spectator. The aesthetics of presence in the auto sacramental are better understood if we recognize that the author and the prodigious technological and social apparatuses that frame his choices actually serve to bring the diabolical threat of the other into existence in the social imaginary of early modern Spaniards. If the philologist remains tied

25. Slavoj Žižek (1991b) connects the ‘other,’ anamorphic gaze with the subversion of ideological fantasies of historical necessity and transcendence. See also Castillo 2001.
to a transcendental intentionality in these texts, s/he runs the risk of reifying a fabricated world view that substantially deforms our appreciation for the complexity of the historical reality and, more importantly, the complexity of the relationship between the literary artifact and its specific circumstances of production. As we have seen with the deployment of “Egyptians” in Borja’s emblem, whatever the historical Morisco or new Christian/crypto-Jew might have to say about Catholic beliefs is irrelevant in the sacramental play.

**Philological Emblematics**

The emblematic and metaphysical operations of philology where Calderón is concerned are exemplified by a recent study by Ignacio Arellano and J. Enrique Duarte, members of a Golden Age research group (GRISO) based at the University of Navarra in Pamplona, Spain. They state that the main objectives (intentions) of the *auto sacramental* are “to provoke the emotive wonder of the spectator—which provokes an adherence *without fissures* to the dogmatic exaltation—and to pedagogically fix the imparted doctrine” (my emphasis).26 This positing of a lack of fissures between the ritual creation of divine truths and their reception by what can only be called a participatory practicant is reminiscent of Borja’s emblematic strategies, and it is typical of much philological criticism on Calderón. Arellano’s and Duarte’s study, which includes as complete a synthesis of the institutional history of the *auto* as one is likely to find, effects a noticeable divorce of the text of the *auto* from its communicative materialities. Of particular interest is the marginalization and eventual bracketing-off, or blocking, of one of the central characteristics of the *auto*, at least according to the “inventor” of modern Spanish theater, Lope de Vega: I am referring to the aforementioned privileging of the politico-religious war on error. Only a complete separation of the aesthetic form from the historical context can sustain such a sanitized reading of Calderón’s sacred theater, which Arellano and Duarte achieve by guiding readers away from the material contingencies and circumstances of institutionalized theater towards the world of allegory, that “traditional mode of expression in the Bible and in religious tradition [of] those truths that are incomprehensible.”27 The blocking effect so central to Gumbrecht’s definition of power is elegantly staged by the GRISO critics through the placement of paradox, and especially religious paradox, in the space where a

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more rigorous consideration of textual materialities might produce concrete knowledge concerning the role of ideology and epistemology in Calderón’s theater, and vice versa. As in the case of emblematics, the insistence on a divinely inspired intentionality fills the abyss of doubt and doctrinal contradiction evidenced in the plays themselves and effectively closes the question concerning the antagonistic role of the ethnic and political other in the representation of divine presence.

Similar procedures can be observed in the GRISO edition of *El gran mercado* by Ana Suárez Miramón. Her commentary stages an emblematization of Calderón within a universal framework of literary genius that includes figures such as Nietzsche, Edgar Allan Poe, Lewis Carroll, Berthold Brecht, Ibsen, and Pirandello. “There is no doubt,” she writes, “that Calderón is the first link in the great chain of writers who have been conscious that creation is language and it creates itself through the created and creating word.”

It is no accident that the medieval concept of the Great Chain of Being and the religious privileging of the word (the *logos* of philology) resonate in this celebration of Calderón’s founding role in the literary patrimony of modernity. In fact, the commentary brings us back to the founding rift of modernity. Where Borja marries the “hieroglyphic” to Spanish imperialism, and where Calderón creates a substantive link between one’s judgment of the material world and salvation, Suárez Miramón links her reading of Calderón to a series of universalizing propositions designed to turn our attention away from the “distractions” posed by verbal and theological contradictions as well as the discursive violence at the heart of these politico-religious spectacles. In one instance she states that “the two brother protagonists [are] living examples of the dualism rooted in the Nature and allegory of the same antinomy of the human being split into body or material and soul or spirit.”

This phenomenalization of a seventeenth-century Catholic point of view through the marriage of Nature and allegory mirrors the gesture of Arellano and Duarte concerning the inability of human language to penetrate divine truths. In both cases, the dehistoricization of Calderón and Counter-Reformation thought pave the way for the universalization of Calderón’s drama as well as the placement of writers with very distinct aesthetic and ideological programs within Calderón’s and the critic’s reach.

A particularly illuminating example of this practice is the conversion of Miguel de Cervantes into the source and inspiration for Calderón’s play. It is worth noting that this philological turn actually places Cervantes, and

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not Calderón, in the role of modernity’s progenitor; more importantly, no literary figure from the Spanish Golden Age is more resistant to the type of orthodox militancy out of which Calderón’s art arises than Cervantes, and his rehabilitation into an orthodox, Counter-Reformation Catholic merits special attention. The emblematization of Cervantes is built on three similitudes, or analogies. In the first instance, Suárez Miramón finds a “total correspondence” between Calderón’s Buen Genio and Cervantes’s Don Quixote in the motif of the “voyage towards an ideal walking together with an ingenuous material man.”\textsuperscript{30} Evidently, the comparison also rests on the identities of Mal Genio and Sancho Panza, which is problematic given the dramatic downward turn of Mal Genio’s fortunes in the auto. Secondly, “the withdrawal of Don Quixote to the mountains [and] the return of Buen Genio through the desert are reminiscent of the Lenten period that Christ spent in the desert.”\textsuperscript{31} Finally, what might be called the materialistic impasses represented by Mal Genio and Sancho Panza are channeled through a depoliticized and dehistorized application of Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of carnival, a move which ignores the theological dialectics at play in Calderón as well as the corrosive irony of Cervantes.

Suárez Miramón’s comparison of Buen Genio and Don Quixote rests on two religious doctrines of the Counter-Reformation: free will and Providence. In the first instance, the conflation of the desires of Alonso Quijano and Buen Genio to test their mettle in a search for love and transcendence must strategically overlook important differences between the characters, the works in which they are situated, and their chosen objects of desire. The object of Buen Genio is the hand of Gracia, an allegorical representation of divine will who requires that he reject the truth effect of what appears before his gaze, in other words, the material significance of the world and its objects in the here and now. As a result, his freedom is completely inscribed within the doctrine of desengaño, a theological sleight-of-hand that converts historical existence into a phantasmatic experience and, consequently, places it completely under the power of the allegorist. In Benjamin’s words, “it is now quite incapable of emanating any meaning or significance of its own; such significance as it has, it acquires from the allegorist.”\textsuperscript{32} Here, freedom is not consonant with the drive for self-realization but rather with a process of self-annihilation under the punishing gaze of the Father. R. de la Flor summarizes this melancholy philosophy: “this infinite order of things and the emptiness and mystery that surround them, forces one to characterize

\textsuperscript{30} Suárez Miramón 2003: 87.
\textsuperscript{31} Suárez Miramón 2003: 89.
\textsuperscript{32} Benjamin 1977: 183.
the human knowledge that one has of them as useless, empty, lacking in capacity and fallen, even ridiculous.” It is no wonder that Buen Genio must search for allegorical meaning in such a wasteland.

In the case of Don Quixote, the freedom to realize his quest to bring knight errantry to the mundane plane of La Mancha is constantly undone, not by any wavering on his part but rather by the often violent encounters with a material landscape which shows itself to be infinitely more substantial and resistant (and rich) than the doctrine of desengaño allows. What is most sublime about the knight’s quest is the abject failures to which it leads, failures that are often exacerbated and even orchestrated by his erstwhile foil Sancho Panza. A case in point is the scene cited by Suárez Miramón as an analogy to Christ’s allegorical pilgrimage through the desert. If Don Quixote’s will is tested on the Sierra Morena, it is certainly not due to any demonic figure offering earthly riches and power. Rather, his own demons, arising from his miserly existence on the lowest rung of a decadent aristocracy and channeled through the romanticized penitence of figures like Amadís of Gaul, will drive him to leap from rock to rock dressed in nothing but a nightshirt, while Sancho alternately looks on and looks away, as it is too much even for him to glance at his master’s withered genitalia when Don Quixote takes a header on the rocks. The carnivalesque inversion effected by Cervantes here is devastating in the way master and servant are separated and resituated in terms of decorum and rationality. In this case, the knight’s abject materiality obstructs any transcendental meaning we might want to project onto the scene.

This brings me to Bakhtin. In discussing the socio-aesthetic aspects of the auto, Suárez Miramón writes: “Its novelty arises from having synthesized all previous tendencies in a multiple-thematic synopsis to which it adds its peculiar vision of the world in which the mythic and the popular are melded together in a perfect carnivalization of the world.” Putting aside the fact that one of the two protagonists in the play must be annihilated in order to unify the great marketplace of the world, the main problem with this statement from a theoretical point of view is that if there is any one thing that characterizes Bakhtin’s concept of carnival, it is the emphasis he places on the imperfect, unfinished, and excessive nature of the carnivalesque mode of discourse which directs any imposition of order, synthesis, or harmony toward the ironization of its constitutive violence: in short, carnivalization is never anything like perfect, finished, or whole. Indeed, the ideological constructs

34. Suárez Miramón 2003: 125.
that carnival subverts are precisely the kinds of power that philologists exert when they extract authors and texts out of their disharmonious and problematic contexts and emblemataze them according to universal axioms and genealogies. By redirecting Calderón’s contingent symbolic practice away from the chaotic marketplace of Counter-Reformation history, Arellano, Duarte, and Suárez Miramón avoid the complex relationship between the dramatic representation of Apostasy, Heresy, the Jew, the Lutheran, the non-believer, and the sophist, etc., and the cultural commodification and political violence that convert baroque religious spectacles into such a powerful and effective practices of ideological containment. No substantive attempt is made to explore how Calderón plays with history in the same way that he plays with allegorical meaning: through a sophisticated semiotic regime that emblematically uproots and reconfigures historical actors and their material relations according to a historically situated religious and political frame of reference.

Conclusion

In chapter 52 of the second part of Cervantes’s *Don Quixote*, our intrepid hero strides into a printing press in Barcelona. As he enters the shop, the knight observes that different textual operations are taking place in different cubicles (“cajones”): some of the laborers are cranking pages out of the press; others are correcting the plates that others have just composed; and still others are emending what their colleagues have done.35 No order is established for these distinct forms of literary praxis, as they all seem to be happening simultaneously and largely independent of each other. After this initial survey, Don Quixote strikes up a conversation with an “author” who happens to be supervising the publication of his own book. I place the designation author in quotation marks because it turns out that the book whose publication he is financing is a translation of a Tuscan work titled *Le Bagatele*. Don Quixote, it so happens, has some knowledge of Tuscan, and he initiates a discussion with the author-translator concerning the relationship between an original work and its translation. The knight’s statement, that reading a translation is like “seeing a Flemish tapestry from the back; although one sees the figures, they are full of threads that obscure them, and they cannot be seen with the clarity and colors of the face,” is well known. What is not often commented on is how he also recognizes that a good translation

can surpass and even substitute for the original: “they felicitously put into doubt which is the translation or which is the original.”

Cervantes does not stop his inspection of the integrity of the artistic act here, as the final question his protagonist poses concerns that most sacred of all philological cows: the motivation of the artist. In the words of the independently minded author-translator: “I do not print my books to achieve fame in the world, since I am already known for my works; it is profit I seek; since without it a good reputation isn’t worth a wooden nickel.”

With this brief side trip to a printing press, Cervantes manages to place into question every assumption that drives philology towards making ever more present the insistently problematic, not to say absent, voice and figure of the author, and leaves us instead with a number of nagging doubts and questions.

What is lost when we assume that Alciato is solely responsible for inventing a new literary genre? What is gained by positing a Calderón whose art reaches into postmodernity? We might contend that philology comes into being before literature itself is a recognizable institution; it might even be said that philology frames literature as a recognizable social practice and, by doing so, creates its own object of inquiry while, at the same time, containing and domesticating both the work’s and the author’s potential as a social force. As Gumbrecht suggests, philology does not study the literary object; it brings it into being, and not as what Heidegger would call an “in itself,” but rather as a “for itself.” The separation of the work and the author from their material contexts of production and reception is perhaps the sine qua non of philology, a cut which necessitates the labor of the philologist. This literary “for itself” is thus more properly understood as “for the philologist,” since it is the philologist who decides the nature of the object s/he is studying before getting to work, which is merely saying that philology is like any other scientific endeavor wherein the results of the experiment can only be read through the apparatus that brings about the perceived change in the object of analysis.

Mindful of this, I have surreptitiously mimicked Barthes’s call for a literary criticism that would “liberate what may be called an anti-theological activity . . . [which would] refuse God and his hypostases—reason, science, law” by demonstrating how the form of the author used by Selig and then López obscures the material processes at the origins of emblematic discourse; or, perhaps better stated, it performs an emblematization of that same form, in which a multiplicity of actors and discourses are arranged through an

equation that produces a sum that is both greater and less than the parts themselves.\textsuperscript{38} I next looked at an emblem by Juan de Borja in which the historically situated, allegorical operations performed on a symbolic artifact, the hieroglyphic/letter tau, are projected into the sign by the emblematist-philologist. The authorial form in question here is either God himself or a messianic intentionality through which the transhistorical meaning of tau “appears” before us in all its universal plenitude. After Borja, I moved to Calderón’s theatrical emblem, in which an authoritative performance of divine presence is produced through the dramatic conflict between opposed semiotic regimes and then made more present through the staged annihilation of one of the protagonists. What I have tried to underline in this movement from emblem to emblem is that what is recovered is also obscured by the tools at the emblematist’s, or philologist’s, disposal. These practices, including the form of authorial intentionality, are our own materialities of communication, and our resistance to scrutinizing their impact on the object of study and the communication of our findings places us in a similar position to Don Quixote in the Sierra Morena: hopelessly exposed to the critical and discerning eye of the materialist.

I have chosen to close with this carnivalesque image because the multiplication of meanings that arise once we admit entrance to historical accidents and contingencies, as well as the inevitable upending of canonical interpretations, are closely analogous to the topsy-turvy world of Bakhtin’s carnival. As such, I propose an alternative critical practice which might be called ‘carnivalesque philology.’ As Don Quixote moves from cubicle to cubicle in the Barcelona printing press, our assumptions concerning the easy movement from creative genesis to printed page are annihilated and reborn according to the demands of the marketplace; the creative act is, in short, subjected to the processes of mechanized fragmentation, standardization, and correction consistent with commodification and the modern marketplace. Moreover, the figure of the author becomes occluded by the translator’s labor to such an extent that the one competes on equal ground with the other. In the end, the motivation for literary creation is grounded in that most banal, yet true, capitalist ethic: profit. It should be clear that the concept I am offering here, \textit{carnivalesque philology}, is neither original nor innovative for early modern authors. It is in fact the most appropriate posture to take with respect to authorship in early modernity. I have merely attempted to provide some of the general contours of what such a practice might look like in the way I have framed this discussion of the emblem. In

\textsuperscript{38} Barthes 1977: 143.
fact, a first step in assembling a carnivalesque philology would be to recognize the emblematic structure of author-driven philology. If we accept the premise that literature, especially modern literature, is embedded in institutional matrices of production, including the marketplace, then we must make room for a significant multiplication of literary actors, too numerous to mention here. A carnivalesque approach would necessarily admit entrance to actors and forces not visible in current critical practices (even though they are clearly visible to Don Quixote and Sancho), concentrating on what Gumbrecht has called “the materialities of communication” and, ultimately, reinvigorating historical artifacts in unpredictable ways.