The Gardeners' Scene as a Parergic Device in Shakespeare's *Richard II*

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The English reception of an *impresa* or a device was well established by the end of the sixteenth century as the surviving examples of Shakespeare and other writers indicate (Young 4). For example, Shakespeare received 44 shillings in gold for the composition of the Earl of Rutland's *impresa* in 1613. Other courtiers sought advice and assistance in such matters from poets and scholars as did Sir Robert and Sir Henry Rich from Ben Jonson, as did the second Earl of Essex from Francis Bacon, and as did Sir Robert Cecil possibly from Sir John Davies. Furthermore, John Donne was involved in the choice of an *impresa* of James Hay, later Doncaster and Earl of Carlisle (Höltgen, 88-9).[1] *Imprese*, developed mainly in Italy and France, were quite popular among European courtiers, because they could communicate without words especially on the occasion of tournaments. A tournament or triumph was the most splendid occasion in which one's *impresa* was displayed. We find a good example in Shakespeare's *Pericles* where he introduces six *imprese* for six knights. Pericles, who has no squire of his own, carries his *impresa* himself at the triumph to celebrate Thaiza's birthday in 2.2. The motto, "In hac spe vivo" [In this hope I live] with the picture of "a withered branch, that's only green at top" (II. 2. 43-44) implies his personal situation at the moment.[2] *Impresa* in Italian was often conflated with "devise" or "device" in England. For example, George Puttenham, in his *The Art of Poesie* (1589) lumped them all together under the one term "device".

> This may suffice for devices, a term which includes Puttenham and also includes all those other terms: liveries, cognizances, emblems, enseigns and imprese. (103)

However, the word "device" means not only a personal *impresa* but a theatrical representation on the occasion of a tournament or triumph. At a royal tournament, a courtier must choose carefully whole garments and accessories for his horse and squires at his appearance, and "device" can refer to such a theatrical presentation. A device was also made on the occasion of a triumph and a court entertainment such as a masque according to their purposes. One of the most popular triumphs, King James's state entry on 15 March 1603, is described fully in Dekker's *The Magnificent Entertainment*. Dekker, as well as Ben Jonson and Harrison, published a detailed report of their own inventions for James's entry to London, which he entitled as "A Divice". He provides a semi-dramatic performance to surprise the King as he approaches the City. "The Divice" was probably performed at the Barres beyond Bishops-gate, the first access to the city, as the first service to James. The Entertainment includes various masque-like celebrations by personified virtues and vices, which are shown around triumphal arches constructed of wood and plaster. The chief designer of all pegmas was Stephen Harrison, the architect and joiner, and Dekker recorded the numbers of joiners, carpenters, turners and sawyers etc., showing us how large-scale these constructions were (Dekker 303). Most of the speeches and performances Dekker included in this Device were not enacted because of the crowds and noise and James's impatience (Parry 4). At the opening of the Device, the Genius of the City in woman's apparel but of ambiguous sex rushes forth from the gate, praising the descendent of Trojan Brutus who unites the two kingdoms of England and Scotland, represented as Saint George and Saint Andrew. At the same time, the Genius refers to Peace who spreads her blessing over the land:

> Soft-handed Peace, so sweetly thrives,
> That Bees in Souldiers helmets build their hives:
> When Ioy a tip-toe stands on Fortune Wheele,
> In silken Robes. (Dekker 255)

Here we can see the popular emblem of Peace, a bee-hive in a helmet. The helmet signifies war, the bees using it as a hive, peace. The emblem of a helmet and bees appeared first in the 1531 printing of Andrea Alciato's emblems, and subsequently in the approximately 200 printings of his emblems in Latin and various vernacular translations. Alciato's emblems must have been printed in tens of thousands of copies. Reproduced in figure 1 is the version by Geffrey Whitney of 1585. Together the helmet and bees suggest that peace abides in the republic after a difficult time of war (Fig. 1).[3] The moralization for this special day which Dekker made in this prelude is quite understandable. James brings peace and prosperity to this land as a "new phoenix" as the title of the arch Dekker invented, "Nova Felix Arabia", suggests. The title is relevant to herald James's entry, because he recreated from Elizabeth's funeral pyre, as it were, a new England (Parry 10) (Fig. 2). The image of the phoenix was commonly applied to Elizabeth, however, the bird from *Arabia Felix*, Arabia the Blest, which was the fertile land of peace in ancient geography, became the symbolic image for James.[4] This device is full of such popular emblematic images, in which the audience could enjoy finding hidden meanings. It is interesting to note that the word device was used to herald King's coming at platforms, galleries and niches of the arch, providing stages on which allegorical figures, musicians and players enact their shows (Höltgen, 137). In addition to proper usage of a device as an *impresa* or a design on a shield, Shakespeare succeeds in creating symbolic theatricality, which represents a theme of the play just like a heraldic device of Dekker. In a similar manner, in *Richard II*, Shakespeare inserts a significant scene which works as if it were a device mounted with allegorical meanings at a triumph: the gardeners' scene (III. 4).

Because the word "emblem" originally meant an inserted or inlaid ornament, the gardeners' scene, placed between Richard's surrender in III. 3 and Bullingbrook's accession in IV. 1, can be discussed in terms of a similar function. Although the scene is short and seems to be marginal, it has a crucial role in the whole play, giving the audience the bird's eye view of the fall of Richard and the

rise of Bullingbrook. It helps to establish the framework of the play, providing the necessary context for understanding the decisive transfer of the power. As an explanatory verse of an emblem can provide an overall frame in which the meaning of the picture can be interpreted, the figurative words of the gardeners in this scene frame the moral design of the whole play. Its function can be compared with that of a *parergon*, one of the terms that has a link with the emblem (Russell 9). *Parerga*, in Pliny's *Natural History*, book 35, are the very small longboats featured in some paintings and the term came to mean an appendage to the main subject. The early emblematists acknowledged the word "emblem" as a kind of *parergon*, which means the detachable ornament craftsmen used, or rhetorical embellishments in literature. For example, one of the important early humanistic emblematists, Johannes Sambucus, refers to the ornamental and explanatory function of *parergon* when he explains what the emblem is: "Quod emblematum, quae fere κατα πάρεργον, operibus pro materiae locique ratione, ornamenti atque varietatis caussa inseruntur, genera sint tria, notum est." [emblems, which are inserted as accessory elements into works where the material and context (commonplaces) call for purposes of ornament and variety, are of three sorts as everyone knows]. The translation derives from Drysdall (114-15).[5] Most emblems place the picture between the motto or *inscriptio* and the text of the *subscriptio*. To give meaning to the picture, emblematists quote traditional works or corpora and often shaping them into new configurations of meaning (Russell 7). The process of their framing text makes it possible to interpret the meaning of the picture to a point. As the *subscriptio* determines the meaning of a picture in an emblem, the gardener's words show us the right angle from which to see the action of the play. As we can interpret the emblem because the accompanying verse contextualizes the meaning of the picture, the metaphoric words of the gardener lead us to see the garden in a specific context. In a sense, the gardeners' words create emblematic images, that function as parerga for the whole action of the play. We shall see that in this sense, the scene can be read as emblematically providing an interpretive context to the play, unlike other devices whose metaphoric function is usually

limited to a specific scene or character.

In *Richard II* a contrast between the fall of Richard and the rise of Bullingbrook can be seen from various visual signs in the play. For example, their contrast can be interpreted in terms of the mechanical turning of Fortune's wheel and the voluntary seizure of *Occasio* or Opportunity.[6] The gardeners' scene also deals with the contrast between the two and displays the inversion of their position by the voice outside the court, without featuring either character. The gardeners first report the unstaged transfer of power from Richard to Bullingbrook (III.4. 87-88); the news is given through their instrumental role as transmitters of letters within broader networks of information exchange (Netzloff 203). The scene opens with Queen's words asking her ladies to "devise here in this garden/ To drive away the heavy thought of care" (1-2). They try to find the way to fight off their feeling of depression, and one of ladies suggests they play a game of bowls. A trio of gardeners enters, and the women decide to hide and eavesdrop. The Queen does not yet know her husband has submitted to Bullingbrook just before this scene, comparing himself with reckless Phaeton (III. 3. 179-180).

The gardeners are unexpectedly well spoken and the gardener's first words indicate his mastery of poetic language and his facility with aphoristic analogy: "Go, bind thou up young dangling apricocks, / Which, like unruly children, make their sire / Stoop with oppression of their prodigal weight." (III.4. 31-34) To the average theatergoer, the apricot would have represented luxury and privilege, as they were relatively uncommon among the general populace (Tigner 87). It needs much labor to grow such a fruit, and its aristocratic image easily reminds us of Green or Busy who indulgingly mislead Richard. They are deservingly executed for their evil deeds as reproached by Bullingbrook in III.1, just as "fast growing sprays / That look too lofty" (34-35) should be cut off to protect fertile branches. Richard's negligence to control such proud noblemen is a cause for his abdication. Shakespeare continues to make the analogy between the cultivation of the garden and the governing of the kingdom: "sea-walled garden" that "is full of weeds, her

fairest flowers chok'd up, / Her fruit-trees all unprun'd, her hedges ruin'd/ Her knots disordered, and her wholesome herbs/ Swarming with caterpillar?" (III.4. 46-49).[7] The garden is the land governed by the gardener who takes care of fruit-trees in proper time lest over-stretched branches should spoil the harvest:

> Lest, being over-proud with sap and blood,
> With too much riches it confound itself;
> Had he done so to great and growing men,
> They might have liv'd to bear and he to taste
> Their fruit of duty. (III. 4. 63-67)

The analogy between a gardener and a governor tells us about the decisive fault of Richard: he neglects "the noisesome weeds" that are "even in our government" (36, 38).[8] If he could have avoided incompetent followers, and have kept a keen eye on his men, he would not have allowed Bullingbrook to take advantage of him. It seems that the most difficult labour for both the gardener and the king is not cultivation but rather extirpation. Especially, pruning is traditionally used to imply a remedy for vice. For example, one of the devices that Queen Mary of Scotland repeatedly used is a vine being pruned with the motto "Virescit vulnere virtus [Virtue flourishes from wounds]". Though this device was originally and essentially religious, the implication of being virtuous should necessarily exclude evil deeds is not irrelevant to Richard's fault.[9] The lack of skill to weed unwanted intruders in the garden is a crucial defect of the incompetent king, as the critical eyes of the gardener make apparent. The image of weeds or weeding, metaphorically linked to good government, either of the private self or of the public state, is quite common in Shakespeare; there are some 20 examples in his plays.[10] The untended garden is used to represent the real state of Richard's England in such a way that the whole description of the garden scene can be regarded as an extended "device" for Richard himself. As this scene lies between the scene of Richard's approval of submission before Flint Castle, Wales and his

deposition scene at Westminster Hall, it signifies the crucial turning point of the action of the play. The image is of Richard no longer representing his kingdom; his majestic display is removed from our memory during this scene. Using a popular analogy between a garden and a state, Shakespeare has inserted here an imaginative emblematic scene. Since a device was made to represent the quality of an individual, we can regard the image of the untended garden as the picture of a device. Hagstrum asserts that the essential quality of devices or *imprese* lies in the complementary and quite inseparable relationship between a motto (words) and a picture (Hagstrum 97). The garden that we see on stage is not merely the garden of York but becomes an allegory of the state accompanied with the text of the gardener's speech. The gardeners' scene functions as a showcase for all the results of Richard's misgovernment. The untened garden that the gardener depicts has relevance to the very theme of the entire play, the transfer of power from Richard to Bullingbrook, illustrative of the fortune of the both characters. In this respect, the scene can be considered as a *parergon*. It is subsidiary, but through it, the essential theme of the play emerges, that is the inversion of fortune and power. Although Shakespeare does not represent the moment of transition on stage, the analogy between the untended garden and Richard's misruled state leads us to acknowledge the inversion of power. Not only working as a device in which Dekker's prologue leads to James's triumphal entry, the garden scene also functions as a parergic device, which articulates Richard's fall and thus anticipates Bullingbrook's triumphal entry.

Notes

1 For the English reception of *impresa* theory and practice, see Michael Bath, *Speaking Pictures: English Emblem Books and Renaissance Culture*, 130-59.

2 Alan Young points out Sidney's influence on Pericles's *impresa* in "A Note on the Tournament Impresas in Pericles," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 36 (1985), 453-56.

3 Bees and their hives may involve political theme in the early modern works of emblems and literature as Dimler discusses. He classifies the topos into four main themes: 1) the sting of the bee; 2) the selfless activity of the bee in making honey and working for the common good; 3) the

nature, structure and activity of the beehive; 4) the bee as a political model in Richard Dimler, "The Bee-topos in the Jesuit Emblem Book: Themes and Contrast", in Alison Adams and Anthony J. Harper (eds.), *The Emblem in Renaissance and Baroque Europe Tradition and Variety: Selected papers of the Glasgow International Emblem Conference 13-17 August, 1990*, 229-46.

4 For one of the detailed discussion of the phoenix imagery associated with Elizabeth, see Francis Yeats, *Astraea*, 58-66. The unique and solitary image of the bird is also naturally applied to the young princess, Elizabeth who marries Frederick, Elector Palatine. For the relationship between phoenix imagery and her, see Parry, *The Golden Age Restor'd*, ch.4.

5 Quoted in Daniel Russell, "Emblems, Frames, and Other Marginalia: Defining the Emblematic" in *Emblematica* vol. 17 (2009), 8.

6 There are several scholars who read the play from the conceptual contrast between the medieval wheel of Fortune, which is associated with Richard, and the Renaissance variant of Fortune, *Occasio*, which represents Bullingbrook; for example, Misako Matsuda, "The Renaissance Concept of Opportunity and *Richard II*" in *Studies in English Literature* (1992), 3-18.

7 The analogy between a gardener and a governor is often found, and one of the possible source for Shakespeare's passage is a medieval poem, *Mum and the Sothsegger,* which includes the very similar wordings to *Richard II*. For more detailed description, see Wilcockson 219-22. I am indebted to Professor Peter M. Daly for pointing out this reference.

8 Russell A. Fraser mentions one of the sixteenth-century homilies, which preaches that a good ruler should learn from the diligence of a good gardener. See *Shakespeare's Poetics: In Relation to King Lear*, 36-37.

9 According to Michael Bath, Mary uses this device with her silver hand bell, the centerpiece of Marian Hangings, and medal or jetton dated 1579. See Bath's *Emblems for a Queen: The Needlework of Mary Queen of Scots*, 60-67.

10 Tigner lists Shakespeare's usages of weeds with the meaning of plants and clothing in her *Literature and the Renaissance Garden from Elizabeth I to Charles II*, 70.

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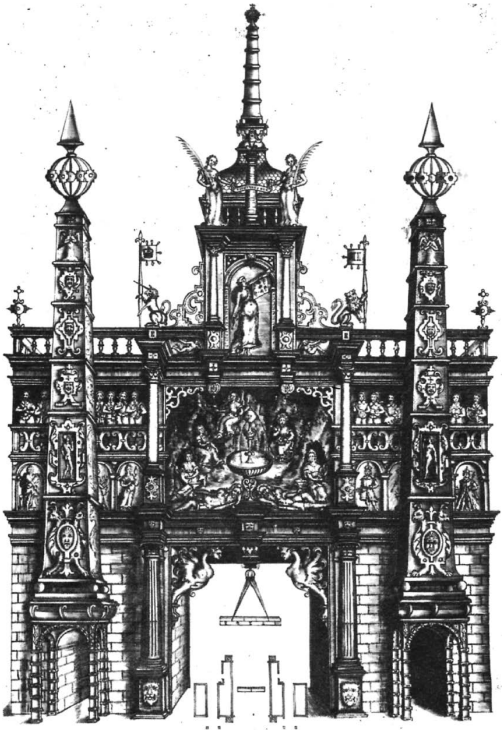
Illustrations



1. The Nova Felix Arabia Arch from Harrison's *Arches of Triumph* (1604)

Ex Bello, pax.

To Hvghe Cholmeley Eſquier.

The helmet ſtronge, that did the head defende,
Beholde, for hyue, the bees in quiet ſeru'd:
And when that warres, with bloodie bloes, had ende.
They, hony wroughte, where ſouldiour was preſeru'd:
Which doth declare, the bleſſed fruites of peace,
How ſweete ſhee is, when mortall warres doe ceaſe.

Pax me certa ducis placidos conuauit in vſus:
Agricolæ nunc ſum, militis ante fui.

De Fabee es enſe, Martialis.

2. Geffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes and Other Devices* (Leiden, 1586), p.138a