CHAPTER I

Introduction

THE GENERATION OF SHAME

History has been hard on Gabriel Harvey. For all his intellectual gifts, the Elizabethan academic and commentator never quite managed to master the rituals of courtly sophistication, and a series of social blunders eventually consigned him to the role of Elizabethan buffoon. What is more, Harvey took on Thomas Nashe in a highly public quarrel in the early 1590s and, while it is unlikely that any Elizabethan could have emerged with dignity from an encounter with Nashe, Harvey's contribution to the quarrel only served to consolidate his image as a pompous pedant. Yet Harvey was an astute critic of Elizabethan culture, and in *Pierce's Supererogation* (1593) he not only turns a skeptical eye on Nashe, but on his own contribution to the quarrel. For Harvey, the danger for both writers lies in the fact that their dispute generates its own rhetorical momentum, forcing both of them to produce impure, ephemeral, vacuous rubbish, as they spawn words about words:

What fonder businesse then to troble the Printe with Pamphlets, that cannot possibly live whiles the Basiliske hisseth death? Was I woont to jest at Elder-tons ballatinge, Gascoignes sonnettinge, Greenes pamphletting, Martins libelling, Holinsheads engrosing, some-bodies abridging, and whatchicaltes translating, & shall I now become a scribling Creature with fragmentes of shame, that might long sethence have beene a fresh writer with discourses of applause? The very whole matter, what but a thinge of nothing? the Methode, what but a hotch-pott for a gallymafry? by the one or other, what hope of publike use or private credite?[1]

Harvey's quarrel with Nashe was a quarrel over the status of professional authorship, which was played out in the public arena of print, and it marks an important development in emerging discourses of literary professionalization, but what interests me about the quarrel is that Harvey associates

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[1] Gabriel Harvey, *Pierce's Supererogation*, in G. Gregory Smith, ed., *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, 2 vols. (1904; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950), II, p. 253.

certain kinds of literary and economic productivity with shame. In this passage from *Pierce's Supererogation*, he figures the author as "a scribling Creature with fragmentes of shame," as a cultural agent whose identity is pieced together from disparate little elements that bring disgrace. Ironically, Harvey's attack exemplifies what he despises, as it spawns matter out of the kind of facile verbal dalliance that draws the word "thinge" from "nothinge," at the same time as it eroticizes verbal wit, and unleashes the bawdy associations implicit in "thinge" and "nothinge."[2] Harvey is repelled by the hybrid nature of the texts generated by his quarrel with Nashe, "what but a hotch-pott for a gallymafry," and his attack elides structural and moral criteria, by implying that the smallness that characterizes the fragmentary components of mixed forms consigns them to ethical and philosophical marginality. Harvey is disturbed by moral and artistic degeneration, and his analysis deflects attention from the privileged and uncontested forms of thought in Elizabethan literary culture. It turns our attention away from those objects he calls "the discourses of applause," and prompts a reconsideration of the roles played by shame, fragmentariness and marginality in late Elizabethan literary culture.

This book is about shame and the pivotal role it played in the changing writing practices of late Elizabethan England. From *The Faerie Queene* (1590 and 1596) to Donne's "Elegies" (written around 1598), from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (performed in 1595/6) to the prose narratives that rework the motif of the prodigal son, texts produced in the 1590s self-consciously deal in the shameful. Such texts may draw attention to the slightness of their form, or the indecency of their content, or they may parade a style that signals itself to be excessively ornamental. They may undermine their own narrative and ideological priorities by wandering off into marginal areas in ostentatious digressions, or they may subvert their own modes of representation by mixing genre with counter-genre. Such texts draw attention to their shamefulness, frequently exaggerating it in shameless gestures of self-promotion. Shame shades into shamelessness when fear of cultural sanctions modulates into contempt for those very sanctions. Shamelessness is a form of self-display which gives the illusion of autonomy and independence, by proclaiming the individual's power to rise above criticism and ignore the rules. The shamelessness of these texts is a strategy of authorial self-promotion, a paradoxical way of turning the negative potential of

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[2] It is equally characteristic of late Elizabethan habits of thought that Harvey's criticism associates new forms of authorship with eroticism: "nothinge" and "thinge" are Elizabethan slang for male and female pudenda.

literature into something productive. The writers who burst on to the literary scene in the 1590s can justifiably be said to constitute "a generation of shame." Not only do they identify themselves in opposition to the cultural and political status quo which seemed to have become entrenched around the aged queen, but they also actively produce, or generate, shame. In other words, they pursue, exaggerate and luxuriate in strategies that bring structural, stylistic and moral disgrace.[3]

Late sixteenth-century England witnessed a dramatic extension and intensification of literary activity – of reading, writing and debate about the function of literature. To a certain extent, this explosion was the product of the political tensions of the 1590s, which propelled writers to explore alternative forms of textual authority, but it was also consumer-led, as new kinds of patron, and new sorts of reader, required new forms of authorship. Sir Philip Sidney and Sir Walter Ralegh made literature part of the symbolic capital of the court, and where the court led, socially ambitious Elizabethans followed. Indeed, Sidney's own prose romance, the *Arcadia*, which had been written for courtly readers, found new audiences in the middling sort, when Robert Waldegrave brought out a cheaper edition in 1599 which undercut William Ponsonby's 1598 folio of Sidney's *Works*, and made the text available to a new range of readers.[4] Literary activity spread through a range of social and geographical locations. For example, writers such as George Wither and Nicholas Breton started to elaborate

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[3] The study that established the idea of a conflict of generations in late Elizabeth England is Anthony Esler's *The Aspiring Mind of the Elizabethan Younger Generation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1966). Richard Helgerson brilliantly takes up Esler's lead in *The Elizabethan Prodigals* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) in which he analyzes the ways generational conflict was mediated through the prodigal son fiction. While my study is indebted to *Elizabethan Prodigals*, and to Helgerson's development of his model of the Elizabethan literary system in *Self-Crowned Laureates: Spenser, Jonson, Milton and the Literary System* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), I identify different functions for the Elizabethan trope of prodigality, functions which will be outlined later in the introduction.

[4] The publishing history of the *Arcadia* raises the complex issues of profitability, and the disjunction between the cost of a text and its value in cultural terms. For an extremely interesting discussion of these issues see Alexandra Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*, Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture 17 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Thomas Nashe's games with the word "credit," which raise the issue of cost and value, will be explored in chapter 2. Lars Engle, *Shakespearean Pragmatism: Market of His Time* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993) also discusses issues of worth, price and value, in the context of competing ideological-economic practices in the Renaissance. Taking specific examples, such as the ascription of value to the beloved, the ascription of timelessness to poetry and the definition of something as obscene, Engle argues that Shakespeare demonstrates the contingent nature of value, as it arises from the needs of communities, rather than from some source of certainty beyond community. Although my study focuses on changing aesthetic and intellectual tropes, the work of critics like Halasz and Engle is a constant reminder of the determinative power of economics on the formation of such tropes.

meritocratic ideals, in a bid to appeal to the middle classes whose patron-
age they sought to exploit, while the increasing economic and political
pre-eminence of towns had already enabled writers, like Thomas Church-
yard, to explore new forms of laureateship by casting himself as an urban
laureate in *Church-yardes Charge* (1580).[5]

The 1590s were characterized by the expansion of literary activity, but
the revolution that took place in the decade was also conceptual, as writers
and readers started to express a changing sense of the forms and functions
of literature. In particular, literature started to be conceived as a valuable
activity in its own right, with its own personnel, rules, history and conven-
tions. What has frequently been overlooked, however, is that change and
marginality enjoy a mutually productive relationship in the late sixteenth-
century network of obsessions. One of the most striking characteristics of
the 1590s is the centrality of marginal forms. Indeed, the innovations which
characterize literary activity in the period often took place in marginal
forms, and the most characteristic genres of the period – including the
epyllion, the complaint, the sonnet sequence and the verse epistle – all
explore threshold states and points of coming into being. They preserve
and re-enact the experience of transformation, whether this involves, for
example, change from youth to maturity, from solitude to society, or from
one genre to another. The relationship between the periphery and the
center seems to be an obsession of twentieth-century cultural theory, from
cultural anthropologists, such as Marcel Mauss, who argued in the 1920s
that what is peripheral in a society is often symbolically central, through

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[5] For Wither's later experiments in authorship, see Michelle O'Callaghan, *The "shepheard's nation":
Jacobean Spenserians and Early Stuart Political Culture, 1612–1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000),
pp. 26–62 and 147–87; and Richard Helgerson's brief, but suggestive, comments in *Forms of
Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) pp. 129–
31. The final poem in *Church-yardes Charge* (D3v–D4v) is dedicated to Sir Nicholas Woodroffe, Lord
Mayor of London, and celebrates London's antiquity, while it warns the city against immorality. His
verse captures the bustle of the metropolis: see ll. 23–32. Apart from Spenser, Churchyard was the only
poet to receive a pension from Elizabeth, but there has been very little work on his function in Eliz-
abethan culture. However, see M. H. Goldwyn, "Notes on the Biography of Thomas Churchyard,"
RES NS 17 (1966): 1–15; Goldwyn, "A Note on Thomas Churchyard's Pension," *N&Q* NS 21 (1974):
89; and Dennis Kay, "The English Funeral Elegy in the Reigns of Elizabeth I and James I," D.Phil.,
Oxford University, 1980, pp. 33–8. Various critics have challenged the metropolitan bias of readings of
Renaissance culture in ways that give a more accurate picture of the undoubted cultural dominance
of London. For example, Michael Brennan, *Literary Patronage in the English Renaissance: The Pem-
broke Family* (London: Routledge, 1988) analyzes cultural activity at Wilton; Claire McEachern, *The
Poetics of English Nationhood 1590–1612*, Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture
13 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) reads Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* as "an aggressively
local poem, with respect to both time and place" (p. 139); and Gerald Maclean, Donna Landry and
Joseph P. Ward, eds., *The Country and the City Revisited: England and the Politics of Culture 1550–1850*
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 1–23, give a particularly careful account of the
fluid interactions between city and country cultures.

Foucault's theories of the interdependence of authority and transgression, to Fredric Jameson and postmodernism.[6] To a certain degree, it is this extended debate that makes these issues so compelling, but this book does not start with theory, but with the particular nature of the 1590s. Shame is not only produced by late Elizabethan literary culture, it actually produces late Elizabethan literary culture. The elements that define a text as literary in the 1590s are precisely those elements that shocked sixteenth-century readers, like Harvey, and have been overlooked by his critical successors.[7] Nevertheless, the generation of shame was pursued to define ways of thinking specific to literary process, and became the engine for transforming contemporary conceptions of literary use and value.

Of course the sense of literary renewal in the 1590s is coupled with the persistence of conservative attitudes towards literature. Critics continued to attack literature as a superficial pursuit that diverted readers and writers from serious employment and Christian morality, and the constant theme of such attacks is that literature is marginal and encourages triviality; that, in Russell Fraser's terms, it "turns the reader's attention from primary to secondary business."[8] The triviality of literary activity, and its association with pastime and matters peripheral to the state, is preserved in Francis Meres' account of the etymology of the term "poet": "In the infancy of Greece they that handled in the audience of the people grave and necessary matters were called wise men or eloquent men, which they ment by

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6 Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison, intr. E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1925; London: Routledge, 1974); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (1975; New York: Random House, 1979); Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (1976; New York: Random House, 1980); Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983), pp. 111–25; Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 146 (1984): 53–92.

7 The importance of the 1590s, and their relative neglect, are highlighted by Emrys Jones in his introduction to *The New Oxford Book of Sixteenth Century Verse*, ed. Jones (1991; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. xxxviii: "The 1590s have a claim to be considered the most remarkable decade in English literary history. This is not simply because they see the arrival of Shakespeare – though that might be thought distinction enough. Shakespeare, however, is only one of many new voices . . . So little known indeed are some of them that this culminating Elizabethan decade, despite its conventionally acknowledged achievements, might in reality be called one of the least explored regions of English poetry." Taking "culminating" in the sense of last, I broadly agree with Jones' assessment. On the 1590s and *fin-de-siècle* anxiety, see Margreta de Grazia, "Fin de Siècle Renaissance England," in *Fins de Siècle: English Poetry in 1590, 1690, 1790, 1890, 1990*, ed. Elaine Scarry (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 37–63.

8 Russell Fraser, *The War Against Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 4. From an extensive study of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century attacks on literature, Fraser concludes that, although these attacks were made for a variety of political, social, economic and moral reasons, they all present literature as a triviality.

Vates: so the rest, which sang of love matters, or other lighter devises allur-
ing unto pleasure and delight, were called Poets or makers."[9] Prior to the
1590s, writers tend to defend literature in humanist terms, by arguing that
it held a kernel of political or moral truth, but such defenses do not recog-
nize advantages that are specific to literary discourse, and the didactic and
allegorical character of a text remains more important than its literary or
fictional qualities. In the 1590s a new kind of defense becomes popular, one
which does not deny the traditional association of literature with the trivial
and transgressive, but capitalizes upon it to uncover the paradoxical value
of marginality, error, ornamentality and excess. By exploiting shame, these
texts set limits on literature, defining it as a thing apart, with its own rules,
personnel and history, and challenge the idea that literature is primarily the
vehicle for historical, political or religious truth. Literature continued to
be these things, but this book traces an important epistemological shift in
the culture of late sixteenth-century England, as writers started to redraw
the boundaries of intellectual activity.

THEORIES OF SHAME

Shame is a slippery term. For Freud it is one of those words, along with
Latin terms such as *altus*, which means both high and deep, and *sacer*,
which means both sacred and accursed, that preserve antithetical meanings,
and hence relate us to our primal experience of learning by comparison.[10]
Antithetical meanings are also encompassed by sixteenth-century uses of
the term shame. On the one hand, the term has negative associations, and
can mean disgrace, guilt, humiliation, self-contempt, sexual violation and
loss of chastity. On the other hand, in contradistinction to all of these
meanings, it has positive associations, and can also mean modesty. Thus,
in the sixteenth century, the term can refer to negative moral states, and to
the positive state of modesty. It can refer to the violent loss of chastity, and
to the state of mind that would preserve chastity.

  Shame and its related terms are explored in *The Faerie Queene* (1590 and
1596), which analyzes the varied, even contradictory, roles played by shame
in social, political and cultural self-definition. The positive cognates of
shame are frequently used to indicate proper, modest female behavior. For

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9 Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia* (1598), reprinted in Smith, ed., *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, II, p. 313.
10 Sigmund Freud, "The Antithetical Meaning of Primal Words"(1910), reprinted in *The Standard
    Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, 23 vols.
    (London: Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1957), XI, p. 159. An English example
    of an antithetical term would be the verb "to cleave."

instance, wicked, lascivious Fidessa knows precisely how to entrap the Red
Cross Knight by giving the impression of modesty, or shamefastness: "With
chaunge of chear the seeming simple maid / Let fall her eien, as shamefast
to the earth" (I.II.27).[11] Contrasted with Fidessa's show of false modesty is,
what could be termed, a show of false immodesty, when, under pressure
from the magic of Archimago, Red Cross dreams of a sexually provocative
Una. In fact, Una is the embodiment of integrity and sexual continence,
and she remains modest, but Red Cross' dream generates a fantasy of sexual
contact with Una as the eroticized figure of female authority. The dream is
an indictment of his own lust, and a test of his own faith, but Red Cross is
unable to interpret it properly, and the immodest behavior of the dream-
Una, with "her shamelesse guise" (I.I.50), provokes his unjust rage against
the real, consistently pure Una.

In *The Faerie Queene*, shame and the related term, disgrace, also describe
the knight who has failed to fulfill the standards of courtliness. As Calidore
explains in Book VI, shame is the consequence of defaming "noble armes
and gentle curtesie":

> Much was the Knight abashed at that word;
> Yet answerd thus; Not unto me the shame,
> But to the shamefull doer it afford.
> Bloud is no blemish; for it is no blame
> To punish those, that doe deserve the same;
> But they that breake bands of civilitie,
> And wicked customes make, those doe defame
> Both noble armes and gentle curtesie.
> No greater shame to man then inhumanitie.
>
> (VI.I.26)

The ethical, social and nationalistic ideals that are defined by Spenserian
courtesy involve a particular sensitivity to shame, which controls the inter-
actions between individuals, and generates order. For example, it is fear of
shame that drives Red Cross into his heroic encounter with Error (I.I.24),
and it is fear of "bashfulnesse" (VI.VIII.5), the term Spenser uses to describe
the mortification caused by shame, that repeatedly impels the processes
through which the knightly ideal is elaborated in the poem. The terrible
consequences of disgrace for a knight are realized in the career of Timias
who is rejected by his beloved lady Belphoebe, because she suspects him
of unfaithfulness with Amoret (IV.VII.24–IV.VIII.18). Although her sus-
picions are largely unjustified, Belphoebe's total rejection of Timias drives

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[11] All quotations are from Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton, Hiroshi Yamashita
and Toshiyuki Suzuki, Longman Annotated English Poets (London: Pearson Education, 2001).

him into distraction. Shame reduces Timias to a state of anonymity and emasculation in which he is not only silenced, but is also de-faced, as he becomes unrecognizable both to his squire, Arthur, and to Belphoebe. Timias' fate figures the realities of Sir Walter Ralegh's relationship with the Queen, especially after the discovery of his secret marriage to Elizabeth Throckmorton, one of her ladies-in-waiting, in 1592, which led to Ralegh's exile from the court. However, Ralegh, like Spenser, was well-versed in the politics of shame, and he campaigned for social, political and cultural reinclusion through a series of staged enactments of his shame and grief, which included his extended lyric fragment, "The Booke of the Ocean to Scinthia," and Sir Arthur Gorges' famous account of Ralegh's distraction on seeing Elizabeth pass by in her barge, when he was confined to his house.[12] The cultivation of shame is a courtly gesture that is encompassed by the ideals of sprezzatura, and, while the verses of "The Booke of the Ocean" are clearly a gesture of submission, the rituals of self-abasement staged by the poem give Ralegh access to courtly forms of exchange, and offer him the means to reinsert himself into the collective consciousness through gestures of spectacular self-abasement in which the cultivation of shame becomes productive.

Shame plays an important role in mediating the transactions between individuals in Spenser's text. It defines an emergent and vulnerable space of privacy that is usually figured by a female body that needs to be shielded from the indulgences of voyeurism. To the extent that excessive desire is figured as "shamefull lust" (IV.VII.12), sensitivity to shame also preserves a sense of measure and guards against dangerous extremes.[13] However, the ordered society generated by shame in *The Faerie Queene* produces its own perversions and is extremely vulnerable to slander which inflicts disgrace on its victims. For instance, the Blatant Beast deals in ignomiy and violation and, like the figure of Sclaunder in Book IV, canto VIII, the

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[12] Gorges' account of Ralegh's dramatic re-enactment of *Orlando Furioso* is discussed by Stephen Greenblatt, *Sir Walter Ralegh: The Renaissance Man and His Roles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 76–7; by Helen Estabrook Sandison, "Arthur Gorges: Spenser's Alcyon," *PMLA* 43 (1928): 657–8; and by Stephen Coote, *A Play of Passion: The Life of Sir Walter Ralegh* (London: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 199–201.

[13] Theresa M. Krier, *Gazing on Secret Sights: Spenser, Classical Imitation, and the Decorums of Vision* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), is an acute analysis of the dynamics of desire, secrecy and vulnerability, and the ways the imitation of Virgil and Ovid mediates these issues for Spenser. She relates Spenser's analyses of vision to class and gender, and to his developing relationship with the Queen. Krier is interested in the ethical and representational problems of how to show hiddenness without violating it. For a brief, but stimulating, analysis of reading as a form of sexual aggression, see Leonard Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986) p. 250.

Beast derives its power from a system that is hypersensitive to shame and places great store on good name. The culture of shame in *The Faerie Queene* empowers language and the imagination, but in dangerously negative ways, as it exposes individuals to the perils of the bad mouth, conjecture and rumor. The significance accorded shame, in the social structures explored by *The Faerie Queene*, leaves individuals uncomfortably suspended between the desire to preserve honor, and the ease with which they can fall into dishonor. The easy interchangeability between the two states is preserved in the associations of Timias' name, which suggest the Greek word *timi*, meaning honor, and the Italian word *timidezza*, meaning bashfulness.[14] In fact, the social formations analyzed by *The Faerie Queene* also betray a further weakness, and for all Spenser's attempts to merge the social élite with an ethical élite, shame cannot escape an association with privileged élitism. It is related to terms which reflect an acute concern with social distinctions, terms such as "disparagement" (IV.VII.16), which describes the disgrace caused by Aemylia's marriage to her social inferior, the so-called "Squire of low degree" (IV.VII.15).

In spite of the frequent condemnation of things that bring shame, Spenser derives cultural capital from his shameful material. For example, his text pursues the pleasures of voyeurism in an explicit description of Serena's body, at the same time as it condemns the savages for abducting Serena and exposing all her "daintie parts" (st. 43) to profane sight (VI.VIII.39–43). Similarly, while the Bower of Bliss, in Book II, canto XII, is condemned for moral laxity, the description of the Bower is a tour de force of Spenser's poetic imagination. The description celebrates Spenser's artistry in a highly ornamental passage that digresses, both structurally and morally, from the narrative of courtly endeavor, and it is only destroyed in a belated act of shamefast iconoclasm. Spenser's assertion of literary power in the context of marginality, in the Bower of Bliss, is highly characteristic of late Elizabethan culture, where a particular form of *literary* canonicity, of literary excellence, is coterminous with, and inseparable from, marginality. On the one hand,

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[14] See A. C. Hamilton's commentary on Timias' name (III.I.18), in his earlier edition of *The Faerie Queene*, Longman Annotated English Poets (London: Longman, 1980). The new (2001) edition only glosses "Timias" as "honoured." Many critics have illuminated the relationship between Timias and Ralegh including: Walter Oakeshott, *The Queen and The Poet* (London: Faber, 1960), pp. 93–8; Jonathan Goldberg, *Endlesse Worke: Spenser and the Structures of Discourse* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), pp. 49–56; Jeffrey Knapp, *An Empire Nowhere: England, America, and Literature from Utopia to The Tempest*, The New Historicism: Studies in Cultural Poetics 16 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992) pp. 177–87; J. R. Brink, "The Masque of the Nine Muses: Sir John Davies's Unpublished 'Epithalamium' and the 'Belphoebe-Ruby' Episode in *The Faerie Queene*," *RES* NS 23 (1972): 445–7; and Patrick Cheney, *Spenser's Famous Flight: A Renaissance Idea of a Literary Career* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), pp. 111–48.

Spenser's laureate ambitions were sanctioned by the pension he received from Elizabeth I in 1591, and *The Faerie Queene* is indeed England's epic. However, at the same time, it is a quintessential late Elizabethan text which deals in trivial, scandalous material. It gives generous space to light subjects, and it makes matter out of marginality, as it wanders through the productive digressions of its form.[15]

In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle attempts his own definition of the terms shame and shamelessness: "let shame then be defined as a kind of pain or uneasiness in respect of misdeeds, past or present, or future, which seem to tend to bring dishonour, and shamelessness as contempt and indifference in regard to these same things."[16] Aristotle's definition of shame is relatively clear, but his definition of shamelessness is less so. Does the condition of being shameless, of being without shame, indicate rejection of the things that bring shame, and hence a kind of purity: or does being without shame indicate contempt for the rules of behavior and indifference to dishonor? Aristotle goes on to list the things that cause shame, and among the sources of dishonor are illicit relations and what he terms "making profit out of what is petty or disgraceful." Aristotle's definition of shame is made in the context of a discussion of social and psychological identity, but the phrase, "making profit out of what is petty or disgraceful," offers an uncannily accurate description of one of the most characteristic strategies of late Elizabethan literary culture, which also contrives to "mak[e] profit out of what is petty or disgraceful." Moreover, Aristotle's intimation of the complex and unpredictable interactions between shame and different sorts of capital, including the forms of cultural, moral and monetary capital implied in the phrase "making profit," suggests why the generation of shame should prove such a particularly productive trope for writers who were in the process of redefining literary use and value.

It would seem that shame is one of our contemporary cultural obsessions. Indeed, since the 1950s, social history, psychology and moral philosophy have been interested in the role played by shame in the development of individuals and societies. Psychologists have elaborated a psychology of shame as part of a project that aims to analyze feelings and their role in

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[15] The association of ecphrasis, artistry and marginality will be pursued in chapter 3.
[16] Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, trans. John Henry Freese, The Loeb Classical Library (1926; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), II, vi, p. 211. *The Rhetoric* was included in theoretical systems for teaching logic and rhetoric in the Renaissance. See T. W. Baldwin, *William Shakspere's Small Latine and Lesse Greek*, 2 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944), I, p. 106 and II, p. 28.