

**“I sing of cruelty and compassion together”:  
Reading Thomas Nashe’s Religious Rhetoric through  
Kenneth Burke’s Perspective by Incongruity**

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To Mandy, Ollie, Savell, and Lela

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## Abstract

This study considers the late 16<sup>th</sup> - early 17<sup>th</sup> century English writer Thomas Nashe's various texts through a rhetorical lens as informed by the 20<sup>th</sup> century rhetoric scholar Kenneth Burke's works. Nashe remains an enigmatic character in English literature as he presses the boundaries of appropriateness in various ways, and, despite his attempts to guide his readers to Christian application, the texts present problems for reconciliation with a Christian motive. However, Burke's discussion of perspective by incongruity and the dramatic pentad provide a helpful set of terms for understanding how Nashe's texts work to accomplish such a motive. This study primarily considers three of Nashe's most well-known texts, *Christ's Teares over Jerusalem*, *Pierce Penilesse*, and *The Unfortunate Traveller*, along with the lesser known *The Terrors of the Night* to present Nashe as consistently pressing the boundaries of rhetorical appropriateness to prompt his readers to a reconsideration of their interior motives. His texts accomplish this goal by developing incongruous perspectives that seek to disrupt the readers' expectations of each of these types of texts. This study also serves as a working example for combining the disciplines of literary and rhetorical studies in effective ways.

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## **Chapter One:**

### **Thomas Nashe's Incongruous Rhetoric**

#### **Introduction**

Thomas Nashe remains an enigmatic writer for Renaissance English literary studies because his texts include multiple divergent combinations of religious content with shifting authorial positions and grotesque, violent imagery. Such disparate subject matter makes understanding Nashe's religious commitments through his works a difficult task. However, viewing Nashe's work through Kenneth Burke's rhetorical framework, and specifically using the concept of perspective by incongruity, indicates Nashe's overall motive of seeking the audience's spiritual reformation. Combinations of elements from Burke's dramatic pentad (act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose) applied within and across Nashe's texts reveal how the author consistently uses transgressive approaches in his writing to prompt his audience's division from outward attachments to religious belief that mask an inward lack of faith. This argument provides the means for uniting apparent contradictions in Nashe's work and follows recent movements that challenge the sacred/secular divide prevalent in literary and cultural studies.

#### **The Problematic Link between Nashe's Beliefs and Texts**

Upon hearing of Thomas Nashe's death in 1600 or 1601, Ben Jonson composed an epitaph titled, "They say a made a good end." In this poem, Jonson attempts to reconcile the contradictions of his apparent friend and sometime collaborator by drawing a distinction between the content of Nashe's texts and his "true" self. Jonson first praises Nashe's wit, proclaiming,

“The man whose want hathe causd a generall dearthe / Of witt; throughout this land: none left behind / to equall him in ingenious kynd” (6-8).<sup>1</sup> Jonson then describes the violence and overtly personal nature of Nashe’s satire, for “when any wrongd him lyving they did feele / his spirite quicke as powder sharp as stele” (13-14). Despite his praise of Nashe’s wit, Jonson attempts to separate the writer from it, arguing that Nashe “to his freindes [his] faculties were faire / pleasant and mild & as the most temp’rate ayre” (15-16). The epitaph separates friends and enemies by the ways that they experienced Nashe as either “pleasant and mild” or wielding a violent wit as fast as a bullet and as dangerous as a blade. Jonson supplements these positive descriptions with a recounting of Nashe’s penitence, saying that he “diedst a Christian faithfull penitent / Inspired with happie thoughtes & confident” (25-26). The epitaph memorializes Nashe in a way that promotes his virtues and faith, apparently hoping to counteract the public reputation of his attacking wit with a private piety and graciousness known amongst his friends.

The context of Nashe’s Christianity takes place among the entrenched battles of the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century between the authorized English church and Puritan agitators influenced by reformation movements in Europe. John E. Booty’s insightful edition of the 1559 *Book of Common Prayer* explains the important compromises that the English church sought between these groups and that come to bear in seeking to reestablish Protestant order at the beginning of Elizabeth’s reign. The 1559 version would be the authoritative text, along with Scripture, for faith and practice under the church’s authority during Nashe’s brief career. With the ouster of Queen Mary I, the Catholic threat had been weakened and more pressing arguments centered on

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<sup>1</sup> This study maintains the spelling of the quoted editions of Renaissance works except in the few cases that require modernization for clarity. Nashe frequently uses italics when writing a character’s name, and I have modified these names to plain text where appropriate to avoid confusion with published texts.

whether or not the English church would follow the Continental models in pursuing a shift in leadership style to a Presbyterian model among other changes. Shifting the role of authority in the church would have tremendous impact on its leaders but also on the individual practices of the parishioners. The English church was tasked with finding its own Protestant identity in the midst of this organizational and devotional turmoil. The 1559 *Book of Common Prayer* shows the pursuit of the church to promote a peaceful authority that claimed the movements of God.

Booby explains,

[Elizabeth I's] religion was not that of the zealous [...] It was that of the Christian humanist, involving devotion and moderation, and delighting in beauty, the beauty of a perfect literary style, the beauty of orderly religious ceremony, it was a religion linked to national sentiment, with the conviction that God was doing a mighty thing, through his Deborah, for England, and through England, for the world" (332).

The idealism of the new queen's movements of compromise reveals a desire for the virtues of the good and peaceful life, yet these are prescribed notions for achieving this existence as opposed to policies that leave the people to their own devices. Within this "mighty thing," there was little room for detraction, and Booby shows that, in the changes in the 1559 book, "there was a checking of a forceful movement in a Protestant or Genevan direction and settling down to that *via media* which has become characteristic of Anglicanism" (330). This *via media* was an ambitious movement for a church that had seen turmoil in the initial reformation during the reign of Henry VIII and subsequent violent returns to Catholicism under Mary.

Despite the pursuit of common ground, establishing order within the church included punishments for any person who did not follow in practice. The prayer book opens with the claims for authority for the subsequent prescriptions with the pending hand of justice present. If anyone would “refuse to use the said common prayers or to minister the sacraments” in the prescribed manner or “preach, declare, or speak anything in the derogation or depraving of the said book or anything therein contained, or of any part thereof, [he] shall be thereof lawfully convicted according to the laws of this realm” (6-7). Such penalties included loss of status, loss of property, fines, prison sentences, and, as the people were rebelling against a governmental authority along with an ecclesiastical one, punishment for treason.

By Nashe’s time late in Elizabeth’s reign (~1590), the Puritan threat had not been conquered but found a broader audience in the infiltration of Cambridge and, more importantly for Nashe’s writing, the burgeoning audience for printed pamphlets. The sale of these pamphlets expanded the reach of an author to a larger audience, and Nashe enters a literary market already filled with poetry, prose fiction, and religious tracts. These texts were controversial as they moved fictional writing outside of the coterie circles that once ostensibly held distribution rights, and these works also invited the scorn from those elite circles that found a low writing style that appealed to a mass audience distasteful.<sup>2</sup> This writing style extends to religious discourse in the works of the Puritan Martin Marprelate co-conspirators as they used this style to challenge the

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<sup>2</sup> Stephen Guy-Bray’s “How to Turn Prose into Literature: The Case of Thomas Nashe” and Steve Mentz’s “Day Labor: Thomas Nashe and The Practice of Prose in Early Modern England” provide helpful explanations of the literary market that Nashe entered, especially regarding his attempts to find success without the benefit of significant patronage.

church to continue its reforms toward Continental models.<sup>3</sup> Such challenges included lampooning specific targets with violent satire, and Nashe enters this mix as an opponent to the Martinist movement but mimics and extends this controversial style to all of his writing. The *via media* that the early Elizabethan church tried to pursue was under extensive threat by people that Nashe felt did not hold to the true and good life prescribed by the English church, and he uses the printing press and its popular style of writing to engage its enemies on theological and authoritative grounds through various approaches. However, Nashe did not limit his attacks to the Puritan agitators only but sought to reform the sinful impulses that prompted such rebellious actions through revealing and attacking these beliefs and practices. Such religious rhetoric in popular form earned Nashe the scandalous reputation that apparently troubled Jonson and prompted his memorial for Nashe.

Katherine Duncan-Jones, who found and edited Jonson's epitaph, points to the need to redeem the reputation of a writer like Nashe. She quotes the *Book of Common Prayer's* "Visitation of the Sick," perhaps given for Nashe by the printer Simon Staffer, as asking God to "Renew in him [...] whatsoever hath been decayed by the fraud and malice of the devil, or by his own carnal will and frailness" (7). For Duncan-Jones, this prayer is especially poignant because Nashe "had sent messages to the Devil in *Pierce Pennilesse* and had composed that most 'carnal' of Elizabethan poems, 'The Choise of Valentines'" (7).<sup>4</sup> Readers might also add the severity of

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<sup>3</sup> Joseph L. Black's introduction to his edition of *The Martin Marprelate Tracts* shows the tremendous influence of these tracts on religious discourse and literary style through their innovative approach to reform via attacking and personal rhetoric.

<sup>4</sup> Duncan-Jones spells Nashe's fictional narrative of *Pierce Penilesse* as *Pierce Pennilesse*. Spelling conventions vary depending on editions of texts, editors, and within Nashe's writing to such an extent that I have chosen to leave the spelling as written within any quote except in cases where clarity requires an editorial change.

the Archbishop's 1599 ban of Nashe's texts, the violent punishments depicted on or recommended for Nashe's enemies, and the seemingly petty feud with Gabriel Harvey as evidence of this scandalous tendency. Typically, Jonson's epitaphs for adults praise the subject's virtues as a picture of devotion and legacy for those who follow. However, he seems to be of two minds in this example because he praises the ingenuity of Nashe's wit but recognizes that this wit does not reflect the virtues appropriate for the Christian epitaph. Indeed, Jonson does not mention the subject's bedside penitence in any of his other epitaphs. He apparently needed to justify his friend's faith because of the nature of Nashe's works and his reputation, despite the emphatic religious rhetoric in Nashe's texts that often involves sermonizing and moral judgments based on scripture or church proclamations. Little biographical information exists about Nashe outside of his published works that could illuminate his religious convictions in effective ways. His works indicate his commitments to the English Church against Puritanism but do not point conclusively to any specific denominational attachment. Within this enigmatic life and work full of cultural emphasis on Christianity, and as evidenced by Jonson's epitaph, reading Nashe's rhetoric as definitively religious does not easily fit with his violent and transgressive style and leaves questions about how these two elements can operate together throughout his works and even within the same texts.

Nashe often nests comedic satire with aggressive sermons and combines grotesque violence and mockery with religious application, bringing together categories that seem too disparate to reconcile in a coherent narrative, especially considering Booty's references to "the beauty of a perfect literary style" driven by "devotion and moderation" that defined the pursuits Elizabethan church and what Nashe's readers might expect in writing. In the only biography

written about Nashe, Charles Nicholl says, “Nashe’s genius was urban, lurid, grotesque, and low. It fed – ‘alas, poore hungerstarved Muse’ – on adrenalin[e], culled daily from the streets of Elizabethan London” (3). This is hardly the language contemporary or modern readers would associate with religious rhetoric. While violence might be the norm for sermons, satire that is both “lurid” and “low” does not easily fit within this style. For example, in an episode of *The Unfortunate Traveller*, the narrator Jack Wilton recounts and interprets the 1534 Anabaptist Massacre at Münster with humorous mockery, proclamations of violence, and Biblical interpretation in a sermon form. Wilton indicates how this episode will end by juxtaposing the religious ceremony of christening with the blood of battle. After a famine caused by a siege, the Münsterians “were forst by Messengers to agree upon a day of Fight, when according to their Anabaptisticall errorr they might al be new christened in their owne blood” (232). However, lest readers think this account will follow the model of a judgmental sermon meant to prompt conviction, Nashe first uses grotesque humor. Before the battle, Wilton pauses to mock the army, describing the weaponry of the tradesmen in escalating mocking satire beginning with the co-opting of workmen’s tools for violent purposes and continuing to his description of outlandish items. He describes one man that “had but a peece of a rustie browne bill bravely fringed with cob-webs to fight for him” and another soldier “that had a canker-eaten skull on his head, which served him and his ancestors for a chamber pot two hundred yeeres” (232-233). The 200-year-old urine soaked skull as a helmet extends this satire to grotesque ends where the audience would likely laugh at the imagery of this army rather than take any larger implied cultural critique seriously.

Yet, at the moment of laughter, Wilton moves quickly from this comedic description to religious challenges of the Anabaptists' motivations. He argues that they believe that "there was not a pease difference betwixt them and the Apostles; they were as poore as they, of as base trades as they, and no more inspired than they" (233). The rebels also speak with such passion that "a man [would] thinke them the onely wel bent men under heaven" (234). They presume to make themselves equal with the apostles by interpreting their own poverty as signs of their power. In response, Wilton takes on the role of a preacher and exposts a passage from the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven must suffer violence.<sup>5</sup> Wilton explains that Christ "meant not the violence of long babbling prayers, nor the violence of tedious invective Sermons without wit, but the violence of faith, the violence of good works, [and] the violence of patient suffering" (234). Within one episode, Wilton shifts from grotesque satire to serious religious critique through the exposition of scripture. The juxtaposition of the 200-year-old chamber pot skull with an expository sermon about Christ's words challenges Nashe's depictions of a rhetoric driven by Christian doctrine.

The questions of interpretation become all the more prevalent when Wilton attempts to justify the use of violence for rhetorical ends in the punishment of these rebels. He advertises this motive as he recounts a tale where, in Nero's time, "an odde Fellowe [...] found out an exquisite way to make glasse as hammer-prooffe as golde" (236). Wilton applies this counterfeiting to his concerns with the Anabaptists, asking, "shall I say that the like experiment he made upon glasse, wee have practiced on the Gospell? I, confidently will I: Wee have found [it] a sleight to hammer it to anie Heresie whatsoever" (236). Wilton's solution for this counterfeiting is violence where

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew 11:12.

“those furnaces of Falshood and hammer-heads of Heresie must bee dissolved and broken as his was, or else I feare mee the false glittering glasse of Innovation will bee better esteemed of, than the auncient golde of the Gospell” (236). Nashe signals his rhetorical purpose as he pauses in this description to apply this message to his audience. Wilton admonishes “Ministers and Pastors” to “sell away your sects and schismes to the decrepitate Churches in contention beyond the sea; they have been so long inured to warre, both about matters of Religion and Regiment, that now they have no peace of minde but in troubling all other mens peace” (237). Specifically, he mentions the churches of France, Scotland, and Switzerland that influenced continued reformation movements in the English church and would have no application to the Anabaptists at Münster (237). This application to his contemporaries signals a rhetorical purpose based on Nashe’s religious beliefs, but the combination of mockery, sermonizing, and violence with contemporary religious application seems difficult to reconcile with notions of an appropriate Christian piety as defined in the ethos of the Elizabethan church that promoted beauty in art. While warnings of violence might be a common trope in sermons at this time, the grotesque humor at the beginning of the episode challenges the advertised seriousness of this sermon. Nashe’s readers would be hard pressed to consider his grave sermon authentic while they are laughing at his targets.

These combinations of religious rhetoric, mockery, and violence in *The Unfortunate Traveller* are part of what makes Nashe’s writings so unique in the Late Elizabethan world. As Jonson’s epitaph indicates, Nashe often runs against the boundaries of appropriateness within his critiques by combining sacred imagery with ironic application. Early in his career, Nashe penned *Pierce Penilesse His Supplication to the Divell*, where the speaker rails against the sins of London. In this text, Nashe often includes traditional religious critique but changes the vehicle,

combining Biblical application with a comedic form by having the narrator write a letter to the devil himself. For example, in describing the “vainglory” of denominational battles during his time, Pierce writes,

We divide Christs garment amongst us in so many peeces and of the vesture of salvation make some of us Babies and apes coats, others straight trusses and Divells breeches: some gally–gascoines or a shipmans hose, like the Anabaptists and adulterous Familists; others, with the Martinists, a hood with two faces, to hide their hypocrisie: and to conclude, some like the Barrowists and Greendwoodians, a garment full of the plague, which is not to be worne before it be new washt. (172)

Pierce likens his contemporaries to the soldiers that crucified Christ and cast lots for his clothing yet extends their sin to destroying the garment and turning it into images of the ways that various contemporary factions reject the truth of the Gospel. For Pierce, those that abuse the sacred debase it, which would seem to be an appropriate religious application from the cataloging of sins. However, in the next paragraph, Pierce writes that because of these sins, “Atheists triumph and rejoice, and talk as prophanley of the Bible, as of Bevis of Hampton. I heare say there be Mathematitions abroad that will proove men before *Adam*; and they are harboured in high places, who will maintaine it to the death, that there are no divels” (172). It is this last emphasis, the claim that there are no devils, that Pierce finds the most egregious. For, he writes, “it is a shame (senior *Belzibub*) that you should suffer your selfe thus to be tearmed a bastard, or not [proved] to your predestinate children, not only that they have a father, but that you are he that must own them” (172). Pierce builds an argument that references the sins of his times but changes the

application of why the behavior is so scandalous by appealing to the devil rather than God. The scandal of the atheist is not that he does not believe in God but that he does not believe in the devil. The juxtaposition of religious critique against practitioners of his times with the “sin” of unbelief in the devil creates an uncomfortable union that prompts similar questions about the either the seriousness of the critique or the laxity of the humor. Why would Nashe include such fierce rhetoric against his contemporaries within a mocking appeal to the devil? Or, on the other hand, if Nashe were only writing comedic satire, why would he invoke such grave religious imagery and application for his audience? The two extremes of this text make for uneasy assimilation and force readers to question the motives that drive Nashe’s satire.

The question of Nashe’s motives in combining disparate images extends to his most perplexing and most gravely serious work, *Christs Teares over Jerusalem*. Nashe takes on the voice of Christ weeping over Jerusalem, recounts the history of the siege of the city in the generation after Christ, and applies the narratives to contemporary London apparently to prompt conviction. In the section describing the assault, Nashe includes the disturbing account of Miriam roasting and eating her son due to the famine brought on by the Roman siege because of Jerusalem’s rejection of Christ. Before beginning this tale of horror, Nashe pauses to apply it to his audience, “Mothers of LONDON, (each one of you to your selves) doe but imagine that you were *Miriam*, wyth what hart (suppose you) could ye go about the cooquerie of your own chyldren? Not hate, but hunger, taught *Miriam* to forgette mother-hood” (71). Miriam argues that her best choice is to cook and eat her son so that famine does not kill both of them and that “it is better to make a Sepulcher for him in mine owne body” (71). In doing so, Miriam juxtaposes the murder with kindness, and she “sing[s] of cruelty and compassion together” (72). She finally

argues that her murder is “one act of piety” where she returns the son to his womb and even argues that he would agree with her choice because “wert thou of age to pleade thine owne desires, I know that they would be accordant with mine” (74). She finally states that through this act “Into the Garden of *Eden* I will leade thee” and consumes her child (75). The men who smell the cooking ravenously seek the source, and Miriam serves them her son. After discovering the origin of their meal, these men “were wholly metamorphizd into mellancholie,” and Nashe concludes, “Was never till this ever heard from *Adam*, that a woman eate her owne Childe. Was never such a *desolation* as the *desolation* of *Jerusalem*” (77). Miriam’s combination, in her mind, of compassion and infanticide produces a horrific image Nashe apparently intends to illustrate the depth of desolation in Jerusalem because of the people’s rejection of Christ.

Nashe begins the third part of this text with an advertised rhetorical purpose for the violence of the first two sections. He says, “As great a *desolation* as *Jerusalem*, hath *London* deserved. Whatsoever of *Jerusalem* I have written, was but to lend her a Looking-glasse” (80). Nashe seems to argue these images to serve the greater purpose that London would turn from her sins in response to reading his works. He proceeds to justify this approach, arguing, “I deale more searchingly then common Soule-[surgeons] accustome; for in this Booke, wholly have I bequeathed my penne and my spyrite to the prosternating and enforrowing the frontiers of sinne” (80). If London’s sins are similar to Jerusalem’s, according to Nashe, then the results will be similar as well. Yet, readers both in Nashe’s time and now struggle to reconcile his stated religious intention with works that exceed the boundaries of appropriateness in the combination of such disparate categories as grotesque violence with the sermonizing and cultural application of Nashe’s Christianity. Like the surgeon he fashions himself to be, perhaps his desire to “deale

more searchingly” causes his knife to slip too far and cut too deeply for reconciliation with a Christian rhetoric that reflects the Elizabethan goals of “devotion and moderation” while seeking to prompt conviction and repentance in his readers. On the other hand, perhaps the overt religious stance is a front for an interest in grotesque and violent imagery where he can excuse his ingenuity in exceeding boundaries under the guise of religious rhetoric.

### **Criticism of Nashe and the Remaining Unanswered Question**

As the three above selections indicate, the difficulty remains in reconciling the overt religious positions in Nashe’s work with a subject matter and style that pull in a contrary direction from the one his faith position indicates. On one side, Nashe attacks his enemies with mockery, constructs violent and grotesque acts in his narratives, and nests his critique in alternative voices with inappropriate and ironic ends. Conversely, Nashe overtly advertises his commitments to Christian morality and interior devotion, often constructing his narratives with direct addresses to his readers to instruct them on what they should be learning. These two poles form the central troubling paradox for Nashe’s texts and challenge any reading that favors one side over the other. In response, many Nashe critics have tended to look beyond his religious claims in favor of analyzing his innovative and transgressive style, his role as an author in the burgeoning public market for books, or his challenges to the ideologies restricting his literary freedom. Those critics who take Nashe’s religious beliefs at face value tend to limit them to the most overt religious rhetoric without a clear connection to a greater reforming motive across his works. The critics below are grouped by these broad categories, and the latter chapters of this work will address these points in discussing specific texts.

Critics who focus on Nashe's stylistic ingenuity argue that he is a brilliant author writing without any central point other than testing the boundaries of what he could do with the language. In his landmark *English Literature of the 16th Century*, which is still referenced in most Nashe studies, C.S. Lewis says that Nashe's works "come very close to being [...] 'pure' literature: literature which is, as nearly as possible, without a subject. In a certain sense of the verb 'say,' if asked what Nashe 'says,' we should have to reply, nothing. He tells no story, expresses no thought, maintains no attitude" (410). The result is a view of Nashe as "the perfect literary showman, the juggler with words who can keep a crowd spell-bound by sheer virtuosity" without a larger purpose driving his writing (410-11). Similarly, in the first book-length discussion of Nashe, *Thomas Nashe: A Critical Introduction*, G.R. Hibbard focuses primarily on Nashe's stylistic innovations and reinforces the idea that he lacks a central theme because his works "are [publicly] rhetorical works, as remote from the confessional and self-revelatory kinds of literature, that later writers have accustomed us to, as anything well could be" (253). These publicly rhetorical works show an author who is "fascinated by words, still more fascinated by the games he can play with them, [and] he ultimately leaves the normal concerns of humanity behind" (253). Lewis and Hibbard view Nashe as a brilliant author at play, distant from any central concern that could be associated with the religious content of his works. Later, Neil Rhodes continues this focus on Nashe's style but connects a religious antecedent to explain Nashe's imagery. In *Elizabethan Grotesque*, Rhodes locates the origin of Nashe's grotesque style with the sermonic form brought to the printing press in the Marprelate controversy. However, according to Rhodes, this influence is stylistic only because "to say that there are themes of high seriousness in Nashe's writing is to suggest an explicit moral and philosophical concern which

he plainly does not have to any great degree” (43). These critics have a clear appreciation for Nashe’s style and the ingenious ways that he manipulates the traditions of writing in entertaining and shocking ways. They also agree on the point that there can be no associable motivation for Nashe’s writing outside of innovating within the language and impressing his audience. For these authors, any overt references to religion are only a part of his transgressive style.<sup>6</sup>

Critics more concerned with Nashe’s relationship to his readers focus specifically on how he presents himself as an author and the influence of the people likely to purchase his books. Charles Nicholl’s ambitious work, *A Cup of News: The Life of Thomas Nashe*, combines the little of Nashe’s biographical information that exists with analysis of the works themselves and descriptions from other texts to construct a limited portrait of the author. Nicholl argues for a view of Nashe as a journalist or “pamphleteer” and that his work lacks the serious critiques of other pamphlets because “he was no crusader. His pamphlets [...] have the *frisson* of topicality, libel and snook cocking-laughter, but little sense of reformist zeal, or even compassion behind them” (3). Like Rhodes, Nicholl considers religious works as inspirations only in their stylistic form as the language precludes thoughts typically associated with religious movements at the time.<sup>7</sup> Nicholl readily builds on Lewis’s view of Nashe as a “literary showman” by presenting

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<sup>6</sup> For example, C.S. Lewis says of *Christ’s Teares over Jerusalem*, “we are alternately nauseated by physical horrors and lulled asleep by ineffective rhetoric,” and, at the moment where Nashe becomes his most didactic, “the author’s irrepressible relish for roguery rather overwhelms his (presumably) moral purpose” (412). In his introduction, Hibbard dismisses the “over-written mixture of sentimental bombast and tasteless religiosity that fills the first half of *Christ’s Tears*” as indicative of the central paradox of all of Nashe’s work where his multiple perspectives cannot be resolved (ix). Rhodes ultimately argues that Nashe is an interesting placeholder in the growth of secular rhetoric that takes on a greater skeptical tone in the works of Christopher Marlowe and Ben Jonson.

<sup>7</sup> Nicholl says, “Satire was in Nashe’s bones – he was quarrelsome, insubordinate, his typical mood one of confrontation – but also satire was a convenience, a vehicle for other messages. It afforded ancient, ingrained prototypes for his brand of journalism – sermons, homilies, morality plays; the licensed railing of fools and jesters; the classical satire of Juvenal, Martial and Ovid; the humanist critiques of Erasmus, Agrippa and Aretino” (4). Nicholl blends sermon, homily, and morality play, all of which could be linked with religious motivation, to texts

him as an Elizabethan combination of “the journalist, the satirist, the showman, and the hack” and argues that Nashe explains the world around him through comedic writing with the ultimate intention of generating income as a writer (5).

This attempt to understand Nashe through his pursuit of a career as a writer extends to more recent history of the book criticism. Critics in this field view Nashe’s development of his identity as an author in the emerging print market and the social changes of writing and reading practices during his time, both of which take place in terms of market exchange. Steve Mentz argues that “Nashe imagined his works as commodities in the market, saw the nascent publishing industry as a group of potential rivals or allies, developed his own authorial persona as a ‘brand name,’ and positioned his books in competition with the public stage, coterie miscellanies, moral homilies, and other forms of circulated text” (“Day Labor” 19). Mentz’s reading focuses specifically on the author/reader relationship and views purchasing practices and the author’s attempts to establish his role as an acquisitive performer and commodifier of words without consideration of motive beyond market forces, or, to put it another way, rhetoric for sales as the most prevalent lens for understanding this author.

Many critics also focus on Nashe’s rhetoric but as a vehicle for his critique of cultural ideologies. In *Unredeemed Rhetoric: Thomas Nashe and the Scandal of Authorship*, Jonathan Crewe argues that Nashe stands as an author investigating “the predicament of the ‘rhetorical’ author during this time” (viii). Crewe’s reading centers on Nashe’s apparent “themelessness” in his works as a criticism of the pressures on fiction to hold some rhetorical purpose (2-3). Any sense of moral theme, for Crewe, is Nashe’s “red herring,” or the bait for his readers’

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that do not necessarily point to their religious motivations: the licensed railing of fools and jesters and other forms of satire.

expectations that he will use to challenge their restrictive imposition of rhetorical guidelines for an author (2-3). Where Crewe envisions Nashe questioning the ideological attachments to authorship in his time, Lorna Hutson focuses specifically on Nashe's apparent criticism of cultural influences on what literature should be and do in *Thomas Nashe in Context*. Hutson is keenly aware of Nashe's rhetorical capabilities and explores the troubled relationship between him and the many diverse influences in his world as "Nashe's versatile prose, with its exceptional sensitivity to the materiality of words, the plasticity of discourse, and the hazards of interpretation, is, far from being the one vehicle of one histrionic personal voice, a parodic medium of multiple voices" (4). Her study centers on how Nashe's "pamphlets shape themselves by exaggerating the features of those discourses which would exclude and inhibit them; they transform drab contemporary restrictions surrounding the authorship and reception of printed texts into the exhilarating new resources of creative and interpretive freedom" (11). For Hutson, Nashe is a lens for viewing his world through its rhetorical restrictions and the ways he revolutionizes the authorial role in light of these boundaries.<sup>8</sup> She views Nashe in ultimate pursuit of the freedom of the artist against those ideals that restrict it, resulting in "literature [that] is always to some extent involved in mocking the integrity of or 'truth' of value systems and systems of meaning whether these systems be mythical, philosophical, or linguistic" (124). The essential driver for Nashe's critique is the challenging of any claim to truth or how it should be presented.

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<sup>8</sup> Hutson ultimately describes Nashe's style as "festive art" that "organizes itself in opposition to the dominant aspects of the humanist ideal of eloquence" (123). His writing "deliberately lacks the integrity to persuade, convince and so teach the reader" and, as a result, all of his writings "challenge this identification of eloquence with persuasion and providence by conceiving festively of time and of human endeavor" (123).

The connections between Nashe and various influences on his world continue into the most recent book-length study on his work, *The Age of Thomas Nashe*. This edited collection explores material culture in the English Renaissance in detail as the authors consider Nashe as a reflection of cultural trends in this time. Each essay continues the focus on Nashe's stylistic ingenuity, his depiction of his immediate surroundings, and his role as an author in the ever-mutable public sphere of the Elizabethan world. However, in many cases, the authors now suggest moral motives driving Nashe's rhetoric. For example, in the chapter on Nashe's interaction with the city in *Pierce Penilesse*, Georgia Brown mentions "the questions Nashe raises about the relationship between city and country, about the moral status of the city, [and] about the possibility of specifically urban forms of behavior and specifically urban forms of language" (12-13). Brown connects this morality to the city itself and Nashe's idea that, for London, "the operative boundary is a moral boundary, and it occurs within locations, and within individuals, rather than between locations. It is the boundary between sinfulness and righteousness" (15). Indeed, Brown argues, "Nashe's fear is that social order will become permanently separated from divine, natural, and cosmic order" (15-16).<sup>9</sup> Despite the overtly religious language that she associates with this text, Brown ultimately connects this motivation to Nashe's authorial anxieties. She writes that "as the author of printed texts, he is someone who puts his wares up for sale, and, to the extent that he invests himself in writing and defines himself through his writing, he also sells his body to everyone that brings coin" (19). Brown adds that

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<sup>9</sup> As a part of her argument, Brown interestingly summarizes the trends in Nashe scholarship beginning with Lewis and continuing now. She asserts Nashe's concept of himself as not only an appealing author but "the champion of print culture and professional authorship" (12). These titles combined with "the creativity and satirical dynamism of his style [that] made him a forceful cultural presence" (12).

Nashe “may pry into lechery for moral purposes but, like the bawds and procurers he castigates, he still capitalizes on prostitution,” ultimately focusing on the “recurring obsession” between the writer and his work (19). Despite using Biblical language to describe Nashe, ultimately Brown turns toward consideration of authorial anxieties but now includes the language of morality in religious terminology.

By continuing with previous lines of criticism, Brown reveals the recurrent gap between Nashe’s advertised religious beliefs and the unique style of his works. Lewis dismissed considering a larger religious motive early in modern criticism, and scholars since then have rejected this motive in pursuit of other applications of Nashe’s critique. This movement is entirely reasonable considering the transgressive style of Nashe’s works that rejects a strict religious reading. He is certainly not the didactic literary writer that many critics associate with literary works during this time.<sup>10</sup> Yet, the sheer volume of Nashe’s references to Christian faith and practice, combined with his attachments to the English church against the Puritans and other reformers, indicate a need for exploring how Nashe might proclaim his Christian beliefs through a style that is overtly transgressive.

Melissa M. Caldwell answers this need in a recent monograph that includes Nashe in a group of writers exploring skepticism while still holding on to orthodox English ecclesiology.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For example, see Lewis’s praise of Sir Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia*, a text more in line with Lewis’s view of an ideal fiction that inspires virtue. He writes, “Sidney is not merely a lover and a knight; he is also a moralist, a scholar, and a man of affairs. He aspires to teach not only virtue but prudence” (335). As a result, Lewis argues, we should see that he “offers sweets in plenty for the young and amorous reader,” and, “he also provides solid nourishment for maturer subjects” (335-6). For Lewis, Nashe is in a different and lower class of writer that might be entertaining but cannot associate with the same seriousness of Sidney’s works.

<sup>11</sup> For Nashe’s time, ecclesiastical orthodoxy would defend the English church against continued prompts for reformation from groups associated with continental reforms. Most importantly for understanding Nashe is the English Puritan movement that argued against that the English church was too much like its Catholic predecessor.

She argues that these writers sought for their works to have religious application, for the epistemological and ontological uncertainties of the post-reformation period—that is, the tension between being reformed and being in an ever-changing state of reformation—were disorienting, but they also offered an unscripted moral space that quickly filled with many voices that were eager to direct religious belief and moral behavior. (7)

In response, these authors had to “face a rhetorical and ethical crossroad as writers interested in producing texts that promote reform without overthrowing orthodoxy altogether” (8). However, these works signal a shift from overt instruction in using a “form of didacticism that capitalizes on uncertainty rather than the dogmatism of authority to invest their texts with moral value,” and, “they test the value of different literary modes for both reform and orthodoxy” (8). Caldwell’s work links the categories of overt Christian rhetoric and an exploratory style that transgresses established norms for religiously inspired works. She associates a moral purpose with individual faith rather than strict corporate change, focusing specifically on the writers establishing a foothold for innovation “within the framework of the defense of normative moral value” (8). These writers “develop theories of reform that have less to do with changing the nature of the church—indeed, in almost all cases they believe the sovereignty of the English Church to be nonnegotiable—than with mentoring the individual’s moral identity within that church” (8). This approach to the author’s intended application for readers is a key emphasis of rhetorical studies and is especially relevant in a writer like Nashe whose works live at the margins of appropriateness while still claiming religious intent.

Some recent critics have taken Nashe's religious rhetoric at face value in exploring the connections between his beliefs and his aggressive approach. Christopher A. Hill's "Thomas Nashe's Imitation of Christ" argues for Nashe developing a sermonic style in *Christs Teares* that incorporates this violent imagery, but Hill limits his argument to only *Christs Teares* as the most openly religious text despite similar approaches in other works. Mauricio Martinez links Nashe's religious emphasis across three of his works but does not provide an explanation for how and why Nashe would choose to use such rhetorical extensions in a world that expected religiously-associated writing to follow, as Booty describes, "the beauty of a perfect literary style." What Nashe criticism lacks, to this point, is a lens for understanding the mechanics of how his religiously-driven rhetoric operates across his works in conjunction with a style that alienated many of his readers both during his time and much later.

### **Perspective by Incongruity as a Method for Understanding Nashe's Religious Rhetoric**

Twentieth century rhetorician Kenneth Burke's work centers on understanding an author's motives through verbal and written expressions and provides a framework for explaining them despite multiple, and perhaps contradictory, possible interpretations. Rather than speculate about what an author might mean based merely on historical background, Burke explores how any rhetor's motives emerge from the interactions of key components of the texts themselves. He opens *A Grammar of Motives* with the seemingly simple question, "What is involved, when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it?" (xv). The answer drives the course of the book and much of Burke's work, so it is not easily reduced to a simple

definition.<sup>12</sup> However, Burke does say that he is concerned with the “basic forms of thought” that explain what a person does and why he does it, or the reason for acting. This definition seeks to explain rather than discover. Rather than view motives as hidden purposes driving action, Burke treats them as available as symbolic action in linguistic interactions.<sup>13</sup>

These linguistic interactions take place within social frameworks that define how and when terminology should be used. Bernard L. Brock describes Burke’s explanation of rhetoric as a necessary part of language that prompts “cooperation among people [that] automatically focuses one’s attention on the language or the symbols employed” (184). This role fills all of Burke’s work as he seeks to understand why humans use language the way that they do and what this language might indicate about the symbol-user’s motives. For, as Brock argues, “Burke clearly demonstrates his view that verbal symbols are meaningful acts from which motives can be derived” (184). Burke’s historical context indicates the need for ascertaining motives in order to prompt understanding and movements toward finding peaceful interactions in the growth of divisive rhetoric. *A Grammar of Motives* was published in 1945 at the end of the Second World War when people grappled with the current progress and/or recent defeat of totalitarian regimes and the function of rhetoric in convincing people to support deeds that led to tremendous human suffering. Burke sought a collective exchange of ideas, called, among other names, the “Human Barnyard” where exploring rhetoric and the way it promotes the joining of ideas allows for

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<sup>12</sup> Burke’s answer is notably cryptic in its attempt to be all-encompassing: “These forms of thought can be embodied profoundly or trivially, truthfully or falsely. They are equally present in systematically elaborated metaphysical structures, in legal judgments, in poetry and fiction, in political and scientific works, in news and in bits of gossip offered at random” (xv).

<sup>13</sup> William Benoit helpfully explores the various definitions scholars have ascribed to Burke’s idea of motives in “A Note on Burke on ‘Motive.’” Benoit compellingly argues for Burke’s view of a discursive and social explanation of motive as opposed to a cognitive and private one.

greater clarity in pursuit of a greater human community (*A Grammar of Motives* xvii, *A Rhetoric of Motives* 23).<sup>14</sup> Given the tumult of Nashe's context, such rhetorical symbols can illuminate the motives driving his writing and his consistent upsetting of the measures of appropriateness as measured in both his context and through modern criticism. Dealing with topics of faith and virtue prompts a discussion of motives, especially in a culture like Nashe's that consistently questioned humanity's role with God and between its members. Burke's theory allows readers to ask these questions of motive that have always been a part of Nashe criticism but have not addressed the apparent gap between his religious inspiration and texts that seemingly transgress the moral and ideological boundaries of Christianity.

While exploring the social contracts of language, Burke also provides a useful set of rhetorical terms for explaining how an author constructs a work. His framework for understanding motives seeks explanation in the rations between key parts of a speaker's relationships with the text or the audience. Burke unites these terms in the *dramatistic pentad* of "what [action] was done (*act*), when or where it was done (*scene*), who did it (*agent*), how he did it (*agency*), and why (*purpose*)" (*Grammar* xv, italics mine).<sup>15</sup> He concedes that these terms are "almost understandable at a glance," but their relationships require more explanation as each term is distinct but relates to the other terms (xv). Burke uses the illustration of the five fingers of a hand to describe the Pentad. One term can carry its own explanation, but it should never be considered apart from the link with other terms. Determining a framework already implies a

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<sup>14</sup> Burke presents *A Grammar* as a means of understanding and returns to this idea in *A Rhetoric* to discuss its value in mapping interactions while building toward an allowance of multiple perspectives.

<sup>15</sup> Purpose here is different than motive. Burke likely means the immediate purpose for a specific action rather than an explanation of the motivation behind it. In other words, the exigence of a speaking event forms part of the explanation of motive, not its entirety.

conclusiveness that would overly restrict a human in Burke's mind. His point in delineating such terms is not to provide a declarative statement about an author's motive but to look for relationships among ratios of the terms as a means of discovery and clarity. He says, "what we want is not terms that avoid ambiguity, but terms that clearly reveal the strategic spots at which ambiguities necessarily arise" (xviii). The dramatic pentad and the ratios between its terms should not be used to make authoritative statements but rather revelatory ones that open doors for exploration rather than closing them, and such a framework fits for reading Nashe in a new way that considers his religious motivation as a key influence for the construction of his texts.

Applying these terms to one of Nashe's works can provide an example of the usefulness of this framework. Nashe's most popular work during his time is the satirical appeal by an impoverished writer named Pierce Penniless to the devil to intervene in the world. The act is the appeal itself; the scene is contemporary London; the agent is the speaker, Pierce Penniless, or places where he might easily be associated with Nashe himself; and the agency is the opportunity upon meeting a "Knight of the Post" to send a message to the devil. There are a number of available purposes that could be ascribed to Nashe and Pierce, including the simple desire to earn an income, but Pierce's stated purpose is to complain about the conditions he faces as a poor, struggling person and to seek the devil's intervention to address London's sins. Burke's rhetorical grammar provides the categories, but he shows that the relationships between these terms, as explored in pairing them together in ratios, indicate the space for explanation of motive (xvi). In this case, the ratio between the act (the complaint) and the agent (Pierce Penniless) provides a possible explanation. If Pierce is an avatar for Nashe himself (critics have long made this connection), then the act would stand as a semi-autobiographical revelation of Nashe's own

struggle with poverty. This is but one of many possible illustrations available to a rhetorical critic using Burke's dramatisitic pentad.

If the pentad provides the grammar for explaining how rhetoric works, then Burke uses the terms *identification* and *division* as concepts for describing the writer's overall motives. Identification is the goal of a speaker in aligning the audience's beliefs with his own (*Rhetoric of Motives* 46). For example, Nashe's commitment to the English Church informs, at least in part, his vehemence against the Puritans. According to this reading, Nashe would seek for his audience to align with his ecclesiological affiliation against the Puritans' desire for continued reform. This example reveals the intrinsic link between identification and division. In order to link with Nashe's desires, the audience must first reject the attempts by the Puritans to change the English Church to mirror European models in authority structures and appreciation for artistic religious expression. Burke argues that "identification is compensatory to division" for the former cannot happen without the latter (22-23). Thus, the author seeks to prompt division in the audience in order to identify with his own beliefs regarding the English church. However, Burke introduces the important term of *consubstantiality* as a part of the discussion of identification where a person (A) identifies with another person (B) but maintains an individual identity (*Rhetoric* 21). This term rests in the "ambiguities of substance," and, while a significant and necessary part of Burke's rhetoric, the term proves difficult to associate with Nashe as he focuses significantly on dividing his readers from their attachments to differing ideologies toward his beliefs as a more direct than implied shift (21). Division and identification would seemingly work easily given a neutral audience and a rhetorically skilled author that could make a case for a simple "for or against" decision. However, such a perfect world does not exist, and a

controversial writer like Nashe seems to attempt ever more aggressive approaches to prompt his audience's division from misguided religious beliefs at the expense of an easily associable identification through consubstantiation.

Nashe's works push the boundaries beyond appropriateness for accomplishing this goal of division. For example, in Nashe's Christianity-soaked culture, writing an appeal to the devil in *Pierce* about societal injustices would rightly seem scandalous. One key part of Burke's expansive explanation of motives allows for texts that operate with a distinctive rhetorical purpose but through a style and content that upset an audience's expectations of what sort of texts that purpose should produce. Burke uses the term *perspective by incongruity* to describe moments when an author intentionally, and often violently, takes a term from a commonly agreed upon explanation and redefines it. Perspective by incongruity is a particular form of what Burke calls *casuistic stretching*, which introduces "new principles while theoretically remaining faithful to old principles" (*Attitudes* 229). However, perspective by incongruity occurs in situations where more drastic measures need to be taken. Burke defines this move as "designed to 'remoralize' by accurately naming a situation already demoralized by inaccuracy" (309). Casuistic stretching can take place in a number of contexts, but perspective by incongruity connects with a gravity of a situation that needs a new start. This new start takes place through "verbal 'atom-cracking'" where "a word belongs by custom to a certain category—and by rational planning you wrench it loose and metaphorically apply it to a different category" (308). The writer using perspective by incongruity stretches terms from acceptable categories to reveal their misuse, and Burke's language indicates that this is a violent process where such connections are cracked and wrenched. Such changes do not always require a grand act, as the

key focus for any speaker would be to locate the audience's expectations and then move in a different direction. Perspective by incongruity hinges on a collective understanding of what a word means, or what Burke calls *piety*: the communal sense of "what goes with what" (*Permanence* 74-75). In cases where the audience expects weakness, the rhetor can present strength through amplification. Conversely, in cases where the audience expects verbal extension, an author could use perspective by incongruity through converting downwards to downplay significance of what is expected to be impactful.<sup>16</sup>

In a religious context, perspective by incongruity could be accomplished by taking a religiously charged complaint and writing it in a letter asking the devil for intervention. In this case, the role of the religiously charged complaint would be demoralized and placing it in a letter to the devil would shift the focus back to the critique that may have been disregarded as it now takes place in a new, impious vehicle. Since perspective by incongruity and casuistic stretching are foundational terms for understanding an author's motive, these moments of shifting become the site where readers will find an author's rhetorical goals for division. In the case of *Pierce Penilesse*, Nashe could be writing his complaint in the form of a letter to the devil to shock the sensibilities of his readers in order to make them question their attachments to what he feels is a skewed belief system.

Perspective by incongruity indicates the sites where Nashe is attempting to prompt division in situations that are already so demoralized that they require a rhetorical shock.

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<sup>16</sup> Burke introduces the term *conversion downwards* as a part of his discussion of comedy as a poetic category in *Attitudes toward History*. He says that, in contrast to the heroic that magnifies a character to inspire identification, comedy "takes up the slack between the momentousness of the situation and the feebleness of those in the situation by *dwarfing the situation*. It converts downwards, as the heroic converts upwards" (43).

Matthew T. Althouse and Floyd D. Anderson helpfully add a category to Burke's Pentad as *Trouble* in explaining the work of Jerome S. Bruner.<sup>17</sup> The term *trouble* indicates a framework for understanding how perspective by incongruity works by showing how the Pentadic terms do not easily fit together. In *Pierce Penilesse*, readers might rightly expect that such a letter complaining about the sins of Londoners would be written to a broad audience, church leaders, or to God himself. The comparison between agent and purpose would work easily in this case as the agent (Pierce) would be writing a complaint to prompt social or theological reform (purpose). However, changing the narrative audience to the devil forces readers to reconsider the purpose. Measuring Nashe's shifting of expectations through the relationships between pentadic terms reveals his use of perspective by incongruity to prompt division across the breadth of his work. Nashe shifts the expected relationships between pentadic terms in violent ways and mapping these shifts through the lens of perspective by incongruity will indicate Nashe's broad motive of Christian reform and specific motives within each shift as he attempts to remoralize what he finds demoralizing in contemporary faith and practice. Such a framework is all the more important for a writer like Nashe where accusations of decorum and bad taste, from both his time and modern criticism, reveal places where his extensions prompt questions over motive. Perspective by incongruity taking place in the relationships between terms allows for readings that unite Nashe's scandalous work with his faith commitments, something that writers as far back as Ben Jonson have struggled to reconcile. The subsequent chapters use Burke's rhetorical framework to explore this connection of faith and rhetoric through literature.

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<sup>17</sup> They also describe the essential difference between Burke and Bruner where "Burke's pentad emphasizes consistency between the nature of acts and agents and a given scene," and, "Bruner's version emphasizes inconsistency that confronts and is anomalous with cultural and canonical expectations."

## Applying Perspective by Incongruity to Nashe's Work

Chapter two focuses on Nashe's establishment of the *prophetic voice* through deferral in several of his works. Nashe's narrators question their position as speakers, especially in matters dealing with divinity, and critics have often read this voice as revelatory of Nashe's anxiety about his position as a writer in contemporary London. However, viewing this deferral through the Biblical antecedents of Old Testament prophets and Jesus Christ reveals that the incongruity of limited abilities and authoritative voice gives the speaker a position of power. Beginning with Nashe's *Christs Teares over Jerusalem* as a strongly prophetic text, this chapter explores the inherent incongruity in the ethos of prophetic rhetoric and how Nashe retools this rhetoric throughout his works. Religious rhetoric has been demoralized by prideful writers, and this shift in the rhetorical agent seeks to force readers to hear what the humble speaker says. The prophetic voice creates an incongruity between the agent (weak position) and the act (judgmental rhetoric). Instead of a powerful voice, the speakers present themselves as meek, and taking on this posture leads Nashe to assume the authority for emphasizing revolutionary claims about his culture's values.

In addition to the reluctant voice, Nashe often writes incongruity across his works with similar arguments. Chapter three considers two of Nashe's seminal works, *Pierce Penilesse, His Supplication to the Divell* and *Christs Teares over Jerusalem* as similar religious critiques of contemporary London through remarkably different voices. In Burkean pentadic terms, Nashe drastically shifts the agent and agency but maintains the scene and purpose of critique. *Pierce* entreats the devil and rails against the perceived "sins" of the city's inhabitants. Nashe, as the narrator in the second work, coopts the voice of Christ and applies historical accounts to his

contemporary audience following the tradition of prophetic warnings. Critics tend to view these works separately due to their rhetorical antecedents in the satirical complaint or crucifixion narratives, respectively. However, despite the tremendously different narrative perspectives, these works utilize incongruity to prompt reform in the readers by cataloging their sins through diametrically opposed positions of rhetorical ethos. Specifically, London has lost its religious way because of the failure of rhetoric to accomplish the goal of reform. Nashe seeks to remoralize this situation by emphasizing the need for artistic rhetoric that many current preachers and religious leaders have left behind. Both texts argue against the loss of appreciation for literary works as impactful for presenting truth. This loss corresponds with the proliferation of dull preaching that has led to unbelief. *Christs Teares* ultimately argues for the return of appreciation for multiple categories of Christian and non-Christian works, and *Pierce* stands as an example of this type of writing designed to prompt greater reflection.

Nashe extends this incongruity from the characters' voices to his style where he uses grotesque satirical and violent imagery to prompt ideological division in the form of repentance. Chapter four explores the way that Nashe uses both comedic satire and violence to accomplish his rhetorical goal of division through the juxtaposition of images. In doing so, Nashe prompts shifts in act and agency from other texts that trend toward moral and religious didacticism or satirical festivity. Studies on the grotesque in literature focus on how the author depicts overextensions of imagery to inappropriate levels to depict and celebrate the cultural upending of traditional rules. However, Burke's definition of the grotesque carries a gravely reflective tone for the audience that reflects how an author can use such imagery to prompt division.<sup>18</sup> Nashe's

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<sup>18</sup> Burke defines the grotesque as "the cult of incongruity *without* the laughter. The grotesque is not funny unless you are out of sympathy with it [...] Insofar as you are *in* sympathy with it, it is in deadly earnest" (*Attitudes* 59).

contemporary situation has been demoralized by outward commitments to faith and practice that cover inward inauthenticity. He attempts to remoralize his readers' beliefs through depictions of violent punishment of the rebelliousness that leads to sinfulness. This chapter locates the origin of these violent lampoons in Nashe's involvement with the anti-Martinist movement and follows the continued use of satire and violence in his works as sites of incongruity between religious purpose and transgressive style that ultimately seek his audience's reformation.

In closing, the final chapter addresses how perspective by incongruity works by reduction of imaginative ideas as opposed to their amplification in one of Nashe's works. *The Terrors of the Night* should provide Nashe ample opportunity to execute his incongruous religious rhetoric. However, in the places where he could inspire fear in his readers through the horrors of nightmare visions, Nashe explains these terrors as mere reflections of the people's sinfulness and need for repentance under God's ultimate power. Given the expectation of imaginative expansion that a dream narrative provides, Nashe's reduction of the terrors becomes an incongruous move through what Burke terms the *conversion downwards* where an author reduces the impact of the situation. Nashe sees contemporary beliefs in the power of dreams as distracting from what needs to be emphasized in personal faith. He shifts his readers' focus from an abstract exploration of dreams to a reflection on their own sinfulness as the real problem. The chapter closes with a reflection on teaching such incongruous texts and how Burke's rhetorical framework creates an opportunity for understanding writers like Nashe, and, in response, how Nashe provides an excellent set of texts for exploring Burke's rhetorical theory. In addition, this section explores how literature and rhetoric should be viewed as allies for understanding but

recognizes the distinctiveness of Nashe and Burke as individual writers that resist one-to-one comparisons.

## Chapter Two:

### **“I am a Child [...], yet I can do all things,” The Incongruity of Prophetic Rhetoric**

The tumult of English Renaissance culture created a climate where the themes of Christianity, social critique, humor, and storytelling often combined in the literary works of many burgeoning authors like Thomas Nashe. Securing support from wealthy patrons often meant submitting to the literary tastes of the day, and the significant threat of having works suppressed by leaders of church or state prompted self-aware writers to engage publicly with their positions as authors. In these self-referential sections, writers often use the topos of humility by downplaying their abilities or the role of their works in the community. As an impoverished writer lacking any societal clout, Nashe would certainly see the need for constructing such a stated position. However, he combines the position of humility with judgmental and aggressive religious rhetoric in a way that seems at odds with the self-deprecating mantle he wants to claim. This unsettled relationship between the writer and his rhetoric makes Nashe’s advertised authorial position and statements difficult to reconcile.

Because of the troubling and overwrought dichotomy of literary works into “religious” and “secular” categories, critics have tended to downplay Nashe’s apparent religious commitments and claims to humility as unnecessary additions to his innovative style or as subversive, inauthentic challenges to the social constraints for writers. However, Kenneth Burke’s perspective by incongruity provides a way of reconsidering Nashe’s position of deference as a necessary part of his assumption of a prophetic role, which he uses to gain the rhetorical authority needed to challenge his readers’ values and prompt repentance. As his most

heavily religious text, *Christs Teares over Jerusalem* includes the most blatant use of this prophetic rhetoric that assumes divine endorsement, if not inspiration. Yet, despite shifting genres and authorial voices in other works, Nashe returns to this incongruity between agent and act, and this consistency indicates a similar reforming motive whenever he deploys this role. In this pursuit, he uniquely shifts the prophetic position and its application, showing that such rhetorical moves extend beyond the imaginary sacred and secular divide or, put another way, that religious reform need not always wear religious clothes. Rather, this prophetic position allows Nashe to use the guise of popular literature as a vehicle for Christian rhetoric as his critiques take on different targets that have led to London's then-current state of needing reform.

*Christs Teares over Jerusalem* is the natural starting point for considering Nashe's religious rhetoric as he connects scriptural and historical examples to challenge what he finds detrimental in his readers' lives. In part one, he takes on the voice of Christ to explicate his weeping over Jerusalem in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. Part two includes a retelling of the post crucifixion narrative of the Roman siege of Jerusalem before the city's eventual surrender after near starvation. In part three, the text seeks to apply this original prophetic fulfillment to his readers, arguing that Christian London is also the anointed city of God and, like Jerusalem, will bear punishment for its excessive sins. In fact, Nashe continually argues the series of plagues that have affected the city are a warning among many from God that London will imminently face the same fate as Jerusalem.<sup>19</sup> Casting such judgment on his contemporaries should require a dominant rhetorical position of listing sins and promising retribution, but Nashe confesses doubts about his abilities to produce such a work before the main text in two prefaces. Understanding

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<sup>19</sup> Catherine I. Cox describes this text as a prophecy that "anticipates, through the daily peal of bells for the dead, the trumpet blast of future desolation if repentance does not come" (51).

that he is about to write his most divinity-driven pamphlet in assuming the voice of Christ, Nashe begins with a preface to Lady Elizabeth Carey that challenges his own presumption. He explains, “More embellished should my present bee, were my abilitie more abundant [...] Wit hath his dregs as wel as wine, Divinitie his drosse. Expect some Tares in this Treatise of Teares. Farre unable are my dimme Ospray eyes to looke cleerely against the sunne of Gods truth. An easie matter is it for anie man to cutte me (like a Diamond) with mine own dust” (9).<sup>20</sup> This confession admits an authorial weakness, suggesting that this work opens Nashe to fair criticism because of his inability to present divine truth. He adds to this imagery with a presentation of youthfulness, declaring “a young imperfect practitioner am I in Christs schoole. Christ accepteth the will for the deede. Weake are my deedes, great is my will. O that our deedes onely should be seene, and our wil die invisible!” (9). Nashe advertises that his heart is in the right place though his words might not reflect his intention, especially when comparing himself unfavorably against those who have more wit and more knowledge of divinity. He must also contend with his reputation as an instigator in print, especially considering the now several public attacks on Gabriel Harvey in his pamphlets and the published satirical appeal to the devil in *Pierce Penilesse*. Seemingly to address this concern, Nashe says that these works have led him away from the religious writing he should be doing, and that “whereas nowe, onely amongst the deade I live in them, and they dead all those that looke upon them” (10). This confession prompts further reflection on what he seems to argue is his more appropriate wit by comparing the current work as “the course-spun webbe of discontent: a quintessence of holy complaint, extracted out of my true cause of condolement” (10). Thus, in comparison with other works that would cause Lady Carey and the

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<sup>20</sup> Cox describes what is at stake in taking on this voice as Nashe “hazards charges of presumption and even blasphemy unless he can convincingly convey a sense of the inventions extreme necessity” (59).

rest of the reading world to not take this discourse seriously, Nashe hopes for a fair reading. He presents the writer, or using Burkean terms the pentadic agent, as a reluctant speaker that already doubts his abilities to produce a work of any value.

Nashe does not limit this self-criticism to the address to Lady Carey but continues this repentance in the next preface addressed “To the Reader” where he similarly addresses accusations that supposedly represent his moral failings. He advertises regrets over his previous works, promising “A hundred unfortunate farewels to fantasticall Satirisme” and laments where “in those vaines heere-to-fore have I misspent my spirite, and prodigally conspir’d against good houres” (12). He even attempts to make amends with Harvey (12). These earlier works apparently represent “some spleanative vaines of wantonness [into which] heretofore have I foolishlie relapsed to supply my private wants,” and Nashe uses this letter as a mark of repentance based on “an unfained conversion” before God and man (13). He feels he must double this repentant attitude of regret over his earned reputation to multiple addressees, and such confessions open the door for his critics to challenge him by addressing their obvious concerns from the outset. Readers would logically wonder why Nashe would embark on a work that requires an awareness of his inabilities to handle weighty matters and a confession of the well-deserved reputation of his previous works not in line with divine content. The reluctant agent does not seem to fit with the forthcoming act of judgment.

Despite appearances, this reduced position is a necessary part of the prophetic rhetoric Nashe will soon use to prompt repentance in his readers as he combines humility and repentance in an attempt to gain rhetorical effectiveness. In making this move, he links the ultimate example of rhetorical authority with a pronounced humble position of becoming merely a vehicle for

God's work. Catherine I. Cox explains that "Nashe's invocation is a rhetorical masterpiece, crafted to show his own meekness and piety, the dire necessity for adopting Christ's voice, the tenderness and sorrow of Jesus, whose tears Nashe hopes will soften England's 'stoney' heart, for God's gift to his humble servant (Nashe) of his own oracular power" (59). Christopher A Hill agrees with Cox and argues in "Thomas Nashe's Imitation of Christ" that this movement could hopefully prompt "the overwhelming emotional response that will lead to repentance" (213). While Cox and Hill's descriptions are valuable for describing Nashe's approach, the rhetorical position follows a path that needs more explanation, one that Burke can illuminate, especially with an author of such a distinctly incongruous reputation.

The relationship of interest in terms of Burke's dramatic pentad is between the act (what is done) and the agent (who does it).<sup>21</sup> It is reasonable to expect that this prophet would speak from a position of authority, self-professed or otherwise, due to claiming the voice of God or the power of the punishment he proclaims. Nashe as the agent does not fit what the act seems to require but supplements this position with an appeal for divine inspiration and scriptural connections that indicate his investment in its power. The main text opens with a direct appeal to God for his intervention so that Nashe's rhetoric might accomplish the goal of moving the audience to repentance, and this opening reveals the key to understanding the motive in Nashe's incongruence between deference and judgmental rhetoric. He prays for rhetorical effectiveness because he would "hate in [God's] name to speake coldly to a quick-witted generation" and asks that God would "let my braines melt all to incke, and the floods of affliction drive out mine eyes before them, [than] I should be dull and leaden in describing the dollour of thy love" (15). He

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<sup>21</sup> In terms of the act, the prophetic message is one of two parts: revelation and prediction, or revelation of the besetting sins of the audience and prediction of judgment to come.

would not have literary success be the only end, for “farre be me from any ambitious hope of the vaine merit of Arte; may that living vehemence I use in lament onely proceed from a heaven-bred hatred of uncleannesse and corruption. Mine owne wit I cleane disinherite: thy fiery Cloven-tongued inspiration my muse” (15). Cox describes this section as the “incongruous yoking of homespun phrases with apocalyptic images [that] emphasizes the paradox that Christian power lies in humility” (59).<sup>22</sup> The logic follows that in order for God to accomplish anything through this work, the wit of Nashe must be removed in favor of divine inspiration because this wit is too demoralized by impulse and sin to be of any use. Burke’s terminology applies in this case as the rhetorical agent must decline in order for the act of rhetoric to hold any real power.

If the prefatory letters and introduction of *Christs Teares* lay the groundwork for Nashe’s prophetic claim, he cements this position as he makes one final plea before taking on the voice of Christ. He prays, “I am a child (as holy Jeremy said), & know not how to speake, yet, [...] I can doe all things through the helpe of him that strengtheneth me. The tongues of Infants it is thou that makest eloquence, and teachest the heart understanding” (16). This request blends several scriptural examples to create a combined image of personal weakness and divine inspiration. First, like the prophet Jeremiah, Nashe argues that his youth prevents him from speaking, but he supplements this reference with a New Testament passage, Philippians 4:13, where he claims God’s empowerment. He quotes Psalm 8:2 and presents himself as the babe that speaks God-ordained praise, and asks, “Graunt me (that am a babe and an infant in the misteries of Divinitie) the gracious favour to suck at the breasts of thy sacred Revelation” (16). His final move asks

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<sup>22</sup> In his later study, Hill calls Nashe’s move “the paradox of inspiration,” where “he publicly gives up his right to speak with his own vehemence [and] gains the ability to speak with divine power” (“Imitation” 213).

God to empower his words again: “All the pours of my Soule (assembled in their perfectest arraie) shall stand wayting on thy incomprehensible Wisedome for Arguments; as poore young birds stand attending on their Dams bill for sustenance. Now helpe, now direct; for now I transforme my self from my self, to be the unworthy Speaker to the World” (16). Nashe sets up a contrast between his previous self and the present one attempting to write with the authority of God’s inspiration. He argues that as a rhetorical agent he must empty himself of whatever has brought him to this point in order to experience the transformation necessary to present Christ’s revelation. Claiming the low position here becomes a move for an act of inspired rhetoric rather than ineffective attempts driven by his own knowledge or wit.<sup>23</sup>

Nashe would need divine inspiration to reach such a “quick-witted” audience. Hill describes Nashe’s understanding the need for this work because “no normal rhetoric can shake London from its sinful complacency” (213). Nashe’s readers are not dumb but demoralized by complacency and the misappropriation of their minds, so they need be shaken from their slumber. Burke’s definition of perspective by incongruity explains how a writer can upset expected connections to prompt the audience’s reflection on its ideological attachments (*Attitudes* 309). He explains this incongruence as a form of *casuistic stretching*, a term that indicates how a writer like Nashe can challenge those from his own country (England) and his own faith commitments (Christianity) to seek reform through repentance rather than punishment. Burke describes this work in how “the devices for ostensibly retaining allegiance to an ‘original principle’ by casuistic stretching eventually lead to demoralization, which can only be stopped by a new start” (*Attitudes* 229). If Nashe truly wants to reform his fellow readers, then he would

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<sup>23</sup> Cox describes Nashe’s voice growing “stronger and more commanding a though he, in this very moment, is being infused with the power of God” (59).

need to seek to shift their allegiances. He models the prophetic position by linking with scriptural examples of divinely-inspired orators who speak with God's authority to prompt their audiences to repent from their actions, which is a Christian form of what Burke calls rhetorical division: the separation of readers from their commitments in order to prompt identification with the writer's perspective (*Rhetoric of Motives* 46). The specific stretch for Nashe's audience would be to question their ideas of Christian belief and perspective without rejecting the core principles of the faith itself. The fear of coming judgment would hopefully prompt such questions and seek a remedy; such prophecy is not vitriolic in its judgment but merciful in its intent.

James Jasinski explains how this incongruity empowers the speaker rather than weakens him. Prophetic rhetoric begins "in a somewhat ironic reversal, [where] prophetic ethos is attained through the effacement of self or individual ego. In religious prophecy, it is not the prophet's voice but rather God's voice that we hear; the prophet no longer possesses an ethos of his or her own but rather gives it up to be a vessel for God's word" (460). This ethos can come from reluctance as the speaker feels compelled to speak against better judgment, for "prophetic vision is depicted as a burden or a calling that one is compelled to accept" but also creates a position of power as the speaker subverts his own will to the will of God (460). The distinction between the speaker and God ultimately allows divine inspiration to speak through the former through his deference where he reduces his own status and gains rhetorical power. The deference creates a shift in pentadic agent from strong to weak in order to then enhance the position with divine inspiration. Rather than ignore his lack of experience or scandalous history, Nashe embraces it as a necessary part of his appeal for authority and in doing so forces readers to consider his words rather than his reputation. By disinheriting his own wit and "the hope of the vaine merit of Arte,"

Nashe challenges his readers to receive his work as opposed to those writers they have previously followed. After asking that he can receive revelation, he further requests that he might “utter some-thing that may moove secure *England* to true sorrow and contrition” (16). He asks that Christ “Lende my words the forcible wings of the Lightnings, that they may peirce unawares into the marrow and [veins] of my Readers” (15). Such piercing reflects exactly the type of rhetorically violent division that a writer using perspective by incongruity hopes to prompt.<sup>24</sup> Nashe describes his audience as a “quick-witted generation,” and London faces pending judgment for their sins; those responsible for the well-being of the people have been lost in endless debates while the world descends into sinful madness (15). In response, Nashe borrows the mantle of prophet to shock the religious system already demoralized by ineffective rhetoric. To engage beyond his readers’ quick-wit would make him a voice among many; taking the voice of God, while presumptuous, also seeks a greater effectiveness.

The rhetoric within the main narrative of *Christs Teares* reflects this desire where Nashe consistently seeks the reformation of his audience as opposed to the mere judgment of the people. He summarizes the teachings of Christ: “he went into their chief Assemblies and there (to the High-priests & Heads of their Sinagogues) freely delivered his message, declared from whence he came, gentlie expostulated their ill dealing, desired them to have care of themselves, told them the danger of their obsintancie, and wooed them (with many fayre promises) to repent and be converted” (19). He adds to this woo the final plea: “His last refuge was to deale plainly with them, and explaine to the full what plagues and warres were entring in at their gates for their

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<sup>24</sup> Burke provides an example of casuistic stretching in the court jester of Shakespearean drama that can use his “professional immunity” to present controversial or inconvenient truths (*Attitudes* 230). This example works well in describing the term, but Nashe would want to invest more in this role than the fool who by position will not bear consequences for his words.

disloyaltie and doggednesse” (19). The people, as both the writer and his audience know, rejected this appeal outright and so incurred the wrath of God in the destruction of their city. Nashe connects the sins of the past and present cities (Jerusalem and London) to create the grounds for the text’s ultimate appeal in part three and an empowerment of its rhetoric. Burke’s pentadic terms provide the means for understanding the relational link Nashe uses to connect Christ’s judgment and his own. If Jerusalem is now London (scene), as Nashe intends his readers to see, then Christ’s appeal (act) now comes through Nashe (agent) as the bearer of the same prophetic plea for repentance. Given this rhetorical empowerment, as Christ exits the narrative, the author shifts to the fulfillment of the judgmental prophecy where the city and its inhabitants face violent destruction.

Nashe’s purposes remain as he becomes a historian in part two of this text to depict the narrative of the siege of Jerusalem. Despite the warnings of Christ, the inhabitants go through with their plans and incur the wrath of the siege. Nashe explains the various signs and wonders that portended the coming judgment, summarizing that “everything rebelled against kind, as thinking [it] scorne to accommodate themselves to theyr uses, that had so rebelled against the Lord” (62).<sup>25</sup> However, the people would not repent “because they obeyed not theyr Maker” (62). Even after the sin of killing Christ, the people of Jerusalem had the opportunity to repent, and as this text is intended to be a mirror for London, Nashe hopes that his readers will not follow Jerusalem into continued disobedience in the face of their current signs that he will

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<sup>25</sup> Nashe writes, “Manie monstrous byrthes at thys instant were brought forth: in divers places of the Citty sprung up founts of bloode. The Element every night was embattailed with Armed men, skirmishing and conflicting amongst themselves; and the imperiall Eagles of Rome were plainly there displayed to all mens sight. A burning sword also was sette forth, visibly bent against the Citty. The strangest and horriblest tempests of thunder and lightning had they that ever was heard of” (62).

recount in part three of this text. Before making this move, Nashe intends to shock his readers with the grotesque suffering of the people in Jerusalem. He pauses, again to invoke divine inspiration in following the prophetic model. He says, “Now is the tyme that all Rivers must runne into the Sea, that whatsoever I have in witte or eloquence must be drayned to the delineament of wretchedness” (63). This interruption before the shift from general judgment to specific illustration of the siege and the people within it causes Nashe to once again attempt the prophetic emptying of himself. The subject matter has become so great, and so necessary, that he apparently eschews all praise for his writing style. He asks God to “enlarge myne invention and my memorie, sincerely and feelingly to rehearse the disornamenting of thys mother of Citties” (63). Nashe had just said that his wit and eloquence must be reduced for this narrative and then asks God to enlarge his invention and memory. While these literary terms are not exactly the same, they illustrate the incongruity of prophetic rhetoric as informed through Burke’s pentad. As the agent hoping to accomplish the act of prophecy, Nashe must empty himself of his own wit to be filled by God’s in order to fulfill the purposes that God would have for his work.

Nashe pauses the narrative at times to remind his readers of how they should be paying attention to the fulfillment of Christ’s prophecy and ask them to reflect upon their own values in reference to his description of Jerusalem’s suffering. After describing the factions within Jerusalem and their destruction of the priestly order and eventual establishment of a plowman to fill the office, Nashe explains how the “Lord at one time visited theyr Citty with these foure capitall plagues, Fyre, Famine, Pestilence, and the Sword” (67). Before making this transition, however, he pauses as though taking a breath from the judgment and destruction to address his readers as he is aware that the volume of his proclamations might ultimately distract them. He

explains that “It is not my intent to runne a right out race through all the accidents of theyr reprobation: onely that which I lay downe is to shewe howe unfallibly Christs words were fulfilled, as touch theyr tenne-times merited desolation” (67). He continues, “Judge all those that have sence of misery, ere they have occasion to use it in discerning their own miseries, whether thys were not desolation or no” (67). Any sorrow the readers feel over such pain should coincide with an understanding of the citizens’ responsibility. Nashe holds, just for a moment, in the breathless description of judgment to his readers to tell them that all of this punishment was brought on by the people’s sin, and thus the words he proclaims carry the same weight. It is an act of self-control that invokes the comparison between what he might have said left to his own devices and what he is willing to lay down so that the most effective rhetoric comes forth for his audience.

The right response to this inspired brevity is for the readers to compare their current struggles, most importantly the present plague on the city, to connect to the prophetic warning that Nashe intends with this text. The latter part of this section presents the egregious climax of the siege in the horror of an otherwise wealthy woman, Miriam, cooking her child and eating it before serving it to the soldiers outside of her house. The famine has grown to such critical mass that this poor soul must commit such a foul act. However, Nashe would not merely have his audience disgusted by the actions they will see but desires that they imagine a similar scene taking place in their city. Before this scene, he pauses and says, “Mothers of LONDON, (each one of you to your selves), doe but imagine that you were *Miriam*, wyth what hart (suppose you) could ye go about the cooquerie, of your own children? Not hate, but hunger, taught *Miriam* to forgette mother-hood” (71). The important application for Nashe’s audience is not the revulsion

at Miriam's actions but to question why she was forced to commit this infanticide in the first place.<sup>26</sup> Each part of these accounts of Jerusalem serves to cement the text's prophetic purpose, and these interruptions allow Nashe to enter the text to remind his readers to not merely focus on the details of what is written but the lesson that these images should teach. In Burkean terms, Nashe reminds his readers of the relationship between his role as the agent and the act of prophecy through his confession of exhaustion and the historical account of judgment on Jerusalem.

After moving through the final destruction of the siege on the city and its inhabitants, Nashe openly transitions to his prophetic connection to London and further defers emphasis away from himself for the sake of rhetorical inspiration. Apparently aware that his judgmental argument could incur rejection, he asks that this work "be acceptable to God and his Church [...], as no man in thys Treatise I will particularly tutch, none I will [seemingly] allude to, but onely attaint vice in generall" (80). What appears to be a pragmatic deference to avoid direct retribution from offended parties allows Nashe to address the culture as a whole rather than a specific person. If such judgments could apply to specific people, then the prophetic rhetoric would miss its mark of reform. His challenges throughout the text have applied to "citizens" of London and "mothers" of London, which designate his rhetoric as applicable to the culture at large. In this case, the sermon will not call on a specific target in the audience. Otherwise, the audience members will not have to reflect on their own sins at the expense of the targets. By adding this apparently deferential caveat, but in this case for the prophetic judgment, Nashe

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<sup>26</sup> Cox helpfully describes Nashe's hopeful impact on mothers, as "those who had lost children to the plague would surely feel a deep kinship to Miriam, for her loss would mirror their own. Yet immense as their suffering would be, they must prefer their sorrow to the guilty shame of Miriam" (63).

maintains the emphasis on the culture at large and keeps the audience from turning away from his mirror because it applies to someone else.<sup>27</sup> In other words, and in Burke's terminology, Nashe shifts the act of the prophecy to gain rhetorical authority by emphasizing the larger cultural sins instead of focusing on specific people.

Nashe also connects to the incongruity of humility in an exposition of Christ's life on earth in opposition to the sinful ambition that runs so rampantly in London. He presents ambition as a sickness, and "when the soule doth swell with ambition, both soule and bodie (without timely phisick of repentaunce) will smart full sore for it" (84). The opposing picture is Christ's humility in the selection of his followers: "the foolish things of the world (saith *Paule*) God chuseth, and not the haughty or ambitious in conceit. God myght have chosen Kings and Emperours, or the Scribes and Pharisies, to be his Disciples, but foolish Fisher-men hee chose" (84). These men were the right choice for Christ because he "chose them whom the devill scorned to looke so lowe as to tempt, in whose harts he had not yet layd one stone of his building. They were the onely fit men to receive the impression of his Spirite" (84). The disciples as fishermen began in a low position, and through his opening repentance, Nashe hopes to remove the stones Satan set in his life to claim a similar reduced state. Throughout this narrative, Nashe continually points to the unexpected orators of Christ's message, a role that he would fulfill in this judgment. By now including the disciples in the presentation of this incongruity, Nashe traces an indirect line from the Old Testament prophets through Christ himself and his

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<sup>27</sup> Whatever his intentions, Nashe did not achieve the neutral posture he might have hoped. See Cox (64) as well as Nicholl (171) for details regarding the retribution Nashe experienced from the local Aldermen who could have seen themselves as the targets of parts of Nashe's argument.

disciples that empowers Nashe as the unworthy speaker to the world. Building such an extensive example of his preferred rhetorical position indicates his inclusion in the long line of prophets.

However, such a self-presentation immediately challenges his inclination toward humility in assuming this rhetorical agent. Immediately recognizing the potential for accusations of sinful ambition in his own work, Nashe pauses to address this concern. He says that “even in thys dilatement against Ambition, the devil seeks to sette in a foote of affected applause and popular fames Ambition in my stile, so as hee incited a number of Phylosophers (in times past) to prosecute theyr ambition of glory in writing of glories contemptibleness” (87). Nashe understands that such a response could silence his prophetic purpose. Readers might rightly claim that ambition drives the writer to challenge others and create the high ground of moral certainty, especially when such a position might engender literary success. If Nashe fails to address these accusations, he would lose the empowerment, so he sets up a contrast of speakers to illustrate his point. Since he has already linked himself with a long history of antecedents, he feels the need to distance himself from another group. As he pursues what Burke calls the rhetorical agent, he must distinguish exactly which line of succession he desires to join. He argues, “I resist it and abhorre [glory]: if any thing be here penned that may peirce or profite, heavenly Christ (not I) have the praise” (87). Hill argues that this deference creates the “most difficult challenge of reading *Christs Teares*,” which is, “reconciling Nashe’s claims of self-abnegation to the self-consciousness of his rhetoric” (217). By connecting the results with Christ, Nashe confirms the prophetic position he has been building throughout the text. In arguing that any success points to God’s work and not his own, he has fully emphasized the text itself and its inspiration rather than focusing specifically on the speaker so that the rhetoric would be

empowered to accomplish his goal of repentance. Nashe combines the agent of the deferred speaker with the act of prophetic rhetoric to emphasize the latter as of primary importance.

Nashe makes this goal apparent with a final plea to his audience at the end of the text after a long explanation of the city's sins, much like his approach to the mirror city of Jerusalem. He asks God for mercy and in doing so connects the final repentance he desires with the model he presents at the beginning of the text. He reminds them that "Certaine conjectures have we had that we are revolted from God and that our ruine is not far of" (172). These signs include supernatural events, such as: "in divers places of our Land it hath raigned blood, the ground hath been removed, and horrible deformed byrthes conceived," as well as "the Earthquake, the dearth and famine some fewe yeeres hence" (173). In response to these signs, Nashe pleads

O ye disobedient chyl dren, returne, and the Lorde shall heale your infirmitie s. Lye downe in your confusion, & cover your faces with shame. From your youth to thys day, have you sinned, and not obeyed the voyce of the Lord your God. Now, in the age of your obstinancie and ungrateful abandonments, repent and be converted. With one united intercessionment, thus reconcile your selves to him.  
(173)

This final challenge represents Nashe's rhetorical goal, and he reflects this journey throughout this text as he consistently defers his abilities. In his humiliation as opposed to his audience's pride, he seeks the inspiration to, in Burkean terms, remoralize his pridefully demoralized city by prompting his readers to see their failings and confess their sins. The incongruity of deference in the Burkean agent and its relationship with judgmental rhetoric allows Nashe to ask his audience to follow a similar journey of division from their allegiance to sinfulness for their own gain.

Nashe's Christianity and desire for his audience's repentance greatly influence his rhetoric, yet critics have largely overlooked his religious influences as a distraction from his otherwise powerful wit or as an indicator of greater anxieties he feels about his audience or himself as an author. *Christs Teares* is a problematic text for readers who appreciate Nashe's other, less apparently religious works, and these critics tend to favor his satire as distracted by or opposed to a religious intent. C.S. Lewis argues that Nashe's "irrepressible relish for roguery rather overwhelms his (presumably) moral purpose" in *Christs Teares* (412). G. R. Hibbard writes that his rhetoric in this text is "an over-written mixture of sentimental bombast and tasteless religiosity" (ix). While Lewis sees Nashe's rebellious nature slipping through his overt religious language, and Hibbard views his religious rhetoric as reducing the value of the text at large, they agree that the text itself represents some offshoot of limited quality when compared to Nashe's other works. J.B. Steane argues that the text has some value and is willing to argue for "the genuineness of [Nashe's] intentions in this homiletic work" based on the "evidence of care over structure and expression, and when the piece is so resolutely sustained" but continues the focus on the text as a variation of Nashe's style rather than on how these intentions might reflect in the construction of his work (35). This dichotomy of critical preference favors style over substance and unnecessarily relegates religious rhetoric to the background of interpretation when such a distinction need not be made. Moreover, these critics overlook areas where Nashe takes on similar positions in many of his works without the direct correlation to religious intent and leave out a significant portion of what he indicates is his driving motivation.

More recent critics have reconsidered this text through Nashe's religious commitments but read *Christs Teares* as indicative of his doubts about himself as an author or an audience

unwilling to listen, no matter the emphatic nature of the rhetoric. Deborah Kuller Shuger's *The Renaissance Bible* compares *Christ's Teares* with a group of crucifixion narratives during the English Renaissance period and argues that in these texts Christ is ultimately conflicted and powerless because he "cannot save his beloved; rather, he causes her destruction, since the city falls as punishment for the Crucifixion. He knows this. He is aware that, although he became man to the end that 'Hell (not *Jerusalem*) might perish,' nevertheless his coming to Jerusalem has 'opend & enwidened Hell mouth, to swallow thee and devoure thee'" (119). She concludes that "*Christes Teares* thus relates the *failure* of redemption" and that "Christ himself recognizes this failure" (119).<sup>28</sup> As Nashe has presented this voice and then attempts to apply it to his time and place, Shuger extends her reading of Christ to the author himself who knows that his work will not save London and that this text ultimately presents an uncentered self that emphasizes the goal of religious rhetoric but is aware of its futility. Despite reading a more active investment in the prophetic role, Melissa M. Caldwell continues this understanding of the text as indicative of Nashe's resignation to the futility of such rhetoric. She suggests that Nashe takes on the role of God's speaker but "interrupts his narrative, [...] to confess his doubts about his own wit," which leads to a view of Nashe as anxious about England's own descent into an immoral illiteracy that may not be conquerable even with a strong presentation of the truth (159).

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<sup>28</sup> Jonathan Crewe makes a similar argument in *Unredeemed Rhetoric* and later in "'This Sorrow's Heavenly,' *Christ's Teares* and the Jews." In the latter, he includes the reductive assumption that "the forty-year interval between the prophecy and its fulfillment renders the causal connection tenuous, especially since the agents of destruction are the Romans, acting for their own reasons without reference to Christ or to any eschatological schema" (35). Many Christians, before Nashe's time and long after him, have linked Jewish responsibility for the crucifixion, and a forty-year gap between the prophecy and Romans as a vehicle for its fulfillment does not necessarily show that Nashe is skeptical of this application. It is anachronistic to argue that "the languages of *Christ's Teares*, including that of Christ, necessarily 'fall' into parody insofar as the forms of transcendental belief supporting them have been undermined" (38). Readers have little reason to think that Nashe's transcendental beliefs have been undermined.

However, the appearance of weakness does not necessarily connect to an author's anxieties about himself or his audience's willingness to listen. By taking on the role of the prophet, Nashe includes such advertised doubts as an essential part of his investment in an inspired rhetorical position. Jasinski explains that "a mark of the prophetic ethos is the acceptance of the reality that one most likely will be misunderstood and persecuted for remaining faithful to the prophetic calling. The prophet might lament this reality, but he or she accepts it; it is part of the burden of prophecy" (461). From the outset, Nashe anticipates rejection and connects to the scriptural examples that allow him to advertise these doubts as a part of embracing this rejection. While Shuger and Caldwell helpfully avoid the bifurcation of Nashe's works into preferential categories that earlier critics promote, they apply the rhetoric of confession too quickly as autobiographical evidence of the author's struggles. The incongruity of prophetic rhetoric with its pairing of the humble agent and judgmental act provides a better explanation of a seemingly weak position as the vehicle for rhetorical authority. The writer using prophetic rhetoric can actively accept this mantle as a signal of "the nobility of his or her cause and calling" despite the apparent ineffectiveness of the rhetoric to prompt repentance in the audience (Jasinski 461). Nashe flips the projection of doubts from a signal of anxiety to a signal of inspiration as the reluctant prophet shares the word of God and will likely suffer rejection for this righteous cause.

Catherine I. Cox and Christopher A. Hill's studies about the prophetic inspiration for Nashe's rhetoric indicate Nashe's reforming intentions. Both authors take Nashe's religious commitments seriously. However, despite the value of these studies, they are limited to only a

single text in Nashe's work.<sup>29</sup> The case for Nashe's prophetic rhetoric in *Christ's Teares* is readily apparent, but the incongruity between his deference and aggressive rhetoric occurs throughout his other works without the same religious overtones. In a similar approach to the earlier readings of *Christs Teares*, critics have tended to favor Nashe's seemingly "secular" works (i.e. those works without a specified religious intention) as more reflective of his literary strength and his skeptical intentions. However, more recent critics that explore a *postsecular* reading of literature present exciting potential for readers to no longer separate, in this case, blatantly religious works with satirical and comical works along a divide that prefers the secular over the religious. Lori Branch helpfully summarizes postsecular literary criticism as locating "the particularities of and precise differences between the various discourses of belief at work in literature, not [arbitrating] between them" (29).<sup>30</sup> Nashe blurs the religious/secular binary, and while he would not claim an anachronistic term like *postsecular*, his works show that his religious claims and his satire need not be distinguished and then ordered. Any binary favors a reading of one over the other; the religious reading downplays the problem with Nashe's shifting positions and much of his scandalous reputation, and the secular reading downplays his overt attachments to English Protestant belief. However, reading Nashe's other works rhetorically allows readers to see him utilizing this prophetic rhetoric in various and more indirect ways, and

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<sup>29</sup> At the end of her article, Cox argues that "while poststructural and materialist approaches are poised to play an important role in Nashe studies in the years ahead, close reading of Nashe's unique sermon *Christs Tears*, offered in the contexts of the Protestant Reformation, scriptural exegesis, genre studies, and the visual and literary traditions of the plague – areas which Nashe, as an educated man of his time must have cared about – will offer fertile ground for interpretation" (69). This chapter is an answer to this call but adds the category of rhetorical studies alongside Christopher A. Hill's exploration of Nashe's sermon as exemplary rhetoric for preaching and pursues these connections across Nashe's works.

<sup>30</sup> *Religion and Literature* 41.2 (Summer 2009) includes an insightful forum among scholars where they discuss the applicability of a postsecular view that challenges the binaries between religion and knowledge that have driven much of literary criticism and the academic world.

such a reading avoids viewing his writing through a reductive religious or secular reading that excludes other perspectives. Burke's terms show that, while operating in different genres and through different voices, Nashe provides various depictions of a similar deferred speaker (agent) combined with aggressive rhetoric (act) that signals a prophetic purpose. These moments of advertised humility are so similar that the application of motive that drives the prophetic rhetoric in *Christs Teares* should also apply in these other cases. They have the appearance of scurrilous wares for sale to whomever will pay, but Nashe nests a similar salvific motive within them, ultimately using satire as a vehicle for his religious intentions. In each case, he brings a different form of this prophetic rhetoric to bear, revealing his view of its plasticity while pursuing similar goals through different means. This rhetorical explanation combines both the religious and secular readings without forcing a dichotomy and ultimately a preference between them.

Nashe's most critically celebrated work, *The Unfortunate Traveller*, includes a moment of such deferential rhetoric nestled within various forms of shifting satire. This work appeared in the bookstalls around the same time as *Christs Teares* and remains one of Nashe's most difficult works to categorize. Steane helpfully explains that while it contains elements of a "picaresque novel' [...] it resists attempts to find a kind of depth and organization which critics would like it to have" (30).<sup>31</sup> The narrator, Jack Wilton, goes on an adventurous grand tour of Europe beginning with serving as a trickster page in Henry VIII's invading army then moving across Europe before finally returning to the English army after his capture in Rome and experience witnessing such acts of cruelty that he foreswears future adventures in favor of a quiet life. The

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<sup>31</sup> Steane defines the picaresque novel as "an episodic narrative centring [sic] on the adventures of a principal character who is up to all sorts of tricks and gets himself and others into various sorts of difficulties" (30). He further argues that this text shifts too greatly between mirth and cruelty to represent the satirical levity of the picaresque narrator fully (30-31).

journey includes one specific episode where he takes on the prophetic position similar to his approach in *Christs Teares*. In creating this moment, Nashe nests a similar religious purpose within a larger entertaining narrative and uses this rhetoric to promote a specific reform against a group of antagonists rather than attacking the culture at large.

In his travels, Jack Wilton shifts from a comic to a graver tone in the key moment when the Anabaptist rebels of Münster falsely presume religious authority. In the prefaces and early stages prior to this point, Wilton seems to eschew notions of rhetorical gravity calling this work his *Acts and Monuments*, a clear invocation of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* that reports on protestant martyrdom, but quickly adds that "it shall be lawfull for anie whatsoever to play with false dice in a corner on the cover" of the book (208). Wilton again invokes this title when first opening his narrative in the King's war encampment. He asks, "What strategemicall acts and monuments doo you think an ingenious infant of my yeeres might enact?" (209). These acts feature Wilton playing trickster to members of his retinue that do not live up to their responsibilities, and his supposed *Acts and Monuments* reports on his mastery of his camp mates, often at expense of their well-being. The last experience in the king's camp features a trick on the accountants, and Wilton says to his readers, "My masters, you may conceive of me what you list, but I thinke confidently I was ordained Gods scourge from above for their daintie finicality" (226). He places himself in the seat of divine retribution, saying that "the houre of their punishment could no longer be proroged, but vengeance must have at them at all a ventures" (226). However, despite invoking God's name and claiming what could be divine authority as God's scourge along with the requisite gravity for sinfulness, Wilton uses "the experience of their pusillanimitie" to "raise the foundation of my roguerie" (226). He ultimately robs the

accountants after scaring them and brags that they “resigned their desks, with the money that was in them, to the mercie of the vanquisher” (226). God’s scourge could claim a righteous cause in robbing the dishonest, but Wilton calls his actions roguery and seeks his own ill-gotten wealth in a perverse sense of justice. The Burkean agent in this case is the rogue villain Jack Wilton, who expects to be praised for his brilliance. He then moves through a grotesque description of the sweating sickness in England with the attitude of a reporter listing the ways that people in various social positions succumbed to this disease.<sup>32</sup> He turns again, this time to a report on a battle between the Swiss and French where he depicts the bloodshed as an interesting spectacle but devoid of any real resonance.<sup>33</sup> Both events would be ready-made occasions for Nashe’s form of prophetic rhetoric since they involve suffering that many authors would attribute to divine judgment, but when Wilton describes them as interesting in their presentation of spectacle, he lacks any real sense of social consciousness. Combined with his roguery in the self-proclaimed title of “God’s Scourge,” readers would likely see this episodic tale as a grotesque travel narrative rather than a convicting treatise.

However, Wilton does not maintain this position in the next episode where the narrative tone changes sharply around the idea of divinity and shows a remarkable similarity to Nashe’s voice as the pentadic agent in *Christs Teares*. Wilton leaves the French and Swiss battle “like a

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<sup>32</sup> At the end of this section, he says “To knit up this description in a pursnet, so fervent & scorching was the burning aire which inclosed them, that the most blessed man then alive would have thought that God had done fairly by him if hee had turnd him to a Goate, for Goates take breath, not at the mouth or nose onely, but at the eares also” (230-231).

<sup>33</sup> Wilton says that he hoped “to thrust my selfe into that Faction that was the strongest,” and that upon arriving at the battle, “I saw a wonderfull spectacle of blood-shed on both sides: here unweeldie *Switzers* wallowing in their gore, like an Oxe in his dung, there the sprightly *French* sprawling and turning on the stained grasse, like a Roach new taken out of the stream” (231). The combined grotesque images of animals and humans degrades whatever sympathetic concern Wilton might have for these armies.

Crowe that still followes aloofe where there is carrion” (232) and lands at Münster with presumably the same pragmatic goals in mind. He finds the Anabaptist usurper John Leiden leading his followers through presumptive prayers and misinterpretations of the Bible that Wilton finds offensive. After mocking their ridiculous attire, Wilton says, “Peace, peace, there in the belfrie, service begins: upon their knees before they joine fals John Leiden and his fraternitie very devoutly, they pray, they howle, they expostulate with God to grant them victorie, and use such unspeakable vehemence a man would thinke them the onely wel bent men under heaven” (234). Apparently, this observation invokes a response or at least an explanation from Wilton’s perspective. Before he does so, however, he asks the readers’ permission to “let me dilate a litle more gravely than the nature of this historie requires, or wilbe expected of so yong a practitioner in divinity” (234). Wilton proclaims his youth similarly to Nashe’s deference in the opening parts of *Christs Teares* and signals a similar use of prophetic rhetoric. In this episode, Nashe presents an incongruous perspective by changing the author’s view of himself from the proud rogue to the youthful preacher.

He argues that the Anabaptists receive what they deserve because of their presumption of God’s blessing on their endeavors and unpacks scripture to argue that they are not truly pursuing God but their own pride. The energy of the speakers belies a greater problem because “not those that intermissively cry, *Lord, open to us, Lord, open to us*, enter first into the kingdom; that not the greatest professors have the greatest portion in grace; that all is not gold that glisters” (234). At this moment, Wilton is now preaching against a proud presumption that readers might easily associate with his previous tales, and he pauses in an additional moment of deference to appeal for authority in his words. He explains that “the lawfulness of the authoritie they oppose

themselves against is sufficiently proved: farre be it [that] my under-age arguments should intrude themselves as a greene weake prop to support so high a Building” (236). In these two cases, Wilton invokes the same youthfulness he ascribed to the prophet Jeremiah in *Christs Teares* in pursuit of the same rhetorical move for inspiration. This movement of the agent toward humility prompts the audience to pause and question the connected rhetorical act. By confessing inexperience, Nashe points to the clarity of the truth against them and that it does not require any embellishment on his part.

However, this movement to use prophetic rhetoric signals an important difference alongside the similarity of argument in *Christs Teares*. This rhetorical shift of the agent points to a specific focus in the rhetorical act. In this case, Nashe’s target is narrower than the entire city of London and its citizens. Wilton says, “let it suffice, if you know Christ, you know his Father, also; if you know Christianitie, you know the Fathers of the Church also. But a great number of you, with *Philip*, have beene long with Christ, and have not knowen him; have long professed your selves Christians, and have not knowen his true Ministers” (236). The shift to direct address within the rhetorical act of the sermon prompts a more localized target for his readers to consider, and Nashe seizes the opportunity to make an application about a problem that he seeks to rectify. Wilton’s challenge to the “Ministers and Pastors” led to rebellion by the “decripited churches beyond the sea” of France, Switzerland, and Scotland connect this sermon to the influence of Puritans who agitated for a Presbyterian style of governance as opposed to the English prelate form (237). Burke’s dramatic framework provides the means for interpreting this episode. Nashe hopes that the shift in the rhetorical act to prophetic rhetoric in the voice of

the humble rhetorical agent will prompt his audience's ideological division from the Puritan influence.

His target is the inauthentic religion promoted by these detractors. Wilton's sermon argues that the true Christian understands that "Christ would have no followers but such as forsooke all and follow him, such as forsake all their owne desires, such as abandon all expectations of reward in this world, such as neglected and contemned their lives, their wives and children, in comparison of him, and were content to take up their crosse and follow him" (239). He contrasts this goal with the actions of the Anabaptists who "took not up their Crosses of humilitie and followed him, but would crosse him, upbraid him, and set him at nought, if he assured not by some signe their prayers and supplications" (239). The message for Nashe's readers in response to the criticism of the Puritans who influence them is that the path of Christianity is known and requires submission to God rather than the path of the Anabaptists who "followed God as daring him" (239). In response, the Anabaptists see "the glorious signe of the rainebowe" and run "headlong on theyr well deserved confusion" into destruction (240). The depiction of the Anabaptists as led astray by John Leiden serves as a warning for Nashe's readers to not follow those ministers and pastors who would also lead them along a similar path of innovation against the known truth that is apparent to them.

While Wilton comically mocked the Anabaptists before their pending judgment, his account does not maintain the harsh tones of the sermon when describing their massacre. Wilton includes a similar regret as *Christs Teares* over the pending judgment that further connects Nashe's rhetoric in these two works. Burke's pentadic terms provide the means for seeing these links. Despite the differences in scene, Nashe maintains the pentadic act of the sermon in

lamenting the slaughter of these people as well as the agent in the form of the weeping prophet. He says that “pittiful and lamentable was [the Anabaptists’] unpittied and well performed slaughter” (240). He compares their defeat to the ruination of a bear at common bear-baiting shows where the crowd eventually feels sorry for the beast and says that the Münsterians received the same pity from their attackers (240). He further explains that “the Emperialls themselves that were their Executioners (like a father that weepes when he beates his childe, yet still weepes and still beates) not without much ruth and sorrow prosecuted that lamentable massacre” (240). Like Christ and Nashe in *Christs Teares*, Wilton’s lament indicates his desire for his audience’s repentance at such a horrid sight as opposed to the disinterestedness of his reports of the demise of the Swiss and French soldiers – a judgment without regret.

By this difference along with the overt connection to the Puritans, Nashe takes over Wilton’s narrative for a swift application to his audience through this use of prophetic rhetoric, but such rhetoric ends with this episode. He signals another shift back to a playful tone in saying that this current exposition is a distraction, and that “the mark is clean out of my Muses mouth, & I am as it were more duncified twixt divinitie and poetrie” (241). Before moving on to the next journey where he will “cashier the new vocation of my cavaliership,” Wilton closes this section with a final application to his readers to reject the influence of the Puritans (241). He warns that “you may bee counted illuminate botchers for a while, but your end will bee, Good people, pray for us” (241). Wilton will go on to many more adventures, stopping first in Wittenburg before eventually falling in with Henry Howard the Earl of Surrey, taking on his identity and landing in a large amount of trouble in Rome. While Wilton never quite returns to the humorous exploits of his time as a page in Henry VIII’s camp, these adventures lack the same sermonic rhetoric as this

experience. Where *Christs Teares* stands as a fully developed prophetic admonition for his audience, *The Unfortunate Traveller* retools the rhetoric to a specific moment for application for Nashe's readers with a similar goal. Like Christ and Nashe, Wilton as the Burkean agent does not relish in the violence committed against his targets. Rather, through Wilton's lament, Nashe completes the connection between his otherwise aloof narrator and the seriousness of the repentance Nashe hopes to prompt. Such a disruption would hopefully appeal to an audience unwilling to consider the heavy-handed rhetoric of *Christs Teares* but much more willing to enjoy a satirical travel narrative.

*The Unfortunate Traveller* has provided fallow ground for criticism that argues for Nashe's active rhetorical goal in subverting the cultural ideologies of what defines literature and the role of the author. However, these arguments leave Nashe's religious motives within the discussion of power dynamics and overlook how such rhetoric works to prompt reformation in his audience. Lorna Hutson's monograph *Thomas Nashe in Context* stands as the best representation of this critical approach. She does not directly address Wilton's deference when speaking on matters of theology but interprets the narrative of *The Unfortunate Traveller* as a self-aware combination of an ironic "confessional narrative" and "the grotesque testament of its own textual integrity" where the text challenges the strictures of what Nashe's culture felt fiction should be: didactic and virtuous (129). Of great importance is her view of Jack Wilton's travels as taking the same tact as Menippean satire, which hinges on the "disinterestedness of the speaker, his lack of any proprietorial impulse, any motive for claiming to possess the truth, or for trying to convince anyone that he does" (129). As a result, according to Hutson, Nashe, through Wilton, attempts to upend every claim of truth or virtue rather than seeking to convert his

audience to his understanding.<sup>34</sup> Applying this reading in the Anabaptist episode would likely leave readers skeptical of any authenticity in Wilton's sermon because his voice is so untrustworthy given his previous roguery and the combination of his deference with the grotesque mockery of the parishioners and their leader.<sup>35</sup> In the end, *The Unfortunate Traveller* "becomes Nashe's surest way of emptying [fiction] of power and restoring it to readers as unintelligible contortion – pure gesture, pure pleasure" (134). Any sense of religious application serves as a ruse to challenge the audience's attachment to texts making truth claims because of the unreliability of the speaker.

Hutson's argument hinges on a key claim that she makes early in the book: Nashe's works should be seen as entirely separate entities given the variation of their voices.<sup>36</sup> One of the consequences of reading so much separation from the unifying biographical or moral readings of other critics is that Hutson overlooks potential continuity in areas where Nashe writes in similar ways across his works. Jack Wilton's self-deprecation ahead of his sermon is far too rhetorically similar in terms of the Burkean agent to Nashe's own apologies for himself in the opening letters of *Christ's Teares* to pass over their connection. In addition, the application to a specific contemporary audience as well as lament over their punishment cements this similar rhetorical

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<sup>34</sup> She argues that "[Nashe's] writing is (largely) not rhetorical in the sense that it is not using figures of speech to persuade the reader; on the contrary, it abdicates the responsibility of the rhetoric to convince and gain the readers' credit, offering instead to juxtapose rhetorical strategies and socially operative forms of discourse in such a way as to make it seem quite astonishing that they should ever have exercised power over anybody" (131-132).

<sup>35</sup> Hutson says that the multiple voices in *The Unfortunate Traveller* signal that "the authorial voice itself is fractured and the autonomy of subjectivity denied by the adoption of several different styles of discourse (as in Jack's narrative) or by a continual reminder of the presence of other, irreconcilable and interrupting voices" (143).

<sup>36</sup> She ultimately explains that, because of the multiple points of view and voices across his works, Nashe "accentuate[s] the properties and reveal[s] the strategies of these public voices" and "celebrates the dispersal of their textual authority" (4).

purpose of repentance. Wilton grieves the senseless loss of these people even though they deserve their wrath, which is the same position Christ and ultimately Nashe take in *Christs Teares*. Following Burke's framework, the act stays constant, but the agent changes as Wilton recounts this episode, which challenges a reading of this text as celebratory of a narrative freedom from theological constraints. As this shift takes place in other texts, Nashe presents a consistent rhetorical mode for his role as an author.

*Christs Teares* and *The Unfortunate Traveller* feature clear Christian language and rhetoric in the form of prophetic sermons where Nashe speaks for himself or through the character of Jack Wilton. They were also produced in the same year and thus could represent a moment in Nashe's career where he uses this type of rhetoric but leaves it out of other works that lack the same type of overt connections to Christianity.<sup>37</sup> However, Nashe carried a similar posture from the outset of his career when he first attempted to build literary success. He penned prefaces to works from more established writers around the same time as the publication of his first full work, *The Anatomie of Absurdity*. Critics have understood Nashe's deference in various places as stemming from an unknown writer attempting to establish his career who would likely feign humility as a pragmatic entrance into the literary world. However, Nashe deploys this humility differently by coupling it with rhetoric that would normally imply a position of authority – an authority that he could not claim as a new writer. The connection of this humility with Nashe's aggressive judgments against his culture's literary practices reveals his attempts at empowering his reforming rhetoric. These works follow a different path, however, where Nashe

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<sup>37</sup> Both texts were entered into the Stationer's Register in September of 1593, though the official publication date of *The Unfortunate Traveller* is 1594 (Steane 16-17).

connects the work of God to poetry rather than direct scriptural inspiration.<sup>38</sup> As the preface writer, Nashe holds to a subservient position while proclaiming the role the attached works have in cultural reformation.

In the preface to Robert Greene's prose romance *Menaphon*, Nashe reserves his humble status until after he deploys his judgment, thus changing the order while still using the same form. Greene, by Nashe's arrival, had established himself as a popular public writer.<sup>39</sup> While attaching himself to such a popular author would be, as Nicholl describes, "a remarkable literary *coup*" (48), Nashe takes a divergent path by starting with an attack on the standards for education. The presumption to challenge these established institutions, including Cambridge where he attended, seems offensively ambitious for such a young author. He refers to Greene as a "Scholler-like Shepherd" to an audience of students from Oxford and Cambridge who should welcome his wisdom (311).<sup>40</sup> Nashe challenges "some deep read Schoolemen of Grammarians, who, having no more learning in their skull then will serve to take up a commoditie, nor Art in their braine then was nourished in a serving mans idlenesse, will take uppon them to be the ironically Censors of all, when God and Poetrie doth know they are the simplest of all" (312).<sup>41</sup> He claims to speak for God and poetry, both of which he clearly holds in high esteem, as

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<sup>38</sup> Nashe clearly holds to poetry as defined by Philip Sidney and others as fictional writing, in verse or in prose.

<sup>39</sup> Charles Nicholl explains that "in the late 1580s Greene reigned supreme as the popular author of the day" with "some 30 pamphlets and half a dozen plays, written in little over a decade" (48).

<sup>40</sup> The connection between poet and shepherd was a fairly established trope by Nashe's time. By designating himself in this role, Nashe hopes to attach to more than just Greene's prose romances. He sees himself in the same line as Edmund Spenser and Philip Sidney, among others, who proclaim poetry's value in promoting virtue.

<sup>41</sup> This challenge is a representation of the types of rhetoric that Nashe uses throughout this preface. He goes on to target specific influences, such as Peter Ramus's plain style rhetoric and the seemingly strong tendency of the schools to teach imitation rather than poetic invention.

opponents to the types of writing available to his audience. It is this connection between God and poetry as the better standard that indicates Nashe's move for rhetorical inspiration for his and Greene's work in designating the important role that poetry has in the presentation of doctrinal truth, and Burke's pentad indicates his similar moves of incongruity. Such a move is prompted by Nashe's view that the universities have so demoralized the value of poetry that appreciation for such artistic work would need to be, to use a Burkean term connected with perspective by incongruity, remoralized (*Attitudes* 309). Nashe will deploy the humble agent with authoritarian rhetoric, but in this case, he starts with the act. He attacks "the doting practise of our Divinitie Dunces, that strive to make their pupills pulpit-men before they are reconciled to *Priscian*" (318). The problem begins when "those yeares which should bee employed in *Aristotle* are expired in Epitomies" and argues that the students should "have so much Catechisme vacation to rake up a little refuse philosophy" (318). Ultimately, Nashe proclaims, "I deeme him farre unworthy of the name of a scholer, and so, consequently, to sacrifice his endeavours to Art, that is not a Poet, either in whole or in part" (321). Poets, then, have the greatest role in presenting the valuable truths of divinity. Nashe's entire challenge to the universities is that they have done the opposite of this description and sacrificed art to their endeavors.

While in other texts, Nashe apparently feels he must downplay his role at the beginning to establish credibility as the rhetorical agent, he waits until the peak of his criticism in this preface to defer his own ability in creating the writing that he recommends. He finds the source of the central problem of poor presentation in "the upstart discipline of our reformatorie Churchmen, who account wit vanitie, and poetry impiety" (321). This is a scandalous position to take because he challenges not only practical positions but theological ones as well. At this moment, he

diverts to claim the incongruous humble position he reflects in other texts. Nashe calls his work “a disputative plea to divines” than “a determinate position in my unexperienced opinion” (321) and later calls his work “the firstlings of my folly” (324). At the peak of Nashe’s attack, he backs away from the authoritative position he has claimed. His bold challenges to confront the religious rejection of poetry’s value in the preface to Greene’s *Menaphon* connect to similar aggressive rhetorical moves that Nashe makes in *The Unfortunate Traveller* and *Christs Teares*, in this case against educational practices that have rejected the value of classical learning and its connection to poetry. Rather starting with self-deprecation, this mid-text deployment allows Nashe to situate his position in response to readers who might argue that his relative obscurity and youth preclude such a claim. In response to this imagined detraction, Nashe uses deference to deflect focus away from his lack of position toward the argument he has already made. Thus, as Burke’s terminology informs, Nashe shifts the audience focus back to the act of his rhetoric though he deploys the role of the humble agent later. This continuity in different form shows Nashe crafting similar arguments via different approaches. Instead of merely ranting about the failures of the system from a position of power, he deploys the incongruity of the humble speaker and creates the prophetic position to gain rhetorical authority for Greene’s work, which he hopes will prompt virtue in its readers by connecting them back to the godly role of such fiction. He challenges those who have faltered in their responsibility for God’s truth but in this case without direct scriptural inspiration.

Nashe shifts this mantle again in a contemporary text to the preface to *Menaphon*, where he makes similar moves but with even less direct emphasis on his role. Philip Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella* carried a tremendous weight during this time as an example of literary excellence but

was largely limited to select groups of readers that received circulated manuscripts. In requesting endorsement from Sidney's sister Mary for a pirated copy printed for a broader audience, Nashe pauses to question whether, "peradventure my witles youth may be taxt with a margent note of presumption, for offering to put up any motion of applause in the behalfe of so excellent a poet" (329). He later compares his style with other writers, calling it "somewhat heavie gated" (332). At the same time, he views his role as important as he will "open the gate to [Sidney's] glory & invite idle eares to the admiration of his melancholy" (330). Nashe indicates that a text as important as Sidney's work "breakes foorth in spight of his keepers, and useth some private penne (in steed of a picklock) to procure his violent enlargement" (330). The text "breaks forth" but only through Nashe's hand that sets it free to do its work. This self-description presents a significant variation on the incongruent combination of deference and reforming rhetoric as Nashe defers the power entirely, merely viewing his own work as an opening of the gates for the greater reforming poet. In the time before the text's entrance, he describes readers as trapped in "the common view of our dark sence" where lesser writers have seized the opportunity "to wander a broade with a wispe of paper at their tailles like Hobgoblins, and leade men up and downe in a circle of absurditie a whole weeke, and never know where they are" (330). According to Nashe, reading Sidney's text will solve the demoralization of absurdity by presenting true beauty that kills what has previously passed for valuable writing. Nashe cautions other writers to "Put out your rush candles, you Poets and Rimers, and bequeth your crazed quaterzayns to the Chaundlers; for loe, here he cometh that hath broken your legs" (330). In this preface, the rhetoric of attack seeks fulfillment in the attached text – Sidney does the work that Nashe desires. The role of the prophet, then, is to "prepare the way" for the coming greatness that will

accomplish the rhetorical goal, which is a similar position to the prophet that previewed the coming of the Messiah. Though he shifts the emphasis to another text, Nashe invests heavily in his role as the rhetorical agent bringing this reforming work to bear. While not explicitly religious, this work will destroy those that have led the people into absurdity. Nashe illustrates his important role in the closing moments of this preface. He compares himself to an ass, who “is no great statesmen in the beastes common-wealth” and full of noticeable physical imperfections. However, he also describes the ass as “deemed a vertuous member, and one of the honestest sort of men that are” (332). He attempts to present the ass as holding the rhetorical power as he finally brings truth to a world trapped in the veneer of dishonest rhetoric. Burke’s pentadic terms reveal that this image is the full extension of Nashe’s deference of the agent and the height of its incongruity. The ass in the servant’s role speaks the truth (act), and the humble position reveals the authority of the words themselves.

Each of the previous four texts have included either direct scriptural connection or at least some form of implication that Nashe views himself as a prophetic rhetor doing God’s work. The test for a consistent reading of his variations on this type of rhetoric would be whether or not he uses it without such direct religious connections. He makes such a move in in the opening of *The Anatomie of Absurditie* where he challenges what he sees as the flaws in the literary establishment he is trying to enter.<sup>42</sup> As with the other prefaces, since this text is Nashe’s entrance in to the literary world, he would rightly use the standard topos of humility. The opening paragraph of the epistle acknowledges his inexperience, and he hopes “that [the] little

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<sup>42</sup> Charles Nicholl determines that Nashe likely brought this text with him and sought to have it published upon his arrival (43).

alliance which I have unto Arte will authorize my follie in defacing heremie: and the circumstance of my infancie, that brought forth this *Embrion*, [and] somewhat tolerate their censures, that would derive infamie from my unexperienst infirmities” (5). Nashe downplays both himself and his work, saying that he is inexperienced and that this work is folly.<sup>43</sup> This claim of humility closes with the request to “let my unschooled indignities, convert themselves to your courtesie, and acquaint you with the counsaile of my rude dedication” (7). Together, these moments of deference seem to point to the standard humility trope used by so many authors during this time.

However, Nashe incongruently seeks rhetorical authority rather than merely excusing his presumption in this work. He claims rhetorical power for this work because “what I have written, proceeded not from the penne of vain-glory but from the processe of that pensiveness, which two Summers overtook mee: whose obscured cause, best knowne to everie name of curse, hath compelled my wit to wander abroad unregarded in this *satyricall* disguise” (5).<sup>44</sup> He claims that the satirical disguise stems from an extended season of thought and not the pride of a new author that readers could associate with Nashe’s inexperience. By combining the request for leniency for his youth with the notion of a “satirical” disguise, Nashe changes the role of the prophetic position. He desires for his satire to have a reforming effect by invoking a similar ethos and the requisite incongruity of his judgmental rhetoric without direct religious connection. In pentadic

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<sup>43</sup> In praising Queen Elizabeth, Nashe makes a similar appeal, explaining, “wherefore since my words impoverish her worths, my fervent zeale shall be the uncessant attendant on her weale. I fear right worshipfull, least the affection of my phrase present mee as a foe to your important affaires, whose hart exalted with the eye sight of such soveraigntie, as soares above humane sight, could not but methodize his admiration in this digression of distinction” (6-7).

<sup>44</sup> Unfortunately, little is known about Nashe’s life prior to his arrival in London, so it is difficult to make a claim about what “two summers” Nashe might be referring to or if this specific reference points to a location or host families.

terms, Nashe combines the humble agent with the judgmental rhetorical act but in this case without an implied religious connection. For example, at the beginning of *The Anatomie*, Nashe announces his motive

to anatomize Absurditie [...] to take a view of sundry mens vanitie, a survey of their follie, a briefe of their barbarisme, to runne through Authors of the absurder sort, assembled in the Stacioners shop, sucking and selecting out of these upstart antiquaries, somewhat of their unsavery duncerie, meaning to note it with a *Nigrum theta*, that each one at the first sight may eschew it as infectious, to shewe it to the worlde that all men may shunne it. (9)

Nashe does not need to take on the voice of Christ or the voice of a preacher to seek reform through his rhetoric. In this case, he can shine the light on the social sins of other writers so that the reading public will turn from their influence. He is inspired to do so through the humble position that inexperience creates, hoping to make his words carry the weight without the need for a position of power.

Despite the different genres of these five texts, Nashe consistently presents himself as the incongruous humble writer as opposed to someone claiming positional or experiential authority to make such aggressive proclamations. Ultimately, it is the connection to the ass as the greatest statesmen that fully illustrates this position; the humblest of the beasts is the most capable agent for the act of revealing the truth without the trappings of pretension, and this image resonates with the humble speakers Nashe invokes as a part of his Biblical inspiration. Nashe takes various forms of humility other than this image: he is young, unschooled, inexperienced, and too limited in his words. At the same time, these rhetorical positions afford him clarity and the consistent

perspective of being an open vessel that can point to ultimate reform. However, while this role claims some semblance of appropriate behavior given the common use of the topos of humility, the next chapter will discuss Nashe's movements to press the reform-seeking agent to even more incongruous and scandalous narrative perspectives by crafting similar criticisms from a prophet speaking with the voice of Christ and a penniless writer sarcastically appealing to the devil.

### Chapter Three:

#### Seeking Redemption in the Devil: Thomas Nashe's *Pierce Penilesse* as Religious Rhetoric

The previous chapter explained how Burke's concept of perspective by incongruity indicates how Thomas Nashe seeks the repentance of his audience through a speaker taking on a weak position to gain rhetorical authority. As this rhetorical move appears in most of Nashe's texts, such religious motivation would seem to fit across his works. However, one of his most well-known texts, *Pierce Penilesse, His Supplication to the Divell*, features a speaker writing a letter to Satan that laments his displeasure with London's citizens while asking for the devil's intervention. Despite this format, the text reads much like Nashe's direct appeal for reform through imitating and applying the voice of Christ in *Christs Teares*. Supplicating the devil to seek Christian repentance stretches credulity nearly to the point of absurdity, and many critics have looked past Nashe's apparent religious commitments to argue that he primarily uses this text as a vehicle to show his expansive wit and complain against the structures restricting him as a writer. More recent critics have rightly eschewed the sacred/secular divide and have considered Nashe's religious commitments in interpreting his other works but have not extended this same critical attention to *Pierce* as a text pursuing the same goals with different methods. However, comparing these texts by their deployment of Nashe's rhetoric through incongruent voices provides a reading of *Pierce* that views the speaker as a fictional anti-prophet attempting to accomplish the same goals as Nashe in *Christs Teares*. Kenneth Burke's explanation of perspective by incongruity and his discussion of *piety* offer a framework that shows Nashe using *Pierce* as a vehicle for Christian rhetoric to prompt the attention of his readers to focus on their

need for reform. These concepts indicate that *Pierce* should ultimately stand as an example of the type of incongruous fiction that Nashe endorses in *Christs Teares* as valuable Christian rhetoric.

After publishing various prefaces and the *Anatomie of Absurditie*, Nashe found literary success as well as notoriety in the release of *Pierce Penilesse*.<sup>45</sup> The narrator, Pierce, stumbles through life as a poor author and finds the selfishness and general loss of art around him appalling. However, instead of writing his complaints to the world at large or invoking a religious framework through prayer, he seeks supernatural intervention by writing to the devil in the hopes that even the great enemy of the faith would also be offended at what Pierce sees. This text's narrative, along with its sarcastic tone and overt complaints, challenge connections between Nashe's religious commitments and this work, perhaps more than any other of Nashe's published texts.<sup>46</sup> Yet, *Pierce Penilesse* mirrors the complaints and desires for reform that Nashe calls for in the third section of *Christs Teares over Jerusalem* so closely that the texts should be considered in relation to each other through their use of similar rhetoric.

The major agreement between these two positions is the loss of the beauty and applicability of fiction as an important means of presenting divine truth. This loss has led to a culture where atheism proliferates, and only by returning to poetic inspiration will the culture hope to avoid decline. In addressing his rejection as a writer of such poetry, Pierce is a brooding, resentful malcontent that finally resorts to the devil as perhaps the only means of righting his perceived wrongs. Nashe in *Christs Teares* turns the judgment into an exhortation for those who

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<sup>45</sup> Charles Nicholl shows how quickly this text gained popularity and notoriety for both the text and the author and explores how the text remained a part of the literary conversation in the immediate years after Nashe's death (99).

<sup>46</sup> *The Choise of Valentines* also challenges this connection, but Nashe never officially published this bawdy poem.

have the responsibility of presenting God's word to rediscover literature as the primary means of combating the present-day wit that has led so many astray. *Pierce* is an ironic and sarcastic approach to a divine topic, and the perspective is so controversial that critics have looked beyond a connection between the obscure intentions of *Pierce Penilesse* with Nashe's overt Christian claims in *Christs Teares*. As a result, the texts' shared focus on the specific point that poetry must be a foundational part of challenging unbelief and immorality remains unexplored. A comparative view of the rhetoric of these two texts provides a means for viewing *Pierce* as a creative example of how literature can ultimately serve to prompt an audience to repentance through scandalous and nearly absurd satire.

For critics who look beyond Nashe's religious commitments, *Pierce* provides a more laudatory work than the overtly religious *Christs Teares* because of the sheer bombast of penning a witty, expressive letter to the devil in such a Christianity-influenced culture. G. R. Hibbard's critical introduction to Nashe focuses specifically on Nashe's wit as his most important contribution to English literature and interprets *Pierce* as a vehicle of complaint against society and a means of showing his skill with the pen. Hibbard assumes that *Pierce* is Nashe "deliberately dramatizing his own situation" (51) and argues that "by the time he comes to write *Pierce Penilesse*, satire is neither a vehicle for despairing protest [...] nor an impassioned plea for reform, [...] but rather a stage, a convenient platform, on which he can exhibit his virtuosity as a writer" (64).<sup>47</sup> Hibbard does mention a larger rhetorical purpose but limits it to challenging "the cult of money and material values in general" (71). This argument takes place "in the form

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<sup>47</sup> Hibbard concedes that "there are some subjects, learning and poetry, which really do matter to Nashe" but ultimately says that "instead of his eye being fixed on a topic, it is fixed on himself writing about that topic" (64).

of comic exaggeration, not a passionate conviction about right and wrong” (77). Hibbard concludes that this letter to the devil is too full of inappropriate wit to be of any real religious use outside of common criticisms that Nashe reflects through a self-impressed reflection on his own ability.<sup>48</sup>

Charles Nicholl’s later biography follows Hibbard in linking Pierce as a character with the author’s own persona and delighting in Nashe’s expansive wit. As is the nature of this biography, Nicholl delves more deeply into Nashe’s reputation and locates specific targets for his criticism.<sup>49</sup> In the end, Nicholl’s work ultimately rejects a reforming point because any discussion of virtue centers on “the urban delights of movement and action, getting and spending, skill and experience, conversation and *camaraderie*” (102).<sup>50</sup> More recently, David Landreth has considered this connection between poverty and *Pierce* as indicative of Nashe’s anxiety about his own distinction from the world and that “*Pierce Penniless* spurns the homiletically ethical *telos* of the prodigal’s conversion in order to locate its verbal productivity instead in the demoniacal scenario of an unrepentantly wasteful diminution, whose *telos* is that of the material minimum of the self” (136). These critics ultimately lean too heavily on the connection between Nashe the author and Pierce the character and dismiss the religious impulse

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<sup>48</sup> As an example, in addressing Nashe’s concerns about atheism, Hibbard merely connects his works to the common social criticisms against the Puritans and other religious sects and the “skeptical tendencies in religious thought which are associated with the name of Christopher Marlowe and the so-called Raleigh circle” (81).

<sup>49</sup> He argues that “sin and vice are too intrinsic to Pierce’s literary performance for him to sustain any censorious attitude convincingly” and then connects this point to Nashe himself, arguing that “Nashe’s reputation – bohemian wit, penner of bawdy rhymes, friend of the hell-raisers Greene and Marlowe – must have made his deploring of drunkenness, quarrelsomeness and prostitution somewhat ironic” (100-102).

<sup>50</sup> Nicholl closes the chapter with an unnecessarily totalizing view of Nashe as a character who is against Puritans and therefore likely a Catholic sympathizer. Such broad categories (Catholic v. Protestant) overlook significant diversity within the Protestant group. Nashe need not be a Catholic sympathizer to argue against the Puritans.

that Nashe connects across his works in favor of the view of the author as the pamphleteer or satirical journalist

In a different vein, Lorna Hutson's brilliant critique is not content to view Nashe as merely lamenting the problems of a writer attempting to build a career as she views a greater cultural criticism about market realities in this work. Instead, she argues that Nashe critically reveals "the commercial interests behind a pervasive literary discourse of moral and patriotic zeal" (176).<sup>51</sup> Hutson's criticism is remarkably valuable in discerning the text as a criticism of larger cultural trends, but at the moment of seeking Nashe's ultimate goal in writing such a satire, she argues that "the incoherence of Pierce's supplication merely exaggerates the senile disintegration of the idealistic discourse designed to promote economic and social reforms" (189).<sup>52</sup> While Nashe certainly uses this text to challenge the decline of popular literature in terms of its effectiveness, Hutson overly generalizes religious commitments within these complaints against social power. Thus, as postsecular criticism informs, the excising of religious influence on literature has left too much critical material on the table, specifically given the arguments about and against atheism that parallel those in *Christs Teares*.

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<sup>51</sup> Hutson further explains that "in the early to mid-years of Elizabeth's reign the high displeasure of the Almighty God and the imminent decay of the poor of this realm could be invoked with conviction as the likely consequence of tolerating parasites who ate meat throughout Lent, or attired themselves in 'monstrous' hose made by the imported silks and velvets, or turned a blind eye to 'deceits' and 'abuses in English manufacture'" (181). Such rhetoric was being abused, according to Nashe in Hutson's argument, because "courtiers made their request for revenue in the unmistakable idiom of the reforming idealism, pleading the profit of the commonwealth for every device dreamed up for their own enrichment" (183). Thus, "what was persistently presented in discourse as a moral crusade in the interests of reforming the commonweal, was increasingly becoming in practice a major source of income for the magistrates and noblemen who implemented it" (182).

<sup>52</sup> Like Hibbard, Hutson indeed notices some areas where Nashe's argument through Pierce should be taken at face value, as "part of the problem [of interpreting the text as a straight-forward satire] is inconsistency within Nashe's own conception; he *is* occasionally in earnest (as for example, when he is defending the contribution of poetry to the credibility of the state)" (175).

More recent critics have explored Nashe's construction of *Christs Teares* as religious rhetoric. These works show an appreciation for what Nashe hopes to accomplish in his rhetoric through *Christs Teares*. Christopher A. Hill's argument in "Thomas Nashe's Imitation of Christ" fits nicely for *Christ's Teares* as a demonstrative sermon of Nashe's recommendations for preaching. However, like many critics who address Nashe's specific religious commitments, Hill stops after analyzing Nashe's most overt example. Mauricio Martinez intercedes in this gap and helpfully links these texts, along with *Terrors of the Night*, as a singular argument for the moral reform of Nashe's audience. The texts serve to illustrate the sin (*Pierce* and *Christs Teares*), divine judgment (*Christs Teares*), and the ultimate individual terror that each citizen must feel when reflecting on the coming wrath (*Terrors of the Night*).<sup>53</sup> Ultimately, Martinez argues that in "the bitter irony" of this text, Pierce entreats "the devil to unleash his torments" but that "the command must ultimately come from God" (60). Thus, "the writer has been supplicating, as it were, in all the wrong places," and "Pierce will find the answers to his entreaties not in sixteenth-century London but in first-century Jerusalem" – the opening of *Christs Teares* (60). Martinez's work rightly finds connections between *Pierce* and *Christs Teares* but largely leaves Nashe's similar rhetorical approach through these disparate vehicles unexplored.

Burke's rhetorical concepts of perspective by incongruity and piety provide a helpful way to view *Pierce* accomplishing the same goals as *Christs Teares* by the deliberate shifting of the audience's expectations. While the connection between Christianity and *Christs Teares* is obvious considering Nashe's invocation of the prophetic position to gain rhetorical authority and

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<sup>53</sup> Martinez writes that the earlier texts' focus on the city "castigates subjects for their transgressions of moral law, shows the workings of divine judgment in the destruction of the city, and illustrates their correlates in the interior spaces of everyday life" (47).

the direct scriptural references, the same connection does not easily apply to a writer who asks the devil for intervention in response to the sins of his city. Perspective by incongruity shows how Nashe can challenge his audience by using deliberate impiety, which includes intentionally changing an appeal to shock the reader into a new consideration. Piety is a key term for Burkean rhetoric and is not a theological term *per se* but descriptive of social norms for the appropriate use of terminology. In *Permanence and Change*, Burke explains that “piety is a system-builder, a desire to round things out, to fit experiences together into a unified whole” (74). Most clearly, Burke says that “piety is *the sense of what properly goes with what*” (74).<sup>54</sup> In the Christianity-soaked culture of late 16<sup>th</sup> century England, it would be culturally appropriate for religious rhetoric properly to go with an openly religious speaker. Piety in this sense is not merely an internal devotion but a social connection through a collective understanding of the ideological attachment to the way that people within societies interact. Burke goes to great lengths to disentangle piety from its religious connotations; however, the language of piety requires the terminology of morality because of the deeply held human commitments to the way the world should work.<sup>55</sup> The separation of commitments into religious, moral, and linguistic categories is a recent phenomenon in terms of historical literary and cultural criticism. For Nashe’s time, and specific to the texts in question, religious belief is a primary focus of the social relationships

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<sup>54</sup> James Jasinski explains the important function of piety Burke ascribes for society at large because “piety preserves order (including conceptual as well as political order) when it functions as a way of organizing or governing our perceptions and cognitive processes” and further that “the principle of piety (embodying the human need for order and stability) and the specific pieties that organize a culture are mechanisms for maintaining a social order in a contingent world” (433).

<sup>55</sup> Burke’s chapters on perspective by incongruity in *Permanence and Change* indicate the myriad ways that people hold pious attachments to economic and government models (in the macro sense) and individual choices like consumer purchasing (in the micro sense). These chapters also explain how various groups challenge these attachments via impious associations using perspective by incongruity (108-163).

described in Burke's definition of piety. The use of Christ's voice as one of challenge and a call for repentance for the audience, especially as bolstered by Nashe's own voice in explicating scripture, fits within these categories. *Christs Teares* thus stands appropriately as pious Christian rhetoric, despite the audacity of attempting to use such a voice. Wherever there is piety, however, the opportunity for impiety closely follows. For Nashe's audience, there would be an immediate sense that appealing to the devil for religious reform that would largely benefit it does not "fit... into a unified whole" in terms of what is socially acceptable. In such a voice, Nashe crosses the pious boundaries of "what properly goes with what."

Burke's dramatic pentad provides the framework of this pious/impious relationship in the expected combination of a religious speaker (agent) with a religious proclamation (act) and viewing Nashe through perspective by incongruity shows the unexpected fit between Pierce's letter and the same type of religious rhetoric. The agent shifts to Pierce supplicating the devil and writing a similar act of criticism. Burke explains that a major motive for perspective by incongruity is ultimately not "demoralizing" but an attempt to "'remoralize' by accurately naming a situation already demoralized by inaccuracy" (*Attitudes* 309). While Burke refers to lexical choices specifically in his explanation of piety, the "naming" must come from a source, and the discussion of incongruity extends beyond the words to the agent and his ethos. Burke summarizes Aristotle's definition of ethos in arguing that "you persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, [thus] *identifying* your ways with his" (*Rhetoric of Motives* 55). This definition aligns closely with Burke's definition of piety, and in order to convince an audience of his credibility, a speaker would seemingly have to appeal to the audience's pious beliefs. However, the religious ethos

Nashe claims in *Christs Teares* and other works obviously cannot apply in the act of appealing to the devil. Thus, his appeal changes the agent from the natural fit of a prophet to the unnatural, or impious, fit of an agent in pursuit of his own fulfillment rather than his audience's reform.

Despite the apparently disparate motivations, the act of the critiques remains largely the same.

Such variations on the speaker's ethos and his motives would serve to shatter the people's commitments to their sinful misunderstandings and resulting actions. Nashe sees that the world is broken but so attached to repetitive and uninspired Christian rhetoric that the people cannot see their brokenness meandering about with the mere appearance of religious conviction. Perspective by incongruity, or in this case writing a religious reforming work through the lens of petitioning the devil, provides the shocking revelation that Nashe's audience needs to seek reform.

As opposed to the agent's role in other texts of a speaker seeking divine authority through deference, Pierce takes a completely divergent approach in building his ethos from the outset of his text. He compares himself with a cobbler, hostel owner, and carriage driver (all of whom make more money than him) and asks, "have I more wit than all of these (thought I to myself)? am I better borne? am I better brought up? yea, and better favored? And yet am I a begger? what is the cause? how am I crost? or whence is this curse?" (158). Pierce does not embrace his flaws but sees his failures as injustices that should be corrected, and he ultimately presents himself as selfishly motivated and complaining against the world rather than trying to save it. In contrast, as chapter two argued, Nashe seeks divine inspiration throughout *Christs Teares* by admitting weakness and claiming rejection and poverty as markers of inspiration. Despite their different stated motives, Pierce and Nashe in *Christs Teares* unite in the rhetorical act of specific criticism against the culture's rejection of engagement with classical and literary texts and their influence

on speaking, writing, and the theater in favor of an unembellished style considered purer because of its lack of external influence. Both texts anatomize atheism as the result of warring factions within Christendom, and both texts argue for the value of poetry in presenting divine and culturally relevant truth. Such a connection indicates that Nashe crafted *Pierce* to be the type of fictive work he eventually recommends for introducing theological truth. Perspective by incongruity applied to Nashe in *Christs Teares* and Pierce in *Pierce Penilesse* reveals how such religious reform can work through a pious and, consequently, an opposite impious perspective by shifting the rhetorical agent from Christ/Nashe to Pierce while maintaining the act. Reading *Pierce* would not be the first time that Nashe's audience would have heard railing against the moral ills of the day. However, by shifting the perspective in *Pierce* and putting such critiques in the mouth of a selfishly motivated and sarcastic speaker, Nashe attempts to remoralize the substance of these complaints via a different vehicle.

Despite the narrative's designation of the devil as the audience, Pierce asks for justice in the same way a Christian might for the culture at large in the removal of immorality. The key threat in both *Christs Teares* and *Pierce* is an atheism that rejects supernatural influence. This appeal is ridiculous for Pierce as he seemingly argues against exactly what the devil would relish. For example, he laments that the "vainglorious" people have made "*England* the exchange of Innovations, and [created] almost as much confusion of Religion in every Quarter, as there was of tongues at the building of the Tower of *Babell*" (172). While both texts allude to the tremendous changes in the English church at the time, neither addresses a specific target (as in Catholic, Puritan, Reformed, etc.) but approaches a broader and more fundamental belief in God

at all that results from this confusion.<sup>56</sup> The moniker of “atheist” carried tremendous weight in an era dominated by religious influence in both the church and the court, and it would be a cultural as much as a religious anathema to be called an atheist in this time, and both *Pierce* and *Christs Teares* present atheism as a significant problem that must be diagnosed and ultimately rectified. Pierce approaches the issue in a fitting way with his speaker’s stated intentions by arguing that the devil is ultimately affronted because, in rejecting belief in God, the people also reject belief in devils. Pierce concludes that “It is a shame (senior *Belzibub*) that you should suffer your selfe thus to be tearmed a bastard, or not approve to your predestinate children, not only that they have a father, but that you are he that must owne them” (172). The cause of this unbelief is a “misery of Pride [...] when men that have good parts, and beare the name of deepe scholars, cannot be content to participate in one faith with all Christendome, but, because they will get a name to their vaine glory they will set their selfe-love to studie to invent new sects of singularitie” (171-2). The problem consists of multiple choices as scholars forego the greater Christian community to form various sects built on pride and the desire of the leaders’ “thinking to live when they are dead, by having theyr sects called after their names” (172). As represented here, the English church should be a unified whole in pursuit of God, yet those responsible for Christian education have invited so much speculation that such unity is lost in pride. The result, Pierce says, is that “Atheists triumph and rejoyce” and reject all notions of the supernatural (172). Contrary perspectives have not led to the proliferation of the church but its division and, consequently, widespread unbelief.

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<sup>56</sup> Nashe actively challenges Puritan belief in other texts but leaves this specific target out of *Pierce* and *Christs Teares* though both texts carry implied criticisms.

While Pierce laments the devil's loss of recognition among these people, Nashe returns to the same point in *Christs Teares* in the third section where he seeks to apply the shocking destruction of Jerusalem to his London audience. He calls atheism a "son of pride" and describes it as beginning "when a man is so timpaniz'd with prosperity, and entranced from himself with Wealth, Ambition, and Vaine-glory, that he forgets he had a Maker, or that there is a Heaven above him which controules him" (114). Nashe uses the same language of cause and consequence as in *Pierce*, especially in the term "vainglory," to describe atheism as a result of pride and, in the end, a disregard of the measure of control that the supernatural realm has over the natural. He further splits atheistic belief into two categories. The first group contains the people that have experienced such "extreame joy & extreame grief" represented by an individual that has been "forced to runne mad" and in doing so "waxeth a Foole and an Idiote, and then hee sayes in his hart, *There is no God*" (114-115). The second group is much more akin to Pierce's targets as Nashe describes them as

these soule-benumned Atheists, who, (having so farre entred in bold blasphemies, and Scripture-scorning ironies against God, that they thinke, if God be a God of any justice & omnipotence, it cannot stand [...] to suffer such despite unpunished,) for their onely refuge perswade themselves there is no God, and with theyr prophane wits invent reasons why there should be no God. (115)

Both texts present the atheists as presuming on their prideful knowledge that God cannot exist. In *Christs Teares*, however, Nashe further shows that this knowledge is an attempt to cover great suffering because of the problem of evil: if God is just and all powerful, then he would not allow such misery to happen. More knowledge provides the wrong answer to the question and leads to

the accusations of atheism first presented in *Pierce Penilesse* and then expounded in *Christs Teares*.

Burke's pentad provides a framework for understanding how this rhetorical shift results in perspective by incongruity. In accordance with the narratives, Nashe presents the same critique through the lens of the ultimately offended party, shifting the agent from the expected role of the prophet to the unexpected role of a malcontent petitioning the devil. In *Pierce*, Satan has claim over the unbelieving souls, and these people wrongly deny his existence. God, according to Nashe, ultimately controls man and the same pride that disregards Satan's existence ignores the eternal justice that God holds. Before further explaining the cause of atheism in both texts, Nashe makes a specific application to a contemporary idea. *Pierce* says, "I hear say that there be Mathematitions abroad that will prove men before *Adam*; and they are harboured in high places, who will maintaine it to the death, that there are no divels" (172). In *Christs Teares*, Nashe provides a definition of *Pierce*'s term *abroad* in saying that the unbelievers argue "that the late discovered Indians are able to shew antiquities thousands before *Adam*" (116). The new world presented much opportunity for discovery, and Nicholl argues that an accusation of atheism "covered a multitude of sins" as a claim that indicated several inappropriate pursuits by known cultural influencers tied to new world exploration (106-107).<sup>57</sup> Despite the shifting agents between these two texts, the rhetorical acts bear striking similarities. People, in their pride, have rejected belief in the God so prevalent in English culture, and the result of atheistic belief is that

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<sup>57</sup> Nicholl unpacks these claims as targeting Sir Walter Raleigh and other people during this time that were accused in some circles of being connected with occult and non-Christian philosophical practice. While Nicholl tends to oversimplify people's commitments in broadly separating them into warring groups (in this case, Raleigh and Puritan influence versus Nashe and apparent Catholic influence), his description shows how the accusation of atheism carried significant weight in this time and Nashe's own awareness of contemporary beliefs.

these unbelievers attempt to control their own destiny all the way from denying the Biblical creation narrative through a disregard of eternal consequences. The thirst for previously undiscovered knowledge, either from the new world or through the sciences has led the people astray, and Nashe uses these disparate voices to make a similar point. Ultimately, these texts attempt to define London's atheism and a reader seeing these divergent, indeed opposite, rhetorical agents would need to reconsider the role of pride in questioning the existence of God. Perspective by incongruity shows this shifting in authorial position to provide a new way to point to the same cause for atheism. The audience might expect this diatribe against atheism from a preacher, but not Pierce.

From this shared rhetorical act, *Pierce* and *Christs Teares* take different approaches to anatomizing the sins of London. These texts are never too far from one another and, given the publication date of *Pierce* two years earlier, *Christs Teares* should be viewed as an attempt to expand the critiques he begins in *Pierce* though its authorial perspective is diametrically different. After decrying the proliferation of atheism in *Pierce*, Nashe moves on to cataloging specific sins while leaving the accusations of atheism behind. However, he pays much more attention to the nature of unbelief in *Christs Teares* but shifts the criticism to those who would denounce atheism but at the same time abuse the mantle of Christianity for selfish gain at the expense of their followers. Viewing these texts together shows that this description further defines the initial complaint Nashe makes in *Pierce* regarding atheism. His critique includes describing the "inward Atheist" who uses outward religious commitment to disguise his unbelief and "devoures widowes houses under pretence of long prayers" (117). This unbeliever "wold professe himselfe an Atheist openly but that (like the Pharisies) he feareth the multitude. Because

the multitude favours Religion; he runnes with the streame, and favours Religion; onely for he woulde be Captaine of a multitude” (117). As Nashe mirrors the prophetic language of Christ, he applies the critique to contemporary religious leaders who commit the same crimes as those in Jesus’s time. In this leadership, the inward atheists practice the height of hypocrisy, for “a holy looke he will put on when he meaneth to do mischief, and have Scripture in his mouth even whiles hee is in cutting his neighbours throate” (117-118). The end of this description invokes the imagery of Satan again, for this false believer represents the Gospel while wielding the “devils power of beguiling and undoing, to every one that believes him” (118). Indeed, “he it is that turneth the truth of God into a lye, and buildeth his house by hypocrisie; that hath his mouth swept and garnished, but in his hart a whole Legion of devils” (118). Such an evil person seems to be wrongly omitted from the results of the description of atheism in *Pierce*, but the genre and ethos dictate the content of the narratives. Ever aware of his audience, Nashe realizes that it would be absurd, even in satire, for a supplication to the devil to lament the whole legion of devils that emanate from the false gospel, so he maintains the guise of *Pierce* to present a similar critique without pressing the satire to the point of absurdity. This distinction differs from the accusations of atheism from the outset because, on that topic, *Pierce* can utilize the shared belief in the supernatural between his perspective and Nashe’s in *Christs Teares*.

Burke’s explanation of perspective by incongruity allows such writing to force the reader into a new consideration, but Nashe does not stretch the rhetoric to the tearing of credulity by extending *Pierce*’s complaint to devils themselves, which would make the text incoherent. Instead, *Christs Teares* and the mantle of the weeping prophet allow Nashe to give this cultural critique full explanation as he extends the rhetorical act in a fitting way for this prophetic agent.

Nashe adds to the description of atheism a plea for “University men that are called to preache at the Crosse and the Court, [to] Arme your selves against nothing but Atheisme, meddle not so much with Sects & forraine opinions, but let Atheisme be the onely string you beate on; for there is no Sect now in *England* so scattered as Atheisme” (121-22). Like in *Pierce*, Nashe sees atheism as the root cause of such sects but *Christs Teares* includes the exhortation that this “roote [must be] thorowly digd up from the bottome” through preaching (122). Given the much graver ethos of *Christs Teares*, Nashe makes more poignant attacks with stronger exhortations to actions than *Pierce*. *Pierce* stands as his rhetorical vehicle for attacking atheism initially, but *Christs Teares* ultimately reveals that Nashe is seeking a far more significant outcome.

Both *Pierce* and *Christs Teares* lament the lack of appreciation for fictive writing as an overall loss for the citizens of London; however, it is not until *Christs Teares* that Nashe completes the specific analysis of this detriment to recommend the type of creativity that will lead to cultural reform. As the rhetorical agent, *Pierce* laments the lack of poetry and its abilities to have a positive impact on society but eventually settles in his larger complaint about his inability to secure income. Before introducing the letter to the devil, *Pierce* invokes Philip Sidney as a sign of the time when poetic writers would be better appreciated and ultimately laments his lack of an income as a sign of the changing market. *Pierce* says that Sidney “knewest what belongd to a Scholler, [and] thou knewest what paines, what toyle, what travel, conduct to perfection: wel couldst thou give every Vertue his encouragement, every Art his due, every writer his desert: cause none more virtuous, witty or learned than thyself” (159). As the previous chapter argued, Nashe would certainly want to attach himself to the Sidney ethos as well as the Sidney estate and its members’ patronage of poetic works. However, *Pierce* writes this

connection in grief that the age of Sidney has passed, and laments to the great poet, “thou are dead in thy grave, and hast left too few successors of thy glory, too few to cherish the Sons of the Muses, or water those budding hopes with their plenty, which thy bounty erst planted” (159). What Sidney represents is more important than a famous connection to Pierce, and ultimately to Nashe, because what has been lost is “that strict observation of honour, which hath been heretofore” (159). Pierce laments the cultural loss of the honorable poet; however, he quickly veers to a much more personal loss: his ability to scrape together a living.

The loss of honor connects directly to those people of resources that should fund a career like the one that he seeks. As a result of the growing depreciation of fiction, wealthy patrons receive empty praises from lesser writers and “impoverish liberality in others” while “those that deserve best be kept under by Dunces” (159-160). Two types of people have led to his poverty: those with resources who simply reject good writers and, even worse, those who claim the name of God but whose gifts do not reflect notions of mercy or generosity. Of the first group, Pierce says that “those that stand most on their honour, have shut up their purses, and shifte us off with court-holie-bread” (161). Pierce describes such miserly behavior as hypocritical as these people who have resources and are approached by poets like the one Pierce claims to be should be willing to pay these writers. A proper system would maintain that those writing in Sidney’s mantle should command patronage, but no such money is available. The second group of targets for Pierce’s critique includes “a number of hypocriticall hot-spurres, that have God alwayes in their mouthes, [but] will give nothing for Gods sake” (161). Nashe connects Pierce’s complaint with Christian rhetoric at this moment by ultimately supposing that Godly people should have appreciated his work to this point, but their greed and selfishness have made their outward

commitments to Christianity seem hollow. Such a complaint would present a disorienting perspective for the audience, whose members might rightly ask why someone petitioning the devil would make complaints against higher moral virtues like honor. This incongruous combination of the rhetorical agent and act indicate a desire for the audience to focus on the act of complaint against the specific types of selfish and inauthentic behavior that these writers represent.

Nashe links this lack of appreciation for literary work to the universities in both texts, specifically his own, Cambridge.<sup>58</sup> For Pierce, the failure begins at the institutions responsible for training the next generation of pastors for their influence on England. He proclaims, “I my selfe have been so censured among some dul-headed Divines: who deeme it no more cunning to wryte an exquisite Poem, than to preach pure *Calvin*, or distill the juice of a Commentary in a quarter Sermon” (192). This challenge results in sermons that have “no wit to moove, no passion to urge, but onelye an ordinarie forme of preaching, blowne up by use of often hearing and speaking” (192). Pierce defends poetry against the accusations of being “an Arte whereof there is no use in a mans whole lyfe, but to describe discontented thoughts and youthfull desires” by explaining that “it dooth illustrate and beautifie” (192). The distinction between what qualifies as preaching and how poetry is treated are on two different planes in Pierce’s mind, and the religious world has neglected the latter for the former. In this railing, Nashe unpacks the deeper problem of why poetry and preaching would be connected in the first place, which is a completely incongruous perspective given the audience for his complaint. The devil would

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<sup>58</sup> J.B. Steane explains that by the time Nashe was in school, Cambridge “had come under Calvinist influence, and the university had, from mid-century onwards, become too much of a Church recruiting-centre for broader studies to prosper (21). Steane wraps this critique into Nashe’s general opposition to Puritanism across English culture (21).

seemingly want weaker preaching that lacks the ability to impact the readers, perspective by incongruity indicates how Nashe presses this point to reorient the readers' focus on the key problem: the loss of the influence of poetry on preaching.

Rather than merely railing against this wrong, Pierce provides the picture of how the relationship should work. He references a "Silver tongu'd *Smith*, whose well tun'd stile hath made [his] death the generall teares of the Muses" (193).<sup>59</sup> Pierce directly addresses him, praising that "queintlie couldst thou devise heavenly Ditties to *Apolloes* Lute, and teach stately verse to trip it as smoothly as if *Ovid* and thou had but one soule" (193). Yet, the poetic inspiration does not merely end in beauty but connects to being "such a plausible pulpit man, that before though entredst into the rough waies of Theologie, thou refinedst, preparedst, and purifidest thy minde with sweet Poetrie" (193). Theology is difficult learning according to Pierce, and the loss of poetic influence on the preachers has led to little or no work in providing the means of accessing these difficult ideas. In referring back to Smith, Pierce proclaims, "I never saw abundant reading better mixt with delight, or sentences which no man can challenge of prophane affectation sounding more melodious to the eare or piercing more deepe to the heart" (193). He challenges the preaching he perceives to have replaced Smith's in his own day as lacking the same level of rhetorical effect. He says, "poetry is the hunny of all flowers, the quintessence of all Sciences, the Marrowe of Witte, and the very Phrase of Angels" (194). This lengthy diatribe falls in line with other English thinkers who argue that reading fictional works is much more than a waste of time in frivolous fantasy but vitally important in the presentation of God and doctrinal truth.

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<sup>59</sup> Ronald McKerrow's extensive notes provide some possible but not conclusive identities for this preacher.

Initially, this section of *Pierce Penilesse* seems to present the narrator (the representation of the Burkean agent) as using the tools of theology as a means for selfish gain. Pierce inevitably returns to his authorial position of appealing to the devil for intervention so that he can generate an income. However, *Christs Teares* reveals Nashe using the tools of fiction to prompt reflection by presenting similar criticisms through an incongruent agent. Burkean perspective by incongruity shows how *Christs Teares* forces readers to consider the gravity of Pierce's perspective as ironically voiced as opposed to a view of his concerns about preaching as driven by selfish attempts at manipulating common belief for self-promotion. In creating similar critiques, Nashe challenges his audience's pious connection between Christian rhetoric and an outwardly Christian speaker. In the end, what remains from the incongruous perspective is the same message, or pentadic act: poetry holds tremendous value in proclaiming doctrinal truth, and the culture has rejected it in favor of plain speaking and unpolished presentations. *Christs Teares* expands the points made in *Pierce* to show that the ones most at fault are those who have the most responsibility; the clergy members have fallen into educational trends that deemphasize the use of literary and classical works as the means for introducing the more difficult concepts of theology. The cause of this loss is the immediate turning out of preachers at too young an age before they can develop the skills of poetic presentation. Given the focus of *Christs Teares* on poetic inspiration, *Pierce* should then be read as a representation of the type of work that Nashe points to as important for the preachers to consider in battling atheism. As a work of witty fiction, texts like *Pierce* will engage the atheists to make them amenable for receiving the deeper truths of scripture and theology.

While the section of *Christs Teares* where Nashe attacks the schools does not include the same defense of literature as *Pierce*, he presents a similar cause and effect relationship in the people's rejection of the strength of art and, as a result, the culture's rejection of doctrinal truth. Rather than lament the lack of cultural appreciation, Nashe attacks writing itself. He cries, "I am at my wits end, when I view how coldly, in comparison of other Countrimen, our *Englishmen* write. How in theyr Bookes of confutation, they shew no wit or courage, as well as learning" (122). Nashe asks, "shall we, because we have Leade and Tynne Mynes in *England*, have Leade and Tynne Muses?" (122). What passes for theological works of study is a dull collection that lacks the beauty as though English writing reflects English exports. The key weakness is the loss of wit that must be developed over time, and once students begin to show any passion for religion, even if such passion is feigned, they are immediately thrown into arenas with too much responsibility. Nashe says that "so many Dunces in Cambridge and Oxford are entertayned as chiefe members into societies, under pretence, though they have not greate learning, yet there is in them zeale and Religion" and the result is that "we should have any hereafter but blockes and Images, to confute blocks and Images" (122). Their zeal is ineffective because rather than using the beauty of wit, they create lead, tin, blocks, and images – unadorned objects that represent the cold, hard truth without any consideration of the way the truth should be presented. These young preachers favor the appearance of seriousness in religious pursuit rather than wit or extensive learning. "If at the first peering out of the shell," Nashe complains, "a young Student sets not a grave face on it, or seems not mortifiedly religious, (have he never so good a witte, be hee never so fine a Scholler,) he is cast off and discouraged" (122-3). Such wit and learning would take time, but the result is "that those blossomes which peepe forth in the beginning of the Spring, are

frost-bitten and die ere they can come to be fruite. That religion which is soone rype, is soone rotten” (123). The schools have fostered an environment where the students can fall to what is easiest: the appearance of passion without the zeal connecting to the learning necessary to present the truth effectively. In this case, such appearances foster inauthenticity in the students who can create the mask of commitment and thus gain advancement in the school. The primary fault lies with the schools because, and Nashe challenges, “too abortive, reverend Academians, doe you make your young plants” (123). In moving the students so quickly through the schools, the inevitable loss is the means of presenting God’s truth in the best way possible because the students cannot learn to use wit effectively.

Such a loss connects the writing that Nashe unfavorably compares to Continental European writers with the ultimate sin and consequence: the loss of effective preaching and the resulting unbelief. Nashe does not limit his critique to only the schools; he argues that the students themselves reflect the same level of pride that he castigates in *Pierce*. The resulting graduates are “a number of young hypocrites” who become the “ridiculous dul Preachers (who leape out of a Library of Catechismes, into the loftiest Pulpits) [and] have revived thys scornfull Secte of Atheists” (123). Nashe asks, “What Kings embassage would be made account of, if it should be delivered by a meacocke and an ignorant? Or if percuse he send variety of Embassadors, and not two of them agree in one tale, but be devided amongst themselves, who will harken to them?” (123). These “cow-baby-bawlers and heavy-gated lumberers [...] boldly will usurpe *Moyses* chayre, without any studie or preparation” (123). As a contrast to the prophet whose unassuming nature provides an incongruous perspective that seeks authority, these preachers represent the opposite ethos. As the Burkean agents of this act of problematic

preaching, their presumption leads to a loss of effective communication. Nashe argues that “nothing comes from their mouths but grosse full-stomackt tautology. They sweat, they blunder, they bounce & plunge in the Pulpit, but all is voyce and no substance” (123). This last phrase seems to work against Nashe’s point since his argument from the beginning has been that they have the scriptures but misuse them, but his next statement describes what he means by substance. These preachers “deafe mens eares, but [do] not edifie. Scripture peradventure they come of thicke and three-folde with, but it is so ugly daubed, plaistered, and patcht on, so peevishly speckt & applyde” (123-124). Those in the pulpit do not have the wit to present God’s truth effectively as a result of a too infantile education that would have them only learn the catechisms and not focus at all on presentation. The substance is not the scripture itself but the preachers’ ineffective presentation, which makes the scripture largely useless for their sermons. In accordance with his previous critique in *Pierce*, these preachers misuse their responsibilities, and the result is a movement toward atheism.

In comparison with *Christs Teares*, Pierce stands as a primary example of the Burkean agent’s incongruity, and Nashe continues with a critique that argues for Pierce’s ultimate perspective and further establishes the connections between these texts. Pierce could be accused of only seeking money for the type of writing that he wants to do, but Nashe expands his point to show that poetic writing of this style holds a valuable place in the presentation of the truth against the atheism that abounds in London. The remedy for the schools of in *Christs Teares* is an expansion on Pierce’s lament but via a different vehicle. Nashe rails, “Gette you some witte in your great heads, my hotte-spurd Divines, discredite not the Gospell” (124). Further, if these preachers cannot gain any wit, they should, “damme up the Oven of your uttrance, [and] make

not such a bigge sound with your empty vessels” (124). However, rather than merely complain, Nashe offers a solution to these preachers who hate poetry so much by encouraging them to “at least, love men of witte, and not hate them so as you doe, for they have what you want. By loving them and accompanying with them, you shall both doe them good and your selves good; They of you shall learne sobriety and good life, you of them shal learne to utter your learning, and speake movinglie” (124). As opposed to Pierce, Nashe recognizes that his targets are those that are committed to the same ideals as him, so his rhetoric takes on a note of encouragement rather than condemnation. This encouragement takes place through the recommendation for the readers to consider an incongruent imaginative speaker presenting the same rhetoric, an agent like Pierce.

Burke’s pentadic terms highlight the key relationship Nashe attacks and the eventual remedy. If the act of preaching is so broken because of the agent’s rejection of poetry, then Nashe would need to promote a solution to correct the agent to, in turn, correct the act. So much of the act of the critiques in one text mirrors the other that the speakers become incongruous agents, ultimately making Pierce a satirical version of a similar goal and an example of the writing that can open a door for greater theological truths. Nashe explains this need for such a solution by presenting the fact that fictional literature has an important theological role and has long been a part of Christian tradition. In *Christs Teares*, Nashe argues that fiction in this sense will make the arguments palatable for those who are refusing to listen. He suggests that, rather than limit the truth, such poetic imagery enhances it. He proposes, “If you count it prophane to arte-enamel your speech to empeirce, and make a conscience to sweeten your tunes to catch soules, Religion (through you) shal reape infamy” because “men are men, and with those thinges

must be mooved that men wont to be mooved. They must have a little Sugar mixt with their soure Pylls of reproofe; the hookes must be pleasantly baited that they bite” (124). In order for the truth of Christianity to go forward, those tasked with its proclamation must learn how to present it effectively, as opposed to “those that hange forth theyr hookes and no bayte, may well enough entangle them in the weeds, (enwrap themselves in contentions,) and never winne one soule” (124). Contentions never beget real religious reform and lead to only mere arguing amongst the different groups and result in the continued immoral behavior covered by a hypocritical outward commitment to Christianity and the resulting atheism.

Nashe contends that artistic approaches to doctrinal truths have a rich history and that they must be reborn to provide the means of reaching the atheist in the current time. He suggests that the preachers “turn over the auncient Fattthers, and marke howe sweete and honny-some they are in the mouth, and how musicall & melodious in the eare” (124). Wit requires such construction of scriptural presentation, and Nashe suggests that “these Atheists (with whom you are to encounter) are speciall men of wit”; indeed, “it is the superabundance of witte that makes Atheists” (124). The answer for these people is a different approach rather than attempting to answer contention with contention. Nashe suggests that “either you must straine your wites [...] above theirs, and so entice them to your preachings, and over-terne them, or else with disordred hayle-shotte of Scriptures shall you never scare them” (124). Such a task will require great work, but it will be work in reading all manner of Christian and non-Christian works to best appeal to the atheists, for “all antique hystories you must have at your fingers-end. No Phylosophers confession or opinion of God [are you] to be ignorant in” (124). Knowledge and wit are weapons, and “Ethnicks with their own Ethnick weapons you must assayle” (125). Nashe calls

the recent innovations “sloth-favouring,” which implies that the new means of presenting truth are not borne from a desire to reach unbelievers but from laziness resulting in an unwillingness to do the difficult work so that a person “will be a compleate Champion in Christs Church” (125). The decline of society, then, takes the form of a rejection of truth in pursuit of selfishness, which is exacerbated by the church’s unwillingness to do the difficult work of rightly representing the scriptures through art. Nashe thus provides the means for these preachers to become more effective. In pentadic terms, the solution is not the re-creation of a different act but a reorientation of the agent’s appreciation of the value of fiction based on its practical value and extended history.

Nashe continues this focus on the preachers themselves as rhetorical agents by emphasizing their need for reform and connects fictional works to a divine calling. The work for these proclaimers must begin with reengagement with the type of poetic art established in the scriptures and persistent in the church until the present time. The speakers should understand that after the resurrection, “Certain meanes [Christ] hath assigned us, which he hath promised to blesse, but without meanes no blessing hath he warranted” (125). Since the ascension, God has ordained preaching as the means of presenting truths to the sceptics. Yet, “no more will hee consent of blockes and stones in these days, to make distributers of the Bread of lyfe” (125)., Nashe argues that the solution to the current laziness is that those “that wil have heavenly Bread enough to feede themselves and a family, (which is a Congregation or flocke,) must earne it and gette it with the sweate of their browes, with long labour, study, & industry;” they must “toile and search after it” (125). The work that must form the basis of preaching is a climb, and “Humaine Artes are the steppes and degrees Christ hath prescribed and assign’d us, to climbe up

to heaven of Artes by, which is Divinity” (125). He further refers to these arts as “hand-maydes” of “heavenly knowledge” and argues that divinity “can never be curiously drest or exquisitely accomplisht” without the adornment of “Logique, Rhetorique, History, Phylosophy, Musique, [and] Poetry” (126). Preachers must look beyond the boundaries of theology toward any inspiration that will help make their preaching artful.

Nashe continues to recommend that preparation for preaching also includes work that is not expressly religious. They should proclaim God’s majesty through “Metaphysicall Phylosophy,” which is, “conversant in these matters” (126). Such connections will allow the preachers to “take occasion [...] from the wonders and secretes these include, to extol [Christ’s] magnificent Name, and by humane Arts abstracts to glorifie him” (126). Nashe even sets Christ’s parables as an example of incorporating fiction to show the preachers that “it is lawfull, to [...], in preaching of his word, by similitudes and comparisons drawne from the nature & property of all these, to laude and amplifie the eternity of his Name” (126). The connection to inspiration requires that the preacher, if he will do his job effectively, must speak in the same rhetorical form as the inspired scripture and mimic the speaking of Christ through metaphor and parable. Thus, in Burkean terms, even Christ and the church fathers provide a model for perspective by incongruity to serve the greater needs of the community. The preachers and schools have grown accustomed to the demoralized plain presentation of truth in preaching, and Nashe argues for them to consider a new perspective, what Burke might call a shift in agents of influence, to consider secular writers and subsequent texts as possible for assisting in the proclamation of divine truth. The rhetorical position that rejects this influence cannot claim the divine inspiration a preacher should want.

As though anticipating his readers' response to this challenge, Nashe explains that the need is dire because the preachers of Nashe's day lose ground with their hearers from the outset. He closes this section with a final plea for preachers to embrace the divine value of fictive writing. He argues, "malicious and malevolent are they that will exclude any one Arte, or Athenian or Romane Author, any one creeping worme of contemptible creature from bearing [the] witness of God" (128). Rejection of any of God's poetic creations, even in the voice of heathen authors, is a discredit to God's work in art. Nashe references the apostle Paul's inspired writing as a sign of this truth and argues that those who reject such writings ultimately reject the Holy Spirit who lowers "himselfe to our capacities, by humane Metaphors and similitudes" (128). Rejecting God carries a significant risk, for "God in judgement shall arise and reprove him" who "thinks he hath wonne the greatest prize to his witte, in putting downe God" (128). In response, Nashe entreats the pastors to use all of the tools at their disposal to combat this atheism. One of these tools should be a consideration of all perspectives, including Nashe's own incongruous letter to the devil. Burkean perspective by incongruity serves the person presenting truth, and Pierce's incongruous role of the rhetorical agent provides a strong example of what Nashe recommends.

To argue that *Pierce* completely represents a blatant theological work that should be quoted from the pulpit would force the text into untenable grounds. Such is the nature of incongruent writing that must always stand at the brink of farce. However, as an introduction to the greater truths of the theology that Nashe presents in *Christs Teares*, Pierce throws open the door as an introduction crafted in satire for greater theological truths to enter. As rhetorical agents, Pierce laments the sycophantic gains by the people who do not have to work to earn their

keep. Nashe applies this critique to the pastors who must now turn to the difficult work of preaching. Thus, these incongruous agents, Nashe as the prophet and Pierce as an anti-prophet in his complaint, emphasize the same point. Though written subsequently, *Christs Teares* provides the justification for the overt Christian rhetoric in *Pierce* as both texts emphasize the call to return to fiction and appreciate the value of poetic works. *Pierce* is an example of answering this call as a work of influence without having to be a work of divine inspiration.

As a final example of how Burke's framework illuminates the connection between these texts, Pierce's addressing of criticism of the stage illustrates how Nashe seeks religious reform through an incongruous perspective. In this case, there is no clear connection to *Christs Teares* because Nashe's prophetic work does not attempt to defend the theaters, but Pierce argues for the value of plays in the same way as Nashe does for poetic works. Toward the end of his critique, Pierce returns to the points made about the value of poetry in correcting what he sees as unfair criticism against the theaters as frivolous and immoral pursuits by the culture at large. He calls those that make such accusations "shallow-brained censurers" and argues that in leisure time, "men that are their owne masters [...] do wholly bestowe themselves upon pleasure, and that pleasure they devide (howe vertuously it skills not) wither into gaming, following of harlots, drinking, or seeing a Playe" (212). Of these activities, Nashe argues that plays are "a rare exercise of virtue" (212). The use of the term *virtue* connects Nashe's arguments about the value of plays to his statements about the role of poetry in society, and rejecting these plays is tantamount to the same rejection that has caused atheism because "all arts to [the critics] are vanitie" (213). Pierce argues that these censors ultimately reject the role of the stage because of their own "execrable luker, and filthie unquenchable avarice" (213). This focus on personal gain

has kept the censors from seeing how plays “shew the ill successe of treason, the fall of hastie climbers, the wretched end of usurpers, the miserie of civill dissention, and how just God is evermore in punishing of murther” (213). Against the charge that the plays “corrupt the youth of Cittie, and withdrawe Prentises from theyr worke,” Pierce argues that the stage “layes before such the halter and the gallows; or praiseth or approoveth pride, lust, whoredome, prodigalitie, or drunkenness, [and] beates them downe utterly” (213-214). Because plays hold a similar value as poetry in society, the general censorship causes the people to cut off their noses to spite their virtuous faces. The stage reveals the sinfulness of society ultimately punished and impresses upon the audience to avoid the same penalties even as they are entertained. The rhetorical act of writing a letter to the devil would obviously not concern itself with the proclamation of the virtuous benefits that people gain from viewing plays, and thus Nashe prompts his audience to reject such a criticism of the stage because of its value as a means of prompting virtue. Even without a connection to *Christs Teares*, the reading of *Pierce* as an incongruous work of Christian rhetoric through Burke’s terminology shows this section accomplishing a similar goal.

It is this notion of defending the plays that Hibbard tackles at some length in reviewing Nashe’s work, and he points to this ironic parody operating as some of Nashe’s most influential interventions. Hibbard calls this section the place where Nashe brings together “his championing of poetry and the liberal arts and his firm opposition to Philistinism and materialism” (80). More importantly, Hibbard explains this connection as “the centrepiece of his argument” (80). He recognizes the impact of this incongruous perspective in saying, “what a shock of surprise, then, must the common reader of 1592 have had when turning on to Pierce’s complaint of Sloth (i.e. the satire on Sloth) he found himself reading a defence of the theater and an attack on its

enemies!” (78-79). Hibbard points to the key incongruity of Nashe’s texts when arguing that this section reveals “wit in the true sense in which he understood the word, the complete reversal of an expected idea” (78-79). Hibbard rightly highlights this reversal as significant, and attentive readers would see the incongruity pressed even further when considering that a complaint against sloth (one of the seven deadly sins) is made to the devil who would, by the definition of sin, want to entice people to even more slothfulness.

Hibbard’s assessment indicates what Burke’s framework helps contemporary readers understand. In nesting these criticisms in his overall text, Nashe presents “the complete reversal of an expected idea,” which is a significant part of what Burke would eventually describe as the motive for perspective by incongruity. His rhetorical framework presses readers to search for the reason why Nashe would use such unexpected models. At this point, Hibbard’s answer is not quite sufficient as, in his discussion of Nashe’s defense of poetry, he disregards these texts operating with religious motive. Nashe’s defense of plays in *Pierce* and his defense of fiction in *Christs Teares* operates as the same act through different agents. The stage, then, provides an additional scene for the type of wit that Nashe ultimately recommends. Rather than the blocks and images of doctrinal truth, the stage provides the bait on the hook for an unbelieving world and a means of accomplishing the greater work of spiritual reform in the same way that *Pierce Penilesse* hopes to do. Yet, inasmuch as Nashe shifts the boundaries of pious appropriateness in the authorial position, his work includes such violent and grotesque imagery that the questions about the rhetorical motive for these works extend to the type of language he uses. The following chapter addresses how Nashe uses such language as the rhetorical means to accomplish his religious ends.

## Chapter Four:

### Scenes of Division: Rhetorical Violence in *The Unfortunate Traveller*

The previous two chapters argue that Nashe often shifts authorial voices between texts in order to challenge the association between religious rhetoric and the ethos that a religious speaker should hold. Inasmuch as Nashe extends the role of the author to incongruent areas, he uses narrative violence to press the boundaries of appropriate imagery to prompt a similar type of reconsideration among his readers. This approach begins at the outset of Nashe's career during his recruitment to the English Church's side of the Martin Marprelate controversy, and this pamphlet battle provided Nashe with the model for connecting his satirical wit to the violent language of sermonic rhetoric for religious ends. Specifically, by depicting physical violence in his narratives, Nashe prompts what Kenneth Burke would describe as the rhetorical violence of division where a reader separates from previously held beliefs. Nashe, fashioning himself a cultural surgeon, uses violence in his texts as a means of revealing the inner workings of his readers in the same way a publicly viewed anatomy reveals the inner workings of the body, and this revelation should lead to the readers' repentance from sinful beliefs and actions. This argument fits for an overtly religious work like *Christ's Teares over Jerusalem*, yet one of Nashe's works in particular troubles this connection between violence and Christian rhetoric and has led to criticism that overlooks how violence in this text could work toward a similar rhetorical goal. However, while *The Unfortunate Traveller* follows the framework of a satirical adventure narrative, the text's depictions of violent episodes along with the narrator's interpretive guidelines indicate a connection to Nashe's larger goal of religious reform through

repentance. While these moments do not make *The Unfortunate Traveller* into a completely prophetic text like *Christs Teares*, they serve as rhetorical scenes of division that prompt Nashe's readers' reflection on their need for change.

*The Unfortunate Traveller* is the first-person account of a wandering page of the court named Jack Wilton who finds himself in and out of trouble across the European continent after leaving the king's service, only to return there after his tour. As the unreliable narrator of this journey, Wilton practices several forms of narrative retelling including those of the prankster, prophet, courtly love poet, historian, and cultural critic. He meets a mistress, Diamante, along the way who becomes a central figure in many of these events. During his travels, Wilton seems surrounded by violence as he observes massive bloodshed in two pitched battles, fears his own death as a subject of an anatomy, witnesses sexual violence and the victim's subsequent suicide, hears retellings of characters' punishments for their sins, and views a particularly violent execution that closes the text and sends him back to the king's service. The episodes feature both large groups and individuals, and in each case, Wilton takes specific care to describe this violence in grotesque and at times revolting details and to provide points of application to guide his readers' interpretations of what they see.

These details present an interpretive problem as violence is by definition a disruption of life and health through physical separation, and Wilton's narrative voice changes so frequently that he resists ideas of a central motive for the text. Critics must consider what might drive Nashe's episodic deployment of such violent imagery without arguing for an overall interpretation that elides contrary moments. This problem is all the more apparent when considering Nashe's overt religious commitments to the English church. Considering scenes of

violence in *The Unfortunate Traveller* rhetorically by their intended influence on the audience indicates that this violence reveals Nashe's Christian-driven redemptive motive as he dramatizes punishment to press his readers toward separation from their sinful thoughts and actions. While *The Unfortunate Traveller* should not be read as a straight-forward devotional work, the construction of the various episodes of violence as informed by Wilton's moments of interpretation indicate a motive for this text that should be linked to Nashe's Christianity.

However, religious motivation has been largely overlooked as a means for interpreting this text in favor of arguments that highlight the inventiveness of Nashe's imagery and view his rhetoric as challenging to any moral and social constraint, including those that Christian devotion would emphasize. Focusing on Nashe's use of narrative violence formed the basis for a significant body of Nashe criticism in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Neil Rhodes helpfully unpacks the role of the grotesque and the ways that Elizabethan writers utilize such extended imagery but ultimately explains Nashe as a comic writer putting the language at play through his texts as "instrument[s] of satirical journalism" (28).<sup>60</sup> Despite the value of Rhodes's explanation of the grotesque, he ultimately views Nashe as using these moments as skeptical means to explore the cultural value of "what is entertaining, what is festive" (44) without "themes of high seriousness" (43). In building on Lorna Hutson's argument that *The Unfortunate Traveller* should be seen as Nashe's statement against the cultural constraints on the form and function of fiction, Phillip Schwyzer explains that this narrative "inevitably leads to the silencing of the author" in the

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<sup>60</sup> It bears mentioning that "violence" in this sense is half of the definition that Rhodes supplies for the Elizabethan grotesque. He argues that there is a larger trend of bringing together the "onslaughts on social vice" of the sermon with the "forms and images of festive ritual [that] still held powerful meanings for any Elizabethan venturing into the field of primitive sociology" (3). Much of this study is indebted to Rhodes's careful presentation of the historical influences of the grotesque on Nashe despite the ultimate disagreement on Nashe's motive.

service of moral expectations and that any question seeking to know the ways of God “becomes one of narrative style rather than truth” (599).<sup>61</sup> Overt violence indicates the failure of the characters’ attempts to make sense of the restrictive world. Thus, “violence is often wildly in excess of what is necessary to release the soul” and indicates judgment against those characters who attempt to understand a God who “is so shrouded from human view in this work that even to have the divine authority is to usurp it” (602). Any claims to authority, including speaking from a divine perspective, face the destructive impulse of Nashe’s skepticism. Stephen S. Hilliard explains Nashe’s career as beginning with an exploration and presentation of orthodoxy, but “in the late works, [...] Nashe’s increasing pessimism about society blunts and displaces his persuasive purpose” (9-10).<sup>62</sup> These critics see Nashe as a brilliant innovator but also as a sarcastically negative cultural critic, and they view the violence in this work as ultimately indicative of his frustration with and rebellion against the cultural constraints driven by church, state, and public practice that overemphasize morality and writing standards against narrative freedom.

More recent critics have provided valuable insight into the historical connections of Nashe’s overt violence with his cultural influences, but, in turn, these critics overlook interior matters of faith and religious reform even while indicating the presentation of moral obligation in the texts. John V. Nance explains Nashe’s particular violence, specifically in *Pierce Penilesse*, as

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<sup>61</sup> Schwyzer quotes Hutson’s description of “the spurious providence which compels every Tudor page to moralize and to invent any narrative as moral proof of divine judgment” to show these didactic constraints on fiction (598).

<sup>62</sup> Hilliard argues that “Nashe’s belief in conformity led him away from any examination of existing social institutions” and that “reform for him was a matter of encouraging people to live up to the ideals of society rather than changing anything” (27). However, Hilliard argues that Nashe eventually walks away from such notions in pursuit of singularity that he chastises at the beginning of his career but eventually embraces through his controversial works.

a means “to ‘look within’ and ‘describe’ a subject” and that the violent episodes of *The Unfortunate Traveller* ultimately serve as revealing anatomies in reference to the Roman Vesalius’s anatomical theater as an antecedent (118,122-125). However, despite the soul-searching value of such violence, Nance’s ultimate argument casts Nashe as challenging contemporary writing and writers through these anatomies and presents the existential threat of the plague “as an allegory to the ubiquity of poetry as a diseased and dying mode” fraught with repeated connections to continental influences (128). Andrew Fleck’s study also reads these violent episodes as driven by Nashe’s “nationalist complexion” against the European influences he sees around him (297). The violence serves a didactic purpose in this argument, but this motive ultimately serves Nashe’s English attachments as Wilton “plays the conservative moralist, warning his readers to learn the lessons of humility and obedience” to state power in the particularly gruesome execution at the end of the narrative (327).<sup>63</sup> Despite the value of these arguments’ analyses of key moments of violence, they maintain the overarching gap in criticism of Nashe’s work by overlooking religious motives in favor of other intentions for his work centered on the exploration and endorsement of a transgressive style or a particularly English way of life (as defined by Nashe or a larger state apparatus). Such a gap is reasonable because, on the surface, no measure of Nashe’s multi-variant texts would overtly disagree with these arguments. However, criticism that generalizes religious commitment to merely matters of cultural obligation neglects how texts can reflect faith commitments and work to prompt individual reformation. These commitments extend to Nashe’s use of violence as a rhetorical tool even in a fictional narrative like *The Unfortunate Traveller*.

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<sup>63</sup> Stephen Guy-Bray also argues for Nashe’s attacks on foreign influences in his attempt to promote prose’s particularly English literary and market value. See “How to Turn Prose into Literature: The Case of Thomas Nashe.”

Burke's rhetorical framework provides a lens for understanding how the depicted violence in *The Unfortunate Traveller* can accomplish religiously-motivated reforming work alongside Nashe's other, more openly Christian, texts. On the surface, violence is a negative term as it describes an act that breaks down rather than builds. However, viewing violence in terms of Burke's description of division shows that such actions can serve in the overall process of rhetorical identification. Burke further explains that this identification takes place in relationship with division as these two terms are inextricably tied together. In the opening stages of *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke seeks some unifying principles to describe ways that humans interact with one another and the role that rhetoric plays in finding common ground between speakers and their audiences. These unifying principles, or the centers to which people identify, signal a movement from one idea or commitment to another. Thus, Burke explains that "identification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division. Identification is compensatory to division" (22).<sup>64</sup> There is no neutral party of thought as though humans wait with no ideological commitments until they find the one most appealing for various reasons (truthfulness, emotional attachment, familial attachment, etc.). Rather, Burke describes identification and division from a state where all people are committed to some ideal and moving from one ideal to another requires a shift of allegiances split between the initial act of division and the compensatory act of identification. Burke invokes the language of violence in describing this process, as he says, "the *killing* of something is the *changing* of it, and the statement of the thing's nature before and after

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<sup>64</sup> Burke extends this discussion to the pursuit of unity by arguing that "if men were not apart from one another, there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity," and, "rhetoric is concerned with the state of Babel after the Fall" (22-23).

the change is an *identifying* of it” (20).<sup>65</sup> The process of identification includes the prompting of rhetorical division, which Burke links in the language of slaying. However, this process is part of a movement of identification and division in pursuit of what Burke terms the transcendence of a new view that incorporates both opposing views. John Belk defines this term as “the merger of perspectives” (377-378). Though understanding transcendence is of vast importance for Burke’s description of identification, applying such a term to Nashe’s use of violence would wrongly argue for his pursuit of a third unifying perspective that is linked but different in scope.<sup>66</sup> Nashe’s use of the violence of division does not incorporate a Burkean transcendent view where two opposing views meet to form a third view; rather, he seeks his readers’ return to submission to already established authority and ideology or, using theological terms, repentance from unrighteousness.

For the clearest example of this rhetoric at work in Nashe’s texts, and in contrast to modern notions of multiplicity of beliefs and the assumed freedom of choice, Nashe views the English church and its leadership as the singular authority to submit to theologically. If Nashe views his authorial role in terms of spiritual influence, then his role is to guide the audience to a similar belief, at least in part, by using his work as the means to prompt stages on the journey. For Nashe, the English Church stands against enemies seeking to destroy it from without or within. The latter is much more prevalent in his mind given the Puritan pressure for continued reforms after the Elizabethan Settlement. While this attachment serves as an example of Nashe’s

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<sup>65</sup> John Belk helpfully tracks the development of the terminology of identification in Burke’s ongoing engagement with T.S. Eliot’s work. See “Snapshots of Identification: Kenneth Burke’s Engagements with T.S. Eliot.”

<sup>66</sup> Belk explains that in describing identification through the terms of violence, “Burke focuses on slaying as transformative, and from his previous treatments of [Eliot’s] *Murder*, it becomes clear that this transformation is transcendence—the merger of perspectives” (377-378).

ecumenical commitments and where the rhetoric of division and identification explains his motive, he also addresses broader and more abstract principles of faith within the crisis of a plague throughout *The Unfortunate Traveller*.

Nashe's means for prompting rhetorical division invokes the nature of violence that is a necessary part of moving people from their deeply held beliefs, and Burke's explanation of perspective by incongruity provides a framework for how Nashe can redirect his readers' commitments. Violence pervades Burke's understanding of perspective by incongruity, and the previous chapters show Nashe's engagement with the rhetorical battles for his audience in terms of their pious beliefs. Chapter two argued that where people identify with an authoritative speaker's use of prophetic pronouncements, Nashe presents the humble speaker as holding the most potential for presenting truth. Chapter three illustrates how Nashe continues this redirection of the audience's identification with a Christian speaker where people would hold connections to religious rhetoric stemming from the voice of Christ and the application to his city by placing the same rhetoric in a satirical letter to the devil. In both of these examples, Nashe attempts to break the demoralized identification that people have with an openly authoritative Christian speaker to indicate their need for reform. This breaking forms the central part of Burke's definition of perspective by incongruity as "verbal 'atom-cracking'" where "by rational planning you wrench [a term] loose and metaphorically apply it to a different category" (*Attitudes* 308).<sup>67</sup> "Atom-cracking" as a metaphor signals the most interior splits within a person's commitments through the clearly violent term of "wrenching." With this language, Burke signals that such a process is not comfortable but painful and at times must be forced by the rhetor. It would seemingly not be

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<sup>67</sup> His description of casuistic stretching, of which Perspective by Incongruity is a specific form, lacks this same language of violence.

enough for Nashe to write intellectual polemics designed to explain the reasons for rejecting Puritanism or other known cultural sins and hope that his audience would see the inherent logical value in his propositions. He does not expect such reception. Rather, he tries a number of different approaches, none of which are so sanitized as a list of propositions, to prompt this rhetorical violence in his audience.

Burke's dramatis personae with its explanations of the relationships between the five elements of act, agent, agency, scene, and purpose provide the framework for discussing how Nashe's rhetoric of violence works via perspective by incongruity. The previous chapter argued that Nashe prompts rhetorical reconsideration by challenging the audience's pious act/agent relationship by arguing for religious reform in a supplication to the devil. Burke's discussion of piety also indicates how Nashe uses grotesque violence as a revelation of internal sinfulness to prompt the Burkean division of repentance. Such repentance requires the breaking of a person's attachments to ideas as well as his actions, and Nashe dramatizes this division through the fear and actual depiction of violence. These scenes of division indicate places where Nashe calls for repentance from specific attitudes and behaviors using the impiety of violence. Burke defines piety as "the sense of what goes with what" and the foremost place where such piety exists is on the lexical level where communities associate terms around shared ideas; for example, "a kind of symbolic cleanliness goes with altars" which leads to the view that "a technique of symbolic cleansing goes with altars, a technique of symbolic cleansing goes with cleanliness" etc. (*Permanence* 74-75). These associations form around social understandings of what an altar "means" and the work of the rhetor, in many cases, is to challenge these associations through deliberate impiety.

One way that artists can depict this impiety is through the use of the literary grotesque. In *Attitudes Toward History*, Burke defines the grotesque within a series of poetic categories that seek to categorize the rhetoric of identification in art through genre distinction into either positive or negative association.<sup>68</sup> Grotesque stands at the far end of the negative group as a form of mysticism that engages in an emotional gravity despite the appearance of comedic elements. Burke says that “humor specializes in incongruities; but by its trick of ‘conversion downwards,’ by its stylistic ways of reassuring us in dwarfing the magnitude of obstacles or threats, it provides us relief in laughter” (58). However, “the grotesque is the cult of incongruity *without* the laughter. The grotesque is not funny unless you are out of sympathy with it (whereby it serves as unintentional burlesque). Insofar as you are *in* sympathy with it, it is in deadly earnest” (58-59). *Deadly earnest* as a description makes a reasonable connection to the prior language of atom-cracking and wrenching that defines the violence of perspective by incongruity. This understanding of the grotesque informs a reading of Nashe that sees such moments as seeking religious reform through depictions of violence as he would expect his readers to be in sympathy with the overall spiritual and practical health of London and its people.

The grotesque is an oft used literary term that requires a more specific and contextually located definition to be of use in describing Nashe’s work. In explaining the late 16<sup>th</sup> century’s writers’ burgeoning fascination with this literary style, Rhodes explains that this influence grows from a combination of the festive nature of Saturnalia celebrations and the judgment of the

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<sup>68</sup> Burke generally describes this classification: “Though ‘acceptance’ and ‘rejection’ cannot be sharply differentiated (the ‘acceptance of A involving the ‘rejection of non-A), it could be said approximately that the epic, tragedy, and comedy gravitate towards the positive side, while elegy, satire, and burlesque stress the negative. This distinction suggests two other modes, preponderantly transitional, the grotesque and the didactic” (57).

sermon form (7). Many writers, both in Nashe's time and since then, have reacted with revulsion toward such works, and Rhodes explains that "the desire to give [a] body to what is abstract produces the images which cluster around that other, macabre and repulsive pole of the grotesque. The monstrous births, the tortured criminal, and the plague- or famine-stricken city are all objectifications of moral deformity and spiritual illness" (14-15). This is especially prevalent in pamphlet literature that "lacks the obvious connections with festive ritual, [so] the shadow of the sermon falls more directly upon its images of violence and physical mutation" (17). As Nashe's first published texts seek to anatomize and reveal the inherent problems in the literary world, his involvement with the Martin Marprelate controversy early in his career gives him the means of connecting a more violent and incongruent language to religious reform as the church endorses such an approach to fight the rebellious Martin with his own tools. Within this connection, Nashe finds a rhetorical use for the depiction of violence in a spiritually reforming pursuit as he seeks to divide the readers from their connections to Martin's Puritan motivated rebellion.

Nashe entered London's writing scene after an unfinished tenure at Cambridge and immediately gained work in writing prefaces for established writers. His first self-generated publication was the *Anatomie of Absurditie* where Nashe lays society's ills before its people for a number of possible purposes, hoping that the work will serve as a revelation of the current failure of the literary field in general and the beginning of his literary career. Such a work could be the introduction of a writer seeking to prove his knowledge of literary antecedents or to generate notoriety (and possibly patronage or some other form of literary success) as a cultural critic. In the dedication to Sir Charles Blunt, Nashe begins deploying the image of the humble speaker in

describing what he hopes his work will accomplish as he builds upon “that little alliance which I have unto Arte,” in the hopes that he will be forgiven his presumption for the cause of “defacing her enemies” (5). Nashe further argues that his infant position gives him clarity to “terme poyson poyson, as well as in a silver peece, as in an earthen dish, and Proteaus Proteaus, though girt in the apparel of Pactoclus” (5-6). The stated goal shows that he intends the work to be revelatory against deceptive coverings, or to present the truth in the midst of lies, by shifting the agent (as defined in Burke’s pentad) from an experienced writer to an inexperienced critic able to see the truth with clarity.<sup>69</sup> In the opening of the main text, Nashe provides the language of how this rhetorical act of anatomy will work to his purifying ends. He says that this pamphlet will

Take a view of sundry mens vanitie, a survey of their follie, a briefe of their barbarism, to runne through Authors of the absurder sort, assembled in the Stationers shop, sucking and selecting out of these upstart antiquaries, somewhat of their unsavory duncerie, meaning to note it with a *Nigrum theta* [dark mark], that each one at the first sight may eschew it as infectious, to shew it to the worlde that all men may shunne it. (9)

The role of the rhetorical act of an anatomy is to pry into the recesses of accepted cultural norms to reveal the insufficiency that drives much of what passes for writing. Nashe also indicates this intention in a defense of the *Anatomie* in the preface to Robert Greene’s *Menaphon* that was published near the same time, where he writes, “it may be [that] my *Anatomie of Absurdities* may

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<sup>69</sup> Chapter two presents this rhetorical incongruity as a consistent prophetic position across most of Nashe’s works, especially those with an overt religious motive. Nashe invests in the humble position of the speaker in order to argue for an authority through weakness as he is not tied to the same structures that have caused the errors in the first place. In the case of the *Anatomie*, Nashe does not use openly Christian language, but invokes the prophetic position to provide authority for his challenge against contemporary writers.

acquaint you ere long with my skill in surgery, wherein the diseases of Art more merrily discovered may make our maimed Poets put together their [blank verses] until the building of an Hospital” (324). Nashe proclaims the role of his first work as revealing the disease that society should seek to cure and continues this work throughout his brief career. Burke’s terminology shows that the *Anatomie* serves Nashe’s rhetorical purpose by revealing the depth of errors from which his readers should divide. He creates an incongruous perspective by challenging the association between the act and the agent. If the person in the writer/agent role should provide literature’s positive societal value, then Nashe will use the incongruous act of violence in an anatomy to reveal the sickness of literary practice. He relishes the role of cultural surgeon and will practice literary violence in the service of these ends.

Literary ends and religious ends are not necessarily the same and to force them under any general banner would be an overly totalizing movement. However, during this early stage of his career, Nashe earns an opportunity for such literary social surgery to extend to religious ends. The Martinists were a group of Puritan sympathizers in 1588-1589 who crafted a series of pamphlets on a hidden press and distributed them to the people in order to challenge the prelate form of church governance.<sup>70</sup> The church sought to silence this press using proclamations and denunciatory pamphlets while also trying to locate and punish the culprits. The stakes of the battle were significant because the English church was only a generation removed from its separation from the Catholic church and now had to address a reforming movement within its own ranks that found a new vehicle of attack. Black explains that when the standard means of

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<sup>70</sup> Joseph Black’s excellent edition of *The Martin Marprelate Tracts* provides tremendously helpful background information on the Martinist movement and church’s response (xv-cxii).

combat (rebuttals, sermons, and royal proclamation) failed, “the church eventually decided to fight Martin on his own terms and took the unusual step of sponsoring a parallel pamphlet campaign in which hired pens deployed Martin’s full stylistic repertoire on behalf of the embattled bishops” (lvi-lvii). For Nashe, this influence carried significant weight for the rest of his career as it was the beginning of using the violence of the Martinist style for religious ends.

Other publications against the church occurred before Martin Marprelate, but these writers brought a unique style to the reformation debates. Black explains that

What seemed shockingly new was Martin’s method of presentation. With his wittily irreverent and conversational prose, ironic modes of argument, fluid shifts among narrative voices, swashbuckling persona, playful experiments with the conventions of print and controversy, and willingness to name names and to tell unflattering stories about his opponents, Martin shattered conventions of decorum that had governed debates about the church since the Elizabethan settlement. (xvi)

Despite apparent links to earlier European reformation literature, “nobody in England had ever read anything quite like these publications” (xvi).<sup>71</sup> Black argues that effects of these texts were long reaching in terms of debates over “appropriate style, the relationship of writer to textual personae, and the social responsibilities of authorship” (xxv). By endorsing the Martinist style

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<sup>71</sup> Christopher A. Hill shows that the historical time was ripe for a new form of religious discourse and introduced “the marketing of religious dispute as a set of printed and relatively cheap texts both available and intended for broad public consumption” (“Dost thou see a Martin” 110). He links this campaign to challenging the way that “Martin’s Puritan politics exposed the laity of England to the dangers of the unqualified, unholy, unfit clergy contaminating the authority of the pastor’s chair by the operations of their own wayward thoughts, and without any bishops to constrain them” (115). Ultimately for Hill, the Marprelate controversy is over authority rather than one of internal faith and practice.

through ecclesiastical authority in their counter campaign, the church opened the door for Nashe to use this same type of writing for religious ends in his own work.

Though the anti-Martinist texts were written using pseudonyms, critics generally consider *An Almond for a Parrat* Nashe's direct contribution. In this satirical castigation of Martin, Nashe first uses the style that will inform much of his later works, including *The Unfortunate Traveller*. Rhodes argues that Martin, and by mimicry the anti-Martinist writers, "introduced a violent physicality to polemical and satirical writing which they developed to much nastier extremes than Martin's brandishing of his 'crabtree cudgel'" (37) The speaker in *An Almond*, Cutbert Curriknave, proclaims that his opponents are driven by "some more subtile spirite of hipocrisie which offers himself to be a false prophet in the mouths of our Martinists; to whom the whole sedition house of hel condescending, break up their sessions, and send this seducer into the world" (345). Nashe deploys the language of violence in rooting out this hypocrisy because "whole reames of paper are blotted with thy hyperbolical blasphemies, and religious matters of controversy [and] massacred by the prophane scurrility" (345). Despite the hypocritical tone of Cutbert calling Martin's work scurrilous, he challenges Martin to "return to thy house (at least if thou hast any) and hang thy selfe in a melancholie" (346). The text continues to lay out the various ways that the Martinists have committed their sins with the goal that Nashe describes in direct address: "Gentle reader, I give you but a tast of them by the waie, that you may knowe them the next time you meete them in your dish, and learne to discern a poysonous scorpion from a wholesome fish" (348). By bringing the Martinists' sins to the fore, Nashe hopes to reveal their hypocrisy, and this exposure would lead his readers to reject them because of the punishment that they are likely to face.

The text's recommendations of violence suggest a seriousness that Nashe and the fellow anti-Martinist writers must address, and he does so by using violence to divide his readers from their attachments to Martin Marprelate. He writes, "Marprelate is not so merrie; hee sits ruminating under an oake, or in the bottome of a haystacke, whose bloud shall be the first spilte in the reformation of the Church" (348). This punishment takes the form of a violent anatomy, for

hee that hath so lately felt the paine of worming and launcing cannot but stande in awe of *Buls* slicing tooles one two moneths after. O, it is a hairebrande whooresonne, and well seene in Phlebotomie, if a but once take a knife in hande, [he] will as soon let out the seditious humours forth a Martinistes bodie, as the beste he in England, that hath bin twentie yeeres practioners in Surgerie. (348)

Nashe further describes their hypocrisy as "the disease of disobedience [that] proceeds from the swelling of pride, as madnesse from some untollerable ulcer" (358). The depicted violence serves to let out the infirmities and to reveal that which is sinful so that it may be repented of, which is especially important because of the public nature of Martin's work and the people that have been led astray. The importance of such revelatory violence is clear because, as Nashe writes,

The humours of my eies are the habitations of fountaines, and the circumference of my heart the enclosure of tearful contrition, when I think howe many soules at that moment shall carrie the name of Martine on their foreheads to the vale of confusion, in whose innocent bloude thou swimming to hell, shalt have the tormentes of tenne thousand thousande sinners at once, inflicted upon thee. (353)

Nashe would have people see and reject the Martinist impulse and commands “Simple English men, that cannot see into pollicie before it surprise your peace, nor interrupt the ambition of treachery before it hath besieged your prosperitie, doe you beholde while innovations bud, & do not feare lest your children and family be poisoned with the fruit” (366). The warning extends to the entire city much in the same way as prophetic literature, and Nashe moves to this application at the end in pleading for the Martinists to “amend, amend, and glorye no more in your hypocrisie, least your pride and vaine glory betray our prosperitie to our enimies, and procure the Lords vengeance to dwell in the gates of our citie” (376). Given such high stakes, the text implies that drastic measures must be taken, and these measures include even the reclamation of the rebellious Martinists. Such violence serves as a narrative cleansing for the characters themselves and for the sake of the readers. Burke’s perspective by incongruity viewed through the dramatic pentad provides a helpful lens for understanding how this redemptive violence works rhetorically. In this condemnatory pamphlet, the relationship between the act (punishment) and the purpose (justice for rebellion) drives what would be expected in such a challenge. However, in this case, Nashe shifts the purpose to provide perspective by incongruity. Instead of vitriolic justice, he stretches the punishment to prompt compassion for both the audience and even the Martinist writers themselves. This incongruous shift forces readers to consider the work through an ultimately redemptive lens even as he depicts violent punishment for the Martinists.

An anatomy is itself an inherently violent process of revelatory cutting designed to purify and not merely to punish. Nashe uses this imagery again in the transitional period between the horrors that Jerusalem faced in *Christs Teares* and the application of this violence to his readers

in London. The audience's revulsion serves as a didactic moment to illustrate that London harbors the same sins as Jerusalem and should fear the same outcome. As though anticipating the accusation that his work has gone too far, Nashe says, "I deal more searchingly then common Soule-[surgeons] accustome; for in this Booke; wholly have I bequeathed my penne and my spyrite to the prosternating and enforrowing [of] the frontiers of sinne" (80). Sinfulness exists in such deep places that, in order to reveal and treat the root, Nashe must delve deeper to these sinful frontiers and press his audience to divide from them through the use of these violent depictions. Taking the role of the anatomy forward, Nashe fashions himself as a surgeon that will use the violence of a text, and what Burke would call the deathly seriousness of his grotesque rhetoric, to reveal what must be cleansed in society.

These acute moments extend from his literary critique in the *Anatomie* to the clearly devotional work in *Christs Teares*. However, such violence also pervades Nashe's fictional adventure narrative in *The Unfortunate Traveller* where he presents the fear of violence and grotesque depictions of it with a similar reforming motive to Nashe's other works: repentance by dividing from deleterious belief and practice. The unique nature of this text shows Nashe at his rhetorically most creative by *showing* rather than *telling* the pending judgments that his readers will face and wrapping this rhetoric within an episodic adventure. It is the deadly earnestness that separates Burke's view of the grotesque from other critical understandings of it, and Nashe's use of such violent extensions in an otherwise comedic text like *The Unfortunate Traveller* indicates places where the laughter of the satire catches and shifts to introspection. Much of what makes Wilton's journey unfortunate takes place with his viewing of other people's deaths and the threat to his own life. These descriptions move into such specifically grotesque detail that revulsion

would be a reasonable outcome to expect from the readers, and Nashe seeks to guide them in each case by providing commentary designed to prompt their self-reflection and repentance. The dramatic pentad helpfully provides specific points of application for these moments. As the text depicts either the fear or execution of violence, Nashe challenges the rhetorical purpose that drives those facing violence to prompt his readers to divide from similar motivations.

Though the text moves in a linear fashion, working out of order to describe this violence by the type of victim or victims provides an indication for how Nashe develops the rhetorical division he seeks to prompt. The clearest connection between violence and repentance takes place via Wilton's fear of his own death via anatomy. In his adventures in Europe, Wilton lands in Rome and, through a series of accidents, falls into the house of a Jewish man named Zadoch who detains him and offers to sell him to the Pope's Jewish physician, Doctor Zacharie. The doctor holds a yearly anatomy and seeks young, healthy men as his subjects, and Zadoch tells Zacharie, "It is not concealed from me (saith he) that the time of your accustomed yearley anatomie is at hand, which it behooves you under forfeiture of the foundation of your Colledge very carefully to provide for. The infection is great, & hardly will get a sound body to deal upon" (304). The infection is the plague that has taken so many lives across Europe by this point and serves as the pending apocalyptic crisis in so many literary works and sermons during this time. The opportunity to secure a fresh subject does not escape the doctor. Fear of the pending anatomy prompts Wilton's repentance, and prior to his description of these fears, he indicates a purpose for recounting this episode as he might "scoffe at a shrowd turn, but theres no readie way to make a man a true Christian, as to perswade himselfe he is taken up for an anatomie" (305). Wilton describes this fear in painstaking grotesque detail as his imagination combines the

actions of the surgeon with extended imagery. He fears that he “should be cut like a French summer dublet” and imagines a flea bite as the edge of a knife while “not a drop of sweate trickled down my breast and my sides, but I dreamt it was a smooth edged razer tenderly slicing downe my breast and sides” (305). He “dreamd of nothing but phlebotomie, bloudie fluxes, incarnatives, running ulcers” and would not cry out in fear of bleeding to death (305). It is not just the fear of death that troubles Wilton but also the fear of bleeding and having the life poured from him. At the hour of his rescue, Wilton could be found “devising what a kinde of death it might be, to bee let blood till a man die” and ruminating on “the assertion of some philosophers, who said the soule was nothing but blood” while fearing that the swelling around the place where he was pricked signaled his “soule searching for passage” (308). Feeling the encroaching pouring out and death forces Wilton into fearful prayer and renewed commitment to Christianity, so much so that upon his rescue, he thought that he “was on horse backe to heaven, and carried to Church on a beere” (308). Alas for poor Jack that he would go on to face more troubles, but this episode signals the important introspective work that even the threat of violence should cause in a person. The fear of bleeding to death and the slow escape of his soul forces Wilton into a momentary spiritual reformation with an exasperatingly sincere focus on prayer and devotion. The rhetoric works by extension as the audience travels with Wilton through these fears in a form of identification, and as Wilton’s terror becomes the audience’s, Nashe would seek to prompt the same repentant response in his readers. In pentadic terms, Nashe presents the act of violence as a way to address the purpose that has driven people to the point of punishment.

Despite the apparent repentance, Wilton’s role as the unreliable narrator does not provide enough evidence to confirm whether his reformation will stick. The other moments in the text

that depict violence on others also prompt further questions about the effectiveness of Nashe's deployment of this violent rhetoric. While these moments do not maintain the clear anatomy motif, they should still be read as generating from the same motive because of Wilton's interjection into the narratives to apply these depictions for his audience. Nashe extends Wilton's inward, personal reflection to an outward recollection as he reports on the various acts of violence he sees. In the text's description of the Anabaptist massacre, Nashe deploys violence on a much broader scale where the imagery presents pending judgment as an appeal for the rhetorical division from Puritan influence in the English church. As chapter one discussed, the significant problem with this episode is the overt shifting between narrative voices from mockery to preaching to regret. In addition, the grotesque violence in the aftermath of war shows how such narrative rhetoric can impact the reader as well as the writer. As a part of his sermon, Wilton connects the Anabaptist position with one of violence: "When Christ said, *the kingdome of heaven must suffer violence*, hee meant not the violence of long babling praier, nor the violence of tedious invective Sermons without wit, but the violence of faith, the violence of good works, [and] the violence of patient suffering" (234). Wilton places violence in the hands of the faithful here in a confusing manner, forcing the readers to question how spiritually positive terms like *faith*, *good works*, and *patient suffering* could be connected with violence. As he continues the sermon, Wilton links the violence of prophecy with God's work in the church because, in reference to end times, "the glorious Sunne of the Gospell shall be eclipsed with the dim cloud of dissimulation; that which is the brightest Planet of salvation shall be a meanes of error and darknes" (235). This cloud will lead to violence within the church, as "those that shine fairest, make the simplest shewe, seeme most to favour Religion, shal rent out the bowels of the church,

[and] be turned into blood” (235). The sermon has shifted into Burke’s *deadly earnest* territory of challenge with the grotesque imagery of bowels and blood, and the laughter of the ridiculous that has consumed the narrative stops for Wilton to drive home the point. He argues that “those furnaces of Falshood and hammer-heads of Heresie must bee dissolved and broken [...], or els I feare mee the false glittering glass of Innovation will be better esteemed of, than the auncient gold of the Gospell” (236). By creating this contrast, Nashe links God’s faithful people with an approved violence, and by expanding the definition of the kingdom to his Christian brethren, Nashe creates a clarifying purpose for this violence to benefit the greater kingdom by providing a clear link to his contemporary struggles with the Puritans. The great enemy of the gospel that must be broken is the same Puritan influence Nashe attacks in *Almond for a Parrat*, and, in Burkean pentadic terms, the purpose of such violent acts calls for similar movement of seeking the restoration of the church by rejecting this rebellious intention.

At this stage, the laughter that filled Wilton’s mouth no longer comes forth, and the battle itself contains a curious moment of compassion where vitriol might have been. Wilton calls the Anabaptists’ massacre at the hands of the empire “Pittiful and lamentable” and “their unpittied and well perfourmed slaughter” (240). The massacre prompts pity as “manie indifferent eyes, who now thought them (suffering) to bee sheepe brought innocent to the shambles, when as before they deemed them as a number of wolves up in armes against the shepherds” (240). The violence of the massacre brings a complete shift in the judgment of the people as the readers identifying with Wilton’s perspective exchange contempt for compassion. The shift takes place because the soldiers create a visually arresting scene that moves beyond the laughter and aggression that define the judgment, for “at everie foot-step was the imbrument of yron in

bloud,” and “one could hardly discern heads from bullets, or clottred haire from mangled flesh hung with goare” (241). There is no celebration in the victory of the gospel over its challengers but regret, and Nashe uses this moment of incongruity in a similar way to *Almond*. The violence shows a definite end if people would continue in their sinfulness and depicts an application of Wilton’s sermon where he tells his readers to “sell away your sects and schisms to the decrepitate Churches in contention beyond seas; they have been so long inured to warre, both about matters of Religion and Regiment, that now they have no peace of minde but in troubling other mens peace” (237). Wilton depicts the brutal aftermath of war, and such violent ends shock the readers from their perpetual battles about “matters of Religion and Regiment.” Nashe locates the rhetorical motives of the Puritan culture in the characters of the Anabaptists and their leaders and sends these people off to a foolhardy rebellion. However, instead of the *schadenfreude* that might coincide with a vitriolic sense of justice, Burkean perspective by incongruity allows a view of Wilton’s compassion as seeking to force readers to a rejection of, or dividing from, these misleading Puritan beliefs for the betterment of everyone involved. To avoid such ends, Wilton could say, reject those that would lead you there. This recommendation would take place via the internal violence that Burke describes as a necessary part of the division and identification relationship. The violence is not retributive as much as it is prophetically revelatory of internal motivations and ultimate ends without this repentance.

However, in a later episode, violence does not lead to compassion and presents a third way that Nashe deploys this grotesque imagery as Wilton recounts judgment for Zadoch, whose punishments mirror those he would also inflict. Unlike the Anabaptists who are deluded and walk foolishly into their own execution, Zadoch’s behavior earns his punishment, specifically for

his treatment of women and his attempt to burn Rome. After Wilton's release from the pending anatomy, Zadoch attempts to get information from Diamante. In order to find out how much money she stole, "he stript her, and scourged her from top to toe" (309-310). In addition to this abusive behavior, Wilton says that Zadoch, "had the right agilitie of the lash," and when Dr. Zachary visits after losing his wealth, Zadoch "was readie to burst out of his skin and shoote his bowels like chaine-shot [...] ]his eies glared & burnt blew like brimstone and *aqua vitae* set on fire in an egshelle, his verie nose lightned glow-wormes, his teeth crasht and grated together, like the joynts of a high building cracking and rocking like a cradle" (310). Zadoch hatches a plan to destroy Rome, poison its water, entice "all the young children into my house that I can get, [...] cutting their throats barrell them up in poudring beefe tubes," and send them to the Pope for food (312). Through this depiction, Nashe sets Zadoch up as an ultimately evil character, guilty for both the abuse of women, of which Diamante is the most recent, and vitriolic anger that promises the death of so many innocent lives. Nashe seeks division from these sins in a straight-forward manner by leading his audience through an example of full retributive justice for such evil. In Burkean pentadic terms, and in comparison to the Anabaptist Massacre, Nashe provides another incongruous perspective by shifting back to what the audience would expect in terms of justice. In this case, the rhetorical agent earns full judgment without regret where the Anabaptists prompted pity while the rhetorical act of violence in these acts is equally grotesque.

Following these initial descriptions, the manner of execution fits the crime as Zadoch's sinful intentions return on his own head. After Diamante alerts the Countess Juliana, the Pope's concubine and Wilton's current owner, she sets people to follow Zadoch, and these servants see him, "of his owne nature violent, [swear] by the ark of Jehova to set the whole city on fire ere he

went out of it” (315). He had actually planned this conflagration of Rome but was stopped by Juliana’s spies, and it is decided that he “should be executed with all the fiery torments that could be found out” (315). In the same way that he promised conflagration, he was tortured so that “his flesh roasted, not burned: and ever as with the heat his skinne blistered, the fire was drawn aside, and they basted him with a mixture of Aqua fortis, allum water, and Mercury sublimatum, which smarted to the very soul of him, and searched him to the marrowe” (315). In drawing the rhetorical circle closer, as Zadoch suffers for his plans to destroy Rome by fire, Wilton describes the vindication of his actions against Diamante and other women and he writes that the executioners “scourge[d] [Zadoch’s] backe partes so blistered and basted, with burning whips of red hot wier” among additional means of torture (315). However, rather than present this as simply Zadoch getting what he deserves, Wilton closes the scene by proclaiming, “triumph, women, this was the end of the whipping Jew, contrived by a woman, in revenge of two women, her selfe and her maide” (316). Zadoch ultimately earns punishment for his abuse of women and his rash oath to burn the city. His overextended rhetoric is met with an overextended end, and the matching grotesque depictions force the readers into a revulsion that would lead them to the view of violence as redemptive. If the text should act as a mirror, then readers can see that ultimate justice will be done to those who abuse others, especially in the time of plague where every citizen stands on edge of the pending judgment. God and his justice are not silent but will bear out in the end, and Burke’s framework shows how this violence indicates where Nashe’s readers should divide from the purposes that would lead to these violent ends. In this case, he rhetorically punishes those who commit violence against women and carry sinful wrath so that the audience will reject any similar impulses.

Such treatment of women would apparently not be tolerated in Wilton's world as run by the justice of God, yet the extended narrative of Heraclide as an innocent victim of sexual violence that leads to her suicide makes such a religious application of violence problematic. This grotesque and unjust violence connects to Nashe's depiction of infanticide from *Christs Teares* and should carry a similar application. As chapter two showed, Nashe uses his historical interpretation of Israel's judgment, which was published around the same time as *The Unfortunate Traveller*, to make a direct connection between the horrors of the siege of Jerusalem and London's suffering because of its people's sins. Before describing the great violence against Jerusalem, Nashe pauses to remind his readers that what they will read represents a gravity different from his other works. His imagination shifts from the voice of Christ to historical narrator, and he says, "Now is the tyme that all Rivers must runne into the Sea, that whatsoever I have in witte or eloquence must be drayned to the delineament of wretchednesse" (63). Nashe apparently hopes that the horrors he recounts would not be a sign of ingenuity but a cause for sorrow for his readers. The invention serves to extend the violence beyond the measures of appropriate ends in order to prompt reflection and division from sinful ways. Thus, the extension of Nashe's rhetoric to such drastic ends provides an additional perspective by incongruity. The apex of these horrors is the description of a once wealthy woman named Miriam's infanticide for sustenance and Nashe's lament of the entire situation as a sign of the results of sin leading to the horrifying logic that Miriam uses in order to justify her actions (71-77). In Burkean terms, Nashe takes the relationship between purpose (love) and act (provision) and shifts it to rhetorically impious ends. The act transforms from provision to infanticide, which Miriam justifies as an act motivated by love. Nashe recounts this moment because of the horrors attached to a mother

having to perform such actions and applies this event to the mothers in London by telling them to take on the perspective of Miriam by asking them to weep (71). Weeping over such rhetorical horrors should lead the people of London to reject the similar acts (sins) and motives (pride, greed, etc.) that will lead to a similar punishment.

Nashe creates similar violent ends in episodes in Rome in the latter half of *The Unfortunate Traveller* without the same historical antecedent. While the parallel forms of injustice suggest that the violence should prompt a similar spiritual reflection, this extended episode stretches revulsion to the point of questioning the effectiveness of Nashe's rhetoric. Issues of justice, faith, sinfulness, and death hang over the entire narrative of *The Unfortunate Traveller*, but the rape of Heraclide and subsequent punishments bring to the foreground larger questions about the justice of God within circumstances that point toward a nihilistic unbelief. Within this frame, Wilton ultimately seeks for his audience to understand that the justice of God stands against sin despite appearances to the contrary, and violence in the text ultimately serves a redemptive purpose by punishing those motives that drive sinfulness. As though his audience feels rejected by God as they face the trials of judgment, Nashe uses the act of violence to punish the purpose of the criminals to prompt the reader to divide rhetorically from such faithlessness with an extended plot through three acts of violence. These episodes press the boundaries of Burkean perspective by incongruity as the narrative violence seeks to restore a faith in God's ultimate justice as readers might rightly ask whether the violence ultimately redeems the crimes Nashe depicts to prove the providence of God.

In his travels with Diamante, Wilton sees the effects of the ever-present plague as he enters Rome and views grave injustices. One hundred thousand people have died within nine

months and “one grave was the sepulchre of seven score, one bed was the alter wheron whole families were offered” (286). Roving groups of bandettos seize the opportunities to rob the victims’ houses, and Wilton mentions two in particular, The Spaniard Esdras and his Italian accomplice Bartol, who were some of the worst because “if there were none but the mistres and the maide left alive” they would “ravish them both & bring awaie all the wealth they could fasten on” (287). These women were true victims whose calls for help would not be answered because of the people’s great fear of the plague (287). Wilton and Diamante stay at the house of a woman named Heraclide, whom he describes as “a noble & chast matrone” and whose servant is the only remaining member of her household as her husband and children have recently died of the plague (287). Esdras and Bartol enter the house, separate the pairs of people, and kill Heraclide’s servant. Wilton escapes Bartol who attacks Diamante and traps Wilton in an adjoining room. During his captivity, he witnesses the evil of Esdras’s villainy against Heraclide through a graphic description of sexual violence and suicide that forces Nashe’s readers to question the injustice of this violence.

Wilton presents rape as a great evil prior to describing it in significant detail. As he is separated from Diamante and knows that she will soon face her ravishing, he angrily “darde all the devils in hell, nowe I was alone, to come and fight with mee one after another in defence of that detestable rape” (288). He “beat [his] head against the wals & cald them bauds, because they would see such a wrong committed, and not fall uppon him” (288). Trapped in his fury, Wilton sees the horrors against the matron of the house and the extended debate between aggressor and victim as the latter pleads for mercy. Esdras first attempts to woo Heraclide by describing his wealth gained by “the many execrable murthers with impunitie he had executed on them that

displeasde him” (288). Heraclide responds with a prayer for God to take her life before Esdras is able to violate her, asking “Jesu, Jesu, spare mee undefiled for thy spouse; Jesu, Jesu, never faile those that put their trust in thee” (288). After she faints and revives, Esdras continues his blasphemy, saying that “he had a charter above scripture” and “she must yeld, she should yeld, see who durst remove her out of his hands” (288-289). Heraclide challenges this presumption with the idea that death awaits Esdras in this time of plague and that she will be the vehicle of his demise. Hopefully, any man when faced with such promise of judgment will “be submissively sorrowfull for his trans-gressions, refraine himselfe from the least thought of folly, and purifie his spirit with contrition and penitence” (289). Heraclide follows the same logic that informs Nashe’s other violent depictions: if a person fears death, then he will lament his standing and seek contrition and repentance. As Burke’s explanation of piety applies in Nashe’s works, the threat of violence should prompt an internal fear that leads to division from sinful impulses.

In this moment, Wilton brings in an incongruous response through Esdras’s act as the threat of violence only prompts a growing rejection of God. Esdras displays the kind of arrogance that presumption prompts despite Heraclide’s choice for him to “either renounce God’s image, or renounce the wicked mind thou bearest” (290). Wilton says that “these words might have moovd a compound heart of yron and adamant, but in [Esdras’s] heart they obtained no impression” (290). Thus, rejection of God has reached its full expression in the rejection of this plea, and Esdras proceeds with the violent rape of Heraclide against the body of her dead husband. This act extends beyond even Nashe’s pious sense of what should be written as Wilton asks his readers to “conjecture the rest, my words sticke fast in the myre and are cleane tyred; would I had never undertooke this tragicall tale” (292). Such narrative violence against women

represents the height of injustice, and, as in *Christs Teares*, Wilton asks his readers to maintain this sense of sorrow and keep their “quick wits in sharp conceipt of compassion,” as he recounts the pain Heraclide has already faced in burying her 14 children and the death of her husband only to be violated in such a way (292). He seeks to prompt compassion in his readers, but the violence lacks the same forceful application as other times where Nashe overtly applies the motive for his rhetoric. Instead of providing a sense of the Burkean purpose from which people should divide, Nashe introduces an incongruous act in response to this violence that would leave the readers temporarily dissociated from the author’s rhetorical guidance.

Injustice reigns in the same way as Miriam’s infanticide in the next part of this episode. Heraclide internalizes the acts committed against her and feels that she must face judgment though she holds no guilt. Wilton says that “loath she arose, as a reprobate soule rising to the day of judgement” and cries out upon seeing the body of her dead husband (293). She connects this fear of judgment with the fear that this event reflects her reprobate status and that she will join those who are not predestined for heaven and are condemned to hell. Heraclide laments for “no blessing is a beautie, but a curse: curst be the time that ever I was begotten; curst be the time that my Mother brought mee foorth to tempt [...] why should not I hold my selfe damned (if predestinations opinions be true) that am predestinate to this horrible abuse?” (293). While battling against the guilt of her “compelled offence,” she insists that “the divell, the belier of our frailtie, and common accuser of mankinde, cannot accuse mee, though hee would, of unconstrained submitting” (293). Despite her innocence, Heraclide despairs of her rejection in heaven: “The Angels shall hisse at me, the Saints and Martyrs flye from me: yea, God himselfe shalle adde to the divels damnation, because he suffered such a wicked creature to come before

him” (294). In her ever-growing despair, she turns to ask God’s mercy, instructing herself to “sue, pleade, intreate; grace is never denied to them that aske,” yet, “It may be denied; I maie be a vessel ordained to dishonor” (294). As a final resolution to this internal battle, Heraclide decides to take her own life, finally asking “Jesu, forgive me, Jesu, receive me” (295). Heraclide’s anguish in this scene follows Miriam’s despair as they both wrestle with the pending judgments upon them. The revulsion at the violence Miriam commits should translate to a sympathetic anguish felt in response to the violence committed against Heraclide. However, instead of calling the people of London to repent as he does in *Christs Teares*, Nashe does not immediately complete the rhetorical connection between violence and contrition, and the episode seems unresolved, especially as Wilton is arrested and faces his own fear of death. In Burkean terms, this moment in the episode seems caught in the height of incongruity where the rhetorical acts of violence could easily extend beyond Nashe’s control and dissolve the connection to his reforming motive.

If, as this chapter contends, the violence committed in these works stems from Nashe’s motives to prompt rhetorical division, then this episode forces readers to question what sort of movement such heinous works accomplish. The revulsion is of a different part entirely as it responds to the sexual violence committed against Heraclide, who has already suffered so much during the plague. As the narrative returns to Wilton’s own troubles, Esdras seems to escape and fulfill his prideful statement that Heraclide, or really anyone, cannot hurt him. However, Wilton returns to this injustice at the end of the story to resolve what would likely point away from a spiritual application, and he does so again with violence that is then resolved with an even greater violence in execution. In the end, of all the offending parties, only God is justified, and

Nashe attempts to use these experiences to link his readers back to their own devotion in the midst of suffering. In this resolution, Nashe uses the execution of Esdras and his murderer Cutwolfe as rhetorical depictions of justice. Burke's pentadic relationships provide the means for understanding Nashe's resolution of this episode. After the incongruous stretch of injustice, Nashe ultimately reveals the spiritual purpose of the acts of violence: God's justice will be accomplished even through several acts of injustice.

Esdras eventually faces this justice after he murders his former partner Bartol and earns the vengeance of the victim's brother. After fleeing capture at the hands of Juliana, Wilton and Diamante hide in Bologna for a time until they could be sure that they were not pursued. They finally leave their hiding after "one day hearing [that] a more desperate murderer than Caine was to be executed" (319). The man is Bartol's brother Cutwolfe. Two graphic descriptions of violent deaths follow this hearing; however, prior to these moments, Wilton pauses to remind his readers of God's justice. He instructs them, "prepare your eares and your teares, for never tyll this thrust I anie tragecall matter upon you. Strange and wonderful are Gods judgements, here shine they in their glory" (320). Nashe will use this tale to resolve the incongruous injustice committed earlier and bring the readers back to this moment in the narrative by invoking Heraclide. Wilton says, "Chast Heraclide, thy bloud is laid up in heavens treasury, not one drop of it was lost, but lent out to usurie: water poured forth sinkes down quietly into the earth, but bloud spilt on the ground sprinkles up to the firmament" (320). "Murder," Wilton says, "is wide-mouthd and will not let God rest till he grant revenge" (320). The readers have been on a journey of questioning the justice of God through this narrative violence, and Nashe will use this resolution to challenge this lack of faith. To this point, he has allowed the connection between

Esdras, as the Burkean agent, and the acts of rape and murder to exist without justice, and such injustice would prompt his readers to question God's providence. The subsequent executions reveal the author's rhetorical goal that the readers asking these questions will ultimately be answered with an act of punishment that Burke might call pious in its resolution.

As the injustice that seems so long ago on Wilton's journey will be rectified, he pauses to apply this episode to his readers' faith in a God who will ultimately hold perpetrators accountable. He expands the suffering of Heraclide into a larger, global suffering and says, "Not onely the bloud of the slaughtered innocent, but the soule, ascendeth to this throne, and there cries out & exclames for justice and recompence" (320). This application stems from the sixth chapter of Revelation when the seals of judgment are broken, and the martyrs appear before the throne of God to plead for justice for their shed blood. Wilton presents this spectacle of violence as an answer to these cries for justice, and instructs "Guiltlesse soules that live every houre subject to violence, and with your despairing feares doe much impaire Gods providence, [to] fasten your eyes on this spectacle that will adde to your faith" (320). In addition, Wilton tells his suffering readers to "referre all your oppressions, afflictions, & injuries to the even ballanced eie of the Almighty; he it is, that when your patience sleepeth, will be most exceedingly mindfull of you" (320). Nashe depicts the narrative violence of justice in the next two episodes to remind these sufferers that no pain, narrative or real, extends beyond God's view and plans.

The end of this extended narrative takes place in two ways. First Cutwolfe explains his finding and execution of Esdras, and second, Cutwolfe himself faces judgment for his vengeance. By recounting this violence, the text can prompt the repentance, or Burkean division, from the detrimental pride that leads to sinfulness while also reminding the readers of God's

justice that prevents them from seeking personal revenge. When Wilton left off Esdras's tale, the perpetrator had violently abused Heraclide with the prideful notion that he is above retribution with his "charter above scripture." At the execution, Cutwolfe explains how he became the hand of justice. Esdras killed his companion Bartol leading Cutwolfe to then pursue him across Europe after leaving a cobbler shop behind to commit premeditated vengeful murder. Despite the apparent justice pursued, Cutwolfe "promist the divell [Esdras's] soule within this houre" of finding him (322). Esdras attempts to plead for mercy and argues that "for thy brothers death the despayre of mind that hath ever since haunted mee, the guiltie gnawing worme of conscience I feel may bee sufficient penance. Thou canst not send me to a hell as alreadie there is in my heart" (322). Ultimately, Esdras pleads that Cutwolfe "bee not thou a divell to torment my soule, and send me to eternall damnation" and faces a similar reflection to Nashe's fear of anatomy, "whilst I viewe death, my faith is deaded: where a mans fear is, there his heart is. Feare never engenders hope: how can I hope that heavens father will save mee from the hell everlasting, when he gives me over to the hell of thy furie?" (322-323). By showing Esdras's reflection in a similar method as Wilton's own in the face of his anatomy, Nashe connects these moments to illustrate the internal reflection that threats of violence should prompt in the characters. Burke's framework indicates that in repeating a similar relationship between the act of confession and the purpose of addressing guilt, Nashe reestablishes the rhetorical purpose of his violent depictions as the characters speak with the same contrition that Nashe would hope to prompt in his audience. However, Esdras eventually reveals that his purpose is not the same as those pursuing authentic confession as he denies his faith to save his life. Thus, Nashe creates an incongruous

relationship between Esdras's purpose with the act of confession in this episode to point to the purpose in confession as the most important consideration.

As he reviews his sinfulness, Esdras connects this judgment with his ultimate crime in ravishing Heraclide. It was in the same house where Bartol abused Diamante, and she was the reason that the two bandettos fought. Esdras piously sees an even greater connection to his own sinfulness as he faces judgment: "Heraclide, now thinke I on thy teares sowne in the dust, (thy teares, that my bloudie minde made barraine). In revenge of thee, God hardens this mans heart against mee" (323). Yet even this confession is not complete because Esdras says that he did not kill Heraclide, arguing the particular results do not belong to him, and at this moment, Nashe shifts the rhetoric of confession as Esdras refuses to repent completely from his actions. Esdras becomes the villain, or agent, that Heraclide was not, and Nashe reestablishes the idea of justice driving Esdras's execution. Though he uses the language of suffering, Esdras becomes an example of the failure to respond appropriately to the rhetoric of violence. He begs, "Gentle sir, learne of mee what it is to clog your conscience with murder, to have your dreames, your sleepes, your solitarie walkes troubled and disquited with murther: your shaddowe by daie will affright you, you will not see a weapon unsheathde, but immediatly you will imagine it is predestinate for your destruction" (323). It is a strange sight for Esdras to attempt to use his own suffering as an argument for mercy, yet he continues to plead for an opportunity "to have a lyttle more time to thinke on my journey to heaven" even while asking that his eyes and tongue be removed (323). Even more than fearing the sword, Esdras says that "A hundred devils haunt me dayly for my horrible murthers," yet he also says that he swore vengeance for an offense the day before (323). This haunting serves for a further plea for mercy as Esdras hopes that Cutwolfe

will fear the same hauntings for his own murder. He begs, “spare me [...] by thy owne soules salvation I desire thee, seeke not my soules utter perdition: in destroying me, thou destroyest thy self and me” (324). This reflection seems in line with the type of soul searching that should accompany the threat of violence, yet Esdras betrays his lack of complete reflection.

Upon seeing that he cannot gain his freedom by pleading, Esdras’s next words ultimately reveal his intentions and indicate Nashe’s motive for including these depictions of violence. In pentadic terms, these confessions reveal the demoralized act/purpose relationship that Nashe will punish through these depictions of violence in order to prompt his readers to avoid the same fate. This act of confession does not include a completely repentant motive in Esdras, and Nashe uses the violence of this scene to press his readers to divide from a similar hypocrisy. The pending knife shows that Esdras does not feel the guilt he so easily proclaimed before, and he ultimately wagers his soul for earthly life. He offers to help kill anyone that Cutwolfe desires, and doubles-down on his plea by saying, “For thy sake will I sweare and forswear, renounce my baptisme, and all the interest I have in any other sacrament” (325). It seems that Esdras thinks that he will at least have a chance for reclamation as opposed to Heraclide’s reasoning that none is available for her. Unfortunately, this opens the door for the worst of Cutwolfe’s vengeance as he will punish Esdras’s soul as well (325). Cutwolfe provides a ludicrous offer for Esdras to

Renounce God and his laws, and utterly disclaime the whole title or interest he had in anie covenant of salvation. Next, he should curse him to his face, as Job was willed by his wife, and write an absolute firme obligation of his soule to the devill, without condition or exception. Thirdly and lastly, (having done this,) hee

shoulde pray to God fervently never to have mercie upon him, or pardon him.  
(325)

Esdras pronounces these blasphemies in such a way that Cutwolfe wonders why “the earth opened not and swallowed us both, hearing the bolde tearmes he blasted forth in contempt of Christianitie” (326). Esdras pierces his vein and writes a contract for his soul to the devil and “more earnestly [prays] unto God never to forgive his soule, than many christians do to save their soules” (326). Despite holding up his end of the bargain, Esdras meets an aggressive death as Cutwolfe shoots him through his open mouth so that he cannot repent. The fear of violence does not reveal a real conviction but a willingness to blaspheme to avoid death, and Esdras dies unredeemed, which is a fate that Nashe knows his audience would seek to avoid.

However, such a depicted act of violence does not necessarily fit within Nashe’s intentions as it could lead to a vigilante justice without the offer of redemption. Cutwolfe is no avenging angel but guilty of his own obsession with revenge, and though he rectifies Esdras’s sinful acts, his purpose for revenge forces readers to question what, if any, overarching sense of God’s justice might inform Nashe’s use of this violence. Applied through the pentad, the purpose of revenge does not rightly fit with the act of justice in this execution. Cutwolfe, for his own confession, recognizes the act he will soon commit and the marks it will make upon his soul. He says, “though I knew God would never have mercy upon me except I had mercie on thee, yet of thee no mercy would I have. Revenge in our tragedies is continually raised from hell: of hell doe I esteeme better than heaven, if it afford me revenge” (324). In searching for the greatest way to seek this revenge, Cutwolfe falls into claiming the role of God for his own. He confesses, “revenge is the glorie of armes, & the highest performance of valor: revenge is whatsoever we

call law or justice, the farther we wade in revenge, the nearer come we to the throne of the almightie. To his scepter it is properly ascribed; his scepter he lends unto man, when he lets one man scourge another (326). Cutwolfe's proclamation works against the scriptural argument that commands God's people to leave revenge to the almighty, and thus violence for the sake of revenge cannot go unpunished in a text seeking to prompt its readers into confession and repentance. In pentadic terms, Nashe incongruously links the act of justice with a purpose of revenge and then punishes this the agent pursuing this purpose to suggest that his readers not follow a similar model. Any vitriolic sense of revenge based on some higher calling of human justice outside of God's sovereignty extends beyond appropriate bounds, and Nashe will not allow such an immoral motive to escape narrative violence. Cutwolfe faces a gruesome end where the executioner beats on his bones without breaking them, cuts him open "and then with boyling lead soulder[s] up the wounds from bleeding" (327). As Cutwolfe claimed God's vengeance for himself, the executioner pulls out his tongue, "least he should blaspheme in his torment" (327). Finally, "in this horror they left him on the wheele as in hell; where, yet living, he might beholde his flesh legacied amongst the foules of the aire" (327). In this gruesome end, Nashe suggests to his audience that violence served for unrighteous ends does not lead to reward but an even greater judgment. Violence against Heraclide earned violence against Esdras, which earned violence against Cutwolfe, and in each case, Nashe punishes the violence to move his audience to repent from similar motives.

Wilton's commentary at the end of this episode reveals the spiritually reforming effect that Nashe constructs this violence to prompt. Wilton says, "unsearchable is the booke of our destinies. One murder begetteth another: was never yet bloud-shed barren from the beginning of

the world to this daie” (327). Bloodshed serves a purpose in Nashe’s prompting of rhetorical division by revealing the true motivations within a person’s heart, and Wilton becomes a representative of the response that Nashe would prompt in his readers. He responds with repentance:

Mortifiedly abjected and daunted was I with this truculent tragedie of Cutwolfe and Esdras. To such straight life did it thence forward incite me that ere I went out of Bolognia I married my curtizan, performed many almes deedes; and hasted so fast out of the Sodom of Italy, that within fortie daies I arrived at the king of Englands campe twixt Ardes and Guines in France. (327)

Wilton brings together the point of all of this violence, and Nashe uses this repentance and reformed life to prompt a similar move in his readers. They too should see these acts of violence and respond with contrition. He extends the language of violence to reveal internal motivations and would have his readers follow the same path of rhetorical division from these internal influences to return ultimately to what they know to be righteous faith.

Despite any motive of extending his salvific intentions to the grotesque sexual crime against Heraclide, the immediate reaction of revulsion does not entirely seem justified by Esdras’s death. Readers both then and now would rightly ask if such depictions are necessary to accomplish this rhetorical goal and if Nashe, in attempting to depict violence to cause violent rhetorical division in his readers, extends too far. Such an investment in the incongruous rhetoric of violence always runs the risk of pressing the readers beyond the desired application, and Nashe’s works straddle the line of pressing his readers too far. If rhetorical overextension drives Nashe’s adventure narrative, what might he do when such overextension is the norm and his

audience would expect his rhetoric to involve grotesque imagery and violence? The next chapter discusses how Nashe again challenges expectations in *The Terrors of the Night*.

## Chapter Five:

### Nashe's Subversive Exposition of Dreams in *The Terrors of the Night*

As an exploration of dreams, *The Terrors of the Night* would provide a welcome opportunity for Nashe to expand his depictions of grotesque and violent imagery to shock his readers into the division of repentance. The number of Biblical and historical antecedents that include prophetic dreams and how they portend coming judgment would provide the foundation on which he could deploy his particular form of religious rhetoric. Nashe even titles this narrative *The Terrors of the Night* as though embracing this genre and the opportunity it provides. Yet, in the moment when over-extended imagery would be appropriate, he shifts into a subdued explanation of dreams as merely night time expansions of the guilt people should feel during the day. While he includes some extended language, Nashe points to the dreamer's guilty conscience as the primary cause of such terrors and downplays supernatural and openly fear inducing elements. In Burkean terms, the appropriate act for this scene would look much more like the violent and grotesque descriptions the *The Unfortunate Traveller*; however, Nashe pivots to downplay the significance of the "terrors" in a divergent interpretation of a dream narrative. Burke's rhetorical framework provides a helpful lens for how such reductions can ultimately serve a similar purpose to Nashe's other violent works via a different approach. *The Terrors of the Night* seeks the audience's repentance by using what Burke calls the downward conversion of making the seemingly serious terrors ultimately impotent, and this movement shifts the focus from the nighttime visions to the dreamers and their need for reform. In pentadic terms, instead of presenting amplifications of violent acts and agents as in other texts, Nashe reduces their

impact to point to the readers' as the ultimate agents of their fears. This conversion downwards operates against the pious attachments the readers have to dream narratives as scenes of rhetorical extension. These moments that show Nashe's consistent movement away from audience expectations make his work difficult to understand, and this chapter closes with recommendations for how literary and rhetorical studies scholars should view literary works through rhetorical frameworks for a greater illumination for both disciplines.

Nashe published *Terrors* in 1594 with the subtitle of *A Discourse of Apparitions* and dedicated it to Mistress Elizabeth Carey, whose mother was the recipient of the dedication to *Christs Teares over Jerusalem* and whose family hosted Nashe in 1592.<sup>72</sup> In this prefatory letter, Nashe downplays his worth as an author and praises Mistress Carey without the same emphasis on the religious content of *Christs Teares*. The second preface, addressed to the Master or Goodman reader, attacks some of the recent trends in the press and unfavorable opinions Nashe has received. Outside of a passing reference in the opening preface, Nashe does not address the content or the motive driving *Terrors*. The text presents a discourse on the devil, his demons, the many ways that dreams have played an important role in previous historical narratives but ultimately ties these dreams together in a clear argument for personal repentance culminating in a "strange tale" of a man who recounts his extensive dreams and their promise of his healing before quickly dying from his illness. Despite the lack of a stated motive, Nashe clearly intends for this work to prompt self-reflection in his readers by the continual references to sinful intentions and actions that cause these nightmares.

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<sup>72</sup> As with all of Nashe's work, G.R. Hibbard's careful research into the life of this writer provides invaluable insight into the composition of his works. For information on *Terrors*, see *Thomas Nashe, A Critical Introduction* (106-109).

Per Sivefors helpfully explains the context of Early Modern views on dreams in one of the few articles that focuses specifically on this text. He argues that there were various conclusions about the source and substance of dreams and sets up a scale between the two extremes of a *Platonic* view that emphasizes a world where “sleep is somehow more ‘real’ than physical reality itself,” and an *Aristotelian* view that “dreams had an essentially physical origin” (“All this Tractate” 163). The influence of Christianity also significantly influenced belief in dreams, and Christian views travelled this same range, leading to views of dreams as, in some measure, inspired by the devil to prompt terror or easily dismissed in the wake of a more practical spirituality (163). While certainly leaning toward the latter view, Nashe does not deny the people’s experiences of dreams but uses these terrors as a teaching moment about the consequences of a guilty conscience.

Such open didacticism has led to a lack of critical focus on this text as many critics dismiss *Terrors* as a lesser work in Nashe’s oeuvre.<sup>73</sup> While celebrating Nashe’s ingenuity in other works, Hibbard establishes that, in *Terrors*, “didactic moralizing, which the age regarded as the true *raison d’être* of literature, though not entirely dropped, becomes the most transparent of pretenses and is clearly intended to be seen as such” (110). As a result, the text loses critical interest because it lacks mystery in terms of what drives Nashe’s language and the puzzles that he presents to readers in other works.<sup>74</sup> More recently, Sivefors praises Nashe’s inventiveness in

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<sup>73</sup> Sivefors points to this oversight in criticism in the lack of emphasis on *Terrors* in two seminal studies of Nashe’s work in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century: Lorna Hutson’s *Thomas Nashe in Context* and Jonathan Crewe’s *Unredeemed Rhetoric* (“All This Tractate” 162 n.2).

<sup>74</sup> Hibbard argues that “*Terrors of the Night* is essentially a *jeu d’esprit*, a piece of deliberate book-making and a demonstration of literary skill in overcoming obvious difficulties” (112). In the end, as with much of his work, Hibbard views Nashe’s use of such rhetoric as a self-aware (and at times self-congratulatory) exploration of how far he could stretch the language.

*Terrors* but ultimately reads it as arguing a futile view that “challenges the idea of the literary text as a container of ethical values” because it presents a view of dreams as neither divinely inspired nor driven by the inconsequential excess of internal struggle (162).<sup>75</sup> While the text certainly troubles such a dichotomy, these authors fail to take Nashe at his own words for the purpose of these arguments. Either, in following Hibbard, Nashe stands against such moralizing work and thus presents the religious application in *Terrors* as a mock motive to be ridiculed or, following Sivefors, Nashe’s lack of “moralizing or expressions of belief in divine providence one finds in many similar texts at the time” shows that he has little interest in pursuing a similar goal in favor of an exploration of dream narratives and their use as a literary, but not religious, vehicle (162). Hibbard and Sivefors’s central disagreement over Nashe’s motive indicates the result of dismissing religious intention from the outset as these critics fail to consider how Nashe might use this opportunity to innovate from the expected dream model to accomplish a similar rhetorical goal as his other texts.<sup>76</sup> Nashe’s different approach to dreams leaves many critical arguments searching for a larger skepticism against Christian writing in Nashe’s time. Other perspectives require similar contemporary accounts to justify his inclusion within a larger

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<sup>75</sup> Sivefors argues that “mimicking the associative structure of dreams, *The Terrors of the Night* refutes both the idea of dream interpretation as morally valuable because dreams are divinely inspired, and the idea of dream interpretation as condemnable because dreams are mere insignificant by products” (162). Ultimately, Sivefors says that “the dreaming mind, then, is not so much amoral as premoral, a carnivalesque sphere where ethical judgements are set aside” (167). Because such inventiveness must be separated from religious didacticism, Sivefors overlooks the way that didacticism can be inventive in its own rite.

<sup>76</sup> Charles Nicholl provides a possible historical figure for Nashe’s “strange tale” in Robert Cotton who was “a scholar of huge repute and [...] lord of the considerable estates he inherited from his father” (148). Whether this is true, Nicholl follows the same dichotomy of spiritual and rational as Hibbard and others and finds that “in treating the causes of dreams as physiological and psychological, Nashe pursues a rationalist, rather than occultist, line. Dreams can result from bad diet, illness, discontent, noises in the night. They are mechanical by-products of everyday conscious life” (151).

Christian literary trend. However, a focus on the rhetorical features of the text itself alongside Nashe's apparent motive provides connecting points between his writing and his Christianity.<sup>77</sup>

In keeping with the dichotomy between the rational and spiritual, critics note some internal anxieties within Nashe that extend beyond the ordinary reflections on the lack of patrons or audience awareness that drives much of Nashe criticism. In passing, Nicholl notes that *Terrors* presents a path on "a different trail" than Nashe's form of urban journalism (153). He suggests that *Terrors* might be "a genuine nightmare of Nashe's: an insect dream; a malevolent swarming and smothering; [...] a nexus of disease, sex and sin" that would prompt internal regrets and fears of condemnation (153).<sup>78</sup> Sivefors also indicates how the text can be considered as a combination of reflections on the mind and its relationship to the body in terms of how an author views himself (166). While a narrative of dreams by definition invokes internal reflection, these critics tend to focus on the dynamics of market shifting and Nashe's understanding of and anxiety over his place in it. They lack a consideration of how such reflections are also devotionally inclined while also failing to consider how Nashe constructs the narrative with an outward focus on the audience. There are too many instances of dream interpretation and recommendations to conclude that the focus of the text is mostly inward.

Mauricio Martinez has recently addressed this focus on the audience with more depth by arguing that *Terrors* is the third in a series of texts starting with *Pierce* and moving through

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<sup>77</sup> Despite their disagreements on the amount of religious rhetoric, Sivefors largely agrees with Hibbard and argues that the pleasure of reading "transcends the notion of dream stories as a container of negative or positive values that affect the world. What counts, for reader and writer alike, is instead the writer's ability to associate further, to perform *ex tempore*, to combine new words in an unexpected way" (171). Praising ingenuity leaves behind how such inventiveness serves ethical and moral concerns as a part of religious concerns.

<sup>78</sup> Nicholl ultimately calls this time resulting in Nashe's "voluble fidgety temper bottled up," leading to "his inquisitive mind aggravated into neurotic self-doubt" (153).

*Christs Teares* that ultimately point to Nashe's exploration of subjectivity within the larger social connections through church and state obligations. Because of its inclusion of religious rhetoric in the overall assessment of this work, Martinez's argument requires more attention before addressing the specific place where it opens the door for more reflection on Nashe's approach. He argues that "Nashe's very status as a popular writer is linked to his ability to adapt the literature of devotion and some of its key themes—the conscience as an experience of presence, judgment, confinement, imprisonment, restlessness, terror and despair—into a lampooning critique of English society in the satirical mode" (47). Martinez's study focuses on Nashe's conscripting of popular language as reflective of the role of the press in promoting such work but finds the links between the self and "the conscience as a vital element of a nebulous and transitional conformity" more akin to the language of popular piety rather than motivating for salvific ends (68).<sup>79</sup> According to Martinez, Nashe uses the intensely personal experience of dreams to work through his own anxieties or to illustrate the shifting terminology of religious institutions.

However, Burke's rhetorical framework presents the opportunity for explaining how this text works to accomplish a salvific motive that takes the overt religious application of dreams at face value. Nashe accomplishes this goal through the unexpected movement of what Burke calls "conversion downwards" (*Attitudes* 43). Burke explains this concept as the movement in comedic texts to downplay the seriousness of a situation to make it much more manageable. Burke's poetic categories, as outlined in *Attitudes Toward History*, explain how epic texts present *acceptance* as a means of identification with a heroic character that the reader seeks to

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<sup>79</sup> Martinez argues that "If anything, the print marketplace of late-Elizabethan England provided Nashe with incentives to adopt the language of Calvinist piety that were strictly mercenary" (68).

emulate. Humor, Burke says, works in an opposite form to the heroic because “it takes up the slack of between the momentousness of the situation and the feebleness of those in the situation by *dwarfing the situation*. It converts downwards, as the heroic converts upwards” (43). The heroic texts work by magnifying a situation to present gravity and to inspire action, and humor works to downplay its significance and show that what might otherwise inspire fear and/or bravery is ultimately not so powerful. In *Terrors*, Nashe could trend toward the heroic in order to magnify the terrors that the dreamer faces into evil that must be conquered through the victorious outpouring of faith and deeds. However, *Terrors* consistently converts downward away from such notions by reminding the readers that their guilty consciences are the cause of their anxieties and that the fearful apparitions are feeble expansions of their minds. This is a different move than using humor as Burke describes, but conversion downwards does not necessarily require humor to operate. By shifting the focus to the readers, Nashe accomplishes what Burke describes as the motive of perspective by incongruity as a “positive cards-face-up-on-the-table [move] designed to ‘remoralize’ by accurately naming a situation already demoralized by inaccuracy” (*Attitudes* 309). In light of how far the situation has been demoralized by the way extended dream narratives have apparently turned, Nashe shifts the emphasis away from supernatural terrors and attempts to accurately name the sinful impulses that drive these apparitions. For his audience, the terror that they feel at night is not caused by grotesque devils or imaginative dreams but by their own consciences. Presenting the terrors in this light remoralizes the function of dreams and presses the audience to focus on their consciences and the redemptive work that must be done in the day.

If the imagery presents the terrors of the *Terrors* as not all that terrifying, then Burke's categorization of rhetorical elements shows how Nashe's explanations of dreams operate using perspective by incongruity. The dramatic pentad provides a framework for how the rhetoric of texts works via ratios between five terms: the act (what), the scene (where), the agent (who), the agency (how), and the purpose (why). Perspective by incongruity takes place when these relationships violate the social agreement that determines what is appropriate in a given relationship. The previous chapter presented perspective by incongruity as an explanation of Nashe's extension of violent judgment to prompt rhetorical division within his readers. However, if perspective by incongruity works through such violent extensions, then it can also work via opposite means by converting downward when the audience would expect such extensions. Perspective by incongruity operates against Burke's explanation of the piety of a situation—the collective expression of *what goes with what*. Monstrous and grotesque depictions of massive devils and demons along with demonstrations of their power to inspire fear would fit within the dreams that would be a part of *The Terrors of the Night*. However, *Terrors* upsets expectations by downplaying the impact of such dreams and reducing the impact of horrific images. Where a writer that invests so much in grotesque violence would be expected to invest heavily in magnified imagery to inspire fear, Nashe presents these terrors as ultimately limited in power, self-caused, and conquerable through faith.<sup>80</sup> This conversion downwards violates the pious view of the dream narrative as the rhetorical scene for imaginative expansion, and this incongruous

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<sup>80</sup> Hibbard reaches a similar conclusion but for a different motive. He argues that to some degree, "Nashe's general intention, as he informs Mistress Carey in the dedicatory epistle, is to show that the terrors of the night are foolish and idle fears. The work is meant as an attack on superstition and credulity" (113). Ultimately, Hibbard argues for Nashe's motive of entertainment based on "showmanship and style" (117) where the present argument does not separate such a motive from a religious reforming one, especially when Burke's idea of conversion downwards provides an explanation for how such an argument can work.

perspective prompts a similar motive for repentance as Nashe's other works. The dramatic pentad shows how the text works to accomplish this rhetorical goal as Nashe explains the different terrors that people face. He converts the agent downward in each situation to show his audience that what they fear in the horrifying images of the night are their own commonly occurring sins.

At the beginning of the narrative, Nashe sets up what would be an expected approach to a text exploring nightmares that seeks to prompt repentance in readers. He starts with an explanation of the night as a time when the devil is the most active in tormenting the people and bringing their sins to bear on their consciences. He says that "the Night is the Divells Blacke Booke, wherein hee recordeth all our transgressions" (345). The night, as the Burkean scene of such imagery, would fit with an expansion of terrifying images. He compares the person facing these torments to "a condemned man [who] is put into a darke dungeon, secluded from all comfort of light or companie," who "doth nothing but despairfully call to minde his gracelesse former life, and the brutish outrages and misdemeanours that have throwne him into that desolate horror" (345). The night presents a fearful rhetorical scene as "night in her rustie dungeon hath imprisoned our ey-sight, and that we are shut seperatly in our chambers from resort," and, "the divell [who] keepeth his audit in our sin-guilty consciences, no sense but surrenders to our memorie a true bill of parcels of his detestable impieties" (345). This audit leads to self-reflection where "the table of our heart is turned to an index of iniquities, and all our thoughts are nothing but texts to condemne us" (345). The devil appears as a prosecuting attorney ready to reflect the dreamer's self-condemning thoughts of judgment, and the night operates as the courtroom of the reader's soul.

This apparent judgment falls in line with the extended fear of the devil that would normally coincide with monstrous images, and here is the place where Nashe would be expected to amplify the language to depict similar violence in other texts. He argues that the dreamer stays anxious because “the only peace of minde that the divell hath is dispaire, wherefore wee that live in his nightly kingdome of darknes, must needs taste some disquiet” (346). This disquiet fits within what Burke explains as the violence of division, and in keeping with this presentation, Nashe says that he “will amplifie the ugly terrors of the night” (346). Violent dreams provide incongruous images as the normal paces of the day are extended to the point of distortion, causing the dreamer in Burke’s terms to divide from the actions and attitudes that have led to this imagery. In fitting with Nashe’s plan to amplify, the rhetorical purpose of repentance through terror seems clear.

However, as he moves from this setup and into his explication of the terrors, Nashe shifts expectations to incongruous ends by downplaying the power and authority of the devil in a scene where he would likely appear monstrous. He continues the explanation of the devil as embracing the terror of his role, for “in the day he may smoothly in some mild shape insinuate, but in the night he takes upon him like a tyrant” (347). Yet, despite this role, Nashe immediately explains that the devil’s shape does not carry the fear that he desires. Nashe explains, “all that ever he can scare us with, are but *Seleucus* ayrie Castles, terrible bug-beare brags, and nought else, which with the least thought of faith are quite vanished and put to flight” (348). In the moments when readers might fear a mighty tyrant with the powers of evil at his disposal, Nashe argues that only a little faith will extinguish such fears. He adds that the devil comes “in the name of sin, and as Gods executioner” and “will imitate the voyces of Gods vengeance, to bring us like birds into the

net of eternall damnation” (348). Whatever image that the devil might inspire is already wrapped in the language of God’s sovereignty and judgment. In pentadic terms, by shifting the agent from the terrifying appearance that the devil could have to a weaker representation, Nashe establishes this text as a different approach than a dream narrative that would prompt terror. Instead of the image that might inspire fear and that would be an expected part of the devil as hugely powerful in judgment, Nashe forces the readers to consider God’s sovereign control over the devil. He later says that “Senior Sathan when he was a yong stripling, and had not yet gotten perfect audacitie to set upon us in the day time, was a sly Polititian in dreams; but those dayes are gone with him, and now that he is thoroughly steeled in his scutcherie, hee playes above-board boldly, & sweeps more stakes than ever he did before” (368). By connecting the work in the night with Satan’s work in the day, Nashe shows his readers that their temptations are not fantastical and the solutions to the fear they cause must be addressed in the same way that open sinfulness is addressed. Since Satan works within the sovereign power of God, people should look to what is present in the day to address these pains at night.

Nashe continues this downward conversion of supernatural beings by discussing the elemental spirits that the readers may envision. The profound characteristic of these demons, despite what could be explained as great power, is the fact that they are so small that “infinite millions of them wil hang swarming about a worm-eaten nose” (349). Nashe nests this description within others that argue for both the ubiquity of these demons but also their lack of significant size, filling spaces in what David Landreth calls their “pervasive plentitude” (152).<sup>81</sup> Nashe does not address their power other than the potential to drive people mad in the same way

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<sup>81</sup> Landreth views this text in the context of *Pierce Penniless* as an indication of Nashe’s fascination with lack. *Terrors* only occupies a small emphasis within his argument because of the depiction of the size of the demons.

a worm might impact a dog through sheer volume. This is not an insignificant fear, but the size of the demons presents them as frustrating creatures rather than overpowering monsters, and Nashe uses this description of size as a conversion downwards from terrifying to annoying to shift the agent of the dream from something that causes terror to something easily referenced in the daytime world.

These spirits are not unique in an ethereal spiritual world but manifestations of the sinfulness the readers see around them. Nashe moves from explaining their minute size to linking the elemental demons of fire, water, air, and earth with historical people and ideological antecedents. With these examples, he proves the connection between the physical and the spiritual while also preventing the demons from holding too much emphasis in terror. As opposed to fear of an external being, this conversion downwards of elemental demons prompts reflection on internal sin in specific impulses, or, in Burkean terminology, purposes. Nashe begins with the spirits of fire that are perhaps the most fearful given the Biblical association of fire with the final judgment. Ultimately, instead of fearful blazes and burning images, Nashe links the spirits of fire to pride in a person's knowledge. He says that "the spirits of fire which are the purest and perfectest, are merry, pleasant, and well inclined to wit, but nevertheless gyddie and unconstant" (351). These spirits do not seem intimidating but rather approachable. Most commonly, readers will see them in prideful pursuits, as "those whome they possesse, they cause to excell in what ever they undertake" (351). These demons appear in Greek philosophy and Islamic belief, and Nashe says that "a man that will entertaine them must not pollute his bodie with any grosse carnall copulation or inordinate beastly desires, but love pure beauty, pure vertue, and not have his affections [...] intermingled with lust and things worthy of liking" (351).

Readers would rightly ask why such a description belongs to the demonic spirits of fire, since these actions seem so virtuous, but Nashe adds that those possessed by the spirits of fire “bee by nature ambitious, haughty, and proud, [and do not] love virtue for itself any whit [...] because they would overquell and outstrip others with the vaine glorious ostentation of it” (351). The real plague of these elemental demons of fire is “a humor of monarchizing” the concepts of virtue and knowledge, and “Many Atheists are with these spirits inhabited” (351-2). Despite would could be terrorizing apparitions, the elemental fire demons appear in the presence of prideful actions that look virtuous on the outside. In the end, Nashe stretches the description of a fire demon from one that should be feared to one that could be seen regularly among the readers. By linking the movements of philosophy and atheism to these spirits, Nashe changes the view of the Burkean agent from fire spirits to the people’s prideful drive to accomplish acts that only appear virtuous. Given what the readers might see, such hypocrisy should cause alarm even without immediate fear and would force the readers to consider in what ways they might be showing this same kind of pride that uses the mask of virtue but does not seek its substance.

Nashe also addresses the spirits of water, earth, and the air to cover all of the base elements, but these descriptions further heighten the sinful motivations of the people instead of the power of the demons. He says that these spirits “are dull flegmaticke drones, things that have much mallice without anie great might” and categorizes them in terms of the people who practice sinful behavior (352). It is the “drunkards, mizers, and women” who face “all rheumes, poses, Sciaticaes, dropsies, and gouts” that represent the influence of water spirits. Earthen spirits are those who “love gold and a buttond cap above heaven” and include witches, soldiers, merchants, and anyone else willing to pursue money as the ultimate goal. In addressing the belief that

witches “kill kyne” with these spirits, Nashe could argue for a greater significance, but he ultimately says that “the giants and chiefetaines of those spirites, are powrfull sometimes to bring men to their ends, but not a jot of good can they doo for their lives” (352). Even at the ultimate sign of power, which is causing death, Nashe argues that only the most powerful are able to accomplish such a task and implies that his readers should not fear them. The spirits of the air might inspire fear because of their mysterious lack of physical substance, but they in turn also reflect an internal motivation that Nashe would like to prompt. He says that the air spirits “are in truth all show and no substance, deluders of our imagination, & nought els” (353). These demons drive any person who favors appearance over substance: knights who are cowardly despite reputations of valor and politicians who “privily incite to bleare the worlds eyes with clowdes of common wealth pretences, to broach any enmitie or ambitious humor of their owne under a title of their cuntries preservation” (353). Nashe converts the terror downward by describing these spirits in terms of people who should receive criticism from the community. Thus, any experience with these elemental spirits indicates an attachment to various sinful motivations. The terror is not some ethereal water spirit but drunkenness, and the same logic could apply to all of these demons. Nashe changes the agent to argue that if the reader feels persecuted by a particular spirit, he should look to himself to address the cause.

After this extended discourse on the elemental demons, it seems that Nashe will then begin discussing their grotesque appearance as terrors that people experience at night, but he writes these descriptions off as flights of fancy caused by the readers’ guilt instead of the power of the devil and his servants. These actions overflow from the mind, and Nashe argues that the nighttime is the most prevalent for demons and that the mind is their ultimate battle ground.

Thus, the night becomes the rhetorical scene according to Burke's pentad, and even Nashe's title indicates the incongruous moves he plans to make by redefining the nighttime's power as reflective of the less terrifying day. He continues the focus on the people's responsibility for their fears, or as the Burkean agents of their terror, rather than associating a cause with the demons. He calls the text the *Terrors of the Night*, and yet argues that such terrors mostly indicate the people's attachment to these worldly ideals. He does not minimize the spiritual aspect of the battle as though these images are mere figments; rather, he seeks the correct remedy by calling something what it actually is, or to put the cards face up on the table, so that it may be managed. Shifting the agent of these terrors to the people themselves allows Nashe to show that his readers can address the truth of their sinfulness rather than the fear of the supernatural images. He says that the spirits of the earth and water are more prevalent at night, and "engender thereof many uncouth terrible monsters" (353). However, these monsters are brought on by "the grossest part of our blood [which,] is the melancholy humor [...] still thickening as it stands still [and] engendereth many mishapen objects in our imaginations" (354). These misshaped objects take on what readers might expect to be a part of dream narratives, but Nashe attributes this to a largely physical phenomenon: "so from the fuming melancholly of our spleene mounteth that hot matter into the higher Region of the braine, whereof manie fearfull visions are framed" (354). This movement results in the self-yielding of reason "to be mocked and trodden under foote by everie false object or counterfet noyse that comes neere it" resulting in the organs in the seat of reason "by some misdiet or misgovernment being distempered, fail in their report, and deliver up nothing but lyes and fables" (354). Nashe anatomizes the source of the people's dreams and shows them that their fears of powerful elemental spirits are brought on by the people

themselves, who are the agents of their own anxieties. The movement of incongruity by shifting the agent from the demonic to the people themselves forces the readers to address the fact that they are deceived. However, in this case, the demon does not deceive them as much as they are deceived by the melancholy nature of their soul, represented in the spleen. By converting the terrors of the nighttime downward to physical, self-caused fears, Nashe shifts the focus to the readers' own minds and emotions that have been distracted by the terrors of supernatural beings.

The narrative continues by moving the discussion from the incongruous agents (people as their own worst enemies) to the dreams themselves as overflowing from the people's fears that must be addressed by faith. In Burkean terms, Nashe begins focusing on the act now that the agent and scene have been accurately named by incongruity. He says that "a dreame is nothing els but a bubling scum or froath of the fancie, which the day hath left undigested; or an after feast made of the fragments of idle imaginations" (355). Later, he says that "our dreams (the Ecchoes of the day) borrow of anie noyse we heare in the night" (356). The text returns to the language of surgery to explain the rhetorical effect of dreams. Nashe says that at night "are our thoughts troubled & vexed when they are retyred from labor to ease, and from skirmishing to surgery" (355-356). The trope of surgery indicates the type of healing work that should be done during sleep, but it is a passive movement instead of an active battle. Such surgery leads to pain, and Nashe suggests that "you must give a wounded man leave to grone while he is in dressing: Dreaming is no other than groaning, while in sleepe our surgeon hath us in cure" (356). Like Nashe's use of violence in other texts, the groans made at night indicate the dividing work that dreams are accomplishing by prompting the surgical removal of interior vice. Later, Nashe argues that "Phisitions by dreames may better discern the distemperature of their pale clients,

than by either urine or ordure” (368). By connecting the terrors of the night to the cleansing work of surgery, Nashe shows that the fear that the dreamers experience should press the readers into asking what in their lives prompts this fear and then seek to remedy the problem. Despite the pain they cause, however, Nashe argues that dreams are an extension of the fears that people experience during the day. He explains that “in our sleepe wee are agasted and terrified with the disordered skirmishing and conflicting of our sensitive faculties: yet with this terror and agastment cannot wee rest our selves satisfiede, but we must pursue and hunt after a further feare [that] in the recordation and too busie examining our paines over passed” (373). Further, he summarizes this argument in saying, “dreames in my minde if they have anie premonstrances in them, the preparative feare of that they so premonstrate and denounce, is far worse than the mischief it selfe by them denounced and premonstrated” (373). Rather than presenting an argument for fear and the subsequent response, Nashe forces his readers back to what is known and can be addressed. He converts fears of the future downwards by arguing that such anxiety produces far worse results than reality, and such a move presses the readers toward reflection on the actual cause of fear that can be managed.

Nashe further addresses the exalted role that those who claim to understand the inspiration of dreams claim. He challenges this role to prove that these people are charlatans as the focus of the *Terrors* moves away from the substance of dreams to focus on another rhetorical agents of people’s harm: those who would abuse the people who suffer from these terrors. Prophecy, in this sense, would be the prediction of the future (as opposed to speaking of a coming judgment), and Nashe argues that there are those who feign inspiration to take advantage of gullible people already prone to fear. He links fears of pending judgment to “Sathans tricke in

the old world of gentillisme to bring to passe all his blind Prophecies” (362). By connecting these fears to the already weakened Satan, Nashe shows that they are unwarranted. He anticipates that some will point to Biblical and historical antecedents of dreams coming true, but he argues that these were divine visions and different in substance than the nighttime visions he addresses. For others given positions based on their prophetic capabilities in predicting treason, Nashe accuses these prophets of playing both sides, since “how ever the world went it was a good pollicie for them to save their heades by the shift, for if the treasons chaunst afterwards came to light, it would not be suspected they were practisers in them, in so much as they revealed them” (363). These fake prophets know of a pending treason and set themselves to survive no matter which side wins. Such prophets are not blessed with divine gifts but are “men which have had some little sprinkling of Grammer learning in their youth” or limited experience in medicine and find predicting the future to be a means of making money because they could find no other work while knowing that they are incapable of the powers that they presume (363-364). They play a rhetorical game as though they are always withholding information, and “they will evermore talke doubtfully, as if there were more in them than they meant to make publique, or was appliable to everie common mans capacitie: when God bee their rightfull judge, they utter all they know and a great deale more” (364). The prophetic dreamer represents a role that Nashe’s readers would respect, especially given the historical and Biblical records. However, he shifts the seat of power away from these people in order to show that the means of prophecy, which Burke describes as the agency by which an agent accomplishes an act, is not a spiritual gift but the abuse of a quick wit in the wrong hands. Like the demons and the dreams, these interpreters are not nearly as significant as the people themselves. In this case, Nashe’s rhetoric

works to challenge the exalted position that some readers may ascribe to such seers in order to help them focus on their own sins.

As Nashe moves toward the closing of his work, he furthers the demystification of dreams but returns to the grotesque language to show that his readers' pain is self-caused. Because the people are the agents of their own pain, the separation from their attachments requires the same rhetorical division as the violence of bloodshed. Nashe describes the man that focuses on his own prosperity as "this poore piteous perplexed miscreant" who "either finallie despaires or like a lanke frost-bitten plant looseth hys vigor or spirit by little and little; anie terror, the least illusion in the earth is a *Cacodaemon* to him" (376). The result leads to Nashe's ultimate rhetorical goal, for "excessive joy no lesse hath his defective and joylesse operations, the spleene into water it melteth; so that except it be some momentarie bubbles of mirth, nothing it yeelds but a cloying surfet of repentance" (377). This person represents Nashe's audience inasmuch as their sinful intentions reflect in the terrors of dreams. Here the text is the most openly didactic in arguing that "there are no true apparitions or prodigies, but to shew how easily we may be flouted if we take not great heed, with our own anticke dispositions" (378). As he finally incorporates some measure of terror, Nashe argues that the demonic group is merely imaginative in order to convert its significance downwards in order to help people see that their fear of dreams, apparitions, and prophetic fulfillments are extensions of themselves and should be thus addressed through the normal means of repentance. Nashe avoids downplaying the dreamers' fear but shifts their focus to themselves as the agents of their terror in hoping that these descriptions will prompt them to fear their pride and its manifestations.

Before closing the text, Nashe provides an example by which the audience can participate in the rhetoric of identification. Presenting a model for the readers with some known connections to interpretation would help him illustrate his point, especially as he provides a model of the standard view of visions and then changes the ending to prove his point to his audience through perspective by incongruity. He applies his argument with a narration of “a Gentleman of good worship and credit falling sick,” where “the verie second day of his lying downe, hee pretended to have miraculous waking visions” (378). As he recounts the various visions, Nashe downplays each one of their impacts. The man faces the fear of being caught in nets and hooks that surround his rooms, rebuffs the appeals of sailors to join their drinking, and the attempt of the devil to snare him with “all the rich treasure [...] or anie further wealth hee would desire” (379). He also declines the advances of “an inveigling troupe of naked Virgins” before being visited by a group of matrons who offered to pray for him (379-380). He witnesses “a cleare light” and is visited by “a Knight of great honour thereabouts” who offers him a drink, and he sees “all the fore-named Enterluders at one hand over head leap, plunge, & drowne themselves in puddles and ditches hard by” (381). The man feels at ease given these visions, and the congruous ending would have him then experience a miraculous healing based on these dreams. However, Nashe writes, “but long it lasted not with him, for within foure howers after, having not fully settled his estate in order, hee grewe to trifling dotage, and raving dyde within two daies following” (381-382). Nashe gives the readers what would appear to be the obvious application and then shifts the outcome to press his readers to his point: they should set their affairs in order instead of focusing on the whimsical and difficult nature of dreams as an indicator of the future. Thus, Nashe presents the people as the ultimate pentadic agents of the overextended attachment to

supernatural influences in their dreams. He presses them to reflection on the act of interpretation to show that beliefs in dream interpretation lead them astray from their present need for reform.

As though aware of his reputation for embellishment, Nashe closes the text with an afterward to secure his preferred application. He says that the text is ultimately a proclamation of truth “since Truth is ever drawne and painted naked, and I have lent her but a leathren patcht cloake at most to keepe her from the cold: that is, that she come not off too lamely and coldly” (382). Even Nashe seems to argue that his work lacks any creative expression in favor of presenting the truth. The means are just enough to help people see what they should already know. In case there are doubts about his ultimate motive in constructing the text in such a way, the text ends with a didactic and ultimately pedantic argument against the sins of the people in pressing them to renounce their unrighteous ways. He closes his challenge by saying “thus I shut up my Treatise abruptly, that hee who in the daye doth not good workes inough to answer the objections of the night, will hardly aunswere at the daye of judgement” (386). Ultimately, instead of the expected explanations of terrors, Nashe ends with a summarizing and largely uncreative statement. This, perhaps, is the reason why this text, despite the appearance of such an audacious title, ultimately presents little in terms of creative connections. The conversion downwards of the nightmare visions might lead the people to their repentance, but this approach takes away from the fantastical imaginative exploration of Nashe’s other works.

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It is this ever-present inventiveness that makes Nashe’s work both fascinating and imminently frustrating for attempts to understand such a mercurial writer who presses the boundaries of appropriateness, even when such a movement requires a shift from fantastical

elements to more ordinary application. Overall, this dissertation seeks to establish several of Nashe's texts within a larger exploration of the incongruous extensions of various ways narrative positions and words operate for the ultimate end of Christian reform. In closing, it seems reasonable to ask why such inventiveness, even without the Christian emphasis of this study, has left Nashe largely under-appreciated in comparison with other writers from this period including William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and Christopher Marlowe. In the most recent book-length collection of Nashe criticism, *The Age of Thomas Nashe*, a survey found that even professors who appreciate Nashe's texts often do not include his work in their surveys and seminars.<sup>82</sup> This is especially true in broad literature surveys where Nashe simply does not hold the same position as these other prolific authors. Nashe's work simply does not have the same historical significance, but this study also indicates another reason why Nashe does not carry the same weight as other authors. Investment in drastically upsetting expectations, which is a working definition of Burkean perspective by incongruity, ultimately risks the alienation of various audiences where the casuistic stretching could lead to a *casuistic break*, or the place where the rhetoric extends too far for identification with the author's perspective.<sup>83</sup> Reading criticism of Nashe from his time and in modern studies reveals that readers often see his some of his work as inappropriate and borderline nonsensical. In addition, Nashe moves so quickly between incongruent voices that no critic could argue that he ever quite affirms any particular reading that

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<sup>82</sup> Chapter nine and the appendices of *The Age of Thomas Nashe* include the survey questions and results from 30 participants. Despite the passion of the participants for Nashe, only one of the participants teaches his work every semester and only five teach his work once a year (172). While this inclusion rate mirrors many other writers during this time, it also illustrates the amount of explanatory work that must go into teaching Nashe as a part of an English literature class.

<sup>83</sup> Burke does not include this term in his discussion of casuistic stretching, but it is a reasonable logical extension of his explanation for when the rhetoric may move out of the author's control.

would categorize his work. To teach his work as a part of a survey would require an extended amount of explanation of historical background, textual production, and the relationship between an author and his text—not to mention attempting to explain the narratives of the texts themselves.

Bringing rhetorical studies to an author like Nashe opens the opportunity for reading such difficult work through a new and illuminating lens. Burke's extensive framework, though written 300 years after Nashe's death, provides the means of connecting what appear to be the disparate pieces of Nashe's religious commitments and his transgressive literature. The weakened author gains an authoritative voice, and Nashe can write a reform-seeking Christian argument in a letter to the devil when viewed through perspective by incongruity. Burke's studies also provide the means for developing this interpretation with his explanations of common assumptions that often need definition but lack an appropriate framework. Most people would understand the connection between a preacher and Christian rhetoric, but by defining such collective senses of "what properly goes with what," in a term like piety provides a concept that can then be viewed from how an author seeks to shift these definitions. Nashe's impious moves make sense because Burke's terminology helps explain the rhetorical piety regarding reforming rhetoric, authorial positions, and appropriate imagery held by Nashe's culture along with how he challenges these standards. In addition, the Burkean pentad provides a framework for understanding the mechanics of how Nashe's rhetoric works to accomplish his reforming motive.

This study approaches a few of the cornerstones of Burke's rhetoric, but there remains a large amount of material to be considered. Nashe can help in this regard for scholars and teachers that focus on rhetorical studies. Such pursuits might become overly theoretical without

connection to a practical example. Burke provides these examples in literary and historical references but including a writer like Nashe who embraces what Burke would eventually codify in these terms as a means of study would provide further application of his rhetorical theory. Viewing Nashe through the lens of Burkean rhetoric provides some measure of understanding this author and, by extension, other writers that remain notoriously difficult to comprehend. Nashe and Burke present an opportunity for cross-pollination between the fields of literary and rhetorical studies. Such a connection also opens doors to religious studies as well, and these potential relationships inevitably argue for scholarship and teaching that avoids overly narrow pursuits in favor of connections between texts, students, teachers, scholars, and even departments. This dissertation represents a move in this direction.

At the same time, despite their value for reading one another, Burke and Nashe are significantly different writers, and the connection between them should not be pressed so far as to say that Nashe is a proto-Burkean or that Burke would find an example of his own motives taking place in Nashe's work. As the present argument shows, Nashe is too conclusive in his arguments for a return to the authority and practice of the English church to be seen as in authentic pursuit of Burkean ideals like the "Human Barnyard." The consistent movement of incongruity without ultimate ends would seemingly place Nashe in the category of Burke's ideal artist. Nashe uses the tools of the role Burke refers to in *Counter-Statement* as "the artist" that, "insofar as he is exposed to the whole of the contemporary situation, will budge, rather than flatter, his audience" (109). However, unlike Nashe, Burke's artist "is not generally concerned with specific political issues. He usually deals with the attitudes, the emphases, in which the choice of some one political or economic policy is implicit, but he need not – as artist – follow

the matter through to the full extent” (113). Despite the apparent application of this concept to Nashe, for the 16th century writer, there is no dichotomy between specific political and economic issues from attitudes and impulses. The political and the religious issues are wrapped together with intentions and need not only be implied.

Thus, despite the clear connection between Burke’s discussion of identification with consubstantiality, the latter term does not work well in describing Nashe’s motive. Nashe pursues an agreement with his own perspective at the expense of the readers’ original beliefs, no matter how deeply held. Such conviction also excludes the term transcendence from the discussion of perspective by incongruity though Burke deliberately ties these terms together. Burke defines transcendence as when two opposite views adopt “another point of view from which they cease to be opposites” (*Attitudes* 336). Viewing Burke through the key terms of the artist, consubstantiality, and transcendence reveals his movements toward a larger permissive understanding of human interaction where rhetoric holds the key in finding common ground so that both parties might leave prior commitments behind for a compromising view that both includes key aspects of each person’s character while in pursuit of a greater collective idea. In other words, Burke’s work seeks clarity of understanding each person’s perspective as he or she collectively moves toward agreement with differing views. Such a world does not exist for Nashe as he draws clearer lines between what he deems as right and wrong. He does not seek a clear understanding of his readers; he assumes their sinfulness and seeks to divide them from the motivations that have led them to this point. As a result, while understanding the value of reading Nashe through Burke (or vice versa), readers must avoid making overt connections that cannot hold. Ultimately, these gaps indicate tremendous opportunities for exploring the historically and

culturally different views on the role of literature and rhetoric. These authors provide profound foils for the other's ideas and more time spent within these differences would provide fruitful study about the role of rhetoric and literature in various literary, rhetorical, historical, and religious contexts.

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## Vita

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