DISPARATE MEASURES: POETRY, FORM, AND VALUE

IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

by

MICHAEL BENNET SMITH

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Michael Smith

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This dissertation has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Department of English by:

George Rowe, Chairperson, English
Benjamin Saunders, Member, English
Lisa Freinkel, Member, English
Leah Middlebrook, Outside Member, Comparative Literature

and Richard Linton, Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies/Dean of the Graduate School for the University of Oregon.

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Approved: _____
Dr. George Rowe

In early modern England the word "measure" had a number of different but related meanings, with clear connections between physical measurements and the measurement of the self (ethics), of poetry (prosody), of literary form (genre), and of capital (economics). In this dissertation I analyze forms of measure in early modern literary texts and argue that measure-making and measure-breaking are always fraught with anxiety because they entail ideological consequences for emerging national, ethical, and economic realities.

Chapter I is an analysis of the fourth circle of Dante's *Inferno*. In this hell Dante portrays a nightmare of mis-measurement in which failure to value wealth properly not only threatens to infect one's ethical well-being but also contaminates language, poetry, and eventually the universe itself. These anxieties, I argue, are associated with a massive shift in conceptions of measurement in Europe in the late medieval period. Chapter II is

an analysis of the lyric poems of Thomas Wyatt, who regularly describes his psychological position as "out of measure," by which he means intemperate or subject to excessive feeling. I investigate this self-indictment in terms of the long-standing critical contention that Wyatt's prosody is "out of measure," and I argue that formal and psychological expressions of measure are ultimately inseparable. In Chapter III I argue that in Book II of the *Faerie Queene* Edmund Spenser figures ethical progress as a course between vicious extremes, and anxieties about measure are thus expressed formally as a struggle between generic forms, in which measured control of the self and measured poetic composition are finally the same challenge. Finally, in my reading of *Troilus and Cressida* I argue that Shakespeare portrays persons as commodities who are constantly aware of their own values and anxious about their "price." Measurement in this play thus constitutes a system of valuation in which persons attempt to manipulate their own value through mechanisms of comparison and through praise or dispraise, and the failure to measure properly evinces the same anxieties endemic to Dante's fourth circle, where it threatens to infect the whole world.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Michael Bennet Smith

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon
Boston University
George Fox University

DEGREES AWARDED:

Doctor of Philosophy in English, 2010, University of Oregon
Master of Arts in Creative Writing (Poetry), 2004, Boston University
Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and Writing/Literature, 2002, George Fox University

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Early Modern Literature
Poetry

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Graduate Teaching Fellow, Department of English, University of Oregon, 2004-2010

Assistant Director of Composition, University of Oregon, 2008-2009

Co-chair, Ad Hoc Assessment Committee, Composition Program, 2008-9

Search Committee, Early Modern Literature: 2007-8

GRANTS, AWARDS AND HONORS:

Rudolf Ernst Dissertation Fellowship Award, University of Oregon, 2009

Paul T. Hurley Prize in Poetry, Boston University, 2004

Robert Fitzgerald Prize for Poetry in Translation, Boston University, 2004

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This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, in love and gratitude.

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CHAPTER I

DANTE AND THE IDEA OF MEASURE

AT THE THRESHOLD OF THE RENAISSANCE

It hath been ordained that one measure and one weight should be throughout all this realm of England…

Magna Carta

As Virgil and Dante enter the fourth circle of hell in the seventh canto of *The Inferno*, they are accosted by Plutus, the ancient god of wealth, who clucks at them in a simulacrum of speech: *Pape Satan, pape Satan, aleppe!* These words—approximating real language, but resisting translation—introduce the pilgrims and the reader into the region of hell reserved for the avaricious and the prodigal, those who mismeasured wealth in their former lives, either by hoarding or by squandering, and are consequently condemned to spend eternity colliding with one another in an indiscriminate, swirling mass. By opening this canto with nonsense words, Dante immediately establishes a connection between measure and language, or, more accurately, between mismeasure and mangled language.

This connection—between one's ability to measure wealth and one's ability to speak—is the canto's dominant recurring theme; it is derived in part from an ancient and venerable connection established by Boethius in his commentary on Aristotle's *De*

Interpretatione. All forms of measure in this hell are debased, beginning with economic measure, for money is the ultimate marker of value.[1] In Virgil's words,

> *Tutti quanti fuor guerci*
> *si de la mente in la vita primaia,*
> *che non misura nullo spendio ferci.* (40-2)
>
> [Every one of them was so cross-eyed of mind in the first life, that no measure governed their spending.[2]]

No *misura*—measure—governed the spending of these souls while they were alive, and in the afterlife their mismeasure is transformed into a world where they must suffer an existence of extremities, eternally denied the ethical mean that they themselves disdained during their mortal lives. Dante repeatedly relies on the imagery of extremity to describe their suffering. The sinners swirl between extreme points in the expanse they inhabit, "*d'una parte e d'altra*" (26), "on one side and the other." From these opposing sides they move *da ogne mano a l'opposito punto*, "on either hand to the point opposite" (32). Instead of occupying the spatial middle ground, the sinners continually return to the extreme ends of their hell. They move toward the middle only to encounter violence, smashing into one another with their meaningless burdens.

But as much as it is a hell of extremes, Dante's fourth circle is also a hell of broken language, a region that continually reenacts the moment after the fall of the Tower of Babel. For Plutus' speech is not the only failed language in the seventh canto. As they

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[1] R.A. Shoaf establishes this connection, noting that "Aristotle [...] insists that 'all goods to be exchanged... should be measurable by some standard coin or measure.' From this need, universally recognized, for a common measure, arises what [I] call the *reductive power* of money—the power of money to reduce anything and everything to itself" (11).

[2] All translations of Dante in this dissertation are from Robert M. Durling's edition.

run in their furious circle, holding great weights, the sinners speak only in interrogatories, "crying 'Why do you hold?' and 'Why do you toss?'" (30). Although their voices clearly ring out, there are no answers here; their questions are purely rhetorical, and this speech approximates a cry of agony more than a communicative attempt. In the final part of the canto, when Virgil and Dante encounter those condemned for wrath, another sin of ethical excess,[3] they find that the sinners "gurgle in their throats, for they cannot fully form the words" (125-6).

These three forms of language—the guttural clucking of Plutus, the rhetorical questions of the avaricious and prodigal, and the throat-gurgling of the wrathful—constitute the only forms of language endemic to the mismeasurers. There is no dialogue in any meaningful sense, just as there is no true dialectic, merely thesis and antithesis eternally alternating while the possibility of synthesis disappears into an infinitely regressing horizon. Dante cannot talk with the sinners as he does elsewhere in hell. The souls cannot even insult one another. They merely talk (or gurgle) *at* one another. Language exists in this hell purely as utterance and its communicative function is aborted even at the outset; this is a place of infinite questions and no answers. Only Virgil and Dante, walking through this circle, practice a viable form of language when they speak to one another, and in noting the cause of these sinners' punishment, Virgil is overtly conscious of his own *parole*:

> *Mal dare e mal tener lo mondo pulcro*
> *ha tolto loro, e posti a questa zuffa:*
> *qual ella sia, parole non ci appulcro.* (58-60)

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[3] Aristotle follows his discussion of extremes and deficiencies of wealth in *Nicomachean Ethics* 2.6 with a discussion of anger, which itself "admits of an excess, deficiency and mean" (2.7)—the wrathful are those who are excessive in anger.

> [Bad giving and bad keeping has deprived them of the lovely world and set them to this scuffling: whatever it is, I prettify no words for it.]

Virgil's statement, constructed as it is in elegant, interwoven *terza rima* lines, self-consciously points to an inescapable irony: Dante *does* prettify words. The *Commedia*, with its strictly defined temporal and geographical parameters, its hypersensitivity to the passage of time and to spatial relations, and above all its precisely measured language—its poetry—offers itself as a perfectly ordered countermeasure to the swirling disorder of the mismeasurers. Dante is conscious of the way his *terza rima*, his *misura*, counters the disorder of these sinners. Their abortive attempts at language, the unanswered questions they shout at one another, constitute a kind of anti-poetry:

> *Così tornavan per lo cerchio tetro*
> *da ogne mano a l'opposito punto,*
> *gridandosi ancheloro ontoso metro;* (31-3)
>
> [Thus they would return around the dark circle on either hand to the point opposite, again shouting at each other their shameful meter.]

Here the correlation between language and measure becomes clear: there is an inextricable connection between shameful measure and shameful meter. *Metro* is *misura*; meter is measure.[4]

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[4] The relationship is etymological. "Meter" (and *metro*) and "measure" (*misura*) probably derive from the same Indo-European root, and throughout their histories these words have meant both poetic meter and the measure of physical objects (*Oxford English Dictionary*, "mete" n1). In ancient Greek, for example, "metron" could mean both poetic meter and quantitative measure (See OED "meter/metre," where the etymology lists meanings of Greek *metron* as "poetic metre, measure, rule, length, [or] size."). Similarly, the classical Latin cognate *metrum* meant either "poetic metre," or "a vessel or other object used for measuring," while *mensura* [*misura*, measure] could refer to either a "system of measurement" or "metrical or rhythmical value" (see OED, "measure" n:

This connection points to a deep measure-anxiety present in the late medieval period. By figuring this circle of hell as a measureless chaos, Dante dedicates the canto to these anxieties, the apprehensions of a culture in the throes of a massive shift in the way it conceived of measure. In this circle the avaricious and prodigal produce in a pure form the consequences of mismeasure, or, more accurately, they produce the cultural fantasies of anxiety that accompany perceptions of mismeasure. Dante does not merely reinscribe the sins of the intemperate in an ironic *contrapasso* punishment; instead he gives the sinners over to themselves, to the extremity of their own mistaken view of the world. Their punishment does not mirror or reverse their sin; they create their own hell by enacting the essence of mismeasure. Lack of measure is given free reign and pushed to its logical and (ironically) extreme end.

This is why, in the fourth circle, there are no persons. It is the ability to order the world that allows us to distinguish one person from another, just as it allows us to distinguish between hours on the clock, between boundary lines on maps, between worlds, and between words. The logical end of mismeasure is the loss of individuality itself. The pilgrim Dante thinks he will be able to recognize and speak to some of the sinners, as he does throughout hell. But the damned here have lost more than their ability to speak. They have lost the markers by which they are distinguished as individual personalities: the failure properly to distinguish economic value manifests in hell as the

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"action or process of measuring, system of measurement, instrument of measurement, [or] metrical or rhythmical value." In English the meanings of the cognates of these words carry all the same interrelationships. "Measure" and "meter" can both refer to poetic structures and to physical quantification, and "measure" and "met" both point to a behavioral dimension as well. They conjoin in the proverbial phrase "met and measure," as in the proverb "met and measure make men wise" (OED "met" 5a).

inability to distinguish among people.[5] Virgil delineates this connection by taking up and playing on Dante's use of "*conoscere*," the Italian word for knowledge or recognition. When Dante says he will surely be able to recognize (*riconoscere*) some of the avaricious, Virgil disagrees:

> *la sconoscente vita che i fé sozzi*
> *ad ogne conoscenza or li fa bruni.* (52-4)
>
> [The undiscerning [*sconoscente*] life that befouled them makes them dark now to all recognition [*conoscenza*].]

In Aristotle's discussion of structural techniques in the *Poetics*, he frames recognition (anagnorisis)[6] as an epistemological event, a "change from ignorance to knowledge" (2.4). Terrence Cave has analyzed the implications of recognition at length; he notes that the etymology Aristotle uses to define anagnorisis survives in the English (and Italian) cognate: "'Ana-gnorisis', like 're-cognition', in fact implies a recovery of something once known rather than merely a shift from ignorance to knowledge" (33). There are recognitions, and mis-recognitions, in the *Commedia*: in nearly every circle Dante recognizes a friend or enemy, from whom he gains some understanding, yet this "something once known" is, in the fourth circle, irrecoverable. Mismeasure has foreclosed the possibility of *riconoscenza*; whereas other denizens of hell can recognize and speak to one another, can learn from Dante or tell him of their forms of existence, here there is only darkness. Dante's failure to recognize these souls, Virgil explains, is deeply connected to their particular sin, to their failure to measure wealth. It is the result

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[5] This measure-anxiety is analyzed in the context of an English literary text in Chapter IV.

[6] The Italian cognate is *riconoscenza* (Cave 5).

of an epistemological short circuit initiated by the sinners themselves: mismeasure in life has annihilated the possibility of recognition in the afterlife, and with it the discovery that would (potentially) lead to *peripeteia*, to some change in circumstance.

Virgil's connection between the sin and its punishment depends on the slippage he exploits between various forms of *conoscere*, between forms of knowing. What is in life a failure of the intellect properly to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate attitudes toward money—a failure of reason or cognition—becomes, in the afterlife, a failure to distinguish between persons—a failure of re-cognition. Virgil's wordplay allows him to draw a causal connection between mismeasure and failed recognition, that is, to explain why miserliness and wastefulness should lead logically to an inability to recognize persons. Yet the connection relies primarily on what may be called etymological accidents, connections between words more than connections between agents situated in a compelling relationship of cause and effect. If so, Virgil's explanation points toward a salient feature of mismeasure, a fact of measure anxieties in the late medieval and early modern periods: the sense that mismeasure causes widespread effects (seemingly) unrelated to measure itself.

The cross-categorical threat of mismeasure implied by the failed recognitions of Dante's seventh canto is not a special case, but an early example of how anxieties of measure would manifest throughout the early modern period.[7] This dissertation tracks

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[7] In using the term "early modern" instead of the term "Renaissance"—here and elsewhere in this dissertation—I emphasize how the onset of the new measures (beginning roughly with Dante) constitutes a worldview that is essentially "modern" and that has not been displaced. Both terms imply fundamental discontinuities between the medieval and subsequent periods, though "Renaissance" clearly suggests a return to the idealized classical age. Because I am interested in both "looking forward" and "looking

those anxieties and the effects they have on literary-cultural productions in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in England. Dante presents a world where the sins of prodigality and avarice are imagined as a nightmare of mismeasure, one that ties together diverse meanings of *misura* and suggests that failures of measure cannot be partitioned. But the nightmare of failed *misura* is, for writers of the centuries that follow, undeniably real. For these writers, mismeasure is a kind of contagion in which failure to measure properly in one category threatens the ability to measure in *all* categories.

The sense of connections between categories of measure, the feeling that one failure of measure leads to another, is the context of Ulysses' famous speech in the first act of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida.* Ulysses' premise—that the failure to keep "degree" destroys the world—is described in terms of contagious disease: when "degree is shaked [...] the enterprise is sick" (101,3). The inability of the Greek troops to order themselves is figured as an infectious fever, an epidemic:

> The general's disdained
> By him one step below; he, by the next;
> That next, by him beneath. So every step,
> Ensampled by the first pace that is sick
> Of his superior, grows to an envious fever
> Of pale and bloodless emulation. (1.3.129-134)

This paranoid worldview depends on the premise that the universe is divinely ordered, and that disorder at any level threatens the entire universe, the entire created *order*. The order of the universe is mirrored at the level of human cultural relationships. Ulysses' catalogue of the institutions that depend on establishing order comprises a significant

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backward," both terms are helpful in conceiving the historical period theorized in this dissertation, and both are used. My decision to refer primarily to the period as "early modern" is dictated by current institutional usage.

range of the period's social intercourse. Military ranks, residential communities, academic positions, guilds, international commerce, primogeniture, inheritance, systems of government, and—importantly for a play treading in ancient literary waters—laurels, all depend on keeping proper degree, or as Ulysses describes it, "degree, priority, and place,/Infixture, course, proportion, season, form,/Office and custom, in all line of order" (86-88). This assertion of the relationship between the (dis)order of human institutions and the (dis)order of creation is an early modern commonplace. Benedetto de Cortrugli, a fifteenth-century merchant, argues that the example of God's creation is the proper pattern for human systems of order: "Inasmuch as all things in the world have been made with a certain order, in like manner they must be managed" (Crosby 199). Because disorder is contagious, disorder in the heavens disrupts the order established in human institutions, as when an astronomical occurrence threatens war and disaster.[8] But the converse is equally true: the disease of disorder among men threatens to infect all the world.

That creation is ordered was obvious to observers of heavenly bodies from ancient times and was taken as a sign of the divine order of the universe. The Book of Wisdom provides the key text for early modern understanding of God's role as a creator and as a measurer: "thou hast ordered all things in measure, and number, and weight" (11:20). This text is one of the most frequently quoted Bible verses of the middle ages; indeed, E.R. Curtius notes that "the ordo-idea of the medieval world-picture developed from this one Bible verse" (504):

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[8] For examples see Shakespeare's *Hamlet* 1.1.129-42 and *Julius Caesar* 1.3.424-34.

> Through this verse, number was sanctified as a form-bestowing factor in the divine work of creation. It acquired a metaphysical dignity. This is the imposing background of numerical composition in literature [...]. "Numero disposuisti." God's disposition was arithmetical! (504-5)

This key verse thus unites God's creation and the writer's creation under the rubric of measured disposition; it emphasizes the relationship between ordering and creating inherent in the opening lines of Genesis, in which creation consists of a three-part model: God speaks things into existence, divides them by category and name, and then announces that they are good.[9] This linguistic, metric, normative creative process occurs again and again until the creation of the universe is complete. Before this, the earth is "without form"; the pre-created state is literally chaos. God creates the world via language, which comes *a priori*, and the act of measurement is simultaneous to the act of creation. Virgil points to the creation in the same canto, emphasizing God's attention to

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[9] Genesis 1:14-5:

> And God said, Let there bee lights in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night: and let them be for signes and for seasons, and for dayes and yeeres.
>
> And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth: and it was so.

The nascent connection between governing and measuring is captured by the double meaning of the English word "rule," where the lights both *reign over* their respective divisions and simultaneously *measure* them out:

> And God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the starres also.
>
> And God set them in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth:
>
> And to rule over the day, and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkenesse: and God saw that it was good. (Genesis 1:16-8, *Authorized Version*)

distributive measure. He tells Dante that God delegated the rule of the heavens to governors whose job it is to ensure that light is meted out equally:

> *Colui li cui saver tutto trascende*
> *fece li cieli, e diè lor chi conduce*
> *sì ch'ogne parte ad ogne parte splende,*
> *distribuendo igualmente la luce.* (73-6)
>
> [He whose wisdom transcends all things fashioned the heavens, and he gave them governors who see that every part shines to every other part, distributing light equally.[10]]

The inhabitants of the fourth circle, in their mismeasure, deconstruct the first creative act. Their mangled version of order, their eternal commitment to disorder, reverses the creative, ordered language—the poetry—of God's created order. Virgil's strategy for defeating Plutus at the opening of the canto is to refer to God's mandate for Dante and Virgil's journey: "Silence, cursed wolf! Consume yourself with your rage within. Not without cause is our descent to the depths: it is willed on high, where Michael avenged the proud onslaught" (10-2).[11] Virgil reminds Plutus that the primeval disorder,

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[10] Virgil's reference to the genesis of the world analogizes and contrasts the way Fortuna works; in the same way God intends that his governors distribute light, he intends that Fortuna distribute wealth and favor, though her rationales must remain inscrutable to men caught in the movements of history. When he discusses Fortune, Virgil relies on a medieval commonplace articulated by Boethius, who is much more negative about Fortune's role. Dante's notion that Fortune facilitates the cosmic distribution of measure according to God's plan is more complicated than Aristotle's belief that the greatest ethical good (happiness) can be achieved irrespective of fortune, though Aristotle agrees that fortune can be a factor in the loss of happiness (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1.8). The medieval English poets considered Fortuna "the force that threatens not only king and state, but all human civilization and order" (Ebin 44).

[11] Virgil's invocation of Plutus—the god of wealth—as a "cursed wolf" implicitly connects him with the medieval allegorical referent: avarice (The wolf also recalls the wolf of Canto I, which is usually recognized as a symbol of avarice.).

the rebellion of Satan, was destroyed by the countermeasures taken by God's ministers, the angels who enforce law and *order*. Virgil vanquishes Plutus by referring to the ancient triumph of an objective system of order over disorder, the measure by which God "rules" (that is, governs and measures) the cosmos.[12]

The association of disorder with rebellion points to a key anxiety for the period. As Shakespeare's Ulysses argues, order at the personal level has a direct effect on social order. Rebellions—including Satan's—are mismeasure writ large; they are an epidemic resulting from the contagion indicated at first by the symptoms of personal disorder.[13] The ability to govern a people depends on the ability of individuals to govern themselves. Thus moderation in one's actions becomes an ideologically important standard, and temperance becomes a critical virtue for any society interested in order, for it constitutes a model of self-conduct the state has an interest in promoting among its populace, a political analogue of the state's interest in confining disease, in preventing the spread of sicknesses that threaten to become disastrous epidemics.[14] Indeed, the ability of poets to create intemperance in their readers was one of the primary reasons Plato argued for the

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[12] The pun is operative in Old English: *metan* (to measure) and *metod* (Creator).

[13] The changing fortunes of the factions in Florence, suggests Virgil, are the result of how Fortuna, another of God's ministers, distributes prosperity in ways inscrutable to men.

[14] Thus Michel Foucault, in *The Use of Pleasure*, finds that sexual relations in ancient Greece were not censured by the moralists according to categories of desire (such as same-sex desire) but according to whether the desire was temperate: "What distinguished a moderate, self-possessed man from one given to pleasures was, from the viewpoint of ethics, much more important than what differentiated, among themselves, the categories of pleasures that invited the greatest devotion" (187).

banishment of the poets from the republic.[15] Furthermore, failing to order one's *writing* (one's language) also threatens to infect the social order.[16] In *The Art of English Poesie*, George Puttenham relies on the epidemic nature of disorder when he points to examples of folk poetry in which the (dis)order of words leads to or encourages rebellion, including the Peasant's Revolt of 1381 (345-6).

Montaigne, in his essay "Of Moderation," also appeals to metaphors of contagion to describe mismeasure: "As if our touch were infectious, we by our handling corrupt things that of themselves are beautiful and good. We can grasp virtue in such a way that it will become vicious, if we embrace it with too sharp and violent a desire" (146). Mismeasure is so infectious that it risks turning inward and contaminating even virtue itself.[17] The danger for Europe, the humanists realized, was not lack of religion, but overzealousness in religion. Thus when Montaigne claims he has "known a man of high rank to injure his reputation for religion by making a display of religion beyond all

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[15] "And as to temperance, isn't the most important thing for the common people that they be subject to the rulers, and that the rulers themselves exercise temperance in drink, love, and feasting? [...] I think it does not make for temperance if the young men hear [certain verses in Homer]" (33). Furthermore, Plato argues that temperate men are not interesting dramatic subjects, so poetry makes intemperate leaders its heroes and encourages us to sympathize with them (52-3).

[16] This was a special concern for Lydgate, who frequently noted the capacity of the maker-poet to order the realm. As Lois Ebin argues, the Hundred Years War made the connection between poetry and political rule particularly relevant in fifteenth-century England: "Lydgate underscores the role of the poet in reinforcing the office of the prince, both by providing models of the good ruler and subject and in moving humanity to embrace these ideals" (41).

[17] In the case of intellectual pursuits, not overreaching was important enough for Montaigne that he had a verse from the epistle to the Romans (12:3) inscribed on the rafters of his library: *Nolite esse prudentes apud vos metipsos* (do not think too highly of oneself, but soberly).

example of men of his sort" (146),[18] one editor suggests that the historical person referred to is Henry III of France.[19] If so, the analogy is particularly apt, for early in his career Henry III seemed to occupy a middle position in the War of the Three Henries, attempting to hold the throne against the Hugenot Henry of Navarre while Henry of Guise rallied staunch Catholics against any concessions toward the Protestants.

Henry III failed to navigate the landscape of extremism successfully, instead presiding, while Duke, over the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre and later, while king, engineering the assassination of Henry of Guise. Of the three Henries, it was in fact Henry of Navarre who represented the moderate middle position, which proved to be a much more effective strategy for governing a religiously divided country. Montaigne's allusion to Henry III points to the pressing historical consequences of his topic—moderation—in a typically offhand way, but hints at the barbarity lurking in the potentials of immoderation. The contagion of mismeasure, even if applied to otherwise holy pursuits like religion, leads to the massacre of thousands and threatens to bring down nation states. The answer to this threat, as to all threats of mismeasure, is temperance, the ability to control oneself, which if practiced carefully by all will prevent the disease of disorder from destroying the person, the community, the state, and the world.

In Dante's conception failures of *misura* evince the same ability to jump categories, to infect other measureable classes. He relies on the lexical complexity of

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[18] See also Olivia's claim about Malvolio's Puritanism, in *Twelfth Night*: "O, you are sick of self love, Malvolio, and taste with a distempered appetite" (1.5.86-7).

[19] Donald Frame, 146 n. 2.

misura to investigate the interconnectedness of measure and the consequences of its failures. For Dante and for the early modern writers who would investigate measure-making and measure-breaking, measure can be partitioned into three separate but related spheres modeled by the creative activity of God: it is quantitative, normative, and linguistic. It refers, first of all, to the measure of physical properties (such as height, weight, volume, and time), which I shall refer to as quantification. Secondly, measure constitutes an ethical category, specifically the Aristotelian conception of virtuous behavior as proper habits subject to the laws of temperance. Finally, measure has an inextricable relation to language, which depends on a shared system of measure in order to function. In literary investigations into measure, language becomes a special area of concern, for mismeasure always threatens language. For instance, in poetics, where formulations of language are most self-consciously structured, "measure" is synonymous (in Western languages) with poetry itself.

It is perhaps obvious to say that Dante's use of *misura* refers to measure as quantification. This is the first and oldest sense of "measure," in both Dante's Italian and modern English, the meaning that refers to the application of numbers to dimensions of space and time. Around the time of Dante's birth the technologies that made the standardization and precision of these forms of measure underwent profound changes. Dante's generation was the first to live in the world of the mechanical clock, a measuring device one historian calls "perhaps the greatest single human invention since that of the wheel" (Cardwell 39), and the early modern period is in many ways an age marked by the changes in worldview that accompany a monumental shift in conceptions of measurement.

The new technologies of measure were swiftly and widely disseminated, so that by 1560 Pieter Bruegel the Elder was able to dedicate an engraving to their collective success. This work, entitled "Temperance," celebrates the achievements of measuring technologies (Fig 1). At the center of the print the allegorical figure "Temperentia" presides, moderating, as it were, the various figures surrounding her. These figures represent the new sciences of measure that had proliferated from the thirteenth century to Bruegel's own historical moment: accountants, musicians reading musical notation, astronomers measuring the sky, cartographers measuring the earth, children learning standardized letters, compasses, and numerous devices, including squares, a plumb bob, and—balancing on top of Temperance's head—a mechanical clock measuring the hours of the day. These forms of measurement were, for the period, new technologies, new ways of seeing the world. Together they constitute a kind of omnibus of the technological achievements of measure from the thirteenth through the middle of the sixteenth centuries. Almost all of the instruments in the print had been invented in the relatively recent past; they are manifestations of a view of the world that began to disseminate in Europe a generation before Dante and that still holds sway. In this sense, the images in the print may be thought of as *early modern* technologies, for they represent the advent of a way of thinking of the world and about quantification that has persisted and become a cornerstone of modern conceptions of reality.

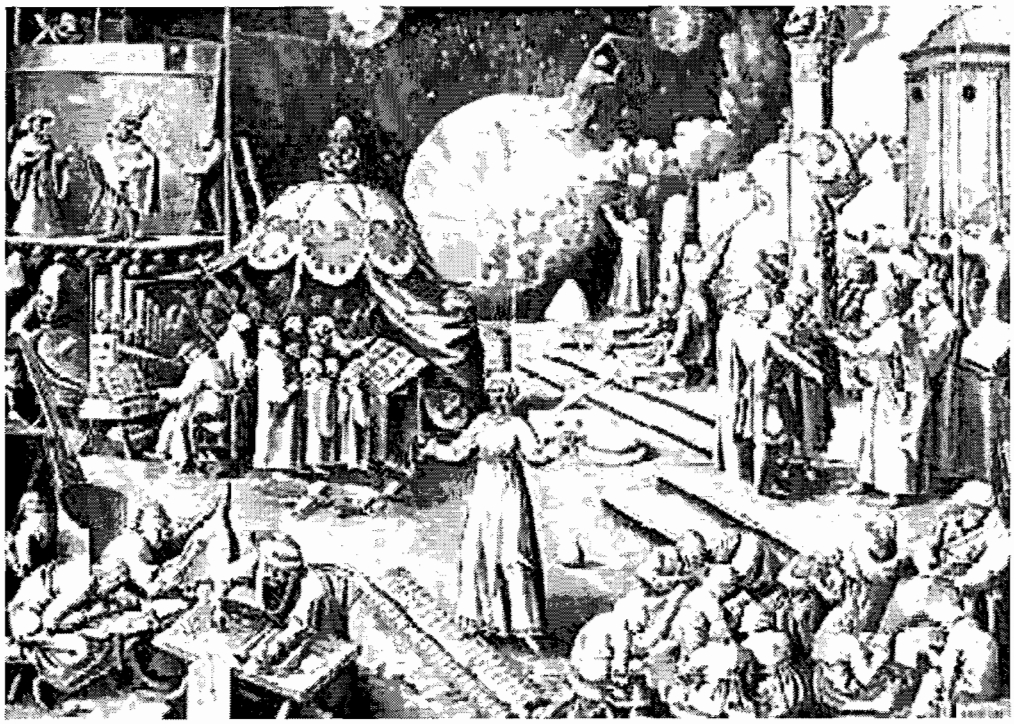

Figure 1: "Temperance"

The quantifying technologies presented by Breugel together constitute one of the primary reasons for the period's anxiety about measure and mismeasure. The problem of how to organize the world—how to categorize thought, systematize knowledge, measure things, and order words—is a problem that presents itself to every culture and every historical epoch. But some historical periods are special cases. Europeans living in late medieval and early modern Western Europe witnessed a massive upheaval in thinking about measure, what Alfred Crosby calls "a new model of reality": a shift from qualitative to quantitative categories of thought (xi). It was this "swing away from metaphorical models to mathematical ones" that created the foundation for the development of modern sciences, for "[i]n form, at least, Kepler's was a mathematical universe rather than a qualitative one" (Finkelstein 2). An epistemology that had held

sway since antiquity and that privileged qualitative analysis of the world began to give way to a new understanding of how the world might be conceptualized, a craze for quantifying the world, for enumerating all aspects of reality itself.[20]

Dante writes in the early throes of that change, for the period between 1275 and 1325 witnessed "Europe's first mechanical clock and cannon" (Crosby 18), both of which helped Europeans to think of time and space, respectively, as quanta. At the same time, or shortly thereafter, advances in marine charts facilitated advances in navigation, perspective painting revolutionized the visual arts, and double-entry bookkeeping nudged the West toward the rise of early capitalism (19). For Europe, it was an era of new measures. These measures both caused and were the effects of enormous shifts in how the average European thought about the world.

It is almost impossible to overstate, for instance, the effects wrought by changes in how Europeans thought about time in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Before mechanical clocks, sun-based systems of measurement dictated that the day had twelve hours and the night had twelve hours, no matter what time of year it was. In the summer, daylight hours were simply longer than nighttime hours, and in the winter the reverse was true (Leach 113). Furthermore, most people kept track of time not according to hours of the day, but according to the local church's ringing of the bells at the seven canonical "hours" (Crosby 33). These monastic divisions are the usual measures of time in Dante's *Commedia*, but a more precise, mechanical way of measuring time was even then appearing in Western Europe, and Dante refers to these new measures alongside the old:

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[20] It was in the fourteenth century that scholars at Oxford began to think about measuring "motion, light, heat, and color" with abstract quanta, and if these, why not "certitude, virtue, grace?" (Crosby 14).

the mechanical clock was invented in the 1270s (Lloyd 648), and a few decades later, in the *Paradiso*, Dante employs the gearwork of such a clock as a metaphor for the spinning movement of ecstatic souls (Crosby 79).

The first mechanical clocks were, like the bells announcing the hours of church prayer, communal, usually located on towers in urban centers. These clocks changed not only the common belief that hours could vary in length by season, but also the very conception of time itself, a conception that lasted from the ancient world into the fourteenth century. E.R. Leach points out that "[i]n the Greco-Roman world the only mechanical time-recorders were water devices, which conveyed a notion of constant flow rather than of consecutive equal intervals" (113). Other conceptions of time prior to the mechanical clock also depended on the metaphor of flowing substance, and thus time itself was conceived of as flowing until the thirteenth century. But Crosby argues that, because measuring devices based on this view—candles, water, sand—were not reliable, the shift in worldview toward quantification was necessary for the invention of the mechanical clock: "Solving the problem becomes possible when one stops thinking of time as a smooth continuum and starts thinking of it as a succession of quanta" (80).[21] The result is what Leach calls "scientific time," a new way of thinking about being itself, in which time is not cyclical or magical, but "a simple dimension, analogous to length,

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[21] Adas describes the transition to the mechanical clock as a shift from the religious to the secular, and hints at the relationship of quantified time to the rise of capitalism: "By the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries considerable numbers of Europeans, particularly those living in urban areas and engaged in textile production or commerce, had undergone the profound reorientation of time perception that the spread of public and, later, private clocks had effected. Personal and social activities, especially those related to work and market exchanges, were increasingly regulated by manufactured, secularly oriented machines rather than natural rhythms or religious and ritual cycles" (61).

and capable of being measured in equal intervals according to any convenient scale" (114).

The ability to think of time as "a simple dimension," or "a succession of quanta" is directly related to the rise of the cash economy. The misvalue of money is Dante's target for measure anxiety in the *Inferno* because money is the ultimate quantifier; the move to a cash economy in the late Middle Ages dramatically increased the possibilities of the quantifiable worldview, to the extent that a scholar in the fourteenth century was able to proclaim that "[e]very saleable item is at the same time a measured item" (Crosby 70). This view hints at the pervasive nature of measuring, for early capitalism suggested that everything could potentially be a "saleable" and therefore a "measured item," and every measured item is potentially a mismeasured item.

The rise of the cash economy tied time and money together as measurable categories, for it allowed time to be quantified by means of the measure of interest on debt (Crosby 71) and the burghers, the merchant class not included in the three medieval estates, dedicated themselves to the quantification of wealth as much as they did to the mechanical clock (77). For the first time labor became measurable by abstract quanta, rather than by generational relationships of feudal allegiance and protection, and the quanta of exchange were made visible in the columns of the ledger sheet, added and balanced by means of another new invention of the fourteenth century: double-entry bookkeeping.[22]

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[22] See Crosby, 199-223 for a discussion of the advent of bookkeeping in Europe. Future economic advances were aided by developments in mathematics, for it was not until the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries that hindu-arabic numerals finally replaced Roman numerals, and the use of basic arithmetic signs like + and – followed later (Crosby 113).

Measured time also revolutionized the art of music, as the Gregorian chants of medieval churches began to give way to ordered, written polyphonic composition. Music in the Medieval period already took advantage of harmony, of the proportion of pitch between various notes, and harmony had provided the basis of metaphors of music as order since ancient times; the music of the spheres, a concept at least as old as Pythagoras, associates musical harmonies with astronomical proportions and places both in the context of God's creative measures. When Johannes Kepler calculated the orbits of the planets on the Copernican model at the end of the sixteenth century he relied on this quasi-mystical metaphor to explain the proportions of celestial movement. Music ordered space, and, with the development of polyphony, time began to order music, for polyphony added a temporal order to what had been timeless chants. Several singers voicing different parts require a consistent time signature to avoid absolute chaos. In the thirteenth century musicians systematized the relationship of notes in proportion to one another, so that the duration of one note might equal the duration of two notes half as long. Music had become quantified in terms of both pitch and time.[23] It remained a commonplace metaphor for God's creative order: Ulysses, in *Troilus and Cressida*, follows his planetary metaphor with a musical one: "Take but degree away, untune that string,/And hark what discord follows" (1.3.9-10).

The visual arts, too, became subject to the tyranny of numbers as painters turned to mathematical principles to aid their pursuit of representing perspective. In 1425 the Florentine artist Filippo Brunelleschi exhibited a series of demonstrations revealing his "discovery" of the vanishing point, and, for the first time since the classical age, pictures

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[23] See Crosby 139-163.

were made according to the principle of geometric linear perspective (Edgerton 4-5). It is perhaps not coincidental that Brunelleschi was trained in architecture, where the application of numbers to spatial objects developed ahead of other arts and sciences in the Middle Ages. A decade later the Florentine artist Alberti elaborated these rules in a treatise on perspective, creating "the first document ever—anywhere in the world—to relate the optical laws of vision to the aims and aspirations of artists" (6). These innovations entail the application of the laws of geometry to painting, and later in the same century Leonardo da Vinci classed painting among the sciences that depend on mathematics (Adas 62). In Breugel's print a painter thus crouches in the lower left corner near other arithmeticians: the merchants and money counters.

The science of cartography, interested as it is in the application of numbers to the real world, benefited from the developments of linear perspective. Additionally, the discovery of Ptolemy's world atlas by a group of Florentine humanists in 1400 revolutionized the study of mapmaking; Ptolemy's methods included solutions to a number of problems of translating the spherical features of the world to two dimensions, notably by taking the viewer's point of view into account. Ptolemy provided three cartographic methods, one of which provided a way forward for Florentine cartographers by reducing "the traditional heterogeneity of the world's surface to complete geometrical uniformity" (Edgerton 113). As Samuel Edgerton makes clear, the revolution in cartography was the same as, and in some ways dependent on, the revolution in art. It entailed the application of geometry to two-dimensional space in the representation of the three-dimensional world. By the sixteenth century, cartography had advanced from the metaphorical "T-O" maps of the middle ages—based on an allegorical worldview that

placed Jerusalem at the center of the world and relied on medieval Christian number theory—to maps that accurately portrayed the world on mathematically-based models. This numeration of the world itself represents a kind of parable of the late medieval, early modern transition from a metaphorical "worldview" that represented symbolic truths about God's creation to a quantifiable, scientific depiction of the world.

Bruegel's print is a useful compendium of these new forms of measure, but it also suggests a crucial point about the way measure functioned in the early modern period. In his analysis of the technologies Bruegel depicts, Alfred Crosby does not mention the most obvious fact of the print, its *raison d'etre*, and it might seem that I too have neglected the person at the center of the engraving: this figure, as the writing on the hem of her garment reveals, is Temperance, and she stands (appropriately) at the center of the engraving. In her hand she holds a bridle connected to a bit in her own mouth, modeling self-restraint. To view the print as merely a historical index of measurements would be to miss the key point: all quantitative measures are tied together by the allegorical figure of ethical measure. If it does not strike viewers as peculiar that this anthology of technical achievements is surrounding a personification of virtue, it may be a testament to the pervasiveness of the ancient relationship between the measure of objects and ethical measure. While the technologies Bruegel depicted were, for him, relatively new, the relationship between measuring objects and measuring the self was not. Thus Temperance stands at the center of Breugel's print, while the new technologies of measure circle her like constellations; Temperance for Breugel, as for Dante, is itself the metonymical index by which all forms of measure may be presented and connected. By

the ethical category of temperance the order of the universe is tied, measure for measure, to the order of the self.

Dante's view of the vices of avarice and prodigality borrows heavily from Aristotle,[24] who spells out the how temperance applies to the spending and keeping of money:

> In giving and taking money the mean is generosity, the excess wastefulness and the deficiency ungenerosity. Here the vicious people have contrary excesses and defects; for the wasteful person spends to excess and is deficient in taking, whereas the ungenerous person takes to excess and is deficient in spending. (2.31)

In the case of avarice and prodigality, both vices represent a failure properly to value wealth, either by investing it with too much value (avarice) or too little (prodigality).[25] The resident of this circle has mistaken the proper measure of wealth because desire has infected the will, causing him or her to miss the mean state. Excess and deficiency in the keeping of money are versions of the same sin insofar as they both fail to keep the proper mean, but oppose one another insofar as they stand on opposite sides of the virtue of generosity. Thus Aristotle refers to them as "contrary excesses and defects," and Dante's

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[24] For Dante's knowledge of *Nicomachean Ethics*, see Minio-Paluello, 67. In dialogue with Dante, Virgil calls this work "*la tua Etica*" (Canto XI). Dante's knowledge of both Aristotle and the medieval redactors and commentators of Aristotle was extensive, and in the *Commedia* Dante quotes or refers to the *Ethics* "not less than forty times."

[25] The kinship of this meaning can be traced etymologically as well: in post-classical Latin *mensura* came to signify "moderation." (Oxford English Dictionary, "measure" n.)

Virgil says that the sinners cry out "when they come to the two points of the circle where their opposing faults (*colpa contraria*) disjoin them" (43-45).

It is not a coincidence, then, that Dante alludes to Charybdis in a simile early in the canto. He describes the swirling mass of sinners as a monstrous whirlpool:

> *Come fa l'onda làsovra Cariddi,*
> *Che si frange con quella in cui s'introppa:*
> *Così convien che qui la gente riddi.* (22-4)
>
> [As the waves do there above Charybdis, breaking over each other as they collide: so the people here must dance their round.]

The reference to Charybdis invokes the classical type of excess and deficiency, a parable alluded to by Aristotle in *The Nicomachean Ethics*.[26] The passage through the strait of Messina, traversed by Jason and Odysseus (and later, in a different but appropriate setting, Guyon), provides an ideal analogy for the ethical task of achieving the mean. On one side crouches the monstrous Scylla and on the other swirls the whirlpool Charybdis, and the challenge of passing safely between these dangers corresponds to the analogous ethical task of seeking the "golden mean."

How is missing the golden mean an emblem of temperance? For Aristotle and for the scholars who disseminated his work, temperance had a double sense. On the one

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[26] Whereas Aeneas is told by the prophet Helenus to avoid the passage entirely, Odysseus decides to travel closer to Scylla to avoid the more dangerous extreme, Charybdis. Aristotle interprets this as an analogue to ethical decision-making. Often one extreme is worse than another; a lack is more dangerous than an excess or vice versa: "we must first of all steer clear of the more contrary extreme, following the advice that Calypso also gives—'Hold the ship outside the spray and surge.' For since one extreme is more in error, the other less, and since it is hard to hit the intermediate extremely accurately, the second-best tack, as they say, is to take the lesser of the evils" (2.33). It is actually Circe who gives Odysseus this advice (Book XII).

hand, it refers specifically to vices associated with missing the proper mark for eating and drinking, or for sexual activity. Aristotle and Aquinas both locate its sphere as that of the senses. But it also has a more general meaning, one that can apply to almost all forms of virtue. Dante's consideration of measure as failures of temperance in relation to the keeping and spending of money would have been familiar to late medieval readers; the classical, Aristotelian model of ethics presents most virtues as states achieved by avoiding extremes, that is, as schemata subject to the general rule of temperance.[27] Thus in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle defines "virtue" (conceived broadly) as "a mean between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency" (2.23). Accordingly, almost all vices can be thought of as failures to keep the ethical mean.[28] On this model, courage is not the opposite of cowardice, but the middle ground achieved by behaving properly—in the right way at the right time according to the circumstances with which one is presented. One can be deficient in the virtue (cowardice) or excessive (foolhardiness), but deficiencies and excesses are both related, in opposite ways, to the virtue they have missed. Cowardice and foolhardiness are in one sense opposites, but in another sense they are very much the same, for they are versions of the same ethical deficiency: they

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[27] The rich tradition of scholastic Aristotelianism was a relatively late feature of the medieval period; commentaries began to appear only in the thirteenth century, and they were usually based on poor Latin translations. Humanist interest in moral philosophy and the return to translations based on Aristotle's Greek texts made the *Nichomachean Ethics* increasingly important to early modern thinking in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See Charles Schmitt 3-5 and 15-25.

[28] Some vices do not fit the tertiary system, but are simply wrong in and of themselves, such as theft and adultery: "Hence in doing these things we can never be correct, but must invariably be in error. We cannot do them well or not well—e.g. by committing adultery with the right woman at the right time in the right way." (2.23).

both represent failures to achieve proper courage. This sense of excesses as both equal and opposite is a commonplace in both ancient and early modern conceptions of the temperate virtues. Montaigne's comparison of immoderacy to marksmanship is a typical metaphor: "The archer who overshoots the target misses as much as the one who does not reach it" (146).

The ethical dimension of *misura* thus provides a convenient field for the exploration of measure more generally, for a venerable tradition of virtue theory originating in the *Nichomachean Ethics*—and extending through the church fathers and Aquinas to Dante—viewed temperance as a virtue that could itself govern or apply to other virtues. Thus Aquinas, in his analysis of Aristotle's treatment of temperance, turns to Augustine to emphasize this point: "For when Augustine writes, ['']It belongs to temperance to keep oneself sound and unspoilt for God,['] he is indicating the function of every virtue. On these grounds *temperance is a general condition of all virtue*" (2a2æ. 141, 2 my emphasis).[29] Thus while temperance is a virtue that has a special meaning in relation to governing the appetites of the senses—especially taste—it also governs other appetites, including spiritual ones (Aquinas 2a2æ. 141, 4-5). Just as "taste" has a metonymic relationship to desire more generally, so temperance (Aquinas argues) refers to all virtues insofar as they represent the governing of desire: "Desire implies a certain impulse of appetite for what is pleasurable, and the checking of this calls for the work of

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[29] Aquinas points to the metonymic function of temperance when he argues that it is both a special virtue, as set down by Aristotle, that refers to temptations related to the physical senses, and a general virtue that can apply to all virtues that deal with desire: "temperance can be spoken of either broadly or more pointedly [...]. Desire implies a certain impulse of appetite for what is pleasurable, and the checking this calls for is the work of temperance." (9, 15).

temperance [...]. Temperance is directly about desires" (2a2æ. 141, 3). And Thomas Elyot, citing Plotinus, defines temperance as "the propretie or office therof is to covaite nothynge whiche maye be repented, also nat to excede the boundes of medyocritye, and to kepe desyre under the yocke of reason" (257).

Like Dante's canto, this chapter began with an assertion of the connection between broken measure and broken language. The relationship between language and *misura* is perhaps less obvious than the connection between quantitative forms of measure, but it too may be traced to technological innovation. Letters themselves became standardized and measureable by means of the appearance, in Germany in the fifteenth century, of a number of innovations that collectively constituted the invention of moveable type. The effects of print on the development of early modern culture have been discussed at great length, and it is a commonplace that the standardization of letters by size facilitated the dissemination of ideas—many of them ideas of quantification—that provided the impetus of the humanist conceptions of a "Renaissance." But printing had another effect, for it began to change the very way that Europeans thought of language itself. The organization of words into printable quantities begins to fix language, which in its various dialects, spellings, scripts, puns, and overall slippery relation to real-world referents represents a maddeningly difficult category to measure.

Dante's historical position before these technologies began to fix language marks him as a thoroughly medieval figure. The obvious fact of language in the fourteenth century is its brokenness, and Dante's concern is with what Thomas Greene calls "the scandal of the mutability, the ungrounded contingency of language" (5), the sense that the vernacular languages of Europe were separated not only from one another (by country, by

region, and sometimes even within a single city), but also diachronically from themselves, so that the language of one's neighbors might be as unintelligible as the dialects of the ancients. In *De Vulgari Eloquentia* Dante traces the descent from the unified, eternal language of God, spoken by all humans before Babel, to the variable and various languages marked by the sin of men. This discussion is marked by nostalgia for the lost language that tied words to their referents in the real world:

> I say that a certain form of language was created by God along with the first soul; I say "form" with reference both to the words used for things, and to the construction of words, and to the arrangement of the construction; and this form of language would have continued to be used by all speakers, had it not been shattered through the fault of human presumption [...] (13).

Greene notes that the impulse to tie language to some kind of universal measure, a "natural language" or "universal authority" extends from Plato to Chomsky. For Dante and for early modern writers this impulse is motivated by a deep unease about the possibility that one's language will pass from existence, that one's writing will ultimately become unintelligible. Noting examples from Samuel Daniel, Castiglione, and Montaigne, Greene identifies this linguistic obsession with an abiding uneasiness: "for most medieval and Renaissance writers, the recognition of linguistic mutability was a source of authentic anxiety" (6).

The measure of language—and the accompanying "authentic anxiety" of failed language—is Dante's final major investigation into *misura*. As I have argued, the broken

language of the seventh canto points to the interconnectedness of measurable categories and to the contagion of mismeasure. The failure of the intemperate to measure themselves threatens the efficacy of language: without a shared measure for words, language cannot exist. But language is more than just another measurable category, for its relation to the world in the fourteenth century makes it a particularly acute locus of measure anxiety. The philosophers of the ancient world had struggled with both the epistemology and the metaphysics of language, recognizing that speech not only organizes the world, but in a real sense might constitute it. Thus Gorgias argues that "We communicate not about things which exist, but only speech," a mysterious and disputed claim that suggests that there may not be a reality independent of human linguistic construction (qtd. in Cooper 3). Metaphors that equate word and world are commonplace in early modern literary texts, and the metaphor cuts both ways: language is a world unto itself, with its own organization, relationships, and histories, just as the world is a version of text, open to interpretation and commentary. God, both the Creator and the *logos* of the world, ties text and reality together.

In *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault's investigation into the epistemological bases of Western civilization—the historical shifts in perception of the world that enable the existence of science and criticism—Foucault argues that the prevailing European epistemology in force from the ancient period until the dawn of the seventeenth century is "resemblance." It is the resemblance between things that indicates their relationship to one another, and this resemblance is revealed by "signatures." The fact that a walnut is good medicine for head ailments is revealed by a visible signature: walnuts look like brains (27). Language is the ultimate system of signatures, for it constitutes the group of

signs that both organizes the world and that represents the original order of things, the divine knowledge of God that he has made evident to all: "There is no difference between the visible marks that God has stamped upon the surface of the earth, so that we may know its inner secrets, and the legible words that the Scriptures, or the sages of Antiquity, have set down in the books preserved for us by tradition" (33). The ancients have already done most of the work of gathering together visible signs and marking the resemblance between things, and thus the primary task of knowledge in the Medieval and early modern periods is one of uncovering. Nature and text must be interpreted: "The process is everywhere the same: that of the sign and its likeness, and this is why nature and the word can intertwine with one another to infinity, forming, for those who can read it, one vast single text" (34).

Language is like the world not merely because it refers to the world, but because like reality itself language consists of a measured system of affinities that together reflect resemblances between things. Just as resemblances in nature require special knowledge in order to be deciphered, the affinities that constitute language are esoteric, mysterious: "Words group syllables together, and syllables letters, because there are virtues placed in individual letters that draw them towards each other or keep them apart exactly as the marks found in nature also repel or attract one another" (35). The secret resemblances of language merely imitate, of course, the original language, the ancient speech before Babel that truly resembled the divine order of the cosmos (36), but these resemblances retain the secrets of God's creation for those willing to decipher them. This property of language, its relationship with the world, lasts until the Classical period, when words come to be viewed in terms of what they represent, rather than as a mystical system of

signs that together reveal God's transcendent, incarnate will. At the end of the Renaissance, Foucault argues, "[t]he profound kinship of language with the world was thus dissolved" (43). The word and the world become separated.[30]

The position of language in the medieval and early modern periods is thus fraught with anxiety, for language both hints at the secret, whole, and divine order of created nature and inevitably points to the inability to know that order, to something that has been lost. By "anxiety," the term I have been using for the pressures that produce Dante's remarkable canto on measure, I refer to the cultural forces of psychological unease created in part by technological and epistemological changes and revealed, consciously or unconsciously, in the thinly veiled tropes of period literature and the preoccupations of criticism. Language is always a locus of measure anxiety because of its role in categorizing the world and because of its relationship with the nature of god, the logos by which he reveals himself to us.

In a hell of mismeasure the anxieties of broken language are even more acute. Dante's fourth circle of hell constitutes what Foucault calls a "heterotopia," an "other space." Heterotopias are places "outside" of society, like prisons, asylums, gardens, or cemeteries, which create their own hierarchies of order. Often they are "heterotopias of deviation," spaces reserved for those "whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm" (3). Foucault does not specifically mention literary hells as heterotopias, but they surely fit his criteria. For instance, he points out that heterotopias

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[30] The humanists challenged the notion that language revealed the mysteries of God, but their view still contextualized language as an anxiety-laden enterprise that entails the measuring of the world: "an instrument both of self-expression and the practical ordering of things" (Cooper 43).

are "not freely accessible": "Either the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or a prison, or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications. To get in one must have a certain permission and make certain gestures" (5). The correlation between the compulsory inhabitants of the prison and the inhabitants of hell is obvious, as is the ancient commonplace of the rites that must be undertaken by those still living who wish to enter hell, such as the requirement that Aeneas retrieve the golden bough and offer it to Proserpina.[31]

One of the primary markers of a heterotopia, says Foucault, is its treatment of language. Unlike utopias, which describe ideal regions, heterotopias are fraught with anxiety:

> *Heterotopias* are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this *and* that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy 'syntax' in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to 'hold together'. (xviii)

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[31] See the *Aeneid*, Book 6, lines 194-6: "Only he may pass beneath earth's secret places who / first plucks the golden-leaved fruit of that tree." Another criterion of heterotopias is that they constitute heterochronies, spaces where there is an absolute break with "traditional time" (4). While Dante and Virgil maintain a strict sense of the passage of time outside hell, the residents are more like the inhabitants of a cemetery or the collections of a museum, "in which time never stops building up and topping its own summit" (4-5).

This is why, unlike utopias, which "permit fables and discourse," heterotopias "desiccate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of grammar at its source; they dissolve our myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences" (xviii).

The inability to order properly is a condition of failed language: language depends on order, but, as Foucault suggests, order depends equally on language. Thus Foucault describes "certain aphasiacs" who, presented with the challenge of organizing colored skeins of wool into patterns cannot construct a coherent order. Because these individuals do not have linguistic categories for the objects they attempt to classify, they have no capacity to create a unified system of organization. Their decisions are based on resemblances between the objects, but these decisions cannot constitute a unified system of organization, which would depend on language.

> Within this simple space in which things are normally arranged and given names, the aphasiac will create a multiplicity of tiny, fragmented regions in which nameless resemblances agglutinate things into unconnected islets; in one corner, they will place the lightest-coloured skeins, in another the red ones, somewhere else those that are softest in texture, in yet another place the longest, or those that have a tinge of purple or those that have been wound up into a ball. (xviii)

But things fall apart: "no sooner have they been adumbrated than all these groupings dissolve again, for the field of identity that sustains them, however limited it may be, is still too wide not to be unstable" (xviii), and so the aphasiac continually and infinitely reconstructs the order of the world in a Sisyphean effort,

> Creating groups then dispersing them again, heaping up diverse similarities, destroying those that seem clearest, splitting up things that are identical, superimposing different criteria, frenziedly beginning all over again, becoming more and more disturbed, and teetering finally on the brink of anxiety. (xviii)

Anxiety, persistently and consistently, is the condition of disorder, of failed measure. When language becomes separated from its ability to organize and reveal the world, when it exists (for instance) only in the mutilated forms of Dante's fourth circle, it creates a literally unspeakable anxiety, for mangled language is the most devastating symptom of the sickness of mismeasure that potentially infects all measurable categories and destroys them. Thus the aphasiacs of Dante's seventh canto move in their circles, revealing and simultaneously suffering the cultural anxiety of an epoch wrought by an upheaval in the measure of the world itself.

II

On July 9th, 1486, Henry Tudor issued a decree that one pound be paid from his treasury to William Nele, "gonnefounder and brasier, of London, upone making of diverse measures and weightes, according to the old standard of England, to be sent unto severalle shires and cities of England" (*Materials* 493). As an element of the Tudor bureaucratic apparatus, this order is fairly inconsequential. As a symbol of a series of standardizations—both practical and ideological—however, it literalizes a set of metaphoric re-measurings that together constitute a monumental shift in how the English

conceived of themselves, their language, and their goods in the 16th and early 17th centuries. This dissertation investigates that shift, and the ways that the measure-anxieties adumbrated by Dante at the beginning of the fourteenth century play out in the English literary Renaissance during sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

The Renaissance, of course, came late to England. A cultural lacuna of English court-inspired achievement extended from the reign of Edward III, when Gower, Chaucer, and Langland wrote their poems, to the establishment of the Tudor dynasty in 1485. Without a stable and powerful central court, there was neither a patronage system available to support poets, artists, and musicians, nor a political advantage for the nobility to use such endeavors to maneuver at court. The end of the Wars of the Roses initiated a period of relative stability, but much of Henry Tudor's reign consisted of putting down rebellions and was thus a continuation of the years in which the monarchs' primary goals were military, their holds on the throne tenuous, and their investment in cultural achievement minimal.

The national system of weights and measures, too, remained in a state of relative chaos. English measures of quantity consisted of a hodgepodge of systems reflecting the various cultural influences of the island's history. The currency, for instance, was at the time of the Conquest coined locally by licensed moneyers who collected old coin and recoined pence, which were then the only coin current (Johnson xix). Over the next three centuries numerous new coins were introduced, usually modeled on continental currencies like the florin. Gradually coinage became standardized and centralized in London, though the state's attempts to control and regulate currency continued to face challenges, such as the common practice of "clipping" coins to remove a portion of their

metal. In England the attempt to standardize currency anticipated later attempts to standardize other measures; obviously increased anxiety centered on unequal coinage, and penalties for altering coins or for minting "light" coins were severe. In fact, every attempt to standardize currency in the medieval period in England met with failure. It would take more advanced manufacturing technologies and economic infrastructure to establish the more sophisticated economic structures of the early modern period.

Pressure to standardize measures is created by the expansion from local to regional, or from regional to national economies. Under the Tudors England transitioned from a largely local, feudal economy to a burgeoning early capitalist center of international trade, and this transition was accompanied by a corresponding regulation of standards of measurement. Local standards for the area, dimensions, weight, and volume of goods could be wildly different during the middle ages, and as Henry focused on unifying England's social and political entities, he also attempted to accomplish the monumental task of standardizing national measures. Henry's order thus represents, less than a year after the Battle of Bosworth, an attempt to standardize and nationalize England's disparate system of measures.

Henry had already given attention to the country's weights. A focus on international trade required a unified measure for commodities exiting and entering the nation, and in February of 1486, only six months after taking the throne, Henry provided for the "[e]stablishment of a weighing machine (upon representations from divers of the king's lieges that great losses have been sustained for want of one) or pesage beam commonly called 'le Kinge's Beme,' in the ports of Exeter, Dertmouth, Plymmouth, and Topesham, co. Devon and in all ports and places adjoining thereto" (*Materials* 302).

These were to supplement the pesage (duty) beam at Southampton and provide a standard for weighing imports and exports.

The money Henry paid to William Nele in July of the same year, however, is more significant as an example of national standardizations, for it represents not only an attempt to increase the national capacity for measure, as the pesage beams did, but goes further: it suggests a mechanism for unifying regional differences. The idea that Nele would fashion standard weights and measures, presumably from brass, and send them to "severalle shires and cities of England" represents a strategy for abolishing regional difference.

This was not the first and would not be the last attempt to standardize England's system of measures. The drafters of the Magna Carta had attempted to unify the national system of quantification, but they had no practical means for implementing standards.[32] The language of the charter insists on "one measure,"— "It hath been ordained that one measure and one weight should be throughout all this realm of England…"—but the national economies of trade and infrastructure were not yet sophisticated enough to create the requisite pressure to invest in the actual standardization of the various weights and measures. Differences in measure were not only regional, but were also artificially created and enforced by the merchant class to create trade advantages, and the Magna Carta, an anti-guild document, insists on the regulation of trade on behalf of the barons' "interests as buyers, and against the interests of the trade guilds as sellers" (McKechnie

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[32] Rulers had periodically attempted to standardize England's weights and measures since before the Norman Invasion. In 960 King Edward attempted to fix the bushel to the London and Winchester standards (Whitelaw 16). Only a few years before the Magna Carta Richard the Lionheart issued the "Assize of Measures," dictating that "[t]hroughout the realm there shall be the same yard of the same size and it should be of iron" (16).

358). The charter attempts to quash practices of manipulating measures for economic advantage at the expense of the landed class:

> Let there be one measure of wine throughout our whole realm; and one measure of ale; and one measure of corn, to wit, "the London quarter"; and one width of cloth (whether dyed, or russet, or "halberget"), to wit, two ells within the selvedges; of weights also let it be as of measures.

In 1215 unstandardized measure was enough of a problem to be diagnosed, but a remedy would have to wait another two and a half centuries.

The Magna Carta's expression (in spite of its optimistic grammar) and Henry's executive order both point to a perceived need. They suggest that regional differences in the calculation of quantities and distances created real problems. But only Henry's decree provides a plan for the unification of the systems of measure, a plan that privileges the London measurements as standards by insisting on the conformity of regional variants to the standards adhered to in London. Henry made another payment to Nele in September of 1486, to continue his work of creating national standards. Yet these changes were not immediately successful.

In 1491 Parliament took up the issue of measures, pushing the king to make known the "true standard" of the nation's weights and measures:

> [C]onsidering that in divers partes of this your seid realm ther be used measures and weightes some more large than the seid standard and som lesse because that the very true mesure of the seid standard is not to all your true lieges verily knowen, at your owne propre cost and charge have do lette make bothe weightes and measures of brasse according to the very true standard" (Pollard 245).

Parliament explicitly identifies the problem of regional difference in weights and measures and prescribes a solution, in great detail and in the language of bureaucracy, establishing that

> [...] the seid measures and weightes of brasse be deyvered to the citezeine or burgeises of the chief cites or shire townes or burghes of every shire in this realm in this parliament nowe being. [...] And the seid citizens burgeises or other chief officers aforseid so theym receyvying, saufly to be conveyed to that cite towne or borough that they be of, at the cost and charge of the seid cite towne or borough, [...] to thentent that as well all measures and weightes within the seid cite towne or borough as the measures and weightes within the seid shire may be correct reformed amended and made according and after the mesure of the seid standard before the feste of Seynt Mighell tharcangell next comying.

A.F. Pollard contextualizes this and other Parliamentary legislation under Henry Tudor in terms of the Tudor project of the nationalization of government, currency, and measurement. Historical changes in trade necessitated legislative involvement:

> Internal trade was becoming national rather than local, and such [Parliamentary] legislation as is devoted to this subject represents somewhat crude experiments to substitute national for local regulation. Matters such as the fixing of wages and hours of labour, and standards for commerce and manufacture, which had been determined by guilds and municipal corporations, were now brought within the expanding scope of Parliamentary interference. Effective steps were at length taken to secure a national uniformity of weights and measures, licence was occasionally granted by Henry VII for the introduction of foreign clothworkers, and the currency was improved, notably by the first coinage of English sovereigns. (xlv-xlvi)

The key phrase here is the reference to trade "becoming national." The old allegiances and regional bases of power were beginning to be reshaped into an ideology of a unified English state, a state based on the power of the merchant classes that were then establishing London as one of the centers of European commerce.

These attempts to standardize measure literalize other attempts to create ideologies of England as a discrete nation state. There are thus two historical tendencies governing the establishment of English measure under the Tudors. The first is the quantification revolution—and attendant anxieties—discussed earlier in this chapter, a shift in thinking about the world that affected every European between the years of 1300 and 1600. The second is the emergence of an ideology of "England," a sense of the

national language, dress, conduct, and culture that Tudor bureaucracy explicitly and self-consciously promulgated.

These historical shifts provide the background for this dissertation's investigation into early modern measures. The literal standardization of England's weights and measures corresponds to the creation of a national, standard poetic measure, for just as England's weights and measures varied by region, so the poetries of the fifteenth century represented a jumble of influences and of forms. The transition from the alliterative accentual poetry of the medieval period to the accentual-syllabic strictures of the high English Renaissance have been widely discussed, although its causes, mechanisms, and significance remain substantially unresolved, if not irresolvable. In Chapter II, I explore the move from these various folk forms to a single, measured poetic line, a monumental change in the conception of poetry and its rhythms in English that I refer to as the early modern prosodic shift.

This shift can be contextualized in terms of England's determination to "measure up" to its international cultural competition. This desire became manifest during the reign of Henry VIII, when the Tudor court first consciously sought to establish a cultural rivalry to correspond with its various national political rivalries. This included following those countries' strategy of creating cultural ideological myths in which ancient achievements were equaled and surpassed. This nationalistic, ideological movement entailed the creation of a recognizable national-linguistic form, a measure that could replicate the meters of the ancients and of continental forms and could itself be replicated. The breakdown of the medieval Anglo-Saxon poetic structural devices left England without such a uniform poetic structural mechanism, without what would come

to be called "numbers" by early modern poets. Chapter II thus analyzes the establishment of numbers (particularly the preeminence of iambic pentameter), the relative rapidity of the acceptance of that standard, and the critical (disciplinary) measures taken against those in violation of the normalized meter.

The compelling aspect of critical prosodic debates lies in the intractability of the debates themselves. I look at these debates both during the establishment of iambic pentameter and in subsequent periods and argue that English poetic meter is built on a pattern that is both precise and immeasurable. One of the fundamental acts of measurement is criticism itself, in its processes of judgment, quantification, and canonization, and I analyze Richard Tottel's *Songs and Sonnets*, an early and influential anthology that establishes and creates metrical norms, and George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesy*, which similarly judges and establishes measure in the service of English cultural ideology. I focus on the work of Thomas Wyatt, whose metrics remain a source of critical debate. Through close readings of Wyatt poems I analyze both how he measures the poems and how they are remeasured by critics like Tottel and Puttenham.

The common property of metrical regularity and irregularity, I argue, is the prevalence of anxiety, the measure anxiety of the aphasiac discussed earlier in this chapter. Literary texts that confront measure are fraught with the anxieties of the aphasiac, and because they are themselves constructed of words they become subject to the anxieties of others, in an infinite regress of critical pressures on perceived instances of mismeasure. Thus criticism itself measures and becomes subject to measures. Critical anxiety persists in current approaches to prosody and can be traced to other developments

in the early modern period, which are discussed in subsequent chapters and include shifts in the ethical and economic registers.

Chapter III analyses Book II of Edmund Spenser's the *Faerie Queene* in the context of ethical measure. This book, often seen as the most "epic" section of *The Faerie Queene*, self-consciously responds to the central generic divide of the *Aeneid* (between romance and epic), as well as one of its most significant themes: an extended meditation on limits and empire. Unlike the *Aeneid*, the *Faerie Queene* posits a second world with indeterminate edges, an open space in which measure is achieved through personal ethics on the Aristotelian model. Furthermore, in Book II, which constitutes an extended exploration of the virtue of temperance—the ethical analogue of the measure and limits of the self—Spenser argues for a generic analogue for personal measure, one in which the form of the work itself participates in what is advocated ethically: balance.

I argue that Book II of the *Faerie Queen* plays the romance and epic forms against one another, identifying each with ethical categories of transgression (the concupiscent and irascible passions) in an exploration and critique of Virgil. The book is thus a kind of experiment, an investigation into classical ethics that identifies moral temptation with the temptations of literary genre. Romance, which is gendered female, is constructed as a form of temptation, of mismeasure. Conversely, epic, which is gendered male, constitutes an equal but opposite temptation, another form of mismeasure. Just as Dido represents narrative deferral in Virgil's epic, so Phaedria, for Spenser, threatens to prevent the hero from completing the narrative quest.

In claiming that these narrative deferrals are loci of the cultural connotations associated with romance, my argument is not that these values define romance, but that

Spenser uses the divisionary model to set systems of value apart from each other and investigate their effects on narrative action. The values associated with romance are consistently those that, when considered in relation to those associated with epic, are denigrated. This is not surprising, given the regular devaluation of romance in respect to epic. What is surprising is the way that Spenser locates these values in terms of character and space and reveals their negative potential not as instances of narrative failure, but as a form of temptation—a form of temptation that also threatens the poem itself: as Gordon Teskey argues, "there is a sense in [...] Renaissance epic poets generally, that because the heroic poem has its origin in the romance it is almost constantly in danger of an ethical and aesthetic relapse" (4-5).

Earlier in Book II, the constellation of values associated with epic (masculinity, violence, martial prowess) receives a much briefer treatment than those associated with romance. This set of values is also a form of temptation, but wields comparatively little power compared to that of romance and female sexuality, as Spenser claims in the first stanza of Canto vi: "A Harder lesson, to learne Continence/In ioyous Pleasure, then in grievous paine" (1.1-2). In this chapter I argue that Spenser, as Wyatt had done before him, incorporates anxieties of measure into the form of the work itself, in this case in terms of the poem's continual movement between romance and epic "temptations."

Finally, in Chapter IV, I examine the recurring expressions of value that circulate through Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* and the implications of those tropes on language. I focus on the play's persistent attempts to fix value on literally everything, including the play itself, attempts that ultimately remain groundless because of the lack of an objective, intrinsic measure of value. The play both creates and undermines a world

without objective measure and depicts that world as a hell in which language and individual distinction fail.

In this play Shakespeare portrays emerging economic realities; specifically, he literalizes exchange value. He rewrites Christopher Marlowe's famous lines on Helen of Troy: Troilus substitutes "price" for Marlowe's word "face":

> Is she worth keeping? Why she is a pearl
> Whose price hath launched above a thousand ships
> And turned crowned kings to merchants (2.2.80-2).

The word "price" represents the play's general tendency to figure all worth in economic terms. As a result, *Troilus and Cressida* becomes a debate about value and measure in the context of the rise of early capitalism, particularly in terms of what we would now call "opportunity cost."

In *Troilus and Cressida* straining for individual distinction paradoxically results in repeated failures to distinguish one individual from another. Again and again characters' identities are confused. It is the lack of a standard of measure that damns both Shakespeare's characters and Dante's indistinguishable souls. Furthermore, I argue that without objective measure, individual worth depends on and is contextualized by the value of one's peers, that is, it is a market value. As I have suggested, this recognition has a thoroughly economic effect: individuals devalue the worth of others to improve their own relative "price."

The economic quantification of everything creates a pervasive measure-anxiety. In fact, *Troilus and Cressida* manifests many of the anxieties of Dante's fourth circle: language is debased, people are indistinguishable from one another, and every aspect of

mismeasure threatens to destroy the entire cosmos of measurable reality. The dominant metaphors are thus those of contagion, for mismeasure is a sickness that runs rampant, for the characters of the play, like Dante's sinners, are given over to their own failures of measure. For Shakespeare, as for Dante, the world of appetite without measure is a kind of hell. The anxiety of the early modern period is that—without proper measures—this hell will spread like a disease and infect the whole world.

CHAPTER II

"SO FAR OUT OF MEASURE": THOMAS WYATT'S LYRIC METER

> Meter and measure is all one, for what the Greeks call μετρον, the Latins call *mensura*, and is but the quantity of verse, either long or short.
> George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy* (157).

Thomas Wyatt is a poet out of measure. To say this is to appropriate one of Wyatt's own favorite expressions: he repeatedly describes his pain—and his beloved's cruelty—as "out of measure" or "without measure."[33] To say that Wyatt is out of measure is also to make a claim, in sixteenth-century usage, about his inability to achieve moderation or temperance. To be out of measure is to stand in excess of some normative standard of being, to experience desire or fear beyond the usual bounds, to be in extreme pain. Excess, in this sense, constitutes an ethical transgression, and can stand as a metonymy for sin of all kinds; thus when Wyatt translates the sixth Psalm, he turns to Aretino's version for a characterization of the sin that requires penitence as a sin of intemperance: "Tempre, O lord, the harme of my excesse" (Wyatt 90). The experience of excess creates, for whomever is out of measure, a complex and contradictory emotional state, the consequence of which Wyatt usually calls "restlessness," but which might be

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[33] See, for example, "Lo what it is to love!," To wisshe and want and not obtain," "Yf with complaint the paine might be exprest," and "Psalm 6. *Domine ne in furore*."

referred to as "anxiety."[34] Thus one of Wyatt's poems on the cruelty of his beloved begins, in the Egerton manuscript, "What rage is this, what furor of excess?" As that poem and others reveal, the consequence of immoderate dependence on the beloved is immoderate pain, and the resulting inability to rest became for Wyatt something of a calling card. Thus Surrey, in one of his epitaphs for Wyatt, begins with a line—"Wyatt resteth here, that quick could never rest" (Nott 45)—that echoes one of Wyatt's frequently anthologized poems, "Of Carthage he that worthy warrior": "At Mountzon thus I restles rest in Spayne."

Wyatt's anxiety—his restlessness—is one symptom of the tension inherent in the concept of temperance in the sixteenth century. On the one hand, early modern ethical theory designated temperance as a primary virtue, a mode that represents and epitomizes all forms of desired ethical states, for to be virtuous, on the Aristotelian model, is usually to be moderate. On the other hand, for the poet-speaker who appropriates the conventions of a Petrarchan lover, the language of love *is* the language of excess. For the medieval courtly love tradition, for Chaucer, and for Petrarch—all important influences for Wyatt—love is a kind of violence, and falling in love is always excessive. When Wyatt says he is "out of measure," he is capitalizing on a centuries-long poetic tradition of describing love as a form of excess, one familiar to any reader of *Le Roman de la Rose* or Chaucer. One of Wyatt's earliest anthologized poems, "So unwarily was never no man

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[34] See, for example, "Alas poor man, what hap have I," "Of Carthage, he, that worthy warrior," "There was never nothing more me pained," and "So unwarily was never no man caught." In "Go, burning sighs unto the frozen heart," and "Once, as methought, Fortune me kissed" Wyatt begs to be left "in rest." In "Mine old dear en'my, my froward master," the speaker complains that Love "took me from rest and set me in error" (28). Rest and amorous desire, for Wyatt's speaker, are usually mutually exclusive.

caught," replicates perfectly the late Medieval conception of falling in love as a form of violent excess.[35] Wyatt's speaker wants his beloved, and he wants to be at rest, and his primary complaint against the beloved is that she perpetuates these mutually exclusive goals in an oscillating cycle of desire and repudiation, to which the speaker usually says he would prefer the ultimate rest of death.

The tension inherent in Wyatt's poetry of excess is found in Petrarch as well, but Wyatt is capable of less poetic variety than Petrarch; he knows only a few tunes, and together they constitute the music of resentment and frustrated desire.[36] Thus, while Wyatt argues repeatedly that his excessive feelings leave him in a state of unbearable restlessness, this restlessness is also often the *raison d'etre* of the poems; without the anxiety accorded by measureless desire many of the poems would not exist at all. Given sixteenth-century England's cultural investment in the normative value of temperance and decorum, contemporaries would recognize the restlessness that gives rise to these poems as an untenable emotional condition, deserving of sympathy. The tradition of excess thus simultaneously and contradictorily functions in Wyatt's poetry as a recurrent and conservative trope he may safely invoke against the forces and personalities that serve as enemies in his poems, a trope that might even be called "comfortable," for it allows Wyatt to position himself as unfairly victimized. Wyatt regularly returns to gestures of excessive suffering both to create his poems and to make them count for

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[35]Muir and Thompson note the Chaucerian influence on two of the poem's metaphors, and Nott discovers several antecedents in Petrarch, which Muir and Thompson call "commonplaces" (419).

[36] C.f. Reed Way Dasenbrock: "Wyatt's range as a poet is much more restricted than Petrarch's, but within that more restricted register, these poems of Wyatt have great intensity and power" (30).

something politically, to elicit the kinds of responses that might be advantageous for his diplomatic career.[37]

I do not mean to suggest that every time Wyatt refers to mismeasure or to restlessness he is consciously using his poetry to maneuver at court. To do so would be to divest them of all aesthetic, psychological, and emotional content merely to salvage political or economic motivations that Wyatt, had he been aware of them, would have considered secondary at best. Wyatt's poems are obsessed with pointing out the injustice of incommensurate relationships; surely he wants to elicit sympathy, to write himself into a role of unfair victimization, but here I want to argue that the poems are doing much more than that. In this chapter I do not attempt to manufacture for Wyatt manifest motivations for his accusations and confessions of mismeasure, but rather to assume that his motivations are complex, contradictory, and often hidden even from himself. I hope to show rather that he regularly returns to the trope of mismeasure because it both reveals his own anxiety and simultaneously provides grounds for a grievance against his beloved, an accusation of the worst kind of bad faith. In these contexts, mismeasure can, paradoxically, produce both comfort and anxiety.

This chapter is interested in two key questions. First, how does Thomas Wyatt (mis)measure himself? Wyatt's recurrent rhetoric of victimization works to establish that he has lost measure of himself as a result of a corresponding lack of measure inherent in

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[37] As Jonathan Crewe and Stephen Greenblatt have shown, Wyatt's portrayal of himself in both the lyrics and the letters cannot be taken at face value. Wyatt has a personal stake, in the lyrics, in portraying himself as a man out of measure, as a victim, subject to the whims of his beloved's measureless cruelty, just as he has an interest, in the letters, in portraying himself as a chastened veteran of court intrigue who has learned that withdrawal from that world is the best remedy for its evils.

the behavior of his beloved. Here I argue that this mismeasure is a rhetorical position, not so much a carefully contrived political stance as a poetic tic, a device Wyatt relies on to express an untenable condition. It is sometimes difficult to place exactly the line between an artificial, postured excess and real, uncontrolled emotion. I will argue that, whether or not the poems represent actual emotional responses by Wyatt to the conditions of his intemperate life, excess is for him a poetic device that reflects a real cultural obsession over measure and mismeasure.

Secondly, how do critics (mis)measure Wyatt? Just as measure provides a standard by which Wyatt may carve out a rhetorical position and score rhetorical points at court, Wyatt's critics have also applied an arbitrary concept of measure—a concept that I will argue is highly artificial and necessarily subjective—in order to carve out their own rhetorical positions and score their own rhetorical points. In the poetry of Wyatt excess is an ethical category; his poems are confessions of an ethical imbalance. In Wyatt criticism the category shifts to the aesthetic and his poems become signifiers of a formal imbalance. Thus the same anxieties that shape Wyatt's measure and mismeasure of himself are reproduced in the criticism of his work.

As I have argued in Chapter I, the period's obsession with measure and with lack of measure points both to a culturally pervasive neo-Platonic matrix of ethical concerns, the correct balance of which is represented in the period by the term *temperance*, and to a more subtle but equally pervasive social norming of behaviors and personal comport, a particular and ordered construction of the self, of which the appropriate balance is denoted by the term *decorum*. These qualities—temperance and decorum—constitute key aspects of the courtier personality, particularly for a courtier-ambassador like Wyatt.

Critics have always been fascinated by the facts of Wyatt's biography, even before Stephen Greenblatt included a chapter on Wyatt in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980) and consequently cemented Wyatt's place as a key subject of New Historicist study.[38]

The facts of Wyatt's life provide a background for the poetry's obsession with mismeasure.[39] Wyatt was certainly an intemperate man, given to passionate love affairs, angry outbursts, long grudges, and violence.[40] His marriage was unstable and he ultimately repudiated his wife and publicly accused her of adultery. While separated from her, Wyatt fell in love with the woman who would become the most dangerous object of desire in England, Anne Boleyn.[41] This love affair nearly cost him his life twice—first

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[38] For biographical sketches before Greenblatt's, see Chambers, Southworth, and Tillyard. For more recent New Historical analyses, see Brigden and Woolfsen's essay on Wyatt in Italy; Gleckman discusses humanist anxieties about flattery, as manifested in Wyatt's satires; Greene looks for the ways that the poems represent themes that resonate with the conquest of the Americas; Powell contextualizes the poems in terms of Wyatt's diplomatic mission, in an approach that might be called "historicist" as opposed to "new historicist"; Jonathan Gil analyzes how Wyatt's treatment of sexuality in the lyrics creates distinction in a system of power relations. The best historical treatment of Wyatt is Stephen Merrit Foley's *Thomas Wyatt* (1990).

[39] The biography can be misleading. It is tempting, for instance, to read a number of the poems as though they were about Anne Boleyn, and to an extent the biography makes such a reading possible. Yet connections between the biography and the poems are tenuous, and too much significance can be placed on assigning persons and situations from Wyatt's life to the poems (Greenblatt 146). At the same time, Wyatt's poetry is about nothing except his tendencies, obsessions, and anxieties.

[40] We know a good deal about Wyatt's life because he was one of Henry VIII's key diplomats; his father had been a trusted servant of Henry Tudor, and Thomas became involved in the court of Henry VIII at a young age. His role as diplomat, his involvement in political intrigue surrounding his diplomatic duties and his patron Thomas Cromwell, and his romantic interest in Anne Boleyn make Wyatt an ideal subject for New Historical research.

[41] For the evidence on which this relationship is based see Thomson, 21-30, 176. Although a love affair cannot be proved, Thomson notes that the "gossiping chroniclers

when the King became infatuated with Anne in 1528 and again when she fell from favor in 1536.[42]

Wyatt's immoderate nature was not limited to amorous pursuits and upheavals. In May of 1534, "there was a great affray between Mr. Wyatte and the serjeants of London, in which one of the serjeants was slain" (Brewer, qtd. in Thomson 32). For this Wyatt was thrown in the Fleet briefly and then probably sent to his family's home in Allington to "cool off" (Foley 16).[43] Stephen Foley suggests that Wyatt, in his ambassadorial duties, was "thought by many to be a hothead" (25), and his tendency to speak rashly got him into trouble. Edward Bonner, Wyatt's fellow ambassador and lifelong enemy, brought to Thomas Cromwell in 1538 a series of charges against Wyatt, including an accusation that he had courted the favor of Charles V "above all mesure" (qtd. in Foley 25). Bonner also charged that Wyatt repeatedly complained of the time he spent in the

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and tract-writers all concur on one point: that Wyatt courted Anne before the King stepped in" (25), and most critics assume an intimate relationship: "There is plenty of evidence to suggest that some of [Wyatt's] poems were written to Anne" (Muir *Life*, 15). Muir notes that several sixteenth-century accounts claim that Wyatt personally warned Henry that Anne was unfit to be queen, as she had been Wyatt's mistress (19-20). Wyatt's relationship to Anne Boleyn is discussed by Nott, Foxwell, Simonds, Chambers, and Harrier, as well as every other biographer of Wyatt.

[42] Wyatt's affair with Anne Boleyn was public enough that Henry sent Wyatt on a diplomatic mission to Calais during Henry's courtship with her.

[43] This incident offers some insight into Wyatt's temper, for a high-ranking diplomat to be involved in a "great affray"—a brawl—suggests an inclination to give in to the irascible passions (anger and violence). In early modern England having killed a man was not particularly unusual, but one might think a diplomat would be better able to keep a cool head and, more importantly, a controlled tongue, and certainly not be brawling with sergeants in the streets of London. By killing a man in a brawl, Wyatt also participated in a particularly brazen threat to social order. For unlike the duel, which reiterates social order by means of precise attention to rank and protocol, and which calls for witnesses and ritualizes (and thereby controls) violence, a brawl represents a complete capitulation to the irascible passions and enacts a version of rebellion.

Tower of London in 1536—during the fall of the Boleyns—and that he insulted the King's person.[44]

Bonner's narrative of Wyatt's treason depended on Wyatt's own misspeaking: first, Wyatt's supposedly treasonous claim that the king deserved to be "cast out at the cart's tail"—a reference to death by hanging; and, second, Wyatt's complaints about his imprisonment in 1536, which Bonner argued were evidence of Wyatt's motive for committing treason with Cardinal Pole (Foley 26). Although Wyatt was ultimately released, his tendency to speak impulsively was clearly an impediment to his personal ambitions, and, indeed, Wyatt's own defense against the charge that he insulted the King depended on this fact. As Muir puts it, Wyatt "admitted that he sometimes used this proverb, but as Bonner had already taken exception to his outspokenness or coarseness he would not have used it in front of him" (186).

Wyatt's "outspokenness or coarseness"—together with his brashness, violence, and romantic entanglements—suggest a biographical basis for his tendency to accuse himself in his lyrics of being "out of measure." Michael Schmidt summarizes Wyatt's personality in such terms: "He was a man of flesh and fiery blood, and his best poems are decidedly un-Platonic, arising out of carnal passion" (124). This is not to suggest that Wyatt is a cultural outlier; to live out of measure was not extraordinary for a man of the

[44] Cromwell investigated the charges and found them without merit (Foley 27), but when Cromwell's policies failed and Henry executed him in 1541, Wyatt—as a member of Cromwell's faction at court—was again imprisoned in the Tower, and Bonner's old charges were again trotted out against him.

rank and experience of Thomas Wyatt.[45] The biography, rather than highlighting Wyatt's unusual intemperance, instead points to a cultural fact of life under Henry VIII: court life encouraged daring, brashness, outspokenness, and wit, while intermittent periods of state terror (fueled in part by a pervasive spy culture) threatened anyone exhibiting these same qualities with execution.[46] Yet Wyatt's tendency toward intemperance is the personality trait perhaps most noted by biographers, and one of Surrey's poems to Wyatt is a catalogue of commonplace sayings warning Wyatt not to give in to extreme passions. The poem is included in Tottel's anthology, where it is titled "Of the golden mean, and the danger and the inconvenience of a too abject, or a too elevated station."

Wyatt's restlessness is a function both of his own excessive temperament and of his relationships. In his poems, he usually depicts his beloved as immoderately cruel, which increases the speaker's anxiety and causes him immeasurable pain. A typical expression of this pain is "Yf with complaint the paine might be exprest," a madrigal from the Devonshire manuscript:

> Yf with complaint the paine might be exprest
> That inwardelye dothe cause me sigh and grone,
> Your harde herte and your cruell brest
> Shulde sighe and playne for my unreste;
> And tho yt ware of stone
> Yet shulde Remorse cause yt relent and mone.

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[45] David Starkey notes that Wyatt's life, "though dramatic, was in no way unusual. Every aspect of it could be paralleled in the biographies of a dozen or more of his contemporaries at the court of Henry VIII" (qtd. in Foley 29).

[46] Greenblatt thus dismisses C.S. Lewis's depiction of Wyatt providing "a little music after supper" by noting that "conversation with the king himself must have been like small talk with Stalin" (136-7).

But sins yt ys so farre out of mesure
  That with my wordes I can yt not contayne,
My overlye truste, my hertes treasure,
Alas whye doo I still indure
  This resteles smerte and payne,
Sins yf ye list ye maye my woo restraine?[47]

This is not a translation, yet in many ways it is a standard Petrarchan conceit. If it were possible, the speaker argues, for the enormous pain caused by the beloved to be put into words, she would be forced to speak out on his behalf—or rather, her own heart and breast would testify against her, as though these body parts would stand apart and act as impartial judges of her sins. The speaker's pain, however, is not capable of expression, because it is excessive. There are two consequences to the excessive pain of the speaker: the first is that the very existence of the boundless pain is utterly compelling. If the beloved became aware of the magnitude of the pain, she would be forced to recognize and alleviate it. The allusion to the gospel of Luke reinforces this point. In that gospel, Jesus, during the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, is praised by the crowd as "the king who comes in the name of the Lord." The Pharisees who witness this possibly blasphemous and certainly treasonous clamor try to get Jesus to quiet the crowd, but Jesus replies that "if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out" (19:40). The message of the crowd is so universally true, so *pressing*, that it demands expression. Likewise, the pain of the speaker in Wyatt's poem demands expression, if not

[47] I have reproduced here, as elsewhere in this chapter, the original orthography of the manuscript, as it appears in the Muir and Thomson edition of the collected poems. The textual and editorial history of Wyatt is, to say the least, problematic (see Caldwell 241-43). Despite the shortcomings of Muir and Thomson's edition, it remains the authoritative complete poems in original orthography, and reproducing the spelling of the original is important for a number of places in this argument, as I hope shall be clear.

from a human voice then even from stones—or, in this case, the stony heart of the beloved.

The second consequence of excessive pain, as the speaker makes clear, is that it ironically resists expression. This is the paradox at the heart of the poem: neither the beloved nor her stony heart will speak out on behalf of the poet, because even he cannot speak on his own behalf. The excessive pain of the speaker both compels and resists expression. The poem is thus a meditation on a paradox: it is an expression of its own failure, for its subject matter is a pain so great that its expression is urgently required, but precisely because of its magnitude that very expression is impossible. It retreats into the trope of ineffability, but not of a mystical or scholastic kind; this is a paradoxical and anxiety-ridden ineffability: the pain is literally unspeakable.

The incapacity to verbalize pain becomes the only reason for the poem's existence, and the hypothetical first line—"if with complaint the pain might be expressed"—posits a world in which this poem would not exist, for if complaint could alleviate this pain, the poem would have no function. The poet could have written a poem describing the pain, and the poet's woe presumably would have been lessened by the contrite beloved. But in this poem the speaker's pain is out of bounds. At the moment the speaker reveals the reason for his inability to describe the pain ("But sins yt ys so farre out of mesure / That with my wordes I can yt not contayne"), the poem's syntax seems to break down. Because the speaker's inability to describe his pain will, according to the poem's logic, prevent his beloved from acknowledging and restraining that pain, the madrigal should end as it began: as an expression of a paradox of pain. But the poem

does something else. As the poet announces his immoderate feeling he leaves off mid-thought and instead appeals to his beloved *in spite of* his inability to explain his pain:

> My overlye truste, my hertes treasure,
> Alas whye doo I still indure
> This resteles smerte and payne,
> Sins yf ye list ye maye my woo restraine?

The tone of the first stanza treats the beloved as pitiless and cold, remorseless and literally stony-hearted. But the second stanza changes tack, leaving behind the initial meditation on the paradox of ineffability and instead entreating the beloved to end the speaker's restless pain. Once the speaker has established the ineffectuality of attempted expression, the only thing left for him to do is beg.

This is a poetics of excess. The speaker's immoderate stake in the beloved's response creeps into the poem at every level. The eighth line of the poem invokes the lover as "my overlye trust, my hertes treasure." "Overly" ("ouerly" in manuscript) is always amended to "only" in modernized editions, and surely it should be, as this is the only way to make sense of the line. But the manuscript orthography suggests the extent to which excessive feeling controls the poem even at the lexical level: it is precisely Wyatt's overly invested trust in his beloved that creates his boundless pain in the first place. He has placed himself at the mercy of his beloved, a dubious strategy if her heart is as hard as the poem suggests; he indeed "overly" trusts her, and suffers accordingly.

If the cruelty of the beloved in "Yf with complaint the paine might be exprest" leads to boundless pain, in "Lo, what it is to love!" love is treated as a snare, leading to an "endless woe" irreconcilable with true wisdom: it is impossible, the speaker says flatly,

"to love and to be wise" (24). Here the consequence of love is not only boundless ("endless") sadness, but also boundless repentance:

> Love is a fervent fire,
> Kendeld by hote desire,
> For a short pleasure
> Long displeasure;
> Repentaunce is the hire;
> A poure tresoure
> Withoute mesure, (33-9).[48]

The cause of Wyatt's measureless pain is here, as elsewhere, the measureless cruelty of his beloved. Wyatt's theme is usually the same: he has behaved in good faith, and has placed his very life in the hands of a woman, and she has repaid him with boundless cruelty and measureless ingratitude. Wyatt usually complains to the woman, alternating between accusations of cruelty to pleas for consideration, sometimes within a single poem, as in "If with complaint the pain might be expressed."

In one of Wyatt's better known poems, "Behold, love, thy power how she dispiseth!" he appeals to a third party—the god of Love—for vengeance against his cruel beloved:

> Behold, love, thy power how she dispiseth!
> My great payne how litle she regardeth!
> The holy oth, wherof she taketh no cure
> Broken she hath: and yet she bideth sure,
> Right at her ease: and litle she dredeth.
> Wepened thou art: and she unarmed sitteth:
> To the disdaynfull, her liff she ledeth:
> To me spitefull, withoute cause, or mesure.
> Behold, love!

[48] This is a three-part poem consisting of this first complaint against love, followed by a defense of love, and culminating with the faintly dubious claim that "love is a pleasant fire."

I ame in hold: if pitie the meveth,
Goo bend thy bowe: that stony hertes breketh:
And, with some stroke, revenge the displeasure
Of thee and him, that sorrowe doeth endure,
And, as his lorde, the lowly entreath.
Behold, love!

The poem is a translation of a madrigal by Petrarch, and the source poem also frames its argument as a formal petition or grievance.[49] Petrarch's original emphasizes the physical appearance of the beloved, and his tone is playful:

Or vedi, Amor, che giovenetta donna
tuo regno sprezza et del mio mal non cura,
et tra duo ta' nemici è sì secura.

Tu se' armato, et ella in treccie e 'n gonna
si siede et scalza in mezzo i fiori et l'erba,
ver me spietata e 'ncontr' a te superba.

I' son pregion, ma se pietàancor serba
l'arco tuo saldo et qualcuna saetta,
fa di te et di me, signor, vendetta.

The speaker in Petrarch's poem protests that he is a prisoner, but much of the wit of this lyric lies in a contradiction between the rhetorical model—a formal petition to a judge, an appeal for advocacy against unjust treatment—and the substance of that appeal, which instead of an expected earnestness, relies on what might be described as a kind of

[49] Wyatt's treatment of his source material is here typical. Wyatt expands the poem from a nine line madrigal to a fifteen line rondeau (see Muir 263), excises references to the physical appearance of the beloved, and transforms Petrarch's "giovenetta donna"—a young woman—into a mere "she." For accounts of Wyatt's overall treatment of Petrarch, see Dasenbrock (23-31), Chambers (129), and Holahan.

fraternal *needling*, an appeal to the masculine sensibility of the god of love that, as Robert Durling's translation reveals, simultaneously pokes fun at the speaker himself:

> You are in armor, and she in a mere robe with loose hair is sitting barefoot amid the flowers and the grass,

Wyatt's tone, on the other hand, is acerbic and concise: "Weaponed thou art: and she unarmed sitteth" (6). This is not to say that Wyatt's version lacks wit; his reference to Love as "weaponed" alludes to the god's genitalia and picks up on the gendered appeal of Petrarch's poem. But Wyatt's version rejects Petrarch's overall playful tone in favor of an insistent earnestness. Petrarch's speaker complains that he is a prisoner of the *giovenetta donna*, but Wyatt cannot prevent the literal cruelty of his beloved from seeping into his translation; his beloved is an oath-breaker, disdainful of love and spiteful toward the speaker: "To the disdaynfull, her liff she ledeth: / To me spitefull, withoute cause, or mesure" (7-8). Again, it is the measurelessness of the beloved that creates the anxiety that generates and sustains the poem.

For Petrarch, love is likewise often out of measure, and the beloved's part in the rhetoric of excess includes blame; but Petrarch's is mostly the poetry of praise. Because the relationship is always distant, always unconsummated, desire for the beloved is described in terms of pain and frustration, but because the project of loving Laura is at its heart noble—and is so precisely because the relationship is unconsummated—these feelings are always subject to the rules of decorum. The longer desire remains unachieved, the more difficult and the more noble it becomes.

Consider, for example, *Rime 224*, a poem in which, as Reed Dasenbrock points out, Petrarch "uncharacteristically upbraids and attacks his lady" (29):

> S' una fede amorosa, un cor non finto,
> un languir dolce, un desiar cortese,
> s' oneste voglie in gentil foco accese,
> un lungo error in cieco laberinto,
>
> se ne la fronte ogni penser depinto,
> od in voci interrotte a pena intese
> or da paura or da vergogno offese,
> s' un pallor di viola et d'amor tinto,
>
> s' aver altrui più caro che se stesso,
> se sospirare et lagrimar mai sempre
> pascendosi di duol d'ira et d'affanno,
>
> s' arder da lunge et agghiacciar da presso,
> son le cagion ch' amando i' mi distempre:
> vostro, Donna, 'l peccato et mio fia 'l danno.

Even here, the yearning and desire associated with love are always modified by ennobling adjectives, as Robert Durling's translation of line two (*un languir dolce, un desiar cortese*) indicates: the symptoms of love are "a sweet yearning, a courteous desire."[50] The poem catalogues the symptoms of the lover in terms of excessive bodily reaction, capitalizing on a tradition that extends at least as far as Sappho[51]: the lover's pallor is too red, "like the violet's, tinted with love"; he is "always sighing and weeping"; his temperature fluctuates from too cold to too hot; and in one of the period's commonplace signifiers of excess, his ability to speak is impaired (his thoughts are "written" on his brow, but when spoken are "barely understood in broken words"). Yet

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[50] The English translations of Petrarch's poems throughout are by Robert Durling.

[51] See, for instance, "He seems to me equal to the gods that man" (Carson 63).

the love itself is noble, and, even if Petrarch suggests that love here is destructive and that the fault is on the part of the *Donna*, the experience is nonetheless salvaged by the sweetness of the destruction.

What Wyatt makes of this sonnet reveals his preoccupation with the bad faith of his beloved:

> Yf amours faith, an hert unfayned,
> A swete languor, a great lovely desire,
> Yf honest will kyndelled in gentill fiere,
> Yf long errour in a blynde maze chayned,
> Yf in my visage eche thought depaynted,
> Or else in my sperklyng voyse lower or higher,
> Which nowe fere, nowe shame, wofully doth tyer,
> Yf a pale colour which love hath stayned,
> Yf to have an othre then my selfe more dere,
> Yf wailing or sighting continually
> With sorrowful anger feding bissely,
> Yf burning a farre of and fresing nere
> Ar cause that by love my self I distroye,
> Yours is the fault and myn the great annoye.

Here, as elsewhere, Wyatt generates the poem from the restlessness created by both resisting and giving in to excess. He begins, with Petrarch, by describing the sweetness of desire, but quickly diverges. Where Petrarch characterizes his amorous experience as "un lungo error in cieco laberinto (4)"—"a long wandering in a blind labyrinth"—Wyatt says that his love has been "long error in a blind maze chained" (4). Wyatt's decision to translate the Italian word *error* into its English cognate gets at the difference between his tone and Petrarch's: for Petrarch love is ambiguous, for *errore* can mean "to error" or "to wander"; for Wyatt the pun does not translate: his love has been a mistake. But Wyatt goes even further here, for love is "a long error in a blind maze chained"; the addition of

"chained" draws on the myth of Theseus and Ariadne, which Petrarch has merely gestured toward, and reverses the way the allusion works. If Petrarch's lover is wandering the labyrinth in search of the Minotaur and inspired by love for Ariadne, Wyatt's experience of love is the same as that of the Minotaur, chained to the center of a vast labyrinth, bestial and monstrous.

Wyatt may have been attracted to this poem because of its obsession with love as an instrument of immoderation.[52] When Petrarch's speaker says "ch' amando i' mi distempre"—in Durling's translation "I untune myself with love"—the reflexive verb summarizes the effects of the "cagion," the intemperate symptoms of love. The speaker's catalogue of bodily excesses reveals that the lady has caused him to "distemper" (*distempre*) himself. Wyatt preserves the catalogue of excess, but changes the summarizing verb. For Wyatt, to live in excess is a form of living death, and he translates the line accordingly: "by love I myself destroy" (13).

Both Petrarch's original poem and Wyatt's translation capitalize on a traditional trope of immoderation: the fluctuation of extreme temperatures. The period's humoral theory of health privileged the idea of balance as the primary indicator of good health. Thus "temperature" in the sixteenth century meant "[d]ue measure and proportion in action, speech, thought, etc.; freedom from excess or violence; moderation" (OED 3a), or "[t]he character or nature of a substance as supposed to be determined by the proportions of the four qualities (*hot* or *cold*, and *dry* or *moist*); = TEMPERAMENT" (OED 4). The

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[52] This is one of Dasenbrock's examples of a poem Wyatt chooses to translate faithfully "because Petrarch is writing a poem more like one of Wyatt's" (29). However, Dasenbrock misses the significance of the allusion, suggesting that the only significant change in Wyatt's translation is in the increased attack of the final tercet.

etymological connection between "temperature" and "temperance" suggests why temperature, for Wyatt, is an indication of intemperance. To burn or to freeze—and especially to burn *and* to freeze—indicates that something is out of balance, that the speaker is out of measure. Petrarch's poems discussing the "contraries of love," often including the trope of extreme temperatures, were favorite targets of translation for Wyatt, as in "I fynde no peace and all my war is done," where Wyatt's speaker complains: "I fere and hope I burne and freise like yse." This translation of Petrarch's *Rime* 134 is entirely a catalogue of contrary emotions, ending with the paradoxical expression of the cause: "my delite is causer of this stryff."

In another expression of mismeasure, Wyatt, via Petrarch, invokes the Classical and early modern trope of the nautical passage between Scylla and Charybdis, a metaphor for the attempt to achieve the ethical mean:

> My galy charged with forgetfulnes
> Thorrough sharpe sees in wynter nyghtes doeth pas
> Twene Rock and Rock; and eke myn ennemy, Alas,
> That is my lorde, sterith with cruelnes;
> And every owre a thought in redines,
> As tho that deth were light in suche a case;
> An endless wynd doeth tere the sayll a pase
> Of forced sightes and trusty ferefulnes.
> A rayn of teris, a clowde of derk disdain
> Hath done the wered cordes great hinderaunce,
> Wrethed with errour and eke with ignoraunce.
> The stares be hid that led me to this pain;
> Drowned is reason that should me confort,
> And I remain dispering of the port.

Wyatt changes Petrarch's "Scilla et Caribdi" to "Rock and Rock," but the metaphor still invokes the challenge of temperance in its Classical form. The sailor must navigate the

extreme outliers, the tempest that symbolizes intemperance, to achieve a temperate and ethical path.

Just as "My galy charged with forgetfulnes" relies on a classical metaphor of Scylla and Charybdis to invoke the dangers of temperance, Wyatt invokes another classical metaphor in "Avising the bright beams of these fair eyes," a fairly confusing, if not incoherent, translation of a sonnet by Petrarch (*Rime* 173). In this sonnet Wyatt says that the mind complains ("playneth") about Love, who lives in the beams of his lady's eyes. Here Wyatt invokes Plato's metaphor of the charioteer to indicate the mind's lack of control over its passions. Properly, the sould should function as a chariot, with the "inner ruler"—the charioteer—controlling both the "better," horse, which is "tempered by self-control", and its teammate, which is "opposite" and "unruly" (Plato 28, 38).[53] The speaker's mind, however, seeing the "woroldly paradise" that is the lady's love, has given the reins of the chariot to Love, who wreaks chaos with his spurs and bridle.

Avysing the bright bemes of these fayer Iyes,
  Where he is that myn oft moisteth and wassheth,
  The werid mynde streght from the hert departeth
  For to rest in his woroldly paradise,
And fynd the swete bitter under this gyse.
  What webbes he hath wrough well he perceveth
  Whereby with himself on love he playneth
  That spurreth with fyer and bridilleth with Ise.
Thus is it in such extremitie brought:
  In frossen thought nowe and nowe it stondeth in flame
  Twyst misery and welth, twist ernest and game;
But few glad and many a dyvers thought;
  With sore repentaunce of his hardines:
  Of such a rote commeth ffruyte fruytles.

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[53] For an influential early modern gloss of the allegory of the chariot, see Ficino 67-71.

Again, Wyatt chooses a poem of Petrarch's that accentuates paradox and "extremity," though here Petrarch's usual elevation of supreme love and the nobility of suffering is deemphasized. Both versions include the temperature metaphor of fire and ice, and both include the horsemanship trope. Wyatt departs from Petrarch, and manages to include the temperature trope not once but twice, by mixing it with the horsemanship metaphor. Petrarch describes love as a horseman *ch' a si caldi gli spron, si duro 'l freno* ("whose spurs are so hot, whose bit is so hard"). Wyatt's charioteer, however, is not merely a forceful influence; in his case Love wreaks havoc by spurring and bridling with fire and ice, possibly at the same time: he "spurreth with fyer and bridilleth with Ise." As always, Wyatt's speaker cedes management of himself to an intemperate love, and subsequently and continually rues the loss of control over his own passions.

II

Wyatt's lack of emotional measure has an intrinsic analogue at the formal level, and the extent of Wyatt's anxiety—as it is adumbrated in the content of his poetry—plays out at the level of form, in terms of his lyric prosodic technique. These are related questions: how may one control—that is, measure—one's conduct, and how may one measure the formal expression of that conduct? Here the ethical and the aesthetic converge, for Wyatt's anxiety about the lack of measure in his life is reproduced by a critical anxiety—spanning centuries—about the lack of measure in his lines. In "Process of Time Worketh Such Wonder," Wyatt complains that the cruelty of his love exceeds everything alive, for in the natural order even the most obstinately unmeasured ("out of frame") object is eventually subjected to the law of temperance:

So cruel, alas, is naught alive,
So fierce, so froward, so out of frame,
But some way, some time may so contrive
By means the wild to temper and tame.

Wyatt's lyric measure—so fierce, so froward, so out of frame—has been subjected to the regularizing impulse of critics from the date of its first publication. But, like Wyatt's beloved, his wild lines have resisted those impulses to temper and to tame. They remain unnatural and intemperate, and they obstinately resist the regularizing impulse. And, as I hope to show here, the attempts of critics to rewrite and to remeasure these lines—to make them "regular"—reveals the extent to which mismeasure produces anxiety. This anxiety for critics is much like the anxiety that has produced the poems. Wyatt's critics ironically reenact his own unease when confronted by something that will not be tempered or tamed.

In my discussion of Wyatt's measure and mismeasure thus far I have deliberately delayed addressing what Jonathan Crewe calls the "old question: that of Thomas Wyatt's craft as metrist, and as a poet in conventional courtly forms" (23). This question, as Crewe points out, has persisted for so long in Wyatt studies that its very intractability has become a critical point of interest. Why has so much ink been spilt in explanations, editions, defenses of, and attacks on Wyatt's meter? Why have Wyatt's poems become one of the foremost sites of critical disagreement about meter in English? One reason, it seems, is that Wyatt's work, in its entirety, represents a tantalizing mixture of perfect iambic pentameter and strange, rhythmically complex lines that flirt with, but often resist, metric "regularity." His metrical craft famously embraces and resists forms that would

become, within a generation of Wyatt's death, standards of English poetry. Because this shifting in and out of metrical regularity is the most recognized and debated form of mismeasurement available in the canon of Wyatt criticism, to say that Wyatt is "out of measure," carries another, this time formal, connotation.

Yet the strangeness of Wyatt's meter is not, by itself, enough to account for the critical obsession it engenders. Another—deeply related—aspect of Wyatt's poetry has given rise to an equally divisive critical question: what is Wyatt's place in the history of English poetics? In fact, the question regarding Wyatt's metrics cannot be considered independently of the question of his position as an influence on the Elizabethans, for critical anxiety about Wyatt's meter is a product of critical anxiety about his place in the canon of English poetry. This has been true since Wyatt's earliest critics approached his poetry. In fact, from the first publication of Wyatt's poems, considerations of his work have been marked by a critical self-consciousness eager to establish Wyatt as the hero of a nationalistic narrative of English greatness and, subsequently, by a counter-narrative that sees him not as the father of Elizabethan poetry, but as a medieval figure characteristic of the "drab" age in which he lived.

To study Henrician poetics is to practice a kind of archeology of forms. The early Tudor poets did not publish arguments concerning the vagaries of accent or create handbooks of metrical theory, as the Elizabethans did two generations later. But even though no "practical" criticism from the period is extant, surely some set of formal conventions governed the creation of the metric forms of Wyatt and Surrey, something very different from Skelton's rhymes or the folk ballad forms. Surrey recognized the potentials of blank verse even if he did not defend the theoretical value of the form self-

consciously, as Milton would do a hundred years later. Instead of handbooks or pamphlets, Wyatt, Surrey, and their contemporaries produced the artifacts themselves: the nascent decasyllabic lines that would come to be known as iambic pentameter. The principles that governed the creation of the verse must be reconstructed by an exploration of these artifacts, by an investigation into the prehistory of meter. Many critics ignore pre-Elizabethan poetic theory,[54] as though the poetic productions of the late sixteenth century—stanza forms, generic choices, and above all, metric tendencies—were invented out of thin air. Yet, even for those critics who examine the principles of poetic craft as practiced by the generations before the Elizabethans, Wyatt represents a special case.

Indeed, there are clear ideological and nationalistic reasons why for centuries critics have demonstrated anxiety about Wyatt's apparent lack of metric measure. Wyatt's critical standing has always rested on his reputation as the man who brought the sonnet to England. This etiological fiction—and it is a fiction, for Chaucer translated a Petrarchan sonnet more than a century before Wyatt was born[55]—is the foundation of a nationalistic narrative developed by two sixteenth-century arbiters of taste: Richard Tottel and George Puttenham. In the forward ("The Printer to the Reader") of his immensely popular anthology *Songs and Sonnets* (1557)—popularly called *Tottel's Miscellany*—Tottel articulates an ideology of national linguistic achievement in which Wyatt, along

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[54] T.S. Omond is representative of this approach, doing away with the earlier poets with a flick of the pen: "English metrical criticism practically begins with the Elizabethans. Nothing before that date needs notice here" (1).

[55] Chaucer translated "S' amor non è" (*Canzoniere* 132), into three stanzas of *Troilus and Criseide*. Chaucer thus translated a sonnet, but did not necessarily *make* a sonnet of the translation.

with Surrey, provides proof of England's potential for culturally measuring up to its continental rivals:

> That our tong is able in that kynde to do as praiseworthily as ye rest, the honorable stile of the noble earle of Surrey, and the weightinesse of the depewitted sir Thomas Wyat the elders verse, with severall graces in sundry good Englishe writers, doe show abundantly. It resteth nowe (gentle reader) that thou thinke it not evill doon, to publish, to the honor of the Englishe tong, and for profit of the studious of English eloquence, those workes [...]" (2).

In *The Art of English Poetry* (1589), Puttenham repeats Tottel's account of the history of English poetry for the benefit of his upwardly mobile readers. Wyatt and Surrey are again the heroes, the chief of the "courtly makers," who,

> having travailed into Italie, and there tasted the sweete and stately measures and stile of the Italian Poesie, as novices newly crept out of the schooles of *Dante*, *Arioste*, and *Petrarch*, they greatly polished our rude & homely maner of vulgar Poesie from that it had bene before, and for that cause may justly be sayd the first reformers of our English meetre and stile" (62-3).

According to this narrative, Wyatt and Surrey begin a literary "reformation" that makes sense of the chaos of verse forms remaining from the medieval period and translate, that

is, convey from one place to another, continental Renaissance forms.[56] As Puttenham emphasizes, these forms consist not merely of arbitrary rhyme schemes, but continental "stately measures and stile," which must be remade into "English meetre and stile": The poetry of the great traditions ("Latines, Italians, and other") must be reworked into the reproducible form (iambic pentameter) and content (Petrarchan conceits) that flourish in the Elizabethan age.[57]

Puttenham and Tottel championed Wyatt as a national hero partly because he represented for them both a link to the past—to Chaucer and to Petrarch—and also a link to their own age. In their search for beginnings, Wyatt's position is notable, for there are few other examples of courtly poetics that seem to provide an example for the Elizabethans. According to Tottel and Puttenham's account, the brief cultural renaissance during the reign of Edward III that included the poetry of Chaucer, Langland, and Gower was followed by a period of one hundred years that produced virtually no new court poetry. Thus, even though the Elizabethans looked to Chaucer as the quintessential example of an Englishman who could rival the great continental poets and who demonstrated the potentials of the English vernacular, their invocation of his greatness always included a sense of reaching backwards across a gap created by the dynastic wars of the fifteenth century. Again, this is the narrative reiterated by Puttenham:

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[56] See OED, "translate" (from Latin "transferre," "transfer," "to bear, carry, bring.")

[57] As C.S. Lewis claims, "to translate Petrarch was not necessarily to introduce a new note into English poetry; it depended on the poems you chose and on the quality of your rendering" (223). Lewis agrees that Wyatt's reputation depends on his standing as a precursor to a later age, but finds that Wyatt fails on those grounds: "The Elizabethan sonnet might not have been very different if Wyatt had never lived."

> I will not reach above the time of King Edward III and Richard II for any that wrote in English meter [...] as beyond that time there is little or nothing worth commendation to be found written in this art. And those of the first age were Chaucer and Gower, both of them, as I suppose, knights. After whom followed John Lydgate, the monk of Bury, and that nameless who wrote the satire called *Piers Plowman*; next him followed Hardyng the chronicler; then in King Henry VIII's times Skelton [...]. In the latter end of the same king's reign sprung up a new company of courtly makers, of whom Sir Thomas Wyatt the elder and Henry, Earl of Surrey, were the two chieftains (147-8).

English poetry does not begin until the reign of Edward III, and following Chaucer, Gower, and Langland—all poets of "the time of King Edward III and Richard II,"—there is a lacuna of one hundred years, during which time Puttenham mentions only Lydgate ("the monk of bury")—Chaucer's immediate follower—and the chronicler John Harding. According to this account, during the reign of Henry VIII, English poetry had to be rediscovered, the Chaucerian legacy reinitiated.[58] And Wyatt is the poet—rather than Skelton—who represents the reinstitution of the Chaucerian heritage, for it is his measures that make the Elizabethan Renaissance possible. Of course, this is a fact in retrospect; Wyatt's elevation is historically significant only because, subsequently,

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[58] Common to virtually all Elizabethan and subsequent critical discussions of pre-Elizabethan poetics is an agreement about the relative paucity of notable poetic achievements during the fifteenth century. Of course, poets did not stop writing between Lydgate and Skelton, and scholars of the fifteenth century have attempted to counter "the approach to the period, which we have inherited from late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century writers, as an anticlimax to the age of Chaucer" (Ebin x).

English poetic practice was supposed to have been built on Wyatt's metric blueprint rather than any of the other metric possibilities, such as Skelton's "doggerel."[59] But its etiological and ideological importance cannot be overlooked: Wyatt is celebrated as the poet who looks backward, reviving Chaucer and Petrarch, and as the poet who looks forward, anticipating Shakespeare and Milton. Wyatt provides narrative continuity in the quest to establish the roots of English poetic "greatness."

There are, however, two mutually exclusive characterizations of Wyatt at stake, characterizations that, for Lewis's generation of critics, are framed by an argument that has its origins with the Elizabethans: is Wyatt primarily a "medieval" or a "Renaissance" poet? Those who would emphasize the former point to the fact that Wyatt depended heavily on English poetry from the fifteenth century; Thomson notes that "many of [Wyatt's] lyrics relate more closely to the immediate English past than to the Latins, Italians and other influences stressed by Tottel" (6). Southall agrees that Wyatt's primary influence is not Petrarch or other continental writers: "The Italian influence has no effect upon [the early Tudor poets'] language, a dubious effect upon their metrics, nor can it be held directly responsible for their conceits or their attitudes towards the business of courtly love" (13). Indeed, Wyatt generally does not reproduce Petrarchan conceits; he selects from Petrarch's canon poems that do not include the blazons and praises the Elizabethans would later consider the essence of Petrarchan convention; and if Petrarch elaborately praises his beloved, Wyatt usually uses the same opportunities to demonstrate

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[59] Skelton's place in the narrative of English literary history is further damaged by the influence of Puttenham, who says of him "I wot not for what great worthiness [he was] surnamed the Poet Laureate" (148). Frank Wigham and Wayne Rebhorn point out that "Puttenham's references to [Skelton] are uniformly disrespectful" (148 n. 10).

resentment towards his. Tottel's and Puttenham's emphasis on the bringing of continental form and style to England, then, is an essentially ideological maneuver, an attempt to frame Wyatt as what we would call a "Renaissance" poet. This move legitimizes the poetry of the second half of the sixteenth century by connecting it, through Wyatt, to both Chaucer and to the continent.

But although Puttenham and Tottel's account of Wyatt is convenient and ideologically motivated, it is also not completely false. Wyatt certainly brought stanzaic forms from the continent, and he had a demonstrable impact on the course of English poetry in the sixteenth century. Not only did he influence Surrey, who more clearly established iambic pentameter (in his sonnets) and blank verse (in his translation of *The Aeneid*) as the proper "English meetre," but by promoting Wyatt as the first Englisher of continental forms, Tottel also popularized the real work Wyatt did in bringing French and Italian forms to England. Slender's comment in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, itself composed about ten years after the publication of *The Arte of English Poetry*—"I had rather than forty shillings I had my Book of Songs and Sonnets here"—suggests that Tottel's version of Wyatt influenced Shakespeare (Rollins 121).[60] In Hyder Rollins's words, "practically every early Elizabethan poet accepted [*Songs and Sonnets*] as his model" (3), and "the beginning of modern English verse may be said to date from its publication in 1557" (4).

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[60] Wyatt's sonnets are variously structured, though one of his double sonnets consists of two "Shakespearean" sonnets (Rollins 103). Generally Surrey is credited with originating the Shakespearean sonnet form (103), though Wyatt also uses of the closed couplet to end some sonnets. This characteristic is not found in Petrarch but is reproduced by Shakespeare. Rollins also points out a reference to material in *Songes and Sonnettes* in the Gravedigger's song in *Hamlet*. For a lengthy discussion of the impact of Tottel's multiple editions on sixteenth-century poetry, see Rollins 107-21.

As Puttenham points out, and as some of the quotes cited above suggest, Wyatt's contribution to subsequent English literary history is primarily formal. By (putatively) modifying Petrarch's hendecasyllabic line (or, alternatively, Chaucer's quasi-pentameter line), Wyatt created the English measure by which other English poets fashioned their poetry, and by which they are judged. But this narrative—so important to Puttenham and Tottel—only makes sense if Wyatt did in fact create a new metric form, a form with a lineage that may be traced from Wyatt's sources to the metrical examples of his followers. The form in question is of course the iambic pentameter line, and its somewhat mysterious appearance in England constitutes an ideologically and historically important question for literary critics.

Some time in the early sixteenth century in England, out of the thicket of folk ballad forms, crude continental imitations, and Skeltonic doggerel, emerged a poetic form capable of sustained effect and almost infinitely subtle rhythmic distinctions, and here critics are most interested in Wyatt's contributions. Though Chaucer's line was roughly decasyllabic and possibly based on iambic rhythms, the forms of English poetry at the beginning of the sixteenth century did not include the iambic pentameter. In fact, the necessity of establishing a new metric form was created by the exhaustion of native English forms in the fifteenth century, as Thomas Greene argues. Whereas Petrarch had a wealth of what Greene calls *mundus significans* available, verse forms, images, commonplaces, myths, and tropes,

> whose resonance was far from exhausted [...] the poetic vocabulary available to Wyatt was seriously shrunken. Most of the verse forms and styles of the fifteenth century in England were losing their appeal or had lost it as he began writing: the ballade, the carol, the 'broken-backed' alliterative line, the aureate style were fading rapidly, and the inspired doggerel of Skelton was not to find any followers. (247)

The pentameter—the decasyllabic line of alternating stressed and unstressed syllables—was used almost immediately from its first appearance in both lyric and epic forms (and only slightly later drama) to great effect, for it could be sustained indefinitely, with or without rhymes. This was a feature the late medieval folk forms—common and long measure, fourteeners and poulter's measure—lacked. Within half a century of its first appearance iambic pentameter had become the dominant form of poetic expression in English verse, and it would remain so for nearly half a millennium. By modifying his sources—especially Chaucer's five-beat and Petrarch's eleven-syllable lines—Wyatt appears to have created a form of immense possibility.[61] The success of the pentameter form lies in its reproducibility: Puttenham can teach the measure to his readers, and they can reproduce it themselves. As Southall notes, Puttenham says his purpose is "is to make of a rude rimer, a learned and a Courtly Poet":

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[61] Although Chaucer scholars disagree about whether Chaucer wrote iambic pentameter lines, Chaucer was probably less understood by Wyatt's generation than by ours, particularly in terms of pronunciation and in the delineation of the Chaucerian canon.

> The emphasis upon the need to cultivate a graceful manner arises from the social requirements of the unmannerly *nouveaux riches*. It is with such people in mind that Puttenham submits his new inventions; his 'rude rimer' is a phrase which marks a social distinction and not merely a literary one [...]. So that what Puttenham is offering his readers is a book of manners in which prosody is presented as a means by which ladies and new courtiers can polish up their verses so as to acquire a reputation for social gracefulness. The means proposed, as Puttenham was well aware, were not those proposed by poets writing 'till this day,' but it could not be long before what was introduced as an aid to social climbers became, after the climbers had arrived, the measure of good writing for all" (121-2).

In J.E. Bernard's words, "All complicated measures were laid aside with the advent of prose and blank verse about 1588" (x). And, although Bernard dates the advent of the pentameter from its Elizabethan appearance rather than its earlier forms, his point is well taken: iambic pentameter provided a simple, reproducible, but infinitely complex template for poets to measure themselves, and as a measure it became a *standard* measure, obliterating the more complicated, less regulated forms, the "medieval swamp" it replaced. It was with Wyatt that the line emerged—possibly re-emerged—and found its way to Surrey and Tottel, and it was on Wyatt's pentameter that Tottel and Puttenham built their story of English achievement, a story that readers of Shakespeare and Milton subsequently turned into the narrative of English literary greatness. Iambic pentameter, in the hands of these poets, revealed its potential as a measure of English poetry, and it is

precisely its slipperiness that made it perfectly suited for this role. This is Wyatt's place in the story of English poetry.

But because Thomas Wyatt is a poet out of measure, negative reaction to his metric craft appeared early. The first earliest critical reaction is Tottel's: only fifteen years after Wyatt's death, Tottel's edition extensively revised his poems to "smooth out" the meter, and in doing so clearly indicated dissatisfaction with the metrical form of the poems in manuscript. Subsequent discussion of Wyatt has been obsessed with metrical questions, particularly after Wyatt's poems became widely available in their manuscript form.[62] If the earliest critics—the editors of *Songs and Sonnets*—were troubled by the meter, readers who had read the extremely "polished" iambic pentameter of the post-Elizabethans (and were likely to think of Dryden and Pope as the consummate masters of English metrical form) found his manuscript poems nearly unreadable. This view found its most enduring expression in a 1781 essay by Thomas Warton, of which I will have more to say, and well into the twentieth century it was a commonplace that Wyatt was "inferior to Surrey in harmony of numbers, perspicuity of expression, and facility of phraseology" (Warton, qtd. in Thomson 41). Wyatt's "rough" verse is criticized by George Gilfillan ("a certain ruggedness of versification"), George Frederick Nott ("crabbed" and "inharmonious"), Robert Bell ("harsh and refractory"), William Simonds ("crude," "harsh and inharmonious"), A.K. Foxwell ("hard and irregular"), "E.M.W.

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[62] Well into the twentieth century some prosodists continued to follow Wyatt's earliest critics in analyzing Wyatt's verse as it appeared in the emended *Songs and Sonnets*. Writing in 1930, Enid Hamer, for instance, praises Wyatt's development of the sonnet and the innovation of the closed couplet ending, specifically in terms of the effect these formal developments had on later English writers; Shakespeare is the implicit beneficiary of Wyatt's formal innovation. Yet Hamer quotes from Tottel's edition, which often reworked Wyatt's madrigals and closely related forms into sonnets.

Tillyard ("intolerable," "grotesque," "uncouth" "hopelessly rough"), E.K. Chambers ("stiff"), and C.S. Lewis ("stumbling").[63] Clearly Wyatt's metrics have made an enduring and unsettling impression on critics.

The actual lines to which these assessments are attached comprise a relatively small percentage of Wyatt's corpus. The poems by Wyatt that are comprised of short lines or lines based on English ballad measures, like the poulter's measure, are not only metrically regular, but consistently iambic. The lines open to debate are those R.A. Rebholz calls the "long line,"—that is, lines of "9 to 12 syllables."[64] Thus Bell can argue that Wyatt's verse is only incidentally unsettling to the ear: "His versification, incidentally harsh and refractory, is, generally, regular and sonorous" (59). This apparent variance of prosodic competence is a key factor in the critical unease created by Wyatt's metrics: Wyatt can and does write iambically, but when he approximates the form of the pentameter he seems to write much more "unmetrically"; the pentameter line thus becomes a focus of increased critical attention and anxiety, for the pentameter is the line of the sonnet and ultimately of blank verse and Elizabethan tragedy. Wyatt's refusal to

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[63] Found in, respectively, Gilfillan xvii, Nott, Simonds 54, Foxwell 122, Bell 58-9, Tillyard 19, 26-7, Chambers 121, and Lewis 223. Because Wyatt's verse is of mixed prosodic regularity, these comments are often in reference to particular lyrics or lyric genres, or are accompanied by praise for Wyatt when he is "regular." Lewis's reference is in regard to "Myne olde dere En'mye, my forward master."

[64] Rebholz says: "it seems safe to say that few readers disagree about the rhythm of his poems written in 'short' lines of two, three, or, most commonly, four feet. Indeed Wyatt is generally acknowledged as a master of the iambic tetrameter line. Nor are his poems in 'poulter's measure'—a couplet consisting of a line of six feet and a line of seven feet—a matter of much metrical controversy (though their aesthetic value is debated and usually disparaged)" (45). Wyatt's treatment of the pentameter in the ballads is lauded by Chambers: "Wyatt, in the balettes, shows himself as finished a craftsman with the pentameter as with any other measure" (121).

make these lines scan iambically is troubling because it obscures his status as the founding father in the grand narrative of English literary greatness.

Thus E.K. Chambers argues that the poetry produced during the fifteenth century was of "folk or ecclesiastical origins" rather than poetry of the court:

> A court poetry, which had grown up with Chaucer, wilted in the hurly-burly of the Roses. And when the Tudors came, the energies of their first king, austere if not already a little world-wearied, were too closely bent upon the establishment of a dynasty and the reconstruction of a national life [to establish a culture of court poetry] (98).

And J.P. Dabney finds that English poetry includes only a few "guide-lights"—including Wyatt—to show the way from Chaucer to Elizabeth: "The times which follow Chaucer are not prolific of great names until we approach that truly Periclean age of art, the reign of Elizabeth" (9). Ian Robinson is more concise: after Chaucer the iambic pentameter "became a lost art which was not again discovered until Wyatt's labors; but Wyatt often [forgot] it again himself" (67).

Clearly Wyatt's importance to critics—from Elizabeth's era to ours—depends on his historical position as an introducer of verse forms. Robinson's ambivalent remark, however, points to a key issue in Wyatt studies, for if Wyatt forgot the art of Chaucer's forms, or if he never really knew them, Puttenham and Tottel's argument for his place in the history of English literature is mistaken. Thus C.S. Lewis argues that Wyatt merely reproduces the poetry of an age dedicated to dying conventions. English literature during

the first three quarters of the century, Lewis argues, is "dull, feeble, and incompetent": the verse is "astonishingly tame and cold [...]. Nothing is light, or tender, or fresh. All the authors write like elderly men" (1). So far this depiction is in keeping with the narrative of the Elizabethan critics and more recent historical characterizations of the sixteenth century. But for Lewis, Wyatt is not so much the direct progenitor of the great poets of Shakespeare's generation as he is a remnant of the Middle Ages, of what Lewis calls, in reference to that period's metrical confusion, "the late medieval swamp" (225). Lewis says that the middle of the sixteenth century is "an earnest, heavy-handed, commonplace age: a drab age" (1), and Wyatt is its "father" (225).[65] Lewis's characterization is much like Dabney's: the poetry produced between the ages of Chaucer and Elizabeth is not "prolific of great names"; but, for Lewis, Wyatt is not a "guide-light" for the Elizabethans as much as a reflection of the past. If anything, he is a negative influence. In fact, "The Elizabethan sonnet might not have been very different if Wyatt had never lived" (224).[66] E.K. Chambers agrees: "It is true that a dozen historians of literature acclaim it as [Wyatt's] chief merit that he introduced the sonnet into England. But a writer's merit lies in what he accomplishes, not in what baffles him" (122).

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[65] Lewis later mitigates the harshness of this claim by insisting that "drab" "is not a pejorative term," but merely a descriptor of Wyatt's unadorned style (227). The difference between Lewis's and Puttenham's characterizations of Wyatt may be observed in the adjectives they use to describe Wyatt's style. Puttenham calls it "stately"; Lewis refers to it as "flat, plodding" (224).

[66] See also Schmidt: "Though [Wyatt] was the first great English sonneteer, the sonnets he translated and composed had little effect on his smooth-mannered successors, who went to the fountainhead in Petrarch rather than to Wyatt's efforts" (123).

As long as critics, like Puttenham, believed that Wyatt wrote poems as they appeared in Tottel's edition, his place in the narrative of English literary history was assured. It was only when Wyatt's manuscripts became available that critics began attacking his verse. And, famously, in the twentieth century the general trend of attacking or dismissing Wyatt turned to defending him. This revaluation of Wyatt corresponds to a number of developments, most importantly the rise of free verse and of New Criticism. Accompanying these new approaches to poetry was a revaluation of John Donne and other "rough" metricists, probably as a result of these poems' suitability for close formal analysis.[67] In a sense, the new approach to Wyatt revived Puttenham's narrative, but it also provided Wyatt with a different (and more fashionable) lineage, extending through Donne and other less "smooth" metricists to free verse. In this account Wyatt still brought the pentameter to prominence, but he did so with a more sophisticated sense of rhythm than Surrey or his followers.

But there remain a great number of instances in Wyatt's verse that simply do not look like iambic pentameter lines. Thus critics who have attempted to excuse Wyatt's long line have often done so by describing it as a kind of disguised iambic pentameter that, unlike Surrey's pentameter, makes use of an enormous number of metrical substitutions and variant pronunciations. The most famous example is A.K. Foxwell's 1911 approach. Here is her list of "Wyatt's rules of verse," the exceptions that make Wyatt's pentameter "regular":

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[67] But see Ben Saunders for a discussion of the limited nature of Donne's reappraisal (19-20).

(a) Inverted stress of the first foot.
(b) Strong stress for the first foot.
(c) Strong stress after the caesura.
(d) Extra weak syllable before caesura with full complement of syllables after the caesura.
(e) Trisyllabic feet are very common in Wyatt's verse, they are found in the first, second, fourth, and fifth foot.
(f) Slurring takes place with weak syllables ending in r, l, n, when followed by another weak syllable; *Enemy* is dissyllabic.
(g) The termination –ayn in words such as rayn, fayn, is often dissylabic, and pleasure in one instance has three syllables.
(h) Verbal ending –eth is usually slurred in the body of the verse: an extension of this rule includes "hath" and "with" at times—
(i) Slurring of vowels in juxtaposition. "y" is regarded as a vowel, and "h" as no letter.
(k) Wyatt avoids syncopation; it is not found except in the words "ton," "tothr"; and "thevyn" (t'hevyn) occurs *once* in the Satire "My mothers maydes."
(l) Two stressed syllables without an intervening weak syllable is a favourite device in Wyatt. It occurs in the first and second, and the fourth and fifth foot—
(m) Lines occur in Wyatt which are quite regular if *a final* "e" or plural termination –es is regarded as syllabic—
(n) An occasional Alexandrine or octosyllabic line occurs in poems written in the five-stressed line—
(o) The caesura is carefully marked after the fourth syllable in Wyatt's early verse in the E MS. [Egerton manuscript]
(p) *Enjambement* or overflow of the line—

Foxwell demonstrates each of these rules with copious examples both from Wyatt's verse and from Chaucer, Wyatt's putative model for metrical composition. Each of the "rules" is *a priori* plausible; variable pronunciation, for instance, would be necessary to make any sixteenth-century verse scan, and trochaic substitution in the first foot is a common substitution in virtually all examples of iambic pentameter. Yet at least one of the rules—(n)—damages the model's viability, as the phrase "occasional Alexandrine [six-stress line] or octosyllabic [likely a four-stress line]" is another way of saying *not pentameter*. Indeed, the difficulty with this approach is that it could account

for almost any line of poetry that is approximately the length of the pentameter. The reliance on Chaucer's metrics as an explanation for the meter is also telling; many of the questions that trouble Wyatt critics are also at stake in a similarly intractable debate about the prosody of Chaucer. Hitching Wyatt's meter to Chaucer's thus begs the question, as Southall argues:

> It is not yet possible to judge fully the rhythmical debt which the courtly makers owe to Chaucer; the issue has been obscured by a pedantic insistence upon the prosodic relationship. The dangers of this have already been seen, it is hardly to the point to demonstrate that Chaucer is prosodically more exact than the courtly makers if, simultaneously, he is rhythmically more clumsy. To say that Wyatt writes pentameter because he strictly adheres to a version of Chaucer's prosody is to make Wyatt's metrical troubles depend on a model with even more metrical troubles and greater mysteries of pronunciation. (35)

Although versions of Foxwell's approach have reappeared as recently as twenty years ago, they have encountered staunch critical resistance in every manifestation. Of the poems written in the "long line," it is possible to describe two genres—the epistolary satires and penitential psalms—as comprised of iambic pentameter lines (although with numerous substitutions), for these poems consist of long lines that are more "regular" than those found in the lyrics (Rebholz 49).[68] Applied to the lyrics, however—and, again,

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[68] "About 75 per cent of the 775 lines in the Penitential Psalms scan as iambic pentameter; if one allows the trochaic substitution common in the first foot, the

metrical theorists have been most interested in the sonnet—the argument seems to fail. As Raymond Southall has pointed out, the numerous substitutions—though they accurately describe the verse—undermine the integrity of the approach as a convincing account of Wyatt's methodology: "the more numerous the departures from the strict iambic pentameter line become, the less schematic the verse becomes until, suffering death by a thousand qualifications, observation of the rule or norm becomes merely fortuitous" (118).[69]

A majority of critics agree that whatever Wyatt was doing in the lyrics, he was not writing consistently regular verse: Thus E.K. Chambers in 1933 rejected the qualification model: "much of [Wyatt's work], especially in the sonnets, is stiff and difficult to scan; and even when full allowance has been made, both for Romance accentuation and for textual corruption, many lines can only be regarded as simply unmetrical" (121). C.S. Lewis followed suit in giving up on some of the lines: "A majority of his lines scan according to the principles which governed English verse from Spenser to the Edwardians: a fairly large minority do not" (Thomson 175). Rebholz agrees: "there are too many lines not in iambic pentameter [excluding the Psalms and satires] to make it Wyatt's metrical norm" (54-5). Southall's rejection of Foxwell's approach is insightful: the attempt to make Wyatt "regular" proves "either that Wyatt wrote very 'bad' iambic pentameter verse or that he did not write iambic pentameter verse at all" (119).

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percentage is about 82 per cent. Of the 306 lines in the Epistolary Satires (not in Wyatt's hand), about 64 per cent are iambic pentameter; if one allows the trochaic substitution in the first foot, the percentage is about 70" (Rebholz 49).

[69] Southall is in this case criticizing a conflated model proposed by A.K. Foxwell and F.M. Padelford.

But Wyatt scholars have been loath to concede that Wyatt wrote "very 'bad' iambic pentameter," partly because so many of the lines that do not scan as pentameter seem to be rhythmically interesting. The critical desire to regulate the long lines has manifested itself in various efforts to suggest an alternate metrical methodology, a governing principle that rescues Wyatt's reputation, even if he "did not write iambic pentameter verse at all." After rejecting iambic pentameter as the "metrical norm," critics have turned to a dizzying array of alternate metrical approaches. Rebholz discusses the attempt to describe the long line as a four-stressed line rooted in the Anglo-Saxon poetic tradition (46). Given the number of lines with five and six stresses, it is difficult to see how this model would work. Rebholz also notes the popular approach of describing the line as a "flexible" meter that allows for four-to-six feet, possibly based on a (supposed) misreading of Chaucer (47), an unlikely move, given the problems plaguing Chaucer's prosody, as noted above. Another critic suggests that the verse is modeled "on the Greek meters used by Catullus and Horace, ancient *logaoedic* meters which are themselves composed of two parts."[70] Additionally, after deftly dismissing the approaches he has discussed, Rebholz trots out his own theory, one that allows a number of substitutions and pronunciation variants, though not so many as the strict iambic pentameter model, probably because of Rebholz's qualification that Wyatt's measure is "not necessarily iambic" (50).

Southall argues that the broken-backed alliterative tradition is Wyatt's metrical basis, but though his argument against the defenders of Wyatt's pentameter is strong, his proposed alternative methodology fails. His theory forces him, at one point, to say of one

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[70] This is Ellen Caldwell's summary of an approach by Robert B. Ogle (Caldwell 233).

of Wyatt's best known lines ("They fle from me that sometime did me seek"): "The phrasing shows Wyatt departing from the more violent method of juxtaposing two alliterative phrases and softening the effect by opposing a rhymed phrase to an alliterative one and carrying the rhyme into the alliterative phrase: They *fle* from *me* that *sometime* did *me s*eke" (140). This convoluted explanation obscures the fact that in this case, at least, the meter is clearly iambic pentameter. Thus if Southall effectively counters claims that Wyatt is *always* writing pentameters, his own argument refuses adequately to account for the pentameters that are there.

I think it is safe to say that the debate on Wyatt's meter is a mess. And, although anyone who has ventured into the morass that is English metrical theory will point out that these disagreements are not peculiar to Wyatt criticism, with Wyatt's work—especially the sonnets—the stakes are unusually high and the lack of consensus is remarkable. Most critics agree that Wyatt is aware of iambic pentameter and that he consistently decides to reject it as his standard measure for the lyric long line. Besides this, critics cannot agree on whether the line is based on four or five stresses, the importance of the caesura as a structural principle, or whether the primary model is classical quantitative poetry, Medieval Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse, the continental decasyllabic line, or Chaucer. No totalizing approach has achieved anything like consensus and most have been criticized at length by other scholars. The critical desire to identify, regulate, and categorize Wyatt's poetic measures has sometimes proved tantalizingly close to realization, for many of the theories proposed by critics are plausible, but when it comes to a shared, agreed-upon metrical standard—a measure—the tradition of Wyatt criticism has failed to account for the meter of his long lines.

III

Thus far I have been discussing these issues in a relatively abstract way. An example will perhaps shed some light on the metrical questions involved and move us toward a solution to the question of why Wyatt lyrics resist "standard" metrical formulations. In the course of his discussion on poetic proportion, Puttenham finds himself puzzled by the first quatrain of a poem Wyatt has translated from Italian:

> Like unto these immeasurable mountaines,
> So is my painefull life the burden of ire:
> For hie be they, and hie is my desire,
> And I of teares and they are full of fountaines.[71]

The critical anxiety produced by the irregularity of the lines is palpable. Puttenham is concerned because at least three are not decasyllabic, although all are vaguely iambic (that is, they hint at but do not fulfill a "regular" metrical expectation). Not to worry, he says, for the lines can be measured according to technical precedent: here we have an example of "acatalecticke" verse, that is, verse consisting of an extra syllable: "in your first, second, and fourth verse ye may find a sillable superfluous, and though in the first ye will seeme to helpe it by drawing these three syllables, *im me su* into a *Dactil*,[72] in the

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[71] The poem is Egerton XXXIII. Muir and Thomson identify the source tentatively as a sonnet by Sannazaro.

[72] Sic. It is unclear how pronouncing these three syllables as a "dactil" would solve the problem, as dactyls are three syllable feet and the extra syllable would remain. Pronouncing the three syllables *su ra ble* as an anapest and then eliding that foot into an iamb would at least be a possible solution and would reduce the line to ten syllables, although a stress would fall awkwardly on the last syllable of the word "mesurable" and "mountaines" would require an iambic (French?) pronunciation. It is not possible to read the word "by drawing these three syllables, *im me su* into a *Dactil*" as Puttenham

rest it can not be so excused; wherefore we must thinke he did it of purpose, by the odde sillable to give greater grace to his meetre" (134-5). When confronted with metrical "irregularity," Puttenham suggests that Wyatt does not write "very 'bad' iambic pentameter verse" but *intends* the meter to exist as it does. Unfortunately for Puttenham's emphasis on intentionality ("he did it of purpose"), the lines above are not those Wyatt wrote; they are the emended lines found in Tottel's *Songes and Sonettes*. Puttenham is attempting to account for the irregularity of lines that have already gone through a regularizing process. In the Egerton Manuscript, the stanza reads as reproduced here on the left side of the chart (Fig. 2). The regularized version in *Songs and Sonnettes* appears on the right for comparison:

Like to these unmesurable montayns Is my painfull lyff the burden of Ire, For of great height be they, and high is my desire, And I of teres, and they be full of fontayns.	Like unto these immeasurable mountaines, So is my painefull life the burden of ire: For hie be they, and hie is my desire, And I of teares and they are full of fountains.

Figure 2: Tottel's Emendation of Wyatt's Meter

This sonnet as it appears in manuscript is typical of the problems that confront metricists who would offer a totalizing methodology for Wyatt's verse. Clearly the poem cannot be read as standard iambic pentameter, or even loose pentameter on the model of Chaucer. The first two lines appear to be decasyllabic, but the third is 12 syllables, and

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recommends. Puttenham's examples of the dactyl include "temperance," "womanhead," "jollity," and "dutiful" (125).

the fourth is 11 (hinting at but disappointing expectations).[73] On the whole the lines seem to consist of five accents rather than four, but it's difficult to read line three as anything except a six-stress line:

For of great height be they, and high is my desire,

Lines three and four might be read on a "broken-backed" medieval model, with a strong central caesura as a governing formal principle, but not so lines one and two. Confronted with this metrical chaos, Tottel's strategy is clear and typical of his treatment of Wyatt: assuming the prosodic standard exemplified by Surrey, he "fixes" the first two unscannable lines by inserting monosyllables early in the lines, thereby moving the second stress to the fourth syllable and creating a roughly iambic measure.[74] Both lines are left with an extra syllable, a vestige of Wyatt's original metrical instability that Puttenham ironically and unwittingly approves on the model of ancient measures. Tottel also excises the two extra syllables from the third line. In the fourth he changes the verb form but leaves the extra-syllabic ("acatalecticke") structure intact. These measures are

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[73] Syllable count comprises one of the most basic elements and most difficult problems for discussions of sixteenth-century metrics, as shifts in pronunciation and orthographic and dialectical variance make accurate determination of syllables very difficult.

[74] One of the surest indications that a poet is not using the iambic pentameter model established by Surrey is a line in which the fourth syllable is not stressed. For Surrey and the Elizabethan and 18th century masters of iambic pentameter that follow him, an initial trochee is widespread even in the most "regular" iambic pentameter, but excepting the (very) occasional anapest in the first two feet or the even less likely second-foot troche, the fourth syllable of an iambic line is stressed. An indication of the reliability of this rule is the verse of Spenser. By my count, of the 5,589 lines of verse that comprise Book I of *The Faerie Queene*, there are only four (0.1%) in which the fourth syllable is not clearly stressed (and one of these—5.35.8—would be scanned as a fourth syllable stress assuming Spenser pronounced "Theseus" as two syllables). Yet four of the lines in this sonnet (1, 2, 5, 13) cannot be read with an accented fourth syllable.

obvious, if uninspired, and it's hard to see how Wyatt, if he were trying for a pentameter line, could not have discovered some (probably more graceful) version of them himself. It does not seem possible, at least, that he could both try for a consistently measurable line and simultaneously leave line three in its state of grammatical inefficiency and palpable excess.

The force of the normalizing and normative-izing process employed by Tottel and Puttenham is evident. They are in the business of establishing the accentual-syllabic five-foot line as the paragon of English forms, and the extent of their achievement in this regard is indicated by the centuries of the form's duration. The critical practice of regulating Wyatt's metrics is, as Puttenham indicates, a process of remeasuring Wyatt. Poetic meter serves both to draw attention to an abstraction—in English, generally the iambic line—while also emphasizing an individual line's departures from that abstract constant. As Wallace puts it, scansion (the system of notation for poetic meter) "does two things. It shows a line's sufficient *approximation* of the metrical norm; and, more important, it shows those *divergences* from the norm [...] that let us begin to discuss the line's characteristic rhythm, its musical qualities, which of course also include such effects as alliteration, assonance, or syntactical balance/imbalance" (28). Like other measures, meter consists of an abstract set of standardized rules against which extant examples are compared and quantitatively labeled.

But what if the "norm" has not yet been completely established? How do we measure the meter of the earliest forms of iambic pentameter? Wyatt's measures will not cooperate, and a critical and ideologically charged desire to *re*measure Wyatt—one that reappears, as I have shown, among twentieth-century Wyatt critics—leads to Tottel's

emendations and, in an intensely ironic instance of critical measuring, Puttenham's attempt to manage the first line's (already re-measured) measure by dictating the pronunciation (the *measure*) of the word "unmeasurable."

For these lines, as written, are unmeasurable. They do not conform to any critical standard: broken-backed, quantitative, syllabic, iambic pentameter, or otherwise. Assuming that Wyatt's choices are "of purpose," why is line three overcharged? The answer, perhaps, is in the way that it runs over its (rejected) pentameter limit: it exceeds that limit by precisely the quantity of its final word: *desire*. For it is this desire-out-of-measure, this uncontainable and irrepressible desire, that constitutes Wyatt's standard poetic posture. When, in the concluding couplet of the sonnet, Wyatt compares the birds of the mountain to his own song ("Off that restles birdes they have the tone and note/and I always plaint that passe thorough my throte") the word "restles" likewise contributes to a line that cannot rest. It overflows itself, although a "metrical" emendation and "correction" would have been simple to achieve. Just as Wyatt's passions always exceed measure, so his metrical practice in the lyrics persistently exceeds the iambic pentameter with which it flirts.

At this point it may be argued that I am simply restating an old argument in Wyatt criticism: that the formal "roughness" is a reflection of Wyatt's psychological state. Thus Warton argues that Wyatt's inability to measure is itself the essence of his poetry:

> [From his Italian models] Wyatt was taught to torture the passion of love by prolix and intricate comparisons, and unnatural allusions. At one time his love is a galley steered by cruelty through stormy seas and dangerous rocks; the sails torn

> by the blast of tempestuous sighs, and the cordage consumed by the incessant showers of tears: a cloud of grief envelopes the stars, reason is drowned, and the haven is at a distance. At another, it is a spring trickling from the summit of the Alps, which gathering force in its fall, at length overflows all the plain beneath. Sometimes, it is a gun, which being overcharged, expands the flame within itself, and bursts in pieces [...] (qtd. in Thomson 42-3).

On the whole, this is a fair description of Wyatt's usual recourse to conventional poetic devices. It is also difficult to imagine a more effective catalogue of images of frustrated desire: the ship unable to reach port, mountain streams gathering into an irresistible river that "overflows" the land, an "overcharged" firearm that misfires and "bursts" into itself.

This language suggests that the critical charge against Wyatt's content is the same as that against his form: it is "torture[d]," and "overcharged"; it "overflows" its measure. Warton also nicely captures the early modern expression of uncontrolled desire as a sin of intemperance, a crime against reason, which Wyatt's use of the storm-ravaged ship allegorizes ("reason is drowned"). Moreover, if Warton leaves the connection between the meter and content (Puttenham's "meetre and stile") implicit, as both merely offend his taste in the same way, Southall explicitly argues that Wyatt employs formal devices to reflect his tempestuous emotions, and in the process reverses the value judgment: "[t]he movements of Wyatt's verse express what, as a court poet, he felt to be the most significant quality of contemporary life, namely its instability" (127). Rebholz also attaches Wyatt's variant metrical lines to his troubled consciousness: they are "deliberate

variations to reinforce the speaker's astonishment at the reality of his past union and the strangeness of his present desertion" (54).

Rebholz's use of the word "deliberate" to describe Wyatt's "variations" echoes Puttenham's "we must thinke he did it of purpose," and Foxwell's insistence that Wyatt "wrote in this manner not from incapacity but from choice" (122). Michael Schmidt, on the other hand, poses the problem of purpose as a question: "Are the irregularities poetic flaws, manifestations of peculiar genius, or proof that his language is still in a state of accentual transition?" (121). At issue here is not merely Wyatt's intentionality but also his competence. All of the metrical structures suggested as alternative organizational principles are designed to show that, although Wyatt was not writing pentameters, he was nevertheless more than an incompetent versifier. But the failure of critics to agree about any of those alternate structures only reproduces the general trend in Wyatt prosodic studies: intractability.

Rebholz's claim that Wyatt makes use of "deliberate variations to reinforce the speaker's astonishment" also suggests that Wyatt's formal roughness is (intentionally) designed to reveal his psychological circumstances. Together with Southall's linking of Wyatt's mismeasure to "contemporary life," these claims represent a version of metric theory summarized by Lascelles Abercrombie in 1923:

> [W]hen metre, e.g., is said to be "expressive," this will be understood to mean "symbolically expressive." It may be asked, How does such symbolism arise? and it must suffice to answer, Empirically: it has been found to work [...]. If, for

> example, metre can effect certain feelings in the mind, then metre will be the expression of those feelings, since by its means the poet who experiences them can provoke them in his hearers: and to do that *is* his expression on the external side. (15)

This frankly dubious explanation is historicized by Derek Attridge, who finds that meter's "emblematic function" is rooted in a history of association that dates at least to Plato:

> As far as rhythm is concerned, the emblematic function which has been most important in the history of verse is a general one, located in the fact of metrical organization itself: the Neoplatonic notion that language which obeys the rules of a strict metre represents an ideal reality governed by order and harmony. The heading of the final book of St. Augustine's *De Musica* (tr. Taliaferro, 1947, p. 324) presents this idea in a nutshell: 'The mind is raised from the consideration of changeable numbers in inferior things to unchangeable numbers in unchangeable truth itself.' Associated with this view is the feeling that metrical regularity purges language of its haphazardness and redundancy, an attitude eloquently expressed by Sidney [...]. (289-90).

Wyatt's lyrics do not raise the mind "from the consideration of changeable numbers"; Wyatt's lyrics *are* changeable numbers. Thus, on Augustine's model, they refuse to allow

readers to contemplate the "unchangeable numbers in unchangeable truth itself"; Wyatt's readers are forced to contemplate the world, in all its pain and mutability.

Wordsworth likewise takes up the question of the relationship between meter and emotional effects. But, for Wordsworth, meter provides a regular expectation which counters the "passion" produced by poetry's content: meter "tempers" poetry:

> The end of Poetry is to produce excitement in coexistence with an over-balance of pleasure; but, by the supposition, excitement is an unusual and irregular state of the mind; ideas and feelings do not, in that state, succeed each other in accustomed order... Now the co-presence of something regular, something to which the mind has been accustomed in various moods and in a less excited state, cannot but have great efficacy in tempering and restraining the passion by an inter-texture of ordinary feeling, and of feeling not strictly and necessarily connected with the passion... and hence, though the opinion will at first appear paradoxical, from the tendency of metre to divest language, in a certain degree, of its reality, and thus to throw a sort of half-consciousness of unsubstantial existence over the whole composition, there can be little doubt but that more pathetic situations and sentiments, that is, those which have a greater proportion of pain connected with them, may be endured in metrical composition, especially in rhyme, than in prose (qtd. in Chatman, 218).

Wordsworth suggests that "metrical composition"—regular meter—allows poets more effectively to portray pain; its role is manifested in "tempering and restraining the

passion." This is the position taken by Spenser when he describes the function of Erato—the muse of lyric poetry—in *The Teares of the Muses*, as to "rule in measure moderate / The tempest of that stormie passion, / And use to paint in rimes the troublous state / Of Lovers life in likest fashion [...]" (379-82). Wyatt's lines threaten the rule of "measure moderate," and it is little wonder that his lyrics, which clearly convey "a greater proportion of pain" than most, are often disparaged because of their irregularity.

Together these arguments suggest a connection between the lack of regular meter in Wyatt's lyrics and his own lack of measure, between expressive form and personal experience. Of course, such claims risk naturalizing critical descriptive metaphors. It's not clear how Wyatt's rhythms indicate psychological states any more than it's clear why meter ought to be described by value-laden metaphors based on tactile experience ("rough," "smooth"), or why multi-syllabic rhymes ought to be referred to as "feminine." Wyatt's "rough" meter may be, after all, closer to normal English speech patterns than Surrey's "smooth" verse.[75] The defenders of an affective theory of meter universally appeal to tradition: meter reflects and tempers reality because generations of readers have invested meter with the power to reflect and temper reality. Meter works, as Abercrombie says, "Empirically: it has been found to work." It is with Augustine that the roots of this association are brought to light: the theory of meter's affective capability is directly tied to a theory of the universe, in which linguistic creations are successful to the extent that

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[75] Southall's discussion of "rough" as a critical descriptor of Wyatt's verse is insightful: "In other words, 'rough' refers to the state of a piece or body of verse that students of classical prosody have been unable to reduce to the standard permutations required or prescribed by that one particular form of prosody. The fact that classical prosody is incompetent to deal with all verse does not imply that the verse with which it cannot deal is bad [...]. (115-6)

they imitate natural creation, which is notable, above all else, for its perfect harmony, its concord, its *measure*.

Thus, as Puttenham argues at the beginning of a chapter called "Of Ornament,"

> It is said by such as profess the mathematical sciences that all things stand by proportion, and that without it nothing could stand to be good or beautiful. The doctors of our theology to the same effect, but in other terms, say that God made the world by number, measure, and weight [...]. Of all which we leave to speak, returning to our poetical proportion, which holdeth of the musical, because, as we said before, poesy is a skill to speak and write harmonically; and verses or rhyme be a kind of musical utterance, by reason of a certain congruity in sounds pleasing the ear [...]. And this our proportion poetical resteth in five points: staff, measure, concord, situation, and figure, all which shall be spoken of in their places" (153-4).

Puttenham here merges natural, theological, and aesthetic conceptions of measure in a typical early modern portrayal of literature as reflective or derivative of nature. All things properly made are things made in measure and proportion, and Puttenham includes his own treatise, which will itself be correctly proportioned ("all which shall be spoken of in their places").

The correspondences between meter and measure suggest that for sixteenth century poets and critics, measure constitutes a field in which the aesthetic, ethical, and natural converge. Just as it was common for early modern thinkers to describe a life well

lived as a measured life, a temperate life, so it was common to consider a work of art's greatness in terms of balance and proportion. At issue here is the morality of aesthetic form, a problem confronted more famously by George Herbert in the seventeenth century. As Yvor Winters says of Wyatt, "If poetry is [...] a form of moral judgment, then the poetic form, in regard to this matter [Wyatt's rejection of affected courtliness and affected poetic style], is merely a more refined and precise embodiment of the social form: poetry and morality are one" (8-9). For Wyatt, rough, plain-speaking lyrics are a reflection of a desire to speak roughly in that other performative context—the court, which, with its premium on eloquence and what Wyatt calls "dowbleness," nearly cost Wyatt his life on more than one occasion. Wyatt's aesthetic form, according to this argument, reflects his desired ethical content. This is a restatement of Rebholz's claim that metrical deviations are for Wyatt "deliberate variations to reinforce the speaker's astonishment at the reality of his past union and the strangeness of his present desertion" (54). But unlike Rebholz, Winters is not invested in presenting a totalizing theory of Wyatt's metrical practice. Of the critics who discuss Wyatt's metrics in detail, Winters is alone in eschewing recourse to complex metrical theories that relieve critical anxiety: "I see no reason to believe that the rough pentameters in general were the result of any subtle theory of meter or rhythm" (5). Winters believes that Wyatt is a rhythmic master, but is willing to accept that at times Wyatt did write "bad pentameter."

Thomas Greene restates the connection between aesthetic form and ethical content in the context of Wyatt's style:

> The drabness of Wyatt's language is of course essential to his moral style. He systematically reduced the tones of Petrarch's highly ornamented surface. [...] This suppression of ornament and Petrarchan decorative richness, this imagistic asceticism, is essential to Wyatt's language because it strips the word of its esthetic pretentiousness and leaves it as a naked gauge of integrity. He seems almost to have invested with value the impoverished formal poetic means available to him. (256)

Greene's point about Wyatt's plain style is apropos of his metric style as well. But in the field of metric studies, the self-replicating arguments about Wyatt's meter generally exist in an environment of competitive explanatory ripostes. Critics demonstrate a fundamental desire to "solve" the problem of Wyatt's metrics, but such a solution is not forthcoming, and I would suggest that the intractability of the problem is itself a source of attraction (perhaps *the* major source of attraction) for critics. Confronted with Wyatt's irregular metrical approach—an approach that clearly produces a massive amount of readerly unease—critics remeasure the text to enforce an artificial "regularity" and relieve anxiety.

Thus Jonathan Crewe cogently points out that Tottel both praises Wyatt as "depe witted" and implicitly criticizes Wyatt's metrics by regularizing them. This double approach "implies recognition by Tottel that the irregularities he is correcting are not necessarily inadvertent or merely old-fashioned but in some sense threatening to good order" (25). This is, it seems to me, the same concern that has vexed Wyatt studies ever since: Wyatt's "irregularities" are a threat to "good order" and must be smoothed out, defended, historicized, or otherwise accounted for in terms of Wyatt's intentionality. The

vexed history of Wyatt criticism reveals a deeply engrained critical desire focused on measuring and on traditional concepts of metrical conformity. And, as Ben Saunders has argued in another context, metrical obsessions such as these can tell us something about the obsessions themselves: they can point to "something about [...] texts and the responses they encourage," and, in the case of persistent metrical arguments, "something about the pleasurable excitations, the ideological functionalism, and finally, the explanatory limits of meter itself, as traditionally conceived" (95).

The attempt to provide a methodological, totalizing solution to the "problem" of Wyatt's metrics both presents critics with the illusion that they will control (measure) the line while simultaneously withholding that pleasure. The metric obsession reveals more about the anxiety that produces the obsession than about the poetry that provokes that anxiety. At issue here is the place of prosodic studies in the field of English literary criticism. If the dream of the pentameter has enticed and eluded Wyatt's critics for four hundred and fifty years, if critics have been driven to propose diverse alternative approaches that have uniformly failed, if the most obvious point about a series of metric arguments is that they are famously intractable, what is the function of prosodic study? In the context of Donne studies, where similar arguments about the meter have not reached resolution, Saunders has argued that the project of objectively describing metrical form is a failed one:

> Once we have accepted that the ability to 'recognize' an iambic pentameter is not a neutrally descriptive act, but a productive, creative, interpretive one, more closely resembling an act of conjuration than an act of discovery; and once we

> have accepted further that in some cases—such as that of Donne—the critical conjurer is so determined to evoke the metrical spectre that he or she is often driven to the rhetorical equivalent of smoke and mirrors; then we are still left with the task of explaining the bizarre spectacle of metrical conjurers tricking themselves into believing their own illusions, and leveling the terrible curse of 'bad reader' upon those who dare to dismiss their magic. (112)

"Smoke and mirrors" seems an apt description of Puttenham's attempt to account for Wyatt's emended meter, bolstered, as the argument is, with his theory of intentionality. And subsequent prosodists have generally followed suit.

In the critical realm, the "solution" to the metrical question presents itself as a displaced object of desire on the Petrarchan model: unattainable, capable of the minute dissection of parts, continually (re)productive of literary/linguistic artifacts. The unmeasurable line eludes the totalizing grasp of prosodists while simultaneously encouraging their attempts by hinting, just often enough, at a "regular" metrical intelligence controlling their construction. We are left with a body of poetry that contains lines that seem to produce the rhythmic expression that subsequently came to be known as "iambic pentameter," and that also contains lines that seem to resist that rhythmic expression.

Wyatt's meter is a form of measure that he frequently utilizes to describe relentless mismeasure. And it must be admitted that Wyatt's lines have effectively communicated, among other things, the anxiety they are meant to describe. This suggests that Plato's and Augustine's and Puttenham's theory of meter as a formal expression of

natural order is more deeply rooted than perhaps we realize, for metrical expressions that resist easily identified and categorized labels generate the same kinds of unease, of restlessness, that their content describes. And this is Wyatt's ultimate achievement: for Wyatt, meter is an aesthetic and an ethical construction, and one that should reflect the moral or immoral order of the universe, as the universe seems to Wyatt at the moment a poem is written. If this is the case, it should not be surprising if Wyatt, in his obsession with the unmeasured responses of all those around him, should produce unmeasured verse.

Yet what are we to make, then, of the critical reaction to Wyatt, which has always attempted to remeasure his verse—first by rewriting it and subsequently by providing speculative theories designed to ascribe to it a kind of order it manifestly lacks? The history of Wyatt studies itself reveals that Wyatt's primary poetic stance—that of anxiety—has replicated itself over and over again, for his unmeasurable line is both a product and a producer of anxiety. But critical responses also suggest complicity with the very language Wyatt is reacting against, the "smooth" lines of Surrey and his successors. If we accept Wordsworth's theory that poetic meter provides "the co-presence of something regular," something to relieve the mind of the excitement of the emotions communicated by the poem, then efforts to provide this measure to Wyatt's poems directly counteract Wyatt's own purpose in writing the lines as he did, for the experience of the world Wyatt attempts to communicate is one of disorder, anxiety, and excitement.

In 1536, when Wyatt was perhaps at his most disillusioned with court life, he was released from the Tower of London and made his way to his father's estate in Kent, where he penned the epistolary satire "Mine Own John Poyntz." In this poem Wyatt

attacks the hypocrisy of court life, the ambition that causes courtiers to flatter and to betray, and the craft that allows men to speak one thing and mean another. Wyatt argues that he doesn't possess the personality traits that make for a successful courtier:

> My Poyntz, I cannot frame my tune to feign,
> To cloak the truth for praise, without desert,
> Of them that list all vice for to retain.

Critical attempts to "frame" Wyatt's "tune" do not merely repeat or reflect his anxiety about measure, but actively erase the expression of that anxiety by reframing it in the very language that makes court life possible. And, as Wyatt here (and everywhere) makes clear, there is a special and potentially inverse relationship between truth and eloquence in the world of the court. Tottel's efforts to frame Wyatt's tune led directly to Puttenham's project, in which Wyatt's re-measured poems are the examples provided for "rude rimers" to learn to write metrically. In this form the poems could teach up-and-coming courtiers how to maneuver at court smoothly and adeptly; it was what Southall calls "a book of manners in which prosody is presented as a means by which ladies and new courtiers can polish up their verses so as to acquire a reputation for social gracefulness." This is the final ironic end for Wyatt's ethical poetic form, for his poems reflect his disgust with court life and all its unmeasured unfairness, and yet Wyatt, embittered and disillusioned with a culture founded on "smooth" and measured language, is made by his critics to bear the mantle of that culture and to exhibit that very language.

Finally, then, the question of the place of prosody in modern criticism is central to how we read the poetry of Thomas Wyatt, for the uses and misuses to which his metric practice have been put must be reconciled with the content of the poems themselves and

with Wyatt's continual efforts to express something about the unruly quality of his life. Certainly the project dedicated to finding Wyatt's lost metric theory has failed. After four and a half centuries of scanning Wyatt's poems, we can agree only that he sometimes wrote iambic pentameter lines and that he sometimes did not. If, as I have suggested, the project has always been motivated by a desire to make his poems—and his place in the canon of English poetry—ideologically palatable, the failure of the project represents the beginning of a new period in Wyatt criticism, one in which Wyatt's poems might be considered in relation to his flawed but resilient ethical vision rather than in relation to a lost theory of metrical construction. This is not to say that there is no place for metric analysis, but that in Wyatt's case his unmeasured form has provided us a way to read the poems without really looking at them, for they are difficult and troubling poems full of difficult and troubling implications. Probably, however, the impulse "to temper and to tame" Wyatt's wild lines will continue, for Wyatt's unsettling truth about his unmeasured world—a truth he tried to write over and over again—remains as troubling to critics of our age as it did to Wyatt's earliest readers, and our institutions are as threatened by mismeasure as the institutions to which Wyatt dedicated his life.

CHAPTER III

TO "MEASURE OUT A MEAN": PHAEDRIA AND THE TEMPTATIONS OF GENRE IN BOOK II OF THE *FAERIE QUEENE*

Measure, noun: 2. a. Moderation, temperance, restraint; abstemiousness.
Oxford English Dictionary

At the beginning of the sixth Canto of Book II of the *Faerie Queene*, the enraged Cymochles stands in an allegorically significant position—at the "utmost brim" of a river—looking across. He sees a small craft on the opposite shore and hails it. This is Phaedria's "gondelay," a vessel she uses to ferry Cymochles, and later Guyon, to the wandering isle, where she attempts to keep them in "joyous pleasure" indefinitely. Critics have paid little attention to Phaedria's craft, even though Spenser is at pains to emphasize its strangeness and the magic of its movements. When Cymochles first spies the gondelay, it is moving "as swift as glance of eye," and once he is aboard it is "more swift, then swallow sheres the liquid skie" (5.2). But the gondelay's most remarkable feature is its ability to move at the whim of its captain. It traverses the water "withouten oare or Pilot it to guide/or winged canvas with the wind to flie" (5.3-4). In moving without a visible guide, the vessel mirrors the condition of Cymochles, who has been forced to leave his companion Atin on shore, and the condition of Guyon, who is likewise forced to abandon the Palmer when he steps aboard the gondelay. In the moral allegory of

Faeryland, a vehicle fundamentally resistant to the allegorical representation of rational control poses a moral-allegorical question: what does it mean to travel as Phaedria and her passengers do, whimsically, easily, led by desire?

For once on Phaedria's boat, we are indeed in the world of desire, where mere fancy dictates progress. Guyon is surprised when the boat departs without the Palmer: "for the flit barke, obaying to her mind,/Forth launched quickly, as she did desire" (20.3-4). The final clause of this sentence is grammatically ambiguous: on the one hand, Spenser indicates that it is the express intention of Phaedria to depart without the Palmer. On the other hand, *all* movements of this craft are dictated as Phaedria desires, and this is both the appeal and the threat embodied by Phaedria in general: just as Guyon leaves behind the allegorical figure of reasoned temperance, he enters the world of unmediated desire, a literally whimsical world. Readers are alerted to be wary of Phaedria's boat not merely because the Palmer is left behind, but because the motion of the boat, in its "wandering" (10.2), already enacts the consequences of that abandonment. The possibilities of such a vehicle are appealing, and in a book concerned with temptation it is the appeal of this craft, its potential for easy progress, that signals the reader to be alert to danger. As will be made clear to Guyon once he reaches Phaedria's wandering isle, ease itself is perilous; it represents a threat not only to Spenser's Protestant sensibilities, but more directly to his hero and to his poem.

But the ease with which Phaedria's craft moves is not the only marker of its sinister nature. The formal threat of instability represented by ease goes hand in hand with the threat of artifice clearly symbolized by the gondelay. Phaedria's craft is intricately decorated—"bedecked trim/with boughes and arbours woven cunningly, / that

like a litle forrest seemed outwardly" (2.7-9)—and in the fourth stanza we are told that it is "painted." In all of the *Faerie Queene*, but in Book II in particular, indications of artifice serve as a warning, and the suspicion occasioned by artifice in the poem reflexively indicts Spenser's poetic practice as well. Just as clearly as artifice is represented (and critiqued) in Book II by Acrasia's Bower of Bliss and Phaedria's Wandering Isle, it is embodied formally by Spenser's rhetorically sophisticated poetics, creating an ironic commentary on art that complicates the otherwise consistently negative valuation of artifice in the poem.

Coupled with Spenser's characteristic pun on "forrest"—*for rest*—the description of Phaedria's gondelay thus provides a double warning against her craft, first in terms of the temptation to rest and second in terms of artifice.[76] And indeed, instead of taking her passengers across the river, Phaedria ferries both Cymochles and Guyon to her artificial island, where she invites them—employing the art of song—to lie down and rest. Here Phaedria's double temptations become indistinguishable: artifice is dangerous because of its duplicity, but that duplicity can be used to disguise what is in fact continual rest with the appearance of a noble—or even biblical—correct path. The apparent speed of the boat noted by Cymochles (2.6) is thus ultimately a misapprehension, for the purpose of the boat is the opposite of movement; it provides the illusion of motion, but it does not take

[76] For another ambivalent treatment of artifice in Book II, see ix, 49-52, where the allegorical representation of foresight, Phantastes, is likewise associated with artifice and poetry, but also (unlike Phaedria) with restlessness: "He had a sharpe foresight, and working wit, / That never idle was, ne once would rest a whit" (49.8-9).

either character where they want to go.[77] Upon reaching the wandering isle, Guyon becomes angry and accuses Phaedria:

> Ah Dame, perdie ye have not doen me right,
> Thus to mislead me, whiles I you obaid:
> Me litle needed from my right way to have straid (22.7-9).

The end of Phaedria's art and craft is to take Guyon where he does not wish to go. But being "misled"—losing one's "right way"—is in fact as much a question for Spenser as it is for Guyon. Indeed, Guyon's accusation that Phaedria has led him astray is identical to the accusations leveled against Spenser in his own lifetime and voiced for centuries afterward: namely, that he was misled by unfaithful guides and lost his right way. For Guyon's right way is coextensive with Spenser's right way: in a heroic poem the progress of the hero is identical to the progress of the poem. This relationship was established in the classical epics and was a major feature in early modern readings of Virgil's *Aeneid,* in which Aeneas' wanderings constitute the poem's wanderings, and his success in founding Rome ends the poem. Furthermore, Phaedria's craft is deeply related to Spenser's craft, which is the mechanism by which readers, led by desire, find themselves enmeshed in an artificial imitation of natural delights, and—some critics would say—led astray.

Readers who expected the *Faerie Queene* to follow the Virgilian model criticized Spenser by insisting that he got lost on his way to the end of the poem. The earliest example of this criticism is perhaps that of the "might peer"—likely William Cecil, Lord

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[77] See also Calidore's pastoral interlude in Book VI, canto x, where Calidore chooses to remain among the rustics, and the abandoned quest is figured as a ship that appears to go somewhere but in fact remains in the harbor, "sayling alwaies on the port" (2.9).

Burghley—who apparently objected to the romance aspects of the poem, as Spenser's defense of his poem in the proem to Book IV suggests.[78] In the eighteenth century Joseph Spense found that if Spenser had followed the ancient poets more closely than his Italian influences, he "would not have wandered so often, into such strange and inconsistent imaginations," and Thomas Rymer argued that Spenser "lost himself *by following an unfaithful guide*" (my emphasis, qtd in Watkins 2). Rymer suggested, further, that Spenser and Ariosto "miscarried in their Travels for want of direction to set them *in the right way*" (my emphasis, qtd. in Watkins 2). For neoclassical readers such as these, the ethical transgressions of characters mirror the aesthetic transgressions of the poet: "Like Verdant or Redcrosse, [Spenser] neglects the sober rule of reason and abandons himself to the wanderings of an undisciplined imagination" (Watkins 1). Thus one seventeenth-century reader of the poem—Sir Richard Blackmore—implicitly connects Spenser's aesthetic progress with the ethical progress of his characters:

> *Ariosto* and *Spencer*, however *great Wits*, not observing this judicious Conduct of *Virgil*, nor attending to any sober Rules, are hurried on with a *boundless,* impetuous Fancy over Hill and Dale, till they are both lost in a Wood of Allegories,—Allegories so *wild*, *unnatural*, and *extravagant*, as greatly displease the Reader" (qtd. in Watkins 1).

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[78] Though Spenser's defense suggests that Burghley objected to Spenser's "looser rimes" rather than to the structural elements of romance.

As Watkins notes, this is yet another assessment that equates Spenser's putative aesthetic failings with the ethical failings of characters in the poem: "The wood of moral error into which Redcrosse first strays returns in Blackmore's critique as an image of Spenser's aesthetic error, his flight from Virgil's judicious guidance into a wood of fantastic, Italianate allegories" (1). To put it another way, Phaedria—an unfaithful guide—misleads Guyon just as (critics of Spenser's romance influences would argue) Spenser is misled from his "right way" by his Italian models.

The eighteenth-century reactions against the interwoven allegories that constitute romance are merely the most strongly stated formulations of criticism already extant in the early modern period. Thus Patricia Parker notes that it was the rise of Aristotelianism during the Renaissance that increasingly informed criticism of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*: "the catalogue of complaints against Ariosto's poem [...] grew, both in Italy and in France, as Aristotle's *Poetics* became increasingly the bible of narrative form" (*Inescapable Romance* 17). Montaigne repeats an already-widespread early modern view of poetic form when he uses the epic structure of Virgil's *Aeneid* to demonstrate the failure of Ariosto's narrative technique in the *Orlando Furioso*:

> We see the former on outspread wings in lofty and sustained flight always pursuing his point; the latter fluttering and hopping from tale to tale as from branch to branch, not trusting his wings except for a very short hop, alighting at every turn for fear his breath and strength should fail (300).

The connection between Phaedria's watercraft and Spenser's poetic craft is not accidental to the word "craft," though the pun was operative in the sixteenth century. The figure of boat as metaphor for a poem's progress toward its completion was a common and ancient literary trope; E.R. Curtius cites examples from Virgil, Horace, Pliny, and Dante, among others (158-60). Patricia Parker calls the figure of ship as poetic craft "one of the oldest of literary *topoi*" (16) and notes that Ariosto begins the final canto of *Orlando Furioso* by figuring the conclusion of the poem as a ship returning from a long voyage. Following this tradition, Spenser regularly uses boats as signifiers of poetic craft.[79] He repeatedly asks us to consider watercraft as metaphors for poetic progress, as at the end of Book I, when he frames the reader's journey through the poem as a sea voyage:

> Now strike your sailes yee jolly Mariners,
> For we be come unto a quite rode,
> Where we must land some of our passengers,
> And light this weary vessel of her lode.
> Here she a while may make her safe abode,
> Till she repaired have her tackles spent,
> And wants supplide. And then againe abroad
> On the long voyage whereto she is bent:
> Well may she speede and fairely finish her intent.

And at the end of Book II, as Guyon and the Palmer prepare to travel from Acrasia's island to return to Alma's castle, the Palmer's invocation to Guyon is also a directive to the poet and the reader: "But let us hence depart, whilest wether serves and winde" (12.87.12).

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[79] For examples see Dees, Edwards, and "ship imagery" in the S.Enc. For an emblematic twentieth-century example, see Mallarme's "Salut."

To read a long poem is to undertake a kind of journey, and it is to be at the mercy of the poet, who steers the vessel from port to port. In a poem in which sailing is a regular allegorical figure for poetic progress, Spenser's painted craft is as suspect as Phaedria's. Thus when Cymochles is literally taken in by Phaedria's craft, both when he steps into the gondelay and when he listens to her song, readers of Spenser's poem are caught in a reflexive irony: just as we are prepared to judge Cymochles' failure to move toward his goals, we must realize that we too are caught in Phaedria's web, enmeshed in the music, magic, and song that is Spenser's poem.[80] Cymochles' first apprehension of the gondelay's movement "as swift as glance of eye," interpolates the reader into the poem by referencing our apprehension of the gondelay at the moment it is perceived by Cymochles: we too are enchanted by the craft, taking it in as swift as glance of eye. Like Cymochles, we face the danger of (mis)reading Phaedria. And like Cymochles, we are made susceptible to romance, to the temptation to lie down and hear a song, to infinite digression and delay.

In this chapter I will investigate the ethical consequences of aesthetic form, as it was conceived in the early modern period and specifically in regards to Guyon's "right way." What does it mean, in a poem of nearly 35,000 lines, "to have straid?" What would constitute Guyon's "right way," and what does it mean, in the context of Book II of *The Faerie Queene*, to be misled? In the course of this discussion I will treat Spenser's self-awareness of the process of creating and executing his poem, that is, of his view of the poem as a kind of journey that entails repeated narrative choices. My approach

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[80] Parker notes that Ariosto also "points not only to the digressive nature of his *romanzo* but to the complicity of the reader in its deviance" (33).

emphasizes the status of the poem as a made thing, a product of historical and political forces, certainly, but also a product of an authorial awareness of the poem as a poem and of the poet as operating within a particular tradition. Specifically, I will argue that Spenser sees his poem progressing by a series of clear choices that must be navigated, choices that are manifested as the possibilities of generic convention and are analogous to the temptations of excess nominally treated in Book II of the *Faerie Queene*. Furthermore, since the *Faerie Queene* is a poem in a conventional mode—a work that self-consciously presents itself as a response to and critique of other poems that confront similar generic problems—Spenser always sees this voyage as something that has happened before. Consequently, his choices of narrative construction are mediated by the poems to which they ostensibly respond.

In investigating these questions I will be discussing two very old questions in Spenser criticism: first, the question of genre in the poem, as it is portrayed in Book II and with respect to early modern theories of poetic form, derived largely from Aristotle's *Poetics*; and second, the nature of Spenser's treatment of the virtue of temperance, including the relationship between that treatment and Aristotle's theory of virtue as elucidated in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. I will argue that these questions are inseparably related and that if we are to take Spenser's engagement with his source materials seriously, we must see his navigation through the poem as a journey—much like Guyon's—in which various narrative possibilities must be encountered and rejected in pursuit of a "middle way."

I begin this chapter with a description of Phaedria's gondelay because—although it is just such a moment in the *Faerie Queene*, a short hop from one tale to the next—it is

one of the places where Spenser expressly frames Guyon's progress in terms of motion and delay—a primary factor of generic form—and because it seems to me an overlooked example of Spenser's consideration of his own poem. Another way to say this is that in considering the nature and function of Phaedria's craft, I wish also to consider the nature and function of Spenser's craft. For Spenser's craft—the formal construction of his poem—is, like Phaedria's ferry, "bedecked trim" and "woven cunningly," and like Phaedria's craft, it does not always take readers where they think they may be going. Both the boat and the poem are, essentially, diversions. They are also both clearly aligned with art on the art/nature dichotomy expressly considered in the Bower of Bliss episode in the final canto of Book II. The association of artifice with rhetoric and the generally negative allegorical significance applied to these loci of value is a repeated theme throughout *The Faerie Queene*, and by attacking these values Spenser undertakes questions about his own project in a highly complex and ambiguous way. If Phaedria represents artifice, and if she is a threat to the virtuous hero partly because of that representation, what is the relationship between the poem and its virtuous reader? Does Guyon's necessary rejection of Phaedria entail the reader's ultimate rejection—or at least suspicion—of the poem itself?[81]

At issue here are questions of readerly responses to poetic forms. What is the appropriate form for a long narrative poem? The answer must lie in the reaction of readers to the form. If the poem takes readers where they do not wish to go—if it leads them "astray"—the poem fails to reflect the proper order of the world. These are

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[81] Parker notes a similar paradox in terms of "imaging," noting that separating "the poet's craft from that of Archimago" is "the crucial problem" of the poem (59).

questions of measure. Of the many overlapping definitions of "measure" in sixteenth-century England, there are perhaps none so strikingly related as the two that refer, on the one hand, to poetic form and, on the other, to moderate ethical behavior. The relationship between the proper order of the self and the proper order of one's imitation of nature—which is how virtually all early modern theorists viewed poetry—is continually noted by readers of poetry, and just as Wyatt's unsettled meter has seemed consistently to unsettle his readers, so too early modern literary theorists considered the form of longer poems in light of ethical effects on readers. One of Plato's primary reasons for banishing the poets from the republic was that they stirred up passions that the state has an interest in regulating. Poems make their audiences intemperate:

> And with regard to sexual emotions, anger, and all the passions and sorrows and pleasures of the spirit, which we think are always with us, does not the poetic imitation have [an undignified] effect on us? It feeds and waters these passions that ought to be dried up, and puts them in command of us when they should be so ruled that we may grow better and happier instead of worse and more vile" (*Republic* 53-4).

For the humanists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Plato's apparent critique of poetry was a traditional obstacle that had to be variously excused, rationalized, disagreed with, or—occasionally—accepted. But these readers always took for granted that there is an ethical relationship between a poem and its readers, between the measure of poetry and the measure of the self.

In considering the ethical nature of poetic form and the relationship between a poem and its audience I am touching on questions that constituted a major part of early modern literary theory, for these were ancient concerns, well-suited to the rhetorical bent of many of the Italian humanists who carried on the great literary debates of the Cinquecento. While Horace's dictum *utile et dulce* clearly captured the medieval view of poetry as a source of knowledge, Cicero's formulation—to teach, delight, and *move*—locates poetry in the field of rhetoric,[82] and the ability of poetry to move its audience was as much a consistent source of poetry's denigration as it was of praise, both in the classical and early modern periods.[83] Thus, Plato's affective theory of poetics in the *Republic* is not substantively different from that Sidney used to elevate the status of poetry among the branches of knowledge.[84] The question is never whether poetry moves, but whether poetry is likely to move its audience to virtuous or vicious habits.

Spenser always assumes that poetry has an ethical function; he is of course a precisely measured poet, and when he pursues what Sidney terms "that numbrous kinde of writing which is called verse" (159) he does so with more attention to numbers than perhaps any other poet of the early modern period. Spenser's interest in the order of his poems is partly an attempt to achieve a perfect imitation of nature, as in the *Epithalamion*, in which the 365 long lines represent the number of days in the year, and other numbers correspond to weeks, months, and seasons (359-61). Because creation is

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[82] Hathaway 23-4.

[83] See Hathaway for a discussion of the sixteenth-century tendency to consider poetry a branch of rhetoric (21-2).

[84] Sidney 174-5. cf. 191-2 for Sidney's response to Plato.

ordered by God, poetic works that imitate that order ought to elicit in readers proper ethical measure. Thus in the *Teares of the Muses* Spenser presents a view of poetry that assumes Plato's theory of ethical poetic effects, but comes to the opposite conclusion; as one editor has pointed out, "The idea of rule appears in many of the [Muses'] speeches, always in association with the Muses' power to discipline men, guide them, enable them to keep proper *measure* in their lives. This measure is the product of the Muses' capacity to enlighten man about his own nature and his proper relation to God" (266).[85] The function of poetry is to measure the lives of men and to bring them into alignment with the measure of the created world.[86]

The way in which poetic forms align with the created world they ostensibly imitate is not obvious, and the rediscovery of Aristotle's *Poetics* provided Italian humanists with a blueprint against which they could test poetic works by genre. Unfortunately, in the *Poetics* Aristotle deals only with rhetorical genres likely to be acted or read to audiences: comedy, tragedy, and epic. Genres that were not included or that were developed subsequently had to be considered speculatively based on what Aristotle said about the genres he treated. The question at issue for Spenser's poetic measure is whether it aligns with the created order in a way likely to produce virtue in its reader. In Book II, in which temperance is self-consciously and allegorically investigated, these questions of measure are obviously foregrounded. The charge against Ariosto and

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[85] See especially Erato's complaint.

[86] Thus Francesco Buonamici, in his reading of Aristotle's *Poetics*, argues that "verse is a natural thing, requiring a certain force for understanding harmony which is natural in some men. And because it is full of number and of harmony, orderly motion moves in an orderly way and according to nature; motion according to nature brings pleasure" (*Discorsi*, 1597, qtd. in Weinberg 693-4).

Spenser, as we have seen, is that they are forestalled on their way to the end of the poem. Spenser explicitly takes up the question of delay in regard to his poetic voyage in the first stanza of the final canto of Book VI, where he looks back at the course of his poem and defends his own "right way":

> Like as a ship, that through the Ocean wyde
> Directs her course unto one certaine cost,
> Is met of many a counter winde and tyde,
> With which her winged speed is let and crost,
> And she her selfe in stormie surges tost;
> Yet making many a borde, and many a bay,
> Still wineth way, ne hath her compasse lost:
> Right so it fares with me in this long way,
> Whose course is often stayd, yet never is astray.

The aural/orthographic pun on cost/coast, enforced by its rhyme with "lost" and "crost," suggests that poetic closure always comes at a price, and that the price is inescapable, "certain." To close a poem is to circumvent its (potentially) endless circumlocutions, to close off the possibility of endless digression and delay. Poetic closure is one of the primary indications of genre, but closure is not determined merely by how a poem ends, for a long poem is always considering its own end, is always both moving toward that end and simultaneously deferring it.

In this defense of his poetic technique, Spenser describes the difference between success and failure as equivalent to the difference between staying and straying, suggesting that the distinction between these two movements—like the distinction between these two words—is very small. It is the instances where Spenser "often stay[s]" that constitute the primary threat to his right way, and the poem itself continually suggests that to stay *is* to stray. Phaedria's craft—in the sense of both her song and her gondelay—is designed to "stay" whomever it comes across; in fact, as Watkins notes, the

key point about Phaedria's craft is indicated the moment she appears in the second stanza of canto six: in a characteristically Spenserian pun, the function of the gondelay is revealed in its spelling: it is a vehicle of delay (138).

As Parker notes, "[d]elay and deferral as moral categories are in Spenser's poem almost uniformly bad, a version of the dangerous and enervating sin of sloth" (62). In a poem in which narrative progress is explicitly figured as seafaring, any analysis of the poem's craft must consider what it means to delay. For Spenser, this is perhaps the crucial question of the poem, and its answer is worked out in the mapping of generic conventions in Book II. When Guyon steps aboard Phaedria's craft he enters the world of magic and of desire, of female sexuality, pleasure, and ease. He enters a world where he is asked to lie down and to rest and to abandon his journey. He enters the world of romance.

II

Be on your way. Enough delays. An ever
Uncertain and inconstant thing is woman. –The *Aeneid*, 4.786-7

In the first paragraph of Spenser's letter to Walter Raleigh, he announces both that the poem to which the letter is affixed will be a moral allegory and that it will "[follow] all the antique Poets historicall," including Homer, Virgil, Ariosto, and Tasso. In these two goals, the first identifying poem's telos, the second its method, lies a tension grounded in the relationship between the aesthetic and ethical functions of literature and related to literary forms, specifically in terms of genre. Following Sidney's defense of

poetry, Spenser expressly indicates that the pleasure of reading the allegory is a mechanism by which the moral lessons may be more easily apprehended by the reader. He thus foregrounds the poem's interaction with its reader and privileges its moral directives: "The generall end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline" (Hamilton 715). The aesthetic pleasures of the work constitute the mechanism by which its ethical purpose is enfolded and delivered.

Had Spenser written a straightforward moral allegory, as did Bunyan a century later, this plan might have been carried out in a straightforward way, but the *Faerie Queene* is not a straightforward moral allegory, as indicated by the models Spenser himself names as his literary guides. Following the three epics of Homer and Virgil, he lists the Italian romance—or, more accurately, what Gillian Beer refers to by the oxymoron "Italian 'romantic epic'" (34)—works of Ariosto and Tasso. Spenser's decision to base his poem on the widely popular romance-infused Italian epics seems strange in conjunction with his intention to write a "moral allegory." Early modern writers believed that in Aeneas Virgil portrayed the perfect man. James Nohrnberg argues that, given this belief, "the heroic poem, according to Renaissance authors, has as its end the 'institution' of a praiseworthy man who may be a model to other men" (30). Ariosto and Tasso used their heroic poems to portray perfection in their heroes, but, as we have seen, they were widely criticized for their choice of form. In the Letter to Raleigh, Spenser thus foregrounds what has been a crucial critical question about his poem ever since it was written: what are the formal allegiances of the poem? Specifically, how much does the poem owe to romance and how much to epic? The *Faerie Queene* and the Italian poems cited by Spenser are open to the objections quoted above because of their

allegiance to romance form, which privileges multiplicity of action. But romance may also be attacked because of the result of that action, which requires of readers a particular attitude. Thus Beer gives two historical critical objections to the romance form, marking out the difficult path the poet must tread between boredom and seduction:

> [P]erhaps its principle *artistic* problem is, quite simply, that it tends to bore the reader who does not succumb totally to it. The principle *moral* objection which has continuously been made to it is that it seduces the reader: it offers him a kind of fairy world which will unfit him (or more frequently her) for common life after he has sojourned there. The two objections are not unconnected (14).

Because romance is more invested than other forms in creating an imaginative world apart from that of normal life, in order to be successful that world must be utterly compelling, must carry the reader wholly away from the concerns and preoccupations that constitute everyday reality. But those concerns and preoccupations are the content of ethical existence. This is the contradiction at the heart of Sidney's Horatian formulation, a contradiction taken up by Spenser when he argues that his formal technique will teach by enwrapping its sermons in "Allegoricall devises": "nothing [is] esteemed of, that is not delightfull and pleasing to commune sence." The appeal to the delight and pleasure of common sense is as much an appeal to the delight and pleasure of the senses, and as Parker notes in the context of Ariosto's appeal to the senses, his "error was to come too close to the *dulce* side of the famous Horatian dictum, to succumb to the attractions of diverting fable over the essential, if perhaps less interesting, moral kernel (19).

The successful romance removes the reader entirely from the realm of the ethical and into the world of the imagination; in order for romance to engage the imagination sufficiently, it must, as Beer says, "seduce" the reader. The tension between *dulce* and *utile*, then, is most concentrated in the form of romance, and it is romance that constitutes the greatest threat to Sidney's and Spenser's express ideology of literary didacticism. Instead of the aesthetic pleasure of poetry serving as a delivery device for the less pleasurable ethical message, in romance the aesthetic pleasure threatens to overcome the ethical point entirely. Thus Beer points out that moral objections to romance focus on the threat the form poses to rational, dispassionate ethical existence: "it drowns the voice of reason, it offers a dangerously misleading guide to everyday life, it rouses false expectations and stirs up passions best held in check" (14-5).

As has been pointed out by a number of Spenser's critics, the threats romance offers to readers are the same as the threats Acrasia and Phaedria offer to Guyon and their victims in Book II of the *Faerie Queene*: they drown the voice of reason, serve as dangerously misleading guides to everyday life, rouse false expectations, and stir up passions best held in check. Indeed, the temptations of romance must be met with temperance, the putative subject of Book II. The question of whether Guyon is successful in overcoming his intemperate passions is accompanied by an equally critical question of whether Spenser is successful in overcoming the intemperate threat of romance, leading to the accusation that, as some critics have suggested, Spenser is "at heart of Acrasia's party" (Durling 113). This remark suggests that the seductive power of romance is too strong for Spenser, that like Verdant, he succumbs to temptation and gives in to the artificial world of the Bower. And, like the question at the heart of a tradition of Milton

criticism that suggests that Milton is secretly of Satan's party in *Paradise Lost*, the possibility strips Spenser of his intentions and opens up powerful interpretive possibilities.

In this chapter I will not undertake a thorough investigation into what constitutes romance; romance is notoriously difficult to define, for its Protean qualities constantly evade precise description. As a genre it is more like a Wittgensteinian complex of values and affinities than a definitive category. It is perhaps best viewed in contrast to epic—though, as we shall see, this contrast is more deceptive than first appears. Nohrnberg notes that there are two requirements for a poem to count as epic above all others: "it must contain the concept of a total action, and it must possess a nearly determinative relation to a culture" (5).[87] There are no such simple criteria for romance, and in fact *The Faerie Queene* attempts both to establish its relation to the English people and to unify its action by means of the perfectly virtuous man, Arthur.

Yet, in a sense, Guyon has been entangled in a romance from the beginning, as was Redcross before him.[88] Throughout the poem the elements of romance appear and disappear, sometimes to be displaced by explicit allegorical set-pieces, and other times to be displaced by the conventional similes and themes of epic, just as in Spenser's Italian sources, where romance formed a baseline against which epic and allegorical conventions could be placed in relief. Yet when Spenser announces in the Letter to Raleigh that he

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[87] Norhnberg argues that, while the matter of epic belongs to a particular people, the motifs of romance are based in folklore and may be transferred from one culture to another (5).

[88] "Spenser's adoption of the *materia* of romance is clear from the moment he announces, in the Ariostan echoes of the Proem, his intention to 'sing of Knights and Ladies gentle deeds'" (Parker 54).

will move from the Biblical and epic structures of Books I and II, respectively, to "intermeddled" action in the third, he seems to announce a turn to romance, for the interwoven stories that follow the first two books seem far less invested in the epic ideal of "total action."[89]

The concept of total action is difficult to apply to particular examples, for epics always consist of a variety of actions, and in the *Poetics* Aristotle describes epic as "a poem made up of many actions." Yet the "intermedl[ing]" of narrative threads is a hallmark of early modern romance, and the third book of the *Faerie Queene* is certainly more like a romance than the first two books. According to early modern theorists of narrative, "adventures" which are accidental have an apparently small place in epic, in which a single goal acts as an organizing principle for the narrative events. For example, the first line of the *Iliad* announces the wrath of Achilles, and the final line concludes the burial of Hector. The space between consists of more or less related activities that are caused by Achilles' anger and that ultimately lead to the death and burial of Hector. The skirmishes, voyages, speeches, and other action of the epic plot are "intentional" and work in service to a single goal. Certainly Books I and II of the *Faerie Queene* better fit this model than does Book III.

Yet like Proteus, romance is difficult to pin down, and the *Odyssey* provides another possible model for generic tension. In that book, the subject is the wandering of Odysseus, as Homer announces in the poem's opening lines. The various obstacles to that return, the encounters, shipwrecks, and commitments that postpone Odysseus's

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[89] "[B]y occasion hereof, many other aduentures are intermedled, but rather as Accidents, then intendments" (79).

homecoming, constitute both the threat that the hero must overcome and the content of the poem itself. According to Nohrnberg,

> The art of the *Iliad* observes aesthetic criteria analogous to the unifying shield of Achilles; the art of the *Odyssey* resembles the overelaborated, repeatedly woven shroud of Laertes. Both the critics Cinthio and Pigna note the analogy between the *Odyssey* and the *romanzi*: the pleasures of uninhibited fabrication belong to it" (11).

This double function of events of postponement—as obstacle and as poetic *materia*—is the feature of romance that presents itself even in the most classical epics, especially the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*, and one that is at least as important, in early modern heroic poems, as intermeddled events. In fact, one of the functions of narrative structured around intermeddled "accidents" is to prolong and complicate the progress of the poem. Intermeddled action thus serves romance to the extent that it frustrates poetic closure. In his defense of method in the second *Discourse*, Tasso explicitly connected the multiplicity of action inherent to intermeddled storytelling with a poem's "end"—that is, its closure and its telos:

> I presume that the fable is the end of the poet, as Aristotle affirms, and there have been none who deny it: if the fable is one, the end will be one; if on the other hand the fables are diverse, the ends will be diverse. But how much better the work where the author has regard to a single end than one who proposes for himself

> diverse ends, distractions in the soul and impediments in execution originating from the diversity of ends; how much better does the imitator of one sole fable perform than the imitator of many actions. I would add that from the multiplicity of fable indeterminacy is born; and this process could go *ad infinitum*, when there is no end either fixed in advance or determined by art. (qtd. in Nohrnberg 12-3)

Inherent to the concept of romance is the anxiety of the eternal poem, the tapestry of Penelope forever unfinished and indeterminate, stories woven and unwoven in an endless cycle of digression, dilation, and deferral. I have already noted the affinity of the *Odyssey* with romance, and one of the effects of attempting to pin down romance is an ever-receding number of "pure" epics against which romance may be delineated. The end of the *Aeneid* is of course the founding of Rome, but that end must be considered in relation to the narrative structures that produce it: the first half of the *Aeneid* is a retelling of the *Odyssey*—based around a sea voyage and a woman who would forestall the hero indefinitely—and the second half is a retelling of the *Iliad*, a story of siege, land war, and border disputes. But the epic half of the *Aeneid* entails a separate anxiety, for though Aeneas eludes the deferral represented by Dido, he succeeds in founding Rome at a price. Seeing the belt of Pallas, which Turnus had taken as a prize and worn as a token of victory, Aeneas rejects Turnus' plea for mercy:

> And when his eyes drank in this plunder, this
> memorial of brutal grief, Aeneas,
> aflame with rage—his wrath was terrible—
> cried: "How can you who wear the spoils of my
> dear comrade now escape me? It is Pallas
> who strikes, who sacrifices you, who takes
> this payment from your shameless blood." Relentless,

> he sinks his sword into the chest of Turnus.
> His limbs fell slack with chill; and with a moan
> his life, resentful, fled to Shades below. (12.1262-71)

To fulfill his destiny, Aeneas must enact the part of the enraged attacker, like Achilles or Pyrrhus. Playing the part of a Greek against a Trojan, he founds Rome on the blood of an honorable opponent—just as the wrath of Achilles led to the death of Hector and Pyrrhus spilled the blood of Priam on his own altar. The destined shores of Latium toward which Aeneas strives throughout the *Aeneid* and upon which Turnus dies thus represent, as Spenser might say, "a certain cost," the price that must be paid for the future of Rome.

The final lines of the *Aeneid*, filled with wrath, represent the end—that is, the conclusion and the telos—of the epic, for epic requires of Aeneas that he reject the temptations of love, as represented by Dido and Carthage, and give in to the temptations of fury. Such are the demands of the Roman empire, and epic always entails a special relationship with empire and with wrath. Perhaps the most clearly epic of poems, the *Iliad* begins with the wrath of Achilles as the *Aeneid* ends with the wrath of Aeneas. According to Nohrnberg, epics carve out for themselves the part of a story "that has the greatest implications for the whole" (7)—that is, the part that centers around strife—while the remainder of the story is taken up by romance. Thus the *Odyssey*, with its motifs of adventure and delay fills in where the *Iliad* leaves off.[90] This is not to say that there is not strife in romance, but that it is treated on a different scale, with different implications and consequences. By the time epics like the *Aeneid* are written, some of the

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[90] According to Nohrnberg, "The art of the *Iliad* observes aesthetic criteria analogous to the unifying shield of Achilles; the art of the *Odyssey* resembles the overelaborated, repeatedly woven shroud of Laertes. Both the critics Cinthio and Pigna note the analogy between the *Odyssey* and the *romanzi*: the pleasures of uninhibited fabrication belong to it" (11).

original sense of strife is already beginning to disappear; it survives in Virgil's re-vision of the *Iliad*, but is not a structural principle, as it is in the *Iliad* proper. Nohrnberg says "the primary epic is organized fictionally, often around strife" (7). Its matter includes: "tales of exile, foreign service, local courts, war parties, border raids, raids for plunder, heroic last stands, feats of arms, blood feuds, and family revenge" (8).

When Spenser undertook to write an epic, however, he had to consider the relation of the poem to the literary history and dynastic future of England, and when he chose to make his virtuous hero Arthur he committed to a tradition of storytelling based on the Medieval romances of Mallory and the gestes of France. Just as the epic is caught up in themes of strife and wrath, the early modern heroic romance-epic hybrids followed Homer's and Virgil's cue in figuring women as the instruments of delay and deferral that would frustrate the ends of the hero. In the *Aeneid*, when Mercury arrives to inform Aeneas that his stay in Carthage has lasted too long, and to remind him of his responsibility to found Rome, he couches his protest in terms of the uncertainty of women: "Be on your way. Enough delays. An ever / uncertain and inconstant thing is woman."[91] The conception of female sexuality as a threat to the single-minded goal of the epic is obviously present in Homer's Circe and Calypso, Ariosto's Alcina, and Tasso's Armida. These women, like Phædria, invite the heroes to focus on the present at the expense of the future and the quest. This repeated motif of romance, in which the forms of narrative deferment are highly gendered, makes female characters responsible for both

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[91] Trans. Allen Mandelbaum (4.786-7).

the ethical faults of the poems' heroes and the aesthetic faults leveled against the poets. Gordon Teskey points out that

> The hero of the romantic epic is never quite free of the goddess of love. And what is true of the hero is also true of the form, which by allowing itself to digress from the main action is in danger of falling back into its original and morally ambiguous state. (6)

In portraying the forces of delay and deferral as seductive women, early modern romances comment on the epic tradition, in which representations of obstruction are always female. Circe is seductive and magical; the Sirens of the *Odyssey* are seductive and vocal. In the combination of these values is the genre of romance, which is gendered female and complicates linear narrative progress. As symbols of narrative deferral, intent on forestalling the quests of the heroes they encounter, these women represent the problems of poetic closure inherent to the romance genre. Thus in Phaedria's role as temptress she represents narrative deferral, what Spenser would call an "Accident" rather than an "intendment." Like Dido, she represents an obstacle to the primary narrative goal; as such, she embodies the romance or proto-romance form.

The hybrid forms of the Ariosto and Spenser thus incorporate varying degrees of interplay between epic and romance. They complicate generic expectations by liberally infusing romance tropes and plots into the narrative, and, as Parker says of Ariosto, excel in the "playing of epic conventions off against the 'errors' of the *romanzo*" (5). Critics influenced by Aristotle's *Poetics* could find fault with the hybrid forms precisely because

they were hybrid forms, but the presupposition on which this criticism was based—that a form should be "purely" epic—was predetermined to produce failed poems, for early modern poets clearly wanted to include elements derived from Medieval romance. Romance thus exists in these poems as an object of desire, for the allure of romance is desirable both to the poet and to the reader; but romance is also a threat. As Gordon Teskey argues, "there is a sense in [...] Renaissance epic poets generally, that because the heroic poem has its origin in the romance it is almost constantly in danger of an ethical and aesthetic relapse" (4-5). The potential relapse is both a moral and formal threat; indeed, in the world of the heroic poem, these categories repeatedly merge.

Aristotelian precepts of unity are not very helpful guidelines for determining the success or failure of narrative technique in terms of early modern heroic poems. As Teskey points out, the categories "epic" and "romance" are not adequately sufficient to describe the poems of Ariosto and Spenser:

> [I]n trying to decide whether romance is being included in epic or epic in romance we encounter a problem [...] For genre theory has its basis in the categories of identity and difference and demands that the sameness of some thing, its *ethos*, remain true to itself, whatever complicated relations it enters into with others. And the relations into which romance and the various classical forms are brought in Renaissance literature are just the sorts of relations that undermine the categories on which genre theory relies [...]. (9)

For even in the classical epics, romance encroaches. Just as the epic *Odyssey* reveals affinities with romance, romance seems to creep into all stories, and in the early modern period it is, as Parker says, "inescapable." The distance from epic to romance is measured not only in the distance from wrath to love—from *furioso* to *inammorato*—but from *Iliad* to *Odyssey*, from Turnus to Dido, from Mammon to Phaedria. And in the early modern heroic poem these elements combine in complex and productive ways. Spenser's decision is not whether to write an epic or a romance, but how best to play the conventions off one another, how best to take advantage of each form's potentials. It is to those potentials—and dangers—that I wish now to turn, for the context of Book II is where Spenser determines the possibilities of romance in the *Faerie Queene*. When he wishes to play epic and romance off one another, Spenser turns to the Legend of Temperance.

III

> But temperaunce (said he) with golden squire
> Betwixt them both can measure out a meane…

The questions of narrative structure and closure are, for Spenser, questions that originate in the classical period, and Book II of *The Faerie Queene* is a classical book.[92] In this book Spenser sets his hero forth on a quest to destroy a bower replete with images of romance and delay and armed with commitment to an Aristotelian view of virtue.

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[92] The word "temperance" is not originally a Christian word and does not appear in the Vulgate. It is derived from Latin; Cicero uses its cognate to translate Plato (*OED* "temperance"). For a reading of Book II that investigates Spenser's commitment to an exploration of classical virtue, see Miller.

Though Book III, as Spenser wrote to Raleigh, initiates the "intermeddled" narrative structure of *The Faerie Queene*, it is in Book II that questions of genre are first investigated; it is here that the implications of both romance and epic are explored and, I will argue, rejected in favor of a third, middle way. Book II asks readers to revise their view of moral decision-making, if that view is based on the moral system portrayed in Book I. In that book the Redcross Knight's ethical universe it generally portrayed as dualistic: one is either in obedience to God or one is in sin. If Redcross's ultimate success lies in his ability to navigate a middle way between (heavenly) contemplation and (earthly) action, his decisions are nonetheless products of a dualist ethical system. Yet even in Book I there are examples where Redcross would have been better served to view his ethical universe through the lens of the tripartite classical system than the dualist Christian conception of obedience/sin. Redcross's decision to enter the Wandering Wood and to encounter Error, for instance, might be viewed not merely as a decision to be courageous or cowardly, but to choose a mean between cowardice and foolhardiness. He must not merely steer the ship to port, but go, as Thomas Wyatt would say, between "rock and rock," between Scylla and Charybdis.

Just as watercraft constitute a traditional representation of a poem's movement from beginning to end, so they also represent, for early modern readers, a pictorial representation of the ethical life. Odysseus' journey between Scylla and Charybdis was allegorized by Classical and Medieval readers as a template for finding the middle way, and Guyon's journey in Canto 12 operates in this tradition.[93] The way in which boats function to allegorize both the moral life and the poet's journey provides a clue to

[93] See Nohrnberg (291) for examples.

Guyon's wanderings by boat—both to and from Phaedria's wandering isle and to and from Acrasia's Bower of Bliss. Watercraft tie the ethical path of the hero to the aesthetic path of the poet in a way that prefigures and highlights the tension between the ethical and the aesthetic that is one of the subjects of this chapter.

Inherent to most understandings of temperance as a virtuous mean is the division of particular moral failings or temptations into dialectical sets of opposed terms, and Spenser takes advantage of this view of temperance to fill Book II with as many examples as possible of opposing faults. In fact, Book II might be the best example of Spenser's proclivity for the schematic investigation of subjects in his poetry. Over and over again in Book II Guyon confronts pairs: Mordant and Amavia, Pyrochles and Cymochles, Sansloi and Huddibras, Elissa and Perissa, Mammon and Phaedria. Each of these pairs represents a failure to achieve virtuous mean; specific examples may be classified under broader dichotomous terms like forward/froward, excess/deficiency, and (most notably) irascibility/concupiscence.[94] In Book II, virtually everything is represented as belonging to the sphere of intemperance, either too much or too little. The path of Guyon entails rejecting these versions or mediating between them. Spenser does not invent the use of temperance as a method for separating and classifying values into an oppositional dichotomy, but relies on Aristotle's model. [95] In the Letter to Ralegh Spenser explicitly ties his schema for the *Faerie Queene* to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*[96]:

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[94] For a discussion of these broader terms, see Carscallen.

[95] For a discussion of the Renaissance interpretation of Arisotle, see Sirluck 76.

[96] As a number of critics have pointed out, Spenser, in treating temperance, combines Aristotle's sense of temperance with his notion of continence. Continence, according to

> I labour to pourtraict in Arthur, before he was king, the image of a brave knight, per-fected in the twelve private morall vertues, as Aristotle hath devised.... So in the person of Prince Arthur I sette forth magnificence in particular; which vertue, for that (according to Aristotle and the rest) it is the perfection of all the rest, and conteineth in it them all, therefore in the whole course I mention the deedes of Arthure applyable to that vertue, which I write of in that booke. But of the xii. other vertues, I make xii. other knights the patrones, for the more variety of the history.

By claiming the influence of Aristotle, Spenser may have bolstered the authority of his treatment of the virtues, but he created a major controversy for twentieth-century critics who actually investigated his use of the *Nicomachean* Ethics. If Spenser actually drew his list of virtues from Aristotle, he made a number of modifications. There is no clear correspondence between Spenser's twelve virtues and the virtues discussed by Aristotle. Holiness and courtesy, for instance, are not among Aristotle's virtues, though they could be conceived as conflations of several of the virtues Aristotle discusses. Of course, twelve is the number of books of *The Aeneid*, and thus an ideal pattern for an epic

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Aristotle, is different than temperance in that involves overcoming temptation. The temperate man is not tempted by excessive or deficient vices because he only desires the good, which always exists as a form of the mean between vicious extremes. The continent man, on the other hand, is tempted by the extremes of excess or defect, but depends on reason to choose the mean as the right course of action. Conversely, whereas the intemperate man succumbs to desires of excess or defect, the incontinent man is more blameworthy because he recognizes the irrationality of choosing vice but does so anyway. See Berger (*Allegorical Temper*) 10, Nohrnberg 290, and Durling 119.

national poem. Spenser's classical influences thus converge with his proposal of twelve (quasi-Aristotelian) virtues represented by twelve (Virgilian) books.

In fact, Spenser's use of Aristotle is consistently mediated by the scholastic critics who Christianized Aristotle in the late middle ages and whose understanding of Aristotle still dictated university curricula in the sixteenth century. Whether or not Spenser drew directly on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he certainly treated the virtues in the tradition of Aristotelianism as it was conceived in sixteenth-century England: "it is inconceivable that [Spenser] in Christianizing his Aristotle or in Aristotelianizing his Christianity should have been uninfluenced by the tradition of Christian Aristotelianism that carried over from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance" (Jones 284). Spenser thus does not follow Aristotle so much as he follows, in his words, "Aristotle and the rest." In this tradition, Aristotle's virtues, by various additions, subtractions, and conflations, were both Christianized and made to number twelve, a number compatible with scholastic numerology.

It should be clear at this point that Spenser's treatment of Aristotle's *Poetics* mirrors in many ways Spenser's treatment of Aristotle's *Ethics*. Spenser's usual practice is to transform the aesthetic and ethical precepts originating in Aristotle's classical texts (and, in the case of the *Ethics*, mediated by Medieval interpretation) to fit his purposes, while simultaneously invoking Aristotle as a guide, thus capitalizing on the prestige of Aristotle's growing influence on early modern thinkers. Yet, whereas early modern theorists valued epic form at the expense of romance, for Spenser, following the hybrid models of his Italian predecessors, the *Poetics* must be considered in light of the *Ethics*, and it is in this regard that temperance becomes an ideal virtue for exploring not only

man's relationship to the exterior world, but also a poem's relationship to the possible genres that govern its narrative coherence and closure.

If we are to take seriously a world in which the hero is consistently called upon to reject two equally incorrect responses in favor of a middle way, and if we are—following most critics of Book II—to take Guyon's journey as representative of Spenser's poetic progress, we should consider the possibility that Book II is an investigation into the possibilities of genre, in which possible narrative structures and closures are investigated and rejected in favor of a middle way. Accordingly, Spenser may see epic not as an ideal form, but as one of two equally dangerous "errors," a form based in wrath that is in reality nearly impossible to achieve. Spenser's influences, from Homer and Virgil to Ariosto to native English Medieval romances, represent powers that pull him in various directions, and he pays homage to each in the *Faerie Queene*, but Book II suggests that his object is to reach the end of the poem without unduly giving in to any of these formal influences. Many of the pairs confronting Guyon may be classified as representing the concupiscent and irascible passions, and the affinities of these moral stances with the genres romance and epic are obvious: irascibility is the disposition to wrath, and concupiscence is the disposition to indolent (sexual) pleasure. My argument here is that Spenser uses the schematic opportunity of Book II to experiment with oppositional values, and two of these opposed values are epic and romance. In the sense that Guyon, the book's hero, has to negotiate a path between these forms, he is representative of Spenser, who, in *The Faerie Queene*, must bring "romance and various classical forms" into relation with each other.

Thus Phaedria represents to Guyon what romance represents to Spenser: a magical, artificial world that threatens infinite delay. In claiming that the narrative deferrals in this canto are loci of the cultural connotations associated with romance, my argument is not that these values define romance, but that Spenser uses the divisionary model to set systems of value apart from each other and investigate their effects on narrative action. The values associated with romance are consistently those that, when considered in relation to those associated with epic, are denigrated. This is not surprising, given the regular devaluation of romance in respect to epic noted above. What is surprising is the way that Spenser locates these values in terms of character and space and reveals their negative potential not as instances of narrative failure, but as a form of temptation—a form of temptation that also threatens the poem itself. Though many critics have noted the ways that in Book II extreme choices are brought into opposition with each other, and likewise have noted the ways that epic and romance are played off one another, no critics that I am aware of have argued that Book II is an explicit investigation into poetic form—one that explicitly and clearly allegorizes its hero as a poet who must avoid the twin dangers of too much epic and too much romance. In fact, the way these narrative possibilities are brought into relation with each other in Book II seems clear once the values associated with each form have been sufficiently analyzed.

If my reading of Book II is correct, its allegorical function is not primarily historical or religious, but creative: it is an allegory of writing. Spenser's self-consciously constructed poem of narrative choices both enacts and critiques the writer's process, and Guyon—often considered a dull hero, without personality—in his role as poet and maker mirrors Spenser's role. His decisions are Spenser's decisions; he has the power either to

derail or to end the poem at any moment. The burden on a writer such as Spenser, familiar with Greek and Roman epic, with Ariosto and with Tasso, and with Chaucer and the heritage of native English romance, is to sort these genres out in a way that makes sense, and to avoid the danger of giving in to any particular influence to too great a degree. That is, the task of the writer is to achieve a form of generic measure.

To give in to the temptation of romance is to create a poem in which narrative deferral prevents a conclusive end: like Penelope's weaving, the text is always going somewhere but never arriving. To give in to the temptation of epic, on the other hand, is to risk flying too close to the sun, to risk narrative failure: like the end of the *Aeneid*, the poem risks instant closure, having succumbed to wrath. The ending of the *Aeneid*—a famously "bad ending"—stands as a dim possibility for Spenser, whose actual epic-romance is famously un-ended. In introducing the Phaedria canto, Spenser makes it clear which of the two threats to his "right way" is a more difficult temptation:

> A Harder lesson, to learne Continence
> In ioyous Pleasure, then in grieuous paine:
> For sweetnesse doth allure the weaker sence
> So strongly, that uneathes it can refraine
> From that, which feeble nature couets faine;
> Bur griefe and wrath, that be her enemies,
> And foes of life, she better can abstaine; (1, 1-7)

For Spenser, Phaedria's Wandering Isle is the stronger of the temptations, an "allure" difficult to resist. Phaedria easily shows her mastery over the opposite, "forward," irascible passions when Cymochles and Guyon give in to the epic passion of fury (they fight "to proue extremities"—to the death, but also with the pun on their

movement from one extreme to the other).[97] Unlike Medina, who earlier in the book harmonizes between extremes, Phædria can only represent one extreme of intemperance opposing another, like Elissa and Perissa in Canto ii. Yet Phædria easily overcomes Cymochles's and Guyon's violence, and she does so rhetorically: "Such powre haue pleasing wordes" (36.5). The form of intemperance represented by poetry, rhetoric, and female sexuality seems to be stronger than that represented by violence and masculinity.

But what constitutes the allure of concupiscence? What is the content of the island and its temptation to rest? The arrival of Cymochles and Phaedria on the island corresponds with a textual crux, for Spenser begins his description of the island by noting that it is "waste and voyd" (11.3), but it is soon evident that it is in fact full of apparently natural pleasures:

> It was a chosen plot of fertile land,
> Emongst wide waves set, like a litle nest,
> As if it had by Natures cunning hand
> Bene choisely picked out from all he the rest,
> And laid forth for ensample of the best. (12.1-5)

In the description of the lush pleasures of the island that follows, the initial adjectives "waste and voyd" fade into a sense of the isle's fullness. In fact, it seems to be a kind of Eden in which no work is required of its inhabitants, who are free to enjoy its bounty at their leisure. Why is the island initially defined as waste and void if it is in fact a bower full of delights? The answer to this seeming contradiction lies in the particular powers Phaedria performs on her island, which are all forms of linguistic coercion. The radical

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[97] 36.2. See note, Hamilton. The perfect epic heroes given to this excess are Achilles, when he slays Hector, and Aeneas in the final lines of the *Aeneid.*

threat Phaedria represents to Guyon is one of instability, of delay, of the "aesthetic and ethical relapse" associated with romance.

Like romance itself, Phædria is alluring, highly gendered, and proliferate. Guyon's first negative reaction to Phædria is when she passes "the bonds of modest merimake" (21.8), that is, she exceeds the conventions governing acceptable interactions between male and female. Like romance, she is superabundant—in words, actions, and sexuality. Spenser's primary rhetorical goal in the description of Phædria's Island is to place it within the romance archetype that Parker calls the "protective but potentially indolent bower" (8). This is a space that represents the temptation to lie down, rest, and forget about the future.[98] Phædria's song to Cymochles is a reading of the sixth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew:

> The lilly, Lady of the flowring field,
> The flowre deluce, her louely Paramoure,
> Bid thee to them thy fruitlesse labors yield,
> And soon leaue off this toylsome weary stoure;
> Loe loe how braue she decks her bounteous boure, [...]
> Yet nether spinnes nor cards [.] (16)

Phaedria's power over forms of language allows her to recast the biblical passage for her own purposes, turning what is in the gospel passage a direction to trust in God into a hymn of self-indulgence. Phædria's lyrical and verbal skills allow her to assimilate and control the passage by rephrasing it in her own image. But Phaedria is not the only person exercising power over the written word in this canto. It is not only her magic that makes a waste and void space into a wondrous bower. For the portrayal of Phædria's Island is as

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[98] Parker suggests that subsequently this particular romance motif becomes synonymous with the romance genre itself "in the increasingly commercial world of the English 'Mammon'" (8)

rhetorically subtle as any single canto in *The Faerie Queene*, implicating Spenser's poetry in its own critique of the misuse of language. Thus Spenser's description of Phaedria's "pleasing words" places his own pleasing words under suspicion; unlike the rhetoric of Mammon, which belongs to the tradition of Medieval scholasticism, the rhetoric of Phaedria belongs to the tradition of Medieval romance poetry. The virtuoso stanza of the canto is 13:

> No tree, whose braunches did not brauely spring;
> No braunch, whereon a fine bird did not sitt:
> No bird, but did her shrill notes sweetely sing;
> No song but did containe a louely ditt:
> Trees, braunches, birds, and songs were framed fitt,
> For to allure fraile mind to careless ease,
> Careless the man [Cymochles] soone woxe, and his weak witt
> Was ouercome of thing, that did him please;
> So pleased, did his wrathful purpose faire appease.

Here Phaedria overcomes Cymochles and the reader with the prospect of aesthetic pleasure and indefinite entertainment.[99] In the final two lines of Book VI *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser explicitly links aesthetic form to pleasure—though his tone implies a cynical defense against his poem's detractors: "Therfore do you my rimes keep better measure, / And seek to please, that now is counted wisemens threasure." As Spenser is well aware, both Phaedria's island and poetry are imitations of nature, and as such they represent the threat to reason that Plato warned against in the *Republic*. We are told in the final line of stanza 13 that the appeasement of purpose is the effect of this form of intemperance ("So pleased, did his wrathful purpose faire appease"); that appeasement is accomplished rhetorically, both by Phædria's song and by Spenser's poetry. Here the

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[99] Nohrnberg classifies epic and romance by their primary goals: the end of epic is glorification, and the end of romance is entertainment.

word "ease" winds through the lines, appearing as "ease," "please," "pleased," and "appease."[100] This echo insidiously invites the reader to lie down, and Guyon's temptation to give up his quest in pursuit of indolent ease is a particularly apt representation of the seduction of romance, which threatens the single-minded pursuit of a goal that characterizes epic: thus Cymochles is derailed from his purpose (of "wrath") by the unstable and seductive forces employed by Phaedria.

Waste and void, the island *seems* to be full of delights. But those delights are the products, in the poem, of poetry, language, and the imagination. Underneath the Island's bountiful appearance is a profound emptiness that suggests the consequence of succumbing to its persuasive invitation. The hint that all is not as it seems lies in the linguistic negation of objects as they are described. Beginning at 12.6, six out of eight lines, and the first four lines of 13 begin with the word "No." The island is described as full to capacity with wondrous delights, but the rhetorical effect is the repetition of the negative syllable resounding throughout the lines:

> No dainty flower or herbe, that growes on grownd,
> No arborett with painted blossomes drest
> And smelling sweete, but there it might be fownd
> To bud out faire, and throwe her sweete smels al arownd.
> [13]
> No tree, whose braunches did not bravely spring;
> No braunch, whereon a fine bird did not sitt:
> No bird, but did her shrill notes sweetely sing;
> No song but did containe a lovely ditt [...].

The negative syllable introducing most of these lines cancels the assertions even at the existential level: the statement "[There was n]o braunch, whereon a fine bird did not sitt"

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[100] As it did in Despayre's argument, I xi 40.

is logically ambiguous. The answer, then, to how the island may be both "waste and voyd" and "a chosen plot of fertile land" is poetic: it is both of these things through a grammar of ambiguity.[101]

Spenser insists that the island's delights are not natural: they appear "[a]s if [they] had by natures cunning hand, / Been choycely picked[.]" Here Spenser perhaps plays on the alternate sense of "cunning," that is, "directing the helm," Phædria's method of controlling her craft: "Onely she turnd a pin, and by and by / it cut away upon the yielding wave" (5.5-6). She is literally cunning, and nature is personified in the same terms: carefree, bounteous, crafty.[102] Like the song of the Sirens, the island appears beautiful, but that apparent beauty is artificial and masks a sinister reality. It is Spenser's rhetorical skill that allows him to present the Island in this ambivalent way: the words "As if" work to negate the description even as it is offered, just as "waste and voyd" impart a dissonance to the rest of the description that implicitly challenges its reality.

These attributes of the island—fertile, misseeming, artificial—place it in the realm of romance, but they also suggest romance's associated categories of poetic indolence and female sexuality. Phædria's method for completing the seduction of

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[101] Spenser's stylistic predecessor here is Dante, who uses a similar device to indicate negation in the forest of suicides in *The Inferno*:

> Non era ancor di là Nesso arrivato,
> quando noi ci mettemmo per un bosco
> che da neun sentiero era segnato.
> Non fronda verde, ma di color fosco;
> non rami schietti, ma nodosi e 'nvolti;
> non pomi v'eran, ma stecchi con tòsco.
> Non han sì aspri sterpi né sì folti [...] 13, 1-7

[102] OED cunning, *vbl. n.* The earliest entry for "cun" in this sense, however, is 1628.

Cymochles is to lay his head "[i]n her loose lap" and sing him a song. Here poetry and sexuality become difficult to separate, as in the song of the sirens. Phædria literally disarms Cymochles with this form of power, a power that asks the subject simply not to act, as opposed to earlier representations of the opposite values, in which the sin is too much action. Again, this is to say that one path away from the middle road is symbolized by male, active, physical, violent, and epic values, and that the other is female, sensuous, emotional, sexual, and romantic.

Spenser's investigation into the forms of epic and romance in Book II, then, recognizes that of the two forms of temptation, with their associated values, romance presents a greater threat to the narrative's movement towards conclusion. The tension, of course, is that romance, through its superabundance and fertility, simultaneously generates narrative action. Thus Spenser both affirms the power of this temptation and interrogates its substance. This is true for each manifestation of "loose desyre": female sexuality, artifice, and poetry. His rhetorical effort both to describe the wonders of the island and simultaneously suggest that its contents are "waste and voyd" reveals the slipperiness of rhetoric itself. When the Phaedria canto is considered as a meta-discourse about poetry, in which the "powre of pleasing wordes" is a serious danger, one that deters from the pursuit of noble virtues, the ability of those words to describe the danger becomes also an example of its powers of seduction. Phædria, as romance's gendered and rhetorical embodiment, represents both a threat to the narrative and a temptation to the hero.

Phædria's song lulls Cymochles to sleep in stanza 14, a stanza in which the word "lay" is woven throughout ("and laid him down"; "playn"; "laying his head"; "with a

loue lay she thus him sweetly charmd"). In the final use of the word the sexual connotation combines with the musical definition, and the two become inseparable: song (poetry) is seduction. Together they constitute romance's threat to defer narrative progress. Cymochles's progression through the poem is completely halted by this power; he is especially vulnerable to this power of words, as the archaic spelling of "worldly" implies in the couplet that describes the effect on him:

> By this she had him lulled fast a sleepe,
> That of no wordly thing he care did take;[103]

Hamilton notes that wordly is an obsolete form of "worldly," and in the 1596 edition the latter word is substituted. But the substitution is not necessary, for on Phaedria's island, the word *is* the world, in all its instability and peril. An ever uncertain and inconstant thing is romance.

IV

Finally, we may return to the criticism raised by Montaigne against Ariosto. Unlike Virgil, Montaigne argues, Ariosto cannot achieve truly epic flight:

> We see the former on outspread wings in lofty and sustained flight always pursuing his point; the latter fluttering and hopping from tale to tale as from branch to branch, not trusting his wings except for a very short hop, alighting at every turn for fear his breath and strength should fail (300).

[103] 18.1-2, 1590. 1596 has "worldly."

The metaphor of poet-as-bird is, like the nautical metaphors for poetic progress, a commonplace allegory of writing. Ariosto uses the same metaphor in *Orlando Furioso* (3.1), and Spenser follows him closely in the *Faerie Queene* (2.10):

> Who now shall give unto me words and sound,
> Equall unto this haughtie enterprise?
> Or who shall lend me wings, with which from ground
> My lowly verse may loftily arise,
> And lift it selfe unto the highest skies?
> More ample spirit, then hitherto was wount,
> Here needes me, whiles the famous auncestries
> Of my most dreaded Soveraigne I recount,
> By which all earthly Princes she doth farre surmount.

Here Spenser introduces the canto on British history; the catalogue is an epic convention that defers narrative progress in the service of (usually) etiological justifications of nation or empire. Inherent to this metaphor is an irony Spenser surely understood: unconstrained ambition, as demonstrated by Spenser in his desire to "overgo" Ariosto, surely "overgoes" the bounds of modesty and smacks of the sin of pride, and in a book investigating temperance even the ambition of the poet comes under investigation. The attempt to "loftily arise," to lift oneself "unto the highest skies" is an attempt to achieve immortality, to reach heaven, and Ovid, in a poem replete with examples of the failure of those who would compete with the gods, nonetheless writes his own apotheosis into the closing lines of *The Metamorphoses*:

> Now have I brought a woork to end which neither Joves feerce wrath,
> Nor swoord, nor fyre, nor freating age with all the force it hath
> Are able to abolish quyght [...].
> *Yit shall the better part of mee assured bee to clime*
> *Aloft above the starry skye*. And all the world shall never
> Be able for to quench my name. For looke how farre so ever
> The Roman Empyre by the ryght of conquest shall extend,
> So farre shall all folke reade this woork. And tyme without all end
> (If Poets as by prophesie about the truth may ame)
> My lyfe shall everlastingly bee lengthened still by fame.
> (15.984-95, my emphasis)[104]

Perhaps sensitive to the blasphemous nature of Ovid's claims, Arthur Golding closes this translation (with which Spenser would have been familiar) with the Latin caveat *Laus & honor soli Deo*. The danger of asking the muses (or one's patrons, in the case of Ariosto) to help one fly to epic heights is the appearance of ambitious pride and the belief that art can reach to heaven. When Spenser continues his invocation in the third stanza, he compares what he must do with the achievement of Homer Mæonides:

> Argument worthy of *Mæonian* quill
> Or rather worthy of great Phoebus rote,
> Whereon the ruines of great Ossa hill,
> And triumphes of Phlegraean Jove he wrote,
> That all the Gods admird his loftie note.

The appeal to the quill of Homer naturally follows the epic metaphor of flying, but Spenser cannily follows with a reference to the rebellion of giants against "Jove" on "great Ossa hill," a classical analogue to the rebellion of Satan, emblematic of ambitious pride. Following Ariosto, Spenser thus inserts a criticism into his claim on immortal

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[104] For Spenser's familiarity with Ovid, see "Ovid" in the *Spenser Encyclopedia*. In that entry, Michael Holahan notes that "Spenser knew Ovid so intimately that to write poetry was to use him, even if that use led ultimately to the dismissal of 'flowring pride, so fading and so fickle' (*FQ* VII viii I)" (522).

poetic achievement. Even the hill on which Homer wrote, and which is now invoked, is a hill built on the ruined pride of giants who came before. Again, it is the fact that this invocation occurs in the Book of the Legend of Temperance that throws the poet's claims into self-critique, for temperance demands a more moderate—a more measured—approach to poetry. Yet the claims for the greatness of Elizabeth (or the princes of d'Este) require a particular tact in presenting this criticism.

Ovid's poem already contains its own criticism of his claims of apotheosis. In Book Eight the artist-as-bird is allowed to attempt "to climb aloft above the starry sky." Daedalus, the traditional figure of the artist,

> Did teach his sonne how he should also flie.
> I warne thee (quoth he), Icarus, a middle race to keepe.
> For if thou hold too low a gate, the dankenesse of the deepe
> Will overlade thy wings with wet. And if thou mount too hie,
> The Sunne will sindge them. Therfore see betweene them both thou flie. (8.272-6)

Ovid thus places in the mouth of his craftsman the advice of the Palmer, to keep to the middle path, avoiding, as it were, the higher path of epic and the lower path of romance. The poet who would truly follow his literary guides should take note of Icarus, who

> Forsaking quight his guide,
> Of fond desire to flie to Heaven, above his boundes he stide. (300-1)

CHAPTER IV

"O, MADNESS OF DISCOURSE": PRAISING, PRIZING, AND MEASURE ANXIETY IN SHAKESPEARE'S *TROILUS AND CRESSIDA*

In this dissertation I have been investigating cultural-literary correlations of a major shift in the way measure-making and measure-breaking were conceived in Europe during the late medieval and early modern periods. In Chapter I, I argued that Dante treats failures of measure in economic terms because money is a particularly pervasive way to measure the world.[105] For Dante, misers and spendthrifts are analogues for a wide range of mismeasurers because those who cannot value their money properly cannot value *anything* properly. Spenser likewise acknowledged the power of money to threaten temperance when he made the Cave of Mammon a pivotal trial for Guyon.[106] During the early modern period, as the systems of exchange and circulation that constituted early capitalism became increasingly complex, discourse about measure in general continued

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[105] In Chapter I, I argue that the rise of early capitalism coincided with (and resulted from) massive technological advances in the way literally everything was measured, including time, distance, and the earth itself. The increasing realization that everything can be monetized, including labor and time, played into the predominant feature of measure-anxiety from Dante to Shakespeare: fear of the cross-categorical (epidemic) effects of all forms of mismeasurement.

[106] See especially the *Faerie Queene* 2.7.15.

to be associated with the economic sphere. The symbolic representation of value treated by Dante, however, in which money could be mismeasured merely by over- or under-valuing—and therefore stood as a convenient metonymy for temperate ethical behavior more generally—gave way, in the sixteenth century, to an increasingly complex and anxiety-ridden understanding of credit, in which value might be attached not only to money, or the various articles of exchange that could be assigned monetary value, but to people themselves, who represented entities more or less capable of making good on monetary promises.[107] The increasing complexity of economic relationships created a corresponding increase in anxiety about the measure of things, for the nascent capitalist structures that replaced the feudal economic relations threatened to order the world in an entirely new way.[108]

Troilus and Cressida belongs to that new world, a world fundamentally different from the economic reality confronted by Dante. While money still might (metonymically) indicate Aristotelian theories of value and measure, its relationship to measure in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries was no longer as univocal as it had been during the late medieval period. In this chapter I read *Troilus and Cressida* as a meditation on the early modern anxieties of mis-measure. While *Troilus and Cressida* has been a favorite object of theorists foregrounding deconstructionist and feminist approaches, it has also

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[107] Craig Muldrew points out that "credit was as dominant a feature of the medieval economy as it was of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries" (38). Yet a continent-wide depression during the fifteenth century (caused by plague-related decreases in population) delayed the onset of the more complex networks of exchange described here (see Muldrew 15-16).

[108] See Agnew for an account of the transition from medieval to early modern market processes in England (27-56).

received a lot of attention from critics interested in its portrayal of economies of desire. These critics usually focus on two threads of imagery in the play: first, a recurring set of images of eating and digesting, and second, frequent recourse to the marketplace as metaphor for competing theories of exchange and value.[109] The play is obsessed with images of eating, disgorging, starving, and defecating; it also repeatedly treats its subject—the Trojan War—as a marketplace. Jean-Cristophe Agnew defines the putative object of markets as "the allocation of scarce resources among competing interests" (xi); obviously Helen is such a resource and the Greek and Trojan armies are "competing interests," but the play's marketplace mentality does not stop with Helen, who is merely the most explicitly foregrounded site of disagreement about commodity exchange in the play. In fact, characters in *Troilus and Cressida* generally attempt to place value on literally everything, including (and perhaps especially) themselves.

Metaphors of eating and metaphors of economics are ultimately interconnected, as in this example in which Troilus argues for keeping Helen and continuing the war:

> We turn not back the silks upon the merchant
> When we have spoiled them; nor the remainder viands
> We do not throw in unrespective sewer
> Because we now are full. (2.2.68-71)[110]

Here Troilus commodifies Helen as both the "silks of the merchant," with its resonances of imperialist trade, and as "remainder viands" (leftover food). Both metaphoric strands

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[109] For a survey of approaches to economic analyses of *Troilus and Cressida*, see Grady (85 n. 38). For an example of approaches to the digestive imagery of the play, see Hillman.

[110] All quotes from *Troilus and Cressida* are taken from the *Norton* edition unless noted otherwise.

might be conveniently thought of, somewhat anachronistically, as tropes of "consumption." This word did not carry, for early moderns, a specifically economic connotation, but its moral weight—and the play's general pessimism—may be suggested by another sense it did have: "The action or fact of consuming or destroying; destruction" (*OED* 1). Reading *Troilus and Cressida* one feels that consumption—both appetite and market exchange—are never treated as promising or even neutral activities: they are always indications of potential destruction, and it is this anxiety, the fear that a fundamentally unjust exchange system will ultimately destroy the world, that, I will argue, infects all relationships in *Troilus and Cressida.*

Because hunger is a primal expression of desire, both image-threads (eating and market exchange) treat questions of acquisition, accumulation, destruction, and exchange, and the recurrent return to images that emphasize the destructive significance of consumption reflects the general tone of *Troilus and Cressida*, a play that continually reverts to registers of disgust in response to its own terms of value and misvalue. In fact, perhaps more than any other of Shakespeare's plays—including its "sister" problem play, *Measure for Measure*—*Troilus and Cressida* is a play about value and the measure of things. It asks us again and again to contemplate what things are worth, and how that worth is determined. This chapter examines the recurring expressions of value that circulate through Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* and the implications of those tropes on language. I focus on the play's persistent attempts to fix value on literally everything, including the play itself, attempts that ultimately remain groundless because of a lack of objective, intrinsic measure of value. The play, I argue, both creates and undermines a

world without objective measure and depicts that world as a hell in which language and individual distinction fail.

I want to begin by setting aside *Troilus and Cressida* for a moment and examining how some questions of value are considered in a related text. David Baker notes that the "economic implications of this play and its actual economic fate, its 'box office' history [...] are rarely, if ever, discussed together" (70). In fact, because the quarto appeared in two initial states, each with its own prefatory matter, contradictorily implying (in the first state) that the play had been performed at the Globe and (in the second state) that it had not been staged at all, the box office history of *Troilus and Cressida* is unclear. Whether it was actually staged or not, we know at least that it was not a commercial success. This play, obsessed as it is with the early modern marketplace, was nonetheless itself a spectacular market failure (Baker 71). By looking closely at the prefatory matter of the second state of the quarto, however, we may set aside the "box office history" and still examine the relation between the play and its market circumstances, the realities of commodification, value, and measure anxiety at the turn of the seventeenth century.

When the First Quarto edition of *Troilus and Cressida* appeared as a market good in 1609, the publisher appended to the second state an anonymous prose epistle—an advertisement—appealing to the would-be purchaser. Addressed from "A never writer, to an ever reader," the epistle praises the play and flatters the buyer, providing a kind of introduction between the two:

> Eternall reader, you have heere a new play, never stal'd with the Stage, never clapper-clawd with the palmes of the vulger, and yet passing full of the palme comicall; for it is a birth of your braine, that never under-tooke any thing commicall, vainely [...].

The attempt to assign a value to the play—to "market" it—entails a series of strategies designed to raise its worth in the mind of the buyer. The most obvious of these is the appeal to the logic of associative value, in which the relative value of objects is determined by comparing those objects to other, similar objects. Thus the writer asserts the superiority of Shakespeare to other playwrights: even those who are most likely to disapprove of plays generally, the writer argues, would still enjoy *this* author's plays: "especially this authors Commedies, [...] that the most displeased with Playes, are pleasd with his Commedies." Furthermore, this is the best of Shakespeare's plays: "Amongst all there is none more witty then this." Finally, the play is equal in "worth" to the plays of the greatest Roman dramatists:

> And had I time I would comment upon it, though I know it needs not, (for so much as will make you thinke your testerne well bestowd) but for so much worth, as even poore I know to be stuft in it. It deserves such labour, as well as the best Commedy in Terence or Plautus.

The point of all these comparisons is of course to fix the play's value in the economic register, to convince the buyer to exchange money to obtain the quarto edition.

Although this final question of "worth" is subverted by the writer, placed in parentheses and syntactically deemphasized, the message is clear: economic value is determined by the same logic of comparison by which literary value is determined, and in this case is predicated on that value. The question implied by the epistle—what is the play "worth?"—can thus be answered multiple ways. It is worth as much as a play of Terence. Or it is worth "your testerne."

In his attempt to make a match between the buyer and the play, the writer of the epistle assumes the role of Pandarus, praising the play by comparing it to other plays, placing them collectively in a system of comparative competition that could be called "emulative." And like Pandarus, the writer flatters the potential consumer, transparently appealing to the taste of the would-be buyer and focusing on the exclusive and private experience entailed by agreeing to his proposed match. He hints at the exclusive class of the buyer by making a classical allusion (to the birth of Venus); he further distinguishes the buyer from the "vulgar" masses who attend plays—many of whom would have been illiterate—by referring to the consumer as a "reader" in the title and the second word of the epistle proper. In fact, the putative lack of a stage history is portrayed as a distinctive quality: "you have heere a new play, never stal'd with the Stage, never clapper-clawd with the palmes of the vulger [...]." The quarto edition of the play is here offered, like Cressida on the marriage market, as a kind of virgin.

There are additional similarities between the advertisement and the play. The author's persistent wordplay points to an obsession with the slipperiness of language that is a recurrent feature of measure anxiety and a major component of *Troilus and Cressida*. He puns on "common," "commodity," "comedy," and "commentary"; on "plays,"

"please," and "pleas"; and on "pray" and "praise." When the epistle writer says that the play has never been "clapper-clawed with the palms of the vulgar" he initiates a complex series of puns on "clap" and "palm" in which the referents of words themselves are destabilized. Thus "clapperclaw," a word Shakespeare uses in *Merry Wives of Windsor* that means to scratch, beat, or revile (OED) becomes associated with applause by virtue of its (etymologically incidental) association with "clapping."[111] This connection is emphasized by subsequent punning on "palms," which here identifies the means by which the audience claps and (thereby) reviles plays and also initiates further wordplay, this time on the palm as signifier of literary achievement (OED 2b: "Victory, triumph; supreme honour or excellence, as in martyrdom; the prize; the first place"). This allows the author to identify "palm" with two separate referents: on the one hand, it refers to the applause of the vulgar—that is, with praise—and on the other hand it indicates a mark of distinction. Those who "consume" the play, in their (ap)praising indicate the extent to which they value it. Thus the epistle, in its first sentence, suggests a complex relationship between distinction and epideictic practice—that is, between *prizing* and *praising*.

I begin my discussion of *Troilus and Cressida* with a reading of this advertisement because—as I hope is clear—the questions of comparison and value raised by the epistle are the same questions raised by the play itself. That is, in its attempt to fix a value on the quarto (apparently at one testern, or testoon—a six-pence coin[112]) the

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[111] See, for instance, Shakespeare's use of "clap" in *Julius Caesar*: "If the tag-ragge people did not clap him, and hisse him, according as he pleas'd, and displeas'd them" (I. ii. 261).

epistle reproduces the very strategies designed to elicit desire—strategies dependant on realities of exchange and circulation rooted in early capitalism—that are satirized so mercilessly in *Troilus and Cressida*. While a number of critical responses to *Troilus and Cressida* have recognized the role of value and comparison in the play, the epistle suggests that the anxieties that run rampant in the play are not merely an exaggerated relativist nightmare, but in fact reflect the reality of the early-modern economic sphere.

II

The epistle's treatment of value is predicted by the play itself. When Diomedes and Paris are on their way through Troy to fetch Cressida back to the Greeks, Paris asks Diomedes whether he or Menelaus "merits fair Helen most" (4.1.55). Diomedes articulates a misogynistic view common in the play, calling Helen a "whore," whom Menelaus and Paris equally deserve. Paris responds by questioning Diomedes' motive for criticizing Helen:

> Fair Diomed, you do as chapmen do:
> Dispraise the thing that you desire to buy.
> But we in silence hold this virtue well:
> We'll but commend what we intend to sell. (4.1.77-80)

Exchange in *Troilus and Cressida*—even forced exchange—is always a market proposition, and marketing entails a dialectical relationship between praising and

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[112] Stating the price of the play as one "testern" additionally complicates the equations of value because of the notoriously wide range of the value of that coin during the Tudor and Jacobean periods, during which it continually lost value due to the quality of alloy from which it was minted.

dispraising the object in question, as buyer and seller attempt to manipulate the price. The idea that the proper value of a thing lies not in some inherent worth of the object, but in a socially-agreed-upon price fuels general early modern anxieties about measure-making and measure-breaking. But it always also entails a correlating anxiety about language, for prizing entails praising and dispraising, and praise places economic exchange in the even murkier and more slippery world of language. Once the value of Helen becomes a question, competing parties have an interest in either over- or undervaluing her, using words in an attempt to change her market value.

As Paris understands, praising and dispraising are mechanisms of value-manipulation, and hence loci of measure anxiety. The question asked over and over again by the play is *how do we know what something is actually worth*? The possibility, lurking behind almost every scene in the play, that "actual" worth may be unknowable, leads to unease about value and measure generally, and—as Paris's attack on Diomedes' motivation for dispraise indicates—uncertainty about objects of exchange leads to uncertainty about language. Once the relationship between epideictic practice and measure is recognized, the relative nature of praise becomes even more clear, for praise becomes a function not of the worth of some object, but of the position of the speaker in terms of acquiring or divesting that object, that is, of the economic motivations of exchange. Thus Aeneas, catching himself praising the qualities of the Trojans to the Greek camp, notes that *who* is praising and dispraising makes all the difference:

> Peace, Trojan; lay thy finger on thy lips.
> The worthiness of praise distains his worth,
> If that the praised himself brings the praise forth. (1.3.237-9)

Again, value is not fixed in objects, but is relative to the position of (ap)praisers.

An example of the way the play highlights the relationship between praising and prizing occurs in one of its many literary borrowings. The reworking of texts key to the Western tradition is of course one of the most obvious features of *Troilus and Cressida*, and critics have profitably examined the play's relationship to Homer, to Chaucer, to Harington.[113] Yet, in looking at the worth of Helen, Shakespeare turns to a contemporary dramatic text. Christopher Marlowe's reference to Helen is ambivalent even in its epideictic context:

> Was this the face that lancht a thousand shippes?
> And burnt the toplesse Towres of *Ilium*?

Shakespeare recontextualizes this clichéd praise into the debate between Troilus and Hector about Helen's worth, moving from the implicit to the explicit register. In this context, Shakespeare replaces Marlowe's word "face" with "price":

> Is she worth keeping? Why she is a pearl
> Whose price hath launched above a thousand ships
> And turned crowned kings to merchants. (2.2.80-2)[114]

By citing one of the period's most well-known examples of praising—even as potentially ambiguous as Marlowe's praising may be—Shakespeare consciously reframes praise of

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[113] See Hopkins for an analysis of Shakespeare's use of sources in this play.

[114] Shakespeare's version alludes to Matthew 13:45-6: "Againe, the kingdome of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearles: Who when he had found one pearle of great price, he went and solde all that he had, and bought it." For Christian audiences Troilus thus makes Helen equivalent to the kingdom of heaven, supporting Hector's assertion that that Troilus's theory of worth entails "idolatry" (line 55).

Helen in economic terms. Everyone in *Troilus and Cressida* is at one time or another a merchant, and everyone is at one time or another a prize, if only because almost all characters self-consciously market themselves.

Just as *Troilus and Cressida* suggests that to praise something is always to prize it, so it suggests that to prize something is always to put a price on it. In the early modern period the words "praise" and "prize" were not as clearly distinguished from each other as they are now, for they share the same etymology via French and Latin, and their meanings had not yet become clearly distinguished.[115] Thus both the etymology and the definitions in the Oxford English Dictionary's entry for "praise" (v) are riddled with cross-references to "prize," and the definitions for "praise" include (besides obvious senses associated with commendation and lauding) meanings current for Shakespeare that suggest prizing ("To value, esteem; to attach value to; = prize *v.*[1]") and even pricing ("To estimate or fix the monetary value of; to fix the price of [something for sale]; to appraise." [def. 5]). The verb "appraise" in fact marks the quasi-hidden historical and semantic relationship between "praise" and "prize," including the word "praise" in its sound and spelling but meaning something much closer to "prize" or "price."

The word "prize" is thus a key term for the play, semantically connecting on the one hand "praise," and on the other "price." There is a complex but direct relationship between the palms (praise) of the vulgar (appraisers) and the palm (prize and ultimately price) the play may achieve. Shakespeare's decision to slip "price" into Marlowe's praise reveals, then, a reality already present in the epideictic context: to praise something is to

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[115] See note in the OED etymology for "prize v1": "In early use there is no clear semantic distinction between this verb and PRAISE *v.*"

suggest not only how much one values the object, but also exactly—and in crass economic terms—how much something costs. "Prize" performs just such a function in 2.1, when Cressida, after Pandarus has exited, comments on his praising of Troilus: "more in Troilus thousandfold I see / Than in the glass of Pandar's praise may be" (262-3). Pandarus and Cressida have just engaged in a game of marketing in which Troilus is the object of exchange. Pandarus praises Troilus while Cressida wittily devalues him, essentially dispraising him *even though* she in fact values him even more than Pandarus does. As Troilus' value becomes subject to market forces, language becomes simultaneously untrustworthy. It is only when Pandarus exits that Cressida can reveal her actual feelings about Troilus' "worth." Once again, uncertainty about the value of an object of exchange creates uncertainty about the linguistic mechanisms employed to manipulate that value, generally manifested as praise and dispraise.

But Cressida then turns to the question of her own value, another "price" subject to praise and dispraise, and we learn that, like Achilles, she is "holding off," removing herself from the market for a period of time in order to create scarcity and increase demand. The fact voiced here by Cressida—that limited market availability would drive up price—is recognized also by the author of the quarto's prefatory epistle, who notes that the price of the quarto edition will rise when it is no longer readily available: "And beleeve this, that when hee is gone, and his Commedies out of sale, you will scramble for them, and set up a new English Inquisition." To say that scarcity increases price because it increases demand is to recognize the role of desire in economies of exchange. Cressida also explains economic scarcity in terms of desire: "Men prize the thing ungained more than it is" (1.2. 267). So reads the folio. But the quarto's change suggests the fluid

semantic relationship between praise, prize, and price, and a scene that began as an exchange of praises and dispraises ends in the purely economic register with the change of a single consonant: "Men *price* the thing ungained more than it is" (my emphasis).

III

The realization that praising and dispraising affect the price of something—that is, that language has the capacity to affect the perceived (and hence real) worth of objects—creates in the early modern period an anxiety both about value in general, which becomes unstable, and also about language, which becomes suspect in terms of motivation. The nature of value is one of the contested themes in *Troilus and Cressida*, and both camps debate whether value is inherent to a thing itself or dependant on socially-agreed-upon judgments. Critics of the play have framed this as a debate about whether value is subjective or objective. The most well-known example of this disagreement occurs during the debate in the Trojan council about whether Helen should be returned to the Greeks.

Nestor has just delivered an offer to the Trojans to end the war. He frames this exchange in terms of the costs incurred by the Greeks during the fighting:

> After so many hours, lives, speeches spent,
> Thus once again says Nestor from the Greeks:
> 'Deliver Helen, and all damage else—
> As honour, loss of time, travail, expense,
> Wounds, friends, and what else dear that is consumed
> In hot digestion of this cormorant war—
> Shall be struck off.' (2.2.1-7)

Just as Troilus combines the consumption tropes in the subsequent debate, Nestor also mixes economic exchange with metaphors of eating, emphasizing the destructive overtones of "consumption" by employing a well known early modern figure for self-consumption (the cormorant). Nestor's offer resembles the notice of a lender to a creditor, suggesting that the interest accrued while the Trojans have possessed Helen will be forgiven if the original debt be paid. The offer, framed as a commodity exchange, sets the tone for what Hugh Grady calls a "formally ethical" discourse which is nonetheless "jarring and disturbing in its instrumentalistic attempt to quantify human lives" (86).

While Helen is the "damage" at stake (if the Trojans give her up, the rest will be forgotten), Nestor's proposal lumps her together with other "prices" of the war, suggesting that there is an arithmetical equivalence for "honour," "time," "wounds," and "friends"; he effectively levels these items with "expense." Everything can be quantified, and the Greeks could be at least potentially compensated for any of their losses. As Heather James has suggested, Helen's commodification allows different characters to interpret her differently, but all such readings are reductive and economic: she is "either a pearl or a whore of great price" (104). In Marx's terms, Helen is the ultimate fetishized commodity, "a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort of another" (41). The reservation occasionally voiced by those who attempt to fix her worth is that her use-value seems relatively small compared to what people are willing to exchange for her.

The question in *Troilus and Cressida* is never whether a person has some quantifiable worth, which is a given, but how exactly to measure that worth. Thus Hector

believes that Helen is not worth what the Trojans have expended in keeping her;[116] he argues for giving Helen back to the Greeks by a mystifying series of arithmetic allusions; Troilus responds by rejecting rationality in general: the very fact of the war indicates that Helen is worth the exchange whether it is reasonable or not. Hector again attempts to present the exchange as an equation: "Brother, she is not worth what she doth cost / The holding" (2.2.50-1). Troilus' response grounds value in the will: "What's aught but as 'tis valued?" (52). This disagreement places rationality at the center of the debate over worth. Modern theories of market exchange suggest that all transactions are fundamentally rational, for parties agree to enter into such contracts based on principles of self interest; hence Troilus may oppose rationalizing the cost of the war because rationality is already implied by his economic theory: it is a supposedly inherent feature of market exchange.

According to Grady, Troilus views value as "baseless, independent of any intrinsic properties of the commodity, completely a function of the evaluating self and the self's whims—exchange value without use value, in Marxian terms" (88). Yet the "self" cannot simply declare the worth of something; worth is entirely dependent on the social contracts that determine value in a market economy. Helen is valuable not because Troilus or any other Trojan has (arbitrarily) declared her so. She is valuable because the war proves that multiple parties place a high value on her. In Marxian terms, the commodity (Helen) has value only because she has entered into a relation of exchange with other commodities; her value is thus the product of social relations (76). Both the

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[116] Hector thus focuses on Helen's use-value. As Marx puts it, "How, then, is the magnitude of this value to be measured? Plainly, by the quantity of the value-creating substance, the labour, contained in the article. The quantity of labour, however, is measured by its duration, and labour-time in its turn finds its standard in weeks, days, and hours."

marriage market and the war bring individuals into relation with each other in such a way that they may begin to establish value. This is both the virtue and the danger of emulation.

Troilus himself has already articulated the consequences of his own belief system in the first scene of the play, endorsing the collectivist theory he puts forward at the Trojan council, but recognizing the ends of that logic: "Fools on both sides. Helen must needs be fair / When with your blood you daily paint her thus" (1.1.86-7). To say that others will pay for Helen because she has value is to say that she has value because others will pay for her: the circularity of this dynamic creates an uncertainty about how to measure value properly, for it suggests the possibility of collective delusion about measure. Thus looming behind assertions of the subjective nature of value is a nostalgia for a simpler, objective value system in which objects have value according to inherent properties regardless of market price.

To Hector, Troilus' focus on subjective value is "mad idolatry," a worldview that makes "the service greater than the god" (56). Hector frames the problem in economic terms,

> Every tithe soul, 'mongst many thousand dimes,
> Hath been as dear as Helen; I mean, of ours:
> If we have lost so many tenths of ours,
> To guard a thing not ours nor worth to us,
> Had it our name, the value of one ten,
> What merit's in that reason which denies
> The yielding of her up? (2.2.18-24)

Troilus responds by noting that there is more at stake than the lives paid to keep Helen; the honor of the Trojans is in the balance. I will have more to say about reputation and

creditworthiness later, but Troilus—during an argument in which he explicitly rejects "reason"—does not here reject Hector's calculations; instead he points out a hidden "cost" to letting Helen go: if the Trojans release her, their ability to make good on promises comes into question:

> Weigh you the worth and honour of a king
> So great as our dread father in a scale
> Of common ounces? Will you with counters sum
> The past-proportion of his infinite,
> And buckle in a waist most fathomless
> With spans and inches so diminutive
> As fears and reasons? Fie, for godly shame!

Both Hector and Troilus are thus making economic arguments, but Troilus places his faith in the rationality of the market; if both camps are paying in blood for Helen, then Helen is by definition worth the price. Hector argues, on the other hand, that there is such a thing as a bad deal:

> HECTOR: Brother, she is not worth what she doth cost
> The holding.
> TROILUS: What's aught but as 'tis valued?
> HECTOR: But value dwells not in particular will.
> It holds his estimate and dignity
> As well wherein 'tis precious of itself
> As in the prizer. (2.2.50-55)

Here Hector explicitly states his theory of value measurement. A thing has as much value "of itself" as it derives from the will of the "prizer." Yet Hector's insistence on this ideal must be considered in light of Hector's other allegiances to outdated systems of honor and heroism. He is the play's most nostalgic and reactionary character, hopelessly out of touch with the political complexities demonstrated by Ulysses or the market

manipulations practiced by almost all the other characters. Like his other outdated allegiances, his argument for inherent, objective value utterly fails, and even he agrees to continue fighting for Helen. In terms of debates about how properly to measure worth, Hector's commitment to absolute value, like his practice of helping up the Greeks he has knocked down, is naïve and self-destructive. As Lars Engle argues, the play evinces "a rabid allegiance to market forces and an unrelieved economism with almost no residue of inherited absolutist conviction to work upon" (148). Hector's theory of inherent value is presented only to be utterly destroyed by the subjectivist theories of value all other characters embrace.

The argument enacted by Hector and Troilus foregrounds the questions the play investigates most persistently. As Engle frames them, "How may value in men or women be assessed? How may it be maintained or fixed? What causes it to fluctuate? In one form or another these questions are asked and given hypothetical answers over and over in the course of the play" (151). Characters desperately attempt to manipulate their own and others' values while simultaneously wishing for a simpler, more objective system by which value might be measured. Because value is relative, it can only be determined by the logic of comparison. Engle points out how Pandarus employs this logic in an attempt to establish the value of his niece:

> Pandarus attempts to establish Cressida's value by comparing her to publically accepted exemplars (in Helen's case a standard) of beauty and intelligence. Of course these comparisons are of little use if Pandarus can cite only his own opinion; thus he searches for any objective or quasi-objective measures of value

> he can find. Cressida is *almost* as fair as Helen, for instance. Or [...] Troilus "is very young; and yet will he within three pound lift as much as his brother Hector" (1.2.117) (151).

In the play's world of subjective value, comparison is the only mechanism by which worth may be measured. As Marx puts it, "Since no commodity can stand in the relation of equivalent to itself, and thus turn its own bodily shape into the expression of its own value, every commodity is compelled to choose some other commodity for its equivalent, and to accept the use-value, that is to say, the bodily shape of that other commodity as the form of its own value" (65). Yet, as we have already seen, the strategy of comparison risks slipping into an infinitely regressive and unstable worldview in which all value is dependant on other values that are themselves equally unstable.[117] For Helen—as discussions throughout the play reveal—may be a "standard" of beauty, but that standard is utterly unstable and subject to the praise and dispraise of interested parties. Thus Pandarus, in his attempts to praise Troilus to Cressida, necessarily devalues and dispraises Hector, and in his attempts to praise Cressida to Troilus, he devalues and dispraises Helen. The more Pandarus tries to manipulate value the more he emphasizes the variability of *all* value. As Engle puts it, "In his attempts to talk up value, Pandarus only draws attention to the relativity and changefulness of values (especially values conferred by erotic attraction)" (151).

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[117] In his critique of the "expanded form of value," in which every commodity is brought into a relation of exchange with every other commodity, Marx suggests the possibility of just such an "interminable series of expressions of value": "Since the bodily form of each single commodity is one particular equivalent form amongst numberless others, we have, on the whole, nothing but fragmentary equivalent forms, each excluding the others" (74).

The sense that value has become detached from a clear system of objective measurement, that the currencies of desire and military distinction have been separated from the gold standard of fixed worth, is a symptom of the economic culture of early modern England. Craig Muldrew has analyzed the transition from feudal networks of obligation, in which networks of exchange consisted of relatively hierarchical agreements between families that could last generations, to the more complex systems of exchange common to the early modern period:[118]

> Personal social relations were seen in terms of trust, but as market competition and disputes became common, 'society' came to be defined, not just as the positive expression of social unity through Christian love and ritual as had been the case in medieval England, but increasingly as the cumulative unity of the millions of interpersonal obligations which were continually being exchanged and renegotiated (123).

The rise of the "culture of credit" that accompanied the increasingly complex market structures created a reliance on trust: "To be a creditor in an economic sense still had a strong social and ethical meaning. Most credit was extended between individual emotional agents, and it meant that you were willing to trust someone to pay you in the

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[118] Muldrew dates this increasing complexity from the middle of the sixteenth century: "After 1530 consumption expanded, and as the amount of buying and selling increased, marketing structures became more complex. With limited amounts of gold and silver in circulation, this economic expansion was based on the increasing use of credit, much of which was informal [...]; and because most credit relations were interpersonal and emotive, this led to their becoming problematic" (3).

future" (3). Unlike modern economic theory, which developed from the classical economic models of the eighteenth century, approaches to markets in the early-modern period stressed the interpersonal, cultural aspects of exchange, for to exchange anything in early modern England was to make a judgment about the person with whom one was exchanging, to demonstrate *trust* in that person. Thus both objects of exchange and those who offered (and marketed) goods had to be evaluated, judged, and measured. By 1580 the new systems of exchange had created what Muldrew calls an "economic crucible" in which marketing involved not only economic objects of exchange, but also the social relationships that made those exchanges possible, especially in terms of the reputation of members of the exchanging community: "there was a reordering of notions of community relations towards a highly mobile and circulating language of judgement," which Muldrew calls "the 'currency of reputation'—about the creditworthiness of households attempting both to cooperate and compete within communities increasingly permeated by market relations" (2-3).

The Trojan and Greek societies are just such communities, obsessed as they are with the dynamics of exchange and reputation. While Grady refers to the Greeks as "objectivist" foils to the "subjectivist" Trojans symbolized by Troilus (92), it seems to me that the Greeks are as subjectivist as the Trojans. They certainly understand how to manipulate their relative individual values at the expense of the army's general effectiveness. In fact, Ulysses recognizes that the factionalism—that is, competition *among* the Greeks, as opposed to competition with the Trojans—is the primary threat to the Greek project, which would ideally result in each of the Greeks raising their respective values at the expense of the Trojans. This is not an objectivist view of social

worth; it is price-fixing. This is why Achilles' self-interest is a threat to the group's goals. As long as Achilles recognizes that he can raise his own value by withholding his services from the collective he represents a threat to the Greek project of collectively inflating their respective values.

While characters repeatedly resort to misogynistic formulations to explain the war, the conversation in the Greek camp reveals that the war provides a market by which heroic and military worth may be established. Thus while both camps blame Helen for the war, both also insist on fighting for reasons completely unrelated to her. Nestor's argument that "valour's show and valour's worth divide / In storms of fortune" (45-6) asserts the importance of the war on the grounds that it will reveal "worth," for only in the difficult circumstances of the war are the properties inherent to valor allowed to enter into a market exchange, a system of comparisons by which relative values may be sorted out. Yet the various attempts by characters to manipulate their own values in fact results only in confusion and anxiety. These anxieties reflect cultural concerns about the instability of value, or, more precisely, about the unstable systems of economic and individual measurement that displace the older modes of exchange, which still commanded rhetorical and emotive power. Hector's insistence that the value of objects lies "not in particular will," but is "precious of itself" belongs to a vanishing world.

Not surprisingly, arguments about the nature of value are common to pamphleteers of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, for the play's obsessions with the subjective nature of value pick up on similar cultural obsessions elicited by the rise of early capitalist systems of measure. Hector's argument for the

objective value of commodities, for instance, is articulated by William Scott in *An Essay on Drapery* (1635):

> A Contract must be made according to the equality of the thing; and that must bee measured by the price that is given. For as time is the measure of businesse, so is price of Wares. If the price exceed the worth of the thing, or the thing exceed the price, the equality of justice is taken away; that both agree is the just rule of trading, against which deceipt is opposite. (18-9)

As Hector says of Helen, "she is not worth what she doth cost / The holding." Of course, part of the problem is that the price for Helen has not been agreed upon by two rational parties. The Trojans pay the price for Helen every day they keep her, but the initial transaction was not a price that underwent the usual practices of bargaining, by which a fair and just price might be determined. This is why Troilus attempts to frame the rape of Helen as a market exchange: "And for an old aunt whom the Greeks held captive / He brought a Grecian queen" (2.2.76-7).

That trading "an old aunt"—Hesione—for Helen is not a fair deal, is clearly implied by Troilus, and is an argument for keeping her, for the Trojans have benefited by the trade. Yet, as Scott would say, in such a transaction "the equality of justice is taken away." The Trojan strategy of seizing Helen as recompense for their own losses, as emphasized by Shakespeare—is perhaps a vestige of the late medieval practice Avner Greif has called "community responsibility systems," in which a community is held responsible for the default of any one of its traders. In situations—impersonal

exchanges—in which personal reputation was not a feasible guarantee of credit, communities could enforce trade violations by holding all members of the defaulter's community responsible for the debt:

> A local communal court held all members of another commune legally liable for the default of any member in contracts with a member of the local community. If a defaulter's communal court refused to compensate the injured party, the local court acquired compensation by confiscating the property of the defaulter's commune members who were present within its jurisdiction (223).

At the heart of Shakespeare's version of the Trojan War is a conflict of trust, and that trust violation has a negative effect on the reputation and identity of the members of each community. The community responsibility system provided an incentive to deal justly with others in order to preserve the communal reputation for good credit, yet the system collapsed when heterogeneity within communities disincentivized such collective action. It is just such conflicts between individuals and their communities that creates emulation in *Troilus and Cressida* and makes justice so difficult to achieve. Without a legal framework for the restitution of defaults, exchange depends on reputation, either communal or individual, yet a breakdown in reputation leads to the failure of justice.

The possibility that economic exchange might not result in justice is at the heart of economic measure anxiety. In the *Boke Named the Governour* Thomas Elyot appropriates Aristotle's distinction between commutative and distributive (or "rectificatory") justice. While distributive justice entails what Muldrew calls "the

distribution of honour, money or some other assets divisible among members of a community, according to merit" (44), commutative justice involves determining mathematical equality between the parts of a transaction, and "sometime is voluntary, sometime involuntary intermedlynge":

> Voluntary is bienge and sellynge, love, suertie, lettynge, and takynge, and all other thynge wherin, is mutuall consent at the beginning [...]. Justice commutative hathe no regarde to the persone, but onely considerynge the inequalitie wherby the one thynge excedeth the other, indevoureth to brynge them both to an equalitie" (196).

Both forms of justice are at stake in *Troilus and Cressida*: on the one hand, honor and merit among Trojans and Greeks must be appropriately measured and distributed, and on the other hand exchanges between parties must be mathematically equivalent in order for them to be just.[119]

In the Greek camp we see the same debate played out in slightly different terms. Ulysses' famous speech on degree is a corollary to the Trojan debate on value, for questions of worth cannot be limited to the Trojans. Ultimately everything and everyone is indicted—or perhaps infected—including the audience. The Prologue argues that the

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[119] Agnew notes that "questions of commutative (or individual) justice overshadowed questions of distributive (or social) justice in ethical and casuistic writing from Aquinas onward, but this was largely because the answers to the distributive questions were already embedded in the rules of access to markets, the prohibitions against hoarding, the provisions for public granaries, and, not least of all, the retributive resources of carnival" (37).

play itself is subject to the relative values of the audience: "Like or find fault; do as your pleasures are" (30). As C.C. Barfoot argues, the play "is concerned to press on us the view that we are all inclined to be traitors once we have something to sell, either by underselling or overselling goods, or ourselves, or others, or even by merely putting ourselves, or our goods, or others up for sale at all" (47). This appraisal is (perhaps subconsciously) reinforced by the use of the homophone traitor/trader, which Shakespeare plays on in Pandarus' epilogue, where both words are used, (Palmer 302 n. 37).

Like Scott and Elyot, and like the Trojans, the Greeks are concerned about the justness of their exchanges. Ulysses, in his speech on order, describes a world in which the failure of degree—that is, a system of ordered relations—leads to the failure of justice. Unlike the universe, which part of the created "order," the Greek camp, Ulysses argues, is "chaos." In my discussion of this speech in Chapter I, I noted how it enforces prevalent cultural anxieties about failures of measure, for it insists that failure of order in any one instance threatens to create disorder everywhere, figuring unease as disease:

> The general's disdained
> By him one step below; he, by the next;
> That next, by him beneath. So every step,
> Exampled by the first pace that is sick
> Of his superior, grows to an envious fever
> Of pale and bloodless emulation.
> And 'tis this fever that keeps Troy on foot
> Not her own sinews. (1.3.129-36)

Disorder spreads like a disease, and infects not only the Greek camp, but the world itself. Through "emulation" the Greeks, like the Trojans, recreate the world of the market in their camp, but this system of competitive comparison destabilizes value rather than fixes it.

The Greeks do not question the worth of Helen relative to their own losses to the extent that the Trojans do. They see the war itself as a chance to establish individual—in the language of this play "particular"—achievement. Once again, the logic of the marketplace is figured in human terms. As we have seen, the effect of this on female characters is commodification, which leads to misogynist value assessments from male characters. But while the effects of market value are gendered differently, males are likewise the sum of their "worth," in this case through emulation, a word Shakespeare uses in *Troilus and Cressida* almost as many times as in the rest of his plays combined.[120] "Emulation" is a word with ambivalent connotations in early modern England, potentially meaning "[t]he endeavour to equal or surpass others in any achievement or quality" (*OED* 1), that is, the code by which Hector wishes to test himself against the best of the Greeks. Yet in its uses in *Troilus and Cressida* the word always has a negative connotation, that of *OED* 2: "ambitious rivalry for power or honours; contention or ill-will between rivals"; or even *OED* 3: "grudge against the superiority of others; dislike, or tendency to disparagement, of those who are superior."

Emulation, then, might be considered positive to the extent that it entails improving one's worth, but negative to the extent that it entails improving the *appearance* of one's worth. And, as we have seen and has been articulated by Troilus and

[120] Eight out of eighteen instances (Bartlett 431).

others, the appearance of worth increasingly comes to be seen as actual value. Thus the Greeks do not oppose the war as wasteful or view their losses as extraordinary. In lengthy rhetorical orations, Agamemnon and Nestor, symbolic representations of power and wisdom, both argue that the "[c]hecks and disasters" (1.3.4) the army has experienced are tests of greatness. Agamemnon claims that "the protractive trials of great Jove" (19) are designed so that "[d]istinction" might reveal the "rich in virtue" (16, 29). Nestor expands on the argument, emphasizing the role of fortune: "In the reproof of chance / lies the true proof of men" (32-3). That is, both argue that the failure to defeat Troy will increase possibilities for individual distinction; both see the war itself as productive of emulative possibilities. In a sense, they agree with Thersites' later ironic comment: "All the argument is a whore and a cuckold. A good quarrel to draw emulous factions and bleed to death upon" (2.3.65-6).

Ulysses rejects both explanations, arguing instead that the desire for individual distinction—emulation—is precisely the cause of the Greeks' failures. I do not think it is enough, on the basis of Ulysses' rejection of individual will, to label the Greeks—as Grady does—"objectivist." Agamemnon's and Nestor's arguments are ultimately bound to worldviews that originate in the appetite of the self—the worldview Ulysses ostensibly rejects. Furthermore, Ulysses describes the entire Greek camp as ultimately bound to this subjective outlook, and, although he rails against it, he shows himself to be a crafty manipulator of the relative values he criticizes. As Cedric Watts notes, Ulysses "invokes the principle of hierarchy in order to urge the Greeks to respect their leaders. But after this appeal for respect, Ulysses goes out to rig a lottery in order to deceive the warriors; and furthermore, his deceptions fail [...]" (126). The Greeks are as imprisoned by

subjectivist values as the Trojans: after all, they too must be persuaded by Troilus' logic since they are still engaged in a war for Helen.

In his speech, Ulysses expounds on early modern commonplaces, the importance of "rule" and order, comparing the army to a beehive and then to the Ptolemaic solar system. To abandon the "specialty of rule," Ulysses suggests, is to destroy the entire world, for the world depends on a system of ordered relationships. Interestingly, Ulysses does not argue that justice will be destroyed in such an event, but that it will be confused; like "right and wrong," it will lose its name:

> Force should be right—or rather, right and wrong,
> Between whose endless jar justice resides,
> Should lose their names, and so should justice too.
> Then everything includes itself in power,
> Power into will, will into appetite,
> And appetite, an universal wolf,
> So doubly seconded with will and power,
> Must make perforce an universal prey,
> And last eat up himself. (1.3.116-24)

Self-consumption is a recurring theme. Here the appetite is "an envious fever / Of pale and bloodless emulation" (1.3.133-4); elsewhere Thersites says "lechery eats itself" (5.4.30-1); and Agamemnon claims that "[h]e that is proud eats up himself" (2.3.146). In a play where one's worth is always economic, pride and avarice become the same sin: all characters in *Troilus and Cressida* try to inflate their own worth through individual will or appetite, which in the gastric logic of the play must lead to self-consumption. As Hillman argues, the play's manifestations of appetite result in the trope of self-consumption because "appetite contains—or wills—its own end. For the play seems to me to conceive of appetite as something very like Nietzsche's 'will to power'—an

insatiable, appropriative urge [...]" (306). Avarice is figured in Alciat's emblem as a filthy woman "quaeque suum cor edit": "who eats her own heart" (Alciato 71).

In my discussion of the seventh canto of Dante's *Inferno*, I argue that the fourth circle of hell is an experiment in the logical ends of measure anxiety. In that canto, those who fail to assess value properly are condemned to an afterlife in which they must carry stones in a meaningless dance, constantly running into each other. The pilgrim Dante thinks he must be able to recognize some of these sinners, but Virgil explains otherwise: "the undiscerning life that befouled them makes them dark now to all recognition" (53-4). Once again, in *Troilus and Cressida*, failures of recognition are a consequence of failures to measure properly: straining for individual distinction paradoxically results in repeated failures to distinguish one individual from another. Catherine Belsey describes appetite in terms of desire, which is rooted in subjective identity: "The play stages the extent to which objects of desire, always only a succession of stand-ins, are ultimately interchangeable for the subject. But obsession here is indiscriminate: the characters lose all distinction as desire becomes the element in which they have their being" (93). Like right and wrong, and like justice, the characters "lose their names" (1.3.118). Patricia Parker notes that Aeneas cannot distinguish Agamemnon from the rest of the Greeks (the "'general' from the particulars"), and Thersites later comments that "Ajax actually takes him for the general" (*Literary Fat Ladies* 88). In Pandarus' catalogue of the Trojans returning from battle—the entire point of which is to distinguish Troilus from the other Trojans—Pandarus confuses Troilus with Deiphobus (1.2.209). Hector comically asks Thersites "Art thou for Hector's match?" (5.5.22). In a world without a figurative gold

standard by which values may be fixed, Shakespeare suggests, individual distinction is fool's gold, a fundamentally impossible illusion.

It is this lack of standard that damns both Shakespeare's characters and Dante's indistinguishable souls. When Ulysses says that the "disease" of the Greeks is that "[t]he specialty of rule hath been neglected" (1.3.77), the diagnosis depends on the possible connotations of "rule." One possible definition is social: "A regulation framed or adopted by a corporate body, public or private, for governing its conduct and that of its members" (*OED* 5a). Conversely, it might be read in individual terms: "A principle, regulation, or maxim governing individual conduct" (*OED* 1a). Thus this word participates in what Parker has called the "[p]aronomastic play on the 'general' and the 'particular'" in *Troilus and Cressida* (87). In its context, the word preserves both connotations: communal order (rule) has been poisoned by the failure of individuals to govern their appetites.[121] Order is the standard that provides value to commodities. This standard is what Dante's Virgil calls "*misura*," measure:

> Everyone of them [the prodigal and avaricious] was so cross-eyed in mind in the first life, that no measure governed their spending. (40-2)

Without objective measure, individual worth depends on and is contextualized by the value of one's peers, that is, it is a market value. As I have suggested, this recognition has a thoroughly economic effect: individuals devalue the worth of others to improve their own relative "price." Parker has noted that economic awareness in this play leads to inflation "in its multiple senses—of body, of discourse, of price, and of the space before

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[121] That is, the failure of temperance. Milton employs "rule" in this context: "if thou well observe / The rule of not too much, by temperance taught [...]" (*Paradise Lost* XI 530-1).

end or fine" (*Shakespeare* 225). But clearly deflation is at work too. The "universal" particular drive to increase value has social effects: paradoxically, characters are obsessed with distinctions of value that depend on a general *misura*, but such distinctions are impossible precisely because characters' pursuit of inflating their "particular" values destroys such "order."

All threats to order in the early modern period eventually suggest failures of language. As I have suggested, praising and dispraising are especially fraught forms of discourse to the extent that they are forms of value manipulation. But given Muldrew's discussion of the rise of credit and the importance of trust beginning in the middle of the sixteenth century, forms of *promising* are equally complex and susceptible to suspicion. We might ask Troilus's question—"what's ought but as 'tis valued?"—of verbal expressions, including Troilus' and Cressida's vows. Since verbal expressions are relative, Troilus and Cressida need a standard—a "rule," or *misura*—by which to measure their own faithfulness. Troilus selects himself as his standard of truth, or, more precisely, he claims that his future faithfulness will itself be the standard for future faithful relationships. He makes his *name* the collateral of his promise. Yet his name is more than himself, for it is a literary byword for one who is faithful and yet is betrayed; like all characters in the play, Troilus evinces a kind of awareness of himself as a literary artifact.

Thus Cressida cannot revert to her own name as a standard of truth, partly because her name has already been compromised. Instead she uses her name as a negative pole of faithfulness: in effect, she curses herself:

> If I be false, or swerve a hair from truth,
> When time is old and hath forgot itself,
> [...] yet let memory
> From false to false among false maids in love
> Upbraid my falsehood. (3.2.171-178)

The wit of this scene depends on the audience's awareness of Cressida's vast literary and cultural history as a standard of betrayal, an equivalence easily available to early modern audiences. Thus, before the vows have been exchanged—before the play has started—Cressida has betrayed Troilus. Shakespeare couches the motives for this betrayal in a kind of market logic: like the male characters, she recognizes that her own value is dependent on forces of competition, which may raise her "price." Cressida, like Helen, is both price and prize, and it is her awareness of her value as prize that causes her to manipulate the market in order to increase her price.

Cressida is depicted as self-consciously aware of her own value from her first appearance in the play. In the first Act, Cressida and Alexander are talking when Pandarus enters. Cressida, after being informed of Pandarus' entry, deliberately praises Hector, since she is aware that it is the very possibility of her availability that preserves her "price." Here I quote from the *New Variorum*, for reasons of spelling and punctuation:

> *Enter Pandarus*
> *Cre.* Who comes here?
> *Man.* Madam your Vncle *Pandarus*.
> *Cre.* *Hectors* a gallant man.
> *Man.* As may be in the world Lady.
> *Pan.* What's that? what's that?

Cre. Good morrow Vncle *Pandarus*.
Pan. Good morrow Cozen *Cressid*: what do you talke of? good morrow *Alexander*: how do you Cozen? when were you at Illium? (1.2.40-9)

While Cressida is already figured as a cheat by her textual history, the pun on cousin/cozen here also prefigures her as a cheater at the precise moment that she self-consciously attempts to manipulate her own market value by speaking of another man in her uncle's presence. She presents herself as a good with a relative price, but she is also buying, and it is in her interest to devalue the good (Troilus) by comparing him unfavorably with Hector:

Pandarus: Troilus is the better man of the two
Cressida: O Jupiter! There's no comparison.
Pandarus: What, not between Troilus and Hector? Do you know a man if you see him?
Cressida: Ay, if I ever saw him before and knew him.
Pandarus: Well, I say Troilus is Troilus.
Cressida: Then you say as I say, for I am sure
He is not Hector. (1.2.56-63)

This exchange continues through the procession of Trojans, in which Pandarus attempts to establish Troilus' relative value, continually pressing Cressida to "mark Troilus above the rest." He might as easily urge her to "market Troilus above the rest"; like Ulysses, who attempts to manipulate the emulation market ("Let us like merchants show our foulest wares / And think perchance they'll sell" [1.3.352-3]), Pandarus and Cressida attempt to inflate or deflate goods in order to serve their own economic interests. In the

process of assigning value, the commodity in question must always be compared to another commodity.[122]

In the vow scene, however, Cressida's attempts to preserve self-value lead to a disastrous paradox. She is caught in a bind: to be valuable she must be both available to competition and completely unavailable—"true." Cressida's attempt to fix her faithfulness to her own name is material for stage humor because of the force her name already has, emphasized again by Pandarus' use of the term "cousin":

> Go to, a bargain made. Seal it, seal it. I'll be the witness. Here I hold your hand; here, my cousin's. If ever you prove false to one another, since I have taken such pain to bring you together, let all pitiful goers-between be called to the world's end after my name: call them all panders. Let all constant men be Troiluses, all false women Cressids, and all brokers-between panders. Say 'Amen.' (3.3.184-90)

Thus Pandarus presents the romantic attachment between Cressida and Troilus as an economic deal, a "bargain" which must be witnessed and sealed. Yet it is a bargain destined to end in bad faith, for the grammatical extension of the hypothetical "if ever you prove false to one another" is ambiguous. That is, the last sentence has independent syntactic force and negates both Cressida's previous "if" and Pandarus' "if"; it becomes a

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[122] See Marx: "It is not possible to express the value of linen in linen. 20 yards of linen=20 yards of linen is no expression of value. On the contrary, such an equation merely says that 20 yards of linen are nothing else than 20 yards of linen, a definite quantity of the use-value of linen. The value of the linen can therefore be expressed only relatively—*i.e.*, in some other commodity" (56).

pronouncement or, with the addition of "Amen," a prayer. This etiological signification is reinforced by Pandarus' reference to his own name, which did in fact spawn the word "pander": the word was in use from Bocaccio's and Chaucer's accounts of the Troilus and Cressida (*OED*).

Troilus and Cressida both grasp at standards by which to reinforce their words, but one of the effects of a world without *misura* is that language itself fails. Even when context demands high oratory, such as the meeting between the Greeks in 1.3, the mode is satirical; the inflated words can only sound deflated in the context of the petty particular cares of the Greeks. More significantly, in this context language turns to the idiom of filth and corruption, typified by Thersites' railing. In Thersites the somatic tropes of the play are given voice in linguistic expressions of disgust, usually in terms of venereal disease. Patroclus is a target for Thersites because he is a perfect embodiment of commodified flesh and is thus paradoxically without value: "Thou idle immaterial skein of sleave-silk, thou green sarsenet flap for a sore eye, thou tassel of a prodigal's purse, thou! Ah, how the poor world is pestered with such waterflies!" (5.1.26-8).

When Ajax has been selected as the Greek champion to face Hector, he is at his most proud, and Thersites describes the effects of self-assessment without measure: the lack of the capacity to distinguish and the failure of language. Ajax has no capacity to distinguish between particulars: "He knows not me. I said, 'Good morrow, Ajax', and he replies, 'Thanks, Agamemnon'. What think you of this man that takes me for the General? He's grown a very land-fish, languageless, a monster" (3.3.251-4). The absurd, languageless Ajax, incapable of making distinctions yet obsessed with achieving distinction, is thus an exemplar of the world of failed measure. Just as language in the

fourth circle of hell is incomprehensible, so in *Troilus and Cressida* it becomes a parody of itself, and we might connect Thersites' caustic ranting with the incomprehensible clucking of Plutus. Yet language only fails in the *Inferno* when it has no *misura*, no shared standard on which community members may rely. Virgil is able to silence and vanquish Plutus with language, indeed with only a few words, but he does so by referring to an outside source of value:

> Not without cause is our descent to the depths: it is willed on high,
> where Michael avenged the proud onslaught. (10-13)

Virgil's language, then, is a currency with absolute value: he is as good as his word(s); characters in *Troilus and Cressida*, generally, are not. Yet, like Virgil, they continually attempt to measure themselves and their words by fixing them to other, more stable values. Thersites is the character most resigned to the failure of this strategy; unlike the Trojans and Greeks who repeatedly compare themselves and others to other Trojans and Greeks, in an infinitely regressive and increasingly futile attempt to fix value somewhere, Thersites removes himself and all others from the market altogether. In Nestor's words, he is

> A slave whose gall coins slanders like a mint,
> To match us in comparisons with dirt,
> To weaken and discredit our exposure[.] (1.3.193-5)

The economic metaphor here is prescient. Thersites' counterfeit praises introduce into the market a set of verbal representations that affect all other verbal attempts to raise or fix

value, and the result is "discredit"—the failure of trust upon which equitable market exchanges depend.

In his ability see the pointless scuffling of the "heroes" of the Trojan War, Thersites is thus like Virgil standing above the pointless clashing of the damned, for he seems to recognize that the characters of this play are stereotypes whose individuality ultimately cannot be recovered. In such a context, the high rhetoric of the source texts is meaningless, and Thersites becomes the chorus: like no other Shakespearean play, *Troilus and Cressida* is the play of disgust and verbal filth, and like no other play it is a meditation on the failures of the ordered and measurable world. It is Dante's Virgil who might best sum up Shakespeare's approach to the "mad idolatry" of the world without *misura*, the Trojan War; these lines might even be considered a motto for the play's attitude toward its heroes in general:

> Bad giving and bad keeping has deprived them of the lovely world and set them to this scuffling: whatever it is, I prettify no words for it (7.58-60).

And Shakespeare prettifies no words for the mismeasured world of the Trojan War. Ultimately, failures of measure threaten to infect language itself, and thus in Shakespeare's nightmare of failed *misura* Homeric characters enter the early modern market, teetering, as Foucault says, "on the brink of anxiety," turned into measureless monsters and expressing every measure anxiety of the early modern world.

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