Inquiry and Provocation: The Use of Ambiguity in Sixteenth-Century English Political Satire

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INQUIRY AND PROVOCATION: THE USE OF AMBIGUITY
IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH POLITICAL SATIRE

by

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ABSTRACT
INQUIRY AND PROVOCATION: THE USE OF AMBIGUITY
IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH POLITICAL SATIRE

Jason J. Zirbel, MA
Marquette University, 2020

Nearly all literary theories for a millennium have defined satire according to its linguistic clarity and moral certainty. Not until recently have theorists such as Dustin Griffin recognized that satire often comprises an ambiguity that moves it beyond the mere policing of established moral boundaries. This project considers how four sixteenth-century satirists—Thomas Wyatt, George Gascoigne, Thomas Deloney, and Thomas Nashe—exploited satire’s capacity for open-ended inquiry to address the rapid political and economic changes that typified the early modern period. Rather than relying on established moral codes to domesticate uncertainty, these writers used satire to explore and analyze government bureaucratization, the nature of commonwealth, the generation of Crown revenue through the granting of monopolies, and the transition from a patronage to a market economy. Satire’s often overlooked ambiguity allowed these writers to engage these political and economic issues in ways beyond the dogmatic and tentatively to posit responses to contingencies at a time when received wisdom proved inadequate. The conclusion of my project is two-fold: Historically, it reveals English satire of the period to be of a greater complexity and nuance than hereto recognized, attributes ideally suited to the political and economic flux of early modern England. Generically, it highlights the functional and constructive ambiguity of a literary mode too often seen, even by modern theorists, as clear-cut in its moral underpinnings and disruptive in its methods.
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Introduction

Nearly all theories of satire for a millennium have defined the satiric mode according to its clarity and certainty, whether of expression or of morality. However, the works of Thomas Wyatt, George Gascoigne, Thomas Deloney, and Thomas Nashe suggest a trend, as yet inadequately treated, among satirists toward utilizing ambiguity— with all its iterations: lack of closure, doubleness, porosity—to probe unprecedented events and tentatively suggest suitable responses. Beyond a degree of plausible deniability, the ambiguity of satire allowed writers during the sixteenth century to confront their political and economic situations in ways beyond the dogmatic and moralizing, to posit pragmatic responses to contingencies at a time when received wisdom fell short.

As such, these satirists can be read as part of a larger overall trend within European writing during the sixteenth century. The “typical humanist historian” cited by George Rowe “analyzed the past [or the present] to make it conform to eternal truths which had already been recognized,” regarding the past in a way that “did not discover or create new truths… [but rather] confirmed old ones.”¹ But an epistemological shift during the sixteenth century, spearheaded by a new generation of historians—Guicciardini, Stow, Bodin, Camden, Selden,—challenged this humanist model with a more empirically minded historiography in which “meaning [gave] way to fact.”² Rather than “domesticating the new and unfamiliar”³ by reading past and current events according to a priori truths, this new historiography pursued a more pragmatic analysis of causes and events. Similarly, in Logic and Rhetoric in England, W.S. Howell argues that advances in
modern epistemology and natural science propelled rhetoric from “communication of what we already know” to a mission of “inquiry.” Rather than seeking to recover a “storehouse of ancient wisdom,” rhetorical invention aimed at “discovering what [had been] hitherto unknown.” Finally, the work of Neal Wood details a related development in English political writing throughout the sixteenth century. As the early modern state emerged from the feudal kingdom, a combination of classical models and empiricism resulted in a pragmatism not seen in the political scholasticism of medieval writers, “an acute sensitivity to the correction of social and economic ills by rational public policy [rather] than by high-level theorizing and the quest for first principles.”

Critics have long acknowledged satire’s topicality. Its exigence is immediate and extraliterary, steered by a topicality that oftentimes evokes backlash in contemporaries and bewilderment in readers at a remove from the circumstances by which it is occasioned. Hallet Smith perhaps put it most clearly, writing that

“The significant sources of satire are not literary or philosophical: they are social and economic. For the understanding of satire, and the response to it, we need not so much an acquaintance with models and conventions, or an understanding of ideas and principles, as a knowledge of the social milieu from which the satire sprang.”

My concern is largely with how English satirists responded to the “bureaucratic innovation” of the Tudor dynasty, which was itself part of the emergence of the early modern state. The satires I treat here all reflect in some degree the work of contemporary political writers such as Edmund Dudley, Thomas Starkey, Thomas Smith, and the Commonwealthmen who, whatever their ideological differences, contributed to an
emerging analytical movement to comprehend the changing nature of commonwealth with a realism that incorporated, but was not limited to, Christian ethics. Like political writers during the sixteenth century, these satirists are concerned with social analysis, causality, and questions of policy; they perceive, in Keith Wrightson’s words, “sometimes sharply, sometimes dimly and uncertainly, the erosion of an older economic” and, I argue, political order “and the animation of a new.” Wyatt, Gascoigne, Deloney, and Nashe show how satire’s capacity for ambiguity is (perhaps) uniquely suited for negotiating the dire straits between increasing awareness of a “highly differentiated and economic and social structure” and a “harmonious Christian social order dated back to the early middle ages.”

Central to my argument is Dustin Griffin’s reformulation of satire, which highlights the mode’s capacity for inquiry and provocation. Griffin’s work is a response to theorists who contend that the satirist is certain of a moral standard, that complexity has no place in satire. Griffin rightly asks, if this is the case, how does such moralizing manage to engage mature readers? His answer is that the bipolar praise/blame structure is the "satirist's point of departure rather than the destination.... [W]e are asked to hold in mind two conflicting thoughts."

In support of this view, Griffin cites the sermons, “little chats,” of both Lucilius and Horace; the Menippean tradition; and satiric discursive terms such as “lanx satura, sermo, farrago, dialogue, essay, anatomy” that suggest satire’s potential for open-ended inquiry. Griffin’s work is key to considering how satirists move beyond the strictly moral/critical, to posit new alternatives, rather than merely falling back upon established moral norms. Considering Tudor satire in this light shows two things: Historically, it reveals English satire of the period to be of a greater complexity
and nuance than hereto recognized, attributes ideally suited to the political and economic flux of early modern England. Generically, it highlights the functional and constructive ambiguity of a literary mode too often seen, even by modern theorists, as clear-cut in its moral underpinnings and disruptive in its methods.

An overview of the critical literature reveals how theories of satire from the medieval to the modern period have been unduly restrictive, too often limiting satire to a didactic function and moral certainty. The body of my dissertation will then work to counter this critical narrative, using “Mine Own John Poins,” *The Steele Glas*, *The Adventures of Jack of Newbury*, and *The Unfortunate Traveller* to show how early modern English satire participated in a general trend toward open-ended inquiry, even while demonstrating the kind of specificity that typified contemporary political discourse.

According to a common folk etymology, prevalent throughout the medieval era and persisting well into the seventeenth century, the English word *satire* derived from Greek *satyr*, a mythological creature of unrestrained and earthy appetites. Half man and half goat, the bawdy humor of the satyr play served as a respite to the ponderous solemnity of classical tragedy during the Athenian Dionysia. Through a confusion of Greek and Roman sources, medieval commentators conflated the rough demeanor and unpolished behavior of the satyr with what they perceived to be to the bluntness and candor of the satirist. The twelfth-century German schoolmaster Conrad of Hirsau held that satire “gets its name from the naked, mocking satyrs, because in this poem depraved morals are stripped of their clothing and mocked.” Similarly, his contemporary William of Conches, a leading faculty member at the cathedral school of Chartres, writes in his *accessus* to Juvenal that “there are some writers who cover up [velant] their
reprehension… [but] true satire consists of naked and open reprehension.” Some centuries later, in the prologue to his Commentary on Dante’s *Comedy*, Guido da Pisa explains that, just as “Satyrs are capricious and nimble creatures, naked and shameless and mockers of all men,” so satire derives its name because it is “naked and shameless …[and] openly criticizes vices.” It should be noted that these same commentators were aware of a contending and (as it happens) more accurate etymology: the Latin *satura*, or “miscellany.” Nevertheless, the notion had taken hold that the satirist was an exemplar of unembellished and unequivocal speech. In the wake of the twelfth-century renaissance, scholastic pedagogues valued poets such as Horace and Juvenal as useful instructional tools precisely because of the perceived “hermeneutical transparency” of their texts. The apparent literalness of Lucilius, Horace, Juvenal, and Persius facilitated the teaching of Latin grammar, and thus cemented their place within the classical trivium. According to Rita Copeland:

> In elementary Latin instruction in the twelfth century, satire was a preferred genre for teaching Latin – and thus literacy – to young boys because satire was understood to operate at the literal level. Traditional generic classifications of satire, beginning in later antiquity, lay stress upon its etymological association with ‘naked satyrs,’ carrying that over – in metaphor – as the hermeneutical ‘nudity’ of satire.

It is precisely this theory that early modern theorists inherited and largely maintained, often clinging to the position of their predecessors that the satirist was a literary type of ringing moral clarity. Questions of epistemology and axiology, of what could be known and what should be done, were foregone conclusions, and the function of
the satirist was simply to police established boundaries. Moreover, like their medieval counterparts, these theorists continued to see the satyr figure itself as a kind of literary forbearer of the early-modern satirist’s persona. In the early sixteenth century, the Italian humanist Polydore Vergil defined a satire as “a Poesie, rebuking vices sharply, not regarding any persones…. [It] is very railing, onely ordained to rebuke vice…. The Satires had their name of uplandishe Goddes, that were rude, lassivious and wanton of behavior.” Thomas Lodge held that satirists drew from “the lives of Satyers, so that they might wiseley, under the abuse of that name, discover the follies of many theyr folish fellow citesens.” George Puttenham writes that, so that their moral certainty “should breed none ill will, … [early satirists] made wise as if the gods of the woods, whom they called satyrs or sylvans.” Notably, the satirist not only uses the wild persona of the satyr to excuse his bitter rebukes, but also draws from the satyr’s demi-god status to indicate his access to a fixed and timeless wisdom, “to make their admonitions and reproofs seem graver and of more efficacy.” The satirist’s function is not to determine what might be right or to explore the implications of an established standard, only to “discover” where such undisputed standards have been transgressed. Expanding the medieval notion of semantic clarity to evoke a fixed moral certainty, these early modern theorists saw the satirist as a kind of accessory to an unchanging and unquestioned standard from which he derived both his purpose and authority.

For sixteenth-century English writers, such bitter rebukes were modelled and authorized by the second-century Roman poet Juvenal, whose “furious rhetoric” was seen as a natural extension of the railing satyr figure of classical drama. It was this shocking and polarizing Juvenalian strain that informed the Martin Marprelate controversy of
1588-89 and the sudden but short-lived vogue of the English satyr in the 1590s, and which was doubtless at least partly responsible for the Bishops’ Ban mentioned above. Even in the wake of the seminal 1605 text *De Satyrlica Graecorum Poesi et Romanorum Satira*, in which Isaac Casaubon carefully extricates Roman satire from the Greek satyr plays, the dominant conception of the satirist as an uncouth and railing figure who unequivocally patrolled well-defined moral boundaries persisted well into the seventeenth century.\(^4\) There was, however, a secondary strain of satire of which sixteenth-century theorists were aware. The witty and urbane Horace provided a counter to the rough denunciations of Juvenal. Horace’s influence is plain in the comparatively mild ribbing and irony of *Utopia* and *In Praise of Folly*, and it is the Horatian model that Sir Philip Sidney intends when he writes that the satirist “sportingly neuer leaueth vntil hee make a man laugh at folly, and, at length ashamed, to laugh at himselfe.”\(^5\) But, generally speaking, Elizabethan theorists veered away from the urbane Horace when describing satire, preferring the putative ferocity of Juvenal, which better fit what Dustin Griffin has termed their “markedly deficient”\(^6\) theory. Most often, sixteenth-century theory struggled to reconcile Horace’s open-ended polyvocality with what was largely seen as a Juvenalian, i.e. harsh and inflexible, literary form.\(^7\) From the time of its first English translation by Thomas Drant in 1566, Horace’s work posed problems for a literary community still bound to a dogmatic conception of satire. Colin Burrow notes the “weird accuracy” of Drant’s preface to his translation of the *Sermones*, the translator’s unease with poems he reads as “deliberately fashioned to resist the extraction of dogma.”\(^8\) Likewise, Neel Mukherjee points to “Drant’s inability to understand the term ‘sermones,’ ‘conversations.’ He misses the chatty, multivocal, gossipy, occasionally
bitchy tone of the *Sermones* and tries to substitute it with a rigidly moral discourse.”

So entrenched was the medieval model of the castigating satyr figure that early modern theorists opted “to construct [Horace] as a sage passing acid judgment on human follies” rather than expand their theory to accommodate his “laughing, teasing voice.”

Twentieth-century critical approaches to genre, of course, changed according to the evolution of literary criticism itself. Critics were no longer so sure about satire’s contours. Alastair Fowler admits that satire is "the most problematic mode to the taxonomist, since it appears never to have corresponded to any one kind," and George Test compares “attempting to define satire [to] trying to put a shadow in a sack.”

Still, many mid-century writers continued to see the genre as a closed form, largely conservative in its world view, aimed at a homogeneous readership whose social values undergirded and were reinforced by the satirist’s stance. The deep-rooted idea of satire as dogmatic and unambiguous is typified in the work of Alvin Kernan, who writes that “the basic components of satire, scene, satirist, and plot remain fairly constant in all ages because they are always the expression of an unchanging sense of life.”

Detailing the convergence of the “simple piety, humility, and honest poverty” of the English Plowman’s Tradition and classical Juvenalian elements to produce the bitterness and “soaring rhetoric” of Nashe’s Pierce Penilesse and the “sadistic…rough work” of John Marston’s Kinsayer, he holds to the enduring opinion that the satire is, almost by definition, typified “by a firm and definite understanding of the moral issues involved.”

Similarly, despite providing a nuanced discussion of the relationship between satire and irony, Jean Weisgerber shares the tendency to limit satire to clear-cut means and motives. Weisgerber argues that, while irony and satire share a theatrical component and indirect
mode of attack, they are differentiated by their respective goals: Whereas satire seeks to "convey a norm," the purpose of irony is to "urge a search after unknown truth."\(^{37}\)

Not until recently have scholars begun to consider how satire engages with contemporary issues in ways other than attack, be it straightforward or oblique. Dustin Griffin writes that much satire uses such moral certainties as a point of departure, rather than the destination. The satirists begin by using ridicule, irony, parody, etc. to expose how people fall short of moral imperatives. But they move on to do something more, often questioning those very imperatives. There is little compelling about simple insistence on agreed-upon moral codes, beyond the readers’ self-satisfaction of knowing that they are on the right side of the moral boundary. As Griffin points out, the “best” satires, those of compelling complexity and subtlety, those to which we continually return, move beyond simply patrolling moral boundaries and instead explore the contours of those boundaries, detailing not only where actors fall short but where the guiding assumptions themselves are suggested to be untenable, inconsistent, or at risk of becoming irrelevant. Satire’s topical/contemporary nature means that the mode is invariably linked to newly arisen and not yet settled questions of value and policy, and Tudor satirists were using the mode to confront sweeping economic and political changes during the sixteenth century.

Contrary to the theories of many of their predecessors, their contemporaries, and their successors, the satirists I consider write satire that defies simple narrative closure. In different ways and to varying degrees, they all incorporate satire’s spirit of open-ended inquiry. At the same time, they demonstrate a specificity akin to the reformist writers of their own day. Instead of basing their political and economic critiques solely on general
and established moral norms, they exploit satire’s capacity to complicate and
problematic certainties—a capacity at odds with the bulk of both pre-modern and
modern theory—and then suggest revisions that are themselves left open-ended and
subject to revision.

I begin with Thomas Wyatt, who opens “Mine Own John Poins” with a traditional
detailing of straightforward criticisms of the court, but then moves on to suggesting that
these moral failings, themselves little more than a reiteration of agreed upon standards,
are related to institutional changes of the 1530-40s. Largely conventional in his humanist
anxiety regarding the misuse of language among courtiers, he notably diverges from the
Mirror for Magistrates tradition by suggesting that duplicity may stem from the King’s
own authoritarian consolidation of power. More innovatively, he concludes his satire
with an open-ended invitation to his addressee, a marked departure from Alamanni’s
original poem and a move that resists simple closure. Theorists have often noted satire’s
failure to provide resolution, seeing it as problematic and, perhaps, indicative of its
ineffectiveness. Kernan, for example, sees satire as most often ending with a “mere
intensification of the unpleasant situation with which satire opens.”38 Indeed, this would
seem to be the case in Wyatt’s source material. However, by replacing Alamanni’s
concluding attack on the rustic locals with an invitation to Poins to join him in Kent,
Wyatt reveals a Horatian open-endedness and an implied dialogism. Wyatt’s debt to
Horace has been amply treated by scholars.39 What I contribute to this conversation is a
close reading of just how “Mine Own John Poins” counters the immediate institutional
reforms of the 1530s. By capitalizing on satire’s capacity for open-endedness, Wyatt
makes the poem itself into a gestural counterbalance to the monologism of the Henrician court.

Of the four satirists I discuss, George Gascoigne provides the starkest example of ambiguity in his adaptation of the Ovidian myth of Philomela. Long read as a fable of how art might extract beauty from tragedy, the story of Philomela’s rape, retaliatory infanticide, and final metamorphosis is in *The Steel Glas* transferred from the aesthetic into the moral sphere. Used by Gascoigne as a symbol of both himself and satire, Philomela becomes a multivalent vehicle for excusing Gascoigne’s personal failures, justifying the satirist’s voice, and modelling a process of rejuvenation for the commonwealth at large. In *The Steele Glas*, the figure of Philomela allows Gascoigne to present himself as both victimized and delinquent, thereby complicating the idea of satirist as moral arbiter and avoiding “righteous isolation.” He thus presents himself as a microcosm of the commonwealth. He encounters himself in the unburnished mirror of his own satire, describing the pain and how to meet it, and thereby models for each reader how satire might be used. Gascoigne’s adaptation of Ovid serves as prologue to what is otherwise a traditional estates satire, grounded on rigid and schematic form and an unchanging hierarchical social model. However, this idiosyncratic interpretation of classical material infuses his subsequent social critique with a dynamism not found in earlier examples of the genre.

Of the four writers discussed here, Thomas Deloney was the only one derived from the artisan class, and this informed his later career as a professional writer. Trained as a silk weaver, Deloney turned to writing as a profession in the 1580s, repeatedly falling afoul of the authorities for publishing complaints against foreign weavers and
grain shortages. For that reason, we might understand the satiric episode of the ants and the grasshopper in chapter three of *Jack of Newbury* in light of a specific economic issue of the 1590s. The monopolies granted by the Crown to its favorites had long been a subject of contention and would continue to be until the 1624 Statute of Monopolies put the matter to rest. In the episode Deloney uses parody to both ridicule and appropriate the King’s voice. Parody allows Jack to show the porosity of the division between king and commoner, a porosity that he exploits in order to both honor his monarch and criticize his failure to protect the economic interests of his subjects.

Finally, I turn to Thomas Nashe’s *The Unfortunate Traveller*, which incorporates nearly all the elements of contending satire theory I have mentioned. Nashe’s work exemplifies both etymologies of *satire*: Jack Wilton is an indisputable satyr figure whose straightforward raillery spares no one, and *The Unfortunate Traveller* itself is a copious mélange of literary, moral, political, and economic criticism. The most Juvenalian of my four satirists, Nashe (somewhat paradoxically) also embodies the kind of open-ended constructive ambiguity too often unnoticed in Tudor satire. Although the figure of Jack Wilton evinces a staunch conservatism at times, he is also a rogue who consistently undercuts all moral norms in the pursuit of a decidedly unenlightened self-interest. The episodic text resists narrative closure, but I hold that Nashe’s use of irony and parody in the paratext works to construct an economic market as an alternative to the inadequate patronage economy. In a very real sense, Nashe’s indiscriminate satire clears the ground of literary, economic, and moral preconceptions, making a space into which he can insert his own narrative as both a literary and economic product that will be evaluated according to its own merits and use-value. Nashe thus epitomizes a constructive
ambiguity, an overabundance of meaning that accommodates apparently irresolvable contradictions, and yet still advances an alternative to the economic woes of the professional English writer of the 1590s.

Thomas Wyatt, George Gascoigne, Thomas Deloney, and Thomas Nashe are too few and too different in their beliefs to constitute a political program or scheme of early modern English satire. But read together they evince a more inductive method of satiric exploration than has been fully appreciated. They are affiliated, albeit perhaps loosely, by a shared concern for the shifting political and economic landscape of sixteenth-century England. While their general moral underpinnings are largely traditional, their approach to government institutions, social analysis, and economic policies suggest an innovation that moves them beyond established models. Like the sailors on Neurath’s boat, they must stand on one plank while replacing another, and gradually reconstruct their vessel.

In order to understand this constructive nature of early modern satire, I will now look at how these satires were broad and flexible enough to accommodate both established and novel ideas of the English commonwealth.
Chapter One
“In Kent and Christendom”: The Construction of Alternative Political Space in Thomas Wyatt’s Adaptation of Alamanni’s Tenth Satire

Thomas Wyatt’s “Mine Own John Poins,” likely written around 1536, is often read as a rejection of the “advertised but blatantly corrupt humanism of the treacherous Henrician court.”\(^1\) Indeed, the poem does participate in the anti-court tradition of its source, Luigi Alamanni’s 10\(^{th}\) Satire. Both Alamanni’s Italian original and Wyatt’s close English translation catalogue the flattery, deceit, and untrammeled self-interest that typify court culture; and both the original and the adaptation appear to conclude that a life of rural retirement is superior to the struggle for preferment and patronage that is the courtier’s lot. However, as Donald L. Guss points out, Wyatt’s persona focuses more on what drove him from court rather than what attracts him to the country life. Whereas Alamanni’s persona has chosen to escape the corrupt atmosphere of court, Wyatt’s persona has been compelled by his own honest nature to accept rustication far from the center of power. Thus, the subtle changes Wyatt makes to his model convert “a praise of Horatian ease to a declaration of Stoic virtue.”\(^2\) Beginning with the important distinction that Guss draws, I want to advance the idea that Wyatt departs even further from the Horatian ideal of otium extolled in Alamanni’s original. Beyond simply decrying the corruption of humanist values at court or accepting his own displacement from public office, Wyatt is using the satiric mode to analyze closely the political situation in England during the 1530s and to explore tentatively an alternative to the oppressive centralization of power at the Henrician court. Rather than focusing on the resigned withdrawal that is often the interpretive focus of critical responses to the verse epistle, I want to consider how Wyatt’s persona is assuming a stance more politically active than previously
recognized. While Wyatt draws from the classical republicanism and Italian civic humanism informing Alamanni’s original, he is satisfied neither with the profound symbolism of Cato’s suicide nor with Alamanni’s bitter marginalization. Instead, he exploits satire’s capacity for dialogism to gesture toward a jurisdiction outside of the Court as a countermeasure to the tyranny of Henry VIII. By concluding with an invitation to his adversarius, Wyatt inserts the possibility of continued political conversation outside of the Henrician Court and, indeed, beyond the confines of the poem itself. Wyatt’s open-ended adaptation acts centrifugally, suggesting a political identity as analyst and collaborator beyond the traditional role of counsel to a king.

Before we turn to Wyatt’s poem, we should establish the political context that shaped it. Upon his ascension to the English throne in 1509, Henry VIII was hailed by poets and humanist scholars as the perfect corrective to the authoritarianism of his father, Henry VII. Of course, as Greg Walker points out, “optimism is virtually compulsory when it comes to coronations,” a truism aptly borne out by Polydore Vergil’s praise of the as yet untested King’s “humanity, benevolence, and self-control.” Still, early in his reign, Henry VIII’s actions seem to have justified that optimism and met expectations of liberality. Edward Hall records that in the first year of his rule Henry VIII pardoned the Duke of Buckingham “of treason laied vnto hym, but not proued”; dispatched aid in the form of 300 men to Calais, at that time beset by the plague; and called Parliament for the first time in six years, at which time William Empson and Edmund Dudley, financial ministers to the previous King, were imprisoned on charges of constructive treason. Henry VII had relied largely on bonds, recognizances, and bills of attainders to keep the nobility in check and safeguard his power base, and Dudley and Empson were widely
believed to be responsible for these unpopular policies. In an apparent attempt to distance himself from his father’s unpopular policies, Henry VIII imprisoned and ultimately ordered the execution of Dudley, who was perceived as having been the architect of the harsh oppressive economic program. Hall’s enthusiastic account of the “lustye, young, and coragious” King’s liberality indicates the “London gossip of the time, the public perception of the young, exuberant, confident” Henry VIII.

But this sense of liberality changed over the course of time and came to a head with the advent of the King’s “Great Matter”: Henry’s protracted struggle to secure a divorce from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, who had been unable to provide Henry with a male heir. Unable to obtain a divorce from Pope Clement VII, who balked at wronging the daughter of Spanish monarch and the aunt of the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry embarked on a series of actions that would result ultimately in England’s break with Rome. These actions fundamentally changed the institutional framework of government in England. The rupture between the English crown and the Catholic Church in Rome not only contributed to the secularization that typified the early modern period in England, it also furthered the centralization of political and legal authority that had begun in England with Henry VII. Despite the liberality that typified the opening years of Henry VIII’s reign, the break with Rome in the 1530s would be accompanied by Crown policies that some felt encroached upon the personal liberties traditionally afforded English subjects. Denying Papal authority in England would create a power vacuum, and Henry’s assumption of the legal powers historically held by the Catholic Church endowed the Crown with an unprecedented absolutist character.
Henry’s break with Rome was welcomed by certain quarters in England, largely because of what was viewed as the Church’s unwarranted incursion into spheres of economic activity. As early as 1510, Edmund Dudley had warned in *The Tree of Commonwealth* that the King needed to be on guard against the temporal ambitions of the clergy. Quentin Skinner writes that, “far from being conservative, Dudley’s doctrine is virtually Marsiglian in character,” a reference to Marsilius of Padua, whose *Defensor pacis* of 1324 denied all papal authority and advocated a supreme monarch at the head of both church and state. (Henry’s chancellor, Thomas Cromwell, had the tract translated into English in 1535.) Similarly, the *Supplication for the Beggars*, printed anonymously in 1529, argued that the clergy possessed “half of the hole substaunce of the realme” and goaded Henry VIII with the claim that bishops were “stronger in your owne parliament house then your silfe.” Hall’s *Chronicle* records how, in 1530, the House of Commons complained “of the griefs wherewith the spirituality had before time grievously oppressed them, both contrary to the law of the realm, and contrary to all right.” The “six great causes” that moved the Commons to censure so vehemently members of the Church were largely economic: “excess fines…great polling,” the occupation of lands by priests, engaging in buying and selling of wool, “having their living of their flock, while lying in the court in lord’s houses,” and unlettered priests holding multiple benefices and ministering adequately to none. Regardless of whether Henry’s motives for breaking with Rome were personal or political, religious or economic, his actions were initially perceived by many of his subjects as duly restraining a spiritual power that had become all too worldly in its goals and holdings.
But the optimism attendant on Henry’s theological renovations soured with time. Ethan Shagan notes that the correlation between “godly Reformation and economic renewal” was used by the circle of humanist writers gathered by Thomas Cromwell in the 1530s to support Royal Supremacy, but goes on to note that this was a “hopeful naïveté typical of the first generation Protestants not yet jaded by harsh political realities.”11 As the decade drew on, and Henry’s rule became more autocratic, the role of the humanist counsellor at the English court became uncertain and, at times, mortally dangerous. In July 1533, Pope Clement VII formally ruled in favor of Catherine of Aragon and denied Henry the divorce he had been pursuing since 1527. What followed was a series of acts that effectively transferred all political, legal, and economic claims of the Roman Catholic Church in England to Henry, thereby enabling the English king to bypass Rome in his quest to dissolve his marriage. First, the Ecclesiastical Appeals Act of 1532, penned by Cromwell at the behest of Henry, argued that England was an empire and, as such, lay outside the jurisdiction of Rome. This arrogation of ecclesiastic authority made the King the final legal voice in England. Cromwell carefully guided the Act through Parliament to create the impression that the legal maneuver was a popular rather than royal initiative, and the Act was subsequently used by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer to warrant the annulment of the King’s marriage to Catherine. (Both Cranmer and Henry were consequently excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church.) Second, whether spurred by the King’s defiance toward Rome, persuaded by his “coercive and even terrorist tactics,”12 or eager to clear the way for a royal marriage that might produce a male heir, Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy in 1534, making the King supreme head of the Church in England. Benefit of clergy and sanctuary for those accused of high
treason were abolished as legal loopholes. Apart from the religious/theological repercussions, this further enhanced the legal authority of the crown. Third, Parliament passed the Treasons Act of 1534, making any disavowal of the Royal Supremacy punishable by death. The Treasons Act meant that “words alone would now constitute treason in King Henry’s commonwealth.”

Rather than an authority limited by his role as King-in-Parliament, Henry was enabled by these acts to exercise a prerogative that was “essentially personal.” Perhaps most notable is the fact that in the same year, the King declared it treason for anyone to refer to him as a tyrant.

These strictures on speech complicated the issue of good counsel, which throughout the sixteenth century was viewed by humanists as the “touchstone of government.” Advice tendered to the sovereign served a political and moral purpose: informing the sovereign and offsetting tyrannical tendencies. English humanists during the 1530s were influenced by Italian civic humanism and its classical antecedents: among them Aristotle’s *Politics* and Cicero’s *De Officiis*. The challenge for English humanists lay in adapting the Continental model, native to the republican city-states of the Italian peninsula, to the “*cursus honorum* prevailing at the royal court” of Tudor England. A series of English pamphlets emerged in the early 1530s exploring the question of how and when the prudent counsellor should offer his advice to the monarch, how to safeguard against flatterers, and how to best guide the monarch along the path of a just and moral rule. However, by 1536 the King’s council had undergone a series of changes that effectively limited its membership to a select few of the King’s favorites, an institutional change “seen by those who were excluded to have narrowed in favor of a
courtly and bureaucratic elite.”\textsuperscript{18} Thus, the humanist ideal of counsel was thwarted in terms of what could be said and also in terms of who could say it.

Alamanni’s original poem and Wyatt’s adaptation each address the problem of exclusion, what Arthur Ferguson terms “the dilemma of the ‘unattached intellectual.’”\textsuperscript{19} Both poets were courtiers/diplomats/ambassadors—Alamanni in Florence and Wyatt in England—and both encountered displacement as a result of political circumstances. Following an abortive plot against Giulio de’ Medici in 1522, Alamanni spent much of his adult life in France rather than live under thrall of the Medici in his native Florence.\textsuperscript{20} Wyatt was twice imprisoned and subsequently rusticated, once in 1536 and again in 1541. However, the poets come to very different conclusions regarding what each believes to be a debased court culture. Alamanni withdraws to lick his wounds. His satire does not look beyond the immediate political crisis. Perhaps because he comes from a tradition of republicanism, he is incapable or unwilling to accept any part of what he views as the tyranny of the Medici in Florence. He therefore withdraws altogether and extols the life of rural retirement. Wyatt, however, coming from a tradition of monarchy, and aware of the lessons the previous century had taught England about the dangers of weak and shifting kingship, is more compelled to address the problem constructively, applying the humanist idea of counsel to forge a political bond outside of the court. While Wyatt’s letter to Poins opens with a conventional attack on deceit, the satire is more analytical and constructive than hereto acknowledged, tracing the source of moral failings to the political environment of the 1530s and intimating that political relationships outside the Court may be a useful corrective to the problems of centralization.
Wyatt’s satire begins by cataloguing the lies and flattery that characterize the Henrician court. This absence of honest speech at court is more than a moral problem: It has significant political implications. Like many of his contemporaries, Wyatt understands the humanist principle of counsel and its necessity in a healthy commonwealth. From a strictly practical point of view, the language of counsel is needed for effective administration of the realm. Thomas Elyot exemplifies this belief in *The Book Named the Governor*, written in 1531, less than a decade before Wyatt’s satire. Elyot explains that

one mortal man cannot have knowledge of all things done in a realm or large dominion, and at one time discuss all controversies, reform all transgressions, and exploit all consultations … it is expedient and also needful that under the capital governor be sundry mean authorities, as it were aiding him in the distribution of justice in sundry parts of a huge multitude.21

The exigencies of effecting a just rule over a large expanse require that magistrates, courtiers, and other “mean authorities” supply information to the monarch. Even though the king is the supreme authority, reason dictates that a just and effective rule requires that he avail himself of these reports. In practice, however,

it must be noted that officials were expected to wait for their monarchs to seek their advice before they offered it. According to authors of contemporary treatises, rather than impress upon a ruler some new unsought-after policy, courtiers were more likely to flatter royal opinions
in the hope of winning greater rewards for their clients and of extending their patronage networks.22

But in order for such counsel to be truly expedient to the commonwealth, it must be candid, and this is not the kind of counsel that is being offered at Henry’s court. Instead of honest counsellors, Wyatt’s persona sees at court sycophants who

Grin when he laugheth that beareth all the sway,

Frown when he frowneth and groan when is pale;

On others' lust to hang both night and day [.] (53-55)

Rather than existing as an integrative exchange between ruler and his counsellors, the court operates according to the “lust” and whim of the monarch. Wyatt’s speaker continually reminds his reader that the flattery is a verbal phenomenon. Hence, he cannot “say that favel hath a goodly grace/ In eloquence” (67-68) as, we assume, other courtiers do. That is, he cannot conflate dissimulation with good speech. This gives a distinctively moral cast to true eloquence as the speaker understands it.

What follows is a congeries that catalogues the misuse of language at court, and although the speaker insists that he cannot participate in them (this is, ostensibly, the motive for his departure) he can nevertheless describe them in vivid detail. He says that

I am not he such eloquence to boast
To make the crow singing as the swan;
Nor call the liond of cowardes beasts the most
That cannot take a mouse as the cat can;
And he that dieth for hunger of the gold
Call him Alexander; and say that Pan
Passeth Apollo in music many fold;

Praise Sir Thopias for a noble tale,

And scorn the story that the Knight told [.](43-51)

His inability to “turn the word that from my mouth is gone” (30) suggests that, once spoken, a word takes on a life of its own, at least it should. Wyatt (as the translator of Plutarch) surely would have known that the Greek word for “turn,” *tropos*, was the root of the English word “trope,” those figures of speech used by both orators and sophists alike to reach such dissimilar ends. A spoken word *should* remain immutable, not be manipulated for personal advantage, and yet it is possible to do so. This was the conundrum with which the advocates of humanist counsel were to struggle. Rhetorical skill was to be cultivated for its use in the administration of the commonwealth. But that same linguistic proficiency could be put to venal designs completely at odds with the interest of the commonwealth. For critics of the humanist agenda, “The courtier as dissembler separate[d] *res* and *verba.*” Such men assumed inscrutable rhetorical roles, the identity and intentions of which were in a “process of permanent change.”  

However, this idealism faded with the advent of what Richard Tuck has termed the “new humanism” in the mid-sixteenth century. Prior to this time, English humanists had subscribed to a Ciceronian belief in the efficacy of language in the pursuit of classical political virtues, and it is this Ciceronian humanism that Wyatt’s speaker is seeing undermined at court. According to Tuck, this optimistic political model was
displaced by one informed by the skepticism of Tacitus and the writings of Guicciardini and Machiavelli, who took a more pragmatic view of the relationship between politics, ethics, and self-interest. A similar skepticism pervades the lines of Wyatt’s speaker, who criticizes not only those who “Use willes for wit,” but those who “call craft counsel, for profit still to paint” (32-33). The reasons for the speaker’s withdrawal from court is not simply the cunning and insincerity that he finds there, but rather the antagonism between self-interest and the benefit of the polity that is the underlying cause of the deceit.

Having focused his criticism on members of the King’s retinue, the speaker concentrates his attention on the very center of the court: the King himself. His catalogue of court vices reaches its culmination when he denies that he can call “The lecher a lover; and tyranny/ To be the right of a prince's reign” (74-75). As in much of Wyatt’s lyric poetry, drawing as it does from the discourse of courtly love, the erotic and the political converge in the satire. A Petrarchan contrariety of fidelity and frustration leads to the emotional and thematic climax of the poem: “I cannot, I; no, no, it will not be!” Until this point, the speaker has phrased his dilemma using the anaphora “I cannot” (lines 19, 22, 25, 28, 31, 34, 57, 76). Now, the tension of his situation, expressed in his stuttering iterations—“I…I; no, no”—forces him to admit that it will not be. Read aloud (aye…aye; no, no) the line encapsulates the insufferable conflict between the speaker’s sense of duty to the monarch and his denunciation of the stark realities of court life. The grammatical change indicates a shift in the speaker’s focus from a personal inability to an external state of affairs. The speaker has come to an impasse, forcing him to admit that the problem lies not simply with individual courtiers, but with the nature of the court culture itself. The very next line—“This is the cause that I could never yet/ Hang on their
sleeves” (77-78)—reminds the reader that this entire poem has been an analysis of sorts, an examination of relationships with a view to assigning causality. Beyond merely inventorying moral failings at court, the poem suggests that tyranny itself is implicated in the endemic corruption that has driven the speaker into solitude.

Early sixteenth-century humanists such as Alamanni and Wyatt readily drew from classical sources when defining tyranny and considering its effects. Book Five of Aristotle’s Politics defines tyranny as the “arbitrary power of an individual…responsible to no one, [that governs]…with a view to its own advantage, not to that of its subjects.” It was an axiom of classical writers that despotism created a corrupt environment of flattery and deceit. Aristotle goes on to say that, under the rule of a tyrant, the flatterer holds “great power.” Similarly, Cicero begins Book Two of De Officiis by explaining why he turned from oratory to writing when “everything passed under the absolute control of a despot and there was no longer any room for statesmanship or authority of mine… [W]hen the republic, to which all my care and thought and effort used to be devoted, was no more, then, of course, my voice was silenced in the forum and in the senate.” England, unlike Cicero’s Rome and Alamanni’s Florence, had never been a republic. But the Henrician reforms of the 1530s—Henry’s Acts of Appeals and Acts of Supremacy, the consolidation of the Privy Council into an institution with fewer numbers and more authority—resulted in an unprecedented centralization of authority, concentrating power in the hands of the few and threatening both the liberty and the prosperity of the commonwealth at large. Wyatt’s adaptation of Alamanni’s poem suggests that his speaker is not merely disdaining the moral faults of others but is chafing under the yoke of an authority that precludes his living an effective political life.
Alamanni’s speaker refuses to “seguir Signiori & Regi” (5), to “follow gentlemen and Kings,” any longer. Wyatt’s adaptation is far more caustic than Alamanni’s poem is in its indictment of those in power: he will not “live thrall under the awe/ Of lordly looks” (4-5). The change from following to living under thrall indicates that a far broader power is under consideration. Harold Andrew Mason rightly comments that “the bitterness [of the line]…is all Wyatt’s.”30 Indeed, whereas Alamanni’s line implies service to an authority that is at worst supercilious, Wyatt’s diction indicates servitude to a power that encroaches on all aspects of life. This disparity might be attributed to the difference in circumstances between the two writers. Alamanni is addressing the return of the Medici to Florence, an unwelcome but not unprecedented shift in the power structure of the city. By contrast, Wyatt is reacting to the fundamental transformation of Crown power during the late Henrician regime in England. Bearing this in mind, Wyatt’s speaker’s claim that he “cannot crouch nor kneel to do so great a wrong,/ To worship them, like God on earth alone” (25-26), while a close translation of Alamanni’s “Non saprei piu ch’a gli immortali Dei,/ Rendere honor con le ginocchia inchine” (25-26), intimates dissatisfaction with Henry’s incorporation of church powers into the Crown’s jurisdiction during the 1530s.

In further considering Wyatt’s analysis of the problem as more politically pointed than Alamanni’s, I want to return to the opening lines, which open the poem with a traditional device of direct satire: the speaker’s response to an adversarius, a character who functions to elicit the satirist’s comments. In this case, it is John Poins, a friend of Wyatt’s about whom we know little other than that he was a courtier and MP, who has apparently asked Wyatt why he has absented himself from court. We do not actually hear
Poins’s voice, as the poem is written in the form of an epistolary satire. That is, it is a letter in the tradition of Horace’s *Epistles*. The purpose of the letter is to explain

The cause why that homeward I me draw,
And flee the press of courts, whereso they go,
Rather than to live thrall under the awe
Of lordly looks, wrapped within my cloak,
To will and lust learning to set a law. (2-6)

These opening lines reveal that the speaker’s retirement is not one of inactivity: he is engaged in some sort of intellectual or moral work—or both. The legal idiom of the lines—*courts, thrall, set a law*—suggest that his time is spent in some sort of regulatory activity. The speaker “cannot wrest the law to fill the coffer/ With innocent blood to feed myself fat” (34-35), but beyond merely avoiding the exploitative “press of courts” and the imperiousness of “lordly looks,” he has withdrawn to study the problem of place-seeking and tyranny. The idiom “set a law” suggests a change in policy, an attempt to assay a problem and administer a corrective. There is a patent difference here between Alamanni and Wyatt. Alamanni’s speaker makes no reference to law. He has retreated to rural Provence in order to “temprando ‘l mio infinito duolo” (6), to “temper my extreme sadness.” He is simply avoiding the corruption of the court and the personal displeasure it causes him. Wyatt’s speaker, by contrast, employs a legal idiom that connotes he is actively engaging in an analysis of the political situation: the nature and distribution of authority and power.

In his verse letters, Horace often reflects upon the advantages of rural living as opposed to the temptations and corruption of court life, and some critics have argued that
this is the gist of Wyatt’s satire, as well. Mervyn James, for instance, sees in Wyatt’s poetry a retreat to “the quietist joys of the countryside and the simple life.”32 However a closer inspection of Wyatt’s language reveals that there is more occurring here than idle reclusion. Wyatt’s explanation that “homeward I me draw/...To will and lust learning to set a law,” while seemingly innocuous at first, will become problematic as the poem unfolds. There is critical speculation that the poem may have been written during a period of forced retirement to his father’s estates in Kent.33 If so, the poet may indeed be spending his time curbing his own “will and lust.” But given that the next 70 lines catalogue the greed and dishonesty of the court, vices which he declares are beyond his ability to tolerate, much less take part in, a reader must question exactly upon whose “will and lust” he is attempting to “set a law.” The implication seems to be that, at home in Kent, removed from the court, the speaker is better able to establish a code of conduct based on learning and rationality rather than willfulness and appetite. Beyond his own appetites, the speaker is exploring the ethics of counsel at Henry’s court. His tactical retreat may be an opportunity for personal self-reflection (whether voluntary or enforced), but it is even more likely that it is a period of analysis of the court, the fruit of which is the satire itself.

As I discuss below, the constructive elements of Wyatt’s satire become more apparent as his adaptation deviates from Alamanni’s original in the final third of the poem. For now, it is important that Wyatt’s speaker immediately establishes a certain decorum: a consistency between tone and purpose. One aiming to set a law to the willfulness and appetite of courtiers who “[set] their part/With Venus and Bacchus all their life long” (23) should, accordingly, abjure the style of courtiers who “asken help of
colours of device/ To join the mean with each extremity” (59-60). Wyatt’s speaker therefore establishes his equanimity early in the poem by ensuring Poins that he has not withdrawn merely to

…scorn or mock

The power of them to whom Fortune hath lent

Charge over us, of right to strike the stroke. (7-9)

Nor, as he reminds Poins later in the poem, is he able to call the courtier “true and plain/ That raileth reckless to every man's shame” (71-72). Rather than Juvenalian invective, Wyatt promises that his letter to Poins will be Horatian in tone and purpose. A simple diatribe against the court will not address the root of the problem. His very mode of speech models the type of discourse needed to preserve the integrity—again, both moral and political/social—of the commonwealth. Absenting himself from court protects him from contamination by the unchecked appetites of others and lets him fortify the rational capacity central to his Stoic program. Avoiding spleen further distinguishes him not only from the immorality but, more specifically, the unenlightened self-interest that pervades the Henrician court. Patricia Thomson notes that Wyatt’s separating himself from his target is typical of nearly all satirists, but that the “fastidious, intellectual, and self-conscious impulse to define the nature of [his] seclusion” is classical in origin and new to the English satiric persona. In contrast to the “outsider Langland…the irresponsible Skelton…[and] the mudslinger Dunbar,” Wyatt’s persona possesses the moral and social cachet of the classical vir bonus, the good man. Beyond an attack on the Henrician courtiers, the poem is an exploration of the ousted persona’s own identity. Its apophatic structure is an inductive process whereby the persona is defined according to what he is
not. As Thomson argues, Wyatt’s satire separates the speaker from the target by detailing his sequestered experience, but it also strives to redefine the political role of the speaker at a time of significant political upheaval. Beyond simply cherishing this marker of prestige in retirement, Wyatt is in fact invoking its authority not only to criticize but to explore alternatives to the centralization he experiences at court. He is not only the *vir bonus*, the well-born man, the traditional counsellor, who draws his mandate from medieval conception of government. He is a *vir bonus, dicendi peritus*, the good man speaking well, an experienced observer of and—more importantly—a participant in political life of the kingdom.

Wyatt’s declining to “scorn or mock/ The power of them to whom Fortune hath lent/ Charge over us” (7-8) suggests that, while he may accept the authority of those above him, he is nevertheless questioning the nature and source of that authority. Recalling Richard Tuck’s argument that the writings of Machiavelli effected a substantial change in how mid-sixteenth century humanists discussed ethics and politics, the particular diction of *fortune* in regard to authority further signals Wyatt’s speaker’s political engagement. By the 1530s, *fortuna* had taken on a particularly political valence. Florentine contemporaries and near contemporaries of Alamanni developed this notion of a secular fortune at play in the political and social affairs of human beings. In what would become a central tenet of humanism, writers such as Pico della Mirandolla, Leon Battista Alberti, and Niccolo Machiavelli rejected an inexorable Providence as the ultimate architect of human experience. Machiavelli writes in *The Prince* that “it may be that fortune is the arbiter of half our world, but she also leaves half a world to our governance.” Machiavelli was, like Alamanni, a Florentine republican, and extant
correspondence between the two reveals shared political and literary interests. It is therefore unsurprising to find the politically charged *fortune* in Alamanni’s original satire. Patricia Thomson notes that both Alamanni’s and Wyatt’s personae evince a kind of nobility novel to humanism, “an aristocracy of the mind” according to which “the good man is impervious to [fortune’s] diverse chances and changes.” She credits Wyatt with importing this philosophy into the English satirical persona. However, her comment that “‘Fortune’ is but casually referred to” in the poem belies the significance of Wyatt’s innovation. Quentin Skinner notes Machiavelli’s notion of *fortune* was accompanied by a novel concept of *virtu*, one based not on morality but on efficacy. According to this paradigm, the virtuous man became a “creative social force, able to shape his own destiny and remake his social world to fit his own desires.” Far from being “impervious” to the vicissitudes of fortune, as Thomson argues, Alamanni’s and Wyatt’s speakers are, as evinced by their satires, subject to fortune’s hardships. Chance has conferred on certain persons an inordinate amount of power, and both speakers are displaced as a result. The difference between the two is found in their responses to these changes. Despite his complaint, Alamanni’s speaker does not embody the empowerment, however limited, that Machiavellian *virtu* proffers. By contrast, Wyatt’s alterations and unique historical situation invite us to read his adaptation as a challenge to the political situation he is describing. Properly historicized, Wyatt’s importation of the term *fortune* signals a pragmatic analysis of the English commonwealth at a time when the concept of “the right to strike the stroke” was undergoing changes both in terms of interpretation and implementation.
As we have seen, a paradigmatic example of Fortune’s inscrutable process against which Wyatt’s satire struggles is the broadening of English royal authority throughout the 1530s. Given the legal idiom employed by Wyatt, the Crown’s relationship to the legal apparatus of the state throughout the 1530s, which culminated with the 1539 Act of Proclamations, is an apt context for reading Wyatt’s satire. A 1535 letter from Thomas Cromwell to the Duke of Norfolk records how the Lord Chancellor and the Lord Chief Justice determined that

in case there were no law nor statute made already for any such purpose…. the proclamations and policies devised by the King and his Council…should be of as good effect as any law made by Parliament or otherwise.\(^4^0\)

This opinion was codified by the 1539 Act of Proclamations, which established that the King

may set forth at all times by authority of this act his proclamations…And that those same shall be obeyed, observed and kept as though they were made by an act of Parliament for the time in them limited, unless the King’s Highness dispense with them or any of them under his great seal.\(^4^1\)

According to Stephen Gardiner, the Crown felt the bill was necessary because, prior to the Act itself, “many proclamations were devised…[but] at such thime as the transgressors should be ponished, the judges would answere, it might not be by the lawes.”\(^4^2\) In other words, the legality of royal proclamations was being questioned by judges when it came to time to enforce them. The preamble of the bill itself attests to this, complaining that royal proclamations in times of crisis have been disputed by some
subjects who questioned “what a king by his royal powers may do.” The issue of both the Crown and its opponents becomes the relation of royal prerogative to statute law. Specifically, to what degree did Henry possess the right to enforce his royal decrees? It would seem that, following the passing of the 1539 Act of Proclamations, Henry could enforce his personal will by issuing a royal proclamation, effectively circumventing parliamentary procedure in the establishment of laws.

With the benefit of historical hindsight, Conrad Russell has written that “whether [the Act was] a serious attempt to give the King a legislative power without Parliament, we cannot say…. [I]ts effects are obscure.” Similarly, H.L Bush, concludes that “the authority of the Crown was legitimately extended in relation to common and statutory law, yet in a manner which proved to be of very limited value.” In spite of these later interpretations asserting that the Act’s encroachment on Parliament’s legislative authority was negligible, the fact remains that it was at the time seen as an alarming extension of royal prerogative, one ripe with tyrannical potential, and was hotly contested. Robert Zaller has written that the bill met with “sharp resistance” in the House of Lords, and that it met with opposition “equally acute, not to say tumultuous” in the House of Commons. The only surviving eye-witness account of the debates in Parliament and council is that of Bishop Gardiner, who some years later recorded that during “the passing of [the] act many liberal words were spoken” in Parliament, which ultimately required of the Crown a “plain promise that, by authority of the act of proclamations, nothing should be made contrary to an act of parliament or common law.” The situation motivating the bill and Parliamentary responses to it demonstrate that it was perceived as being potentially tyrannical, that is, as an attempt by Henry to supersede the legislative
authority of Parliament and concentrate an inordinate amount of legal power in the
Crown.

Wyatt registers concern over the Crown’s legal maneuvering in his choice of
addressee. John Poins was MP for the borough of Devizes in 1529, and although
incomplete records keep us from knowing whether or not he sat in the Parliaments of
1536 or of 1539, when the Statute of Proclamations was debated, it is not beyond the
realm of possibility. Moreover, his name is included in a list of MPs compiled by Thomas
Cromwell in early 1533 that S.T. Bindoff speculates identifies those MPs who opposed
the Statute in Restraint of Appeals. The appearance of Poins’s name on the list suggests a
legal conservatism that makes him a fitting addressee of Wyatt’s satire. Poins, like Wyatt,
who in addition to his ambassadorial duties was MP for Kent in 1542, would almost
certainly have intimate knowledge of the debate concerning the King’s legal authority in
both 1533 and 1539. If Poins did, as Bindoff suggests, oppose the 1533 Statute in
Restraint of Appeals, it is reasonable to assume that he may have been among those who
argued against the Statute of Proclamations in 1539. That Wyatt should address to him a
poem in which the legal idiom is so prevalent further suggests that Wyatt is adapting
Alamanni’s original to a specific political situation in England and deploying it in a way
much more politically active than Alamanni’s can possibly be read.

Wyatt’s adaptation of Alamanni’s original may thus be read in terms of the
Machiavellian struggle of *virtu* versus *fortuna*, representing one man’s struggle against
those on whom fortune has conferred political power. While Wyatt deliberately retains
and uses Alamanni’s “fortuna” to question the basis of Henrician centralization in
England, he changes the metaphor Alamanni uses to represent power itself, reimagining it
in a way that compels him to mount a more active resistance. Whereas Alamanni writes that those wielding tyrannical power “hold the reins,” in Wyatt’s they “strike the stroke.” The antagonists in Alamanni may curb the liberty of the individual, but the antagonists in Wyatt’s poem are more pointedly described in terms of aggression and violence. Thus, he cannot “cruelty to name/ Zeal of justice” (68-69). Donald Guss interprets this change as meaning that Wyatt’s speaker has been “unjustly injured” and thus “retires with a consciousness of his virtue.” But these changes do more than make a victim of the speaker. They also suggest a situation more urgent than that found in Alamanni. More than a man “whose honest simplicity has occasioned his downfall,” Wyatt’s speaker is placed in a position requiring action. He cannot countenance what he sees at court, cannot excuse “cruelty” as “Zeal of justice” (68-69). He therefore moves beyond simply criticizing from a distance. The editorial decisions Wyatt makes in adapting Alamanni’s original push the revision beyond protesting retirement to a kind of political analysis not found in Alamanni’s original.

Wyatt’s purpose, though, is not simply to attack tyranny, but to avert tyranny in the interest of rehabilitating the monarchy. In this respect, his purpose possesses a nuance not found in Alamanni’s original. This sophistication is revealed in Wyatt’s change from Brutus to Cato the Younger as a symbol of resistance. Alamanni’s speaker says he cannot “honour with bright immortal praise Caesar and Sulla, condemning Brutus to be wronged.” In stark contrast, Wyatt’s speaker cannot

   … allow the state

   Of him Caesar, and damn Cato to die,

   That with his death did scape out of the gate
From Caesar's hands (if Livy do not lie)
And would not live where liberty was lost;
So did his heart the common weal apply. (37-42)

A great deal of information about Cato the Younger circulated during the early modern period, much of which resonates with both satires. Plutarch, for instance, writes that there was “nothing youthful or refined” in Cato’s manner of speaking, that his speech was “straightforward, full of matter, and rough, at the same time…there was a certain grace about his rough statements.”

Cato thus serves as a triumphant embodiment of the plain speaking of the marginalized persona. Similarly, Cato was known throughout his lifetime and posthumously as one who served principle rather than his own appetites. Biographies abound that attest to Cato’s incorruptibility and resistance to bribery and while in office, a revealing difference from Brutus, who as governor of Cyprus lent money at exorbitant rates, prompting historian Peter Green to describe the idealistic Brutus as “a man of high principle, and even higher interest.”

In contrast to the unassailable reputation he affords Cato, Plutarch records how Brutus “tasted of the benefit of Cesar's favor in any thing he requested” to such an extent that he was urged to “beware of Caesar's sweet enticements, and to fly his tyrannical favors: the which they said Caesar gave him, not to honor his virtue, but to weaken his constant mind.”

Given his unadorned manner of speaking and his unassailable public record, it seems Cato is preferable to Brutus when choosing a classical foil for the flattery and greed typifying the Renaissance court.

Moreover, the contrast between the relationships of Brutus and Cato to Caesar reveals a deeper and more insightful reformatory impulse on the part of Wyatt’s speaker. Perez Zagorin argues that the switch was motivated by a sense of self-preservation on the
part of Wyatt, who was understandably loath to sympathize with Brutus, a perceived regicide. Jon Robinson counters that the poem’s being a translation would have been adequate defense and thus does not explain the amendment. Following Elizabeth Heale’s lead, Robinson attributes the change to Plutarch’s rendering of Cato as the “epitome of upright honesty and plain speaking.”53 But beyond this, the resistances mounted by Brutus and Cato against Caesar were fundamentally different. Both men fought against Caesar’s forces at Pharsalus. But following Caesar’s victory, Brutus sued for and was granted forgiveness. Cato, by contrast, retreated to Utica, there to commit suicide rather than surrender. For this sacrifice, Roman historians beginning with Pliny the Elder conferred upon him the cognomen “Uticensis,” an honor normally reserved for military victors. Thus, even in the aftermath of the battle considered to mark the death of the Republic, Cato displays a constancy and commitment to liberty not found in Brutus.

Of equal or greater significance is the source to which Wyatt attributes his information regarding Cato. Wyatt’s qualifier “if Livy do not lie”—an addition without cognate in Alamanni’s original—suggests that his source is the Roman author’s Ab Urbe Condita Libri, a magisterial history of Rome from its mythical founding c. 753 BCE through 9 BCE. However, by the sixteenth century, all but the first 45 books of the original 142 books comprising Livy’s history had been lost to posterity. This means that, for readers and writers during the Renaissance, Livy’s history essentially concluded at the year 167 BCE, long before Cato’s death at Utica in 46 BCE. What may have served as Wyatt’s actual source was the Periochae, an epitome of the last three quarters of Livy’s history that had been compiled in fourth century. The summary of book 107 found in the Periochae briefly notes that Cato opposed a law that would have allowed Caesar to hold
the consulship *in absentia*, and the summary of book 114 relates how, following Caesar’s military victory at Pharsalus and subsequent approach to Utica, “Cato… stabbed himself and although his son intervened and tried to rescue him, he reopened the wound that was being nursed, and died at the age of forty-eight.”

But these excerpts illustrate that the *Periochae* is little more than a table of contents, providing cursory details about Cato’s life without contributing anything in the line of analysis. That is, nothing in the epitomized Livy suggests the “liberty” or “common weal” that Wyatt uses Cato to symbolize. It is therefore curious that Wyatt should allude to Livy instead of historians such as Plutarch and Cassius Dio, both of whom comment on Cato’s moral rectitude and commitment to liberty and would have been available to Wyatt. Perhaps it is not too much to suggest that the allusion to Livy and to liberty in the line immediately succeeding would serve as yet another indicator that Machiavelli’s ideas underpin the political critique of this satire. Machiavelli’s *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio*, written sometime around 1517 and printed in 1531, was an attempt to “resurrect in the spirit of young Italians Roman republican wisdom and virtue.” In it, Wyatt would have found no mention of Cato. He would, however, have been exposed to Machiavelli’s innovative ideas of *fortune, virtu*, and personal liberty as the touchstone of just government.

By alluding to Cato and (indirectly) to Machiavelli, Wyatt’s speaker is claiming an uncompromising devotion to personal liberty. Like Cato, he mounts a resistance even in exile. Of course, while Wyatt’s speaker admires Cato’s uncompromising devotion, his purpose in mentioning it is also to make clear that he cannot allow such things to happen. It is not enough to die for liberty: one must *live* a resistance for the sake of the
commonwealth. For this reason, he cannot “damn Cato to die” (38). The greatest service one can do for the English commonwealth is not to effect a permanent retreat, but to maintain one’s principles even if at some remove from the court. Wyatt’s choice of Cato over Brutus is prudent in a self-preservative sense. But the prudence of the choice of Cato also lies in the nature of Cato’s resistance to tyranny. Unlike Brutus (and Alamanni for that matter), neither Cato nor Wyatt looks to personal violence as a way to safeguard liberty. Brutus is remembered for the plot against Caesar, but Cato resisted Caesar long before the fateful Ides, standing against the “new, self-serving legislation of Caesar’s.”

Both men resisted Caesar in the senate house. But where Brutus did so with a dagger, Cato used the toga. Susan Bridgen writes that “Like others of the classically educated at Henry VIII’s court, Wyatt thought on the nature of monarchy, and of tyranny, and he wrote about it, despite the dangers. But there was always an ambivalence in him.”

Wyatt couldn’t possibly align himself with a regicide, nor could he accept death as the only honorable alternative to servitude. Far from advocating the regicide of Brutus or the withdrawal of Alamanni, Wyatt seeks to reform the monarchy. But since direct counsel to the monarch no longer seems viable, he must explore other options, a situation that Arthur Ferguson describes as “rais[ing] the problem of counsel…from truth-telling to that of intellectual citizenship.”

Having described the corruption and tyranny of the court, Wyatt’s speaker defines his present circumstances in ways that suggest a kind of political activity among subjects outside of conventional channels.

While Wyatt uses the figure of Cato to evoke the twin ideas of withdrawal and resistance, his refusal to endorse Cato’s death shows that he is searching for a solution to problem of tyranny that is more practical than Cato’s symbolic (albeit profound) gesture.
Wyatt cannot “damn Cato to die,” and unlike Cato he will not “with his [own] death…scape out of the gate.” Ultimately, Wyatt’s satire proposes political discourse outside of Court as a corrective to the problem of Henrician centralization. This is evidenced by the striking changes he makes to Alamanni’s poem, which concludes with the speaker indiscriminately castigating all about him:

> Although the locals are full of malice, their evil efforts are kept within bounds by their ignorance and fear. Much as they are for ever bursting with hatred and envy of their betters, their wicked plots are frustrated by their shortsightedness. So here I dwell in solitude with my Muses, mocking the yokels’ lack of wit and slow desires. Henceforth the courts of the great and their palaces will not see me crowding in among their followers. Greed and envy will take no tribute, will not triumph over me. I shall know true peace of mind.

Wyatt, by contrast, makes no mention of the locals in Kent. This is a meaningful omission, as it allows him to avoid the Juvenalian spleen with which Alamanni concludes. This is because Wyatt is doing much more than simply shaming those who fail meet his standards. His criticisms of the courtiers are only a point of departure for a political comment of greater significance. The speaker explains:

> I am not now in France to judge the wine,
> With saffry sauce the delicates to feel;
> Nor yet in Spain, where one must him incline
> Rather than to be, outwardly to seem:
> I meddle not with wits that be so fine.
Nor Flanders' cheer lettesth not my sight to deem
Of black and white; nor taketh my wit away
With beastliness; they beasts do so esteem.
Nor I am not where Christ is given in prey
For money, poison, and treason at Rome [...] (89-98)

Up to this point, the speaker seems to have been limiting his criticism to the English court. But near the very end of the poem, the speaker censures France, Spain, Flanders, and Rome, all of which by this time shared a court culture similar to that of England. The speaker caricatures each of these courts according to the vices that were popularly thought to characterize them. In another context, such stereotypes would be used in a chauvinistic effort to define the contours of his own inchoate national identity against those of less ethical, moral, incontinent, sober, or restrained character. Indeed, this became a fairly typical satiric treatment of other lands as a sense of nationalism increased in England and throughout Europe in general: the need to identify oneself or one’s country by distinguishing it from others. However, the vices that typify these foreign courts are in fact the same ones that the speaker seems to have attributed to the English court: greed, dissimulation, incontinence. The inclusion of foreign courts clarifies the actual target of the satire. It is not merely the English courtier, but the court itself. As David Starkey notes that in the early sixteenth century, the courts of kings and princes were not only politically dominant in northern Europe but were appearing in Italy as well. In the early part of the sixteenth century, European courts were undergoing a process of homogenization. Household reform, first in France in 1515 and soon after in England and the Hapsburg Empire, led to more streamlined, efficient, and centralized mode of
governance. The target is not simply one court or another, but a European court culture that is assuming a more absolutist character.

By expanding the purview of the poem to include all of Europe, Wyatt undercuts the legitimacy of courts in general, which is contrasted all the more starkly with his own location “in Kent and Christendom” (100). His sojourn in Kent, whether rustication or retreat, suddenly becomes not only morally but politically and theologically preferable. Wyatt’s county seat is a foil to the court, an alternative location, characterized as the antithesis of court. Furthermore, his alliterative zeugma of Kent with Christendom invites us to see the two locations, one literal/local, one figurative/corporate, as in a sense coterminous. There is the suggestion that the two do not simply overlap, they are in a sense identical with one another. Wyatt is not banished from the only site of sovereignty. Given the centrality of religious considerations to Henry VIII’s recent expansion in prerogative, the speaker’s claim to a piece of Christendom suggests a degree of autonomy, be it ever so humble. The synecdoche of Kent and Christendom allows for both equivalence and difference. This, in itself, is a challenge to the perceived tyranny of the Henrician supremacy, in which all political power and theological authority is concentrated in one man, and where one’s political efficacy depends wholly on one’s proximity to that center of power.

The suggestion of this alternative jurisdiction is rounded out by the speaker’s invitation: “if thou list, my Poinz, for to come/ Thou shalt be judge how I do spend my time” (102-03). Wyatt’s invitation to Poins marks another important divergence from Alamanni’s original, in which the speaker concludes with a misanthropic, if not solipsistic, intention to “dwell in solitude with [his] muses.” Just as Kent provides a
spatial counterbalance to the court, the invitation to Poins provides a moral offset to the dishonesty of the courtiers and despotism. By locating his speaker in Kent, Wyatt divests his speaker of the fatalism in Alamanni’s original. Whereas Alamanni’s speaker has been banished to Provence—much like Cato was pursued by Caesar to Utica—Wyatt’s speaker has withdrawn to his ancestral home in the southeast of England. Having equated corrupt English courtiers with corrupt courtiers of France, Spain, Flanders, and Rome, Wyatt’s speaker now issues an invitation to Poins, a fellow Member of Parliament, to join him where “in lusty leas at liberty [he] walk[s]” (84).

If the bulk of the satire comprises the efforts of unethical courtiers to elude exposure and the inability of their client to see through their dissimulation, Wyatt’s invitation to Poins promises the transparency required for the humanist program to function: the purpose of the visit will be for Poins to “judge” what Wyatt has been doing. If Wyatt has in fact left court to “set a law,” which I argue refers to the constitution of the commonwealth, an invitation to a fellow MP who, it has been suggested, opposed certain Henrician legal reforms, to join him and “judge” the fruits of his labor carries with it a distinct political valence. In his description of tyranny, Aristotle notes two things the tyrant must guard against if he us to maintain power:

[H]e must prohibit literary assemblies or other meetings for discussion, and he must take every means to prevent people from knowing one another (for acquaintance begets mutual confidence.) Further, he must compel the inhabitants to appear in public and live at his gates; then he will know what they are doing; if they are always kept under, they will learn to be humble.60
By withdrawing to Kent and inviting Poins to join him there, Wyatt puts into action precisely those measures that Aristotle writes pose a threat to tyranny. Wyatt’s withdrawal and invitation are centrifugal countermeasures to the centralization of power at Court and far more politically constructive than previously recognized.

Wyatt’s invitation to Poins is a significant departure from Alamanni’s fatalistic conclusion. Alamanni despairs, tacitly accepting Aristotle’s notion that a “tyrant is not overthrown until men begin to have confidence in one another,” but finding nothing but dissimulation at court and idiocy in the country. Wyatt, on the other hand, does what little he can do to resist the defects of the Henrician court. While both Alamanni and Wyatt withdraw from the deceit and tyranny of court, Wyatt’s adaptation demonstrates a reformative impulse. A monarchist and conservative with an abiding concern for the health of the commonwealth, Wyatt adopts a more prudent approach to the problem of tyranny than does Alamanni. Rather than Brutus’s bloody and ethically ambiguous mutiny, Wyatt prefers Cato’s slow, morally unassailable, prudent, and legal opposition to despotism. However, Wyatt’s speaker is fully satisfied neither by Cato’s surrender—be it ever so honorable and self-sacrificing—nor by Alamanni’s retreat—be it ever so caustically critical of the Court. Informed by Machiavelli’s philosophy of fortune and virtue, and by Wyatt’s own personal experiences in the employ of the English crown, Wyatt brings to his adaptation of Alamanni’s satire a greater degree of prudence and sophistication when addressing the issue of personal liberty in an increasingly autocratic state. Most importantly, “Mine Own John Poins” is a definitive example of how sixteenth-century English satirists were using satire’s open-endedness and dialogism to respond to the increasing political centralization of the early modern state.
Chapter Two
“Not what I would, but what I am”: Ambiguity and Mutability in George Gascoigne’s *The Steele Glas*

In the exordium of *The Steele Glas*, written in 1576, George Gascoigne strikes a pose similar to that of Thomas Wyatt in “Mine Own John Poins.” The persona of each poem is a victim of dissemblers and, consequently, at a remove from the center of power. However, in the body of his satire, Gascoigne moves beyond Wyatt’s clear distinction between the righteous and the wrongdoers. Adopting the mirror as a vehicle for satire means that the persona cannot help but see himself. Drawn into the ambit of the genre, Gascoigne’s speaker becomes, like the Horatian persona, a topic of critique. Gascoigne encourages this, exaggerating his own failings so that he may dramatize his struggle to overcome them. Paradoxically, it is his own moral culpability that authorizes his voice and situates him within the context of the commonwealth in the mid-sixteenth century.

While contesting definitions of how exactly satire works abound, critics all agree that satire moves beyond simple complaint. One way to more deeply understand this difference between the two modes is to consider the empowered status of the satiric voice. Beyond registering dissatisfaction or cataloguing shortcomings, the satirist aims to correct social ills and must therefore establish a degree of authority through various rhetorical strategies. In many cases, this involves the satirist setting himself apart from the target of the satire. For instance, both Luigi Alamanni and Thomas Wyatt remove themselves from Court and, by way of explaining their departure, attack the immorality of the court culture. This moral high ground both grants them perspective on and protects them from contamination by the corruption they are decrying. In *The Steele Glas*, George Gascoigne makes a riskier gambit for moral authority. He paradoxicallyforegrounds
checkered past not merely to explain and then dismiss it, but to parlay it into moral capital. His shortcomings paradoxically inform his criticisms and, ultimately, establish his interest in the commonwealth. Significantly, interest here denotes not only a concern for England’s moral condition, but a vested stake in its economic and political wellbeing. While the general criticisms found in *The Steele Glas* situate it neatly within the estates satire tradition, Gascoigne’s idiosyncratic voice pushes the boundaries of 16th century satire, expanding our understanding of it to include a speaker who is implicated in the current state of affairs and, precisely because of this, has a right and moral imperative to assert his opinion of them.

Beyond merely harkening back to a traditional poetic form, in *The Steele Glas* Gascoigne uses elements of ambiguity and irony implicit in satire to address topics distinctive to his own historical situation. However, to date, critical attention of *The Steele Glas* has neglected this, instead focusing largely on either the novelty of its prosody or the lack of originality in its worldview. Throughout the 20th and into the 21st century, *The Steele Glas* has most often been cited for the novelty of being the first English nondramatic poem written in blank verse.¹ But critical discussion of the poem has rarely gone beyond its formal innovation, with too few critics crediting Gascoigne’s use of the form to comment on mid-16th century political issues such as foreign policy and, more importantly, the issue of self-representation at court. C.S. Lewis famously maintained that the poem is “medieval in everything but metre.”² Stanley Maveety contests Lewis’s qualification by showing how Gascoigne’s use of caesura, his eschewing of enjambment, and the interplay of accent and alliteration actually disclose a heavy medieval metrical influence.³ Similarly, Joan Grudy dismisses the significance of
the poem’s wealth of classical allusions with her assertion that “the poem's classicism goes nevertheless merely skin deep, and its strongest affinities are clearly with Langland,” the author of the fourteenth-century estates satire \textit{Piers Plowman}.

The problem with these assessments of \textit{The Steele Glas} is not that they trace its medieval generic antecedents. Indeed, structurally, \textit{The Steele Glas} is easily seen to meet the four identifying criteria of medieval estates satire as laid out by Ruth Mohl: an apparently exhaustive listing of social and occupational groups; the belief that these sundry classes and occupations comprise a divinely ordained, three-estate social structure and that stability depends on the fulfillment of duties by all three; a decrying of the historical failings of each estate; and an attempt to remedy the shortcomings of each estate.\footnote{Nor are the critical comparisons drawn between \textit{The Steele Glas} and \textit{Piers Plowman} in any way implausible. Langland’s estates satire was arguably “the first English poem to attain a national readership and influence while its author lived.”} Editions were printed by Robert Crowley in 1550 and by Owen Rogers in 1561. Gascoigne makes clear his awareness of Langland’s poem by numerous references at the conclusion of \textit{The Steele Glas}:

\begin{quote}
Stand forth good \textit{Peerce}, thou plowman by thy name (1017)

stand forth \textit{Peerce plowman} first (1035)

I see you \textit{Peerce}, my glasse was lately scowrde (1042)

pray you to God for \textit{Peerce}, / As \textit{Peerce} can pinch, it out for him and you.

(1049-50.)
\end{quote}

The problem is that early 20\textsuperscript{th}-century assessments underestimated the reformist tendencies of Langland’s text, and more recent revisionist criticism has not yet been
extended to criticism of *The Steele Glas*. One example of early 20th-century traditionalism is C.S. Lewis, who held that “Langland has nothing to propose except that all estates should do their duty.” Similarly, E. Talbot Donaldson described Langland as a “political moderate... [whose] political thought was conservative and traditionalist.” More recent scholarship has sought to revise this “counterprogressive model.” For instance, Larry Scanlon has argued that medieval studies during the mid-20th century “underestimated a radical strain of vernacular thought within its own period.” In an effort to correct this, Scanlon suggests that *Piers Plowman* was not altogether misappropriated by the Peasants Revolt of 1381 and explicates the poem to reveal a “national vision, a vision of the nation’s center from its periphery” and a “radically communal notion of political sovereignty.” Similarly, D. Vance Smith considers how *Piers Plowman* “traces and accommodates the crucially unstable mercantile subject... without falling prey to a nationalist symbolics based on the atavistic model of the three estates.” Scanlon and Smith credit Langland and his readers with a greater degree of political awareness and activity than earlier critics who ascribed to the fourteenth century a static worldview and quietist social philosophy. Surprisingly, this well-established correction to our reading of Langland’s poem has yet to penetrate our understanding of Gascoigne’s estates satire, despite its having been written almost two centuries later. Recent scholarship continues to interpret *The Steele Glas* as backward looking rather than explicating the immediacy of its comment on contemporary political and social issues. For instance, Laurie Shannon dismisses *The Steele Glas* as an “estates satire in the vein of *Piers Plowman*, [which] attacks and laments a world of bad faith and corruption... in quite traditional and generic Christian terms.” Gillian Austen concurs
that *The Steele Glas* is “thoroughly medieval” and locates its “revolutionary aspect” in its prosody. Austen mentions only briefly that it appears “carefully tailored” to accord with the military interests of its dedicatee, Lord Grey.

There is a need for criticism of *The Steele Glas* to be afforded the same kind of revision that has been granted criticism of Langland’s *Pier Plowman*. While the interpretations of Scanlon, Smith, and others have largely revised the conservative and moralistic interpretations to which *Piers Plowman* was reduced for much of the twentieth century, to date no similar reassessment of *The Steele Glas* has been carried out. It seems that critical approaches to Gascoigne’s satire accord with Ruth Mohl’s assessment that it “might have been written in the time of Langland and Gower” without incorporating more recent critical sensitivity to the nuances and dynamism of medieval texts. That is, the “deeper historical gaze” that scholars have recently trained on medieval estates satire has not yet been turned to its 16th-century counterpart. While medievalists have revised their opinion of *Piers Plowman*, early modern critics still seem to accept that *The Steele Glas* is premised on a static medieval vision of an ideal society. One way to address this critical lacuna, and to expand our conception of Renaissance satire at large, is to consider how Gascoigne adapts Ovid’s story of Philomela and uses it as exordium to *The Steele Glas*. *The Steele Glas* then becomes a clear example of how early modern writers retooled classical materials, grafting them onto their own native literary tradition to understand and address specific historical situations. Considering Gascoigne’s innovative use of source material reveals two things: First, his adaptation of Philomela allows him to address his personal interests, ambitions, and anxieties within the highly competitive patronage system associated with the Court. Second, and more broadly, it
enables the articulation of a satire more morally complex than that typified by medieval estates satire. Gascoigne’s use of Ovidian metamorphosis, comprising as it does the concepts of twinning and change, counters the monolithic and static ideal of society typically evoked in earlier assessments of both medieval estates satire and The Steele Glas itself. Thus, The Steele Glas is a key text for considering how English writers were using satire to articulate an understanding of political and economic change in the mid-Tudor period.

Before turning to The Steele Glas, I want to discuss briefly the environment in which Gascoigne began his writing career, as it helps to establish how he and his immediate contemporaries viewed the intersection of politics and literature. Gascoigne wrote his earliest extant work while a member of Grey’s Inn during the 1560s. During this period, the Inns of Court were the “hub of literary activity”\(^\text{19}\) in London, a professional community in which the functionaries of the burgeoning Elizabethan bureaucracy were trained in law. While not part of a formal curriculum, the practices of translation and composition contributed to the formation of an “extended network of quasi-corporate authorship”\(^\text{20}\) at the Inns.\(^\text{21}\) Laurie Shannon contends that the conventions of translation, pastoral, and epistolary verse observed by members of the Inns demonstrate an awareness of horizontal relations based on collective intellectual activity rather than vertical relations based on patronage and service, and that the imagined community they engendered informed “emerging paradigms of nationhood”\(^\text{22}\) during the 1560s. In her examination of nine of Seneca’s tragedies translated at the Inns during the 1560s, Jessica Winston concludes that, more than literary exercises, the translations suggest “personal interactions, and political thinking and involvement.”\(^\text{23}\) The literary
precedents set by Inns of Court writers encouraged Gascoigne’s mindfulness of how various literary forms could comment on immediate social and political issues.

Gascoigne opens *The Steele Glas* with an exordium based on the classical myth of Philomela, adapted from Book 6 of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. In the original narrative, Philomela is raped and imprisoned by her brother-in-law, Tereus, who then cuts out her tongue so that she cannot divulge his crime. However, by weaving the story of the crime into a tapestry, Philomela reveals the truth to her sister, Procne. The two women exact vengeance by murdering Itys, Procne’s young son by Tereus, cooking him and serving him to his father. Enraged, Tereus pursues the two women, who turn to the gods for deliverance. Ovid’s tale ends with each of the three being transformed into a species of bird: Tereus a hoopoe, Procne a swallow, Philomela a nightingale.

Gascoigne makes substantive changes to Ovid’s original plot. In *The Steele Glas*, there is no mention made of violent female retribution. Gascoigne sticks to the Ovidian script when he relates the wooing and marriage of Procne by Tereus, Procne’s longing for her sister’s company, Tereus’s journey to fetch Philomene and his subsequent rape of her, but he makes a curious move by jumping directly to Philomene’s metamorphosis, eliding the conspiracy of the sisters and omitting the retaliatory infanticide and cannibalism found in Ovid. As a result, the tale of moral equivalencies found in *Metamorphoses*, in which the crime of Tereus is answered by the crimes of the sisters, becomes in *The Steele Glas* a much more one-sided tale of power and victimization.

The thematic implications of these plot excisions become clearer as Gascoigne applies an allegorical overlay to what remains of the original Ovidian framework. On one level, this allegory is informed by Gascoigne’s literary theory. Procne becomes *Poesys,*
who is “pleasant” (60), with a face “louely to beholde” (67), and Philomene becomes Satyra, characterized by her plainness of speech. Already Gascoigne is broaching the subject that underlies The Steele Glas: the difference between glittering appearances and stark reality. But, as yet, there is no moral valence to this generic difference. Both poetry and satire, being the offspring of “Playne dealyng” and “Simplycitie,” bring no harm to anyone. Moreover, their relationship is not a simple binary; it is complementary rather than oppositional. Poesys and Satyra are “twinnes at one selfe burden borne,” and Poesys sometimes turns to Satyra for relief. Trapped in an unhappy marriage, seeing herself “so matchte” (102), Poesys pines for her sister, whose “companye might comfort hir sometimes,/ And sound advice might ease hir wearie thoughtes” (105-106). Thus, there is a supportive relationship between poetry and satire, a consanguinity that extends to congeniality.

There are, of course, differences between the sisters and between the genres they represent, and these come to the fore in their respective dealings with vayne Delight, a “stately man” (63) and “Galant” (78) who personifies both the allure and the hazard of life at Court. Poesys, wooed because she is the more beautiful of the two sisters, happily marries Vayne Delight. Two possible reasons are given for her “free consent” (83). She is either “Entyst… with glosse of gorgeous shewe,” or she is “persuaded by his peeres” (85-86). She is misled in either case, whether by herself or others, and mistakes glittering appearances for “constant loue” (87). Poesys can sometimes slip into superficiality and is therefore more easily manipulated than her sister. Fooled by Vayne Delight, it takes her “some yeeres” (91) to realize her mistake. She responds to this truth with passivity,
languishing in her bower and “mourn[ing] dayes and nights/ To see hir selfe…so deceived” (100-102).

In contrast, Satyra demonstrates an agency not seen in Poesys by flying to her side “euen at hir first request” (97). En route, she attracts the attention of vayne Delight not because she is fair, but because she is alone, “on seas ful farre from friendly help” (104). There is something unpolished about her clearing her throat and striving to sing her best, and this combination of vulnerability and homeliness kindle the “sparke of lust” within her brother-in-law (105-108). In the aftermath of Vayne Delight’s rape of her, she evinces a constancy wanting in her sister, refusing to be either enticed or persuaded to remain silent. Even imprisonment cannot lure her “simple mynde, from tracke of trustie truth” (118). Ultimately, Vayne Delight resorts to cutting out Satyra’s tongue with the “Raysor of Restraynte,/ Least [she] should wraye, this bloudy deede of his” (126-28). But, even then, she continues with the

stumps of [her] reproued tong,

[to] Reprouers deedes reproue,

And sing a verse to make them see. [136-38]

This is an important departure from Ovid, in which Philomela sings to assuage the pain of the wrongs visited on her by Tereus and the pain of her own guilt. Gascoigne’s Philomene sings because she is constitutionally unable to depart from the truth.

The sisters’ interactions with Vayne Delight bring into focus the workings and limitations of the respective genres they represent, showing how poetry and satire can be subject to the caprice of power, which is by turns alluring and violent, and nearly always, it would seem, acquisitive and opportunistic. On a more personal level, Gascoigne’s
allegory corresponds to his experience as aspiring poet, caught in the intersection of literature and power. Gascoigne is at different times each sister in the story. Like Procne/Poesys, Gascoigne was “Entyst… with glosse of gorgeous shewe” (85) of court, and his career is often viewed as a string of frustrated attempts to establish himself as a court poet or secure the backing of a noble patron. These difficulties also reveal his affinity with Philomene/Satyra. An abortive term in Parliament was fraught with legal trouble, and despite a sound reputation among his fellow authors, his reputation suffered from accusations of immorality levelled at his Poesies, particularly the prosimetric The Adventures of Master F.J., which both interrogates and participates in the tradition of erotic Petrarchan poetry. Gascoigne uses the figure of Philomene to show how he too has contended with the Court’s “comely crewe of guylefull wights,” including “False semblant,” “Detraction and Deceite,” and “False witnesse.” Perhaps the most compelling kinship between Gascoigne and Satyra is found in how they are both wronged and subsequently blamed for bringing it upon themselves. Satyra relates how, after she is raped by Vayne Delight, he orders his courtiers to first inveigle and then blame her for the assault:

He causde straight wayes, the formost of his crew
With his comppeare, to trie me with their tongues:
And when their guiles, could not preuaile to winne
My simple mynde, from tracke of trustie truth,
Nor yet deceyt could bleare mine eyes through fraud,
Came Slander then, accusing me, and sayde,
That I entist Delyght, to loue and luste. (115-21)
Gascoigne thus uses Satyra to symbolize his own innocence, victimization, and undeserved censure. While his “harmelesse hart, perceivde not their deceipt” (43), his detractors have attacked and despoiled his reputation. In a direct address to his patron, Lord Grey, Gascoigne explains how to interpret correctly the Ovidian allusion:

But that my Lord, may playnely vnderstand,

The mysteries, of all that I do meane,

I am not he whom slaundorous tongues haue tolde [.] (44-46)

Like Philomene, Gascoigne is the victim, his honor besmirched, and Grey’s patronage to him would be not only charitable but just. Moreover, beyond a plea for patronage, Gascoigne’s posture associates him with the Horatian tradition, marking him as a “foolish victim”24 rather than as the railing satyr figure that will figure so prominently among English satirists of the next generation. As the poem proceeds, Gascoigne will diagnose rather than denounce.

Gascoigne’s extended allusion to Ovid, in creating a persona more vulnerable than Wyatt’s, is innovative for several reasons. First, it predates Spenser’s eclogues of 1579, which John King, like many critics, argues mark the “infusion”25 of classicism into the English satiric tradition. Second, Gascoigne adapts the Ovidian story to accord with traditional satirical discourse, expressing its moral certainty and the defensive position it offers the satirist. As the off-spring of “Playne dealyng” (56) and “Simplycitie” (57), Satyra is unable to participate in the collusions of the Court. Similarly, Gascoigne himself is no court poet, and he sings his songs
…in corner closely cowcht

Like Philomene, since that the stately cowrts,

Are now no place, for such poore byrds[.] (142-44)

Like Thomas Wyatt’s in “Mine Own John Poins,” Gascoigne’s persona speaks from the periphery. However, Satyra lacks the authority and choice of Wyatt’s speaker, which doubtless reflects the different situations of the respective authors. Whereas Wyatt’s speaker removes himself to Kent by choice, Philomene and Gascoigne are excluded by those in power who would silence them. But in either case, this outsider status is not without its virtues. It sets Gascoigne apart, as the satirist now is, from “euery ianglyng byrd,/ Which squeaketh loude” (150-51), and enables him to offer to his patron

A rare conceit…

A trustie tune, from auncient clyffes conueyed,

A playne song note, which cannot warble well. (158-60)

Gascoigne suggests that The Steele Glas will make up in candor what it might lack in embellishment.

Perhaps Gascoigne’s most significant innovation is his use of Philomene to articulate and excuse his role as satirist. Through Philomene, Gascoigne can cast his poem as a response to the disproportionate wrongs visited on him by his enemies. He is compelled but powerless to retaliate against his assailants, and therefore his “teares must venge [his] harms” (131). But, beyond providing defensive cover, the figure of Philomene allows Gascoigne to begin developing the concept of discernment refined through suffering, which will be central to his satire. Thus, Gascoigne opens The Steele
Glas with an invocation of Philomene, whose unforgettable pain confers upon her a moral acuity:

O Phylomene, then helpe me now to chaunt:
And if dead beastes, or liuing byrdes haue ghosts,
Which can conceiue the cause of carefull mone,
When wrong triumphes, and right is ouertrodde,
Then helpe me now, O byrd of gentle bloud,
In barrayne verse, to tell a frutefull tale,
A tale (I meane) which may content the mindes
of learned men, and graue Philosophers. (18-25)

Gascoigne’s opening supplication to Philomene indicates his satiric intent. The poem’s rhetorical purpose is not only to decry how “wrong triumphes, and right is ouertrodde” (21), but to determine causality, to establish “the cause of carefull mone” (20), with a view to correcting what is wrong. That his analysis is meant for “learned men, and graue Philosophers” (25) suggests both a social and reformative impulse that is essentially satiric. The author hopes that, “content” with the poem’s conclusions, such men (and, presumably, women) will disseminate and apply them. To earn the acceptance of such grave minds, Gascoigne draws a parallel between himself and Philomene so that he, too, may use his troubled past to establish his credibility in the present.

Unlike the Roman satirist Juvenal, Gascoigne is not merely compelled to write his satire by the vice he sees around him but also through his recognition of the faults within himself. Like Philomene, he compels himself to sing by leaning against the thorn of painful memory. The persona
...sing[s], with pricke against [his] brest,

Like Philomene, since that the priuy worme,

Which makes [him] see [his] reckles youth mispented,

May well suffise, to keepe [him] waking still[.] (145-48)

Although Gascoigne refashions Philomene solely as victim, his readership would surely have remembered that, in the popular and well-established source tale, she was also the perpetrator of horrible crimes. Thus, the image of the thorn is richly ambivalent, drawing from both iterations and evoking both her sadness and her guilt. Through this ambivalence, Gascoigne unites his own failings with his victimization by others, an ambiguity which is key to his satire. The twinning of his faults and his grievances disabuses him of self-serving illusions, bestows a degree of moral acuity, an objectivity, and thereby justifies his criticisms. In Ovid, Philomene’s metamorphosis is aesthetic, enabling her to transmute tragedy into beauty. However, Gascoigne’s Philomela does more than simply comfort herself through a process of artistic creation. She discomfits other by showing them truths they might rather ignore.

In one sense, Philomene’s singing is an act of remorse, perhaps even of expiation. In another sense, her song is an act of defiance. It should be remembered that Vayne Delight initially woos Poesys in part because her “speeche [is] pleasant stil” (68), connoting the quiet passivity of a silent woman who knows her place. By contrast, Philomene sings despite Tereus’s escalating efforts to silence her. Like Philomene, Gascoigne writes despite what “slanderous tongues haue tolde” (46) about “the tales deuised by [his] pen” (50). Per Sivefors argues that, in The Steele Glas, “the unbridled tongue is inseparable from immoral behavior, and the poem makes the point that a
functioning state is inconceivable if its language is licentious." But Gascoigne uses the figure of Philomene to show that, while licentiousness itself may be dishonorable, it can at times bestow a kind of license upon those marked by it. Like the legendary Roman matron Lucrece, Philomene is despoiled both literally and morally by her assailant. Contaminated though she may be, however, the gods decree that she may sing of the wrongs visited upon her. Thus, a kind of empowerment issues from her ignominy. By invoking Philomene as his muse, Gascoigne suggests a parity between his own sullied reputation and hers, participating in both her victimhood and her subsequent empowerment. Paradoxically, it is the onus of a shameful reputation that enhances the vision and empowers the voice of each of them.

To further align himself with Philomene, Gascoigne blurs the gender line that separates them. Briefly but explicitly alluding to another Ovidian figure, he claims to be “in dede a dame,/ Or at the least, a right Hermaphrodite” (52-53). He cannot, therefore, be

the man, which ment a common spoyle

Of louing dames, whose eares wold heare my words

Or trust the tales dueised by my pen. (48-50)

Beyond a personal defense against detractors, the figure of the hermaphrodite embodies the poem’s overall theme of metamorphosis. In *The Steele Glas*, metamorphosis is not simply about changing from one thing to another, but about inhabiting the space in between, retaining aspects of both the prodigal and the reformed. The figure of Hermaphroditus embodies the central theme of doubleness. Gascoigne’s satire unfolds a liminal space between absolute right and absolute wrong. In this way, *The Steele Glas*
embraces an ambiguity not appreciated in earlier assessments. The doubleness of the hermaphrodite is important in this respect.

Had Gascoigne stopped here, *The Steele Glas* might be classified as hybrid of complaint and apologia. He has alluded to his past mistakes (albeit with some ambiguity about whether they are real or alleged); he has questioned whether he justly deserves the ill-treatment he has received at the hands of others; and he has justified his speaking openly of them. But as he moves into the body of the estates satire, he complicates his relationship to the figure of Philomene and foregrounds his internal struggles. Within the logical framework he has established in his exordium, these past lapses and his present handling of them model a process of rejuvenation that may be applied to the commonwealth as a whole. Doing this pushes *The Steele Glas* beyond complaint into satire, ultimately one more constructive than Juvenalian attack and more intense than gentle Horatian ribbing.

One way Gascoigne segues from complaint to satire is by shuttling between the personal and the political. In the body of *The Steele Glas*, the individual becomes a microcosm of the commonwealth. His commentary on the behavior of others is inextricably tied to his own behavior, his insight into their lapses somehow associated with his own shortcomings. Initially, as he “mark[s] this weak and wretched world” (161) seeking to determine “from whence such errour springs” (164), he is hampered by his “weary wittes” (168), casualties of the “cannon shot, of much misgouernment” (170-71). Gascoigne’s diction in this line works on multiple levels. In the most literal sense, “cannon shot” calls to mind his military service in the Low Countries, foregrounding a personal sacrifice that would recommend him to his militant patron, Lord Grey.
Additionally, when we remember that “misgovernment” carried a distinctly personal denotation during the period Gascoigne was writing, “cannon shot” becomes a metaphor for indiscreet or incontinent personal behavior. Thus, the line is richly polysemic, deftly weaving together success and failure, the personal and the political. Gascoigne juxtaposes his military service and his personal faults to underscore the theme of stark, unembellished knowledge emerging from harsh experience. It is because of his “battred braynes” (170), not in spite of them, that Gascoigne is able to “spye…onely one conceite, / Which makes [him] thinke, the world goeth stil awry” (172-73). Divested of his own delusions, Gascoigne can see how every person “yet deceiuces himself” (163). He understands that self-deception gives rise to “mistes of darke mistake” (165) and concludes that commonwealths languish because their members prefer to be

Beguylde with Foyles, of sundry subtil sights,

So that they seeme, and couet not to be.

This is the cause (beleue me now my Lorde)

That Realmes do rewye, from high prosperity[.]

…

This is the cause (or else my Muze mistakes)

That things are thought, which neuer yet were wrought,

And castels byult, aboue in lofty skies,

Which neuer yet, had good foundation. (192-213)

Gascoigne will continue to foreground both his service to the country and his perceived failures in order to validate what his satiric voice has to say about the commonwealth, exploiting the relationship between bitter experience and a consequent moral acuity.
In the exordium, Gascoigne uses Philomene to represent his struggle with external forces. Like Philomene, he has contended with his own crew of detractors, of “guileful wights,” in and around Court. Now, in the body of the poem, he moves the struggle inward, using the mirror to symbolize the tension between self-awareness and self-image. The mirror is the precise interface between being and seeming, refining the idea of doubleness suggested by the twinning of Poesys and Satyra and further emphasized by the allusion to Hermaphroditus. Appealing to the gravitas of Lucilius, the Roman poet reputed to have invented satire, Gascoigne describes the genre as a mirror of

…trustie Steele,

[which] came to [him], by wil and testament

Of one that was, a Glassemaker in deede. (225-27)

Rayna Kalas rightly notes that Gascoigne “chooses a mirror whose particular substance will link the poetic mirror with the patriotic sword, and thus his career as a poet with his career as a soldier.”27 But personalizing the genre also exposes a dissonance within himself, one revealed to be of a piece with the commonwealth at large as the poem unfolds. The martial figures of Caesar and Codrus embody the contrast between his aspirations and his accomplishments. The speaker describes himself as having

A Cæsars minde, and yet a Codrus might,

A Souldiours hart, supprest with feareful doomes:

A Philosopher, foolishly fordone. (244-46)

Caesar’s military prowess was renowned. The allusion to Codrus requires some explanation. A mythical king of Athens, Codrus learned of an oracle foretelling a Dorian victory on the condition that the king of Athens—in this case himself—remain unharmed.
Codrus therefore disguised himself as a peasant, infiltrated the Dorian camp, and revealed himself. His ensuing death secured the safety of his city, in accordance with the oracle. Codrus’s sacrifice may have been selfless, but certainly not an example of “might” in any conventional sense. Gillian Austen, taking these lines at face value, reads them as suggestive of Gascoigne’s humiliation over possessing “a less than ideal reputation as a soldier and a poet.”

But this overlooks the fact that Gascoigne’s poetic output was admired by his peers and recognized by superiors as highly placed as the Earl of Leicester, who employed him to not only design the Kenilworth entertainment but also record it for posterity. Moreover, Gascoigne’s military reputation was noted by his superiors, such as in a dispatch written in 1572 that lists “Mr. George Gascoigne” among those who on July 28 “charged [the Spaniards] in the face with sordes and targettes…[and] served valyauntly.”

William of Orange repaid Gascoigne’s efforts monetarily and with subsequent military commissions. Thus, his reputation as both soldier and poet was sound. In fashioning his persona using details from his own life, Gascoigne appears to have exaggerated the blemishes. Such self-effacement was a rhetorical tactic common to Roman satirists and their imitators, shielding them from accusations of self-righteousness or downright scurrility. In discussing the influence of Horace’s *Sermones* on Donne’s satires, James S. Baumlin notes that “when the satirist engages himself dramatically in the world of his satire, his words and his actions become as open to scrutiny as those of his *adversarius*…. [T]he satirist’s own characterization, with his likes, dislikes, strengths, and indeed weaknesses may be part of his poem’s subject matter.” That Gascoigne grafts this classical practice to the native stock of estates satire is itself significant, especially when we note that he did so decades before
the flourishing of English formal verse satire, a conscious imitation of Roman satire, in the 1590s.

Beyond a defensive rhetorical pose, however, the sheer emotional intensity of the following lines demonstrates the aptness of the mirror as a metaphor for satire. Having first taken up his steel glass as a kind of shield against the aspersions of others, Gascoigne now finds that it inevitably leads to a painful self-examination. The plangent imagery of Philomene’s maiming is echoed in the Gascoigne’s frustration with what the steel glass reveals:

> And to be playne, I see my selfe so playne,
> And yet so much vnlike that most I seemde,
> As were it not, that Reason ruleth me,
> I should in rage, this face of mine deface,
> And cast this corps, downe headlong in dispaire [.] (247-51)

Typically, these lines are read as Gascoigne’s attempt to recoup a tarnished reputation, the kind of literary and social ambition amply addressed in the critical work of Richard Helgerson and Susan Frye. But beyond the author’s *mea culpa*, the lines demonstrate the unflinching diagnostic power of satire as Gascoigne understands it. In *The Steele Glas*, not even the satirist himself is afforded a privileged position. Unlike “Mine Own John Poins,” *The Steele Glass* offers no Archimedean point to which the poet can withdraw and renders judgement on those around him; he is fully implicated.

Despite a professed desire to “let al seeming passe” (229), to dispense with artificiality and confront reality, the persona struggles to reconcile his self-image and his own reflection in the steel glass and is roused nearly to self-mutilation. The stark imagery
of a corpse “cast...headlong in despaire” (251) moves the sentiment beyond the decorous humility of an Elizabethan client writing for his patron. Beyond a rhetorical pose of the author, this is a critical, albeit brief, moment of almost existential crisis for the satiric persona. So despondent is he for having discovered a reflection “so farre vnlike it selfe” (252), the speaker acknowledges the possibility of abandoning his virtuous enterprise to “this face of [his] deface” (248), to strike out any reminder of failure. Reason alone keeps him from mirroring Tereus, who visited a similar violence on Philomene and “did carue hir pleasant tong, / To couer so, his owne foule filthy fault” (10-11), and from mirroring Philomela, who helped to murder her nephew and serve his remains to his father.

More broadly, defacing the face in the steel glass would be a rejection of the unembellished truth of satire, a retreat into the same self-deceit at the root of all the commonwealth’s woes. Men wish to “seeme, and couet not to be” (191), and this, as the persona has already told us, is the principal reason

That kings decline, from princely gouernment,
That Lords do lacke, their auncestors good wil,
That knights consume, their patrimonie still,
That gentlemen, do make the merchant rise,
That plowmen begge, and craftesmen cannot thrive,
That clergie quayles, and hath smal reuerence [...] (192-99)

The persona’s interaction with the steel glass establishes a pattern that recurs throughout the remainder of the poem: a dialectical process whereby each social rank—prince, knight, commoner, cleric—is first stripped of its pretensions and then redirected to more ethical behavior. By dramatizing how one individual interacts with the satire, Gascoigne
models how the entire commonwealth is to accept and employ his criticisms. He does not


dramatize his own experience merely to avoid arousing the hatred of his targets. Rather, by including himself in the common problem, he reintegrates himself into the


commonwealth he anatomizes. The bird “closely couched” in the corner reemerges as a moral example, not simply a moral arbiter at a remove from the community, but an active participant both in its failures and in its regeneration. By continuing to look into the steel glass, despite the difficulty of doing so, he discovers for himself and reveals to his reader how intimately linked his personal struggle is to that of the commonwealth:

And therewithal, to comfort me againe,

I see a world, of worthy gouernment,

A common welth, with policy so rulde,

As neither lawes are sold, nor iustice bought,

Nor riches sought, vnlesse it be by right. (253-57)

Two considerations mark this episode as a focal point in the poem. First, the persona finds this healing vision of a properly ruled commonwealth *within* the steel glass. Satire does more than strip away the speaker’s self-serving delusions. Having done so, it also offers the comfort of a sound moral alternative. Up to a certain point, this mirrors the metamorphosis of Ovid’s Philomene, whose participation in a tragic narrative leads to the creation of aesthetic beauty. Gascoigne’s satire, of course, goes further, adding a moral valence to the metamorphosis. Gascoigne’s speaker is comforted not by simple beauty, but by contemplation of “justice” and “right.” Satire in this instance is both diagnostic and therapeutic. Second, the pain experienced by the persona on a personal level is
assuaged not by a simple individual consideration but by the vision of a properly functioning commonwealth, by his contemplation of

… foure estates, to serue eche country Soyle,

The King, the Knight, the Pesant, and the Priest.

The King should care for all the subiectes still,

The Knight should fight, for to defende the same,

The Peasant he, should labor for their ease,

And Priests shuld pray, for them and for themselues. (289-94)

The persona purges the residual pain of his pasts by ferreting out duplicity, rank by rank, and then redirecting his and his readers’ attention to restorative models.

Gascoigne’s analysis of social ills delves deeply, recreating his struggle for personal rejuvenation to model social renewal. Having established a pattern of diagnosis and remedy, Gascoigne applies it to each estate in turn. Princes pursue pleasures “of little worth in dede” (348); but Gascoigne’s “glasse, which is of trustie steele” (412), shows plainly how “kingdomes breede but care” (413). Knights are urged to “[b]ehold [his] glasse” (590-91) that they may “learne to liue, within thy bravries bounds” (623). Included among the peasantry is “he that labors any kind of way. / To gather gaines, and to enrich himself” (653). Too many of these “be blynde” (683), and so Gascoigne positions his

Glasse… to shew,

Whereas long since, all [commoners] were seene

To be men made, out of another moulde. (694-96)
Such a dialectic between what is and what should be is not, of course, an innovation of Gascoigne’s. In discussing conventional mid-20th century theories of satire, Dustin Griffin notes that just such a “bipolar praise-and-blame pattern is the formal core of a satire.” But Gascoigne’s satire is more nuanced than this, suggesting as it does what Griffin calls the “drama of an inflamed sensibility…. [A] working through… [of] the implications of a given moral position.” While the exordium of *The Steele Glas* contains the unambiguous moral certainty earlier critics expected of satire, the body of the poem records a persona who writhes in the mesh of such moral certainty.

By dramatizing his own failings, his attempted reform, and his tendency to backslide, Gascoigne establishes his bona fides as a speaker of truth. Thus, his insights are “no feined dreame” (214), an explicit and significant departure from the flattering untruths of Court poetry and, perhaps, an implicit but no less significant departure from Langland’s *Piers Plowman*, which is almost wholly related as a number of medieval dream visions. In his exordium he has woven his own history with the story of Philomela, walking us through a personal narrative, from credulous victim to self-deceiver to wielder of satire’s unforgiving but undeceiving mirror:

… a glasse of trustie Steele,

Wherein they may be bolde alwayes to looke,

Bycause it shewes, all things in their degree.

And since myselfe (now pride of youth is past)

Do loue to be, and let al seeming passe,

Since I desire, to see my selfe in deed,

Not what I would, but what I am or should [...] (225-31)
The persona has undergone a metamorphosis of sorts, from aspiring court poet of “reckles rimes” (27) to sober moral arbiter. Moreover, his moral struggle is a microcosm of the political and economic struggles of the commonwealth, participating in the more realistic, almost empirical approach favored by sixteenth-century English political reformers. A marginal gloss reminds the reader that “He which wil rebuke mens faults, shal do wel not to forget hys owne imperfections.” This moral commonplace takes on new meaning in *The Steele Glas*, in which both Gascoigne’s version of the Philomene story, his allusion to Hermaphroditus, and the steel glass itself all symbolize the doubleness that counters earlier theories of satire based on unambiguous moral certainty.

In Gascoigne’s satire, double-ness is unavoidable. Although Gascoigne laments the apparent gulf between being and seeming, satire itself is shown to comprise just such an ambiguity. The ideal and the real exist side-by-side in the steel glass, and Gascoigne’s own described experience suggests that reformation is a recursive process, a shuttling back and forth among what we have been, what we are, and what we should be. This mutability is especially remarkable in an estates satire, a sub-genre that traditionally insisted on an almost schematic view of human society. Moreover, it suggests a pragmatism perhaps overlooked in early modern satire, too often reduced by critics to moral certainty. Gascoigne’s foregrounding of ambiguity and change in *The Steele Glas* reflects the social analyses of political reformers in the sixteenth century, moving it away from the strict hierarchy of the three-estates model to something more dynamic and only vaguely understood.

That said, *The Steele Glas* is fundamentally conservative in its world view. Like all estates satire, it targets a certain decadence throughout society, a condition of being
out of step with preordained rhythms of a functioning commonwealth. Written by a sometime court poet desperate for patronage, its normativity and insistent nostalgia for a golden age could be labelled reactionary. What’s new here is the way the author positions himself within his account of the commonwealth. The persona in *The Steele Glas* is, like the speaker of “Mine Own John Poins,” at a spatial remove from the center of power. But, unlike Wyatt’s speaker, Gascoigne’s persona is not morally different from those he aims to correct. On the contrary, only because he personally has struggled against the same self-serving delusions to which all social ills—civil unrest, unemployment, poverty, price inflation, dislocation, crime—are secondary can he effectively speak to “the cause of carefull mone” (20). Perhaps these disparate approaches reflect differences between the authors’ social positions. A prominent courtier such as Wyatt would have the standing and confidence to posit, however tentatively, an alternative space on the periphery to counterbalance the corruption he sees at the center. Conversely, Gascoigne’s persona implicates himself within the common condition precisely because he lacks an established place. By establishing himself as an accomplice in sin and a collaborator in duty, he cements both his moral and material interest in the commonwealth.

In a broader sense, *The Steele Glas* shows how early modern satire reflected changing conceptions of commonwealth during the second half of the sixteenth century. The story of Philomene allows Gascoigne to address the instability inherent in the estates social model, despite its quest for perpetual stasis, and incorporates into the genre the kind of analysis and dynamism that mark the political reformers of the sixteenth century as fundamentally different than their predecessors. Gascoigne’s body politic comprises more than just heroes and villains. By integrating the facets of his own checkered past
and present, Gascoigne incorporates himself into a new moral economy in which each member is in some sense both victimized and culpable, an inevitability in a system of interdependent and conflicting interests.
Chapter Three
“How dares the lamb be so bold with the lion?”: Parody and Porosity of Political Roles in Thomas Deloney’s Jack of Newbury

In chapter three of Thomas Deloney’s 1597 prose romance Jack of Newbury, the eponymous weaver Jack Winchcombe stages a scene along the parade route of Henry VIII, who is on progress through Berkshire. Dressing thirty of his household servants in silken finery and arming them with swords and bucklers, Jack directs the men to assume a defensive posture atop a large anthill and takes his place among them to await the passing royal entourage. The King, naturally curious, stays his progress and sends his herald to ask the meaning of this strange spectacle. Jack responds that he is “poor Jack of Newbury… chosen Prince of Ants…to defend and keep these my poor and painful subjects, from the force of the idle butterflies, their sworn enemies, lest they should disturb this quiet Common-wealth.” Learning of this response, the amused King again dispatches his herald to summon this “pleasant fellow” to approach the royal person. Jack cheekily replies to the astonished herald “His Grace hath a horse and I am on foot, therefore will him to come to me.” This is, in fact, precisely what the Henry does, and in their subsequent exchange Jack develops further his allegory for the King, explaining that this “most provident Nation of the Ants” has suffered under the Grasshopper, the Caterpillar, and the Butterfly, who are proud, ambitious, and “not only idle, but also [live] upon the labors of other men.” Jack’s allegory raises the issue of competing interests within the commonwealth and the role of political power in regulating conflicts arising from such competition. By parodying the language and practices of the ruling elite, Jack insinuates his voice into an emerging discourse of political economy, simultaneously critiquing his monarch and demonstrating an affinity with him. Deloney’s
use of open-ended, dialogic satire allows him to tender practical (if pointed) criticism without resorting to simple and reductive condemnations.

Many critics have overlooked the topical import of this episode and read it solely in terms of the period depicted in the narrative, in this case the 1520s. Thus, Jack’s complaint of “proud Butterflies” is dismissed as a gibe at Cardinal Wolsey, a by-word for the opportunistic counsellor who perverts the rule of an otherwise just and congenial sovereign. For instance, F.O. Mann interprets the “parable of the Anthill…[as] directed at Wolsey…[and] the great subsidy of one-fifth of all goods.” Paul Salzman claims that the allegory is an “attack on Cardinal Wolsey, especially on his extortionary taxes.” Alex Davis, too, argues that “once again, Wolsey is the target.” Even David J. Morrow, who recognizes that Deloney’s historical fiction is “characterized by hardships redolent of the 1590s,” sees Wolsey, rather than the King, as the target of Jack’s satire. These reading are justified to some extent. Taken as whole, Jack of Newbury certainly participates in a discourse of “body politic” theory, according to which a symbiotic and reciprocal relationship exists between king and commoner, a relationship that is threatened by the grasping policies of the ruthless courtier. But by overlooking events of the years immediately preceding and following the publishing of Jack of Newbury, critics run the risk of reducing the episode to a case of naïve monarchism that effectively immunizes the monarch from any culpability. I would submit that the true target of Jack’s Allegory of the Ants is, in fact, the King himself. The complexity of Deloney’s satire emerges when the episode is read beside current debates over royal prerogative and the granting of monopolies during the 1590s. Deloney’s satire can then be seen as part of a larger change in economic discourse that occurred during the sixteenth century. Like participants in this
new mode of economic discourse, Deloney is not concerned with overarching ideals or
general principles. Rather, his satire looks to immediate historical circumstances to
ground his critique of the social repercussions of government’s economic role in the
commonwealth. Ultimately, Deloney’s satire advances a conception of the
commonwealth that differentiates between the government and the state.

By the 1590s, the relationship between economics and government policy was
being written about in ways vastly different from those at the close of the previous
century. An awareness of the social function of economic mechanisms in daily life was,
of course, not lacking prior to the sixteenth century. But, as Arthur Ferguson writes,
while the “articulate Englishman of the later Middle Ages” was becoming increasingly
aware of a causal relationship between economics and society, the expression of this
awareness was restrained by a “view of public life…limited by the fixed horizons of a
prescribed moral order and a providential history.” This universalist and religious
worldview prevalent at the close of the fifteenth century largely restricted economic
discourse to modes of complaint and moral exhortation and precluded such discourse
from advancing to analysis and discussion of policy. In contrast, by the mid-sixteenth
century, English writers trying to understand the civil uprisings and “dearth” of their own
day began to discuss the commonwealth not as an “organism governed by universal
principles,” but as an “economic mechanism impelled by particular, often variable forces,
natural in origin and observable, impersonal and amoral, yet subject to the intelligent
direction of human agencies.” The new secularism was fostered by the advent of the
humanist movement: the discovery, translation, and study of classical texts, which
provided writers with analytical models that might be applied to contemporary issues and
problems. For sixteenth-century English humanists, the Roman stoics provided the “primary source of inspiration”\textsuperscript{10} in the formation of a new vocabulary of political activity. Foremost among these classical authors in the first half of the sixteenth-century was the orator and statesman Cicero, whose \textit{De Officiis} was translated into English by Robert Wittington in 1534 as an aid to understanding the “increase of commen welthes [and the] cause of [their] ruyne and decaye.”\textsuperscript{11} This use of classical texts to understand and discuss politics was more than an academic exercise for English humanists. Cicero’s exhortation to join \textit{otium} (learning) to \textit{negotium} (daily business) justified the English humanist in conceiving of himself as a reformer, a “citizen rather than merely as a sage.”\textsuperscript{12} Encouraged by the Ciceronian doctrine of the \textit{vita activa}, political activity within English humanist discourse became idealized as a “noble exchange of views by leading scholars and humanistically educated courtiers for the purpose of educating the monarch.”\textsuperscript{13}

However, when it came to economic questions, English humanists during the first half of the sixteenth century encountered problems in trying to reconcile their own historical circumstances with the counsel they drew from their classical sources. Typically, economic issues were not treated in their own right in Greek and Roman writers, being instead subordinated under ethical and political categories. Because they “took for granted the basic ethical and political origins of classical discussions of commerce,”\textsuperscript{14} early-modern English economic commentators needed carefully to distinguish their own commercial endeavors and economic reforms from the excessive pursuit of profit and “wealth-getting” condemned in classical sources such as Aristotle’s \textit{Politics}. One way of doing this was by discussing economics in terms of the financial
health of the commonwealth as a whole. For example, in *A Discourse of this Commonweal of England*, Thomas Smith explores the nature, purpose, extent, and responsibilities of government with a view to diagnosing and remedying social ills of the years immediately preceding 1549. Smith’s treatise is an intersection of political philosophy and economics in which neither discourse is privileged. Smith sees the economic and political domains as intersecting, forming a nexus “touching everything and everyone, [in which] economy becomes more than simply a means of achieving political coherence but promotes a reimagination of the political relation itself.”

However, this optimism of Ciceronian humanism soured as the Continental wars of the sixteenth century rendered untenable any notion of a single unifying morality and “sharpened the perception of contemporaries about what kind of politics was necessary in the modern world.” According to Richard Tuck, by the 1570s the Ciceronian ideal of a commonwealth administered through rational discourse—typified, for example, in Smith’s *Discourse*—gave way to what Tuck has termed the new humanism, which incorporated the language of “ethical skepticism” and “principles of self-interest and self-preservation.” Inspired by Tacitus, among Roman writers the most “sceptical and disenchanted commentator on political events,” and contemporary writers such as Machiavelli, Guicciardini, Lipsius, and Montaigne, the new humanism dispensed with a Ciceronian ideal that it saw as “lofty yet forlorn.” Rather than view politics as a moral, collective enterprise, Tacitean discourse recognized that “politics must usually be understood in terms of the interplay of interests.” This shift from a Ciceronian moralism to a Tacitean realism (?) is illustrated by Sir Henry Savile’s 1591 English translation of Tacitus’s *Historiae*, in which Nero is subjected to a “novel criteria: to see him in a
primarily political, as opposed to moral, perspective.”Peter Burke writes that the appeal of Tacitus for late sixteenth-century humanists was his practice of “discussing men as they really are, not as they ought to be.” For many political commentators during the late sixteenth century, Tacitus’s pragmatic account of “the ubiquity and ineluctability of princely wrong doings” appeared more applicable to their own situation than did a slightly outmoded Ciceronian moralism.

This “taste for realism in analysis” extended to English economic reformers of the later sixteenth century, who saw the sources of public revolt to be not moral but political and economic. Often, the matter of contention was the perception that one party was drawing private profit at the public’s expense. Such was the case with the monopoly debates that began during the Parliament of 1574 and reached a critical juncture by the late 1590s. John Guy has argued that these years witnessed “a fundamental reconstruction of royal patronage,” signaled by a switch from land leases to monopolies as the primary source of compensating courtiers. The Crown’s granting of such concessions was perceived by Parliament as “shifting the costs of such rewards from the crown to the commonwealth,” and led to a series of hotly contested debates in 1597 and 1601, the “ugliest parliamentary scenes before the revival of impeachment in the 1620s.” As I will show, commoners and courtiers alike were aware that monopolies might be a contributing factor in the social upheavals experienced throughout the realm, especially during the late 1590s.

The division between different modes of humanist discourse (Ciceronian and Tacitean) has been described as a “divorce between an academic moral science, the material of university courses, and the ethical and political attitudes of the people actually
involved (even if at some remove) in the business of government.” But Peltonen notes that the emergence of Tacitean humanism did not altogether replace the Ciceronian mode. Rather, the two existed side by side. And, indeed, chapter three of *Jack of Newbury* seems to be informed by both of them: Deloney looks on government activity with a rather jaundiced eye in order to return it to a more just, balanced state, and he uses the satiric mode in a way that is both diagnostic and instrumental. First, it allows him to explore the ethics underpinning a new kind economic discourse. Satire is, by definition, concerned with moral norms, a fact that has led some to the opinion that the genre requires a certain homogeneity within its audience. Without an already established moral norm on which to ground the satire, this argument goes, the satirist confuses or alienates the reader. But I will argue that one of the distinctive things about satire by the end of the sixteenth century is that writers such as Deloney are using it in its exploratory sense. At a time of rapid economic change, during which skepticism is such a prominent feature of the intellectual landscape, traditional moral codes lose their salience. New conditions call for new actions, which in turn require a new ethic to underwrite them. Deloney’s satire explores a new set of circumstances while avoiding recourse to an entire code, instead advancing an ethic that is situational and analytical. In addition, Deloney’s use of parody in Jack’s Allegory of the Ants allows him to appropriate the courtier’s role while simultaneously distancing himself from it. Deloney creates a new form of the faithful subject to counter the grasping courtier who profits from monopoly at the expense of the commonwealth. Thus, while informed by a Tacitean realism, Jack’s allegory fulfills the dual duty of the true Ciceronian courtier: *diagnosing* the problem by revealing the
Deloney was writing about economic issues prior to the entry of *Jack of Newbury* in the Stationers’ Register on March 7, 1597. In June 1595, his twin vocations of weaver and writer intersected when he penned a complaint signed by 14 London weavers who blamed French and Dutch labor within England for their “great decaye and ympoverishinge.” Forty copies of the letter were printed and distributed to the Elders of both the French and Dutch churches in London, as well as to the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the city. The premise of the London weavers’ complaint was that French and Dutch weavers pursued business practices not among those sanctioned by the guild. Deloney protested that the foreign weavers

Exceede and kepe more Loomes and Servants then any Freeman dare
doe…they runne into the Countrye five or sixe myles from the Cittye out
of our Liberties, and there malitiously kepe and do what they list….They]
live not like Strangers of another Countreye, nor like obedient subjects to
the Lawes and Customes of this land, nor like Christian bretheren, nor like
freindes nor like good neighbors.

Perhaps Deloney and the English weavers believed that by going to both the foreign ecclesiastical authorities in London and the local English secular authorities they were bettering the chances that the situation would be resolved in their favor. However, the Elders of the French and Dutch churches in London turned to the city authorities in defense of their parishioners, and the presumptuous English weavers were promptly imprisoned in Newgate until a petition to the Lord Chief Justice secured their release.
his treatment of the incident, Roger Ladd explains that, based on the evidence of letters exchanged between the mayor and the lord treasurer, Deloney’s incarceration was not simply the result of the letter’s content, but also due to the fact that the letter was published. The Weavers’ Company itself had ordinances objecting to what it perceived as unjust practices of foreign weavers. A 1585 decree refers to such alien practices as a “great annoyance and hindrance of the said Company.” However, the crucial difference is that the Company’s decree was strictly a matter of internal governance and was circulated only among members of the livery company, whereas Deloney’s letter was printed and distributed to members of the public.

Deloney’s second brush with the London authorities also involved putting his pen to economic issues. In the 1596 he wrote and published what has come to be known as “The Corn Ballad.” While the ballad is no longer extant, we can infer from official reactions what the ballad might have contained that so rankled the establishment. In a letter dated July 25, 1596, the Lord Mayor of London, Stephen Slany, wrote to Lord Burghley of “a certain ballad contaynyng a Complaint of the great want and scarcity of corn within the Realm.” Similar to the letter of June 1595, however, the Corn Ballad seems to have raised the ire of city authorities not for the complaint itself but for the “vaine and undiscreet manner” in which Deloney opted to air the grievances of the London citizens. The Lord Mayor makes plain that the most offensive feature of the ballad is its portrayal of the Queen in direct conversation with dissatisfied commoners. He objects that the ballad

contayneth in it certain vaine and presumptuous matters bringing in her highness to speak with her people in dialogue wise in very fond and
indecent sort and [the ballad] prescribeth orders for the remedying of the
dearth of Corn…that thereby the poore may aggravate their grief, and take
some occasion of soom discontentment.37

The Lord Mayor objects to the commons engaging the Queen with such intolerable
familiarity and protests further their presumption in suggesting solutions for “remedying
of the dearth of Corn.” According to this paternalistic view, the commons may be
permitted to supplicate, but never to critique a situation, to diagnose a problem, or to
propose a solution. Furthermore, the Lord Mayor’s letter assumes that the commons is
incapable of offering anything in the way of constructive analysis: inclusion of the
“poore” in the discourse of government serves only to “aggravate their grief.” In contrast,
both the weavers’ letter and the Corn Ballad not only suggest that the constituents of the
commonwealth possess the ability rationally to probe issues such as artisanal competition
and dearth, but also that their observations should be given ear by those in power.

Deloney is active not only as a petitioner, but as an analyst of economic issues of his day.
Similarly, Jack Winchcombe shows himself to be more than a faithful and industrious
subject. His allegory of the ants, while essentially conservative in its view of rank and
obligation, advances a notion of the commonwealth as a variety of economic interests.
Like Thomas Smith, Jack sees these interests as working in concert, but not without
prudent policies to guide the natural drive of self-interest into the most productive
channels.

The first two chapters of Jack of Newbury are concerned largely with providing
the background of Jack’s rise to professional success and establishing his character as one
of industriousness, patriotism, sobriety, and business acumen. The third chapter of the
episodic narrative opens with Jack assuming the role of stage manager, creating an intentionally provocative allegorical scene in order to insinuate himself into the dialogue of governance. A rhetorical astuteness (particularly in regard to *kairos*) is demonstrated not only by Jack, who seizes the opportune moment to address his sovereign about economic grievances, but by Deloney himself, who draws historical parallels between the Henrician past depicted in his narrative and the Elizabethan present in which he is writing in order to comment on how the commonwealth is being governed in the 1590s. The narrator explains:

> About the tenth year of the King’s reign, his Grace made his progress into Berkshire, against which time Jack of Newbery clothed thirty tall fellows, being his household servants, in blue coats, faced with sarsenet, every one having a good sword and buckler on his shoulder… who knowing the King would come over a certain meadow near adjoining to the town, got himself thither with all his men and, repairing to a certain ant-hill which was in the field, took up his seat there, causing his men to stand round about the same with their swords drawn.³⁸

On the most superficial level, the Statute of Liveries and the Sumptuary Laws would seem to have rendered Jack’s outfitting of his servants transgressive in Henrician England. While the livery laws of early Tudors were relaxed by the time of Elizabeth, sumptuary laws were not. According to the Greenwich Statures of 1574, anyone below the rank of knight was prohibited from wearing either sarsenet or a sword. Robert Zaller, noting that such measures were an early form of “institutional control…on an economic level,”³⁹ compares sumptuary laws to the granting of monopolies in that each was a
means of maintaining social order through crown prerogative. I submit that Jack’s outfitting of his servants suggests not only a violation of royal edict, but an opposition to the crown’s use of royal prerogative itself. As I will show, the issue of royal prerogative lies at the heart of Deloney’s satire. As the episode unfolds, Deloney will focus his criticism specifically on the granting of royal monopolies, itself a reification of the royal prerogative, and on its deleterious effect on the commonwealth at large.

However, before treating the specific subversive elements of Jack’s display, I want to consider the rhetorical situation in which the display is embedded. Infractions such as Jack’s against sumptuary laws were in fact permissible in the context of performances commonly played out along the route of a monarch on progress, during which “the ritual actions and arrangement of costumed officials performing a tableaux of civic self-definition” served the dual purpose of honoring the visiting monarch and voicing local concerns. Thus far, Jack’s scene corresponds with these sanctioned displays. William Leahy contends that “The number of allegorical devices presented to the new Queen and audience were fundamentally part of a poetics of praise.” And Mary Hill Cole concurs that while the progresses provided “an opportunity to speak across the divides of status” they invariably did so “without challenging the divides of hierarchy.” However, when asked the meaning of the display, Jacks’ cryptic responses suggest a criticism of the King. It is at this point that I would submit Jack’s scene departs from the orthodoxy of civic display and enters the realm of satire. Jack will parody the language of court and the royal progress itself to criticize what ultimately can be read as a censure of Elizabethan economic policies of the 1590s.
Once he has gained the attention of the King, Jack responds to questions posed by the herald and later the King himself with answers that deliberately mimic the euphuistic rhetoric of the Elizabethan courtiers, who were “the first to indulge in this excessive form of language… peppering their speech with the proper amount of parison and isocolon, assonance and rhyme.” The publication of John Lyly’s *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* in 1578 had prompted a rhetorical fashion at court that was both artificial and elaborate, based on devices such as antithesis, isocolon, chiasmus, as well as a great deal of nature imagery. According to Richard Helgerson, Lyly’s book advanced the idea that “Wit is the skill at repartee required for success in the sophisticated, courtly conversazione.” Jack adopts euphuism’s ornate trappings in order to assume an advisory role ordinarily limited to courtiers. But, beyond that, Deloney parodies the affectedness of euphuistic rhetoric to criticize an Elizabethan court culture that expresses “superior position not through any productive pattern of economic behavior, but through such artificial aspects of manner as elaborate dress and sophisticated talk.” Ultimately, his words to the monarch, even though couched in the sanctioned rhetoric of the court, will criticize the King’s favoring of courtiers—specifically through the granting of monopolies-- at the expense of the commonwealth.

When first asked by the King’s messenger the meaning of the display, Jack declares that he is “marquis of a molehill… chosen Prince of Ants.” While Jack’s response may strike the reader as nonsensical, as it does the royal herald, the overblown epithets and those that follow conform to the euphuistic speech of the late Elizabethan court. Jack’s juxtaposition of the lofty and the humble, with its touch of alliteration, moves the King to laugh “heartily.” Jack’s stylistic flourish not only mimics the florid
speech of the late Elizabethan court, it also exploits the heuristic potential of antithesis, which can lead to questioning the nature or basis of the disjuncture. More than merely observing, the reader is invited (if not required) by Deloney’s use of the rhetorical trope to resolve the disjunction of marquis/molehill and prince/ants. There are at least four ways in which the reader can harmonize the dissonance and interpret the meaning of the Jack’s cryptic self-identification. Perhaps the most conventionally satiric interpretation is one aimed at Jack himself. But, as noted by William Leahy, in Renaissance allegory “directed meanings are not the only possible ones…pageant creators beckon ambiguous meanings,” and I want to argue that Jack uses this to full advantage in his satire. First, “marquis of a molehill” can function to deflate the prestige of rank itself, thereby calling into question the exclusivity of office. Second, the image may conversely insist on the prerogative of the speaker himself, maintaining a defiant stance in defense of his own jurisdiction, be it ever so laughably unsubstantial. Third, the image could suggest that the disproportion is resolvable, or least mitigated, by granting the speaker more authority, agency, or property. Lastly, the reader may interpret the image as an instance of irony in which all of these possibilities are present. According to Linda Hutcheon, irony is inclusive, involving oscillation “between the said and the unsaid…rapid perceptual or hermeneutic movement between them….implies a kind of simultaneous perception of more than one meaning.” In this case, each of these meanings contributes not to a single definitive conclusion, but to a polysemous field of inquiry concerning the nature of authority and property. Jack’s response seems to raise more questions than it answers, which is precisely how Deloney’s satire begins to work. Jack’s ironic use of euphuistic
rhetoric allows him to begin destabilizing the very hierarchy in which it serves as a marker of rank.

Curious to know further the meaning of Jack’s staged scene, the King summons him to approach the royal train. The exchange between Jack and the King’s herald is a bit of verbal sparring that incorporates what G.K. Hunter refers to as euphuism’s “unnatural natural history.” Jack responds to the summons that “his Grace hath a horse and I am on foot, therefore will him to come to me.” Jack is advancing a claim to dictating the grounds, both literal and ideological, on which monarch and subject will meet. The astonished herald objects “How dares the lamb be so bold with the lion?” And Jack ripostes “if there be a lion in the field, here is never a cock to fear him.” The audacity of Jack’s response is obvious, but it takes on greater significance when read in the context of Jack’s staged tableaux. As Jack explains to the herald, were he to heed the summons, he would be remiss in his duty to those dependent upon him: “tell his Majesty, he might think me a very bad Governor, that would walk aside upon pleasure, and leave my people in peril.” There is, I argue, an intended irony here, for this is exactly what the King himself is doing. While the King is on parade, Jack must take charge of defending the poorer members of the commonwealth. The satiric edge of Jack’s words becomes keener when read in the context of Elizabeth’s progresses and how they were viewed during the second half of her reign. Mary Hill Cole writes that, despite being “assiduous about paying attention to business” while on progress, the queen’s frequent absences from London were often viewed as “a time of confusion, sloth, and self-indulgence.” Petitioners, foreign ambassadors, councilors, and even those entrusted with the defense of the realm frequently recorded their unease and dissatisfaction with what they perceived to
be a lack of responsibility on the part of the peripatetic Queen. Hence Jack’s final words to the King’s herald, “He that hath a charge must look to it, and so tell thy Lord my King.”

Jack has been criticizing further the monarch’s laxness in fulfilling his role within the commonwealth. Furthermore, the delivery of the proverb alludes to the dual function of satire as Deloney employs it. Thus far, Jack has used irony to destabilize hierarchy and criticize the King. As his allegory continues to unfold, he will move on to instructing the King by modelling the proper character of authority in the commonwealth.

Jack modulates his role from critic to teacher through a third instance of euphuistic rhetoric, this time alluding to his role of protector during the King’s absence in the past. While explaining to the herald his unwillingness to leave the anthill, Jack says “while I am away our enemies might come and put my people in hazard as the Scots did England while our King was in France.”

Like the antithesis and “unnatural natural history” of the previous examples, the chiastic structure of this statement encourages comparison, contrast, discrimination, and evaluation. The two internal elements, “our enemies” and “the Scots,” are analogous in that both are threats to the realm of England, one in the past and one in the hypothetical future. The two external elements, Jack and the King, are for a third time compared, again to Jack’s advantage. If Jack remains on the anthill for the express purpose of defending his people, is there an implication that Henry was somehow remiss in deciding to go to war with France? The inverted parallelism suggests that Jack is doing what the King himself should have done. Moreover, Jack’s words contain a tacit reminder that, during the King’s absence, Jack played a vital role in the defense against the Scots:
[Jack] came home in all haste and cut out a whole broadcloth for horsemen’s coats, and so much more as would make up coats for the number of a hundred men. In short time he had made ready fifty tall men well mounted in white coats and red caps with yellow feathers, demi-lances in their hands, and fifty armed men on foot with pikes, and fifty shot in white coats also, every man so expert in the handling of his weapon as few better were found in the field.58

That is, Jack has been a selfless defender of the commonwealth in the past. Jack’s words to the herald and his arming of his men to defend the anthill evoke memories of these earlier preparations, which in turn point to the arming of his men to defend the anthill in the episode now under consideration. A vital difference is that this time the threat is internal. As Jack will explain to the King when the two finally come face to face, it is “diverse ill members in the common-wealth”59 who are causing the people such hardship.

Jack’s use of euphuisms throughout this scene has garnered some small critical attention, but the satiric import of his rhetorical strategy has not been considered. For instance, Jack’s boast that “if there be a lion in the field, here is never a cock to fear him” has been shown to be a direct borrowing from Thomas Fortescue’s *The Forest*: “The mightie Lyon dreadeth and feareth the Cock.”60 Rollins’s suggests that Deloney’s apparent debt to contemporary writers casts doubt on his knowledge of classical authors, going so far as to allege that Deloney’s occupation as an artisan rendered it “improbable that he was at all familiar with, say, many Latin and Italian works.”61 According to this reading, Deloney’s borrowing is simply another example of the early modern practice of adorning one’s own writing in borrowed plumage. But this overlooks several essential
details. First, the claim is belied by Deloney’s translation in 1583 of several letters passed between the archbishop of Cologne and Pope Gregory XIII, all of which were of course originally penned in Latin. Given the pedagogical practices of sixteenth-century England, it seems more improbable that anyone, artisan or no, could attain the linguistic facility necessary for such an undertaking without gaining a familiarity with writers such as Ovid, Plautus, Horace, Virgil, Cicero and Seneca. Second, Deloney’s use of euphuism is strategic rather than merely imitative. By employing the euphuistic style, Jack is able to address the sovereign in his own tongue, as it were. Even though the character of the King does not speak in euphuistic style, it’s reasonable to assume that Deloney’s readers in the 1590s would have recognized Jack’s linguistic embellishments as belonging to the Elizabethan court. Indeed, by the time of Jack of Newbury’s entry into the Stationers’ Register, the euphuistic style was enjoying a popular vogue. Leah Guenther notes that “As time passed…the popularity of Lyly's text stretched beyond its original courtly circles: to the chagrin of courtiers, the embellished locutions of Euphuism could be found on the tongues of the masses.”

But Jack is doing more than just mimicking the court style. This is not mere parroting; it’s parody, an “appropriation of the voice of another twisted to new motive.” The ease with which Jack adopts and discards the extravagant idioms caricatures the pretention of those “butterflies” whom he sees as harmful to the commonwealth. Most importantly, his use of parody will allow him to at once appropriate and critique the language of power. Linda Hutcheon notes that the “double etymology of the prefix para” suggests how parody can be at once mocking and complicit. Para can denote both “against” and “beside.” Jack adopts the accoutrements of civic display and euphuistic
rhetoric in order to question the court itself. As Hutcheon points out, an essential
difference between parody and satire is in the nature of their targets. Parody’s target is
textual. That is, the target of parody is the parodied text itself. In contrast, satire’s target
is extra-textual: it lies beyond of the text. Deloney’s goal is not merely to criticize the
ritual of the royal progress or the affectations of the court. Rather, he parodies the
monarch’s perambulations and the artificial speech of courtiers as a way of gesturing
toward other more serious instances of negligence on the part of the crown. But, thus far,
Jack’s tableaux has only piqued the interest of the King. In the next phase of what is a
shrewdly designed piece of satiric stagecraft, Jack will draw the monarch into the scene
itself and interpret for him the meaning of the allegory of the ants.

As noted earlier, while scholars have noted that Jack’s scene accords with
conventional petitions to monarchs on progress, none have discerned the satire implicit in
his address to the King. Mary Hill Cole writes that “despite the different local
circumstances and requests, civic speeches to the queen had a common structure [and]
rhetoric,” one so clearly established that “everyone knew how the script should read.” If
this is so, then it is all the more likely that Deloney’s readers would have recognized his
inversion of this structure, especially as it follows on the heels of his parodying of the
euphuistic rhetoric of the court. The established structure of a petition to a monarch on
progress was a narrative of the town’s “illustrious history,” interlarded with episodes of
“royal aid on many occasions.” Instead, Jack delivers his allegory of the ants, a tale of
hardship that includes multiple insinuations of the King’s absence:

[N]ot long ago, in my conceit I saw the most provident nation of the ants
summoned their chief peers to a parliament which was held in the famous
city Dry Dusty, the one and thirtieth day of September, whereas by their
wisdoms I was chosen their King; at what time also many bills of
complaint were brought in against diverse ill members in the
commonwealth, … the grasshopper and the caterpillar, because they were
not only idle, but also lived upon the labours of other men. Amongst the
rest the butterfly was very much disliked, … who through sufferance grew
so ambitious and malapert, that the poor ant could no sooner get an egg
into her nest but he would have it away[.]67

Rather than reinscribing an organic view of the commonwealth in which king and people
comprise a quasi-mystical unity, Jack offers a rudimentary anatomy of English society
comprised of conflicting interests. The source of the problem is not interest itself, but the
lack of an overseeing authority to police those interests. For Jack, this is the duty of the
highest secular authority: the King himself. The issue is not so much the legitimacy of
authority as it is the responsibility that is included in it. For this essential reason, Jack
explains to the King that the butterfly has grown proud “through sufferance,” presumably
of the King himself. In other words, the King’s failure to keep his courtiers in check is
the reason for the economic hardship experienced by the commons, which in turn is the
reason for the curious scene produced by Jack and, perhaps most importantly, the threat
of civil insurrection that it implies.

The language of Jack’s allegory as explained to the King evokes that recorded in
official transcripts and parliament diaries. The “many bills of complaint” brought against
the Grasshopper and the Caterpillar, which Jack has been called upon to pursue in his
allegorical parliament, focus on “ambitious” and “idle” members of the commonwealth
who live “on the labors or other men.” Similarly, historical parliamentary clashes regarding monopolies frequently deplored a situation in which the “principallest commodityes ... are ingrossed into the handes of these bloodsuckers of the commonwealth.”68 In 1601, Richard Martin’s protested that

Inward and Private Commodities dare not be used, without License of those Monopolitans. If these Blood-suckers be still let alone, to suck up the best and principallest Commodities... What shall become of us...and the Commodities of our own Labour,69

Jack’s complaint that “the poor ant could no sooner get an egg into her nest, but [the Butterfly] would have it away” resonates with a protest by William Hackwell to the House of Commons in 1601:

Upon Reading of the Patents aforesaid, Mr. Hackwell of Lincolns-Inn stood up, and asked this, Is not Bread there? Bread, quoth another? This voice seems strange quoth a third: No quoth Mr. Hackwell, but if order be not taken for these, Bread will be there, before the next Parliament.70

The agreement between Jack’s allegory and parliamentary opponents of monopoly seems to be that the few are profiting at the expense of the many, a rapidly deteriorating state of affairs that threatens the commonwealth itself.

That knowledge of these issues was not denied the commonalty is revealed by Robert Cecil, who speaking about monopolies specifically complained that “Parleamente matters are ordinarie talke in the streetes.”71 A journal entry from January 1595 records that “the exactions and other inconveniences of Mr. Darcy’s patent cause great grief and
murmur of the people throughout the land.” And indeed The Acts of the Privy Council
record how

of late certain apprentices of London violently took away a 1000 lbs. weight of starch that had been seized on for her majesty’s use by Mr. James Anton, her patentee, and not only carried the same to a warehouse but did grievously beat and wound Mr. Anton’s deputies.

These records indicate the topicality of monopolies and the violence attributed to them. But beyond the currency of the debate and the anxiety concerning popular violence (real or imagined), Deloney’s satire has in common with parliamentary opponents of monopoly the belief that it is crown policy that leads to economic distress and then to social upheaval.

In 1601, Sir George Moore attested to the civil unrest occasioned by monopoly on salt and salterpeter and the anxiety that this caused civic officials. But, more importantly, his metaphor of the body suggests that the Crown is responsible not only for the granting of monopolies, but the resulting violence as well:

Many Grievances have been laid open, touching the Monopoly of Salt; but if you had added thereunto Peter, then you had hit the Grief aright…There be Three Persons; Her Majesty, the Patentee, and the Subject: Her Majesty the Head, the Patentee the Hand, and the Subject the Foot. Now, here is our Case; the Head gives Power to the Hand, the Hand Oppresseth the Foot, the Foot Riseth against the Head.
Francis Moore, speaking in the same parliamentary session, gets to heart of the matter when he argues that the granting of monopolies harms the commonwealth as a whole, including the Queen herself:

There is no Act of Hers that hath been, or is more Derogatory to Her own Majesty, or more Odious to the Subject, or more Dangerous to the Common-Wealth, than the Granting of these Monopolies.\textsuperscript{75}

But, in contrast to Deloney’s amenable monarch, Elizabeth was notoriously jealous of her prerogative. Her view of the House of Commons, as expressed to the Lord Keeper that they should “meddle with noe matters of state but such as should be propounded unto them, and to occupy themselves in other matters concerning the common wealth,”\textsuperscript{76} reveals a fundamental difference in how the commonwealth was perceived. Moreover, that difference was largely economic. The debates over monopolies would extend to larger questions by the turn of the century. By 1601, many MPs “demanded not just that abuses [of monopolies] be addressed but that the legality of all such grants be challenged: a clash over the prerogative was therefore unavoidable.” The isolated incident of monopoly hence led to a fundamental question regarding the commonwealth. How far should royal prerogative extend? And what was the proper balance between prerogative and liberty? What most benefited the commonwealth? And what was the role of authority within that polity? In sixteenth-century English satire we see a focus on particulars that leads ultimately to a questioning of fundamental assumptions on which economic theories are grounded. The relevance of Deloney’s use of satire is not limited to a single economic grievance: it extends to how central political authority should function in the
context of an increasingly complex economy. Policy, rather than prerogative, is seen as the more fitting rudder for the ship of state.

When the King finally turns from his route and approaches the anthill, “Jack of Newbery and his servants put up all their weapons, and with a joyful cry flung up their caps in token of victory.” On the surface, this may appear to dispel the threat of violence, to reduce the scene to mere symbolic play. But, again, when read against the recent uprisings of the late 1590s, which continued to be a source of serious anxiety to civic and royal officials, it would seem that the violence implicit in Jack’s scene threatens to rupture the superficial deference implied by observation of conventional forms. The fact that Jack’s retainers lay down their arms should not be misread simply as homage to the King. The threat implicit in Jack’s display has already opened up interpretive avenues that cannot now be closed off. His subsequent kneeling before the King effects what Jonathon Dollimore, in a discussion of Jacobean anti-masque, describes as a “formal restoration of providentialist/political orthodoxy, a compliance with its letter after having destroyed its spirit.”

But whereas it is the function of masque to re-order the impropriety of the anti-masque, Jack’s kneeling down before the King is, again, cosmetic at best. Deloney’s familiarity with and understanding of the economic situation during the later sixteenth century must not be overlooked when interpreting Jack’s scene in book three of Jack of Newbury. Read against the specific historical circumstances of the 1590s, Jack’s allegory becomes an indictment of Elizabethan economic policy as the source of violent social disorder. It also questions the role of royal prerogative in the life of the commonwealth. The performative aspect of Jack’s scene has led Evelyn Tribble to suggest that Deloney
uses the “complex semiotic system of civic pageantry”\textsuperscript{79} in part to avoid official sanctions similar to those resulting from his Letter to the French Divines and his Corn Ballad. Further, Tribble argues that Jack’s observance of rhetorical conventions when arming and positioning his men “transmutes rebellion into pageantry,”\textsuperscript{80} mediating not only the flouting of royal decree but also the defiance, not to say violence, implicit in the spectacle of thirty armed men with swords drawn. In support of this, she cites several precedents from the Henrician past, arguing that the threat of Jack’s armed men is neutralized by memories of “May Day festivities of which Henry VIII was so fond…” [during] which disguised courtiers intercepted Henry and his entourage as they went out to ‘fetch May.’\textsuperscript{81} However, this romanticized reading is only possible if one overlooks the immediate historical circumstances during which Jack of Newbury was published. I would argue that, rather than contain the implicit threat of Jack’s display, the situation of the progress in fact highlights the critique inherent in Jack’s words and actions. For readers in the late 1590s, the image of Jack’s armed men doubtlessly resonated with more recent memories. The simple mention of armed apprentices evokes the civil unrest that plagued England throughout the 1590s. A royal proclamation issued on June 20, 1591 describes

\begin{quote}
sundry great disorders committed in and about her city of London by unlawful great assemblies of multitudes of a popular sort of base condition, whereof some are apprentices and servants to artificers.\textsuperscript{82}
\end{quote}

There were a dozen instances in June 1595 alone of London apprentices rioting against exorbitant food prices and the jailing of their comrades,\textsuperscript{83} a crisis that prompted the reissuing of the 1591 proclamation quoted above. The Trevelyan Papers record an
anonymous letter copied from manuscript of 1598 that suggests the solidarity that could exist among the apprentices and the means by which this group could effect retribution for perceived wrongs. While the specific circumstances occasioning the unrest are unknown, the preparation called for in the letter bears a striking similarity to Jack’s staged scene. Reading the historical document alongside Deloney’s fictional episode brings out the violent threat implicit in Jack’s apparently harmless and deferential stance:

After our most harty commendacions unto you goo brethren and Prentyses….The cause of our wryting unto you at this time is for to know whether you will put up this iniurye or no: for to se our brethren whypt and set on the pyllory without a cause, which is a greyef to us. Desyring you to send an aunswere on waye or other, for yf you will not put it up we do give consent to geather our selves togeather uppon Bartholomew day in the feildes, some with daggers, some with staves…betwixt 3 and 4 of the cloke in the afternoone against my Lo. Mayor go to the wrestlinge, and there to be revenged of him[..]64

Both the letter and the official reactions to civil unrest make plain that participants and observers both understood rank to be a marker of identity. Therefore, it seems more likely that Deloney’s readers would have identified Jack’s “household servants” with the rioters of the 1590s rather than the “disguised courtiers” two generations removed. I suggest that Deloney intends his readers to draw parallels between Jack’s retainers and the apprentices who caused such anxiety in 1590s London. Jack appropriates the trappings of the civic pageant, producing a scene that ostensibly honors the monarch on progress, while at the same time prompting memories of recent civic violence, which I argue he attributes to
misgovernance on the part of the King. Thus, Jack’s use of the civic pageant is parodic: He both participates in and critiques the ceremony of the civic pageant. Parody thus serves to further his program as an interested member of the polity, allowing him access to the monarch and the opportunity to critique the monarch’s economic agenda. Finally, his parody of the civic pageant is satiric in that its ultimate target is much larger than the rhetoric of the progress itself.

Jack’s political activism becomes more apparent when his own performance in the staged scene is read alongside official proclamations responding to the riots of the 1590s. In the absence of a paid constabulary, a master or householder was expected to police his apprentices and servants. In response to the rash of rioting London experienced in June 1595, the Lord Mayor declared that “every householder [was] to have a sufficient weapon at his dore for the preservation of her Maiesties peace.” In June 1597, responding to violent disorder near the Tower, the Lord Mayor ordered that “householders be…ready at the door…with a weapon in their hande.”85 This measure was to be taken not to keep rioters out of the house, but to keep them in. Both the crown and the civic authorities seem to have felt that the disturbances were the responsibility (if not the fault) of householders who are “not able or not disposed to rule their servants as they ought to do.”86 Jack parodies these proclamations and subverts the social theory that informs them when he as householder arms his men each with “a good sword and buckler” while apparently going unarmed himself.87

Jack’s words to his sovereign, while couched in the rhetorical blandishments of the Elizabethan court, nevertheless suggest that the problem is systemic rather than local. As such, it must be addressed at the executive level, the purview of the King himself.
Rather than a moralistic attack on Cardinal Wolsey, an ill-famed scapegoat of a bygone era, Deloney’s satire addresses the economic problems of the 1590s. Like Thomas Smith in *A Discourse on the Commonwealth of England*, Deloney suggests that the social harmony of a polity is a function of its economic well-being. Smith, writing in the middle of the sixteenth century, attributes social ills to the debasement of currency under Somerset. Although Deloney, writing in the 1590s, ascribes social disorder to a cause different from Smith’s, both authors indorse the reformist notion that social stability is a function of economic stability, which in turn is dependent on sound economic policy. In his discussion of the 1599 Bishops’ Ban, Bryan Herek remarks on the efforts of “Elizabethan authors … to develop a literary form that attended to the social, economic, and political pressures acting upon the individual in particular historical moments.”

Thus, in this sense, Deloney’s prose work may be classed with writers of formal verse satire such as Hall, Marston, and Guilpin whose books were explicitly targeted by Whitgift and Bancroft. However, Deloney’s avoidance of Juvenalian vitriol and his participation in Native and Horatian satiric traditions distance him from these satirists.

Jack parodies both the euphuistic rhetoric of the court and the deferential rhetoric of supplications to a monarch on progress to undercut the paternalism in which each of them participates. But Jack’s display should not be read as simply attacking the hierarchical structure of Henrician or Elizabethan England. His attitude toward power falls somewhere between the naïve monarchism of the mid-sixteenth century and the overt republicanism of the mid-17th century. Rather than simply attacking, Jack’s satire aims at reforming the monarch’s failure to meet his obligations within this paternalistic relationship, a failure which in turn threatens the stability of the hierarchical social
structure. This motive to reform constitutes the fundamentally satiric quality of his agenda. His goal is not to condemn the norms of reciprocity but to redefine and enforce them, insisting that the King maintain a balance of power among the ranks of his subjects. Quite apart from challenging the established order, Jack demonstrates to the King that social stability is dependent on economic order, which in turn is dependent on the policies of the King himself. The idea that the health of the commonwealth depended on the King is not novel to the 1590s. Edmund Dudley, for instance, argued in the first years of Henry VIII’s reign that the king was the soil out of which the tree of commonwealth grew. But Dudley’s treatise was underwritten by a Christian ethic and concluded that the king’s moral character would be absorbed by the commonwealth, which would then flourish or fail depending on the integrity king’s example. A crucial difference between Jack’s analysis and that of economic reformers of the early sixteenth century is that Jack is concerned with economic policy rather than with the character of the king.

Deloney’s pragmatism becomes even clearer when Jack’s satiric episode is considered within the larger context of *Jack of Newbury*. Despite winning the King’s support for his fellow clothiers, Jack nevertheless must contend with Wolsey later in the narrative. Again, economic hardship is the problem. England’s wars on the Continent disrupt trade, as English clothworkers are forbidden to traffic with French or Dutch merchants, leading to a slashing of English wages and widespread unemployment. Seeking redress, Jack organizes a large contingent of laborers who travel to London and again appeal directly to the King, whose response to their petition reveals that the Allegory of the Ants has left a lasting impression on him:
‘My lords,’ quoth the King, ‘let these men’s complaint be thoroughly looked unto, and their grief redressed, for I account them in the number of the best common-wealth’s men. As the clergy for the soul, the soldier for defence of his country, the lawyer to execute justice, the husbandman to feed the belly, so is the skillful clothier no less necessary for the clothing of the back, whom we may reckon among the chief yeomen of our land; …Many more reasons there are, which may move us to redress their griefs, but let it suffice that I command to have it done.’

But the King’s easy slide into ‘body politic’ rhetoric is undercut by the disgruntled Wolsey, still smarting from Jack’s “wars against the butterflies.” Entrusted with re-establishing economic ties between the English clothiers and their foreign markets, Wolsey “put[s] off the matter from time to time,” leading Jack to quip “if my Lord Cardinal’s father had been no hastier in killing of calves, than he is in dispatching of poor men’s suits, I doubt he had never worn a mitre.” Wolsey’s father was a butcher in Ipswich, and when the elitist Cardinal learns of Jack’s remark he causes all the clothiers to be imprisoned in the Marshalsea. Friends of Wolsey intercept the clothiers’ petition to the King, who is unaware of what’s happening, and it is only through the intercession of the Duke of Somerset that Jack and his companions are released from prison and reconciled with the Cardinal, who finally grants their suit.

This later episode suggests that Deloney is aware that satire has its limitations. While its parodic elements have enabled Jack to exploit the porosity of the border between king and subject, there is always the chance that satire will come up short when faced with bureaucracy. Wit sometimes comes at a cost, as Jack’s four days in the
Marshalsea have taught him. Granted, Jack’s satire opened the King’s eyes to royal negligence in the first episode, and this in turn influenced his decision to grant the clothiers’ economic petition in the second. However, the King is for a second time, if not remiss, at least absent when it some to implementing whatever remedial measures he has decreed. The Ciceronian humanist that informs Jack’s initial encounter with the King is clouded over by a more Tacitean pragmatism as Jack becomes enmeshed in the contending interests surrounding the monarch. Still, by eschewing Juvenalian anger and adopting a dialogic Horatian approach, Jack not only speaks to power but engages with it, even if the results are temporary or problematic. Deloney can thus be read as participating in a trend of constructive satire expansive enough to accommodate and explore the shifting and dimly perceived relationship between political power and a national economy in the sixteenth century.
Chapter Four
“A lewd moneyless device”: Marketing the Text in Thomas Nashe’s *The Unfortunate Traveller*

Thomas Nashe’s *The Unfortunate Traveller*, published in 1594, is the story of Jack Wilton, an enterprising English rogue whose escapades on the Continent are a survey of early sixteenth-century European politics, dynastic struggles, and religious wars. Ostensibly set during the reign of Henry VIII, Wilton’s tale is nevertheless firmly rooted, thematically, in the 1590s. In this chapter I focus on Wilton’s time in the English military camp and his subsequent travels to Germany, considering how Nashe uses the detached picaro to record the varying economic dynamics underlying the political and theological relationships among the people he encounters. Through the character of Wilton, Nashe not only posits a market for his own literary product, but also shows how early modern satire was expanding to accommodate contending positions, itself a reflection of new conceptions of society as an amalgam of contending interests rather than a monolithic, organic, hierarchal unity. The result is a work that both embodies the emergence of a market based on dissimilar interests and marks an early attempt at exploring this new phenomenon.

Nashe’s eccentricities as a writer have long defied scholarly taxonomy. Nashe’s wit, while undeniable, creates a kaleidoscopic effect between the ludic and the sardonic, and is oftentimes more dazzling than enlightening. Steven Mentz notes that pre-1970 critics most often viewed Nashe as an “artistic failure.”¹ Stanley Wells tersely states of *The Unfortunate Traveller* that “it has no organizing principle; it is not a unified work of art.”² G.R. Hibbard offers this more gracious apology for the work’s episodic structure:
Nashe is essentially an improviser. He works in terms of what may be described as scenes. Interested in the immediate, local effect he can extract from an idea or situation, he works on it until he has exhausted its possibilities or grown bored with it, and then moved on to something else, unconcerned with its relationship with what has gone before, intent on showing his craftsmanship by treating it in an arresting manner and relying on his virtuosity as a showman to cover up the gaps.³

Kiernan Ryan rightly argues that these earlier assessments are unfairly reductive and informed by a “profoundly conservative ideology” interested in “pinning the author to one unchanging vision and narrowing reality to an essential theme sealed within a single form.”⁴ More recent critics have tried to understand Nashe’s idiosyncrasies on their own terms, reading him either as a proto-postmodernist in the vein of Bakhtin or Kristeva, a precursor of modern journalists, or an anti-humanist skeptical⁵ of an Elizabethan epistemology. But the “Nashe problem” persists.

Narrowing our critical focus to the question of satire within The Unfortunate Traveller, we are met with similar difficulties. It seems almost impossible to understand its satire as enforcing moral boundaries between one group and another.⁶ Nashe’s satire is so indiscriminate and omnidirectional that it threatens to devolve into a gleeful misanthropy for its own sake. The “Nashe problem,” as described by Lorna Hutson is rooted in this overabundance: “if we can even suspect that Nashe’s writings are not really saying anything, they clearly lack the ethical commitment, the rhetorical efficiency, of satire.”⁷ One way beyond this critical impasse is by expanding our understanding of the “rhetorical efficacy” of satire beyond the wholly prescript-tive. Nashe’s fulsome
descriptions with their apparent contradictions are less about separation than about interrelatedness. If we focus instead on satire’s capacity for “shared inquiry” between author and reader, Wilton’s apparently indiscriminate pillorying of virtually all he encounters on his travels begins to emerge as exploratory, even constructive, of an alternate space. Nashe’s idiosyncratic style and satire’s capacity to simultaneously participate and critique allow for an interpretive through-line to Wilton’s otherwise episodic narrative. The accumulation of satiric episodes suggests an emerging experience of community economics, the complications of which were only partially understood and which no lexicon yet existed to adequately describe.

To begin, I want to consider the two pieces of paratext that precede the narrative proper: Nashe’s dedicatory letter to Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, and Wilton’s Induction to the Dapper Monsieur Pages of the Court. The dedicatory letter and the induction work in concert to establish the economic themes that I trace throughout several episodes of *The Unfortunate Traveller*. Even though the two pieces of paratext precede the narrative, they in fact bookend it in terms of the economic models they posit: whereas the dedicatory letter to Wriothesley deals with the economy of patronage, the induction to the pages of the Court suggests a market economy. The body of *The Unfortunate Traveller* then uses Wilton’s satirical observations of economic and moral relationships to move from the static dependency of the patronage model to the more negotiable dynamic of the market.

In his dedication to Wriothesley, Nashe raises the problematic and interrelated issues of arbitrary authority, a slavish conformity to tradition, and the idea of a literary work as a useable commodity. Typical of the contrarian Nashe, his dedication to
Wriothesley opens on a querulous note, doubting the relevance and utility of dedicatory letters themselves: “I know not what blind custom methodical antiquity hath thrust upon us, to dedicate such books as we publish to one great man or other.” He characterizes the practice as one of outmoded conformity, “blind” and “methodical,” i.e., undiscerning and dogmatic. (His choice of words may also be an attack on his enemy, Gabriel Harvey, who had recently contrasted Nashe’s “licentiously heterogenized” style with that of the “finest Methodists.”) This opening line is not only a promise of things to come stylistically speaking, it also uses the heavily freighted term “custom” to introduce a theme running throughout *The Unfortunate Traveller*: the moral and material valuation of a text as a saleable (or even allowable) commodity.

Despite the strictures of the patronage system, Nashe defers to “blind custom” out of necessity. Deference to Wriothesley’s taste is the custom he needs to pay: “lest any man should challenge these my papers as goods uncustomed and so extend upon them as forfeit to contempt, to the seal of your excellent censure lo here I present them to be seen and allowed.” According to the logic of the patronage system, the only security against the scorn of the obtuse “any man” is the imprimatur of a discriminating patron. The text cannot be transmitted by its own merit. Nashe resorts to a traditional trope to express this dependence on Wriothesley, comparing the earl to a spreading tree “with whose juice and sap [his writings] be evermore created and nourished.” Fundamentally hierarchical, the trope posits a central authority figure as the sole source of inspiration, authorization, and prosperity. For Nashe, professional success wholly depends on the sanction of his noble patron, without whose “vigorous nutriment of…authorized commendation…never will [his writing] grow to the world’s good liking.”
On the one hand, the dedication’s imagery accords with a fundamental social conservatism found elsewhere in *The Unfortunate Traveller*, such as the Anabaptist revolt discussed below. Even for an author as self-assured as Nashe, the value of one’s work within the patronage economy is a function of a single elite patron: “How well or ill I have done in it I am ignorant…. [O]nly your Honour’s applauding encouragement hath power to make me arrogant.”\(^{16}\) On the other hand, despite its obligatory epideictic rhetoric, the imagery of Nashe’s dedication to Wriothesley also registers doubts about this dependence on a single, definitive index of his worth. For instance, he praises the infallible good taste of his patron, writing to Wriothesley that “Unretrievably perisheth that book whatsoever to waste-paper which on the diamond rock of your judgement disasterly chanceth to be shipwrecked.”\(^{17}\) But the purity, refinement, clarity, and wealth of “diamond…judgement” are complicated by the extended metaphor in which the image is embedded. There is a certain arbitrariness to “chanceth,” especially troubling given the absolute and irrevocable nature of the judgement. Moreover, recalling the dedication’s opening metaphor of customs and trade, the question must be asked: when is a rock anything other than a hazard to a ship at sea, something on which one’s ship and one’s enterprise (whether mercantile or literary) might founder? The patron may be a “dear lover and cherisher… of poets.”\(^{18}\) But the upshot is that Wriothesley is “dear” in two contending senses: his patronage being esteemed but costly. Within the patronage economy, dependence on the patron is indisputably requisite, potentially profitable, and invariably risky. The patron is not simply a guarantor; deference to his tastes is the tax the author needs to pay. Should Nashe fail to meet Wriothesley’s expectations, no matter how unreasonable or misguided, his product will not be allowed to reach its public.
In contrast to the elevated diction and fulsome praise of the dedication, which centers attention solely on the figure of the noble patron, the parodic banter of the induction is addressed to a corporate body of nameless “Dapper Monsieur Pages of the Court.” This is a liminal moment, signaling both a break and a continuation. Signed by Wilton (as opposed to Nashe), the induction marks the beginning of the narrative itself. But it is also a continuation of the paratext, a parodic reflection of the dedication that has preceded it. Without exactly criticizing or even reversing the patronage model, it nevertheless dissolves its monopoly on assigning literary and economic value by showing an alternative economy already in place and operative. The noble Wriothesley is not effaced, merely sidelined as focus shifts to the pages “waiting together at the bottom of the great chamber stairs.”

Despite the patron’s presence in the background, it’s a scene of radical decentralization, as the pages (and the reader’s attention) debouch onto the street, moving from porch (the pages’ own “parliament house”) to tavern to stationer’s stall. Peopled by servants, grocers, printers, and professional authors, the induction dissolves established rank in a swelter of economic activity in which the proffered narrative is comparable to other commodities. The materiality of the printed pages is emphasized by the uses to which they may be put: “to dry and kindle tobacco,” “to stop mustard pots,” “to wrap mace,” “To any use about meat & drink… for they cannot do their country better service.”

Thus, the narrative is construed as an artefact, a saleable article, rather than a sign of service to a patron.

Moreover, the induction proposes a new criterion of worth. Whereas the dedication focuses on Wriothesley as “the large spreading branch of renown” and on the “diamond rock of [his] judgment” as the sole and incontrovertible index of value, the
induction suggests gradations of use-value that may be assigned to the narrative by a corporate body of commoners. These uses range from the scatological (“waste paper… a privy token”) to the contractual (“a pawn in times of famine and necessity”) to the ceremonial (“swear…on nothing but this chronicle of the king of pages henceforward”).

Even if found wanting, the written narrative is integrated within this alternate economy, rather than being “unreprievably” rejected by a single patron.

The economic plight of the professional English writer in the 1590s has been recognized by literary historians for some time, and it’s a commonplace that “the disappointed scholar [is] one of the major types of Elizabethan satirist.” Nashe’s own contemporaries saw him as an example of the type, using him as a model for the impoverished Ingenioso in the Parnassus plays depicting “the struggles of the scholar in the late-Elizabethan world.” But even in this strained economic environment, “Nashe's perennial cry of poverty” might be heard above the common cry. This is partly due to how satire operates in the paratext. Read in tandem with the dedication, the induction completes a satiric diptych in which the Dedication to Wriothesley discreetly insinuates the incongruities of the client’s predicament, the Induction to the Pages that immediately follows sounds a robust response, using parody and satire to construct an alternative to the patronage economy. Comprising its own argot, practices, and standard of value, this alternate space is a marketplace: a site of economic, social, and cultural exchange.

In an important sense, the actual narrative of The Unfortunate Traveller continues the work begun in the paratext. From the very start of his tale, and within the brief span of a mere several pages, the protagonist Jack Wilton parodies and co-opts some of the most prominent literary forms of his day. Much has been made of Nashe’s conflicted
relationship with the romance genre. John Berryman allows that *The Unfortunate Traveller* is a “symbolic effort to wrench prose narrative out of euphuism and romance.” Similarly, Georgia Brown writes that “Nashe’s own antipathy to romance as a literary form remains virtually definitive of his career.” Lacking alternative long-prose forms, Nashe uses satire to deconstruct those at hand, exploiting the porosity of their discursive boundaries and opening a space for his own narrative, much in the same way that he has already used parody in the induction to posit a market for his literary product. The story opens in the early years of Henry VIII, using elevated language evoking the medieval *chanson de geste* and the more recent historical chronicle:

> About that time that the terror of the world and fever quartan of the French, Henry the Eighth (the only true subject of chronicles) advanced his standard against the two hundred and fifty towers of Tournay and Terouanne, and had the Emperor and all the nobility of Flanders, Holland & Brabant as mercenary attendants on his full-sailed fortune.

But generic rules and readerly expectations are foiled by Wilton’s effortless shuttling between high and low registers, oftentimes in a single sentence. A tragic violation (“Turwin lost her maidenhead”) readily morphs into a crass joke (“and opened her gates to more than Jane Tross did”); the promise of Wilton’s part in the young English king’s venture (“where what my credit was”) devolves into blunt and amoral self-interest (“a number of my creditors that I cozened can testify”). This continues a process of destabilization begun in the paratext. The difference is that now it is not only the economic model but the product itself, the narrative, that is being dismantled with a view to moving outside established criteria.
In addition to historical writing, Wilton continues a burlesque of sixteenth-century devotional literature begun in the induction, where he proclaims to his fellow pages that “It shall be lawful for any whatsoever to play with false dice in a corner on the cover of this foresaid *Acts and Monuments*.” As he begins to describe life in the English military camp, he compares his own irreverent narrative to the martyrology of John Foxe, piercing the boundary between the sacred and the profane: “What stratagemical acts and monuments do you think an ingenious infant of my years might enact?” Going further, he arrogates Holy Writ itself, inverting a biblical commonplace to impishly sanction his mischief: “Those companies, like a great deal of corn, do yield some chaff. The corn are cormorants, the chaff are good fellows which are quickly blown to nothing with bearing a light heart in a light purse.” The biblical imagery of separation remains but is transformed by a Machiavellian amorality. In his revision of the metaphor, Wilton shifts the dichotomy between good and bad from a moral axis to one of expedience. That is, some people are “quickly blown to nothing” through their own inability to make do. The onus, if any, is placed squarely on their shoulders. The resulting moral ambiguity is epitomized in the polysemous symbolism of the curiously inserted cormorant, which for Nashe’s contemporaries could symbolize both greediness and duty to others.

Just as he deflates the pretensions of historical and devotional literature, Wilton shows that “lower” sub-genres of rogue literature are also insufficient to contain his tale. His first episode is the duping of the camp tapster, a “peer of quartpots” whom he selects to “damn with a lewd moneyless device.” Feigning friendship, Wilton deceives the tapster into believing that he is being slandered as a traitor to the English army:
It is buzzed in the King’s head that you are a secret friend to the enemy, and under pretence of getting a licence to furnish the camp with cider and suchlike provant, you have furnished the enemy, & in empty barrels sent letters of discovery and corn innumerable.\(^\text{37}\)

Utterly taken in, the credulous tapster tries to recoup his supposedly tarnished reputation by giving away all he has to the rank-and-file:

> But the next day I think we had a dole of cider, cider in bowls, in scuppets, in helmets, and, to conclude, if a man would have filled his boots full, there he might have had it; provant thrust itself into poor soldiers’ pockets, whether they would or no.\(^\text{38}\)

Despite an obvious affinity with the jest-book tradition, Wilton boasts that his own story exceeds the capacity of that sub-genre: “I had done a thousand better jests if they had been booked in order as they were begotten.”\(^\text{39}\) Similarly, he parodies the rejuvenated prodigal of coney-catching literature, with its claims to moral edification and social utility.\(^\text{40}\) Although he is ultimately found out and “pitifully whipped for my holiday lie,” this merely serves as additional entertainment, as the king and his retainers “made themselves merry with it many a winter’s evening after.”\(^\text{41}\) Wilton delights as much in the perpetration as in the recounting of his exploits, even when he is hoist on his own petard. His tongue-in-cheek offer that “as freely as my knavery was my own, it shall be yours to use in the way of honesty”\(^\text{42}\) rehearses the dubious excuse of rogue literature since mid-century that it might either dissuade or at least forewarn its readership of sin in the world. But given Wilton’s unabashed smugness\(^\text{43}\) in his own knavery (“This was one of my famous achievements…. It is pity posterity should be deprived of such precious
records⁴⁴), his parody of such admonitions serves as an advertisement for his own literary product. There is no pretense to moralizing here. Wilton is not merely informing us of the underworld of swindlers; he is inducing us to enter it with him. This is not edification; it is an invitation.

Satire is an element common to all forms of rogue literature (e.g., the picaresque, coney-catching pamphlets), so it is not surprising that Wilton’s three remaining episodes in the English camp fit neatly in the realm of general satire. But, just as he punctures the discursive boundaries of the genres discussed above, Nashe here foregrounds the problems with satire. There is a great deal of ambiguity surrounding the satirist’s motivation and, assuming he is acting in good faith, the efficacy of his attack. Ostensibly, Wilton’s gulling of “an ugly mechanical captain,”⁴⁵ a Swiss mercenary, and a “company of coistrel clerks”⁴⁶ is actuated by their embodying broad categories of human faults. In the first instance, he exploits the undiscerning ambition of the captain, fabricating a “silver-sounding tale” of “kingly promotion”⁴⁷ to goad him into making a foolish foray into the French camp. Apparently, the victim is targeted because of his inflated sense of self-importance. But Wilton also discloses that the captain has been his collaborator in other schemes, and “it not convenient [his] soldado should have [his] purse any longer for his drum to play upon.”⁴⁸ The second and third instances share a similar moral ambiguity, the integrity of their satire being tainted by the self-interest of the satirist. Donning a maid’s habit, Wilton exploits the lust of a Swiss mercenary “that was far gone for want of the wench,” absconding with “the earnest-penny of impiety, some six crowns at the least for an antepast to iniquity.”⁴⁹ Finally, he raises a false alarm and scatters a company of clerks, “goose-quill braggadocios” who, he tells us, “were mere cowards and cravens.”⁵⁰
Surely, this would appear to be just treatment according to the moral code of a military force on the march. Indeed, Wilton claims the satirist’s mandate to ridicule the moral flaws of his targets:

I think confidently I was ordained God’s scourge from above for their dainty finicality. The hour of their punishment could no longer be prorogued, but vengeance must have at them at all adventures…..

[W]herefore on the experience of their pusillanimity I thought to raise the foundation of my roguery.⁵¹

This is Wilton’s final comment on his adventures in the English camp, and it explicitly points out the satiric thread running through each of his capers and through much of rogue literature in general. By virtue of their outsider status, tricksters and picares can pull back the veil from otherwise sacrosanct institutions and reveal underlying hypocrisy.

But by now a narrative and thematic pattern has been established in The Unfortunate Traveller, and the reader is not surprised to learn that Wilton plunders the company payroll after the clerks have taken to their heels.

The first third of The Unfortunate Traveller undoubtedly fits under the heading of general satire, but the congruence isn’t absolute. By foregrounding Wilton’s self-serving and self-aggrandizing agenda, Nashe is doing more than simply attacking the foibles of Wilton’s targets, and he goes far beyond the contaminated yet authoritative voice of, for instance, Philomene in The Steele Glas. If anything, Wilton’s mixed messages actually invite the perennial accusations that the satirist is merely contrarian, misanthropic, self-serving.⁵² Nashe seems to be satirizing satire itself, just as he has parodied historical, devotional, and rogue literature. Perhaps this is most obvious when Wilton returns to
England. Despite being “close at hard-meat,” i.e., “under strict restraint,” (undoubtedly due to his antics while in camp), he adopts exactly the pretensions he has just targeted while in camp, while continuing to parody the moral claims of the satirist: “For your instruction and godly consolation, be informed that at that time I was no common squire, no undertrodden torch-bearer; I had my feather in my cap as big as a flag in the foretop.” Moreover, the catalogue of his affectations recalls the grotesqueries of his recent victims. The tapster’s “great velvet breeches” and “ill-favoured goat’s beard,” the Switzer’s “scabbed elbows,” the clerks’ “near bitten beards” and “crab-lice” are all of a piece with my French doublet, gelt in the belly as though (like a pig ready to be spitted) all my guts had been plucked out; a pair of side paned hose that hung down like two scales filled with Holland cheeses; my long stock that sat close to my dock, and smothered not a scab or a lecherous hairy sinew on the calf of the leg;…and a black budge edging of a beard on the upper lip, & the like sable auglet of excrements in the rising of the angle of my chin.

This is more than simply a coda to his recent exploits: it is their consummation. Wilton’s indiscriminate satirizing of everyone finally leads to effacement of any distinction between satirist and satirized. His cheerful concession of any moral high ground frustrates attempts to construe Nashe’s satire as socially constructive, and his ludic nihilism leads Lorna Hutson to suspect Nashe of being “simply incapable of carrying out the old-fashioned prescription with conviction.” There seems to be no ironic distance here between Nashe and Wilton, as Wilton is plainly in on the joke even though it is at
his expense. At this point, the satire within *The Unfortunate Traveller* seems to accord with Northrop Frye’s *early* conception of the mode, a conception predating his more maturely developed theory in *Anatomy of Criticism*: “Satire at its most concentrated… [is] a universal negation that cheapens and belittles everything.”

But the reader must remember that there is more to the story. Thus far we have been following “an ingenious infant” playing the “poor, childish wellwisher” to his dupes. Despite his rhetorical sophistication, his satire has been impulsive and narcissistic. Now, Wilton tells us, he intends to “quietly descend to the waning of [his] youthful days.” There is a formal correlative to this, as Wilton is aware that he “must not place a volume in the precincts of a pamphlet.” Hibbard suggests that Nashe at this point realized he “had done something new with the pamphlet” and decided to explore “the new vein further.” Leaving aside Hibbard’s speculative theory of Nashe’s composition process, the fact remains that there is a modularity to the finished product. Wilton’s returns to the Continent marks a change not in disposition (he remains unscrupulous in his dealings and irreverent in his tone) but in what satire allows him to see. In contrast to the first part of *The Unfortunate Traveller*, in which vice is easily attacked and exploited, the second third of Nashe’s narrative shows a satire of subtly increasing complexity. As he travels through the “religiously and politically charged” environs of Muenster, Rotterdam, and Wittenberg, a more seasoned Wilton shifts his focus from individual to collective targets and begins to discern the economic basis underlying much of the strife he observes.

Fleeing the sweating sickness epidemic of 1517, Wilton returns the Continent, there to seek employment as a mercenary in the French king’s 1515 expedition to recover
Milan: “As at Turwin I was a demi-soldier in jest, so now I became a martialist in earnest.” True to form, this is a set-up for subsequent deflation, and he immediately reveals that he means “to thrust [himself] into that faction that was strongest.” With no pretensions to ideological investment and apparently still motivated by an amoral self-interest, Wilton seems poised to rehearse the same sort of mischief as he did while in the English camp. But there is a difference. Here there are no pranks, as Wilton assumes the role of passive observer. Still sardonic in his commentary and reliant on the grotesque, his descriptions of events around him take on a decidedly darker and more visceral tone than before:

I saw a wonderful spectacle of bloodshed on both sides; here unwieldy Switzers wallowing in their gore like an ox in his dung, there the sprightly French sprawling and turning on the stained grass like a roach new taken out of the stream; … the plain appeared like a quagmire, overspread as it was with trampled dead bodies. In one place might you behold a heap of dead murdered men overwhelmed with a falling steed instead of a tombstone, in another place a bundle of bodies fettered together in their own bowels, and as the tyrant Roman emperors used to tie condemned living caitiffs face to face to dead corses, so were the half living here mixed with squeezed carcasses long putrified….The French King himself in this conflict was much distressed, the brains of his own men sprinkled in his face[.]

This apocalyptic vision concludes anticlimactically, with “Milan surrendered unto [Francis I] as a pledge of reconciliation” and Wilton, “like a crow that still follows aloof
where there is carrion,” proceeding to the Anabaptist revolt at Muenster. Always on the wing, the peripatetic rogue now observes from a distance, unhampered by any moral code or direct participation (or by historical plausibility, the two events being separated by 19 years).

At Muenster, Wilton’s satirizing of the rebels focuses on their social status and exemplifies Nashe’s “baffling mixture of political conservatism and aesthetic radicalism.” The rebel leader, John Leyden, is described as wearing

- a scarf made of lists like a bow-case,
- a cross on his breast like a thread bottom,
- a round twilted tailor’s cushion buckled like a tankard-bearer’s device on his shoulders for a target,
- the pike whereof was a pack-needle,
- a tough prentice’s club for his spear,
- a great brewer’s cowl(?) on his back for a corslet,
- and on his head, for a helmet, a huge high shoe with the bottom turned upwards, embossed as full of hobnails as ever it might stick.

Leyden is thus a composite figure of his followers, who “were all base handicrafts, as cobblers and curriers and tinkers.” It’s noteworthy that, for Wilton, the rebels are not simply associated with their trades; they are wholly defined and identified by them: they do not simply practice base handicrafts; they are base handicrafts.

To Wilton, the greatest fault of the Anabaptist rebels is that “they were so dunstically set forth, and … thought they knew as much of God’s mind as richer men.” Despite his own unprincipled behavior thus far, he is nevertheless invested in an established hierarchy, and he is merciless in his treatment of any who question it. So embedded is the belief in hierarchy that even the rebels themselves appear unable to step
outside of it. Even in their protest they take for granted the fundamental authority of its ideology:

so grounded and gravelled were they in this opinion, that now when they should come to battle, there’s never a one of them would bring a blade (no, not an onion blade) about him, to die for it. It was not lawful, said they, for any man to draw the sword but the magistrate[.]

The gruesome scene of the battle recalls that of the French expedition to recover Milan (“so ordinary at every footstep was the imbruement of iron in blood that one could hardly discern heads from bullets, or clottered hair from mangled flesh hung with gore”) but Wilton plainly takes sides in this contest. He cannot help but “dilate a little more gravely than the nature of this history requires,” and delivers a strident polemic against the Anabaptist rebels that seems jarringly at odds with his moral detachment up to this point in the narrative. Hibbard notes that Wilton’s account of the quashing of the rebellion is “undiluted pamphleteering”, and there is an obvious stylistic and ideological debt to Nashe’s own anti-Martinist tracts of the previous decade, in which Nashe defended the Anglican establishment against its Puritans detractors. In fact, Wilton conflates the two groups (“Hear what it is to be Anabaptists, to be Puritans, to be villains”), even though there are significant historical and confessional distinctions between them. For Wilton (and Nashe?), the point here is the common threat they pose to the established social order.

More to my point, Wilton’s satirizing of the rebels is just as much economic as it is political or religious. Wilton delegitimizes Leyden and the rebels by attributing their religious heterodoxy to a kind of class envy:
[T]hey would reduce us to the precedent of their rebellious persecuted beggary, much like the sect of philosophers called cynics, who, when they saw they were born to no lands or possessions, nor had any possible means to support their estates, but they must live despised and in misery, do what they could, they plotted and consulted with themselves how to make their poverty better esteemed of than rich dominion and sovereignty.\textsuperscript{80}

There is no jesting or irony in Wilton’s diminution of the Anabaptists, only a straight denouncing of their motives. No longer the youthful prankster of the English camp, this older Wilton for the moment exchanges satire for invective. He has not, however, lost his knack for adapting materials at hand to suit his own purposes. In this case, it is the story of Diogenes, “one of the first and foremost of the ringleaders of this rusty morosity.”\textsuperscript{81}

Extrapolating from a piece of apocryphal history, Wilton implies that the motives of the rebels are not merely spiteful but dishonest: “Diogenes… for all his nice dogged disposition and blunt deriding of worldly dross and the gross felicity of fools, was taken notwithstanding a little after very fairly a-coining money in his cell.”\textsuperscript{82} This hypocritical inconsistency is then extended to include the Radical Protestant congregation of the Continent: “our cynical reformed foreign churches… will digest no grapes of great bishoprics, forsooth, because they cannot tell how to come by them[.]”\textsuperscript{83} Like Aesop’s fox, the Anabaptists criticize what they do not possess because they cannot possess it.

The Anabaptist revolt is the first of three episodes in this segment of The Unfortunate Traveller, each of which will contribute a different view of economic conflict. Here Wilton appears to be wholly in step with traditional hierarchy. The Anabaptist radicals are infantilized as followers of a “dead-born faith…begotten by too
too infant fathers,” whereas the paternalistic elite is described by Wilton as harsh but ultimately benign: “The imperials themselves … were [the rebels’] executioners, like a father that weeps when he beats his child, yet still weeps and still beats.” At this point, Wilton’s understanding of political power accords with the economic power structure of the patronage model. He suggests that hierarchy, despite (or because of) its prerogative and unyielding nature, is perhaps the only safeguard against the perils of an otherwise chaotic world. This, of course, ignores the fact that he is surrounded by chaos. Moreover, it overlooks the possibility foundering on the hierarchy’s judgement, as insinuated in the dedicatory letter to Wriothesley.

Wilton recognizes that his strident excursus has led him astray: “I am as it were more than duncified twixt divinity and poetry.” Nashe rescues his floundering protagonist from discursive and geographic uncertainty by introducing Wilton’s “late master,” Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey. It is no coincidence that Wilton, who shares Nashe’s concern with literary forms and their function in society, should be in the nominal service of a poet credited by Elizabethan readers with the inauguration of a nationalist poetics. Nor is it coincidence that the two immediately proceed to Rotterdam and there encounter “quick-witted” Thomas More and “that abundant and super-ingenious clerk” Desiderius Erasmus, for together the humanist luminaries introduce ideas of rank, wealth, and social cohesion that problematize the conservative view Wilton took of the rebellion at Muenster:

Erasmus in all his speeches seemed so much to dislike the indiscretion of princes in preferring of parasites and fools that he decreed with himself to swim with the stream, and write a book forthwith in commendation of
folly. Quick-witted Sir Thomas More travelled in a clean contrary province, for he seeing most commonwealths corrupted by ill custom, & that principalities were nothing but great piracies, which, gotten by violence and murder were maintained by private undermining and bloodshed, that in the chiefest flourishing kingdoms there was no equal or well-divided weal one with another, but a manifest conspiracy of rich men against poor men, procuring their own unlawful commodities under the name and interest of the commonwealth, he concluded with himself to lay down a perfect plot of a commonwealth or government, which he would entitle his *Utopia.*

The idea of “rich men against poor men” reiterates the economic basis of conflict that Wilton began to recognize at Muenster. However, Wilton’s unexamined conservatism and authoritarianism are now complicated by the idea that such conflict stems not from simple class envy but from the “indiscretion of princes,” that a commonwealth is little more than “a manifest conspiracy,” that there simply is “no equal or well-divided weal.” Thus, violent eruptions are not aberrations from a stable organic social model but are rather the norm: economic antagonism is a constitutive piece of every polity. The mercantile idiom of Nashe’s Dedication to Wriothesley is glancingly reiterated by “unlawful commodities,” “ill custom,” and “great piracies.” The gruesome suppression of the Anabaptists is recalled and reinterpreted by More’s argument that governments are “maintained by… bloodshed.” The brief detour into Rotterdam, which appears geographically arbitrary (Wilton explains that the city was “clean out of [their] way” without providing explanation for why they go there), is thus a thematic turning point. By
way of Wilton’s observations, Nashe signals the suspicion that conflict is endemic and inevitable, and that attempts to suppress it are stopgap at best and are at worst violent and unjust.

This patent intertextuality has an additional, more subtle consequence for *The Unfortunate Traveller*. Not only do the references to *Utopia* and *In Praise of Folly* deepen the satiric probing of economic and political power, and provide Nashe’s satire with an obvious genealogy, but his handling of these additional texts also continues the idea begun in the induction of the text as a commodity no longer in need of either patron or author. Despite his penchant for satiric blazons of the people he meets, Wilton avoids providing any portrait of either More or Erasmus, casually eliding their persons and mannerisms by telling us that “it were here superfluous to rehearse” his conversation with the two luminaries. Instead, he focuses almost exclusively on their “discontented studies,” and his precis of their satires makes up the entirety of the brief encounter in Rotterdam. The modifiers that Wilton does provide for the two great humanists seem pointedly incongruous with his descriptions of their satires. It is “grave” Erasmus who writes in “commendation of folly” and “merry” More who speaks of corruption and violence. In either case, the nature of the satire is independent of the satirist’s temperament, suggesting a decoupling of author from text. Just as Wilton has been steadily moving away from the center of his own story, both More and Erasmus fade in significance when compared to the significance of their works themselves. This relegation of More and Erasmus to the background echoes the sidelining of Wriothesley in the induction, where the interpersonal relationship of patronage is superseded by a market economy in which the text moves as an independent commodity. The Rotterdam
episode furthers this idea, suggesting how even seminal texts such as *Utopia* and *In Praise of Folly* possess their value inherently, rather than deriving it from either patron or author.

At Wittenberg, Wilton witnesses a concord of religious and political authority that is the inverse of the violent contention he saw at Muenster. The people have gathered to pay tribute to the Duke of Saxony, “because he was the chief patron of their university, and had took Luther’s part in banishing the Mass and all like papal jurisdiction out of their town.”\(^{93}\) However, his recent exposure to the ideas of More and Erasmus has sensitized him to the ubiquity of economic tensions, and he immediately begins to discern the fault lines within this apparently felicitous union. First, his blanket satirizing leads him to divide the people of Wittenberg into two groups: “the heads of their university… in their hooded hypocrisy and doctorly accoutrements" and the “burghers and dunstical incorporationers,”\(^{94}\) both of whom he ridicules for their overwrought orations delivered to the Duke:

> They imagined the Duke took the greatest pleasure and contentment under heaven to hear them speak Latin, and as long as they talked nothing but Tully, he was bound to attend them. A most vain thing it is in many universities at this day, that they count him excellent eloquent who stealth not whole phrases but whole pages out of Tully. If of a number of shreds of his sentences he can shape an oration, from all the world he carries it away, although in truth it be no more than a fool’s coat of many colours. No invention or matter have they of their own, but tack up a style
of his stale gallimaufries. The leaden-headed Germans first began this, and we Englishmen have surfeited of their absurd imitation.95

Then, moving beyond simple ridicule of an outmoded Ciceronianism,96 Nashe’s satire pries into the economic divisions by which this apparently unified community is riven. Unlike Muenster, where the readily dismissed envy of base laborers threatens social cohesion, here it is the more privileged ranks of academics and merchants that impedes integration. While jockeying for position before the Duke, both groups are shown to be incapable of fulfilling their proper roles within the community, an inability which in either case is framed as a kind of impoverishment. The representatives of Wittenberg University address the Duke in “gibberish” and “some three-halfpenny worth of Latin…..[B]ut it was choice stuff, I can tell you, as there is a choice even amongst rags gathered up from the dunghill.”97 As mentioned above, the figure of the needy scholar was especially prevalent by the 1590s and was frequently invoked by Nashe. Here, however, the academics are not materially but intellectually destitute. In their rush to curry favor from political authority their collective identity is drained of political legitimacy and economic utility as the junior graduates of Wittenberg University are reduced to a “miserable rabblement” and a “company of beggars.”98

The guild members fare no better, as the official uniform of their corporate body and the very symbol of its economic function is transformed by Wilton’s satiric punning into a grotesque physical manifestation of incontinence. For instance, he describes the merchant’s distinguished liveries, their distinguished livery faces, I mean, for they were most of them hot-livered drunkards, and had all the coat colours of
sanguine, purple, crimson, copper, carnation that were to be had in their
countenances. Filthy knaves, no cost had they bestowed on the town for
his welcome, saving new painted their houghs and boozing houses, which
commonly are fairer than their churches, and over their gates set the town
arms carousing a whole health to the Duke’s arms[.]

In addition to Wilton’s satirizing of both academics and merchants, there is sniping
between the two groups. The “bursten-belly ink-horn orator” Vanderhulke is the most
apparent mouthpiece of this competition. A grotesque figure often interpreted as a
personal jab at Nashe’s *bete noir* Gabriel Harvey, Vanderhulke brings to the fore the
issue of economic division among the townspeople, insisting on the greater usefulness of
merchants to the Duke:

> On our shoulders we wear no lambskin or miniver like these academics,
yet we can drink to the confusion of thy enemies. Good lamb’s-wool have
we for their lambskins and for their miniver, large minerals in our
coffers.

The division between lambskin, symbolizing both academic regalia and the parchment on
which a diploma is written, and lamb’s-wool, i.e. a staple commodity in Europe’s
increasingly integrated economy, reveals that the town’s celebration of religious
solidarity with the Duke is also a contest among the people for his recognition, with a
significant criterion being their economic utility to political authority. Although
Wittenberg lacks the violence of the Anabaptist revolt at Muenster, it is similarly chaotic
and imbued with a similar economic factionalism.
The difference is that in Wittenberg there is no overarching centralized power able to impose order. The rivalry among the townspeople takes center stage and becomes more anarchic as the figure of the Duke recedes into the background and is reduced to being inert and ridiculous. He listens and observes but does not himself speak, and as the orators are “emptying their phrase books the air emptie[s] his entrails,” he is forced to “stand in the rain till he [is] thorough wet.” Even while being compared to the “nine worthies” and assured of “Nestor’s years,” the Duke is figuratively urinated on. This piece of Rabelaisian absurdity inverts the paternalism of the Muenster episode, depicting the representative of political authority as passive consumer and figurehead.

A similar deflation occurs regarding the disputations of Reformation luminaries Martin Luther and Andreas Karlstadt, with similar results. Despite the centrality of both their persons and their theological positions within Reformation historiography, to say nothing of Luther’s obvious historical connection to Wittenberg, both are here reduced to noise and empty gestures:

A mass of words I wot well they heaped up against the Mass and the Pope, but farther particulars of their disputations I remember not. I thought verily they would have worried one another with words, they were so earnest and vehement. Luther had the louder voice; Carolostadius went beyond him in beating and bouncing with his fists.

Just as the Duke’s silence intensifies the voices of the people of Wittenberg, the noise and gesticulating of the two theologians are immediately drowned out by the voices “all the other train of opponents & respondents” to which Wilton turns:
One pecked with his forefinger at every half-syllable he brought forth, and
nodded with his nose like an old singing man teaching a young chorister to
keep time. Another would be sure to wipe his mouth with his handkerchief
at the end of every full point, and ever when he thought he had cast a
figure so curiously as he dived over head and ears into his auditors’
admiration, he would take occasion to stroke up his hair, and twine up his
mustachios twice or thrice over, while they might have leisure to applaud
him. A third wavered & wagged his head like a proud horse playing with
his bridle, or as I have seen some fantastical swimmer at every stroke train
his chin sidelong over his left shoulder. A fourth sweat and foamed at the
mouth for very anger his adversary had denied that part of the syllogism
which he was not prepared to answer. A fifth spread his arms like an usher
that goes before to make room, and thripped with his finger and his thumb
when he thought he had tickled it with a conclusion. A sixth hung down
his countenance like a sheep, and stutted and slavered very pitifully when
his invention was stepped aside out of the way. A seventh gasped for
wind, & groaned in his pronunciation as if he were hard bound with some
bad argument.107

Wilton claims that Luther and Karlstadt “uttered nothing to make a man laugh”108 and
that this is the reason he turns to describing the cacophony of the unidentified debaters.
But there is deeper significance to this shift in focus, one beyond an immediate concern
for entertainment. Even though Wilton ridicules the speakers, the fact remains that it is
their voices that are being heard. The marginalizing of Luther and Karlstadt continues a
trend of decentralization prefigured in the induction and more fully developed as Wilton travels through Muenster, Rotterdam, and Wittenberg. Despite Hibbard’s belief that in moving from one episode to the next Nashe is “unconcerned with its relationship with what has gone before,” in Wittenberg we see that Nashe is building on Wilton’s experiences to bring his rogue to a greater understanding of authority. It is the accretion of these apparently isolated episodes that allows Wilton to conceive the alternative to patronage presented in the paratext. He is not yet the celebrator of untrammeled exchange who pens the induction. But he has moved beyond both the narrow focus of immediate gratification he displayed in the English camp, as well as beyond the questionable confidence in hierarchy he displayed at Muenster. These two changes in his outlook allow him to consider the scene at Wittenberg as chaotic but harmless and freed from the overarching authority of hierarchy.

According to Allyna Ward, Germany provides a setting for Wilton “to criticize not just the Anabaptists and the German character but also to comment on English Puritan reform.” In other words, the satire of the Wittenberg episode is of a piece with the Muenster episode, each of them reflecting “the waywardness of the religious and political leaders and the lack of logic behind their disputations, which might also apply to extremist groups in England.” This is surely a defensible interpretation, especially given Nashe’s open hostility to Puritanism throughout his writing career. But Ward’s reading overlooks key historical distinctions between Muenster and Wittenberg and the importance of the Rotterdam episode interpolated between the two. In The Unfortunate Traveller, Nashe takes pains to draw a clear distinction between Muenster and Wittenberg, using Muenster to represent the Radical and Wittenberg to represent the
Magisterial Reformations. At Wittenberg Nashe shows us an apparently ideal integration of the two institutions, as the people of Wittenberg “crouched to [the Duke] extremely.” And yet, sensitized by his exposure to the ideas of More and Erasmus, Wilton sees that there is competition within the polity even in the absence of open rebellion. He therefore drops the partisan position he adopted at Muenster, declines to take sides, and instead methodically works through various positions of power/authority, exploring the political and economic situation at hand in all its ludicrous convolutions. Wittenberg may be read as the culmination of a development that ultimately leads to Wilton’s recognition of competing interests as a constituent piece of the polity, a force that counters the ordering imposed by hierarchy, and in which language moves fluidly, anarchically, and subversively. Returning to the bipartite structure in the paratext, one might see how these experiences have allowed Nashe-Wilton to move from the economic model presupposed by the dedication to that of the induction: the movement from individual to corporate authority, from a close-ended system to an open-ended, from the fixed to the contingent. Ultimately, Wilton’s gradual awareness of underlying economic tensions, regardless of prevailing ideology, allows him to discern and address the inescapable economic pressures introduced in the Dedication to Wriothesley and the Induction to the Pages.

Throughout The Unfortunate Traveller, Nashe’s satire sinuously weaves generic, moral, and hierarchal distinctions. The young Wilton’s literary pastiches at the opening of his narrative break down barriers between “high” and “low” genres, i.e. historical and devotional versus popular forms; an older Wilton’s satire works to debunk purported ideological differences, at times revealing the economic divisions underlying them. The supposedly anti-materialist Anabaptists desire the same power and wealth they are
attacking; Wittenberg’s scholars and merchants both reveal their intellectual
impoverishment in their pandering to the Duke; even the towering historical figures of
Luther and Karlstadt are conflated, their doctrinal differences lost in the spectacle of their
shared public performance. Similarly, Wilton’s own position is repeatedly subjected to
revision. Against the Switzers he looks only for personal gain. Against the Anabaptists he
espouses strident conservatism. At Rotterdam he assumes the role of student, duly
registering the lessons of More and Erasmus about the pernicious competition endemic to
human society. Finally, at Wittenberg he seems reconciled to the dissolution of hierarchal
and confessional differences. These changes contribute to the (mis)diagnosis of a Nashe
problem discussed at the beginning of this chapter. But, taken en masse, they might also
reveal how satire need not work by simply insisting on clear distinctions. Rather, satire
plays with such distinctions, not necessarily with a view to reinforcing them through
egregious subversion, but to move beyond stasis and certainty into a domain of ambiguity
and contingency. The accumulation of Wilton’s observations throughout The Unfortunate
Traveller reflect Nashe’s own sense of professional and economic uncertainty, as
reflected in the dedication to Wriothesley; the possibility of a system of cultural and
economic valuation that is negotiable, as reflected in Wilton’s indication to his fellow
pages; and the capacity of early modern satire to accommodate the disparate, the
uncertain, and even the contradictory.
Notes to Introduction

1 Rowe, “Interpretation,” 281.
2 Rowe, “Interpretation,” 282.
3 Rowe, “Interpretation,” 283.
4 Howell, Logic and Rhetoric, 347.
6 Smith, Elizabethan Poetry, 194.
7 Wood, Foundations of Political Economy, 11.
8 Wrightson, Earthly Necessities, 4.
9 Wrightson, Earthly Necessities, 29, 28.
10 Griffin, Satire, 37.
11 Griffin, Satire, 41.
12 Ben Parsons notes that, until the late 20th century, “the very notion of satire in Middle English… often proved contentious,” due in part to the mistaken belief that classical Latin satire was little known by English writers of the period: “When approaching this literature, a variety of other, less precise designations have been preferred, such as Douglas Gray's ‘the satiric,’ Thomas Wright's ‘political songs,’ or James Sutherland's ‘school of primitives.’” Parsons, “‘The Werste Lay That Euer Harper Sange’,” 114. See Gray, “Rough Music,” 21; Coss, Thomas Wright's Political Songs; Sutherland, English Satire, 23.
13 Quoted in Minnis, Scott, and Wallace, Medieval Literary Theory, 44.
14 Quoted in Minnis, Scott, and Wallace, Medieval Literary Theory, 136-37.
15 Quoted in Minnis, Scott, and Wallace, Medieval Literary Theory, 474.
16 Conrad of Hirsau writes “or else the name is derived from satyra, that is a great dish full of different fruits or other kinds of foods offered to the gods. The kind of work in which there are laudatory songs or odes (odae), or strong abuse of the wicked, is also called satyra.” Likewise, Guido of Pisa allows that “some are called satirical poets because they are replete with every sort of wit, or else from ‘fullness’ (saturitas) or abundance.” Quoted in Minnis, Scott, and Wallace, Medieval Literary Theory, 44, 474.
17 Copeland, Pedagogy, Intellectuals, and Dissent, 80.
18 Copeland, Pedagogy, Intellectuals, and Dissent, 79.
19 Quoted in Kernan, Cankered Muse, 55.
20 Quoted in Maslen, Shakespeare and Comedy, 17.
21 Puttenham, Art of English Poesy, 120.
22 Puttenham, Art of English Poesy, 120.
23 Uden, “A Crowd of Gods,” 102. It should be noted, however, that recently scholars have begun to question taking Juvenal’s bitter indignation at face value. See, for instance, Braund, Beyond Anger.
24 See, for instance, Griffin, Satire, 12ff.
25 Smith, Elizabethan Critical Essays, 176.
26 Griffin, Satire, 11.
31 Fowler, Kinds of Literature, 110.
32 Test, Satire: Spirit and Art, 13.
33 Kernan, Cankered Muse, 40.
34 Kernan, Cankered Muse, 42.
35 Kernan, Cankered Muse, 50. 116.
36 Kernan, Cankered Muse, 88.
38 Kernan, Cankered Muse, 31.
Neel Mukherjee sums up the current critical consensus “that although Drant was the first translator of Horace's *Sermones*, the classical poet had entered English before him with the three epistolary satires of Sir Thomas Wyatt which are creative, slightly oblique imitations of the Horace of the *Epistles* and the *Satires*. Wyatt's Horace is filtered and refracted through Ariosto and Luigi Alamanni, and his poems are not only remarkably sensitive to Horace's infinitely suggestive play of latent voices, their slippery and shifting perspectives, but also to the intertextual play of the *Sermones* and the *Epistles*.” Mukherjee, “Drant's Rewriting of Horace,” 9-10.

Griffin, *Satire*, 51.

Notes to Chapter One

1 Marquis, “Politics and Print,” 156.
4 Carpenter, *Wars of the Roses*, 226-32. Perhaps not surprisingly, Dudley wrote after the King’s death that “the pleasure and mynde of the kinges grace…was much sett to have many persons in his danger at his pleasure…wherefore many persons were bound to his grace…great somes of money.” Harrison, “Petition of Edmund Dudley,” 86.
5 Hall, *Chronicle*, 520.
7 See, for instance, Elton, *Tudor Revolution in Government*. Elton is the *locus classicus* when considering political changes under the Tudors from an institutional perspective. For a useful response to Elton’s narrow focus on administrative minutiae, see Penry Williams’s social historical treatment of Tudor political change in *The Tudor Regime*.
9 Fish, *Supplication*, 5, 8.
10 Hall, *Chronicle*, 765.
12 Zaller, *Discourse of Legitimacy*, 487.
15 Russell, *Crisis of Parliaments*, 43.
16 Guy, “Rhetoric of Counsel,” 293.
22 Warnicke, “The Court,” 72.
26 See, for instance, Wyatt’s use of legal idioms in the sonnet “Farewell love and all thy laws forever.”
Notes to Chapter Two

1 In his dedicatory epistle/foreword to Lord Arthur Grey of Wilton, Gascoigne refers to The Steele Glas as "written without rime, but I trust not without reason," and in his "Letter to the Reader," Gascoigne admits to seeking a fame "much to high, for ladders made of ryme," a stateliness of purpose "that rime could neuer win."
2 Lewis, English Literature, 270.
3 Maveety, 168.
4 Grundy, review of George Gascoigne's The Steele Glas,' 599.
5 Mohl, Three Estates, 6-7.
7 Lewis, Allegory of Love, 197.
8 Quoted in Kirk and Anderson, Piers Plowman, vii.
9 Scanlon, “King, Commons, and Kind Wit,” 198.
10 Scanlon, “King, Commons, and Kind Wit,” 194.
11 Scanlon, “King, Commons, and Kind Wit,” 201.
12 Scanlon, “King, Commons, and Kind Wit,” 204.
14 Shannon, “Poetic Companies,” 460.
15 Austen, George Gascoigne, 164.
16 Austen, George Gascoigne, 159.
17 Mohl, Three Estates, 358.
21 It’s likely that many of the poems later included in Gascoigne’s A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres of 1572 were circulated in manuscript at the Inns of Court. Austen, George Gascoigne, 28.
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27 Kalas, “Technology of Reflection,” 528.
29 The Earl’s three-week entertainment of the Queen at Kenilworth Castle took place in summer 1575, the year prior to publication of *The Steele Glas*. Gascoigne’s account of the historic event was published as *The Princeely Pleasures* in 1577. Around the same time, Gascoigne was employed by Burghley as an agent on the Continent, and his correspondence from Flanders was circulated among and valued by the members of the Privy Council. Helgerson, *Elizabethan Prodigals*, 50.
32 Baumlin, "Generic Context of Elizabethan Satire,” 460.
33 Griffin, *Satire*, 37.
34 Griffin, *Satire*, 38.
35 McKeown claims Riche’s *The Dialogue Between Mercury and an English Soldier* [1574] is also an internal dialogue (a dream sequence). Perhaps this further suggests the novelty of Gascoigne’s satire. McKeown, *English Mercuries*, 34.

Notes to Chapter Three

8 Ferguson, *The Articulate Citizen*, 90.
17 Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism*, 134.
19 Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism*, 125.
22 Burke, *Tacitus*, 166.
The incident was plainly the basis for Jack’s own letter of complaint and his consequent imprisonment in chapter six of *Jack of Newbury*.

Quoted in Ladd, “Thomas Deloney,” 983-86.


Notes to Chapter Four

1 Mentz, Romance for Sale, 185.
2 Wells, Thomas Nashe, 8.
3 Hibbard, A Critical Introduction, 147.
4 Ryan, “Extemporal Vein,” 43.
5 See, for instance, David Randall, who writes that Nashe’s authority comes not from “unanswerable logic or unquestionably superior character” but from a combination of skepticism and sincerity, a laying bare of his abilities and motives. Randall, “Ethos,” 236.
6 See, for instance, Bogel, Difference Satire Makes.
7 Hutson, Thomas Nashe in Context, 10.
8 Hile, Spenserian Satire, 23.
9 Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 207.
10 As an example of the dogmatic connotations of the “methodical,” the OED quotes John Marston’s Scourge of Villanie: “As many more,/ As methodist Musus, kild with Hellebore” (1.2-3).
11 Harvey, Pierce’s Supererogation, 110.
12 Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 207.
13 Perhaps the best remembered instance of this trope is Edmund Dudley’s Tree of Commonwealth, in which the young Henry VIII is the moral center of the English commonwealth and the “the medieval allegory [is] carried almost to the length of parody.” Christopher Morris, Political Thought in England: Tyndale to Hooker (London: Oxford UP, 1953): 15.
14 Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 208.
15 Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 208.
16 Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 207.
17 Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 207.
18 Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 207.
19 Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 209.
20 Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 208-209.
21 Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 208-209.
23 P.B. Roberts “Underemployed Elizabethans: Gabriel Harvey and Thomas Nashe in the Parnassus Plays” Early Theatre 21, no. 2 (2018): 49. The three anonymously written Parnassus plays, c. 1598-1601, were academic dramas closely associated with Nashe’s alma mater, St. John’s College, Cambridge.
27 UT, 209-210. In 1513, Henry had led a large army into France, joining the emperor Maximilian I and routing the French at the Battle of the Spurs. While historians have come to dismiss the practical gains of the invasion, the two victors naturally caused their success to be commemorated in print and the visual arts.
Hibbard notes that Nashe had already taken issue with the writers of historical chronicles in Pierce Penilesse, “criticizing them for their inability to distinguish between the significant and the insignificant and for the flatness of their style.” Thomas Nashe: A Critical Introduction (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1962), 148.


Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 209.


See Matthew 3:12 in the Bishops’ Bible of 1572: “Whose fanne is in his hande, and he wyll purge his floore, and gather his wheate into [his] garner: but wyl burne vp the chaffe with vnquencheable fire.” See also Job 21:18; Ps 1:4; Ps 35:5; Isa 17:13; Isa 29:5; Hos 13:3.


Coriolanus 1.1.115, Love’s Labour’s Lost 2.2.6, Richard II 2.1.720, Troilus and Cressida 2.2.995 [Noted in Mohamed Eric Rahman Lacey’s unpublished dissertation “Birds and Bird-lore in the Literature of Anglo-Saxon England,” p. 78, n. 233]

In heraldry, the cormorant with outstretched wings embodied the Christian cross, symbolizing the self-sacrifice.

Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 211.

Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 214.

Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 215.

Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 216.

See, for instance, Anna Bayman: “In the charged post-Marprelate atmosphere earnest, moralizing reportage continued to be a ‘safe’ favourite of the cheap press through which it could reassert its claims to benevolence.” “Rogues, Coney-catching and the Scribbling Crew” History Workshop Journal 63 (Spring, 2007): 3.

Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 216.

Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 216.


Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 216.

Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 216.

Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 223.

Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 220.

Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 217.

Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 223.

Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 224.

Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 224.

Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 224.

A paradigmatic example is Francis Bacon, who in 1589 condemned the Marprelate tracts for their tendency ”to turn religion into a comedy or satire; to search and rip up wounds with a laughing countenance; to intermix Scripture and scurrility sometime in one sentence.” Bacon, Advertisement, 36.

Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 224.


Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 224-25.

Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 211.

Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 218.

Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 224.

Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 225.

Hutson, Thomas Nashe in Context, 67.


Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 213.

Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 225-26.

Nashe, Unfortunate Traveller, 224.
68 Nashe, *Unfortunate Traveller*, 228.
69 Nashe, *Unfortunate Traveller*, 228.
70 Nashe, *Unfortunate Traveller*, 228.
72 Nashe, *Unfortunate Traveller*, 229.
73 Nashe, *Unfortunate Traveller*, 229.
74 Nashe, *Unfortunate Traveller*, 229.
76 Nashe, *Unfortunate Traveller*, 236.
79 Nashe, *Unfortunate Traveller*, 236.
81 Nashe, *Unfortunate Traveller*, 233. This is probably not historically accurate. While the actual story is not fully known, it is general thought that Diogenes swore off worldly goods after being banished for defacing currency.
82 Nashe, *Unfortunate Traveller*, 233. “Abundant” is perhaps a punning reference to Erasmus’s *De Copia* of 1512.
84 Nashe, *Unfortunate Traveller*, 236.
85 Nashe, *Unfortunate Traveller*, 236.
86 Nashe, *Unfortunate Traveller*, 236.
88 Nashe, *Unfortunate Traveller*, 240. “Abundant” is perhaps a punning reference to Erasmus’s *De Copia* of 1512.
89 Nashe, *Unfortunate Traveller*, 240.
90 Nashe, *Unfortunate Traveller*, 240.
91 Nashe, *Unfortunate Traveller*, 240.
93 Nashe, *Unfortunate Traveller*, 240.
95 Nashe, *Unfortunate Traveller*, 244-45.
96 Francis Bacon decried the faddish imitation of Cicero’s style as the “the first distemper of learning, when men study words and not learning.” Bacon, *Works*, 3:284. For the perceived prevalence of the style at Cambridge, see Duhamel, “Ciceronianism of Gabriel Harvey.”
100 Nashe, *Unfortunate Traveller*, 241.
105 This is another instance of Wilton/Nashe taking liberties and blending history and fiction. While the relationship of Luther and Karlstadt was at times confrontational, there is no evidence that they ever debated theology in Wittenberg.
106 Nashe, *Unfortunate Traveller*, 244.
107 Nashe, *Unfortunate Traveller*, 244.
108 Nashe, *Unfortunate Traveller*, 244.
109 Discussed above on p. 104.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


