

# STRATEGIES FOR THE PAGE AND STRATEGIES FOR THE STAGE, THE INTERPLAY OF IMAGE AND LANGUAGE<sup>1</sup>

ESTRATEGIAS PARA LA PÁGINA Y ESTRATEGIAS PARA EL TABLADO,  
LA INFLUENCIA RECÍPROCA ENTRE LA IMAGEN Y EL LENGUAJE.

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**ABSTRACT:** The present study dwells on certain common features of the strategies followed by emblem books and by drama composed for the stages of the English Renaissance. These features include the expressive as well as the enigmatic dumb show, choric interventions, allegorical tableaux, and the uses of *sententia* in dramatic discourse.

**KEYWORDS:** Shakespeare; Dumb Show; Choric Interventions; Allegorical Tableaux; Sententia or Sententiae.

**RESUMEN:** Este estudio se centra en ciertos rasgos comunes de las estrategias utilizadas en los libros de emblemas y en los dramas concebidos para su representación en los tablados del Renacimiento inglés. Estos rasgos incluyen tanto la pantomima por señas expresiva como la enigmática, las intervenciones del coro, retablos alegóricos, y los usos de sentencias en el discurso dramático.

**PALABRAS CLAVES:** Shakespeare; pantomima por señas; intervenciones del coro; retablos alegóricos; sentencias

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1. This is a revised and augmented version of an article published in *Cahiers Élisabéthains* 29, April 1986, pp. 39-51, under the title «Strategies for the Page and Strategies for the Stage: Some Interludes of Image and Language Basic to the Production of Meaning».
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*For Quentin Beroud who chose the way  
of drama and theatre*

It is tempting to think that the languages of the Western world did not start off as pure phonetic codes but shed on the threshold of recorded time those properly figurative values that may be noted in such ideographical systems as the Egyptian hieroglyphics which captured the imagination of the Renaissance. But such a hypothesis is, so far as we know, unsupported by any kind of evidence, at least where spoken language is concerned. It may more readily apply to written language so long as one turns a blind eye to the possible mimological relationship subsisting between this and the reality designated.<sup>3</sup> Besides, it is known that public speaking resorts to hand rhetoric and the general expressiveness of the body. Gesture (which includes facial expression) and posture have been codified, in the West and other parts of the world, prompted by instinct<sup>4</sup> or set down by tradition and the performing arts,<sup>5</sup> their figurative value thus ranging the gamut of the anthropological and the ethnical. While the general theory on the formation of language as the result of a split between the figurative and the phonetic must at best remain an assumption, history and daily experience witness to the fact that figuration and language are as forcefully attracted to each other as the two halves of Plato's androgyny. Their reunion is sometimes as calculated and ephemeral as are the mating dances of some bird species. Most of the time though, it manifests itself in a stabilised form, as observed in commemorative sculpture (civic, religious, funeral, etc.), coins and medals, painted manuscripts, stained glass windows, tapestry, maps, scrolled paintings, heraldry, some trade signs, historiated or more generally illustrated books, emblem books and calligrams, and in our more recent visual advertisements and comic strips evolved from the illustrated book of yore in its various forms, including almanacs and chapbooks. To this list must be added silent films when they resort to placards and sub-titled films that, whatever the motive of the textual addition, yield the common experience of a text addressing a picture. However, the reunion of figuration and language is revealed to be more intimate and complete in the performing arts ranging from early types of dramatic delivery to the most sophisticated forms of theatre and opera.

It does not lie within the scope of this study to retrace the origins of its two poles: the emblem book and the practice of theatre. Let me simply stress the fact that the development of the emblem book in fifteenth and sixteenth century Europe coincides –very strikingly where England is concerned– with the flourishing of popular dramatic poetry. It is easy to see what elements are shared by theatre and emblem book. Both resort to figuration; both show a taste for aphorism, or else incline to poetic development and strive for moral didacticism; both have recourse to mythology, history and nature. These provide them with the essential references and analogies that the technique of exposition accumulates, amplifies,

3. See Genette G., in particular the chapter entitled «L'écriture en jeu», (1976: 329ff).

4. As evidenced by the two great categories of distal and reflexive gestures making the subject's body the pivot of centrifugal or centripetal forces.

5. On this question, see the analysis of B.L. Joseph, (1951), notably the whole chapter on «All the Parts of an Excellent Orator», with the illustrations included.

or else stylises and condenses along a poetic and rhetorical route frequently taking us from metaphor to metonymy.

The emblem book sometimes advertises itself as a form of home theatre. Thus *Le théâtre des bons engins* by Guillaume de la Perrière (Paris, 1539), translated into English by Thomas Combe c. 1593 as *The Theater of Fine Devices*;<sup>6</sup> thus too *A Theatre for Worldlings*, an English translation published in 1569 of Van der Noot's work (Antwerp, 1568), complete with woodcuts inspired by the originals. Were the book's emblematic orthodoxy better asserted,<sup>7</sup> Geoffrey Whitney's *A Choice of Emblems* (1586) would be robbed of its distinction as the first emblem book designed for England. Little imagination is required to see in the frame surrounding the woodcuts of the emblem book the equivalent of a window opening on a stage. Moreover, narrative emblems are often impatient of the single fixed picture to which they might have been thought restricted. They come close to the effect achieved by the dramatic sequence by splitting the action represented into planes or levels, a technique akin to that of the painter's multiple setting or to that of the medieval stage divided into mansions. The eye can then easily follow the concatenation of essential episodes. Procne's revenge, or Thyestes' banquet are often treated in this manner. The engravings in Whitney, for example, use the device to illustrate the legend of Arion according to Herodotus, (Whitney: 144) [fig. 1]. In the foreground of the picture, one can see the musician with his harp being pushed into the sea. In the background, he is seen riding on the dolphin's back towards the safety of the shore.

The flexible distribution of the printed text in relation to the figure seems occasionally to strive to come close to the experience of dramatic performance. This is my interpretation of the unexceptional inclusion of text in the framed figure, previously assimilated to a staged episode.<sup>8</sup> Whitney's book offers a striking example of this technique for the illustration of the *Dominus vivit et videt* [The Lord lives and sees] apophthegm (p. 229) [fig. 2], showing Adam cowering behind a tree of the Garden of Eden. The presence of God calling out to his creature is manifested in the upper

6. Only two copies of this book survive. 1593 is the approximate date of the copy in the Stirling Maxwell Collection of Glasgow University Library. Another edition was brought out in 1614 by Richard Field, the London printer originating from Stratford-upon-Avon, and responsible for the printing of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594). The surviving copy of this second edition of Combe's translation is in the Huntington Library.
7. See Rosemary Freeman's analysis in *English Emblem Books*, Chatto and Windus (1948: 51-52).
8. For some examples, see the figures reproduced in Green, H. *Shakespeare and the Emblem Writers...*, 366, 384, 392, 398, 450.

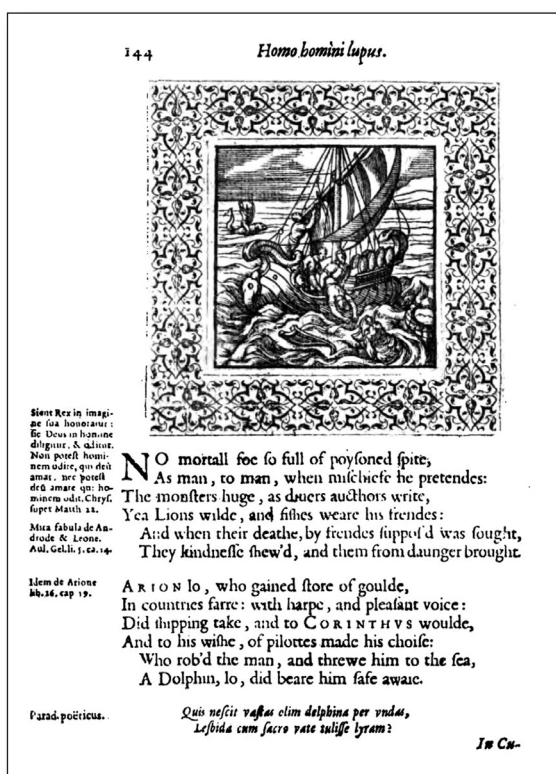


Fig. 1. Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblems* (1586) The Legend of Arion, p. 144, instancing the use of multiple setting.

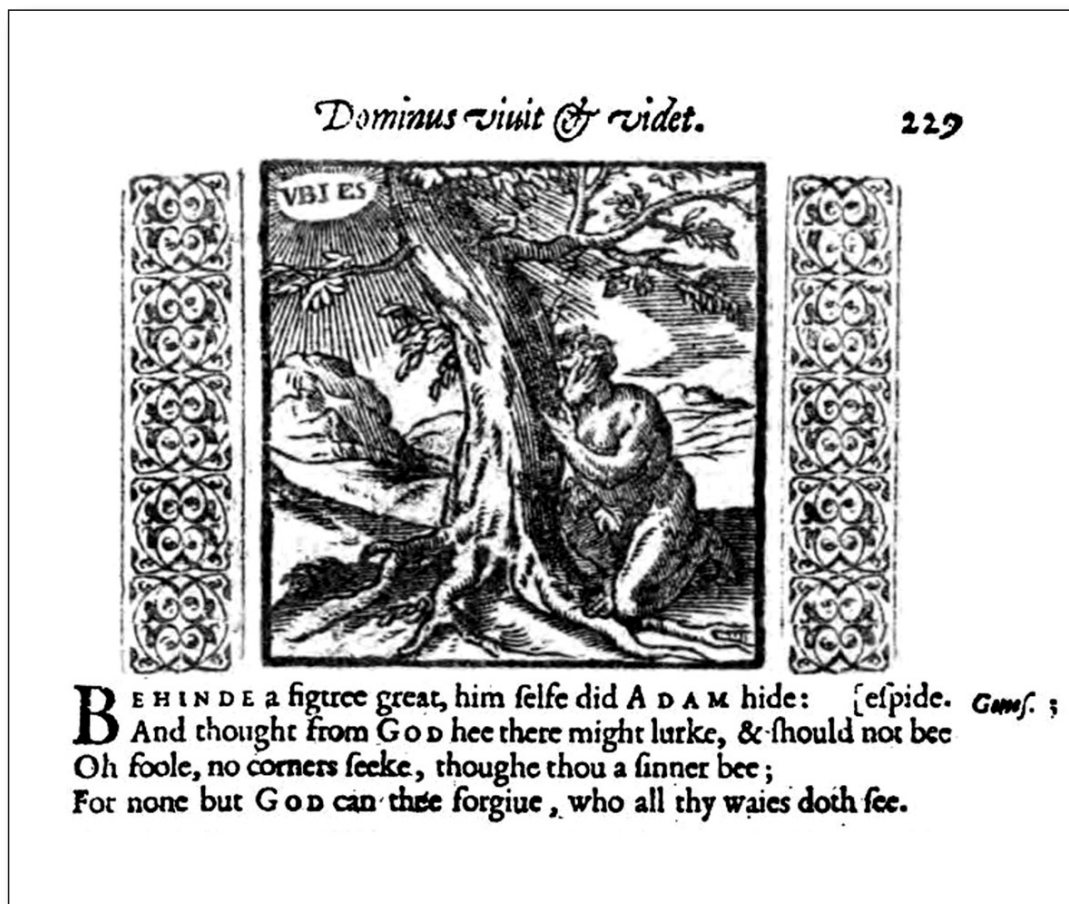


Fig. 2. Whitney: God calling Adam, p. 229: language as persona.

left-hand corner by the words VBI ES [Where art thou?] set within a radiant halo. Here, language breaks into the playing area; print becomes a *persona* of the play, a suitable representation of the founding *Logos*.

Yet, theatre could not be defined merely as a process in which language is simultaneous with and inseparable from the staging of speaking creatures. Dumb shows, for instance, choose to do without speech. The mass, if treated as a spectacle –and it is generally recognised as a main source of medieval drama– is one that did not originally rely on audibility throughout. Puppet plays, when they give up dialogue for commentary by one form of truchman or another (see the famous incident in chapter XXVI of *Don Quixote*), display the kind of discrepancy between language and figuration that is commonly observed in films using voice-off or over. Choric passages in drama are so many pauses between episodes of action and/or dialogue, although the significance of this particular case is greatly limited by the physical demonstration of grief or awe that frequently accompanies such speeches. The actors form a *tableau vivant* on the pageant waggon as it goes from one station to the next to repeat their performance. In this case, pure figuration underlines the caesura in dramatic speech. Masques may point up their discoveries by temporarily renouncing speech and resorting instead to instrumental music. The spoken or sung exchanges are thus complements

of dumb figuration. Lastly, we know that Elizabethan stages kept the spectator up-to-date about changes in the action's location with the help of placards. The written editorial message is included in the space of the stage after the fashion of a scroll in a painting.

No doubt other examples of the theatricality of emblems and of emblemization on stage could be found, as well as other associative or dissociative ways of using text and figuration. The situation is one marked by extreme fluidity and easy interpenetration; strategies for the production of meaning are no more exclusive of one another in the emblem book than they are on the stage. It follows that these similarities are as important to grasp as the differences.

At this point, one must note that the problem tackled here is one heavily encumbered by the manifold orders of signals involved. The present, and possibly definitive incomprehensiveness of theatre semiotics precludes the systematic perception of these signals in their functional complementarity, either successive or simultaneous. It follows that impressionism blights attempts to establish a phenomenology. Yet, short of being adjourned *sine die*, the examination of the question must be turned over to a cautious heuristic. The latter finds encouragement from the classic pronouncement of Horace, *Ut pictura poesis*, the meaning of which, while giving cause for speculation, was popularly glossed in the Renaissance through such maxims as 'Poetry is a speaking picture, and painting a dumb poem'.<sup>9</sup> More recent comfort is provided by Rosemary Freeman's remark on the identity of form and function of the dumb show and the emblematic picture in her standard examination of *English Emblem Books* (p. 15).

Having warned the reader about the limitations of the present study, I wish to dwell on certain common features of the strategies followed by emblem books and by drama composed for the stages of the English Renaissance. These features include the expressive as well as the enigmatic dumb show, choric interventions, allegorical tableaux, and the uses of *sententia* in dramatic discourse.

As part of the advice to the actors, Shakespeare has Hamlet deplore the tendency shown by some plays to 'split the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise' (3.2.10-12).<sup>10</sup> This condemnation of dumb shows is not shared by Sidney who, swift though he is to damn what English drama he has seen on stage, is pleased to exonerate *Gorboduc*, a play that makes very prominent use of such shows. What could lead to this difference of opinion between such connoisseurs as Sidney and Shakespeare –granting that Hamlet is indeed Shakespeare's mouthpiece in this particular instance? First, a difference of temperament and æsthetic education of which one is soon apprised when reading Sidney. But second, and more fundamentally, a difference of time and context. The *Apologie for Poetry*, though not published until 1595, was probably written around 1580, twenty-odd years before *Hamlet*. The major tragedies that Sidney could have seen before his death in 1586 –like *Gorboduc* by Norton and Sackville (1562), *Jocasta* by Gascoigne and Kinwelmershe (1566), *Tancred and Gismund* by Robert Wilmot and others (c.1566)– all used a dumb show to preface each of their acts, and from this point of view at least were comparable. The technique is preserved in *The Misfortunes of Arthur* by Thomas Hughes and others (1588). It is only after this date that dumb shows cease to be

9. So does Amyot in translating Plutarch: «La Poésie est peinture parlante, et la peinture une poésie muette». *Les œuvres morales de Plutarque*, pour Antoine de Harsy, Lyon, 1587, tome 1, chapt. 2 «Comment il faut lire les Poètes», 38.

10. Thompson, A. and Taylor, N. eds. [2006], *Hamlet*, Arden 3, London, Bloomsbury.

introductory material and are integrated in the acts.<sup>11</sup> The way in which, some twelve years later, Marston uses a dumb show to preface three out of the five acts of his *Antonio's Revenge* is clearly –perhaps deliberately– regressive. About the same time, Shakespeare preludes the play-within-the-play in *Hamlet* with a dumb show; it is, together with prosody, lexicon, and style in general, one of the ways he calls upon to make the whole dramatic inset archaic in character. His *Pericles* (c. 1608), on the other hand, resorts to dumb shows embedded in the scenes, their character being expressive and narrative, or else symbolic. Thus it is not, contrary to what John Dover Wilson believed,<sup>12</sup> dumb shows as such that Hamlet criticizes, but the ‘inexplicable’ variety, undiscerningly thrown at the groundlings by dramatists who plug in a dramatic device irrespective of its pertinence, and confuse absurdity with enigma. The integration of dumb shows within the scenes of plays goes unquestioned by Jacobean and Caroline practice which finds in them handy instruments to introduce the supernatural on the stage –a choice heralded by Marlowe in his *Doctor Faustus* (c. 1592) with the apparition of Helen of Troy. Dumb shows are not only decorative interludes, they can make for narrative raciness. They allow the actualization on stage of events occurring in a location remote from the current one (thus for the murders of Isabella and Camillo in John Webster's *The White Devil* (c. 1612), or the materialisation of a dream, as in the case of the Emperor's vision in Act V, scene 1 of Philip Massinger's *The Roman Actor* (1626).

It was necessary to suggest, however briefly, the evolution of dumb shows in English Renaissance Drama, a phenomenon rather neglected until Dieter Mehl's study, *Der Pantomime im der Drama der Shakespearezeit* (1964),<sup>13</sup> before we could focus on points of contact between this dramatic form and the emblem with its strategies. All these share a preoccupation with the production of meaning. Degree zero is a situation in which the emblematic figure in the book and the expressive dumb show on the stage are but the initial blow on whatever needs to be hammered home. The next blow is delivered by the text. We are dealing here with explicit pictures like those used to illustrate *Intestinae similtates* or *Furor et rabies* (Hostilités intestines ou Fureur et rage, Whitney, pp. 7 and 45) which represent the savagery of civil and foreign wars. The poetic commentary supplied strikes one as redundant. This is also the impression we may form at first when confronted with the dramatic inset in *Hamlet*. The murder of the sleeping King and the seduction of his widow by the murderer lie quite within the possibilities of an emblematic woodcut using the multiple-setting technique. Some have explained Claudius' lack of reaction to the provocation of the dumb show by the fact that he would not be watching so superfluous a prolegomenon for a man of his intellectual powers. He would the while be engaged in conversation with Polonius and the Queen.<sup>14</sup> Many productions of *Hamlet* follow this clue. The explicit synoptic figuration of the argument prefixed to the poem or the play is but a cautious approach on the part of a dramatist

11. See the Chronological Table of ... Plays Including Dumb Shows appended below.

12. «‘inexplicable dumb shows’: This express condemnation of Dumb-shows must not be held responsible for the Dumb-show that follows.» *Hamlet*, ed. J. Dover Wilson, The New Cambridge Shakespeare, Cambridge U.P. (1969 [1934]), p. 196. Harold Jenkins, in his edition of the play for the Arden Shakespeare (series 2, 1982), quotes Thomas Heywood's deprecation of dumb shows in IV.1 of his masque, *Love's Mistress* (1634), as a parallel, and overlooking the epithet ‘inexplicable’, as does Dover Wilson, goes on to comment: «In dumb-shows Shakespeare not uncharacteristically mocks what he is going to supply» (p. 288, note 12).

13. Translated into English as *The Elizabethan Dumb Show*, Methuen (London, 1965). The author establishes the parallel between dumb shows and emblems, and mentions the difficulty in spotting sources.

14. So John Dover Wilson, who supplies the following stage direction for the passage: «Hamlet seems troubled and casts glances at the King and Queen as the show goes forward; they continue in talk with Polonius throughout» (op. cit. p. 70). One must concede that it is not until the middle of the play-within-the-play's performance that Claudius asks ‘Have you heard the argument? Is there no offence in't?’ (3.2.226-7).

or emblem writer holding none too generous a notion of his audience's lights. Again, productions that seek to achieve a much-needed condensation of *Hamlet* by removing either the dumb show or the play-within-the-play proper bear witness to a feeling of redundancy.

A closer look at Shakespeare's practice in *Hamlet* reveals that it is nearly patterned on the tripartite structure of the emblem. The *sententia* is produced as early as the end of Act 2: '[...] murder, though it have no tongue, will speak / With most miraculous organ' (2.2.528-9), a variant developed from the phrase «murder will out» (c. 1300). The dumb show provides a clear icon to fit the general statement, and the play-within-the-play proper, with the murder of Gonzago, a particular illustration of the general law whose commentary has already been made by Hamlet (2.2.523ff: 'I have heard / That guilty creatures sitting at a play [...]').<sup>15</sup> It must be confessed though, that in its overall dynamics the dramatic inset exceeds by far the possibilities of the emblem book. The dumb show retrieves from dramatic limbo and actualizes on stage the villainous offence which sets the revenge in motion: the murder of King Hamlet by Claudius and the seducing of Gertrude. The staging of Gonzago's murder by his *nephew* Lucianus looks forward to Hamlet's revenge on his uncle Claudius. It is this that triggers the terror and the wrath that Claudius might well have checked during the staging of the dumb show. When looking at picture and commentary on the one hand, dumb show and *Murder of Gonzago* on the other, the redundancy that I initially highlighted is not as complete or mechanical as it seemed to be at first.

Plays older than Shakespeare's *Hamlet* also yield interesting evidence when we look at the preludes provided by their dumb shows. Out of the four founding tragedies of the English stage, *Gorboduc*, *Jocasta*, *Tancred and Gismund*, and *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, whose every act is preceded by a dumb show, *Gorboduc* offers the most significant case. Two of its dumb shows are allegorical and enigmatic: first, wild men try in vain «both severally and together» to break a bundle of small sticks. «At the length, one of them pulled out one of the sticks, and brake it: and the rest plucking out all the other sticks, one after the other, did easily break them, the same being severed; which being conjoined, they had before attempted in vain» (Prelude to Act I). Secondly, a king refuses the cup of transparent glass held out by an old man, and accepts the poisoned cup of gold offered by a young man (Prelude to Act II). One dumb show is allegorical and explicit: the three Furies drive before them a band of notorious infanticides who have been delivered into their hands (Prelude to Act IV). The two remaining dumb shows are simply expressive, and premonitory, of course, like the others. A company of mourners passes thrice about the stage (Prelude to Act III). And, lastly, armed men enter the stage in battle order and fire a volley (Prelude to Act V). The play makes use of all the modes and styles appertaining to the category of the narrative emblem: allegorical figuration, whether mythological or natural, enigmatic, expressive, or explicit.

One category of emblems however does not find an equivalent in these dramatic preludes. It is the emblem resorting to a purely symbolical objective representation or to a graphic and artistic code, like the divine hand pulling a sash attached to the prow of a ship surmounting the earthly globe, the emblem of Drake's circumnavigation symbolizing divine help, (*Auxilio divino*, Whitney: 203). Illustrating the same category, we find the shirt hanging across an erect lance, intended as a sobering *memento mori* for princes devoured by ambition while they were alive (Whitney: 86). We shall see that equivalents can be found elsewhere in drama. With the exception of the explicit prelude to Act IV, the authors of *Gorboduc* thus present the spectators with a challenge at the beginning of the other acts. After that, let

15. *Hamlet*, ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, Arden 3 series, Bloomsbury (London, 2006).

them discover the key to the meaning of the dumb show in the following episodes of the play. The strategy of the enigmatic emblem is different. Just as the commentary following the picture in the emblem book leads the reader to invest in retrospect the desired sense in the figure, so does the unfolding of the Act conduct the spectator to an understanding of the dumb show. Should the audience's intellectual powers fail them, the vigilant dramatists come to the rescue. The choric close of each Act (Eubulus serves as Chorus at the end of Act V) is very clearly a *reditus ad propositum*. A single example of this mode of explication will suffice to illustrate the point. Here is how the fable of the six wild men and their faggot is elucidated at the end of Act I:

The strength that knit by fast accord in one,  
 Against all foreign power of mighty foes,  
 Could of itself defend itself alone,  
 Disjoined once, the former force doth lose.  
 The sticks, that sunder'd brake so soon in twain,  
 In fagot bound attempted were in vain.  
 (Chorus, I.446-51)<sup>16</sup>

This comes very close to the maxim «United, we conquer» which, had it been prefixed to the figuration, would have deprived it of its enigmatic appeal.

There is a possibility that the first, and possibly the second dumb show of *Gorboduc*,<sup>17</sup> find inspiration from Gilles Corrozet's emblem book *Hécatomgraphie* (1540). The latter presents at least interesting analogues. Figure 31 in this work bears the prefix «Amytié entre les frères» (Friendship amongst brothers), [fig. 3] and shows three characters of whom the eldest (most probably the father figure) in the centre is vainly trying to break a sheaf of arrows, while two young men, on either side, easily bend and snap on their knee a single arrow. The quatrain appended to the picture is hardly more explicit than was the prefix:

16. *Gorboduc, or Ferrex and Porrex*, ed. I.B. Cauthen, Regents Renaissance Drama Series, [1970], London, Edward Arnold.

17. The second dumb show of the king who refuses the transparent healthy cup to accept the cup of gold filled with deadly poison may be inspired by, or at least comes close to the poetic commentary appended to figure 11 of *Hécatomgraphie*, entitled «Liesse et tristesse» [Mirth and Sadness]:

<p><i>Juppiter, Dieu qui les haultz cieulx gouverne          En son celier tient publique tavern,          A tous venantz par les mains de fortune,          Qui donne à boire à chascun et chascune,          En verres clers, en tasses et vaisseaulx,          Deux vins divers, les différens tonneaulx,          L'un est claret, pétillant, vigoureux,          Joyeux et bon, friant et savoureux,          Et ce vin là par un valet bien gent,          Se tire en potz qui sont d'or &amp; d'argent.          Le second vin est trouble &amp; esventé,          Gras &amp; pesant, tout aigre &amp; tout gasté,          Meslé de lie, estonné de tonnerre,          Tiré dedans aucuns vieux potz de terre.</i></p>	<p><i>High Jove, the Heavens' Almighty ruler          Into a common inn has turned his cellar,          Goddess Fortune to wights resorting there          Hands a drink, man or woman, plain or fair,          In glasses clear, in vessels and in cups          Of one of two wines, kept in separate stoups          The first is a claret, strong and sparkling,          Cheering and good, of rare and choice tasting;          This wine is by a full comely tapster          Drawn into jugs made of gold and silver,          The second wine is both stale and clouded,          Thick and heavy, turnéd sour and wasted,          Mix'd with dregs, thunder-shent beyond repair,          'Tis drawn in old pots of plain earthenware.</i></p>
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(*Hécatomgraphie* de Gilles Corrozet..., 1540. H. Champion, Paris, 1905: 25). My translation, if anything, regularizes the doggerel of the original. Even though the symbolism of materials is treated differently, dumb show and commentary of the emblem share the contrast between a healthy beverage and an evil one, transparent vessels and opaque ones, in the context of a choice expressive of Fortune or Destiny.



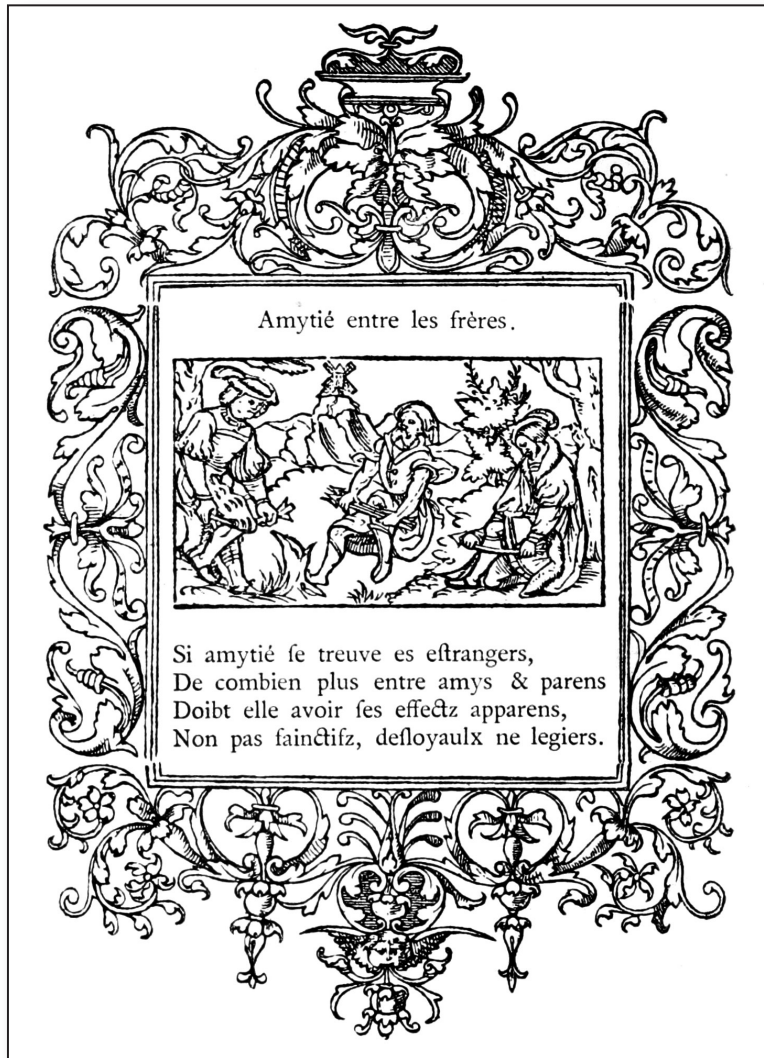


Fig. 3. Gilles Corrozet, *Hecatographie* (1540); a source for the first dumb show of *Gorboduc*?

Si amytié se treuve es estrangiers,  
De combien plus entre amys & parens  
Doibt elle avoir ses effectz apparens  
Non pas fainctifs, desloyaulx ne legiers

If even strangers friendship helps assemble  
Friends and kinsmen the more it should avail  
And there be seen vividly to prevail  
Not in vain shows ne fickle to dissemble.

It is left to the commentary on the opposite page of the 1540 volume (H. Champion: 67) to spell out the meaning of the figure. A father, before his death, wants to demonstrate to his three children that while it is impossible to break what is strongly knit together, dissonance –here, between brothers– entails weakness. Corrozet is as careful as the authors

of *Gorboduc* to maintain an aura of stimulating mystery around his figure in order to make the revelation more dramatic. There is little doubt that this delayed epiphany was a staple device of didactic strategy making the moral lesson memorable. Riddles and enigmas work on those lines. The fable analysed here can ultimately be traced to Æsopus (Fable 86),<sup>18</sup> and it is possible that both Corrozet and Norton and Sackville borrowed the anecdote from Plutarch's moral works where it is a twice-told tale. The more striking version is found in *De garrulitate: Regum and imperatorum apophthegmata*<sup>19</sup> and recounting how Scylurus, king of the Scythians, proved to his eighty children how their strength could not prevail on a sheaf of arrows which, taken individually, could easily be broken. At the same time, Corrozet's book provides a remarkable visualisation of the fable used in the first English tragedy.

To sum up, *Gorboduc* presents five emblematic dumb shows without *sententiæ*, but each is followed by an *exemplum* or particular illustration of the general truth mimed. More in terms of explication is left to the ensuing Act complemented by the sententious comment of the Chorus. This structure, rather homiletic in character, privileges figuration over speech by omitting or deferring the *sententia*. The strategy lays stress on the stage and its virtues that distinguish theatre from the strictly literary genres. The figuration proposes the challenging enigma, and the first movement is to mistrust language, thought more apt to dissipate the mystery than to deepen it. The other tragedies that make systematic use of the emblem –and this is true too of the late *Antonio's Revenge*– keep clear of the technique of choric elucidation, and throw no new light on the kinship between the rhetoric of dumb shows and that of the emblem books. No doubt, the popularity of the two phenomena reflects a widespread appetite for riddles. When meaning is not given but must be achieved, the spectator becomes an active partner in the production of meaning, finding in his own intellectual resources, his education and cultural memory the keys necessary to appropriate the message ahead of the author's final linguistic push.

No play makes so much of ambiguity born from emblematic figuration as Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (1599), if we concede that Calphurnia's dream (2.2.76-91),<sup>20</sup> her vision of Caesar's statue turned into a fountain spouting blood whereto smiling Romans troop to dip their hands, is a verbal vignette followed by a three-line commentary (80-2) that may be summed up as 'It bodes ill, you must not out'. The symbolic picture in the dream coincides with the extremely popular Christianised image of the fountain of youth where regenerating blood pours from the crucified body of Christ. Dozens of paintings and woodcuts on the theme have firmly anchored the scene in the imaginary of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance.<sup>21</sup> It is visual material readily activated by Caesar's account of his wife's vision.

18. Noted by I.B. Cauthen in his edition of *Gorboduc*, Regents Renaissance Drama Series, Edward Arnold (London, 1970). The editor, however, does not mention that the fable and its impact are transmitted by Plutarch whose works prompt some of the most popular translations of the sixteenth century. Likewise, the visualisation of the episode in Corrozet's emblem book goes unremarked.

19. Mentioned in Arthur Henkel and Allbrecht Schöne, *Emblemata...*, J.B. Metzlersche Verlagbuchhandlung, 1967, col. 1513. This study also notes the existence of a similar emblem in M. Claudius Paradinus, *Symbolicæ heroicæ* (Antwerpen, 1563). I have not been able to check this edition of Claude Paradin's *Devises héroïques* which is, anyway, too late to influence the authors of *Gorboduc*. The 1557 Lyons edition of *Devises héroïques* (by Jan de Tournes et Guil. Cazeau) makes use of the emblem in question. Under the *sententia* *Vis nescia vinci* (A Power that Knows No Defeat, p. 185), the unframed figure pictures five arrows formed into a St. Andrew's cross, tips pointing downwards, with serpent coiled around the waist to symbolize prudence. It is plain that the narrative nature of the figure in Corrozet makes it much closer to *Gorboduc's* first dumb show.

20. *Julius Caesar*, ed. David Daniell, Arden 3 series, Bloomsbury (London, 2011 [Thomas Nelson, 1998]).

21. A particularly fine example of this is found in the central panel of the *Triptyque du bain mystique* by Jean Bellegambe (*La Fontaine de Jouvence*), held in the Musée des Beaux Arts at Lille (France). Old men arrive dragging

But can one interpret an emblem rightly when one is under the pressure of political stakes, not to mention personal vanity? The answer is negative, and Decius, who is part of the conspiracy, wins Caesar over with a flattering explication (93-90) that will lead him to the Capitol and his death. Emblems should be read with caution and humility.

The obscurity of some dumb shows' figurative expression occasionally prompts spectators on stage to solicit the help of the Master of the Revels. The two narrative dumb shows in Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (c. 1587), the masque of the three knights and the three kings (I.4), and the dumb show of revenging Hymen (III.15)<sup>22</sup> elicit such pleas:

King: *Hieronimo, this masque contents mine eye,  
Although I sound not well the mystery* (I.4.138-9)

[...]

Andrea: *Awake, Revenge, reveal the mystery* (III.15.29)

The formal difficulty is not only stressed but exaggerated. The dramatist's strategy aims at flattering the spectator who, through his knowledge of domestic and foreign heraldic devices in the first case, of classical mythology in the second, penetrated the sense of the dumb shows better than the distinguished onstage audience.

The previously mentioned difference between dumb shows patterned on the narrative emblem and dumb shows modelled on the symbolical emblem appears distinctly in a play like *Pericles* (1607 or 1608) in which Shakespeare and his collaborator make use of both categories. The dumb shows of Acts II (Chorus *Here have you seen a mighty king...*) and III (Chorus *Now sleep y-slacked hath the rout...*)<sup>23</sup> are but narrative short cuts, the visual counterparts of the condensation implemented through the Chorus. The tenor of these two narrative sequences appears to be quite remote from the emblem tradition. Not so the technique or vehicle used. Its interest is twofold. In the dumb show of Act III, *Pericles* is receiving a letter; this he shows to his father-in-law of whom he takes his leave, and departs accompanied by his wife. It is certain that the dumb show is acted simultaneously with the speech of the Chorus, in an equivalent of the puppeteer interpreting the show. So the first critical interest here is the manifestation of a type of discrepancy between speech and action to which both emblem and theatre may resort. The second benefit is to be found in the clear-cut opposition between the narrative character of the two timesaving dumb shows on the one hand and, on the other, the symbolic nature of the silent parade of the knights holding up their shields to Thaisa before the tournament (II.2.16ff). Whether to call this a masque or a dumb show is a delicate question;<sup>24</sup> fortunately of no great moment here. What matters is to observe how the appearance of the first five champions draws for its effect on the much-valued symbolical tradition of heraldry. The sixth knight, *Pericles*, for his part, does not carry a shield and wears rusty armour. The latter, if properly interpreted, and together

themselves on one side of the fountain of Youth, bathe in the blood of Christ, and emerge rejuvenated on the other side. Bellegambe (Fairleg) signs his painting with a private joke, picturing himself as a fresh-looking monk, lifting a shapely leg, ready to climb into the mystical pool. The while, Christ is looking benevolently at the fountain spouting his blood.

22. Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, ed. Philip Edwards, Revels Plays, Methuen (London, 1959).

23. In the edition by F.D. Hoeniger, Arden 2 series, Methuen (London 1963; K. Deighton ed., 1907). Scenes 10 and 5 respectively in the Oxford Shakespeare edition by S. Wells and G. Taylor (1988).

24. This difficulty of classification is also met in *The Spanish Tragedy* where Kyd calls «masque» the mimed show of the three knights and the three kings (I.4.138) and where the printer indicates «dumme shew» for the mimed sequence of revenging Hymen (III.15.28; 1592 Quarto: *Enter a dumme shew*, sig. I, fol. 2v).

with the device he presents to Thaisa, *A wither'd branch, that's only green at top; The motto, In hac spe vivo* (In this hope I live, II.2.42-3), defines the symbolic auspices under which the main character will fight. The rusty armour, which common sense might take as a sign of guilty negligence (worthy knights keep their armour well-furbished), turns out to be by contrast –as perceived by one spectator– a promise of great fighting spirit, since it is the dust of the lists that is expected to restore the steel to its native shine. This marked antinomy between common sense and a far-fetched symbolism is exemplary. Simonides' remark that 'Opinion's but a fool, that makes us scan / The outward habit by the inward man' (II.2.55-6) encourages one to think that it is the Friar devout (here the bold knight) that makes the cowl holy, and that in accordance with the purest tradition of symbolism the deeper nature of things will always find expression on the surface however curiously or flimsily. Here is the most mannered and hermetic emblem together with its commentary. The hidden *sententia* logically follows from the caricature of a syllogism whose major premise is found in the proverb «A holie Hood makes not a Friar devout» and the minor premise held in Simonides' observation that the outward habit does not help to a knowledge of the inward man; *ergo* it is the man that makes the habit.

Beyond these various ways of producing meaning through which the common resources of the emblem book and the theatre are evidenced, we must look at two complementary phenomena in which stage and dramatic text draw their rhetorical strategy directly from the emblem. These situations, if properly apprehended, can be a notable help in the analysis of a dramatic imagery made complex by the multiple nature of the signs involved, as well as by their elusive manifestation and the ambiguity of their function and status.<sup>25</sup>

One example singled out for its representative value will serve to typify each situation. The first case is that of the tableau staged without comment,<sup>26</sup> but of a clearly emblematic nature and overdetermining the punctual state of affairs described, in that it establishes a link between this and a question of universal import. Take for instance Act 2, scene 2, 172ff of *King Lear* (c. 1606)<sup>27</sup> when Edgar enters showing every possible sign of physical deprivation and moral suffering, hunted down as he is by the men his father, his brother and Cornwall have sent for his capture. His appearance is made in perspective of the figure of Kent asleep in the stocks where tyranny has consigned him.<sup>28</sup> Innocence run to earth with pilloried Honesty in the background. Plot and subplot run together to produce this emblem of Injustice ruling the world. The global effect raises to incomparable power the sum of these two individual plights, ignorant as they are of each other. No comment on stage is needed, but the spectator will more or less consciously project the *sententia* that fits the tab-

25. I have no intention of drawing up here a list of the emblems used in English Renaissance drama complete with their sources. For Shakespeare, the fundamental work remains the study by Henry Green (1870). Much helpful information can be obtained from Rosemary Freeman's (1948) concerning Shakespeare, Jonson, Chapman and Webster. The study by Martha Hester Fleischer (1974) makes many important points (see in particular the introductory essay «The Emblematic Eye»).

26. Characteristically, George Whither, in his *Collection of Emblemes* (1635), uses a dramatic term to designate emblematic figures without *sententia*; he calls them «dumb figures» or «dumb shows». This is noted by Rosemary Freeman (op. cit. 14-15).

27. Foakes, R. ed. [1997]. *King Lear*, Arden series 3, Walton-on-Thames, Thomas Nelson.

28. The combination is unavoidable on the Jacobean stage. Kent, who falls asleep in the stocks at the end of the previous episode (2.2.171), cannot leave the stage unless he is carried out by stage hands in full view of the audience, then quickly brought back in the same way once Edgar has spoken the twenty lines of his soliloquy (172-92). On the modern stage, Edgar is sometimes spot-lit while the rest of the stage, Kent included, is blacked out. The emblematic effect mentioned here is then lost.

leau: *Homo homini lupus est* (Man is to man a wolf). The formulation of this secreted maxim turns the audience into a creative partner of the playwright.

The second case presents the reverse situation. It occurs every time the text heard contains a *sententia* that encourages the spectator to form the associated picture visually lacking on stage. It is the Wheel of Fortune –a popular cultural image and a frequent emblem– that the audience easily project when Edmund, mortally wounded in the final combat of *King Lear*, remarks: ‘The wheel is come full circle: I am here’ (5.3.172). The play’s visual spectrum is thus momentarily enriched by the exercise of memory and imagination as the spectator completes the set and thus collaborates to the management of the stage. These verbal emblems in drama exactly match the emblem books printed without figures to save cost and rely instead on the imagination of the reader guided by *sententia* and commentary. These «naked emblems», to use the name they were given, are clearly described by Rosemary Freeman (1948: 67).

It therefore appears that theatre, like the emblem book, by relying on either figure or text, or both, seeks a creative partnership with the spectator-reader to endow the work with as full a meaning as possible. Emblematic moments abound in drama, planted there, consciously or not, by the playwright and proposed to the sagacity and know-how of stage directors, actors and set designers. The whole of the garden scene (3.4) in *Richard II* (c. 1595) is conceived with a moral, emblematic view in mind. It culminates in an allegory contrasting the wise and judicious professional gardener with the foolish and profligate king who neglected the garden of England entrusted to his care:

Gardener. [...] *O, what a pity is it  
That he has not so trimmed and dressed his land  
As we this garden!* [...] *Superfluous branches  
We lop away that bearing boughs may live.  
Had he done so, himself had borne the crown,  
Which waste of idle hours hath quite thrown down.* (55-66).<sup>29</sup>

Another such moment is offered by the calculated invention by Richard of an impossible deposition ritual supposed to efface the coronation rites. Through this he sets up the usurper in a frozen posture symbolizing his crime and branding him for centuries to come:

[*to Bolingbroke*]  
*Here, cousin, seize the crown. Here cousin  
On this side my hand, and on that side thine.* (4.1.182-4)

The image of the crown held by the legitimate king and seized by the usurper is calculated to immortalize the scandal of the situation. A little later in the scene, the shattering of the mirror that Richard has begged of his enemy likewise aims at emblemizing the frailty of human affairs of which glass is the objective correlative:

Richard. *Is this the face which faced so many follies,  
That was at last outfaced by Bolingbroke?  
A brittle glory shineth in this face —  
As brittle as the glory is the face!* [*Shatters the glass.*]

29. *Richard II*, ed. by Charles Forker, Arden 3 series, Thomson Learning (London, 2002).

*For there it is, cracked in an hundred shivers.  
Mark, silent King, the moral of this sport,  
How soon my sorrow hath destroyed my face.*  
(4.1.283-291)

An added interest of this symbolic episode is its immediate reinterpretation by the usurper –a process not unlike the alternative deciphering of Calphurnia’s dream by Decius in *Julius Caesar*–: ‘The shadow of your sorrow hath destroyed / The shadow of your face’ (292-3). Bolingbroke’s riposte has the concision necessary to annul Richard’s emblematic demonstration.

These are embryonic emblems to be gently coaxed and not ignored in production. The conclusion of Gloucester’s savage treatment in *King Lear* yields another such moment. With his bleeding empty orbits directed at the auditorium filled by people who can see and watch, the victim draws up the moral of his destiny for the benefit of the Old Man eager to assist him: ‘I have no way, and therefore want no eyes: / I stumbled when I saw [...]’ (4.1.20-1). In his ravings, Lear tosses at Gloucester, with inspired accuracy, the name of a mythological figure popular in emblem books and on trade signs: ‘[...] blind Cupid’ (4.6.134).<sup>30</sup> The commentary, with its Providential justification of the metonymy, comes a little later when Edgar remarks to his dying brother, Edmund: ‘The dark and vicious place where thee he got / Cost him his eyes’ (5.3.170-71). Even though the source emblem has been dissevered and its limbs scattered, piecing it together remains a possibility.

That the media examined here, the emblem book and the theatre –whose common denominator is the confrontation of language and image–, should prove so similar in their choice of strategies aiming at a simple, or complex, or ambiguous, or again contradictory effect is hardly surprising. The first steps of English Renaissance tragedy capitalised on the success of the printed emblem whose tripartite set-up submits complex but frozen stimuli where theatre adds the challenge of stage dynamics. To the phenomena of intertextuality that have busily engaged literary criticism, it appears necessary to add the concept of interpictureoriality in order to reach a fuller understanding of both dramatic creation and its reception in production.

## **CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF SELECTED PLAYS INCLUDING DUMB SHOWS (D.S.):**

- 1562, *Gorboduc* (tragedy), Norton and Sackville, 5 d.s. in prelude to the play’s five acts.
- 1566, *Jocasta* (tragedy), Gascoigne and Kinwelmersche, do.
- 1566 (-68), *Tancred and Gismund* (tragedy), R. Wilmot et al., do.
- 1588, *The Misfortunes of Arthur* (tragedy), T. Hughes et al., do.
- 1587 (1582-92), *The Spanish Tragedy*, T. Kyd, integrated d.s.

30. The figure of Cupid (blind or blindfolded) in emblem books is well researched. See Select bibliography. In the already quoted *Hécatomgraphie*, Gilles Corrozet (1540) has an emblem showing Cupid aiming his arrow at Pallas who defends herself successfully with her shield (H. Champion: 28-9). Whitney’s *Choice of Emblemes* (1586) shows Death and Cupid shooting their respective arrows at men (132): *De morte et amore: iocosum* (Of death and love: a tale). Emblem LXXXI in Thomas Combe’s *Theater of Fine Devices* (c. 1593, 1614) shows a blindfolded Cupid grafting a pear tree that will yield through his care «The choking peare of anguish and of grieve».

- 1588, *Endymion* (comedy), J. Lyly, do.  
 c. 1590-1591, *James IV* (history), R. Greene, do.  
 c. 1592 (1588-92), *Doctor Faustus* (tragedy), C. Marlowe, do.  
 1598, *Death of Robert, Earl of Huntingdon* (history), Chettle and Munday, do.  
 1600 (1599-1601), *Antonio's Revenge* (tragedy), J. Marston, 3 d.s. in prelude to three of the play's five acts.  
 c. 1601, *Hamlet* (tragedy), W. Shakespeare, 1 d.s. in prelude to the play-within-the-play.  
 1601, *What You Will* (comedy), J. Marston, integrated d.s.  
 1608 (1606-08), *Pericles* (romance), W. Shakespeare and G. Wilkins, do.  
 1612 (1609-12), *The White Devil* (tragedy), J. Webster, do.  
 1626, *The Roman Actor* (tragedy), P. Massinger, do.

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