

# Alonso de Ledesma and the Spanish epigrams in the polyglot edition of Vaenius's *Amoris divini emblemata*<sup>1</sup>

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Sagrario López Poza, University of A Coruña

In this paper, I will discuss the epigrams in the Spanish language that (with others in French and Dutch) explain the *picturae* in Otto Vaenius's *Amoris divini emblemata* (1615). As Vaenius indicates in the preface of the book, the author of those verses is Alonso de Ledesma, described as 'poëta peregrinus', that is to say, as an excellent, magnificent poet. I will outline the question of why this particular Spanish poet was chosen for that task and in what grade/measure those epigrams are similar or different to others that were used in Spanish emblem books at the time. I will analyze the particularities in the metric form and the dominant features of style.

## The author

Alonso de Ledesma lived from 1562 to 1623. He was born in Segovia – and there he died –, a Castilian town with thousands years of history that has been declared 'Patrimony of Humanity' and that – due to its spectacular location and nearby beautiful landscapes – was one of the favourite Spanish towns of King Felipe II, who spent long periods at the magnificent Alcázar (fortress), as well as at a nearby mansion in the field called *La Casa del Bosque de Segovia* (The House of the Forest of Segovia). There are hardly any traces of this mansion left.<sup>2</sup> This palace was the favourite place of Queen Isabel de Valois, the third wife of the Spanish monarch,<sup>3</sup> and it was there that their first daughter, Isabel Clara Eugenia, was born on August 12, 1566. Isabel would become the person most trusted by her father, the King, who initiated her into state matters and who entrusted to her and her husband, the archduke Alberto of Austria (1598-1621), the government of the Low Countries.

It is impossible not to wonder – although we cannot obtain an answer – why Alonso de Ledesma was chosen to work on the Spanish version of the epigrams in Vaenius's emblem book. Was the choice for this poet related to the fact that he was known and admired by the Princess herself and by her circle? In the prologue of *Amoris divini emblemata*, she is identified as the promoter of the adaptation of Vaenius's *Amorum emblemata* (1608) to a version with religious contents.<sup>4</sup> Vaenius

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2 The regrettable state of this place has produced a 'Estudio integral de la Casa del Bosque de Valsaín, arquitectura y paisaje' (an integral study of the architecture and landscape), a project that is financed by the Junta de Castilla y León (regional government), undertaken by research workers from Universidad SEK, and supervised by Luis Ramón-Laca Menéndez de Luarca.

3 Fontainebleau 1546 – Aranjuez 1568.

4 Vaenius declares in the foreword to his *Amorum divini emblemata* that Isabel Clara Eugenia,

took on the challenge and dedicated his new book to the Spanish Princess, governor of the Low Countries.

Isabel Clara Eugenia lived in Spain until the day she married in 1599, when her father had already died. She had the opportunity of getting to know part of the poetic production of Alonso de Ledesma, a poet who enjoyed an enormous popularity and recognition in Spain at the time. He used to participate in whatever contests were announced and very often won a prize. His fame was definitively consolidated in 1600 with the publication of the first part (others would follow) of his *Conceptos espirituales* (*Spiritual concepts*), which had an unusual success and was repeatedly reprinted.<sup>5</sup> His poems passed from hand to hand before reaching the printing house. Due to the popularity he acquired with the method of transforming the profane into the religious, Ledesma received the nickname of 'divine Ledesma.' He had the ability to make the most of his personal talent to establish links and connections (to create 'conceits'), at a time when witty sayings and analogies were very much appreciated, and for putting all of that at the service of the Catholic Church in order to stimulate people's devotion.

Religious wars and the fear of Spanish rulers for the expansion of Protestant ideas fostered all kinds of actions aimed at inflaming people's devotion, this being more bound to emotions than to intellectual reflection. The formula used by Ledesma can be characterized as follows: a saying, a proverb, a little tune from a

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when become aware of Vaenius's book of emblems about Love, asked if the work could be adapted to a spiritual variant, turning the focus on the divine love, since the effects of both types of love were almost the same ones: "Hæc cùm Sua Celsitudo, vt amicorum relatu percepì, coràm inspexisset, petissetque, illane Emblemata commodè ad sensum spiritualem ac diuinum trahi possent, cùm diuini & humani Amoris iidem pene sint erga rem amatam effectus: noluit tacitæ Principis voluntati, officio meo deesse, & in gratiam illius nonnulla Diuini Amoris Emblemata, additis è sacra Scriptura & SS. Patrum scriptis depromptis hinc inde testimonijs, concinnare ac designare visum fuit. Accessere his ad illustrationem peregrino idiome versiculi, Hispano, Belgico, & Gallico. Castellanos Alphonsus de Ledesma, poëta peregrinus, Gallicos dominus Carolus Hatronius I.V.L. Duci Arschotanae à Consilij, suggessere; vernaculi domi nostræ, velut vernæ, nati." [When Her Highness, as I understood from reports by friends, had had a look and had asked if those emblems could easily be redirected toward a spiritual and divine meaning, as the effects of human and divine love are almost the same towards the object of love, I did not wish to disregard the Princess's silent wish, nor to fall short of my responsibility. To please her I decided to produce 'Emblems of Divine Love', with the addition of a broad selection of quotations from Holy Scripture and the writings of the Church Fathers. In addition there are poems in foreign languages (Spanish, Dutch, French) to illustrate the emblems. Alphonsus de Ledesma, a most excellent poet, made the Castilian collection, M. Carolus Hatronius, licensed in sacred and secular law and advisor to the Duke of Aarschot, collected the French. (Translation into English offered by the *Emblem Project Utrecht*, <http://emblems.let.uu.nl/v1615pre002.html>).

<sup>5</sup> The first part is followed by a second (1608) and by a third (1612). He also became very popular thanks to his *Juegos de la Noche Buena en cien enigmas* (1611), where he adapted profane popular lyric to versions 'of the divine'. In that work he includes enigmas with logogriphs, *letreados*, *paranomasias* and play on words. The *Romancero y monstruo imaginado* (1615) is full of witty ambiguities.

children's game or from a popular game, a song or a popular ballad, a riddle, or a joke is taken and changed a bit to adapt the profane topic and turn in into a religious one. The new product was accepted immediately because it appealed to the reader's senses, to his liking of music and the familiar. That attraction produced unaccustomed results. At the time, few authors managed to see their own poems printed so many times; much less to sell their editions in so many copies as did this poet from Segovia.<sup>6</sup> His *Conceptos espirituales* was reprinted thirty times in the seventeenth century. His success was probably related to his permanent friendship with the Society of Jesus, with which he always collaborated (Ors 1974, 27; Quintanilla 1949).

So, it is not strange that, given the fame Ledesma enjoyed, and given that this fame was associated with the kind of production Isabel Clara Eugenia demanded, this poet was thought to be the suitable person to be charged with writing the Spanish versions of the Vaenius's epigrams, that were to have such a prominent place on every page (See fig. 10 on page 105).

### The epigrams

What does surprise and stands out when reading Ledesma's epigrams for the polyglot edition of Vaenius's *Amoris divini emblemata* is their brevity and concision, something that already attracted Mario Praz's attention (Praz 1939, 138). Praz praised the Spanish author for the wittiness and the grace with which he composed his adaptation, in contrast to the French and to the Dutch versions that he found less elegant.

Epigrams for emblematic compositions in the Spanish language written before 1615 were mostly written in the hendecasyllabic verse and strophes, being influenced by the Italian lyric. As I have closely analyzed elsewhere (López Poza 1999), this trend is already perceived in the first piece of work in Spanish related to the genre: the translation of Alciato's emblems made by Bernardino Daza Pinciano in 1549 (Fig. 1). In the title he already indicates the kind of compositions he is going to use:

*Los Emblemas de Alciato traducidos en rhimas españolas*– Lyon: 1549 –. (The Alciato Emblems translated into Spanish *rhimas*).

The word *rhima* was used in Spain during the sixteenth century to name the compositions that, by imitating the Italian ones, use long verses (hendecasyllabic in this case) which are gathered in strophes such as the octave, the sonnet, the tercet, the quatrain, etc. During the first half of the sixteenth century there was a confrontation in Spain between those poets who clearly showed themselves to be

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<sup>6</sup> In a dedicatory letter that is included in *Juegos de Nochebuena* it is said that, up to that moment (1611), 50.000 copies of *Conceptos espirituales* had been printed, an unheard-of amount at this time.



Fig. 1: Title page of Spanish translation of Alciati *Emblemata*

enthusiastic admirers of the metrics in the Italian style – adapting those to compose their works in Spanish, following the examples of Juan Boscán and Garcilaso de la Vega – ,and those who resisted change and were faithful to the octosyllabic verse that was used in ballads and popular compositions. These last poets were called ‘Castilian poets’ and they kept using short verses and traditional strophes: the Castilian *copla*, the octosyllabic quatrains, the octosyllabic tercet, and even the *coplas de pie quebrado*<sup>7</sup>, well known in the fifteenth century. Despite the resistance, however, the Italian forms finally became the most used, although not in poetry with a didactic aim, or in popular poetry sung and learnt by heart.

I would like to highlight the significance of metrics because, during this time we are talking about, the choices of verse and strophe were not as arbitrary as they are today. Metrics were chosen according to the poetic genre and to the nature (sublime or low) of the composition. Depending on content, intention, and genre, the poet was expected to use a certain kind of verse and a certain kind of strophe.

Ledesma’s choice of the octosyllabic tercet or the Castilian tercet as formal vehicle for the epigrams is significant, being based on certain precedents. Three or

<sup>7</sup> *Copla de pie quebrado* (or *sextina de pie quebrado*): strophe composed for six verses (four of eight syllables and two of four syllables) with consonant rhyme, and with the following disposition: 8a-8b-4c-8a-8b-4c. Every short verse is called broken foot (*pie quebrado*). This verse type was very used by Jorge Manrique (XVth century), for what is also known as *copla manriqueña*. It has been used in all the times of the Spanish literature, suffering some variations in the distribution of the rhymes and in the situation of the broken foot.



Fig. 2: Titlepage of Gómez de Castro's *Recebimiento que la imperial ciudad [...]*

four octosyllabic verses were as a poetic form characteristically used at public festivities, to exhibit emblems or hieroglyphics with their explanation in Spanish (in octosyllabic tercets, octosyllabic quatrains). This is to say, the language – Castilian or Spanish –, and the kind of verse – octosyllabic – and the strophe – short – were associated with a didactic, popular, and informative aim.

In the festival books of the middle of the sixteenth century one can observe that an interesting change took place between 1560 and 1570. The festival book of the solemn entry in Toledo of Queen Isabel de Valois on the 12th February, 1560, written by the prestigious humanist Alvar Gómez de Castro and published one year later (Fig. 2), reproduces the epigrams that explain or supplement the meaning of the sculptures or paintings, the arches and other material of ephemeral art. The texts are written in Latin and the chronicler, in order to facilitate their comprehension, translated them into Spanish (Fig. 3). But, one decade later, in Segovia, on the occasion of the celebration of the fourth wedding of Felipe II marrying Anna de Austria, the humanist Jorge Báez de Sepúlveda, born in Segovia, described the iconographic programmes in great detail, and reproduced the epigrams – he calls them *letras* – that were put on large posters or *affixiones* near the pieces of architecture of ephemeral art whose significance they tried to explain (Figs. 4 and 5). Some of these poems were written in the Italian style, but an important number of them were written in the Spanish language using octosyllabic verses: octosyllabic tercets, octosyllabic quatrains, *quintillas*<sup>8</sup> or *sextina de pie quebrado* (Báez de Sepúlveda 1572).

<sup>8</sup> *Quintilla*: five verses of eight syllables, rhyming in consonant to the poet's pleasure, with the following limitations: it cannot be any loose verse, they cannot rhyme more than two followed verses, the last two verses cannot form a rhyming couplet.

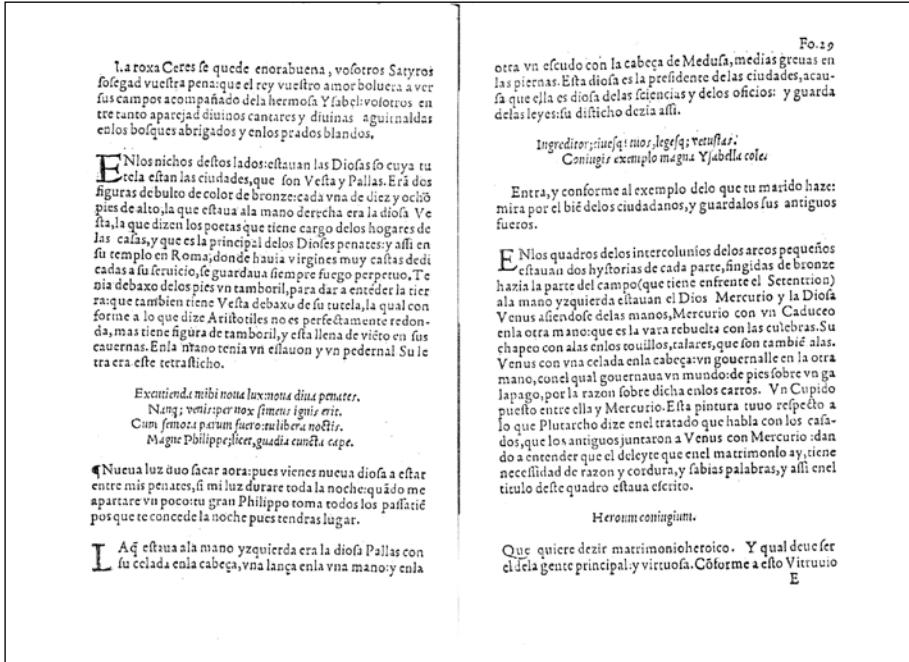


Fig. 3: Text in Gómez de Castro's *Recebimiento que la imperial ciudad [...]*



Fig. 4: Titlepage of Báez de Sepúlveda, *Relación verdadera del recibimiento [...]*

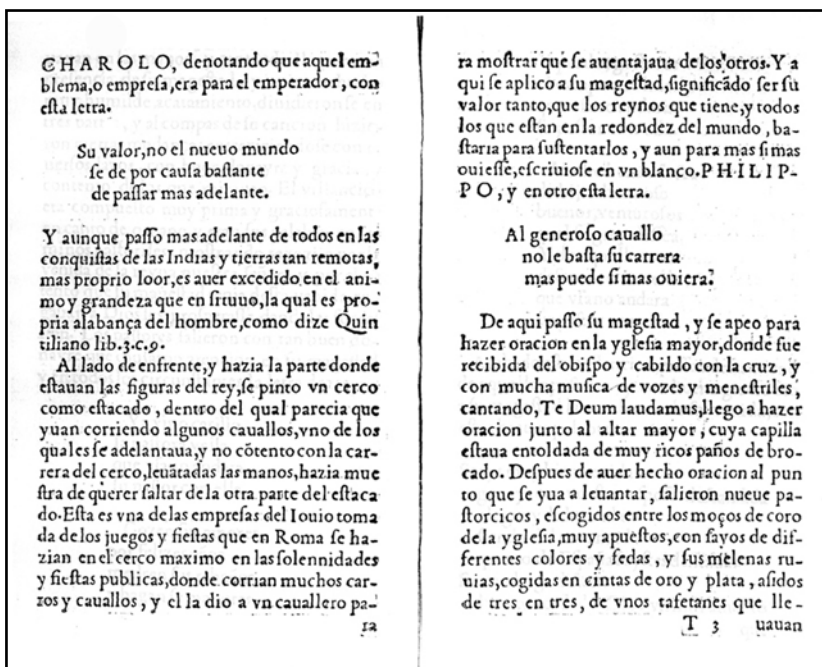


Fig. 5: Text in Báez de Sepúlveda, *Relación verdadera del recibimiento* [...]

These *letras*, according to the *Diccionario de Autoridades* of the Spanish Royal Academy, fulfilled the function of explaining the *pictura* in the devices or emblems; that is, they are equivalent to what we call today *epigrama* in the *emblemata triplex*. They had to be short poems in order to be read without delay or difficulty by those who undertook the processional route. Frequently, they are laconic maxims that display some witticism to provoke the readers's hesitation and uncertainty at first, and give satisfaction later, when they understand the full meaning.

Ledesma must have been very used to this kind of composition because public festivities were very common in the town in which he was educated and lived. In the sixteenth-century Segovia was, thanks to a very favourable conjuncture, one of the most modern towns in Spain.<sup>9</sup> The King had given privileges to woollen cloth makers (tax concessions and facilities to achieve the status of nobility) and that attracted many people as a labour force and merchants, people with money but without the cultural level and knowledge of Latin that had the inhabitants of towns with a University such as Alcalá, Salamanca, or the traditional Toledo (with the weight of the Church). In so far as that manufacturer bourgeoisie contributed to the festivities' expenses, they would want to understand the explanations on the posters, that is to say, they wanted the verses to be written in Spanish. Perhaps this had something to do with the change we notice in festival books.

9 By the end of the sixteenth century, the working population consisted of manufacturers (for three quarters) and traders (a fifth). For more detailed information, see Vela Santamaría 1991.



Fig. 6: Emblem in Horozco, *Sacra Symbola* (Agrigento 1601)

In Segovia the more productive years in textile trade were 1571-1586, that is, the years of Alonso de Ledesma's education. Ledesma's father, by the way, worked as a cloth merchant, as did the poet himself later in life. It is within this manufacturer bourgeoisie, which envisaged a modern and capitalist society for Castile, where the literary changes we are talking about were carried out.

In Spain the first emblem book was printed in Segovia: Juan de Horozco's *Emblemas morales* (Juan de la Cuesta, 1589). This author, who was a canon or prebendary at the Segovia Cathedral, as he was Archdeacon at the village of Cuellar, was the first to use the octosyllabic tercet as an epigram in emblems of the religious kind. I am referring to a work he published in Agrigento, (Sicily) in 1601, while he was a bishop there, and that he dedicated to Pope Clemente VIII. The book is titled *Sacra symbola* (Fig. 6). Today the work is extremely rare, but Ledesma must have known it. It presents a series of xylographic prints in the *picturae* that are of great interest, despite of the fact they seem naive or simple. Although the moral lesson of the emblem is written in prose and in Latin, the author used the Spanish language for the epigrams, in octosyllabic verses, and strophes such as those used by Ledesma: the octosyllabic tercet and the octosyllabic quatrain. Due to their shortness, witticism and popular nature, the epigrams achieved the instructive aim Horozco was looking for, which would have been difficult to obtain in Latin. Thus, his book was useful, on the one hand, to the priest – who could under-



stand the statement and moral lesson of each emblem in Latin – and, on the other hand, to those who did not understand the Latin language. He or she could at least comprehend the meaning of each *pictura* and motto with a short and little poem similar to so many song choruses.

Horozco, having used the Italian metrics for his *Emblemas morales* (81 octaves and 19 sonnets), used the octosyllabic Castilian verses for his *Sacra symbola*. The same happens in another work that, no doubt, Ledesma knew and appreciated, given that it was the first book with Jesuits' emblems printed in Spain. I am referring to *Libro de las honras que hizo el Colegio de la Compañía de Jesus en Madrid, a la [...] Emperatriz doña Maria de Austria* (*Book of honours that the College of the Company of Jesus in Madrid made for the Empress Doña María de Austria*), printed in Madrid in 1603. This book showed the Jesuits's grief for the death of their benefactor, the sister of Felipe II, widow of the Emperor Maximilian of Austria, who, during her last years, lived a withdrawn life in the convent of the *Descalzas Reales* in Madrid. The Jesuits's *Colegio Imperial* was established in this town in 1572, only 16 years after the death of Saint Ignacio de Loyola, founder of the Society, thanks to Maria de Austria's generous donation. The book, apart from a description of the display done for the Empress's last honours in the church at the Jesuits' School, includes the text of a prayer and a funeral sermon in Latin in which the Empress's qualities and generosity with religious orders are praised. The hieroglyphics with the epigrams in Hebrew, Greek, Latin and Spanish that were created and exhibited for her obsequies, are also reproduced. For the epigrams in Spanish, strophes such as the octosyllabic tercet and the octosyllabic quatrain were preferred.

In those cases in which the reproduction of the *affixiones* used in the festivities of Ledesma's writing period are preserved, the octosyllabic tercet and the octosyllabic quatrain are almost exclusively used for the explanatory epigram of the exhibited image. This is the case, for instance, in a beautiful manuscript preserved in the National Library in Madrid (Fig. 7). This reproduces some of the posters or *affixiones* that were exhibited on the occasion of a Literary competition that took place in Alcalá de Henares during the visit of the Kings Felipe III and Margarita de Austria in 1611 (Cordero de Ciria, 1991).

We can see, then, that Alonso de Ledesma had several relevant precedents upon which he could base his work when he was entrusted with the task to write epigrams on topics related to divine love. He chooses the octosyllabic tercet to convey the content of the epigrams because of his pedagogic purpose: that his epigrams could be learnt by heart, as if they were a prayer, as so many proverbs were learnt in those years in Spain, especially by those people who could neither read nor write. That intention required shortness and a concise composition.

Ledesma would have written emblem books if he had had a patron, or a protector, who covered the high expenses that the carving of the wooden blocks for the making of the *picturae* entailed. But, for the 'hieroglyphics' he wrote, he had to resign himself to words without concomitant image. These *jeroglíficos* have em-



Fig. 7: Fragment of manuscript with reproduction of emblems dedicated to the the king Felipe III and Margarita de Austria in 1611, at Alcalá de Henares. (See also colour plate 6)

blematic elements, but no *picturae*; these were substituted by an explanatory text preceded by the word *Pintose*, meaning ‘it was painted’. The reader is invited to imagine the drawing or *pictura* to form a conventional, complete emblem. Then, by adding some biblical text in Latin and some low art verses (octosyllabic tercets or quatrains), Ledesma wrote in the same witty style he used before:

### **Hieroglyphic to Christ our Lord**

Pintóse una Piedra con sus rayos de oro y cobre

***Petra autem erat Christus.***

Vos soys la piedra de toque,  
 Donde nuestras obras vienen,  
 A ver qué quilates tienen.<sup>10</sup>

10 A stone was painted with its golden and copper rays. *Petra autem erat Christus*. You are the touchstone | to which our works are put | to test how many carats they have. In: *Conceptos espirituales de Alonso de Ledesma, natural de Segovia. Dirigidos a nuestra Señora de la Fuencisla*. En Madrid, en la Imprenta Real 1602, 333-346. Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid: R/ 39694.

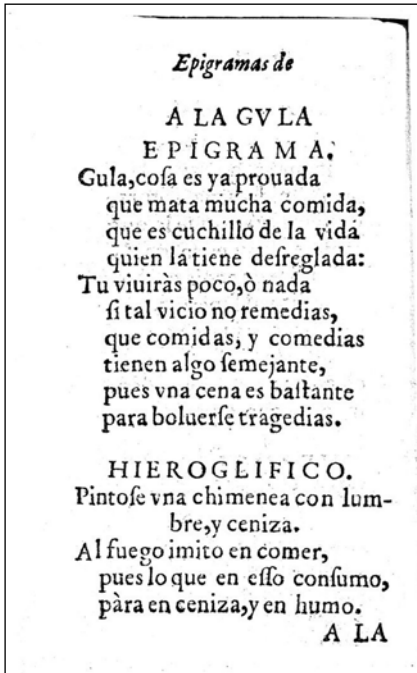


Fig. 8: Text in Ledesma's *Epigramas y Hieroglyphicos a la vida de Christo*

As you can see in figure 8, all the emblematic elements are present: an epigram, and – titled *Hieroglyphico* – a description of the pictura to help the reader imagine its presence, and then three verses that serve as summary, just like a motto uses to do in an emblem.

### The conceptual wit

Ledesma was famous in his time because of his skills in establishing links and connections between very different realities, bringing together these realities for a religious purpose. This is why he was regarded as the father of 'conceptism', a fashion that enjoyed an uncommon success in the seventeenth century. Conceptism reached a point of exhaustion in abuses, when wild relationships were established between issues of a sacred nature and the most earthly and daily things. This even worried the Inquisition, which sometimes intervened to restrict the distribution of some of the works of this type.

Conceptism consisted in the creation of a mental connection (relationship or equivalence) between different realities. The further away the ideas are, the more attention their connection within the *conceit* will draw, and the more witty the author will be considered for being able to establish a connection between the two objects, either by similarity or by disparity.

In the seventeenth century, theorists of the *agudeza* wrote about the many procedures by which these mental associations could be expressed. For instance,

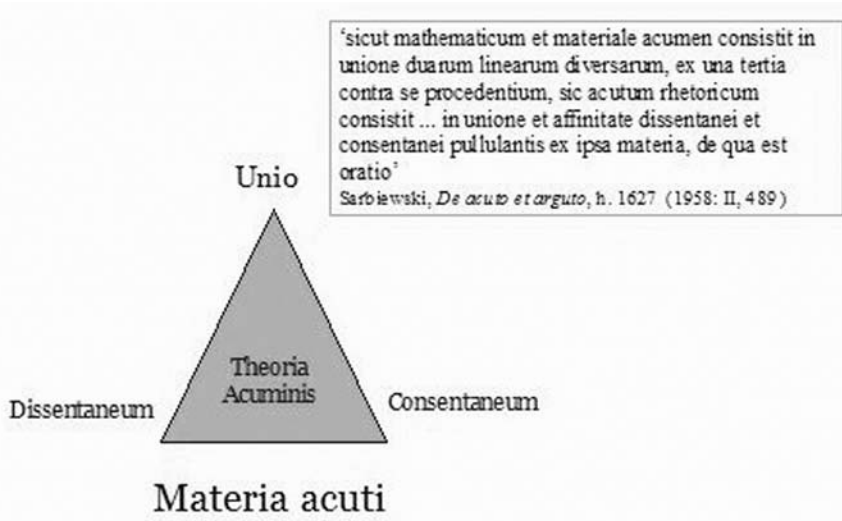


Fig. 9: Sarbiewski, *De acuto et arguto*, h. 1627 (1958, II, 489)

Baltasar Gracián, a Spanish Jesuit, made an effort to explain this (1642) in his *Arte de ingenio. Tratado de la Agudeza (Art of ingenuity. A treatise of keenness)*, extended in 1648 as *Agudeza y arte de ingenio (The wit and art of ingenuity)*. Another Jesuit, the Polish Mathias Casimir Sarbiewski, in his *De acuto et arguto liber unicus*, written around 1627 but not published until 1958, explains the means by which alliances between the chord and the discordant can be established in order to reach a harmonious effect that will take the reader by surprise and through which the one who has the ability of gathering things so visibly apart will be described as *agudo*. This process can be graphically represented by a triangle in whose angles at the base the discordant and the concordant (which are opposed and had nothing in common) are placed together.<sup>11</sup> The author's ability will consist in finding an alliance between what is concordant and what is discordant so that a harmonious effect is achieved where one could only see dissimilar elements at first (Fig. 9). This meeting point is the *acumen* or the vertex of the triangle and it produces the *concors discordia* or the *discors concordia*. A relationship based on equivalence almost imperceptible at first sight and requiring careful reflection was considered to be very keen, characteristic of a sharp mind.

Let's consider an example of an epigram by Alonso de Ledesma for Vaenius' *Amoris divini emblemata*: (Fig. 10)

<sup>11</sup> 'Sicut mathematicum et materiale acumen consistit in unione duarum linearum diversarum, ex una tertia contra se procedentium, sic acutum rhetoricum consistit ... in unione et affinitate dissentanei et consentanei pullulantis ex ipsa materia, de qua est oratio'. Sarbiewski, *De acuto et arguto*, h. 1627 (1958: II, 489). See Malgorzata Anna Sydor, 2006.



Fig. 10: Emblem 24 in Vaenius, *Amoris divini emblemata* (1615)

**Facit munificum** [Vaenius 1615, 54-55]

El Amor más que los clavos  
hizo, alma mía, por vos  
manirroto al mismo Dios<sup>12</sup>

The author is addressing his soul. He tells her that divine Love, out of love for her, became a squanderer – in Spanish ‘manirroto’, a popular adjective formed by the noun MANO (hand) and the adjective ROTO (broken), which refers to one spending more than he should, wasting away his properties (and even his life) in useless expenses. The word evokes somebody who has a hole in his hands through which all the wealth received flows away. The adjective *manirroto* most often conveys a contemptuous tone. The boundary between virtue and vice is subtle and a question of degree. Generosity is worthy of esteem, but not keeping anything, or giving everything one owns, is imprudent. This is an adjective much used by parents to criticize their children’s excessive expenses. It is a popular term.

Ledesma employs a witticism by establishing an equivalence that is apparently absurd: how can one say that God is *manirroto* (a squanderer)? This question, at first, seems scandalizing, because it seems to contain an insult. But, later, the relationships achieved by the verbal pirouette become visible:

12 Amor Divinus, just for your love, my soul, | Made God wasteful (as if he had a hole in his hands) | Not just for the holes they made him when nailing him to the cross.

- A *manirroto* has a hole in his hands through which he allows his wealth to flow away.
- Christ's hands were broken in order to nail him to the cross and he, like the *manirroto*, gave, for men's salvation, his most valuable wealth: his own life. Therefore, Christ can be called *manirroto* for two reasons. Firstly, he indeed had his hands (physically) broken. And secondly, he figuratively was lavish or prodigal to man, in giving him the most precious, his life.

Conceptual playing also implies word play. The simplest conceit is the one that establishes a connection between two analogous realities. And the author can show his witticism by these rhetorical means: comparison, image, metaphor, personification, allegory, paradox, antithesis, etc. For the witty saying to be effective a laconic style is required. No idle word should be employed. Verbal brevity, concise expression facilitates quick connections, it helps to grasp the spark of the conceits.

Most of Ledesma's epigrams in this work by Vaenius show a simple structure frequently based on causal subordinate sentences. In the first line the main sentence is displayed and the causal subordinate occupies the other two lines.

Causal subordinate sentences:

*Omnia vincit Amor* [90-91]

No hay peto a prueba de Amor,  
**Que** la flecha de un amante  
Pasa un pecho de diamante

There is no armour that resists the force of Love  
because the arrow of a lover  
is able to pass through a diamond chest

or a comparative structure (with explicit comparisons):

*Amoris umbra invidia* [56-57]

Cual sigue la sombra al cuerpo,  
**Tal** la invidia a la afición  
Y a virtud la emulación

Just as the shadow follows the body  
Envy follows Love  
And Emulation Virtue

*Micat inter omnes Amor virtutes* [88-89]

Es la luz de charidad  
Entre las virtudes bellas  
**Cual** sol entre las estrellas

The light of Charity  
Among the beautiful Virtues  
Is like the sun among the stars

*Nec vidisse sat est* [100-101]

Amor es **como** la gloria,  
Pues la cosa que es amada  
Jamás le cansa ni enfada

Love is like Glory  
As the thing that is loved  
Never tires or angers him

Metaphor:

*Agitatus fortior* [92-93]

Cuanto la <b>planta de Amor</b>	All the more the plant of Love,
Más inclemencias padece	suffers hardships
Tanto más se arraiga y crece	so much more it grows and strengthens its roots

Two metaphors:

*Crescit spirantibus auris* [96-97]

El <b>aire de Amor divino</b>	The air of divine Love
Enciende con suavidad	Gently lights
El <b>fuego de caridad</b>	the fire of Charity

Allegory:

*Gravata respuit* [52-53]

Amor es <b>ave que vuela</b>	Love is a bird that flies
Y las cosas que acá tiene	and the things that he has down here [on earth]
Son liga que le detiene	Are birdlime that ties him and brakes his ascent/his flight [birdlime is a viscous substance with which, anointing some bars, birds were hunted]

Antithetic couples (sometimes metaphor and paradox):

*Sternit iter Deo* [72-73]

Amor allana el camino	Love levels the road toward the celestial court,
De la corte celestial,	and although the path is narrow
Y aunque estrecha, es senda real	It is the main road

Laconic sentence with the technique of the proverb or the riddle:

*Animae sal est Amor* [104-105]

Amor y sal son dos cosas	Love and salt are two things that,
Que fuera de dar sazón	besides giving season,
Preservan de corrupción	they preserve against corruption

In this last example, Ledesma has found two analogical elements in two far away realities such as love (an intellectual and friendly conception) – something sublime – and salt (used to flavour food and to preserve meat) – something ordinary and low –. The witticism lies in finding what they have in common: both give flavour and preserve from decay.

This liking for surprisingly weaving the sublime with the everyday in a playful net of ambiguities is the technique that made Ledesma famous. In spite of the positive judgement that Praz passed on these epigrams, one only occasionally notices

poetic refinement. But his religious fervour, the effective brevity of the versified precepts and his funniness are what made Alonso de Ledesma popular and respected by his contemporaries.

We could say that Ledesma attains the same sharp brevity already employed by Erasmus in his *Adagia*. That *acuta brevitatem* was also in an old text that every boy had studied in the school for different exercises: *Disticha Catonis*. Ledesma's epigrams gathered, like these works, teaching and enjoyment (*docere & delectare*), and they satisfied anyone who had, as a main concern, the maintenance of the Catholic faith through having recourse to the most intricate feelings and emotions.

An interesting but impossible to prove question remains: How did Ledesma come to know the motives that were going to illustrate his epigrams? Would drawings of the *picturae* have been sent to him? Would descriptive texts have been sent to him? We have not succeeded in finding something that could have orientated the poet about what he should say in his short poems. If we occasionally notice some large distance between what is pictorially represented and what is said in the epigram, most of the times the poet fully gets it right and he does so with an economy of discourse that is highly superior to other epigrams in French and in Dutch.

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Plate 6: Fragment of manuscript with reproduction of emblems dedicated to the the king Felipe III and Margarita de Austria in 1611, at Alcalá de Henares. (See also Fig. 7 on page 102)