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Jennifer Andersen

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Author(s): Jennifer L. Andersen

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Anti-Puritanism, Anti-Popery, and Gallows Rhetoric in Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*

Jennifer L. Andersen

California State University, San Bernardino

This article explores links between the anti-Marprelate polemics and Thomas Nashe's satire of Puritans and Catholics in *The Unfortunate Traveller*. In public confrontations with the late Elizabethan church, activist minority religions were co-opting powerful rhetorics of holiness. Analysis is made of episodes in *The Unfortunate Traveller* where Nashe deconstructs Puritan and Catholic appropriations of the rhetoric of martyrdom and seeks to educate the reader in interpreting or seeing through what he believes are pretended forms of holiness. Making readers aware of false appropriations and performances of holiness involves educating them in the narrative and dramatic conventions that are used to manipulate their opinions and emotions.

THE MARPRELATE CONTROVERSY was one stage in the contest to define conformity in the early modern English church, and Thomas Nashe's *Unfortunate Traveller* can best be understood in the immediate aftermath of that satirical pamphlet exchange. *The Unfortunate Traveller* has been generally dismissed by literary critics as a novel manqué, but the polemical implications of its fictional setting in early Reformation Europe help explain Nashe's rhetorical strategy.¹ As in the anti-Marprelate pamphlets, here Nashe also attacks Puritan visions of the true church. This article illustrates how that satire plays out in the episodes on John of Leiden and the Münster rebellion, the suicide of the Roman matron Heraclide, the ignominious death of Esdras of Granado, and the noble death of Cutwolfe. Nashe's anti-Puritan polemic echoes theological positions that had been articulated at length by John Whitgift and Richard Bancroft.² These Elizabethan clerics had sought to establish a conformist middle ground between Puritans and Papists, and part of

¹It is nothing new to notice the stylistic continuities between Nashe's anti-Marprelate pamphlets and *The Unfortunate Traveller*; Travis L. Summersgill does this in "The Influence of the Marprelate Controversy upon the Style of Thomas Nashe," *Studies in Philology* 48 (1951): 145–80. To suggest that *The Unfortunate Traveller* shares the anti-Puritan polemic of Nashe's anti-Martinist pamphlets, however, is new. Critical assessments of Nashe are helpfully summarized in Donald J. McGinn, *Thomas Nashe* (Boston: Twayne, 1981), chap. 7, and Robert J. Fehrenbach, "Recent Studies in Nashe (1968–1979)," *English Literary Renaissance* 11 (1981): 344–50.

²For Whitgift's positions in the Admonition Controversy, see Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988). Richard Bancroft's *A Survey of the Pretended Holy Discipline* (1593) and *Dangerous Positions and Proceedings* (1593) are discussed at greater length below, 45–57.

Earlier versions of this essay were presented at the National Endowment for the Humanities institute on "Redefining the Sacred in Early Modern England" (1998) and at the Folger Library colloquium "Puzzling Evidence: Literatures and Histories" (2001).

forging a self-image of moderation involved discrediting both Puritans and Papists as radicals, lunatics, and militants. Nashe directs his satire not only at the Puritan political platform, but also at Puritan appropriations of popular genres and rhetorical traditions. In pamphlets, trials, and executions, Puritans harnessed powerful elements of the Foxeian rhetoric of Protestant suffering, faithful testimony, state persecution, and martyrdom. In satirizing the Puritan appropriation of these rhetorics, Nashe implicitly recognizes that not only the control of ecclesiastical structures and doctrines is at stake, but also that this struggle is increasingly taking place in and through popular narrative forms and traditions.

Contemporaries recognized that the cheaply printed format, the chatty, vernacular humor, and the open burlesque of serious theological dispute in the Marprelate pamphlets constituted a frank appeal to plebeian audiences.³ Martin Marprelate's detractors criticized him for pandering to popular tastes even as they mimicked his colloquial prose and paid him back in the same debased coin. Eventually the Elizabethan officials who had instigated the anti-Martinist campaign were discouraged from pressing the case against Puritans through such popular invective.⁴ Nashe had no doubt learned this lesson in the decorum of ecclesiastical dispute as one of the Grub Street writers who had been enlisted by Archbishop Whitgift and Richard Bancroft to fire back at Marprelate salvos. By the time the Elizabethan bishops were compelled to muzzle their scurrilous counterattacks, the Marprelate press had been confiscated and its leaders rounded up or silenced. The very suppression of the Martinists and of other radical Puritans, however, risked being represented as tyrannical persecution. In 1591 William (Frantick) Hacket was executed for plotting against church and queen; in 1593 John Penry was executed for his part in Marprelate pamphleteering; Henry Barrow and John Greenwood, two prominent London Separatist leaders, were also executed. These executions were meant to show that not only Catholic but also certain kinds of Protestant activity could be defined as seditious. Yet the powerful rhetoric of the gallows, as Peter Lake and Michael Questier have argued, could cut both ways: "The very act which expressed sovereign authority could also generate and express resistance to that authority."⁵ As Lake and Questier show, public executions could be manipulated to challenge authority when the condemned redefined their executions as martyrdoms.

³See Patrick Collinson, "Ecclesiastical Vitriol: Religious Satire in the 1590s and the Invention of Puritanism" in *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade*, ed. John Guy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 150–70; Joseph Black, "The Rhetoric of Reaction: The Martin Marprelate Tracts (1588–89), Anti-Martinism, and the Uses of Print in Early Modern England," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 28 (1997): 707–25; Peter Lake, "Puritans, Papists and Players: Was There a 'Public Sphere' in Elizabethan England?" in *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*, ed. Peter Lake and Steven Pincus (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

⁴In "An Advertisement Touching the Controversies of the Church of England," Francis Bacon thoroughly chastises the Elizabethan clergy who stooped to Martin Marprelate's level; see *Francis Bacon*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3–4. See also John Guy, "The Elizabethan Establishment and the Ecclesiastical Polity," in *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, 126–49.

⁵Peter Lake and Michael Questier, "Agency, Appropriation and Rhetoric under the Gallows: Puritans, Romanists and the State in Early Modern England," *Past and Present* 153 (1996): 65.

The suppression of radical Puritan and Separatist agitators, then, needed to be legitimated by the conformist establishment. Richard Bancroft resumed his anti-Puritan campaign in two formidable volumes published in 1593 in which there was a marked toning down of the shrill rhetoric of the Marprelate exchange. In his addresses to the reader, Bancroft notably distinguished these serious academic treatises from the "violent words," "rayling speeches," "fleering, and jeering of the Marprelate pamphlets. Because style itself had become a central issue in the conduct of religious dispute, Nashe's strategy was to mock Puritan appropriations of popular culture.⁶ In particular, he recast the violent ends of Puritans as deserved and even courted. Marprelate had attempted to hijack popular, festive genres to advance the Presbyterian platform and to pillory bishops as corrupt; now Nashe seeks to collapse the religious protest voiced through these festive genres back into the rebellious, criminal subcultures of the cheap pamphlet world. Nashe would have known cheap pamphlet genres well from working in the 1590s as a copy editor for John Danter, a fledgling London printer who produced many of them.⁷

Nashe's weird pseudohistorical mix of fact and fiction in *The Unfortunate Traveller* allows him to comment on religious controversy with impunity. Historical figures such as Henry VIII, Cardinal Wolsey, Erasmus, More, Luther, and the Earl of Surrey rub elbows with the likes of Jack Wilton and a cast of made-up characters culled from the stock types that populate coney-catching pamphlets, murder pamphlets, plague pamphlets, and last dying speeches. Anti-Martinist pamphleteers had accused Marprelate of drawing from just such popular sources to fabricate slanders against prelates. Now, Nashe deepens this critique of the Puritan appropriation of popular pamphlet genres by associating religious nonconformists with social deviants.

SENDING UP THE PURITAN RHETORIC OF MARTYRDOM

Although *The Unfortunate Traveller* is set in early Reformation Europe and its picaresque narrator, Jack Wilton, encounters such figures as Erasmus and Luther, the account of John of Leiden's Münster rebellion is the most extended description of a Protestant community. Luther and the other Reformers probably escape caricature because Nashe's satire, like Bancroft's polemic, does not target reformed religion per se, but rather seeks to identify itself with a Protestant mainstream tradition and to ostracize Puritans as extremists. Bancroft's anti-Puritan tomes, A

⁶See John Coolidge, "Martin Marprelate, Marvell, and *Decorum Personae* as a Satirical Theme," *PMLA* 74 (1959); Raymond Anselment, *Betwixt Jest and Earnest: Marprelate, Milton, Marvell, Swift and Religious Ridicule* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), for the tradition of satire deriving from Nashe.

⁷Nashe mentions residing with his publisher John Danter in *Have with you to Saffron Walden* (1596), making it appear as if this had been a long-standing arrangement; see R. B. McKerrow, *The Works of Thomas Nashe* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966), 3:114–15. Pamphlets printed by Danter in the early 1590s include *The black bookes messenger* (1592), *The ground worke of conny catching* (1592), *Present Remedies against the plague* (1592), *The most strange and admirable discoverie of the three witches of Warboys* (1593), *The life and death of Jack Straw, a notable rebel* (1594), and *Strange signes seene in the aire, about the citie of Rosenberg* (1594).

Survey of the Pretended Holy Discipline (1593) and *Dangerous Positions* (1593), both published a year before *The Unfortunate Traveller*, sought to identify Puritans with the most extreme and notorious Protestant sects on the European continent, the Anabaptists, and to portray them as rebellious, rapacious, and morbidly preoccupied with theological controversies at the expense of their own sanity and the stability of their communities.

Already in his 1589 Paul's Cross Sermon, Bancroft had denounced Presbyterianism in England as an outgrowth of European Anabaptism.⁸ He developed this notion further in his *Survey*, under the heading "many false prophets are gone out into the world," where he described English Presbyterians' desire to adopt Calvinist discipline in church government as "Anabaptistical" and tending to the overthrow and destruction of all good rule and government.⁹ Nashe similarly makes a direct connection between John of Leiden's Anabaptists and English Puritans when he interrupts his fictional account of the battle of Münster to address directly English ministers who "follow the French and Scottish fashion and faction" (referring to Presbyterians in Geneva and Edinburgh), admonishing them to avoid the example of continental sects:

Ministers and Pastors, sell away your sects and schismes to the decrepite Churches in contention beyond sea; they have been so long inured to warre, both about matters of Religion and Regiment, that now they have no peace of minde but in troubling all other mens peace. Because the pov-ertie of their Provinces will allow them no proportionable maintenance for higher callings of ecclesiasticall Magistrates, they wold reduce us to the president of their rebellious persecuted beggerie....¹⁰

Nashe suggests here, as Bancroft had argued at length, that Presbyterianism is a recently invented, foreign import ill suited to English institutions and apt to fragment and divide rather than to establish order. Bancroft insinuated that Calvin was able to institute consistorial discipline in Geneva by his rhetorical skills ("He

⁸On the sermon and reactions to it see W. D. J. Cargill Thompson, "A Reconsideration of Richard Bancroft's Paul's Cross Sermon of 9 February 1588/9," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 20 (1969): 253–66; Owen Chadwick, "Richard Bancroft's Submission," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 3 (1952): 58–77; Jenny Wormald, "Ecclesiastical Vitriol: The Kirk, the Puritans and the Future King of England," in *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, 171–91; Gordon Donaldson, "The Attitude of Whitgift and Bancroft to the Scottish Church," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 24 (1942): 95–115.

⁹Richard Bancroft, *Daungerous positions and proceedings, published and practised within this Iland of Brytaine, under pretence of Reformation, and for the Presbiteriall discipline* (1593; repr., New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), and idem, *A Survey of the Pretended Holy Discipline. Contayning the beginnimes, successe, parts, proceedings, authority, and doctrine of it: With some of the manifold, and materiall repugnances, varieties and uncertainties, in that behalfe* (1593; repr., New York: Da Capo Press, 1972); hereafter cited in text as *Daungerous positions* or *Survey*. Quotations from early modern sources generally retain original spelling; however, italics that distract from meaning have been eliminated and *u/v*, *i/j*, and long *s* are modernized. My summary of elements of the Presbyterian platform is drawn from Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), and Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?*

¹⁰*The Works of Thomas Nashe*, ed. Ronald B. McKerrow, reprinted with corrections and supplementary notes, ed. F. P. Wilson, 5 vols. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966), 2:236–37; hereafter cited in text as *Works*.

was not ignorant, how easy a matter it would prove, for him and his fellow ministers, to over-rule twelve simple men, all of them unlearned, as being either apronmen, artizans, or marchantes" (*Survey*, 25). Calvin's platform succeeded in Geneva, Bancroft maintained, because he won the support of the "ignorant multitude" or "that disordered dunghill of riffraffe, tagge and ragge" (*Survey*, 36). Nashe ascribes to Presbyterians the divisiveness that Bancroft had emphasized by characterizing them as "sects" and "schismes" that foster "contention" and trouble the peace. Bancroft spends the bulk of the *Survey* cataloguing squabbles, scandals, and discreditable incidents among Presbyterian ministers to imply that they were playing into the hands of the common (Papist) enemy by dividing Protestants over trivial external issues.

Bancroft had made useful capital out of recurrent dissensions and rivalries that rent Separatist congregations such as the emigrant settlements at Middleburg and Zeeland, and Nashe's John of Leiden and his "cnipperdolings" undoubtedly evoke this context. Nashe promotes notions of Puritan extremism and volatility in his extended description of John of Leiden and the Münster rebellion, conjuring up a world of disorder, chaos, and violence. Bancroft had equated Puritanism with demagoguery, and elements of his account of the chaos that would ensue with the implementation of Calvinist discipline are vividly taken up by Nashe. Here broad elements of the Presbyterian platform that unsettled Bancroft are luridly and crassly fleshed out. Nashe attempts to show, as Bancroft had maintained, that the interests of the Presbyterian clergy and of the "simple men" who support them come into conflict. In Nashe's pseudohistorical rendering, the Anabaptists expel the bishop and the magistrate, assuming the power to excommunicate and to ordain clergy. Bancroft's description of the aldermen who would participate in a presbyterian form of government reads like a preview of Nashe's catalogue of the Münster Anabaptists: "in most parishes of England, no doubt, but the brethren must content themselves, with very meane fellowes, Husbandmen, Taylors, Butchers, Carpenters, Shomakers, Thatchers, Dawbers, and such like. Indeed at Geneva they flaunt it out" (*Survey*, 154). Similarly, John of Leiden's ragtag army is pictured by Nashe as consisting of naive and unlearned artisans poorly equipped for battle with the tools and emblems of their trades:¹¹

That day come, flourishing entred John Leiden the Botcher into the field, with a scarffe made of lysts like a bow-case, a crosse on hys breast like a thred bottome, a round twilted Taylors cushion buckled like a Tankard-bearers device to his shoulders for a target, the pyke whereof was a pack-needle, a tough prentises club for his spear, a great Bruers cow on his backe for a corslet, and on his head for a helmet a huge high shooe with the bottome turnd upwards, embossed as full of hob-nayles as ever it

¹¹The use of artisans' work tools as weapons is not as ridiculous as Nashe suggests; see Bob Scribner, "Religion, Society and Culture: Reorienting the Reformation," *History Workshop* 14 (1982): 2-3.

might sticke: his men were all base handicrafts, as coblers and curriers and tinkers, whereof some had barres of yron, some hatchets, some coole-staves, some dung-forkes, some spades, some mattockes, some wood-knives, some addises for their weapons. (*Works*, 2:232)

The meaning of “botcher” as a tailor who did repairs is played upon in the description of John of Leiden’s armor, which has been patched together from the odds and ends of his workshop (cushion, pack-needle, hob-nailed shoe) and in a simile taken from the tailor’s shop (“a crosse on hys breast like a thred bottome”); Nashe’s description embroiders elaborately on the historical John of Leiden’s profession as a journeyman tailor in order to suggest Bancroftian stereotypes of artisans meddling ineptly in affairs of church and state. Nashe’s Anabaptists have gotten their literal interpretation of biblical imagery backwards (ploughshares into swords), and bring about the carnival inversions expected at the apocalypse in a low comic mode. John of Leiden and his Anabaptists come across as eccentric lunatics instead of inspired prophets. The cruder sense of “botcher” anticipates the outcome of the battle in which John of Leiden leads his followers to be massacred. Nashe’s conformist message is clear: while Presbyterian discipline seemed to offer lowly men a chance to acquire both status and power, because they were unfit to govern, all would end in popular tumult, disorder, and loss of life.

While Nashe’s portrait of John of Leiden and his followers evokes general conformist fears about Presbyterian government, his Dutch heretic may also refer to the contemporary English self-proclaimed messiah, Frantick Hacket, who instigated a bizarre conspiracy in 1591. Hacket had lent color and realism to the Puritan bogeyman that conformist propagandists were attempting to vilify. Hacket, a Northamptonshire malt-maker, declared himself the second Christ, accompanied by two gentlemen, Henry Arthington and Edmund Coppinger, as his prophets. All three were arrested, interrogated, and denounced as false prophets and traitors. Hacket refused to recant and was executed; Coppinger died in prison; Arthington recanted, confessed, and was set free. The Frantick Hacket affair played right into the hands of conformist apologists, for it supported the equation they wanted to make between presbyterianism and social subversion. Hacket’s low-class origins, his seditious intentions, his violent means, his seduction of others, and his apparent lunacy allowed conformist propagandists to associate religious radicals with mental deficiency and social deviance.¹²

¹²In his early notebooks Bancroft lumps together moderate Puritans such as Cartwright with radical Separatists such as Barrow and Greenwood; see *Tracts Ascribed to Richard Bancroft*, ed. Albert Peel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 18, 76–77. Later, in *Dangerous Positions*, Bancroft links the probably insane Hacket with Cartwright. See John Booty, “Tumult in Cheapside: The Hacket Conspiracy,” *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 42 (1973): 293–317, and Alexandra Walsham, “Frantick Hacket’: Prophecy, Sorcery, Insanity, and the Elizabethan Puritan Movement,” *Historical Journal* 41 (1998): 27–66.

At Hacket's arraignment the attorney general dismissed the argument of insanity, insisting that Hacket's was a carefully planned conspiracy involving not only himself, Coppinger, and Arthington, but also Thomas Cartwright, Giles Wiggington, John Udall, a cobbler named Newman, and others "of that faction": in other words, all of the respectable leaders of the Presbyterian movement. This was maintained even though Cartwright had repeatedly denied Coppinger access to himself and regarded him as insane.¹³ After reviewing all the evidence, "Mr. Solicitor" ended in pronouncing:

No treason was so dangerous to the estate as that proceeding from so base puddelles shaddowed with the glosse of a pretended holliness, forasmuche as yf a nobleman rebell, his meaninge ys onelie to usurpe the Crowne, not impayringe the government; but ther can be no means to these peasants to accomlishe ther purpose, excepte by the absolute extirpation of all governmente, magistracy, nobility and gentrye, with the utter subversione and ruine of all lawes that should suppress these ther trayterous actions.

He illustrated this with reference to the rebellions of "Cade, Taylor, and them of Norfolk" in the reign of Edward VI, but went on to locate "the verye paterne of this conspiracy":

In Sleidon's comentaries, and practysed in Westphalia by one John Leydone, the Archana baptiste, who with his adherency, by this very practice, surprised ther the most famous cytye of Mounster ... and no difference in the worlde betwene that action and this conspiracie. And, therefore, most plainlie and evidentialie, yt was never complotted by men possessed with frenzy or lunacies.¹⁴

Sleidanus was also the source Nashe turned to for his portrait of John of Leiden and the Münster rebellion.¹⁵ Not only Hacket's prosecutor attempted to link Cartwright and his followers with the mad projects of Coppinger and Hacket, but Bancroft also devoted several chapters to this in his *Daungerous Positions*. The Frantick Hacket debacle may thus have lent color and validity to Nashe's antinomian caricature.

Another Bancroftian fear exorcised in Nashe's Münster episode is that, despite the sharp distinction Presbyterians made between church and state, their reorgani-

¹³Job Throkmorton, who had been accused of aiding the fanatical Hacket, published a *Defence* in 1594 in which he vehemently denied any participation in the Hacket-Arthington-Coppinger conspiracy.

¹⁴"Memorandum of the arraignment, at Newgate, of William Hacket, of Northamptonshire, for high treason," in *The Manuscripts of Lord Kenyon*, appendix, part 4 (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1984), report 14, pp. 607-9.

¹⁵As R. B. McKerrow points out, however, Nashe's description of the battle is actually taken from the battle of Frankenhausen. See *Works*, 2:268. Nashe's reference to Frantick Hacket in *Have With You to Saffron Walden* (1596) shows that he knew of the false prophet, which makes the connection between Nashe's John of Leiden and the Frantick Hacket episode less far-fetched.

zation of ecclesiastical power would challenge the authority of secular magistrates. Conformists feared that Presbyterian discipline would lead to more despotic tendencies than the bishops had ever shown: that every minister would be a pope in his own parish, and that Presbyterians would claim the same immunities from the power of the magistrate as did the Papists. Nashe likewise suggests that mayhem and misdirected mob rule will follow upon the elimination of bishops and their replacement with collective rule, a prime feature of the Presbyterian platform:

What was the foundation or ground-worke of this dismall declining of Munster, but the banishing of their Bishop, their confiscating and casting lots for Church livinges, as the souldiers cast lottes for Christes garments, and, in short tearmes, their making the house of God a number of hungrie Church robbers in these dayes have made a den of theeves.... (*Works*, 2:238)

Total social collapse predictably results from the toppling of the bishop. Nashe criminalizes Anabaptists, and through them Puritans, by identifying them with the soldiers who cast lots for Christ's garments at the crucifixion.¹⁶ By extension, he identifies the bishop with the body of Christ, hence equating the institution of episcopacy with the true church. The tacit assumption of a divine right or foundation for episcopacy implicit in Nashe's image echoes the conformist case for *iure divino* episcopacy that had tentatively and cautiously been put forward by Bancroft in his Paul's Cross Sermon.¹⁷ Nashe's highly condensed but suggestive comparison of the plunder of episcopacy to the desecration of Christ's body identifies episcopacy with the mystical body of the church itself and, in so doing, glances at the controversial *iure divino* case, which Bancroft was tentatively advancing.

Presbyterians believed they could dispense with bishops because they thought their scripturally authorized form of church government would ensure the election of the godly community to office. Whitgift and Bancroft rejected this elision of the visible and invisible churches because they did not think it humanly possible to sort out the elect. Like Bancroft, Nashe takes aim at the Presbyterians' vehement insistence that after the institution of consistorial discipline, edification would follow, and with it, the apocalypse. Once ministers with an authentic vocation had been called to office, in the ideal Presbyterian scenario, they would convey God's word and thereby bring about God's kingdom on earth. According to Peter Lake, Cartwright did not quite equate the edification of Christ's spiritual body with the intro-

¹⁶Martin answers the prelates' accusation that he plans to rob and spoil church livings in *The Protestation of Martin Marprelat*; see *The Marprelate Tracts [1588–89]* (1588; facsimile repr., Menston, Yorkshire: Scolar Press, 1967), 17–19.

¹⁷Bancroft's 1589 sermon represents an important stage in the *iure divino* debate as the first published Elizabethan work in which the institution of episcopacy was defended solely on historical grounds. See Thompson, "A Reconsideration," 264. Peter Lake discusses the *iure divino* argument for episcopacy as a significant turn in the debate between bishops and Presbyterians in "Presbyterianism, the Idea of a National Church and the Argument from Divine Right" in *Protestantism and the National Church in Sixteenth Century England*, ed. Peter Lake and Maria Dowling (London: Croom Helm, 1987).

duction of the discipline, but the two processes were being associated, even elided, and Whitgift saw this as an Anabaptist tendency.¹⁸ Nashe ridicules Presbyterian edification and apocalyptic expectations:

Verie devout Asses they were, for all they were so dunstically set forth, and such as thought they knew as much of Gods minde as richer men: why, inspiration was their ordinarie familiar, and buzd in their eares like a Bee in a bose everie hower what newes from heaven, hell, and the land of whipperginnie: displeasethem who durst, he should have his mittimus to damnation ex tempore; they would vaunt there was not a pease difference betwixt them and the Apostles. (*Works*, 2:233)

Such a caricature of the Anabaptists turns the tables on Puritan railers, like Marprelate, who had declared that Dean Bridges's *Defense of the Government Established in the Church of England*, the book which sparked the Marprelate pamphlet war, seemed "to proceede from the braynes of a woodcocke, as having neyther wit nor learning."¹⁹ Nashe derides Presbyterians' alleged intimations of God's intentions as superstition and vainglory. The "inspiration" they claim is like a satanic familiar, suggesting that their higher learning amounts to nothing more than popular magic. And like a witch's familiar, the Anabaptists' "inspiration" seems capable only of effecting malevolent ends.²⁰ Even more menacing than their superstitious error was the attendant presumption that such godly visionaries could not fall from grace. This kind of divine carte blanche, it was feared, would open up every avenue to deviance, and it was this that connected predestinarian style religion, in the conformist mind, with antinomianism. The specter of a misguided godly oligarchy arbitrarily pronouncing sentences of excommunication articulates a conformist fear about the narrow definition of the godly community. Excommunication was naturally controversial and clearly central to the struggle over whether to define the church broadly as national and inclusive or more strictly according to a test of zealous belief. The Anabaptists' issuance of a "mittimus" (a secular writ) in this passage prefigures the conformist nightmare in which Presbyterian ministers would usurp the powers of secular magistrates.

In reporting the violent demise of the Münster Anabaptists, Nashe deflates the potential for sympathy and pity. First comparing the overmatched Anabaptists to a bear which, though cruel itself, receives compassion from those observing it outnumbered and torn apart by a pack of dogs, Jack Wilton pronounces pity for the Anabaptists as misplaced: "even such compassion did those ouver-matcht ungra-

¹⁸See Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?* For the Puritan concept of edification see John S. Coolidge, *The Pauline Renaissance in England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), chap. 2, "Christian Liberty and Edification."

¹⁹"Oh read ouer D. Iohn Bridges [The Epistle]" in *Marprelate Tracts [1588-89]*, 10.

²⁰For examples of witches and their familiars, see the witchcraft pamphlets reprinted in Joseph H. Marshburn, *Murder and Witchcraft in England, 1550-1640* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971). One such pamphlet, *The most strange and admirable discoverie of the three Witches of Warboys* (London, 1593), STC 25019, was printed by John Danter.

cious Musterians obtaine of manie indifferent eyes, who now thought them (suffering) to bee sheepe brought innocent to the shambles, when as before they deemed them as a number of wolves up in armes against the shepheards” (*Works*, 2:240). Nashe anticipates and preempts the compassion of readers by devaluing the pity felt by the “manie indifferent eyes” as akin to the emotions aroused at a bear-baiting. He also indicates the shortsightedness of such an emotional reaction in pointing out that, although the naive Anabaptists resemble sheep being led to the slaughter, a moment before, when they had deprived bishops and magistrates and threatened general anarchy, they were the wolves in the analogy. This kind of counter-rhetoric was necessary to refute a discourse of persecution which would portray such religious dissenters as martyrs.

As Lake and Questier have shown, the symbolic violence of state executions, especially when performed with all the gestures connoting a “good death,” could offer a way to cast doubt on judicial authority and win sympathy for the condemned. Bancroft worried about Puritan charges of persecution against the Elizabethan government. In chapter 10 of *Dangerous positions*, for example, he quotes from the *Second Admonition to Parliament* and from Marprelate’s *Protestation*, ventriloquizing Puritan complaints:

There is a persecution of poore Christians....

Poore men have been miserably handled, with revilings, deprivations, imprisonments, bannishments, and such like extremities. Godly Ministers have beene brought before the barres of justice: they have beene arraigned amongst fellons and theeves: they have been imprisoned to the uttermost and defaced: they are reproched, shaken up, threatened; many are deprived: they are examined by an inquisition, much like that of Spaine. O lamentable case, O heynous impietie....

Besides whorish impudencie, halter, axe, bandes, scourging, and racking, our Bishops have nothing to defend themselues withall.

The Clinke, Gatehouse, White-Lion, and the Fleete, are their onelie arguments. (*Dangerous positions*, 56–57)

As Bancroft’s excerpts show, powerful images of persecution, poverty, and imprisonment linked “Puritan martyrs” with an ancient tradition of Christian suffering and martyrdom for the “true church.” The conformist establishment stood to lose moral legitimacy and face if it continued to be cast in the role of tyrannical persecutor and oppressor.

John Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*, more than any other text, shaped Elizabethan expectations about what counted as a good death at a public execution. While Foxe of course had been writing about the conflict between Catholics and Protestants, English Separatists threatened to co-opt Foxeian rhetoric for their own purposes in the intra-Protestant conflict between Puritans and conformists. In Foxe’s accounts of martyrdom, the paradoxical merriment of the condemned in the final moments

on the scaffold signified true saintliness.²¹ Nashe deprives the deaths of John of Leiden and his followers of the aura of sanctity surrounding martyrdom by playing Foxe's comic levity as invective humor against the Anabaptist "sheep" being led to the slaughter by their sectarian minister, the "botcher" John of Leiden. The scene is farcical; yet, as in the comparison to a bearbaiting noted earlier, it also evokes a queer pity for simple folk influenced by the messianic delusions of false prophets like John of Leiden.

The narrator raises and frustrates readers' expectations in his final comment on the Münster rebellion. While Nashe has referred to the Anabaptists' low social origins throughout this episode to ridicule their spiritual ambitions, he realizes that the imminent scene of death may burst the boundaries of his satire, because Foxe wrote of many common folk who ended as glorious martyrs. Indeed, Foxe emphasized the humility and baseness of ordinary and simple martyrs to heighten the contrast with the earthly wealth and pomp of the Catholic Church. Acknowledging the generic confusion and tensions, Nashe attempts to put them to rest:

This tale must at one time or other give up the ghost, ... for what with talking of coblers, tinkers, roape-makers, botchers, and durt-dauber[s], the mark is clean out of my Muses mouth, & I am as it were more than duncified twixt divinity and poetrie. What is there more as touching this tragedie that you would be resolved of? ... How John Leyden dyed, is that it? He dyde like a dogge, he was hangd & the halter paid for. For his companions, doe they trouble you? I can tell you they troubled some men before, for they were all kild, & none escapt, no, not so much as one to tell the tale of the rainebow. (*Works*, 2:241)

Coming to the conclusion of his tale makes the narrator self-conscious about its genre, and he must confess that he might well have set it up as "divinity," "poetrie," or "tragedie." The simple fact that it is a tale populated with simple craftsmen need not necessarily signal low comedy. After all, anonymous saints—such as the two weavers, a tanner, a husbandman, a sawyer, and an apothecary who were martyred at Colchester in April 1556—often featured in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. Sensing that this scene may have set up readers' expectations for a martyrdom and making his readers aware of this, Nashe ends bluntly by frustrating those expectations. John of Leiden, he assures us, "dyde like a dogge" and in the manner of a common criminal. Death by hanging rather than by flames helps to drive home the distinction between common criminal and martyr.

Puritan complaints that the bishops' only answers to their arguments were the Clink and the gallows worried Bancroft and are here turned on their head: Nashe suggests that the label of criminal and thug is entirely appropriate. Speaking as the mock prognosticator Adam Fouleweather in 1591, for example, Nashe predicted,

²¹See D. R. Woolf, "The Rhetoric of Martyrdom: Generic Contradiction and Narrative Strategy in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*," in *The Rhetorics of Life-Writing in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Thomas F. Mayer and D. R. Woolf (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 243–82.

“out of the old stock of heresie ... will bloome new scismaticall opinions and strange sects, as Brownists, Barowists, & such balductum devises, to the great hinderance of the unities of the Church, & confusion of the true faith, if the learned doctor sir T. Tiburne be not taskte to confute such upstart companions with his plain & dunstable philosophie” (*Works*, 3: 391). The Elizabethan Separatists Henry Barrow and John Greenwood identified with Foxe’s Marian martyrs and accused bishops and other church dignitaries of persecuting true Christians.

However much Nashe attempts to deflate the glory attaching to a noble death, he seems to recognize the pettiness and unchristian lack of charity implied in exulting over the downtrodden. Therefore he repeatedly reworks the last dying speech in *The Unfortunate Traveller* to get the satire right.²² He takes a different tack against Presbyterian appropriations of the rhetoric of martyrdom in the episode of the rape and suicide of Heraclide. The chaste Roman matron Heraclide, raped and terrorized, would seem to merit sympathy. She has done nothing to deserve the sadistic torments and cruel rape by Esdras of Granado. Yet through Heraclide’s smug assurance of her own salvation, her overzealous moral scruples, and finally her suicidal despair, Nashe hints at the dangers of Puritan predestinarian doctrine. During Esdras of Granado’s assault, Heraclide invokes God to spare her, presuming that she should be able to expect so much as one of the godly marked out for salvation: “Heare me, Jehouah, & be merciful in ending my miserie” (*Works*, 2:288). She tries to dissuade Esdras from murdering her husband by instilling a fear of God’s imminent judgment, and suggests that she carries the power of God’s anger in her creased brow and in her very breath, which can emit the plague of a thousand corpses. When that fails, she appeals to Esdras’s conscience. When it becomes clear that divine providence will not intervene to preserve Heraclide, her despair following the apparent murder and rape arises not so much out of shame or trauma as out of melancholy over her fallen spiritual state (“Up she rose after she was deflowred, but loath she arose, as a reprobate soule rising to the day of judgement”). Convinced of her damnation, Heraclide laments:

Have I lived to make my husbands bodie the beere to carrie mee to hell?
Had filthy pleasure no other pillow to leane vpon but his spreaded lims?
On thy flesh my fault shall be imprinted at the day of resurrection. O
beautie, the bait ordained to insnare the irreligious... The Angels shall
hisse at me, the Saints and Martyrs flye from me: yea, God himselfe shall
ade to the divels damnation, because he suffered such a wicked creature to
come before him. (*Works*, 2:293–94)

Heraclide’s prediction of her own damnation parodies the moral severity of predestinarian doctrine. She calls to mind the classical type of the defiled Roman matron who commits suicide to preserve her family honor, but apart from the superficial similarity of her predicament with a Lucrece, there is little to connect

²²Lake and Questier discuss the difficulty of dismissing the impression of a “good death” in “Agency, Appropriation,” 64–107.

Heraclide with the tragic Roman heroine. Instead of invoking Roman honor or pudor to justify suicide, Heraclide is plagued in her dying moments by the overtly Christian concepts of judgment, damnation, hell, resurrection, saints, and martyrs. Heraclide does not resemble Shakespeare's Lucrece as much as his Isabella from *Measure for Measure*. Heraclide maintains even stricter standards of chastity than Isabella will, for while Isabella believes that her soul will be damned for consenting to exchange sex for her brother's life, Heraclide's violent ravishment involves no such moral ambiguity. Heraclide refused her consent and, therefore, it seems perverse that she should believe herself damned and a sinner. Convinced that she is damned by God's double decree, Heraclide sees no alternative but self-murder:

The onely repeale we have from Gods undefinite chastisement is to chastise our selves in this world: and I will; nought but death be my pennance, gracious and acceptable maie it be: my hand and my knife shall manumit mee out of the horroure of minde I endure. Fare-well, life, that hast lent me nothing but sorrowe. Fare-well, sinne-sowed flesh, that hast more weedes than flowers, more woes than joies. Point, pierce, edge, enwidem, I patiently affoorde thee a sheath: spurre forth my soule to mount post to heaven. Jesu, forgive me, Jesu, receive me. (*Works*, 2:294–95)

What we have here, surely, is Nashe's best effort to paint Puritanism as a religion of desperation. Heraclide usurps God's role by pronouncing judgment upon herself and embraces death to escape the miseries of earthly existence. Early modern English people believed that suicide was God's judgment against sinners or a terrible sin instigated by Satan.²³ Whether interpreted as divine retribution or diabolical temptation, self-murder was condemned as a heinous sin and thus became an effective weapon in the arsenal of sectarian polemicists. The symbolism of this propaganda was on one level simple: the antagonistic faith drove its members to a state of despair, the psychological equivalent of apostasy, and to suicide.

Even though Heraclide is convinced that she is damned, Nashe adds the following ironic gloss asserting that she does in fact die a saint:

Strange and wonderfull are Gods judgements, here shine they in their glory. Chast *Heraclide*, thy bloud is laid up in heavens treasury, not one drop of it was lost, but lent out to usurie: water powred forth sinkes downe quietly into the earth, but bloud spilt on the ground sprinkles up to the firmament. Murder is wide-mouthd and will not let God rest till he grant revenge.... Guiltlesse soules that live every houre subject to violence, and with your despairing feares doe much empaire Gods providence, fasten your eies on this spectacle that will adde to your faith. (*Works*, 2:320)

Here Nashe parodies the Puritan appropriation of the tropes of murder pamphlets for evangelical polemics. Several features of the passage send up the clichés of

²³See Michael MacDonald and Terence R. Murphy, *Sleepless Souls: Suicide in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 60–75, "Sectarianism and Self-Murder"; here, 60.

providential murder pamphlets.²⁴ The notion that murder is a pollution and the blood of the murderer will cry out for revenge (“murder is wide-mouthd”) is duly trotted out. The inevitability of divine justice meted out to felons and the vindication of the innocent are affirmed. But these well-worn saws ring hollow or ironic here, because Heraclide was not murdered but rather killed herself, and her husband, it turns out, did not die after all. The pastoral application also strikes one as incongruous because it is difficult to see how Heraclide’s despair could attest to divine providence or add to religious faith; rather, providence seems conspicuously absent and unresponsive to Heraclide’s imprecations. In this way Nashe parodies Puritans for awkwardly straining the conventions of murder pamphlets to propagate their evangelical agenda. In passages like this we see Nashe paying back Martin Marprelate for ridiculing the platitudes and banalities of the higher clergy’s sermons.

The kind of manipulation, play, and travesty of the rhetoric of martyrdom that we see in such passages carries on a favorite rhetorical tactic from the Marprelate exchange: the Martinists appropriated the rhetoric of martyrdom, and the anti-Martinists parodied that appropriation. In *The Protestatyon of Martin Marprelat* (1589), for example, the fugitive Martin pens a narrative of his own martyrdom:

But tell them from me: that we feare not men who can but kille, the bodye: because we feare that god who can cast both body and soule into unquenchable fire. And tell them alsoe this. That the more bloode the churche loseth the mor life and blood it gets. When the fearfull sentence pronounced against the persecuters of the truth is executed upon them, I would then gladly know, whether they who go about thus to sheade our bloode: or we whose blood cryeth for vengeance against them, shall have the worst ende of the staffe. We are sure to posses our soules in everlasting peace, when soever we leav this earthly tabernacle.²⁵

Martin’s ability to jest with and defy his persecutors even at the point of his own imagined execution echoes and summons up the willingness of Foxe’s martyrs to perish for their faith. Contrasting the flames of the martyr’s pyre with the unquenchable fire of hell, Martin illustrates how those condemned to the flames as heretics might convert the symbolism of state power into an antitype for divine power. Even more menacing was the charismatic potential of this sacrifice to convert new believers and, in Martin’s trope, to add more blood to the church than that lost in a single martyr. The martyr paradoxically may bring more converts to the church in death than in life. This is exactly the kind of inversion of symbols of

²⁴See Peter Lake, “Popular Form, Puritan Content? Two Puritan Appropriations of the Murder Pamphlet from Mid-Seventeenth-Century London” in *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain: Essays in Honour of Patrick Collinson*, ed. Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 313–34; idem, “Deeds Against Nature; Cheap Print, Protestantism and Murder in Early Seventeenth-Century England” in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 257–83.

²⁵Quoted from *Marprelate Tracts [1588–1589]*, 5.

state authority against which Nashe set up his counterrhetoric. The demise of John of Leiden and Heraclide raises several objections to seeing Puritans as martyrs. John of Leiden as the reckless antinomian and Heraclide as the moral precisian seem to court their own violent ends through anarchic self-destruction or in the throes of neurotic depression.

EQUIVOCATORS, CASUISTS, JESUITS, JEWS

The most sordid episodes of *The Unfortunate Traveller* take place in Rome, where the Spaniard Esdras of Granado and two Jewish doctors, Zadoch and Zacharias, play the archvillains. There is little mystery to the significance of these nationalities in Elizabethan popular culture or polemics. Rome was, of course, the home of the pope and the center of Roman Catholicism; of all religious groups, Roman Catholics generated the most hostility in Elizabethan pamphlets. Christopher Ockland sums up Elizabethan attitudes to Roman Catholicism in *The Fountaine and Well-spring of Variance* (1589): "Idolatri, worshipping of Images, masses, dirrignes, and Heaven to be sold for mony, murdring of Saints, stewes in whole streets of Curtesans, blessings for meed, cursning for Envy, are to be found in Rome" (sig. D2).²⁶ Nashe's Rome evokes many of these unsavory stereotypes.

Though Roman Catholicism in general was seen as Protestantism's great adversary, the Spanish empire in particular was thought to be behind papist plots to invade and convert England. In Nashe's Esdras of Granado we find an amalgamation of hispanophobic motifs: treachery, cruelty, cunning, and cowardice. Esdras's callous attitude toward rape and murder is reminiscent of the cruelties described by Bartolomé de Las Casas.²⁷ Catholic Spain was seen as the imperial power behind the religious wars in France, the champion of the Counter-Reformation, and the right arm of the pope. When described as a Spaniard with a license from the pope, Esdras also presents a crude parody of a Spanish Jesuit ("he discourst unto her how he was countenanced and borne out by the pope, and how many execrable murders with impunitie he had executed on them that displeasde him" [*Works*, 2:288]). Esdras's boast that he has "a charter above scripture" (*Works*, 2:288) perpetuates the myth that the militancy of the Jesuits was countenanced if not instigated by the pope. Elizabethan conformists feared that since Jesuits pledged obedience to the pope, they would not recognize any other civil authority. The impression that Jesuits were equivocators who would dissimulate to serve their purposes was spread by their use of casuistry manuals such as those written by Robert Parsons. Characters like Zadoch and Zacharias, the bloodthirsty Jewish doctors who imprison Jack and plot his vivisection, fill in the picture of Rome as a nest of iniquity. Anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic stereotypes dovetail in this section; medieval legends of ritual

²⁶Quoted from Sandra Clark, *The Elizabethan Pamphleteers: Popular Moralistic Pamphlets 1580-1640* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983), 189.

²⁷William S. Maltby, *The Black Legend in England: The Development of Anti-Spanish Sentiment* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1971), surveys accounts available to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Englishmen that spread the stereotype of Spaniards as lecherous, deceitful, and cruel.

murder by Jews coalesce with the more contemporary “Black Legend” of Spanish cruelty.

Nashe dwells at length on Esdras of Granado’s treachery when Cutwolfe is about to kill the Spanish villain in revenge for his brother’s murder. In this scene Nashe satirizes the notion of the scaffold conversion in a number of ways. Esdras pleads for mercy by feigning moral compunction and contrition:

Quoth *Esdras*, what ever thou best at whose mercie I lye, spare me, and I wil give thee as much gold as thou wilt aske. Put me to anie paines, my life reserved, and I willingly will sustaine them: cut off my armes and legs, and leave me as a lazar to some loathsome spittle, where I may but live a year to pray and repent me. For thy brothers death the despayre of mind that hath ever since haunted mee, the guiltie gnawing worme of conscience I feele may bee sufficient penance. Thou canst not send me to such a hell as alreadie there is in my hart.... For my soules health I beg my bodies torment: bee not thou a divell to torment my soule, and send me to eternall damnation. Thy over-hanging sword hides heaven from my sight, I dare not looke up, least I embrace my deatheswounde unwares. I cannot pray to God and plead to thee both at once. Ay mee, alreadie I see my life buried in the wrinkles of thy browes.... (*Works*, 2:322)

The pun on “lye” in the first sentence sets up the equivocal status of the whole speech. Esdras spews forth a series of clichés and commonplaces about revenge and repentance, liberally plagiarizing from Heraclide’s earlier pleadings with him. Heraclide had expounded on the hell of the guilty conscience and the torments of the damned; Esdras even appropriates her rhetoric to the point of plagiarizing the specific image of the wrinkled brow of judgment. He invokes Heraclide by name, citing the fact that he refrained from killing her as proof that he himself set Cutwolfe an example of mercy:

Heraclide, now thinke I on thy teares sowne in the dust (thy teares, that my bloudie minde made barraine). In revenge of thee, God hardens this mans heart against mee: yet I did not slaughter thee, though hundreds else my hand hath brought to the shambles. Gentle sir, learne of mee what it is to clog your conscience with murder, to have your dreames, your sleepes, your solitarie walkes troubled and disquited with murther: your shaddow by daie will affright you, you will not see a weapon unsheathde, but immediately you will imagine it is predestinate for your destruction. (*Works*, 2: 323)

While Esdras may be thinking about Heraclide here, we eventually discover that the desire to imitate her saintlike performance instead of genuine guilt for his crimes triggers the memory. He thinks of her now, not out of empathy or contrition, but like an actor trying to memorially reconstruct a theatrical player’s lines and persona. He continues to feign attacks of conscience with elaborate histrionics:

This murder is a house divided within it selfe: it subornes a mans owne soule to infourme against him: his soule (beeing his accuser) brings foorth his two eyes as witnesses against him; and the least eie witsnesse is unrefutable. Plucke out my eyes if you wilt, and deprive my traitorous soule of her two best witnesses. Digge out my blasphemous tongue wyth thy dagger, both tongue and eyes wyll I gladly forgoe, to have a lyttle more time to thinke on my journey to heaven. (*Works*, 2:323)

When he requests these symbolic punishments instead of death, one begins to see that he will do anything to avoid the scaffold. Despite brave words ("wounds I contemne, life I prize light, it is another worlds tranquillitie which makes me so timerous; everlasting damnation, everlasting howling and lamentation"), his incessant pleading comes across as cowardly.

The superficiality of his protestations of repentance becomes clear when we witness the alacrity with which he is prepared to abandon all religion to save his life. For when Cutwolfe refuses to give in to his lengthy appeals, Esdras exclaims:

Stay, stay ... and heare me but one word further.... Respite me a little from thy swordes point, and set me about some execrable enterprise, that may subvert the whole state of christendome, and make all mens eares tingle that heare of it. Commaund me to cut all my kindreds throats, to burne men, women, and children in their beds in millions, by firing their Cities at midnight. Be it Pope, Emperour, or Turke that displeaseth thee, he shall not breath on the earth. For thy sake will I sweare and forswear, renounce my baptism, and all the interest I have in any other sacrament. (*Works*, 2:324–25)

Reasoning that if his previous arguments have failed to move Cutwolfe his assailant must be an atheist, Esdras bends his appeal to suit Cutwolfe's apparent apostasy. Such an adjustment of one's answers and arguments to the beliefs of one's examiners was thought to be a standard tactic in Jesuit casuistry.²⁸ Once penitential rhetoric fails him, Esdras reverts to the cruelty and perfidy of the Spanish Black Legend, which presumably represents his true character and motives. Here he betrays the extent to which his religious allegiance has nothing to do with genuine belief, and instead falls in line with opportunism and self-interest.

This extended scene of Esdras's cunning, cowardice, and hypocrisy plays out one variety of conformist revenge fantasy. For here the dying Catholic enacts the opposite of a good death. In this Nashe insinuates that the self-promoting propaganda of Puritans and Catholics involves role-playing and adopting advantageous poses and speeches—especially at the highly ritual dramas of scaffold speeches, whose notoriety was spread beyond an immediate audience by popular pam-

²⁸See Perez Zagorin, *Ways of Lying: Dissimulation, Persecution and Conformity in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

phlets.²⁹ Esdras plays on conventions of the theater of saints—manipulating the gestures betokening salvation or damnation to wear down his executioner’s resolve. His elaborate performance of repentance, only to be followed by much flip-flopping and finally a full abjuration, casts doubt on all such scenes of criminal repentance on the scaffold as mere drama or theater. In this view, the condemned deliver conventional statements of repentance in the hopes of manipulating people’s sympathy and winning a reprieve. Nashe contrives to wring even more satisfaction out of Esdras’s humiliating performance and to bring home the logical implication of the spiritual state of mercenary scoundrels like Esdras by tempting him to reveal his utter depravity. Cutwolfe describes how he tempts his adversary to damn himself:

At this his importunitie I paused a little, not as retiring from my wreakfull resolution, but going backe to gather more forces of vengeaunce. With my selfe I devised how to plague him double for his base minde: my thoughtes traveld in quest of some notable newe Italionisme, whose murderous plat-forme might not onely extend on his bodie, but his soule also. The ground worke of it was this: that whereas he had promised for my sake to sweare and forswear, and commit Julianlike violence on the highest seales of religion; if he would but this farre satisfie me, he should be dismist from my furie. First and formost, he should renounce God and his laws, and utterly disclaime the whole title or interest he had in anie covenant of saluation. Next he should curse him to his face, as Job was willed by his wife, and write an absolute firme obligation of his soule to the devill, without condition or exception. Thirdly and lastly (having done this,) hee should pray to God fervently never to have mercie upon him, or pardon him. (*Works*, 2:325)

In the extended shaming of Esdras, Nashe repays Martin Marprelate for pillorying Mar-Martin (an anti-Martinist writer) in an imagined “auricular confession from the top of a gibet,” where Mar-Martin’s imagined scaffold speech begins:

Come neere, quoth he, take heede by me,
I loved to lie by ryming,
Tis just you see, and doth agree,
that now I die by climbing:
What wretch but I, that vowed to lie,
all falshoode still defending?
Who may say fie? No beast but I,
Low here you see my ending.³⁰

²⁹Another example of the empty conventionality of the repentance expressed at the scaffold occurs when Jack Wilton, wrongly accused of killing Heraclide and about to hang for it, goes to the gallows having prepared a ballad even though he hasn’t committed the crime.

³⁰*The iust censure and reproofe of Martin Iunior, in Maprelate Tracts [1588–1589]*, sig. D3r.

In staging Esdras's extravagantly disgraceful dying speeches, Nashe reappropriates the rhetoric of the scaffold. He implicitly reiterates and elaborates the charge repeatedly made by Mar-Martin that linked Puritans with Papists. Such an equation was made not only in scurrilous pamphlets, but also by Richard Cosin (a high-achieving Bancroft protégé).³¹ Between the extremes and excesses of Puritan and Jesuit, Nashe's audience is no doubt meant to conclude, stands the solid middle ground of Elizabethan conformity.

THE FANTASY OF A CONFORMIST SCAFFOLD SPEECH

To be left with conformity merely by default as the most acceptable option after eliminating the evils of Puritanism and Papistry, however, would not make a very strong case in its favor.³² Nashe offers a solution to this problem in the scaffold speech of Cutwolfe. As self-appointed executioner to Esdras, Cutwolfe puts himself in the position of the state. His situation generates all the moral ambiguity and sympathy of the revenger characters in Elizabethan drama. Exacting his vengeance in duty to his slain brother, the revenger paradoxically becomes the mirror image of his adversary. Yet Cutwolfe willingly submits to a state execution for his crime. Taking his place on the scaffold in the final scene of *The Unfortunate Traveller*, Cutwolfe displaces John of Leiden, Heraclide, and Esdras from the position of victim/martyr, facing his death with greater equanimity and conviction than any of them had. While Nashe parodies prison and scaffold conversions as perfunctory, shallow, and calculated to proselytize, a recognition of the special evidence of salvation or damnation thought to be contained in the dying speech seems implicit in his attempt to co-opt the rhetorical power of the scaffold speech for conformist discourse.³³

Strictly speaking, neither John of Leiden, nor Heraclide, nor Esdras was shown to die on a scaffold, even though Nashe's readers have been privy to their last dying speeches. So Cutwolfe is in fact the only character afforded this public platform by Nashe. When Cutwolfe introduces himself to the spectators at his execution, he reclaims the humble social origins of a Foxeian illiterate saint: "my name is Cutwolfe, neither better nor worse by occupation than a poore Cobler of *Verona*; Coblers are men, and kings are no more" (*Works*, 2:320). And he pictures his humble shop with Foxeian low-mimetic scenography: "the newes brought to me as I was sitting in my shop under a stal, knocking in of tacks, I thinke I raised up my

³¹See Zagorin, *Ways of Lying*, 229. The replies to Martin Marprelate printed in 1589 under the title *Mar-Martin* repeatedly accuse Martin Marprelate of this seemingly incongruous alliance with the pope. These replies are reprinted in "Mar-Martine," *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society* 5 (1912): 357-69.

³²Peter Lake, "Conformist Clericalism? Richard Bancroft's Analysis of the Socioeconomic Roots of Presbyterianism," *Studies in Church History* 24 (1997): 219-29, discusses the reactive nature of Bancroft's positions. Though most of Nashe's polemic, like Bancroft's, is negative, we see in Cutwolfe his effort to put forward a positive case for the virtues of conformity.

³³Sister Mary Catherine O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well: The Development of the Ars moriendi* (New York: AMS Press, 1966), 193-212, argues that the tradition of the *ars moriendi* persisted in Protestant devotional writings.

bristles, solde pritch-aule, spunge, blacking tub, and punching yron, bought mee rapier and pistoll, and to goe I went" (*Works*, 2:321).

The dutiful, stoical Cutwolfe demonstrates the perennial qualities denoting sanctity and a good death: patience, nobility, and superhuman immunity to pain. Even though he commits a murder as vengeance, he has the sympathetic traits of a folk hero who has ridded the commonwealth of a public nuisance:

Men and people that have made holy day to beholde my pained flesh toil on the wheele, expect not of me a whining penitent slave, that shal do nothing but cry and say his praiers, and so be crusht in peeces.... The occasion of my coming hether at this present is to have a few of my bones broken (as we are all borne to die) for being the death of the Emperour of homicides, Esdras of Granado. (*Works*, 2:320)

Paradoxically, that Cutwolfe is resigned to being damned for the murder of Esdras indicates that he believes in hell. His satisfaction in being able to consign Esdras to damnation also rests on his assumption that there is a heaven and a hell. His claim to be "the death of the Emperour of homicides" even has a Christlike quality, turning his own death into a Christlike sacrifice instead of a common criminal's ignominious end. By contrast, at the point of their deaths, Heraclide despaired of providence and Esdras perjured himself over and over. Cutwolfe's brave embrace of his punishment contrasts with Esdras's shameless, craven pleadings to spare his life. Cutwolfe's speech partakes of the aura and gravity surrounding a martyr's dying words. He reclaims and redefines martyrdom for Elizabethan conformists: he sacrifices his life in the general public interest to rid Christian society of a pernicious sociopath.

In Cutwolfe, Nashe finds a fitting spokesman for conformist episcopacy and the Elizabethan state. Cutwolfe's ability to appropriate the rhetoric of martyrdom could afford a potent moral and rhetorical advantage. This solution was obviously not very workable in the long term or outside of a fictional context. For Elizabethan bishops would remain in the position of enforcing conformity and inadvertently or involuntarily producing more Catholic and Puritan martyrs in the process. Hence there are many elements of fantasy in imagining the avenging hand of Elizabethan justice in the person of Cutwolfe. Those who order judicial murder do not suffer retributive justice, because such executions are legal, and thus they lack the opportunity to come clean in the way Cutwolfe does. Only the condemned have the opportunity to express their repentant dying words. In such a fiction Nashe may have satisfied conformists' desire to be seen in the light of an aggrieved and injured party, instead of the bully state wielding capital force. It is also notable that Cutwolfe refrains from torturing Esdras physically in contrast to Esdras's customary treatment of his victims.

The spectacle of Cutwolfe's scaffold speech and noble death even prompts the conversion of Nashe's rogue narrator Jack Wilton. But the reformed rogue is a cliché: such characters at one moment boast of their criminal techniques and at the

next condemn themselves for viciousness.³⁴ Given Wilton's customary insouciance, his alleged conversion is hard to take seriously. Here as elsewhere, Nashe seems to want at once to grant the occasion of the dying speech its rhetorical power (if possible harnessed to the cause of conformity) but also to imply the shallow, mawkish emotions which momentarily tug at the heartstrings of even inveterate wags like Jack Wilton.³⁵ So the series of violent deaths witnessed by Jack Wilton on his tour through early Reformation Europe plays out an elaborate Elizabethan conformist fantasy about controlling the rhetoric of legitimate state violence and religious authenticity. In this fantasy, it would be clear in state executions of Puritans and Catholics that the offenders were dangerous traitors and enemies to the state. Whatever the histrionics of speech and gesture displayed at the moment of death, Puritans and Catholics would appear as perverse recalcitrants rather than as holy martyrs. To justify state persecution of Puritans and Catholics, Nashe derides Puritan and Catholic attempts to appropriate the discourse of martyrdom; he parodies and explodes Puritan and Catholic martyrological rhetoric. John of Leiden and his Knipperdolings, Heraclide, and Esdras of Granado are not holy martyrs, but subversive antinomians, neurotic perfectionists, and seditious cutthroats. They may be casualties of the Reformation, but they are not martyrs to Nashe's true church.

³⁴Robert Greene's narrator in the *Black Book's Messenger*, for example, is torn between an unrepentant reprobate and a reformed soul apt to moralize on his past follies.

³⁵When he expected to die under the knife of an anatomist, Jack Wilton experienced a similar miraculous conversion: "O, the cold sweating cares which I conceived after I knewe I should be cut like a French summer dublet . . . but theres no such readie way to make a man a true Christian, as to perswade himselfe he is taken up for an anatomic. Ile depose I praid then more than I did in seven year before" (*Works*, 2:305).