

Underplayed Rivalry: Patronage and the Marlovian Subtext of *Summer's Last Will and Testament*

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It has been something of a critical commonplace that Thomas Nashe was an early embodiment of professional authorship, one of the first representatives of a discourse 'endowed with the author function'.¹ Such defining moments as the Marprelate controversy or the Nashe-Harvey quarrel in the 1590s have been considered almost pivotal, with people like Nashe ushering in a new profession and his arch-enemy Gabriel Harvey adhering to the old and (by then) largely anachronistic ideal of patronage.² As has often been pointed out, one consequence of this professionalisation of the writer is a competitive, sometimes even combative relationship towards other writers and their texts.³ Nashe's literary relation to his friend Christopher Marlowe is no exception, as is demonstrated in *Lenten Stuffe*, where Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* is the subject of an extended parody that strives to outdo Marlowe even while praising his poem as the work of a 'diviner Muse'.

However, the focus on Nashe as a professional writer may in fact be one reason why his only extant play, *Summer's Last Will and Testament*, has received relatively little attention, for this text bears the mark of professional authorship to a lesser extent than most of his other works. The play is unusual both in the sense of being Nashe's only play and in

¹ The phrase is Michel Foucault's in 'What is an Author' (Foucault 1991: 107). Nashe and the notion of authorship has been examined by Crewe 1982: *passim*; Manley 1995: 320-40; Halasz 1997: 82-113. For a recent corrective to the traditional idea of Nashe as a 'professional writer', see Brown 2004, to which the present study is indebted. Any study of literary relations in this period must owe a debt to Richard Helgerson's studies of the Elizabethan literary system (Helgerson 1976 and 1983), although I wish to avoid stressing Helgerson's notion of a 'system', which has to my mind the wrong connotations, overshadowing contradictions and suggesting a proportionateness which was never really there in the first place. To me, it is the 'unsystematicness' of the Elizabethan literary system that is one of its defining features.

² See Lorna Hutson's seminal study, *Thomas Nashe in Context*, especially 197-214.

³ See for example Shapiro 1991.

the sense of being written for performance outside the commercial theatres. Featuring personifications of the seasons as well as a comical commentator in the shape of the appropriately named Will Summers (a historical person who was the court jester of Henry VIII), *Summer's Last Will and Testament* was written for and probably performed at Archbishop Whitgift's household in October, 1592. It was never part of the commercial repertoire at the public theatres.⁴ As the text was not printed until 1600, after Nashe's works were banned (by his former patron Whitgift, in fact), it does not seem to bear the mark of Nashe's own involvement in the publishing business in same way as most of his other works.⁵ The idea of professional competition, then, would seem inappropriate to elucidate Nashe's relation to other authors in the play.⁶ It is instead, I suggest, in the framework of patronage that the key to such relations must be sought. Thus, while the 'vertical' relations of patronage provide the fundamental context for my discussion, the issue at stake in this essay is how such complex interdependencies are reflected on a

⁴ See McKerrow 1910: 5.416.

⁵ As McKerrow points out, there is no evidence that Nashe himself published the play; it may even have been printed after his death (1910: 5.34). Nashe has long been regarded as a prototype of the free writer living off his pen on the rising marketplace of print where patronage was becoming increasingly anachronistic (see e.g. Hutson 1989). Such a commercial climate, the argument runs, favours originality and competition, the assertion of one's artistic independence vis-à-vis other competitors. While I would certainly not disagree with the point that Nashe plays a pivotal role in the history of commercial authorship, it should be emphasised that to the writers themselves such distinctions were not as 'systematic' or obvious as they may appear to us. Rather, as Georgia Brown points out, Nashe's texts 'constitute a defense of redundancy and excess which bridges the gap between print and patronage' (Brown 2004: 65; emphasis added). Properly speaking, then, the patronage system could be seen as diversifying rather than merely declining in the 1590s (Brown 2004: 62-3). At the same time, for reasons already pointed out *Summer's Last Will and Testament* seems to be less than representative of Nashe's bridging of print/patronage.

⁶ In fact, what is striking about *Summer's Last Will and Testament* is its lack of controversy. As Sherri Geller points out, 'to our knowledge, Nashe's only extant play was not considered seditious by his contemporaries; if he was involved in its first printing in 1600, then perhaps he thought that this was one work to which the authorities would not object' (1995: 148).

'horizontal' level, that is, in this case, the relation between Nashe and Christopher Marlowe and how it is reflected in *Summer's Last Will and Testament*.

To my knowledge, no one has examined the Marlovian elements of Nashe's play or their significance to the relationship between the two authors. I would suggest that instead of the combative, superseding pattern of imitation in many of Nashe's other works, there is in *Summer's Last Will and Testament* a pattern of underplayed, covert referencing that reproduces the conditions of patronage in terms of succession and servitude rather than open competitiveness.⁷ By its very entanglement in patronage, and by its specific relation to the Archbishop's household the play distances itself from the commercial enterprise that Shapiro describes, resulting in an underplayed form of rivalry that is visible through hints and accents that are surprisingly free from the parodic exuberance that characterise much of Nashe's other writing.

While *Summer's Last Will and Testament* is all about succession, the change of one season into another, there is also a peculiar form of textual exchange with Marlowe at stake here, inaugurated by images of death, envy, the usurpation of royal power. It hardly seems coincidental that the two plays by Marlowe most frequently alluded to in *Summer's Last Will and Testament* are also closest to Nashe's own theme of succession and patronage: *Tamburlaine* and *Edward the Second*. These plays, one of which was one of the biggest commercial and artistic successes of

⁷ For the concept of imitation in the Renaissance, see for example Pigman 1980 and Greene 1982. Pigman discerns two 'major categories of imitation' (1980: 3) in this period: those of *imitatio* and *aemulatio*. Roughly, while the former denotes the following of role models classical and contemporary, the latter involves superseding the models. In Erasmus' succinct formulation, 'imitation aims at similarity, emulation, at victory' (qtd. in Pigman 1980: 24). While I would see Nashe's imitation of Marlowe in *Summer's Last Will and Testament* in terms of *imitatio* rather than *aemulatio*, it should be pointed out that the neat theories of imitation provided by Pigman or Greene are insufficient to cover the messy reality of literary competition in Elizabethan England, not least since such theories tend to emphasise the diachronic at the expense of the synchronic and thus focus on classical models rather than contemporary ones (Shapiro 1991: 13-14; Cheney 1997: 17-18). At the same time, as will be apparent throughout this essay, *Summer's Last Will and Testament* cannot purely be seen as the result of competition on a commercial market.

Elizabethan theatre and the other of which was a relatively new play in October 1592,⁸ both elaborate upon and subvert the idea of dynastic succession; *Tamburlaine* because it suggests that ‘upward mobility is the universal law of nature’ (Riggs 2004: 205) regardless of one’s position in society; *Edward the Second* because it pits an aristocratic system against one of ability and cunning, in which art—‘sweet speeches, comedies and pleasant shows’ (1.1.55)—is a vital component in the royal minion Gaveston’s journey to power. In *Summer’s Last Will and Testament* it is mainly two characters that seem to be full of Marlovian echoes: Sol and Back-winter. These characters have in common the fact that they both—unlike many other characters in the play—speak blank verse of an ambitious and often suggestively Marlovian kind, thus defining themselves as competitors in a field where Marlowe had set the standard in the early 1590s. At the same time, within the feudal hierarchy of the seasons both Sol and Back-winter are reluctant subordinates who aspire towards the position of monarch, something which they very clearly share with both Tamburlaine the Scythian shepherd and Gaveston the foreign upstart. These similarities take the form of stylistic and thematic imitation in *Summer’s Last Will and Testament*. Sol is a servant of the seasons who takes on the Oriental splendour of Tamburlaine but also emphasises the role of artistic merit—‘music’ and ‘poetry’, specifically—in a way that closely parallels Gaveston’s rise to power. Back-winter, on the other hand, is the envious son of Winter, who attempts to resolve his subordinate position by way of a distinctly Tamburlainian-sounding rhetoric. Yet neither Sol nor Back-winter display their Marlovian allegiances in a manner that suggests a confrontation with Marlowe’s style; rather, they seem to acknowledge their insufficiency in that respect, as when Back-winter puts his entire speech in a mode—the subjunctive, envious ‘would I’ rather than ‘I shall’—that is alien to the performative rhetoric of Tamburlaine. The grounds for this particular mode of underplayed literary competition should, I suggest, be sought in the condition of patronage, and I will therefore begin by a more general discussion of this condition before moving on to Nashe’s play.

⁸ Like most other Elizabethan plays, the dating of *Edward the Second* is less than certain. Charles Forker argues 1591 to be the likeliest date, ‘but, theoretically, the play could have been written as late as early 1592’ (Forker 1995: 16).

It is no exaggeration to say that patronage is a crucial dimension of *Summer's Last Will and Testament*. Brown claims that 'unlike Nashe himself, modern critics are reluctant to acknowledge his debts to patronage' (2004: 59-60), but this does not seem to be the case with Nashe's only play. In one of the few discussions of it to appear during the last decade, Sherri Geller argues that the theme of patrons and their illiberality is basically what keeps the structure of this episodic play together.⁹ From a different perspective, Marie Axton observes how the play voices an anxiety about the status of revels, its personification of the seasons resonating as 'both the climate in which art may flourish (or be nipped), and as embodied patrons of art' (270). Indeed, the play makes more than frequent reference to the conditions of writers under patronage, as when the moralising Winter speaks of

certaine drunken parasites,
Term'd Poets, which, for a meales meat or two,
Would promise monarchs immortalitie. (1268-70)¹⁰

Patronage should consequently not be seen as an obsolete or negligible phenomenon in the play, but it should not be understood in absolute opposition to professional authorship either. As Brown points out, patronage is based not only on the patron's benefit, but on mutual profit, on 'principles of generosity that make it productive for authors as well as patrons' (2004: 64). Hence, unlike what much previous scholarship has argued, patronage in the 1590s could actually provide writers with a model of exchange in which they could locate their own authorial space; this model 'suggests how authors could negotiate independence and self-assertion through, not in spite of, existing institutions such as patronage' (2004: 64). Simply put, what may seem like clear paradigmatic shifts to us were hardly perceived as such by the authors or patrons themselves.

That said, I would emphasise that what is at stake here is not just the relation between the isolated writer and his patron. Analyses of *Summer's Last Will and Testament* have largely ignored the question of

⁹ For the opposite idea that the play defends aristocratic generosity, see Bristol 1985: 83-4.

¹⁰ *Summer's Last Will and Testament* is quoted from volume 3 of R. B. McKerrow's edition of Nashe's works; line references to the play will be given parenthetically in the text.

how Nashe, under these particular circumstances and in this particular text, negotiates his own position vis-à-vis other, contemporary writers.¹¹ James Shapiro has claimed that in this period ‘the writing of plays remained a commercial and therefore *inescapably competitive* enterprise’ (1991: 14; emphasis added), but his generalized statement overlooks the specific conditions for the production of a play like *Summer’s Last Will and Testament*.¹² Given the perspective outlined above, it would appear that the competition with other writers would become less outspoken and aggressive than in other of Nashe’s works where patronage itself is the subject of elaborate mockery and the relations to other writers are openly parodic.¹³

However, in order to investigate the precise nature of the Marlovian presence in *Summer’s Last Will and Testament*, we will need, firstly, to contextualise the literary relationship between Nashe and Marlowe from a more specific historical perspective that covers the moment in time when the play was composed, and secondly, to establish a conceptual taxonomy that maps the precise nature of Nashe’s imitation under these historical circumstances. To begin with, then, what was Nashe’s relation to Marlowe?

It is well-known that Nashe generally speaks of his contemporary in familiar and sympathetic terms, and the title-page of *Dido Queene of*

¹¹ The only significant exceptions to this rule are Michael R. Best’s 1969 essay, ‘Nashe, Lyly, and *Summer’s Last Will and Testament*’, which, rather speculatively, argues that Nashe’s play is a revision of an older play by Lyly, and Peter Berek’s ‘Artifice and Realism in Lyly, Nashe, and *Love’s Labor’s Lost*’, which is more concerned with the transition from ‘artificial’ court comedy to the more realistic modes that informs Shakespeare’s play. Neither article, however, deals with Marlowe in any way.

¹² True, Shapiro admits a wide range of imitative strategies within this commercial field, from the relatively uncontroversial to the downright pathological; but it would nonetheless be mistaken to locate a play such as *Summer’s Last Will and Testament* in this taxonomy without paying attention to its indebtedness to patronage—a condition which Shapiro consistently ignores.

¹³ One could think, for example, of *Four Letters Confuted*, where the system of patronage is itself the subject of extravagant mockery in the dedication ‘to the most copious Carminist of our time, and famous persecutor of *Priscian*, his verie friend Maister *Apis Lapis*’, a man of whom Nashe exclaims, ‘What a famous pottle-pot Patron you haue beene to olde Poets in your daies’ (McKerrow 1910: 1.256).

Carthage (1594) famously credits both Nashe and Marlowe with the authorship (even though scholars usually believe that Nashe only prepared that work for the press).¹⁴ Nashe's send-up of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*—of which more shortly—clearly indicates that he was not alien to the idea of imitating Marlowe after the latter's death. Such general observations, however, say relatively little about why Nashe would choose to imitate Marlowe in the way he did at this particular moment in time—the autumn of 1592, when Nashe probably wrote *Summer's Last Will and Testament* and when Marlowe was still alive. There is certainly a historical dimension to the attractiveness of patronage at this particular time—the prolonged closure of the public theatres due to the plague in 1592, which for some time caused playwrights to seek their income elsewhere.¹⁵ And this appears to be the case with Marlowe too—as Riggs points out, Nashe's colleague may have been in active search for patronage at the time, since his epitaph on Roger Manwood and the dedication to Mary, Countess of Pembroke in Thomas Watson's *Amintae Gaudia* both appeared in 1592 (Riggs 2004: 304-5). The turn to patronage in *Summer's Last Will and Testament*,

¹⁴ For Nashe's putative collaboration with Marlowe in *Dido Queen of Carthage*, see McKerrow 1910 ('it seem fairly clear from the general evidence of style that the greater part of the work is Marlowe's, but what share, if any, Nashe had in it is very difficult to decide', 4.294), and H. J. Oliver, who however points out that 'there are more than a dozen words that are found elsewhere in Nashe but not in Marlowe, and at least three classical allusions to which Nashe's other works offer closer parallels than do Marlowe's' (Marlowe 1968: xxii-xxiii).

By Nashe's own account, he and Marlowe knew each other well; in the second preface to *Christ's Teares over Jerusalem* (1594), Nashe speaks fondly of 'poore deceased Kit Marlow' (McKerrow 1910: 2.180), and in *Haue with you to Saffron-Walden* (1596) he states that 'I neuer abusd Marloe, Greene, Chettle in my life, nor anie of my frends that vsde me like a frend; which both Marloe and Greene (if they were aliue) vnder their hands would testifie' (McKerrow 1910: 3.131). In *Haue With You to Saffron-Walden*, Nashe cites Marlowe as saying of Gabriel Harvey's brother Richard that 'he was an asse, good for nothing but to preach of the Iron Age' (McKerrow 1910: 3.85). Nashe also quotes two lines from Marlowe's translation of Ovid's *Amores* in *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594).

¹⁵ The plague broke out on 8 August and forced the theatres to be closed until the end of the year. For the history of plague in Elizabethan England, see Slack 1985.

then, could be said to involve the obviously material explanation of seeking income, and Nashe and Marlowe would then be players in the same arena seeking their fortune in similar ways.

At the same time, the conditions under which Nashe's play were performed suggest otherwise, and there may be a rather straightforward reason why it would be so. Scholars generally agree that in *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*, which was published exactly around the time *Summer's Last Will and Testament* was written,¹⁶ both Marlowe and Nashe are referred to among 'those Gentlemen his Quondam acquaintance, that spend their wits in making plaies' (Greene 1969: E4^v).¹⁷ In this work, the author famously obsesses over the notion that Marlowe is an atheist who indulges in 'confused mockeries' and 'pestilent Machiulian pollicy' (1969: F1^r). At least this characterisation of Marlowe suggests why Nashe referred to his colleague in such a covert way: if Marlowe was publicly denounced as an atheist at this time, there would be ample reason for Nashe—who was, after all, associated with Marlowe in the *Groatsworth*¹⁸—to avoid too open allusions to his colleague in a work performed on the Archbishop's premises. Politically, Nashe tended to side with conservative forces (which may, incidentally, be one reason why critics have problems in dealing with his aesthetic radicalism), and the polemical outing of Marlowe as a Machiavellian would hardly be a reason for Nashe to sing his colleague's praise—or, indeed, depict him as a competitor—in his play.

Yet, Marlowe's plays are undoubtedly and unmistakably there in *Summer's Last Will and Testament*, and they are not necessarily treated

¹⁶ *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit* was entered in the Stationers' Register on 20th September, 1592, while *Summer's Last Will and Testament* was probably written for performance in October that year.

¹⁷ Although long ascribed to Robert Greene, this attack is now often thought to be written by Henry Chettle (see the edition by D. Allen Carroll, Binghampton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1994: 131-45). However, my quotations from the *Groatsworth* are taken from the Scolar Press facsimile of the 1592 edition, which is published under Greene's name.

¹⁸ After talking about Marlowe, the author immediately proceeds to Nashe: 'With thee I ioyne yong *Iuuenall*, that byting Satyryst, that lastlie with mee together writ a Comedie' (Greene 1969: F1^r). Thus, the two authors are explicitly 'joined' within this polemic.

with dismissiveness or parodic distance either.¹⁹ Indeed, the apparent seriousness of some of the verse passages—in fact even the more Marlovian bits—has been the object of consternation to critics, as in G. R. Hibbard’s assessment that ‘Sol, like all the more exalted figures in the play speaks blank verse, and blank verse of some quality too. The lines are largely end-stopped, but, when one considers the date of it, much that he says surprises by its lyrical grace and easy flow’ (1962: 95). I would suggest that the “grace” and “flow” of this passage becomes less perplexing if seen in its right literary—and Marlovian—context. In order to understand this context, we will first take one step back, or rather ahead, to the most famous and extended of Nashe’s references to Marlowe, the parody of *Hero and Leander* in *Lenten Stuffe* (1599).

Unsurprisingly, in this passage it is professional authorship rather than patronage that is heralded. Nashe rewrites *Hero and Leander* over

¹⁹ To some extent I find Linda Hutcheon’s notion of parody evocative for the discussion of Nashe’s and Marlowe’s literary relationship, especially Hutcheon’s insistence that parody, besides its traditional connotations of mockery, is ‘an accord or intimacy *instead* of a contrast’ (1985: 32; emphasis mine), since on a general level, I find more of intimacy than mockery in the way Marlowe is present in *Summer’s Last Will and Testament*. However, quite apart from the problems of using a theory focusing specifically on twentieth-century art forms for Renaissance texts (indeed, Hutcheon herself insists that ‘there are no transhistorical definitions of parody’, 1985: 32), *A Theory of Parody* is too little concerned with the diachronic rather than synchronic dimensions of textual relations (cf. Cheney 1997: 17 for a discussion). Marlowe and Nashe were, after all, contemporaries and it is the relation between living writers in the same historical moment that interests me here.

A related problem can be found in the Bakhtinian notion of parody, in which the ‘second voice, once having made its home in the other’s discourse, clashes hostilely with its primordial host and forces him to serve directly opposing aims’ (Bakhtin 1984: 193). As suggested, I do not see Nashe’s use of Marlowe in his play in terms of a clash that serves ‘directly opposing aims’. Given the critical tendency of using Bakhtinian carnival in conjunction with C. L. Barber’s concept of ‘festive comedy’ – of which *Summer’s Last Will and Testament* is an integral example (Barber 1959: 58-86)—it should also be pointed out that I trace a relationship that cannot merely be described in terms of class contradiction; after all, as Brown rightfully points out, Marlowe cannot be placed in a more elevated social milieu than Nashe, and Nashe’s texts cannot just be described as more ‘lower-class’ because they seem to be more ‘realistic’ in their style (Brown 2004: 85).

six pages, playing out the story of the ancient lovers, ‘of whom diuine Musæus sung, and a diuiner Muse than him, Kit Marlow’ (McKerrow 1910: 3.195), and the ancient love story becomes an occasion for celebration as well as extravagant mockery. Such a dual take on Marlowe’s poem reflects Nashe’s own position and goals as an author, for Brown argues that in *Lenten Stuffe* ‘Nashe’s attempts to lead the vanguard of literary professionalism come under particular threat from Christopher Marlowe, who is both an inspiration and a challenge to Nashe’s ambitions’ (2004: 84). Thus, the act of praising Marlowe as a ‘diviner Muse’ also becomes a destabiliser of Nashe’s own literary position, and as a result the story of Leander is superseded by being translated into an emphatically commonplace story with Leander metamorphosed into ling and Hero into herring, both in the end ‘miraculously’ meeting again on our plates during Lent. The self-conscious shallowness of the story itself becomes an articulation of the emergent professional author’s situation: translating rubbish into—literally—gold (Brown 2004: 86). Differently put, Nashe’s form of professional aemulatio in *Lenten Stuffe* is coterminous with the need to surpass the competitor on a commercial marketplace; as Brown argues, Nashe ‘invokes *Hero and Leander* to define his own modernity through and against Marlowe’ (2004: 110).²⁰

Yet, while this argument is valid enough in the case of *Lenten Stuffe*, the case of the Marlovian imitation in *Summer’s Last Will and Testament* would have to call for a different approach.²¹ As should be apparent from the previous discussion of patronage, Nashe’s play does in fact not seem

²⁰ At the same time, as Shapiro points out, Nashe’s reduction of the poetic and mythological in Marlowe’s poem also paradoxically keeps it close to the spirit of the original—its dwelling on surface details ‘that inevitably lead, as in Marlowe, to digression’ (1991: 27) and its eschewal of either comedy or tragedy in favour of deflation and parody (1991: 28).

²¹ It should be noted at this point that Hutcheon recognizes a similarity between Renaissance imitation and (post)modern parody in the sense that they both stretch across a vast discursive field and thus transcend single genre practices, and in that imitation and parody parallel each other in terms of intent. Again, however, it is the pattern of irony that makes the difference: ‘I am not claiming that modern parody is only Renaissance imitation: it would require the addition of an ironic and critical dimension of distanciation for it to be an accurate reflection of the art of today’ (Hutcheon 1985: 10). This dimension, to state the obvious, is not present in *Summer’s Last Will and Testament*.

very intent on defining its own modernity in terms of authorship. Indeed, in the play the competition between writers under these circumstances is not expressed in terms of encounters over ‘small’ or self-consciously trivial matters. Instead, I would suggest, the imitation of Marlowe in *Summer’s Last Will and Testament* is inextricably bound up with metapoetic references that are geared to servantry, the poet’s position under patronage. Imitation then becomes the occasion for reflection upon the conditions of writing. This is particularly true of the two characters around whom the Marlovian references are developed: Sol and Back-winter. In a sense, the metapoetic intrusion is reflected in the very way these characters speak, for apart from them and the four seasons, Summer, Vertumnus, Autumne and Winter, there are only two characters in the play who speak blank verse: Solstitium and Orion. Solstitium is the tedious moraliser, whose ostentatious ‘moderation’ shows that ‘the unqualified approval of such decrepit old pedant as Summer is, in the play’s terms, a joke’ (Hutson 1989: 161). The hunter Orion, in good humanist tradition, delivers an oration on a purposely commonplace topic: dogs. All the remaining characters—Ver, Harvest, Bacchus, Christmas and the ubiquitous commentator/jester Will Summers—all speak prose, and they often do so in an unmistakably Nashean way. What Sol and Back-winter, on their hand, seem to share is a discomfort with their own underdog position, and it is to the relation between this awkwardness and the condition of patronage in the play that I will now turn.

Sol, for example, despite his position as the ‘chiefe planet of the heauens’ (445), is identified as a servant from his very entrance, in the following line from Summer: ‘He is our seruant, lookes he ne’re so big’ (446). As G. R. Hibbard points out, Sol represents ‘the upstart promoted to be a royal favourite’ (1962: 95) as well as Apollo, the sun-god and protector of poetry. For a preliminary connection with Marlowe here, one could point to the fact that Marlowe himself was associated with Apollo by his contemporaries; Henry Petowe, who published a continuation of *Hero and Leander* in 1598, did exactly that.²² But the case is more specific. In Autumne’s hostile and moralising characterisation, Sol seems to take on the precise attributes of an oriental upstart/conqueror, of

²² In fact, Petowe even manages to—almost—rhyme on their names: ‘Quick-sighted spirits, this supposed Apollo, / Conceit no other but th’admired Marlowe’ (Marlowe 1971: 94).

Marlowe's Tamburlaine: 'He ouerloads his carre with Orient gemmes, / And reynes his fiery horses with rich pearle' (494-5). In its suggestion of opulence, Autumne's imagery combines the 'oriental pearls' that Marlowe invokes in *Tamburlaine*, Pt. 2 and elsewhere with Saturn's chariot 'gilt with fire' (4.3.126), which Tamburlaine compares his own to.²³ However, while Tamburlaine is frequently likened to the sun in Marlowe's play, he is seen as a competitor to the sun rather than as the sun itself.²⁴ From this perspective, it is interesting that in *Summer's Last Will and Testament* Sol, besides impersonating the sun-god Apollo, also seems to take on the qualities of Apollo's son, Phaethon, the overreacher who undertook to drive his father's chariot but lost control over it and was killed by Jove. In Nashe's play Autumn describes Sol as a 'sawcie vpstart Iacke' who 'now doth rule the chariot of the Sunne' (471-2), and Sol readily emphasises this association by referring in his own speech to 'dead Phaetons three sisters funerall teares / That by the gods were to Electrum turnd'. Phaethon is of course frequently mentioned by Tamburlaine and other Marlovian overreachers.²⁵ By the twin associations to Apollo and Phaethon, Sol could in other words be said to embody a conflict: he is both the god of poetry and that god's son/successor—a ruler and an upstart at the same time.

That this conflict involves both Marlowe and patronage becomes more apparent as Sol continues his boasting:

Vaunting my iewels, hasting to the West,
Or rising early from the gray ei'de morne,

²³ For the 'oriental pearls' in Marlowe, see also *Doctor Faustus* 1.1.82 and *The Jew of Malta* 1.1.88.

²⁴ E.g., Pt. 1, 4.2.36-40:

For I, the chiefest lamp of all the earth,
First rising in the east with mild aspect,
But fixed now in the meridian line,
Will send up fire to your burning spheres,
And cause the sun to borrow light of you.

²⁵ See *Tamburlaine*, Pt. 1, 4.2.49; also, Tamburlaine's death scene in Part 2, when the dying hero admonishes his son to guide his chariot 'with thy father's hand' (5.3.229) and compares the son's plight to that of 'Clymen's brain-sick son' (5.3.231). As we shall see, Gaveston in *Edward the Second* is similarly characterised by his enemies as an 'Ignoble vassal, that like Phaethon / Aspires to the guidance of the sun' (1.4.16-17).

What do I vaunt but your large bountihood,
 And shew how liberall a Lord I serue?
 Musique and poetrie, my two last crimes
 Are those two exercises of delight,
 Wherewith long labours I doe weary out.
 The dying Swanne is not forbid to sing.
 The waues of Heber playd on Orpheus strings,
 When he (sweete musiques Trophe) was destroyd. (520-9)

Stylistically, there is clearly an element of Marlowe at work here; Hibbard notes—evidently with some perplexity—‘the Marlovian accent of the line, “Or rising early from the gray ei’de morne”’ (1962: 96). Indeed, the verbs suggesting restless movement—hasting, rising—in themselves come close to capturing the spirit of a Marlovian aesthetic (quite apart from the slight similarity between Nashe’s line and Marlowe’s depiction in *Dido* of the gates of Atlas, which ‘Shall make the morning haste her grey uprise / To feed his eyes with his engraven fame’, 1.1.102-3). But the Marlovian tinge is more than just verbal. Unlike the moralising seasons—the ‘masters’, according to themselves—Sol eschews any kind of moral dimension to his mastery of words.²⁶ ‘Let him not talke; for he hath words at will, / And wit to make the baddest matter good’ (497-8): Winter’s response to Sol’s rhetoric comes close to recognising the ‘yoking of language and action’ (McDonald 2004: 58) which critics see as a pervasive topos in *Tamburlaine*.²⁷ In other words, the speech Sol produces, and the moral panic it provokes, parallels the accents of Marlowe’s play. It is as if the combination of theatrical idiom, aestheticised amorality and ‘natural’ striving could only result in something that sounded like Marlowe.

As already pointed out, subtle echoes like these also become the occasion for metadiscursive reflection on the particular condition of writing from which the play arises. Indeed, Sol’s monologue contextualises its Marlovian tone under the aegis of patronage, of a ‘liberall Lord’ whose servant the artistically inclined Sol aspires to be. The inherent theme of competition under patronage is underscored by Sol’s defence of his ‘exercises of delight’, music and poetry, for this

²⁶ I share Hutson’s view that Summer, instead of the ‘positive ideal of moderation’ he has sometimes been construed as, is revealed as a pedant who cannot arouse unqualified approval in the audience (Hutson 1989: 161).

²⁷ For the idea of *Tamburlaine* as a Renaissance ‘wit’, see Sivefors 2004: 61-101.

defence has a parallel in the speech of Gaveston, the upstart royal favourite in *Edward the Second*, on the shows that he aims to provide for the king:

I must have wanton poets, pleasant wits,
Musicians that, with touching of a string,
May draw the pliant king which way I please.
Music and poetry is his delight;
Therefore I'll have Italian masques by night,
Sweet speeches, comedies, and pleasing shows[.] (1.1.50-5)

Like Sol, Gaveston links music and poetry with delight, asserting the seductive force of wanton poetry. Against the aristocratic system of monarchy, he pits his own model of meritocracy based on artistic achievement. Sol, similarly, is characterised as the servant of the aristocratic seasons, and Autumne sneeringly says of him that 'he termes himselfe the god of Poetry, / And setteth wanton songs vnto the Lute' (496-7). In other words, what Sol and Gaveston seem to have in common is their attempt at negotiating an aristocratic system through poetic and musical merit. Artistic ability is the road to power for the 'saucy upstart jack' – and hence, what makes him offensive.

However, the very emphasis on delight rather than edification is not so much a dismissal as a confirmation of both the power and arbitrariness of patronage. Gaveston's and Sol's 'pleasant shows' are staged for an audience that does emphatically not need edification, and this is a condition they share with Nashe himself. As Hutson points out, 'after all, [Nashe] does not have to teach his audience anything; to attempt to do so would be presumptuous in a mere university graduate, writing for the distinguished entourage of the Archbishop of Canterbury' (1989: 162). Patronage thus becomes the occasion for, as much as the enemy of, the linking of musical and poetic delight. At the same time, the theme of *Summer's Last Will and Testament*, the succession of the royal seasons, inevitably emphasises the transitoriness of the patron's liberality. Indeed, for all its cockiness and self-assertiveness, Sol's language tends to revolve around death—the servant's death, to be precise. His imagery of mortality may itself owe a debt to Nashe's contemporary, for it could at least be speculated—as Neil Rhodes has done—that Marlowe's

Tamburlaine has an Orphic dimension.²⁸ At any rate, what is unquestionable is that the Marlovian subtext of the Sol sequence in *Summer's Last Will and Testament* is associated with the exigencies of writing under patronage. This association is made even clearer after Sol's exit, when the jesting Will Summers indulges in a lengthy piece of metadiscourse on writing, with an explicit and dismissive reference to John Skelton's *Tunning of Elinor Rummung*: 'Out of doubt, the Poet is bribde of some that haue a messe of creame to eate, before my Lord go to bed yet, to hold him halfe the night with riffe rafffe of the rumming of Elanor' (585-9). 'Bribery', the 'mess of cream', is the link that holds poet and patron together, the occasion for performance. At the same time, if in this feudal scheme grace always runs the risk of passing into disgrace, disgrace is equally inevitably bound to pass into grace. 'Long shalt thou be eclipsed by the moone' (577), Summer states, but Sol confidently retorts: 'What is eclipst will one day shine againe' (580).

Yet this hope for a feudal system to offer the servant a safe return seems ultimately to be in vain both in Marlowe and Nashe. In *Edward the Second Gaveston*, the 'Ignoble vassal, that like Phaethon / Aspires to the guidance of the sun' (1.4.16-17), is outmanoeuvred by the noblemen. In Nashe's play Sol, despite in fact being the sun, is unable to aspire to the guidance of patronage. 'Is it pride that is shadowed vnder this two-leg'd Sunne, that neuer came neerer heauen then Dubbers hill?' (619-21), Will Summers jokes, with a reference to the area near the Archbishop's Croydon palace. But if the jester denounces the servants' high-flying hopes as vanity, the play also suggests that patronage is a fickle and unstable condition that is forever in need of renegotiation. If Sol's poetic

²⁸ Rhodes points out that Tamburlaine has the power to make things happen by his words—a condition which bears association both of the supreme humanist orator and the destructive powers of the divine Word: 'And behind this . . . is the eternal figure of Orpheus, the power of whose poetry is associated with both civilisation, and madness and destruction' (1992: 92). There may be further Marlovian connections in the Orphic imagery as well, since it was around the time when Nashe's play was written that Marlowe, as Cheney points out, was promoting himself as an Orphic artist in *The Massacre at Paris* (Cheney 1997: 178-79). That the connection Marlowe / Orpheus was not lost on later contemporaries is proved by for example Petowe's 1598 continuation to *Hero and Leander*: 'Marlowe must frame to Orpheus' melody / Hymns all divine to make heaven harmony' (Marlowe 1971: 95).

allegiances are largely defined by his position within patronage, it seems that the patrons themselves are defined by their relation to their servants—and the servants' adversaries. This is the case in Marlowe as well as Nashe. In *Edward the Second* the king hesitates to leave the crown to the followers of Mortimer, the play's enemy of poetry par excellence:²⁹

Here, receive my crown.
 Receive it? No, these innocent hands of mine
 Shall not be guilty of so foul a crime. (5.1.97-99)

In what almost looks like a direct response to Marlowe's lines, Nashe exposes the succession of royal patrons in terms of dynastic legitimation. As Summer hesitates in handing over the crown to his successor Autumn, he realises the inevitability of the change:

Hold, take my crowne:—looke how he graspes for it!
 Thou shalt not haue it yet:—but hold it too;
 Why should I keep that needs I must forgo? (1241-3)

Characteristically, though, this assertion of inevitability is immediately played out on the level of patronage, for according to Winter, Autumn's fault—just like Edward's—is his susceptibility to 'scholarship':

He and the spring are schollers fauourites.
 What schollers are, what thriftles kind of men,
 Your selfe be iudge, and iudge of him by them. (1252-4)

One is of course reminded of Marlowe's own acknowledgment in *Hero and Leander* that 'to this day is every scholar poor' (Marlowe 1971: 30), but from the present perspective the point is rather that Autumn is too easily ruled by learned minions—'eache one do plucke from him without controll' (1249). Indeed, Autumn's competitor for power, Winter, seems almost to play the role of Mortimer in *Edward the Second*. Throwing himself into a lengthy rant against the various kinds of scholarly

²⁹ As Cheney points out, Marlowe's main alteration of his source, Holinshed, is that Holinshed's anti-theatricalism is transferred onto Mortimer, who becomes Gaveston's enemy; hence, their antagonism is played out on the level of metadrama as well (1997: 166).

parasites who seek patronage, Winter denounces poets in his already-quoted lines on

certaine drunken parasites,
Term'd Poets, which, for a meales meat or two,
Would promise monarchs immortalitie. (1268-70)

However, there is a certain degree of irony here: while suspicion is thrown consistently upon poetry in the play, the succession of the seasons is itself explored in a highly poetic fashion. As Elizabeth Cook suggests, Winter's invective against poets and scholars is not very convincing since he is, after all, himself an allegorical personification (Cook 1984: 27). Mathematicians and 'gold-breathing Alcumists' who 'get their meales by telling miracles, / Which they haue seene in traualing the skies' (1372-75) are denounced with a suggestion of Marlowe's upward movement – in Barber's words, 'the Marlovian reach of "travaling the skies" [is] qualified by the punning suggestion of working a racket' (1959: 79). At the same time, Winter's anti-Marlovian critique is bound to backfire on himself, for it is Marlovian rhetoric that gets the upper hand, though certainly, as we will see, with a twist. In the competition between allegories, Winter's own son, Back-winter, is a personification of filial envy whose eloquence reads like an elaborate pastiche of Tamburlainian rhetoric:

Would I could barke the sunne out of the sky;
Turne Moone and starres to frozen Meteors,
And make the Ocean a dry land of Yce;
With tempest of my breath turne vp high trees,
On mountaines heape vp second mounts of snowe,
Which, melted into water, might fall downe,
As fell the deluge on the former world.
I hate the ayre, the fire, the Spring, the yeare,
And what so e're brings mankinde any good.
O that my lookes were lightning to blast fruites!
Would I with thunder presently might dye,
So I might speake in thunder, to slay men. (1761-72)

Considering the vast success of *Tamburlaine* around the time when *Summer's Last Will and Testament* was written, it does not come as a surprise that a dramatic representation of hyperbolic violence in blank verse would take on a Marlovian ring. The similarity between Back-

winter and *Tamburlaine* does not only include the pervasive mode of exaggeration, however; it extends to the use of recurrent Tamburlainian devices such as frozen meteors, lightning looks and thundering speech.³⁰ At the same time, for all the similarities in style and manner there is a notable difference between Nashe's language and Marlowe's. Rather than *Tamburlaine*'s pervasive 'will and shall', *Back-winter* has 'would I could', 'might fall downe', 'O that my lookes were', 'would I with thunder' and 'so I might speake'. One might say that *Back-winter* is best characterised as a *Tamburlaine* in the subjunctive mood. The persistent conditionals, the 'ifs', 'woulds' and 'mights', add a touch of aspiration and competition, as though *Back-winter* aspired to be a *Tamburlaine* without quite having achieved the goal.³¹

In other words, *Back-winter* strives not only to dethrone his father but to outdo *Tamburlaine* as well. Summer, predictably, banishes *Back-winter* 'from my fertile bounds' (1792), but the envious son is not so easily outmanoeuvred:

I will peepe forth, thy kingdome to supplant:
My father I will quickly freeze to death,
And then sole Monarch will I sit, and thinke,
How I may banish thee, as thou doost me. (1798-1801)

Remarkably, this conflict between ruler and upstart, son and father, monarch and subject is then rendered in distinctly metadiscursive terms, for *Winter* retorts by a line that is almost identical to a line near the end

³⁰ Cf., for example, Cosroe's 'freezing meteors and congealed colde' (*Pt. 1* 1.1.11); *Tamburlaine*'s 'frowning brows and fiery looks' (*Pt. 1* 1.2.56); and Mycetes' suggestion that he lacks 'the great and thundering speech' (*Pt. 1* 1.1.3) of his enemy.

³¹ Interestingly, in the 1950s Harry Levin observed how Nashe's implied critique of Marlowe in the preface to *Menaphon* seemed to focus on the use of conditionals: 'When Nashe speaks of botching out verses with "ifs" and "ands", he indicates how the momentum of speech can be suspended by conditional clauses and prolonged by a series of double predicates and appositional phrases' (Levin 1954: 30-31). However, it seems to me that Nashe's own use of conditionals produces a different rhetorical effect in the sense that it is the non-performativeness of *Back-winter*'s rhetoric that is stressed; after all, his 'woulds' and 'ifs' are incompatible with the persistent 'wills' and 'shalls' of Marlowe's hero. (My thanks to Roy Eriksen for calling my attention to Levin.)

of *Edward the Second*: ‘I see my downfall written in his brows’ (1802). In Marlowe’s play, it is the desecrated king Edward who addresses his executioner Lightborn: ‘I see my tragedy written in thy brows’ (5.5.73).³² Nashe converts ‘tragedy’ to ‘downfal’, thus downplaying the generic positioning of Marlowe’s tragedy into something that is more in line with his own play—which is in fact not even a play, according to Will Summers: ‘nay, ‘tis no Play neyther, but a shewe’ (75). Imitation ceases to be an emulative conflict on the same generic and commercial ground; there is no need for open parodic engagement if there is no substantial threat or challenge from literary rivals. The imitative ambition, while undoubtedly present, spells wishful thinking rather than fierce, competitive wittiness.

In this sense, the notion of envy conveyed by Back-winter takes on a metadimension of underplayed literary rivalry, and unsurprising for anyone familiar with the literary discussion in the 1590s, the example of Ovid is part of the picture:

Ovid could well write of my tyranny,
When he was banisht to the frozen Zoane. (1789-90)

As several recent critics have demonstrated, Ovid represented one of the most pervasive role models for Elizabethan poets in general and Marlowe in particular—not only as an aesthetic example but in terms of career structure as well.³³ This is also reflected in the competition among authors at the time; in Brown’s words, ‘the competition for supremacy among professional Elizabethan authors is played out as a battle over Ovid’s inheritance’ (2004: 84). Brown’s claim is undoubtedly true from the perspective of Nashe’s parody of *Hero and Leander*, but here, in the less ‘professional’ context of *Summer’s Last Will and Testament* the Ovidian competition is reduced to the lightest of hints through the would-be Tamburlainian rhetoric of Back-winter. For despite his

³² Cf. also the ‘characters graven in thy brows’ (1.2.168) that Tamburlaine sees in his presumptive vassal Theridamas. The similarity between the lines from *Edward the Second* and *Summer’s Last Will and Testament* is noted by McKerrow, who, however, credits Charles Crawford with the discovery (McKerrow 1910: 4.442).

³³ For the Ovidian dimensions of *Edward the Second*, see for example Brown 2002, esp. 166 and 174; Cheney 1997: 157-74.

energetic attempts at throwing off the yoke of the seasons, Back-winter is soon banished and reduced back to the position of a subservient son/poet: ‘And banisht be thou from my fertile bounds’ (1792), Summer says, admonishing Winter lock his son up,

Ne’re to peepe foorth, but when thou, faint and weake,
Wants him to ayde thee in thy regiment. (1796-7)

Feudal order is restored and the hint of open literary rivalry is, momentarily at least, brought under control.

Yet, the conclusion of *Summer’s Last Will and Testament* does seem to bring out the desolation of the author’s position in such a controlled hierarchy. In the very last line of the play Nashe again refers to the Tristia, this time in a direct quotation from the banished Ovid: ‘Barbarus hic ego sum, quia non intelligor vlli [I am a barbarian here, because I am not understood by anyone]’ (1954-5). Geller assumes that these words are spoken by Toy, the actor playing Will Summers, but the fact that they are set off as a concluding epigraph instead of being included in the speech makes the reference of the ‘ego’ ambiguous.³⁴ Nashe certainly had a predilection for Ovidian epigraphs—the last sentence of *Christ’s Tears over Jerusalem* (1593) is taken from the *Metamorphoses*, for example—and the quotation at the end of his play reads more as a declaration of the poet’s, i.e. Nashe’s, situation. Ultimately, the negotiation of patronage in *Summer’s Last Will and Testament* forces the author to acknowledge that he is but a guest and that he is at least momentarily removed from the occupation of the commercial writer to that of the patronised—in all senses—servant.³⁵ *Summer’s Last Will and Testament*, then, becomes a metadiscursive ‘testament’ from author to audience, smoothing over the exuberance of professional literary competition under the surface of patronage. ‘For one being spoken to, all are offended’: Greene’s putative dying words on Nashe could have been an admonition to his younger colleague to avoid poetic contamination from the ‘pestilent Machiuilian’ they both knew.³⁶

³⁴ Cf. Geller 1995: 171.

³⁵ Again, for the notion that Nashe is criticising illiberal patrons, see Geller *passim*.

³⁶ The quote is from Greene 1969: F1^v.

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