

Introduction: Between Word and Image, East and West

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Taken from Andrea Alciato's *Book of Emblems*,¹ the engraving above exemplifies the interrelationship between language and image that the articles of this journal seek to explore. Alciato (1492–1550) was born near Milan and settled in France in the early sixteenth century, where he came to be regarded as one of the foremost European jurists of his time. He was particularly famous for restoring the textual integrity of the Roman juridical textual tradition,

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¹ Andrea Alciati, *Emblemata* (Leyden: Ex Officina Plantiniana Raphelengii, 1608), p. 167. The copy we consulted (RB A146 Macd) is preserved in the Rare Books and Special Collections section of the University of Sydney Library, which we thank in allowing us to reproduce the image.

which had been corrupted by the emendations of medieval glossators, through his application of the humanist philological method. Teaching this method, he became one of the most followed (and courted) law professors of the first half of the sixteenth century. In *Life of Alciato (Vita Alciati)*, Claude Mignault informs us that Alciato developed his knowledge in the areas of classical philology, ancient history and literature during his studies in Milan, and evidence of this can be found in his humanistic analysis of jurisprudence. It should be noted, however, that his juridical works bear great importance not only philologically, but were also influential on jurisprudence in general, as they renewed the hermeneutical and historical approach to the study of the law.²

The *Book of Emblems*, or, as in the original Latin titles, *Emblemata* or *Emblematum liber*, is the work for which Alciato is most famous, even though emblems were only a secondary occupation for him after his law studies. It is a collection of short Latin verse texts and accompanying woodcuts, and was printed in more than one hundred and seventy editions from 1531 onward, creating its own genre which attained enormous popularity throughout Europe.³ The word ‘emblemata’ is the plural of the Greek word *émblema*, made of the two words *én* (English ‘in’) and *bállo* (English ‘to insert’), meaning something that is included in another thing as an ornament, as in a piece of inlay or a mosaic.⁴

With his ‘emblemata,’ Alciato wished to inspire his readership, which he hoped would include painters, goldsmiths and other artists, to produce

² Alciato’s first writings reflect his non-judicial interests: a collection of ancient inscriptions, a treatise about the modern use of ancient coins, and studies on the churches and history of Milan. He began his law studies in Pavia in 1507, and furthered his studies in Bologna from 1511 to 1514. Finally, in 1516 he received his degree in civil and canon law from the University of Ferrara, although, according to Abbondanza, he never studied there. Returning to Milan, he combined his juridical practice with his classical studies. See R. Abbondanza, ‘Alciato (Alciati) Andrea,’ in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, II, (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1960), pp. 69–77. We read Mignault’s ‘*Vita Alciati*’ in Andrea Alciati *Emblemata* (Parisiis: Apud Ioannem Richerium, 1589), pp. ii–iviii.

³ “Si tratta di una raccolta di soggetti allegorici e di simboli – riprodotti mediante incisione spesso da artisti rinomati – dei quali è dato in alcuni versi latini il significato, che si traduce per lo più in un insegnamento morale. Il genere, di origine medievale, preesisteva all’A., ma questi lo nutrì di spirito classico e gli diede forma compiuta e popolare, avviandolo a un enorme successo nel ’500 e nel ’600.” Abbondanza, p. 72. See also Andrea Alciato, *Il libro degli emblemi secondo le edizioni del 1531 e del 1534*, ed. Mino Gabriele (Milan: Adelphi, 2009), pp. XIII–XXXVII.

⁴ Alciato, *Il libro*, pp. XXXV–XXXVI.

images (*imagines, signa* in Latin) based on his verses.⁵ The *Book of Emblems* established a format that became extraordinarily popular during the Renaissance. Although many others tried their hand at what would become a widespread leisure activity and a legitimate literary genre, it was Alciato that enjoyed renown for this genre.

The books of this genre contained small illustrations (in the style of the image presented at the beginning of this introduction) that were accompanied by a short title or motto, a descriptive verse epigram, and, in some cases, an additional explanatory text in verse or prose. The books of emblems were created by individual scholars and were aimed to express the author's personal view of the world, while at the same time possibly communicating moral, political or religious values in ways that would have to be decoded by the viewer. Their sources ranged from the classical to the humanist, and included, for example, the *Greek Anthology* (also known as *Anthologia Graeca*), a collection of Greek poems – mostly epigrams – deriving from the tenth-century *Palatine Anthology*, from the fourteenth-century *Anthology of Planudes*, and Erasmus of Rotterdam's *Adagia*, and an annotated collection of Greek and Latin proverbs that the author first published in 1500 and then continued to expand until his death in 1536.⁶

While it is believed that Andrea Alciato was the first to devise such a book, current scholarship suggests that Alciato himself had nothing to do with the series of editions from 1531 onwards, and that it was his associate and friend Conrad Peutinger who commissioned the publications based on unillustrated epigrams that had circulated among Alciato's friends in manuscript form.⁷

⁵ Alciato, *Il libro*, p. XVII. Gabriele also quotes a letter dated 9 December 1522 sent to Alciato's friend and printer Francesco Calvo: "Durante questi Saturnali ... ho composto un libretto di epigrammi intitolato *Emblemata*, in ciascuno dei quali descrivo qualcosa, tale che significhi con eleganza un qualche cosa tratto dalla storia e dal mondo naturale, donde pittori, orefici, fonditori possano realizzare quel genere di oggetti che chiamiamo scudi [stemmi o distintivi] e attacchiamo ai cappelli o portiamo quali insigne."

⁶ Our image derives directly from Epigram 12 of Book IX of the *Greek Anthology*, which is titled 'Leonidas of Alexandria': "The blind beggar supported the lame one on his feet, and gained in return the help of the other's eyes. Thus the two incomplete beings fitted into each other to form one complete being, each supplying what the other lacked"; see *The Greek Anthology*, with an English translation by W. R. Paton (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, and London: William Heinemann, 1983), Vol.3, p. 9.

⁷ The chronology of the first edition of Alciato's *Book of Emblems* is complicated. It is clear that he composed the epigrams, but how they came to be associated with certain engravings and in book form involves unearthing a labyrinthine history; see Gabriele's discussion in Alciato, *Il libro*, pp. XVIII–XXXIV.

The *Book of Emblems* was conceived as a collection of Greek epigrams translated into Latin. The thirty epigrams first published in Basel in 1529 in the volume entitled *Selecta epigrammata graeca* form the core of the work. These, and a number of others, with sententious phrases as titles, constitute the collection of one hundred and five epigrams that Alciato donated to Conrad Peutinger, which were published by Heinrich Steyner and printed in Augsburg in 1531, apparently without the author's knowledge. The editor titled the collection *Emblematum liber*, and, independently, decided to illustrate each composition with a small engraving, thus creating the triple structure motto-engraving-epigram which, from that time on, has been known as an 'emblem.'⁸

The immediate success of the book convinced Alciato to publish it again, and under his own supervision the volume was carefully edited, featuring better engravings. Thus, the Paris editor Christian Wechel published a second edition in 1534, which already contained one hundred and thirteen emblems, and, in 1542, a third edition with two additional emblems was released. This same editor was to publish the first translations as well, a French edition in 1536 and a German edition in 1542. When Aldus Manutius published a collection of eighty-four additional emblems in Venice in 1546, the book took an important step closer to its definitive form. This was followed by the collaboration of Alciato with the bookseller Guillaume Rouillé and the printer Macé Bonhomme of Lyon. The Lyon enterprise published a series of editions and translations in Spanish, French and Italian with new engravings. In 1548 the book already included two hundred and one emblems, and the following year the Spanish translation introduced ten new ones. Finally in 1550, in the year of Alciato's death, what can be regarded as the definitive Lyon edition was released. It contained the complete collection of emblems composed by Alciato, all of which are illustrated, totalling two hundred and eleven. Following Alciato's passing, a series of commentaries were produced. Alciato's *Book of Emblems* was, then, regarded as the prototype for a characteristic Renaissance genre, uniting image and word in a series of 'speaking' pictures.⁹

⁸ The collection's preface reads: "Dum pueros iuglans, iuvenes dum tessera fallit, detinet et segnes chartula picta viros. Haec nos festiuis emblemata cudimus horis, artificum illustri signaque facta manu. Vestibus ut torulos, petasis ut figere parmas, et valeat tacitis scribere quisque notis" [While boys are entertained by nuts and youths by dice, so playing-cards fill up the time of lazy men. In the festive season we hammer out these emblems, made by the distinguished hand of craftsmen. Just as one affixes trimmings to clothes and badges to hats, so it behooves every one of us to write in silent marks]; see Andreae Alciati (Augustae Vindelicorum [Augsburg]: Per Heynricum Steynerum, 1531), f. A2r.

⁹ On this topic the literature is extensive. Key works include Peter M. Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem: Structural Parallels between the Emblem and Literature in the*

Peter Daly maintained that, although a reliable theory of emblems cannot be advanced before a systematic historical study of emblematics is undertaken, an analysis of Alciato's work would conclude with an investigation of the relationship between word and image. Among the issues Daly raises in his *Literature in the Light of the Emblem* we would like to point out two fundamental questions for our own purposes. What functional relationship exists between *pictura* and *scriptura*, that is, between thing (pictured) and meaning (expressed in word)? And how is the synthesis effected?¹⁰

This question can be clarified further by resorting to an example advanced by Peter Berger in his *Ways of Seeing*,¹¹ in which he asks his readers to look at 'Wheatfield with Crows' (1890) by Vincent Van Gogh. The reader looks at a landscape of a cornfield with birds flying out of it, then Berger asks the reader to look at the same image with the following words underwritten: "This is the last picture that Van Gogh painted before he killed himself."¹² He concludes: "It is hard to define exactly how the words have changed the image but undoubtedly they have. The image now illustrates the sentence." Then, he emphasises that the "image reproduced has become part of an argument which has little or nothing to do with the painting's original independent meaning. The words have quoted the painting ... to confirm their own verbal authority."¹³

The image reproduced at the head of this introduction is derived from a copy of the edition printed, in all probability, in Leiden by Franciscus Raphelegius (son-in-law of Christoph Plantin) in 1608, though it is difficult to establish with certainty, as the title page is a hand-drawn copy that was added at some later stage, possibly to replace the original-but-now-destroyed title page.¹⁴ In the epigram we read:

Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (2nd ed., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998 [1979]); Sibylle Penkert, 'Zur Emblemforschung,' in *Emblem und Emblematikrezeption: Vergleichende Studien zur Wirkungsgeschichte vom 16. bis 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Sibylle Penkert (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978), pp. 1–22; Guido Arbizzoni, *Un nodo di parole e di cose». Storia e fortuna delle imprese* (Roma: Salerno Editrice, 2002), pp. 148–183; and Alciato, *Il libro*, pp. XIII–LXXII. Gabriele writes: "l'opera...ebbe senz'altro una gestazione complessa e diluita nel tempo, di cui però ci sfuggono i precisi contorni cronologici. Del resto è lo stesso Alciato a dirci, nella sua *Praefatio*, che componeva gli epigrammi/Emblemi nelle ore di festa e per diletto, dunque senza una programmazione rigorosa. Per il sommo giurista si trattava di uno svago...dove confluivano curiosità e interessi filologico-antiquariali per il mondo classico." Alciato, *Il libro*, p. XXIV.

¹⁰ Daly, *Literature*, p. 8.

¹¹ Peter Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin Books, 1972).

¹² This painting has been seen by some biographers as Van Gogh's 'suicide note.'

¹³ Peter Berger, *Ways*, pp. 27–28.

¹⁴ See above, footnote 1.

Between Word and Image

Loripedem sublatum humeris fert lumine captus,
Et socii haec oculis munera retribuit.
Quo caret alteruter, concors sic prestat uterque;
Mutuat hic oculos, mutuat ille pedes.¹⁵

[A man deprived of sight carries on his shoulders one with deformed feet

and offers this service in return for the use of his companion's eyes.
So each of them by mutual consent supplies what the other lacks;
one borrows eyes, the other feet].

In a French edition printed in 1549 we can find a different engraving accompanying the same motto, mutual aid or *mutuel ayde*, accompanied by the explanatory text that follows:

Nature, (qui est Providence divine) ha pourveu à l'ung, de ce quelle ha privé l'aultre: affin que les hommes ne se pouvans passer les ungz des aultres, se accompaignassent en Familles, Villes, Citez, Royaumes, comme l'homme est Animal social, & compagnable.¹⁶

[Nature, that is divine Providence, has provided one with what she has taken away from another: since people cannot do without each other, they accompany each other in families, towns, cities, kingdoms, because man is a social and companionable animal].

The emblem that opens this collection of articles not only joins the verbal and visual in its format, but can also be used as a metaphor for the relationship between word and image. The word cannot see and the image cannot walk. The only way they can follow the path ahead of them is through collaboration and mutual help. The emblem's history serves also to remind us of the way text and image together can travel and circulate through space and time, often changing their meaning and function according to cultures, societies, institutions and power.

As it must be clear by now, the relationship between word and image is not a simple issue. Throughout time, the alliance and, very often, rivalry between verbal and written languages and visual and symbolic systems of communication have attracted the attention of academics and thinkers all around the world and from a diverse range of disciplines, including literature, drama, cinema studies, art history, book history and print culture, philosophy, anthropology, media studies and architecture.

As explained by Mitchell, 'word and image' generally indicates a basic division in the human experience of representations, presentations and

¹⁵ See also, among other editions, Andreae Alciati, *Emblematum Libellus* (Parisiis: Ex Officina Christiani Wecheli sub Scuto Basileiensi, 1536), p. 26, where the wording is the same but the image slightly different.

¹⁶ *Emblemes d'Alciat, de nouveau Translatez en François vers pour vers iouxte les Latins* (Lyon: Chez Guillaume Rouillé, 1549), p. 195.

symbols. This is the relation between the seeable and the sayable, the visible and the articulable, display and discourse, showing and telling, perception and conception or symbol and concept, as also discussed by theorists from Foucault to Deleuze, to mention just two.¹⁷

This is also an extraordinarily ancient problem in the study of the arts and in theories of rhetoric, communication, and human subjectivity. For instance, the comparison of poetry and painting, literature and visual art has been a consistent theme since antiquity in both Eastern and Western aesthetics. From Aristotle's theory of *lexis* (speech) and *opsis* (spectacle) in tragedy to Horace's *ut pictura poesis* ('as is painting, so is poetry'), which became the foundation for one of the most enduring traditions in Western aesthetic debates (of the late Renaissance and in neoclassicism). From the Renaissance *paragone delle arti* or competition among the rival arts to Edmund Burke's empirical grounding of word and image in categories drawn from the structure of sensation (vision and hearing), feeling (imitation and sympathy) and aesthetic mode (the beautiful and the sublime). And later again, from Lessing's defence of distinct boundaries between poetry and painting and rejection of the ideal of pictorial representation (and so shaking the belief of them as 'sister arts') in his influential *Laocoon* (as also discussed by Robert Buch in his article) to the Romantic ideals of synthesis and recombination.¹⁸ In the twentieth century, art historians who have been involved in such a debate include Walter Benjamin (and his belief in the tension between word and image related to technological and political forms of organisations), Aby Warburg, Erwin Panofsky, Meyer Shapiro, as well as Ernst Gombrich with his reliance on the opposition of nature and conventions in the distinction between verbal and pictorial signs. The issue has been at the centre of attention of semiotic theorists since the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century with Charles S. Peirce and his triad of symbol, icon and index (much employed in the interaction between photography and writing) and Ferdinand De Saussure, up to Roland Barthes and later Umberto Eco.¹⁹ Other thinkers and scholars include Nelson Goodman

¹⁷ W. J. T. Mitchell, 'Word and Image,' in *Critical Terms for Art History*, eds Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 47-57, and his *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 51-61; see also Michel Foucault, *This Is Not a Pipe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp. 64-65.

¹⁸ See Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 2nd ed. (London: for R. and J. Dodsley, 1759); Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoon: or, The Limits of Poetry and Painting* (London: Ridgeway, 1836 [1766]).

¹⁹ See Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011 [1916]); Walter Benjamin, 'The Word of Art in the Age of

and his “grammar of difference,” an analysis of the text–image boundary based on the structure and function of symbolic systems, up to W. J. T. Mitchell, Mieke Bal and Wendy Steiner, and many others who continue such a complex discussion on the dialogue, mutual collaboration and hostility between verbal and visual languages.²⁰

As discussed by Mitchell on various occasions, words we read are intelligible verbal signs. We can read them aloud, translate them into other languages, interpret or paraphrase them. They are also visible marks on the white page, or audible sounds when read aloud. And as explored in some of the articles here, we can see words as black marks on a white or colour background (as carved on Chinese limestone cliffs or on Japanese manga) or with specific shapes (as ancient Turkish and Persian alphabet characters, or Japanese and Chinese logograms). Words present, therefore, a double face to both the eye and the ear. Similarly, in the act of creating as well as interpreting and describing images, language enters into the visual field, whether it is a Japanese handscroll or a graphic memoir.

Another way to see the relationship between word and image is, as suggested by Mitchell, as being like that between “two countries that speak different languages but that have a long history of mutual migration, cultural exchange, and other forms of intercourse.”²¹ They have no fixed boundaries and live often in an interdependent relationship. At the same time, as already mentioned, they are domains with a long history of competition (as in the case

Mechanical Reproduction,’ in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968 [1936]), pp. 217–242; Aby Warburg, *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 1999 [1932]); Erwin Panofsky, ‘Iconography and Iconology: an Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art,’ in his *Meaning in the Visual Art: Papers in and on Art History* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955), pp. 26–41; Ernst Gombrich, *Art and Illusion* (London: Phaidon, 1960); Meyer Schapiro, *Words and Pictures: On the Literal and the Symbolic in the Illustration of a Text* (The Hague: Mouton Press, 1973); Charles S. Peirce, *The Essential Peirce*, 2 vols. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998); Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1977); Umberto Eco, *Sugli specchi e altri saggi: il segno, la rappresentazione, l’illusione, l’immagine* (Milan: Bompiani, 1995).

²⁰ Nelson Goodman, *The Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976); Wendy Steiner, *The Colors of Rhetoric: Problems in the Relation between Modern Literature and Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Mieke Bal, *Reading “Rembrandt”: Beyond the Word–Image Opposition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

²¹ Mitchell, ‘Word and Image,’ p. 53. In the last twenty years a number of edited volumes have focused on the relationship between word and image, including the creation of specialised academic journals such as *Word & Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry*.

of iconoclasm discussed by Vrasidas Karalis), accusations of contamination, invasions and colonisation. Words and visual images “seem inevitably to become implicated in a ‘war of signs’ ... Each art, each type of sign or medium, lays claim to certain things that it is best equipped to mediate, and each grounds its claims in a certain characterisation of its ‘self,’ its own proper essence.”²²

Many terms and criteria that describe the word and image relationship are also applicable to the way the relationship between East and West has often been understood. There is no need to remind us how the East/West dichotomy has been a recurring topic that has never failed to claim the imagination of thinkers and scholars in a multiplicity of fields from Herodotus’s portrayal of the Persians as ‘East’ and the Greeks as ‘West,’ to Edward Said’s influential *Orientalism* (1978) which further complicated the concepts of East/West dichotomy. Philosophers, theorists and sociologists have tried to reconcile and unify such a relation seen as dialogical and complementary, antagonistic and mutually exclusive, or asymmetrical and nonreciprocal. We may say that, like ‘word and image,’ ‘East and West’ are human constructs used to mediate our understanding of the world. They shape our perceptions, and, as some of the articles here demonstrate, such dichotomies cause us to see some things and overlook others.

Alciato’s emblem, however, seen within such a context, points to a journey or an ‘encounter en route’ (as in the case of as *Tōkaidō gojūsan tsui* as discussed here by Ann Wehmeyer) through time and space – undertaken by the two subjects in the image; the *emblemata* then also suggests movement and communal progression that, here, we want to see as undertaken not only by word and image, but also by East and West.

Therefore, the articles gathered in this issue intend to look at different ways words and visual images can interlace and communicate within a variety of contexts and formats. At the same time, their purpose is to encourage reflection on the similarities and differences of the encounter between words and images in different cultures and throughout time. It is not the purpose of the articles, then, to enquire about the dichotomy ‘East/West,’ but rather to look at how ‘word and image’ as ‘East and West’ indicate multiple regions of social, political, cultural, literary and semiotic differences and similarities that are crucial to us and which we must continually study, reinvent and renegotiate. Moreover, the purpose of this special issue is not that of finding fixed solutions and final answers. Drawing on Mitchell once more, the focus of this study “is not to heal the split ... but to see what interests and powers it

²² Mitchell, *Iconology*, pp. 47–48.

serves.”²³ Therefore, the articles aspire to provide a reflection on the way different disciplines – from history of art to ancient history, from literature to cultural studies – as well as different cultures – from Europe to the Middle East and the Asia Pacific – understand and use the relationship between word and image. Discussions therefore focus on the different modalities one medium has interlaced with the other in Western and Eastern cultures.

The articles are varied in their range and intensity of focus. There are, however, common questions across this diversity of perspectives. How do image and text engage with each other to communicate ideologies in different times and places? What is the public or personal function of such an interaction within a specific cultural and historical context? What authority is actually left to the viewer – as in the case of Alciato’s emblems – to decode a particular image-text liaison? In some cases, articles consider how text and image can put into question both Eastern and Western aesthetics in literary works (as analysed by Mark Byron and Dinu Luca in their articles) or the way such a relationship in popular culture can replicate and subvert pervasive East/West dichotomies (as discussed by Rebecca Suter).

Contributions are, only indicatively, grouped into three sections that explore the relationship of collaboration – and in a few cases of competition – between word and image within, respectively, historical, literary and cultural contexts.

The first section focuses on the power, authority and agency of the word or the image, or iconotext, within specific historical periods, schools or groups. We start from the case of the destruction of images during the Byzantine Empire in favour of an aniconic pictorial abstraction, and move towards the collaboration of word and image in Persian epigraphy or in carved inscriptions and images in stone during medieval China. We conclude this section by moving to the other extreme: an exploration of the authority of the image as exegesis in mid-tenth century Chinese books.

The second section gathers articles studying the text-and-image encounter in literary works and covers mostly individual authors or artists. This part also considers texts and images that did not cohabit in a single space but have communal characteristics and reflect each other. This is the case of the illustrations by Japanese artist Takehisa Yumeji and writer Sata Ineko. Two contributions will discuss the way Eastern and Western aesthetics combine through written language and visual images, as in the case of Athanasius Kircher’s travel journal or Ezra Pound’s poetry. This section closes with a discussion of the controversial idea of ekphrasis in a number of diverse works:

²³ Mitchell, *The Language of Images*, p. 44.

the Greek Progymnasmata, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's Laocoon essay, and the modernist authors, Claude Simon and Peter Weiss.

The final section gathers articles focusing on the narrative power of images as well as on the presence of words in visual images as narrative strategy. Here the encounter between the visual and the textual is generally seen as functioning as a display of cultural hegemony – as in impressive fourteenth-century Japanese handscrolls – or as an expression of popular culture where issues of gender and self-representation are also at stake, as in the late Edo *Tōkaidō gojūsan tsui*, or the Japanese girls' comics with their combination of experimental visual-verbal techniques and exoticisation of Western culture, up to the genre of graphic memoir with its representational shifts in either the verbal or visual track.

To conclude, we would like to add one final reflection on the East/West polarity as a one-sided concern as a way to further contextualise this collection of articles. The old aphorism, *ex Oriente lux* ('light from the East'), implies that not only the sun but also culture rises in the East, then passes to the West. According to this heliodromic theory,²⁴ human history began in Asia and then settled in Europe, where it climaxed with help from reason and individual freedom, or so we like to think.

With Alexander the Great, however, history changed course. The West began to push eastwards, reaching the Indus and present-day Afghanistan, and intensifying cultural exchange. Though early on such reciprocity occurred only sporadically, it eventually grew common. India, for example, has enjoyed relations with Europe for millennia; though initially indirect and intermittent, by the sixteenth century these interactions had become fairly regular. On the other hand, China, which referred to itself as the 'country of the middle,' existed in isolation. Europeans eventually forced it to open to Western goods and ideas.

Extensive contact between East and West grew primarily from European migration, which began with fifteenth- and sixteenth-century exploration of western Asia, and continued along the Pacific coast in the two centuries that followed. Within this period, European states and private enterprises took possession of the Americas, Africa, key parts of Asia and, finally, Australia. Ironically, in the last century, the shift of world hegemony from Europe to the United States and Asia, and particularly China and India, appears to have confirmed the heliodromic doctrine.

²⁴ Antonello Gerbi, *The Dispute of the New World: The History of a Polemic, 1750-1900*, trans. Jeremy Moyle, (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010 [1955]), pp. 136-141.

In this configuration, Australia holds a very special position, overlooking the East while retaining roots in the West. Australia is the world of yesterday looking at tomorrow. Yet in order to embrace the future, it must welcome the Asian influx, which will undoubtedly and significantly change its character.²⁵ Australia is the place where the encounter between scholars from around the world gathered to discuss and exchange ideas on word and image, East and West, on the occasion of an international Symposium held at the University of Sydney on 28-29 October 2011.²⁶ Alciato's *emblema*, again, can be used to symbolise the mutual help and scholarly conversation across disciplinary and geographical borders from which the present special issue of *Literature & Aesthetics* originates.

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²⁵ These reflections build on an unpublished inaugural lecture delivered on 15 April 2011 by Remo Bodei at the 'Far West: Ideas beyond Borders' conference held at the Australian National University Centre for European Studies.

²⁶ The Symposium was organized by Giorgia Alù and Francesco Borghesi of the Department of Italian Studies, The University of Sydney. It was generously supported by the China Studies Centre (The University of Sydney), as well as by the School of Languages and Cultures, the Power Institute and the School of Letters, Art, and Media (The University of Sydney), and the China Research Centre (University of Technology, Sydney). It was also kindly supported by IAWIS-International Association of Word and Image Studies.