

THE RHETORIC OF RANK IN EARLY MODERN DRAMA FROM 1590 TO 1642

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation, “The Rhetoric of Rank in Early Modern Drama from 1590 to 1642,” argues that early modern dramatic works pull from rhetorical theory to shape social status in a period that underwent significant social transformations. Arguing that dramatists use early modern rhetorical manuals to respond to historically specific social tensions, I explore how dramatists use rhetorical figures to comment on social tensions between ranks, define the social role of emergent social roles, and define social values. While I explore the relationship between early modern drama and rhetorical manuals, I situate my analysis alongside the work of social historians to provide a historically situated account. I argue that rhetorical theory plays a central, though underexamined, role in the formation of those emergent social roles—like merchant or factor—and that dramatists dramatize the process of social (trans)formation through rhetorical figures.

Furthermore, social formation itself is a process with often contradictory priorities and perspectives, and I show that dramatists use the semantic flexibility of rhetorical figures to support a range of attitudes that are sympathetic, tolerant, or even hostile towards social change, illustrating that social change is not the inevitable product of historical contexts but a process structured in part by rhetoric. My dissertation traces how rhetoric is used to cultivate civic values among ranks with competing interests, a process rife with social tensions that the drama lays bare.

DEDICATION

To Molly, my wife. Thank you for the limitless support and unending patience. You have made this process not only bearable but thoroughly enjoyable. This dissertation took shape in the many conversations to which I subjected you, and for that I am immensely thankful and terribly sorry. Thank you for your help with editing and proofreading as much as for your wisdom and advice. In this next generation as we voyager and discovery together in this enterprise and others, you will always be my deep space nine.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In the 1593 edition of *The Garden of Eloquence*, Henry Peacham notes that eloquence allows the rhetorician to become the “emperour of mens minds & affections, and next to the omnipotent God in the power of perswasion.”¹ Peacham’s account of eloquence is a far cry from some contemporary humanists’ sympathy toward commoners; in fact, Peacham’s model of rhetorical skill is seemingly monarchical.² Peacham promotes an absolutist vision of eloquence wherein the rhetorician’s verbal skill leads the auditor’s free will, the auditor becoming subject to the rhetorically skilled speaker. Peacham underlines a central tenet in early modern rhetorical education and the use of rhetoric in everyday life; namely, rhetoric is always a social action. Early modern rhetoricians and dramatists repeatedly underscore the connection between rhetorical eloquence and social status. In his introduction to *The Arte of Rhetorique*, Thomas Wilson claims that rhetoric caused humans to transform from beasts to civil beings, saying that “where as Menne lyued Brutyshlye in open feldes,” the early poets “called them together by vtterance of speache, and perswaded with them what was good...and after a certaine space, they became through nurture and good aduisement, of wilde, sober: of cruel, gentle: of foles, wise: and of beastes, men.”³ For both Wilson and Peacham, rhetorical eloquence was instrumental to

¹ Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (London: Richard Field, 1593), A.B.iii^v. Peacham also claims that “eloquence makes savage nations civil, wild people tame, and cruell tyrants not only to become meek but likewise merciful” (Aii^r).

² For a description of how some rhetoricians, such as Vives and Rainolds, embrace of republican humanism, see Marrku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

³ Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique* (London: 1553), Aiii^v. The poet and dramatist George Chapman mused that the poet uses eloquence to tame people and bring them “from the violent current of natural cruelty to affability and courtesy...bringing savage lives in civil chains” (*The Poems of George Chapman*, ed. Phyllis Brooks (New

the early formation of civil society. Likewise, Ben Jonson maintains that “he must have civil prudence and eloquence” when “he will handle business or carry councils...which commonly is the school of men.”⁴ Jonson points out that to maintain civil society people must interact with a degree of mannered civility, which is promulgated through rhetoric. These examples underscore a pervasive tendency in early modern thought, suggesting that rhetoric is the early foundation of civil society and that rhetoric maintains civil society by teaching both commoners and the elite lessons about obedience, moderation, manners, and duty to society.

While Wilson and Peacham underline that rhetoric is the foundation of civil society, Peter Mack has shown how rhetorical manuals provided a treasure trove of moral axioms for the commonplace books of both the elite and the commoners, saying that “rhetorical methods reflected and reinforced a distinctive kind of civil society.”⁵ Readers looked to rhetorical manuals for both rhetorical instruction and instruction in how to be social. In the late sixteenth century, notes Keith Wrightson, “the transformation of gentry education contributed much to the development of a degree of cultural cohesiveness which went over and beyond common consciousness of rank. Those of the lesser gentry whose education did not carry them outside the borders of their counties nonetheless experienced a common intellectual training.”⁶ Wrightson points out that education provided a framework of rules and values, and while those rules and values were born among the gentry, they trickled down to commoners. This framework implies that the distinction between elite and common cultures was at times razor thin. In fact, Markku

York, 1941), 362). Francis Bacon goes so far as to claim that rhetoric is highly useful “in civil occasions, of conference, counsel, persuasion, or the like” (Francis Bacon, *Francis Bacon: The Major Works*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 140).

⁴ Ben Jonson, *Timber: Or, Discoveries* (London: 1641), 128. Jonson also traces the use of eloquence from the Hebrews, to the Greeks, to the Latins, and finally to his own age, arguing that the study of eloquence “offers to mankind a certaine rule, and Patterne of living well, and happily; disposing us to all Civill offices of Society. If wee will believe Tully, it nourisheth, and instructeth our Youth” (126).

⁵ Peter Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 302.

⁶ Keith Wrightson, *English Society*, 200.

Peltonen remarks that “when the gentry increasingly sought access to education in the grammar schools as well as in the universities they received an essentially humanist education which thus became the common possession of the whole governing class.”⁷ Both Wrightson and Peltonen call attention to a common culture shared by ambitious commoners and an elite eager to maintain their rank, and it was partially an interest in rhetorical education—for practical and performative purposes—that shaped that culture.⁸

Rhetorical manuals play a crucial role in creating a shared interested and shared vocabulary between elite and common cultures that were constantly evolving, depending on the specific social conditions of a particular social moment.⁹ In the late sixteenth century, the distinction between the elite and common culture began to erode; however, as commoners gained access to education and mobility, the elite looked to different modes of distinction to distinguish themselves from ambitious commoners.¹⁰ In many ways, this study looks at various stages of this transformation. While the study begins with the erosion of rhetorical skills as a distinguishing mark of gentility in the 1590s, it looks to hospitality in the 1600s, and then finally to manners in the 1630s. The pressure points that I examine are by no means the only social tensions of a decade, but the particular pressure points I look to in each section underline the role of rhetoric in shaping rank. Each decade has a different mode of distinction, a quality or skill, that is a pressure point between the elite and commoners who use that distinguishing mark; moreover, rhetorical

⁷ Markku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism*, 14.

⁸ For more on the need for able-minded administrators and the increasing complexity of Tudor administrations, see JP Cooper, *Land Men and Beliefs: Studies in Early Modern History* (London: Hambledon Press, 1983).

⁹ Markku Peltonen argues that the “practical aims of rhetorical training” made it more likely that “education from the prince down to commonalty should therefore be relatively uniform,” though that likelihood is obviously belied by contradictions and exceptions (Markku Peltonen, *Rhetoric, Politics and Popularity in Pre-Revolutionary England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 25).

¹⁰ The erosion of the distinction between the elite and common cultures was partially due to the Tudor administration’s predilection to hiring education commoners, but some sorts of commoners like merchants also enjoyed greater geographic mobility and economic stability. As we shall see in Chapter III, even the merchants’ economic success is inflected by rhetorical theory in some cases.

manuals are an important site where these modes of distinction are defined, explained, and disseminated.

In this study, I argue that early modern dramatists pull from rhetorical theory to respond to social tensions between and among ranks between 1590 and 1630. Dramatists draw from rhetorical manuals' claim that rhetoric promotes social mobility by offering students eloquence and wit; furthermore, the manuals also comment on the importance of social values, such as hospitality and manners, that define the social roles of those ranks. In this way, rhetoric played a crucial, though underexamined, role in the reshaping of England's social hierarchy in the period. While studies of early modern drama have looked at rhetoric and rank individually, the relationship between the two is underexamined. This study seeks to reengage scholarship with the social dynamics of rhetoric by situating the use of rhetoric in the drama alongside specific social conditions. For instance, in Chapter II, I suggest that Shakespeare and Jonson use rhetoric to reflect on how rhetorical education has transformed both the nobility and commoners. Each chapter takes issue with a specific pressure point, such as rhetorical education, to demonstrate that dramatists use rhetorical theory to comment on social pressure points. I suggest that scholars can more clearly analyze the use of rhetoric in drama when we address the specific social conditions of a particular historical moment, which is why this study contextualizes each section with relevant social history. I focus on the rhetoric because rhetorical education was a crucial engine of social mobility in the period, and characters use rhetoric to navigate and mediate social tensions. I look to drama to explore the role of rhetoric in England's changing social structure because the drama represents social tensions as overtly rhetorical, and I explore rhetoric in the drama because rhetoric often framed discussions about social mobility in the period.

Rhetorical manuals in the early modern period are essentially handbooks for social mobility, which were designed to appeal to ambitious commoners as much as a gentry eager to learn how to maintain their social status. Wayne Rebhorn points out that rhetoricians were often “men on the make,” and that manuals were more often than not written by educated commoners who aspired for prestige and who were ambitious of social opportunities.¹¹ Early modern rhetorical manuals are written to a wide variety of readers, and those manuals provide varying forms of instruction for their readers’ varying needs.¹² For example, Thomas Wilson’s *The Arte of Rhetorique* (1553) and George Puttenham’s *The Arte of English Poesy* (1589) are written to the governing elite and aspiring courtiers, respectively; however, Richard Sherry’s *A Treatise of Schemes and Tropes* (1550) and Henry Peacham’s *Garden of Eloquence* (1577\1593) are written to commoners and poor students, respectively.¹³ Each of these manuals goes about instructing its readership differently, but each of the manuals underscores several central tenets in early modern thought. They argue that education is beneficial to both the state and the individual; they illustrate how to use rhetoric to persuade and edify through stylized language; they promote manners and civility as crucial to maintaining stability in the commonwealth and the local community. A 1596 translation of Latin rhetoric offered “certaine Rhetoricall Declamations, the vse whereof in euery member in our Commonweale, is as necessary, as the abuse of wilfull

¹¹ Wayne Rebhorn, *The emperor of men’s minds: Literature and the Renaissance discourse of rhetoric* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 16.

¹² Wayne Rebhorn has pointed out that “virtually all [rhetoricians] were men on the make, men who came from the lower and middling orders of society and sought advancement through their mastery of the word” (Wayne Rebhorn *Renaissance Debates on Rhetoric* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 6).

¹³ Richard Rainolde’s *The Foundacion of Rhetorike* (1563) is written to a general audience; William Fulwood’s *The Enemie of Idleness* (1568) is written to ambitious merchants; John Hard’s *Method or Comfortable Beginning for all unlearned* (1570) is written to commoners; John Hart’s *A Method or Comfortable Beginning* (1570) is written to commoners; Dudley Fenner’s *The Artes of Logike and Rethorike* (1584) is written to a general audience but is particularly sympathetic to commoners; Angel Day’s *The English Secretarie* (1599) is written to gentleman; John Hoskins’ *Directions for Speech and Style* (1600) is written to gentleman.

ignorance is odious.”¹⁴ In his defense of rhetorical education, John Barston claimed that grammar schools were the “Pilote of policies” because rhetorical education provides “ready meanes to vnite learning and gouernement together.”¹⁵ These manuals repeatedly underscore the importance of social style—a style that is as aesthetically eloquent as it is morally instructive—because they recognize that society is structured upon shared values. The earliest vernacular treatise in English, Leonard Cox’s *The arte or crafte of rhetoryke* (1532), assures the audience that learning rhetoric is useful for anyone who has “any thyng to prepose or to speke afore any companye” and “in any comynaltye.”¹⁶ Likewise, John Rainolds’ lectures on Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, delivered in the 1570s, argues that eloquence “was made for the people.”¹⁷ Speaking of both the elite and the commoners, Richard Beacon claims that the rhetorician must be ready to “delude either faction by faire promises and sweete words.”¹⁸ In these examples, it is clear that rhetoric is not only useful as a tool used by the elite to persuade the common people, but rhetoric is also used by commoners to learn the civic values that will increase their chances of social advancement. The central premise that underlies nearly every rhetorical manual is the assumption that rhetoric defines social values and stabilizes society. According to Peltonen, “the common good could not materialize unless everyone was fully committed to promote” the “full range of civic virtues,” and manuals disseminate those social virtues and instruct audiences how to use them.¹⁹ The paradox for a highly hierarchical society is that education is necessary to promote a cohesive set of values—such as manners, civility, and community—but education also provides the common people the skills—both hard skills like arithmetic and soft skills like

¹⁴ Alexandre Sylvain, *The Orator* (Adam Islip: London, 1596), Aiv^r.

¹⁵ John Barston, *The Safeguard of Societies* (London: 1576), 105^v.

¹⁶ Leonard Cox, *The arte or crafte of rhetoryke* (London: Robert Redman, 1532), Aii^v.

¹⁷ *John Rainolds’ Oxford Lectures on Aristotle’s Rhetoric*, ed. Lawrence Green (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1986), 186.

¹⁸ Richard Beacon, *Solon his follie* (Ioseph Barnes: Oxford, 1594), 26.

¹⁹ Peltonen, *Classical Humanism*, 39.

eloquence—they would need to capitalize on economic and social forces that allowed for upward mobility.

The first premise, rhetorical manuals define and disseminate the social values that shape society, is followed by the second premise that the social values that authors define are not homogenous or linear. Richard Halpern posits that it is “axiomatic that the primary function of schooling in the period is to reproduce the dominant social order,” but Lynn Enterline has shown that grammar school “demand for mimicry performed in public under threat of punishment would produce rhetorically capable subjects,” not homogenous subjects.²⁰ Enterline correctly asserts that grammar schools produced generations of students with flexible subject positions who could perform as the social situation required, and this study uses plays that show just such a theory play out, including moments where adaptation, resistance, and contradiction are key skills in navigating social tensions.²¹ Furthermore, Brian Vickers claims that “The dominance of rhetoric as a communication system applicable to poetry, literary criticism, and other arts, meant that it produced a unified and homogenous culture.”²² The curriculum for rhetorical education was not standardized, despite attempts to make it so, and rhetoric was used for a variety of reasons in a variety of contexts.

In fact, this project began as a response to Robert N. Watson’s claim that simile in *As You Like It* is “appropriative” and violent,” and that ultimately “efforts to bridge, through simile, the

²⁰ Richard Halpern, *The Poetics of Primitive Accumulation: English Renaissance Culture and the Genealogy of Capital* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 22. Lynn Enterline, *Shakespeare’s Schoolroom: Rhetoric, Discipline, Emotion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 48.

²¹ This also has to do with an unspoken undercurrent of this study about the voice of commoners. While some scholarship has argued that commoners were largely pre-political in that they had no political voice, recent scholarship seeks to uncover the ways that commoners express their voice. For more on a critical overview of this debate, see Chris Fitter, “Introduction,” *Shakespeare and the Politics of Commoners: Digesting the New Social History*, ed. Chris Fitter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 1-39. This study does not explicitly delve into this debate, but there multiple moments in the plays that follow that stage commoners’ political voice.

²² Brian Vickers, *English Renaissance Literary Criticism*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 21.

gap between ourselves and nature, and between our minds and reality, again only confirm that there is really no way back.”²³ In a forthcoming essay, I argue that the simile is used for a variety of reasons in the play, which includes Jacques’ appropriative similes as much as Rosaline’s instructive similes.²⁴ This project began as a response to arguments that early modern rhetorical education was homogenous or that figurative language was only used in one way; instead, I argue that rhetorical education varied based on the user’s motives and priorities, and the way rhetorical figures were used also varied, sometimes even by the same user. In *As You Like It* as in the rest of the chapters that follow, rhetoric is both a stabilizing and destabilizing force. For example, my analysis of Middleton’s *Michaelmas Term* in Chapter III suggests that while some characters use a rhetorical figure to stabilize society by advocating for civility, other characters use the same figure to destabilize society through deception. Throughout this study, the tension between these rhetoric as a stabilizing and destabilizing force is not equivocation; instead, people in the early modern period turned to rhetoric precisely for its ability to encode double meaning and articulate complex concepts. This study demonstrates that rhetoric played a fundamental role in shaping an increasingly heterogeneous social hierarchy, and central to the second premise is the claim that rhetoric itself was anything but homogenous. In the plays that follow, we see rhetoric used in multiple, contradictory ways in the same play by characters with diverse social backgrounds.²⁵ This study seeks to illustrate, then, that the use of rhetoric is clearer when it is read alongside historical context.

²³ Robert N. Watson, *Back to Nature: The Green and the Real in Late Renaissance Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 78.

²⁴ This essay, “Imaginative Language and the Simile in *As You Like It*,” is forthcoming in *Early Modern Literary Studies*.

²⁵ England’s social structure was increasingly heterogeneous for a number of reasons. Firstly, transition from a feudal to a mercantile economy created an abundance of new jobs; secondly, new jobs offered new opportunities; thirdly, increased access to education offered opportunities; fourthly, economic conditions changed so that money was less concentrated in the hands of landed nobles and was more available for some sorts of people; fifthly, there was much

Recent scholarship on rhetoric in early modern drama is not particularly sparse. I am indebted to the work of Lynn Enterline and Jenny Mann, whose contributions to rhetoric emphasize methodologies similar to my own. While Enterline's discussion of rhetoric shows that grammar school education produces a flexible identity, Mann highlights how rhetorical manuals legitimate English vernacular and national identity.²⁶ My interest in social values bridges these studies, connecting Mann's focus on the state's formation and Enterline's focus on the formation of individual identity.²⁷ By connecting criticism on identity and society, we can more clearly see how fluctuating social categories influence identity in the drama. While early modern rhetoric has recently received quite a bit of critical attention, there are relatively few studies that focus exclusively on drama.²⁸ The studies on rhetoric and drama, furthermore, do not focus on rank.²⁹ This study addresses the underexamined influence of rhetoric on rank in early modern drama.

I focus exclusively on drama because drama provides a diverse set of voices and perspectives that allow for a full examination rank and rhetoric in the period. Dramatic action is also driven by a rich variety of social conditions and tensions that underlie dramatic action.³⁰

more geographical mobility in the sixteenth century, so people flocked to cities with opportunity. All of these conditions made for a social hierarchy that was much less homogenous than had been a generation before it.

²⁶ Lynn Enterline, *Shakespeare's Schoolroom*, 2012). Jenny C. Mann, *Outlaw Rhetoric: Figuring Vernacular Eloquence in Shakespeare's England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012).

²⁷ Mann's discussion refers to general nationhood, but I refer to the particular communal engagement; Enterline's discussion refers to identity as it relates to interiority, but I refer to social identity as it relates to rank.

²⁸ For studies on rhetoric that are not exclusively on drama, see Peter Mack, *A History of English Rhetoric 1380-1620* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Jennifer Richards and Alison Thorne, *Rhetoric, Women, and Politics in Early Modern England* (New York: Routledge, 2007). Judith Anderson, *Translating Investments: Metaphor and the Dynamic of Cultural Change in Tudor-Stuart England* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005). Ceri Sullivan, *The Rhetoric of Credit: Merchants in Early Modern Writing* (London: Farleigh Dickinson, 2002). Neil Rhodes, *The Power of Eloquence* (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1992). Debora Shuger, *Sacred Rhetoric: The Christian Grand Style in the English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

²⁹ For studies on rhetoric and drama, see Quentin Skinner, *Forensic Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). Maria F. Fahey, *Metaphor and Shakespearean Drama: Unchaste Signification* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). Raphael Lyne, *Shakespeare, Rhetoric, and Cognition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). Carla Mazzio, *The Inarticulate Renaissance: Language Trouble in an Age of Eloquence* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009). Madhavi Menon, *Wanton Words: Rhetoric and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

³⁰ For instance, Lynn Enterline shows that drama repeatedly—almost compulsively—stages the grammar school exercise *in utramque partem* (arguing both sides of an argument). Very rarely is one perspective of an argument

Early modern theaters were attuned to this multiplicity because every rank and occupation frequented the theater; indeed, the theater is one of the few places in London where commoners and gentry consistently intermingled. The theater space manifests drama's interest in social interaction. My study focuses on comedies because that genre deals with ordinary social interaction between ranks in ways that highlight social values. As Ben Jonson says in his Prologue to *The Alchemist*, comedies are a stream that reflects people's "natural follies, but so shown, / As even the doers may see, and yet not own."³¹ City comedy, a genre which comprises all but my section on Shakespeare, reflects distinct quirks and traits and instructs audiences through humor.³² Because comedy scrutinizes people's distinct mannerisms and uses that material to instruct, it is an ideal genre to interrogate how people interacted, learned, and developed. City comedies are especially fertile ground to discuss rank because the genre explores communal identity, tensions between ranks, rhetoric's role in those tensions, and the sociopolitical implications of those tensions.

While the study generally charts a gradual process in the development of a more socially mobile society, each chapter covers compelling cases when plays resist and complicate direct progress. In each chapter, the pairing of plays reveals that the narrative of progress toward the growing opportunity of commoners is challenged by forceful counter arguments and appeals to tradition. The instances when plays resist the thrust of progress reveals social pressure points, aspects of society that are resistant to change. In other cases, there are characters that advocate for tradition in plays that generally have a positive outlook on change; in those plays, we can see

encourage without a response from the other side. This tendency to weigh both sides of an argument means that rhetorical arguments for a range of social issues—including civic identity and rank—pervades drama.

³¹ Ben Jonson, *Five Plays*, ed. GA Wilkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 23-4.

³² For more on city comedy, see Jean E. Howard, *Theater of a City: The Places of London Comedy, 1598-1642* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 1-29.

clearly the specific rhetorical strategies that early modern thinkers used to oppose such change. Rhetoric is fundamentally dynamic and changes depending on who uses it and in what structural context they use it. According to Brian Vickers, a full view of rhetoric's influence will "consider the parallel presence of rhetoric in major literary forms...and will need to consider the role of eloquence in institutions, such as parliaments, lawcourts, universities, academies," responding to how rhetoric is used at distinct points in time in distinct social institutions.³³ I suggest that the use of rhetoric in social interactions—how everyday commoners and gentry use rhetoric to navigate society and interact together—is itself an institution that requires examination.³⁴ Rhetoric gives drama the vocabulary and formal techniques with which to respond to social tensions. Rhetorical manuals teach readers how to express their voice in society, and because dramatists are very clearly among those readers, the manuals play an important role in shaping how dramatists respond to social tensions in the drama.

Recent projects have shed light on sociopolitical contexts like national identity or economics, and others have shed light on particular rhetoricians or figures of speech.³⁵ Few studies, however, examine how dramatists use a particular rhetorical figure alongside the history of a social tension. This study argues that dramatists use rhetoric in response to social changes,

³³ Brian Vickers, *In Defense of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 436.

³⁴ For studies of other institutions, see Lynn Enterline, *Shakespeare's Schoolroom*, 2012, on grammar schools. Lorna Hutson, *The Invention of Suspicion: Law and Mimesis in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Jennifer Richards, *Rhetoric and Courtliness in Early Modern Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Enterline studies how the use of rhetoric in grammar schools indoctrinates obedience and unsettles a static identity. Hutson studies how legal rhetoric, particularly the dialectic, shapes the legal culture in England. Richards studies how rhetoric is used by courtiers to navigate the treacherous courtly environment. These studies provide excellent frameworks for studying how rhetoric influences particular institutions. They do not, however, examine in detail the influence on rank or civic identity.

³⁵For recent formalist studies using rhetoric, see Jonathan Lamb, *Shakespeare in the Marketplace of Words* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). Mann, *Outlaw Rhetoric*, 2012. Judith Anderson, *Go Figure: Energies, Forms and Institutions in the Early Modern World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011). Stefan Daniel Keller, *The Development of Shakespeare's Rhetoric: A Study of Nine Plays* (Tubingen: Francke Press, 2009). Sylvia Adamson and Gavin Alexander, *Renaissance Figures of Speech* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

exploring how social rank is shaped alongside the historical events that inspire that shaping; furthermore, this study demonstrates that dramatists draw on rhetorical theory to define social roles, articulate social values, and negotiate social tensions. Both the development of social rank and the development of rhetorical techniques are a gradual process, and I argue that these processes inform each other. This study examines the historical and aesthetic jointly, arguing that social tensions shape authors' formal techniques, and I use this understanding to investigate how that use of rhetoric transforms England's social structure. To set the stage for rhetoric's involvement in social change, I examine several plays in discrete periods, suggesting how those plays' formal characteristics illuminate sociopolitical questions unique to that period. I begin in the 1590s because the decade was immersed in a culture of eloquence that stressed the importance of wit and verbal ornament.

In Chapter II, "Rhetorical Education in Jonson and Shakespeare," I look to two plays in the 1590s to explore how characters use their rhetorical education to promote social values and negotiate social tensions. In the first section, I take up Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour* (1598), which presents a picture of everyday London life that gets at the heart of how rhetorical eloquence affects the community. The play interrogates the role of poetry and education in its examination of the lower-gentry's responsibility in a community. The young Ed Knowell turns to poetry and education in order to learn civic values, but he is confronted by the residue of that earlier generation that mistrusted education. In the play, virtue and education are inextricably linked, but rather than present only the virtuous and educated Knowell, the play also presents a retinue of fashionable gallants whose pretense for education is eclipsed by their immense stupidity. Jonson qualifies and problematizes a neat picture that lauds the value of education by a cast of fools, including a plagiarizing poet, a vain gallant, and an obsolete knight who professes

chivalry and martial prowess but possesses neither. the analysis of Jonson's play is framed by an overview of rhetorical education. While each subsequent section looks at a dramatic text alongside a particular rhetorical figure, it is important to lay out how rhetorical theory responds to social tensions in general terms before delving into particulars in the following sections. Before moving onto particular examples, Jonson's play is particularly well-suited to providing an overview of how dramatic texts use rhetorical education—either as a theatrical representation or a formal feature—to respond to social tensions. Furthermore, this section will make clear the rhetorical approach I take in each subsequent section; namely, it will establish the argumentative framework, historical and rhetorical terminology, and social tensions that populate each section. On a less conceptual level, the play's interest in poetics and style—as it pertains to performing gentility—helpfully foregrounds how rhetorical education seeps into the daily life of those that traffic the early modern stage.

In the second section, I demonstrate that Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* (1595) indicates how nobles—rather than the urban gentry—turn to education to acquire skills in governance. While Jonson's play ultimately embraces the utility of education, Shakespeare's play is far more suspicious of its utility, demonstrating how too much education leads to students potentially neglecting their social duties. The nobles in *Love's Labour's Lost* turn to education to avoid responsible behavior and instead insist on performing stereotypes of youthful excess that the play links with the use of the rhetorical figure hyperbole. According to early modern rhetoricians, the hyperbole was associated with excess, but the figure was also known for being able to conceal truth in that excess. The play traffics in both forms of hyperbole, indicating the limits of what might be considered productive language. I argue that the play's frequent use of hyperbole draws light on the young nobles' proclivity to youthful excess and prodigality, a vice

that the play critiques in nobles who should be responsible governors. As a whole, then, the first chapter explores the social utility of a rhetorical education in both commoners and nobles; furthermore, the first chapter illustrates how a rhetorical education shapes society, showing how rhetoric in Jonson's play promotes community and education in Shakespeare's play is connected to theories of responsible governance.

In Chapter III, "Civil Rhetoric in Heywood and Middleton," I move my attention to two plays in the first decade of the 1600s. These two plays highlight the use of rhetoric by commoners to promote civic values, particularly charity and manners. Like Chapter I's interest in manners in the 1590s, these two sections explore manners among London's commoners, indicating once again how commoners adopt elite skills to advance their own social status. Chapter III begins with an analysis of Thomas Heywood's *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody, Part II* (1606) as a case study for how commoners—from wealthy merchants to tradesmen—use rhetoric to define how to harmonize civic values with mercantile values by inspiring a sense of communal responsibility. In the play, the wealthy merchant, Gresham, learns that charity is a civic value that ties the community together, but Gresham also benefits from charity by using his magnificent generosity to announce his wealth. The play's educated character, Dr. Knowell, uses the rhetorical figure *descriptio*, a description of a quality or person, to teach Gresham the importance of charity, and the merchant soon uses rhetorical descriptions to articulate his own wealth and rise to prominence. Gresham's charity signals the rise of merchants, who use their significant wealth to acquire social power. This play proffers a nuanced take on charity that advocates for the virtue in its classical religious sense of altruistic generosity, but the play also reveals how the charitable can also benefit from their own charity, which seems to embrace commercial value of charity. Heywood's vision of economic goodwill ties London

together and smooths out social tensions, but the next section offers a more skeptical view of tensions between social ranks.

In the second section of Chapter III, I look to Thomas Middleton's *Michaelmas Term* (1604?) to provide an antithesis to Heywood's rather optimistic view of social change. In Middleton's play, an ambitious merchant, Quomodo, uses rhetoric to gull an unsuspecting gentleman, the aptly named Easy, out of his property. The conflict that follows from that scheme comments on the increasing influence of vice in London's changing social structure. Quomodo relies on the rhetorical figure *paradiastole*, which reframes a vice as a virtue, to confuse Easy and conceal his own duplicity. While the use of *descriptio* in Heywood's play clearly demonstrates virtue, Middleton's play uses *paradiastole* to conceal vice. On first glance, the figure might be associated with a particularly unsavory use of rhetoric; however, classical and early modern rhetoricians point out that *paradiastole* can also be used to reveal vices that are otherwise hard to decipher. In the play, I point out that Quomodo uses the figure to gull Easy, but Easy ultimately uses the figure to expose Quomodo and restore some order to the community. This play is particularly relevant to studies of early modern social status because it exposes tensions between upwardly mobile commoners like Quomodo and land-owning gentry like Easy, and while Heywood's play suggests that those tensions can be overcome by a charity that is both Christian and commercial, Middleton's play stages a community where Quomodo's avarice is only overcome when Easy finally becomes more astute. While their worldviews differ slightly, both plays offer a picture of society that is influenced by rhetoric and a picture of rhetoric that refuses a single meaning. In Heywood's play, *descriptio* propagates Christian charity, but it is also worryingly commercial; in Middleton's play, *paradiastole* propagates dangerous vice, but the figure is also used to recognize and expose that vice. In these cases, rhetorical figures hold up

two or more meanings simultaneously. Rhetorical figures very rarely mean only one thing, and they very rarely only comment on one aspect of society. In the next chapter, I illustrate that two plays in the 1630s use rhetoric to comment on social tensions between the commoners and the elite.

In Chapter IV, “Mannered Rhetoric in Shirley and Brome,” I move to the 1630s, a decade that boasted political peace but bubbled with social tensions. I pass over plays in the 1610s and 1620s to draw attention to the subtlety of the plays in this decade despite criticism that accuses plays of the 1630s of being “fickle and shallow.”³⁶ Furthermore, the decade is notable for its enormous social disparity, economic extravagance, and manners, which are qualities particularly apt for a study of rhetoric and rank. I begin Chapter IV with an analysis of James Shirley’s *Lady of Pleasure* (1635), and I use the figure *metalepsis*, where a reference is made to something by means of something else remotely related to it, to think about the relationship between manners and rank. In Shirley’s play, two definitions of gentility are debated and tested. Aretina advocates for a definition of gentility that emphasizes lineage and compliments; her husband, Bornwell, advocates for a definition that centers on education and manners. The play indicates that the culture of compliments, popular in that decade, are hollow recitations of goodwill, but manners are authentic and honorable statements. Aretina uses the figure *metalepsis*, which references something by making an association to something else that is similar but not identical, to muddle her definition of gentility. She repeatedly uses the figure to obfuscate what she means, which indicates the vapidness of gentry language. In fact, the play makes sure to indicate the very real threat of that new mode of gentility. Ultimately, Aretina recognizes the error of her ways, and the

³⁶ Dorothy Farr, *John Ford and the Caroline Theatre* (London: Macmillan, 1979), 150. Clifford Leech also claims that “it is difficult not to take an *ex post facto* view, but the Caroline audience seems like a community of people waiting for its own dissolution, sipping its hemlock daintily” (*Shakespeare’s Tragedies and Other Studies in Seventeenth Century Drama* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1950), 161).

play seems to define gentility through responsibility and restraint; however, a succinct ending like that is frustrated by the prominent existence of a significant subset of gentles in the play that promote compliments, which implies that gentility defined by responsibility might be preferable but that definition of gentility will not soon disappear.

The next section of Chapter IV examines *paronomasia*, the use of two words that are nearly alike, and *sylllepsis*, the use of one word with two simultaneous meanings, in Richard Brome's *The New Academy; or, The New Exchange* (1636). While Shirley's play stages tensions among the gentry, Brome's play represents tensions between upwardly mobile commoners and the elite that resist that mobility. In the play, wit is a tradeable commodity and characters rise and fall by their rhetorical skill. Some of the elite characters in the play use language with decorous skill and largely avoid drama, but Valentine Askal and Lady Nestlecock are elite characters who use puns, *paronomasia* and *sylllepsis*, to hide their deceit and their lack of ingenuity. Several of the central common characters, including Rachel and Hannah, use puns to outsmart the elite characters. Rachel's experience indicates how upwardly mobile wives can become the target of envious elites, and Hannah illustrates the vulnerability of downwardly mobile women. *The New Exchange* offers an intensely realistic picture of the exigencies of status in the 1630s. While the popular 1630s genre "place realism" often refers to the plays using real places for settings, *The New Exchange* offers a surprisingly real picture of a person's social place, particularly that mobility is treacherous and difficult whether the person is going upward or downward. The play, like many of the plays in this study, also demonstrates the social precariousness of women, noting that a woman's experience navigating the social hierarchy is notably different than the experience of a man. Brome's play is a vibrant account of that disparity and the unique challenges that face women. In both of the sections of Chapter IV, social tensions are mediated

by a form of domestic self-regulation that is thoroughly linguistic. In both plays, characters use manners and civil conversation to overcome social antagonisms, illustrating once again the critical role rhetoric plays in shaping society.

Each chapter of this study presents two plays in a single decade, usually no more than a few years apart, that stage conflicting views of society. In Chapter II, Jonson emphasizes the importance of education for the minor gentry who feel pressure from increasingly educated and upwardly mobile commoners, and Shakespeare concerns himself with the potential harm in a nobility that is too educated. In Chapter III, Heywood presents an optimistic outlook on overcoming social tensions, but Middleton provides a much more sober outlook. In Chapter IV, Shirley examines how compliment culture has made the gentry artificial and deceitful, and Brome looks to the effect of manners on the commoners and minor gentry. Each chapter accounts for the perspective of the gentry and the commoners, using a rhetorical figure that is prominent in that play and reflects some social tensions between or among the ranks. Each chapter also includes a brief account of a social tension, borrowed from social historians, to which the play responds. This study, therefore, seeks to reengage scholarship with the social importance of rhetoric, but it also seeks to position the use of rhetoric alongside historically specific contexts. The importance of a particular rhetorical figure in a literary work becomes clearer when it is supplemented by specific historical context. In the early modern period, we witness the inevitable breakdown of the idea that social hierarchy is an inviolable and rigid structure maintained by the quality of one's blood. While there are innumerable causes to the breakdown and subsequent transformation of England social hierarchy, I propose that rhetorical education and the use of rhetoric is an important and underexplored cause. Each chapter takes a particular decade as its starting point to highlight the enormous shifts in England's social

hierarchy and the social pressure points that played a role in those shifts. The tensions of one decade are often not the tensions of the next, which is why rhetoric might very well be used differently under a different social environment.

Rhetoric played an influential role in the shaping of England's social structure in several ways. Firstly, rhetorical education provided a pathway for opportunities. Secondly, rhetorical eloquence offered users an ability to navigate the social hierarchy and negotiate social tensions. Thirdly, reading rhetorical manuals taught students how to interpret language and people. Fourthly, rhetorical manuals also worked as treatises that provided readers a manual of manners, gestures, and the codes of civility that the gentry embraced. In each of the plays, characters use rhetoric to articulate and define the social role of a particular rank, but characters also turn to rhetoric to navigate the everyday experiences of a particular rank. This study, then, demonstrates that language does more than reflect a social reality; language shapes and conditions a social reality. In the drama, we also see an overt embrace of the drama of ordinary social interactions. While commoners like Rachel appear to perform the rhetoric of domination and submission, they actually thwart their rivals and resist control. While elites like Aretina perform the rhetoric of gentle refinement, they traffic in empty codes of civility that mask their own vice. Society and the social interactions that make up society are thoroughly rhetorical, and we can understand the nuance of both society and social interactions more clearly when we read for the rhetoric of rank.

CHAPTER II: RHETORICAL EDUCATION IN JONSON AND SHAKESPEARE

I. Introduction

This study takes its starting point in the 1590s, when a push to promote socializing qualities was particularly important.¹ Because the decade saw a spike in instability, qualities like obedience, moderation, and manners were in dire need. Curtis Breight describes the 1590s as a “nightmare for hundreds of thousands of commoners victimized by disruption of trade, years of dearth, and even famine in mid-decade, and especially Cecilian engagement in perpetual war.”² Ian Archer explains that the 1590s is “characterised by plague, repeated harvest failure, massive price inflation, heavy taxation, depression in overseas trade and in volume of domestic demand, large-scale unemployment, and escalating crime and vagrancy.”³ Despite the pervasiveness of these problems, however, Archer notes that the “ruling elite in Elizabethan London therefore showed an extraordinary level of cohesion, and there was little prospect of popular grievances becoming matters of controversy within the elite.”⁴ Rather than crumble under the weight of

¹ Social crises erupt in nearly every decade of human history, but the 1590s was unique because it was the beginning of an age obsessed with eloquence and that eloquence saw its expression, in part, on stage. The 1590s is important for this study because of the confluence of several factors: 1) drama was increasingly popular, 2) rhetorical manuals were increasingly popular, 3) social status was undergoing transformation, and 4) increased access to education at all level made for a rhetorically educated audience. Educated people went to the theater to witness rhetorical skills, and the non-educated went to the theater to learn rhetorical skills.

² Curtis Breight, *Surveillance, Militarism and Drama in the Elizabethan Era* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 172.

³ Ian Archer, *Pursuit of Stability: Social Relation in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 9.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 49. While Archer suggests that controversy did not often reach the elite, Fulke Greville worried that “if the feet knew their strength as well as we know their oppression, they would not bear as they do” (*To the House of Commons, 1596*, qtd. in Ronda Arab, *Manly Mechanicals on the Early Modern English Stage* (Selinsgrove:

social tensions, social stability was fairly consistent due to cohesion among the elite. Elite solidarity was not the only factor in the surprising stability of the 1590s; in fact, Keith Wrightson points out that the elite responded to tensions between the elite and commoners by winning the assent of “various social groups upon whose co-operation depended the maintenance of order,” which was achieved in part by allowing local communities to “mark out and enforce new boundaries of permitted behavior.”⁵ The elite consolidated authority in the period, in part, by forming structures of cooperation and dependence between themselves and the other ranks, allowing local communities and people from the lower ranks to resolve tensions among themselves.⁶

This directed tensions at local authorities rather than at the elite, but it also encouraged a degree of cooperation among all ranks.⁷ Virtues like moderation, manners, and civility were particularly important due to the decade’s instability, and early modern rhetorical manuals and dramatic works foreground how rhetoric is used to encourage cooperation between the ranks, regarding the social spectrum as a community rather than discrete units. Andy Wood calls attention to the fact that despite the decade’s instability tensions rarely curdled into outright riot; furthermore, Wood argues that plays in the 1590s that “involve reconstructions of rebellion” stage historical uprisings to articulate the concerns of the populace and so purge antagonisms.⁸

Wood notes that the theater’s staging of historical rebellion helps purge contemporary tensions,

Susquehanna University Press, 2011), 70). To be clear, Archer’s thesis that crisis did not boil over into widespread riot or rebellion is largely accurate, but Greville’s anxiety makes clear that the matters of controversy reached the elite.

⁵ Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1982), 159, 179.

⁶ For more on overlapping structures of authority, see Phil Withington, “Public Discourse, Corporate Citizenship, and State Formation in Early Modern England,” *The American Historical Review* 112.4 (2007): 1016-1038.

⁷ For more on this cooperation across ranks, see Craig Muldrew, “The Culture of Reconciliation: Community and the Settlement of Economic Disputes in Early Modern England,” *The Historical Journal* 39.4 (1996): 915-42.

⁸ Andy Wood, “Brave Minds and Hard Hands: Work, Drama, and Social Relations,” *Shakespeare and the Politics of Commoners: Digesting the New Social History*, ed. Chris Fitter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 84-102, 84.

which motivates cohesion among the ranks. The theater, then, often traffics in a rhetoric of civic virtues to promote the qualities in a citizen or a prince that would cement civic stability. Like the theater, rhetorical education fosters the ideals of a virtuous citizen by repeatedly returning to a sort of common set of values.⁹ This chapter will look at two plays in the 1590s, exploring how rhetoric is used in each play to promote social stability. In Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour*, rhetorical education is associated with upwardly mobile Londoners. In Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*, however, rhetorical education is associated with the dissolution of the nobility. In both sections of Chapter Two, rhetorical education is a quality that is central to marking clear distinctions between the ranks for better or for worse.

II. Civilizing Humours in Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour*

In the rhetorical manual, *De Ratione Dicendi*, Juan Luis Vives claims that “there are gradations of rank, which can be considered either in isolation or in relation to others.”¹⁰ “Just as citizens of a community are distinguished by their clothing,” Vives continues, “so too they are distinguished by their speech. The design of a magistrate’s garment is the same as the commoner’s, but the cut is fuller and the material more expensive. Similarly the language of a magistrate will be that of the people, but the arrangement will be more elaborate.”¹¹ Vives uses the metaphor of clothing to underscore that language is an external symbol of a person’s rank; in theory, then, a speaker’s rhetorical skill displays his or her social status. Because England

⁹ While early modern culture was by no means monolithic or without contradiction, authors often advocated for a similar set of values. Peter Thompson’s notion of “cultural hegemony” perhaps insists too strongly on the elite’s ability to impose a cultural standard, but Peter Burke’s thesis that all cultures share “unique combinations of recurrent elements” underlines the point that values like civility are elemental to a fully-functioning society (Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Ashgate, 2009), 163).

¹⁰ Juan Luis Vives, *De Ratione Dicendi*, ed. David Walker (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Publishing, 2017), 279

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 279.

initiated a fairly standardized curriculum in the mid-sixteenth century that allowed—for the most part—all ranks access to education, Vives' claim allows for enormous slippage.¹² If the design of the magistrate's and commoner's garments differ only in ornamentation, then an educational system that prioritizes rhetorical ornament to both elite and common students would blur the distinction between ranks. Critics have oftentimes read the relation between language and status as analogous. When Ralph Berry claims of Shakespeare's plays that "class identification is confirmed through language," he overestimates the degree to which language can be learned, affected, and copied; furthermore, characters in early modern drama—especially city comedies—repeatedly frustrate a world in which the relation between language and status is easily legible.¹³ Jonson's *Everyman in his Humour* (1598) presents a gentleman who learns language sympathetically, but it also presents a gallant who copies language and another who affects rhetorical skill but has none. The play seems to suggest that only authenticity—a quality that is difficult to pin down because it is possessed by both the cunning servant and the honorable gentleman—is commendable. The play's representation of language and status provides insight to how language worked as a signifier of status, how ambitious people adopt language to counterfeit status, and how rhetoric is used to define the social role of London's gentry.

Recently, several critics have examined Ben Jonson's play as an example of Bourdieu's "social capital, a theory which sheds light on how an economic structure affects traditional social structures."¹⁴ While they often do not specifically refer to Bourdieu's theory, the idea that

¹² Ian Green claims that religious and nationalistic loyalty are two main factors for "remarkable continuity" in English curriculum (Ian Green, *Humanism and Protestantism in Early Modern English Education* (London: Routledge, 2009), 83). For an overview of texts that were in most grammar schools and universities, see TW Baldwin, *William Shakespeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944), vol. 1, 170-4; 303-320.

¹³ Ralph Berry, *Shakespeare and Social Class* (Atlantic Highlights, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1988), xv.

¹⁴ Bourdieu defines social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and

characters use social networks and linguistic skill to secure socioeconomic advantages runs throughout the criticism. Matthew Hunter claims that the play's repeated objections to pretentious language and clothing "seem to be working to preserve the class relations and signs that pretension unsettles" because pretension "disrupts the continuity" between outward bearing and status.¹⁵ Hunter argues that London's increasing population-density allowed for "anonymous, public social encounters" where the ambitious huckster could "conceal his origins, class, and personality beneath the most fashionable surfaces of display" and disrupt the traditional social demarcations.¹⁶ Hunter understandably reads a conservative tone in the play, suggesting that the plain style of Justice Clement, the play's figure of authority, "collapses the boundaries between public and private selves that pretension, or even a rigorous formality...is calculated to uphold."¹⁷ The play does not, however, unilaterally endorse a plain style because the elder Knowell's exorbitant fear of education satirizes the older generation of upwardly mobile gentry who distrusted education and instead emphasized plainness.¹⁸ In fact, the play seems to suggest—as we shall see—that Clement's and Knowell's plain-speaking works because of their relative positions of authority; however, those like Ed Knowell, the son of Knowell, turn to rhetorical skill to succeed in a vastly different urban environment than those of the previous generation. At times, Jonson seems to critique rhetorical display—as in the case of the upstart gallant Matthew—and at times, Jonson praises rhetorical skill—as in the case of Ed Knowell.

recognition" (Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. JG Richardson (New York: Greenwood, 1986), 241-58, 248).

¹⁵ Matthew Hunter, "City Comedy, Public Style," *English Literary Renaissance* 46.3 (Fall 2016): 401-32, 409.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 409. Hunter suggests that Jonson's suspicion of linguistic artifice is compounded by London's population explosion, both of which serve to unsettle traditional social distinctions.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 415.

¹⁸ Keith Thomas notes that the older strain of traditional gentry tended to "think of themselves as blunt, plainspoken, and devoid of foreign craft and subtlety" (Keith Thomas, *In Pursuit of Civility: Manners and Civilization in Early Modern England* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2018), 222). That pride in frankness is contradicted by another strain of those who associated plain speaking with the "plain people in the country," and the gentry—in part—turned to eloquence to distinguish themselves from the boorish commoner (Thomas, *In Pursuit of Civility*, 75). Plainness, then, comes with its own set of contradictions and ideological loyalties.

Building upon Hunter's shrewd analysis of external symbols of status more generally, I illustrate that Ed's use of rhetoric indicates a shift in how the young gentry—the first generation who received broad-scale grammar education—use language to define their social role and carve out a space in London's frenetic, competitive, and sometimes dodgy streets.

While Hunter illustrates that forms of display, such as language, reveal changes in the social structure, Matthew Kendrick examines the play's use of humours embodies early modern anxieties about commoners. Kendrick suggests that the play “depicts a London that has been thrown into chaos by the unsettling of traditional social boundaries.”¹⁹ To Kendrick, Brainworm's deception and trickery is motivated by his need to survive in London's economic landscape, and such linguistic deceit “cannot be fully contained by his social superiors,” which explains why he is pardoned by Clement in the final scene.²⁰ The play does not fully endorse Clement's plain-speaking just as it does not fully incriminate Brainworm for his deceit. While Kendrick singles Brainworm out as a character whose actions are shaped by “a desire to resist and push against the economic conditions that surround him,” I examine how Ed Knowell's actions are also shaped by a socioeconomic environment that encourages rhetorical skill.²¹ Both the servant, Brainworm, and the member of the gentry, Ed, use rhetoric to navigate the tension between traditional social values—frankness in speech and behavior—and those emerging values like civility and education.²² Building on Hunter's analysis of language as a disruptive force and Kendrick's exploration of how different forms of language are valued, I read the play as an

¹⁹ Matthew Kendrick, “Humoralism and Poverty in Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour*,” *South Central Review* 30.2 (Summer 2013): 73-90, 79.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 88.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 80.

²² This is not to say that civility is new in the late-sixteenth century, but that civility becomes an important signal of social worth used by commoners and the elite alike.

illustration of how the new gentry turned to education as a way of maintaining their social authority.

i. New men and the old gentry

Ed typifies a particular sort of new gentry that look to education to secure their social position, which connects to larger trends in England's social formation in the late-sixteenth century. Wayne Rebhorn observes that "the Renaissance saw a substantial increase in the movement of people from one social class to another," and "young prodigals wasted their inheritances by trying to keep up with the latest fashions."²³ The larger cultural shift from the permanence of social boundaries in the medieval period to a destabilized hierarchy of the early modern period is a significant ideological backdrop of Jonson's play, which critics have noted since L.C. Knights' observation that the figure of the "new man" is an important source of tension in early modern city comedies.²⁴ These "new men," Knights continues, "owed their power not to the possession of land, like the old feudal nobility, nor to political-administrative talents, like the older members of the Tudor aristocracy, but solely to their business ability."²⁵ Rhetorical skill is central to that cultural shift, and *Every Man in his Humour* underscores the social utility of rhetoric as language works to define and demarcate social roles in the play. On the one hand, the gallants Matthew and Stephen represent a socially deleterious use of rhetoric; on the other hand, Ed Knowell uses rhetoric to expose the folly of his foppish peers. I suggest that we can understand the play as a part of what Norbert Elias calls "the civilizing process," which demonstrates the role of rhetoric in distinguishing the elite class from the common class.

²³ Wayne A. Rebhorn, *Renaissance Debates on Rhetoric*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 6-7.

²⁴ L.C. Knights, *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1937), 88.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 88.

As the elite become increasingly aware that commoners use social mobility to threaten their social status, according to Elias, elites must find new ways to distinguish themselves from the common public.²⁶ “For this very reason,” argues Elias, “the question of uniform good behavior becomes increasingly acute, particularly as the changed structure of the new gentry exposes each individual member to an unprecedented extent to the pressure of others and of social control.”²⁷ In Jonson’s play, the new gentry is represented by Ed Knowell and Wellbred.²⁸ These characters are under immense pressure to distinguish themselves as elite from the affected gallants, Bobadil and Matthew. Keith Wrightson argues that the crisis of the 1590s forced some groups into the laboring poor, but other groups profited from rising prices, a process that Wrightson describes as “social polarization.”²⁹ Rather than boil over into overt conflict, such polarization between the rich and poor ended up meaning that “merchants and professional men enjoyed close familial ties to the landed gentry; they were, to a significant extent, recruited from the younger sons of the gentry.”³⁰ The crisis of the 1590s caused tension between groups, which the gentry weathered by cultivating relationships with wealthy commoners, and the cooperation between ranks ended up blurring the distinction between gentry and those commoners who were increasingly wealthy, well-educated, and accommodating.³¹ The play is populated by nearly every sort of person imaginable, including a crafty servant, a humble squire, a braggart soldier on the make, a merchant, a country gentleman, a town gentleman, and a Justice of the Peace. Ed,

²⁶ Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The Development of Manner*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York, Urizen Books, 1978), especially 16-24, 80.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 80. As we shall see, Ed uses “good manners” in the form of civility and eloquence.

²⁸ Though he is a gentleman, Wellbred serves as a rude and ill-mannered foil to Ed.

²⁹ Wrightson, *English Society*, 129.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.

³¹ H.R. French identifies the “middle sort of people”—those wealthy commoners—as “defined by the pursuit of the hallmarks of gentility” (H.R. French, “The Search for the ‘Middle Sort of People’ in England, 1600-1800,” *The Historical Journal* 43.1 (2000): 277-93, 288). Thomas Wilson finds such mobility a cause of ambition, saying that “my Yonge master the sonnes of such, not contented with their states of their to be counted yeomen... must skip into his velvet breches” (Thomas Wilson, “The State of England Anno Domini 1600,” ed. F.J. Fisher, *Camden Miscellany*, no. 16 (1936), 19.)

son to the traditional sort of land-owning gentry father, must adopt new strategies—in the form of rhetorical education—to distinguish himself from the panoply of ambitious urban characters who vie for authority, prestige, and wealth in London’s bustling streets.

This new group of gentry, then, exists in a precarious space as a rank that depends on the wealth and skill of commoners but also must articulate their superiority to those same commoners or else risk their place in the hierarchy. Rhetoric plays a significant role in articulating one’s education and ability to persuade others. While George Puttenham claims that rhetoric can pull a person from “carte to the schoole, and from thence to the Court,” Thomas Wilson argues that eloquence gives people the ability to “wynne folke at their will.”³² For the commoners, as we have seen, rhetorical education was an avenue to acquire the social connections and linguistic skills necessary to become upwardly mobile. For the elite, rhetorical education was increasingly necessary for maintaining one’s elite status. Rhetorical education taught elite students eloquence to persuade inferiors; moderation to govern themselves and others; civility to successfully navigate transactions; and it provided social connections that often ended in employment.³³ Rhetoric is the tool that England’s gentry used to distinguish themselves from ambitious commoners, and it becomes a tool for the gentry precisely because it was being used to great effect by the commoners below them.³⁴ Characters who represent this sort of gentry, such as Ed, are under immense pressure to display their social value. While Elias

³² George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, (London: Richard Field, 1589), 250. Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique*, Aiii^v.

³³ According to Wallis and Webb, less than half of gentry sons actually bothered to graduate, viewing university education as a finishing school with social connections more than an institution of higher learning (Patrick Wallis and Cliff Webb, “The Education and Training of Gentry Sons in Early Modern England,” *Social History* 36.1 (2011): 36-53, 49).

³⁴ Ineffable qualities, such as *sprezzatura* or inherent eloquence, were often used as roadblocks to ambitious commoners, who might acquire an education but could not acquire an innate skill. For an examination of how the elite used Castiglione’s notion of *sprezzatura* as an innate skill, see Jennifer Richards, *Rhetoric and Courtliness in Early Modern Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 48-55.

downplays the degree to which influence may flow from the commoners to the elites, Peter Burke emphasizes the reciprocity of influence between the two cultures, arguing that elite “use of popular culture was self-conscious rather than spontaneous.”³⁵ The two-way traffic of influence was both “rising” and “sinking,” but the elite cultural values were “transmitted formally at grammar schools and at universities,” highlighting language’s role as a mediator of cultural value.³⁶ Burke’s two-way traffic underscores the push-and-pull of communicative structures in Elizabethan England, illustrating how elite and common culture are influenced by one another. Rhetoric clearly exercises an enormous amount of influence on early modern culture, but I contend—along with Burke—that in order for cultural change to occur as rapidly and profoundly as it does in this period, a homogenous culture cannot exist. Central to my thesis is the mutually constitutive relation between elite and common culture, and *Every Man in his Humour* provides crucial evidence that shows how the late-sixteenth century commoners and elite use education to define their social status.

ii. Rhetorical education in *Every Man in His Humour*

In the play’s first scene, we get an immediate introduction to how education legitimizes rank. Knowell enters, saying that if his son, Ed, is “at his book, disturb him not,” explaining he wants to “wean the boy / From one wain course of study he affects. / He is a scholar” (.1.4-9).³⁷ Knowell goes on to lament that Ed has become interested in poetry, and “Myself was once a student; and, indeed, / Fed with the selfsame humour he is now, / Dreaming of naught but idle poetry,” but Knowell claims that “time, and truth have waked my judgment, / And Reason taught

³⁵ Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, London: Ashgate, 2009), 108. In Burke, “rising” is influence from common to elite, and “sinking” is influence from elite to common culture. Elias suggests that, as commoners civilize themselves, their increasing social competence exerts a natural pressure on the elites above them, but Elias moderates how much commoners’ manners, tastes, and values influenced the elites.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 55.

³⁷ All references to the play are from *Ben Jonson: Five Plays*, ed. G.A. Wilkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

me better to distinguish / The vain from the useful learnings” (1.1.15-23).³⁸ Jonson interjects a unique nuance to the comic father, who is depicted as obsolete and out-of-touch with the current culture. Knowell allows his son to read, though he is deeply suspicious of poetry’s practicality. Knowell is the product of a very specific, and paradoxical, attitude toward education that distrusts education yet acknowledges its value. Rebecca Bushnell points out that while rhetorical education “stamped the more prominent members of the new elite with an indelible cultural fluency...it offered everyone a model of true culture as something given, absolute, and something to be mastered.”³⁹ Knowell’s distrust of poetry develops from an anxiety that education softens the gentry and so undermines social hierarchy. Despite his disposition, he allows his son to pursue his course, fearing that curbing his son’s appetite for verse would be tyrannical.⁴⁰

After Knowell reads the letter that Ed’s riotous friend, Wellbred, sends him, instead of reacting imperiously, Knowell says that “There is a way of winning, more by love, / And urging of modesty, than fear: / Force works on servile natures, not the free” (1.3.119-21). Immediately after pronouncing he would not force his son, Knowell intercepts a letter from a friend and then devises a scheme to disguise himself and block his son’s attempts to rendezvous with friends. Knowell’s specific attitude toward education is bizarrely paradoxical, an attitude that is unable to untangle the relationship between freedom and mastery. On the one hand, he allows his son to continue reading and advocates for leniency; and on the other hand, he surreptitiously reads his son’s letters and then follows him in disguise. This seemingly contradictory attitude toward

³⁸ What kind of gentleman Knowell is, we do not know for certain. He is rich and he went to school. Whether he refers to grammar school or University is uncertain, though the latter is most likely.

³⁹ Rebecca Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching: Early Modern Humanism in Theory and Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 12.

⁴⁰ Early modern educational treatises repeatedly urge teachers to avoid overly-draconian teaching methods, preferring allurement to punishment as a pedagogical model. For more on the links between parental, pedagogical, and political tyranny in educational theory, see Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching*, 144-85.

education expresses a larger cultural contradiction. In 1517 Richard Pace, Dean of St. Paul's, tells a story about a noble he encountered who said "I swear by God's body I'd rather that my son should hang than study letters. For it becomes the sons of gentlemen to blow the horn nicely, to hunt skillfully, and elegantly carry and train a hawk. But the study of letter should be left to the sons of rustics."⁴¹ In the first half of the sixteenth century, the standard opinion nobles had toward education was that it was specifically for the commoners, clergy, and second or third sons. Instead, the predominant educational emphasis of traditional noble fathers was archery, hunting, and hawking. The effects of this attitude are visible in 1563, when Roger Ascham—who writes both an educational manual and a manual on archery—complains that "the yong gentlemen of England, go so vnqillinglie to schole, and run so fast the the table: For in verie deede fond scholemaster, by feare, do beate into them."⁴² Knowell's attitude toward education articulates a distinction of "vain from useful learnings," or poetry, and more pragmatic skills like hawking and hunting (1.1.23). As we shall see, however, Knowell also harbors deep resentment toward what we might associate with early sixteenth century aristocratic education.

Knowell's distaste for a reading-based education would be a familiar critique among England's aristocracy, especially earlier in the century, and Knowell's distaste for poetic education is linked to a concern about idleness. Knowell lobbies a critique of noble idleness that would be familiar to Jonson's contemporary audiences.⁴³ Stephen, Knowell's ridiculous cousin, asks Knowell for a book on "the science of hawking and hunting," specifying that "I have bought

⁴¹ Richard Pace, *Richard Pacei, invictissimi Regis Angliae primarii Secretarii*, qtd. in Kenneth Charlton, *Education in Renaissance England* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 80.

⁴² Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster*, ed. Edward Arber (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1870), 44. In regards to youth, Ascham also notes that from "from seventene to seven and twentie (the most dangerous tyme of all a mans life, and most flipperie to stay well in)" (51).

⁴³ We see, here, two arguments toward education: the early-16th century gentry favored hawking and hunting, while the late-16th century saw an increased interest in skills that seemed to have direct socioeconomic advantage, such as rhetoric. Knowell seems to express both sides simultaneously.

me a hawk, and a hood and bells...I lack nothing but a book to keep it by” (1.1.31-5). By buying the hawk before he has learned the skill or even read a book on the subject, Stephen has reversed the logical order of education. After claiming that he has purchased all the accoutrements of hawking before he has even considered learning how to hawk, Stephen continues to say “an’ a man have not skill in the hawking and hunting languages nowadays, I’ll not give a rush for him. They are more studied than the Greek or the Latin. He is for no gallant’s company without ‘em” (1.1.37-8). Knowell advises instead that Stephen should “Learn to be wise, and practise how to thrive,” before going on to say that:

“I would not have you to invade each place,
Nor thrust yourself on all societies,
Till men’s affections, or you own desert,
Should worthily invite you to your rank.
He that is so disrespectful in his courses
Oft sells his reputation at a cheap market” (1.1.64-9).

Knowell sees the danger in both the study of rhetoric, a distinctly late-sixteenth century notion, and a study of hawking and hunting, which are specifically connected to England’s nobility. Knowell’s advice to Stephen indicates an awareness that education and rank are intimately connected.

In this passage, Stephen seems to think that merely learning the language of hawking is an investment in social capital that will win him the approval of London’s gallants. Instead, he becomes the butt of the gallants he would like to impress, the very “airy and borrowed thing” Knowell fears he would become (1.1.81). What seems to upset Knowell is not so much that either form of study is inherently wrong but that idleness and affectation lead to moral and social decay. He calls Ed’s study “idle poetry” and Stephen’s study a “waste” (1.1.17, 51). The ideology that underpins both of Knowell’s critiques is a pervasive anxiety about idleness in the period. Indeed, Thomas Harman’s *Caveat for Common Cursitors* is insistent that each of the

criminals he catalogues is connected, in one way or another, to a life of itinerant idleness.⁴⁴ Responding to Harman's anxiety about idle rogues, Linda Woodbridge notes a predominant early modern concern that England was swollen with "idle and unprofitable persons."⁴⁵ The notion that gallants' study of hawking and hunting is an idle pursuit is unsurprising given the language marshalled to promote rhetorical study. Henry Peacham notes the social profitability of rhetoric, suggesting that the person with rhetorical skill "hath been judged able and esteemed fit to rule the world with counsel, provinces with laws, cities with policy, and multitudes with persuasion."⁴⁶ He goes on to note that it was those eloquent people "who by their singular wisdom and eloquence made savage nations civil, wild people tame."⁴⁷ George Puttenham seconds Peacham's claim that rhetoric was "th'originall cause and occasion of their first assemblies, when before the people remained in the woods and mountains, vagrant and dispersed like wild beasts, lawlesse and naked."⁴⁸ According to rhetoricians, society itself is at stake. Other than a means of social capital and expression of excess, skills like hawking and hunting have no demonstrative social benefit. It is no surprise that the rhetoricians legitimize their proposed study as a skill that is inherently social.

That Knowell expresses versions of both sides of this argument is compelling. He chastises Stephen for activities associated with the vain pursuits of nobles, but he worries that Ed spends too much time reading poetry. Knowell favors a course of study that has practical

⁴⁴ Thomas Harman, *Caveat for Common Cursitors*, qtd. in *The Elizabethan Underworld: A Collection of Tudor and Early Stuart Tracts and Ballads*, ed. A.V. Judges (London: Routledge, 2002), esp. 61-3.

⁴⁵ Linda Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 119. This concern is repeatedly expressed in William Harrison's *Description of England* that sees England as invested with "great swarmes of idle serving men," (qtd. in Annabel Patterson, *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 189. For an enormously helpful analysis of the historical context that led to the rise of idleness and poverty, see William C. Carroll, "Vagrancy," *A Companion to Renaissance Drama*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 83-93.

⁴⁶ Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence*, xxxix.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, xxxix.

⁴⁸ Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, 3.

applicability, a skill that would “worthily invite you to your rank.”⁴⁹ The reason for this becomes clearer when Ed himself demonstrates the social effect of a bad poetics. When Ed first meets Bobadil and Matthew, Matthew, the affected poet, asks Ed to judge his humour, and Ed responds “I’ll neither do your judgement, nor his folly that wrong, as to prepare your apprehension: I’ll leave him to the mercy o’ your search, if you can take him, so” (3.1.58-60). Ed’s zeugma, “do your judgment, nor his folly that wrong,” conceals Ed’s judgment; he refuses to blatantly judge, but he uses rhetoric to imply Matthew’s folly. This judgment of vice is threaded throughout the play. When Knowell complains of his son’s profligacy, Justice Clement responds “Your son is old enough to govern himself: let him run his course, it’s the only way to make him a staid man” (3.7.73-5). As we have already seen, Knowell initially advises using patience as a way to allow Ed’s penchant for poetry to run its due course. The theory that folly will expose itself is shared by each of these people, though Ed’s and Knowell’s perception of what constitutes vice is radically different.

Rather than explicitly critique Matthew for what is self-evidently bad poetry, Ed chooses to allow the folly to reveal itself. Ed’s poetic and moral theory is best expressed by Jonson in the “Prologue” to *The Alchemist*. Jonson claims that the theater will show vices and how they breed so that:

“If there be any, that will sit so night
 Unto the stream, to look what it doth run,
 They shall find things they’d think, or wish, were done;
 They are so natural follies, but so shown,
 As even the doers may see, and yet not own” (Prologue 20-4).⁵⁰

⁴⁹ 1.1.67. Knowell seems acutely aware of the problem that plagues the play: “But I perceive, affection makes a fool / Of any man, too much the father” (1.2.100-1). In the play, Knowell’s humour, the singular thing that consumes his mind, is an overwhelming concern over generational change. Knowell is similar to the type of father Montaigne warns against in his essay “On the affection of fathers for their children,” the father who feels the weight of generational change and fears obsolescence. This fear is evident when Knowell complains about “the change / Of manners and the breeding of our youth, / Within the kingdom, since myself was one” (2.5.2-4).

⁵⁰ *Ben Jonson: Five Plays*, ed. G.A. Wilkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), “Prologue” 20-24. I do not suggest that Ed be seen as a sort of spokesman for Jonson’s theory of poetics. Lawrence Levin has argued that “the

Jonson suggests that theater, like a flowing river, will reflect a person's vice back onto them. Theater, then, operates as a mirror for audiences, uncovering—through realistic “deeds, and language, such as men use”—the follies that corrupt London society.⁵¹ Ed's theory of poetry is very much the same. He allows Matthew's absurdity to dawn on him as the action of play unfolds. Rather than read Ed as a profligate gallant, it is clear that his education is particularly practical, streetwise, moral, and poetic. Much like Hal's experiences in Eastcheap train him to be the people's king, Ed learns from the folly of his peers, but he also instructs others and orchestrates the play's action that concludes with at least a degree of moral improvement.⁵²

After the braggart soldier, Bobadil, uses hyperbolic language to boast of his skill at fencing, Ed is left to lament: “Oh, manners! That this age should bring forth such creatures! That Nature should be at leisure to make ‘em” (4.7.126-7). In addition to this later explicit awareness of the deleterious effect of gallantry, Ed exerts a certain distance from himself and Wellbred. Although Wellbred is supposed to be viewed as a gentleman of some taste and intelligence, he is much more mean-spirited and prone to chaos than Ed. In fact, it is Wellbred who starts the verbal fight with Downright, and he is the first to draw his sword.⁵³ In the first scene, Wellbred writes Ed the letter that beckons him to come to make sport of Bobadil and Stephen, but scholars have not noted that Wellbred says “Why, Ned, I beseech thee; has thou forsworn all they friends i' the Old Jewry? Or dost thou think us all Jews that inhabit there?” (1.1.63-4) It is clear from the beginning, then, that Ed has avoided the mischief that surrounds Wellbred, and it is only the

Folio Jonson has expressed his views on poetry and poets largely through the words of Justice Clement,” but I find that wondering which character acts as Jonson's spokesperson is largely irrelevant to this play (“Clement Justice in Every Man in His Humor,” *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 12.2 (Spring 1972): 291-307, 303.

⁵¹ “Prologue,” *Every Man in His Humour*, 21.

⁵² This reading of the *Henriad* is purposely reductive. Reading Hal's experiences in *1 Henry IV* and *2 Henry IV* as an educational practice flattens other important implications, but this is one line of reading that Hal proposes (1.2.220-222).

⁵³ For the large fight-scene that ends up with several arrests and necessitates the intervention of Clement, see 4.2.100-20. It should be noted that it is Ed who ends up having to part the fray.

possibility of correcting the affectations of a false poet and bragging soldier that brings Ed out. In fact, Ed explicitly tells Wellbred, “thou art some strange dissolute young fellow, and I a grain or two better, for keeping thee company” (3.1.47-8). The deliberately reinforced distinction between Wellbred and Ed underscores Ed’s function as the ideal form of both gentleman and poet. He reveals the falsity of affectation through mocking, which Jonson claims to do in the play’s “Prologue,” but Ed creates a distance between himself and characters who cause social fracturing. He is a catalyst of social instruction without becoming one with the characters who propagate that vice.⁵⁴

If, as I suggest, Ed is the ideal form of gentleman, Stephen, Matthew, and Bobadil occupy the various positions that the play considers as affectation. As I have pointed out, Bobadil and Stephen are associated with the archaic nobles of the early sixteenth century, who emphasize hawking, hunting, and fencing. Matthew, however, represents a new sort of gentlemen that uses rhetoric and poetry as a means to distinguish themselves. Both Matthew and Ed use rhetoric, but Matthew depicts the potential vices of this new form of distinction. Matthew frequently brags about his poetic skills, which he claims are “of mine own doing, at idle hours” (3.1.87-8). Indeed, after reading a loosely quoted version of Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander*, Matthew asserts “I made ‘em extempore, this morning” (4.2.56-7). Ed comments on the poetry, “Well, I’ll have him free of the wit-brokers, for he utters nothing but stolen remnants,” before saying that stealing from the dead Marlowe is “worse than sacrilege” (4.2.49-50, 53). Ed mocks Matthew for stealing poetry, but Ed’s “wit-brokers” jab also illustrates that poetry is thought of as a marketable good

⁵⁴ This explains, to a certain degree, why Jonson repeatedly seems upset that his plays do not gain popular approval, which he voices in *Sejanus*’ “To the Readers” among other places. However much Jonson seems irked by such disapproval, he returns to the poet’s role as a moral instructor, unwilling to use the poetic or theatrical vices that more popular playwrights used. He refuses, like Ed, to be associated too closely with the very people he thinks he instructs. I do not claim that Ed explicitly sees himself as a moral instructor, but I do claim that role is evident in Ed’s characterization regardless of Jonson’s intent.

that can be exchanged. Arguing that Jonson's attention to labor is a strategy to distinguish himself from the common members of society, Bruce Boehrer suggests that Jonson is "one of early modern England's first self-conscious representatives of literature as a vocation."⁵⁵ Ed, like Jonson, seems to take the labor of poetry seriously, and he recognizes that wit is a profitable commodity in the early modern marketplace. In *The Book of the Courtier*, Castiglione uses the term sprezzatura to argue that courtiers should conceal the labor of learning a skill so as to appear naturally skillful. Castiglione applies this directly to poetry, saying:

"Let him much exercise hym selfe in poets, and no lesse in Oratours and Historiographers, and also in writinge bothe rime and prose, and especiallye in this our vulgar tunge. For beside the contentation that he shall receive thereby himselfe, he shall by this meanes never want pleasaunt interteinments with women which ordinarylye love such matters. And if by reason either of his other busines beside, or of his slender studie, he shall not attaine unto that perfection that hys writings may be worthy much commendation."⁵⁶

The importance of poetry, which Jonson frequently underscores, is not only its edifying possibility, but also how it legitimizes the vernacular and increases a person's distinction. Rather than be regarded as an innocuous theft of poetry, Matthew's type of gallant deflates a means of distinction used by esteemed nobles and those ambitious for favor or patronage. By making poetry seem foolish, these gallants jeopardize aspiring poets and educated commoners.⁵⁷ The upwardly mobile lacked a coat of arms or lineage to legitimize their ascent. Instead, the

⁵⁵ Bruce Boehrer, "The Poet of Labor: Authorship and Property in the Work of Ben Jonson," *Philological Quarterly* 72.1 (1993): 289-312, 303. Laurie Ellinghausen also maintains that "Jonson both disparages labor and uses it as a vocabulary for defining a new profession of authorship" in order to define the poet as an elite member of society, not a rude mechanical (Laurie Ellinghausen, *Labor and Writing in Early Modern England, 1567-1667* (London: Ashgate, 2008), 65). Ellinhausen argues that much of Jonson's work maintains that poetry can be laborious and yet also dignified.

⁵⁶ Baldassare Castiglione, *The Courtier from the Italian Count Baldassare Castiglione Done into English by Sir Thomas Hoby* (London: David Nutt, 1900), 85.

⁵⁷ Thomas Dekker complains that gallants "are still the surest chapmen: and these by means that their heads are well stocked [with stolen poetry], deal upon this comical freight by the gross" (Thomas Dekker, *The Gull's Hornbook* (1609), qtd in *Shakespeare's Theater: A Sourcebook*, ed. Tanya Pollard (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004) 207-8). Jonson shares Dekker's punning metaphor when, after Matthew reads a poem, Ed comments that "he utters them, then, by the gross" (3.1.80). Both Dekker and Jonson see poetic theft as a commercial problem that deflates the value the original poet.

ambitious often turned to the education of their sons to mark their status.⁵⁸ Matthew's devaluation of poetry, and general lack of taste, threatens education and poetry as important routes to signaling status.⁵⁹

Poets like Jonson resent the theft of their labor for obvious commercial reasons, but for him poetry was a way of exerting his social status. Paul Yachnin notes that Jonson's poetry expresses "a desire for social legitimation and esteem, a desire that was capable of fulfillment only in the conflicted terms of the status hierarchy," and "his class aspirations were inescapably shadowed by the taint of social climbing."⁶⁰ Ed, like Jonson, is directly affected by the misuse of poetry because it is an important tool for social legitimization. Clement, the play's figure of authority and education, marks a clear boundary between authentic and artificial education. After Clement orders the burning of Matthew's poetry, Knowell says to Ed "There's an emblem for you, son, and your studies" (5.5.31). Clement responds "Nay, no speech, or act of mine be drawn against such, as profess it worthily. They are not born every year, as aldermen. There goes more to the making of a good poet, than a sheriff" (5.5.33-5).⁶¹ While poetic education may have its vices, which are depicted through Matthew, good poets are the bedrock of society. The emblem for study, then, is that students must profess it worthily. Similar to Castiglione's notion of *sprezzatura*, students must display education with an unpracticed sincerity. The sincere use of

⁵⁸ William Harrison notes that "Whosoever studieth the laws of the realm, whoso abideth in the university giving his mind to his book, or professeth physic and the liberal sciences, or, beside his service in the room of a captain in the wars or good counsel given at home, whereby his commonwealth is benefited, can live without manual labor" (Harrison, *The Description of England: The Classic Contemporary Account of Tudor Social Life*, ed Georges Edelen (New York: Dover Publication, 1994), 113-14). Harrison makes clear that gentlemen are one of the few Englishmen that do not have to perform manual labor, and one route to becoming a gentleman is acquiring a university degree.

⁵⁹ Lawrence Stone has shown how education blurred the lines between the middling sort and the gentry, describing the upwardly mobile educated commoner as "the true *bourgeois gentilhomme*, the self-assured townsman and tradesman with the education, the values of the cultivated aristocrat" (Lawrence Stone, "Social Mobility in England, 1500-1700," *Past and Present* 33.1 (1966): 16-55,54).

⁶⁰ Paul Yachnin, *Stage-Wrights: Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and the Making of Theatrical Value* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 58.

⁶¹ In his *Discoveries*, Jonson recycles this claim, except he adds that only poets and kings are born once in an age. Jonson cites the Latin "*solus rex, aut poeta, non quotannis nascitur*" (Ben Jonson, *Timber*, 92).

language, Jonson's famous "plain style," coordinates with the gallants' vices.⁶² Each of the gallants have little knowledge of the skills they profess: Matthew appropriates other poets' work, Bobadil uses pretentious fencing terms but avoids conflict, and Stephen repeats other people's oaths. Imitation is the highest form of foolery.

The study of language is an important index of the permeability of status boundaries. As we have seen, when Stephen wants to distinguish himself, he turns to the "hunting and hawking languages," and when Ed discovers Brainworm's disguise, he notes that the servant "had studies begging all his lifetime, and been a weaver of language, from his infancy" (1.1.38, 3.5.22-4). When Knowell discovers Brainworm's disguise, he, too, says "Is it possible! Or that thou shouldst disguise thy language so, as I should not know thee?" (5.3.70-1)⁶³ The successful use of language renders status boundaries flexible if not entirely artificial. Because rhetoric is regarded as essential to persuading others, the rhetorical education that children received in grammar schools was a tool of upward mobility to which the new class turned in the late sixteenth century. Richard Halpern argues that "the Tudor grammar school oversaw the birth of a nascent bourgeois culture," and he suggests how merchants' capital went to the establishment and maintenance of grammar schools.⁶⁴ According to this logic, conspicuous displays of wealth, a sign of merchants' power, deliberately targets the very institutions that will guarantee their sons' and grandsons' social mobility. This display of power manifests itself as a distinctly literary pursuit, and even if social boundaries were not levelled, David Cressy notes that by the end of the sixteenth century "The gentry, clergy, and members of the professions were so similar in their literacy that they

⁶² For more this, see Wesley Trimpi, *Ben Jonson's Poems: A Study of the Plain Style* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962).

⁶³ Knowell's complaint about bad fathers hinges on language as well: "The first words / We form their tongues with are licentious jests!" and "read the grammar of cheating I had made / To my sharp boy, at twelve" (2.5.19-20, 47-8).

⁶⁴ Richard Halpern, *Poetics of Primitive Accumulation: English Renaissance and the Genealogy of Capital*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 61.

can be regarded as inhabiting a single cluster,” so much so that “Thirty percentage points or more usually separated them the next literate cluster, the yeomen and tradesmen.”⁶⁵ This shrinking of the space between the common and the elite, the destabilizing of permanent status boundaries, was mobilized in rhetorical training in grammar schools across England.

English grammar schools began spreading throughout the country, beginning in earnest with St. Paul’s, founded by the state in 1509, but the availability of education took a turn with the founding of the Merchant Taylors’ school in 1551, which was established by the Merchant Taylors’ Company. Richard Greaves has pointed out that “of the 250 students admitted to the Merchant Taylors’ school, 100 were to be poor men’s sons.”⁶⁶ As Halpern shows, much of the impetus behind the merchants’ support of grammar schools was to ensure the continuation of class mobility.⁶⁷ The spread of education was pervasive: “as many as 400 grammar schools in England by 1500” were founded and “another “400 opened in the century after that.”⁶⁸ While these schools were initially clustered in and around London, by the 1560s schools were being founded in increasingly rural counties.⁶⁹ The explosion of grammar schools parallels growth rates in university and Inns of the Court education. “At the university level,” according to Richard Greaves, “Social distinctions also were becoming less important, though the government had hoped in to restrict legal study to the immediate descendants of the nobility and gentry.”⁷⁰

Although distinctions began to erode, the percentage of the sons of nobility and gentry entering

⁶⁵ David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 124.

⁶⁶ Richard Greaves, *Society and Religion in Elizabethan England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 341.

⁶⁷This motive questions models that read conspicuous consumption of clothes and other luxury items as simple acquisitiveness; instead, this model shows that consumption, to a certain degree, symbolizes the possibility of status impermanence

⁶⁸ Merry E. Wiesner, *Early Modern Europe 1450-1789*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 122.

⁶⁹ Mellisa Franklin-Harkrider, *Women, Reform and Community*, (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2008), 92.

⁷⁰ Greaves, 341.

university “increases from 39% in the period of 1575-79 to 52% in the 1600s.”⁷¹ While the gentry class began going to universities more in the 1560s and 1570s, the nobility did not catch onto the trend until the 1580s. This trend is palpably evident in *Every Man in His Humour*.

In *Civilizing Process*, Norbert Elias suggests that as the commoners learned a skill that was once served to distinguish the elite from the commoners, the elites must develop new skills to maintain their distinction. I suggest that a fundamentally different structure exists here. Pace Burke, influence flows from both the top-down, “sinking,” but it also flows from the bottom-up, “rising.” However, the unique characteristic of rhetorical education in this period is the delayed response to education and the residual preoccupation—of both elites and socially mobile gentleman, such as Stephen—with older forms of distinction. As merchants began putting more capital toward the founding of grammar schools, more commoners had access to education and inevitably began to receive higher education at the universities and Inns of Court. Naturally, according to Elias’ model, the elites would immediately generate a new way to distinguish themselves from the increasingly educated, socially mobile commoners. The increase of grammar schools, however, began in earnest in 1551.⁷² It was not until the 1580s, thirty years later, that the noble class made a quantifiable effort to enter the universities. Rhetorical and educational manuals in the sixteenth century show a concerted effort to convince the nobles to send their children to school. Roger Ascham complains that it is most difficult to convince a young gentleman to go to school “from seventene to seven and twentie (the most dangerous tyme of all a mans life, and most flipperie to stay well in),” which indicates the anxiety that young

⁷¹ Ibid, 342.

⁷² The creation of the Merchant Taylors’ school in 1551 follows a more general interest in schools that began with the Chantries Act in 1547, which dissolved all former Catholic chantries and vested the property in the crown. Many of those properties became state-operated grammar schools. Only then did the rising merchant class begin to turn their newfound capital toward founding grammar schools (Melville Watson Patterson, *A History of the Church of England* (New York: Longmans and Company, 1912), 250).

gentlemen avoid education in the very years when they are at most risk to be a social nuisance.⁷³

In 1531, Thomas Elyot notes a particular distaste toward education:

“These persons, that so moche contemne lernynge, that they wolde that gentilmens chyldren shulde haue no parte or very lyttell therof, but rather shulde spende theyr youth alway (I saye not onely in huntynge and haukyng, whiche moderately vsed as solaces ought to be, I intende not to dyspryse) but in those ydle pastymes, which for the vice that is therin, the commaundement of the prynce, and the vniuersall consente of the people, expressed in statutes & lawes, do prohibite, I meane playenge at dyce & other games named vnleful.”⁷⁴

Both Elyot and Ascham lament the difficulty of convincing the elite of education’s value, but their concern will not be responded to *en force* until the late 1580s. As the play shows, older gentlemen like Knowell hold idle activities in contempt, but he still dislikes rhetoric and poetry, which are central to education—even at university level—after humanist curriculum became standard. In fact, Richard Halpern observes that “it is as if the entire Tudor educational system was adopted to train successful poets, playwrights, and pamphleteers.”⁷⁵ If education was central to social mobility and the permanence of the merchant class, why did the older generation respond slowly? The answer, I suggest, may be found in Justice Clement’s response to poetry.

When Ed cannot recall who Justice Clement is, Wellbred reminds Ed that Clement is “a great scholar: but the only mad, merry, old fellow in Europe!”⁷⁶ In 1562, only 7 of 143 Justices had been to university and 44 had been to one of the Inns of Court, but by 1584, of 246 Justices, 57 had been to university and 114 to one of the Inns of Court.⁷⁷ Justice Clement, then, belongs to one of the first generations of predominantly educated Justices. To associate Clement with education is to legitimize him, but it also marks him as “merry,” a break from the usual

⁷³ Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster*, ed. Edward Arber (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1870), 51.

⁷⁴ Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named the Governour*, (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1531), 41.

⁷⁵ Richard Halpern, *Poetics of Primitive Accumulation*, 21.

⁷⁶ 3.5.43-4.

⁷⁷ Richard Greaves, *Society and Religion in Elizabethan England*, 341.

stereotype of the educated as either elite or poor.⁷⁸ When the disturbance between Kately, Dame Kately, and Cob is brought before Clement, the Justice almost immediately recognized that “this is a mere trick, a device; you are gulled in this most grossly, all!”⁷⁹ He is an incredibly shrewd judge of character, which I suggest is directly linked to his poetic skill. His ability to interpret civil complaints is a product of his ability to interpret poetry. When Clement asks if Tib, Cob’s wife, was beaten for this offence, Cob responds that he did, which he hopes shall be proven correct. Clement responds, “Aye, that’s like, and a piece of the sentence.”⁸⁰ Clement implies that Cob had better hope he is correct because the cause for beating likely relied on only a piece of information, but this suggests also that Cob’s beating will sentence him if it does prove unjust. Clement’s layered response carefully manages both outcomes, and it underlines the importance of words. He instructs Cob not to rely on pieces of information, on words, but instead to wait for the whole sentence before acting. He dispenses variations on this advice throughout the play’s final act.

After Downright complains that he was served a warrant, Clement asks if he had seen it. Downright replies that he had not, so Clement emphasizes the importance of careful language, saying “Oh, God’s pity, was it so, sir? He must serve it? Give me my longsword there, and help me off; so. Come on, sir varlet, I must cut off your legs, sirrah: nay, stand up, I’ll use you kindly; I must cut off your legs, I say.”⁸¹ This is madcap with a message. After the Justice threatens Brainworm, Clement continues: “I said, I must cut off thy legs, and I must cut off thy arms, and I must cut off thy head; but, I did not do it...do you say you must? Sirrah, away with him, to the

⁷⁸ For an analysis of the stereotype of the educated as poor, see P.B. Roberts, “Underemployed Elizabethans: Gabriel Harvey and Thomas Nashe in the *Parnassus Plays*,” *Early Theatre* 21.2 (2018): 49-70.

⁷⁹ 5.1.22-4.

⁸⁰ 5.1.37.

⁸¹ 5.3.28-31.

jail, I'll teach you a trick, for your *must*, sir.”⁸² Clement shows that words are the bedrock of legal protection, and the line between defendant and criminal, as we have seen with “sentence,” is small. Clement demonstrates that the foundation of a peaceful society is built upon language, but he also repeatedly stresses that knowledge is only a “piece” unless we wait for the whole “sentence.”⁸³ The centrality of language to maintaining social peace becomes explicit in the play’s final scene. Out of all of the play’s petty crimes—impersonating an officer, theft, and battery—Justice Clement responds to plagiarism with the most vehemence. When Matthew’s poetry is brought to Clement’s attention, Wellbred says that Matthew “is not for extempore, sir. He is all for the pocket-must, please you command sight of it.”⁸⁴ After searching Matthew, Clement roars “What! All this verse? Body o’ me, he carries a whole realm, a commonwealth of paper, in’s hose! Let’s see some of his subjects!”⁸⁵ For Clement, poetry is a metonymy of the state. Copying other poets’ work is not just plagiarism; it corrupts the commonwealth.

The social theory Clement articulates suggests that corrupt poets, who Jonson specifically aligns with the uneducated, also corrupt society. In the play’s Quarto, Jonson includes an elaborate defense of poetry, arguing that the people with “such lean, ignorant, and blasted wits, / Such brainless gulls, should utter their stol’n wares” have won applause “From fat judgements of the multitudes,” which produces “this barren and infected age.”⁸⁶ Only a “true Poet,” the defense continues, “can more adorn humanity.”⁸⁷ The multitude’s poor judgment causes social infection, which only the poet, educated in rhetoric and classical verse, can rectify. Appropriately enough,

⁸² 5.3.40-5, emphasis is the editor’s. Earlier in the play, Cob complains that Bobadil killed him, to which Clement responds “How? How, knave Swear he killed thee? And by the law? What pretence” (3.7.28-9).

⁸³ When Stephen complains of yet another violation of the peace, Clement responds “Well, let this breathe awhile; you, that have cause to complain, there, stand forth” (5.3.12-13).

⁸⁴ 5.4.14-15. “Pocket-muse” is a reference to the plagiarized poems he keeps in his pockets.

⁸⁵ 5.4.19-20.

⁸⁶ 5.1.283-88 (Quarto).

⁸⁷ 5.1.290-1 (Quarto).

Clement's response to this corrupting influence is: "Bring me a torch; lay it together and give fire. Cleanse the air. Here was enough to have infected the whole city."⁸⁸ Clement sees that exterminating corrupt language in the form of poetry will cleanse the literalized body politic, the collection of human bodies that comprise the commonwealth. Clement's speech expands the traditional body politic to include poetry. Matthew's stolen poetry, however, is a corrupted "realm" that must be cleansed from London.

The only example in the play we get of good poetry is the poetry that corrected the jealous husband, Kately, who says "I ha' learned so much verse out of a jealous man's part in a play."⁸⁹ Yet in, the Preface, Jonson claims that good poetry "would show an image of the times / And sport with human follies, not with crimes," so that the audience will recognize their faults by laughing at them.⁹⁰ For Jonson, theater is an educational tool, and while he emphasizes moral instruction in his Prologue, the play repeatedly stages the adverse effects of a poor education. In the Dedication, Jonson explicitly connects poetry and education, lamenting the "crying downe of Poetry, or the Professors."⁹¹ Jonson dedicated the play to William Camden, the famed antiquarian and first layman headmaster of Westminster School. Continuing the Dedication, Jonson writes "I pray you, to accept this, such, wherein neither the confession of my manners shall make you blush; nor of my studies, repent you to have beene the instructor: And, for the profession of my thanke-fulnesse, I am sure, it will, with good men, find either praise, or excuse."⁹² Jonson rests assured that equally educated men will praise his work, illustrating the degree to which Jonson recognizes that education galvanizes communal ties and ensures social

⁸⁸ 5.5.26-8.

⁸⁹ 5.5.74.

⁹⁰ Prologue, 23-4.

⁹¹ Folio 1, F2r, *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson: Online*.

⁹² Ibid, F2r.

peace. Jonson looks to his manners and scholarship as qualities that will honor Camden, indicating that Jonson associates the play with education.

Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* dramatizes the importance of education. The play, like the Prologue to *The Alchemist*, is a stream that reflects the audience's vices back onto them. It exposes the nobility's traditional activities—hunting and hawking—to be idle and unproductive. The play also shows that incorrect use of rhetoric and poetry, the new curriculum, can end up infecting the whole city. The play makes clear that new standards of behavior are symbols of inclusion in a rapidly changing society, and by the end of the sixteenth century, those symbols were gradually internalized. There is, however, the overlapping period of thirty years between the time humanist theorists counseled nobles to send their children to school, and the statistics that show that it was not until the 1580s that nobles began to go *en masse* to universities. In this period, idle activities still have residual symbolic power, but it is poetry that has the power to reform as much as corrupt. The play demonstrates that rhetorical education is a resource for expressing status. In *Timber*, Jonson claims that “Speech is the only benefit man hath to express his excellency of mind above other creatures. It is the Instrument of Society.”⁹³ I suggest that the play's backdrop of education and status division foregrounds not only that education stabilizes society, but it also shows that the educated poets, Ed and Clement, are the catalysts of the stability. Humours are corrected by poetic justice, and the city—depicted as a large body—is cleansed of infectious humours. The play is as much about the education of gallants and gentleman as it is about the civilizing of culture.

⁹³ Ben Jonson, *Timber*, 72. Jonson also asserts that “he which can feign a Common-wealth (which is the Poet) can govern it with Counsels, strengthen it with Laws, correct it with judgements” (265).

III. Hyperbole in *Love's Labour's Lost*

Roger Baynes' *The praise of solitarinesse*, a dialogue that questions whether people "ought rather to make choise of Solitarinesse or Societie," considers the debate between solitude and society.⁹⁴ Eudoxus argues that it is only possible to attain "the freenesse and libertie of our minde" by abandoning human society and pursuing solitary study.⁹⁵ Because human society is corrupt and immoral, according to Eudoxus, a person must "withdrawe him from the companie of such lewde disposed persons, retiring from thence into some solitarie corner" to study moral philosophy; otherwise, the wise will be corrupted by society.⁹⁶ Lysippus, Eudoxus' interlocutor, defends social engagement, saying that "it appeareth that the propertie of *Philosophie*, is rather to make hir louers to liue wel in publique conuersation, than to speake & teach wel in priuate."⁹⁷ Discussing the importance of public life, Lysippus maintains that it is "his duetie, not only to employ the best of his labour, but also to adventure the losse of hys life, for the better maintenance of the commen Wealth."⁹⁸ Lysippus reframes Eudoxus' argument that society corrupts people by claiming that civic engagement is a responsibility; moreover, he uses military rhetoric to reframe civility as a call to arms, a rhetorical strategy that positions study as a nobleman's obligation rather than the pursuit of a poor scholar.⁹⁹ Redefining study as a noble pursuit parallels other humanist sympathies in the text; namely, Lysippus finally persuades Eudoxus by underlining that solitude cannot be considered moderate behavior, which rejects the

⁹⁴ Roger Baynes, *The praise of solitarinesse, set down in the form of a dialogue, wherein is conteyned, a discourse philosophical, of the lyfe active and contemplative* (Francis Coldocke: London, 1577), 1.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹⁹ For more on the trope of the scholar as poor and so beneath the nobility, see Daryll Grantley, *Wit's Pilgrimage: Drama and the Social Impact of Education in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2000), 1-14.

humanist claim that solitude is self-control.¹⁰⁰ Embedded in the debate between solitude and society, then, is an examination of what constitutes moderation, which gradually traces a mean between the extremes of both complete solitude and complete social engagement. Eudoxus ultimately concedes that “he onely knoweth beste, how to rule and gouene others, that hath the power and skill to gouerne hymselfe,” underlining the inextricable relation between governance and self-governance, a topic that is also of much interest in Shakespeare’s *Love’s Labour’s Lost*.¹⁰¹ Both Baynes’ dialogue and Shakespeare’s play repeatedly underscore that a noble person cannot successfully govern other people until they can govern themselves, a point that rhetorical education also emphasizes. While critical attention has been paid to the play’s interest in the courtier’s academy and university entertainments, examination of the play’s engagement with rhetorical education as a form of self-governance and moderation has been largely overlooked.¹⁰²

The play comments on contemporary debates concerning the function of academic study; furthermore, the play demonstrates how different forms of education simultaneously promote and restrain youthful excess. Anna Bryson points out a pervasive interest in moderation in early modern educational theorists, remarking that “almost every writer complained of the tendency of young gentleman to prefer hunting, gambling, drinking and fashion to the solid achievement of virtue and learning.”¹⁰³ Rather than approach the subject of moderation through drinking or gambling, Shakespeare’s play examines moderation through opposing ideas about study, paying

¹⁰⁰ For more on humanist education and moderation, see Rebecca Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching: Early Modern Humanist in Theory and Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 23-40.

¹⁰¹ Baynes, *The praise of solitarinesse*, 71.

¹⁰² For more on the courtier’s academy, see Lynne Magnusson, “Scoff Power in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* and the Inns of Court Language in Context,” *Shakespeare Survey* 57.1 (2004): 196-203. For more on university entertainments, see Daryll Grantley, *Wit’s Pilgrimage: Drama and the Social Impact of Education in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Press, 2000), 188-94.

¹⁰³ Anna Bryson, “The Rhetoric of Status: Gesture, Demeanour and the Image of the Gentleman in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England,” *Renaissance Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture 1540-1660*, ed. Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn (London: Reaktion Press, 1990), 146).

particularly close attention to how excessive study can cause a lapse in a nobleman's ability to govern.¹⁰⁴ Because moderation is a broad category that encompasses contradictory interests and goals, its application is sometimes unstable. For instance, Roger Ascham remarks that education tempers youthful excess and teaches moderation; however, Francis Bacon argues that too much study promotes immoderate behavior.¹⁰⁵ Richard Mulcaster argues for a moderate position between the two, using social order to make his point: "to many learned be to burdenous, that to few be to bare, that wittes well sorted be most ciuill, that the same misplaced be most vnquiet and seditious."¹⁰⁶ Like Mulcaster's moderation between too much study and too little, *Love's Labour's Lost* teases out the instability of these opposing views, underscoring that education should not undermine civic responsibilities. Shakespeare's play frames its attempts to locate a moderate balance in study around governance, an important quality in a leader in a decade known for its crises.

While the precise date of composition of *Love's Labour's Lost* is debated, most conjecture that the play was written around 1595, during a decade notorious for its social tensions.¹⁰⁷ "The crisis of the 1590s" is characterized by persistent problems with plague, poverty, inflation, and crime.¹⁰⁸ Steven Rappaport suggests that London remained fairly quiet despite the crisis, but Archer contends that such quiet "may reflect tightened social control rather

¹⁰⁴ Shakespeare connects excessive study with incompetent leadership in *Henry VI, As You Like It, The Tempest*, and, I would argue, *Hamlet*.

¹⁰⁵ Ascham pushes back against the practice of noble fathers taking their children out of school, and so claims that "learning teacheth more in one yeare than experience in twentie," suggesting that noble sons leave the confines of solitary study and gain education through experience (Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster* (John Daye: London, 1570), 18). Bacon warns that "to spend too much time in [studies] is sloth; to use them too much for ornament is affectation; to make judgment wholly by their rules is the humour of a scholar" (Francis Bacon, *Francis Bacon: The Major Works*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 81).

¹⁰⁶ Richard Mulcaster, *Positions VWherein Those Primitive Circvmstances be Examined* (Thomas Vautrollier: London, 1581), 132.

¹⁰⁷ *The New Oxford Shakespeare Authorship Companion*, ed. Gary Taylor and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 512.

¹⁰⁸ For more on these issues, see Ian Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

than the restoration of social calm.”¹⁰⁹ Like the work of Michael Braddick and Keith Wrightson, Archer argues that nobles and city elite respond to tension by consolidating their ranks: “the perpetuation of elite control depended on its solidarity.”¹¹⁰ As the last section shows, commoners turn to education to gain advancement in government and ecclesiastical jobs in the latter half of the sixteenth century, which had previously been all but guaranteed for the elite. With the dearth and instability of the 1590s and the growing pressure from the bottom-up by a more educated commonalty, the 1590s was a more critical time than ever to consolidate elite authority, restrain excesses, and govern wisely. *Love’s Labour’s Lost* demonstrates how education can curb excess and promote self-governance; furthermore, the play exemplifies how education itself can become excessive, a point that is illustrated when Lysippus reminds Eudoxus that too much solitary study leads to a neglect of one’s duties. In its efforts to tackle excess and moderation, the play also comments on linguistic values in a decade that relished stylistic excess, which implies a link between linguistic extravagance and good governance.¹¹¹ The play’s interest in elaborate language, then, is a gesture toward self-restraint and good governance, which underlines the link between education and governance that the play probes.

In fact, early modern educational theory has broadly divergent attitudes towards the education of nobles between early humanists and later humanists, reflecting different theories about education and the social role of the nobility.¹¹² While Elyot implored the nobility to send

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 9. Steven Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 170.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 32. Michael Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England: 1550-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 27. Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1982), 25-46.

¹¹¹ Leah Guenther notes that the Euphuism of the 1590s is characterized by its “excessive form of language, structuring sentences with parallel clauses and alliterative phrases, peppering their speech with the proper amount of parison and isocolon, assonance and rhyme” (“‘To Parley Euphuism’: fashioning English as a linguistic fad,” *Renaissance Studies* 16.1 (2002): 24-35, 24.

¹¹² There is much overlap in attitudes between these groups, but later humanists, according to Markku Peltonen, “preferred public education, which would enhance consent whereas private tuition would trigger elitism and dissension” (*Rhetoric, Politics and Popularity in Pre-Revolutionary England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

their children to school so that “meane gentyll men” would not surpass them, later thinkers worried about the ill effects of too much education.¹¹³ So while some theorists saw education as the route to ensure the stability of the commonwealth, other theorists saw education as the potential cause of instability. In 1572, Sir Humphrey Gilbert’s ill-fated attempt to construct an academy exclusively for noble sons was expressly devised because he felt that nobles had become too attached to scholarly pursuits and so were “estranged from all serviceable virtues to their prince and country.”¹¹⁴ Some considered education, particularly writing, to be a mechanical art reserved for commoners and so, in the words of a courtier’s handbook, “impertinent to a civil man.”¹¹⁵ Dramatists and popular authors, too, worried about the effects of too liberal an education on noble sons. Gabriel Harvey points out that “Schollars have the books: & practitioners the Learning,” and George Pye-boord—in Middleton’s *The Puritan* (1606)—worryes that “the multiplicity of Scholars, hatcht and nourisht in the idle calms of peace makes ‘em like fishes, one devour another.”¹¹⁶ While there is an exponential growth of grammar schools and interest in university education in the latter half of the sixteenth century, there is a concomitant worry that the country is not prepared for such rapid change. These diverse attitudes toward education indicate a suspicion of education for a variety of reasons, but at the core of most of them is the fear that education might unsettle social order.¹¹⁷ Markku Peltonen has expertly detailed the tension in early modern educational theory that recognizes that rhetoric

Press, 2012), 25). Early humanists would include figures like Thomas Elyot and Juan Luis Vives and later humanists would include Richard Mulcaster and William Kempe.

¹¹³ Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named the Govenor* (Thomas Berthelet: London, 1534), 44.

¹¹⁴ Humphrey Gilbert, *Queene Elizabethes Achademy, a Booke of Precedence*, ed. Frederick Furnivall (London, 1869), 303. Gilbert’s academy is almost certainly a point of reference for the play. Gilbert was led by the principle that the humanist study of languages was far less important than that of mathematics, law, and military engagement.

¹¹⁵ Annibale Romei, *The Courtiers Academie*, trans. J.K. (Valentine Sims: London), 1598, 269.

¹¹⁶ G.C. Moore Smith, *Gabriel Harvey’s Marginalia* (Stratford-upon-Avon, 1913), 212. Thomas Middleton, *The Puritan*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1.3.53-55.

¹¹⁷ For a good overview on the expansion of both grammar schools and university, see Ursula Potter, “To School or Not to School: Tudor Views on Education in Drama and Literature,” *Parergon* 25.1 (2008): 103-121.

pulled humanity from barbarism to civility, but that eloquence—by the turn of the sixteenth century—is increasingly regarded as a tool of sedition.¹¹⁸ While motives and views differ, there is concern in the period that rhetoric causes sedition, effeminacy, and idleness in individual students; furthermore, some theorists express concern over structural issues, such as an oversaturation of the market, a fear that education is used only as a tool for ambition, and that it distracts nobles from their duty to govern.¹¹⁹ The crisis of the 1590s called for a nobility that was consolidated in their efforts to assuage tensions. The crisis also called for a nobility who were educated enough to control the populace, but not so given to studies that they disregard their duties. In the light of these attitudes toward education, *Love's Labour's Lost* examines the limits of education in order to illustrate the problems that arise when the nobility becomes detached from social responsibility. The play uses Navarre's academy to assess the consequences of excessive solitary study, and it uses hyperbole to reveal the immaturity and excess that plague's Navarre's academy. In the play, characters use hyperbole to work through and understand problems, such as whether to study or to experience, a problem the characters try to resolve.

Critical work has often mistaken the play as a work obsessed with language to the detriment of plot and purpose; however, the play's interest in language is intrinsic to the plot as a social commentary on excess and immaturity. While Marion Trousdale views *Love's Labour's Lost* as “a play whose very life seems bound up with the nature of poetic language,” I argue that the play

¹¹⁸ Markku Peltonen, *Rhetoric, Politics and Popularity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) 18, 125.

¹¹⁹ Juan Luis Vives warns noble fathers that “when a boy is brought to school by his father, let it be made clear to the father that learning ought not be sought as a means to making an easy living,” but should instead be “the fruit of studious labour: surely not honour or money, but the culture of mind” (Juan Luis Vives, *Vives: On Education: A translation of the De Tradendis Disciplinis of Juan Luis Vives*, trans. Foster Watson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), 62, 72). Lawrence Stone has discussed many of these structural issues, particularly how educational theorists were “disturbed by the sociopolitical consequences of large number of unemployed school boys being thrown on to a glutted labour market” (Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 682).

uses poetic language to question the utility of extensive rhetorical training.¹²⁰ Rather than view the language as ornamental for ornament's sake, the play uses ornamental language to comment on and interrogate the emptiness of style without substance. Alternatively, other critics investigate the play's interest in words and language reform, an issue taken up by the pedant Holofernes. For instance, William Carroll investigates the play alongside essentialist theories of words that derived from Plato's *Cratylus*.¹²¹ While Carroll's work is critical to our understanding of linguistic philosophy, I demonstrate how the play's differing attitudes toward language critiques early modern theories of education and governance. Carroll's theory abstracts the linguistic questions in the play from the social issues, such as questioning the social utility of education. Both Trousdale's and Carroll's works are critical to our understanding of language in the play, but they tend to approach language apart from its sociocultural contexts. Another aspect of the play's critical history is the charge that it is a plotless dalliance with language.¹²² In one of the more influential essays on Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*, James Calderwood argues that the play reveals a young poet "passing from a sensuous enchantment with language, a wantoning with words, to a serious consideration of his medium, his art, and their relation to the social order."¹²³ That Calderwood would see residue of Shakespeare's adolescence is unsurprising, given that he was right around thirty years old during the play's composition. When he labels the play "a dalliance of wit and language" that "is truly without issue," however, he underestimates the degree to which

¹²⁰ Marion Trousdale, *Shakespeare and the Rhetoricians* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 95.

¹²¹ William Carroll, *The Great Feast of Language in Love's Labour's Lost* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).

¹²² Harley Granville-Barker calls the play a product of artistic immaturity: "to many young poets of the time their language was a new-found wonder" (*Prefaces to Shakespeare Vol. I* (London: Batsford), 9). Coleridge, too, writes that "if this juvenile drama had been the only one extant of our Shakespeare, and we possessed the tradition only of his riper works, or accounts from writers who had not even mentioned the *Love's Labour's Lost*, how many of Shakespeare's characteristic features might we not discover, tho' as in a portrait taken of him in his boyhood" (*Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. T.M. Raysor (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1960), 83).

¹²³ James Calderwood, "Love's Labour's Lost: A Wantoning with Words," *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 5.2 (1965): 317-32, 318.

the dalliance with language might perhaps satirize linguistic affectation.¹²⁴ Katherine Eisaman Maus jokingly suggests the play is a “rite of passage after which Shakespeare, having sown his verbal wild oats, shakes off such adolescent temptations to indulgence...and begins to write the history plays and romantic comedies.”¹²⁵ Critics tend to pay attention to the play’s adolescence, both in terms of its linguistic vigor and its characters’ lack of seriousness. I suggest, however, that the play is not a victim of these juvenile tendencies but deliberately uses them as a critique of sixteenth century rhetorical education, and that the use of hyperbole, a rhetorical trope that is often associated with obfuscating meaning, is critical to the play’s interrogation of education, youth, and excess.

i. Hyperbole in rhetorical manuals

To get a fuller sense of hyperbole’s dramatic effect in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, we must first turn to the early modern rhetoricians that helped shape cultural attitudes toward the figure. Early modern rhetoricians felt the need to defend not just the utility but the very existence of hyperbole. One of the foundations of English rhetorical theory, Quintillian’s *Institutio Oratio*, worries that because the hyperbole “seems a little risky, we must take certain measures in advance to save it from censure.”¹²⁶ After calling attention to hyperbole’s eloquent ability to amplify or diminish according to the appropriate matter, Henry Peacham cautions against hyperboles that “amplifie trifles, or diminish the estimation of good things,” and he makes a second qualification that “there be not too great an excesse in the comparison: but that it may be discreetly moderated, *ut nequid nimis*.”¹²⁷ If the hyperbole’s subject and the context of the

¹²⁴ Ibid., 320.

¹²⁵ Katherine Eisaman Maus, “Language, Individualism, Gender,” *Shakespeare Left and Right*, ed. Ivo Kamps (New York: Routledge, 1991), 206.

¹²⁶ Quintillian, *Institutio Oratio*, trans. H.E. Butler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 8.3.37.

¹²⁷ Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence*, (H: Iackson: London, 1593), 33. In regards to amplifying trifles and diminishing good things, Peacham classifies the former as Bomphiologia and the latter as Tapinosis, both of which are traditionally regarded as stylistic vices.

utterance are apt, then the hyperbole is still further restrained by moderation. What is key, however, is that the speaker is given enormous flexibility in choosing what is trifling, what is excess, and how to moderate language. Taking schematic organization from classical rhetoricians, Henry Peacham classifies all apt hyperboles as “equality of comparison”, or comparing like things, and “comparative degree,” which he breaks up into eight subsections.¹²⁸ To take Armado’s hyperbole as an example, one to which we will return below, not only is he incorrect in comparing himself to a king—he lacks money and respect—but he also clumsily uses hyperbole to diminish the estimation of Jaquenetta.¹²⁹ Peacham’s analysis of hyperboles grants the speaker discretionary authority, but it also underscores the speaker’s moral obligations to choose apt matter and speak with moderation, or the speaker will “diminish the estimation of good things.”

While Peacham’s advice is typically moral, George Puttenham gives his readers aesthetic advice concerning the use and misuse of the trope. Similar to Peacham’s restrictive boundaries, Puttenham observes that bad hyperboles go “vltra fidem” and “vltra modum,” suggesting that the truth of the matter is dependent upon the particular context of its application.¹³⁰ Puttenham introduces hyperbole as a figure used when “we speake in the superlatiue and beyond the limites of credit,” which he later names “the over reacher” and “lowd lyar.”¹³¹ While Peacham only warns against distorting a thing’s inner qualities, not to amplify a trifle or diminish the good, Puttenham emphasizes the speaker’s role and their credit with the audience. Choosing to stress

¹²⁸ Ibid, 32. The eight subsections are: 1) a like thing, 2) living creatures, 3) false gods, 4) characters from fables, 5) comic characters, 6) historical persons, 7) regional stereotypes, and 8) occupations.

¹²⁹ An example of tapinosis. In addition to breaking those rules, he is far from moderate in his poem. Though he uses the fabled King Cophetua (fourth in Peacham’s classification of comparative degree), he is in no way comparable to the rich and sexually desirable king of popular ballads. After calling her “fair” (60), he calls her “heroical vassal” (64), “base and obscure vulgar” (68-9), and “captive” (75), underscoring his inability to moderate his own self-assessment or be aware of the demeaning effect on Jaquenetta.

¹³⁰ Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, (London: 1589), 160.

¹³¹ Ibid, 159.

the boundaries of truth depends on one's credit in that context. Puttenham underscores this point by telling the story of a courtier of Henry VIII's who excessively praises the king, exceeds the limits of truth, and appeared to be a "grosse flattering foole."¹³² Puttenham chooses to use the example of a courtier providing counsel to illustrate how not to use hyperbole, which underscores the figure's relation to courtly conduct. If the speaker had told a "moderate lye," he would have praised the king's merits with truthful elegance.¹³³ Puttenham's central preoccupation in the section draws attention to hyperbole's social utility. He observes that the effective use of hyperbole "would greatly aduance or greatly abase the reputation of any thing or person, and must be vused very discreetly, or el it will seem odious."¹³⁴ After remarking on the immediate downfall of a flattering courtier, Puttenham limits hyperboles to three specific uses: praise of one's monarch, one's mistress, or the very specific "noble Gentlewoman lamenting at the vnkindesse of her loue."¹³⁵ Both Peacham and Puttenham allude to the hyperbole's semantic limits, how to make sense out of excess, but Puttenham applies that discussion of semantics to its social effect. Furthermore, Puttenham's seemingly out-of-place third type of hyperbole, the lamenting gentlewoman, is a part of a larger context in rhetorical theory that is significant to *Love's Labour's Lost*.

Puttenham's lamenting woman ties into the topos of female volubility that permeates early modern rhetorical theory.¹³⁶ The topos functions primarily as a "straw (wo)man" argument that illustrates one end, the excessively talkative, of the spectrum while the meek man illustrates

¹³² Ibid, 160. The courtier claims that Henry's virtues are as innumerable "as the stares of the skie" or "the sands of the sea."

¹³³ Ibid, 160.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 160.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 160.

¹³⁶ In addition to the dramatic topos of a talkative woman, the female complaint genre reached a high watermark in the late-sixteenth century in Thomas Churchyard's "Shore's Wife" (1593), Samuel Daniel's *Rosamond* (1594), Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece* (1594), and Michael Drayton's *Heroicall Epistles* (1597).

the effects of excessive quietness.¹³⁷ In *The Arte of Rhetorique*, Thomas Wilson rebukes men who allow “the cart” to come “before the horse,” setting the “mother” and “woman” before “father” and “man.”¹³⁸ Noticing this emphasis on hierarchy in the figure *hysteron proteron*, a figure that inverts the logical sequence or order of things, Patricia Parker suggests that *Love’s Labour’s Lost* exploits the “reversal of the stereotype of loquacious women, descendants of ‘our grandmother Eve,’ in a plot plagued instead with wordy men.”¹³⁹ Parker recognizes that the play’s reversal of gender norms is linked to rhetoric, and her analysis examines the specific way *hysteron proteron* demonstrates the reversal of those norms; however, the hyperbole reveals how excess subverts the distinction between norm and abnormal. Because *hysteron proteron* emphasizes strict linearity, misuse announces itself with perfect clarity, but in hyperbole the boundary between feminine and masculine is utterly obscured.¹⁴⁰ Dudley Fenner writes that a hyperbole’s “change of signification must be shamefaste, and as it were maydenly, that it may seeme rather to be ledde by the hande to another signification, then to be driuen by force vto the same.”¹⁴¹ Fenner, like Peacham, discusses the moral implications: be shamefast; like Puttenham, Fenner genders the distinction between an apt in incorrect use. What is unclear, however, is how speakers will know if they are shamefast, if they are leading, or if they are being led by the figure. Because hyperbole inherently generates the feminine verbosity rhetoricians

¹³⁷ For more on the “loud woman” topos, see Patricia Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies* (London: Routledge, 1987), 104-06; and Linda Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 210.

¹³⁸ Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique* (Richard Grafton: London, 1553) 89. Richard Sherry, another rhetorician writing in the mid-sixteenth century, writes that “God” is placed before “man” and “man” before “woman” (*A Treatise of Schemes and Tropes*, (London: J. Day, 1550), 22. Hyperbole and *hysteron proteron* are both linked with reversing logical order.

¹³⁹ Parker, “Preposterous Events.” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 43:2 (Summer 1992): 186-213, 196. *Hysteron proteron* is rhetorical vice that switches the logical order of events. Parker looks at reversals of gender roles, particularly when a man follows a woman (1.1.264-5).

¹⁴⁰ In *The French Academy* (1586), Pierre de la Primaudaye states that “adolescence is the fourth age of man, beginning at the foureteeneth yeare, and continuing vntill the 28th...and at that age the nature of man is knowne, and whereunto hee bendeth his minde” (*The French Academie*, trans. T.B. (John Legat: London, 1618), 232.

¹⁴¹ Fenner, *The Artes of Logike and Rethorike*. (R. Schilders: Middleburg, 1584), 1.

problematized, one would expect the limits of excess to be made very clear. It seems, however, that rhetoricians embraced the trope's fluidity; successful use not only encourages but also demands self-governance and moderation. Successful use of the hyperbole, then, necessitates reining in "feminine excess," but the play reverses that stereotype by presenting the male nobles as excessive and the females as within the bounds of moderation. Hyperbole's Greek etymology means "to throw beyond," beyond traditional semantic boundaries. According to Peacham, the figure amplifies by "exceeding similitude."¹⁴² Its function is to challenge boundaries, a topic connected to youthful inexperience and excess. While certain kinds of hyperbolic excess lead to semantic confusion, early modern rhetoricians call attention to the meaning that is produced precisely when intent and utterance do not correlate. In *Directions for Speech and Style*, John Hoskyns writes that a hyperbole expresses a thing "in the highest degree of possibility, beyond the truth, that it descending thence may find the truth."¹⁴³ Meaning, according to thinkers steeped in early modern rhetoric, lurks in the interplay between what we intend to say and the words we use to say it.

Classical and early modern rhetoricians alike connect hyperbole to youthful potency and unpredictability. Youth is particularly important to theater because it was boy actors who played female parts, further complicating the gendered limits of hyperbole on stage, but youth was also seen as a liminal stage between femininity and masculinity, which Katherine calls attention to when she says she refuses to become Dumaine's wife until he grows "a beard, fair health, and honesty (5.2.824).¹⁴⁴ Not only is youth linked with dishonesty, but it is also seen as unhealthy to remain youthful for too long. In his discussion of hyperbole, Aristotle argues that the trope is

¹⁴² Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence*, 31.

¹⁴³ *Directions for Speech and Style*, ed. H. H. Hudson (Princeton, 1935), 29.

¹⁴⁴ All quotations Shakespeare's plays are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

“the character of the young.”¹⁴⁵ Arguing against hyperbolic poetry, Thomas Nashe suggests that there is no extreme “more outrageous then the excessive studies of delight, wherewith young Students are so besotted they forsake the sounder Artes to followe smoother eloquence.”¹⁴⁶ Contra Nashe, the lords’ use of hyperbole in the play is not the study of delight; instead, their linguistic hyperbole comments on the hazards of solitary study.

The young students turn to hyperbole precisely because of its linguistic autonomy and delight, but it also signals to the audience the nobles’ immaturity.¹⁴⁷ The use of hyperbole signals fluidity, in between childhood and adulthood, which the rhetoricians advise against. In addition to that hazardous fluidity, the young students also create an extreme attitude toward women in the play’s first scene, and their resolution is another extreme response to women, resulting in the paradoxical attitude that knowledge is gained either in spite of women or through women.¹⁴⁸ Whether or not Shakespeare was cognizant of the particulars of this discourse, early modern rhetorical theory clearly indicates that hyperbole is inseparably linked to discourses about youth and femininity.¹⁴⁹ The link between youth and femininity is often invoked by rhetoricians to remind readers to adopt the masculine virtues of moderation and responsibility, a link that the play exploits to critique the young nobles’ academy. By associating the nobles with youthful hyperbole, the play signals the imbalance an insulated homogenous academy might produce;

¹⁴⁵ *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, trans. George A. Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 2.12.14.

¹⁴⁶ Nashe, *A Concordance to the Works of Thomas Nashe. Vol. 1*, ed. Louis Ule (New York: Olms-Weidmann, 1997), 180.

¹⁴⁷ Henri IV, who the play’s Navarre is based upon, was in his early twenties during the time of the play’s composition.

¹⁴⁸ That knowledge is gained despite women is made clear in the opening, and that knowledge is gained through women is a point that we will turn to later, but the recurrent metaphor that women’s eyes are “the books, the arts, the academes” is one such example (4.3.349)

¹⁴⁹ The widespread association with youth, gender, and hyperbole suggest that it permeates culture. The topos is not restricted to rhetorical discourse, but it shows up in the popular educational manuals as well. Thomas Elyot describes how to restrain hyperbolic excess in youths: “By Shamefastnes, as it were with a bridell, they rule as well theyr dedes as their appetites. And desire of prayse addeth to a sharpe spurre to their disposition toward lernyng and virtue” (Elyot, *The Boke Named the Govenor*, 26). Like Fenner, Elyot emphasizes shamefastness and education.

furthermore, the students at that academy are inherently antisocial and so disregard their governing responsibilities, which Berowne brings up in the first scene: “This article, my liege, you must break, / For well you know here comes in embassy / The French king’s daughter with yourself to speak” (1.1.133-5). The play, then, functions as a gentle reminder to nobles not to forsake their duties to govern in their pursuit of education, and it is a more general reminder—in the age of courtier-poets, Marlovian bombast, and Euphuism—that style is no substitute for substance. While critics, such as Calderwood, criticize the play’s lack of plot and its linguistic indulgence, they ignore the subtle and profound meanings that hyperbole intentionally conceals. One of these hidden meanings is embedded in Armado’s love poetry.

In a poem to his beloved Jaquenetta, the fantastical braggart, Armado, writes “I am the king, for so stand the comparison; thou the beggar, for so witnesseth thy lowliness,” only to then say that he will “profane my lips on thy foot, my eyes on thy picture, and my heart on thy every part” (4.1.78-86). The subtle use of hyperbole inverts the traditional Petrarchan love poetry where the lover subjects himself to the loved, transforming the deification of the loved—as Berowne does—into a lowly beggar. Armado’s hyperbole is a medium for irony in these lines not only as an antithesis to the more competent lords, but also because the hyperbole announces its own deception. Armado claims that Jaquenetta will be “enrich’d” and grant her “titles” and “robes,” but audiences will readily recall the scene where Costard repeatedly mocks Armado’s poverty (4.1.76, 83).¹⁵⁰ His lack of ready capital is a source of jokes, and his lack of courage is made clear when he challenges Dumaine to combat only to back down, saying “I will not combat in my shirt” then “The naked truth of it is, I have no shirt” (5.2.704-11). The gap between intention—Armado wants to articulate his martial and erotic ability—and utterance—the irony of

¹⁵⁰ Costard mocks Armado at 1.2.33, 57.

a character who brags about the very thing he lacks—exposes Armado’s affectation. Armado’s unequivocal hyperbole prompts audiences to be alert to the ladies’ and lords’ frequent use of hyperbole and its rhetorical effect. In his clumsy poem to Jaquenetta, Armado plunders Marlovian bombast and Petrarchan love poetry, the two most recognizable and panned forms of hyperbole on the late- sixteenth century stage.¹⁵¹ This misuse of hyperbole, then, is central to the dramatic action because it establishes the play’s interest in immoderation. Marrku Peltonen has remarked on a debate, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, between those who argued that “sedentary and indoor arts were contrary to military disposition,” and those who recognized that eloquence had already replaced military service as the primary purpose of England’s nobility.¹⁵² Armado, like *Don Quixote*, stands in as an illusory representation of England’s perceived past, a figure of an obsolete nobility. Armado’s hyperboles, which are derided by nearly every character in the play, signal his clumsy artificiality and his ignoble affectation, a far cry from the nobles’ *sprezzatura*.¹⁵³ If the play so openly satirizes the noble who identifies with the nobility’s martial past, then it must surely recognize the value in an educated noble. While this is true to an extent, the play indicates that certain theories about education, namely solitary education, are counter-productive in producing effective leaders.

¹⁵¹ For Marlowe’s hyperbole, see Harry Levin, who presents Marlowe as an iconoclast who endorses the views of his heroes and their penchant to take an action “to its uttermost extreme” (Harry Levin, *Overreacher: A Study of Christopher Marlowe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 75). Goran Stanivukovic sees Marlowe’s use of hyperbole as a figure that bodies forth “the context of Marlowe’s plays, in which elevated abstract ideas correspond to the megalomaniac zest for world rule, possession of all knowledge, energetic ideas, unlimited fame, and an exuberant but forbidden love” (Goran Stanivukovic, “‘Mounting Above the Truthe’: On Hyperbole in English Renaissance Literature,” *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 43.1 (2007): 9-33, 128). Similarly, Petrarch’s use of hyperbole accentuates the power and magnitude of love in his poetry. Shakespeare’s play, however, engages with hyperbole as a way of revealing the hazards of solitary study, immaturity, and immoderation.

¹⁵² Markku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought, 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 227.

¹⁵³ For more on Castiglione’s *The Courtier* and *sprezzatura* as a signal of noble grace, see Michelle Marrapodi, *Italian Culture in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (London: Routledge), 2007.

The play opens by promising silent asceticism and cloistered academic labor. Tom Flanigan calls attention to the laborious 12-hour days grammar school students drudged through in late-sixteenth century schools.¹⁵⁴ Flanigan describes the typical school day saturated by rote memorization of classical texts, double translation, and corporeal punishment administered by the schoolmaster. Flanigan claims “I’m exhausted just thinking about it,” suggesting that the representation of the lords’ proposed educational curriculum critiques the detrimental effect of excess study.¹⁵⁵ After the lords’ Muscovite fails to win the ladies in act five, Boyet claims that “Fair ladies masked are roses in the bud; / Dismasked, their damask sweet commixture show, / Are angels in vailing clouds, or roses blown” (5.2.295-7). Boyet realizes that deferral of desire has invigorated, not frustrated, the men’s desire. In the play, education operates through a similar logic. The students’ deferral of desire and duty implodes under the weight of what Ferdinand calls “mere necessity” (1.1.148). Ferdinand refers to the Princess’ arrival and Navarre’s necessary duty to execute the business of the crown, but Berowne responds with ribaldry, claiming that “Necessity will make us all forsworn / Three thousand times within this three years’ space” (1.1.149-50). Berowne is clearly speaking hyperbolically, but both make the point that social duties and human desire make excessive education intolerable.

Navarre’s academy itself is a hyperbolic project that attempts to find fame through ascetic study. Navarre states, “Let fame, that all hunt after in their lives, / Live regist’red upon our brazen tombs,” referring to both the noun “brass” as much as the newly coined adjectival use “impudent.”¹⁵⁶ As Louis Montrose notes, the lords’ project is inherently paradoxical because “it

¹⁵⁴ Tom Flanigan, “On Fashionable Education and the Art of Rhetoric: Reflection of a Not-Indifferent Students in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*,” *The Journal of the Wooden O Symposium* 5.1 (2005): 13-33.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁵⁶ According to the OED, the adjective is first used by Hugh Latimer in 1555 (*OED*, “brazen, adj” 1.a).

is a peculiarly distorted false synthesis” of the active and contemplative lives.¹⁵⁷ “In their extreme forms,” Montrose continues, “the contemplative and active lives lead toward antithetical ends,” and “it is a peculiarly distorted and false synthesis of these contraries that the King expresses.”¹⁵⁸ Rather than pursue virtue as the goal of contemplation, Navarre seeks fame; moreover, rather than pursue virtue during a lifetime of moderation, Navarre wants to truncate a lifetime’s pursuit to three years. The academe itself is created on hyperbolic paradoxes to “live regist’red upon our brazen tombs” and “grace us in the disgrace of death,” which finally becomes “living art” (1.1.2, 3, 14). These paradoxes hyperbolize the function of education; namely, Navarre seems to think that the act of study itself—rather than some product of study like virtue or skill—will produce fame.

Berowne easily dismantles Navarre’s academic project. He points out that the nobles “having sworn too hard-a keeping oath, / Study to break it and not break my troth” (1.1.65-6). Using study to learn how to break oaths is a thread that reappears several times throughout the play, which delegitimizes the idealized pursuit of knowledge that Navarre proposes. The paradox of breaking his oath but not the truth subverts Navarre’s idea of knowledge, a notion Berowne picks up on again when he says that knowledge is merely “base authority from others’ books” (1.1.87).¹⁵⁹ While Navarre’s hyperbolic view idealizes education, Berowne voices a far more skeptical view of the nobles’ academy. Challenging Navarre’s hyperbolic oath, Berowne uses realism and paradox; he forces a realistic perspective onto Navarre’s lofty, idealized conception of study. These differing attitudes toward study parallel debates in educational theory in the

¹⁵⁷ Louis Montrose, “Folly, in wisdom hatch’d”: The Exemplary Comedy of ‘Love’s Labour’s Lost,’” *Comparative Drama* 11.2 (Summer 1977): 147-70, 48.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 148.

¹⁵⁹ Immediately after saying he will study to undo the oath, Berowne utters another paradox: “Study know that which yet it doth not know,” which satirically mirrors how Navarre regards study as a way to bridge life and death. For Berowne, study is at worst a ridiculous logical paradox and at best an example of Parker’s preposterous reversals (1.1.68).

period. The debate between solitude versus society, which Baynes' dialogue discusses, is evident in Berowne's critique of the academy. The critique of solitary study is founded upon the notion, advocated by humanists, that the purpose of education is for it to be applied to the benefit of the commonwealth, not the private enjoyment of individuals.¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, when Berowne checks Navarre's excessive view of study, he also checks Navarre's concept of the commonwealth. Rebecca Bushnell has shown that at the core of educational theory is "the early modern discourse of political authority, monarchy, tyranny, and resistance," and that theorists saw the schoolroom as a reflection of the government that does the important work of reproducing social values amenable to the government.¹⁶¹ In the schoolroom, Richard Mulcaster asks, "Is not obedience the best sacrifice, that the student can offer up to his prince and governor, being directed and ruled by his country laws? And in the principles of government, is not his master his *monarchy*? And the school-laws his country laws?"¹⁶² For Mulcaster, the schoolroom replicates the values of obedience and duty that maintain a well-ordered commonwealth. Berowne's counsel, then, also curbs Navarre's predilection to seeing himself and his academy as divorced from his very real social duties. Berowne's point reveals the possibility that the nobility—no longer boorish and now at least superficially educated—may turn their attention to education as a way to purchase fame rather than through traditional venues like service to the commonwealth. Berowne uses

¹⁶⁰ Humanists, such as Cheke, Colet, Ascham, and Elyot, argued that the end of education was to maintain the commonwealth by training civility, patriotism, and governance in its students. See, for instance, the educational theorist John Brinsley, who claims that "You know well that [schoolteachers] are they to whose charge that rich treasure, both of church and commonwealth is committed in trust...and the hope of a more happy age hereafter to come. We are they who help either to make or mar all; for that all the flower our nation, and those who become the leaders of all of the rest, are committed to our education and instruction; that if we bring them up aright, there is great hope, that they shall prove goodly lights, and marks to all the rest of the land, especially to the towns and countries where they are" (John Brinsley, *A Consolation for Our Grammar Schooles* (London, 1622), 45).

¹⁶¹ Rebecca Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching: Early Modern Humanism in Theory and Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 34.

¹⁶² Richard Mulcaster, *Positions VWherein those Primitive Cirvmstances be Examined* (Thomas Vautrollier: London, 1581), 151.

hyperbole to shed a light on the paradoxes the oath has caused.¹⁶³ Navarre's belief that secluded study will result in fame is notably hyperbolic, so Berowne adjusts his argumentative approach accordingly.

After having failed to sway Navarre through a more realistic perspective, Berowne adopts a more hyperbolic approach, an approach that suits his excessive penchant to jesting. Berowne adopts a new form of hyperbole—one less tethered in reality—to counter Navarre's hyperbole. Like his advice that the “mere necessity” of social responsibilities renders Navarre's academy untenable, Berowne's jesting also parallels theories of education. Central to educational debates was a disagreement between those schoolteachers, such as Mulcaster, who advocated for corporal punishment and other schoolteachers, such as Ascham, who claimed that education was best delivered through allurements rather than the rod. While Ascham argues that “young children, were sooner allured by love, than driven by beating, to attain good learning,” Mulcaster uses moderation to claim that the rod was “the mean which in a multitude may work obedience.”¹⁶⁴ The difference evident in these two strains of thinking is the *studia humanitas* of rote identification of figures, and the *ludus literarius* that John Brinsley claimed would “allure & draw on my schollars in this exercise, as in all other, to proceed as in a scholasticall play, with vnderstanding, loue and delight.”¹⁶⁵ In fact, the play mocks the former strain of education in Holofernes' pedantic question: “What is the figure,” an echo of what Richard Sherry sees as an endemic problem in rural schoolmasters: “The common scholemasters be wont in readyng, to say unto their scholers: *Hic est figura*: and sometimes to ask them, *Per quam figuram*? But what

¹⁶³ Just a few of the paradoxes include: how does one fulfill the responsibility to govern while in solitude, how can the nobles seek fame without doing anything productive, and how can the nobles gain knowledge while eschewing experience?

¹⁶⁴ Ascham, *The Scholemaster*, 48. Mulcaster, *Positions*, 150.

¹⁶⁵ John Brinsley, *Ludus Literarius: Or, the Grammar Schoole* (Humphrey Lownes: London, 1612), 174.

profit is herein if they go no further (5.1.59)?"¹⁶⁶ Berowne uses a *studia humanitas* approach in the previous scene, disputing the relative merits of education, solitude, and knowledge; however, Berowne adopts a form of *ludus literarius*, engaging in hyperbolic jests in order to persuade Navarre. Furthermore, while Navarre advocates for solitary study and rote memorization, Berowne advocates for a kind of study marked by play and allurement.

Navarre uses hyperbole to heighten the power of study, but Berowne's use of hyperbole is unmistakably in line with Aristotle's and Nashe's view of hyperbole as an adolescent mode of expression.¹⁶⁷ Through his use of hyperbole, Berowne prods Navarre to relax and try to enjoy study. Berowne responds to Navarre's critique that all delights are an obstacle to study, saying "study is like the heaven's glorious sun, / That will not be deep search'd with saucy looks" (1.1.83-4). On the surface, Berowne claims that study is like the sun because prolonged attention will blind the viewer rather than reveal the sun's secrets. Peacham's suggestion that hyperboles "exceed similitude," however, might point us to interrogate this further. In fact, the excessive simile is the fulcrum of Berowne's argument; it connects Berowne's earlier discussion of the "losing of your eyes" to excessive study and the later discussion of seasons and birth (1.1.79). Berowne's uses of hyperbole coalesce around themes that urge Navarre to abandon his predilection to solitary study and embrace things of substance, which Berowne specifies are experience, love, and governance. Berowne's hyperbolic jests code the play's interest in serious matters, disguising serious study in the garb of playful jests.

The necessity of young gentlemen procreating is a central preoccupation to Shakespeare's sonnets, written within a year of this play, so Berowne advises that academic

¹⁶⁶ Richard Sherry, *A Treatise of Schemes and Tropes* (London, 1550), 7.

¹⁶⁷ Though I would argue that both lords' hyperboles are juvenile, Berowne's hyperboles more obviously function as schoolyard jests. For more on jests, a subject to which I will learn later, see Lynne Magnusson, "Scoff Power in Love's Labour's Lost and the Inns of Court: Language in Context" *Shakespeare Survey* 57.1 (2004): 196-208.

preoccupation will interfere with more pressing matters, a point he drives home when he twice brings up “grandfathers” at the close of the speech (1.1.88, 93).¹⁶⁸ After Navarre criticizes Berowne, saying “How well he’s read, to reason against reading,” Berowne responds that all seasons have a fit “place and time” (1.1.94, 97). Again, Berowne uses paradox as an appeal to Navarre’s logic, saying that “you, to study now is too late, / Climb o’er the house to unlock the gate” (1.1.107-8). Navarre seems to unknowingly support what Berowne is claiming; namely, if reason can be undone by reading, then study is a self-defeating enterprise. Berowne uses an intricate combination of hyperbole and hysteron proteron to show Navarre that the oath is both excessive and reverses the natural order. This entire discussion is embedded in a larger discussion about grandfathers, the sun, nature, seasons, and birth. Berowne uses hyperbole and paradox to reveal the problem in Navarre’s reasoning, a logic that ignores the king’s responsibility to govern and the notion that education, play, and social duties are not mutually exclusive.

To study in one’s later adolescence prolongs the rigorous labor of education, but it also comes into direct conflict with the responsibilities of a king. After Berowne reads the agreement’s fine print, he notices that the king must break the article forbidding women due to the Princess’ arrival. Navarre responds “Why, this was quite forgot” (1.1.141).¹⁶⁹ Navarre clearly runs the risk of becoming a Prospero, a ruler who sacrifices responsible governance for

¹⁶⁸ Barbara Mowat suggests that “the ‘procreation’ sonnets were written about 1595” (*Shakespeare’s Sonnets and Poems* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), xxx. Likewise, H.R. Woudhuysen claims that 1595-1596 is the most likely period of composition for *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, (*Love’s Labour’s Lost*, ed. Woudhuysen (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1998), 59. *The Riverside* dates the sonnets in “the period of 1592 to 1595 or 1596” (1839), and it has 1594-5 as the likely date of composition for the play (80).

¹⁶⁹ Navarre makes a habit of not knowing important information; he “never heard” of France’s already paid receipt (2.1.157), and he is either unable to count or interpret a joke (5.2.541). These issues question Navarre’s inability or unwillingness to govern effectively. This has historical significance. As Linda Shenk points out, the play is loosely based on Henri IV’s courtship and marriage, a subject that was particularly important in the 1590s as Henri IV was under pressure to convert to Catholicism. Marriage as a socially binding force, then, looms menacingly in the background of the play (Shenk, “Shakespeare’s Comic Tropicality in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*,” *English Literary Renaissance* 47.2 (Spring 2017): 193-217).

intellectual autonomy. Berowne responds, saying “So study evermore is overshot: / While it doth study to have what it would, / It doth forgot to do the thing it should; / And when it hath the thing it hunteth most, / ‘Tis won as towns with fire—so won, so lost” (1.1.142-6). This extended simile, with the simile coming at the end of the speech, captures the essence of Peacham’s “exceeding similitude,” which is used to “amplifie the greatnesse or smalnesse of things.”¹⁷⁰ Berowne compares the effect of excessive study to burning towns that have been conquered, a comparison any king should readily understand, but the hyperbole is particularly effective because Berowne, like his earlier argument, shows that idealized study has real life effects.

The speech clearly points out that Navarre’s project ignores the real for the conditional, moving from “would,” to “should,” to the devastating effect of what will happen when “it hath the thing.” The speech is designed as a hermeneutical exercise. The speech’s subject, “study,” is replaced by six successive “its,” forcing Navarre to pay attention and interpret the point that study is a Pyrrhic enterprise, resulting in a destruction of the very thing it hunts. Though Rosaline rightly characterizes Berowne as someone who turns every object into a “mirth-moving jest,” his early interactions with Navarre show him to be a truthful and critical counselor (2.1.71). Berowne might be motivated by a desire to avoid privation; however, he gives objectively good guidance to his king. His hyperboles amplify good things and highlight the negative effects of too much study, and he remains within the bounds of truth and propriety. In this play’s first scene, Berowne shows himself to be anything but the flattering courtier, a figure that is often the crux of courtly dissipation in early modern drama.¹⁷¹ Berowne’s moral

¹⁷⁰ Peacham, *Garden of Eloquence*, 31.

¹⁷¹ See, for instance, Suffolk in 2 *Henry VI* or Baldock and Spencer in Marlowe’s *Edward II* for just a couple of examples.

instruction to the king places him in Puttenham's first category, counseling the king through hyperbole.

After becoming infatuated with Rosaline, Berowne's hyperboles shift into a Petrarchan mode that is more style for style's sake rather than a courtier's counsel wrapped in elegant rhetoric. This shift is significant to the play's interest in love and maturity because it endorses Berowne's earlier statement that romance "will make us all forsworn / Three thousand times within this three years' space; / For every man with his affects" (1.1.149-51). While Berowne uses hyperbole to counsel and dispute with Navarre, his hyperboles with Rosaline transform into affected excess. This transformation illustrates how romance draws the nobles out of their immature solitude, underscoring how the exigencies of life inevitably undermine the nobles' unrealistic lifestyle. Berowne composes Rosaline a love sonnet, saying "If love make me forsworn, how shall I swear to love? / Ah, never faith could hold, if not beauty vowed! / Though to myself forward, to thee I'll faithful prove" (4.2.105-7). Berowne's chiasmus, beginning the first clause and then ending the second clause with "if," attempts to prove his way out of dishonesty.¹⁷² This *paradiastole*, turning a vice into a virtue, is blind to its own paradox. Berowne attempts to prove, in a syllogism that is redolent of scholastic *in utramque partem* arguments, that he will be faithful by forswearing himself, but the focus of the sonnet—as we will see—is entirely around his own desires. Berowne packages his argument in a *polyptoton*—the repetition of words derived from the same root—on "forward" and "forsworn" that illustrates, in hyperbolic terms, the paradox that he cannot be forward in love without forgoing his oath to Navarre. Berowne points to a deeper problem in education that one cannot study in

¹⁷² The logical proof, especially done poorly, is a mainstay in both early modern drama and education. For instance, it is satirized when the scholar Tim, in Middleton's *Chaste Maid at Cheapside*, claims, "'Tis the easiest thing to prove a fool by logic; By logic I'll prove anything" (4.1.38-9).

complete solitude and fulfill the expectations of adult masculinity, particularly through governing or marriage. In his argument, however, faith comes in direct conflict with the “I” and “me” that motivate this poem, and his suggestion that faith can never hold without a vow to beauty sacrifices personal desire for social responsibility.¹⁷³ In fact, it seems that Puttenham’s clumsy use of hyperbole, which turns a courtier into a gross flatterer, is really no different than the Petrarchan flatterer who constructs idealized visions of women that reflect their own narcissistic desires. Berowne’s earlier use of hyperbole to counsel transforms from a tool to counsel to tool to prove the honesty in his dishonesty. This transformation underscores the play’s interest in subverting gender norms by depicting Rosaline as taking on the responsibility of moderating Berowne’s excessive passions.

In addition to this submissive posturing, Berowne’s hyperbole also neglects his role as advising courtier as he actively promotes dishonesty.¹⁷⁴ Berowne’s sonnet continues: “Those thoughts to me were oaks, to thee like osiers bowed. / Study bias leaves, and makes his book thine eyes, / Where all those pleasures live that art would comprehend” (4.2.107-10). Berowne’s shift from oak to osier, a willow tree, signifies his shift from sturdiness to melancholic lover, bending under the weight of its excessive passions.¹⁷⁵ The transition from tree, to leaves, to books, and finally to eyes is an example of auxesis, the arrangement of things in ascending order of importance, which subordinates study to beauty. The pun on “leaves” suggests that the young

¹⁷³ In regards to the play’s sonnets, Mark Breitenberg claims that “the instances where language is in excess of what it purports to represent, underscores rather than obfuscates the condition of the desiring masculine subject in patriarchy” (“The Anatomy of Masculine Desire in Love’s Labor’s Lost,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 43.4 (1992): 430-49, 435. The sonnet codes the male sonneteer’s masculine desire alongside anxiety of femininity and youth, both of which reflect patriarchal concerns. The sonnet, then, is always already socially engaged. Maus’ concern that heightened rhetoric obfuscates “social realities,” therefore, misses the meaning that excess underscores.

¹⁷⁴ Though that dishonesty eventually allows the lords to untangle themselves from the pact, it is also the principle reason behind the deferral of marriage.

¹⁷⁵ The willow is repeatedly used a symbol of melancholy and sadness (*3 Henry 6* 3.3.227-8, *Merchant of Venice* 5.1.9-12, *Hamlet* 4.7.166-75).

student both leaves the bias of study and that a book's leaves are biased. In a hyperbolic conclusion, Berowne suggests that all knowledge, art, and study are inferior to Rosaline's eyes. This clearly Petrarchan conceit is *ultra modum* because it echoes Aristotle's notion that the trope expresses youthful vehemence. The conceit renders expressions of love trite because the metaphor is impossible to actualize, and it compares Rosaline's eyes to a litany of inherently different objects, which shatters Rosaline into an inconsistent and fragmented image. When Puttenham claims that praising a mistress is one of the three appropriate hyperboles, he quotes Henry Howard's "Give place ye lovers," which makes the moderate comparison of his love to the light of a candle.¹⁷⁶ To compare his lover's eyes to trees, leaves, books, and study is render the comparison—according to Quintillian—a "bad affectation."¹⁷⁷ It is an example of *ultra fidem* because Berowne himself claims that Rosaline's eyes are in fact "two pitch-balls stuck in her face" (3.1.197).¹⁷⁸

In Berowne's hyperbole, beauty is in the "I" of the beholder. The "eyes" of his sonnet can easily be read as both praise of his lover and self-praise. Berowne's sonnet continues, saying "Well learned is the tongue that can well commend, / All ignorant that soul that sees thee without wonder; / Which is to me some praise that I thy parts admire" (4.2.112-14). As I suggested above, Berowne's hyperbole complicates the relation between truth and dishonesty, moderation and excess. The comparison of Rosaline's eyes to trees, books, and art connects to Berowne's self-congratulatory "which is to me some praise." The "eyes" of his earlier speech bridge to this "eye," which imposes a hyperbolic all-seeing "I" into his poetry. He praises his own ability to recognize the beauty, and he commends his ability to commend that beauty. The obsessive "I" of

¹⁷⁶ Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, 160.

¹⁷⁷ For Quintillian, a *mala affectatio*, bad affectation, is a hyperbole that deflates verisimilitude (8.3.56).

¹⁷⁸ In the next scene, the other lords repeatedly tease Berowne about Rosaline's eyes (4.3.244-65).

the hyperbolic Petrarchan lover overshadows the Rosaline's "eyes." This second meaning is folded into the extended hyperbole. One could read this as straightforward self-conceit, and on one level it is, but perhaps something more nuanced is folded into Berowne's hyperbole. In the Petrarchan sonnet tradition, the male poet subordinates himself to the female object; however, the Petrarchan sonnet constructs the female as a representation of male desire, which Berowne underscores in his own poetry.¹⁷⁹ The sonneteer's posturing is paradoxically both feminized and hyper-masculinized, and folded within that paradox is the hyperbolic "I." The "I" that punctures Berowne's love sonnet is his attempt to reconcile his desire with the oath, personal affections with social responsibilities. Katrin Ettenhuber notes that "By highlighting the limits of figuration and productively destabilizing the reader's views of linguistic norms and conventions, [hyperbole] encourages active reflection on the different ways in which meaning is constructed and communicated."¹⁸⁰ The bombastic hyperbole of Armado points out his own ridiculousness, and Berowne's love hyperbole points out his infatuation with his own wit, a point to which I will turn later. The sonnet itself, however, arcs from the sonneteer projecting love outward in the beginning to projecting self-love by its conclusion.

While the sonnet is strictly classified in Puttenham's second category, praising a mistress, it covertly praises oneself. Puttenham's three categories can be grouped into two groups. On the one hand, praising a king and praising a mistress, the first two categories, project outward; on the other hand, the third category, the lamenting gentlewoman, projects inward. The lamenting gentlewoman uses hyperbole to express her own desires and discontent. Therefore, Berowne's sonnet gestures toward masculine praise on the surface, but according to Puttenham's categories,

¹⁷⁹ Berowne makes this clear, saying that men are "the authors of these women" (4.3.356).

¹⁸⁰ Ettenhuber, "Hyperbole: Exceeding Similitude," *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, ed. Sylvia Adamson, Gavin Alexander, and Katrin Ettenhuber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 210.

Berowne's sonnet is a self-interested lamentation of discontent, a sonnet that traffics in self-love more than love. Berowne's protestations of love are revealed to be superficial before Rosaline even has the chance to examine where his hyperbolic jests stop and his ability to be serious begins. The play makes very clear that Berowne's jesting is connected to his youth, throwing into stark relief his immaturity and inexperience; however, the hyperbole also codes a layer of feminine anxiety onto Berowne. According to Renaissance rhetoricians, the hyperbole is specifically reserved for masculine courtiers to instruct kings, but Berowne's unrestrained desire and verbosity link him more with the "loud woman" topos than the somber counselor. Gail Kern Paster discusses the prevalent discourse in early modern culture that "inscribes women as leaky vessels...as excessive, hence either disturbing or shameful."¹⁸¹ The "loud woman" trope is a linguistic manifestation of this humoral discourse.¹⁸² Berowne's verbosity inscribes him as verbally leaky and therefore shameful, and the repeated use of hyperbole exposes his lack of self-control. In fact, Thomas Elyot makes just such a connection between humoral and linguistic porosity, saying "foolish women," who omit "letters and syllables" in verbose "wantonness," cultivate "corrupt and foul pronunciation."¹⁸³ Language, like femininity, must be carefully monitored lest either become excessive. Berowne's hyperbolic sonnet marks him as both youthful and feminine, qualities that the play repeatedly shows undermining the noble's duty to govern wisely. However, hyperbole is a symptom, not the cause, of this leaky language. I believe we can trace the cause back to Navarre's hyperbolic oath and the excessive restraints of their little academe.

¹⁸¹ Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 25.

¹⁸² Stephen Greenblatt has argued that "erotic friction originates in the wantonness of language and thus the body itself is a tissue of metaphor or, conversely, that language is perfectly embodied" (*Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 89. It is precisely this overlap between the uncontrollability of the body and language that the hyperbole exploits.

¹⁸³ Elyot, *The Book Named the Governor*, 18.

In the play's first scene, Berowne's hyperboles are within the limits of appropriate use, and it is only when he feels the restraints of the injunction that he resorts to immoderate hyperbole. Berowne first turns to immoderate hyperbole as a way to harmonize the idealized oath he swore with the realistic passions of a young man. Because the academe and desire are mutually exclusive, Berowne's hyperboles embed a frustrated attempt at self-realization.¹⁸⁴ Berowne's sonnets conceal a frustrated attempt to understand how "I" fits into study, love, and honesty. Hyperbole thrives on excess, and if language is leaky, then excess emotions—especially subconscious anxieties—will inevitably spill out. I do not suggest that Berowne is consciously aware of the meaning he folds into hyperbole, but the very nature of the trope generates excess, whether intended or not. As a linguistic figure, hyperbole exceeds likeness and degree. As a figure of thought, however, hyperbole tests the limits of figuration itself. Describing a tendency for critics of Shakespeare's early comedies to examine either gender or examine language, Katherine Eisaman Maus worries that the "critic must resist such temptations, must look beneath the linguistically ornate surface to discern the social and characterological realities which make the work interesting and important."¹⁸⁵ Instead of getting in the way of more complex issues, excessive language generates complexity and nuance that is productive in both social and characterological readings. In Navarre's and Berowne's excessive language, we see evidence of their inexperience and immaturity; furthermore, we see both characters turn to hyperbole to think

¹⁸⁴ Navarre suggests that the young scholars are at "war against your own affections / And the huge army of the world's desires" (1.1.10).

¹⁸⁵ Maus, "Language, Individualism, Gender," 205-6. In regard to editorial conflicts concerning the substitution of "bene" for "bene" (5.1.28-9) in Nathaniel's Latin, Adam Zucker has recently suggested that critics should embrace the possibility that sometimes Shakespeare does not intend anything in his nonce words. Resisting Stephen Orgel's claim that Shakespeare must have meant something in everything he wrote, Zucker suggests that "our impulse to make sense out of nonsense hides an important facet of the Shakespearean text" ("Antihonorificabilitudinitatibus: Love's Labour's Lost and unteachable words," *Shakespeare Survey* 70 (2017): 135-45, 141. I suggest, however, that sometimes the character—or the author—does not intend to fold meaning inside excess; nevertheless, the nature of the trope generates and conceals leftover, sometimes unintended, meaning.

through the paradoxes they have thrust themselves into, such as Berowne's conflict between forsworn and forward. Berowne uses hyperbole to challenge Navarre's educational theory, suggesting that social engagement and allurements are productive alternatives to excessive study. Hyperbole, then, exposes immoderation, which is unsurprising given that the figure expresses excess; however, in the play, hyperbole is also useful in working out the tensions between two radically different things, such as locating a middle-ground between duty and desire or forsworn and forward.

In *Love's Labour's Lost*, Berowne's early hyperboles demonstrate his allegiance to providing good counsel, but then his use shifts markedly as he examines the relationship between social and personal realities. Hyperbole codes social anxieties about gender hierarchy and leaky mouths, and the play's hyperboles are also linked to educational discourse that worried about the effects of education. Educational theorists have long known that in tropes meaning is "transfer[red] from its natural and principal meaning to another for the sake of embellishment," but perhaps more than any other trope, hyperbole announces itself as a trope.¹⁸⁶ The self-conscious exaggeration of hyperbole can be seen to generate semantic sterility, as Calderwood suggests in regards to verbal ornament. I contend, however, that hyperbole is a highly self-conscious mode of expression that is useful when speakers probe the limits of language or thought. In the play, Berowne uses hyperbole to counsel Navarre and check his exceptionally unproductive educational regime. Berowne's hyperboles explore the effectiveness of various educational theories, such as allurements or punishment; study in solitude or for social application; and moderation or excess. While these theories are embedded in the play's discourse

¹⁸⁶ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 9.1.4. This function of tropes is repeated by early modern rhetoricians. Thomas Wilson defines a trope as "an alteration of a word or sentence from the proper signification to that which not proper" (*The Art of Rhetoric* (1560), ed. Peter Medine (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 197.

about the purpose of education, the play is a crucial interrogation of how and to what ends nobles should be educated. The play is a counterpoint to Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* because Shakespeare's play examines nobles' rather than commoners' education, but it also critiques a wide variety of educational theories, evident in Holofernes' representation of a provincial pedant or Navarre's representation of isolated academies for the elite. We can gain from these satirical representations, which are understood through the characters' figurative language, a clearer picture of the play's stance toward the purpose of being learned; in fact, the play makes evident that end of learning is not style but substance, and that learning should temper desire with moderation and duty. Understanding hyperbole is crucial to understanding not only *Love's Labour's Lost* but also how the play critiques education. While I do not contend that hyperbole is the singular lens that unlocks the play, I do propose that much of the play's interest in language and excess is both embedded in and understood by the trope. By examining the trope more closely, we can reveal the links between language and gender that, Maus suggests, ornament might conceal.¹⁸⁷ Further analysis of embedded meaning in plays that are self-consciously verbose will help recover meaning lost in the folds of its excess. For *Love's Labour's Lost*, in particular, revealing a concealed, nuanced discourse that will help recover the play's reputation as something more than youthful "wantoning with words."¹⁸⁸ Perhaps pointing out the lost labor hidden in the cracks between possibility and impossibility will win the love of critics by shedding light on the play's complexity.

In Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*, hyperbole reveals the noblemen's immaturity, an immaturity that problematizes their responsibility to govern. Shakespeare's play seems to speak directly to the nobility and those with authority more generally, suggesting that solitude, excess,

¹⁸⁷ Anxieties about feminine verbosity is one of the many "social realities" that lurk within the folds of hyperbole.

¹⁸⁸ Calderwood, "Love's Labour's Lost: A Wantoning with Words," 318.

and study must be tempered by moderation. While Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour* underscores how the gentry respond slowly to education, which makes it more difficult for the gentry to maintain their social status, Shakespeare's play underscores the problems associated with too much education. The plays present both sides of the conversation—too much and too little education. The plays do not separate the topic of education from the very real social, political, and cultural consequences that arise due to the educational revolution in the period. While Jonson and Shakespeare deal with the topic of rhetoric and education as it pertains to England's elite, Thomas Heywood and Thomas Middleton approach these issues with a focus on the middling sort, a new and powerful social group emerging in England's social landscape.

CHAPTER III: CIVIL RHETORIC IN HEYWOOD AND MIDDLETON

I. Introduction

While Shakespeare is interested in rhetoric as a means of teaching nobles good governance, plays in early seventeenth century are increasingly invested in the life of commoners. The prominence of histories and comedies in the late sixteenth century provides an opportunity for Shakespeare to examine how ideals of governance and nobility are constructed, but the genre largely excludes common voices, let alone the expression of commoners' interests. The burgeoning popularity of city comedies, however, allows playwrights to examine how the ideals of the elite exert influence on commoners and the community, but city comedies also identify how commoners exert influence on the elite. Antonio Gramsci once commented that drama forms an "indirect document" of social history, and I will examine how Thomas Heywood's *If You Know Not Me, part II* and Thomas Middleton's *Michaelmas Term* reveal how to mediate tensions between ranks, how to define ranks, and how to respond to changes in social hierarchy.¹ Each play offers a different insight into social hierarchy. Heywood offers an example where rhetoric productively mediates social conflict, and Middleton offers an example where rhetoric is largely the cause of that conflict. In both plays, I use a rhetorical figure to show how the play responds to a particular problem. In *If You Know Not Me*, I look to *descriptio* to show

¹ Antonio Gramsci, *Antonio Gramsci: Selections from Cultural Writings*, eds. David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985), 241.

that descriptions of model citizens helped form an optimistic outlook on social tensions through a rhetoric of charity, but in *Michaelmas Term*, I look to *paradiastole* to show that civic values are still being contested, producing conflicting ideals of hospitality. I take up the issue of charity in *If You Know Not Me* because of the play's stance that charity binds community, but hospitality is more pertinent in *Michaelmas Term* because the play emphasizes other forms of generosity, such as openness and honesty, that are not strictly associated with charitable giving. Studying these historical disputes reveals the rhetorical mechanisms that shaped the discourse about rank, showing that the flexibility of rhetorical figures allowed speakers to redefine and challenge cultural values, but—as we shall see in Heywood's play—rhetoric also gave a persuasive clarity that allowed speakers to defend cultural values.

II. Merchant Mobility in Heywood's *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody, part II*

Recent attempts to understand the function of Thomas Heywood's *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody, Part II* (1606) have overlooked the role of charity in the play. Critics typically read Gresham's building of the Royal Exchange, which is the central action in the play, as either a sign of Christian benefaction or a merchant's challenge to feudal hierarchy. I will argue, instead, that Gresham's seemingly profligate spending and charitable works signal his classes' wealth and the mechanism of their mobility. Thomas Gresham builds the Exchange to increase his credit, but the building also functions as a mercantile college, teaching apprentices and merchants civic engagement and economic prudence. Gresham's Exchange is a symbol that merchants' wealth is a means to their social mobility. This indicates that profit is just as important to a merchant's success as conspicuous charity, which helps define the ill-defined

middle class. The merchant class, I suggest, is defined in part by charitable giving, and merchants look to charity to ensure their upward mobility. In the play, Dr. Nowell teaches the merchants charity through the rhetorical figure *descriptio*, demonstrating rhetoric's social effectiveness, and it also shows how characters use rhetoric to articulate and understand rank. Gresham comes to understand a merchant's role in society through *descriptio*, and he thinks of the Exchange itself as a *descriptio* of merchant generosity. The play's merchants define their role in society through their charitable acts, a responsibility that traditionally fell upon the nobility. Examining the function of charity in early modern drama is essential to understanding the relations between the wealthy and poor classes, but the dispensation of charity also explains how and why English merchants spent their considerable fortunes.

In the play, Heywood dramatizes the construction of Gresham's Royal Exchange. Instead of highlighting the Exchange's economic legacy of turning London into an international trade hub, Heywood focuses on the construction's communal origin. Our first exposure to the land upon which the Exchange will be built is a feud between the play's two wealthy merchants, Thomas Gresham and Thomas Ramsey. Ramsey put one hundred pounds of earnest on the parcel of land that would become the Exchange; afterwards, Gresham directly purchased the land from the owner. Ramsey claims that Gresham illegally purchased the land on which he already put a down payment, and ownership of land is central to claiming gentry status. Joan Simon shows that "at a time when there was no secure long-term investment except land, [merchants] bought up landed property; if they become established...their descendants ranked as gentry."² In the late sixteenth century, blood as the marker of gentility lessens, and university education and landed

² Joan Simon, *Education and Society in Tudor England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 16.

property come to signify gentility more.³ Gresham's and Ramsey's dispute over prime real estate is partly a flexing of economic muscle, but acquiring the land is also central to each merchant's ability to signal their wealth and centrality—both geographically and economically—in London. Hobson, Gresham's friend and fellow merchant, tries to dissuade the two from the feud, suggesting that before he would give a “pennie amongst Lawyers, / Ide giu't poore people” (349-50).⁴ Gresham responds that “the Law shall begger me” before he gives away “his right” (354-4). Before Gresham transforms into London's most renowned philanthropist, he reveals that he would waste all his money in a legal feud before he would give it to the poor.⁵ Clearly, Gresham has not yet learned the potency of giving.

The feud between Ramsey and Gresham is explicitly about their relative ranks. Gresham says he would scorn to “stoop or yield to” Ramsey even though he is reputed “Ramsey the rich” (425). Gresham also petulantly goads Ramsey, saying “Tut in thy teeth although thou art a knight,” indicating that Gresham bristles at Ramsey's higher rank (431). In fact, the two merchants engage in stichomythia that expose their animosity when Ramsey says, “Do not I know thy rising,” Gresham responds “I, and I know thine” (452). Ramsey quickly retorts “Why mine was honestly,” to which Gresham says, “And so was mine” (453). In that short interaction, the merchants indicate that honest rising is the central issue that divides the two. Hobson tries to put their feud in perspective, suggesting that “I know thy rising, and I know thine, When as Gods blessing, that hath rais'd them both” (457-6). After Gresham and Ramsey make the conciliatory gesture of acknowledging each other's rank—when Gresham calls Ramsey “Sir” and Ramsey

³ In fact, Thomas Gresham owned at least 30 properties, according to John William Burgon, *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Gresham: Volume 1* (London: Robert Jennings, 1839), 469-70. This transformation in how rank is defined is discussed at length below.

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, all citations are to Thomas Heywood, *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody, Part II*, ed. Madeleine Doran, Malone Society Reprints (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935).

⁵ The later founding of the Exchange, then, distances Gresham from the topos of merchants as excessively money-conscious.

calls Gresham “Master”—Hobson exclaims “Body of mee, both shall be school’d” (490-3). While a university education meant instant access to the title of gentleman, here “school” suggests Gresham’s and Ramsey’s ability to cooperate to their mutual economic and social benefit; school, in this sense of the word, indicates an ability to understand the rules of social mobility. That Heywood names the lesser merchant Hobson is likely a reference to the Cambridge book-peddler Thomas Hobson, furthering the ties between education and commerce.⁶ In most references to education in the period, school is associated with a practical ambition, but school in *If You Know Not Me* is uniquely associated with learning civic virtues. By acknowledging rank, the two begin to understand that status is constructed through a rhetoric of charity, cooperation, and consumption.⁷

In fact, it is this recognition of cooperation that undergirds Gresham’s transformation into a benefactor. After Gresham and Ramsey agree to end their feud, Dr. Nowell—the schoolmaster and Dean of St. Paul’s—offers to take them to his house where he will show the merchants “A gallerie, wherein I keepe the Pictures / Of many charitable Citizens” (760-1). In this crucial scene, Ramsey and Gresham are converted from avaricious merchants to charitable, “royall” citizens.” After showing them the pictures of noted citizens, Dr. Nowell says that he will “describe to you some of their birth, / How they bestowd their lives,” to which Gresham responds paradoxically “You shall gaine more in shewing this to vs / Then you have showne”

⁶ Thomas Middleton refers to Hobson in “Father Hubbard’s Tales” (*Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1096. John Milton also refers to him in the short poem “On the University Carrier.” Middleton’s reference is particularly striking because he is brought up in a section bemoaning the lack of opportunity for Cambridge graduates. The real Thomas Hobson started his business as a small-time book peddler, but he died a wealthy merchant whose daughter married a baronet.

⁷ A Cambridge tutor, Holdsworth, claims that university education is used “to gett such learning as may serve for delight and ornament and such as the want wherof would speak a defect of breeding” (qtd. in Margaret Tudeau-Clayton, *Jonson, Shakespeare and Early Modern Virgil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 36. The idea that a person’s gentility is evident in their composed and charitable eloquence is most famously expressed when Castiglione advises that a courtier should never be “stubborne and full of contencion...no lyer, no boaster, nor fonde flatterer” (Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Thomas Hoby (London: Orion, 1994), 121.

(765-6, 778-9). Gresham uses the rhetorical figure *antanaclasis* to accentuate that Nowell's statues reveal more than words can express. According to Henry Peacham, *antanaclasis* is "a figure which repeateth a word that hath two significations," and Peacham suggests that speakers use the figure to "moveth many times a most pleasant kind of civile mirth, which is called of the Latines *Facetiae*, or *Urbanitas*."⁸ This playful double-meaning of "show"—both to display the pictures and also to reveal an instruction to Gresham and Ramsey on civility—indicates that the two merchants have reached an understanding that "civile mirth" is better than feuds. The play on words suggests an alteration in Gresham's attitude, and Dr. Nowell turns to a rhetorical figure to encourage civility between the two merchants. This linguistic transformation demonstrates Gresham's inward change. *Antanaclasis* indicates a spirit of cooperation and playfulness, but Peacham's "civile" and "*Urbanitas*" inflect that mirth with a specifically urban undertone. In addition to this trivial pun, however, Gresham also makes clear that Dr. Nowell will "gain more" from instructing the two merchants, which underscores that the ethical lesson about to take place will be mutually beneficial.

When Dr. Nowell leads Gresham, Hobson, Ramsey, and Lady Ramsey into his gallery, he shows them pictures of five citizens: John Philpot, Richard Whittington, John Allen, Agnes Forster, and Ave Gibson. These five citizens are united in their charitable contributions to London, particularly the construction of civic buildings. John Philpot levied troops to defend London, John Allen was a mercer who became counselor to Henry VIII, and Agnes Forster gave money to relieve beggars at Ludgate prison. Richard Whittington is remembered for being born an apprentice, "began the library of Gray-friars in London," and being Lord Mayor three times (793). Ave Gibson was the wife of a grocer and "Founded a free schoole at Ratcliffe, / There to

⁸ Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (1593) ed. W.G. Crane (Gainesville: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1954), 46. While *Facetiae* refers to witty jests, *Urbanitas* refers to sophisticated, gentle humor.

instruct three-score poore children...leaving for tutors 50 pounds a year” (840-2). In exchange for the citizens’ generosity, each is rewarded by upward mobility.⁹ Dr. Nowell’s pictures demonstrate that certain kinds of charity—perhaps of the particularly liberal variety—cause upward mobility. Philpot is knighted on the field for his service, a particularly feudal form of mobility.¹⁰ John Allen rises from mercer, to Lord Mayor, to counselor of the king. This degree of mobility is not unusual in the Tudor period. In *The Schoolmaster* (1564), Roger Ascham advises nobles that their sons will be replaced by educated “mean men.”¹¹ Because the central government grew under Henry and Elizabeth, their administrations looked to educated laymen to replace the gentry as public servants.¹² Nowell’s *descriptio* of past merchants underlines their charity, but it also indicates that the relationship between nobility and charity has changed dramatically. The first picture celebrates upward mobility due to military service, which was the primary means to knighthood in the early sixteenth century, but the latter pictures—and Gresham’s own rise to prestige—increasingly emphasize the importance of commercial rather than military achievements.

It is not surprising, then, that both Richard Whittington and Ave Gibson use their wealth to found schools. Thomas Gresham’s own father, Richard, arranged for him to be sent as an apprentice—in very similar circumstances as the fictionalized John in the play—to France to chaperone dignitaries, telling Thomas Cromwell in a letter that “My son hath waited upon them

⁹ Several times, Gresham stresses the importance of giving while one is still alive. While reward in the play is economic and social, the religious reward of giving is hard to avoid. In the Bible verse to which the play’s title might refer, Matthew 7: 23, a person has just died and tells God of the things they did on Earth in God’s name. God responds, “I never knew you” (*The Geneva Bible*). Just before this response, however, is a section on the importance of knowing the faithful by their “fruit” or good works. Good works are not only an outward sign of inward goodness, but they are also what makes God “know you.”

¹⁰William Harrison, *The Description of England: The Classic Contemporary Account of Tudor Social Life*, ed. Georges Edelen (New York: The Folger Shakespeare Library, 1994), 113.

¹¹ Roger Ascham, *The Schoolmaster* (London: Cassell and Company Limited, 1894), 68. Thomas Elyot’s *The Boke of the Governor* makes the same point.

¹² JP Cooper, *Land, Men, and Beliefs: Studies in Early-Modern History* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 1983), 44. Lawrence Stone, *An Open Elite? England 1540-1880* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 673.

and doth keep the same company by the way to the intent to see them well entertained and used by reason of his language.”¹³ Language, in particular eloquence, is central to a merchant’s ability to negotiate, persuade, and build confidence. Thomas Gresham stipulates that after his widow’s death a school would be established at their family home. As he makes clear in his will, the new school, Gresham College, “provided free adult education” where “the lectures had to break away from the university tradition of commenting on set texts, and had to expound on their subject practically.”¹⁴ Gresham ensures that physic, music, astronomy, and geometry would be included in the curriculum, which differs greatly from the heavily logic and rhetoric-based curricula at Oxbridge. At Gresham College, common and gentle sons receive a practical education that is geared towards mercantile skills, such as numeracy, geometry, and astronomy.¹⁵ Merchants’ proclivity toward founding and maintaining schools instructs the new generation of merchants that will reinforce their position in the social hierarchy, but it also suggests that merchants, in part, define their role in society through their charity. Gresham’s College, like Whittington’s and Gibson’s charity, maintains merchants’ upward mobility. When Gresham sees the pictures, he recognizes the utility of education and charity, setting in motion his plans to become the city’s schoolmaster.

When Dr. Nowell describes the pictures, he focuses not on the subjects’ physical characteristics but their moral deeds. Unlike classical descriptions of a person’s body, armor, or horse, Dr. Nowell presents his audience with an ethical description suited to materialize not the citizens themselves but their works. He says that by seeing these pictures “You may by them

¹³ Ian Blanchard, “Sir Thomas Gresham c. 1518-1579,” *The Royal Exchange*, ed. Ann Saunders (London: London Topographical Society, 1997), 11-12. Gresham was also one of the few merchants’ sons who received a university education; but by the late 16th century, the practice was relatively common.

¹⁴ Helen Jewell, *Education in Early Modern England* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1998), 31.

¹⁵ The latter two are specifically linked to navigation and cartography.

learne to refresh your soules” (763). Henry Peacham defines the rhetorical figure, *descriptio*, as “a description is when the Orator by a diligent gathering together of circumstances, and by fit and naturall application of them, doth expresse and set forth a thing so plainly and lively, that it seemeth rather painted in tables, then declared with words, and the mind of the hearer thereby so drawn to an earnest and stedfast contemplation of the thing described, that he rather thinketh he seeth it then heareth it.”¹⁶ “Even so doth the orator,” Peacham continues, “by his art and his speech describe and set forth to the contemplation of mans mind.”¹⁷ *Descriptio* was one of the most common figures in rhetorical training, so the figure is a central part of the educational experience, indicating a shift to instruction that Heywood’s audience would have known well. Peacham makes clear that the rhetorical figure is meant to move audiences to virtuous action, and Gresham responds “We doe see and are relieu’d withall,” and later says that Dr. Nowell’s words “have started teares into my eyes, / And M.D. Nowell you shall see / The words that you have spoke, haue wrought effect in me” (817, 869-771). Dr. Nowell’s vivid description of the citizens’ civic-minded deeds inspires his audience to imitate the charitable citizens. Lynn Enterline argues that the “grammar school’s daily demand for verbal and bodily mimicry performed in public under threat of punishment would produce rhetorically capable gentlemen.”¹⁸ Enterline shows that the students’ imitation of their schoolmaster is written into the very fabric of early modern education, which produced “emotionally labile speakers for

¹⁶ Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (1593), 105.

¹⁷ Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (1593), 105. Henry Peacham’s son, Henry Peacham the Younger, adds a rather unsettling nuance to his definition, saying that *descriptio* is “like a dish with a delicate Sauce, invites the Reader to taste euen against his will” (Henry Peacham, *The Compleat Gentleman Fashioning him absolute in the most necessary Commendable Qualities concerning Minde or Bodie that may be required in a Noble Gentleman* (London: Francis Constable, 1622) 85). That Henry Peacham writes one of the period’s most popular rhetorical manuals, and then his son writes a popular manual on gentle behavior suggests the close relationship between rhetoric and rank.

¹⁸ Lynn Enterline, *Shakespeare’s Schoolroom: Rhetoric, Discipline, Emotion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 8.

whom language learning and self-representation entailed the incessant dislocations of the theater.”¹⁹ Students imitate their schoolmasters, which promotes a flexible identity and ability to empathize with others, and this public performance in front of students and the schoolmaster is inherently theatrical. In this scene, then, Gresham imitates Dr. Nowell’s passionate *descriptio* of London’s charitable citizens, and Gresham learns how to self-represent—both ethically as a generous man and commercially as a merchant who learns how to market his generosity—through identifying with the citizens.

Dr. Nowell’s linguistic description of pictures moves Gresham to cooperate to the benefit of all parties involved. After Dr. Nowell describes the pictures, Gresham responds “Why should not all of vs, being wealthy men, / And by Heaven’s blessing onely rais’d, but / Cast in our minds how we might them exceed / In goodly workes” (846-9). Rather than compete over land, Gresham suggests that competitive charity causes a person to be “rais’d.” He wants to exceed the pictures Dr. Nowell has described partially for heaven’s blessing, but also because a merchant’s upward mobility is inherently connected to their reputation. Dr. Nowell describes Gresham’s reputation if he becomes charitable, saying “If you will follow the religious path, / That these have beat before you... You shall not walke the street” without the thanks of the poor, and young couples will say “You rais’d vs vp” (854-62). For Gresham, charity and economic success are indistinguishable. What he first imagines upon building the Exchange is that young couples will be obliged to him for their raising, revealing that a major motivating factor for the Exchange is increasing his own credit. If Dr. Nowell’s well-described pictures inspired charity and civic mindedness in Gresham, then Gresham can use the Exchange as a site that uses the same tactics to instruct. Instead of citizens or kings, however, Gresham will be remembered as the

¹⁹Lynn Enterline, *Shakespeare’s Schoolroom*, 46.

Exchange's founder. The Exchange is a monument, much like the pictures, which signals Gresham's civic charity and his role as London's schoolmaster.

i. Ranking Charity

By the late sixteenth century, feudal definitions of class were increasingly destabilized by the advent of mercantilism, trade, and migration to London. For hundreds of years feudalism's three estates—clergy, nobility, and peasants—categorized social hierarchy. Due to a number of economic and social issues in the latter half of the sixteenth century, the “middling sort” develops between nobility and peasants.²⁰ Thomas Harrison's *The Description of England* (1577, 1587) and Thomas Smith's *De Republica Anglorum* (1583) are preoccupied with categorizing the “new” classes that emerge out of mercantile trade. Merchant adventurers, traders, moneylenders, factors, and many other occupations refuse to be categorized within the static feudal framework; furthermore, these trades are explicitly connected with vast sums of wealth flowing in and out of London. These newly wealthy trades begin to permeate the boundary between upper commoners and lower gentry. Harrison and Smith both divide England into gentlemen, citizens, yeomen, and artificers, and while Harrison ranks merchants below gentlemen, he notes that merchants “often change estate with gentlemen, as gentlemen do with them, by a mutual conversion of the one into the other.”²¹ Harrison follows Smith's definition of gentlemen as “those whom their blood and race doth make noble and knowne,” but Harrison adds—in what seems to be a conciliatory gesture—“or at the least their virtues.”²² Harrison's

²⁰ The rising cost of land, inflation, migration to city centers and away from agricultural land, the influx of gold and silver from the West Indies, and international trading companies are only a few of the contributing factors to the rise of this “middling sort.”

²¹ William Harrison, *The Description of England*, 115.

²² Thomas Smith, *De Republica Anglorum*, (London: Henrie Midleton, 1583), 26. Harrison, *The Description of England*, 113.

subtle addition indicates that gentility is not an inherent quality but can be achieved by the capacious term “virtue.”

Harrison’s and Smith’s unstable categories demonstrate that mercantile trade reshaped early modern notions of social order, but their hesitancy in defining the boundary between gentry and the merchant class—the primary beneficiaries of mercantile wealth—reveals precisely how merchants can achieve gentle status. Harrison claims that merchants can generate

“great wealth, insomuch that many of them are able and do buy the lands of unthrifty gentlemen, and often setting their sons to the schools, to the universities, and to the Inns of the Court, or, otherwise leaving them sufficient lands whereupon they may live without labour, do make them by those means to become gentlemen.”²³

Land and education, Harrison avers, are pathways to gentility. This equation for achieving gentry status is a far cry from earlier claims that gentry is defined exclusively by blood and race. A generation after Harrison’s attempt to understand the effect of merchant-trade on social ranks, Henry Peacham the Younger, argues that “Nobilitie...is nothing else then a certaine eminency, or notice taken of some one about the rest, for some notable act performed, be it good or ill; and in that sence are *Nobilis* and *Ignobilis* usually amonge the Latine Poets taken.”²⁴ If Peacham’s argument is any indication, between 1587 and 1622, gentility begins to refer not to nobility of birth but to nobility of character. Peacham explicitly links nobility with a person’s acts, but he also repeatedly links gentility to eloquence. A generation before, Henry Peacham the Elder suggests that through wisdom and eloquence the rhetorician becomes “emperor of mens minds & affections.”²⁵ Wayne Rebhorn argues that this ability to persuade is a unified discourse that

²³ William Harrison, *The Description of England*, 117-18.

²⁴ Henry Peacham, *The Compleat Gentleman*, 2.

²⁵ Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence (1593)*, ed. W.G. Crane (Gainesville: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1954), A.B.iii^v.

works to control and maintain the social order, suggesting that the aristocracy's eloquence allows them to control the commoners.²⁶

As we have seen, however, the nobility's claim to intrinsic superiority begins to erode in the latter half of the sixteenth century, and Peacham states that the diligent study of wisdom and virtue allowed Cicero and Quintillian "a great excellency in their kinde, who have got to themselves & their country, many commodities" that "tyme shall never be able to oppresse, nor devouring course of years strong ynough to abolish or darken the brightnesse of their glory."²⁷ To be considered virtuous, Peacham illustrates that eloquence must be joined with acts that bring commodity to the rhetorician's country, and those acts will be monuments of civic duty. According to Peacham, rhetoric is a civic instrument, a tool that entertains audiences with lively descriptions that motivate toward virtue, and Peacham makes the virtuous utility clear by providing a "Caution" and "Use" for each trope. Indeed, in the Epistle to the 1577 edition, Peacham claims that he writes the book to "profyete this my country, and especially the studious youth of this Realme."²⁸ Rehorn's analysis of Peacham as ideologically motivated is a part of an endemic tendency among critics to read early modern drama—especially when economics is of thematic interest—as either promoting the values of either the gentry or the commoners. In a period when the boundary between those categories begins to break down, however, Gresham promotes neither the values of the gentry or commoners. He promotes the values of those upwardly mobile merchants whose very existence blurs the distinction between the two ranks.

In their attempt to categorize this new "middling sort," Harrison and Smith question the definition of true nobility. Peacham suggests that personal virtue is the central marker of nobility,

²⁶ Wayne Rehorn, *Emperor of Men's Minds: Literature and the Renaissance Discourse of Rhetoric* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 15.

²⁷ Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence*, A.iii.

²⁸ Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence*, (London: H. Jackson, 1577), A.iii^v.

and the notion that virtue announces nobility guides Thomas Gresham's founding of the Royal Exchange. Most critical accounts of the play follow two strands of criticism. On one hand, critics like Edward Bonahue call the play "a palatable lozenge for citizen consumption" that tries to "reconcile disparities between the alienating effects of the new commerce and inherited notions of communal organization and obligation."²⁹ On the other hand, critics, such as Charles Crupi, argue that Gresham's spending indicates "monopolizing," "control," and "colonial dominance."³⁰ The former group suggests that Gresham's charity and civic works praise merchant values and the rise of the middle class, while the latter group sees the same charity and civic works as oppressive signifiers of proto-capitalistic acquisitiveness. Those who emphasize the play's positive representation of Gresham find it difficult to explain his seemingly profligate spending; he loses 60,000 pounds on a sugar monopoly, quaffs a ground-up pearl worth 1,500 pounds, and he easily forgives John's theft of a hundred pounds.³¹ Those who emphasize the dehumanizing acquisition in the play find it equally difficult to explain why nearly everyone in the play rises at least one rank, why charity seems to cement civic-responsibility, and why Thomas Heywood—who is notoriously pro-bourgeois—would denounce social mobility.³² Gresham's spending helps to define the function of the ill-defined "middling sort" by educating other merchants how to create cooperation between the merchant class and the poor.

After the crisis of the 1590s—when high housing prices, bad harvests, and inflation caused rampant poverty—Queen Elizabeth enacted the 1597 and 1601 Poor Laws, issuing rules

²⁹ Edward Bonahue, "Social Control, the City, and the Market: Heywood's 2 *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody*," *Renaissance Papers* (1993): 75-90, 90, 77.

³⁰ Charles W. Crupi, "Reading Nascent Capitalism in Part II of Thomas Heywood's *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 46.3 (2004): 296-323, 300.

³¹ These are only a few instances; he also spends money on lawsuits with Ramsey, loses a hundred pounds to Ramsey in the acquisition deal, and has 500 pounds stolen from him by his factor.

³² For more on Heywood as pro-bourgeois, see David Hawkes, "Thomas Gresham's Law, Jane Shore's Mercy: Value and Class in the Plays of Thomas Heywood," *English Literary History* 77.1 (2010): 25-44. Hawkes notices pro-bourgeois sentiment in *Edward IV*, *The Four Prentices of London*, and *The Wise Woman of Hoxton*.

to regulate charity and confer powers of patronage on the nobility. When Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries dissolved Church-based poor relief, Elizabeth was forced to create a state-controlled structure to combat poverty.³³ Elizabeth's Poor Laws created a systemic dependency on the crown, but Paul Slack argues that private philanthropy "encouraged the revival of the kind of 'civil society' which had promoted the culture of the commonwealth in the fifteenth century and had been weakened by the dissolution of guilds and fraternities."³⁴ Merchant charity is a symbol of individual, communal responsibility that is often a reaction to the crown's monopoly on poor relief, and merchants' increased philanthropy in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries attests to their desire to both educate the poor and remain upwardly mobile. Slack notes the "foundation of three or four hundred new grammar schools between 1540 and 1640," and David Mitch shows that merchants account for 42% of charitable donations to education between 1480 and 1660.³⁵ Merchants outspent other social ranks, and a disproportionate amount of their wealth went toward education.³⁶ Merchant charity resists the crown's regulated control of poor relief, regulations that were in part designed to celebrate Elizabeth as England's sole benefactress.³⁷ Charitable giving, in particular the foundation and

³³ Paul Slack, *The English Poor Law: 1531-1782* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 3-5.

³⁴ Paul Slack, *The Invention of Improvement: Information and Material Progress in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 65.

³⁵ Paul Slack, *The Invention of Improvement*, 65. David Mitch, "Schooling for all via financing by some: perspective from early modern and Victorian England." *Paedagogica Historica* 52.4 (2016): 325-48, 336. This number peaks between 1561-1600.

³⁶ W.K. Jordan, *Philanthropy in England 1480-1660: A Study of the Changing Pattern of English Social Aspirations* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1959), 376-77. Jordan argues that merchants contributed as much as 90% of the private philanthropy in England between 1480-1600. Jordan's analysis, however, has been shown to inflate the amount they did contribute; even if the numbers are inflated, merchants nevertheless recognized the importance of charitable giving. For more on the inflation in Jordan's figures, see William Bittle and Todd Lane, "Inflation and Philanthropy in England: Re-Assessment of WK Jordan's Data," *The Economic History Review* 29.2 (1976): 203-210.

³⁷ As we shall see in the next section, it also resists the noble benefactor to impoverished commoner model of generosity that maintains social hierarchy by creating bonds of deference rather than communality.

maintenance of schools, explains how merchants spent part of their vast wealth, but to answer why I will turn to Heywood's *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody*.

ii. Charity and "a royall cittizen"

Most critical commentary identifies charity as the play's binding force, the central lesson the main characters learn. Crupi claims that Gresham is not a "representative of transformative economic energies" because his "wealth is not so transformed, but spent, non-rationally."³⁸ Like Crupi, Anita Gilman Sherman does not see Gresham as the proper representation of the mercantile economy, proposing that "it is not Gresham's career, but Tawnycoat's that seems to exemplify the way Heywood wants charity to circulate."³⁹ While Crupi suggests that Hobson exemplifies mercantile charity, Sherman endorses Tawnycoat.⁴⁰ Both critics find that Gresham's quaffing of the ground-up pearl makes him an unfit candidate for charity, but if the quaffing is seen as a *descriptio* of mercantile values, then the act is more instructive than narcissistic ostentation. Indeed, Ramsey commends Gresham for the act, saying "You are an honour to all English Merchants, / As bountifull as rich, as Charitable / As rich as renowned as all" (1556-8). The Second Lord claims that Gresham is "As royall in his vertues as his buildings" (1540). After he quaffs the pearl, Gresham says "I doe not this as prodigall of my wealth, / Rather to shew how I esteeme that losse / Which cannot be regain'd" (1559-61). For Gresham, loss is not monetary but credit. If Gresham appears to have an empty purse, his credit will be difficult to regain.⁴¹ Instead, Gresham explicitly reads his act as an educative moment because directly after he drinks the pearl he proclaims "Lord so please you but to see my Schoole, / Of the seven learned liberal

³⁸ Charles W. Crupi, "Reading Nascent Capitalism," 306.

³⁹ Anita Gilman Sherman, "The Status of Charity in Thomas Heywood's *If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody II*," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 12.1 (1999): 99-120, 112.

⁴⁰ Charles W. Crupi, "Reading Nascent Capitalism," 306-7.

⁴¹ When he drinks the pearl, Gresham recently lost 100 pounds to his prodigal nephew, statues that were to adorn his building, and 60,000 pounds in the deal with Barbary.

Sciences, / Which I have founded here” (1564-66). Gresham drinking the pearl is less a grandiose display of consumption and more a signal to the other merchants that credit is more powerful than capital.⁴² Interpreting Gresham’s quaffing of the pearl misunderstands his rhetorical purpose, which overlooks the obvious lesson his action demonstrates. He imitates the citizens he saw in Dr. Nowell’s gallery, and now in a role as schoolmaster, he urges fellow merchants to “bestow, and see done whilst we live” (1571).

Gresham’s spending stimulates economic growth, but charitable displays of wealth also displace associations of conspicuous consumption with nobility. Bonahue attests that the play reinforces the “legitimizing force” of the monarchy, suggesting that Elizabeth’s naming of the building reinforces the monarch’s monopoly in the economy.⁴³ Theodora Jankowski asserts that the play comments on the bond between the government and merchants, and that Gresham’s “personal wealth is used to reinforce the political glory of England.”⁴⁴ While Elizabeth’s naming of the building as the Royal Exchange seeks to emphasize the crown’s role, the building is more often referred to colloquially as Gresham’s Exchange, suggesting that popular opinion supersedes royal fiat. When the two Lords and Ramsey view the building, the First Lord tells Ramsey “This should incite you to such noble works, / To eternize you,” (1378-9). The Second Lord says that Gresham has become “a royall citizen” (1397). Gresham anticipates that credit would be due to him, saying earlier that “Gresham shall have a place, / To erect this worthy building to his name, / May make the Cittie speake of him for euer” (1133-35). Gresham recognizes that his building will turn him into a *descriptio* of merchant industry that others can imitate. Reproducing Dr. Nowell’s earlier suggestion that young couples will thank Gresham for

⁴² In many ways, the play eschews a cash-based economic system, favoring a credit-based system for transactions.

⁴³ Edward Bonahue, “Social Control, the City, and the Market,” 88.

⁴⁴ Theodora A. Jankowski, “Historicizing and Legitimizing Capitalism: Thomas Heywood’s ‘Edward IV’ and ‘If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody.’” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 7.1 (1995): 305-37, 322.

his charity, Gresham claims that at the Exchange “Yong maides” will be brought up and “yong men as prentices” will “speake in Greshams praise,” saying “In Greshams worke we did our fortunes raise” (1156-60). Gresham’s charity is repeatedly linked to his credit but also the social mobility of London’s apprentices and merchants. Gresham supplants older forms of signaling nobility, such as creating obligation through charity, conspicuous consumption, and constructing monuments; in their place, the Exchange signifies communal uplift built upon credit and commercial ties.

The rise of mercantile trade destabilizes traditional hierarchy, putting more cash and land into the hands of merchants who eventually use that influence to become gentlemen and knights. Mercantilism does not exclusively favor elite merchants; in fact, the play demonstrates the positive effect of mercantile wealth on peddlers and minor merchants. Gresham imagines the Exchange as a place that will raise the fortune of young couples and apprentices, and he claims that the building will be “like a parish for good Cittizens / and their fair wiues to dwell in,” to which Dr. Nowell responds “this same worke of yours, / Will be a Tombe for you after your death, / A benefit to Tradesmen and a place / Where Marchants meet their trafficke to maintaine” (1230-1, 1240-3). The Exchange, like the monarch’s tombs that line Westminster Abbey, is a monument to Gresham’s nobility, but rather than a picture of a monarch, Gresham’s monument will be the center of commercial life. After the peddler, Tawnycoat, gives all his money away to help the poor, Hobson finds him digging in the dirt for food, and Hobson gives him forty pounds, saying “Thou art a free-man, vp with thy Trade agen, / Ile raise thee Rouland” (1740-1).⁴⁵ After

⁴⁵ Tawnycoat is the peddler’s alias; his real name is John Goodfellow, but the play sometimes designates him Robin or Rouland. Tawnycoat is driven to poverty and must dig in the ground due to his overly generous charity, which clearly evokes *Timon of Athens*, but Heywood seems to dismiss this issue by having Hobson quickly step in to provide relief. At issue, here, is a distinction between gifts of obligation—as in *Timon*—versus Hobson’s no-strings-attached gift to Tawnycoat. For more on gift-giving as obligation in *Timon*, see Ken Jackson, “One Wish’ or the Possibility of the Impossible: Derrida, the Gift, and God in ‘Timon of Athens.’” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 52.1 (2001): 34-66.

Hobson's generosity, Tawnycoat becomes a citizen and Master of the Hospital, and Gresham refers to Hobson as a "rich, substantiall citizen," who now waits outside church to give dowry to poor couples getting married, becoming "Their common fathers" (2077, 2140). Anita Sherman rightly calls Hobson's form of charity "baffling and comical," but Hobson is just a clumsier version of Gresham's role as London's benefactor.⁴⁶ Not only do these characters rise in ranks, but they are also bound by strong communal ties that highlight the benefits of communal obligation. Although Jean Howard points out that large-scale trading companies "contributed to a split between magnates who dominated these ventures and the small traders who were excluded from them," the play repeatedly emphasizes the rising of all London's people.⁴⁷ In fact, the kind of large-scale venture that precipitates this inequality is undone when Gresham's monopoly on Barbary's sugar is dissolved. Tawny and Hobson—and those who they help—rise from the charity that Dr. Nowell's *descriptio* sets into motion. The displacement of the crown's monopoly on charity augurs the rise of merchants' influence, a rise that unsettles traditional definitions of gentility.

According to Harrison's definition, gentle status is recognized by owning property, receiving a university degree, inheritance, or performing military service. Gresham shows that gentility is defined by charity and civic actions, and those who see his actions—Hobson and Ramsey in particular—imitate his generosity. Over the course of the play, Gresham persuades a group of people to be linked not by commercial self-interest but by communal interest, recognizing that what benefits Gresham benefits those around him. In the play, Elizabeth knights Gresham for his service to the city, but the historical Gresham was knighted in 1559 for his work

⁴⁶ Anita Gilman Sherman, "The Status of Charity," 112.

⁴⁷ Jean E. Howard, "Competing Ideologies of Commerce in Thomas Heywood's 'If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody, Part II.'" *The Culture of Capital: Property, Cities, and Knowledge in Early Modern England*, ed. Henry S. Turner (New York: Routledge, 2002), 163-82, 178.

as royal accountant. Jean Howard suggests that Heywood's inaccuracy detracts from the "action that ostensibly serves the honor and glory of the whole city, and not just the financial stability of the Crown."⁴⁸ Gresham's Exchange does indeed serve the city; it increases the mobility of many in the play, but it also increases the leverage and prestige of London's merchants. When Gresham hears that statues he had commissioned have been lost at sea, he responds "My ships but wealth...The pictures were the grace of my new Burse...I car'd not to have lost their waights in gold" (1500-4). When Gresham agrees to purchase the expensive pearl only to consume it, he says "a London Marchant here will buy" (1548). Finally, when the new King of Barbary rejects Gresham's trade deal by giving him a pair of slippers, Gresham responds "A London Marchant / Thus tread on a kings present" (1561-2). Gresham does not require the crown's legitimation; instead, part of his project is to erode the crown's sole ownership of legitimation. He shows that merchant capital comes with leverage.⁴⁹ In this light, Gresham's extravagance is a *descriptio* of merchants' power.

However, the play does not advocate for disloyalty to the crown; the play lauds merchants for their new, larger role in English government. Bonahue argues that the play celebrates the "mythical power of the late Queen, who arrives ceremoniously toward the end of the play to preside over the Exchange's opening and nominate it the 'Royal' Exchange."⁵⁰ As I have suggested, the Queen's naming power is undermined by popular opinion; furthermore, throughout the play, she has the impression of a monarch whose most formidable times have

⁴⁸ Jean Howard, "Competing Ideologies of Commerce," 172. Howard, along with Bonahue, also calls attention to Heywood's revisionist historiography, showing that the actual Exchange was built using foreign laborers, which caused complaint among the Londoners. In both these cases, I wonder what Heywood would benefit from including such information. If his purpose is to include dramatic intrigue, then including the information would certainly benefit his purpose; if his attempt is rather to stimulate civic unity, then this information undermines his project.

⁴⁹ Throughout the play, Gresham makes many deals and purchases, but he is only seen with one sovereign, which he places in the foundation of the Exchange. It is not only his capital that gives him power, but it is primarily his credit in London that gives him power.

⁵⁰ Bonahue, "Social Control, the City, and the Market," 88.

past.⁵¹ In her first scene, she comes on stage to nominate the building and to prompt Hobson to utter the play's title.⁵² Her second scene is oddly out of place and does not serve the plot at all. In the scene, Dr. Parry has been recently forgiven by the Queen for an attempted murder. Once back in court, Dr. Parry reveals his allegiance to Catholicism and promises to kill the Queen. This political drama is a bridge to the play's last scene—the destruction of the Spanish Armada—but its incongruity with what happens earlier in the play is conspicuous. After Dr. Parry pulls a pistol on the Queen but is thwarted, the Queen resolves to give him leniency, but Leicester exasperatingly responds, “Let her alone, sheele pardon him againe: / Good Queene we know you are too mercifull, / To deale with Traitours of this monstrous kinde... Good Queene you must be rul'd” (2370-7). The scene underscores the tense rivalry between Spain and England, and it transitions from city charity to courtly intrigue, but it also presents the Queen as fragile once more. The play's final act stages England's triumph over the Spanish Armada, but instead of stressing the Queen's central role, it underscores the work of merchants.

The play's final scene opens with a “Peale of Chambers,” but instead of stirring her troops with the “Speech to the Troops at Tilbury,” the Queen gives a truncated version, saying “Oh had God and Nature, / Given vs proportion man-like to our mind, / Wee'd not stand her fenc't in a wall of Arms, / But have beene present in these Sea alarmes” (2544-8). Throughout the remainder of the scene, the Queen remains fixed on stage awaiting news of her naval captains: Martin Frobisher, Francis Drake, and John Hawkins. Martin Frobisher was a merchant adventurer known for his exploration of the North-West passage.⁵³ By the time the play was first

⁵¹ In Heywood's *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody, Part I*, the Queen is a far more commanding presence.

⁵² When Hobson approaches her, she does not recognize him; she then asks Leicester and Gresham who he is. Hobson, then, asks who would “Knowest thou not mee Queene? then thou knowest no body... Bones a me woman send to borrow money / Of one you doe not know” (2071-9).

⁵³ For an interesting account of Frobisher, see Stephen Alford, *London's Triumph: Merchants, Adventurers, and Money in Shakespeare's City* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), 158-79.

performed, Francis Drake and his cousin John Hawkins were celebrated for circumnavigating the globe and capturing Spanish towns and ships in the New World. It is no mistake that the protectors of the realm are merchant adventurers working for the crown, both in military and economic exploits. On land, Elizabeth eagerly anticipates news from messengers of her captains' fate. One by one, Posts report of Frobisher's, Hawkins', and Drake's heroism. Drake approaches last, telling the Queen they outmaneuvered the Spanish fleet and set fire to the ships, "Making their fleet an Etna like themselves, / They cut their cables, let their anchors sink, / Burying at once more wealth than th'Indies can in many years restore" (2659-63).⁵⁴ Drake's report fuses the military with the economic, recognizing the metonymic relation between the cost of the fleet, their naval dominance, and gold imported from the Indies.⁵⁵ As the scene makes clear, merchants do not challenge the crown; instead, the play shows just how much the crown relies on mercantile money, ships, and prestige. The play's ending is a vivid *descriptio* of English might, prompting audiences to remember economic and military exploits like Gresham remembers charitable citizens.

In fact, Francis Drake's diary was published posthumously in 1626—with liberal additions—called *Sir Francis Drake Revived: Calling Vpon this Dull or Effeminate Age, to folowe his Noble Steps for Golde & Siluer*.⁵⁶ Drake's nephew, also named Francis Drake, publishes his uncle's diary a generation after his death to reinvigorate the spirit of adventure and exploration that ended after the successful defeat of the Armada. The book is an exhaustive *descriptio* of Drake's heroism and exploits meant to instruct the English to resume their

⁵⁴ This reference is taken from the revised *Thomas Heywood's Dramatic Works, Vol. II*, ed. J. Payne Collier (London: The Shakespeare Society, 1853), 162.

⁵⁵ This metonymy, which binds Spanish merchants to Spain, shows that what Gresham has done to bind merchants to the crown is not an isolated incident. The skirmish, then, is between two different groups of merchants who fight on behalf of their crowns.

⁵⁶ Sir Francis Drake, *Sir Francis Drake Revived: Calling Vpon this Dull or Effeminate Age, to folowe his Noble Steps for Golde & Siluer* (London: E.A., 1626).

mercantile expansion in the West Indies and beyond. Gresham's Exchange similarly calls upon merchants to revive their civic spirit. In each case in the play, charity—whether a cash donation, constructing a building, or saving the kingdom from invasion—is rewarded with upward mobility. The play's depiction of Hobson's ridiculous charity shows that the play does not simply mythologize merchants, and the merchants' role creating civic unity suggests an affirming rather than anxious attitude toward the growing strength of London's mercantile elite. The play supports Peacham's meritocratic definition of nobility, showing that nobility is defined by noble acts. Indeed, the play describes the ideal merchant—like Aeneas describes duty or Achilles describes bravery—to encourage the “middling sort” to civic duty, and for a notoriously status-conscious social group, the link between civic duty and social mobility is clearly enticing. The play is a part of the transformation from the Tudor stereotype of merchants as acquisitive to the play's representation of merchants as pillars of society.

It is not surprising that early modern merchants favor education in their charitable giving. Elizabeth Hanson has pointed out that the mixture of commoners and the “well-born suggests that schooling, with its unceasing production of questions of ability, enabled a systemic transformation in modes of social distinction and self-knowledge, rather than mere place-changing for a few able but previously disadvantaged individuals.”⁵⁷ Gresham's conspicuous charity is a form of such distinction, and his actions—along with Hobson's and Drake's—are a description that promotes self-knowledge. As the new middling sort emerges, new forms of distinction arise, and charity allows the merchants to create communal networks, stabilize the economy, and educate their peers.⁵⁸ Education and charity are both means of achieving upward

⁵⁷ Elizabeth Hanson, “The Interiority of Ability,” *The Dalhousie Review* 85.2 (2005): 255-72, 267.

⁵⁸ The promotion of charity and unity, according to Christopher Brooks, “would have been essential features to urban environments, which had of necessity to accommodate a constant flow of newcomers, and where rivals in the same business or trade were forced to live in close proximity...charity was facilitated by promoting a sense of

mobility, but they are also means to maintain that status for their peers of similar status. In his *Apology for Actors* (1612), Thomas Heywood links the theater and the classroom, saying “playes have made the ignorant apprehensive” and given “the unlearned the knowledge of many famous histories.”⁵⁹ He goes on to argue that universities are “the fountains and well-springs of all good Arts, Learning and Documents,” and that “I haue seen Tragedyes, Comedyes, Historyes, Pastorals and Shewes, publickly acted, in which Graduates of good place and reputation, have bene specially parted,” which arms the students “with audacity, against they come to bee employed in any publicke exercise.”⁶⁰ Heywood recognizes the educative potential in theater, and he suggests that theatrical imitation prepares graduates of good place for public service. Recognizing the cultural prestige of spectacle, Heywood points out that “playing is an ornament to the City, which strangers of all nations, repairing hither, report of in their Countries.”⁶¹ According to Heywood, the theater is a testament to a city’s notability, an educational experience, and a place of social mobility. Mirroring the theater’s function within London, Gresham’s Exchange is also recognized as a monument attesting to English wealth and prestige. As an ornament to the city, Gresham’s Exchange gathers people of good reputation to perform charity and to educate citizens. The Exchange is not merely a place of commerce, but it is also a place of education. Gresham stresses the virtuous working class values his building will impart, saying:

“when our Courtiers
 Shall come in traines to pace old Greshams Burse,
 They shall have such a girdle of chase eyes,
 And such a globe of beautie round about:
 Ladies shall blush to turne their vizards off,

community amongst members, providing a means of resolving conflicts, and establishing codes of acceptable behavior” (“Apprenticeship and Social Mobility,” *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England 1550-1800* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 77.

⁵⁹ Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors* (London: Nicholas Oakes, 1612), 52-3.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 52.

And Courtiers swear they ly'd when they did scoffe" (1234-39).

The Exchange does not challenge the monarchy or threaten the poor; instead, it is a physical marker of merchant power that announces to London's populace the new economic reality that trade and credit are paths to social mobility.

Because nearly every character in the play benefits from charitable *descriptio*, the play's optimistic representation of community, rank, and rhetoric is nearly unchallenged. According to the play's perspective, rhetoric works, people are generally generous, and tensions between ranks can be sorted out if people acknowledge communal interest above individual interest. The play is not simply pro-citizen; instead, it is pro-city. The play examines the positive impact of charity on the city and the realm. When Dr. Nowell uses *descriptio*, he shows how rhetoric is used to encourage charity, but Gresham also enacts the figure to articulate merchant's role in society. His extravagant acts describe how a merchant should act. He shows that charity creates communal ties that benefit everyone in the city, and that merchants could use their wealth to make the monarch rely on them rather than the other way around. By helping to replace feudal models of social hierarchy, Gresham's Exchange renegotiates the role of obligation from the monarch's monopoly on charity to a communal system where all ranks benefit socially and economically. It is a space where every citizen can learn to become royal. Middleton's *Michaelmas Term*, however, presents a much less optimistic outlook on London's future, exposing the dark side of rank and rhetoric that Heywood avoids. Gresham uses the lack of clarity about how to describe the middling sort to define merchants through charity, but in *Michaelmas Term*, Quomodo and Lethe exploit that obscurity to deceive gallants.

III. Paradiastole and Civil Virtue in Middleton's *Michaelmas Term*

In his prose pamphlet *The Blacke Booke* (1604), Thomas Middleton recalls the effect of the “devils in *Doctor Faustus* when the old Theatre cracked and frightened the audience.”⁶² That Middleton would recollect the impact of Marlowe’s play on audiences is integral to his own interest in the consequence of bonds in *Michaelmas Term*.⁶³ Quomodo, *Michaelmas Term*’s archvillain, makes this clear when he speaks directly to the audience in Paul’s, saying “Admire me, all you students at Inns of Cozenage” (2.3.485-6).⁶⁴ While Marlowe underscores the theological significance of bonds written in blood, Middleton emphasizes how legal bonds exploit the traditional civic virtues that maintain social stability. Unlike Marlowe’s interest in a particular individual, Middleton’s interest is in the soul of London.⁶⁵ The play explores how changes in civic interactions renegotiate the values that underlie communal ties. Middleton’s story underscores the visceral impact of theater on playgoers, and in *Michaelmas Term* he reveals how changes in social organization might frighten the audience as much as *Faustus*’ devils. In this section, I will examine the play’s response to socioeconomic transformations that renegotiate how hospitality stabilizes community. Throughout the sixteenth century, hospitality was a force that bound society and organized ranks. By the beginning of the seventeenth century,

⁶² Thomas Middleton, *The Black Booke*, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 156-7.

⁶³ Theodore B. Leinwand suggests that the play was first performed between 1604 and early 1606 (Leinwand, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 334).

⁶⁴ Thomas Middleton, *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). All subsequent references are to this edition.

⁶⁵ Critics have long been interested in locating specific religious or secular sympathies in Middleton’s plays. Aaron Kitch summarizes the arguments, suggesting that “Those who argue for a moral, Calvinist reading of the plays have to ignore the genuinely festive comedic quality of the city comedies, while those who argue for an amoral or immoral reading offer a portrait of Middleton...that is equally at odds with the frequent serious ethical concerns of the plays” (“The Secular Morality of Middleton’s City Comedies,” *Comparative Drama* 42.2 (2008): 101-19, 202). While I will not attempt to evaluate Middleton’s religious leanings, I will examine the significance of ethics in the play.

however, hospitality was used to redefine society in significant ways. In the play, hospitality, which should bind ranks and community, is the cause of tension between the gentry and the middling sort. Quomodo, the merchant, uses dubious legal tactics to extort land from Easy, the gentleman, and their conflict demonstrates that the mechanisms that should guarantee communality are used to exploit it. Rather than view the play as demonstrative of Middleton's sympathy with the gentry or middling sort, I will argue that the play depicts how fluctuations in social order affect communal life; furthermore, I will investigate how rhetoric shaped discussions of hospitality.⁶⁶

In the play, characters use the figure *paradiastole*—when a speaker redefines a vice as a virtue—to justify, to obscure, and to understand. That the figure is used by speakers to justify their actions or to obscure their own faults is obvious, but early modern and classical rhetoricians point out that *paradiastole* also, somewhat counterintuitively, uncovers vice. In the play, Lethe uses *paradiastole* to justify his vices, Quomodo uses the figure to obscure his deceit, and Easy uses the figure to sort out the difference between vice and virtue in the city. The figure is helpful in examining each character's actions, but *paradiastole* also reveals how social norms and values were challenged and affirmed.⁶⁷ The figure redescribes civic values—civil discourse, civic participation, and communal generosity—by changing the normative concept of a given virtue.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ That Middleton's sympathies lie with the gentry or middling sort has been the topic of several studies. For a study that sees Easy as sympathetic, see Virginia Lee Larsen, *Thomas Middleton as Social Critic: A Study of Three Plays* (Santa Cruz, CA: University of Santa Cruz, 1995). For a study that sees Easy as culpable, see Robert D. Hume, "The Socio-Politics of London Comedy from Jonson to Steele," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 74.2 (2011): 187-217.

⁶⁷ Quentin Skinner has pointed out that "the ability of the Renaissance Christian humanist to argue both sides of any question came to be viewed with much greater nervousness, even by the rhetoricians themselves" while they became "anxious to insist that the question as to whether any given action ought properly to be described as virtuous can always be settled with finality," the certainty that "the figure of *paradiastole* tends to undermine" ("*Paradiastole*: Redefining the Vices as Virtues," in *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, ed. Sylvia Adamson, Gavin Alexander, and Katrin Ettenhuber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 157).

⁶⁸ Envisioning a sort of ethical Principle of Plenitude, Skinner details how classical rhetoricians imagined that "every virtue consists in a mean between two opposed vices," so a speaker could use the figure to slide an audience's understanding of a concept from a vice closer toward a virtue, which could then become normative (Skinner, "*Paradiastole*," 155).

By examining *paradiastole* in *Michaelmas Term*, I will show that the figure highlights the values that were being negotiated and redefined in social discourse, whether textual, theatrical, or public; furthermore, the figure helps to explore Middleton's complex ethical attitude. While several studies have sought to uncover a consistent ethics in Middleton's plays, *paradiastole* shows that Middleton's ambiguous stance on ethics is a part of a larger cultural discourse that debated those values, which reveals the values that were being discussed rather than Middleton's particular views.⁶⁹ Middleton's supposed ambiguity, then, underscores his participation in the discursive process that actively constructed early seventeenth century civic values. Before turning to Middleton's use of *paradiastole*, I will detail the values he scrutinizes by examining how ownership of land foregrounds discussions about both hospitality and changes in the social order.

Prior to the seventeenth century, land was used to ensure that power remained with a fairly homogenous elite. Owning land was a principal way the gentry broadcasted their authority over their social inferiors. Michael Bush observes that between 1500 and 1700 the gentry increased their share in the land—their access to power and wealth—from 30-50%.⁷⁰ Likewise, Andrew McRae has found that “the percentage of cultivated land in England owned by the ‘middling and lesser gentry’ increased from 25 per cent to 45-50 per cent; and the share of ‘yeomen, family farmers and other small owners’ lifted from 20 to 25-33 per cent.”⁷¹ The bond

⁶⁹ For Middleton as a traditional moralist, see Margot Heinemann, *Puritanism & Theatre: Thomas Middleton and Opposition Drama under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Anthony Covatta, *Thomas Middleton's City Comedies* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1973); and Brian Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy: A Study of Satiric Plays by Jonson, Marston and Middleton* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968). For studies on Middleton's amorality, see George E. Rowe, “Prodigal Sons, New Comedy, and Middleton's *Michaelmas Term*,” *English Literary Renaissance* 7.1 (1977): 90-107; David Farley-Hills, *The Comic in Renaissance Comedy* (New York: Macmillan, 1981); and Matthew Martin, “[B]egot between tirewomen and tailors’: Commodified Self-Fashioning in *Michaelmas Term*,” *Early Modern Literary Studies* 5.1 (1999): 21-36.

⁷⁰ Michael Bush, *The English Aristocracy: A Comparative Synthesis* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 111.

⁷¹ Andrew McRae, *God Speed the Plough: The Representation of Agrarian England, 1500-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 14. Nigel Wheale shows that in the waning years of the seventeenth century

between the landowner and the commoner, linked through idealized accounts of pastoral life and the gentry hospitality, began weakening. The landed gentry's domination was not as automatic or as simple as discussions of subordination, the notion that "the lands know their heir," might imply (5.3.76). While William Harrison's *The Description of England* (1577) details how population expansion and aggressive estate management oppressed tenants, Thomas Wilson's *An Account of the State of England* (1600) claims that tenants exploit long leases and inflation, so that the gentry "had no more than would keep his house and some small rent, and therefore could not spend away prodigally much of the wealth of the land, because he had no superfluity."⁷² These two accounts underscore early modern thinkers' diverse interpretations of contemporary events. Wilson emphasizes the gentry's inability to spend lavishly, a concern for a rank that depended on conspicuous consumption to maintain ties of dependency. In the early modern period, owning land was more than a way of articulating one's rank; in fact, the gentry viewed land as the principal means by which social order was stabilized.⁷³ Felicity Heal explains that hospitality—the duty to dispense commodities and accommodation—was "one of the methods by which social, and even the political power of the mighty was confirmed and sustained."⁷⁴ Hospitality places the gentry at the center of English economic transactions, bestowing not only Christian ideals of charity but also urging recipients' dependence on such generosity.

"gentle families constituted about 2 per cent of the total population, owning 50 per cent of the land in England. If the aristocracy is included then just over 2 per cent of the total population owned 70 per cent of the kingdom," suggesting that a crisis of the aristocracy is perhaps overestimated (*Writing and Society: Literacy, Print, and Politics in Britain, 1590-1660* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 27).

⁷² William Harrison, *The Description of England: The Classic Contemporary Account of Tudor Social Life*, ed. Georges Edelen (New York: The Folger Shakespeare Library, 1994). Thomas Wilson, "The State of England, anno dom. 1600," *Camden Miscellany* xvi. (London: Camden Society, 1936), 39.

⁷³ Quomodo has three speeches where he imagines the status and reputation land will confer upon him (2.3.91-100; 2.3.374-6; and 3.4.1-19).

⁷⁴ Felicity Heal, "The Idea of Hospitality in Early Modern England," *Past & Present* 102 (1984): 66-93, 67.

In the anonymous dialogue *Cyvile and Uncyvile Life* (1579), two viewpoints on hospitality are expressed. Vincent, a rural gentleman, claims that in the country “hospitalitie is liberally kept” and “neighbours doo meete often without ceremony, chearing, and conuersing one with an other, without disdayne, or enuie,” which Vincent takes a sign that in the city there is “less liberality to inferiors.”⁷⁵ He goes on to explain that “in the Towne it seemeth contrary, there is no meetinge of neighbours, without special conuitation, no salutation, without much respect, & ceremony.”⁷⁶ Vincent emphasizes that linguistic etiquette is central to city values, but town values allow a more free mode of speech. Vallentine, his interlocutor and a city gentleman, responds that “ceremonies of ciuility” are modes of discretion, claiming that “a knot of good and famylier freendes bee met, to make merry, and talke” in open, but if a rude stranger comes in unannounced, then “you shall finde all the mirth marred, and their free speech conuerted to respecte.”⁷⁷ While Vincent calls his open door generosity, Vallentine suggests that such credulity limits other guests’ ability to speak openly.⁷⁸ Vallentine challenges Vincent’s definition of civility and generosity, showing his interlocutor that traditional manners can actually infringe upon free conversation. According to Felicity Heal, Vallentine points out that the traditional notion of hospitality “was a wasteful and uncivilized way of providing reciprocal entertainment for neighbours, friends, and men of influence.”⁷⁹ Vallentine claims that staying in the country, keeping a retinue of servants, and entertaining with lavish feasts is costly, going so far as to say that such generosity is “couetous, and clownishe honour they cloak vnder pretence of

⁷⁵ Anonymous, *Cyvile and Uncyvile Life* (Richard Jones: London, 1579), Eii.

⁷⁶ Anonymous, *Cyvile and Uncyvile Life*, Eii.

⁷⁷ Anonymous, *Cyvile and Uncyvile Life*, Eii.

⁷⁸ In his poem, “Inviting a Friend to Supper,” Ben Jonson notes the importance of free speech at the table, saying “No simple word, / That shall be uttered at our mirthful board, / Shall make us sad next morning: or affright / The liberty, that we’ll enjoy tonight” (Ben Jonson, “Inviting a Friend to Supper,” *Ben Jonson: The Complete Poems*, ed. George Parfitt (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 39-42).

⁷⁹ Heal, “The Idea of Hospitality,” 87.

hospitalitie.”⁸⁰ At the end of their dialogue, Vallentine finally succeeds in showing Vincent that city gentlemen have better opportunities for advancement, but that they also exert less of a drain on the rural poor; furthermore, traditional expressions of civility might in fact mask incivility. The dialogue underscores, as Jennifer Richards has demonstrated, the importance of civil conversation “as a negotiation between conflicting interests.”⁸¹ Moreover, the dialogue repeatedly scrutinizes the content of key concepts, such as hospitality, civility, and covetousness.

Vallentine uses *paradiastole* to show Vincent that some city vices are actually virtues, arguing that ceremonies of civility encourage communities to use discretion, which protects civil conversation. Vallentine also shows him that the city’s “less liberality” is actually more honest than the rural hospitality that cloaks exploitation, challenging the very concepts that were seen to bind community. Steve Hindle argues that “issues of power and prestige, and of deference and subordination, which loomed large in the rituals of reciprocity and exchange” were “stage-managed by the aristocracy” to intensify status differentiation.⁸² That Vallentine’s and Vincent’s dialogue revolves around redefining concepts that are central to social order highlights *paradiastole*’s potency in early modern discourse, but it also shows that the means by which the gentry ensured their superiority was a topic of discourse. Land and generosity to one’s tenants is more complicated than idealized charity, and Vallentine’s *paradiastole* questions the concepts that underlie those actions. Paul Yachnin reads the play as affirming Easy’s authority, explaining that “the main plot is the sacramental mode: the victory of the main-plot protagonist, Richard Easy, over his mercenary opponent, Epehestian Quomodo, constitutes an authoritative judgment

⁸⁰ Anonymous, *Cyvile and Uncyvile Life*, Jiii.

⁸¹ Jennifer Richards, *Rhetoric and Courtliness in Early Modern Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 90. This is precisely the kind of negotiation that Dr. Nowell performs in *If You Know Not Me*.

⁸² Steve Hindle, “Dearth, Fasting and Alms: The Campaign for General Hospitality in Late Elizabethan England,” *Past & Present* 172 (2001): 44-86, 47.

on the opposing claims of upper-class exclusivity and middle-class ambition.”⁸³ While this reading rightly points out that the play affirms Easy’s right to the land, Middleton’s plays in the same period frequently question gentry values; in fact, his depiction of gentry prodigality in *Father Hubbard’s Tales* (1604), his depiction of Bounteous Progress’ hospitality in *A Mad World, My Masters* (1605), and his collaborative depiction of generosity in *Timon of Athens* (1605-6) indicate a deep skepticism toward gentry hospitality.⁸⁴ Middleton problematizes these controversial concepts by using *paradiastole* to tease out how they are manifested in society, showing that Middleton is perhaps more interested in examining the vocabulary on which the discussion of social order is based rather than affirming or rejecting a particular concept. *Paradiastole* is ideally suited to explore the complicated ways land figures in the play because it emphasizes the elasticity of these concepts, underscoring, too, how early modern authors use rhetorical figures to complicate and question social discourse.

i. Reframing vices in early modern rhetorical manuals

While most early modern definitions of *paradiastole* maintain that the figure redefines a vice as a virtue, classical rhetorical manuals understood the figure quite differently. *Rhetorica ad Herennium* notes that the figure is used in legal defense: “What the person speaking against us calls justice we shall demonstrate to be cowardice, and a lazy and corrupt form of liberality.”⁸⁵ For classical and early modern rhetoricians alike, the figure is almost entirely used in relation to the cardinal virtues, and the distinction between liberality and prodigality is invariably the focus of much discussion. Quentin Skinner demonstrates that “If virtue is a mean, it follows that many

⁸³ Paul Yachnin, “Social Competition in Middleton’s *Michaelmas Term*,” *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 13.1 (1987): 87-99, 89-90.

⁸⁴ Dates taken from *Thomas Middleton and Early Modern Textual Culture: A Companion to the Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Vagnino (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007).

⁸⁵ Anonymous, *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, trans. Harry Caplan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), III.III.6, 166-8.

of the vices, far from being ‘contraries’ of the virtues, will be likely to appear disconcertingly close to them.”⁸⁶ Classical writers used *paradiastole* to exploit the proximity between a vice and virtue, seemingly urging speakers to challenge the arbitrary connection between words and their meanings, but classical rhetoricians regarded this as evidence of rhetoric’s power to challenge normative morality. Quintilian claims that a speaker can replace a vice with a neighboring virtue but “no one supposes that the words prodigality and liberality mean the same thing; the difference is rather that one person calls something prodigal which another thinks of as liberality.”⁸⁷ Quintilian is not necessarily interested in reshaping the linguistic distinction between the two concepts; instead, he persuades his audience to evaluate liberality in light of its nearness to prodigality, which is precisely what Vallentine urges Vincent to do. The anonymous *Rhetoric ad Herrenium* shows how *paradiastole* can change the terms of a discourse, but Quintilian recognizes that *paradiastole* forces audiences to mediate meaning for themselves, an important distinction that places the audience in a more active role. The slipperiness with which classical rhetoricians use the figure—to expose the near-fungibility between liberal and prodigal—made early modern rhetoricians suspicious, and they discussed it in starkly different terms.

Early modern rhetoricians, whose worldview embraced the inviolability of virtues rather than their flexibility, reworked the definition of *paradiastole* to correspond with humanist values. It is an ironic footnote in the rhetorical tradition that early modern rhetoricians redefined a figure that itself redefines. Thomas Wilson’s *Arte of Rhetorique* (1553) largely passes over the figure,

⁸⁶ Skinner, “Paradiastole,” 156. Using language that suggests a community of words and concepts, Cicero claims that vices are “neighbours” of the virtues, and that “cunning imitates prudence, insensibility imitates temperance...extravagance imitates liberality” (Cicero, *De Partitione Oratoria*, trans. H Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942), II.XXIII.81, 370.

⁸⁷ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, trans. H.E. Butler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1922). VII.VI.36, vol. III, 322.

lumping it in with two other kinds of amplification, only to say that we use it “when wee giue vices the names of vertues.”⁸⁸ In *English Secretary* (1592), Angel Day classifies *paradiastole* as “a milde interpretation or speech we colour others or our own faults” as when we call “a prodigall man liberall.”⁸⁹ While Wilson chooses to avoid discussing the potentially hazardous figure, Day aligns with classical rhetoricians, seeing it as a figure that makes actions more palatable to audiences; unlike classical rhetoricians, Day does not emphasize the figure’s ability to effect change in normative vocabulary. Instead, he uses the intentionally vague, “colour” faults to avoid explicitly criticizing its use.⁹⁰ While classical rhetoricians advocated using the figure to transform the audience’s understanding of the word itself—as Vallentine does with “hospitality”—Day merely states that the figure is used to make an action less egregious. Henry Peacham, in his *Garden of Eloquence* (1577), defines *paradiastole* as “when by a mannerly interpretation, we doe excuse our own vices, or other mens who we doe defend, by calling them vertues” as when we call “couetousnesse, a wordly or necessarye carefulnesse.”⁹¹ Peacham recognizes the political nature of *paradiastole*, categorizing it with other figures of Amplification that he explains through Cicero’s orations: “Cicero doth Amplify the thefts, the sacraledges, the robberies, the lletcherous lyfe, and ryots of Verres...he compelled Caesar to pardon Legarius...And made bold Caitiline dumme in the Senate, with great vehemency and copy, he disputeth much of religion, of dutyes, of the common safety of Cittizens.”⁹² Although his initial

⁸⁸ Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique* (Richard Grafton: London, 1553), 121

⁸⁹ Angel Day, *The English Secretary, or Methode of Writing Epistles and Letters: with A Declaration of Tropes, Figures or Schemes* (P.S.: London, 1599), 84.

⁹⁰ Both Wilson’s and Day’s manuals are written specifically for a gentle audience, and as Puttenham makes clear in a moment, the figure is useful for courtiers who must carefully navigate courtly discourse. Wilson and Day may be revealing classical influence, but they may also be revealing their alignment with their noble audiences. Rhetorical manuals written to commoners, such as Dudley Fenner’s *The Artes of Logike and Rethorike* (1584), largely avoid the issue, preferring instead to discuss virtue and vice in stark terms.

⁹¹ Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (H Iackson: London, 1577), B1r

⁹² Peacham, *Garden of Eloquence*, BIIIr.

description points to the figure's ability to conceal vice, Peacham connects *paradiastole* to the civil tumults in Roman history, showing that Cicero used the figure to great effect. Unlike Wilson and Day, Peacham elaborates on the figure's social power. He points out that Cicero's deft use of the figure allowed him to expose Catiline and protect the polis, and by juxtaposing a critical opening description of the figure with a positive example of its use, Peacham appreciates the figure's danger as much as its utility.

George Puttenham, in *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), takes a much less politically-engaged approach, defining *paradiastole* as a figure "when we make the best of a bad thing, or turne a signification to the more plausible sence: as, to call an vnthrift, a liberall Gentleman...the niggard, thriftie."⁹³ Puttenham's definition suggests a more commercial understanding of the figure, emphasizing its ability to look at the bright side of an unthrift transaction. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the more common application of "plausible" in the period was either "Acceptable, agreeable, pleasing, gratifying" or "Expressing applause or approbation; plausible."⁹⁴ Puttenham is not interested in the figure's ability to alter truth content, making an argument more plausible in the contemporary sense; instead, he shows that the figure is useful in making an argument more agreeable, a courtly take on a figure typically reserved for discussing ethics. While Wilson and Day follow the classical tradition that the figure is used for moral arguments, Puttenham emphasizes the figure as an example of artful amplification. By the time Puttenham writes his *Art of English Poesie*, rhetoricians had long been aware of the figure's political utility, ingratiating oneself with an interlocutor by "colouring" his actions. While each of the rhetoricians bring up the figure's dangers only to then describe its utility, Peacham is singular in his detailed description of its political utility.

⁹³ Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesy*, ed. Frank Whigham and Wayne Rebhorn (Ithaca, 2007), 269

⁹⁴ *OED*, "plausible, adj. II. 1a and 2a."

Seemingly aware of the figure's capacity to transform, Peacham's expanded *Garden of Eloquence* in 1593 elides the ambiguity of the definition in his 1577 version. Peacham introduces the term, saying "There is another faultie tearme of speech, called *Paradiastole*, which in this place may well be mentioned, for that it also opposeth the truth by false tearmes, and wrong names" like calling "craft and deceit wisdom and pollicie."⁹⁵ Peacham concludes his entry, saying "This vice of speech is a fit instrument of excuse serving to selfe-love... which for the better maintenance of wickednesse useth to cover vices with the mantles of vertues."⁹⁶ While Peacham's 1577 version calls *paradiastole* a "mannerly interpretation" with social utility, which is a peculiar euphemism for the figure, his 1593 definition rejects the social aspects and instead removes all doubt about its status as a vice of style. Peacham's use of the phrase "maintenance of wickednesse" suggests that the speaker will continue their wicked behavior, but several other meanings add significance to the phrase. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "maintenance" also meant "The action of providing oneself, one's family, etc., with the means of subsistence" and "The action upholding or keeping in being a cause, right, state of things, government... assertion of the truth."⁹⁷ Because "maintenance" can mean to support a wicked lifestyle or support a government's values, Peacham codes the figure's social consequences into his individualized definition. Peacham, unlike other early modern rhetoricians, acknowledges *paradiastole*'s nuanced complexity and responds by simply labeling it as a vice. The discussion of hospitality, ranging from Smith and Harrison to *Cyville and Uncyville*, underscores how the figure is useful in covering and uncovering both personal and social vice. Middleton's *Michaelmas Term* responds to this discourse about land and hospitality using similarly

⁹⁵ Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (H. Jackson: London, 1593), 168-9.

⁹⁶ Peacham, *Garden of Eloquence*, 169.

⁹⁷ *OED*, "maintenance," n. I. 3a, 4a, and 4b."

ambiguous terms in order to negotiate between traditional community and the individual on the one hand and social order and social ambition on the other hand.

ii. Justifying vice: Lethe and *paradiastole*

Middleton exposes the slippage between these concepts by using *paradiastole* because, as we have seen, the figure foregrounds the ambiguity of moral arguments. Like most city comedies, the play has an upstart gallant, Lethe, whose ambition is only rivalled by his impudent idiocy. Though his father was a poor toothdrawer, Lethe has ingratiated himself in London society and accrued enough credit and conned enough gallants to purchase a knighthood. His status comments on James I's penchant for knighting, going so far as to give more people knighthoods in 1604 than Elizabeth I had given in her entire reign.⁹⁸ Due to his lack of ready cash, James I turned to selling knighthoods, thereby destabilizing the static order that Thomas Smith had described two generations before.⁹⁹ Lethe's very existence in the play upends social order because he is not only an upstart gallant, but he is also a successful upstart gallant. He has accumulated enough wealth to purchase a knighthood and convince Quomodo to marry his daughter. Lethe's comedic gimmick is that he has forgotten his past lineage and forged a new life, but nearly everyone in the play seems to know his secret.¹⁰⁰ It is rather impressive, then, that the basis of a conman's scam is widely known yet he is still successful. His success, if only for a moment, underscores the gentry's gullibility and the fragility of social status, and he further destabilizes social status by reframing traditional noble values.

⁹⁸Lawrence Danson and Ivo Kamps, *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 91.

⁹⁹ Thomas Smith, *De Republica Anglorum* (Henrie Middleton: London, 1583). Smith claims that a person's "blood and race doth make noble and knowne" and "ordinarily the king doth only make knights and create barons or higher degrees: for as for gentlemen, they be made good cheape in England" (27-8). Smith desires rigid hierarchical markers of blood and race to clearly distinguish commoner from noble, but he is also aware—even before James I—that knighthood is not an essential quality.

¹⁰⁰ Rearage and Cockstone comment on Lethe's humble beginnings at 1.2.65-74, Rearage knows his full name at 1.2.151, and Thomasine is aware how Quomodo helped Lethe rise at 2.3.10-13.

In Lethe's first major speech in the play, he uncovers his litany of vices. Bragging about the authority he enjoys due to his "sudden fortunes," Lethe claims that "I can command a custard, and other bake-meats," and says that he is beloved "e'en quite throughout the scullery" (1.2.215-19). Though he tries to boast about the virtues of his newfound status, he ends up only commenting on his ability to command kitchen staff. After he complains about Thomasine, Quomodo's wife, not favoring him in a marriage proposal to her daughter Susan, he decides that "I'll deal like an honourable gentleman" by enticing "some discontented gentlewoman" to be his mistress (1.2.238-240). Lethe claims that to act like a gentleman one must maintain a mistress, but he also suggests that such behavior is honorable, underscoring the contradictory meanings of honor as virtuous and as gentle. He seeks to justify the vice of keeping a mistress by suggesting it is a way to announce his gentility. Mother Gruel, Lethe's mother, serendipitously walks onstage when he finishes announcing his plan. After her husband has died, she has come to London looking for work, and due to Lethe's fine clothing she does not recognize him. Lethe suggests that she become his bawd, saying he will use her "to pass my letters and secure my lust, / And ne'er be noted mine, to shame my blood, / And drop staining birth upon my raiment" (1.3.286-88). Though Lethe rightly characterizes his desire as lust, he says that being recognized as a commoner is the stain. Seeking to justify his lust, he claims that his blood, not the vice, would bring him shame. Mother Gruel responds by asking if Lethe has heard of her son, and he responds that her son is well employed "For his behavior, wisdom, and other virtues" (1.3.296-7). His confused mother responds, asking "His virtues? No, 'tis well known his father was too poor a man to bring him up to any virtues; he can scarce write and read," and Lethe responds, "He's the better regarded for that amongst courtiers, for that's but a needy quality" (1.3.298-

302). Lethe's comment that literacy is a commoners' skill is a typical—albeit dated by the early seventeenth century—defense of a noble's exclusion from labor.¹⁰¹

When Lethe mentions “virtue,” he suggests an ineffable gentle quality like Castiglione's *sprezzatura*, but Mother Gruel connects “virtue” to tangible skills like reading and writing. Her confused conflation strips the ambiguity from the values that gentles use to define themselves. The ambiguity with which the nobles define themselves—in terms like honesty, honor, or virtue—cannot be contested or acquired because the ambiguity suggests they are inherent qualities. Mother Gruel is unable to traffic in such vague terms so scans “virtue” as the ability to read and write, and she further deflates Lethe's attempt to sound naturally gentle by suggesting that if his father was not poor he could have been brought up to those virtues. Lethe's response tries to reiterate the ambiguity of qualities by saying that those are not a courtier's virtues, but he also implies that courtiers lack any qualities at all. His *paradiastole* of virtue, which accidentally implies the ineptness of courtiers, shows that he uses the figure to justify his own deficiencies. Furthermore, nearly every time Lethe uses *paradiastole*, he uses it by accident, which exposes his own ineptness. After his mother relents, Lethe allows her to become a servant as long as she stays far away from him because she is too neat, saying that “if you were fouler, so you were braver, you might come nearer” (1.2.315-17). After his inadvertent suggestion that courtiers have no good qualities, he overtly states here that among courtiers “foul” and “clean” are inverted. The earlier examples of *paradiastole* confuse the usual meanings of “blood” and “virtue,” but Lethe makes explicit the vague impression that courtiers turn vice into virtue. This may seem

¹⁰¹ In 1509, Edmund Dudley claimed that the commonalty lived by the sweat of their bodies and “may not grudge nor murmur to live in labour and pain. Let not them presume above their own degree nor any of them pretend or counterfeit the state of his better” (Edmund Dudley, *The Tree of the Commonwealth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), 45-6). Due to overall cost of managing land, the gentility were increasingly forced—by the mid-16th century—to acquire skills in numeracy and literacy for accounting, surveying their land, and basic estate management. Gentle labor, then, becomes closely associated with land.

like an innocuous comedic moment, but put into context with the rest of the play's interest with gentility, land, and inheritance, the moment indicates how changes in social status can lead to inverting cultural values.

Lethe separates gentility from the values, such as honor, title, and hospitality, that once distinguished gentility from commoners. In fact, when Lethe introduces his mistress to Salewood and Rearage—gallants he tries to impress—he claims incorrectly that she is a “gentlewoman of a great house, noble parentage, unmatched education, my plain punk” (3.1.81-3). Lethe's earlier slippage simply suggests that courtiers lack virtue, but here Lethe boasts that he has turned a virtuous gentlewoman into a plain punk, depriving her not only of her ethical virtue but also her virtue as gentle. When Lethe reframes vice as virtue, he appears not as the cause of vice but a symptom of a culture of vice. Susan Wells argues that audiences condemn the “rapacity and lust of Gruel/Lethe” more than “Quomodo's simple acquisitiveness,” but Lethe's blundering awkwardness merely exposes the city's vice—the courtiers' lack of virtues and the gentry's proclivity to maintain mistresses—rather than cause it.¹⁰² Lethe comedically introduces the vices that the play is interested in uncovering. As we shall see, however, Quomodo exploits those vices in a way that more menacingly challenges social values.

iv. Obscuring vice: Quomodo and *paradiastole*

The play introduces Quomodo and his minion Shortyard as they plan to dupe an unwitting gallant out of his inheritance. The gallant, Easy, has recently arrived in London after his father died, connecting him with other characters, such as Lethe, Salewood, Susan, and the Induction's Terms, whose fathers have either passed or are cruel. This dearth of positive fatherly roles is certainly related to the play's interest in inheritance, but that issue is a part of a broader

¹⁰² Susan Wells, “Jacobean City Comedy and the Ideology of the City,” *English Literary History* 48.1 (1981): 37-60, 54.

concern about social stability; in the play, fathers encode a rhetoric of inheritance but also the traditional values, land, and communal responsibility that are being eroded by people like Quomodo.¹⁰³ Through his deceit and legal machinations, Quomodo threatens the traditional values that supposedly maintain social order, and Easy embodies the fears of Thomas Elyot and other writers who accused the gentility of failing to acknowledge the profit in humanist values.¹⁰⁴ Quomodo, then, signifies the upwardly mobile middling sort, with their newer values that stress commercial self-interest, and Easy signifies the traditional system that places more meaning in honest dealing with one's neighbor. In fact, Cockstone comments on Easy's gentle gullibility, saying he is "A free-breasted gentleman, somewhat too open," which is "The gentry-fault" (1.2.57-9). While Quomodo attempts to acquire land and wealth rapidly, Easy prefers the traditional rural gentry method of slowly accumulating rents, and his distress happens only when he engages in a scheme to acquire quick money. When Easy meets Quomodo and his son Sim, Quomodo explains why he wants his son to be a lawyer and not a clergyman, saying "some of our livery think it an unfit thing, that our own sons should tell us of our vices," but lawyers are "good for our trade an increaseth the number of cloth gowns, for our word is, 'What do ye lack?' and their word is, 'What do you give?'" (2.3.458-65) Unlike the humanist program, Quomodo makes it clear that increasing his trade is more important than developing virtue. In fact, he inverts the clergy's role, suggesting that it is unfit to expose vice. Though Quomodo expresses an

¹⁰³ In the period, fatherhood is associated with paternal authority in both the domestic and social spheres, so the play's lack of father figures augurs social unrest. Perhaps the only passable father in the play is the Country Wench's father, who only rehearses stale proverbs. In fact, the entirety of 4.1 is devoted to Country Wench, now named Courtesan, besting her father in a debate whether or not her vice is morally permissible.

¹⁰⁴ For more on Elyot's anxiety that well-educated commoners would eventually replace an obsolete elite, see Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named the Governour*, (London: Thomas Berthelet), 41. According to Grafton and Jardine, humanism teaches that education leads to "the natural triumph of virtue over vice," offering "such vistas of intellectual and spiritual freedom as to make it irresistible" (Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth and Sixteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), xii). Humanism's emphasis on virtue, pragmatism, and duty to the community is the opposite of Quomodo, who favors vice, deceit, and individualism.

open allegiance to opportunistic individualism, he paradoxically recognizes the long-term benefits of humanist education.

Quomodo sets out to scam gallants of their lands for several reasons. Firstly, he sees the gentry and middling sort as locked in enmity, saying “They’re busy ‘bout our wives, we ‘bout their lands” (1.2.112). Secondly, he wants to make his fellow liverymen jealous, stating that “Now shall I be divulged a landed man / Throughout the livery: one points, another whispers, / A third frets inwardly...Especially his envy shall I have” (3.4.5-8). Thirdly, he wants to set Sim up in school so that he will become a legitimate gentleman, but he is aware that “most of our heirs prove notorious rioters...and that cozenage in the father wheels about to folly in the son” (4.1.89-92). Quomodo’s first two reasons invert the traditional ideal of communal obligation. Mark Bayer points out that “guilds were first established as fraternal organizations designed to promote community and religious involvement for all inhabitants of the city. Arguably, their most visible role in the community was the administration and distribution of charity.”¹⁰⁵ The traditional role of livery companies is to instill bonds of communal responsibility through civic rituals, distribution of charity, and membership.¹⁰⁶ Rather than see the company as a source of charity, Quomodo shirks the bonds of community in favor of promoting envy.¹⁰⁷ The last reason, however, acknowledges the permeability of rank at the same time as its inviolability. If Sim can become a gentleman by attending school, then the ranks are permeable; if Sim is to become a gentleman, Quomodo must do so by cozenage, which is passed down to his children who will lose their wealth. Sim is destined to inherit his father’s vice. For that reason, Quomodo turns to

¹⁰⁵ Mark Bayer, *Theatre, Community, and Civic Engagement in Jacobean London* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2011), 48. For more on the administration of charity and the companies, see Steve Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 109-13.

¹⁰⁶ When a new Lord Mayor was elected, companies paid for elaborate pageants, and the new Lord Mayor was elected on Michaelmas day.

¹⁰⁷ Quomodo mentions several times his distaste for charity (2.3.196; 2.3.251-56; and 4.1.100-4).

education to establish his son, but he overturns the traditional role of education. That education is central to disseminating the government's values is well-known; however, places of education were also central to establishing those values.¹⁰⁸ John Barston's *The Safegarde of Societie* (1576) notes that grammar schools were fundamental to the effort to cultivate virtue, ensuring that students "may profit the common weale in times of more maturitie and ripenesse," which establishes the school as "the Pilote of policies."¹⁰⁹ Quomodo disregards education as a source of virtue and instead only values its ability to confer gentility.¹¹⁰ He turns both the virtue of education and corporate community into a vice, and his recognition that both education and companies are important social institutions suggests an awareness of the power that derives from controlling discourse.

While Quomodo inverts the ideal social purpose of education and corporate community in the preceding lines, he also distorts a term central to maintaining social order. Gail Kern Paster has argued that Quomodo's "ambitions are entirely material," and that the play refuses "to idealize the significance of gentry."¹¹¹ While Paster rightly points out that the play refuses to idealize the gentry, part of the way it does so is Quomodo's undermining of the terms the gentry uses to distinguish themselves. After Easy failed to pay his debt of 200 pounds to Quomodo in

¹⁰⁸ For more on the school's role in spreading values friendly to the government, see Brian Vickers, *English Renaissance Literary Criticism*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 21; Lynn Enterline, *Shakespeare's Schoolroom: Rhetoric, Discipline, Emotion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 77; and Helen Jewel, *Education in Early Modern England* (New York: St. Martin's, 1998), 21-6.

¹⁰⁹ John Barston, *The safegarde of societie: describing the institution of lavves and policies, to preserue euery felowship of people by degrees of ciuill governments* (London: Iohn Shepperde, 1576), 105^v.

¹¹⁰ Though early modern authors frequently allure readers by referring to upward-mobility, George Gascoigne discusses a father sending his sons to school with the hopes that they will "by learning aspire unto greater promotion," but the father carefully qualifies his desire by saying that "Neither yet would I have you conceive hereby that I am ambitious. But if I be not deceived, Al desire of promotion (by vertue) is godly and Lawfull, where as ambition is commonly nestled in the breastes of the enuious" (George Gascoigne, *The Glasse of Governement* (London: H.M., 1575), Ai).

¹¹¹ Gail Kern Paster, "Quomodo, Sir Giles, and Triangular Desire," in *Comedy from Shakespeare to Sheridan: Change and Continuity in the English and European Dramatic Tradition*, ed. A.R. Branmuller and J.C. Bulman (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1986), 165-79, 172.

the first part of the scheme, Quomodo convinces Easy to sign a *recullisance*, which acknowledges his debt and the security that is forfeit if he defaults, with Shortyard and Falselight who are disguised as merchants. Quomodo's scheme is purposely convoluted.¹¹² He first gets Easy to co-sign a loan of 200 pounds of cash for cloth so that Easy can sell the cloth for a profit. Though Easy could simply wait to receive rents from his landholdings to pay off the debt, he wants quick money to throw a lavish party in order to ingratiate himself with other gallants. Before signing the new bond, Quomodo has his minions, disguised as sergeants, arrest Easy for failing to repay the initial loan. Falselight convinced Easy that he was merely a co-signer "for fashion's sake," turning the significance of credit in early modern English economy into mere fashion (3.3.42).¹¹³ The byzantine complexity of Quomodo's scheme satirizes the complexity of early modern legal practice, but it also shows how inverting a word's normative meaning can manipulate audiences. Easy is allured by a word like "fashion," which carries a connotation of civility among the gentry, but Falselight uses "fashion" to suggest the empty elegance of a gallant. As the precariousness of his situation dawns on Easy, Quomodo assures Easy that the arrest is customary, saying "'twas not my mind, Master Easy, to have you first," but "Since you are come to me, I have no reason to refuse you; I should show little manners in that" (3.4.36-40). The charitable course of action would be to allow Easy time to summon assistance, but Quomodo assures Easy that since he is there to refuse arresting Easy would be unmannered, thus distorting the usual sense of "manners." When Quomodo and Falselight use manners and

¹¹² Amanda Bailey discusses the importance of textuality and literacy in Quomodo's scheme, showing that the period "witnessed a significant shift from oral assimilation to print, which allowed the proliferation of legal commentaries, manuals, handbooks, and writs" (79). The transition from oral agreements to textual documents implies a concomitant shift from personal agreements to impersonal agreements, from communality to individuality. Subha Mukherji calls the law an "upstart economy" because—like Quomodo's interest in Sim becoming a lawyer—skill in literacy excludes those who do not have access to education (Subha Mukherji, "Middleton and the Law," in *Thomas Middleton in Context*, ed. Suzanne Gossett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 106-14, 109.

¹¹³ For more on credit in early modern society, see Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

fashion, he is deliberately using words in the gentle vocabulary to make Easy assume his situation is normal in the city. According to Markku Peltonen, humanists believed that the foundation of society is based on the inculcation of manners, and “the decay of manners of the people coincided with the corruption of the government.”¹¹⁴ Thomas Becon writes of the importance that schoolmasters teach “good manners and bring them up in humanity and civility of life, that they may know how to behave themselves in places and toward all persons.”¹¹⁵ Quomodo reframes “manners” as predatory rather than as hospitable behavior toward all persons. While Falselight distorts terms like “fashion” and “custom” to encourage profligate behavior, Quomodo cuts at the heart of the values that uphold social order by redefining “manners.” The cultivation of manners is important in stabilizing social interactions, but Quomodo’s redefinition of “honesty,” a key term used to define gentry, directly challenges the gentry’s claim to authority.

Manners played a part in distinguishing the elite from the commoners, but discourse about *honestas* was essential to sustaining the gentry’s monopoly on gentle behavior.¹¹⁶ According to Markku Peltonen, “rhetoricians followed Cicero and argued that the orator had to base his arguments on *honestas* if he was addressing the senators or elite and on *utilitas* when he spoke to the common multitude.”¹¹⁷ While common audiences were persuaded by topics that appealed to their practical interests, the elite were drawn to an abstract discourse concerning

¹¹⁴ Markku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought: 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 98.

¹¹⁵ Thomas Becon, “A new Catechism set forth Dialogue-wise in Familiar Talk between the Father and the Son,” in *The Catechism of Thomas Becon with other Pieces Written by him in the Reign of King Edward the Sixth*, ed. John Ayre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1844), 188.

¹¹⁶ For more on how manners were used to distinguish the ranks, see Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The Development of Manners*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York, Urizen Books, 1978); John Gillingham, “From Civilitas to Civility: Codes of Manners in Medieval and Early Modern England, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 12.1 (2002): 267-89; or Keith Thomas, *In Pursuit of Civility: Manners and Civilization in Early Modern England* (Waltham, PA: Brandeis University Press, 2018).

¹¹⁷ Markku Peltonen, *Rhetoric, Politics, and Popularity in Pre-Revolutionary England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 75.

noble virtues. The discourse was abstract, at least in part, because ambiguity allowed the elites to control the terms of gentility, shrouding the term in obscurity. The term *honestas* is as complex as it is semantically versatile. Jennifer Richards suggests that the term is short hand for the self-restraint that “facilitates negotiation between different and conflicting interests,” but Cicero includes truth-telling and moral goodness in his definition.¹¹⁸ An older, though occasionally popular, definition of *honestas* argues that martial prowess is true honesty. Francis Bacon writes that peace is hostile to noble glory, saying “No body can be healthful without exercise...a civil war is like the heat of a fever: but an honourable foreign war is like the heat of exercise.”¹¹⁹ The final, and by far most important, aspect of the *honestas* discourse is the emphasis that many authors put on civic duty, particularly holding public office or providing sound counsel. In *A moral methode* (1576), Francesco Patrizi defines the man of *honestas* as a “civil man” and “a good Cittizen” who is “profitable to his common weale.”¹²⁰ Peltonen argues that “it was only through the exhibition of the people’s virtue that civic greatness could be attained, and this required a community where the conditions of participation in public life were fulfilled.”¹²¹ This last definition of *honestas*, corresponding with *vita activa*, suggests that gentility is defined by the holding of public office or doing public service. Once the exclusive domain of the gentry, both office and service were increasingly open to those of common descent.¹²² Phil Withington complicates this issue, however, pointing to the “exclusionary potential of *honestas*, in the sense

¹¹⁸ Richards, *Rhetoric and Courtliness*, 2. For more on Cicero’s stance, see Cicero *De Officiis*, trans. Walter Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 2.10

¹¹⁹ Francis Bacon, “Of the Greatness of Kingdoms,” in *The Major Works*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 402.

¹²⁰ Francesco Patrizi, *A moral methode of civile policie*, trans. Richard Robinson (London: 1576), 48^v-49^v.

¹²¹ Peltonen, *Classical Humanism*, 216. Peltonen primarily uses the terms *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* to discuss citizen and gentry virtues, but the values I have laid out correspond neatly. The cultivation of self-restraint and virtue are similar to *vita contemplativa*, and the appreciation of martial prowess and public office correspond with *vita activa*.

¹²² See Chapter Two on *Every Man in His Humour* for more on commoners holding public office; see Chapter Three and *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody, Part II* for more on commoners and public service.

that its drive for order and civility, both of personal and institutional, could in practice justify the enclosure of power by those able to describe themselves as better or able within communities. It is to say that civic power and influence was to a large extent based on a control of discursive practice.”¹²³ Instead of the gentry controlling discursive practice to exclude commoners, Quomodo redefines the terms of gentle values to exploit Easy’s openness. Quomodo uses discursive practice, manipulating terms like honesty and manners, that excludes commoners and maintains gentle authority to position himself as the authority.

v. Understanding vice: Easy and *paradiastole*

Because Easy is a country gentleman from Essex, he is outside of the city’s discursive practice and must discover what is standard behavior in the city. Quomodo manipulates him by controlling the discourse, subtly appropriating gentry terminology like “honesty” to frame the blatantly suspicious contract as honest. After Quomodo says that good manners induce him to arrest Easy, he claims that not arresting Easy for defaulting on a loan would be dishonest, saying “You shall find me an honest man; you see I mean what I say...You’d ha’ me live uprightly, Master Easy?” (3.4.43-6) While *honestas* would typically emphasize generosity, Quomodo’s action suggests *utilitas*, practical self-interest. After Quomodo convinces Easy to sign onto a second bond in order to pay off the first, he gives the gentleman advice, saying “O, what’s a man but his honesty, Master Easy? / And that’s a fault amongst most of us all” (3.4.142-3). Quomodo states that a person is defined by their honesty, and for a merchant who deals in credit, that concept is particularly accurate; however, in an illustrative example, Quomodo gets dangerously close to overtly announcing the truth that he finds genuine honesty to be a fault. He is only protected from exposing himself because the term is ambiguous. Before launching into an

¹²³ Phil Withington, “Public Discourse, Corporate Citizenship, and State Formation in Early Modern England,” *The American Historical Review* 112.4 (2007): 1016-1038, 1030.

extended proverb comparing bonds to children, Quomodo says “Mark but this note; I’ll give you good counsel now” (3.4.144-5). His proverb teaches Easy—all too late at this point—not to involve himself in contracts if he is unfamiliar with the particular details, advice that embodies the pragmatic *utilitas* of a city merchant. In fact, Quomodo dispenses two more proverbs that compare bad bonds to bad children, and the complexity of the proverbs forces Easy to ask Quomodo to construe the meaning for him. Quomodo’s use of proverbs positions him as a schoolmaster, and when Easy asks Quomodo to construe the meaning, he accepts Quomodo’s authority. By first framing himself as honest, Quomodo becomes the moral and social authority even though Easy outranks him.¹²⁴ The well-meaning but prolifically gullible Easy repeatedly parrots that Quomodo is honest, showing that he has completely absorbed Quomodo’s false projection of city values.¹²⁵ Unlike Lethe, Quomodo does not use *paradiastole* to justify his actions; instead, Quomodo’s *paradiastole* covers his dishonesty in a cloak of honesty. He turns language into a utility, not unusual for the middling sort who trafficked in *utilitas*, by representing his covetousness as carefulness. When Quomodo redefines honesty, manners, and custom, he deliberately distorts gentle discourse to manipulate Easy.¹²⁶ Although Easy has a proclivity to gullibility, he slowly learns the intricacies of city values.

Easy’s transformation from gullible country gentleman to a gentleman who uses the mechanisms of city life is facilitated by his use of *paradiastole*. When the play first introduces

¹²⁴ The inversion of rank and authority further suggests a reference to education. Rebecca Bushnell shows a pervasive concern among early modern pedagogues about the complicated relationship between gentle students and their common schoolmaster, suggesting that the “schoolroom society blurred the status distinction” (Rebecca Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching: Early Modern Humanism in Theory and Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 35).

¹²⁵ 2.3.200 and 3.3.57.

¹²⁶ This move is similar to a teacher using terms associated with the *honestas* discourse to scold his noble student for not being honorable. Rebecca Bushnell shows how George Buchanan, James I’s schoolmaster, used this discourse to teach the young James about authority and virtue, but it also framed Buchanan as the sovereign in that relationship, a usurpation of James’ natural authority that the king would recall with irritation decades later. For more on this, see Bushnell, *Culture of Teaching*, 158-76.

Easy, he makes his lack of city knowledge evident. Cockstone comments that Easy's father has recently died and the city is full of "gallants of all sizes, of all lasts" and one can "make choice of those / Whom your affection may rejoice in" (1.2.48-50). In the city, Cockstone suggests, gallants can remake themselves by imitating a diverse cast of examples. Easy responds with characteristic openness, saying "You have easily possessed me, I am free; / Let those live hinds that know not liberty" (1.2.51-2). According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "possessed" meant to own property in the usual sense, but it also meant "to affect or influence strongly" or "to apprise of, acquaint with, instruct in."¹²⁷ By influencing and instructing Easy, they have come to be in possession of him as a property; in fact, he yields himself freely. Stephen Greenblatt has argued that in the early modern period there was "a powerful official interest in identity and property, and identity *as* property," suggesting that identity was in large part defined by what one owned.¹²⁸ The play exposes an anxiety about this property-based definition of identity. Quomodo is scorned for defining himself by his desire for property rather than through the traditional means of defining oneself, such as his livery or his family. Easy, however, turns himself into property to be defined.¹²⁹ Furthermore, Easy's use of "free" and "liberty" are complicated by the realities of city life.

While some humanist treatises used the terms in reference to republicanism, the way the terms were used by commoners was significantly different. Susan Wells argues that "the contradiction between commerce and celebration can be traced in the development" of the two terms.¹³⁰ Freedom was closely associated with the phrase "freedom of the city," meaning license

¹²⁷ *OED*, "possess," v. I. 3a and II. 11a.

¹²⁸ Stephen Greenblatt, "Psychoanalysis and Renaissance Culture," in *Literary Theory/Renaissance Texts*, ed. Patricia Parker and David Quint (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 220.

¹²⁹ In rhetorical and courtesy manuals, authors typically look to community, family, and God to define themselves. The Courtesan is "begot" once she changes clothes, so her identity is defined by clothing (3.1.6-7). Once Shortyard disappears, Easy says "Methinks I have no being without his company" (3.2.8).

¹³⁰ Wells, "Jacobean City Comedy," 41.

by a livery company to sell goods in a particular location, and the participation in communal existence was central to defining oneself. While freedom denotes the acceptance and legitimization that comes with entering the communal body, liberty was a quasi-legal term—heavily influenced by the locale the liberties—that implied a liminal position in London life that was outside the regulations and protections of London. It was, then, both precarious and a sort of emancipation from city rule.¹³¹ Easy uses the gentle definitions of free and liberty but seems unaware to the more colloquial definitions, and it is perhaps fitting that Easy uses the colloquial version because he places himself in a precarious social position. Because the play has already made Easy's gullibility explicit, the more traditional meanings of liberty and freedom are silent puns, and the colloquial meanings bubble to the surface. Therefore, Easy accidentally uses *paradiastole* by invoking the negative connotations—precarious, unregulated, and perhaps depraved—of both words. As he becomes increasingly embroiled in convoluted legal schemes, however, he begins to learn the nuances of city life.

Easy seems to become aware of Quomodo's malicious intent. When he signs onto the second debt, he tells Quomodo "I'll not trust your courtesy; I ha' sent for bail," hoping that he has "friends i'th' city" that will assist him (3.4.181-84). After friends fail to appear, he states that "A stranger's kindness oft exceeds a friend's" (3.4.260). His transition from not trusting Quomodo, to trusting friends, to then trusting the general community shows a growing acceptance that city life is far less hospitable than the country. At his most precarious position after having lost all his lands, Easy stumbles upon Quomodo's minion, Shortyard, reading the

¹³¹ When Hellgill tells the Courtesan that "Virginitie is no city trade / You're out o'th' freedom, when you're a maid," he is suggesting that remaining a maid leaves a woman unprotected because they are unregulated by a male (1.3.47-8). This *paradiastole* inverts the virtuous maid as chaste to the vice of maid as in peril. Due to liberty's polysemous nature, the "hinds" that know not liberty suggests both that country people do not know autonomy, but it also means they do not know precariousness.

deed of Easy's properties. In a wrath, Easy exclaims "Man is ne'er healthful, till his follies bleed" (5.1.15). When he decides to the best course to restore the health of his estate is to bleed, Easy embodies the *paradiastole*, suggesting that purging his vices will result in health. He attacks Shortyard, who immediately contrives a fabricated story, which Easy rejects, saying "When slaves are found, 'tis their base art to fawn" (5.1.38). The gullible country gallant has learned how to identify deceit, but he soon begins to use vice in order to restore his honor. Rather than the typical arc for a city comedy protagonist, Easy's restoration comes not with repentance but with revenge. He forces Shortyard to relinquish the deeds in language that conflates his actions and his lands, saying "Here's good deeds and bad deeds, the writings that / keep my lands to me, and the bonds that gave it away from me. / These, my good deeds, shall to more safety turn, / And these, my bad, have their deserts and burn" (5.1.54-57). After burning both his follies and the incriminating documents, Easy uses a document Quomodo had signed earlier to regain the claim to his estate. In other words, Easy uses bad actions to reclaim his good deeds.¹³² Following those critics who find that Easy's restoration is short-lived and he will quickly be duped again, Paul Yachnin states that "our sympathy for Easy rises no higher than it would for any other dumb beast led to financial slaughter."¹³³ By examining Easy's increasingly more shrewd and nuanced use of ambiguity, however, it appears that he has learned how to behave himself in the city. There is a correlation between how Easy uses language and how well he understands the intricacies of city life; if he can parse *paradiastole*, then he can understand the difference between vices and virtues. Unlike city comedy gallants who assert their natural claim to land, Easy restores himself by beating Quomodo at legal schemes. While the play may not

¹³² His actions are, as Fabian says in another scene that concerns status differentiation, "o' th' windy side of the law" (William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), (3.4.164).

¹³³ Yachnin, "Social Competition," 91.

justify the morality of such trickery, its lack of providentiality—of people’s inherent claim to things—certainly suggests that city life sometimes necessitates vice.

The play methodically points out that social control requires self-control. Easy’s well-meaning hospitality—like that of Timon or Bounteous Progress—is thoroughly manipulated. While there is a tendency among critics to detect a coherent perspective, the play is less interested in determining which position is right than in investigating the legal and linguistic mechanisms by which vice and virtue are constructed.¹³⁴ Easy incrementally discovers the language Quomodo and Shortyard use to cloak their deceit, and then he adopts that language to right a perceived wrong. The play suggests that Easy’s right is not uncontested. When he says to the Judge, “the lands know the right heir; I am their master,” Easy must provide written proof and Shortyard’s testimony before recovering his lands (5.2.76-7). Furthermore, the Judge, not Easy’s fiat or some ineffable quality of the land, must authorize the claim. Rights to property are not an intrinsic quality of a family but are authorized through legal and governmental mediation. The play stages the historical juncture when formal modes of exchange replaced informal modes.¹³⁵ The play represents a social order in flux, but formal and informal modes of exchange regulate the threat. The Judge and legal documents combine with communal testimony to reestablish order.¹³⁶ Through Quomodo’s deceit, the traditional modes of mediation, such as

¹³⁴ Critics have looked at whether the play is Puritan or anti-Puritan, pro-citizen or pro-gentry, and satirical or realist. For more on these readings, see footnotes 4 and 5 above.

¹³⁵ Formal modes of exchange include the law, government, and texts; informal modes include inheritance, community, and speech. While inheritance and community certainly do not disappear in the period, the frequency with which they are the subject of concern in early modern drama suggests the importance of this transition. In the backdrop of these changes is the tension between an upwardly mobile middling sort and the gentry who once had less contested rights to land.

¹³⁶ The main plot with Easy and Quomodo tends to prioritize formality, but the play’s subplot—where Lethe tries to marry Susan—prioritizes informality. Lethe’s avarice and lust are exposed by his mother, Rearage, and the other gallants. He is excluded from high society because no one will orally confirm his good character, which demonstrates the significance of credit when it comes to determining virtue.

livery companies or aldermen, are compromised.¹³⁷ Because Easy has almost no recourse other than deceit, the play seems to suggest that the conflict between Easy's traditional gentry values and Quomodo's city values made it increasingly difficult to distinguish vice from virtue. This could be either a condemnation of depraved city life, or it could be a condemnation of Easy's initial gullibility. What is clear, however, is that the play is interested in examining the collision between traditional gentry ideals and the pragmatic ideals of the middling sort.

The play suggests that both ideals presented in *Cyvile and Uncyvile Life* are not without problems. Vincent is correct that city life lacks hospitality and community, but Vallentine is correct that gentry hospitality leaves one open to abuse. Rather than present this dilemma as an impasse, Middleton presents a nuanced picture of hospitality that critiques Quomodo's animosity toward communality and Easy's naïve confidence in communality; however, the play indicates that Easy overcomes this tension when he adopts a hybrid traditional pragmatism, actualizing his claim to the land through cunning. Like *Cyvile and Uncyvile Life*, this presents a paradox wherein gentle rights can, in this instance, only be achieved through ungentle means. The play poses larger questions about how one should act given that cultural change—in particular the tension between traditional gentry values and pragmatic city values—has produced just such a paradox. When Michaelmas Term enters in the Induction, he tells his servant “Give me my gown, that weed is for the country, / We must be civil now, and match our evil; / Who first made civil black, he pleased the devil” (1.1.2-4). His *paradiastole* underscores the contrariety between country and city and redefines civil as black, a provocative slippage that conflates civil as city and civility as evil. Michaelmas Term indicates that the tension that the play will not depict “great quarrels in law” but instead “presents those familiar accidents which happened in town in

¹³⁷ For more on the role of aldermen and companies in mediating disputes, see Ian Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 58-63.

the circumference of those six weeks whereof Michaelmas Term is Lord. *Sat sapienti*” (1.1.71-4). Rather than present abstract legal proofs as one would expect in school, the play will present familiar scenes that have happened. While some search the play for a definitive stance, the Induction clearly states that the play will provide *Sat sapienti*, “a word for the wise is sufficient.” For Easy to find wisdom, he must interpret words and understand how they cover and uncover vice. Middleton might not advocate for a single coherent value, but he uses *paradiastole* to demonstrate how language constructs civic values. The contest over civic values is as much fought out in the courts and streets as it is in contested meaning of words like freedom and honesty, and Middleton uses *paradiastole* to indicate precisely how words shape values.

If You Know Not Me embraces the tension between gentry and commoners as a productive moment for merchants to use their newly acquired wealth to promote the public good. Tensions are mediated and assuaged by Dr. Nowell’s *descriptio*, and Gresham becomes a model merchant upon which other merchants can model their charity. Gresham’s charity blends profit and philanthropy, and his Exchange becomes an embodiment of benevolent commerce where young merchants learn their trade and the community convenes in a single public space. The Exchange of *Michaelmas Term*’s world, however, has turned into a space of uncontrolled deceit.¹³⁸ In Middleton’s play, rhetoric is used to obscure rather than describe, and rhetoric is principally used to cause tension between ranks rather than mediate it. In each of these play’s, rhetoric is the stage upon which the discourse about rank is set. In *If You Know Not Me*, merchants define their social role through *descriptio*, recognizing their responsibility both to stimulate social mobility and articulate their importance to the crown. In *Michaelmas Term*,

¹³⁸ Middleton never refers directly to The Exchange in this play, but it is the location of cons in *Your Five Gallants* (4.5.2-3), *Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (1.2.35), *Anything for a Quiet Life* (1.1.56), “The Blacke Booke” (480) and “The Penniless Parliament of Threescore Poets” (271).

Quomodo and Lethe obscure their social role through *paradiastole* in order to deceive gallants. In the last minutes of the play, Easy finally identifies the deceit and learns to use deceit rather than fall prey to it. That Easy turns to deceit rather than acknowledge his failure, as Gresham does after Dr. Nowell's mediation, suggests a less optimistic—if not more realistic—outlook on social affairs. In both of these plays, though, rhetoric is the epicenter of the social discourse. Both plays clearly present the immense gravity of language, and in the next chapter, we shall see a different set of problems that arise when social conditions threaten commoners' free speech.

CHAPTER IV: MANNERED RHETORIC IN SHIRLEY AND BROME

I. Introduction

While the socioeconomic changes in the early seventeenth century allowed merchants and others in the middling sort to define their social role in a changing social environment, the gentry in the 1630s—in part led by Charles I’s elitist tendencies—tightened their grip on economic and social control. The two plays included in this chapter, Shirley’s *Lady of Pleasure* and Brome’s *The New Academy*, pull from rhetorical theory to respond to the influence of manners in elite culture. Both playwrights comment on the tensions between rural and urban gentry, which became a social pressure point in the 1630s. As rural gentry continued to move to London during Charles I’s reign, the king’s policies are of particular importance when it comes to understanding the tensions between the rural gentry and their city counterparts. The rural gentry flocked to London to establish ties with the court, to have greater access to business dealings, and to engage in pleasurable pursuits available in the city.¹ While Elizabeth I and James I commanded the gentry to return to their estates during their reigns, the unprecedented frequency of the gentry’s relocation during Charles I’s reign forced the king to issue the most

¹ For more on the reasons why the gentry relocated, see F.J. Fisher, “The Development of London as a Centre of Conspicuous Consumption in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 30.1 (1948): 37-50; Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 183-91); and Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (London: Macmillan, 1994), 140-1.

stern warning.² In his 1632 Proclamation, Charles I ordered the gentry to remain in the country, maintaining their traditional responsibilities of hospitality and governance, but he also ordered “a census of all gentry residing in London in contravention of the proclamation and prosecuted offenders in Star Chamber.”³ The goal of Charles I’s Proclamation was to reanimate traditional forms of governance by revitalizing local administration and reprimanding dissolute behavior in the city. While Elizabeth I and James I had kept relatively open courts, granting access and petition to a fairly broad collection of the gentry, Charles I’s court was notoriously exclusive. John Walter asserts that Charles’ court adopted a variety of formalities and reverential rituals, showing that “distance and decorum became the hallmark of a court, to whose spaces increasingly restricted access itself became a careful marker of hierarchy.”⁴ Charles I’s policy of restriction was unpopular with the gentry, who relied on open access to request assistance or provide counsel about policies that would benefit their locality. While there is disagreement about the extent to which Charles I’s court precipitated political tensions or pacified them, it is clear that factions and individuals vied for influence in an environment—caused in part by Charles I’s policies—that required careful negotiation.⁵

² The gentry also relocated to London during the reigns of Elizabeth and James I. During Charles I’s reign, however, the problem worsened. Lawrence Stone claims that by the 1630s “three-quarters of the peerage, and probably more, had acquired for themselves by ownership or lease a fairly permanent residence in or about London” (Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of Aristocracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 189).

³ Kevin Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment: The Politics of Literature in the England of Charles I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 9.

⁴ John Walter, “Body Politics in the English Revolution,” in *The Nature of English Revolution Revisited*, ed. Stephen Taylor and Grant Tapsell (New York: Boydell Press), 2013), 81-103, 91. Charles I’s closest confidant, the Duke of Buckingham, granted access to the court and filtered who could request royal patents (Christopher Durston, *Charles I: The Personal Monarch* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 49). After Buckingham’s assassination in 1628, Charles I’s court was increasingly isolated.

⁵ On one hand, Mark Kishlansky argues that “there was no groundswell of opposition to Caroline government during the 1630s” (Mark Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed: Britain 1603-1714* (London: Penguin Press, 1996), 137). On the other hand, T.K. Raab avers that the decade’s conflicts set the civil war into motion, claiming that “the attempt to do without parliament in the 1630s was in the long run untenable” and “resistance to Charles’s policy was inevitable” (T.K. Raab, “The Role of the Commons,” *Past and Present* 92.1 (1981): 55-80, 65). Contemporary accounts of the period were equally diverse. The Earl of Clarendon commented that the period of Personal Rule saw “the fullest calm and greatest measure of felicity” (Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, *The Life of Edward Earl of*

In addition to the Proclamation, Charles I also had a string of policies leading up to 1635 that undermined gentry authority. In 1631, Charles I issued the Book of Orders that commanded petty sessions of the Justices of Peace, constables, magistrates, and gentry to meet and then report to the privy council quarterly.⁶ The Orders wrested part of the gentry's control of local authority and forced them to return to their homes during the sessions. While some gentry took the move as "a major extension of royal control over local government," the Orders attempted to remedy problems arising from "dearth and high unemployment" in the provinces.⁷ One of the most unpopular policies, the 1634 ship money tax, increased the tax burden on everyone, but it irked the provinces in particular because it obliged the provinces to "produce a centrally determined sum" as opposed to the "old system of subsidies" that collected a percentage.⁸ Charles I also turned to royal patents and monopolies as "more novel schemes to raise money," but those projects "loomed large in criticism of Charles I's regime."⁹ Royal patents were dispensed largely on the basis of favoritism, and given Charles I's notoriously exclusive court,

Clarendon, 3 vols. (Oxford: 1759), 1:70). Sir Henry Wotton, however, claimed that the period was "mainly factious and disordered" (L.P. Smith, *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton* (Oxford, 1907), 339).

⁶ Martin Ingram calls the Book of Orders "an official blueprint for a reformation of manners" (Martin Ingram, "Reformation of Manners in Early Modern England," in *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England*, ed. Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox, and Steve Hindle (New York: Macmillan, 1996), 47-89, 73.

⁷ Austin Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution: 1625-1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 70. This was clearly not the most popular of policies because Woolrych points out that "half the counties failed to return" any quarterly reports (70). The ship money tax, however unpopular, was largely successful in its ability to receive payment it ordered. Another similar declaration, The Book of Sports (1633), attempted "to buttress another institution which, like the country estate, was declining" (Leah Marcus, "Politics and Pastoral: Writing the Court and Countryside," in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1993), 139-60, 152). The Book of Sports licensed festivities, morrisdances, May-games, and Whitsun ales. While Charles I intended to mollify provincial unrest by encouraging lawful recreation, the policy was inevitably unpopular with Puritans. Both the Book of Sports and Book of Orders attempted to quell instability and disorder, but they provoked disapproval.

⁸ J.C.D. Clark, *Revolution and Rebellion: Stage and Society in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 46. For more on how the ship money tax affected the provinces, see Richard Cust, "The Collapse of Royal Power in England, 1637-1642," in *The Oxford Handbook of the English Revolution*, ed. Michael Braddick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 96-100.

⁹ Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 120-1).

those who did not receive or benefit from such partiality became disgruntled.¹⁰ While critics like Lawrence Stone have asserted that such policies led to the king's alienation of the gentry and inexorable political crisis, more recent scholarship has shown that, though nobles were dissatisfied with Charles I's policies, most did not abandon their support of the king.¹¹ Whether or not Charles I's court was rife with tension or enjoyed relative peace is subject to debate, but it is clear that the king's policies led to a crisis of authority that exacerbated tension between the rural gentry and their city counterparts.

Royal policy cultivated a climate that compelled the gentry to pronounce their privileges in new and creative ways; furthermore, the gentry had to negotiate not only the competitive climate of London life—where a high concentration of the gentry made distinction all the more challenging—but they also had to retain authority with the commoners who witnessed gentry power being eroded by the central government's policies.¹² Charles' policies exacerbated tension among the ranks that was already fostered by shifts in who controlled property. Alexandra Shepard and Judith Spicksley demonstrate that between 1625 and 1649 “yeomen experienced the most spectacular rise in both mean and median worth,” which “brought them level with the gentry's median worth by the second quarter of the seventeenth century.”¹³ Keith Wrightson details a similar rise in the merchant's purchasing power, which increased pressure on the gentry

¹⁰ For more on Charles I's dispensation of patents, see Roger Lockyer, *Buckingham: The Life and Political Career of George Villiers, First Duke of Buckingham, 1592-1628* (London: Longman, 1984), 88-90.

¹¹ Richard Cust, for instance, shows that courtiers continued to wait on the king and continued to seek patronage. Cust argues that it was still “an essential part of the *raison d'être* of the aristocracy that they should serve, and be seen to serve, the king” (Richard Cust, *Charles I and the Aristocracy, 1626-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 78-9).

¹² David Posner shows that in the seventeenth century, “the nobility found itself, or—more importantly—perceived itself, to be in a period of difficulty, tension, and transition, in which certain previously secure ideas of what it meant to be ‘noble’ were being challenged, modified, or replaced” (David Posner, *The Performance of Nobility in Early Modern European Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 3).

¹³ Alexandra Shepard and Judith Spicksley, “Worth, age, and social status,” *The Economic History Review*, 64, no. 2 (2011): 493-530, 516.

to create new ways to communicate their authority.¹⁴ The merchant William Scott writes a code of manners to other merchants, advising that they should “live pleasingly to others” and so succeed in business.¹⁵ In 1639, John Saltmarsh gives similar advice to merchants, saying that “they that would enfavoure themselves for the advantage of any businesse, must shew themselves affable, smoothe, and courteous.”¹⁶ While the gentry had adopted manners as a mode of distinction much earlier, commoners begin to implement manners for their commercial advantage in the 1630s; in fact, manners become synonymous with civil society, conflating the mode of distinction with what it preserves.¹⁷ The rural gentry’s idealized values of moderation was thrust into contact with the highly stylized code of manners used by London’s elite.

This confluence of events forced the gentry to define their role with more intentionality and force, and the resulting discourse about what constitutes gentility tended to emphasize how the gentry display their status. On the one hand, Thomas Gainsford proclaims that “a Gentelman vvithout meanes, is a painted barge without oares; faire to looke on, but there is no vse to him,” which illustrates a pressure on the gentry to display their means as a direct symbol of their social

¹⁴ For more on the rise of merchants, see Keith Wrightson, *English Society*, 182-90; Kevin Sharpe, *Politics & Ideas*, 266-8; and Lawrence Stone, “The Educational Revolution in England, 1560-1640, *Past & Present* 28.1 (1964): 41-80, 69-71. Stone shows that the number of university entrants in the 1630s favored the non-gentry: “the number of professional and bourgeois entrants was certainly increasing faster than those from the landed classes,” and that “English higher education did not get back to the level of the 1630s until after the first World War” (Stone, *The Educational Revolution*, 59, 69). Likewise, Patrick Wallis and Cliff Webb show that gentry sons turning to apprenticeships rather than other career paths peaks between 1625 and 1640 (Patrick Wallis and Cliff Webb, “The Education and Training of Gentry Sons in Early Modern England,” *Social History* 36.1 (2011) 36-53, 45. David Cressy shows that literacy in merchants, yeomen, and the gentry reached a peak in the 1630s then dipped sharply until the 1700s (David Cressy, “Educational Opportunity in Tudor and Stuart England,” *History of Education Quarterly* 16.3 (1976): 301-20, 315. In almost every conceivable metric, therefore, England’s youth avoid education and turn to other means to maintain their rank.

¹⁵ William Scott, *An Essay of Drapery; or, The Compleate Citizen Trading Iustly* (Stephen Pemel: London, 1635), 85.

¹⁶ John Saltmarsh, *The Practice of Policie* (E.G.: London, 1639), 29-30.

¹⁷ Keith Thomas notes that courtesy manuals in the seventeenth century “tended to envisage a wider range of contexts and to take into account the totality of social relationships,” not exclusively catering to elite readers as medieval and humanist manuals had done (Keith Thomas, *In Pursuit of Civility: Manners and Civilization in Early Modern England* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2018), 18).

utility.¹⁸ On the other hand, Richard Braithwait suggests that the gentry should “with timely *Moderation* so bound in an confine your affections” so that “you enjoy more absolute content in restraining, than enlarging.”¹⁹ While Gainsford suggests that the gentry should liberally display their means, which inevitably results in competitive displays of luxury among other gentry, Braithwait urges readers to display their gentility through restraint. Braithwait goes on to emphasize the importance of gentle temperance, saying that “a true and generous moderation of his affections, hath begot in him an absolute command of himself... a gentleman *will doe* like a gentleman.”²⁰ For Braithwait, to be gentle is a performance of a social ideal, the instantiation of ideals like moderation, hospitality, and generosity.²¹ Those who subscribed to the notion that manners defined gentility perhaps found it difficult to follow a constantly-evolving code of manners. According to Nicholas Faret, the gentry should learn memorize fashions “as in a table, the customes which are obserued, the powers which reigne, the factions and parties which are in credit, the men which are esteemed, the women which are honored, the manners & fashions which are in course.”²² Rather than perform gentry ideals as Braithwait suggests, the gentry who follow fashions are subject to incessant changes in social conduct, which operates as a barrier

¹⁸ Thomas Gainsford, *The Rich Cabinet Furnished with varitie of Excellent Discriptions* (I.B.: London, 1616), 51.

¹⁹ Braithwait, *The English Gentleman* (Iohn Haviland: London, 1630), 324.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 460, 266.

²¹ Keith Thomas also notes the connection between hospitality and civility, noting that “values of sociability and urbanity... appealed to English gentlemen who were spending more times in London, participating in metropolitan society, and meeting regularly in the country towns,” which he contrasts with traditional gentlemen who were “widely dispersed landowners, living relatively isolated lives in hierarchically organized households” and so “had less incentive to adopt these new styles of social behavior” (Keith Thomas, *In Pursuit of Civility*, 24).

²² Nicholas Faret, *The Honest Man: or, The Art to Please in Court*, trans. E.G. (London: Thomas Harper, 1632), 136-7. Likewise, Anthony Stafford writes that the gentry should “weare good clothes” and “follow the received fashion” (Anthony Stafford, *The Guide of Honour* (London: T.C., 1634), 57). Prioritizing fashion is not a particularly new development in the 1630s; in fact, James Cleland gives the advice that the gentleman should be trained to “transforme himself so easily without hurt of his health to al fashions where hee came, sometimes exceeding the riotousnes of the *Persians*” (James Cleland, *Hero-Paideia, or the Institution of a Young Noble Man* (Oxford: Ioseph Barnes, 1607), 63-4).

between the gentry and the commoners.²³ The discourse over what defines and best broadcasts gentility is a debate between those who choose to distinguish themselves through the elaborate symbols of manners and those who distinguish themselves by strict adherence to moderation.²⁴ Both modes of distinction, however, insist on strict adherence—either to manners or to moderation—which creates an atmosphere where a person’s attitude is readily legible in their language and behavior.²⁵ The legibility of these modes of distinction prove useful in determining how gentry discourse manifests itself on the Caroline stage. Richard Brome’s *The New Academy* understands tension between different kinds of gentry through the punning figures *paronomasia* and *syllipsis*. However, in Shirley’s *The Lady of Pleasure*, the discourse centers on the rhetorical figure *metalepsis*. The play contains one of the most clearly expressed examples of the conflict between country gentry and city gallantry in the 1630s, a conflict that helpfully demonstrates elite modes of discourse and distinction. In effect, the play stages a discourse about what constitutes gentility, including debates between nobles and gentles, as well as those from the country or court, about how they define themselves differently.

II. Metalepsis and Manners in Shirley’s *Lady of Pleasure*

²³ George Pettie, in his translation of Guazzo’s popular courtesy manual, claims that the gentry “are so much more esteemed by how much our civility differeth from the nature and fashions of the vulgar” (*The Civil Conversation of M. Steeven Guazzo*, trans. George Pettie (Richard Watkins: London, 1581), 123).

²⁴ For more on strict and changing rules of manners, see Jean Howard, *Theater of a City: The Places of Comedy, 1598-1642* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 168-82. For more on the gentry’s strict moderation, see Keith Thomas, *In Pursuit of Civility*, 26-35.

²⁵ Braithwait reveals a deep concern about those gentry who abandon the civil society entirely and instead pursue moderation too fervently, suggesting that those “Gentry betake themselves to such strictnesse, as to be deprived of common aire, live remote from all company, passing the remainder of their days in a wilderness” (Braithwait, *The English Gentleman*, 387). In a later work, he worries about too much strictness in observing fashions, noting that “You shall obserue those who are tyed to *affectation* in this kinde, set their looke, gate, and whatsoever else may conferre a phantasticke grace on their vsurped *Behauiour*, so punctually, as if they had entred a solemne Contract with eye, fface, hand, foot, and all,” but those whose “generous demeanours expresse themseules lesse strictly, but farre more comely; score to tye their affections to these seruile restraints” (Richard Braithwait, *The English Gentlewoman* (B. Alsop: London, 1631), 57-8).

In *The English Gentleman* (1630), Richard Braithwait defines a gentleman as “a Man of himselfe without the addition of either a Taylor, Millener, Seamster or Haberdasher...Hee scornes pride, as a derogation to Gentry...Amongst men he hates no lesse to be uncivill, than in his feare to God-ward to be servile. *Education* hee holds a *second Nature*; which (such innate seeds of goodnesse are sowne in him) ever improves him, seldome or never depraves him. *Learning* hee holds not only an additament, but ornament to *Gentry*.”²⁶ Though education is supposedly an inherent quality in a gentleman, Braithwait emphasizes the importance of learning in a proper gentleman. James Shirley’s *The Lady of Pleasure* (1635) echoes the sentiment that education is a necessary component of gentle behavior, demonstrating how an absence of serious learning affects gentry behavior. Bornwell, the play’s example of proper gentry, admonishes his nephew, who has just returned from university at the behest of his aunt, saying that “Learning is an addition beyond / Nobility of birth; honour of blood / Without the ornament of knowledge is / A glorious ignorance” (2.1.31-34).²⁷ Though he changes the terms slightly, he illustrates his point in a clear chiasmus, linking education to nobility then noble honor to the result of education. Instead of framing an ornament as something superfluously tacked on, both Braithwait and Bornwell assert that gentility apart from learning is ignorance. In fact, Bornwell goes so far as to assert that learning is a quality beyond birth, an additional obligation that his wife, Aretina, emphatically opposes.

Aretina, the play’s example of gentry indulgence, beckoned her nephew home from university because she fears that education is dangerously unfashionable. She laments that she

²⁶ Braithwait, *The English Gentleman*, 457. Note that Braithwait here reframes the definition of ornament, usually a word associated with superfluity, as a necessary quality; if it is not merely an additament, then it must be vital.

²⁷ James Shirley, *The Lady of Pleasure*, ed. Ronald Huebert (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986). All subsequent references are to this edition.

did not send him to France rather than university, saying that “they would have given him generous education, / Taught him another garb: to wear his lock / And shape as gaudy as the summer, how / To dance and wag his feather *à la mode*, / To complement and cringe, to talk—not modestly” (2.1.59-63). Like Bornwell, Aretina connects education and gentility, but while Bornwell states that education ornaments gentility, Aretina implies that gentility is defined by whatever happens to be *à la mode*. Frederick responds incredulously: “Madam, with your pardon, you have practiced / Another dialect than was taught me when / I was commended to your care and breeding” (2.1.74-6). Bornwell’s earlier chiasmus clearly outlines the relationship between education and nobility, but Aretina’s formulation confuses Frederick because she muddies that relationship. Aretina uses *metalepsis*, a rhetorical figure where reference is made to something by means of something else remotely related to it, to infer a relation between clothing and rank. Though her intent is clear enough in a general sense, the lines resonate with ambiguity. Aretina first establishes that French education is generous, a word which indirectly references rank, and she then proceeds to connect rank to a person’s clothing and hair, which contradicts Braithwait’s suggestion that gentility does not depend on a tailor. She elaborates on the curriculum of a generous education, stating that to dance and wag, to complement and cringe, and to talk but not modestly indicate gentle behavior.²⁸ The general sense that gentle education differs from university education is clear, but the *metalepsis* that connects rank and education

²⁸ Note the antitheses in these lines. To dance and to complement are neutral terms. To wag and to cringe have primarily negative connotations. To wag has the obvious connotations of a subservient dog, but in the period, it could also mean “to dangle on the gallows” or “to move briskly in animated talk: often in implication of foolish or indiscreet speech” (*OED*, “wag, v. I. 3d and 4b”). Likewise, to cringe carries almost entirely sycophantic connotations, such as to bow or “to bend the body in a timorous or servile manner” (*OED*, “cringe, v. I. 3a”). The gentle person, which here refers to the city gallant, is paradoxically obsequious but not modest. She also uses *soraismus* (affectedly using foreign words to appear fashionable) and *cacozelia* (affecting copiousness but falling into repetition), which are both figures explicitly connected with courtly affectation. For more on these figures, see William Poole, “The Vices of Style,” *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, ed. Sylvia Adamson, Gavin Alexander, and Katrin Ettenhuber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 241.

obfuscates meaning. Garb is used metonymically as a referent to education, but it also implies education proper to one's rank, which transfers meaning from education to rank without clearly elucidating the metaphorical connection.

Aretina uses garb as a metonymy for rank, suggesting that Frederick's subfusc is unbecoming of a city gentleman. The phrase, "Taught him another garb to wear," refers to Frederick exchanging his academic dress for more appropriately gallant clothing, but because she proceeds to refer to the proposed curricula—specifically how a proper gallant dresses and behaves—the phrase also refers to education. Furthermore, the idea that a student can be taught a garb is meaningless in most contexts, but in the gallant curricula, clothes are the subject. Rather than make the meaning clearer, as rhetorical manuals advise, Aretina's *metalepsis* submerges meaning under a layer of barely connected references.²⁹ She begins the string of images by connecting France to "generous education," which refers to France's notoriety for affectation and fashion.³⁰ There, she imagines, the French would have taught Frederick a garb of gallantry, clothing him in a "shape as gaudy as the summer" (2.1.61). Aretina's imagined connection between summer and gaudy perhaps evokes the intense brightness of summer, or the gallant's ability to parade in gaudy attire due to pleasant weather; the simile "shape as gaudy as the summer," however, might refer to Frederick's imagined shape being as gaudy as summer, or that Frederick's clothes are as gaudy as summer.³¹ It is unclear if it is Frederick or his clothes that are the source of such a dazzling spectacle. The *metalepsis* "taught him another garb" and the simile

²⁹ Thomas Wilson states that the end of rhetoric is teach and delight so that "hearers maie well knowe what he meaneth, and vnderstande him wholly, the whiche he shall with ease do, if he vtter his mind in plain words" (*The Arte of Rhetorique* (Richard Grafton: London, 1553), 1).

³⁰ For more on English attitudes toward French fashion, see Jean E. Howard, *Theater of a City: The Places of London Comedy, 1598-1642* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 162-208.

³¹ Huebert glosses "shape" as the general demeanor of a person, including his or her clothing, language, and disposition.

“shape as gaudy as the summer” substitute a clear meaning with a meaning peripherally connected with the image being conveyed. The *metalepsis* conflates education and gentility because it is not clear if garb refers to academic clothes or gallants’ fashionable clothes.

Although the general sense of Aretina’s passage is not entirely lost, the relationship between education, gentility, and fashion is difficult to parse. Her *metalepsis* strains others’ ability to interpret her meaning, which is evidenced by Frederick’s bewildered response. As opposed to Bornwell’s metaphor clearly stating that education is an ornament to gentry the ideals of lineage and honor, Aretina’s speech conflates education, gentility, and fashion, which reduces education to fashion. The result, then, is that the definition of gentility is obscured; if we learn anything, it is that gentility itself is defined by gaudy clothes and deferential manners. By obscuring the definition of gentility, Aretina makes gentility a performance. She reshapes Bornwell’s definition of gentility by rendering unintelligible what defines gentility. In *The Lady of Pleasure*, characters use *metalepsis* to challenge the gentry’s traditional responsibilities, such as hospitality and self-governance, and instead replaces those ideals with fashionable modes of distinction, such as manners and pleasure. Bornwell defines gentility through the gentry’s traditional social role, invoking easily legible terms like hospitality. Aretina’s *metaleptic* definition, however, points to her intrinsic right—her privilege—but she does so through the related concepts of fashion and manners, which obscures how the related concept actually defines gentility in the first place.

i. Excluding the middle term: *metalepsis* and society

Much like gentility, *metalepsis* is defined and applied diversely in early modern rhetorical manuals. Broadly speaking, rhetoricians consider it a figure that continues another figure, replaces a figure with another figure, elides meaning, or deliberately omits a middle word

in order to stretch meaning. Erasmus emphasizes how *metalepsis* can obscure meaning, saying that “in this we move by stages to what we mean to say.”³² Erasmus gives an example from *The Aeneid*, “the omnipotent father hid them in lusterless caves,” to show that by lusterless we mean blackness and so obscurity or hidden depths, but the *metalepsis* excludes the middle term, which only arrives at the meaning indirectly. Erasmus shows that the figure produces semantic incongruity, which Brian Cummings glosses as “a kind of metaphorical ellipsis.”³³ Philipp Melanchthon provides an alternative definition that classifies the figure as a unique kind of *metonymy*, noting that the figure works “when from one meaning another is inferred.”³⁴ By placing *metalepsis* directly after metaphor in his later *Elementa rhetorices* (1531), Melanchthon insinuates that the figure implies likeness, but that likeness is further removed than metaphorical likeness, which muddies the distinction between cause and effect.³⁵ He emphasizes that the figure obscures logic and causation by obscuring the middle term in a syllogism.³⁶ While those who align with Erasmus define the figure as a metaphorical ellipsis that obscures semantics, those who align with Melanchthon tend to stress the figure’s capacity to obscure cause and effect through likeness. Humanist rhetoricians, then, differ in their categorizations of the figure, suggesting that it compresses meaning by excluding a middle term or that it stretches meaning by

³² Erasmus, *Literary and Educational Writings 2: De Copia and De Ratione Studii*, ed. Craig R. Thompson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 339. Erasmus largely follows Quintilian’s definition (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, trans. H.E. Butler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 8.6.39).

³³ Brian Cummings, “Metalepsis: The Boundaries of Metaphor,” in *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, ed. Sylvia Adamson, Gavin Alexander, and Katrin Ettenhuber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 217-36, 220. For an overview of the figure in the medieval period, see William Purcell, “Transsumptio: A Rhetorical Doctrine of the Thirteenth Century,” *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 5.4 (1987): 369-410.

³⁴ Philipp Melanchthon, *Institutiones Rhetoricae* (Leipzig, 1521), Diii^v. Melanchthon follows Quintilian in placing *metalepsis* after the six major figures.

³⁵ Susenbrotus, like Melanchthon, remarks that the figure involves a gradual move towards likeness: “when we go step by step to what is shown...further away from its proper signification” (Johannes Susenbrotus, *Epitome troporum ac schematum* (Zurich, 1540), Avii^r).

³⁶ The figure excludes the middle term in a syllogism, so X is to Z excludes the middle term Y. Though I will not dwell on the implications in Ramist theory here, it is worth noting that disagreement hinges on whether *metalepsis* is a figure of rhetoric or logic

substituting cause and effect. In the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the definition and application of *metalepsis* becomes a critical distinguishing characteristic of rhetorical manuals.

English rhetorical manuals pick up on the disagreement between Erasmus and Melanchthon. Peter Mack uses the way rhetoricians define *metalepsis* to group those who follow Melanchthon from those who follow Erasmus, which illustrates that the authors are highly “alert to changes in stylistic fashion.”³⁷ The figure is a helpful tool to examine how authors view rhetoric’s function. Following Erasmus, Thomas Wilson defines the figure as “when by digrees wee go to that, whiche is to be shewed. As thus: Suche a one lyeth in a darke dungeon, now in speaking of darkenesse, we vnderstand closeness, by closenesse, we gather blackenesse, we iudge depenesse.”³⁸ Wilson defines the figure’s semantic manipulation with the Virgilian example. In the 1577 edition of *Garden of Eloquence*, Henry Peacham closely follows Erasmus, defining the figure as “when we goe by degrees to that which is shewed” to then proceed to quote the oft-cited example from Virgil.³⁹ In his 1593 edition, however, Peacham defines the figure as a kind of *metonymy*: “signifying by the effect a cause far off by an effect nigh at hand,” and although Peacham says that “when the word expressed and the thing signified stand too far asunder...the meaning cannot be understood,” he also notes that it usefully “teacheth the understanding to dive down to the bottom of the sense.”⁴⁰ Between 1577 and 1593 Peacham shifts away from echoing Erasmus’ definition and instead aligns more closely with Melanchthon’s emphasis on logic, and he even indicates that the figure’s obscurity might lead the reader to confusion or to a more deep interpretive engagement with the text. Like Peacham,

³⁷ Peter Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 87.

³⁸ Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique* (Richard Grafton: London, 1553) 175. Richard Sherry’s *A Treatise of Schemes and Tropes* defines the figure almost verbatim (John Day: London, 1550), Ciiii^v). Like Quintilian, Sherry places *metalepsis* directly after *abusio* (catachresis), which not so subtly implies the figure’s potential for abuse.

³⁹ Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (H Iackson: London, 1577), Ciiii’.

⁴⁰ Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (H Iackson: London, 1593), 24-5.

Angel Day seems to embrace both aspects of the figure, echoing the Erasmian definition “when by a certaine number of degrees we go beyond that wee intend in troth, and have meaning to speake of,” only to then provide an extended example about Jason and Medea with the note that “the originall cause whereof her just complaint was derived.”⁴¹ Day provides the quote, “Accursed soile that bred my cause of woe,” which he compares to Penelope, Ulysses, Paris, and Helen, showing how *metalepsis* substitutes the “soil” for what was actually the cause of the Trojan War, which obscures cause and effect.⁴² Early rhetoricians’ definitions typically stress how the figure alters semantics, but later rhetoricians pay more attention to the figure’s application in daily interactions.⁴³

Peacham suggests how the figure can negatively affect meaning or dive down to the bottom of sense, and Day implies how the figure can obscure the cause, and therefore who is the victim or who is the aggressor, of conflict. From Erasmus to Wilson, most rhetorical manuals that define the figure repeat examples with little clarification or application, which explains why Madhavi Menon says the figure “lurks in textual shadows” with “neither a clearly defined ontological status nor a sharply delineated physical form; its existence is purely relational.”⁴⁴ Given that the definitions of classical and humanist scholars typically echo earlier examples without further elucidation, such a lack of clarity is unsurprising. It does seem, however, that Peacham and Day provide the clarity that Menon finds lacking. Peacham’s 1593 definition, for

⁴¹ Angel Day, *The English Secretary* (P.S.: London, 1599), KKii. It is worth noting in passing that Day tacks onto Erasmus’ definition the idea that we go beyond what we mean in truth, which suggests that the figure inherently stretches the truth.

⁴² *Ibid.*, KKii. The quote is from a speech by the Nurse from Ennius’ translation of Euripides’ *Medea*.

⁴³ The metaphorical ellipsis of Quintilian’s and Erasmus’ definition emphasizes semantic alteration, but Melanchthon stresses how it alters the logic of cause and effect.

⁴⁴ Madhavi Menon, *Wanton Words: Rhetoric and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 73. The German scholar of rhetoric, Richard Volkmann also calls *metalepsis* a “very obscure and difficult figure” (*Die Rhetorik der Griechen und Römer in systematischer Übersicht* (Berlin: H. Eeling and C. Plahn, 1872), 364).

instance, applies a caution and interpretive advice to his example, which illustrates how the figure should be used. George Puttenham adds another illustrative, albeit bizarre, definition: “the hearer’s conceit strangely entangled by the figure *metalepsis*, which I call the Far-fetched. As when we had rather fetch a word a great way off than to use one nearer hand to express the matter as well and plainer. And it seemeth the deviser of this figure had a desire to please women rather than men” because “things far fetched and dear bought are good for ladies.”⁴⁵ Puttenham genders far-fetched words not so much to denigrate women as to reproach courtiers, a theme Puttenham returns to repeatedly. In fact, Puttenham claims that the user of “language and style” should not show “himself a craftsman, and merit to be disgraded” and should instead “wisely and discreetly...retain the credit of his place and profession of a very courtier, which is, in plain terms, cunningly to be able to dissemble.”⁴⁶ “But,” Puttenham continues, “may it not seem enough for a courtier to know how to wear a feather, and set his cap aflaut...and by twenty manner of new-fashioned garments disguise his body.”⁴⁷ For Puttenham, rhetoric communicates wisely and discreetly, a tactic he claims is necessary for the courtier, but he frames effeminacy as insubstantial ornamentation. Because that ornament is visible in figures like *metalepsis*, the insubstantial courtier would be revealed and disgraded. Puttenham links *metalepsis* with the pressures of court life, showing how a successful courtier should behave in order to retain their rank furthermore, he notes that wise and discreet dissembling—not learning new fashions—defines a courtier.

⁴⁵ George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy* ed. Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 267. The original spelling, “strangly entangled,” gives the impression that the tangle of far-fetched words strangles meaning.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 379. Whigham and Rebhorn gloss disgraded as “deprived of rank or status,” but the inference of being socially disgraced is also inferred. Puttenham claims that the courtier’s ideal figure is the allegory because it dissembles with more cunning.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 379.

Day, Peacham, and Puttenham supplement classical and humanist accounts of the figure with specific social applications, showing how the figure should be used in complex social interactions. These manuals apply a social hermeneutics, which describes the principles of rhetoric as they are applied to social behavior, to their accounts of rhetoric; they turn the close-reading of a text—a practice which is central to the early modern humanist agenda—into the close-reading of social interactions, which illustrates how style manuals borrow from courtesy manuals.⁴⁸ This change does not end in the rhetoricians of the late sixteenth century; instead, rhetoricians well into the middle of the seventeenth century continually underscore the social hermeneutics of rhetoric.⁴⁹ In *The dove and the serpent* (1614), Daniel Tuvill remarks that “speech is the onely Character, by which a man expresseth himselfe,” but he then proceeds to recommend that the reader should “therefore out of his owne discretion so leuell forth his carriage, that it may hold a certaine specious kind of correspondencie with most, and not give by reason of distance, or disproportion, occasion of offence to any.”⁵⁰ While speech reveals a person, Tuvill instructs readers repeatedly throughout the manual to practice discretion, concealment, and even dissembling, which gives the impression that the manual is more concerned with how to camouflage speech than how to interpret it.⁵¹ Tuvill’s manual only rarely covers the textual or linguistic aspects of rhetoric; instead, it discusses how rhetoric is used to negotiate various social interactions across the spectrum of rank. The manual argues that public

⁴⁸ For more on humanism and close reading, see Rebecca Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching: Early Modern Humanism in Theory and Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 117-44. I do not argue that humanist rhetoricians ignored social interactions; instead, I suggest that they were more interested in interpreting texts and harvesting them for moral insight than they were applying those texts to a broad but specific variety of social interactions, which is a hallmark of these later manuals.

⁴⁹ One of the most apt examples of early modern manuals attending to the close reading of social interactions is John Bulwer’s examination of the body’s language (*Chirologia: or the natural language of the hand* (Thomas Harper: London, 1644).

⁵⁰ Daniel Tuvill, *The dove and the serpent* (T.C.: London, 1614), 2, 16. He also claims that those who are not adept at concealment “can neither be profitable to themselves, nor seruiceable to others” (4).

⁵¹ Tuvill also tells readers how to flatter those on which you depend, how to dissemble in court, and how to use rhetoric for economic gain (*Ibid.*, 23, 29, 48).

people should “beware men” and adopt “the Wisedome of the Serpent...but the Innocencie and Simplicite of Doues.”⁵² Tuvill uses *paradiastole* to reframe the serpent—usually associated with vice—as wisdom, but he also uses *metalepsis*, suggesting that the serpent is wise but leaving out the middle term—discretion or shrewdness—that characterizes Tuvill’s variety of social wisdom. Tuvill’s manual builds upon Puttenham’s interest in tailoring rhetorical skill to a specific social application.⁵³

While Erasmus, Wilson, and Sherry relegate *metalepsis* to a minor role, Peacham, Puttenham, Day, and Tuvill spend far more time exploring its use.⁵⁴ The figure’s history reveals a distinct change in manuals from a focus on how to speak—in the humanist mode—to how to behave.⁵⁵ The manuals respond to readers’ growing interest in the ability to use manners to successfully navigate the social world, which is a significant shift from humanist manuals’ interest in solitary and isolated study.⁵⁶ These manuals respond to a clientele who are increasingly motivated by sociopolitical circumstances to learn and adapt to the manners that define the elite. Because *metalepsis* obscures the relationship between cause and effect by excluding a middle term, the figure is useful in examining how the gentry define themselves.

ii. Moderation and manners in *The Lady of Pleasure*

⁵² Ibid., 8.

⁵³ John Barton defines *metalepsis* as a kind of metaphor, and he also describes the figure’s social application in relation to scriptural hermeneutics (John Barton, *The Art of rhetorick concisely handled* (Nicolas Alsop: London, 1634), Cii’).

⁵⁴ Broadly speaking, those who follow Erasmus think the figure alters semantics as a metaphorical ellipsis, and those who follow Melanchthon think that the figure alters logic by obscuring cause and effect.

⁵⁵ Though it is a later example, John Smith’s definition of the term follows Melanchthon’s connection between *metalepsis* and logic. He writes claims that the figure expresses one thing but “signifieth another word or thing removed from it by certain degrees. Or, it is the cloathing of a Trope with excellency” that signifies “by the Effect a Cause far off” (*The Myserie of Rhetorique Unveil’d* (E. Cotes: London, 1657), 44). Smith, like Puttenham, compares the figure to a superficial ornament.

⁵⁶ For more on humanist rhetoric as a solitary pursuit, see Lynn Enterline, *Shakespeare’s Schoolroom: Rhetoric, Discipline, Emotion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 4; Jennifer Richards, *Rhetoric and Courtliness in Early Modern Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 20-3; and T.W. Baldwin, *Small Latine & Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944) 1:90.

Because the sociopolitical atmosphere of the 1630s compelled the gentry to redefine how they expressed their status, the gentry turned to manners or moderation to articulate their role in society, and in Shirley's *Lady of Pleasure*, characters use *metalepsis* to either explore or define what constitutes gentility.⁵⁷ Shirley's play stages a dynamic discourse where different perspectives toward gentry are coded in *metalepsis*, and the figure helpfully illustrates whether a character has a sensible understanding of their social role, or whether they obscure their social role by relying on a far off signification like manners or fashion. The play responds to tensions between different articulations of gentility by exploring the causes and effects of different kinds of gentle behavior, a mode of exploration for which *metalepsis* is ideally suited. In Aretina's exchange with Frederick and Bornwell, with which I began, Aretina uses *metalepsis* to conflate fashion and gentility, obscuring the effect (gentility) and the cause (fashion), but Bornwell states clearly that education is only an accidental quality of gentility. In the play, characters use *metalepsis* to express their particular form of gentility, creating a discourse within the play about the appropriate way to define the gentry. This use of rhetoric mirrors a broader cultural discourse about the changing social role of the gentry, which illustrates how rhetoric is to think through and define social hierarchy. The link between rhetoric and rank, which is coded in *metalepsis*, clarifies the play's stance toward the gentry's social function and whether manners or moderation best fulfills that function, which are aspects of Shirley's drama to which scholars frequently turn.

In the past few decades, scholarship has tended to comment on the play's style, which explores whether Shirley's language reveals royalist sympathies or critiques the decadence of the royal court. Ira Clark argues that Shirley's plays present characters who "find, try, learn and

⁵⁷ In Peacham's words, characters use the figure to "dive down to the bottom of sense" or to signify "by the effect a cause far off" (Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (1593), 24-5.)

adapt stereotypical privileged roles by experimenting with model speech,” and he corrects “pretenders who prove their innate lack of degree by their lack of facility with language which distinguishes the elite.”⁵⁸ Clark rightly points out that speech marks elite status, but by examining how characters use *metalepsis* in the play, I demonstrate with specificity how rhetoric models and embodies attitudes toward gentility in the period and what kinds of elite style are embraced or rejected. Clark also posits that the play “typifies Shirley’s allegiance to courtly attitudes about manners and prerogatives” and “embeds a veneration of absolute monarchy,” but the play exposes how Aretina’s notion of prerogatives is counter-productive in its program to consolidate gentry authority.⁵⁹ While Clark perceives royalist sympathies in Shirley’s drama, Martin Butler recognizes clues that point to Shirley’s critique of royal interference.⁶⁰

Butler argues against the opinion that Caroline drama obsequiously parrots royalist views, suggesting instead that the drama staged opposition to the crown throughout the 1630s, which persuaded scholarship that Caroline drama is a useful source for exploring political tensions in the Caroline period. In his reading of *Lady of Pleasure*, Butler suggests that Celestina’s “manners are not a blind for lascivious or over-liberal behaviour but a reflection of her true, virtuous nature,” and he claims that Aretina’s “extravagance is related to court tyranny.”⁶¹ Celestina’s manners are a practical response to her social situation, which positions

⁵⁸ Ira Clark, *Professional Playwrights: Massinger, Ford, Shirley & Brome* (Louisville: University of Kentucky, 1992), 137.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 130, 138.

⁶⁰ Martin Butler surveys the long tradition, including E.K. Chambers and Clifford Leech, of reading Shirley as a “decadent escapist” with royalist connections (Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis, 1632-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 1-18). Likewise, Zucker and Farmer catalogue critics who have dismissed Shirley’s drama as “decadent” and “royalist propaganda” (*Localizing Caroline Drama: Politics and Economics of the Early Modern English Stage, 1625-1642* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 2-4).

⁶¹ Butler, *Theatre in Crisis*, 168. In a similar reading, Kenneth Richard claims that “when Shirley refers to the fashion, however, it is invariably in a satiric way” (Kenneth Richard, “Satire and Values in James Shirley’s *The Lady of Pleasure*,” *Acta Neophilologica* 13.1 (1980): 49-57, 53). Shirley does not satirize fashion wholesale because manners are an important aspect of fashion; instead, he rejects fashion that distracts from substance, but he commends Celestina’s fashion. Tony Stafford also comments on manners in the play, suggesting that Celestina is associated with virtuous pursuits and Aretina with earthly diversions (Tony J. Stafford, “Shirley’s *The Lady of*

her behavior not as morally virtuous but as socially shrewd.⁶² Building upon Butler's connection between Aretina and court tyranny, I examine how the play also makes an explicit critique about the effect of rural gentry moving to the city, which derives from court influence.⁶³ Instead of advocating a particular perspective on Caroline politics, I suggest that Shirley describes how manners and moderation embody gentility, and he ultimately theorizes a way to unify seemingly disparate modes of behavior. While Clark notes Shirley's royalist sympathies and Butler underscores the political undercurrents of the drama, Juliet McGrath and Julie Sanders comment on the play's language. Juliet McGrath proposes that "good language," in the play, "would seem to be plain, unpretentious language," and "Shirley undercuts all but the most bland types of language."⁶⁴ Likewise, Julie Sanders claims that "it is women who are Shirley's plain speakers."⁶⁵ Although characters with whom the play seems to sympathize are certainly restrained, they do not avoid rhetorical effusion. In fact, the play's female characters are the most linguistically dexterous, a quality that is celebrated in *Celestina* and rebuked in *Aretina*. The suggestion that Shirley's style lacks the rhetorical flourish of earlier dramatists is one of the reasons why Jeremy Lopez suggests "James Shirley is the invisible man of the early modern

Pleasure: The Dialectic of Earth and Sky," *Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association* 4.1 (1983): 125-34.

⁶² Clark makes a point to transform the "idea of language as a moral sign to my consideration of language as a sociopolitical instrument" (Ira Clark, *Professional Playwrights*, 212). I follow Clark in emphasizing the social aspects of Shirley's language rather than its moral implications.

⁶³ Butler also claims that 1630s culture was "pre-political in the sense that it did not occur readily to men that society could tolerate dissenting opinion," but he confirms that the theater energetically tolerates dissenting opinions (Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis*, 19). The theater is an important source of dissent because official modes of dissent were precluded during the period of Personal Rule.

⁶⁴ Juliet McGrath, "Shirley's Uses of Language," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 6.2 (1966): 323-39, 330.

⁶⁵ Julie Sanders, *Caroline Drama: The Plays of Massinger, Ford, Shirley, and Brome* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1999), 14. While Caroline drama lacks Marlovian hyperbole or Euphuistic copia, the drama of the period is rich in other kinds of rhetoric. Marina Tarlinskaja compares Shakespeare's and Shirley's versification, showing how Shirley's rhetoric is skillful (Marina Tarlinskaja, "Versification from Shakespeare to Shirley," in *James Shirley and Early Modern Theatre*, ed. Barbara Ravelhofer (London: Routledge, 2017), 193-210.

dramatic canon.”⁶⁶ Shirley’s rhetoric in *The Lady of Pleasure* is far from bland or uninspired; instead, the play uses *metalepsis* to frame a complex discourse that questions whether manners or moderation best fulfills the gentry’s social role, a role that desperately requires defining due to the crown’s recent policies.⁶⁷

The play opens with Aretina complaining to Steward that the country, which her and Bornwell have just left, is “primitive” and “barren,” (1.1.4, 6). Steward responds that in the country Aretina lived “secure and innocent, beloved of all, praised for your hospitality, and prayed for” (1.1.25-6). When Steward claims that she will miss the wholesome conversation of the country, Aretina retorts that Steward is only “a country gentleman, by your affection to converse with stubble. His tenants will advance your wit, and plump it so with beef and bag-pudding” (1.1.38-40). Aretina compares speaking with commoners to speaking with stubble, but she then shifts the comparison to suggest that such conversation would fill Steward’s head with bag-pudding.⁶⁸ She rapidly shifts from conversation, to stubble, to wit, and then to food, but she excludes the middle concept that conversation is edible. The thrust of Aretina’s comparison argues that country language is not for cultivating wit, but she obscures the meaning with far-fetched references, and she renders unclear whether conversation or simply being in the country

⁶⁶ Jeremy Lopez, “Time for James Shirley,” *James Shirley and Early Modern Theatre*, ed. Barbara Ravelhofer (London: Routledge, 2017), 17-31, 17. Lopez seeks to address Shirley’s exclusion from the canon by showing how he has been lost in between Elizabethan and Restoration drama, but he classifies *Lady of Pleasure* as a looking toward the “comedy of manners” (18). This conflation of 1630s and 1660s drama is not uncommon, but it does tend to lead to the periodization that excludes Shirley from the canon. Jean Howard comments on this tendency, suggesting that critics make a distinction between comedy of manners and the 1630s “town culture” (Jean E. Howard, “Dancing Masters and the Production of Cosmopolitan Bodies in Caroline Town Comedy,” in *Localizing Caroline Drama: Politics and Economics of the Early Modern English Stage, 1625-1642*, ed. Adam Zucker and Alan Farmer (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 183-212.

⁶⁷ Shirley’s interest in how the crown’s policy disrupts gentry authority is also a subject in his *Triumph of Peace* (1634). For more on how the masque responds to Charles’ policies, see Lawrence Venuti, “The Politics of Allusion: The Gentry in Shirley’s ‘The Triumph of Peace,’” *English Literary Renaissance* 16.1 (1986): 1082-205; Andrew J. Sabol, “New Documents on Shirley’s Masque ‘The Triumph of Peace,’” *Music & Letters* 47.1 (1966): 10-26; and Kevin Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment*, 220-24.

⁶⁸ The *OED* notes that “bagpudding” is, as the name would suggest, pudding boiled in a bag, a common meal in the country (*OED*, “bagpudding, n. I. 1a.”).

causes a lack of wit. While this may seem like an innocuous jab, it involves the traditional responsibility of the rural gentry. Aretina and Bornwell abandon their duty of hospitality, but they also abandon their duty to civilize their tenants, a duty which Thomas Milles clarifies, saying that the gentry have a responsibility “to draw the rude people unto a more civil kind of life and courtesy of behavior.”⁶⁹ The gentry’s absence deprives commoners of hospitable aid, but it also deprives commoners of the ability to learn manners from their social interactions with the gentry. Aretina obscures the mutually-beneficial cooperation between the gentry and commoners, ignoring the gentry’s duty as social role model and focusing instead on how it affects her lifestyle, and she makes clear in the next scene that manners are central to achieving this lifestyle. The *metalepsis*, then, illustrates Aretina’s shift from the traditional rural values of fellowship and community toward the city gentry’s emphasis on well-mannered conversation.

When Bornwell comes onstage, he continues Steward’s discussion about the gentry’s responsibility in the country. He reprimands Aretina for asking him to abandon their country estate, but she responds that he has the duty to provide for a woman of her “birth and education” (1.1.58). Bornwell proceeds to give a lengthy oration laying out the negative effects of Aretina’s prodigal spending, gaming, and following ostentatious fashions. He frames the discussion by saying that he will “be studious, Madam, to give the dignity of your birth all the best ornaments which become my fortune,” but she has “obeyed no modest counsel to affect, nay study ways of pride and costly ceremony” (1.1.62-3,72-3). Bornwell establishes that performing gentility is a learned behavior, a skill that is perfected by study and counsel. His oration is crammed with metaphors, such as the claim that her gaudy jewels “burn out the spectators’ eyes / And show

⁶⁹ Thomas Milles, *The Catalogue of Honor* (William Iaggard: London, 1610), 16. A contemporary commentator praises a Lincolnshire gentleman because he “doth daily civilize the rudeness of the people” (qtd. in HMC, *Cowper*, vol. 2 (London, 1888), 51).

like bonfires on you by the tapers,” that illustrate in clear comparisons how city gentility is a false signifier of honor (1.1.93-4). Throughout Bornwell’s oration, Aretina interjects with articulations that remind Bornwell that her “birth” necessitates a proper lifestyle (1.1.58). When she responds to the lengthy oration, she says that “I find that you would entrench me and wound the liberty / I was born with. Were my desires unprivileged / By example, while my judgement thought ‘em fit / You ought not to oppose...I take it great injustice / To have my pleasures circumscribed and taught me” (1.1.1138-44).⁷⁰ When Bornwell asks if she has the “ambition to buy preferment at so dear rate,” Aretina responds with the paradox that she would not “sell my honour / By living poor and sparingly” (1.1.149-51). Aretina grounds her privilege to pursue her desires on the basis of her birth, and she rejects Bornwell’s conclusion that gentle birth entails the reciprocal responsibilities of hospitality and moderation. In doing so, she subordinates Bornwell’s understanding of privilege to her own.⁷¹

In this exchange, Aretina uses *metalepsis* to obscure how exactly she defines gentility.⁷² While she conveys the general understanding that noble birth generates an almost endless degree of privilege, she does not make clear the process by which those privileges are conferred. Instead, she states that Bornwell restraining her desires, however slightly, wounds her liberty, and she goes on to say that example gives her the privilege to act on her desires. She does not

⁷⁰ She also accuses Bornwell of using rhetoric to “veil your avaricious meaning with handsome names of modesty and thrift,” but she promises to reply “without art or elegance” (1.1.134-37). John Hoskins gives the advice that speakers should act as if they avoid rhetorical flourish so as to appear honest (John Hoskins, *Directions for Speech and Style, 1599-1600*, ed. Hoyt Hudson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1935), 22).

⁷¹ For more on the privileges, which are roughly intrinsic rights, enjoyed exclusively by the gentry, see Steve Hindle, *The State and Social Change in Early Modern England: 1550-1640* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 77; Robert Zaller, *The Discourse of Legitimacy in Early Modern England* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2007), 576-80; and Mark Dawson provides a list of the gentry’s privileges: 1) identification as gentle, 2) as a university student, 3) ability to serve in government office, 4) marriage prospects, 5) course of debate in the House of Commons, 6) tax liability, 7) ability to serve on a jury, 8) severity of criminal prosecution, and 9) ability to engage in foreign diplomacy (Mark Dawson, *Gentility and the Comic Theatre of Late Stuart London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1-2).

⁷² Throughout his oration, Bornwell shows that he thinks gentility is defined by hospitality, honor, education, moderation, and maintaining a good reputation.

clarify what that example is, and she does not elucidate how the slightest bit of moderation would wound her liberty. Instead, she doubles down on that sentiment, saying that Bornwell should not oppose her desires if she judges that they are fit. Her privilege, then, is founded upon example and her own judgment, but she does not make clear the connection between her liberty, her desires, and her privilege. In fact, the thing that most irked Melanchthon about *metalepsis*, how the figure distorts causality, is at work in Aretina's logic. If Aretina's own judgment and the example of others is the cause of privilege, privilege is the cause of itself. In a far-fetched comparison, Aretina obscures how it is that she derives her privilege. Directly after this confrontation, Aretina puts her privilege to the test by openly inviting two visiting gallants to woo her.

Before the two gallants, Littleworth and Alexander, come on stage, Bornwell complains that Littleworth "studies complements" but "defies all wit" (1.1.195-6). In the scene, city gallants are explicitly tethered to manners, which takes particular form as insincere complements. When Bornwell affably asks Littleworth "what day is it abroad," the gallant responds that "The morning rises from your lady's eye; / If she look clear, we take the happy omen / Of a fair day" (1.1.212-15). Bornwell indicates the meaninglessness of such manners, saying that "To the discredit of your complement...you express your wit thus" (1.1.216-17). Littleworth compares the day to Aretina's eye, but he fails to answer the question. The comparison suggests that Aretina's eye signifies a fair day. The metaphor of her eye implies that the eye connotes her disposition that day, but such a conclusion is not clear. The jump from Aretina's eye to a happy day excludes the implied middle term that Aretina's eye signifies her happiness. After Bornwell says "Leaving this subject," he asks the two "what exercise carries the general vote / O'th'town

now? Nothing moves without your knowledge” (1.1.219-21).⁷³ Alexander responds with a ludicrous *metalepsis*, saying “The cocking now has all the noise; I’ll have / A hundred pieces of one battle. O, / These birds of Mars,” to which Littleworth puns: “Venus is Mars his bird too” (1.1.222-24). Huebert glosses “cocking” as a sport that “gain’d so great an estimation among the gentry,” which on its surface means that Alexander merely boasts about his knowledge of fashion, but Littleworth picks up on the inferred pun.⁷⁴ In fact, the comparison suggests that the gentry are to Mars as Aretina is to Venus, making Bornwell the cuckold, but it also implies that such cuckolding will mar Aretina. In this case, the far-fetched comparison conceals a significant threat that Littleworth poses to Bornwell. Throughout the rest of the scene, the gallants’ *metalepsis* conceals a threat under the guise of niceties. While Aretina theorizes that manners and fashion define gentility, the gallants put the theory into practice, which the rest of the play shows to be as superficial as it is corrosive.

In between Act one scene one and Act three scene two, Bornwell pretends to seduce Celestina in an effort to teach Aretina a lesson about profligacy, and he adopts the language and excessive spending of city gallants.⁷⁵ Aretina has forced Frederick to abandon his studies, in the exchange that began this section, because the university fails to teach fashionable manners. She

⁷³ Throughout this interaction, Bornwell twice says he wants to leave the current subject, which suggests that he is irritated by how inane their conversation is (1.1.219, 243).

⁷⁴ Huebert quotes from Charles Cotton, *The Compleat Gamester* (A.M.: London, 1674), Ovii^v. In 1705, James Watson writes that the “sport,” which is what we now call cock-fighting, was practiced only by the gentry and “never sunk down to the hands of the Commonality” (*An Essay Upon the Royal Recreation and Art of Cocking* (James Watson: Edinburgh, 1705), Aii^v). This was the kind of sport, lauded in Charles’ *Book of Sports*, that distinguished the gentry from the commoners.

⁷⁵ In the scene that Bornwell puts on his disposition, he mimics the gallants’ use of bizarre metaphors that invoke a litany of material objects meant to indicate wealth and fashion. He says that “I must have my dining-room enlarged, to invite ambassadors; we’ll feast the parish in the fields, and teach the military men new discipline, who shall charge all their new artillery with oranges and lemons, boy, to play all dinner upon our capons” (1.1.307-11). Bornwell compares his new disposition to teaching soldiers to shoot at capons with fruit, a comparison about as far-fetched as possible. This comparison conceals a subversive message about gallants. The traditional responsibilities of the gentry—diplomacy, hospitality, and military service—are turned into a parody, which demonstrates how bizarre comparisons code anxiety about the destabilization of gentry values.

also conspired with Decoy, a bawd, to arrange a secret liaison with Alexander. Aretina repeatedly insists that the tryst is “silent,” “confident,” “in secrecy,” and Alexander himself must “not have the least knowledge of my name or person” (3.2.9, 11, 25-6).⁷⁶ Immediately after asking Decoy to act as her bawd, she employs Littleworth and Alexander in a scheme to humiliate Celestina during a dinner at Aretina’s home. Littleworth attempts to woo Aretina with saccharine complements, and while Aretina normally ignores his attempts, she responds in this scene because she needs Littleworth and Alexander for her scheme. Aretina tells Littleworth and Alexander that Celestina is “now my guest” before saying, “You gentlemen are held / Wits of the town: the consuls that do govern / The senate here, whose jeers are all authentic; / The taverns and ordinaries are / Made academies where you come...By your authority, believed, no rapture / Ought to have honest meaning” (3.2.58-70). Aretina notes that the two gallants authorize what is considered fashionable in the city, and she compares taverns, which Alison Deutermann claims are an emerging public sphere with “feverish levels of public discussion,” to academies.⁷⁷ In another effort to question gentry values, Aretina’s comparisons conceal a subversive chain of cause and effect, claiming that the city gallants have become the senate and the taverns have become their academies.⁷⁸ She invokes a *metalepsis* by piling comparisons on top of one another, and the end result is to control “honest meaning” by confusing the authority of instructions. She uses *metalepsis* to suggest that the gentry are defined by fashion and manners. She substitutes the senate for the tavern and the university for academies of complement, replacing traditional sites

⁷⁶ In each of these events, Aretina’s privilege is shown to directly infringe upon the happiness and liberty of others, which illustrates more broadly that England’s gentry are not a world unto themselves but always already embedded in a web of social relations.

⁷⁷ Alison Deutermann, “Taverns, Theaters, Publics: The Intertheatrical Politics of Caroline Drama,” *Renaissance Drama* 45.2 (2017): 237-56, 247.

⁷⁸ For more on academies as a crucial site in the discourse on manners, see Jean E. Howard, *Theater of a City: The Places of London Comedy, 1598-1642* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 162-208. The subject of academies and manners is a subject to which I will return in the next section.

of gentility with fashionable spaces. Aretina inverts the traditional modes of gentry authority, turning hospitality into humiliation and education into amusement. She capitalizes on her fulsome complements by asking the two gallants to “exercise / The strength of both your wits” on Celestina by provoking her into “anger,” which Aretina hopes will put an end to Celestina’s monopoly on the gallants’ attention (3.2.71-3). She trades manners for the gallants’ service as agents of inhospitable malice.

When Celestina enters, she and Aretina commence a lengthy exchange of complements in French, which gallants considered the most elegant language. Aretina tells her “It is doubtless by virtue of the sweetness of your natural disposition that you maintain such discourse,” to which Celestina responds “You do me too much honour” (3.2.89-91).⁷⁹ Aretina continues the flattery until Celestina responds “Now I perceive that the victory will always be yours, madam, both in discourse and courtesy,” but she then asks Aretina to “leave these complements” (3.2.100-4). Though she does not yet know the motive, Celestina recognizes that Aretina’s complements are not genuine and are instead a part of some attempt at victory. After they end the charade of complements, Aretina excuses herself to take care of Frederick, who drunkenly stumbled into the party. Frederick claims that he “contemn[s] all learning” and instead professes to become a “gentleman whose manners are most gloriously infected,” a malapropism that suggests that affectation can be confused with infection (3.2.172-3). Before exiting, Aretina signals the gallants to begin their assault on Celestina. They accuse her of “ill manners” for having innocently laughed at Frederick’s drunkenness (3.3.207). Littleworth says he will teach her to be “well mannered” before calling her “a puppet, a thing made / Of clothes and painting,” and Alexander says she “Would be thought handsome (and might pass i’th’country / Upon market

⁷⁹ I follow the translations provided by Huebert.

day) but miserably / Forfeit to pride and fashions” (3.2.219, 231-2, 241-3). The entire scene works in a pattern. Aretina complements the gallants and then asks them to be openly hostile to a guest, and then Aretina complements Celestina and is then openly hostile. This circularity makes legible the blatant artificiality of complements, a form of manners that the play shows to be entirely empty. The overt artificiality of complements in this scene suggests that defining gentility on performed qualities—like fashion or complements—is subject to misuse and therefore unstable. Complements, the play points out, can ornament a gentle person, but complements should not be a primary defining characteristic. Like the opening scene, Aretina’s privilege—her right to pleasure—comes at the expense of others’ pleasure. In the economy of privileges, Aretina is unsatisfied if anyone else has access to pleasure, which indicates the deeper perverse effects of the gallant culture with which she is associated. In the play’s final two Acts, Aretina recognizes the error of her ways.

In Act five scenes one and two, Bornwell notifies Aretina that their pleasure spree has drained their resources, and they will soon be reduced to begging on the streets. In the next scene, Frederick drunkenly tries to seduce Aretina, his aunt, and she is horrified that his education in the gallant lifestyle has so thoroughly corrupted him. In the same scene, she asks Alexander—with whom she has recently had a clandestine assignation—why he has recently worn such nice clothes.⁸⁰ Because their meeting took place in the dark, Alexander tells Aretina that he met a woman “i’t’h likeness of a beldam” (5.2.161). Horrified, Aretina says in an aside that “‘Tis a false glass; sure, I am more deformed. What have I done? My soul is miserable” (5.2.178-9). Alexander’s inadvertent comparison of Aretina to a beldam works as a false glass,

⁸⁰ He has received the money from Decoy, who has pimped him out to Aretina, but the scene suggests that he has also been pimped out to quite a few other clients because even Aretina is surprised at how much wealth he has. If she was his only client, she would likely not be surprised by how much wealth he has received.

an imperfect mirror that projects a distorted image and shows her what she has become. Throughout the play, Aretina uses *metalepsis*—a sort of linguistic false glass that distorts comparison—to support her claims that the gentry have the right to unchecked pleasure, but it is the clear metaphor “i’th’likeness of a beldam,” that clearly demonstrates her extravagance. For a character who so enthusiastically pursued pleasure, it is only when Aretina is miserable that she reforms her ways. In the next scene, Aretina asks to speak to Bornwell alone and after a short private conference, she announces her penitence and that “I throw my own will off” (5.3.176). We do not know whether she told Bornwell of her adultery, but it seems unlikely because his response is simply that she is “Dearer now / Than ever to my bosom, thou shalt please / Me best to live at thy own choice” (179-81).⁸¹ When Aretina says that she will abandon her previous attitude towards privilege, Bornwell tells her to live at her own will. The play opens with Bornwell questioning Aretina’s decisions, but she is afforded license to live at her choice once she recognizes the importance of moderation. Rather than tightly restrict Aretina’s privilege, she is rewarded with increased license because she resolved her own issue, which indicates how the play suggests the gentry should go about resolving tensions among themselves.

While early Jacobean city comedies often involve external authority in the finale of a play as a way of exerting order on an otherwise disorderly situation, Aretina self-regulates her own over-indulgence. Ira Clark claims that Aretina “is a caricature of debasement, extravagance, and promiscuity,” who “repents mightily and is disciplined to traditional feminine virtue.”⁸² That the play is concerned with gentry extravagance is clear, but Barbara Ravelhofer rightly points out

⁸¹ Note that Bornwell implies a return to intimacy by using the “thou” form, but earlier in the scene he uses the “you” form with Aretina (5.3.7).

⁸² Ira Clark, *Professional Playwrights*, 127, 129.

that “Aretina suffers no humiliating exposure for her adultery.”⁸³ The play conspicuously refuses to expose and punish Aretina, which is nearly inevitable in early modern representations of women’s infidelity. Daniel Tuvill’s rhetorical manual, *The Doue and the Serpent*, repeatedly insists on the importance of discretion in the gentry, to which I refer above, and he devotes an entire section to the importance “Of Secrecie.”⁸⁴ The play does not excuse Aretina’s behavior, but it does suggest that an important privilege of the gentry is discreet self-regulation. Rather than stage an elaborate punishment, Aretina’s earlier vice is kept secret, which seems to suggest that the gentry’s vice should be mediated from within, not displayed before others. Secrecy depends on a certain degree of moderation, a perspective that moderates a desire for retaliation with mercy. Once she recognizes the error of her excessive liberality, the play represents her as fully reformed, depicting her as counseling other characters against immorality. Aretina’s competition for the gallants’ attention, Celestina, articulates a theory of privilege that contrasts Aretina’s.

While Aretina turns to *metalepsis* to support her convoluted definition of gentility, Celestina uses clear metaphors to articulate her clear definition of gentry, which maintains that the gentry should moderate their pleasure. Celestina is not opposed to manners or extravagant spending, and she expresses a theory of privilege that understands the responsibility of gentry moderation. In a scene that parallels Aretina’s first scene, Celestina is rebuked by her Steward for spending too much on finery, but she insists that “I’m resolved / To pay for some delight, my estate will bear it, / I’ll rein it in shorter when I please” (1.2.102-4). She uses the simple metaphor of a horse rider and reins that demonstrates her ability to regulate her spending.

⁸³ Barbara Ravelhofer, “Introduction,” *James Shirley and Early Modern Theatre*, ed. Barbara Ravelhofer (London: Routledge, 2017), 1-13, 12.

⁸⁴ Richard Braithwait also returns to the subject of discretion, silence, and secrecy throughout *The English Gentleman* and *The English Gentlewoman*.

Celestina's ability to rein it in distinguishes her from Aretina, which provides a city analogue to Bornwell's traditional country values of moderation and generosity. Like Bornwell, she does not shy away from rhetorical figures, but she uses clear metaphors to underscore that she has control over both her language and her will. In Celestina's next scene, she makes good on her earlier desire to establish an "academy of wits" at her home (1.2.85). Jean Howard notes that plays of the 1630s obsessively parody academies and "exposes the commercial logic and sexual implications of schemes to teach manners, complements, and postures," but she provides a counter-example of some female academies as "a site for serious discourse on significant topics."⁸⁵ Rather than discuss the merits of fashion or complements, Celestina instructs her two cousins about the significant topic of maintaining independence in courtship, informing them that "'Tis the chief principle to keep your heart / Under your own obedience; jest, but love not. I say my prayers, yet can wear good clothes / And only satisfy my tailor for 'em/ I wo' not lose my privilege" (2.2.16-20). Celestina recognizes the importance of moderation in both love and spending, noting that she will not lose her privilege in either case. She can indulge moderately in good clothes and yet retain her virtue. Aretina's definition of privilege refers to her intrinsic right to pursue pleasure, but Celestina's privilege refers to a will tempered by moderation.

Given the sociopolitical situation that Charles' policies created, advocating for gentry privilege on the basis of pleasure surely resonates less with the public than founding privilege on moderation, a topical issue during the period of Personal Rule. While Aretina suggests that it is the extravagance that expresses her rank, Celestina understands that gentility is defined by action. She tells her cousins that "You see me merry, full of song and dancing, / Pleasant in language, apt to all delights...but you cannot / Accuse me of being prodigal of my favours," but

⁸⁵ Jean Howard, *Theater of a City*, 188, 207. The example is Margaret Cavendish's *The Female Academy* (1668).

“Some ladies are so expensive in their graces / To those that honour ‘em, and so prodigal, / That in a little time they have nothing / The naked sin left to reward their servants” (2.2.53-69).

Celestina articulates an economy of favors where discreet moderation allows her to be in people’s good graces while avoiding prodigality. In the play’s first scene Aretina discusses privileges as an inexhaustible resource, but Celestina recognizes that privilege is finite.

Furthermore, she understands that if she gives everything to the gentry, then she will have nothing left with which to pay the servants and maintain bonds of deference and dependence. In the play’s final scene, Celestina acts on her theory of privilege in a tense exchange with Lord.

Throughout the play, Celestina cordially evades the courtship of the gallants Haircut and Littleworth. In the play’s final scene, however, she is courted by Lord, who she previously praised for deliberately not courting her. In an earlier scene, Lord and Celestina discuss why the former has not remarried since his wife died; instead, he professes to honor his wife through a Neoplatonic devotion to beauty and constancy.⁸⁶ Celestina tells Lord that his reputation in town is that “You are learned” and a “master of / A language that doth chain all ears and charm / All hearts where you persuade; a wit so flowing, / And prudence to correct it” (4.3.69-73).⁸⁷ Though Lord can express his dignity through symbols, such as wit, he prefers to articulate his honor through prudence. The play sets up this paragon of noble prudence only to undermine it, providing a clear example of the tension between moderation and manners. In the last scene, Lord informs Celestina that the prudence he professed earlier has been replaced by erotic desire. Lord replaces his formerly clear language with convoluted language. He woos Celestina, saying

⁸⁶ Neoplatonic ideals are often associated with Henrietta Maria’s court, with which Shirley was in close contact in the mid-1630s. For more on Shirley’s association with the Neoplatonism in the court, see Peter Happe, “‘And you meane to rise at court, practise to caper,’ The Representation of the Court in James Shirley’s Plays, 1631-6,” *James Shirley and Early Modern Theatre*, ed. Barbara Ravelhofer (London: Routledge, 2017), 48-58.

⁸⁷ She also notes that “you have known valour, and upon / A noble cause know how to use a sword / To honour’s best advantage, though you wear none” (4.3.76-8).

“Consent to be my mistress, Celestina, / And we will have springtime all years, / Upon whose invitations, when we walk, / The winds shall play soft descant to our feet / And breathe rich odours to repure the air, / Green bowers on every side shall tempt our stay” (5.3.69-74). After an extended comparison of himself as Adonis and Celestina as Venus, Celestina chides Lord for declaring “such love, linsey-woolsey, to no purpose” (5.3.103).⁸⁸ Linsey-woolsey is a coarse fabric that often incorporates a mixture of patterns using other recycled items, which was associated with the poorer sort of people. Celestina compares Lord’s muddled language to commoners’ clothing, suggesting that such language does not befit a person of his rank. He does not pick up on her comparison between language and clothes, and as he attempts to embrace her, he asks “You like this language?” (5.3.104) Celestina uses discreet comparisons to dissuade Lord from acting imprudently; however, Lord continues his assault. Because Lord does not understand her clear language, she then uses a *metalepsis* in an attempt to discreetly reveal her aversion at his forwardness.

She constructs a hypothetical comparison that defines gentility for Lord, asking him if he would help her buy a coat of arms for a friend, and this comparison indicates that her gentility is linked to her virtue. He claims that a coat of arms is easily purchased, but Celestina replies that the friend requires Lord’s own coat of arms. He responds that “I’ll sooner give these arms to th’hangman’s axe... Than sell one atom from my name” (5.3.133-5). By excluding the middle term—lineal honor is like virtuous honor—Celestina uses *metalepsis* to redefine honor as a quality of character, a comparison that Lord finally understands. For Lord, the coat of arms is more important than doing a favor for Celestina. Celestina enacts her earlier conversation on the economy of favors, telling Lord “Change that, / And answer him would buy my honours from

⁸⁸ Huebert glosses linsey-woolsey as “a strange medley in talk or action; confusion, non-sense.”

me: / Honour that is not worn upon a flag / Or pennon...But that which grows and withers with my soul” (5.3.136-41). She uses a metonymical substitution of coat of arms for personal honor, and she then shows that her honor is as precious as his. She tells him that “If you would not for price of gold, or pleasure / (If that be more your idol), lose the glory / And painted honour of your house—I ha’ done” (5.3.144-6). Celestina shows Lord that honor is a quality that emanates from within, not something derived from external symbols like a flag, manners, or even noble lineage. The difference between Celestina’s and Aretina’s use of rhetoric is that Celestina uses *metalepsis* to clearly define her through honor, but Aretina uses *metalepsis* to obscure what it is that defines gentility in the first place. Celestina’s *metalepsis* shows that the gentry’s behavior defines their rank, and she explicitly links the emptiness of complements, a coat of arms, and lineage to economic language, which underscores her refusal to exchange her honor for his (5.3.101, 119, 146).⁸⁹

Celestina establishes that economy of favors, which stresses discreet moderation, maintains the gentry’s privilege. She indicates that privilege flows both ways; if Lord has the right to preserve his honor, then she has the right to preserve hers.⁹⁰ Lord acknowledges his error, asking Celestina to “Obscure my blushes here” (5.3.148). Celestina obliges and the failed courtship is not mentioned again. While many early modern comedies end with exposing and chastising the play’s wrongdoers, *Lady of Pleasure* concludes by concealing misconduct. This

⁸⁹ Braithwait suggests that gentle virtue “consists in action,” and he repeatedly claims that riches and titles alone do not confer gentility (Richard Braithwait, *The English Gentleman*, 107, 59-64 especially). Peacham also notes that honor is the “reward of Vertue and glorious Action onely,” and “Neither must we Honor or esteeme those ennobled, or made Gentle in blood, who by Mechanicke and base meanes, haue raked vp a masse of wealth, or because they follow some great man” (Henry Peacham, *The Compleat Gentleman*, 2-3). Seventeenth centuries commentators gradually drifted away from defining gentility by lineage or wealth alone as earlier commentators, such as Edmund Dudley or Thomas Elyot had done, and instead increasingly emphasized a person’s character. H.R. French notes a similar change in how social historians define middling ranks, showing “there has been a shift away from definitions based on the isolation of ‘exterior’ characteristics—whether of wealth, occupation or patterns of consumption” and toward “interior attitudes” and “values” (H.R. French, “Social Status, Localism and the Middle Sort,” 71).

⁹⁰ This is distinct from Aretina’s notion of privilege that detracts from Bornwell’s privilege, or Lord’s notion of noble prerogative that subordinates Celestina’s honor to his own desire.

correlates with the play's interest in discretion and the gentry's social role. The gentry do not require external authority to right their wrongs; instead, they discreetly handle their affairs through cooperation and mutual trust.⁹¹ The play suggests that gentry privilege depends on this cooperation. In the play's opening scenes, Aretina's extravagance is juxtaposed with Celestina's moderation, and the gallants' triviality is juxtaposed with Bornwell's prudence. That the play seems to embrace Celestina's and Bornwell's position indicates that neither the country nor the city is superior, but it implies that cooperation between the country and city is mutually beneficial. Furthermore, the play demonstrates that moderation is more productive than unlimited privileges in the gentry's attempts to articulate their place in society. Although Lawrence Stone is correct that pressure from royal policies and upwardly-mobile commoners led to a crisis of aristocracy, Keith Wrightson has shown that the tension in the 1630s led to greater gentry cooperation that allowed them to consolidate their power as "members of a national ruling class."⁹² Just as tensions in the play between country and city gentry are smoothed over by cooperation, gentry in the 1630s began a process of cooperation that allowed them to consolidate their power. Wrightson demonstrates that some of the ways the gentry consolidated power was through education, land management, and resolving conflict from within.⁹³ The play examines these very topics in detail through *metalepsis*, which demonstrates the rhetoric used to obscure the definition and social function of gentry.

⁹¹ In addition to the discreet handling of the conflict between Lord and Celestina and Bornwell and Aretina, Aretina discreetly reconciles with Decoy and Alexander, going so far as to offer Alexander to find a job for him at court (5.3.195, 203).

⁹² Keith Wrightson, *English Society*, 200. For more studies on gentry consolidation, see Steve Hindle, *The State and Social Change*, 9. Phil Withington claims that "in spite of the class struggle there was really a covert alliance between the powerful middle classes," (*Society in Early Modern England: The Vernacular Origins of Some Powerful Ideas* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2010), 42).

⁹³ Keith Wrightson, *English Society*, 200, 179, 66-7.

The play stages a discourse that evaluates two dominant notions of gentility in the period. Aretina advocates for the position that gentility is defined by blood and demands intrinsic rights, but Celestina embodies the shrewd pragmatism of city gentility, a position that recognizes the utility of manners and fashions but only when paired with moderation. While Aretina uses *metalepsis* to obscure what causes gentility, Celestina's *metalepsis* clearly defines her gentility on honor and reputation. In the play, these differences are reconciled through discretion. Although Aretina's notion of privilege directly infringes on Bornwell's and Lord exerts his rank over Celestina, the play resolves incompatible discourses through discreet cooperation. The various gentle characters in the play mediate their tensions discreetly. This cooperation suggests that the gentry can manage social tensions without interference from the crown, a particularly topical suggestion in the 1630s; furthermore, the cooperation articulates a need among the gentry to form a structure of solidarity that allows them to manage tensions among themselves through moderation, which the play shows is mutually-beneficial to all parties. *Lady of Pleasure* engages different modes of defining gentry, and through the use of *metalepsis*, the play gradually parses out what ideals lead to a more stable gentry. Martin Butler argues that in the 1630s the gentry acquired "selfconsciousness as an autonomous group with its own values, distinct from the court and potentially in tension with it," which "implies a corresponding growth in political consciousness and confidence."⁹⁴ While it would seem that the development of the gentry's self-consciousness emerged sometime before the 1630s, this was a particularly important pressure point in sociopolitical events that provoked the gentry to articulate their roles and values in society in clear and decisive terms. Plays like *The Lady of Pleasure*, set in London's fashionable districts, obsessively provide a platform to question, critique, accept, or reject modes of behavior

⁹⁴ Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis*, 142.

among the gentry. In its open engagement with what modes of behavior best define gentility, *Lady of Pleasure* is a part of the self-conscious construction of the gentry. Rather than merely staging a discourse about gentry ideals, the play examines how each ideal plays out in realistic social interactions, showing the causes and effects of each position. While the play is almost entirely interested in how the events of the 1630s affect the gentry, Richard Brome's *The New Academy* (1636) examines how the middling sort respond to the culture of manners.

III. Paronomasia and Syllepsis in Brome's *The New Academy*

In a short section of *The Academy of Complements* (1640), titled "A jesting discourse with a Maide," a wooing gentleman asks a maid "Come, why will you be an enemy to your selfe, and let modesty keep you still in the state of virginity? I came to offer my service to helpe you of this trouble," to which the maid responds, "You are very kinde; but I like my present estate, Maids are happie."⁹⁵ Distraught, the man responds: "Alas! poor Ignorance, dost thou talke of hapinesse? I tell thee, untill thou art maryed, thou art but a Cypher, and of none account," and the understandably exasperated maid replies: "You are deceived; our hearts, free from the passion of love, retaine a world of happinesse, being exempted from any wanton knowledge."⁹⁶ In the first exchange, the maid uses *paronomasia*, the repeating of words which are nearly alike in sound, to quibble on the man's use of "state." Building on his use of "state" as a general condition, she uses "estate" to refer specifically to a maid's position in the social hierarchy. She points out that her condition as a virgin and her social standing are coterminous. In another

⁹⁵ Anonymous, *The Academy of Complements, VVherin Ladyes Gentlewomen, Schollers, and Strangers may accommodate their Courty Practice with most Curious Ceremonies* (T. Badger: London, 1640), 77.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 77-8.

paronomasia, the man's "Alas" echoes "lass," suggesting that she is woefully ignorant, and he uses a *syllepsis*, the use of a word with two simultaneous meanings, to describe a maid's social value. The man's account of the maid as a "cypher" plays on the word's two meanings as "an arithmetical symbol or character of no value by itself, but which decreases the value of other figures according to its position" and as "a secret or disguised manner of writing."⁹⁷ She is both enigmatic and valueless, and the maid responds to his quantification of her value by also using a commercial *syllepsis*. Her use of "exempted" plays on the word's meaning as both "Not subject to a superior authority. *esp.* of a monastery" and "Not liable to a charge, duty, payment, tax, etc.," a *syllepsis* that illustrates that her condition as maid—not being under the authority of a husband—allows her to remain outside the commercialization of sex.⁹⁸ Throughout the dialogue, the maid responds to the man's vulgar language with the intricate and civil language indicative of complement manuals.

Contemporary commentators, who recognized the potential for dissimulation in complements, strongly counseled readers to avoid such language. In his conduct manual to gentlewomen, Henry Peacham suggests that complements embody the gentry's depravity. He instructs gentlewomen that "Light discourses, which tend rather to the depraving of the hearer, than ministring any vsefull subject to an attentive Obseruer, she excludes; vncivill Complement shee abhorres; what onely is modest she approves."⁹⁹ *The Anonymous Academy of*

⁹⁷ *OED*, "Cipher, n. I. 1a and 5a." There is also a potential homonymic play on "maryed" and "marred," which undermines his own position by suggesting that marriage mars. Note, too, the maid's use of the formal "you" and the wooer's use of the overly informal "thou."

⁹⁸ *OED*, "exempt, adj. I. 3a and 5b." The maid points out that she is exempt from commercializing sex, but that does not suggest that unmarried women are in positions of authority; in fact, I will explore in this section how wordplay reveals the precarious position of both married and unmarried women.

⁹⁹ Peacham, *The English Gentlewoman* (B. Alsop: London, 1631), 168. Richard Braithwait also admonishes readers to reject the superficiality of complements, asking: "How much are you deluded by apish formalitie, as if the only qualitie of a *Gentleman* were novell complement? or as if there were no good man besides some outlandish congie or salute?" (Braithwait, *The English Gentleman* (B. Alsop: London, 1631), 66.

Complements, however, provides examples that instruct young readers how to avoid lascivious language and instead engage in wholesome complements. In this example, the maid uses refined speech to reinforce traditional values. Furthermore, the maid reveals herself to be an astute reader, using wordplay to reject the man’s advances and expose and censure his wrongdoing. She uses *paronomasia* and *sylllepsis* to take control of the conversation and unpack and explicate wooer’s moral and linguistic shortcomings. Sister Miriam Joseph helpfully catalogues puns into the “four highly esteemed figures of Renaissance rhetoric—antanaclasis, syllepsis, paronomasia, and asteismus—which have their roots in the logical distinction between the various meanings of a word, and depend for their effect on the intellectual alertness necessary to perceive their ambiguity.”¹⁰⁰ While Joseph rightly includes *antanaclasis* and *asteismus* in her catalogue of what constitutes a pun, I confine my examination in this section to *paronomasia* and *sylllepsis*, the two figures that feature prominently in the exchange above.¹⁰¹ Joseph’s argument that the pun’s ambiguity prompts intellectual alertness is an important departure from well-known distaste for puns among neoclassicists, but she is too quick to assume that puns were unilaterally esteemed in early modern rhetoric.¹⁰² In fact, Richard Sherry categorizes certain kinds of wordplay as an obscenity caused by having inordinate parts: “when the words be spoken, or joyned together, that they may be wronge into a fylthye sence.”¹⁰³ This widely divergent attitude toward puns, finding

¹⁰⁰ Sister Miriam Joseph, *Shakespeare’s use of the Arts of Language* (New York: Paul Dry Books, 1947), 165.

¹⁰¹ I will examine only *paronomasia* and *sylllepsis*, partly for brevity’s sake and partly because those two figures most clearly capture the play’s interest in wordplay. *Antanaclasis* is the repeating of a word while shifting from one meaning to another meaning, and *asteismus* is a light mocking, usually by repeating the other speaker’s word in a different sense.

¹⁰² Joseph Addison decries the use of puns in tragic scenes, complaining that in Shakespeare’s plays “nothing is more usual than to see a hero weeping and quibbling for a dozen lines together” (Addison, *Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 1: 260). Samuel Johnson claims that “A quibble is to Shakespeare, what luminous vapours are to the traveler; he follows it at all adventures; it is sure to lead him out of his way, and sure to engulf him in the mire” (Johnson, “Preface to Shakespeare,” *Johnson on Shakespeare, The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Arthur Sherbo, 8 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 7: 439).

¹⁰³ Richard Sherry, *A Treatise of Schemes and Tropes* (John Day: London, 1550), Cii^r. Sherry’s *sylllepsis* of wrung\wrong is surely no more than mere coincidence. Francis Bacon also famously claimed that excessive study of eloquence caused speakers “to hunt more after words than matter; and more after the choiceness of the phrase, and

them either stimulating or obscene, is particularly helpful in analyzing early modern drama, which capitalizes on and gravitates toward linguistic ambiguity. The study of puns has recently received fresh analysis, but these studies have not closely examined puns in relation to rank in early modern society.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, puns are a useful rhetorical figure to analyze rank in the period because puns tend to underscore a character's linguistic ability and wit, qualities that often cross the spectrum of social rank. In fact, both the elite and commoners use puns to navigate social tensions between those two social groups. In Richard Brome's *The New Academy; or, the New Exchange* (1636), puns expose the decay of hospitality among urban commoners and the precariousness of servants and women in a dangerously commercialized city.¹⁰⁵

Rather than dramatize the affairs of London's gentle elite as is common in Caroline drama, Brome turns to merchants, servants, and tradesmen to explore how changing economic structures and social values have transformed daily life in the city.¹⁰⁶ Brome's *New Academy* is classified as an example of "place-realism," a short-lived genre in the mid-1630s that "makes extensive and important use of particular locations around the capital," and in addition to that local topography, there is often reference "to the high micropolitics of matters of government

the round and clean composition of the sentence, and the sweet falling of the clauses, and the varying and illustration of their works with tropes and figures, than after the weight of matter" (Francis Bacon, "The Advancement of Learning," *The Major Works*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 139).

¹⁰⁴ For recent studies on puns, see Stefan Daniel Keller, *The Development of Shakespeare's Rhetoric: A Study of Nine Plays* (Tubingen: Francke Press, 2009), 71-4; Jonathan Hope, *Shakespeare and Language: Reason, Eloquence and Artifice in the Renaissance* (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2010), 79-88.

¹⁰⁵ I follow Lucy Munro's convincing argument that the play was first performed in 1636 (Lucy Munro, "Richard Brome and the Book of Bulls: Situating The New Academy, or The New Exchange," *The Ben Jonson Journal* 13.1 (2006): 125-38).

¹⁰⁶ Daryll Grantley notes that "Caroline comic drama tends largely to confine its gaze to the sophisticated world of the privileged" (*London in Early Modern English Drama: Representing the Built Environment* (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 168).

and foreign policy.”¹⁰⁷ Unlike other place-realism plays that emphasize the antics of the leisured urban elite, *New Academy* documents the precarious living conditions of London’s working servants and merchants. The play explores how a merchant’s recklessness and lack of compassion has impacted the living conditions of London’s servants, a representation of merchants that casts them as fulfilling the social responsibilities—hospitality and manners—usually held by the gentry.¹⁰⁸ Though the play represents servants in a vulnerable position, their rate of upward-mobility and the play’s more elite characters’ stagnancy presents the commoners as an industrious antidote to gentry lassitude. In the play, servants navigate economic and social tensions through ambiguous wordplay. The servants conceal criticism and instruction in a figure that, as we shall see, early modern rhetoricians predominantly associate with ribaldry and rusticity; furthermore, both servants and women use puns to challenge tyrannical paternal authority, demonstrating that such authority is threatening and counterproductive. While Sanders and Butler claim that paternalism in *Brome* is an oblique criticism of Charles I’s Personal Rule, I instead shift focus to how the play comments on domestic authority.¹⁰⁹ *Brome*’s critique of domestic paternalism does indirectly question Charles’ policies, but criticism has overlooked how Charles models authoritarian control that is then adopted by merchants and the lesser-

¹⁰⁷ Matthew Steggle, “Caroline Politics on the Professional Comic Stage,” *The 1630s: Interdisciplinary Essays on Culture and Politics in the Caroline Era*, ed. Ian Atherton and Julie Sanders (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 154-171, 156).

¹⁰⁸ For more on “the new urban gentry” of merchants, tradesmen, and professionals in the seventeenth century, see Richard Grassby, *The Business Community of Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 141-5.

¹⁰⁹ Sanders claims that “critique of family relations and in particular of overweening patriarchy in the plays of *Brome* and others might be a coded reference to the monarchy” (Julie Sanders, *Caroline Drama: The Plays of Massinger, Ford, Shirley, and Brome* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1999), 50). Butler suggests that *Brome* “perceives what is at stake if the fiat of Charles’ single will is capable of restricting so radically the freedoms of many, and his treatment of the issue probes insistently into the justification (and the implications) of the authority by which Charles does these acts” (Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis, 1632-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 150).

gentry, a problem that is much more local and relevant to the *New Academy's* granular exploration of the fractured relations between merchants and servants.

Buried in the play's alternate title, *The New Exchange*, is a *sylllepsis* that signals the various values that the physical New Exchange—a metonymy for London's commercial market—has unsettled: to trade merchandise, to transform oneself, to give in marriage, to give reciprocally, to exchange words, and to change ranks. Each of these issues dominate the play's landscape, and while no clear resolution is given as to how to resolve such transformation, understanding the function of puns in the play unlocks some concealed contradictions; in fact, the play resists singular characterization. Merchants are presented favorably and unfavorably; servants are virtuous and unvirtuous; and marriage is represented optimistically and pessimistically. Underlying this deliberate refusal to present society as monolithic is language that carries both surface-level meaning and alternate subterranean meanings. In order to analyze the ambiguity in the play's puns, we must first turn to how early modern rhetorical manuals assessed *paronomasia* and *sylllepsis*.

i. “Vulgar custom” in *paronomasia* and *sylllepsis*

Classical accounts of *paronomasia* tend to frame the figure as a vice. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* provides a succinct definition of *paronomasia* as “a modification in sound” so that “similar words express dissimilar things.”¹¹⁰ The author goes on to link the figure to vulgar speech, saying that it is “more suitable for a speech of entertainment than for use in an actual cause,” and if a speaker uses *paronomasia* too often, then “we shall seem to be taking delight in a childish style.”¹¹¹ Quintilian echoes the link between *paronomasia* and the low style, calling

¹¹⁰ Anonymous, *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, trans. Harry Caplan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954), 4.21

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 4.23.

the figure “a poor trick (*iocis frigidum*) even when employed in jest, and I am surprised that it should be included in text-books: the instances which I quote are therefore given as examples for avoidance, not for imitation.”¹¹² Classical authors disliked the figure not because it caused poor logic, but because it made the speaker sound poor, and early modern rhetorical manuals built upon this connection between rhetoric and rank. John Hoskins, for instance, warns against overextending *paronomasia*: “that kind of breaking words into another meaning is pretty to play with among gentlewomen, as, ‘you will have but a bare gain this bargain’; otherwise it will best become tuftaffeta orators to skip up and down the neighbourhood of these words that differ more in sense than in sound, tending nearer to the metre than to matter.”¹¹³ Hoskins builds upon the figure’s classical connection to childishness to establish the effeminacy of wordplay, and his examples create linkages to commerce and—in an amusing metaphor of words in a dictionary to a neighborhood—to city life. Hoskins’ distaste for rhetorical sleights of hand recalls Patricia Parker’s claim that wordplay “involves a network whose linkages expose (even as the plays themselves may appear simply to iterate or rehearse) the orthodoxies and ideologies of the texts they evoke.”¹¹⁴ Hoskins exposes a belief that frivolity in language is related to social decay, a concern more with manner than matter. He is not alone in his belief that the figure is correlated to larger social changes. Discussing the connection between society and language, Ben Jonson claims that “custom is the most certain mistress of language, as the public stamp makes the current money,” but “when I name custom, I understand not the vulgar custom; for that were a precept no less dangerous to language than to life, if we should speak or live after the manners of

¹¹² Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, trans. H.E. Butler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 9.3.69-70. Note that Quintilian’s *frigidum* carries multiple meanings, including “cold,” “indifferent,” “dull,” and “trivial.”

¹¹³ John Hoskins, *Directions for Speech and Style* (1600), ed. Hoyt H. Hudson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1935), 15-16.

¹¹⁴ Patricia Parker, *Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 13.

the vulgar: but that I call custom of speech, which is the consent of the learned.”¹¹⁵ Three sentences later, he provides an examples of just such vulgar custom, saying that “some words are to be culled out for ornament and colour,” but “we must not play or riot too much with them, as in Paronomasies.”¹¹⁶ Jonson argues that language and society are interwoven and wordplay is indicative of vulgar manners encroaching on elite culture, but not all rhetoricians associate *paronomasia* with vulgar manners. That Brome, a loyal “Son of Ben,” would turn to the figure to reveal social ills rather than fall prey to them is the product of a second strand of rhetoricians who find value in wordplay.

Some rhetoricians point out productive uses. Angel Day, for instance, remarks that the figure is “a pleasant kind of collusion in words, in signification divers, only by changing, detracting, or adding a letter or sillable in a word.”¹¹⁷ Day recognizes that speakers can conceal counsel in the figure, adding the example: “thou art no bewraier, but a betrayer of mens counsels.”¹¹⁸ Day points out a productive application, a salvaging of the figure that Henry Peacham similarly undertakes but with more apprehension. In his 1593 edition of *Garden of Eloquence*, Peacham provides a standard definition with four examples that expose vice in a character, such as “so fine a launderer, should not be a slaunderer.”¹¹⁹ In addition to these moralizing examples, Peacham adds the caution that “this figure ought to be sparingly used, and especially in grave an weightie causes, both in respect of the light and illuding forme, and also forasmuch as it seemeth not to be found without meditation and affected labor.”¹²⁰ The section

¹¹⁵ Ben Jonson, *Timber, or, Discoveries, Made Upon Men and Matter* (London, 1641), 119.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 119.

¹¹⁷ Angel Day, *The English Secretary* (P.S.: London, 1599), LLii^r. The *OED* cites this as its example for “collusion” as “a trick, or ambiguity, in words or reasoning,” but it could just as easily be applied to its predominant meaning: “Secret agreement or understanding for purposes of trickery” (*OED*, “collusion, n. I. 3 and 1a”).

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, LLii^r. Day’s three other examples similarly use the figure to counsel.

¹¹⁹ Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (H Iackson: London, 1593), 56.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 56. George Puttenham also notes the figure’s playful nature, but he adds to the social dimension by imagining *paronomasia* as a human: “Ye have a figure by which ye play with a couple of words or names much

containing the claim that the figure has “illuding forme” is titled “To allude,” which is itself a *paronomasia* that indicates how wordplay both eludes and alludes.¹²¹ That the section formally embeds a *paronomasia* inside a sober caution demonstrates that Peacham does not take his own advice that the figure should not be used in grave causes, and the final remark rephrases Jonson’s and Hoskins’ associations with vulgar manners; namely, by using *paronomasia* too often, the speaker reveals their affectation and their labor. In almost every vernacular rhetorical manual in the period, the figure is discussed alongside the language of commerce and society, which indicates that rhetoricians recognized the figure’s pervasive appeal. Furthermore, the rhetoricians’ unease with *paronomasia* reveals a concern about changing commercial practices in the period, which some rhetoricians seem to associate with the threat of uncontrolled commoners. Early modern rhetoricians approach the figure with intense scrutiny because it exposes the artifice of language, but early modern dramatists embrace the figure precisely because it throws into stark relief culturally specific aspects of language. As the manuals point out, the figure marks affectation, artificiality, labor, and vulgar custom. A second appeal of the figure is its ambiguity, a quality that lends itself to dramatists interested in nuanced and sometimes contradictory representations. In fact, Hoskins wrongly calls alliteration *paronomasia* later in his manual, a mistake that Abraham Fraunce also makes.¹²²

Paronomasia is ambiguous because it changes both the spelling and the meaning of a word, but a second pervasive figure in wordplay, *syllipsis*, creates ambiguity by compressing

resembling, and because the one seemes to answere th’other by manner of illusion, and doth, as it were, nick him. I call him the *Nicknamer*...and is rather a by-name geven in sport, than a surname geven of any earnest purpose” (George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy* ed. Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 286).

¹²¹ According to the *OED*, “elude” and “illude” both existed simultaneously. A pun on the two meanings is evident here. “Elude” meant “to baffle” or “to escape by dexterity or stratagem” in the early seventeenth century (“elude,” v. I. 1b and 2a). “Illude” meant “to mock” or “to trick” in the early sixteenth century (“illude,” v. I. 1a and 2a).

¹²² Hoskins, *Directions for Speech and Style*, 16. Abraham Fraunce, *Lawiers Logike* (William How: London), 1588, Oiii’.

two meanings in one word.¹²³ Richard Sherry defines *sylllepsis* as “in vnlike clauses a certeyn comon thyng that is put in one of them, can not agre with the other, excepte it be chaunged.”¹²⁴

In his 1577 edition of *Garden of Eloquence*, Peacham follows Sherry, defining the figure as “when there is some common worde in unlike clauses, being put in one clause is requyred in the other som what changed.”¹²⁵ Both Sherry and Peacham emphasize how the word disrupts the normal relation between common and unlike, a word that transgresses its conventional place. Unlike their definitions of *paronomasia*, however, the two rhetoricians do not fret over the application of *sylllepsis*. George Puttenham picks up on the thread of likeness but extends that notion into a social image: “if such wants be in sundrie clauses, and of several congruities or sence, and the supply be made to serve them all, it is by the figure *Sillepsis*, whom for that respect we call [*the double supplie*] conceiving, and, as it were, comprehending under one, a supplie of two natures, and may be likened to the man that serves many masters at once, being of strange Countries or kindreds.”¹²⁶ Puttenham plays on the two meanings of comprehension, to include and to understand, which announces that two understandings are included in one word.¹²⁷ In a later manual, John Smith echoes Puttenham’s emphasis on comprehension, saying that “*Syllepsis*, Comprehension: a figure of construction when a nominative plural is joyned to a verb singular; or on the contrary: Or it is a comprehension of the more unworthy under the more worthy.”¹²⁸ Smith’s hierarchy of worth and unworthy, Puttenham’s language of service, and

¹²³ *Paronomasia* creates a network of meaning between two words by changing the spelling of the second word, but *sylllepsis* fuses meaning by unifying two meanings—usually one active and at least one latent—in a single word.

¹²⁴ Richard Sherry, *Treatise of Schemes and Tropes*, Bviii’.

¹²⁵ Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (H Iackson: London, 1577), Fi’.

¹²⁶ George Puttenham, *Art of English Poesy*, 249. Angel Day also refers to service: “one word serveth manie sences” (Angel Day, *The English Secretary*, KKiiii’).

¹²⁷ *OED*, “comprehension, n. I. 1a and 2a.”

¹²⁸ John Smith, *The Mysterie of Rhetorique Unveil’d* (E. Cotes: London, 1657), 171.

Peacham's reference to common versus unlike create a constellation of images that associates *syllipsis*, like *paronomasia*, with the language of the unworthy, the servants, and the commoners.

On one level, this suggests that both commoners and language serve the worthy; however, on a second level, the slipperiness of both figures indicates the instability of both linguistic and social norms. Rhetoricians, including Puttenham and Day, allow *syllipsis* to slide easily into *zeugma* or malapropism; *paronomasia* slides easily into alliteration or *polyptoton*. The rhetoricians seem aware that compressing meaning in figures is inherently unstable because it allows for—and even encourages—subversive meanings to bubble under the surface.¹²⁹ To early modern rhetoricians, these two figures, like the commoners who use them, seem unruly. Because the rhetoricians superimpose social hierarchy onto the two figures, the implication is clear that the commoners can capitalize on ambiguity to slide from their conventional place to another place. If metaphor and allegory are central to the court's ability to maintain power, the pun is central to the commoners' ability to covertly express criticism and perhaps even transform their place in the social hierarchy.¹³⁰ Brome's *The New Exchange* exploits just this characteristic of wordplay. In the play, characters use wordplay to change rank through slippery verbal, commercial, and marital exchanges. Kevin Sharpe's reads court masques as deploying "the licence of play to offer counsel through compliment and through criticism," and, in a similar way, Brome's play uses the license of puns to offer compliment and criticism, not to the elites in

¹²⁹ Mary Bly notes that "subcultures delight in puns, most markedly when subverting the cloying paradigms of a dominant ideology" (Mary Bly, *Queer Virgins and Virgin Queens on the Early Modern Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1-2).

¹³⁰ For more on metaphor as the dominant figure in court masques, see David Bevington and Peter Holbrook, "Introduction," *The Politics of the Stuart Court*, ed. David Bevington and Peter Holbrook (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1-19, 15. That puns are the preferred style of commoners is evident in drama from Shakespeare well into the Caroline period. For more on that characterization, see Jonathan Hope, *Shakespeare and Language*, 74-88.

court but to the commoners in the city.¹³¹ The pun is one of the most playful of rhetorical figures, a quality that allows dramatists to conceal compliment and criticism in a playful veneer. Shirley's *Lady of Pleasure* stages a sustained examination of hospitality and manners to expose and resolve tensions among the gentry, but Brome's *New Academy* examines manners and hospitality in order to advocate for solidarity among London's commoners, both wealthy merchants and their servants.¹³² The play's treatment of wordplay is not monolithic; instead, some instances of wordplay expose social contradictions and attempt to resolve tensions, and other instances reveal merchants' complacency and self-interestedness. Both *paronomasia* and *syllipsis* map onto the play's interest in exchange, which demonstrates how verbal and social exchanges can counsel against predatory commercial and marital exchanges.

Because the play announces its interest in both the New Exchange and academies of manners, critics have long recognized the importance of both in their treatments of the play. In the first book-length study of Brome, Kaufmann compares the play to other place realism plays, suggesting that "Brome added the subtitle, *The New Exchange*, to gain gratuitous appeal for his play from a fad well under way," and it is "a mediocre play—it lacks sharpness and coherence of structure."¹³³ Unlike other place realism plays, such as *Hyde Park* (1632) and *Covent Garden* (1633), Brome's play is almost entirely concerned not with elite town culture but with the middling sort and servants who are affected by that culture. Brome's departure from exclusively staging the interactions of town elites renders the play a unique and sustained examination of

¹³¹ Kevin Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment: The Politics of Literature in the England of Charles I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 295.

¹³² Rosenfeld examines how Braggadochio, in Spenser's *The Faerie Queen*, uses puns to assert a "plan for social advancement" (Colleen Ruth Rosenfeld, *Indecorous Thinking: Figures of Speech in Early Modern Poetics* (New York City: Fordham University Press, 2018), 95-120.

¹³³ RJ Kaufmann, *Richard Brome: Caroline Playwright* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 54, 57.

those social tensions pertinent to commoners.¹³⁴ In a far more meticulous account of the play, Matthew Steggle calls attention to the fact that “*The New Academy* uses ‘change,’ ‘interchange,’ and ‘exchange’ in a range of senses moving outward from literal reference to the building erected in 1608-9, through the wealth it represents, out to describe financial and social transaction and on to the exchange of family members.”¹³⁵ Steggle rightly points to the polysemous nature of “exchange” in the play, a *syllepsis* that encompasses a wide range of meanings, but he focuses attention on exchange as it pertains the physical goods and marriage; however, Steggle does not attend to verbal exchange or exchange as it relates to changing one place in the social hierarchy for another, which are overlooked but critical aspects of the play. By examining exchange in its verbal and social contexts, we can examine how the play’s characters use language to navigate social tensions and mediate their own social mobility.

In fact, the play’s language of exchange revolves around social rank. As Martin Butler has shown, Caroline city comedy is often a reaction of traditional worldviews to the changes of new economic forces, but Butler stresses “the gentry’s acquirement of selfconsciousness as an autonomous group” and the “interaction between manners and social change.”¹³⁶ Critical attention paid to the values and concerns of the gentry occludes those plays’ representations of commoners. In fact, Brome’s play indicates that the acquirement of manners affects social change as it pertains to commoners as well as the elite. In a careful reading of Brome’s plays, Ira Clark has argued that “Kaufmann portrays a nostalgic conservative concerned to preserve

¹³⁴ For more on Brome as a playwright who “knew most intimately the common man of the hustle and bustle of London and is at his best when peopling his stage with common men and using their language,” see Catherine M. Shaw, *Richard Brome* (Boston: Twayne Press, 1980), 32.

¹³⁵ Matthew Steggle, *Richard Brome: Place and Politics on the Caroline Stage* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 98.

¹³⁶ Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis: 1632-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 142. I would also point out that the gentry’s self-consciousness did not develop in the 1630s, but, as we have seen, their dynamic responses to economic and social changes significantly predate the emergence of city comedies.

Elizabethan values, Butler a radical political critique,” but Clark points out that “no consistent Brome platform is discernable.”¹³⁷ In *New Exchange* in particular, Brome’s social and political position is elastic; the play both critiques and celebrates merchants’ social role, and it represents servants as both dissembling and industrious. Rather than read the play’s representation of social change as tension between traditional values versus emergent materialistic values, I argue that the play is more interested in teasing out how social interactions should work among London’s non-elite. It is important to note, however, that the play does not take an overtly traditional or an overtly progressive approach; instead, the play celebrates traditional values, such as hospitality, as much as it makes room for new forms of cultural prestige, such as complements. In the play, the Exchange and academy are conflated in several ways. They are both sites of prestige, fashion, and exchange. While some city comedies pit those commoners who sell versus those elite who buy, *New Exchange* narrows the distance between those who sell goods and those who purchase status.¹³⁸ Social hierarchy is formally embedded in wordplay as characters exchange rank through ambiguous language. The social playing field is leveled in a *sylllepsis* on “footing” in Nehemiah’s closing remark, asking everyone to join in the dance: “*Omnium Gatherum*, ‘tis the daintiest daunce. We had it here to-day. I and my mother, my aunt and all can daunce in’t, as well as the best, with everyone in their own footing.”¹³⁹ Nehemiah’s inadvertent wordplay simultaneously asks everyone to come together in a communal dance, but it also points out that everyone participates in society according to their footing. Because his mother is a wealthy widow and his aunt is a servant who married a wealthy merchant, Nehemiah’s comment suggests

¹³⁷ Ira Clark, *Professional Playwrights: Massinger, Ford, Shirley & Brome* (Louisville: University of Kentucky, 1992), 158.

¹³⁸ This formulation is evident in city comedies ranging from Middleton’s *Your Five Gallants* (1607) to Massinger’s *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (1625). Brome contributes a thorough account of the commoners’ perspective to this genre.

¹³⁹ Richard Brome, *The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*, ed. John Pearson, 3 vols. (New York: AMS Press, 1873), 2: 5.3703-7. All subsequent references are to this edition.

that social rank is a dance anyone can learn. Wordplay is the formal instantiation of a dynamic social hierarchy, a formal system of exchange that is elastic, mobile, and unfixd.

In *New Exchange* marginalized characters, use wordplay to challenge worldviews that would seek to restrict and devalue their social role. These characters use wordplay to articulate their social worth and expose inequality in traditional social structures. Rachel is perhaps the quintessential example of social mobility in the play.¹⁴⁰ She begins the play as the meek servant to a reasonably wealthy merchant; however, after marrying the merchant, fortuitously named Matchil, she embraces the privileges of her new rank and domineers her husband and his sister Lady Nestlecock. At first, Rachel might be too hastily thrown into a category with unruly women, such as Katherine in *Taming of the Shrew*, but it is evident early on that Rachel's resistance to Matchil exposes faults in his character and in the worldview to which he subscribes. Upon hearing of the apparent death of his son and becoming enraged, Matchil marries Rachel to exclude his scoundrel brother Strigood, his sister Lady Nestlecock, her son Nehemiah, and his daughter Joyce out of his will. Matchil uses a *sylllepsis* on "venture" telling his sister and brother: "to end your strife for shares in mine estate I'll venter on a wife: indeed I'll marry" (1.522-23). The double-meaning of venture indicates that Matchil's understanding of marriage as a commercial exchange, but it also indicates that he turns to marriage as a way of stabilizing his estate.¹⁴¹ After marrying Rachel, Lady Nestlecock erupts at Matchil, saying "Thou hast made thy self an example, and the scorne of thine own childe in marrying of thy drudge there" because "she hates to live where she must call her mother that was thy droile" (2.1328-32). Rachel, who

¹⁴⁰ Though I will focus on Rachel here, other marginalized characters use wordplay to great effect. Gabriella and Joyce use wordplay to resist their suitors' advances, Papillion and Galliard use wordplay to successfully court Gabriella and Joyce, and Blithe uses wordplay to point out that her would-be-suitor, Nehemiah, is her intellectual inferior. Each of these characters is a dependent of a foolish paternal figure, and the characters use wordplay to spotlight foolishness and carve out a space to make their own decisions.

¹⁴¹ Estate, here, refers to his finances, but it may also point to his refusal to allow his sister and brother to share in the finances that would raise their own social status.

up until this point has barely spoken a word, unpacks the Lady Nestlecock's accusation: "The droile is now your brothers wife, madam, and in that, setting your Ladyships lavish tongue aside, as good a woman as your selfe, none disprais'd, ha" (2.1336-38). Rachel adopts the proverbial expression "ha" that has only been used by Matchil and his sister, which indicates her equality on a linguistic level.¹⁴² Rachel also points out that if she has married Matchil, Lady Nestlecock and Rachel are social equals, using the morally-weighted term "good." Embedded in Rachel's argument that marriage has made her Lady Nestlecock's equal is an aural *syllipsis* on "Ladyships lavish tongue" and "slavish tongue," which accentuates the connection between language and rank. Lady Nestlecock is both subjected to her tongue and lavishly talkative.

In these lines, Rachel indicates that rank is not an inherent quality of a person, and she implies that, other than Lady Nestlecock's verbal boasting, the two are equals. Not to be outdone, Lady Nestlecock responds: "Thou shalt not dare to call me sister Huswife" (2.1347-48). Rachel once again parses the accusation, saying "Cods so, and why troe? because a Lady scornes to be a huswife, ha. If you be no huswife, I scorn to call you Sister, I; though my husband brother. From whence came you troe, ha?" (2.1349-52). Lady Nestlecock, whose name plays on her tendency to coddle Nehemiah, uses the derogatory sense of huswife as a disreputable woman; however, Rachel responds by pointing to the original meaning of huswife as a "woman whose main occupation is managing the general running of a household."¹⁴³ Natasha Korda demonstrates that in the early seventeenth century the importance of maintaining a properly ordered household, especially for those in the middling sort who wanted to signal their

¹⁴² This play is full of proverbial expressions. Nehemiah uses "Amardla," Camelion uses "honi soit qui mal y pense," Blithe's and Whimlby's is "ha, ha, ha," and Matchil's and Lady Nestlecock's is "ha." Rachel assuming Matchil's expression suggests an overlap between marital and linguistic exchange.

¹⁴³ *OED*, "housewife, n. I. 1a."

prosperity, meant that the housewife was a crucial part of the “civilizing process.”¹⁴⁴ Lady Nestlecock’s reluctance to participate in domestic duties, which smacks of the noble privilege to live in idleness, is contrary to what is expected of those in her social position.¹⁴⁵ Rachel’s philological demonstration brings the positive sense of “housewife” to the fore, and she subtly points out Lady Nestlecock’s domestic negligence, both as a person who orders the domestic space and as a parent who cosssets her child. Only recently a member of the middling sort, Rachel demonstrates her command of language, and she uses *sylllepsis* to uncover the competing meanings of “huswife.” Though Lady Nestlecock scorns the domestic labor of a housewife, Rachel asks “whence came you” (2.1352). Matchil is a merchant, so it is more than likely that money, rather than an inherited title or land, is the basis of her family’s social status.¹⁴⁶ That Lady Nestlecock’s superiority derives from cash implies that Rachel’s upward-mobility is not unlike Lady Nestlecock’s. Rachel turns to puns to defend her social status and defend housewives, which illustrates the important role that puns played in working through social tensions.

After Rachel defends her new social status and the importance of domestic duties, she turns her attention to Matchil. At the beginning of the play, Matchil has just heard the rumor that his son—who has been exchanged with the daughter of the French merchant Lafoy—has died.¹⁴⁷

The motive for the exchange of children is never clarified, but Papillion probably moves to the

¹⁴⁴ Natasha Korda, *Shakespeare’s Domestic Economies: Gender and Property in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 19.

¹⁴⁵ Thomas Smith defined the gentry as anyone who “can live idly and without manual labour” (Thomas Smith, *De republica Anglorum*, ed. Mary Dewar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 71).

¹⁴⁶ Almost immediately after coming onstage for the first time, Lady Nestlecock commands a servant to obey her “in my husband’s name, who was a Justice, when he liv’d” (1.183-84). While Justices of the Peace enjoyed prominence in their community, they were typically not gentry (Keith Wrightson, *English Society: 1580-1680* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 166).

¹⁴⁷ Matchil’s children are Joyce and Papillion, and Lafoy’s children are Gabriella and Galliard. Matchil has exchanged his son for Lafoy’s daughter.

continent as an apprentice or a factor. Oftentimes, marital exchange signals the binding of powerful noble families, but merchants exchange sons to create ties in international commerce, which throws into stark relief the difference between how merchants and nobles view exchange. After hearing the news, Matchil throws his daughter, Joyce, and Lafoy's daughter, Gabriella, out of the house. Marking himself as choleric, Matchil then swings wildly to trying to facilitate what promises to be a disastrous match between Lady Nestlecock and Sir Swithin Whimlby, a melancholic knight who has recently become a widower. After providing Lady Nestlecock the philological lesson that doubles as a conduct manual, Rachel tells Matchil that he should not "thrust yourself into unthankful offices, in things which concern you not" (2.1444-45). Although he praised Rachel for reproofing Lady Nestlecock, Matchil chides her for speaking to him too liberally, to which Rachel responds that "'Tis not so long since we were married, that you can forget it, or repent so soon. I am not now your slave, to have my face wash't with your snuffes, not to be kick't and trod on without resistance, nor to make you answers meerly with silent court'sies, run when you bid go to fetch and carry like your Spaniel" (2.1466-75). Rachel points out Matchil's tendency to exchange emotional states violently and with little cause.¹⁴⁸ She reminds him that he only recently married her and cannot have possibly forgotten their equal status, and she emphasizes her point—as she did with Lady Nestlecock earlier—by juxtaposing her new social position with her former submissiveness. While there is a tendency among critics to read paternalism in Brome's plays as a critique of royal tyranny, Matchil's paternalism has less to do with political oversight than with specific inequalities in marriage and rank.¹⁴⁹ In fact,

¹⁴⁸ In a later soliloquy, Matchil laments that his "Predominant blow, pull'd on me by mine own impetuous rashnesse let me here consider, while my hearts torture keeps my soule awake, the moving cause of all these ill effects" (3.1636-39). Unlike other city comedy patriarchs who recognize the error of their ways later in the play, Matchil recognizes early on that his choleric disposition causes problems.

¹⁴⁹ For examples of Brome's paternalism as a critique of Charles I's tyranny, see Julie Sanders, *Caroline Drama*, 53 and Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis*, 148-52. Matthew Steggle points out that such readings can overstate the importance of political crisis and so underexamine the plays' interest in other matters (Matthew Steggle, "Caroline

Rachel responds to Matchil's paternalism by exposing contradictions in his understanding of her rank.

The connection between her former inferiority and the tyranny of Matchil's character is embedded in the *sylllepsis* on "snuffes," which means both "a fit of indignation; a huff, pet, rage, passion" and "a portion of a drink left at the bottom of a cup."¹⁵⁰ Both of these definitions are related to the word's primary meaning as the portion of a wick that is snuffed out, a word that was also used "to describe what is faint, feeble, or on the point of extinction."¹⁵¹ Rachel's use of "snuffe" foregrounds the process by which social inferiors become the object of scorn. Matchil directs his fits of indignation at the feeble object because it is only what is left over at the bottom. To emphasize this point, Rachel structures her defense around the antitheses "married\slave" and "court'sies\spaniel." Puttenham and Peacham draw attention to how *sylllepsis* compresses meaning in one word, and Puttenham goes so far as to compare the figure to a "man that serves many masters at once."¹⁵² Rachel's *sylllepsis* points out the incoherent position Matchil puts her into, requiring her to marry him and maintain her subjection to him. Rachel expands on the paradox in marriage that positions women as both servant and equal. She asserts that she is owed courteous behavior because she is no longer Matchil's servant, a "condition I liv'd long enough," she continues, "and was content until you freed me out on't. Now free I am and will be a free woman, as you are a free-man, ha" (2.1476-79). She uses *sylllepsis* and antitheses to point out the vulnerability of upwardly mobile women who are expected to articulate their role with grateful deference.¹⁵³ As she is now married into the middling sort, Matchil expects Rachel to embody

Politics on the Professional Comic Stage," in *The 1630s: Interdisciplinary Essays on Culture and Politics in the Caroline Era*, ed. Ian Atherton and Julie Sanders, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 154-71, 158).

¹⁵⁰ *OED*, "snuff," n. II. 5 and I. 3.

¹⁵¹ *OED*, "snuff," n. I. b.

¹⁵² George Puttenham, *Art of English Poesy*, 249.

¹⁵³ Rachel is vulnerable partly because she only recently transformed from servant to partner. She is also vulnerable because women's social roles were oftentimes ambiguous. In his conduct manual for wives, Thomas Edger claims

the *syllipsis*. She is expected to compress the roles of both servant and wife in one person, a paradoxical expectation that is fairly common in early modern theories of marriage.¹⁵⁴ However, Rachel adopts language often associated with commoners, including her references to objects of domestic labor and to her status as free, to assert her new status in the community.¹⁵⁵

When Rachel refers to her freedom, she points to her privilege in marriage and to the freedom of no longer being a servant.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, she implies that by being married to a relatively wealthy merchant, she enjoys privileges afforded to her by virtue of being married to a freeman.¹⁵⁷ According to Keith Wrightson, “outside the context of the household, few women could exercise authority in economic affairs. Within it, however, they had a role in the daily provision and management of resources which could, and often did, confer a right to be informed and to be heard.”¹⁵⁸ Rachel reveals the paradox that marriage makes her a free woman by virtue of marrying a freeman, but Matchil expects her to subordinate herself to his mercurial desires. Sid Ray argues that Protestant marriage tracts use metaphors of subjugation, such as “bond” or “yokefellow,” that “hyperbolize the degree of power invested on the side of male authority and overstate the subjection of wives,” which “may unwittingly have contributed to domestic

that “Wedlock is a locking together,” but “a married woman perhaps may either doubt whether she bee either none or no more than halfe a person. But let her bee of good cheare...they bee by intent and wise fiction of Law, one person, yet in nature & in some other cases by the Law of God and man, they remaine divers” (Thomas Edgar, *The Lawes Resolution of Womens Rights* (John More: London, 1632), 4).

¹⁵⁴ For more on theories of marriage that includes figuring the wife as a servant, see Barbara Kreps, “The Paradox of Women: The Legal Position of Early Modern Wives and Thomas Dekker’s “The Honest Whore,” *ELH* 69.1 (2002): 83-102.

¹⁵⁵ William Harrison divides the “gentle” from the “commons,” maintaining a traditional distinction between freemen, such as rural yeomen and urban tradesmen, and the non-free, the latter of which are “day labourers, poor husbandmen, and some retailers (which have no free land), copyholders, and all artificers” (William Harrison, *The Description of England*, ed. G. Edelen (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1994), 118).

¹⁵⁶ On the privileges that marriage affords, see Keith Wrightson, *English Society*, 75-86.

¹⁵⁷ Ian Archer notes that “freedom entailed economic, political, and legal privileges” (*The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 61). Though she might not receive the same privileges directly, should would enjoy far more social latitude than would a servant.

¹⁵⁸ Keith Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 64.

strife.”¹⁵⁹ Matchil relies on similarly hyperbolic claims of power to assert his authority, which only amplifies the precariousness of Rachel’s impossible position as both servant and wife.

Because Matchil and Lady Nestlecock assume that Rachel’s transformation from servant to wife will not affect her demeanor or how she expresses her freedom within the household, the play underscores the contradiction that Matchil regards the roles of a wife and a servant as largely indistinguishable. In fact, early modern marital privileges were rarely legally codified, so domestic freedom was often negotiated by individuals within a household. In the next scene, Rachel negotiates marital power dynamics by illustrating the absurdity in Matchil’s position. After a second volatile confrontation, he tells her that “I love my peace, and would preserve my honour,” and she responds that “you think the way to purchase peace is by a war with me...or that you shall have honour by abasing your wife?” (3.1703-10) Once again, Rachel uses antithesis (peace\war and honour\abasing) to underscore that Matchil need not revert to authoritarian measures to assert his own role. Furthermore, she supplements the play’s interest in how commerce affects marriage by indicating that marital peace is purchased, not something owed to Matchil. She uses *sylllepsis* to embed “base” within “abasing,” showing Matchil that his own honor is tied to how he treats her. *Sylllepsis*, like marriage, mixes two things in one, and Rachel critiques the contradictions in Matchil’s autocratic view of marriage by using puns that mix the role of a servant with that of a wife. Using a particularly unruly figure like *sylllepsis*, she asserts her marital privileges and her new rank, repeatedly showing Matchil that both of their ranks are mixed together. Throughout these interactions, Matchil expresses the attitude that he must assert himself with force to ensure his authority; however, Rachel uses *sylllepsis* to dissuade him from his overly controlling demeanor. While Rachel uses *sylllepsis* to define and defend her

¹⁵⁹ Sid Ray, *Holy Estates: Marriage and Monarchy in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2010), 26.

new social role, Valentine uses *syllipsis* to conflate commerce and romance, which he uses to disguise his wooing of wives as a form of labor.

Like many city comedy gallants, Valentine seeks to turn his wit into profit, exchanging seduction for money.¹⁶⁰ His primary pursuit in the play is to seduce a tradesman's wife and then bribe her to remain silent, and he cloaks his scandalous intentions in witty wordplay. As the stepson of the play's most elite character, Valentine's wit is more than likely associated with the elite's intellectual superiority. That Valentine lives by his wits rather than by manual labor marks him as a member of the idle elite.¹⁶¹ That Valentine seeks, and partially succeeds, in exchanging seductive language for cash underlines an important *syllipsis* in the play's interest in exchange. Like the previous example where Rachel uses *syllipsis* to facilitate her exchange of one rank to another, Valentine uses *syllipsis* to exchange language for money; likewise, the woman he attempts to seduce, Hannah, uses wordplay to defend her social position. The play explores the way people use language in overtly commercialized ways; however, while Rachel's exchanges solidify her rank, Valentine's exchanges jeopardize others' honor and rank.

In fact, Valentine opens the play with a variety of references to exchange. The first use of the word in the play is Valentine's exposition that the merchants Matchil and Lafoy switched

¹⁶⁰ Valentine's confidante, and one of the play's only voices of reason, says that "I cannot blame this fellow now so much for using of his to get a living, though in an idle way" (2.9133-15). Matchil also forces the play's villain, Strigood, to live by his wit: "You have wit, yes, you can daunce, tread money out of rushes, slight and activity to live upon" (1.536-38).

¹⁶¹ Thomas Elyot constructs a hierarchy of manual and intellectual labor: "So the houseband man fedethe hym selfe and the clothe maker: the clothe maker apparayleth him self and the housebande: they bothe socour other artificers: other artificers them: they and other artificers, them that be gouernours. But they that be gouernours (as I before sayde) nothyng do acquire by the sayd influence of knowlege for theyr owne necessities, but do imploye all the powers of theyr wyttes, and theyr dylygence, to the only preseruation of other their inferiours" (Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named the Governour* (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1534), 4-5). While many early modern manuals suggest that wittiness is a natural quality in the elite, other manuals argue that those who live by wit do so out of necessity and are therefore inferior. Nicholas Faret, for instance, claims that a gentleman being "cunning and witty" is "seruile and obsequiousnesse, and vnworthy of a man of honour" (Nicholas Faret, *The Honest Man: or, The art to please in court* (Thomas Harper: London, 1632), 192).

children “by way of Exchange” (1.16-17).¹⁶² There is another use of exchange made by the tradesman whose wife Valentine seduces. The tradesman, Camelion, is a frivolous character marked by his repeated refusal to be jealous of his wife’s vulnerability, swearing that he would not be jealous “for all the wealth i’the’Exchange” (3.1864).¹⁶³ Camelion is the antithesis to the jealous husband archetype of the city comedy, but unlike the archetype where jealousy is often portrayed as irrational, Camelion has every reason to want to protect his wife. In fact, Hannah tells Camelion that he seems “careless of my credit, exposing me to all temptations of the wild gallantry,” which leaves her open “to all assaults and hazards” (2.704, 716-18). Hannah operates Camelion’s shop in the Exchange while her husband visits the ducking pond, which he accidentally reveals later is a euphemism for visiting prostitutes outside of town. Her references to credit and hazard link commerce and her exposure at the Exchange. However, she makes it clear that she does not ask him to be jealous but “a little watchful o’re my reputation,” and not to invite customers while he is away: “as if I were a thing set out, as in your shop, for common sale” (2.729-33). Hannah asks her husband to stay at the shop, using *sylllepsis* so that Camelion understands the jeopardy of her position in relation to commerce. Hannah references credit, hazard, and sale in a *sylllepsis* that connects her own sexual vulnerability with her position as shopkeeper, a position often associated with promiscuity.¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, Hannah represents the

¹⁶² In other prominent uses of the word, exchange refers to the accidental marriage of the two of siblings, which they “shall exchange and marry in due order” (5. 3605-06). Also, when Galliard hears that the accidental marriage will be remedied by merely exchanging spouses, he declares: “we shall make de exshange presently. a new exchange, De new Exshange indeed” (5.3608-10). These instances refer to the exchange of raising children and the exchange of wives, two uses that illustrate how commerce has upended the traditional domestic arrangement.

¹⁶³ Camelion is no Simon Eyre from Dekker’s *Shoemaker’s Holiday* (1599). Instead, he is more similar to Merrythought in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607) or Allwit in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (1613), who both pursue excessive merriness while their domestic and economic situations become increasingly dire.

¹⁶⁴ For more on the stereotype of shopkeeper’s wives as promiscuous, see William C. Baer, “Early Retailing: London’s Shopping Exchange, 1500-1700,” *Business History* 49.1 (2007): 29-51. For analyses of the stereotype in drama, see Garrett Sullivan, “All Things Come into Commerce: Women, Household Labor, and Spaces of Marston’s *The Dutch Courtesan*,” *Renaissance Drama* 27.1 (1996): 19-46 and Mario DeGangi, “Sexual Slander and Working Women in *The Roaring Girl*,” *Renaissance Drama* 32.1 (2003): 147-76.

Exchange as a precarious space where bodies are turned into commodities and reputations sold at hazard.¹⁶⁵

When Hannah is incapable of convincing Camelion that her reputation is in danger, she decides to devise a scheme to test Camelion's recklessness. In their home near the New Exchange, she establishes a school for teaching compliments and manners. He reacts incredulously at first, but wanting to appear imperturbable, Camelion brags that he enjoys having a dancing-school in his home, telling his wife that "though you are a Gentlewoman borne. You took me for my legs, not my armes. Is it not a good Jest, Cock. Sbobs 'twas out before I was aware" (3.1888-92). Peacham cautions that wordplay must be used deliberately, or else, as Peacham warns, the speaker will appear "affected."¹⁶⁶ Camelion's accidental wordplay, then, marks him as clumsy; furthermore, the *sylllepsis* on "armes" as body part and arms as marker of lineage indicates Camelion's violation of traditional social demarcation. The gentle-born Hannah married Camelion for his lively dancing ability, not his lineage.¹⁶⁷ After Hannah informs Camelion she has taken in gallant lodgers that would certainly mark their home as a disreputable, Camelion responds that "my house is counted a house of quality and recreation, Cock, in civil sort and gentle fashion" (3.1859-61). Camelion frames the gallants' seedy behavior as fashionable, a logic he also applies to his pastime at the ducking pond. Hannah exposes Camelion's cupidity, responding "you care not what people say, so *I* bring you in profit"

¹⁶⁵ Hannah sees a New Exchange very different from its motto: "All other places give for money, here all is given for love."

¹⁶⁶ Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (1593), 56. Quintilian also notes that "whenever the addition is not deliberate...it must be regarded as a fault" (*Institutio Oratoria*, 8.3.54-55).

¹⁶⁷ Jean Howard calls attention to two forms of dancing in Caroline drama. On the one hand, country dancing "emphasized rougher movements, groups of dancers rather than couples, and often involved bodies that bent parallel to the ground rather than being held elegantly erect"; on the other hand, courtly dancing is associated with fashionability, skill, and teamwork (Jean Howard, *Theater of a City: The Places of London Comedy, 1598-1642* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 171-2). Because Camelion has to ask the name of the courtly dance Gabriella and Joyce are practicing in the academy, it is likely Camelion is more proficient in country dancing, which further marks him as the lively commoner who threatens traditional lineage by marrying Hannah.

(3.1865-66).¹⁶⁸ While Camelion conceals his neglect by conflating liveliness and gentility in his *sylllepsis* on “armes,” Hannah openly calls attention to the fact that Camelion profits off her vulnerability. He disregards her reputation at their shop in the Exchange and at their home near the Exchange. Moments later, he takes his leave to go to visit his favorite resort, bragging that the fashionability of the ducking pond is greater than the academy: “if you saw me a the ducking pond, me and my trull” (3.1954-55). Noticing his verbal slip, Strigood asks “Your trull,” to which Camelion responds, “*I* mean, my bitch, sir. O she would ravish you” (3.1956-58). While the dominant meaning of trull is a prostitute, Camelion takes advantage of the little-used secondary meaning simply “a girl.”¹⁶⁹ Camelion seems to relish in displaying his infidelity brazenly, using the word “ravish” to gesture again to the obvious slip that he meant prostitute. The *sylllepsis* on “trull” is supplemented by the implied *paronomasia* of “ducking” and the adulterous activity that he has actually been performing. Camelion’s clumsy and crass use of wordplay reveals his baseness.

In fact, the play starkly contrasts how Hannah uses wordplay to resolve marital tensions and how Camelion uses wordplay to unintentionally expose his own extra-marital assignations. By the end of the play, Hannah finally succeeds in reforming Camelion’s negligence by threatening to cuckold him in an elaborate scheme with her stepbrother.¹⁷⁰ Like Rachel, Hannah uses wordplay to make clear the precariousness of her position. Both Rachel and Hannah are subject to the capricious whims of their husbands, and though Rachel’s and Hannah’s mobility

¹⁶⁸ Italics are included in the 1659 octavo.

¹⁶⁹ *OED*, “trull,” n. I. 2.

¹⁷⁰ Hannah convinces Camelion to begin thinking more of her reputation after she convinces him that she has been having an affair with Valentine, but he does not know that she actually been giving Valentine money because he is her dissolute stepbrother. After he thinks he has personally been cuckolded, he acknowledges the importance of reputation and so promises to consider Hannah’s.

runs in opposite directions, they both point out the failure of male authority.¹⁷¹ In many ways, Hannah's position as shopkeeper's wife parallels Rachel's position as servant-turned-wife. Both women are treated as servants and subjects to the dangerous whims of their irresponsible husbands. Rachel's experience indicates how upwardly mobile wives can be degraded; however, Hannah's experience underscores the peril of a downwardly mobile gentlewoman. Camelion's use of *sylllepsis* reveals his inelegance, but when Hannah uses *sylllepsis*, she connects her insecurity at the Exchange with commerce, underlining again how commerce threatens traditional modes of exchange. She exposes the contradictory position that tradesmen's wives are supposed to sell products in the bustling New Exchange, but they are expected to be vigilantly chaste. Camelion's and Hannah's discussion shows two distinctly different uses of *sylllepsis*, but in the final encounter between Lady Nestlecock and Rachel, *sylllepsis* is used to bridge the two women's disagreement over rank.

Throughout the play, the two women quarrel over Lady Nestlecock's haughtiness and Rachel's formerly low rank; however, when they arrive at the academy, they are found "deep in complement" (5.3435). Lady Nestlecock admits that "I am too much your trouble," to which Rachel responds "Pray Madam let me serve you truly truly. I'll be your servant for a yeare and a day" (5.3437-39). Lady Nestlecock continues the exchange of niceties: "Indeed, indeed you wrong your self, I am yours," and Rachel once again claims that "I am your servants servant, and will serve under your Ladships Cook to do you service" (5.3440-43). The two women engage in hyperbolic displays of service that at once satirize the servant-master trope in romance, but the

¹⁷¹ This point is not limited to these two cases. Camelion is a negligent guardian to Hannah, and Matchil is an overly authoritarian husband to Rachel; furthermore, Matchil's authoritarian parenting leads to Joyce and Gabriella running away, and then Strigood takes the two women into the academy as pseudo-prostitutes. The melancholy Sir Whimby, who courts Lady Nestlecock, is also a negligent father to Mistress Blithe, who also runs away to marry Erasmus later in the play. The frequency with which male authority figures fail miserably in the play underscores the incompetency of domestic power dynamics.

complements also reconcile the earlier disagreement between Lady Nestlecock and Rachel.¹⁷² The two adopt a language of service that places both women in the same rank, a stark reversal of the hierarchy Lady Nestlecock articulated earlier. In fact, Lady Nestlecock seems to suggest that in civil society all friends are servants to each other, a sort of radical equality of service. When Lady Nestlecock says “If I may not be accepted for your household servant, let me become your Chare-woman in any office from Cupboard to Close-stool,” Valentine says “this now savours of Complement indeed” (5.3445-50). Valentine’s *syllipsis* builds on Rachel’s culinary reference and the general use of “savour” as a rough analogue to “appears like.” In the exchange of complements between Rachel and Lady Nestlecock, elite and common culture is bridged. Elite displays of complements are expressed alongside references to domestic labor. While Valentine seems to scoff at the exchange, Lady Nestlecock ends by calling Rachel “good gentle sister,” a fitting resolution to earlier tensions over her rank (5.3455). The complements, however artificial, seemingly restore domestic tranquility at the Matchil house; moreover, the exchange of complements shows how a new form of exchange can help restore traditional values, such as hospitality and service. While complement culture tends to be associated with fashionable frivolity, Rachel and Lady Nestlecock use complementary exchange to position themselves as hospitable to each other, which resolves the animosity that began as tension over Rachel’s new social rank.

Just before the play’s closing, Nehemiah beckons everyone one to dance “in their own footing,” a *syllipsis* that connects the communal dance with social rank (5.3707). Afterwards, Matchil claims that “you have done well. Now pray lets break up school,” but Hannah’s father responds “but yet not break up house. My sonne and daughter have given my power to call their

¹⁷² The servant-master trope is satirized throughout the play. Valentine uses it to try to seduce Hannah, and Whimlby’s melancholy is the product of hyperbolic romance.

Supper mine. To which I'll give you welcome, Ale and Wine" (5.3710-13). The closing lines round off a play that begins with Valentine satirizing Matchil's "huge hospitality" (1.4-5). In the academy, hospitality repairs the social tensions that simmer in the first scene. The academy will be broken up and life will resume, but the academy plays a pivotal role in mediating conflict between Lady Nestlecock and Rachel as well as providing a communal space for characters to be instructed, corrected, and married. It is fitting, then, that the academy is not entirely broken up; instead, the house—the domestic space that is the site of earlier conflict—gets folded into the academy; furthermore, the academy is a sort of spatial *symploche* that compresses the space of business, home, and school into one. Using wordplay, Hannah teaches Camelion to be vigilant of his wife's honor; likewise, Rachel uses wordplay to define her new social role and negotiate tensions between herself and Lady Nestlecock. Camelion, however, uses wordplay that exposes his own limitations. It is unclear whether the play advocates for or censures wordplay, but it clearly portrays linguistic ability as an exchangeable commodity. *The New Exchange* provides an intensely realistic portrayal of early modern positionality, showing in detail the dangers of male and female characters that are both upwardly and downwardly mobile.¹⁷³ The experiences of a wide variety of characters who occupy different positions on the social spectrum are staged in detail that points out their social and economic pressures, tensions that revolve around competing notions of "exchange."

At first, the play's multiple uses of "exchange" seem to stress a concern that commercial exchange, represented by The Exchange, has devalued traditional exchanges, such as marital exchange or an exchange of hospitality. In fact, the academy, located at Camelion's house "near the Exchange" figures as a home bastardized by a commercial logic; by play's end, however, the

¹⁷³ This is not unique in early modern drama, but it is certainly rare to see a meticulous account of social mobility from many perspectives.

domestic sphere successfully resolves tensions between commercial and traditional exchange through complements, marriage, and dance (2.744-45). In the play, initial social disruption is caused by domestic strife, and the play stages effective strategies in managing and ultimately mediating that strife. The rivalry between Lady Nestlecock and Rachel indicates how tensions among the middling sort and the laboring-poor can be defused through complements; likewise, Hannah's patient instruction that Camelion's marital negligence risks her reputation demonstrates how domestic tension can be resolved. In each of these cases, the domestic sphere is a unit unto itself that self-regulates without the assistance of elite authority. Unlike those examples of Caroline drama that overtly refer to contact between the elite and commoners, Brome's *New Exchange* stresses the benefits of cooperation and civility in a strictly domestic setting among a variety of commoners.¹⁷⁴

If the play critiques authoritarian power dynamics, as critics like Butler have argued, then it is more interested in the uneven power dynamics of the domestic sphere than in developing the notion that domestic paternalism is analogous to Charles I's state paternalism. It is possible that the play critiques state authoritarianism on some level, but the ever-present nature of domestic strife, which never shades into political strife in the play, is the topic of more concern. By playing up the political analogy, there is a risk that granular attention to the more mundane issues at stake in the play may be eclipsed. By examining domestic strife in the play, we can attend to the tensions that arise between spouses of different ranks. Likewise, using wordplay as a mode of analysis allows us to examine the friction between traditional and emerging notions of "exchange," such as commercial, marital, discursive, and rank. The multiple uses of that word,

¹⁷⁴ For examples of plays that stage traffic between elite and commoners, particularly indicating tensions between the two groups, see Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (1625) or Brome's *The Weeding of Covent Garden* (1632).

and other vital words, demonstrates that “exchange” is a pressure point that is used by characters to define and assert their social and domestic roles. Several characters, including Rachel, use marital exchange to assert their independence from authoritarian male figures; similarly, Hannah and Rachel use marital and discursive exchange to instruct their neglectful husbands. Tracing the play’s references to exchange, service, and hospitality underscores how the use and definition of a word becomes a sort of battleground, a discursive field where characters debate their particular preference.¹⁷⁵ Patricia Parker notes that wordplay “involves a network whose linkages expose (even as the plays themselves may appear simply to iterate or rehearse) the orthodoxies and ideologies of the texts they evoke,” and the play’s network of uses of a particular word expose the competing ideologies that word subtends.¹⁷⁶ Far from trivial comedic figures, *paronomasia* and *syllipsis* are central to the play’s interest in exchange in its many facets, helpfully illustrating how marital and linguistic exchange can correct the destabilizing effects of commercial exchange. Brome’s *The New Exchange* underscores the necessity of domestic self-regulation through civil conversation, demonstrating how the contradictions in language and in society can be resolved through a simple exchange.

¹⁷⁵ An example of this would be Lady Nestlecock’s use of “drudge” versus Rachel’s use.

¹⁷⁶ For instance, the words “change,” “exchange,” and “interchange” expose the ideological disposition of the character using the word. When Strigood uses “interchange” he refers to the exchange of complements at his academy. When Galliard uses “exchange,” he refers to his recent marriage. When Camellion uses “exchange,” he refers to commercial exchange.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

While Shirley's and Brome's plays demonstrate how rhetoric can be used to negotiate social tensions between ranks in the 1630s, later thinkers claim that rhetoric was, in fact, the cause of social upheaval. In his *The Elements of Law* (1640), Thomas Hobbes accuses rhetorical education of instigating sedition by training students to question foundational truths, saying that "there can be no author of rebellion that is not an eloquent and powerful speaker"; moreover, Hobbes claims that rebellious thoughts "proceeded from private and public teaching, and those teachers have received them from grounds and principles, which they have received in the Universities."¹ For Hobbes, the universities and grammar schools are no more than breeding grounds of "opinion," a dangerous freedom of thought and speech that, he suggests, curdles into rebellion. In his *De Cive* (1642), Hobbes argues that schoolmasters "cooperate in disposing the citizens' minds towards sedition by infecting the young people in the schools."² After charging England's schoolmasters and rhetoricians with inspiring revolutionary action, Hobbes suggests England's eloquent Parliamentarians' "deliberation in large assembly" produces "conflicting proposal and adversarial speeches."³ For Hobbes, the variety of conflicting proposals instigates social tensions by teaching listeners how to defend their opinions. Two decades after his *De Cive*, Hobbes offers an analysis of the causes of the Civil War in his *Behemoth* (1668), where he

¹ Thomas Hobbes, *The elements of law natural and politic*, ed. J.C.A. Gaskin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 171, 176.

² Thomas Hobbes, *On the citizen*, trans. and ed. Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 140.

³ *Ibid.*, 123.

claims that schoolmasters and Parliamentarians are educated by “books written by famous men of the ancient Grecian and Roman commonwealths concerning their polity and great actions.”⁴ Armed with the “advantage of their eloquence” and knowledge of classical polities, these orators participated in the undoing “the peace of the kingdom.”⁵ Hobbes provides a succinct causal chain of the events leading into the Civil War, saying that “Studying Greek and Latin,” the schoolmasters “became acquainted with the democratical principles of Aristotle and Cicero, and from the love of their eloquence fell in love with their politics, and that more and more, till it grew into the rebellion we now talk of.”⁶ Hobbes’ concern over rhetoric’s capacity to stimulate sedition stems from his perspective that rhetoric instills a willingness to rethink traditional principles and deliberate publicly through persuasive speech. Despite Hobbes’ pessimism, his concerns are indeed visible insofar as sixteenth and seventeenth century rhetoricians often also viewed rhetoric as a tool to reshape the speaker’s social condition.⁷

Hobbes’ account of how rhetoric facilitated revolution in England by the instigating democratic principles of free thought articulated by training in eloquence is legible in the rhetorical theory of the preceding century. The rhetoricians this study has covered range from those like Thomas Wilson, who hopes to instill humanist values in elite readers, to Henry Peacham, who proclaims that anyone who learns the art of rhetoric can become the emperor of men’s minds. While rhetorical manuals continued to be written for elite audience into the seventeenth century, manuals by the late-sixteenth century were increasingly written with

⁴ Thomas Hobbes, *Behemoth or The Long Parliament*, ed. Ferdinand Tönnies (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 23, 109.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 43, 158.

⁷ Hobbes is not alone in this sentiment; in fact, John Locke echoes Hobbes’ concern over rhetoric, saying that “all the Art of Rhetorick, besides Order and Clearness, all the artificial and figurative application of Words Eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong *Ideas*, move the Passions, and thereby mislead the Judgement” (John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 506-7).

common audiences in mind. Changes in the socioeconomic structure, which each chapter details, stimulate competition for social distinction and economic advantage, and characters in the plays this study has examined look to rhetoric to navigate the social landscape and capitalize on economic possibilities their ancestors might not have had if they were born into humble circumstances. Rhetorical theory and humanist education played an enormous role in amplifying social mobility by providing hard skills like eloquence, but rhetoric and humanist education also provided soft skills, an ability to define unstable social positions—as Rachel does in Chapter IV—or articulate the values of a particular rank—as Ed does of the gentry in Chapter II.

The plays this study has covered illustrate that the practice of rhetoric seems to support Hobbes' thesis, though rhetoric is certainly only one of many elements that lead to civil unrest. The rhetorical theory from the 1550s to the 1580s is generally interested in promoting a distinctly Christian humanism, emphasizing virtue, governance, and duty; however, the rhetorical theory from the 1590s to the 1610s predominantly stresses rhetoric's ability to remake the speaker, and that period tends to associate rhetorical skill with social mobility. An oft-quoted example of just such an idea is George Puttenham's pronouncement that learning rhetoric will pull his reader "from the carte...to the courte."⁸ While Puttenham's statement is not unusual in the sense that other rhetoricians make statements endorsing social mobility, many those other rhetoricians explicitly design their manuals for upwardly-mobile commoners; however, Puttenham claims to write to an elite audience, but repeatedly includes advice that seems designed to encourage a common audience to take advantage of the social advancement that rhetorical skill offers.⁹ Puttenham's highly pragmatic advice indicates his awareness that rhetorical skill is useful in securing social advancement. The Puttenham example illustrates a

⁸ George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (London: Richard Field, 1589), 250.

⁹ For more on the audience of various rhetorical manuals in the period, see the Introduction.

broader shift—among the later manuals between the 1590s and 1610s—wherein rhetoric was advertised more for its social utility than its ability to teach virtue; furthermore, later rhetoricians stress the everyday practice of rhetoric in particular social situations more than earlier rhetoricians, which predominantly stressed abstracted virtues. What Hobbes recognizes, then, is that rhetorical theory teaches its readers that the skillful rhetorician can negotiate a porous social hierarchy through eloquent speech. In each play this study has examined, characters put their rhetorical training into practice in order to shape the social environment around them.

Each chapter of this study illustrates how two plays use rhetoric to respond to particular social tensions in a specific decade. While some plays in this study challenge and critique social tradition like Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*, other plays seek to uphold tradition or—in the case of Shirley's *Lady of Pleasure*—seek to preserve old traditions by folding them into emerging values. The two plays in each chapter examine two different strategies and two different rhetorical figures that each play uses to respond to that historically specific social tension. By situating the use of rhetorical techniques alongside historical specificity, we can identify how rhetoric is used to drive social change and how language changes over time. Throughout the study, we see attitudes toward rhetorical education and the use of rhetoric shift in each chapter, but we also see recurrent themes crop up repeatedly, such as the role that rhetoric plays in promoting civil values. Rhetoric is a part of the formation of new values as much as it is a part of the reinforcing of traditional values, which underscores the role rhetoric plays in social change as much as it illustrates the dynamic complexity of social change. Furthermore, we can see that rhetorical manuals are used to codify the language that signifies social status in period with major changes in the social structure. In recent years, social historians have attended to the emergence of new social roles in the period that had not existed a generation before, and this

study explores how rhetoric is used to define the social roles of traditional ranks as much as articulate the role of newly forming roles. In each of these plays, characters use rhetoric to articulate and define the social role of a particular rank, but characters also turn to rhetoric to navigate the everyday experiences of a particular rank. In each of these cases, Hobbes thesis is, in part, supported by how rhetoric is used in the drama.

Characters use rhetorical eloquence to actively articulate their right to social advancement; they actively articulate the rights of their particular rank; and they actively articulate their views as to the values that define the social role of that rank. In each of these cases, characters put rhetoric to use to shape the social environment around them, linguistic acts that illustrate the integral role rhetoric played in shaping England's social landscape. While Hobbes' account surely overestimates rhetoric's role in instigating the Civil War, he provides a perspective sensitive to influence of language in the social sphere, an influence that contemporary scholarship could also attend to with greater sensitivity. This study demonstrates the value of putting early modern dramatic use of rhetoric in context with broader social changes and with changes in rhetorical theory. This offers opportunities to examine shifts in the formation of rank in early modern drama as developed by and constituted through rhetorical discourse. As we have seen, this rhetorical discourse often mobilizes the language of civility, hospitality, and virtue in order to more clearly describe social changes and respond to social tensions. A fuller understanding of how the patterns of rhetorical discourse map onto patterns in social changes throws into stark relief the rhetoric's social influence. Andy Wood has recently suggested that a hallmark of recent social history is a focus on sociolinguistics, a targeted analysis of language that argues that "we are coming to view the linguistic constitution of social identities in the creation of new social categories as *at least as* important as the experience of

material deprivation, exploitation and immiseration.”¹⁰ For a full exploration of how language constitutes social identity, the everyday use of rhetoric should be more closely studied alongside mainstays in sociolinguistics, such as regional dialects, urban fashions, gendered speech, and other forms of language identity.

In order to delineate the complex intersection between society and rhetoric, a full study should explore rhetoric that is put into historical context, providing a detailed account of the motivations, tensions, and problems relevant to a specific time and place; furthermore, a full study should explore rhetorical theory not as a homogenous field but as a complex, dynamic, and fluid discourse that expresses different attitudes and different allegiances depending on the author, the period, and the place of publication. With an appropriately contextualized view of the specific historical and rhetorical changes, we can attend to the specific ways authors pull from rhetorical theory to comment on social formation. As we have seen, characters in the drama use rhetoric to define emerging social ranks; secure social mobility; advocate for particular social values. The everyday practice of rhetoric, then, has a deliberate and perceptible impact on social formation, and an analysis of rhetorical use that is sensitive to historical and rhetorical context can use rhetoric in early modern literature to identify larger social changes and reconstruct the experiences of the people that used language to effect that change. The early modern period was a period entranced by the powers of eloquence. From England to the continent, rhetoric was used to mediate and instigate conflict; it was used to promote and critique social values; it was used to distinguish from and cooperate together. Recognizing rhetoric’s social utility will contribute to our knowledge of how authors, the gentry, and commoners engage in intricate debates that shape England’s social landscape, debates drawn from the profound social impact of rhetorical theory.

¹⁰ Andy Wood, “Fear, Hatred and the Hidden Injuries of Class in Early Modern England,” *Journal of Social History* 39.3 (2006): 803-26, 807.

While I confine my study to early modern English drama, this methodology—situating the use of rhetoric with historical specificity—would be particularly useful to understanding other textual objects in the period.

In early modern English poetry and prose, rhetoric is used to negotiate similar social tensions. This study's methodology could be usefully applied to a study how poetry or prose in the period draws from rhetorical theory to respond to social tensions. While I examine how rhetorical theory is used in relation to changes in social status, this method could be applied to studies on gender, race, or the environment; in fact, the use of rhetoric permeates every discourse in the period, so it authors pull from rhetoric to articulate their argument and persuade the audience. Outside the field of rhetorical theory, this method could be usefully applied to other kinds of manuals. I look to rhetorical manuals because they are popular throughout the period and across the social spectrum, but I also look to rhetorical manuals because they are overtly practical, teaching specific techniques with specific applications. In addition to rhetorical manuals, preaching manuals, merchant manuals, and conduct manuals—to name just a few—also teach techniques with applications that overlap with issues like social status, gender, race, or the environment. To date, no study has explored how early modern preaching manuals—for instance—codify shifting attitudes about humanity's relation to the environment, a study that could provoke new insight into old discussions about religion's role in shaping property rights or agricultural practice. In these kinds of manuals, language and social performance is integral, and users' ability to thrive in an increasingly competitive environment hinges on their ability to negotiate social tensions, articulate their value, and appear competent. While this study is embedded in history, the argument that rhetorical techniques drive social change and offers

opportunity for social mobility is as applicable in the seventeenth century as it is in the twenty-first century.

In fact, this study has fundamentally shaped the way I approach teaching rhetoric and literary texts in the classroom. In the English classroom, instructors offer rhetorical techniques and interpretive strategies that have direct marketable application. In effect, instructors of English are rehearsing the same material that rhetoricians wrote in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, instructing students how to be both civically engaged and able to perform negotiate complex social situations. My research into the ways formal techniques shape a student's ability to maneuver in a competitive market in the early modern period informs my philosophy in the classroom, particularly my commitment to equipping students with applied skills. While instructors might not be telling students that English Composition classes will pull them from the "carte to the courte," instructors can cultivate a classroom where students recognize the direct social benefits that come from an education in writing, debating, and thinking with style. This study's interest in the use of rhetoric in ordinary social interactions is motivated by the fact that rhetoric is infused in nearly every facet of social life, and encouraging students to identify rhetorical techniques in marketing campaigns and social media posts encourages them to engage twenty-first century issues with critical awareness. In both early modern English history and contemporary society, renewed interest in the history of rhetoric and its use among ordinary people will shed light on who speaks, how they speak, and why they speak, which reveals the contours of power relations between ranks and genders as well as political or geographical affiliation. While this study explores how rhetoric shapes early modern English social structure, the story of how rhetoric transforms social tensions in the twenty-first century is still being written.

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