

Mason Tung: *Variorum Edition of Alciato*.

For this emblem and its English translation on the *Alciato at Glasgow* website, click [here](#).

Emblem 156.

1534	70	1577	511
1547	68	1583	506
1551	168	1621	661
1567	(193)		

In formosam fato præreptam.

Cur¹ puerum Mors ausa dolis es carpere Amorem?²
Tela tua ut³ iaceret,⁴ dum propria esse putat.⁵

Textual Variants

¹21]CVR ²67]amorem? 77,83,21]Amorem, ³47,51,67,77,83,21]vt ⁴51,67]iaceret:
⁵77,83,21]putat?

Commentary

PICTURE variant: The design in 34 at first glance seems to be but an enlargement of the background scene in the previous emblem. What is barely visible as to what Death is doing in the background is now enlarged in the foreground. Death, in order to deceive Cupid, is removing arrows from the sleeping Cupid and putting his own into the latter's quiver, a design illustrating perfectly the text of this emblem. If this is correct, then the background scene in the previous emblem failed to illustrate its own text. The relevant portion of that text is as follows: "They [Death and Cupid] turned aside together, and slept beside each other that night," and after explaining that both at this time was blind, "for each took the other's heedless arrows," obviously the next morning. From the background scene, it seems obvious that Death woke up before Cupid did and decided to leave first. How could he mistake Cupid's arrows for his own if Cupid was still wearing his own quiver. Although the design of 34 clearly illustrates the text of this emblem, that Death is perpetrating a willful deception, the same cannot be said of that in 47, where Cupid is no longer sleeping but is awake. He is not only awake but raises his right hand in protest against what Death is doing to his quiver, either removing his arrows or putting Death's arrows into it, while Death threatens him with his uplifted right hand, which holds something that looks like a weapon. This scene can hardly represent a deception and thus makes no sense of the text. Adding a beautiful girl's corpse to the scene in 51 and 67 does not resolve the discrepancy between the text and the picture. The switching of the cuts of these two emblems in 77 and 83 only intensifies the mystery. 21 returns to the motif of a sleeping Cupid, but shows Death walking away with Cupid's bow, arrow, and quiver, and leaving behind his scythe and hourglass. How can this design satisfy the question at the end of the text, "so that he [Cupid] shot your arrows, thinking they were his own" since Death left no arrows of his own but the scythe and hourglass? More study of the divergent textual traditions behind the pictorial designs of these two emblems is clearly needed.

Emblem 156.	In formosam fato praereptam.	Death steals arrows from the sleeping Cupid.
		
1531 (nonexistent).	1534, p. 70.	1546 (nonexistent).
		
1547, n. 66, p. 68.	1551, p. 168.	1567, n. 193, p. 193.
		
1577, n. 155.	1583, n. 155, p. 506.	1621, n. 156.