

The State Of England's Camp

Courtesans, curses, and the violence of style in *The Unfortunate Traveller*

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Thomas Nashe's mystifying *The Unfortunate Traveller* offers few clues to explain its fundamental purpose, its grotesque depictions of violence, its outrageous rhetoric, or its relationship to forms of linguistic, literary, and social authority. While this text begins amidst Henry VIII's conquests, one soon realizes that 'the state of England's camp' in Nashe's early modernity pertains both to the military encampment and to incidences of outrageous, ironic theatrical citation that occur within those encampments and that are now associated with the term 'camp.' As Jack Wilton strays from the dangerous pranks of England's camps to the degenerate pleasures of Italy, his textual performance oscillates between dissembling, feminine persuasion, associated with the courtesan (who was, for Nashe, a figure of the writer) and brutal, unforgiving masculine force, associated with the vengeful curses of the blasphemer. Nashe's prose explores degraded forms of orality (speaking, tasting, and eating) with a theatrical morbidity that reveals the subject of *The Unfortunate Traveller* to be the development of a style to balance the limitless violence of rhetorical assertion with the effeminizing effects of commercial publication. As Nashe's parodic compensations for the lived contradictions of gender, commerce, and writing backfire spectacularly, the style and subject of *The Unfortunate Traveller* truly emerge.

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In the introduction to his 1960 edition of *The Unfortunate Traveller*, John Berryman observes, '[a] prose work will not live for its style alone' (15). But in attempting to account for the strange longevity of the works of Thomas Nashe, Berryman became one of numerous critics to turn to style to address what Jonathan Crewe refers to as the 'Nashe problem.' Crewe begins his study of Nashe, *Unredeemed Rhetoric* (1982), by taking 'the Nashe problem' as a given, which provides some index of the extent to which the study of Nashe has been defined by an apparent inscrutability of style. G. R. Hibbard finds Nashe 'not a writer who lends himself easily to the elaboration of a thesis. His work does not fall naturally into kinds, nor does it admit of any neat arrangement under topics' (xi). Steven Mentz has referred to Nashe as 'among the least classifiable of Elizabethan writers' (339). Both Hibbard and Mentz hearken back to C. S. Lewis's assertion that Nashe provides us with an example of pure style. That is, 'literature which is, as nearly as possible, without a subject' (quoted in Crewe 6). Thus another way of understanding Lewis's assertion would be to insist that style *is* Nashe's subject. For though a prose work may not live for its style alone, what is central to Nashe is violent stylization, which occurs at the level of the sentence, where odd but compelling syntax, inspired colloquialisms, crude epithets, and bizarre juxtapositions coexist with moments of astonishing rhetorical splendor. But Nashe's habitual style also creates the radically unstable tones, attitudes, and plot sequences of his prose works. Why indeed does *The Unfortunate Traveller* begin like a picaresque narrative *cum* jest-book full of apparently frivolous jokes and end with nauseatingly graphic scenes of torture and execution?

Critics have explained Nashe's violence in a variety of ways. Berryman sees *The Unfortunate Traveller* as an attempt 'to wrench prose out of euphuism and romance' (7). Hibbard explains Nashe's wild style with reference to the development of early modern prose, remarking that '[w]riters became conscious of the dangers of overwriting in the very process of doing it; excess and critical exposure of the absurdities it could lead to flourished side by side' (147). While others explain Nashe's oddities as a function of the demands of commercial writing or the development of an early journalistic style (Rhodes), Charles Nicholl finds Nashe to be the source of the oddities in works that demonstrate 'an almost unwholesome mental profusion and momentum' and 'an imagination momentarily unhinged, jolted into over-reaction' (4). The style Nicholl critiques as idiosyncratic perversion Neil Rhodes explains as an interest in an intense and grotesque corporeality of material experience. Mihoko Suzuki sees Nashe's oddities as a response to a historical crisis in linguistic and social authority, while Ann Rosalind Jones celebrates Nashe's penchant for polyvocality and demystification and Margaret Ferguson locates an attempt by the human maker to usurp the divine creator. Lorna Hutson finds Nashe's writing to be 'a parodic medium of dozens of public voices' (1) as a response to being required to write rhetorically effective, morally profitable prose in a culture of state-sponsored repression and censorship.

The medium *is* the message for Nashe and here I will explore another way of understanding what Hutson refers to as Nashe's 'insistent foregrounding of the writing process' (1). The struggle to identify even the subjects, no less the attitudes, of Nashe's prose resonates powerfully with the attempt to define the queer style known as camp. Indeed, were one to quote authors describing 'representational excess, heterogeneity, and *gratuitousness* of reference' (Cleto 3) or 'incongruous juxtapositions,' 'theatricality,' and a complex 'system of humor' (Newton 102), would it be clear if they referred to Nashe's style or to camp? What about 'themelessness, verbal

excess, nullity, marginality, scandalousness, and sinister encroachment?' (Crewe 5). Debates on the nature of a camp have been, as Susan Sontag argues in her (to some) controversial 'Notes on Camp,' notoriously inconclusive for, as she argues, '[a] sensibility (as opposed to an idea) is one of the hardest things to talk about' (275). Although Sontag indicates that in telling the history of a sensibility organized around extreme stylization, artifice, and exaggeration, one might look to the late seventeenth-century, she traces 'a pocket history' of camp back to earlier styles and figures, including 'Euphuism (Lyly, etc.)' (280). More accurately, we might see Lyly's earnest Euphuism as a spur to Nashe's performances, making Nashe a parodic progenitor of style at the height of an early modern English struggle for self-fashioning in (and of) prose.

Regardless of when one starts the clock of 'camp' history – and without attempting to trace an exhaustive definition or history of camp and its critical uses – two particular features of camp style remain useful for discussing the peculiarities of *The Unfortunate Traveller*: (a) its penchant for citing, dramatizing, and hyper-stylizing gender roles (either to exaggerate forms of masculinity or femininity or to emphasize a certain indeterminacy of gender) and (b) the sometimes morbid deployment of cultural obsolescence in the interests of investigating notions of style and taste. On this latter subject, Andrew Ross refers to both a 'revivalist nostalgia' and a 'necrophiliac economy' when describing 'the camp effect,' which is 'created ... when the products ... of a much earlier mode of production, which has lost its power to produce and dominate cultural meanings, become available, in the present, for redefinition according to contemporary codes of taste' (58). Whether concerned with gender, obsolescence, or both, camp is a citational practice, a way of quoting traditional social codes as a means of examining, subverting, and revising them. Ross's emphasis on 'codes of taste' proves especially useful in early modern prose where the collision of erotic, culinary, and linguistic forms of orality makes use of the manifold meanings of 'taste.'¹

While no direct historical connection may bridge the emergence of the term 'camp' ('se camper') in Theophile Gautier's 1863 novel *Capitaine Fracasse* and Nashe's 1594 *The Unfortunate Traveller*, the two do share a military context. Gautier, Mark Booth argues, draws on the military association of a camp and uses *se camper* to mean 'to present oneself in an expansive but flimsy manner (like a tent) with overtones of theatricality, vanity, dressiness, and provocation' (Booth, 75). Nashe's odd opus opens more like a jest-book than anything else and it does so in the midst of Henry VIII's continental encampment. One soon realizes that 'the state of camp' in Nashe's early modernity has as much to do with the logistics of military encampment as with outrageous satire and theatrical hyper-stylization. Jack Wilton strays from the dangerous pranks of England's camps to the degenerate pleasures of Italy and back, and his peregrinations expose Nashe's attempt to define what it means for an English man to write in English prose at the turn of the seventeenth century.

Wilton and Nashe's wild textual performances are structured by an unstable set of coordinates determined by interlocking tensions between feminine and masculine gender positions, oral and written modes of signification, and postures of aggression and victimization. Jonathan Dollimore defines camp as a style that 'negotiates some of the lived contradictions of subordination, simultaneously refashioning as a weapon of attack an oppressive identity inherited *as* subordination, and hollowing out dominant formations responsible for that identity in the first instance' (224–5). Nashe's hollowing out of the formations of English masculinity and English

prose of his time produces a particular dilemma, the lived contradictions of which play out in *The Unfortunate Traveller*. The compromising economics of print culture, which renders writers whores, evokes a nostalgic and sometimes morbid return to what Walter Ong has referred to as the particular oral residue of Tudor culture. Rather than bolstering authorial masculinity, that orality, which appears in references to speaking, tasting, and eating, becomes consistently associated with improper sexual gestures and unconventional gender positions, thus proving subject to an alternation between hyper-masculine and hyper-feminine postures that produces the violence of style and plot we recognize as uniquely 'Nashe.' *The Unfortunate Traveller* produces writerly figures arranged between dissembling persuasion (associated with the eroticized and effeminate orality of panders and whores) and forceful assertion (associated with the virility of Aretino or blasphemers such as Esdras and Cutwolfe). What I argue here is that Nashe's style *is* the key to his subject and that we must read that style as an early modern camp theatricality that spawns violence in *The Unfortunate Traveller* as its compensations for the 'lived contradictions' of early modern gender, commerce, and writing backfire spectacularly.

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Nashe tells us, in the manner of a jest, that writers really might be whores. In *Have With You to Saffron-Waldron* (1596), a final riposte in his feud with Gabriel Harvey, he addresses the charge of being 'newfangled and idle, and prostituting my pen like a Curtizan' saying 'neither will I deny it nor will I grant it; onely thus farre Ile go with you, that twise or thrise in a month, when ... the bottome of my purse is turned downward, & and my conduit of incke will no longer flowe for want of reparations, I am faine to ... follow some of these new-fangled *Galiardos* and *Senior Fantasticos*, to whose amorous *Villanellas* and *Quipassas* I prostitute my pen in hope of gaine' (*Works*, 3:30–31). Nashe's punning admission makes him a courtesan prostituting his pen while implicitly dismissing *The Unfortunate Traveller* as an attempt to cash in on the early modern vogue for popular romance. The very language of the passage suggests the way in which money enables literary and sexual performance; it affirms the phallic power of the pen just as it deflates masculine self-assertion by recognizing the writer's whorish dependency on money. Yet as is always the case with Nashe, a joke is never just a joke. If Nashe raises the specter of the whore to disarm the charge of writerly prostitution, the jests that open *The Unfortunate Traveller* point to a mosaic of anxieties about gender, commerce, and writing. If, as the preface to the work jokingly insists, '[p]rinters are mad whoresons' (253), what, indeed, are writers?2

The opening of *The Unfortunate Traveller* no less insistently answers that question in its consistent juxtaposition of writer and whores. 'Bee it knowen,' Jack Wilton announces, 'to as many as will paie mony inough to peruse my storie, that I followed the court or the camp, or the campe and the court, when *Turwin* lost her maidenhead, and opened her gates to more than Jane Trosse did' (254). Wilton positions himself as one of the court and camp who deprive towns of their 'maidenhead,' opening the gates of those such as Jane Trosse who, though historically unidentified, perches precariously at the end of the sentence in the posture of a whore. Yet the reader is one who pays money to peruse Wilton's stories like the very same goods Jane Trosse seems to have given up. *The Unfortunate Traveller* and the jests that structure its opening foreground compromising sexual, economic, and rhetorical situations, situations in which Jack Wilton's efforts to get the better of merchants, captains, and clerks are marked by increasing

anxiety as an attempt at masculine but persuasive oral rhetoric comes to be increasingly marked by improper erotic bonds between men and writing comes to be increasingly associated with improper and extreme gender positions.

While the first of Jack Wilton's jests highlights the subversive power of rhetoric, it also highlights a compromising eroticism associated with persuasion as manifest in an unstable economy of bodily fluids. Wilton's proof of his status as an 'ingenious infant' involves a jest directed at a cider merchant, 'the man,' Wilton argues, he 'chose out to damn with a lewd moneyless device' (256). Wilton convinces the cider merchant who services the needs of Henry's troops that he is suspected of being a spy and traitor to his king. Wilton drags out the jest through multiple mugs of cider and repeated protestations of affection, speaking 'at his earnest importunity, after I had moistened my lips to make my lie run glib to his journey's end' (257). Wilton whets his whistle at no cost to himself, thus making the glib lie of this 'lewd moneyless device' run smoothly. But the lewd, both false and (sexually) vulgar, device begins to evoke a more licentious flavor as the cider merchant begs for Wilton's tale: 'over my neck he throws himself very lubberly, and entreated me, as I was a proper young gentleman and ever looked for pleasure at his hands' (258). In his appeal for Wilton's mercy, the cider merchant falls to his knees, wrings his hands, and, Wilton tells us, 'wept out all the cider that he had drunk in a week before' before 'he rose and put his rusty ring on my finger, gave me his greasy purse ... promised to make me his heir, and a thousand more favours.' Wilton, before claiming to have 'wept' all his own 'urine upward' for the plight of the cider merchant, confesses that he is 'by nature inclined to Mercy (for indeed I knew two or three good wenches of that name ...).' Persuasion in this scene is marked by an intense tactility and a grotesque liquidity, which mark persuasion as an erotic interaction between these two men. It is as if what Ong refers to as the oral residue of Tudor culture, with its devotion to Latin rhetoric, *copia*, commonplace sayings, and colloquialisms, surfaces as a debased oral eroticism (here between men) from which Wilton attempts to distract us with the cheap gag about 'two or three wenches' he knew named Mercy. Wilton begins in an economically compromised position because he must pay another man for pleasure, but the extraction of cider through the greasy liquidity of persuasion contaminates a jesting, masculine oral rhetoric intended to displace the vagaries of whorish print culture.

Wilton's subsequent jests follow a repeated pattern; Wilton's compromising economic relationships with other men result in a debased oral eroticism for which he must compensate with joking references to sexually available women. Wilton plies his next jest against 'an ugly mechanical Captain' who commands a share of Jack's winnings at dice; indeed, '[t]his Monsieur Capitano ate up the cream of my earnings' (263). Wilton repays the captain by convincing him to become a double agent and assassin and to join the French camp with the promise of offering valuable intelligence. In a tit for tat reprisal for the Captain's oral intrusions on Wilton's earnings, Wilton repays him with a 'silver-sounding tale' that 'made such sugared harmony in his ears' that it renders him 'inflamed and ravished' (267). Indeed he is so 'incensed and fired therewith that he would needs run presently upon it and set a courtesan's house on fire that had angered him.' The erotic display of oral persuasion between men results in complex economic dependency. This compromising situation produces not merely a courtesan but a courtesan subject to violence. We expect the ugly mechanical captain to be persuaded but perhaps not to be so inflamed that he would burn down the house of a whore that displeased him. Wilton struggles to assume the role of the masculine, mechanical captain: someone who can not only burn down a

whore's house but who can tell the difference between masculinity and femininity, that is 'can discern Achilles from a chamber-maid' (266). In attempting to assume that role, Wilton tries to turn the rude mechanical into an adventitious creature of dissimulation. That the captain turns out to be a poor performer suggests that he also becomes the target to which is drawn the violence against creatures driven by rapidly shifting economic, political, and sexual allegiances, including whores, merchants, and spies. The French king easily captures the captain and not even his confession 'could keep his joints from ransacking on the wheel' (269). The application of torture to the body as a means of extracting truth becomes the revenge of truth against the dissimulating body as well as the revenge of dissimulation against the brute 'mechanical' masculinity Wilton can never quite attain.

These patterns of unstable gender and rhetoric culminate in Jack Wilton's assumption of the role of the whore. Wilton targets a Switzer captain so 'far gone for want of the wench' by coming 'disguised unto him in the form of a half-crown wench, my gown and attire according to the custom then in request' (270). Wilton becomes as delectable as the many other signifiers of oral pleasure in these jests; he tells us, 'I simpered with my countenance like a porridge pot on the fire when it first begins to seethe' (270). The mechanical captain ate up the cream of Wilton's earnings at dice, and similarly the Switzer captain unknowingly turns the table on Wilton, making *him* the meal by offering him money: 'some six crowns at the least for an antipast to iniquity' (270). Wilton's game of jokingly occupying the position of whore draws to an anxious conclusion as he becomes all too delectable, as porridge or antipast, and must avoid the captain's advances, feigning 'an impregnable excuse to be gone, and never came at him after.'

Wilton may wish to be 'impregnable,' but his short-lived drag act exposes how the strategy of playing the whore in order to disarm the sexually and economically damaging effects of rhetoric might backfire. The final jest, before Wilton decamps and heads to Italy, consists of an attack on writing itself. Wilton targets a company of 'coistral clerks' among whose many infractions against Wilton's sense of decency is their fastidious dress, obsessive cleanliness, and miserly tendencies. Not only are they ungenerous with their fellow men but they take the wages of slain soldiers, refusing to 'let a dram of dead-pay overslip them' (270). Wilton gives a false alarm that scatters them: 'Upon the first watchword of treason that was given, I think they betook them to their heels very stoutly, left their pen and inkhorns and paper behind them for spoil, resigned their desks, with the money that was in them, to the mercy of the vanquisher, and in fine left me and my fellows (their fool-catchers) lords of the field' (271). The desks – like writing – are both sources of easy cash through lewd, shifty devices *and* objects of Wilton's rage. Even as Wilton exercises mastery, becoming presumptive lord of an admittedly pathetic field, the object of his aggression, the desks of effeminate clerks and their prostituted pens, affirms the frailty of his position. This attack on writing, following so closely these moments of debased, erotic orality, suggests that all rhetoric is entangled in damaging patterns of economic dependency that disable the ontological security of masculine identity, that force perilous identifications with whorish femininity, and that produce backlashes of extraordinary violence.

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Wilton may leave 'the state of camp,' leaving behind England and France alike, but the erotic dilemmas of rhetoric and economy prove debased to the point of morbidity in Italy. There he

meets 'a precious supernatural pander, appavelled in all points like a gentleman, and having half-a-dozen several languages in his purse, entertained us in our own tongue very periphrastically and eloquently' (300). This pander is no gentleman, despite his elegant dress and rhetoric. He is, rather, a counterfeiter who conveys Wilton to 'a pernicious courtesan's house' in order to part him and his money. The linguistic elegance of the panderer and his proximity to both debased currency and debased women make him an ideal crystallization of the compromising erotics of orality. Indeed, though Wilton extricates himself from the pander's trap, he inadvertently extorts counterfeit money and is jailed almost immediately. Wilton and his newly found courtesan mistress Diamante are saved from their imprisonment only through the intervention of the poet Aretino who presents the portrait of the phallic writer secure in the masculine assertion of self through pen and print. Of Aretino we learn, 'His pen was sharp-pointed like a poniard, no leaf he wrote on but was like a burning-glass to set on fire all his readers. With more than musket-shot did he charge his quill, where he meant to inveigh' (310). Aretino not only frees Wilton but secures the imprisonment and execution of the panderer and the whore Tabitha.

On the spectrum arrayed from the oral loquacity of the counterfeiting pander and the virility and capacity of Aretino, where does Wilton lie? This is Wilton's first entrance to Rome: 'I being a youth of the English cut, ware my hair long, went appavelled in light colours, and imitated four or five sundry nations in my attire at once; which no sooner was noted, but I had all the boys of the city in a swarm wondering about me' (326). Wilton seems vulnerable to sexual misapprehension and identity confusion, as if to be 'a youth of the English cut' were to present a fundamental ambiguity of gender, sexual interest, and national character. Wilton's appeal is hardly new. Earlier in the narrative, he emphasizes his gallantry in language that shifts casually from fashion to food: 'I had my feather in my cap as big as a flag in the fore-top; my French doublet gelt in the belly s though (like a pig ready to be spitted) all my guts had been plucked out; a pair of side-paned hose that hung down like two scales filled with Holland cheese' (272). It is perhaps this delectability, Wilton's easily imagined role as a consumable object of desire, that makes his attempt at masculine assertion fail. The rapier and dagger he carries with him in Italy nearly get him thrown in jail again, which he avoids by the confiscation of these signifiers of virility and a hefty bribe, making his masculinity dependent upon his notoriously inadequate purse.

Wilton's anxious resistance to an effeminate identification with panders or whores and his inability to perform, or afford, masculinity collide gruesomely in the rape of the 'noble and chaste matron' Heraclide (331). While it is the vicious murderer, serial rapist, and 'notable banditto' in the service of the Pope, the Spaniard Esdras, who commits the act, not only does the scene invoke the 'honey speech' of oral persuasion, it also leaves Wilton in an ambivalent, voyeuristic position. His masculinity compromised again as he is unable to wield his gun in the face of his attacker's rapier, Wilton is locked in a room from which he still manages to see 'through a cranny of my upper chamber unsealed ... all this sad spectacle' (339) and to recount in full visual and auditory detail, the extensive speeches Heraclide and Esdras trade before Esdras throws her down on the body of her unconscious (though presumed dead) husband to rape her. Following paragraphs of suspenseful description and rhetorical debate, Wilton ends his narrative abruptly: 'Conjecture the rest, my words stick fast in the mire and are clean tired; would I had never undertook this tragical tale. Whatsoever is born, is born to have an end. Thus ends my tale: his whorish lust was glutted, his beastly desire satisfied. What in the house of any

worth was carriageable, he put up, and went his way' (336). Wilton's sudden disavowal of the details of the rape strikes the reader as less virtuous than at first it might appear when we learn that the elaborate debate between Heraclide and Esdras and the rape itself are only 'proem' of this 'elegiacal history.'

Indeed, Wilton follows with an exhortation to the reader to have compassion for the Hecuba-like Heraclide, whom we are asked to imagine in postures of death-like grief as we summon our compassion: 'Devise with yourselves that you see a corse rising from his hearse after he is carried to church, and such another suppose Heraclide to be, rising from the couch of enforced adultery' (337). Nashe participates here in the long-standing literary tradition of spinning sentimental narratives of abused, abandoned, wronged, and even raped women, and in so doing asks the reader to replace the scene of rape *with* a scene of elaborately performed, emotionally charged, and rhetorically eloquent female grief: 'Have I lived to make my husband's body the bier to carry me to hell? Had filthy pleasure no other pillow to lean upon but his spreaded limbs? On thy flesh my fault shall be imprinted at the day of resurrection' (337). The potential pornography of representing Heraclide's rape as an act of sexual penetration comes to be superseded by the near-pornographic intensity of representations of Heraclide's suffering and Wilton's exhortations to sympathy. Furthermore, in counterpoise here are a seductive rhetoric of grief and a violent rhetoric of imprinting. Not only is the husband's body, in Heraclide's imagination, liable to be 'imprinted' with her violation but she looks for her own degradation in the mirror: 'Having passioned thus awhile, she hastily ran and looked herself in her glass, to see if her sin were not written on her forehead. With looking she blushed, though none looked upon her but her own reflected image' (338). The oral performance circulates the tale of Heraclide's shame, which, as the legacy of Lucrece would dictate, rebounds upon her. Such circulation renders Heraclide sexually abject as it also renders her an object of violent (masculine) imprinting and consumption in the sexual marketplace of commercially circulating narratives. That the husband's body, too, is 'imprinted' suggests that the sexual degradation that wrongfully attaches to Heraclide circulates to and contaminates the impugned masculinity of the husband. Complicating the circulation of this narrative is the complicity of Wilton, who fails to defend Heraclide and then watches the entire 'sad spectacle.' The narrative emphasizes this complicity when the rape and Heraclide's suicide are pinned on Wilton, but we might ask with whom is Wilton complicit: with the husband for mustering insufficient masculinity to protect Heraclide, with the rapist for viewing and translating the rape into passages of rhetorical and narrative appeal, or with Heraclide for being at the mercy of the bandits and then of the authorities?

Aretino may present the tantalizing possibility of masculine self-assertion, an escape from compromise and complicity that Wilton never can attain, but the virile style Aretino represents reaches a disturbing logical conclusion in the rhetorical and sexual prowess of Esdras and in the curses of his murderer, the blasphemer Cutwolfe. Cutwolfe's crime derives from a desire for justice; he slays Esdras, the murderer of his brother. But his oral performances mark a threatening use of rhetoric. During his public torture, Cutwolfe recounts his conversation with Esdras, who he tells 'I have riven my throat with overstraining it to curse thee. I have ground my teeth to powder with grating and grinding them together for anger when any hath named thee. My tongue with vain threats is bollen, and waxen too big for my mouth' (367). No longer a site of *eros*, the mouth is a site of a hunger for murder, a rage for revenge that swells the body in grotesque proportions. Before killing Esdras, Cutwolfe exacts a revenge upon him that invokes

this murderous orality as he forces him, at gunpoint, to renounce God, to curse God, and to swear allegiance to Satan to prevent any possibility of salvation. Esdras's 'blasphemous abjurations' present the supreme power of rhetoric as physical violence, which Cutwolfe himself experiences while listening: 'My joints trembled and quaked with attending [his words]; my hair stood upright and my hear was turned wholly to fire' (368). Cutwolfe, despite (or because of) his own proclivity for murderous curses, shoots Esdras in the mouth, removing his capacity to speak or repent. Moments later, as Cutwolfe is executed, he too is silenced, 'his tongue pulled out, lest he should blaspheme in his torment' (369). Cutwolfe and Esdras come to represent not merely the danger of blasphemous or criminal speech but of religiously tinged rhetoric itself.

Indeed, the violent end of Wilton's Italian escapades reminds us of his passage to that nation from France, through regions torn by religious conflict. If 'at Turwin [Wilton] was a demi-soldier in jest, so now [he] became a militarist in earnest' (276). The newly mercenary Jack Wilton stumbles into a spectacle of great violence:

It was my good luck or my ill, I know not which to come just to the fighting of the battle, where I saw a wonderful spectacle of bloodshed on both sides. Here unwieldy Switzers wallowing in their gore like an ox in his dung; there the sprightly French sprawling and turning on the stained grass like a roach new taken out of the stream. All the ground was strewed as thick with battle-axes as the carpenter's yard with chips: the plain appeared like a quagmire, overspread as it was with trampled dead bodies. In one place might you behold a heap of dead murdered men overwhelmed with a falling steed instead of a tombstone; in another place a bundle of bodies fettered together in their own bowels. And as the tyrant Roman Emperor used to tie condemned living caitiffs face to face to dead corpses, so were the hal-living here mixed with squeezed carcasses long putrefied (276).

Wilton's blithe and morbid reportage of this carnage garners greater significance as he strays immediately afterward into Germany, where he encounters the rebellious 'Anabaptistical brother named John Leiden' (277) and his followers. Wilton's spares neither Leiden nor his followers from his satirical wit as he observes the violent rhetorical style that accompanies their beliefs: 'They pray, they howl, they expostulate with God to grant them victory, and use such unspeakable vehemence a man would think them the only well-bent men under heaven' (279). It is in response to this religious rhetoric that Wilton 'dilates a little more gravely than the nature of this history requires' to spend pages condemning the Anabaptist beliefs. Though he condemns both their heresies and their preaching style – the 'vehement outcries' and 'shouts and clamours' (284), Wilton also witnesses the suppression of this rebellious sect: 'Pitiful and lamentable was their unpitied and well-performed slaughter' (285). Indeed, the opposing soldiers 'that were their executioners, like a father that weeps when he beats his child, yet still weeps and stills beats, not without much ruth and sorrow prosecuted that lamentable massacre.' By siding with the regrettably necessary slaughter of the heretics, Wilton not only disdains their beliefs but brackets their rhetorical practices, replacing the violent movements of rhetoric with the violence of warfare, which 'overthrows as many men every minute of the battle as their falls ears of corn before the scythe at one blow ... So ordinary at every footstep was the imbrument of iron in blood, that one could hardly discern heads from bullets, or clotted hair from angled flesh hung with gore' (286). Reduced to its bloody constituents, the body can no longer produce the violent religious oratory that invades other bodies, stirring them to heretical acts and brutal ends.

But the destruction of the body capable of violent, masculine religious rhetoric enables, perhaps requires, the appearance of its constitutive opposite: the effeminate orator, who presents a less threatening figure for rhetorical power. Indeed, as Wilton and his master, Henry Howard Earl of Surrey, enter Wittenberg, Vanderhulke, a stand-in for Gabriel Harvey, greets them with the utmost bombast: 'A bursten-belly inkhorn orator called Vanderhulke they picked out to present him with an oration; one that had a sulphurous big swollen large face like a Saracen, eyes like two Kentish oysters, a mouth that opened as wide every time he spake as one of those old knit trap doors' (292). Vanderhulke is palpably swollen with contaminated rhetoric, and his baggy body is adorned oddly with delectable oysters and a consuming maw. Nashe forces Vanderhulke to unconsciously speak his own degradation, describing himself as 'the tongue-man of [his city's] thankfulness' and apostrophizing 'Oh orificial rhetoric, wipe thy everlasting mouth and afford me a more Indian metaphor than that, for the brave princely blood of a Saxon!' Vanderhulke's rhetoric is full of slaving tongues and sullied orifices; his words are tinged with the taint of the east, with Indian metaphors dedicated to the sternly masculine Saxon nobleman he praises. In the midst of his vicious satire – and despite the praiseworthy presence of Surrey – Nashe looks to Europe and sees the ugliness of England staring back in the lascivious, heathen shapes of foreignness, from the painted faces of Italian whores and the greasy palms of its panders to the swollen faces of Saracen enemies and murderous Spanish bandits.

As was apparent from Wilton's first entry into Rome as a delectable and perhaps effeminate specimen of Englishness, the consistently compromised masculine identity of Wilton reveals a consistently compromised national identity, as the true, hardy Saxon Englishness of Surrey remains unattainable. Indeed, the figure par excellence of this alienated national identity is a 'banished English earl' who saves Wilton as he is about to be executed for the rape and death of Heraclide. Upon Nashe's release, the earl inquires into 'the occasion of [Wilton's] straying so far out of England to visit this strange nation' (341). The earl's insistence that there be no need to leave one's home rests on the assumption that if the motive be the learning of 'languages, thou may'st learn them at home; nought but lasciviousness is to be learned here.' It is from this point that the banished earl traces the genealogy of unfortunate travelers back to the first, the biblical Cain, before launching into a catalogue of stereotypes about Franks, Spaniards, Danes, and Italians. The narrative consequence of Wilton's failure to heed the banished earl's advice and return to England leaves him in search of his courtesan Diamante, the result of which is his encounter with the Jew Zadoch, who captures, strips, humiliates, and (at least psychologically) emasculates Wilton as he prepares to sell him to another Jew, Doctor Zacharie, to be anatomized before an audience of medical students in his college. Doctor Zacharie 'caused [him] to be stripped naked, to feel and grope whether each limb were sound and [his] skin not infected' (349). For all this violation, it is Wilton's appearance, his 'age and beardless' face that draw the attention of Juliana, the Marquise of Manuta, who later engineers his rescue. It is here, at the height of the narrative's morbidity, as it contemplates the anatomization of its own protagonist, that the vulnerability to public circulation and consumption also reaches a paranoid height, reinforcing the facile anti-Semitic rhetoric and the ethnocentric rhetoric of the banished earl in the defense of the English masculinity tenuously (and sometimes disastrously) represented by Wilton.

If the traveler of *The Unfortunate Traveller* remains paradigmatic in this text, standing in for the writer of this travel narrative, then to be a traveler is either to risk contamination by figures of

compromised gender and nationality or to trace one's genealogy back to the original murderer and fratricide Cain: at worst, perhaps both. That Nashe closes *The Unfortunate Traveller* immediately after the execution of Cutwolfe suggests that Wilton must, as in the case of his ill-advised drag performance, beat a hasty retreat from the compromising erotic marketplaces of Italy by rushing back to the English king's camp to marry the courtesan Diamante. The extravagances of *The Unfortunate Traveller* represent an unstable camp performance whose extreme stylization enables Nashe to act out *as narrative* the lived contradictions of being an English writer at this moment in time and place. Nashe's attempt to dramatize his negotiation of the mutually constitutive expansion of print culture and early modern capital only throws notions of masculinity, national identity, and literary authority into crisis. If whores and courtesans present the author with sites of inadvertent identification, murders and blasphemers represent the all too logical extension of masculine backlash, which, in its violence, also targets a variety of national and racial others, opposing them to the purity of the Englishman, to whom the banished earl attributes 'the plainest dealing souls that ever God put life in' (342). Wilton's final alignment must be with the courtesan who figures dangerous varieties of eroticized rhetoric and who must be intimately monitored in the holy bonds of matrimony, making her, and most of the feminine or effeminate figures in the texts, figures of damaged English writerly masculinity. For *The Unfortunate Traveller*, the writer *is* a whore, called neither Jane Drosse nor even Diamante but, instead, Jack Wilton or Thomas Nashe.

Notes

1. See Gigante and Litvak for recent literary histories of taste.
2. All references to the text of *The Unfortunate Traveller* are, unless otherwise noted, to Steane's edition.

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