

/DISEASE AND POLITICAL ANXIETIES IN NASHE'S
SUMMER'S LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT/

by

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B.A., College of Saint Catherine, 1975

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree

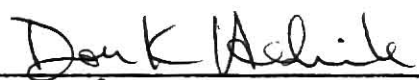
MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1985

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Summer's Last Will and Testament was performed in October of 1592 before a private audience consisting of Archbishop Whitgift's household and guests at Croydon.¹ Critics agree on two points: the play's topic of expressing the ending of summer at Croydon; and the brilliant rhetorical display in some of the speeches, especially Winter's. As a pageant entertainment, C. L. Barber points out, the work provides festive prototypes which appear later in the comedies of playwrights such as Shakespeare and Jonson.² In terms of the play's relation to its private audience, Charles Nicholl in his biography on Nashe provides illuminating information about the play's literary allusions and its references to various local and historical events with which the audience was familiar.³ In addition, G. R. Hibbard points to aspects of social satire in the play as an element of entertainment for the Croydon circle.⁴ Within this context of the play's relevance to its time and audience, Peter Berek focuses on the play's more serious function as ritual. By this he means that the pageant of summer's passing objectified for the Croydon audience their anxieties about man's mortality, and affirmed through faith in the year's renewal their hope for immortality of the soul.⁵

However, certain elements so far overlooked in the play suggest that its ritualistic function may go beyond the conventional anxiety about mortality to deal with a historically more specific and complex set of anxieties. The ritual arrives at this set of anxieties in three ways.

First, within the play's framework of the orderly progression of the seasons, the presence of disease introduces a theme of disorder. Second, the play's personification of the seasons creates an overt and well developed power structure within which disease is directly linked to power anxieties. Summer, the dying sovereign, has supporters, loyal servants, disobedient subjects, and detractors. His sickness necessitates his naming a successor. Throughout the play, the business of succession is complicated by the threat of subversion and disorder. Finally, in the play an analogy exists between Summer and Queen Elizabeth I. Considering the time and audience for the play, it is possible that the play is relevant to the Elizabethan issue of succession, and the attendant threats of political subversion and disorder in the state. These points will be further developed in Part II.

An investigation of the play in terms of political anxieties will also clarify what has puzzled readers about the play's structure. By its private and topical nature, Barber points out, the work lacks a plot and the control that plot provides. For this reason, and partly owing to Nashe's "slapdash workmanship," Barber concludes that "read for a play, Summer's Last Will often seems jerky and sprawling, without a controlling movement" (Barber, 58). According to this view, some of the speeches would be merely brilliant digressions. In passing, Barber also notices a structural disproportion: the play's express purpose of announcing Summer's last will and testament is dispatched by a few lines in the middle and one speech toward the end. He goes on to point out that "the main business [of the play] is the calling of [Summer's] officers to account" (Barber, 59). From the ritualistic perspective, Berek suggests that the accounts are functional insofar as they lead to Summer's

judgments of his subjects, which confirm the orderly progression of the yearly cycle. Berek's emphasis on the judgments does not, however, sufficiently explain the considerable space Nashe devotes to these passages.

The problem of structural disproportion may be solved if we consider the theme of power anxieties to be the central unifying element of the play. The accounts serve several important functions in this respect. In the first place they reveal the dynamics of power relationships unfolding around the business of succession in the play. Moreover, it is in the accounts that political anxieties are objectified for the audience. In the course of the accounts, a curious feature appears in that Summer's disobedient and aspiring subjects will invariably discredit themselves by showing their true colors, and Summer's judgments then restore the authority and order of his rule. In this light, the speeches--especially the two long ones by Summer and Winter--are all integrated to the theme of power anxieties, and the play has a greater unity than hitherto granted.

This is not to say that the speeches do not serve Nashe's purpose of rhetorical display. Rather, it is to say that in the accounts rhetorical display is inseparable from the power motives of Summer and his subjects, be it self-preservation or self-advancement. Because the dynamics of power relationships is embodied in the language, the threat of political subversion and disorder in Summer's court also finds a linguistic parallel in the constant threat of rhetoric to undermine and undo logic in the accounts. Considering Nashe's style and his career of continual conflict with established rhetorical practice of his time,⁶ the conflict of power in the accounts forms an interesting dramatic realization of Nashe's antagonism to rhetorical authority.

In this study, I will first examine the political anxieties explored within the immediate context of the play, and establish the connection between these anxieties and the political issues of Elizabeth's reign. I will then reexamine the play's ritualistic function of objectifying political anxieties for the Croydon audience, and show how this purpose is achieved by Nashe's manipulation of conventional ritual elements in theatrical performance. Finally, I will analyze the rhetorical performances in the accounts for various forms of logic undermining. In doing this I hope to show that language is a self-conscious tool for acquiring power in the play as well as in Nashe's career as a writer.

II

The story of Summer is the story of a monarch, with the difference that Summer is the personification of a season. He has powerful supporters, Autumn and Winter, both hoping to succeed him. He has loyal servants, Solstitium and Harvest, each marking a cardinal point in the year. He also has disobedient servants--Ver, Sol, Orion, and Bacchus--and detractors--Christmas and Backwinter. And Vertumnus, the god of mutability, summons and dispatches Summer's subjects. In other words, the personification of nature and natural phenomena⁷ creates as full-fledged a power structure as one may expect on the Renaissance stage.

Within this power structure, Summer's sickness has political consequences. As Will Summers announces in the prologue:

Forsooth, because the plague raignes in most places this
latter end of summer, Summer must come in sicke: he must

call his officers to account, yeld up his throne to Autumne;
and make Winter his Executour. . . . (82-8)⁸

"The plague raignes . . . Summer must." From the beginning of the play, Nashe asks his audience to view disease as the cause of Summer's political anxieties. For disease is the existence of an "otherness" that ravages the body from within. Just as the plague sickens Summer and blights his kingdom, so the threat to Summer's sovereignty lies somewhere within the power structure. As Stephen Greenblatt has instructed us, in the encounter between an authority and an alien, the external threat to the authority is also seen as an internal imperative,⁹ in this case, disease, undermining Summer's health and necessitating the transfer of his power to a successor. In the play the plague becomes a focus that brings to surface feelings of the pervasiveness and hiddenness of disease that lurk in the consciousness of the characters.

Perhaps the analogy of disease to the undermining of power is not so distant from the Elizabethan sensibility. The plague was recurrent during Elizabeth's reign, and its latent power of destruction was as encompassing as nature itself. Queen Elizabeth is said to have taken summer progresses in part to avoid the plague in London.

In the play the queen herself is featured as a traveler in Summer's realm. More important, however, Elizabeth's progress is linked with Summer's remaining days in such a way as to suggest an analogy between Elizabeth and Summer. In his opening speech, Summer explains that Eliza "forbad the execution of [his] fate/ Vntill her joyfull progresse was expir'd" (135-36). The second line of the quotation may apply both to Elizabeth's summer progresses and her life's journey which would expire

along with Summer. The suggestion of her mortality is again present as Summer continues, "For her doth Summer lue, and linger here,/ And wisheth long to lue to her content./ But wishes are not had when they wish well" (137-39). Again, in his testament, Summer says, "All my faire dayes remaining I bequeath/ To wait vpon her till she be returnd" (1843-44). It is perhaps owing to Nashe's "slapdash workmanship" that Summer should die twenty-seven lines after his generous bequest. But even this passage hints unmistakably at the queen's approaching old age, for Summer's wish that Eliza's "flourishing [may] stand at a stay" implies the recognition that flourishing will naturally lead to decline (1858).

A further analogy exists between Elizabeth and Summer. Like Elizabeth, Summer is the spiritual as well as temporal ruler of Christendom. In his meeting with Solstitium, Summer divines in the hour glasses his subject carries the instruction "how to weigh all estates indifferently,/ The Spirituality and Temporalty alike" (392-93). But the hour glasses are more than just an emblem of ideal princely behavior, for Summer sees in them a darker meaning. Addressing all rulers, Summer says, "So, this white glasse runne out (as out it will),/ The black comes next, your downfall is at hand" (400-401). With his approaching death, the problem of naming a successor becomes immediate. Summer frets, "Ill growes the tree affordeth ne're a graft" (1234). No doubt Summer is referring to the succession of seasons, for Autumn is only an "adopted heire" (1835). And yet beyond the play's immediate meaning, there is implication for Elizabeth who, like Summer, had produced no natural heir to the throne, nor had she in 1592 at the age of 59 named a successor. The issue of succession had come up as early as 1559 in Parliament. In the early part of her reign, several court dramas had commented on the

subject.¹⁰ By the last two decades of her rule, the anxiety at court about this issue became increasingly acute.¹¹ Within this context, the instances in which Summer is linked with Elizabeth seem more than coincidence. Indeed, they are a reflection of the political anxieties of the time.

Further echoes between Elizabeth and Summer will surface in the accounts rendered Summer by his subjects. At the same time, the accounts will bring to light the sources of political undermining and disorder in Summer's kingdom. In his analysis of the play, Hibbard has commented on the various social types satirized in the accounts. I will extend his comments to show how the accounts reflect some of the political issues and problems in Elizabeth's time. Summer's task of dealing with his subjects is considerably simpler than that of a real ruler, however. The reason is that in personifying the seasons and natural phenomena, Nashe has given each character certain moral traits. Summer and his loyal servants exemplify moral balance and rationality, whereas each of his disobedient or aspiring subjects manifests a particular vice or extreme humour. In his encounters with these subjects, Summer will trace the causes of his sickness and the undermining of his power to their vices.

The best accounts are rendered by Solstitium and Harvest. Solstitium is a hermit and guardian of "a few dayes eyes" (367). To his sovereign he confesses, "I never lou'd ambitiously to clyme,/ Or thrust my hand too farre into the fire" (369-70). His account fits both the natural ways of daisies and his sense of the danger of political ambition. Despite his lack of power, Solstitium fulfills the ideal service of instruction to the ruler. Summer calls him "best steward of my howres" (419). On the other hand, Harvest serves his lord by garnering Summer's wealth. Although Summer has heard reports maligning Harvest, he realizes that Harvest has

done him the best service. Significantly, the maligning of Harvest highlights an atmosphere of court intrigue and envy which could prevent the loyal servant from reaching his sovereign. And while neither of the loyal servants expected rewards, Summer realizes "the time is past" when he could have done anything for them (415).

The entrances of the disobedient servants liven up the power game in Summer's court. Autumn and Winter, both with the crown in view, take on the role of accusers, and it falls upon Ver, Sol, Orion, and Bacchus to defend themselves by their wit and learning.

One of the disobedient subjects, Ver, undermines Summer's wealth by his wastefulness. Ver calls to mind, Hibbard writes, "the young man who came up to London and fell into the hands of the usurer" (Hibbard, 94). In justifying his wastefulness, Ver sermonizes that it is the will of the "high Creatour" that "wee must helpe to consume [the world] to nothing" (258, 259). Thus by allying himself with God, Ver expresses his defiance of his earthly sovereign. With a host of learned saws quoted out of context, and proverbs made to suit his point, Ver attempts to prove that "an vnthrif, of any, comes neerest a happy man, in so much as he comes neerest beggery" (283-85). Summer's response is that Ver uses wit to his own detriment. After decreeing that "Lent shall wayte on [Ver]" (329), Summer laments: "Thus in the paths of knowledge many stray,/ And from the meanes of life fetch their decay" (334-35).

Ver's use of wit and knowledge to justify his vice sets the pattern for the other disobedient subjects. His account is rather harmless because it fools no one, not even Will Summers. But in the succeeding accounts, Summer comes to perceive wit and knowledge as subversive to his power and the order in his kingdom. In the case of Sol, knowledge (poetry

and music) translates into pride. Summer criticizes his subject, "Thou know'st too much to know to keepe the meane" (541). On the natural level, it is the intemperate heat of the sun that has dried up crops and rivers; and it is also the absence of the sun during a flood at Croydon that had caused men to die from disease, and had caused eels to become poisonous. For Nashe's immediate audience, these charges would refer to specific events that had happened around 1592.¹² On the moral level, Sol's pride is seen in his disregard of Summer's purpose, and his abuse of the power which Summer has given him. Sol's failure to keep the mean brings disease and destruction into Summer's kingdom, and moreover undermines the sovereign's health and power. Summer identifies Sol as a usurper, and sentences him to be eclipsed by the moon.

Another disobedient subject, Orion, has about him the air of the vain nobleman who "[hunts] for pleasure, not for gaine," and therefore can give no account of his work (747). His pleasure however, according to Autumn, is Summer's hurt. For when Orion crossed the bounds of his aristocratic heaven to hunt on earth, his dogs turned the days exceedingly hot, thereby engendering contagion, killing people, and blasting Summer's fruits. Orion of course will not stoop to argue with Autumn; instead he uses his wit and learning in a seemingly irrelevant praise of dogs. Although Orion's praise of dogs is rejected by Summer, it shows the extent to which wit and learning can be used to justify the pleasures of an unproductive nobility. Since Orion has descended from heaven to transgress on earth, Summer's judgment continues his subject's descent into hell.

Bacchus, the last of the disobedient subjects, enters and exits drunk. Allied with scholars, Bacchus uses his wit and learning in defense of wine: "Wine is poyson to a sicke body; a sicke body is no sound body;

Ergo, wine is a pure thing, & is poyson to all corruption" (1007-1009). Summer it seems is not opposed to drinking, for he is concerned that Bacchus has no vintage to show. It is Bacchus' drunken excess and the unruliness he threatens to spread around Summer's court that provoke Summer into cursing him with "shame, sicknes, [and] misery" (1089). Bacchus' parting shots at his lord are vicious, the last of which even harbors a wish for royal assassination: "As many wounds maist thou haue as Caesar had in the Senate house . . ." (1100-1102).

The common thread running through the above four accounts is the subversive use of wit and knowledge by various elements in a political state. This kind of subversion is apt to generate anxiety in the sovereign because it is not localized in a few subjects, but rather it is communicable, like a disease, through the medium of language. Thus although Summer is able to confront and pass judgment on his disobedient subjects, his political anxiety deepens with each confrontation and culminates in Bacchus' account with its ultimate threat of assassination. At this point, it requires little provocation for Summer's fears to surface: Will Summers, lately dubbed Sir Robert Tossopot by Bacchus, and reeking of the beer poured on him, becomes concerned with "reputation." After packing off the Bacchus group of players to "soupe off [their] prouender closely," he remarks, "report hath a blister on her tongue: open tauerns are tel-tales" (1139-40). Summer immediately follows with a speech complaining at length about knowledge, betrayal, and rumor. "Knowledge breeds pride, pride breedeth discontent," which in turn breeds revenge--and rumor is the traitor's means of revenge (1157).¹³ Says Summer:

In mountaines, Poets say, Echo is hid
 For her deformitie and monstrous shape:
 Those mountaines are the houses of great Lords,
 Where Stentor, with his hundreth voices sounds
 A hundreth trumpes at once with rumor fild. (1174-78)

The image of Stentor's hundred voices multiplied with echoes at once invests rumor with magnitude and incontrollability. Moreover, rumor is the mindless propagation of an especially dangerous kind of knowledge, for

. . . men, meane men, the skumme & drosse of all
 Will talk and babble of they know not what,
 Upbraid, deprave, and taunt they care not whom,
 Surmises pass for sound approved truths:
 Familiarity and conference,
 That were the sinews of societies,
 Are now for underminings only used. (1189-95)

From the houses of great lords to whole societies, rumour is the monarch's fear from which Elizabeth was certainly not exempted.¹⁴ This fear was especially warranted in the last two decades of her rule, with the growing opposition from the younger faction at court and the increasingly outspoken criticism from various learned and religious elements in society.¹⁵ Nashe's audience would not be unaware of this.

Beleaguered by disease, subversion, and disorder in his kingdom, Summer must now hand over his power to a successor and face his detractors, Christmas and Backwinter. He regrets his lack of issue, for he doubts that Autumn and Winter would be thankful for the inheritance. As soon as Summer

names Autumn his successor, Winter launches his tirade to discredit Autumn. Winter begins with the charge that Autumn, like Ver, is a favorite among scholars. The rest of his speech is a wholesale attack on the learned arts, artists, and scholars. With a catalogue of learned references and accusations, he seeks to prove that "there is no vice/
Which learning and vilde knowledge brought not in,/ Or in whose praise
some learned haue not wrote" (1394-96). Just as the moral corruption of learning undermines the health of society, so images of disease creep into Winter's invective: Poets are "drunken parasites" (1268); historiographers are like "lazers" (1347); scholars are slothful and "sloths plague
bee want" (1408); and "bookmen are/ . . . pestilent members in a state" (1421-22). Armed with his righteous indignation, Winter declares:

He is vnfit to sit at sterne of state,
Who fauours such as will o'erthrow his state:
Blest is that gouernment where no arte thrives;
Vox populi, vox Dei;
The vulgars voice, it is the voice of God. (1423-27)

This juxtaposition of misrepresentation and misapplied learning amounts to an attack on Summer's divine right as ruler of Christendom. Summer's supporter turns out to be no supporter at all. Nevertheless Summer names Winter his executor, as the audience may have anticipated from the start.

A closer look at Winter's speech reveals the Puritan coloring which Nashe has given him. More specifically, in Winter's speech, Nashe seems to be examining Protestant theology for its more extreme subversive tendencies.

Winter's attack on all the learned arts is based on his conviction

that they offend against the teachings of the scripture. Classical poets were liars because they peopled the universe with gods and "found causes and beginnings of the world" (1272). The poets of the divine fury--Musaeus, Linus, Homer, and Orpheus--are singled out for attack. Likewise, Winter denounces the classical philosophers for thinking "how they might plant a heauē on earth,/ Whereof they would be principall lowe gods" (1331-32). A survey of the philosophers named by Winter shows their divergence from the orthodox Christian view of a single god and of creatio ex nihilo. "Hermes Trismigistis" claims that the world was created from chaos.¹⁶ Thales Milesius, Anaximander, and Anaximenes explain the origins of the world as a "natural process of growth from a simple substance to a complex form" (DHI, IV, 46). Pythagoras and his follower Xenocrates attempt to "penetrate the mysteries of the universe by observing numerical correspondences" (DHI, IV, 32). Furthermore the writings of these philosophers fostered the Renaissance Neoplatonists' ideal of the divinity of man's soul, an idea which runs the risk of deprecating God's power.

Winter's hostility to classical mythology and philosophy forms the basis of his hostility to scholars and artists of the present state who are heirs to the classical tradition. In rejecting classical mythology or an allegorical interpretation of it, Winter shows the Puritan's adherence to the literal sense of scripture. More important, Winter's claim that all books except divinity corrupt society reflects the fundamental Puritan assumption that the scripture is the absolute authority for guidance in all aspects of life. This assumption is not only hostile to learning, but also subverts secular forms of authority, in Elizabeth's case, her royal supremacy over church and state. Finally, there is the Puritan theology of the direct relationship between God and man which exercises a

democratizing influence that is dangerous to monarchy. As we have seen earlier, Winter's manipulation of the religious sentiment "the vulgar voice it is the voice of God" implies such a political meaning.

Moving from Winter's theology, Nashe examines the practical aspects of the Puritan threat in the character of Christmas. In the play Christmas is a miser who refuses to keep the twelve days of Christmas. Hibbard finds that "in him the Puritan opposition to such festivals as Christmas, and the ethics of the business community . . . have been fused" (Hibbard, 99). The most convincing details of Christmas' self-revelation are his concern with costs--labor costs in particular, and his familiarity with the business market of Smithfield. Hibbard further points out that Christmas, in rejecting hospitality as an old fashioned god, exhibits "all that contempt for the past which was so typical of Puritanism and, indeed, of humanism, at their worst" (Hibbard, 99). Given Christmas' Puritan leanings, one might say that his contempt for the past is specifically presented through his contempt for the Roman Catholic tradition of celebrating the twelve days of Christmas.

More interesting, however, is that Christmas' religious contempt serves as a pretext for his contempt of the crown, in a speech that hints at Summer's possible middle-class origins:

Some call them emperours, but I respect no crownes but
 crownes in the purse. Any man may wear a siluer crowne,
 that hath made a fray in Smithfield & lost but a peece
 of his braine pan: And to tell you plaine, your golden
 crownes are little better in substance, and many times got
 after the same sort. (1662-67)

Equally interesting is Summer's response which implicitly admits of a connection between religion and politics by stressing the political importance of religious festivals. For the nobility, Summer instructs his subject, the function of "[keeping] high dayes and solemne festiuals" is first and foremost "to set their magnificence to view" (1726, 1727).

Summer's position echoes Elizabeth's own sense of the political importance of pageants and spectacles in asserting her authority as supreme ruler over both church and state. Elizabeth must have felt it necessary, being a woman ruler of middle class origins, "faced with continuous questions about the sources of her authority and the very legitimacy of her birth."¹⁷ From the beginning of her reign, as Frances Yates has shown, the Virgo-Astraea image of Elizabeth had appeared in town and court pageants as part of the imperial theme of the return to a golden age of purified religion.¹⁸ The religious festivals of the Roman Catholic church with their tradition of pageantry and festivities provided the occasion for this kind of royal image making. Their political importance ensured the survival of major Catholic festivals such as Christmas in Elizabeth's reign, although to please the Puritans many Catholic saints' days and holy days had been removed from the church calendar.¹⁹

In a curious way, the place left by the removal of "the Pope's holidays" might have been filled by a more secular form of pageantry--the Accession Day Tilts:

We have had evidence from one of the Accession Day Tilts speeches that these annual occasions were presented as a substitute for, or an improvement on, 'the Pope's holidays'. The annual pageant of Protestant chivalry, in honor of the

holy day of the Queen's accession, skillfully used the traditions of chivalrous display to build up the queen's legend as the Virgin of the Reformed Religion . . . and to present the spectacle of the worship of her by her knights in the ritual of chivalry as a new kind of regularly-recurring semi-religious festival. (Yates, 109)

However, this attempt at "setting magnificence to view" had its problems, because "by the last two decades of the reign at least, a strong sense of impatience and disillusion with the royal mythology was being felt" (Orgel, 42).

In larger focus, both the Astraea theme and the idea that the essence of knighthood was service to a lady²⁰ exemplify the pageant's reliance on mythology and its strong sense of looking back to a past age, which were antithetical to the Puritan outlook, as presented in *Winter and Christmas*. Beyond the compass of the play, spectacles and pageants also invited Puritan distaste for their extravagance and image-making, and their connections with the Roman Catholic tradition and the popular theater. From Elizabeth's point of view, one can also see that the Puritan ideology was in fundamental conflict with her purpose.

The Puritan opposition to church and state persisted throughout the reign of Elizabeth. In the years between 1588 and 1593, the conflict was "open and violent; then the stringent discipline of Whitgift and the resolute hostility of the queen told" (Frere, 257). Summer's Last Will was performed during one of the most violent years of the conflict. Considering the time and audience for the play, and Nashe's pro-establishment sympathies,²¹ it is not surprising that *Winter and Christmas* should

be portrayed as totally unsympathetic to their sovereign. More extreme than the two is Backwinter, the third member of Winter's family, and the last in the series of accounts.

To argue that, as Winter's son, Backwinter also reflects Puritan sympathies would be fruitless. One suspects that in Nashe's satire on the Puritans Backwinter is thrown in for good measure, and for comic relief. As an example of the worst of detractors in a state, Backwinter exhibits open and unreasoned hatred for Summer, for Winter, and for all earth. In the course of his speech, Backwinter literally plays "the veriest Dog of Christendome" (1759):

Would I could barke the sunne out of the sky,

 Earth, if I cannot iniure thee enough,
 Ile bite thee with my teeth, Ile scratch thee thus.
 (1761-74)

Indeed, he would call up the millions from hell "to execute the malice [he intends]" (1780). On the surface these words bode rebellion.

Paradoxically, his ill-concealed hatred renders him non-threatening to Summer, who simply orders him locked away. Allowing the detractor to rail on about supplanting his kingdom, Summer says (perhaps jokingly to the court), "I see my downefall written in his browes,"²² and excuses Winter for spoiling his child (1802).

In the final analysis, it is not open subversion but its covert potential that causes most anxiety. Although most clearly illustrated in the case of Backwinter, this idea runs through the entire sequence of accounts. I began this analysis by noting a similarity between the power

structure in Summer's court to that appearing on the Renaissance stage. The accounts reveal a significant difference however between Summer and the monarchs in the tragedies. Unlike these monarchs whose unreasoned will brings disorder to the state and ruin on themselves,²³ Summer is the victim of his subjects' moral, political, and intellectual disorder. Nashe's play thus presents a virtuous ruler in his decline. In this way, the political anxieties in the play closely parallel those of Elizabeth's subjects at Croydon.

III

The relevance of the play to the major political issues of Elizabeth's reign prompts a second look at the play's ritualistic function. My analysis will rely on the groundwork provided by Professor Berek, and examine how Nashe adapts the conventional ritual elements of theatrical performance to his political material.

As Berek has suggested, the play's ritualistic function of objectifying the audience's anxiety about mortality involves the presentational form of audience participation and the subject matter of the seasonal cycle. In the performance, the role of facilitating audience participation falls on Will Summers. Authorities agree that Summers is a combination of Nashe, Toy the actor, and the historical figure of Henry VIII's court fool.²⁴ During the performance, Will Summers continually draws attention to the real identities of the players and the theatricality of the pageant, with the effect that

the dramatic illusion of the stylized pageant is distanced,
if not shattered, and in its place emerges the even stronger

illusion that Toy-Will is not part of some gossamer entertainment but belongs--like the spectators--to life itself.²⁵

Within this context, the play's references to events that happened around Croydon in 1592 "help involve the Croydon audience in the pageant they watch" (Berek, 212). The summer of 1592, and Croydon itself thus became the time and setting of the larger human drama, with the ongoing plague as an added element of seriousness in the background.

In this way, Berek says, Nashe "breaks the framework separating play from audience," and invites the audience to participate in the events of the play, i.e. summer's passing, from which they may draw analogies to the human cycle (Berek, 212). Just as the passing of summer confirms man's mortality, the renewal of the year affirms man's hope for immortality of the soul. In the events of the play, Summer assumes a pivotal role because it is in his judgment of his subjects that he validates the facts of nature and reasserts for the audience faith in the natural order to bring about a renewal of life and spirit.²⁶

This ritualistic function is important in itself. But more than that, it also provides the conventional ritualistic elements which Nashe adapts to the objectification of political anxieties. The adaptation is achieved in two ways: one, the use of Will Summers not only as a link between the play and the audience, but also between the audience and the Tudor court; two, the injection of disease into the seasonal cycle as a perversion of the natural order and a subversion of the political order.

From the play's beginning, Will Summers' speech signals the character's relation to the Tudor court. The actor Toy emerges half-dressed, and calls himself "a Goose, or a Ghost at least," referring to

the ghost of Will Summers (3). Then in a highly symbolic act, the actor completes his dressing before the audience, the fictional ghost thus assuming before their eyes the fictional human status of Will Summers. For the Croydon circle, the memory of Will Summers was not distant in their minds: he was buried by Elizabeth early in her reign. His fictional presence in the play thus prompts a connection with the Tudor court and with Elizabeth, the presiding ruler.

Throughout the pageant, Will Summers comments on the speeches and the players' performance, exchanging words with the characters, addresses the audience, and reviles the playwright. He is often playful and foolish, at times serious, and at times speaking for Nashe. But what is less observed in the changing voices of Will Summers is his function of drawing attention to political meanings in the play, specifically in Summer's speeches. As occasional comment, they seem to be merely entertaining; taken together, they mark stages in the sovereign's decline.

An early instance of Will's function occurs after Summer's meeting with Solstitium. Will evidently misses the import of the hour glasses, for he rambles on about clocks and time: "It is a pedanticall thing to respect times and seasons" (429-30). If his innocence amuses the audience, it also sets in contrast and emphasizes for them the gravity of the subjects raised before: the behaviour of the Christian ruler, and the approaching death of Summer. In another instance, Will Summers, lately dubbed Sir Robert Tossopot by Bacchus, begins to worry about reputation and tavern rumors. His mock propriety gives rise to Summer's exposition of his fears about rumor and betrayal.

At a high moment, when the play's central statement on life and power is delivered in a song, Will's role is no longer comic. Summer has

transferred his power and wealth to Autumn and Winter, and asks for a song about his approaching death. The song evokes a world in its diverse reality, dominated by the plague.²⁷ One by one images of temporal power are called into being, and pass on, before the mind's eye: riches, beauty, queenship, strength, wit. One recalls the brief moments on stage of Ver's and Bacchus' wit, and Sol's and Orion's strength.²⁸ The brevity of life and the powerlessness of power are felt in the short lines and verbal compression. Summer is moved by the song and, for the first time, Will's buoyant spirit is subdued. "'Lord have mercy on us,' how lamentable 'tis!" (1644): Will's comment repeats the song's refrain, the word "us" underlining for the audience the sense of communal pathos which is now enlarged to include Croydon as well.

Perhaps the most crucial of Will Summers' comments is one which highlights the relation of Summer to Elizabeth. Summer delivers his testament in which he asks Autumn and Winter to serve the queen in his place. His request rises into a sort of prayer for Elizabeth:

A charmed circle draw about her court,
Wherein warme days may daunce, & no cold come;
On seas let winds make warre, not vex her rest,
Quiet inclose her bed, thoughts flye her brest.
Ah, gracious Queene, though Summer pine away,
Yet let thy flourishing stand at a stay. (1853-58)

Summer then dies, and in the litany that follows, Croydon, London and Lambeth mourn his passing and express their fear of the coming of winter. At the end of the song, the solemn mood is suddenly broken by Will Summers, urging applause: "How is't how is't? you that be of the grauer

sort, do you thinke these youths worthy of a Plaudite for praying for the Queene and singing of the Letany?" (1886-88). Will's indecorous comment shatters all dramatic illusion: London, Lambeth, and Croydon assume reality as political entities, with the ageing queen in the midst of them.

Thus through the fictional-historical status of Will Summers and his functional relation to Summer, Nashe creates moments of heightened awareness during which political anxieties in the minds of individual auditors are made matter for communal sharing. Within this context, it also becomes clear that the objectification of political anxieties is not entirely focused in Summer's judgments. Rather its locus is in the interactions between Summer and other characters. Specifically it is in the subjects' accounts that the potential for subversion becomes actualized, defined in the eyes of Summer and the audience.

Earlier I have identified the sources of Elizabethan political anxieties in the issue of succession, the threat of subversion from various learned elements in society, and in the puritan opposition to the church and state. In the play these anxieties are combined and objectified in the lowest common denominator of human experience: disease. For disease in its perversion of natural processes is the ultimate subverter of power to which even the monarch is subject. As we have seen, Summer attributes his sickness and the disorder in his kingdom to his subjects' vices, political ambition, and subversive use of wit and knowledge. Summer's judgments are informed by a vision of an ideal natural order within the divine scheme of the world with its extensions into moral, political, and intellectual planes of existence. By reasserting the order of nature in his judgments then, Summer attempts to restore the basis of all orders and, indeed, the basis of his own power.

Through the sequence of accounts, the theme of order and the countertheme of disorder unfold in opposing tension. Summer's rewards (if only in praise) and punishments are just because they accord with the law of nature. Although presented with reports maligning Harvest, Summer forms his own opinion of the true merit of his servant. Despite the excessive vices of his subjects, he upholds the mean in his judgments. On the one hand, he tries to "counteruayle" Ver's waste by Lent's scarcity (330). On the other hand, he teaches the miserly Christmas generosity. Faced with the subversive tendencies of wit and knowledge, he remains rational and, unlike Winter, refuses to condemn all learning. Thus in the face of the constant threat of subversion, Summer defines an ideal kingship through the imperfections of his subjects. In this way, the threat of subversion is turned, paradoxically, into a constructive force in the state: it provides the pull toward extremes against which the sovereign locates the mean. Through justice, rationality, and adherence to the mean, Summer reestablishes order amid disorder.

And yet order exacts its duty when the sovereign confronts his mortality. Summer brings his earthly term to an orderly conclusion. He settles his will, names his successor and executor, and bequeathes his estate. His exit fulfills not only nature's course but also the political expectations of his subjects. Such behavior in a sovereign must have been comforting to the Croydon audience, even though they might not have consciously connected Summer with their queen.

However, a basic irony underlies the play: Summer's heroic undertaking only manages political anxieties for a time; it does not do away with them. If the accounts enable Summer to localize the different forms of subversion in his subjects, he deals only with the symptoms, not the sources, of his

problem. By its very nature, disease in the form of the plague is epidemic. And by analogy to disease, vice, political ambition, and the subversive use of wit and knowledge--the enemies to Summer's health and power--continue hidden, free floating, communicable as ever. Thus in the accounts, the sources of subversion always generate anxiety in excess of what Summer's judgments can deal with. With the plague raging on in 1592, disease with its analogies to moral, political, and intellectual disorder thus assumes a significance that goes beyond the play to express for the Croydon circle a continuing condition of their political existence.

In this light, although the ideal of order in nature is present in the play, it is expressed only in the form of Summer's judgments and, for the Croydon audience, only in the form of a hope. And yet the fact that this ideal persisted in Elizabethan society reflects its hold on the imagination of that society. As we shall see in the next section, this ideal finds specific expression in the linguistic idealism of the Tudor humanists.

IV

One of the distinguishing features of Summer's Last Will is the degree to which language is made a self-conscious issue in the interactions among characters. More importantly, these interactions touch on concerns about language which are relevant to the linguistic issues in Nashe's time and in Nashe's own career as a writer. Summer bases his judgment of his subjects on their ability to give a reasonable account of their work. The failure to render an account, or the use of illogic to rationalize actions is, as interpreted by Summer, an indication of the subject's

attempt to undermine his power and the order in the state. In this way, Summer's judgments reflect the linguistic position of Tudor Humanists, Ascham for example, which is based on the assumption that "a good order of words is both the sign and the origin of a good order in the world and in the individual mind" (Crewe, 23). This linguistic idealism ultimately receives its ethical justification from a transcendent authority--God, who is the sole author of the rational order in the world and in the mind.. Where language is a representation of rational order, logic becomes central to rhetorical performance in producing a "good order of words." In Nashe's time, "the achievement of this good order depended to a high degree on classical imitation," with Cicero as the preeminent model of rhetorical correctness (Crewe, 23).

During his university days, Nashe identified himself explicitly with the linguistic assumptions and values of the Tudor Humanists.²⁹ Nashe's public career, however, can be characterized as a progressive departure from this initial position. In his analysis of Nashe's literary career, Jonathan Crewe points to Nashe's realization that linguistic idealism is incompatible with the contingencies of the real world. (The economic pressures experienced by the commercial writer is a prominent theme in Nashe's works.) In his public career, then, Nashe sets out to achieve a rhetoric which stresses not logic and imitation but style and self-dramatization, and as such is antagonistic to established rhetorical practice. In his proposed style of writing in the "extemporall veine in any humour," Nashe asserts the writer's power of self-determination in the place of imitation:

In enacting a shift from university wit to "humour" as the foundation of rhetorical performance, Nashe reestablishes a vital connection between speech and being, substituting an impulsive expressiveness for premeditated effects.

(Crewe, 29)

However, Nashe's career of self-emancipation is informed by no sustaining principle other than the principle of "almost pure wilful antagonism" (Crewe, 29). As a result,

the continuing parasitism of his own antagonistic mode upon a prior model of rhetorical correctness and upon a prior figure of rhetorical authority (Cicero) makes his own self-emancipation questionable. . . . The repetitive violence of the emancipation gesture may merely become the sign of a continuing bondage.

(Crewe, 30-31)

Summer's Last Will provides a dramatic example of the antagonistic impulses at work in Nashe's literary career. The power structure inherent in the play provides a framework within which Nashe's antagonism to rhetorical authority is translated into the constant attempt of subjects to undermine the figure of authority, Summer. More specifically, the dynamics of power relationships unfolding around the issue of succession provides an immediate context from which characters derive an initial motive for rhetorical display, each in the "extemporall veine" consistent with his particular "humour."

The world of the play, like Nashe's world, is fallen from the ideal.

Within this diseased kingdom, the approaching death of Summer and the transference of his power inform the characters with the consciousness that power resides neither permanently nor absolutely in any person, lineage, or position. "Starres daily fall": "who treadeth not on stars, when they are fallen?" (518, 1669). In the encounters between Summer and his subjects, with Autumn and Winter in attendance, power becomes a shifting configuration shaped and reshaped by the characters, each with his own motive of self-preservation or self-advancement. Given the play's relative lack of dramatic action, the shaping of power takes place almost exclusively in language.³⁰

The means to power lies in the character's ability to fashion in language an identity (not just an image) in opposition to the authority of Summer. This identity, derived from the particular "humour" of each character, receives its full embodiment in "unpremeditated" speech.³¹ Thus "humour" becomes the organic and irrational source of power, and language is power in the making. The immediate consequence, given Nashe's style of writing, is the constant threat by Summer's subjects to undermine logic in their rhetorical performances. This undermining of logic surfaces in the form of equivocation, satire, drunken speech, and selective interpretation of myth.

The means to maintain authority, then, lies in Summer's ability to uphold logic and rationality in his judgment of the subjects' rhetorical performances. Summer's task is considerably lightened, however, by the self-limiting nature of a rhetoric that, like Nashe's personal one, is motivated purely by its opposition to logic, and is hence still subject to judgment based on logic. For this reason, the rhetorical performances of the disobedient subjects are discredited by their illogic. Moreover,

within the rhetorical situation, the observance of good logic is essential to the credibility of the speaker. In their speeches, most of Summer's subjects are able initially to assume a credible image; however, in the course of their performances, their particular humours will dominate the performance, and their real identities will undo the credibility of their assumed images. Thus humour, which is the source of power, is ultimately also the element of self-undermining. Summer's job is to come in at the end with a judgment that reasserts logical order in language and rational order in his world, and at the same time his authority in that world.

Equivocation is a rather transparent form of logic-undermining at which Ver, Bacchus, and Christmas are especially skilled practitioners. Because the performances of Ver and Bacchus will be analyzed later for other purposes, I will concentrate here on only the example of Christmas. In his equivocation, Christmas justifies his avarice and miserliness by upholding the virtues of industry and husbandry. In his refusal to keep the Twelve Days, Christmas claims that "feasts are but puffing vp the flesh, the purueyers for diseases; trauell, cost, time, ill spent" (1685-86). Furthermore, the good Christian Christmas attributes the origin of feasting to pagan kings--"Sardanapalus, Nero, Heliogabulus, Commodus, [who were] tyrants, whoremasters, vnthrifths" (1661-62). These examples are enough to justify his general contempt for emperors, including Summer. In the course of his speech, his motive of rationalizing his avarice becomes clear. Christmas goes on to complain about labor costs, and the upkeep of his servants: "I keepe them vnder with red Herring and poor Iohn all the yeare long" (1709-10). His Christian spirit shows

once in a dozen yeare, when there is a great rot of sheepe,
and I know not what to do with them, I keepe open house for
all the beggers, in some of my out-yards: marry, they must
bring bread with them, I am no Baker. (1713-16)

To feed rotten sheep³² to beggars in order to rid oneself of an economic burden is hardly charitable. And yet Christmas seriously thinks this is the sensible thing to do. Equivocation has by now given way to a full expression of miserliness, and the humour creates a logic of its own which is absurd by rational and ethical standards. In calling Christmas a "snudge," Summer identifies Christmas in his humour and restores the rule of reason.

With the satiric speech of Orion, a subtler form of logic-undermining comes into play. Unlike equivocation, satire sometimes employs a suspect logic for ironic purposes. The judgment of satire then must take into consideration the speaker's ironic distance from his subject; beyond this it must assess the purity of the speaker's motive.

From the beginning, Orion expresses his satiric intent when he would "in a iest" defend dogs as creatures that come nearest to men (668). His insistence that he speaks from experience suggests the satirist's stance of observing human nature--and dog nature as well. His ironic distance seems to be established in such statements about dogs as "they barke as good old Saxon as may be,/ And that in more varietie than we" (677-78). And a picture of human folly lies behind Orion's praise of dogs' power of reason:

That they haue reason, this I will alleadge,
They choose those things that are most fit for them,

And shunne the contrarie all that they may;
 They know what is for their owne diet best,
 And seeke about for 't very carefully;
 At sight of any whip they runne away,
 As runs a thiefe from noise of hue and crie:
 Nor liue they on the sweat of others' browes,
 But haue their trades to get their liuing with,
 Hunting and conie-catching, two fine arts. (682-91)

Then without warning comes the curious shift from ironic praise of men to straight praise of dogs, effected in balanced contrast in four lines:

Cynicks they are, for they will snarle and bite;
 Right courtiers to flatter and to fawne;
 Valiant to set vpon the enemies,
 Most faithfull and most constant to their friends.
 (710-13)

From this point on Orion no longer maintains ironic distance. Not only are dogs faithful, but they are wise. By the time Orion proposes "that Dogges Physicians are, thus I inferre," his satire on man has turned into a kind of fawning on dogs (721). One example will suffice:

Speciall good Surgions to cure dangerous wounds;
 For stricken with a stake into the flesh,
 This policy they vse to get it out:
 They traile one of their feet vpon the ground,
 And gnaw the flesh about, where the wound is,
 Till it be cleane drawne out; and then, because

Vlcers and sores kept fowle are hardly cur'de,
 They licke and purifie it with their tongue:
 And well obserue Hippocrates old rule,
The onely medicine for the foot is rest,
 For if they haue the least hurt in their feet,
 They beare them vp and looke they be not stird.

(724-35)

One can perhaps still insist on seeing in the physician-like qualities of dogs a reflection on man's self-pampering. But the lack of any signal that irony is at work makes a satiric intent doubtful. In addition, the unabashed praise in the latter part of Orion's speech also casts doubt on the satiric intent in the earlier parts.

The failure of satire does not automatically mean that Orion is illogical. As a piece of straight praise, moreover, his description of dog habits is true to observation and therefore logical--excepting the more extravagant claims such as dogs invented vomiting. However, when he goes from observation to inference, his logic is suspect: he is either overexaggerating or careless in his comparisons. And yet Orion does take pains to project an image of logicity with such phrases as "thus I proue," "this I will alleadge," and "thus I inferre" (671, 682, 721). Behind this image however his observations range in a kind of free association that reveals his indifference to logic. But the form of the satire enables Orion to mask his illogical praise of dogs as ironic praise of man. Until Orion destroys his own credibility as a satirist, his rhetorical performance seduces belief, invites the hearer into not caring about logical relationships.

Within the political context, Orion's speech may be seen as a calculated gamble that fails. Autumn has charged that Orion, by hunting out of his heavenly bounds, has caused his dogs to bring contagion to earth, thereby undermining Summer's health and estate. Although Orion will not stoop to confute Autumn, the seriousness of the charge must somehow be diffused. In calling dogs creatures of reason and logicians, and in protesting his own logicity, Orion is trying to ally himself with the rationality which we have seen is one of power's self-images. Most revealing, in calling dogs physicians, Orion is seeking to indirectly discredit Autumn's charge. The success of his performance would have meant exoneration from guilt; its failure opens the way to incrimination. Orion loses both the moral and intellectual superiority he has claimed, and Summer punctures his subject's attempt at power making when he reduces Orion's "satire" to "a storie of dogs qualities" (743).

Forced into rendering an account, Orion's condescension turns into presumption: "Hunters doe hunt for pleasure, not for gaine," he tells Summer (747). Behind his disdain of working for profit, his love of pleasure surfaces to weaken his argument. Orion's claim that he is Summer's "staff and right hand" reveals the utter powerlessness of his presumption.

Orion's and Christmas' speeches exemplify two conditions that are to greater or lesser extents typical of the rhetorical performances of other disobedient subjects. First, Christmas' contempt and Orion's presumption are signs of a general disrespect toward Summer whose power is coming to an end. Second, the undermining of logic in their speeches suggests a tendency toward irrationality in the speakers. These conditions are manifested in the extreme in Bacchus.

In Bacchus, illogical speech and disorderly conduct are explicitly presented as symptoms of an irrational mind. Throughout his performance, Bacchus is governed by a form of irrationality--drunkenness. Moreover, Bacchus' irrationality constitutes not only a threat to Summer's authority but also a threat to the order in Summer's court. Upon his entrance, Bacchus addresses his sovereign, "Why, Summer, Summer, how would'st doe but for rayne?" (978-79). Thus begins his friendly but irreverent persuasion to drink. Bacchus' speech abounds with examples of transparent logic-chopping and misapplied learning which do not require analysis here. In his drunkenness, he quite forgets that Summer is his lord, and taunts Summer, "Either take your drink, or you are an infidel" (1004). These words come after and paraphrase the Latin proverb "aut epi aut abi"--drink or go away (1003). A comparison of the two versions shows the word "infidel" to be Bacchus' invention. The tone of the tavern buddy then does not obscure his glancing reference to himself as god of wine, to whom even Summer must pay homage. Indeed, Bacchus asserts his own misrule against Summer's authority: calling himself the god of wine, he knights Will Summers and invites all to drink.

Although Bacchus' performance is easily discredited by his drunken disorder, it marks the clearest case of the assault of irrationality on the rational mind, and on the authority based on reason. Even if Bacchus fails to persuade others to drink, the threat of his irrationality persists in his speech and conduct. In dealing with Bacchus, Summer himself momentarily loses control and curses his subject bitterly. But Summer quickly regains his balance in a statement excusing Bacchus' fault, "It is his drinke, not hee, that rayles on vs" (1107). By this statement, Summer shows the benign reason on which his authority is based, and

effectively reduces Bacchus from the status of a god to that of a subject, and Bacchus' power to a drink. Moreover, Summer's statement reveals his assumptions about power and language. Bacchus is capable of rational speech and conduct if he were sober, and rationality is the source of good order in his state. His own power is justified by the logic and reason that attend his speech and judgment.

In the encounter between Summer and Bacchus, something larger than power play suggests itself. As a ruler of a Christian state, Summer's power is derived from God who is the author of rationality. In Summer's triumph of reason, the pagan myth of Bacchus as the full embodiment of irrationality is subordinated to the Christian myth. In a play where natural and mythological orders are blended, the conflict of power in the natural order often reaches back to a source in myth. The fact that myth legitimizes power in Summer's court also means that the power derived from one myth can be undermined by a conflicting myth, or by a reinterpretation of the same myth with a different emphasis. This is perhaps only implicit in the case of Summer and Bacchus. But the idea becomes explicit in the selective reinterpretation of myth undertaken by Ver, Sol, and Winter to gain political advantage for themselves.

The selective reinterpretation of myth is by far the most powerful form of logic-undermining. Myth has no objective reality; it appeals to subjective experience. In the telling of myth, it is language that creates for the hearer an existential experience that is filled with potency and significance. Myths are often interpreted to explain the nature of the world or of the human condition. This interpretation reduces a myth to rational and often moral dimensions by bringing the mythic action in line with a logical explanation. In the process, the

interpreter assigns a hierarchy of importance among the various elements in the myth, and a set of moral values to the myth. In the selective reinterpretation of the myth, elements hitherto less acknowledged are singled out for emphasis. In this way the reinterpreter reorders the hierarchy of importance among mythic elements and supplants the original line of logic with one of his own, thereby challenging the authority of the original interpretation. Ostensibly, both lines of logic remain intact. But by reinterpreting the myth, the reinterpreter also inadvertently concedes the validity of any line of logic or any hierarchy of mythic elements. In this way the reinterpreter undermines the possibility of a logical way to interpret myth. Furthermore, the reinterpretation not only undermines the original interpretation but is ultimately also self-undermining. And yet since this form of logic-undermining is only implicit, this allows the reinterpreter in his rhetorical performance to foreground his challenge to authority while his self-undermining goes undetected.

In their rhetorical performances, Ver, Sol, and Winter are each able to gain authority and power through a selective reinterpretation of myth. The reinterpretation also furnishes each speaker with a new ethos, and the audience with a new set of responses to the myth, and a new set of values by which to judge the speaker. In effect, each speaker redefines the rules of the game to his advantage. However, what power they gain through reinterpretation they lose in the rest of the performance through an excess of humour.

In the play, the myth of Phaeton is reinterpreted by Ver and Sol; and the myth of Hercules by Winter. These two myths deserve attention because they bring to focus the two major preoccupations of the play: power and

the use of language, and because they are so much a part of the Renaissance imagination.

The use of the Phaeton myth as negative example runs through Tudor literature. As Arthur Golding moralizes, the myth represents blind political ambition and the willfulness of youth. Moreover in the disobedient child is foreshadowed the ambitious, disobedient subject.³³ Gorboduc, presented in 1562 before the queen, weaves these ideas and references to the myth into the political commentary on the issue of succession. In Spenser's Faerie Queene, Phaeton signifies the usurper and the false king.³⁴ In Marlowe's hands the myth gains a dangerous ambivalence. Marlowe goes so far as to glorify the ambition of Tamburlaine who in the play is reviled by his enemies as Phaeton but who suffers no divine judgment for his deeds. And even if the dream of power ultimately plummets into utter despair of hell in Doctor Faustus, the play expresses for its age the will to power that is beyond rational control. Phaeton will fall, but Phaeton was meant to rise. By the 1590's when Elizabeth was approaching sixty and encountering increasing opposition from the younger factions at court, this dangerous ambivalence may well have a deeply felt relevance.

In Nashe's play, Ver's reinterpretation of the myth emphasizes the uncontrollability of Phaeton's horses as the cause of Phaeton's fall. In justifying his dissipation of Summer's wealth, Ver compares himself to the "lusty courser" who, unlike dumb asses, will overleap his bounds to feed. Then by a leap of association, Ver links the lusty courser to Phaeton's horses: "Peraduenture the horses lately sworne to be stolne carried that youthful mind, who, if they had bene Asses, would haue bene yet extant" (250-52). By identifying his prodigality with the energy and

spirit of the mythic horses, Ver romanticizes his prodigality. At the same time, by claiming the horses' part in the destruction of the usurper of power, Ver defines his prodigality as loyalty to his sovereign. The appetite of the lusty courses is conveniently forgotten, and Ver downplays his own usurpation of Summer's wealth.

Ver would do well to have stopped here. Instead, his reference to the Phaeton myth only serves as the exordium to a sermon preaching wastefulness as the will of God:

This world is transitory; it was made of nothing, and it must to nothing: wherefore, if wee will doe the will of our high Creatour (whose will it is, that it passe to nothing), we must helpe to consume it to nothing. (256-59)

Unable to curb his spendthrift nature, Ver goes on to compare God's waste of men's lives to the feast of the emperor Geta.³⁵ The appetite of the lusty courses surfaces once again as an attribute of God. The blasphemous suggestion of a devouring God now completely destroys Ver's image of the dignified preacher. By the end of his "sermon," Ver has exposed his wastefulness. His argument itself becomes another example of waste--of rationality and language.

In contrast to Ver's boast, Sol uses the myth to appeal to emotion. Sol is in a tough predicament because Summer, Autumn, and Winter have condemned him in unison as an upstart and a usurper. Moreover, as the god of poetry, Sol's eloquence casts his defense in doubt. "Let him not talke; for he hath words at will,/ And wit to make the baddest matter good" (498-99). Winter's protest marks a moment in the play when the powers of language to invent a self-serving reality and to silence the

opposition are equally suspect. In his defense, Sol counters the charge of usurpation, and brazens out his offenses of lust as "mishaps" to which all gods are subject. Then, philosophizing on the inescapable end of power, Sol simply states: "Starres daily fall ('tis vse is all in all)/ And men account the fall but natures course" (518-19). Although the statement implies the general condition of all falls from power--including that of the ruler--it has particular reference to the fall of the aspiring subject. As a reference to his own fall, Sol's statement echoes the myth of Phaeton, but it also excuses his offense as a universal fault. The double signification of "nature" as nature and human nature here reinscribes Phaeton's tragedy in the daily human cycle marked by sunrise and sunset. In his glorious rise, asks Sol, "What do I vaunt but your large bounty-hood,/ And shew how liberall a lord I serue?" (522-23). Sol's complaint, even now in his fall, appeals to his lord's magnanimity. Finally, in defending his "crimes" of music and poetry, Sol recalls moving tales of death and mourning--a subject with which Summer can identify:

The dying Swanne is not forbid to sing.
 The waues of Heber playd on Orpheus strings,
 When he (sweete musiques Trophe) was destroyd.
 And as for Poetry, wood eloquence,
 (Dead Phaetons three sisters funerall teares
 That by the gods were to Electrum turnd,)
 Not flint, or rockes of Icy cynders fram'd,
 Deny the sourse of siluer-falling streames. (527-34)³⁶

In Orpheus' death, nature continues his music. In mourning their brother, Phaeton's sisters move the gods to pity. By these examples of the

pathetic power of music and poetry, Sol pleads for the continuance of his two arts. However, since Phaeton is not known for his poetry, Sol's reference to the myth is suggestive of a political intent. The echo of Phaeton's tragedy earlier in the speech now becomes an explicit though indirect use of the myth portraying Phaeton as no longer a threat to the ruling power. Phaeton is dead; likewise, Sol is bereft of power. It is in the sisters' voice that Sol pleads for mercy and disarms Autumn and Winter's call for justice. In this way, Sol attempts to gain mercy through effacing his own power while at the same time asserting the power of poetry to move the listener.

Immediately following, however, Sol's pride shines through when his plea turns into chiding. If his wisdom is taken for the "slyght webbe of arte" (537), says Sol, then "let none but fooles be car'd for of the wise;/ Knowledge owne children knowledge most despise" (539-40). In fact, the tone of pride persists throughout his defense, and at this point Summer finds it necessary to check his subject. "Thou know'st too much to know to keepe the meane," Summer says, and goes on to accuse Sol of drying up the Thames (541). When Sol attempts to transfer responsibility for this deed to the moon's eclipse, pride is exposed in its utter evasiveness.

It is perhaps Nashe's own brand of complex and self-referential humor to have the usurpers of Summer's wealth and power justify themselves by means of a myth condemning usurpation. However, something can be said for Nashe's management of his audience who were used to hearing Phaeton's lesson repeated in the mouths of virtuous characters. A similar move to surprise expectation is at work in Winter's deployment of the myth of Hercules.

The tale of Hercules dragging Cerberus out of Hades is another myth

that claimed the imagination of the Renaissance. The Middle Ages allegorized the myth, giving it the Christian interpretation of Christ's triumph over sin and hell. It is therefore fitting that Winter with his devotion to the teachings of divinity should begin his speech with this myth. His emphasis, however, is not on the heroic Hercules, but on the monstrous Cerberus and the poisonous herb aconite from the sap of which supposedly ink was made. This selective reinterpretation enables Winter to attack the learned arts at the source: the ink with which poets and philosophers write and disseminate their "lies." It is perhaps ironic that Winter should turn the glory of Christ into a source of corruption. In addition, a contradiction exists between Winter's use of myth and his professed distrust of mythology (see pp. 12-13). Winter then is either judging himself and others by different standards, or his argument is built on a lie. Whichever the case, his credibility is called into question, and the strength of his argument is undermined. But since this selective retelling of the myth comes at the beginning of his speech, the contradiction is not immediately apparent. Moreover one must applaud Winter's assessment of his audience, for both Summer and Autumn are receptive to mythology. The hellish origin of ink sets a tone for the rest of this "invective tale"; it "[finds] causes and beginnings" for the waywardness of learning and the corruption of society; it dictates a point of view. It allows Winter to assume a pose of "authoritative telling" throughout his performance. He assigns motives: the practice of contemplation is the poets and philosophers' excuse for sloth. He dismisses whole philosophies in a sentence: "Anaximander, Anaximenes,/ . . . positively said the aire was God" (1295-96). He states his interpretations, and indeed misinterpretations, with the conviction of absolute truth: "In

briefe, all bookse, diuinitie except,/ Are nought but tales of the diuels lawes" (1417-18).

The longer Winter speaks, however, the more questionable his "authority" becomes. His use of learning to attack learning graduates into a praise of ignorance. His image of righteous indignation wears thin from the accumulated untruths and misinterpretations. In this way, Winter's performance defeats logic in its basic aims of discovering truth. Winter's anger, too, becomes the cause of his own undoing. Summer's judgment that "so much vntrueth wit neuer shadowed" is both a reprimand to Winter and a defense of learning and of Autumn (1486).

However, Winter's speech is extremely powerful not in spite of but because of his distortions of truth. His unscrupulous performance implicates other skillful users of language, including those he condemns and Summer's subjects. Summer's comment that "words haue their course, the winde blowes where it lists" reveals his awareness that Winter is not the only one who can shape words to distort meaning (1489). Thus even as Summer realizes the extremeness of Winter's charge that "bookmen are pestilent members of the state," he cannot entirely dismiss the potential subversiveness of writing. The reflexive nature of language thus has logic and reason trapped in such a way that the truth or falsity of Winter's speech no longer seems the main issue. Unlike other subjects, Winter's failed performance advances his power in Summer's court. The appointment of Winter marks the utter powerlessness of Summer's rationality.

So far four forms of logic-undermining have been analyzed: equivocation, satire, drunken speech, and selective reinterpretation of myth. There may of course be more. But these forms alone show the

inseparability of power and language in the play. In the dying Summer, we see that power does not inhere in any person, lineage, or position. Likewise language as a means to power reflects no intrinsic power in the speaker nor an absolute order on which power is based. Thus in the sequence of accounts, power becomes a fluid configuration, changing with the momentary success and eventual failure of each speaker's rhetorical performance. Summer's subjects undermine logic in order to undermine Summer's authority. And yet in these endeavors they have implicitly accepted both a political and a rhetorical authority. Hence their undoing.

Among the different forms of logic-undermining, the selective reinterpretation of myth is most interesting in relation to Nashe's own struggle with rhetorical authority. In selective reinterpretation, Nashe has identified the legitimizing source of authority in myth and the means by which to strike at this authority. As we have seen, the established rhetorical practice of the Tudor Humanists is based on a linguistic idealism which ultimately derives its authority from the Christian myth. Nashe's selective reinterpretation of myth in the play therefore suggests the conscious level at which he is engaged in his antagonism to rhetorical authority. Moreover, the strategies of reinterpretation presented in the play indicate the possibilities Nashe explores in redefining the rules of the language game. In Sol's plea for mercy instead of justice for the usurper, Nashe stages an attempt at self-preservation within an authoritative structure. In Ver's romanticizing of wastefulness, Nashe proposes the possibility of validating humor as a source of authority. Perhaps Nashe's greatest self-investment in achieving authority as a writer is seen in Winter's reinterpretation of Christ's triumph over hell as a source of corruption on earth. Ironically, the reinterpretation

legitimizes by divine inadvertance ink, and the kind of writing which is opposed to the "good order of words" upheld by authoritative rhetorical practice. That Nashe presents these reinterpretations of myth as a successful if temporary means of gaining authority is significant. It is true that the failure of other forms of logic-undermining reflects, according to Jonathan Crewe's insight, Nashe's self-critical awareness that a rhetoric motivated by antagonism to a rhetorical authority will ultimately fail to emancipate itself from that authority. But in the partial success of selective reinterpretation of myth, Nashe holds out a last hope for this freedom.

In a sense the play itself is a daring reinterpretation of a myth. For in his use of the seasonal myth, Nashe denies the traditional association of the emperor with the sun or with spring in their powers to renew the earth³⁷ to present an emperor at the end of his power. This use of the writer's creative prerogative also expresses the arbitrariness of using mythology to validate power in the human realm. But arbitrary or not, the validation of power depends on the power of the myth itself to capture the imagination of an age. Myths of order and rationality in the world and in the mind are doubtless some of the most powerful myths of Western civilization. To truly emancipate his rhetoric from the authoritative mode, Nashe would have to go beyond opposition to these myths and claim another that justifies the pre-existence of something larger than order--chaos itself. Such a myth had a long tradition, and its presence in the Renaissance was reflected in the writings of Nashe's contemporaries.³⁸ However, the myth had never fully captured the cultural imagination of the English Renaissance.

Despite the tremendous odds Nashe faces in his struggle with

rhetorical authority, the power of his rhetoric to entertain the audience remains a strong challenge to the authoritative mode. By the very unpredictability, logic-undermining, exaggeration, excess--in one word, indecorum--of his rhetoric, Nashe engages the audience in the liveliness of his performance. Through a series of poses, his rhetorical persona gives the illusion of a person speaking spontaneously. In other words, by departing from the imitation of an established mode, and dramatizing the self in writing, Nashe's style achieves a certain transparency that reveals the speaker's self. Nashe breaks the framework separating writer and audience, and invites the audience to play along.

In Summer's Last Will, Nashe's rhetoric fulfills to a large extent the pageant's function of providing entertainment for the audience. Of course, much of the comic effect also comes from the physical aspects of staging, lost or implicit, such as Backwinter's mad dog antics and Bacchus' farcical misrule. In any case, the effectiveness of the entertainment consists in the underminer's self-undermining, undoing his assumed image and purpose right before the eyes of the audiences (within and without the play). As such, Nashe's entertainment also fulfills the ritualistic function of managing the political anxieties of the Croydon audience, if only for the duration of the play.

In larger focus, the play can be viewed as what Victor Turner calls a "liminoid phenomenon"³⁹ for both Nashe and his audience. The play refers to a transitional state both in Elizabethan society and Nashe's direction as a writer. Summer's court marks a space out of the ordinary life at Croydon, a space in which disease and disorder reflect the audience's political anxieties and the uncertain fate of Nashe's rhetoric. Throughout the accounts, the characters "flow . . . according

to an inner logic" which produces a structure puzzling to today's readers (Turner, 47). But through the flow of the characters' interactions, the play expresses a desire, even a possibility: for the Croydon circle, it is perhaps the settlement of the Elizabethan succession; for the author, rhetorical emancipation. But even in the very subjunctivity of these wishes the play works against the interests of established authorities. Nashe's play is like a disease surfacing and is, whether Nashe realizes or not, subversive as hell.

Notes

¹ Both 1592 and 1593 have been suggested as possible dates. Evidence however strongly favors the 1592 date. For fuller discussions, see Ronald B. McKerrow's edition of The Works of Thomas Nashe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), IV, 416-19; G. R. Hibbard's Thomas Nashe: A Critical Introduction (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), pp. 87-90; and Charles Nicholl's A Cup of News: The Life of Thomas Nashe (London, Boston, Melbourne, and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), pp. 135-39. Although McKerrow finds no evidence that the play was actually performed, Nicholl refers to letters written by Nashe which suggest the author's part in helping to produce the play.

² C. L. Barber, "Prototypes of Festive Comedy in a Pageant Entertainment: Summer's Last Will and Testament," in Shakespeare's Festive Comedy (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1959), pp. 58-86.

³ Nicholl, pp. 135-39, 245-47.

⁴ Hibbard, chapter 4 (pp. 85-105). Hibbard draws on Nashe's experience as a commercial writer in London to provide a convincing analysis of the various social types in London satirized in the play.

⁵ Peter Berek, "Artifice and Realism in Lyly, Nashe, and Love's Labor's Lost," Studies in English Literature 1500-1900: Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama, 23, No. 2 (Spring 1983), 207-22.

⁶ This is a central idea in Jonathan V. Crewe's Unredeemed Rhetoric:

Thomas Nashe and the Scandal of Authorship (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1982). The rhetorical analysis of Summer's Last Will in part IV of this study draws on Professor Crewe's illuminating analysis of Nashe's university experience and his early career as a commercial writer.

⁷ Although Sol or Apollo, Orion, Bacchus, and Vertumnus are part of the mythological order, in the play these characters also represent the natural phenomena of the sun, a star, the guardian of wine, and the succession of the seasons.

⁸ Citations are to Ronald B. McKerrow's edition of The Works of Thomas Nashe, IV, 227-295.

⁹ Stephen Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-fashioning from More to Shakespeare (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980). In the Introduction, Greenblatt discusses a set of ten governing conditions that are present in most instances in self-fashioning. One of these conditions is that, in the encounter between an authority and an alien, "if both the authority and the alien are located outside the self, they are at the same time experienced as inward necessities, so that both submission and destruction are always internalized" (p. 9). To this idea the present study is indebted.

¹⁰ David Bevington, Tudor Drama and Politics (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), pp. 141-55. In his chapter entitled "Unwelcome Advice on the Succession," Bevington names three plays dealing with the subject of succession. The plays and their dates of performance before the queen are: Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton's Gorboduc, 1562; John Pickering, Horestes, 1567; and The Misfortunes of Arthur produced by the gentlemen of Gray's Inn, 1588.

¹¹ Lacey Baldwin Smith, Elizabeth Tudor: Portrait of a Queen (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown, 1975). Smith suggests that Elizabeth's refusal to name a successor was probably due to the fact that "she had not forgotten the well wishers who had crept to Hatfield House in anticipation of her sister's death. . . . In 1564, de Silva [the Spanish ambassador] was convinced that Elizabeth would never name her successor because of these memories" (p. 129). And in fact "we have no last will and testament for Elizabeth" (p. 135).

¹² McKerrow, pp. 417-18; Nicholl, pp. 135-39; Berek, p. 212.

¹³ The sense that rumor is the traitor's means of revenge is established in Summer's speech through a series of associations. Summer compares traitorous servants to serpents who "crowch so low;/ If they be disappointed of their pray,/ Most traitorously will trace their tailes and sting" (1165-67), and to the lapwing who, having built its nest on man's dung, "will follow him with yelling and false cries" (1171). The "false cries" of betrayal is followed by the allusion to Sidney's "vaine chattering pies" (1173), which in turn leads to the passage on Echo quoted in the text.

¹⁴ According to the Hollinshed Chronicles, and to various historians, Elizabeth did have detractors and traitorous subjects throughout her reign who would resort to rumor and plotting. For example, the death of Lord Robert Dudley's wife in 1560 was the source of a good deal of rumor about the relationship between Dudley and the queen (Smith, 124).

¹⁵ Smith, chap. 9, "Good Mistress--Dread Sovereign," deals with the problems faced by Elizabeth in the last two decades of her rule, especially the opposition from a younger faction at court. For a detailed account of the religious opposition to Elizabeth from both

Catholics and Puritans, refer to W. H. Frere's A History of the English Church in the Reigns of Elizabeth and James I (1558-1625) (London and New York: Macmillan, 1904), chapters 8-15 (pp. 129-274).

¹⁶ Dictionary of the History of Ideas, ed. Philip P. Wiener (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), II, 431. Hereafter cited in the text as DHI.

¹⁷ Stephen Orgel, "Making Greatness Familiar," Genre 15, Nos. 1 and 2 (Spring/Summer, 1982), 41.

¹⁸ Frances Yates, Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul), 1975, pp. 59-61.

¹⁹ Elizabeth's adherence to the Roman Catholic tradition and the outward forms of worship was in part designed to pacify her Catholic subjects. As supreme ruler over both church and state, Elizabeth was careful to accommodate both Catholicism and Puritanism in points of theology and religious practice. For a fuller discussion, see Horton Davies' Worship and Theology in England: From Cranmer to Hooker 1534-1603 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970). Davies points to the political significance of the queen's via media, by which she had "maintained the peace and unity of church and state, preserving them from the perils of religious wars abroad and civil war at home" (p. 241).

²⁰ Orgel writes: "the chivalric code, with its attendant social forms and public displays, had been a crucial element in Tudor policy from the beginning. . . . Elizabeth redefined Tudor chivalry to create a mythology that was particularly her own" (Orgel, p. 41).

²¹ Around 1590, Nashe became involved in the religious conflict from the literary side, playing a limited part in the anti-Martinist campaign. For the extent of Nashe's involvement, see Hibbard, pp. 36-48.

²² On p. 139 of his book, Nicholl calls attention to the allusion to Marlowe's line in Edward II, "I see my tragedie written in thy browes" (V, v, 71). My reading of Nashe's version as comic is based on the inversion of roles (having the king speak the subject's line), and the third person address (compare with Edward's direct address of his murderer).

²³ Gorboduc and King Lear, for example.

²⁴ See Hibbard, 102; Berek, 211; Nicholl, 137-38.

²⁵ Michael Shapiro, Children of the Revels (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1977), p. 76. Quoted by Berek on p. 211.

²⁶ The above paragraphs are largely a restatement of the groundwork provided in Berek's analysis.

²⁷ Jonathan Dollimore sees the presence of the plague in the world of Summer's song as a reflection of an uncertainty in the sixteenth century about the providentialist belief in natural mutability as part of the divine scheme. For this discussion see Dollimore's Radical Drama (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1984), pp. 94-95.

²⁸ Barber describes the song as "an imaginative projection of the pageant's whole subject" (p. 81). In particular, I am indebted to his connections of Ver and Bacchus to wit, and Orion and Sol to strength (pp. 81-82).

²⁹ Crewe, 23-24. Crewe's discussion refers specifically to Nashe's Anatomy of Absurdity.

³⁰ In this sense, the rhetorical performances of Summer's subjects can be seen as artistic instances of self-fashioning.

³¹ Hibbard also remarks that in his treatment of the seasons, Nashe has endowed each character with "distinct attributes and a personality of his own" (Hibbard, 93).

³² "A great rot of sheep" may be taken to mean a great number of sheep. However, according to the OED, the meaning of "rot" in the sixteenth century invariably has to do with disease and decay.

³³ Arthur Golding, "Epistle," in Shakespeare's Ovid Being Arthur Golding's Translation of the Metamorphoses, ed. W. H. D. Rouse (London: at the de la More Press, 1904), p. 2, ll. 71-84.

³⁴ Jane Aptekar, Icons of Justice: Iconography and Thematic Imagery in Book V of The Faerie Queene (New York and London: Columbia Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 70-83.

³⁵ Dollimore also sees in Ver's blasphemous wit "a damning indictment of divine sadism" (p. 106). In context with the "cosmic decay" in the play, the passage is, Dollimore suggests, an instance in Renaissance literature of the subversion of providentialist belief of Calvinism.

³⁶ I regret that the lines beginning with the image of Phaeton's sisters are corrupt. However the "flint or rocks of icy cinders framed" probably refers to "hard hearts," especially in view of Sol's reference to envy which follows this quoted passage. Thus in appealing to Summer's mercy, Sol is also trying to prevent Autumn and Winter's envy from hardening Summer's heart against him.

³⁷ The association of the emperor with the sun is a Renaissance commonplace. The theme of spring is also present in Elizabethan pageantry and the royal mythology of Elizabeth as Astraea. See Yates, pp. 66-67, and pp. 217-18.

³⁸ Lucretius in the sixth century B.C., and the Hermetica (third century B.C.) explain the creation of the world out of chance and chaos. Among Nashe's contemporaries, Shakespeare in King Lear, and Marlowe in Dr. Faustus, both present the vision of a larger chaos outside of the

order of the world. Sir John Davies in Orchestra on the other hand rejects the Lucretian view of an atomistic world governed by chance. These are just a few examples.

³⁹ Victor Turner, "Frame, Flow, and Reflection: Ritual and Drama as Public Liminality," in Performance in Postmodern Culture, eds. Michel Benamou and Charles Caramello (Milwaukee: Center for Twentieth Century Studies, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1977), pp. 33-55.

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DISEASE AND POLITICAL ANXIETIES IN NASHE'S
SUMMER'S LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1985

Abstract. Summer's Last Will and Testament has specific relevance to the political and linguistic issues of its time. On one level, the pageant presents the ending of summer and ritualistically objectifies the audience's anxieties about mortality. But beyond conventional expectations, the pageant features an overt and well developed power structure within which Summer's choosing of a successor is centerstaged. Moreover, the business of succession and the attendant threats of political subversion and disorder in the play reflect political issues and anxieties dominant in the latter part of Elizabeth's reign. Given its political relevance, the play's ritualistic function goes beyond objectifying the anxiety about mortality to deal with the political anxieties of the Croydon audience. From a linguistic perspective, the dynamics of power relationships in the play is embodied in the rhetorical performances of various characters. Given Nashe's career of antagonism to the rhetorical authority of the Ciceronian model and the Tudor Humanist position of linguistic idealism, the power structure in the play provides a framework within which Nashe's antagonism is dramatized in terms of the constant attempt of aspiring subjects to undermine the figure of authority, Summer. In this way, the play itself is a dramatic realization of Nashe's own struggle as a writer.