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*Pamela M. King*

Dunbar's *The Golden Targe*:  
A Chaucerian Masque



Modern critical opinion concerning Dunbar's *Golden Targe* has ranged from reserved praise to outright condemnation and righteous bafflement. In order that we are not unjust to Dunbar's rhetorical skills in conveying the matter of his poetic imagination, it is clearly only fair to attempt to identify precisely what he was imagining. In this connection, recognizing the influences upon the poet becomes peculiarly important both to the reader's appreciation of the poem and, vicariously, to the poet's reputation.

The critical commonplaces surrounding our reading of the poem in the last twenty-five years include discussion of its "craft,"<sup>1</sup> its "superficiality"<sup>2</sup> and even its "technology."<sup>3</sup> These terms call to mind an essay by Francis Bacon, "On Masques and Triumphs," which, with equal equivocation, regards an art form familiar to Dunbar in its infancy,

These things are but toys to come amongst such serious observations. But yet, since princes will have such things, it is better that they should be graced with elegancy, than daubed with cost...It is true, the alternations of scenes, so be it quietly and without noise, are things of great beauty and pleasure; for they feed and relieve the eye, before it be full of the same object. Let the scenes abound with light

specially coloured and varied; and let the masquers, or any other, that are come down from the scene, have some motions upon the scene itself before their coming down; for it draws the eye strangely, and makes it with great pleasure to desire to see that it cannot perfectly discern...But enough of these toys.<sup>4</sup>

Amongst the voices of bewilderment and dismissal have been two<sup>5</sup> who have urged readers of *The Golden Targe* to look outside literary sources and analogues for an understanding of the poem, particularly to the masquing and pageantry of the court of James IV. Disappointingly the conclusion has been that the poem, by its high degree of artifice, demonstrates that it was probably intended as an occasional poem for some such court extravaganza. In other words, its relationship to pageantry has been judged to be a strictly metonymic one.

It is my view that *The Golden Targe* is related to court pageantry in a more intimate manner than heretofore explored, and that a corrected reading of the poem from this point of view in turn elucidates its relationship with the medieval dream vision. I should like to adopt a metaphoric view of the poem as masque, tournament or disguising. The suggestion that any poem has this kind of relationship with theatre does, of course, call to mind the seductive arguments of Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*.<sup>6</sup> He has argued:

All poetry is born of play: the sacred play of worship, the festive play of courtship, the martial play of the contest, the disputatious play of brag-gadoco, mockery and invective, the nimble play of wit and readiness...<sup>7</sup>

To Huizinga "play" is the common denominator of all poetry within the broadly courtly genre. Without joining battle in this larger arena, it is certainly possible to isolate certain characteristics in certain poems within the tradition which bear specific relationships with Huizinga's definition of "play." These can range from overt references to mimetic forms to emulation of those forms within the movement of the poem itself.

The suggestion that *The Golden Targe* relates to the masque metaphorically, however, neither links it with an external occasion, nor claims that its mimetic qualities exist at so deep a level as "the structure of the creative imagination."<sup>8</sup> *The Golden Targe*'s relationship with "play" is quite specific: it is a highly self-conscious celebration of the rather out-moded dream vision convention. What is more, the method of celebration is based upon mimetic forms current in the Scottish court

and familiar to the poet. The poem exists, in other words, in relation to *The Romance of the Rose* in the manner that later Jonson's *Masque of Hymen* related to the marriage of the Earl of Essex to Lady Francis Howard.<sup>9</sup> It remains, therefore, to demonstrate the central importance of mimetic activities to the milieu in which the poet moved, to look at the affinities that other poems of the Chaucerian and post-Chaucerian period have with masque forms, and to identify the mimetic and emblematic features demonstrated in *The Golden Targe*.

It was obviously in the poet's interests to impress that most ambivalent of monarchs, James IV. Whether we view him as the ideal Renaissance prince of Ayala's glowing testimony,<sup>10</sup> or as the imprudent and decadent monarch suggested by Tom Scott,<sup>11</sup> there can be no doubt that he was a king who enjoyed ostentatious show. His military exploits are notorious, particularly the construction of those two impressive naval white elephants, the Great Michael and the Margaret. It has been suggested that James's schoolboyish love of ships and guns accounts for the inclusion of a ship in *The Golden Targe*.<sup>12</sup> It would, however, be facile to suggest that Dunbar put a ship in his poem, as one puts cherries in a cake, simply to please a royal patron. The ship may be no "ship of fools" or "bowge of court"; but the manner in which it is presented in the poem shows that it is only real in the sense that the Great Michael and the Margaret were "real" in the mind of their creator. This monarch was the master at organizing tournaments, yet led his country full-tilt into the series of disasters which ended at Flodden. His involvement in the Scottish build-up of shipping and artillery reflects the same preference for show over reality. Ayala is moved to say:

He is not a good captain, because he begins to fight  
before he has given his orders,

. . . . .  
He loves war so much that I fear, judging by the  
provocation he receives, the peace will not last  
long.<sup>13</sup>

Both these predictions were to be borne out by later events. Scotland saw her monarch preparing for conflict by, for instance, personally firing a cannon at the newly completed Great Michael.<sup>14</sup> The chronicler, Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie, tells us: "this scheip was of so great statur and tuik so mekijll timber that scho waistit all the wodis in Fyfe, except Falkland wode..." Fortunately the king's grand gesture "derit

her nocht and did hir lyttil skaith."<sup>15</sup>

Returning to the ship in *The Golden Targe*, we note its approach:

A saill, als quhite as blossom apon spray,  
 Wyth merse of gold, brycht as the stern of day,  
 Quhilk tendit to the land full lustily,  
 As falcoun swift desyrrouse of hir pray.  
 (lines 51-54)<sup>16</sup>

The extension of the landscape imagery to describe the ship with its sail like "blossum" and its merse, "brycht as the stern of day," does not suggest a warlike machine so much as a breathtaking spectacle. Even its predatory approach, "as falcoun swift," is couched in courtly imagery. Nor does this ship require to drop anchor, it curiously "tendit to the land" where its passengers disembark unimpeded. One may argue that the stylized nature of the dream makes these features an inevitable part of the illusion; but I would suggest that this ship is a piece of ingenious tournament machinery, which arrives, as Bacon would wish, "quietly and without noise."<sup>17</sup> Furthermore the ship's departure, "realistic" though it appears to be, could simply indicate the departure of such an ingenious piece of machinery:

In a twynkling of ane eye to schip thai went,  
 And swyth up saile unto the top thei stent,  
 And with swift course atour the flude thay frak;  
 Thay fyrir gunnis with powder violent,  
 Till that the rake raise to the firmament,  
 The rochis all resounit wyth the rak...  
 (lines 235-40)

Such spectacular effects were at least as much a part of pageantry as of real warfare. In *To Aberdein*, the poem in which Dunbar describes the entry of the new Queen Margaret into that city, he notes:

Gryt was the sound of the artelye. (line 15)

Dunbar is not, then, trying to represent the arrival of a real ship but of an elaborate piece of stage machinery. Such a machine would doubtless surprise and impress a king who seems to have seen all statecraft in terms of stage-management, and a court milieu particularly given to ostentatious and dramatic display, often "daubed with cost"<sup>18</sup> at that. Dunbar's poem, with an elaborate mimetic approach to a venerable poetic genre would have been both popular and aesthetically topical.

Elaborate ships as elements of stage machinery in pageants are recalled by Aurelius in Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*, as he muses on his problem concerning the removal of the black rocks. He, like readers of *The Golden Targe*, has trouble distinguishing the spectacle from the real thing:

For ofte at feestes have I wel herd seye  
 That tregetours, withinne an halle large,  
 Have maad come in a water and a barge,  
 And in the halle rowen up and down.  
 (lines 1142-5)

Indeed, quite apart from concrete references such as this one, Dunbar is not the first by any means to write poetry which has some affinity with pageantry. His occasional poem *To Aberdein* has important precursors in Lydgate's poem celebrating the entry of Henry VI into London in 1432 and the *Mummings* devised by the same poet.<sup>19</sup> *King Henry VI's Triumphal entry into London, 21 February 1432*, gives an eye-witness account of the actual pageant including descriptions of liveries and of the procession. The description of allegorical characters here gives Lydgate considerable opportunity to extrapolate, in, for example, his account of Nature:

The ffirst of hem called was Nature  
 As she that hath vnder her demeyne  
 Man, beeste and ffoule and euery creature  
 With-inne the bondys of hire goldyn cheyn;  
 Eke heven, and erthe, and euery creature  
 This emperesse of custume doth embrace...<sup>20</sup>

Here Lydgate is essentially describing pageantry in his poem, unlike Dunbar who is emulating the form. Hence descriptions of characters in *The Goldyn Targe*, as I shall demonstrate below, are kept to the emblematic minimum, the very opposite of Lydgate's expanded accounts which take up the essentially literary associations. The difference is not simply one of Lydgate's prolixity contrasting with Dunbar's economy; but shows us again that Dunbar's poem does not behave like an occasional poem, that we must look elsewhere for poetic analogues.

The same distinction can be made in the case of Lydgate's *Mummings*, for example, *The Mumping at Hertford*.<sup>21</sup> Again the poem depends upon an external concrete event and is thus strictly occasional. In this case the poem fulfills the role of proclamation and commentary designed to accompany the action for the benefit of the royal spectator and his entourage. Although Lydgate's poems, therefore, bear some

resemblance to *The Goldyn Targe* in terms of their content, their varied personifications drawn from allegory, the Bible and mythology; they are related to pageantry in a strictly formal and metonymic way. Their connection with "play" then is altogether different.

Another type of affinity between poetry and pageant, closer to the sweeping evaluations of *Homo Ludens*, has recently been examined by Richard Firth Green.<sup>22</sup> He considers in particular the late medieval dream vision and its relationship to so-called "courts of love." It seems that the existence of these courts remains open to question; but Green goes as far as to suggest:

We cannot be wholly sure that what is being portrayed is not rather an idealized 'game of love' than an allegorized love affair. It is as if, life having modelled itself on art, art in its turn had begun to seek inspiration in its own social reflection.<sup>23</sup>

It appears that the integration of court poets into court societies where the audience themselves could be both poets of love and participants in the game of love led to the production of ritualized love poetry and self-consciously dramatic narrators. The resultant poetry, seeking "inspiration in its own social reflection," takes the form, in an extreme instance, of *The Floure and the Leafe*, which Green sees as "allegory, as it were, at one remove--rather eye-witness accounts of an allegorical masque than the thing itself."<sup>24</sup> In this concept we must have a near analogue to *The Goldyn Targe*, the mimetic process reflected in the poetic mode. For *The Floure and the Leafe* contains its own masque within the experience of its dreamer-narrator, described by him as an "uncouth disguising." The poem also places great emphasis upon the colors green and white. The emblematic use of color in this manner was popular in pageantry to denote allegorical significance.

In *The Floure and the Leafe*, then, as in *The Goldyn Targe*, affinities with formal court games lie within the poem itself rather than referring to one concrete occasion. Once again, however, it seems necessary to make a distinction. In *The Floure and the Leafe* ultimately one cannot rule out the possibility that an actual court game of love is being described within the dream framework. In Dunbar's poem it is not the matter of love vision but the form that interests the poet; it seeks its inspiration from older dream visions, not from any current "social reflection." Dunbar's opinion of "games of love" is well documented in *Quhone he list to feyne*.<sup>25</sup> In other words, whereas *The Floure and the Leafe* seems to derive

its very form as a love poem from the mimetic activities, albeit imaginary, of a court of love, *The Golden Targe* is deriving purely its method of presentation from contemporary court masque. Indeed, at the level of form and meaning, as shall later be seen, the poem presents a parody of earlier love poetry. In these terms, *The Golden Targe* is more closely related to Chaucer's *House of Fame*, another poem more about poetry than love. *The House of Fame* book III presents the audience with the ultimate pageant, the successive processions of all those who seek fame. Even the process of poetic inspiration is formalized in a mimetic manner in the transmission of tidings. Above all the narrator dreamer is, like Dunbar, the self-conscious poet-spectator.

If *The Golden Targe* is, then, not so much an occasional poem as a poem borrowing forms of presentation from court occasions in order to celebrate the dream vision mode, it is now necessary to explore the characteristics of court masque in Dunbar's time in order to assess the particular influences we are referring to. Clearly Dunbar was familiar with stylized combat in the form of the tournament, and with other forms of occasional pageantry such as the disguising and the royal entry, if not with the "game of love." He did, indeed, write poems which were obviously intended to be associated with individual occasions, even if, in my view, it is not necessary to see *The Golden Targe* as one such. Anna Jean Mill states that the tournaments arranged by James IV in 1507 and 1508 "attracted attention far beyond the bounds of Scotland."<sup>26</sup> These were among the first tournaments anywhere to deal in really elaborate allegorical themes.<sup>27</sup> They centered upon a challenger, a Wild Knight, who took on all comers in defense of his prize, a real negress. Despite Dunbar's own lukewarm response to the lady's charms,<sup>28</sup> it appears that:

in response to the illuminated 'articules' sent to France, combatants came to Edinburgh from overseas to prove their valour in the Garden of Patience, where grew the Tree of Esperance bearing the leaves of Pleasure, the flower of Noblenesse and the fruit of Honour.<sup>29</sup>

These two events are probably somewhat later than our poem; but we need to look very little further for suitable mimetic analogues for *The Golden Targe*. We know that Dunbar was present at the elaborate ceremonies described by Leland<sup>30</sup> surrounding the king's marriage to Margaret Tudor in 1503, and similar events which surrounded Katherine of Aragon's marriage to Prince Arthur in 1501 are known to have been advertised in



Scotland. Thus the first decade of the century alone provides adequate comparative material.

One of the chief problems posed by the poem to modern critics is the way in which Dunbar strips the dream vision of all its psychologically penetrating elements and all its internal debates. He presents the reader instead with a reluctant lover-dreamer, a mere eaves-dropper, who is met by a list of barely differentiated assailants. There is no mediator between the dreamer and the world of his dream and no explicit opposition between the two courts from whom the attack emanates. These factors combine to make the poem a curious representative of the dream vision genre altogether; they are more clearly reminiscent of a series of challengers meeting a champion, endeavoring to win a prize, in a tournament:

Unto the pres persewit Hie Degre  
Her folwit ay Estate, and Dignitee  
Comparisoun, Honour and Noble Array,  
Will, Wantonnes, Renoun and Libertee,  
Richesse, Fredome and eke Nobilitee:  
Wit ye thay did thair baner hye display;  
A cloud of arowis as hayle schour lousit thay  
And schot, quhill wastit was thair artilye,  
Syne went abak reboyit of thair pray.  
(lines 172-80)

The organized onslaughts of each group of assailants is closely allied to the manner of proceeding at any event involving jousting, while the allegorical names given to the combatants and their more elaborate weaponry is in keeping with the elaborate tournaments described above. Allegorical figures had been gaining in popularity in public shows since those devised by Lydgate and cited above.<sup>31</sup>

Pageantry, particularly the tournament, may also be used to explain the surprising concision with which Dunbar describes the allegorical characters who people the dream. Glynne Wickham says of the tournament:

One man in armour looks very like another, so that in tournaments of the general melee sort the combatants would be known neither to the spectators nor to each other. Colour was the simplest method of assisting recognition. It remains so on the football field today. By the turn of the thirteenth century more definite means of individual identification had been evolved--usually a personal attribute.<sup>32</sup>

In Dunbar's verbal tournament it seems that color, favor or

attribute has been transmuted into label or name. No one fails to understand the grouping of, for instance, "Youth" with "Grene Innocence," "schamefull Abaising," "quaking Drede" and "humble Obedience." The attraction of Dunbar's catalogue lies in its careful emblematic arrangement rendering psychological exploration unnecessary. One is, in turn, led to think of the scaffolds on which tableaux vivants were presented at a royal entry. When Margaret Tudor reached Edinburgh for the first time, she was greeted by:

...a Scarfawst maid, wher was represented Paris and the Thre Deessys, with Mercure that gaffe hym th Apyll of Gold, for to gyffe to the most fayre of the Thre, wiche he gave to Venus. In the Scarfawst was represented also the Salutacioun of Gabriell to the Virgyne, in saying Ave gratia, and sens after, the Sollempnizacion of the varey Maryage betwix the saide Vierge and Joseph.

More faurther was of new maid One other Yatt, apon the wiche was in Sieges the iij Vertuz. Theys is to weytt, *Justice*, holdyng in hyr right Haunde a Swerde all naked, and in t'other a Pair of Ballaunces, and she had under hyr feet the King Nero: *Force*, armed, holdyng in hyr Haund a Shafte, and under hyr feete was Holofernes, all armed: *Temperance*, holdyng in hyr Haund a Bitt of an Horse, and under hyr Feete was Epicurus: *Prudence*, holdyng in hyr Haunde a Syerge, and under hyr Sardenapalus.<sup>33</sup>

In the cramped space presented on the scaffolds erected against city gates it is obviously necessary to economize on action and explanation, replacing them with careful arrangement and clear labelling. It seems that Dunbar adopted the same principle in writing his poem.

The emblematic treatment of characters in extravagant occasional entertainments reached its most sophisticated heights when Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones derived costume designs for their masques from emblem books.<sup>34</sup> Whereas Dunbar's Reason strays from the emblematic norm by being male, he does seem to combine the classical emblem-book character with the tournament champion. Denton Fox is right when he notices that Dunbar does not present us with an "empty" list because of its "careful arrangement."<sup>35</sup> I would further suggest that that arrangement and the naming of characters each with his or her own single descriptive adjective is derived from the common emblematic treatment of mythical and allegorical characters in the masque and related events.

In talking about the masque proper we are inevitably led to

consider whether the true analogue of *The Golden Targe* is not the indoor "disguising," an event more fully dramatically developed than the tournament or royal entry. Unfortunately Leland is evidently not as interested in describing these as he is in outdoor events. We know simply that the betrothal of Margaret Tudor to James IV by proxy was accompanied at Richmond Palace by "divers Sortes of Morisks" and a "goodly disguising."<sup>36</sup> Similar events accompanied the marriage celebrations in Edinburgh.<sup>37</sup> We do, however, have an eye-witness account of the tournaments and disguisings which were held in the English court two years earlier when Prince Arthur married Katherine of Aragon. The place of these events in Dunbar's experience is, of course, far more speculative, although they were advertised and no doubt reported in Scotland; I include this account simply because I think that *The Golden Targe* bears comparison with a more fully developed mimetic event and because it demonstrates one example of the use of the ship as a popular stage conceit. The pageant cars in this instance appeared first in the tournament, the ship being the pavillion of William de la Ryvers, "a goodly shippe borne up w<sup>t</sup>men, himself ryding in the myddes...the sides of the ship [were] covered w<sup>t</sup>cloth peynted after the colour or lykenesse of water." Later the same cars appeared in the disguising:

The secunde pagent was a shippe in like wise sett upon whelys w<sup>t</sup>out any leders in sight, in right goodly apparell, havynge her amstys, toppys, saylys, her taclynge, and all other app[ur]ten[au]ns necessary unto a semely vessell, as though it hade been saylyng in the see;...till they cam byfore the kynge, sumwhat beside the castell. At the which tyme, the masters of the Shippe and their company in their counten[au]ns, spechis and demeano<sup>r</sup> usid and behavyd them silf after the man<sup>r</sup> and guyse of Marynours. And there [they] cast their ankkers. In the which shipp[e] there was a goodly and a faire lady, in her apparell like unto the P[ri]ncess of Hispayne. Owte and from the seid shippe descendid down by a ledder two weelbeseen and goodly p[er]sons, calling themself Hope and Desire, passyng toward the rehersid castell, w<sup>t</sup> their baners in maner and forme as ambassadours from Knights of the Mownte of Love unto the ladies w<sup>t</sup>in the castell...for th'entente to ataigne the favouris of the seid ladies p[re]sent; The seid ladies gave their final answers of utt[e]rly refuse and knowledge of any such company...The two seid ambassadours, therw[ith] takyng great displeasure, shewed the seid

ladies that the Knights wolde for this unkyend  
 refusall make bataill...<sup>38</sup>

As an analogue to *The Goldyn Targe* this occasion gains weight when we consider how it is simply one example of the ship as a pageant car. Glynne Wickham considers<sup>39</sup> that it goes back traditionally to the pageant car used by the London fish-mongers to celebrate the birth of Edward III in 1313. Certainly, when one considers that every Mystery Play cycle had its Noah's Ark, pageant cars decked as ships can be accepted as a widespread phenomenon.

What is more, Withington, in his history of English pageantry, notes of these events:

The 1501 disguising shows the "court of love" theme complete; the tournament is recalled by the storming of the Castle; that the Castle represents the ladies' hearts is suggested by the names of the two ambassadors Hope and Desire. The ladies will not yield without some pressure but they fall before the determined attack of the cavaliers.<sup>40</sup>

It seems that, as the tournament came to incorporate more and more allegorical and fully dramatic devices, as it moved towards masque, it also became more and more concerned with the battle for the unattainable lady. This is demonstrated by the theme chosen for James IV's great tournaments of 1507 and 1508, as well as in the minor encounter staged to entertain Margaret Tudor near Edinburgh in 1503. Leland describes the pavillion in a meadow, "whereof cam out a knyght on Horsbak, armed at all Peces, havng hys Lady Paramour that barre his Horne. And by Aventur, ther cam an other also armed that cam to hym and robbed from hym hys sayd Lady..."<sup>41</sup> A battle for the lady of course ensued.

This is not to say, however, that *The Goldyn Targe* presents a conventional "court of love theme" inspired directly by such events. That would be to suggest that it was nearer to *The Floure and the Leafe* in tenor than it truly is. Tom Scott has suggested that *The Goldyn Targe* represents a parody of the conventional love vision as the dreamer is an unwilling party and womanhood is the predator in Dunbar's garden. If we return to *Quhone he list to feyne* and recall what Helen Shire calls the "wicked overplaying" Dunbar gives the court of love in that,<sup>42</sup> it becomes possible to see the poem as a comic inversion of the "court of love" tournament. Certainly, in Dunbar's scenario the knight has to be defended by the champion Reason, against assailants representing womanhood, instead of the helpless lady being rescued by the champion.

Ultimately the reversal, whether of love vision poetry or of "court of love" tournament, reinforces the view that it is not the matter so much as the form of the love vision which Dunbar seeks to celebrate.

So far I have tried to account for the narrative balance of Dunbar's poem by reference to contemporary pageantry. There is also a point of actual interpretation which this reading of the poem can help to clarify. Four stanzas in the poem are devoted to the disembarkation of two courts of assorted gods and goddesses. While it is recognized that Venus, Nature and Cupid have a traditional role in the dream vision, the need to list so many others, so carefully arranged without creating any obvious opposition between the two parties, seems obscure. E. Allen Tilley offers an ingenious explanation: "As the first court was an analysis of physical and moral situation the second is an internal analysis."<sup>43</sup> According to this arrangement of deities within the courts, this seems to be a plausible account of their functions. If this were Dunbar's intention, however, at best it is rhetorically underdeveloped. The second court plays no part in the ensuing action except that the blowing of Eolus' horn breaks up the conflict. It may be that Dunbar is importing the lists directly from another poem<sup>44</sup> and that they have no developed function because of the derivative nature of the poem.

If, however, the courts are seen as the audience at a tournament, made up of interested parties on either side, Tilley's argument gains credibility. The court of Venus, the other females and Apollo support and direct the assailants, whereas Cupid and the other male gods, representing passion and turbulence, support the dreamer, reflecting his weaknesses. Opposing parties within the audience, or, to use Wickham's analogy, the football match, are then represented by the two courts. Leland describes some of the jousts which were held in the aftermath of the marriage of James and Margaret, and here it is clear that on three occasions the king and his companions watched from one location, supporting one set of combatants, while the queen and her ladies watched from somewhere else, supporting the opposition:

At the Wyndowes was the Kynge accompanied of the Archbyschops of Seint Andrew and York, and of the Byschop of Durham, and of other Prelatts, the said Wyndowes being well appoynted. The Qwene was at the Wyndowes of hyr grett Chammer, accompanied of hyr Ladyes, and of others of the Reyme.<sup>45</sup>

Parallels with contemporary occasional celebrations, then, help to explain much of what has drawn adverse criticism to

*The Goldyn Targe* in terms of its balance and arrangement. They can also contribute to a better understanding of the message borne by the poem's allegorical core. In the Stuart masque, the center of the action and of the allegory is invariably the monarch, and the narrative celebrates the values of the society which inhere in that monarch. The early masque, disguising or allegorical tournament also introduces a narrative in which the forces of right are threatened but always vindicated. When art is idealized, imitative and celebratory, social order must be affirmed in the end, but not before the unpleasantness of the alternative has been explored.

Looking at *The Goldyn Targe* from this point of view; it seems as if the forces of the anti-masque are very nearly triumphant. Order in the central figure's world--this time the dreamer-poet--is threatened by figures who blind his Reason and cause the landscape of his dream to collapse:

All was hyne went, there was bot wildernes  
 There was no more but birdis, bank and bruke...  
 (lines 233-34)

Not only is the order in his world threatened, his relationship with God is in danger of collapse when he gives in to the physical attractions of deceitful womanhood:

For rede it semyt that the raynbow brak.  
 (line 241)

But as the dreamer awakes, the landscape is restored to its former splendor:

And as I did awake of my sueving,  
 And joyfull birdis merily did syng  
 For myrth of Phebus tendir bemis schene...  
 (lines 244-46)

The message of the allegory is a severe one, particularly in view of James IV's philandering habits: to allow Reason to be blinded by female sexuality can destroy harmony. Whatever Dunbar's poetic masque celebrates it is not the "court of love" per se. The harmony, however, signalled by the landscape of the poem, is further equated in *The Golden Targe* with the rhetorical harmony of earlier love poetry, particularly that of Chaucer. The allegory itself exists as a testimony to the belief, wry though it seems in a love vision, that it is better to travel than to arrive. Dunbar's poem then has the dual function of parodying the matter of courtly artifice surrounding the battle of the sexes, while mimicking its

manner.

The admiration which Dunbar's rhetoric has won is like that which Bacon shows for elaborate and subtle stage machinery, ingeniously lit. *The Golden Targe* bravely asserts the supremacy of art over life, of art as a refinement of life, in a manner almost baroque. It anticipates the flowering of the imitative spectacular artifice of Ben Jonson's masques; but it also causes us to look back more carefully at other love visions, particularly in the fifteenth century, to reconsider their relationship to any recognized reality. It was Jonson who said, "all representations...public spectacles, either have been or ought to be mirrors of man's life."<sup>46</sup> Dunbar presents us with a spectacle in poetry, the perfect architected mirror of great medieval poetry, and, as such, a monument to the makar's craft.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Lois A. Ebin, "The Theme of Poetry in Dunbar's *Golden Targe*," *ChauR*, 7(2) (1972), 147-59.

<sup>2</sup>Denton Fox, "Dunbar's *Golden Targe*," *ELH*, 26 (1959), 311-34.

<sup>3</sup>Frank Shuffleton, "An Imperial Flower: Dunbar's *The Golden Targe* and the Court Life of James IV of Scotland," *SP*, 72 (1975), 193-207.

<sup>4</sup>Francis Bacon, *A Harmony of the Essays*, "Of Masques and Triumphs," ed. Edward Arber (London, 1871), pp. 539-40.

<sup>5</sup>Shuffleton; Kurt Wittig, *The Scottish Tradition in Literature* (Edinburgh, 1958), p. 65.

<sup>6</sup>Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens* (London, 1970), *passim*.

<sup>7</sup>Huizinga, p. 151.

<sup>8</sup>Huizinga, p. 155.

<sup>9</sup>Ben Jonson, *The Complete Masques*, ed. Stephen Orgel (New Haven, 1969), 75-106. I am here indebted to Thomas Zugic of York for access to his unpublished work on the Stuart Masque.

<sup>10</sup>A.F. Pollard, *The Reign of Henry VII from Contemporary Sources* (New York, 1967), I, 197 ("Ayala's Description of James IV of Scotland" from "Spanish Calendar," I, 169).

<sup>11</sup>Tom Scott, *Dunbar: A Critical Exposition of the Poems* (Edinburgh, 1966), 1-21.

<sup>12</sup>Shuffleton, pp. 200-1.

<sup>13</sup>Pollard, pp. 198 and 199.

<sup>14</sup>Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie, *The Historie and Chronicles of Scotland*, ed. Aeneas J.G. Mackay, STS, 1st Series 43 (Edinburgh, 1899), pp. 251-2.

<sup>15</sup>Lindsay, pp. 251-2; Shuffleton, p. 201.

<sup>16</sup>William Dunbar, *The Poems*, ed. W. Mackay Mackenzie (London, 1970), pp. 112-9. All references to Dunbar's poems will be to this edition.

<sup>17</sup>Bacon, p. 539.

<sup>18</sup>Bacon, p. 539.

<sup>19</sup>John Lydgate, *The Minor Poems*, ed. Henry Noble MacCracken, EETS, OS, 192 (1934), *Secular Poems*, 630-83; 675-82.

<sup>20</sup>Lydgate, pp. 113-9.

<sup>21</sup>Lydgate, pp. 675-82.

<sup>22</sup>Richard Firth Green, *Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto, 1980). I am indebted to Professor Derek Pearsall, University of York, for drawing my attention to the relevant passages in this work.

<sup>23</sup>Green, p. 119.

<sup>24</sup>Green, pp. 119-20; *The Floure and the Leafe and The Assembly of Ladies*, ed. D.A. Pearsall (London, 1962).

<sup>25</sup>Dunbar, pp. 99-100; Helen M. Shire, *Song, Dance and Poetry of the Court of Scotland* (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 2-16.

<sup>26</sup>Anna Jean Mill, *Medieval Plays in Scotland*, St. Andrews University Publications, 24 (Edinburgh, 1927), p. 53.



<sup>27</sup>Robert Withington, *English Pageantry: An Historical Outline* (New York, 1918), I, 80-1.

<sup>28</sup> Quhai for hir saek, with speir and scheid,  
Preiffis maest mychttelye in the feld,  
Sall kis and withe hir go in grippis;  
And fra thyne furth hir luff sall weld:  
My ladye with the mekle lippis.

*Of Ane Blak-Moir*, p. 66, lines 16-20. The poem was undoubtedly written on the occasion of the tournaments of 1507 or 1508.

<sup>29</sup>Mill, p. 53.

<sup>30</sup>Joannis Lelandi Antiquarii cum Thomae Hearnii, *De Rebus Britannicis Collectanea* (London, 1774), pp. 256-300; Ranald Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages* (Edinburgh, 1974), 554.

<sup>31</sup>Lydgate, pp. 630-83, 675-82.

<sup>32</sup>Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages 1300-1669* (London, 1959), I, 45.

<sup>33</sup>Leland, pp. 289-90.

<sup>34</sup>Jonson, pp. 79-80.

<sup>35</sup>Fox, p. 329.

<sup>36</sup>Leland, p. 263.

<sup>37</sup>Leland, p. 299. James appears to have employed John Inglis and his players to stage an interlude on more than one occasion.

<sup>38</sup>Wickham, I, 44 and 209; from Cambridge MS. 1st M 13, ff 57-8.

<sup>39</sup>Wickham, I, 201.

<sup>40</sup>Withington, p. 115.

<sup>41</sup>Leland, p. 288.

<sup>42</sup>Shire, p. 7, n 6.

<sup>43</sup>E. Allen Tilley, "The Meaning of Dunbar's *The Golden Targe*," *SSL*, 10 (1973), 228.

<sup>44</sup>Ronald D.S. Jack, "Dunbar and Lydgate," *SSL*, 8 (1971), 215-27.

<sup>45</sup>Leland, pp. 298-9.

<sup>46</sup>Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong, *Inigo Jones and the Theatre of the Stuart Court* (London, 1973), p. 2; from *Tempe Restored* (1631).