“EATEN WITH A REFORMED MOUTH”: DEMOCRATIZING GLUTTONY IN JONSON’S BARTHOLOMEW FAIR

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ABSTRACT

In Ben Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair*, various characters attend the annual Saint Bartholomew's Day Fair at the Smithfield fairgrounds outside of town, where sundry underworld characters peddle food, drink, and cheap trinkets, hoping to ensnare and cheat the gullible visitors. Three authority figures, Justice Overdo, Busy, and Wasp, assume they are above the fair's carnal attractions, specifically the roast pig and ale that emanate from the grotesque Ursula's tent. However, these men are themselves poor judges and cannot control their own bodily cravings for the fair's temptations. This thesis will prove that Jonson exhibits a more forgiving attitude toward human nature than in his earlier satires by examining his portrayals of the relationships characters share with the food they crave and how what those cravings mean in Jonsonian satire.

*Bartholomew Fair* is a play about appetites, and culminates a trend in the softening of Jonson's satirical impulse. In earlier plays, *Volpone* and *The Alchemist*, Jonson portrays wicked characters who fantasize about obscene, exotic dishes to exhibit their power. By showing a greater number of relatively benign characters who all consume throughout the play, Jonson makes the statement that indulging the body is natural, and those who seek to control the appetites of others are deservingly humiliated when their own fleshly weaknesses are revealed. The three figures who would keep others from enjoying the attractions at the fair are humorless satirists who pass judgment from an artificially superior position. By turning the satirical mirror on himself and other moralists, Jonson exhibits that he has grown more tolerant and more forgiving.
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INTRODUCTION

In Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, an ensemble of various London characters attends the yearly fair in Smithfield commemorating the martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew. First performed in 1614, *Bartholomew Fair* contains many Jonsonian staples that appeared in his earlier plays *Volpone* (1606) and *The Alchemist* (1610), particularly the theme that when social order is turned upside down or absent, predators emerge to construct a new order based on cheating other characters. At the fair, the characters argue, steal, fight, and cheat while consuming roast pig, ale, gingerbread in a swirl of gluttony, profanity, and sex. Three authority figures, Humphrey Wasp, Justice Adam Overdo, and the Puritan Rabbi Zeal-of-the-Land Busy, seek to control other characters, but they cannot control their own appetites. In *Bartholomew Fair*, Jonson shows that the individual is responsible for his own morality and should not give moral responsibility to authority figures who often succumb to the same vices. The fair exists outside the confines of the London, but Wasp, Overdo, and Busy believe their respective influence follows them into Smithfield. When the three authority figures accede to their own appetites and gorge themselves, the audience and the characters realize that the fair has its own social order. As I will illustrate, *Bartholomew Fair* culminates a trend in Jonson's work, from *Volpone* to *The Alchemist*, and from *The Alchemist* to *Bartholomew Fair*, of allowing a certain level of corruptibility in human nature, and turns his satirical mirror on the satirists themselves. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the relationships of authority and food in *Bartholomew Fair*, and how persons with authority, when seeking their aggrandizement, become consumed by the very vices they try to
suppress in others.

Volpone and The Alchemist are stricter satires than Bartholomew Fair. Satire employs humor and wit to improve social institutions and human behavior, to "attempt through laughter not so much to tear down as to inspire a remodeling" (Holman and Harmon 423). In these earlier plays, Jonson attempts to correct the audience's morality by showing the effects of vices, stretched to the extreme. In Volpone, in the strictest sense, the most satirical of the three plays, the titular character and his parasitic servant cheat the greedy, immoral Venetian gulls named fittingly after carrion eaters: Corbaccio, Corvino, and Voltore. These birds of prey who are themselves preyed upon by Volpone and Mosca, the fox and the fly. Volpone and Mosca are carrion-eaters of apparent disproportion. The fox is historically portrayed as more cunning than the fly, but as the play progresses, the fly feeds on all other animals, the fox included: “Sir,” Mosca tells Volpone, “I can fit you” (5.3. 113). The rapacious scavengers of Volpone's Venice embody monstrous corruption, while the plague-ridden London of The Alchemist is populated by more familiarly mendacious characters. With the master of the house waiting out the plague in the country, his servant Face has opened up an alchemist's laboratory accompanied by Subtle, the alchemist, and Doll Common, a prostitute. The three characters quarrel with each other and their victims in a mimetic inverse of the alchemical aspiration of changing base metals into gold, through which, instead of pursuing spiritual and material perfection, the characters debase and humiliate themselves and others in a desperate attempt to climb over one another to the top of the dung-heap. Jonson's style of Juvenalian satire in these earlier plays "is biting, bitter, angry; it points
with contempt to the corruption of human beings and institutions" (Holman and Harmon, 424). The author necessarily satirizes from a superior, judgmental attitude, but in *Bartholomew Fair*, that voice is softer and more lenient.

The treatment of food in these three plays best illustrates the pattern of softening in Jonson's satirical tendencies. In *Volpone* and *The Alchemist*, the most perverted and immoral hedonists envision obscene menus that are impossible to obtain and that have no culinary appeal beyond the power and cruelty required to obtain them. In *Bartholomew Fair*, however, everyone consumes mundane fare such as roast pig, ale, and gingerbread almost constantly. Jonson's satire in *Volpone* proceeds from a position of great self-importance; hence its gargantuan distortions of society's evils, portrayed as demoniacally obscene. In *The Alchemist*, written four years later, Jonson moves his setting from an alien, unnatural Venice, to London, symbolized as a vast masterless house. The petty crooks' endeavors are treated as routine and unavoidable, a satire on the moral responsibility to the lower classes that the privileged sometimes shirk. In *Bartholomew Fair*, satire descends from the pedestal where Jonson's previous plays pronounced judgment, to a raucous carnival where even thievery and violence seem relatively harmless. It is the self-appointed authority figures, seeking to equate the natural excesses of the carnival with biblical wickedness, who Jonson holds up for ridicule and correction.

In the second act of *Bartholomew Fair*, the upright Justice Overdo disguises himself as a local madman and creeps near the booth of the “pig-woman” Ursula as she lectures her apprentice Mooncalf on the proper technique to shortchange a customer:
I ha' told you the ways how to raise it:

froth your cans well I' the filling, at length, rogue, and jog
your bottles o' the buttock, sirrah, then skink out the first
glass, ever, and drink with all companies, though you be
sure to be drunk; you'll misreckon the better and be less
ashamed on't. But your true trick, rascal, must be to be ever
busy, and mis-take away the bottles and cans in haste before
they be half drunk off, and never hear anybody call, if they
should chance to mark you, till you ha' brought fresh, and
be able to foreswear 'em.                        (2.2.99-108)

Overdo concerns himself with the fairgoers cheating customers on food and drink, and
thinks he is poised to prevent it. His preoccupation with the dangers of tainted food and
drink, while robberies and assaults are committed around him, reveals Overdo's poor
judgment, and his inability to protect the visitors to the fair. Overdo adopts the madman's
garb to thwart the cheaters at the fair committing what he calls “enormities” (2.1.106)
against the fairgoers: "O tempora! O mores! I would not ha’ lost my discovery of this one
grievance, for my place, and worship o’ the bench, how is the poor subject abus’d, here!
"(2.2.113-15). Overdo’s attempt to control carnality and the vices associated with it
shows how he aspires to the superior role of satirist. Jonas Barish views the repeated
appearance and examination of appetites as “expressive of [an] omnipresent carnality”
(228).

Justice Overdo is one of three self-appointed authority figures who visit the Fair
on this day to prevent their charges from being swindled by the various booth operators. However, as Overdo's failures reveal, when the correctors at the fair fall to their own appetites, their status as judges of others' faults is seriously compromised. The loss of their ability to judge and correct leads to the loss of their abilities to protect their charges.

In the last act of *Bartholomew Fair*, Bartholomew Cokes tells his tutor Wasp that he saw Wasp in the stocks; Zeal-of-the-Land Busy is defeated by a puppet in a test of rhetorical skill; while Justice Overdo, who prepares to make a speech on the depravity at the fair, is interrupted by the violent vomiting of one of the prostitutes who turns out to be his wife. *Volpone* concludes with both Volpone and Mosca being sentenced to severe penalties which amount essentially to death sentences: Mosca, "being a fellow of no birth or blood" (5.12.112), is ordered to be whipped and made a prisoner for life in the galleys; since Volpone is a gentleman, his sentence is lighter, and the avocatori send him to a hospital for incurable diseases, where he will "lie in prison, cramped with irons,/ Till thou be'st sick and lame indeed" (5.12.123-24). Volpone and Mosca are punished severely, not only because of their material crimes: fraud, attempted rape, and perjury, but because they disrupt and infect the social fabric. Because the audience enjoyed their scheming, their punishment must be severe and unambiguous lest the satirical intent be overlooked by the audience. Harold Bloom suggests that Jonson over-punishes Volpone and Mosca as a form of self-punishment for enjoying Volpone's wickedness: "Massively aware of this paradox, distrusting the theatrical while creating Volpone as a genius of theatricality, Jonson takes moral revenge on Volpone, the audience, and even himself” (8). The humor required in satire is a tricky matter. On one hand, when the goal is to correct the
audience's behavior, and by extension, society, the trickster must be clever enough to dupe the gulls, who themselves are greedy and immoral. This makes the trickster somewhat likable. On the other hand, he must be revealed as a cheat and punished. The playwright achieves this by showing Volpone attempt to rape Celia, and showing Mosca persuade Corbaccio to disinherit Bonario. When Volpone and Mosca try to ruin the two decent, albeit wooden and uncharismatic characters, the audience turns on them and demands their punishment. In *The Alchemist*, there are no decent characters; however, the gulls are a motley collection of fools rather than the wicked predators in *Volpone*. When Lovewit returns, Doll and Subtle flee to their origins: the brothel for her and the Pie Corner slums for Subtle. The authority figure, Lovewit, gains the wealthy Dame Pliant, and therefore allows the preceding schemes to go unpunished. Face must return to his role as a servant and everything essentially reverts to how it was before the play began. By populating his play with less wicked characters, and placing responsibility on the negligent landlord, Jonson redirects the satirical imperative from *Volpone* to *The Alchemist*. This trend continues in *Bartholomew Fair*.

Where the trial scenes in *Volpone* and *The Alchemist* result in prisons and a return to the slums or the brothel for the loser, in *Bartholomew Fair*, the aspirant authority figures are humiliated by being placed in the stocks, from which they easily escape. Quarlous, arguably the biggest winner of the day, persuades the chastened Justice Overdo to invite the entire Smithfield retinue to his house for supper: “There you and I will compare our discoveries, and drown the memory of all enormity in your biggest bowl at home” (5.6.105-08). In the beginning, Overdo thought his place in the play was to
correct others, but instead he loses his authority and is himself corrected. He, along with Wasp and Busy are guilty of pride, of placing themselves above others. They brought with them to the fair the conceit that they would maintain their status, but as it turns out, they find themselves out of their depths. Humphrey Wasp speaks for Jonson himself when he realizes he “must think no longer to reign; my government is at an end. He that will correct another must want fault in himself” (5.4.98-100).

In *Bartholomew Fair*, food is a means of social leveling, undermining the satirist's authoritative advantage. The characters' appetites propel them to gorge at the fair. Their hungers result in bodily corruption, vomiting, urination, defecation, drunkenness, and ultimately humiliation. Food never brings the pleasure it promises because the fairgoers do not seek food out for sustenance, but for carnal indulgence. There is an overwhelming *thingness* about the fair's inhabitants. The previous class affiliations, as well as the future socio-economic consequences do not matter. As Katharine Eisaman Maus states in the introduction to the Norton edition of *Bartholomew Fair*: “When only the present matters, the only motive to action is appetite—for food, for sex, for novelty, for triumph over the others” (964). Excessive food and drink, and their bodily consequences, are of the highest concern to the authority figures who seek to protect the fairgoers, but thinking they are above having the same cravings of those they seek to protect, they are exposed as incapable of curtailing human nature that refuses help and *wants* to crave. The authority figures fail to differentiate relatively minor indulgences of eating and drinking to excess from the Satanic “abuses” (4.1.85) Busy conjures in his Puritan zeal, or the “enormities” (2.1.42) imagined by Justice Overdo. All
that separates the authority figures from the other characters is the will to control, a satirical impulse. Repeatedly they are exposed by their actions as incapable of sound judgment.
CHAPTER ONE: INDUCTIONS

In *Bartholomew Fair*, the induction parallels, but in many ways departs from the note to the reader of *The Alchemist* and the prefatory epistle in *Volpone*. Central to the introductions of these plays is a complicity between the playwright, the players, and the audience regarding the play the audience is about to see. In *Volpone*'s prefatory epistle, the playwright reveals his Ciceronian ideal of the good man speaking well, and even doubts the possibility of “any man's being a good poet without first being a good man” (22-23). The play that follows shows immediately how the wicked can use skillful rhetoric to nefarious ends. While referencing Cicero, Horace and Martial, the playwright offers that such debauchery is intended to achieve “instruction and amendment” (105). In the letter to the reader in *The Alchemist*, the playwright again speaks to the importance of discerning quality from quantity, which applies to the satire in *The Alchemist*. The playwright seeks an agreement between the playwright and the audience, and wishes to warn the audience “that there is a great difference between those that (to gain the opinion of copy) utter all they can however unfitly, and those that use election and a mean” (30-32). Jonson no longer needs to portray citizens as monsters, distorted by corruption. His satire is subtler in *The Alchemist*, and the characters are as recognizable to the audience as the local druggist, a gambling clerk, the loudmouth Puritan, or a nouveau-rich rube.

Both plays offer a prologue, in which an intimacy and understanding is suggested between those who are about to watch the play and the playwright who wrote it and the actors who perform it. The prologue to *Volpone* reiterates the playwright's intention to
instruct as well as delight, to “mix profit with your pleasure” (8). The author of The Alchemist's prologue explains the turn from exotic Venice to the Blackfriars of London:

   Our scene is London, 'cause we would make known
   No country is better than our own.
   No clime breeds better matter for your whore,
   Bawd, squire, impostor, many persons more (5-9).

This bit of sardonic patriotism marks a shift toward specifically correcting the moral ills of the contemporary English city rather than the general wickedness of humanity in Volpone. While Venice stands in for London, with its lack of a moral center (London spiritually, Venice literally adrift) and interchangeable characters seemingly with no occupations, the Blackfriars setting of The Alchemist is much more immediate. In examining the metaphor of a London emptied of respectable citizens, Cheryl Ross draws a connection between the city infected by the plague and the moral sickness Jonson attacks. While the plague never makes and actual appearance in The Alchemist, the populace is sick, and the city itself “is no longer a healthy body politic” (Ross 440). Between the gulls as well as cozeners, immorality is rampantly contagious.

The most obvious signifier that Bartholomew Fair is about entertainment with an emphasis on satirizing satire itself is that unlike Volpone and The Alchemist, the induction to Bartholomew Fair never mentions bettering its audience. Instead of a disembodied voice stating his intentions, the audience for Bartholomew Fair meets a stage-keeper who complains that the play lacks any of the delights he enjoys in the theater:
ne'er a sword-and-buckler man in his fair, nor a little
Davy to take toll o'the bawds [...] Nor a juggler with a well-educated ape
to come over the chain for the King of England and back again for the
Prince, and sit still on his arse for the Pope and the King of Spain. (17-20)

A bookholder emerges and dismisses the stage-keeper and introduces the scrivener, who
reads to the audience the conditions of the agreement. In deliberately tedious legalese,
the scrivener proposes that the audience may dislike the play on how much each member
paid for his seat. Anyone who has paid is allowed to complain, but “if he drop but
sixpence at the door, and will censure a crown's worth, it is thought there is no conscience
or justice in that” (94-96). Where the prefatory epistle to Volpone stresses the classical
intentions of the play in Roman moralist terms, the induction to Bartholomew Fair
ignores the improvement of society and focuses instead on strictly aesthetic aims. The
scrivener's willingness to accept more criticism from the audience members who paid
more, shows a flexibility the playwright of Volpone and The Alchemist would not
consider.

The materiality of Jonson's earlier plays remains, but in Bartholomew Fair, the
playwright joins the audience in their delight at the trickery of the cozeners and the
duping of its gulls. The introductions of the earlier two plays come from omnipotent
voices who state what sort of reaction is expected of the audience. The playwright adopts
the part of a school master. In Bartholomew Fair, the playwright's role is subverted by
stagehands and clerks who are willing to negotiate.
Another significant departure in the introduction to *Bartholomew Fair* that shows Jonson's tempered attitude is the sort of peers the playwright summons for himself. Kyd, Shakespeare and Marlowe take the place of Cicero, Horace, Martial, and Juvenal. Where the younger, stricter satirist found his own place among the classical moralists, *Bartholomew Fair*’s author accepts the company of contemporary dramatists. The play is offered for the audience's enjoyment rather than its correction, and each audience member takes from it what he needs: "no person here is to expect more than he knows or better ware than a fair will afford" (113-114). The scrivener offers one final condition to which the audience will agree as part of the contract. The audience must not seek meaning in the fair that the playwright does not present. Where the characters in *Volpone* and *The Alchemist* mirror members of corrupt society seeking gain at his neighbor's loss, the characters who populate the fair can be taken at face value. The audience member need not "search out who was meant by the gingerbread-woman, who by the hobbyhorse-man, who by the costermonger--nay, who by their wares" (137-39). The scrivener, speaking for the playwright, agrees for the first time that the quality of the play's comedy exceeds its moral responsibility.

Instruction is thus subordinated to delight. Rather than pay homage only to the classical satirists, *Bartholomew Fair*’s induction references contemporary dramas, admitting that the playwright enjoys them too. The shift from strict classical moralism to placing the main emphasis on entertaining parallels Jonson's softening satire in the action of *Bartholomew Fair*. The satirist is *inside* the play in *Bartholomew Fair*, not outside it passing judgment. The induction is a welcome, with certain conditions, not a lesson. The
authority figures who are satirized in the end are humorless satirists. In Bartholomew Fair, the audience can enjoy watching the tricksters ply their craft without being punished in the end. The playwright is something of a trickster himself, and in Bartholomew Fair, he allows the audience to enjoy it.
CHAPTER TWO: THE BODY

Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin discusses the nature of carnival in Rabelais and His World. The vulgarity of the characters in Bartholomew Fair, particularly, but not exclusively, the pig-woman Ursula, suggests a carnivalesque emphasis on the body and its grotesqueness. The characters' social interaction and their perpetual craving for food and drink relate to Bakhtin's discourse, as does the polyphonic nature of the narrative in which characters rise and submerge in intersecting and occasionally disconnected storylines. Bartholomew Fair's characters are so diverse, and the action is so chaotic, that T.S. Eliot feels the plot is “hardly a plot at all...what holds the play together is a unity of inspiration that radiates into plot and personage alike” (20). Jonson created the characters and their hungers propel them like a clockwork universe. Characters drive the action of Bartholomew Fair in a way Jonson's earlier plays relied on carefully constructed plot.

The early modern carnival's roots lay in the medieval folk culture that was usually suppressed by the church, though occasionally tolerated. Bakhtin recognizes three spheres in the development of folk culture, all of which appear in Bartholomew Fair:

1. Ritual spectacles: carnival pageants, comic shows of the marketplace.
2. Comic verbal compositions: parodies both oral and written, in Latin and in the vernacular.

   (Bakhtin 5)

Food and drink were major attractions to the fairs, as the prevalence of both in
Bartholomew Fair illustrates. As Stephen Mennel observes in his study of early modern food, the while gluttony was considered a lesser sin than drunkenness,

The point is partly obscured, in the English sources at least, by the fact that one word, gluttony, was used in the Middle Ages to refer to both excessive eating and excessive drinking; it acquired its modern reference exclusively to excessive eating only much later. (Mennel 29)

For the purposes of this paper, gluttony will refer to excessive eating, though its link to drunkenness will be noted where differentiation is required. Food and drink, and the resultant digestive processes that follow their consumption, fuel much of the action in the play. All of the characters eat and drink at the fair, which levels out many of the social inequalities that are so important outside it. In a rigidly stratified society, the carnival, with its upending of authority was “not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts, there is no life outside it. During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom (Bakhtin 7). An application of this idea to Bartholomew Fair helps to explain how in the carnival, authority and order are loosened and mocked. The three authority figures, Wasp, Overdo, and Busy, take it among themselves to impose external authority upon the carnival. Their major folly is their superior attitude which combines arrogance and a lack of recognition. Their belief that they are immune to the appetites piqued by the fair leads to comic failings in their judgment and eventual humiliation.

The importance of food at the fair cannot be overestimated. The Puritan couple
John and Win-the-Fight Littlewit, Bartholomew Cokes and his presumptive wife Grace Wellborn, and the gentleman gallants Quarlous and Winwife, are summoned by hunger for one delicacy or another. As Anne Barton has noticed, almost everyone at the fair is driven by hunger, “swallowing down roast pig, gingerbread, Catherine pears, bottle ale, women, money, and property with indiscriminate greed” (214). With the outside world rendered irrelevant, and nothing to strive for except the satisfaction of hungers, the characters follow their appetites from one carnal scene to another.

In *Bartholomew Fair*, hunger is a natural, although at times grotesque, occurrence that democratizes the characters regardless of their previous social standing. *Volpone* and *The Alchemist* feature more rarefied kinds of food and more perverse appetites. Volpone's unnatural hunger signifies his corruption and immorality. Led by his hunger, he finds that his pretense of illness becomes reality, depriving him of any enjoyment he believes the consumption will bring. He attempts to seduce Celia by projecting onto her a desire for the kind of obscene feast that stimulates his own imagination:

*We will eat such a meal. The heads of parrots, tongues of nightingales, The brains of peacocks and of ostriches Shall be our food, and could we get the phoenix, Though nature lost her kind, she would be our dish.* (3.7.200-204)

Volpone’s menu consists not only of unpalatable items, but objects notable for the cruelty and selfishness required in taking them. Rare birds are killed for their brains and tongues; the rest of the animal is presumably discarded. By eating a phoenix, which
exists only one at a time, Volpone would destroy all possible future phoenixes. He would commit unthinkable barbarism for a rare taste, imagining Celia will interpret it as sophisticated devotion. But Volpone's list of sumptuous fare horrifies her, as it does the audience, and Volpone's lack of sophistication is revealed when he tries to rape her. In *The Alchemist*, Sir Epicure Mammon is no less descriptive of the meals he will enjoy once Subtle and Face create for him the philosopher's stone:

The tongues of carps, dormice, and camel's heels,
Boiled i' the spirit of Sol and dissolved in pearl,
(Apicius' diet 'gainst the epilepsy)-
And I will eat these broths with spoons of amber,
Headed with diamond and carbuncle.
My footboy shall eat pheasants, calvered salmons,
Knots, godwits, lampreys; I myself will have
The beards of barbels served instead of salads,
Oiled mushrooms, and the swelling unctuous paps
Of a fat pregnant sow newly cut off. (2.2.75-84)

Like Volpone, Mammon wants the tongues of small animals, an atrocity that shocks not only with its wastefulness, but as the prized items are tiny, with the amount of death inflicted to create a meal. The calvered salmon and pregnant sows' paps are particularly cruel, specifically meaning that the animals were mutilated while still alive, and in the case of the pregnant sow, killing not only the sow, but a litter of piglets, which are also wasted. These are monstrous cravings. Conversely, the roast pig, for which Win fakes a
pregnancy-inspired longing, and with which Busy engorges himself, differs from these exotic items in that it is plentiful, easy to obtain, and desirable only for its taste. A single pig can feed several people, and is particularly utilitarian in that all most all of the animal is useful. It is the opposite of “the heads of parrots,” “lampreys,” and "swelling unctuous paps," which are notable for the difficulty, expense, and cruelty needed to acquire them. One would only eat Volpone and Mammon's imagined dishes to demonstrate that one was wealthy and powerful enough to get them. The roast pig is almost craved in secret, an ugly dish that tastes good, versus exotic-looking food that rightly disgusts.

The relatively middle-class characters attend the fair knowing it is carnal and vulgar. That is indeed its main allure. When Littlewit first persuades Win to accompany him to the fair, she tells him, “my mother will never consent to such a profane motion” (1.5.147-48). Although they are married adults, the husband and wife remain children who cannot be trusted to make their own choices about what to eat or where to eat it: “Win, long to eat of a pig, sweet Win, i' the fair; do you see? I' the heart o' the fair, not at Pie Corner. Your mother will do anything, Win, to satisfy your longing, you know” (1.5.152-54). In Bartholomew Fair, hunger reduces adults to children who are unable to see beyond the momentary satisfaction of primal cravings.

Family relations bind the characters to each other, but similarly as in Volpone and The Alchemist, the lack of legitimate authority decentralizes the family and the society. Busy, Justice Overdo, and Wasp attempt to provide the authority that would right the social order, but they are unable to regulate the body's cravings. James Loxley argues that the fair occupies a "space of fantasy" (85), where desires are not restricted, either by
internal censoring, or by authority figures:

The world was turned upside down in carnival, hierarchies inverted and boundaries crossed, the earthly and transient exalted in place of the spiritual and eternal. Celebrated for its mutability and openness to the world—its involvement in generation, regeneration and degeneration—the human body itself was identified as one of the most important emblems of carnival, while its language was the language of the marketplace, colloquial and irreverent. (Loxley 86)

The carnival, as it emerges at the fair, exists to excite the cravings of the body. The body's fallibility requires discipline that the authority figures seek to provide, but they do not understand that the fair is an engine of bodily excess; it exists to provoke the body: the fair catalyzes eating, digesting and expelling, as well as fornicating and fighting.

When Win Littlewit approaches her mother, pretending to suffer from a pregnancy-induced craving for pork, the Puritan Dame Purecraft must consult her preacher, Zeal-of-the-Land Busy. Predictably, Busy is first mentioned eating and drinking. Littlewit tells Dame Purecraft that Busy will be with them shortly: “as soon as he has cleansed his beard. I found him, fast by the teeth i'the cold turkey pie, i'the cupboard, with a great white loaf on his left hand and a glass of malmsey on his right” (1.6.36-38). Clearly the audience doubts from the onset of how much leadership Busy will be able to provide before he has even stepped on stage. Busy does more than eat and drink--he merges with the food. Before they have even entered Smithfield, Busy has become grotesque, "characterized by fantastic representations of the human and animal
forms often combined into formal distortions of the natural to the point of absurdity, ugliness, or caricature” (Holman and Harmon 219). Busy is easily distracted and highly solvent where food and drink are concerned. Like a child he gets into trouble if not closely attended.

Justice Overdo does no more to inspire faith in his judgmental abilities than Busy does. Believing he follows in the footsteps of a civic forefather who “would take you now the habit of a porter, now of a carman, now of the dog-killer in this month of August, and in the winter of a seller of tin-derboxes” (2.1.14-17), Overdo plans to sniff out cheats at the fair. Overdo has a civil servant's tendency to itemize and measure. His concerns revolve around food and the body, but as distinguished from Busy, Overdo gets lost in minutiae. He plans to visit

   every alehouse and go down into every cellar; measure the length of puddings; take that gauge of black pots and cans, ay, and custards, with a stick, and their circumference with a thread; weigh the loaves of bread in his middle finger. (2.1.18-22)

Displaying an obsessive attention to detail, while ignoring the larger picture marks Justice Overdo as an unfit judge especially concerning the citizens' food consumption. He believes that itemizing and measuring are ways to control others' behaviors to their own benefit. Overdo is more sympathetic than Busy, but just as poor a judge. While Busy's hypocrisy projects outward, Overdo internalizes his role. He skulks about in his disguise, bemoaning insignificant "enormities" to his imagined counterparts, classical moralists, imaging he will cast off his disguise in time to save everyone, who will then adore and
respect him. Chief in his interests are imagined corruptions of food, alcohol and tobacco:

Thirst not after that frothy liquor, ale, for who knows when
he openeth the stopple what may be in a bottle? Hath not a snail, a spider,
yea, a newt been found there? Thirst not after it, youth, thirst not
after it. \(^{(2.6.11-15)}\)

Overdo characteristically warns against imagined impurities in the alcohol, and ignores the very real peril that may befall someone wandering around drunk at a fair populated by thieves and toughs. Overdo also warns against tobacco consumption: "whose complexion is like the Indian that vents it [...] And who can tell, if, before the gathering, and making up thereof, the alligarta hath not piss'd thereon? \(^{(2.6.24-30)}\). Overdo’s indictment of tobacco saddles him with the thankless task of defending the syphilitic symptoms of "the poor innocent pox, having nothing to do there, is miserably an most unconscionably slandered" \(^{(2.6.55-57)}\). Overdo struggles with an ambivalence early modern people felt about food and food preparers. Huey-Ling Lee points out that a major reason for fears about contamination of food stemmed from "the essential but unpleasant labor of handling and preparing raw food, which brings the cooks in direct contact with the uncivilized aspect of nature. The anxiety about foodstuffs is particularly intensified in the case of animal flesh" \(^{(254)}\). Cooks served as a boundary between animal and human, and a gateway from the natural world to the civilized. Cooking necessarily involves the purification of the unknown and unfamiliar so that it is connected with the civilized and nourishing; however, the civilizing process could go the other way, with the cook possibly being tainted by the rawness of the food he or she prepares. Overdo strives
to guard against this corruption, and the fraudulent practices that create it, by defending the breach against the cooks who reject their responsibilities and allow their food to be corrupted or adulterated.

Class divisions are repeatedly dissolved by the need of the characters, especially the women, to urinate. The bodily needs are the great leveler at the fair, with the lower class characters escaping the debasement because they never imagined they were above it the way the middle and upper class characters do. The hunger the characters follow in *Bartholomew Fair* results inevitably in digestion and expulsion. The need to urinate, a “very great what-sha'-call-him” (3.6.121-122), brings Win Littlewit to the Pig-woman's booth. A similar need brings Dame Overdo to Ursula's, seeking a “common pot” (4.4.206-07). Similar scatology emerges repeatedly in *Bartholomew Fair*, such as Humphrey Wasp's oft repeated salutation of “a turd i' your teeth” (1.5.16). Bakhtin finds a repeated conflation between the outward expressions of carnival and scatology: “grotesque debasement always had in mind the material bodily stratum, the zone of the genital organs. Therefore debasement did not besmirch with mud but with excrement and urine” (Bakhtin 147). Sexuality and scatology are two prominent themes at the fair. Bakhtin refers to the medieval Feast of Fools, which bears many similarities to *Bartholomew Fair*, wherein hierarchies were turned upside down. During these feasts the poorest citizens enjoyed eating in the same way that the wealthy elite did: “Man's encounter with the world in the act of eating is joyful, triumphant; he triumphs over the world, devours it without being devoured himself. The limits between man and the world are erased, to man's advantage” (Bakhtin 281). In the Feast of Fools, defecation played
an important part in the upending of hierarchies, including “a solemn service sung by the
bishop-elect, [where] excrement was used instead of incense. After the service, the
clergy rode in carts loaded with dung; they drove through the streets tossing it at the
crowd” (Bakhtin 147). Among the regulars at Ursula's pig booth is a pimp named after a
chamber pot, and the only urinal in Jonson's fair—carefully located in the pig booth itself
—is a broken beer bottle. Dame Overdo and Win Littlewit are mistaken for whores when
the need to urinate leads them to the pig-booth. The common chamber pot is a social
leveler--everyone must use it.

In the repeated images of eating and drinking and expelling, the body emerges as
an object doing as well as an object being. The characters at the fair are in a constant
state of motion that resembles digestion. Edmund Wilson sees evidence for a Freudian
reading of Jonson’s work, noting that the anally fixated

are likely to have a strong interest in food both from a deglutionary
and the excretatory points of view; but the getting and laying by
of money or of some other kind of possession which may or may
not seem valuable to others is likely to substitute itself for the infantile
preoccupation with the contents of the alimentary tract. (64)

Wilson argues that in Jonson’s representations of the body as corrupted and excreting, as
well as the interest in hoarding valuable objects, the poet never moved past the anal stage
in his development. Wilson asserts that Jonson’s portrayal of the avaricious hoarder
Volpone as well as the childish wastrel Bartholomew Cokes can be traced to resentment
that is emblematic of this stage, “the sulky resentment of the man who can only withhold
against the man who can freely lavish” (69). Bruce Thomas Boerher does not deny
Jonson's interest in the anal, but asserts firstly that “Jonson's preoccupation with
excretory processes should arguably be viewed as culturally paradigmatic rather than
individually neurotic” (14). Feces, and what to do with it, was a common and reasonable
concern in the city life of early modern England. That it appears in Jonson’s plays is
natural and unavoidable considering his play is about communal eating at a fair in the
early seventeenth century, “a world dominated by the conceptual canon of the grotesque
body” (Boerher 16). While a scatology undeniably exists in *Bartholomew Fair*, it is not
indicative of Jonson's neurosis as much as a societal compulsion, and a necessary one at
that. Scatology functions on a number of levels, such as transformation, expulsion, and
especially social democratizing. The digestive process parallels how people exist at the
fair in a state of flux.
CHAPTER THREE: GENDER AND CLASS

The corruption of the cook by the proximity to the flesh he/she prepares and the potential of this for social leveling is illustrated in the pig-woman Ursula. Visitors to the fair are simultaneously attracted to her booth and repulsed by her gross carnality. The pig-woman's booth is the epicenter of illegal and sinful activity at the fair: gluttony, in the consumption of pig flesh and bottled ale; greed, as it houses the fair's thieving element; wrath, in the attacks upon Overdo, the fight between Quarlous and Cutting, and the game of vapors; and lust, where Win and Dame Overdo are solicited into prostitution. Gender and class have different meanings at the booth, and despite the characters' status outside the fair, the pig-booth creates a commonality among them, though little solidarity. All the characters seek out the pig-booth, which democratizes them and binds them to each other.

Human beings, particularly women, and swine are repeatedly hybridized in *Bartholomew Fair*. Women and pigs are consumed in a similar manner: “Five shillings a pig is my price, at least; if it be a sow-pig, sixpence more” (2.2.113-114). Women are referred to as “Poultry” (2.5.103), “sow” (4.5.71), “foul” (4.5.14), “bird o'the game” (4.5.17), and “tripe” (4.5.74). Characters repeatedly describe Ursula using porcine imagery. Women exist at the fair as a commodity along with other food and trinkets, to be bought and consumed. Win Littlewit, Dame Overdo, Joan Trash, Punk Alice, and Grace all go to the fair for different reasons, but with the notable exception of Grace, they end the play on essentially the same social level. Grace is notable because she does not partake of the food or drink offered at the fair, exhibiting that she does not share the other
characters' carnal weakness. Thereby she is spared from the abjection the other women experience. Pig-roasting and prostitution both originate at the pig-booth. Win Littlewit and Dame Overdo are women who are well provided for, and who have husbands that actually care for them, yet both are easily convinced to don the prostitute's green cloak when Knockem suggests: “It is the vapor of spirit in the wife to cuckold nowadays, as it is the vapor of fashion in the husband not to suspect” (4.5.47-49). As with the exchange of high fine shoes and a lady's French hood for a whore's green cloak, clothing symbolizes how superficial status is and how easily it is lost when the only concern is momentarily satisfying the appetite.

Justice Overdo warns against the contamination in the food, based on the unlikelihood that it is contaminated by spiders and newts. Where Overdo's concerns are with improbable, minute details, Zeal-of-the-Land Busy warns against the same food, alcohol, and tobacco, but for different reasons:

And bottle-ale is the drink of Satan’s, a diet-drink of Satans, devised to puff us up and make us swell in this latter age of vanity, as the smoke of tobacco to keep us in midst and error; but the fleshly woman, which you call Urs’la, is above all to be avoided, having the marks upon her of the three enemies of man: the world, as being in the fair; the devil, as being in the fire; and the flesh, as being herself. (3.6.29-35)

That Busy himself gorges on the Ursula’s roast pork illustrates the hypocrisy of the Puritans as well as his weakness to the same vanities he rails against. The temptations of
Ursula's booth evoke the most power over those who think themselves fit to steer others away. Robert Watson links Ursula the pig-woman nominally to the objects of bear baiting “who would have held the same central place at the Hope theater (where *Bartholomew Fair* was performed) that Ursula and her booth held on other nights” (Watson 145). Even when she is not part of the main action, the appetite Ursula invokes is always present. She dominates the other booth-keepers at the Fair, but complains about her state: “Fie upon't: who would wear out their youth and prime thus, in roasting of pigs, that had any cooler vocation” (2.2.42-45).

In addition to being baited by the upper class gallants, Ursula is repeatedly conflated with the pigs she roasts. When Knockem, the hobby-horse man first enters Ursula’s booth, he greets her: “Art thou alive yet, with thy litter of pigs to grunt out another Barthol’mew Fair?” (2.3.1-3). The pigs are described with human characteristics: “Very passionate, mistress. One of ‘em has wept out an eye” (2.4.58-59). When the gallants Quarlous and Winwife spy into the booth, Quarlous snickers to Winwife, “here’s Orpheus among the beasts, with his fiddle, and all!” (2.5.7-8).

Ursula's booth, and the work she does in it, draws everyone from the fair, where they are reduced to the sum of their appetites. Lee argues that in early modern England, “men were entrusted with the responsibility not so much to nurture as to protect the eating community that they cooked for from the invasion of untamed forces from Nature or from barbarous social groups. Women, by contrast, were suspected of meddling with food and endangering health” (251). Whether for roast pig, alcohol, prostitutes, or even the game of "vapors," Ursula's booth is makes her indispensable for all the fairgoers. The
nature of Ursula's work, necessary but degraded by the upper classes, dissolves her and like the food she cooks, transforms her: "I do water the ground in knots, as I go, like a great garden-pot; you may follow me by the S's I make" (2.2.54-55). Ursula swelters under the conditions of her working environment: “Hell's a kind of cold cellar to it, a very fine vault, o' my conscience” (2.2.45-46). Ursula is repeatedly identified with fleshly motion of the pig” (1.6.8-9), as “some walking sow” (2.5.76), and she facilitates the male consumption of women by pimping them even as she is consumed by the fire: “I am all fire, and fat, nightingale; I shall e'en melt away to the first woman, a rib, again, I am afraid” (2.2.51—52). Ursula's dissoluteness reduces her to a basic carnal existence, and reduces her customers to basic hungers. Ursula’s grotesqueness, augmented by the labor she performs, is the center of the booth, which is the center of the fair.

Win's feigned longing for the roast pork is only allowed because she is married and pregnant. Busy claims understanding “the disease of longing, it is a carnal disease, a carnal disease, or appetite, incident to women; and as it is carnal, and incident, it is natural, very natural” (1.6.50-58). He believes women are prone to cravings that are directly linked to sexuality, and expresses the male duty to protect decency and to defend against women's weakness in losing it. Busy feels that women in particular are vulnerable to “the vanity of the eye or the lust of the palate” (1.6.79-80). Busy's linguistic and moral flexibility allows him to condemn an activity while partaking of it: “It may be eaten, and in the fair, I take it, in a booth, the tents of the wicked...we may be religious in the midst of the profane, so it be eaten with a reformed mouth, with sobriety and humbleness, not gorged in with gluttony or greediness” (1.6.74-77). Busy places
conditions on the eating of pig, which he has recently condemned. The rabbi is incapable of maintaining distinctions, arguing absurdly that the lawfulness of it depends on how it is eaten, a ridiculous differential that shows he is an unfit authority figure who cannot control his own “lust of the palate.” Busy's rhetoric holds no center; it is ultimately a relativism he alters to suit his needs.

Showing that he does not understand the system of consumption and commoditization, especially of women, Littlewit compels Win to kiss the lecherous Winwife, who describes Win-the-Fight, tellingly, as fruit: “Alas, you ha' the garden where they grow still: a wife here with a strawberry breath, cherry lips, apricot cheeks, and a soft velvet head like a melocoton” (1.2.13-15). Winwife's food imagery in categorizing Win shows that women in Bartholomew Fair exist only to the extent that they provide pleasure or sustenance.

The upper-class gentlemen need Ursula's services, but they hate her because she threatens the social order and exposes the hunger they do not like to admit they have. An interesting meeting of the classes occurs in the fifth scene of act 2, when Quarlous and Winwife enter the fair. Satirists in their own way, they have come seeking “excellent creeping sport” (1.5.138-39), and think themselves only observers of the fair, underestimating its power to level the classes. Joan Trash approaches the two gallants and offers them gingerbread. Winwife is bemused that “these people should be so ignorant to think us chapmen for 'em! Do we look as if we would buy gingerbread? Or hobbyhorses? (2.5.12-14). Despite the two gentlemen's disdain for the lower class peddlers, the hobbyhorse man, Knockem, approaches the pair: “Who's yonder? Ned
Winwife and Tom Quarlous, I think. Yes... Master Winwife! Master Quarlous! Will you take a pipe of tobacco with us?” (2.5.20-24). Quarlous immediately takes umbrage: “you'll pardon us if we knew not of so much familiarity between us afore” (2.5.35-36). Protest as Quarlous may, Knockem does know the two. One cannot help but wonder how the hobby-horse man knows the two gallants who look down on even the middle class Puritan family. A possible answer appears when Knockem notes to the two gentleman that they are in “Ursula's mansion” (2.5.40). The hybridization of woman and pig emerges again when Knockem offers that at Ursula's mansion, “you may ha' your punk and your pig in state, sir, both piping hot” (2.5.40-41). The hobby-horse man's familiarity with the gentleman may lie in a previous visit to, if not Ursula's mansion, someone's. Knockem's familiarity with the Winwife and Quarlous suggests that the two gentlemen have a reputation for consuming prostitutes. Soliciting prostitutes is not necessarily an exceptional occurrence, and Jonson notably does not condemn it; however, this illustrates further the democratizing power of the fair's attractions. The gentlemen's appetites threaten their presumed position above the booth-keepers and the fair-goers. They need the fare offered at the pig-booth as much as anyone else does, and resent the lower class's knowledge of it.

When Ursula re-enters the tent, Quarlous lets loose a torrent of insults against her: “Is she your quagmire, Dan Knockem? Is this your bog?” (2.5.87-88), “he that would venture for't, I assure him, might sink into her and be drowned a week ere any friend he had could find him where he were” (2.5.92-94), “Out upon her, how she drips! She's able to give a man the sweating sickness with looking on her” (2.5. 108-09). Ursula is
repeatedly perceived as only her body; further, her body is described in terms of the viscous and slimy and diseased. To the upper-class visitors to the fair, Ursula is actually less than low class, and even less than animal; she is an oily viscosity that if one were to fall into her, it would be “like falling into a whole shire of butter; they had a team of Dutchmen should draw him out” (2.5.97-98). Quarlous and Winwife recognize the precariousness of their status within Smithfield. Their superiority exists outside their bodies, which are a common denominator, and they respond to the threat symbolized by Ursula's carnality with venomous insults. Baiting Ursula becomes their sport.

When Quarlous and Knockem begin to fight, Ursula rushes to get a pan of scalding water to break them up, and she falls with it and burns her leg (2.5.151-54). At this point, the audience has only encountered the foul-mouthed, violent pig-woman, an object of disgust and derision. The audience has enjoyed their insults because they think Quarlous and Winwife are the satirist's voice. Bartholomew Fair's sympathies pivot on this scene; when Ursula scalds her leg, all of the poor characters rush to her assistance (2.5.156). Joan Trash is sent to procure cream, while Leatherhead helps Ursula to a chair (2.5.154-66). The conflation between the woman body and animal continues, when Knockem tends to Ursula with “the white of an egg, a little honey, and hog's grease” (2.5.172-73). The booth-keepers seek to heal Ursula with the same sort of oily, viscous material that her body seems to consist of, and what that means has changed for the audience, who now see the earthy, thingy booth-keepers are just as moral as and more natural than the upper-class visitors who seek to tame and codify the fair. The deeper the characters descend into the fair, the further they move from the social inequalities that
mark their lives outside of Smithfield.

Up to this scene, the characters could be divided into three levels: lower class (booth-keepers), middle-class (Puritans, Littlewits, Overdo, Wasp), and upper-class (Winwife, Quarlous, Bartholomew Cokes). Despite the quarreling among themselves, the vendors at the fair share a relationship that excludes the visitors. The cooking that “melts” Ursula and burns her “seems to make her whole by uniting and consolidating those lower-class characters, enabling them to revolve around her like a constellation” (Lee 268). The audience sees that the gentlemen are not morally superior to booth-keepers. Their hungers are the same and their callousness isolates them from the audience.

Quarlous understands the commodity of relationships better than the other characters. When Quarlous and Winwife discuss Winwife's philandering, Quarlous evokes images of Winwife as tanner and the older women he courts as hides:

> there cannot be an ancient tripe or trillibub i'the town but thou are straight nosing it. And 'tis a fine occupation thou'lt confine thyself to when thou hast got one: scrubbing a piece of buff as if thou hadst the perpetuity of Pannier Alley to stink in, or perhaps, worse, currying a carcass that thou hast bound thyself to alive.  

(1.3. 64-69)

Quarlous's characterization of Winwife's proclivities exemplifies the cynicism behind relationships between men and women. Quarlous and Winwife maintain their friendship while amusing themselves at the expense of the fair visitors, but once the prospect of either of them winning Dame Purecraft comes into view, their friendship degrades to a
bitter competition. Barton notes that Quarlous and Winwife are portrayed, “like Face and Subtle, but far less forgivably, they cease to be friends once both have become rivals for the hand of a wealthy woman” (207). When people are reduced to their bodies, social differentiation ceases to hold any viability. Jonson does not excuse Quarlous and Winwife's objectification, but employs it to prove that for all their sophistication, Quarlous and Winwife are simply greedy legacy hunters.

When threatened by the upper-class interlopers, the booth-keepers unite around Ursula, but the relationships in *Bartholomew Fair* are all relatively short-lived. The ingredients with which Joan Trash may or may not be adulterating her gingerbread (the audience is never sure which booth-keeper is most dishonest) are the same foodstuffs Knockem uses to heal Ursula's burned leg, "stale bread, rotten eggs, musty ginger, and dead honey" (2.2.9-10). Whether the organic objects employed heal or harm depends on how they are applied. The lack of competent judges at the fair prevents anyone from discerning. The characters bounce around the fair, driven by one craving after another. Following the appetite brings them into contact briefly, but with no moral or social center but the pig-booth, the relationships are fleeting and meaningless.

It is tempting to see solidarity among the lower class and cruelty among the gallants, but the characters at the fair and the relationships among them are more complex. Wilson detects a resentful tendency on Jonson's part to lampoon a wealthy young heir “who is an utter numbskull and who, just having come into his money, begins throwing it away by the handful and soon find himself fleeced by sharpers” (69). However, in addition to being a child-like spendthrift, Cokes is one of the few characters
who does not deceive, cheat, or threaten any of the other characters, and many of the trinkets he gobbles up from the peddlers he intends to give away (3.4.153-62). Cokes may be a literary descendant of the quarrelsome, moneyed Kastril, but he is much more likable. While Wilson is correct that the young fool, throwing away his money is a Jonsonian trope, he misses entirely that Cokes's innocent consumption of trinkets confirms Jonson's increased tolerance in *Bartholomew Fair*.

In *Volpone, The Alchemist*, and *Bartholomew Fair*, Jonson shows that characters of all classes can be cheaters and can be cheated. Volpone and Mosca are equally corrupt, though Mosca is the more adept. Among the gulls in *Volpone* are a father who would disinherit his son and a husband who would pimp his wife, both for money. Jonson seems to be making a statement about the arbitrary nature of class when Mosca appears before the court dressed as a gentleman. The avocatori leap at the opportunity to ingratiate themselves to Mosca when they believe he is a gentleman: “A proper man! And, were Volpone dead,/ A fit match for my daughter” (5.12. 51-52). Mosca's punishment, once he is revealed, is more severe than Volpone's, but there is no justification for it, as the avocatori are no more fit to judge than any other character.

In the case of *The Alchemist*, Lovewit's return to London represents a reestablishment of order from what has been a carnivalesque misrule by the lower class cozeners, “these temporary aristocrats” Ross 439). While the authority that Lovewit represents is not of a particularly noble stripe, Doll, Face, and Subtle represent anarchy. The gulls in *Volpone* are rapaciously wicked; their counterparts in *The Alchemist* are greedy and petty. In *Bartholomew Fair*, the characters exist in a food-chain where
everyone is devoured. The democratizing effect of the fair is total. All the characters
consume, and all in some way are consumed, but the stakes are not as high at the fair as
in earlier plays, because only pride and social standing are lost.
CHAPTER FOUR: TRANSFORMATIVE LANGUAGE

Repeatedly in *Bartholomew Fair*, characters use transformative language to describe food and appetite. The fare described is earthy and communal. The roast pig, the gingerbread, and the bottle ale are for everyone's consumption. Even the Catherine pears strewn on the ground to lure young Cokes are scattered and obtainable by whoever reaches them. The omnipresence of food at the fair dissolves distinctions between the characters into a collective human body that longs to eat, to drink, to urinate and expel. The material necessity of the body overrides religious authority, social boundaries, and even matrimonial bonds. The communal nature of the food illustrates a departure from Jonson's severer earlier satires where the food never appeared, and was only described in bizarre and pornographically impossible fantasies. The potentialities the speakers imagine are elongated and exaggerated distortions of reality through the obscene fantasies of Volpone and Mammon.

Several characters in *Bartholomew Fair* fancy themselves great rhetorical wits. Littlewit, the self-fashioned playwright, thinks he has dreamed up a great scheme when he suggests Win fake a longing to eat pork that can only be gotten at the fair. Littlewit considers himself invaluable to the play, but is really of little consequence in that his contrivances are repeatedly taken from him and played out by more interesting characters. His scheme for Win's pregnancy-induced pork craving is hijacked by Busy, who launches into a hysterical treatise on the nature of women:

> Now pig, it is a meat, and a meat that is nourishing and may be longed for,
and so, consequently eaten. It may be eaten, very exceedingly well eaten, But in the fair, and as a Barthol'mew-pig, it cannot be eaten. For the very calling it a Barthol'mew-pig, and to eat it so, is a spice of idolatry, and you make the fair no better than one of the high places. (1.6.50-58)

Busy's prevarication about eating roast pork suggests he will fall prey to the same longing he warns against. Using transformative language, Busy repeatedly inflates minor indulgences into abominable sins. Like Overdo, Busy's sin is overestimating his authority. He wants to be the spiritual satirist who saves his followers from evil, but to do so he must exaggerate the dangers while ignoring his own tendency toward gluttony.

Littlewit's puppet play is performed by Leatherhead, and quickly usurped by Cokes, Busy, Overdo and a puppet. Littlewit has finally achieved his dream of writing a play, and it is a bastardized, dumbed-down, improbable blend of *Hero and Leander* and *Damon and Pythias*:

> I have only made it a little easy and modern for the times, sir, that's all. As, for the Hellespont I imagine out Thames here; and then Leander I make a dyer's son, about Puddle Wharf; and Hero a wench o' the Bankside, who, going over one morning to old Fish Street, Leander spies her land at Trig Stairs and falls in love with her. Now do I introduce Cupid, having metamorphosed himself into a drawer, and he strikes Hero in love with a pint of sherry. (5.3.120-28)

The puppets are echo creatures of the characters at the fair, imagining themselves in romantic epics, but really drunkenly fumbling at one another. Alcohol holds the same
importance for the puppets that it does for the people. Far from degrading Marlowe's poem, as Wilson accuses: “a travesty of Marlowe's Hero and Leander in terms of Bankside muck... an ugliness which makes one suspect that Jonson took an ugly delight in defiling a beautiful poem which he could not hope to rival” (Wilson 72), Jonson seems to be satirizing his own tendency to integrate the classics into popular drama, as some critics have noticed (Barish 212). Watson insists that Jonson completes an arc with Bartholomew Fair, which became “steadily more forgiving, both toward human nature and toward popular drama” (10). All three assessments ignore a crucial aspect of the vulgar puppet play, namely, that being Littlewit's opus, the play could not be anything other than facile and rude. Further, since it is Littlewit's play, the actual content of the play is unimportant and only the childlike Cokes seems to pay attention to it. The real action occurs when the play is taken over and becomes a trial show about Overdo, Busy, and Puppet Dionysius.

Even Littlewit's shock and dismay when his wife is revealed as a prostitute are upstaged by Dame Overdo's more significant unveiling and violent vomiting. By his language, Littlewit tries to imbue his life and his character with a significance they do not possess. Littlewit is clearly a satire on satirists, whether he is a stand in for Jonson, or for Jonson's rival playwrights.

While Littlewit considers himself an author of importance, Bartholomew Cokes believes he is the star of a comedy about himself. He rushes from booth to booth, with no cognizance of anything other than the newest trinket he wants to buy:

Three Jews' trumps, and half a dozen o'birds, and that
drum (I have one drum already), and your smiths (I like that
device o'your smiths very pretty well), and four halberds,
and—le' me see—that fine painted great lady and her three
women for state, I'll have. \(3.4 .73 - 77\)

Cokes's hunger for novelty is boundless, but good-natured, unlike the greedy gulls in
*Volpone* and *The Alchemist*. Blindly gobbling up the wares at the fair, Cokes does not
understand that the dwellers at the fair seek to consume him also. Cokes is forever
gullible, always enthusiastic, and unrestrained by critical thought-- the perfect target not
only for the soft cheating of the hobby-horse man and gingerbread wife, but for the
cutpurse Edgeworth, who notices that Cokes is essentially a child: “I cannot persuade
myself but he goes to grammar school yet, and plays the truant today” (4.2.41-42).

Edgeworth strips Cokes of two purses, his sword, cloak, hat, and all his purchased
trinkets. After he is robbed, Cokes realizes he is not the hero of a story about his
adventures at the fair, and mopes that “if ever any Bartholomew had that luck...that I have
had, I'll be martyred for him and in Smithfield, too” (4.2.67-68). This petulantly self-
centered statement uttered during Saint Bartholomew's Day illustrates Cokes's childish
lack of reflection. Alison Chapman notes that Saint Bartholomew's Day would not only
have called to mind the flayed saint, but the Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre in 1572,
“when French Catholics slaughtered the French Huguenots numbering in the thousands"
(523).

When Cokes is robbed, he blames the food, not understanding how close his
rhetoric is to the truth: "I ha' paid for my pears. A rot on 'em!...You were choke-pears to
The individual pears are not responsible for his ruination, but his voraciousness for them is. History does not exist to Bartholomew Cokes. He makes his world linguistically from moment to moment, forgetting each debacle as soon as a new distraction appears. He blurs people into objects, calling Grace and Wasp his “gingerbread-wife,” and “hobby-horse man” (4.2.21-22), respectively. Cokes's tutor, Humphrey Wasp complains that Cokes's manic consumption will include Wasp himself: "I'll be flayed and feed dogs when his time comes" (3.4.67-68). Cokes considers the puppets of the play his peers: “I am in love with the actors already, and I'll be allied to them presently. (They respect gentlemen, these fellows.)” (5.4.131-33). Cokes alone enjoys the puppet play and acts as a chorus to the debauched actions of the puppets, even compelling Overdo at the end of the play to invite the puppets to their supper: “We'll ha' the rest o' the play at home” (5.6.122-23). Though the real action for the audience has been resolved, the play is never over for Bartholomew Cokes. With no sense of either the past or the future, and no appreciation of the consequences of either, Cokes is immune to closure. Despite the misfortune he invites with his careless solipsism, Cokes is likable. His unwillingness to stay defeated by his losses transforms into aplomb by the time he wants to bring the puppets home to complete the play.

As Volpone and The Alchemist warn against the dangers of skillful rhetoric, the game of vapors, and the puppet play which mirrors it, seems to warn against bad rhetoric produced by idiots. Further emphasizing that Bartholomew Fair is more about delighting than instructing, the game of vapors has no discernible ending, and seems a pointless exercise in empty rhetoric. The vapors game fits Wasp perfectly, as his appearance in act
I presages:

I know? I know nothing, I. What tell you me of knowing?

Now I am in haste. Sir, I do not know, and I will not know,

and I scorn to know, and yet, now I think on't, I will and

do know, as well as another. (1.4.19-22)

Alison Chapman's analysis focuses on Wasp's stewardship over Bartholomew Cokes, which largely seems to consist of attempting to deprive Cokes' of any of the pleasures he seeks, whether it is the food he openly craves, or the sexual undertones food represents: “he is such a ravener after fruit! You will not believe what a coil I had, t'other day, to compound a business between a Catherine-pear woman and him about snatching!” (1.5.116-18). Wasp fancies himself the protector of Cokes's moral virtue, “the wise and long-suffering protector of prodigal youth, a figure that appears in many guises throughout medieval and Renaissance drama” (Watson 148). Even leaving Cokes long enough to obtain the license requires Wasp to leave Cokes with Cokes' sister Dame Purecraft, which Wasp is loathe to do even though she “is a justice of peace, his wife, and a gentlewoman o'the hood, and his natural sister; but what may happen under a woman's government, there's the doubt” (1.4.83-85). Wasp thinks himself the guardian between Cokes and the world, but he is incapable of preventing Cokes from buying all the trinkets Wasp can carry (3.4), or from being robbed so frequently by Edgeworth that the cutpurse remarks: “A man might cut out his kidneys, I think, and he never feel 'em, he is so earnest at the sport” (4.2.44-45). Wasp seems to detest Cokes, and mistakes protecting Cokes with denying him enjoyment, not to serve Cokes's well-being, but to fulfill his contrary,
waspish nature. Wasp grows more irritated throughout the fair, and his appetite for venomous verbal attacks is limitless. The game between an assortment of ethnic stereotypes and Wasp is an example of rhetoric at its worst. Sating his hunger for wrath, Wasp attacks the game with zeal that suggests his true calling is quarreling with fools:

WASP. I have no reason, nor will I hear of no reason, nor will I look for no reason, and he is an ass that either knows any or looks for't from me.

CUTTING. Yes, in some sense you may have reason, sir.

WASP. Ay, in some sense, I care not if I grant you.

WHIT. Pardon me, thou oughtst to grant him nothing, in no shenish, if dou do love dyshefl, angry man.

WASP. Why, then, I do grant him nothing, and I have no sense.

(4.4.42-49)

The game of vapors, resembling rounds of a drinking song, but with negations added each time it passes a character, is “a strange echo poetry” (Boerher 193). In many ways, the game of vapors resembles Zeal-of-the-Land Busy's early condemnation, then allowance, of Win Littlewit eating roast pig at the fair:

It may be eaten, and

in the fair, I take it, in a booth, the tents of the wicked.

The place is not much, not very much; we may be religious in the midst of the profane, so it be eaten with a reformed mouth, with sobriety and humbleness, not
gorged in with gluttony or greediness. (1.6.72-77)

That he was only a few lines before stating “in the fair, and as a Barthol'mew-pig, it cannot be eaten; for the very calling it a Barthol'mew-pig, and to eat it so, is a spice of idolatry” (1.6.55-57), does not occur to the oblivious Busy. Busy improvises his speeches, talks himself into a frenzy. The content does not matter to him, only that it be pronounced in a biblical tone, full of repetition and metaphor. While Justice Overdo murmurs his pronouncements to himself, Busy is unimaginable without an audience. Wasp seems indifferent to whether he is heard or not. Each of the three authority figures at the fair engage in empty verbiage that inversely mirrors their rampant gluttony. They consume as much in food and drink as they expel in meaningless rhetoric.

The characters who pretend to be above the fair's lures lose the most when they give in to their appetites. While Busy plays a game of vapors with himself in the opening act of the play, when he meets his puppet counterpart King Dionysius, all the arguing and bickering that has taken place throughout the course of the day reaches a crescendo. Barish calls the puppet show “an orgy of quarrels, a saturnale of vapors” (231). The puppets are miniature, condensed men, and like the men they are crafted to mimic, the puppets quarrel endlessly. Dionysius even boasts that he only uses Busy's style of rhetoric against him:

I'll prove against e'er a rabbin of 'em all, that my standing is as lawful as his, that I speak by inspiration as well as he, that I have as little to do with learning as he, and do scorn her helps as much as he. (5.5.107-110)
Grace correctly assesses the situation when she says “I know of no fitter match than a puppet to commit with a hypocrite” (5.5.48-49). As in the game of vapors, Puppet Dionysius repeats Busy's accusations back at Busy, negated:

BUSY. First, I say unto thee, idol, thou hast no calling

PUPPET DIONYSIUS. You lie. I am called Dionysius.

LEATHERHEAD. The motion says you lie; he is called Dionysius

I' the matter, and to that calling he answers.

BUSY. I mean, no vocation, idol, no present lawful calling.

PUPPET DIONYSIUS. Is yours a lawful calling?

LEATHERHEAD. The motion asketh if yours be a lawful calling?

BUSY. Yes, mine is of the spirit.

PUPPET DIONYSIUS. Then idol is a lawful calling.

LEATHERHEAD. He says, then idol is a lawful calling. For you called him idol, and your calling is of the spirit.

COKES. Well disputed, hobbyhorse! (5.5.50-62)

By attacking the literal meaning of Busy's words, Puppet Dionysius undermines one of Busy's most prolific rhetorical flourishes, and strips his words of their sermonizing impact. Showing his mimetic nature, the Puppet also argues in a childish contradicting way:

BUSY. I say his calling is profane...It is profane idol!

PUPPET DIONYSIUS. It is not profane!

LEATHERHEAD. It is not profane, he says.
BUSY. It is profane!

PUPPET DIONYSIUS. *It is not profane!*

BUSY. It is profane!

PUPPET DIONYSUS. *It is not profane!*

LEATHERHEAD. Well said! Confute him with “not,” still. [*To Busy*]

You cannot bear him down with your base noise, sir (5.5.66-73)

The pointlessness of this argument shows how limited Busy’s rhetoric is when his accusations of wickedness are retorted just as loudly as he asserts them. Even when Leatherhead commends the puppet and scolds Busy, the Puritan ignores that he is involved in an unfair contest with a puppet; the rabbi cannot hope to succeed when the puppet-master moderates.

Rebutted in his first attempt to simply shout “profane” at the puppet, Busy regroups and attacks not the puppet's existence as an idol, but that the puppet's profession as an actor is a “Vanity” (5.5.79). Dionysius counters that because of the public nature of their professions, their names, even their clothing, the Puritan subculture is full of vanity. The puppet's exhortation of the Puritan's public personas recalls Subtle's invective against Tribulation Wholesome in *The Alchemist* that since the Puritan faction will be wealthy after they acquire the stone, they will not need to perpetrate their scams any longer:

Nor call yourselves

By names of Tribulation, Persecution, Restraint,

Long-Patience, and suchlike affected

By the whole family or wood of you
Only for glory and to catch the ear
Of the disciple. (3.2.92)

By telling the Puritans what they will not have to do after they achieve the stone, Subtle lists all the Puritans' sins. The Puritans at the fair are the ultimate moralizing satirists, stripped of all sense of self-awareness. Dionysius does not need subtlety, and openly attacks Puritan hypocrisy, that while they rail against it, many aspects of their faith fall under the banner of vanity. Dionysius uses Busy's improvisational tropes against the rabbi, illustrating that his accusatory proclamations, so capable in whipping up the already-converted, are useless in actual debate. While Justice Overdo repeatedly talks to himself, Busy, an ecclesiastical counterpart to Overdo, never acts by himself, always for an audience. Like the puppet king, Busy has no existence beyond his performances for the audience. Busy's lack of substance is evident as early as the first act when Quarlous discusses the rabbi with John Littlewit:

A notable hypocrite vermin it is; I know him. One that
stands upon his face more than his faith, at all times;
Ever in seditious motion, and reproving for vainglory;
of a most lunatic conscience and spleen, and affects the violence
of singularity in all he does. (1.3.134-38)

Barish notices that Quarlous has classified Busy four different ways: “by the neuter pronoun 'it' (belatedly affixed to its predicate nominative), the masculine 'him,' the impersonal 'one,' and finally by the absence of a pronoun” (191). Quarlous's description of Busy is notable in that it offers a series of motions, non-parallel verb structure that
leaves no real impression. Busy has a rapacious appetite, a grotesque nature that overpowers his rhetoric, but nothing else substantive; there is no “it” to Busy.

The disputation between Zeal-of-the-Land Busy and Puppet Dionysius continues Jonson's trope of a trial that concludes Volpone and The Alchemist, but differs greatly from those two in tone and severity. In Volpone, the trial takes place in a literal courtroom where Volpone, with the aid of his scheming gulls, has succeeded beyond all reasonable expectations in defeating the rape charges made against him by Celia and Bonario. Against Mosca's advice, Volpone orders Mosca to spread word around Venice that Volpone has died and left all his possessions to Mosca, in order to “vex 'em still at every turn” (5.3.112). News of his premature death works against him when Mosca appears in court, declaring himself the inheritor of Volpone's ill-gotten fortune, and refusing to recant at Volpone's behest. When Volpone objects, the avocatori order him whipped (5.12.79). Volpone confesses he is not dead to avoid the whipping and the loss of his possessions to Mosca, but is in turn sentenced to be held in “the hospital of the Incuribili/.../ Thou art to lie in prison cramped in irons,/ Till thou be'st sick and lame indeed” (5.12.120-24). Volpone and Mosca's crimes were enjoyable to the audience while they duped various stupid, greedy gulls, but his attempt to rape Celia is the pivot where the audience turns against Volpone and Mosca. The harsh nature of Volpone's wickedness demands an equally vicious punishment.

In the final act of The Alchemist, the landlord Lovewit has returned home and Face immediately sets out to double-cross his erstwhile partners Subtle and Doll, who are sent off to uncertain, but not preferable fates. The familiar world of The Alchemist's
London is restored to how it was before the plague raged; a status the perverse and foreign Venice could never attain. The monstrous in Volpone becomes the cheap in The Alchemist. The actual outcome of the venture tripartate “does not seem a matter of great moral import, as Volpone's is. It happens ever day in Face and Subtle's London, and to everybody: one day up, one day down” (Gertmenian 251).

After the absurdity of Zeal-of-the-Land Busy's attempts to prove the immorality of theater in a play is unveiled, he disappears. Busy rebukes the “vanity of the eye,” and is famous for impassioned prayers that go on for so long that he loses consciousness and rends his garments. Win remarks that she and her family have “such a tedious life with him for his diet—and his clothes too. He breaks his buttons and cracks seams at every saying he sobs out” (1.2.70-72). Zeal-of-the-Land fakes indifference to the material world, but at the fair he indulges every aspect of his physical appetite, about which Knockem remarks: “two and a half he eat to his share! And he has drunk a pailful. He eats with his eyes, as well as his teeth” (3.6.47-48). He is a character of pure rhetoric. There is nothing between the gluttonous appetite and the empty rhetoric.
CHAPTER FIVE: RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY

Zeal-of-the-Land Busy is the most obvious religious presence at the fair, and his hypocritical gluttony expresses the softening of Jonson's satire. Where the Puritans Ananias and Tribulation Wholesome in *The Alchemist* cheat orphans and widows, Busy merely eats too much and makes a fool of himself. Robert Watson characterizes the more forgiving nature of Bartholomew Fair as a “flag of surrender” (Watson 10), a capitulation to literary and social behaviors, and comments that in the face of the Puritan’s increase of civic power in the first decades of the seventeenth century, “the social circumstances compelled Jonson to turn his parodic strategy away from dramatic rivals, and toward censorious forces that were threatening to shut down all the theaters” (Watson 140). *Volpone*'s Venice is too removed from the religious tensions that take a more prominent role in *The Alchemist*, and reach a peak in *Bartholomew Fair*. Zeal-of-the-Land Busy combines the censorious piety of Ananias and the cynical hypocrisy of Tribulation Wholesome in *The Alchemist*, but in a clownish, less wicked manner. The overwhelming carnality of the fair and its denizens is the perfect setting to expose the failings of those who would sit in judgment of others.

Zeal-of-the-Land Busy's accusation that “you are an abomination; for the male among you putteth on the apparel of the female, and the female of the male” (5.5.96-98), as well as Dionysius's retort, display an interesting dichotomy in the religion of the speakers and of the poet. Busy's condemnation is from the Old Testament: “The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's
garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God” (Deu. 22:5).

Deuteronomy is full of the legal codes pertaining to the period of Israelite history during and shortly after the reign of King Josiah. Busy's invocation of an Old Testament command speaks to the rabbinical nature of the Puritans, a complicated association that the officious glutton reduces to a culinary syntax discrepancy: “There may be a good use made of it...by the public eating of swine's flesh, to profess our hate and loathing of Judaism, whereof the brethren stand taxed” (1.6.95-98). Busy has no understanding of the spiritual demands required of a preacher. Quarlous and Winwife repeatedly refer to Busy in his pre-puritanical existence as a baker, which demeans his place at the spiritual head of his community and aligns him with Ursula and Joan Trash: "A notable hot baker he was, when he plied the peel" (3.2.52-53). There is a clear Old Testament mode, although bereft of the emphasis on learning, to how Busy leads the Purecraft/Littlewit family through the fair:

Look not toward them! Hearken not. The place is Smithfield, or the field of smiths, the grove of hobbyhorses and trinkets; the wares are the wares of devils. And the whole fair is the shop of Satan! They are hooks, and baits, very baits, that are hung out on every side...you must not look nor turn toward them. The heathen man could stop his ears with wax against the harlot o'the sea; do you like, with your fingers against the bells of the Beast (3.2.40-49)

Busy feels he alone is capable of moving the family past the very wares and amusements they came to the fair to enjoy. His repetition of “Smithfield, or the field of smiths”
reveals that his claim to favor inspiration over learning is a cheap rhetorical trick devised to lure the gullible. Busy has neither learning nor inspiration. He merely repeats the name in a genitive linking of two nouns with “of,” “field of smiths,” “grove of hobbyhorse and trinkets,” “the wares of devils,” “the shop of Satan!” “bells of the Beast.” Even his ignorant, mistaken recount of Odysseus being lashed to the mast to prevent being lured by the harpies contains a genitive phrasing. Genitive phrasing lends a biblical heft to Busy's empty blathering and serves to “lull the listener into a narcotic doze” (Barish 199). Jonson clearly identified this trope with Puritan cant, as Ananias and Tribulation Wholesome in *The Alchemist* share the quality when they discuss the necessity of absorbing the insults Subtle hurls at them: “we of the separation,” “the language of Canaan,” “children of perdition” (3.1.2-15). The empty pomposity alerts the reader to the fact that any of Busy's (or Tribulation's or Ananias's) utterances is as meaningless as any other.

Busy's argument against the transvestitism of the puppets is dispatched by Puppet Dionysius' rejoinder that “we have neither male nor female among us” (5.5.102-03), a New Testament inference that “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). That Busy condemns from Old Testament law and is rebuked by a New Testament epistle is particularly telling of how the playwright views the Puritan faith. The Puritans stand on their separation from other religious sects by their status as the elect, a position pointedly unrelated to education in matters ecclesiastical or otherwise. The sex by which Busy condemns the puppet players requires a biologically constructed difference among the
males and the females, based on a procreative act the puppets are unable to perform; as Boerher affirms: “where Busy expects to see sex, he instead discovers gender” (197).

Puritanism, with its insistence on inspiration over education, and its status as an oppositional denomination, is prone to charismatic idiots who appeal to the emotion of the parishioners rather than their reason. Diane Shuger posits that the puppet's answer to Busy is more significant than it seems at first sight, that its effect on him is therefore not abrupt, “but quite intelligible, and the conversion from the dramatic climax to Jonson's treatment of hypocrisy is one of the basic themes of the play” (70). Busy's attack on the stand “may act out his comic obsession with idolatry but...is also a meaningful analysis for those superficial appeals of the fair which can draw in the naïve or foolish individual as prey” (Dessen 157). Blindly chasing their “lust of the palate,” several characters meet a public humiliation at the fair. Like Ananias in The Alchemist, Busy “cannot be silent” (3.6.73) when he beholds the hobbyhorse booth. The fair runs on gluttony, wrath, lust, thievery, and idolatry. The havoc that is wreaked on the middle-class ladies, Bartholomew Cokes, and the authority figures Busy, Wasp, and Overdo, testifies to the veracity of Busy's entreaty. Zeal-of-the-Land is a hypocrite; however, his failings in morality at the fair may be compared to many Old Testament heroes. Moses, Noah, David, and particularly Busy's model, Samson were all men who were entrusted in the deliverance of their people, yet fell short because of a moral fecklessness born of fleshly appetites of pride, drunkenness, and lust.

Busy's foolishness about the wickedness of the fair is a mistake in degree, not in kind. The effect of the idols at the fair, “the peeping of popery,” upon young
Bartholomew Cokes is certainly a ravenous materialism that incites Cokes's gluttonous consumption of trinkets by the armful. Littlewit's need to see his play performed ends with his wife turned prostitute. Despite Busy's idiocy, his remark that “The fleshly woman you call Ursula is above all to be avoided, having the marks upon her of the three enemies of man: the world, as being in the fair; the devil, as being in the fire; and flesh, as being herself” (3.6.31-35), is certainly acute. From lust to gluttony, wrath, drunkenness and idolatry, Ursula's booth is the center of all the sins at the fair. Busy's susceptibility to the sins speaks to the weakness of the individual, but does not discredit what he says. Dessen's thesis that the downfall of some of the characters at the fair “illustrates the effect of corrupt society upon average humanity” (169), is correct, but incomplete. It is the individuals within that society that make it corrupt. Jonson states that individuals are responsible for their own morality. Authority figures themselves are subject to the same weaknesses and hungers, and to place too much faith in them leads the individual to a similar downfall.

Zeal's admonition to the Littlewit party, “walk on in the middle way, foreright. Turn neither to the right hand nor the left. Let not your eyes be drawn aside with vanity, nor your ear with noises” (3.2.30-32), is a reasonable appeal to avoid excess. Robert Watson explains that

By making his most intelligent and successful characters neither the great idolaters of the Fair (like Cokes and Littlewit) nor its great condemners (like Busy and Overdo), Jonson is announcing that, while he cannot wholeheartedly approve of many popular theatrical conventions, he will
no longer offer aid and comfort to the hypocritical enemies of the theater, who had begun renewing their attacks with a dangerous zeal.

(141)

Busy fails to heed his own advice, and suffers for it, stripped of his zeal as Cokes is his trinkets and Wasp and Overdo are of their authority. After he is “converted,” Busy disappears, not to speak again in the play. Busy is revealed as a rhetorical construct, propped up by appetite, but with no substance underneath.
CONCLUSION

Bartholomew Fair is Jonson’s admission that playwrights are just as susceptible to follies of the world as anyone else. In his biography of Jonson, Ben Jonson: A Life, David Riggs recounts a sojourn to the continent in 1612, with Sir Walter Raleigh’s teenage son Wat, whom Jonson tutored. Riggs recalls the story as Jonson told William Drummond that Jonson and young Wat got very drunk while in Paris, and Raleigh placed the unconscious Jonson, arms splayed, in the back of a wagon he then had drawn through the streets “‘showing his governour stretched out, & telling them that was a more Lively image of the Crucifix then any they had’” (190). My thesis does not propose that this single episode affected Jonson so much that when he wrote Bartholomew Fair in 1614, he was chastened into satirizing his own satiric intentions, though some critics do suggest just that. That sort of biographical causality is too simplistic. Wasp, Busy, and Overdo are converted that quickly, but Jonson is too complex a character for that. Rather, I suggest that Jonson’s forgiveness of human foibles in Bartholomew Fair is another step in the direction that he had begun earlier. The change is more subtle than some critics would like there to be. Coupled with a softer satirical motive is the self-confidence Jonson lacked in earlier plays. The playwright who wrote Bartholomew Fair is more comfortable with his ability and his accomplishments than the one who wrote Volpone. The credit Jonson gives contemporary playwrights in Bartholomew Fair, shows more generosity than he was capable of earlier, when he viewed the classical moralists as his peers.
Present also is a sense of community, threatened by increasing Puritan civic power, that forces Jonson to defend the theater. The severer satire of The Alchemist, and especially Volpone, illustrate Jonson’s sense that he was a single voice crying out in the wilderness, much like Bunyan’s Christian in The Pilgrim’s Progress. By the time he wrote Bartholomew Fair, Jonson was secure enough to see himself as part of a community under attack by outside forces. Authority figures sought to shut down the theaters. In retaliation, Jonson brought them into the fair at Smithfield and forced them to take responsibility for their accusations. What Overdo, Wasp, and Busy discover is that since they cannot control their own appetites, they are in no position to judge anyone else. Jonson admits that he has played the judge too often himself, and in Bartholomew Fair, shows that he has the same shortcomings anyone else does. By letting the now-chastened authority figures off lightly, they can all retire to Overdo’s house, where they can eat and drink together.
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