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Andreas Gryphius and the Instructive Garden

STEMMING PRIMARILY FROM Humanist and Renaissance influences the garden had evolved in Europe by the mid-sixteenth century to become a focus for the dissemination of knowledge, both scientific and cultural. Therefore, it is not surprising that Andreas Gryphius (1616–1664), a significant seventeenth-century German author of tragedies, comedies, lyrical poetry and festival plays, chose a garden as the setting for one of his festival plays, *Majuma*.¹

To provide a better understanding of Gryphius' choice of the garden setting this paper will first present a brief overview of the history of the Renaissance and Humanist garden and the literary traditions associated with the garden. It will then trace Gryphius' knowledge of the Italian Renaissance garden and the literary traditions that led him to purposefully choose the garden setting for this festival play. It will be seen that the literary garden served two simultaneous functions that coincided with the *raison d'être* for much of Gryphius' other works: to provide entertainment and to present instruction, *prodesse et delectare*. Thus the paper will also examine both Gryphius' didactic concepts within this play and his specific use of the literary garden as the means of transmitting those concepts. As also noted by Strong, "the garden evolves from a series of separate enclosed emblematic tableaux ..."² Therefore, this paper also examines Gryphius' emblematic use of the garden setting to transmit his beliefs and ideas. Through such an examination of the specific use of the garden by a major German author, our understanding of the role of the garden in seventeenth-century literature is broadened.

It is worthwhile, I believe, to begin this study by retracing briefly the development of the Humanist and Renaissance garden. The historical background on Renaissance gardens presented here is based on Roy Strong's *The Renaissance Garden in England*. In Italy the creation of the Renaissance and Humanist garden had its roots with Pliny the Younger and also with Gian Battista Alberti. Pliny the Younger and

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¹ Gryphius was the author of two festival plays: *Majuma* (1653) and *Piastus* (1660) Festival plays fall within the genre of occasional poetry. Occasional poetry was a very popular genre in the seventeenth century. Members of the court, as well as members of the community at large, would commission an occasional piece to be written for a special occasion, such as a wedding, birthday, or their return from travels. Seventeenth-century authors were familiar with this genre and could write these works very quickly, sometimes relying on ready-made templates. According to Gerald Gillespie, *Garden and Labyrinth of Time*, Germanic Studies in America 56 (New York: Lang, 1988) 303, the roots of the festival play are to be found in antiquity or mythology. The hierarchy, ceremony, palaces, and gardens of aristocratic circles dominated seventeenth-century society and were viewed as reflecting the life of the Gods. Therefore, through their association with mythical figures of the past within festival plays, princes gained strength and representational character. (as discussed in J.R. Mulryne, introduction, "Early Modern European Festivals — Politics and Performance, Event and Record," *Court Festivals of the European Renaissance*, ed. J.R. Mulryne and Elizabeth Goldring (Hants: Ashgate, 2002), 5.

As discussed by Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly in "Early Modern European Festivals — Politics and Performance, Event and Record," *Court Festivals of the European Renaissance*, ed. J.R. Mulryne and Elizabeth Goldring (Hants: Ashgate, 2002) 19–23, festival plays served a number of functions. They were sent as official records to other courts. Festival plays also commemorated history and provided a permanent written record that would "outwit mortality." They aided the understanding of the festival, acted as a substitute for those who could not be present, and became souvenirs for those who were present. Festival plays also served as official propaganda, showing how mighty and splendid the prince was. Festival plays were also designed to strengthen the relationship of the prince to the people. According to Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, the spectacles invented at court often had as their theme the bringing of order out of chaos. For additional information concerning these two festival plays, see Dietrich Walter Jöns, "Majuma, Piastus," *Die Dramen des Andreas Gryphius*, ed. Gerhard Kaiser (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1968).

² Roy Strong, *The Renaissance Garden in England* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1998), 11.

Alberti studied and defined the concept of the villa and that of the garden as an extension of the villa. As Strong notes,

The garden becomes a fantasy world of escape where box sculpture fulfills the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid.³

In 1499, Francesco Colonna published his work *Hypnocrumatachia* in Venice in which he designs the garden as “a place for fantasy about the classical world ...”⁴ Colonna also wrote of, and showed, the “clipped trees” in geometric or figurative shapes. These represented a revival of the antique *ars topiaria*. They represented a major step towards the recognition of the garden “as a medium of allegory...”⁵ By 1540, the allegorical programs that had already been applied to the interiors of villas and palaces now were applied to the garden.

Thus, aristocrats, and even middle-class citizens, began decorating their gardens with antique statues as a means of displaying their humanist learning. Starting in the 1540s new statues were being commissioned to represent a definite symbolic program, such as, for example, Giorgio Vasari’s account of plans for the Medici garden. This garden is an allegory of the city of Florence and its surroundings. Gardens began to assume a definite symbolic function. As Strong also notes,

In addition to its medieval meaning of earthly paradise, by the mid-sixteenth century the garden had become the location for solitary meditation and for philosophical discussion. It was the setting for feasts and entertainments. It could be an open-air museum of antique sculpture, a horticultural encyclopedia, a center for botanical and medical research and a source for moral instruction. The garden evolved into a series of separate yet interconnected intellectual and physical experiences which required the mental and physical co-operation of the visitor as he moved through them.⁶

Application of this concept of a garden as a path of learning is found throughout the Renaissance within a literary tradition in which fiction was set in a garden, or labyrinth, through which reflection upon one’s errors led to a personal pathway of discovery and growth.⁷ Thus by the mid-seventeenth century, the instructive literary garden was well established and, therefore, presented an ideal choice to Gryphius as a stage for dramatic presentations.

But why did Gryphius specifically choose a garden as the physical setting for his festival play *Majuma*? We know from the report of Gryphius’ friend and travel companion, Johann Stosch, that during his travels throughout Italy in 1645/1646 Gryphius visited Tusculano and the most beautiful and delightful gardens of Aldobrandini.⁸ Although he does not provide specific details in his report, Stosch does note that he and Gryphius visited a number of other locations within Italy as well.⁹ Therefore, it is quite possible that during his travels Gryphius may have seen other Italian gardens, such as those surrounding Villa D’Este, and learned about the concepts associated with the Humanist and Renaissance gardens of Italy. Strong writes that

The garden was a setting for masques and alfresco entertainments, for philosophical contemplation and melancholy meditation ...The garden had become symbol of pride and expression of the royal and aristocratic magnificence ... a sign that man had conquered the earth, tilled it, planted it and ultimately subjecting it to his will.¹⁰

³ Strong, 15.

⁴ Strong, 17.

⁵ Strong, 17.

⁶ Strong, 20.

⁷ Gerald Gillespie, *Garden and Labyrinth of Time*, Germanic Studies in America 56 (New York: Lang, 1988), 303.

⁸ Fleming, *AG Eine Monographie*, 53.

⁹ Fleming, 56.

¹⁰ Strong, 10.

Thus, these gardens provided the setting for many feasts that symbolized the new civilization created by economic and political stability.¹¹

Since Gryphius wished, through *Majuma*, to celebrate the prospect of a similar stability following the end of the Thirty Year War and to celebrate the coronation of a ruler who would hopefully lead the country back to that wealth, prosperity and economic stability that had been so destroyed by the war, it is not surprising that he chose a garden for the setting of this festival play. However, Gryphius' choice of the garden setting must be seen within a broader context.

Gryphius' knowledge of the Italian Renaissance garden and the literary traditions connected with the garden led him purposefully to choose the setting of the garden as the literary space for this festival performance for more significant reasons. The first is that a garden is expected to serve two simultaneous functions: to provide entertainment and to present instruction, *prodesse et delectare*. As noted earlier, both of these functions form the *raison d'être* for much of Gryphius' *oeuvre*. Although a good garden was expected to include decorative and beautiful plants, it was also to include useful plants, such as rosemary that bloomed in winter and thus symbolizes hope and survival. The Garden of Eden was commonly held up as the model of a good garden where the beautiful coexists in harmony with the useful.¹² Based upon these concepts, it is not surprising that at the beginning of *Majuma*, Gryphius proclaims his intent with this play through the voice of a forest God who says that flower festivals such as "Faunalia," "Floralia," "Majalia" and "Majumas" were held in antiquity to provide people with joy so that they would be inspired throughout the year to yield "better and more useful fruits," thus fulfilling Gryphius' goal of *prodesse et delectare*.¹³

Thus, by situating his play within a garden space, Gryphius allowed this work to symbiotically forge a meaningful visual entertainment with a philosophical presentation of the responsibilities of a good ruler to his people and his country.

In *Majuma*, Gryphius praises Ferdinand not only for the good deeds he has already achieved but also for future ones. Using the emblematic imagery for which he is well known, Gryphius writes that Ferdinand will be decorated with a gold crown and will be led by eight princes to his father's throne. In the play Mercury says that the country blooms again because of Ferdinand's leadership, symbolized by the rising sun. "Itzt blüht die grosse Welt! Weil diese Sonn auffgeht"¹⁴ (*Majuma*, III, ii, ln. 122–

¹¹ Strong, 9.

¹² Margherita Cottone, "Die Bedeutung des Gartens in der Barockzeit: Gartenkunst und Gartenmetaphorik bei J. G. Schottelius", *Germanic Studies in America* 56 (New York: Lang, 1988), 994.

¹³ Andreas Gryphius, *Majuma*, ed. Marian Szyrocki and Hugh Powell, vol. 8. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1972). Future references to the text will be made parenthetically, whereby the first entry within the parentheses will be the name or abbreviation of the festival play from where the quote derives followed by act, scene and line numbers. Thus, here *Majuma*, I, i, ln 41–44.

¹⁴ Eagle flies higher, towards the sun: See Juan de Boria, *Empresas Morales*, Prague: Nigrim, 1581, Emblem 6, pg. 7. See Henkel and Schöne, cols. 775–776 where the *pictura* depicts an eagle that is flying towards the sun. The motto is: "Das Alte abgelegt" (The old has been shed). The translated *subscriptio* reads: "Der Trieb der Natur hat allen Thieren die Begierde seiner Erhaltung eingepflanzt/ und wir sehen keines/ wie gering es auch ist/ welches sich nicht zu erhalten und zu vermehren trachte. Der Mensch ist hierinnen am aller nachlässigsten weil mehr seinen Begierden folgt als der rechten Vernunft gehorsamet. Welcher zwar/ so er den andern Weg erwählen/ und seiner Erhaltung wahrnehmen wolte/ kein besser Mittel seiner Dauerhaftigkeit finden könnte/ als so er sich selbst/ mit ablegen des alten zu erneuern/bemüht wäre/ wie von dem Adler gesagt wird/ dass er so hoch und nahe an die Sonne fliege/ dass sie ihn mit ihren Strahlen verbrenne und die Federn versengte/ mit welchen er hernach sich ins Wasser tauchte und also neue Federn und Kräfte bekäme. Solches wird uns auch wiederfahren so wir uns bemühen werden/ unserer Sonne der Gerechtigkeit zu nähern/ damit sie uns anzünde und erneure. Welches mit diesem Sinnbild des Adlers/ der nach der Sonnen fleucht/ und der Überschrift: Das Alte abgelegt/ angedeutet wird." (The drive of nature has implanted into all animals the desire to keep themselves alive and we do not see any which do not want to keep themselves alive and reproduce themselves. Man is especially bad since he follows his instincts rather than reason. If he chose the other way in an effort to keep himself and ensure his continuity, he could put aside the old and renew himself. This is what they say about the eagle that it flies so closely to the sun that it burns the eagle with its hot rays and singes its feathers so that it will fly into the water to rejuvenate his feathers. This will happen to us too, when we strive to get closer to the sun of justice so that this may light us and renew us. This is meant by the emblem of the eagle that flies towards the sun and with the title: the old one is put aside).

123). Gryphius writes that Ferdinand has inherited from his ancestors the wish for peace and intelligence which will help him to rule. “FERDINAND des Vatern’ Fried / was die Ahnen glid auf glid (Klug im Herrschen /...) Auff dich Stammen: Wachs und mehr / FERDINAND / sich noch so sehr!” (*Majuma*, Reyen after III, ii, ln. 140–145). Therefore, it is clear that Gryphius believes that one of a ruler’s principle responsibilities is to work to ensure the prosperity of his country. By setting this festival play in the garden Gryphius underscores that the country’s expectations from its impending ruler, Ferdinand III, is a renewal of civilization, created by economic and political stability.¹⁵

The added responsibility of the ruler to ensure peace is embodied within the play by Mars, who says that he was born to break and to destroy, to separate the “weeds of humanity” from those who are productive, but that he is also responsible for ultimately guaranteeing peace through war. In the end, he will ensure that the good and virtuous will be rewarded with the eternal crown.

Sanfft sinnigste Göttin / diss muss ich bekennen Wie dass ich geboren zu brechen und brennen / Dass isch erkohren zum Fechten und Rasen ...” (*Majuma*, II, ii, ln. 95–97).

Denckt das ich euch Ruh durch Unruh erhalte / Dass ich der nemesis Straffambt verwalte. Dass ich das Unkraut der menschen aussreute; dass ich Platz mache für redliche Leute; dass ich die kargen Freygiebigkeit lehre / dass ich was tugendreich krön’ und verehere /... dass ich die Kirchen der Götter beschütze; dass ich abbreche was nicht zu viel nütze... (*Majuma*, II, ii, ln. 131–140).

By combining the royal responsibility for peace with the emblematic crown, Gryphius not only highlights the earthly responsibilities of the ruler, but also the reward the ruler will receive for upholding those earthly responsibilities.

In *Majuma*, Gryphius also presents the concept that rulers must strive to understand the suffering of their subjects that is caused by war and to accept their responsibility to serve their subjects by helping them to rebuild after war. In the play, Chloris takes Zephir through her flower garden and laments how her garden has been destroyed by Mars.

O schmerz! Wo ist das Blumenreiche Feld? Meinst du den Ort / auff dem so mancher Held / Den Tod geküsst: das Feld mit Blutt genetzt / Weil Mars die Welt in lichten Brand gesetzt. (*Majuma*, II, i, ln. 25–28).

Here Gryphius clearly uses the image of the garden to represent not only the physical wellbeing resulting from civilized order, but also the intellectual and spiritual attainments of civilization that are damaged by the chaos of war.¹⁶ In the play, Chloris demands revenge for the destruction of her garden, symbolizing the feelings of subjects who have suffered great loss through war. In response, Mercury delivers Mars in handcuffs. Mars, who seems remorseful for the destruction he has caused to the garden, is found guilty, and Pan sentences him to serve Chloris as a slave. Mars must work in her garden and help rebuild it. While working in the garden, Mars, dressed as a gardener, is transformed into an eagle. Mars’ transformation into an eagle emblematically mirrors Ferdinand’s immanent coronation as the Holy Roman Emperor (of the German Nation). Through this fusion of the image of the eagle with that of the gardener Gryphius emblematically connects the responsibilities of a ruler as being both the protector of their subjects and the servant of their subjects in the rebuilding of civilization after war.¹⁷

¹⁵ Strong 9.

¹⁶ Strong 9.

¹⁷ Tending a garden: See Diego de Fajardo Saavedra, *Idea de un Principe Politico Christiano*, Amsterdam: Janson, 1659, Emblem 5. See also Henkel and Schöne, cols. 1243–1244, where the *pictura* depicts a well-tended garden. According to Henkel and Schöne the motto reads: “Durch Ergötzen lehren” (Learning through pleasure). The translated *subscriptio* is: “Die wurtzeln der künsten die einst bitter die Früchte aber süß derowegen unsere Natur entziehet sich von denselbigen; und keine arbeit kompt ihr so schwer vor/ als die/ so sie in dem anfang muss darauff wenden/diess ist der jugendt sehr beschwerlich/und kostet nit wenig schweiss/derowegen aus dieser ursach/ und weil die studia einen steten fleiss erfordern/ welches weder die gesundheit/ noch die hoffgeschäften/ auch die belustigungen nit zulassen/ muss also solches von des Lehrmeisters klugheit ersetzt werden/ allerhand mittel erdencken/ wie er die beschwerlichkeiten die bey der unterrichtung der jugend sich befinden/ also süß mache/ dass er nach und nach/ ungemercket/ wass zu lernen ist/ das fürstlich gemüht fasse...” (The roots of the arts are bitter but the fruits are sweet. That’s why human nature shies away from those. No work is harder than

Gryphius also presents in this festival play the symbiotic relationship between the shared responsibilities of the ruler and ruled. He again turns to emblematic devices in order to highlight this relationship. Gryphius uses the well-established image of the helmet into which bees fly to represent emblematically the concept that all must work together to bring peace and order out of the chaos and destruction caused by war.¹⁸ To indicate that the ruler shares in this group responsibility, Gryphius writes that Mars' weapons changed from murder weapons into useful tools which he used for rebuilding.

Diss ist der Götter Spruch Komt Diener greifft ihn [Mars] an und führt dis Urtheil aus /
dass nimand tadeln kann Die Biene zih hinfort in seinen Sturmhut ein Die Feder-Pusch
mag nun der Vogelschrecken seyn / Der Dolch ist gut / im fall man etwa Bäume ritzt Die
Zäune gleiche macht / und junge Reben schnitzt. Das Schwert taug nicht vor uns (*Majuma*,
III, i, ln. 17).

Similarly, although it will be Emperor Ferdinand's duty to use the sword which he will receive to protect his subjects, it will also be his duty, like the duty of Mars in the play, to restore the garden to full bloom — to ensure that the country will soon be returned to its former glory and prosperity. And, although it may have seemed as though the destruction of war might last forever, earthly life changes — Ferdinand will be crowned emperor and he will rebuild the garden.

Through his use of emblematic devices within the garden setting of *Majuma* Gryphius is able to make clear his belief that monarchs have a sacred obligation not only to protect their subjects from enemies of the kingdom, but also to work with those subjects to ensure the peace and stability afforded through the rebuilding and continuation of civilization.

Gryphius' second reason for choosing a garden setting is perhaps best summarized in Justus Lipsius' *De Constantia* in which Lipsius writes that the garden is the place where one achieves wisdom, "...[der Garten] wird zum Ort, wo man zur Weisheit gelangt."¹⁹ In the second part of *De Constantia*, Lipsius describes the garden of the Belgian humanist Carolus Langius and writes that philosophers should dispute about peace, constancy, and life and death in the gardens:

In den Gärten solt ihr Philosophi von der Ruhe / von der Beständigkeit / vom Leben und
Tod disputieren.²⁰

Gryphius presents his philosophy about precisely these themes within the gardens of his *Majuma*. For example, Gryphius uses a garden rose in *Majuma* to emblematically highlight his theme of the transitoriness of earthly life. Mercury proclaims that Cupid and the other gods are not able to be steadfast and loyal to any nymph because once the physical beauty of a goddess fades, so does the love of the god for her.

the beginning. This is especially difficult for youth and costs them a lot of sweat. Due to this reason and because the studies require a lot of industry and hard work and which does not allow for your health nor court business nor pleasures, it is important that the teacher is clever and he has to come up with all kinds of tools to make teaching the young which is so difficult, sweeter, so that they don't even realize that they are taught how to behave as a prince).

¹⁸ Bees and helmet: See Andreas Alciatus, *Emblematum liber*, Steiner, 1531, C3 b. See also Henkel and Schöne cols. 1489–1499 where the *pictura* depicts a helmet out of which bees are flying. According to Henkel and Schöne the motto reads: "Auss Krieg fried" (Out of war comes peace). The translated *subscriptio* is: "Sich an den Helm den auff hat geführt Der Stoltze Kriegsmann ungejrt Der auch off ist in grosser not Worden bsprengt mit dess Feinds blut rot Der ist jetzt geben den Binen Zu eim Binkorb und Hauss drinnen Sie jre Wab und Honig süß Machen mit fleiss on all verdrüss All Schwert und Waffen seyen weit Und man auch nicht ehe greifft zum streit Dann so man mit keinr andern kunst Erlangen kan den friden sunst." (the proud warrior who often has the enemy's blood on him has given his helmet to the bees so that they can use the helmet to build their house and make their sweet honey industrious. One should leave far away the swords and weapons and should reach for them until peace cannot be achieved any other way).

¹⁹ Cottone 989. Lipsius' *De Constantia* was originally written in 1599 in Latin. Andreas Vitrius translated the work in 1599. A second edition of the translation was published in 1601.

²⁰ Cottone 990.

So gehts! Cupido fleugt und wechselt für und für / Itzt brennt er in der See / bald sucht er
Feur allhier / Wenn er die Götter trifft / steckt auch die Gifft sie an: Dass keener eine
Nymph beständig lieben kann (*Majuma*, I, iii, 8, ln. 49–52).

Mercury compares the beauty of a young goddess to the beauty of a rose in the spring when the rose,
covered with dew is just about to bloom.

Göttinnen! Ach / was ists ihr bleibt der Rosen gleich...[wenn sie] im ersten Frühling
trotzt: Wenn sie den Knopff entschleusst Wenn sie der Perlen Tau anmuttigst übergeusst
(*Majuma*, I, iii, ln. 53, 55–56).

In her youth, a beautiful goddess may be overwhelmed with gods who are vying for her beauty.

Jetzt hat euch der geküst / Jetzt betet der euch an... (*Majuma*, I, iii, ln. 63–64).

Similarly, bees swarm all around young roses that are just beginning to bloom.

Schwermt die bemühte Bien umb ihrer Bletter Pracht (*Majuma*, I, iii, ln. 58).

However, as soon as the heat of the afternoon begins to wilt the rose, and the storm winds begin to
blow away the roses' blooms, all that is left of the beautiful rose is its thorns which are so frightening
that no one, not even a hiker, stops to admire it.

So bald die matte Hitz im Mittag sie bezwingt / Und der geschwinde Sturm von Süden
Nordwärts dringt. Bleibt nur ein Dornen-Pusch / vor dem man sich entsetzt Den auch kein
Wandersman des Anblicks würdig schätzt; So eben ists mit euch (*Majuma*, I, iii, ln. 59–63).

Similarly, the god who adores a goddess today, will not even greet the goddess tomorrow “der morgen
nur nicht grüst” (*Majuma*, I, iii, ln. 64) when her beauty has faded. Clearly Gryphius chose to use the
emblematic rose within the garden setting of *Majuma*, to transmit his philosophical belief that earthly
life is transitory.²¹

That a major seventeenth-century German author chose a garden for the stage setting of a significant
coronation festival play underscores the elevated stature the garden had attained in the literature of the
period. Through its innate ability to provide a pleasant visual entertainment for his audience and its
embedded allegorical and emblematic ability to convey complex themes and beliefs that were at the
heart of Gryphius' didactic message, the garden provided Gryphius with a staging that was as meaningful
as it was entertaining.

²¹ Flowers: The concept of the transitoriness of human life is symbolized by several different flowers. For an
example of the rose see my endnote 21, chapter 2, “The Illustrations for *Catharina von Georgien*,” for the lily,
see Joachim Camerarius, *Symbolorum & Emblematum ex Re Herbaria*, 1590, Emblem 96. See also Henkel and
Schöne, col. 308 entitled “Eintagslilie, verwelkend... (day lily, wilting...)” and “Kürze des Lebens” (Shortness of
life). Here the motto is “Alle nur einen Tag” (All only for a day). The translated *subscriptio*, according to Henkel
and Schöne, is “Dass du in dich aufnehmst: jeder Tag könne der letzte sein...” (May you remember: that every
day could be your last one...) For an example of the “Pfungstrose” (peony), see Joachim Camerarius, *Symbolorum
& Emblematum ex Re Herbaria*, 1590, Emblem 62. See also Henkel and Schöne, col. 305 entitled “Vergänglichkeit
der Schönheit” (transitoriness of beauty). In Henkel and Schöne the motto reads “Vergängliche Lust” (transitoriness
joy). The translated *subscriptio*, according to Henkel and Schöne, is “Wie diese Rose geziert mit hundertfacher
Blüte, schnell dahinwelkt, so fährt der Gestalt und des Lebens ganze Schönheit bald dahin.” (Just like this rose
which is adorned with a hundred blossoms will wilt, so will life's whole beauty disappear.)