

Identity in the Early Works of John Marston, 1575-1634

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R.A. Pelling,
St Edmund Hall,
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ABSTRACT

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Among Marston's earliest works are two books of verse satires (*Certaine Satyres* and *The Scourge of Villanie*, both 1598) and three plays (*Antonio and Mellida*, *Antonio's Revenge* and *What You Will*, all between 1600-1602) in which he explored the composition of human identity. From the initial premiss that the self is socially constructed and tends always to be dependent on the social and material contexts in which it exists, he developed a conception of existential struggle, in which the individual self either succumbs to the influence of its environment, or else achieves an authentic autonomy by imposing its own reality on the world around it.

The thesis is in five main parts. Chapter I reviews theories of identity in the sixteenth century, analyses the Roman verse satires on which Elizabethan satires were modelled, and gives an account of the developments in English society at the end of the sixteenth century that helped to generate a satirical discourse in which anxiety as to the stability of the self was prominent. Chapter II examines these satires, focusing on Marston but paying close attention also to such other authors as Donne, Hall, Guilpin, Lodge and the anonymous author of *Micro-Cynicon*. Chapters III and IV are a close reading of the three plays named above; it is argued that in them Marston developed the ideas about identity which he had first conceived in the satires into a considered anatomy of the self. Chapter V looks briefly at Marston's later plays, especially *Sophonisba* (1606) with the same principles in mind.

As will be apparent, the emphasis of the thesis is on Marston as a thinker, rather than as a poetic technician or man of the theatre, although these aspects of him are considered where they are relevant.

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None of the errors contained in this document are the responsibility of any of the above, except possibly the last.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in the footnotes and bibliography to this thesis:

A&M - Antonio and Mellida

A.R. - Antonio's Revenge

DC - The Dutch Courtesan

EHR - Economic History Review

Finkelpearl - *John Marston of the Middle Temple*, by P.J. Finkelpearl, Cambridge, Mass., 1969.

J&N - *The Selected Plays of John Marston*, ed. M.P. Jackson and M. Neill, Cambridge, 1986.

JEGP - Journal of English and Germanic Philology

LJ - London Journal

Malc. - The Malcontent

MLR - Modern Language Review

PMLA - Papers of the Modern Language Association

PQ - Philological Quarterly

RD - Renaissance Drama

REL - Review of English Literature

RES - Review of English Studies

SEL - Studies in English Literature

E in C - Essays in Criticism

SP - Studies in Philology

TSLL - Texas Studies in Language and Literature

WYW - What You Will

A Note on Texts

Owing to the vagaries of Marston's modern editors, I have found it advisable to resort to five different modern editions of his work in writing this thesis. An excellent complete collection of his poems, edited by Arnold Davenport, was published in 1951 and all my references to *Certaine Satyres* and *The Scourge of Villanie* are to this volume.¹ For *Antonio and Mellida* and *Antonio's Revenge*, which are the two plays by Marston which are most closely analysed here, I used the two single-volume editions by Reavley Gair. These have the merit of being of recent origin, as well as having been edited by the leading authority on the company that staged them, St. Paul's Boys. Gair has not edited any others of Marston's plays, so for three of these, *The Malcontent*, *The Dutch Courtesan* and *Sophonisba*, I used *The Selected Plays of John Marston*, edited by Macdonald P. Jackson and Michael Neill. This clear, scholarly and modern one-volume edition is widely available and at least provides consistency of approach to all three plays. For *What You Will* I turned to Volume II of A.H. Bullen's 1887 three-volume edition of Marston, which so far as I can ascertain is the only modernised version of the play to have been published since Halliwell's came out in 1856, and is certainly the most commonly accessible. The only complete edition of Marston to have been published in this century is that by H. Harvey Wood, which appeared in three volumes between 1934 and 1939. This much-criticised old-spelling edition, which has no line numbering, was used by Finkelpearl for his book, *John Marston of the Middle Temple*, but seems to me to be best avoided. However, its third volume contains the only modern versions of *Histriomastix* and *Jack Drum's Entertainment*, and so it is used here as the text for these two plays only.

¹ Complete details of publication of all these editions are given in the bibliography and in the main text of the thesis when they first appear.

...along with the ethical urge of each individual to affirm his subjective existence, there is also the temptation to forgo liberty and become a thing. This is an inauspicious road, for he who takes it - passive, lost, ruined - becomes henceforth the creature of another's will, frustrated in his transcendence and deprived of every value.

- Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 1949.

Punicus, of all I'le beare with thee,
That faine would'st be thy Mistres smug Munkey,
Here's one would be a flea, (iest comicall)
Another his sweet Ladies verdingall
To clip her tender breech; Another he
Her siluer-handled fanne would gladly be,
Here's one would be his Mistres neck-lace faine,
To clip her faire, and kiss her azure vaine.
Fond fooles, well wish'd, and pittie but should bee,
For beastly shape to brutish soules agree.

- John Marston, *The Scourge of Villanie*, 1598

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Introduction

John Marston was born in 1576, and he died in 1634. Between these dates he was at various times an Oxford undergraduate, a member of the Middle Temple, a poet, a playwright, a husband and father, an inmate of Newgate prison and, from 1609, a Priest in the Church of England.¹ He was a colourful, outspoken character, for a decade deeply immersed in the literary and theatrical life of London, and for his unbridled tongue he suffered a wide range of social and criminal penalties, from ridicule, in print and on the stage, to incarceration. Lampooned by Joseph Hall,² satirised by Jonson³ and lambasted in *The Return from Parnassus* for his “pissing against the world”,⁴ Marston early acquired the reputation of being an uncouth, frothing ranter.⁵ This was at least partly caused by the snarling, outraged and outrageous persona he created for himself in his first published works, two books of poetry which came out in 1598 and which mostly consisted of the kind of verse satires that were fashionable at the time.⁶ Around the turn of the century he threw himself into writing plays for the London theatres, which brought him some acclaim. He worked as a dramatist more or less continuously, producing some half a dozen plays of note and some lesser dramas, until, in June 1608, he “was ...summoned before the Privy Council and committed to Newgate...[which] was probably the end of his stormy connexion with the stage”.⁷ He subsequently took holy orders and became the incumbent of Christchurch, Hampshire. Marston’s collected plays were published in 1633, the year before he died.

¹ The leading biography is Philip J. Finkelpearl, *John Marston of the Middle Temple*, Cambridge, Mass., 1969 (henceforth, ‘Finkelpearl’).

² See the poem which, says Marston, “the Authour *Vergidemiarum*” caused to be attached to every copy of *The Metamorphosis of Pigmaliions Image* that went on sale in Cambridge. In *The Poems of John Marston*, ed. A. Davenport, Liverpool, 1961, pp.164-165.

³ For example, in Jonson’s *The Poetaster* the character Crispinus is generally acknowledged to be a satirical portrait of Marston. See *The Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. Herford and Simpson, London, 1925-1952. *The Poetaster* is in Volume IV; the stage-quarrel between Jonson and Marston is discussed in Volume I, pp.18-34.

⁴ *The Three Parnassus Plays*, ed. J.B. Leishman, London, 1949, p.241: “What, Monsiuer Kinsayder, lifting up your legge and pissing against the world?”. For the origin of the ‘kinsing’ pun on Marston’s name, see this thesis, Chapter II, note 21.

⁵ For contemporary judgements on Marston as a dramatist, see Chapter II, section 3 of this thesis.

⁶ *The Metamorphosis of Pigmaliions Image and Certaine Satires* (henceforth, CS) and *The Scourge of Villanie* (henceforth, SV). In *Poems*.

⁷ E.K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, Oxford, 1923, Vol. II, pp.53-4. See also Finkelpearl, pp.256-7.

In London in the 1590s, verse satires became a fashionable vehicle for articulating the spirit of sardonic alienation that was fast taking hold of literary minds. Along with Marston, the best-known writers of them were John Donne, Thomas Lodge, Joseph Hall and Everard Guilpin. Of these, all but Hall were Inns of Court men.⁸ Throughout the 1590s, Hall was first an undergraduate and then, after 1595, a fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Formal satires by Donne are thought to have circulated in manuscript form from 1593 onwards;⁹ Lodge's *A Fig for Momus* was published in 1595. The first three books of Hall's *Vergidemiæ* were published in 1597 and were followed in 1598 by the second three; Guilpin's *Skialetheia* was also published in 1598. It is interesting to note that Hall claimed in the prologue to the first book of *Vergidemiæ* that he was the first author of English satire;¹⁰ despite Milgate's assertion that Hall "ignor[ed]" Lodge's earlier satires¹¹ there remains the interesting possibility that the emergence of formal satire in English occurred independently and almost simultaneously in London and in Cambridge.¹² In addition to the work of these five, many other writers added their voices to the clamour of social and moral criticism in verse that arose at this time. *Micro-Cynicon: Sixe Snarling Satyres*, whose anonymous author, known by the initials T.M., may have been Thomas Middleton, was a book of full-length satires that came out in 1599. Epigrams, described by Jonson as "bold, licentious, full of gall,/ Wormewood, and sulphure, sharpe, and tooth'd withall",¹³ enjoyed a parallel vogue with satires: as well as Jonson himself, Donne, Weever, Davies and a host of other writers including Thomas Campion, John Harrington, Thomas Bastard and Benjamin Rudyerd all wrote them. Half of Guilpin's *Skialetheia* consists of epigrams. There also appeared an assortment of other material, often commenting in some way on the fashion for satire, such as

⁸ The nature and significance of literary activity at the Inns of Court at this time is thoroughly covered by Finkelpearl, pp.3-80.

⁹ *John Donne: The Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters*, ed. W. Milgate, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1967, (henceforth, 'Milgate'), p.117.

¹⁰ *The Collected Poems of Joseph Hall*, ed. Davenport, Liverpool, 1949. *Vergidemiæ*, Prologue to Book I, ll.3-4: "I first adventure, follow me who list,/ And be the second English Satyrst".

¹¹ Milgate, p.xxxiii.

¹² In *The Satire of John Marston* (Columbus, Ohio, 1920; repr. New York, 1971) Morse S. Allen makes the interesting point that "It must have been the case that Marston too knew of no other previous satires, else he would surely have refuted the false claims of Hall". The quarrel between Marston and Hall is closely documented in Davenport's introduction to Hall's *Poems*.

¹³ Jonson, *Works*, VII.27.4-5.

Weever's *Faunus and Melliflora* (1600) and what have come to be known as the 'Whipper Pamphlets'.¹⁴

It should not be forgotten that, as more than one literary historian has observed, the formal satirists of the 1590s were bright young men who "sought admission into circles of possibility and saw display of literary wit as a means of advancement".¹⁵ Although it would be going too far to say that they were a literary set, there were many links between them quite beyond the loose Inns of Court connection between Donne and many of the others.¹⁶ There survives a verse letter from Donne to Everard Guilpin in which Donne sends "much of my love and hart";¹⁷ Guilpin, moreover, had been a contemporary of Hall's at Emmanuel College, Cambridge and was a personal friend of Marston's - Marston addressed a satire "To his very friend, maister E.G."¹⁸ - as well as being related to him by marriage.¹⁹ However, despite the personal connexions and common educational backgrounds of these men, we must be wary of inferences to the effect that verse satire was finally the ephemeral affectation of a fashionable and educated but introspective clique, and nothing more. To accept that the satirist's desire to save society from itself may be as much a matter of literary form as it is one of genuine engagement in public affairs is one thing; to dismiss the satires of Marston, Donne and the rest on this basis as being purely cynical exercises in self-advertisement is quite another. Clearly, those who attended the Universities and Inns mostly enjoyed sheltered lives, but there is no reason to assume that they were wholly separated from the eventful and sometimes turbulent world that lay outside - and sometimes within - the walls of their elegant quarters. The more deeply men were involved in 'literary life', the more likely they were to be familiar with the metropolitan scene.²⁰ Satirical writing can be expected to (and in fact does) contain a view of

¹⁴ 'The Whipping of the Satyre' (John Weever); 'No Whippinge, nor Trippinge, but a kinde friendly Snippinge' (Nicholas Breton); 'The Whipper of the Satyre his Pennance in a White Sheet' (Everard Guilpin) All 1601. Ed. Arnold Davenport, *The Whipper Pamphlets*, Parts I & II, Liverpool, 1951.

¹⁵ D. Allen Carroll, in the introduction to his edition of Guilpin's *Skialetheia*, , Chapel Hill (N. Carolina), 1974, p.7. See also John Wilcox, 'Informal Publication of Late Sixteenth-Century Verse Satire', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 13 (1949-50), p.194.

¹⁶ See Finkelpearl, appendix A (pp.261-264).

¹⁷ 'To Mr E.G.'; Milgate, p.64.

¹⁸ 'Satyra Nova', in the second edition of *SV* (1599). *Poems*, p.163.

¹⁹ Twice over, in fact. Marston's uncle married Guilpin's mother (1592) and Guilpin himself married Marston's cousin (1606/7). See: Finkelpearl, 'Donne and Everard Guilpin', *RES*, 14 (1963), 164-167, and R.E. Brettell, 'Everard Guilpin and John Marston', *RES*, 16 (1965), 396-399.

²⁰ For example, many were enthusiastic patrons of both the public and private theatres. See A. Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574-1642*, Third Edn, Cambridge, 1992, pp.216-218.

society, an interpretation of the age. Insofar as this is the case it anticipates, in its profound pessimism, the gloom of the Jacobeans.

The late-Elizabethan and Jacobean sense that society was fast losing its shape and order is eloquently articulated in Donne's *The First Anniversary* (1611).²¹ Donne was probably thinking of Galileo when he declared that "new philosophy calls all in doubt" (l.205), but there was more than an astronomical basis to his judgement that the "sicke world" (l.23) was "Quite out of joynt" (l.192):

'Tis all in pieces, all cohaerence gone;
All just supply, and all Relation:
Prince, Subject, Father, Sonne, are things forgot,
For every man alone thinkes he hath got
To be a Phoenix, and that there can bee
None of that kinde, of which he is, but hee.

(ll.213-218)

The First Anniversary mourns the retreat of a society stable and ordered in its composition and hierarchy before the onset of dynamic, new forces, whose origins may have been economic, religious and political, but which Donne sees in terms of the disintegration of the world. The emergent perception, both acknowledged and deplored by Donne, is of a world of sharply individuated selves, not fixed and knit - identified by community and common purpose - but forgetful of their true natures, fragmented and competing. There is, he says, "Disorder in the world" (l.304, marginal note). Elizabethan and Jacobean literature is often coloured by a strong romantic attachment to a mythic, prior golden age, described by Julia Briggs as "an imaginary past characterised by peace, plenty and social equality, when common wealth belonged to all in common... [which] challenged a belligerent, capitalist, hierarchic society to justify its values".²² The historical authenticity of this idyll is highly questionable, but its imaginative grip on contemporary minds is testimony to the common assumption that the world was in a state of decay. Moreover, by the mid-1590s there was an element of truth to the idea that the past, at least by comparison with the immediate present, had indeed been a golden age. Poverty, crime, vagrancy, disease and civil unrest were all threatening the realm; the highly stratified order of English society was being placed under unprecedented strain by

²¹ John Donne: *The Complete English Poems*, ed. C.A. Patrides, London, 1991.

²² J. Briggs, *This Stage-Play World: English Literature and its Background, 1580-1625*, Oxford, O.U.P., 1983, p.36. For an extended version of 'Golden Ageism' in satire, see Hall, *Vergidemiaram*, III.i, although this has clearly also been influenced by Juvenal.

new social and economic forces, and in the Court standards of propriety and honesty were fast being undermined.

There was nothing particularly new about any single one of these factors, but their combination caused, or at least was coincident with, a generally prevalent cynicism and even despair in literary minds. The generation of writers from the English upper middle class who reached adulthood in the early 1590s (Donne himself was born in 1572) had a particularly keen sense that the world was radically unstable. By the end of the century, as one historian has put it, “[t]he times seemed out of joint”.²³ That which had seemed sharply defined, fixed and enduring was becoming negotiable, nebulous and, to use the catch-word of sixteenth-century writers, *inconstant*. R.C. Bald, Donne’s modern biographer, draws attention to the close hand that Joseph Hall had in the publication of *The First Anniversary*, emphasising that

the theme of *The First Anniversary* appealed to [Hall] deeply, for he had been ‘noted in the University for his ingenuous maintaining, (be it *Truth*, or *Paradox*) that *Mundus senescit*, The World groweth old.’²⁴

The First Anniversary thus seems to have appeared to Hall as a powerful articulation of his own sense of dissolution and decay, but this was not the first time that the two writers had shared such a pessimistic prognosis; in the 1590s, probably before they came to know each other, each had recorded his cynical and alienated vision of the age in satiric verse. As the fact that, more than a decade after the end of the century, Hall would personally ensure that a poem of Donne’s like *The First Anniversary* was published implies, the sixteenth century satirists shared more with one another than the desire to be ‘satirical’. They all partook of a peculiarly detached and disillusioned spirit, a reaction to what Guilpin called “This madcap world, this whirlygigging age”.²⁵

Unlike Donne, Marston had little instinct for the elegiac tone. His inclination was towards satire proper, both in his poems and in his plays, which are richly veined with social criticism and artistic parody, and reveal a keen sense of the absurd. Yet, his literary ambition went beyond these concerns, in that he addressed the substantially philosophical question of how the social and material environments in which people find themselves are related to their own

²³ K. Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680*, London, 1982, p.149.

²⁴ Bald, *John Donne, A Life*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, Ch.X, pp.243-244. In common with Davenport, Bald attributes to Hall the verses ‘To the Praise of the Dead, and the Anatomy’ that were prefixed to the poem on its publication.

²⁵ Guilpin, *Skialetheia*, I.49.

personal identity, the core, if there is one, of individual being. Much of his writing on this subject is not hysterical but thoughtful, persuasive, and sometimes even elegant; moreover, even where the verse satires are at their most furious, the violent critical tirades articulate, by their very anarchy, the formlessness of a society that seems to be dissolving into chaos and taking the individual self with it. This thesis will seek to emphasise the attention that Marston gives in his drama to the study of what happens when the individual's internal sense of who he is collides with the evidence of his experience: a prince becomes an outcast; a merchant is unrecognised by his wife and brothers; a queen is forced to become a slave-trophy. It does not, therefore, pretend to be an exhaustive analysis of Marston's output, but aims to explore his ideas on one particular subject and to relate these to some aspects of the literary and social context in which he wrote them. Since, in the drama, these ideas are mostly confined to four plays, *What You Will*, *Sophonisba* and especially the *Antonio* plays, my treatment is accordingly specific: chapters III and IV, which constitute almost half the total thesis, are directed mainly towards analysing *What You Will*, *Antonio and Mellida* and *Antonio's Revenge*, Marston's first three attempts at serious drama. Where Marston's later plays seem to echo the ideas about identity expressed in them, the similarity is drawn to the reader's attention. Chapter V contains a brief survey of these later dramas, followed by a more extended examination of *Sophonisba*, Marston's last play and a fitting conclusion to his dramatic career.

Book-length studies of Marston have variously tended to emphasise the 'theatricality',²⁶ or alternatively the philosophical aspects of his drama,²⁷ or to relate it to the immediate context of Marston's life during his years in London, the Middle Temple.²⁸ This thesis seeks to demonstrate the important ways in which Marston's treatment of identity in his plays grew out of his satires, particularly those in *The Scourge of Villanie*. Its main emphasis is therefore not dramaturgical, although the circumstances of the plays' performance are discussed, but literary and philosophical. However, this is to place the broadest possible gloss upon those words: Marston's 'philosophy' was deeply engaged with problems of everyday existence, and ideas

²⁶ See for example J.S. Colley, *John Marston's Theatrical Drama*, Salzburg, 1974.

²⁷ See A. Caputi, *John Marston, Satirist*, Ithica (New York), 1961.

²⁸ Finkelpearl, *passim*.

interested him insofar as they could be turned to practical account in that context; literature was a means of articulating those ideas, sometimes with a strongly didactic accent. It was from verse satire that Marston took the notion of a continuing conflict between the self and society, the seed from which much of his thinking about identity sprang. Chapter II is therefore devoted to a discussion of satire itself, to what might be termed its discourse - the unstable, glancing narratives that it presents - and to its conceptions of how individual identities are related to the social world. It argues that *The Scourge of Villanie*, though highly distinctive within the genre, is nonetheless also highly representative, that Marston was in different senses both maverick and typical.

Chapter I is an attempt to locate the emergence of English verse satire in a wider literary and historical context. It is divided into three sections. The first sketches out the theories of the self that were circulating in sixteenth-century England, dividing them for the purposes of this argument between those that assumed or expounded the view that individual human identities are in some sense internally 'fixed' or at least 'fixable', and those acknowledging the significance of environmental factors in determining human behaviour and thought. These are important because it is against them that Marston's own ideas on this subject must ultimately be measured.

The second section is an examination of the verse satires of Juvenal and Persius, the Roman authors whose work was used by the Elizabethans as a model for their own satirical commentary. It argues that these writers' own perceptions of cultural fragmentation led them to construct a model for poetic protest in which an anxiety as to the stability of the self was inherent. The third section examines the social context in which the Elizabethans adopted this model. It charts some of the sources and effects of social and economic instability in English society at the end of the sixteenth century and indicates how these created an environment that was ripe for the resurrection of a satiric form in which the possibility of autonomous selfhood was once again brought into question. The age swam within Marston; his preoccupation with identity and the limitations of stoicism as a model for selfhood were by no means peculiar to himself. However, a comparative study of the various writers who dealt with the subject - for example, Webster, Chapman and Middleton - is outside the scope of this thesis which, aside

from a broad overview of the verse satirists of the 1590s has been restricted to a narrower focus on Marston alone.

Chapter I: Contexts and Influences

1: The Intellectual Background.

The treatment of the self in Elizabethan satires came at the end of a century in which the idea of a personal essence had been regarded with increasing suspicion, although belief in an absolute, that is, internally defined, self as an achievable ideal continued to have its defenders. Traditionally, identity was theorised by Christianity in terms of the soul, a spiritual essence in man which was derived from God. Pre-Renaissance Christianity's two most influential psychologists, St Augustine (354-430) and St Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), whose views on the subject became deeply embedded in conservative Christian thought, took this for granted in their anatomies of the soul. Aquinas was heavily influenced by Augustine; debating "[u]trum mens...sit essentia animae, vel aliqua potentia eius",¹ he argued that

...videtur quod sit ipsa essentia animae. Quia Augustinus dixit...quod mens est spiritus non relative dicuntur, sed essentiam demonstrant : et non nisi essentiam animae. Ergo mens est ipsa essentia animae.
(p.190)²

It is partly because these theorists consider the mind in terms of and in relation to such metaphysical abstractions as "essentia" (essence) and "anima" (soul) that they hardly countenance the possibility of its changing. Augustine and Aquinas seek to establish what 'the mind is': given the parameters of such a field of enquiry, which requires the investigation of an eternally stable set of materials without regard for questions of cultural or even individual specificity, we should not be surprised by this. It is, moreover, a natural consequence of Augustine's and Aquinas' positions as primarily Christian philosophers that they should conceive of man, the chief object of study, in terms of his link with God, since it is by virtue of this link that man possesses not only significance, but existence:

¹ "whether the mind is the essence of the soul or a mere faculty thereof". Quotations from Aquinas are from *De Veritate*, Volume I of *Quaestiones Disputatae*, ed. Fr. Raymundi Spiazzi, Rome, 1949. This quotation from p.190. The translations are quoted from the Everyman *Selected Writings*, trans. and ed. M.C. D'Arcy, London, 1939. This quotation from p.177.

² "It seems that the mind *is* the very essence of the soul; for Augustine says that the terms 'mind' and 'spirit' are not relative but denote the essence and nothing but the essence of the soul. Hence the mind is the very essence of the soul" (*Selected Writings*, p.177).

“Augustinus...dicit, quod nos sumus, ad imaginem Dei, in quantum sumus, novimus nos esse...[p]raeterea, eadem ratione invenitur mens in angelo et in nobis” (pp.190-1).³

Accordingly, their definitions of man focus on his spiritual being and his relationship to the divinity:

Augustinus...assignat imaginem Dei in nobis secundum notitiam, mentem, et amorem. Cum ergo amare sit actus amoris, et nosse sit actus notitiae, videtur quod esse sit actus mentis. Sed esse est actus essentiae. Ergo mens est ipsa essentia animae.

(p.191)⁴

Such a philosophical foundation can be neither the begetter nor the tool of an inquiry into how identity is related to events in the temporal zone.

Even where Augustine and Aquinas do countenance the possibility of a change in identity, they measure its significance in terms of spiritual continuity. When Augustine discusses “autem quatenus accipienda sit animi mutatio”,⁵ he considers the argument that

Namque aut secundum corporis passiones, aut secundum, suas, anima dicitur immutari. Secundum corporis, ut per aetates, per morbos, per dolores, labores, offensiones, per voluptates. Secundum suas autem, ut cupiendo, laetando, metuendo, aegrescendo, studendo, discendo.

(pp.182-4)⁶

However, he purports to refute this by comparing the soul with a piece of wax:

...si ex albo cera nigrum colorem ducat alicunde, non minus est; et si ex quadrata rotundam formam sumat, et ex molli durescat, frigescatque ex calida...Manet autem cera non magis minusve cera, cum illa mutantur.

(p.184)⁷

For Augustine a change in identity is only worth considering in so far as it affects the substance of the soul. What we would call the secular self is not important for him because the real issue is a theological one, and it is this that Augustine’s conclusion addresses:

“nulla autem illarum mutationum, quae sive per corpus, sive per ipsam animam fiunt...id

³ “Augustine says that we are in the image of God by the fact that we exist...[f]urther, the image of God is of the same nature in the angel and in ourselves” (*Selected Writings*, p.178).

⁴ “Augustine...ascribes the likeness of God in us to our mind, knowledge, and love. Now since loving is the perfection of love, and knowing the perfection of knowledge, it seems that existence is the perfection of mind. But existence is the perfection of essence. Therefore mind is the essence of the soul” (*Selected Writings*, p.178).

⁵ “to what extent we should accept the statement that the mind changes”. Quotations from St. Augustine are from Chapter V of *De Immortalitate Animae*, in Volume V of *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, ed. P. de Labriolle, Paris, 1939. This quotation from p.182. The translations are quoted from Volume II of the *Basic Writings*, trans. G.C. Leckie, ed. W.J. Oates, New York, 1948. This quotation from p.305. For a more detailed exposition, see R.J. O’Connell, *St Augustine’s Early Theory of Man*, Cambridge, Mass., 1968, p.135 ff.

⁶ “For, the soul is said to be changed, either according to the passions of the body, or its own passions; according to the passions of the body, as through age, disease, sorrow, work, hatred, or carnal desires; according to its own passions, in turn, through desire, joy, fear, worry, zeal, and study” (*Basic Writings*, p.305).

⁷ “...if wax changes to a black colour from white, it is none the less wax; and also if it assumes a round shape after being square, becomes hard when it has been soft, cools after being hot...wax remains not more or less wax when these things are changed” (*Basic Writings*, p.305).

agit ut animam non animam faciat” (p.186).⁸ In the Renaissance the authority of this view came to be undermined. This is not to imply that it was abandoned; as we shall see, the case for the soul’s being man’s essence, the repository of God’s gift of humanity (despite the Fall), was put by John Davies in 1599, and it remained the Anglican orthodoxy after the Reformation. To Richard Hooker, Aquinas was “the greatest of the ‘school-divines.’ Augustine is esteemed most highly of all, as ‘without any equal in the *Church of Christ from that day to this*’”.⁹ But the value of such essentialism became diminished in a world that placed increasing emphasis on the importance of material experience.

Renaissance humanist philosophers wrote in praise of man’s exalted nature, his lordship over creation, and his consonance with God’s purpose in the world. It began quietly enough: the Italian Neo-Platonist Marsilio Ficino (1433-99) cited Augustine as his guide in seeking to combine Platonism with Christianity. The glorification of man reached its zenith with Giovanni Pico della Mirandola’s (1463-1494) *Oratio de Hominis Dignitate* (‘Oration on the Dignity of Man’; written c.1486; published 1495-96)¹⁰ in which he argued that

...felicissimum proindeque dignum omni admiratione animal sit homo, et quae sit demum illa conditio quam in universi serie sortitus sit, non brutis modo, sed astris, sed ultramundanis mentibus invidiosam.
(pp.1-2)¹¹

However, this glorification of man’s universal ‘nature’ should not be taken as a denial of Humanism’s personal and individualistic values. For Pico, man’s freedom to determine himself is his greatest distinguishing glory. He imagines God addressing man at the beginning of the world:

Nec certam sedem, nec propriam facinem, nec munus ullum peculiare tibi dedimus, o Adam, ut quam sedem, quam faciem, quae munera tute optaveris, ea, pro voto, tua sententia, habeas et possideas. Definita ceteris, natura intra praescriptas a nobis leges coercetur. Tu, nullis angustiis coercitus, pro tuo arbitrio, in cuius manu te posui, tibi illam praefinies.
(p.3)¹²

⁸ “not one of those changes which occur to the soul, either through the body or through itself...causes the soul not to be a soul” (p.306).

⁹ R.K. Faulkner, *Richard Hooker and the Politics of a Christian England*, U. of California Press, California, 1981, p.50 (no references given for the quotations).

¹⁰ Quotations from the *Oratio* are from the Lexington, Kentucky edition of 1948, including a parallel translation by E. Livermore Forbes. Modern English version of this and several other relevant texts are to be found in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, ed. Cassirer, Chicago, 1948.

¹¹ “man is the most fortunate of creatures and consequently worthy of all admiration, and what precisely is that rank which is his lot in the universal chain of Being? - a rank to be envied not only by brutes but even by the stars and by minds beyond this world” (*Oratio*, pp.1-2).

¹² “Neither a fixed abode nor a form that is thine alone nor any function peculiar to thyself have we given thee, Adam, to the end that according to thy longing and according to thy judgement thou mayest have and possess what abode, what form, and what functions thou thyself shalt desire. The nature of all other beings is limited and constrained within the bounds of laws prescribed by Us. Thou, constrained by no limits, in

The new emphasis placed on man's importance in his own right naturally led to the questioning of religious teaching where it conflicted with empirically-acquired knowledge. Pietro Pomponazzi's celebrated *Tractatus de Immortalitate Animae* ('On the Immortality of the Soul'; 1516) was an enquiry into whether the Thomist idea of the individual, immortal, rational soul was sustainable by reference to reason and experience. In this respect Pomponazzi argued that Aquinas' conception of the soul was highly questionable. In his view, the soul was a form beginning with and ceasing to be with the body, and unable to exist without it. It was a quasi-material thing, albeit of the 'noblest' kind. Pomponazzi concluded by affirming Thomism, but only, he explicitly and somewhat disingenuously stated, as a matter of Faith in canonical Scripture, which ought to be preferred to any human reasoning and experience whatever.¹³ The '*de Immortalitate*' was no futile academic exercise. Carefully avoiding a breach of the letter of orthodoxy, Pomponazzi nonetheless produced an analysis of humanity that asserted the importance of experience in the formation of the soul and, by hypothetically denying its immortality, opened the way to a conception of a secular self whose identity is primarily rooted in the material world.

In England this tendency is discernible in the work of two of its most important sixteenth-century intellectuals, Thomas More (1478-1535) and Francis Bacon (1561-1626). The Humanist More's *Utopia*, as J.H. Hexter has pointed out, is based on a theory of "environmentalism":¹⁴

In effect Utopia provides an environment in which men's natural gifts flourish, Europe an environment which causes them to grow twisted and rot...It is because men respond rationally to their environment that Europe is racked with social ills.

(p.cxx)

Hexter emphasises that "The analysis in *Utopia* is radical. It stands at the opposite pole to the best-known piece of social analysis in Tudor literature - Ulysses' apostrophe to the principle of hierarchy in *Troilus and Cressida*" (p.cxxi). Early in the book, when Raphael is describing the benefits of the Utopian way of life, More's own (ironically presented) reaction posits human nature as being universal and unalterable:

accordance with thine own free will, in whose hand we have placed thee, shalt ordain for thyself the limits of thy nature" (*Oratio*, p.3).

¹³ This was presumably because in December 1513, in reaction against heretical philosophy, the Lateran Council had been forced to issue a decree to the effect that individual immortality could be philosophically proven, and that it must therefore be defended by all philosophers.

¹⁴ J.H. Hexter, Introduction to *Utopia* in the *Complete Works of Sir Thomas More*, Volume IV, ed. Hexter and E. Surtz, New Haven, 1965, p.cxviii.

At mihi inquam contra videtur, ibi nunquam commode uivi posse, ubi omni sint communia. Nam quo pacto suppetat copia rerum, unoquoque ab labore subducente se? Utpote quem neque sui quaestus urget ratio, & alienae industriae fiducia reddit segnem. At quum & stimulentur inopia, neque quod quisquam fuerit nactus, id pro suo tueri ulla possit lege, an non necesse est perpetua caede ac seditione haboretur?

(Works, IV, p.106)¹⁵

Of course, the book as a whole is an attack on this way of thinking. It postulates a society which, by the abolition of private property and political conflict, achieves a ‘human nature’ quite different from the one assumed in More’s speech. In doing so it relates identity to experience and context, implying that man’s inner self is always subject to the influence that his surroundings have on him.

Bacon’s position is important for different reasons. It is true that he wrote in his essay ‘Of Custom and Education’ that “Men’s...deeds are after as they have been accustomed...as if they were dead images and engines moved only by the wheels of custom...[which] is the principal magistrate of man’s life...”,¹⁶ implying an ‘environmentalism’ like that in *Utopia*. However, Bacon’s most important contribution to the intellectual life of the time was probably his *Advancement of Learning* (1605) which contained an all-out attack on the Mediaeval Aristotelean tradition of learning, and its laborious, jargon-ridden interpretation of countless abstractions.¹⁷ His attitude to the Schoolmen was one of unrelenting contempt; he saw their detachment from the material world as being the cause of their “degenerate learning”:

...having sharp and strong wits, and abundance of leisure, and small variety of reading, but their wits being shut up in the cells of a few authors (chiefly Aristotle their dictator) as their persons were shut up in the cells of monasteries and colleges, and knowing little history, either of nature or time, did out of no great quantity of matter and an infinite agitation of wit spin out unto those laborious webs of learning which are extant in their books.¹⁸

He goes on to argue that “the wit and mind of man, if it work upon matter...worketh according to the stuff, and is limited thereby; but if it work upon itself...then it is endless”.

¹⁵ “But,” I ventured, “I am of the contrary opinion. Life cannot be satisfactory where all things are common. How can there be a sufficient supply of goods when each withdraws himself from the labour of production? For the individual does not have the motive of personal gain and he is rendered slothful by trusting to the industry of others. Moreover, when people are goaded by want and yet the individual cannot legally keep as his own what he has gained, must there not be trouble from bloodshed and riot?” (Works, IV, p.107)

¹⁶ Bacon, *Essays*, Everyman Edition, 1906, pp.119-120.

¹⁷ See Anthony Quinton, *Bacon*, Oxford (O.U.P.) 1980, p.8-17.

¹⁸ Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, 1605. This quotation from the Everyman edn., ed. G.W. Kitchin, London, 1915, p.26.

Bacon was widely-read in continental philosophy, which led its English counterpart in ridding itself of the burden of scholasticism. His commitment to understanding the natural world through experimentation and measurement resulted from a belief that knowledge worthy of the name could be gained empirically through the senses: “men have withdrawn themselves too much from the contemplation of nature, and the observations of experience, and have tumbled up and down in their own reason and conceits” (p.33). Scientific empiricism placed man emphatically in the material world and, while Bacon did not set out to attack Christianity as such, he did strongly deny that it was possible “by view and enquiry” to learn anything of God:

if any man shall think by view and inquiry into these sensible and material things to attain that light, whereby he may reveal unto himself the Nature or Will of God, then indeed is he spoiled by vain philosophy: for the contemplation of God's creatures and works produceth (having regard to the works and creatures themselves) knowledge, but having regard to God no perfect knowledge...
(p.7)

It is now demonstrated that by the end of the sixteenth century in Europe there had emerged in various forms the hypothesis that the human mind drew much of its character, knowledge and operation from the experience of living in the social and material world. As it became evident that divine secrets could not be discovered through reasoned enquiry, the mind was liberated from its traditional associations with essence, soul and form, and scrutiny of it revealed a far more indeterminate and discontinuous phenomenon than had hitherto been revealed. Montaigne's essay, 'Of the Inconstancy of our Actions' (1580) of which John Florio's popular English translation was eventually published in 1603,¹⁹ exemplifies this. In it, “seeing the natural instability of our customes and opinions” (pp.7-8) he first attacks authors who “doe ill and take a wrong course, wilfully to opinionate themselves about framing a constant and solide contexture of us. They chuse an universall ayre, and following that image, range and interpret all a mans actions” (p.8). In fact, he argues, the self is led by events external to it: “Our ordinary manner is to follow the inclination of our appetite this way and that way, on the left and on the right hand; upward and downeward, according as the winde of occasions doth transport us...We goe not, but we are carried...” (p.8-9). This inconstancy arises from the fundamental instability of the self:

¹⁹ *The Essayes of Michael Lord of Montaigne*, trans. Florio, intr. MacCarthy, 3 Vols., London, 1928. Volume 2.

I remove and trouble my selfe by the instability of my posture, and whosoever looketh narrowly about himselfe, shall hardly see himselfe twice in the same state...If I speake diversly of my selfe it is because I look diversly upon my selfe. All contrarieties are found in her...; shamefast, bashfull, insolent, chaste, luxurious, peevish...All these I perceive in some measure or other to be in mee, according as I stirre or turne my selfe...I have nothing to say entirely, simply and with solidity of my selfe, without confusion, disorder...

(pp.11-12)

However, it would be simplistic to suggest that the sixteenth century was a period of steadily diminishing confidence in the absoluteness of identity, and leave it at that. Against this tendency there ran a literary and philosophical counter-current that sought to establish the self as an essence that existed - or, more accurately, that could be *made* to exist - in a fixed definition without regard for the material world surrounding it. The philosophical and spiritual tools developed for re-stabilising the self were essentially of two kinds: those which were derived from the pagan philosophies of the ancient world, of which Stoicism, “easily taught and understood, and universal in its appeal”²⁰ was certainly the most influential, and those which stressed man’s duty to develop his spiritual identity - his soul - by reconciling himself to God. Both of these approaches emphasised the importance of abstracting the mind from the world of material things. Renaissance England witnessed a burgeoning of interest in Stoicism, as is evidenced by the numerous translations of Classical Stoic writings published between the publication of Wyatt’s translation of Plutarch’s *Quiete of Minde* in 1528, and that of Thomas Lodge’s version of Seneca’s *Epistles* in 1614.²¹ Rudolf Kirk has pointed out that the first wave of translations of Stoic works into English “seemed to accompany and follow the Reformation”;²² between 1528 and the death of Edward VI in 1553 there were published ten English translations of classical Stoic authors.²³ This flood abated during Mary’s reign, but swelled again after

²⁰ I. Rivers, *Classical and Christian Ideas in English Renaissance Poetry*, London, 1979, p.49.

²¹ This, of course, is quite apart from the prominence given to Stoic ideas in the work of English authors. John Donne, Joseph Hall, William Cornwallis, Anthony Stafford, George Chapman, Ben Jonson, Samuel Daniel, Fulke Greville and Shakespeare, in addition to a host of more obscure writers, all show at least knowledge of Stoic principles. In many cases they seem to espouse them.

²² In the Introduction to Justus Lipsius’ *Two Bookes of Constancie*, trans. Sir John Stradling (1594) New Jersey, 1939, pp.20-21.

²³ In chronological order these were: Plutarch’s *The Governauce of Good Helthe*, Erasmus Beynge Interpretour (c.1530); Plutarch’s *The Education or Brynginge up of Children*, by Sir Thomas Elyot (c.1535); Plutarch’s *Howe one may take Profite of his Enemyes* (c.1533); Cicero’s *Of Old Age*, by Whittington (c.1535); *The Paradox of M.T. Cicero*, by Whittington (1540); *The Preceptes of Plutarch for the Preservacioun of Good Health* by J. Hales (1543) *L.A. Senecae De Remediis Fortuitorum*, by Whittington (1547); Cicero’s *The Booke of Freendship*, by Harington (1550) and *M.T. Cicero’s Three Bookes of Duties*, by Grimald (1553). (Source: R. Kirk, introduction to *Two Bookes of Constancie*, by Justus Lipsius, trans. Sir John Stradling (1594), New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1939).

Elizabeth's accession: between 1561 and 1578 nine more such translations appeared, and although after 1578 only Plutarch's *Quietness of Mind* (1589) was translated before 1600, the seventeenth century saw fresh work, including Lodge's translation of Seneca.

The late sixteenth century also saw a series of attempts to unite Stoic ethical thought with Christianity. The two most important works in this field were by a Belgian and a Frenchman, and English translations of both were published: Sir John Stradling's of Justus Lipsius' *Two Bookes of Constancie* in 1594, and Thomas James's version of Guillaume du Vair's *The Moral Philosophie of the Stoicks* in 1598.²⁴ As well as seeking to reconcile an often inhumane and essentially pagan philosophy with Christian mores, these authors were writing a practical version of Stoicism that was "a direct response to the bloody religious wars which tore Northern Europe apart in the second half of the sixteenth century".²⁵ While contesting such patently un-Christian Stoic doctrines as the glorification of suicide and a conception of destiny that tended to nullify Free Will, the neo-Stoics retained the traditional Stoic emphasis on the need to isolate the mind from its environment. By refusing to commit himself to the material context, it was argued, the individual protected himself against the effects of the instability inherent in it. In the words of Samuel Daniel,

All glory, honour, fame, applause, renown,
Are not belonging to our royalties,
But to others' wills, wherein they are only grown.
And that unless we find us all within,
We never can without us be our own.²⁶

This doctrine, which comes dangerously close to the classical *apatheia*, is ultimately un-Christian, but it appealed strongly to sixteenth-century minds. In the 'Epistle to the Reader' at the beginning of his translation of Lipsius, Stradling expresses the hope that "by reading and meditating upon this little treatise" the reader's mind will gain

such a firme impression of CONSTANCIE, as neither the violent
floods of common calamities may be able to wash away, nor the firie
flame of private afflictions to consume the same.

(p.69)

²⁴ See also Pierre Charron's *De la Sagesse* (1601) whose English translation, by Samson Lennard, was published in 1610 or 1611.

²⁵ Jill Kraye, 'Moral Philosophy', in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (pp.303-387); p.370.

²⁶ 'To the Lady Lucy, Countess of Bedford', ll.59-63. Daniel, *Poems and A Defence of Ryme*, ed. A. Colby Sprague, Chicago, 1930, p.117.

There are several good reasons why we should look closely at Lipsius' work. The *Two Bookes of Constancie* represents the most considered academic statement extant of sixteenth-century neo-Stoicism: it "is usually considered the most important text of the so-called 'Neostoic' revival and it immediately became extremely popular throughout Western Europe".²⁷ That the original was written in Latin, the international language of philosophical scholarship, as opposed to the French in which du Vair wrote, tends to support this view. However, as Kirk points out, the "process of adapting Stoicism to the needs of sixteenth century Christians was in large measure carried on quietly by all who read and loved the wise sentences of Epictetus and Seneca" (p.33). The sixteenth-century reader brought to the works of the pagan Stoics a consciousness in-formed by the Christian values of his own culture, and his reading would in broad terms have resembled Lipsius' more formal adaptation. The *Two Bookes* is therefore not merely an obscure post-scriptum to the history of Stoicism, but an updating of Stoic thought for a new age. Stradling's translation has additional significance for the purposes of this thesis because it invokes certain specific ideas and modes of expression, particularly in relation to concepts of being and unbeing, that also arise in the verse satires that began to be written around the time when it was published. This is not to say that verse satire was finally Stoical in its perspective; it was not. But it did tackle some of the same issues as the *Two Bookes*, and the Stoic resonance of some of its ideas needs to be explained.

Lipsius' theory of identity is traditionally Stoical in that it affirms the individual's power to determine his own nature, irrespective of his social or material context. Langius, the Socrates-figure of the *Two Bookes*, advises the author-character, who is trying to escape from the religious wars of the Low Countries, that "our mindes must be so confirmed and conformed, that we may have rest...even in the midst of warre" (p.72). The duty of men is to create for themselves minds that are untroubled by external vicissitudes:

The mind must be changed, not the place: and thou shouldest
transforme thy selfe into an other manner of man, not into another place.
(p.77)

The constant, that is, self-determining man, is the one who can fortify himself against the misguiding influence of the body's sense-perceptions, and live by reason alone:

²⁷ G.D. Monsarrat, *Light from the Porch: Stoicism and English Renaissance Literature*, Paris, 1984, p.52.

I am guarded and fenced against all externall things, and settled within my selfe, carelesse of all cares save one, which is that I may bring in subjection this broken and distressed mind of mine to RIGHT REASON and GOD, and subdue all humaine and earthly things to my MIND.

(p.137)

The emphasis is on the protection of the self from the damage that results from having too great a mental investment in the material world. The latter is perceived to be unstable by nature and particularly so at the time of writing. Inscrutable Providence directs “the ebbing and flowing of all humaine affaires” and the “rising and falling of Kingdomes” (p.104) and it is the individual’s duty to submit to this will, which in practice is manifested by whatever happens to eventuate. Lipsius sees history as flux, and anticipates for Europe a period of momentous historical transformation in which the old order is to be thrown off:

Once the East flourished: *Assyria*, *Egypt* and *Iewrie* excelled in warre and peace. That glorie was transferred into *Europe*, which now (like a diseased bodie) seemeth vnto me to be shaken, and to have a feeling of her great confusion nigh at hand...beholde the alterations of all humaine affaires: and the swelling and swaging of them as of the sea...

(p.110-111)

In this chaos the truly virtuous man can stabilise himself by achieving a *substance* that is independent of the world: he must develop shape and density. Lipsius uses the image of imprinting to denote the mind’s proper retention of good qualities: “wisdom...is able to imprint vertue, and to work the impression of CONSTANCIE in thee” (p.140).

Much of Lipsius’ analysis attends to the concept of ‘Opinion’, the materially-orientated component in human motivation that diverts man’s mind away from the truly good, which is attainable only through reason. While reason is an attribute of the soul, opinion is the mental manifestation of the affections of the body. It is “nought els but a vaine image and shadow of reason: whose seat is the Sences: whose birth is the earth” (p.82). The concept of Opinion is crucially important: its usage passes beyond Stoic jargon and into the general currency of literary thought in the period.²⁸ It comes from attaching significance to “vaine outward things” (p.83); it

is vaine, vncertaine, deceitfull, euill in counsell, euill in iudgement. It depriveth the mind of Constancie and veritie. To day it desireth a thing, to morrowe it defieth the same...It hath no respect to sound iudgement, but to please the bodie, and content the senses.

(p.82)

²⁸ For Marston’s use of this term, see Chapter II, section 3.

In this way the mind eventually comes to take on the quality of instability that is so evident in the material world outside it. Opinion and its influences are often evoked through images of insubstance. Things can appear to be real, but are actually illusory. We have already seen that Lipsius calls opinion an “image” and a “shadow”. He also calls it a “thicke mist” (p.178) talks of “the darke myst of errors” (p.139) and says that “mystes and cloudes...doe proceede from the smoake of Opinions” (p.73). Cast down by an ‘opinionated’ sense of woe at the war-blighted condition of his country, the Lipsius-character apostrophises, “*What is it to be some bodie? what is it to be no bodie? Man is a shadowe and a dreame.*” (p.111).

This idea is the foundation of another series of observations, those that connect opinion with insubstance of the self. Not only does opinion corrupt the perception of the mind, it also deprives it of substantial being. Those who are “froward and obstinate” because they are guided by opinion “can hardlie be pressed downe, but are verie easily lifted up, not unlike to a blown bladder” (p.79). Affections, such as desire and joy can hinder “upright poise and evenness...by puffing up the minde.” (p.85). The mind “which discerneth by...opinions”, like a ship without ballast

is tossed and tumbled on the sea with the least blast of wind: Euen so is it with a light wandering minde, not kept steddie and poised with the balasse of reason.

(p.83)

The vocabulary of emptiness establishes a direct relation between the extent of the mind’s engagement with events in the material world, and the extent to which it lacks authentic substance. *The Two Bookes* sees the development of the link between the mind and the earth as being a sign of weakness and folly: Langius scolds Lipsius’ character for allowing the wretched state of his homeland to breed in him a nihilistic vision of man. To summarise the argument of the *Two Bookes of Constancie*: it is in every man’s power to construct a fully developed self, to ‘exist’ in the fullest sense of the expression. But the ability of the individual to do this is dependent on his disengagement from emotional or personal involvement in ordinary, worldly human affairs, since such involvement interferes with the use of pure reason and the empowerment of the soul.

Lipsius does, however, allow for one point of beneficial contact between the self and the world. He asserts that by undergoing the trials of “adversitie”, the self is made more stable:

adversitie doth confirme and strengthen us. And as trees that be much
beaten with the wind, take deeper roote: so good men are the better
contayned within the compasse of vertue, being somtimes assaulted
with the stormes of adversitie.

(p.149)

In comparing “confirme[d] and strengthen[ed]” men with deeply rooted wind-blown trees, Lipsius espouses a philosophy of resistance, asserting that there are moral and existential²⁹ benefits to be gained from withstanding the “stormes of adversitie”.³⁰ He contrasts the mind thus enforced with “those lazie and lither bodies” upon whom it is seldom that “any sharp air breatheth”, for “even such are the minds of those nice folk that feel nothing but felicity, whom the least blast of adverse fortune bloweth downe, and resolveth into nought” (p.149). This implies that to live in a condition of sustained material and social well-being is to experience a false sense of identity, in which the self relies far more on its context than it knows. Only the disruption of that context reveals the true extent of the self’s inner enfeeblement.

Sir John Davies’ *Nosce Teipsum* (1598) a paradigmatic attempt to relocate identity in the Christian soul, contains a similar idea. Davies, a young barrister, was expelled from the Middle Temple on February 9th, 1597/8 for publicly assaulting one Richard Martin, a fellow Templar, during a dinner in the Middle Temple Hall. Apparently ruined, he spent the following five years in trying to rescue himself from ignominy, partly by writing laudatory poems to influential people (including thirty-six flattering acrostics on the Queen’s name). During this period he also wrote *Nosce Teipsum*, which was entered in the Stationer’s Register on April 14th, 1599.³¹ In this poem Davies addresses a world in which, he says, “few know themselves” (l.133) because people are preoccupied with “the face of outward things” (l.137):

²⁹ I use this word in a wide sense to refer to any “philosophical theory emphasizing existence of the individual person as free and responsible agent determining his own development” (*O.E.D.*). No allusion is intended to any specific nineteenth- or twentieth-century existential theory.

³⁰ Although based in Senecan Stoicism, this seems to have become a Renaissance commonplace. See Bacon’s essay ‘Of Adversity’, *Essays*, p.15-16.

³¹ For a full account of Davies’ career, see the introduction to *The Poems of Sir John Davies*, ed. R. Kreuger, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1975. All quotations from *Nosce Teipsum* are taken from Kreuger’s edition.

All things without, which round about we see,
We seeke to know, and have therewith to do:
But that whereby we *reason, live, and be*,
Within ourselves, we strangers are theretoo

* * *

We that acquaint ourselves with every *Zoane*,
And passe both *Tropikes*, and behold both *Poles*;
When we come home, are to ourselves unknowne,
And unacquainted still with our owne *Soules*
(ll.89-92; 97-100).

Davies' purpose is to demonstrate the divinity of the soul and its precedence over material experience in the life of man: the second section of the poem is titled, 'Of the Soule of Man, and the Immortalitie thereof', and at one point he declares that "*it* [the body] *on her* [the soul], not *she* *on it* depends,/ For *she* the body doth sustaine and cherish..." (ll.485-486). Davies' commitment to the Christian ideal of identity as a function of spiritual essence is uncompromising:

The soule a *substance* and a *spirit* is,
Which *God* him selfe doth in the Bodie make;
Which makes the *Man*, for every Man from this,
The *nature* of a *Man*, and *name* doth take.
(ll.265-268)

Early in the poem Davies recounts how he was delivered out of the material world and back into his proper self by 'Affliction', a conception not unlike Lipsius' 'adversitie', which presumably refers to his disgrace and ostracism after the incident involving Martin. 'Affliction' is personified as a kind of schoolmistress; once she begins to threaten "the feeble sense", the "*Mind* contracts her selfe, and shrinketh in,/ And to her selfe she gladly doth retire." (ll.143-144). "[N]ow beyond my selfe I list not go", concludes Davies, and thus confined, "Onely *my selfe* I studie, learne, and *know*" (ll.166; 168). Like Lipsius' *Two Bookes*, this argues that there is, or at least should be, an absolute disjunction between the 'world outside' and the inner man, which the individual can and needs to maintain if he is to achieve an authentic and settled existence.

*

The evidence assembled in this section shows that at the end of the sixteenth century the prevailing conceptions of the self among theorists can be evaluated in terms of two tendencies: that which emphasised the importance of man's experience of his social and material environment, and the opposite view, which sought to define man's essence as a

thing in itself, without reference to this context. It is not intended to show that these were 'schools of thought', between which the issue was hotly debated; that would be to overstate the case, as on the whole contemporary writers did not perceive the dichotomy with the absoluteness that such a term implies. Lipsius and Davies exemplify this in their treatments of 'adversitie' and 'affliction' respectively. The importance of these ideas for them broadly rests on the spiritual gains *for the soul or self* from an experience of *worldly* suffering. The difficulty of locating Davies' precise position in relation to the dichotomy is compounded by the fact that, like many other writers of his period (Marston, for example,) he makes no clear distinction between the soul and the self, and in fact often seems to use the two words more or less interchangeably. He does this in lines 99 to 100, above, and does the same with "spirits" and "minds" (ll.1499-1500) and "soule" and "mind" (ll.1893-1895).

This is not just a question of flawed metaphysics on Davies' part. If, as he seems to, he identifies the whole mental component of man as being both the soul and the self synonymously, the contraction of the self caused by a brush with 'Affliction' locates some component of identity - however divine its theoretical source - in the human, material environment. If there is a distinction between 'soul' and 'self' which connects one to purely spiritual, the other to material experience, Davies never makes it. Either way, the poem suggests a creeping secularization of identity that Davies cannot, or does not, expunge even from his own discourse, despite the fact that his chief aim in *Nosce Teipsum* is to show that it is God, via the soul, who "gives thee power to *be*..." (l.1924). T.S. Eliot's verdict on *Nosce Teipsum*, that its reasoning is "not strong; had Davies entered the ring of philosophical argument his contemporary, Cardinal Bellarmine, would have knocked him out in the first round", might have been aimed at this very failure. Unfortunately Eliot did not explain his criticism, but it is interesting to note that he considered Davies' thought to be, "for an Elizabethan poet, amazingly coherent...The wonder is that Davies, in his place and time, could produce so coherent and respectable a theory as he did."³² This is surely true; it is also an important reflection on England in the late sixteenth century that Davies could be considered its most philosophically rigorous poet. Verse satire, the medium within which Marston chose to work, was the antithesis of *Nosce Teipsum*, in that it contrived to

³² T.S. Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets*, London, 1957, p.135.

appear chaotic and impressionistic, a picture of disrupted consciousness in a culture whose tendency was towards chaos.

When Marston came to write *Certaine Satyres* and *The Scourge of Villanie* in 1597-8, his treatment of the self owed something to both of the conceptions of it that have been identified in this section. He set the self emphatically in a social world, and from 'environmentalism' drew the principle that individual identities take much of their character from the society in which they exist. However, he borrowed from Stoicism the concept and the vocabulary of insubstance, and used it to attack those who slavishly surrender their personal autonomy and allow themselves to be ruled too much by society's expectations. He synthesised the two in the idea that people could and should use their relationship with society to create independent identities for themselves. The combination of the two principles depends, as we shall see, on an active engagement with the social context, by means of which the individual, particularly the writer, imposes his identity on the world outside him, and develops a self whose potency is measured and reflected back onto him by its social impact. This differs from Stoicism, first in its acknowledgment of the necessarily social nature of existence and second in its emphasis on the importance of exercising the individual's will for the act of self-creation, contrary to the Stoic insistence on the need for people to conform themselves to divine Providence. Epictetus the arch-Stoic, had said that,

I regard God's will as better than my will. I shall attach myself to Him as a servant and follower, my choice is one with His, my desire one with His, in a word, my will is one with His will.³³

The chief influence of classical culture on verse satire was not 'philosophical', in the sense of a transmission of abstract principles between the two, but stylistic and technical. Elizabethan satirists used the Roman form because it was a powerful tool for articulating a certain kind of sensibility. The nature and significance of this model is discussed in the next section.

2: Roman Satire.

Modern critics of Elizabethan poetry have tended to be dismissive of verse satire as a form, usually being content to shrug it off as being 'coarse' or 'obscure' and rarely

³³ Epictetus, *Discourses*, Loeb edn. trans. W.A. Oldfather, in 2 vols., London, 1925, IV.vi.34.

enquiring further.³⁴ This, however, is naive: verse satire has many formal characteristics that do much to shape and give direction to the 'motive power' behind it, and if these are to be appreciated the artificial distinction between form, as aesthetics, and content, as experience, must be avoided. In the 1590s Roman verse satires constituted a literary model for articulating the response of an alienated individual to a corrupt and fragmenting culture. However, this model was not merely a blueprint for literary imitation; it helped to define and explain the experience of the Elizabethans, whose decision to imitate Roman forms implies a strong degree of identification with the Roman satirists and correspondingly tends to identify sixteenth-century London with first-century Rome.³⁵ This analogy needs to be explored if Elizabethan satires are to be properly understood.

The classical influence on Elizabethan satire is manifest throughout, and is derived from Persius (A.D. 34-62) and Juvenal (A.D. c.60-c.130). From these two authors the Elizabethans drew the defining characteristics of their satires.³⁶ The governing serial arrangement, the frequent use of allusion and the shifting, unstable quality of the text are common to both. Persius brought to the form an obscurity of his own which often relied on veiled reference and ambiguity, coupled with a tendency to report dialogue elliptically, without clearly identifying the different speakers. Characters in Elizabethan satires had Latin names, sometimes taken directly from Juvenal and Persius, a feature which, although apparently employed to protect the authors from charges of libel, emphasised the ancient origins of the form.³⁷ The subjects, too, were often loosely similar to those of the Romans: apart from decrying such general vices as greed, promiscuity and drunkenness, the Roman

³⁴ Modern critical responses to Elizabethan satire are discussed in Chapter II, section 1 of this thesis.

³⁵ There is evidence to suggest that the Elizabethans believed in a tradition of native English satire, which they declined to follow. In *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), ed. G. Willcock & A. Walker, Cambridge, 1936, Puttenham's list of "satyricques" includes "*Lucilius, Iuvenall* and *Persius* among the Latines, & with us he that wrote the booke called *Piers Plowman*." (I.xi; p.26). Marston at one point considers Chaucer alongside Persius and Juvenal so as to imply that he was a satirist like them (*Poems*, p.100).

³⁶ Most commentators identify Juvenal and Persius as the main influences on Elizabethan formal satire. These, for example, are the only Latin authors whom Marston mentions in his note on satiric style in *The Scourge of Villanie* (*Poems*, p.100). Marston also quotes Persius in the Prologue to *Sophonisba* (l.29). Peter asserts, without any evidence, that "while it is Horace whom we find in Lodge's satires, and Juvenal in Hall's, it is Martial more than any other writer who is present in *The Scourge of Villanie*" (*Complaint and Satire*, p.167), but Marston only mentions Martial once, in the note to the reader in the early quartos of *The Fawn* (1606), where he also mentions (and gives much more prominence to) Persius and Juvenal. Although Horace is an influence in the period, as is evident from Jonson's *Poetaster* and Thomas Drant's translation of the *Sermones* (1566), Marston's satires are much closer to Juvenal and Persius. Bowles, Marston's only eighteenth century editor, went so far as to call him "the British Persius" (*Miscellaneous Pieces of Antient English Poesie*, 1764).

³⁷ Marston and Hall in particular use this technique. For a detailed analysis, see Highet, *Juvenal the Satirist*, Oxford U.P., 1954, p. 324. Arnold Davenport's editions of Marston and Hall also trace many of the characters' names to Juvenal's satires.

and the Elizabethan satirists shared a concern for the decline in literary standards which they regarded as symptomatic of wider social decay.³⁸ But, most important was the underlying anxiety common to both: a sense that growing immorality was not simply bad behaviour, but signalled a disintegrating culture in which the question of what people *were* was one to which there was no longer an obvious answer. The perception of social flux presented itself in part as a distortion of identities, which became subject to strange forms of corruption and change, the culturally pervasive nature of which was indicated by the fact of its being marked internally, in the voice of the satirist himself.

In imperial Rome, Persius and Juvenal between them lived through an era which saw the free play of public life replaced by the vicious despotism of the tyrants Tiberius (A.D. 14-37), Caligula (A.D. 37-41), Nero (A.D. 54-68), and Domitian (A.D. 81-96). Their satires depict a society whose former discipline and austerity have been replaced by self-indulgence and luxury:

nunc patimur longae pacis mala, saevior armis luxuria incubuit
victumque ulciscitur orbem. nullum crimen abest facinusque libidinis,
ex quo paupertas Romana perit.³⁹

prima peregrinos obscaena pecunia mores intulit, et turpi fregerunt
saecula luxu divitiae molles.⁴⁰

(Juvenal, VI.292-295; 298-300)

That the first century A.D. was a chaotic time in Rome there is no doubt: Suetonius' description of the period in the *Lives of the Caesars* is an extraordinary catalogue of debauchery, misgovernment and murder. The Caesars' unlimited and often arbitrarily-wielded power caused economic instability and widespread poverty as huge sums of public money were spent on extravagant and useless displays. Suetonius says that Caligula "calidis frigidisque unguentis lavaretur, pretiosissima margarita aceto liquefacta sorberet, convivis ex auro panes et obsonia apponeret..." (*Lives* IV.xxxvii).⁴¹ Consequently,

³⁸ See particularly Juvenal, Satires I and VII; Persius, Satire I; Hall, *Vergidemiaram*, Bk. I; and Marston, CS, 'The Authour in prayse of his precedent poem', (*Poems*, p.65-66) and Satyre II. See also Marston's 'In Lectores prorsus indignos', (*SV; Poems*, p.96).

³⁹ "We are now suffering the calamities of long peace. Luxury, more deadly than any foe, has laid her hand upon us, and avenges a conquered world. Since the day when Roman poverty perished, no deed of crime or lust has been wanting to us..." All quotations and translations from Juvenal and Persius are taken from the Loeb's Classics edition, London, 1918, ed. and trans. G.G.Ramsay. This translation from p.107.

⁴⁰ "Filthy lucre first brought in amongst us foreign ways; wealth enervated and corrupted the ages with foul indulgences." Ramsay, p.107.

⁴¹ "...would bathe in hot or cold perfumed oils, drink pearls of great price dissolved in vinegar, and set before his guests loaves and meats of gold..." All quotations and translations from Suetonius are taken from the Loeb's Classics edition, 2 vols., London, 1913, ed. and trans. J.C. Rolfe. This translation from Vol. I, p.463.

“immensas opes totumque illud Ti. Caesaris ac septies milies sestertium non toto vertente anno absumpsit” (*Lives* IV.xxxvii).⁴² Nero, according to Suetonius a great admirer of Caligula’s extravagance,⁴³ was equally unrestrained: “Divitiarum et pecuniae fructum non alium putabat quam profusionem...”(*Lives* VI.xxx).⁴⁴ After Rome’s great fire, which Suetonius accuses Nero of having personally caused, the contributions to cover his losses that he extorted from his subjects “...provincias privatorumque census prope exhausit.” (*Lives* VI.xxxviii).⁴⁵ Nero’s reign also saw some disasters less attributable to the emperor: a plague which took thirty thousand lives in a single autumn, military disasters abroad and, towards the end of his rule, food shortages.⁴⁶ Domitian, though not a spendthrift on the scale of his predecessors, eventually found himself financially straitened by his excessive spending. When this happened,

nihil pensi habuit quin praedaretur omni modo. Bona vivorum ac mortuorum usquequaque quolibet et accusatore et crimine corripiebantur.

(*Lives* VIII, Dom.xii)⁴⁷

The period was characterised by a prevailing atmosphere of terror, the result of frequent, often whimsically-ordered public humiliations, tortures and executions of the most savage kind:

Multos honesti ordinis deformatos prius stigmatum notis ad metalla et munitiones viarum aut ad bestias condemnavit aut bestiarum more quadripedes cavea coercuit aut medios serra dissecuit, nec omnes gravibus ex causis, verum male de munere suo opinatos, vel quod numquam per genium suum deierassent.

(*Lives* IV.xxvii)⁴⁸

Nero was vicious even when young, reports Suetonius, but in A.D. 65 there was an insurrection which he suppressed with the utmost violence: “Nullus posthac adhibitus dilectus aut modus interimendi quoscumque libuisset quacumque de causa” (*Lives*,

⁴² “...vast sums of money, including the 2,700,000,000 sesterces which Tiberius Caesar had amassed, were squandered by him in less than the revolution of a year” (Rolfe, I, p.463).

⁴³ *Lives*, VI, xxvii.

⁴⁴ “He thought that there was no other way of enjoying riches and money than by riotous extravagance...” (Rolfe, II, pp.133-135).

⁴⁵ “...nearly bankrupted the provinces and exhausted the resources of individuals”. (Rolfe, II, p.157).

⁴⁶ *Lives*, VI, xxxix and xlv.

⁴⁷ “...he had no hesitation in resorting to every sort of robbery. The property of the living and the dead was seized everywhere on any charge brought by any accuser”. (Rolfe, II, p.365).

⁴⁸ “Many men of honourable rank were first disfigured with the marks of branding irons and then condemned to the mines, to work at building roads, or to be thrown to the wild beasts; or else he shut them up in cages on all fours, like animals, or had them sawn asunder. Not all these punishments were for serious offences, but merely for criticising one of his shows, or for never having sworn by his Genius” (Rolfe, I, p.449). See also *Lives*, IV, xix, xxv, xxvii, xxxv, xxxvii; VI, xxx, xxxi, xxxii, xxxvi, xxxvii, xxxviii, xliii, xlv; VIII, Dom, x, xi, xiv.

VI.xxxvii).⁴⁹ Domitian, too, mastered the art of tyranny: “Erat autem non solum magnae, sed etiam callidae inopinataeque saevitiae” (*Lives*, VIII, Dom.xi.).⁵⁰ In addition to the everyday atrocities of these emperors, there were intermittent threats even to such order as they represented. Caligula was deposed and murdered; Claudius, his relatively civilised successor, was probably also murdered; Nero committed suicide in A.D. 68 while fleeing from a rebellion; Galba succeeded him and was killed the following year after reigning for less than seven months. Otho, the next, lasted ninety-five days before he killed himself to avoid being captured by Vitellius, who was himself tortured to death in the eighth month of his reign. Twelve years of relative calm followed, after which Domitian succeeded; he ruled for fifteen years, until his assassination in A.D. 96.

This bare outline of Rome’s most notorious years is necessarily selective. It shows that the period which spawned the two writers whose work most influenced the Elizabethan satirists was one of violence and instability, legal chaos and random victimisation. Above all, it was a time of uncertainty, in which often nobody knew what lunacy tomorrow would bring. Persius, and especially Juvenal, completed this image by including in their satires a wealth of detail depicting life under the Caesars. Caligula, Nero and Domitian were all dead by the time Juvenal came to describe the “tempora saevitiae” (IV.151)⁵¹ of Domitian, events “temporibus diris...Neronis” (X.15);⁵² and the destruction brought to Rome by the insane blood-thirst of Caligula:

ardebant cuncta et fracta conpage ruebant, non aliter quam si fecisset
Iuno maritum insanum.
(VI.618-620)⁵³

Many of Juvenal’s attacks on these emperors relate to their crimes against Rome’s ruling élite, such as Nero’s family murders (VIII.211-230) and plundering of rich estates (X.8-19), and Domitian’s brutal caprices (IV.86-89). Yet, Juvenal also shows that the effects of tyranny were felt throughout society. The fourth Satire concerns a fisherman who catches an enormous fish, but immediately offers it to the emperor,

⁴⁹ “After this he showed neither discrimination nor moderation in putting to death whomsoever he pleased on any pretext whatever” (Rolfe, II, p.153).

⁵⁰ “His savage cruelty was not only excessive, but also cunning and sudden” (Rolfe, II, p.363).

⁵¹ “...those days of cruelty...” (Ramsay, p.69).

⁵² “...in the dire days...of Nero” (Ramsay, p.193).

⁵³ “The whole world was ablaze then and falling down in ruin just as if Juno had made her husband mad” (Ramsay, p.135).

quis enim proponere talem aut emere auderet, cum plena et litora multo
delatore forent?

quidquid conspicuum pulchrumque est aequore toto, res fisci est,
ubicumque natat.

(IV.46-48; 54-55)⁵⁴

The existence of such feared and ubiquitous intelligencers implies that, in the case of Domitian at least, the emperor sought to control, not just Rome's aristocracy, but a much greater area and populace. He revived the Scantinian laws against sexual licence, under which both patricians and plebeians were executed and which "omnibus atque ipsis Veneri Martique timendas" (II.31).⁵⁵ Domitian's habit of slaughtering his critics is well documented by Suetonius. Nero was equally uncompromising in his ruthlessness:

pone Tigellinum: taeda lucebis in illa qua stantes ardent qui fixo
guttore fumant, et latum media sulcum deducis harena.

(I.155-157)⁵⁶

Despite the sophistication of this tyranny, it should not be forgotten that, collectively, the mass of plebeian poor remained a threat to any emperor. Domitian could, says Juvenal, drench himself with impunity in the blood of the Lamiae, a noble family, "sed periit postquam cerdonibus esse timendus coeperat..."⁵⁷ The enormous sums spent on elaborate festivals and games were largely designed to buy the people's affections. While this policy contributed to short-term political stability, its eventual consequence was state bankruptcy and all that that entailed. Moreover, from the perspective of a man like Juvenal, the bloodthirsty and debauched public extravagances of the Caesars were themselves sources of outrage: they were morally offensive, as well as politically stupid.

This, then, was the world in which Juvenal and Persius lived: dangerous and corrupt to the very top of society. Yet, Juvenal did not ultimately blame Rome's moral decline on the Caesars. Instead, he saw it as originating with the growth in Rome's wealth that came with the expansion of its profitable empire and the development of its money economy. For Juvenal, this had two chief effects: it allowed too many Romans to live in luxury and sloth,

⁵⁴ "...who would dare to put up for sale or to buy so big a fish in days when even the sea shores were crowded with informers?...every rare and beautiful thing in the wide ocean, in what ever sea it swims, belongs to the imperial treasury" (Ramsay, p.61).

⁵⁵ "...were to be a terror to all men - ay, even to Mars and Venus..." (Ramsay, pp.19-21). See also Suetonius, 'Domitian', viii.

⁵⁶ "...just describe Tigellinus and you will blaze amid those faggots in which men, with their throats tightly gripped, stand and burn and smoke, and you trace a broad furrow through the middle of the arena" (Ramsay, p.15). Tigellinus was "an infamous favourite of Nero's" (Ramsay).

⁵⁷ "...but when once he became a terror to the common herd he met his doom" (Ramsay, p.69).

and it disrupted the pattern by which the gentry and aristocracy were automatically accorded social precedence before their putative inferiors. It became possible for individuals to make fortunes by legitimate, as well as corrupt, means, and personal wealth came to be the accepted yardstick by which men were measured. Juvenal attacks this development with the full force of his sarcastic invective:

expectent ergo tribuni,
vincant divitiae, sacro ne cedat honori
nuper in hanc urbem pedibus qui venerat albis,
quandoquidem inter nos sanctissima divitiarum,
maiestas...

divitis hic servo claudit latus ingenuorum
filius...

(I.109-113; III.131-132)⁵⁸

Within this context of economic change and hierarchical disarray, other norms of behaviour and self-identification were also being flouted. Traditional sexual mores were increasingly ignored, and various kinds of debauchery became rife. Juvenal describes a public pleader who dresses in a transparent tunic (II.64-81), a marriage between men (II.132-142), and the adventures of Messalina, wife of the emperor Claudius, who steals away to work in a brothel while her husband sleeps (VI.114-132). Gender re-identification features prominently; unmanly men disgust Juvenal, and he is disturbed by women who actively seek self-gratification, not so much because he is against self-gratification as because he is against female assertiveness. For Juvenal, the most unacceptable woman of all is not the faithless wife but the intellectual who, like himself,⁵⁹ claims the right to have a voice:

Illa tamen gravior, quae cum discumbere coepit,
laudat Vergilium...

cedunt grammatici, vincuntur rhetores...

inponit finem sapiens et rebus honestis;
nam quae docta nimis cupit et facunda videri,
crure tenus medio tunicas succingere debet,
caedere Silvano porcum, quadrante lavari.

(VI.434-43; 438; 444-447)⁶⁰

⁵⁸ "So let the Tribunes await their turn; let money carry the day; let the sacred office give way to one who came but yesterday with whitened feet into our city. For no deity is held in such reverence among us as wealth..."; "Here in Rome the son of free-born parents has to give the wall to some rich man's slave..." (Ramsay, pp.11-13; 41-43). "Slaves imported for sale had white chalk-marks on their feet" (Ramsay)."

⁵⁹ The opening lines of the first satire read: "Semper ego auditor tantum? Numquamne reponam/ vexatus totiens rauci Theseide Cordi?" ("What? Am I to be a listener only all my days? Am I never to get my word in - I that have been so often bored by the Theseid of the ranting Cordus?" Ramsay, p.3).

⁶⁰ "But most intolerable of all is the woman who as soon as she has sat down to dinner commends Virgil... The grammarians make way before her; the rhetoricians give in... She lays down definitions, and discourses on morals, like a philosopher; thirsting to be deemed both wise and eloquent, she ought to tuck up her skirts knee-high, sacrifice a pig to Silvanus, and take a penny-bath." (Ramsay, pp.119-121). Only men wore short tunics, sacrificed to Silvanus and used the public baths.

Juvenal's attitude towards Rome is essentially that of a somewhat self-righteous man who sees his culture's traditional standards and tastes of discipline, simplicity and moral rigour being overturned and reduced to chaos:

Cum tener uxorem ducat spado, Mevia Tuscum
figat aprum et nuda teneat venabula mamma,
patricios omnis opibus cum provocet unus
quo tondente gravis iuveni mihi barba sonabat,
cum pars Niliacae plebis, cum verna Canopi
Crispinus Tyrias umero revocante lacernas
ventilet aestivum digitis sudantibus aurum,
nec sufferre queat maioris pondera gemmae,
difficile est saturam non scribere.

(I.22-30)⁶¹

However, these images are not strictly of what we would call immoral behaviour; rather, they depict inversions of tradition in a wider sense and are the natural strictures of a culture in which morality and the social order are seen as being ultimately inseparable. When other people repudiate their allotted social roles, they create a threat to the ordered social context by reference to which Juvenal can define his own individual position. The concluding words of this quotation do not merely imply that moral criticism is the only possible response for the right-thinking man. They also carry the idea that satire is apt for the times, that the satiric discourse is a natural product of the age. This in turn suggests that the satirist himself - that is, the voice within the text - does not simply react against the cultural and moral fragmentation that he sees, but also that to some extent it gains interiority within him.⁶²

Certainly, verse satire is itself a fragmentary and incoherent form. The collapsing buildings and random nocturnal muggings (III.5-9; III.278-301) so vividly described by Juvenal are also reflected in the structure of his verse. Primarily, this is achieved by the satires' construction as a series of glancing perceptions and half-stories that revolve

⁶¹ "When a soft eunuch takes to matrimony, and Maevia, with spear in hand and breasts exposed, to pig-sticking in Etruria; when a fellow under whose razor my stiff youthful beard used to grate challenges, with his single wealth, the whole nobility;¹ when a guttersnipe of the Nile like Crispinus² - a slave-born denizen of Canopus - hitches a Tyrian cloak on to his shoulder, whilst on his sweating finger he airs a summer ring of gold, unable to bear the weight of a heavier gem - it is hard not to write satire." (Ramsay, p.5) Ramsay glosses as follows: 1: "Some barber who had made a fortune"; 2: "A favourite aversion of Juvenal's as a rich Egyptian parvenu who had risen to be *princeps equitum*". For Juvenal's exposition of how the simple ways of life have been supplanted by the extravagant, see Satire XI.

⁶² It is arguable how far the authors of Roman and of Elizabethan satire should be identified with the views and sensibilities found in the texts, as degrees of irony could well be present. I have not debated this question here because the focus in this study is on the ideas and techniques that the Elizabethans would have found in the Roman texts, not on the exact correspondence of those ideas to Juvenal's or Persius' own opinions. It is the principle (i.e. that the subject is unavoidably affected by the destructuring of his society) that counts; whether that subject is actually supposed to be Juvenal or not is less important. However, the question of Elizabethan satirists and their literary personae is discussed in section 1 of Chapter II, below.

continuously through the reader's mind. These are produced by the manipulation of three main tools of effect: allusion, character and voice. Juvenal's allusions are chiefly of three kinds: to Roman figures (contemporary, near-contemporary and historical), to places and to mythical characters. They are introduced suddenly, briefly and in great number, so that the reader is carried along breathlessly from one to another without pause for development or contemplation:

quis caelum terris non misceat et mare caelo,
si fur displiceat Verri, homicida Miloni,
Clodius accuset moechos, Catilina Cethegum,
in tabulam Sullae si dicant discipuli tres?

(II.25-29)⁶³

In this passage, the relentless repetition of the criminal hypocrites' names gives rhetorical force to the idea that their actions do not only affect their immediate victims. The whole of society is thrown into confusion by the impossibility of making the most basic moral distinctions between guilt and innocence, giving further substance to the idea that the satirist feels an anxiety not only for the culture surrounding him, but also for his interior self. The use of long lists of names rhetorically implies the universality of corruption, as well as reducing the verse to a large number of tiny, independent components:

...Hispulla tragoedo
gaudet: an expectas ut Quintilianus ametur?
accipis uxorem de qua citharoedus Echion
aut Glaphyrus fiat pater Ambrosiusque choraules

(VI.74-77)⁶⁴

The style is sustained even where Juvenal is recalling the great patrons of Roman letters:

quis tibi Maecenas, quis nunc erit aut Proculeius
aut Fabius? quis Cotta iterum? quis Lentulus alter?

(VII.94-95)⁶⁵

Even when characters are introduced into the text as people, as opposed to simply being bywords, the treatment is usually brief and insubstantial, allowing for the observation of only one side of their natures, as in the greed of Crispinus (IV.11-25) and the snobbery of Virro (V.37-79). Where a more extended treatment is given, and the characters are allowed

⁶³ "Who will not confound heaven with earth, and sea with sky if Verres denounce thieves, or Milo cut-throats? If Clodius condemn adulterers, or Catiline upbraid Cethegus?; or if Sulla's three disciples inveigh against proscriptions?" (Ramsay, p.19).

⁶⁴ "Hispulla has a fancy for tragedians; but do you suppose that any one will be found to love Quintilian? If you marry a wife, it will be that the lyrist Echion or Glaphyrus, or the flute player Ambrosius, may become a father" (Ramsay, p.89).

⁶⁵ "...who nowadays will be a Maecenas to you, a Proculeius, or a Fabius? who another Cotta, or a second Lentulus?" (Ramsay, p.145).

to speak for themselves, as in the cases of Laronia (II.36-63) Umbricius (III.21-322) and Naevolus (IX.27-89) they bring to the satire a series of complaints originating from a single perspective, and then disappear. Moreover, the content and style of the speech of Umbricius, by far the longest of these, is indistinguishable from Juvenal's own voice. The overall impression is as though the satirist takes us through a dense crowd, pointing out some people, listening briefly to a few, and occasionally addressing others:

silvestrem montana torum cum sterneret uxor
frondibus et culmo vicinarumque ferarum
pellibus, haut similis tibi, Cynthia, nec tibi, cuius
turbavit nitidos extinctus passer ocellos...

(VI.5-8)⁶⁶

nos utinam vani. sed clamat Pontia "feci,
confiteor, puerisque meis aconita paravi,
quae deprensa patent; facinus tamen ipsa peregi."
tune duos una, saevissima vipera, cena?
tune duos?

(VI.638-642)⁶⁷

Once again, the effect is of instability and unpredictability, of vision: in the perspective of Juvenal nothing endures or has any depth. The effects of Persius are in this, as in other respects, like Juvenal's, although the means by which they are achieved are to a degree different. Persius' satires are not so laden as Juvenal's with the names of contemporary people and places, although these are still present in plenty.⁶⁸ However, Persius' writing is more densely sown with indirect statements, mythical allusions and commonplace circumlocutions than is Juvenal's:

Nec fonte labra prolui caballino
nec in bicipiti somniasse Parnaso
memini, ut repente sic poeta prodirem.
Heliconidasque pallidamque Pirenem
illis remitto, quorum imagines lambunt
hederae sequaces: ipse semipaganus
ad sacra vatum carmen adfero nostrum.

(Prologus, 1-7)⁶⁹

⁶⁶ "...when the hill-bred wife spread her silvan bed with leaves and straw and the skins of her neighbours the wild beasts - a wife not like thee, O Cynthia, nor to thee, Lesbia, whose bright eyes were clouded by a sparrow's death..." (Ramsay, pp.83-85).

⁶⁷ "Would indeed that my words were idle! But here is Pontia proclaiming 'I did the deed; I gave aconite, I confess it, to my own children; the crime was detected and is known to all; yes, with my own hands I did it.' 'What, you most savage of vipers? you killed two, did you, two, at a single meal?'" (Ramsay, p. 135).

⁶⁸ See Sat. I. 4-5, 73; II.1, 14, 19, 26, 36, 72; III.45, 65, 79; IV, 3, 20, 21, 25; V.4, 7-9, 17, 21, 32, 37, 64, 74, 76, 79, 80, 81, 85, 90, 103, 123, 126, 134, 142, 161, 162, 168, 180, ; VI.1, 6, 9, 10, 11, 27, 29, 37, 43, 44, 47, 55, 56, 60, 62, 66, 80.

⁶⁹ "I never soused my lips in the Nag's spring;¹ never, that I can remember, did I dream on the two-topped Parnasus that I should thus come forth suddenly as a poet. The maidens² of mount Helicon, and the blanching waters of Pirene,³ I give up to the gentlemen round whose busts the clinging ivy⁴ twines: it is but as a half-member⁵ of the community that I bring my lay to the holy feast of the bards" (Ramsay, p.311). Ramsay glosses as follows: 1: "The inspiring spring Hippocrene...on the top of Mt. Helicon"; 2: "ie the Muses"; 3: "...an inspiring spring near Corinth, called 'pale' because poets were supposed to become pale

nostra vel aequali suspendit tempora Libra
 Parca tenax veri, seu nata fidelibus hora
 dividit in Geminos concordia fata duorum,
 Saturnumque gravem nostro Iove frangimus una,
 nescio quod certe est quod me tibi temperat astrum.
 (V, 47-52)⁷⁰

It is instructive to consider this kind of writing in the light of an essay by Lucius Annaeus Seneca (c.4 B.C. - A.D. 65), 'On Style as a Mirror of Character'.⁷¹ Seneca, the pre-eminent Stoic ethicist of first-century Rome, was a tutor to Nero, and eventually anticipated the hostility of Nero by killing himself. The essay, which is undated and takes the form of one of the many letters from Seneca to his friend Lucilius, argues that

Quemadmodum autem uniuscuiusque actio dicenti similis est, sic genus dicendi aliquando imitatur publicos mores, si disciplina civitatis laboravit et se in delicias dedit.
 (Ep. Mor. CXIV.2)⁷²

Seneca does not mention satire by name, but he clearly disapproves of the kind of disjointed style popularised by Persius. He identifies the stylistic features of Persian satire as being manifestations of precisely the kind of decadent luxury that was condemned by Persius in Seneca's own lifetime and later abominated by Juvenal:

Cum adsuevit animus fastidire, quae ex more sunt, et illi pro sordidis solita sunt, etiam in oratione, quod novum est, quaerit et modo antiqua verba atque exsoleta revocat ac profert, modo, id quod nuper increbuit, pro cultu habetur audax translatio ac frequens.
 (Ep. Mor. CXIV.10)⁷³

It is paradoxical that Persius, who died only three years before Seneca, and who was, like him, a Stoic and a sharp critic of contemporary letters, should have chosen to express himself in such an obscure and idiosyncratic style. At one point Persius even quotes some contemporary verses and asks, "haec fierent, si testiculi vena ulla paterni viveret in nobis?"

from study"; 4: "The busts of poets were crowned with chaplets of ivy"; 5: "Referring to the feast of the Pagnalia common to all pagani, i.e. members of the village community (pagus). Persius calls himself a half-outsider as compared with professional poets".

⁷⁰ "Either a truth-abiding Fate hangs our destinies on the even-balanced Scales, or if the hour which dawned upon the faithful pair distributes between the Twins the accordant destinies of us twain, and a kindly Jupiter has vanquished for us the malignancy of Saturn, some star assuredly there is which links your lot with mine" (Ramsay, p.373).

⁷¹ Epistle CXIV in the *Epistulae Morales*, trans. R.M. Gummere, Loeb's Classics, 3 Vols., London, 1925, repr. 1962. The title of the letter is Gummere's.

⁷² "Exactly as each man's individual actions seem to speak, so people's style of speaking often reproduces the general character of the time, if the morale of the public has relaxed and has given itself over to effeminacy" (Gummere, III, p.301).

⁷³ "When the mind has acquired the habit of scorning the usual things of life, and regarding as mean that which was once customary, it begins to hunt for novelties in speech also; now it summons and displays obsolete and old-fashioned words; now it coins even unknown words and misshapes them; and now a bold and frequent metaphorical usage is made a special feature of style, according to the fashion which has just become prevalent" (Gummere, III, p.307).

(I.103-104).⁷⁴ Clearly, the conception was current that people's language revealed much about themselves as individuals, about their society and about the relationship between them. In view of Seneca's remarks, it seems reasonable to infer that Juvenal and Persius chose to write in the style that they did because, on some level, they were aware of the impossibility of separating the individual from the society. If the defiant satirist could not expunge the signs of confusion from the discourse by which he identified himself, then who could?⁷⁵ The satirist's style became an index of the pervasiveness of cultural breakdown.

The danger was not simply a moral or a linguistic one, but one which extended to the compromise and dislocation of the whole self as its context was disrupted by the historical factors that we have identified. As we have seen, there is at least one place where Juvenal admits that his own experience is affected by this; but it is implicit in the insubstantial, fragmentary vision that pervades both his and Persius' texts. It is therefore both foreseeable and paradoxical that in the war against cultural disintegration, both Juvenal and Persius make their stands in the individual self. Foreseeable, because any resistance must at some level involve the separation of the innocent individual from the corrupt world. Paradoxical, because it becomes necessary to declare inviolable the very entity whose vulnerability lies at the root of the whole problem: if identities were easily made proof against corruption, society would not have become so diseased in the first place. The contradiction is most apparent in Juvenal's attempts to separate people from their contexts, and thereby to focus on the authentic moral substance, or the lack of it, possessed by them as individuals. In the eighth Satire, he turns on the noble families of Rome, and accuses their contemporary representatives of taking excessive pride in the great reputations of their forbears, while embracing vice themselves:

quis fructus generis tabula iactare capaci
Corvinum, posthac multa contingere virga
fumosos equitum cum dictatore magistros,
si coram Lepidis male vivitur?

(VIII.6-9)⁷⁶

⁷⁴ "What? Would such things be written if one drop of our fathers' manhood were still alive in our veins?" (Ramsay, p.327) .

⁷⁵ See Chapter I, note 60, above.

⁷⁶ "Of what profit is it to boast a Corvinus on your ample family chart, and thereafter to trace kinship through many a branch with grimy Dictators and Masters of the Horse, if in the presence of the Lepidi you lead an evil life?" (Ramsay, p.159).

Juvenal argues that people should identify themselves by reference to their own merits and achievements; personal responsibility should be personally shouldered, and not allowed to rest on the artificial glories of high birth, prominent social position or great wealth. In Juvenal's scheme of things, "nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus".⁷⁷ The individual whose honour is parasitical threatens the public standing of the institution whence he derives it,

ergo ut miremur te, non tua, privum aliquid da,
quod possim titulis incidere praeter honores
quos illis damus ac dedimus, quibus omnia debes.

...miserum est aliorum incumbere famae,
ne conlapsa ruant subductis tecta columnis.
(VIII.68-70; 76-7)⁷⁸

There is a substantial contradiction between this emphasis on the duty of individuals to distinguish themselves by personal virtue, and Juvenal's earlier resentment that wealth should have more social significance than family. A rich, arrogant freedman asks,

"...quid confert purpura maior
optandum, si Laurenti custodit in agro

conductas Corvinus oves, ego possideo plus
Pallante et Licinis?"
(I.106-109)⁷⁹

This sentiment is based on the notion that somehow the noble families should have wealth and status, but that they have been deprived of it by an inversion of the traditional order that is not really their fault. Juvenal is torn between respect for the old order, and a kind of Stoic individualism that is implicitly antagonistic to the persistence of an aristocratic system. He describes with approval the exploits of Cicero, whose virtues, if not his family, were of the right sort:

hic novus Arpinas, ignobilis et modo Romae
municipalis eques, galeatum ponit ubique
praesidium attonitis et in omni monte laborat.
tantum igitur muros intra toga contulit illi
nominis ac tituli, quantum in Leucade...
(VIII.237-241)⁸⁰

⁷⁷ "...virtue is the one and only true nobility" (Ramsay, p. 159).

⁷⁸ "So, if I am to respect yourself, and not your belongings, give me something of your own to engrave among your titles, in addition to those honours which we pay, and have paid, to those to whom you owe your all....It is a poor thing to lean upon the fame of others, lest the pillars give way and the house fall down in ruin" (Ramsay, pp.163-165).

⁷⁹ "What better thing does the Broad Purple¹ bestow if a Corvinus² herds sheep for daily wage in the Laurentian country, while I possess more property than either a Pallas or a Licinus?"³ (Ramsay, p.11). Ramsay glosses as follows: 1: "The broad purple stripe...on the tunic of senators"; 2: "One of an ancient Roman family"; 3: "Pallas and Licinus were wealthy freedmen".

⁸⁰ "Born at Arpinum, of ignoble blood, a municipal knight new to Rome, he posts helmetted men at every point to guard the affrighted citizens, and is alert on every hill. Thus within the walls his toga won for

The contradiction reveals the confused substance that underlies the fragmentary surface of Juvenal's writing. Persius, on the other hand, embodies the contradiction between the Stoic desire to withdraw into a stable, clearly defined self, and the acute self-perception of the man who examines his own inner experience and finds it to be unstable and ill-defined. The need to separate oneself from the corrupting influence of society is forcefully stated by Persius; the self, apparently, is not a source of anxiety or confusion, but a dependable entity of which knowledge is both achievable and desirable:

Ut nemo in sese temptat descendere, nemo,
sed praecedenti spectatur mantica tergo!
respue quod non es, tollat sua munera cerdo;
tecum habita: noris quam sit tibi curta supellex.
(VI.23-24; 51-52)⁸¹

However, as we have seen, this kind of Stoic faith in the possibility of spiritual and psychological independence does not square with Persius' literary 'style', an issue that, as we have seen, is not only apparent to us, but was also evident to Seneca, his contemporary. Yet, this extends beyond the the immediate surface-texture of the writing implied by 'style', and reaches deeply into the form. For the first 62 lines of Persius' third Satire the satirist alternately "plays the part" (Ramsay) of a dissolute young man with a hangover, and of his older mentor, who is trying to persuade him to galvanise himself. The satirist manoeuvres himself between the personae, each addressing the other, until it becomes impossible to tell who is speaking to whom: the initially stable narrative dissolves into an impressionistic chaos that recalls Juvenal's description of an orgy:

quid enim Venus ebria curat?
inguinis et capitis quae sint discrimina, nescit
grandia quae mediis iam noctibus ostrea mordet,
cum perfusa mero spumant unguenta Falerno,
cum bibitur concha, cum iam vertigine tectum
ambulat et geminis exsurgit mensa lucernis.
(VI.300-305)⁸²

The satires of Juvenal and Persius record the experience of individuals whose society has lost its former shape and discipline. Their satires are an attempt to combat this tendency, to assert the authors as substantive moral units that will not be swept aside by the

him as much name and honour as Octavius gained by battle in Leucas..." (Ramsay, pp.177-179). "'Leucas' here stands for the battle of Actium..." (Ramsay).

⁸¹ "Not a soul is there - no, not one - who seeks to get down into his own self; all watch the wallet on the back that walks before!...Cast off every thing that is not yourself; let the mob take back what they have given you; live in your own house, and recognise how poorly it is furnished" (Ramsay, pp.361-363).

⁸² "What decency does Venus observe when she is drunken? when she knows not head from tail, eats giant oysters at midnight, pours foaming unguents into her unmixed Falernian, and drinks out of perfume-flasks, while the roof spins dizzily round, the table dances, and every light shows double!" (Ramsay, p.107).

tide of corruption, an effort which is continually undermined by the chaotic quality of the texts. It does not greatly matter that their vision of the past is inclined towards the mythic, or that their image of themselves as lonely, conscientious objectors, baying defiance at the cataclysm, betrays a tendency towards self-dramatisation. When the Elizabethans read this poetry, they found in it a vivid expression of their own cultural anxieties, which they confronted by re-inventing it in an adapted form. Exactly how they adapted it will be examined in detail in chapter II of this thesis, which focuses on the theme of identity in satire, with emphasis on Marston's theoretical approach to this central issue. But it is striking how similar the Elizabethans' satires are to the Romans', a point which emphasises the close parallels which the later society perceived to exist between itself and the earlier.⁸³ Of course, Tudor England was never in the grip of an insane autocrat like those described by Suetonius, even in the latter days of Henry VIII, and by the end of the sixteenth century it was comparatively a model of stability and peace. Poetry, however, is a matter of perception, and English society did suffer from instabilities and vices of its own, some of which were enough like those described by Juvenal and Persius to make Roman satire seem a ready-constituted poetic form for writers who were dismayed by the turn of developments. It is this immediate social and economic context that is described in the next section.

3: England in the 1590s.

It is a truism to say that in the sixteenth century England saw some of the most dramatic and far-reaching social and economic alterations in its modern history. Both its religious and its political characters were subjected to radical change. The former was transformed as a result of the Reformation, its countering and its renewed prosecution after 1558, the dissolution of the monasteries, the final establishment of Anglicanism, the rise of Puritanism and the intermittent persecution of Catholics, which was vigorously pursued by Elizabeth. The latter was changed more gradually but just as profoundly by the gradual

⁸³ It is by no means widely acknowledged that the late-Elizabethan age had certain key features in common with the Rome of Juvenal and Persius. A. Stein, 'Joseph Hall's Use of Juvenal' (*MLR* XLIII, 1948, 314-322) surveys the arguments that Hall was merely an imitator of Juvenal, and acquits him of the charge: "at his best he achieved his own style, in which Juvenalian influence (even transformed) was but one of several elements" (p.321). However, the suspicion that Elizabethan satire is basically a matter of literary imitation persists. See Angela J. Wheeler, *English Verse Satire from Donne to Dryden: Imitation of Classical Models*, Heidelberg, 1992.

centralisation of power in the Court, to which the aristocracy increasingly repaired in quest of gain, prestige and pleasure; feudalism declined and with it the prospect of aristocratic rebellion against the crown, as landowning peers lost their close ties to their tenants and acquired the status of absentee *rentiers*, in keeping with the economy's general tendency to become more money-based. The shift towards capitalism, made official in 1571 by the state licensing of usury, facilitated an explosion in foreign trade and the spread, via the wool industry, of rural enclosures. This in turn led on one hand to the rise of a merchant class whose wealth was eventually able to challenge that of the aristocracy, and on the other to a sharp increase in vagrancy and internal migration as people were thrown off land that had been converted from arable to sheep farming. Even the limits of the physical world were redefined, by explorations of the Americas and the East.

Such a concentration of fundamental and widely-felt social changes can hardly have helped to shore up the idea of personal identity as being defined from within the individual subject. To think of the mind as an essence or form, and to define it in terms of the universal and the absolute are much more tenable propositions when they are accompanied by a perception that the human world is, in tune with the ordered cosmography of the universe, a set of rigid structures, such as those which the modern period inherited from the Mediaeval: "everything had to be included and everything had to be made to fit and to connect."⁸⁴ An experience that the world is basically stable in the long run - physically, spiritually, socially and economically - encourages the theorising of the self as an unworldly essence, because it tends to render imperceptible the reality, that identity is heavily contingent upon the stability of social and material factors. When these remain unchanged, identity can also seem fixed, and it becomes possible to explain it by reference to that which is eternal and immaterial, and therefore immutable. However, these large-scale changes in England's composition were mostly well under way by the 1590s; the developments of that decade that need to be emphasised for the purposes of analysing satire were of three kinds: the succession of socio-economic disasters that struck the country at large and the anxiety to which they gave rise, especially in London, for social order; the pressure placed upon the

⁸⁴ E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture*, Penguin, London, 1943, p.13. Tillyard says (more controversially) of his subject that "one can say dogmatically that it was *still* solidly theocentric..." (p.12, my italics).

class-system, which was continually redefining individuals as they moved up and down the social scale; and a general growth in what we might (at the risk of sounding priggish) term 'public immorality'.

Many critics of verse satire have acknowledged its desire for "a frank confrontation with the primary mode of historical reality - social phenomena"⁸⁵ but have usually identified these phenomena in terms of the social position of the satirist, or the goings-on in his immediate environment - in Marston's case the Inns of Court.⁸⁶ Others have stressed philosophical factors; Davenport, for example, has written of the "deep dismay" at the bottom of Marston's writings, putting it down to a combination of factors, including "Machiavellianism", and "the Calvinist vision of man".⁸⁷ But this deep dismay is surely related to the fact that verse satire emerged at a time when crime, disease, vagrancy, food shortages and civic unrest were all reaching what appeared to be crisis proportions. That these problems do not form the main material of the satires themselves does not mean that they did not help greatly in establishing the mood that informs them. "It is evident", wrote E.P. Cheyney in 1926,

that under the surface of the carefully regulated Elizabethan administration, there was deep discontent and constant danger of revolt. Along with sincere loyalty to the queen and pride in their country, there was much reluctance to yield submission to constituted authority, much dissatisfaction with prevailing policy, and much practical disobedience. There was, besides, the whole miserable mass of distress, crime and vagabondage that crowded the gallows, streets and prisons of the time. Unemployment was frequent, poverty was everywhere... and the problem of feeding the people and keeping them orderly was, although intensified in these years of scarcity, a constant and largely an unresolved problem.⁸⁸

This dramatic view of England in the mid-1590s has never been seriously challenged.

Historians such as Archer, Pearl and Rappaport have argued that London "combined turbulence with fundamental orderliness",⁸⁹ and emphasised the city's underlying patterns of social identification and support for the poor.⁹⁰ However, even Rappaport concedes that

⁸⁵ L. Martines, *Society and History in English Renaissance Verse*, Oxford (Blackwell) 1985, p.29.

⁸⁶ The approach taken in Finkelpearl's *John Marston of the Middle Temple*, especially Part One, pp.3-80.

⁸⁷ *Poems*, p.26.

⁸⁸ Cheyney, *A History of England from the Defeat of the Armada to the Death of Elizabeth*, 2 Volumes, London, 1926, p.35.

⁸⁹ V. Pearl, 'Change and stability in seventeenth-century London', *LJ*, 5 (1979). See also Rappaport, *Worlds within worlds: structures of life in sixteenth-century London*, Cambridge, 1989, and Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: social relations in Elizabethan London*, Cambridge, 1991.

⁹⁰ M.J. Power, 'London and the 'Crisis' of the 1590s', *History* 70 (1985) 371-385, at p.375.

If at any time during the sixteenth century London's problems mounted to the point where they caused much suffering or threatened the city's stability it was in the 1590s, a decade of exceptional hardship.

(Rappaport, p.378)

Two facts in particular emerge from the evidence. The first is that the 1590s were, in Archer's words, "clearly the worst decade sixteenth-century Londoners experienced" (p.10). The second is that, however 'fundamentally' stable sixteenth-century London may appear to have been when viewed in retrospect, its condition in the 1590s greatly alarmed the authorities, as did the state of the country in general.⁹¹ Early in 1597, Lord Mayor Billingsley wrote to Robert Cecil, the Secretary of State, refusing to license the shipment of wheat from London to the West Country. He wrote that he

would gladly have satisfied his request, if the present dearth of corn, specially of wheat...and the great discontentment and murmuring of the people, whom he desires to keep in all obedience and peaceable behaviour, would permit the same.⁹²

The social burdens of England were intensified in London because of rising immigration into the city from the provinces after 1550. In his *Survey* (1598)⁹³ John Stow said of London that "the poor...from each quarter of the realm do flock unto it" (p.497); estimates vary, but it is generally thought that the city's population roughly doubled - from about 70,000 to about 150,000 - between 1550 and 1600,⁹⁴ despite the fact that in London the death rate greatly exceeded the birth rate.⁹⁵ This shift was partly caused by a general rise in the nation's population, which rose from 2.3 million in 1522 to 3.75 million in 1603.⁹⁶ The effects of the extra strain that this growth placed on England's resources were greatly exacerbated by the enclosure of land and its conversion from tillage to pasture, a practice that often left tenant farmers without land or employment. Prompted by desperation, many set off for 'the Great Wen',⁹⁷ often with disastrous results; the city's provision for the

⁹¹ See Walter and Wrightson, 'Dearth and the Social Order', *Past and Present* 71 (1976) 22-42.

⁹² *Calender of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon the Marquis of Salisbury, K.G., Preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire*, 18 volumes, London, 1883-1940 (henceforth, *Hatfield MSS.*). Volume VII, p.148.

⁹³ Repr. London, 1916.

⁹⁴ Rappaport, p.64.

⁹⁵ Rappaport, p.76.

⁹⁶ J. Cornwall, 'English Population in the Early Sixteenth Century', *EHR*, Second Series vol. XXIII 1970, 32-44, at p.44.

⁹⁷ See P. Ramsey, *Tudor Economic Problems*, London, 1965, p.24 and G.H. Tawney, *The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century*, London, 1912, repr. New York, no date on volume: "the writer who spoke of whole towns being depopulated was not romancing... we may say...that from 1455 to 1607 the agrarian changes...displaced something between 30,000 and 50,000 persons" (p.261-262). See also particularly pp.147-177 and 237-266, and S.I of 'An Act Against the decaying of towns and Houses of Husbandry' (1597), in Prothero ed., *Statutes and Constitutional Documents Illustrative of the Reigns of Elizabeth and James I*, p. 93-4: "...of late years more than in times past there have been sundry towns,

poor, though well-funded, attracted the destitute from afar, and was unequal to the demands placed upon it. London became overcrowded, rents increased sharply⁹⁸ and slums appeared in which crime flourished,⁹⁹ but still people flocked to it in search of work and sustenance. The situation worsened in the mid-1590s, and in 1597 Parliament countered it with two pieces of legislation: 'An Acte for the Reliefe of the Poore', and 'An Acte for Punyshement of Rogues, Vagabondes and sturdy Beggars'.¹⁰⁰

In the mid-1590s another problem arose. The harvests of 1594 and 1595 were "well below average, and then for only the second time in the sixteenth century England suffered successive dearths in 1596 and 1597" (Rappaport, pp.136-7). In London, "the number of deaths increased significantly in 1597, to almost double the number in years of low mortality".¹⁰¹ Appleby quotes a passage from Philip Stubbes's *Anatomie of Abuses*, describing the deprivation:

[They] die, some in ditches, some in holes, some in caves and dens, some in fields...rather like dogs than christian people...yet they are forced to walk the countries from place to place to seeke their releefe at every mans doore, except they wil sterue or famish at home.¹⁰²

Food riots broke out in the home counties, and the Privy Council, perceiving the necessity that "the cittie of London, being the chief place and resort of this realme, may in no wyse be left to much unprovided", made several orders between 1595 and 1598 instructing provincial Justices of the Peace to release food for London's use.¹⁰³ In 1596 the Queen donated £500 to the city's poor, and corn was exempted from customs duty. Bread prices climbed steeply: a penny loaf weighed 20 ounces in December 1594; by November 1597 its weight was half a pound.¹⁰⁴ In London in June 1595 there was a series of riots involving hundreds of people, some of which involved the forcible purchase of food at prices below

parishes and houses of husbandry destroyed and become desolate, by means whereof a great number of poor people are become wanderers, idle and loose..."

⁹⁸ See especially John Howes's second 'Famyliar and Frendly Discourse Dialogue Wyse' (1587), III.421 in *Tudor Economic Documents*, ed. Tawney and Power, London, 1912, 3 vols. Hereafter, *TED*.

⁹⁹ John Stow, *The Survey of London*, 1603 edn. Repr. London, 1916, note p.116, pp.150, 365, 376. See also Barry, p.125-127.

¹⁰⁰ *TED*, II.354-362.

¹⁰¹ A.P. Appleby, 'Diet in Sixteenth-century England: sources, problems, possibilities'. Ch.3 of *Health, Medicine and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Charles Webster, Cambridge, 1979, p.114.

¹⁰² Phillip Stubbes, *The Second Part of the Anatomie of Abuses*, ed. F.J. Furnivall (1882) p.43. *Health, Medicine and Mortality*, p.115.

¹⁰³ In these paragraphs on the policies of national and local authorities in response to the dearth, I am relying heavily on the information in Power's article.

¹⁰⁴ Powers, p.374. See also R.M. Benbow, 'The Court of Aldermen and the Policy of Price Control in Elizabethan London', *Guildhall Studies*, IV (1980), p.104.

those of the market. On 16 June a large group, including many apprentices, met in St. Paul's and plotted rebellion, including the beheading of the Lord Mayor. Burghley rounded up the ringleaders, who in July were tried for treason and executed. These disturbances created considerable alarm, and measures were implemented against lawbreakers in general and vagabonds in particular. A succession of marshals was created to rid the city of masterless men, and cages and stocks were set up in the streets, to punish and to deter the unruly.¹⁰⁵ Moreover,

In June 1596 the Lord Mayor suppressed a ballad by Thomas Delaney which depicted the Queen sympathising with the people's suffering because of the scarcity of food, lest the poem 'aggravate their grief and take occasion of some discontentment.'

(Powers, p.380; Cheyney, II.27)

The authorities' nervousness was such that literature with no seditious intent (in this case, quite the contrary) was taken out of circulation only because it acknowledged in printed form what was already visible throughout London and the provinces. In view of this it is not surprising that three years later, in June 1599, the Bishop of London and the Archbishop of Canterbury decreed that, *inter alia*, both of Marston's books of satires, Guilpin's *Skialetheia* and the epigrams of John Davies should be called in and burnt. They also ordered that "noe Satyres or Epigrams be printed hereafter".¹⁰⁶ The discourse of discontent was broadly defined by the Elizabethans, and satires fell well within its bourn.

In a decade of hardship, the plague of 1593-7 was an added burden on the people and an extra source of concern for the state. The epidemic was the third worst of the Elizabethan era; London's mortality rate jumped to almost four and a half times its normal level and some 14.3 per cent of the city's inhabitants died in 1593 alone.¹⁰⁷ The economic effects of plague could also be devastating; the sudden demographic changes caused by an epidemic - much flight from the city, and many deaths - created high unemployment among those who remained. Once a city was known to be gripped by plague, outsiders would avoid it; markets would suffer, and its exported goods would be delayed or refused by other cities for fear that they were infected.¹⁰⁸ Cloth exports from London, both to Europe and

¹⁰⁵ Powers suggests that the intensity of the crisis can be measured by the total number of orders regulating corn supply, poverty, vagrancy and public order in each year. These were 9 of these in 1593, 22 in 1594, 18 in 1595, 43 in 1596, 31 in 1597, 20 in 1598 and 7 in 1599.

¹⁰⁶ Finkelpearl, p.116.

¹⁰⁷ Slack, *The Impact of Plague*, p.151.

¹⁰⁸ Slack, *The Impact of Plague*, p.257.

within Britain, were hit hard by plague in the short run.¹⁰⁹ The fear engendered by plague reached directly to the top of society: money was a guard against hunger, but it could not buy a cure for plague. Of course, the rich (including the well-heeled young gentlemen of the inns of court) could leave for the countryside, but there is an inverse correlation between the perception of imminent crisis and the likelihood of its actually occurring. That there was a much lower death rate in the richer than in the poorer parishes of London bespeaks a keen sense of self-preservation on the part of the well-off: they were afraid of plague and used their wealth to avoid it. As Thomas Dekker put it during the great plague of 1603, when London's death rate increased sevenfold, "fear and trembling (the two catch-poles of death) arrest everyone".¹¹⁰

Even allowing for London's high mortality rate outside plague years, the plague epidemic, which lasted for three years,¹¹¹ must have impressed the precariousness of human existence on those who witnessed it. It was the first serious plague epidemic for thirty years, and the generation born in the 1570s can never have seen anything like it. As Paul Slack has said, "Plague was a reminder of the transience of everything connected with life...After a plague, ties of family and friendships had to be re-formed. They can never have seemed secure".¹¹² Most importantly, for the purpose of considering contemporary perceptions of society, plague created an atmosphere heavy with death: the incessant tolling of churchbells, the moans of the dying and bereaved and the sight and smell of corpses, which were often left lying in the streets, so sudden and so dangerous was the infection, must have impressed themselves on even the sardonic wits of the Inns of Court.¹¹³ John Donne especially felt the effects of the plague's devastation: in 1593 the disease killed his brother Henry, who had been imprisoned in Newgate after being arrested in his chambers at Thavies Inn, along with a Catholic priest named Harrington, who was himself subsequently hanged, drawn and quartered.¹¹⁴ Plague also carried off Donne's brother-in-law, William

¹⁰⁹ Slack, *The Impact of Plague*, p.189.

¹¹⁰ *The Plague Pamphlets of Thomas Dekker*, ed. F.P. Wilson, Oxford, 1925, pp.31-32.

¹¹¹ Letter to the privy council dated 24/12/1596. *Hatfield MSS.* VI, p.534.

¹¹² Slack, *The Impact of Plague*, pp.17-18.

¹¹³ Slack reports that the bells of St. Martin's, Salisbury, had to be replaced after the plague of 1627 because of the wear and tear inflicted on them by constant ringing. (*The Impact of Plague*, p.285).

¹¹⁴ R.C. Bald, *John Donne, A Life*, Oxford, 1970, p.58.

Lyly, in London in the summer of 1603.¹¹⁵ In one verse letter of the mid-1590s, 'To Mr T.W.'¹¹⁶ Donne says of London that

hell is...
...where I am, where in every street
Infections follow, overtake, and meete...
(ll.9;11-12)

In another, to Everard Guilpin,¹¹⁷ he complains that

Our theatres are filled with emptines;
As lancke and thin is every street and way
As a woman deliver'd yesterday.
(ll.8-10)

Clearly, Donne was giving vent to a genuine sense of revulsion when, in his second Satyre, which may have been written as early as 1594, he wrote that "I do hate / Perfectly all this towne" (ll.1-2).

The extent of the crisis of the 1590s is evident from the fact that fear and hardship blighted even the lives of the well-to-do. That this was so is made especially clear by a letter of Christmas eve, 1596, in which the Lord Mayor and aldermen of London wrote to the privy council in response to a demand for ship money to help finance the war against Spain. They pleaded inability to pay, partly, they said, because great sums had already been levied in London to help pay for the wars,

but more especially from the great dearth of victual which hath been continued now these three years, besides three years' plague before, which so hath impoverished the general estate of this whole city, that many persons, before known to be of good wealth, are greatly decayed and utterly disabled for all public service, being hardly able by their uttermost endeavours to maintain the charges of their private families in very mean sort...

(*Hatfield MSS.* VI, p.534-5)

This gloomy and disturbing picture sits ill with the the glorification of Elizabeth's reign by Tudor propagandists and Stuart nostalgists alike. It is easy to understand why poetry written at this time should have been filled with notes of disaffection, but it must also be acknowledged that, while the pessimism of the satires fits the era well, the specific social

¹¹⁵ Bald, p.147.

¹¹⁶ "I have not been able to identify 'T.W.' positively" (Milgate, p.211).

¹¹⁷ Guilpin was admitted to Grays Inn in 1591, and it is almost certain that this letter, addressed only to 'Mr E.G', which dates from the summer of 1593 or 1594, is to him. "By 1598 Guilpin had written verse satires and epigrams, and his interest in this kind of writing may easily have begun in the early 1590's, when he and Donne were students in the Inns of Court and when Donne was probably writing his first satires", R.E. Bennett, 'John Donne and Everard Guilpin', *RES* XV (1939) 66-72. Bennett points out the similarity between the first lines of Guilpin's Satire V and Donne's (in 1598 still unpublished) first Satire, which is striking. See also P.J. Finkelpearl, 'Donne and Everard Guilpin: additions, corrections and conjectures', *RESN.S.* XIV (1963) 164-167.

issues raised in the poems are not on the whole those described above, which presumably were catalysts, although not raw materials.

We should not, however, forget that, generally speaking, the sixteenth century was a time of great increase in upward - as well as downward - social mobility, a form of social instability that gave rise to a need for new patterns of identification as the old order was forced to adapt. R.H. Tawney described the century as having taken its character from the outburst of economic energy in which it had been born.

Like the nineteenth century, it saw a swift increase in wealth and an impressive expansion of trade, a concentration of financial power on a scale unknown before, the rise, amid fierce social convulsions, of new classes and the depression of old, triumph of a new culture and system of ideas amid struggles not less bitter.¹¹⁸

In his great study, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641*, Norman Stone makes a similar comparison in calling the period “a time when in fact families were moving up and down the social and economic scale faster than at any time before the nineteenth and twentieth centuries”.¹¹⁹ Stone bases this claim on the enormous quantity of land sales during the period, as recorded in the Close Rolls and Feet of Fines (p.22); these peaked around 1620, but had been rising sharply since the 1560s. The 1590s were a decade of particularly rapid turnover. The importance of this measurement as an index of social mobility is rooted in the fact that ownership of land was the key to social prestige and political power. When people made fortunes in trade or the professions, they invested their wealth in land, like the lawyer in Donne’s *Satire II*, who “Shortly...will compass all our land;/ From Scots, to Wight; from Mount, to Dover strand” (ll.77-78). “Except for the yeomen”, says Stone,

none of the new men had acquired their fortunes from the profits of land, and yet as soon as the opportunity offered all hastened to turn their wealth into a landed estate. Since there was plenty of land on the market there arose no proud dynasties of merchants, no hereditary strain of lawyers (except through younger sons), no unbroken sequence of professional politicians...

(p.24)

¹¹⁸ Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, Penguin, 1948, p.79.

¹¹⁹ N. Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641*, abridged edn., Oxford, O.U.P., 1967, p.22. Much of the information in this section concerning structures of class in the period is taken from Stone’s study, which continues to be highly authoritative. Two important critiques of Stone are: ‘The Aristocracy in Transition’, R. Ashton, *Economic History Review*, 1969, pp.308-322 and the essay in Hexter’s *On Historians: Reappraisals of some of the Makers of Modern History*, London, 1979, pp.149-226. These, however, do not seriously challenge any of the points made by Stone and used in this Chapter. A useful survey that in some respects complements Stone’s work is the essay on ideas of gentility in Tudor England, pp.43-77 of J.P. Cooper’s *Land, Men and Beliefs* (London, 1983) which reveals a wide range of views as to what constituted ‘gentility’ during the period.

Of course, land that was being bought was also being sold, and a self-perpetuating cycle came into existence:

Over-consumption led to sale of land, which generated social mobility and psychological insecurity among the purchasers; in its turn insecurity caused a struggle for status... which found expression in competitive consumption.

(p.86)

Competitive, or conspicuous, consumption was a key feature in the assumption of an upper-class¹²⁰ identity. Ostentatious material generosity to others and lavish expenditure on one's own indulgences were seen as mandatory for the aristocracy, and families aspiring to high social status aped their practices, thus setting in train the cycle described by Stone. As aristocrats ruined themselves through overspending and lost their lands, professionals and tradesmen (who in many cases made much of their money by catering for the excesses of the dissipated nobility) were able to buy them up. An early play of Marston's, *Jack Drum's Entertainment* (1600), contains a debate on this subject between Sir Edward Fortune, a satirical portrait of an excessively openhanded knight, and Mamon, "A usurer with a great nose"¹²¹ who is suing for the hand in marriage of Fortune's eldest daughter, Katherine. In their attitudes to money these two characters could not differ more: Mamon criticises Fortune for thriftlessness: "You keep too great a house" (p.183), but Fortune has the aristocrat's detestation of parsimony: "O madnes still to sweat in hotte pursuite/ Of cold abhorred sluttish nigardise" (p.183). Part of the basis of Mamon's censure is his opinion that money should be used to the ends of achieving "respect and mounted place" (p.184) and of founding a new family:

Mam. Oh but so great a masse of coyne might mount/ from wholsome thrift,
that after your decease/ your issue might swell out your name with
pompe.

S. Ed. Ha, I was not borne to be my cradles drudge,
To choake and stifle up my pleasures breath,
To poyson with the venomd cares of thrift
My private sweet of life...

(p.184)

"*I had rather live rich to die poore, then live poore to die rich*" he concludes (p.184), adding that he wishes to be remembered after his death as "*a knight whose money/ Was his slave*" (p.185). With such an attitude prevalent among the rich, vultures like Donne's

¹²⁰ I use this loose term synonymously with *élite*, to indicate the aristocracy and their imitators, the superior gentry. Fine economic distinctions are unnecessary, as this survey is concerned with contemporary perceptions of manners and codes, rather than underlying historical truths.

¹²¹ Marston, *Plays*, ed. H. Harvey Wood, 3 vols., Edinburgh, 1934-39, Vol. III, pp.179-243; p.243. This edition has no line numbers, but contains the most modern published version of the play.

lawyer, “spying heires melting with luxurie,/ Satan will not joy at their sinnes, as he” (ll.79-80) found them easy prey, and many aristocratic families fell from prominence into poverty.

At the same time, there was an influx into high society of *arrivistes*, removed from their accustomed circles by the advent of money, but despised for their efforts to join the upper tiers of the establishment; Nashe calls them “upstart gallants, [who] as without desert or service, are raised from the plough to be checkmate with princes”.¹²² Hall’s reactionary, Juvenalian attitude to this “genuine weakening of old lines of division”¹²³ is shown by his disgusted treatment of “Old driueling Lolio”, who “drudges all he can,/ To make his eldest son a Gentleman” (IV.ii.1-2). Lolio has to live frugally,

For else how should his sonne maintained bee,
At Ins of Court or of the Chancerie:
There to learne Law, and courtly carriage,
To make amendes for his meane parentage,
Where he unknowne and ruffling as he can,
Goes currant each-where for a Gentleman?

(IV.ii.53-56)

Guilpin takes a similar approach to people’s attempts to ‘better’ themselves. In his third Satire, he attacks ‘Panduris’, whose “father with bartring, and trucke/ Of bad greene-sickness wines, hath heapt vp muck” (ll.35-36), ‘Cynops’, whose father, grown rich on the profits from beer, has bought land, because “the man/ Is damnd, to make his sonne a gentleman” (ll.47-48) and ‘Publius’, whose “dad with Chimicke vsurie,/ Turnd yron to sterling, drosse to land and fee” (ll.51-52). The basis of Guilpin’s attack is that these characters have abandoned their erstwhile friends on becoming rich, and now refuse to speak to them. Yet, the criticism goes beyond the moral: Guilpin sees in their ‘inconstancy’ a dilution of their true reality, so that they only possess a kind of semi-existence, the consequence of not having a full and stable engagement with other people:

When these, and such like doe themselues estrange,
I neuer muse at theyr fantasticke change:
Because they are Phantasmas butterflies,
Inconstant, but yet witless Mercuries.

(ll.57-60)

Nosce Teipsum notwithstanding, John Davies makes the same point in his epigrams: that social dislocation accompanies (in fact, is a result of) the destabilisation of identity caused by the acquisition of new wealth:

¹²² *Pierce Penilesse his Supplication to the Divell* (1592). Nashe, *Works*, ed. R.B. McKerrow, London, 1904-5, repr. Blackwell, Oxford, 1966, Vol. I, p.173

¹²³ L. Stone, *An Open Elite? England 1540-1880*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1984, p.7

When Priscus raide from low to high estate,
Rode through the streetes in pompous jollitee,
Caius his poore familier friende of late,
Be-spake him thus, Sir now you know not me:
Tis likely friende (quoth Priscus) to be so,
For at this time my selfe I do not know.¹²⁴

It is worth noting the causality here. Priscus no longer knows himself, because his material fortunes have changed dramatically; his identity is thus seen to be contingent upon, and therefore responsive to changes in, his economic, and therefore his social, circumstances.

Examples of the establishment and maintenance of superior class status are ubiquitous in Elizabethan satire, which tends to depict its characters as being the mindless slaves of a system that deprives them of wealth, dignity, and ultimately of personal identity. To be acknowledged as a person of consequence it was necessary to waste money on a fabulous scale. One means of doing this that was repeatedly attacked by the satirists was indulgence in fine clothes, and gambling.¹²⁵ When Donne describes the clothes of courtiers as being “as fresh, and sweet...as bee/ The fields they sold to buy them” (IV.180-181) he is not exaggerating. The otherwise notoriously parsimonious Elizabeth spared no expense in attiring herself with utmost splendour, and in doing so set the pace for those around her, whose example in turn influenced the rest of society. This unnatural obsession with clothing encouraged the spread of European styles of dress in sophisticated circles, which for the satirists symbolised England’s collective departure from its proper self. Joseph Hall complains of seeing

A *French* head ioynd to necke *Italian*:
Thy thighs from *Germanie*, and brest fro *Spaine*:
An *Englishman* in none, a foole in all...
(*Vergidemiaram*, III.i.66-68)

and Guilpin attacks men who, affecting to have “beyond sea looks” (III.16) - foreign modes of dress and manner - so forget their English identities that

thou canst not claime
 Thine old acquaintance, mothers tong, nor name
 Giuen thee in thy baptisme...

(III.23-25)

Nationalism was not the only ground of objection to outlandish clothing. The cost of competitive dressing in wealthy circles was ruinous: “Who cannot shine in tissues and pure

¹²⁴ *Poems*, ed. Kreuger, p.142.

¹²⁵ This is chosen here because of its great prominence, but there were plenty of others. Satire V.iv of Hall's *Vergidemiarum* identifies many of them.

gold,/ That hath his lands and patrimony sold?” (*Vergidemiarum*, IV.ii.17-18) asked Hall, but the obvious answer to this rhetorical question did not deter people with money from joining the expensive sartorial chase. The important point to bear in mind, though, is that as Stone says, this expenditure was intrinsic to the struggle for status; it was not merely the indulgence of personal taste. Marston is the most sensitive to this. One of his gallants, Aulus,

will leaue begging Monopolies,
When that mong troupes of gaudie Butter-flies,
He is but able iet it iollily,
In pie-bauld sutes, of proude Court Brauerie
(SV.IV.83-86)

Perceiving that extravagant dress is, within the context of Elizabethan society, a coded assertion of self, he repeatedly attacks men for lacking an inner substance to match the outward show:

Each sattin sute,
Each quaint fashion-monger, whose sole repute
Rests in his trim gay clothes...
(SV, ‘In Lectores Prorsus indignos’, 4-5)

Seest thou yon gallant in the sumptuous clothes,
How brisk, how spruce, how gorgeously he showes,
Note his French-herring bones, but note no more...

He’s nought but clothes, & senting sweet perfume.
(SV.VII.18-20; 41)

This fashion-mounger, each morne fore he rise
Contemplates sute shapes...

O that the boundlesse power of the soule
Should be coop’d up in fashioning some roule!
(SV.XI.163-164; 176-177)

The absurdity - ultimately, the counter-productivity - of this obsession with social appearances fascinates Marston. He attacks the craze for gambling for high stakes, which did not reach its apogee until Stuart times, but was well under way in the 1590s, when the 5th Earl of Rutland “rarely staked less than £100 on a race”¹²⁶ and, at least according to Marston, “some slie, golden-slopt *Castilio*/ [Could] cut a manors strings at Primero” (SV.III.107-108). To play for such high stakes was to manifest the twin aristocratic qualities of great wealth and indifference to risk, quite apart from the opportunity it offered of making considerable gains.

¹²⁶ Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, p.260.

However, membership of the élite required more than a talent for haemorrhaging money. It also called for the possession of “sufficient education to display a reasonable knowledge of public affairs, and to be able to perform gracefully on the dance floor and on horseback, in the tennis-court and the fencing school”.¹²⁷ To these could be added the ability to write verses, a sophisticated acquaintance with current plays, and, especially after the successful Cadiz expedition of 1596, some military service,¹²⁸ but doubtless not all of these were essential and the individual would make the best of whatever credentials he had.¹²⁹ This, at least, is the impression given by the verse satirists, although their portrayal of the pursuit of gentility is inevitably a jaundiced one. Dancing especially is savaged, perhaps because it seems inherently less dignified than, say, riding.¹³⁰ The gallant of Donne’s *Satire I* cries out on seeing a “well-favour’d youth.../ That dances so divinely” (ll.84-85), and Donne has to stop his companion from dancing in the street: “Stand still, must you dance here for company?” (l.86). Guilpin’s attack on Fabian, a social climber (“How like a *Musherom* art thou quickly growne” - III.75), uses dancing as a metaphor of personal change, as friendship is replaced by snobbish disregard: “Thou art growne a silken dauncer, and in that/ Turn’d to a caper, skipst from love to hate” (III.81-82). At University Fabian “Siz’d eightene pence a week” (III.77) but has since grown proud and now lives the snobbish, frivolous life of a fashionable gentleman. He has followed fashions for so long “that at last/ Thou art growne thy selfe a fashion” (III.104-105); his inconstant life, devoted to “Fitting the various world” (III.107) has finally deprived him of his former self. Comic butts similar to these appear widely in drama, as well as in satire, but it is characteristic of satire that Guilpin should emphasise the denial of identity of which they are guilty.

In one satire, *Humours*, Marston enumerates several examples of young men’s enthusiasms in “these pride-swolne dayes” (SV.XI.9), all of which indicate social ambition.

¹²⁷ Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, p.27.

¹²⁸ Guilpin mentions the snobbery associated with these in *Skialetheia*, III.61-68.

¹²⁹ See ‘Recreations’, pp.149-162 of Ruth Kelso’s *The Doctrine of the English Gentleman in the Sixteenth Century*, University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, University of Illinois Press, 1929, and Marcia Vale, *The Gentleman’s Recreations: Accomplishments and Pastimes of the English Gentleman, 1580-1630*, Cambridge, 1977.

¹³⁰ Waldo F. McNeir identifies Curio (*The Scourge*, Satire XI) as John Davies, and observes that “Davies incurred [Marston’s] displeasure chiefly as the author of a spirited defence of dancing [*i.e. Orchestra*] in which he offered a fanciful explanation of its metaphysic”. McNeir argues that Marston had a “puritanical antipathy to dancing” which arose from his “strong moral sense”, but this seems excessive; in any case, Marston was not in any conventional sense a puritan (see Chapter II, section 2 of this thesis). W.F. McNeir, ‘Marston versus Davies and Terpsichore’, *PQ* XXIX (1950), 430-434, p.433.

He shows us Curio, a youth so obsessed with dancing that he can talk, and even dream, of nothing else:

His teeth doe caper whilst he eates his meate,
His heeles doe caper, whilst he takes his seate,
His very soule, his intellectuall
Is nothing but a mincing capreall.

(SV.XI.21-24)

Luscus, another, is addicted to plays, and ceaselessly shows off his knowledge of them; Martius never stops talking about fencing; Luxurio has pretensions to being a gentleman-rake and boasts endlessly of his conquests; Piso devotes his life to fashionable dress. “In fayth I am sad”, says Marston,

To see the vaineness of fayre *Albions* youth;
To see their richest time euen wholly spent
In that which is but Gentries ornament.
...
It argues too much time, too much regard
Imploy’d in that which might be better spard,
Then substance should be lost.

(SV.XI.187-189; 196-198)

Individual “substance” is sacrificed in order to achieve “Gentries ornament” - an appearance of refinement and sophistication which is the sign of upper-class breeding. The significance of this will be discussed in depth in chapter II, but it should be noted now that one important origin of Marston’s intellectual and artistic exploration of the nature and meaning of identity, and its relationship to social and material contexts, lies in the collective neurosis of sixteenth-century Englishmen concerning their class-status. As we have seen, by the 1590s there had appeared a substantial amount of intellectual comment on the origins of identity; this was made into a particularly ‘live’ issue by the problems of locating one’s identity in a highly class-conscious society whose traditional structure was being pressured to allow greater mobility to those who were displaced by changing distribution of wealth.

One particularly good illustration of this is the period’s fascination with ancestry,

which now reached new heights of fantasy and elaboration. Though it soon became a fad, a craze, a quasi-intellectual hobby for the idle rich, its prime purpose was social integration, the welding of a homogeneous group of seemingly respectable lineage from a crazy patchwork of the most diverse, and sometimes dubious, origins. Genuine genealogy was cultivated by the older gentry to reassure themselves of their innate superiority over the upstarts; bogus genealogy was cultivated by the new gentry in an effort to clothe their social nakedness, and by the old gentry in the internal jockeying for position in the ancestral pecking order.¹³¹

¹³¹ Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, p.16. In *English Politics and the Concept of Honour, 1485-1642* (*Past and Present* Supplement 3, 1978) Mervyn James argues that as an increasing proportion of the “new men” claiming the privileges of honour “were not men of war, but lawyers, officials, merchants, even

This did not escape the attention of the satirists. Joseph Hall foresees how a descendant of the low-born but (or therefore) dynastically conscious Lolio denies his real origins and

findes records of his great pedigree,
And tels how first his famous Ancestor
Did come in long since with the Conquerour.
(*Vergidemiarum*, IV.ii.134-136)

Marston's Castilio, a portrait of a gallant "that can all the poynts of courtship show" (CS.I.28) but who is essentially of "queere substance, worthlesse, most absurd" (CS.I.48) is derided for the newness of his coat of arms, the assumption of which was essential for rising families that sought to establish their high place in the pecking order:

[Castilio] on his glorious scutchion
Can quaintly show wits *newe* invention,
Aduancing forth some thirstie *Tantalus*,
Or els the Vulture on *Promethius*,¹³²
With some short motto of a dozen lines.¹³³
(CS.I.31-35)

Such behaviour should not surprise us. There can have been few times in English history when who a person *was*, was such an open question, and one that hinged so much on factors that lay outside the individual self.

Marston's reference to Prometheus and the vulture, a metaphor of courtly rapacity, brings us to the third aspect of the immediate historical background that seems to have been influential on the development of verse satire: the general rise in corruption and immorality in the upper class. This is a broad and vague topic, but it deserves some consideration. In the first place, the types of behaviour we have already looked at may themselves be seen as strictly immoral, and this is certainly an aspect of the satirists' motivation for attacking them. Moreover, the growth in ostentatious consumption among the rich had implications for others, especially tenants of some high-spending landlords, whose rents were increased to pay for the cost of riotous extravagance in London.¹³⁴ There was some substance to the

husbandmen and artisans" (p.58), so "uncertainty about the status of heredity in relation to other aspects of honour increased, with a proneness to present honour, virtue and nobility as detachable from their anchorage in pedigree and descent" (p.59). While such uncertainty may have been encouraged by some of the *arrivistes*, there is no indication that the idea became popular with established families. It is indisputable, though, that the arrival of educated newcomers in high society helped to establish learning and wit as two of the necessary graces of a gentleman, whose essential accomplishments had hitherto largely consisted of the mediaeval ideal of martial prowess, coupled with a general distrust of intellectual exertion (p.260-1). Elizabethan satires are crammed with courtly characters who affect to be intellectually sophisticated. See especially Donne, IV.51-65; Marston, *SV*, 'In Lectores', *passim*; and Guilpin, V.101-125.

¹³² "Suitable armorial shields for modern courtiers, as distinct from the ancient aristocracy, would be Tantalus, as indicating thirst for advancement, or Prometheus' vulture as indicating the way that courtiers, with monopolies etc., prey on the vitals of the state" (Davenport, *Poems*, p.221).

¹³³ "Unlike the pithy mottos of ancient nobles, these new-style courtiers use long-winded and pompous legends" (Davenport, *Poems*, p.221).

¹³⁴ Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, p.156.

idea that landlord-tenant relations had been disrupted by the decamping of so many lords to the Court; mediaeval traditions of aristocratic paternalism and rural hospitality were eroded, and the decay of these personal ties made it psychologically easier for landowners to squeeze their tenants financially. The verse satirists were not blind to this.¹³⁵ However, their treatment of 'moral issues' goes further, and is influenced by a perception that the Court was corrupt, not only in its extravagant waste, but also in the abuse of its legal and constitutional powers. It is difficult to establish exactly what constitutes 'abuse', because the whole system by which wealth and honours was distributed would nowadays commonly be regarded as corrupt, but there were some aspects of it in particular that drew the wrath of the satirists, especially Donne and Marston.¹³⁶

It was a maxim of Lord Burghley's that a man without contacts at Court was "like a hop without a pole".¹³⁷ In the personal gift of the monarch were a great variety of valuable offices, pensions and lands that would be granted to those who were successful in gaining royal favour. The prospect of staking a claim in this seam of gold naturally drew the aristocracy and greater gentry to Court, where they set themselves to the task of making their servile presences felt. This was a well established feature of royal government; indeed, Elizabeth's relative parsimony meant that the Crown's wealth was less diminished in this way than it had been under her father, or was to be under her successor, James. However, it was this same meanness, coupled with the great demands made on the royal coffers by the war with Spain (1587-1604) and the suppression of the Irish rebels, that led to the main corruption scandal of the 1590s, that of monopolies. From the 1560s onwards, the Crown had leased out to some high-ranking courtiers the task of collecting customs duties on certain luxury imported goods, and as financial need became more pressing it increasingly leased out the job of enforcing trade regulations.

The original reason for doing this was to exploit the profit motive in attempting to maximise revenues from duty, which were proving difficult to collect; the Crown would receive a fixed rent greater than its average income from a commodity over the previous

¹³⁵ See, particularly Donne, II.103-110, Marston, SV.III.1-29 and Hall, *Vergidemiarum*, V.ii.

¹³⁶ For an authoritative early study of corruption see J.E. Neale, *Essays in Elizabethan History*, London, 1958, pp.59-84; in *Freedom, Corruption and Government in Elizabethan England*, London, 1973, Joel Hurstfield identifies some of the problems associated with judging 'corruption' from a great historical distance.

¹³⁷ Quoted by Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*, p.191.

seven years, and the lessee would be in a position to reap whatever profits he could, which were often considerable. Often the lessee could simply subcontract the work immediately at a straight profit of a hundred per cent or more. Out of this precedent arose a climate in which various abuses became commonplace. One was the system of granting exemptions, under which the Queen would reward a courtier's services with a specific exemption from one or another of the various restrictions on trade, normally a right to export goods, for example wheat, or ordnance, whose sale abroad was forbidden or restricted in the national interest. This the courtier would promptly sell on to merchants who were in a position to turn the exemption into profit. The Crown could thus effectively transfer wealth to courtiers without actually paying out any of its own money, a system that had obvious appeal to Elizabeth, who in her distribution of monopolies took it to its logical and widely hated extreme.

Monopoly patents had originally been designed to encourage industrial enterprise by giving an inventor sole rights over his innovation, but by the end of the century were subject to what were by any standards outrageous abuses. The impecunious Queen took to granting to courtiers monopoly rights over commodities and products in well-established industries to the development of which the recipient had made no contribution whatever. In the words of John Guy,

monopolies had doubled the price of steel; tripled that of starch; caused that of imported glasses to rise fourfold; and that of salt elevenfold. Richard Martin, MP for Barnstaple... claimed to speak 'for a town that grieves and pines, and for a country that groans under the burden' of monopolists whom he dubbed 'bloodsuckers of the commonwealth'.¹³⁸

It became increasingly apparent that the poor were being ruthlessly exploited to pay for the high life of courtiers, and the situation drew fierce criticism from Parliament in November and December 1597. Donne's Satire IV, written earlier the same year,¹³⁹ has a portrait of a court-intelligencer, who knows

who'hath sold his land, and now doth beg
A licence, old iron, bootes, shooes, and egge-
shells to transport; shortly boyes shall not play
At span-counter, or blow-point, but they pay
Toll to some courtier...

(ll.103-107)

¹³⁸ John Guy, *Tudor England*, Oxford, University Press, 1988, p.400.

¹³⁹ Milgate, p.148.

Marston, characteristically, admits not only the public harm caused by this legalised extortion (“grinding”) but also emphasises the way the system of distribution encourages courtiers to become fawning idiots and sacrifice their pride in the hope of gain, like Aulus (SV.IV.83-86, quoted above) and an unnamed character who “doth snort in fat-fed luxury,/ And gapes for some grinding Monopoly” (SV.VII.31-32).

Legal or not, monopolies were widely seen to be products of a corrupt system, but they were only the most obvious examples. The low fees that went with many of the offices of state had not been increased to keep pace with inflation in the Elizabethan period; in 1583 Sir James Croft notified Burghley that “Inferior servants and ministers are driven for necessity to make spoil of as much as they can embezzle”¹⁴⁰ and by the 1590s bribery was becoming common, although it subsequently became even more widespread.¹⁴¹ Donne, always the best-informed of the satirists on the technical workings of his society, devotes the whole of his Satire V to an attack on corruption in the administrative and judicial systems: “justice was sold; now/ Injustice is sold dearer farre” (ll.36-37). This, of course, was another indirect consequence of the need for conspicuous spending among the great: officers of state were simply unable to keep themselves in a style appropriate to their dignity unless they accepted the gifts and ‘sweeteners’ that were constantly being pressed upon them by suitors.

It is a moot point whether there was any connexion between the two, but at the time when standards of public probity were slipping, so too were those of private sexual continence. Stone points out that “after about 1590... there developed general promiscuity among both sexes at court”.¹⁴² In an age when aristocratic marriages were almost invariably arranged, it was regarded as almost normal that upper-class men would, once married, pursue affairs with women other than their wives, and of a lower social class than themselves. The patrilineal culture traditionally withheld this freedom from women, in whom sexual infidelity was a threat to dynastic continuity and an affront to the husband’s manly authority. However, at the end of the sixteenth century the ‘double standard’ was challenged:

¹⁴⁰ Guy, *Tudor England*, p.391. Guy sees Croft’s statement as “an excuse rather than an explanation”, arguing that there was “increased tolerance of dishonesty by the 1590s”, but he does not question J.E. Neale’s thesis that corruption increased significantly at this time.

¹⁴¹ Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, p.223.

¹⁴² Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, p.299.

Although it was only under the rule of the tolerant (and homosexual) James I that the sexual morality of the court reached its nadir and became a public scandal, the situation had evidently been deteriorating in the latter years of Queen Elizabeth, despite her anxiety to prevent her entourage from enjoying those sexual pleasures which she had deliberately denied herself. As early as 1603 Lady Anne Clifford reported that 'all the ladies about the court had gotten such ill names that it was grown a scandalous place', indicating that the double standard had already collapsed in these circles.¹⁴³

Sexual promiscuity in women was thus not merely 'a lust of the blood and a permission of the will', but an attack on what might nowadays be called the patriarchal hegemony (or perhaps the hegemonic patriarchy). When women took to themselves the sexual freedom that was traditionally restricted to men they challenged the social order, redefined ideas of gender and created a risk of illegitimacy that to a dynastically-obsessed society was potentially threatening.

It thus comes as no surprise to find that lust features prominently among the vices castigated by the satirists; Marston in particular rarely leaves the subject for long. Much of this is of the orthodox, male-initiated kind, but some shock is also expressed at the new forwardness of women. "O split my hart", exclaims Marston,

least it doe breake with rage
To see th'immodest loosenes of our age.
...
When lust doth sparkle from our females eyes
And modestie, is roused to the skies.
(SV.II.104-105; 108-109)

In his satire on the wearing of cosmetics, Guilpin identifies a change in the nature of women:

Thus altering natures stamp, they're altered,
From their first purity, innate maidenhead:
Of simple naked honesty, and truth,
And giued o're to seducing lust and youth...
(II.77-80)

This attitude towards women forms part of a treatment of gender and sexuality whose general import is that traditional patterns of sexual identification are at risk from new modes of immoderate, unnatural and subversive behaviour. Hall's *Vergidemiarum* looks to the destabilising of sexual identities as an underlying reason why the times are "such a fickle age" (III.v.3). Like Juvenal, he looks back to a mythical time when men went naked, or dressed in "home-spun *Russet*, voyd of forraine pride" (III.i.63). Then, he says, "men were men, but now the greater part/ Bestes are in life, and women are in heart" (III.i.70-71).

¹⁴³ Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800*, London, 1977, p.504.

As Hall's reference to men being women "in heart" suggests, his attitude to gender is based on a sentimental affection for the good old days, when men were men and women were scared of them. He perceives in his own age a reversal of this condition:

I wote not how the world's degenerate,
That men or know, or like not their estate...
(IV.vi.1-2)

Men now "weare curl'd Periwigs, and chalke their face/ And still are poring on their pocket-glasse" (IV.vi.8-9); women have become "mannish Hus-wiues like their refuse state", who "make a drudge of their *uxorius* mate" (IV.vi.15-16). The Juvenalian technique of adducing gender-reversions as evidence of the corrupted nature of society was popular with the Elizabethans. Marston attacks transvestites of both sexes, characteristically accusing them of insubstantiality ("Protean shadowes") on the ground of their shape-changing:

...He neuer raile at those
That wear a codpis, thereby to disclose
What sexe they are, since strumpets breeches vse...
...
...faire *Briscus* I shall stand in doubt
What sex thou art, since such Hermaphrodites
Such Protean shadowes so delude our sights.
(CS.II.119-121; 124-126)

However, the longest and most interesting treatment of gender-subversion is in the fifth satire of *Micro-Cynicon*.¹⁴⁴ 'T.M.' describes Pyander, the androgynous issue of a union between the devil and an aged prostitute, as a "Cheating youth" who sometimes "iets it like a gentleman" and at others "like a wanton Curtezan" (C4v). On one level 'T.M.'s treatment of Pyander is conventional. He wants to expose "Iugling *Pyanders* damned villanie" and calls down "A plague upon such filthy gullery". But his condemnation is tempered with reluctance. Juvenal, or for that matter Hall, would damn from afar such a deviant, as a judgement on his transvestism. But 'T.M.' dwells on the beauty of Pyander, "so like a lovely smiling parragon" when "in a Nymphes attire"; we are even told of his "cherry lips, black brow and smiles". The satirist's ambivalent attitude toward Pyander is confirmed by his confession that "time was, I loued *Pyander* well". 'T.M' initially says that he overcame his love for Pyander because he felt a moral compulsion to reveal this immoral behaviour:

¹⁴⁴ London, 1599.

True loue indeed, will hate loues black defame,
So loathes my soule to seek *Pyanders* shame.
Oh but I feelee the worne of conscience sting,
And summons me upon my soule to bring
Sinfull *Pyander* into open viewe,
There to receive the shame that will ensue.

(C5r)

However, he also indicates, as is suggested by the term “gullery” (C6r), that Pyander’s real crime was not transvestism as such, but the deception which was practised upon the world, and upon ‘T.M.’ in particular, as a result of this cross-dressing. In ‘T.M.’’s case this led to the stirring and then frustration of his lust, a source of great annoyance to him,

For had he bene a she iniurious boy,
I had not bene so subiect to annoy.

(C6r)

By this, of course, the satirist is himself deeply compromised: he frankly confesses his lustfulness, acknowledging his participation in a lascivious society. The stated moral of this satire is not in the least ‘moral’ in the ordinary sense of the word, but a warning to other gallants “to be wise” and “Trust not a painted puppet” because the streets are filled with “virgins counterfets” (C6r), as though genuine ones were considered fair game. But in ‘T.M.’’s passionate references to Pyander’s beauty, and in his confession that some part of his love for Pyander still lingers within him, there is the important further admission that sexual attractions, even on a question as basic as that of gender, are socially constructed, not innate, and can be confounded by the confusion of the social codes by which they are organized. This acknowledgement, in relation to a component as fundamental to identity as sexuality is, is a striking example of Elizabethan satire at its most radically sceptical.

Being, apart from Joseph Hall, members of the Inns of Court and young men-about-town, the satirists were naturally in a highly ambiguous position in relation to their satires, parts of which are devoted to attacking lawyers and students of the Inns. Marston attacks frivolous youths and pompous barristers alike,¹⁴⁵ as does Guilpin,¹⁴⁶ who frowns on the “Attorneys silken pride” (III.127). Donne, as we have seen, also describes an overweening lawyer, who gets rich on the pickings to be had from “heires melting with luxurie” (II.79) and, though talentless, nevertheless

...throwes

¹⁴⁵ *The Scourge*, ‘In Lectores’ 7-9; 77-79 and VII.80-91

¹⁴⁶ *Skialetheia*, V.119-125.

Like nets, or lime-twigs, wheresoere he goes,
His title' of Barrister, on every wench,
And wooes in language of the Pleas, and Bench...

(II.45-48)

As these lines imply, lawyers enjoyed considerable prestige in the late sixteenth century; it was possible for them to become very rich, and as professionals, rather than tradesmen, they belonged to the educated upper-middle class. They were thus in a position to join the battle for favour and status that is described in these pages, but on the whole it is noticeable that the satirists did not do so. Donne, after sailing in the expeditions against Spain in 1596 and 1597, started a promising career as Secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton, but fell on hard times after he contracted a clandestine marriage to his employer's niece; Guilpin faded into obscurity. Marston, of course, became a playwright, and a colourful and successful one at that. As a gentleman, he was flouting convention by becoming a professional writer, but this, it seems, was the whole point. His hatred of the whole of upper-class culture, and of the trivial vanities and the servility to codes and people that it encouraged, led him to profoundly individualistic philosophy, for the propagation of which verse satire was an ideal medium. Chapter II analyses Marston's satires from this perspective.

Chapter II: The Self in Elizabethan Satire

This chapter is a close analysis of Marston's satires, principally *The Scourge of Villanie*, which it examines in the contexts of Elizabethan satirical theory and the work of contemporary satirists. It is in four sections: the first explains the stylistic and formal features of Elizabethan satire and makes some general comments on *The Scourge* in the light of these; the second deals specifically with the critical wisdom that interprets *The Scourge* as a Calvinist work; the third argues that the Elizabethan satirists, especially Marston, define themselves through their writing, which is an aggressive statement of the author's self; the fourth examines the treatment of self-creation in these poems, and concludes that Marston's satires expound a theory of existential duty which is to some extent reflected in the satires of Guilpin and Hall, but which is also to a large extent his own.

1. Language and Satire.

The self-conscious manipulation of language is prominent in Elizabethan satire which, taking its cue from the Romans, insists that corruption in society has a linguistic index. In practice, satire's approach to language and identity is manifested in two ways. The first is the satirist's own use of language, the way he uses it to create a suggestive satirical discourse; the second is through the satirical treatment of characters who abuse language, twisting it away from its true function. As we shall see, both of these techniques are based on the idea¹ that language is a looking-glass in which individuals and cultures may see themselves reflected. In order to appreciate this conception, though, we must first look at the Elizabethans' theory of satire, asking what kind of principles they observed in writing and reading this strange and obscure poetry.

In discussing the etymology of the Latin *satura*, J.W. Duff concludes that "a prevailing sense of mixture may be taken as the original sense: it is not difficult to transfer from it to

¹ Originally Senecan - see Chapter I, section 2 above.

that sense of a literary medley which was never wholly dissociated from the term ...”.²

That this idea underlies both Roman and Elizabethan satire cannot be doubted: both range widely, covering a variety of contemporary social phenomena. However, the re-invention of verse satire by the Elizabethans included a thorough revision of one important element: the satirical persona, the identity of the speaker within the satires, took on a new significance. The discourse of Roman satires was, as we have seen, highly contrived, but their basic moral perspective seems natural, in the sense that it is one that we can imagine a reasonable, if conservative, Roman might have sought to defend. Elizabethan satire largely lacks this quality. Instead, its satirical voices embrace extremes of disaffection and alienation, from the licentious, outraged hypocrisy of Marston’s satires to the intensely world-weary disgust of Donne’s.

Contemporary attempts to define satire (or, ‘satyre’) tend to emphasise these anti-social characteristics and to derive it etymologically from satyrs, the mythical, libidinous woodland gods. Thomas Langley wrote in 1570 that “The satires had their name of uplandyshe Goddes, that were rude, lassivious and wanton of behaviour.”³ On the other hand, Puttenham’s *Arte of English Poesie* (1589) argues that “the Satyre” was “the first and most bitter invective against vice and vicious men”. It got its name because “to th’intent their bitterness should breed none ill will” the reciters of this poetry disguised themselves as “Satyres or Silvanes...the terrrene and base gods being conversant with mans affaires”.⁴ As we shall see, this contradiction is itself significant. In *Faunus and Melliflora* (1600) a mythological narrative poem subtitled ‘The Original of our English Satyres’, John Weever tells of how the goddess Diana, enraged by the elopement of Melliflora, a woodland nymph, with Faunus, “to ease her hate” turned their child into a monster. This “Ioynd issue with the Satyres and the Faunes” (l.1042) and the resulting offspring were brought to Britain by Brutus, the mythical Trojan refugee:

This boone *Diana* then did aske of *Love*,
(More to be venged on the Queene of Love,)
That *Faunus* late transformed sonnes Satyres,
(So cald because they satisfide her ires)

² J.W. Duff, *Roman Satire*, Cambridge U.P., 1937, pp.13-14. This derivation is not undisputed; some derive ‘satura’ from an independent Etruscan root. See *The Oxford Latin Dictionary*.

³ *An Abridgement of the Notable Works of Polidore Vergile* (1570) sigs. cii-ciii.

⁴ Richard Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, ed. G. Willcock and A. Walker, Cambridge, 1936, I, xiii (p.31).

Should euermore be vtter enemies,
 To lovers pastimes, sportfull veneries.
Love granted her this lawful iust demand,
 As we may see within our faerie land:
 The satyres ierking sharp fang'd poesie,
 Lashing and biting *Venus* luxurie,
 Gauling the sides of foul impietie,
 Scourging the lewdnesse of damn'd villainy...
 (*Faunus and Melliflora*, 1065-76)⁵

Weever's poem invites three main observations: it specifically aims at the origins of "our *English* satires" (my italics), and by invoking the immigration of Brutus clearly differentiates them from the Roman; it emphasises, through the use of terms like "lashing" and "biting", the uncontrolled violence of English satire; and it singles out Marston, the self-appointed 'scourge of villanie' as an illustration of this principle. Weever goes on to attack satires for their bitter censoriousness: "I was borne to hate your censuring vaine,/ Your enuious biting in your crabbed straine", he says at ll.1085-86. In a slightly later poem, *The Whipping of the Satyre* (1601) he changed the ground of his criticism somewhat when he accused Marston, Guilpin and Jonson of "vsing much hypocrisie to conceale your malice".⁶ This criticism is chiefly directed against Marston, the paradigmatic satirist of the times, the "filthy sweepe-chimney of sin", whereof "The soyle...defiles thy soule within" (ll.179-180).

Satires that castigate society for its sexual vice, but revel in the lewdness they depict will inevitably attract charges of duplicity and hypocrisy. Weever addresses Marston with the accusation that

seeing men inclined to svch sinne,
 You feasted them with all varietie,
 And lest you should this vilde pretence reveale,
 Did hypocrite it with a show of zeale.
 (*The Whipping of the Satyre*, ll.201-204)

This foregrounds a feature anticipated by the Romans and fundamental to Elizabethan verse satire: the contradiction implied by, on one hand, a sense of alienation from a society that seems to be morally and socially disintegrating and, on the other, a suggestion that the satirist's own self is being drawn into the very process it professes to deplore. Weever's comments are particularly applicable to Satire III of *The Scourge of Villanie*, in which, among other characters, Tullus boasts of how "That for a false French-crowne, [he]

⁵ Ed. A. Davenport, Liverpool U.P., 1948.

⁶ *The Whipper Pamphlets*, ed. A. Davenport, Liverpool U.P., 1951 in Two Parts. Vol. I, p.3: 'To the Vayne Glorious the Satyrst, the Epigrammatist, and Humorist', prose introduction.

vaulting had", but, it is gleefully pointed out, his incontinence was repaid with "true French pestilence" (ll.91-94); Robrus, "for videnage", "Enters commen, on his next neighbors stage" (ll.99-100);⁷ Lucea, swerving from "her husbands luke-warme bed", takes "her pleasure...hurried/ In ioultng Coach" (ll.121-123) while Furia acts as a broker for "her sisters modestie,/ And prostitute[s] her soule to brothelrie" (ll.183-184).⁸ There is tension here between the great vitality with which Marston imbues his debauchees, and his ostensibly reprobative purpose; the resulting contradiction between fascinated prurience and moralistic revulsion was what prompted Weever's criticisms. Weever's criticisms have been echoed in this century by many writers on Marston. Morse Allen, for example, observed that "[w]hen lust is so carefully and lingeringly dwelt upon, it is impossible to avoid the suspicion that its consideration was pleasing to the author",⁹ and Hallett Smith rather more diffidently suggested that "Marston's preoccupation with lust is so pervasive that one wonders whether he has quite escaped from identifying himself with the object of his attack."¹⁰

This tendency towards self-contradiction is only part of a larger pattern of incoherence and obfuscation in *The Scourge* that seems designed by Marston to give an impression of a culture and a consciousness in which all true manifestations of clarity and purity are in retreat. For example, in the very last couplet of the book, Marston registers his departure from the reader in the following terms:

Here ends my rage, though angry brow was bent,
Yet I haue sung in sporting merriment.
(SV, XI,239-240)

In doing so he acknowledges that there have been two opposing forces at work in his poetry: 'anger' and 'merriment', the wrathful and the humorous, or rather perhaps satire and comedy, both inform *The Scourge*. Although much of the book's invective expresses anger and disgust, several of the victims of Marston's "knottie rod", while being guilty of

⁷ "Marston is playing on the legal term 'common pur cause de vicinage' which W.S. Holdsworth (Hist. of English Law, 1923, ii.143) explains thus: 'Common pur cause de vicinage exists where there are adjoining wastes belonging to two different manors and the tenant of each manor is allowed to put his beasts on the wastes of the other.' But from the context it is clear that Marston does not mean anything so innocent..." (Davenport, *Poems*, p.295).

⁸ See also especially III.39-42 and 60-78. Satire III is in fact crammed with sexual dynamism of every kind.

⁹ *The Satire of John Marston*, p.97.

¹⁰ Hallett Smith, *Elizabethan Poetry: A Study in Conventions, Meaning and Expression*, Cambridge, Mass., 1952, p.99. Gustav Cross is in a minority in arguing that "Marston writes in the tradition of the hell-fire preacher who paints vice at its most vicious in the hope that his audience will look to heaven". 'The Retrograde Genius of John Marston', *Review of English Literature* 2:4 (1961) 19-27, p.20.

certain kinds of folly, are laughed at for their idiocy, rather than cursed for their sinfulness. With similar inconsistency, verse satires deplore the breakdown of moral order, but are themselves fluid and formless. By comparison with the Romans, in whose satires, as we have seen, similar factors were at work, the Elizabethans were very conscious of the ambiguity of their satirical poetry. Where Roman satires were contradictory or incoherent, this seems to have been the result of unconsciously confused thinking on the part of the writer (Juvenal) or the outcome of a - to contemporary minds - eccentric conjunction of style and meaning (Persius). But to the Elizabethans obscurity was the chief characteristic of satirical writing, and confusion an effect at which satirists consciously aimed; it is as though they deliberately accentuated these aspects of the form. Joseph Hall thought that a “true and naturall Satyre” should be “both hard of conceipt and harsh of stile”¹¹ and at one point notes that some people have criticised his satires for being too lucid:

Not riddle-like obscuring their intent:
But packe-staffe plaine vttring what thing they ment...
(*Vergidemiurum*, Lib. III, Prol.)

Marston makes a similar observation. In the note ‘To those that seeme iudiciall perusers’ at the beginning of *The Scourge of Villanie*, he describes the fashion for “obscuritie, & harshness”:

... there are some, (too many) that think nothing good, that is so curteous, as to come within their reach. Tearing all Satyres (bastard) which are not palpable darke, and so rough writ, that the hearing of them read, would set a mans teeth on edge.
(*Poems*, p.100)

He goes on to imply that the definition of satire as obscure is based on a misunderstanding of Persius, who “is crabby, because antient, & his ierkes, (being perticularly giuen to priuate customes of his time) duskie”, and Juvenal, who “(vpon the like occasion) seemes to our iudgement, gloomie”. This is paradoxical, since Marston was certainly the harshest and arguably the most obscure satirist of his generation.¹² His poems are jagged and impressionistic, possessing the difficult syntax, the glancing, allusive quality and the sudden

¹¹ ‘A Post-script to the Reader’, *Poems*, p.97.

¹² “I cannot, I protest, yet understand/ The wittie, learned, Satyres mystery”, wrote Weever, probably with reference to Hall and Marston, in the prologue to the *Epigrammes* (1599). The same volume includes a parody of a satire: “Hence *Braurons* god to *Taurominion*,/ And you leualting *Corybants* be gone,/ Fly thundering *Bronsterops* to *Hyppocrene*,/ And *Mauors* to Nymph-nursing *Mytilene*...” (D2v, ll.1-4). This sample is representative of the parody as a whole. Its ranting and joke-allusiveness suggest Marston, but Weever added that “this is now a schollers vaine” (D3v, l.6) which implies that he was thinking of Hall.

switches of voice that are characteristic of both Juvenal and Persius.¹³ But the transition from one idea to the next can be even more rapid than it is in Roman satire, and the absurd, dream-like result is sometimes redolent of twentieth-century stream of consciousness:

Writ *Palaephatus*, comment on those dreames,
That *Hylus* takes, mid' st dung-pit reeking steames
Of *Athos* hote house. Gramercie modest smyle.
Chremes a sleepe. *Paphia*, sport the while.
Lucia, new set thy ruffe, tut thou art pure,
Canst thou not lispe, (*good brother*) look demure?
Fye *Gallus*, what, a skeptick *Pyrrhonist*?
When chaste *Dictinna*, breakes the Zonelike twist?
(SV.I.70-77)¹⁴

The Elizabethans also had a stronger sense than did the Romans that the satiric persona, that is, the voice within the text, and the author - the person who actually wrote the document - were not exactly the same entity; as a result, when we read Elizabethan satire we often feel ourselves to be in the presence, not of an authentic moralist, but of a strutting, posturing critic who is himself at least half reprobate, and is highly contrived to boot. Modern criticism has frequently failed to notice this partly ironic perspective that the writers have on their poetic personae, an omission which seems to have contributed to its generally low opinion of Elizabethan satire. For example, in an essay entitled 'The Precarious Balance of John Marston' (1952),¹⁵ Samuel Schoenbaum argued that Marston's work, which "lacks high intrinsic merit" (p.1070), is "a testimonial of the turbulent emotions of a distressed spirit" (p.1078): "literary activity remained fundamentally an outlet for [Marston's] conflicting emotional energies" (p.1071). The latter originated in "an inability to overcome an infantile repugnance to elementary biological facts" which later manifested itself as a "need for rationalizing and self-justification as feelings of guilt and revulsion succeeded the original impulse toward sensual delight" (p.1075).

The amateurishness of Schoenbaum's psychologising is perhaps best demonstrated by his conclusion that Marston's "own maladjustment coincided with the malaise of his age" (p.1078), leaving the reader to guess exactly what it was in relation to which Marston was

¹³ For an analysis of Marston's metrical technique, see F. Burke, *Metrical Roughness in Marston's Formal Satire*, Washington, 1957.

¹⁴ Marston does describe this satire as being "too obscure" (*Poems*, p.100) but it is not obviously a parody. Perhaps he wrote it in order to show that he could meet the highly obscure standard set by Hall. Another particularly obscure and allusive satire by Marston is CS.V.

¹⁵ *PMLA*, 67 (1952), 1069-78.

supposed to be maladjusted. This absurdity did not prevent John Peter from delivering a similarly artless but even more hostile verdict on *The Scourge* three years later:

if we come to [Marston's] satires (as I think we come to most reprobative literature) with the expectation of coherence and consistency it is only to be flabbergasted by the wildness of his uncertainties and contradictions...

As we come to the close of *The Scourge of Villanie* it is difficult to resist the conclusion that we have been witnessing an utterly insincere and possibly pathological performance.¹⁶

Whether twentieth century critics have laid the blame for the supposed badness of Elizabethan satires with their authors or with the age that produced them, they have generally been unstinting with their condemnation. Thus, in 1929 Humbert Wolfe complained that Marston

sought to atone with violence for what he lacked in strength, as though an ass braying through a megaphone could out roar a lion...It is not that he was coarse and wanton in his language and thought. That merely labels him Elizabethan... He was a satirist through disappointment, chagrin, or by deliberate choice, and not because he sought to change or amend his times.¹⁷

But, even forty years later, things hadn't changed much:

Donne is by far the best of the Elizabethan satirists. Hall is frigid and mechanical, Marston is turgid and chaotic, the others are mere bunglers".¹⁸

These responses are fairly typical of the twentieth century's reception of Elizabethan verse satire.¹⁹ It is one primarily dictated by an intense emotional hostility that is difficult to explain; for example, in his eagerness to point out Marston's inadequacies, Peter overlooks the fact that in this case that which is insincere is unlikely to be pathological.

The most detailed study of Elizabethan satiric theory is Alvin Kernan's *The Cankered Muse*.²⁰ The author centres his discussion of the genre on Marston because of the typicality of *The Scourge*'s satiric persona, who "is made up of the usual tensions incumbent on practising the satiric trade. He is prurient, sadistic, sick in mind, proud, envious and downright untruthful" (pp.251-52), the epitome of the "[i]nstability, incoherence, wildness, uncertainty, contradiction" that are "part of all the satirists of Elizabethan satire" (p.116). Kernan emphasises the artificial quality of the Elizabethan

¹⁶ J. Peter, *Complaint and Satire in Early English Literature*, Oxford, 1956, pp.174,176.

¹⁷ H. Wolfe, *Notes on English Verse Satire* (The Hogarth Lectures, No. 10) Hogarth Press, London, 1929, p.53.

¹⁸ M. Hodgart, *Satire*, London, 1969, p.142.

¹⁹ See also C.S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1954, p.472, 477.

²⁰ A. Kernan, *The Cankered Muse*, New Haven, 1959.

satiric persona ('satirist'): "the Elizabethan satirist was a strange, twisted character, and the poets seem to have delighted in multiplying his peculiarities - so much so that it often appears that they were more interested in creating a sensational satirist than in writing satire" (p.89). As a result, "Elizabethan and Jacobean satirists are best understood as conventional figures designed for a specific function in satire, not as spokesmen for the authors' views" (p.247); Kernan maintains this separation by always referring to Marston's satiric persona as 'Kinsayder', the pseudonym Marston uses in *The Scourge of Villanie* and in *Certaine Satyres*.²¹

The problem with Kernan's analysis of the author/satiric persona relationship is that in taking issue with the psychologising tradition he goes too far in the opposite direction. If Elizabethan satires do not express their authors' views, we might ask, what is the point of them? Whose views do they express, if anybody's? Should we simply think of them as exercises in a form without content, as is implied by the contention that the writers "were [often] more interested in creating a sensational satirist than in writing satire"? This seems excessive. Kinsayder and Marston are in some ways distinguishable from one another, but not to the point where Kinsayder is purely a fictional character, as distinct from Marston as, say, Richard the Third is from Shakespeare.²² While on one hand we can scarcely imagine a 'real life' version of the coarse and truculent Kinsayder as being capable of writing a play as elegant and disciplined as *The Dutch Courtesan*, on the other we cannot afford to ignore the fact that there is much in *The Scourge* that does clearly relate to Marston's later work. The difficulty is in deciding which personality is responsible for which elements of *The Scourge*. This problem is complicated by the book's internal contradictions, and any attempt to resolve it must ultimately be subjective in its approach.

I would draw a broad distinction between the *formal* wildness and incoherence of Marston's satires, and the thread of reasonably consistent philosophical *content* that I

²¹ Marston signs himself "W.K." at the end of the dedication of *Certaine Satyres* (*Poems*, p.49) and as "W. Kinsayder" at the end of the note in *The Scourge* 'To those that seeme iudiciall perusers' (*Poems*, p.100). Kernan observes (p.96) that "Kinsayder is apparently a pun on Marston (Mar-stone) since 'Kinsing seems to have been an operation which castrated unruly dogs and docked their tails'" (Kernan quotes from Theodore Spencer, 'John Marston', *The Criterion*, 13(1934), 581). See also Davenport, *Poems*, p.265.

²² cf. WYW, II.i:134-135: "Why, you Don Kinsayder!/ Thou canker-eaten rusty cur! thou snaffle/ To freer spirits!". Marston's ability to send up Kinsayder in this way strongly implies a distance between himself and his satiric persona.

suggest runs through them. The former I attribute to Kinsayder, on the two grounds that (a) as a feature of Marston's work, contradiction is confined to *The Scourge*, and (b) contradiction is, as Kernan rightly says, an integral component of Elizabethan satire. The latter I attribute to Marston on the two further grounds that (c) it makes no sense to dismiss the presence of a set of related and reasonably consistently pursued philosophical/psychological themes in a book of this kind as the ramblings of a half-mad fictional reprobate and (d) there is enough continuity in the pursuit of these themes between *The Scourge* and the plays that came after it to justify an assumption that Marston is in some sense 'putting his views across' in both. Since both Kinsayder and Marston are frequently both speaking at once, as for example when a basically serious reference to the human soul is couched in furious or heavily ironic language, it is fruitless to try to divide up *The Scourge* between them, so in the following discussion I use the term 'Marston' to denote both the author and the satirical persona,²³ identifying them separately only where it seems necessary for the purposes of clarity. This practice accords with the main emphasis of this thesis, in that it foregrounds Marston's philosophical ideas rather than his technical achievements; there are difficulties with it that will become apparent,²⁴ but it seems to me that the fluidity of such an approach offers the best opportunity of understanding what Marston was trying to say. Kinsayder is, after all, Marston's creation and much of the substance of what he has to say is rooted in what I take to be Marston's own views.

Another problem with Kernan's approach, which in this respect epitomises the general poverty of imagination brought to Elizabethan satire by its twentieth century assessors, arises from his view that "no author of Elizabethan formal satire had a clear idea of what was basically wrong with his society"; lacking a "binding element" of this kind, Elizabethan satires were inevitably "fragmentary": "[t]he failure of the satiric poets to grasp the innate unity of their raw materials is manifest in the organisational weaknesses of both the individual satires and the collected books" (pp.86-7). This rather patronising attitude shows a failure to consider the possibility that the chaos apparently embodied by satires does not spring from a technical or intellectual incompetence on the authors' parts to

²³ I have done the same in my discussion of satires by other authors.

²⁴ See section 2 of this chapter.

“grasp the innate unity of their raw materials”, but from an understanding that those materials were actually not unified but chaotic, and that an important truth was told by bringing this chaos to light, if not to order. Throughout Marston’s work is present the idea that language does not merely express ideas and meanings; it also performs them. In this the form of *The Scourge of Villanie* is no exception; its harsh language, contradictions, obscurity and lack of tight structure in themselves suggest doubt and anxiety, the tendency towards erratic, undisciplined thought by which Marston wishes to characterise the times.

There is literary decorum in suiting an indecorous mode of writing to an indecorous era, and it should be acknowledged that the Elizabethan satirists repeatedly claim to be not only the critics, but also the mouthpieces of an unstable, incoherent, wild, uncertain and contradictory age. Guilpin calls his satires “these bastards of my *Muse*”, insisting that

I know they are passing filthy, scuruey lines,
I know they are rude, harsh and vnsauory rimes...
(Ep.70, ll.8-10)

but he justifies this by pointing to the moral decay of the times:

Viewing this sin-drownd world, I purposely,
Phisick’d my *Muse*, that thus unmannerly,
She might bewray our folly-soyled age...
(Ep.70, ll.13-15)

Joseph Hall laments the corruption of poetry by rich patrons who conceal their faults and purchase the world’s good opinion by paying writers to eulogise them:

...in this smoothing age who durst indite,
Hath made his pen an hyred Parasite,
To claw the back of him that beastly liues,
And pranck base men in proud Superlatiues.
(*Vergidemiarm*, Lib.I, Prologue ll.9-12)

As the (allegedly) first English satirist, Hall’s self-appointed task is to reverse this trend. Declaring that he will write neither love poetry nor tragedy, he instead opts for the less exalted satirical form: “I albee in careless rymes,/ Check the mis-ordred world, and lawlesse times.” (*Vergidemiarm*, Sat. I, ll.23-24). Like Guilpin, Hall emphasises in his introductory verses the lowness and vulgarity of the corrective form. It is “lowly Satyre”, “worth-lesse poetry”, inspired by a “baser Muse” and written “withouten second care”. Alluding to the mythical association of satire with satyrs, he says that the “ruder Satyre should goe rag’d and bare:/ And show his rougher and his hairy hide...” (*Vergidemiarm*, ‘His defiance to Enuie’ ll.77-78).

Marston's claims for the appropriateness of satire to the times go further than those of any of his contemporaries. Quoting Juvenal, he gives Satire II of *The Scourge of Villanie* the title 'Difficile est Satyram non scribere' and in it pursues the Juvenalian idea that satire is an unavoidable moral and stylistic response to the corruption and disintegration of society. "What icye Saturnist, what northerne pate/ But such grosse lewdnes would exasperate?", he asks at ll.19-20. The satire describes a catalogue of vice in support of this entirely rhetorical query, which reappears at line 38 ("Who would not shake a Satyres knottie rod?") and again in a modified form at line 70:

O what dry braine melts not sharpe mustarde rime
To purge the snottery of our slimie time?

At line 96 it appears once more ("Fie, who can with-hold...") and finally in the concluding couplet of the Satire:

Who can abstaine? what modest braine can hold,
But he must make his shame fac'd muse a scold?
(ll.142-143)

The questions act as a kind of refrain, lending to the Satire what structure and direction it has. They also, through the use of phrases like "knottie rod" and "scold", establish physical violence as a metaphor for the wild linguistic aggression of satire. The all-licensed satirist claims for himself a sadistic liberty that is paradoxically based on his purpose to improve:

My soule is vext, what power will'th desist?
Or dares to stop a sharpe fangd satirist?
Who'le coole my rage? who'le stay my itching fist
But I will plague and torture whom I list?
(SV.II.7-10)

He later says that this kind of language is not merely a personal affectation, but is required by the times: "Rude limping lines fits this leud halting age" (SV.V.18). It appears that the Elizabethans borrowed wholesale from Seneca the theory that language identifies the self, both individually and in collective society. An essay of Ben Jonson's, published in *Discoveries* (1640) but apparently written much earlier, closely follows Seneca's epistle 'On Style as a Mirror of Character':

...wee may conclude: Wheresoever, manners, and fashions are corrupted, language is. It imitates the publicke riot. The excesse of feasts, and apparell, are the notes of a sick State; and the wantonnesse of language, of a sick mind.

Language most shewes a man: speake that I may see thee. It springs out of the most retired, and inmost parts of us, and is the Image of the

Parent of it, the mind... Some men are tall, and bigge, so some language
is high and great. Then the words are chosen, their sound ample, the
composition full, the absolution plenteous...Some are little, and
Dwarves: so of speech it is humble, and low, the words poore and
flat...²⁵

In Elizabethan verse satire there is no surer outward sign of peoples' inner spiritual and intellectual vacuity than the failure of the faculty of language in them. As individuals betray their human potential and abdicate from their responsibility to think and act as moral units, their language becomes feeble and recessive. Donna Hamilton has shown how, in Marston's play *The Dutch Courtesan* (1605), "the irrational and the foolish render language helpless and ineffectual"²⁶ but the idea also permeates his (and others') verse satires. "[L]et me have the substance rough, not the shadow", says Marston of satiric verse in 'To those that seeme iudiciall perusers', one of the prefatory notices to *The Scourge*. (*Poems*, p.101). Later, in the poem 'Ad Rithmum' he argues that rhyming poetry, a "prettie pleasing symphonie of words" is admissible only if the need for a rhyme does not interfere with poetry's purpose, which is to communicate "sence":

No title of my sence let change
To wrest some forced rhyme, but freely range.
Ye scrupulous observers, goe & learne
Of Aesops dogge; meate from a shade discern.
(*'Ad Rithmum'*, 33-38)

The moral of this is that the world must learn to discriminate between the 'meate' of linguistic substance and mere 'ornature', the ghost of meaning. The characters of *The Scourge of Villanie*, who cannot do so, are repeatedly described in terms of their unconsidered and trivial talk:

...shall perfum'd Castilio censure thee?...
(Who nere read farther then his Mistris lips)...
Nere in his life did other language vse,
But, *Sweete Lady, faire Mistres, kind hart, deare couse...*
(*'In lectores prorsus indignos'*, 15, 17, 19-20)

[Lollio's son] ...can like taught Parrat cry
Dearely belou'd, with simpering grauitie...
(SV.III.171-172)

There is a crew...
That lick the tayle of greatness with their lips:
Laboring with third-hand iests, and Apish skips,
Retayling others wit...
(SV.IV.57, 59-61)

Hence ye big-buzzing-little-bodied Gnats,
Yee tatling Ecchoes, huge tongu'd pigmy brats...

²⁵ Jonson, *Collected Works*, ed. Herford and Simpson, Vol. VIII, pp.593, 625.

²⁶ Donna Hamilton, 'Language as Theme in *The Dutch Courtesan*'. *RD* (Northwestern U.) N.S. (1972), 75-87.

(SV.VI.101-102)

Why, he is naught but huge blaspheming othes...
(SV.VII,116)

Did euer any eare, ere heare him speake?
Vnlesse his tongue of crosse-poynts did intreat?
(SV.XI.19-20)

Now I haue him, that nere of ought did speake
But when of playes or plaiers he did treate.
(SV.XI.41-41)

Oh come not within distance, Martius speakes,
Who nere discourseth but of fencing feates...
(SV.XI.52-53)

He's naught but censure, wilt thou credite me...
....I flatly say he lyes
That heard him ought but censure Poesies.
(SV.XI.110,116-117)

Did euer any man ere hear him talke
But of Pick-hatch, or of some Shorditch baulke,
Aretines filth, or of his wandering whore...
(SV.XI.142-144)

It is in the case of Tuscus (SV.XI,74-97) though, that the relationship between language and selfhood is most revealingly told. Tuscus is a "iest-mounging youth",

Who nere did ope his Apish gerning mouth
But to retaile and broke anothers wit.
(SV.XI.75-76)

"[N]ere his tongue shal lye", continues the satirist, "Till his ingrossed iests are all drawne dry;/ But then as dumbe as Maurus", a gambler, who falls silent when "at play/ H'ath lost his crownes, and paun'd his trim array" (SV.XI.80-83). All of Tuscus' conversation is made of stolen wit; his self is barren because it lacks the power to originate, to bear language:

Lad, hast an Epigram,
Wilt haue it put into the chaps of Fame?
Giue *Tuscus* coppies, sooth as his owne wit
His proper issue he will father it.
(SV.XI.86-89)²⁷

In the concluding couplet of Satire VI, the satirist reflected on his own language, also using the metaphor of birth:

My pate was great with childe, & here tis eased,
Vexe all the world, so that thy selfe be pleas'd.
(SV.VI.111-112)

Not only does the satirist assert his own linguistic fecundity, he also talks of using language to act upon the world. That Tuscus receives and adopts others' language is a sign and a

²⁷ Marston also uses this image at CS.II.41-54.

cause of his lack of substance. The satirist calls for the reverse of this process; the infliction of language on others is a means of ratifying, perhaps even of achieving, one's own existence because it involves an expansion of the self into the world. Tuscus, meanwhile, has nothing that is really his:

O that this Eccho, that doth speake, spet, write
Naught but the excrements of others spright,
This ill-stuft trunk of iests, whose very soule
Is but a heape of libes, should once inroule
His name mong creatures termed rationall,
Whose cheefe repute, whose sence, whose soule & al
Are fed with offal scrapes...

(SV.XI.90-96)

The abuse of language, its debasement to service as a tool of affectation and the concomitant separation of it from its true function as a means of projecting thought, is often cited as a symptom of social decay in the satires of the 1590s. Where Roman satirists focused specifically on the decline of poetry, the Elizabethans seized on the gamut of utterances to show how contemporary society was dissolving into vacuity and waste. Joseph Hall is perhaps the most Classical of his generation in this respect; he certainly dwells at greater length on the state of contemporary literature than any of the other satirists. In his rather florid style, and referring, like Persius, to Parnassus, the fabled home of the Muses, he asserts a link between decadent society and decadent art:

Now is *Pernassus* turned to the stewes:
And on Bay-stockes the wanton Myrtle growes.
Cytheron hill's become a Brothel-bed...
Ye bastard Poets see your Pedegree,
From common Trulls, and loathsome Brothelry.
(*Vergidemiarum*, Bk.I, Sat.II, 17-19, 37-38)

Guilpin is perhaps more typically Elizabethan in that he locates observations whose theoretical root is similar to Hall's in a more tangibly domestic setting. His Epigram 68 concerns Caius, whose unvarying response to others is 'oh rare'. He cries "Oh rare to heare a ballad or a fart", says Guilpin, and has been trotting out these words for so long

That now that phrase is growne thin and thred-bare,
But sure his wit will be more rare and thin,
If he continue...

Caius is clearly an idiot, but by using the conditional expression, "If he continue", Guilpin acknowledges the mutually influential relationship between language and identity: language does not only reveal people, it also affects them. In the 'Satyre Preludium' he uses this relationship as part of the basis for his attacks on contemporary poetry, "these *Lydian*

tunes which blunt our sprights/ Turning our gallants to *Hermaphrodites*". He calls instead for a "*Doricke touch*" that might "Woo *Alexander* from lewd banquetting/ To armes". One character, the "young gallant *Mutio*", formerly filled with valiant resolution, has become "crestfalne" as a result of reading the product of "one's elegiack pen patheticall", and will "goe no voyage now to leaue his Loue" (ll.1-20). Donne's contribution to this aspect of satire is similar to Marston's, in that he singles out those who steal others' witticisms and claim them as their own:

...hee is worst, who (beggarly) doth chaw
Others wits fruits, and in his ravenous maw
Rankly digested, doth those things out-spue,
As his owne things; and they are his owne, 'tis true,
For if one eate my meat, though it be knowne
The meate was mine, th'excrement is his owne.
(Sat.II, ll.25-30)

It must indeed have been galling for the wittier students at the Inns to have their better *bons mots* appropriated by their less gifted peers.

But there was much more to the satirists' concern with language than this. They were of a generation that rejected, for example, the histrionics of the courtly tradition and the Petrarchan sonnet form in favour of a grittier, more realistic poetry that flowed naturally from their experience of a grimmer world.²⁸ The earlier fashion for affected, amorous poetry was mercilessly sent up by, among others, Guilpin, Marston and especially by Davies in his 'Gulling Sonnets', in the first of which the gods come to the assistance of a languishing lover in an ironically appropriate way:

The Lover under burthen of his Mistress love,
Which lyke to *Aetna* did his harte oppresse:
Did give such piteous grones that he did move
The heav'nes at length to pittie his distresse.
By their decree he soone transformed was:
Into a patiente burden-bearinge asse.
(ll.1-4,13-14. *Poems*, p.164)

The impatience with artifice, and especially with passivity implied by this change of attitude closely reflects the mood of the 1590s; Elizabethan satire is very much an attack on those who affect to make art out of life, or rather, to make art instead of life. As we shall see, the kind of identity fashioned by elaborate manners, ostentatious dress and shallow poetry is found to be inadequate by Marston and his contemporaries because it is based on a denial that the individual has either a need or a duty to create for himself a dynamic, independent

²⁸ See Chapter I, section 2 of this thesis.

self. The 'Sence' that Marston calls for is founded on the idea that the use of reason generates and is a sign of personal substance; language whose function is purely one of ostentation, which is borrowed, or which is otherwise not the result and the conveyor of thought and experience, is the discourse of the hollow man.

The problem with this analysis becomes evident when the origins of identity, the core of the self, are brought into question. For the sense of contemporary corruption and decay contains the idea of contagion. The third Satire of Lodge's *Fig for Momus*, for example, sees vice as being passed by example from parent to offspring:

It is as common as unkind a fault
In youth, (too subiect to this worlds assault)
To imitate, admit and daily chuse,
Those errors, which their lawles parents vse.

(II.1-4)²⁹

Underlying this conception is the idea that the self is contextually constructed, that, in people as in apples, rottenness propagates itself. The idea is present in Juvenal:

dedit hanc contagio labem
et dabit in plures, sicut grex totus in agris
unius scabie cadit et porrigine porci
uvaeque conspecta livorem ducit ab uva.

(II.78-80)³⁰

It is because of this mutability of the self that social breakdown occurs, indeed, the social nature of decadence is proof that the self is not an essence, dictating behaviour from within, but is instead the proverbial piece of blank paper, inscribed by experience and environment. Morally, verse satires are in this tradition inasmuch as they stress the (usually corrupting) effect that social and environmental factors can have on the identities of individuals.

However, they must also accept that people can determine their own natures by rejecting the mores of a corrupt society; otherwise the exhortations of satire would have no justification for existing. This opposition, between an awareness of the self's necessary contextuality and an insistence on its duty to, in effect, decontextualise itself, is present, either explicitly or implicitly, in much Elizabethan satire and is implicitly resolved by the assumption of free will.

However, for Marston in particular moral issues are secondary to the more important question of whether social interaction is being used to serve its proper *existential* end. This,

²⁹ Lodge, *Works*, Hunterian Club Edition, 4 volumes, London, 1883 vol IV, no page nos. given.

³⁰ "This plague has come upon us by infection, and it will spread still further, just as in the fields the scab of one sheep, or the mange of one pig, destroys an entire herd..." (Ramsay, pp.23-25).

briefly, is the transcendence by the individual of his position as the object, the receiver of society's immoral or enfeebling influence, and his establishment of himself as an initiating and independently reasoning power that acts on others. Failure to do this actually results in a loss of self because it involves a submission to the external and a concomitant abandonment of will. Peculiar to Marston's own writings is an attempt to analyse this social and secular reality by reference to a metaphysical theory that is vitiated by an important central contradiction. This has led to the authoritative classification of *The Scourge of Villanie*'s as a work with an informing Calvinist perspective, an interpretation that seems to me to be profoundly mistaken. But, in order to gain a full understanding of Marston's satires, as well as to integrate them, both with his other work and with the work of other satirists, this question needs to be resolved. It therefore forms the major part of the analysis in the next section.

2: Marston and Calvinism: the Soul in the World.

In his 1961 edition of Marston's poems, Arnold Davenport argues for a predominantly Calvinist reading of *The Scourge of Villanie*. In support of his case he quotes two passages from Satire IV:

*Sure Grace is infus'd
By diuine favour, not by actions us'd.
Which is as permanent as heauens blisse
To them that have it, then no habite is.*

Vice, from priuation of that sacred Grace,
Which God with-drawes, but puts not vice in place.

*Then vice nor vertue haue from habite place,
The one from want, the other sacred grace.
Infus'd, displac'd, not in our will or force,
But as it please Iehova haue remorse.*

(SV.IV.117-120,123-124,141-144)

Davenport says that

We are all, [Marston] insists, corrupt, and there is nothing we can do to purify ourselves...He argues against Aristotle and maintains that virtue is not created by long-continued good habits. He affirms instead the Calvinist position. Fallen man is wholly corrupt, and if he is virtuous it is by the grace of God.

(p.20)

Later (p.26) he adds:

Under Marston's posturings, bluster, violence and effect-seeking there is a deep dismay...[his] impression of the miserable condition of humanity made a man like Marston uncertain that any remedy could be found. It was the imminence of such despair that troubled Marston...

Davenport's position is that the passages which imply a Calvinist stance are the intellectual expression of an underlying "dark pessimistic weariness that falls little short of complete despair" (p.17). Humanity has fallen so far that only the intervention of Christ the Redeemer can save it; nothing can be achieved by man's own efforts, since he is already so deep in sin that it taints all his acts. Kernan had already identified *The Scourge*'s Calvinist passages, but argued that Marston merely "use[d] ...Calvinism as a satiric philosophy" (p.126). Since he sees Marston and Kinsayder as being absolutely separate, Calvinism for Kernan is merely a tool that "imparts to the satires a vividness and quality of reality" (p.125) which is not achievable with the Stoicism that, he says, traditionally informs formal satire.

Davenport denies that there is a duality between satirist and author; he says that "the mask of Satirist-Malcontent from which Marston speaks is only a cruder and more highly-coloured version of his real face" (p.16). This argument has since been adopted by Philip Finkelpearl.³¹ Referring to Anthony Caputi's argument, against Davenport, that the satires will bear a neo-Stoic interpretation,³² Finkelpearl insists that "[a]s Marston's most pretentious intellectual effort, the fourth satire in *The Scourge* must be the crux in settling this disagreement" (p.110). He too strives to show "how unmistakably Marston commits himself to a Calvinist view" (p.112). Whether or not one identifies Marston with Kinsayder, a Calvinist reading of *The Scourge of Villanie* is bound to be problematic. Kernan's argument, that Marston simply chose Calvinism as a satirical philosophy, to give colour to his fictional Kinsayder, seems contrived and must be regarded as being at best a hypothesis. On the other hand, to suggest that Marston actually embraced Puritanism is to disregard a considerable body of external evidence that tends consistently to show that he despised it. Above all, any argument to the effect that *The Scourge* is essentially Calvinistic in its outlook founders on the fact that not only does the book lack any systematically applied religious perspective, it also contains many passages that, implicitly or explicitly, oppose Puritan teaching.

³¹ Finkelpearl, pp.110-112.

³² Anthony Caputi, *John Marston, Satirist*. New York, 1961. A book that might more accurately have been titled: *John Marston, Neo-Stoic*.

In fairness to them, it should be noted that Kernan, Davenport and Finkelpearl all acknowledge that there are “inconsistencies in Marston’s philosophical positions”.³³

Finkelpearl says that

insofar as the Calvinist view is seriously offered, the endeavor of such satire is illogical. The satirist scourges his victims for their villainy, yet explains that it is not really within their power to reform...

We have seen that in the last satire of *The Scourge* the satirist addresses himself directly to the gallants and exhorts them to reform. Obviously this is inconsistent with his views on grace. Perhaps Marston permitted himself this contradiction in order to make his endeavors as a satirist appear less self-defeating at the end of the volume, but it is equally likely that he did not notice he was assuming contradictory positions.

(p.112)

These comments, particularly the last, represent a misreading of *The Scourge* and seem to be influenced by the popular view that when Marston wrote it he was having some kind of fit. The last satire is not, as is implied, an aberration from an informing Calvinist norm; rather, the Calvinistic passages of Satire IV are at odds with a far more pervasive assumption that men have free will and can either reform or damn themselves.³⁴ In none of Marston’s plays is there anything like an affirmation of Calvinism, and as both Davenport and Finkelpearl recognise, Calvinism is a position “hardly compatible with moral satire”.³⁵

The separation of Marston from Calvinism is an important preliminary step in the development of an argument that will seek to show how Marston’s satires and the *Antonio* plays are a thematically and philosophically related series of examinations of how selves are created and destroyed by interaction between individuals and the society in which they live. In *The Scourge*, Marston sows the seeds of this analysis in his treatment of the soul, the possession and condition of which is generally found to be dependent on the actions of its owner. ‘Generally’, because the fundamental philosophical contradiction of *The Scourge* is on precisely this point; the forbidding, hopeless tendency that finds fullest expression in the Calvinism of Satire IV is opposed by a reformatory assumption that the characters we see are not merely individual specimens brought forth as evidence for a thesis of universal human corruption, but have personal control over their destinies. In this case the problem is

³³ Finkelpearl, p.110.

³⁴ J.S. Colley (*John Marston’s Theatrical Drama*, Salzburg, 1974) argues, in my view bizarrely, that “the tradition of formal verse satire in which Marston first wrote is especially compatible with a Calvinist religious position. The satiric writer is content to expose and explore a static world of blind inevitability, and commonly stops short of showing growth, change, or purely human redemption.... The moral rigidity of verse satire complements the rigidity of the classical Calvinist perspective” (p.8). He notes that “Calvin’s one purely literary work is a poem in the manner of Juvenal” (p.8).

³⁵ Davenport, p.21.

not rooted in the Fall of Man, but in contemporary behaviour. In order to demonstrate just how different this is from Calvinism, it is necessary to examine briefly the theory of the human soul put forward by Calvin himself, who, according to William Holden, “came to be the authoritative voice for the English Puritan.”³⁶ Holden argues that “[a]t the basis of...English Puritanism, is Calvin’s account of the universe and of man’s place in the universe...if the Anglicans followed Calvin for most of the journey to salvation, the Puritans went all the way” (p.3). The Puritans were not alone in espousing Calvinist theory, which was largely embraced by the established Church; however, ‘Puritanism’ came to be a perjorative term which described people who lived a particularly rigorous life, underpinned by a close identification with Calvinist precepts.

The four books of John Calvin’s *Institutio Christianae Religionis* constitute, in their final form, an exhaustive definition of the form of Christianity known as Calvinism. The view of man put forward in them is a bleak one. All the nobility and splendour that God conferred on him at his creation was lost in Adam’s Fall: “Dominum, quas voluit humanae nature collatas dotes, apud Adamum deposuisse. Ideo illum, quum acceptas perdidit, non tantum sibi perdidisse, sed nobis omnibus” (II.1.vii).³⁷ Calvin declares that “cunctas animae partes a peccato fuisse possessas, ex quo a fonte iustitiae descivit Adam” (II.1.ix)³⁸ and concludes that “totum hominem quasi diluvio a capite ad pedes sic fuisse obrutum vt nulla pars a peccato sit immunis: ac proinde quicquid ab eo procedit in peccatum imputari” (II.1.ix).³⁹

This is a vision which allows the individual no influence over his or her own fate. Man lives in sin throughout his life, whether he likes it or not and regardless of his own attempts to improve himself. Calvin’s scepticism as to the value of human efforts to purge sin from the soul finds its logical and forbidding conclusion in the doctrine of predestination, an

³⁶ William P. Holden, *Anti-Puritan Satire, 1572-1642* (New Haven, 1954) p.3n.

³⁷ “Adam was made the depository of the endowments which God was pleased to bestow on human nature, and...therefore, when he lost what he had received, he lost not only for himself, but for us all”. Quotations from the *Institutio* are taken from the edition published by ‘Iacobum Stoer’, Geneva, 1618. The translations are quoted from the edition by Henry Beveridge (London, 1953). References are by Book, Chapter and Section, and are therefore identical for both the original and the translation.

³⁸ “all parts of the soul [have been] possessed by sin, ever since Adam revolted from the fountain of righteousness”.

³⁹ “the whole [of] man, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, is so deluged, as it were, that no part remains exempt from sin, and, therefore, everything which proceeds from him is imputed as sin”.

extreme anti-humanist stance which follows naturally from the belief that “nihil nobis inesse proprium, sed praecario nos temere quicquid in nos Deus contulit” (II.1.i):⁴⁰

dicimus, aeterno & immutabili consilio Deum semel constituisse quos olim semel assumere vellet in salutem, quos rursum exitio deuouere. Hoc consilium quoad electos in gratuita eius misericordia fundatum esse asserimus, nullo humanae dignitatis respectu, quos vero damnationi addicit, his iustio quidem & irreprehensibili ipsius iudicio, vitae aditum praecludi.

(III.21.vii)⁴¹

In its denial that human works have any place in God’s Providential scheme, and its affirmation of the inscrutable nature of God’s wisdom this is closely followed by the passages in Satire IV in which, according to Kernan and others, Marston takes a Calvinist view:

*...vice nor virtue haue from habite place,
The one from want, the other sacred grace.
Infus’d, displac’d, not in our will or force,
But as it please Iehoua haue remorse.*

(SV.IV.141-144)

This is consistent with Calvin’s view that the soul can only be influenced through its connection with God. Human action, moreover, is explicitly denied by Calvin to be a force either for salvation or for damnation:

Dicimus ergo naturali hominem vitiositate corruptum, sed quae a natura non fluxerit. A natura fluxisse negamus vt significemus adventitiam magis esse qualitatem quae homini acciderit, quam substantialem proprietatem quem ab initio indita fuerit. Vocamus tamen naturalem, nequis ab unoquoque prava consuetudine comparari putet, quum haereditario iure vniversos comprehensos teneat.

(II.2.xi)⁴²

There is, then, no question that the passages in Satire IV of *The Scourge* are basically Calvinist in their treatment of the soul and man’s relationship to God. But not only must these must be read in the context of the rest of the book; it is also pertinent, at least in assessing Davenport’s and Finkelpearl’s argument, on the strength of these passages, that Marston “commits himself” to Calvinism in *The Scourge*, to look for evidence of Marston’s attitude to Puritanism elsewhere. All such evidence, and there is quite a lot of it,

⁴⁰ “we have nothing of our own, but depend entirely on God, from whom we hold at pleasure whatever he has seen it meet to bestow”.

⁴¹ “We say, then...that God by his eternal and immutable counsel determined once for all those whom it was his pleasure one day to admit to salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, it was his pleasure to doom to destruction. We maintain that this counsel...is founded on his free mercy, without any respect to human worth, while those whom he dooms to destruction are excluded from access to life by a just and blameless, but... incomprehensible judgement”.

⁴² “...man is corrupted by a natural viciousness, but not by one which proceeded from nature. In saying that it proceeded from nature, we mean that it was rather an adventitious event which befell man, than a substantial property assigned to him from the beginning. We, however, call it natural to prevent any one from supposing that each individual contracts it by depraved habit, whereas all receive it by hereditary law”.

shows a strongly felt, if conventional, antagonism towards the sect on Marston's part.

Holden convincingly argues that "Marston...damns the Puritans...[to Marston t]he Puritan is precise, hypocritical, sour, ignorant and overbearing" (pp.55-6). This is at least partly based on the "sneering but slight" (p.142) references to Puritans which are to be found in the plays, particularly *The Dutch Courtesan*, in which the hypocritical and grasping Master and Mistress Mulligrub are Puritans.⁴³

Marston, however, was making distinctly anti-Puritan noises even before *The Scourge of Villanie* was published. The *Certaine Satyres* contain a Puritan character, a "devout meale-mouth'd Precisean,/ That cries *good brother, kind sister,*" and who "can alwayes pluck/ A sacred booke, out of his ciuill hose". After dinner he "Sayes with a turn'd-vp eye a solemne grace/ Of halfe an houre", and piously cries "*O manners! o times of impurity!*" (CS.II.55-64). The reality, at least according to Marston, is rather different. Puritans are grasping usurers who, not content to merely indulge in the sin of avarice, have a subversive influence on the world:

Who thinks that this good man
Is a vile, sober, damn'd, politician?
Not I, till with his bait of purity
He bit me sore in deepest usury.
No Iew, no Turke, would vse a Christian
So inhumanely as this Puritan...

I had rather be within a harpies claws
Than trust myself to their devouring iawes.
Who all confusion to the world would bring
Vnder the forme of their new discipline.

(CS.II.69-74,77-80)

Equally hostile is the note to the reader which was published in the early printed editions of *The Malcontent* (1604), and in which Marston again expresses his religious and political antagonism toward the Puritans:

I protest that, with my free understanding, I have not glanced at disgrace of any but of those whose unquiet studies labour innovation, contempt of holy policy, reverend comely superiority and established unity.

(Preface to *The Malcontent*)⁴⁴

Puritanism represented a threat to the religious establishment, which itself was an important foundation of the political order. Marston, like Donne and Hall, was innately conservative in his attitude to politics and partly opposed Puritanism for this reason. The Elizabethan

⁴³ For other examples of the snide glances at Puritans in Marston's plays, see *Malc.*, II.v.116-132, V.i.46-47, V.v.106 and *The Fawn*, II.ii.325-334.

⁴⁴ *The Selected Plays of John Marston*, ed.M.P. Jackson and M. Neill [hereafter, J&N], p.196.

satirists resembled twentieth century Modernists like Pound and Eliot in that their strange, and fragmentary poetry belied a deep commitment to their conceptions of order and tradition.

The *Scourge of Villanie*, then, is straddled in Marston's career by unambiguous attacks on Puritans; but it also contains several passages of its own in which Puritans are accused of the vices frequently attributed to them during the period, particularly religious hypocrisy. Early in Satire II the satirist says,

If that the three-fold walls of Babilon
Should hedge my tongue, yet I should raile vpon
This fustie world, that now dare put in vre
To make *IEHOVA* but a couerture,
To shade rank filth...

(SV.II.11-15)

Later in the same Satire (lines 92-96) he accuses the "Precisians" (that is, Puritans) of encouraging apostasy with their lack of due reverence for the ritual of Communion:

I am vext, when swarmes of Iulians⁴⁵
Are still manur'd by lewd Precisians.
Who scorning church rites, take the simbole vp
As slovenly, as careless Courtiers slup
Their mutton gruel.

(SV.II.92-96)

But it is the charge of hypocrisy that mostly forms the basis of Marston's attacks on Puritans. In Satire IV we are shown Flaccus, a hypocritical and ostensibly Puritanical preacher who tricks his congregation out of its wealth so that he can use it for his private ends (ll.39-52). Curus, a Puritan who appears in Satire IX, stands accused of failing to practise as he preaches. Marston asks him,

Why babbles thou of deepe Diuinitie?
And of that sacred testimoniall?
Liuing voluptuous like a Bacchanall?
Good hath thy tongue: but thou ranke Puritan,
I'le make an ape as good a Christian.

(SV.IX.106-110)

Bearing in mind the particularly close association between Calvinism and the Puritans, Marston's attacks on Puritans, both within *The Scourge* and in his other works, are so forceful and explicit that any attempt to link Marston with Calvinism must be treated with caution even before questions of theological and metaphysical dogma are raised. Nor is Finkelpearl's suggestion that Marston "did not notice that he was assuming contradictory positions" at all credible. As Lynette Mcgrath remarked in a 1972 essay on Marston's

⁴⁵ Davenport notes that "the reference is to the Emperor Julian the Apostate" (*Poems*, p.285).

satires, “Marston was a much more self-conscious satirist than Hall, and would not have remained unaware of the inconsistencies and conflicts that haunt the pages of his satires”.⁴⁶

He would not, however, have needed to be very self-conscious to perceive *The Scourge*’s contradictions. Among these some of the most obvious are the places where he adopts a thoroughly un-Puritanical view of the soul. The verses in which Marston seems to affirm Calvinism, which are few in number and highly concentrated within *The Scourge*, are opposed by many passages that express a religious-philosophical view antithetical to Calvin’s, in that they link the soul to the human environment surrounding its owner. These are frequently explicit and almost exclusively negative: the soul is corrupted and weakened, not by the withdrawal of Grace, but by sinful *behaviour*. This clearly conflicts with Calvin’s doctrines of predestination and the unredeemed sinfulness of humanity since the Fall, since it suggests that the condition of a person’s soul is the individual’s responsibility. But this is not all. It is important to recognise that *The Scourge* places the soul firmly in the context of human, social dealings:

...swarmes of Mountebancks, & Bandeti
 Damn’d Briareans, sincks of villanie,
 Factors for lewdnes, brokers for the deuill,
 Infect our soules with all polluting euill.
 (SV.III.117-120)

...I dare sweare, the soules of swine
 Doe liue in men, for that same radiant shine
 That lustre wherewith natures *Nature* decked
 Our intellectuall part, that glosse is soyled
 With stayning spots of vile impietie,
 And muddy durt of sensualitie...
 (SV.VII.7-12)

He’s nought but clothes, & senting sweet perfume.
 His very soule, assure thee *Linceus*,
 Is not so big as is an atomus:
 Nay, he is sprightless, sense or soule hath none,
 Since last Medusa turned him to a stone.⁴⁷
 (SV.VII.41-45)

He hath no soule, the which the Stagerite
 Term’d rationall, for beastly appetite,
 Base dunghill thoughts, and sensuall action,
 Hath made him lose that faire creation.
 (SV.VII.66-69)

Infeebling ryot, all vices confluence,
 Hath eaten out that sacred influence
 Which made him man.

⁴⁶ ‘John Marston’s Mismanaged Irony: the Poetic Satires’, *TSLL*, 18 (1976) 393-408, p.393.

⁴⁷ “[I]t was generally accepted that it was courtier-like to be thus petrified, and the Medusa image in this context is not uncommon” (Davenport, *Poems*, p.329).

That divine part is soak'd away in sinne,
In sensuall lust and midnight bezeling.
(SV.VII.120-124)

Out on these puppets, painted Images,
Haberdashers shops, torch-light maskeries,
Perfuming pans, Duch antients, Glowe wormes bright
That soile our soules and damp our reasons light...
(SV.VII.180-183)

What should I say? Lust hath confounded all,
The bright glosse of our intellectuall
Is foully soyl'd. The wanton wallowing
In fond delights, and amorous dallying,
Hath dusk'd the fairest splendour of our soule:
Nothing now left, but carkas, lothsome, foule.
(SV.VIII.165-170)

These are only some of the most explicit examples of passages which treat the soul as being, in Jonathan Dollimore's phrase, 'earthbound',⁴⁸ in the sense that it is determined not by divine grace, but by human action.⁴⁹ Its existence is seen to be contingent upon a way of living which is for instance free of "amorous dallying". But it should be noted that it is not only carnal excess that "soiles" the soul: "Mountebancks", romantic obsession, "bezeling" (heavy drinking) and "haberdashers shops" (overdressed gallants) have all contributed to the loss of "that faire creation". The underlying implication, moreover, is that this need not have happened; the corruption witnessed in *The Scourge of Villanie* does not stem from a Biblical Event, but is rooted in the society of Marston's time.

This tends to be confirmed by a long passage, which comes at the end of Satire XI, and thus forms a conclusion to the series as a whole. It is the plea to the "Gallants" to reform themselves that Finkelpearl said was "obviously inconsistent with [Marston's] views on grace":

Me thinks your soules should grudge, & inly scorne
To be made slaue to humors that are borne
In slime of filthy sensualitie.
(II.205-207)

The argument is that mens' souls have been corrupted by 'sensual' behaviour, and that "That part not subiect to mortalitie"

Me thinks should murmure, when you stop his course,
And soile his beauties in some beastly source,
Of brutish pleasures. But it is so poore,
So weake, so hunger bitten, euermore
Kept from his foode...
...that now poore Soule,
(Thus peasanted to each lewd thoughts controule)

⁴⁸ J. Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, Brighton, 1984 p.33.

⁴⁹ This link is also made implicitly in a number of other places. See, for example, SV: IV.9-13; VI.19-22; VII.34-39; VIII.111-112; XI.23-24; XI.90-96; XI.176-177.

Hath lost all hart, bearing all iniuries,
The vtmost spight, and rank'st indignities
With forced willingnes.

(SV.XI.208, 211-215, 219-223)

The soul should act to prevent the kinds of decadent behaviour that are exposed in *The Scourge*, but it cannot. It is starved of spiritual “meate”, wasted and downtrodden. So grateful is the soul for any kind of intellectual or moral nourishment that it will take “great ioy”

If you will daine his faculties imploy
But in the mean'st ingenious qualitie.
(How proude he'le be of any dignitie?)

(SV.XI.224-226)

Davenport paraphrases this as, “If the rational soul be employed in the meanest activities that, however, demand the exercise of intellect (‘ingenious’) it rejoices. How much more if the activity be one of true intellectual nature, worthy of it” (*Poems*, p.369). Even its employment in relatively un-intellectual activities, such as fencing and dancing are welcome to the soul, because they show the way to realise its potential:

Put it to musick, dauncing, fencing schoole,
Lord how I laugh to heare the pretty foole
How it will prate, his tongue shall neuer lie,
But still discourse of his spruce qualitie;
Egging his maister to proceed from this,
And get the substance of celestiall blisse.

(SV.XI.227-232)⁵⁰

Yet, this “substance” eludes the gallants. They do not see it because they do not seek it; they only experience the world through images and material things, which paradoxically lack true substance. Their reason is defective, and when the soul's owner “calls his parliament of sence/...still the sensuall haue preheminnence” (ll.233-234). The

...poore soules better part so feeble is,
So cold and dead is his Synderesis,⁵¹
That shadowes by odde chaunce sometimes are got,
But o the substance is respected not.

(SV.XI.235-238)

There is no reason to assume that this call for reform is somehow ‘token’ or insincere unless one is gripped by the desire to force a consistently Calvinist reading onto the book

⁵⁰ Davenport acknowledges that Marston “is here tacitly assuming the non-Calvinist, orthodox doctrine of salvation, but could perhaps argue that lines 237-8 preserve his consistency: Men may sometimes achieve the appearance of virtue, and that therefore absolute grace is the only hope of salvation. But in this case it is difficult to see what point there is in urging his gallants to make efforts which they are *ex hypothesi* unable to make” (*Poems*, p.369).

⁵¹ Synteresis: “That function or department of conscience which serves as a guide for conduct; conduct as directive of one's actions” (*OED*). Marston also uses the expression at SV.VIII.211: “Returne, returne, sacred Synderesis,/ Inspire our trunks, let not such mud as this/ Pollute vs still”.

as a whole. Satire XI is self-evidently a conclusion to the book, and has if anything more philosophical authority than any other part of it. The gallants to whom this passage is addressed are a fallen section of humanity; they are responsible for the conditions of their souls, and their neglect of them is described in terms that suggest a starved child or a beaten dog. In this way the separateness of the soul's being is emphasised; it is a part of man, but it is also his *creation*; he must nurture it by conscious acts of will that determine what kind of life he leads. Above all, the soul needs spiritual nourishment and employment. But this should not be interpreted narrowly. Kinsayder, or, for that matter, Marston, at no stage advocates withdrawal from the world to a life of contemplation and prayer; rather, he implies that people should engage responsibly with existence. The gallants cannot grasp what this involves, though; their pursuits of "musick, dauncing, fencing schoole" are shadows of "the substance of celestiall blisse", not the thing itself.⁵² Their syndereses are "cold and dead": their discrimination has failed. Occasionally they accidentally 'get' the vague semblance of what they should be seeking, but this is not the result of any moral or religious strategy.

Having said all this, it must be acknowledged that the metaphysics of Marston's treatment of the soul are not very consistent or precise; here he says that the soul is weakened by its owner's sinful acts. Elsewhere, "amorous dallying,/ Hath *dusk'd the fairest splendour* of our soul" (SV.VII.168-169, my italics), but he also commonly says that it has deserted man altogether. More importantly, he contradicts himself on the question of whether the loss of the soul is universal in his society, or only brought on individuals by their own actions. He frequently speaks of the poverty of 'our' soul, as though to include himself in the general decay, but to wholly identify himself with the

⁵² Davenport notes that Marston "seems to be vaguely remembering" Diogenes Laertius, vi. 70: "Diogenes would adduce the indisputable evidence to show how easily from gymnastic training we arrive at virtue... Again... what surprising skills [athletes and flute players] acquire through their incessant toil; and, if they had transferred their efforts to the training of the mind, how certainly their labours would not have been unprofitable or ineffective" (*Poems*, p.369). There is an inconsistency here between the initial implication that training the body leads to moral virtue, and the later shift to the notion that the effort involved in training the body needs to be *transferred* to the mind. Marston's use of the word "proceed" would appear to be closer to the first of these ideas, as it would also to the common Renaissance humanist conception that through training in the lower arts one can move to the higher arts in which the soul is best expressed. Such an upward progression can be found in Castiglione's *The Courtier*, whose first book is devoted to such arts as horsemanship, and whose fourth and final book culminates in the ideal love of the soul. However, Marston clearly hated the idea of modelling behaviour on courtly lines, and the characters named 'Castilio' in the satires and in the *Antonio* plays are clearly designed to recall and ridicule the 'self-fashioning' discussed in *The Courtier*.

decadent society whose image he projects would be to make nonsense of his pretensions to criticise it. On the other hand, given that hypocrisy is one of the vices Marston attacks most vociferously, to continually speak of 'your' failings would be to weaken the moral credibility of the satirist's perspective. In practice, when 'our' is used, as in "The bright glosse of our intellectuall/ Is foully soyl'd" (SV.VIII.167-168), it signifies not so much 'my own, as well as your' as much as it does 'people's', or 'society's'. Furthermore, where criticisms are addressed to individuals or particular groups it is quite clear that the satirist assumes that he is speaking from a point of higher moral vantage. The long passage last quoted is a good example of this. Its one-word opening line, "Gallants", gives it an almost oratorical air, and this is pursued in the second line, "Methinks your soules should grudge, and inly scorne...". Although there is a contradiction, the balance of evidence weighs again in favour of there being a general location of responsibility for the condition of the soul with the person to whom it belongs.

This is supported by the great number of occasions on which Marston refers to his own soul, implicitly contrasting himself with those around him whose souls have been enfeebled or lost:

My soule an essence metaphisicall,
That in the basest sort scornes Critickes rage,
Because he knows his sacred parentage.
(SV, 'To Detraction', 10-12)

...as for me, my vexed thoughtfull soule,
Takes pleasure, in displeasing sharp controule
(SV, 'Proemium in librum primum', 7-8)

My soule is vext, what power will'th desist?
Or dares to stop a sharpe fangd Satyryst?
(SV.II.7-8)

Nor can I make my soule a merchandize,
Seeking conceits to sute these Artlesse times.
(SV, 'Proemium in librum secundum', 7-8)

Think'st thou that Genius that attends my soule,
And guides my fist to scourge Magnifico's
Will daine my mind be ranck'd in Paphian showes?
(SV.VI.12-14)

What though the sacred issue of my soule
I here expose to Ideots controule?
(SV.VI.105-106)

My soule adores iudiciall schollership...
(SV.IX.38)

Cheeke dimpling laughter, crowne my very soule...
(SV.XI.7)

In addition to these, there are the four stanzas at the end of 'In Lectores prorsus indignos', addressed to those critics who come disinterestedly and without prejudice to Marston's poetry. Praising their independence of mind and generosity of spirit, he calls them

...diviner wits, celestially soules,
Whose free-borne mindes no kennel thought controules...
Yee substance of the shadowes of our age...
(ll.81-82; 84)

The overall implication is that some men have souls, while others do not, and that this distinction is the result of differences between the ways in which individuals live their lives. The soul certainly possesses a theoretical divinity; it is an "essence metaphysical" with "sacred parentage", but its true character is determined by the nature and extent of its owner's relationship to other people. Because of this, the soul takes on the significant characteristics of what we would now call the secular self, and Marston, far from being a Calvinist, can be seen as a thinker with leanings towards a form of existentialism. This helps to explain Marston's later use of drama to explore the relationship between the self and the world, as well as preparing the ground for the real point of *The Scourge*.

3. "My lines are still themselves, and so am I": The Satirical Redoubt.

In a book-length study, *Light from the Porch: Stoicism and English Renaissance Literature*⁵³ Gilles Monsarrat argues that Marston

appears in the various epistles that are joined to the satires as an extremely touchy and hypersensitive man, perpetually tormented by the judgments, the opinions of other people...

Marston's early works are clear evidence that he was obsessed with what other people thought of his writings, whence his concern with envy, detraction and oblivion.

(p.158)

How far the sort of material mentioned by Monsarrat ought to be taken as a direct expression of Marston's personality is highly debatable. His theory is difficult to sustain in the light of the (generally very favourable) contemporary comments on his work:

We need not agree with Francis Meres, John Weever, and Charles Fitzgeoffrey when they rank him among those best for satire; nor need we take seriously the fact that practically every list of important playwrights named him, as William Camden's did in 1605, with

⁵³ Paris, 1984 (henceforth, *Light from the Porch*).

Jonson, Shakespeare and 'other pregnant wits.' But...we must take seriously that these men felt as they did about Marston...⁵⁴

Such critical approbation of Marston dates mostly from the early sixteen hundreds, by which time he had begun to establish himself as a playwright. It seems clear that the antagonism he vented against Joseph Hall in 1598 in *The Scourge of Villanie* was at least partly the result of Hall's contemptuous dismissal of Marston's first book of poetry, *The Metamorphosis of Pigmaliions Image and Certaine Satyres*, but Hall's comments seem to have been made in the context of a personal antagonism between the two poets.⁵⁵ No other comments on Marston dating from the time when he was writing *The Scourge of Villanie* survive; even the *Parnassus* plays are slightly later (c.1600), as are Weever's attack on *The Scourge*, Nicholas Breton's *No Whippinge, nor trippinge: but a kinde friendly Snippinge*,⁵⁶ and the quarrel with Ben Jonson.⁵⁷

In the absence of evidence that Marston was persecuted by critics, we should look for some other explanation for the concern he apparently betrays in his early prefatory material for "the judgements, the opinions of others". In fact, this is not hard to find: the epistles to which Monsarrat refers articulate an attitude to identity with important theoretical implications that are closely related to those of *The Scourge* proper. They reveal patterns of abstract thought, not merely of emotional angst, although viewed superficially they may appear hasty and crude. Their significance is primarily intellectual, not psychological, but common sense is required to draw it out. One modern critic who has fallen short in this respect is Anthony Caputi. Seizing on the presence in them of such Stoic concepts as

⁵⁴ Caputi, *John Marston, Satirist*, p.4. Finkelpearl notes that fifteen passages from *The Scourge* are quoted by Robert Allot in *England's Parnassus* (1600) and other selections by John Bodenham in *Belvedere* (1600).

⁵⁵ In 'Satyra Nova', the satire which was added to the second edition of *The Scourge* and addressed to Guilpin, Marston says that "the author *Vergidemiarum*", Joseph Hall, had "caused to be pasted to the latter page of every *Pigmalion* that came to the stacioners of Cambridge" a verse notice intimating that its author should be whipped, which he reprints: "*I ask'd Phisitions what theyr counsell was/ For a mad dogge, or for a mankind Asse?/ They told me though there were confections store,/ Of Poppy-seede, and soueraine Hellebore,/ The dog was best cured by cutting and kinsing,/ The Asse must be kindly whipped for winsing*" (SV.X.50-55). Marston calls Hall a "stinking Scauenger" and, noting that Guilpin and Hall were both products of Emmanuel College, asks, "Doost thou not blush (good) Ned, that such a sent/ Should rise from thence where thou hadst nutriment?" (ll.61-62). It should be remembered, though, that the quarrel between them was apparently started by Marston (Davenport, *Poems*, p.1-2).

⁵⁶ An uninspired piece of doggerel whose author begs "euery Poet" to "be each others louer" (l.516). A disliker of satires in general, Breton further exhorts his fellow poets to "leaue our biting kinde of verse" because "They are too bitter for a gentle taste" (ll.554-555). His opinion seems to be that the sole purpose of poetry is to praise God in harmony. "This, this I say" he says, "would be a blessed thing:/ When all the world might ioy to heare and see/ How poets, in such poetry agree (ll.586-588). In *The Whipper Pamphlets, Part II*, ed. Davenport, Liverpool, 1951.

⁵⁷ See Finkelpearl, p.163-164.

‘Opinion’ and ‘Detraction’, Caputi quotes from them in support of his case that Marston “accepted entirely the classic Stoic postulates” (p.59) that

traced man's failure primarily to that abuse of the mind that reveals itself characteristically in mishandling external impressions or in mishandling sense data. Typically, this failure involves, first, neglecting to distinguish between what can and cannot be controlled by reason and, second, neglecting to attribute values with the aim of life, the perfection of rationality, clearly in view.

(Caputi, pp.62-63)

As a working definition of ‘Opinion’, this reflects the concern with the sense-impressions that is central to classical Stoic ethics - both Seneca and Epictetus make much of it⁵⁸ - as well as being consistent with Lipsius’ description of ‘Opinion’ as “a vaine image and shadow of reason”.⁵⁹ However, Marston only invokes these ideas in so qualified a way as to make it clear that by no means is *The Scourge* a Stoic text.

Unquestionably 'Opinion' had currency among contemporary Stoical authors and the translators of and commentators on classical Stoic texts, and Marston must have been aware of the specialised meaning which was attached to it in such intellectual circles. Yet, when he was writing, 'opinion' also carried the less technical modern meaning of 'what people think'. Caputi, inexplicably, ignores this aspect of the word, but Monsarrat's comments, at the opposite extreme, seem to be entirely based upon it. This sense of 'Opinion' would have been as inescapable in the late sixteenth century as it is now; even writers as well-acquainted with Stoic thought as Guilpin and Donne used the word freely in its ordinary sense:

every one
Is a fine man in thine opinion:
In thine opinion? no, it's but thy word...
(Guilpin, Ep.14 'To Licus')

Ther's nothing simply good, nor ill alone,
Of every quality comparison,
The only measure is, and judge, opinion.
(Donne, 'Progresse of the Soule', ll.518-520)⁶⁰

⁵⁸ See, for example, Epictetus, *Discourses*, I.xxvii.1-2: "The external impressions come to us in four ways; for either things are, and seem so to be; or they are not, and do not seem to be, either; or they are, and do not seem to be; or they are not, and yet seem to be. Consequently, in all cases it is the business of the educated man to hit the mark". The titles of the first three of Marston's *Certain Satyres* seem to be derived from this passage: 'Quedam videntur, et non sunt' (I), 'Quedam sunt, et non videntur' (II), and 'Quedam sunt, et videntur' (III).

⁵⁹ *Two Bookes of Constancie*, p.82.

⁶⁰ See also Marston, WYW, Ind.37-48 ("what cold-hearted snow/ Would melt in dolour, cloud his mudded eyes,/ ...if that some juiceless husk,/ Some boundless ignorance, should on sudden shoot/ His gross-knobb'd burbolt with - 'That's not so good;/ Mew, blirt, ha, ha, light chaffy stuff!'/ .../ No, let the feeble palsey'd lamer joints/ Lean on opinion's crutches..."); III.ii.282-286 ("Doth not opinion stamp the current pass/ Of each man's value, virtue, quality?/ Had I engross'd the choice commodities/ Of heaven's traffic, yet reputed vile,/ I am a rascal!").

When Marston dedicated his first published work ‘To The Worlds Mightie Monarch, Good Opinion’, he was tying two ideas together. First, he was suggesting that the whole world is led astray by its inability to distinguish between morally useful and useless perceptions of things; second, he was alluding to the tendency for individuals to allow themselves to be governed by the dominant (and misconceived) mores of the age. Since the two senses, although they carry different implications, are both frequently implied by a single verbal context, the dedicatory poem is heavy with double-entendre. Marston suspends the emphasis between meanings so as to suggest that both are simultaneously present:

Sole regent of affection, perpetuall
 Ruler of Iudgement, most famous Iustice of
 Censures, onely giuer of Honor, great procurer of
 Aduancement, the Worlds chiefe Ballance, the All
 of all, and All in all, by whom all things are that that they
 are. I humbly offer thys my poem.
 (‘To Good Opinion’, prose preamble)

‘Opinion’ is here both a corrupt psychological process and the phenomenon of popular consensus: both readings are equally sustainable throughout. In the first stanza of the poem the ambiguity continues when ‘Opinion’ is addressed as “Great Arbitrator, Vmpire of the Earth,/ ...whose powrefull breath / Swaies all mens iudgements” (ll.2; 4-5) a reference which equally signifies peer-group pressure and moral confusion operating independently within individuals. In the second stanza, though, ‘Good Opinion’ comes to be more clearly identified with simple ‘popularity’ as Marston promises that

If thou but daine to grace my blushing stile
 And crowne my Muse with good opinion:...

Ile sing an Hymne in Honor of thy name,
 And add some trophie to enlarge thy fame.

(ll.7-8; 11-12)

In the fourth stanza, though, this note of supplication is dropped and replaced by defiant tone which came to characterise the various epistles and preambles which Marston addressed to his readers:

But if thou wilt not with thy Deitie
 Shade, and inmaske the errors of my pen,
 Protect an Orphane Poets infancie,
 I will disclose, that all the world shall ken
 How partiall thou art in Honors giuing:
 Crowning the shade, the substance praise depriving.
(ll.13-18)

The good opinion of the world at large confers praise on those who do not deserve it, just as individuals give priority to objects and actions which, although superficially attractive, are trivial. The two are linked: individual misrecognition is both the cause and the result of a misrecognition that is endemic. The root cause of the corruption of society, therefore, is the corruption of the self, not merely in that people do bad things, but also in the broader and deeper sense that *as an entity* its existence is becoming less real.

For *The Scourge* Marston wrote a second dedication which can be seen as a companion-piece to his first. This was addressed 'To Detraction', and in it he sustained throughout a defiant, hostile tone:

Foule canker of faire vertuous action,
Vile blaster of the freshest blooms on earth,
Enuies abhorred childe, *Detraction*,
I heare expose, to thy all-taynting breath
The issue of my braine, snarle, raile, barke, bite,
Knowe that my spirit scornes *Detractions* spight.

(ll.1-6)

(We should note in passing here that Marston again uses the metaphor of birth - "issue" - to describe his language). Caputi argues that 'Detraction' was "second to Opinion" in the neo-Stoic vocabulary of error, though "far less prominent as a villain...it is clear that Detraction was for [Marston], like Opinion, a perverter of the purposes of nature".⁶¹ This implies that 'Detraction' is, like 'Opinion' an error made by individuals, but the third stanza of 'To Detraction' makes it clear that this is not Marston's message:

My minde disdaines the dungie muddy scum
Of abiect thoughts, and *Enuies* raging hate.
True iudgement, slight regards Opinion,
A sprightly wit, disdaines Detraction.

(ll.19-24)

Caputi quotes the last couplet of this stanza, and remarks that Marston "links the two, as though to accord them equal roles...[t]he linkage is, of course, misleading. Detraction does not loom as prominent as Opinion, and it does not enter so intricately into Marston's analysis of evil" (p.65). In fact, the linkage is not misleading at all; whatever its Stoical connotations, 'Detraction' clearly carries the sense of 'malicious depreciation',⁶² and therefore, like 'Opinion', it is emphatically a social phenomenon, and not a reference to evil,

⁶¹ *John Marston, Satirist*, p.65.

⁶² See also WYW, Prol.4-6: "Nor cares he to insinuate the grace/ Of loath'd detraction, nor pursues the love/ Of the nice critics of this squeamish age...".

in any normal sense of the word, or to Stoical psychology. Marston is making a statement of self in this poem, insisting on his immunity to whatever “raging hate” or other “abiection thoughts” society may have in store for him. He speaks of his soul,

...an essence metaphisicall
That in the basest sort scornes Critickes rage
(ll.10-11)

and of his secular self as being similarly inviolable:⁶³

A partiall praise shall neuer eleuate
My settled censure, of mine owne esteeme
A cankered verdict of malignant Hate
Shall nere provoke me, worse my selfe to deeme.
 Spight of despight, and rancors villanie,
 I am my selfe, so is my poesie.
(ll.21-24)

Marston denies that either popular acclaim (“partiall praise”) or critical condemnation (“malignant Hate”) will affect him: he claims for himself a spiritual and psychological independence that is bound up with his identity as a poet.

In Satire VI of *The Scourge*, he again makes explicit the link between inviolacy of self and inviolacy of language; there, he speaks of his poetry as issuing from his soul (again using a metaphor of birth):

What though the sacred issue of my soule
I heare expose to Ideots controule?
What though I bare to lewd Opinion
Lay ope to vulgar prophanation
My very Genius. Yet know my poesie
Doth scorne your vtmost, rank'st indignitie.
(SV.VI.105-110)

He also elaborates on the significance of ‘Opinion’ - “vulgar prophanation” - in a way that puts it beyond doubt that he was not simply using it as a neo-Stoic term of art. More than anything else, ‘Opinion’ denoted for Marston people’s tendency to embrace uncritically the views and behaviour of the mass: unable to confront the world with individual powers of moral discrimination, they instead continually adapt themselves to the changing social climate. Marston distances himself from this mode of behaviour, emphasising that he - in soul, in self and in poetry - is “himself”, a being untainted by, and impregnable to, society’s mindless collectivism.

⁶³ These are two more examples of how Marston took no particular care to draw consistent metaphysical distinctions between the soul and the self. In his plays characters frequently use the word ‘soul(e)’ as a term of endearment.

In spite of this, it would be wrong to ignore the Stoical implications of ‘Opinion’ in Marston’s work. His plays show that he was deeply interested in Stoicism, and it is significant that Crispinus, a character in Ben Jonson’s *The Poetaster* who is widely thought to be a caricature of Marston, introduces himself as “a pretty stoic”.⁶⁴ Stoical ethics rely on the principle that the individual can, indeed ought to, make himself spiritually self-sufficient. By refusing to invest the world, a place over which he has ultimately no personal control, with responsibility for his happiness, a man establishes power over himself. Seneca cites with approval the exemplary life of Socrates: “...nec hilariorem quisquam nec tristiorem Socratem vidit. Aequalis fuit in tanta inaequalitate fortunae”.⁶⁵ Marston’s interest in Stoicism was a natural corollary of his fascination with the subject of personal identity, but, as we shall see, his plays contain much that is sceptically critical of the possibility of realising the self-determining ideals on which Stoicism is based.

However, Marston’s mock-dedications should be set in context. Prefatory notices voicing defiance of critics and indifference to the world’s opinions became the norm in printed books of satire at this time, so much so that it would be fair to see them as a component of the satiric form even before Marston’s satires were published. As early as 1595 Lodge had declared ‘To the Gentlemen Readers whatsoever’ that he chose his title, *A Fig for Momus*, “in despite of the detractor, who hauing no learning to iudge, wanteth no libertie to reprove”. The detractor

*shall rather at my hands haue a figge to choake him, then hee, and his lewd tongue shall haue a frumpe to check me: Sheepe are soonest woored by curdogs, because they are mild but hee that nips him soundly, that bites him cowardly, purchaseth his owne peace, & escapes much perill.*⁶⁶

Hall introduces the first volume of *Vergidemiaryum* (1597) with a poem entitled ‘His Defiance to *Enuie*’, followed by a Prologue in which he describes his isolation as the first English satirist, a brave adventurer in a dangerous and hostile world:

I first aduenture, with fool-hardie might
To tread the steps of perilous despight...
(*Vergidemiaryum*, Lib I., Prol. ll.1-2)

⁶⁴ Jonson, *Plays*, London, 1910, Vol. I, p.252.

⁶⁵ Seneca, *Epistulae Morales*, CIV: ‘On Care of Health and Peace of Mind’: “no man ever saw Socrates too much elated or too much depressed. Amid all the disturbance of Fortune, he was undisturbed” (R.M. Gummere, Loeb edn., Vol. III, p.207).

⁶⁶ Lodge, *Works*, Hunterian Club Edition, vol IV, no page nos. given.

Hall was followed by the anonymous ‘T.M.’, sometimes said to have been Thomas Middleton, who began his book of satires, *Micro-Cynicon* (1599) with his own ‘Defiance to Enuy’, which he calls “Credits Crack,/ Feares festivall” (ll.12-13); he confronts its “false assault” with “Defiance, resolution and neglects” (ll.8-9). ‘The Author’s Prologue’, which immediately follows the ‘Defiance’, pursues the same personal narrative of alienation from the world, described as “open plains”, where “huffing winds cast up their airy accounts”, and withdrawal into an invulnerable self. This withdrawal is the assumption of the satirist’s persona, symbolised by the author’s finding “sanctuarie” from the “threatning stormes” in “a brazen tower” (A7v l.3). Now beyond the reach of criticism, he “little dread[s]” the “stormie raging power” of the “bugbare threatning words” of “windie parasites or the slaues of wine,/ That wind from al things saue the truth diuine” (A8r. l.1).

There is a suggestion of Stoicism in these references to wind and ‘huffing’, which charge society with the familiar, ‘Opinionated’ vices of insubstance and directionlessness. A Stoical posture is quite consistent with the Prologue’s broader theme of self-isolation from a corrupt and hostile environment, but it is at odds with the angry, aggressive tone of the poem as a whole. ‘T.M.’ calls his Prologue a “blacke defying Embassie”; the “divellish venome” of critics is to him “a Cordiall of a Candie taste” which he threatens to drink up “and then let’t run at waste.” The “drugie Lees” of this, he says,

Ile belch into your throates all open wide,
Whose gaping swallow nothing runs beside:
And if it venome, take it as you list:
He spights himself, that spights a satirist.

(A8v, l.3-6)

The emotional intensity of this is quite incompatible with Stoic apathy. It goes beyond defensive withdrawal and becomes a counter-attack. Anger and its outward manifestation in the poetic form of linguistic violence become means by which the alienated self not only declares, but actually achieves its sense of existence. Identity is posed in being opposed, so that in ‘T.M.’’s case, as in Marston’s and in Guilpin’s, there is an attempt to repair the inner weakness, wrought by a feeling of exclusion from what there is of collective culture, by setting up the satirical self as an antagonistic force.

Despite their author's frank criticisms of the satirical cult's excesses, the *Epigrammes* (1599) of John Weever exhibit a self-conception that would have been very familiar to the readers of satires. In the preliminary 'Intentio operis & Authoris' Weever says that "To whip and scourge my chieftest meaning is" (A6v, l.13) and in the opening lines of the book's first epigram, 'De Se' (B1r) he defies his potential critics in the usual terms:

Nor do I feare the Satyres venom'd bite,
Nor choplogs teeth, ne Railors vile reproach,
Nor male-contented Enuies poysned spight...
(B1r, ll.1-3)

But, he continues, "I thinke I shall be carpt of none,/ For who'le wrest water from a flintie stone?" (B1r, ll.9-10). "Water" here suggests tears, and by this repudiation of emotional response the epigram creates the same tension between its nod to Stoicism⁶⁷ and the rich anger of its tone that exists in *Micro-Cynicon*. Weever, like Marston and 'T.M.', locates his identity in his writings. The last stanza of 'Lectores, quotquot, quales, quicunq estis', Weever's longest introductory poem at some 48 lines, simply concludes,

If this suffice not for the enuiest,
Know then, I am an Epigrammatist.
(A6v, ll.5-6)

Gulpin, who, as we have seen, probably knew both Marston and Donne well, is also forceful in his assertion of self through the satiric persona. In Epigram 70 of *Skialetheia*, which is immediately followed by the satires, he declares his indifference to the world's reception of his work. Guilpin uses familiar terms in describing his 'muse' (which, interestingly, appears as a man), evoking a sense of violent confrontation with words like '[sword] play', 'Rapier', 'fist' and 'armed':

I care not what the world doth think, or say,
There lies a morral under my leane play:
And like a resolute Epigrammatist,
Holding my pen, my Rapier in my fist:
I know I shall wide-gaping *Momes* conuince.
My *Muse* so armed is a carelesse Prince.
(Ep.70, ll.19-24)

In common with Marston, Guilpin gives specific consideration to the role played by 'Opinion' in the constitution of selves. At 190 lines, Satire VI of *Skialetheia* is a prolonged discussion of identity, and one in which 'Opinion' is prominent (the word occurs thirteen times in the satire). It opens on the despairing note that 'Opinion' has gained the upper

⁶⁷ "Take your stand by a stone and revile it; and what effect will you produce? If then, a man listens like a stone, what profit is there to the reviler?" (Epictetus, *Discourses*, I.xxv.29).

hand in its endless, manichaeian struggle against reason, “the soules bright Genius” (l.13) for possession of the minds of humanity. At this point ‘Opinion’ is an abstraction described, in a vocabulary strongly redolent of Lipsius’s, as being reason’s “slave” and “shadow” (l.18); it is “That dreame, that breath...that *Nothing*” (l.28), “the Eccho of inconstancie” (l.49). In abandoning reason, men have sacrificed their moral freedom; they are in a “slauish state” (l.2), “gally-slaues” (l.5) to ‘Opinion’.

From this perspective, though, Guilpin shifts to another so that we can see ‘Opinion’ “as she is” (l.57). From the second point of view ‘Opinion’ is seen as being not in the least abstract, but as the observable social phenomenon to which we would now prefix the word ‘public’. When Guilpin calls ‘opinion’

*The Proteus Robin-good-fellow of change,
Smithfield of iaded fancies, and th’Exchange...*

*Its but the hisse of Geese, the peoples noyse,
The tongue of humours, and phantasticke voyce
Of hare-brain’d Apprehension...*

(ll.59-60; 64-66)

he emphasises not only the ill-founded and unstable nature of collective sentiment; he also locates it in the common gathering-places of Elizabethan London. The critic Peter Ure has said of Guilpin’s conception of ‘Opinion’ that he “did not hesitate to personify and allegorize what had been part of an abstract epistemology”;⁶⁸ but here there is more to Guilpin’s analysis than such literary contrivance. As with Marston’s treatment of the word, Guilpin draws together its two senses, using it to suggest both the failure of individual powers of discrimination, and the way this manifests itself in the “*hare-brain’d Apprehension*” of collective society.

The problem addressed by this satire is that faced by the person who finds himself part of, and yet in personal opposition to, a society that he perceives to be in a condition of decay because its members have no sense of existential responsibility. It thus places great importance not only on the need to be morally responsible, but on the necessary foundation of this, to ‘be’ at all. Guilpin’s solution to the problem is ringingly declared at line 131: “let’s be Stoicks”. Those under the sway of ‘Opinion’, its “gulls”, are denounced in language that recalls both Marston and Lipsius. They are “empty caske like minds”

⁶⁸ “Opinion had been associated with the multitude (hoi polloi) by Plato, and it remained the special prerogative of the People, who are inconstant like their deity”. Peter Ure, ‘A Note on ‘Opinion’ in Daniel, Greville and Chapman’. *MLR* 46 (1951) 331-338, p.336.

(l.105); “Light minded” (l.108); “sleight frothy minds” (l.111) who “care for vulgar breath” (l.165). The only way to protect oneself against the spread of this disease of insubstance is to place oneself in philosophical isolation by refusing to care for the views of others:

...let's be Stoicks, resolute, and spare not
To tell the proudest Criticke that we care not
For his wooden censure, nor to mittigate
The sharp tart veruice of his snap-haunce hate
Would change a line, a word, no not a poynt...
(ll.131-135)

Guilpin, like Hall, Lodge, Marston, Weever and ‘T.M.’, claims to identify himself through his writings: they are the ground on which his self is fought for and won. A substantial part of Satire VI (ll.67-102) is devoted to a discussion of literary reputations. Guilpin observes that “Opinion play[s] the two edged sword” (l.103) even with the greatest of these, that of “wits *Caesar, Sidney*” (l.97) who “Is not exempt from prophanation/ But censured for affectation” (l.101-102). Guilpin is determined not to be influenced by the “phantasticke winds” (l.106) of critical reception. In the concluding couplet of the satire (and so that of *Skialetheia* as a whole) he says of the critical response to his poetry,

For let them praise them, or their praise deny,
My lines are still themselues, and so am I.
(ll.189-190)

The quest for a substantial self is at the heart of *Skialetheia*. It is the absence of this substance, rather than specifically immoral conduct, that Guilpin perceives to be the real illness besetting his culture. Many of the victims of Guilpin’s satire are not so much accused of ‘bad’ behaviour, as they are condemned for being shallow, insubstantial people. Caius, “when his horse hath won the bell”, is more joyful “than his dull tongue can tell” (ll.113-114); Lycanor fears the loss of a set at tennis “more then his soules losse” (l.116); Pollio and Pansa are absurdly vain (ll.117-128), and so on.⁶⁹ But these are not cardinal sins. Rather, they are the petty vices of those who concern themselves only with unimportant things, embracing the trivial, fleeting values of a society in which authentic morality has been replaced by a frivolous social code; Guilpin’s idea of existential self-fulfilment is to be “resolute”, a still point in a world of unstable identities.

⁶⁹ For other examples, see also *Skialetheia*, I.27-30, 63-76; II.31-48; III.1-27, 31-42; IV.17-30; V.119-139.

Donne's satires reveal similar doubts about the self, but with greater self-consciousness and in a more restrained voice that is to a large extent religiously informed. In his third satire he foreshadows 'The First Anniversary' when he says to an imagined gallant that

...as
The worlds all parts wither away and passe,
So the worlds selfe, thy other lov'd foe is
In her decrepit wayne...

(III.35-38)

The world is a "lov'd foe" because the young man embraces fleshly values to the ultimate detriment of his soul, but Donne also fears for his own moral identity in a corrupt and decaying world. The images of corruption are frequently the stock ones of Elizabethan satire, although Donne in many cases may have been their originator. We are told of men who steal or purchase others' wit (II.25-30) and of women whose beauty, like the mens' speech, is "bought" (IV.190-191). We are told of the greed of rising lawyers, and of the concomitant decline of the old tradition of hospitality (II.62-112). We are told of those who affect foreign ways (I.102-104), of the vanity and absurdity of the court (IV.*passim*) and of men who fornicate with prostitutes of both sexes and even with goats (IV.127). But all these items need not be enumerated in detail: Donne's satires are laden with them. What is of more interest for the purpose of this thesis is Donne's statement of his own position in relation to such a moral and social climate, as a man who strives to preserve his own dignity and live in accordance with Christian principle.

Essentially, Donne, like Guilpin, advocates a form of withdrawal from the crazed world, although Donne talks of physical removal, often implying that to linger in a vicious place is to risk becoming tainted by it. He lacks Guilpin's brash confidence in the possibility of rendering oneself immune to the deleterious influence of a hostile or vicious environment by simply deciding to defy it, but he certainly considers the issue. Although Donne does not include any prefatory material of the 'defiance to envy' type, possibly because his satires were not conceived as a volume, he does address in them a broadly defiant embassy to the ruling class:

Shall I, nones slave, of high borne, or rais'd men
Feare frownes? And, my Mistresse Truth, betray thee
To th'huffing braggart, puft Nobility?
No, no...

(IV.162-165)

More pervasively, though, he emphasises the corruptibility of the individual and the need for him to isolate himself physically from vice if he is to preserve his soul. In satire IV a monstrously overdressed courtier, “A thing more strange, then on Niles slime, the Sunne/ E’r bred” (l.18) tells Donne that

‘If of court life you knew the good,
You would leave lonesse.’ I said, ‘Not alone
My lonesse is. But Spartanes fashion,
To teach by painting drunkards, doth not tast
Now; Aretines pictures have made few chast;
No more can Princes courts, though there be few
Better pictures of vice, teach me vertue.’

(IV.66-72)

“Wholesome solitarinesse” (IV.155) is associated by Donne with the virtues of self-control, simplicity of life and Godliness. In particular, lines 1-24 of Satire I draw a contrast between the satirist’s own life, confined in a small and simple room with the “constant company” (l.11) of books, and that of the “fondling motley humorist” (l.1) a “headlong, wild uncertaine” *boulevardier* who lives only to socialise. The necessary isolation of the man who seeks spiritual fulfilment is most profoundly explored in Satire III, which describes man's duty to seek religious truth. Its second paragraph begins with the plaintive exhortation, “Seeke true religion. O where?” (l.43) and goes on to identify the quandary of those caught up in the murderous religious politics of the Reformation. Donne

advises his readers of the need to find a personal religious truth, which he distinguishes from simply taking sides in a world of religious factions:

Foole and wretch, wilt thou let thy Soule be ty'd
To mans lawes, by which she shall not be try'd
At the last day? Will it then boot thee
To say a Philip, or a Gregory,
A Harry or a Martin taught thee this?⁷⁰

(III.93-97)

The individual’s responsibility is difficult to fulfil, and the quest for truth a hard and lonely road:

On a huge hill,
Cragged and steep, Truth stands, and hee that will
Reach her, about must, and about must goe...

⁷⁰ Philip II of Spain, Pope Gregory XIII (d.1585) or Gregory XIV (d.1591), Henry VIII of England and the reformer Martin Luther respectively.

Donne's religious emphasis defines this inner journey as a search for God, rather than as the construction of an authentic secular self; the most important danger facing those who lose sight of God in the world of men is a posthumous one "At the last day", and the satire's conclusion is that those souls "perish...which more chuse mens unjust/ Power from God claym'd, then God himselfe to trust" (III.109-110). But choosing God's power before men's involves an act of self-affirmation here on earth. The experiences of God and Truth in Donne's satires are not public, but private, and in order to reach them the influences of life in the public sphere, which are pernicious, must be excluded. In order to do this, men must first decide to 'fix' themselves from within, constructing themselves as stable constants with beliefs and identities of their own. It is this aspect of verse satire that forms the subject of the next section.

4. "These are no men, but *Apparitions*": Satire and Authentic Existence.

The underlying criticism that Marston makes of his society, and that from which all the others stem, is that its members have failed to take control of their lives through the independent exercise of reason, and are guided by considerations of the moment, principally greed, lust and vanity. Marston inserted into the second edition of *The Scourge of Villanie* (1599) a dedication of the book "To his most esteemed and best beloved Selfe".⁷¹ This should be read both ironically and literally: ironically, as a comment on the egomania that he intends to attack; literally, because it refers to Marston's belief in people's duty to cultivate a vital identity by developing a habit of individual response and responsibility. He takes a legitimate pride in his own 'Selfe', refusing to run with the unthinking herd.

We have seen that Marston frequently shows to us characters who, through various kinds of immoral or thoughtless behaviour, have lost their souls. Unlike Donne, who relates the soul quite closely to God and to religion, Marston frequently mentions it in such a way as to suggest that he largely identifies it with the secular self. His social critique, therefore, is often not only a spiritual but an existential one, as he describes the unreality of

⁷¹ *Poems*, p.94

people who have allowed themselves to drift with the fickle currents of a society that lacks moral direction. Satire VII of *The Scourge of Villanie*, 'A Cynicke Satyre', is particularly illuminating in this respect. Its opening line, "A Man, a man, a kingdome for a man" is a kind of structuring thematic refrain, and is repeated in adapted forms at irregular intervals throughout the satire. Davenport notes a story about Diogenes, the Cynic of its title: "One day he shouted out for men, and when people collected, hit out at them with a stick, saying, 'It was men I called for, not scoundrels'".⁷² Marston too calls for men, but his irony is not simply based on a moral distinction; he goes further than Diogenes, insisting that the "troupes of men" swarming in the streets are actually less than human, because they are less than real:

These are no men, but *Apparitions*,
Ignes fatui, *Glowwormes*, *Fictions*,
Meteors, *Ratts of Nilus*, *Fantasies*,
Colosses, *Pictures*, *Shades*, *Resemblances*.

(ll.13-16)

To some extent this rests on the theory that when man behaves like an animal he loses his soul, the divine spark that raises him above the rest of creation. Marston makes plenty of references to animals in portraying the "grosse beastlines" (VII.126) of humanity. In Satire VII alone, people are variously described as being "swine", "Glowwormes", "Ratts", "a maggot", "Eeles", "Iades", "Hedge-hogs", "Currish", "dew-wormes", "a water-spaniell", "a Mimick Ape", "Aesops Asse", "an Oxe" and a "Beuer". But in *The Scourge* as a whole Marston does not pursue a dominant beast-motif; unsatisfied by such Biblical commonplaces, he takes his satirical analysis beyond moral issues and confronts the problem of being. It is therefore surprising that of the animals featured in *The Scourge*, the most prominent by far is the "Mimick Ape", an apt metaphor for the book's characters because it "onely striues to seeme an others shape" (VII.149). The twofold significance of this is evident in Satire IX, 'Here's a toy to mocke an Ape indeede', which shows how vice is spread through imitation. Marston addresses "Old Iack of Parris-garden" (IX.72) a performing ape of the time and says that if he can "Looke smug, smell sweet.../ Keepe whores, fee baudes, belch impious blasphemies" (IX.74-75) then he should "troupe among our gallants.../ And call them brothers" (IX.82-83). The ape's likeness to them is inward,

⁷² *Poems*, p.327. See also Diogenes Laertius, vi.32.

as well as outward. In copying the gallants' actions, Jack also copies their minds, for they are only capable of imitation themselves: "what are they els/ But imitators of lewd beastlines?" (IX.87).

Under the 'bestiality' heading the self can also fail simply as a result of bestial behaviour, that is, indulgence of the basest instincts. This approach is mostly explored in 'A cynicke Satyre':

Thou brutish world, that in all vilenes drown'd
Hast lost thy soule, for naught but shades I see,
Resemblances of men inhabit thee.

(VII.140-142)

But there are also other, more complex and more specifically cultural ways in which human identity is threatened. It is because people are prone to imitate the behaviour of others that their authentic, independent identities come to be eroded by contact with the wrong sorts of social norms and contexts. Marston's treatment of this process is mostly concentrated in the last four satires of *The Scourge*: 'A Cynicke Satyre', 'Inamorato Curio', 'Here's a toy to mocke an Ape indeede' and 'Humours'.⁷³

The first of these we have already looked at. Satire VIII, 'Inamorato Curio', deals with the behaviour of infatuated gallants, but its conclusion, that "Lust hath confounded all" (l.165) is not entirely justified by the evidence put forward in the Satire's main body. What we see is frequently not so much lust as it is a bloodless and histrionic pursuit of women by men who, we suspect, would themselves be confounded if the women proved willing to be caught. The Curio of the title seeks to find a way to the heart of Corinna, his "mistres", by writing "mournfull Elegies" for her recently-deceased monkey (ll.1-4); the satirist calls upon her to "daine the ribande tie/ Of thy Cork-shooe", before Curio dives "Into the whirle-poole of devouring death" (ll.7-13). "Some puling sonnet" will toll the unrequited lover's passing bell, and his epitaph be a laughable rhyme:

Heere lyeth he, he lyeth heere,
that bounc'd, and pity cryed,
The doore not op'd, fell sicke alas,
alas fell sicke, and dyed.

(ll.19-22)

⁷³ I refer to the first edition (1598). This does not include the satire to Guilpin, 'Satyra Nova', a later interpolation which is largely devoted to attacking Hall. 'Satyra Nova' first appeared in the second edition of the book, which was published in 1599. It was originally inserted between Satires IX and X, but Davenport renumbers, so that 'Satyra Nova' is Satire X and the last Satire becomes number XI.

Marston mocks the exaggeration and affectation of Elizabethan courtly love, but his main target is the slavish self-abnegation it requires on the part of the lover:

I cannot choose but bite
To view *Mavortius* metamorphiz'd quite
To puling sighes, & into (aye me's) state,
With voyce distinct, all fine articulate
Lisping, Fayre saint, my woe compassionate,
By heauen thine eye is my soule-guiding fate.
(ll.50-55)

The Satire carries the contradictory implications that desire for women is emasculating whether it is lustful and physical, or is absurdly sentimental. Thus, lines 56 to 83 deal with the weakening effect on soldiers of spending “feebled valour, in tilt and turneing,/ With wet-turn'd kisses, melting dallying” (ll.60-61). “*Weak force, weak ayde that sprouts from luxurie*” (l.67) says Marston, who even rebukes Martius for wearing his lady’s livery to war, and proceeds to step well over the line of misogyny when he says of the soldiery

Alack, what hope? when some ranck nasty wench
Is subiect of their voves and confidence?
(ll.82-83)

On the other hand, the devotion of the gallant courtier is also attacked, even though it doesn’t seem to lead to any actual communion with women. Notwithstanding his politically correct hatred of Catholic idolaters, Publius languishes “Vnto the picture of a painted lasse”; he vows “pesant servitude” to this “painted puppet” and when he gets the “sacred relique”, her hair-pin, he cries that “’tis diuine” (ll.84-109). Others, going beyond worship, yearn literally to abolish themselves altogether. Saturio “wish’d himselfe his Mistres buske” (l.118) Phrigio, his lady’s dog (ll.122-123); Punicus “faine wouldst be [his] Mistres smug monkey” (ll.128-129). The list continues, with others wanting to be a flea, a verdingall, a silver-handled fan and a neck-lace. This clearly has reference to the central idea of Satire VII; in every sense real men are vanishing from the earth.⁷⁴

Marston’s objection to the amorous characters of Satire VIII, both soldiers and gallants, is that they seek to surrender control of their lives to factors outside themselves. This involves a subjugation of the spiritual by the material and effectively prevents the development of a truly human identity:

Ist possible such sensuall action

⁷⁴ For a survey of the excesses of late-Elizabethan courtly love, see L.E. Pearson, *Elizabethan Love Conventions*, London, 1933. See especially ‘Fashionable sonneteers’ (pp.112-136); ‘Early disintegrating Influences’ (pp.136-151) and ‘The reaction’ (pp.202-222).

Should clip the wings of contemplation?
O can it be the spirits function...

Should be made slave to reprehension
Of craftie natures paint? Fie, can our soule
Be vnderling to such a vile controule?

(II.111-113; 115-117)

The body, abandoned by reason, is now “ledde with sencelesse will” (I.201).⁷⁵ While this mainly refers to sexual obsession, the satire’s treatment of courtly love is imbued with the idea that those who are possessed by this absurd conception of devotion and suffering are largely drawn to it by its very public nature. The sighs and poetic languishings of Curio and Mavortius register, as well as the self-abnegation of the lover, the self-subordination to a theatrically predetermined mode of behaviour of the man who would rather not think for himself.

The same type of criticism underlies Satire IX, ‘Here’s a toy to mock an Ape indeede’, at which we have already glanced. There is no need to dwell on this satire here, beyond pointing out that the ‘apishness’ it attacks encompasses intellectual vices, as well as the commoner ones that ‘Old Iack of Parris Garden’ is challenged to mimic. The ‘apish’ character, moreover, need not be himself an imitator, but might simply be one who passes judgement without knowledge or consideration of the thing he judges, as, for example, is the case with ‘Iudicall Iack’ (no relation) a foolish critic who is asked,

how hast thou got repute
Of a sound censure? O ideot times,
When gawdy Monkeys mowe ore sprightly rimes!

(II.16-18)

This is worth noting because it demonstrates that even when Marston devotes a satire to attacking imitation, he comprehends within it more general sallies against people who lack authentic powers of discrimination or, in the case of a pretentious unidentified academic, speech. This pseudo-scholar disguises his inner vacuity by using incomprehensible language:

This affectation,

⁷⁵ Lust and lustful obsession constituted the main subjects of two in particular of Marston’s later plays, *The Malcontent* and *The Dutch Courtesan*, and in them the treatment closely follows the lines laid down in *The Scourge*. Since the second of these did not appear until 1605, it will be apparent from the comments they make on the relationship between being and desire that the ideas Marston hatched in 1598 still formed the basis of his thinking seven years later. See especially Malevole at *Malc.* I.iii.62: “Here a Paris supports that Helen; there’s a Lady Guinevere bears up that Sir Lancelot. Dreams, dreams, visions, fantasies, chimeras, imaginations, tricks, conceits!” and Malheureux’ descriptions of his own passion: “I am no whit myself” (*DC*, II.ii.125) he says, and later adds that he would “enjoy” Franceschina “Rather than my breath, even as my being” and that “There is no being for me but your sudden enjoying” (II.ii.195; 206). See *Malc.*, I.vi.73 s.d. ff.; III.iii.26ff.; *DC*, II.ii.137-144; IV.ii.28-29; V.iii.63-69.

(11.66-71)

The last satire in the series, 'Humours', depicts characters whose minds are governed by single passions.⁷⁶ Curio loves dancing, and it dominates his life to the point where "His very soule.../ Is nothing but a mincing capreall" (ll.15-34). Luscus is obsessed by plays, and "nere of ought did speake/ But when of playes or plaiers he did treat" (ll.37-51); Martius "nere discourseth but of fencing feates,/ Of counter times, finctures, slye passataes" (ll.52-62).⁷⁷ Tuscus, a "iest-mounging youth", cannot speak, "But to retaile and broke anothers wit" (ll.74-97); Musus, another critic, is "naught but censure" (104-136); Luxurio, a lecher, only ever talks "of Pick-hatch, or of some Shorditch⁷⁸ baulke,/ *Aretines* ⁷⁹ filth, or of his wandring whore". The existence of Pyso, a "fashion-mounger", revolves around clothes: "not a fashion once dare show his face,/ But from neate *Pyso* first must take his grace" (ll.156-177). Last comes the narcissistic Suffenus, who

(11.178-182)

These characters are handicapped in their humanity because they only experience one facet of life: they are 'humorous' in that for them one impulse dictates all. Their mental and physical energies are expended on the narrow-minded pursuit of trivial things that are not worthy of a properly developed person. They are mostly identified by their talk, which is

⁷⁷ Fencing terms: a “counter movement”, a “false thrust” and a “step forward or aside” respectively (Davenport, *Poems*, p.360).

⁷⁹ "Indecent pictures of Giulio Romano", notes Davenport, who also quotes from A.J. Axelrad's *Un Malcontent Elizabethain: John Marston* (1955): 'Les "tableaux de l'Aretin" auxquels il est fait allusion ici sont seize dessins dus au peintre Jules Romain...illustrant les diverses positions de l'amour. L'Aretin composa en 1524...' (*Poems* p.237). The images were notorious; Marston also refers to them at CS.II.145.

limited in each case to a single subject; as we have seen, this is in itself taken to be a sign of a defective self.

But there is more to Marston's analysis than this. By emphasising the way his characters talk, as opposed to act, Marston suggests that a significant cause of their enthusiasms is the need to construct a public persona. By playing the roles of duellist, rake, wit and so on, they attempt to appease an inner need for identity that cannot be altogether ignored. This explains Marston's use of curious terms like "fictions" "fantasies" and "resemblances" in Satire VII. Such characters have become hollow constructions, images without depth; in trying to acquire identities for themselves they gain only "that which is but Gentries ornament" (l.189) and waste

too much time, too much regard
Imploy'd in that which might be better spard,
Then substance should be lost.

(ll.196-198)

Marston's acknowledgement that even the shallowest and most thoughtless of people feel a need for personal identity is an important strand of his thinking. In his address to the gallants at the end of the Satire⁸⁰ he says that if the soul is exercised even "in the mean'st ingenious qualitie" (l.225) it will ceaselessly spur its owner to develop an authentic identity:

How it will prate, his tongue shall neuer lie,
But still discourse of his spruce qualitie;
Egging his maister to proceed from this,
And get the substance of celestiall blisse.

(ll.229-232)

Viewed in the context of Marston's earlier treatment of the self, the gist of this is that there is a human need for a morally and existentially substantive identity, felt even by those who are incapable of fulfilling it for themselves. This to some extent distinguishes Marston from the other satirists. They do not go so far as to suggest that, even among the parasitic, there is an universal internal need for substantive identity. But they do, in terms similar to Marston's, identify the insubstance of those who ignore the objective duty of being. This is still relevant, because it shows that even if Marston's approach to the question was slightly unusual, his attachment of importance to it in the first place was not. To some extent this has already been shown by pointing out the commonplace nature of the satirical practice of

⁸⁰ Discussed above, Chapter II, section 2.

prefacing books with a proclamation of the author's own existential substantivity, but in the main bodies of their texts many writers go on to look at the opposite side of this question.

In this respect, it is not surprising to find that the writer whose satires most closely resemble Marston's own is Guilpin.⁸¹ Guilpin's satires, which as we have seen are based more on a Stoic philosophy than on any other, are nonetheless laced quite liberally with a vocabulary of existential rebuke that is strongly redolent of Marston's. An ambitious courtier has "puffe thoughts" (I.71); painted women are "Idols, Puppets" (II.11) and the men who dote upon them "turnd all *Pigmalion*/...So grossly to commit idolatry" (II.49; 52). Snobbish social climbers are transformed with a "fantasticke change" into "Phantasmas butterflies" (III.58-59). A fashionable courtier has become "thy selfe a fashion" (III.105) and of another it is said that "Light heeles, light head, light feather well agree" (V.131). Other people, "bond to opinion" (VI.4) have "empty caske like minds" and "slight frothy minds" (VI.105; 111); in their vanity they are "Puff'd up with the praises" (VI.153) of those around them.

Guilpin does not balance these criticisms of others with any positive existential advocacy, beyond "let's be Stoicks" (VI.131).⁸² He does, however, open his first satire with a statement that amounts to a claim of the positive realisation of his own self through literary publication:

Shall I still mych in silence and giue ayme,
To other wits which make court to bright fame?
A schoole boy still, shall I lend eare to other,
And myne owne priuate Muses musick smother?

No, no, my Muse, be valiant to controule...

(I.1-4; 11)

Rather than be, like a schoolboy, the object of others' influence and instruction, Guilpin chooses to take "controule" himself through a muse that is "valiant" in its aggression, yet

⁸¹ For an account of the close personal and intellectual relationship that seems to have existed between Marston and Guilpin, see D. Allen Carrol's introduction to *Skialetheia*.

⁸² Both Marston and Guilpin implicitly contradict themselves in expressing their attitudes to Stoicism, and in similar ways. Marston repudiates Stoicism on the only occasion that he mentions it by name in *The Scourge*: "Preach not the Stoickes patience to me,/ I hate no man, but mens impietie" (SV.II.5-6). He also attacks Zeno and Cynicism, in many ways a more extreme version of Stoicism (SV.IV.145-147). In Epigram 15 of *Skialetheia*, Guilpin attacks a character called Zeno, who, "desirous of the idle fame/ Of Stoicke resolution", professes to care for nothing at all. The epigram's sarcastic closing couplet is: "To all this carelesnes, should one declare/ His father's death, I am sure he would not care". On the other hand, considered apart from Guilpin's espousal of Stoicism, both write fulsomely of the arch-Stoic Epictetus. "O Epictetus", says Marston, "I doe honour thee,/ To thinke how rich thou wert in pouertie" (SV, Proem. in Lib. Sec. 23-24). Guilpin calls him the "True patterne of a philosophick soul" (VI.151) who, "though a slaue", "hadst as free a soule.../...as any Emperour" (VI.140-142). My inference is that both found it difficult to accept the moral and emotional constraints of the doctrine of *apathia*.

private, belonging to himself alone. We have seen how Marston tells his reader to please “thy selfe” by vexing all the world⁸³ and how, both to the Romans and to the Elizabethans, potency of language was an index of potency of self. Juvenal’s own first satire begins,

Semper ego auditor tantum? numquamne reponam
vexatus totiens rauci Theseide Cordi?
inpune ergo mihi recitaverit ille togatas,
hic elegos?

(I.1-2)⁸⁴

Juvenal’s conception of his own writings as a public punishment or vengeance extends to authorship the status of action, an extension which is also accepted by Marston and Guilpin. Elizabethan satire in effect allows the individual three possible modes of existence in relation to society. These are: the resignation of autonomy and submission to the mores of the mass; self-prescribed moral isolation from others; and independently-conceived action upon the social environment. Such action, in which the self is asserted as a substantive, belligerent force, in turn begets autonomous being, which is thus constructed as being a thoroughly public phenomenon. This goes a step further than, say, simply defying envy, unless to defy something is to attack it.

Of the four most prominent satirists - Donne, Hall, Marston and Guilpin - Donne alone does not consider the possibility of self-realisation through public action. This, of course, is perfectly consistent with the fact that he never submitted his satires for printing. While we should not underestimate the importance of avoiding print for those who sought to cultivate a ‘gentlemanly’ reputation at the Inns of Court,⁸⁵ Donne’s engagement with the introspective quest for true religion and his willingness to be “coffin’d” with his books would not in any case have accorded well with a thirst for publicity, existential or otherwise.⁸⁶ It should, however, be noted that Donne does not ignore the question of individual substance altogether. In his satires people are sometimes described in terms that connote feebleness or dissipation of mind, such as “Puppits” (I.17),⁸⁷ “heires melting

⁸³ See SV.VI.111-112.

⁸⁴ “What? Am I to be a listener only all my days? Am I never to get my word in - I that have been so often bored by the Theseid of the ranting Cordus? Shall this one have spouted to me his comedies, and that one his love ditties, and I be unavenged?” (Ramsay, p.3).

⁸⁵ See J.W. Saunders, ‘The Stigma of Print’, *Essays in Criticism*, I (1951) pp.139-164.

⁸⁶ Marston and Guilpin were the exceptions in this case. See Finkelpearl, p.28-29: “on the whole...Inns of Court writers avoided publication throughout the Tudor and early Stuart period”.

⁸⁷ An expression also favoured by the author of *Micro-Cynicon*, who talks of “windie parasites” (Author’s Prol.); “faire painted images”, “Ilfavoured Idols”, “Foule coloured puppets” (all Sat. III); a “painted puppet”, and “iugling parasites” (Sat.V).

with luxurie” (II.79) “huffing...puft...” (IV.164) and “gay painted things” (IV.172).

Like Aesop’s dog, they jeopardise themselves by chasing the unreal:

Thou’ art the swimming dog whom shadows cosened,
And div’st, neare drowning, for what vanished.
(V.90-91)

Hall occupies a middle ground. As a social critic, his preoccupations are mainly literary and moral, and he is less engaged with existential questions than are Marston and Guilpin. He does, however, address personal identity in relation to two other subjects: death, and the ancestral blood-line. That reactions to death can be an important indicator of changing attitudes to identity has been shown by Clare Gittings, whose *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England*⁸⁸ argues that the growth of individualism in England during the early modern period made death come to seem more unnatural and disastrous than it hitherto had done. This was because

In cultural terms, individualism results in originality, itself a form of distinctiveness, being more highly prized than skilful imitation... [T]he more stress is laid on the uniqueness of each individual, the harder it becomes to contemplate the exit of a particular person from this world, since one who is unique can by definition never be replaced.
(pp.9-10)

Perhaps because of this, the Elizabethans were greatly fired by a desire for posthumous reputation. Bacon says in one essay that death “openeth the gate to good fame” and elsewhere remarks approvingly that “There never was the like number of beautiful and costly tombs and monuments, which are erected in sundry churches in honourable memory of the dead”.⁸⁹ It was also a commonplace that poetry was a path to immortality because it captured people’s names and thoughts for ever.

Without directly attacking the principle of individual self-commemoration, in Book III, Satire ii of *Vergidemiarm* Hall questions whether this method is entirely fitting. Osmond, a rich man, is frightened of the obscurity to which death will ultimately reduce him “Vnlesse he reare vp some ritch monument” to serve as his “stately tombe” (II.4-5). Hall rather puritanically objects to the idea of a “gawdie grave” (I.9) and suggests that Osmond should preserve himself from oblivion in a less material way:

Thy monument make thou thy liuing deeds,
No other tombe then that, true vertue needs.
What? had he nought whereby he might be knowne

⁸⁸ London, 1984.

⁸⁹ ‘Of Death’, *Essays*, p.7; *Observations on a Libel* (1592) quoted by Gittings at p.144.

But costly pilements of some curious stone?

(ll.13-16)

Hall advocates the creation of a self through action, preferring the dynamic (“living deeds”) before the static (“pilements”) and the personal before the institutional:

The matter Natures, and the workmans frame,
His purses cost; where then is *Osmonds* name?

(ll.17-18)

In Satire IV.iii of *Vergidemiarmum*, which is closely modeled on Juvenal's eighth, he applies similar principles to the theme of ancestry. Hall argues that the glory of his characters' forbears is irrelevant in determining their own personal worth:

What boots it *Pontice* tho thou could'st discourse
Of a long golden line of ancestors?

(ll.1-2)

Rejecting the empty snobbery of blue-blooded elitism, he insists that moral fibre is a matter of individual conduct, for “their vertue was their owne,/ Not capable of propagation” (ll.46-47). However, like Lodge,⁹⁰ he does say that vice can be inherited, as “if the Syre be ill inclin'd,/ His faults befall his sonnes by course of kind.” (ll.86-87). The responsibility is thus placed on the individual to create a virtuous identity through good deeds, whether or not this involves breaking the mould of his moral inheritance:

Brag of thy Fathers faults, they are thine owne;
Brag of his lands, if those be not forgone:
Brag of thine owne good deeds, for they are thine,
More than his life, or lands, or golden line.

(ll.92-95)⁹¹

As a statement of the need to nurture one's public, substantive ego this is not far from Marston and Guilpin. Hall's stance is a more self-consciously moral one than theirs, which often has an existential priority, but his satire is itself more ‘moral’, in that it is less prurient or hypocritical than either *The Scourge of Villanie* or *Skialetheia*. On the important point - that the individual has a duty to distinguish himself from the mass by identifying himself as a substantive human force - all three are more or less agreed.

*

This chapter shows that Elizabethan satires are not merely extravagant and undisciplined exercises in self-advertisement on the part of their authors. They may be these things, but if

⁹⁰ See above, Chapter II, section 2.

⁹¹ Hall follows Juvenal into the contradiction between emphasising individual merit, and attacking the nouveaux riches. See Chapter I, sections 2 and 3.

for 'extravagant' we read 'violent', if for 'undisciplined' we read 'contradictory' and if for 'self-advertisement' we read 'self-assertion' we are much closer to the truth. If, instead of attacking or dismissing this poetry, we attempt to make sense of it, then sense it yields. The subject of this thesis, Marston's treatment of identity, was chosen because a fascination with the self seems to have prominence in his work. In this respect Marston is representative of the satirists of his generation. Not, perhaps, typical: his involvement with the problem of how to constitute a human authenticity that was at once social and individual was unusual, but only in degree. In going on to become a professional playwright Marston took a step that none of the other gentleman-satirists of his generation was willing, or able, to follow. Writing for the stage allowed him to work out his theories in a new environment, that offered greater possibilities for the representation of how and why identities are created and destroyed than formal satire ever could.

Philip Finkelpearl observes of Marston that "For an affluent young man from an old family to have become a professional playwright at this time was an unprecedented move" (p.125). The point is an important one because it shows Marston practising as he preached. His father, who died in 1599, made clear his reservations about his son's choice of career in his will:

To sd son John my furniture &c. in my chambers in the Middle Temple
my law books &c. to my sd. son whom I hoped would have profited by
them in the study of the law but man proposeth and God disposeth &
c.⁹²

So badly did Marston want to write plays that he initially enlisted in "the most plebeian company, Henslowe's Admiral's Men", for a brief period (Finkelpearl, p.126). The move is totally consistent with his creed of self-individuation. At one point in *What You Will* (1601) a character says that

...as we see the son of a divine
Seldom proves a preacher, or a lawyer's son
Rarely a pleader (for they strive to run
A various fortune from their ancestors...

(I.i.174-177)

To run such a various fortune clearly had significant implications for Marston. He was not just challenging a parent; he was deploying a philosophy.

⁹² Quoted on p.7 of Morse S. Allen, *The Satire of John Marston*.

As a character the angry, vociferous railer of *The Scourge of Villanie* was too overwhelming and too crude to have any place on the London stage, where by the turn of the century such pieces as *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet* were being performed. In any case, the nature of drama, with its requirement of conflict and resolution, was inherently unsuitable for the relentless and unopposed aggression that constituted Elizabethan satire. Marston abandoned the didactic in favour of what might be called a much more scientific approach, but in decamping for the theatre he also took much of his technical baggage with him. He continued to exploit the performance of language as a means of laying open the self, and exploited the increased potential it had as a tool of characterisation on the stage. He retained his conception of violence as a mode of existential self-realisation, as well as his idea that substantive personal identity is something that people not only ought to, but in some sense need to have. It will be seen, though, that the most important way in which the plays are like the satires is in the great attention they give to the question of how the psyche is really composed.

In Marston's poems the self is seen as something which exists in relation to society, and is besieged by its insidious influence. Faced with the conflict between asserting their individualities and submitting to the norms of a corrupt social environment, the characters of *The Scourge of Villanie* - in so far as they 'face' the conflict at all - opt out of their responsibility and embrace sensual and worldly values. In so abdicating from the universe of reason and moral choice, they enter a world ruled by superficial and trivial concerns, which lacks spiritual substance and deprives them of theirs. There is, however, another way. The individual can, and should, refuse to be drawn into the moral chaos that surrounds him. He should try, firstly, to exercise independent control over himself and, secondly, to exercise an improving influence on his environment by expanding his reasoning and autonomous self into it. In this case the self is seen as being only able to exist dynamically: it is posed only in being opposed, but opposition to the self can threaten to extinguish it. In the following chapters we shall see how these ideas are explored in Marston's plays, where the debate as to how far the individual can preserve his or her integrity of self in hostile circumstances is central to the drama.

Chapter III: Self and Context in *Antonio and Mellida*

This chapter is primarily an analysis of *Antonio and Mellida*. It argues that the play is centrally concerned with the effect on identity of two types of experience which are apparently antithetical to each other: that of extreme dislocation and distress as the individual is torn from his accustomed surroundings and set down in a place where he is hunted like an animal (the wilderness); and that of uninterrupted incubation in a society that does nothing to challenge the individual's preconceptions about himself (the court). It argues that the play brings to its subject some of the themes and tropes of *The Scourge of Villanie*, but also shows Marston using drama to construct a more ambitious anatomy of selfhood than was possible with verse satires. The chapter is in three sections. The first introduces the main analysis via a brief examination of two other pieces: the Induction to Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* (1589) and the main plot of Marston's own *What You Will* (1601).¹ The former is discussed because it constitutes an analogical early treatment by an influential dramatist of the issue of how individual identity is related to the social and material context.² It is useful because it clarifies the fundamental issue under discussion. *What You Will* is important because it lays out very clearly Marston's basic approach to the same relationship and makes explicit some of the basic principles of his dramatisation of identity-crises. Section one goes on to discuss some preliminary questions relating to both of the *Antonio* plays, such as their schemes of metaphor and the significance of the fact that they were originally performed by child actors. Section two is

¹ "We do not know anything about the performance of [*What You Will*], not even which acting company did it, and even the generally agreed upon date of 1601 is conjectural" (Finkelpearl, p.162-163). The play was entered in the Stationers' Register on August 6th 1607; "All arguments for an earlier date derive from its alleged connections with the War of the Theaters and subjective impressions of Marston's stylistic development" (p.163 n.1).

² Clearly, it is not the only work of Shakespeare's on this subject; the two comedies of identity, *The Comedy of Errors* (1594) and *Twelfth Night* (1601) are clearly closely engaged with it, and in various forms it is an issue in many of his other plays. The Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew* seems especially suitable because its themes and conflicts are most like those of *What You Will*, and because of the condensed form in which they are treated.

a detailed examination of the main plot of *Antonio and Mellida*, focusing especially on the effects on Antonio and Andrugio of their experiences in the wilderness. Section three takes a contrasting look at Marston's portrayal of courtiers and the court in the play, relating his treatment of courtiers to some of the ideas in *The Scourge* and to the play's main plot.

1: General Principles.

The Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew* first shows Christopher Sly, a tinker, who has been thrown out of a public house for misbehaving and is shouting at the hostess. She calls him a rogue, to which he replies that

Y'are a baggage, the Slys are no rogues. Look in the Chronicles, we
came in with Richard Conqueror. Therefore, *paucas pallabris*, let the
world slide. Sessa!

Host. You will not pay for the glasses you have burst?

Sly. No, not a denier. Go by, Saint Jeronimy, go to thy bed and warm
thee.

(Ind.i.3-8)³

Sly first refers to his blood-line as proof of his honesty, but in a way that shows him to be talking nonsense. By connecting his glorious ancestry with the non-existent 'Richard Conqueror', he consigns it and, by extension, himself, to the realm of the unreal. His language tends to be consistent with this. It is laden with confusion and affectation.

"Therefore" implies an entirely illusory sequentiality; "Paucas pallabris" is a corruption of the Spanish 'pocas palabras';⁴ "sessa" is a word of uncertain derivation, probably foreign in origin;⁵ a "denier" is a French coin, and "go by, Saint Jeronimy" is a confused and inappropriate reference to *The Spanish Tragedy*.⁶ Of course, Sly is presumably drunk in this scene, but in the context of Elizabethan drama his drunkenness itself signals feebleness of mind.⁷

Having quarrelled with the Hostess, Sly falls asleep. It chanced that he is thus discovered by a lord out hunting with his train, who decide to play a trick on him. As they gaze down at the comatose tinker, the Lord asks,

³ *The Taming of the Shrew*, ed. B. Morris, New Arden, London, 1981.

⁴ "Few words"; first adopted by Kyd, the Spanish phrase became common in Elizabethan drama. See *The Spanish Tragedy*, III.xiv.118.

⁵ See Morris's note to l.5.

⁶ III.xii.31: "Not I. Hieronimo, beware, go by, go by". Hieronimo is telling himself to be careful not to run headlong into trouble.

⁷ See for example *Twelfth Night*, I.iii.14-43; *Hamlet*, I.iv.17-20.

What think you, if he were convey'd to bed,
 Wrapp'd in sweet clothes, rings put upon his fingers,
 A most delicious banquet by his bed,
 And brave attendants near him when he wakes,
 Would not the beggar then forget himself?
First Hunt.. Believe me, lord, I think he cannot choose.
 (Ind.i.35-40)

So the experiment proceeds. When Sly awakes, in luxurious surroundings, wine and fruits are pressed upon him by a bevy of servants who call him “your lordship”. He defends himself against this assault on his identity by reaching for his name: “I am Christophero Sly, call me not ‘honour’ nor ‘lordship’” (Ind.ii.5-6). But the insidious campaign continues, and the servants bemoan his madness, saying that an “idle humour” has caused ‘his lordship’ to so forget himself for fifteen years as to believe that he is a tinker. A doubting Sly tries again to stabilise himself by insisting on the facts of his origin:

Am not I Christopher Sly, old Sly's son of Burton-heath, by birth a
 pedlar, by education a cardmaker, by transmutation a bear herd,⁸ and
 now by present profession a tinker?
 (Ind.ii.17-21)

But appeals to name, family, place and occupation are ultimately unsuccessful. When he is told that he has a wife, his resistance collapses:

Am I a lord, and have I such a lady?
 Or do I dream? Or have I dream'd till now?
 I do not sleep. I see, I hear, I speak.
 I smell sweet savours and I feel soft things.
 Upon my life, I am a lord indeed,
 And not a tinker nor Christophero Sly.
 (Ind.ii.69-74)

When his ‘wife’, actually a page in a dress, appears, ‘she’ refuses to undress and get to bed with the excuse that his physicians have advised that to do so at once would be to risk a relapse into his “former malady”. He agrees, saying “I would be loath to fall into my dreams again” (Ind.ii.123; 127). Then a messenger announces that some players, who have been introduced to the real lord earlier (Ind.i.75-102) are ready to perform for the court. This goes ahead as *The Taming of the Shrew* proper.

The Induction acts as a condensed illustration of how personal identity is contingent upon environment; as such it anticipates the main theme of the play, the transformation of Katherina, as well as perhaps obliquely commenting on the forms of upward social mobility that were discussed in chapter I, section 3 of this thesis. When we first see Sly

⁸ “One who keeps and exhibits a bear” (Morris, p.163).

his speech and behaviour indicate that he is a man of little social or moral substance, and after the initial shock of being told that he is someone other than himself has worn off, he readily succumbs to the pressure upon him. In his transformation he emphasises the importance of sensory experience: “I see, I hear, I speak./ I smell sweet savours and I feel soft things.” In this new material environment, which is available for immediate physical examination, the realities of his past life are rendered abstract and intangible, and are finally repudiated, along with the identity they constituted.

What You Will was first performed in about 1601, and, although it is distinctly Marstonian in many respects, its main plot has an identity-deception format which in principle is very similar to the Induction of *The Taming of the Shrew*.⁹ *What You Will*, a comedy, depicts the misfortunes of Albano, a rich Venetian merchant who is thought to have been drowned at sea three months before the play’s beginning, and whose wife, Celia, has decided to marry a French knight, Laverdure. In order to disturb the match, Jacomo, a rejected suitor of Celia’s, and Albano’s brothers, Andrea and Randolfo, disguise Francisco, a perfumer who happens to strongly resemble Albano, in Albano’s clothes. However, Laverdure’s page overhears their plotting, and warns his master of the plan. Then, the real Albano turns up and, encountering Laverdure, is addressed as Francisco and told that the plot has been discovered. Laverdure reduces him to a distraction of rage and confusion, which deepens when his brothers approach and congratulate him on his likeness to Albano. Later, while Celia is entertaining guests, Albano and Francisco both clamour for admittance, but Laverdure had previously said that he intended to disguise a fiddler as Albano in order to foil the disguised perfumer, so that, when Albano and Francisco appear, Celia imagines them to be the fiddler and the perfumer. The mystery is solved when Albano shows Celia a birthmark and repeats their private conversation before he went to sea. From this outline it will be evident that the story is rich with possibilities for examining how an identity is affected by the withdrawal of the recognition of those who ought to know the subject better than anybody, in this case Albano’s wife and brothers.

⁹ Quotations from *What You Will* are from the edition of the play in volume II of *The Works of John Marston*, ed. A.H. Bullen, 3 volumes, London, 1887.

Marston's main point is very simple: people's identities are essentially socially determined; selves are created and maintained, and can also be destroyed, by social interaction. *What You Will* harks back, particularly in its satirical sub-plot, to *The Scourge of Villanie*; the snarling, malcontented Quadratus, to whom "All things are error, dirt and nothing" (I.i.72) recalls Marston's persona in those poems. In language very redolent of Kinsayder's, he describes Simplicius Faber, a sycophantic and affected gallant, as

Yon chamlet¹⁰ youth,
Simplicius Faber, that hermaphrodite,
Party per pale,¹¹ that bastard mongrel soul,
Is nought but admiration and applause...
(II.i.46-49)

The familiar connections between voice and self are made; another character, Lampatho Doria says at one point that "my speech mount[s] to the value of myself" (IV.i.251) and remarks of the insubstantial Simplicius that

I'll make a parrot now
As good a man as he in fourteen nights.
I never heard him vent a syllable
Of his own creating since I knew the use
Of eyes and ears.
(II.ii.140-144)¹²

However, the play's main interest in our perspective is the effect on Albano of finding on his return that his wife and brothers think that he is not himself. After a long argument in which he fails to persuade his brothers that he is not Francisco, the perfumer, his confidence in his identity collapses entirely:

Alb. Boy, who am I?
Slip. My Lord Albano!
Alb. By this breast you lie.
The Samian¹³ faith is true, true! I was drowned;
And now my soul is skipp'd into a perfumer,

A gutter-master.
(III.ii.270-275)

The page's efforts to prevent Albano from losing sight of himself are fiercely rejected:

¹⁰ "Chamlet (or camlet) was a mixed stuff of wool and silk" (Bullen, p.345).

¹¹ "'Party per pale' is a term in heraldry denoting that the field or ground on which the figures that make up a coat of arms, is divided into two equal parts by a perpendicular line; and Quadratus means that the external appearances of the two sexes are, in Simplicius, divided with equal exactness." - *Dilke*" (Bullen, p.345).

¹² The play also contains a number of passages of a broadly satirical nature that are highly reminiscent of *The Scourge*. See especially I.i.44-49; II.i.72-83; II.ii.195-210; II.ii.219-230; III.i.11-23; III.ii.53-67.

¹³ "Pythagoras was of Samos" (Bullen, p.380). Albano alludes to metempsychosis, Pythagoras' doctrine of the transmigration of souls.

Hence, ass!
 Doth not opinion stamp the current pass
 Of each man's value, virtue, quality?
 Had I engross'd the choice commodities
 Of heaven's traffic, yet reputed vile,
 I am a rascal!
 ...
 I am a perfumer: ay, think'st thou, my blood,
 My brothers know not right Albano yet?
 Away! 'tis faithless! If Albano's name
 Were liable to sense, that could I taste, or touch,
 Or see, or feel it, it might 'tice belief;
 But since 'tis voice, and air - Come to the Muscat, boy;
 Francisco, that's my name...

(III.ii.281-286; 292-298)

Albano's words, like Christopher Sly's, stress the importance of material sensation in the determination of personal reality. His name, and therefore by implication, 'he', is ultimately "voice, and air", a kind of nothing whose existence is precariously dependent on the recognition of others.

As we have seen, for Marston, language - although in the context of drama it is more appropriate to refer to 'the voice' - is also an index of the speaker's selfhood, and in *What You Will* he turns this linkage to new effect. It is a characteristic of Albano that he "stuts"¹⁴ when he is vehemently moved" (I.i.246) but to Marston this is not merely a source of cheap humour. Albano's stuttering - the disintegration of his speech - symbolises the disintegration of his identity. Of his wife, Celia, he says,

I was her husband, and was called Albano, before I was drown'd; but now, after my resurrection, I am I know not what; indeed, brothers, and indeed, sisters, and indeed, wife, I am What You Will. Doest thou laugh? dost thou ge-ge-ge-gerne?¹⁵ A p-p-p-perfumer, - a fiddler, a - *Diabolo, matre de Dios*, - I'll f-f-f-firk you, by the Lord, now, now I will!

(IV.i.348-357)¹⁶

Marston takes the same kind of conflict as Shakespeare and, philosophically speaking, resolves it in much the same way, but Marston is more interested in the abstraction. His drama is heavier-handed than Shakespeare's, in that he is inclined to use plays as a means of setting forth ideas about human motivation and behaviour, as opposed to pursuing psychological realism. Shakespeare's characters always seem to respond much more

¹⁴ "Stutters" (Bullen, p.342).

¹⁵ "Grin, snarl" (Bullen, p.402).

¹⁶ Marston uses this and similar tricks of aposeopesis repeatedly in *WYW*. See III.ii.79-80; III.ii.94-96; III.ii.177-188; III.ii.231-233; III.ii.269; IV.i.318-357; V.i.269-298

naturally to the situations in which they find themselves.¹⁷ As this might lead one to expect, there is strong thematic coherence to *What You Will*; one of the play's key phrases, spoken by Quadratus, is: "all that exists,/ Takes valuation from opinion,/ A giddy minion now" (I.i.18-20); another is its title, which appears repeatedly in the characters' speeches:

your friend the author, the composer, the *What You Will*...
(Ind.78-79)

even now a perfumer, - now a fiddler! - I will be even *What You Will*...
(IV.i.336-337)

Albano Belletzo, thy merchant, thy soldier, thy courtier, thy slave, thy
anything, thy What thou Wilt, kisseth thy noble blood.
(V.i.269-271)¹⁸

In the context of the rest of the play this title, like Quadratus' remark about opinion, has an ironical, as well as a serious point. Both phrases draw attention to the fact that there really is no objective existence, only socially constructed meanings and significances, but even allowing for this they both also imply a criticism of people's tendency to subordinate their own 'wills' to the judgements of others. This, of course, is the main theme of the satires, and, again like the satires, *What You Will* has a defiant Prologue:

Nor cares he to insinuate the grace
Of loath'd detraction, nor pursues the love
Of the nice critics of this squeamish age;
Nor strives he to bear up with every sail
Of floating censure; nor once dreads or cares
What envious hand his guiltless muse hath struck...
(Prol.4-9)

The important difference between the satires and *What You Will* is in the fact that Albano is, unlike the spectral figures of *The Scourge*, not a vapid youth but a self-made man of some substance, in no way the butt of Marston's invective, but described by another character as

...so bounteous,
Valiant, wise, learned, all so absolute,
That naught was valued praiseful excellent,

¹⁷ The difference between Marston's and Shakespeare's approaches is especially apparent from the difference between the moments when Albano feels most intensely the pressure on his senses of identity and reality, and corresponding moments from *The Comedy of Errors*. For example, when Antipholus of Syracuse, newly arrived in Ephesus, is pressed to come home for dinner by a woman who says that she is his wife, his confusion is profound, but it does not go to the extremes experienced by Albano: "Am I in earth, in heaven, or in hell?/ Sleeping or waking, mad or well advis'd?/ Known unto these, and to myself disguis'd,/ I'll say as they say, and persevere so,/ And in this mist at all adventures go" (II.ii.212-216). See also WYW V.i.294-298, and *The Comedy of Errors*, I.ii.35-40, III.ii.29-75 and IV.iii.1-11.

¹⁸ See also Ind.88-94; III.i.47; IV.i.45; IV.i.251. The same concept is also glanced at in *Malc.*, V.iv.46 and, in effect, in the epilogue to *A&M*: "What we are is by your favour. What we shall be rests all in your applausive encouragements" (Ep.8-9).

But in it was he most praiseful excellent.

(I.i.137-140)

Prima facie, this may appear to cloud Marston's moral purpose in *What You Will*. To have a demonstrably inadequate self is no longer a prerogative of the vicious and the fatuous; even a wise and valiant man finds that, ultimately, he is unable to secure his identity from within. Yet, in the Prologue Marston still makes a point of advertising his own aggressive indifference to public criticism; there would seem to be a conflict of principle here. To some extent the two positions can be reconciled by emphasising the importance of violence, both literal and figurative, in Marston's work. Albano, is not an aggressive man or one with a keen awareness of how the world shifts. When he is first told of Celia's engagement to Laverdure, he is penetrated¹⁹ by the psychological assault because he is unprepared for it. The personality Marston puts forward in the Prologue, on the other hand, is braced and ready for anything; he is in every sense offensive, and so can (according to Marston's lights) more confidently lay claim to an unshakeable sense of self. This distinction, however, is less important than the changing emphasis in Marston's artistic purpose that is illustrated by the worthiness of Albano as a man: the moralistic approach of the satires yields to a more morally neutral enquiry into the nature of identity.

In drama, and especially in Elizabethan drama, the self is frequently anatomised by stripping it down, layer by layer, from the outside inwards: Lear gives up his kingdom, then he gives up his followers, and finally he loses his mind. The psychological violence inherent in this process is most readily appreciated when it arises out of physical violence, and for this reason it is a subject that lends itself most readily to tragedy. The contrived ending to *What You Will* that, although necessitated by the comic form and not less contrived than the play as a whole, is profoundly unsatisfying. In his treatment of Albano, Marston suggests the psychological horrors that might come of true deracination and isolation, but is forbidden to expose them by the limits of comedy. However, by the time he came to write *What You Will*, there was little need for such intellectual frankness, because he had already explored this darker side of experience in the *Antonio* plays, the first of which was performed in the dying weeks of the sixteenth century, and was,

¹⁹ See especially III.ii.53-54.

together with the second, entered in the Stationers' Register on the 24th October 1601.

They were listed as the 'first and second parts' of *Antonio and Mellida*, implying, as we shall see, a continuity between the two plays that should be treated with caution.²⁰

Antonio's Revenge followed *Antonio and Mellida* onto the stage within a year.²¹

Before going on to discuss the plays themselves, we should pause to consider the conditions under which they were staged. Both *Antonio's Revenge* and *Antonio and Mellida* were performed by the Children of St Paul's, a company composed of the cathedral's choir boys whose first recorded performance was in 1551.²² The company was suppressed for political reasons in 1589-90,²³ but re-formed in about 1599 and played until falling demand forced it to cease in about 1608.²⁴ Apart from occasional appearances at court, it presented its plays in a small playhouse in the Cathedral grounds, one of the so-called 'private theatres', where the minimal admission price was higher than at the public playhouses where the adult companies played. The typical patron of a private theatre of this period is often characterised as an Inns of Court man - a young, educated gentleman with a taste for wit, like John Donne:

who leaving *Oxford*, lived at the *Innes of Court*, not dissolute, but very neat; a great visiter of Ladies, a great frequenter of Playes, a great writer of conceited Verses.²⁵

That the audience at Paul's would have included characters of Donne's age and background is undoubted, but it is difficult to be much more precise about its composition.²⁶ The

²⁰ For a fuller discussion of the relationship between the two plays, see Chapter IV, section 1, below.

²¹ Since my argument does not hinge on disputed dates, texts, or influences, they are not treated in any detail here. The reader is referred especially to the introductions to the Regents editions of the two plays edited by G.K. Hunter (1965 and 1966) and to the Revels editions by Reavley Gair (1978 and 1991). For a useful survey of the main arguments see J&N, pp. 3-5 and 95-96.

²² H.N. Hillebrand, *The Child Actors, A Chapter in Elizabethan Stage History*, Illinois, 1926, p.124. For a detailed history of the company, see R. Gair, *The Children of Paul's: the Story of a Theatre Company, 1553-1608*, Cambridge, 1982. For an excellent overview of the boy companies and their drama, see M. Shapiro, *Children of the Revels*, New York, 1977.

²³ Gair, *The Children of Paul's*, p.112.

²⁴ Gair, *The Children of Paul's*, pp.172-175.

²⁵ Sir Richard Baker, *Chronicles* (1643) First ed., Part II, p.156.

²⁶ Gair insists that Paul's playhouse, far from being a "wholly exclusive preserve", served "as a place of entertainment for the inhabitants of the nearby streets". It was cheaper and easier for people to spend sixpence on a visit to the nearest theatre than it was for them to cross the Thames and pay both the admission price and boatman's fee (*The Children of Paul's*, pp.72-73). Both Shapiro and Gurr (*The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642*, Third Edn., Cambridge, 1992) acknowledge the relatively low seat prices at the newly-reopened Paul's in 1599 - the cheapest seats were then probably 2d each, compared with a penny at the public theatres - but still argue for an élite audience (cf. *Jack Drum's Entertainment* (1601) V.i.: "I like the audience that frequenteth there/ With much applause: A man shall not be choakte/ With the stench of Garlicke, nor be pasted/ To the barmy jacket of a Beer-brewer"). In *Jacobean Private Theatre*

difference in price between Paul's and the public theatres might have been sufficiently wide to deter the poorest of visitors, such as apprentices, but there may be little substance to the visions of glittering assemblies that writers on the subject sometimes conjure.²⁷

The actors were in 1599 aged from about ten to about fifteen, and their singing abilities were used extensively by Marston: *Antonio and Mellida* alone has eight songs in it. The question of what effect the use of child actors would have had on the performance of the plays has drawn much comment, some of it (in my view) misguided. In 1962, R.A. Foakes's highly influential essay on 'John Marston's Fantastical Plays'²⁸ argued that Marston

shows his actors detached from the roles they are to play, and matching the roles and themselves against adult plays and players...

By the end of the Induction, in fact, it is clear that the play to follow will parody old ranting styles, make the children out-strut the adult tragedians, who were still performing the plays of Kyd and Marlowe, and burlesque common conventions.

(pp.229-230)

Foakes contended that Marston sought to send up the excesses of the adult stage, that to have children deliver ranting speeches and generally enact the formulaic behaviour of tragedy was "a parodistic technique that simultaneously inflates, in tragic hyperbole, and diminishes, in the figure of child-actors ranting, the stock hero and villain" (p.238). It needs to be discussed at this point, partly because its tendency is to reduce the *Antonio*

(London, 1987) Keith Sturges asserts that the private theatre audiences of this time had "an intellectual, even radical bias" (p.19).

²⁷ Shapiro argues that the private theatres offered to members of the upper class whose social status was precarious the chance "to live in a style commensurate with their dignity". This was partly afforded by the conspicuous extravagance of visiting a private theatre in the first place, but also important were the "opportunities for self-dramatisation" which the small, intimate playhouses provided. The spectator "could disrupt the play in any number of witty or childish ways, thereby manifesting his wit and critical judgement, and exhibiting the potency of his presence...the aristocratic spectator was actually giving a counterperformance of his own". The playwrights invented "dramaturgical defences", against such behaviour, such as satirising it (as in the Induction to *What You Will* (1601)), humbly appealing to the audience's aristocratic good manners in prologues and epilogues (the epilogue of *Antonio's Revenge* alludes to the "calm attention of choice audience") and mocking the adult companies with allusions that flattered the audience with an assumption of its knowledge and superior judgement (pp. 67-138). However, his case is weakened by the fact that in 1599-1600 the admission price at Paul's was hardly more than at the public theatres. See Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy*, Second Edn., London, 1980: "There was probably some difference...between the boys...and the men at the Globe in the early years from 1599 to 1602...though it should not carry any suggestion of deliberate exclusive 'in-group' intimacy or triviality or social snobbery" (p.27), also A.J. Cook, *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London, 1576-1642*, Princeton, 1981; Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis 1632-1642*, Cambridge, 1984; and Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, Cambridge, 1987.

²⁸ 'John Marston's Fantastical Plays: *Antonio and Mellida* and *Antonio's Revenge*', *PQ*, XLI, 1962, 229-239.

plays to the status of a ragbag of cheap jokes about grown-ups, and partly because of its popularity.

Foakes's essay has been the inspiration for others,²⁹ but its argument is not without difficulties. These are essentially two: first, we know very little about the acting styles of the boy companies, and what we do know is not particularly supportive of Foakes's case; second, Foakes does not integrate his parodic reading with any argument as to Marston's serious philosophical purpose, indeed, he doubts whether there is one. These two points will be dealt with in turn. In *The Children of the Revels*, Michael Shapiro suggests that three styles would have been available to the child-actors: the natural, the declamatory and the parodic, but acknowledges that "it is not always possible to know when declamation is so exaggerated that it becomes parodic" (p.131). In fact, many speeches in both of the *Antonio* plays are open to either reading, but this is no basis for assuming a parodic delivery.³⁰ Nor is it generally accepted that there would have been a parodic effect inherent in the performance of grandly heroic and villainous roles by children. It is frequently observed that *Bussy D'Ambois*, a tragedy in which all the internal evidence points to a sympathetic, rather than a parodic, design, was presented by the Children of Paul's in 1604. As one recent study has argued, "The quality of the children as performers was not by its nature satiric; it was neutral":

Parody is the application of the Children's special quality in a particular social and theatrical context, which provided a nexus for the children's mimetic vivacity on the one hand, and the combative, satirical penchant of the writers who gathered round them on the other. There is every reason to suppose they could draw tears as well as laughter.³¹

²⁹ Subsequent studies which drew on Foakes's parodic interpretation include E. Berland, 'The Function of Irony in Marston's *Antonio and Mellida*', *SP*, 66 (1969) 739-755; A. Bergson, 'The Ironic Tragedies of Marston and Chapman', *JEGP*, 69 (1970) 613-630 and 'Dramatic Style as Parody in Marston's *Antonio and Mellida*', *SEL*, 12 (1971) 307-325; and B. Baines, '*Antonio's Revenge*: Marston's Play on Revenge Plays', *SEL*, 23 (1983) 277-294.

³⁰ This was partly the basis of Richard Levin's reply to Foakes, 'The New *New Inn* and the Proliferation of Good Bad Drama' (*E in C*, 22 (1972) 41-47): "There is no way to disprove any of these [parodic] readings because they are all theoretically possible" (p.45). See also Foakes's answer (p.327 in the same volume) and Levin's rejoinder, 'The Proof of the Parody', *E in C*, 24 (1974) pp.312-317.

³¹ D. Mann, *The Elizabethan Player: Contemporary Stage Representation*, London, 1991, pp.116-117. See also David Frost, *The School of Shakespeare* (Cambridge, 1968): "we may not assume that there was something inherently ridiculous in the tragic posturing of children...Of itself, [*Antonio's Revenge*] does not amuse; there is little of that precise allusion to *The Spanish Tragedy* or *Hamlet* which parody would demand. The targets are not hit" (p.181). R.W. Ingram, *John Marston*, (Boston, 1978) is also wary: "The ability of boys to mock adult behaviour can lend something to the satire, but to apply the label of parodistic too widely to what they act is dangerous" (p.89).

On the basis of what we know about the acting styles of the child companies, it is to say the least unsafe to assume that the dominant tone in the presentation of the *Antonio* plays was parodic, and it is pointless to try to sort them into 'straight', and parodic parts. Exaggerated pieces of writing might equally be read as alienation devices which call attention to the theatricality of the spectator's experience, without necessarily having being intended - or interpreted - as attacks on adult companies. To a large extent this will depend on whether a specific victim can be identified for a given alleged parody. For example, Piero's line "My fate is firmer than mischance can shake" (*A&M* I.i.41) may make him a caricature of a theatrical character in the grip of *hubris*, but we are invited to laugh *at him*, and not through him at some other play. Nor is it likely that the boy companies were sending up the adults' declamatory style in a general sense, because to do this by parodying it would require an assumed agreement on how plays should be written and acted between writer, director, actors *and audience*. It is difficult to see how such an understood positive norm could have existed, since there was no third alternative to the adult companies who on this theory were being sent up, and the boys who were creating the parody.

My second quarrel with Foakes relates to his denial that Marston's allegedly parodic technique had any serious point to it. Foakes simply asserts that "the possibilities for serious drama" in Marston's technique were "not [his] immediate concern", which was to create "a satire...against conventional literary and theatrical modes and attitudes" (p.238). This is to ignore the completely 'serious' psychological and philosophical issues which are considered in some depth in both *Antonio* plays, as well as to deny that they have any important link with the verse satires (unless one is to dismiss those as being 'not serious' as well). Subsequently, attempts to weld Marston's alleged³² use of parody to arguments

³² Even when dealing with specific passages, it can be very questionable whether parody is really involved. To take three examples from *Antonio and Mellida*: (1) III.i.1 s.d. reads, "Enter Andrugio in armour, Lucio with a shepherd gown in his hand, and a Page". Jackson and Neill argue that "the scene suggests a burlesque inversion of 1 Tamburlaine, I.ii", but no such inversion takes place; Andrugio never takes off his armour. (2) II.i.144-148 reads: "Slid, I have been searching every private room,/ Corner, and secret angle of the court,/ And yet, and yet, and yet she lives concealed./ Good sweet Felice, tell me how to find/ My bright-faced mistress out." Jackson and Neill say that this "apparently parodies" *The Spanish Tragedy*, Fourth Addition, 17-21, which reads: "I pry through every crevice of each wall,/ Look on each tree, and search through every brake,/ Beat at the bushes, stamp our grandam earth,/ Dive in the water, and stare up to heaven,/ Yet cannot I behold my son Horatio." If this is a parody, it must be explained why Marston's language is so much *less* hyperbolic than Kyd's, and bears such a slight resemblance to it. (3) The Painter scene (V.i.1-69) has long been cited as an instance of Marston's parodic approach. Yet in his recent edition

about his “serious dramatic and philosophical intention” have not been particularly successful, either. Jonathan Dollimore says that

By the time of the appearance of these plays stoical endurance had been memorably embodied in such figures as Kyd’s Hieronimo and Shakespeare’s Titus. A philosophical attitude had become a stage convention. Marston, through parody, undermines the convention and so discredits the attitude.

(*Radical Tragedy*, p.31)

The problem with this is that Titus and Hieronimo are not embodiments of Stoical endurance, but multiple murderers who are both dead by the end of their respective plays. Feliche,³³ Andrugio and Pandulpho may (arguably) be parodies of these characters, but if so they are parodies of revengers, not of Stoics, which in the context of Dollimore’s argument is not very helpful.

Overall, it is probably best to treat the use of child-actors and any parodic references, be they directly related to the fact that the performers were boys, or arising independently out of the script itself, as being part of the package of devices which Marston uses continually to shake the audience out of the illusion. It seems to me that Marston decided to exploit the highly artificial presentation that the Children of Paul’s would give to his plays in any case by making the plays themselves non-illusions, filled with self-reference and theatrical consciousness.³⁴ The frequent breaks for songs would only add to this effect. In denying the audience a continuous suspension of its disbelief, Marston forces it to approach the play intellectually, to think its way through the performance as opposed to engaging with it emotionally. Child-actors would give the performances an air not of enactment, or

of the play Reavley Gair, a leading authority on Marston, finds “no overwhelming evidence to suggest that Marston’s Painter scene is a parody of any other writer’s work” (p. 50, n.46). It should be noted that *The Malcontent* contains several passages that manifestly send up speeches in *Hamlet*. See I.v.51-55; I.vii.103-107; II.v.145-148; there are also some interesting similarities (though probably not satirical in effect) between IV.v.31-50 and *Hamlet*, I.ii.129-159.

³³ Gair uses the Italian spelling (‘Felice’) of this name in his edition of *Antonio and Mellida*, and the ‘English’ (‘Feliche’) in that of *Antonio’s Revenge*. In both cases his text, including speech-prefixes, has been quoted without alteration. I use the English spelling throughout.

³⁴ The most prominent examples, apart from the Prologues, the Epilogues, the songs and the Induction itself, are: A&M II.i.114-115 (Feliche tells the audience what will happen next); A&M II.i.1-14, II.i.57, III.ii.31 (various references to the “diminutive” stature and unbroken voices of the boys); A&M III.ii.186-190, IV.i.189-206 (characters break into Italian); A&M III.ii.20, V.ii.53 V.ii.187, V.ii.229 (references to “scene”, “comedy”, “tragic spectacle” and “tragedy”); A&M V.i.78 (Alberto announces the end of his part); A.R. I.v.76-80 (Pandulpho dismisses shows of emotion as “player-like”); II.i.20-32 (Balurdo’s beard will not stay on); II.ii.79 (reference to Dekker’s *Old Fortunatus* (1599)); A.R. III.ii.15-22 (Antonio quotes from Seneca’s *Thyestes*); A.R. IV.v.47 (Pandulpho compares himself to “some boy that acts a tragedy”); A.R. V.i.11 (Andrugio refers to “the last act of my son’s revenge”); A.R. V.v.22 (Andrugio calls himself a “spectator of revenge”); A.R. I.i.11, V.i.3 (personification of vengeance that recalls the figure of Revenge in *The Spanish Tragedy*). But this is by no means an exhaustive list.

mimesis, but of re-enactment, of representation, a process described by David Mann as “that experience in which truths come to us by so circuitous a route as to appear both objective and freshly minted, the familiar made strange” (*The Elizabethan Player*, p.116). Even if the spectators do succeed in settling into character and story, the illusion is shortly shattered by the reminder that it is an illusion, throwing the audience back into an awareness of the theatre, alienating it from the drama and forcing it to confront the play intellectually. Since Marston seems to want us to look at his ideas, it seems reasonable to do just that. It is the contention of this thesis that they are worth the trouble.

Broadly speaking, *Antonio and Mellida* treats identity in the contrasting contexts of hostile and supportive environments. Outcast, isolated and hunted after a bloody sea-battle, Antonio and Andrugio have been dislocated from their wonted lives of wealth and power, and thrust into a new kind of existence which tests their wills to oppose and to survive. Meanwhile, in the bosom of Piero’s court such fools as Castilio, Alberto, Forobosco and, transcendently, Balurdo, drag out their trivial lives in luxury and acceptance. In both cases there is a tendency for the environment to undermine the independent reality of the individual self. As a study in identity, the play thus follows and builds upon the distinctive theme of the satires, but it also shows Marston revelling in the possibilities offered by the theatre for playing games with the audience’s perspective, in order to get his point across. The Induction illustrates this. It first shows the actors on stage, “*with parts in their hands, having cloaks cast over their apparel*” (Ind.0 s.d.) apparently discussing the characters they are about to play.

Marston shows his actors as being absorbed by their roles, and as the scene develops it becomes evident that to play a part of a flat character on “this world’s stage” (Ind.79) is to some extent to become it. Like the ‘humorous’ gallants of *The Scourge*, the characters in the Induction become locked into their own play-acting, notwithstanding that the former assume roles for social, the latter for theatrical, purposes. The Induction is set in a kind of no-man’s land between fiction and actuality, inviting the audience to forget its prejudice as to the existence of an absolute distinction between the two. The actor/characters discuss the play as a play, yet they have apparently never rehearsed it together, claim to have no

idea of how to portray their characters,³⁵ and disconcertingly slip between their two personae; moreover, two of the 'actors', 'Alberto' and 'Antonio', announce that they have to play two characters.³⁶ When one addresses another by name, he uses the name of the character: "those persons, as he and you, Felice" (Ind.143-144). The cumulative effect of all this is to dissolve the idea that the people on the stage are complete, either as fictions or as actualities, and to construct them in the audience's mind as being the conscious performers of roles which they nonetheless internalise. When 'Forobosco' speaks flatteringly to 'Alberto' and is reproved for doing so, his defence is that "I but dispose my speech to the habit of my part" (Ind.44-45); 'Mazzagente's later bellicose interjection to the effect that he will kill anyone "that dares divulge a lady's prejudice" (Ind.90) is similarly explained: "'tis native to his part" (Ind.93). Equally telling is the example of 'Antonio'; when asked to describe his own part, his response is confused, because in a sense he has to play two: "Faith, I know not what: an hermaphrodite; two parts in one...and I know not what" (Ind.70-71; 74).

Marston goes on to construct in the *Antonio* plays a set of thematic oppositions that are used to set forth the nature of selves and their relationships to contexts. It is worth briefly introducing these, which may owe something - although by no means everything - to Stoical and neo-Stoic thinking. On one side of the equation is the earth, for Marston as for Shakespeare "the type of dull, dead matter",³⁷ the stuff that graves are made of. The cold, lifeless, material and inhospitable earth is thematically associated with the bruised or beaten self, and with the lowest, most 'senseless' and material components of the human

³⁵ "[W]ee are ignorant in what mould we must cast our Actors" (Ind.3-4). Gair emphasises the fact that *Antonio and Mellida* was the company's first production in almost a decade and interprets the Induction in terms of "the difficulties they have encountered in preparing the production...All of these choristers lack experience on the stage: Paul's has not operated as a dramatic company for some nine years, so there is no reserve of theatrical experience to draw upon" (*The Children of Paul's*, p.119). However, there is nothing in the text to compel such a reading.

³⁶ Of course, the only unusual aspect of this is Marston's drawing attention to the fact. The doubling of roles was commonplace: "one man in his time...played many parts, often in a single play" (*The Elizabethan Theatre II*, ed. David Galloway, London, 1970, p.83). See also D. Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe* (Cambridge, Mass, 1962) ch.vii and *The Seventeenth-Century Stage*, ed. G.E. Bentley, Chicago, 1968, pp.110-134.

³⁷ C.T. Onions, *A Shakespeare Glossary*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1958. See *Richard II*, III.iv.78; *King Lear*, V.iii.263: "She's dead as earth". In *Antonio and Mellida* Andrugio goes so far as to characterise the earth as a destroyer of men: "this huge earth, this monstrous animal/ That eats her children" (III.i.26-27). See also *Malc.*, IV.v.122ff.: "Think this: this earth is the only grave and Golgotha wherein all things rot; 'tis but the draught wherein the heavenly bodies discharge their corruption; the very muckhill on which the sublunary orbs cast their excrements".

constitution. Grief, misery, anguish and woe are frequently described as weights that crush, stifle or bear down the self to earth, lessening and compressing it, and depriving it of its highest, most quintessentially human attributes. These, which are opposed to the earth and its tendencies, are identified by words connoting ethereality such as ‘spirit’, ‘breath’, ‘heat’, ‘soul’ and most importantly ‘air’, the key elemental counterpart of the earth.³⁸ Sense and sensation are also located on the ‘air’ side of the thematic division, against numbness and insensibility, although, quite typically for its period, ‘sense’ implies ‘understanding’, ‘reason’ or even simply ‘thought’.

This does have a partial similarity to Justus Lipsius’ description of ‘Opinion’ as “*but a vaine image and shadow of reason: whose seat is the senses: whose birth is the earth. Therefore being vile and base it tendeth downwards...*” (*Two Bookes of Constancie*, p.82), of which Marston’s thematic oppositions are conceivably an adapted form. This would accord with the interpretation that Marston’s handling of his characters is designed to show the consequences of failing to live up to the ideals of (neo-) Stoicism, for in both cases proximity to the earth is associated with spiritual failure or collapse: Lipsius goes on to say that fear and sorrow can “hinder [the mind’s] upright poise and evenness...by pressing it downe too much” (*ibid.*, p.85). However, his metaphoric scheme sits ill with Marston’s opposition of the earth to ‘air’ and things thematically associated with it, because in the *Two Bookes* these too are viewed in a very unfavourable light:

those who are froward and obstinate as a result of opinions...can hardlie be pressed downe, but are verie easilie lifted up, not unlike to a blown bladder, which you cannot without much adoe thrust under water, but is readie to leap upwards of it selfe without helpe.

(*ibid.*, p.79)

Such an image is the very opposite of the tropes in Marston’s plays, in which metaphors of ‘lifting up’ connote spiritual wholeness, because they contain the idea of transcending the earth. Unlike Lipsius, Marston assumes no middle ground of stability between earth and air: the ethereal dimension is the location of powerful and authentic, although not necessarily morally good identities; hence his tendency to situate the ideals of resolve and

³⁸ There is a comparable, and in some respects related, pattern of imagery in *The Malcontent*, which has a motif of rising and falling. See especially *Malc.*, I.v.16-20; I.vi.94-113; II.iii.19-24; II.v.61-65; IV.v.157-162; V.i.14-30; V.iii.67-68; V.vi.20-27.

steadiness of mind on the ethereal side of the balance; the earth, being the stuff of material things, is paradoxically seen as being unstable and inhuman.

2: “I was a duke; that’s all”: The Precarious Self.

At the opening of the play Antonio has been washed up on Venice’ shore after a battle at sea has ended the efforts of his father, the duke of Genoa, to secure for him by force the hand in marriage of Mellida, daughter of Piero, Duke of Venice. Shipwrecked, alone and dressed bizarrely as an Amazon, Antonio grieves over his fortunes. His farcical costume mocks at his distress, alienating the audience’s sympathy and turning what might otherwise have been an emotional melodrama into a serio-comic puzzle. It also signals his inner disarray.³⁹ Antonio is a character of great emotionality, to a point so far beyond psychological ‘realism’ that it is impossible to take him on his own terms. He is Marston’s puppet, manipulated and utterly deprived of dignity; he is there to be laughed at, but he is also there to be learnt by,⁴⁰ an extreme representation of how identity is affected by circumstances apparently external to the mind.⁴¹ From the audience’s alienated perspective, his language is a philosophically coded, intellectual illustration of the effects on the self of the kind of experiences he has suffered. His initial response to these reveals a mind that has been forced into confrontation with its ultimately subordinate position in relation to the material body that sustains it. The implication is that this is novel and perplexing, that he has not *felt* this corporeal, earthbound quality of his being before. He likens himself to a prisoner:

Heart, wilt not break? And thou, abhorred life,
Wilt thou still breathe in my enraged blood?
Veins, sinews, arteries, why crack ye not,
Burst and divulsed with anguish of my grief?
Can man by no means creep out of himself,

³⁹ See also Ellen Berland, ‘The Function of Irony in Marston’s *Antonio and Mellida*’, *SP*, 66, 1969, 739-755: “The assumption of a disguise here has an ironic function: ‘it serves to reveal the character for what he truly is.’ That is to say, Antonio, by temperament, is more womanish than manly. He is weak, cowardly, and emotional” (p.743).

⁴⁰ But see an attack on ironic readings of Marston by T.F. Wharton: “his intentions were pathetic rather than parodic, emotional rather than cerebral”. ‘Old Marston or New Marston: The *Antonio* Plays’, *E in C*, 25, 1975, 357-358.

⁴¹ “When T.S. Eliot described Marston’s characters as ‘lifeless’ he was perhaps missing the point that the dramatist presents them in a highly stylised form. The characters tend towards types, reflecting their theoretical implications”. M. Scott, *John Marston's Plays: Theme, Structure and Performance*, London, 1978, p.10.

And leave the slough of viperous grief behind?

(I.i.1-6)

This has a clear place in the context of the earth-to-air oppositions already discussed: Antonio has been brought down to earth, his spirit's wings clipped. Defeat and despair have changed his perception of himself, forcing a new awareness of the material context in which he exists and of which he is a part. The shock of all this is apparent in his speech, which alternates between the second and first persons as, divided and alternately beside and within himself, he shows signs of succumbing to disintegration:

Antonio, hast thou seen a fight at sea...

...

Have I outlived the death of all these hopes?
Have I felt anguish poured into my heart,
Burning like balsamum in tender wounds,
And yet dost live?

...

Is Death grown coy, or grim Confusion nice,
That it will not accompany a wretch,
But I must needs be cast on Venice' shore...

(I.i.5; 20-23; 25-27)

As he hears a flourish announcing the arrival of Piero, he resolves to re-integrate himself, to recover his former sense of completeness as a prerequisite to action: "Take spirit, blood; disguise, be confident;/ Make a firm stand" (I.i.32-33). But he cannot; the sense that he is trapped in a state of semi-existence is further confirmed by his speech - again, to himself - as Mellida enters, in which he adjures himself to

press thy spirit forth
In following passion, knit thy senses close,
Heap up thy powers, double all thy man.

(I.i.159-160)

Yet, despite such a conscious attempt to acquire the physical substance connoted by "knit...close", "Heap up thy powers", and "double all thy man", he cannot achieve an authentic heroism. In the person of Florizel, not revealing himself to Mellida and Rosaline, he concocts for himself, as Antonio, a narrative of romantic self-destruction in the midst of war and tempest. First saying that Antonio is "a now dead man" - ironically pointing up the destruction of his former identity - his account of his own death shows a peculiarly negative self-idealisation. He tells of how, when, "notched with gaping wounds" (I.i.203) he was plucked from the sea after the battle, "The first word that he spake was, 'Mellida',/ And then he swooned" (I.i.205-206). Having come round, "this martyred soul began to

sigh” (I.i.222) and a storm blew up. He wept and sighed some more and then, having asked her, Florizel, to kiss the hand of Mellida for him, he “tottered from the reeling deck” and drowned himself (I.i.244-245).

Piero’s previous announcement that there is a reward for Antonio’s head makes it desirable that he should be thought dead, but there is no obvious need for him to construct this extravagantly long and melodramatic story of his own demise, so we must conclude that he does so for its own sake, because he wants to. This is entirely consistent with his earlier speeches, which show a predilection for histrionic self-narration. But his chosen ‘ideal’ portrait of his own end is not in the least heroic: rather, it is the story of one who, with all the negativity of the courtly tradition, surrenders, weeps and dies. It is a passive image of love, one that involves an abolition of the ego and eschews positive action, the love of an avowedly sensitive but fundamentally effete young man. Later, at the Venetian court, Antonio is forced to look on as Mazzagente and Galeazzo pay court to Mellida. In an aside, he splutters to himself about “how impatience cramps my cracked veins/ And curdles thick my blood with boiling rage!” (II.i.206-207). Yet, his ‘rage’ spurs him on to no more intrepid an act than to throw himself to the floor in an excess of self-pity: “Here lies a wretch on whom heaven never smiled” (II.ii.14).

We should be wary of what is apparently the assumption of most critics, that Antonio and Andrugio represent the good, while Piero is a villain.⁴² The Piero of *Antonio’s Revenge* is clearly evil (although arguably so is the Antonio) but in *Antonio and Mellida* the moral issue is far muddier. It is significant that Antonio says of his father that he

even, despite Piero’s cankered hate,
Would with an armed hand have seized thy love

⁴² E.J. Jensen, *John Marston, Dramatist: Themes and Imagery in the Plays*, is a good example of this. He argues that “From his appearance in *Antonio and Mellida* Piero is revealed to be a tyrant who is committed to acts of outrageous violence.... He revels in his triumph and rejoices in the prospect of the absolute destruction of his enemy, Andrugio. He is vicious and cruel in his actions toward Mellida, urging her into a marriage against her wishes and treating her complaints with no more consideration than one might extend to a disobedient animal” (p.42). Stone (*The Family, Sex and Marriage In England, 1500-1800*) says that in selecting a marriage-partner, among the English landed classes “Only a handful of children resisted parental dictation before the end of the sixteenth century, and their rebellion was soon crushed” (p.183). Piero’s assumption of control over his daughter’s marriage would thus appear to be in no way extraordinary in England in 1600, nor would his reaction to her protests: “psychological coolness and physical severity...characterized the upbringing of children” in the same period. It should, however, be noted that in popular literature (for example, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*) the miseries of enforced marriage are made clear, and Piero’s actions towards his daughter would not be regarded by the audience as being morally neutral. See also Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680*.

And linked thee to the beauteous Mellida...

(I.i.17-19)

The story is therefore triggered by an act of military aggression by one ruler against another, with the object of “seiz[ing]” the latter’s daughter, and the main plot largely deals with the attempts of the victim of the attack (Piero) to wipe out his assailants, a response that in the context of Renaissance power politics would be considered justified, even if in practice ransom would probably be preferred. In effect, the great sea-battle was fought in order that Antonio might marry his preferred girlfriend, no small indulgence from a father, and Antonio’s response to his crisis makes it apparent that he is unused to fighting for himself. To this picture we must add Piero’s letter, telling the Italian Princes that

the just overthrow Andrugio took in the Venetian Gulf hath so assured
the Genoese of the injustice of his cause and the hatefulness of his
person that they have banished him and all his family...⁴³

(III.i.13-16)

This tends to further reinforce the interpretation that Antonio is meant to be seen as the spoilt, incapable product of a court that is corrupt or at least unpopular; otherwise, why would the Genoese cast off their ruling family at the first opportunity? There is no reason at this stage to see him as being morally or even intellectually superior to Balurdo, Alberto and the others.⁴⁴

When Antonio eventually reveals himself to Mellida, he does so in a way that ironically stresses the ‘death’ of his former, courtly self, “that Antonio that this morning shone/ In glistering habiliments of arms” (II.i.277-278). “Dost not behold a ghost?” (II.i.269) he asks her, going on to describe the spectre’s movements, while presumably at the same time enacting them: “Look, he comes towards thee. See, he stretcheth out/ His wretched arms to gird thy loved waist...” (II.i.272-273). In the fact that Mellida “can not hear, nor see him” (II.i.284) is a further ironical confirmation of the insubstance of Antonio’s ghostly nature: identity is dependent on recognition by others, a ratification whose denial is both a cause and a result of Antonio’s disintegration. The full significance of this principle becomes

⁴³ This, it seems, is no mere ruse. At the beginning of *Antonio's Revenge*, Maria, Antonio's mother, arrives in Venice describing herself as a “poor banished wretch” (I.iii.101) and saying that “fortune's guilt/ Is rubbed quite off from my slight tinfoiled state” (I.ii.5-6).

⁴⁴ There is some suggestion that Balurdo is a base comic parallel of Antonio, in the traditional manner of an embryonic sub-plot. Both characters have a tendency to begin ambitious similes which they are subsequently unable to complete, and in Act I of *Antonio's Revenge* the two characters’ ‘dream’ speeches have obvious resemblances. See especially *A&M*, I.i.152-154; II.i.307; III.ii.134-135; IV.i.270-273 and *A.R.* I.iii.39-71

evident when, having at last been recognised by Mellida, Antonio suggests that they elope.

When she asks “whither?”, he is confounded:

Ha! Now I think on't, I have ne'er a home,
No father, friend, no country to embrace
These wretched limbs. The world, the all that is,
Is all my foe. A prince not worth a doit!
Only my head is hoised to high rate,
Worth twenty thousand double pistols
To him that can but strike it from these shoulders.
But come, sweet creature, thou shalt be my home,
My father, country, riches, and my friend,
My all, my soul...

(II.i.296-305)

Antonio's will to run away evaporates when he remembers that he has no anchor in the social world, no home in relation to which he can usefully locate himself and towards which he can run for safety. He has been part of a culture and country that has pledged to cut his head off if he should return.⁴⁵ He has been deprived of the superstructure of his humanity, reduced, in another reminder of his corporeality, to a few “wretched limbs” and a head worth nothing as long as it is attached to them. Everything, “all that is”, is against him. In this void, Mellida becomes the only source of self-ratification that remains to him. When he calls her ‘father’, ‘country’, ‘riches’, and ‘friend’, this is not mere hyperbole: he needs her to take the place of all these lost identifiers. While there were formerly many of them, both social and material, there can now be only one. This is what he means when he says that she will be his soul, for without her he cannot truly exist; his self is bound to her, because she now constitutes the whole of his society.

Andrugio is in a position similar to Antonio's, having been washed up on some different part of Venice's shore accompanied only by his servant, Lucio. He too experiences a crisis of identity. When Lucio says that it is dawn, “so please your excellence” (III.i.3), Andrugio rebukes him like a martyr:

Away, I have no excellence to please.
Prithee, observe the custom of the world
That only flatters greatness, states exalts.

(III.i.4-6)

The loss of his dukedom has impressed upon Andrugio (who, we must infer from Lucio's ready use of the term, never objected to being called ‘excellence’ before) that, although they are part of a system of naming, modes of address do not finally refer to the essence of

⁴⁵ He knows this from overhearing Piero's exchange with Alberto at I.i.60-73.

a person, but describe and are contingent upon the relationships which obtain between those who possess differing degrees of power and wealth. Names and titles are important for Marston's treatment of identity because they are fundamental to his characters' own ideas of who they really are; loss or confusion of a person's identity forces him to re-evaluate the relationship between what he is and what he is called.

Andrugio resists the psychological and existential threats posed by his dislocated condition with somewhat more vim than his son, although he too vacillates between despair and defiance. At first, he rejects the Stoical doctrines that the world was designed according to a divine, providential plan, most obviously manifest in the perfection of nature, and that human purpose ought to be directed towards living in accordance with it:

Philosophy maintains that nature's wise
And forms no useless or imperfect thing.
Did nature make the earth, or the earth nature?
For earthly dirt makes all things, makes the man,
Moulds me up honour and, like a cunning Dutchman,
Paints me a puppet even with seeming breath
And gives a sot appearance of a soul.
Go to, go to. Thou liest, Philosophy.
Nature forms things imperfect, useless, vain.

(III.i.28-36)

Material disaster enforces a rejection of abstract structures in favour of the particular truths of immediate personal knowledge. Philosophy gives way to experience, creating nature is replaced by the earth, of whose dirt all things are made, and thus a soul becomes a sot in the spiritless universe of the dispossessed Andrugio. Like his son, he is confronted by the physical basis of his existence; men are not, in the first instance, identified by an immaterial essence of themselves any more than the world is made perfectly by nature. Men are the "children" (III.i.27) of the material earth, 'moulded up' by their experience of it. To suffer is to know this: Andrugio, divided like his son, says that his soul is "splitted" and "sunk with grief" (III.i.39); he throws himself down on the "all-bearing earth"

Which men do gape for, till thou cramm'st their mouths,
And chok'st their throats with dust...
Let me sink into thee.

(III.i.42-45)

His casting himself onto the ground is a visual expression of how man and earth - the type of all material things - converge, when the artificial and insubstantial constructions of society no longer stand between them.⁴⁶

Andrugio repudiates Stoicism intellectually, by rejecting its metaphysical basis, and practically, in his extravagantly emotional behaviour. He initially yearns for self-abolition: “O [earth] chawn thy breast,/ And let me sink into thee” (III.i.43-44). Yet, immediately after this, he pulls himself together, declaring his mind to be invulnerable to the forces that conspire to destroy him:

There's nothing left
Unto Andrugio but Andrugio,
And that nor mischief, force, distress, nor hell can take,
Fortune my fortunes, not my mind, shall shake.
(III.i.60-63)

At this point Andrugio restricts his self-segregation so that it does not include his name; to that, which is a linguistic and therefore inherently social construction, he continues to cling. He also holds on to his dress, his armour, despite Lucio's advice to take it off and disguise himself in a shepherd's gown. He is, therefore, in direct contrast with Antonio, who has abandoned his own arms before the start of the play. For Andrugio, armour is a double protection: it shields him physically from his enemies, but the symbolic continuity of warlike dress also lends stability to his inner self in the battle against collapse. Consistently with this desire for continuity, he reminds himself (now a “soul”) of his noble birth - an unalterable fact of the past - as a means of locating himself in a dependable matrix of identity:

Wouldst thou have me go unarmed among my foes?
Being besieged by passion, ent'ring lists
To combat with despair and mighty grief,
My soul beleaguered with the crushing strength
Of sharp impatience? Ha, Lucio, go unarmed?
Come, soul, resume the valour of thy birth.
Myself, myself will dare all opposites.
(III.i.68-74)

Carried away by this train of thought, Andrugio proceeds from self-defence to the desire for self-expansion. He says that he will “muster forces, an unvanquished power”

⁴⁶ It was conventional to illustrate psychological collapse in this way: “sitting on the boards, and, worse still, lying down is a familiar image of lost hope and strength” (A. Pasternak Slater, *Shakespeare the Director*, Brighton, 1982, p.44. See ch.2, ‘Position on the Stage’, p.34. Of course, the conventionality of this image does not prevent us from seeing the special significance it has in Marston's plays.

before which “Ghastly amazement, with upstart hair,/ Shall hurry on...” (III.i.79-80). Despite Lucio’s warning that “your speech is all too light” (III.i.82) he plunges on, boasting that “Andrugio lives, and a fair cause of arms./...that’s an army all invincible” (III.i.86-87). He draws ‘firmness’ from his defiance, envisaging himself as a sort of one-man moral crusade:

O, a fair cause stands firm, and will abide;
Legions of angels fight upon her side.
(III.i.91-92)

Then, at the peak of his uprising, as he begins to talk of angels and a cause, and is called a “noble spirit” (III.i.93) by Lucio, he suddenly falls back to earth. “My soul”, he says, “grows heavy” (III.i.104) and he again withdraws into a shell, this time more completely than ever:

For God’s sake call me not Andrugio,
That I may soon forget what I have been.
For heaven’s sake, name not Antonio,
That I may not remember he was mine.
Well, ere yon sun set, I’ll show myself myself,
Worthy my blood. I was a duke, that’s all.⁴⁷
No matter whither, but from whence we fall.
(III.i.110-116)

Here, he renounces name, kin and rank *because* they belong to a past of which no trace now remains. The main shift in his perspective is an end to his attempts to ‘fix’ himself by reference to history, and a willingness to confront the present on its own terms. But even here there are contradictions; he talks of his blood as though it were his last defining feature, but immediately afterwards says that he is no longer a duke, and “that’s all”. Then he seems to revert to the original idea that his past is what really counts: “No matter whither, but from whence we fall.” Andrugio’s contradictions and manic mood-swings

⁴⁷ The picture of the fallen duke is of course related to what is said in Chapter I, section 3 of this thesis about class and wealth during the period. While many families were rising, others, including members of the ancient, landed aristocracy, fell dramatically (the reader is referred to ‘Economic Change’ - Ch. IV of Stone’s *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*). Marston’s alertness to this is evidenced in *The Scourge*, Satire II, where he observes that in a former age “men did hold [their land] by servile villenage./ Poore brats were slaues...” (II.51-52) but that in the modern, topsy-turvy era this has been inverted: “*But now, (sad change!) the kennel sink of slaues,/ Pesant great Lords, and servile service craues*” (II.56-57). In the Envy scene of Marston’s *Histriomastix* (c.1600), the same theme is pursued: “...O wher’s the honour to my high borne blood!/ When every peasant, each Plebeian,/ Sits in the throne of undeserv’d repute.../ Whilst urgent need makes princes bend their knee,/ As servile as the ignobilitie” (*Plays*, ed. H. Harvey Wood, Edinburgh, 1934-39, III.278). The image of the dispossessed aristocrat thus directly reflects socio-economic events in Elizabethan society. However, the extreme degree of dislocation suffered by Andrugio and Antonio indicates an interest on Marston’s part in the abstractions of identity and context, not confined to actual historical experience but apparently inspired by it. See especially pp.8-9 of P. Ure’s *Shakespeare and the Inward Self of the Tragic Hero*, University of Durham Press, 1961.

are a sign of his unhinged condition. Rendered unstable by events, he is only able to exist dynamically, shooting between extremes of emotion and reason. His servant Lucio, a “weak old man” (III.i.85) is the voice of sense in this scene: never having been rich or powerful, his identity is much less threatened by his present condition.

Andrugio’s instability is, at least in the short run, moderated by his efforts to intellectualise his position. Antonio’s is not: when he sees Mellida after their elopement plot has been discovered, he first bursts into Italian, presumably an expression of his joy at seeing her again. Then, when she tells him that she has lost his note, he throws himself to the ground in despair, and lies there as Feliche tries to galvanise him into action. This, however, requires a mental coherence that Antonio lacks:

We wring ourselves into this wretched world,
...
To fret, and ban the fates, to strike the earth
As I do now. Antonio, curse thy birth,
And die.

(III.ii.208-212)

Again we see the symbolic collision of man and earth, and again Antonio expresses an impulse toward self-abolition, this time in the past as well as in the present. Feliche can move him to action only by threatening to say that Antonio ‘railed upon’ Mellida before he died, and called her a “strumpet”: “I’ll defame thy love,/ And make thy dead trunk held in vile regard” (III.ii.226-227). This threat of posthumous infamy has a curiously galvanic effect on Antonio, who agrees to change into the sailor’s gown offered by Feliche, and slip away. Reputation after death is important to Marston’s characters, as it is to some of Shakespeare’s. Like Othello, Marston’s characters seem to have a sense of their lives as narratives, and one eye on how history is likely to judge them. When they reveal this vanity, we are reminded that individuals exist from more than one perspective, and that selves are constructed in a temporal context that extends into the future, even beyond death. The *Antonio* plays show us that insofar as we construct ourselves with history in mind, posterity does not merely witness our decisions; in a sense it participates in them.

Antonio duly escapes in a sailor’s costume. He enters in disguise and pretends to chase himself:

Antonio. Stop Antonio! Keep, keep Antonio!
Piero. Where? Where, man, where?
Antonio. Here, here! Let me, me, pursue him down the marsh.

...
I'll sweat my blood out, til I have him safe.
(III.ii.241-243; 247)

The deepest irony of this exchange is that Antonio really is in pursuit of himself, or at least is in pursuit of the safety and equilibrium that will restore him to his right mind. However, his disguise (his second assumed identity) is a clue to the futility of this quest. Except in the most literal of senses, he cannot survive without Mellida, "My father, country, riches and my friend" (II.i.303), whom he believes to be imprisoned in Piero's court:

[*Shouting*] Stop, stop Antonio! Stay Antonio!
[*Lowering his voice*] Vain breath, vain breath, Antonio's lost.
He cannot find himself, not seize himself.
Alas, this that you see is not Antonio.
His spirit hovers in Piero's court,
Hurling about his agile faculties
To apprehend the sight of Mellida...
(IV.i.1-7)

His self, his "spirit" as it is here, can only exist through his relationship with his lover, who has become the whole of his social world. Deprived of this, Antonio's soul, he says, 'hovers' and 'hurls' in Piero's court, words that suggest ceaseless and hysterical motion by a thing of little substance and no gravity. It also lacks "apt instruments/ To speak or see, [and] stands dumb and blind, sad spirit..." (IV.i.8-9); he says that his crippled and divided self is deprived of the higher faculties of speech and vision, though the latter part of this claim would seem to be at odds with its own nature, which is hardly tacit. In the *Antonio* plays sensory dysfunction is used to denote dysfunctional selfhood; this may be adapted from the Stoical idea that proper evaluation of sensory perceptions is fundamental to authentic moral being:

The external impressions come to us in four ways; for either things are, and seem so to be; or they are not, and do not seem to be, either; or they are, and do not seem to be; or they are not, and yet seem to be. Consequently, in all these cases it is the business of the educated man to hit the mark.
(Epictetus, *Discourses*, I.xxvii.1-2)

...the measure of every man's action is the impression of his senses...
(*Ibid.*, I.xxviii.10)

There is a difference between Epictetus' concern with the moral evaluation of sense impressions and the failure in Marston's characters of the intellect's connexion to the sensory and motive mechanisms themselves; nonetheless, there is a strong likeness between the two concepts that, especially in view of Marston's professed admiration for

Epictetus,⁴⁸ may shed some light on his purpose in referring at certain moments to this confusion of the senses.⁴⁹

That his self is divided, however, Antonio is certain. He asks the audience (or, perhaps, himself) to

Concept you me as, having clasped a rose
Within my palm, the rose being ta'en away,
My hand retains a little breath of sweet;
So may man's trunk, his spirit slipped away,
Hold still a faint perfume of his sweet guest.

(IV.i.13-17)

To summarise: his spirit is in Piero's court and his soul is standing somewhere else, dumb and blind, although it also "gallops" along "through the bounds of heaven" (IV.i.19).

Meanwhile, the body, described in a typical Stoic image as "the dull lodge of spirit",⁵⁰

standeth waste
Until the soul return from - what was't I said?
O, this is nought but speckling melancholy
That morpheus tender skin. I have been
Cousin german - beare with me, good Mellida -
Clod upon clod thus fall.

[He casts himself down.]

Hell is beneath, yet heaven is over all

(IV.i.22-28)

Clearly Antonio is no metaphysician, but then neither was Marston. This is not a problem, as long as we grasp the central points of Antonio's statement: that his identity is fragmenting because it lacks a properly supportive context, and that, as he predicts, because of this the faculty of language eventually deserts him and his speech is reduced to gibberish.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Marston signed *Certaine Satyres* with the name "Epictetus" and mentions him in *The Scourge of Villanie*: "O Epictetus, I do honour thee,/ To think how rich thou wert in poverty!" (*Poems*, p.127). He talks of "my bosom friend, good Epictetus" in 'To the Equal Reader', *The Fawn*. Caputi argues that Marston owed "a heavy intellectual debt...to Epictetus" but this needs to be qualified. Marston was not a Stoic, but he was clearly interested in the Stoical approach to identity. As G. Cross points out, "The positive values to which his heroes cling are to be found in Stoicism, although it is obvious from the outset that the maintenance of philosophic calm and indifference to adversity is an impossible ideal...his plays are philosophic explorations of the moral philosophy of the Stoics" ('The Retrograde Genius of John Marston', *REL* 1961 2:4, 19-27; pp.22-23).

⁴⁹ "Oh, I smell a sound", says Balurdo irrelevantly at I.i.43. For other examples of sensory confusion/dysfunction in the play, see especially Balurdo's speeches at III.ii.128-157.

⁵⁰ It is typical of both Marston and Epictetus to describe the body as a temporary dwelling-place of the mind, or soul. See for example the *Discourses*, I.xxv.18, and A.R. V.iv.32-33: "this lodge/ Of dirt's corruption".

⁵¹ The textual authority of this passage is disputed, but it is argued that its use of aposiopesis is "a means of rendering the breakdown of language under the pressure of extreme passion" (J&N, p.487). The original Quarto's wording is: "O...melancholie./ I haue beene/ That Morpheus tender skinp Cousen germane/ Beare with me good/ Mellida:..."

As he lies there, Andrugio and Lucio appear on another part of the stage. While they lunch on raw roots, Andrugio flatters himself that at last he has achieved the Stoical ideal of perfect inner calm. Paraphrasing Seneca,⁵² he boasts of his contentment and claims to have embraced his new, fallen condition: “I never was a Prince till now” (IV.i.45). He sees himself as an island of unflappability:

Lucio, he's a king,
 ...
 Who is not blown up with the flattering puffs
 Of spongy sycophants, who stands unmoved,
 Despite the jostling of opinion,
 Who can enjoy himself maugre the throng
 That strive to press his quiet out of him,
 Who sits upon Jove's footstool, as I do,
 ...
 Whose brow is wreathed with the silver crown
 Of clear content.
 (IV.i.52; 55-60; 62-63)

But none of this has any substance. As soon as Lucio cuts in with a remark about the Genoese, Andrugio, driven to a sudden rage, is blown clean off Jove's footstool:

Name not the Genoese! That very word
 Unkings me quite, makes me vile passion's slave.
 ...
 Alas, one battle lost,
 Your whorish love, your drunken healths, your shouts,
 Your smooth 'God save's' ...
 ...
 Spit on me Lucio, for I am turned slave.
 Observe how passion domineers o'er me.
 (IV.i.67-68; 78-80; 82-83)

Despite Andrugio's knowledge of and desire to live by Stoical ethics, he is unable to live up to the Stoical ideal of self-definition, stated by Epictetus simply as: “I pay attention only to myself”.⁵³ He is ruled by his passion - anger - which Stoicism argues has no place in the mind of a wise man, because the wise man “should bring his own will into harmony with what happens, so that neither anything that happens happens against [his] will, nor anything that fails to happen fails to happen when [he wishes] it to happen.”⁵⁴ Andrugio simply cannot separate his emotions from his experience in the way that this requires, and the resulting implication is that the Stoical ideal is finally unachievable. Antonio is by nature highly emotional and intellectually untrained to boot; Andrugio, by contrast, rings his mind with philosophical defences. But when they are placed under similar degrees of

⁵² *Thyestes*, 344-352.

⁵³ Epictetus, *Discourses*, I.xix.10.

⁵⁴ Epictetus, *Discourses*, II.xiv.7-8.

pressure, they collapse equally, ergo: the will and the intellect are not decisive factors.

When the context goes to pieces, so does the 'individual', irrespective of his self-conceit.

By the same token, however, when the context is to some extent reassembled, its participants are proportionately mended. This is what happens when Andrugio and Antonio become aware of each other's presence on the marsh.

When they encounter one another, Marston uses the meeting to illustrate, dramatically and sometimes ironically, the differences between Antonio and Andrugio, which have so far only been implicitly stated in the characters' speeches about themselves. They meet initially because Antonio overhears his father deploring the loss of "My dear sweet boy, my dear Antonio." (IV.i.89) and answers:

Antonio. Antonio?
Andrugio. Ay, echo, ay. I mean Antonio.
Antonio. Antonio! Who means Antonio?
Andrugio. Where art? What art? Know'st thou Antonio?
Antonio. Yes.
Andrugio. Lives he?
Antonio. No.
Andrugio. Where lies he dead?
Antonio. Here.
Andrugio. Art thou Antonio?
Antonio. I think I am.
Andrugio. Dost thou but think? What, dost not know thy self?
Antonio. He is a fool that thinks he knows himself.
Andrugio. Upon thy faith to heaven, give thy name.
Antonio. I were not worthy of Andrugio's blood
If I denied my name's Antonio.
Andrugio. I were not worthy to be called thy father
If I denied my name, Andrugio.

(IV.i.90-109)

Antonio has been consciously disabused of the fiction of his substantivity, while Andrugio occupies a middle ground, apparently taking his self for granted, but then expressly identifying himself by reference to his son. It is worth noting, though, that Antonio initiates this process, while his father merely completes the reciprocal symmetry, itself a participative, as opposed to a purely independent, function. Antonio is at first the "echo", catching and repeating his own name, incapable of originating speech. Then he says that he is dead, then that he 'thinks' (that is, doubts) that he is himself and finally agrees that his name, at least, is Antonio. Andrugio seems more positive as to what the issues are in this exchange, but his affirmation of his own identity is, like Antonio's, tenuous, reluctant and evasive. As a result of the disasters that have befallen them, particularly each's belief that the other is dead, they have gained an awareness of how greatly their identities both

partake of a collective, familial self: as members of one family, they are bound together by the power and need of mutual recognition.

In the conversation that follows their re-union, they continually re-affirm their blood-relationship, seeking refuge in the idea of kinship. “I have lived/ To see my joy, my son, Antonio” cries Andrugio, folding Antonio in his arms, “now fortune do thy worst” (IV.i.112-114). Antonio asks what “black sin/ Hath been committed by our ancient house”, that it should bring this “scalding vengeance” down “upon our heads” (IV.i.118-120). In restating their membership of a single old family and reinterpreting their plight as a collective punishment, he binds them closer together. Andrugio, however, exhorts Antonio to abandon his past identity and escape with him: “forget thy self./ Forget remembrance what thou once hast been” (IV.i.124-125). “I am a raising of our house”, he says, “Which Fortune will not envy, ‘tis so mean” (IV.i.128-129). ‘House’ refers to the shelter afforded both by the construction of a building, and by the reconstitution of the family. Neither will be great: the building is to be “like the world, all dirt” (IV.i.130) and within its walls, “one shall still tell greefes, the other weepe” (IV.i.134); the passage is like a more miserable version of Lear’s ‘gilded butterflies’ speech.

When Andrugio leaves, Antonio says that he will follow him, but he lingers on the stage, alone with his page, whom he asks to sing for him, since

Thou hast had a good voice, if this cold marsh,
Wherein we lurk, have not corrupted it.
(IV.i.136-137)

Antonio expects the boy’s voice to have been affected by his life as a fugitive in the wilderness, just as his own speech and language at times reflect the impact of his experiences.⁵⁵ While the page waits to begin his song, Antonio raves out his grief at the loss of Mellida, and when she actually appears, disguised as a page, he is at an unprecedented pitch of excitement. “I am not for thee if thou canst not rave” (IV.i.163) he cries, throwing himself to the ground. As Antonio recognizes Mellida, the lovers

⁵⁵ cf. *A.R.*IV.v.66-70, and *Malc.*, III.iv, in which a page playfully claims to have lost his voice “With dreaming” (l.36). The experience of dreaming (particularly in the court - see *Malc.*, I.iii.64) is analogous to Antonio’s and his page’s dislocation from their own erstwhile reality; in both cases the weakened voice signals a distracted mind.

immediately break into a duet in Italian; in this way Marston suggests that in its different way love is as disturbing an experience as suffering:

Antonio. O svanisce il cor in un soave bacio.
Mellida. Muoiono i sensi nel desiato desio.

(IV.i.197-198)⁵⁶

Both are intense experiences that jolt the characters out of their accustomed modes of being; as Lucio says, “I thinke confusion of Babel is fallen upon these lovers, that they change their language” (IV.i.217-218). After eighteen lines of Italian, they decide to split up again. Mellida asks Antonio to go and “scout o’er the marsh” (IV.i.207) because she is afraid of what might be out there, and then herself promptly exits. As a piece of plotting, this is about as plausible as the ‘let’s split up; you go down to the abandoned boathouse and I’ll search the crypt’ school of 1980s horror movie writing. In both cases the artificiality is necessary for the development of the narrative (Mellida has to be made to send Antonio on his scouting mission so that she can be recaptured by Piero in the next scene) but at least in Marston’s it is justified by its consistency with the sometimes camp but intellectually coherent theatricality of the whole play.

Antonio brings back Andrugio, with whom he enters “wreathed together” in a symbolic expression of their interdependence: “thus enfoulded, we have breasts of proof,/ ’Gainst all the venomd stings of misery.” (IV.ii.3-4).⁵⁷ Yet, when the page tells them that Mellida has been caught, Antonio does not speak at all: his voice is entirely stopped by despair. As Lucio explains, “’tis more than he can utter. Let him go./ Dumb solitary path best suiteth woe.” (IV.ii.24-25). This new blow seems to spur Andrugio to action. He calls to Lucio for “my arms, my armour” and prepares to affirm his identity through violent death: “Come, let me die like old Andrugio,/ Worthy my birth” (IV.ii.35-36). Again, his speeches are burdened with references to the family: he asks the shocked Antonio “where’s.../ Thy father’s spirit?” and threatens to “renounce thy blood/ If thou forsake thy valour” (IV.ii.19-22). ‘Blood’, like ‘house’, starts to take on a *double entendre*, signifying the familial bond, as well as the contents of their veins. When Andrugio says

⁵⁶ “*Ant.* O, the heart dissolves in a gentle kiss./ *Mel.* The senses die in the object of desire.” (Gair, p.135).

⁵⁷ Marston uses this visual device to similar effect at A.R.IV.ii.110 s.d. and V.ii.97 s.d.

that “blood-true-honoured graves/ Are...blessed” (IV.ii.36-37) the family is honoured by the death, as well as the grave by the blood spilt in violent eclipse.

Despite all this valiant talk, no great action ensues. When Andrugio arrives at the Venetian court to present Piero with his own head, he ostensibly delivers himself up to violent death⁵⁸ but his speeches also arguably contain a coded pleading, from one noble patriarch to another, for his life. Either way, there is not much evidence of the “unbounded vigour” that he boasts is in the “spirits” of his “dauntless soul” (V.ii.162-163). He first reminds Piero of the latter’s vow “by the honour of our birth, to recompense any man that bringeth Andrugio’s head with twenty thousand double pistolets and the endearing to our choicest love.” (V.ii.150-153). Piero confirms this “with most unmov’d resolve”, relating the power and firmness of his language, in this case a vow, to the nobility of his dynasty:

When I recall this vow, O, let our house
Be even commanded, stained, and trampled on,
As worthless rubbish of nobility.
(V.ii.154; 157-159)⁵⁹

Like Andrugio, Piero frequently identifies himself dynastically, but since his perspective is that of the self in conquest and not, as is Andrugio’s, in retreat, his eyes are more on the future than they are on the past. Andrugio’s rhetoric exploits this factor by deploying a strategy of pleading for death, while at the same time ironically emphasising the personal, and particularly the genealogical shame that would proceed from such a killing:

Strike!

O, let no glimpse of honour light thy thoughts.
If there be any heat of royal breath
Creeping in thy veins, O, stifle it.
Be still thy self, bloody and treacherous!
Fame not thy house with an admired act
Of princely pity. Piero, I am come
To soil thy house with an eternal blot
Of savage cruelty. Strike, or bid me strike!
I pray my death, that thy ne’er-dying shame

⁵⁸ Gair observes that this plot-device “may be derived from the *Arcadia* where, in the story of the Paphlagonian unkind king, Plexirtus ‘having gotten a passport for one that intended he would put Plexirtus alive into his hands to speak with the king his brother, he himself (though much against the minds of the valiant brothers, who rather wished to die in brave defence) with a rope about his neck barefooted, came to offer himself to the discretion of Leonatus’ (Feuillerat, I:213)”. The objection of the “valiant brothers” lends weight to the argument that Andrugio’s surrender is ambiguous, and not simply the exercise of Stoic self-determination. Even Caputi acknowledges that it is “inconsistent with the ideal of rational control” (*John Marston, Satirist*, p.73).

⁵⁹ cf. *Sophonisba*, II.i.83: “Our vow, our faith, our oath, why, they’re ourselves”. Marston is by no means alone in allowing an important link between a vow and the self that makes it (see, e.g., *The Comedy of Errors*, I.i.140-150) but it forms a part of his analysis of the voice, and the keeping of vows is a key affirmation of selfhood at the end of *Sophonisba*, which itself is an enquiry into the nature of duty. See, for example, II.i.117-120; III.ii.35-40; V.iii.60; V.iv.37.

Might live immortal to posterity.

(V.ii.167-177)

The effect of this on Piero is dramatic; his hatred of Andrugio is apparently instantly transformed into the highest affection: "him whom I loathed before/ That now I honour, love, nay more, adore." (V.ii.185-186).

This *volte face* is not merely a parodic theatrical absurdity. Throughout the play, Piero consistently shows concern for the same values as Andrugio. Their actual bases of self-definition are in both cases social and material: family, nobility, fame and glory. The paradoxical truth, however, is that they both also harbour a desire for total substantivity. This is to some extent hidden by the fact that they are at opposite extremes of the existential continuum. Andrugio, in order to avoid self-extinction, seeks to secure his identity by divorcing it from its context, while Piero tries to expand himself into his universe to the point where it becomes a mere instrument of his will. This is foretokened in the Induction when 'Alberto' advises 'Piero' that in order to play his role he must appear

As if you held the palsy-shaking head
Of reeling Chance under your fortune's belt,
In strictest vassalage. Grow big in thought
As swoll'n with glory of successful arms.

(Ind. 9-12)

The idea of growing "big in thought" is essentially one of self-expansion; it may find expression in the *actions* of physical conquest and the achievements of power, wealth and glory, but at its core is thought itself, the matter of individual being. One critic, Gordon Braden, has identified this conception of the self as belonging to the tradition of Senecan tragedy:

Senecan tragedy is the tragedy of the success of the human drive for moral and personal self-sufficiency, the drive for an autonomous selfhood that is subject to no order beyond itself.⁶⁰

Braden's analysis is directed towards the attribution to Seneca of a deeper influence on Elizabethan tragedy than was hitherto acknowledged, but it makes a great deal of sense in the context of the present argument. Senecan or not, the drive that Braden describes is seen to be fundamental to Piero's motivation in the early part of the play. When Piero has defeated Andrugio at sea, he indulges in an hubristic boast that

Victorious fortune, with triumphant hand

⁶⁰ G. Braden, 'Senecan Tragedy and the Renaissance', *Illinois Classical Studies*, IX.2 1982 p.285.

Hurleth my glory 'bout this ball of earth,
...
To see myself adored, and Genoa quake,
My fate is firmer than mischance can shake.

(I.i.35-36; 40-41)

Feliche personifies this arrogance as “pride”, and warns against it in terms that make it clear that in Piero he sees a self starting to run amok, hungry for autonomy⁶¹ to the point where, if its will is to be fulfilled, nothing can be allowed to live outside its control:

O, she's ominous,
Enticeth princes to devour heaven,
Swallow omnipotence, out-stare dread fate,
Subdue eternity in giant thought...

(I.i.52-55)

Braden also says that

The killing of children in Senecan tragedy is a purposeful killing of the future, an attempt literally to ingest the time to come - the ultimate act of the self's imperium to ensure that nothing will happen without its consent. But this of course eventually means ensuring that nothing more will ever happen; and in refusing to surrender to what will outlast it, the self also and inescapably ensures its own total and more awful extinction.

(p.292)

He applies this in the Renaissance to Shakespeare's history plays, through which there runs “a strong *kindermord* motif”, and to *Macbeth*, but with certain qualifications it also sheds light on the *Antonio* plays.⁶² In *Antonio and Mellida*, Piero certainly has an urge very similar to this, which is one reason why he pursues Antonio's death with such vigour, but it is ultimately tempered by a greater concern for his reputation. This concern shows him to have a higher awareness of his own contextuality than would otherwise be evident, and draws him back from the brink of murder.

It should be borne in mind that the play began with Andrugio's attempt to, in effect, kidnap Piero's daughter; this has precipitated in Piero a need for revenge that is not confined to Andrugio personally, but includes his “hated issue”, (II.i.167) Antonio:

I prosecute my family's revenge,
Which I'll pursue with such a burning chase

⁶¹ Images of hunger in this connexion are quite common in Marston's plays. See *Malc.*, I.iv.84-85: “Envious ambition never sates his thirst,/ Till, sucking all, he swells and swells, and bursts”.

⁶² A motif of child-killing runs through both of the *Antonio* plays, culminating in the Thyestean catastrophe of *Antonio's Revenge*, in which the revengers invite Piero to eat the body of his butchered son, Julio. Piero spends most of the first play trying to kill Andrugio's son and subsequently does kill Pandulpho Feliche's. He is also largely responsible for the death of his own daughter. It should also not be forgotten that the mainspring of the action in *Antonio and Mellida* is Andrugio's attempt to take Mellida from Piero - not exactly *kindermord*, but surely related to it.

Till I have dried up all Andrugio's blood.

(I.i.88-90)

This implies an awareness that selves exist in contexts, which are constituted by both social and genealogical patterns. From the belief that Andrugio's extinction is not complete until all his descendants are dead, it follows that Piero's own self is not, and never can be, entirely autonomous because it too exists in a framework of relationships. This interpretation is reinforced elsewhere in the play. When Piero is told that Mellida has escaped to join Antonio, his language loses its form and becomes a staccato series of barked commands which, both in form and in content, evoke frenetic motion and chaotic disturbance:

Pursue, pursue, fly, run, post, scud away!
Fly, call, run, row, ride, cry, shout, hurry, haste,
Haste, hurry, shout, cry, ride, row, run, call, fly
Backward and forward, every way about!

(III.ii.270-273)

The loss of a daughter thus evokes in him the same symptom as the loss of a lover does in Antonio; but the reasons are not identical. In both cases there is the consideration of simple social context but, for Piero, Mellida also represents a personal stake in the future, a dimension in which his conquering self seeks preservation, even if he does not ultimately seek total control. His desire to kill Antonio is at least partly based on this desire to render himself immune to time by glorifying his memory:

This vengeance on the boy will lengthen out
My days unmeasuredly.
It shall be chronicled, time to come,
Piero Sforza slew Andrugio's son.

(III.ii.261-264)

It is precisely this concern for future reputation that Andrugio plays upon in his "Fame not thy house" speech. It is not to be wondered that Piero seems to capitulate; taken at face value, Andrugio's words contain a promise of the very thing that Piero has sought all along. His memory will be ennobled by his act; only the method is changed, from vengeance to mercy.

The conjunction of the two families is a logical extension of this principle. In telling Antonio (who, as befits his morbid psyche, has entered in a coffin) to "Possess me freely, I am wholly thine" (V.ii.241) Piero invests himself *in* that which lies beyond him and will survive him. He abandons the ideal of an absolute autonomy achieved through the

triumph of his will *over* others, and instead seeks to eliminate opposition by removing the very basis of conflict. He offers to pay to Antonio the price that he had placed on his head:

Thine be the gold,
To solemnise our houses' unity.
My love be thine, the all I have be thine.
...
Now there remains no discord that can sound
Harsh accents to the ear of our accord...
(V.ii.260-262; 265-266)

The play ends with professions of love and kinship all around. Mellida and Andrugio both profess themselves to be dumbstruck with passion for Antonio, while Piero offers him paternal devotion:

Mellida. Can breath depaint my unconceived thoughts?
Can words describe my infinite delight
Of seeing thee, my lord Antonio?
O no!
...
Piero. Fair son - now I'll be proud to call thee son -
Enjoy me thus. [*He embraces him.*] My very breast is thine;
Possess me freely, I am wholly thine.
Antonio. Dear father!
Andrugio. Sweet son, sweet son - I can speak no more -
My joy's passion flows above the shore
And chokes the current of my speech.
(V.ii.232-235; 239-245)⁶³

Antonio's line here is, in the written text, highly ambiguous; it is probably addressed to Andrugio, but it *may* be addressed to Piero, to Andrugio or (possibly) to both of them. But this is less important than the fact that the plays ends with these affirmations, not merely of harmony, but of kinship. The characters are shown to achieve their greatest happiness and fulfilment through the creation and acknowledgement of family ties. Of course, this rather saccharine resolution may be heavy with irony, stemming either from a desire on Marston's part to send up happy endings that strain credibility, or from hints at hypocrisy on the part of the actor playing Piero, preparing the audience for the treacherous killing of Andrugio with which *Antonio's Revenge* opens. But there is no strong evidence in the text for the former of these, and it is highly unlikely that Marston had at this stage any clear idea of what was going to happen in the sequel.⁶⁴ It is perfectly reasonable to take this scene at face value: A stable and hospitable context - both socially and materially -

⁶³ cf. *DC*, V.i.119-121: "'Tis joy not to be expressed with breath./ But, O, let him that would such passion drink/ Be quiet of his speech and only think".

⁶⁴ See note 7, Chapter IV.

in which people confess themselves to be interrelated and interdependent, succeeds the suffering and chaos which results from the characters' inevitably futile attempts to evade or to transcend this principle. This, however, is only the positive side of *Antonio and Mellida*; its obverse view is that human beings are radically unstable as individuals, that they cannot tuck 'fortune' under their belts, but are feathers for each wind that blows. The scenes we have discussed so far have generally thrown an optimistic light on human society, insofar as they have shown the sense of order and identity that it imparts to people. We shall now look at the ways in which, as he does in his satires, Marston shows in *Antonio and Mellida* that the contingent self is open to corruption and enfeeblement by continued involvement in a society which, though stable, embraces values that place a false emphasis on fleeting and trivial things.

3: "Be my slave": Brainless Gentility and the Courtly Milieu.

"Tis horse-like not for man to know his force" (I.i.86) says Piero at the beginning of the play and, as in the seventh satire of *The Scourge of Villanie*, the impotent characters of the Venetian court are frequently described as being like animals. Mazzagente looks "for all the world like an o'er-roasted pig" (I.i.125) has "a gander neck" (I.i.133) and "a little monkish eye" (I.i.134); Balurdo is a "trout" (II.i.113) and "an ass" (III.ii.137); Forobosco is an "Egyptian louse;/ A rotten maggot" (II.i.129-130); Alberto is an "amorous hound" (II.i.154) and so on. The animalism of these characters partly reflects their humouristic natures; a particular motivation is easily denoted by reference to a creature with which it is associated. But this technique also denotes their sub-human, in the sense of inadequately developed, minds. Piero's words mean that the human self is only proven when it is set up as a force that opposes and collides with other selves; within the pampering confines of the court this never happens to any testing degree.⁶⁵

In Act II Cazzo and Dildo, the servants of Castilio and Balurdo respectively, discuss their masters' performances in the recent sea-battle:

⁶⁵ Another example of Marston's use of Stoical ideas in a piecemeal and adapted form. See Epictetus on the labours of Heracles, which "were servicable as a means of revealing and exercising [him]" (*Discourses*, I.vi.32-36) and Lipsius: "adversitie doth confirme and strengthen us...as trees that be much beaten with the wind, take deeper roote..." (*Two Bookes of Constancie*, p.149).

But was't not rare sport at the sea battle,
whilst rounce-robble-hobble roared from the ship's sides, to view
our masters pluck their plumes and drop their feathers for fear of being
men of mark?

(II.i.30-33)

The significance of this is more than to show simply that Castilio and Balurdo are cowards. It is important that the form of their dereliction is to tear off the signs that make them "men of mark", a phrase that simultaneously implies both officer status ('mark' = distinction) and danger from enemy riflemen ('mark' = target). But feathers were also a sure sign of a fop. In Overbury's *Characters* we are told of 'A Golden Asse', that "Hee is naught plucked, for his feathers are his beauty, and more then his beauty; they are his discretion, his countenance, his all".⁶⁶ Balurdo himself confirms this association when he says to Feliche that "you shall know me...I ha' bought me a new green feather with a red sprig" (V.i.86-87). Signs and tokens, such as language and clothing, are not merely evidence of identities, they are an incorporated part of them, and in a sense for the courtier to part with his feathers is for him to part with his courtliness. Balurdo's and Castilio's plucking of plumes in battle is both a symbolic and an actual relinquishing, if only temporarily, of the frivolous, 'puffed up' selves that they signify. Courtiers are made for the abstracted, almost fictional life of the court; such bundles of affectation and frivolity as they are cannot survive in the face of dangerously authentic cannon fire.

In studying the characters of the Venetian court it is useful to draw a dichotomy between two groups: the watched and the watchers. Balurdo, Alberto, Forobosco, Castilio, Galeazzo and Mazzagente are watched in that they live mainly in and for the gazes of others; they exist within and through the context provided by the codes and values of the court. They know who they are and what they do because others, on whom they are parasitical or otherwise reliant, bear witness to it. Piero, Feliche, the two servants Cazzo and Dildo, and Rosaline are watchers by virtue of the fact that they try to evaluate and criticise what goes on around them. They seek to bring to their experiences an independent perspective through which they define the world, both for themselves and

⁶⁶ *The Miscellaneous Works...of Sir Thomas Overbury*, ed. E.F. Rimbault, London, 1890, p.53. See also Donne, Satire I, 53-55, and Guilpin, *Skialetheia*, V, in which the gallants' warlike countenances make them look "like *Talbots, Percies, Montacutes*,/.../ But bring them to a charge, then see the luck,/ Though but a false fire, they theyr plumes will duck" (ll.78; 80-81). Guilpin also observes of "*Don Fashion*", a dancer, that "Light heeles, light head, light feather well agree" (l.131).

for the watched. It is admitted that there are difficulties with this dichotomy. Mellida, and Flavia, for example, do not really fit into either category, and there are important moral differences between, say, Piero and Feliche which cannot be simply resolved in terms of this kind of amoral, existential analysis. However, the principle remains a useful one because issues of morality, in the strict sense of separating the good from the bad, are less important to Marston's philosophical approach than issues of being - distinguishing between human authenticity and a sham version of it.

Forobosco, Alberto and Castilio are largely indistinguishable from one another. In Act I, Piero asks whether the Genoese have agreed to deliver to him the heads of Andrugio and Antonio, should they return home. Alberto's reply is sycophantic, smoothing:

With most obsequious, sleek-browed entertain
They all embrace it as most gracious.

(I.i.66-67)

Forobosco's answer to Piero's subsequent question, as to whether the reward has been advertised throughout Italy, is perhaps even more unctuous: "They are sent every way. Sound policy,/ Sweet lord." (I.i.73-74). Introduced in this way these characters are immediately shown to be part of the machinery of the court, yes-men whose job it is to *respond to*, to approve and to execute the commands of the autocrat. In a different way Castilio Balthazar, whose name is designed to recall that of Baldassare Castiglione, the author of *Il Cortegiano* (1528), is just as much a creature of the system: he mostly seems to function as an usher for Piero.⁶⁷ His first speech is also a *response*, to a witticism of Rosaline's:

Ha, her wit stings, blisters, galls off the skin with the tart acrimony of
her sharp quickness...Delicious creature, vouchsafe me your service. By
the purity of bounty, I shall be proud of such bondage.

(II.i.65-66; 68-69)

"I vouchsafe it; be my slave" replies the imperious Rosaline, anticipating Miss Whiplash. Then, she spits onto the floor:

Rosaline. Poh! Servant, rub out my rheum. It soils the presence.

Castilio. By my wealthiest thought, you grace my shoe with an unmeasured
honour. I will preserve the sole of it, as a most sacred relic for this
service.

(II.i.86-90)

⁶⁷ See II.i.55-56 and II.i.156-157.

As in *The Scourge*, Marston is here attacking courtly love, this time brutally reducing it to a fairly sophisticated form of what we would now call sado-masochism. But Castilio's servitude is not confined to Rosaline. He is a 'slave' in the substantive sense in which the word was then used, to signify a low, contemptible person.

Castilio is not the only one to pursue Rosaline; Forobosco, Alberto and Balurdo all conceive of themselves as courtly lovers, and each lays claim to her affections. They compete for her programmatically, apparently because that is what a courtier is expected to do. Marston manipulates drama and language so as to illustrate the tired banality of their rivalry:

Alberto. Gallants, saw you my mistress, the Lady Rosaline?
Forobosco. My mistress, the Lady Rosaline, left the presence even now.
Castilio. My mistress, the Lady Rosaline, withdrew her gracious aspect even now.
Balurdo. 'My mistress, the Lady Rosaline, withdrew her gracious aspect even now.'
Felice. [Aside] Well said, echo.

(II.i.133-140)

In this as in other ways, Marston shows these courtiers to have no independent or authentic being; another good example is the incident in which Castilio tries to persuade Feliche that what is actually a tailor's bill is a love letter from Rosaline. By forcibly taking the paper from him, Feliche discovers the ruse and beats him: "twill not be so stitched together. Take that, and that, [strikes him] and belie no Lady's love" (I.ii.110-112). Castilio has no sense of the need to construct reality from within. He is content to paper over the cracks - or patch over the holes - in his image, by whatever means comes most readily to hand. As befits such a man of straw, he takes his thrashing without complaint, only begging Feliche to

tell not my Lady mother? Well, as I am a true gentleman, if she had not willed me on her blessing not to spoil my face, if I could not find in my heart to fight, would I might never eat a Potato pie⁶⁸ more.

(III.ii.115-118)

That Galeazzo and Mazzagente essentially belong with Castilio and his ilk is established at the pair's first entrance. They have come to Venice, Alberto tells Piero, "to gratulate your victory" (I.i.94) and pass across the lower stage, embracing and complimenting Piero while Rosaline, Mellida and Flavia watch them from above.

⁶⁸ Thought to be an aphrodisiac.

Rosaline pours scorn on the two princes, ridiculing their looks; she infers from their physical feebleness that they are mentally insubstantial. Galeazzo has

a short finger and a naked chin,
A skipping eye. Dare lay my judgement, faith,
His love is glibbery; there's no hold on't, wench.
Give me a husband whose aspect is firm...

(I.i.107-110)

Mazzagente fares no better:

Avoid him, for he hath a dwindled leg,
A low forehead, and a thin coal-black beard...

...

Precious, what a slender waist he hath!
He looks like a maypole, or a notched stick.
He'll snap in two at every little strain.
Give me a husband that will fill mine arms,
Of steady judgement...

(I.i.130-131; 135-139)⁶⁹

Galeazzo and Mazzagente are not large parts - they have only 43 lines between them - and it is not easy to envisage their personalities. It appears that Galeazzo, described by his rival as a "skipping feeble amorist" (II.i.191) is a smooth denizen of courtly milieux, much in the mould of Castilio, while Mazzagente, described in the Induction as "a modern braggadoch" (Ind.93) contrives to present a more martial aspect (II.i.188-192).

Both are clearly meant to be foolish, so it is curious that their contributions to the masque in Act V, along with Balurdo's offering, should articulate the play's central message about the contextuality of things. The motto for Galeazzo's turn is "splendente Phoebus"⁷⁰ his sign a "burning glass", and he declares his love for Mellida in a qualified way that emphasises its contingency upon her loving him:

I'll no longer burn than you'll shine and smile upon my love. For
look ye, fairest...

...

...unless you shed your brightest beams
Of sunny favour and acceptive grace
Upon my tender love, I do not burn.
Marry, but shine, and I'll reflect your beams...

(V.ii.81-82; 85-89)

The important effect of this is that his love does not spring from any self-defining inner source but is, like so much other behaviour in the play, a response to circumstance, in this

⁶⁹ See also *Malc.*, I.iv.44-47: "O, the father of maypoles! Did you ever see a fellow whose strength consisted in his breath, respect in his office, religion in his lord, and love in himself? Why, then, behold".

⁷⁰ "While the sun God shines", Gair p.153.

case that of Mellida's loving him. Mazzagente's turn makes a similar thematically related point. His motto is "*Splendescit tantum tenebris*",⁷¹ his sign a "glow-worm" that

...figurates my valour, which shineth brightest in
most dark, dismal and horrid achievements.
Rosaline. Or rather, your glow-worm represents your wit, which only seems to
have fire in it, though indeed 'tis but an *ignis fatuus*, and shines only
in the dark dead night of fools' admiration.

(V.ii.105-111)

Mazzagente's slightly absurd boast allows Rosaline to draw out the thread of the relativity - and therefore the contextuality - of how things are perceived. The 'wit', that is, the intelligence of Mazzagente is only apparent when he is at court and surrounded by idiots; outside this company it is imperceptible.⁷²

Balurdo is the most interesting courtier, partly because Marston seems to have conceived of him as being the quintessence of "brainless gentility" (Ind.60). In the Induction he is described as "the fool" (Ind.31) who "like an empty hollow vault" gives "an echo to wit" (Ind.38). For Balurdo, the function of language is to confer an air of distinction on its users; immediately after Rosaline dubs him knight of the golden harp, a nomination which he takes very seriously, he says that he feels "honourable eloquence begin to grope me already" (V.ii.44). But Balurdo's quest for the dignity of fine speech is evident throughout the play. More than any other character, he is conscious of the impression created by words, and seeks to wear them, in much the same way as he does clothes, for effect:

My silk stocking hath a good gloss, and I thank my planets my leg is
not altogether unpropitiously shaped. There's a word -
'unpropitiously'! I think that shall speak 'unpropitiously' as well as
any courtier in Italy.

(II.i.105-109)⁷³

Because Balurdo's command of thought or language does not allow him to scintillate in the way that he would like to, he frequently finds himself dumbfounded. His speech does not fragment or become absurd in the way that Antonio's does; it just runs out:

By my golden - what's the richest thing about me?

(III.ii.126-127)

⁷¹ "It shines only in the dark", Gair p.154.

⁷² The relative nature of appearance is not a uniquely Marstonian idea (see for example *The Merchant of Venice*, V.i.89-109: "Nothing, I see, is good without respect" (l.99) but Marston integrates it too carefully with his themes for it to be seen here as a mere commonplace.

⁷³ Balurdo is Marston's most prominent borrower of others' words, but see also Simplicius Faber (WYW, II.i.107-108) and Mistress Mulligrub (DC, III.iii.20-22; 36-38; 70-73) who both do exactly the same thing.

By Jesu, I think I am as elegant a courtier as -

(III.ii.134)

I'll toss love like a - prank -
'Prank it?' - a rhyme for 'prank it'?

(IV.i.270-271)

Most significantly of all, Balurdo's tongue fails him when he sets out to describe the "substance" of himself. He finishes by quite literally identifying himself as being nothing at all:

I'll myself appear;
Balurdo's self, that in quick wit doth surpass,
Will show the substance of a complete - .
Dildo. - ass, ass.
(IV.i.263-265)

Balurdo's inner unreality is not only betrayed by the *form* of his language; its content also implies that he experiences a fantastic chaos of sense-perception. "Oh, I smell a sound" (I.i.44) is his first line in the play, and is followed later by others like "hold up the glass higher that I may see to swear in fashion" (III.ii.122-123) "Are ye blind? Could ye not see my voice coming for the harp?" (V.ii.21-22) and "I appeal to your mouths that heard my song?" (V.ii.28). These allusions to the mind's failure to correctly order sense-impressions may be a rather mocking glance at Stoical psychology,⁷⁴ but the main point is that there is no internal coherence to Balurdo: his persona is constructed from the outside inwards, using words, which he as often as not plagiarises from others, and clothes, which he wears without taste. He speaks of his garish costumes in a way that identifies him essentially as being the *only* wearer of *these particular* clothes:

If you see one in a yellow taffeta doublet cut upon carnation velour, a green hat, a blue pair of velvet hose, a gilt rapier, and an orange-tawny pair of worsted silk stockings, that's I, that's I.
(V.i.81-84)

This concern with playing upon the surfaces of things helps to explain the play's treatment of optical reflection. A stage direction at III.ii.118 reads:

Enter BALURDO backward, DILDO following him with a looking glass in one hand and a candle in the other hand; FLAVIA following him backward with a looking glass in one hand and a candle in the other; ROSALINE following her. BALURDO and ROSALINE stand setting of faces; and so the scene begins.

⁷⁴ See this thesis, Chapter I, section 1 and Chapter II, section 3.

Finkelpearl says of this scene that the “main characters mistake the cosmetic-covered images in their mirrors for their real selves and meanwhile walk backward in the world”,⁷⁵ which ignores the facts that Rosaline (a) is actually moving forwards and (b) devotes herself quite deliberately in the ensuing scene to making up her face to a perfect likeness of Mellida’s. Despite the apparent popular success of the tableau⁷⁶ it is difficult to make any great sense of its symmetrical arrangement; the characters are quite different from one another, and there is no obvious point to the suggestion that Rosaline ‘reflects’ Balurdo. However, Finkelpearl’s remark is true to the spirit of the scene, which common sense requires us to regard as being essentially an attack on sycophantic mimicry (Rosaline) and vanity (Balurdo). When Dildo tells his master that he has “one little fault - you sleep open-mouthed”, Balurdo replies that

In good sadness, I’ll have a looking glass nailed to the tester of the
bed, that I may see when I sleep whether ‘tis so or not.
(III.ii.143-145)

The absurdity here does not turn only on waking and sleeping; when confronted by an issue relating to himself, Balurdo’s immediate response is to resolve it by looking at his outside with a looking-glass: he also tells Dildo to hold the glass higher “that I may see to swear in fashion” (III.ii.122-123) and “that I may see to put on my gloves” (III.ii.130). His attention to his reflection is but one instance of how he continually looks outside himself for guidance as to what he should do, a trait that is also manifest in his tendency to ask others to supply him with “an epithet” (II.i.232) or “a rhyme” (IV.i.271): he is a wholly superficial being, engaged with his surroundings to the point where the simplest forms of self-realisation are impossible.

At first sight, Feliche and Rosaline, arch-critics of the fops and shysters of the Venetian court, seem to be the antitheses of Balurdo. In the very first scene of the play Feliche criticises and argues with Piero, and Rosaline ridicules the noblemen Mazzagente and Galeazzo. Throughout the play, Feliche excoriates the “limber sycophants” (I.i.75) “slavish sots” (II.i.94) and “rare fools” (III.ii.119) of the court, culminating in his exhortation to Alberto to “go hang thy self” (V.i.55). Like Andrugio, he affects the role of

⁷⁵ Finkelpearl, p.148.

⁷⁶ J&N point out that “the scene was twice imitated by Ford, in *Love’s Sacrifice*, II.i, and *The Fancies Chaste and Noble*, I.ii” (p.54).

a Stoic but, also like Andrugio, in doing so he reaches for the unattainable. It is important that Feliche tries to separate himself from the other courtiers' antics; he is a sympathetic character who, for example, selflessly helps Antonio to escape in Act III, and he belongs to a quite different existential order from the likes of Balurdo. Nonetheless, he does not achieve the substantivity he prizes.

As we have seen,⁷⁷ this is implied in the Induction, but Feliche's character is laid open most deeply in the nocturnal scene with Castilio (III.ii.1-118). We first see Feliche, alone and unbraced, and engaged in a curious soliloquy; unable to sleep "In these court lodgings" (III.ii.5) he wanders through the court, professedly "To see if the nocturnal court delights/ Could force me envy their felicity" (III.ii.6-7). His conclusion, that "by plain truth - I will confess plain truth - / I envy nothing, but the traverse⁷⁸ light" (III.ii.9) is a statement that tends to undercut itself, a case of protesting too much. His sleeplessness, moreover, is at odds with the tranquillity to which he pretends: insomnia is conventionally used in the drama of the period to denote mental turmoil.⁷⁹ When Castilio asks him whether, "by the perfection of it", he envies the court, his reply is self-congratulatory to the point of being boastful:

I wonder it doth not envy me.
 Why, man, I have been borne upon the spirit's wings,
 The soul's swift Pegasus, the fantasy,
 And from the height of contemplation
 Have viewed the feeble joints men totter on.
 I envie none; but hate or pity all.
 ...
 When I.....see myself
 Nor fair, nor rich, nor witty, great, nor feared,
 Yet amply suited, with all full content,
 Lord, how I clap my hands and smooth my brow,
 Rubbing my quiet bosom, tossing up
 A grateful spirit to omnipotence!
(III.ii.42-47; 56-61)

First, in terms that must be read with the play's association of completeness of self with elevation from the earth in mind, he speaks of a metaphysical transcendence ("borne upon the spirit's wings"), then he uses physical self-reference as a visual and verbal metaphor

⁷⁷ See section 1 of this Chapter.

⁷⁸ "the light admitted by the window in the screen or partition (i.e. because from it one can see the true character of others)" - Gair, p.110. The suggestion is that Feliche is more curious about goings-on in the court than he cares to admit.

⁷⁹ See *Malc.*, III.ii.1-14; *Henry IV Part 2*, III.i.531; and, famously, *Macbeth*, V.i.1-76 (and III.iv.140-143).

of spiritual autonomy. Together the passages argue a separation from (first) the material and (second) the social components of the world. But, there is a contradiction between Feliche's claims to contentment and quietude, and the hatred for others which is both stated here and implied elsewhere in the denunciations of other characters noted above. We have already seen that he is disturbed by the environment of the court to the point where he "seldom rests" in it (III.ii.4). That Feliche is not as happy or secure in his apparent substantivity is confirmed when Castilio tells him of his own happiness, so great that if Feliche could know it

Thou wouldst even grate away thy soul to dust
In envy of my sweet beatitude.
I cannot sleep for kisses. I cannot rest
For ladies' letters...

(III.ii.63-66)

Feliche's initial reaction to this is ambiguous; he accuses Castilio of lying, but, not being able to simply rise above the issue, *argues* with him nonetheless and in doing so joins him in the sordid arena of courtly one-upmanship. He tries to demonstrate that he is "as like a man" as Castilio, a claim that would acquire comical overtones by virtue of the fact that both actors are boys:

Confusion sieze me, but I think thou liest.
Why should I not be sought to then, as well?
Fut! Methinks I am as like a man.
Troth, I have a good head of hair, a cheek
Not as yet waned, a leg, faith, in the full.

(III.ii.69-73)

The comic irony of a boy's delivering these lines would compound the effect that they have in undermining Feliche's claim to have transcended human vanity and viewed from the abstracted "height of contemplation/ ...the feeble joints men totter on", that is, the flimsy structures that hold them above the bleak earth. The ambivalence in his character is further revealed in his description of how he has previously, albeit without success, adopted the affectations of the other courtiers in an effort to acquire a mistress. In the course of this speech it emerges that he is less a Happy Stoic than he is a failed seducer, turned malcontent by women's rebuffs:

There are a number of such things as then
Have often urged me to such loose belief.
But 'slid you all do lie, you all do lie.
I have put on good clothes, and smudged my face,
Struck a fair wench with a smart speaking eye,
Courted in all sorts, blunt, and passionate,

Had opportunity, put them to the 'ah!',
 And, by this light, I find them wondrous chaste,
 Impregnable - perchance a kiss or so,
 But for the rest, O, most inexorable!

(III.ii.81-90)

When Castilio produces the 'seeming letter' from Rosaline, Feliche's reaction is hardly Stoical:

Prithee, from whom comes this? Faith, I must see.
 [Reads] '*From her that is devoted to thee, in most private
 sweets of love; Rosaline.*'
 Nay, God's my comfort, I must see the rest.
 I must, sans ceremony, faith I must.
Felice takes away the letter by force.

(III.ii.94-98)

Feliche claims spiritual independence, but is easily driven to lose his self-possession by the suggestion that he is a loser at courtly games of love. The fact that the 'letter' turns out to be a tailor's bill only emphasises the ease with which he is tricked out of composure by the idiotic Castilio. Like Andrugio, Feliche finds it impossible to maintain a psychological distance between himself and his environment: the Stoic calm they both profess is at odds with the reality of their dependence on social and material contexts.⁸⁰

Rosaline is also ambivalent. Her ridicule of Galeazzo and Mazzagente at the play's beginning establishes her as being no respecter of persons, a fiery and independent spirit who throws in her lot with firmness and steadiness (I.i.135-140). Many of her subsequent appearances confirm this, as she continually shows disgust for the courtiers who, Feliche apart, pursue her to a man. Without forgetting that this play was written for performance by boys, she has something of the arrogance of beauty: she frequently accompanies Mellida, but receives most of the male attention. Next to Rosaline's sexy contempt, Mellida seems insipid; her self-pity, her oft-repeated, irritating exclamation, "Ay me",⁸¹ her tendency to allow herself to be led by Rosaline⁸² and the suggestions in the text that Mellida is physically quite unattractive,⁸³ all contribute to the

⁸⁰ Ellen Berland supports this interpretation: "If Feliche were as content and as honest as he pretends to be, he would have no reason to remain at court. Once he had proved to himself that he was not envious of court life, he would leave...His self-revelations to Castilio indicate further the contradiction between his assumed manner and his true character...Feliche is, obviously, guilty of just the vices he censures in others. He is as hypocritical and as pretentious as any of the other courtiers. He is envious of them but pretends to be content" ('The Function of Irony in Marston's *Antonio and Mellida*', *SP*, 66, 1969, 739-755, pp.751-752).

⁸¹ At I.i.206, II.i.200, IV.i.256 and V.ii.190. Piero rebukes her for it at IV.i.257.

⁸² As at I.i.100-143.

⁸³ See IV.i.183-186, Balurdo's mistake at IV.i.230-236 and the ready withdrawal of her suitors at V.ii.246-254.

impression that she dwells much in her gentlewoman's shadow. The differences between the two women are nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in their attitudes to love. Mellida remains unswervingly devoted to Antonio throughout the play, but Rosaline flirts with everybody, while loving no one. Her dealings with the love-sick Alberto are typical:

Rosaline. Say, sweet, what keeps thy mind - what think'st thou on?
Alberto. Nothing.
Rosaline. What's that nothing?
Alberto. A woman's constancy.
Rosaline. Good, why, wouldst thou have us sluts and never shift the vesture of our thoughts? Away, for shame!
Alberto. O no, th'art too constant to afflict my heart,
Too too firm fixed in unmoved scorn.
Rosaline. Pish, pish. I, 'fixed in unmoved scorn'?
Why, I'll love thee tonight.
Alberto. But whom tomorrow?
Rosaline. Faith, as the toy puts me in the head.

(II.i.218-229)

She refuses to embrace the two courtly but contradictory roles suggested for her by Alberto, because these would tend to deprive her of the prerogative of continuing choice. This rejection of Petrarchan modelling is a refusal to exchange personal authenticity for the pre-scribed fictions of the court, a retention of autonomy in a context that puts pressure on the individual to become a cipher.

Whether Rosaline's freedom actually makes her a better person is another question. There is a kind of brutality about her, as when she tells the miserable Mellida, who is shortly to be married to Galeazzo, that "my pretty coz, 'tis but the loss of an odd maidenhead" (V.ii.38-39). This remark, which recalls Roderigo's "'Tis but a man gone",⁸⁴ impresses upon us the inconsequence of her existence; for all her wit and vigour, she is ultimately unable to endow her life with any meaning beyond trivial flirtation:

I tell you, sir, I have thirty-nine servants, and my monkey - that makes the fortieth. Now, I love all of them lightly for something, but affect none of them seriously for anything.

(V.ii.56-59)

It is significant that she swears by "pleasure's body", an oath in which 'pleasure' takes the place of the usual 'God'. She moves whimsically through the court, toying first with one man and then with another, never committing herself and never engaging with any other character on a moral plane; to this extent, she is a creature of the system that promotes such frivolity: the court. In her way, she is just as insubstantial as Balurdo is in his.

⁸⁴ *Othello*, V.i.10.

In this chapter I have tried to show that in *Antonio and Mellida* Marston is centrally concerned with the nature and limits of selfhood. His conclusion, which is developed through treatments of a variety of characters and contexts, is that the self can only precariously achieve the kind of substantivity idealised by Stoics, and that self-determination is an illusion fostered by a life of ease. Consequently, identity is unstable by its very nature: changes in society, status and material conditions beget changes in the person. Modern critics have acknowledged this as far as to observe that Marston shows Stoicism to be finally untenable, but Marston's critique of Stoicism is subordinate to his greater ambition of a general scrutiny of the relationship between self and context. In such characters as Forobosco and Balurdo, the self has already effectively failed, as is made manifest by their deficiencies of voice⁸⁵ and language. Feliche and Andrugio struggle to transcend their environments, but cannot do so. In Marston's vision nothing is reliable or solid in itself: even the earth shakes (I.i.42). Many of the themes of the first play are also pursued in *Antonio's Revenge*, where they are developed further. Of these, the most distinctively Marstonian is the concept of war between identities. In *Antonio and Mellida* Piero conducts his persecution of Andrugio with a strategy of attempting to wipe out, not only his life, but also his greater identity, which extends outward from him in society and in time. At the same time, Piero discloses his hunger for self aggrandisement via the same channels. *Antonio's Revenge* follows this theme of conflict between greater selves to its fascinating, blood-drenched conclusion.

⁸⁵ At II.i.57 Dildo compares Forobosco's voice to a "squeaking cartwheel", a thematic allusion to the effeminacy of the character as revealed by his voice, and perhaps also a reference to the unbroken voice of the child actor playing the part.

Chapter IV: Power, War and Selfhood in *Antonio's Revenge*

This chapter applies to *Antonio's Revenge* the principles of analysis that have been developed in Chapters I to III. It argues that, despite its formal status as a sequel, the *Revenge* is a quite different kind of play from *Antonio and Mellida*, chiefly (although not exclusively) because the context within which it examines identity is specifically one of aggressive conflict between human forces, as contrasted with the earlier play's general tendency to deal with the effect on individuals of their human and material environments. In *Antonio's Revenge*, the characters are not passive, but violently active. The first section considers the relationship between the two plays and discusses Marston's renewed analysis of principles of motivation and power in *Antonio's Revenge*, especially with reference to the development of the character of Piero. The second section explores the psychology of injury among those who eventually assassinate Piero; it seeks to explain Marston's conception of the need for revenge in terms of Marston's theories of identity. The third section is a close study of the killing of Piero: with detailed reference to visual and verbal symbolism it argues that vengeance is presented as being the ultimate self-affirmation, an individual's public declaration of his (or her) personal reality.

1: "I ha' no reason to be reasonable": Piero and Autonomy.

Antonio's Revenge and *Antonio and Mellida* were entered in the Stationers' Register on a single day, 24th October 1601, as "the first and second parts" of *Antonio and Mellida*. This implies a continuity between the two that has been too readily accepted by some critics, whose analyses skip back and forth between them without much acknowledgement of the divide by which they are separated. There is a good reason for avoiding this approach: sufficient disjunction exists between the tone and characterisation of the two plays as to require that they should not simply be read as a single work. It is true that in

the Induction to *Antonio and Mellida* 'Antonio' anticipates a sequel in which Galeazzo and Feliche are to receive "more exact accomplishment" (Ind.145) but the sequentiality that this might be taken to imply is negated by the fact that in *Antonio's Revenge* Galeazzo hardly appears at all and Feliche does so only as a corpse. This is perhaps the strongest evidence of all that when Marston wrote *Antonio and Mellida* he had only the haziest idea of what was going to go into the sequel. Certainly, it must be allowed that there are threads of continuity running from the first play to the second. The bellicose Mazzagente, whose character seems to be derived from that of Martius in *The Scourge of Villanie*¹ still swaggers self-importantly about the stage;² Mellida remains much the same as before, even down to her exclamation "Ay me"³ for which Piero again reprimands her;⁴ and Balurdo is mostly unchanged, especially in his verbal foolery.⁵

In many other respects, though, the plays are quite distinct from each other. Most obviously, *Antonio and Mellida* is a melodramatic comedy, while *Antonio's Revenge* is a tragedy of blood whose purpose, according to the Epilogue, is to "obtain but tears" from the audience.⁶ The second play introduces two important new characters, Maria, Antonio's mother, and Pandulpho Feliche, father of the now-late Stoic of *Antonio and Mellida*, as well as three minor ones: Strotzo, Piero's accomplice; Julio, Piero's young son; and Nutriche, Maria's nurse. The Ghost of Andrugio, murdered between the plays, is in a sense also a new character. Moreover, several characters from *Antonio and Mellida* are lost in transit: Cazzo, Dildo, Rosaline, Flavia and numerous Pages disappear, as well as the flesh-and-blood version of Andrugio. In addition to these, there are distinct alterations in the personalities of many of the characters who survive from the first play. Two important, related changes occur in Piero. The first is that he passes beyond being the bloodthirsty but defensible and mostly coherent avenger of attacks on his dynasty and his dukedom, and becomes an out-and-out stage villain, wholeheartedly committed to the generation of chaos. The second change, a consequence of the first, is that he now

¹ See SV.I.1-9; XI.52-73.

² See I.iii.6-21.

³ See II.iii.63 and IV.iii.88.

⁴ See IV.iii.89

⁵ Balurdo begins the second play much as he ends the first, but in Act V becomes almost heroic when, like Alberto, he makes a stand against Piero's tyranny.

⁶ See V.vi.69.

operates in secrecy, instead of openly declaring his aims and actions. Marston tries to minimise the discontinuity caused by this by making the change retroactive: Piero explains in the first scene of *Antonio's Revenge* that his alliance with the Duke of Genoa was a necessary pretence.⁷

Although Antonio still has a propensity for tearful self-pity, he has become less inclined to collapse hysterically in the face of disaster, and he finally develops the power to attack his enemy, which the Antonio of the first play could never do. There are two occasions when Antonio lies down on the stage in an excess of self-pity,⁸ but the accompanying speeches are less hysterical than they are mournfully contemplative. He does not disintegrate as he does in the first play. Of the minor characters, Alberto shows hitherto unrevealed reserves of dignity and courage, and Castilio of savagery: he helps Piero to strangle Strotzo in Act IV.⁹ Of course, all these changes could be explained in terms of character development, as opposed to alteration, or even as illustrations of the instability of identity, but whichever is the case they contribute to the great differences of mood and tone that exist between the two plays.

While *Antonio and Mellida* emphasised the influence of the immediate environment on the individual, *Antonio's Revenge* is almost exclusively concerned with conflict *between selves*, and especially with vengeance. This, for those who have been bereaved or robbed by Piero in the second play, is depicted as being existentially and psychologically essential to the process of self-reconstruction. As such, it forms part of an analysis that identifies the whole struggle for supremacy between opposing human forces as being ultimately a struggle for self-ratification, the prize that crowns the winner and whose denial, even apart from the material consequences, destroys the loser. But, within the mechanism that generates authenticity out of conflict, suffering is also a crucial component: it awakens the subject, both to his own materiality, and to the reality of

⁷ See I.i.30-74. Michael Scott argues that "there is no change in Piero's fundamental characterisation. The only alteration is in his new gained ability to disguise his basic self and adapt himself for his part" (*John Marston's Plays*, p.12). He sees the last scene of *Antonio and Mellida* as one in which "he learned how to disguise his emotion and find time to gain his ends" (*ibid.* p.13). But H. Harvey Wood asserts, in my view rightly, that between the two plays there is a "complete change in the author's conception of plot and characterisation...There is nothing in the last scenes of *Antonio and Mellida* to suggest that the magnanimity of Piero is feigned, or the reconciliation insincere" (Introduction to *The Plays of John Marston*, 3 Vols, London, 1934-1939, Vol. I, p.xxii).

⁸ See II.iii.131 and IV.iv.11 s.d.

⁹ See IV.iii.64-66.

misery, and it allows him to adopt a perspective on the world that accounts for these two truths. The most important new development, on which all this is based, is that the characters of *Antonio's Revenge* actively resist the forces that threaten to engulf them, whereas those in the earlier play merely submitted.

Antonio's Revenge has very little of the easygoing, farcical satire which provides *Antonio and Mellida* with much of its comedy, and it contains plenty of X-Certificate gore to boot. Just as the gentle, rather cosy tableaux of life at the Venetian court are largely absent from the second play, so in the Prologue to it Marston tells his auditors that any present who, like the courtiers of *Antonio and Mellida*, has been protected from life's harsher dealings by "happiness" and does not wish to see the effect that they have on men, should leave at once:

If any spirit breathes within this round,
Uncapable of weighty passion
(As from his birth being hugged in the arms
And nuzzled 'twixt the breasts of happiness)
Who winks and shuts his apprehension up
From common sense of what men were, and are,
Who would not know what men must be - let such
Hurry amain from our black-visaged shows;
We shall affright their eyes. But if a breast
Nailed to the earth with grief, if any heart
Pierced through with anguish, pant within this ring,
If there be any blood whose heat is choked
And stifled with true sense of misery,
If ought of these strains fill this consort up,
Th'arrive most welcome.

(Prol.13-27)

To a large extent, this follows the main thematic oppositions of *Antonio and Mellida*. Happiness is associated with the breathing spirit, the human being in the ethereal dimension, while passion is "weighty"; it chokes and stifles the heat of the blood and nails the 'breast' - another example of Marston's identification of grief-stricken man by reference to his physical parts - to the earth. But Marston goes further than this; he also says that to experience passionate grief and "*true* sense of misery" (my italics) is to gain some insight into a perennial truth about human existence, "what men were, and are,/ ...what men must be". This is a departure from the blind disintegration of Antonio and the unstable Stoicism of Andrugio in the first play. In *Antonio's Revenge*, loss and danger generate rage, but do not ultimately destroy their victims. By juxtaposing the metaphor of being "Nuzzled 'twixt the breasts of happiness" with those of being "Nailed to the earth with grief" and

“Pierced through with anguish”, Marston suggests that suffering introduces people to a dimension of being that, although painful, has a tangible reality that helps to validate it. In what Antonio later calls the “frozen zone” (II.iii.53) there is at least an acute sensation of experiencing something authentic, a vision of what humanity really is when stripped of its comfortable, social self-perceptions.¹⁰

The chief protagonist of *Antonio's Revenge* is Piero; he leads the action, dictating events to which the other characters respond. We have seen that the Piero of the first play is at least in principle a seeker of absolutely autonomous selfhood, but that his actions in pursuit of this goal are at least partly justified by the fact that he is the victim of aggression, and his commitment to it is moderated by a sense of its potential for destroying him. In *Antonio's Revenge*, the same urge towards autonomy exists, but it is reined by fewer moderating influences.¹¹ Piero now works in secrecy, measuring his potency by his ability to generate chaos and evil, not only to control, but to pervert and destroy that which lies outside himself. Internally, he tries to divorce himself from society: he solipsistically revels in the secrecy and ingenuity of his plots:

Will I not blast my own blood for revenge,
...
And yet no creature dream 'tis my revenge?
(I.i.85; 87)

He takes on something of the quality of Shakespeare's Richard III, yet even Richard is fuelled by desire for the crown, a universal, and therefore rational, symbol of what is desirable. A better comparison might be made with Marlowe's Barabas. Like both Gloucester and Piero, Barabas is a camp connoisseur of villainy who delights in evil-doing for its own sake:

As for myself, I walk abroad a-nights,
And kill sick people groaning under walls.

¹⁰ See the discussion of Lipsius' remarks on 'adversitie and Davies' on 'affliction', Chapter I, section 1 of this thesis

¹¹ In 'English Folly and Italian Vice' (*Jacobean Theatre*, Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies 1, no editor listed, London, 1960, pp.85-111) G.K. Hunter calls the *Antonio* plays a "thematic picture of a world of Hobbesian individualism" (p.91). Hunter emphasises the importance of lines 12-20 of the Prologue ("what men must be") and argues from them that "It is... as an image of the 'realities' of power that Marston defends [the *Antonio* plays]" (p.88). There is much in this; but my reservations about it are based on the argument that Marston's analysis of power derives from an analysis of the self that lays far too much stress on the importance of society to be described as 'individualism'. Superficially, Marston's depiction of a universe of in which men compete for supremacy seems to anticipate Hobbes, but it must be recognized that for Marston 'individualism' in its purest sense would be impossible.

Sometimes I go about and poison wells...¹²

But the most important similarity between Barabas and Piero is that in the final analysis they are both motivated by the desire to shake the world with their personal chaos:

Know, Calymath, I aim'd thy overthrow:
And, had I but escap'd this stratagem,
I would have brought confusion on you all,
Damn'd Christians, dogs, and Turkish infidels!
(V.v.82-85)

Excellent, excellent! I'll conquer Rome,
Pop out the light of bright religion;
And then, helter skelter, all cocksure!
(IV.iii.142-144)

Even so, Barabas' material greed, like Gloucester's power-lust, forces us to concede the special quality of Piero's motivation. He strives to transcend the dictates of society and reason altogether; the only principles he willingly acknowledges are the need to become self aware - to feel his own power - by making others feel it, and the sheer delight of making mischief.

Despite all this, he craves applause. At the play's beginning, he enters, "smeared in blood" (I.i.0 s.d.), from the murders of Andrugio and Feliche. The ensuing scene draws out contradictions in Piero's attitudes to vengeance, to morality and to his own identity.

On one hand, in the context of Marston's use of language as an index of selfhood, the power of his voice, especially measured against Strotzo's feeble, monosyllabic utterances, implies that he is to some extent made greater by imposing his will on his victims.¹³ "Will I not turn a glorious bridal morn/ Unto a Stygian night?" he asks (I.i.88-89), implying that when he impacts upon things, they bend to his will. Piero seems to draw self-assurance from his crimes: they augment him, affirming the power of his "brain" and making him "great in blood":

'One, two.' Lord, in two hours what a topless mount
Of unpeered mischief have these hands cast up!

Enter Strotzo

I can scarce coop triumphing Vengeance up
From bursting forth in braggart passion.
Str. My lord, 'tis firmly said that -
Pie. Andrugio sleeps in peace! This brain hath choked
The organ of his breast.
...

¹² Marlowe, *The Jew of Malta*, ed. N.W. Bawcutt, Manchester 1978, II.iii.176-178.

¹³ For other examples of Marston's treatment of the voice in this way, see *Malc.*, I.v.25-35; II.ii.19-25.

I am great in blood,
Unequalled in revenge.

(I.i.9-15; 17-18)

His description of his acts constructs them as unparalleled masterworks that elevate their author into the realm of the incomparable, and therefore of the absolute: they are “topless”, “unpeered” and “Unequalled”. However, a problem arises because the mere *fact* of the crimes is not enough; greatness must be public, while murder must be kept secret. Before Piero can distil from his perfidies the transcendent, villainous glory inherent in them, they need to be publicised, that is, stated, which is impossible. As a result, he cannot coop “triumphing vengeance up/ From bursting forth in braggart passion”: in the absence of others’ recognition, he must provide his own. His frustration is apparent throughout the scene. He continually asks Strotzo to verify the cleverness of his success:

Pie. Could I avoid to give a seeming grant
Unto fruition of Antonio’s love?
Str. No.
Pie. And didst thou ever see a Judas kiss,
With a more covert touch of fleering hate?
Str. No.
Pie. And having clipped them with pretence of love
Have I not crushed them with a cruel wring?
Str. Yes.
Pie. ...
Fut!
Is’t not rare?
Str. Yes.
Pie. No! Yes! Nothing but ‘no’ and ‘yes’, dull lump?
Canst thou not honey me with fluent speech
And even adore my topless villany?

(I.i.57-65; 80-84)

It is not only Strotzo who is appealed to in this way. Piero calls upon such figures of evil as the “horrid scouts/ That sentinel swart night” to “give loud applause/ From your large palms” (I.i.18-20) and “Hell, Night” to “Give loud applause to my hypocrisy” (I.i.30-31). His self-gratulatory speech is a measure of his need for linguistic acknowledgement, the form, if not the substance of social recognition.

From the first, then, Piero’s bid to become the self-sufficient author of others’ destinies is encoded with its own futility. Even while he asserts his freedom by boasting of his extraordinary crimes, he is forced to admit that he could not have simply defied public opinion and killed Andrugio openly:

When his bright valour even dazzled sense,

In off'ring his own head, public reproach
Had blurred my name - Speak, Strotzo, had it not? -
...

Huge infamy
Press down my honour if even then, when
His fresh act of prowess bloomed out full,
I had ta'en vengeance on his hated head.

(I.i.32-34; 52-55)

As in *Antonio and Mellida*, Piero's moral reputation is enormously important to him: here, his use of terms like "name" and "honour" emphasises the importance for the inner man of his public identity. When this becomes tarnished, his self in a sense shrinks, or is "Press[ed] down".¹⁴ Piero is aware of this, but also realises that he is helpless to prevent it, except by feigning good conduct. To this extent he knows that he is unavoidably at the mercy of that which he would rather defy, a fundamental contradiction that he is never able to resolve.

As the play progresses, Piero's impatience with the constraints on his power becomes increasingly evident to the other characters. When, covered with blood, he announces to the court that he has caught Feliche in bed with Mellida and killed him, he does so in a way that suggests that he is enacting a private fantasy of absolute invulnerability:

Pandulph Feliche, I have stabbed thy son;
Look, yet his lifeblood reeks upon this steel.
Albert, yon hangs thy friend. Have none of you
Courage of vengeance? Forget I am your Duke;
Think Mellida is not Piero's blood.
Imagine on slight ground I'll blast his honour...

(I.iv.11-16)

Rhetorically, he is excusing himself, but it is also important to look at the literal meaning of his words, which express defiance and contempt. It is difficult to avoid the interpretation that what Piero really desires is to play out the scene as he invites his antagonists to conceive it, with himself as a casual murderer who faces down his victims' friends and relatives, not by virtue of his formal status but by sheer personal force. He works himself into such a state of fury that Forobosco reminds him to "Keep league with reason" (I.iv.22); again, Piero's reply, ostensibly a calculated statement of despair designed to gain credence for his version of events, chimes ironically with his private thoughts:

¹⁴ cf. *Othello*, II.iii.254-257: "Reputation, reputation, reputation!/ I have lost the immortal part of myself, and what remains is bestial".

There glow no sparks of reason in the world,
 All are raked up in ashy beastliness;
 The bulk of man's as dark as Erebus,
 No branch of reason's light hangs in his trunk;
 There lives no reason to keep league withal,
 I ha' no reason to be reasonable.

(I.iv.23-28)

This speech, especially its last line, indicates Piero's growing urge to unite his private and public identities by declaring himself openly. Marston analyses power very much in terms of identity. In *The Scourge* he called the insubstantial characters with incoherent identities "fictions" and "fantasies".¹⁵ He told his readers to "Vexe all the world, so that thy selfe be pleased",¹⁶ that is, to vitalise the self by antagonistically seeking confrontation with others, and led the way with the example of his bitter and violent verse. In *Antonio's Revenge*, he translates this concept of personal 'self-empowerment' into the arena of political power: in both cases, the key is to impose one's personal reality onto the social context. In a crucial confrontation with Pandulpho Feliche, Piero describes kingship in just these terms. Pandulpho refuses to join the plot against Antonio:

Pan. Beware, take heed, lest guiltless blood be spilt.
Pie. Where only honest deeds to kings are free
 It is no empire, but a beggary.
Pan. Where more than noble deeds to kings are free,
 It is no empire, but a tyranny.
Pie. Tush, juiceless graybeard, 'tis immunity
 Proper to princes that our state exacts,
 Our subjects not alone to bear, but praise our acts.
Pan. O, but that prince that worthful praise aspires,
 From hearts, and not from lips, applause desires.
Pie. Pish! True praise the brow of common men doth ring,
 False only girts the temple of a king.
 He that hath strength and's ignorant of power,
 He was not made to rule, but to be ruled.

(II.ii.55-68)¹⁷

In an influential book on the Renaissance self, Stephen Greenblatt has examined the signification of power in the Tudor period. He writes with reference to Thomas More's *Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation*, but his remarks are equally applicable to this passage by Marston:

...why should men submit to fantasies that will not nourish or sustain them? In part, [the] answer is *power*, whose quintessential sign is the ability to impose one's fictions upon the world: the more outrageous the fiction, the more impressive the manifestation of power...The

¹⁵ SV.VII.13-16.

¹⁶ SV.VI.111-112.

¹⁷ cf. *Sophonisba*, III.i.4 ("kings' glory is their force") and V.ii.38-39: "Kings' glory is their wrong./ He that may only do just act's a slave".

point is not that anyone is deceived...but that everyone is forced either to participate in it or to watch silently.¹⁸

In forcing people to submit to such fictions, in Piero's case by compelling them to give praise which everyone, including himself, knows to be false, the tyrant renders imperceptible all wills other than his own. All that remains evident is a single ego, extending outward from him and flowing through others, who cease to be substantive entities in any significant way. Piero's desire to wipe out other identities and replace them with his own is, like his war against reason, a means of affirming his individual forcefulness. The chaos he seeks to bring into the world is above all *his* chaos, a creation in the image of his own mind:

Piero's thoughts are fixed on dire exploits;
Pell mell! Confusion, and black murder guides
The organs of my spirit...

(II.v.46-48)

Similarly, Piero prefers to surround himself with "beasts",

Whose service is obedience and whose wit
Reacheth no further than to admire their lord,
And stare in adoration of his worth...

(II.i.57-60)

and "routs of fools" (IV.iii.41). Idiotic fops lack the ability critically to evaluate their lord, to "search the leaks of his defects" (IV.iii.42) and allow his will to go unchallenged.

As in the first play, Piero's idea of vengeance involves more than simply killing his enemies. Both he and, as we shall see, the revengers, have a highly contextual idea of their own and each other's identities. Piero is a villain, but has (unlike Barabas) at heart a concern for his offspring. He calumniates Mellida, but plans to redeem her reputation through his plot with Strotzo;¹⁹ when she dies, he shows a regret that seems genuine²⁰ and Alberto later says that "The Duke drinks deep to overflow his grief" (V.iii.7). More strikingly, when at the play's catastrophe, with his tongue torn out and his own death imminent, he is shown Julio's corpse, he "*seems to condole his son*" (V.v.49 s.d.). As in the first play, his villainous/heroic individualism is at odds with his awareness of his own contextuality, in which family plays an important part; like his individualism, moreover, his conception of the familial context is mad and extreme: he tends to regard members of

¹⁸ S. Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning From More to Shakespeare*, Chicago, 1980, p.13.

¹⁹ See II.v.7-10.

²⁰ See IV.iii.187-198.

one family as being, in effect, one person. He tells Strotzo to explain the defamation of Mellida by reference to Antonio's hatred of himself (Piero):

Swear that...
...Antonio bribed thee to defame
Her maiden honour, on inveterate hate
Unto my blood...

(II.iv.8-11)

The assumption that it would be plausible for Antonio to destroy the reputation of the woman he has risked his life to possess, purely out of dislike for her father, is entirely irrational. Even Strotzo, who does not show outstanding percipience in other respects, seems to understand this.²¹ Yet, Piero sees it as a viable deception, the fabric of a plot. His faith in it, despite its absurdity, shows, at least for the purpose of vengeance, that when his attention turns to the relationship between people and their families he makes no important distinction between the two, but instead thinks in terms of greater identities.

He assumes that this applies to Antonio because it operates so strongly in himself. The speech which he delivers while standing over Andrugio's confined corpse emphasises the destruction of Andrugio's claim on the future, a different but related element in the dead man's greater identity:

Oblivion choke the passage of thy fame!
Trophies of honoured birth drop quickly down;
Let naught of him, but what was vicious, live.
Though thou art dead, think not my hate is dead;
I have but newly twone my arm in the curled locks
Of snaky Vengeance.

(II.i.3-8)

Andrugio is long past suffering, but Piero says that his vengeance has only just begun. Later, witnessing the grief of the bereaved Antonio, he says "Now do I scourge Andrugio with steel whips/ Of knotty vengeance" (II.iii.127-128) and later still, after plotting the ruin of Antonio with Strotzo, "Swell plump bold heart,/ For now thy tide of vengeance rolleth in" (II.43-44). Vengeance is a process in which the enemy's death is but a small part: to wipe out his greater identity the revenger must pervert or destroy his victim's

²¹ When Strotzo appears and makes his 'repentance', at IV.iii.32, he changes this element of the story. The final version, as he gives it, is: "I have defamed this lady wrongfully,/ By instigation of Antonio./ Whose reeling love, tossed on each fancy's surge,/ Began to loathe before it fully joyed" (IV.iii.50-53). This is hardly better, but the alteration is significant. For evidence of Strotzo's general stupidity, the fact that he agrees to get involved in this scheme at all should suffice.

memory, murder his children and take his widow: “Poison the father, butcher the son, and marry the mother - ha!” (I.i.104).

More than this, by tying his vengeance to a metaphor of personal growth (“Swell plump...”) Piero constructs it as in a sense greatening him.²² The swelling of the heart is a swelling of the self. This metaphor chimes with the play’s thematic treatment of vengeance as *feeding*, an idea which is present in the language of both Piero and Antonio:

Pie. This morn my vengeance shall be amply fed.
(I.i.109)

Pie. I have been nursed in blood, and still have sucked
The steam of reeking gore.
(II.i.19-20)

Ant. I’ll suck red vengeance
Out of Piero’s wounds, Piero’s wounds.
(III.ii.78-79)

Ant. Thy father’s blood that flows within thy veins
Is it I loathe; is that revenge must suck.
(III.iii.35-36)

Ant. My heart hath thirsting dropsies after gore.
(III.iii.69)

The metaphor of nourishment, particularly suckling, as well as implying growth, implies necessity. The play shows the need for vengeance to be universal. Revengers are “what men *must* be” (Prol.19, my italics); the injured self must redress the injuries and insults which it has had to suffer if it is to achieve wholeness, stability and peace. Piero’s description of his crimes as being “vengeance” for his “honour’s death” (I.i.25) the result of Andrugio’s having won the competition for Maria, is an attempt to rationalise them by reference to a principle that comes to be accepted by all the play’s main characters. His plots and murders are thus *like* vengeance, in that they are based on a need for self-assertion, but they lack a proportionate cause. The chief difference between him and Antonio, Alberto, Maria, Pandulpho and the Ghost, therefore, is one of degree: his deeds are less justifiable in terms of their cause, although as the play develops we may begin to doubt whether even this is true.

²² cf. *DC*, III.ii.244-245: “Now does my heart swell high, for my revenge/ Has birth and form”.

2: The Revengers: Five Studies in Motivation.

The revengers are five characters who, though initially decent, are driven to perpetrate horrific crimes as a result of the loss and humiliation they suffer at the hands of Piero. Piero's crimes against them collectively comprise a violation of every component of greater identity, including the social, the material and the temporal, in the strict sense of 'denoting time'. In return, they inflict a reciprocal set of annihilations on him.

At the play's beginning Antonio is a princely, almost heroic figure among the gentlemen - Galeazzo, Mazzagente, Balurdo and the rest - with whom he first appears, significantly at the break of day. His language is elevated and poetic, as in his description of dawn - "now Aurora's horse trots azure rings,/ Breathing fair light about the firmament" (I.iii.3-4) - which contrasts with the low comedy of the others' exchanges. He is authoritative - he tells the others to "Blow hence these sapless jests" (I.iii.36) - but gracious to his friends, attentive to his mother and honourably devoted to Mellida, "The trophy of triumphing excellence" (I.iii.126). In all these respects he seems to be an ideal prince. The killings of Andrugio and Feliche, and the allegations of Mellida's infidelity (which he does not believe) shake him to the core, despite his earlier premonition of "dire prodigies" (I.iii.77).²³ When Piero appears at I.iv.1 and announces that Mellida is "unchaste,/ Tainted, impure, black as the soul of hell" (I.iv.3-4) Antonio's initial reaction is violent and forceful: he draws his rapier and "*offers to run at*" Piero, saying (or shouting)

Dog, I will make thee eat thy vomit up,
Which thou hast belked 'gainst taintless Mellida.
(I.iv.5-6)

However, his aggression quickly evaporates when Strotzo announces that Andrugio has died. "What, whom, whither, which shall I first lament?" (I.v.30) he asks, rejecting Alberto's injunctions to be patient and implying that self-government through reason is achievable only by those who are insensible to feeling or who have no cause to be distressed:

Ant. Patience is slave to fools: a chain that's fixed
Only to posts, and senseless log-like dolts.
Alb. Tis reason's glory to command affects.
Ant. Lies thy cold father dead, his glossed eyes
New closed up by thy sad mother's hands?
(I.v.36-40)

²³ See I.iii.36-77.

He thus avers almost from the outset that patience is inadequate and reason is impotent where great passions are stirred. Although he arguably does make a subsequent attempt to subdue his emotions, the overwhelming tendency of his character is to surrender to them.

This anti-rationalism is one of the several characteristics that Antonio has in common with Piero which are identified in a study of the two characters in parallel by P.J. Ayres.²⁴ Ayres's argument that Antonio should be seen as "a parodistic exposure of the amorality of the Kydian revenger" (*ibid.* p.359) ultimately fails to convince, partly because it ignores Marston's intent, professed in the play's Prologue, to write about human realities, and instead reduces the play to a moral critique of a certain type of dramatic model. However, his subsidiary contention that Marston "is working up to some supreme equation" (*ibid.* p.367) between Piero and Antonio still deserves consideration in the context of the present argument.²⁵ Ayres observes a series of similarities in the treatments of both characters, including their common notion of revenge as feeding, the fact that the Ghost tells Antonio to be "peerless in revenge" (III.v.29), while Piero describes himself as being "Unequaled in revenge" (I.i.18), and the stage directions at I.i.1 and at III.v.13 which describe first Piero, then Antonio, as entering with bare, bloody arms and carrying a torch and a dagger. According to Ayres, these resemblances are designed to undercut the validity of Antonio's revenge by showing it to be on a moral par with Piero's vindictiveness,²⁶ but his analysis is limited throughout by its assumption that Marston's purpose was morally didactic: "There is no reason to assume that Marston put aside his accepted role of moral teacher for this play" (*ibid.* p.374). If instead we see Antonio as an attempt at a fictional but representative case study in how people do in fact react to the kinds of extreme distress and dislocation he experiences, his similarity to Piero can be re-interpreted.

I have argued that Piero is driven by the desire to achieve autonomy by imposing his personal chaos on the world outside him. Antonio seems to understand this drive. He

²⁴ 'Marston's *Antonio's Revenge*: the Morality of the Revenging Hero.' *SEL.*, 12 (1972) 359-374.

²⁵ See also John Peter, *Complaint and Satire*, p.224: "Worst of all, his revolting murder of Piero's little son...simply makes one more Piero of him..."

²⁶ For a different reading see T.F. Wharton, 'Old Marston or New Marston: The Antonio plays', *Essays in Criticism* 25, 1975, 357-369: "Although this might be seen as supporting the parody-theory, by implying a damaging affinity between the languages of ranting villain and 'heroic' revenger, the wholesale repetitiveness from which the play suffers suggests rather that Marston's sense of verbal effects is merely local" (p.358).

never wonders why Piero behaves as he does, indeed in one soliloquy he cannily interprets the Duke as one who is driven by the desire to overcome the constraints of his human identity:

Still striving to be more than man, he proves
More than a devil; devilish suspect,
Devilish cruelty, all hell-strained juice
Is poured to his veins, making him drunk
With fuming surquedries, contempt of heaven,
Untamed arrogance, lust, state, pride, murder.

(III.ii.68-73)

The phrases “Untamed arrogance” and “contempt of heaven” recall Feliche’s anatomy of unbridled pride in *Antonio and Mellida*.²⁷ Both Piero and Antonio are in quest of selfhood, and both see their way as a passage of blood: Piero cannot contain “triumphing Vengeance” (I.i.11) while Antonio’s “soul” comes to be “enthroned/ In the triumphant chariot of revenge” (III.v.18-19). There is ostensibly a difference between them in that while Piero seeks to become “more than man”,²⁸ Antonio’s ambition is limited to a real vengeance for the wrongs he has suffered, but the play is ambiguous on this point. There is an indication that Antonio becomes an agent of chaos, as in his repeated use of the word “pell-mell”:

Have at adventure, pell-mell, no reverse -
Come hither, boy.

(III.iii.24-25)

Let’s think a plot; then pell-mell vengeance!

(IV.v.95)

Now pell-mell! Thus the hand of heaven chokes

The throat of murder.

(V.v.76)

The word is first used by Piero, as “Pell mell! Confusion and black murder guides/ The organs of my spirit” (II.v.47-48) but more than this connection, the word itself implies disorder, general confusion. To this extent it can be argued that Antonio becomes identical with Piero, but a good case can be made for the view that his commitment to vengeance mainly has the more limited aim of affirming - as opposed to expanding - his own selfhood, although even this distinction is one of degree only. The best evidence for this is

²⁷ See *A&M*, I.i.48-57.

²⁸ The delivery of this speech by a boy would of course give it a strong ironic flavour.

the simple fact that he, Pandulpho and Maria decide to enter a religious order as soon as Piero is dead - proof of the specificity of their purpose.

Antonio's anti-rational response to his predicament is developed in II.iii, when he enters carrying a book of Seneca's writings. Lucio and Alberto try to calm him, but he first defies them, saying "Forsake me now, you see how light I am" (II.iii.18) and eventually persuades them to leave by indicating his book and saying, "see,/ I am taking physic, here's philosophy" (II.iii.41-42). Gair glosses "light" in this context as meaning "volatile, unstable" and it becomes clear that this element is to dominate Antonio's character. He reads from the book a short passage beginning "Ferte fortiter"²⁹ and instantly rejects its Stoical arguments that pain should be scorned:

Pish! Thy mother was not lately widowed,
Thy dear affied love lately defamed
With blemish of foul lust when thou wrotest thus.
Thou, wrapped in furs, beaking³⁰ thy limbs 'fore fires
Forbid'st the frozen zone to shudder.

(II.iii.49-55)

As in his earlier argument with Alberto, he weighs precept against experience and prefers the latter.³¹ Seneca's position is rather like that of the auditors who are "nuzzled 'twixt the breasts of happiness" (Prol.16): both are protected by their environments from the harder reality perfectly conveyed in the phrase "frozen zone".³² The contrasting images of warm shelter and cold exposure recall the fugitive Antonio and Andrugio of the first play, but by expressing psychological conditions in such simple physical terms, Marston not only emphasises the directness of the relationship between self and context, but also compares psychological /existential needs to biological needs, a comparison that follows the same pattern as the metaphor of vengeance as feeding.³³ It is worth noting, too, that Antonio defines his experience in terms of the class from which he comes. Just as Andrugio said in

²⁹ "...endure with fortitude" (Gair, p.93).

³⁰ "Warming" (Gair, p.93).

³¹ As Nero's tutor and (later) chief minister, Seneca lived a comfortable and compromised life, but was seen by Stoics as having partially redeemed himself by his eventual suicide. See I. Rivers, *Classical and Christian Ideas in English Renaissance Poetry*, London, 1979, p.49.

³² In *The Malcontent*, Pietro says of Seneca: "Out upon him! He writ of temperance and fortitude, yet lived like a voluptuous epicure and died like an effeminate coward" (III.i.27-29).

³³ In *The Dutch Courtesan* Malheureaux' lustful desire for Franceschina is similarly treated: "I would but embrace her, hear her speak, and at the most but kiss her. *Freevill*: O friend, he that could live with the smoke of roast meat might live at a cheap rate" (II.i.111-114).

Antonio and Mellida that “No matter whither, but from whence we fall” (III.i.116) Antonio here goes on to say that

he that was never blest
With height of birth, fair expectation
Of mounted fortunes, knows not what it is
To be the pitied object of the world.

(II.iii.58-61)

By regarding his experience as being of a kind that would be incomprehensible to one who had never had his own past advantages, he rationalises suffering as a matter of translation between levels of social status and material wealth. Suffering only appears as suffering because that which is lost was had in the first place. At this stage, then, Antonio interprets his experience, and therefore his identity, as being phenomena whose essential qualities are derived from the circumstances in which they occur.

The encounter with Mellida recalls the meetings between the two lovers at II.i.290 and at IV.i.187 of *Antonio and Mellida*, in that it is brief, intense and of little consequence for the plot. It is laced with familiar tropes: the nobly resigned Mellida speaks “like her glorious self” (II.iii.85) begs Antonio to kill her and advises him to “welcome heaven’s will” (II.iii.103) all of which suggest an attempt at Stoical fortitude.³⁴ When he leaves her, Antonio says that “Thus heat from blood, thus souls from bodies part” (II.iii.124), using imagery which, like his “crushing anguish” harks back to the thematic opposition between the earthly, material body and the nonmaterial spirit. Thus far, the scene repeats much that is essentially in *Antonio and Mellida*, but it also introduces the new idea that grief creates a pressure in the individual that must be relieved:

Mel. I have surcharged the dungeon with my plaints;
Prison and heart will burst if void of vent.

This conceit is taken up by Antonio a few lines later, as “Throngs of thoughts/ Crowd for their passage” (II.iii.108) again as “My heart is great of thoughts.../ And therefore I must speak” (II.iii.119-120) and shortly afterwards by Maria in terms almost identical to Mellida’s: “I must vent my griefs, or heart will burst” (II.iv.33).³⁵ Once again, we are directed back to the couplet in *The Scourge*,

My pate was great with child, & here tis eas’d,

³⁴ Mellida shows more self-possession than she does in the first play, but this does not prevent her from swooning and dying when it is reported that Antonio has died (IV.iii.96ff.).

³⁵ Similarly, at IV.v.46 Andrugio says that “Man will break out, despite philosophy”.

Vexe all the world, so that thy selfe be pleas'd.

(SV.vi.111-112)

In *The Scourge*, the easing of the pate is the release of pent-up, hostile thoughts in the form of violent satirical poetry; through vexing the world the satirist affirms his own existence, and he calls on others to do the same. In *Antonio and Mellida*, grief and anguish caused identities to fragment and language to break down, but here in *Antonio's Revenge* both self and speech are more resilient. As in *The Scourge*, instead of disintegrating, they threaten to burst out in torrential "plaints" and, although Mellida subsequently dies, the revenges of Antonio and Maria can be seen as means of 'easing' the mental pressure caused by injury, not through words, but through 'vexatious' action.

This translation is prompted by the appearance of the Ghost. Originally a Senecan device, after the success of *The Spanish Tragedy* (c.1588) the ghost became a common feature in Elizabethan revenge plays, as well as appearing in historical tragedies such as Shakespeare's *Richard III* (c.1591) and *Julius Caesar* (c.1599).³⁶ As many writers have pointed out, the use of the Ghost is one of the key resemblances between *Antonio's Revenge* and *Hamlet*.³⁷ In both plays the ghost's function within the plot is to confirm to the son that his father has been poisoned by the villain, and to demand revenge. As characters, both ghosts seem to cut a middle path between the very limited role of nemesis-symbol, the function of the ghosts of Banquo and Caesar and that of Richard's victims in *Richard III*, and the more developed character-ghosts of Don Andrea and Friar Comolet, in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Bussy D'Ambois* respectively. Ghosts are plot- and spectacle-devices, but some of them are nonetheless stamped with an individuality that marks them out both as characters in their own right and as the distinctive creations of their respective authors. It is, for example, typically Shakespearean that the Ghost of Hamlet's father should call on Hamlet to "revenge his foul and most *unnatural* murder" (I.v.25, my italics). The emphasis of the Ghost's story is on the twin violations of nature that the murder of the king and the subsequent marriage of Claudius to Gertrude constitutes: he uses the words

³⁶ J.W. Cunliffe, *The Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy*, New York, 1893, p.44: "the most important inheritance of English tragedy [from Seneca] was the Ghost". Moreover, "Of all the Elizabethan dramatists, Marston owed the most to Seneca" (p.98). Cunliffe has been criticised for defining 'influence' too narrowly - his study mostly focuses on sententiae and verbal echoes which Marston could have picked up from commonplace-books - but his remark still seems true of Marston as a dramatist.

³⁷ The most detailed study of resemblances between the two is 'The Impact on the Revenge Tradition', ch.5 in David Frost's *The School of Shakespeare*.

‘nature’, ‘natural’ and ‘unnatural’ altogether six times in the course of the scene. He also regards Hamlet’s own sense of nature as the faculty whence vengeance should spring:

If thou has nature in thee, bear it not,
Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
A couch for luxury and damned incest.

(I.v.81-83)

The Ghost of Andrugio takes his own loss much more personally than this. He is, in fact, much as we would expect the dead Andrugio to be; there is considerable continuity from his living character in *Antonio and Mellida*. Andrugio’s Ghost is solely concerned with revenging the injury to his ‘blood’; his view of the conflict is informed by the idea that identity (and therefore crime, and so vengeance) is contextual and familial. He describes Piero’s crimes in terms of the offence against his own family, constantly emphasising the collective effect of them and drawing Antonio into the community of victims at every step:

Antonio, revenge!
I was empoisoned by Piero’s hand;
Revenge my blood! - take spirit, gentle boy -
Revenge my blood! Thy Mellida is chaste;
Only to frustrate thy pursuit in love
Is blazed unchaste. Thy mother yields consent
To be his wife and give his blood a son,
That made her husbandless and doth complot
To make her sonless.
...
Thou vigour of my youth, juice of my love,
Seize on revenge...

(III.i.34-42; 44-45)

Andrugio’s ‘blood’ is located in opposition to his enemy’s; the Ghost sees Piero’s advances to Maria not as a mere sexual appropriation, but as an attempt to “give his blood a son” while depriving Andrugio of the continuation of his own line. The Ghost is thus a figurative representation of Andrugio’s “crushed” (I.i.64) self; and just as Piero pursues Andrugio beyond the grave by striking at his family, so the Ghost, the ‘spirit’ of Andrugio, opposes this attack by setting up its own offensive against Piero’s kin, specifically his son. The Ghost’s parting words to Antonio are a quotation from *Thyestes*: “*Scelera non ulcisceris, nisi vincis*”;³⁸ there can be no vengeance, and therefore no rebuilding of the self, without a conquest of the enemy - although physical destruction of his life may not in itself be enough to constitute ‘conquest’. It is worth noting that it is the Ghost that demands a violation of Piero’s greater identity: when Antonio decides to spare

³⁸ “‘You do not avenge crimes unless you conquer’ (trans. Keltie)” (Gair, p.105).

Julio's life, the Ghost appears and eggs him on to the murder (III.iii.30). In this way the war between and through families and contexts, first shown in *Antonio and Mellida* when Andrugio tried to seize Piero's daughter and then Piero sought the head of Antonio, persists. Nobody stands alone in Marston's *Antonio* plays: people are always tied to what is apparently external to them.

The killing of Julio is probably the purest example of this principle at work. After the Ghost's departure, Maria enters and tries to persuade Antonio to go to bed, but he does not hear her. His first words are an adapted eight line Latin quotation, again from *Thyestes*, concluding with the word, "*Ulciscar*".³⁹ While his uncomprehending mother tries to calm him, he stands ranting. Antonio calls for revenge while his mother can only ask, "Wherefore?" (III.ii.29). The answer is significant:

So I may sleep, tombed in an honoured hearse,
So may my bones rest in that sepulchre.
(III.ii.31-32)

The sepulchre in question, of course, is Andrugio's, and in this phrase Antonio is simultaneously wishing for honour, peace of mind, death and unity with his father, the last a symbolic, if partial, reassembling of the family. He knows, however, that he can only reach these through a total commitment of himself to vengeance:

May I be numbed with horror and my veins
Pucker with singeing torture, if my brain
Digest a thought but of dire vengeance;
May I be fettered slave to coward chance,
If blood, heart, brain, plot ought but vengeance!
(III.ii.37-41)

Peace of mind can only be gained by asserting himself against those on whom his vengeance should fall. As with the 'feeding' metaphor, by speaking of revenge as a pre-requisite to peace, Antonio again underlines its necessity for his psychical reconstitution:

I'll bring ye all to bed,
Piero, Maria, Strotzo, Julio,
I'll see you all laid; I'll bring you all to bed,
And then, i' faith, I'll come and couch my head
And sleep in peace.
(III.ii.51-54)⁴⁰

³⁹ "I shall revenge" (Gair, p.106).

⁴⁰ This idea of surrendering to vengeful passion seems to have preoccupied Marston. In *The Dutch Courtesan* Franceschina makes a very similar speech: "Now sall me be revange. Ten tousant devla! Dere sall be no Got in me but passion, no tought but rage, no mercy but blood, no spirit but divla in me. Dere sall noting tought good for me, but dat is mischievous for others" (IV.iii.54-58).

To be complete, his revenge must include reprisals against several victims, including his mother, who has, albeit unknowingly, betrayed the family with its enemy, and Julio, who at this point is still unknown to the audience. The inclusion of the two names in the same breath as those of Piero and Strotzo indicates that the underlying principle of Antonio's revenge is not merely the redress of evil intent, but a wide-fronted assault on the web of identities that has deprived him of a father, threatens to deprive him of a mother and has brought him to the verge of insanity.

In saying this, the phrase 'wide-fronted' is emphasised. Maria should die because her links with Piero make her part of the mechanism by means of which he bears down the Genoese family and exalts his own and, by extension, himself. So must Julio, because as Piero's only son, or at least the only one mentioned in the play,⁴¹ he is the chief bearer of Piero's identity into the future. Marston's emphasis on the personal innocence of Julio serves only to underline the idea of collective being that is the reason for killing him:

O that I knew which joint, which side, which limb
Were father all, and had no mother in't,
That I might rip it vein by vein and carve revenge
In bleeding rases!

(III.iii.20-23)

The child has great affection for Antonio; he specifically declares that "I love you better than my father, 'deed" (III.iii.5) and "since my mother died I loved you the best" (III.iii.9). This unexpected transfer of loyalty pleases Antonio enormously: "Thy father? Gracious, O bounteous heaven!/ I do adore thy justice" (III.iii.6-7); it does, after all, represent a fragmentation of Piero's family. But it is not enough to save the child. Antonio falters when Julio asks him to be merciful "for my sister's sake" (III.iii.26) since, as brothers-in-law they are almost family to each other. "[F]or thy sister's sake I flag revenge", he says, (III.iii.29) but the ghost reappears and urges Antonio to the killing.

Even while this is in progress Antonio continues to justify his action by reference to Julio's parentage. For him, Julio has no existence of his own, but is identified entirely by his paternity:

It is not thee I hate, not thee I kill.
Thy father's blood that flows within thy veins

⁴¹ There is a curiously *ad hoc* quality to the character of Julio, who, although Piero's eldest son and presumably a considerable person at court, is introduced and murdered in the space of one and a half scenes. It is almost as though Marston thought him up on the spur of the moment.

Is it I loathe, is that revenge must suck.

...

He is all Piero, father, all; this blood,
This breast, this heart, Piero all,
Whom thus I mangle.

(III.iii.34-36; 56-58)

The killing of Julio is thus seen as a blow struck at Piero himself, the first step towards vengeance. It generates in Antonio an extreme passion that has been simply dismissed as “madness”,⁴² but warrants closer investigation than this implies.⁴³ During the murder, Antonio’s voice acquires power; like Piero in I.i., he seems to derive linguistic fecundity from killing. The early part of his long speech contains echoes of Piero’s own extravagantly gothic celebration of night’s black agents:

Now lions’ half-clammed entrails roar for food,
Now croaks the toad and night-crows screech aloud,
Fluttering ’bout casements of departing souls...

(Antonio, III.iii.44-46)

No spirit moves upon the breast of earth,
Save howling dogs, nightcrows, and screeching owls,
Save meagre ghosts, Piero and black thoughts.

(Piero, I.i.6-8)

As the speech progresses, his self-esteem waxes: “Here stands Andrugio’s son,/ Worthy his father” (III.iii.52-53); he sprays blood onto Andrugio’s hearse, calling on the Ghost to “suck this fume” (III.iii.63). His language becomes more powerfully rhythmic, and the speech ends on a pair of couplets in which he again iterates the ‘revenge as feeding’ motif and restates his conception of vengeance as an universal need:

thus I heave my blood-dyed hands to heaven,
Even like insatiate hell, still crying, ‘More!
My heart hath thirsting dropsies after gore.’
Sound peace and rest to church, night-ghosts and graves;
Blood cries for blood, and murder murder craves.

(III.iii.67-71)

⁴² Michael Scott, *John Marston’s Plays*, p.18. Scott bases his argument on Hunter’s observation that “this scene is framed around the celebration of the requiem mass” (p.16) but takes the idea further, arguing that Antonio becomes an “actor-priest...totally associated with his supernatural god-like entity, Vengeance” (p.17). Despite his belief that “Antonio having totally lost self-control is as completely possessed by Vengeance as the priest-dancer in pagan ritual” (p.19) he contradictorily insists on seeing him as “act[ing] the role of sacrificial priest” (p.19, my italics).

⁴³ Few critics have seen in the killing of Julio anything more than “a purely gratuitous piece of business brought in merely to make the audience shudder” (F. Bowers, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy*, Gloucester, Mass., 1959, p.123). C. and E. Hallett’s rather psychologically-orientated study of the play in *The Revenger’s Madness* (U. of Nebraska, 1980) is exceptional in that it argues that “The Julio scene contains at least two insights into the madness of revenge which should be noted. First, Marston has attempted to reflect what the revenger would be feeling in Antonio’s situation - intense anger coupled with a sense of frustration arising from the inability to hurt enough. Not reason but anger makes Antonio hesitate to kill Piero. Second, the dramatist has understood how the mind, under the pressure of a raging passion, can find an outlet for its pent-up emotions by striking out at surrogate targets” (p.171).

It may be true that he is in some sense mad during this scene, but it is beside the point to say so. In any case, it would probably be more appropriate to speak of a moment of bloody intoxication, since by the beginning of Act V he has become sufficiently rational and cunning to disguise himself as a fool. What is more important is that Antonio, Marston's quintessential revenger, is shown to be reconstituted by the experience of killing his enemy's child. His language - still an index of personal potency - becomes fluent and sinewy; he has done what he needed to do, both for his own benefit and for that of the memory of his father, and at his reappearance in III.v he sets his action in the context of the earth-air thematic opposition that pervades both the *Antonio* plays:

Look how I smoke in blood, reeking the steam
Of foaming vengeance. O, my soul's enthroned
In the triumphant chariot of revenge.
Methinks I am all air and feel no weight
Of human dirt clog.

(III.v.17-21)

From having "woes more weighty than my soul can bear" (I.v.57), so heavy that they should "crack the joints of earth" (I.v.33), and labouring under "crushing anguish" (II.iii.122) he is transformed into being totally ethereal, raised out of his material body and positioned so that he can reclaim his spiritual identity. His change is the result of his act, the murderous imposition of his will upon another being who, in the play's treatment of individuals and families, is his enemy: to kill is to be, and the need to be, to feel one's own existence, or "force" (*A&M*, I.i.86) is a key guiding principle in the world of the *Antonio* plays.

Antonio's assumption of a fool's disguise in Act IV allows for some discussion of alternative possibilities. It also forms the basis of some sharply satirical glances at courtly mores. In *Antonio and Mellida*, Feliche claimed to be a spiritually exalted observer of the court, but the criticisms of the system that he made from this perspective were, I have argued, ultimately shown to be hypocritical cant.⁴⁴ Now, the censorious role is again disapproved in Antonio's rejection of Alberto's advice that he should

Rather put on some trans-shaped⁴⁵ cavalier,
Some habit of a spitting critic, whose mouth

⁴⁴ See *A&M*, III.ii.42-62 and Chapter III, section 3 of this thesis.

⁴⁵ "transformed...i.e. put on the dress of a courtier who has fallen on hard times" (Gair, p.120). It is implied that this is true of Feliche: "Pray you, in ancient time were not those satin hose?", asks Flavia (See *A&M*, II.i.247-252).

Voids nothing but gentle and unvulgar
Rheum of censure; rather assume -
Ant. Why then I should put on the very flesh
Of solid folly.

(IV.i.3-8)

Here, the terminology of the reply, which associates folly with solidity and flesh, is another utilisation of the earth/air opposition. Denizens of the court, it is implied, have no place in the ethereal dimension even if they do affect to be malcontented critics: they remain trapped in the tangible solidity of the flesh. However, Antonio then says that “there is no essence mortal/ That I can envy, but a plump-cheeked fool” (IV.i.11-12). ‘Fool’ in this context specifically means an all-licensed professional courtly comedian, but Antonio subsequently refers to “a golden ass” - a stupid, rich, overdressed, courtier⁴⁶ - in way that identifies the two together: “Why, friend, a golden ass,/ A baubled fool are sole canonical” (IV.i.18-22). This is important because it indicates that the discussion of fools that follows is not only applicable to the fool-jester, but has reference to all ‘fools’, in the wider sense.

The basis of Marston’s satirical attack on the world of courtly manners and gentle pretensions in *The Scourge of Villanie* was that the characters failed in their duty to create authentic identities for themselves, and instead chose to embrace corrupt mores and trivial enthusiasms, adopting for themselves pre-formed patterns of behaviour. Antonio’s problem, by contrast, is that he experiences an internal *need* to affirm the potency of his identity by taking revenge for the vicarious suffering and humiliation that he has experienced at the hands of Piero. His envy of the fool is therefore only partly ironical. He has too keen a respect for his own individuality to really wish it away, but struggles under the burden imposed on him by the need to affirm it. When Alberto warns him that discovery of Antonio in such a disguise “disgraceth much” (IV.i.29) Antonio’s answer is extremely reminiscent of the poem Marston wrote ‘To Detraction’ as a preface to *The Scourge*:

Pish! Most things that morally adhere to souls
Wholly exist in drunk opinion,
Whose reeling censure, if I value not,
It values nought.

(IV.i.30-33)

My mind disdaines the dungie muddy scum
Of abiection thoughts, and *Enuies* raging hate.

⁴⁶ See *The Miscellaneous Works...of Sir Thomas Overbury*, p.53.

*True iudgement, slight regards Opinion,
A sprightly wit, disdaines Detraction.*
(‘To Detraction’, *Poems*, p.95)

The “fool’s beatitude” (IV.i.37) is that he never perceives such a conflict between himself and the world; happily incapable of appreciating things around him, he is never affected by them and simply goes his own way:

He is not capable of passion;
Wanting the power of distinction,
He bears an unturned sail with every wind;
Blow east, blow west, he stirs his course alike.
(IV.i.38-41)

To the extent that Antonio regrets the position in which he finds himself, his envy of the fool seems sincere. The fool’s senselessness protects him against the effects of emotional dislocation: grief, madness and confusion. “Had heaven been kind”, Antonio says,

Creating me an honest, senseless dolt,
A good, poor fool, I should want sense to feel
The stings of anguish shoot through every vein;
I should not know what ’twere to lose a father;
...
...I could not thus run mad
As one confounded in a maze of mischief
Staggered, stark felled with bruising stroke of chance...
(IV.i.48-52; 54-56)

Most importantly, he would have no need of vengeance:

I should not shoot mine eyes into the earth,
Poring for mischief that might counterpoise
Mischief, murder...
(IV.i.57-59)

This passionate need is the thing that sustains him in his grief and anguish. His soliloquy at IV.iv describes his deep self-pity at having lost “my vital blood” (IV.iv.10), Mellida, and become a “poor, poor orphan” (IV.iv.14). He calls himself “the very ooze,/ The quicksand that devours all misery” (IV.iv.15-16) terms that imply a destabilization of the self as a structure, a loss of solidity, shape and definition. Yet, “For all this”, he says,

I dare live, and I will live,
Only to numb some other’s⁴⁷ cursed blood
With the dead palsy of like misery.
Then death, like to a stifling incubus,
Lie on my bosom.
(IV.iv.18-20)

⁴⁷ Without explanation, both Gair and J&N apostrophise ‘others’ as though it were plural; however, it seems far more likely that the word refers specifically to Piero; even if it does not, there is no reason to assume that a plural is intended.

The purpose of his existence has become simply to achieve its own validation. He carries on living only in order to become the author of numbness and misery, to crush and wound Piero's "blood" - again the resonant word - in a final, overwhelming demonstration of the potent actuality of his own identity. Antonio makes much of his own passionate nature, but we should not see this assertiveness as a mark of eccentricity or individual predisposition. If anything, *Antonio's Revenge* shows the opposite to be the case. Like *Antonio and Mellida*, it insists that whatever a character's intellectual or emotional inclination, certain circumstances are bound to elicit certain responses from him. In the first play, the parallel experiences of Antonio and Andrugio had very similar effects on them, despite the difference in their conscious attitudes to their predicaments. Feliche, too, whose experiences were not of an unduly traumatising nature, nonetheless had extreme difficulty in achieving the stoical detachment he sought.

Antonio's Revenge invites a similar comparison between the avowedly passionate Antonio's reaction to his experiences, and those of the would-be Stoics, Alberto and Pandulpho, to theirs. Pandulpho in particular "may be seen thematically as a continuation and extension of the parts played by Andrugio and Felice in *Antonio and Mellida*".⁴⁸ In I.iii, even before the body of Feliche is revealed, he reacts to Antonio's premonitions of "dire prodigies" (I.iii.77) with a highly coloured, idealistic and rather pompous exhortation to Antonio to rise above his fears:

Tut, my young prince, let not thy fortunes see
Their lord a coward. He that's nobly born
Abhors to fear; base fear's the brand of slaves,
He that observes, pursue, slinks back for fright,
Was never cast in mould of noble spright.

(I.iii.78-82)

Immediately Pandulpho gives away his two important assumptions about the self: first, identity is the "lord" of fortune and not her slave; second, behaviour is inseparable from social class, which is itself originally a matter of birth and scorns to be intimidated by circumstances. His speech recalls such lines of Andrugio's as "Come, soul, resume the valour of thy birth" (*A&M*, III.i.73) and "I'll show myself myself,/ Worthy my blood" (III.i.114).

⁴⁸ Scott, *John Marston's Plays*, p.6. See also Hunter's introduction to the Regents *Antonio's Revenge*, p.xii. Caputi calls Pandulpho and Alberto "orthodox Stoics for whom patience and indifference are the highest responses to misfortune" (*John Marston, Satirist*, p.149).

His reaction to seeing the corpse of his son is to laugh (I.v.26; 58). He tries to justify this by reference to his intellectual perspective:

If he is guiltless, why should tears be spent?
Thrice blessed soul that dieth innocent.
If he is lepered with so foul a guilt,
Why should a sigh be lent, a tear be spilt?
(I.v.81-84)

The logic is built upon a foundation of beliefs that are essentially Stoical, as, indeed, is the application of logic to such an experience in the first place. Such beliefs include the rejection of displays of passionate emotion, which are “apish...player-like” (I.v.80) and the refusal to become engaged in vengeful feuding:

...’tis not true valour’s pride
To swagger, quarrel, swear, stamp, rave and chide,
To stab in fume of blood, to keep loud coil,
To bandy factions in domestic broils...
(I.v.87-90)

Pandulpho continually patronises Antonio and Alberto, addressing them variously as “young prince” (I.iii.78) “kind nephew” (I.v.62) “sweet youth” (I.v.70) “young blood” (I.v.87) and “loved youth” (I.v.93). He is significantly older than they are, but such continual reference by implication to his own greater experience and seniority undercuts Pandulpho’s authority by hinting at his pride. As in *Antonio and Mellida* when Andrugio claimed to sit upon “Jove’s footstool” (IV.i.60) and Feliche to have “been borne upon the spirit’s wings” (III.ii.43) his speech is the idealistic and self-gratulatory pontificating of a man who is not fully engaged with the reality of his situation:

No, my loved youth, he may of valour vaunt
Whom fortune’s loudest thunder cannot daunt,
Whom fretful galls of chance, stern fortune’s siege
Makes not his reason slink, the soul’s fair liege,
Whose well-peised action ever rests upon
Not giddy humours, but discretion.
This heart in valour even Jove out-goes;
Jove is without, but this ’bove sense of woes...
(I.v.93-100)

The conceit that the man who could control his passions was above the gods came to take the place of the emphasis which classical Stoicism originally placed on *apatheia*, or passionlessness; it became a Stoical commonplace.⁴⁹ Here, Pandulpho’s application of it

⁴⁹ See *De Providentia*, vi.6: “ferte fortiter. Hoc est quo deum anteceditis. Ille enim extra patientiam malorum; vos supra” (“...endure with fortitude. In this you may outstrip God; he is exempt from enduring evil while you are superior to it”, Gair p.92), and Epictetus, *Discourses*, II.xiv.13: “the man who is going to please and obey the gods must endeavour as best as he can to resemble them...he must act as an imitator of God”.

to himself draws out its hubristic connotations and so contributes to the scene's showing up of the overinflated naivety of Stoical ambitions. Although Alberto counsels patience (I.v.34) and comfort (I.v.47) and tells Antonio that "'Tis reason's glory to command affects" (I.v.38), he should not be seen as being simply another Pandulpho. He is mystified by his uncle's laughter (I.v.59) and censures him for it (I.v.75); most importantly, he emphasises the loss which Feliche's death represents:

He was the very hope of Italy,
The blooming honour of your drooping age.
(I.v.66-67)

At this stage, Alberto occupies a middle ground between Antonio's passion and Pandulpho's Stoicism. He sees the need for self-control, yet acknowledges that there is cause for grief. His is an entirely practical nature in which passion and reason are well commingled.

The cracks in Pandulpho's armour open a little wider in II.ii. He is again a fount of Stoic platitudes, and they are again undermined in subtle ways. When he enters he is weeping; not, he tells Piero, for the dead Feliche, but for his own sins: "Had I been a good father he had been/ A gracious son (II.ii.2-3). The audience would be entitled to be sceptical about this, as it also would in response to the curious conclusion to his reflections on "the wise man", whose

...breast's of such well-tempered proof
It may be rased, not pierced by savage tooth
Of foaming malice; showers of darts may dark
Heaven's ample brow, but not strike out a spark,
Much less pierce the sun's cheek. Such songs as these
I often dittied till my boy did sleep;
But now I turn plain fool; alas, I weep.
(II.ii.19-25)

By locating the former delivery of this advice in the domestic context of a lullaby, Pandulpho betrays the great abyss that lies between the circumstances to which such precepts are intended to apply (and in which he now finds himself), and those in which he has been accustomed to rehearsing and preaching them. To use the dichotomy of the play's Prologue, Pandulpho's Stoic aphorisms were acquired when he was "nuzzled 'twixt the breasts of happiness" (Prol.16) but the play tests his ability to live up to them now that his breast is "Nailed to the earth with grief" (Prol.22). The great difference between the two positions is perhaps further stressed by Pandulpho's having *sung* these fearsome

philosophical prescriptions *to a child*; a conjunction of such incongruity in music, thought and audience implies a degree of vanity, a failure to grasp fully the serious and terrible nature of what is contemplated in Stoicism. His renewed tears, which he does not this time attempt to pass off as being caused by shame, simply demonstrate that his breast has indeed been pierced by the savage tooth of foaming malice.

He is however, not yet bereft of wits, morals or courage. He refuses to become involved in Piero's plot against Antonio, and he flatly contradicts the Duke's claims to absolute power.⁵⁰ When Piero threatens to make him "wretched" (II.ii.71) he invokes the Stoical conception of a spiritual freedom that transcends the body, insisting that his mind cannot be confined:

Thou canst not coop me up. Hadst thou a jail
With treble walls like antique Babylon,
Pandulpho can get out.

...

Thou canst not slave
Or banish me; I will be at home,
Maugre the beard of greatness.

(II.ii.76-78; 83-85)

Piero challenges this by banishing him from "the town/ Thy native seat of birth" (II.ii.89-90) and from the court, and by seizing "all that thou hast" (II.ii.102). Yet, even this typically Marstonian ploy of seeking to destroy an individual's self-assurance, not only by depriving him of property, but by cutting him off from such a key identifier as the town of his origin and habitation, fails. "His quiet's firmer than I can disease" (II.ii.103) admits Piero, as Pandulpho, contemptuously telling him that "Loose fortune's rags are lost; my own's my own" (II.ii.106) exits. The gesture is a grand one, but for the next two acts the audience is left wondering what has become of him, and specifically whether he is able to live up to the splendid indifference to which he lays claim.

When he re-enters at the begining of IV.v, carrying Feliche's body with Alberto, he at first seems to retain his self-belief. He first addresses Antonio as "Young man" (IV.v.5) and greets him with great ceremony, at the same time laying claim to the most absolute self-possession:

The domineering monarch of the earth,
He who hath naught that fortune's gripe can seize,
He who is all impregnably his own,

⁵⁰ II.ii.52-72.

He whose great heart heaven cannot force with force,
Vouchsafes his love. *Non servio Deo, sed assentio.*⁵¹
Ant. I ha' lost a good wife.

(IV.v.6-11)

If the enormous arrogance implicit in Pandulpho's description of himself does not indicate to the audience that his fall is approaching, the contrast between his style of speaking and Antonio's should. In this scene, long speeches of Stoic theory from Pandulpho are broken by short, blunt statements of fact from Alberto and Antonio, of which "I ha' lost a good wife" is only the first. This series of juxtapositions has the effect of making Pandulpho's speeches seem filled with wordy sophistries that really fail to confront the tangible facts of the situation, which are poignantly and frankly expressed in the simple, choric phrases of Antonio and Alberto: "she was full of hope" (IV.v.20) "I ha' lost a true friend" (IV.v.23) and "You have lost a good son" (IV.v.41). As Pandulpho talks away, failing to make any impact on the other two, the impotence of his ideas in the face of this enormous disaster becomes increasingly evident. It is Antonio and Alberto who seem to be the realists; one is reminded of how the film actor John Wayne used to persuade directors to transfer as many of his lines as possible to other actors, so that they would seem windy and effete while he stood next to them, seeming strong, because silent.

I have argued that in Marston's plays the voice is an index of selfhood. At first sight, the verbal fecundity of Pandulpho, contrasted with the mournful brevity of Antonio and Alberto, might seem to run counter to this argument. If Pandulpho is genuinely 'crushed' by his son's murder, it may be asked - and Marston gives every indication that he is - and the voice reflects the self, why is it that he is nonetheless able to project himself so fluently? The answer, again, lies in Marston's handling of the cultivated disparity between the authentic self and its projected image. In *The Scourge*, the 'humorous' characters of Satire XI used talk as a means of projecting identities that were fictional, in that they had no relation to inner substance; this idea was developed further in *Antonio and Mellida*, particularly through the treatment of Balurdo. Pandulpho, although not a fool, has a similar problem: his being is not equal to his projected image. When he finally loses his composure altogether and renounces Stoicism, he does so in terms that describe his former

⁵¹ "Seneca, *De Providentia*, v.6 (reading 'assentior'): 'I am not slave to God, but give consent to his doings' (Hunter)" (Gair, p.138).

behaviour as a form of play-acting, and his language accordingly takes on a new simplicity and directness:

Man will break out, despite philosophy.
Why, all this while I ha' but played a part,
Like to some boy that acts a tragedy,
Speaks burly words and raves out passion;
But when he thinks upon his infant weakness,
He droops his eye. I spake more than a god,
Yet am less than a man.
I am the miserablest soul that breathes.

(IV.v.46-53)

The inner mind cannot sustain its equilibrium by thought alone. The impact of this is influenced by the fact that the lines are delivered by a boy, but this does not in any way undercut the sentiment, or, *pace* Foakes, turn the speech into parody. On the contrary, the visible fact that the actor is himself “less than a man” tends to add weight to what he is saying; the illusion is broken and the truth of the words resonates beyond the world of the play, into the actuality of the theatre. In every way, the speech represents the triumph of material reality over the indwelling fictions of the mind.

Pandulpho describes his renunciation of Stoicism in terms that imply a silencing of his former voice. He “ha[s] but played a part”, like one who “Speaks burly words and raves out passion”, and “spake more than a god”. This refrain is taken up again 20 lines later, when Antonio asks the Page to sing a dirge. Pandulpho, anticipating the initial stage direction of *The Malcontent*, which calls for “The vilest out-of-tune music” as a symbolic reference to the disorder in the Genoese court, objects that any song will be “vile out of tune” (IV.v.66). Alberto agrees: “the poor boy’s voice is cracked” (IV.v.67) and Pandulpho explains:

Why, coz, why should it not be hoarse and cracked,
When all the strings of nature’s harmony
Are cracked and jar? Why should his voice keep tune,
When there’s no music in the breast of man?

(IV.v.68-73)

The boy’s voice is related not only to his own individual identity, but through it to the whole warped and chaotic world that Venice has become, at least in Pandulpho’s eyes. Singing, the purest vocal expression of human perfectibility and beauty, becomes impossible when nature - in the broadest sense - is in chaos. It should be stressed, though, that Pandulpho’s misanthropy reflects his personal experience. Far from being reduced to

general confusion by Piero's misrule, it later emerges that the citizens grow sick of Piero's "bloody crudities" and seek to "vomit him from off their government" (V.iii.18-20).

Pandulpho joins Antonio in acknowledging a need for vengeance; "*wreath[ing] their arms*" together (IV.v.87 s.d.) they vow to destroy Piero:

Now swear we by this Gordian knot of love,
...
Ere night shall close the lids of yon bright stars
We'll sit as heavy on Piero's heart
As Etna doth on groaning Pelorus.⁵²

(IV.v.88-89; 91-93)

The embrace symbolises the interweaving of selves, a replacement for their lost families; Pandulpho's reference to his dead son as the "Blood of my youth" recalls the Ghost's addressing Antonio as the "vigour of my youth, juice of my love" (III.i.44) a verbal similarity that draws attention to the related nature of their predicaments. Along with their vengeance, again characterised here as a 'crushing' of Piero to earth, the relationship between them will help them to reconstitute themselves.

Of the remaining two revengers, Balurdo and Maria, Balurdo is by far the richer character. He begins the play much as he finished *Antonio and Mellida*, as a foolish courtier who is marked out by his appropriation of others' language. When Mazzagente scorns to "retort the obtuse jest of a fool" (I.iii.21) Balurdo "*draws out his writing tables and writes*" (I.iii.21 s.d.): "'Retort' and 'obtuse'; good words, very good words" (I.iii.22). However, to this familiar trick of characterisation Marston adds a wealth of developments that increase Balurdo's intellectual interest, as well as eventually giving him for the first time the feel of a rounded personality. Balurdo is still in pursuit of courtly credibility, and, while his quest for a sophisticated vocabulary continues apace, he also places great importance on the mock-knighthood he received in *Antonio and Mellida*, which he treats as though it were authentic. When Galeazzo calls him "good Balurdo" (I.iii.28) his reaction is vehement: "O, do me right; Sir Geoffrey Balurdo - Sir, Sir, as long as ye live, Sir" (I.iii.29-30). He yearns for the right to bear arms, as his repeated

⁵² "Pelorus, a cape in Sicily, lies 'below' (fifty miles north of) Etna; the story is found in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, v.346-353, trans. A. Golding (1567): 'Because the Giant *Typhon* gave presumptuously assayes/ To conquer Heaven, the howgie Ile of *Trinacris* [Sicily] is layd/ Upon his limmes, by weight whereof perforce he downe is weyde...his monstrous head doth under *Aetna* lie.'" (Gair, p.142).

references to himself in the third person as “Sir” Geoffrey testify,⁵³ but for now the trappings of mock-chivalry will do:

Marry, forsooth, I’ll carry for my device my grandfather’s great stone-horse flinging up his head and jerking out his left leg; the word, *Wighy Purt*. As I am a true knight, will’t not be most retort and obtuse, ha?
(I.iii.32-35)

Of course, he is not a true knight, his concluding question is absurd, and these two facts simply compound the ridiculousness of his aspiration; the unreality of the knighthood chimes with the unreality of the man. His description of his dream, itself a parody of Antonio’s premonitory nightmare, contributes to this impression. Balurdo is terrified by “the abominable ghost of a misshapen Simile, with two ugly pages, the one called Master Even-as, going before, and the other Mounser Even-so, following after...” (I.iii.64-66). His world is made of words, not of things; even his bugbears are personified verbal abstractions.

In the early stages of the play Piero favours Balurdo and tries to suborn him. His reasons for doing so have already been glanced at: Piero finds Balurdo potentially useful because of the latter’s stupidity, and ambition. His stupidity makes him likely to be obedient without question (II.i.55-60) and his ambition, which is a consequence of his low birth, to be unscrupulous. Piero says of him that “I love a slave raked out of common mud/ Should seem to sit in counsel with my heart” (II.ii.61-62) and Balurdo reciprocates the sentiment. He claims to be a member of Piero’s council (II.i.26-28) although this is never confirmed by the Duke. His ‘counsel’ is in any case likely to be gibberish. As he himself says,

Many men can utter that which no man but themselves can conceive;
but I thank I have a good wit, I have the gift to speak that which
neither any man nor myself understands.
(II.i.34-37)

Balurdo seeks to impress others with his use of language, but lacks the necessary education. He continually uses the words ‘retort’ and ‘obtuse’ in the wrong contexts but nonetheless thinks that “Sir Geoffrey talks like a councillor” (II.i.53). “I was made”, he tells Maria in a later scene, “a knight only for my voice, and a councillor only for my wit”

⁵³ See I.iii.61; I.v.20; II.i.53; III.iv.21; IV.iii.156; V.ii.4ff.

(III.iv.49-50). Again, the absence of both authentic voice and wit is underscored by the spuriousness of his other claims.

On Piero's instructions, Balurdo imprisons Mellida in the dungeon (II.i.44-50) but in IV.iii, when Alberto takes issue with Piero's decision to deprive the banished Pandulpho of land and goods, Balurdo sides against the Duke. The reasons for this unexpected, self-validating and dangerous action are shrouded in Balurdo-speak, and are essentially confined to three short speeches:

God's neaks, he has wrong, that he has; and 'sfut, and I were as he, I
would bear no coals. La, I - I begin to swell - puff!

'Sneaks, and I were worth but three hundred pound a year more, I could
swear richly; nay, but as poor as I am, I will swear the fellow hath
wrong.

Go to, 'tis just, the man hath wrong; go to.

(IV.iii.126-128; 133-135; 145)

The emphatic and repeated statement that "he" - presumably Pandulpho, but possibly Alberto - "has wrong" is uncharacteristic in that it contains a clear moral affirmation; previously, Balurdo has said virtually nothing that was not trivial or absurd. It is also noticeable that during this confrontation he refers to himself in the first person, which implies a coherence of identity, a unity between private and public selves, that his calling himself "Sir Geoffrey Balurdo" tends to negate. In view of this, we should be careful of how we read the line: "I begin to swell - puff!". This may be another allusion to the Stoic vocabulary of being, in which case the swelling would denote the empty, 'opinionated' nature of Balurdo's anger. However, given that on any reasonable scale of judgement, Balurdo is right, and given also that the play's central theme is the personally validating nature of opposition, it would be plausible to read the idea of 'swelling' as a positive reference to the 'growth' of the self that is achieved through conflict, as in "swoll'n with glory of successful arms" (*A&M*, Ind.12).

However we regard Balurdo's show of spirit, he himself regrets it when he is committed to prison for his pains. Piero's rather picturesque threats ("let him feed on slime" - IV.iii.148) break the rebel's nerve, and he immediately promises to recant his treason, but he is dragged off nonetheless. However, as it turns out it is the renunciation, and not the rebelliousness that is a flash in the pan. When we next encounter Balurdo, he

is speaking “*from under the stage*” (V.ii.0 s.d.). Piero’s prison is distinctly a dungeon (II.iii.73-75) which enables him literally to thrust his enemies into the earth, forcing them into a symbolic identification with all that is associated with it. The first thing that Balurdo does in this scene is to climb up out of the dungeon, his second act of defiance against authority, and an affirmation of his courage: “O now, Sir Geoffrey, show thy valour: break prison and be hanged” (V.ii.4-5). In the context of Marston’s analysis of identity, the showing of valour suggests a self in the ascendent, but Balurdo is hardly buoyed up by his experiences. He says that he is “all wind” (V.ii.12) and refers to himself as “The discontented Sir Balurdo’s ghost” (V.ii.7) a term that, like Antonio’s reference to himself as a ghost in *Antonio and Mellida*,⁵⁴ and the appearance of Andrugio’s spirit, seem designed to evoke the idea of the shadow of a self.

The self in this instance is his identity as an aspiring knight and frivolous man of the court, “Sir” Geoffrey. In his cell, Balurdo has experienced the hard authenticity of physical suffering. He complains of two material discomforts in particular: cold, and hunger. His complaining of the cold (“Oh cold, cold, cold, cold, cold” - V.ii.13) recalls Antonio’s “frozen zone” (II.iii.53), the hard, merciless world of those who have become socially dislocated and materially deprived. It invites us to make a comparison between their two conditions, Antonio deprived of father and wife, but still living in the court, and Balurdo, a cold, hungry fugitive but not, apparently, bereaved of a lover or relative. Similarly, hunger “domineerest in my guts” (V.ii.10) but the hunger is more than physical. Balurdo longs for “a fat leg of ewe mutton in stewed broth, or drunken song to feed on” (V.ii.11-12); while Antonio needs to feed, or “suck”, on vengeance, Balurdo wants the nourishment of song. “O poor knight, O poor Sir Geoffrey! Sing...O cold, O sing, O cold, O poor Sir Geoffrey, sing, sing!” (V.ii.13-16) he pleads to himself. The significance of this resonates through the psychological and philosophical patterns of both plays. His ‘knighthood’, symbolic of his integration into the court, was got for singing, and so now, by singing again, he might reconstitute the self that has become a ghost. Singing feeds his

⁵⁴ See *A&M*, II.i.266-283.

might attend his transfer from court to dungeon, but the play's treatment of his suffering concentrates on his physical discomfort. This impresses upon Balurdo the fact that his consciousness is not something that exists apart from the circumstances governing his body: he inhabits the material world, and is himself made of matter: the cold has bitten off his knighthood and he has "a skull, a brain of proof".⁵⁶

Maria, the widowed Duches of Genoa, completes the circle of revengers. When she first appears in I.ii she is the type of a faithful, aristocratic wife and an affectionate mother. Strotzo tells Piero that she is coming to Venice in order to see Andrugio (I.i.92-95) but evidently there is more to her journey than this. In the first play it was reported that Andrugio's family had been banished from Genoa,⁵⁷ and in I.ii she clearly considers herself to be a fugitive. She says that she is "ungraced/ Of the bright fulgor of glossed majesty" (I.ii.7-8) and asks Lucio, "Will heaven at length grant harbour to my head?" (I.ii.14). It is fitting that, as the wife of Andrugio, she bears these misfortunes Stoically. When Lucio advises her that before meeting her husband she should rest privately "till the soil of grief/ Were cleared your cheek" (I.ii.43-44) her reply emphasises the importance of the inner self, setting steady virtue above superficial beauty:

So long as wives are faithful, modest, chaste,
Wise lords affect them. Virtue doth not waste
With each slight flame of crackling vanity.
A modest eye forceth affection,
Whilst outward gayness light looks but entice.

(I.ii.51-55)⁵⁸

However, Maria's steadiness turns out to be less than this might imply. The news of Andrugio's death causes her to swoon, with the words, "Andrugio, my lord, I come, I come" (I.v.16) but by III.i she is lively enough to accept Piero's suit of love. Although she is ignorant of her husband's murder, the dumb show at the end of which Piero "*tears open his breast, embraceth and kisseth her; and so they all go out in state*" (III.i.0 s.d.)

⁵⁶ Marston uses a similar phrase in *The Malcontent*: "Now 'gins close plots to work; the scene grows full,/ And craves his eyes who hath a solid skull" (II.v.175-176). In Malevole's case, "solid skull" clearly implies a person who has matter (as opposed to air) between his ears; this sense of a substantial self is also present in Balurdo's boast.

⁵⁷ See *A&M*, III.i.12-16.

⁵⁸ Gair notes that the sentiments of I.ii.47-56 "appear to be derived from R. Whytton's translation of Seneca's *De Remediis Fortuitarum*: (1547)" and quotes from pp.63, 65 of R.G. Palmer's edition (Chicago, 1965).

may well have seemed to an Elizabethan (to us?) to have followed Andrugio's death with indecent haste.⁵⁹

By III.ii it becomes clear that Maria has little control over her emotions. In a scene that seems designed to project her as a character of hysterical impulses, she ranges through the church, "*her hair about her ears*" (III.ii.0 s.d.) searching for Antonio, whose own sanity she suspects to be threatened by grief. "Let flare my loosed hair" she cries,

Where's my boy? Run! I'll range about the church
Like frantic Bacchanal or Jason's wife
Invoking all the spirits of the graves
To tell me where.

(III.ii.6; 8-11)

Her behaviour falls largely within the pattern of Pandulpho's and Alberto's; controlled self-definition finally yields to passion. The terms she uses to denote family - she calls Antonio "part of" Andrugio (I.iii.106) and "my poor wretched blood" (III.ii.11) place a typically Marstonian emphasis on the physical derivation of child from parent and compound the implication of the self's contextuality inherent in the "frantic" distress she feels on her child's behalf. Within the terms of Marston's analysis of society and identity, her participation in the revenge is the logical outcome of her experience and the means by which she is able to replace her own shattered family with the 'family' of revenge.

3: "Let him die and die, and still be dying": Antonio's Revenge.

"Be gracious, Observation, to our scene", says the ghost in the first speech of Act V, "For now the plot unites his scattered limbs/ Close in contracted bands" (V.i.12-14). But Marston does not only tie up his plot; he does so in a way that also draws together many of the themes that run through both the play and its predecessor. The very expression "scattered limbs" suggests the reintegration of a shattered body and, by extension, a person.⁶⁰ At the heart of the catastrophe is the resolution of a conflict in which one side achieves personal and social reintegration by annihilating the other. However, this is not to ignore the fact that arrayed against Piero are two forces: the revengers themselves, who have already been discussed, and the broader, more vaguely defined Venetian citizenry

⁵⁹ See, for example, *Hamlet*, ed. H. Jenkins, London, 1982, I.ii.180-184

⁶⁰ cf. *The Malcontent*. When Malevole is asked to kill Pietro, who has usurped his dukedom, he calls the killing, "My heart's wish, my soul's desire...O, how my united spirits throng together! So strengthen my resolve!" (III.iii.82-85). In this case, too, the words imply that reintegration and revenge go together.

who do not come into the play until the dumb show at the beginning of Act V, in which Galeazzo stands “*betwixt two Senators, reading a paper to them; at which they all make a semblance of loathing PIERO and knit their fists at him*”.

Piero’s treatment of the public at large is not specified, but the ghost observes that “The states of Venice are...swoll’n in hate/ Against the Duke for his accursed deeds” (V.i.17-18), Pandulpho finds “the citizens grown sick/ With swallowing the bloody crudities/ Of black Piero’s acts” V.iii.17-19) and the First Senator finally says that “We have found/ Beadrolls of mischief, plots of villainy,/ Laid ’twixt the Duke and Strotzo...” (V.vi.16-18). This tends to set the events of the first four acts in the context of a wide background of tyrannical crime committed against the general populace. Clearly, however, there is a relationship between the events in the foreground and those hinted at in the background. Both are results of Piero’s will to absolute domination of his world, and both ultimately show the impossibility of achieving this goal. The war between his own identity and that of the society outside him results, symbolically and actually, in the destruction of himself; as the Ghost, with one eye on the play’s air/earth opposition, puts it, ‘Vindicta’ towers aloft,

That she may fall with a more weighty peise
And crush life’s sap from out Piero’s veins

(V.i.5-6)

I shall return to this point, since it is at the heart of Marston’s handling of revenge-motifs.

It is typical of Marston’s delight in playing games with the audience’s perspective that the world beyond the court only becomes evident in the last act. Suddenly, the court ceases to be a microcosm, a miniature in itself and is revealed as the foreground of a much deeper canvas. Yet, the revengers continue to represent their society - both in the sense of ‘to symbolize it’ and that of ‘to act on its behalf’ - even after this shift. It is inherent in the structure of the play that the crimes which Piero commits against the revengers cover the widest possible range of antagonistic possibilities. Between them Antonio, Pandulpho, Balurdo, Alberto and Maria suffer loss of father, son, husband, wife, reputation and ‘voice’; banishment, theft, imprisonment, starvation and (if you add Andrugio to the list) murder. Piero violates every component of greater identity in his dealings with them, so that together they are figured by his offensive as a single individual, the contextual identity

mutual inter-reliance of its perpetrators. When they finally come to kill Piero, they stab him in turn, saying “This for my father’s blood”; “This for my son”; “This for them all!”; “And this, and this...” (V.v.77-79). Then, “*They run all at Piero with their rapiers.*” (V.v.79 s.d.). Violent, assertive action against Piero and the affirmation it generates is only made possible in the first place for these crushed and threatened characters by their coalition.

The killing of Piero is introduced and then conducted in a way that connects it throughout with the themes of the play, and indeed many of those ideas of Marston’s which have been discussed in this thesis. Prevalent among these are images of swallowing and digestion. The hunger of Balurdo in V.ii and V.iii has already been discussed, and Pandulpho’s description of the citizens as “sick/ With swallowing” Piero’s crudities has been mentioned. Pandulpho pursues this metaphor further, advising that “they fain would cast/ And vomit him from off their government” (V.iii.19-20). Public resentment deepens,

Whilst swart Piero’s lips reek steam of wine,
Swallows lust-thoughts, devours all pleasing hopes
With strong imagination of - what not?
(V.iii.37-39)

The citizens’ antipathy toward Piero is thus characterised as a desire expel him from the state, while Piero is still seen as the man who wants to ‘swallow’ the universe. There are numerous other connexions made between feeding and slaughter, such as Piero’s toast to the dead and Antonio’s threat to “cook your sweetmeats, gallants, with tart sour sauce” (V.v.20-21); the Ghost “taste[s] the joys of heaven” as he watches the assassination (V.v.36). Their effect is to generate an atmosphere of threat, by continually hinting at the appetitive and visceral nature of what is to follow, but they also recall the specific metaphor of war as the devouring of an enemy; Piero’s reference to the ‘banquet’ of the maskers is heavy with irony for this reason (V.v.27).

It is because of the thematic connexion between eating and identity that the presentation to Piero of Julio’s body is more than just a piece of gratuitous Senecan excess.⁶² As with the original killing of Julio in III.iii, this is charged with a significance that relates to the

⁶² Such would seem to be the case in Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* (V.iii), although it could be argued that that play, like Marston’s, ultimately derives not only its spectacularly bloody effects but also an underlying psychological-philosophical rationale for them from Seneca’s *Thyestes*. Gair, however, draws attention to Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, VI, 813-818.

plays' conception of the self as being constructed through the individual's relationship to his family. I have argued that in the *Antonio* plays, the destruction of an enemy involves far more than the simple termination of his life; by including in his definition of vengeance the annihilation of the victim's offspring and reputation, Marston dramatically connects identities to what apparently lies outside individual people. By inviting Piero to eat his son, the revengers are in fact asking him to *eat himself*. When the body is uncovered (V.v.49), Alberto has already told Piero to "Eat thy black liver!" (V.v.41); if we bear in mind how Antonio has said of Julio that he is "all Piero...all; this blood,/ This breast, this heart, Piero all" (III.iii.56-57) we must see this scene as being in part a symbolic attempt to turn Piero's self outside-in, to force him, by the swallowing of his son, to re-ingest the extension of his life into the world and the future. Pandulpho emphasises the importance of Julio's physical descent from Piero;

Thy son? True; and which is most my joy,
I hope no bastard but thy very blood,
Thy true-begotten, most legitimate
And loved issue: there's the comfort on't!

(V.v.61-64)

This implies that the body is not produced solely in order to distress Piero, but to illustrate visually the 'crushing' of his greater identity. His seed, his dynastic future, has been stopped; by trying to get him to eat his child, the revengers seek to go further, to force a material contraction of his self, and thereby to demonstrate the triumph of their personal force over his.

Nonetheless, the infliction of sheer misery on Piero is also an important component of the revenge. Antonio has already sworn to "force him feed on life/ Till he shall loathe it" (III.ii.89-90) and both physical and mental tortures are employed in order to achieve this end. The tearing out of Piero's tongue represents both. Of the physical pain involved in this we need say little; its psychological importance is that it represents a forced and final silencing of Piero's voice. I have argued that Marston closely identifies the voice with the self, and that this link is used in the plays to extended dramatic effect; here, perhaps, most of all. Again, the Shakespearean precedent, in its undisciplined exploitation of horrific

effect, lacks the resonance of Marston's careful use of symbolism.⁶³ Making the man mute is symbolic of confining his identity, a prelude to extinguishing it altogether: "We'll spoil your oratory. Out with his tongue!" (V.v.33). The heaping of insults on Piero, which he is powerless to prevent or counter, is a vivid affirmation of the revengers' triumph: their voices become strong, while his is utterly impotent.⁶⁴ They delight in calling him "black dog" (V.v.39) "Scum of the mud of hell!", "Slime of all filth" (V.v.65) and "Thou most detested toad" (V.v.66).

Pandulpho, following Antonio's desire to make Piero "feed on life till he shall loathe it", says that they should

let him die and die, and still be dying.

They offer to run all at Piero and on a sudden stop.

And yet not die, till he hath died and died
Ten thousand deaths in agony of heart.

(V.v.73-75)

To kill a man's child, to silence his voice, to destroy his reputation,⁶⁵ to humiliate and terrorise him: each of these is to inflict a kind of death on him because it *lessens* him, but only if the self is seen as being contingent upon external factors.⁶⁶ Accordingly, as they "crush life's sap" from Piero (V.i.6) the revengers use language that defines their action as a pressing of him down to earth, collapsing him into senseless matter. At this point, Marston goes beyond the simple opposition of earth to air; this is certainly present, as is

⁶³ See *Titus Andronicus*, II.iv.0 s.d. ff. It should, however, be noted that Marcus calls Lavinia's tongue the "engine of her thoughts" (III.i.82), a phrase that may be said to connote something of Marston's treatment of the voice. *The Spanish Tragedy* offers another precedent, but Hieronimo's biting out of his own tongue (IV.iv.191 s.d.) notoriously does not even make sense in terms of plot, still less of symbolism.

⁶⁴ In *John Marston's Theatrical Drama*, J.S. Colley, insisting on the profound 'theatricality' of Marston's plays, sees the revenge as a reversal of an earlier tableau (II.iii.125 ff.) in which Piero is the 'director': "'actors' are made to take the roles assigned by Piero.... It is the working out of the performance that so enraptures him" (p.85-86). Now, "Piero has lost control of the tragedy, and is forced to 'act' in a play composed by his enemies" (p.87). If this is the case, we may see the revenge as being in part the imposition on Piero of the fictions of his victims, by which his self is reduced to the status of a receptor. Compare this with Piero's argument with Pandulpho as to the rightful use of power at II.ii.56-64 (Chapter IV, section 1, above).

⁶⁵ During the dumb show at V.i.0 s.d. Galeazzo, who sides with the revengers, is seen trying to turn the senators against Piero, while at V.iii.16 Pandulpho says that "I have been labouring general favour firm", which is glossed by Gair as: "I have been strongly endeavouring to rouse up public opinion" (p.147). By the end of the play, Piero's reputation, like his body, is manifestly in shreds. See especially V.vi.14-19.

⁶⁶ This is a recurring idea in Marston's plays. See *Malc.*, I.iii.178-180: "The heart's disquiet is revenge most deep./ He that gets blood the life of flesh but spills,/ But he that breaks heart's peace the dear soul kills"; and *The Dutch Courtesan*, V.iii.59-60: "Ick vill not speak; torture, torture your fill,/ For me am worse than hanged: me ha' lost my will". In two cases, the villains in Marston's plays are allowed to live, the humiliation of contemptuous dismissal being seen as a sufficient revenge in itself. See *Malc.*, V.v.134-141 and *Sophonisba*, V.ii.49: "Hear a most deep revenge; from us take life".

evident from the use of epithets like 'scum' ("of the mud of hell") and 'slime' to describe Piero, and Balurdo's cry of "down to the dungeon with him" (V.v.38), but it is extended to include hell, and heaven. As in Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman*, hell is related to not-being, heaven to achieved substantial identity. The destruction of Piero's identity, therefore, involves not only crushing him into the earth, but sending him down to hell itself, the dwelling-place of other tortured demi-beings:⁶⁷

Thus charge we death at thee. Remember hell;
And let the howling murmurs of black spirits,
The horrid torments of the damned ghosts
Affright thy soul as it descendeth down
Into the entrails of the ugly deep.

(V.v.68-72)

As Alberto stabs Piero, his words take up the same theme: "sink to the heart of hell!" (V.v.79).

By contrast, the revengers repeatedly invoke heaven to describe their own experiences. At first, Antonio restricts himself to the more familiar part of the thematic opposition. When Maria tells him that "all is above all hope", that is, that the assassination is likely to be successful, he answers:

Then will I dance and whirl about the air:
Methinks I am all soul, all heart, all spirit.

(V.v.15-16)

However, after Piero's tongue has been cut out, the Ghost says,

Blest be thy hand. I taste the joys of heaven,
Viewing my son triumph in his black blood.

(V.v.36-37)

When Antonio calls on the others to kill the Duke he too invokes heaven:

Now, pell-mell! Thus the hand of heaven chokes
The throat of murder.

(V.v.76-77)

In terms of the air/earth opposition, the allusions to heaven imply that the revengers are imbued with new spiritual vitality by their violent, assertive action, which is frequently described as a 'triumph'.⁶⁸ This goes hand in hand with the imagery of structured resistivity that is attached to the vengeful mind, as when Antonio speaks of the need to be

⁶⁷ Douglas Cole, (*Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe*, Princeton, N.J., 1962) discusses the medieval philosophical concept "of evil as privation, an absence or a lack of proper being. This idea arises from the proposition that all being is ultimately good...Hence it is only by virtue of a lack of being, a default of being, or a denial of being that evil can be explained" (p.15).

⁶⁸ See V.i.23; V.ii.64; V.v.37 and V.v.42.

“stiff and steady in resolve” (IV.v.86) and pursued again in Act V, when he calls his friends, “Resolved hearts” and tells them to “Steel your thoughts, sharp your resolve, embolden your spirit, grasp your swords...” (V.v.59-61).⁶⁹ To fight is to gain form and strength for the fighter’s identity, because it defines him as a dynamic force that acts against others. To conquer, therefore, is the ultimate affirmation of selfhood.⁷⁰

The desirability of such personal authentication is shown when the Senators burst in and the first of them asks,

Whose hand presents this gory spectacle?
Ant. Mine.
Pan. No! Mine.
Alb. No! Mine.
Ant. I will not lose the glory of the deed,
 Were all the tortures of the deepest hell
 Fixed to my limbs. I pierced the monster’s heart
 With an undaunted hand.
Pan. By yon bright-spangled front of heaven, ’twas I;
 ’Twas I sluiced out his life-blood.
(V.vi.1-6)

This not simple boasting, as the revengers do not expect to get away with the killing and are subsequently “amazed at [the Senators’] benignity” (V.vi.28). That they have gained a new sense of self from their act is strongly implied when Antonio speaks of “the glory of the deed”⁷¹ and claims an “undaunted hand” guided only by his independent will, and Pandulpho swears to his own responsibility by the “bright-spangled front of heaven”, but, as in the case of Piero in the first scene of the play, they feel a compulsion to make public their triumph. It is not enough to win; one must be seen to do so. This is implied by their jockeying for the position of sole murderer, a contest for the authorship of the deed. In this Marston seems to have touched a nerve, for in two of the most famous tragedies of the

⁶⁹ As these quotations suggest, ‘resolve’, ‘resolved’ and ‘resolution’ are words that possessed a peculiar attraction for Marston. From the liberality with which he used them in his later plays, it appears that the steadfastness of mind and purposiveness that they connote is highly expressive of his philosophical purpose. See *Malc.*, I.iv.43; II.v.61-88; III.iii.134-136; V.iii.14-15 and *Sophonisba*, I.ii.178-180; V.iii.95-99.

⁷⁰ Marston’s handling of the heaven-motif in this part of the play loosely recalls Satire XI of *The Scourge*, where the gallant’s soul urges him to “get the substance of celestial blisse” (l.232). Although the means envisaged in *The Scourge* is the exercise of reason, as opposed to the slaughtering of one’s enemies, there is a noteworthy similarity between the ends.

⁷¹ Like ‘resolve’, ‘glory’ is a word that recurs so frequently in Marston’s work that it merits some attention. Marston does not seem to attach any specialised meaning to the expression; rather, he admits its intrinsic vagueness to his text, but still leaves us with the sense that the word contains a concept of great importance. Marston’s uses of both ‘glory’ and ‘resolve’, frequently leave one (me) with the feeling that in his time the vocabulary was not yet in place to anatomise the human self in the way that he wished to. Perhaps it still is not. See especially *Sophonisba*, where ‘glory’ appears more than in any of Marston’s plays: I.i.34; II.i.33; III.i.4; V.ii.38; V.iii.103; V.iii.108; V.iii.113; V.iv.42.

Jacobean age a similar kind of pride in revenge is also expressed. The first is in Tourneur's *Revenger's Tragedy* (1607)⁷² at the end of which Hippolito and Vindice unwittingly convict themselves out of their own mouths because they expect to win praise for killing the Duke; however, they go unrepentantly to the torture-room:

This work is ours, which else might have been slipped;
And if we list we could have nobles clipped
And go for less than beggars, but we hate
To bleed so cowardly.⁷³

The second is Lodovico's last speech in *The White Devil*: (1612):

I do glory yet,
That I can call this act mine own: - for my part,
The rack, the gallows, and the torturing wheel
Shall be but sound sleeps to me, - here's my rest -
I limb'd this night-piece and it was my best.⁷⁴

What these speeches have in common with the passage from *Antonio's Revenge* is the characters' defiant desire to identify themselves with and by their acts. Phrases like "This work is ours" and "this act [is] mine own" carry an important sense here of being constituted by the act, of becoming, in the words of De Flores in *The Changeling*, "the deed's creature" and, next to the affirmation of the self that this contains, death is an irrelevance. This, of course, is consistent with Marston's whole treatment of revenge: identity is comprised of much more than life alone, and in a sense it can survive biological extinction. We might recall Hamlet and Othello, who both, when at the extreme end of life, become preoccupied with their lives as narratives told and heard by others when they themselves are dead. Their gazes are turned outwards, as though in the end the impression one makes on others is much more important than the experience of life itself:

O God, Horatio, what a wounded name,
Things standing thus unknown, shall I leave behind me.
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
To tell my story.⁷⁵

At the end of *Antonio's Revenge*, the revengers are embraced by their society, which holds their "honours...sacred" (V.vi.11) and allows them to retire unmolested to "live enclosed/ ...in some religious order" (V.vi.34-35). This is a departure from what became

⁷² Now frequently attributed to Middleton.

⁷³ V.iii.120-123. *Plays of Cyril Tourneur*, ed. George Parfitt, Cambridge, C.U.P., 1978.

⁷⁴ V.vi.293-297. *The White Devil*, ed. John Russell Brown, Revels Plays, Manchester, 1960.

⁷⁵ *Hamlet*, V.ii.349-354.

the established ending for such plays, a bloodbath in which revengers were themselves killed after achieving their aim, however justified that might seem to be:

on lustful kings
Unlooked-for sudden deaths from God are sent;
But curs'd is he that is their instrument.⁷⁶

Much has been made of Marston's conclusion by his modern critics, who have drawn all kinds of profound inferences, both from the sympathy of the Senators, and from the desire of the revengers to pass out of the world, which would result in suicide but for "the constraint/ Of holy bands" (V.vi.31-32). Their approaches to the subject are frequently hamstrung by their insistence that Marston's mission as a playwright was basically a moral one. Finkelpearl, for example, who argues that the theme of *Antonio's Revenge* is "the moral cost of immersion in the destructive element" (p.161) says that once the revengers have reduced themselves to Piero's moral level through their own killings, "Justice, in the form of a group of Venetian senators, implicates itself in the ruthless murders by judging the murderers 'sacred'", resulting in a "vision...of almost unprecedented darkness" (p.160).⁷⁷ Michael Scott follows a similar line: "In their acts of 'respectability' the senators of *Antonio's Revenge* are as misguided and amoral as Piero, Pandulpho or Antonio" (p.24). Other writers have applied their own theories to the evidence: Samuel Schoenbaum, making a case for Marston's "precarious balance" thought that "the odd conclusion...shows the playwright identifying himself with the forces of violence, enjoying vicariously the piling up of horrors".⁷⁸

However, perhaps the most trenchant observation came from Michael Higgins, almost fifty years ago:

Marston's conception of revenge was probably in accord with popular Renaissance feeling on the subject. He depicts it as a kind of wild

⁷⁶ Beaumont and Fletcher, *The Maid's Tragedy* (c.1611) ed. T.W. Craik, Manchester, 1988, V.iii.294-295.

⁷⁷ G. Geckle, in *John Marston's Drama: Themes, Images, Sources* (Toronto, 1980) argues similarly that "The point is, in fact, excess.... Marston [is] showing the ethical consequences of what happens when men accept and then exceed the *lex talionis*" (p.84). However, to Geckle, as to me, Finkelpearl's conclusions "about Antonio's becoming morally indistinct from Piero seem...demonstrably wrong" (p.91, n.13).

⁷⁸ 'The Precarious Balance of John Marston', *PMLA*, 67 (1952) 1069-78, p.1072. Of course, substantial numbers of critics have averred that Marston was simply unable to control his material: "Because Marston very slenderly knew his literary purposes, it is difficult to assess the sincerity of his literary attitudes and emotions.... If we did not see in Marston's other plays a lack of discipline and a willingness to sacrifice artistic unity for immediate dramatic effect, we might well suspect that the closing scene of *Antonio's Revenge* is a sardonic travesty of Christian sentiment" R. Ornstein, *The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy*, pp.154-155). More bluntly, "Marston's likely mood is one of confusion" (Colley, *John Marston's Theatrical Drama*, p.89).

Although the Christian orthodoxy forbade private revenge, there is no need for us to assume that this extended as a matter of practical belief to the men sitting in Paul's playhouse, who, while probably being willing to condemn Antonio for the killing of Julio, might well think (as we would probably think today) that by and large Piero got his just deserts. As Fredson Bowers observes, "There can be little question that many an Elizabethan gentleman disregarded without a qualm the ethical and religious opinion of his day which condemned private revenge, and felt obliged by the more powerful code of honour to revenge personally any injury offered him".⁸⁰ By extension of this principle, the acceptance of the killing by the Venetian senators does not represent the final extinction of humanity's last hope of redemption, but a perfectly reasonable - and above all *realistic* - reaction by the leaders of a tyrannized people to those who have liberated them from the tyrant; as Galeazzo says, "Thou art another Hercules to us/ In ridding huge pollution from our state" (V.vi.12-13).⁸¹ Remembering always that Marston's declared intention was to write about "what men were, and are,/...what men must be" (Prol. 19-20) we must surely agree that Marston is refusing to impose some implausible demonstration of the omnibeneficence of Providence on to his play,⁸² instead simply referring us to the way things are, without necessarily making any judgement on them.

⁷⁹ M. Higgins, 'The Convention of the Stoic Hero as Handled by Marston', (*MLR* XXXIX (1944) 338-346), p.345.

81 This is a reference to Hercules' fifth labour, in which he cleansed the Augean stables by diverting the rivers Alpheius and Peneius. In 'Proemium in librum tertium' (*Poems*, p.149) Marston wrote, "O that a Satyres hand had force to pluck/ Some fludgate vp, to purge the world from muck:/ Would God I could turne *Alpheus* riuer in/ To purge this *Augean* oxstaule from foule sin" (ll.170-20). The repetition of the idea adds weight to the argument that the linguistic violence of the satirist and the physical violence of the revengers are related. Both involve a pitting of the individual against corruption. In *The Fawn*, the court of Urbin is purged by Duke Hercules in disguise, and J&N find further references to the myth in *Malc.*, II.v.6-8 and IV.v.59 (J&N, pp.231, 263).

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killing of Julio, although he never specifically says that it is.⁸³ But retreating from the world is also the natural solution to their troubles, because it is the only means by which they can be sure of protecting themselves from a repeat of the ravages they have already undergone. There is a curious sense of deflation about the last scene of the play. When the Second Senator calls Antonio a “poor orphan”, the response is one of somebody ‘high’ (in every sense) on vengeance:

Poor?
 Standing triumphant over Belzebub?
 Having large interest for blood, and yet deemed poor?
 (V.VI.20-22)

With a similar emphasis on the benefits of their experiences, the First Senator declares that the revengers are “well-seasoned props/ And will not warp or lean to either part”, because ““Calamity gives man a steady heart”” (V.vi.25-27). Yet, very shortly afterwards Maria asks them to “Leave us to meditate on misery” (V.vi.46), and Antonio, vowing to “weep away my brain” (V.vi.39) for Mellida, delivers his mournful epilogue and concludes the play with a plea for the audience’s tears. None of this is exactly contradictory, but it does indicate a dissipation of the euphoria induced in all of them by the killing of Piero. The redress of the balance of injuries may be necessary for the affirmation of the victim’s selfhood, but that does not mean that it is sufficient. At the end of the play all the signs point to an underlying, permanent and radical disturbance of the revengers’ minds. Their physical exit from society is symbolic of their psychological dislocation from the places which they once occupied in its social frame. Maria’s last speech identifies them by what they have lost, the former selves that died with Andrugio and Feliche:

If any ask
 Where lives the widow of the poisoned lord,
 Where lies the orphan of a murdered father,
 Where lies the father of a butchered son,
 Where lives all woe, conduct him to us three,
 The downcast ruins of calamity.
 (V.vi.48-53)

⁸³ T.B. Tomlinson sees Marston’s refusal to take any discernibly moral approach to the killing of Julio as one of the “many...hallmarks of decadent writing” in *Antonio’s Revenge* that simply make it a bad play: “Even the simplest conventional comment on the murder of the innocent Julio is omitted - or forgotten - and all the revengers...escape the consequences of their actions by taking holy orders...The plot itself answers the demands of an audience who want all the horrors of revenge and none of its more difficult moral implications” (*A Study of Elizabethan and Jacobean Tragedy*, Cambridge, 1964, pp.219-220).

Chapter V: Marston's Later Plays.

This thesis has been designed as an interpretation of four important parts of John Marston's literary output: his satires and the three plays, *What You Will*, *Antonio and Mellida* and *Antonio's Revenge*. These, in my argument, are all, in different but closely related ways, centrally concerned with the implications for people's identities of their confrontations with what exists outside themselves. To this extent, these writings are an identifiable group ('the identity corpus') within what is admittedly an *œuvre* of considerably greater size. With the arguable exception of *Sophonisba*, to which we shall return in a moment, none of Marston's other writings can be said to be centred on this issue to an extent comparable with that to which these are. However, it would be foolish to state flatly that identity as it is discussed in the preceding pages is a subject that simply vanishes, as a theme, from Marston's writing once we step outside the pages of the identity corpus. It does emerge continually in his other works, but never with the same pre-eminence. Marston continues to evince the same patterns of thought, and to employ the same tricks of language and characterisation, but normally in ways that are manifestly derived from his treatment of the subject in the material that has been discussed above. His later plays were on the whole more elegantly plotted, comedies, and concerned with less abstract matters, in which a concern with sexual morality and the nature of true love played an important role, although the satirising of courtly characters continues to form a powerful undercurrent. Where they touch on the matters which are significant for the purposes of this thesis, I have already footnoted the relevant passages at the appropriate points. This usually takes the form of pointing out characters, phrases or incidents that reveal a continuing presence of the conceptions that inform Marston's thinking about identity, but I shall also briefly discuss them here, before examining *Sophonisba* at somewhat more length.

The plays which have been considered in this thesis belong to the first two or three years of Marston's writing career. It is, perhaps, surprising that the two other works of his that date from this period do not reveal preoccupation with the same subject-matter. *Histriomastix*, which Finkelpearl dates at around 1598-99 is a mediaeval-style morality play which glorifies Elizabeth and her era. The play's subject is thus largely historical: characters representing Peace, Plenty, Pride, Envy, War and Poverty move across the stage in a pageant, each symbolising an age in the nation's experience, until Peace finally returns to rule again. There is also an insubstantial drama that shows how the activities of a company of idle players (Incle, Belch, Gutt and Post-hast) and those of some merchants and lawyers (Fourcher, Voucher, Velure and Lyon-rash) are affected by the changes in their society's fortunes. As a morality play, its psychological dimension is minimal, and it shows little evidence of the ideas about identity that inform the satires. It may have been written for the Middle Temple's Christmas revels of 1598-99; the quasi-academic nature of such an audience would help to explain how such an apparently old-fashioned play came to be written at such a time.¹

Jack Drum's Entertainment (1600)² is slightly more relevant for the purposes of this thesis. It is essentially a romantic comedy with satirical overtones, but the satire is of much the same kind and has many of the same targets that it has in the verse satires and in the *Antonio* plays.³ Marston's chief targets are the court, which is the subject of lengthy vituperation in the manner of *The Scourge of Villanie* early in the play (pp.181-182), a foolish girl whose "love is uncertaine as the Almanacke, as unconstant as the fashion" (p.189) and three absurd gallants, Ellis, Puffe and a Frenchman known as Monsiour. Marston's main avenue of satirical attack is, characteristically, through these characters' abuses of language. Ellis talks in bizarre similes: "As a hungry dogge waiteth for a mutton bone, or as a tattered foote-boye for a caste sute, even so will I attend on my mistris" (p.193); Monsiour has an outrageous accent, and the voice-as-character analogy, as well as

¹ These speculations are Finkelpearl's. He devotes a small section of *John Marston of the Middle Temple* (pp.119-124) to *Histriomastix*. The play can be found at p.248 of volume III of H. Harvey Wood's edition of Marston's plays.

² Entered in the Stationers' Register, 8th September 1600. H. Harvey Wood, *Plays*, III, 179-243.

³ The play's treatment of class differences is discussed briefly in Chapter I, section 3, above.

an obvious reference to the unbroken voices of the boy-actors of Paul's, is present in a description of the

profound tounge Maister Puffe, he that hath a perpetuitie of
complement, he whose phrases are as neatly deckt as my Lord Maiors
Hensman, he whose throat squeakes like a treble Organ, and speakes as
small and shrill, as the Irishmen crie Pip, fine Pip.

(p.191)

This kind of writing adds little to what Marston has to say about courtiers in his satires and in the *Antonio* plays. Through his treatment of the gallants and their relationships with women he sends up courtly love and the “mouldy fopperies of stale poetry” (p.179) that he ridicules in the play's Introduction, but the point he is making is largely that of ‘Inamorato Curio’ (Satire VIII of *The Scourge*) and the court-scenes of *Antonio and Mellida*.

In 1602 and 1603 Marston probably produced nothing for the stage, but on 5th July 1604 a new drama, *The Malcontent*, was entered in the Stationers' Register. *The Malcontent* is widely regarded as Marston's best play, and is among those which have received the most critical attention. The play is not covered in detail in this thesis because its main subject, the rottenness and vanity of court life, is explored thoroughly in the satires. Moreover, although it shows its protagonist, the virtuous Duke Malevole, engaged in a one-man war against the decadence that surrounds him, it rarely raises questions of identity, as such: Malevole's dukedom has been usurped by Pietro, but the question of how this has affected his sense of self is never raised in the way that it is in *Antonio and Mellida*. Although disguised, he remains within the court and never doubts his own opposition to its culture: “And to what dost thou addict thy time to now more than to those antique painted drabs that are still affected of young courtiers, Flattery, Pride, and Venery?” (I.iii.28-32), he asks one gallant. The play is thus not governed by a desire to explore identity *per se*, but it does contain many of the themes and tropes that have been examined in this thesis. Again, these have been cited or quoted where it seemed appropriate.

The Dutch Courtesan was registered on 26th June, 1605. The main plot of the play revolves around Malheureux, a young man who initially insists to his friend Freevill that lust is “the strongest argument that speaks/ Against the soul's eternity.../ The wise man's folly and the fool's wisdom” (I.i.107-109). Malheureux has a horror of fornication in

general and of prostitution in particular; for him “The most odious spectacle the earth can present is an immodest, vulgar woman” (I.i.185-187), but when he meets Franceschina, Freevill’s Dutch courtesan of the title, he develops an obsessive, lustful passion for her which almost causes him to murder Freevill. Thematically, the play is related to *Antonio and Mellida*, in that it depicts a challenge to an individual’s belief that he can constitute himself much as he likes, irrespective of the situation in which he finds himself. Malheureux is gripped by lust, whereas Andrugio was stricken with grief, but the consequences for his sense of self is very similar:

I am no whit myself. *Video meliora proboque*,⁴
 But raging lust my fate all strong doth move:
 The gods themselves cannot be wise and love.
(II.ii.125-127)

The Dutch Courtesan applies the ‘environmental’ theory of identity to the sphere of morality, and finds that moral absolutes of the kind entertained by Malheureux are not only unsustainable, but harmful into the bargain. The play’s implication is that Freevill, who is significantly less burdened with principles, is better able to manage his own passions because he is more familiar with them and therefore has a depth of human understanding that Malheureux lacks because he deals only in axioms. Yet, all this really belongs outside the ambit of this thesis, which has avoided, where possible, becoming enmeshed in debates about Marston’s moral perspectives.

On 12th March 1606 *Parasitaster, or, The Fawn* was entered in the Stationers’ Register.⁵ As its name implies, this play is yet another Marstonian attack on the culture of the court. Hercules, the widowed Duke of Ferrara and an old man, sends his son Tiberio to the court of Gonzago, the Duke of Urbin. Tiberio’s mission is to negotiate on his father’s behalf for the hand in marriage of Dulcimet, Gonzago’s young daughter, but love flowers between the two young people, who eventually manage to marry through a series of clever plots. However, much of the play’s interest is provided by the activities of Hercules himself, who follows his son to the court of Urbin in disguise in order to observe him and through adroit flattery (‘fawning’) gains the confidence of the courtiers there, as well as that of the Duke himself. The courtiers are a typical selection of fools and

⁴ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, VII.20: “I see and approve the better course” (J&N, p.326).

⁵ *Parasitaster, or, The Fawn*, ed. D. Blostein, Manchester University Press, 1978.

weaklings, including “a causelessly jealous lord” (Don Zuccone), “a vicious braggart” (Herod Frappatore) “a common [*i.e.* indiscriminating] lover” (Nymphadoro) and, a distinctly Marstonian device, “a silent lord” called Granuffo, whose taciturnity is taken by the foolish Gonzago, who calls him “a right wise good lord, a man of excellent discourse, and never speaks” (III.i.295-296) as a sign of great profundity, but which is actually the outward manifestation of inner vacuity. Once again, there is little in this play’s satirical detail, or in its larger outline, which concerns the inappropriateness of marriage between old men and young women, that bears significantly on the issue of identity and context.

Marston’s last play,⁶ *The Wonder of Women, or, The Tragedie of Sophonisba* (hereafter, *Sophonisba*), was registered on 17th March 1606. Said by T.S. Eliot to be Marston’s best play,⁷ this tragedy of state is greatly concerned with power and lust, but its treatment of these two subjects and the relationship between them carries it well into the thematic territory of the *Antonio* plays, although, one might argue, with rather different consequences. For this reason, and partly, perhaps, because it was Marston’s last play (although it seems unlikely that when he wrote it he knew it would be his last) *Sophonisba* merits some discussion here. It is a play that has received little attention outside the mostly uninspired, play-by-play book-length surveys of its author’s work. *Sophonisba* is a reconsideration of the position that Marston had adopted towards the self’s relationship to its context in his early work. It is a dramatic celebration of the heroism of Sophonisba, ‘the wonder of women’, whose triumph was that, unlike Albano in *What You Will*, and the Stoics (or pseudo-Stoics) of the *Antonio* plays, she retained her inner strength and balance in the face of great adversity. In the play’s Prologue Marston stresses that constancy of mind is his theme:

...and now ye worthier minds,
To whom we shall present a female glory
(The wonder of a constancy so fixed,

⁶ *The Insatiate Countess*, which Marston seems to have begun, but left as a fragment to be finished by another poet, William Barksted, was printed under Marston’s name in 1613. I do not find, as Harvey Wood and Finkelpearl do, that “Marston’s hand is evident throughout the play” (Finkelpearl, p.255) but certainly agree with Finkelpearl that “There is no point in attempting to assign lines to each author on the basis of subjective feelings about the style, because nothing is particularly noteworthy or valuable in the play as it stands” (Finkelpearl, p.255). The play’s most striking feature is that its two main plots have absolutely no connection with each other.

⁷ T.S. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, London, 1932, p.230. Eliot, generally ill-disposed towards Marston, called it “the play which [he] wrote most nearly to please himself” (p.230) and claimed to detect in it an “underlying serenity” (p.232).

That fate itself might well grow envious),
Be pleased to sit...

...

...what of this you hear,
The author lowly hopes, but must not fear;
For just worth never rests on popular frown,
To have done well is fair deeds' only crown.
Nec se quaesiverit extra.

(Prol.19-23; 25-29)

The quotation from Persius at the end of the Prologue is telling: "Nor will he have looked [for praise] to anyone outside himself".⁸ The translation here, from Jackson and Neill's edition of the play (p.405), is perfectly reasonable, but one could just as well omit the phrase in square brackets and change 'himself' to 'herself'. The ambiguous applicability of Persius' phrase implies a comparison between the poet's independent self-valuation and Sophonisba's heroic 'constancy' that demonstrates the play's relevance, its 'moral' to the Jacobean audience. This idealisation of the substantive self is highly reminiscent of Marston's satires, especially the verses 'To Detraction', but the introduction of a fictional example of the principle at work in the world is wholly alien to their spirit. There is nothing new in Marston's own claim to psychological self-sufficiency; it is his promise to present a dramatic model illustrating this principle that is novel and deserves to be examined.

At the play's beginning, Syphax, a Libyan king, has been rejected in his suit for the hand of Sophonisba, the daughter of a Carthaginian general named Asbrubal, who has decided to marry another Libyan king, Massinissa, instead of him. His anguish, however, does not arise from unrequited love, but from the humiliation of rejection. Syphax is essentially ruled by concern for the way others see him:

Reputation,
Thou awe of fools and great men, thou that chok'st
Freest addictions and mak'st mortals sweat
Blood and cold drops in fear to lose or hope
To gain thy never-certain seldom-worthy gracings,
Reputation,

Were't not for thee Syphax could bear this scorn...

(I.i.7-13)

With tropes familiar from the *Antonio* plays, Syphax complains of his "low neglected head" (I.i.5), is "in depth of hell" (I.i.22) and looks to the Roman general Scipio, "Man of

⁸ Adapted from Persius, *Satires*, I.7. Persius' original reads: "nec te qaesiveris extra".

large fame, great and abounding glory” (I.i.34) who is advancing on Carthage, to provide him with the opportunity of revenge. Formerly, Syphax, like Massinissa, gave his allegiance to Carthage; he now decides to turn his coat. His treachery, and therefore his inconstancy, is a direct result of his tendency to place great importance on the opinions of others. Yet, his sensibility is essentially an aristocratic one. His concern for the image he presents results from pride, not from timidity;⁹ in many respects he resembles Piero:

I am disgraced in and by that which hath
No reason: love, and woman; my revenge
Shall therefore bear no argument of right;
Passion is reason when it speaks from might.
(I.ii.73-76)

Kings' glory is their wrong.
He that may only do just act's a slave.
(V.ii.38-39)

Much of Piero is in these lines alone: the failure in courtship; the desire for ‘revenge’; the embracing of irrationality; the claim to transcend morality itself. Like Piero, Syphax is in the paradoxical position of representing the principle of chaotic self-interest, yet being necessarily nailed to the society that he despises.

Sophonisba first appears in I.ii. It is the night of her wedding to Massinissa, and she is being made ready for her husband by her maid, Zanthia. There develops a revealing debate between them, in which Sophonisba protests against the ritual and formality that surrounds the consummation of a marriage, and particularly against the pretended reticence that form requires from the bride:

I wonder, Zanthia, why the custom is
To use such ceremony, such strict shape,
About us women. Forsooth the bride must steal
Before her lord to bed; and then delays,
Long expectations, all against known wishes.
I hate these figures in locution,
These about-phrases forced by ceremony.
We must still seem to fly what we most seek,
And hide ourselves from that we fain would find us.
Let those that think and speak and do just acts,
Know form can give no virtue to their acts,
Nor detract vice.
(I.ii.6-16)

Unlike Syphax, Sophonisba refuses to attach significance to public opinion; her speech becomes an attack on the process by which people’s behaviour is dictated by custom,

⁹ “One of the most characteristic features of the age was its hyper-sensitive insistence upon the overriding importance of reputation” (Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, p.25).

instead of by original impulses. Accordingly, she emphasises the importance of the individual's inner authenticity, which, she implies, should be publicly manifested in honest speech and direct action. Slightly later, she says, "What I dare think I boldly speak:/ After my word my well-bold action rusheth" (I.ii.47-48), a principle that, especially in Marston's work, identifies her as being both independent and morally strong.

In response to Sophonisba, Zanthia argues that the moral substance of women is an illusion sustained by society's conventional flattery of them, without which they would appear utterly contemptible. Only men have the physical and psychological constitution that enables them to "naked walk", that is, to travel through life without the need for flattery to disguise their essential selves:

'Las, fair princess, those that are strongly formed
And truly shaped, may naked walk, but we,
We things called women, only made for show
And pleasure, created to bear children
And play at shuttlecock, we imperfect mixtures,
Without respective ceremony used,
And ever compliment, alas, what are we?
Take from us formal custom and the courtesies
Which civil fashion hath still used to us,
We fall to all contempt. O women, how much,
How much you are beholding to ceremony!

(I.ii.18-28)

The play subsequently shows the testing of Sophonisba's position by a series of events that place great pressure on her to ignore the dictates of her own will and conscience, and to allow herself to be governed by other people.¹⁰ In doing so it demonstrates the falsity of Zanthia's argument, which is based on a traditional conception of gender-roles; *Sophonisba* challenges the idea that human beings are bound to conform to these, instead depicting men who are cowardly, unprincipled and weak, and a woman (Sophonisba) who succeeds in transcending the political mire, simply by deciding that she will be true to her self. The most important principle that emerges from this is that a person can retain a clear idea of his or her own individual meaning, even when the social structure that normally underpins it is changed or removed. However, this apparent recantation of Marston's earlier sceptical attitude towards Stoicism is not without qualifications. The belief in the possibility of *absolute* self-determination that Stoicism espouses is still treated with

¹⁰ "The play rests on a number of "tests" that Sophonisba is forced to undergo" (Colley, *John Marston's Theatrical Drama*, p.169).

suspicion by Marston, who also makes some points about the moral dangers that can arise from a philosophy that, in emphasising people's duties toward themselves, tends to downplay their duties towards others.

The ceremonials of Sophonisba's wedding night are interrupted by the entry of Carthalon, who, in his role of nuntius, describes how he has just escaped from a battle between the invading Roman army and the Carthaginians, in the course of which Syphax joined with Scipio and thereby caused a Carthaginian rout. If Carthage is to be saved, Massinissa and his troops must rush to the city's defence. Sophonisba urges him to go at once, and he does so, but the next scene (II.i) shows the Carthaginian senate agreeing that, even with Massinissa's help, Carthage cannot withstand the forces arrayed against it. It therefore decides on the Machiavellian ploy of arranging for Massinissa to be poisoned, and then giving Sophonisba to Syphax in an attempt to win him back. The senators are presented as being happy to betray Massinissa; Bytheas justifies the action by reference to the fact that all approve of it except Gelloso, whom he browbeats for holding "such preposterous zeal as stand against/ The full decree of senate" (II.i.3-4). Carthalon argues that "prosperous success gives blackest actions glory;/ The means are unremembered in most story" (II.i.33-34). Both of these rationalisations take the form of removing responsibility for moral discrimination from the self and vesting it instead in such extra-individual constructions as the momentum of the collective and the gaze of history. The un-cooperative Gelloso alone shows respect for his self:

I am bound to lose
My life, but not my honour for my country.
Our vow, our faith, our oath, why they're ourselves,
And he that's faithless to his proper self
May be excused if he break faith with princes.
(II.i.83-85)

When the plan is put to Sophonisba, she initially shows disgust for the senate's treachery, but subsequently agrees to submit to the will of Carthage. She sees the evils ahead as trials, which will act as proofs of her strength and virtue.

On the battlefield, Massinissa fights valiantly, but seems about to lose. Asdrubal enters and tricks him into letting Gisco, the poisoner, dress his wounds, but Gelloso appears in disguise and warns Massinissa of the plot, which is frustrated. Massinissa then counter-attacks against Syphax's army, defeats it and makes a pact with Scipio, in which he swears

to obey Scipio's commands; the leaders of Carthage fly amid mutual recrimination, and the armies of the two new allies set off in pursuit of Syphax himself, who, has taken possession of Sophonisba. Syphax tells Sophonisba of his intention to rape her; she escapes, but he recaptures her, whereupon she declares that he may force her body, but never her mind. Impressed by this, Syphax engages a witch, Erictho, to place a love-charm on Sophonisba for him, but Erictho disguises herself and tricks Syphax into making love to her under the impression that she is Sophonisba. At this point Scipio and Massinissa attack the army of Syphax; the latter is defeated (though not killed) in single combat by Massinissa, and Sophonisba is rescued. However, the story is not over: Scipio orders Massinissa to surrender Sophonisba to him as a captive enemy of Rome, but Massinissa has sworn to keep his wife free from Roman bondage. There is only one way for him to reconcile this promise with his vow to obey Scipio, and that is through the death of Sophonisba, whom he helps to take poison; her body is then delivered to Scipio, who is moved by Massinissa's honourable adherence to his word to grant him the friendship of Rome for as long as he lives.

The important question that arises from all this is: does *Sophonisba* constitute a complete volte-face in Marston's treatment of Stoicism, and therefore of identity? The general critical response to this question has so far been, 'yes'; the prevailing view is that (in Caputi's words) "the action of the play is designed to define and heighten progressively the impressiveness of Sophonisba's and Massinissa's Stoic virtue...a straightforward illustration of Stoic virtue is unmistakable".¹¹ Finkelpearl argues that "Marston's one authentic Stoic was a virgin martyr";¹² Peter Ure, that in *Sophonisba* "Marston does produce a much more convincing study in neo-Stoicism than either Pandulpho or Andrugio had been".¹³ A different view is put forward by W. Kemp in the introduction to his edition of the play. Kemp argues that

In no way...does *Sophonisba* represent a revision of the attitudes Marston dramatises in his earlier plays. There, he treats the question of

¹¹ John Marston, *Satirist*, pp.242-243.

¹² John Marston of the *Middle Temple*, p.248.

¹³ P. Ure, 'John Marston's *Sophonisba*: A Reconsideration'. *Durham University Journal*, n.s. 10 (1949) 81-90; p.87.

Stoic indifference realistically, whereas here only extraordinary - and therefore in a sense unreal - persons can find indifference adequate...¹⁴

In other words, for Kemp the very perfection of Sophonisba underlines Marston's message that Stoicism is not for mere mortals - the view that is also put forward in the *Antonio* plays.

There is no doubt that in parts there is a strong Stoical flavour to the heroism of *Sophonisba*. Massinissa believes that

To doubt of what shall be is wretchedness.
Desire, fear, and hope receive no bond,
By whom we in ourselves are never, but beyond.
(I.ii.83-85)¹⁵

This desire to establish self-containment by emotional disinvestment from the future is unquestionably Stoical, as is another of Massinissa's sententiae, "A just man's country Jove makes everywhere" (III.ii.11). The same spirit lies behind such lines of Sophonisba's as "My fortunes may be wretched, but not I" (I.ii.226) and (to Syphax) "Thou mayst enforce my body, but not me" (III.i.15).¹⁶ Also highly suggestive of Stoicism are Marston's emphasis on Sophonisba's "constancy" in the Prologue (quoted above) and the speech in which Massinissa says that Sophonisba is "above the gods" (III.ii.49-62).¹⁷ There can be no doubt that passages such as these are quite widely spread through the play, or that they help to give it a generally Stoical 'atmosphere'. But if we look beyond these scattered titbits and try to understand the whole play, it becomes evident that Stoicism cannot be used as the basis of a comprehensive interpretation.

In the first place, it is apparent that, far from presenting characters who, in Kemp's words are "extraordinary" and "unreal", Marston was making an effort to present his audience with 'realistic' models. Certainly, Sophonisba and Massinissa belong to an optimistic, rather than a pessimistic view of what real people might be like, but that does not make them purely idealised types. When we first see Sophonisba, she is frankly acknowledging her sexual desire for her new husband, an urge which she later calls a "low

¹⁴ W. Kemp, *John Marston's The Wonder of Women*, New York, 1979, p.22.

¹⁵ J&N argue (p.414) that this is a paraphrase of Montaigne (I.iii.25 in the Dent edition, London, 1965) but its origin is essentially Stoical.

¹⁶ The precise relationship of these phrases to Stoicism is discussed on pp.181-187 of Monsarrat's *Light From the Porch*.

¹⁷ For discussion of the central tenets of Stoicism, see Chapter I, section 1 of this thesis.

appetite” when he disappears for war. Yet, throughout her ordeal with Syphax she is sustained by her love for Massinissa, whose name she repeatedly invokes:

Zanthia, victorious Massinissa lives,
My Massinissa lives. O steady powers,
Keep him as safe as heaven keeps the earth...
(III.i.89-91)

There’s Massinissa:¹⁸ my true Zanthia,
Shall’s venture nobly to escape, and touch
My lord’s just arms?
(IV.i.7-9)

Bow but to seize this arm, and by myself,
Or more, by Massinissa, this good steel
Shall set my soul on wing.
(IV.i.53-55)

Syphax,
I speak all frightless, know I live or die
To Massinissa, nor the force of fate
Shall make me leave his love...
(IV.i.64-67)

In the heat of battle, Massinissa does much the same. He often invokes the name of his wife, derives hope and inspiration from doing so and, once he knows she has been turned over to Syphax, is possessed by the desire to reclaim her. As in his earlier plays, Marston invites us to consider the name as a token of the self:

To us before great Syphax did [Carthage] yield,
Fair, noble, modest, and ’bove all my own,
My Sophonisba. O Jugurth, my strength doubles;
I know not how to turn a coward...
(II.ii.10-13)

Carthage, fie,
It cannot be ungrate, faithless through fear,
It cannot, Jugurth: Sophonisba’s there.
(II.ii.22-24)

Why wast thou born at Carthage? O my fate!
Divinest Sophonisba! I am full
Of much complaint...
(II.ii.83-85)

...Jugurth, if I fall
Through this day’s malice or our fathers’ sins,
If it in thy sword lie, break up my breast,
And save my heart that never fell nor’s due
To aught but Jove and Sophonisba. Sound,
Stern heart’ners unto wounds and blood, sound loud,
For we have named Sophonisba.
(V.ii.23-29)

Sound high, sound high, we strike
For Sophonisba!
(V.ii.31-32)

¹⁸ *i.e.* in Utica, ten leagues distant.

As soon as he is able to ascertain from Syphax that Sophonisba is alive and “unstained” (V.ii.45), he sets off to rescue her:

March we to Cirta straight,
My Sophonisba with swift haste to win,
In honour and in love all mean is sin.

(V.ii.32-34)

When they are re-united, Sophonisba’s reaction is one of uncontrolled joy. As is the experience of characters in the *Antonio* plays, her emotions overwhelm her and her language breaks down:

MASSINISSA. This night be love’s high feast.
SOPHONISBA. O’erwhelm me not with sweets;
let me not drink
Till my breast burst, O Jove, thy nectar, think -
MASSINISSA. She is o’ercome with joy.
SOPHONISBA. Help - help to bear
Some happiness, ye powers! I have joy to spare,
Enough to make a god. O Massinissa!
MASSINISSA. Peace!
A silent thinking makes full joys increase.

(V.iii.32-37)

Yet, when it becomes apparent that Sophonisba will have to commit suicide in order to avoid being taken as a prisoner to Rome, she denies her former emotion, just as at the beginning of the play she acknowledged and then renounced her lust for Massinissa:

How near was I unto the curse of man, joy!
How like I was yet once to have been glad!
He that ne’er laughed may with a constant face
Contemn Jove’s frown: happiness makes us base.

(V.iii.89-92)

Emotion of any kind is a liability and an embarrassment for a Stoic, and both Sophonisba and Massinissa try to contain and to repudiate it, but it will not be denied. A good instance of this is the encounter between Massinissa and Scipio after the second battle. Scipio reminds Massinissa of the deep treachery of Carthage and asks,

Where is thy passion? They have shared thy crown,
The proper right of birth, contrived thy death.
Where is thy passion? Given thy beauteous spouse
To thy most hated rival. Statue, not man!
And last, thy friend, Gelloso, man worth gods,
With tortures have they rent to death.
MASSINISSA. O Gelloso,
For thee full eyes.
SCIPIO. No passion for the rest?
MASSINISSA. O Scipio,
My grief for him may be expressed by tears,
But for the rest, silence, and secret anguish
Shall waste, shall waste. Scipio, he that can weep
Grieves not, like me, private deep inward drops
Of blood. My heart, for gods’ rights give me leave

Scipio is shocked by Massinissa's refusal to show emotion; it is significant that he compares him to a statue, and not to a god, which would be appropriate if he were impressed by such impassivity. But it all proves to be a pretence; Massinissa eventually weeps, just as Pandulpho wept before. Neither he, nor his wife, are true Stoics; throughout their separation, they sustain themselves, not through indifference to circumstances or by a god-like transcendence of earthly matters, or by an acceptance of all eventualities as being the shape of divine Providence, but through simple love and loyalty to one another. To call this Stoical is to misunderstand Stoicism. Each of them has great hopes of seeing the other again, and when they do so their joy is immense, but Massinissa was much truer to the Stoical spirit when he said that "To doubt of what shall be is wretchedness..." (I.ii.83). That they implicitly claim to be Stoics does not make them so; in practice their emotions are governed by factors (people, events) which according to Stoical philosophy should lie outside the individual and have no influence over his happiness. Of all the critics, Monsarrat has probably come closest to the truth in adjudging Sophonisba to be "at once deeply in love and a model of stoical dignity in adversity";²⁰ she certainly is 'stoical' in the loose sense in which the word is now used, meaning 'tough', or 'self-possessed', but she is not a Stoic. When she dies, her last words are:

I die, of female faith the long-lived story;
Secure from bondage and all servile harms,
But more - most happy in my husband's arms.

(V.iii.104-106)

Her self-destruction is an archetypally Stoical act, but her last line of all is an declaration of the happiness that her husband has brought her. It is thus an affirmation of the importance and value of a *social relationship*, not of wisdom, reason or of the need for people to submit to the will of the gods, which are the sort of values that one would expect a committed Stoic to have.

¹⁹ See also Sophonisba's speech at IV.i.20-27, in which she seems on the point of losing her self-control, but recollects herself before doing so.

²⁰ *Light From the Porch*, p.186.

There is no suggestion in Marston's text that Sophonisba and Massinissa are weakened by their inability to live according to the spirit of Stoicism. All critics (including this one) are agreed that both of them are meant to be seen as fundamentally virtuous and admirable.²¹ This is unsurprising because it is Stoicism itself that is being scrutinised in this play, not people's ability to meet its exacting requirements. The most extended Stoical speech in the entire play comes, not from one of the supposedly Stoical characters, but from the Machiavellian villain, Asdrubal, Sophonisba's father:

What deed so red but hath been done by kings?
 Iphigenia!²² He that's a man for men,
 Ambitious as a god, must like a god
 Live clear from passions; his full aimed-at end,
 Immense to others, sole self to comprehend,
 Round in's own globe, not to be clasped, but holds
 Within him all; his heart being of more folds
 Than shield of Telamon, not to be pierced, though struck.
 The god of wise men is themselves, not luck.

(II.iii.6-14)

Sophonisba's maid, Zanthia, who is bribed by Syphax to betray her mistress, makes a similar speech when she thinks that Sophonisba is about to go to bed with Syphax:

Those are the living women that reduce
 All that they touch unto their ease and use,
 Knowing that wedlock, virtue and good names,
 Are courses and varieties of reason,
 To use or leave as they advantage them,
 And absolute within themselves reposed,
 Only to greatness ope, to all else closed.

(III.i.80-85)

The effect of having these corrupt characters use a central tenet of Stoicism as a justification for amoral behaviour is to attack the tenet. Asdrubal's speech is commonly described as a 'perverted' version of Stoicism,²³ but the *doctrine* has not been perverted; it is the *application* which is inconsistent with a truly Stoical purpose. In these passages Marston is demonstrating the susceptibility to misappropriation of a teaching that tends to minimise the moral importance of social factors; the idea that people should be "absolute within themselves reposed" is dangerous because it can be used to absolve them of moral responsibility. This is a different angle of attack on Stoicism from those that he pursued in

²¹ Finkelpearl detects a trace of contempt for Massinissa in Scipio's last speech. See *John Marston of the Middle Temple*, p.248.

²² "Marston expects his audience to remember the story of Iphigenia, sacrificed by her father, Agamemnon, in order to secure favourable winds for the Greek expedition to Troy" (J&N, p.432). The reference is an allusion to the handing over of Sophonisba to Syphax.

²³ See for example Monsarrat, *Light From the Porch*, p.183 and J&N, p.432.

his earlier plays, but it is a closely related one, because once again we find him stressing the importance of the concept of society and restricting the freedoms and powers of the individual. This is exactly what Marston also does in his treatment of the relationship between Sophonisba and Massinissa, whose mutual love compromises their commitment to Stoicism (and is approved for doing so).

The last point I would make about *Sophonisba* concerns the play's treatment of vows. As G. Geckle has said, "swearing and forswearing and the consequences that inevitably follow constitute a major theme in *Sophonisba*".²⁴ This theme is a continuation of Marston's commentary on the relationship between the self and language, which is prominent in his work from the satires onwards: the fulfilment of promises attests to the power of the promiser's spoken word, and thence to the 'firmness' of his mind. It is also closely related to the arguments that have already been put forward in this Epilogue. When Sophonisba first hears of the plot to betray Massinissa, her objection is partly grounded in a sense of linguistic community between men:

We have all sworn good Massinissa faith;
Speech makes us men, and there's no other bond
'Twixt man and man but words. O equal gods,
Make us once know the consequence of vows...
(II.i.117-120)

Vows are commitments, to other people and to the future. The making and keeping of them establishes the continuity and stability of the maker's identity over time, and proves his *reality*. The consequence of breaking them, is a deep compromise of the self, which must be avoided if the individual's sense of his own power and integrity is to be preserved. Syphax, whose sense of self is in any case heavily contingent on what the public think of him, is an incorrigible breaker of vows, from the first, when he turns against Carthage, to the last, when he deserts Scipio despite having pledged his loyalty to the Roman with "most passionate vows and solemn faith" (V.ii.61). Sophonisba, Massinissa and Gelloso, whose conduct seems to be approved by the play, are unstinting in their efforts to keep to their words: "Look, Scipio, what hard shift we make/ To keep our vows" (V.iv.37-38) says Massinissa, as he lays his wife's body at the Roman's feet.

²⁴ John Marston's *Drama: Themes, Images, Sources*, Toronto, 1980, p.178.

It is important to recognise that an emphasis on the keeping of vows is not especially a feature of Stoicism; indeed, deep engagement with such matters implies a more outwardly-turned gaze than is suitable in a self-sufficient Stoic. However, *Sophonisba's* preoccupation with promises is appropriate to Marston's anatomy of identity because he is always willing to accept that the self's authenticity is a function of its relationship to other people. It is difficult to avoid the impression that in this, his last play, Marston is presenting his prescription to the world: Sophonisba and Massinissa are not Stoics, but they are examples of the moral and existential fortitude that can be achieved by individuals who keep faith with their affections and their ideals when the world becomes turbulent. Marston owes much to Stoicism, primarily the idea that merely to be conscious is not the same as to have a true self, but his insistence that that self can never transcend its environment, and should not attempt to do so, but should gain nourishment and strength from its relationship with society, is his own.

Conclusion

Marston was never well served by dogmatic critics, and it would be foolish to attempt to compress the forgoing study into a fistful of pithy generalisations. However, some of its main points could usefully be recapitulated.

I have tried in this analysis to set Marston's work in an intellectual, historical and literary context. There were three main reasons for this. The first was that I sought some explanation as to why he directed his attention to the specific issue of the self at the time when he did. The second was that I needed some background against which his ideas could be scrutinised, which would provide a means of judging and understanding them: the discussions of Stoicism and Roman satire were especially crucial in this respect. The third reason was that I wanted if possible to show that what Marston was saying was of some historical significance, in that it tied into a larger pattern of events and perceptions. Chapter I is directed to these ends, as is a substantial element of Chapter II. The first section of Chapter I describes a range of sixteenth-century opinions which relate in various ways to the question of what the self is and whence it is derived. It argues that the dominant theories can essentially be divided into two: those that tend to make the self separate or separable from its environment, and those that tend to acknowledge or emphasise the importance of the relationship between the self and the world that it inhabits. The second section examines Roman verse satire with these principles in mind and argues that the genre depicts a society that is losing its former structure and discipline. However, despite the satirist's professed alienation from this process, the satiric form carries within it the signs of his being drawn into it, as though he finally cannot isolate himself from his culture: his being is fundamentally social. The third section looks at English society at the end of the sixteenth century, and argues that it had certain key instabilities, particularly those in relation to personal identity, that made it seem apt to poets to compare it with first-century Rome by writing verse satires about it which were modelled upon those of Juvenal and Persius.

Chapter II examines these satires in detail, focusing on Marston's but also referring to a wide range of those by others. It begins with a short examination of Elizabethan satirical theory, which is developed into a discussion of satire's treatment of the relationship between language and identity. This establishes that satire is the ground on which Marston first makes explicit the connection between the two, which he went on to develop in his plays and which forms an important component of his anatomy of identity. The second section of Chapter II debates the question of Marston's supposed Calvinism, which it disputes, and in the third section a case is made for reading verse satires as aggressive statements of self, in and by virtue of which the authors seek to achieve and demonstrate their virile and autonomous being. Section four is devoted to exploring Marston's and to a lesser extent the other satirists' application of this principle to the characters whom they depict; it argues that Marston's satires in particular stress the individual's duty to construct an authentic identity for himself by resisting the enfeebling influence of the social medium in which he lives. In this Marston is exceptional, but only in the degree to which he emphasises this duty.

Chapter III uses many of the principles discussed in Chapter II as the basis of an analysis of the first of Marston's *Antonio* plays. However, it argues that in *Antonio and Mellida*, instead of emphasising the individual's existential duty, Marston illustrates the difficulty people experience in attempting to isolate themselves psychologically from their environments. This is closely related to the themes of the satires, which are based on the argument that men's true identities are being dissolved and replaced by shadowy imitations as a result of their dwelling in a frivolous and corrupted society. The first section of this chapter uses the analogical examples of *What You Will* and the Induction to Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* to explicate further the issues and techniques involved in *Antonio and Mellida*, as well as discussing the circumstances of the staging of the *Antonio* plays and introducing some of the key tropes and figures that Marston uses to set forth his ideas about the self in both plays. In the subsequent analysis of *Antonio and Mellida* proper, the play is divided for purposes of discussion into two environments: the wilderness, and the court. These are then examined separately in sections two and three respectively, where it is argued that Marston uses the two contrasting types of experience in these settings to

demonstrate the great contingency of human identity upon the surroundings in which the subject finds himself.

Chapter IV subjects *Antonio's Revenge* to a close examination using the principles of analysis developed in Chapters I to III. It argues that the play differs fundamentally from *Antonio and Mellida* in that it shows characters who, instead of succumbing to the effects of grief and disorientation, take up arms against their persecutor. Marston never departs from his premiss that the self's identity is determined by its relationship to the social context; he simply presents alternative versions of what is possible within that relationship. Violence against an enemy is presented by Marston as being the ultimate act of self-validation: the revengers' act of violence re-establishes the authenticity of their substance, raising them metaphorically from the earth and returning to them the spirituality of which they were bereft by Piero's crimes. The first section of this chapter is an analysis of Piero's position in the play, and of the ideas which Marston puts forward through him, especially those concerning the relationship between selfhood and power. The second section examines the experiences of the revengers, whose losses are considered in terms of the effect on the self of being a victim; the third is a detailed discussion of the play's catastrophe.

In Chapter V I very briefly ran through Marston's later plays, arguing that they do not deal with concepts of identity to anything like the same extent as do the satires and the *Antonio* plays, and that where they do, they do not add anything substantial to what has already been discussed. The exception to this is his last play, *Sophonisba*, which is frequently seen as an affirmation of Stoicism, but which really places human authenticity within a framework of social interaction.

Above all, my purpose in this thesis has been to draw attention to the interest in the nature of identity that is revealed in Marston's work. Marston shows profound curiosity as to the forces that lie at the very heart of human existence, as well as a great facility for giving life to his theories on the stage. But, I have tried to show him less as a poet, or as a dramatist, than as an inventive thinker, an 'ideas man' whose early plays were much more a *deconstruction* of the self than they were exercises in psychological realism. Although I have at times used the word 'philosophy' in connection with Marston and his writings, this

is to some extent to clothe him in a giant's robe, not because his contributions were trivial, but because they perhaps lacked the structured coherence that 'philosophy' implies. However, although it is intellectually unfashionable to make observations of this kind, I do think that Marston's work contains flashes of great insight that are as valid today as they were when he conceived them. Although very much a product of his time he was also to some extent ahead of it: in some respects his treatment of the self anticipates that of such modern intellectuals as Marx, Sartre, and De Beauvoir. He was, at all events, an original thinker on the big questions, and his thoughts deserve the intellectual historian's attention no less than they do that of the student of experimental theatre.

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