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Hafters and crafters : verbal unruliness and the contest for artistic discourse in the english renaissance

David A. Haines

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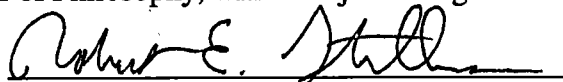
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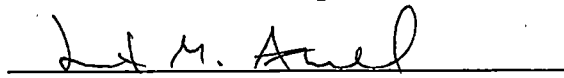
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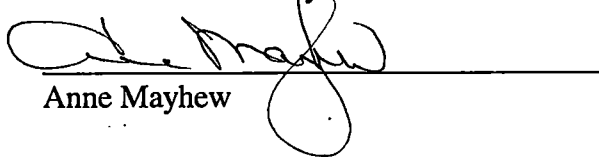
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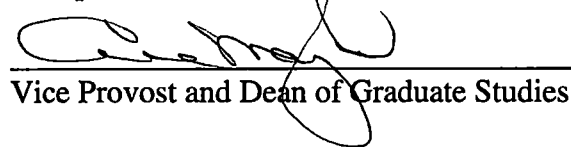
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HAFTERS AND CRAFTERS:
VERBAL UNRULINESS AND THE CONTEST FOR
ARTISTIC DISCOURSE IN
THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

David A. Haines, Jr.
December 2001

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to

Ann V. Miller

and

Paula M. Woods

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABSTRACT

Chapter One argues for the recovery of the word *haft*. An account of the denotative varieties of *haft* provides a way of looking back into an implicit logic of rhetorical practice which has fallen out of use. Chapter Two focuses on two texts by John Skelton which demonstrate the rhetorical texture of "literary" contests: the flyting "Agenst Garnesche" (1514) and the interlude *Magnyfycence* (c. 1515). In the former, Skelton falls to verbal blows with his opponent, Christopher Garnesche, in an effort to exalt his own reputation at court while humiliating Garnesche. In *Magnyfycence*, Skelton enlarges an understanding of *haft* through characters who explicitly claim to be hafters. Chapter Three examines oppositional discourse in the English Renaissance as it appears later in the sixteenth century in Sidney's *Defense of Poesie* and Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie*. As opposed to the ostentatious style and heavy-handed nature of earlier-century flytings, the manner in which authors wage later-century verbal combat is more restrained, and private contests for a reputation as a distinguished poet must be disguised as a public effort to imitate courtly decorum in the form of "poesie." Here, *haft* marks out the places where professional status and style intersect. In Chapter Four, *haft* serves as a means of indicating the aptness of one's ideas about language. Herein the quarrel between Thomas Nashe and Gabriel Harvey is considered as a later sixteenth-century flyting disguised as criticism. This debate helps shape the identity and boundaries of the profession of English literature, setting out the limits of decorum by means of their eristic nature. Chapter Five examines *haft* as a transgression of boundaries via indecorous language of rogues, vagrants, and ruffians in Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*. Just as the actual fair event places a number of the *dramatis personae* in close proximity to rogues

and cut-purses, *Bartholomew Fair* offers playgoers the opportunity to slum in an anti-

pastoral carnival world without risking injury to their own purse or person. The dramatist

benefits from exchanging a performative text with an audience whose admiration fills the

symbolic coffers of Jonson's cultural strongbox.

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Introduction

This dissertation begins with the premise that unruliness is a concept which can be described by means of an analysis of the social conditions under which it is practiced. Just as social conditions change over time, so too will unruliness or, in other words, so too will the idea of what unruliness is. I will be investigating specifically the concept of unruliness in the English Renaissance, roughly from the time of the early Tudors to the Jacobean age. Unruliness provides the essential motivation for literature to develop as a concept and as a professional practice because multiform, combative, "masterless" character traits create a regularized method of obtaining status by means of artistic texts. During this time, artistic discourse was quite a different social phenomenon than it was to become in subsequent centuries, for the material devices used to produce it (e.g., the printing press, paper, ink, binding technology) as well as the social institutions of its existence (e.g., printers, booksellers) and concepts such as "the author" and "patronage" were developing or being substantially altered. In effect, the Renaissance witnesses the conjunction of a multitude of cultural and material objects responsible for the creation of a wholly new social institution of written language. A full, modern account of these forces and of the birth of "literature" is underway with numerous studies of the history of printing and publication, of patronage, and of authorship, just to mention but a few of the elements which unite to create it. Generally, the organization of unruliness as depicted in artistic texts themselves helps explain the rise of literary professionalism in the sixteenth century--where it comes from, what sustains it, and what shapes it. More particularly, an examination of the patterns of oppositional discourse in the later sixteenth century

provides an understanding of why standards of literary excellence need be invoked at all. The particular manifestation of artistic unruliness belongs in the genre of verbal contest, which includes modes such as the flyting and the debate. Often, the purpose of unruliness resembles that of satire, and unruly language bears a relation to billingsgate, beggars' cant, and other sorts of poetic indecorum. However, this dissertation takes rhetorical function to be a defining characteristic, more so than that of literary or stylistic form.

One may justifiably ask why it is necessary to write an account of a mode of artistic texts which appears so marginal to the vast corpus of Renaissance literature. What is distinctive about unruly texts that sets them apart from the others sorts of verbal abuse? Following the suggestion that present accounts of sixteenth-century literature might yet be defective due to the exclusion of hafting, how then does one go about looking for evidence of something unfamiliar with the same maps and tools, from within the same canon of texts and critical models, which are already known so well? How will one discern the foreign in the familiar?

The primary means for resolving these questions in this dissertation is through the recovery of the word *haft*, a viable word throughout the sixteenth century which denotes the use of subtilty or deceit, haggling, caviling, and avoiding agreement. For example, the word is used by the early sixteenth-century poet John Skelton in his interlude entitled *Magnyfycence*. The courtly vice named Clokyd Colusyon proudly boasts

> Double delynge and I be all one;
>
> Craftynge and haftynge contryved is by me.

The action of deception as displayed here with the word "haftynge" certainly has many other synonyms, and the use of this particular word might surely today be considered archaic, if not in fact extinct. The point is not that Skelton mentions courtly duplicity but that he knows a specific name for it, one which is unfamiliar today except to a studied scholar. With that name "haftynge" must have attended an entire body of knowledge concerning the activity itself: representative examples from the past and present, suitable subject matter, adept practitioners, personal taste, etc. In short, the word was "alive" for Skelton in a way that it distinctly is not for us today. Even with a scholar's considerable devotion to the study of the literary culture of the later middle ages, one perforce speculates on practical associations of a particular meter or an individual text and must always remain at a theoretical distance from the object of study. Which is not to say that such an epistemological gap prevents effective or worthwhile study of sixteenth-century literature but merely points out an important condition when making an account of such texts: that our present categorizations of sixteenth-century literature might be defective, not only on account of what we select as worthy of recovery and study but also because there is the potential for missing a practical disposition toward these texts, one which has not been preserved by the words of a text alone, which existed in the habits and lives of sixteenth-century readers.

An old word such as *haft* suggests places to discover old attitudes about language and artistic texts. With the right tools, it is possible that contemporary criticism can come closer than it has heretofore in understanding the ways that texts functioned in the sixteenth century other than to provide aesthetic reflection. The possibility of

discovering old modal distinctions in sixteenth-century literature demands yet another archeological excursion into familiar territory.

In the context of the study of Renaissance texts, hafting represents a conceptual Other of both deed and word. There remains an aesthetic prejudice against texts written before the reign of Elizabeth, epitomized by the criticism of C. S. Lewis, whose label for the early Tudor era as the "drab" period in English literature survives despite a developing interest in early Tudor texts. Disappointingly, these texts are still often posited primarily as places for reading the prehistory of Renaissance England's Golden Age (c. 1580-1620), an attitude which forecloses the considerations of these texts other than as objects of "historical" interest. The conceptual classifications of literary genres are ineffective in detecting and describing hafting because they characterize texts according to the preferences of a period in which hafting constitutes "bad taste." As a result, there is a possibility that critics have not got the full picture of forms and functions of texts in the Renaissance due to a narrowed way of perceiving literature. An account of hafting, then, forces critics to think around received notions of literary taste, to construct a system of rhetorical applications which describe these texts as more than simply doggerel or antiquarian objects. Hafting thinks beyond these bounds as does the word *haft*; both force an expansion of methods of knowing, perceiving, reading, and classifying sixteenth-century texts.

Haft bears witness to sets of distinctions that create professional space and professional competencies. These professional spaces are not new avenues of power and are actually restricted domains. As the sixteenth century progresses, the literary cultural field, which was at one time homologous with--indeed, identical to--that of political

power, combining the monarchy, the nobility, and the full contingent of government in the realm of honor and symbolic power, disintegrates. Through the rise of the monarchy and the nation state, the political field, symbolized in the form of the monarch, "government" becomes more and more distinctly that of the political field, the practices of which are best termed the arts of statehood--politics, legislature, political economy. On the other hand, the aesthetic field that had been symbolized in the old nobility had come to be represented under the title of the poet. In summary, we need to look at verbal contests and instances of oppositional discourse because these practices are situated on the boundary between ruly and unruly discourse. As such, these acts of discourse either fall in or out of acceptability. They are generating potentially useful capital which can then enter the cycle of exchange.

In individual chapters on John Skelton, Thomas Nashe, and Ben Jonson, (Chapters Two, Four, and Five, respectively), I take up the issue of hafting in light of the establishment and exercise of authority in literary communities in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and I will demonstrate how a number of texts variously violate the contemporary norms of literary production, accumulating for these authors both material and symbolic profits against their audiences. In the following investigation of hafting in texts by Skelton, Nashe, and Jonson, I wish to point out that, in spite of all the ways in which their texts seem familiar, the manner in which those texts are understood as making meaning today is estranged from the ways they were once understood to do because the development of the artistic field between cultures differs so radically. It is important then to ground a study of hafting in an understanding of the contemporary state of sixteenth-century literary criticism. Therefore, Chapter Three concerns the

construction of poetic decorum and will treat the burgeoning discipline of literary production from mid-century.

Chapter Two provides a detailed examination of *haft* as it appears in two texts by John Skelton, "Against Garnesche" (1514) and *Magnyfycence* (1520). "Against Garnesche" is a traditional flyting, and the appearances of *haft* here suggest more than general derogation. "Against Garnesche" points to issues of authority in defining limits of acceptable artistic texts. This occasion highlights the intricate linkage of verbal contest and the development of literary texts. This text sets up the practical application of *haft* and provides a grounding of a type of distinction built on artistic texts. In terms of evaluating the hafter's performance, the opponent's critique is mere rhetoric. However, in terms of evaluating the opponent's own performance, the text is valuable in showing what he himself feels to be a violation of proper literary conduct; it shows what he himself does not want to be. I argue specifically that late twentieth-century critics no longer practice the habit of reading a flyting as a commodity in a symbolic economy of practice for which the text can secure positive social status for an author.

In *Magnyfycence*, *haft* describes the disposition of an individual, not simply a physiological description as in the sense of "humors" but also that character's physical location in space and the sociological matrix of the play. This text sets up the theoretical application of *haft*. The focal point of the present study of *Magnyfycence* is the secular nature of the protagonist's social-symbolic status and the attendant uses of wealth to secure and bolster that status.[1] This study of hafting in the early sixteenth century uses

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[1] "Status" here denotes "relative standing in a social group" with no necessary connotation of "elevation."

Skelton's interlude to explicate the means by which symbolic capital is implicated in a secular "marketplace" of social, human relationships. *Magnyfycence* is a theoretical demonstration of the relationship between symbolic capital and hafting. As opposed to a practical application of hafting principles such as the one demonstrated in "Against Garnesche," the interlude manifests the contingencies of non-material, secular capital because it shows what can potentially happen when an individual abuses his wealth. Skelton may have stood to garner both material and non-material capital with *Magnyfycence*, but any such gains are now hard to measure because history has not preserved a clear picture of the immediate social context into which the interlude fits. Thus, *Magnyfycence* is here considered to be a speculative fiction useful for demonstrating the ways in which the sixteenth-century economy of secular symbolic capital operates. In a similar fashion, it is characteristic of the morality genre to signify a character's spiritual status by means of a physical disposition and to demonstrate the debilitating effects of the love of money upon both body and soul.

When critics identify the proverb "measure is treasure" as the fundamental premise of Skelton's interlude, most thereby privilege a wholly moral (i.e., spiritual) reading of the text that leads to examinations in terms of the critical vocabulary of allegory. Granted, economics as a distinct social practice hardly existed in early Tudor governance and was only beginning to be understood apart from the various social aspects of currency, money, and human choices regarding trade and exchange; these subjects were indeed discussed and reasoned about, albeit not as "economics" or as a distinct disciplinary area of knowledge. As this study of *Magnyfycence* seeks to demonstrate, economic behavior in the Renaissance was often undifferentiated from

discussions of social virtue, private morality, and institutionalized spirituality, all of which are expostulated in governmental policies, the national and civic legal codes, sermons, and "literature."

A reading of *Magnyfycence* in light of a concept of excessive use of money as well as words problematizes the issue of artistic distinction and provides a preface to an examination of Renaissance literary criticism by actualizing the rhetorical dynamics of literary critique--who is allowed to participate? on what occasions? for what stakes?

Chapter Three examines two writers traditionally cast as progenitors of Renaissance theory, Sir Philip Sidney and George Puttenham. Both of these writers were intimately connected with the English court and their texts must be read as products of that environment. This is nothing new. But what is remarkable is the mode of artistic composition which is not accounted for by this mode. A regular antagonist is the scholar. There seems to be a consistent style of writing. This is helpful but does not suggest why courtiers oppose scholars. An answer resides in the fighting disposition that is traditionally associated with scholars. Verbal wrangling also typifies the means by which artistic discourse at this time bestows distinction upon writers.

A study of *haft* in the later sixteenth-century involves looking at this peculiar word from three different perspectives, each of which is suggested by Puttenham's divisions of court and school. In one respect, *haft* suggests an ornate, Asiatic, and highly visible display of linguistic competency often typical of poetry produced in Renaissance schools and universities. Scholarly poets suggest the *haft* of excessive display and of rhetorical superfluity. The form of such poetry connotes a "waste" of time simply for the purposes of a personal display of one's mastery of words, tropes, and schemes. The

overly artful poetry of the schools is indicative of a consumption of time without redeeming dignity, *otium sine dignitate*, as it were. On the other hand, *haft* also suggests the actions of those seeking to transgress boundaries. These, then, are the two "vices" an aspiring Court Poet could mistakenly commit when aiming at the golden mean of courtly style: decorum. As such, these two places suggest ways to discriminate good poetry from bad.

The moderate corrective for both of these vices is the decorum of the ideal court poet, whose poetry is performed as an exercise in concealment. The court poet uses the same sorts of rhetorical figures as the practiced scholar and also stands to reap a symbolic profit from practicing his craft well; however, both of these purposes must be concealed and made to seem as if poetry and the title of poet did not matter. In a sense, all the combatants for the title of poet--the courtier, the scholar, and the common poetaster--are hafters; however, the distinctive difference between them is manifested as a concern either to display or to conceal one's art, and only those who conceal their interests in acquiring this title can avoid the epithet of hafter and label their rivals thus.

Almost as if by accident, Puttenham provides a distinguishing feature of court poetry and genuine poets: leisure. This tool, the resource of disposable time, becomes the hallmark of the best court poets of the day like Sidney, Oxford, Greville, Dyer, or Raleigh, not as an explicit, reducible feature of their texts, but as a structuring base which is evident not only in the biographic details of their lives but even in their style, which in turn becomes the prevailing model of decorous poetry. That Puttenham has time on his mind is evident from his swift summary of poetics in the late Classical and middle ages in chapters six through eight of Book One. He belittles the literate monks and clerks of that

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age as "iolly rymers" and states that they were consumed with their abilities to compose "pretie inuentions, "as Puttenham so scornfully labels. By chance, some good rhyming poetry was composed according to quantitative meter so that "[t]he posteritie taking pleasure in this manner of *Simphonie* had <u>leasure</u> as it seemes to deuise many other knackes in their versifying that the auncient and ciuill Poets had not vsed before" (30, emphasis mine). Disposable time underwrites the production of medieval literature so it would seem that the court poet and the scholarly versifier possess the same social position. Yet, Puttenham is intent upon distinguishing rhetorical facility moderately exercised from rhetorical showmanship excessively displayed.

Chapter Four examines the distinction in the artistic field as it is contested among members of the scholarly community. It is unrealistic to conceive of the scholastic field as a unified group of practitioners. Certainly, members there struggled to distinguish themselves from on another. How does one build distinction in this field without resorting to the courtly principles? Furthermore, what advantage is to be gained with the use of an unruly style when to do so obviously contradicts what the ruling poetic voices declare to be "good taste"? In other words, Why potentially expose one's attempts at self-fashioning with a style which flouts moderation when the height of artistic cleverness is defined as the ability to conceal it? Transgressing authorized limits of decorum carries a calculated risk: if one successfully argues for the propriety of his style--that is, if one is able to convince an audience that violation of the rules was warranted--one can nominate oneself as an honorable innovator; alternately, if one is not successful then one stands to be labeled unorthodox--a hafter. This sort of judicial model of self-fashioning is

demonstrated with the trial of Skelton and Scoggin in Thomas Vaughan's *The Golden Fleece.*

The unruliness of verbal contests seems counterintuitive: such forms of printed dueling violated legal (e.g., slander) as well as artistic rules in the later sixteenth century; therefore, a writer wishing to garner a laudable reputation would seemingly avoid using an aggressive style. Yet critical discourse not only existed, it thrived. In light of this phenomenon, I examine Paula Blank's treatment of the prevalence of unruly dialects and their inherent value as counter-examples of decorous language. At the same time the arbiters of decorum generate the definitions of good form, they also draw the outlines of bad form. Although not intending to promote artistic indecorum, the critical dicta produced by texts like Sidney's *Defense* or Puttenham's *Arte* animate the realm of artistic unruliness simply by creating standards of artistic distinction, which are means of assuming tactical positions in society. This is hafting: while watching the conjuror, the observer's purse gets nipped.

Blank's conception of language as money--the activity of "coining" words and phrases--suggests that the enrichment of one dialect must impoverish others. I suggest that this is partly correct. The market of symbolic goods does not operate exactly like the marketplace of material goods--or, at least like a capitalist marketplace. I propose a better way of conceiving of symbolic capital with respect to artistic discourse for the purpose of understanding how a writer in the Renaissance could "afford" to publish texts which featured pronounced unruliness. Unlike material capital, symbolic capital is not "consumed" when it is used; "profit" is not necessarily exacted at an equal cost to another

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subject. Although by no means limitless, symbolic capital does share some attributes of a cornucopia, specifically the notion of copia.

I proceed to examine the importance of rhetorical copia in the Renaissance and the usefulness of amplification, investigating how copia and unruly language of verbal combat in Nashe expand the range of artistic discourse (i.e., the available symbolic capital) by stretching the boundaries of decorous language. The Nashe-Harvey quarrel demonstrates how capital is generated by means of rhetorical copia for the institution of artistic discourse. Nashe and Harvey transgress the limits of decorum in an effort to position themselves as contestants for artistic distinction. Both writers negotiate a position around the boundary between acceptable and objectionable styles. In the context of this war of words, distinction comes to a poet in the form of coining new words and ways of combining words. Pushing the limits of propriety is a process of asserting authority but also of capturing the belief of other members.

In actuality, the Nashe-Harvey quarrel produced two kinds of capital: material and symbolic. Their contest provided the institution of print professionalism with material capital (i.e., texts) which could then be transformed into material profit. On the other hand, their contest also provided the institution of artistic discourse with a bank of idiomatic or otherwise exceptional vocabulary and syntax, and with blatant violations of decorous or acceptable speech--all of which could then be transformed into institutionalized capital in the form of counter examples to the "rules" of decorum. *Haft* is a word for thinking about the positions situated at the boundary between catachresis and metaphor that these violations highlight. In the subsequent chapter, I show how the

methodological and verbal unruliness of Nashe and Harvey's contest become the foundation for the defense of artistic discourse.

Chapter Five examines the intersection of artistic discourse and unruliness as they meet in Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, what would seem a world populated with hafters and crafters. However, I argue that the genuine hafters in *Bartholomew Fair* are actually those who visit the fair, especially those characters who approach with an intention to criticize or denounce the delights of the fair. This dissertation focuses on one such character, Humphrey Wasp, a verbal wrangler and cynic who possesses a humor for criticism and outrageous behavior. Wasp, who seems perfectly suited to engage in the fair's game of linguistic nonsense called vapors, actually looses his tactical advantage on account of his inability to negotiate the proper mode of verbal combat. Wasp's denunciation and brief turn in the stocks demonstrate once again that, even in the very heart of unruliness, there are rules of order.

By means of his depiction of Wasp, I find that Jonson comments on the larger matter of audience reception and critique of his own drama. Jonson very clearly sets forth for his audience the right limits of interaction with *Bartholomew Fair* in the Induction to the play, a document that establishes the obligations attendant upon watching the play based upon the spectator's physical place in the theater. The audience is cast in a significant role in Jonson's conception of the way his play makes meaning; however, the most important player among the spectators is King James I, whom Jonson nominates as the exemplary audience member based not only on his ability to understand the intricate construction of the plot and characters but also on the King's capacity to accept the play as a symbolic gift. Johnson gives *Bartholomew Fair* to James in an effort

to legitimize the unruliness of the poet's dramatic vision, I argue. In so doing, Jonson tests the limits of acceptable unruliness in a new environment removed from political, legal, and religious critique of artistic discourse. He creates a new social space for the production and evaluation of artistic discourse: literature.

CHAPTER ONE

Outlining a Theory of Hafting Practice

I have been ever of this mynde. that I never take hym for a just man /
whose dedes agre not with his wordes.

Robert Whittinton *Vulgaria* (1520)

Concerning *Haft*

John Skelton's dream allegory entitled "The Bowge of Courte" (composed c.

1498) narrates the tribulations of a courtly parvenu named Drede who finds himself

among seven malicious members of the court of Dame Saunce-Pere. Five of these

threatening persons are named after courtly vices: Favell (flattery), Suspycyon, Disdayne,

Dyssymulation, and Disceyte. Their physical characteristics and demeanors clearly

correspond with analogues in previous depictions of sins and vices. Although Skelton

fashions these characters to be his own, by the late fifteenth century their behaviors and

appearances are well-established tropes. The remaining two, Ryote and Harvy Hafter,

are much more idiosyncratic characters. Drede calls Ryote (whose name here denotes

dissipation or extravagance) a "rybaude foule and leude" (414), one who practices

socially transgressive behaviors such as whoremongering and gambling. He has a filthy

mouth, is wholly destitute of health and wealth, and exemplifies a man of Tyburn. Drede

is altogether glad to be rid of Ryote's company.

On the other hand, Harvy Hafter is a light-hearted, jaunty sort of rogue who

approaches Drede "lepynge, lyghte as lynde" (i.e., nimbly) (231) and who only desires

Drede's fellowship in a song or two. He is dressed in a fox-fur robe and has a good

singing voice. He never personally threatens Drede, only encourages him in his quest for

Fortune's favor. However, Drede is initially leery of Harvy, although not on account of his personal wellbeing but rather for the sake of his money: "He gased on me with his gotyshe berde; / Whan I loked on hym, my purse was half aferde" (237-38). As affable as Harvy Hafter seems, Drede's mistrust is soon justified, for immediately after taking his leave of Drede, Harvy is seen conferring with Dysdayne, the two of them plotting to dispose of the courtly newcomer since "[i]t is lyke he wyll stonde in our lyghte!" (305). Like Clokyd Colusyon, another of Skelton's beguiling "hafters" appearing in the interlude *Magnyfycence*, Harvy Hafter is not the man he appears to be.

Twentieth-century readers of "The Bowge of Courte" have no problem perceiving how most of the characters deserve their names even before reading the poem: Disdayne is likely to be haughty, and he is; Disceyte is likely to be deceptive, and he is; Dyssymulation is likely to be two-faced, and indeed he is. And although names like Favell and Ryote may not immediately evoke images of bad behavior, readers can readily discern the specific sorts of transgressions these characters typify once they are seen in action. But in the case of Harvy Hafter readers encounter a character whose name and disposition are a bit of a mystery. In the first place, the only current denotation of "haft" in modern English refers to the handle or hilt or a tool or weapon, which in no way elucidates Harvy's persona. Second, Harvy's jovial yet Janus-faced nature seems to be partially reduplicated in the personae of Dyssymulation, Disceyte, and Ryote. Thus, assuming Skelton means to represent seven distinct courtly vices, it becomes difficult to distinguish Harvy from the rest of his comrades. Alternatively, it is possible that Harvy Hafter represents a particular vice or amalgamation of vices, ones indicative of a "hafter,"

a type of person who would be readily discernible to sixteenth-century readers. But what, then, is a hafter?

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the verb *haft* as meaning "to use subtilty or deceit, to use shifts or dodges; to haggle, cavil; to avoid coming to the point, hold off, hang back." The corresponding substantive *hafter* is thus "a caviller, wrangler, haggler, dodger." The verbal substantive *hafting* is also listed, citing its use in Skelton's *Magnyfycence* (1526). The OED circumscribes the currency of all such denotations of *haft* from 1519 to 1644, after which time this meaning presumably falls out of use.

As in the OED, J. O. Halliwell defines a *hafter* as "a wrangler; a subtle, crafty person." Walter W. Skeat's definition of *hafter* is "a wrangler" and "a cheat, thief," whereas *haft* means "to use shifts, haggle; to cheat," citing Skelton's use of the verb in *Magnyfycence* and "The Bowge of Courte." Finally, Thomas Wright's definition of a *hafter* is virtually identical to Halliwell's. Both Wright and Halliwell record the phrases "loose in the haft" and "by the haft," the former meaning "not quite honest," the latter they simply state is "a common oath."[1]

These definitions of *haft* are consonant with--in fact, almost verbatim restatements of--sixteenth-century denotations and applications of the word. The substantive *hafter* is defined in John Baret's 1573 dictionary of English, Latin, and French as "one that renneth backe and yet will not give over:[2] an overthwarter:[3] a

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[1] Halliwell indicates that *hafter* occurs in Claude Hollyband's *Dictionarie* (1593).

[2] That is, one who retreats but does not surrender.

[3] The verb means "to act in opposition to; to cross, oppose; to hinder, thwart," and the earliest citation in the OED appears in Skelton's "Replycacion." The substantive denotes "an adversary, opponent."

wrangler . . . a cavillour [caviller]." In his *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae et Britannicae* (1565) Thomas Cooper glosses the Latin noun *cavilla*, akin to Baret's term *cavillour*, as "a mocke: a scoffe: an **haftyng** question: a cavill."[4] Subsequently, Cooper defines a *cavillatio* as "a mery taunte: a subtill forged tale: a subtill wrestyng of a false thyng to a purpose: a cavillation." In light of these descriptions, it becomes clearer just what about Harvy makes him a hafter.

In addition to the dictionary entries and Skelton's personifications of hafters, there are several other sixteenth-century texts in which to see this word in action. One is in Philemon Holland's 1603 translation of Livy's *Romane historie* which at one point chronicles a four-day battle between Antiochus and the Romans. On the fifth day, however, when the Romans advanced their artillery to the forefront, Antiochus did not follow suit, a maneuver which left the Romans nonplussed. After consideration in the war counsel, the Romans decided to strike while their soldiers had their fervency for the fight. Observing this, Antiochus decided to move his troops into action: "*Antiochus* likewise supposed it was not expedient to lie off and **haft** any longer, for feare least in refusing still to fight, hee should either abate the courage of his owne men, or encrease the hope of his enemies . . ." (folio Nnnnii). Evidently, Antiochus' strategy here was to confuse his opponent by holding back when he would have been expected to have forged ahead.

This sense of delay is found in the OED definition of *haft* but not in either Cooper's or Baret's definitions. However, Baret's dictionary lists Latin equivalents for English words, and in the definition of *haft* one finds a clue as to the denotation "to hold

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[4] I have placed all instances of *haft* in this section cited from primary texts in bold for easier identification.

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back, hang back." Baret supplies the word *tergiversator* as a Latin equivalent for *hafter*.

Two contemporary foreign-language dictionaries possess entries like *tergiversator*. The

first edition of John Florio's *A Worlde of Wordes* (1598), an Italian-to-English dictionary,

defines the verbal *Tergiversare* as "to turne backe, or ones taile unto, to shrinke from, to

avoide from, . . . Also to **hafte** and by no meanes to come to any reasonable point." The

verbal noun *tergiversatione* Florio translates as "**hafting** . . ." and the substantive

tergiversatore is "he that withdraweth and shrinketh backe and will not holde to a point, a

hafter, a wrangler, a dodger, one that runneth backe and yet will not give over."

Entries for *Tergiversateur* (sb.) and *Tergiverser* (v) in Randle Cotgrave's French-

to-English *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (1611) closely resemble

Florio's and the others'. Cotgrave defines the noun as "[a] flincher, shrinker, starter,[5]

hafter, . . ." The French verb means "[t]o flinch; to shift, slinke, or shrinke back from; to

dodge, paulter, hagle, or **haft**. . . ." Curiously, Erasmus mentions in *De Copia* that

tergiversari , which he defines as "'to shuffle, evade'," is an obsolete word "fallen

completely out of use."

Thomas Tusser provides yet another facet to the word. *A hundreth good pointes*

of husbandrie (1557) is a handbook with proverbial advice for wholesome living,

housekeeping, and farming. The "hundreth good pointes" are divided among twelve

sections according to months as well as sections for Christmas and Easter seasons. In

point sixty, Tusser advises thus: "Spende none but thyne owne, howsoever thou spende: /

nor **haft** not to god ward, for that he doth sende. / Tythe truly for al thing, let pas of the

rest: / the just man his dealinges, god prospereth best." The sense of *haft* here again

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[5] That is, "one who is given to abandoning purposes, one who runs away."

appears to connote a holding back, as with Holland's use, but on a more personal scale with an implication of deceitful stinginess. Thus, by combining the denotations in several sixteenth-century dictionaries with other contemporary texts using the word, we derive a wider range of denotations of *haft*. And although Antiochus' hafting still appears to be something unlike Harvy's, whose again is unlike Tusser's miserly husband, we begin to see a consistent pattern of behavior, one which centers on delusive actions.

Another interesting text makes use of the word *haft* and exemplifies the various denotations noted above. In 1519, William Horman published his version of a Latin grammar book simply entitled, as most texts like it commonly were, *Vulgaria*. Horman's handbook provides over three thousand sentences (which were known as "vulgare") in English with model Latin translations immediately beneath. They are grouped thematically into a wide range of topics (e.g., "Concerning Virtuous and Acceptable Custom," "Concerning the Weaknesses of the Senses," "Concerning Scholastics"). The sentences are, apparently, Horman's own creations, some of the How-do-you-do? variety but others seemingly drawn from vernacular or proverbial sayings. His homespun phrasing somewhat resembles vulgare found in other contemporary grammar books such as Stanbridge's or Whittinton's, the latter's providing a greater percentage of model Latin sentences culled from the pages of classical authors such as Virgil, Salust, and the grammar book sine qua non, Cicero. In this regard, Horman's text provides a fascinating opportunity to observe a unique portion of English culture and ideology--with enough sentences to provide for a lifetime of New Historical epigrammatic introductions--and stands in a long tradition of texts such as commonplace books and "character" studies.

Horman uses a form of *haft* in five different sentences, which, significantly, all appear in the section entitled "Concerning the Vices and Unruly Custom." Here, context provides as much clarification of the word as does its explicit use. For example, the sentence, "He is a **hafter** of kynde" (*Est versutiæ ingenitæ homo.*) in itself provides little to elucidate the meaning of the word; however, its denotation becomes clearer in the context of several surrounding sentences:[6] "He controlled [challenged] my lyvynge and gydynge [business] in the shamfullest fasheon," "These wordes were all uncourtese and full of presumpcion/and disdaynynge," "That was a wyly pageaunt," "Thou hast deceyved and mocked me," and, as something of a corrective to the aforementioned slights, "I kepe never speke or meddyll with hym." These sentences clearly evoke the denotations found in Baret, Cooper, and others who link *haft* to cavils, sophistry, and arguments that "reason subtilly and overthwartly upon woordes" (Cooper *Cavillor*).

Horman's Latin rendering of "hafter,"*versutiæ ingenitæ*, literally translates as "inborn cunning." The verb *verso, -are*, "to keep turning; to bend, shift; to disturb, harass" is cognate with the adverb *versum* (*vorsum*), "back; backward." Through Horman's translation, we again observe the tendency of hafters to misrepresent their intentions or actions through the wily use of words. At issue seems to be more matters of ethical appearances rather than strictly logical truth or falsity, for the effects of hafting as demonstrated here are "shame" and "disdain"--both qualities manifested in or upon the person who falls victim to such deception. Previous instances of hafting behavior bear witness to this: Harvy Hafter, Disdayne, and the five other courtiers ply a plot to

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[6] The sentences quoted here are not sequential in Horman's *Vulgaria*.

eliminate the newcomer Drede, whose steadily rising fortune at court begins to eclipse their own opportunities for advancement. Antiochus' holding back threatens either to disgrace the Roman army by provoking them to an improper attack or to defeat them by lulling them into a false truce.

Now consider two other instances of *haft* in the *Vulgaria*. Horman writes, "A flaterynge **hafter** /is soone espyed of a wyse man" (*Sedulus captator / sapienti facile dephenditur*.) shortly followed by "There is nothynge moore sette by nowe/than subtyle **hafters**" (*Nihil hoc tempore callidis illustrius*.). Both of these appear in the company of sentences such as "Thou arte a chourle," "Thou arte contrarye in thyne owne sayenge," "The prouder thou arte/the more I sette lasse and lasse by the," "Thou hast stayned thyn honeste," and "He was shamfully mocked/whan his subtylte was spyed." All of these vulgare suggest that individuals are not without some degree of defense (through wisdom) or retribution (through denigration of the hafter's own reputation) against hafters.

Again, Horman's Latin interpretation of the particularly English word "hafter" is illustrative of practical connotations behind the use of the word. *Sedulus captator* literally translates into "a busy or officious hound,"[7] a translation evocative of dramatic characters such as Polonius or Zeal-of-the-Land Busy in *Bartholomew Fair*. *Captator* is etymologicaly related to the verb *capto, -are*, "to catch at eagerly; to keep reaching for; to try to catch," as well as the adjective *captivus*, "caught, taken captive," both of which are suggestive of the kind of activity becoming familiarly associated with hafters: catching advantage against an individual through beguilement.

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[7] Here, used in the figurative sense, so that *aurae popularis captator* would be "a publicity hound."

The literal translation of *callidis illustrius* is somewhat more problematic, however, but no less interesting. *Callidus -a -um* is an adjective meaning "expert, skillful; ingenious; clever, shrewd; cunning, crafty, calculating," clearly a word capable of innocuous as well as nocuous connotations. It is related to the noun *calliditas*, "skill, shrewdness; cunning, craft," and the verb *calleo* denoting "to know by experience or practice, to understand; to be thick-skinned; to be experienced, clever, skillful." All of these fall in accord with these present observations of hafters in action, implying that hafting is a technical skill one may practice in contrast with an inherent (i.e., inseparable) aspect of only particularly sinful individuals.

Horman's two other uses of *haft* illustrate yet another sense of the word. The *Vulgaria* reads, "He came forthe with an **haftynge poynte**"(*Cavillio sese ingessit / vel objecit.*) and "This was a subtile and an **haftynge poynt**" (*Astus fuit /et versatilis inenii argumentum.*). A hafting point, then, pertains to shrewd and eristic usage of words in an argument. Most dictionary definitions associate *haft* with flattery and sophistry as do several other sentences in the *Vulgaria*: "Thou arte contrarye in thyne owne sayenge," "Thou ever checkest me with that worde," "He gave curste and styngynge answers," "This was a proude and a presumptuous worde," "I hate this flaterynge speche," and another sentence reminiscent of Polonius, "He is a great mouthed man/a claterar/a chaterar full of wordes: a talkar/a boostar/a crakar. &c." Thus, a hafting point in an argument seems to indicate a holding back of the progress of discussion on the basis of an inconsequential or inappropriate detail, virtually the same thing as the contemporary word "cavil," which is, in fact, the very word Horman uses in the first instance: *Cavillio.* In the second sentence, the words Horman supplies for "hafting point" translate as "an

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argument consisting of an inconstant, always changing character," which is to say, something in the nature of the line of reasoning itself exhibits a cunning ability to remain dynamic.

Additionally, the verbs in the first vulgare, *ingessit* and, as an alternative, *objecit*, clarify the way one employs a hafting point. The former means "to throw in a heap; to hurl, shoot (*weapon*)," and, most appropriate here, "to pour out (*angry words*), heap (*abuse*)." The latter denotes "to throw in the way; to cause (*delay*)" as well as "to fling (*charges, abuse*) at." Both verbs connote an offensive agent, one whose intention is to oppose, hinder, or thwart the opposition. This description coincides quite well with denotations for "overthwart-," used as a substantive synonym for "hafter" in Baret, for the gerundive "overthwarting/hafting" in Florio's definition of *tergiversatione*, and as an adverb in Cooper's definition of *cavillor*: "to reason subtilly and overthwartly upon woordes."

Thus, in a world populated with hafters, one must be on guard so as not to fall victim to them. Yet this is not easy because it is the inclination of hafters to misrepresent reality expertly. Recognizing hafters, however, is only half the battle. Neither the sixteenth- nor the twentieth-century lexicon lacks words describing what a hafter is or does. However, *haft* suggests a slippery disposition between the world of actions and the world of words that now seems only dimly reflected to us in terms such as "hedge," "haggle," "chaffer," "inveigle," or even "cavil." As demonstrated above with the numerous applications of *haft*, none of these connotes quite the same concept to contemporary sensibilities which the word must have possessed in the sixteenth century. However, this etymological survey suggests that *haft* generally pertains to a type of

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disingenuousness, one in which bad deeds are often bound to and concealed by bad words.

The Defense of *Haft*

Despite the variety of its application in the sixteenth century and its obsolescence in the twentieth century, *haft* recommends itself for use in this project for several reasons. First, the word has a strong and active history in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The fact that *haft* is included as a synonym in a number of dictionaries, even once as an entry in its own right, in addition to its appearances in a variety of other texts--for both more and less sophisticated audiences--speaks to a once viable currency and acceptability. The citations of the denotations of *haft* examined here remained in use for approximately 125 years, from its OED *terminus a quo* with Horman's *Vulgaria* in 1519 to its *terminus ad quem* with Thomas Bulwer's *Chirologia* in 1644. A slightly longer period of currency can be reasonably supposed given that Skelton used the word as early as 1498 in "The Bowge of Courte."[8]

So *haft* was clearly an item in the vernacular vocabulary, one people would have used and readily recognized. This being the case, using *haft* in this study makes sense from the standpoint of a modern account of sixteenth-century texts, for, unlike twentieth-century critical terms that accustom Renaissance texts to contemporary epistemologies, *haft* requires readers to reexamine "familiar" texts in light of social and cultural modes of reading that are longer in use. Attempts to reconstruct the experiences of past cultures

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[8] This antedating is noted by Greg Waite.

using theoretical models of complex historical phenomena will inevitably fragment those cultures into artificial perspectives. My aim in the use of *haft* is to avoid such bias as much as possible by using a sixteenth-century word to describe sixteenth-century literary practices.

Furthermore, the necessity of a lengthy yet somewhat inconclusive etymology does not present a reason for doubting the appropriateness of *haft* as a term for contemporary criticism, despite the fact that its definition and usage always remain somewhat unclear. This obvious strangeness is an important feature for Renaissance literary criticism--or of any project attempting to historicize the past--which seeks to avoid errors of a teleological narrative. "An attempt to write a 'pure' literary history," warns Andrew Hadfield, "in the belief that a genre of writing can be isolated, will always be prone to teleological readings" (3). Among other differences of time and space, value is now placed differently upon the uses of texts. In his critique of aesthetic valuation, John Guillory addresses the issue regarding the difficulty late twentieth-century readers have in seeing the practical logic of a once-viable concept like *haft*. Readers are no longer trained to respond to any Renaissance literary text, claims Guillory, in any other context except as "High Art"--whether that text be coined "lyric" or "doggerel" (330). "The fetishizing of such objectified formal relations," remarks Guillory, ". . . effectively suppresses their specificity as relations of contents, which specificity we may designate as the specificity of the aesthetic" (335). That is, matters of style, content, production, etc., which are now aesthetic objects--in the sense that one interacts with them only as objects of theoretical or speculatory consumption--were used at an earlier time for an entirely different social purpose. As I will demonstrate, using an essentially foreign word

like *haft* that constantly calls attention to unfamiliar ways of perceiving words and actions helps to foreground the disparities between early modern and contemporary means of using texts in a way that endeavors to return to Renaissance criticism non-aesthetic modes of reading literary texts.

The sixteenth-century denotations of *haft* implicitly call attention to a strong association between words and actions, both signifying--at least to Renaissance sensibilities--a precise character or disposition. One can readily observe this practical connection at work in grammar books of the early Tudor period. One of the selling points of Horman's *Vulgaria* was its exclusive reliance upon imitation as a pedagogical method for learning Latin. Unlike Whittinton's *Vulgaria*, which prefaces exemplary Latin sentences with a section explicating grammatical rules, Horman's text foregoes all such precepts and immerses the pupil immediately and directly in a practical study of the language through the recitation of everyday sorts of statements. As David Carlson points out, Horman's pedagogy was not really that much different from his fellow educators', despite claims in the Preface distinguishing his grammar on account of its incorporation of the humanistic, New Learning methodology (165). The differences which contribute more significantly to a distinction between Horman and his competitors have to do with a generational conflict between educators and struggles for preferment at the court of Henry VIII, Carlson asserts (167).

I believe Carlson is right in this matter, and in emphasizing the structure of Horman's *Vulgaria* I am not maintaining that his methodology is any more effective than Whittinton's in teaching Latin. Instead, I wish to draw attention to the fact that the way Horman sought to teach Latin through the use of vernacular vocabulary, syntax, and

subject matter makes aspects of sixteenth-century cultural practice more available and perhaps more intelligible to contemporary literary historians in ways which few other texts of the time do or can be made to do. Reading through several pages of the section entitled "Concerning the Vices and Unruly Custom" endows a privileged perspective on the associations and assumptions that an English citizen of the sixteenth century might have intuited between a person who employed subtle reasoning, used bombastic speech, or made a habit of lying and the unmistakable nature of that person. Horman's *Vulgaria* clearly establishes the centrality of language as a marker for distinguishing what might otherwise remain cloaked by a person's actions or appearances. The capacity of the spoken word or printed text for exposing "hafters and crafters" is not new; what makes language interesting in this context is its ability to expose a practical disposition which has heretofore remained cloaked by previous historical constructions of the sixteenth-century literary domain.

The account of a hafting idiom (at best only a theoretical extrapolation from observable features in texts) provides a way of looking back into an implicit logic of practice which has long ago fallen out of use. The sententiae of Horman's sentences contain the local knowledge of reasons why bad people demonstrate their character by means of bad language as well as how someone honest, civil, and clean was fashioned as such by proprietous language. The phenomenon of language as a tool for deliberate self-fashioning becomes even more pronounced with the mid-sixteenth-century standardization and official regulation of English. However, what neither Horman's text nor definitions of *haft* demonstrate explicitly or practically is what hafting language sounded or looked like, who used it, or how to distinguish it from similar modes of

expression. In order to construct a comprehensive model of hafters and hafting language, contemporary Renaissance criticism needs to combine an understanding of the word itself with instances of such individuals in action. Literary texts provide such practical situations, and therein can the practice of hafting best be examined.

Finally, *haft* recommends itself in this study as a metaphor for the sorts of behaviors hafters evince. As stated above, the definition of *haft* clusters around a concept of dissimulation, of behaving as if one were something other than what one really is, or of using language intentionally to misrepresent motivations or actions. And despite attempts to expose hafters or the "real" meaning of *haft*, the thing and the word persistently manage to avoid being pinned down. Consider, for example, the etymological origin of *haft*: the OED suggests (without much conviction) equivalents in any number of Germanic languages, all words denoting fixture or stability. The OED supplies the Old English verb *hæftan* meaning "to bind, fetter; arrest, detain, imprison; condemn," all of which suggest almost the virtual opposite of the practical and theoretical uses of the word in the sixteenth century where, instead of binding or containing meaning, the hafter is in the business of liberating signs from signifiers. Other related Old English words such as *haga* (sb. "hedge, enclosure; fortified enclosure; homestead, house"), *hege* (sb. "hedge, fence"), or *hegian* (v. "to fence in, hedge, enclose") provide adequate explanations of a second substantive and corresponding third verbal denotations of *haft*,[9] but denotations associated with these words appear eighty-one years after the last

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[9] Substantive. "fixed or established place of abode; settled or accustomed pasture-ground"; verb. "to establish in a situation or place of residence, to locate, fix; to accustom (sheep, cattle) to a pasturage."

citation for the meaning of *haft* explored here and do nothing to explain the enigmatic denotative about-face this word makes.

As shown in the brief survey above, vagrancy, like dissimulation, becomes a consistent quality of *haft*: in actions hafters themselves are noted wanderers and interlopers, and their language dislocates--in the sense of either occasion or syntax--word-signs from their customary signifiers. Thus, the shadowy etymology of the word itself resembles its denotative wanderings, a fact which problematizes a precise understanding of what *haft* means but simultaneously enriches a critical account of the ways a hafter makes meaning. The word itself--its undeniable history coupled with its complete absence from present-day vocabularies--serves to estrange the literature of the sixteenth century yet, eventually, also to grant a clearer understanding of it. What *haft* takes away is a fantasy that the past can be theorized clearly and readily understood simply by reading its surviving documents, the assumption being that human experiences are not significantly altered by changes in material conditions: love is still love, war is still war, business is still business. In his study on Rabelais, Bakhtin stresses that the billingsgate and marketplace uses of language exist on a level which confounds modern social sensibilities with its "deep ambivalence" of simultaneous praise and abuse (150). Both a study of *haft* and one which makes use of the word as a critical, theoretical concept confirms Bakhtin's observations, suggesting that, through the existence of a word--one which critics in the late twentieth century longer possess--citizens of the sixteenth century constructed social relations amongst themselves and with material reality in a way that is not quite yet fully grasped. As the objective, textual features which signal the presence of the hafting idiom begin to change over time, the study of

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haft becomes, on the one hand, an inquiry into the causes of its transfiguration and, on the other, an account of how those dispositions formerly responsible for hafting practices are subsequently expressed in literary texts. A study of hafting texts recovers a more complete, because more complex, view of Renaissance literature.

The complexities due to distances in time and culture are real and must be accounted for in any historicization of sixteenth-century literature. A smooth, continuous reading of texts as they move from pre-modern, to early modern, to modern, to contemporary erases all trace of the effects of material culture from history. "[H]istorical reconstruction of 'the old works,'" claims Michael Bristol, "must place struggle, social difference and cultural antagonism at the center of critical analysis, rather than consensus, harmony, and accommodation" (13). Much of the critical work in new historicist and cultural materialist methodologies accounts for the disharmony and difference Bristol mentions. An individual literary text may supply places from which to reconstruct the struggles within sixteenth-century cultures by reading it both as a pronouncement for and against a dominant hegemony. Andrew Hadfield emphasizes this point in his study of sixteenth-century English nationalism and literature, making the case that literary texts can provide "a site of knowledge saturated with ideology and simultaneously a utopian hope of a free, interactive critical space" (10).

Haft, too, affords such a site; its cultural presence, most pronounced in dictionaries and grammar books, can now not be completely contained within the bounds of such texts. Especially in practical instances, *haft* leads a double life of specific denotation and vagrant disposition. Thus, in this study *haft* is both an object of critical examination and a tool for negotiating between denotation and connotation. *Haft*

describes both objective (surface, quantifiable) and subjective (interior, qualitative) components of sixteenth-century texts. It is a term seeking to conjoin the indiscernible disposition of an individual and the readable manifestations of feeling via an author's literary expression. The following sections explicate the manner in which I will subsequently identify and analyze several representative hafting texts.

Flyting, Hafting and the Rhetoric of Blame

Modern Renaissance studies have sought to describe the organization of sixteenth-century English society, from Lovejoy's great chain, to Tillyard's world picture, to Lewis' discarded image. More recently those attempts at describing the ordered (and orderly) operations of sixteenth-century society have themselves been revealed as artificial visions constructed by literary critics' own stakes in describing the functions of Renaissance literature and its value within sixteenth- and seventeenth-century society. Contemporary critiques have exposed the artificial and self-interested nature of literary criticism (both then and now). Historicism, cultural materialism, feminism, gender, and rhetorical criticism have all revealed the structured nature of literary norms and how such evaluative norms are in turn means to a particular kind of power with respect to language and literature.

My project continues in this tradition of unveiling the assumptions which ground a system of evaluation and critique, seeking to discover who stands most to benefit from such systems, when, and why. Behind a phenomenon like Renaissance literary criticism is a struggle among agents to claim authority and symbolic power inherent in language. In order to test this supposition I will examine the uses to which literary makers put

eristic, excessive language as a means of distinguishing themselves from one another. As a critical tool, *haft* is particularly well suited to this task because of the invisible yet very real associations between words and things. Since many of the distinctions at which I will be looking are made on stylistic and quasi-aesthetic grounds centering on the notion of decorum, there are no absolute criteria to which either my own critique or those of the Renaissance can appeal, only relative terms of value, contingent upon an agent's ability to nominate a text as authoritative or as "good."

This dissertation stretches the study of Renaissance literary criticism back to the early decades of the sixteenth century in an attempt to show that the struggle of literary self-fashioning did not suddenly spring up after mid-century as a new anxiety over the value of linguistic and literary power, a task grounded on the assumption that literary criticism in this era is not simply a matter of evaluating texts in light of fixed rules. I will be noting instances of verbal combat, flytings, and debates regarding language. These are suitable places for driving to the heart of matters of decorum and authority for two reasons. First, verbal combat represents a textual, euphemized form of physical combat. Just as flyting is useful as a tool for creating distinction among poets, the tradition of physical combat is the tool *par excellence* for noble classes to organize themselves according to degrees of honor and reputation. Flyting awards status based on the performative capabilities of the participants, yet, simultaneously, it potentially exposes the artificial nature of such performances as being artificial value systems due to the very nature of the verbal contest. An exploration of verbal combat in the sixteenth century will reveal the eristic nature of Renaissance literary criticism and documents the degree

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to which the sixteenth century witnessed a state of "warre," in Hobbes' terms, regarding language and the construction of the field of literature.

Second, many of these texts will use language of abuse, e.g., invective, satire, *ad hominem*, or billingsgate. Such language very much resembles the sort of discourse of the carnivalesque and popular unruliness; however, one must be careful here not to associate the stylistic appearances to the degree that they are understood as manifestations of the same cultural phenomenon or with a single sort of linguistic/textual production. My project focuses on indecorous language in order to expose the arbitrary nature of proprietous language. To this end, *haft* and *hafting* serve as heuristics for thinking about the constructedness of linguistic power and the "rules" for evaluating literary texts. As shown in the previous etymology, the denotation of this word is itself unclear, and this ambiguity resembles the kind of invisible boundary separating a stylistically decorous text from one which is excessive and immoderate. This stylistic relationship is reproduced in the debate between legitimate and illegitimate literary productions. In short, contemporary critics need to think about a word like *haft* because it compels thoughts about the arbitrary, artificial, and invisible limit between "good" and "bad" literature.

As a critical term, *haft* restores to the flyting a capacity to garner status by means of its rhetorical bombast and stylistic flourish because *haft* provides the rhetoric of blame with a term by which to distinguish excessive from moderate flyting. Hafting is a profitable concept for Renaissance literary criticism because it provides a moderate term with which to establish a distinction between licit and illicit literary productions. It allows for a mean, an accepted middle position within the genres of verbal combat. The

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process of licensing literary texts is not primarily concerned with the production of "good" or "bad" literature per se but rather with "good/bad" ways of producing literature and ways of certifying authors. The study of the flyting-hafting duality focuses not simply on arguments about style but on arguments about arguments about style; not just on aesthetic forms but on a process of evaluating such forms in specific social contexts of art, authority, and power.

Without a term to suggest both moderately and excessively composed flytings, this literary genre is commonly understood to be one of mere rhetorical bombast and stylistic superfluity. Flyting, it would appear, lacks an aesthetic purpose other than to suggest an author's self-aggrandizing display of linguistic excess. With the added concept of *hafting*, flyting demonstrates orderliness in what appears to be stylistic chaos. The process of verbal combat becomes a method for acquiring social power, specifically the symbolic power of rhetorically shaped language. From this perspective, hafting vis-a-vis flyting brings to light a purpose in poetic display which has been previously discounted. The rationale behind flyting's eristic tone and its overblown, aggressive use of language emanates not solely from an attempt to appear preposterous but to engage an opponent in a verbal contest in which a superior performance is awarded with an honorable title and status. The pre-Renaissance flyting--much like its physicalized counterparts the joust, tournament, or duel--had been used to determine excellency among warriors, to discern the mettle of an unknown opponent, or to test the soundness of rival spiritual, ethical, or philosophical opinions. In the sixteenth century the flyting begins to be used as a tool that literary makers employ to determine prestige and reputation in the rapidly expanding field of literary production. At this time, more than

ever, the flyting--combat with words--focuses reflexively upon those words themselves. Language is now used not only to determine an issue of martial or political disagreement but also matters of linguistic worthiness as well. That is, words must be used to conduct arguments in which words are themselves the issue at stake.

This contest of words is not strictly a matter of definitions and denotations however. At stake is the power of administration of the English vernacular, and the struggle to define both its uses and misuses as conducted within the field of literature. The negotiation of the vernacular proceeds by means of licensing specific kinds of literary texts that uphold the values--artificial as they might be--of the arbiters of linguistic decorum. Eventually, this project of distinction manifests itself in explicit claims both for and against kinds of literature as they promote or detract from a dominant interpretation of the uses of vernacular English. In other words, a practice of criticism develops in the sixteenth century which holds as its underwriting object of contest the power of language to shape the fortunes of individuals, as well as the nation. Although the flyting as a literary genre becomes increasingly rare toward the close of the sixteenth century, the flyting mode--the combative relationship between rival language masters, poets, and literary makers--remains a salient feature of several authors and texts.

Flyting and hafting are not immutable forms but, rather, relative distinctions resulting from an author's perspective. Often, one finds an agent-author being labeled a hafter by an opponent who mutually strives for a stake in a specific field of power. An evaluation of a flyting (or any sort of literary contest) without a concept such as hafting errs on the side of strict formalism--of critiquing only the self-evident, non-rhetorical aspects of a text. Flyting also serves as an appropriate genre with which to examine the

issue of literary criticism because debates about poetic authority and the poet's rôle in society so often operate like flytings. The flyting-hafting duality provides a useful model for observing a power struggle because of the eristic nature of censorious language, i.e., of the rhetorical exigencies of blame. This is so because flyting is the verbal manifestation of physical combat, the ultimate means of determining status and social order.

The Unruly Language of Flyting and Hafting

When surveying the language of unruly citizens such as the rogues and vagrants in Renaissance literature, one notices striking similarities between the conversations like those of Jonson's Surly in *The Alchemist* and Shakespeare's schoolmaster Holofernes in *Love's Labor's Lost* on the one hand, and between the discourse of the flyting on the other, as well as between the flyting idiom and accounts of canting language in texts like Harmon's *A Caveat or Warening for Commen Cursetors* or the helter skelter rhymes in the poetry of John Skelton. It might at first be tempting to explain these resemblances by means of a "rogue style," one which is generated by an endemic roguish way of knowing, unconsciously transferred from text to text by means of an author's discussion, portrayal, or imitation of real-life unruliness. However, the hypothesis of a quantifiable, consistent rogue style becomes increasingly difficult to maintain as part of a continuing investigation of such language both as used by authors and by personae of sixteenth-century texts. The similarities that first catch the eye and ear appear to be manifestations of deeper associations between sound and sense, ones which arise from the rhetorical

value of words in a social context but which are not solely related on the formal level of style.

The designation "Skeltonic" presents a case in point for distinguishing between a qualitative term like *hafting* and a static genre of unruliness. Skelton's own poems and others like them frequently exhibit many transgressive stylistic characteristics indicative of flyting. In fact, the term "Skeltonic" has virtually fused the poet's reputation with a variety of poetic indecencies pertaining to vices of excess. However, I employ *haft* for the exploration of literary unruliness instead of "Skeltonic" for two reasons. First, Skeltonic--as it is currently defined in critical literature--is too closely tied to the nature of Skelton's own discrete canon of texts. Although many of Skelton's poems exemplify much that is symptomatic of hafting literature, the use of a specific author's name to designate such texts and practices might erroneously imply that this study traces Skelton's reputation or influence through the period. Second, the Skeltonic principally refers to stylistic features which frequently violate poetic decorum, but critical accounts thereof often lack the functional interaction between aesthetic form and social-rhetorical context essential to a concept like hafting. I am interested not only in the unruly language of Renaissance literature, but also in differences in affective qualities of transgressive texts. Such distinctions place a greater emphasis upon *how* a text conveys meaning than upon what a text is about. An author's reputation in combination with the manner in which a text is presented (its affective style) can be as determinate of "meaning" as what is printed/said. All of which is to say, an account of flyting and verbal combat literature relies heavily on a rhetorical understanding of sixteenth-century unruliness within the contexts of author, audience, and society. Thus, stylistic abuses like

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those of the Skeltonic facilitate studying hafting literature by flagging transgressive matrices likely to generate hafting literature. An understanding of *in situ* contexts of authority, power, and ideology produces an account of the labels *haft* and *hafters* as they are employed by authors against their rivals.

Understanding hafting as simply a transgression of literary decorum suggests an imperfect, or at least incomplete, use of this peculiar word. Hence, a more useful focus in a study of literary unruliness is the genealogy of transgressive stylistics itself in the Renaissance. Furthermore, an equally important point of consideration is an author's rationale for writing in such a manner. Why, for instance, would an author willingly flout norms of decorum knowing the possible repercussions to his reputation? What benefit or use could such violations provide? Clearly there must be more to flyting than highly stylized poetry or eristic prose since literary unruliness garners no merit as an end of its own, according to the precepts of most sixteenth-century literary treatises.

During the sixteenth century, the title "poet" and the honor accumulating around the cult of the Renaissance author became increasingly contested as the material and symbolic status of poets and dramatists rose. One finds that the distinction between flyting and hafting so prevalent in the early decades of the sixteenth century and which is typified in several of Skelton's texts prefigures this anxiety regarding mere poetasters posing as true poets, concerns which continue to inform later sixteenth-century debates regarding literary excellence. As a heuristic, then, *haft* suggests the stakes over the title "poet" by providing a negative exemplar. This negative image of the Renaissance poet helps clarify both the positive model of authorship and the line between these two classes. Since these two categories are not absolute but instead relative, their contents

and forms change through time as different agents influence the field with arguments about the nature of poetic and literary language. A majority of this activity is conducted using eristic language and is concentrated around a mode of combat, contention, abuse, and blame, for these had been traditional modes by which to acquire honor--jousts, tournaments, displays of strength, and armed conflicts. And the victor reaped spoils: trophies, titles, reputations, prestige--a range of material and symbolic rewards. In the study of verbal contests in the Renaissance, the prize constitutes the title of poet, but this alone does not describe everything about the struggle. For instance, how was such a verbal contest conducted? What were the means of combat? How was victory determined? These are the more difficult questions for which this dissertation will suggest answers by looking at some texts in which a contest of this sort takes place.

CHAPTER TWO

Early Sixteenth-Century Hafting:
The Case of John Skelton

> *Skelton* a sharpe Satirist, but with more rayling and scoffery then
> became a Poet Lawreat, such among the Greekes were called *Pantomimi,*
> with us Buffons, altogether applying their wits to Scurrillities and other
> ridiculous matters.
> George Puttenham *The Arte of English Poesie*, I.xxxi

Contemporary anthologies[1] and critical surveys of sixteenth-century poetry[2]

increasingly include John Skelton as a relevant voice in English literature of the early

Henrician decades. Although more recent critical accounts of the Skeltonic canon do

well to divorce their conceptualization of the poet from former notions of his status as a

Janus figure, Skelton and his texts are still often conceived as a bridge between late

medieval and Renaissance literary sensibilities.[3] Not only are his poems used to fill a

void of nearly one hundred and fifty years in English literary history but his persona has

become a convenient totem for describing a nation in transition between royal families,

political and religious systems, and economic modes of production. For the most part,

this bifurcation is not viewed as a problem to be resolved; in fact, it is seen as a way of

justifying the study of Skelton and the "drab" literary and social milieu of which he is a

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[1] Anthologies that provide a number of Skelton's poems include those edited by Sylvester, Gardner, Tydeman, Taylor and Hall.

[2] Berdan's is an older but classic study of Skelton and the early Henrician. For more recent investigations, see Guy, Herman, Fox, and Fox and Guy.

[3] The Janus metaphor is reiterated in all the major modern biographies: Carpenter, Edwards, Gordon, Nelson, and Pollet

part. The fact that he might provide a missing link in the genealogical record of English literature between Chaucer and Sidney constitutes the best reason for studying his texts at all, most would argue.[4]

What room, then, does this perception leave for a critic who wants to examine Skelton without merely writing an epilogue to the middle ages or a preface to the Renaissance? How does one begin to discuss his poems without reference to one literary era or the other? And, even if Skelton's dualism is justifiably a component of his œuvre, how does this stylistic individuality, which is often posited as one of his saving graces, help one understand Skelton in his own time? What end does it serve to designate him a group of one? In so doing, one eliminates comparisons of his poems with other Renaissance texts, thereby suggesting that Skelton represents his own best analogue. For instance, his trademark verse form, the Skeltonic, remains a crux of sixteenth-century poetry. Even after tentative suggestions regarding its "origins" have been proposed,[5] important critical questions persist with respect to its purpose and value within Skelton's canon as well as to its esteem among both contemporary and subsequent poets. The point is that a closed-set formulation only makes him more enigmatic by moving him outside the dynamic evolution of English literature.

This chapter will not be concerned with settling the issue of Skelton's literary *locus* into one period or the other; however, as is evident from the preceding series of

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[4] Most critical readings of Skelton's poetry use the Janus-figure concept, even if only as a heuristic for studying Skelton. For example, see Fish, Heiserman, and Kinney. Even later, more revisionist readings of Skelton's poetry struggle with this perception to some degree. See Sharratt, Halpern, Gutierrez, Lawton, Scattergood ("John Skelton's Lyrics: Tradition and Innovation"), and Kipling.

[5] Regarding the origins of the Skeltonic, see especially Budgey, Norton-Smith, Blake, and Partridge.

questions, the specter of the Janus metaphor shadows the following examination of Skelton's poetry, at least in the sense that it provides the impetus for looking for more fruitful ways of understanding how it relates with other Renaissance poems, especially the rough invectives and rude rhyming. There is much in Skelton's poetry recommending it in a study of unruly literature. For instance, the Skeltonic, which exhibits many of the transgressive qualities of verbal contests set forth in Chapter One, figures prominently in the flytings entitled "Agenst Garnesche" and in the dialogues of the vices in *Magnyfycence*. However, the present study of the Skeltonic is not intended to provide an argument for Skelton's stylistic influence or a literary following traceable in later texts. It is a common assumption--even among revisionist critics--that the Skeltonic style neither generated a "school," as one might argue of Spenser or Jonson, nor stamped any individual author to the degree of being recognizable as a "son of Skelton." Skelton's idiosyncratic poetry benefits from a study of ceremonial blame and hafting because through these he demonstrates much concern for his status among contemporary court poets and explicitly burnishes his reputation as a professional poet. Additionally, in order to further clarify the relationship between flyting and hafting, one goes to Skelton because he so diligently provides a rationale (however personal or arbitrary it may seem) for distinguishing himself from those authors whom he sees as competitors for his poetic status. As attentive as he is to his own preeminence, he is equally concerned to see rival poets denigrated or at least put well out of fame's way.

Yet, Skeltonic verse will not be treated as a static norm applicable to all subsequent instances of unruly poetry throughout the century. On the contrary, the Skeltonic will be shown to belong to a self-conscious habit in Renaissance criticism, one

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in which texts are supplied as exemplars for drafting and enforcing boundaries which constitute a body of arbitrary rules. It will be important to have Skelton's model in mind when examining later instances of sixteenth-century eristic verse because his principles of self adulation and of the censure of competing standards of excellence underlie later processes of establishing and defending artistic norms.

The concepts of self-fashioning as brought to the study of Renaissance literature by historical and materialist viewpoints provide a most useful way of supplementing the study of ceremonial blame and Skelton vis-à-vis broader social constructions of institutional power and individual agency. However, the importance of a rhetorical awareness of language in general in addition to the ways in which specific agents negotiate literary norms on particular occasions is critical to an understanding of Renaissance self-fashioning. As historian Greg Walker has so aptly put it in the case of Skelton, "[t]his sense of his own social and artistic worth is a constant sub-text to all Skelton's poems" (56). In general, this statement holds true whether one looks at an early poem such as "Bowge of Courte" (1498) which demonstrates a great familiarity with Burgundian literary taste, or the raucous and highly imagistic "Elynour Rummynge" (c. 1517), or his late invective against English heretics, the "Replycacion Agynst Certayn Younge Scholars" (1528). Conversely, the manner in which he goes about securing his personal reputation varies from one text to the next. For example, considerable stylistic differences exist between the acrimonious invectives against Garnesche, Dundas, and anonymous slanderers[6] on the one hand and on the other the staid, almost regal

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[6] Skelton most likely wrote "Agenst Garnesche," "Against Dundas," and "Against Venemous Tongues" between 1514 and 1516.

disposition of the *Garlande of Laurell* (published 1523). Yet, in all of these texts Skelton's concern remains the same: he claims distinction as a poet both because of his superior qualifications and his superiorly crafted poems. Nevertheless, between the obvious measure of *Garlande* and the ostensible mismeasure of his flytings, it is rather difficult to find a consistent approach to poetic composition or a unified image of Skelton as "Author" such as Walker observes.

Perhaps his helter skelter display of self-aggrandizement contributes to the perception that Skelton is a bit schizophrenic, a little too dangerous to be allowed in the company of more well-behaved Renaissance self-fashioners and is subsequently bracketed into a room of his own. Yet Skelton is every bit as concerned with constructing a public image of himself through his texts, explicitly mentioning his idiosyncratic style on no fewer than seven occasions.[7] Certainly , "factual," historical studies regarding Skelton and his literary environment have enriched an understanding of the cultural milieu into which any number of his poems fit by refining the rôle Skelton plays in a number of contemporary social and political movements. Walker's exacting examinations of Skelton's participation in the courts of Henry VII and VIII as well as his connections with several of England's noble families provide a valuable means for understanding how Skelton was most likely received by his contemporaries.[8] However,

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[7] Cf. "Bowge of Courte" 533-39, "Phyllyp Sparowe" 813-18, "Agenst Garnesche" v 95-115, "Against Venemous Tongues" 34-48, "Colin Cloute" 47-58, "Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?" epilogue 1-34, "Replycacion" 329-408.

[8] In addition to Greg Walker's *John Skelton and the Politics of the 1520s*, see his monographs *Persuasive Fictions: Faction, Faith and Political Culture in the Reign of Henry VIII* and *Plays of Persuasion: Drama and Politics at the Court of Henry VIII.*

when the concern turns toward an examination of what Skelton himself thought of his court and literary presence, Walker's historicized perspectives alone are insufficient because they do not provide an account of the poet's disposition toward his own status with regard to others' perceptions of him.

In the context of an individual author and his literary community, Skelton's own quest for literary status and his assumptions for acquiring personal prestige can be best studied in his flyting against Christopher Garnesche. This present chapter provides a more complete picture of Skelton in his own time by reading his texts in light of the arbitrary--yet powerful--claims he makes for himself and for his poetry. Skelton's desire to garner status at court is most profitably examined in his participation in a literary war of words with Garnesche, a conflict that in itself suggests reasons both why Skelton makes the sorts of claims he does as well as why he often expresses them in Skeltonic verse, a meter which appears wholly unsuitable for acquiring poetic status.

In light of--indeed, as a response to--his overall stylistic variability, a critical vocabulary needs to be developed that allows for the inclusion of Skelton and the unruly Skeltonic within the environment of sixteenth-century poetry without simply ignoring the stylistic disparities between Skelton and other poets. This project of distinction is more than a matter of hypothesizing about an inscrutable attitude or authorial intention; Skelton's rationale can be verified through an examination of the kinds of language he uses and of the cultural value that language possesses in a particular rhetorical context. To this end, an analysis of Skelton's self-fashioning serves as a starting place for a larger investigation of the establishment of artistic norms and of ceremonial blame as a means of validating those norms. Skelton's career-long goal to be known and respected as a

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foremost court poet suggests a pattern for exploring later sixteenth-century literary disputes regarding the valid uses and legitimate users of English poetry.

The issue of a descriptive, critical vocabulary for Skelton's unruly poetry has already been addressed in terms of genre and the degree to which such texts function as allegory or as satire.[9] Generic designations "emphasize conventions and rules of procedure," explains Paul Alpers; "one does the thing this way, in effect, because this is the way such things are done" (67). A convention-based critique of texts first compares a text with universalized descriptions of generic forms and takes the contingencies of rhetorical context into consideration as a secondary matter. The peculiarities of a text are explored only after the lineaments of the convention are established and elaborated. In sum, "style" frequently constitutes deviations or variations from a norm of conventional use and thereby becomes a matter of an author's idiosyncratic "interpretation" of a literary convention.

An understanding of the literary heritage of a specific form is undeniably important when it comes to providing a close reading of a text, but the methodology of genre criticism has a tendency to obscure important differences pertaining to use and artistic value between, say, the abusive language of a Skeltonic flyting and Jonsonian billingsgate. Additionally, a convention like satire is evoked to provide a background for Skelton's more bitter poems. Critical studies such as those by Heiserman and Fish argue convincingly for a satirical tradition underlying poems like "Bowge of Courte," "Collyn Clout," "Speke Parott," and "Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?" However, the satire

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[9] Allegorical and satiric studies of Skelton works are numerous and diverse. The most recent survey of applicable scholarship is by Staub.

convention does not provide a complete picture of how these or less clearly satiric yet unruly poems contribute to Skelton's reputation as a learned "maker" when he moves away from censure of faults at large and toward invective against his personal adversaries. Unlike most satiric authors, Skelton not only abuses specific individuals but also avidly promotes himself as a poet of masterful ability, worthy of courtly honor. Additionally, simply labeling Skelton's more aggressive verse as "satire" renders the study of his poetry either an uninteresting search for analogues or a tedious and circumspect project of correlating historical facts with Skelton's literary record of events. In order to understand how Skelton uses his flyting to increase his reputation among his peers, critics need to pay closer attention to the dynamics of the invective process of verbal combat and to the claims Skelton provides for his superiority.

These tendencies to transgress the standardized norms of satiric behavior return the genre critic to the same conclusion as that of the stylist: Skelton's poetry violates too many rules to be admitted into a conventional narrative of Renaissance literature. To avoid such impasses, Paul Alpers' hypothesis of literary mode instead of literary genre supplies a way of effectively discussing Skelton's stylistic mood swings and his relation to other Renaissance poets. Alpers defines a literary mode as "the term that suggests the connection of 'inner' and 'outer' form; it conveys the familiar view that form and content entail each other and cannot, finally, be separated" (49). He goes on to say that "mode" is the best critical term for describing the relation between the social stance (*ethos*) presented by a text and the stylistic manner in which it conveys that stance, all of which is to say, "mode" is a qualifying term for the rhetorical connection between "usages and attitude" (48-49).

"Attitude," explains Alpers, represents "the literary manifestation, in a given work, . . . of its assumptions about man's nature and situation" (50). For instance, the specific assumptions that the pastoral mode makes about human nature and the human condition are revealed in the figure of a shepherd (93). Playing on denotations of the word "convention," Alpers explains that the dispositions and habits of shepherds constitute the distinguishing feature of the pastoral mode. Thus, a key criterion in Alpers' identification of a pastoral is the tendency in a text to put human beings in touch with one another for the purpose of reciprocal edification. In contrast with the individuality of epic and tragic heroes, shepherds meet one another with an attitude "of common plights and common pleasures" (93). "Only by paying attention to the modal aspects of these structural practices," asserts Alpers, "can we understand why they remained in force--that is, why writers and readers continued to find life and interest in them" (67).

In an effort to discern the modality of any particular text of Skelton's, it is helpful to note the research of Ward Parks regarding the classification of verbal contest genres. In his efforts to classify different types of verbal aggression and dueling, Parks seeks to define "principles that . . . can be used to distinguish legitimate classes of [verbal contest]" (165) for the purpose of creating "a framework by which heroic flyting can be interrelated with other, radically different contest forms" (178). He establishes a continuum of argumentative categories ranging from the *heroic flyting* (which tends toward physical combat) to the *debate* (an intellectual combat) with a class he terms *sounding* falling roughly between these two in terms of its intensity. Parks fine tunes this

continuum by establishing four evaluative criteria with which to classify verbal dueling. Parks' aim is

> to identify principles that, whether or not consciously conceived as such,
> are *real*, that represent fundamental alternatives in the actualization of
> verbal contests, and that can be used to distinguish legitimate classes of
> these, even if they were not acknowledged in the explicit critical
> consciousness of the societies that produced them. (165)

Parks suggests that "criteria need to be developed that can both distinguish and interrelate various modalities of verbal contesting" (161). Instead of classifying texts according to formalistic surface features, he proposes to isolate "the relationship between the discourse and the contest of its production" and calls this the "world-to-dialogue relationship" (166), an attempt to analyze texts according to the rhetorical context of which they are a part. This description resembles Alpers' concept of mode as "outer" plus "inner" form and complements an attempt to describe a text's "eristic intensity." "There are no simple formal criteria for quantifying the 'eristic intensity' of any given exchange; only a sensitivity to intentional and tonal coloring will serve" (44). Instead of classifying verbal contests by means of stylistic or generic features, Parks holds that the study of flyting should explore the range of affective qualities which provide functional inter- and intradistinctions between modes of verbal combat. For example, flyting texts which might be differentiated as "heroic flyting" and "ludic flyting," the former presenting a surer route to martial resolution, the latter tending away from physical combat (165). Although today's readers might not now recognize such a distinction, Parks maintains that "this distinction would have been at least *functionally* recognized by societies that

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countenanced both kinds" (165). The function of eristic texts, claims Parks, is to be found in an "animating force" (44), not in a structural analysis of various elements composing a formalistic "reading."

With regard to the criticism of the Skeltonic and Skelton's flyting, my objective is to explain not only the presence of unruly language but also its appropriateness in these contexts in light of its function as a means of promoting and defending Skelton's professional reputation in the Tudor court. In the following examination of Skelton's flyting entitled "Agenst Garnesche," I will apply Parks' scheme for classifying a verbal combat in order to begin establishing a rationale for Skelton's excessive language of abuse.

CONCERNING THE FLYTING MODE OF "AGENST GARNESCHE"

The five short poems collectively entitled "Agenst Garnesche," probably composed in the first half of 1514, represent Skelton's contributions to a poetic contest with Christopher Garnesche, whose complementary flytings are not known to survive.[10] Scattergood's note indicates that Garnesche descended from a wealthy East Anglian family and was decorated at court by Henry VIII. Through evidence in Skelton's poems, one gathers that this war of words was instigated by Garnesche having publicly called Skelton a "knave" (i 9) and that the ensuing series of flytings was a command

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[10] Citations of "Agenst Garnesche" indicate poem and line number, and all references are from Scattergood's edition.

performance at the behest of the King himself.[11] The following examination of these five

poems will demonstrate an application of the practical distinction between flyting and

hafting as discussed in the section about *Magnyfycence*. "Agenst Garnesche" presents

Skelton engaged in the defense and promotion of his symbolic status at the Tudor court

and, as such, provides an exemplary text for discerning how an author license himself and

castigates his opponent.

Given this brief description of "Agenst Garnesche," it is clear to see that these

poems belong in such the category of flyting. However, the question remains as to the

poem's particular mode. Although joined by a generic similarity concerning the use of

words in an effort to secure capital (both material and symbolic), not all verbal combat

literature is alike. For instance, the bragging contest in *Beowulf* between Beowulf and

Unferth is rather unlike the "debate" between Satan and Elene in the Anglo-Saxon

religious narrative to which the saint lends her name.[12] Similarly, differences might be

noted between the early sixteenth-century flyting between Dunbar and Kennedy[13] and the

numerous tracts published in England a few decades later against Luther such as those by

Thomas More. Each of these texts differs from the others in rather obvious ways; some

are fictional, others are quite real; some are composed in verse, others in prose; some

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[11] "By the kynges most noble commanundment," appears at the ends of four of the five poems: i 43, ii 45, iii 206, v 181. Additionally, biographers such as H. L. R. Edwards and critics such as Greg Walker agree that this series of poems constitute a court entertainment.

[12] For studies regarding the flyting in Anglo-Saxon and other medieval literature, see Clover, Baker, Sondergaard and Pettitt, Ziolkowski, Clark,. Cochran, Blake.

[13] The body of criticism regarding the Dunbar-Kennedy flyting is expansive given that a majority of studies of literary flyting make at least a passing reference to it. More specific, recent studies include Parkinson, Raich, Bawcutt ("Dunbar: New Light on Some Old Words" and "The Art of Flyting"), and Gray.

evoke a battle field, others a courtroom. However, in the final analysis, each of these texts presents two agents vying against one another using words to obtain power, honor, and legitimacy. This antagonism is the necessary criterion which draws them together under the genre of verbal combat. Agents are brought together in mutual censure and blame; they do not aim simply to persuade one another of a different point of view nor do the combatants seek the confirmation of universal, ahistorical truths.

"Agenst Garnesche" more closely resembles the boasting contest in *Beowulf* than the calm yet rigorous debate in "Elene," and, for obvious reasons, Skelton's five poems are much more like the Scottish flyting than More's defense of orthodox Roman Catholicism. The first task, therefore, must be to describe the specific mode of Skelton's "Agenst Garnesche." Parks' analytic categories not only provide an effective means for qualifying the kind of contest "Agenst Garnesche" represents but they are also helpful for describing the elemental rules underpinning such a verbal combat. There exists an agreement between Skelton and Garnesche to abide by implicit rules, ones which pertain to the specific rhetorical context of this sort of literary contest. Both status at court--in the form of an esteemed reputation among the literati--and material wealth--in the form of compensation for literary services--are at stake in this particular war of words. On the other hand, the general reward that underlies both status and wealth is honor. In the fourth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle identifies honor as "the greatest of the external goods," because it is "the one we award to the gods, the one above all that is the aim of people with a reputation for worth, the prize for the finest [achievements]" (1123b16-21).

TABLE 1

Summary of Ward Parks' four variables and options

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<u>Subject Matter</u>
Contestant Oriented: contest focused on personal differences between disputants
Other Oriented: contest focused on ideological differences between disputants

<u>Referential Mode</u>
Serious: formal argumentative structure, full refutation with subsequent counter
                attack
Ludic: loose argumentative structure, no refutation before counter attack

<u>Locus of Resolution</u>
External: contest is resolved by action outside the bounds of the dispute
Internal: contest is resolved by the dispute itself

<u>Context</u>
Intergroup: involvement of party(ies) or issue(s) beyond the immediate bounds of the
                contest
Ingroup: involvement of party(ies) or issue(s) only within the immediate bounds of
                the contest

Parks' study designates a pair of options for each of four variables: <u>subject matter</u>,

<u>referential mode</u>, <u>locus of resolution</u>, and <u>context</u>.[14] Table 1 summarizes Parks' scheme.

Parks provides a feature analysis for three distinct modes of verbal dueling (the

heroic flyting, sounding, and debate) which functions as test-cases for the variables noted

above. Additionally, these three particular modes typify eristic (heroic flyting), ritual

(debate), and mixed (sounding) texts along a verbal combat continuum. Parks'

conclusions are summarized in Table 2.

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[14] The names of Parks' four <u>variables</u> have been underlined and the corresponding sets of *options* placed in italics for clarity and easier reference.

TABLE 2

Ward Parks' Categorization of Three Classes of Verbal Dueling

	HEROIC FLYTING	SOUNDING	DEBATE
Subject Matter	C	C	O
Referential Mode	S	L	S
Locus of Resolution	E	I	I
Context	It	In	In

In terms of Parks' schematization, I describe "Agenst Garnesche" as follows:

	"AGENST GARNESCHE"
Subject Matter	Contestant Oriented
Referential Mode	Ludic / Serious
Locus of Resolution	Internal
Context	Ingroup

Skelton's flyting rather resembles the constitution of Parks' intermediate category, sounding, although it arguably shares the *serious* option with both heroic flyting and debate. The rationale and implications of this description are explained below.

First, Parks explains that subject matter does not refer to specific contents but instead the degree to which the dialogue involves the personal lives or concerns of the contestants themselves. Considering the inordinate attention Skelton grants to discussing his opponent's loathsome appearance as well as to constructing his right to enforce his title of *orator regius* against his opponent, "Agenst Garnesche" represents a *contestant oriented* text.

Next, the variable referential mode "is entirely independent of subject," explains Parks, "it concerns not the matter of assertions but how they are meant to be interpreted" (167, emphasis Parks). The argumentative pattern in a *serious* text demonstrates a

defendant making a complete refutation of the prosecutor's charges before proceeding with a counterattack. This formal pattern accompanies a highly ritualized set of rules intended to prevent disagreements from generating physical violence, which is reminiscent of an academic debate. Exemplary *serious* texts include Thomas Starkey's *A Dialogue between Cardinal Pole and Thomas Lupset* (1529) and Thomas More's tedious *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer* (1532-33). Since Garnesche's half of this particular set of flytings is lost, it is difficult to evaluate the degree to which Skelton's texts correspond to a meticulous refutation of his opponent's charges. Judging from the frequency with which Skelton repeats his charges against Garnesche's ugly appearance as well as the helter skelter manner in which Skelton goes about staking his own claim as the supreme poet laureate, it is likely that "Agenst Garnesche" tends more toward the *ludic* pole of the continuum. There is no evidence of a measured, reasoned (in the sense that one describes a statement as being "reasonable") response to Garnesche.

In addition to the formal arrangement of a dispute, Parks stipulates that a verbal duel is *ludic* when the opponents do not perceive each other's charges as having any basis in reality. This is a critical "rule" in the sounding as it has been described by William Labov. In order for "Agenst Garnesche" to represent a *ludic* text, Garnesche should not take genuine offense at Skelton's jibes about his personal appearance; if he did, his response would suggest that Skelton's charges constituted a legitimate point to be refuted. As no pictorial representation of Garnesche is known to exit, the accuracy of Skelton's verbal portrait of him is arguably overdrawn. Additionally, most critics agree that this flyting was very likely performed "by the kynges most noble commaundment" as an object of entertainment. If Skelton's account is given any measure of historical

accuracy, Garnesche may have been responsible for kindling Skelton's ire and thus

providing the impetus for the ensuing contest, but there is nothing to suggest, either in the

text itself or in surviving documents, that this particular affair extended beyond the

bounds of these poems. From the evidence of subsequent works, e.g., "Against

Venemous Tongues," "Garlande of Laurell," or the "Replycacion," Skelton continues to

defend his idiosyncratic style and his right to apply it to any subject he sees fit. So one

could argue that Skelton's claims to the titles "Laureate" and *orator regius* constitute an

attitude more properly labeled *serious* than *ludic*. Nevertheless, the accusations against

Garnesche's person--his loathsome countenance, his offensive body odors, his inability to

enchant ladies of the court--should in all likelihood be taken as elements contributing to

the zest of the exchange and not considered genuine charges of offense. Therefore, one

might classify the <u>referential mode</u> of "Agenst Garnesche" as somewhere between

serious and *ludic*.

Third, "if the contestant wins or loses primarily on the basis of his performance

within the verbal contest," explains Parks, "the locus of resolution is . . . 'internal'" (169).

Contrarily, for a verbal contest to qualify as *external*, the conflict must rely on some

means of resolution other than the verbal forum, such as a display of strength or physical

conflict, which is clearly not an element of the Skelton-Garnesche flyting because, as

stated before, rules of conduct are in place which limit this contest to a war of words.

"Agenst Garnesche" resembles Parks' example of a courtroom trial as an occasion with

an *internal* <u>locus of resolution</u>. Although a judge or jury pronounces a verdict after

weighing the evidence presented by the prosecutor and the defendant, the final decision

must be based on the arguments themselves as they have been presented. In the case of

the Skelton-Garnesche flyting, the king or his court may evaluate the performance, "approving" one or the other as the "victor," but the place where it is determined who actually "won" or "lost" occurs by way of the performance/-ers.

Finally, the <u>context</u> for "Agenst Garnesche" would be designated as *ingroup* instead of *intergroup* because Skelton and Garnesche both belong to the same courtly community of literary suitors to Henry VIII, another condition limiting the likelihood of the verbal combat escalating into physical conflict. Throughout this series of poems, Skelton's primary point of contention against his opponent is that Garnesche lacks the necessary authority to flyte against him. The following section describes one of Skelton's primary means of drawing distinction between himself and Garnesche.

AGAINST THE MAN

Skelton impugns his opponent's character in a number of ways, most frequently by means of an *ad hominem* attack. In at least thirty-five instances, Skelton makes denigrating remarks concerning Garnesche's physical person. For example, this stanza from the first poem makes out Garnesche's head to be an emblem of hideousness:

> I sey, ye solem Sarson, alle blake ys yor ble [complexion];
>
> As a glede [fire] glowynge, your ien glyster as glassse,
>
> Rowlynge in yower holow hede, ugly to see;
>
> Your tethe teintyd with tawny; your semely snowte doth passe,
>
> Howkyd as an hawkys beke, lyke Syr Topyas.
>
> Boldly bend you to batell, and buske your selfe to save.
>
> Chalenge yor selfe for a fole, call me no more knave. (i 36-42)

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These lines say nothing concerning Garnesche's standing at court, his talents as a poet, or any other criteria than the assertion that he is, according to Skelton, repulsive to look upon. Garnesche's countenance remains a cherished motif throughout the poems as Skelton refers to it several times: "Your lothesum lere to loke on, lyke a gresy bote dothe schyne" (ii 5), "How the favyr of your face / Is voyd of all good grace;" (iii 9-10), "But now, gawdy, gresy Garnesche, / Your face I wyse [wish] to varnyshe / So suerly yt xall [shall] nat tarnishe" (iii 120-22), and "Thy fonde face can me nat fray" (v 171). Early in the third poem Skelton makes a point to recount that Garnesche was a "kechyn page," a "dyshwasher," and a drudge when he was younger (iii 25-26). This fact is now unverifiable, but such an occupation might have had a lasting impression upon Garnesche's appearance even later in life, much as it was reputed to have done to alchemists who constantly labored over flames and chemical vapors.

All of the *ad hominem* curses that Skelton rains down on Garnesche are conventional features in sixteenth-century flyting contests. In contrast, such argumentative tactics strike twentieth-century sensibilities as nothing but a logical fallacy. The degree of name-calling and demonizing with which Skelton builds his case against Garnesche clearly seems excessive. It is, however, instructive to realize that, valid or not, the aim of an *ad hominem* attack is to fashion a distinction between the accusing and the accused parties. It is to draw a line, however artificial or arbitrary, and make an audience believe in the reality, logic, and naturalness of that distinction. Thus, the *ad hominem* serves an important rhetorical purpose for Skelton: it demonstrates that Garnesche is not the sort of handsome nobleman his noble reputation might imply. If he were, he would not be so repulsive, to extend Skelton's reasoning. Skelton here is about

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the business of revealing Garnesche for the sham that he is, or at least the one Skelton seeks to portray of him. The *ad hominem* is a valid strategy in flyting because it can be used as a tool for distinguishing between classes of language users. *Ad hominem* requires skill when used in a flyting such that one both denigrates one's opponent but at the same time maintains a right proportion to the abuse. Skelton does not need to destroy Garnesche's reputation on the whole, just his qualification as a poetic challenger. If this means resorting to attacking him personally, then an evaluation of this flyting should consider if this might have some kind of bearing on Garnesche as a poet, and, if it does, how well Skelton uses this technique. Later in the sixteenth century as the debate over poetry, decorous language, and the authorization/authority of poets increases, this sort of verbal contest will be looked down on because of the means by which it is conducted. That is, the style of flyting will be denegrated in large part because of its use of *ad hominem.*

Skelton is perhaps at his most entertaining when describing Garnesche's breath, which is, he writes, so bad that it is dangerous for the King to be around Garnesche when Henry is fasting (iii 78-84). Garnesche's breath is worse than gutters and drains after a rainstorm (iii 142-47), such that he is not even able to proposition a prostitute without provoking her scorn (v 46-62). Skelton makes his own trope out of Garnesche's foul breath and employs it in one of the most amusing passages from these flytings:

> O ladies of bryght colour,
>
> Of bewte that beryth the flower,
>
> When Garnyche cummyth yow amonge
>
> With hys brethe so stronge,

> Withowte ye have a confectioun
>
> Agenst hys poysond infeccioun,
>
> Els with hys stynkyng jawys
>
> He wyl cause yow caste your crawes,
>
> And make youer stomake seke
>
> Ovyr the perke to pryk (iii 148-57)

These lines open with a formal invocation reminiscent of a poet's appeals to the Muses or of a lover's complaints to a beloved. The first line here also implicates a wider audience than simply the King. The vocative address to the "ladies of bryght colour" suggests that Skelton and Garnesche may be performing for a full court of attendants, which would understandably increase the stakes for the flyting contest as more people would be able to report first-hand on the participants' performances.

Line 148 fixes the ladies as the primary image throughout the ten-line section, but not even their flower-like beauty is able to withstand the noisome, withering breath. Garnesche, instead of being pictured forth in person, is shown here like his breath itself: invisible yet all too discernible. Earlier in this third poem, Skelton says that Garnesche's breath is "stronge and quike" (iii 78) and that he stinks "At bothe endes" (81), giving the listener/reader pause to consider the similarities between Garnesche's face and his fundament. Garnesche is a walking sewer whose mere presence among the court ladies is enough to sicken them. The sweet image of noble women sours with Garnesche's presence and he leaves them puking over a balcony.

The poor court ladies are not the only ones affected by Garnesche's emetic person. Readers, too, convulse upon encountering the metric irregularity of these lines,

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the ten of which count seven, nine, nine, five, eight, eight, six, seven, six, and six syllables each. The regular couplets belie the jagged meter, scarcely able to conceal the herky-jerky combination of stresses. The section fractures at line 154: the final "ô" sound from end of this line--"jawys"--breaks the following one in half, rhyming with "cause" as well as "crawes." Line 155 is a complete metrical fiasco. It begins with a spondee (Hé wy´l), is followed by a double trochee (caúse yow cáste your), and concludes with a single, unpaired stress (cráwes), all of which suggests a reader hurling out the stressed, hard "c" consonants in short heaves. The alliterated "c," "s," and "p" in the last three lines turn the couplet concept in upon the words of the final lines themselves in the form of consonance. Women, readers, and it seems even the text itself become nauseated by ugly, stinking Garnesche. If, as critic Greg Walker suggests, the flyting between Skelton and Garnesche was performed as a court festivity, this sort of sound-plus-vision poetry would have been "ideally suited to public performance" and quite entertaining (*1520s* 122).

THE HAFTER, THE LORELL, AND THE LAUREATE

Near the end of Skelton's final response to his opponent, he warns Garnesche, "Harkyn herto, ye Harvy Haftar, / Pride gothe before and schame commyth after" (v 164-65). In this "stanza,"[15] Skelton complains that he really has better things to do than censure a haughty and presumptuous accuser like Garnesche. Nevertheless, Skelton

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[15] Only the first and second of the five flyting poems are composed in anything visually resembling a regular stanza, seven lines rhymed *ababbcc*, but the meter seems irregular. The rest of the poems appear to be Skelton's responses to what are perhaps in some instances Garnesche's own attacks. They are most commonly iambic trimeter lines rhymed irregularly.

deigns a response, "my proces for to save" (v 157), supposing there is virtue in finishing what he has begun. Skelton decides to conclude his attacks with a bit of "advice" to Garnesche in the form of an incomplete syllogism: "Inordynate pride wyll have a falle. / Presumptuous pride ys all thyn hope" (v 159-60); therefore, Garnesche will (one cannot resist supplying "soon") suffer a fall on account of his insolence toward the poet laureate, who warns Garnesche to beware of the hangman's noose.

Skelton then addresses Garnesche as "Harvy Hafter," which is interesting in light of the historical applications of *haft* since pride is not one of the characteristics frequently associated with hafters. Perhaps Skelton is here merely reaching for an alliterative complement to the pair of "h" sounds in "Harkyn herto." But given the strong negative connotations with hafters in the sixteenth century and knowing Skelton's contempt for Garnesche, it is hard to accept Skelton's use of this title simply as a means to a stylistic end. Some quality of hafters, one which Skelton associated with his attitude toward Garnesche and that courtier's overweening pride, must explain why Garnesche deserves a name like "Harvy Hafter."

Of course the epithet recalls the fictional hafter named Harvy in Skelton's "Bowge of Courte," which was composed approximately thirty years earlier. Although Harvy Hafter's characterization in "Bowge" hardly resembles the one fashioned for Garnesche, there are three striking rhetorical similarities between the two poems: the setting, the occasion of the participants' interaction, and the opponents' dispositions toward the protagonists. Of first note, both are set at a royal court: "Bowge" in the presence of the fictional Dame Saunce-Pere, "Garnesche" before Henry VIII. A setting at court circumscribes not only the kinds of participants who can appear, but also what

they are likely to discuss, as well as how they are apt to speak. As an early sixteenth-century convention, the court had already come to signify a place beset as much by folly as by intrigue and as a place to seek profit and advancement albeit at the risk of purse and person. Therefore, this common locale functions as a rhetorical frame for the actions and words of the dramatis personae.

Additionally, Harvy Hafter and Garnesche both engage their respective opponents in singing contests. In the former text, Harvy befriends the courtly newcomer and desires Drede to teach him to sing harmoniously and to accompany him in some popular ballads. Harvy's invitation is jovial, if not also sincere. But not so in the later text. Skelton and Garnesche engage in a poetic agon for the favor and patronage of a real king. At stake between Drede and Harvy are the "bouche de court," "free rations provided in the royal household" (Scattergood 395), over which Drede eventually fights for his very life. Nevertheless, "Bowge" is at two removes from reality: once since it is a fictional text and secondly because the predominate action of the poem occurs in the narrator's dream vision. In contrast, the stakes in "Agenst Garnesche" are ultimately higher since the contestants themselves, not just their fictions, stand to win or loose real court rations in the form of symbolic reputations at court. With these sorts of similarities in mind, it becomes easier to configure Garnesche as an actual counterpart to the fictional Harvy Hafter, in which the nightmarish "Bowge" prefigures one of Skelton's own encounters at court.

There is a third, perhaps even more essential, resemblance between the hafters in the two poems that concerns the connection between words and actions, specifically between a hafter's clever use of language and the actions such language attempts to

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conceal. The case of Harvy Hafter in "Bowge" illustrates the potential power of words to misrepresent a person's intentions, as his interactions with Drede suggest that, of all the court persons encountered, Harvy Hafter is the most amiable. However, upon taking his leave, Harvy subsequently conspires with Dysdayne in a plot to overthrow the fortunate new courtier, whom they view as a competitor for Fortune's favor. Thus, one who simply took Harvy Hafter at his word--which is to take him at his "face value"--would fall victim to a deception. The words show forth a persona which appears genuine but is in essence not as it seems. The rhetorical dynamics of this interaction exemplify the practice of dissimulation which hafting denotes, and the epithet "Harvy Hafter" functions as a cumulative curse against Garnesche.

All the while Skelton rails against his adversary with unrelenting *ad hominem*, he simultaneously makes a more valid argumentative distinction between himself and Garnesche. This claim has to do with the authority invested in an individual to write poetry and, perhaps more publicly, to criticize the poetry of others. As an additional way to denigrate Garnesche, Skelton draws a line between his own license as a legitimate court composer and Garnesche's coordinate lack of prestige, although, it is a matter of fact that both were encouraged, i.e., authorized, by Henry VIII to flyte against each other. Skelton's castigation of Garnesche as an unrecognized, unruly court voice serves three functions for him. First, in terms of the text immediately at hand, it functions as a classic flyting topic. By calling into question his opponent's authority, Skelton follows conventional flyting protocol. This is not to say that the critique of an opponent's authority or poetic skill is merely perfunctory. There was a proper time and place to employ such a trope, and a command performance before a king and his court is

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appropriate because it represents a powerful authorizing body. As historian John Guy

points out, in spite of the powerful nobles and ministers who inhabit the court, such as

Wolsey, Henry "remained the ultimate source of power" (83), the ultimate patron.

This fact points to the second reason validating Skelton's unabashed self-

promotion, which is that the prize at stake is the title of poet laureate. That is, at least

Skelton suggests that this is the prize. It is worth exploring what this title means with

respect to the early Tudor court and how Skelton comes to lay a claim to it before

proceeding with the examination of these poems.

Scattergood notes that the title "laureate" signifies "a sort of post-graduate

'degree' in rhetoric" which Skelton receives from Oxford, perhaps in 1488 (16), at which

time he would have been approximately in his late twenties. Late in this year, Skelton

enters the service of Henry VII as a rhetorician. Both of these events must have held a

great deal of personal significance for Skelton since it is in this year that he begins his

own private chronology by which he dates subsequent events, both personal and public,

as well as his poetry.[16] Also, Skelton is awarded the title "Laureate" from Louvain

University in 1492 and from Cambridge in the following year. Around 1496 until 1501

Skelton serves as the tutor for Prince Henry. In 1504 or 1505, Skelton receives another

honor from Cambridge, which Scattergood suggests might have stated "that he may stand

in the same status here that he has at Oxford, and the right to wear the robe granted to

him by the king" (17). In addition to his degrees, throughout the later decades of the

fifteenth century and the first half dozen years of the sixteenth Skelton receives written

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[16] See Edwards 38 and Nelson.

praise of his literary achievements from Caxton, educationalist Robert Whittinton, and

Erasmus, evidence which testifies that his work is at least in the courtly/academic eye, yet

the sentiment of this praise must be viewed with circumspection given the conventional

nature of encomium at this time. That is to say, not all praise is necessarily sincere. The

following passage from Caxton's preface of an English translation of the French romance

entitled *Eneydos* (published in 1490) is often quoted by Skelton's biographers and critics

alike and merits reprinting here because it demonstrates a contemporary conception of

Skelton's competency:

> But I pray master John Skelton, late created poet laureate in the university
>
> of Oxenford, to oversee and correct this said book, and t'address and
>
> expoun' wheras shall be found fault to them that shall require it. For him I
>
> know for sufficient to expoun' and english every difficulty that is therein;
>
> for he hath late translated the epistles of Tully, and the book of Diodorus
>
> Siculus, and divers other works out of Latin into English--not in rude and
>
> old language but in polished and ornate terms, craftily, as he that hath read
>
> Vergil, Ovid, Tully, and all the other noble poets and orators, to me
>
> unknown. And also he hath read the nine Muses, and understand their
>
> musical sciences, and to whom of them each science is appropred: I
>
> suppose he hath drunken of Helicon's well. Then I pray him and such
>
> other to correct, add or 'minish whereas he or they shall find fault.
>
> (qtd. in Edwards 34)

In his exacting study of the court of Henry VIII, contemporary English politics,

and literary texts of the first third of the sixteenth century, Greg Walker revises many of

the commonly held conceptions regarding Skelton's rôle at court and his associations with noble families. Walker clarifies what it means to be a poet laureate in early modern England, explaining that the title signifies "merely an academic qualification gained for conspicuous achievement in the fields of Latin and Rhetoric" (39), reducing the status of the title even further than Edwards, who states that "the name of *poet* had nothing to do, necessarily, with verse; it was used freely of any man of learning or letters" (34). Both Walker and Edwards concur that the title "poet laureate" does not designate a singular, honorific office at court, at least not one to which Skelton could have laid sole claim.

Walker also carefully examines the significance of the title *orator regius* (orator of kings), one which Skelton first asserts for himself in the short poem "Calliope" (post 1512) and subsequently appends to three other poems.[17] He concludes that the title means very little in terms of Skelton's standing among the court literati. The "poetry" Skelton writes for the first two Tudor monarchs represents "a side-line to his duties" as a grammar tutor and, later, rector at Diss; his position is definitely not that of "a commissioned poet, kept at Court on an indefinite royal stipend, free to write on whatever topic suited either his sovereign or him" (Walker 43). A common misconception about Skelton is that he performs a number of important duties at the early Tudor court, "poet, minstrel, teacher and counselor," as Walker puts it (49). To the extent that Skelton is a spokesman for either of the Henries (a position Walker claims Skelton arguably possesses), he functions as a propagandist for the English cause against France, Scotland, and internal enemies (Walker 49). In the final analysis, Walker finds that Skelton represents "a champion without a cause: a King's Orator with nothing to say" (49).

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[17] In "Against Venemous Tongues" headnote, "Speke Parott" 520b, "Replycacion" headnote.

After such a rigorous scouring of Skelton's status, one must ask where, then, has all this misconception come from. Clearly it is fashioned initially and most intensely by Skelton himself, both with his implications of familiarity with the internal operations at court and with his explicit statements by means of his various titles and other self-aggrandizing assertions found throughout his poetry. Although there is no evidence suggesting that Skelton's title as poet laureate or *orator regius* was specifically on the line in the flyting with Garnesche (the latter title is never used in any of these five poems), one can easily imagine that a university graduate specifically trained in the language arts--not to mention who had been severally rewarded for his achievements--would feel pressured to maintain his reputation and good name against such a sophomoric challenger as Garnesche. The formalized head- and footnotes appended to each poem give evidence of this; for example, "Skelton Laureate Defendar Ageinst Lusty Garnyshe / Well Be Seen Crystofer Chalangar, *et cetera*," (v), and "By the kynges most noble commaundment," which follows each flyting. Skelton invariably identifies himself as the "defender" and Garnesche as the "challenger."

Aside from the issues of the distinctiveness of the poet laureate position and his rightful claim to it, "Agenst Garnesche" clearly demonstrates Skelton using the symbolic force of this title to bully his opponent and to validate his own flytings. Although Walker's well-meaning desire to revise Skelton's reputation in light of the "facts" of historical documents does much to clarify matters regarding the poet and his milieu, at times this virtue turns into a deficiency when attempting to explore the emotion and motivation behind Skelton's engagement with Garnesche. Walker's overdetermined attention to the material evidence provided in the poems and ancillary documents

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overshadows the symbolic rationale for Skelton's display of his titles. Walker all but

ignores this struggle for symbolic power. Contrasting the efficacy of the Skelton-

Garnesche contest with that of the Scottish one between Dunbar and Kennedy (published

1508), he denies that Skelton strives with Garnesche "for any recognition of superiority"

but is merely toying with his opponent, battering Garnesche with his "pyrotechnic

invective" (47). Walker suggests that flyting was a crude form of court entertainment

which was, on certain occasions, indulged; however, when more refined entertainment

was desired, patrons turned elsewhere than to a flyting contest--or to Skelton at all, for

that matter (48). He believes that Skelton goes overboard with his attack merely to

conceal the "triviality" of the contest due to the artificiality of Skelton's exaggerated

claims to Henry's favor (48). At this point in his revisionist history, Walker reveals a

prejudice against the excessive language of flyting that limits his ability to critique a

verbal contest at all. What he does point out, though, is the degree to which the stakes of

a flyting or verbal contest rely not so much on logic or historical accuracy as on rhetorical

construction and the manipulation of belief.

Edwards' explanation of the symbolism attached to the office of poet laureate is

instructive here for understanding the force of this epithet. He notes that, despite its

uncertain origins, the practice of crowning a poet as a "laureate" was made popular in the

Renaissance by the instance of Petrarch's receiving the garland in Rome (37). With the

development and spread of humanism throughout Italy and northward, "the right to

laureate became a privilege that was jealously sought, on the one hand by emperors,

popes and princes, and on the other by university authorities" (37), explains Edwards,

who further states that aristocrats and academics both desired to surround themselves

with individuals especially trained to speak and write eloquently for the purposes of augmenting their own social and political respectability.

Although little is known for certain about Garnesche, he would seem to be outmatched against such a decorated adversary. It hardly seems likely that a young noble, even if he were endowed with a university education, would be an appropriate, much less competent, opponent for Skelton, who, at least fifty years old by this point, had variously made a career as a Latinist, a grammarian, a clergyman, and a courtier. There is good evidence to suggest, however, that Garnesche was not acting alone, that there was, in effect, a ghostwriter helping him compose his flytings. For instance, in the third flyting, Skelton begins a new stanza with the address, "And he that scryblyd your scrolles, / I rekyn yow in my rowllys, / For ij dronken sowllys" (iii 192-94); also, in the brief fourth flyting, "*Tu Garnische, fatuus, fatuus tuus est mage scriba*" (You, Garnesche are a fool, and your scribe is a greater fool).[18] The lines most suggestive of the collaborator's identity appear in the head note to the second flyting:

> Skelton Lauryate Defender Agenst Master Garnesche
>
> Chalangar, with Gresy, Gorbelyd Godfrey *et cetera*

and lines 29-39, which suggest Skelton's address to two opponents: "Ye [Garnesche] ground you upon Godfrey, that grysly gargons face" (ii 29), "Baile, baile[19] at yow bothe, frantyke folys! Follow on the chase!" (ii 31) and "For thes twayne whypslovens calle for a coke stole" (ii 38).

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[18] Scattergood's translation.

[19] *imp.*, deliver blows; a call to combatants to engage in fighting.

Alistair Fox identifies Alexander Barclay as Garnesche's amanuensis and confederate. Fox argues convincingly that "Skelton became a particular *bête noire* for Barclay" in sum due to Skelton's acquisition of court patronage--recognition and remuneration Barclay desired for himself (42). Barclay had crossed literary swords with Skelton before with disparaging remarks in *Ship of Fooles* against Skelton's *Phyllyp Sparowe*, and Fox maintains that, subsequent to Skelton's "gorbellyd Godfrey" epithet in the flyting with Garnesche, Barclay coopts the name Godfrey--as well as the style of Skelton's flyting--into his own "Eclogues," which were being completed at approximately the same time as the Skelton-Garnesche flyting (Fox 43-44). Furthermore, the attribution to Barclay of a lost work entitled "Contra Skeltonum" strongly argues for Barclay's participation in this particular flyting affair. Fox even believes that this work "is the missing side of the flytyng, the counterblast to Skelton's 'Agenst Garnesche'" (44). Walker suggests that both men would have maintained traditionalist views regarding linguistic and social issues and thus the suggestion that their antagonism might be understood as another instance of Greeks versus Trojans is misdirected (51). Indeed, the intensity of their animosity is made all the more reasonable in light of the fact that they share a common intellectual heritage: no enemy is more reviled than one against whom you directly compete for a share of the capital at stake within a common field of expertise. Barclay, more than any other court poet at the time, stood to receive Skelton's vitriole and the title "hafter."

Critics' accounts of the relationships between Barclay, Garnesche, and Skelton reveal a complex web of court literary intrigue fueled by desire for official recognition and the attendant symbolic and material capital which accompanies a title like poet

laureate--one which Skelton here fights hard to save for himself by labeling his opposition a hafter. Several lines in particular show Skelton making such a distinction. For example, he declares early in the third flyting, "I am laureate, I am no lorell" (iii 14), simultaneously drawing a distinction between his own words, those which befit a renowned poet--"I, Skelton, am no fool . . ."--and alternately those of his opponent, whose words mark him as a foolish rhymer. Further on in the third flyting, Skelton declares that Garnesche, and perhaps also his collaborator, possess too little wit to engage legitimately with Skelton, adding that the opposition's "termys ar to grose, / To far from the porpose, / To contaminate / And to violate /The dygnyte lauryate" (iii 96-100). The office of poet laureate cannot be besmirched with the scribbling of Garnesche and his hackney accessory, declares Skelton, nor can these rascals hope to attain the honor of that office. Garnesche himself is responsible for instigating this flyting--"Sith ye have me chalyngyd, Master Garnesche, / Rudely revilyng me in the kynges noble hall, . . . So curryshly to beknave me in the kynges place" (i 1-2, 9)--as well as his surliness setting the tone of the contest: "How may I your mokery mekely tollerate, / Your gronynge, yor grontynge, yor groinynge lyke a swyne?" (ii 1-2), "Thow demyst my raylyng ovyrthwarte; / I rayle to the soche as thow art" (v 136-37). Skelton is amazed that he must contest with such an unworthy opponent, one whose poetry possesses neither rhyme nor reason:

> For reson can I non fynde
>
> Nor good ryme in yower mater.
>
> I wondyr that ye smatyr,
>
> So for a knave to clatyr;

Ye wolde be callyd a maker,

And make moche lyke Jake Rakar (iii 104-09)

"Jake Rakar" seems to be an abusive epithet like "Harvy Hafter," which, according to Scattergood, may be derived from "'raker' meaning 'scavenger,'" (427). On all accounts, Garnesche is a man for no season: "Ye ryme yet owte of reson; / Your wyt ys so geson [barren], / Ye rayle all out of seson" (iii 128-30). Therefore, Skelton generously recommends Garnesche find something else to do, such as "dryve / A dong cart or a tumrell / Than with my poems for to melle [meddle]" (v 92-94).

While denouncing Garnesche Skelton simultaneously magnifies his own poetic authority. In the fifth flyting, Skelton plays his trump: his erstwhile position as Henry VIII's grammar tutor prior to Arthur's death. "The honor of Englond I lernyd to spelle, / In dygnyte roiall that doth excelle" (v 95-96). In a frenzy of vatic altitudo, Skelton proclaims that "It plesyth that noble prince roiall / Me as hys master for to call / In hys lernyng primordiall" (v 103-05). Skelton claims what is most likely the truth, for even in adulthood Henry's proficiency in the arts of the trivium could in no way have exceeded Skelton's. However, for Skelton to draw attention to this fact and to situate himself above the King in any regard must have been a remark as equally dangerous as it was audacious.

And this is not the only instance of Skelton making grand claims for his own reputation. Lines 79-94 of the fifth flyting outline the trajectory of Skelton's poetic career:

What eylythe the, rebawde, on me to rave?

A kynge to me myn habyte gave

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> At Oxforth, the universyte,
>
> Avaunsid I was to that degre;
>
> By hole consent of theyr senate,
>
> I was made poete lawreate.
>
> To cal me lorell ye ar to lewde;
>
> Lythe and lystyn, all bechrewde!
>
> Of the Musys nyne, Calliope
>
> Hath pointyd me to rayle on the. (79-88)

Skelton alleges to possess license from the king to publish his poetry and by the consent of the faculty at Oxford to add "laureate" to his name. In addition to the appointments Skelton bears from university and sovereign, he also claims an entitlement from Calliope, the muse of epic poetry. Skelton first asserts this divine appointment a few years before the "Garnesche" flytings in the poem "Calliope," supposedly written sometime after April 1512 based on the evidence of a lost patent "dated in the fifth year of Henry VIII's reign" that endows Skelton with the title of royal poet (Scattergood 420). The epigraph to this brief, twenty-four line poem asks, "Why were ye Calliope, embrawdred with letters of golde?" and states that "Skelton Laureate, *Orator Regius*" will provide an answer. He begins by acknowledging this muse the regent of all poets, the very one who gave him "The high degre / Laureat to be / Of fame royall" (1-8). In the second eight-line section, Skelton explains that, even though he grows old and somewhat worn out (15-16), he is proud to represent Calliope in his robes of silk and gold: "I dare be bolde / Thus for to were" (11-12). Yet, his pride does not displease her, for she keeps him in her service: "With her certayne / I wyll remayne / As my soverayne / Moost of pleasure" (21-

24). The penultimate line presents an interesting bit of ambiguity turning on the word "As." One might understand Skelton to mean "Certainly I will remain in the service of my sovereign, Calliope," or to intend "I will remain as certainly in the service of Calliope as I do my sovereign, Henry VIII." In either reading, Skelton presumes much for his own behalf, and, as evidenced in the lines "Of the Musys nyne, Calliope / Hath pointyd me to rayle on the" (v 87-88), Skelton envisions himself authorized by king and convention to rail against his adversaries.

Furthermore, these are not the only two poems in which Skelton mythologizes his literary genealogy. In "Against Venemous Tongues" (c. 1515-16),[20] he declares "My learning is from the more sublime Minerva.[21] My scole is more solem and somwhat more haute / Than to be founde in any such faute" (23b-25). Scattergood glosses "haute" in this instance to mean "high of academic standard" (545), in which case Skelton again advances his personal conviction that, at least stylistically, he is beyond reproach. Whoever disagrees must be cursed: "Whoever has slandered the muse-like poet Skelton laureate, let him admit that he has an inauspicious, ill-omened, unlucky horoscope, *Skeltonidi Laureato*" (70b).[22]

In another invective written at about the same time as "Agenst Garnesche" and "Against Venemous Tongues" entitled "Against Dundas," Skelton uses his language arts to curse and destroy the body of Scotsman George Dundas. "You wag your tail when

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[20] Assuming Skelton is granted the title of royal orator in 1512 or 1513. The headline to the poem reads "Skelton laureate *Oratoris Regis tertio*"--in the third year as orator royal.

[21] *Pedagogium meum de sublimiori Minerva constat esse.* Scattergood's translation.

[22] In auspicatum, male ominatum, infortunatum se fateatur habuisse horoscopum, quincunque maledixerit vati Pierio Skeltonidi Laureato.

you can; begging you beat at the doors. You will be a beggar, and a double-tongued liar, scabby, horrible you whom worms and six feet of earth will destroy wretchedly; for miserable men, their stock is cursed" (3-10). Evidence suggests that Dundas becomes the target of this abuse by dint of a dispute regarding a preceptory which somehow involves James V of Scotland and Henry VIII (Scattergood 430). Admittedly, it hardly seems like a matter that would or should attract Skelton's attention all the way from London, but perhaps there are associations, now lost or unrecognized, which make Skelton's involvement more plausible. Nevertheless, this relatively brief text exemplifies the sort of national defense poem Walker suggests might have been apropos for Skelton as *orator regius*. Apparently, this is one of the last nationalistic poems Skelton composes before he turns his anger against clerical abuses ("Speke Parott," "Collyn Clout," and "Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?") and heresy ("Replycacion"), all of which feature at least a dozen lines proclaiming his poetic license.

Clearly, then, many of Skelton's texts display a poet constantly hard at work fashioning his public and private image. The conception of himself as England's Poet Laureate, accuracy aside, serves as "a potent metaphor for Skelton," suggests Walker-- one which both crowned his youthful achievements and licensed his mature works, all in an effort to secure prestige (56).

MAGNYFYCENCE AND THE DEPICTION OF THE HAFTER

Magnyfycence is Skelton's only extant dramatic text. This interlude of approximately 2600-lines was probably written around 1515 but not printed until 1531.[23] The action focuses on a tragic episode in the life of a prince named Magnyfycence who represents "a composite term involving, amongst other things, magnanimity or greatness of soul, princely authority and judgment, dignity, glory, [and] liberality" (Scattergood 434). The attending dramatis personae are allegorized royal virtues and vices. The action begins with a squabble between the characters named Lyberte and Felycyte (prosperous happiness) concerning which of them is to enjoy superiority over the other. The virtue named Measure settles the dispute, pronouncing both of them subject to his authority by order of the prince. However, Fancy shortly arrives on the scene and reinstigates the initial discord, eventually allowing court attendants such as Cloaked Collusion, Counterfet Countenaunce, and Courtly Abuse to banish Measure, gain free access to Lyberte and Felycyte, impoverish Prince Magnyfycence, ruin his health, and drive him to the brink of suicide. The prince is saved in the nick of time by Good Hope and is restored to spiritual, physical, and fiscal health through the ministrations of Redresse, Circumspection, and Perseveraunce.

Skelton's interlude clearly falls in the genealogy of the English morality plays of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Additionally, critics have argued convincingly that

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[23] All citations of *Magnyfycence* are from Scattergood's edition.

the text belongs within the tradition of the *speculum principis*,[24] some believing that

Magnyfycence was designed to offer moral, political, and spiritual advice to Henry VIII,

although it is doubtful whether Henry every witnessed a performance of Skelton's

interlude.[25] Most critical discussions of this text focus on the proverbial phrase "measure

is treasure"--a precept which Measure himself espouses early in the text.[26] Many

readings of *Magnyfycence* both past and present concentrate on the ways in which this

proverb provides the key to understanding Skelton's interlude.[27] Given the example of a

wealthy prince despoiled of his riches due to a prodigal lifestyle, this precept makes

plenty of sense: a king should be generous but not such a spendthrift that he depletes his

entire store of treasure. The error of the prince in *Magnyfycence* is unquestionably on the

side of overindulgence and prodigality. If the interlude pertains to a young King Henry

VIII--as several critics and historians have persuasively argued[28]--it is hard to deny that

Skelton's primary message in the interlude is one of fiscal restraint.

Thus, a strictly moralistic interpretation of *Magnyfycence* is not necessarily the

whole story, either for this particular text or for the time in which it was composed. A

non-moralistic interpretation of the text contributes a more persuasive rationale for

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[24] Ramsay's is the modern study which sets many of the critical parameters of *Magnyfycence*. See also Irving Ribner, Harris ("The Thematic Importance of Skelton's Allusion to Horace in *Magnfycence*" and *Skelton's* Magnyfycence *and the Cardinal Virtue Tradition*), Bevington ("Skelton and the Old Aristocracy"), Wilson and Hunter, and Potter.

[25] See especially the discussion in Fox 238 ff.

[26] Appearing first at line 125.

[27] For example, see Harris' monograph, Holtei 79-95, and Heiserman 66-125.

[28] See especially discussions of the interlude in Guy, Fox and Guy, Fox, Harris, and Heiserman.

reading the interlude in the tradition of a political *speculum principis*. "The question at

issue [in *Magnyfycence*] is not a metaphysical one, but one that touches on problems of

practical philosophy: economics, politics and ethics," (87) explains Ranier Holtei. The

proverb "Measure is treasure" can function as a heuristic for an *exemplum* but this alone

cannot function as a "homiletic theme," says Holtei, "because in the course of the

dramatic action the validity of the proverb is put to the test" (90). Likewise, David

Bevington finds that "The interest is historical rather than timeless; the political advice to

a prince is specific and practical rather than generic and spiritual" (136). Thus,

interpretations of *Magnyfycence* that render it solely a moralistic caveat against the

spiritual dangers of wealth overlook an important secular message concerning the

necessity of good choices regarding wealth[29] and the consequences pursuant to misguided

ones. Readings of *Magnyfycence* that focus solely on the message of strict fiscal

conservation overlook the coordinate importance of expenditure.

     In an article concerning *Magnyfycence* and Tudor household governance, John

Scattergood points out that the Aristotelian virtue of liberality, upon which Skelton

arguably models his prince, pertained not only to moral but also to political governance.

The aspect of the interlude that has to do with the successful operations of the royal

household "is not distinct from the moral level," explains Scattergood, "because, for a

king or lord, the proper administration of a household was a moral, as well as a practical

and political matter" ("Household" 24). Therefore, this reading of the text does not

disregard the value and relevance of a spiritual, allegorical reading, for Aristotle's concept

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[29] In accord with Aristotle's use of the word in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, "wealth" will here refer to
"anything whose worth is measured by money."

of the mean implies value as well as character because only a good person will be able to locate and maintain the appropriate means for his social standing. With this necessary dualism in mind, exclusive attention to the spiritual axioms disregards the importance of the secular aspect of the early modern economy of royal status. In short, reading *Magnyfycence* strictly as an allegorical morality play precludes consideration of a complementary secular, ethical message in text. As most studies of *Magnyfycence* have exclusively dealt with the text in terms of a mean of spiritual virtue, this study will focus on the secular message of locating and maintaining decorous means of social behavior.

Critics of *Magnyfycence* often remark on the reciprocal relationship between health and wealth, noting how the prince's physical condition mirrors the state of his treasure keep. Yet, as Holtei and Bevington opine, this is not a text like *Everyman* or *The Castle of Perserverence* in which the emphatic message concerns the salvation of a soul. *Magnyfycence* is "practical," "historical," and "specific," and as such a strictly spiritualized examination of the text does not fully explain Magnyfycence's recovery in light of the worldly relation between the prince's physical and fiscal status. Undeniably, the overtly spiritual nature of Magnyfycence's restoration authorizes such a reading. For example, in the introduction to her critical edition of the interlude, Paula Neuss explains that the sudden and rather unbelievable reversal of Magnyfycence's bad fortune[30] was a common feature of the morality plays (30). Her failure to consider the ethical modality of the interlude leads her to conclude that the restoration of Magnyfycence to his former position of wealthful luxury in the end negates the verity of "measure is treasure" because

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[30] Good Hope appears from nowhere and rescues Magnyfycence from Dyspare (Suicide) at line 2324.

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"Measure does not return, nor does 'Wealthful Felicity', and so there seems no reason why 'treasure' should" (30).

As stated above, there is nothing inherently inaccurate with this sort of moralistic critique, for on the allegorical level of interpretation it is entirely appropriate. But allegory alone does not present a complete interpretation of Skelton's drama. Neuss' interpretation of the prince's exemplum flounders when a moral basis for the action is not supplemented with an understanding of the secular ethos of measure in relation to wealth because a moral modality alone has difficulties accounting for an idiosyncratic element of most early modern moralities such as the sudden remission of arrant behavior. Neuss explains the expeditious upswings of the principle characters' states (spiritual, physical, and financial) in *Magnyfycence* and interludes like *Mankind*, *Youth*, *Mundus et Infans*, and *Nature* with what she vaguely terms the "optimistic view" of a Tudor audience with regard to the final hopefulness of the Human situation (31). The hero's immoderate condition is remedied through the divine ministrations of the patient and merciful Virtues whose efficacy alone dispels the aggravating Vices; the protagonist does nothing but repent its misdirected ways and is saved, passively. For instance, noting that "Good Hope speaks like a churchman," she concludes that "he can be seen as coming from 'outside', rather than from the psychology of Magnificence" (31). However, Neuss provides a different reading regarding the emanation of the prince's bad behavior. "On the moral level those courtiers, the Vices, are concrete manifestations of the hero's own vice, <u>his</u> fancy, <u>his</u> folly" (37). Neuss' rationale here hinges on an assumption that Prince Magnyfycence signifies Henry VIII only in the sense that this is a narrative of a prince

who becomes confused by malevolent courtiers, ones who eventually impoverish him (37).

At the same time, one must not necessarily interpret the Vices--or even Magnyfycence--as representative of some person other than the king, say, Wolsey or any other historical person at Henry's court, just to soften the text's critical edges.[31] On the contrary, as Holtei, Bevington, and Scattergood argue, one can indeed interpret Prince Magnyfycence, as well as the virtues and vices, as representing Henry VIII when one restores a secular message to the interpretation of the interlude because the vices do not then of necessity signify spiritual, allegorical faults. They can be material, historical, mundane faults--ones which texts of this sort very often at this time took in hand, e.g., *Utopia, Castle of Sapience, The Praise of Folly*, or *King Johan*. It endows Magnyfycence with a status which Alistair Fox says was typical of civic/political "literature" of the first half of the sixteenth century (236-39). Fox calls *Magnyfycence* "the citizens' message" to Henry, a sort of nervous petition that the King desist his prodigality and temper his spending with measure (239). By tempering his message with the Aristotelian precept of virtuous large-scale giving, known as largess, Skelton utilizes a literary trope which allows him to be more specific in his censure of his sovereign's behavior without having to obscure or dilute his message in the medium of allegory simply to save his neck. The Aristotelian concept of the mean was a prevalent trope not only in the service of literature but in political and economic matters as well. Thus, Skelton could avoid seeming too direct by criticizing Henry's excessive behavior from the standpoint of an Aristotelian evaluation.

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[31] For example, see Hooper, Dodds, and Farnham.

Skelton's depiction of the condition and correction of excessive expenditure makes *Magnyfycence* relevant to a study of hafting and verbal combat. In addition to the Price's material profligacy, Skelton also demonstrates a prince whose use of words is as excessive and irresponsible as his spending. Just as the prince's immoderate use of his wealth is reflected in his decaying health, so too is his attitude toward the value of words and language. That is, *Magnyfycence* provides evidence of an assumption that language carries with it an inherent worth that is non-material yet valuable all the same. Therefore, a study of Skelton's application of the Aristotelian mean as demonstrated in *Magnyfycence* enlarges an understanding of hafting because the interlude features both a persona who symbolizes the ambivalence between flyting and hafting and characters who explicitly claim to be hafters. An examination of the rhetorical dynamics between social status and language in *Magnyfycence* complements allegorical interpretations of the interlude, providing a more satisfactorily unified reading of its dramatic structure. As such, Skelton's text can be read in the critical tradition of active, rhetorical self-fashioning which seems to inform so much of the literature of the sixteenth century.

Skelton's dramatis personae in *Magnyfycence* help explain the relative, rhetorical relationship between flyting and hafting which in practice resists explication. These characters embody rhetorical distinctions, not just allegorical personality types. In particular, the character named Fansy-Largesse is a good manifestation of the invisible distinction between hafting and flyting. He embodies both positive and negative aspects of giving since he is both a mean (when representative of largess) and excess (when seen as Fansy). However, he is not both at once; he is one or the other depending on the specific audience with whom he interacts. He is both flyter and hafter: Largesse, the

moderate virtue of right expenditure, and Fansy, the excess of that virtue. Furthermore, as no actual, self-respecting, sixteenth-century author sets out to write a hafting text or to stake a claim as a hafter, it is not likely that one will find an agent or author explicitly claiming this title. In addition to the portrait of Fansy-Largesse, *Magnyfycence* depicts several hafters in action--not only violating poetic virtues but in the process of creating the standards that define literary excesses. The vices actually profess this title for themselves, thereby providing rare portraits of self-proclaimed hafters in the process of making unruly literature.

"LARGESSE, THAT ALL LORDES SHOLDE LOVE"

Whereas interpretations of the text as a play illustrating the importance of right order focus perforce on the character named Measure, one of the most important personae when reading *Magnyfycence* in light of the distinction between flyting and hafting is Fansy, known to Magnyfycence (until the onset of his adversities) as Largesse. Scattergood defines this character of habit as "capricious whimsicality, erratic self-centeredness," and this is indeed a good description of Fansy's excessive behavior throughout the interlude. In contrast, the virtue largess represents a quality of regal bearing, referring to a king's liberality with treasure, wealth, and favor. Fansy, through the influence of Measure, is transformed into Largesse. The essential action, the distribution of wealth, may be figured both as a mean (as Largesse) and as an excess (as Fansy).

Fansy-Largesse makes six separate appearances, the first being at line 251. After briefly introducing himself to Magnyfycence and Felecity, Fansy-Largesse explains to

the prince the beneficial gifts that he brings with him or that he facilitates: "noblenesse," "worshyp," "pardon," "grace," "noble fame," and "name," understood to mean a good reputation (265-71). Fansy-Largesse announces himself to have been "brought up and bred" by aristocrats (261), a claim with which he authorizes himself to be the bearer of all these assets. Convinced that Fansy-Largesse ought to attend Magnyfycence, Felycyte suggests that the noble character should be added to the ranks of the prince's courtiers. "Yet we wyll therin take good delyberacyon," replies a circumspect Magnyfycence (275), who shortly thereafter states that "Largesse is laudable so it be in measure" (278). Fansy-Largesse's response to this statement begins the process of persuading Magnyfycence to forget his sagacity: "Largesse is he that all prynces doth avaunce; / I reporte me herein to Kynge Lewes of Fraunce" (279-80), expounds Fansy-Largesse, suggesting that the late Louis XII's lavish displays of wealth at his recent marriage to Mary Tudor, Henry VIII's sister, serve as a benchmark for royal generosity. This statement throws down a gauntlet before Magnyfycence, challenging him to compete with peers in a contest for national glory.

The prince eventually does allow Lyberte and Felycyte to associate freely with Fansy-Largesse, whose incessant pestering finally pays off: "What the devyll, man, your name shalbe the greter; / For welth without largess is all out of kynde" (1440-41). As this quotation clearly shows, Fansy-Largesse's selling point to the prince is always the promise of a greater, more impressive name, which represents the means through which he is able to capitalize on symbolic status as well as make the most of his wealth. And yet, even as a vice, Fansy-Largesse echoes Aristotle's dictum that giving, regardless of the quantity, must be measured in quality, what Fansy-Largesse refers to as "kynde."

Aristotle emphasizes that a virtuous individual must give in proportion proper to the situation at hand; the liberal person must spend the right amounts at the right time and upon the right persons or objects (*NE* 1120a23-25). In a later speech chiding Magnyfycence against deficient giving, Lyberte echoes Aristotle's precepts for large-scale giving, proclaiming, "But nowe adayes as huksters they hucke and they stycke,/ And pynche at the payment of a poddynge prycke"[32] (2121-22). The last phrase here is proverbial and can be paraphrased as "And be mean over the payment of something of small value." Here, Lyberte says it is a shame that a prince would put more effort into saving money than into fashioning and maintaining symbolic relations with nobles, peers, and the populace--the real sources of his honor and prestige (2124-25). In contrast, largess is treasure in action, and it benefits both the wealthy ruler and his subjects. To the benefit of his subjects, the ruler may use this wealth to provide material advantages such as roads, venture capital, walls, or artistic patronage. In return for peace and prosperity, citizens accord rulers obedience, respect, and loyalty--the very sorts of non-material symbolic assets which Fansy-Largesse purports to provide.

The prince's name, his reputation, functions as an indicator for evaluating the prince's symbolic capital, a sort of shorthand for describing him as a physical agent. The character Fansy-Largesse is of critical importance when examining Magnyfycence's non-material assets because it is through the action of giving away wealth that a ruler fashions a name, a reputation. There are no instances in the interlude of the prince associating with fellow humans, only personified states. No other persona represents a complex human being; in fact, one might argue that even Magnyfycence himself is an

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[32] *hucke*: to haggle, bargain; *stycke*: to hesitate; *pynche*: to behave miserly.

anthropomorphized assemblage of regal qualities. Read as an allegory, there is no practical exercise or test of the prince's agency in the interlude because Magnyfycence never interacts with fellow aristocrats or noble peers--only abstractions of them and only certain positive or negative qualities at that. Therefore, there seems to be no way actually to test the strength or validity of his symbolic bonds, and one is left to imagine what it would be like if a real prince, one such as Magnyfycence is fashioned as being, were to behave thus.

It is worth spending some time examining the relationship between spending and saving wealth and the connection between right spending and a reputation as a virtuous governor because the balance between these activities at first glance appears so arbitrary. Skelton designs *Magnyfycence* to reveal what happens specifically when one spends an excess of money on a large scale. This situation has importance as a parallel between flyting and hafting. Flyting might be conceived of as poetic expenditure on a grand scale; tropes and figures are employed with what seems to be an excess like unto those displayed in palaces such as Versailles or Schönbrun, or in regal attire worn by most of the Tudor monarchs. However, such expenditure is in keeping with the kind of person Louis XII or Elizabeth was. Likewise the displays of verbal combat are in proportion with the kind of poetic project flyting is. Nevertheless, as Skelton argues with *Magnyfycence,* there is a limit to large-scale giving at which point generosity becomes a vice. One can thereby see how verbal combat suggests itself to a mean and an excess: flyting and hafting.

In the beginning, Fansy-Largesse appeals to a sparing Magnyfycence to assume the mantle of generosity which accords his status as a monarch. Middling merchants

must make the most of their material capital because that is their stock in trade. Frugality is right for those whose livelihoods consist upon the commerce of material objects but not for those whose occupations, whose very existence, is founded largely upon the commerce of symbolic commodities such as honor, reputation, national peace, or international presence. The following lines highlight the class-bound qualities of generous giving:

> FAN. For largess stynteth all maner of stryfe.
>
> MAGN. It dothe so sure nowe and than.
>
> But largess is not mete for every man.
>
> FAN. No. But for you grete estates
>
> Largesse stynteth grete debates; (367-71)

Largess provides a ruler with a tool for making peace at home and abroad, thereby simultaneously supplying him with a means for strengthening the political and economic integrity of his nation as well as assuring his popularity with the citizenry. Monarchs and nobles can afford to be liberal with material capital because they have recourse to a treasury of symbolic capital like no other class of citizen. In fact, they cannot <u>afford</u> to hoard their wealth:

> Measure is mete for a marchauntes hall
>
> But largess becometh a state ryall.
>
> What! Sholde you pynche at a pecke of grotes
>
> Ye wolde sone pynche at a pecke of otes.

> Thus is the talkynge of one and of oder,
>
> As men dare speke it hugger mugger:
>
> 'A lorde a negarde, it is a shame.' (382-88)

To this end, it is Magnyfycence's reputation, not his material wealth, that Fansy-Largesse promises to restore when people carp against a stingy king: "But largess may amende your name" (389).

Fansy-Largesse is not the only character, however, who advises Magnyfycence concerning the tenuous balance between liberality and prodigality. After Magnyfycence is saved by the virtue named Good Hope and is restored to health and wealth by the three other Virtues, Redresse tells the prince to "Be gentyll, then, of corage, and lerne to be kynde; / For of noblenesse the chefe poynt is to be lyberall, / So that your largess be not to prodygall" (2486-88). Cyrcumspeccyon follows this by stating that "Lyberte to a lorde belongyth of ryght" (2489) but it must be used prudently. Furthermore, one should be cautious not to err subsequently on the side of overdetermined frugality. Miserliness too is a vice; the *Household Ordinance of 1478* kept for Edward IV states that both prodigality and greed are to be avoided but that "auarice . . . is the werse extremite, and a vice moore odiouse and detestable" (qtd. in Scattergood, "Household" 26-27). Scattergood convincingly argues that statements such as this and others like it found in the household books kept for Henry VII and Henry VIII clearly relate to the matter at hand in *Magnyfycence* ("Household" 27). Perseveraunce concludes the series of admonishments, informing Magnyfycence that if he wishes to increase his symbolic wealth--his "honour"--he should dress himself "with magnanymyte" and remember

always that both his wealth and self are perishable, in spite of his apparent "dygnyte" (2496-99).

Several recent critical examinations of *Magnyfycence* point to the relevance of the household books kept by fifteenth- and sixteenth-century English monarchs.[33] These books provided not only accounting and quantitative information regarding expenditures and receipts but also practical perceptions concerning responsible royal fiscal behavior, e.g., time-honored advice, practical rules of thumb, as well as biblical and historical exemplars to lend support to the various policies and instructions for maintaining the solvency of the royal household. A look at household books further clarifies the theoretical division yet practical ambiguity between flyting and hafting by figuring a mean (right expense) as a certain yet wholly unexplicated state reached through the tension between deficiency and excess. In an article on the governance of the Tudor royal household, John Scattergood examines *The Black Book of the Household of Edward IV* and the bifurcation of the household into the *domus regie magnificencie* and the *domus providencie*. The former division, under the supervision of the Lord Chamberlain, was "the public face of the Household which demonstrated the magnificence of the ruler by lavish expenditure and display" (25). In this respect, the *domus regie magnificencie* was in essence responsible for the maintenance of the ruler's symbolic capital, that is, for distribution of the king's wealth in accordance with the Aristotelian precepts for magnificent expenditures upon the right persons and projects, at the right time, and in the right amount (*NE* 1122a18-1123b33). Aristotle prescribes that magnificence pertains to

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[33] In addition to Scattergood's article discussed here in detail, see Walker, *Plays of Persuasion* 76-88 and Starkey.

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large-scale public works, such as the construction of walls, ships, expenses for the gods, or the provisions for a chorus (*choregoi*), which were considerably expensive (*NE* 1122b19-24). In the context of Yorkist and Tudor England, magnificence could be demonstrated in grand celebrations reminiscent of chivalric spectacles. In addition to the funding of regular holidays, there were elaborate disguisings, lavish dramatic productions, and fantastically expensive international convocations, the exemplary instance being the Field of Cloth of Gold, the 1520 diplomatic meeting between Henry VIII and Francis I at Guisnes in northern France, "which was hailed as the eighth wonder of the world" (Guy 106). The aim of these grand public expenditures was "chiefly propagandist," explains Guy; "Court displays provided a method of transmitting political, diplomatic, and religious messages as well as of glorifying the Tudor dynasty" (424), and the *domus regie magnificencie* would have overseen all of this.

In contrast with distribution, the *domus providencie* was the body that conducted the strict accounting operations where "control over expenses was regulated in relation to income" (Scattergood, "Household" 25). The Lord Steward was the overseer of this half of the household. His duty was to approve all expenditures and enforce proper and timely collection of receipts due unto the royal household. This operation would have been conducted out of public view; in fact, Scattergood calls it "the below-stairs department" (25). The emphasis on quantitative accounting and cost analysis clearly associates this half of the household fiscal services with conservation of material capital. The *domus providencie* and the *domus regie magnificencie* would have worked in concert though to make the most of the king's wealth, both houses striving in its own way to reach the mean of magnificence. Scattergood cites a sentence from the *Black Book of the*

Household of Edward IV that provides a concise summary of the principles grounding

regal giving and getting: "'The kyng wull haue his goods dispended but not wasted'"

(25). Interestingly, the *Black Book* names the excess state ("wasted") of the action

("dispended") but does not name the mean or its deficient state. One begins to wonder at

the likelihood of a monarch spending too little and the coordinate deficiency in verbal

combat of a flyter using too few tropes or not enough aggressive word play.

One finds similar avocations in other sixteenth-century texts contemporary to

Magnyfycence. Castiglione's *The Courtier* suggests that the prince

> ought to be full of liberality and sumptuous, and giue unto euerye manne
>
> without stint, for God (as they say) is the tresaurer of freharted princis:
>
> make gorgious bankettes, feastes, games, people pleasinge showes, kepe a
>
> great number of faire horses for profit in war, and for pleasure in peace,
>
> Haukes, Houndes, and all other matters that beelong to the contentation of
>
> great Princis and the people. (288)

Thomas Elyot's *The Governor* presents another case in point strongly commending royal

liberality. "Therfore he [a governor] ought to consider to whom he shulde gyue, howe

moche, and whan. For liberalitie . . . resteth nat in the quanitite or qualitie of thynges that

be gyuen but in the naturall disposition of the gyuer" (113). Elyot's claim here--that

generosity is to be measured according to the physical and natural characteristics of the

giver and <u>not</u> by the material quality of the gift itself--falls in line with Fansy-Largesse's

argument for generosity and the Aristotelian negotiations of royal wealth. Elyot allows

the symbolic status of the giver to dominate the action. Both Castiglione's and Elyot's

views are well grounded in the advice concerning the appropriate sphere of magnificence

in the *Nicomachean Ethics*: "But in all cases, as we have said, we fix the right amount by reference to the agent [as well as the task]--by who he is and what resources he has; for the amounts must be worthy of these, fitting the producer as well as the product" (1122b24-26).

Elyot continues to reiterate the importance of this gift ethic particularly as it pertains to rulers: "Natwithstandinge that liberalitie in a noble man specially is commended all though it somwhat do excede the termes of measure; yet if it be well and duely emploied it acquireth parpetuall honour to the giver, and moche frute and singuler commoditie therby encreaseth" (113). Here, Elyot is saying that a certain class of citizen--the nobility--may spend and extend goods beyond what is considered good measure for most people. What does the nobility receive in return? Honor, a non-material yet highly valuable commodity for rulers and nobles, which, as John Guy notes, "was the cornerstone of aristocratic culture" (82). When kings, emperors, and other magnificent heads of state fell into disagreement with one another, they felt they had no higher authority to whom they might appeal and so used warfare when political negotiation broke down, explains Guy (82). "'[H]onour' in the Renaissance was necessarily defended in the last resort by battle" (Guy 82).

"NOWE WHAT IS HIS NAME? AND WHAT IS THYNE?"

One of the ostensible reasons, it seems, which twentieth-century critics have for misrecognizing the secular message of *Magnyfycence* is that so much of the notion concerning non-material assets such as reputation and status has been subsumed into the domain of the spiritual. What is left for "the world" is that which can be counted and

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assessed for certain. If an object cannot be quantified and it is not part of the explicitly

defined realm of the Western spiritual world, there is a presiding antipathy for it. This

diminishment of power in secular symbolic bonds goes back to a mistrust and

demonization of what cannot be seen. In turn, this attitude has its origins in the sort of

duplicity and doubleness which *Magnyfycence* exemplifies with the Vices, characters

who change their names in order to abuse the prince[34] and who lie about their capacities

for affecting his reputation.

This misunderstanding occurs because Magnyfycence unbridles his will and

ignores the proverbial importance of keeping measure in court affairs. The prince's

behavior is often interpreted as representative of allowing one's hedonistic will to infect

the soul's purer inclinations toward God. However, once again the spiritual side of the

economy of symbolic interactions predominates in such an interpretation of the text and

thereby excludes consideration of the non-spiritual aspects of symbolic capital. Granted,

this sort of duplicity is not redeemable simply because it has been so often ignored, for it

certainly generates negative consequences for Magnyfycence. However, in order to

avoid the vocabulary and critical perception of the spiritual symbolic capital, the action

can be cast in the language of economics and be labeled a poor exchange, for that is what

it actually is for Magnyfycence.

When this idea of a fraudulent exchange is applied to the text, one can recognize

the situation described in so many instances of the use of the word *haft-*. That is, a

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[34] The Vices are first misnamed to Magnyfycence as follows: Fansy = Largesse (270); Counterfet
Countenaunce = Good Demeynaunce (676); Crafty Conveyaunce = Surveyaunce (525); Clokyd Colusyon =
Sober Sadness (681); Courtly Abusyon = Lusty Pleasure (964); Foly = Consayte (1309).

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misrepresentation of one sort or another is proffered by one party with the hope that another party will be "taken in" by the false appearance, to the advantage of the malicious hafter. This advantage is usually in the form of a material gain, e.g., when one reneges or withholds on a contract of payment, or when a con artist persuades a gullible individual into believing that he will be receiving recompense for the material capital he ventures.

Even when the terms of a contract are explicit, hafters violate an implicit trust between contracted individuals, that being an agreement that each party receives an equal recompense out of the exchange. Thus, in a huckster's confidence game, a rube's material capital is secured with the assurance that it will be returned, possibly with interest, due to a hope that he can "beat the odds." Disappointment follows the loss of the ventured capital accompanied by a realization that one was deceived into believing that he might be able to make a profit in spite of chance or duplicity.

This is essentially the condition of the Vices in Magnyfycence and their name changes occur out of a necessity to enter the marketplace of symbolic exchange and to conduct business at court on the basis of their names. A lesson of *Magnyfycence*, however, is that character is not altered simply with the adoption of a name. It must be earned in the sense that one labors to endow a name with a certain degree of symbolic validity. When such labor is faked, a condition of hafting results such as demonstrated in the soliloquy by Clokyd Colusyon at lines 689 through 744. This speech is indicative of many of the Vices' soliloquies in *Magnyfycence* in that Clokyd Colusyon here provides an amplification of his name by describing his character in detail. Since Clokyd Colusyon reveals himself to the audience as the maleficent hafter that he is, his autobiography, although shocking to the degree in which he delights in his brand of vice,

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should come as no surprise: "Double delynge and I be all one" (696), "Two faces in a

hode covertly I bere" (710), "My speche is all pleasure, but I stynge lyke a waspe" (730).

The final stanza of this fifty-six line soliloquy presents a summary of Clokyd Colusyon's

behavior and aims, in a way which represents a technical outline of how he drives a

person to sadness, madness, and despair:

> To flater and to flery is all my pretence
>
> Amonge all suche persones as I well understonde
>
> Be lyght of byleve and hasty of credence;
>
> I make them to startyll and sparkyll lyke a bronde [brand];
>
> I move them, I mase them, I make them so fonde,
>
> That they wyll here no man but the fyrst tale.
>
> And so, by these meanes, I brewe moche bale. (738-44)

He proclaims himself the originator of "Craftynge and haftynge" (697) and suggests the

elements of his own trinity of deception: "dyvysyon, dyssencyon, dyrysyon--these thre /

And I, am counterfet of one mynde and thought / By the menys of myschef to bryng all

thynges to nought" (700-02).

Courtly Abusyon represents the most perfect manifestation of treasure at rest

since all material capital is converted into a display only for the private self. Such

expenditures resemble expensive pageants and regal displays in manner but differ

entirely in mode as they cannot readily be converted to forms of symbolic capital which

obligate others to acknowledge a debt of honor or grace to Magnyfycence. Courtly

Abusyon's persona is emphasized in his extreme emphasis on outward appearances such

as his gown, hose, and shoes, which he notes in the quotation above. All of this excess,

however, leads to "confusyon" (858) and death--"Wherfore I preve, / A Tyborne checke / Shall breke his necke" (909-11).

In having Counterfet Countenaunce explain his particular modus operandi, Skelton depicts more than simply another aspect of deception. As he is a thief of names, Counterfet Countenaunce is a thief of the symbolic capital associated with those names. It is the non-material aspect of capital that he acknowledges as so easy to abuse: "A mynstrell lyke a man of myght, / A tappyster lyke a lady bryght" (419-20), "Counterfet maydenhode may well be borne" (445). Interestingly, the way to steal this sort of symbolic capital is by means of money and language. "Counterfet maters in the lawe of the lande-- / Wyth golde and grotes they grese my hande" (431-32), he proclaims, and he encourages falsifying accounts by adjusting receipt records (443-44). Friars and nuns "gyve me a fee" in order to learn how to feign charity simply by saying "*benedicite*" (487-91). "Counterfet langage" in this manner, he instructs: "*fayty bone geyte,*" which itself is "a corruption of the French phrase *fait a bon get* or *geste* meaning 'elegant' or 'finely fashioned'" (Scattergood 438). According to Counterfet Countenaunce's account, counterfeiting much resembles dramaturgy, as when he advises to "[c]ounterfet eyrnest by way of playes" (427), "Swere and stare, and byde therby, / And countenaunce it clenly, / And defende it manerly" (414-16) sounding almost like a director instructing an actor to portray a resolute character.

In addition to these self-proclaimed hafting vices, there are two instances of hafting later in the interlude that explicate the relationship between deceptive actions and words. The first occurs in lines 1630 to 1725. Estranged from Magnyfycence, Measure petitions Clokyd Colusyon to serve as his representative before the prince and pays

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Colusyon a non-refundable fee to plead for repatronization. Colusyon informs the prince that he has signed with Measure a bill of annual income should Measure's suit be approved. However, Colusyon could not care less about his suitor because he has already received his payment. "And he go to the devyll, so that I may have my fee, / What care I?" quips Colusyon, to which Magnyfycence replies, "By the masse, well sayd" (1670-71). Courtly Abusyon remains a little skeptical, speculating that Measure might recognize that he was being duped, and so, in order to mask his duplicity, Colusyon suggests that Measure be allowed a brief audience before Magnyfycence, at which time the prince will angrily deny his petition and banish Measure for good. A fine plan, the prince says, commending Colusyon's hypocrisy. "So it is all the maner nowe a dayes," explains Colusyon, "For to use suche haftynge and crafty wayes" (1677-78). This episode highlights the sixteenth-century connotation of social hafting having to do with deceitful actions performed to swindle a person for money. The subsequent scene between Magnyfycence and Clokyd Colusyon exemplifies the linguistic aspect of hafting that entails the substitution of empty, valueless words for valuable, symbolically full language. Clokyd Colusyon advises Magnyfycence with the same advice regarding large-scale giving one finds throughout the interlude: nobles have a different sort of relationship to establish with respect to material wealth than do common classes. But Clokyd Colusyon misadvises Magnyfycence here, perverting this prerogative just as he bastardizes the rhyme-royal meter of his soliloquy. When Magnyfycence, sheepishly submits the caveat, "Yet somtyme, parde, I must use largesse" (1755), Clokyd Colusyon's affirms his statement but advises him to be generous with the wrong sort of

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capital--not with his own property and material wealth, but with words, since they may be
given away without subtracting from his store of material capital.

> It is the gyse nowe, I say, over all--
>
> Largesse in wordes--for rewardes are but small.
>
> To make fayre promyse, what are ye the worse?
>
> Let me have the rule of your purse. (1759-62)

This advice obviously goes against all previously recognized dicta concerning the use of
largess to affect the status of a "good" name. The value of generous giving is demolished
because it no longer possesses the ability to affect the giver's reputation.

Here the dynamics of hafting as they pertain to language become clear. Clokyd
Colusyon ignores the symbolic side of language--the significance of vows, oaths, and
promises--which is to say, the ability of the giver to secure symbolic capital through the
process of fair exchange. All transactions occur on a material level only, without regard
for the character (*ethos*) constructed by an agent. Words, then, are freed from the
signifying agent and become free-floating signs with a more or less disposable signifier,
i.e., words mean whatever one wants them to mean and the ethos of the speaker has no
grounding in reality. This process of dislocating the monistic sign-to-signifier
relationship is a part of the semiotic shuffling typifying the language of hafters who are
renowned cavilers and wranglers. Recall that several sixteenth-century definitions for
haft mention sophists and sophistry as synonyms and the connections between language,
persona, and power become clearer.

Magnyfycence exemplifies the relationship between unruly language and corrupt
character through the Vices' use of indecorous verse forms and meters. How does one

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know these characters are "bad"? Because one recognizes that their speech is inappropriate for their stations. Aside from the visual clues regarding Magnyfycence's debased character, how would one discern the condition of his soul? By the fact that he begins speaking an idiom that had already been explicitly recognized by Counterfet Countenaunce himself as an instance of vulgar appropriation of poetic forms traditionally reserved for more dignified subjects and speakers.

Clokyd Colusyon's soliloquy is composed in rhyme-royal stanzas. This dignified meter and manner of speech are incongruous with his status as a Vice. The rhyme-royal stanza, with four-stress lines and a heavy caesura, is used particularly for the debate of the Virtues at the beginning, and the didacticism at the end of the play. "The rhyme-royal form," explains Paula Neuss, "is used by the Vices in places where they pretend to dignity. . . ." (54). For example, each of Clokyd Colusyon's stanzas is packed with alliteration, some of which follows the versification patterns in Old English poetry in that the same stressed consonant or vowel sound before the caesura is repeated twice after it. For example, line 735, "I *l*aughe at all shrewdenes, | and *l*ye at *l*yberte," demonstrates a perfect separation of six syllables on either side of the pronounced break after "shrewdenes," as well as a consonated "l," with the 1:2 arrangement, each hemistich possessing two stresses.46 The subsequent line presents an instance of 2:1 consonance in which the post-caesura "m" is not the first letter of the word but instead the sound which receives the first stress: "I *m*uster, I *m*edle | a*m*onge these grete estates" (736). The caesura breaks the Alexandrine line 737 in half, but the initial consonance is contained on either side of the caesura, the justification perhaps being that the second stress in the first hemistich falls on the syllable sounding "dish" (fourth syllable), as well as the emphasis

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upon the "d" in "sedes," which thereby links the consonance across the caesura

Additionally, the "s" sounds from the first hemistich are echoed twice in the second,

making this a very metrically compact line, a fact which emphasizes both what Clokyd

Colusyon does as well as the truth of this statement:

I *s*owe *s*edycyous *s*edes | of *dy*scorde and *de*bates.

All of this ornate metrical architecture serves to elevate Clokyd Colusyon's speech

beyond his station, effectually clothing his language in garb borrowed from above his

social station. As Neuss asserts, a sixteenth-century observer would have readily sensed

the impropriety of a villain using metrically ornate language (54).

Immediately after Clokyd Colusyon finishes his speech, Courtly Abusyon makes

his initial appearance, as if Colusyon's speech had magically invoked a materialization of

the startling, sparkling, amazing guises he himself confesses to using. Courtly Abusyon's

subsequent soliloquy demonstrates imposturing like that of the previous vice. However,

the staid meter of the rhyme-royal stanza is snipped in half, each line possessing (with a

few exceptions) four syllables and a single metrical accent. The fourth stanza is typical:

Beyonde measure

My sleve is wyde;

Al of pleasure

My hose strayte tyde;

My buskyn wyde,

Ryche to beholde

Gletterynge in golde. (849-55)

In contrast with the fuller, more stately pentameter and Alexandrine lines of Clokyd Colusyon's soliloquy, the idiom of Courtly Abusyon resembles the clipped meter used by Skelton previously in his flyting and invective verses, "Phyllyp Sparowe," and, several years after the composition of *Magnyfycence*, in "Elynour Rummynge," "Collyn Clout," "Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?," and the "Replycacion." Obviously, these lines most resemble the poet's trademark stylistic idiom, the Skeltonic, which, as it is commonly perceived as a debased metrical form, befits Courtly Abusyon's status as the most flagrant misappropriation of the prince's material wealth.

The soliloquy of Counterfet Countenaunce provides another instance of a Vice appropriating a verse form above his station. This speech encompasses ninety lines (403-93) arranged into thirteen seven-line stanzas which appear to be instances of rhyme-royal but vary so much from the norm of that scheme that they really should not labeled thus. Alternately, Counterfet Countenaunce himself provides a more accurate description of his style of versification: "But nowe wyll I, that they be gone, / In bastarde ryme, after the dogrell gyse, / Tell you where of my name dothe ryse" (407-09). The notion of a "bastarde ryme" scheme encapsulates the concept of false appearances and sets the tone for this character's disposition. As Neuss describes, "Countenance . . . uses leashes of seven four-stress lines, another sort of perversion, or bastardization, as he suggests, of the seven lines and four stresses in rhyme-royal" (54).

These lines represent one of the illustrious comments Skelton himself makes on the Skeltonic. Another such commentary upon his rude rhyming, perhaps the *locus classicus* of Skelton's canon, appears in "Collyn Clout":

> For though my ryme be ragged,
>
> Tattered and jagged,
>
> Rudely rayne-beaten,
>
> Rusty and mothe-eaten,
>
> Yf ye take well therwith
>
> It hath in it some pyth. (53-58)

Except for Counterfet Countenaunce's first and tenth stanzas (ll. 403-09, 466-72), each stanza possesses a single terminal rhyme sound for all seven lines, e.g., all of the seven final words in the second stanza (ll. 410-16) rhyme with a long "i" as in "I" and "therby," (although Skelton stretches to include "foly," "clenly," and "manerly"). In the third stanza, all terminal words rhyme with "knyght." The ninth stanza quoted here in full is representative:

> It wolde be nyce, thoughe I say nay;
>
> By crede, it wolde have fresshe aray,
>
> 'And therfore shall my husbande pay.'
>
> To counterfet she wyll assay
>
> All the newe gyse, fresshe and gaye,
>
> And be as praty as she may,
>
> And jet it joly as a jay. (459-65)

And so it goes for the rest of the soliloquy; when read aloud, the effect really is rather impressive.

In contrast with the mesmerizing drone of these lines, in the first stanza the second through the seventh lines are rhymed in couplets, the first being unpaired.[35] Although there is no final rhyme in the tenth stanza, Skelton uses the adjective "Counterfet" to begin each line, creating a list of falsified objects and activities in which Counterfet Countenaunce has a hand: "prechynge," "conscyence," "sadnesse" [seriousness], "holynes," "reason," "wysdom," and, as the summary endorsement for all such duplicity, "Counterfet Countenaunce every man dothe occupy" (472). Traditional indicators of social status mean nothing with Counterfet Countenaunce, for he is a thief of names and reputations. "A knave wyll counterfet nowe a knyght, / A lurdayne [vagabond] lyke a lorde to syght" (417-18), he proclaims and then suggests that all this confusion of customary social roles leaves everyone fighting "wyth thryft," their desperate struggles leading eventually "[t]o Tyburne, where they hange on hyght" (423).

The cumulative effect of divorcing the non-material value of a reputation or of words from the material signifier of the agent or speaker is demonstrated in Magnyfycence's dialogue with Poverte at lines 1955-2047, especially 1975 to 2019. This is a diatribe against material wealth. What makes wealth bad though is not an inherently evil essence within money and material objects but an unnatural dissociation of material and symbolic capitals. For example, Poverte tells the prince, "For thoughe you were somtyme a noble estate, / Nowe must you lerne to begge at every mannes gate" (1980-81). Poverte here represents not so much a Vice as he does a deficiency of Felecity, the representative of prosperous happiness. Poverty, at least as demonstrated in this text, is a capacity because its end lies not simply in impoverishment but in bringing about a certain

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[35] 1: "net"; 2-3: "Magnyfycence/pretence"; 4-5: "stone/gone"; 6-7: "gyse/ryse."

state of mind with regard to wealth. Poverte is what befits Magnyfycence now that he

has voided himself of all his wealth and symbolic capitals. In an impressive series of

lines, Poverte strips away all that signifies Magnyfycence's social rank. Readers are

shown a line-by-line transformation of the prince denuded of all his regal habiliments.

First removed are the elements of his comfort: featherbeds and warm drinks to aid

sleeping. Next, sumptuous meals, then his fine apparel and array, followed by a

deprivation of ceremony attending his living. Finally, readers are shown the culmination

of all this degradation upon Magnyfycence's own body, his ultimate means of signifying

his status:

> Your skynne that was wrapped in shertes of Raynes,
>
> Nowe must be stormy beten with showres and raynes.
>
> Your hede that was wonte to be happed moost drowpy and drowsy,
>
> Now shal ye be scabbed, scurvy, and lowsy. (2016-19)

As he exits, Poverte gives Magnyfycence two options for restoring wealth,

robbery or beggary, providing a brief argument in favor of the later. Although begging is

humiliating, it is better to live with shame than be hanged for crime, "For by robbynge

they rynne to *in manus tuas* quecke" (2044). Both of these activities have the uncertain

potential for restoring the prince's wealth; alternately they will do nothing to revitalize

Magnyfycence's honorable status because they render him a receiver and not a giver,

effectively canceling out his efficacy by eliminating his namesake.

Interestingly, these are exactly the same preoccupations with deficient giving that

Aristotle mentions in the *Nicomachean Ethics* regarding magnaminity. "The gambler and

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the robber,"[36] are both classified as people too concerned with taking money, "shameful lovers of gain" who err both by taking from inappropriate sources, such as friends and neighbors, and by being ungenerous with wealth once they acquire it (1122a8-17). Moreover, the lives of gamblers and thieves are dangerous; the former because it is shameful to take from one's friends and the later because it is punishable by death. Poverte's reasoning parallels Aristotle's: robbery threatens death, which represents the ultimate end of one's physical existence; beggary threatens public humiliation, the ultimate end of social status. Gambling and begging prefigure the sorts of activities practiced by hafters found in later sixteenth-century literature.

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[36] Ross translates the later as "footpad," and McKeon glosses this word as "highwayman."

CHAPTER THREE

Courtiers, Scholars, and Hafters

Scire tuum nihil est nisi te scire, hoc sciat alter.
      Which I haue turned into English, not so briefly, but more at large
of purpose the better to declare the nature of the figure: as thus,
Thou vveenest thy vvit nought vvorth if other vveet it not
As vvel as thou thy selfe, but o thing vvell I vvot,
Who so in earnest vveenes, he doth in mine aduise,
Shevv himselfe vvitlesse, or more vvittie than vvise.
                George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*

Elegant diction, whether in writing or speaking, is an effective means of
reputability.
                Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*

After the frequency with which *haft* is used by Horman and especially by Skelton,

the word seems to recede from the vocabulary of sixteenth-century authors. Authors

simply do not select this word, even when its use might seem to make sense in the

company of other sorts of social transgressions. Although there does not seem to be a

good explanation for this, perhaps the word has associations of which we are still not

fully aware. An inspection of the OED citations for *haft* and *hafting* following Skelton's

uses (concluding in 1526) reveal the word used mainly in two sorts of texts: in

dictionaries as an English synonym for foreign words connoting cavilling, haggling, or

trickery and in texts touching on a number of social issues, several of which have to do

with money. For example, one instance of *haft* given in OED after citations from Skelton

comes from Miles Coverdale's "Prologue" to Erasmus' commentary on the New

Testament book of Ephesians (1549) in which Coverdale presents some extremely anti-

Roman Catholic opinions. His use of the word, "Whan was there more haftyng and

craftyng to scrape money to gether, and lesse succortyng of pore wydowes, fatherles children, and poore neady impotent persons, than now," situates it in the context of wily behavior for the acquisition or accumulation of money without regard for the poor or disadvantaged. This sense evokes similarities with Thomas Tusser's use, one which suggests a spirit of grudgery regarding religious tithing: "Spende none but thyne owne, how soeuer thou spende: nor haft not to god ward, for that he doth sende" (1557). Coverdale's pairing of "craftyng" with "haftyng" is telling for it seems to resonate with Thomas Cooper's gloss of the word *cavilla* as "an haftyng question," and a *cavillatio* as "a subtill wrestyng of a false thyng to a purpose" (1565-73). Similarly, Walter W. Skeat's *A Glossary of Tudor and Stuart Words* (1968) defines *haft* as "to use shifts." William Horman translates *hafter* into Latin as *callidis*, the verb *calleo, -ere* meaning "to know by experience or practice, to understand; to be experienced, clever, skillful," all of which suggests that deception might be practiced and perfected with a fair amount of skill. Furthermore, Coverdale's "haftyng and craftyng" echoes Skelton's Cloked Colusyon, who brags, "Craftynge and haftynge contryved is by me; / I can dyssemble; I can bothe laughe and grone" (697). Cloked Colusyon is also the character in *Magnyfycence* who observes that "So it is all the maner nowe a dayes / For to use suche haftynge and crafty wayes" (1677-78). Upon Magnyfycence's redemption, the ministers advise the Prince,

> REDRESSE. Use not then your countenaunce for to counterfet.
>
> SAD CYRCUMSPECYON. And from crafters and hafters I you
>
> forfende. (2455-56)

The denotations for the substantive "craft" which seem appropriate here suggest skillfulness, particularly human skill "applied to deceive or overreach; deceit, guile, fraud, cunning," and art as opposed to nature. Thus, the "crafting" Skelton and Coverdale seem to have in mind links hafting with "crafty or artful dealing; using crafty devices."

In one sense, *haft* resembles the notion of self-fashioning in that both suggest movements within any particular field aimed at seeking an advantage over other agents in that field. However, the theorizations of new historicist and cultural materialist criticism seem to have constructed self-fashioning as an activity which might be practiced with an amount of esteem. In contrast, the only evidence which exists of individuals taking personal responsibility in their hafting are the vices in *Magnyfycence*. Other than those singularly perverse fictional personae, no one claims, or would want to claim, to be a hafter. Hafting, then, seems to suggest the seamy side of self-fashioning. However, hafting does not simply forebode crafty words and dishonesty. Hafting words might be used (and misused) for the purposes of securing financial gain but even this conception is a bit misdirected because the words themselves are not the sole means to extortion, for then hafting might as well simply mean "lying," "scheming" or "hypocrisy." Another denotation which the OED citations of *haft* seem to support is "to hold off, hang back," "hesitation, demur," and careful inspection of the citations suggests why. Whether used in the context of extortion or military maneuvering, the denotations of *haft* which suggest cavilling or reticence and the corresponding citations consistently suggest the action of remaining aloof and of using time (consuming time) as a buffer between the "hafter" and his audience. When this time becomes apparent, or, to state matters more accurately,

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when the agent (hafter) delays in such a way so as to make the consumption of time appear as a tactical move redounding to his advantage and to the disadvantage of others, the hafter can be denigrated or condemned as an idler, as one who uses time irresponsibly or perhaps even criminally. However, if the hafter successfully perpetrates his consumption of time then he stands to convert his position into a tactical advantage. Much of what underlies the association between the word and the deed of hafting seems to be connected with the hafter's physical position in relation to others around them. Perhaps the attempt to understand the word is confounded by an inability to envision where a hafter is when he acts.

In order to address this issue regarding hafting and physical space, I turn briefly now to a painting entitled "The Conjuror" (1475-1480) by the Netherlandish artist Hieronymus Bosch (see Figure 1. on the following page). In this scene one finds the sort of folly which serves as a subject for northern Renaissance painters time and time again. Bosch depicts a magician performing a miraculous slight of hand: pulling toads out of the mouth of an incredulous volunteer. As amazing as this spectacle is--perhaps it would be better to say <u>because</u> this sight is so amazing--the members of the audience remain oblivious to a second, more genuine slight of hand, the purse nipping of the toad-spitting dupe. The crowd's attention is focused on the ostensible center of the spectacle, the magician. Indeed, this is where the "power" of attraction lies for the audience. And yet, the figure standing at the farthest remove is also a center of attraction--for us, the viewers. Whether they are in cahoots or not, the miracle of the toad extraction conceals the crime, which must be conducted at a remove from, in the opposite direction from, the main attraction in order to be successful. The purse cutter lags behind the rest of the
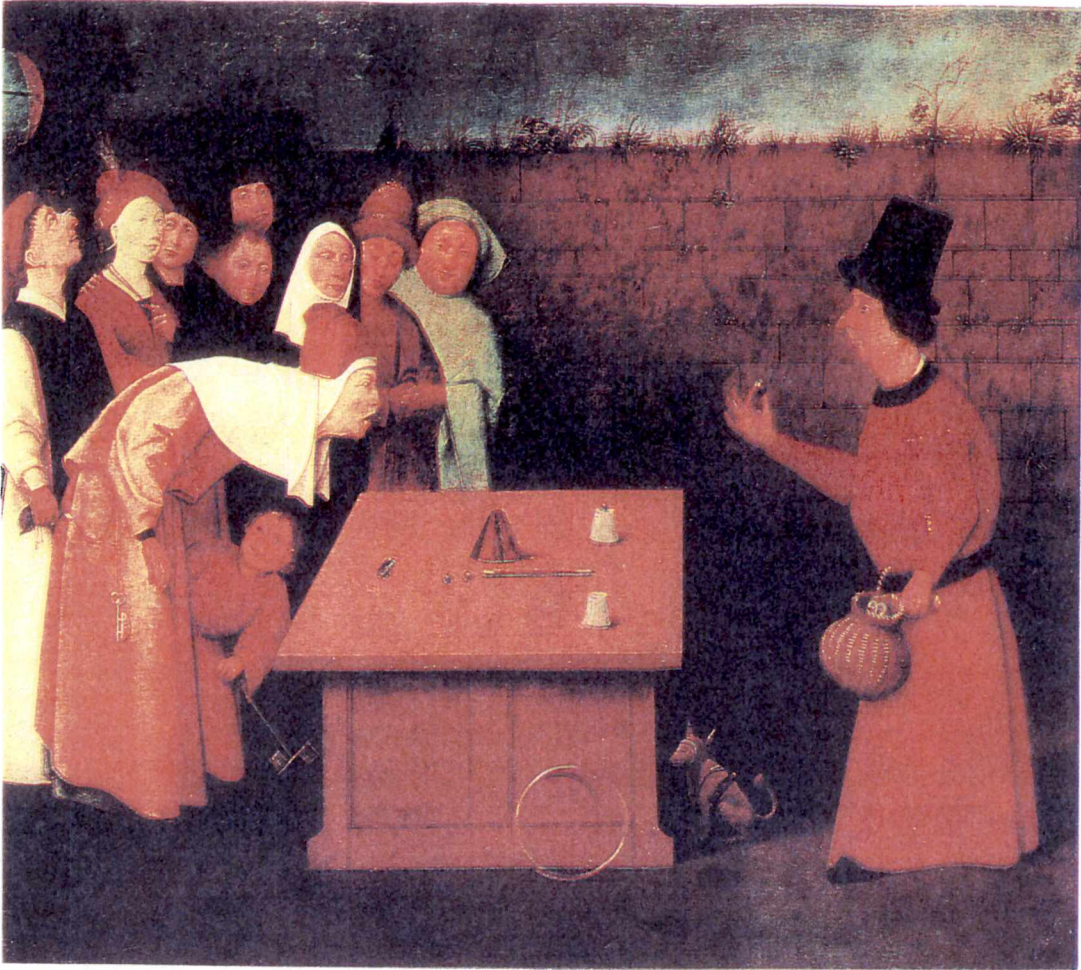
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Figure 1. "The Conjuror"

crowd for the purposes of gaining the advantage of the spectator's purse. Additionally, his lagging enables him to see and not be seen. What Bosch's painting shows so well with regard to hafting is how one form of action hides another. The magician's show is really just a ruse for purse snatching. In a similar fashion, the enchanting words used by Skelton's Cloked Colusyon (or Courtly Abusyon or Fansy, etc.) veil sinister motives for draining Prince Magnyfycence of his wealth, both material and symbolic.

On the whole, *haft* clearly maintains negative connotations. One would evidently never want to label one's self a hafter. Conversely, one might wish to call attention to an adversary's hafting. Ironically, it seems that the best way to espy hafting is to remain apart from one's immediate environment, to take a removed, disinterested stance in relation to one's surroundings, in other words, to haft. In her recent study of slander as both a social practice and a legal problem, M. Lindsay Kaplan points out similar constructions of malignant language in the Renaissance. A "slanderer" is both one making false, malicious, or defaming statements against an undeserving person, and at the same time one whose guilt, disgrace, or infamy becomes exposed. This is virtually the same concept as hafting. "The very problem with defamation is its ability to be believed and thus inflict damage on its victim. How is the listener to determine whether the accusation is true or false, if the victim is or is not deserving of ill repute?" (Kaplan 13). But one's hafting must be concealed or else it will bring down on oneself condemnation as one who consumes/wastes time for one's own private purposes.

It is the use of one's ability to control the limits of artistic discourse as a tactical advantage which I want to draw forth from the arguments of Sidney and Puttenham in defense of and in description of English poesie. In this sense, the poet uses time--idle

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time, personal time--to construct his poesie. Likewise, Sidney's and Puttenham's

constructions of English poesie conceal a distance between the capacity to fashion a

public self and the capacity to compose pleasant ditties to please the ears of court

denizens. That is, poesie is an unacknowledged legislator of symbolic capital which

circulates in the guise of a text which delights and teaches. This chapter will first

establish how this distance is concealed via the concepts of decorum and sprezzatura.

The conjuror's trick, so to speak, which the *Arte of English Poesie* and the *Defense of*

Poetry perform rests in the capacity for poesie to transform private indulgences (*otium*)

into public services (*otium cum dignitate*); likewise, the thief's office is the negotiation of

social status which is conducted by means of the symbolic value associated with the

composition of poesie. The hidden element in this spectacle, that all-important distance

between what is and what seems to be, is time.

THE BLAZON OF *HAFT*

It bears reemphasizing that the word *haft* itself, as employed throughout this

study, suggests one's ability not only to arbitrate the rules for poetic production but also

to create the impression that these rules are more than arbitrary standards of decorum that

others should observe. To this end, the use of descriptors such as "good" or "bad" to

describe any particular poem must be seen as relative to a set of criteria posited and

maintained by arbiters of poetic style and diction. Much to this point, Thorstein Veblen

makes the case that

> the use of such epithets as 'noble,' 'base,' 'higher,' 'lower,' etc., is
>
> significant only as showing the animus and the point of view of the

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disputants. . . . All of these epithets are honorific or humilific terms; that is

to say, they are terms of invidious comparison, which in the last analysis

fall under the category of the reputable or the disreputable; that is, they

belong within the range of ideas that characterizes the scheme of life of

the régime of status. . . . (393)

Veblen's landmark examination of the social bases of consumption, *The Theory of the*

Leisure Class, although primarily aimed at explaining the habits and mores of the late

nineteenth-century upper class, serves as a valuable account of the ways in which status

gradually attaches itself to the phenomena of time and social status through the

construction and institution of "invidious distinctions." Veblen uses this term to denote a

way of ranking individuals in which they are evaluated in terms of their relative worth to

a community's sense of beauty or morality and of creating a communal belief in the

propriety of such standards (34).

Furthermore, this chapter continues the examination of oppositional discourse in

the English Renaissance as it appears later in the sixteenth century. In Chapter Two,

hafting was observed as a bluff, as a role Skelton performed at the court of Henry VIII

and one he fictionalized at the court of prince Magnyfycence. In a similar manner,

Sidney and Puttenham perform at the court--one might even go so far as to say they help

perform/produce the court--of Elizabeth. Whereas Skelton crafts his court persona via a

flyting against Garnesche, Sidney and Puttenham fashion themselves to be Renaissance

courtiers by the practice of *sprezzatura* and the performance of decorous language.

Skelton grounds his method for distinguishing a poet from a poetic poseur on the brute

forces of invective, and his best justification for the efficacy of poetry ultimately seems to

be the plea with which he concludes "Agaynst the Scottes": "*Si veritatem dico, quare non creditis michi?*"--that is, If I am telling the truth, why do you not believe me? In contrast, Sidney's and Puttenham's methods are more refined and more explicit; they include expositions of the state of English poetry, discussions of appropriate subject matter, forms and styles, and catalogues of various genres. Skelton holds questions regarding the suitability of his versified expositions at bay by appeals to sententiousness (e.g., "Yf ye take well therwith / It hath in it some pyth" ("Collyn Clout" 57-58)) and to the tradition of using verse to correct vice (e.g., "Of poetes commendacion, / That of divyne myseracion / God maketh his habytacion / In poetes whiche excelles" ("A Replycacion" 374-77)). These are all hafting points[1] in that they prevent Skelton's adversaries and critics from contending any further with him. His religious ethos and his ultimate purpose of combating corruption and vice authorize him to rail in almost any fashion he sees fit. However, whereas Skelton might have been able to certify his poetic expressions by appeals to his religious orthodoxy, in the closing decades of the sixteenth century an author's ability to claim distinction in the field of artistic discourse depends less on a sacred ethos and more on his secular status, particularly in terms of being perceived as a loyal citizen of the nation. The hafting points are however no longer found in religious certitudes, for the field of artistic discourse begins to assume a structure apart from its ability to defend the faith. The manner in which agents wage later-century verbal combat can sometimes be equally as fierce as the ostentatious style and heavy-handed rhetoric of earlier-century flytings, but efforts to craft a personal reputation as a distinguished poet in the final decades of the sixteenth century must be disguised as a public effort to produce

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[1] "a haftynge poynt, or a false subtylte," William Horman, *Vulgaria* (1519).

rhetorical excellence in the form of English "poesie." As more and more writers add their voices to the discourse of artistic texts, agents contest ever more rigorously for a dominant position in the field of artistic discourse; hence, the object of a study of hafting in the later sixteenth century becomes an exploration of the ways in which the managers of decorum assert their authority while simultaneously fending off those who would challenge the tenuous nature of their authority. However, as suggested above, not all the formal features of these verbal contests resemble the flytings of the first third of the century. These later-century conflicts do, however, reproduce the rhetorical texture of the earlier form, the author's aggressive mode, and *haft* can again be employed as a tactical measurement for discriminating the distance between decorous language and that which either exceeds or falls short of a stylistic benchmark. *Haft* will thus be explored from the angle suggested by a decorous mean which Puttenham and Sidney locate in the class of courtly poets. As the work of Richard Helgerson and others shows,[2] the profession of the poet was by no means consolidated by the later sixteenth century. In fact, it was only beginning to develop, a fact to which Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault attest in their accounts of the origins of the concept of the literary author.[3] A number of social groups were competing for inclusion in this emerging profession and the power to regulate it. What might appear on the surface to be a fairly homogeneous body of "poets" reveals a more diverse and chaotic collection of authors.

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[2] Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992); and also *Self-Crowned Laureates: Spenser, Jonson, Milton, and the Literary System* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1983); Edwin Haviland Miller, *The Professional Writer in Elizabethan England: A Study of Nondramatic Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1959).

[3] Roland Barthes, "Authors and Writers" *Critical Essays* (Northwestern UP, 1972); and Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" *Textual Strategies* Ed. Josue Harari (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1979).

The Court Poet is made the normative model of poetic production by Sidney and Puttenham and all evaluation is made against that invidious norm. As Gary Waller notes, "[t]he major institution or apparatus that dominates sixteenth-century poetry is the Court" (16) The Elizabethan court was, obviously, a site of complex cultural interactions and, as such, any statement concerning "court" politics or "court" customs or "court" ideology must be tempered with the recognition that there were a number of such political positions, customs, or ideologies in circulation at any one time during Elizabeth's lengthy reign. Thus, as Louis Montrose remarks, although members of the English court society may resemble each other more than they do, say, the class of London professionals, courtiers' solidarity with regard to one issue should not exclude the possibility that they maintain contestatory positions on another (317). It is also Montrose who voices a corrective to Stephen Greenblatt's totalizing notion of court power, suggesting that the Elizabethan court lacked "the necessary material and technological means" to implement such an all-encompassing command over the lives of English subjects ("Elizabethan Subject" 330, 331). Montrose points to Raymond Williams' notions of residual and emergent powers which coexist with dominant power and complicate a model of singular court "'Power' within a polyphonic discursive process" ("Elizabethan Subject" 331). In addition, David Norbrook finds evidence of strain among the forces of court influence in the number of "unfinished" works from the period (e.g., *Arcadia*, *Faerie Queene*) and in the quantity of later sixteenth-century exhortations concerning "order and degree," exhortations which "would not have been necessary had the principle of hierarchy not been coming under question" (15). In support of such observations historian Lawrence Stone suggests that "[t]he inflation of honours not only provoked divisions within the

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peerage, but also inspired fierce jealousies between order and order, rank and rank," to which he adds that "numerical increase in all ranks, the creation of a new order, and the glaring injustices of the distribution of titles tended to set the whole governing class at loggerheads" (124).

Although there are certainly rival factions in Elizabeth's court--the Essex/Cecil contention comes to mind immediately--there is just cause to consider the "courtier" as a distinct social class in the sense that Pierre Bourdieu defines the term. Bourdieu's conception of "class" as something other than a strictly Marxist separation grounded on economic bases adds integrity to social divisions which can otherwise become rather ambiguous and inaccurate. He distinguishes classes as "sets of agents who occupy similar positions and who, being placed in similar conditions and submitted to similar types of conditions, have every chance of having similar dispositions and interests, and thus of producing similar practices and adopting similar stances" (*Language* 231). Agents of a particular class interact with one another and with members of other classes in any one of a number of "fields of relations" and any single agent's power in a field can be assessed in terms of his position in relation to the acknowledged source of power in the field in question (*Language* 229-51). In this sense, court poetry encodes more than a mere glimpse into a single author's imagination; as Waller suggests, "poetry is the visible edge of a whole complex social text, the centre of which . . . was a firm policy of binding poetry inextricably to the Court" (16). The professionalization of the field of artistic discourse entails a struggle for power to describe and to defend the limits of an authoritative title. "The 'author'," explains Waller, "is a function of the discourse which permits him to speak. Not just a 'court' poet, he is the Court's poet, controlled and in a

real sense created by the Court" (22). Its sanctioned constituents must be strictly regulated in order for it to maintain an elevated social value.

Court authors are the likely possessors of power in terms of the field of artistic discourse because they are closest to the center of legitimate power in England at that time, the monarch and the royal court. "Control" became a byword of the later decades of Elizabeth's reign and fictionalized texts were one method by which not only the court but also courtiers exercised control over the ways their peers and the public perceived them (Waller 17).[4] "It also follows," notes Bourdieu, "that objective relations of power tend to reproduce themselves in symbolic relations of power, in visions of the social world which contribute to ensuring the permanence of those relations of power" (*Language* 238). Symbolic power is synonymous with distinction, claims Bourdieu, explaining that both are a form of social capital which exerts influence "when it is perceived by an agent endowed with categories of perception arising from the incorporation of the structure of its distribution, i.e. when it is known and recognized as self-evident" (*Language* 238). The distinctions concerning poetry made by the spokesmen of the court style are effective only when they are "known and recognized as legitimate differences," and these differences are most convincing when they are made to seem natural, in which case they have the virtually irrefutable force of the "real world" behind them (*Language* 238).

As demonstrated in the case of Skelton, struggles to define the lineaments of good poetry are already present early in the sixteenth century. In his flyting "Agenst

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[4] Waller's conception of courtly self-fashioning is influenced by Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning, from More to Shakespeare*. See also two other, more recent, interpretations of Elizabethan court fashioning: John Guy, "Introduction, The 1590s: The Second Reign of Elizabeth I?" 1-19, and Peck.

Garnesche," Skelton falls to verbal blows with his opponent in an effort both to humiliate

Garnesche and to exalt his own reputation at court. Garnesche is a hafter because he

overreaches his appropriate station, and his ineffectual poetry, according to Skelton,

reflects his lack of certification. For the purpose of exposing poetic frauds, the flyting is

as fine a form as any because it exercises the abilities of literary combatants much like a

joust or duel does in the case of physical prowess or skill at arms. Flyting as a specific

rhetorical form, however, does not appear much in the final third of the sixteenth century.

Instead, one is more likely to encounter close cousins of flyting: singing matches and

eclogues:

> The manner of the Arcadian shepherds was, when they met together, to
>
> pass their time, either in such music as their rural education could afford
>
> them, or in exercise of their body and trying of masteries. But of all other
>
> things, they did especially delight in eclogues; wherein sometimes they
>
> would contend for a prize of well singing. . . . (50)[5]

Sidney's explanation of eclogues here in *The Old Arcadia* (completed by 1580) suggests

clear connections between the contestatory nature of singing matches, physical

competition, and the flyting, all of which award an appropriate "prize" to the victor,

which might be nothing less than the title "poet laureate" and the honor attached to it by

means of a professional nomination at court, as in the case of Skelton's contest with

Garnesche, or among peers, as in the case of the Arcadians. As well as singing

shepherds, one finds throughout later sixteenth- and earlier seventeenth-century literature

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[5] Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calendar* (published anonymously in 1579) provides the most well-known example of the varieties of eclogues in English Renaissance literature.

characters whose personal idiom resembles that of the flyter, in addition to rhetorical

situations in which two characters attempt to establish dominance between themselves

using a war of words.[6] In addition to such fictional personifications of verbal warriors,

one can find a number of real-life opinions regarding oppositional discourse, such as an

author's prefatory self-defense against slanderous, envious critics[7] and explicit critical

treatments of the state of English poetry and the proper composition thereof.

Yet, to spring from an early Henrician defense of poetry like Skelton's to Sir

Philip Sidney's more elaborate Elizabethan *Defense of Poesy* or George Puttenham's *The

Arte of English Poesie* seems a far leap in both the chronology and evolution of

Renaissance literature. Skelton's worth as a poet in Henry VIII's court is founded on his

insistence that his poetry, regardless of the shape in which it appears, is, simply, "true."

In contrast, the courtier poets of the later sixteenth century ground their professional

status on less sanctimonious assertions about themselves. Frequently, the standard

evoked for evaluating the "worth" of later sixteenth-century authors is measured in terms

of their contribution to the growing field of English artistic discourse and to the

authorization of vulgar English--of their ability either to enrich or to devalue it. But such

standards, even when explicated so seemingly completely as in a text like the *Arte*, often

remain rather vague. For example, Puttenham presents the following verses to exemplify

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[6] Carol M. Cochran's unpublished dissertation, "Flyting in Pre-Elizabethan Drama in Shakespeare, and in Jonson," provides a fine exploration of flyting language as used by Falstaff in *1 Henry IV* and between Benedick and Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Her treatment of flyting in Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* will be examined in detail in Chapter Five of this dissertation.

[7] There are two excellent recent treatments of this subject: Kaplan and Belt. Also see Gill and Frederick Tupper, "The Envy Theme in Prologues and Epilogues" *JEGP* 16 (1917): 551-72.

the rhetorical figure known as *anaphora* (the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of a line or sentence):

by Sir *Walter Raleigh* of his greatest mistresse in most excellent verses.

In vayne mine eyes in maine you wast your teares,

In vayne my sighs the smokes of my despaires:

In vayne you search th' earth and heauens aboue,

In vayne ye seeke, for fortune keeps my loue.

Or as the buffon in our enterlude called *Lustie London* said very knauishly and like himselfe.

Many a faire lasse in London towne,

Many a bavvdie basket borne up and downe:

Many a broker in a thridbare gowne.

Many a bankrowte scarce worth a crowne. In London. (161-62)

Since both illustrations conform to the principle of the figure by beginning each line of the stanza with the same words, what, one may rightly ask, is the difference between anaphora as illustrated by Raleigh's lines which makes them "most excellent verses" and that of the anonymous author in the supplementary example which makes those verses unruly, "said very knauishly," as Puttenham has it? Does the difference inhere in the subject matter, a lover somehow deemed "better than" urban corruption? Is it that the illustration from Raleigh is taken from an individual poem and the latter from a dramatic text? Or does Puttenham's estimation stem from the reputations of the speakers/authors themselves? Generally then, what <u>are</u> the standards for evaluating the worth of an author's contribution to the rapidly expanding body of artistic discourse? What purpose

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does it serve to institute such standards and who stands to gain or lose from them? As this chapter will suggest, waging a war of words over the right to call one's self a poet is one way to negotiate these issues, and the phenomenon of oppositional discourse traced previously in Skelton's flyting resonates with concerns Elizabethan authors later in the sixteenth century have about creating standards for fictive discourse on the one hand and of enforcing those standards on the other.

THE SCIENCE OF ENGLISH POETRY

Most accounts of poetics in the sixteenth century inevitably consider the issue of decorum. Puttenham most directly treats decorum in Book III of his *Arte of English Poesie*, and the following description from the fifth chapter, entitled "Of Stile," is a *locus classicus* of English Renaissance statements of this elusive rhetorical quality:

But generally to haue the stile decent and comely it behooueth the maker or Poet to follow the nature of his subiect, that is if his matter be high and loftie that the stile be so to, if meane, the stile also to be meane, if base, the stile humble and base accordingly: and they that do otherwise vse it, . . . do vtterly disgrace their poesie and shew themselues nothing skilfull in their arte, nor hauing regard to the decencie, which is the chiefe praise of any writer.

Decorum puts a presentable face on dissimulation. The notion of concealed artfulness readily suggests the action of a hafter concealing hard-fought composition under the guise of a perfect sonnet. Quite frequently, decorum evokes the notion of *sprezzatura*, artfully disguised art, and one only look to Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* for evidence of a handbook for producing appearances. However, in emphasizing a resemblance between

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haft and *sprezzatura* I am not suggesting that the courtly style of poetry itself represents hafting; doing so only collapses the rich ambiguity of *haft* into the well-explored subject of courtliness.[8] Puttenham clearly intends his readers to understand that there are limits of acceptable dissimulation: "we doe allow our Courtly Poet to be a dissembler only in the subtilties of his arte" (308).

It is a troublesome prospect but Puttenham insists that the uses of dissimulation can be positive provided that it is tempered by the use of decorum. In the eighteenth chapter of Book III in the *Arte* Puttenham discusses the rhetorical figure of allegory, which he calls "the Courtly figure . . . which is when we speake one thing and thinke another, and that our wordes and our meanings meete not" (196). Puttenham's definition is strikingly reminiscent of denotations for *haft* and it is worth paying some attention to Puttenham's attempts to distinguish between good and bad allegory. The most notable quality of this figure, according to Puttenham, is its ability to dissimulate: "for his duplicitie we call the figure of [*false semblant or dissimulation*] [sic] we will speake first as of the chief ringleader and captaine of all other figures, either in the Poeticall or oratorie science" (197). Puttenham offers another, albeit more clumsy, definition of allegory a little later: "when we do speake in sense translatiue and wrested from the owne signification, neuerthelese applied to another not altogether contrary, but hauing much conueniencie with it as before we said of the metaphore" and he supplements this description with a brief example (197). Although this figure dissimulates its meaning "vnder couert and darke termes" (197), there is certainly a virtuous use of allegory, which

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[8] The subject of English Renaissance courtliness and courtier poets is explored in May and Javitch. For a more generalized study of early European courtliness, see Jaeger.

is so important a figure that not only courtiers use it but also "the grauest Counsellour, yea and the most noble and wisest Prince of them all are many time enforced to vse it" (196). Thus, allegorical language, although instituted in the *Arte* primarily as a principle of stylistic decoration, is not only acceptable but also necessary for conducting important business of the court.

In addition to allegory as the "Courtly Figure," Puttenham discusses several other kinds of allegory. It is worth briefly looking at these and at the way Puttenham authorizes them for use in court poesie because of the way his justifications depend on the decorous application of the devices. Puttenham proceeds with an exposition of allegory and then turns to two closely related figures of dissimulation, "*Enigma*. or the Riddle" and "*Parimia*, or Prouerb" both of which hold moralistic or slightly didactic connotations. Along with allegory, these constitute the first triad of the best applications of rhetorical dissimulation. Following these come three more figures, each with a middling sort of approbation: "*Ironia*, or the Drie mock," "*Sarcasmus*, or the Bitter taunt," and "*Asteismus*. or the Merry scoffe. otherwise The ciuill iest" (199-200). Since each one of these might be employed in a derogatory or destructive fashion, Puttenham carefully provides examples of their more salutary applications as used by princes, kings, and other upstanding public figures. After the exposition of the "Merry scoffe," Puttenham carefully notes for the reader that "In these examples if ye marke there is no griefe or offence ministred as in those other before, and yet are very wittie, and spoken in plaine derision" (201). The third triad of allegorical figures represent gradations of what might now all be examples of sarcasm: "*Micterismus*. or the Fleering frumpe," "*Antiphrasis*. or the Broad floute," and "*Charientismus*. or the Priuy nippe" (201). It is

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important to note, however, that for Puttenham none of these figures represents vices. They are all forms of allegorical, linguistic dissimulation and, as such, may be rightly employed in specific rhetorical contexts; "all these be souldiers to the figure *allegoria* and fight vnder the banner of dissimulation" (201).[9]

Subsequently, allegory turns into a vice in the following discussion of "*Hiperbole. or the Ouer reacher, otherwise called the loud lyer*" (202). Here, dissimulation connotes a "lying" figure when it becomes "superlatiue and beyond the limites of credit" (202). Puttenham explains his vernacular terminology thus: "I for his <u>immoderate excesse</u> cal him the over reacher right with his originall or [*lowd lyar*] and me thinks not amisse" (202, emphasis mine). It is noteworthy that he qualifies his description by suggesting that overstatement may even be employed acceptably when in right measure. Puttenham's treatment of hyperbole differs from his discussion of the previously mentioned allegorical figures in that he goes as far as to suggest a particular occasion for which hyperbole is most often used: "when either we would greatly aduaunce or greatly abase the reputation of any thing or person" (202). In other words, hyperbole is permissible in epidictic speeches. However, this sort of excess "must be vsed very discreetly," he warns, "or els it will seeme odious, for although a prayse or other report may be allowed beyond credit it may not be beyond all measure" (202). Following this qualification are several examples of excessive praise. The caveat to apply a figure "discretely" appears again in the subsequent discussion of periphrasis (circumlocution), "one of the gallantest figures among the poetes so it be used discretely and in his right kinde" but which is often

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[9] Note Puttenham's military metaphor here, for this is an important connection with verbal combat.

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unskillfully exercised by many of the lesser poets of the day such that they render their poetry either verbose or confusing (204).

Puttenham also refers to a principle of finding a decorous mean earlier in the *Arte* in Book III concerning three sorts of subject matters. He provides descriptions of the high, low, and mean styles and suggests subjects appropriate to each, qualifying what counts as decorum in these three categories by saying that "in euery of the sayd three degrees, not the selfe same vertues be egally to be praysed nor the same vices, egally to be dispraised . . . but euery one in his degree and decencie" (165). Puttenham is most explicit concerning indecorum in conjunction with the high style, explaining that this sort of degree "is disgraced and made foolish and ridiculous by all wordes affected, counterfait, and puffed vp, as it were a windball carrying more countenance then matter, and can not be better resembled then to these midsommer pageants. . . ." (165). Again, Puttenham suggests that which most destroys decorum in the high style is an excess of words, ones which do not fit the occasion but serve merely to overdecorate the matter at hand. In this way, what might otherwise be grand and elegant is made simply foolish.

All of this leads to an important but invisible feature of Puttenham's arguments concerning decorum. What is beautiful is not only of a right proportion, it is as if it were natural and could not appear otherwise. Decorum for Puttenham rests in a text's capacity to appear natural, that is, as if it were a naturally occurring phenomenon:

> we doe allow our Courtly Poet to be a dissembler only in the subtilties of
> his arte: that is, when he is most artificiall, so to disguise and cloake it as it
> may not appeare, nor seeme to proceede from him by any studie or trade
> of rules, but to be his naturall. . . . (308)

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In his discussion of the art-nature quandry the *Arte* presents, Derek Attridge observes that "[d]ecorum . . . is what comes 'naturally' not to all humanity but to an elite; and members of that elite can be identified by their "natural" sense of decorum. What comes naturally to the majority, who are ignorant and inexperienced, is not *truly* natural" (269). Furthermore, he iterates that what appears "natural" about decourm is nothing other than "an ideological product . . . whereby a historically specific class attitude is promoted and perceived as natural" (269). Puttenham concedes that art may at times to be allowed to "appear" in a text. However, there are occasions on which one's rhetorical artifices must remain hidden. To this end, Puttenham endeavors in part to explain in Book III "were arte ought to appear, and where not, and when the naturall is more commendable than the artificiall in any humane action or workmanship. . . ." (308). In the end Attridge summarizes Puttenham's argument regarding decorum thus: "The ideal is to *be* natural, by being yourself as nature is; but if you cannot--and the entire manual is built on the premise that you cannot--you need to supplement your own natural inadequacies by the exercise of decorum (that 'natural' art), so that you may artificially rise to the status of perfect and self-sufficient nature" (274).

Sidney's *Defense of Poesy* puts forward the poem-as-natural object argument even more emphatically than the *Arte*. In this defense, the composition of poetry appears more akin to a science than an art. Early in the *Defense*, Sidney begins this argument by claiming that poesie possesses "some divine force in it," making a claim not only for the efficacy of poetry but also for the source of its power (128). That is, meter plus rhythm and wit yield something akin to the divine--like a charm, a thing which merely is, not which is made. Sidney's idea of the end of poetry--"to lead and draw us to as high a

perfection as our degenerate souls, made worse by their clayey lodgings, can be capable of" (295-97)-- sounds very theological and anything but the goal of a mundane art of words. Similarly, poetry is the "*architektonikē*" (316) of the theoretical sciences, like astronomy, philosophy, natural philosophy, music, and mathematics, all of which possess as an end "to know, and by knowledge to lift up the mind from the dungeon of the body to the enjoying his own divine essence" (306-08). Poetry subjugates all these "serving sciences" to itself, suggests Sidney, and turns this science onto the human spirit "with the end of well-doing and not of well-knowing only" (313, 317-18) so that knowledge without a good character (the product of poetry) is useless.

A somewhat different sort of approach to the argument of poetry-as-nature appears in the account which Sidney makes of the reasons the *misomousoi* hate poetry, noting that, above all others, "rhyming and versing" give them the greatest cause for complaint (870). He makes the case that the best poems apply rhetorical figures such that "one [word] cannot be lost but the whole work fails" (887-88); that is, not only is the best poetry so finely constructed that every syllable of every word necessarily contributes to the perfection of the end result but also these poems are crafted such that they seem not to be able to be written any other way--the perfect balance between *oratio* and *ratio*, "speech next to reason" (874-74). Sidney's idea here is that rhyme makes the poet's ideas appear as if they arise from nature and naturally suggest one another just as the poet presents them. "Besides, one word so, as it were, begetting another, as, be it in rhyme or measured verse, by the former a man shall have a near guess to the follower" (889-91). One can clearly see the hafting going on here; the apparent ease with which one word leads to the next, one line to the other, from the first to the last suggests the action of a

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conjuror's trick, which, in this case, turns out to be the operation of memory: "memory being the only treasure of knowledge, those words which are fittest for memory are likewise most convenient for knowledge" (883-85).

Poets, of course, do not "naturally" produce poetry; no one does, and this fact troubles--indeed fuels--Sidney's and Puttenham's arguments regarding the production of artistic discourse. When one recalls that the sort of poet under examination here is not simply anyone possessed of a mind to write down the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions, one must consider the possibility that artistic discourse itself might not be the end product which Sidney and Puttenham strive to defend and delimit. In order to be of use in a practical, critical sense, the issue of decorum needs to be provided with a contextualized mean, which, for literature of the later sixteenth century is, as has been suggested throughout this chapter, presented in Sidney's *Defense* and Puttenham's *Arte*, i.e., the court. What such a Renaissance code of artistic value describes is a disposition to literary texts, a way of composing stylistically complex language and texts that reinforces the courtier's dominant position in the field of social power. The way court poetry stands in relation to the vernacular--the formalistic qualities of shaped language which elevates it above regular speech and not simply the content of the texts themselves--imbues it with authority. It is not what a text represents as an isolated, abstract expression but the way it is positioned in the field of literary production in terms of its linguistic and stylistic complexity, its artful artfulness. It should be noted that what is under discussion here is not simply aesthetics, a way of studying artistic discourse which privileges questions regarding how a text is consumed rather than the way it is constructed, a philosophical inquisition which is not codified even in a primitive form until the first decades of the

seventeenth century. Moreover, a critique of sixteenth-century decorum based on the aesthetic nature of language obscures the perception that "literary" texts could have been used either for any other purpose or, perhaps stated more clearly, in any mode other than as objects to be consumed by refined sensibilities.

One of Bourdieu's primary aims in *Language and Symbolic Power* is to establish an outline for a systematic examination of the ways agents are empowered both by their social position and by the language they speak, a project he calls a "structural sociology of language." The focus of such a project is to understand the ways in which social distinction is structured by linguistic distinction and vice versa (*Language* 54). Bourdieu stands resolutely upon the notion that the social value of language indicates not only the social status of the speaker but also reinforces that social status by reproducing it in a speaker's style of expression: "And a spontaneous stylistics, armed with a practical sense of the equivalences between the two orders of differences, apprehends social classes through classes of stylistic indices" (*Language* 54). Without explicit reference to Bourdieu's "structural sociology of language," Heinrich F. Plett similarly advocates a contextual understanding of Puttenham's *Arte* and the court dispositions it purports to "teach." Plett points to the peculiar English names Puttenham gives to each of the rhetorical figures he catalogs and describes (i.e., *"tapinosis* = 'the Abbaser'; *hyperbole* = 'the Ouerreacher'; *antitheton* = 'the Quarreller'" (607)) as evidence of the overall allegorical structure of court literature and of the court disposition itself: "the Courtly figure *Allegoria* which is . . . of so great efficacie as it is supposed no man can pleasantly vtter and perswade without it . . . in somuch as not onely euery common Courtier, but also the grauest Counsellour, yea and the most noble and wisest Prince of them all are

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many time enforced to vse it" (*Arte* 196). Plett calls such a study of the mutual influence and reiteration of social and linguistic distinction a "socioaesthetic," stipulating that phenomena such as Puttenham's anthropomorphized tropes suggest that "stylistic forms indicate social roles, from which it is also legitimate to draw the opposite conclusion, the social roles are made manifest in particular categories of style" (606-07). Social types then translate into stylistic types and thus describe the particular composition of a late sixteenth-century socioaesthetic.

Evidence of the way in which material conditions, ones owing to social or economic status, influence the socioaesthetic of language can be illustrated with the third drama in a series of late Elizabethan Cambridge comedies entitled *The Return from Parnassus (Part II), or The Scourge of Simony*.[10] In Act 2, scene 4, a young man named Immerito aspires to become apprenticed to a lawyer named Sir Randall, whose son, Amoretto, brokers the deal. Immerito is the son of a commoner named Stercutio, who accompanies his son to negotiate with Amoretto the price for recommending the young man to Sir Randall. "Sonne, is this the gentleman that sells vs the liuing?" asks Stercutio. "Fy father," Immerito chides, "thou must not call it selling, thou must say is this the gentleman that must haue the gratuito?" (*Scourge* 2.4.670-73). Having been corrected, the father asks his question again but in no better fashion:

> STER. O is this the grating gentleman, and howe many pounds must I
>
> pay?
>
> IM.   O thou must not call them pounds, but thanks. . . .
>
> (*Scourge* 2.4.681-83)

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[10] Hereafter noted as *Scourge*.

Amoretto explains that he is willing to recommend Immerito but the two of them must

first negotiate a fee for Amoretto's doing so. His explanation is so verbose, however, that

Stercutio must ask him to repeat himself, this time in "English," "for that is naturall to me

& to my sonne, and all our kindred, to vnderstand but one language" (*Scourge* 2. 4.731-

33). Amoretto's response "in plaine english [sic]: I must be respected with thanks,"

which, however plain, is less than straightforward, for what he really means is that the

commoner must pay for the intercessor's services. Stercutio finally catches on:

> STER. And I pray you Sir, what is the lowest thanks that you will take?
>
> . . . .
>
> AMOR. I must haue some odd sprinckling of an hundred pounds or so, so
>
> I shall think you thankfull, and commend your sonne as a man of good
>
> giftes to my father.
>
> . . . .
>
> STER. Harke thou Sir, you shall haue 80. thankes. (*Scourge* 2.4.738-47)

Immerito must groom his father's unrefined vocabulary; "selling" should be "giving

gratitude" and "pounds" should be called "thanks." However, this bit of humorously

awkward dialogue suggests more than just euphuism. The words the father chooses

reflect a grounding in a material economy in which prices are negotiated; this is the

socioaesthetic of the marketplace. Standing in stark contrast with the language of his

father, the preferred idiom of the aspiring Immerito and his patron-advocate suggests a

symbolic economy where the impersonal transaction of trading money is distasteful, and

instead the up-and-coming courtier prefers to speak in terms evocative of a gift exchange.

At the least, this scene indicates two distinct social classes separated by varying degrees of formality of a common language. As such, one observes a disparity in linguistic registers which in the case of Amoretto and Immerito suggests a negotiation of preference based on an economy of symbolic exchange. In addition to demonstrating the courtly scorn for material evaluation of language, this brief scene also implies that there were different idiolects of English vernacular which existed outside the bounds of artificial language and dialogue. Puttenham suggests this as well in the *Arte*. In a chapter entitled "Of Language" he prescribes that the court poet restrict himself to the language used within a nine-mile radius of London, preferably to that of the city proper, and even more specifically to the language of the court itself (*Arte* 157). And, in addition to refraining from the excessively styled language of the schools, the court poet is to forego the many foreign words and phrases imported by ambassadors and other English people who travel abroad (*Arte* 158). Puttenham devotes the rest of this particular chapter to a careful consideration of the definition, etymology, and propriety of a number of words in the context of his own treatise on court poetics and, by extension, in court poetry.

Puttenham's own explication of the court socioaesthetic is presented in the chapter entitled " Of Stile" in Book Three. "Stile is a constant and continual phrase or tenour of speaking and writing," Puttenham begins, explaining that it is an effect which can be both conscious ("such as either he keepeth by skill") and unconscious ("or holdeth on by ignorance"); nevertheless, it is fairly difficult to alter one's style--"and will not or peraduenture cannot easily alter into any other" (*Arte* 160). His discussion suggests that style is an intrinsic part of an author, something more profound than just a mutable dress of thought. Puttenham holds that style is "the image of man [*mentis character*] for man

is but his minde," reasoning that what is seated deeply within an individual's disposition is bound to be manifest when he speaks or writes (*Arte* 160-61). "For if the man be graue, his speech and stile is graue: if light-headed, his stile and language also light: if the minde be haughtie and hoate, the speech and stile is also vehement and stirring. . . ." (161); a writer's habitual disposition, an aspect of what Bourdieu calls *habitus*, directs how a speaker or writer expresses himself with language and even provides a directive for what to write: "Then againe may it be said as wel, that men doo chuse their subiects according to the mettal of their minds, and therfore a high minded man chuseth him high and lofty matter to write of" (161). Habitus represents "principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them" (*Logic* 53), explains Bourdieu.[11] An agent's habitus generates and directs ways of seeing the world which remain consistent over time; in Bourdieu's terms, they are "durable." Moreover, habitus is not so much a product of a set of rules followed consciously as it is itself a life-script which an agent follows "naturally."[12]

Bourdieu puts to great use both the word *habitus* itself and the Classical concept of a permanent, structured disposition for the purpose of describing the structures,

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[11] In *Outline of a Theory of Practice* Bourdieu writes that *habitus* is "an acquired system of generative schemes objectively adjusted to the particular conditions in which it is constituted" (95).

[12] See *The Logic of Practice*, pp. 52-65 for Bourdieu's explication of the *habitus* concept. John B. Thompson's discussion in the "Editor's Introduction", pp. 12-14 in *Language and Symbolic Power*, as well as Richard Jenkins' treatment in *Pierre Bourdieu*, pp. 74-84, both provide excellent explications of Bourdieu's concept and application of *habitus*.

institutions, and fields which shape and are reciprocally shaped by human behavior.[13]

Much of Puttenham's poetic theory derives from medieval and classical sources for which style is as much a function of behavior as it is a form of "self expression"; therefore, it is not coincidental that his interpretation of court poetics should be a reproduction of court behavior--of the court itself. What is remarkable, however, is the fact that Puttenham so explicitly uses the court as the decorous standard for civilized, cultivated, proper discourse and links both the court habitus and the linguistic disposition it produces with a particular style of shaping written language. He presents the best poetry as the product of effortless imitation of nature, as a natural product. In one sense it is indeed natural; it is the result of habits acquired from extended participation in the Elizabethan court. Puttenham had been around the Continental and English courts for so long that he himself had absorbed a courtly habitus which directed him to write an authoritative and exhaustive sixteenth-century manual of poetic composition. This is, in fact, his stated purpose in composing the *Arte* "to make of a rude rimer, a learned and a Courtly Poet" (170), and, as Derek Attridge points out, one of Puttenham's most frequently cited topoi for illustrations of properly exercised decorum come from instances of court affairs and not from artistic texts (270). Puttenham states, quite explicitly, that "our chiefe purpose herein is for the learning of Ladies and young Gentlewomen, or idle Courtiers, desirous to become skilful in their owne mother tongue, and for their priuate recreation to make now and then ditties of pleasure" (170). This is the progression Puttenham sets out: "first from the carte to the schoole, and from thence

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[13] The term is a very old one, " notes Thompson, "of Aristotelian and scholastic origins, but Bourdieu uses it in a distinctive and quite specific way" ("Introduction" *Language* 12).

to the Court" (304). Although this may be his aim, a non-courtier will not be able to acquire these habits simply from reading the *Arte.* In fact, an application of the precepts Puttenham so meticulously catalogs in his treatise will most likely result in the kind of uninspired poetry he holds up as the excessive demonstration of tropes and figures such as that written by scholars and clerks. "Puttenham must therefore produce a manual that is designed to fail," writes Attridge, because if the art of poesie "were reducible to rule, it would be available to all who were willing to make the effort. Since the existence of poetry, like the power of the court, is predicated upon its exclusiveness, such a conclusion is unthinkable" (270).

Sidney suggests a similar way of seeing the world when, in the context of an explication of comedy, he explains that audiences can easily pick out which characters represent folly or vice by the "signifying badge" which the dramatist gives to them, "and not only to know what effects are to be expected, but to know who be such" persons as a miser, a thief, a flatterer, a braggart. (*Defense* 733-35). Toward the conclusion of a lengthy examination of the genres and components of contemporary poetry, Sidney provides a perfect illustration of the courtly habitus at work. The lack of a thorough education, Sidney explains, makes no great difference whether one becomes a good poet, a great one, or no poet at all. On the contrary, extensive schooling seems to hinder one's ability to produce artful poetry. The best experience for evoking the true spirit of poetry comes from a tenure at court.

> Undoubtedly (at least to my opinion undoubtedly), I have found in divers
>
> smally learned courtiers a more sound style than in some professors of
>
> learning; of which I can guess no other cause, but that the courtier,

following that which by practice he findeth fittest to nature, therein

(though he know it not) doth according to art, thought not by art: where

the other, using art to show art, and not to hide art (as in these cases he

should do), fleeth from nature, and indeed abuseth art. (1444-51)

Here Sidney gives clues as to the powerful ability of habit and custom; simply by being at court one follows "rules" without consciously aiming at them or trying to master them. The rules themselves, however, are here referred to as "nature" and this reinforces the idea that the court poets are superior to all others--not just because courtly poetry is better but because it seems more natural and not something which is consciously and artificially constructed. Sidney himself exemplifies this attitude a little earlier when setting himself apart from the "base men with servile wits" (1197), those "paper-blurrers" (1210) who mostly want to turn a material profit on their writing. "But I," Sidney protests, "as I never desired the title [of poet], so have I neglected the means to come by it. Only, overmastered by some thoughts, I yielded an inky tribute unto them" (1214-16). Sidney encodes a great deal about his attitude concerning poetry in these two sentences. Just as with the "smally learned courtiers," Sidney claims not to have come to his status as a representative poetic voice among sixteenth-century courtiers by means of a concerted, overt attempt. He was simply "overmastered," controlled by irresistible forces which directed his actions and arguments in defense of poetry. According to Sidney the inspiration for his defense came to him as "though he [knew] it not." The true art of English poetry is to be learned by means of a tenure at court--the longer the better. Bourdieu is emphatic about the critical effects of time upon the constitution of cultural capital. "The accumulation of cultural capital," he writes, ". . . costs time, time which

must be invested personally by the investor" ("Forms" 244). The effort to improve one's

self--any attempt at self-fashioning--"presupposes a personal cost . . . an investment,

above all of time," Bourdieu continues ("Forms" 244). Veblen, writing about the

indoctrination of taste, points out that

> canons of taste are race habits, acquired through a more or less protracted
>
> habituation to the approval or disapproval of the kind of things upon
>
> which a favorable or unfavourable judgment of taste is passed. Other
>
> things being equal, the longer and more unbroken the habituation, the
>
> more legitimate is the canon of taste in question. All this seems to be even
>
> truer of judgments regarding worth or honour than of judgments of taste
>
> generally. (392)

What Veblen suggests here is that at the heart of nice manners and the production of

tasteful habits is a lengthy period of time, during which a subject absorbs a disposition of

character which will in the future allow him to reproduce these same tastes and manners

"naturally." Veblen explains that the educational program of the liberal arts, as opposed

to that of the "sciences," is especially well-designed for reproducing subjects who have a

knack for "a traditional self-centered scheme of consumption," one in which the truth and

beauty of things are contemplated for their own sake (390).

As Puttenham, Plett, and Bourdieu all suggest, language, style, and social

organization are reciprocal. Therefore, "literary" decorum--the approximation and

expression of court habits--as described in the *Defense of Poesie* and the *Arte of English

Poesie* should not be understood as a strictly textual phenomenon; it is equally as much a

tool of social distinction. Puttenham's self-avowed purpose in the *Arte* "is to make of a

rude rimer, a learned and a Courtly Poet" (170) with the cumulative effect being to "[pull] him first from the carte to the schoole, and from thence to the Court" (304). These statements establish not only the court as the audience and the court poet as the product of the *Arte* but also nominate the Elizabethan court as the source of the ideology of later sixteenth-century stylistics. The *Arte of English Poesie* is thus, in Bourdieu's terminology, an element of the structure of symbolic power, of the ideology of the court. As such, it serves as one of the "instruments which help to ensure that one class dominates another (symbolic violence) by bringing their [the wielders of such instruments] own distinctive power to bear on the relations of power which underlie them. . . ." (*Language* 167). As an institution vested with an enormous amount of social power, the Elizabethan court "aims at imposing the definition of the social world that is best suited to their interests" (*Language* 167).

As perplexing as the absence of *haft* is in texts which seem to provide a rich matrix for descriptions of hafting and tactical delay, there does seem to be a word which stands in for it in both the *Defense* and the *Arte*. This word is *idle-*, and it resembles *haft* by being a word which has a time component in it. *Idle* in the sixteenth century possesses similar denotations as it does today. There are times when it seems to have a slightly neutral connotation, as when it means simply "inactive" or "not engaged in work," but for the most part *idle* suggests a vacancy of substance or usefulness, or lack of purpose, while *idleness* denotes vanity, the "habitual avoidance of work," and indolence. One can readily see the connections between *haft*, in the sense of a putting aside of time, and *idle-* which suggests a measure of time in which one does nothing at all. In the latter, one is inactive; in the former, one appears to be inactive, "appears" because to haft is to be idle

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for the purpose of gaining an advantage. In this regard, *idle-* might suggest a more generalized consumption of time, while *haft* suggests a more specific consumption which converts inactivity into work.

In the final chapter of Book III of the *Arte*, Puttenham too rails against idleness, particularly as practiced in the lives of courtiers, and he attempts to distinguish between artistic dissimulation and idle dissimulation. Puttenham denigrates lazy courtiers-- making clear that he intends not so much English as Continental ones--who feign sickness or a preoccupation with their business in order to avoid work, or who pretend to be better off than they actually are for the purpose of keeping up appearances (305-07). This use of idleness to secure advantage is summarized best in Puttenham's final supposition as to why someone might dissimulate for dishonest purposes: "Finally by sequestring themselues for a time fro [sic] the Court, to be able the freelier and cleerer to discerne the factions and state of the Court and of al the world besides, no lesse then doth the looker on or beholder of a game better see into all points of auauntage, then the player himselfe" (306). Puttenham's analogy here provides a wonderful description of hafting; by removing one's self from the exigencies of a particular situation, be it court intrigue or a sports event, one gains a tactical advantage over those who remain too preoccupied with political or athletic maneuvering to grasp an overview of the field positions of the agents around them. Puttenham writes that such are the practices in other courts where courtiers "seeme idle when they be earnestly occupied and entend to nothing but mischieuous practizes, and do busily negotiat by coulor of otiation" (307). This concept of disguising, of dissembling one's true purpose, works both ways: one can seem busy in order to afford a respite from duty as well as seem idle in order to make one's work more

efficient. Louis Montrose picks up on Puttenham's "negotiat by coulor of otiation" and provides an insightful examination of the strategic use of time in the *Arte*. "What the courtier must dissemble above all else is his investment of time and labor in learning and performance: he must mystify his origins; he must dissemble the very process of his *own* making in Puttenham's shop" (446). Montrose suggests that the "ideological significance" of such hafting is to stabilize "the congruity between skill and status, grace and place" (445), "in a process of social signification" (448). Thus, whether the activity be named otiation, sprezzatura, Allegoria, or decorum, the essential action remains the same: the artful use of appearances in order to conceal one's own artificially ordained position--that is, hafting. Although the word itself is hardly ever utilized--nowhere explicitly denied but prevalently defended--it describes a central activity of court poetics.

As a final revelation of the hafting which is so much a part of both the *Arte* and the *Defense*, I wish to draw attention to the ways Puttenham and Sidney justify (which amount to a concealment) their texts to their readers. First, Puttenham makes it quite clear that his *Arte* is written for the approval of and in service to Queen Elizabeth (304, 313-14). As such, it provides a handbook for the production of entertaining, salacious, sagacious, and obedient courtiers with whom the Queen might people her court and fashion her sovereignty. In the Conclusion, Puttenham makes what might be considered an obsequious apology to Elizabeth, asking her forgiveness for engaging her with so long a "tedious trifle" (313), "the toyes of this our vulgar art" (314). Such posturing is considered simply a matter of protocol when dedicating a text to an aristocratic or otherwise gentle patron. But Puttenham's explanation of how he came to write the *Arte* in the first place is instructive for the purpose of concealing the time it took to write it.

"But when I consider how euery thing hath his estimtion by opportunitie," he explains, "and that it was but the studie of my yonger yeares in which vanitie raigned" (314). That is, as he wrote the *Arte* when he was young and unoccupied with important public matters, he put his private time to good use by composing a treatise which might prove of benefit to Queen and country, but also, not in the least, to himself. Montrose points out that, in part, Puttenham suggests that the *Arte* serves Elizabeth by preoccupying powerful nobles with something by which they might divert their attentions instead of contesting with the Queen over important matters of state (446-48). In other words, idle courtiers equal non-intrusive courtiers.

One of the most striking invocations of idleness in the *Defense* is its mention as the first of the four charges against poetry which Sidney deems worthy of a response. "That a man might better spend his time, is a reason indeed; but it doth (as they say) but *petere principium*" (234). Sidney defends poetry against this charge of idleness on account of its singular ability to both teach and delight, but this is the very certainty Sidney himself calls into question by denigrating the *Defense* as "triflingness" (249) and an "ink-wasting toy of mine" (249). Like Puttenham, Sidney explains early in the introductory paragraphs that the *Defense* was composed "in these my not old years and idlest times" and immediately disavowes an interested stake in the debate over poetic discourse: "having slipped into the title of a poet, am provoked to say something unto you in the defence of that my unelected vocation" (212). Katherine Duncan-Jones suggests that Sidney might be referring in part to the *Defense* in sonnet 18 in which Astrophil complains of the "wealth" and "youth" he has "most idly spent," "my knowledge brings

forth toys, / My wit doth strive those passions to defend," he laments (8-10).[14] The idea of self-cancellation is well demonstrated throughout *Astrophil and Stella*, and so it is no surprise that it should appear as well in the *Defense*. However, Sidney's rejection of having any genuine stake in defending the virtues of artistic discourse (poetry or otherwise) does not have to be viewed as simply a deconstructive moment in the text. It is also a tactical move designed to put space between the masculine interests of a soldier-nobleman and the antithetical effects of delicate language and studied expressions of love and emotions. Mary Ellen Lamb elaborates this argument in a recent article in which she proposes that in addition to the familiar four-fold charges against which Sidney defends poetry lies an unacknowledged fifth charge, "that the pleasures offered by poetry rendered it dangerously effeminizing" (499) She argues that masculinizing legitimacy was restored to poetry by a return to eloquent yet rational models of artistic discourse found in classical texts, particularly in the figure of Aeneas (511); "[a]ny effeminizing effects of the pleasure offered by poetry in the lower forms," explains Lamb of Tudor grammar school pedagogy, "were then to be counteracted by dispensing a healthy antidote of history and moral philosophy in the upper forms" (509), all of which was intended to create the "warrior-reader," who, as a graduate, was bound less often for the battlefield armed with historical exempla and moral rules than for the court and the evolving "proto-capitalistic society" with the invisible "mystique" of a "feudal warrior" (511).

The principle class with which the court poet competes for status as the nominated spokesman and supreme arbiter in the field of artistic discourse is the scholar,

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[14] See the note to these lines on page 360 of her Oxford Authors series edition of selected works by Sidney.

who represents a class of authors most able to imitate the court habits without actually attending court. Although situated at somewhat of a remove from the center of social power, the academy does pose a threat to the supremacy of the court in terms of the field of literary relations. It is against such an adversary that Puttenham and Sidney rail most vehemently. It is from the idleness of the court to the excesses of the school that the focus must now turn.

"SCHOLLERLY AFFECTATION"

When Puttenham wants to illustrate the excesses of contemporary poetic discourse he most often turns to the learned speech of scholars. He complains that these affected poets "make long and tedious discourses, and write them in large tables . . . which be so exceeding long as one must haue halfe a dayes leasure to reade one of them" (71). Puttenham places blame for the preponderance of "inkhorne termes so ill affected" (158) at the feet of the "preachers and schoolemasters," among others, who import them into the good vulgar English. The language of the courtier-poet ought to be taken from the royal court or from "the good townes and Cities within the land" rather than from port cities, northern dialects, the idiom of common tradespeople, "or yet in Vniuersities where Schollers vse much peeuish affectation of words out of the primatiue languages" (156-57).

This section will suggest that a class of court poets struggles against the linguistic authority traditionally invested within the schools. Puttenham, Sidney, and others attempt to codify English poetry such that the court idiom displaces the scholastic model of authority in things linguistic. Whereas the schools and universities already possessed a

well-defined set of professionalizing practices (academic degrees, curricula, mastery of classical languages, objectified capital such as buildings and clothing), the domain of "the poet"--as a title of distinction in the field of artistic discourse, of poesie--was common property so to speak. It is the class of academic word masters against which court authors must contend for the power to establish decorous linguistic practices and for the privilege to nominate exemplary authors. When reading Bourdieu's account of more contemporary language contexts, one gets a sense of how enduring such distinctions such as "courtier" and "scholar" are. "Thus, against the 'fine style' of high society and the writers' claim to possess an instinctive art of good usage," Bourdieu remarks, "the grammarians always invoke 'reasoned usage', the 'feel for the language' which comes from knowledge of the principles of 'reason' and 'taste' which constitute grammar" (*Language* 59). It is instructive to note how similar are the means and ends of the "writer" and the grammarian. Both strive for correctness relative to the common use of language and do so according to a measure of time spent internalizing rules (explicit in the case of the grammarian, implicit in the case of the writer) of decorous composition. A struggle ensues because both the court poet and the grammarian contend over the right to describe proper language use. Additionally, they fight for similar positions in the field of artistic discourse. Writers hold up the criterion of "genius" against the grammarians' "reason" in order to "legitimate their right to legislate on language and in order to denounce the claims of their rivals" (59). "The professional or academic title is a sort of legal rule of social perception, a being-perceived that is guaranteed as a right," explains Bourdieu (241). As such, a legitimate/legitimizing institution possesses the symbolic power to grant value to the "work" which members do in its name, and "the

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institutionalized value of the title which acts as an instrument serving to defend and maintain the value of the work" (241). All of this is not to say, however, that courtiers and scholars value the same sorts of artistic expression. Whereas the courtier authorizes his texts by means of their contribution to the strength of the nation in general and to the strength of vernacular English in particular, the artistic discourse of the scholar has its own rhetorical texture, its own style and legitimizing slogan: "the clever wit displayed with skill" (*callidum ingenium ostenti peritum*).

Thus, if decorous poetry uses art to conceal its reliance on rhetorical figures to the effect of appearing seamless, then poetry which unsuccessfully conceals its constructedness strikes readers as, to use Sidney's word, "unnatural" and excessively artful. The question then arises, How does one discern between poets who are genuinely inspired and those who are merely witty? In turn, What are the criteria for assessing the value of a poet's efforts? and Who is qualified to distinguish poets from hafters?

Puttenham's account of the proper balance between linguistic delight and overindulgence remains virtually inscrutable. For example, nowhere in the *Arte* does Puttenham explicitly mention a non-courtly class of poets. He does frequently, however, impugn the "bastard rimers" and "little court wits." In the first ten chapters of Book I, Puttenham sets out the history of poets up to the later decades of the sixteenth century and in so doing presents several rather vague distinctions between poets and rhymers. Puttenham builds his case for the usefulness and dignity of poetry upon this claim: "For speech it self is artificial and made by man, and the more pleasing it is, the more it prevaileth to such purpose as it is intended for:" (24). Sensuous language is more effective than prose because it is "cleanly couched," "more delicate to the eare," "more

currant[15] and slipper upon the tongue," "tunable and melodius." These are invidious distinctions, and Puttenham repeats the gist of this claim regarding the pleasant qualities of verse in Book I, Chapter Four and in the first several chapters of Book II. And yet, Puttenham seems to frustrate the simplicity of this distinction when he denigrates the medieval monks and clerks who similarly exercised their wits when composing poetry. Puttenham casts a harsh, critical eye upon scholastic preferences for alliteration, doublet, and rhyme, such "versifying"

> whereof one was to make euery word of a verse to begin with the same
>
> letter, as did *Hugobald* the Monke who made a large poeme to the honour
>
> of *Carolus Caluus*, euery word beginning with *C.* which was the first letter
>
> of the king [sic] name thus.
>
> *Carmina clarifonæ Caluis cantate camenæ.*
>
> And this was thought no small peece of cunning, being in deed a matter of
>
> some difficultie to finde out so many wordes beginning with one letter as
>
> might make a iust volume, though in truth it wer but a phantasticall deuise
>
> and to no purpose at all more then to make them harmonicall to the rude
>
> eares of those barbarous ages. (30-31)

According to Puttenham, Hugobald composed an entire encomium strictly observing the figure of *paroemion*, "a resolute alliteration in which every word in a sentence or phrase begins with the same letter" (189). Puttenham's name for *paroemion* is "the Figure of like letter," and he treats it in chapter sixteen of Book Three along with other figures which appeal wholly to the ear instead of to the mind: "figures vvhich because they serue

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[15] *currare,* to run

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chiefly to make the meeters tunable and melodious, and affect not the minde but very little, be placed among the auricular" (184). Although he has no problem finding decorous applications for or of auricular figures, the ones he exhibits in this particular chapter seem a little more suspect than in ones previous. He illustrates several of the seven figures with poetry he describes as "vulgar ryme" and "defectiue," figures "much vsed by our common rimers" or by "one of our ordinary rimers" (184-88). The use of resolute alliteration is one such figure, Puttenham noting that this most auricular of all auricular devices is sometimes used well when used sparingly, yet it is easily employed to excess, in which case it becomes *tautologia*, "selfe saying" and the author "takes too much delight to fill his verse" with alliteration. (183, 261). Exercising one's wit by means of a "clever" style may therefore delight the ear but does not yield fine poetry because it produces (or reproduces) nothing else other than pure wit. Such misspent ingenuity is a waste of time and effort (which are essentially the same thing, the latter simply a more specific manifestation of the former).

In addition to the distinctions between decorous court poetics and scholastic excesses, the stylistic analyses of earlier sixteenth-century prose style by Teresa Kennedy help explain the sorts of intense antagonism between court and school. Her study focuses on the tensions between medieval orality and the growing trend toward literary composition in the prose of Sir Thomas Elyot and Baldassare Castiglione. She points out that "earlier rhetoricians and philosophers were not writing textually, rather they were participating in a system of literary orality, literary speech or oration" (117) and argues that it makes good sense to consider that Elyot would have been in no small way influenced to incorporate the more oral figures into his own written discourse. One of

these medieval figures which Kennedy points out as being more oral/aural is the doublet, "[e]mphatic repetition of a word with no other words between" (Lanham 71). The classical name is *epizeuxis* and Puttenham catalogs it as "the Vnderlay, or Coocko-spel" (210). Although he lists seven kinds of repetition,[16] all which "doth much alter and affect the eare and also the mynde of the hearer" (208), Puttenham's illustrations of this figure do not appeal to the eye as much to the ear:

> *It was Maryne, Maryne that wrought mine woe.*

And this bemoaning the departure of a deere friend.

> *The chiefest staffe of mine assured stay,*
>
> *With no small griefe, is gon, is gon away.*

And that of Sir *Walter Raleighs* very sweet.

> *With wisdomes eyes had but blind fortune seene,*
>
> *Than had my looue, my looue for euer beene.* (210)

This conversion from an oral, sound-based style toward a textual, sight-based style was fairly determined by the late sixteenth century, observes Kennedy (118). She notes that "the taste for literary prose composition had drastically shifted away from elaborate rhetorical structures to a plainer style," such that "the elaborate sentence structure, the glosses, and the doublets are at odds with the pressures to create a new literary style that is geared to textuality" (118). And this attention to stylistic form by authors throughout the sixteenth century represents an important feature of the control of language by dominant forces in the field of literary production. As Bourdieu notes,

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[16] *anaphora, antistrophe, symploche, anadiplosis, epanalepsis, epizeuxis,* and *ploche.*

[t]here is a whole dimension of authorized language, its rhetoric, syntax, vocabulary, and even pronunciation, which exists purely to underline the authority of its author and the trust he demands. In this respect, style is an element of the *mechanism* . . . through which language aims to produce and impose the representation of its own importance and thereby help to ensure its own credibility. (*Language* 76)

In light of this distinction, a contrast between courtiers and scholars begins to emerge here, one which follows the logic of invidious distinctions summarized by the antithetical labels "poet" and "versifier." Puttenham concerns himself with these terms early in Book I of the *Arte*. The labels "Philosopher" and "Poet," he explains, had become terms of abuse by "the barbarous ignoraunce of . . . grosse heads not being brought vp or acquainted with any excellent Arte" (34), but Puttenham intends to recover them as honorable titles. He points out that the reason "poet" had fallen into disrepute stemmed from the fact that so many people had taken to calling themselves poets without any of the necessary skill or finesse with which Puttenham believes is necessary to write poems like the best of the courtly authors. Therefore, since anyone who wants to fashion himself a poet does so, the title has lost all its social value as a marker of distinction and has even taken on negative connotations. As a result, the "true" poets are subsequently disregarded as well as the "false" ones; the poet-haters "doe deride and scorne it in all others as superfluous knowledges and vayne sciences, and whatsoeuer deuise be of rare inuention they terme it *phantasticall*, construing it to the worst side" (34).

In contrast, Puttenham finds merit in the mind's "fantastic" capabilities, arguing that, when rightly ordered, the human imagination is capable of providing valuable

lessons for living a good life. However, instead of trying to argue that the word

"phantasticall" really connotes positive activity, Puttenham creates another word

altogether: "euphantasiote," resembling Aristotelian *eudamonia* which poets, according

to Puttenham, are supposed to facilitate: "Wherfore such persons as be illuminated with

the brightest irradiations of knowledge and of veritie and due proportion of things, they

are called by the learned men not *phantastici* but *euphantasiote*" (35). Therefore, being a

poet requires two things: first, the capacity to adjudicate the "due proportion of things,"

which amounts to something akin to a heuristic for the best public action. Puttenham

exemplifies this quality as it appears in the best military commanders, legislators,

politicians, civic counselors, and engineers. The second condition is that true poets must

be accepted by an authorizing body of "learned men." This qualification limits the

number of those who can certify true poetic activity to a much smaller body of critics and

has the value of controlling much more rigorously the membership of a fraternity of

poets. What seems to have destroyed the reputation of poets as much as anything is an

attitude that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, thereby nominating every person able to

contract with a printer a poet and every willing reader able to afford the publisher's price

an arbiter of taste. Puttenham attempts to combat such a notion by holding up the

standard of the court style while simultaneously limiting the number of people qualified

to speak with authority about how to adjudicate decorous poetry.

When justifying his peculiar English names for the rhetorical figures he presents

in Book III, Puttenham explains that if he had used only the Greek or Latin name for the

device "it would haue appeared a little too scholasticall for our makers, and a peece of

worke more fit for clerkes then for Courtiers for whose instruction this trauaile is taken"

(170). Immediately thereafter, Puttenham refers again to the constitution of his court audience as it dictates the sort of language he uses in the *Arte*: "since to such manner of mindes nothing is more combersome then tedious doctrines and schollarly methodes of discipline, we haue in our owne conceit deuised a new and strange modell of this arte, fitter to please the Court then the schoole" (170). There is nothing "more irksome or ridiculous" than poetry which is composed "by long meditation" and "in spite of Nature or Minerua" because it exposes itself as an artificial composition rather than one created "by a suddaine inspiration" (311).

In several of the earlier sonnets in *Astrophil and Stella*, Sidney too presents a similar disdain regarding the scholastic approach to artistic composition. For example, in the third sonnet, Astrophil declares that he will forego all the contemporary methods of invention in place of simply copying Stella's face. Among the numerous figures mentioned here he most frequently refers to scholarly sorts of phrasing, speaking of "Pindar's apes" who "flaunt" their ideas "in phrases fine" (3), and of those who "with strange similes enrich each line, / Of herbs or beasts, which Ind or Afric hold" (7-8). In the sixth sonnet, the lover enumerates a number of popular Petrarchan antitheses which often serve to carry the sense of more trite examples of later sixteenth-century court verse. Some poets resort to the imagery of classical mythology and others still rely on pastoral conventions. Sonnet fifteen exemplifies Astrophil's frustration with the ineffectual ways many courtier-poets express themselves, reiterating his disdain for the over reliance on classical mythology--"the ribs of old Parnassus" (2)--, upon the flowers of rhetoric, "not sweet perhaps, which grows / Near thereabouts" (3-4), or on learned alliteration, what Astrophil calls "dictionary's method . . . running in rattling rows" (5-6).

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These poets and others he criticizes because they believe, simply by resorting to these poetic commonplaces, that they have created "genuine" poetry when in actuality, Astrophil argues, they only "bewray a want of inward touch" (10). He finds himself guilty of the same offense in the thirty-fourth sonnet when he complains that "with wit my wit is marred" (11). Clearly then, the display of rhetorical mastery merely for the sake of exhibition mars good poetry, and the use of tropes, schemes, or imagery which is apt in one particular text is not to be indiscriminately transferred.[17]

Sidney animates this sort of pedantic poet with the character Master Rombus in the opening of *The Lady of May*. The narrator explains that Rombus, "fully persuaded of his own learned wisdom, came thither with his authority" (45-46) to settle the dispute among the villagers as to who should wed the lady of May. For his intrusion, "he received many unlearned blows" (47). The narrator's mildly sarcastic description of Rombus' speech, decorated "with many special graces," suggests before the speech even commences what sort of poetic disgrace he will illustrate. Subsequently, the schoolmaster's speech is full of needless repetitions, unbelievable synonyms, and Latin words and phrases--all intended to demonstrate his learning and, evidently, to insinuate his more elevated status among the retinue of the Lady of May to the Queen. The May Lady herself interrupts Rombus, whom she calls a "tedious fool" whose "foolish tongue" is only troublesome to the Sovereign (90-91). Rombus' response to her chiding exemplifies not only the Asiatic nature of his previous speech but also the same sorts of excessively decorated language as Astrophil complains of and which Sidney castigates in

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[17] Especially illustrative on these points is Patricia Fumerton's comparison of Sidney's finely executed rhetoric with the famous miniature paintings of Nicholas Hilliard, especially pages 90-104.

the *Defense*: "*O Tempori, O Moribus!* In profession a child, in dignity a woman, *in ceteris* a maid, should thus turpify the reputation of my doctrine with the superscription of a fool! *O Tempori, O Moribus!*" after which, the "good Latin fool" departs in consternation (93-94, 97). Rhombus' speech lacks the "inward touch" of which Astrophil complains. The schoolman's oration is learned but without feeling; it certainly neither moves nor teaches his audience and it hardly delights them. It is an example of hafting because it is excessive in form while simultaneously without any power to affect change, a mere display of who Rhombus himself is but a display recognized as such and, thus, a failed attempt at rhetorical self-fashioning.

Like Rombus, Shakespeare's Holofernes, the pedant in *Love's Labor's Lost* (1595), provides another instance of the obvious artfulness of scholars which Sidney and Puttenham find so reprehensible in their court-poets. This scene opens with Holofernes, the dim-witted constable Dull, and the curate Nathaniel commenting on the success of the king's recent hunting expedition. Nathaniel states that the prize was well-taken, to which Holofernes replies, "The deer was (as you know) *sanguis*, in blood, ripe as the pomewater, who now hangeth like a jewel in the ear of *caelo*, the sky, the welkin, the heaven, and anon falleth like a crab on the face of *terra*, the soil, the land, the earth" (4.2.3-7). Which is to say simply, the deer was in good health, but Holofernes must also help himself to a far-fetched metaphor, likening the plump deer to an apple and then turning that bit of catachresis into a simile for the setting sun. The insertion of Latin words immediately followed by several equivalent translations clearly marks Holofernes as something of a scholar, but he sounds more like a speaking dictionary. Nevertheless,

he elicits from Nathaniel the compliment, "the epithites are sweetly varied, like a scholar

at the least" (4.2.8-9), which might more likely be the real reason the pedant uses them.

When the curate suggests that the deer was older than Holofernes first suggests,

the pedant is doubtful; *"haud credo,"* "I cannot believe it," he replies (4.2.11).

Apparently misunderstanding the schoolmaster's Latin, Dull proffers his own suggestion,

to which Holofernes replies in an excessively learned response, producing an impressive

yet ineffectual word heap:

> Most barbarous intimation! yet a kind of insinuation, as it were *in via*, in
>
> way, of explication; *facere*, as it were, replication, or rather *ostentare*, to
>
> show, as it were, his inclination, after his undressed, unpolished,
>
> uneducated, unpruned, untrained, or rather unlettered, or ratherest
>
> unconfirmed fashion, to insert again my *haud credo* for a deer.
>
> (4.2.13-19)

Richard Lanham cites these lines to exemplify the figure *soraismus* (what Puttenham

calls "the Mingle Mangle") which he describes as "mingling of languages ignorantly or

affectedly." The overall sentence is an elaborate amplification built primarily on two

notable figures of repetition. Holofernes first employs a repetition of the "-tion" ending

and follows with seven instances of "-ed" (the figure "homoioteleuton"). The repetition

of the "un-" prefix is best described as alliteration. All he means to say is that the

simpleton Dull is so dull that he has mistaken Holofernes' Latin *"haud credo"* as

meaning "old gray doe."[18] The effect of this elaborate rhetorical display may impress

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[18] Noted by A. L. Rowse, *Times Literary Supplement*, July 18, 1952. Cited in the Riverside edition of
Shakespeare's collected works.

Dull and Nathaniel but it is not enough to save him from exposing himself as a hafter to a more savvy sixteenth-century audience and one trying to insinuate himself as a member of a higher social order. If Sidney or Puttenham ever had reason to use the epithet *hafter*, it might very well have been used to describe these sorts of poets.

There are several places in the *Defense* where idleness is associated with the activities of the academic class. The first place one notices the idleness of scholastics appears early in the *Defense* wherein Sidney metes out the differences between philosophy, poetry, and history. Sidney associates moral philosophy with sterile contemplation which teaches what truth and virtue are but makes no attempt to inspire others to follow its precepts. He parodies their overly artful language in his alliterative description of their mission, "casting largesse as they go, of definitions, divisions, and distinctions, with a scornful interrogative do soberly ask whether it be possible to find any path so ready to lead a man to virtue as that which teacheth what virtue is" (220). Sidney points to the scholars' hafting as he describe them "sophistically speaking against subtlety, and angry with any man in whom they see the foul fault of anger" (220). In one sense, Sidney implies that they are hypocrites who do the very deeds they discourage and disparage others for doing; indeed, this is the very definition of hypocrisy. But in another sense Sidney's critique serves as more than a tool for exposing vice; it illuminates the stakes at hand in this contest between the disciplines. If the philosopher (or the historian or the poet, for that matter) were able to turn his own intellectual specialty into a normative measure of civility, as a master of that knowledge he would stand to reap the benefits accorded to powerful role models of civic virtue. Sidney is determined to prevent this from happening for the academic class, and the *Defense* metonomically

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reduces them to "idle tongues" which bark, wrangle, scoff, and backbite. The cumulative image of academicians is that of a class of agents whose chief characteristic is their love of idle argumentation: "the philosophers . . . be content little to move--saving wrangling whether *virtus* be the chief or the only good, whether the contemplative or the active life do excell" (227). The voice of Sidney's fictionalized historian critiques the philosophers' "disputative virtue" (220), and a little further on in his argument Sidney associates the scholastics' dialectical disputations with staged expressions of anger in classical Greek tragedy (222).

But perhaps the closest Sidney comes to associating idleness specifically with hafting occurs immediately before the famous refutation to the four foremost charges against poetry. Sidney first endeavors to dismiss the charges of the *misomousoi*, those who despise poetry and whose criticism is not intended for the reformation of English poesie but for its abolition. Sidney characterizes these "poet-haters" as motivated by the praise they hope to garner for themselves by means of finding fault with others. "[T]hey do prodigally spend a great many wandering words in quips and scoffs, carping and taunting" such that their arguments serve no constructive purpose and actually work against rational consideration of the question at issue (233). Such criticism is "full of a very idle easiness" (233), explains Sidney, one which is highlighted by a desire to complain regardless of person or place. The true titles for these "smiling railers" and "pleasant faultfinders" are "good fools" and "jesters" (233). Their mocking habits are broadened most by means of "rhyming and versing," and Sidney then spends the rest of a lengthy paragraph arguing for the salutary uses of verse, both as an object "sweet and orderly" and as "the only handle of knowledge" (234).

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Opening the *Defense* as he does at the court of the Italian equestrian master, John

Pietro Pugliano, Sidney sets the tone for his treatise as it enters the contest over the

legitimacy of artistic discourse in the later sixteenth century, although doing so in a way

which allows him to remain above the fray already stirred up on this matter by the

publication of Stephen Gosson's *The Schoole of Abuse* (dedicated to Sidney) and *An

Apology of the School of Abuse* (1579), the response of Thomas Lodge's *Reply to Stephen

Gosson Touching Plays* (1579), and Gosson's rebuttal in *Plays Confuted in Five Actions*

(1582). These sorts of violent public debates disrupt the decorous hierarchy of tropes and

schemes Puttenham and Sidney establish. The subjects of the following chapter

contribute to the formation of sixteenth-century artistic discourse but not in precisely the

same manner as do the proponents of court culture. Despite their sniping, carping and

wrangling, Thomas Nashe and Gabriel Harvey engage in the same struggle for notoriety

in the field of artistic discourse as the high-minded proponents of court poetry. One of

the universal elements of any field of contest, explains Bourdieu, is that the contest for

authority within a field obscures the fact that all agents, regardless of their relative

position in relation to the power of the field (e.g., empowered, disempowered, dominant,

dominating), abide by the same fundamental rules of operation. "More precisely,"

remarks Bourdieu, "the struggle tends constantly to produce and reproduce the game and

its stakes by reproducing, primarily in those who are directly involved, but not in them

alone, the practical commitment to the value of the game and its stakes which defines the

recognition of legitimacy" (*Language* 58). The struggles between authors concerning the

standards of writing--Bourdieu calls it "the legitimate art of writing"--generate both the

accepted, authoritative version of language and the impression among all members of the

field of writing--what might now be understood to be the literary field--that that version is, undisputedly, the true one. However, by no means was the field of artistic discourse settled to the degree that a peaceful, consistent production of literary texts might be observed, brought under the aegis of a dominant model of aesthetic theory. Far from it, as the following chapters will suggest; there were still wars of words about words to be fought and contests regarding the sorts of language that could be used to create artistic texts to be waged in the last decades of the sixteenth century.

CHAPTER FOUR

Verbal Combat and Critical Discourse:
The Case of Thomas Nashe

> But if you have an enemy, do not requite his evil with good, for that
> would put him to shame. Rather prove that he did you some good.
> And rather be angry than put to shame. And if you are cursed, I do not
> like it that you want to bless. Rather join a little in the cursing.
> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

In order to explicate the nature of decorum as instituted in texts like *Defense of Poesie* and *The Arte of English Poesie*, I turn once again to Skelton. However, instead of a poem of his own making, this chapter will look at the early-Tudor laureate as he appears in Thomas Vaughn's *The Golden Fleece* (1626), ostensibly an economic text endorsing the potentialities of the fishing industry recently discovered off the coast of Newfoundland. The undoing of Skelton's hard-fought reputation as a courtly maker contained herein is as equally instructive regarding the rise of later sixteenth-century critical discourse as it is entertaining in its own right. This portrayal of Skelton as an unruly, envious poet over one hundred years after his death raises several questions, principally, why does Skelton's reputation sink so low?[1] But the argumentative emphasis of this chapter will fall less on Skelton as a historical individual and more on the combative, confrontational style Vaughn portrays through him. The question which Skelton's appearance in *The Golden Fleece* frames for this chapter asks, what advantage

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[1] The legacy of Skelton as both an unruly prosodist and as a literary character in the century following his death is a fascinating one, of which no full critical account yet exists. However, see Edwards and Kinsman.

is at stake with an aggressive, argumentative style when it seems so obviously contrary to what the courtly poetic voices declare to be decorous? That is, why potentially expose one's attempts at self fashioning with a style which flouts moderation when the height of cleverness is defined as the ability to conceal one's wit?

The Golden Fleece is written as an outline for the rejuvenation of England's economy. However, as Vaughn demonstrates in a summary of the three major divisions of the text which appears in the prefatory letter "To the indifferent Readers," *The Golden Fleece* provides recommendations for much more than economic policy: "In the first Part I will endeavor to remove the Errours of *Religion*, in the Second the Diseases of the Common-wealth: And in the Third Part I will discouer the certainty of the *Golden Fleece*, which shall restore us to all worldly Happinesse." It should thus come as no surprise that an "economic" text published at this time would include as entirely relevant to its message discussions touching religious reform; rectification of social ills such as frivolous law suits, the decline of family values, the vices of tobacco, and, late in the third book, the banishment of unruly poets. In this regard, *The Golden Fleece* is as fine a document of early seventeenth century ideology as a literary historian might wish to find.

In the Third Part, Vaughn, always writing under the pseudonym Orpheus Junior, leaves off his examination of the hindrances to the English economy and takes up an investigation of the particulars of the nascent Newfoundland fishing industry which he esteems as England's Golden Fleece, "A myne of Gold it is," he proclaims (3.82). After describing what the Golden Fleece is, its location, its qualities, and its potential for the English economy, Apollo, the protagonist of this third part, asks seven wise Greek

philosophers if they might suggest a better way for England to enhance its economy than by making use of the resources in Newfoundland. They cannot.

In Chapter Twelve, Apollo then turns to the patron saints of Great Britain's four national divisions for their assistance in directing the newly crowned Charles I to the best governance of the kingdom. In the court of Lady Pallas Athena, who is attended by the nine Muses and the three Graces, Apollo makes a short speech charging Saints George, Andrew, Patrick, and David (patron saints of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, respectively) to assist Charles with securing the Golden Fleece. Each saint offers a gift to the King: St. George a parade of the Knights of the Garter, St. Andrew an oration on the unity of the realm, St. Patrick a book of military science, and St. David concludes the episode with a panegyric poem commemorating the King's recent marriage and coronation. Only St. David's contribution is recorded in detail, the others' offerings being simply summarized.

Saint David hardly begins his praise than he is interrupted by the fool Scoggin who scoffs at David's Welsh patronage, saying that Wales is full of nothing but infertile land, lawyers, and poor poets. St. David is allowed to make a lengthy defense of his people and protectorate against Scoggin's charges before he is interrupted again, this time by Skelton whose objections focus on the indecorous style of David's poem, which Skelton finds to be "so stale," fitting more for the ale house than the royal court. However, St. David is allowed to have the last word, and his subsequent defense mostly elaborates the praise which he had begun before of Charles, Great Britain, and Wales.

These reiterations notwithstanding, a few of David's lines early in the rebuttal are laced with subtle yet derogatory remarks for the style of Skelton's own poetry. For

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instance, the saint explains that those "Whom mighty *Ioue* meanes to destroy, / He lets them quaffe a while: / And mads them with a *smoaky* toy, / Themselues till they beguile" (3.88-89). Just a bit further on, he proclaims "I worship not false *Mahomet*, /Who barres the *Ivy signe*, / As ignorant, how some haue met / in *wine* the *sisters nine*" (3.89). Preceding discussions regarding the use of tobacco and excessive drink have clearly identified these activities as private vices responsible for numerous public ills, and David/Orpheus Junior/Vaughn readily associates them here with muddled poetry. It is easy to see David's line of reasoning in his defense: My style may be simple but it is dignified and quite apart from the coarse poetics of my detractor, who rhymes as if he were giddy from smoking or drunk from drinking. "I come not here for *Belly-cheere*," he says, "Nor for *Tobaccoes fume*. / With mirth for mirrh my *Soueraigne* deare, / To perfume, I presume" (3.88).

David returns to his encomium and closes Chapter Twelve without any further interruption. Chapter Thirteen resumes on the following day, again at the court of Lady Pallas who presently administers justice as Queen Regent after Apollo's departure for the Tropic of Cancer. Scoggin and Skelton are hauled into court by Spenser, "the *Emperours Atturney* for the *English Poets*," who is so "moued with the vnmannerly and rude interruptions of *Scoggin* and *Skelton*" that he accuses them of libel against St. David (3.93). The defendants summarily plead guilty, protesting that the style of David's poem "seemed more conuenient for men of their rank, then for a venerable *Patriarch*, whose veine ought rather to flow with Heroicall blood, then to borrow their plaine robes of Poetizing" (3.93). In other words, a poet such as David ought to have composed a poem in a grand heroic manner more befitting his station and to have left the simple rhyming to

protest poets like themselves. Lady Pallas convicts Skelton and Scoggin of libel, and

Orpheus Junior recounts that, "because their floutes and taunts tended to the breach of

Ciuill Orders, her *Maiestie* banished all *scoffing companions*, and base ballet Rimers

quite out of the Iuridsiction of *Parnassus* [Britain] and *Colchos* [Newfoundland], and for

euer after to become incapable of the mystery of the *golden fleece*" (3., 95). Pallas

provides five justifications for her verdict: first, the offenders interrupted a poet of

superior rank, which act she believes they committed "more out of spleene and

prejudicate iudgement," than from any rational sort of motive; second, contrary to their

opinion, an honest, simple poem is always more appropriate than a fulsome, grand one;

third, a literary critic ought not only to point out shortcomings but also salutary aspects of

a text; fourth, critics should not criticize that which they simply do not comprehend; and

finally, one should not mind the carping of individuals whose opinions are worthless in

the first place (although this point seems more apropos to David than to Skelton or

Scoggin) (3., 94-95).

The manner in which this scene is conducted raises several questions germane to

issues of artistic discourse and decorum in the later sixteenth century. For example, how

has the composition of poetry come to support "ranks" at this point, and how has artistic

production become so professionalized that it necessitates the presence of an attorney

general (to say nothing of why Vaughan nominates Spenser to this position)?

Furthermore, what would be the function of a professional poetry prosecutor? What

code of law might he follow, and who instituted it in the first place? As argued in

Chapter Three, Sidney's *Defense* and Puttenham's *Arte* play no small role in the later

sixteenth century in establishing the boundaries of artistic decorum and in turn laying the

groundwork for a means of using poetry to discriminate not just one poet from another but also one citizen from another. Vaughn's 1626 depiction of Skelton in *The Golden Fleece* might be understood as one such instance of the application of dicta introduced several decades earlier. Indeed, several of Pallas' charges against Skelton and Scoggin seem to echo Sidney's own injunctions against poetasters who use their arts merely to tear others down without a concern to supplement their censorious remarks with reformative advice. But perhaps more instructive for the present purpose of exploring the rationale behind unruly poetry is the reason provided by the offenders in defense of their actions: a heroic poem composed in a grand style befits a poet like St. David and he should not resort to plain-spoken praise. Strangely enough, Skelton does not say that he himself is more qualified to praise the new king; instead, he objects to the style with which St. David praises Charles. If rustic or "rude" poetry, previously the exclusive stylistic province of satirists and other fault-finders, were henceforward deemed dignified enough for courtly epidictic, then the trademark unruliness of sharp critique might be thereby rendered impotent, and the prior contributions of poets like Skelton could effectively be excluded from the national literary heritage. The "ranking" of poets Vaughn tenders in the final sections of *The Golden Fleece* suggests the tactical positioning and social fashioning implicated with hafting and the capacity to conceal one's own artfulness while simultaneously demonstrating the seams of others' texts.

Skelton's argument in defense of his actions seems contrary to that which twentieth-century critics might expect, for it suggests that there might have been some who wrote poetry (setting aside for the moment the issue of whether their contemporaries found them to be artful poets or not) fully cognizant of the fact that their texts stood in

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violation (sometimes quite starkly) of the decorous norms instituted by the later

Elizabethan arbiters of artistic taste. Given the possibility that some poets intentionally

revealed their self-aggrandizing motives by means of an aggressively excessive,

indecorous style, one returns squarely to the question proposed at the opening of this

chapter: What advantage is there in the use of an aggressive, argumentative artistic style

which seems so obviously contrary to what the courtly poetic voices declare to be

decorous?

So much about verbal contest seems to be counterintuitive; flyting breaks rules,

earns disrepute; therefore, one should avoid it. But many later sixteenth-century poets do

not avoid using rough, base, or otherwise harsh language, as evidenced by the

proliferation of "base ballet rhymers" mentioned by the likes of Sidney and Puttenham,

Gosson, Harvey, Lodge, and others. However, it bears reemphasizing that instituting

standards of artistic decorum is a matter of getting writers to accept a specific set of rules

and that these rules are arbitrary; he who mediates artistic decorum mediates the

positions--the public reputations--of others in the artistic field. Although verbal combat

often relies on stylistic features defined as excesses or as vices of good usage, one must

constantly keep in mind that the only reason such texts are perceived as indecorous in the

first place is because they happen to be constructed in a way which goes against an

artificial standard of what "good" poetry is. Granted, many flytings and battlelogia sound

bombastic and appear stylistically ostentatious; however, as Carol Cochran suggests,

these texts frequently possess a performative--if not almost musical--quality which makes

them more than simply the versified equivalent of shouting (82). "Generally the rhythm

of a flyting in earnest is an exaggeration of the four-stress unit," explains Cochran, "an

exaggeration because many of the unstressed syllables are dropped, leaving the four stresses to pound away uninterrupted" (82-83). Flyting is raucous music that has a rhythm of its own. It possesses a practical logic which the "common sense" rules of sixteenth-century decorum and Puttenham's *Arte* fail to codify. David Lampe sets forth a convincing argument which posits that flyting and other modes of verbal contest operate according to a well-defined inversion of the topics of ceremonial praise as outlined in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (112). Flyting, finds Lampe, operates on the principles of *dissoi logoi*, the doctrine of antilogic which teaches the discovery of arguments by means of a process of finding the logical negation of the opponent's rhetoric. Lampe concludes by explaining that "[t]he inverted rhetoric of abuse operates then as a kind of comic carnival in which one expresses praise through blame, friendship through apparent hostility, and celebration in the form of deprecation" (117). Clearly then, flyting possessed rational, even orderly, bases of arrangement despite its apparent disorderliness. Nevertheless, to have engaged in a flyting in print in the later sixteenth century was counterintuitive--not because the genre lacks principles of arrangement or delivery--but because its aggressive style is not valued in prescriptions of decorum like Sidney's and Puttenham's.

It would be unwise to think that the construction of decorum occurred only on an artistic level; one must consider that political discourse was involved in these evolutions as well. To this end, Lauro Martines suggests that "what we see as a 'shadowy land' between literary change and social change is no more than a metaphor for a lack of discernment in us: for our inability to see that a literary response to social change is perfectly natural and also social" (51). The counterintuitive nature of verbal contest is profitably addressed by considering the place of physical violence in late Tudor England.

"Did it have any method, rhyme or reason?" asks Mervyn James, "How was the language of the sword translated into politics?" (308). James finds that there was essentially a contest-mindset fostered by the notion of honor (308).

> This, emerging out of a long-established military and chivalric tradition, is characterized above all by a stress on competitive assertiveness; it assumes a state of affairs in which resort to violence is natural and justifiable; the recurrence of personal and political situations in which conflict cannot be otherwise resolved than violently. Honour could both legitimize and provide moral reinforcement for a politics of violence. (James 308)

Although physical contests and duels settling points of personal honor between two private individuals were outlawed in the Renaissance, James notes that they were practices too ancient to be eliminated with only a few decades of legislation (322). Furthermore, the idea of physical combat persisted in the minds of English citizens--even those who had no reason to engage in a duel because they effectually had no public reputation to defend--due to the manner in which dueling suggested an honorable chain of being. Although almost entirely a practice of the noble and aristocratic classes, physical contests and other displays of arms and might were nonetheless strongly accepted by members of the middling and lower classes of Elizabethan England because they contributed to a satisfying reinforcement of "the natural order of things" (James 381). "The sense of blood and lineage required acceptance [in the general populace] because of its firm grounding in the 'opinion of the vulgar'," notes James (381).

Although by the end of the sixteenth century the "quasi-feudal" cult of honor was showing definite signs of giving way to the "national" cult of virtue, Lawrence Stone

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suggests that these two models of social prestige existed simultaneously well into the reign of Elizabeth (206). Although the display of liveries and other sorts of advertisements of the aristocracy were not unknown in the 1580s and 1590s, "there can be no doubt," Stone emphasizes, "that the dependence of the gentry on the nobility was on the decline" (206). Instead of sending their sons into the homes of aristocrats for the purposes of developing a livelihood, members of the gentry paid for private tutors or for educations at Eton or Westminster (Stone 208). Mervyn James posits that in the last decades of Elizabeth's reign honor was "as much to be mastered in the bloodless combats of school and classroom as on the field of battle," thereby amplifying the desirability of marks of distinction and modifying the various means by which individuals could achieve them (383). James asserts that the late Tudor court placed honor in civic service, particularly service to the Crown. Traditional honor, based as it was on personal, private conceptions of blood, friendship, duty, and loyalty stood in contradiction with the new honor-ethos built on virtue. "Thus the community of honour came to be that which centred on the crown, its structure that of the court and city, its service that of the state, its mark the nobility of virtue, and the dignities which this conferred" (James 381).

These evolutions in the social perception of honor influenced the rapidly developing realm of print culture. Words--especially words in print--were not thought to have inhabited a separate realm of reality. They pertained to the same sort of reality as other social institutions and in fact were in large part fundamental in creating the efficacy of those institutions. M. Lindsay Kaplan explores the interface between artistic discourse and political/legal discourse in her book *The Culture of Slander in Early Modern England*. "Thus, by the end of the sixteenth century," notes Kaplan, "the common law

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measured slander both in terms of its content and its effect" (17). Slander, in other words, was the product of an action. And if that action became publicly disruptive then the Star Chamber ignored whether or not the accusations were true or false (Kaplan 90). As Kaplan puts it so succinctly, "the Elizabethan state did not make nice distinctions between attacking persons [in print] as opposed to crimes" (90).

As Kaplan points out, the early modern field of power accounts for public decorum based on compliance with law, a rather absolute standard of valuing words (10-11). On the other hand, the cultural field developing around artistic discourse in the Renaissance counts capital by compliance with the concept of decorum, a far less objective standard of valuing words.

It is entirely possible then to establish, maintain, or defend a reputation based on legal principles. However, one cannot as easily build a reputation as a poet based solely on propriety or statutory correctness. "Models of censorship focus on the exercise of state power," explains Kaplan; "in so doing, they ignore what a defamatory model reveals: the elusive power of discourse" (113). There has to be an element of arbitrariness, of transgression in order generate capital in the cultural field. As a result, the political, more broadly social agency is driven out of the cultural field and invested strictly in the field of power. "If attempts were made in the early modern period to discredit poetry by associating it with defamation, the subversive potential of libels linked poets to a discursive power that eluded official containment and successfully challenged the state's authority" (Kaplan 113). This capacity of certain types of language to flourish outside the bounds of political/legal jurisdiction effectively answers the question posed at the opening of this chapter: what advantage is there in engaging in

indecorous battlelogia? Therein lies the opportunity to define the limits of the field of

artistic discourse to one's own advantage, and this enterprise is negotiated by relying on

the textual equivalent of dueling: verbal combat. Ultimately, the question revolves back

around the concept of honor, but instead of a publicly certified honor delegated by

courtly codes of conduct this sort of honor inheres to the reputation a writer creates

through the publication of "artistic" discourse.

Many of Thomas Nashe's texts furnish a matrix for exploring the practical

implications of this sort of reasoning. Nashe is very concerned about his reputation as a

writer and about the nature of artistic discourse at the end of the sixteenth century. In

several texts he engages in a quarrel over these precise issues. Ultimately, Nashe's

willingness to put his reputation on the line between respectable and disreputable texts

often places him at the forefront of Renaissance prose. The texts which comprise the

Nashe-Harvey quarrel provide just such an instance of his putting his wit and writer's

ethos on the line, and it is to those texts that the focus of this chapter now turns in an

effort to explore how Nashe uses the resource of transgressive language to generate

capital for himself.

Nashe composed *Strange Newes* (1593) as a rebuttal to Gabriel Harvey's *Four

Letters* (1592), which primarily castigates Thomas Greene but also includes several

minor references to Nashe himself. Harvey's riposte, *Pierces Supererogation* (1593) was

answered by Nashe's *Have With You to Saffron Walden, or Gabriel Harvey's Hunt is Vp*

(1596). Although his *Strange Newes* is full of excessive language, from the very

beginning of the quarrel, Nashe argues for an ethos other than that of a verbal duelist: "if

any such deepe insighted detracter will challenge mee to whatsoeuer quiet aduenture of

Art, wherein he thinkes mee leeast conueranst, hee shall finde that I am *Tam Mercurio quam Marti*, a Scholler in some thing else but contention" (1.259).[2] His primary obstacle seems to be--and Nashe himself complains about this regularly--that his detractors read every derogatory statement as if it were an allusion to themselves or to someone they know. It seems readers take Nashe's texts as if they are solely invectives and not satire. That is, they take Nashe too seriously, as if he were attacking them personally and not antiquarian ideas in general. "If idle wittes will needes tye knottes on smooth bulrushes with their tongues, faith, the worlde might thinke I had little to attend, if I should goe about to vnloose them with my penne" (1.259). Relating an anecdote of one who discovered himself to be caricatured in his *Pierce Penniless*, Nashe warns readers of *Strange Newes* that they should not attempt to discern for themselves the point of his satire, and they should certainly not trust others who spread rumors concerning the targets of Nashe's derision. "So they that are vngroundedly offended at any thing in *Pierce Pennilesse*, first let them looke if I did name them; if not, but the matter hangeth in suspence, let them send to mee for my exposition, and not buy it at the seconde hand, and I doe not doubt but they will be throughly satisfied" (1.260). Once into the main text of *Strange Newes*, Nashe particularly singles out Harvey's quantitative metrics for derision. "I would trot a false gallop through the rest of his ragged Verses, but that if I should retort his rime dogrell aright, I must make my verses (as he doth his) run hobling like a Brewers Cart vpon the stones, and obserue no length in their feete" (1.275).

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[2] All quotations of Nashe's texts are from R. B. McKerrow, ed., *The Works of Thomas Nashe* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), and are cited by volume and page number.

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Early in the text, Nashe begins his ad hominem attacks on Harvey. One point over which he quarrels most passionately regards Harvey's defamation of Robert Green who, regardless of the true intimacy of his friendship with Nashe, functions as a totem for discourse which is witty, fresh, and timely, in essence, everything that Harvey's is not. "The Analasis of the whole is this: an olde mechanical meeter-muger would faine raile, if he had anie witte. If *Greene* were *dogge-sicke and brain-sicke*, sure he (poore secular Satirist) is dolt-sick and brainlesse, that with the toothlesse gums of his Poetry so betuggeth a dead man" (1.275). Nashe mockingly praises Harvey, asserting that he affects the language of the dramatic Vice figures perfectly: "I will not robbe you of your due commendation in any thing: in this Sonnet you haue counterfeited the stile of the olde Vice in the Morrals, as right vp and downe as may be" (1.275).

Nashe soon argues that satire is meant to be corrective of vice but it should also be amusing--it should "delight with reprehension," (1.285) is the way he describes it. He suggests that historically poetry has always been used for epidictic, "of praise and reproofe," and that without either one of these objectives in mind a text "haply may tickle the eare, but neuer edifies" (1.285). Nashe really places some restrictions on the use and the occasions for poetry here, ones which seem rather like Puttenham's, especially where the *Arte* recommends that poets refrain from invectives and other sorts of vituperative verse. Furthermore, Nashe argues from history that poets have license to satirize virtually any subject except the "secrets of God" and God's earthly viceroys, kings and rulers (1.286).

Nashe has a few words for the way Harvey has misread *Pierce Pennilesse*: "A fewe Elegeicall verses of mine thou pluckest in pieces most ruthfullie, and quoted them

against mee as aduantageable, together with some dismembred Margine notes, but all is inke cast away, you recouer no costs and charges. With one minutes studie Ile destroie more, than thou art able to build in ten daies" (1.307). Of note here is the language Nashe uses to speak of Harvey's misdirected rebuttals: they "recouer no costs or charges," suggesting the investment of Harvey's efforts as if they were of material consequence. In a wonderful attack against the man, Nashe manages to cram into a single paragraph a critique of almost every way Harvey has attempted to certify himself as a public writer:

> Gentlemen, by that which hath been already laid open, I doe not doubt but you are vnwauerlingly resolued, this indigested Chaos of Doctourship, and greedy pothunter after applause, is an apparant Publican and sinner, a selfe-loue surfetted sot, a broken-winded galdbacke Iade, that hath borne vp his head in his time, but now is quite foundred & tired, a scholer in nothing but the scum of schollership, a stale soker at *Tullies Offices*, the droane of droanes, and maister drumble-bee of non proficients. What hath he wrote but hath had a wofull end? When did he dispute but hee duld all his auditorie? his [sic] Poetry more spiritlesse than smal beere, his Oratory Arts bastard, not able to make a man rauishingly weepe, that hath an Onion at his eye. In Latin, like a louse, he hath manie legges, many lockes fleed'd from *Tullie*, to carry away and cloath a little body of matter, but yet hee moues but slowly, is apparaild verie poorely. (1.310-02)

Nashe, ever attuned to the attention of the audience and the requisites of publishable prose, suggests that "Those that catch Leopards set cups of wine before them; those that

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will winne liking and grace of the readers must set before them continually that which shall cheare them and reuiue them" (1.322). He presents Harvey as a writer who would require tedious patience and unnatural reserve from his readers: "*Gabriell*, thous hast not done so, thou canst not doe so, therefore thy works neither haue, nor can any way hinder mee, nor benefit the Printer" (1.322). With a wonderful bit of neologizing, Nashe calls critics like Harvey who would search out places in Nashe's texts that they believe reveal Nashe's lack of artistry "expected spiefaults" (1.308). "Squeise thy heart into thy inkehorne, and it shall but congeal into clodderd garbage of confutatio[n], thy soule hath no effects of a soule, thou canst not sprinkle it into a sentence, & make euerie line leape like a cup of neat wine new powred out, as an Orator must doe that lies aright in wait for mens affections" (1.307).

Using Harvey's own words, Nashe demonstrates how Harvey himself commits the very same egregious stylistic transgressions of which he would accuse Nashe: "Yet, yet, *Gabriell*, are not we set *non plus*; thy *roister doisterdome* hath not dasht vs out of countenance. If anie man *vse boistrous horse-play, or bee beholding to Carters Logique*, it is thy selfe; for with none but clownish and roynish ieastes dost thou rush vppon vs, and keepst such *a flurting and a flinging* in euerie leafe, as if thou wert the onely reasty iade in a country" (1.324). Also Nashe engages in a bit of aggressive stylistics while quoting Harvey: "Holla, holla, holla, *flurt, fling*, what reasty Rhetoricke haue we here? certes, certes, brother *hoddy doddy*, your penne is a coult by cockes body" (1.281).

Nashe sets out his definition of invective and shows both how he is innocent of invective and how Harvey's *Four Letters* serves as the exemplar to the definition. "Scolding & railing is loud miscalling and reuiling one another without wit, speaking

euery thing a man knows by his neighbour, though it bee neuer so contrary to all humanitie and good manners, and would make the standers by almost perbrake to heare it. Such is thy inuectiue against *Greene*, where thou talkst of his lowsines, his surfeting, his beggerie, and the mother of *Infortunatus* infirmities. If I scold, if I raile, I do but *cum ratione insanire*; *Tully, Ouid*, all the olde Poets, *Agrippa, Aretine*, and the rest are all scolds and railers, and by thy conclusion flat shrewes and rakehels: for I doe no more than their examples do warrant mee" (1.324). Nashe also threatens Harvey with the voice of the angry, malicious persona which Harvey accuses him of being (1.319-20). Nashe says "I will neuer leaue thee as long as I am able to lift a pen" (1.319). Both Nashe and Harvey want to fashion themselves as professors of poetry, not of invective. "Thou saiest I professe the art of railing: thou shalt not say so in vaine, for, if there bee any art of depth in it . . . looke that I will sound it and search it to the uttermost, but ere I haue done with thee ile leaue thee the miserablest creature that the sunne euer sawe" (1.320).

With regard to the Marprelate affair one notices the same pattern of events being repeated as occurred with the quarrel between Nashe and Harvey: one side receives (or perceives) a slight from another, the defendant issues a riposte, the other party responds in kind, and the entire event escalates in a frenzy of abuse and vitriol until an outside agent steps in to put an end to the fighting. In the case of the Nashe-Harvey affair, bishops Whitgift and Bancroft intervened, desiring "to cut off the publishing of satire and contentious works, which was expanding at an exponential rate in the late 1590s, and they also took the occasion to discourage a number of other potentially seditious works" (218). Stephen Hilliard's explanation of the concluding events of the quarrel suggests the prevalence of verbal combat as a viable, although officially repudiated, relation of artistic

production. "The bishops disapproved of what was essentially a private quarrel because it was a model of singularity and contention," stipulates Hilliard, suggesting that intemperate self-aggrandization both initiated and concluded the quarrel (171). In the end, the bishops' ban was provoked not so much from any particularly "dangerous political commentary or topical allegory," explains Hilliard, but rather because the texts "were models of presumption, encouraging discontent with the existing order while inspiring verbal aggressiveness and self-assertion" (218-19).

Lorna Hutson explains that the abiding apprehension in the English government regarding critical discourse, especially when such discourse touched on matters of state and/or religion in an ironic manner, derived in large part from the bewildering chain of events that comprise the Martin Marprelate affair (198). "Linked through the Marprelate episode with puritan dissent, and more generally with the spread of atheism and skepticism, Lucianic irony was by the 1590s regarded as a deliberately subversive mode, employed by those whose object was to undermine the political indivisibility of Church and Crown" (Hutson 146). The Marprelate entanglement heightened the sensitivity to printed conflicts and left emphatic mistrust of sardonic language in general. "It was Martin's style," asserts Joseph Black, "not his arguments on church government, that would ultimately have the greater impact" (708). Black points out that the Anglican clergy were no strangers to the concept of debate and spiritual warfare, but it was not so much the action of disputing over the legitimacy of certain words that unsettled the religious leaders as it was the stylistic manner in which the Martinist attacks and anti-Martinist counter offensives were conducted: "While they were perfectly comfortable with the weapons of scripture, tradition, and authority, the bishops seem to have been

unprepared for the sharper edge of satire and the *ad hominem* thrust" (Black 710-11).

Even among the fraternity of unruly anti-Martinist authors ordained to fight on the side of

the religious establishment, there was a compelling desire to vie with one another in a

spirit of "literary one-upmanship," notes Black, "as if the authors of these pamphlets

were competing not only with Martin but also with one another to devise the most

imaginative insults, scatological metaphors, or witty comparisons" (714). As Black

suggests, the stylistic habits of verbal dueling used by both sides virtually transformed

what was initially an effort to control troublesome notions about theology into a

troublesome engagement with the opposition in a war of words that seemed to be

animated as much by an effort to offend one another than as to reform. That is, the

"liberty of language" became tantamount to "the political liberties they threaten" (Black

711). As a specific illustration of this predicament, Black points to "the use of stage

burlesques to supplement the efforts in verse and prose" employed in the third wave of

attack against Martin (715).

In the end, the anti-Martinists and their tendency to write in a style

indistinguishable from their opponents weakened their overall effectiveness to represent

the Anglican position with dignity and authority. The lesson of this affair seems to be

that claims of civic loyalty needed support from a style which reflected the authority the

text purported to represent. A text had to be usable, and the best way to be usable was to

exercise a style which did as little as possible to provoke or promote personal

demonstrations of rhetorical agility. As Lorna Hutson suggests, "[b]eing obliged to claim

for one's own text the status of a patriotic commodity meant being obliged to disclaim

literary originality for fear of seeming to start a trend of licentious irresponsibility with

the resources of meaning and interpretation" (62). Particularities with respect to person or place only made a text less transposable for readers removed from such "facts" in either space or time and therefore rendered a text less useful.

Not only was idiomatic information less useful, it was also less trusted. "When Elizabethan writers condemn the publication of 'novels' . . . they are criticizing the prodigal waste of exemplary resources in discourse which can disclose nothing except itself, which is too particular to afford any knowledge of a more general application to the reader," points out Hutson (52). This leads to an interesting distinction between truth and falsity: "Lies are not lies in Renaissance literary theory unless they are also 'unprofitable'" (Hutson 52). In the process of converting particularities into usable exempla, the "truth" of a fact was inevitably slanted away from what actually pertained to the situation at hand and toward the essential lesson such an episode might illustrate (Hutson 50). Thus, the particularized objects of *ad hominem* attack which constitute so integral a part of Nashe's entanglements with Harvey and in the Marprelate affair are counter-cultural as well as counter to norms of decorous production. Not only are these wars of words seen as a waste of time and materials but also in the end they are perceived as too specific to be of much good for present or future readers.

Paula Blank's work in *Broken English: Dialects and the Politics of Language in Renaissance Writings* explores the varieties of early modern unruly English dialects. Her work lays the historical foundation for an account of both the persistence and the diversity of verbal contests in the sixteenth century. She explains that, "According to [Alexander] Gill, poets may use regional dialects, yet they usually 'abstain' from doing so; poetic diction corresponds with the 'common' language, just as Puttenham suggested-

-but only because poets deliberately choose not to exploit the license they have been granted to transgress the borders of common speech" (30). Poets--that is, ones whose texts Puttenham or Sidney would approve--do not transgress the limits of decorous language because constructing the field of artistic discourse is a matter of abiding by rules as a community--not, as with verbal contests, of violating decorum as individuals.

Given the strong social conditioning writers would have received to associate their texts with the virtues of rhetorical usability, Hutson points out that Nashe diverged from the practice of his peers. His texts, finds Hutson, "refuse from the outset to be serviceable and indeed are offered by their author as waste paper to be consumed in various idle forms of wrapping and packaging: 'To anie vse about meat & drinke put them to and spare not, for they cannot doe theyr countrie better seruice' (2.207)"[3] (34). Hutson finds Nashe to have been concerned less with the transferable exemplarity of his texts than with generating a unique experience for a reader by means of his rhetoric. "Nashe's concern to provoke the reader into responding to a purely aesthetic experience of the language inspires a caricature of contemporary moralized discourse as shabbily second-hand, or parsimoniously obsessed with making profitable use out of scrap, retailing 'the cinders of *Troy*, and the hiuers of broken trunchions' (3.332),"[4] Hutson points out (65). She argues that Nashe consciously wrote against the prevailing humanist, and by extension nationalist, mode of composition in an effort of refine the rhetorical and stylistic uses to which the English vernacular could be employed (65).

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[3] Quoted from "The Induction to the Dapper Monsieur Pages of the Court," preceding *The Unfortunate Traveller*.

[4] Quoted from "Preface to Sidney's 'Astrophel and Stella'."

> The holiday gestures of the fool, pleasurably divesting repressive sign-
> systems of their everyday authority, are obviously comparable to the
> fool's characteristic fondness for nonsense speech, for babble, the only
> purpose of which is to re-appropriate the instruments of meaning and
> distinction as source material comfort and pleasure. Nashe's rhetorical
> personae declare their affinity with the popular festive fool, or the 'Vice'
> of the Tudor interlude, by their predilection for such gratuitous wordplay,
> which even at its most sophisticated seems to retain links with a festive
> dynamic of dismemberment and grotesque re-creation. (Hutson 135)

However, to invest a transgressive discourse like verbal combat with little or no value simply because of its uselessness to wider audiences is to misconceive the operations of the sixteenth-century linguistic marketplace. Such excessive language carries a symbolic value often equal--but opposite--to the language of the linguistic upper classes. The unruly idioms of reprobates and other masterless men seem to have been "a language that generated profit not only for the rogues who allegedly spoke it, but for the authors who appropriated it. . . . The authors of Renaissance rogue literature do not so much decipher the canting language as reproduce it for their own profit" (Blank 58). Blank's notion of language as a miraculous sort of ever-abundant resource proves to be misleading because language, specifically language intended for use by the more powerful classes, must only be available to a limited consumer base. The ways language is used by those of privileged social status must be distinguished from those of the populace, and boundaries must be rigorously demarcated when the manner in which one speaks or writes reflects the status of the user.

Blank's discussion of the negative value of unruly dialects approaches this issue but is not targeted specifically at an explanation of precisely <u>how</u> a speaker/writer positions himself in the field of artistic production with respect to his "dialect." This issue of linguistic distinction has been investigated in Chapter Three in terms of the normative boundaries placed on artistic texts by means of poetic decorum. But there is a complementary way of looking at the profitability inherent in any particular style of language, and this appears in terms of the capital a writer stands to gain or lose with the use of any particular style.

Coordinate with the regulation of standard and nonstandard English was the creation and distribution of linguistic "social authority," a project with the power to coin new words, to certify good usage, and to designate "who, finally, stood to profit from the trade" (Blank 38). This linguistic authority must have something against which to value itself. Simply designating a language as one's own does not endow that language with value; one must also take pains to say explicitly what the language is not. Appropriating the authority invested in any particular language entails a seizure of linguistic and symbolic power. "To 'gain the language' of another is," as Blank suggests, ". . . to take it away from him [the other person] to produce the poverty on which one's own wealth-- linguistic, social, political--stands" (36). In other words, authority must have something against which it is valued. In terms of the production of literary and poetic normalcy, that is part of the "value" of verbal combat; stylistic transgressions and vices provide the excessive and deficient ends against which the decorum of courtly form is defined. Thus, the end of the project of exercising linguistic authority is the acquisition of elevated social status and, therefore, of symbolic power.

Blank works closely with the notions of linguistic power and symbolic capital as elaborated by Pierre Bourdieu. Qualifying the degree to which the standards are established via literary and linguistic control, Bourdieu asserts that arbiters of taste and decorum are not conscious of the restraints or controls but remain unaware of them (*Language* 60). The "external effects" generated by critical treatises like Sidney's *Defense* or Puttenham's *Arte* are always mystified from the authorities themselves. Authors "misrecogni[ze]" the actual ends of their literary control, claims Bourdieu, by dint of their position as authors (*Language* 60). He finds that distinction between dialects need not be understood as a conscious effort of distinguishing one class of discourse over another but that the practice instead goes back to a deep regard for "a practical sense of the rarity of distinctive marks" (*Language* 63). Furthermore, Andrew Hadfield asserts that the citizens of sixteenth-century England had no preconceived notion of how they wanted their language to evolve. "'Literature' was not a clear and distinctly identifiable category of writing which would be employed to deal with certain themes in a particular way," suggests Hadfield (1). Granted, particular genres like the ballad, epic, satire, or romance did exist as recognizable types of texts, "but it was not clear exactly how they related to each other, how they related to other forms of writing and, most importantly, what was the point of writing or reading such works" (Hadfield 1).

Nevertheless, Blank stipulates that "[t]he acquisition of new words is not, according to many Renaissance writers, a venture that is open to all; rather than a communal resource, the new English is often represented as a dialect that pertains to a particular group or social class" (34). And, in light of what is noted above, this is part of the irony of the commonality of the new idiom of the King's English and poesy: it

appears open but it is really quite restricted by means of strict rules governing the creation of decorous poetry.

With this end in mind, one discovers another reason the foundation of King's English drives toward an increasingly rule-bound production of poetry: if one is going to designate an object as an index or marker against which the value of another object will be determined, the status of the first object must be held constant. This relationship typifies the function which the combative style serves in terms of literary criticism. In order to posit a consistent set of preferable literary practices in support of an authorized style and subject matter, would-be poets needed an index of counter examples against which to define their own literary products. If the boundary between the set of "negative" and "positive" examples constantly changed or was in dispute, the project of valuing literature faltered. That boundary, however, is strictly tied to the very nature of the decorous style itself. "In the uses of language as in life-styles," explain Bourdieu, "all definition is relational. Language that is 'recherché', 'well chosen', 'elevated', 'lofty', 'dignified' or 'distinguished' contains a negative reference ... to 'common' 'everyday' ... and, beyond this, to 'popular', 'crude', 'coarse', 'vulgar', 'sloppy', 'loose', 'trivial', 'uncouth' language (not to mention the unspeakable, 'gibberish', 'pidgin' or 'slang')" (*Language* 60).

At the same time the proprietors of the dominant dialect demarcate the boundaries of the most exclusive classes of English speakers, they also describe the linguistic purview of the lower and dispossessed classes. Throughout her work, Blank suggests that non-standard dialects are defined and utilized alongside the standard one in an effort to regulate the boundaries between creditable and transgressive English. Transgressive

literary practices, therefore, have as much to do with the minting of a normative vernacular as do hegemonic ones. Substandard language is frequently identified with what are termed "hard" words, words imported from other languages, inkhorn terms, cant vocabulary, and neologisms. And, although such language appears to exist independently from acceptable English vernacular, Blank stipulates that sixteenth-century regulators of linguistic currency themselves have an equal hand, and certainly an equal stake, in the project of creating non-acceptable English. "Early modern neologism . . ." argues Blank, " is best understood not as a discontinuous, sporadic, idiosyncratic activity, but as the systematic production of sociolinguistic differences--a cultural project aimed at creating 'new' vernaculars tied to social class" (40). Since "universally recognized" dialects of the lower social classes did not yet exist, authors in the sixteenth century made them up and marketed them in the mouths of fictional speakers (Blank 40). Thus, in the most literal sense, Blank considers transgressive language to begin in the sixteenth century as an artificial dialect. Literary texts of the period, practicing the theoretical prescriptions of dictionaries, word-lists, and handbooks, display the various ways in which English could be used and abused. "From the beginning," Blank asserts, "the elaboration and transmission of canting words was the special province of early modern fiction. . . . [T]he representation of English dialects, in general, was largely a literary enterprise in this period" (20). Moreover, Blank asserts that authors regularly script ignominious dialects to characters who represent members of the lower social orders: peasants, petty tradespeople, gypsies, tramps, and thieves.

Even so, Blank's focus on "dialect" here is a bit misleading. In the first place, it seems plausible, even probable, that in real life there would have been ways of

distinguishing high from low idioms. Although without any true evidence of this, the claim that a real class language did not exist is unlikely. Blank's study seems, too, tied to the notion of explaining texts in light of "literature"; that is, her investigation of Renaissance dialects treats artistic production and consumption of texts as if it were the only means by which transgressive language circulated. Blank highlights her focus on literary language without regard for actual forms by making the case that "[m]alapropism, whether a 'real' phenomenon or not, consists of forms invented by authors ascribing a low social or educational status to certain characters" (43, emphasis mine). And yet, while the transgressive stylings so prominently found in verbal conflicts do get inscribed into the fictional scene, they are not simply a phenomenon of artistic texts. The emphasis solely on "literary" uses of transgressive language obscures the possibility that poetry or drama could have been used either for any other purpose or, perhaps more clearly, in any other mode than that between an "author" and a literate audience. If such a premise were true, one might assume that there was no effective linguistic/language authority before the later decades of the sixteenth century, and this is hardly possible. Blank writes about rogues and other such characters as if they were instituting real changes in language themselves, that fictional characters were generating capital on linguistic markets. The present examination of the Nashe-Harvey quarrel clearly indicates that the idiom of fictional rogues is by no means the only technique--or perhaps even the most effective one--authors have for establishing the contours of transgressive language.

The notion that the transgressive rhetoric of battlelogia generates symbolic capital for a system of artistic discourse represents one way of providing an account of textual

practices in the Renaissance. As a theoretical construct, it remains a bit vague with respect to the stakes individual authors stand to win or lose by using an indecorous style. As Claire Sponsler suggests, in order to create a discourse about social practices critics also need to find specific instances, "oblique glimpses that catch practice at work in the complex and dynamic processes of everyday life" (50-51). Blank's theorization of class-conscious dialects makes important contributions to the notion of oppositional discourse as a means of generating symbolic forms of capital out of the process of artistic making. But it is difficult to observe this process of capital accumulation due to the consummate skill with which those who institute the transparent rule of decorum dissemble the artificial, arbitrary nature of their practice. One always ends up watching the conjurer's trick and missing the cutpurse. With the case of Thomas Nashe, the Nashe-Harvey quarrel is the trick; the "rules" of virtuous, useful writing the conjurer; Sidney or Puttenham, the arbiters of taste whose influence stands invisibly behind the production of the preferred style of the day, represent the cutpurse--they are the real hafters. In her recent study of Renaissance conduct books and other materials aimed at shaping individuals from the inside out, as it were, Sponsler suggests that conduct books created "codes of bodily behavior" which "constructed a cultural order and placed subjects--willingly or not--within it"(56). Sponsler's argument supplements Blank's notions regarding the uses of non-standard dialects as instruments of fashioning attitudes about the way the social world operates through the use of artificially structured structures. Like Blank, on this account Sponsler draws heavily on notions of practice and *habitus* derived from Bourdieu, and her approach to the nature of social control of individual lives through the more "user friendly" examination of conduct books softens the harsh

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lines of institutional omnipotence found in many New Historical conceptions of power in the Renaissance. Nevertheless, to ignore the means by which the prevailing forces of social control "use to get people willingly to play the roles they offer, is to miss the logic of their operation, which turns on the voluntary, the desirable, and the profitable" (57). To this catalogue of symbolic benefits, one might add Hutson's term "useable." Sponsler adds this caveat to counter ideas by the likes of Foucault and many New Historical ideology-controls-everything proponents. This corrective allows for an analysis of actions--of practices, really--among compelling structure, conscious choice, and unconscious motivation, a triangulation which works well with an examination of decorum and the way battlelogia operate both in conjunction and contrast with such rules of textual comportment. With an extended reading of the practical functions of the Vice in a number of early modern morality plays Sponsler suggests that misconduct always possesses a certain kind of attraction, regardless of how much it might have been officially discouraged:

> [T]hese models of misbehavior--especially misbehavior grounded in the symbolic disorder of the body out of control--provided a way of exploring the relationship between violation of norms of bodily propriety and transgression of social and economic norms. Using the unruly body as a resource for resistance, these dramas of misbehavior and ultimate repentance provided a way of performing and hence negotiating complex relations between individual desire and social control. In the process, these plays demonstrate how seductive mischievous governance could be and how difficult to control. (81)

It is not hard to extrapolate from the proceeding quotation the possible attractiveness of verbal contest and flyting language even though it seems counter to good stylistic practice.

The wide-spread Renaissance practice of rhetorical *copia* provides a familiar approach of thinking about the way transgressive discourse generates capital for the field of artistic production. In his definition of *amplificatio*, Richard Lanham suggests that *copia*, the "expansive richness of utterance as an educational technique and stylistic goal" (42), operates essentially by creating multiple synonymous words or phrases from a single word, "creating thereby an expanded set of words for which, in turn, the audience can invent an expanded sense of reality" (9). Lorna Hutson suggests that "the very notion of 'copia' and 'copiousness' as an ideal of discourse expresses more than anything else that vital importance of developing a richly inventive capacity, for as [Terence] Cave remarks the word *copia* covers 'not only the notion of abundance itself but also he place where abundance is to be found, or, more strictly, the place and its contents: one of the particular senses of *copia* is 'treasure-chest', 'hoard', or 'store'" (42). She posits that a humanistic pedagogy would have construed all communication to have been didactic in the sense that finding the copious nature of any particular text ultimately cooperated in the production of new knowledge; "What distinguished the didactic possibilities of copious discourse was its capacity to communicate not only its own argument but also a linguistic and figurative potential which might be exploited by the reader in inventing arguments of his own" (42). In concert with Hutson's suppositions, Eugene Kintgen makes the case that, "[f]or the Tudors, reading was always preparation for something else," whether that purpose be specific, such as composing a letter or writing a poem, or

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general, such as the "amendment of life" obtained by reading scripture or other sorts of texts handling civic virtue (181). These observations regarding Tudor reading habits and the practice of *copia* coincide with the aforementioned stipulation that a text ought to be "usable" in the sense that it could be "accessible at any time" (Hutson 46). "This is extraordinary," remarks Hutson, "because it transforms the reading experience itself into a process of poetic or dialectical invention" (46).

Given that amplification and *copia* are key rhetorical--and epistemological--elements of Renaissance artistic texts, Carol Cochran points out that "the flyting is a useful form of expression to an age which believed not only in the word, but in the word used abundantly" (76). She notes that the flyting is particularly well-suited for showcasing the potentialities of Elizabethan elocution, accurately explaining that the "flyting never was the place for understatement and most of the devices typical of a flyting are rightly treated by Wilson in the section of his *Arte of Rhetorique* which deals with amplification" (77). And, in terms of transferability, "more" is indeed better because it expands the range of possible uses a reader might find for any particular text. However, the danger inherent in amplification is that it will reproduce itself to the degree than meaning is no longer clarified but instead lost. Lanham speculates that "the success in creating a new reality would seem to make the difference between" amplification or diminishment of a subject (9), and from this one readily observes the prominent role of the audience as a collaborative force in creating meaning, along with the author and the text itself.

Interestingly, Patricia Parker points out that the theorization and deployment of metaphor has historically been troubled with this very issue of use/abuse, most pointedly

when it comes to metaphoric language in artistic texts. Parker cites the eighth book of Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* as providing one of the most definitive statements regarding the proper limits of metaphor: "'We must be careful to distinguish between abuse [*abusio*] and metaphor [*translatio*], since the former is employed where there is no proper term available, and the latter when there is another term available'" (61). But the case is altered with regard to poets, explains Quintilian, since "'they indulge in the abuse of words even in cases where proper terms do exist, and substitute words of somewhat similar meaning. . .'" (Parker 61). Parker demonstrates how this caveat and the seemingly unproblematic statement regarding the distinction between proper and improper figurative language lead to a persistent and troublesome blurring between metaphor and catachresis. She states that "the distinction between what the [*Institutio*] will eventually term *abusio* (catachresis) and *translatio* (metaphor) is thus first introduced as a distinction between 'necessity' and 'decoration'--depending on whether a prior 'proper' term exists" (63). The argument that catachresis supplies figurative language where no acceptable word or image already exists places catachresis sequentially before, that is, prior to, metaphor and as a result nominates catachresis at the "origin of figurative language" (64).

Many of the features of rhetorical copia resemble elements of a flyting. Both catachresis and transgressive language of battlelogia expand the range of the vernacular as usable material for artistic discourse by stretching the boundaries of decorous language. The texts of the Nashe-Harvey quarrel generate capital by means of rhetorical copia for the institution of artistic discourse. This contest produced two kinds of capital: material and symbolic. Their quarrel provided the institution of print professionalism the

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material capital (i.e., salable documents) which could then be transformed into material profit. On the other hand, their contest also provided the institution of artistic discourse with a bank of idiomatic or otherwise exceptional vocabulary and syntax, and with blatant violations of decorous or acceptable speech--all of which could then be transformed into institutionalized capital in the form of counter examples to the "rules" of decorum.

When understood as such, the rationale for the unruly, unregulated idiom of verbal contestants--as well as fictional rogues, vagrants, cony catchers--becomes evident. Since in real life these sorts of people are transported to the fringes of civil society and decidedly out of the way of legitimate power, they should be represented as speaking in a manner suited to their stations. Accordingly, the underworld of the flyter, of vagrants and rogues, signifies, by the time of the institutionalization of the English vernacular, the normative world turned upside-down. Thus, in order to represent the disposition of a social outsider in a fictional text, an author could draw upon a marginalized way of speaking as in a war of words. Conversely, to represent an inverted (perhaps even perverted) way of thinking and acting, one could use a subject which is materially upside-down, one which is an outsider. With this relationship in mind, it is not difficult to see how a social construction of an individual represented a specific sort of cultural practice as well. Linguistic ways of interacting with the world are, particularly in the sixteenth century when distinct "economic" classes barely exist, a way of understanding social relationships that juxtapose classes of individuals based not on what one owns but on how one lives. A rogue's life, its disposition, is closely tied with the way it is pictured as

speaking. In the following chapter, Ben Jonson figures forth the relationship between audience, critic, and a new sort of rogue, the literary author.

CHAPTER FIVE

Hafting Court, Stage, and Page:
Ben Jonson and *Bartholomew Fair*

In an examination of early modern unruliness, the inclusion of *Bartholomew Fair* would seem to need little justification.[1] With the misadventures of Littlewit and his family, Cokes, Winwife and Quarlous, who all step out of their comfortable, ordered, secure, middle-class positions as spectators of the London underworld and enter as participants into the lower-class, unordered, unruly, and uncomfortable world of the denizens of Bartholomew Fair, Jonson presents a play steeped in a noisome atmosphere of fools, heat, and dirt. Furthermore, in an examination of a word like *haft-*, *Bartholomew Fair* recommends itself as a text populated by archetypical dodgers and con artists. The rogues and scoundrels in this play are multitudinous: Ursula, Leatherhead, Joan Trash, Knockem, among many others. They are responsible for so much of the comedy of error and word play in the central portion of the text, and it is in their world that the play develops and takes shape. Their idiom is unruliness, just as the fair appears disordered and chaotic. Ironically, the pig-woman and her cohorts are truly the ones--indeed, the only ones--who remain in their proper places throughout the play. They are part and parcel of Bartholomew Fair: they belong to it, they constitute it. Therefore, they are the characters whose behavior most keeps to a decorous mean by remaining in the limits of their stations.

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[1] For instance, see discussions in Brown, Martin, Partridge, Enck, and Townsend.

On the other hand, it is the fair-goers who all, at one point and to some degree, violate their life-stations by visiting the fair. In light of the denotations of *haft-* as both a point in social space and as tactical advantage, the ostensible rogues are not the hafters under investigation here nor the ones, I shall argue in this chapter, whom Jonson castigates with *Bartholomew Fair*. Leah Marcus, arguing for *Bartholomew Fair* as a test of dramatic, and thereby social, limits, notes that "*Bartholomew Fair* . . . is a deliberate test case which swells out toward the limits of the permissible in order to create a new clarity about how those limits are defined"(60). Perhaps even more than an exploration of preestablished limits, *Bartholomew Fair* seeks to create the boundaries for the presence of literature in the public sphere.

This chapter examines the ways Jonson defines in *Bartholomew Fair* the criteria for valuable artistic discourse both practically in the play and theoretically in the Induction. This play is unquestionably metadramatic, as are so many of Jonson's. The Induction constitutes an explicit theoretical statement regarding the proper method for critiquing the play. The Induction explicates the sorts of ideas that the play enacts. As such, it is an important place for examining the connection between artistic discourse and literary unruliness.

Although the environment of Bartholomew Fair is extremely unruly, it is not, however, without a sense of control; there is a definite order to be found in its disorder. The concept of control--and alternately, behavior which is out of control or beyond controlling--complements a study of *Bartholomew Fair* and early modern unruliness implied with the word *haft-* in several ways. Foremost, the pattern of one writer pointing out the stylistic transgressions of another, and in turn subsequently committing the

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identical transgressions runs throughout the studies of Skelton, Sidney and Puttenham, and Nashe. Verbal contest exposes the excesses of a writer throughout the medium of excessive language--linguistic enormity is both the disease and the cure. It is, therefore, a very tricky game the critic plays, one in which the potential symbolic and material profits are equal to, if not overmatched, by the potential costs. With *Bartholomew Fair*, Jonson clearly shows Wasp to be a looser, revealed as a transgressor whose hafting is ferreted out and punished. The winner, by dint of his ability to control himself in the uncharted environs of early modern authorship, is Jonson. His gamble is that of performing both as contestant and judge; his prize, the title of laureate, of author.

Sidney and Puttenham sought to define the contours of literature by means of a writer's social position and courtly habitus. But these dicta obviously were not enough to reform the paper blurrers and many who rushed their names through the presses. Jonson proposes a corrective to the rules of courtly decorum, one which is more open with regard to who may try a hand at becoming an author, yet a corrective which, at the same time, sets more explicit limits on how one should produce and consume "good" literature. Jonson satirizes the contemporary critics of artistic discourse who sought to limit the boundaries of dramatic productions on the basis of civic or religious decorum. Jonson uses *Bartholomew Fair* to argue that authors have a right to shape artistic discourse in any way that they see fit without the interference of other sorts of professional voices, whether those voices belong to clergymen, lawyers, or even "common" readers.

In studies of verbal enormity in *Bartholomew Fair* the characters Zeal-of-the-Land Busy, Justice Adam Overdo, and Sir Humphrey Wasp often figure quite prominently. Much of the unruliness generated by the hafters from the city swirls around

these three characters who most egregiously violate the decorum of the fair. More than any others, this trio seeks to perpetrate an extraneous set of rules and expectations on the fair. For this they are summarily made to look foolish and reprimanded. Busy, who is fit neither to visit nor to critique the fair, fails miserably and in the end is transformed into one of the outlandish attractions of Smithfield. Try as he might, Justice Overdo is wholly unable to exercise his authority over the criminal offenders. His clever attempt to visit the fair disguised as a madman backfires and only licenses more vice. Wasp, too, fails to comprehend the innate rules of the fairiers' game, although he would seem singularly qualified to participate in, and to win, the game of vapors. Nevertheless, he ends up in the stocks. He shows us what Bartholomew Fair looks and sounds like before the action moves out of Littlewit's house; therefore, Wasp's humor would seem to forecast success in such a rough-and-tumble environment.

Much critical attention is given to Busy and Overdo because they seem to reflect Jonson's satirical critique so clearly and emphatically. Their characters become increasingly complex and their motions develop the rich, dramatic fabric of this play. They are that sort of critic who leaps from the suburb to the fair with the wrong attitudes. Wasp, on the other hand, although not a fairier himself, stands more on the side of the Fair because his idiom links him with the enormities of language. Wasp is an intrafield critic, one who resembles the agents in the field enough so that his position is not that of attacking the fair ideologically but instead more basically, physically. More than Wasp's ideas, the fair makes Wasp prove his words.

Of this trinity of verbal transgressors, Wasp is frequently dismissed as the least significant in his own right. Although a few critics, most notably James Levine, have

argued that the game of vapors, so intimately connected with Wasp's persona, is critical

to the structure and action of this most unruly of Jonson's plays, Wasp is frequently

ignored in light of the more prominent satires on Puritans (Busy) and London city

officials (Overdo). Even in studies on the grotesque or outrageous aspects of the fair,

Wasp is often replaced by another pugnacious character such as Quarlous or Ursula.[2] In

this study of *Bartholomew Fair* I will not attempt to argue that Wasp is equally important

to, or more important than, Overdo or Busy. I will, instead, suggest that Wasp presents a

facet of Jonson's critique of enormities that neither Busy nor Overdo addresses precisely.

Unlike studies of Busy and Overdo, which link each character to parodies of religious

and political personae, I will argue that it is Wasp's striking idiom which signals his

importance. His penchant for contest, both verbal and physical, marks a more subtle

feature of Jonson's critique of Jacobean culture, one which features so prominently in the

examination of textual authority in general and of Jonson's status as a self-proclaimed

author in particular. It is Wasp's disposition, his humor (to employ a well-worn term in

Jonson criticism), which points to issues of public persona and the ethos of an emergent

authorial class.

The unruliness of the fair is epitomized in Wasp's disposition as a wrangler.

Early on, Littlewit cautions Quarlous, "Sir, if you have a mind to mock him, mock him

softly, and look tother way; for if he apprehend you flout him once, he will fly at you

presently. A terrible testy old fellow, and his name is Wasp too" (1.4.41-44).[3]

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[2] Neil Rhodes clearly places Quarlous and the fairiers in a more prominent position than Wasp. See his discussion of this relationship in *Elizabethan Grotesque*, 152 ff.

All citations of the play are from Hibbard's New Mermaid's series edition.
[3]

Subsequently, Wasp, having been delayed at Littlewit's house, begins to rant at the other characters with language that closely resembles a flyting: "A plague o' this box, and the pox too, and on him that made it, and her that went for't, and all that should ha' sought it, sent it, or brought it! Do you see, sir?" (1.4.46-5). Criticized for being so brusque, he responds with resolved insolence: "Why, say I have a humour not to be civil; how then? Who shall compel me? You?" (1.4.57-58). If he could, Wasp would overrule everyone in his charge. "Marry gip, goody she-Justice, Mistress French-hood! Turd i' your teeth; and turd i' your French-hood's teeth, too, to do you service, do you see? Must you quote your Adam to me? You think you are Madam Regent still, Mistress Overdo, when I am in place? No such matter, I assure you; your reign is out when I am in, dame" (1.5.13-18). Upon this outburst, Mistress Overdo calls Wasp to control himself: "I am content to be in abeyance, sir, and be governed by you. So should he [Cokes] too, if he did well. But 'twill be expected you should also govern your passions" (1.5.19-21). Evidently, there is no one who can govern Wasp once his anger is aroused.

Like other railers, Wasp is noteworthy for his angry idiom, which he does share with other characters such as Quarlous, Ursula, Knockem, and Whit, but which he practices with such outstanding tenacity and consistency that he seems totally consumed by his splenetic humor. As Jonas Barish points out, "If there is any one dominant characteristic to which all these linguistic details [of Wasp's idiom] refer, it is the absurd disproportion between sheer buzzing and solid meaning in all of Wasp's speeches" (215). Contrasting Wasp with Busy and Overdo, Barish concludes that "Wasp takes no pains to mimic a learned or a modish language, or even to talk correctly . . . Linguistic corruption is suggested by the incessant tautologizing, the thudding repetitions, the farcing of every

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statement with mouthfuls of senseless expletives" (216). But without Wasp, the vapors--

and so much of the concomitant violence which accompanies them--would indeed lack

any useful purpose. Blindly critical of anyone and anything, Wasp all the more fittingly

plays the game of vapors at the Fair. His persona is epitomized by the rules of vapors:

negate the last man, whatever he says.

Once at the fair, he wastes no time in selecting targets for his critical eye.

Immediately, Wasp, Cokes, and Mistress Overdo come upon Overdo "preaching" in the

Fair about the evils of alcohol and tobacco. The Justice, disguised as a madman,

sermonizes against these substances, attempting to step out of his position as legal

enforcer and to become instead the voice of caution. His prescriptive lesson is rather

hollow and ridiculous. Wasp is not at all impressed with Overdo's sermon, perhaps in

part because Cokes is so taken with it. As Overdo warns of the evils of beer and pipes,

Edgworth cuts Cokes' purse, within the first minutes the young gull's entering the Fair.

Ironically, Overdo's sermon becomes the occasion for the first genuine crime of the play.

At 2.6.132, Wasp beats Overdo, suggesting the degree to which Wasp is out of bounds

and uncontrolled, such that his humour makes him transgress the law and to commit a

punishable crime.

Wasp's temper again erupts in Act 4, scene 4, at which time Wasp becomes

involved in Knockem and Whit's game of vapors. Even among a crew of ranters, Wasp

distinguishes himself to the degree that Whit refers to him as the "angry man" (4.4.40,

57). As the group is playing the vapors, which is, as the stage directions indicate,

"nonsense: every man to oppose the last man that spoke, whether it concerned him, or

no" (4.4.27-29), Wasp is the first to make a genuine error by taking what another player says seriously.

> KNOCKEM. In no sort, pardon me, I can allow him nothing. You mistake the vapour.
>
> WASP. He mistakes nothing, sir, in no sort.
>
> WHIT. Yes, I pre dee now, let him mistake.
>
> WASP. A turd i' your teeth! Never pre dee me, for I will have nothing mistaken.
>
> KNOCKEM. Turd, ha, turd? A noisome vapour! Strike, Whit. *They fall by the ears* (4.4.91-96)

In other words, Wasp takes the game out of bounds. He looses control of himself and is instead controlled by the enormities of the vapors of the Fair. After this, Wasp virtually looses control of his tongue; he utters all sorts of flyting taunts and jibes, and is finally arrested by the King's Watch.

> BRISTLE. Why, we be His Majesty's Watch, sir.
>
> WASP. Watch? 'Sblood, you are a sweet watch, indeed. A body would think, an you watched well o' nights, you should be contented to sleep at this time o' day. Get you to your fleas, and your flock-beds, you rogues, your kennels, and lie down close.
>
> BRISTLE. Down? Yes, we will down, I warrant you.--Down with him in His Majesty's name, down, down, with him, and carry him away, to the pigeon-holes. [Wasp *is arrested*] (4.4.146-54)

Ian Donaldson notes that "The game [of vapors] marks an ultimate in arbitrariness, in 'noise' and 'sport'; reason is quite suspended; language deteriorates into 'nonsense' (*O.E.D.*'s first recorded use of the word) . . ." (64). Barish refers to Wasp's participation in the vapors as "his earthly paradise" (216). "Here, where the rest contradict each other lazily for sport," notes Barish, "Wasp contradicts more than ever from pure truculence, and having out-vapored the whole crew of noisy roarers, is carried off to the stocks as an offense to the peace" (216-17). However Barish overlooks the orderliness of the game of vapors in the Fair as Knockem and Whit play it. The vapors game should not really be called an "earthly paradise" for Wasp because it is here that he is controlled, confronted, and eventually confined. In essence, it is his "purgatory." Vapors may be nonsense but the reason for the end of the game is Wasp's temper, which causes him to transgress the limits of fair play.

Wasp loses at the fair because his disposition is too much like that of the Fair itself to visit it with any sense of enjoyment. In this regard, Wasp and Fair are contestants. Both Bartholomew Fair and Wasp control the actions of those around them-- the Fair through more physically outrageous measures and Wasp through verbal enormities. Each strategy works effectively against most contenders, but, when Wasp confronts the denizens of Smithfield, overt violence erupts because these agents are too similar. Apparently, Wasp is the player who is overruled since he is taken to the stocks. Outside the Fair, there is no one to control him, as Mistress Overdo points out. But the enormities of the Fair provide a frame of unruliness with which to cool his raging humor and to put it in perspective. Barish's reading of Wasp's "out-vapor[ing]" the others is patently a misreading of the game itself, for Wasp indeed looses the game. It is Knockem

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who wins, perhaps not alone, but "the Fairiers" in aggregate who triumph over Wasp's brand of civic unruliness. Nevertheless, he craftily escapes by putting his shoe on his hand, effectively eluding any punishment by the authorities. When next we see Wasp, just before Littlewit's puppet show, he has been reunited with Cokes. Wasp, still testy at first, seems a little chastened by his arrest.

> COKES. Hold your peace, Numps; you ha' been i' the stocks, I hear.
>
> WASP. Does he know that? Nay, then the date of my authority is out; I must think no longer to reign, my government is at an end. He that will correct another must want fault in himself. (5.4.88-91)

Each of the three major critics of the Fair is taken to the stocks, physically cast out in a way which finally parallels their ideological isolation while in Smithfield. As opposed to the belief that Wasp is retained the shortest because he, proportionately, transgresses the least, I find his brief, almost negligible, incarceration indicative of the degree of his potency as a subtle hafter of the habits of the Fair. It is almost as if his transgression were forgiven due to his resemblance to the ethos of Bartholomew Fair.

The struggles Wasp faces at the Fair resemble the sorts of conflicts between artistic license and institutional authority Jonson faced in the field of Jacobean drama. A relatively unorganized and burgeoning field at the turn of the sixteenth century, artistic discourse frequently runs afoul of preexisting fields of power, namely those of political and religious authority. As suggested in Chapter Four with the case of Thomas Nashe, one of the primary offensive qualities of artistic discourse at this time is the copious, virtually boundless aspect of linguistic creation in poetry, prose, and drama. This unruliness occasionally brought artistic texts, their authors, patrons, and dedicatees into

conflict with censors who frequently sought to control artistic license by means of rules and prescriptions from political or religious areas of culture. In her examination of slander in the Renaissance, M. Lindsey Kaplan finds that previous studies of censorship over-privilege the efficacy of governmental authority; "in so doing, they ignore what a defamatory model reveals: the elusive power of discourse" (113). Kaplan notes that the Platonic attempt to disparage the practice of poetry based on its proclivity to defame individuals and institutions actually ended up licensing for poets "a discursive power that eluded official containment and successfully challenged the state's authority" (113). The field of political power acknowledges capital by compliance with law, a more absolute standard of valuing words. On the other hand, the artistic field counts capital by compliance with decorum, a less absolute standard of valuing words, because one does not build a literary reputation based solely on propriety or statutory correctness. There must to be an element of arbitrariness, of transgression, of catachresis in order claim capital in the artistic field. Forms of verbal unruliness--slander and other forms of public criticism--become something else when placed in the context of the artistic field. Certainly, the system of the fair is not transferable to many other social contexts. Likewise, very few, if any, environments outside the fair provide an appropriate set of rules for either describing or regulating the practices of Smithfield. As a result, political agency is driven out of the artistic field. As Kaplan explains,

> In response to this association of their medium with slander, poets counter
> with strategies similar to the state's. Accusations that poetry is
> defamatory are themselves branded malicious and slanderous, while the
> criticisms that poets make about the status quo are justified as enlightened

and salutary. Poetry sets up just such another model of valid criticism versus malicious slander with regard to its own discursive practice. (32)

It is the idea of the game of vapors that usefully unites order and disorder and, as Julie Sanders points out, "The game of vapours is also indicative of the multifarious tensions the fair only just holds in balance: the game at its extremity threatens to explode into violence and self-destruction" (96). Indeed, the notion of gaming itself controls the language and action that transpire in the scenes at the fair. "Chance and misunderstanding are seemingly crucial for the practical and linguistic operation of the fair" (Sanders 100).

Clearly, vapors is an unruly sort of game; yet, it has rules and real consequences for those who break them. To this end, Wasp suggests the envious critic whom Jonson castigates in *Timber*. "Envy is no new thing," he writes, "nor was it borne onely in our time" (571)[4] Those writers unable to bring forth good poetry resort to denigrating those who can: "It is a new, but a foolish way you have found out, that whom you cannot equall, or come neere in doing, you would destroy, or ruine with evill speaking" (571), an observation which draws upon the Latin origins of the word "envy," *invidere*, meaning "to cast an evil eye on, to begrudge." Unruly criticism such as Wasp fulminates resembles this kind of envious criticism, observes Jonson, who shows no tolerance for the widespread fault-finding fueled by seventeenth century audiences: "Hee shall not have a Reader now, unlesse hee jeere and lye" (572). Jonson also characterizes the carping critic with this description in the "Apogetical Dialogue" appended to *Poetaster*:

> AUTHOR. And though the impudence of flies be great,

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[4] All citations of *Timber* are from Herford and Simpson's edition, Volume 8.

> Yet this hath so provoked the angry wasps,
>
> Or as you said, of the next nest, the hornets,
>
> That they fly buzzing, mad, about my nostrils;
>
> And like so many screaming grasshoppers
>
> Held by the wings, fill every ear with noise. (96-101)

Unlike the critical ideal Jonson sets forth in *Timber*, Wasp represents a type of Renaissance writer who knew that a majority of the reading and viewing public more greatly esteemed texts which resembled "Fencers, or Wrastlers; who if they come in robustiously, and put for it, with a deale of violence, are received for the braver-fellowes" (*Timber* 583). Knockem's game of vapors serves as the perfect game to attract the fallen judgment of a critic like Wasp. The vapors which figure so prominently at the fair are representative of the sorts of legal carping and sniping which is out of place--or at least in poor form--in the field of artistic discourse. As words go, the vapors hurled by Knockem and Whit are harmless, unless an opponent takes them too seriously, as in the case of Wasp. The fairiers themselves vapor correctly, Wasp does not. His transgression converts unruly words into violent actions. Vapors submerges a genuine eristic outcome in the form of a game. Going beyond bounds, that is, losing vapors, results from taking the charges seriously. In terms of the metadrama that is *Bartholomew Fair*, vapors is the search for extraneous signification performed by the envious critics.

Some critics find resemblances between Wasp and Jonson himself,[5] but, as Paul Yachnin points out, reading Wasp as a one-to-one manifestation of Jonson is not as

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[5] For example, Marcus points to Busy and voices in several of his poems as idiomatic portraits of Jonson himself (178 ff). Drawing upon Jonson's experiences as a tutor for the son of Sir Walter Raleigh in 1613, Barish suggests that Jonson created Wasp as a "self-projection and self-parody" (213).

instructive as seeking the metaphorical resemblances between the author and one of his characters based on the violence of both word and deed evinced by both Jonson and Wasp. Yachnin expands the violence of Wasp from the specific character to a broad cultural attitude of violence prevalent in Jacobean England and attributes this penchant for violence to the upper classes (54-55). "The fact that quick tempers and acts of violence, especially dueling with swords, were class markers specific to make members of the Elizabethan gentry suggests that Jonson's violence might have been an imitation of a certain kind of conduct called for by his orientation toward an aristocratic ethos. . . ." (Yachnin 55). Barish suggests as much with his observation that *Bartholomew Fair* goes a long way toward overturning "The two great themes of Renaissance literature, love and friendship . . . along with everything else in the play, to the level of vapors" (233).

Moreover, this comparison highlights the inherent violence in the theater business. The 1600-02 war of the theaters further documents the prevalent, violent disposition in Renaissance culture. As described by Richard Dutton, this conflict served only to manifest "the actors' longstanding practice of cordially trading insults in their productions" which was "intensified by renewed competition from the boy companies and by the personalities of Jonson and Marston . . ." (*Revels 135*). The violence reputed to Jonson and other personalities of the English theater points beyond the constitution of individual people. However, it does serve as a marker of a larger trend in unruly behavior associated with the production of artistic discourse as emphasized throughout previous chapters. The fin de siecle war of the theaters, while not especially surprising, is noteworthy for the degree to which the field seems so more organized, if only as a result of being more full of competitors. As one of the most contentious personalities of

Bartholomew Fair, Wasp highlights the violent disposition inherent in the developing field of artistic discourse. Wasp and his material counterpart, the puppet show, point to an important feature of the evolving field of artistic production: namely, the interrelationship between linguistic unruliness, physical violence, and the evolution of a discrete, professional field of artistic texts. To this end, *Bartholomew Fair* becomes, in addition to a forceful critique of contemporary political and religious dispositions, a cogent description and critique of the specific field of cultural production in which Jonson was most personally involved.

Barish's comment directs the examination of Wasp's battlelogia to the play's material, dramatic manifestation of his humor, the puppet show. "But on the other hand, as the Fair is the microcosm, so the puppet show becomes the microtheater" (Barish 234). As Donaldson states, "The fifth act of *Bartholomew Fair* is Jonson's most subtle and extended dramatic treatment of the whole complex of ideas provoked by the comparison of real and theatrical life; with great ingenuity and humanity Jonson explores the truth that *hypocrisy* or play-acting is a universal, and not necessarily baleful, element in all human activity" (66). Yet, as Donaldson points out, the puppets are able to convey the message of Jonson's critique more effectively than the human characters because the puppets can attack each other without concern for a riposte (69). This observation nicely emphasizes the violence inherent in the play at large. It also points to the way that members of the artistic field, into which Jonson sets this play, are themselves responsible for critiquing the play, not authorities in the civic or religious fields. Not only the puppet show itself but also the language of the play, Donaldson notes, indicates a focus on the

theater, creating, as he calls it, a "curious effect of double-focus," suggestive of "the resemblances between the world of the play and the world of real life" (59-60).

Barish provides a further chain of associations: "Yet the puppet show epitomizes the Fair, which in turn epitomizes the world, a world inhabited by the descendants of Adam. If one is to legislate against folly, where does the legislation stop? And who is so disinfected of flesh and blood as to qualify as a legislator?" (236). Jonson is the new legislator--or the type of "true" poet he describes in *Discoveries*. One does not have to be sin-free to critique the artistic field; one must simply approach it in good faith. That is, one must be for promoting the field for its own sake.

Writing about the resemblances of *Bartholomew Fair* and Jonson's antimasques, Kate Chedgzoy, Julie Sanders, and Susan Wiseman find that "the chaos and lack of decorum is [sic] as carefully plotted as a masque is choreographed and the fair is bound to the question of commercial authorship through the Induction" (13). The conflict between the orderly form and the disorderly content, between words uttered in sport and those in earnest, unifies the ruly and unruly elements of the play. Speaking to the notion of this dramatic tension, Yachnin notes that "contradiction opens up ideology to interrogation and manipulation because contradiction disturbs the placidity of discursive practices, but contradiction does not afford a transcendent vantage point because it is itself a product of ideology" (66). Once inside the limits of the Fair, it is difficult to distinguish the limit between art and the law, thereby complicating the task of differentiating between them. For example, Wasp has a hard time discerning the rules of vapors and mere angry speech. Overdo's clever disguise as mad Arthur Bradley results in the degeneration of the law, in essence blending festivity and criminality. However,

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prior to removing the setting to Smithfield, Jonson provides a clear prospectus of right judgment by means of the Induction, wherein he separates the field of artistic discourse from the field of power by working out a space for artistic, non-political critique of drama. In order for artistic discourse to flourish (i.e., for an audience to derive pleasure and moral), the restrictions placed upon language by legal and religious propriety have to be suspended. The language of poetry cannot be contained in or limited to the same levels of statutory correctness that govern other types of public discourse.

In much the same vein expressed in both *Poetaster* and *Timber*, *Bartholomew Fair* presents a strong caution to censors and critics in the Induction of the play. According to the Scrivener, audience members have a right to censure only to the degree to which they have paid for their admission. Jonson presents here a close linkage between social position and intellectual position. Those who paid less would, presumably, know and understand less. Therefore, they would have been limited to commenting on the farcical elements of the play and on the comedy of rough language.

And yet, even without an explicit code of behavior, there is no misrule with artistic texts when regulated by means of decorum. Jonson appropriates principles of classical criticism. In one sense, it seems that Jonson's goals for perfecting artistic discourse are more liberal-minded, promoting the field of artistic discourse for its own redeeming social values, hearkening back to humanistic ideals espoused in the earlier decades of the sixteenth century. Unlike Sidney or Puttenham, who closely tied artistic propriety to the social and political status of the individual writer, Jonson goes further than either of these to explicate the limits of artistic decorum. The former authors tie decorum strictly to an author's social and political standing, a regulation which links

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artistic production to symbolic standards of production such as social or political status, integrating criteria other than textual or artistic excellence into the definition of a "poet." Jonson, although no voice for a wholesale democratization of the artistic field, makes a case for broadening the criteria of acceptable poetry. Nevertheless, Jonson's opening of the criteria--which is not so much an opening in the sense of a lowering standards but rather a making explicit what the standards actually are--moves artistic production away from the symbolic ethos of the courtier and towards the artistic abilities of the author. In so doing, Jonson also replaces the courtly arbiter of taste with an "authorial" judge, one whose office is, as Jonson himself describes, "not to throw by a letter any where, or damne an innocent Syllabe, but lay the words together, and amend them; judge sincerely of the Author, and his matter, which is the signe of solid, and perfect learning in a man" (*Timber* 642).

McLuskie points out that "Jonson's translation of classical criticism into theatrical pleasure allowed his audience to identify themselves as sophisticated men, rich enough to buy the pleasures of theatre but properly sceptical about the limits of the connection between taste and wealth" (140). This ideal audience recognizes the virtue of Jonson's classical design, appreciates the wit and pleasure of the various characters, and also acknowledges "the dangers this uncontrolled artistic license presented to the virtuous state" (140). The point is that Jonson encourages his audiences to replace a taste for violence and competition with an appreciation of tasteful critique and wit.

As opposed to a code of decorum determined by courtly ethos, Jonson provides an antithetical environment, the chaotic world of Bartholomew Fair. It is the fair itself which creates the right mean for words and deeds. The fair serves as an unusual testing

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ground, unlike the civilized and refined environment of the court. Furthermore, the fair symbolizes the unruly field of artistic production, where all are welcomed, few are rewarded, and many are robbed.

Perhaps one of the best places to observe the dynamics of such tension in all Jonson's canon is in the Induction to *Bartholomew Fair*. Throughout his career, Jonson consistently demonstrates a compulsion to provide a rigorous set of rules for composing his artistic texts. Jonson's intense desire to dictate the reception of this texts also attests to his urge to control the experience of a Jonsonian poem, play, or masque. In the Induction, the Stage-keeper, entering briefly before the play begins, tells the audience that he objects to the play because it does not resemble the real Smithfield fair environment. The poet hasn't captured a good likeness of fairiers, claims the Stage-keeper, because the author has not even talked with them (11-13). He also complains that the play lacks many of the stock characters one would expect to find in a comedy: "a sword-and-buckler man," "a little Davy," "a Kindheart," and "a juggler with a well-educated ape" (16-19). Deficient as such, the play lacks the requisite elements for bawdy action--there are no secret entrances to a neighbor's tent (19-20), no riotous sex (23-24). In sum, this play has nothing which recommends so many good plays of the past, as "in Master Tarlton's time," opines the Stage-keeper (35).

In contrast with the Stage-keeper's vulgar opinions as to the constitution of good drama, the Scrivner's "Articles of Agreement" argue that whoever still thinks "*Jeronimo* or *Andronicus* are the best plays yet" (103) is welcomed to that opinion, a consistent dullard being preferable to a fickle one. However, instead of the outdated sword-and-shield age, the poet sets the action in the present; instead of the stock brawler, Jonson

provides a horse thief and a drunkard; instead of a tooth extractor, "a fine oily pig-woman and tapster" (117-18); instead of a juggler with an ape, a Justice of the Peace, adding new characters: "a civil cutpurse" and "a sweet singer of new ballads" (120-21), both of whom represent a strange mixture of civility and unruliness.

The warnings/agreements set out in the Scrivener's articles stipulate that the audience should not move around once inside the theater space. This admonition limits both physical and intellectual motion since places of mind are homologous with places of the body. The "Articles" in the Induction regulate the physical theater and the reception of the play so that every viewer's pleasure is maximized. In essence, the "Articles" equate to a statement of decorum. "By dressing up this discussion of taste and money in the dramatic encounter between Scrivener, Bookholder, and Stage Keeper," explains McLuskie, "Jonson is able to be heavily ironic about a reductive, commercialized idea of taste, without ever solving the conundrum of judgment, pleasure, and money. . . ." (138).

The Scrivener also announces that the audience should strictly refrain from interpreting or "understanding" the play beyond what it appears to be: a rowdy, dirty, good time. Obviously, Jonson's request for the audience's constrained understanding is facetious, because, of course, *Bartholomew Fair* means so much more than what rests on the surface of the words and actions which constitute either text or performance. This is more of a smoke screen intended to throw off the witless viewer and a disclaimer for those of his audience who were more discerning but misintentioned and untrained dramatic poets. These critics, whom Jonson calls the "politic pricklocks," are amateur critics. They seek to second guess the author by attaching a double or triple significance to each character or object in an effort to expose lewd, seditious, or slanderous material,

however, and not for a critique of the author's skill as a dramatist. In the "Apogetical Dialogue" appended to *Poetaster*, Jonson himself dramatizes this sort of situation between on the one hand the "Author," who holds forth that audiences must acknowledge his special authority and trust that his intentions are genuine, and on the other hand the skeptical audience, here personified as "Polyposus," who long to see the Author present more of a case against charges of libel:

> POLYPOSUS.   Ay, but the multitude, they think not so, sir,
>
> They think you hit and hurt, and dare give out
>
> Your silence argues it, in not rejoining
>
> To this or that late libel.
>
> AUTHOR.   'Las, good rout!
>
> I can afford them leave to err so still,
>
> And, like the barking students of Bears' College,
>
> To swallow up the garbage of the time
>
> With greedy gullets, whilst myself sit by
>
> Pleased and yet tortured with their beastly feeding.
>
> (27-35)

In sum, in order for the play to be enjoyed as a play--and not as a performance of Jonson's own ideas and opinions--the audience must remain faithful to the articles of the Scrivener's address. Each audience member should remain placed according to his/her social decorum; otherwise, the play is misunderstood. The Induction serves as the theoretical description of how the play is supposed to function and *Bartholomew Fair* is the dramatic/practical complement to it, repeating the Induction to a more copious

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degree. Julie Sanders points out that this contract points once more to one of the crucial tensions in the play: between the author's intended meaning and the audience's perception of the play. "Yet there is something more intrinsic to Jonson's artistic, as opposed to mercantilist, persona under debate here: the paradoxically liberating and yet self-negating recognition by the author that any reader or spectator produces an autonomous response to his/her work" (96-97). Given what seems to be the highly controlling posture Jonson assumes in the Induction, many critics have found a fertile field for observing the tension between Jonson, the well-intentioned author, and the audience, prone as it was to misunderstand the play, for any number of reasons:

> What the 'Articles of Agreement' indicate is Jonson's awareness that any
> performance is dependent upon the nature, composition, and reception of
> any one audience, on any one day. A certain group of individuals is held
> together, ostensibly by the dramatic text and the particular ramifications of
> its performance, under the collective title of audience for a limited period.
> ... (Sanders 96)

Two elements necessary for deriving true delight from this play are wit and honesty. The articles of the Scrivener's address stipulate that audience members remain in the place which the price of admission affords them; furthermore, this admission price limits the viewer's capacity to censure the play. The first stipulation of the Articles states that critics must use their own judgment in assessing the play. That is to say, no one may lay claim to a critique other than one which he has discerned on his own. This is a means of keeping potential critics in their places albeit on a more intellectual prejudice. As Stallybrass and White point out, "Again and again, Jonson defines the true position of the

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playwright as that of the poet, and the poet as that of the classical, isolated judge standing

in opposition to the vulgar throng" (67). "It is easy to represent all of this in terms of

social snobbery," asserts Dutton, "as aimed at the 'groundlings' or 'the understanding

gentlemen o' the ground'," there being a very real connection between capacity to

comprehend and the capacity to pay (*Authority* 48). Yet, the intellectual capacity to

critique might very well have been a function of social station, those who could afford the

payment in both time (especially) and money of a substantial education being more

qualified to critique Jonson's play than one who had not the educated wit to comprehend

the play's classical integrity. An individual audience member should expect to gain from

the play only as far as his wit can reach and only as much as the subject allowed.

Chedgzoy points to the irony of this simultaneously liberating and restricting convention:

"Yet [the notion that the audience is free to judge and censure the play as they will] is

embedded in a sequence which mimics a contract between play and author, and one

which attempts to delimit and encroach upon the freedom of audience members to 'read'

the play ignorantly, to ask for different conventions, or to inappropriately over-read

'hidden' meanings'" (12). Jonson's Induction both "acknowledges the place of the

author in commercial culture" and "also simultaneously offers a critique of the audience's

control and ability to censure simply by paying" in a manner which is both clever and

delightful (Chedgzoy 12). Donaldson points to the irony of this particular "licensing" as

a practice which denotes both freedom and restraint (50). And, as Dutton notes, "The

'Articles of Agreement' in the Induction to *Bartholomew Fair* may be a comic fiction,

but the contractual relationship they spell out belies a fundamental truth about the

author/audience polarity, and the nature of the 'exchange' between them, which underlies the concept of 'literature' as the modern world has known it" (*Authority* 51).

And yet, for all the effort to restrict the audience's critique of the play (and Jonson's own parody of that effort), the Induction reveals the ways Jonson is himself constrained. "The juxtaposition of judgment and money is curious, though, a reminder that the author, for all his contempt, is a bought man, dependent for his success upon the applause of conflicting social groups" (Stallybrass and White 70). The tension in the Induction lies between the author's ability to delimit precisely the play's reception and the very dynamics of staging a substantially lengthy and complex production before a mixed audience. There are a number of critical positions regarding reception theory in Jacobean theatre. In situating his own opinion, Dutton puts the influence to the readers, "in all their perplexing variety," and in essence floats the issue between a position typified by Jonathan Goldberg, who strongly favors the notion of the King's symbolic influence, and Stanley Fish, whom Dutton finds to strongly deny the efficacy of all symbolic influence, making the issue of the meaning of the play a reception/rhetorical issue ("Lone Wolf" 127). But none of these positions obviates the amount of energy Jonson invests in the creation of his poetic ethos; indeed, the thesis of Dutton's argument would seem to suggest the importance of recognizing such activity. Sanders goes even a bit further to suggest that the "Induction may be a synecdoche for the social contract between a monarch and his/her subjects, suggesting the need to accord those 'paying' subjects certain rights" (95).

Given that the play seems to have been performed twice in 1614--at the Hope theater and at Blackfriars, most likely with James I himself in attendance--it is

appropriate to speak of both a common and a courtly audience. Jonson realized that in the former group there might be those whose taste for old-style comedy and farce might cause them to object to Jonson's new fashioned city comedy. The Stagekeeper's address to the audience seems especially apropos for such an audience. In the courtly audience, Jonson could suppose a greater ability to appreciate his classical comedy but also a greater inclination to take personal offense at one or another of his caricatures.

On the night of the second performance the Induction was proceeded by a poetic invitation extended to James to visit the fair: "Your Majesty is welcome to a Fair; / Such place, such men, such language, and such ware, / You must expect;" ("Prologue" 1-3). Assuming very little, if any, material from the rest of the play was altered, Jonson "may also have been pushing the possibilities of what could be said and done before the king" (Sanders 100). However, this notion of Jonson's testing boundaries is intimately linked with his critical project of reestablishing more public methods of critiquing drama than the personal character of the author or the personal preferences of the audiences. "Of course, breaking the boundaries of what was permitted was a dangerous game since the government response that would mark a particular play as politically powerful might also entail the punishment of its author" (Yachnin 63).

If the audience were able to understood as much as Jonson would have it to, perhaps the Induction would not be necessary. Such an ideal public simply does not exist, at least from Jonson's perspective, and Sturgess points out that when it comes down to understanding the play in the way it was designed, "only the King, and by implication the poet, has the right to judge his fellow man (and the Epilogue spells this out)" (186). Only the "detached moralist," as Sturgess puts it, has this capacity to judge correctly

(186). This notion of a clearer, more pure understanding which results only from standing away from the play brings up the notion of hafting all over again. It will be recalled that one of the implications of hafting is that a person creates a personal advantage by remaining apart from individuals or groups in order to obtain a more inclusive picture of the position of others. The hafter's ability to assess relationships between agents "at a glance," as it were, creates a tactical advantage over the other members of a specific field. Clearly then, the hafter obtains an advantage over others by taking up the position of a spectator and/or a critic, one whose gaze distances him from the immediate actions of other agents. We witness such a hafting in *Bartholomew Fair* by Quarlous and Winwife, who are inclined to visit Smithfield simply for the sport of watching Bartholomew Cokes make a fool of himself, to have, as Winwife puts it, "excellent creeping sport" (1.5.127). Both of these characters "epitomise the *petit bourgeois* voyeur," suggests Mickel, "whose status depends on maintaining a distance between his gaze and its object" (142). The notion of keeping a respectable distance is important here, for Quarlous and Winwife's "objectivity" stands as the physical manifestation of the practical distance Sidney and Puttenham keep with regard to public forays into print.

In terms of *Bartholomew Fair,* Jonson creates for himself this very sort of speculative position in the play: the Author waits in the wings of the tiring house, ready to interrupt the Induction should he overhear the Stagekeeper's skeptical critique of the production. The Author's observing the audience's attention to his play "parallels the King's idealized position a the court performance . . . except that Jonson is unseen by the Hope audience whereas the King was visible at court" (Yachnin 89). In the Induction,

"Jonson spells out overemphatically that the play is insulated from the real world and that the proper response from the audience is not an indulgent enjoyment in the action but a discriminating and detached judgment upon it" (Sturgess 176). As the principal audience member, the King effectively controls the reception of the play, since the rest of the Whitehall audience would have taken its cues as to how to respond to the play from James. This represents a substantial tactical advantage for Jonson given the enormities of the play and the range of private interpretations that could have been issued had the play gone into regular performance at one of the London theaters.

Furthermore, James himself is "staged" at a short distance from the edge of the actual stage, sitting virtually on a second stage (Sturgess 175). So, while the King was not a member of the cast of *Bartholomew Fair*, he was, nevertheless, effectively the single actor in this production of a performance at court. As such, James' reactions function better than any Induction Jonson could have composed because the King's reactions to the play normalize the audience's responses. In essence, if James was pleased, who could have had a case to be displeased? "In the Epilogue, James is gracefully reassigned to his role of chief, even sole, spectator; but during the course of the evening's performance, he played his part in public view as enthusiastically as the Lady Elizabeth's Men" (Sturgess 175). Given that *Bartholomew Fair* was probably not played again until after the Restoration and not printed until 1631, James' reactions would have had all the more weight as the "official" opinion of the play. "Your Majesty hath seen the play, and you / Can best allow it from your ear and view," states "The Epilogue" (1-2). Hibbard glossed "allow" as "to sanction, license," so the responsibility and privilege for evaluating the play falls squarely to James: "This is your

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power to judge, great sir, and not /The envy of a few" ("The Epilogue" 9-10). Although

this has been a public performance in the physical sense, it concludes as a private

possession of James. Jonson puts symbolic critique in the hands of the King, the ultimate

symbolic representative, and leaves social matters of law and religion to lawyers and

clergy.

Jonson's ceding the evaluation of *Bartholomew Fair* to James also puts into

practice the sorts of requests in the Induction that artistic discourse fall under an

understanding judge of artistic discourse and not to the jurisdiction of legal or religious

discourse. James I sat as the supreme arbiter of taste and decorum due to his station as

supreme head of symbolic capital in the nation and, after 1613, as the sponsor of all

dramatic companies. As Yachnin points out, at this point in England's history, there is

"No question also but that the rich in real capital also tended to be lords of the symbolic

kind" (45-46). In addition to being an object of material culture, the play is also clearly a

symbolic object. One sees that clearly in the dedication printed on the title page of the

1631 edition, which states that the play was "acted in the yeare, 1614. by the Lady

Elizabeth's Servants. And then dedicated to King James, of most blessed memorie"

(Hibbard 1). James was also, to be sure, a very powerful political and religious voice in

England (although not as powerful as he might have wished). But it is his role as the

artistic patron extraordinaire for which Jonson honors James. It is the King, not the

common critics or censors, however well-versed in the law or in theology they might be,

who is the ultimate audience to which Jonson submits *Bartholomew Fair*. Sturgess

points to the ways Jonson appeals to James' serious and ludic habits of mind in a way

that "caters accurately for that kind of chief spectator" (189). Donaldson suggests yet

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another reason this sort of subject might have appealed especially to the king: James'

own published ideas concerning human governance.

> In designing this play partly for a royal occasion, it seems not improbable
>
> that Jonson may have remembered what James himself has written on this
>
> subject, turning, as he had turned once or twice already, to his king's
>
> famous treatise written for his son in the 1590s, which had been reprinted
>
> within a few days of Elizabeth's death in 1603, and again continually
>
> throughout King James's reign: *Basilikon Doron.* (74)

"In a play about the controls on human nature," notes Sturgess, "the epilogue nominates

James as the final arbiter," a position which could only flatter the monarch's sense of his

divine right to rule (189). In a sense, it would seem that Jonson's dedicating the play to

the king would place him squarely under James's symbolic influence. While some critics

suppose this to have been a considerably underlinecomfortable place for such an individualistic

personality as Jonson, Dutton suggests that it was a position into which Jonson had

placed himself before, to no small advantage. For example, Dutton notes how Jonson

virtually credits Queen Anne for the creation of the antimasque convention. "This is in

part simple deference to a patron whom Jonson would hope to serve again," explains

Dutton, "but it also provides him with a sanction--an authority of sorts--for an innovation

which would not necessarily meet with universal approval" (*Authority* 22). As Dutton

further notes, it was a "common Renaissance perception that *patrons*, rather than the

artisans they employed, were the true 'authors/esses' of any work produced in their

service. . . ." (*Authority* 23). This practical convention must be inspected more closely,

however, when dealing with a published text, for a printed text conveys "an unmistakable

force, even if that person makes a show of deferring to the authority of a patron" (*Authority* 23). However, it is of extreme importance to recall that *Bartholomew Fair*, although performed in 1614, was <u>not</u> included in the 1616 *Works*. This fact radically alters the way we can conceptualize the play in relation to Jonson's private career as a dramatist and the public field of artistic discourse. Of note is that Jonson "gives" *Bartholomew Fair* to James I and never "takes it back," as it were, by publishing it in the 1616 *Works*. Several critics believe that *Bartholomew Fair* was intended foremost as a performance at court,[6] and they found their ideas on the evidence provided by Keith Sturgess in *Jacobean Private Theatre*. Sturgess suggests that the "key performance" of *Bartholomew Fair* on November 1, 1614, might very well have been a "royal commission" of sorts (169). "It seems likely, therefore, that Jonson wrote *Bartholomew Fair* expressly for that court performance and the Hope premier was in the nature of a public dress-rehearsal," suggests Sturgess (170). Interestingly enough, performance records provide no evidence that the play was ever acted again after the All Hallows Day production until after the Restoration (Sturgess 170). Indeed, the title page of the 1631 quarto edition only gives the 1614 performance date; if *Bartholomew Fair* <u>had</u> been staged after the performance at Whitehall, it is a curious matter that the first printed edition of the play should not mention subsequent performance <u>and</u> that no record exists whatsoever to document any such performance. This evidence suggests then that *Bartholomew Fair* might very well have been reserved as a singularly special text, one given to James I as a gift from Jonson.

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[6] See McLuskie 144; Donaldson 48-49, 72-77; and Creaser.

The play's absence from the 1616 *Works* is also a curious feature of *Bartholomew Fair*. Dutton asserts that "it is clear that there was simply no space for [*Bartholomew Fair*]" just as there was no room to print the translation Jonson made of Horace's *Ars poetica*, in which he is reputed to have composed an "apology" for this comedy (*Authority* 18). I find this line of reasoning unconvincing and would instead propose that it was a gift to James I and could not therefore be reclaimed until James' death. James died in 1625 and *Bartholomew Fair* was published in quarto in 1630 when, as Dutton suggests, Jonson was again in need of money (*Authority* 18). Dutton also speculates that "Jonson was taking the long view and simply not contemplating print again until he could match that volume [the 1616 *Works*] with one of similar substance" (*Authority* 18-19). Sturgess somewhat concurs with Dutton, stipulating that the conspicuous absence of *Bartholomew Fair* from the 1616 folio edition can be explained by Jonson's intentions to reserve the play as the first piece in a second folio of collected works (166). Neither Sturgess nor Dutton provide any documentation for these speculations, however.

Another aspect of the play suggests that it was not intended to have been a regularly produced piece: the huge cast, a feature which prompts Sturgess to assert that with *Bartholomew Fair* Jonson had created "a new kind of play" (174). While some doubling of parts was possible, any production of the play would have called for more actors and props than any other Jonson play and certainly more than any contemporary acting company alone could have produced.[7]

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[7] Sturgess notes that *Bartholomew Fair* has thirty-three speaking parts, compared with thirteen in *Volpone*, twelve in *The Alchemist*, and fifteen in *Epicoene* (174).

It is possible, in fact, that because of the play's uniquely heavy demand on acting personnel, it was never feasible, logistically, to mount it again, so that besides the customary ten pounds fee the company received for their performance at court, prestige and royal favour was all their reward for doing the play, plus one gathering. For Jonson, the play might have been a royal commission--and this would explain why a new play by a contentious playwright opened the festive season, 1614-15.

(Sturgess 170)

If speaking of the play in terms of gift exchange, *Bartholomew Fair* becomes a sort of potlatch production, one in which the giver's resources are significantly diminished in an effort to demonstrate both fidelity to the recipient and to show the actual amount of resources the giver has to sacrifice. Just as in the old custom of the potlatch, the material costs (in the case of *Bartholomew Fair*, composition, production, opportunity costs of not staging what could very well have been a financial gold mine for Jonson) are huge and the material profits or compensations inversely small. In fact, it was Nathan Field, the company leader of the Lady Elizabeth's Men and a protégé of Jonson's,--not Jonson himself--who the court's account books indicate received the customary ten pounds gratuity for a court performance, suggesting that Jonson took nothing, materially speaking, for the play (Sturgess 172-73).

It is easy to believe now that the author, as a species of early modern writer, "happened" in the early seventeenth century and that Jonson was one, if not the first, of the English authors to evolve. The issue of authorship, of the author "function," as Foucault calls it, circulates throughout Jonsonian criticism and has become a central issue

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in the study of his *oeuvre*.[8] Jonson's career is used as an integral part in studies of early-modern authorship. With the publication of the 1616 *Works* there is perhaps no better example of "authorial self-presentation," as Richmond Barbour has recently called it. Critics study Jonson's struggle for self presentation, as well as the implications of such an evolution upon the interpretation of Jonson's texts. As David Riggs observes, "Since his career coincides with the rise of the literary profession in England, his personal success story takes on the characteristics of a cultural phenomenon: in following his rise we are also witnessing the emergence of authorship as a full-time vocation" (3).

McLuskie locates the trajectory of Jonson's artistic career "between high culture and low entertainment which was increasingly dominating theatrical commentary," and localizes this sort of contest in terms of his contemporary, Thomas Dekker: "the distinction between Dekker the envious hack and Jonson the high-minded poet was one of the illusions created by Jonson's self-fashioning" (142). Stallybrass and White, too, emphasize the position into which Jonson put himself, suggesting that "We see him trying to stabilize and dignify an emergent place for authorship at a distance both from the aristocracy and the plebeians" (74). Stallybrass and White claim that Jonson's project of "authorial investiture" forces Jonson to withdraw from "the clamour of the marketplace" and to reinstitute himself " in the studies of the gentry and the libraries of the universities" (74, 76). Taking a slightly different angle, Yachnin suggests that Jacobean playwrites "were not able freely to valorize theater" because it was a practice which was still "socially degraded and morally suspect throughout the period" (53).

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[8] Significant discussions appear in Brady and Herendeen, Helgerson, Newton, Stallybrass and White 27-79; and Van den Burg.

Therefore, the project of asserting the cultural potency of theater was one not just of moving from vulgar to courtly audiences but of translating the entire practice of theater into "other, culturally legitimate currencies" (53). Stated more emphatically, "commercial playwrights . . . had somehow to change how theater meant; they had to reinscribe dramatic discourse in some interpretive field or in terms of some foundational value different from the interpretive field and the valuelessness or cultural weightlessness of the powerless theater" (Yachnin 62). Yachnin's emphasis points to the sort of transformations wrought on any practice that undergoes the process of professionalization. In terms of Jonson and *Bartholomew Fair*, the field is that of artistic discourse. In essence, Jonsonian theater sought to establish new hierarchies within the cultural filed by restarting the classical tradition of comic theater used for cultural (and therefore public) instruction and renewal.

This restart is not, however, the "mirth" of Bakhtin's carnival culture, although it does resemble it, as presented in arguments by both Yachnin and Leah Marcus. Yachnin suggests that Jacobean playwrights sought to negotiate the tensions between crowd and court by instituting into drama the revitalizing energy of mirth (68). The difference between Bakhtin's carnival and Jacobean mirth lies in the difference between saturnalia and satire, the former aimed at renewal, the latter more prominently for critique (Mickel 136). "But in fact," suggests Yachnin,

> the theater was subversive of both hierarchy and mirth. Theater
> undermined social hierarchy because playgoers took their places according
> to their ability to pay rather than by virtue of their social rank. Moreover,
> the mirthful experience of theater-going was undermined by the fact that it

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was neither 'public' (in the full sense) nor 'free.' After all, customers had

to pay to get into the playhouse, and once inside their freedom to

participate was limited by the basic need to pay attention to the play. (68)

Lesley Mickel describes "Bakhtin's festive market place" as a "kind of primitive and

socialist utopia where all rank and hierarchy is abandoned" (135). If, like Bakhtinian

carnival mirth, Jonson's newly evolving theater experience dismantled traditional

systems of hierarchy, it effectively reconstituted status in the form of professional

distinction among dramatists. As the professionalization of the literary arts is helped

along by a conversion from a market fueled by patronage to one increasingly motivated

by the business of printing and the tastes of the reading populace, the supply of poetic

labor becomes overly abundant.[9] In essence, the market reaches a state of saturation--any

writer can become an author, any reader a critic--thereby deflating the value of the

symbolic wage supplied to true poets. As Bourdieu describes, "the profit of distinction

results from the fact that the supply of products (or speakers) corresponding to a given

level of linguistic (or, more generally, cultural) qualifications is lower than it would be if

all speakers had benefited from the conditions of acquisition of the legitimate competence

to the same extent as the holders of the rarest competence" (*Language* 56); therefore,

those with the greatest symbolic capital invested in any given field (suggesting that those

with the most capital at stake stand both to realize the most substantial profit or loss)

must strictly control access to official titles of distinction (e.g., "poet") and rigorously

define acceptable participation in the field--in this instance, the field of artistic

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[9] See especially discussions in Voss; Fox, "The complaint of poetry for the death of liberality: the decline of literary patronage in the 1590s"; Adams; and Marotti, especially 291-324.

production--in order to realize the profitability of their positions. This development of surplus labor in the field of literary production is analogous with the swelling numbers of unemployed workers, vagrants, and beggars, a condition brought about by declining wages and inflation taking place in the English economic culture at large in the last third of the sixteenth century.[10]

Dutton suggest that, since the marketplace of print had become so full with both producers and consumers, "there was a need for new terms to register their qualities and for new forms of expertise to discriminate between them" ("Lone Wolf" 32). The market needed, therefore, a class of regulators--"knowledgable mediators"-- who could negotiate between "consumers" and "products" (Dutton, "Lone Wolf" 32). A self-appointed arbiter like Jonson, however, could not simply assert his intentions to transform a field of symbolic practice like artistic discourse based solely on his own authority. Even in the early seventeenth century, when the marketplace of print had created a substantial alternative to artistic sponsorship from aristocratic patrons, an aspiring author had still to play the game of deference and gratitude, essentially disavowing any direct profit gleaned from the print market, be it material or symbolic. In "'Pure Poetry': Cultural Capital and the Rejection of Classicism," Trevor Ross suggests that "The return to a genre's originating essence is a common strategy within the cultural 'game,' since it signals a disavowal of naked economic interest on behalf of refining one's art to its seemingly purest form" (439). Such a restart as Jonson clearly attempts " is one of the most

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[10] For an econometric approach to the phenomenon of Tudor unemployment and vagrancy, see Salgado; Beier; Kelley; and Dobb, especially pp. 221-42. For investigations primarily geared to the influence of economic conditions upon the field of literary production, see Taylor; Timpane, Jr.; McPeek; and Aydelotte.

powerful gestures for earning symbolic profits within the cultural field" (Ross 439). In Jonson's "codified formal classicism, 'the old way and the true'" (439), as Ross asserts, Jonson effectively nominates himself as a laureate loyal to both tradition and innovation.

Jonson places critique on a different level, one of literary and aesthetic evaluation, not popular, civic discourse. A play like *Bartholomew Fair* suggests the development of an increasingly discrete field of artistic discourse (i.e., literature). *Bartholomew Fair* gives definition to both the positive and negative ends of the field of artistic discourse. He allows for criticism as long as it is based on the right principles of place (decorum); misapplied criticism is scorned as being out of place. Thus, "criticism," the negative side of artistic discourse, is scorned in artistic discourse as if it were slander or heresy or some other sort of civic unruliness.

The positive limit on criticism is set by decorous remarks but not ones made with respect to civic rules (laws, statues, etc.). The Scrivener's contract is modeled on such legalistic documents in part as a critique of the preponderance of such documents (Marcus 54), in part because Jonson needs some model on which to construct a more professional statement of literary behavior. Again, the Fair itself is the gauge of decorum. To go to the fair with the purpose of censuring equates with criticism of a thing that should be avoided in the first place. Marcus makes this point in *The Politics of Mirth* about the hypocritical stances of Wasp, Busy, and Overdo. Marcus likens James' sovereign rule to Jonson's lordship over the "rules" of dramatic production. There is no room now for wrangling or common debate. There are rules now for this sort of activity, albeit, Jonson's rules. By limiting the propriety of the Fair to a rule of law, Jonson advances the development of literary decorum. He wishes to purge the field of the voice

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of Anyman and replaces it with that of the Author, a new sort of professional. It resembles the voice of learned authority that Skelton assumes in his flyting against Garneshe. The process begins with the rough combat of flyting and evolves into rational negotiation of letters, both *litteras* and the letter of artistic decorum.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

[T]here are only two ways of getting and keeping a lasting hold over someone, debts and gifts, otherwise signified as "overt violence" and "symbolic violence".

--Pierre Bourdieu

The hostilities of warfare, indeed, are literally buried within the ceremonies of the gift in the form of mock violence, magical spells, and pointed language.

--Patricia Fumerton

Rhetoric and belligerence meet in the verbal contest.

--Ward Parks

These three epigraphs sketch the path that this dissertation takes towards resolving the question, What is the association between violent actions, rough language, and artistic discourse? On the one hand, the practice of war is established on traditions of seizure and violent acquisition. Aggression brings fear, respect, and perhaps a sort of dignity. On the other hand, it is easy to understand how literary fame can grant dignity, but how did that social mechanism work when there was no actual concept of "literature" or of an "author" such as one speaks of them today?

In an attempt to respond to these questions, this dissertation performs a careful study of texts and language which look and sound like the violence of armed conflict but which substitute for the overt violence of war the symbolic violence inherent in textual unruliness. Unruliness provides the essential motivation for literature to develop both as a concept and as a professional practice because multiform, combative, "masterless" character traits created a regularized method of obtaining status by means of artistic texts.

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This dissertation traces the development of literary professionalism via the combative nature of unruly literature and demonstrates the effect that verbal contest had upon the evolution of Renaissance literature. In essence, the purpose of this dissertation is to show that unruliness is necessary for the Author function to appear.

Chapter One provides the etymological icon that centralizes the subject of unruliness throughout the dissertation. Some studies of unruliness conduct investigations based on single texts (e.g., *The Ship of Fools, The Alchemist, The Roaring Girl*) or from a genre (ballad, pamphlet, city drama) in order to provide a material source in which to foreground the effects of various social fields (usually political, economic, or, increasingly, linguistic). However, in order to refine an account of textual unruliness, I seek an objective feature, a kind of specific, textual practice which can be documented and traced, a marker with which to genealogize the practice of unruliness. The word *haft* serves as just such a place to ground the key concepts of position and observation that constitute the practices of rogue and masterless behavior, whether it be that of a fictional character or of an actual writer. The presence of *haft* in a wide range of texts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries provides a rationale for selecting the word in the first place.

The word *haft* suggests a relationship between practitioners which underlies the evolution of artistic professionalism and professionalization. *Agon* or struggle sets up a hafting situation. At stake in this struggle could be truth, position, or material capital. Whatever the stakes, the necessary components requisite in a hafting are two agents, one who "sees better" than the other by dint of position, either physical or conceptual. That is, I have used the currency of the word *haft* in the Renaissance (c. 1489-c. 1644) to

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circumscribe a portion of the larger class of flyting texts in order to expose the varieties

of literary texts which evince aggressive dispositions vis-á-vis those which do not. Thus,

hafting defines not a genre but rather a mode.

Many sixteenth-century texts (and each of the ones I have selected for this

project) exhibit stylistic unruliness, which can be marked in part by the use of stylistic

devices such as paroemion, congeries, neologisms, and homoioteleuton, just to name a

few of the more frequent excesses and violations of sixteenth-century poetic decorum.

Writers who make use of these stylistic transgressions display a tendency to violate the

limits of decorous language used in the production of artistic texts. Additionally, the

rhetorical environment of artistic unruliness resembles that of blame more often than

praise, of eristic and contest more than deliberation or negotiation. Texts exhibiting

unruliness can frequently be linked genealogically with genres of verbal roughhousing

like billingsgate, flyting, and the French débat. In the final analysis, an account of this

style functions as a tool for understanding the relationships between a writer's

construction of a self via a printed text and the rhetorical structures that surround the

activity of artistic unruliness.

The word *haft* serves as the material phenomenon that helps to chart the more

symbolic process at work in the field of artistic production in the Renaissance, i.e., the

evolution of artistic discourse as a distinct field, in which the most important symbolic

object is the status of the title "Author." *Haft* allows me to shift between degrees of

verbal contest without deforming the current descriptions of types of verbal contest.

Chapter Two focuses on two works by John Skelton, "Agenst Garnesche" and

Magnyfycence. These two works were chosen both because they use forms of the words

haft and, in so doing, provide a practical context for understanding the practice which I find at work involving unruliness and artistic discourse. These two texts also typify the kinds of situations and individuals that pertain to hafting later in the century. Skelton is an important figure to examine in the study of the professionalization of English literature because his texts demonstrate older, scholastic modes of verbal contest at work. The series of flytings entitled "Agenst Garnesche" demonstrates the stakes of Renaissance artistic production. The contest with Garnesche produces the foundation on which the motif of battlelogia rests and provides a template for evaluating the other wars of words that obtain of a hafting mode. Through the use of Ward Parks' categories of verbal combat, I demonstrate the degree to which Skelton's flyting is rhetorical and intellectual. There is truly nothing material at stake; the reward Skelton stood to receive from "winning" the flyting was symbolic: a reputation at court.

With the interlude *Magnyfycence*, I demonstrate that the characteristics of excess also have a limit. This is typified in the character who goes by the virtuous name of Largess but who is known as Fancy when he behaves as a vice. The potential for both qualities coexist in the same individual, and this suggests that the limit between mean and excess rests very much on a relative degree of behavior. The study of *Magnyfycence* also shows that nonmaterial objects do not always have to be considered a part of the moral or spiritual realm. There is an intricate relationship between material and symbolic capital, and *Magnyfycence* shows the principle of conversion to be based on the notion of material excess within symbolic measure--"Measure is treasure." What looks like excessive expenditure can actually be decorous, depending upon the individual who does the spending. Kings are licensed to spend more because they have the symbolic status of

the nation to uphold. Therefore, their spending is not entirely personal; they are, in a sense, consuming for the entire nation.

In all instances of hafting examined in Skelton's texts, the essential action involves deceiving another party by means of openness. Skelton's production of artistic criticism through his flyting with Garnesche highlights the importance of seizing the rhetorical advantage to be found in being the first to label an opponent a hafter. This principle is demonstrated in Chapter Three with the examination of Sir Philip Sidney's *Defense of Poesie* and George Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie*. These texts codify the precepts of regular, acceptable artistic texts in the later sixteenth century. They also display the "rule" of poetry openly and seemingly without concealing anything. However, like the hafter who admits his crime to his unwitting victim and who is still not recognized to be responsible for it, Sidney and Puttenham explain what the best court poetry should look and sound like and even go so far as to explain how to go about reproducing it. However, they omit a discussion of one essential quality for the composition of that poetry, which is the time necessary for habituating one's self to the disposition of a courtier, all of which is necessary for the true production of the kind of poetry they are describing. Their texts demonstrate the codification of courtly habits in artistic production and establish the exemplary modes of production and (implicitly) critique. However, critique in the form of criticism is discouraged by Sidney and Puttenham because the voice of the critic very often sounds like unruly discourse, for "sharp" language resembles the rhetorical mode of verbal contest

In Chapter Four Thomas Nashe and Gabriel Harvey are two "scholars" whose exchange typifies unruliness and critique prefigured by the flyting between Skelton and

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Garnesche. As in both verbal contests, the way to out-maneuver and to defeat an opponent in a war of words is to generate a more copious text than the other writer, to create a text charged with all the poetic and rhetorical explosions of physical combat. One might ask, legitimately, why a writer would not simply follow the rules set out by Sidney and Puttenham and be less troubled by the need to justify an idiomatic violation of artistic decorum. The primary reason is because the courtly model implicitly defined success by reproduction of a courtly ethos--a mode of life unavailable to most writers. Secondly, the relevance and nature of the courtly ethos was in fact changing in the late sixteenth century due to a decline of feudal institutions and the rise of humanism, which had the effect of differentiating the means through which one accumulated material and symbolic power.

In this chapter I explain that both writers rail against each other in order to fashion their reputations as authoritative critics of poetry and to make money. In the Nashe/Harvey contest, personal honor is less an object at stake than professional reputation. I addressed the issue of what each stood to win and lose by prolonging their public argument. The printed battlelogia of Nashe and Harvey provided the institution of print professionalism with materials--texts--which could be translated into material capital. On the other hand, they were also providing the institution of artistic discourse with materials--uses of language and words, violations of decorous speech--which translated into symbolic capital, specifically, the institutionalized capital of "rules." However, the spoils of their contest function not as rules per se but rather as counter-examples to courtly decorum.

After looking at the texts of Nashe and Harvey individually, I return to the idea that this battlelogia (and others like it, in general) provided an important means of testing the limits of artistic expression and expanding those limits by means of the concept of *copia* and the tricky relationship between metaphor and catachresis. The unruly language of verbal combat in Nashe expands the range of artistic discourse (i.e., the available symbolic capital) by redrawing the boundaries of decorous language. Additionally, their contest also provided the practitioners of artistic discourse with a bank of idiomatic or otherwise exceptional vocabulary and syntax, and with blatant violations of decorous or acceptable speech--all of which could then be transformed into institutionalized capital in the form of counter examples to the "rules" of decorum. *Haft* is a word for thinking about critical and creative positions at the boundary between catachresis and metaphor.

In Chapter Five, I argue that Ben Jonson performs a scholarly reassessment of the production of artistic discourse on a symbolic level, one which is tied to the court of James I only in the end by way of symbolic approval, through the composition and production of *Bartholomew Fair*. Jonson removes the action of *Bartholomew Fair* from the world of the court altogether and places it in the world of the rogue and hafter. The examination of Wasp and battlelogia culminates with a puppet show, which, I argue, represents Jonson's embodiment of the Jacobean theater. Just as the puppet show figures forth theater, so the event of the fair represents the Jacobean court.

The struggle for professional space is now configured between artist and critic, a voice increasingly heard from <u>outside</u> the class of the writer himself. Jonson's surrender of *Bartholomew Fair* to James converts the unruliness and violence not only of the play itself but of the field of artistic discourse at large to the only agent strong enough to

decidedly institute peace: the king. However, the court is no longer truly in control of the production standards of artistic discourse, the Author is. As long as an Author successfully makes a case for his producing within the limits of the field of artistic discourse, he can write virtually anything, free from the criticism of law and religion.

Jonson justifies, "tames," in a way, the unruliness of his *Bartholomew Fair* by submitting it, literally, to James for his approval. In *The Logic of Practice* Pierre Bourdieu articulates the practical operations of this sort of social interaction. Power rests in "recognition, personal loyalty or prestige" (*Logic* 126), and this observation accords with the work of Karl Polayni and Marshall D. Sahlins in locating the model of gift exchange in pre-capitalist societies, a description which still fits fairly well for sixteenth-century England. Such pre-capitalist systems are the best places for symbolic violence to function efficiently "because the only way that relations of domination can be set up within it, maintained or restored, is through strategies which . . . must be disguised, transfigured, in a word, euphemized" (*Logic* 126).

If war, arms, and weapons--the elements of overt physical violence--are inappropriate to a civil setting, then "symbolic violence, gentle, invisible violence, unrecognized as such . . . presents itself as the most economical mode of domination because it best corresponds to the economy of the system," explains Bourdieu (*Logic* 127). As he clearly states, the signs of symbolic violence are "trust, obligation, personal loyalty, hospitality, gifts, debts, piety, in a word, of all the virtues honoured by the ethic of honour" (*Logic* 127). Where arms are an inappropriate means of garnering distinction, some other method must do. For example, in the contest for prestige in Henry VIII's court between John Skelton and Christopher Garnesche, actual combat is transferred into

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the symbolic conflict of a verbal contest. It would be egregiously incorrect for Skelton to resort to arms; therefore, "the more likely it is that gentle, disguised forms of domination will be seen as the only possible way of exercising domination and exploitation" (*Logic* 128). A similar situation exists later in the sixteenth century where two learned individuals, Thomas Nashe and Gabriel Harvey, struggling over the proprietous use of English, met out their differences in a verbal contest. Physical violence is again inappropriate because that is not the way such academic disagreements are concluded. In other words, the combatants do not stand to gain anything by actually coming to blows because the stakes are not material in the sense that there is anything to which the victor can lay claim by conquering his opponent. Instead, the prize is a measure of authority granted to the winner in terms of innovative usage. This is a non-material sort of license which, in the absence of any professionally organized linguistic institution,[1] has no way of being officially certified except by means of a reputation or elevated prestige among the community of Renaissance language arbitrators.

Oppositional discourse and criticism attempt to establish a hierarchy of worth based on the symbolic honor attached to the titles "poet" and "author," specifically with respect to the production of artistic texts. As such, the sixteenth century in England sets the scene for a state of war--"Warre," as Thomas Hobbes calls it--over the professionalization of the literary field. Another way to configure oppositional discourse as war: *Leviathan* I.13: "For WARRE, consisteth not in Battell onely, or the act of fighting; but in a tract of time, wherein the will to contend by battell is sufficiently known and

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[1] The Philosophical Society was not founded until 1645, subsequently reorganized as The Royal Society in 1662.

therefore the notion of *Time,* is to be considered in the nature of Warre; . . . So the nature of War, consisteth not in actual fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is PEACE" (185-86). The protacted "tract of time," as Hobbes points out, is crucial in defining the limits of war and peace. An individual or even a few "fighting" texts are not enough to constitute a state of war in the realm of cultural texts. But the proliferation of printed battlelogia such as appears in the sixteenth century in England is enough to assert with confidence that there was indeed a protracted war of words raging.

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