"Non intus ut extra":[1] The Emblematic Silenus in Early Modern Literature

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This article explores the emblematic identity of the Silenus figure, a statue concealing beautiful images inside an ugly exterior, to which Alcibiades compares Socrates in Plato's *Symposium*. In a letter to a fellow poet in the early seventeenth century, William Drummond refers to the Silenus as if it were an emblem, yet it has a curiously limited presence in emblem literature and is rarely illustrated, despite its usefulness as a literary archetype for the hiddenness of virtue. I trace depictions of the Silenus statue in Italian, English, and French sources, and offer some suggestions as to why it resists visual depiction in early modern literature.

In a letter of 12 July 1637, William Drummond encouraged his friend Henry Adamson to overcome his reticence about publishing his history of Perth, written in memory of a friend from the town. The work was eventually published (after Adamson's death a year later) as *The Muses Threnodie*, and a "just copie" of Drummond's letter to his "worthie Friend" was included among the prefatory pages.[2] Drummond wrote:

1. "Non intus ut extra" [Within, not without].
2. Adamson composed the work in memory of John Gall, who died around 1620 from consumption. It is a verse elegy consisting of several thousand lines of rhyming couplets, divided into nine parts, or "muses." The verse is arranged as a dialogue between Gall and George Ruthven, a Perth physician, and as well as elegizing Gall, it chronicles the history of their city and its environs, linking local

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> These papers of your mournings on Master Gall appeare unto me as *Alcibiadis Sileni*, which ridiculously look, with the faces of Sphinges, Chimeraes, Centaures on their outsides, but inwardlie containe rare artifice, and rich jewels of al sorts, for the delight and well of Man. They may deservedlie beare the word, *Non intus ut extra*. Your two Champions, noble *Zannies*, discover to us many of the Antiquities of this Countrey more of your auncient towne of *Perth*, setting downe her situation, founders, her hudge colosse, or bridge, walls, fousies, aqueducts, fortifications, temples, monasteries, and many other singularities. Happie hath *Perth* beene in such a Citizen: not so other townes of this kingdome, by want of so diligent a searcher and preserver of their fame from oblivion. Some Muses neither to themselves, nor to others do good; nor delighting, nor instructing; yours performe both . . . (Adamson, 3).

Adamson must have been encouraged to receive praise from his country's most eminent poet, who shared his interest in historiography and was at that time working on his own history of Scotland. Although Drummond evidently thought that Adamson's writings would make valuable literary and historiographical contributions, the rhetorical gesture with which he begins his letter is initially surprising. Comparing Adamson's papers to "Sileni," which "ridiculously look . . . but inwardlie containe rare artifice," Drummond employs the imagery with which the drunken politician Alcibiades controversially praises Socrates in one of Plato's most well-known dialogues, the *Symposium*. After bursting in uninvited, Alcibiades delivers a speech in which he compares Socrates to "the Silenus-figures that sit in the statuaries' shops," which appear ludicrously rustic from the outside, but which open to reveal images of the gods (Plato, 215a–b, 216e).[3] To un-

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figures and events with stories from antiquity. The elegy to Gall is preceded by an "Inventarie of the Gabions, in M. George his Cabinet"—a curious poem written in rhyming octosyllables—and there are also several shorter elegies in Latin and English by others on the death of Adamson himself. Thanks to Adamson's brother John, it was posthumously published as *The Muses Threnodie, or, Mirthfull mournings on the death of Master Gall. Containing varietie of pleasant poëticall descriptions, morall instructions, historiall narrations, and divine observations, with the most remarkable antiquities of Scotland, especially at Perth* (Edinburgh, 1638).

3. According to Greek myth Silenus was a god of drunkenness, said to be the mentor of Dionysus. He is usually depicted as a jovial, bearded old man with the ears and tail of an ass, and his followers are referred to as the Silenes.

derstand Socrates, Alcibiades argues, one must look inside his off-putting appearance and behavior, and his crude language: "when these are opened, and you obtain a fresh view of them by getting inside, first of all you will discover that they are the only speeches which have any sense in them; and secondly, that none are so divine, so rich in images of virtue, so largely—nay, so completely—intent on all things proper for the study of such as would attain both grace and worth" (Plato, 221d–222a).

The method by which Alcibiades praises Socrates in the *Symposium* is unconventional, contrasting dramatically with the speeches by other guests in praise of love that precede it, but it is this deliberate subversiveness that makes it so effective. In a condensed version of Alcibiades's rhetorical move, the Sileni to which Drummond compares Adamson's work have the "faces" of multiple mythical beasts on the outside, and, more vaguely, "rare artifice, and rich jewels of al sorts" (rather than Plato's "divine and golden" images of gods) inside. Drummond's vocabulary echoes some of the phrases in Adamson's opening "Inventarie" poem, which features hundreds of "uncouth formes, and wondrous shapes," like "Satyrs, dragons, flying fowles . . . winged-horses, strange Chimaraes" (Adamson, **r*). These images belong to the sphere of the grotesque, from which the Silenus also comes. In his invocation of Alcibiades, Drummond says something about the literary quality of Adamson's work, and also about his experience of reading it: the first poetic images with which he was confronted were indeed those which "ridiculously look," but he found "rich jewels of al sorts" hidden deeper within the pages.

Like Plato's *Symposium*, *The Muses Threnodie* is a text concerned with praise, and the art of praising. While Adamson elegizes Gall, and the city of Perth, the printed edition of his project is literally wrapped in Drummond's praise for his work and for Perth: "it hath beene no little glory that she hath brought forth, such a citizen, so eminent in love to her" (3). Drummond also praises Adamson's "two Champions," Gall and Ruthven, as "noble Zannies"—they are clownish figures (like Socrates, or Alcibiades) but their entertaining dialogue serves to instruct, as well as to delight. In his version of this method of praising, however, Drummond adds something significantly transformative to the Sileni. The papers Adamson sent "may deservedlie beare the word, *Non intus ut extra*" [Within, not without] he says, imagining the Sileni not on a shelf in the Platonic statue shop, but in the format of an emblem, where the problem of how to interpret their external visual appearance is spelled out by an accompanying motto: "Within, not without."

As Michael Bath has noted (17), Drummond expressed approval for emblematic devices in a 1619 letter to Ben Jonson, in which he describes the set of bed hangings "on a Bed of State, wrought and embroidered all with Gold and Silk by the late Queen *Mary*, Mother to our sacred Sovereign, which will embellish greatly some Pages of your Book, and is worthy your remembrance." He lists over thirty emblems and *impresas*, remarking that "the Workmanship is curiously done, and above all Value, and truly it may be of this Piece said, *Materiam superabat opus*" (Drummond, 137). Drummond also revealed some of his thoughts about emblems in *A short Discourse upon Impresa's and Anagrams*, written in response to a device he had received from the Earl of Perth. Here, Drummond is anxious to distinguish between the *impresa* and the emblem as different devices with their own distinct form and purpose: "*Emblems* serve for Demonstration of some general Thing, and for a general Rule, and teaching Precept to every one, as well for the Author and Inventer, as for any other; which is a Fault in an *Impresa*: For an *Impresa* is a Demonstration and Manifestation of some notable and excellent Thought of him that conceived it, and useth it; and it belongs only to him, and is his properly" (Drummond, 228). In his letter to Henry Adamson, Drummond's imaginary Silenus is clearly emblematic, offering one such "teaching Precept to every one," and demonstrating how Alcibiades's image, as it is transformed into an emblem, offers a commonplace literary shorthand for explaining the hiddenness of valuable things.

Setting his emblematic framing aside for a moment, Drummond's decision to praise *The Muses Threnodie* by comparing it to the Sileni illustrates how this universally useful simile was generally employed in early modern literature. The location (in the prefatory matter of a printed work) and the purpose (to praise the text that follows by emphasizing the need to look beyond its initially unpromising exterior) are very typical. In the epistle dedicatory to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, in Robert Peterson's late sixteenth-century translation of Giovanni della Casa's popular manual of social conduct, for instance, the author praises the dedicatee for his "so singular demeanour," for being "so ciuil, so courteous, as maketh you renouned abrode, and honored at home: coueted of the Noblest, & wonderful of the learnedst" (Peterson, Aii*v*). Peterson follows his unequivocal praise of his famous dedicatee with a reminder of Alcibiades's less conventional approach. The readers of his translation "shal herein see no lesse commoditie, then was in Alcibiades Sileni (wherevnto Socrates was compared)

whiche though they bare not, in the front, any shewe of singularitie: yet within, bare they pictures of excellent wit & delight" (Peterson, Aii*v*–Aiii*r*). Although Peterson is vague about what "Alcibiades Sileni" actually were, or what they looked like, his emphasis on their pictorial "wit & delight" clearly hints at their emblematic potential.

One of the most well-known sources in which the Sileni featured in early modern England was Francis Meres's *Palladis Tamia*, a popular book of similes and commonplaces for the ornamentation of speech. Describing them as "vnpolished without, but curiously and with great Art wrought within," Meres includes the Sileni as an illustration of virtue, which "outwardly seemeth rough, when inwardly it is full of beautie" (159). Other English authors employed the Silenus for more specific purposes: "the wordes of the law may be compared to certaine Images called *Sileni Alcibiadis*, whose outward *feature* was deformed & ouglie, but within they were full of iewels & precious stones," wrote William Fulbecke in his 1600 handbook on the study of law, "so the wordes of the Law, though they be rude in sound, yet are they preignant in sense" (D5*v*). Fulbecke likens the terms of the law to Sileni that are imagined, as in Drummond's letter to Adamson, to have contained not divine images, but rather more mercenary treasures of "iewels & precious stones." The speeches of the lawyer may be "rude in sound" (like those of Socrates), but Fulbecke establishes this as only the "outward *feature*," the phrase "preignant in sense" underlining his insistence that the lawyer's words contain something of true and lively virtue hidden within, which is but waiting to emerge.

These texts offer just a few English instances of how the Silenus is invoked as a model of praise in early modern literature. However, while Plato's image evidently offered rich inspiration for early modern writers, it is extremely rare that the Silenus statues are actually illustrated. Although there are plenty of visual depictions—in all kinds of media—of Socrates, as well as the god Silenus and his drunken followers surviving from ancient times onwards, pictorial representations of the Silenus statue described in the *Symposium* are surprisingly few and far between. This article began with Drummond's use of the trope because his particular variation explicitly draws attention to the inherently emblematic qualities of the Silenus: it could well exist, by Drummond's account, as an image accompanied by an explanatory motto in an emblem book. As a concise conceit with an instructive message about the hiddenness of virtue, it is ideal emblem mate-

rial. This image provides a universally useful simile, and yet it is scarcely represented visually, and hardly at all in emblem culture, despite the fact that, as Drummond suggests, it has evident emblematic potential. The resistance of the Silenus statue to visual illustration in early modern print culture is surprising. In light of Drummond's emblematic slant on the Silenus, this essay surveys the verbal and visual treatments of the Silenus figure in early modern Italian, French, and English texts, and in concluding, offers some suggestions as to why its presence in emblem literature is so limited.

How did "Alcibiadis Sileni," to use Drummond's shorthand, come to be known in Renaissance Europe? The earliest extant allusion to this passage from the *Symposium* is in a letter of 1485 from the great humanist Giovanni Pico della Mirandola to Ermolao Barbaro, in which he defends the writing style of the scholastics, whose "barbaric" words contain hidden wisdom (I, 354). In her discussion of this passage, Edith Wyss draws attention to a visual representation of the Silenus figure, found in a mid-sixteenth-century Italian volume that sets out an elaborate method for fortune-telling with cards (130–31; 139–40). Throughout Francesco Marcolini's *Le Ingeniose Sorti*, rhyming verses and diagrams of cards are accompanied by fifty interspersed woodcut images of allegorical personifications, one centered at the top of each recto page, and fifty images of ancient philosophers, one in the top left-hand corner of each verso page. Among the latter sits Socrates, slumped under a tree, while an immobile-looking figurine with a beard stands in the dark background (fig. 1). While Wyss points out the crack that is just about visible in the side of this Silenus statue, by which it may presumably be opened for its glorious contents to be revealed, others have ignored the figure entirely, focusing on the idea that this scene shows Socrates drinking hemlock, in the act of ending his life.[4] In the foreground of the picture, Socrates's stone-cutting tools are visible, but they have been set aside, perhaps illustrating his decision to leave the stonemasonry trade in favor of philosophy. The image is revelatory in many possible ways, and the shadowy Silenus statue is easily overlooked.

The Silenus appears in a more obviously emblematic format in other sixteenth-century Italian works. In Achille Bocchi's *Symbolicarum Quaes-*

4. Anon., "*Francesco Marcolini: Le Sorti . . . intitolate giardino di pensieri (The Fates . . . Entitled Garden of Ideas)*: Garden of Ideas (37.37.23)," *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York, 2000–. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/37.37.23.

Fig. 1. Franceso Marcolini, Le Ingeniose Sorti: Giardino di Pensieri (Venice, 1550), "Socrate," E3v. Image courtesy of Cambridge University Library.

tionum (1574), the forty-fifth emblem depicts a satyr-like figure, who carries musical pipes in his left hand, and touches his head with his pointing right forefinger (fig. 2). His gesture is explained by the emblem's inscription: "Non extra, at intus audio" [I hear not outside, but inside]. With the horns and cloven hooves of a goat and the torso of a man, as well as a beard and a billowing cloak, this figure looks like a typical follower of Dionysus. This is definitely not one of the "Silenus-figures" that Plato describes in the *Symposium*, however. While the distinction between exterior and interior in Alcibiades's speech emphasizes the external distractions of Socrates's off-putting appearance and confusing way of talking, here the satyr's music is the key to defining a distinction between interior and exterior spheres. The set of pipes works as an external visual token of worldly music, in contrast to the divine harmonies hidden inside the satyr's head, as the accompanying poem explains. Given the iconographic potential of sound and music in the Silenus tradition, it is surprising that verbal punning or other play on "Silenus" and "silence" is largely absent in early modern literature. The potentially emblematic relationship between silence and the Silenus is also given minimal attention in the secondary literature; in *Picturing Silence*, for example, Karen Pinkus includes only passing mention of the Silenus (78, 171), despite her discussion of the *Symposium* and the serious playfulness of Socratic language.

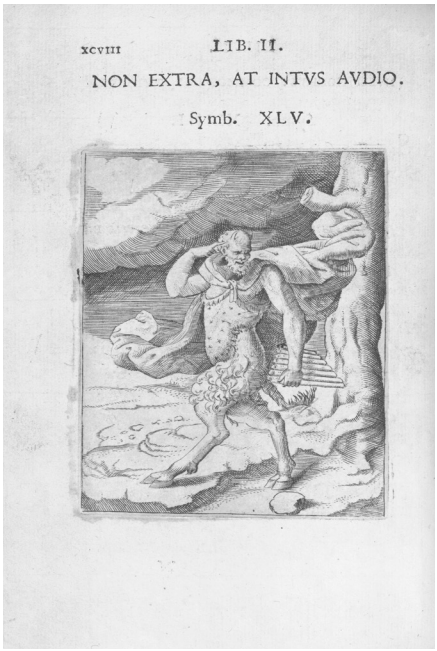

Fig. 2. Achille Bocchi, *Symbolicarum quaestionum* (Bologna, 1574), emblem 45, "Non Extra, At Intus Audio," Nv. Image courtesy of Cambridge University Library.

An image of something more like the object Plato describes was adopted by the Academy of the Occulti in Brescia, who in 1568 issued a treatise containing the personal device of each member of the group. The Academy's name means "hidden," and each member was also assigned a related code name, such as "covered" or "submerged." At the center of the frontispiece of the *Rime de gli Academici Occulti: con le loro imprese et discorsi* is a Silenus figure, accompanied by the motto "Intus non extra" [Within, not without]. This Silenus has cloven hooves and horns, and his human torso is divided into what appear to be two hinged doors, firmly shut. The opening "Discorso intorno al Sileno Impresa de gli Accademici Occulti," explains that:

> Beneath the veil of the body of this artificial Silenus we hide the soul of the Device, which is the primary intention to keep the best part of ourselves in its native form and purest light. We therefore add to the device our aim, in the literary clothing of the Motto, WITHIN, NOT WITHOUT. That is, just as the ancients gazed into the Silenus, and not at it, so too we will seek to put all our study into the internal and not the external form (translation: Gaylard, 234).

There are multiple concealments at work in this passage, and in the Academy's use of the Silenus as a device. Their Silenus is "artificial," and everything about it is described in terms of something else that is also a covering: its body is a "veil" and the motto is "literary clothing." Academic discourse is portrayed as elite and exclusive, although it remains unclear exactly what they are hiding: there is just a "general academic economy of ob-

fuscation" (Pinkus, 78; see also Gaylard, chapter 5). The frontispiece of the *Rime de gli Academici Occulti* emphasizes secrecy and concealment, even as the reader opens the book to discover more about the Academy. This Silenus is at the heart of an ostentatious performance of exclusivity in print, making sure that readers know their place outside the Academy even as they are reminded of the Academy's elevated ambitions to see beyond "external form[s]," and focus on "study into the internal."

Although the Brescians adopted the Silenus as an institutional *impresa*, as a literary simile it had a more generalized humanist appeal in early modern Europe. The most sustained textual engagement with the Silenus figure in the sixteenth century came from Erasmus. While he frequently refers to the Sileni as useful images, it is in the *Adages* (*Adagia*), his monumental handbook of classical wisdom containing commentaries on thousands of Greek and Latin quotations, that he dwells upon them at greatest length. Plato's memorable Silenus figure has an obvious place in this compendium of numerous discrete rhetorical exercises, each of which is concerned with revealing the wisdom hidden in ancient literature, and which inspired many emblematists, including Andrea Alciato. Erasmus continually expanded the *Adages* until his death, and *Sileni Alcibiades* is one of his longest entries; consisting in 1508 of just a few sentences, by 1515 it had been reworked and extended to hundreds of times its original length, with a few more additions in 1517/8 and 1528.

Claiming that the Silenus "seems to have passed into a proverb among educated people," Erasmus's description of these objects confirms that they have a place in the common memory, and summarizes several of their key material properties:

> [they are] said to have been a kind of small figure of carved wood, so made that they could be divided and opened. Thus, though when closed they looked like a caricature of a hideous flute-player, when opened they suddenly displayed a deity, so that this humorous surprise made the carver's skill all the more admirable.[5]

These objects exist as a kind of rumor—we know only what they are "said to have been," and so they are mysterious things of the distant past. Erasmus

5. Desiderius Erasmus, *Collected Works*. 78 vols. Toronto, 1974–2011, vol. 34 (262). Further citations will be made parenthetically in the main text as *CWE* followed by the volume and page numbers.

claims that they were made of "carved wood," a detail that is not given by Plato, who specifies only that they are found in "statuaries' shops," which might well suggest other materials such as clay or stone. Erasmus's reference to "carved wood" gives particularity to these half-forgotten antique objects, bringing them more sharply into focus. Finally, this passage draws attention to these objects as things of "humorous surprise," which show off the "skill" of their maker when they "suddenly" reveal an inside that contrasts dramatically with their "hideous" external appearance. Again, Plato's description does not explicitly mention the suddenness of the Silenus's revelation, and so this is another elaboration from Erasmus, who turns the Silenus into something that is surprising and entertaining, like a sort of magic trick, as well as instructive. While Alcibiades emphasizes that Socrates had a laughable exterior but a serious interior, for Erasmus it is, crucially, the act of revealing what is inside that prompts the most enjoyment.

The Silenus figure originally offered a model for explaining the person and discourses of Socrates, but in *Sileni Alcibiades*, having explained the basic principles of the object, Erasmus argues for its universality. Most importantly, the pagan Silenus lends itself as an illustrative figure for understanding the protagonists in the history of the Christian faith. Old Testament prophets, New Testament apostles, and the early leaders of the church can all be thought of in terms of the Silenus, as individuals whose humble way of life contrasts with their spiritual richness. Among these is John the Baptist, a humble man of the desert "clothed in camelhair with a leather girdle round his loins," who in his actions "far surpassed kings with their purple and their precious stones" (*CWE* 34, 265–66). The ultimate example is of course Christ, "a marvellous Silenus." "Observe the outside surface of this Silenus," Erasmus urges, "to judge by ordinary standards, what could be more humbler or more worthy of disdain?" (*CWE* 34, 263–64). Originally a simile for Socrates, the Silenus can now be transformed into an illustration of Christ. This association between Christ and potentially emblematic forms endured: Francis Quarles similarly alludes to the divine capacity of emblems at the beginning of his famous emblem book. Explaining that "an emblem is but a silent parable," he encourages the reader to see the "allusion to our blessed Saviour figured in these types" (A3*r*).

For Erasmus, the Silenus figure presents an object infinitely more flexible than the statue on the shelf in Plato's imagined shop (Lepage, passim). It can even be turned inside out when people have the appearance of wisdom

or humility, but their behavior reveals the opposite. Across all his writings, it is the paradoxical *Praise of Folly* that most epitomizes the slipperiness of the Erasmian Silenus. Presented as a learned but entertaining joke, it is an endlessly elusive work of multiple layers, which continually hide and reveal wisdom. The figure of Folly, the wise fool, is like Christ and Socrates in her speech, explaining both Christian and pagan truths even as she seems completely elusive. Thus the pagan Silenus is assimilated into Erasmian thought as a neat way to synthesize Christian and humanist moral codes, by which earthly poverty is linked to heavenly riches, and true virtue comes from learning, as opposed to, for example, nobility or birth. For Erasmus, as for Plato, the Silenus is something that consistently applies to the interpretation of both people and texts. The additional irony of the Erasmian Silenus is that this rough, pagan metaphor turns out to contain the wisdom necessary for scriptural exegesis, and through this ancient object, the faithful are brought closer to true Christian understanding.

The ever-shifting identity of the Silenus in Erasmus's writing means that it remains unclear what exactly the reader is supposed to imagine when told to think of this object. Erasmus's *Sileni Alcibiades* was printed separately by Johann Froben in 1517, and was followed in the next few decades by English, Dutch, French, German, and Spanish translations. In one of these early versions, published in London in 1543 by John Goughe, the first page announces "a scorneful image or monstrus shape of a maruelous stra[n]ge fygure called, Sileni alcibiadis," and features a woodcut depicting a headless man, with a smiling face on his torso. Evidently the printer selected this illustration from his stock because it shows a suitably "scorneful image or monstrus shape," but it bears no resemblance to the classical god Silenus, or to typical representations of Socrates, or, indeed, to the objects Erasmus describes in the text. It looks more like the monstrous creatures in Hartmann Schedel's Nürnberg Chronicle,[6] or the figures illustrated in woodcuts in printed editions of the travels of John Mandeville—the "men that haue no hedes & theyr eyen are in theyr sholders & theyr mouth is on theyr brest" (fig. 3). Goughe's use of this illustration encapsulates the early modern response to the Silenus: nobody is quite sure what this object looks like, but all are aware that it is definitely something "maruelous" and "stra[n]ge."

6. Hartmann Schedel, *Register des buchs der Croniken vnd geschichten, mit figurenn vnd pildnussen von anbeginn der welt bis auf dise vnnsere Zeit*. Nürnberg, 1493.

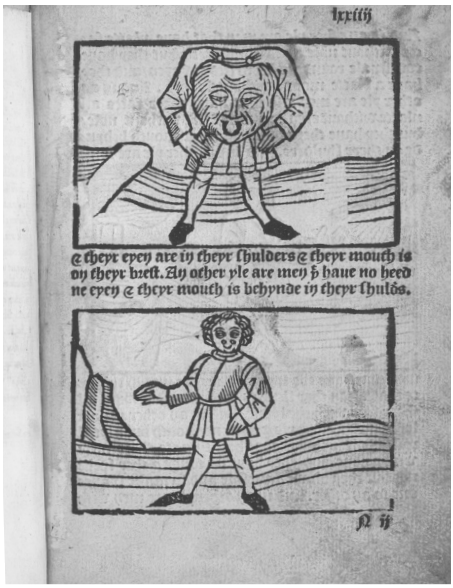

Fig. 3. John Mandeville, *Here begynneth a lytell treatyse or booke named Johan Mau[n]deuyll knyght born in Englonde in the towne of saynt Albone* (London, 1499), Niir. (Image courtesy of Cambridge University Library.)

It is difficult to say for certain which sources for "Alcibiades Sileni" would have been known by William Drummond, and what exactly inspired his emblematic vision of the simile. It is quite possible that he would have been familiar with what remains today the most well-known sixteenth-century literary appearance of the Platonic Silenus. The "Author's Prologue" to the first book of François Rabelais's *Gargantua* (1534/5), addressed to the "Most Noble and Illustrious Drinkers," begins with a reminder of Alcibiades's entrance to the drinking party. In elaborating on this moment, the narrator Alcofribas explains that:

> *Silenes* of old were little boxes, like those we now may see in the shops of Apothecaries, painted on the outside with wanton toyish figures, as *Harpyes, Satyrs, bridled Geese, horned Hares, saddled Ducks, flying Goats, Thiller Harts* [i.e., bridled, like work-horses], and other such like counterfeted pictures at discretion, to excite people unto laughter, as *Silenus* himself, who was the foster-father of good *Bacchus*, was wont to do; but within those capricious caskets were carefully preserved and kept many rich jewels, and fine drugs, such as *Balme*, *Ambergreece*, *Amamon*, *Musk*, *Civet*, with several kindes of precious stones, and other things of great price (19).

The narrator depicts the Sileni as things from an unspecific past—"of old"—likening the artifacts Plato said were found in "statuaries' shops" to the "little boxes" that can now be seen in "the shops of Apothecaries." While Plato's Sileni were anthropomorphic in shape, similar to the ugly, ill-kempt Socrates, they are here transformed into "little boxes" which have

all manner of fantastical creatures "painted on the outside." These "wanton toyish figures" (like Silenus and his drunken followers) make up a riotous array of mythical beings and animals rendered tame by bridles and saddles, like something from a painting by Hieronymus Bosch or Pieter Breughel, perhaps. Designed "to excite people to laughter," they form a pleasurably distracting wild goose chase on the outside of the box, replicated in the text as a list. The chase or hunt is a classic motif of desire, and thus the box's exterior imbricates the entire object in a whimsical quest. These painted boxes share the festive, erotic, and Bacchic pleasures explored in many individual emblems, discussed by John Manning (228), which are also inherent in emblems more generally, as forms intended to provoke inquisitive responses.

The second list in this passage reveals the contents of "those capricious caskets," which include many exotic, luxurious substances: "rich jewels," "fine drugs," "precious stones," and "other things of great price." The list form is an important characteristic of Rabelaisian satire; there are a great many lists in *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, where they are essential to the self-consciously carnivalesque atmosphere of the text. With their abundant lists of painted images on the outside and treasures inside, these "little boxes" appear like miniature cornucopia, or miniaturized motifs of the work as a whole. Drummond's depiction of the Sileni in his letter to Adamson—"with the faces of Sphinges, Chimeraes, Centaures on their outsides"—resonates with these Rabelaisian evocations of the grotesque, and the eventual reproduction of his letter as an external wrapping for Adamson's project mirrors the prefatory function of this Rabelaisian prologue. Although they do not depict the Silenus pictorially, printed paratextual elements such as these, and the others discussed in this essay, work a bit like emblematic frontispieces (Daly, 180–84), attempting to shape the reader's response to the book's content from their very first encounter with its literal and intellectual "outside."

In the *Symposium*, Plato embodies the problem of interpretation in a material object apparently found in "the statuaries' shops." The great irony of the Silenus statue as material object, however, is that it exists only in textual form. Although there are plenty of visual representations of the rustic, drunken, lecherous figure of Silenus surviving from ancient times onwards, there are no extant examples of the objects Plato describes. Scholars have speculated that it may well be the case that he does not refer to real objects, but invents them for the purposes of Alcibiades's speech, perhaps

influenced by statues used for drinking games, which contained hidden intricate mechanisms (Lissarrague, 55). Plato's reader must think through something tangible in order to understand the intangible, but this object, the "Silenus-figure," is in the end something that exists only in the imaginary realm.

Ultimately it is this absence of the material artifact, however, that licenses the freedom of the imagination in response to the Silenus in early modern literature. The Dutch poet Jacob Cats gave the title *Silenus Alcibiadi, sive Proteus* to what would become one of his most popular emblem books. While this title embraces the emblematic potency of the Silenus, none of the emblems therein are explicitly based on it, and there are no visual representations of *Silenus Alcibiadi* in the volume. One clue to this surprising absence is also found, ironically, in the title, and its additional allusion to the Greek figure of Proteus, the sea god who could assume any shape. With this unexpected link between two ancient figures, Cats reminds the reader of the protean nature of the Silenus, as an object whose identity is enigmatic: as long as the crucial distinction between inside and outside is maintained, no one is quite sure how it should be represented in visual terms. It is acceptable to admit to the metamorphic possibilities of the Silenus, to the extent that it might not be depicted visually at all.

The limited visual presence of Plato's "Silenus-figure" in early modern literature may be attributed also, in part, to the fact that the artifact described in the *Symposium* is not an inert object. It derives most of its force from the very act of being opened to reveal its inner glories, and so the flat, static nature of the page does not allow the Silenus figure to work to its full potential. As early modern writers realized, and Erasmus in particular demonstrated at length, it is the textual, narrative form that provides the temporal dimension necessary for the Silenus figure to operate to best effect. Plato's "Silenus-figure" exists as a curious combination of the material and the imaginary, and as Alcibiades first demonstrated, words alone are sufficient for it to illustrate a particular model of thinking.

Nonetheless, the Silenus described by Alcibiades embodies the essence of every emblematic device—that what is initially perceived must be carefully negotiated for its hidden meaning to be revealed. To read an emblematic device correctly is to recognize that things are not necessarily what they first appear to be, to know how to get beyond distracting superficialities. The motto attributed to the imaginary Silenus emblem by William Drum-

mond in his letter to Henry Adamson—"Within, not without"—can be read as a universal formula for emblematic ways of reading: frequently, truth must be opened, unveiled, or uncovered. Even when it is not employed in explicitly emblematic terms in early modern literature, the Silenus offers an inherently emblematic way of thinking.

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