

'Talke Woorth the Hearynge': Situating the Rhetorical Nature of Gossip in Early Modern Conduct Manuals



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“As it is not unknowne to some of my Lordes here (**for now I will play the blabbe**), I secretlie wrote her a letter upon the discouverye of her treasons, that if she would repent her through lie of her evell course, confesse it and privatlie acknowledge it but her lettres unto me, she never should be called for it into publique question...”



True friends
don't judge each other.
They judge other people,
together.



Gossip is:

- social
- about past events
- about third parties
- evaluative
- an informal means of communicating
- exclusive of non-group members
- interpretative of norms and values,
- private



Egads, Rebecca!



**Gaze ye upon her
backside!**

Gossip as Play

"Gossipers are border-runners who, in their exciting excursions into the zones of the improper, do not simply ignore the boundaries of the domains of virtue and vice, but recognise and disdain them at the same time..."



The Courtier as Playful Gossip

“And althoughe I was not there present,...I hearde them of a person that faithfullye **reported them unto me**. And I will endevoure my selfe, for so muche as my memorye wyll serve me, to call them perticularly to remembraunce, that you maye see what, men worthy greate commendacion, and unto whose judgement a man maye in everye poynt geve an undoubted credyt, have judged and beleved in this matter.”

A “Good Huswief”

“...and all those partes that beelonge to a good huswief: I say that for her that liveth in Court, me thinke there beelongeth unto her above all other thinges, a **certein sweetnesse in language** that may **delite**, wherby she may **gentlie entertein all kinde of men** with talke woorth the hearynge and honest, and **applied to the time and place**, and **to the degree of the person** she communed withall...”



Instructs Against Gossip



**Constructs His Entire Text
Around Gossip**



**And Posits His Text as an
Act of Gossip**

“...gravity tempered with knowleage and goodnes, is (as it were) a shield against the **wanton pride and beastilines of saucy merchauntes**. Wherefore it is seen that one woord, a laughter or a gesture of good will (how litle soever it be) of an honest woman, is more set by of every man, then al the toyes and wanton gestures of them that so lavishly show small shamefastnesse.”

