

Fanciful Fictions

The Fashioning of Authorship in Two Elizabethan Novels

Renate Leder, 0113573

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Supervisor: Dr. A.J. Hoenselaars

Second reader: Prof. Dr. H. A. Hendrix

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Introduction

The problem called the Elizabethan novel

Prose fiction is a category of early modern literature that has long suffered undeserved scholarly neglect. While theorists of the novel have long tended to identify Elizabethan fiction as the somewhat chaotic precursor to the novel, the increasing amount of publications on early modern prose over the past decade, demonstrates a rising interest in the genre and a desire to revalue these literary texts.¹ In this connection, some scholars have been concerned with establishing the first English novel, regressing ever further into the early modern period. Since it is difficult to determine what a novel is, locating the moment of its first appearance remains a challenging and precarious project. Literary critics may unwittingly downplay the distinctive cultural conditions under which these texts came into being by applying modern literary genre theory to early fictional prose texts.

When compared to more fully developed conventions present in the modern novel, its early modern counterpart is often referred to in terms of hybridity and instability, whether or not with negative connotations.² The question that inevitably arises is what causes this sense of instability. It seems that the source cannot simply and unequivocally be located either in the author, the reader, or the text itself. Each of these has enjoyed its moment of being the primary focus of literary criticism, but it is the interplay between them that may provide a more complete picture of what is at stake in the Elizabethan novel.

Reception of texts changes over time in relation to the reader's frame of reference and tendencies in literary criticism. The availability of texts in larger quantities and different formats similarly influences the evaluation of texts. The fact that we can read Shakespeare's tragedies online and in full-text, or examine a digitized version of a manuscript, changes our perception of the text's material features. Walter Benjamin famously argued that such mechanical reproduction destroys the 'aura' of the artefact, as copies lack the unique appeal to the emotion of the audience that an original work of art possesses.³

A more positive approach regards the proliferation of texts through new media as a means to facilitate public availability of otherwise inaccessible texts. There is an interesting

¹ See Paul Salzman, *English Prose Fiction 1558-1700: a Critical History* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985). Recent examples include Constance C. Relihan, ed., *Framing Elizabethan Fictions: Contemporary Approaches to Early Modern Prose* (Kent and London: Kent State University Press, 1996), which draws on critical approaches such as feminism, Marxism and cultural studies. Steve Mentz, *Romance for Sale in Early Modern England: The Rise of Prose Fiction* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006) and Katherine Wilson, *Fictions of Authorship in Late Elizabethan Narratives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) focus on romance and longer prose narratives. The essays in Naomi Conn Liebler, ed., *Early Modern Prose Fiction: The Cultural Politics of Reading* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007) revolve around reading and consumption practice in late sixteenth century prose.

² See for example David Kaula, "The Low Style in Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 6.1 (1966): 43-57; David Margolies, *Novel and Society in Elizabethan England* (London: Croom Helm, 1985).

³ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Selected Writings, Volume 4, 1938-1940*. Eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003).

correlation between the scholarly debate on the effect of hypermedia on the state of literature and the increased interest for the genre of early modern prose fiction. Both tendencies tap into the problematic question of authorship. Issues of hybridity, (in)stability and (un)reliability of hypertext relate new technology to the authority of the writer and empowerment of the reader.

It is perhaps less surprising that fictional prose texts published in the early modern period are perceived as chaotic when we take into account that they emerged in a time when the conditions which later constituted the novel, were still in development. In the first place, print - now the principal cultural medium - was an emergent practice, establishing itself in a culture where oral traditions were still strong. Secondly, literacy was only partly established, which affected the author's conception of his readership. Thirdly, conventions for the specific genre of fictional prose, arising amid other genres that had governed the literary scene for ages, were yet to be formed. Lastly, the social and legal position of the author was of a different order than the modern autonomous profession.

These material, social and literary conditions offered new creative prospects to the early modern author. Awareness of these conditions was likely to feed into the style and structure of his work. The two Elizabethan novels I have chosen to consider in this light are William Baldwin's *Beware the Cat* (1553) and Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594). The former is little known, but has been put forward as a candidate for the distinction of the first English novel by William A. Ringler.⁴ The latter has received considerably more scholarly attention, from a wide range of critical perspectives. Appreciating the differences between the two novels in terms of the social and literary contexts in which they were written, I propose to read them as manifestations of the experimental space that the medium of print provided.

In this thesis, I will therefore tackle the question of the significance of narrative experiment in the Elizabethan novel. I will look at the novels with regards to the material conditions of book production and the use of narrative strategies. Furthermore, I will examine the materialization of the authorial voice in the text through these experiments. The subquestions that I will deal with involve the following:

- To what extent was the early modern author bound by conventions and how did he respond to them?
- What cultural and epistemological principles are conveyed by the texts?
- What conception of reading and writing fiction is reflected in these novels?

⁴ Although technically written during Edward's reign, I consider *Beware the Cat* as an Elizabethan novel as it was published and read after Elizabeth's accession to the throne.

Not surprisingly, these questions are very much intertwined: textual and literary practice are based on traditional socio-economic structures and the epistemological ideas prevalent in society influence the extent to which reading and writing are promoted. Together, these questions shed light on the kaleidoscopic nature of early modern literary culture. The research thereby aims to contribute to developing a methodology that evaluates the Elizabethan novel on its own merits.

Structure and methodology

In the first chapter I will outline the critical context for the two novels. I will start out by reflecting on the New Historicist approach to the dynamics of Renaissance culture and Bourdieu's analysis of the field of cultural production. Shifts in narrative practice are discussed against the background of Walter Ong's work on orality and literacy. In relation to the status of these texts as novels, I will draw on Bakhtin's notion of polyphony as a distinguishing feature of novelistic discourse. Finally, I will re-examine the implications of the poststructuralist proclamation of the death of the author. My analyses are informed by the instrumental view of narratology as formulated by in the work of Mieke Bal and Gérard Genette, in particular the latter's theory of paratextual elements.⁵

The second and third chapter deal with William Baldwin's *Beware the Cat* and Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* respectively. Situating these writers in their religious and social contexts, the central issue involve the self-manifestation of the author through his narrative strategies. Thereby, I hope to demonstrate how Baldwin and Nashe, employing their own particular style and strategy, recognized in printed fiction a malleable medium that was bound by structures from earlier literary genres and also enabled a new relationship between author and reader. In that way, the texts reveal the fashioning of the authorial voice in the profoundly print-based genre of the novel.

The culture of print

Before turning to the theoretical framework, I will first reflect on the changing conditions of communication in Elizabethan England, as this will provide a useful context for the analysis of both novels.

Forms and structures of knowledge transmission underwent major changes in early modern Europe as a result of the invention of the printing press. Two important developments of the day, the dissemination of political and religious ideas and its

⁵ Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Transl. Christine van Boheemen. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Transl. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Genette discusses the discursive features of texts, which he refers to as paratexts, "thresholds of interpretation". He sees narrative text as a space of negotiation between the publisher, the author and the reader, in which devices such as prefaces, dedications and notes direct the reception of the text.

psychological effects on reading practice, have often been linked to the shift from oral to print culture. In his famous work *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962), Marshall McLuhan emphasizes the dramatic effects of print on perceptions of space and time. He conceives of the technology as the origin of modern individualism, drawing on the distinction between the oral nature of medieval society and the print-oriented culture of the Renaissance as the basis for his argument. Elizabeth Eisenstein's ground-breaking study *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (1979) also points to the importance of the new technology for the distribution of books and ideas, but she rejects McLuhan's overstated opposition between oral and literate culture, stating that he has "shirked the difficult task of organizing his material coherently" (41). Instead, she emphasizes continuities and demonstrates that developments encouraged by print, such as silent reading, already took shape in the Middle Ages, and that oral forms like sermons and orations persisted to play a role in literate cultures. In other words, print provided a tool that helped to disseminate and preserve knowledge without eradicating earlier forms of communication.

Expanding on this idea, Adam Fox illustrates the numerous ways in which speech, writing and print coexisted and interacted in his comprehensive study *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (2000). Analyzing diverse forms of transmission of knowledge, ranging from local customs to rumours, the author demonstrates that the spread of literacy did not entail the destruction of oral-based folklore, but rather reinvigorated it: "Written sources fed into the popular mind providing it with a stock of images and themes to fashion in terms relevant to its own experience. Words and sayings, storylines and tunes, traditions and news stories were all taken up from print and recycled or reapplied in specific communities as the property of local people" (50). Oral communication thus remained a key instrument of accessing information and amusement for the larger part of the population.

Still, English society was already a textually oriented culture in the sixteenth century, and the new technology accelerated educational developments. The emphasis on individual reading of the Bible in the Reformation further supported the significance of the written word. Exact figures on literacy rates are scarce, but a steady growth in people's ability to read and write can be witnessed over the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Even the large illiterate sections of the population were not free from what Fox calls "literary infusion" (36). People came across texts in private fireside gatherings, where others would communicate the latest news or read broadsides, or in public affairs, because documents formed an integral part of legal and ecclesiastical proceedings. Texts in their turn were still shaped in accordance with discursive practices of the oral culture from which they sprang. This kind of cross-pollination becomes clear in that "prose style had a very 'oral' quality, a high degree of colloquialism and formularity, which facilitated its spoken delivery. Even the format and the punctuation of printed works was often designed to that end" (Fox 37).

The essays collected in *Print, Manuscript, and Performance: The Changing Relations of Media in Early Modern England* (2000) also reflect on remediation of modes of communication and tie in with the debate on technological changes as inspired by McLuhan and Ong. Editors Arthur Marotti and Michael Bristol articulate their view of technology as “a relationship between means and ends governed by a desire for a maximum yield in commodities in return for a minimum expenditure of skilled engagement or effort” (4). With this focus, they shun a technological determinist view that excludes the inherent social aspect of human engagement with technology. This interaction involves different modes of production and reception of texts. It is therefore interesting to see how the coexistence of oral and literate forms is reflected in the novels by Baldwin and Nashe. As these authors consciously employed print, the ideological subtexts of the new technology inevitably come into play in their work. Taking this approach implies looking at how the author’s attitude towards the medium and its connotations developed over the forty years that lie between the two novels.

Next to the issue of the coexistence of oral and literate practices, scholars have also concerned themselves with the stabilizing character of print. Eisenstein argues that the advent of typography generated standardization, and that the consequential meticulous scrutiny of texts, which allowed scientists to set new standards for criterion of truth, marked the dawn of modernity. The suggestion that printed texts are less changeable and hence more controllable than manuscripts appears to be based on a crude opposition between the forms. The notion of fixity as an inherent quality of print has been contested by Adrian Johns in *The Nature of the Book* (1998). He criticizes the technological determinism of Eisenstein’s approach and maintains that the politics of print constituted a more complex practice. Predominantly dealing with the period from the Restoration to the early eighteenth century, Johns argues that the uniformity Eisenstein signalled in the sixteenth century had not even been achieved by the end of the next century and that fixity should accordingly be seen as a *transitive* quality, that “exists only inasmuch as it is recognized and acted upon by people” (19). The shift in emphasis is significant as it considers print culture as a whole to be outcome of social and economic practices and conflicts rather than seeing the printing press as the “sui generis” cause of change that Eisenstein proposes. This conception of fixity is useful, as it grapples not only with the mutability of texts per se, but also with the way that this sense of stability is implied and/or challenged in the text. The author’s anticipation of his readership’s expectations, reflected in his textual strategies, will therefore play an important role in the following chapters.

Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier’s well-known collection of essays entitled *A History of Reading in the West* traces how changes in the materiality of texts influenced expectations of the reception of texts. The relationship between print, religious reformation

and the spread of literacy plays an important role in many of these essays. This is most clearly illustrated in the opposition between the Protestant promotion of individual reading and the tradition of the Catholic church where reading the Bible remained a clerical practice. Dominique Julia's observations on reading in seventeenth century France, for example, confirm that the project of the Counter-Reformation emphasized the communal aspects of faith, reinstating the dependence of the faithful listener on the spiritual authorized voice of the priest.⁶

Although the significance of the printing press for the advance of the Reformation can hardly be overstated, reservations have been articulated both in terms of the specificity of the medium for Protestantism and in terms of the uniformity of its use in the dissemination of reformational ideas.⁷ As Ian Green's thorough study of print and Protestantism shows, the social and commercial aspects of the printing industry and the variety of printed Protestant texts indicate that we can not speak of one kind of print, nor of one kind of Protestantism. Still, the religious 'best-sellers' examined by Green - including Bibles and devotional works but also religious ballads and dialogues - reveal that Protestants were particularly eager to appropriate the power of the written word to display the flaws of the Catholic doctrine. Indeed, it seems that the idea of the strong connection between print and Protestantism is rooted in contemporary texts. Authors like John Foxe applauded the arrival of the moveable type as an instrument of God to restore the true doctrine of the church and thereby set the trend for the opposition between the two religions (Green 1).⁸

The printing industry also provided a powerful propaganda weapon to both religions. Jean-Francois Gilmont discusses how the theological debates between Protestants and Catholics led to an increase in the publication in polemical pamphlets, a development applauded by the ever-growing number of printers (216-219). At the same time, Catholics as well as Protestants became aware of the potentially subversive effects of print on individual readers. As not all books were deemed fit for the popular masses, reformers of both denominations tended to exercise control over theological exegesis. Gilmont further remarks that writing changed the individual's relation to the text: "It set up two contradictory positions: on the one hand, there was the conviction that Christ's teaching was simple and had been addressed to all; on the other, fear of heresy led to a desire for control of interpretation through preaching. This created a fundamental debate between the Bible of

⁶ Julia notes that the Council of Trent (1546), "reacting to reforms establishing Scripture as the one rule of faith (sola scriptura), reaffirmed the importance not only of the Bible but also of tradition, the accumulated depository of oral transmission of faith" (238).

⁷ Refutations of the assumption that print was a Protestant practice are provided in Arthur F. Marotti, *Catholicism and anti-Catholicism in Early Modern English Texts* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999). For a re-examination of the uses of print in Protestantism, see Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁸ In his concluding chapter, Green remarks that he has attempted to "reinforce or extend the existing narrative" (555) based on his representation of the diversity of doctrinal messages and forms. He thereby confirms the idea of the connection between print and Protestantism, but in a more nuanced way.

the ear and the Bible of the eye, between the church of orality and the church of print” (223). So, although Protestants generally sought to return to the original text, uncorrupted by ecclesiastical rituals, the written word did not exclude speech in their practice, as orality retained primacy through sermons and catechisms.

The opposition between aural/oral-based Catholicism and print-based Protestant thus needs to be carefully and critically considered, especially as it seems to have been based on polemical statements from the period itself. The relationship between religious controversy and the printing industry is particularly relevant to Baldwin’s polemical text. My analysis therefore starts from the assumption that the text proper attests to the problematic position of orality and print in this religious dimension.

Another significant connection between the printed word and religion can be found in the question of authority. Kevin Sharpe discusses in *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* how the confidence vested in the authoritative power of the Bible, royal statutes and proclamations, was gradually extended to written texts in general. Under the influence of changes in social and commercial conditions, such as urbanization and the growth of the book trade, a decisive shift took place with regard to the position of author and his text. These processes had important consequences for the literary profession as they activated a sense of intellectual property and originality. As Sharpe notes, the early modern period witnessed “a change from valuing a text for its authorized origin to ‘granting its author creative autonomy’ and valorising ‘originality’” (31).

As I have tried to demonstrate, the debate on print culture revolves around issues of technological and social changes in early modern England. Religion, remediation of text and the question of authorship were significant aspects of print culture and have been critically examined in Renaissance literary scholarship. Exploring *Beware the Cat* and *The Unfortunate Traveller* against this background, I intend to reassess the orality-literacy dynamics and the question of fixity of print by drawing on the interactive aspect of the author’s use of the medium. Both texts date back to an age in which conventions of the book were yet to develop. This affected the reader’s expectations of fictional prose in particular. The author’s play with conventions is indicative of his assumptions with regard to the reader and the medium of print. The use of typographic and narrative conventions and the materialization of the authorial position will therefore be central to my analyses. Considering the new technology as a communication tool with a problematic reputation *and* as a dynamic, social process, I will reflect on the way in which the authors articulate their awareness of the materiality of their work and grapple with the reader’s receptiveness to the text. It is in this complex field of production, reception and perception of the new genre, that this thesis interrogates the significance of narrative experiments in the Elizabethan novel.

Chapter 1. Cultural Dynamics in the Literary Field

This chapter maps the various theories revolving around questions of textual communication, novelistic discourse and authorship as the critical context for the analysis of the Baldwin's *Beware the Cat* and Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*. Starting point is the conception of the author as the product of social-cultural conditions and as a discursive construct. I will therefore draw on what Chartier calls the world as representation, "a world fashioned by means of the series of discourses that apprehend and structure experience" (Chartier 1988, 11). The first section relates the concept of cultural production in the work of Pierre Bourdieu to the literary enterprise of New Historicism. The second section reflects on storytelling in oral and literate and print culture as presented in the work of Walter Ong. I will then move on to a discussion of two prominent and different approaches to the novel and conclude by revisiting the poststructuralist conception of authorship.

1.1 Constructing culture: Bourdieu and New Historicism

The work of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has proved significant for the study of the arts from the 1970's onwards. His theory of culture as a social practice supplies insightful commentary on the complex mechanisms at work in the literary marketplace. Bourdieu argues against Marxist and other reductive modes of cultural analysis (Bourdieu 3-9).⁹ The complexity of this theory of cultural practice also provides a useful context for the analysis of literary texts: it does not seek to reduce a text to its literary specificities (as formalists would do) or to the specificities of its producer (as is the case in the romantic conception of the author-genius). However, a pitfall of his broad and complex approach is a loss of attention for historical and generic particulars. This section will therefore take a closer look at Bourdieu's view on the cultural field and focus on those elements that allow for a theorization of the author and his emergent position in the sixteenth century. It refers to Foucault's concept of power and compares with the New Historicist approach to the circulation of texts.

Bourdieu starts from the assumption that culture is a dynamic, relational practice and can therefore never be reduced to objective structures and institutions, as is done in Marxist ideology. Bourdieu does recognize the significance of economic and social conditions in the sense that cultural classification is bound up with the social class system, but he argues against the dualistic view of culture as consisting of the economic *base* – the material conditions of production – and the *superstructure* of culture. Instead, he introduces the individual cultural agent as a uniting principle. He advocates a consideration of both the

⁹ Critical reception of Bourdieu's work demonstrates that it remains debatable whether or not he is successful in this attempt. See for example Craig Calhoun, Edward LiPuma and Moishe Postone, eds., *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993.)

economic 'objective', cultural and institutional structures and the 'subjective', individual attitudes, thoughts and actions of social actors (Jenkins 18-20).

In the essay "The Field of Cultural Production," Bourdieu analyses the social arena where the cultural agent seeks to define and create his position (29-73). He describes how the practice of writers depends on the meeting of two histories, "the history of the positions they occupy and the history of their dispositions" (61). The relationship between the two histories is circular; the writer's position in the cultural field shapes his dispositions, and they in turn reshape the hierarchies in the field, influenced by independent social and economic conditions. Through his individual behaviour, the social agent is actively involved in the *reproduction* of the objective structures that produce culture and determine social hierarchies. This complex process describes the literary field as a site of struggle, "in which what is at stake is the power to impose the dominant definition of the writer and therefore to delimit the population of those entitled to take part in the struggle to define the writer" (42).

Using the dynamic relationship between social structures and the subjective dispositions of the agent as an analytical model for the Elizabethan novelist, entails a view of Baldwin and Nashe as reproducing the structures that shaped their authorial position. It is noteworthy that Bourdieu's theory is based on the conditions of book production in nineteenth century France, when, as he maintains, "the literary field attained its maximum autonomy" (46). The question naturally arises how this view applies to early modern writers. What needs to be taken into account, therefore, is that these novels not only reflect economic structures in an abstract sense, but also what I would call 'cultural dispositions': the dynamic religious and literary attitudes of the community or circle to which a writer belonged or against which he aimed his criticism. In my analyses, I address this dimension as an extension of Bourdieu's commercially informed approach to culture.

Another important aspect of Bourdieu's theory involves the relationship between author and audience. The critic draws on the notions of success and economic profit as defining principles for the artist's position in the field. He contends that the literary marketplace underwent a transformation in the early modern age, developing into a more autonomous creative field, enabling the emancipation of the artist. In this process, the writer's assertion of autonomy and creativity determines the value of the product or its 'symbolic capital,' which is defined as "the degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration of honour and is founded on a dialectic of knowledge (*connaissance*) and recognition (*reconnaissance*)" (Bourdieu 7).

The issues of autonomy and prestige apply to the eighteenth century author in particular. The question of literary creativity needs to be scrutinized in this context as well. Edward LiPuma remarked that literary originality "is defined dialectically in terms of how culturally ascribed attributes of creativity are valued and valorized in relation to social

positions that creativity is partly responsible for creating” (18). Although the type of relationship to the audience described above had not yet materialized in the age of Baldwin and Nashe, the issues of value and valorization may be instructive. In our postmodern culture, where print takes a central position in consumption and production, and new media are rapidly gaining ground, the relationship between artist and audience is governed by factors that differ greatly from those prevalent in medieval society, where church and state more directly intervened through systems of censorship and patronage. It is therefore worth examining in the following chapters to what extent older institutional forms fashioned the contact between a producer of a literary text and his audience. Another line of investigation involves the question whether early modern writers competed with other authors for recognition and prestige, or whether other cultural dispositions played an important role.

Bourdieu’s ideas are to some extent analogous with the New Historicist view of culture as a site of negotiation and exchange.¹⁰ This approach, first introduced by Stephen Greenblatt and now widely used in Renaissance literary studies, seeks to read texts as dialogically situated in the culture from which they emerge. Like Bourdieu, New Historicists object to the project of the New Critics, who isolate literary works from their social conditions. Alternatively, they argue, literary analysis needs to take into account the power structures and the subversion of those structures that influence the production and circulation of literary artefacts.¹¹

The existence of similarities between the New Historicist mode of reading and Bourdieu’s view of culture is not surprising, as both are influenced by the Foucauldian notion of power. Michel Foucault shunned the negative suspicion of power, but conceived of it as “productive rather than repressive.” Throughout his work, he maintains that power is pervasive throughout society rather than class-related. Theorizing on the relationship between knowledge and power, he assigns a prominent role to discourse, which denotes more than a mode of speaking: discourse is a multi-layered set of mental practices which spreads dominant ideology through society. New Historicists similarly claim that texts are signs of the pervasiveness of authority in everyday life and that they are used to construct one’s identity (Barry 174-77). ‘Self-fashioning,’ a term introduced by Greenblatt, refers to this process that takes place through discourse as a collective construction of codes. Defining and controlling identity often takes place through direct or indirect rejection of opposing views. This is what has become known in postcolonial theory as the cultural ‘Other’. The construction of identity

¹⁰ Robert Matz also draws on Bourdieu in his analysis of Renaissance literary theory and opposes it with the New Historicist emphasis on politics and power. However, as my discussion shows, the ideas of Bourdieu and New Historicism are compatible and even complementary in their view of social structures as determined by dominant discursive practices. See Robert Matz, *Defending Literature in Early Modern England: Renaissance Literary Theory in Social Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

¹¹ Stephen Greenblatt outlined his views in his influential *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). A compilation of essays representative of the New Historicist approach can be found in Aram Veesser, ed., *The New Historicism* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

in response to this Otherness, which may reside in religious, cultural or political background, occurs in daily life as well as in the creation of literary artefacts. In my analyses of the early modern novel, I will therefore look at the way the author, as a cultural agent, represents and comments on culture in his text.¹²

Related to the prominence of language is the New Historicist notion of “the textuality of history and the historicity of texts” (Montrose 20). Conceiving of all sources as ‘text,’ New Historicists renounce the problematic conceptual distinction between text and context, and use both literary and non-literary sources to make sense of the past. Literary texts interact with the whole network of institutions, beliefs, power relations and social practices of a given period, including the system of production and reception. These critics refrain from constructing totalizing narratives and look for the ‘touch of the real’ in anecdotal segments of textual culture.¹³ This is important in relation to Bourdieu’s complex theorization of culture. While he also dismisses grand theory as “the kind of conceptual gobbledygook ... that is good for textbooks” (quoted in Jenkins 67), his approach remains too underdetermined at times. The New Historicist method of analysis, which retains cultural and historical specificity, is therefore more productive in relation to early modern culture.

Bourdieu remains critical of the prominence of discourse in poststructuralist thought: he perceives in Foucault’s “field of strategic possibilities” a too narrowed focus on discursive practices which refuses to relate literary artefacts to the social conditions of production within the cultural field (33).¹⁴ In my view, however, the emphasis on discourse by no means excludes careful consideration of social conditions in the study of literary texts. This becomes clear when we compare the view of art in both approaches. Bourdieu defines the work of art as an object that “exists only by virtue of the (collective) belief which knows and acknowledges it as a work of art” (35). In other words, the value attached to a work of art depends on the reception and circulation of the work, a process which is governed by principles of legitimacy, cultural distinction and authority. Comparing this to Greenblatt’s description of “great art” as an “extraordinarily sensitive register of the complex struggles and harmonies of culture” (Greenblatt 2005, 5), a synthesis of the two conceptions is in fact more profitable. Examining the socio-economic conventions of the marketplace *and* the discourses that construct the author in the field is therefore essential for analyzing the early modern novel.

¹² This is in line with the poststructuralist view of the author as a cultural construct, changing in accordance with shifts in socio-economic conditions and institutional power structures and I will return to the issue of the inherent constructedness of attitudes through discourse in the section on authorship below.

¹³ In this context, New Historicist critics are aware that they, too, only see the past as cultural representations, constructs that they can never completely disentangle, but they approach the texts ‘from within’ contemporary culture by taking more than just the text into their analyses.

¹⁴ Bourdieu criticizes the Russian formalists on the same grounds, maintaining that “these theoreticians of cultural semiology or culturology are forced to seek in the literary system itself the principles of its dynamics” (33), a project which in Bourdieu’s view is doomed to fail.

To summarize, the usefulness of Bourdieu's model for the analysis of the production and circulation of texts in Elizabethan England lies in a contextualization of the work of art (the literary text) and its producer (the author) in terms of the cultural conditions in the literary field. Using the specific focus on discourse by New Historicists as an addition to this model, I argue that fruitful literary analysis takes into account social structures, cultural dispositions and the discursive constructions and constructedness of the author. Translated to early modern textual culture, this means examining the forms of knowledge transmission as well as the author's position in the literary field and his representation of cultural norms through his narrative strategies.

1.2 Storytelling and printed prose: the circulation of new forms

The invention of the printing press dramatically transformed the form and style of narrative. In his intriguing piece “The Storyteller” (1936), Walter Benjamin asserts that storytelling as an art began to “recede into the archaic” with the advent of print as a result of the increasing availability of information. His slightly romantic view of storytelling as arising from experience or tradition - most clearly embodied in the tales told by travellers - associates this form of communication with lay culture and craftsmanship. Benjamin seems to deplore this development which eradicated the position of storyteller in the personal, intimate atmosphere of the oral performance: “A man listening to a story is in the company of the storyteller; even a man reading one shares this companionship. The reader of a novel, however, is isolated, more so than any other reader” (156).

The notion that the new technology had significant consequences for the relationship between author and reader and on narrative conventions proper, has been more elaborately discussed by Walter Ong. His seminal work *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word* (1982) draws on the ideas formulated by Marshall McLuhan and maintains that writing “moves speech from the oral-aural world to a new sensory world, that of vision” (85). According to Ong, typography turned the word into a commodity and encouraged a sense of closure. This process, started by chirographic changes, was standardized with the advent of print. The accuracy with which written texts could be examined allowed for more reflexivity on the part of the reader and thereby detached written discourse from its author (Ong 81-83).¹⁵

Ong formulates his theory on the shifting positions of storyteller and audience in terms of the opposition between oral and literate culture. Writing, he argues, is a solipsistic activity, differing from spoken discourse in that it lacks a context of direct contact with the audience. The fact that the author has to create the roles himself, leads Ong to state that “the writer’s audience is always a fiction” (102). Comparing prose narrative with older literary genres, such as the epic, the oral song and the romance, he concludes that the distance between author and reader in print generated new narrative forms. Lacking the direct interaction between the singer and audience, the author of prose narrative was able to move away from the episodic structure that was a central feature of oral delivery of the traditional epic. The author emerging in the age of print could select and rearrange his material more carefully and thereby establish a distance between real life and the literary expression. Writing materialized the voice of the narrator in a variety of forms and enabled the storyteller to develop into a novelist. Ong further argues that the stability of the printed page influenced

¹⁵ Ong’s ideas are based on previous studies, mainly his own, but also of other scholars, and they show similarities with Eisenstein’s thesis (see introduction).

the reader's experience of the text, as it "mechanically as well as psychologically locked words into space" (148). The exact ramifications of the idea that "writing restructures consciousness" and the direct link he establishes between typographic and narrative control are worth exploring in relation to early modern fictional prose texts.

Although richly illustrated, Ong's tendency to oppose the two cultures still seems to reduce the omnipresence of orality. In Elizabethan society, the familiarity with print expanded only gradually under the influence of rising levels of literacy. Readers had yet to develop a sensitivity for the expressions and narrative structures used by authors as they differed from the practice of the orator before his audience. In this context, Ong refers to the address of the "dear reader" in the nineteenth-century novel as a "problem of adjustment" (149). This prompts us to ask to what extent the interactive aspect of the oral performance and the malleability of the manuscript were eliminated or (consciously) maintained in a different shape in the early modern novel. As has been noted in the introduction, the line between oral and literate culture can not so simply be drawn. It is therefore interesting to examine whether the early modern writer makes this opposition felt in his text. In other words, we need to look at signs of textual awareness in order discover how the author fashioned himself: as storyteller or as writer or perhaps as something in between.

Maurice Couturier's approach to the novel as a print-based object in *Textual Communication* (1991) provides some valuable observations in relation to the shift from oral to literate culture. Critically examining the ideas presented by McLuhan and Ong, Couturier attempts to fill in the gaps that arise out of "the intuition that the novel owes its existence, originality and development to the new medium" (viii). Couturier notes that the word 'novel' was first used at the end of the seventeenth century to refer to the familiarity and probability of the events described in novels - as opposed to the wondrous nature of those depicted in romance (140). While occasionally referring to earlier works like Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, he devotes most of his attention to the modernist and postmodernist novel. Couturier's study focuses in detail on various aspects of the communication environment, such as the printing industry and its legal implications in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Like Ong, Couturier reflects on the position of the author in terms of the complex relationship between author and audience: "In the oral age, the communication between storyteller and public was fairly straightforward [...]. With the development of print, the process has become more complex, especially after the industry started to be the accomplice of the law" (50). Couturier sees the novel as the invention of the individual, discovering diverse ways to communicate ideas within the new discursive mode. He describes the novel not so much as a genre, but as the new name for printed literature and defines the novel as "a small entertaining book, meant to be read silently and in private, which exhibits its

bookhood, exploits the resources of the printing industry, contains important narrative elements, and simulates plausible discourses ('natural' or literary)" (143-144).

This definition does not differentiate between the modern and the early modern novel. This is important as every age and every subcategory exploits different aspects and to different narrative, polemical or critical purposes – differences that need to be taken into account in order to fully appreciate the literary works in their cultural context. Keeping Couturier's definition of the novel in mind when looking at the Elizabethan novel, I wish to explore these texts in terms of the supposed transformation of storytellers into authors. Such an approach grapples with the question whether the writer in print did indeed gain editorial, manipulative power and examines the deliberate play with conventions from other forms and the specific possibilities of the printed text.

1.3 Realism and discourse: the theory of the novel

Theorists have approached the novel from a range of perspectives, and the steady flow of publications and anthologies on the theory of the novel testifies how it still inspires critics to re-examine this heterogeneous genre.¹⁶ One of the most influential theories has been formulated by Ian Watt in *The Rise of the Novel* (1957). Watt signals a correlation between the socioeconomic changes in English society, the development of philosophical realism and formal realism in the novels of Defoe, Richardson and Fielding, whose works he considered to be the first manifestations of the novel form.

According to Watt, a significant distinguishing feature of the novel resides in the originality of plot, as opposed to the principles of imitation and emulation that were so important to Medieval and Renaissance writers:

This literary traditionalism was first and most fully challenged by the novel, whose primary criterion was truth to individual experience - individual experience which is always unique and therefore new. The novel is thus the logical literary vehicle of a culture which, in the last few centuries, has set an unprecedented value on originality, on the novel; and is therefore well named (13-14).

He distinguishes between romance and novel based on the extent to which the literary work imitates reality. The magical world of romance was defined by religious and moral symbolism, whereas the novel was closer to the experience of everyday life. The distinctive narrative mode of the novel, as Watt describes it, is “the sum of literary techniques whereby the novel’s imitation of human life follows the procedures adopted by philosophical realism in its attempts to ascertain and report the truth” (34). In other words, defining indicators of reality such as time and place - that which the individual perceives with his senses - are essential for the novel form.

Watt’s thesis has proved very persuasive. However, his bias towards realism in the novel, based on the premise that the novel began with Defoe, Fielding and Richardson, has been contested because of signs of romance conventions persistent in the novel. Watt overlooks these continuities in order to emphasize the differences between the novel and earlier genres. At the same time, reducing early modern literary culture to imitation and convention discards the narrative experiments present in early fictional prose. Michael McKeon’s study of the English novel grapples with these conflicting issues. Reflecting on epistemological and moral changes in the period 1600-1780, he reconsiders the shifting

¹⁶ Two recent examples are Dorothy J. Hale, ed. *The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory, 1900-2000*. (Malden: Blackwell, 2006); Franco Moretti, ed. *The Novel*. 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

attitudes towards questions of truth and virtue in order to identify the foundations of the novel. McKeon excludes fictional prose from the sixteenth century, but nevertheless provides a valuable view on the perceived disorderliness of the early novel when he states that “the novel comes into existence in order to mediate this change in attitudes, and it therefore is not surprising that it should seem a contradictory amalgam of inconsistent elements” (20-21).

I intend to expand on this notion of contradiction and literary diversity, not as a sign of inconsistency, but as productive. I will therefore draw on Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of the novel, which is based on discourse rather than formal narrative characteristics. Bakhtin does not view the emergence of the novel form as a linear development, but rather locates several moments in literary history, as early as Greek and Roman times and argues that the novel’s distinctiveness lies in the fact that it can “include, ingest, devour other genres and still retain its status as a novel” (Bakhtin xxxii).

Bakhtin developed his philosophy of language that helps delineate the features of the novelistic texts.¹⁷ Formulating his theory on novelistic discourse, he states that it is “only in the novel that discourse can reveal all its specific potential and achieve its true depth” (50). He distinguishes the novel as a genre with “plastic possibilities” from the epic, which he views as a completed form that refers to the heroic, traditional and distanced past. The novel on the other hand is determined by knowledge and experience of the individual with the reality of everyday life. As the only genre that came into being after the invention of writing, it parodies other genres in so many different manifestations that it will never harmonize with them (14-16).

Like Watt, Bakhtin signals the interrelatedness between realism and the novel, but he accentuates another aspect. He argues that the novel reflects the reality of the new world as it continually interacts with the still-developing world and traces the origins of the novel back to folklore tradition and Menippean satire. In this view, the link between reality and artistic form defines the role of the author: “The shift of the temporal center of artistic orientation, which placed on the same valorized plane the author and his readers (on the one hand) and heroes described by him (on the other), making them contemporaries, possible acquaintances, friends, familiarizing their relations [...] permits the author, in all his various masks and faces, to move freely onto the field of his represented world, a field that in the epic had been absolutely inaccessible and closed” (27). The individual relationship of reader and author with contemporary reality is the distinctive quality in setting it apart from the epic.

The “novelization of literature,” as Bakhtin terms it, thus denotes the fermentative process that has its roots in a range of genres and the combined influence of social and cultural changes through which the novel came into being. This idea was further elaborated

¹⁷ The essays concerning this topic were written in the 1930s and were first published in English under the title *The Dialogic Imagination* in 1981.

in a later essay entitled “Discourse in the Novel” (1935). Bakhtin signals a connection between phases of social and political upheaval and the thriving of what he calls the “germs of novelistic prose”, such as the presence of a multiplicity of discourses that are aimed against reigning ideological systems (370). These elements are found in ironic, burlesque and polemical texts in ancient as well as early modern times, but “embryonic beginnings of authentic double-voiced and double-linguaged prose did not in ancient times always achieve the status of novel, as a definite compositional and thematic structure” (371). Artistic prose is thus characterized by a constant dialogue between languages and socio-ideological belief systems.

If novelistic discourse involves speech types that seek to challenge official language systems, then such subversive projects are likely to manifest themselves in the Elizabethan novel. Bakhtin’s assumption that the novel has the unique potential to incorporate other artistic and extra-artistic genres that each bring in their own specific set of meanings and values, is particularly relevant to my analyses. The social diversity of the speech types generates a process which he has termed ‘heteroglossia’. It denotes the way that the social environment of an utterance shapes the production of meaning. Heteroglossia materializes in a text as “*another’s speech in another’s language*, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way” (324). Understanding novelistic discourse as the amalgam of a multitude of voices in which the authorial voice is cloaked, we must examine the way in which the heteroglot of verbal-ideological languages of early modern London are represented in the novels by Baldwin and Nashe. Bakhtin’s approach to the novel as an organic genre that came into being in dialogical response to earlier traditional literary forms, thereby provides a valuable means to reconsider the fictional prose narratives of the sixteenth century.

1.4 Situating the author: conceptions of authorship

Views on authorship have often been connected with the institutional arrangements concerning copyright which protects the author's literary text as the unique creation of his imagination. These efforts are in line with claims to genius and originality that emerged in the Romantic period. Questions around authorship arose in the 1960's in poststructuralist thought, in the work of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, claiming that an author should no longer be considered as the human subject constructing a work of literature, but rather as a space in which conventions and codes circulate and are recorded in the text. The author's position as the authority giving meaning to the text was then seemingly removed from critical discourse (Burke 1998, 14-16).

In "The Death of the Author" (1968), Barthes argues that the author can no longer be considered as the person determining the final meaning of text. Instead, a text should be analyzed as an independent unity, enabling the reader to interpret the text in all its diversity. This has implications for the study of early modern texts and the importance attached to the historical author. Barthes does not deny the existence of an actual person writing, a mediator whose "mastery of the narrative code" may be admired, but he warns against the importance often attached to the intention of the author as it unnecessarily limits our understanding (Barthes 142). The author with his feelings and opinions is in this approach replaced by the modern scriptor, who arranges the words on paper but loses his authority as soon as the writing process begins. Barthes thereby asserts that a text should be immune to limitations based on the presence of the author, his intentions and the context.

In response to this discussion on the relationship between author and text, Foucault introduced the concept of the author-function in his essay "What is an Author?" (1970). Like Barthes, he argues that the traditional concept of the author as the source of a text's signification limits the multiplicity of meaning, but he maintains that the author is not entirely removed from the text. Rather, he is internalized in the discourse specific to the work's time and place. This presence is the author-function, which is constructed through a complex process in terms of unity in style and discourse: the author continues to exist in a nonmaterial sense. Foucault concludes by saying that the author is only "a variable and complex function of discourse" (158). He thus describes how the traditional place of the author is nowadays filled by an ideological figure, a principle limiting meaning by raising his authoritative voice.

The two texts by Barthes and Foucault have led to an increased attention for the role of the reader in literary theory, independent from authorial interference. The removal of the author has gained popularity among poststructuralists and has been accepted by many as if it was indisputable. It is this unqualified reception that Sean Burke argues against in *The Death*

and Return of the Author (1998). He concludes that theory does not match the reading experience, which is inevitably shaped by expectations and presuppositions concerning the author.

The gap between theory and practice of anti-authorialism is also detectable in Renaissance literary studies, where the author still plays an important role. While New Historicists to some extent follow Foucault in their conception of a non-physical, discursive presence of the author, their actual study does not and should not separate the human from the subject that is writing. It is difficult to even conceive of interpretation of early modern text without taking the author's presence into account. Burke's final suggestions are instructive in this sense. In the epilogue, he introduces the term "situated authorial subjectivity" in relation to recent developments in digital culture. It is often claimed that hypertext empowers the reader while removing the authority and originality of the author. According to Burke, the context of digitalized technology asks for a different way of dealing with authorship, namely to see it as a situated activity, as "authorship is the principle of specificity in the world of texts" (Burke 202). As I understand the term 'situated authorial subjectivity,' such a conception of authorship recognizes the historical reality of the author and his presence throughout his work: the author is, after all, that connects the text to context. The author is thus more than a set of discourses, but an actual person constructed and characterized by personal and cultural values and endowed with literary creativity. It is from this perspective that I propose to read the early modern author.

1.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have introduced concepts concerning the production and reception of texts, starting from a perspective of conflict and convergence of cultural practices. As the theories on textual communication, novelistic discourse and authorship suggest, the negotiations between author and reader are never fixed. Early modern textual culture must therefore be regarded as a productive and re-creative site of interaction between author, text and reader.

In the following chapters, I will investigate the nature of prose fiction by drawing on these theories and assessing their usefulness as tools for the analysis of the Elizabethan novel. This entails investigating the cultural dynamics operating in the *Beware the Cat* and *The Unfortunate Traveller* in their respective contexts with the main purpose of testing the New Historicist assumption that texts construct and reproduce cultural norms. In addition, assessing the applicability of Bourdieu's comprehensive model of the cultural field to the appreciation of early modern novel, I will consider the social structures as well as the individual and cultural dispositions manifested in the discourse of these texts.

More specifically, the analyses look at the textual manifestation of the author to evaluate Ong's formulation of the psychological effects involved in the shift from storytelling to writing. To that end, I will combine Couturier's print-based conception of the novel, as demonstrating its textuality and narrative strategies, with Bakhtin notion of polyphony of discourses and genres as the distinctive quality of the novel.

The variety in analytical tools is intentional, as it is in line with this specific type of text which has received such a diversity in critical responses and which uniquely captures the cultural, medial and generic changes in early modern England. Going against the grain of poststructuralist thought in the removal of the author, I borrow Burke's concept of situated authorial subjectivity to explain the author as a discursive construct *and* a historical individual. It is my belief that the Elizabethan novel profits from a methodology that appreciates the complexity of the authorial role as a defining principle in the hermeneutic process.

The extent to which these theoretical aspects come into play in the following two chapters is related to the specific concerns of each of the authors. In relation to Baldwin's *Beware the Cat*, the focus will mainly be on the interplay between oral and literate culture in relation to the religiously tumultuous phase in sixteenth century London. The chapter on *The Unfortunate Traveller* highlights the socio-economic implications of literary conventions and will therefore draw on the author's conscious self-fashioning in the literary marketplace.

Chapter 2. Framing Fiction: Polemic in William Baldwin's *Beware the Cat*

In *A maruelous hystory intitulede, Beware the Cat* (1553), William Baldwin has created a complex fictional narrative that embodies the cultural and religious interests and anxieties of mid-sixteenth century London. The pungent satire of Catholic superstition echoes contemporary positions propagated in Protestant polemics, while its intricate narrative structure and its textual challenges to the authorial position serve as generic markers of the novel. *Beware the Cat* was occasionally listed in bibliographies of early prose, but it was not until William A. Ringler claimed in 1979 that Baldwin wrote the first English novel that it entered the academic debate. Bearing that in mind, this chapter looks at the manner in which Baldwin foregrounds the fictional nature of this complex text while fervently engaging in a debate on sources of (religious) truth.

The Epistle Dedicatory, which is signed 'G.B.', informs us that the book is an accurate account of a story told by a Master Streamer during Christmastime. The letter is followed by the Argument, which explains that the writer and Gregory Streamer were both lodged at the house of Master Ferrers on the night of the 28th of December 1552. Ferrers was responsible for the Christmas festivities at court and the others were similarly involved in the revels that season. Speculating about a play named *Aesop's Crow* in which most of the actors were birds, the men discussed whether or not animals had reason. Streamer, convinced that animals could talk, tried to convince the others of his point of view and the speech he delivers comprises the rest of the book.

In the first part of the oration, Streamer recounts what happened one evening when staying at a friend's house at Saint Martin's Lane. Sitting by the fireplace with some of the workers of his friend's printing shop, Streamer complains about the noise of cats outside, instigating the men present to tell stories about cats employing human language and wit. Encouraged by these tales and curious what the cacophony of cats outside his window means, Streamer explains in the second part how he spent the night studying Albertus Magnus' *De Virtutibus Animalium* in order to concoct a magical potion to help him understand animal speech. He follows the complicated instructions for applying the mysterious medicine and he discovers that the gathering of cats is in fact the trial of a cat named Mouse-slayer. The last part revolves entirely around the strange adventures of this cat. The book ends with an Exhortation in which the author draws moralizing conclusions. In addition, he has supplied the entire text with marginal comments and provides a "hymn" written by Streamer in the epilogue.

As Andrew Hadfield has pointed out, *Beware the Cat* is hard to pin down to a specific literary category, it is rather an amalgamation of a range of sources and genres (Hadfield

1998, 141). In the recently published *Cambridge History of Irish Literature*, it has been described as a “protean text, which melds beast fable, satire, oral narrative, a medieval tale of wonders, anti-Catholic invective and earnest Protestant apologetic” (Fogarty 142-143). Interestingly, this hybrid and fascinating prose text has long been overlooked by scholars of early modern English literature, but the rising interest in the origins of fiction has led scholars to look for early manifestations of the novelistic text, often in connection with the rise of humanism. Placing the novel in the tradition of Reformation literature, John N. King noted that the novel deserves to be regarded as “a very early example of the kind of experimentation with modes of narration and point of view that characterizes modern fiction” (360).¹⁸

In line with this suggestion, we need to identify the novel’s historical context in order to appreciate its intended effects. This includes the conventions of the medium used, since the polemical message of this generically unsettled text is not just encapsulated in the story, but also in Baldwin’s artful use of narrative frames and characters. The vehicle of a fictional narrative obviously offers exhilarating new possibilities and Baldwin’s narrative strategies should be analyzed accordingly. As issues of authority and credibility of oral and textual modes of communication play an important role in the typographic features and the narrative itself, I will first examine the text in the light of the changing conditions of knowledge transmission and look at the ways in which the characters and embedded stories are employed to further Protestant, humanist ideals. The second section moves from the contents to the structure of the novel and focuses on Baldwin’s use of the material properties of the printed page and the manifestations of the authorial role. The final section deals with the effect of these narrative strategies and the boundaries of fact and fictionalization of the subject matter on the reader.

¹⁸ Stephen Gresham also draws attention to Baldwin’s propensity to blend morally edifying matter with a sensitivity to literary forms as illustrative of his humanist spirit, “William Baldwin: Literary Voice of the Reign of Edward VI” *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 44.2 (1981): 101-116.

2.1 “We fell in communication of cats”: Religious polemic and the transmission of knowledge

Although little known today, William Baldwin (1515-1563) was a recognized author in the sixteenth century. An overview of his entire literary production, ranging from Bible translations to political elegy and satire, reveals the scope of his interests and multifaceted talent. Today his name is mainly associated with the *Mirror for Magistrates* (1559), a compilation of narrative historical and biographical poems that served as literary model to many poets in the last decades of the sixteenth century. Baldwin’s contemporary John Bale praised him as a distinguished poet and scholar, and the likes of Shakespeare and Nashe included references to his texts in their work. Little is known, however, about Baldwin’s activities in his early life, but it is probable that he studied at Oxford where he first met his friend George Ferrers, who appears as the host in the introduction to *Beware the Cat*. On his return to London, Baldwin started writing. His first work, entitled *A Treatise of Morall Phylosophie* (1547), was a translation of classical aphorisms meant to defend Christian teaching. The Protestant printer Edward Whitchurch, who published the work, employed Baldwin first as corrector of the press and later as compositor. It was through Whitchurch that Baldwin came into contact with printers and other writers who endeavoured to further the English Reformation as promoted by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer and the Duke of Somerset, King Edward’s Protector. As a devoted member of this circle, he translated the biblical *Ballads of Solomon* (1549) and became affiliated with the court. This elevated position was of brief duration, as the death of Edward in 1553 and the reinstatement of the Catholic religion under Queen Mary prevented them from openly continuing their Protestant projects. The religious upheaval of the mid-sixteenth century and its repercussions on the printing of texts are therefore significant for situating Baldwin’s work. Both the *Mirror for Magistrates* and *The Funeralls of King Edward* met with opposition and were initially suppressed. The former was composed in the years that Baldwin, Ferrers and Chaloney were at court together, but printing was not authorized until 1559, presumably because it revealed their Protestant sympathies. Since many Protestants were burnt at the stake during the reign of Bloody Mary, it is not surprising that the publication of *Beware the Cat*, with its satirical comments on Catholic practices, was deferred until the country witnessed a return to Protestantism after Elizabeth’s accession in 1558 (Feasey 407-13 and Gutierrez 19-23).¹⁹

¹⁹ Although the novel was not published during Mary’s reign, the exact date of the novel’s first publication is dubitable. A response to the novel has been reprinted by William C. Hazlitt (*Fugitive Poetical Tracts*, 1875) and was dated 1561. Hazlitt’s source is Joseph Ritson, whom Ringler mentions as recording an edition from 1569 (*Bibliographia Poetica*, 1802). No other authorities can be found for either of these editions. The earliest copy now extant is dated 1570, which is the copy on which Ringler’s edition is based (see Ringler’s notes on the text in Baldwin, xxix).

As an assistant to Whitchurch, Baldwin was immersed in this Protestant culture and fully aware of the possibilities of the printing press. The hectic religious and political environment of early modern London was a scene for vigorous polemic. In his attempt to rehabilitate this category of writing in Renaissance literary studies, Jesse M. Lander explains that the term ‘polemic’ simultaneously denotes a genre, a concept and a practice. This suggestion also points to the multiformity of the reformers’ uses of print and the troubling effect textual heterogeneousness has on modern readers. But the genre was not merely causing chaos, it was also productive: “along with heat and noise, polemic produces arguments and identities: early modern polemic is not only polarizing but also pluralizing” (Lander 34). It follows from this observation that we need to identify those elements that are used to construct identity either by affirmation or by opposition.

I wish to approach the Baldwin’s *Beware the Cat* from this perspective and detect the mechanisms by which he sought to represent his religious views and epistemological principles. As such, my analysis reflects on the set of individual dispositions as formulated by Bourdieu as well as the cultural dispositions that determined the author’s self-fashioning. In addition, in highlighting the presence of multiple ideological systems, it ties in with the notion of heteroglossia in novelistic discourse.

Baldwin’s famous *A Treatise of Morall Phylosophie* articulates his attitude towards religious education. An important influence can be traced back to the principles of humanism, originating in the works of Italian philosophers such as Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, which had reached England in the late fifteenth century. Pivotal figures in English humanism were Thomas More and John Colet, who were both sons of established Londoners and were active in public life and sought to replace the scholastic mode of teaching with the new learning. The literary and pedagogical ideals of humanism were united in the idea that man could be shaped and perfected through an educational practice that stimulated intellectual debate and employment of creative talent. Key element in the reformation process was rhetoric, the art of eloquence based on Cicero’s *De Oratore*. Imitation of classical writers like Virgil, Horace and Cicero was therefore at the core of the teaching at grammar school (Kinney 3-38, Manley 23-62).²⁰ The *Treatise* was written in this tradition, both in its emphasis on the importance of morality and reason, and the implied assumption of the educability and perfectibility of man.

Didactic works, ‘entertaining edification’ as Ian Green terms this category, were aimed at schoolboys or educated adults like the lay authors of the works themselves, and

²⁰ On the models of rhetorical imitation, see Pigman III, G.W. “Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 33.1 (1980): 1-32. Pigman’s analysis reflects the ideal of imitation and emulation as it was propagated in humanist teaching. Nashe’s

were often more popular than the more complex clerical treatises (Green 443-44).²¹ These circumstances explain the success of Baldwin's treatise in the latter half of the sixteenth century.²²

Beware the Cat, Baldwin's next original literary work, is far more difficult to categorize. His interest in promoting the project of the Reformation takes an original turn in this novel, by composing a fictional narrative that includes multiple genres and discourses. In the following section I will therefore investigate on what grounds the novel repudiates Catholicism and what strategies are used to propagate the Protestant attitude towards knowledge and texts as an alternative.

Anti-Catholicism and popular culture

As critics have pointed out, Catholics and their superstitions form the butt of many jokes in *Beware the Cat*. Stephen Gresham remarked that the "commonplace strands of anti-Catholic satire" in the narrative are employed by Baldwin in a more sophisticated way than can be seen in the work of his contemporaries (114).²³ I will expand upon this notion and illustrate that Baldwin's literary and polemical quality resides not so much in the satire proper, which contains rather conventional elements, as in the organization of the tales. As a result of the complex network of embedded stories, the novel requires the reader's active involvement with the text.

The stories told in the first part of the oration revolve around the question whether cats, like human beings, are capable of communicating with each other. The participants in the discussion tell stories about speaking cats in order to convince the others of their different theories. As a result of the embeddedness of the anecdotes, the original voice of the storyteller and the ultimate source of the tales become ever more blurred. Terence Bowers has convincingly argued that the questionability of the sources is suggestive of the speculative nature of the Catholic faith. It also points towards the proliferation of legends of saints and martyrs. These legends had their origin in non-biblical tradition rather than in texts in which the authority of the storyteller could be subjected to scrutiny. The narrative thereby highlights the unreliability of oral transmission of knowledge and by extension promotes a text-based Protestant epistemology (Bowers 7-13).

²¹ Green's survey in this category includes verse, plays, allegories, biographies and other forms of writing. An important aspect of these texts was that lay writers sometimes unwittingly digressed from the strictly orthodox Protestant views by granting greater importance to good deeds as opposed to presenting man as wholly dependent on God for salvation (Green, chapters 7 and 8, 372-501). The diminution of the believer's passivity might be an additional reason for the popularity of these works next to the accessibility of these genres for the common reader.

²² Green records 25 editions between 1547 and 1651 (597).

²³ Andrew Hadfield's discussion of John Bale's works in relation to his concept of a pure, reformed English church provides the context for the writer's bitter anti-Catholicism and his pursuit of a Protestant poetics, most notably in his tract *The Vocacyon of Johan Bale to the Bishopricke of Ossorie* (1553) (Hadfield 1998, 51-80). See also Hadfield's contribution in *Representing Ireland*, chapter 3, 43-59.

The rejection of the Catholic faith and the reliance of the church on oral traditions is most explicitly illustrated in the third part of the oration. Streamer eavesdrops at the assembly of the cats where Mouse-slayer relates her experiences among humans “in the time when preachers had the leave to speak against the Mass” (Baldwin 37).²⁴ This passage alludes to the first years of the reign of King Edward VI when Catholic pulpits and bishops were attacked by reformed preachers. Edward was England's first Protestant ruler and his accession to the throne prompted a complete doctrinal reformation. Latin Mass was officially abolished and replaced by the English Communion Service through the Act of Uniformity in 1549 (Mackie 509-22). In the eyes of the Protestant reformers, Mass was *the* symbol of the old faith and Mouse-slayer's first tale exposes the service as ultimately based on superstition. The cat relates how she lived with an old couple in the countryside who were “hard to be turned from their rooted belief”. The woman was blind, but a priest restored her sight by saying a private Mass at her house at night. Her family attempted to convert her to Protestantism and the priest explains her blindness is a punishment for this deviation, as a symbol of the blindness of her soul. The priest is depicted as ignorant, and instead of supplying theological arguments to convince the woman of the old church's doctrine, he uses a miracle to prevent her conversion. Mass is thereby reduced to a manipulative instrument used by the clergy to hold sway over naïve believers.

Not only the woman's ignorance and the priest's abuse are ridiculed; the deeper doctrinal foundation of the mass is similarly subject to mockery. Early in the conversation, Streamer objects to someone's suggestion that cats are really witches. He argues that a witch could never fit her body into that of a cat. His friend immediately corrects him and equates him with “the stubborn Popish conjurer” who thinks that the bread of the Eucharist actually transforms into Christ's flesh. The concept of transubstantiation was central to the celebration of Mass in the Catholic Church, but the doctrine became a controversial theme during the Reformation, as Protestants regarded the Lord's Supper rather as a symbolic commemoration.²⁵ In line with this new doctrine, the speaker rejects the Catholic dogma as perverse and a hyperbolic comment is added in the margin: “Transubstantiationers destroy Christ's manhood” (17). Another servant relates how a bishop confirmed the story of the plague of Saint Patrick – the patron saint of Ireland - a curse that transformed men and women into wolves.

²⁴ All quotations are from *Beware the Cat: The First English Novel*. Ed. William A. Ringler, Jr. and Michael Flachmann (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1988) and will be indicated in parenthetical references to page numbers.

²⁵ Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury during the reign of Henry VIII and Edward VI, explained the differences between the two doctrines as follows: “They teach, that Christ is in the bread and wine, but we say, according to the truth, that he is in them that worthily eat and drink the bread and wine. They say, that Christ is received in the mouth, and entereth in with the bread and wine. We say that he is received in the heart, and entereth in by faith” (quoted in Mackie 509).

This episode is emblematic of the line of reasoning used by the storytellers. The series of tales is generated by an anecdote recounted by Thomas, an English traveller who had been to Ireland. This central story took place forty years earlier when a kern (foot soldier) and his boy servant were on their way home after a cattle raid. During dinner they were joined by a cat called Grimalkin, who devoured their stolen sheep and cow in their entirety. Because of this avariciousness, the kern and his servant believed that the cat was the incarnation of the Devil. They fled in fear, killing the cat when he pursued them. A group of cats immediately appeared and tore the unfortunate boy to pieces to revenge their leader's death. The kern told the remarkable story to his wife and was attacked and strangled by his kitten, who was appalled at the fact that his master had slain Grimalkin.

The episode instigates a debate on cats and witches based on the associative memories and thoughts of the participants. The reader is thus confronted with a complex of embedded narratives from doubtful origin that staples together prejudices against Catholicism, the Irish and a number of other stereotypes. When one of the servants questions the plausibility of the story of Grimalkin's death in Ireland reaching cats in England, Thomas explains that news travels among animals in the same way it does among people, especially when the news involves a leader. This analogy is extended when he suggests that the power of Grimalkin over the other cats is:

as the Pope hath had ere this over all Christendom, in whose cause all his clergy would not only scratch and bite, but kill and burn to powder (though they knew not why) whomsoever they thought to think but once against him – which Pope, all things considered, devoureth more at every meal than Grimalkin did at her last supper. (15)

This comparison of the animals' greed and aggressiveness of the animals with that of the clergy leads Streamer to expand upon the Pope's copious meals. Another servant categorizes the veneration of the Pope as foolish, when someone explains why Grimalkin was so esteemed among the other cats:

other natural cats that were not so wise have had [Grimalkin] and her race in reverence among them, thinking her to be but a mere cat as they themselves were – like we as silly fools long time, for his sly and craftly juggling, revered the Pope, thinking him to have been but a man (though much holier than we ourselves were), whereas indeed he was a very incarnate devil, like as this Grimalkin was an incarnate witch. (20-21)

It was a commonly held belief that cats possessed occult power as helpers of the Devil and they were subject of many folktales. This malignant image had been propagated by the church since the Middle Ages in response to pagan religions that worshipped cats, and as a result, cats became victims of brutal games. In 1233, Pope Gregory IX issued a proclamation giving divine sanction for torturing cats and their female owners (Atwood Lawrence 630-32). Robert Darnton has pointed out that cat-killing was a popular theme in literary works and that the animals were often mutilated as part of carnival rituals because of their connection with witchcraft (85-90). The association of cats with magic made by Streamer's companions is thus in line with the cultural dispositions of the time.

A man who is introduced as wise and "of excellent judgment" asserts that Grimalkin was really a witch, since witches are known for their ability to take on the shape of a cat (16). He offers additional linguistic proof for his suggestion: the very name Grimalkin is a woman's name, as the proverb "there be more maids than Malkin" testifies (20).²⁶ The reputation of cats in popular culture and the fact that bawdry and witchcraft often went together, explain how easily the storytellers move from tales about cats to occult practices.

The transmission of knowledge from a sorceress to her daughter is linked to tradition in the marginal comments, which states: "Witchcraft is kin to unwritten verities, for both go by traditions" (19). The notion of tradition is associated with Catholicism and the heresy inherent in witchcraft in turn engenders slighting remarks about the moral weakness of the Catholic clergy.

Wilde Irishmen, witches and bawds: alternative 'Others'

The instances quoted above show how Catholics are equated with cats in their behaviour, displaying wickedness, ignorance and gluttony. Maslen has pointed out the obvious pun on Catholics in the word 'cat', but there are several other elements in the conduct of the cats that allowed English readers to relate the two (Maslen 18). Both groups speak an outlandish language - the uncivilized Irish or the enigmatic Latin of the Mass - and they both use an international, underground network to communicate with each other. Cats, by nature nocturnal animals, assemble in a fashion that reminds both of the secret meetings of Catholics and of the nightly Sabbaths that witches were believed to hold.

The fact that the Grimalkin story and other tales are traced back to Ireland is not unrelated to the representation of the Irish in contemporary sources and chronicles as a wild and superstitious people with exotic customs. The introduction to Thomas's story exemplifies this attitude:

²⁶ The OED accounts for this association, describing Malkin as a "typical name for a lower-class, untidy, or sluttish woman". The entry for Grimalkin reads: "A name given to a cat; hence, a cat, esp. an old she-cat; contemptuously applied to a jealous or imperious old woman." The name is recorded as appearing in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* I.i.9, "I come, Gray-Malkin!" and can now be traced to *Beware the Cat*.

Hearing that I hear now, and calling to mind my own experience when it was, I do so little misdoubt it that I think I never told, nor you ever heard, a more likely tale. While I was in Ireland, in the time that Mac Murrough and all the rest of the wild lords were the King's enemies, what time also mortal war was between the Fitz Harrises and the Prior and the Convent of the Abbey of Tintern, who counted them the King's friends and subjects, whose neighbor was Cahir Mac Art, a wild Irishman then the King's enemy and one which daily made inroads into the country of Wexford and burned such towns and carried away all such cattle as he might come by, by means whereof all the country from Clonmines to Ross became a waste wilderness and is scarce recovered until this day (12).²⁷

Ireland had been conquered by Anglo-Norman settlers under King Henry II in the twelfth century and the English were still struggling to gain control over the Irish chieftains who reclaimed the land in the sixteenth century. Loyalty conflicts also arose between the Old English, the descendents of the barons who settled in Ireland in the first century - and the New English who moved to Ireland as part of the plantations during the reign of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I. In order to reinforce political and cultural sovereignty, a statute was passed in the Irish parliament in 1541, acknowledging Henry VIII as king of Ireland, but since his representatives ignored Irish customs and traditional structures, internal struggles and revolts rendered English political structures ineffective. In addition, Catholic European countries supported the Irish and the Old English (Myers 2-8). The latter half of the sixteenth century witnessed a proliferation of anti-Irish works, such as John Bale's *The Vocacyon of Johan Bale to the Bishopricke of Ossorie* (1553) and Edmund Spenser's *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (1596). These texts, professing objectivity under the label of 'chronicle' in analogy with Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicle of Ireland* (1586), created literary examples of Irishness, in a way that "the determination of an English self depends upon the subjection of an Irish other" (Bradshaw, Hadfield and Maley 1-15).

The representation of the Irish was largely politically motivated and much of Irish historical writing was Anglo-centric. The terminology used to describe Ireland ensured a dichotomy between civilized English and barbarous Irish rebels. Writers contrasted the two nations in terms of political organization and legal system as well as religion, opposing the Irish papist with the Christian Englishman. Many of the characteristic ideas about clothing habits, cooking, (female) drunkenness, uncleanliness and the role of magic are contained in

²⁷ Considering the detailed description of Ireland and its traditions, it is likely that Baldwin spent some time in Ireland after he left Oxford. Another indication of this is the record of a play "On the State of Ireland" written by Baldwin for King Edward. See Feasey, 409.

Baldwin's text as well.²⁸ The kern's way of preparing his food, for example, which is glossed in the margin as the "old Irish diet," includes the curious habit of eating roasted shoes (13). The marginal comments repeatedly add cues to indicate that these stories took place in Ireland, e.g. "This was an Irish town" and "Irish curs bark sore" (12). Locating these stories in another, but familiar, culture is a didactic technique which functions as a warning against the follies and strange habits to which people could fall victim. The novel thus reflects contemporary positions and values regarding the Irish, Catholic Other.

Stereotypical vices, such as idolatry, promiscuity and a general inclination to magic, play a role in many of the stories. These characteristics are cleverly joined together in a story about a crafty old bawd in the third part of the oration. Mouse-slayer tells about a woman who kept a brothel and stole young gentlemen's money and jewels. Yet "she was very holy and religious" and knelt down to an image of the Virgin Mary every night, "promising that then she would honor and serve Her during all her life" (40). Apparently oblivious to the internal contradiction in her behaviour, she engages in immoral acts such as tricking a chaste young merchant's wife into adultery, and she expects to receive forgiveness because of her beads and prayers.

The bawd's corrupt activities are intertwined with notions of heresy, while other stories successfully link anti-Catholic sentiments directed against superstitious priests and the dogma of transubstantiation, to more general vices like magical transformations, deception of the senses and witchcraft.²⁹ This character can not so easily be placed in the distinction between the archetypal procuress and the stereotype of the witch. Peter Burke explains the former as a popular belief dating back to the Middle Ages, a woman exercising her magical powers for mischief. The latter, a "learned belief to which ordinary people were converted only gradually," was more dangerous, involving the heretic who was associated with the Devil (168).

The caricatures of Irishness and Catholicism exemplify the burlesque types that occurred in early modern storytelling and writing. Burke's study of popular culture illustrates how the representation of heroes, villains and fools served as benchmarks of middle and lower class attitudes and values. Misogyny nourished the stereotyping of witches and deceitful women, whereas the clergy was prototypically associated with traits of ignorance and covetousness. Such images often crystallized around certain individuals, like triumphant

²⁸ For a concise overview of representations of Irishness in Elizabethan writing, see Sheila T. Cavanagh, "The Fatal Destiny of that Land': Elizabethan Views of Ireland" in Brendan Bradshaw, Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley, eds., *Representing Ireland: Literature and the Origins of Conflict, 1534-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 116-131.

²⁹ The story shows interesting analogies with Fernando de Rojas' tragicomedy *La Celestina* (1499) which describes how Celestina orchestrates a secret meeting between Calisto and nobleman's daughter Melibea under the pretence of the young man's suffering. Ringler signals a resemblance between the two characters and notes that the text was translated into English in 1525 (71). The correspondence extends to other elements of the story as well, such as the diverging social positions of the lovers and the initial refusal of the chaste woman to become involved with the bawd. A notable exception is the unfortunate death of the lovers in the Spanish story.

rulers and saints or notorious villains (Burke 1994, 149-77). In line with these stereotypes, the characters in *Beware the Cat* - the bawd, the credulous priest and the Irish soldier - move in a milieu where practices that were condemnable from the perspective of Protestant morality are joined together by association. The rejection of Catholic religion and naïve reliance on oral tradition is thus constructed from an intricate web of traditions and rituals.

This interrelatedness is an important narrative device. The stories derived from hearsay are rendered even more unreliable because its speakers are without exception stereotypical. As we have already seen in relation to the mode of writing used in Irish chronicling, this was a technique to locate anomalies and uncritical beliefs in a cultural Other. The representation of marginalized groups who were stereotyped in contemporary writing as a form of identity politics formed around habits that differed from religious or cultural norms. These deviations were feared and distrusted as they were experienced as a threat to the social order. The concerns about such aberrations were then 'safely' relocated into what Burke terms 'hate-figures,' people outside one's own social circle such as witches and Jews (Burke 1994, 176-77).

As Burke further illustrates, caricatures were especially liable to materialize in a culture marked by political and religious conflict, like mid-sixteenth century England. Communal festivals and performances perpetuated these images, most notably during carnival when social order was temporarily subverted. It was against such rituals and traditions that church officials (both Catholic and Protestant) aimed their reformation projects both on theological and moral grounds. In the first place, reformers sought to purify popular culture from its secular, 'pagan' influences, for example in the condemnation of witchcraft. In the second place, they argued against vanity and indulgence in excessive drunkenness and gluttony (Burke 1994, 207-13).

In the light of Burke's survey of stereotypes, Baldwin's employment of caricatures is paradoxical, as he uses the very object that he seeks to oppose. The oral performance where hearsay and fables are introduced as reliable sources allows for explicit satire of the oral tradition. The style in which the different stories are linked reflects the associative way in which storytelling in the domestic sphere took place and such gatherings represented a familiar pastime for the reader. Although his characters are flat by modern definitions, their function within in the narrative as a whole is more complex, as the entire discussion takes place in a Protestant printer's shop. So in fact, the criticism is more fundamental: the oral setting is located in contemporary London, with the participants representing a mixture of lay and middle class people. The credulousness that they refute in their stories is not merely an external (Irish, Catholic) phenomenon; the threat resides at the heart of Protestant society and thus contains a double warning for the reader.

Transmission and reception of knowledge

Baldwin's approach fits with the image constructed by Protestant reformers towards the heterogeneousness of popular forms and practices: through the characterization of the speakers and the structure of the text proper, he constructs an image of Catholicism that associates it with other marks of naivety and corruption based on oral and popular tradition. The old religion is continually coupled to speculations and reliance on the visual, as illustrated in the adoration of images and the theatricality of Mass.

According to Terence Bowers, Baldwin creates an opposition between the Catholic modes of knowledge production, based on oral and visual means, and the text-based culture of Protestantism. This conflict between Catholic and Protestant approaches to sources is only part of the story. The novel ridicules, more generally, the *people* who display an uncritical attitude towards sources of knowledge, especially if they expose themselves to mockery by emphasizing their own learnedness. The problem implied here is the simplicity and gullibility of the speakers. Storytelling and the transmission of knowledge play an important role from the very beginning of the novel. While the Argument gives the impression of learnedness and intellectual debate at court, the main narrative presents a decidedly lower-class environment. Sitting together by the fireplace, Streamer and his friends participate in a discussion that bears little relation to reality or rationality, with stories rooted in popular culture and reports derived from hearsay. Anecdotes are associatively connected in an almost endless sequence and the characters are easily persuaded into believing them, accepting thirdhand stories and proverbs as reliable proof.

The impression of intellectual discussion is maintained by occasional protestations like a "conjecture is too unreasonable" (14). Ironically, the objections are not directed against the main argument –that animals can speak – but against trivialities like the exact manner in which Irish and English cats communicate. Streamer's explicit introduction of his two creditable and learned friends is thus undermined by their ignorance. The storytellers who criticize the superstitious Irish and the Pope are thus similarly guilty of believing fantastical stories of speaking animals and are easily persuaded by invalid argumentation. The structure of storytelling, actually lacking structure altogether, allows Baldwin to blend stories dealing with Irish customs, witchcraft and other religious anomalies and expose them as the foil against which the (Protestant) reader should fashion his own, critical attitude towards sources of knowledge. Streamer's complaint that the "cause that learning is so despised and baggagical things so much advanced" (6) ironically foreshadows the rest of the stories.

The dialogic form activates the novel's concern with oral and textual communication, in particular questions related to the reliability of sources of knowledge.³⁰ Streamer is

³⁰ Jesse Lander's analysis of polemic as a "discursive dynamic" provides useful observations. Lander does not include early fictional prose texts, but notes the rising popularity of the polemic dialogue in the sixteenth century

introduced by the author as a respected man, Master Ferrer's "Divine," who translated a book entitled *Cure of the Great Plague* out of the Arabic (5), but he soon exposes himself to be neither skilled in theology and does not show any sign of profound intellect. His credibility is seriously compromised by the internal contradictions in his speech and his gullible character. With his affected, pretentious behaviour he is the stereotypical foolish orator. Streamer starts his oration with an ostentatious but speculative elaboration on the etymology of the names of gates in London. He laments the fact that the value of education has deteriorated to the point that "if he can prate a little Latin and handle a racquet and a pair of six-square bowls, he shall sooner obtain any living that the best learned in a whole city" (10). He repeatedly refers to his own intellectual activities, such as the printing of his "Greek alphabets" and his ability to speak different languages, "chiefly the Calde, Arabic and Egyptian" (9, 17). This boastful attitude is at odds with the expressed belief in ghosts and his misinterpretations of classical sources and alchemical handbooks.

Bowers reads the opening lines in terms of Baldwin's intention to show that Catholicism, with its reliance on orally delivered, non-authoritative tales, misdirects believers. What Bowers takes to be deviation as a result of "existential disorientation" (5), in my view rather points towards Streamer's self-professed learnedness. The narrative digression accords with his pedantic stance and mode of speaking throughout the text: he continually seeks to confirm his authority by referring to other sources, both oral and textual. The point of conflict therefore resides not in the origin of his information, but in Streamer's uncritical appropriation of those sources.

The absence and pretence of learning is a key issue in the attitude towards sources. This is made explicit in the second part of the oration, which moves away from the oral setting and focuses on Streamer's practice of astronomy and alchemy. Like the mixture of topics and anecdotes in the first part, the attempt to create a magical potion described here is an overt conflation of sources of more or less questionable content. Remembering the formula to understand birds in *De Virtutibus Animalium* by the medieval philosopher Albertus Magnus, Streamer greedily takes the description of the medicine to achieve his own goal:³¹

Because his writing here is doubtful, because he saith "quoddam nemus," a certain wood, and because I knew three men not many years past which, while they went

and provides examples of "dialogic polemic" concerning religious matters, see Lander 35-45. The popularity of dialogues and the relation to the humanist interest in the classical forms of dispute as a method of highlighting different aspects of a topic is provided in Nancy A. Gutierrez "Beware the Cat: Mimesis in a Skin of Oratory" *Style* 23.1 (1989): 49-69.

³¹ Ringler explains in his notes that Streamer's translations are derived from *Liber Secretorum de Virtutibus Herbarum, Lapidum at Animalium* but differ in their wording from the printed English version which appeared around 1550. On the popularity of the text and its pseudo-scientific character, see Michael R. Best and Frank H. Brightman, eds., *The Book of Secrets of Albertus Magnus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973). xi-xxi.

about this hunting were so 'fraid, whether with an evil spirit or with their own imagination I cannot tell, but home they came with their hair standing on end, and some of them have been the worse ever since, and their hounds likewise; and seeing it was so long to St. Jude's Day, therefore I determined not to hunt at all. But conjecturing that the beast which they should take was an hedgehog (which at that time of the year goeth most abroad), and knowing by reason that the flesh thereof was by nature full of natural heat – and therefore, the principal parts being eaten, must needs expulse gross matters and subtilize the brain (as by the like power it engendreth fine blood and helpeth much both against the gout and the cramp) I got me forth towards St. John's Wood, whereas not two days before I had seen one. (25-26)

Rather than following the instructions, he opportunistically interprets the passages as he pleases, in his superstition and ignorance. The irony is heightened by his subsequent railing against a group of hunters, who, in Streamer's eyes, are "unlucky, idolatrical, miscreant infidels and have no true belief in God's providence" (26). His project is marked by the jumbling of astrological terms, inaccurate references to planetary hours and a superstitious belief in the circumstances under which the medicine should be applied:

And when I had settled myself where I might conveniently hear and see all the things done in the leads where the cat cried still for Isegrim, I put into my two nostrils two trochisks and into my mouth two lozenges, one above my tongue the other under; and put off my left shoe, because of Jupiter's appropinquation; and laid the fox tail under my foot (31).

In addition, he pronounces strange, Irish-sounding spells, employs tools used in alchemy and dissects animals under the pretence of practicing science. The passage thus mocks Streamer's pretence of bookish wisdom and his superstitions and as such relocates the point of attack in the person dealing with sources, whether oral or textual. The invective against Catholics and their inclination towards magic is rendered dubious by Streamer's own use of 'alchemical science' in order to hear the cats speak. Just as the threat of the degenerative effect of the wild Irish on English culture was not so indisputably limited to Ireland, so the strict boundaries between pure Protestantism and corrupt Catholicism are called into question. The reader is forced to contemplate on the legitimacy of such accusations and to be aware of the presence of vices even in their supposedly safe Protestant environment.

So although Baldwin openly satirises religious naivety, his criticism is not limited to the moral degeneracy of the Catholic clergy and their practice. Rather, the representation of the characters and their reliance on orally delivered narratives, portrays magic, superstition

and Catholicism as a conglomerate of interrelated discursive practices and implicitly opposes it to the epistemological principles of Protestants. The satire even goes beyond the 'comfortable' image of the religiously alternative Other. The omnipresence of popular cultural practices and pseudo-intellectualism, even in Protestant circles like court, is represented in the stories to serve as a foil to the critical reader of the printed text. The association between oral tradition and the "epistemological weaknesses" of Catholicism does not only involve the sources of knowledge themselves, but also the critical attitude of the reader/listener. Baldwin's edifying polemic revolves around the complex issue of communication knowledge in different forms and ridicules naïve reliance on both oral and written sources. The novel promotes a critical attitude and, reflecting the cultural dispositions of his Protestant milieu, argues against corrupted morality, expressing the belief in the educability of man in the humanist tradition. Indeed, as will be demonstrated in the next section, the complex format and the embedded narratives already indicate that Baldwin seeks to educate his readership.

2.2 “Wonderful and strange confections”: Framing strategies and narrative authority

As any work of literature appearing at the time, *Beware the Cat* contains features from other literary forms. The structural patterns and narrative techniques are based on conventions of oral performance and manuscript, but employed in more complex ways. The embedded narratives in the novel stage a variety of speakers and competing discourses. In addition, the author subverts the reader’s conception of his role as the editor of Streamer’s oration. As will be illustrated below, these experiments with familiar models tie in with questions of stability and reliability of texts in printed form and grapples with the issue of narrative authority in a way that both frustrates and empowers the reader. This analysis thereby tests Ong’s connection between typographic and narrative control.

***Beware the Cat* as frame narrative**

The introduction of Streamer’s oration in the Epistle Dedicatory and the Argument is modelled on the frame narrative, an orally invented device frequently used in medieval storytelling and poetry, such as *The Book of One Thousand and One Nights*, which allowed for the incorporation of multiple stories into a larger plot. The embedded narratives are connected by a main story that operates as a organizing principle.³²

The novel shows a certain resemblance with works like the *Decameron* and *The Canterbury Tales* not only in the sense that it deals with tales mocking the ecclesiastical authorities and exposing foolishness and lasciviousness, but also in its structure. However, as Edward T. Bonahue argues, Baldwin “puts such devices to better use than any of his contemporaries” (300), and Arthur F. Kinney similarly praises his inventive use of “narrative frames within frames, which makes the tripartite *paragena* preceding [George Gascoigne’s 1573 novel] *The Adventures of Master F.J.* look simple indeed” (116).

Considering the nature of the main story (Streamer’s oration) and the frame (the discussion between Streamer and G.B.), the novel’s oral setting brings into play questions surrounding discursive processed as materialized in print. Lee Haring has argued that the framing device in oral cultures is more than just a mechanism and approaches the mode of storytelling as a “cultural universal” which is based on the human habit of interrupting discourses (Haring 230). The interactive nature of the oral performance demonstrates the intrusion of one narrative level into another; with the entry of each speaker, the reader is confronted with a new discourse or a variation on older models.

³² See Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Transl. Christine van Boheemen. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 52-53.

Judith Davidoff's study of framed stories in late medieval English poetry introduces the term 'framing fictions' as "a narrative-maker, a genre-leveler that can turn rhetorically unlike elements into structurally similar ones" (18). She illustrates that the framing device was a structure used to bring together in one plot various earlier narrative forms, such as *chanson d'aventure*, dream vision, lyrics, formal debates and more. In other words, framing enables, perhaps even dictates a form of folkloric intertextuality.

Baldwin employs similar tactics: *Beware the Cat* in its entirety incorporates a variety of genres, including beast fable, medicinal recipe and pseudo-intellectual debate. The novel draws from the tradition of embedding and parodies of genres, but also departs from it in a structural sense. The framing in *Beware the Cat* consists not of a single overarching frame that introduces one or more stories, but of multiple stories within stories. After G.B. has introduced Streamer as the principle narrator, the oration itself instigates the other storytellers and even cats to relate their experiences and stories they heard from others. The ever regressing embedding complicates the narrative situation – a device which may account for the impression of disorderliness. As outlined in the previous section, this confusion prompts the reader to think about the acquisition and proliferation of knowledge.

Alternative authors and marginal discourse

In addition to the heteroglossia of the languages of the characters, the text itself provides a structure for the author to assume different roles. The framing of Streamer's oration and the provision of the marginal comments draw attention to the way in which the story is constructed. This section deals with the operation of Baldwin's narrative devices in terms of the construction of the authorial role in the main text and the paratexts as well as its effect on the reader.

Baldwin's use of the conventional dedicatory letter, marginal notes and the exhortation are recognized by the reader and make him feel safe. However, this confidence about the relationship between author and reader is tested throughout the text, as Baldwin experiments with the boundaries of the authorial role. The reader encounters multiple 'authors' of the text. The title page mentions no author, and it is only in the initials 'G.B.' in the signature of the Epistle Dedicatory the author is indicated. These initials may stand for Gugliemus Baldwin, but readers should be careful not to conflate the actual author William Baldwin with G.B., the character that Baldwin assumes in the novel.³³ It is not immediately clear that the Epistle Dedicatory is part of the fiction.³⁴ Indeed, the reader is initially led to believe that the William Baldwin is the author of the text. But as we will see, the development of the narrative and in particular the incongruities arising from the marginal comments on

³³ I am indebted for this useful distinction to Edward T. Bonahue's article.

³⁴ Genette has observed that dedications of homodiegetic narratives are "often signed with the name or initials of the (real) author, as if to avoid all equivocation" (130). In this case, even the initials are not conclusive.

the text, make the reader realize that G.B. is actually a character in the story. The dedicatory letter is therefore not to be read as an authentic document but as a device that stages the author's narrating persona as an alternative voice. As such, Baldwin himself acts in a semi-fictional world of his novel and complicates the relationship between the speakers as well as his relationship with his audience.

He declares to have written down the speech in such a way that Streamer himself "shall in the reading [...] doubt whether he speaketh or he readeth" (3). Baldwin wants the reader to believe in the truthfulness of his report. He even likens himself to Plato writing down Socrates' dialogues and states that he "used both the order and words of him that spake them (which is not the least virtue of a reporter)" (3). A few lines below, however, he reveals that he is actually much more active in the writing process than one would expect of a mere reporter, having "divided his oration into three parts, and set the argument before them and an instruction after them, with such notes as might be gathered thereof, so making it booklike, and entitled *Beware the Cat*" (3). G.B. thus unwittingly collapses the distinction between his position as communicator between Streamer and the reader, and that of an editor interfering with the text.

The reader's initial expectations concerning G.B.'s trustworthiness are frustrated in the course of the reading, most prominently in the side-notes. The concept of marginal notes originates in the manuscript tradition, where the reader himself would scribble his personal observations in the spaces aside the text. In print, however, where the gloss is provided by the author or editor, the constant interaction between text and margin may destabilize assumptions about the nature and authority of the narrative voice.³⁵ Questions concerning the production of meaning inevitably arise in relation to the text/note dynamics. The reader is simultaneously confronted with the large body of the main text - which is usually considered to be primary - and the supplementary notes at the edges of the page. Continuous reading of either of the two texts disrupts the reading experience of the other. In the words of William Slights, "special kinds of information webs are created when a reader shuttles between a text and its notes" (62). Slights' study theorizes on the practice of printed marginalia and provides an encompassing survey of early printed books in Renaissance England that supplied glosses in the margins, ranging from religious and historical to educational texts. The period between 1475 and 1640 witnessed a proliferation and refinement of the use of marginalia, not unrelated to the religious, polemical writings of post-Reformation society. The printed marginalia, intended to facilitate the reader's comprehension of the text, often generated new difficulties for the reader by creating a new

³⁵ Genette notes that medieval texts, often surrounded by explanations and comments in smaller type size, were much less structured and unified than its printed counterpart. Marginal notes in the sixteenth century were generally "shorter and appended to more definite segments of text" (320). As will be illustrated, Baldwin's use of the gloss is part of the fiction and does not fit this definition.

text running parallel to and interacting with the main body of the text. This affected both the interpretation and the speed of the reading process. The function of these annotations ranged from instructive references to other texts and translations of phrases in the text proper, to the more evaluative remarks and objections to the author's opinion or even parodies on the substance of the text (Slights 22-28).³⁶

The marginal notes in *Beware the Cat* are deliberately used to create multiple layers of interpretation. They are not so much aids of interpretation, but constitute an intricate game with the reader. G.B.'s editorial role initially displays 'glosslike' characteristics. In the margins to the opening paragraph we find notes "Why Aldersgate was so named," "Why Moorgate," "Why Newgate," etc. to inform the reader about the etymological knowledge claimed by Streamer. But the editor mistakenly takes Streamer's conjectures to be trustworthy and as soon as the reader realizes Streamer's foolishness, G.B.'s misinterpretation of the text similarly exposes him as an unreliable narrator.

Streamer and G.B. display strong resemblance in their self-professed wisdom. The latter embellishes the text with Latin adages, most prominently in the second part of the oration where he seeks to augment Streamer's alchemical project by supplying quotations from authors like Hermes Trismegistus and Zoroaster. However, his poor understanding of Latin, exemplified in the inaccurate rendition of Terence's poetical line 'sine Cerere et Baccho friget Venus' as "Sine Baccho et cetera friget Venus" (50), only further exposes his deficiencies as reader *and* author. It becomes ever more clear that the marginalia are at odds with the text. For example, when a boy tastes one of Streamer's magical potions, which he spits out on recognizing it as "a cat's turd", the gloss mistakenly states: "Strange things are delectable" (30). And near the end, as Streamer relates how he joined in with the cats' laughter caused by Mouse-slayer's stories, G.B. erroneously comments that "The author laughed in a cat's voice" (49).

In addition, he often glosses insignificant details and his comments are at times completely irrelevant to the passage in the main text. The conflict between text and margin led Bonahue to suggest that it is not always clear whether G.B. misunderstands the oration or is exceedingly ironic. For example, when the old bawd tries to convince a virtuous girl into adultery, G.B. makes the unlikely comment: "women are orators by nature" (42). G.B.'s inconsistent judgment of Streamer suggests that he manifests genuine misunderstanding rather than irony. He misinterprets his superstitious remarks as "good ghostly counsel" (10) and when the drug starts to work and Streamer nonsensically says: "My imagination also was so fresh that by and by I could show a probable reason what, and in what sort, and upon what matter, everything I had taken wrought, and the cause why" (28), he dubs him a "good

³⁶ See for a helpful (although admittedly not inexhaustible) list of possible functions of marginal notes Slights, 25-26.

philosopher” (28). Although these might be interpreted as irony in moments of lucidity, this suggestion is hardly tenable when we take into consideration that G.B. expresses his confidence in the “approved authority of the ecstatic author” (54) in the Exhortation.

G.B. is aware that Streamer’s astronomy is inconsistent with common knowledge, but he simply says: “Master Streamer varieth from the astronomers in his planet hours” (28) and accepts it. Moreover, he even states that the astronomers are deceived and, like Streamer, demonstrates his belief in magic. The overall impression of the author’s persona is thus one of ignorance and inattentiveness rather than wittiness. From the very beginning, G.B. displays signs that he is not as prudent an editor as he claims to be. He fails to meet the requirements of the task of the editor - to carefully read and correct a text. In analogy with Streamer, the editor’s education consists of hardly more than the slavish repetition and misapplication of moralizing clichés.

The unstable relationship between text and commentary generate doubt about the authoritative voice, especially because G.B. - a fictional construction - still comments on the text from a “position of historical actuality” (Bonahue 289-90). As both the narrator and his editor are rendered unreliable on the narrative and typographic level, Baldwin leaves it up to the reader to determine the boundary between the fictional and the actual – a never-ending struggle. William Slights highlights the co-dependence of the relationship between ‘parent’ text and gloss in terms of its didactic nature. This interactive process was supposed to elicit a certain response from the reader. Seen in this light, annotation generally intended to provide additional information amplified the reader’s understanding, but inadvertently complicated the dialogic process with the world outside the text.

The dynamics of the multilayeredness, both in terms of the framing and the gloss, confront the reader with questions concerning narrative authority. Baldwin confronts his readers with the issue of narrative authority on multiple levels. Apart from the actual author, William Baldwin, the reader encounters his naïve persona, G.B., who is the narrator of the frame narrative and the editor of the embedded narrative. The reader’s initial assumption of G.B.’s authorial credibility is soon undermined by his injudicious comments on the transcription of Streamer’s oration. He can therefore be classified with Streamer, the narrator of the main story, as foolish. Their unreliability is based on their contradictory discourses and flawed value systems, and on the reader’s perception of the inconsistencies in their attitudes. The typographic element of marginalia, frequently used in texts to guide the reader, to explicate and evaluate texts, are exploited here in more complex ways in order to challenge the reader’s active involvement with the text.

Print and the question of textual stability

The subversive effect of Baldwin's marginal discourse through his complex use of tools for reader management ties in with the issue of the fixity of the printed text. The often posed view of the stabilizing effect of print versus the malleability of manuscripts or written texts, does not seem entirely tenable in relation to *Beware the Cat*.

The form and tone of marginalia as used in written texts did transform under the hands of authors and editors in print. An author in a printed text was able to exercise greater control over his audience through the management of the gloss, anticipating their interpretation of specific words. This is not to say that reader's role is reduced to an mechanical response expected by the author, but it does change the nature of the hermeneutic process, especially when the marginalia supply information that stretches beyond the text proper. Intertextuality as such was not a new phenomenon in literary texts, but the guidance to other texts through explicit comments in the margin was likely to alter the reader's perception of the relationship between main text and the abundance of potentially subversive texts and discourses beyond the book.

Beware the Cat illustrates the influence of authorial intervention in texts, which, as Maslen argues, marks an awareness of the power that the new technology could exert over people's minds and of the role of printers within this system of dissemination (23). At the same time, G.B.'s comments reveal that print does not necessarily establish the text's credibility. By printing marginal notes that give clear-cut but ever challenging comments next to another text that allows the speaker to discredit himself, the reader is confronted with the impossibility of simply sitting back and being entertained. The acts of writing, editing and explaining are not assigned to one specific author, but the point of view seems to be always shifting. The truth of the printed text can not be taken at face value: the lack of certainty on narrative authority presupposes a critical audience.

Baldwin's framing devices and the diversity of speakers deliberately collapses the boundaries between fact and fiction. It obscures the reader's understanding of who is speaking and prompts him to scrutinize the author's credibility.³⁷ By plainly revealing the mechanisms of the editing process of Streamer's oration, the text challenges the liberating, constructive character of print.³⁸ The different roles assumed by the author produces a lack of hermeneutic certainty. The text demands a critical reader who will flip back and forth through the pages and recognize the challenges of the material text. It requires him to compare those challenges with the oral performance illustrated in the text and the reputation

³⁷ Bonahue remarks that "the reader penetrates frame after frame, delving deeper into Baldwin's text, only to find at its core an unstable relationship between two semantic systems, each struggling to frame the other" (297). Although such destabilization is certainly at hand, I see the actual struggle taking place in the reader's response to the printed text rather than in a fundamental uncertainty over primacy of meaning.

³⁸ Roger Chartier states in relation to this issue: "Every textual or typographic arrangement that aims to create control and constraint always secretes tactics that tame or subvert it" (Chartier 1989, 173).

of such alternative forms of communication. The didactic process concerning the acquisition and transmission of knowledge - as developed in the discourse of the speakers - is continued in the typographic arrangement of the frames and marginalia. G.B.'s rendition of the text ridicules inaccurate reading and teaches how a properly educated reader should respond to the text.

The play with narrative frames in *Beware the Cat* complicates the sources of the narrative voice. In line with the didactic intent of the work, the reader is put in a position of active involvement with the text. The promotion of texts over oral sources of knowledge thus requires an active reader. The author's experiment with familiar models from manuscript traditions ties in with questions of stability and reliability of texts in a printed form. Deploying the text according to humanist principles of studying texts – the dialogue that introduces the argument, the marginal comments and the moralizing summary in the exhortation –, Baldwin eventually subverts the expectation of the reader by exposing the author of these supposedly critical elements as unreliable. The fact that the reliance of the reader on the writer's authority is challenged in the process, gains poignancy in the conception of fixity as a transitive rather than intrinsic quality of print. By implication, the novel demonstrates that eloquence and imitation of form are not enough for the educated reader.

2.3 “The truth should be known”: the reception of *Beware the Cat*

Baldwin’s interaction with his readers cleverly plays into the conventions of writing and reading of fiction. His promotion of careful scrutiny of validity of sources (both oral and textual) is doubly significant in relation to the text’s blending of actual and fictional characters. It may be perfectly clear to the modern reader that the text is entirely fictional, but the boundaries between fact and fiction are deliberately blurred from the very beginning of the novel and may not have been so easily perceived by the novel’s first readers. This is exemplified by two early responses to the novel which grapple with the pretence of verisimilitude.

William Nelson defined the early modern perception of fiction in terms of ‘play’: readers were aware that the text was not recorded history but mimesis. Artistic devices were used to set the story apart from reality, while other references were included to keep the pretence of verisimilitude. The relationship between author and reader was thus based on a mutual understanding of the fiction. The practiced reader expected a coherently organized fictional world, which was, at least to some extent, analogous to reality. Within that framework, readers were prepared to cooperate with the author and his use of the conventional narrative practices, which were meant to bring about a certain set of emotional responses. In other words, Renaissance authors did not intend to lure their readers into believing a story to be true. In fact, Nelson argues, most narratives lacked the consistency necessary for credibility in the first place (56-72).

Judging from its complex structure and its thematic conflation of satirical objects, the impression of incoherence may apply to *Beware the Cat* as well, but it is not so much a narrative deficiency as a deliberate technique of the author. Baldwin employs different methods to confuse the reader’s conception of illusion and reality. The generic ambiguity of the text created by the author starts on the title page, which reads *A maruelous hystory intituled, Beware the Cat. Conteyning diuers wounderfull and incredible matters. Very pleasant and mery to read*. Labelling a text as a pleasant history was not an uncommon practice in early modern texts. It conformed to the Horatian adage *utile dulci*: the combination of the useful, edifying examples of history, with the sweet, entertaining character of poetical texts.

The impression of reality is produced by the actuality of the location set out in the Epistle Dedicatory, where G.B. describes the gathering at court of Master Ferrers, Streamer and himself. The author himself and Ferrers, who was co-editor of *A Mirror for Magistrates* and a well-known figure, lend credibility to the text. But as we have seen, the introduction of Streamer into this setting produces a gradual disruption of the novel’s claim to verisimilitude. A Gregory Streamer is recorded as a professor at Oxford in 1529, but there is no indication of

A MARVELOVS
Hystory intituled, Beware the
Cat. Conteynyng diuerse wounder-
full and incredible matters.
Very pleasant and mery to read.

✻



¶ IMPRINTED AT LONDON, IN
Fleetstreete at the signe of the
Faulcon by W ylliam Gryffith:
and are to be sold at his shop
in S. Dunstons Church=
parde. Anno. 1570.

Figure 1. Title page *Beware the Cat* (1570). Copy in possession of the British Library.
 Source: Early English Books Online, <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>

Baldwin's acquaintance with him, nor of his presence at court that Christmas. Streamer's claims on having written and published Greek alphabets in John Day's printing shop are not corroborated either, nor is there any record of *Cure of the Great Plague* or *Book of Heaven and Hell* of which he supposedly was the author.³⁹ Streamer was thus most likely a fictional figure, modelled on the type of the old-fashioned, but ignorant scholar.

Further ground for the reader's confusion may be found in the Exhortation, where G.B. moralizes Streamer's oration and addresses the reader directly to stress the truth of Streamer's stories: "And were it not for the approved authority of the ecstatical author of whom I heard it, I should myself be as doubtful as [many men]. But seeing I know the place and the persons with whom he talked of these matters [...] I am the doubtful of any truth herein" (54). G.B. apparently hopes that this declaration validates the story, but he achieves the exact opposite: having witnessed the pedantic foolishness of Streamer, the attentive reader would immediately see how these remarks turn the world upside down. G.B.'s confidence in this credulous character supports the idea that he is a fictional construct as well.

A Short Answere to the boke called Beware the Cat

The emphasis on the text's wonderful and incredible nature should be a clear enough signal to the reader that the text is not to be taken as documenting an actual historical event. One of Baldwin's readers was not sufficiently convinced of the text's fictional status, as he expresses his indignation in a broadside entitled *A Short Answere to the boke called: Beware the Cat*.⁴⁰ The anonymous author mistakenly believes that Streamer was an actual person and he rails at Baldwin for spreading lies about an honest man.⁴¹ He argues that Streamer never told such stories and that William Baldwin is responsible for these lies. The poem thus aims to convince other readers not to lend credit to "Baldwins straunge fashions" (line 2).⁴² The author repeatedly calls attention to the issue of truth, increasing the irony of his misunderstanding by making allusions to the deficiency in the author's mental health and resorting to grotesque insults: "Rede this litel short Rime: Baldewinken, til more cum / And with Stremers excrements: be bold to noint your gum" (23-24) and "For your Bagagical boke, a warme a.r.s. you may kys" (30). The text is interspersed with Latin sayings and a borrowed phrase from Erasmus's *Colloquia familiaria* which also refers to texts used for cleaning wiping away human excrements. But these authorities do not succeed in augmenting the text's persuasiveness, as it rests more on empty verbal abuse. The author concludes by stating

³⁹ See Ringler's note to the text, Baldwin, 58.

⁴⁰ Eveline Feasey's article brought this broadside to my attention. William Hazlitt reprinted the text in *Fugitive Tracts* (1875) and dated it 1561. This date is not indicated in the text itself, but seems to be inferred from Ritson's mentioning of an edition of *Beware the Cat* from that year (Hazlitt xvi-xvii).

⁴¹ It is possible, though not likely, that this author knew someone named Streamer and felt compelled to defend this man to slander, but Baldwin's Streamer was nevertheless recognizable as a fictional creation.

⁴² Hazlitt's edition is not paginated. For the purpose of reference, I add the full text as an appendix.

his sole aim: “that the truth shuld be knowen / And that the falsitie: shuld quite be ouerthrowen” (56-57). His failure to comprehend the novel properly produces an exaggerated, inappropriate invective against the distortion of truth. This broadside thus illustrates the exact opposite of what the narrative was supposed to achieve: to educate the reader through its theme and content, and to delight him with its inventive games.

T.K. to the Reader

In the 1584 edition of *Beware the Cat*, a short poem was added to the main text in order to explain the text’s intention. The poem, signed by T.K., accounts for reason that the book was withheld from publication, as “it showed the toys and drifts / Of such as then, by wiles and wills / maintained Popish shifts” (1).⁴³ At the same time, arguably in response to the kind of misapprehensions illustrated above, it explicitly refers to the text as “this fiction” and confirms the fact that it is both meant to make the reader laugh over the ridiculous “popish pranks” and to weep over the seriousness of its deeper intent: “Yea, who can now boast but that / the Cat will him disclose? / Therefore, in the midst of mirth I say, / “Beware the Cat” to those” (2). Whereas the broadside ironically demonstrates what happens when proper education is lacking, this latter interpretation is obviously more in line with the argument and religious intent of the novel.

Baldwin’s blending of historical and fictional characters interferes with the expectations of his readers in order to test their apprehension of the discursive characteristics of writing prose fiction. The response to fiction was not unrelated to its reputation in Elizabethan England. In his insightful analysis of Elizabethan literary theory, Robert Matz explains this as a clash of cultural values. It has already been noted that, in terms of humanist ideals and the emphasis on textual analysis, literature was promoted as an essential vehicle for education. Fictional texts that lacked a clear moral goal, however, only offered entertainment and was hence seen as ‘prostitution’ of the noble art. The Puritan stance toward literature and poetry in particular was that it was a source of immorality and a waste of time. Some polemicists dismissed this mode of writing as frivolous and childish: it might provide diversion on a long winter evening, but it was not considered a serious occupation for the sophisticated man. Others defended the genre and signalled not only the artistic potential but also the moral value of fictional prose and verse. The conceptual division between narrative and moral content constituted a paradoxical attitude which tended “to depreciate the value of the narrative component of the work, to refer to that component, with a tolerance sometimes bordering on contempt, as a concession to human weakness” (Nelson 59).

⁴³ Ringler notes that the rising fear of Catholic plots in the 1580s may explain the relevance of the text (Baldwin, 57).

As Matz points out, authors who sought recognition for literary skills presented their work as “profitable pleasure,” as literature had the duty to delight and instruct. In his *Defense of Poetry* (1595), a skilfully composed apology, Sidney constructed the writing of poetry as a aristocratic virtue that was more than a decadent toy, and insisted on the poet’s ability to teach and delight. But even Sidney deemed it necessary to introduce his *Arcadia* (1590) in humility rather than take pride in the production of a fictional narrative (Matz 22-24).

The articulation of the response of common readers to fiction, combined with the essays written in defence of fiction, reveals the contemporary sensitivity to the problem of fiction. Naïve as it may seem to confuse illusion of reality with reality itself, readers and authors alike needed to situate the emerging genre of prose fiction. The early reception of Baldwin’s novel beautifully illustrates that it was still a source of readerly uncertainty.

2.4 Conclusion

Drawing his inspiration from a variety of sources, William Baldwin has woven a tapestry of literary and oral traditions, constituting a hybrid literary object entitled *Beware the Cat*. The genres included in the novel, ranging from beast fable to pseudo-intellectual alchemical treatise, account for its perceived generic instability. Categorized as an anti-Catholic satire along the lines of the Edwardian Reformation, the novel's narrative structure artfully exploits the connections made between with Catholicism, witchcraft and popular superstitions. By implication, it discredits the unreformed belief, thereby advancing the project of the text-based Reformation. The author's familiarity with the practice of printing further enabled him to promote this epistemological stance.

But Baldwin's criticism reaches deeper than an unequivocal rejection of Catholicism: the novel questions belief systems and attitudes based on uncritical acceptance of oral as well as textual sources of knowledge. The representation of the main characters and the setting in the heart of the Protestant printing community in London diffuses the attack beyond the cultural Other - embodied in the wild Irish, the gullible priest, the promiscuous bawd and the vicious cat - to a wider circle of readers.

In line with the humanist belief in the educability of man, the text requires an actively involved reader. Baldwin's framing techniques and the polyphony of speakers further endorse the view that reading demands critical interaction with the text. The reader encounters different authoritative voices in text and paratexts, alternating between Streamer in the main narrative, G.B. in the dedicatory letter and the margins, and ultimately the discursive presence of the author William Baldwin as the polemicist. This experiment with material possibilities of the printed text and the embeddedness of narrative voices prompts the reader to think about fixing ideas in print and the consequences for a text's reliability. The initial confidence of the reader, among others created by the use of familiar devices from the manuscript tradition such as the argument and the marginal comments, is disturbed by the inconsistency in the narrators: both Streamer and G.B. are gradually revealed to be unreliable. It is the reader's task to take position and judge the textual and narrative credibility.

The hermeneutic process is further complicated in terms of the conflation of fact and fiction and in relation to the perception of fiction in mid-sixteenth century literary culture. Baldwin deliberately inserted fictional characters into a verisimilar setting to sharpen and entertain the reader, but the two responses to the novel illustrate that the boundaries between reality and fiction were not always so easily grasped and suggests that the nature of prose fiction still needed to materialize in the reader's mind.

The novel thereby hints towards the changing conditions of early modern literary practice both in terms of the cross-fertilization of oral and written practices and the experimentation with generic conventions. The text also questions contemporary value systems through its polemic nature and as such represents the intrinsic polyphony of novelistic discourse. This hybrid text was composed in a time when the printing press was a strong tool in the hands of Protestant reformers and humanist educators. The popular traditions feeding into the textual discourse illustrate that oral and literate culture were still very much intertwined *and* that this situation led authors like Baldwin to advocate an attitude of active readership. Verse and drama dominated the literary scene at court, while (polemical) prose texts also started to flourish among the expanding community of readers as a result of rising levels of literacy among lower classes. The conflicts in this cultural field were thus not so much determined by economic and commercial interests related to success, but more ideologically informed.

Seeking in fictional prose a vehicle for polemics and an educational tool, Baldwin's novel both reflects and encourages this development: the reproduction of conventions derived from oral, manuscript and printed modes of communication manifest the coexistence of these forms. Interestingly, Baldwin himself was of course also influenced and 'constructed' by his cultural dispositions. As storytelling still played a major part in the transmission of knowledge, the literary infusion in his work suggests that he could not entirely disentangle the popular from the learned tradition. At the same time, the experiment with prose narrative in print, which enabled the appropriation of different genres, endorses the promotion of the reader's careful evaluation and judgment of the printed page. This quality of fictional prose is exploited by the author to draw attention to the instability the authorial voice. Baldwin thereby tests the reader's reception of fiction in a way that calls to mind techniques often used in modern metafiction: self-consciously displaying the constructedness of the author and the relativity of his authority. It is in that sense a work that seeks to empower a new kind of reader, while still keeping the author in control of the material text, anticipating and manipulating the reader's response.

Chapter 3. Transforming Authorship: Explorations of the Authorial Voice in Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*

Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594) is an extraordinary narrative that quickly and effortlessly moves between accounts of war, religious oration and semi-touristic descriptions in the space of less than 100 pages. The novel's generic transgressions and the foregrounding of its textuality point towards an inventiveness that has troubled and fascinated scholars. This chapter aims to explain how Nashe's self-reflexive use of standard features of printed texts and of the strategies of traditional storytelling in *The Unfortunate Traveller* exposes the mechanisms involved in writing literature and establishes his conception of authorship in this cleverly crafted fiction.

The novel's protagonist, the swashbuckling page Jack Wilton, recounts his meanderings through Europe and supplies matter-of-fact commentary on the astonishing episodes of his travels. Initially "a demy soudier in iest," performing his knavery in the camp of King Henry VIII in war-torn France, he soon decides to "become a Martialist in earnest" (231).⁴⁴ His roguish opportunism takes him to historic scenes such as the battle of Marignano (1515) and the slaughter of the Anabaptists at Münster (1534) before he joins Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey (1517-1547) in his noble quest for Italy. But Surrey's cherished "second mistress" appears very dangerous, as Wilton falls victim to the perverted sexual fancies of countess Juliana and almost loses his life for the anatomical experiments of the Jewish Doctor Zachary. It is only after the gruesome torture of the villain Cutwolfe that Wilton decides to return to England for good and, as he puts it, "neuer to bee out-landish Chronieler more while I liue" (328).

The stories of Jack Wilton's adventures on the continent are loosely connected and function relatively independently of one another. Identifying similarities with the jest-book, a popular genre in late sixteenth century England, G.R. Hibbard has explained this structure as a result of Nashe's tendency to work in 'scenes' (147). Still, it is more than an arbitrary method of writing. First of all, such a structure is in keeping with the story's alleged character of travel narrative. More importantly, it harmonizes with the narrator's inclination to storytelling. Wilton is clearly more interested in describing his own cunning than in producing a nicely polished narrative. Rather than presenting a set of stories more or less equal in length and style, he shifts between a wide range of techniques and always prioritizes the elaboration of his own role and perspective above narrative coherence.

⁴⁴ All citations from *The Unfortunate Traveller* are taken from McKerrow's edition of *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, volume II, 199-328. Subsequent references will be indicated parenthetically in the text by page numbers only. Incidental references to Nashe's other works will be indicated by volume and page numbers.

Hibbard continues to argue that the historical moment is reduced to a mere setting for Wilton's practical jokes: "Nothing is done to give [the stories] any kind of verisimilitude or dramatic interest" (Hibbard 149). Indeed, establishing realism is not Nashe's primary concern: the jumbling of historical events must have been evident and therefore amusing to an audience familiar with Nashe's mode of writing. However, the mixture of historical figures and episodes is of greater significance than Hibbard suggests. The unpredictable plot, shifting between geographical and historic scenes, allows the incorporation of a wide range of discourses derived from these scenes. The structure thus primarily represents the traveller's self-indulgent way of storytelling. As such, Nashe presents a kaleidoscopic view of cultural dispositions and conventions.

It is this slipperiness of discourses that is most prominent in the critical reception of the text. The novel is generally characterized as a cacophonous text that defies classification in the standard genres of early modern literature and received more scholarly attention than any of Nashe's other works. The apparent lack of moralistic, stylistic and structural unity in the novel was a recurring theme in critical analyses and its discomfiting effect induced C.S. Lewis to dismiss the author's style as follows:

In a certain sense of the verb 'say', if asked what Nashe says, we should have to reply, Nothing. He tells no story, expresses no thought, maintains no attitude. Even his angers seem to be part of his technique rather than real passions. In his exhilarating whirlwind of words we find not thought nor passion but simply images: images of ludicrous and sometimes frightful incoherence boiling up from a dark void. (Lewis 416)

The increasing interest in the erratic character of the text over the past two decades demonstrates an opposite tendency among modern scholars, who celebrate the novel's diversity rather than to place it within a unifying theory. Attempting to pinpoint the source of the reader's textual fascination and confusion, critics have focused on the extreme violence, representations of England's cultural Other and the crisis of authority.⁴⁵

The fact that the novel appeals to modern scholars and their critical codes is not unrelated to its resemblance with postmodern fiction: the exploitation of techniques like intertextuality, pastiche and parody occur in both the modern novel and in its early modern

⁴⁵ For an analysis of cultural otherness, see Andrew Hadfield, *Literature, Travel, and Colonial Writing in the English Renaissance 1545-1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) and Helga Quadflieg, "As mannerly and civil as any of Europe': Early Modern Travel Writing and the Exploration of the English Self," in: *Perspectives on Travel Writing*, edited by Glenn Hooper and Tim Youngs. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004). 27-40. On the question of authority and narrative strategies, see S.M. Harrington and M.N. Bond, "Good sir, be ruled by me": Patterns of Domination and Manipulation in Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*, *Studies in Short Fiction* 24.3 (1987): 243-250 and Mihoko Suzuki, "Signorie over the Pages': The Crisis of Authority in Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*," *Studies in Philology* 81.3 (1984): 348-371.

counterpart. Scholarly interest in these aspects is nourished by tendencies in postmodern literary criticism, which delights in deconstructing unruly texts. Raymond Stephanson for example approaches the text more favourably and locates the problem outside the novel and in the modern reader when he wonders “whether the distortions, shifts, ambiguities, and improprieties of *The Unfortunate Traveller* are in fact legitimate challenges to our critical and epistemological codes rather than severe flaws which somehow disqualify the work” (22). Wendy Hyman refuses to regard features of disharmony and multivoicedness as deconstructive ends in themselves, because such an approach discards the potential aesthetic aims of the text’s generic and narrative transgressions. Similarly, basing her analysis on the critical approaches of Bakhtin and Kristeva in their studies of polyphony and intertextuality, Ann Rosalind Jones contends that these disunifying textual aspects account for its popularity today.

Alternating between scholastic oratory and anecdotal journalism and between the stylized conventions of Petrarchan poetry and the sensational grotesque of the revenge tragedy, the novel presupposes familiarity with the contemporary literary scene and popular culture. It is therefore interesting to examine what effect the mixture of oral and written discourses in *The Unfortunate Traveller* may have had on the early modern reader’s perception of the fictional narrative. The exploration of the self-fashioning of the author in *The Unfortunate Traveller* takes place in the light of such conventions and expectations from the audience. Extending Wendy Hyman’s suggestion that the source of the explosive nature of *The Unfortunate Traveller* lies in the “rogue medium” of prose fiction itself (40), I wish to approach the novel in terms of the dynamics of Nashe’s literary milieu. It grapples with the socio-economic structures as articulated in Bourdieu’s theory of the cultural field in relation to Nashe’s attempt to position himself as a professional writer. I will examine the self-manifestation of the author in the novel through his appropriation of discourses from oral and literate traditions to test Greenblatt’s and Ong’s assumptions concerning the textual constructedness of the author and the cross-fertilization of communicational practices respectively. In order to get a coherent view of the textual and literary experiments of the author, I will first discuss Nashe’s appropriation of paratextual conventions. Secondly, I will address the instances where the narrator foregrounds his own storytelling techniques and manipulates his audience. In the last section I will examine the implicit commentary on London’s humanist culture in the author’s parody of literary models.

3.1 “Blind customs of methodical antiquity”: (Para)textual conventions

The fact that Nashe’s works appeared in print is indicative of his literary milieu, but as I will demonstrate here, Nashe did not uncritically adopt the conventions of the text. On the contrary, *The Unfortunate Traveller* confronts the reader with its status as a literary artefact and questions the validity of a bookish culture dominated by economic conditions. This section examines the significance of publishing in late Elizabethan London and the configurations of author, patron and reader in the paratexts of the novel.

London witnessed great demographic and economic changes in the course of the fifteenth century and the growth and stabilization of the merchant community generated a strong intellectual and literary culture influenced by continental humanism (Manley 27).⁴⁶ Starting his humanist education at St. John’s College in Cambridge in 1582, Thomas Nashe was introduced to the principal classical and contemporary poets, and he developed an aversion to Puritanism. The following years proved to be formative for Nashe’s ideas on the function of literature. Moving to London in 1588, he became a prominent member of a group of writers known as the ‘University Wits’. This literary circle included Robert Greene, Christopher Marlowe, George Peele and others who ridiculed commonplaces of Elizabethan society in their polemical writings. Nashe published a range of invective texts, such as *The Anatomy of Absurdity* (1589) which is aimed against women, and *Pierce Penniless His Supplication to the Devil* (1592) which attacks social abuses of all kinds, while he takes on religious perversion in *Christ’s Tears over Jerusalem* (1593). Shortly after this, in the summer of 1593, Nashe wrote *The Unfortunate Traveller*, but it was not published until 1594 (Hibbard 1-48, Nicholls).

Like his fellow writers, Nashe grappled with the publishing conventions that were tied up with socio-economic conditions in the literary field.⁴⁷ Class played an important role and there was a clear distinction between professional and amateur writers in Elizabethan London. The former was a rising group of ‘middle class’ writers whose identity can be summed up in the terms “humanist, Protestant, professional, country” (Matz 24). The aristocratic poets, on the other hand, were affiliated with the Court. In their view, writing should be practiced as a sophisticated pastime, not as a serious means to sustain oneself. They strove to preserve an air of artlessness, according to the principle of *sprezzatura*, to prevent their poetry from being recognized as the product of painstaking labour.

It was not only the professed effortlessness of their writing but also the medium through which court poets distinguished themselves. Most Tudor poetry circulated only in

⁴⁶ For a detailed discussion of the origins of English humanism and its effects of urban life, see Lawrence Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 21-62.

⁴⁷ Lorna Hutson’s study provides a helpfully analysis of the socio-economic context of Nashe’s work, focusing on the connection between the festive nature of Nashe’s stylistics and the restrictions on authorship. See Lorna Hutson, *Thomas Nashe in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

manuscript form, and was thus associated with intimate and refined society. As J.W. Saunders has pointed out in his classical piece, court poets wished to retain their reputation as amateur poets who wrote for a private circle of friends, and they dissociated themselves from professional writers who, by publishing in print, made their work a public commodity in return for material gain. Print long bore the stigma of being a vulgar form of literary transmission, leading even those who wrote in defence of the medium to describe the literary marketplace in terms of “social deterioration and sexual scandal” (Wall 16). So when a court poet did publish in print, he either published under a pseudonym or merely added initials to justify his use of the medium (Saunders 143-47).

Although seeking print could damage the reputation of a court poet, the upwardly mobile actually seemed to benefit from the publicity that printed poetry provided, enabling them to establish their name among the reading and theatre-going public. This holds for playwrights and poets such as Samuel Daniel, Marlowe and Shakespeare. Saunders underlines the commercial interests of these professional writers, opposing them to the ‘nonprofit’ attitude of the courtiers (Saunders 157-159).

Saunders draws a stylistic and idiomatic distinction between the two groups: “The abnormal and pedantic experiments of the day must be attributed to the professional poets” (162). He attributes what he sees as a lack of “natural, healthy style” to the social position of these poets, suggesting that their dependence on patronage was incompatible with artistic achievement. Such a bifurcated approach is in danger of downplaying the literary talent of those writers and unjustly reduces their unconventional experiments to inferior artefacts. This is not to say that their choice for the medium was only of minor importance to these writers, but they were less reluctant to use the new technology. It fitted with their interests, combining the literariness from their education with elements from the popular culture in which they worked. Manley outlines the emergence of this urban literature in the late sixteenth century as a response to the increasing challenges to religious and political authority: “With a highly self-conscious sense of the materiality of discursive practice, pamphleteering erected itself on the rubbish heap of preaching and complaint” (301). For the University Wits, who excelled in pamphleteering and engaged in literary quarrels through their texts, print was thus the most appropriate mode of communication, allowing them to develop their unique style and develop a new kind of authorship. Such marks of identity and conventions of early modern textual practice are reflected in *The Unfortunate Traveller*.

Framing the fiction: Literary patronage in the dedicatory letter

In sixteenth century England, paratextual aspects of the book were still under construction and performed a central role in the writing and publishing process. The function of prefaces and dedicatory letters consisted in “framing and positioning its contents: by interposing this

matter between the reader's first, generic impressions of a book (from its binding and title page), and the subsequent experience of reading its particular content, printers and authors sought to realize a range of rhetorical, political and financial ends" (Zurcher 173). While the conventions stemmed from the manuscript tradition, they were only standardized with the rise of the printing press. Nashe experiments with the possibilities of the new medium and implicitly comments on these established modes of writing in the extra-narrative elements of the novel. Outwardly meeting the requirements of the traditional apology, Nashe eventually exposes the mechanisms of the patronage system.

The practice of dedicating a literary work to a wealthy patron was already used in manuscripts, but, as Heidi Brayman Heckel has pointed out, they took a definite shape in the course of the sixteenth century and its use in printed texts made the relationship between the author and his patron a public affair. Based on Franklin Williams' 1962 *Index of Dedications*, Brayman shows how dedicatory epistles had become a standard element in scholarly works, classical literature, popular pamphlets and even sermons by the early seventeenth century. An important consequence of this standardization was that it altered the position of the patron and the author with regard to the text: the dedicatee is both patron and reader; the dedicator is simultaneously a dependent writer and autonomous literary voice. In most cases, the patron was addressed as the wealthy and powerful protector of the literary artefact, rather than as a reader. Through literary patronage, a powerful ruler could ensure protection and shield the author from criticism and pirated editions. The author could increase his reputation and security as a writer when associated with an influential patron. However, the dedicatory letter often revealed the lack of contact between the author and his dedicatee, reducing the epistle to a document ensuring the financial or material support in return for fame (Brayman 101-16).

The dedication was thus more a document of social and economic gain than of strictly literary value. Nashe plays on this when he commits his work to the judgment of Lord Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton, in order to prevent people from criticizing the papers as "goods uncustomd" (201). Nashe employs a type of language that reveals the commercial interests involved in dedications, continuing the metaphor of trade in his request to Wriothesley to set a price on them. It is clear from the outset that the text serves to establish a lucrative 'contract' between dedicator and dedicatee. The early modern reader would have been familiar with the elements needed to secure and validate the funding. In anticipation of the patron's financial support, the dedicatory letter needed to include extensive praise for the patron and often also involved the physical presentation of the book.

According to the established fashion, Nashe presents his work to a learned patron for approval, but feigns not to understand the "blinde custome methodicall antiquity hath thrust upon us" (201). As he continues, however, he reveals his understanding of what the purpose

and tone of a dedicatory letter ought to be, including references to the writer's labour as small, simple and poor. Nashe's humble flattery of his patron and an acute sense of his being dependent on Southampton's approval fit into this pattern. He positions himself as a dedicated writer, eager to prove himself and seeking to be taken up in the Southampton's "sacred" circle of protégées, which at the time included poets like Barnabe Barnes, and, most notably, Shakespeare.

But soon the devoted tone becomes extremely modest, praising his patron's high standing and excellent literary taste and stating that his mind has from his infancy been set on glorifying the Earl. The author downplays his own achievements by referring to his writing skills as the employment of his "dul pen" and to the text itself as a handful of "vnpolisht leaues." The obsequious tone of the letter culminates in a comical biological metaphor in which the author expresses a need for the patron's authority to nurture the work, so that he will not dispose of the "worm-eaten & worthless" paper, but cherish them "for some litle summer frute you hope to finde amongst them" (202).

Although an attitude of deference was common in these epistles, the inflated style of this dedication is especially noteworthy in comparison to Nashe's other works. The dedicatory letter to Lady Elizabeth Carey in *Christ's Teares over Jerusalem* (1593) for example, is not as hyperbolic in its flattery and does not minimize the author's own efforts to the same extent. The dedication to *Have with You to Saffron Walden* (1596), on the other hand, was humorously addressed to the "superuisor of all excrementall superfluties for Trinitie Colledge in Cambridge" (III, 5). It seems that Nashe was testing his limits in the dedication to Southampton, which marks a transition from 'genuine dedication' to a real patron to 'mock-dedication' to a barber.⁴⁸

The reach of the patron's authority is illustrated in the author's willingness to sacrifice his personal style, declaring that he will get himself a "new brain, a new wit, a new soul [...] to canonize your name to posterity" (202). In his humility, the author subordinates his writing to the elevation of Southampton's reputation, rather than seeking his support for his own fame. A patron was originally meant to function as a muse, inspiring the artist, but this function is turned into a caricature. The reversal of roles reduces the dedication to a kind of authorial self-depreciation that only serves the patron. It reveals that a patron's influence may extend beyond matters of finance and protection and into the area of the author's creativity. Implicitly, it attacks the tradition of patronage, which, as an economic necessity, might compromise creative and independent authorship.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Signalling the scepticism toward authority, Suzuki concludes that Nashe still displays "a genuine desire and hope" to acquire the authority of literary patronage (351). This conclusion seems to reduce the irony to flattering teasing rather than a sincere questioning of the system of patronage.

⁴⁹ According to Hyman, Nashe does not give in to the requirements of patronage, but uses the dedicatory letter as "more raw material to be devoured by his text" (27).

The satirical undertone is brought out further in the section where the author expresses his ignorance of the quality of his writing skills. First he states that it is only in Southampton's power to encourage vanity in him and then describes him as incomprehensible in "heroical resolution and matters of conceit," denoting not only 'opinion' in a neutral sense, but also self-conceit.⁵⁰ Playing on the ambiguity of 'conceit', the passage hints at the patron's arrogance rather than his nobility of character. Moreover, the aristocrat's vanity is represented as communicable through literary patronage and Nashe's praise is exposed as a hollow construction. Interestingly, the dedication was omitted in the second edition of *The Unfortunate Traveller*, and McKerrow suggests that Nashe may have acquired a new patron who was not on good terms with Southampton (IV, 255). Another explanation may be that Southampton was not amused by the tone of the dedication and personally intervened in order to prevent having his reputation as a literary patron connected with this author.

The dedication explores the financially inspired relationship between patron and writer. As a professional author, Nashe was aware that an author's choice to publish in print was often brought about by pragmatic reasons; the need for financial support from a patron. It also enabled writers to disseminate their work more easily and thus to find recognition for their authorship. But Nashe's mocking exaggeration of the traditional apology suggests an aversion of the system of literary patronage and the desire to break with these conventions.

Chronicle versus waste paper: the ambiguous status of the printed page

The author's consciousness of the materiality of his text pervades the narrative and is particularly prominent in the protagonist's identity. In the fictional preface entitled 'The Induction to the dapper Mounsier Pages of the Court,' Nashe stages an anonymous agent between Jack Wilton and the reader to introduce the text: "A proper fellow Page of yours called *Iack Wilton* by me commends him vnto you and hath bequeathed for wast paper here amongst you certaine pages of his misfortunes" (207). The pun on the word 'page', which occurs several times in the short Induction, refers both to the protagonist's social position and to the material reproduction of his adventures in the leaves of the book. The term's ambivalence produces a comical effect, especially when Wilton introduces himself as "a certain kind of an appendix or page," maintaining the connection between social ranking and material features of the book (209). Nashe thus cleverly brings out the shared connotational characteristics of the terms: the typical conception of the page as a public, popular form of communication is presented as corresponding with the meaning of the lower-class boy.⁵¹

⁵⁰ The use of conceit with this, now common, negative connotation seems to be emerging in the late sixteenth century, OED, "conceit" n., II 4, 5 and 6.

⁵¹ See OED entry for 'page': the meaning 'boy or servant' was already in used in c. 1300, whereas use in senses 'relating to a leaf or side of paper' occurred around 1485 and more often from the late sixteenth century onwards.



THE
UNFORTUNATE

TRAVELLER.

Or,

The life of Iacke Wilton.

Qui audiunt audita dicunt.

Tho. Nashe.



LONDON,
Printed by T. Scarlet for C. Burby, & are to be sold at his
shop adioyning to the Exchange.

1 5 9 4.

Figure 2. Title page The Unfortunate Traveller (1594)
Source: Early English Books Online, <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>

The Induction also expresses a conventional stance towards the book. The typical rhetoric of dedications is reflected in the argument of the pedantic speaker who seeks to commend the book to a select group of readers. Addressing the “Gallant Squires,” he relates Wilton’s intentions in publishing this book. Wilton’s reported presentation of his work as “wast paper” echoes the conventional modest pose from the dedicatory letter. He continues in that manner and passes on Wilton’s advice to the reader to find alternative uses for the pages that are deemed uninteresting. He offers suggestions like making tobacco or wrapping velvet slippers, or anything else related to food or drink, “for the cannot doe theyr countrie better seruice” (207). In other words, the author allows the reader to tear out pages at random, turning the classical trope of the worthlessness of the text into a disproportionate, ironic readiness to sacrifice the text’s internal coherence to the taste of the reader. Under the guise of authorial modesty, the speaker thus overstates the text’s insignificance by means of his extensive elaboration on alternative uses of the pages.

A radically different attitude is presented a few lines later, when the “Gallant Squires” are called upon to act as guardians of the written word and defend the book against censure. He states: “It standes not with your honours (I assure ye) to haue a gentleman and a page abusde in his absence” (207), referring simultaneously to the injustice of insulting the absent author and to the abuse of the book as a material object. The latter, more literal, meaning is extended in the second half of the Induction where the author advocates a position of veneration. Furthermore, Wilton’s fellow pages are requested to swear on “this Chronicle of the king of Pages” instead of their pantofles, and to retort contemptuous remarks from others with their sword in defence of the author and his work.

Moreover, they have to take off their hats and bow when passing by any bookstall where the book is sold “in regard their grand printed Capitano is there entombd” (208). The phrase invokes an interesting association between the words ‘tome’ and ‘tomb’. The former refers to a separate volume of a book or to a large and old-fashioned book.⁵² The latter connects the printed text with the finality and immortality of the tomb. This was not an uncommon metaphor in Elizabethan literature, as the printed page was considered as fixed and reliable. ‘Entombed’ thus unites the authority often assigned to printed texts with the hyperbolic deference of the physical object.

In order to further establish Wilton’s tale as valuable, interesting and trustworthy, the speaker aligns it with different esteemed historical works, alternatively referring to the text as “chronicle,” “*Acts and Monuments*,” and “catalogue” (208). The allusion to John Foxe’s famous *Acts and Monuments* (1563), also known as the *Book of Martyrs*, is particularly noteworthy. This anti-Catholic work on English church history dealt with persecutions of early Christian martyrs and Protestants until the accession of Elizabeth I. Nashe’s readers

⁵² See OED entry for ‘tome’.

would instinctively take the reputation and popularity of this book and its author into account and signal the tongue-in-cheek link between the violence and cruelty present in both texts. The assaults on Wilton's life and integrity, as well as the executions and deaths of Anabaptists' leader John of Leiden and matron Heraclide, serve as an ironic reminder of the martyrs in Foxe's work.

However, the speaker's lower-class background unmistakably protrudes from the lines of his status-seeking discourse. The text contains allusions to gambling and taverns, for example in the suggestion that the Gallant Squires are also allowed to "play with false dice in a corner on the couer" (208). Similarly, the claim on authoritative chronicling is at odds with the description of the work as a "pamphlet," which rather points towards the text's ephemeral nature and places it within the context of popular publishing culture. As such, he unintentionally undermines his ambitious attempt to categorize the narrative as an honourable chronicle entombing Wilton's deeds for posterity. The paradoxical description of the text as a historical record on the one hand and the link with popular drinking games on the other thus only results in a violation of the text's credibility. The irony of these claims is even more palpable when Wilton's adventures turn out to be so blatantly vulgar and insignificant.

The Induction tackles the problematic and ambivalent nature of the book and its conventions. On the one hand, publishing in print was stigmatized as unfit for the sophisticated writer. In line with this, the anonymous speaker ventriloquizes Wilton's humble quest for recognition. But he seems to lose sense of balance and dismisses his pages to be used as printers' napkins and other inappropriate uses. Nashe thus satirises the courtly custom of the apologetic stance. On the other hand, the association with appreciated books such as chronicles, is also subject to ridicule. The speaker mistakenly places his claim for the novel's historical value in the book's materiality. Implicit in the mocking rejection of both the courtly mode of writing and the overemphasis of the object of the book itself, lies an attempt to defend print as a conscious choice and gateway to literary fame for professional writers. As such, Nashe tries to turn the stigma of print into a positive mark of distinction for a new generation of writers.

Gentle Readers: constructing the audience

Since the reader's acquisition and reception of the book eventually determined the author's success, guiding the reader's response through the use of a specific type of language and structure was an important aspect of composing a text. With its direct address of the reader, the preface formed a key element in that process. The author sought to construct a 'gentle reader' in the manner of the manuscript tradition where a limited, elite readership was

addressed.⁵³ The ideal reader created by the preface's rhetoric possessed a series of positive features, such as docility and learnedness, and was expected to follow the author's 'instructions' in the reading process. Alternatively, or sometimes additionally, a preface would stage an unreceptive reader in order to correct false interpretations or to prevent deliberate attacks on the text. Such rhetorical tricks illustrate both the anxiety for the loss of control and the effort to actively persuade the reader (Brayman Heckel 116-25).

The intended readership of *The Unfortunate Traveller* is defined in the Induction as the narrow circle of Wilton's fellow pages. The narrative itself, however, presupposes a less restricted audience. The narrator's explanations of courtly customs and terms suggest that he is telling his tale with a less educated, uninitiated audience in mind. Anticipating his reader's response, he interrupts himself in the description of a battle in order to insert an obvious remark: "theres neuer a one of them would bring them a blade (no, not an onion blade) about hym" (233). His approach to the reader is consistent with the custom described above: addressing him as gentle reader and promising to "make short worke, for I am sure I haue wearyed all my readers" (315), he gives the impression that he takes his audience seriously. But Wilton's roguishness also permeates his storytelling techniques and he brashly claims authority over his audience: "Gentle Readers (looke you be gentle now since I haue cald you so)" (217). The illocutionary force of this assertion deflates the valued convention of the gentle reader. Paradoxically, the narrator forces the audience to be sympathetic towards the text by constructing his readership in this traditional sense. Nashe's gentle reader is thereby unmasked as a construction used by the author to manipulate and gain control over the reader as he accepts the tacit agreement.

We have seen that the literary and commercial conventions of the book provided a space for the author to ensure patronage and to shape his relationship with the reader. The references in Nashe's text show how he grappled with the status of the book and the connotations of publishing in print. This involved not only the economically defined relation between publisher and writer, but also the demand and supply of the book as an artefact. The author's anticipation of the reception of his work is closely related to the status of the book as a form of literary transmission.

Borrowing and parodying paratextual conventions from the manuscript tradition, Nashe draws attention to the conflict of commercial and literary interests in the patronage system and positions himself within the literary marketplace. He actively defends professional authorship as an activity that allows writers like the University Wits to appropriate the techniques and conventions acquired through their education in printed fictional texts. Rather than bending to the fashion humbly to defend his use of the

⁵³ For an elaborate discussion on this topic, see Brayman Heckel ch. 3, 'Framing "gentle readers" in preliminaries and margins', 69-136.

stigmatized medium, he debunks the customs involved in the higher literary circles. Recognizing the relationship between the patron and author as a commercially necessary contract on the one hand, he also understands how these traditions are essentially literary inventions. He magnifies the writing mechanisms of the traditional dedication and the creation of the gentle reader in order to explore the power of the author who personally constitutes his relationship with his readers. It is on these grounds that the professional author should seek to liberate himself from the socio-economic constraints of the literary marketplace and brashly, in a Jack Wilton-like manner, develop an individual and personal style.

3.2 “Siluer-sounding tale made sugred harmonie”: Narrative strategies and the textual presence of the author

Thomas Nashe’s use of the medium of print to advocate professional authorship attests to the fact that he was immersed in the textual practices of his time. The presence of oral modes of communication and references to popular culture in the novel also indicate the coexistence of both traditions. It is not surprising then, that the author’s fascination with contemporary modes of writing and conventions also feeds into the narrative style.

Self-conscious storytelling

Jack Wilton is endowed with many features that render him a suitable vehicle for the Nashe’s dealing with narrative techniques. He regularly slips into the idiom and habits of a storyteller, and his colloquial speech evokes the atmosphere of an oral performance. At the same time, the double meaning of his pagehood constructs him as a textual creature, taking pride in his appearance in print. He often explicitly addresses his readers and refers to the textual quality of his narrative, in order to emphasize his command over the text and to establish himself as an author. Wilton’s discourse, alternating between confident awareness of his authorship and colloquialisms, is illustrative for the convergence of oral and textual culture.

The first marks of orality appear in the Induction, which introduces the story as though it was told to a group of patient listeners. It reads like the literal transcription of a dramatic, associative speech that lacks clear structure. The speaker presents the printed pages imagining they were narrated by Wilton himself: “Heigh passe, come alofte: euerie man of you take your places, and heare *Jack Wilton* tell his owne Tale” (208). This phrase implies that the narrative is part of a public, oral performance rather than a matter intended for private, silent reading. This suggestion is continued in the text proper when, only a few sentences into his story, Wilton interrupts himself: “There did I (soft, let me drinke before I go anie further) raigne sole king of the cans and blacke iackes” (209). The image thrust upon the reader is one of a storyteller in a tavern who pauses to have a drink, instead of an author sitting behind his desk penning down the subsequent sentences.⁵⁴ It is debatable, however, whether the author (as opposed to the narrator) should unconsciously slip into such oral habits. Nashe’s phrasing is intentional, meant to simulate and textualize the oral performance in print. Nevertheless, such references were bound to influence the reader’s perception of the text. The experience of the intrinsically social act of listening to a speaker differs from that of the privacy of solitary reading. Nashe experiments with the convention of

⁵⁴ This is what Walter Ong refers to as “oral residue,” i.e. habits of thoughts and expression that are the result of a “reluctance or inability to dissociate the written medium from the spoken” (Ong 1965, 146).

the social space of listening and reading in this mystification of the question whether Wilton is writing for the ear or the eye.

The shifting forms of address further substantiate this idea. Conscious of the presence of his audience, the narrator conforms to the practices of publishing in print when he addresses them as gentle readers. But in an attempt to keep their attention, he exclaims “Oh my Auditors, if (I say) you had seene but halfe the actions that he vsed [...] you wold haue laught your face and your knees together” (219). In the heat of the moment, he unwittingly preserves the interactive atmosphere of the oral performance. Nashe establishes his narrator as a storyteller who has become a writer, by repeatedly reminding the reader of the interactive character of storytelling. Given that both the traditional storyteller and first-person narrator in fiction create a personal relationship with their audience, the narrative techniques used to manipulate the reader are also similar to some extent. Interestingly, however, Wilton makes no effort to obscure his intervention, but rather foregrounds his manipulating strategies in the account of his travels. The difference between storyteller and writer lies in the fact that the first establishes a real, direct relationship with his audience, while the latter, due to its textuality, only constructs the *semblance* of such an interactive relationship, while in fact assuming authority over the reader.

In line with his roguish nature, Wilton boldly represents himself as the great chronicler of his own adventures. But he jeopardizes his objectivity as historiographer and experienced traveller as he neglects accurate detail. Instead of supplying descriptions of the countries or customs, he shifts from elaborations and gory details of battle scenes to verbally reproduced speeches. The trickery becomes apparent when Wilton states that he would rather leave history for what it is and spend his precious time on the narration of his own adventures: “Let me not speake anie more of his accomplishments, for feare I spend all my spirits in praising [Surrey], and leaue my selfe no vigor of wit or effects of a soule to go forward with my history” (242). The narrator flaunts his knowledge of the physicality of the book, using words like ‘gloss’ and ‘annotation’ in order to describe his associative mode of writing: “Dismissing this fruitles annotation *pro et contra*; towards Venice we progest, and tooke Rotterdam in our waie, that was cleane out of our waie” (245).

In addition to this textual awareness, Wilton celebrates his eloquence and persuasiveness in tricks he plays to emphasize his narrative abilities and employs his cunning in a similar way to take control over his audience. In the camps at Tournay and Terouanne, Wilton convinces a credulous cidermerchant that he is suspected of treason, using his barrels for secret communication with the enemy. He tricks the poor man to prove his loyalty by providing his fellow soldiers with cider, but the lie is soon discovered and Wilton is punished. Nevertheless, it is implied that the rascal considers his jest successful, as the soldiers “made themselues merrie with it manie a Winters euening after” (216). Moreover, he proudly

comments a little later, that this “was one of my famous achievements [...] but I have done a thousand better jests, if they had been booked in order as they were begotten” (217). The exhibition of his jests, of all kinds of abuses and the unbridled satire of religiously and culturally deviant conduct throughout the novel, demonstrates Wilton’s theatrical indulgence in storytelling. The narrative is thus essentially a ‘self-centred’ celebration of the narrator’s wit.

Manipulative writing

Wilton’s self-congratulating attitude is also reflected in the display of narrative control over his readers. Occasionally interrupting himself, the narrator is constantly present in the text: “Here let me triumph a while, and ruminate a line or two on the excellence of my wit: but I will not breathe neither, till I have disfraughted all my knauerie” (225). He frequently addresses his readers and seems to be concerned with carefully guiding them through his story. On closer examination, however, he prioritizes his own storytelling over entertaining or pleasing the reader:

I must not place a volume in the precincts of a pamphlet: sleepe an hour or two, and dreame that Turney and Turwin in wonne, that the King is shipt againe into England, and that I am close at harde meate at Windsore or at Hampton Court. What, will you in your indifferent opinions allow me for my trauell no more signiorie ouer the Pages than I had before? yes, whether you will part with so much probable friendly suppose or no, Ile haue it in spite of your hearts (227).

The narrator ascribes his interference in the text to the limits of the medium, but it is only a pose. In fact, the anticipation of the reader’s response is a narrative device in itself. The audience, though addressed as ‘gentle readers’, is not treated with the appropriate reverence, but is eventually manipulated by a narcissistic narrator who claims authority over his story. The violation of the reader’s expectations continues when the narrator casually undermines the strategies of storytelling instead of conforming to them. When the mysterious sweating disease breaks out in England, Wilton flees Hampton Court and returns to the European continent. Arriving at the battle of Marignano (1515), he delivers a sensational description of “wonderfull spectacle of blood-shed” where “the French King himselfe in this Conflict was much distressed, the braines of his owne men sprinkled in his face etc” (231). His next destination is Munster, Anno Domini 1534, where he witnesses the run-up to the slaughter of a group of Anabaptists. His account of the preparations for the battle and the inflammatory rhetoric of their religious leader, John of Leiden, suggests another atrocious battle. But Wilton suddenly grows weary of his own gory stories:

This tale must at one time or other giue vp the ghost, and as good now as stay longer; I would gladly rid my handes of it cleanly, if I could tell how, for what with talking of coblers, tinkers, roape-makers, botchers, and durt-daubers, the mark is clean out of my Muses mouth, & I am as it were more than duncified twixt diuinity and poetrie. What is there more as touching this tragedie that you would resolued of? say quickly, for now is my pen on foote. How *John Leyden* dyed, is that it? He dyde like a dogge, he was hangd & the halter paid for. For his companions, doe they trouble you? I can tell you they troubled some men before, for they were all kild, & none escapt, no, not so much as one to tell the tale of the rainebow. (241)

This strategy undercuts the narrative climax and Nashe subverts his reader's anticipated response: the grotesque elaboration on the piles of dead bodies and limbs at the battle of Marignano lowered the bar for the depiction of even greater violence, but instead Wilton decides that a summary of the tragic event suffices.⁵⁵ In other words, it is the narrator's opportunistic tendency in narrating that causes this divergence rather than a fundamental flaw in the power of art. Instantly moving on to Wilton's meeting with the Earl of Surrey, the discursive mode shifts to the more peaceful, elevated language of Petrarchan poetry only to return to the brutalities of lynchings at the end of the narrative. This shifting of discourses ties in with the different styles and genres presented throughout the novel, as the literary showground for Nashe to vent his ideas on the state of literature. But this will be dealt with in the final section of this chapter.

The actively involved narrator that Nashe has created in *The Unfortunate Traveller* is a freewheeling storyteller who self-assertively establishes himself as a 'published author'. This combination turns him into a caricatural image of an empowered author, who exploits this power in unorthodox ways. Preoccupied with his own talent and wit, he impatiently rejects his reader's interaction and claims authority over his pages. The reader is then continually confronted with a narrator who not only understands, but also manipulates his reading habits. This illustrates Nashe's perceptiveness to the strategies involved in traditional storytelling and the conditions of writing fiction. The occasional lapse into an oral style suggests that the oral and written modes of communication were closely related. But as Nashe's unravelling of narrative techniques makes clear, the narrator's manipulation of the reader is easier to identify in this materialized form than it would have been as part of an oral performance.

We are initially given the impression that the interaction between reader and writer resembles the contact between storyteller and audience, but the former is later revealed to be

⁵⁵ Suzuki interprets this passage as a sign of the limits imposed on narration by violence, it "can only lead to silence" (363), but thus disregards the narrative strategy practiced here. It is effective in contrast not only to earlier descriptions of brutality, but also to ones that are still to follow.

of a different order. Even though Wilton's address to the reader seemingly maintains the interaction, the actual dialogue of the oral setting is transformed into a monologue in print. Whereas a storyteller as a performer actively engages with his audience, a writer ventriloquizes through the narrator within the text. As a result, printed fiction allows the development of a narrative voice that is less directly connected with the author. An audience listening to stories is more inclined to take the discourse to be coming from the speaker himself. In contrast, an author, dissociated from his text, can cloak his narrative voice in a variety of discourses. In the words of Walter Ong: "the original voice of the oral narrator took on various new forms when it became the silent voice of the writer, as the distancing effected by writing invited various fictionalizations of the decontextualized reader and writer" (Ong 1982, 148).

3.3 “Eligiacall histories” and “stale galymafries”: London’s literary scene

The fictional world of Jack Wilton’s European explorations is one lavishly decorated with discourses from a range of literary genres. Effortlessly shifting between religious sermon, lyrical poetry and travel narrative, the narrator satirizes different courtly and scholarly modes of writing and speaking.⁵⁶ Nashe’s burlesque representation of literary traditions has a comical effect on the practiced reader, but as will be shown below, they reach deeper than plain mockery.⁵⁷ The characters in *The Unfortunate Traveller* are in some way or other part of the literary universe, either as practitioners of a specific genre or as caricatures from such a tradition. Nashe’s appropriation of those modes of writing provides an insight into his view on literature and the status of the author of fictional prose in particular. For Nashe, the polyphony of voices available in the fictional narrative constitutes a device to comment on the excess of platitudes and classical commonplaces practiced by his fellow writers. The novel ties in with the declining belief in the virtues of humanism and essentially defends originality in writing.

Parodying literary discourse

The Unfortunate Traveller has often been classed as a picaresque novel, as Nashe’s Jack Wilton resembles the protagonist of Spanish romance *Lazarillo de Tormes* in his roguish wit and social background. However, as both Hibbard and Kaula have argued, *The Unfortunate Traveller* lacks the realism of the picaresque genre, as it “relies too heavily on extravagant and macabre effects to be credited with a consistent verisimilitude” (Kaula 43). Still, Nashe might have drawn his inspiration from this novel, which had been translated into English in 1576. More important to note is that Wilton is decidedly less occupied with rising on the social ladder and more with the narration of his adventures proper.⁵⁸

Another important influence, or model, is the travel narrative; a genre that was emerging in relation to the explorations of newly discovered countries across the Atlantic, as letters and diaries of travellers inspired poets to take the notion of otherness as a subject for their literary artefacts (Hadfield 32-33). In that respect, it is no coincidence that Italy figures as the major travel destination in the novel. Roger Ascham’s *The Schoolmaster* (1570), a famous treatise attacking the romance tradition and the popularity of the Italy, compared the

⁵⁶ See for example Agnes Latham’s seminal essay “Satire on Literary Themes and Modes in Nashe’s *Unfortunate Traveller*,” *English Studies (Essays and Studies)* New Series 1 (1948), 85-100.

⁵⁷ As Rosalie L. Colie has demonstrated, the mixture of different types of writing was a common practice in much of early modern literature. See *The Resources of Kind: Genre-Theory in the Renaissance*. Ed. Barbara K. Lewalski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

⁵⁸ Walter Davis does indicate a development from low to high in Jack Wilton’s travels, but this seems to oversimplify the matter. Although Wilton starts out in the army and seemingly ‘rises’ to the companion of Surrey, he retains his identity as an unfortunate traveller until the end - even when he temporarily switches identity with his master, it is only to return to his former status. See Walter R. David, *Idea and Act in Elizabethan Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969). 214-237.

country to Circe's mythological imprisoning island and indicates the seductive and corruptive character of the Italians. Wilton's description of the hardships he suffered in that country echo the writings of Ascham, in whose teachings he had been schooled. In addition, Italy serves as the background for the mockery of writing in the chivalric tradition, for example in the idyllic description of a summer banquet and in the elaborate account of a decadent tournament in Florence.

Wilton's travelling companion poet Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey (1517-1547), is commonly viewed as the founding father of the English sonnet. Their first meeting inspires Wilton to praise the poet as God's most excellent creation: "Destinie neuer defames hir selfe but when shee lets an excellent Poet die: if there bee anie sparke of Adams Paradized perfection yet emberd vp in the breastes of mortall men, certainlie God hath bestowed that his perfectest image on Poets" (242). The poet fosters a passionate admiration for the lady Geraldine, who has sent him on a pilgrimage to her native land Italy – the birthplace of the Petrarchan sonnet. Wilton reports amusedly how the Earl unexpectedly bursts out in lyrical emotion in the embellished style of Petrarchan comparisons. Only a few pages later, however, Surrey's performance turns out to be no more than the well-practiced act of appropriated form and style. Arriving in Venice, Surrey and Wilton fall victim to deceitful 'Tabitha the Temptress' and her pander, who, embodying the Italianate wickedness, conspire to swindle them out of their money and have them imprisoned. Notwithstanding their deplorable state, Surrey seizes the opportunity to display his sonnet-writing talent and he shifts his sentimental allegiance to the adulteress Diamante who keeps them company:

If I must die, O, let me choose my death:
Sucke out my soule with kisses, cruell maide,
In thy breasts christall bals enbalme my breath,
Dole it all out in sighs when I am laide.
Thy lips on mine like cupping glasses claspe,
Let our tongs meete and striue as they would sting,
Crush out my winde with one strait girting graspe,
Stabs on my heart keepe time whilest thou doest sing.
Thy eyes lyke searing yrons burne out mine,
In thy faire tresses stifflie me outright,
Like Circes change me to a loathsome swine,
So I may liue for euer in thy sight.

Into heauens ioyes none can profoundly see,
Except that first they meditate on thee. (262-63)

Surrey sees himself as the stereotypical suffering lover and appropriates the Petrarchan conventions accordingly.⁵⁹ However, his intentions result only in the absurd transformation of the emotional violence of the traditional verse into a physical aggression which “stabs on his heart” and “burns out his eyes”. Similarly, the metaphor of the sorceress Circe is hardly flattering for his lover, nor is Surrey’s readiness to degrade himself to the swines a successful image in the poem. Nashe thus ridicules courtly writers who pride themselves in their lyrical talent. The cliché-ridden Petrarchan mode further suffers Nashe’s criticism through Wilton’s response to this performance. Diamante’s heart is unmoved - in analogy with the aloof lady of the sonnet – and, ironically, becomes Wilton’s mistress. Wilton’s simple comment is as comical as it is effective in its contrast with his master’s lyrical language: “My master beate the bush and kepte a coyle and a prattling, but I caught the birde: simplicitie and plainnesse shall carrie it away in another world” (263).

This episode shows how sonnet-writing is exposed as an outdated practice that has been worn-out and depleted of its original artistic potential. In that sense, it is emblematic of Nashe’s satire on the numerous other modes of discourse. The abrupt transitions between the discourses take place in moments where a genre or style enters the narrative sphere. They show Nashe’s skill in applying the different oral and written modes available to him. As Hutson has pointed out, “it is not a society that is the object of representation in Jack’s narrative, but the way in which society is currently ‘set forth’ in discourses of all kinds” (220). These modes are mostly voiced by other speakers, ‘specialized’ in a type of language by virtue of their character, such as the Earl of Surrey’s sonneteering and Cutwolfe’s “insulting oration” at the scaffold. As these characters themselves are generally comical and stereotypical figures, their speeches are rather straightforward parody.

The different discourses adopted by the narrator are even more intriguing, in that they tend to have a serious undertone, showing Nashe’s pamphleteering skills at full strength. Wilton’s idiom is predominantly colloquial, but larded with Latin phrases and he assumes identities swinging between the adventurous picaro and the naïve travel-writer, between the historian and the quick satirist. He describes himself as an “outlandish chronicler”, but his status as historiographer is revealed to be unreliable in the way he mixes up his chronology and favours wit above accuracy, thus mocking the practice of ‘historytelling’.⁶⁰

Reflecting on his adventures in retrospect, Wilton intersperses his narration with digressive afterthoughts on different religious and literary topics. Launching a religious invective against the Anabaptists, for instance, the narrator explicitly states that he leaves his

⁵⁹ Several critics have pointed to the similarity between Surrey and Sidney and interpreted the sonnets as a sign of Nashe’s admiration, see for example Katherine Duncan-Jones, “Nashe and Sidney: The Tournament in *The Unfortunate Traveller*,” *Modern Language Review* 63 (1968): 3-7 and Kinney 311. However, the overall tone of the poem and Wilton’s response in particular reveal that the sonnet lacks its intended artistic quality and force.

⁶⁰ On the representation of history, see Andrew Hiscock, “Blabbing Leaves of Betraying Paper: Configuring the Past in George Gascoigne’s *The Adventures of Master F.J.*,” Thomas Nashe’s *The Unfortunate Traveller* and Thomas Deloney’s *Jack of Newbury*” *English* 52.202(2003): 1-20.

own field of expertise to “dilate a litle more grauely than the nature of this historie requires, or wilbe expected of so yong a practitioner in diuinity” (234). Having observed the aggressive manner in which the Anabaptists defended their faith, Wilton exclaims: “When Christ said, *the kingdome of heauen must suffer violence*, hee meant not the violence of long babling praiers, nor the violence of tedious iuectiue Sermons without wit, but the violence of faith, the violence of good works, the violence of patient suffering” (234). On close examination, Wilton’s professed exercise, which takes up several pages, indeed sounds surprisingly sincere in comparison to the witty comments on the foolish victims of his jests.⁶¹

Another interesting case is the defence of Pietro Aretino, author of pornographic literature and a controversial figure in Elizabethan England. The nature of his writings gave rise to a literary argument between Gabriel Harvey and Nashe, whose admiration for the Italian satirist was well-known. Wilton’s appreciative declaration that “his pen was sharp-pointed like a poniard; no leaf he wrote on but was like a burningglass to set on fire all his readers” (264) is thus an indirect reply to Harvey’s criticism.⁶²

Hibbard has referred to such sudden transitions as ‘excuses’ to introduce a new polemical thought, suggesting that Nashe was uncertain about how to continue after each ‘jest’. However, this conclusion seems to stem from a mistaken equation of the writer with his protagonist. Unlike Wilton, Nashe was an experienced writer and knew when his “pen was on foot.” He consciously structured and opposed the different genres in an effective way. At the same time, Wilton’s deliberate departures from his storyline do express ideas that veer close to Nashe’s own attitudes and the narrator thus functions as a ventriloquist, allowing Nashe to pursue his religious and literary quarrels in the text. The caricatural representation of well-known literary models not only serves to amuse the reader, Nashe also exposes the hollowness of the language usually employed in these genres. As will be shown below, Nashe uses this internal polemic to establish his fictional project as an alternative to the archaic genres taught and practised at universities.

Literary decadence and hollow rhetoric

In Cambridge, Nashe had been introduced to the great Greek and Roman writers Plato, Aristotle and Cicero, as well as to the prominent English authors of his day and was provided with the essentials of humanist learning. The pride Nashe took in his education is pervasive in his work, even though, as McKerrow argues, it is rather “an endeavour to appear learned,

⁶¹ This passage reverberates the attack on the hypocrisy of the Pharisees in Nashe’s in *Christ’s Tears over Jerusalem*. In relation to this work, Hibbard states that Nashe was “essentially a clown and an exhibitionist, he could not turn preacher merely by removing his red nose” (127), suggesting that his criticism was only temporary. However, Nashe’s attacks on religious abuses throughout his works, suggest that his anti-Puritanism can be taken as seriously as his witty engagement in literary polemics. See Kinney, 315-318 and Jennifer L. Anderson, “Anti-Puritanism, Anti-Popery, and Gallows Rhetoric in Thomas Nashe’s *The Unfortunate Traveller*,” in *Sixteenth Century Journal* 35.1 (2004): 43-63.

⁶² The historical context for this matter is provided in David C. McPherson, “Aretino and the Harvey-Nashe Quarrel,” *PMLA* 84.6 (1969): 1551-1558.

with little real learning behind it” (V, 132). Nevertheless, he was exceptionally perceptive to the weaknesses in the methodical application of the classical theories in contemporary literature and rhetoric.

Nashe’s mocking representations of oratory in *The Unfortunate Traveller* reveal that he saw a clear difference between the slavish imitator and the experienced author who digested and blended the classical texts he read in order to carefully integrate them in his own creative enterprise. The latter would show originality in his use of the models. Nashe had lashed out against the tendency to literally reproduce phrases from classical predecessors on numerous occasions. In the preface to Robert Greene’s *Menaphon* (1589), he addresses his fellow “Gentlemen Students of Both Universities” and articulates his views of the literary scene in London (III, 309-25).⁶³ This dense and at times puzzling piece is emblematic for Nashe’s writing and has attracted much scholarly attention. It argues that the state of writing as it has developed since the introduction of humanist teaching at universities is portrayed as flawed. Although Cambridge scholars like Sir John Cheke and Roger Ascham introduced “a more perfect methode of study,” their efforts appear to be without success when “those yeares which should bee employed in *Aristotle* are expired in Epitomies” (III, 317-18). Nashe inveighs against the tendency among writers to exercise themselves in writing uninventive compendiums, thereby sacrificing the splendour of art and limiting the reader’s understanding.

Nashe does not reject the use of classical models per se, but criticizes the contemporary fashion which reduces writing literature to copying “whole sheetes & tractates *verbatim*, from the plentie of *Plutarche* and *Plinie*.” A competent writer should be able to distinguish between the implementation of “apish deuices” and “learned imitation” (III, 313). In his view, English writers had grown so comfortable with the accepted mode of writing, merely ‘borrowing’ from foreign literatures, that they failed to appreciate their own literature and deprived it from its originality. This argument is echoed in Wilton’s comments on writers and orators in *The Unfortunate Traveller*. Shortly after Wilton has joined the Earl of Surrey on his journey to Italy, they arrive in Wittenberg, the birthplace of the Reformation, where they are “spectators of a verie solemne scholasticall entertainment of the Duke of Saxonie” (246). Wilton is not impressed by the hypocritical ceremonial practices of the university and ridicules the “hot-livered drunkards” that have gathered to display their oratory skills. The performance is nonsensical, as the speakers lack the wit and invention but only reiterate the contents of their treasured Latin phrasebooks. The city that is supposed to educate leaders of the church apparently only succeeds in delivering dressed-up fools who believe themselves to be erudite but show no real command of language. One of the town officials seeks to impress

⁶³ The preface was Nashe’s first publication in print and Hibbard suggests that it was an act of kindness on Greene’s part, as it was more likely to further Nashe’s literary career than that it would recommend Greene’s work to the reader (Hibbard 29).

the Duke, but Wilton's ridiculing description of the speaker's attire disqualifies him as credible before he has even started his strange oration:

Right noble Duke (*ideo nobilis quasi no bilis*, for you haue no bile or colar in you), know that our present incorporation of Wittenberg, by me the tongue man of their thankfulness, a townsman by birth, a free Germane by nature, an orator by arte, and a scriuener by education, in all obedience & chastity, most bountifully bid you welcome to Wittenberg: welcome, sayd I? O orificiall rhetorike, wipe thy euerlasting mouth, and afford me a more Indian metaphor than that, for the braue princely blood of a Saxon. Oratorie, vncaske the bard hutch of thy complements, and with the triumphantest troupe in thy treasure doe trewage vnto him. What impotent speech with his eight partes may not specifie, this vnestimable gift, holding his peace, shall as it were (with teares I speak it) do wherby as it may seeme or appeare to manifest or declare, and yet it is, and yet it is not, and yet it may be a diminutive oblation meritorious to your high pusillanimitie and indignitie. Why should I goe gadding and fisingg after firking flantado amfibologies? wit is wit, and good will is good will. With all the wit I haue, I here, according to the premises, offer vp vnto you the cities general good will, which is a gilded Can, in manner and forme following, for you and the heirs of your bodie lawfully begotten to drinke healths in. (248)

As Arthur F. Kinney has convincingly demonstrated, the use of alliteration, paradox and repetition and other persuasive strategies prescribed by rhetorical handbooks, have no effect in this speech and provides an image of "humanism gone badly wrong" (340). Continuing in this manner, the speaker further displays his ignorance by jumbling words and misusing Latin terms. The speech culminates in the dubious metaphor of garlic, which makes a man wink, drink and stink "so we wil winke on thy imperfections, drinke to thy favourites, and al thy foes shall stinke before vs" (249).

Hibbard interprets this ridiculous oration as a sign of Nashe's contempt for the Germans, but I think there is an unmistakable serious undertone to this passage that reaches beyond the German borders to the English educational system as well. The academic training in rhetoric which teaches students to combine knowledge with eloquence has evolved into a meaningless frame, available for every fool to use. Wilton articulates this when he comments:

A most vaine thing it is in many vniuersities at this daie, that they count him excellent eloquent who stealeth not whole phrases but whole pages out of *Tully*. If of a number of shreds of his sentences he can shape an oration, from all the world he carries it awaie, although in truth it be no more than a fooles coat of many colours. No

invention or matter haue they of theyr own, but tack vp a style of his stale galymafries. The leaden headed Germanes first began this, and wee Englishmen haue surfetted of their absurd imitation. (251)

Although the corruption comes from the continent – as once did the Reformation –, its effect on English universities in terms of the intellectual impoverishment remains Nashe's main concern here. *The Unfortunate Traveller* is in that sense illustrative of Kinney's analysis of the declining belief in the ideals of humanism in the late sixteenth century. In the face of continuing warfare and religious controversy, people began to question to what extent man was indeed educable (Kinney 295-303).

These ideas seeped through to Nashe's fiction as well, and he addresses the issue in terms of the fallibility of language. The speakers in the novel are either represented as unreliable by Wilton or they undermine their own credibility through faulty use of language or flawed arguments. Cutwolfe for instance 'defends' himself by declaring that "Reuenge is the glorie of armes, & the highest performance of valure: reuenge is whatsoeuer we call law or justice" (326). The glorification of revenge as justice not only ridicules Italian morals, it also exposes the falsity of self-assured rhetoric. In analogy with the scholarly orators, Cutwolfe is fully convinced of his own words, even though they only further incriminate him. In other words, in the hands of villains and fools, rhetoric turns into a deceptive device rather than an effective, well-employed persuasive tool.⁶⁴

Another interesting example is the speech delivered by the Roman woman Heraclide before she is raped by the villainous Spaniard Esdras de Granado. Wilton, lodged at Heraclide's house when Esdras and his partner in crime Bartol enter the house, verbally reports the dialogue from the room where the criminal locked him up. Heraclide's language and the response of Esdras echo the tone of the female complaint. This genre was extremely popular in England in the 1590s and had been prominent in the *Mirror for Magistrates* (1559). Complaints typically portrayed women either yielding to abusive power of a ruler or defending their chastity and were often moralizing in content. Nashe's rendition of the rape follows the generic conventions of the complaint in both structure and content. First, the woman submissively but passionately pleads for mercy, and when the harm has been done, she rails in shame against female frailty and beauty. Heraclide's plea is similarly in vain: "These words might haue mooued a compound hart of yron and adamant, but in his hart they

⁶⁴ Anderson reads this speech in the light of "the aura and gravity surrounding a martyr's dying words" and contends that Cutwolfe suffers a prototypical noble death (62). This interpretation curiously takes Cutwolfe's words to be sincerely remorseful, granting them rhetorical power, and seems to overlook the criminal's closing justification for vengeance which is at odds with the virtues of the Christian martyr.

obtained no impression” (290). The failure of the woman’s rhetoric to persuade was inherent in the complaint genre and emphasized the limits of language.⁶⁵

The ineffectiveness of the worn-out scholarly, religious and literary rhetoric is in interesting contrast with Wilton’s witty storytelling. Wilton’s mobility brings him into contact with a wide range of more or less ridiculous characters, each introducing a different speech style. Placing Ciceronian orators next to credulous cider-merchants, romantic poets next to bawds and villains, *The Unfortunate Traveller* demonstrates the multiplicity of discourses and its connotations of early modern society. Interweaving traditional modes of writing with the comical prose of his protagonist, Nashe demonstrates his ability to appropriate all these discursive practices in a dynamic story. The episodic nature of the stories allows Nashe to abruptly shift from one mode to another. The reader, recognizing the familiar literary traditions, is then constantly surprised and entertained by Nashe’s skills as a writer. In addition, Nashe proves the twistiness of the narrator to be an excellent vehicle for polemicizing about the very nature of the art of writing and thus indirectly educate his reader about his view of the state of literature.

Innovating fiction

A group of ‘Elizabethan Prodigals’, a term coined by Richard Helgerson, which included George Gascoigne, John Lyly, Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge and Sir Philip Sidney, felt compelled to defend their use of fiction. Their writings are characterized by a sense of guilt over the fact that they wasted their time and talent on fiction which should be spent in service of the country.⁶⁶ Drawing on the distinction made by Helgerson between literary tendencies in the late sixteenth century, Hutson proposes to read Nashe’s work as showing both features of the generation of the Elizabethan Prodigals whose work dominated the literary scene of the 1580s, and of the generation of satirists, as he does not fit neatly in either category (10-11). Moreover, Nashe’s project moves beyond the satirical and seeks to celebrate the type of literature that the Prodigals apologetically published.

After his first review of the literary scene in the preface to *Menaphon*, Nashe continued to articulate his views in many of his writings. He addressed the enemies of poetry in *Pierce Penilesse His Supplication to the Diuell* (1592), a work which merges the attacks on immoral behaviour with literary disputes. Alongside condemning sections on deadly sins

⁶⁵ Heather Dubrow has illustrated in relation to Shakespeare’s *Rape of Lucrece* that such speeches were often highly rhetorical, containing stylistic devices such as apostrophe, antithesis and exclamations. This suggests that the woman is portrayed as in control of language, despite her sense of helplessness and emotional confusion. But as both Lucrece and Heraclide show, rhetorical tools in a woman’s hands are ineffective. See “A Mirror for Complaints: Shakespeare’s *Lucrece* and Generic Tradition.” *Renaissance Genres: Essays on Theory, History, and Interpretation*. Ed. Barbara Kiefer Lewalski. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986. 399-417.

⁶⁶ Richard Helgerson, *The Elizabethan Prodigals* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

such as greediness and wrath, we find a defence of plays and an attack on Richard Harvey in response to the latter's offensive references to Nashe's friend John Lyly.⁶⁷

Commenting on tendencies in the literary scene in London, Nashe condemns objections against the writers of poetry, mostly from the side of those so-called learned scholars who excel in "tautologies" rather than eloquence. Nashe sets himself and his fellow writers apart from them, as "there goes more exquisite paines and puritie of witte, to the writing of one such rare Poem as Rosamond, than to a hundred of your dunsticall Sermons". Furthermore, reading or writing poetry is not an idle, popular pastime, but it "refinedst, preparedst, and purifiedst" the mind of clergymen and thinkers alike, and it has purged the English language of its barbarisms (I 192).

This ambivalent stance is also articulated in the dedicatory letter to *The Unfortunate Traveller*. The author tries to classify his mode of writing but reveals his uncertainty concerning the generic position of his text. He refers to the text as a "phantasticall Treatise" which, paradoxically, contains "some reasonable conueyance of historie, & varietie of mirth" (201). Claims that the story contained true descriptions were not uncommon in prefaces to fictions, even though readers were expected to be able to distinguish imaginative literature from historical truth. Nashe plays on this ambiguity in the attempt to lend his text credibility and educational worth by claiming historical truthfulness, while admitting his text to be fantastic and incredible at the same time.

Nashe refers to a deeper motive in his choice of this form of writing, which is "a clean different vein from other my former courses of writing" (201) when he declares how he has decided to employ his "dul pen" in a new way, intending "to be kinde to my frends and fatall to my enemies" (202). So rather than presenting his fiction as such, he admits his project to have polemical a purpose. This points towards his intention to actively in the debate on the role of literature, not by writing poetry, but by using a rather new textual form. And that form, which as we have seen offered new possibilities to the author, also requires more interpretative strength from the reader. Through his text, Nashe advocates literary innovation and presents the audience with new reading material, commenting on forms they were already familiar with.

The Unfortunate Traveller also cleverly plays into the reader's anticipations of the fictional text. Wilton gives the impression that he will provide a reliable account of his "strategical acts and monuments" (209) and seemingly aligns himself in the tradition of

⁶⁷ The literary quarrel between Nashe and the brothers Richard and Gabriel Harvey originated in the late 1580s, when Nashe and several other writers engaged in the religious pamphlet war inspired by the publication of radical puritan texts under the pseudonym of 'Martin Marprelate'. Nashe and Lyly published anti-Martinists tracts, and Richard Harvey, preaching religious unity, attacked Nashe by comparing him with Marprelate for his unauthorized, presumptuous engagement in the matter. This only evoked further invective and the dispute was carried on between Nashe and Gabriel Harvey in prefaces and letters until in June 1599 Archbishop Whitgift and Bishop Bancroft issued an order that 'all Nasshes and Doctor Harvyes bookes be taken wheresoever they maye be found and that none of there bookes bee ever printed hereafter' (Hutson xiii, 197-204). On the details of the Harvey-Nashe controversy, see Hibbard 180-232, Kerrow V 65-110.

official history writing. The illusion of ‘chronicling’ is soon betrayed; Wilton races from the battle of Tournay and Terouanne (1513) via Marignano (1515) to the Anabaptist uprising (1534) and then back to Wittenberg (1519). There, he witnesses Luther’s debate with Carlstadt and engages in conversations with Erasmus and More about the forthcoming publications of their respective masterpieces *Praise of Folly* (1509) and *Utopia* (1516).

Anachronous as this hotchpotch of historical facts is, the reader accepts it as the reality of Wilton’s world, in line with the mimesis principle of fiction. The fact that Wilton himself is convinced of his role as reliable historiographer, produces then a comical effect. He apparently supposes that his world is also that of his readers, while it is clearly an absurd, inflated and ahistorical version of it. In the words of Raymond Stephanson, the “rhetorical distortions create tension and ambivalence in the reader because they threaten his cherished notion of a transparent, intelligible world” (Stephanson 33).

Implicit in the comical acts of Nashe’s historical and fictional figures are the author’s ideas on the state of literature in contemporary England. The pastiche of religious invective, lyrical poetry and travel narrative is not simply a celebration of the kaleidoscope of literary and popular traditions available to Nashe. Nor is it merely a strategic move to reduce the narrative element, which, as Nelson has argued, was often done in early modern narratives in order to ‘cloak’ their fiction in generic diversity (Nelson 63-65). Rather, Nashe’s advocacy for literary inventiveness shows that he prides himself in the fact that his literary endeavours are not simply borrowed from the writings of others, but establishing something original. As he states in *Pierce Penniless*, “Newe Herrings, new, wee must crye, euery time wee make our selues publique, or else we shall bee christened with a hundred new tytles of Idiotisme” (I 192).

A traditionalist in his defence of the English literary heritage, his view of the state of authorship is much more radical, going against the grain by exposing the intellectual bankruptcy of humanist education. His challenging of conventions reinforces the impression that he viewed fictional narrative as *the* medium for the self-confident professional author to display his prowess and technique. The cultural dispositions manifested in *The Unfortunate Traveller* implicitly comments on those aspects of literary practice that had been corrupted by the decadence of very people who were supposed to defend the art. In short, Nashe argues for critical revision of the humanistic and literary environment and he offers fictional prose as the alternative.

3.4 Conclusion

The cacophony of voices and unsettling nature of Nashe's prose has intrigued readers and scholars for a long time. *The Unfortunate Traveller* is richly lavished with a wide range of poetical, religious and popular discourses, with fascinating characters and unexpected narrative turns. The novel is not only an exercise in writing fiction, but also a polemical tool expressing Nashe's view of the concept of professional authorship and it expounds his literary disputes within the fiction.

The novel ties in with the popular taste for spectacle and with Nashe's aesthetic concerns and ambitions. It helps to understand how the medium of print, textual conventions and strategies of storytelling are benchmarks of the changing status of the author in Elizabethan London. Jack Wilton, the carefree page moving from the margins of society into the literary arena of early modern Europe, is Nashe's mouthpiece for mocking the literary and social conventions surrounding the state of literature.

Wilton's pagehood, which designates both the textuality of the book and his social standing at the fringes of the court, calls to mind the status of the printed book as the popular medium used by professional authors. Even as economic conditions were beginning to change for writers in print, Nashe found himself in a network of conflicting interests and that ambiguous position is illustrated in the way that the author grapples with paratextual conventions. Deliberately turning to print, he adopts the attitude of the humble writer in the dedication to his patron, but his inflation of the expected mode of writing exposes the conventions as invalid and he defies the conditions of the literary marketplace.

As the narrator of his own adventures and as a self-professed chronicler, Wilton embodies the storyteller who turns writer. The construction of the relationship between author and reader, as distinct from storyteller/audience, plays an important role: it is never really stable. The novel retains the episodic structure of orally delivered narrative, but simultaneously enables the development of separate stories according to the writer's taste. Nashe has endowed his protagonist with self-indulgence in his own wit and a pride to appear in print. He assertively claims "signorie ouer the pages" and revels in the control over his readers. Wilton's roguish wit and narrative games are thus representative of his creator's literary skills and of his critical reflection on the manifestations of oral and written forms of communication in early modern London. A printed text allowed the author to interact with his readers in new ways and authors like Nashe, who were well-educated and active in literary circles, were especially prone to explore the width and breadth of these techniques.

As a result of the model of the travel narrative, Jack Wilton explores the European continent and in the process comments on many of its characteristics. The burlesque representation of the heteroglot voices of European cultural history serves to interrogate the

consequences of humanist teaching. In Nashe's view, the education of rhetoric had deprived scholars and writers of their originality and the adherence to literary conventions had reached the point where inventiveness, as celebrated in his fiction, was simply rejected as childish entertainment. But while the "King of Pages" Jack Wilton is the archetypal rascal, Nashe's project is more than just simply destabilizing and rebellious. His engagement in contemporary literary debates, illustrated in his prefaces and pamphlets, confirms that he sought to revive and reform English literature. He claimed the creative space of narrative fiction and offers it as an alternative to the archaisms of the corrupted literary outgrowths of humanism.

The distinctive polemical, artistically informed tone of *The Unfortunate Traveller*, which strives to establish professional authorship in terms of creativity and originality, as well as the experiments with the literary conventions and discourses, highlights the author's susceptibility to the possibilities of printed prose fiction. The novel's hybridity, the creative appropriation of available sources and narrative structures from different modes of communication reproduces the structures and cultural dispositions of Nashe's turbulent society and serves as a vehicle for the author to fashion himself in the emerging literary marketplace. The analogy often drawn with postmodern fiction is not unrelated to the author's discovery of his voice and the extent of his authority over the reader in this process. Rather than an open-ended, interactive oral performance, the novel allows for a pre-arranged relationship with the reader that is exploited by Nashe in order to puzzle and entertain his readers. As such, the novel displays a range of elements that came to play a role in the development of novelistic discourse, while keeping its typically Elizabethan unsettledness, accounting for the lasting attraction of *The Unfortunate Traveller*.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have argued that the indeterminacy of the status of the early modern novel may profitably be explained in relation to the experimental potential of the printed page and the self-fashioning of the author during the period. Composed in different social contexts, William Baldwin's *Beware the Cat* (1553), and Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594) display significant differences and similarities in their approach to the textuality of their work and the construction of the relationship with their readers.

In the first place, both novelists reveal an awareness of contemporary conventions of writing and publishing as well as the skill to appropriate these traditions for their own polemical aims. *Beware the Cat*, arguably the first English novel, displays a generic diversity in the blending of animal fable, pseudo-intellectual debate, alchemical tract and religious invective. Baldwin draws on older forms of storytelling, such as the frame narrative and the humanist dialogue as structuring principles for his novel. The very composition of the text - its division in three parts and the storytelling scene in the first part of the oration - thus shows how prose fiction enabled the integration of different genres. This type of intertextual experiment materializes in the associative mode of the separate stories.

In Thomas Nashe's *Unfortunate Traveller*, we find a comparable structure, connected by the narrator's adventures. This novel also mixes traditional modes of writing, such as the Petrarchan sonnet and the female complaint, as a form of parody. More significant is Nashe's appropriation of the conventional dedicatory letter, where his inflated modesty actually serves to debunk the conditions of system of patronage. Baldwin's use of the paratextual elements was no less experimental, albeit not in relation to the author's position in the literary marketplace. Interacting with his own text as an editor, Baldwin rather foregrounds the operation of the reading process. He stages G.B. as the 'author' responsible for the dedication and marginal notes, and thereby rather seeks to subvert the reader's expectations of the author's reliability.

These textual strategies are not unrelated to the connotations of the medium, as each of the oral and written means of communication used in Elizabethan England had its own set of attributed values. The practice of storytelling was connected with the private atmosphere of the house, and the elite custom of manuscript circulation of poetry was distinguished from the medium of print as a more popular vehicle for religious and literary ends. At the same time, modes of discourse were also conveyed from one form to the other. Paratextual principles governing the relationship between the author and his audience were transferred via the manuscript tradition to the printed text. Baldwin and Nashe partly relied on conventions from other types of texts and experimented with the boundaries of these traditions. The two novels also demonstrate the flexibility on the level of the fictional

narrative and of the material text. The way in which authors appropriated the borrowed conventions allowed them to develop their own authorial voice.

A second significant aspect of these novels involves the conveyance of the cultural ideas. Baldwin and Nashe each had their distinctive polemical intentions in writing their novels. Baldwin was actively involved in the printing business and was interested in furthering the ideas of the Edwardian reformation. The fact that the novel was not published until England's return to Protestantism under Elizabeth, attests to the sensitivity of the religious problem. Baldwin's satire of the corrupt religious practice of the Catholic clergy is extended to the rejection of all uncritical and superstitious beliefs that are based on oral traditions rather than textual scrutiny. His humanist belief in the educability of men through the study of texts is corollary to his approach.

Nashe wrote *The Unfortunate Traveller* over forty years later. An ambitious writer active in the literary scene with his fellow 'university wits,' Nashe was trained in the humanist tradition but had much less confidence in the effectiveness of their ideals in literary practice. The belief in the corrective potential of humanism present in Baldwin's work seems to have ebbed away by the end of the sixteenth century. Nashe expressed his concerns by satirizing the pretentious but hollow imitation of esteemed literary modes. Deploring the degradation of literature, he advocated originality in writing and propagated a professional, independent authorship based on print.

These epistemological principles are closely related to the third important element of these novels, the narrative strategies used and the conceptions of reading and writing fiction that can be derived from them. The structure and contents of *Beware the Cat* is in line with Baldwin's optimistic belief in the reader and his engagement with the printed text. The oral performance described in the opening argument depicts the fictional author G.B. and protagonist Streamer engaging in a debate and the storytelling motive returns in the exchange of tales among the workers in the printer's shop. The text ridicules the simple-minded characters who accept the fantastic and unauthorized stories for plain truth. This strategy discredited orality in favour of the humanist attitude towards texts, which promoted individual reading. The reader was supposed to identify with the Protestant characters, but Baldwin reaches deeper than polarized censure of Catholicism. The text activates the reader to adopt a critical attitude towards sources of knowledge by voicing the exact opposite response in the credulous characters. Streamer's concoction of the magical potion is based on the uncritical reading of a text of dubitable origin and G.B.'s inconsistent marginal gloss only deconstructs the authority he so carefully sought to create for himself and his friend Streamer. The conflation of actual characters like the author's assumed naïve persona and the well-known Master Ferrers with fictional ones like Streamer constitutes another device to stimulate the reader's discriminative sensibility.

Although he dismisses most of oral culture, Baldwin himself draws on popular traditions for the caricatural portrayal of his characters. Walter Ong explicitly stated that orality is not an ideal and that every culture seeks to move to literacy, as it “opens possibilities to the word and to human existence unimaginable without writing” (175). The opposition between oral and literate culture thus carries a value judgement that was already promoted in Baldwin’s time. As a Protestant advocate of print culture, he was eager to associate orality with base practices, Catholicism and superstition. This does not mean that print was an uncontested medium. The dangers of print on the individual’s reading process were soon recognized and the public nature of print, in opposition to the exclusive, intimate and intellectual connotations of manuscript affected the status of authorship in the course of the Elizabethan era. Professional authors felt compelled to seek patronage in order to justify their use of the medium.

It is this context that Nashe sought to challenge the economic necessity as well as the subtext of the publishing practice. His aesthetic interests are mirrored in the construction of the audience’s response and in the assertion of narrative and material authority over the printed page to regulate his reader management. The explorations of European history and narrative techniques of the boastful protagonist Jack Wilton are illustrative in this respect. He pretends to be engaging with his audience, but aware of his appearance in print, he manipulates them and continually subverts their expectations. Wilton thereby assumes the role of the storyteller who turned author, interacting with his readers but in control of the printed page. The novel echoes Nashe’s concerns with the autonomous position of the author who does not depend on elitist forms and conventions of the literary marketplace, but constructs his own audience. Prose fiction thus provided the ideal creative space for an author to fashion his identity and narrative skills.

Along these lines, Baldwin and Nashe explored the material and narrative boundaries of the new genre. They both created a fictional world that to some extent resembled their own world. The specificities of date and location in *Beware the Cat* in particular keep the pretence of verisimilitude alive, only to undermine the assumption through the unreliability of the characters. The narrator in *The Unfortunate Traveller* also blatantly mixes historical events and thereby subordinates the realistic coherence to celebration of his wit.

The defensive attitude of writers like George Gascoigne, John Lyly and Robert Greene in the dedication to their work, and exemplified in Sidney’s *Defence of Poetry* (1595), illustrates the increasing concern with the contested status of fiction in the second half of the sixteenth century. The vituperative tone of the poem written in response to *Beware the Cat* ironically demonstrates the effect of misconstruction of fiction and thereby points towards the generic anxiety over a text like *Beware the Cat*. By the time Nashe published *The Unfortunate Traveller*, prose fiction had started to flourish. The 1580s witnessed a gradual

but certain rise in the amount of fictional prose narratives by writers like Robert Greene, Thomas Deloney and Thomas Lodge. Readers had become increasingly familiar with the emerging genre and Nashe's engagement in literary debates over the role of fiction ties in with this development.

Within their specific social and literary contexts, both authors manifest a keen perception of the potential of print for authorial self-fashioning. While Baldwin's optimistic, humanist approach assigns an active role to the reader through an intricate play with framing and narrative voices, Nashe exploits his literary talent to exert authority over his text. They both used the textual space of the printed page to interact with the reader and experiment with material and literary conventions in constructive, critical and creative ways. Contemporary conceptions of fiction and publishing conventions played an important role in the composition of both novels. These cultural dynamics enabled the author to mature as a storyteller in print and as such facilitated the gradual construction of a new literary mode.

As has been observed in the introduction, the dilemma of fictional prose narratives from the sixteenth century is that they are easily categorized as unmatured predecessors of the novel, an attitude which reduces their cultural hallmarks to by-products. Terminology is crucial here. When speaking about the Elizabethan novel as 'embryonic' and 'emergent' genre, we indicate the coalescence of material and discursive practices in a period that produced texts in which literary scholars nowadays recognize elements of the modern novel. The destabilizing and challenging effect that this fusion of practices has on the reader suggests that the properties of the medium shape the form and effect of narrative.

Approaching this emerging genre in its own right thus calls for a methodology that relates the assertion of textual authority to the novelty of the medium. Such an approach grapples with the position of the author as an organizing principle in the diversity of discourses. The polyphony of voices and genres is connected to the practice of challenging old conventions and establishing new ones. Their literary products were naturally rich in intertextual references from heterogeneous sources.

Drawing on the New Historicist approach to authorial self-fashioning, I have suggested that understanding the early modern author involves appreciating the concept of 'situated authorial subjectivity' as introduced by Sean Burke. This concept avoids both the intentional fallacy of biographical criticism and the poststructuralist proclamation of the death of the author. Instead, it recognizes the historical situatedness of the authors and sees him as a discursive construct that ties text to context rather than as the ultimate source of meaning. Authors employ their specific skills to construct their readership through strategies and discourses. They are also constructed themselves by cultural conventions and habits as well as economic constraints of the literary field.

In an attempt to define a constructive methodology for the Elizabethan novel, I propose to read these texts in relation to the individual and cultural dispositions of the author and his susceptibility for the significance of the medium of print. Textual awareness stands at the cradle of the development of authorship, as it allowed the storyteller to test the extent of his authority over his audience through a range of narrative devices. As such, he learned to fashion himself as a professional author.

The early modern novel forces us to rethink some of the theoretical tenets outlined in the first chapter. Theorists like Fox countered the opposition between oral and literate culture implicit in the work of Ong. It can now also be revisited in terms of the pervasiveness of both forms in early modern fiction. It is significant that both novels recreate the intimacy of oral performances and draw on the model of the travel tale, which was the epitome of storytelling according to Benjamin. Although both Baldwin and Nashe advocate textual, literary culture, they are still, perhaps unwittingly, influenced by oral traditions. They writer found their inspiration in the world of contemporary oral, popular culture as well as in long-standing literary traditions. The preoccupation of the narratives with oral as well as textual cultural forms registers the cross-pollination and mutual influence of narrative forms.

This brings in the discursive approach to the novel as proposed by Bakhtin. As there were no firmly established conventions for publishing fictional prose texts, authors could shape the medium and available discourses to their own liking. They may not have achieved the status of novel at the time, as Bakhtin suggests, but drawing on older forms such as satire and the carnivalesque, the novels combine these ingredients in such clever ways that the term 'germs of novelistic prose' seems too belittling. In spite of the discursive diversity that may produce a sense of instability, the narratives demonstrate coherence in the way that they capture contemporary generic and medial anxiety. Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia is therefore an instructive analytical tool for the hybrid Elizabethan novel.

Reassessing Bourdieu's theory of the field of cultural production, we find that the texts reflect to some extent the hierarchies and traditions of contemporary literary culture. *The Unfortunate Traveller* in particular reveals the struggle of the author for recognition - a key aspect of the 'birth of the author' in the literary marketplace. More importantly, both novels indicate the cultural dispositions with which Baldwin and Nashe grappled. Authors are constructed by the conditions and customs of the society in which they grow up and they reproduce those structures in their novels: Baldwin uses his text to sustain the premises of humanist education and the ideals of the Reformation, while Nashe uses the flaws he signals in literary culture to reposition himself in the field.

Bourdieu's approach - based on eighteenth century conditions - sees cultural practice in a distinctly commercially informed way. With regard to earlier textual forms and author-reader relationships, this theory lacks specificity and to some extent overlooks the complex

concerns of Renaissance society, when the professional writer was just arising and religious and literary authorities still exerted their influence.

Reading the early modern novel therefore requires recognizing the text as a conscious textual and discursive construction that reproduces cultural norms as perceived by a historically determined author. The author serves as a unifying principle in the understanding of the text's narrative operations. The successful critical practice of cultural poetics as introduced by Greenblatt three decades ago and which focuses mainly on drama and poetry, can in that respect be profitably applied to fictional prose as well. The New Historicist mode of reading may benefit from analysing the different discourses and genres appropriated in the Elizabethan novel, as it points towards the cross-fertilization of literary categories. In addition, as it was not clear at time where the novel belonged in the literary scheme, the contested status of fictional narrative challenges the eradication of the distinction between high and low art promoted by New Historicism.

Returning to the narrative experiments in the early modern novel and the self-fashioning of the Elizabethan author as the central concern of this thesis, I have sought to demonstrate that, while remaining to some extent determined by oral structures, the authors also consciously exhibited the textuality of their text and exploited the underdetermined space of the printed page. They seek to communicate and acquire visibility in the new status of the text. Print enabled the storyteller to become a written author in the midst of changing social structures and literary conventions that conditioned authorship. Not only the status of the author, but also the religious dimensions of print culture and its remediating potential help bring into focus the distinctive qualities of Elizabethan prose fiction. No other type of text reveals this complex interchange of interests more prominently than the early modern novel.

With this idea in mind, there is still a considerable body of fictional prose narratives from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century that invites further investigation, not only in English literature, but in early modern literature across cultures. Comparing the Elizabethan novel to its European counterpart and looking for the parameters both synchronically and diachronically could enrich our understanding of the intriguing genre that it remains. The concerns of this thesis also tie in with recent discussions on the state of literature in an age of new media. Analogies between reception of the early modern novel and hypertext in terms of generic anxiety and fascination encourages extending such a methodology to new narrative forms where remediation and pastiche play a similar important role. Investigation of the ways in which technology shapes the perception of audiences in relation to issues of fixity and instability also pertains to hypertexts.⁶⁸ Signalling

⁶⁸ See Marie-Laure Ryan, ed. *Narrative across Media: the Languages of Storytelling* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

these parallels in production and reception of texts over a span of four centuries, critical recognition of the early modern novel is not only important in its historical context, but also lends pertinence to idea of changing position of literary texts in our day and age.

Appendix

A short Answer to the boke called: Beware the Cat.⁶⁹

- To the ientel reder: harti salutacions
Desiring thee to knoe: Baldwins straunge fashions
And if in aunsering: I appere sum what quick,
Thinke it not with out cause, his taunts be rive & thick⁷⁰
5 Where as ther is a boke, called: be ware the cat,
The veri truith is so, that Stremer made not that,
Nor no such false fabels: fell ever from his pen,
Nor from his hart or mouth: as knoe mani honest men
But wil ye gladly knoe, who made that boke in dede,
10 One Wylliam Baldewine. God graunt him wel to spede
God graunt him mani new yeres, prosperite and helth
As he hath in this thing: farderd the Commonwelth
With large lesure, browne studi: he musing all alone
Devised by what meanes: he might win the whetstone⁷¹
15 Every thing almost: in that boke is as tru
As that at Midsomer: in London it doth snu.⁷²
Every thing almost: in that boke as tru
As that his nose to my dock: is ioyned fast with glu,
Put vp your piper Baldewine: if you can make no better,
20 Many talk more wittily: that knoe not one letter,
Put on your cap Baldewine: & kepe your brayn pan warme
Least ye go to Bedlem: if suche toyes in you swarme⁷³
Rede this litel short Rime: Baldewinken, til more cum:
And with Stremers excrements: be bold to noint your gum
25 In stede of Diaglum, in stede of Coloquintida⁷⁴

⁶⁹ As printed in William C. Hazlitt, *Fugitive Tracts Written in Verse which Illustrate the Condition of Religious and Political Feeling in England and the State of Society there During Two Centuries*. First series, 1493-1600. [London: Chiswick Press], 1875 (page numbers are missing).

⁷⁰ OED: 'rife' 2.a: "Of rumours, reports, etc.: Common or generally current in popular knowledge or talk."

⁷¹ OED: 'whetstone' 2.b: "in allusion to the former custom of hanging a whetstone round the neck of a liar; esp. in phr. to lie for the whetstone, to be a great liar."

⁷² This spelling for 'snow' is not recorded in the OED, but is used here to maintain the analogy with the words 'tru' and 'glu'.

⁷³ OED: 'bedlam' 2: "The Hospital of St. Mary of Bethlehem, used as an asylum for the reception and cure of mentally deranged persons; originally situated in Bishopsgate, in 1676 rebuilt near London Wall, and in 1815 transferred to Lambeth. Jack or Tom o' Bedlam: a madman."

⁷⁴ Coloquintida is an alternative name for 'colocynth'. OED: "The Bitter-apple (*Citrullus Colocynthis*), a widely-cultivated plant of the Gourd family, the fruit of which is about the size of an orange, and contains a light spongy and extremely bitter pulp, furnishing the well-known purgative drug. Also the fruit of this plant, and the drug

In stede of ru barbarum, or casia fistula
 In the maker hereof: had bid at more lesure.
 Ye had had from his hande: a more precious tresure
 But in the meane season: content your selfe with this
 30 For your Bagagical boke, a warme a.r.s. you may kys.
 Or els a payre of stockes: if officers do wel,
 You hurt a harmeles man: which no such tales did tel,
 As ye were disposed: loude lyes on him to make
 Which many witti things: writes for his countreys sake.
 35 Alas I wolde to God: your boke were half so good,
 I wyssh you no more harme; nor to your swete heart bloud
 The pith of this paper (if any man in it loke)
 Is to deni utterly, that Stremer made that boke
 The boke (of ten leaves) was printed every worde
 40 Er Stremer saw any pece, to wipe away a t.o.r.d.
 Tergendis natibus, som thought his boke was good⁷⁵
 Or to cari spiceri, to cherische a sick mans bloud.
 Therefore ientyl reder: beware what credence thou ghive
 The truth here conteyned: thou mayst boldly belive
 45 Baldwins toyes do belong: to thee or any other
 As well as they do touche Stremer, his poor brother.
 And now Iuge good hirers: whether he be a good man
 Of whom I write these things: as truli as I can.
 If that not a grete faute, so to hurt a mans name,
 50 Without sufficient cause: what crime shuld a man blame?
 Omnia si perdas: famam servare memento: Qua semel amissa postea nullus eris,⁷⁶
 If thou lese all (sayth he) yet reserve honest fame
 If that be ones clene gon: go home and suck thy dame.
 I am loth for to rayle, as Baldwin hath begun
 55 For so betwine vs both: a fayre threde shuld be spun
 This miche I haue written: that the truth shuld be knowen
 And that the falsitie: shuld quite be ouerthrowen. FINIS.

prepared from it.” Deriving from its conjunction with rheum barbarum (rhubarb) and cassia fistula, it seems likely that ‘diaglum’ likewise refers to a bitter herb used as laxative.

⁷⁵ Inversion of the phrase “Cunducunt natibus tergendis” from Erasmus’ satirical *Colloquia Familiaria*. The passage involves a debate between Christ and Peter on the benefit of ‘littera’, texts. When Christ asks his disciple to explain the use of texts, the latter only formulates such base uses as to get rid of children’s excrements and to wipe one’s ‘backdoor’. Full-text on <http://www.grexl.com/biblio/colloquia/index.html>

⁷⁶ This translates as ‘if you lose everything, remember to preserve your good name: once it is lost, you are no longer somebody.’

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